

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 22, 2022

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY TRAIL and RIDGE TRAIL:
VALLEJO BLUFFS TRAIL FINAL DESIGN AND ENGINEERING**

Project No. 19-016-09
Project Manager: Virgilio Cuasay

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization for the Association of Bay Area Governments to disburse up to \$366,250 of previously-granted Conservancy funds to the City of Vallejo to complete full final design and engineering documents for the approximately two-mile segment of Bay Trail and Ridge Trail at Vallejo Bluff in Vallejo, and the adoption of findings under the California Environmental Quality Act.

LOCATION: City of Vallejo, Solano County

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Map of the proposed trail alignment](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Project Photos and Images](#)
- Exhibit 4: [October 17, 2019 Bay Trail Block Grant No. 6 Staff Recommendation](#)
- Exhibit 5: [Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration Vallejo Bluff Trail Project](#)
- Exhibit 6: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings.

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) to disburse up to \$366,250 of the Conservancy funds authorized as part of the San

Francisco Bay Trail Block Grant No. 6 on October 17, 2019 to the City of Vallejo to complete full final design and engineering documents for the approximately two-mile segment of Bay Trail and Ridge Trail at Vallejo Bluff in Vallejo subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of funds, ABAG shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy final work programs, schedules and budgets, and grant agreements between ABAG and the City of Vallejo.
2. ABAG shall ensure installation and maintenance of signs acknowledging the Conservancy's funding and displaying the Conservancy logo in a manner approved by the Executive Officer. ABAG will also ensure installation and maintenance of signs acknowledging the project's Bay and Ridge Trail alignment and affiliation.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation 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 improvement of public access to, within, and around the bay, coast, ridgetops, and urban open spaces of the San Francisco Bay area.
2. The proposed projects are consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. As a responsible agency, the Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the "Vallejo Bluffs Trail Project Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration" (IS/MND), adopted by the City of Vallejo on August 20, 2019. The Conservancy finds that the Vallejo Bluff Trails Project as described in the IS/MND includes the project proposed for funding, and that the Vallejo Bluff Trails Project as designed and mitigated, avoids, reduces, or mitigates the potentially significant environmental effects to a less-than-significant level, and there is no substantial evidence based on the record as a whole that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, as defined in 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15382.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) to disburse up to \$366,250 of Conservancy funds authorized as part of the San Francisco Bay Trail Block Grant No. 6 on October 17, 2019 to the City of Vallejo to complete full final design and engineering documents for the approximately two-mile segment of joint Bay and Ridge Trail at Vallejo Bluff (Trail) project. When the Conservancy authorized Block Grant No. 6, it required ABAG to obtain Conservancy approval of each grant to be awarded, and delegated authority to the Executive Officer to approve those grants that were exempt from CEQA. Conservancy (not through its Executive Officer) authorization for ABAG to grant the

funds for this project is necessary because the preparation of final design and engineering documents requires adoption of findings under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The Trail is particularly critical because it serves as an overlapping alignment for multiple trail systems: the San Francisco Bay Trail (Bay Trail), Bay Area Ridge Trail (Ridge Trail), the Great California Delta Trail, and the Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail. This is a unique location where the Bay and Ridge Trails combine to create a loop between the Carquinez and Benicia Bridges and adjacent shorelines which has been designated as the Carquinez Scenic Loop Trail (Exhibit 2). Completing final designs and engineering for this gap will allow the City of Vallejo to construct a safe pedestrian and bicycle crossing under the Carquinez Bridge and Interstate 80, connecting to completed segments of Ridge Trail to the east. Furthermore, this segment will allow trail users to travel from the Carquinez Strait, through the City of Vallejo to the Bay Trail alignments along the Mare Island Straits to the west.

The Trail eliminates the barrier created by I-80, creating a safe crossing to various public transit facilities, and will provide a direct connection to planned bike lanes on State Route 29. The City of Vallejo has a diverse population of 126,000 residents. According to 2020 data the City's population was 20.3% Black/African American, 23.8% Asian, 26.3% Latinx, and 35% White. The communities in the census tracts adjacent to the proposed trail reflect some of the most economically challenged neighborhoods in the Bay Area, with 30 percent of residents in the adjacent census tract with incomes twice below the federal poverty level. The trailhead on Sequoia on the west side of I-80 is within and serves a 61 percentile census tract which means that the percent of people living below twice the poverty level is higher than 61% of the census tracts in California.

