

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
December 3, 2015

BAY AREA RIDGE TRAIL: GREEN VALLEY ROAD CROSSING

Project No. 15-024-01
Project Manager: Laura Cholodenko

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$25,000 to the City of Fairfield to complete design of a section of the Bay Area Ridge Trail that will improve pedestrian/bicycle crossing of Green Valley Road and Westlake Drive in the City of Fairfield, Solano County.

LOCATION: Green Valley Road and Westlake Drive, south of Rockville Hills Regional Park in the City of Fairfield, Solano County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Site](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160–31165 and 31111 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed twenty five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to the City of Fairfield for planning and design of a segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail located in the City of Fairfield, Solano County. No Conservancy funds shall be disbursed until the Executive Officer of the Conservancy has approved in writing a final work plan, including a budget and schedule, and any proposed contractors.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay area.

2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

This authorization would provide up to \$25,000 to the City of Fairfield to design pedestrian/bicycle crossings across Green Valley Road and Westlake Drive, in the City of Fairfield to fill a critical gap in the Bay Area Ridge Trail (Ridge Trail). The Green Valley Road crossing has not been dedicated as part of the Ridge Trail due to safety concerns. Approximately 14,000 vehicles travel daily along Green Valley Road making it a high use roadway that needs to be safely accessed.

The existing Green Valley Road crossing is approximately 60 feet wide with a median strip. Pedestrian access ramps leading from the edges of Green Valley Road to the median strip are not well aligned, creating a barrier to access. The crossing also creates a safety concern when vehicles make a left turn from Westlake Drive onto Green Valley Road, which is the primary movement of peak hour morning traffic. An existing median along Westlake Drive also presents a barrier to access for those traveling to or from the Ridge Trail (Exhibit 2). The proposed project will address these issues by routing the Green Valley Road crossing north of the intersection and installing safety and improved access features. Specifically, the project design will include: 1) crosswalks and ADA-compliant access ramps on Green Valley Road and Westlake Drive, which will involve excavation and rebuilding the medians, and adjusting current irrigation and landscaping; 2) a new section of trail (less than 100 feet) west of Green Valley Road and north of an existing PG&E utility tower; and 3) active warning devices (e.g., rectangular rapid flashing beacons) that alert drivers to pedestrian crossing of Green Valley Road. The project will also include negotiation with PG&E for construction and trail access to the utility easement. The City will contract for the design work which it does not have the capacity to do in-house. Funds for construction of the road crossing have not been secured but may include municipal funds and/or funds from the Solano Transportation Authority.

Site Description: The project site is located on land owned by the City of Fairfield. The project site includes landscaped grass and trees, paved trails and roadways, and an electric transmission tower. Land use surrounding the project site is residential with narrow corridors of landscaped grass and trees along Green Valley Road. Rockville Regional Park is less than one mile from the project site and can be accessed via the Ridge Trail (Exhibit 2).

Project History:

The vision for the Bay Area Ridge Trail is a 500-mile multi-use trail along the ridgelines circling San Francisco Bay. Approximately 360 miles of the 550-mile trail are now open to the public.

This authorization will further the Conservancy’s strategic and statutory goal of improving access around San Francisco Bay, and is consistent with previous Conservancy authorizations to prepare trail construction plans and designs. In 2011, the Conservancy provided funding for acquisition and development of a management plan for the Rockville Trails Estates property, immediately north of Rockville Regional Park and within a few miles of the project site. The management plan includes designs for approximately 6 miles of the Ridge Trail. The Green

Valley Road Crossing project builds upon this previous investment by improving access along the Ridge Trail within a few miles of the Rockville Trails Estate project area.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$25,000
Project Total	\$25,000

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds for this grant is the fiscal year 2010/11 appropriation to the Conservancy from the “Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006” (Proposition 84). Proposition 84 funds may be used for the purposes of promoting access to and enjoyment of the urban open space resources in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area in accordance with the provisions of Conservancy’s enabling legislation. Consistent with the purposes of Proposition 84, the proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program (Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code), as described below.

