

san francisco international airport gap

The San Francisco Bay Trail is a planned 500-mile trail circumnavigating the San Francisco Bay, running through nine counties and 47 cities, and across seven toll bridges. This multiuse trail—which is approximately 70% complete—is enjoyed by cyclists, pedestrians, birders, runners and families, among others looking to experience the majesty of the Bay. The Bay Trail connects neighborhoods, schools, parks and transit centers, providing unique active transportation options for the region's nearly 8 million residents.

Project Overview

The San Francisco International Airport (SFO) gap is a 3.2-mile incomplete segment of the Bay Trail that circumvents the airport. The project extends from San Bruno Avenue in the north to Millbrae Avenue in the south, and is bounded by the airport to the east and by El Camino Real to the west. Existing Bay Trail segments to the north continue well into San Francisco County, while to the south the trail connects to the Millbrae and Burlingame waterfronts. This has long been one of the most complex Bay Trail gaps to close due to the limited availability of space, and the many conflicting land uses (the airport, US 101, BART, etc.) surrounding this gap on all sides.

A feasibility study, the Bay Trail SFO Gap Study, was completed by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in 2024 and provided an analysis of three alternatives. The study determined that the “1998 Plan option”—featuring an off-street, multiuse path along the edge of the open space west of US 101 and next to existing Caltrain and BART rail lines—was the best option. While not directly adjacent to the shoreline due to constraints presented by airport operations, the preferred alignment offers passage through a more natural setting than would ordinarily be expected in a fully built-out environment. The San Mateo County Transportation Authority (SMCTA), in partnership with the cities of San Bruno and Millbrae, is now beginning the process to refine the ultimate alignment and create a phasing and funding approach for advancing the project into the preliminary design and environmental clearance phase. The Bay Trail SFO Gap Closure has also been identified as a priority in SMCTA's 101 Corridor Connect program and is a critical component of the Active 101 North/South Mobility Network.



Transformative Impact

Closing the SFO Bay Trail gap will provide important connections to Lions Field, Bayside Manor and Bayfront Parks, as well as to an existing and planned network of local and regional trails, newly connecting thousands of residents to the Millbrae Caltrain station, shopping, schools, the airport and the San Francisco Bay. Bicycle commuters will be able to use this new segment of trail to access employment centers at SFO and beyond. This project will strengthen regional connectivity, enhance opportunities for recreation and active transportation, and support cleaner, healthier travel options for Bay Area residents and visitors alike.

Project Data

- Total Project Miles:** 3.2
- Continuous Bay Trail Miles Linked by Gap Closure:** 13
- Estimated Project Cost:** \$64 million
- Project Status:** Feasibility study complete; funding for preliminary design and environmental clearance needed

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Project Action Plan

SMCTA is the lead agency, in partnership with the cities of San Bruno and Millbrae, for the next phase of this project and is actively seeking grant funding to support environmental documentation, engineering phases and construction of the gap closure project, while continuing to facilitate collaboration with partner stakeholders. Securing additional funding is the key element for forward progress on the SFO gap. This project scored highly, but did not make the final selection in MTC's Regional Measure 3 Safe Routes to Transit & Bay Trail funding program. Since then, SMCTA has actively sought funding from multiple sources including the State Coastal Conservancy, Priority Conservation Area grant program and SMCTA's own Measure A & W Pedestrian and Bicycle Program, among others. Letters of support, advocacy with elected officials, identification of new and diversified streams of funding (grants, foundations, corporate giving, etc.) are all needed to move this large, complex infrastructure project forward.

Project Leads

- San Mateo County Transportation Authority
- City of San Bruno
- City of Millbrae

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The Bay Area Trails Collaborative is a Rails to Trails Conservancy TrailNation™ project—a nationwide initiative to create model trail networks that demonstrate the powerful impact trails have on communities.

