



## CRYSTAL SPRINGS REGIONAL TRAIL – WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

[Issue](#) | [Summary](#) | [Glossary and Abbreviations](#) | [Background](#) | [Discussion](#) | [Conclusion](#) | [Findings](#) | [Recommendations](#) | [Requests for Responses](#) | [Methodology](#) | [Bibliography](#) | [Appendix](#) | [Responses](#)

### ISSUE

What is the status of completing the Crystal Springs Regional Trail? Could the County do more to make the Crystal Springs Regional Trail safer and more accessible for all users, and could changes make the Sawyer Camp segment entrance at Crystal Springs Road less crowded?

### SUMMARY

The County of San Mateo Parks Department's (Parks Department) Crystal Springs Regional Trail (CSRT or the Trail), when completed, will extend 17.5 miles along the east side of the San Andreas and Crystal Springs Reservoirs from San Bruno to Woodside. About 16.5 miles of the Trail are finished and provide striking views of reservoirs, winding paths through Douglas firs, and encounters with wildlife and diverse habitats. Almost all of the completed Trail runs through San Francisco Public Utilities Commission property, within an easement granted to San Mateo County. As a multi-use trail, it is shared by bicyclists, pedestrians and, on some sections, equestrians. It is the most visited trail in San Mateo County, attracting over 600,000 users per year and growing rapidly.

The completed portion of the Trail is comprised of three segments: the San Andreas, Sawyer Camp, and Crystal Springs segments (see Figure 1). There is currently no trail connecting the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments. Along this one-mile trail "gap," pedestrians and bicyclists must travel within California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) right-of-way along the shoulders of two busy state highways, Highways 92 and 35, and must cross the signalized intersection of those two highways.

The Parks Department recognizes the need to complete the Trail. Its *San Mateo County 2001 Trails Plan* included a proposed route, "P9 - Crystal Springs Trail North," that would connect the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments. However, the proposal has not been implemented and the County has not adopted a schedule to do so. The Grand Jury finds that now is the time for the County to investigate how to complete the CSRT. The County of San Mateo Planning and Building Department (Planning Department) is currently studying the intersection of Highways 35 and 92, just east of the reservoirs, as part of its "Connect the Coastside" *Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan*. However, the study does not incorporate the CSRT as part of its planning, even though a completed CSRT will need to pass through this intersection. In March 2019, the Parks Department issued the *Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail Feasibility Study* (Heritage Trail Study) which proposes a 90-mile trail system that incorporates, along with other trails, the entire planned CSRT. The Heritage Trail Study identifies multiple alternatives for completing the gap between the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments. The Heritage Trail Study specifically recommends that the County adopt a policy that the Heritage Trail be incorporated into the Highway 92/35 intersection project design.

Other potentially relevant studies are underway to address bicycling and pedestrian access in the County by the San Mateo County Office of Sustainability in an *Unincorporated San Mateo County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* and by the San Mateo City/County Association of Governments (C/CAG) in an update of its 2011 *San Mateo County Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*. The Grand Jury finds that improved coordination is needed among the different government entities responsible for planning related to the CSRT. The Grand Jury recommends that the Parks Department coordinate with the Planning Department and the Office of Sustainability and C/CAG, as well as their respective bicycle committees, to complete the gap in the Crystal Springs Regional Trail and provide a continuous trail experience away from traffic.

The Grand Jury also finds that along the already completed segments of the CSRT, there are just three entrances (“access points”) along an 8.6-mile stretch of the Trail north of the entrance to the Sawyer Camp segment at Crystal Springs Road. This limited number of access points creates congestion at existing entrances as well as an overflow of cars parking along the roads and highways adjacent to the Trail. This is particularly serious at the entrance to the Sawyer Camp segment at Crystal Springs Road, the most popular trail access point. The Parks Department advised the Grand Jury that it originally envisioned having more trail entrances, which would more evenly distribute users and reduce parking requirements at individual locations. However, these additional access points have not been created. The Grand Jury recommends that the Parks Department investigate the viability of providing additional access points (with off-street parking) north of the Sawyer Camp segment entrance at Crystal Springs Road to relieve congestion at that entrance and consider providing additional off-street parking at all access points and intersections along the CSRT north of Highway 92 to meet demand.

## GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC): The San Mateo County’s City/County Association of Government’s (C/CAG) bike and pedestrian advisory committee.

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans): A California state department that manages state highways, freeways, and transportation.

City/County Association of Governments (C/CAG): A joint powers authority formed by the County of San Mateo and all 20 cities within the county for various purposes including oversight of a regional transportation Congestion Management Program.

Connect the Coastside or the Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan: A project under study by the County of San Mateo Planning and Building Department to “identify and evaluate transportation improvements and changes in land use policy that in combination would meet the requirements of the Midcoast LCP [Local Coastal Program].”<sup>1</sup>

Crystal Springs segment: The southernmost portion of the CSRT, starting at Highway 92 and continuing 6.7 miles<sup>2</sup> and paralleling Canada Road to Woodside.

Crystal Springs Regional Trail (CSRT): A planned 17.5-mile County of San Mateo Parks Department multi-use trail extending from San Bruno to Woodside along the east side of the San Andreas and Crystal Springs Reservoirs.

Gap or CSRT gap: A one-mile section of the CSRT between the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments that runs along state highways, Highways 92 and 35, and which has not been developed into a multi-use trail outside of traffic.

Measure W: A sales tax measure on the ballot for San Mateo County voters on November 6, 2018 that was approved and enacted a 0.5 percent sales tax for 30 years to fund road improvements, transit services, and implementation of the San Mateo County Congestion Relief Plan.

Off-Street Parking: Parking lots and designated spaces other than the shoulder of the road.

Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail (Heritage Trail): A planned 90-mile trail that recognizes the first contact between the Ohlone and Europeans and is part of the cultural heritage of San Mateo County. It incorporates a number of existing trails, including the Crystal Springs Regional Trail.

Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail Feasibility Study (Heritage Trail Study): A report released in March 2019 by the County of San Mateo Parks Department in conjunction with the County of

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<sup>1</sup> DKS, “Connect the Coastside: Evaluation of Recommended Alternative to Address Potential Future Transportation Deficiencies, Draft Report”, March 10, 2016. <https://planning.smcgov.org/sites/planning.smcgov.org/files/press-release/files/1.3%20CTMP%20Draft%20Recommendation%20of%20Transportation%20Improvements%20and%20Appendices%204.13.16.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> This Grand Jury report calculates CSRT dimensions based on lengths shown in Figure 1.

San Mateo Department of Public Works and a committee of county, state, federal, and tribal representatives.

