



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-19-114
Meeting 19-20
August 14, 2019

AGENDA ITEM 7

AGENDA ITEM

Regional Trails Overview - Informational Presentation

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION *dlw*

Receive an informational presentation on Regional Trail Partnerships and Projects. No Board action required.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this informational presentation is to provide the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) Board of Directors (Board) with an overview of current and emerging regional trail planning efforts and partnership opportunities within District boundaries. At the December 6, 2018 Annual Strategic Goals Retreat, the Board updated the District's Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-2020, highlighting a desire for better connectivity to open space and implementation of a regional environmental protection vision with the community and our partners (see Attachment 1).

Regional trail opportunities have always played an essential role in determining trail planning within District preserves and influence decision making when the Board considers new acquisitions from willing sellers. These opportunities also allow the District to outreach, coordinate, and collaborate with other agencies, entities, and communities to improve open space connectivity and fulfill the District's Mission, Strategic Plan goals and objectives, and Open Space Vision Plan priority actions.

BACKGROUND

Open Space Vision Plan/ Measure AA Project Priorities

In August 2012, the District initiated the *Open Space Vision Plan (Vision Plan)* to engage District partners, stakeholders, and the public in a process to determine a District-wide 40-year vision for land preservation, resource management, public recreation, and working lands. Public desire for an integrated regional trail system to connect communities to their open space was a dominant theme. The Vision Plan recreational assessment process identified a suite of recreational opportunities illustrated in Figure 3.8, *Vision Plan Regional Trails and Midpen Open Space Preserves* (Attachment 2).

In January 2014, the Board approved the 54 Vision Plan priority actions and the top 25 priorities (R-14-25). Of the top 25 priorities, 19 contain a regional trail development component. Subsequently, passage of Measure AA Funding in June 2014 provided approximately \$187 million for 19 Vision Plan priority actions that emphasize regional trails and connectivity to open

space. As many of the regional trail projects are highly complex, Measure AA funding is intended to leverage partner and grant funding to implement these projects.

The District provided an overview and refresher of the Vision Plan and its Priority Actions with the public and with partners in November 2017 (R-17-124). In March 2018, the Board approved the Measure AA Five-Year Recommended Projects List, as well as Measure AA Optional Projects List, both of which include projects that advance regional trail priorities (R-18-24).

Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

On December 8, 2018, the Board strengthened their commitment to connecting people to open space and regional trail connectivity by including Goal 2 in updates to the District's Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives (R-18-41):

Goal 2 – Connect people to open space and a regional environmental protection vision

- **Objective 1** – Communicate the purpose of the regional environmental protection vision
- **Objective 2** – Refine and implement a comprehensive public outreach strategy, including the engagement of diverse communities and enhanced public education programs
- **Objective 3** – Expand opportunities to connect people to their public open space preserves consistent with an environmental protection vision

DISCUSSION

Over the years, the District has participated in many regional trail programs, such as the San Francisco Bay Trail, Bay Area Ridge Trail, California Coastal Trail, and both the Santa Clara County and the San Mateo County Trails Master Plans when planning trails and public access within/to District preserves. In recent years, the District has fostered existing relationships and developed new ones with cities, agencies, and other entities. These partnerships are vital to expanding opportunities for connecting people and communities to their public open space. The District will benefit from continuing to work with our regional trail partners by leveraging mutual resources and expertise in trails planning and development, partnering on grants, and creating broader and more seamless experiences for users.

The approved FY2019-20 Budget and Capital Improvement and Action Plan (CIAP) contains several major Vision Plan and Measure AA priority projects that include regional trails priorities (R-19-82) through:

1. **Land Conservation** –*future acquisitions for consideration that contain opportunities for regional trails and connections to local trails*
2. **Public Access Improvements** –*current trail projects that connect to regional trails*
3. **Expand Regional Trail Connections** –*Projects that support or expand opportunities to connect open space preserve trails to broader regional trail systems*

Tables 1 and 2 below summarize regional trail priorities in both San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties that intersect with the Board's Vision Plan, Measure AA and CIAP Priorities:

