

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 25, 2008

BAY AREA RIDGE TRAIL: INTERSTATE 780 OVERCROSSING CONSTRUCTION

File No. 08-096-01
Project Manager: Melanie Denninger

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Consideration and possible Conservancy authorization to disburse up to \$241,500 to the City of Benicia to assist with building an addition to the Rose Drive/State Park Road overcrossing of Interstate 780 to enable safe passage by users of the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

LOCATION: The City of Benicia in Solano County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Regional Location](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Linkages](#)

Exhibit 3: [Site Plan](#)

Exhibit 4: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

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

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of up to \$241,500 (two hundred forty-one thousand five hundred dollars) to the City of Benicia to assist with building an addition to the Rose Drive/State Park Road overcrossing of Interstate 780 to enable safe passage by users of the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Bay Area Ridge Trail, subject to the following conditions:

1. No Conservancy funds shall be disbursed until the Executive Officer of the Conservancy has approved in writing the following:
 - a. A final work plan, including a budget and schedule, and any contractors proposed to be used;
 - b. A signing plan for the project; and

- c. Evidence that Caltrans agrees to maintain the project.
2. The City shall install and maintain a sign which acknowledges the Conservancy's funding contribution to the project and identifies the project as part of the Bay Area Ridge Trail."

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 project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated by the Conservancy on September 20, 2007.
2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31160-31165), regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff is recommending that the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of up to \$241,500 to the City of Benicia to assist with building an addition to the Rose Drive/State Park Road overcrossing of Interstate 780 (I-780) to enable safe passage by users of the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Bay Area Ridge Trail (the Ridge Trail). A trail-crossing of I-780 at this location provides the only feasible opportunity in the Benicia/Vallejo area for connecting the Bay Trail and Ridge Trail along the Benicia and eastern Vallejo waterfronts and the new bike and pedestrian facility on the Al Zampa bridge across the Carquinez Strait with urban areas north of I-780 and the segment of the Ridge Trail that reaches northward near the Napa/Solano boundary (Exhibit 2).

In its current condition, the Rose Drive/State Park Road overcrossing has a sidewalk and bike lane, but both are too narrow for safe passage, there is no barrier between motorized and non-motorized traffic, and the facilities are not usable by equestrians. The proposed project will entail building a 16-foot-wide bridge with a 12-foot-wide Class 1 trail for pedestrian, bicycle, wheelchair and equestrian use immediately adjacent to the west side of the existing overcrossing (Exhibit 3). The new overcrossing is designed to use the existing abutments at both ends and will connect with street-level trail improvements being constructed at the north end by private developers of adjacent property and at the south end by Caltrans.

In addition to being priorities for the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (BARTC) and the Bay Trail, the overcrossing is identified in the Solano Transportation Authority's Bicycle Plan as part of the Benicia-to-Vallejo Bicycle Route and presently is among its top four construction priorities. The overpass improvements are also among the City of Benicia's priority capital improvement projects.

Assisting with this project is a priority for the Conservancy because it helps meet objectives in the Conservancy's enabling legislation and in its strategic plan with respect to improving public access around the Bay Area, completing Bay Area Ridge Trail, and providing access that is

compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. (See “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” and “Consistency with the Conservancy’s 2007 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives.”)

The proposed grantee, the City of Benicia, is taking the lead to build the bridge addition and expects to begin construction in spring of 2009. Upon completion, Caltrans is expected to take over ownership and maintenance of the new overcrossing. The Conservancy has assisted the City with successful public access planning and construction projects in the past. Most recently, the Conservancy contributed \$150,000 in 2003 for its First Street Pier improvements.

Site Description: The project site is alongside the existing Rose Drive/State Park Road overpass which spans I-780 at the western edge of the City of Benicia. At the north end of the bridge are commercial and residential areas. The south end adjoins the Benicia State Recreation Area (BSRA) and leads into the BSRA trail system (Exhibit 2).

Trails through the BSRA serve both the Ridge Trail and the Bay Trail and ultimately will connect to the pedestrian and bicycle crossings of the Carquinez Strait on the new Al Zampa-Carquinez Bridge to the west and on the Congressman George Miller-Benicia Bridge to the east. The new Rose Drive/State Park Road trail overcrossing, in turn, connects these trails northward with urban areas and an inland route of the Ridge Trail (Exhibit 2).

Project History: The vision for the Ridge Trail is a 500-mile multi-use (serving hikers, mountain bicyclists and equestrians), continuous trail that rings San Francisco Bay, high on the ridgeline. Under the leadership of the Conservancy and BARTC, and supported by a diverse group of project participants, the Ridge Trail creates an interconnected system of open space and trails that provides recreational opportunities and scenic views to the public. Begun almost 20 years ago, over 300 miles of trail are now dedicated and/or open to the public in all nine Bay Area counties. This authorization will further the Conservancy's statutory and strategic goal of improving access around San Francisco Bay, and is consistent with previous Conservancy authorizations to negotiate and acquire trail easements, prepare trail construction plans and designs, and construct and open trail segments to the public.