San Andreas segment: The northernmost portion of the CSRT, extending from San Bruno 2.6 miles south to Hillcrest Boulevard.

San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC): A public agency that provides retail drinking water, wastewater services, and electric power services to the city and County of San Francisco and to three Bay Area counties.

San Mateo County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (SMCBPAC): The County's committee appointed by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors which advises the Office of Sustainability on bicycle and pedestrian related matters pertaining to the unincorporated areas of San Mateo County such as the County of San Mateo Office of Sustainability's *Unincorporated San Mateo County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* in development.

San Mateo County Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (CBPP): A report released in 2011 by the City/County Association of Governments (C/CAG) that addresses county-wide bicycle and pedestrian projects in San Mateo County.

Sawyer Camp segment: The middle portion of the CSRT, extending 7.2 miles south from the San Andreas segment at Hillcrest Boulevard, past the Crystal Springs Road entrance, and ending at Highway 35. This includes the South of Dam Trail extension.

South of Dam Trail extension: A newly completed extension of the CSRT which now constitutes the southernmost portion of the Sawyer Camp segment. This multi-use 1.2-mile trail runs south of the Crystal Springs Dam and connects with Highway 35.

Visitor Use/Non-Use Parks Study: A study conducted by the County of San Mateo Parks Department in 2015-2016 to learn how visitors use County parks.

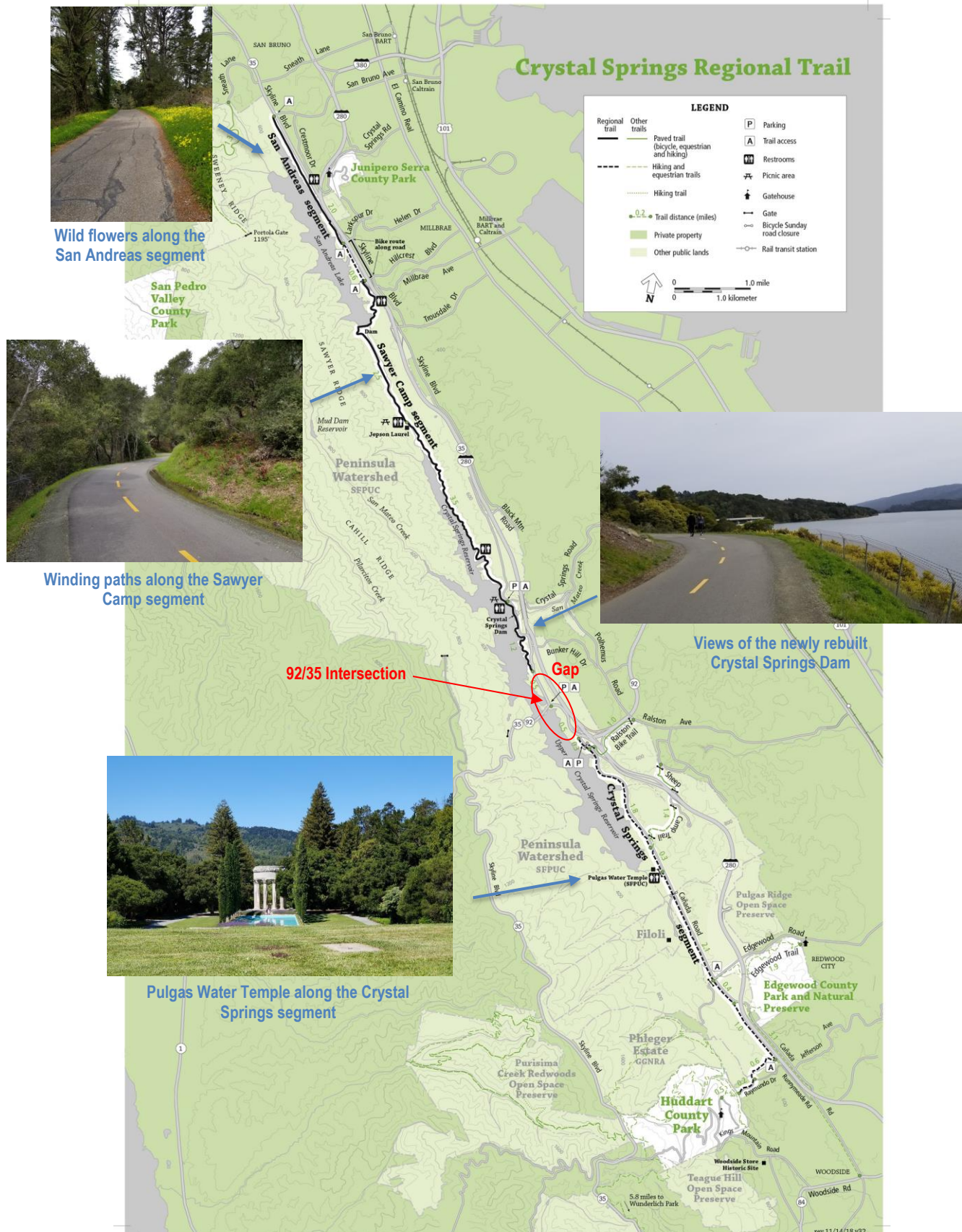


Figure 1: Parks Department's Crystal Springs Regional Trail map (with notations)



## BACKGROUND

The County of San Mateo Parks Department's (Parks Department) planned Crystal Springs Regional Trail (CSRT or the Trail), when completed, will extend 17.5 miles along the east side of the San Andreas and Crystal Springs Reservoirs (see Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> About 16.5 miles of the Trail are finished.<sup>4</sup> CSRT is a multi-use trail drawing pedestrians, joggers, individuals with strollers, kids with scooters, Segway users, bicyclists and, along some portions, equestrians to enjoy spectacular scenery and diverse natural habitats.<sup>5</sup> It is the most visited park in San Mateo County, attracting over 600,000 users per year and growing rapidly.<sup>6</sup>

While the planned CSRT is entirely within unincorporated San Mateo County,<sup>7</sup> almost all of the completed Trail runs through reservoir watershed property owned by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC). The SFPUC has granted easements to San Mateo County, providing that the Parks Department would manage and maintain the Trail, including all associated costs.<sup>8</sup> A completed CSRT is envisioned in the Parks Department's *San Mateo County 2001 Trails Plan*<sup>9</sup> and its March 2019 *Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail Feasibility Study*<sup>10</sup> as a continuous trail extending from San Bruno to Woodside.