Table 1. Regional Trail Priorities in San Mateo County

Regional Trails	Partners	Relevant District Project
San Francisco Bay Trail	City of East Palo Alto, Bay Trail Program, SFPUC	Ravenswood Bay Trail Design and Implementation (MAA02)
Bay Area Ridge Trail		Lower La Honda Creek Phase II Loop Trails (MAA07)
	Cal Water, San Mateo County Parks	Cal Water Land Exchange, Teague Hill Preserve (VP34)
Bay to Sea Trail	POST, City Half Moon Bay, City of Redwood City, City of East Palo Alto, State Parks, San Mateo County Parks, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, SF Public Utilities Commission, Coastside Land Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravenswood Bay Trail (MAA02) • Purisima to the Sea Trail (MAA03) • Cowell-Purisima Coastal Trail (VP30) • Miramontes Ridge Land Conservation (MAA01)
Palo Alto to Sea Trail	City of Palo Alto, POST, State Parks, San Mateo County Parks	Cloverdale Ranch Land Opportunity (MAA13)
Regional-serving trail	San Mateo County Public Works Department	Alpine Road Trail, Coal Creek Preserve (MAA10)

Table 2. Regional Trail Priorities in Santa Clara County

Regional Trails	Partners	Relevant District Project
Bay Area Ridge Trail <i>and</i> Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail*	Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, National Parks Service Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail Program, Caltrans, Santa Clara County Parks	Highway 17 Bay Area Ridge Trail/Anza Trail Crossing and Trail Connections (MAA20)
	Santa Clara County Parks	El Sereno Trails, Wildlife Corridors and Land Conservation (MAA19)
	Caltrans, Santa Clara County Roads and Airport	Bear Creek Redwoods Phase II Trail Improvements (MAA21)
	Santa Clara County Parks, Santa Clara Valley Water District	Beatty Property Parking Area and Trail Connections (MAA22)
Skyline to Sea Trail and Saratoga to Sea Trail	City of Saratoga, Santa Clara County Parks	Saratoga to Sea Trail (MAA18)
Stevens Creek Trail (Middle)	Friends of Stevens Creek Trail, Cities of Cupertino, Sunnyvale, Mountain View and Los Altos	Rancho San Antonio Multi-modal Access Study (MAA11)

*While the 1200-mile Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail (Anza Trail) is located along the San Francisco peninsula in San Mateo County, the District has most recently worked with the Anza Trail on the Highway 17 Wildlife and Regional Trail Crossing and trail connections projects in Santa Clara County.

Regional Trails Planning Partnerships

With the 2014 voter approval of Measure AA, the District has amplified its ability to acquire, plan, develop, and complete new public access trails and low-intensity recreational facilities that connect communities to open space preserves. To achieve the Vision Plan and Measure AA priorities, the District builds upon existing relationships and fosters new partnerships with federal, state, regional, and local agencies and non-traditional partners such as public utility commissions, transit agencies, and others.

In late 2014, the District conducted outreach and coordinated with multiple agencies and stakeholders to nominate existing and potential regional parks, trails, and other publicly accessible recreation facilities to be designated as Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs). The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) PCA program is a voluntary program for local jurisdictions, which includes Counties, Cities, and Open Space Special Districts, to identify regionally significant open space areas that have evidence-based conservation, restoration, and/or recreation value. Projects within designated PCAs may be eligible and/or better positioned for future grant funding to help leverage Measure AA funding.

On May 13, 2015, the Board adopted a resolution of support endorsing six (6) PCAs in San Mateo County and nine (9) PCAs in Santa Clara County; and a resolution of support for two PCAs nominated by the California State Coastal Conservancy and a resolution of support for one PCA nominated by the City of Menlo Park (R-15-73). The Board's approval of the PCA nominations designated approximately 95% of District lands within a PCA. The Coastal Conservancy (Conservancy) also nominated the Coastal Trail as a PCA in the Regional Recreation category. The Coastal Trail is a network of public trails extending along the 1,200-mile California coastline. This designation would be similar to the existing PCAs that include the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Bay Area Ridge Trail, which both received funding from the 2013 PCA grant program. The Conservancy worked with the Counties of San Mateo, San Francisco, Marin, and Sonoma on resolutions by the boards of supervisors supporting the nomination of the Coastal Trail. The Board supported the Conservancy's PCA nomination.

In December 2018, the Board approved a request for a one-time contribution of \$500,000 to support the natural resource restoration, public access improvements, and management of Tunitas Creek Beach, and long-term management of the nearby Cowell-Purisima Trail, which is a segment of the California Coastal Trail (R-18-154). The District's funding contribution leveraged an additional \$8.2 million of funding secured for San Mateo County to restore and open the beach to public access within three years, and maintain and manage Tunitas Creek Beach and the nearby 3.6-mile Cowell-Purisima Coastal Trail over the long-term. This partnership contribution is consistent with Vision Plan Portfolio 30: Support California Coastal Trail.

