



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-24-62
Meeting 24-14
May 22, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA ITEM 1

AGENDA ITEM

Selection of a Preferred Overcrossing Alternative for the Highway 17 Wildlife and Regional Trail Crossings and Trail Connections Project

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Review the key considerations and select one preferred multi-use use trail overcrossing alternative to advance with the wildlife undercrossing into the Caltrans Plans, Specifications & Estimates (PS&E) phase based on the Board of Director's highest priority goals for the Highway 17 Wildlife and Regional Trail Crossings and Trail Connections Project as follows:

1. If the goal is to provide a more overall balanced project, including maximizing regional trail connections and providing an enhanced experience for trail users, and avoid the need to acquire a private property, select the Southern Overcrossing Alternative to advance with the wildlife undercrossing and associated features into the Caltrans Plans, Specifications & Estimates (PS&E) phase.
2. If the goal is to maximize the separation of trail users from the wildlife undercrossing for wildlife functionality and/or minimize construction and associated costs, select the Northern Overcrossing Alternative to advance with the wildlife undercrossing and associated features into the Caltrans Plans, Specifications & Estimates (PS&E) phase.

SUMMARY

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District), in cooperation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), proposes the construction of a wildlife undercrossing and a separate regional multi-use trail overcrossing of Highway 17 near Lexington Reservoir, south of the Town of Los Gatos in Santa Clara County. Together, the Highway 17 Wildlife Crossing (MAA20-001) and Regional Trail Crossing (MAA20-002) Projects (collectively the Highway 17 Project or Project) were one of the highest ranked priority actions during the Vision Plan process in 2014. The Project supports the District's goal of providing safe, regional wildlife and trail access across Highway 17 in the project area.

In 2019, following public outreach and completion of the Highway 17 [Revised Alternatives Report](#), the District Board of Directors (Board) approved four crossings to be evaluated during the current Caltrans Project Approval and Environmental Document (PA&ED) phase: wildlife crossings at two proposed locations, and recreational crossings at two proposed locations (four total). One of the wildlife crossing alternatives was determined to be infeasible to construct during the current PA&ED phase, however, both trail overcrossing alternatives were found to be

constructable and have been analyzed in the Draft Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration/Environmental Assessment (IS/MND) for the Project. Even though both alternatives have been analyzed in the PA&ED phase, Caltrans requires that the District select a preferred alternative to advance the design into the Caltrans Plans, Specifications & Estimates (PS&E) phase. The District is fulfilling Caltrans' requirement for selection of a preferred alternative prior to the District's conclusion of the environmental review process and presentation of the CEQA findings to the Board for consideration in order to advance the Project to the PS&E phase and avoid delays to the overall Project schedule.

Overall, the Southern Overcrossing Alternative would provide a more balanced project with greater value for trail users; the Northern Overcrossing Alternative would cost less to construct and maximize the separation of humans from the wildlife undercrossing. Selection of a preferred project alternative to advance into the Caltrans PS&E phase has no immediate fiscal impact. If approved, funding for design and construction will be recommended in future fiscal year budgets during the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

DISCUSSION

Background

In 2019, following consultation with the public, stakeholders, and project partners, the District finalized a Revised Alternatives Report and completed the Caltrans Project Study Report - Project Development Support (PSR-PDS) phase of the Project. With completion of the PSR-PDS phase, the Board approved moving forward with environmental analysis of four crossing alternatives for the Project (R-19-136) as part of the current Caltrans PA&ED phase. The four crossing alternatives included two wildlife undercrossing alternatives and two multi-use trail overcrossing alternatives. No other feasible wildlife crossings (under or over) were identified within the study area (Los Gatos to Bear Creek Road) during the feasibility phase of the Project that met the needs of the target species, which are mountain lion and deer. Additional information can be found in the Revised Alternatives Report.

The PA&ED phase includes preliminary design and environmental review for the Project; specifically, preparation of the: 1) Caltrans Draft and Final Project Reports; 2) California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document; and 3) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document. The Draft Project Report (DPR) was completed in February 2024, and the CEQA/NEPA analysis prepared for the Project, a joint [Draft Initial Study \(IS\) with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration \(MND\)/Environmental Assessment \(EA\)](#), was publicly circulated between February 20, 2024 and March 22, 2024.

Based on refined topographic mapping completed during field studies for the DPR, it was determined that one of the wildlife undercrossing alternatives, formerly known as Alternative 1, was infeasible to construct, and therefore it was not evaluated in the environmental analysis (CEQA/NEPA document) prepared for the Project. However, technical studies and preliminary design work have demonstrated that the remaining wildlife undercrossing alternative (Trout Creek), and both multi-use trail overcrossing alternatives, known as the Southern Overcrossing Alternative and Northern Overcrossing Alternative, are feasible to construct (Attachment A – Vicinity Map). Caltrans is requesting that the District selects a preferred project alternative in order to finalize the CEQA/NEPA document and Project Report, complete PA&ED, and advance

into the PS&E phase. However, both overcrossing alternatives will continue to be analyzed in the IS-MND/EA.

Both trail overcrossing alternatives would function as multi-use trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, equestrians, and potentially dogs on leash, connecting the Los Gatos Creek Trail on the west side of Highway 17 with El Sereno Open Space Preserve (OSP) on the east. One trail overcrossing alternative along with the wildlife undercrossing and associated features will be selected as the preferred alternative to advance into final design and construction. A summary of each multi-use trail overcrossing alternative is provided below:

Northern Overcrossing Alternative

The Northern Overcrossing would be a six-span concrete bridge on abutments and columns. The bridge would cross Highway 17 approximately 0.4 miles north of Lenihan Dam and connect steep slopes on the west side of the highway with an existing service road and California Highway Patrol (CHP) turnout on the east side of the highway (Attachment B – Northern Overcrossing Alternative Project Layout and Photo Simulation). Adjacent rest areas would be provided at each end of the bridge for users to enjoy views, rest, or let others pass on the trail.