The completed parts of the Trail are divided into three segments (see Figure 1)<sup>11</sup>:

- The San Andreas segment extends from San Bruno 2.6 miles south to Hillcrest Boulevard.
- The Sawyer Camp segment extends 7.2 miles south from the San Andreas segment at Hillcrest Boulevard, past the Crystal Springs Road entrance, and ending at Highway 35.
- The Crystal Springs segment starts at Highway 92 and continues 6.7 miles paralleling Canada Road to Woodside.

There is currently no trail connecting the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments.<sup>12</sup> (See Figure 1). This Grand Jury report investigated the possibility of closing this gap and completing the CSRT in order to provide a continuous trail experience away from traffic. In the course of its

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<sup>3</sup> County of San Mateo Parks Department, "Crystal Springs Regional Trail – Park Map".

<https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/CrystalSpringsTrailMap-Nov2018-FINAL-web-formatted.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The missing mile is taken from CSRT dimensions shown in Figure 1.

<sup>5</sup> County of San Mateo Parks Department, "Crystal Springs Regional Trail". <https://parks.smcgov.org/crystal-springs-regional-trail>

<sup>6</sup> Parks Department Visitor Counts included in Appendix A.

<sup>7</sup> County of San Mateo Information Services Department, "Unincorporated Land Areas: San Mateo County, California", 2015 (polygon shapefile). <https://earthworks.stanford.edu/catalog/stanford-dj051mr7220>

<sup>8</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

<sup>9</sup> San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Commission, Environmental Service Agency, Parks and Recreation Division, "San Mateo County 2001 Trails Plan", 2001.

<https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/documents/files/Trails%20Master%20Plan.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> County of San Mateo Parks Department, "The Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail Feasibility Study", March 2019. [https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/OPHT-FINAL%20Feasibility%20Study%204-7-19\\_r%20full.pdf](https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/OPHT-FINAL%20Feasibility%20Study%204-7-19_r%20full.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> This Grand Jury report calculates CSRT dimensions based on lengths shown in Figure 1.

<sup>12</sup> County of San Mateo Parks Department, "Complete the Gap Trail Project". <https://parks.smcgov.org/complete-gap-trail-project>

investigation, the Grand Jury also observed two related problems with the already completed portions of the CSRT. First, the Grand Jury found that there are only three Trail access points north of the Sawyer Camp segment entrance at Crystal Springs Road, covering a distance of 8.6 miles. Since many users only travel on the Trail over a relatively short distance, they tend to concentrate near these few entrances, which creates congestion. The Grand Jury also found that there is inadequate off-street parking at the few entrances that do exist. As a result, trail users must park their vehicles along the adjacent roads and highways, creating congestion and requiring visitors to walk on the traveled roadway in order to get from their vehicles to the trailheads. This is particularly serious at the entrance to the Sawyer Camp segment at Crystal Springs Road, the most popular trail access point.<sup>13</sup>

## DISCUSSION

### Trail Usage

The Parks Department conducted a *Visitor Use/Non-Use Parks Study* in 2015-2016 and found that the CSRT was the most visited of all San Mateo County parks.<sup>14</sup>

The Parks Department has been tracking trail use on the CSRT since 2006. During 2015-2016, they installed trail counters at the Sawyer Camp segment and, in 2017, placed additional counters at several other entrances to the CSRT. Appendix A shows a steady increase in visitors to the CSRT. The number of visitors increased from 340,176 in fiscal year 2015-2016 to 602,854 in 2017-2018, which is an increase of 77 percent. The Parks Department has also observed a corresponding increase in demand for services along the CSRT at facilities such as restrooms during those same periods.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the monthly trail counters found that the entrance of the Sawyer Camp segment at Crystal Springs Road was more popular than the other entrances. During the one-year period starting in February 2018 and ending in January 2019, the Sawyer Camp segment entrance at Crystal Springs Road had 62 percent more visitors compared to the next closest entrance. The southern entrance of the Sawyer Camp segment had 300,000 visitors compared to 185,000 visitors at the northern Sawyer Camp segment entrance and 65,000 visitors at the southern San Andreas segment entrance.

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<sup>13</sup> Sawyer Camp monthly trail counter data from Parks Department, See Appendix A.

<sup>14</sup> County of San Mateo Parks Department, "Visitor Use/Non-Use Parks Study", 2015-2016.

<https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/documents/files/Visitor-Study-Final-Report-072216.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

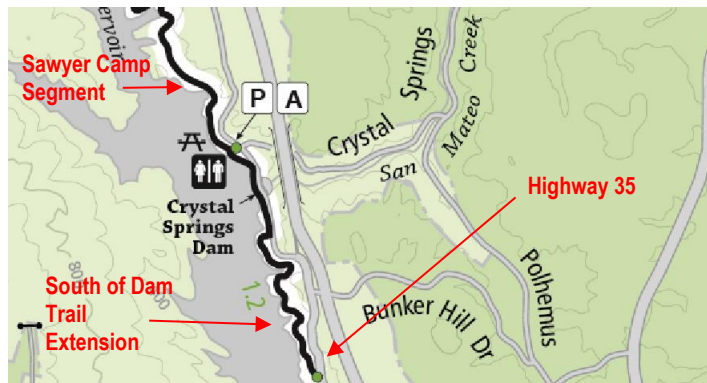


Figure 2: CSRT South of Dam Trail extension in black just below the Crystal Springs Dam

On January 11, 2019, the Sawyer Camp segment was extended 1.2 miles by a new “South of Dam Trail” that connects with Highway 35 (see Figure 2).<sup>16</sup> This newly completed section of the CSRT is a multi-use trail that enables bicyclists, pedestrians, and other users to cross the dam bridge road on a lane separated from passing traffic (shown in Figure 3) and travel on the South of Dam Trail extension continuously out of motor vehicular traffic until it connects with Highway 35 (see Figure 2).<sup>17</sup>

This newly opened extension promises to draw additional Trail users due to its views of the reservoir, a paved reasonably flat path, and facilities. As mentioned in a January 29, 2018 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* entitled, “Crystal Springs Regional Trail just got a dam sight better,” “[the CSRT] likely will become one of the most popular routes for walks, hikes and easy cycling anywhere.”<sup>18</sup>



Figure 3: Bidirectional lane separated from traffic south of Crystal Springs Dam

<sup>16</sup> County of San Mateo Parks Department, “Crystal Springs Dam Bridge Reopens”, January 30, 2019. <https://parks.smcgov.org/press-release/crystal-springs-dam-bridge-reopens>

<sup>17</sup> Supra, Note 12.