At the September 23, 2015 Board meeting, the Board authorized the General Manager or designee to sign on to the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network (SCMSN) Memorandum of Agreement (R-15-142), which was subsequently updated to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). On December 8, 2016, the General Manager signed on to a MOU with the Peninsula Working Group (PWG), which is comprised of partner agencies such as the California State Coastal Conservancy (CCC), San Mateo County Parks, and POST.

Through the work of the SCMSN and PWG, the District has been participating in coalition and planning meetings to share information and coordinate on current and emerging regional trails at

a landscape-level that crosses multiple jurisdictions. One of the project priorities that emerged from the PWG is the Bay to the Sea Trail initiative. In 2018, POST formed a new Planning Coalition for the Bay to Sea Trail to develop a vision for this 40-mile regional trail that would connect multiple jurisdictions and communities from the baylands to the San Mateo coast. The Bay to Sea Trail is an example of an external-led regional trails planning priority in San Mateo County that supports and integrates with several District project priorities (Ravenswood Bay Trail connection, Purisima to Sea trail, Miramontes Ridge Gateway).

Other external trails planning activities in San Mateo County that the District participates in include:

- South Skyline Bay Area Ridge Trail Extension
- Phleger Estate Trail Assessment and Planning
- San Mateo County Ohlone Portola Heritage Trail
- District 4 Caltrans Bicycle Plan and District 4 Caltrans Pedestrian Plan
- California Coastal Trail/Coastal Bluffs Coastal Trail Connections
- California Coastal Trail /Tunitas Creek Beach Master Plan
- City of Half Moon Bay Pedestrian and Bikeways Master Plan

Partner Presentations

To share some of the current and emerging regional trail planning initiatives and priorities in San Mateo County, the District has invited trail partners to present their regional trails program priorities, conceptual visions and current planning work. Representatives from the San Francisco Bay Trail Program, Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, POST, San Mateo County Parks, and City of Palo Alto will present information on these regional trail initiatives.

- **San Francisco Bay Trail**

The San Francisco Bay Trail is a vision of a continuous 500-mile walking and cycling path along the shoreline of San Francisco Bay running through 9 counties, 47 cities and across 7 toll bridges. With over 350 miles in place, including paths on 5 toll bridges, the Bay Trail is now 70% complete as a recreation and active transportation corridor. Numerous shoreline partners are working to connect communities to parks, open space, schools, environmental education centers, and transit stations, for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy.

- **Bay Area Ridge Trail**

Thirty years ago, the vision for the Bay Area Ridge Trail (Ridge Trail) was developed to unite the ridge lines encircling the Bay Area into one continuous park with a 550-mile Ridge Trail. In 1987, Greenbelt Alliance, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, National Park Service, and citizen advocates came together to help form the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council. Today, 375 miles are open and ready to explore, 80% of which are open to hikers, bikes, and horses. The first Ridge Trail segment was dedicated at Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve in May 1989. Most recently, the Ridge Trail Council dedicated a 5.2-mile segment on the Mt Umunhum Summit at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve in 2017. Currently, the Ridge Trail Council is supporting the Highway 17 Wildlife and Regional Trail Crossing and related trail connections. The completed connection will create over a 50-mile continuous stretch of Ridge Trail.

- **SFPUC South Skyline Ridge Trail Extension**

The proposed San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) Bay Area Ridge Trail Extension includes construction of a new trail parallel to upper Highway 35 from the Highway 92 intersection south to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) Phleger Estate. The new extension, combined with transferring an approximately 2 mile trail easement from Highway 92 north through Skylawn Cemetery to the existing Fifield-Cahill Ridge trail at Cemetery Gate on Cahill Ridge, would allow the SFPUC to manage and provide 16.5 miles of trail across the 23,000-acre SFPUC Peninsula Watershed. The proposed project also includes the operation of the 16.5 miles of trail, trailhead improvements, and a new enhanced ADA trail loop at Cemetery Gate.

