A UNIFIED VOICE FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND TRAILS IN THE BAY AREA

The vision of the Bay Area Trails Collaborative is to develop a 2,700-mile regional trail network that connects the San Francisco Bay Area—its trails, people and places—to improve our quality of life.

Through the development of the regional trail network, the Collaborative—chaired by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and comprising more than three dozen organizations, agencies and businesses—will provide safe biking and walking routes for millions of people, connecting them with critical destinations, including jobs, parks, shopping, schools and cultural and civic sites.
HOW WILL THE PROJECT POSITIVELY IMPACT THE BAY AREA?

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

California has passed sweeping climate change legislation with ambitious greenhouse gas reduction and petroleum use targets for the state¹, and it’s fundamentally changing the way California must plan and invest in transportation infrastructure. By completing the region’s walking and biking networks, the Collaborative can help reduce vehicle miles traveled and significantly lessen the Bay Area’s carbon footprint in the long term. According to the California Air Resources Board, the Bay Area could reduce more than 557,000 vehicles miles per day if just an additional 3 percent of car and light truck trips were shifted to bike trips.³ What’s more, trails provide connections to protected open spaces, creating wildlife corridors and improving habitat and species diversity.

CREATING SMART TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

The demand for safe walking and biking infrastructure is evident in the Bay Area, where nearly one-quarter of residents already choose a multimodal approach for commuting. Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) expects that by 2020, 10 percent of its riders will access stations by bike (an increase of more than 60 percent in seven years). Trail projects like the East Bay Greenway—which will link to seven BART stations between Oakland and Hayward⁴—will support this rapidly growing demand.

IMPROVING RECREATION, HEALTH AND WELLNESS

By providing safe, close-to-home opportunities to walk, run and bike, the Bay Area regional trail network will be a cornerstone of a statewide strategy to encourage physical activity and combat high obesity and diabetes rates.⁵ A California study found that obesity levels were lower among adults who felt safe to walk for leisure in their own neighborhoods—and it’s proven that when people have safe places to walk within 10 minutes of their home, they are one and a half times more likely to meet recommended activity levels than those who don’t.⁶ Spending time in nature also reduces stress and depression, and improves concentration and creativity⁷—in fact, hiking in nature is being prescribed by doctors with positive results!⁸

PROMOTING SOCIAL EQUITY

The Collaborative serves communities with health disparities that have urgent need for more safe places to bike and walk. More than two-thirds of African Americans and Latinos living within the project footprint are overweight or obese⁹, with few places for safe outdoor recreation; the cities in the region with the highest poverty rates—Berkeley and Oakland—are also at the bottom of statewide rankings when it comes to bicycle and pedestrian safety.¹⁰ The region’s communities of color are also the least likely to own cars, further demonstrating the importance of safe, convenient options for active transportation and transit.

STRENGTHENING THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

The regional trail network includes signature projects that attract millions of tourists, including the Bay Trail and the Ridge Trail, and connect to renowned destinations like San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park and Bridge. The Napa Valley Vine Trail will run the length of Napa Valley, one of the premier winemaking regions in the world, which attracts 4.7 million visitors annually. A 2011 statewide study found that Californians engaged in 1.5 billion days of outdoor recreation—including walking, biking or running for fitness and pleasure—with trip expenditures topping $4 billion.¹¹ Completing the remaining gaps in the regional trail network could spark new waves of outdoor tourism, as well as new small business investment and job creation.

¹ The Governor’s Climate Change Pillars: 2030 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals, 2016, available at: https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/pillars/pillars.htm
² Cycle More Often 2 Cool Down the Planet: Quantifying CO2 Savings of Cycling, European Cyclists Federation, 2015, available at: https://ecf.com/groups/cycle-more-often-2-cool-down-planet-quantifying-co2-savings-cycling
³ ARB Bicycle Awareness Program, California Air Resources Board, available at: https://www.arb.ca.gov/planning/tsp/bicycle/factht.htm
⁴ East Bay Greenway: Lake Merritt BART to South Hayward BART, Alameda County Transportation Commission, available at: http://www.alamedactc.org/eastbaygreenway
⁵ Obesity in California, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, June 2015
¹⁰ An Equity Profile of the San Francisco Bay Area Region, PolicyLink and Pere, April 2015, available at: http://www.policylink.org/find-resources/library/an-equity-profile-of-san-francisco-bay-area
COMPLETING THE VISION

Nearly 60 percent of the Bay Area regional trail network is already on the ground—and the Collaborative is committed to moving the network toward completion by 2030. RTC is leading the Collaborative to leverage the group’s collective influence and expertise with a focus on advancing policy and environmental change; growing public and private support; accelerating trail development; and building a more diverse, robust trail movement in the Bay Area. The Collaborative includes multisector partners such as:

- Bicycle, pedestrian and social justice advocacy groups
- Park and trail development organizations and nonprofits
- Private consulting firms specializing in walking, biking and trails
- National, state, regional and local park and open space agencies
- Public health and transportation agencies

CURRENT PRIORITIES

The Collaborative is speaking in a unified voice for trails in the San Francisco Bay Area. Current priorities include:

- Increasing investments that support trails in key regional and state funding programs, including park bonds and the California Active Transportation Program
- Accelerating completion of the regional trail network through best practices, including establishing a regional bike/ped count program and web portal to share data across the region
- Building partnerships and cultivating regional trail network champions
- Promoting trail use, and publicizing and marketing the Bay Area trail network vision to the public
- Building capacity of the Collaborative by expanding and diversifying its members, and securing new resources

EXPLORE THE PROJECT FOOTPRINT

The Bay Area trail network travels through the region’s nine counties and dozens of communities—urban and rural, small and large—in the San Francisco Bay Area. Over 5 million people live within 1 mile of the planned network, which encompasses various local and regional trail systems, including:

- Bay Area Ridge Trail
- California Coastal Trail
- East Bay Regional Park District paved trail system
- Napa Valley Vine Trail
- San Francisco Bay Trail
- SMART Rail-with-Trail (Sonoma & Marin)
- San Jose’s urban trail network