The eastern approach would connect the bridge with the existing Los Gatos Creek Trail. West of the highway, a new trail would be constructed to connect the Northern Overcrossing with a flat earthen bench area that is currently on private property. From there, new and improved trails using existing road cuts on private property would be used to connect the Northern Overcrossing to existing trails in El Sereno OSP.

During the previous Caltrans project phase (Project Study Report- Project Development Support phase) the District completed a feasibility study that analyzed the Northern Overcrossing Alternative as a combined trail/wildlife overcrossing or trail-only overcrossing. Among other reasons, the combined trail/wildlife overcrossing alternative was not advanced as a wildlife crossing option because it would require a 90-degree approach which would not provide a direct line of sight for wildlife to access and use the crossing.

Southern Overcrossing Alternative

The Southern Overcrossing bridge would be a single-span, precast concrete girder bridge on abutments and would cross Highway 17 approximately 0.2 mile north of Alma Bridge Road. The crossing would connect a level earthen bench area west of the highway with a landing area to the east. The eastern landing would be directly north of San Jose Water Company (SJWC) facilities adjacent to Lexington Reservoir and west of Alma Bridge Road (Attachment C – Southern Overcrossing Alternative Project Layout and Photo Simulation). As with the Northern Overcrossing, adjacent rest areas would be provided at each end of the bridge for trail users to enjoy views, rest, or let others pass.

A new trail connection along the Lexington Reservoir spillway road would connect the east side of the Southern Overcrossing to the Los Gatos Creek Trail, allowing trail users to avoid car and truck traffic on Alma Bridge Road, which lacks shoulders in many locations. From the west side of the Southern Overcrossing, a new trail would traverse Trout Creek canyon to connect to the existing Serenity Trail in El Sereno OSP. A new trail would also connect the west side of the Southern Overcrossing with Montevina Road and an existing Lexington Reservoir County Park

trail along Montevina Road, allowing for a connection to Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve.

Preferred Overcrossing Alternative

In recommending a preferred overcrossing alternative, staff considered several primary criteria, including those consistent with the alternatives evaluation completed for the 2019 Revised Alternatives Report. A summary of that analysis is below and an Alternatives Comparison Table can be found in Attachment 4.

Functionality for Regional Trail Use and Wildlife

The Southern and Northern overcrossing alternatives would both provide an east-west Bay Area Ridge Trail and Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail connection across Highway 17 between the Los Gatos Creek Trail and El Sereno OSP. Additionally, both trail connections between the overcrossings and El Sereno OSP could allow multi-use (hiking, biking, equestrian use, and dogs on-leash). However, equestrian use on the connecting trail between the Southern Overcrossing to El Sereno OSP may be provisional subject to water quality monitoring results as outlined in the non-binding letter of intent referenced above between the District and SJWC. The connecting trails between El Sereno OSP and the Los Gatos Creek Trail would be similar lengths and gradients for both alternatives, and each would provide views of Lexington Reservoir and the surrounding mountains. The Southern Overcrossing would also provide a north-south trail connection between the Los Gatos Creek Trail and Bear Creek Redwoods OSP, where the Northern Overcrossing would not provide such connection.

The Southern and Northern overcrossing alternative structures are located relatively of similar distance from the location of the proposed wildlife undercrossing, 930 and 1,400 feet respectively. However, the new trail connection between the Southern Overcrossing Alternative and El Sereno OSP would be approximately 300 linear feet to the west of the wildlife undercrossing where it turns west into Trout Creek Canyon (Attachment C). While this would bring humans in closer proximity to the wildlife undercrossing, there is currently an existing SJWC facility to the west of the crossing, as well as pockets of housing, where human use is already present, yet animals continue to use the area as evidenced by the high wildlife road mortality hotspot located at the proposed site of the undercrossing. Topography and vegetation also screen the trail and proposed crossing from visible sight of one another, meaning that wildlife will generally be able to traverse the landscape without being seen by humans using vegetative cover. In addition, the proposed new trail may also include wildlife friendly fencing features to ensure humans remain on the trail. The trail would also only be open during the day, meaning that wildlife passage across the trail to the nearby crossing would not be interrupted at night, when the trail would be officially closed to trail users.

Trail Connection User Experience

The Southern and Northern overcrossing alternatives would both connect to El Sereno OSP on the west side of Highway 17 via improved existing and newly constructed connecting trails (Attachment 1, Trail Segments Nos. 1 and 2). In 2019 the District completed a *Highway 17 Regional Trail Connections Study* that identified feasible regional trail connections to the proposed highway crossing structures. Various connecting trail routes were evaluated based on existing conditions, including steepness, unstable slopes and major stream crossings, as well as the trail user experience and other Project criteria such as ease and feasibility of construction and future maintenance. The alignments currently proposed for the Southern and Northern

Overcrossing alternatives were determined most feasible and consistent with the goal for the Bay Area Ridge Trail to be located on or near the most prominent ridges overlooking the San Francisco Bay.

Overall, the Southern Overcrossing Alternative would offer a better trail user experience than the Northern Overcrossing Alternative due to stretches of gentler trail grades, and over a mile of newly built trail that traverses through native forest in Trout Creek Canyon, including a new trail bridge and creek crossing before ascending to El Sereno OSP. The Northern Overcrossing connecting trail would be generally steeper than the Southern alternative (averaging approximately 13% compared to approximately 11% for the Southern connection), and over half the trail length would use existing road cuts, with the remainder being newly constructed trail.

