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Parks' backers leery of high-speed rail plans

By Amy Chen
Knight Ridder

A non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the state park system says a proposed high-speed rail system would endanger Eastshore State Park in Alameda County and 21 other open spaces.

The California State Parks Foundation released a survey Wednesday that the group says bolsters its concerns about threats to the park system.

About 82 percent of those polled in the online survey said they want to see more land acquired for future state parks.

About 55 percent said they would support these acquisitions with bonds.

The second annual State of Our State Parks report also identified six threats to the park system, including the proposed high-speed rail system between Northern and Southern California.

The proposed rail line would pass through nine parks and be within 1,500 feet of 11 state parks, including Eastshore State Park, said Elizabeth Goldstein, president of Kentfield-based California State Parks Foundation.

The remaining two parks would be about 2,500 feet from the proposed rail line, she said.

Eastshore State Park covers about 2,300 acres along an 8.5-mile stretch from Richmond through Berkeley, Albany, Emeryville and Oakland.

``Obviously we think a high speed system would be advantageous to California but the question is what route the rail will take," Goldstein said. ``We're not against the rail line but we are for thoughtful and smart planning so it doesn't impact the state parks."

The foundation sent the e-mail survey to about 5,000 members. The remaining 500 respondents were contacted using online survey software developed by Mill Valley-based firm MarketTools Inc.

A spokeswoman for the California High-Speed Rail Authority said a proposal for a high-speed route from the Bay Area to the Central Valley has not been determined but will include a second round of studies and public hearings.

``California State Parks Foundation members will have another chance to weigh in," said spokeswoman Kris Deutschman. ``It will be valuable input because there is no definitive alignment yet."