



GREAT REDWOOD TRAIL AGENCY

MEETING DATE: January 22, 2026

AGENDA ITEM: 2. Staff Reports

FROM: Bridget Nichols

RE: Operations & Maintenance Division Report

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION & CLEAN-UP:

Fernbridge Waste and Vegetation Removal - Update

GRTA owns a parcel in Fernbridge located across from the rail corridor that includes a privately owned structure deemed unsafe for occupancy by Humboldt County. The former tenant has vacated the property, leaving behind a substantial volume of waste that presents health and safety hazards and requires prompt removal.

GRTA has secured the parcel with fencing and awarded a contract for waste and vegetation removal. Exterior waste materials equaling approximately 55 tons at the building site have been successfully removed. At the time of this report, interior cleanup has not yet begun, as the contractor is allowing exterior ground conditions to dry before proceeding with work inside the structure. The project remains on schedule and is expected to be completed by the March board meeting.

Property Management and Corridor Cleanup: (Ongoing)

GRTA continues to work with contracted property management partners in Mendocino and Humboldt Counties to address large-scale dumping sites along the corridor. Efforts include outreach to individuals encountered on GRTA property, referrals to support services, and routine garbage collection along established routes. These coordinated actions support more efficient cleanup cycles and help reduce recurring impacts along the corridor.

Humboldt County:

A recent cleanup effort resulted in the removal of more than 12,000 pounds of trash from the rail line in Arcata, near O Street, just west of the Creamery District. This project is still active at the time of this board report and it is anticipated many more tons will be removed.

Mendocino County:

In Ukiah, north of Brush Street, a large dumping site was remediated, with approximately 15,000 pounds of material removed, including scrap metal, tires, garbage, and pallets. Also in Ukiah, an abandoned encampment near Costco left a kitten behind; staff from Friend of Boon fostered the animal and successfully placed it in a permanent home.

In Willits, a large abandoned encampment along Mill Creek was cleaned up, with approximately 2,000 pounds of debris removed from the creek embankment.

MAINTENANCE PROJECTS:

Storm Damage - Samoa Breach

In Humboldt County, the first weekend of January brought some of the highest recorded high tides in Humboldt Bay. Combined with heavy rainfall, these conditions caused widespread flooding throughout the county. In several locations, the rail line along the Samoa Peninsula functions as a de facto seawall, although it was not constructed for this purpose nor has it been maintained as a seawall. During this event, tidal waters overtopped the rail corridor and eroded the underlying fill, resulting in breaches in the rail line.

The damage caused to GRTA property by flooding and high tides also impacted neighboring parcels owned by County of Humboldt and the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District. Vance Road near the Samoa Bridge was closed to traffic until the water receded. Without repair to GRTA property, the rail prism will no longer prevent normal tidal flows from advancing. GRTA staff were alerted to the damage, conducted site visits, consulted with the GRTA engineer regarding repair recommendations, and coordinated with the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District to secure emergency permitting.

The emergency permit, issued on January 13, authorizes repair work accessed exclusively from the rail corridor and limited to areas above the mean high tide line to avoid tidal influence. At the time of this report, repair work has not yet commenced.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Local Humboldt Small Agencies:

As a result of the Samoa Breach, GRTA is exploring participation in a shared Memorandum of Understanding with other small local agencies in Humboldt County to support maintenance response needs, particularly for unplanned or emergency situations. Under the existing MOU framework, participating agencies collaborate on dispatching staff for response efforts, with costs limited to direct expenses billed to the requesting agency.

This arrangement has the potential to reduce costs and improve response efficiency by streamlining mobilization, permitting coordination, and access to available staffing resources.

Upcoming Scheduled Fieldwork & Inspections During the first week of February, GRTA's engineer, along with GRTA and SCC project staff, will conduct a week-long field inspection. These inspections will assess infrastructure conditions and property-related issues to develop and prioritize a list of maintenance projects. The results will guide work planning for staff, including the newly hired Trail and Property Maintenance Technicians.

ENCROACHMENTS :

Segment Encroachment Review

Staff will begin a systematic, segment-by-segment review of encroachments along the GRTA corridor, starting with completed sections of the Great Redwood Trail in Eureka, Arcata, and Ukiah. This review will include verification of existing formal agreements, documentation of encroachments not currently on record, and outreach to property users to formalize appropriate encroachments where needed.

License and Lease Digitization with GIS (Ongoing)

GRTA has an active contract with Evari to digitize all license and lease agreements and integrate them into

a GIS-based platform. This effort will provide staff with clear, visual representations of authorized encroachments and property uses, significantly enhancing field verification and property management capabilities. The GIS-based system will be especially valuable as GRTA continues its comprehensive corridor-wide property review.

Billing and Customer Verification (Ongoing)

GRTA staff continue to refine and update customer records associated with encroachments. This work includes verifying active accounts, confirming current license and lease status, and archiving outdated or inactive agreements. These efforts support a more accurate and efficient billing system. Encroachment-related revenue remains a critical funding source for ongoing property maintenance along the rail corridor and directly supports the financial sustainability of the Operations and Maintenance Division.