<sup>18</sup> Tom Stienstra, “Crystal Springs Regional Trail just got a dam sight better.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 29, 2019. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/outdoors/stienstra/article/Crystal-Springs-Regional-Trail-just-got-a-dam-13556971.php?psid=9XJ2D>



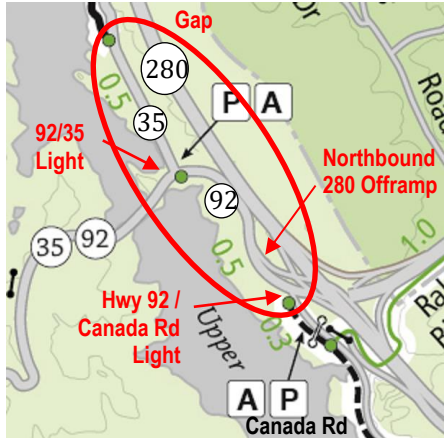


Figure 4: The “gap” – the area where there is no solid or dashed line along the CSRT labeled in red.

## CSRT “Gap”

There is currently no trail connecting the Sawyer Camp segment (the middle CSRT segment) and the Crystal Springs segment (the southern CSRT segment). Along this one-mile trail gap<sup>19</sup> (shown in red in Figure 4), pedestrians and bicyclists must travel along the shoulders of two busy state highways, Highways 92 and 35, and must cross the signalized intersection<sup>20</sup> of those two highways (92/35 light), just east of the reservoirs. These highways are under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).<sup>21</sup>

Bicyclists and pedestrians traveling north across the gap from the Crystal Springs segment to the Sawyer Camp segment of the CSRT must also cross a vehicular offramp that leads from northbound Highway 280 to westbound Highway 92 as shown in Figure 4. On both highways, the gap follows a major route for trucks, fast moving cars, and other vehicles to get to/from Half Moon Bay. While there is generally a wide shoulder along the Highway 92 section of the gap (running from the Highway 92/Canada Road intersection and the light to the intersection of Highways 92 and 35), bicyclists and pedestrians must share the highway with vehicles traveling at highway speeds. According to government officials with SFPUC and Parks Department interviewed by the Grand Jury, it would be safer if pedestrians and bicyclists traveled on a path separated from the highway.

Unlike the relatively wide shoulders along Highway 92, along the 0.5-mile stretch of Highway 35 running north of the intersection with Highway 92, the shoulder can be as narrow as three inches wide heading southbound. It becomes non-existent where vegetation covers the shoulder heading northbound, requiring bicyclists to ride or pedestrians to walk in the same lane with traffic.<sup>22</sup> (See Figure 5).

The intersection of Highways 35 and 92 is signalized, allowing pedestrians and bicyclists to cross. However, the signals do not include a button to allow non-vehicular uses to trigger a change in the signal.

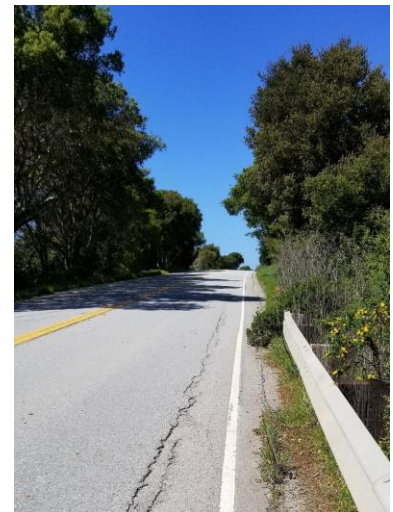


Figure 5: A shoulder covered by a bush along a section of Highway 35 north of the light at Highway 92 and 35

<sup>19</sup> The Grand Jury calculated the one-mile gap based on dimensions shown Figure 1.

<sup>20</sup> Highways 92 and 35 come together at two intersections in San Mateo County: an eastern intersection which includes the CSRT gap and a western intersection at the top of the Coast Range, closer to Half Moon Bay. This Grand Jury report discusses only the eastern intersection.

<sup>21</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

<sup>22</sup> Measurements taken of paved shoulder by the Grand Jury on April 9, 2019.

Contrast this gap in the planned CSRT with the Crystal Springs segment of the CSRT south of the gap which runs along Canada Road (also shown in black dashes in the lower right portion of Figure 4). The Crystal Springs segment of the CSRT has far less highway-speed traffic because vehicles have the alternative of traveling along Highway 280. The light at the intersection of Highway 92 and Canada Road (shown at the southern end of the gap on Figure 4) also has a signal button for northbound bicyclists or pedestrians to trigger a change in the signal light to allow them safe passage across Highway 92.

## CSRT Planning Studies

The Parks Department has long recognized the need to complete the CSRT. Its *San Mateo County 2001 Trails Plan* included a proposed route, “P9 - Crystal Springs Trail North,” that would connect the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments.<sup>23</sup> The Department website continues to state that it is planned to be a continuous multi-use trail that runs from San Bruno to Woodside:<sup>24</sup> The website also states, “We are striving to eliminate the last remaining gaps to finish the overall trail. We have already completed the easiest CSRT trail segments that involved converting existing service roads to trail. Now we are focused on the smaller more complicated gaps.”<sup>25</sup>

The most recent improvement to the Trail was the completion in January 2019 of the South of Dam Trail extension which runs part way between the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments - a multi-use trail south of the recently opened Crystal Springs Dam that connects farther south with Highway 35 (described above). However, the Parks Department has not adopted a schedule for further improvements to close the remaining one-mile gap in the CSRT.<sup>26</sup>

In March 2019, the County of San Mateo Parks Department issued the *Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail Feasibility Study* (Heritage Trail Study) in conjunction with the County of San Mateo Department of Public Works and a “committee of county, state, federal, and tribal representatives.”<sup>27</sup> The Heritage Trail Study assesses a proposed 90-mile trail system that recognizes the first contact between the Ohlone and Europeans and is part of the cultural heritage of San Mateo County. It incorporates a number of existing trails, including the entire planned CSRT.<sup>28</sup> The Heritage Trail is proposed for recreational use for hikers, equestrians, and bicyclists. The Heritage Trail Study gives the CSRT gap between the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments a high priority ranking for “trail acquisition and development” and identifies solutions for completing it.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Supra, Note 9, Page 16.

<sup>24</sup> Supra, Note 5.

<sup>25</sup> Supra, Note 12.

<sup>26</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

<sup>27</sup> Supra, Note 10.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, Page 47 & Attachment E ranks segments 39 to 42 (the gap) as the highest overall and in terms of safety. See Page 27 (map 4) to understand map segments. Pages 33 and 175-178 are also helpful.