The City of Fairfield will provide in-kind services of staff time to retain the contractor, administer the contract and provide project management and final review and sign-off of project deliverables.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

Pursuant to Section 31111 of the Public Resources Code, the Conservancy may award grants to public agencies for the purposes of undertaking plans and feasibility studies. Consistent with Section 31111, the proposed project will fund development of construction design plans.

Pursuant to Section 31162(a) of the Public Resources Code, the Conservancy may award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area that will help to improve public access to, within, and around the ridgetops, consistent with the rights of private property owners, local plans, and without having a significant adverse impact on agricultural operations and environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife. Consistent with Section 31162(a), the proposed project is located in Solano County, one of the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties, will provide planning for a segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, is not located in or near any agricultural operations, and will be designed to avoid significant adverse impacts to environmentally sensitive areas and is consistent with local planning efforts around the Ridge Trail.

Consistent with Section 31163(a), the Conservancy has cooperated with nonprofit land trusts and other organizations in identifying and adopting long-term resource and outdoor recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay Area. Completion of the Ridge Trail is identified in (1) *The San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program Regional Needs Briefing Book (Bay Area Open Space Council July 1999)* and (2) *400 Miles and Beyond: A Strategic Plan for Completing the Bay Area Ridge Trail (BARTC 2006)*.

The proposed project satisfies the criteria for determining project priorities under Section 31163(c) as follows: 1) completion of the Ridge Trail is identified as a goal in the Solano County General Plan, 2) the Ridge Trail is a multi-jurisdictional resource, 3) the City of Fairfield can

complete the project in a timely manner—within a few months following Conservancy authorization to proceed, and 4) in the absence of other funding sources, this opportunity to address a public safety issue would be lost.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN
GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S), AS REVISED JUNE 25, 2015:**

Consistent with **Goal 12, Objective 12F** of the Conservancy’s 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will design improvements to fill a critical gap in the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on October 2, 2014, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy’s statutory programs and purposes:** See the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
3. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:** The proposed project will design biking and walking infrastructure which supports the goal of building sustainable regions that have healthy and livable communities as identified in *California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report (2013 Draft)*. This section of the Ridge Trail moves through a dense residential area and provides the community with an “alternative” means of transportation.
4. **Support of the public:** Completion of the Ridge Trail is supported by the Solano County Board of Supervisors and the Fairfield City Council and has been incorporated in both the city and county General Plans. See project letters in Exhibit 3.
5. **Location:** The project site is in the City of Fairfield, County of Solano, along a section of the Ridge Trail that is part of a regional linear park trail anchored to the north by Rockville Hills Regional Park and to the south by Nelda Mundy Elementary School. Solano is one of the nine Bay Area counties.
6. **Need:** The City of Fairfield does not have the staff capacity to conduct this design work. Absent Conservancy funds, the project will continue to be on hold as it has been for several years.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The project is part of a regional effort to provide continuous access along the ridgelines circling San Francisco Bay.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The proposed project is located well inland, approximately 17 miles from San Pablo Bay, and thus not vulnerable to flooding or erosion or other effects of sea level rise.

Additional Criteria

9. **Urgency:** The project addresses an important safety concern for those traveling along the Ridge Trail in the City of Fairfield.
10. **Readiness:** The project applicant can contract for the work and have it completed within a few months following Conservancy authorization to proceed.
11. **Cooperation:** Completion of the Ridge Trail is one of the goals identified in the Bay Area Open Space Council's *The San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program Regional Needs Briefing Book (July 1999)*. In addition, the proposed project is consistent with the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council's adopted alignment and the report entitled *400 Miles and Beyond: A Strategic Plan for Completing the Bay Area Ridge Trail (Draft 2006)*.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed project involves data gathering, planning, and feasibility analyses for possible future actions that have not yet been authorized or approved by the Conservancy or another agency and is thus statutorily exempt from California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15262. Planning carried out as part of the project will consider environmental factors, as required by Section 15262. The project is also categorically exempt under Section 15306 as a basic data collection activity that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource.

Upon the Conservancy's approval of the project, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.