Constructability/Cost

Preliminary design and field technical studies completed during the current PA&ED phase have confirmed that both overcrossing alternatives are feasible to construct from an engineering perspective. Total estimated concept-level costs for the Southern Overcrossing Alternative (\$43M), including right-of-way (ROW) and support costs for the project, are approximately 10% higher than the Northern Overcrossing Alternative (\$38.4M) due primarily to required roadwork such as improvements to freeway shoulders under the overcrossing, longer trail connection segments and associated retaining walls and a trail bridge within the Caltrans right-of-way (ROW). The total concept-level cost estimates for both alternatives include the wildlife undercrossing and associated wildlife directional fencing and escape ramps, multi-use trail overcrossing, and connecting trails within the Caltrans ROW. Construction cost estimates for the preferred overcrossing alternative selected will be updated during the PS&E phase of the project.

Long-term maintenance costs could also be higher for the Southern Overcrossing Alternative due to the potential need for retaining walls associated with the connecting trails within the Caltrans ROW. Operation and maintenance agreements, including funding responsibilities, would be finalized during the PS&E phase of the project.

Property Access

Both alternatives would require temporary construction easements, maintenance easements, and utility easements. In addition, both alternatives would require the District to acquire property interests for regional trail connections. The Northern Overcrossing would require property interests on one private residential property and relocation of current occupant(s) if full acquisition is required to connect the overcrossing with existing trails in El Sereno OSP on the west side of Highway 17.

Connecting trails between the Southern Overcrossing Alternative and El Sereno OSP on the west side of Highway 17 would require a trail easement across property owned by SJWC. SJWC is a partner agency on the Highway 17 Project and a non-binding letter of intent was signed by the District and SJWC in March 2024 outlining terms for the basis of negotiating a final written agreement for various aspects of the Project, including an easement allowing the trail connection between the Southern Overcrossing Alternative and El Sereno OSP. A trail easement over SJWC property is expected to be faster and potentially less costly to the District than partial or full

acquisition of the private property needed to implement the trail connection associated with the Northern Overcrossing.

The connecting trail between the Southern Overcrossing Alternative and Los Gatos Creek Trail on the east side of Highway 17 (Attachment 1, trail segment No. 9) would be accomplished through an encroachment permit from Valley Water and an existing Master Partnership Agreement between Valley Water and Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department, or a new agreement with Valley Water.

Valley Water is in the planning stages of a project to increase the capacity of the existing Lexington Reservoir Spillway (Lexington Reservoir Spillway Project) that could temporarily or permanently impact the proposed connecting trail between the east side of the Southern Overcrossing and the Los Gatos Creek Trail (Attachment A, trail segment No. 9). The extent and timing of those impacts are unknown at this time; however, a potential reroute of the connecting trail from the overcrossing to the Los Gatos Creek Trail could be pursued. The potential reroute would include a new trail bridge across the top of the spillway to efficiently connect with the Los Gatos Creek Trail at the top of the Lenihan Dam and would be substantially less impacted by the Lexington Reservoir Spillway Project. A trail bridge across the Lexington Reservoir Spillway was not analyzed in the Highway 17 Draft IS-MND/EA and would be a separate future project, if a potential trail reroute would be necessary.

Stakeholder and Public Input

District staff have held five rounds of public meetings and workshops and presented numerous Highway 17 Project related items to the Board (see Prior Board and Committee Review section below), allowing for numerous opportunities for public input since initiating the project with Caltrans in 2016. Staff have also held various stakeholder meetings with local agencies and organizations throughout the Caltrans process.

Based on community member and stakeholder input there is overall support for the multi-use trail overcrossing as part of the Project. In general, there is high support for the Southern Overcrossing Alternative from members of the public who would like a north-south connection to Bear Creek Redwoods OSP; and high support for the Northern Overcrossing Alternative from members of the public who desire more separation of the connecting trails from the wildlife undercrossing. Other common or reoccurring comments from stakeholders and the public related to the overcrossing alternatives include:

- Preference for the Northern Overcrossing Alternative because it provides a more direct connection to Los Gatos Creek Trail.
- Concern that the Northern Overcrossing Alternative could create a distraction for drivers along a bend in the highway.
- Desire for a direct connection from the east side of the Southern Overcrossing Alternative to St. Joseph's Hill across the top of Lenihan Dam.
- Potential safety issues for trail users attempting to use Alma Bridge Road as a connection to the east side of the Southern Overcrossing, where pedestrian infrastructure does not currently exist.

Potential Environmental Impacts

For purposes of sharing public and agency feedback on the trail crossing and connections to inform the Board's selection of an overcrossing alternative, comments related to the two overcrossings are generally summarized below from the environmental review phase. Based on the Draft IS-MND/EA prepared for the Project, the majority of the potential environmental impacts of the two alternatives would be either the same or very similar. The differences would be due to the different locations of the Southern Overcrossing and Northern Overcrossing bridges and trails, as summarized in the table below.

Resource Area	Summary of Differences of Potential Environmental Impacts between Southern and Northern Overcrossing Alternatives
Aesthetics/Visual	The Southern Overcrossing and associated connecting trails would be closer to nearby residents than the Northern Overcrossing Alternative, although views would be shielded by hills and vegetation west of Highway 17. Overall, both alternatives would have the same potential level of visual impacts but in different locations.
Natural Communities	The Northern Overcrossing Alternative would have a slightly greater temporary impact (0.14 acres more) to California bay forest and woodland than the Southern Overcrossing Alternative. The Southern Overcrossing Alternative could impact approximately 182 trees, compared to 165 trees by the Northern Overcrossing Alternative.
Threatened and Endangered Species	The Southern Overcrossing Alternative would result in 6% more (1.62 acres more) of temporary impacts, and 12% more (0.42 acres more) of permanent impacts to California red-legged frog upland habitat than the Northern Overcrossing Alternative.
Utilities	The Northern Overcrossing would require the replacement of five utility poles. The Southern Overcrossing would require the replacement of four utility poles.
Water Quality and Storm Water Runoff	The Southern Overcrossing Alternative would add 1.34 acres of new impervious surface compared to 0.95 acres of new impervious surface for the Northern Overcrossing Alternative.