## Opportunities for Completing the Gap

The County has new initiatives in the works that make the timing opportune to reconsider completing the CSRT across the gap. A key obstacle to completing the gap between the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments is the intersection of Highways 35 and 92, east of the reservoirs (See Figure 6). The Heritage Trail Study notes that this intersection is currently under study by the County of San Mateo Planning and Building Department as part of its “Connect the Coastsides” *Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan*.<sup>30</sup> The Planning Department is considering a double lane roundabout to improve traffic flow as a result of “Midcoast development on Highway 1 & 92.” The Heritage Trail study recommends that the County “adopt a policy that the Heritage Trail be incorporated into the detailed site planning, design, and environmental review for the roundabout to close this important gap in the Heritage Trail system... The policy would include consideration for either a signalized at-grade crossing of Highways 35 and 92, as appropriate, or a bicycle/pedestrian bridge over Highway 92.”<sup>31</sup> The Heritage Trail study notes that Caltrans cooperation and an encroachment permit would be required.<sup>32</sup> As of March 2019, according to Planning Department staff, the Connect the Coastsides project has not considered the CSRT in its planning.<sup>33</sup> Without considering the CSRT in its planning, it is possible that a future redesigned intersection could hinder or preclude a CSRT crossing.

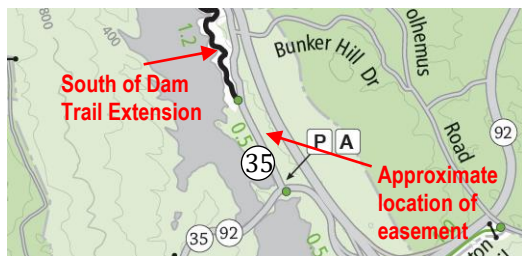


Figure 6: easement on the east side of Highway 35

The Heritage Trail Study also proposes multiple alternatives for parts of the gap between the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments.<sup>34</sup> One option is for the CSRT to cross to the east side of Highway 35, opposite the southern end of the South of Dam Trail extension of the Sawyer Camp segment, and connect with an existing service road, for which the Parks Department has an easement (shown in Figure 6).<sup>35</sup> Caltrans has discussed but rejected proposals from senior staff at the Parks Department options for a safe

passage across Highway 35 to the east side, such as a crosswalk or flashing light. As a result, according to Parks Department staff, “the trail crossing has been eliminated at this time.”<sup>36</sup>

Another option is to extend the CSRT by creating a bidirectional multi-use trail along the west side of Highway 35 within Caltrans right of way over the 0.5-mile gap north of the intersection

<sup>30</sup> County of San Mateo Planning and Building Department, “Connect the Coastsides”.

<https://planning.smcgov.org/connect-coastsides>

<sup>31</sup> Supra, Note 10, Page 52.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, Page D-56 Segment #40 (175/208) addresses the intersection.

<sup>33</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

<sup>34</sup> Supra, Note 10, Attachment D.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, Appendix D, Page D-56 refers under Alternatives: “Upgrade of existing service road east of Skyline Boulevard [Highway 35] as an option to Segments #40 and #41 with overcrossing of Highway 92 to Segment #42.”

<sup>36</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

of Highways 92 and 35. According to Parks Department staff, Caltrans would require a “lead agency to develop [the] trail and be responsible for maintenance.”<sup>37</sup>

As for completing the CSRT gap south of the intersection of Highways 92 and 35 down to the Crystal Springs segment, the Heritage Trail Study stated that designs for doing so were “essentially completed” using an “existing service road / pathway.”<sup>38</sup> However according to the Parks Department, this option was not undertaken in 2014 due to environmental issues that made the cost of building the trail prohibitive.<sup>39</sup>

In interviews with senior Parks Department and SFPUC officials, the Grand Jury raised the idea and they agreed that the County could explore creating a bidirectional multi-use lane along the west side of Highway 92 on Caltrans right-of-way, or other ideas that may come out of the Connect the Coastside efforts.<sup>40</sup>

### Providing More Access

Distances between entrances along the 17.5-mile CSRT are significant. Notably, as shown in Figure 7, there is no entrance to the CSRT along the 5.1-mile stretch of the highway running parallel to the CSRT between the Sawyer Camp segment entrance at Crystal Springs Road and the northern Sawyer Camp segment entrance at Hillcrest Boulevard. The entrance of the Sawyer Camp segment at Crystal Springs Road is the most visited and, as noted in the next section, used regularly for parking. Providing a new entrance in the vicinity of Hayne Road would encourage users to spread out along the Trail and reduce use and parking needs at the Crystal Springs Road entrance. It would also provide residents in nearby areas of the county with easier access to the CSRT.

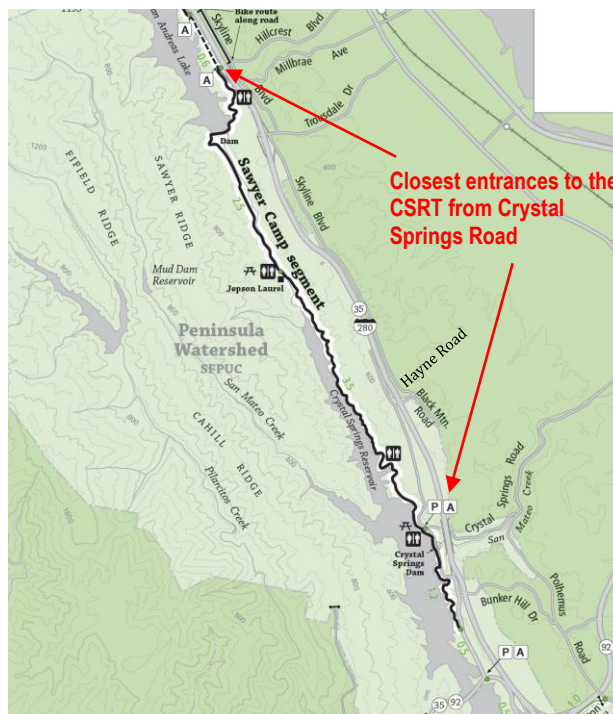


Figure 7: Existing northern access points of the CSRT

<sup>37</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

<sup>38</sup> Supra, Note 10, Appendix D, Page D-58 covers Segment #42 South of 92/35 intersection.

<sup>39</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

<sup>40</sup> Grand Jury interviews.





