



July 16, 2024

To: Dan Phu, Program Manager, OCTA

CC: Dr. Caryl Hart, Chair, California Coastal Commission

Dr. Kate Huckelbridge, Executive Director, California Coastal Commission

Karl Schwing, Deputy Director, South Coast District

Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis, Chair, California State Lands Commission

Jennifer Lucchesi, Executive Director, State Lands Commission

RE: Request for environmental review of the Coastal Rail Resiliency Study Initial Assessment

Dear Mr. Phu,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback to Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) regarding the Coastal Rail Resiliency Study Initial Assessment (CRRS). As several of the undersigned requested during the June 20, 2024 listening session, we hereby formally request the OCTA conduct a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) with at least 60 days allotted for the public to review and provide meaningful public comment, and submit a coastal development permit application, before any potential hard armoring of the coastline occurs that could negatively impact San Clemente State Beach and/or public trust lands.

A California State Park since 1933, State Beach is one of the most popular beaches in California, as pictured below, providing safe refuge from the inland heat and affordable overnight lodging with 160 campsites. This beach also contains vital coastal dunes and potential sensitive habitat. Given the magnitude of the potential harm to this priceless beach, a full EIR must be completed to ensure that irreparable damage is avoided.



Image: San Clemente State Beach heavily utilized on June 28, 2024; sandy beach that is at risk by OCTA's proposed 50-foot-wide revetment.

We note that the currently proposed shoreline armoring along the existing rail line will infringe on public trust lands and irreparably harm coastal habitats and ecosystems, as well as obstruct coastal access and recreational opportunities by covering the sandy beach with large boulders. We also note that past shoreline armoring in recent years performed under emergency permits at Cyprus Shores beach and Cottons Point have resulted in permanent obstruction of public access to San Onofre State Park and destruction of sandy beaches and public trust lands.



Image: Cotton's Point fronting Cyprus Shores HOA in August 2023 where the beach has completely vanished.

This work was performed without proper environmental review and without the public's due process right to review and comment before the irreparable harm was committed. We

therefore request that all correspondence and applications regarding the past and the proposed work be publicly available for review on the OCTA website.

OCTA must submit a coastal development permit application for the proposed work, which does not qualify as an emergency. Proper environmental review under CEQA *and* the California Coastal Act will ensure that OCTA selects the least environmentally damaging alternative, mitigates impacts and provides for meaningful public input. All viable alternatives to shoreline armoring must be carefully examined, including nature-based alternatives, rail relocation or retirement and train speed management.

A coastal development permit hearing must be agendized at the Coastal Commission with sufficient opportunity for all concerned stakeholders to participate. This may require a special hearing, such as was necessary to accommodate the thousands of concerned stakeholders at the 2008 Coastal Commission hearing to determine whether to allow a toll road through San Onofre State Park.¹ We also ask that any application to the State Lands Commission for lease of public trust lands be made publicly available for review and comment before any lease is issued.

OCTA claims to value stakeholder feedback, yet meaningful input is not possible without a clear understanding of the proposed work and the potential impacts on coastal resources.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Taylor
Legal Counsel
Surfrider Foundation

Gary Headrick
Founder
San Clemente Green

Mandy Sackett
Senior California Policy Coordinator
Surfrider Foundation

Toni Nelson
Founder
Capo Cares

Dan Silver
Executive Director
Endangered Habitats League

Elizabeth Wallace
President, Orange County Chapter
Native Plant Society

¹ We note that an [online petition](#) to stop any additional hard armoring of San Clemente's beaches has already garnered over 11,000 signatures.

Suzie Whitelaw
President
Save Our Beaches San Clemente

Mark Gold
Director of Water Scarcity Solutions
Natural Resources Defense Council

Susan Goggins
Chief Operating Officer
San Onofre Parks Foundation

Rachel Norton
Executive Director
California State Parks Foundation