The District received a total of 11 comment emails or letters during the public circulation period of the Draft IS-MND/EA. Six were from members of the public, four were from public agencies, and one was from a non-governmental organization. Comments related specifically to the overcrossing alternatives are summarized as follows.

California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW)

- Although CDFW supports the Southern Overcrossing as the preferred alternative because of the potential impacts on intact habitat associated with the Northern Overcrossing, their comments noted that the trail west of the wildlife undercrossing in the Southern Overcrossing Alternative would add constrictions and obstacles to

wildlife movement and indicates that the proximity of the trail would cause the wildlife undercrossing to lose its quality and functionality.

- CDFW recommends eliminating or shifting the proposed trail connecting the Southern Overcrossing Alternative with El Sereno OSP to the east or west to avoid potential impacts to wildlife using the wildlife undercrossing.
- CDFW recommends a minimum 3,000-foot buffer between trails and the wildlife undercrossing. Where buffers are not possible, directional fencing and vegetation cover is recommended to direct wildlife to undisturbed habitats.

The connecting trail between the Southern Overcrossing Alternative and El Sereno OSP (Attachment 1, trail segment No. 1) is not anticipated to cause the wildlife undercrossing to lose its overall functionality. The trail alignment was based on review of topographical and geological conditions; land cover; access feasibility due to land ownership; trail user experience and overall constructability; and minimizes impacts within the Trout Creek corridor where possible to the maximum extent feasible. The closest point of the El Sereno OSP connecting trail to the wildlife undercrossing would be farther from the undercrossing than the closest point of the existing Los Gatos Creek Trail, and the proposed trail bridge crossing Trout Creek would be more than 850 feet from the western opening of the undercrossing. Additionally, there would be no direct line of sight from the proposed trail into the proposed wildlife crossing location due to heavy vegetation present within the canyon. Furthermore, the proposed 4- to 6-foot-wide dirt trail would be narrower than many existing trails in the project vicinity where wildlife easily traverse, including the Jones Trail and Flume Trail in St. Joseph's Hill OSP, the Limekiln Trail in Sierra Azul OSP, and the Aquinas Trail in El Sereno OSP.

Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water)

- Valley Water is in the planning stages of a project to increase capacity of the Lexington Reservoir Spillway. The project may require using all of Valley Water's property along the western side of the spillway, which could possibly impact, temporarily or permanently, the proposed trail connecting the Southern Overcrossing Alternative with the Los Gatos Creek Trail and may affect use of the staging area west of the spillway.
- Based on Valley Water's preliminary assessment, there would be fewer project related impacts to the Northern Overcrossing Alternative from the proposed Lexington Reservoir Spillway Project.
- Any work within Valley Water's property that impacts their facilities requires the issuance of a Valley Water permit.

As discussed above, District staff understands that the future spillway project may affect proposed trail connections on Valley Water property, specifically the trail connection between the east side of the Southern Overcrossing Alternative and the Los Gatos Creek Trail. A potential reroute of the connecting trail over the spillway at or near the top of the dam could be evaluated and considered as a separate project if the Lexington Reservoir Spillway Project were to result in a long-term temporary closure, or permanent closure of the proposed connecting trail. If a re-route of this trail across the spillway is feasible, it would also result in shifting recreational trail use farther away from the eastern side of the proposed wildlife undercrossing.

District staff met separately with CDFW and Valley Water in April 2024 to discuss the comment letters received from each partner agency during public circulation of the Draft IS-MND/EA.

District staff will continue coordinating with partnering and responsible agencies and the public to make appropriate design adjustments where needed, while still achieving the purpose and goals of the project identified in the Vision Plan. All comments on the Draft IS-MND/EA will be addressed and responses published in the Final IS-MND/EA.

District Resource Management Policies

The District's Resource Management Policies document states that District projects should be designed, constructed and managed to prevent and/or reduce environmental impacts through 1) avoidance, 2) minimization, 3) internal mitigation and 4) purchase of external mitigation credits (in that order). As summarized above, based on the environmental evaluation prepared for the Project, the majority of potential impacts to the environment from the two alternatives would be either the same or very similar. The Northern Overcrossing Alternative would have slightly less impacts to natural resources due to less grading and disturbance associated with the connecting trail compared to the Southern Overcrossing Alternative. However, avoidance and minimization strategies have been incorporated into the design of both overcrossing alternatives, particularly related to the conceptual trail connection alignments. For example, the conceptual connecting trail alignments for both alternatives were adjusted following biological surveys to better avoid sensitive plant species. Through implementation of the avoidance and minimization measures identified in the Draft IS-MND/EA and the District's own standard practices, impacts to the environment for both alternatives would be minimized consistent with the Resource Management Policies document. In addition, the project is exploring the use of a Mitigation Credit Agreement that would document that the overall benefit of the project outweighs the impacts by improving both human and wildlife connectivity while reducing the potential for wildlife vehicle collisions.