Figure 8: Narrow shoulder of Highway 35 north of Crystal Springs Road

Similar to conditions along the 0.5-mile section of the gap along Highway 35 south of the Crystal Springs Road entrance, conditions north of this entrance, along the 1.2-mile stretch of Highway 35 to Hayne Road/Black Mountain Road, include extremely narrow shoulders<sup>41</sup> with uneven surfaces and drop-offs, as shown in Figure 8. Thus, access to the Crystal Springs Road entrance requires visitors from the north to walk or bicycle in the traffic lane of Highway 35 with blind corners, parked cars and a vehicular speed limit of up to 50 mph.<sup>42</sup>

The Parks Department has not asked the SFPUC for easements to provide access to the CSRT north of the Sawyer Camp segment entrance at Crystal Springs Road.<sup>43</sup> However, the Grand Jury examined existing access roads, currently not open to the public, that cross SFPUC land north of Crystal Springs Road. SFPUC officials interviewed by the Grand Jury stated their willingness to discuss

additional easements for the Parks Department to open access to the CSRT on these northern sections. The SFPUC said it was willing to explore using one existing service road near Hayne Road identified by the Grand Jury (labeled “Possible Access Point” in red next to the red dashed line in Figure 9). This existing service road runs part of the way to the CSRT along the edge of the Crystal Springs Golf Course across from Black Mountain Road/Hayne Road and is used for access to the Fairview Wedding & Event Center. The service road would need to be extended to tie into the CSRT.<sup>44</sup>

Providing additional access points to the CSRT would encourage users to spread out along the Trail, reducing density and parking demands at the Crystal Springs Road entrance.<sup>45</sup>

Additionally, it would allow bicyclists and pedestrians to avoid the dangers of a narrow shoulder, fast-moving vehicles, overgrown brush, tight turns, and parked cars that are present on the 1.2-mile portion of Highway 35.

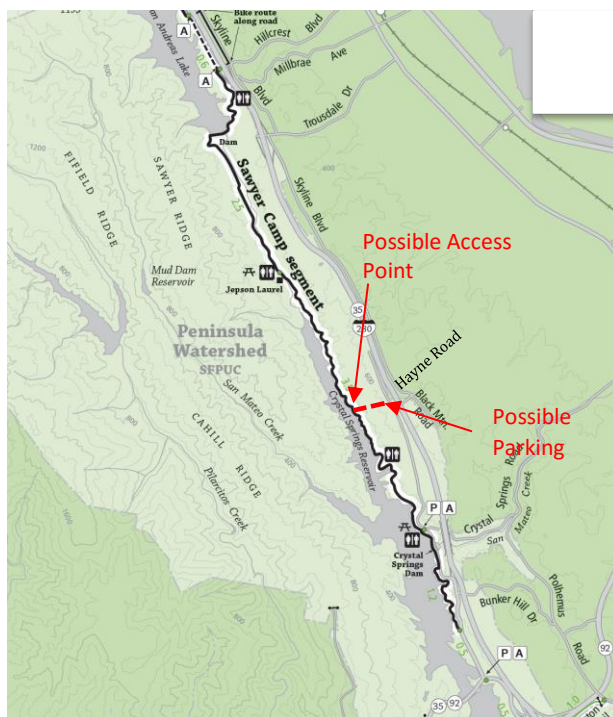


Figure 9: Proposed access and parking north of Crystal Springs Road

<sup>41</sup> Measurements taken of paved shoulder by the Grand Jury on April 9, 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Grand Jury Interviews.

<sup>43</sup> Grand Jury Interviews.

<sup>44</sup> Grand Jury Interviews.

<sup>45</sup> Grand Jury Interviews.



## Limited Parking Along the Trail

The 2016 *Visitor Parks Study* notes that for San Mateo County’s parks a “lack of ... parking can, in fact, be barriers for their visitation...” Without mentioning the Sawyer Camp segment entrance, the Study highlights some challenges: “For those participants who do own a vehicle, parking was an issue, especially during weekends or at popular parks.”<sup>46</sup>

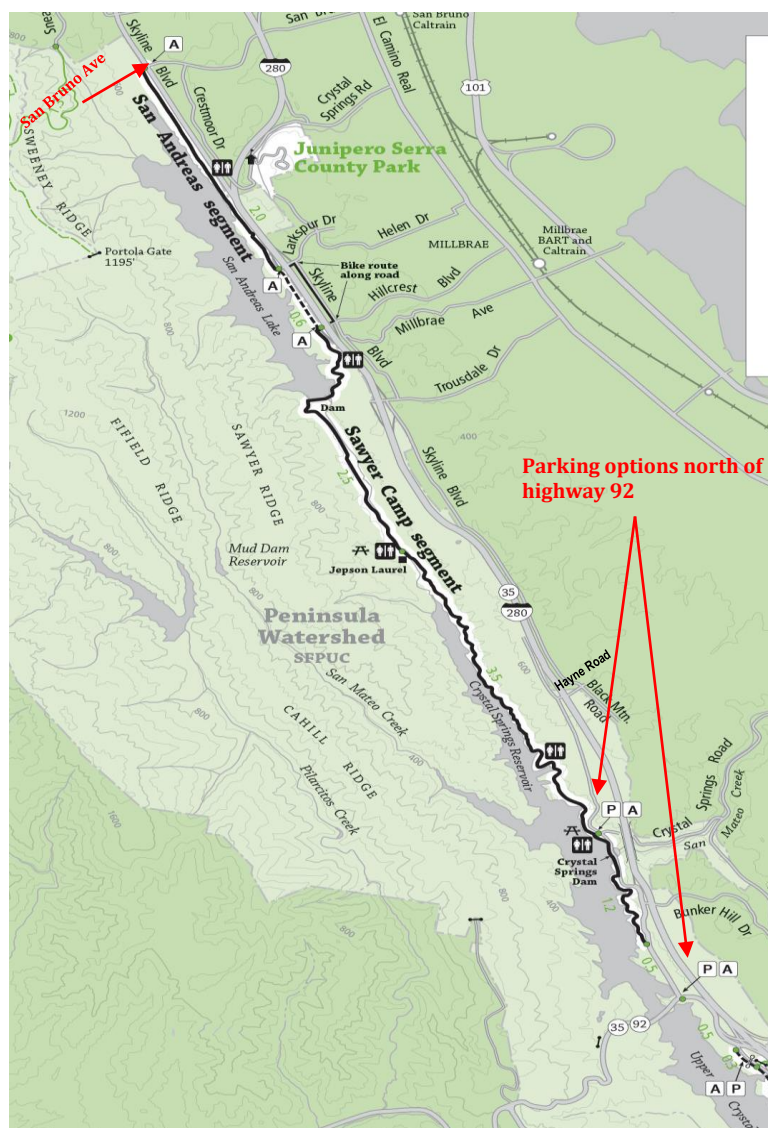


Figure 10: Existing access and parking options along the CSRT north of Highway 92

The *San Mateo County 2001 Trails Plan* includes a design goal to “adequately accommodate and manage anticipated parking use levels to prevent overflow parking into local neighborhood streets.”<sup>47</sup> However, the Parks Department was not able to design appropriate levels of parking along the CSRT as they developed the Trail. According to Parks officials, “opportunities were limited. It was decided at that time that having a longer trail with more access points would disperse heavy use and parking along Sawyer Camp Trail.”<sup>48</sup> However, the additional access points were not built.