- **Bay to Sea Trail**

The Bay to Sea Trail will be an approximately 40-mile multiuse (hike, bike, equestrian) trail that guides and connects people to open space in the Peninsula between the San Francisco Bay and Pacific Ocean. This east-west trail will also connect people to regional trails within San Mateo County, Santa Clara County, and other counties. A Bay to Sea Trail Planning Coalition (Planning Coalition) was formed in 2018 and is comprised of representatives from public land agencies (county, city, special district, etc.), non-profit organizations, state agencies, and others who play a critical role in planning, designing and managing this trail. This coalition recognizes the benefits and need of working in collaboration on this regional trail project, understanding that the full trail will cross lands managed by numerous agencies and affect many communities directly and indirectly. The Planning Coalition will engage externally with community members, agencies and organization advisors to seek input as needed throughout the project.

- **Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail**

To recognize the 250th anniversary of Gaspar de Portola's expedition and the first European sighting of the San Francisco Bay, which was the catalyst for the development of California, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors sought to create a trail system that traverses the expedition route. In total, the trail will span approximately 90 miles. It will traverse the route used by the expedition from Año Nuevo north to Pacifica following Ohlone trails between villages and then to the discovery sight at Sweeney Ridge. The trail will then continue south to the Crystal Springs Regional Trail at San Bruno Avenue, to the Town of Woodside and City of Menlo Park. Half of the proposed trail exists and utilizes portions of the California Coastal Trail and Crystal Springs Regional Trail. The remaining segments will need to be developed. Approximately 95 percent of the proposed trail is on public lands.

- **Dumbarton Rail Corridor Feasibility and Environmental Review**

The San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans) is exploring the feasibility of reopening the Dumbarton Rail Corridor to enhance mobility options between the East Bay (Union City) and San Francisco Peninsula (Redwood City). As part of the Dumbarton Corridor Transportation Study, the feasibility of a multiuse path adjacent to passenger rail is being explored. If deemed feasible, a 4.6-mile long segment of this multiuse path would connect to the District's Bay Trail connection at Ravenswood Open Space Preserve and may be included as a section of the Bay to Sea Trail. This path would create an off-street transportation/recreation connection between downtown Redwood City, the Bay Trail, and the open space areas along the Bay.

- **Palo Alto to Sea Trail**

The City of Palo Alto developed a conceptual-level vision of the Palo Alto to Sea trail that would provide future east-west connections between District preserves and County and State parklands to the southern San Mateo County coast. The 2017 Palo Alto Parks and Recreation Master Plan describes the Palo Alto to Sea Trail as: *Improving trail connections and access to our parks and open space was identified as an important priority by the community. Linkages promote the "Green Necklace" vision for the City allowing regional connections to adjacent cities and open spaces... including multi-modal trails.*

Future Opportunities

As part of future annual Budget and Action Plan processes, staff will present Vision Plan and Measure AA Five-Year optional projects that facilitate regional trail connections for Board prioritization.

- **MAA05 - La Honda Creek:** *Upper Area Recreation, Habitat Restoration and Conservation Grazing Projects*
 - Design and construct a new segment of the Ridge Trail to connect the Red Barn area to upper La Honda Creek and Skyline Boulevard. Fulfills a Master Plan goal to provide a multi-use trail and expand visitor access to the upper Preserve.
- **MAA08 - La Honda/Russian Ridge -** *Preservation of the Upper San Gregorio Creek Watershed and Ridge trail completion*
 - Land conservation opportunities to purchase additional open space lands.
- **MAA12 - Peninsula and South Bay Cities:** *Partner to Complete Middle Stevens Creek Trail*
- **MAA14 - Regional:** *Trail Connections and Campgrounds*
 - Open New Trails throughout the Redwoods connecting large parks like Big Basin Redwoods State Park
- **MAA17- Regional:** *Complete Upper Stevens Creek Trail*
 - In partnership with Santa Clara County Parks, the District completed acquisitions of land necessary for the Upper Stevens Creek Trail corridor.
 - Partner with Santa Clara County Parks to design and construct a new multi-use trail connecting Picchetti Ranch and Montebello with Upper Stevens Creek County Park, benefitting a wide range of user groups across the region.
- **MAA25- Regional:** *Loma Prieta Area Public Access, Regional Trails, and Habitat Projects*
 - Opportunity to connect regional multi-use trail between Sierra Azul Preserve and Forest of Nisene Marks State Park.

