



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-24-26  
Meeting 24-05  
February 28, 2024

## AGENDA ITEM 8

### AGENDA ITEM

Ravenswood Open Space Preserve and Bay Trail Public Access via Rutgers Street

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Approve the creation of a new public access point for the San Francisco Bay Trail and Ravenswood Open Space Preserve via Rutgers Street

### SUMMARY

The City of East Palo Alto (City, EPA) has requested that the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) open public trail access to Ravenswood Open Space Preserve (Preserve) at the end of Rutgers Street. City-to-bay trails are a component of Measure AA (MAA) Portfolio #02 *Regional Bayfront Protection and Public Access Partnerships*. The General Manager recommends approving a new access point to the Preserve at the end of Rutgers Street. There are sufficient funds in the fiscal year budget to develop plans for a new entrance. Improvements to create a trailhead would be budgeted for in Fiscal Yr 2024-25 (FY25).

### BACKGROUND

There is currently no public access at the end of Rutgers Street to enter the Preserve. Access is blocked by a chain link fence and vehicle gate. Rutgers Street ends at the property boundary with San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) lands over which the District has a trail easement for the San Francisco Bay Trail (Bay Trail) between University Ave and the Preserve. The trail easement runs directly outside the vehicle gate at the end of Rutgers Street.

The District has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City regarding the management of the (Ravenswood) Bay Trail, where section 5 addresses neighborhood access: (in part) *The District will also coordinate with EPA on their interest to provide a future trail along the former Union Pacific right-of-way from the University Village neighborhood, and connect to the Ravenswood Bay Trail.* The District has completed work to develop and open the Bay Trail, including a sidewalk on University Avenue to provide walk-in access. To use the University Avenue Bay Trail entrance, residents on Rutgers Street and the surrounding University Avenue community must walk over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile to return to the point where Rutgers Street is separated from the Bay Trail by a gated fence. This adds over a mile and half to a round-trip neighborhood walk to view the San Francisco Bay.

The East Palo Alto Parks Master Plan (Parks Master Plan) highlights the community desire to create an access point from Rutgers Street to the Bay Trail via Recommendation 4.1 - Improving parks #11: **Create greater connectivity to the Bay Trail - open the gate at Rutgers Street.**

This recommendation is also repeated in the section Improving Our Trails. (Attachment 2 EPA Parks Master Plan page 143, Figure 4-7). The Parks Master Plan includes plans for on street trails/travel to provide a neighborhood connection from the University Village neighborhood to the Bay Trail. It also includes plans to develop a trail along the former Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way in the future, which would facilitate additional community access. While the minimum goals of MAA Portfolio #02 *Regional Bayfront Protection and Public Access Partnerships* have been met, this project would further the goals of the portfolio by providing improved public access.

## **DISCUSSION**

The SFPUC approved a project review certificate submitted by the City with the following project description: *The City of East Palo Alto (project sponsor) proposes to install a pedestrian gate and perform minor paving adjacent to the SFPUC right-of-way (ROW) at Rutgers Street and Tulane Avenue near University Avenue.* The trail easement held by the District is consistent with an additional entrance at Rutgers Street and does not require an amendment to the recorded easement. The easement requires that, *“Holder shall install and operate gates as needed in SFPUC’s reasonable judgement for safety and security purposes, which shall include a gate at each end of the Public Trail”.* The District previously worked with the SFPUC to design and install pedestrian gates at the trail entrance at Bay Road and at University Avenue. These gates are open for pedestrian and bicycle access during the trail hours prescribed in the easement from 5 AM until 10 PM and automatically close at 10 PM or shortly thereafter. Visitors inside the preserve can access a button to get out after hours. As a reminder, the District requested extended trail hours, past the normal preserve open hours of half hour before sunrise to half hour after sunset, because the Bay Trail is used by commuters who often need to travel before or after the Preserve is open. SFPUC is requiring a similar gate at the proposed Rutgers Street entrance. Pending Board approval, the District will provide plans for a gate installation for SFPUC approval per the requirements of the approved project review certificate. East Palo Alto has agreed to share the cost of the gate installation with the District. The main improvements to complete this new entrance include a new automated trail gate and trail signage.

### Use and Management Plan

The proposed new public access point is consistent with the Comprehensive Use and Management Plan as amended on November 16, 2016, which allows for public access on the Bay Trail easement that extends across SFPUC lands. Additional neighborhood access was anticipated and included in the MOU with the City, which was also approved by the Board.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is sufficient funding in the FY24 budget to cover the cost of the recommended action. Funding for future year budgets will be requested as part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process. Implementation of capital improvements (e.g., construction of the new entrance) may be eligible for Measure AA reimbursement. This project supports Measure AA Portfolio 2: Regional Bayfront Protection and Public Access Partnerships. Implementation costs for the project are estimated to be \$80,000 to \$100,000 to design and install a new automated trail gate at the end of Rutgers Street and post regulatory and trail signage at the new entrance. The District and the City have agreed to share the installation costs. This does not include any street or sidewalk improvement costs, which would be borne by the City.

## **PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW**

November 16, 2016: Board accepted a public trail easement from the City and County of San Francisco, amended the Ravenswood Use and Management Plan for a public trail easement and approved an MOU with the City to manage the trail. ([R-16-146](#), [minutes](#))

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. Notice was provided to neighbors in the University Avenue neighborhood.

## **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

Replacement of a section of existing chain link fence with an automated trail gate at the end of Rutgers Street, East Palo Alto is exempt in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Existing Conditions, and Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land.

## **NEXT STEPS**

If approved by the Board the General Manager will direct staff to install a new automated trail gate at the end of Rutgers Street and install regulatory and trail signage at the new entrance. The trail access will be added to the Preserve map.

### Attachments

1. Map of proposed public access trailhead
2. East Palo Alto Parks Master Plan Figure 4-7: Important Trail Network Connections

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Proposed Access to Bay Trail via Rutgers Street



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(MROSD)  
2/1/2024



Data Source(s): Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

See Chapter 5.4 for Trail Design Guidelines



**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- Open gate to SF Bay Trail along Rutgers Street.
- Ensure all entrances to the SF Bay Trail are open and have ADA accessibility.
- Improve integration with transit and biking networks to expand access into the SF Bay Trail from surrounding neighborhoods. Coordinate activity with RBD developments.
- Enhance trail security through partnerships, volunteering, regular police patrols, and clean up.

**FIGURE 4-7:**  
IMPORTANT TRAIL  
NETWORK CONNECTIONS

**LEGEND**

- ✕ Gate to be Unlocked
- - - Potential On-street Trails
- Potential Off-street Trails
- Existing Off-street Trails
- ←○ Potential Connections
- ←○ Existing Connections