Conclusion

Overall, both the Northern and Southern overcrossing alternatives meet the public access and wildlife connectivity goals of the project as identified in the Vision Plan to establish a Bay Area Ridge Trail connection and to improve wildlife connectivity across Highway 17. Effects to the environment of the two alternatives are similar, and neither overcrossing would have a significant impact on the environment based on the environmental evaluation prepared for the Project. Community members and stakeholders have expressed a preference for the Southern Overcrossing and Northern Overcrossing alternatives for different reasons, and there has not been strong opposition to either alternative. In general, there is high support for the Southern Overcrossing Alternative from members of the public who would like a north-south connection to Bear Creek Redwoods OSP; and high support for the Northern Overcrossing Alternative from members of the public who desire more separation of the connecting trails from the wildlife undercrossing. Construction and long-term maintenance costs are anticipated to be higher for the Southern Overcrossing Alternative due to required roadwork along the highway to construct the overcrossing and more extensive connecting trails in the Caltrans ROW, providing connections to both El Sereno OSP and Bear Creek Redwoods OSP. Implementation of the connecting trails for both the Northern Overcrossing Alternative and Southern Overcrossing Alternative will require partial or full property rights acquisitions. However, securing property access is expected to be faster and less costly for the Southern Overcrossing Alternative. Additionally, the Southern Overcrossing provides superior trail connections and trail user experience for the public. In summary, the Southern Overcrossing Alternative would provide an overall more balanced project with greater value for trail users, whereas the Northern Overcrossing Alternative would

cost less to construct and maximize the separation of humans from the wildlife undercrossing potentially increasing the functionality of the proposed wildlife undercrossing.

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommended action has no immediate fiscal impact. If approved, funding for design and construction will be recommended in future fiscal year budgets during the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

The following table outlines the *Measure AA Portfolio 20 South Bay Foothills — Wildlife Passage and Ridge Trail Improvements* allocation, costs-to-date, projected future project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

MAA20 South Bay Foothills — Wildlife Passage and Ridge Trail Improvements Portfolio Allocation:	\$13,966,000
Grant Income (through FY27):	\$8,049,988
Future Grant Funding and Fund 40 Allocation:	\$15,000,000
Total Portfolio Allocation:	\$37,015,988
Life-to-Date Spent (as of 03/18/24):	(\$3,887,533)
Encumbrances:	(\$362,432)
Remaining FY24 Project Budgets:	(\$29,766)
Future MAA20 project costs (projected through FY27):	(\$32,730,523)
Total Portfolio Expenditures:	(\$37,010,255)
Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):	\$5,733

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 20 allocation, projected life of project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

MAA20 South Bay Foothills — Wildlife Passage and Ridge Trail Improvements Portfolio Allocation:	\$13,966,000
Grant Income (through FY27):	\$8,049,988
Future Grant Funding and Fund 40 Allocation:	\$15,000,000
Total Portfolio Allocation:	\$37,015,988
Projected Project Expenditures (life of project):	
20-001 Wildlife Corridor: Highway 17 Crossing	(\$17,844,912)
20-002 Bay Area Ridge Trail: Highway 17 Crossing	(\$18,885,170)
20-004 Spooky Knoll Trail/new Hwy 17 Trail Connections	(\$280,173)
Total Portfolio Expenditures:	(\$37,010,255)
Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):	\$5,733*

*Balance projected pending board approval of FY24 Q3 Budget Adjustments and adoption of the FY25 Budget and Action Plan. FY25 budget and action plan projections are preliminary and will be revisited in future fiscal years once board direction is given.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

- February 24, 2016: Award of contract to Trail People to proceed with the conceptual design and feasibility study ([R-16-18](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- August 24, 2016: Caltrans cooperative agreement for the Project Initiation Document phase ([R-16-105](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- October 12, 2016: Contract Amendment with Trail People for additional Caltrans analysis ([R-16-126](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- November 9, 2016: Resolution and approval of a Caltrans cooperative agreement ([R-16-147](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- June 27, 2018: Advancement of eight alternatives to the Caltrans PSR-PDS phase and approval of a contract amendment with Trail People ([R-18-66](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- October 24, 2018: FYI noticing the Board of an upcoming public meeting for feedback on crossing alternatives ([FYI memo](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- February 13, 2019: FYI Final Revised Alternatives Report ([FYI memo](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- September 17, 2019: Planning & Natural Resources Committee, Crossing alternatives, Caltrans Project Study Report, environmental review, public outreach and funding ([R-19-124](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- October 23, 2019: Approval of the Caltrans PSR-PDS document and Cooperative Agreement to begin the PA&ED phase ([R-19-136](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- May 27, 2020: Award of Contract to AECOM for the PA&ED phase, CEQA/NEPA ([R-20-53](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- December 9, 2020: Application for Grant Funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board ([R-20-144](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- August 25, 2021: Contract Amendment with AECOM ([R-21-113](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- February 9, 2022: FYI Highway 17 Wildlife and Regional Trail Crossings Project Status Update ([FYI memo](#), [meeting meetings](#))
- May 25, 2022: FYI Highway 17 Crossings Design Aesthetics ([FYI Memo](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- September 13, 2022: Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee, Guiding Principles for the Design Enhancements of the Highway 17 Crossings ([R-22-91](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- October 26, 2022: Guiding Principles for Highway 17 Crossings Design Enhancements ([R-22-118](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- May 23, 2023: Highway 17 Wildlife and Trail Crossings Cooperative Agreement with the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority ([R-23-56](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- October 25, 2023: Highway 17 Wildlife and Trail Crossings Funding Exchange Agreement with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority ([R-23-126](#), [meeting minutes](#))

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice of the Board Meeting was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Selection of a preferred overcrossing alternative to advance into PS&E is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The District and Caltrans performed an environmental review of the Project in accordance with CEQA and NEPA, where the District is the lead agency under CEQA, and Caltrans is the lead agency under NEPA. The joint Initial Study (IS) with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND)/Environmental Assessment (EA) was publicly circulated between February 20, 2024 and March 22, 2024. Following identification of the preferred project alternative to advance into the PS&E phase, staff will return to the Board for consideration of adoption of the Final MND and MMRP in Summer 2024. Caltrans will be responsible for considering approval of the NEPA document (Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact or FONSI).

