



## FRIENDS OF SMART

Jan. 7, 2025

Dear Congressman Huffman,

I am most pleased to see your stated belief that “the redwood trail and restored rail line could co-exist in the segment south of Willits. We feel that when rehabbed, the rail line will create a much needed transportation route up to Willits (Mendocino County) home of the well-known Skunk Train.

Returning the rail line to full operation would be a catalysis to a significant reduction in greenhouse gases by reducing heavy truck traffic on CA Hwy 101. A fully operational rail line would also be a tremendous catalysis for future economic development and tourism.

I and others also agree with you that it makes no practical or financial sense to even consider going further north. In fact the line was rail banked in 2022 from Willits to Humboldt Bay. I should note that no rail banked line in California has ever been reopened.

Currently SMART, as part of its requirement, is building a hiking and biking trail alongside its right of way with the full support of the Great Redwood Trail Agency (GRTA).

I and my colleagues from our organization, Friends of SMART (FoS) question why that same shared design concept shouldn't be continued on up to Willits, a concept that GRTA and its political supporters do not support.

On our FoS website you will find a detailed letter from our Chairperson calling for the preservation of the tracks to Willits along with the trail and it's economic and clean air benefits, in a letter to the Press Democrat. ([www.friendsofsmart.com](http://www.friendsofsmart.com))

With the rebuilt rail line in place, Willits would become a hub for the transloading of goods, (construction materials, fuels and bulk food, etc. from the south for local/regional delivery and of course as a rail shipping point (lumber, gravel, manufactured goods) back south into the Sonoma and Marin region as well as to a connection with the national rail system in Napa County.

Imagine the jobs in your district that would be created not only from rail construction but from current local as well as new industries that would develop as the result of that rail connection.

Thank you for taking time from your very challenging day to respond to my comments; it must be a unique time in the Capitol.

Respectfully submitted for your attention,

Richard Brand, Sonoma County, FoS Freight Subgroup Chair  
Michael Pechner, FoS - Lead, North Coast Rails with Trails  
Woody Mosgers, Santa Rosa, FoS Editor  
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