

# Highway 17 Wildlife and Regional Trail Crossings

## Southern Santa Clara County Gap Closure



**BAY AREA TRAILS  
COLLABORATIVE**

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Highway 17 Wildlife and Regional Trail Crossings Project will connect more than 30,000 acres of protected public lands east and west of State Highway 17 in southern Santa Clara County and close a significant gap in the region's developing trail network. Two separate crossings will be constructed—one to provide safe movement for recreational trail users over the highway (see rendering), and one to help animals seeking food, mates and habitat in the Santa Cruz Mountains find safe passage under the highway. The project will also develop new, critical connections to existing regional trail networks, including the Bay Area Ridge Trail, the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail and other multiuse trails currently in development. Additional connections to regional public open space and parks in the Santa Cruz Mountains are also part of the larger trails plan.

A "Top 25 Priority" of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's Open Space Vision Plan, the project requires a high level of collaboration with Caltrans and a growing list of key partners, including but not limited to the National Wildlife Federation, the Bay Area Ridge Trail and Santa Clara County Parks. Measure AA, a \$300 million bond approved by Bay Area voters in 2014, will provide partial funding in the amount of \$15 million for the project.

The Highway 17 project is one of 13 projects that the Bay Area Trails Collaborative has prioritized as critical to completing its 2,700-mile regional trail network connecting the San Francisco Bay Area. The Bay Area Trails Collaborative is a Rails-to-Trails Conservancy TrailNation™ project—a nationwide initiative to create model trail networks and ultimately connect the country by trail.

### PROJECT DATA

- Total Project Miles: 6 to 8
- Project Costs:
  - Wildlife and Regional Trails Crossings only: \$20.1 million–\$21.3 million (2024 dollars)
  - Wildlife directional fencing: \$2 million (regardless of alternative) (2024 dollars)
  - Trail connections to the future crossings: \$9 million to \$16.5 million (2024 dollars)
- Project Funding: \$15 million Midpen Measure AA funding; remaining funds unsecured



Rendering of Northern Overcrossing (TrailPeople)

### TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

**Connecting Open Space:** The project links approximately 30,000 acres of protected public lands east and west of Highway 17—including Midpen preserves (Bear Creek Redwoods, El Sereno, St Joseph's Hill and Sierra Azul) and Santa Clara County Parks (Lexington Reservoir, Sanborn and Almaden Quicksilver).

**Closing Critical Gaps in the Regional Trail Network:** The creation of additional trail segments will help close a major gap in the Bay Area Ridge Trail and ultimately establish a contiguous 50-mile section of trail from Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve to Almaden Quicksilver County Park.