NEXT STEPS

Following the Board’s recommendation on the preferred overcrossing alternative (Southern or Northern) to advance into PS&E, the Caltrans Project Development Team will formally select a preferred alternative. District staff will then return to the Board for consideration of adoption of the Final MND and MMRP, and approval of a Comprehensive Use and Management Plan (CUMP) for the Project. Caltrans will be responsible for considering approval of the NEPA document (Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact or FONSI) and Final Project Report. Completion of both CEQA and NEPA will meet existing grant funded tasks and ensure that the Project is eligible for the greatest variety of future fundings sources (state and federal monies) for implementation.

The current overall Highway 17 Project schedule for construction of the multi-use trail overcrossing, connecting trails, wildlife undercrossing, and associated directional fencing is as follows:

Milestones	Tentative Timeline
Board recommendation of preferred alternative for multi-use trail overcrossing	May 2024
Board consideration of Final MND and MMRP, and Final CUMP	Summer 2024
Caltrans consideration of NEPA FONSI and Final Project Report	Fall 2024
PS&E	2024 - 2026
Bidding and Construction (funding dependent)	2026 - 2028

Attachments:

1. Project Vicinity Map
2. Northern Overcrossing Alternative Project Layout and Photo Simulation

3. Southern Overcrossing Alternative Project Layout and Photo Simulation
4. Alternatives Comparison Table
5. Letters of Support

Responsible Department Heads:

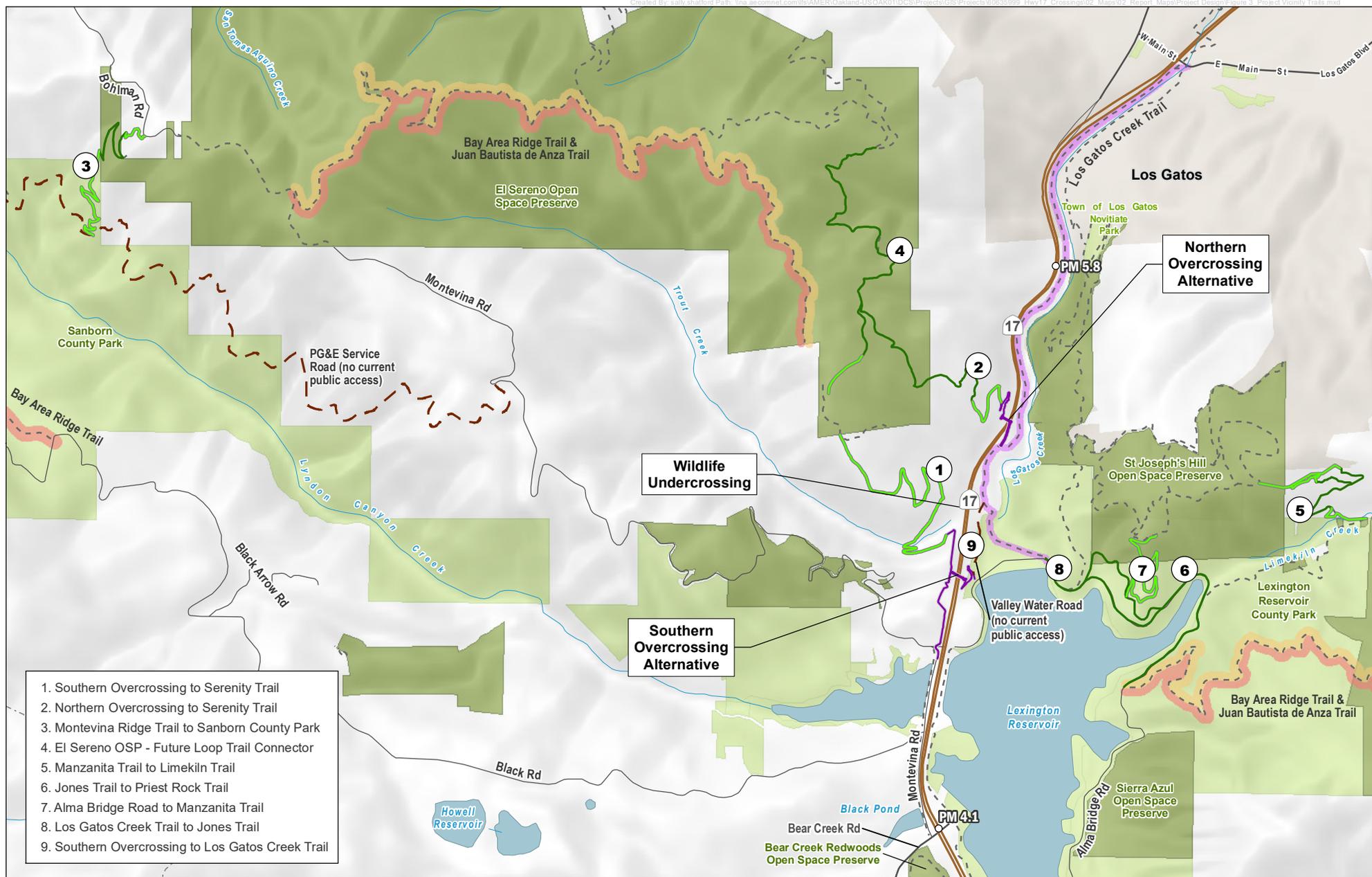
Jane Mark, AICP, Planning Manager
Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Manager

Prepared by:

Jared Hart, AICP, Senior Planner

Contact person:

Jared Hart, AICP, Senior Planner, Planning Department



1. Southern Overcrossing to Serenity Trail
2. Northern Overcrossing to Serenity Trail
3. Montevina Ridge Trail to Sanborn County Park
4. El Sereno OSP - Future Loop Trail Connector
5. Manzanita Trail to Limekiln Trail
6. Jones Trail to Priest Rock Trail
7. Alma Bridge Road to Manzanita Trail
8. Los Gatos Creek Trail to Jones Trail
9. Southern Overcrossing to Los Gatos Creek Trail

