



October 15, 2021

Del Mar Bluffs Safety Enhancement Map and Visual Analysis Released

The North County Transit District (NCTD) is working collaboratively with the City of Del Mar and the California Coastal Commission to develop a solution that enhances rail safety and reliability for the rail right-of-way (ROW) along the Del Mar bluffs. The three public agencies formed a Working Group to review project alternatives.

The NCTD Board of Directors voted on May 20, 2021 to approve a contract with [CivilPros \(A DBA of RailPros Holdings, LLC\)](#) to conduct right-of-way mapping, viewshed analysis, and other services to foster a complete understanding of project alternatives being discussed by the Working Group. This supplemental study, [supported by the Coastal Commission](#), is intended to address public feedback, and help determine whether additional refinements to the proposed fencing plan are necessary.

On October 15, 2021, NCTD released the project mapping and visual impact analysis. The current project plan, which was analyzed by CivilPros, includes modifications responsive to public input and feedback from City of Del Mar and the Coastal Commission. The mapping and visual analysis are the next step in NCTD's collaboration with the Coastal Commission and the City of Del Mar to enhance safety, rail service reliability, and provide safe and legal access to the beaches in Del Mar.

"The refined plan shown in the mapping and visual analysis reflects public and shareholder input. This analysis is one part of our effort to ensure a collaborative, constructive, and transparent process."

– Matthew O. Tucker, Executive Director
North County Transit District

A summary of the mapping and visual impact analysis can be found [here](#).



Modified Fencing Plan

The original fencing plan has been refined to be more community-sensitive while advancing increased safety and continued access to the trails on the upper bluffs. The modified fencing plan reduces the overall length of the fencing from 12,960 linear feet in the original plan, to 6,876 linear feet in the modified plan. The modified plan also refines the fencing height and type.

The original plan included 6-foot chain link fencing throughout the entire length of the project. In response to feedback from community stakeholders, the modified plan also reduces the height to 4 feet or less for nearly half of the project (3,163 linear feet) and includes post and cable fencing for most of those sections. The CivilPros study includes the modified project map and visual simulations of the fencing for the original and modified plans.

Modified Fencing Plan

- Reduces fencing from 12,960LF to 6,876LF
- Reduces fence height from 6ft to 4ft for 3,163LF of fencing
- Includes post and cable fencing for 2,933LF of fencing

Background

Since the mid-1990s, NCTD and the City of Del Mar have had ongoing discussions about railroad trespassing and the need to create safe and legal access along the railway on the Del Mar bluffs between approximately Mile Post 244.1 and Mile Post 245.7 of the Los Angeles to San Diego section of the LOSSAN rail corridor.

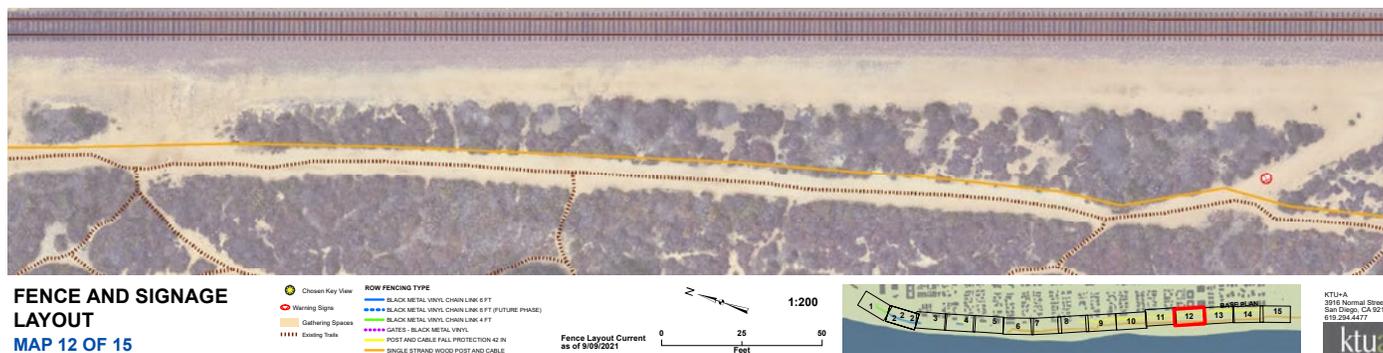
On August 28, 2020, NCTD filed a Petition with the Surface Transportation Board, which provides regulatory oversight for the movement of interstate commerce via rail. The Petition seeks confirmation that rail maintenance and upgrades are not subject to the Coastal Zone Management Act’s Federal Consistency Review and the Coastal Act’s permitting requirements.

The Petition was filed following significant analysis and internal discussion that included input, feedback, and approval from NCTD’s Board of Directors and advance consultation with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).

NCTD strives to work collaboratively with the communities that it serves and believes the Petition will provide clarity regarding the authority of state and local governments for their review and requests related to maintenance and safety projects. This clarity will also improve budget and scope planning, which in turn will allow critical state of good repair projects to be completed in a timely manner.

Working Collaboratively Toward a Solution

In December 2020, NCTD, the City of Del Mar, and the California Coastal Commission executed an agreement to delay regulatory review by the Surface Transportation Board and determination of NCTD’s rights as a rail carrier related to maintenance and safety projects as requested in the Petition. The agreement to delay is intended to allow the parties time to work in good faith to reach an agreement that would eliminate the need for a review and determination by the Surface Transportation Board.



As part of the Agreement to work in good faith, the parties established a Working Group to discuss, evaluate, and work towards a final agreement by December 31, 2021.

Geotechnical Study Conducted

NCTD has also completed a [geotechnical review](#) that validated that the proposed fencing would “not impact the stability of the bluffs or the trackbed support, nor promote additional erosion/bluff retreat.” This geotechnical review was conducted by Leighton Consulting, Inc. in early 2021.

SANDAG Coastal Connections Study

In summer 2021, SANDAG began the Coastal Connections Study to analyze potential improvements to public access along the Del Mar bluffs. NCTD, as part of its effort to foster collaboration, contributed funding to the study and is an active participant with the city and SANDAG. The study is advancing to include the development of initial draft concepts to improve public access along the bluffs. Community outreach about the concepts will occur in winter 2021 with refined concepts and final presentations anticipated in summer 2022.

Next Steps

The Working Group established by the City of Del Mar, Coastal Commission, and NCTD is currently meeting regularly to discuss and evaluate fencing project alternatives and work toward a final preferred approach.

The Agreement between the Coastal Commission, NCTD, and the City of Del Mar establishes December 31, 2021 as the deadline for the completion of the joint Working Group’s efforts to come to a negotiated agreement for the fencing project that promotes rail safety, ensures reliability, and provides safe access.

NCTD, in collaboration with the Coastal Commission and City of Del Mar, will provide periodic updates to its Board and the general public as additional developments occur.

For More Information

For more information about the Del Mar bluffs project, including frequently asked questions and full project history, please visit at GoNCTD.com. NCTD also encourages the public to visit our [Trespasser Mitigation](#) web page for additional information related to this project and other initiatives. ■