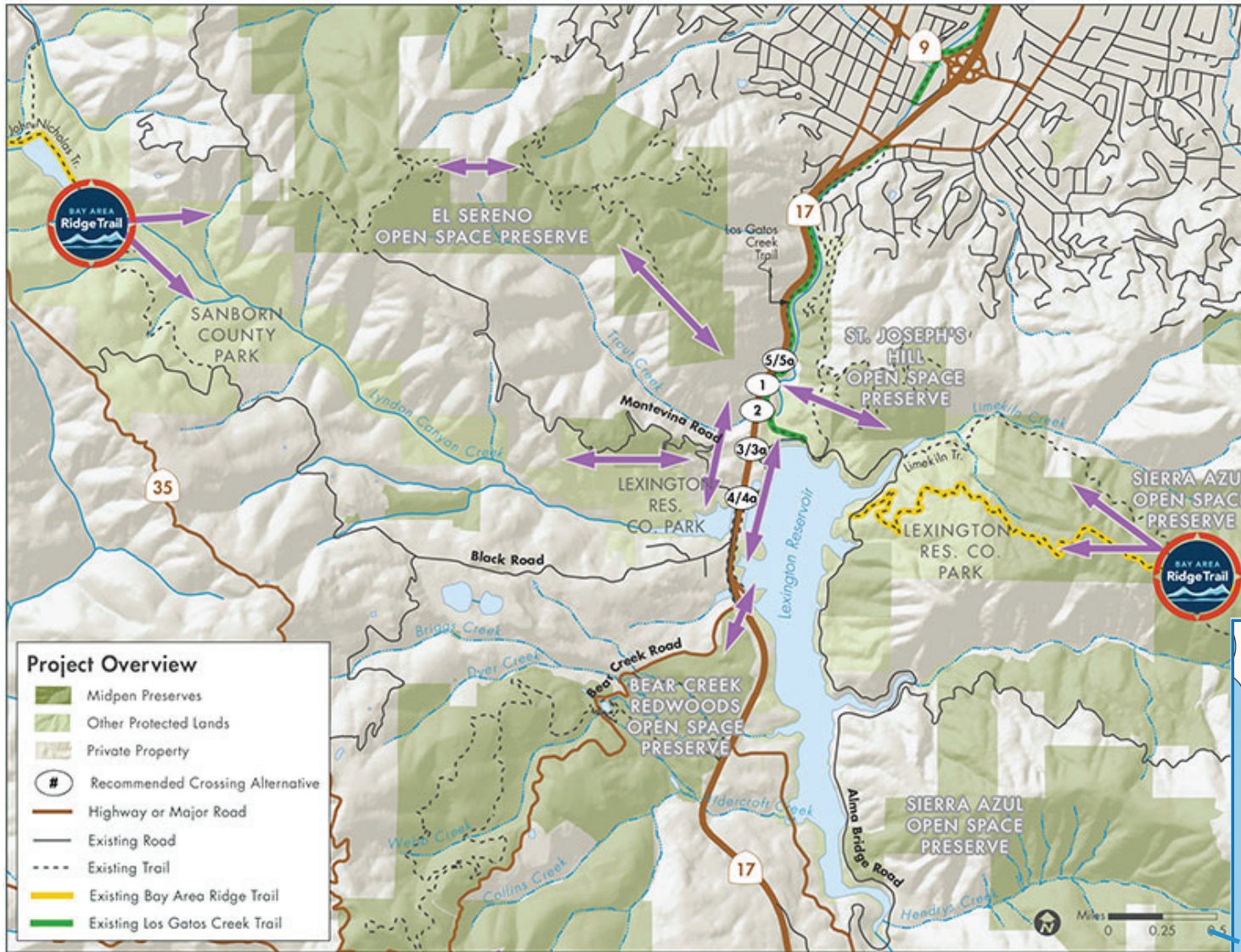
**Providing for Safe Movement of Wildlife and Recreational Trail Users:** This area is a road-kill "hot spot." Since 2008, one or more mountain lions have been killed each year by vehicle collisions on Highway 17 near the project area—in addition to 100 other animals, including deer, bobcats, foxes and coyotes, over the past decade. This project will meet the needs of both animals and recreational trail users by establishing a nonmotorized pathway across this high-speed, heavily trafficked road.

### PROJECT ACTION PLAN

- Conduct environmental review (CEQA, NEPA)
- Develop construction plans, specifications and estimate
- Secure public access rights for crossing and trails
- Secure funding (Midpen is providing \$15 million in Measure AA funds.)

[railstotrails.org/bay-area](https://railstotrails.org/bay-area) | @RailstoTrails

For information about the Bay Area Trails Collaborative, contact Laura Cohen: [laura@railstotrails.org](mailto:laura@railstotrails.org).



## PROJECT LEADS

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District  
330 Distel Circle  
Los Altos, CA 94022

Meredith Manning, Senior Planner  
(Recreational trail crossing)  
650.691.1200  
mmanning@openspace.org

Aaron Peth, Planner III  
(Connecting regional trails)  
650.691.1200  
apeth@openspace.org

Julie Andersen, Senior Resource Management Specialist  
(Wildlife crossing)  
650.691.1200  
jandersen@openspace.org

## BAY AREA TRAILS COLLABORATIVE



## PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS



[railstotrails.org/bay-area](http://railstotrails.org/bay-area) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | @RailstoTrails

For information about the Bay Area Trails Collaborative, contact Laura Cohen: [laura@railstotrails.org](mailto:laura@railstotrails.org).

Published November 2019