Project Vicinity Map

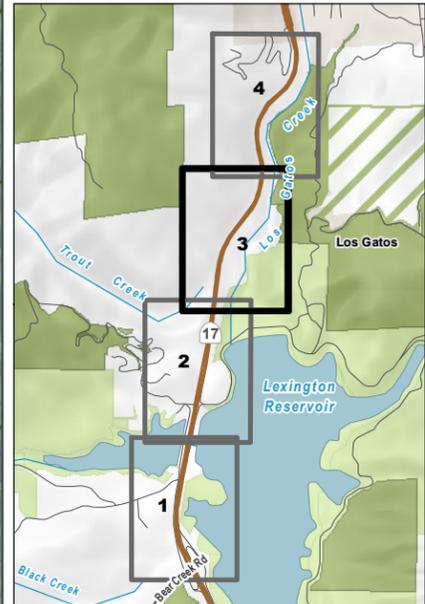
○ Project Post Mile	Trails	Bay Area Ridge Trail
River/Stream	Proposed Trail	Bay Area Ridge Trail & Juan Bautista de Anza Trail
Midpen Open Space	Existing Trail, Proposed Improvements	Los Gatos Creek Trail
Other Protected Land	Existing Road, No Current Public Access	
	Proposed Overcrossing Trail	
	Existing Trail or Road	

Note: Not all proposed trails will be built

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
5/14/2024



While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.



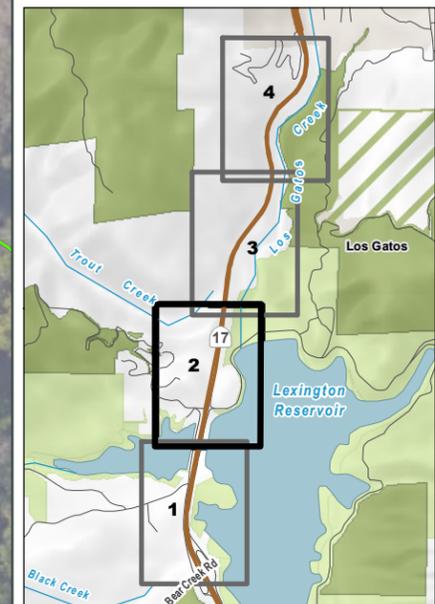
Northern Overcrossing Alternative Project Layout

- Proposed Project**
- Wildlife Undercrossing
 - Wildlife Directional Fencing
 - Wildlife Escape Ramp
 - Sound Wall
 - Transitional Railing
 - Gate
 - Northern Overcrossing Alternative Bridge
 - Lookout/Queueing Area
 - Overcrossing Trail Connection
 - Proposed Trail
 - Existing Trail, Proposed Improvements
 - Existing Road, No Current Public Access
- Existing Features**
- Existing Trail
 - Caltrans Right of Way





Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
5/14/2024

Southern Overcrossing Alternative Project Layout

- Proposed Project**
- Southern Overcrossing Alternative Bridge
 - Lookout/Queueing Area
 - Retaining Wall
 - Wildlife Directional Fencing
 - Wildlife Escape Ramp
 - Electrified Mat
 - Gate
 - Proposed Trail
 - Existing Road, No Current Public Access
- Existing Features**
- Existing Trail
 - Caltrans Right of Way



While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.



Attachment 4: Alternatives Comparison Table

	Functionality for Wildlife (MAA)	Functionality for Regional Trail Connections (MAA)	Trail Connection User Experience	Constructability/Cost*	Property Access	Stakeholder and Public Input	Potential Environment Impacts	District Resource Management Policies	Overall
Northern Overcrossing									
	Overcrossing structure located farther from wildlife undercrossing. Trail connection to El Sereno OSP would not bring humans in closer proximity to wildlife undercrossing than Southern Overcrossing.	Provides East/West connection across Highway 17 between Los Gatos Creek Trail/St. Josephs Hill OSP and El Sereno OSP that would close gaps in the Bay Area Ridge Trail and Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.	Approximately 1 mile trail connection from the overcrossing to El Sereno OSP, over half of which would be on existing dirt road cuts with the remainder on newly constructed trail. The connecting trail would be generally steep and have partial shade.	Overcrossing structure feasible to construct. Preliminary total cost estimate of \$38.4M. Additional cost of up to approximately \$700K for property interests.	Requires acquisition of property interests on one private residential property and relocation of occupant(s).	Support for the Northern Overcrossing from members of the public who desire more separation of connecting trails from the wildlife undercrossing, or the more direct connection to Los Gatos Creek Trail.	No significant impacts. Potential environmental impacts either same or very similar to the Southern Overcrossing. Deviation from proposed connecting trail alignment could result in greater impacts to sensitive plant communities. Valley Water indicated that Northern Overcrossing would be less affected by future Lexington Reservoir Spillway improvement project.	Northern Overcrossing would have slightly less impacts to natural resources. Avoidance and minimization strategies have been incorporated into design and would be implemented consistent with Resource Management Policies.	
Southern Overcrossing									
	Overcrossing structure located closer to wildlife undercrossing. Trail connection to El Sereno OSP would bring humans in closer proximity to wildlife undercrossing than Northern Overcrossing.	Provides East/West connection across Highway 17 between Los Gatos Creek Trail/St. Joseph's Hill OSP and El Sereno OSP that would close gaps in the Bay Area Ridge Trail and Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. Also provides North/South connection between El Sereno OSP, Los Gatos Creek Trail, and Bear Creek Redwoods OSP.	Approximately 1.3 mile trail connection from the overcrossing to El Sereno OSP including a segment traversing Trout Creek Canyon. The connecting trail would be less steep than the Northern Overcrossing Alternative and consist of predominantly newly built trail.	Overcrossing structure feasible to construct. Preliminary total cost estimate (\$43M) is higher than Northern Overcrossing due primarily to required roadwork, and longer trail connection segments and trail bridge within the Caltrans right-of-way. Connection from the overcrossing to the Los Gatos Creek Trail could require separate bike/ped overcrossing of Lexington Reservoir Spillway (not included in cost estimate).	Establishment of trail easement for overcrossing connecting trail expected to be faster and less costly than property interests needed for Northern Overcrossing. Future Valley Water Lexington Reservoir Spillway Project could temporarily or permanently impact proposed connecting trail between the overcrossing and Los Gatos Creek Trail.	Support for the Southern Overcrossing from members of the public who would like a north-south connection to Bear Creek Redwoods OSP (in addition to the connection between El Sereno OSP and Los Gatos Creek Trail/St. Joseph's Hill OSP).	No significant impacts. Potential environmental impacts either same or very similar to Northern Overcrossing. CDFW recommends Southern Overcrossing as the preferred alternative because of potential impacts on intact habitat associated with the Northern Overcrossing, but expressed concern with Southern Overcrossing's connecting trails potential to impact effectiveness of wildlife undercrossing.	Southern Overcrossing would have slightly more impacts to natural resources. Avoidance and minimization strategies have been incorporated into design and would be implemented consistent with Resource Management Policies.	