In addition, regional trail partners have identified emerging opportunities to collaborate and work on significant gaps in the regional trails system that include:

- **Bay Area Ridge Trail Crossing at Highway 35 –** *Interim Bay Area Ridge Trail connection between SFPUC's new South Skyline Ridge Trail Extension to the existing Ridge Trail at the North Ridge Parking Area in Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve.*
- **Bay to Sea Trail –** *Letter of Intent for agency and partner staff to participate in and provide technical assistance on feasibility studies, planning and development of the 40-mile regional trail connection.*

FISCAL IMPACT

Review of regional trails programs and priorities has no immediate fiscal impact. The Measure AA project portfolios with regional trails components represent approximately \$90 million in San Mateo County and \$97 million in Santa Clara County.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

The Board briefly discussed this item at the December 6, 2018 Board Retreat, and this item is brought to the full Board due to full Board interest.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. The District completed additional public notice to an interested party mailing that included agencies and entities who work on regional trails programs and priorities.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and no environmental review is required. Any necessary environmental review required by CEQA shall be completed before any specific project is commenced.

NEXT STEPS

The General Manager will sign a nonbinding Letter of Intent to work collaboratively on the Bay to Sea Trail project with other partners.

Attachments:

1. FY2019-2020 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives
2. Regional Trails Map from Open Space Vision Plan

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Ravenswood Open Space Preserve

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Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve

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FY2019-20 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

Goal 1 – Promote, establish, and implement a regional environmental protection vision with partners

- Objective 1 – Continue implementation of the District’s Vision Plan and communicate progress on projects through reporting results and building partner relationships
- Objective 2 – Build and strengthen diverse partnerships to implement a collaborative and science-based approach to environmental protection on the Peninsula, South Bay and San Mateo Coast
- Objective 3 – Build and strengthen relationships with legislators to advocate environmental protection goals
- Objective 4 – Take a regional leadership role in promoting the benefits of open space and sustainable agriculture
- Objective 5 – Expand regional climate change resiliency and adaptation to preserve healthy natural systems
- Objective 6 – Work with fire agencies and surrounding communities to strengthen the prevention of, preparation for, and response to wildland fires

Goal 2 – Connect people to open space and a regional environmental protection vision

- Objective 1 – Communicate the purpose of the regional environmental protection vision
- Objective 2 – Refine and implement a comprehensive public outreach strategy, including the engagement of diverse communities and enhanced public education programs
- Objective 3 – Expand opportunities to connect people to their public open space preserves consistent with an environmental protection vision

Goal 3 – Strengthen organizational capacity to fulfill the mission

- Objective 1 – Provide the necessary resources, tools, and infrastructure, including technology upgrades and capacity building
- Objective 2 – Continuously improve recent process and business model changes to effectively and efficiently deliver Vision Plan projects and the District’s ongoing functions
- Objective 3 – Reflect the changing community we serve in the District’s visitors, staff, volunteers, and partners
- Objective 4 – Build state of readiness for potential disruptions by completing a risk assessment and creating a business continuity plan

Goal 4 – Position the District for long-term financial sustainability to fulfill the District’s mission on behalf of the public

- Objective 1 – Continue to engage constituents for bond sales and via the work of the Bond Oversight Committee – “Promises made, promises kept.”
- Objective 2 – Pursue discretionary funding opportunities and partnerships to augment operating, capital, and bond funding sources
- Objective 3 – Ensure discretionary funding opportunities are available and successful through advocacy and education
- Objective 4 – Ensure large capital expenses are evaluated within the long-term financial model and remain financially sustainable
- Objective 5 – Ensure land acquisitions, including associated public access and land management costs, are evaluated within the long-term financial model and remain financially sustainable



Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve



- Priority Action Portfolio #
(Approximate location)
- Regional Trail Connection Projects
(Represents generalized location)
- Midpen lands to be opened
- Midpen open space preserves
- Major city, county, state & federal parks, open space preserves, and publicly-owned watershed lands

This map shows a long-term, shared vision of a thriving, interconnected regional open space network, accomplished with POST, San Mateo and Santa Clara County, State Parks, and other public and private partners.

When the Vision Plan trails are complete, 99% of Midpen residents will live within 5 miles of a regional trail.

Gateway to Coast Integrated Trails

City-to-Bay Trails

Connections between Midpen, County and State Lands

Connection to Mount Umunhum Summit—the Highest Point on the Bay Area Ridge Trail

Loma Prieta Public Access and Connection to Nisene Marks State Park

