

# Caltrans to fund county bike trail study

By **JONDI GUMZ**  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Caltrans is giving county officials \$130,000 to investigate building an 8-mile bike trail from Santa Cruz to Boulder Creek.

"It's a great thing," said county Supervisor Jeff Almquist, who has been talking with trail advocates about the idea for a year. "In this time of no money, we actually got a grant."

He worked on the grant request with the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, a nonprofit that has been pushing for trails nationwide since 1986. The San Lorenzo Valley project was one of five to be funded.

"A lot of folks in the valley are interested in bicycling," said Karen Christensen, 32, of Felton, who works in Almquist's office. "I bicycle myself."

But there are not too many places where she can take her 2-year-old out for a ride. The problem is that much of the valley is not bicycle-friendly, especially Highway 9, the main artery, which is narrow and for the most part lacks bike lanes.

Preliminary discussions have been held with Roaring Camp, which runs tourist trains from Santa Cruz to Felton, about accommodating a bike trail.

Conservancy officials said a "rail with trail" route would be a first for Santa Cruz County. It has been done successfully in Northern California, from Chico to Durham, and in Sacra-

mento, where the Folsom Parkway trail runs five miles adjacent to light rail.

Putting in a trail dedicated to bicyclists and pedestrians could improve safety, said Josh Hart, a UC Santa Cruz alumnus who works for the conservancy.

Another enthusiast is Caltrans spokesman Mike Galizio, who drove up from San Luis Obispo to talk with local residents and offered to look for money to study possible routes.

"He knows we need some relief," Christensen said.

North of Felton, a bicycle trail would require the cooperation of numerous property owners.

Christensen said no routes have been developed yet, but the possibilities include Quail Hollow Road, Highway 9 and Irwin Way.

Whether the bike trail would be geared for commuting or recreation has yet to be determined.

The first step in what could be an 18-month process will be for the county to hire a consultant this summer to look at possible bike lanes.

A survey is planned in the fall at San Lorenzo Valley schools to find out what bike routes and walking paths students use now.

"Our intent is to get as much input as we can," Christensen said.

*Interested residents are invited to e-mail [jeff.almquist@co.santa-cruz.ca.us](mailto:jeff.almquist@co.santa-cruz.ca.us) to get more information.*

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