* Cost estimate includes wildlife undercrossing and associated features, multi-use trail overcrossing and connecting trails within the Caltrans ROW.



State of California – Natural Resources Agency

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Bay Delta Region

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GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor

CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



May 9, 2024

Margaret MacNiven, Board Chair
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
5050 El Camino Real
Los Altos, CA 94022

Subject: Letter of Support for Highway 17 Wildlife and Regional Trail Crossings and Trail Connections, Santa Clara County

Dear Dr. MacNiven:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is writing this Letter in Support of the goals of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MidPen) in developing a wildlife undercrossing along Highway 17 at Lexington Reservoir.

CDFW has met with MidPen over the last five years to provide input into the scientific value and feasibility of a crossing in the proposed location. CDFW appreciates the efforts made to create a more effective wildlife crossing, including separating the wildlife and pedestrian crossings. The Highway 17 Wildlife and Regional Trail Crossings and Trail Connections (Project) is important to improving connectivity across Highway 17, reducing roadkill, and improving gene flow for multiple species including mountain lion, deer, badger, and a range of reptiles and amphibians.

CDFW has reviewed the required California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents for the proposed Project and concurs the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment (IS/EA) meets the requirements for CEQA disclosure. CDFW is committed to constructively working with MidPen to address the range of proposed CEQA avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures, and those resulting from CDFW exercising its Responsible Agency role when issuing permits such as our Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement.

Since 2020 CDFW has met with MidPen to explore the development of a Mitigation Credit Agreement (MCA) for the Project and looks forward to continued collaboration exploring the potential establishment of an MCA and realizing the improved wildlife connectivity the undercrossing along Highway 17 near Lexington Reservoir would provide.

CDFW looks forward to continuing coordination with MidPen on this and future projects to improve wildlife connectivity in the region.

Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Marcus Griswold, Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist), at (707) 815-6451 or

Conserving California's Wildlife Since 1870

Margaret MacNiven
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
May 9, 2024
Page 2

Marcus.Griswold@wildlife.ca.gov; or Jason Faridi, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory) at Jason.Faridi@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Erin Chappell
B77E9A6211EF486
Erin Chappell
Regional Manager
Bay Delta Region

ec: Julie Andersen, MidPen – JAndersen@openspace.org
Jared Hart, MidPen – JHart@openspace.org
Craig Weightman, CDFW Bay Delta Region – Craig.Weightman@wildlife.ca.gov
Jason Faridi, CDFW Bay Delta Region – Jason.Faridi@wildlife.ca.gov
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Brandon Amrhein, CDFW Habitat Conservation Planning Branch –
Brandon.Amrhein@wildlife.ca.gov



April 3, 2024

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Board of Directors
Sent via electronic mail

Dear Midpen Board,

In reviewing a pending item for Board consideration, the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (Ridge Trail Council) would like to go on record to support the staff recommendation to proceed with the Southern Overcrossing Alternative as the preferred location for a trail crossing of Highway 17. This alternative will provide a high-quality multi-use trail experience and provide a critical connection across a major highway.

The Ridge Trail Council's mission is to plan, promote and sustain a connected hiking, cycling, and equestrian trail on the ridgelines around San Francisco Bay—linking people, parks and open space for today and future generations. This year we're celebrating the 35th anniversary of our first trail dedication. Thanks to terrific leadership and support from Midpen and other park partners, 407 miles of the ultimate 550-mile route are open to enjoy today and protected for future generations, including 49 miles of existing trail within Midpen properties.

Creating a safe trail crossing of Highway 17 is a top priority and is critical to our shared mission of a fully connected Ridge Trail and it offers the promise of connecting iconic regional preserves including El Sereno and Sierra Azul, as well as communities, parks and trails on either side of the highway and beyond. The Southern Overcrossing Alternative appears to be the most viable option based on studies completed to-date (looking at a full range of issues) and it has a higher potential to achieve near-term full multi-use trail connections with El Sereno Open Space Preserve, based on our understanding of recent discussions with the San Jose Water Company.

We would like to commend Midpen's project team for an exceptional job in the design of this project and for keeping the Ridge Trail Council informed and involved in the planning process. The Ridge Trail Council looks forward to the next steps in this process including environmental review, final design and funding and we stand ready to support the pursuit of funding, for the crossing and for additional trail connections on either side of the crossing. We look forward to a future celebration when we are able to close this complex trail gap in Santa Clara County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet McBride". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Janet McBride
Executive Director, Bay Area Ridge Trail Council