The proposed project is to develop all necessary final design and engineering documents to build the Trail, which is an approximately two-mile Class I multi-use path along the north side of SR 29 and from Lincoln Road East south on the east side of I-80, then east to connect to Clearview Circle in the Glen Cove neighborhood of Vallejo. The Trail will connect three existing trails (San Francisco Bay Trail, Bay Area Ridge Trail, California Delta Trail) near the north landing of the Carquinez Bridge. The proposed trail will be located close to a variety of local destinations including the Vallejo Ferry, the California Maritime Academy, Vallejo City Hall and Library, Benicia State Recreation Area, and Glen Cove Waterfront Park.

Site Description

The northern limits of the project are the intersection of Sequoia Avenue and Lincoln Road East on the east side of I-80, and the intersection of Maritime Academy Drive/Sequoia Avenue and Sonoma Boulevard/SR 29 on the west side of I-80. On the west side of I-80 the Trail would be aligned along Sonoma Boulevard. A portion of the Trail will pass directly under I-80. On the east side of I-80, the trail would run southward, near I-80, from the intersection of Sequoia Avenue and Lincoln Road East to a point near Carquinez Strait, where it would run east to connect with an existing trail.

The area north of the project site is a mixed use commercial and single-family residential area, along with extensions of I-80 and Sonoma Boulevard/SR 29. West of the northern portion of the

Trail, on the opposite (west) side of I-80, are a motel, California State University Maritime Academy, and single- and multi-family residential use area. Most of the proposed trail alignment is located east of I-80 and west of a mix of areas zoned for open space and single family residences in the Glen Cove area occupying the bluffs above I-80. The Carquinez Strait and the Carquinez Bridge are south of the trail site (see Exhibits 1 and 2).

Most of the project site is located on Caltrans right-of-way, for which no Assessor's Parcel Number is available. The remainder is located on privately- and city-owned land, for which the Assessor's Parcel Numbers are 0075140190, 0075140200, 0075140120, 0075150190, 0079631750, and 0079340590.

Grant Applicants' Qualifications:

The City of Vallejo has been working in partnership on this project with the Conservancy, the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, and the San Francisco Bay Trail since 2008. The City spent approximately \$450,000, derived from various grants including from the Conservancy) on various preliminary planning and design phases. The City of Vallejo is the most appropriate grantee to implement this project since the trail is within the City, connecting two neighborhoods divided by I-80. Additionally, Caltrans has responded favorably to an ongoing collaboration between itself and the City regarding this project because it aligns with Caltrans' commitment to multi-modal transportation opportunities that improve the environment, support a vibrant economy, and build communities, not sprawl.

Recently the City of Vallejo completed planning and design for the Trail using Bay Trail Block Grant No. 5 funds as well as a direct Conservancy grant. The City has completed CEQA, 35% designs, hydrological and geotechnical reports, and a Caltrans Design Engineering Evaluation Report process. The City is excited to complete final designs and engineering for this project, and has the staff and capacity to do so.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on September 23, 2021, in the following respects:

Selection Criteria

1. Extent to which the project helps the Conservancy accomplish the objectives in the Strategic Plan.

See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Strategic Plan" section below.

2. Project is a good investment of state resources.

The City of Vallejo has committed to providing the remaining funds necessary to complete this planning and design phase, and the project is ready to proceed on award of ABAG funding.

The Bay Trail is specifically recognized in the California Recreational Trail Plan, as well as numerous regional and local plans including the San Francisco Bay Area's Plan Bay Area 2040 as a Priority Conservation Area, all nine Bay Area County General or Master Trail Plans, and the public access policies in the San Francisco Bay Plan.

4. Project benefits will be sustainable or resilient over the project lifespan.

Because the alignment for this portion of trail is shared with the Bay Area Ridge Trail which aligned high on the ridgetops encircling San Francisco Bay, the proposed project will not be directly vulnerable to sea level rise. The safe routes to access critical public infrastructure and services that will be provided by this project, as well as the benefits created by trails providing alternatives to motorized, will both be direct project benefits with long-term sustainability.

5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The Bay Trail and Bay Area Ridge Trail are regionally significant trails running through all nine Bay Area counties. As mentioned earlier, this project significantly reduces critical public access barriers by creating a safe crossing under I-80 to various public transit facilities and providing direct connection to planned bike lanes on SR 29. Additionally, the trails' scenic views, opportunities for extended trips and connectivity to other trail systems, parks and natural areas enhance the appeal of the Ridge Trail as a destination for visitors from outside the Bay Area.

This ongoing project provides co-benefits and alleviates multiple stressors within communities, such as improving public health, addressing the need for additional recreational amenities, reductions in pollution burden, access to parks and open space, habitat enhancement or other environmental benefits.

6. Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.