The City of Benicia has been working for over six years to design and build the proposed project. City staff has completed the initial design and engineering and the California Environmental Quality Act review, coordinated with Caltrans and the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and assembled the construction funding package. The City projects that it will complete the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review (required for federal funding administered by Caltrans) and construction documents in order to begin construction in spring of 2009. Project completion is slated for early 2010.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Construction engineering, NEPA review, permitting and construction

Coastal Conservancy	\$ 241,500
City of Benicia	
Committed to-date for future costs	853,000
Shortfall funding (including contingency) if needed	481,500
Solano Transportation Authority	
Transportation for Livable Communities	1,000,000
Transportation Development Act, Article 3	481,000
Caltrans	
Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality	671,000
State Controller	
Highway Safety, Traffic Reduction, Air Quality and Port Security Act, Local Assistance	449,000
Delta Protection Commission (pending)	<u>60,000</u>
Total estimated project cost	\$4,237,000

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is the fiscal year 2007-2008 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). This funding source may be used to promote access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the state. The proposed project is consistent with this allowed use in that it would complete planning needed to make connections in Bay Area regional trails.

The City of Benicia has assembled a construction funding package from local and State sources. Previous conceptual design and CEQA review costs, estimated at \$350,000, were funded locally.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

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, and without having a significant adverse impact on agricultural operations and environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife. Consistent with Section 31162(a), the proposed project will provide safer non-motorized access between ridgetop segments of the Ridge Trail in Solano and Napa Counties and the shoreline segment of the Ridge Trail and Bay Trail along the north shore of the Carquinez Strait. The proposed project is entirely on currently developed public property.

Consistent with Section 31163(a), the Conservancy cooperates 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 Ridge Trail Council, July 1999)* and (2) *400 Miles and Beyond: A Strategic Plan for Completing the Bay Area Ridge Trail (BARTC, Draft 2006)*.

Pursuant to Section 31163(c), the Conservancy shall give priority to projects that, to the greatest extent, meet criteria including support by adopted local or regional plans; multiple jurisdictions or service to a regional constituency; ability to be implemented in a timely way; opportunities for benefits that could be lost if the project is not quickly implemented; and matching funds from other sources of funding or assistance. Consistent with criteria in Section 31163(c), the proposed project will implement the Ridge Trail Plan and the Solano Transportation Authority's Countywide Bicycle Plan; serve regional pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian trail users; start construction in spring 2009; ensure that federal funds allocated for the project will not be lost; will include cash and in-kind matching funds from multiple sources; and is consistent with the Ridge Trail alignment that has been adopted by the BARTC.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2007 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective G** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will entail construction of approximately 1,300 feet of the Ridge Trail and, consistent with **Goal 11, Objective L**, it would result in implementation of a project with elements compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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 September 20, 2007, 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. **Support of the public:** Letters of support accompanied the City of Benicia's funding proposal to the BARTC. Letters were sent by Congressman George Miller, the board of Solano Transportation Authority, the Bicycle Advisory Committee of the Solano Transportation Authority, the Bay Trail Project, the Benicia Bicycle Club, and the Solano Ridge Trail Committee of the BARTC (Exhibit 4). The Executive Committee of the BARTC also adopted a resolution in support of project funding in the amount of \$241,500.
4. **Location:** The proposed project is within the nine-county jurisdiction of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
5. **Need:** While the grantee and a number of other trail and transportation entities are contributing to the project, the Conservancy's proposed contribution of \$241,500 is needed to complete the funding package.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project is necessary for implementing a section of the Ridge Trail, a regionally significant trail system.

Additional Criteria

7. **Urgency:** The City of Benicia needs the Conservancy's commitment of funds in order to ensure that the Caltrans contribution administered by the Solano Transportation Agency will remain secure.
9. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
12. **Readiness:** The City expects to begin construction in spring 2009.
13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See "Project History" above.
15. **Cooperation:** The City has been working with the Solano Transportation Authority, Caltrans, the State Department of Parks and Recreation, and the BARTC to design, fund, and build the proposed project. Under the terms of a cooperative agreement that is in preparation, Caltrans will take on ownership and maintenance of the project following construction.

In addition, 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 BARTC'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 modifies an existing street, involving negligible expansion of the existing street already in use as a pedestrian and bicycle access to the recreation area and is therefore categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15301. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval of the proposed authorization.