



Innovation in Community-Driven Railway Technology

Mendocino Railway

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

02/20/2026

Federal Transportation Board Preserves Fort Bragg–Willits Rail Line; Mendocino Railway Calls for Collaborative Rail-and-Trail Future

Willits, CA — The Surface Transportation Board yesterday denied a request to remove the 40-mile Fort Bragg–Willits rail corridor from the national rail network, preserving the line for continued freight and passenger use.

The unanimous decision confirms that the corridor remains part of the interstate rail system and recognizes its potential for present and future rail service.

“This corridor remains a vital public asset for Mendocino County,” said Robert Jason Pinoli, President and CEO of Mendocino Railway. “We appreciate the Board’s thoughtful review. Our focus now is simple: protect the corridor, continue investing in it, and work constructively with regional partners on long-term solutions.”

A Path Forward: Rail and Trail

The Board’s decision does not prevent trail development. Instead, it makes clear that recreational trail use can coexist with rail service where properly planned.

Mendocino Railway is calling for renewed collaboration with the Great Redwood Trail Agency to pursue a coordinated rail-and-trail approach that serves both transportation and recreation goals.

“We respect the GRTA’s vision,” Pinoli said. “Rail corridors are uniquely valuable because they can serve multiple public purposes. We are prepared to work together on a solution that preserves freight access, maintains passenger service, and expands trail opportunities for the community.”

Mendocino Railway has extensive experience developing and maintaining rail-with-trail projects in California and owns the specialized equipment required to build and steward trail infrastructure responsibly.

Continued Investment in the Corridor

The company is actively advancing federally supported infrastructure improvements designed to restore full functionality of the line between Fort Bragg and Willits. These investments are intended to strengthen freight options for local businesses, preserve tourism through excursion passenger service, and maintain long-term transportation flexibility in a rural region with limited alternatives.

“This is about keeping options open for future generations,” Pinoli said. “Once a rail corridor is lost, it is rarely recovered. Our commitment is to protect it, and to ensure it serves the people and businesses of Mendocino County in the most constructive way possible.”

About Mendocino Railway

Mendocino Railway is a federally regulated Class III common carrier public utility railroad providing freight and passenger service in Northern California. Since 2004, the company has operated and maintained the historic Fort Bragg–Willits line, including the Skunk Train passenger service. The company remains committed to safe operations, infrastructure investment, and community partnership. For more information, visit www.mendocinorailway.com

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