The City of Vallejo and their trail consultants conducted public outreach meetings with the Glen Cove Homeowners Association (HOA) as well as a public meeting at the South Vallejo Community Center in October 2017. City staff have also met more recently with representatives from the Glen Cove HOA who confirmed their ongoing support for the project. The project also received two letters of support (addressed to the Bay Trail project manager), one from the Greater Vallejo Recreation District, and the other from the Solano Transportation Authority.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy (via Bay Trail Block Grant to ABAG)	\$366,250
City of Vallejo	\$33,750
Project Total	\$400,000

The Conservancy's \$366,250 contribution is from the \$1,400,000 Conservancy grant to ABAG known as the San Francisco Bay Trail Block Grant No. 6, which was authorized on October 17, 2019 (Exhibit 4). Conservancy funds for Block Grant No. 6 are derived from the "California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018" (Prop 68, Public Resources Code Division 45, Chapters 1-13, Sections 80000-80173), in particular Chapter 9, which allocates funds for projects that enhance and protect coast and ocean resources including projects that are consistent with the purposes of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program at Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. (Pub. Res. Code sections 80120(d)). As defined by Proposition 68, the term "protection" includes actions that

will improve access to public open-space areas and actions to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property and natural, cultural, and historic resources. (Section 80002(l)). The Bay Trail is consistent with the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program and will improve public access to, and enjoyment of, San Francisco Bay.

This authorization follows previous Conservancy investments in planning and design of \$114,160 dollars from Bay Trail Block Grant 5, and \$125,000 from the Conservancy directly, both of which were funded with Proposition 84 funds.

Unless specifically labelled "Required Match" the other sources of funding listed above are provided as estimates. The Coastal Conservancy does not typically require matching funds nor does it require documentation of expenditures from other funders. Typical grant conditions require grantees to provide any funds needed to complete the project.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31160-31165 regarding San Francisco Bay Area projects.

The proposed authorization is consistent with Section 31162(a) because it will help achieve the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program goal of improving public access to and around the bay through completion of the Bay Trail, the Ridge Trail, and the connecting regional trail system. The proposed project will complete a segment of trail that will be part of both the Bay Trail and 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 Bay Trail is a priority recreational goal. The proposed project is consistent with Section 31163(c), for the following reasons:

1. The proposed project will promote completion of trails that provide safe routes to transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and recreational resources consistent with adopted local and regional plans.
2. The proposed project serves a regional constituency by contributing toward the completion of a regional trail network through the nine counties surrounding San Francisco Bay.
3. The proposed project can be implemented in a timely manner.
4. The proposed project will provide benefits that could be lost if the project is not quickly implemented, as there is current momentum built from the work already undertaken by Caltrans and the City of Vallejo.
5. The project provides matching funds.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#) GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

The proposed project is consistent with **Goal 13, Objective D** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, because by completing design and engineering for the Vallejo Bluffs Trail, the proposed project will plan a regionally significant segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail.

The project is also consistent **with Goal 13, Objective F** in that in addition to the fact that this part of the Bay Trail, it will also achieve planning for the Ridge Trail (shared alignments), as well **as Goal 13, Objective H**, planning for regionally significant connector trails, as this alignment is also part of the Great California Delta Trail, and the emerging Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The City of Vallejo adopted the Vallejo Bluff Trail Project Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) (Exhibit 5) and approved the Vallejo Bluff Trail Project (Project) on August 20, 2019. The IS/MND addresses the entirety of the irregularly shaped 8.5-acre parcel along the approximately two-mile trail section, including the two-mile trail segment that is recommended for funding. The IS/MND included a Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Program (Appendix A to MND in Exhibit 6).

The IS/MND identifies potential environmental effects of the Project that are less than significant with mitigation in the areas of air quality, biological resources, geology, cultural resources, hydrology, hazardous materials, noise, and utilities. Most of these mitigated environmental effects relate to construction of the Project. All of these environmental effects will be reduced to a less-than-significant level by mitigation measures identified in the MND and associated Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP), as summarized below:

Air Quality: Air quality impacts (e.g., dust) from the construction of the proposed trail will be managed by incorporating Basic Construction Mitigation Measures regarding controlling dust and managing construction equipment, as required by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Construction air quality impacts are therefore considered ***less than significant***.

Biological Resources: The Project has the potential to adversely affect nesting birds including tree nesting raptors and migratory birds. These potential impacts will be mitigated to a ***less-than-significant*** level by either constructing the Project outside of nesting season or by conducting pre-ground disturbance surveys using the methods described by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and US Fish and Wildlife Service if vegetation removal and construction activities occur in nesting season (February-August). If nests are found, an adequate setback will be established around the nest location and no activities will occur in that zone until a qualified biologist confirms that the young birds have fledged. The zone will be fenced with temporary construction fencing as needed. There are no restrictions if no nests are found in nesting season (described above) or if construction activities occur outside of nesting season (from September through January).