Figure 10 shows existing CSRT access points (labeled A) as well as parking locations (labeled P) on the Parks Department’s maps. There are only two parking locations in Figure 10 between Highway 92 and San Bruno Avenue. Both are at the southern end of the Sawyer Camp segment and provide a total of just 24 parking spaces plus 3 disabled parking spaces.<sup>49</sup> However, despite the parking locations indicated in Figure 10, the Parks Department does not consider these locations “defined parking lots.”

<sup>46</sup> Supra, Note 17, Page 39.

<sup>47</sup> Supra, Note 9, Page 30.

<sup>48</sup> Grand Jury Communication.

<sup>49</sup> Parking spaces at the southern entrance of the Sawyer Camp segment were counted by the Grand Jury.

Parks Department staff says that:

“There is not a defined parking lot along the 17.5-mile Trail; however there is parking along road right of way at almost all entrances and intersections north of Highway 92, not only at the Sawyer Camp segment southern entrance, but also at the Larkspur, Hillcrest, and South of Dam Trail extension entrances as well as at the Millbrae, Trousdale, and eastern Highway 92/35 intersections. Without defined parking lots the goal to date has been to disperse trail use over a larger area with more points of entry.” Staff goes on to say, “We’ve always looked for more parking but have had no luck securing lands from SFPUC for or other agencies for such a purpose.”<sup>50</sup>

As a result, visitors park their cars along the shoulder of Highway 35 and Crystal Springs Road. This requires pedestrians to walk in the road with traffic (Figure 11).<sup>51</sup> There is also a steep slope leading up Crystal Springs Road which makes it difficult for pedestrians, especially with strollers, to make their way from their parked cars along this section of the road to the Trail entrance as pictured in Figure 12.<sup>52</sup>



Figure 11: Parking at the Crystal Springs Road entrance



Figure 12: Pedestrian with stroller walking up the hill to the stop sign at Crystal Springs Road across from the Sawyer Camp segment entrance

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<sup>50</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

<sup>51</sup> Photos in this report taken by the Grand Jury.

<sup>52</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

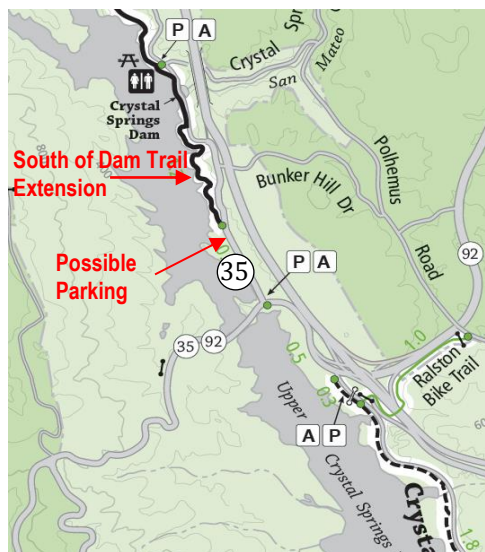


Figure 13: Possible parking at the southern entrance of the South of Dam Trail extension

The South of Dam Trail extension of the Sawyer Camp segment which opened in January 2019 would be a new location to consider for potential off-street parking. This section of the CSRT offers features comparable to the Sawyer Camp segment, such as a reasonably flat slope of the trail, picturesque views, as well as trash and restroom facilities. If the South of Dam Trail extension had a parking lot at the southern entrance (labeled “Possible Parking” in red in Figure 13), it could encourage users to start their recreation at the southern entrance of the South of Dam Trail extension.

Based on the parking design goals set forth in the *San Mateo County 2001 Trails Plan* mentioned

above and Grand Jury observations that parking along the CSRT overflows into neighboring streets, the Grand Jury finds that there is inadequate parking along the state highways and roads that provide access to the CSRT, requiring pedestrians and bicyclists to share the same lane with traffic. This is particularly serious at the Crystal Springs Road entrance to the Sawyer Camp segment, the most popular trail access point. The Grand Jury finds that there is inadequate parking along the 17.5-mile Trail at almost all entrances and intersections north of Highway 92, not only at Crystal Springs Road, but also at the Larkspur, Hillcrest, and South of Dam Trail extension entrances as well as at the Millbrae, Trousdale, and eastern Highway 92/35 intersections (see Figure 14).

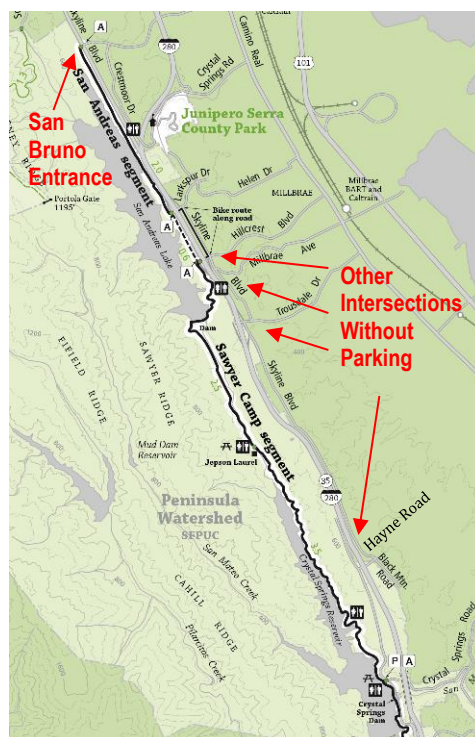


Figure 14: No designated parking north of Crystal Springs Road entrance

The Parks Department has not asked the SFPUC for easements for additional parking spaces along SFPUC land.<sup>53</sup> The Grand Jury notes that if an additional access point is added at Hayne Road (see Figure 9), the availability of additional off-street parking at that location should be considered. There is currently a Caltrans Park and Ride parking lot at this location which could possibly be expanded and used by CSRT visitors.

Senior officials at the Parks Department and SFPUC agreed that a solution for parking at entrances and key intersections along the CSRT could be helpful in meeting demand as well as reducing congestion and parking limitations at the Crystal Springs Road entrance. A senior SFPUC official further noted that “it’s still very crowded, particularly on weekends.”<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

<sup>54</sup> Grand Jury correspondence and interviews.