Cultural Resources: Within the site, there is the potential to disturb cultural resources with trail development. To mitigate this potential impact to a ***less-than-significant*** level, the

MND establishes protocols to address such resources if they are unearthed, as follows: If any cultural artifacts are encountered during site grading or other construction activities, all ground disturbance shall be halted until the services of a qualified archaeologist can be retained to identify and evaluate the resource(s) and, if necessary, recommend mitigation measures to document and prevent any significant adverse effects on the resource(s). In the event that any human remains are encountered during site disturbance, all ground-disturbing work shall cease immediately, and the County coroner shall be notified immediately. If the coroner determines the remains to be Native American, the Native American Heritage Commission shall be contacted within 24 hours, and no work shall proceed. A qualified archaeologist, in consultation with the Native American Heritage Commission, will recommend subsequent measures for disposition of the remains.

Geology and Soils: A geotechnical report will be prepared prior to any grading or construction permit approvals. This report will provide detailed design criteria regarding designing for expansive soils, slope instability, runoff control, and earthquake resistance. Construction will comply with all design criteria described in the geotechnical investigation. Additionally, prior to grading activities the City will prepare and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) according to the statewide Construction General Permit. The SWPPP shall be prepared by a Qualified SWPPP Developer, and will include the minimum Best Management Practices (BMPs) required for the identified risk level. The SWPPP will include a construction site monitoring program that identifies requirements for dry weather visual observations of pollutants at all discharge locations, and as appropriate, depending on the project risk level, sampling of site effluent and receiving waters. A Qualified SWPPP Practitioner (QSP) shall be responsible for implementing the BMPs at the project site. The QSP shall also be responsible for performing all required monitoring, BMP inspection, maintenance and repair activities, and reporting. Finally, if any paleontological resources are encountered during construction, all work shall be halted within a 50-foot radius of the findings and a qualified paleontologist shall be retained to ascertain the nature of the discovery, the significance of the find, and provide proper management recommendations. All of these measures will ensure that the Project will have a *less-than-significant* effect on site geology and soils.

Hydrology and Water Quality: The Project has the potential, during construction, to cause erosion or spills that can contaminate water quality. To mitigate these potential impacts to a *less-than-significant* level, the Project will incorporate site design measures and Low Impact Development design standards to the best ability feasible, including minimizing disturbed areas and impervious surfaces, and using best management practices for infiltration, evapotranspiration, and/or bio-treatment of stormwater runoff. The City of Vallejo will also require the contractor to implement control measures associated with the Municipal Regional Stormwater NPDES Permit Number R2-2015-0049 regarding release of water contaminants during project operation.

Additionally, regarding post-construction impacts, City of Vallejo will conduct an analysis of the potential additional stormwater runoff generated by the Project and its effect on existing stormwater drainage systems. If the analysis determines that the increase in runoff would exceed the capacity of the existing stormwater drainage systems, then part of the

final design and engineering work will identify locations and designs for detention basins, infiltration basins, and/or other drainage improvements with capacity sufficient to ensure that project-generated stormwater runoff does not contribute to any exceedance of the capacity of the drainage system serving the project site. These drainage improvements will be developed in coordination with, and the approval of, the City of Vallejo and/or Caltrans, depending on the location of the affected stormwater drainage system(s). This stormwater runoff and engineering work will reduce any future impacts to *a less-than-significant* level.

Noise: The MMRP describes a variety of measures to ensure all noise impacts are kept to *less-than-significant* levels. These include limiting construction to 7am-8pm Mondays-Fridays, muffling and maintaining all construction equipment, notifying all neighbors adjacent to the construction in writing, designating a “disturbance coordinator” to respond to any complaints, and as much as possible combining noisy activities so they occur simultaneously for a shorter period of disturbance overall.

Utilities and Service System: Prior to the initiation of construction, the Project sponsor shall prepare a recycling plan to cover all phases of project construction. The plan will identify a strategy for handling all waste materials that will be generated during construction, in order to divert a minimum of 50 percent by weight.

Staff has independently evaluated the IS/MND and associated public comments and concurs that there is no substantial evidence that the Project will have a significant effect on the environment. Staff therefore recommends that the Conservancy find that the Project as mitigated avoids, reduces or mitigates the possible significant environmental effects to a level of less-than-significant and that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment as that term is defined by 14 Cal. Code Regs. §15382.

Upon approval of the project, Conservancy staff will file a Notice of Determination for the award to the City of Vallejo.