## Coordination of Four County Studies

Studies are underway by San Mateo County that could provide an opportunity to address the CSRT gap as well as improve the Trail in other sections.

1. The County of San Mateo's Office of Sustainability recently received a grant to develop the *Unincorporated San Mateo County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* (Master Plan). The study is now underway and is scheduled to be completed in the second quarter of 2020.<sup>55</sup> The objectives of the Master Plan include: "completing gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle network, improving roadway safety, decreasing number of pedestrian and bicycle collisions, improving community and environmental health, and increasing mobility and accessibility throughout the county."<sup>56</sup> The County has a committee appointed by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors called the San Mateo County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (SMCBPAC) which advises the Board of Supervisors on bicycle and pedestrian related matters pertaining to the unincorporated areas of San Mateo County. According to staff with the Office of Sustainability as well as a SMCBPAC committee member, there is interest in discussing the CSRT gap when this department develops the Master Plan.<sup>57</sup>
2. San Mateo County's City/County Association of Governments (C/CAG) also has a bike and pedestrian committee called Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) which will be providing input on C/CAG's update to the 2011 *San Mateo County Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan* (CBPP) later this year.<sup>58</sup> The CBPP "addresses the planning, design, funding, and implementation of bicycle and pedestrian projects of countywide significance."<sup>59</sup> The CBPP listed the CSRT as a "Key Corridor," and the gap portion of CSRT from Highway 92 to Canada Road was considered a "high funding priority." "Key Corridors are corridors that serve key transportation and recreation needs evident in county commute patterns, concentration of population, and geography."<sup>60,61</sup> If proposed by the BPAC, the scope of the CBPP update could include other parts of the CSRT and also identify improvements needed for bicycles such as widening the road to add bike lanes. The process to update the CBPP is also now underway.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Grand Jury interviews. The San Mateo County Office of Sustainability received the funds for this grant from Measure W which was passed in November 2018. See also: County of San Mateo Office of Sustainability, "Unincorporated San Mateo County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Grant Application". <https://www.smcsustainability.org/wp-content/uploads/BPMP-Grant-Application-Presentation.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

<sup>58</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

<sup>59</sup> City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County, "San Mateo County Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan". [http://ccag.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CBPP\\_Main-Report-and-Appendix\\_Sept2011\\_FINAL.pdf](http://ccag.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CBPP_Main-Report-and-Appendix_Sept2011_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, Pages viii, 63, 66, and Appendix A-13.

<sup>61</sup> The Gap portion of CSRT from Highway 92 to Canada Road was ranked highly enough to have an estimated project expense of about \$515,000 when the report was published.

<sup>62</sup> Grand Jury Interviews.

3. *Connect the Coastside* is a project under study by the County of San Mateo Planning and Building Department to develop a “Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan (CTMP) to address the cumulative traffic impacts of Midcoast development on Highways 1 & 92.” The Planning Department is considering redesigning a key section of the CSRT gap at the Highway 92/35 intersection to improve traffic flow. This study is due to be issued for public comment in June and published in the fourth quarter of 2019.<sup>63</sup>
4. As previously mentioned, the Parks Department’s Heritage Trail Study explores the viability of a proposed 90-mile trail system that recognizes the first contact between the Ohlone and Europeans and is part of the cultural heritage of San Mateo County. It incorporates a number of existing trails – the eastern portion of which will follow the entire planned Crystal Springs Regional Trail. This study was issued in March 2019 and, as of the time of this report, was recommended for acceptance and approval by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors at their June 25, 2019 meeting.

With studies in three San Mateo County departments as well as C/CAG all currently underway that involve or could involve improving the CSRT, the Grand Jury finds that coordination between the departments in conducting these studies could be beneficial for the Trail.

### **Potential Sources of Funding**

According to senior officials within the Parks Department, there is no budget for improvements to the CSRT.<sup>64</sup> However, additional funding sources may be available through other initiatives or projects.

In 2018, voters in San Mateo County approved SamTrans’ Measure W ½ cent sales tax measure to fund road improvements, transit services, and implementation of the San Mateo County Congestion Relief Plan. Five percent of the proceeds from Measure W must be used for bicycle, pedestrian, and active transportation projects throughout the County.<sup>65</sup> The text of Measure W suggests that it is a possible funding source for helping to close the gap or improve trails like the CSRT: “Programming of funds under this Category will give priority to those projects that ... fill gaps in the existing bicycle and pedestrian network; safely cross barriers such as major roads, rail corridors, and highways; improve existing facilities to make them safer and more accessible for cyclists and pedestrians; and make walking or bicycling a safer and more convenient means of transportation for all County residents and visitors.”<sup>66</sup>

Additionally, the Parks Department plans to apply for state recognition for the new Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail. The CSRT could experience increased popularity and even benefit from other funding if the Heritage Trail becomes recognized as a state historic trail.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

<sup>64</sup> Grand Jury interviews.

<sup>65</sup> Full Text of San Mateo County Measure W (2018). [https://www.smcacre.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/samtransresono2018-29\\_076022\\_full\\_text.pdf](https://www.smcacre.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/samtransresono2018-29_076022_full_text.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, Section 6 (c).

<sup>67</sup> Grand Jury Interviews.



## CONCLUSION

The Grand Jury concludes that now is the time to investigate how to complete the one-mile gap in the Crystal Springs Regional Trail (CSRT) to create a continuous trail separated from traffic from San Bruno to Woodside. Key considerations for why it is opportune to complete the gap are:

- The County of San Mateo Planning Department is currently considering redesigning a key intersection in the middle of the CSRT gap between the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments as part of its “Connect the Coastside” *Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan*.
- The recently finalized Heritage Trail Study labels the CSRT gap a high priority and suggests multiple alternatives for completing it.
- Given that the County’s Planning Department, the County’s Office of Sustainability, and C/CAG are initiating studies in 2019 that concern bicycling and pedestrian use near the gap, cooperation and consultation between these groups could best identify solutions for completing the gap and improving the CSRT overall.
- Measure W funds that were recently made available with its passage in November 2018 make the timing possibly advantageous for helping to fund improvements to the CSRT.

In addition to closing the one-mile gap, the Grand Jury recommends that the Parks Department consider installing new access points north of the Crystal Springs Road entrance of the Sawyer Camp segment and additional off-street parking along the CSRT north of Highway 92 to reduce crowding at the popular Crystal Springs Road entrance. The Grand Jury finds in its investigation that the increased use by more than a half a million visitors annually to the CSRT presents an opportunity for the County to focus attention on this highly valued resource within San Mateo County.

## FINDINGS

- F1. A completed CSRT is envisioned in the Parks Department’s *San Mateo County 2001 Trails Plan* and later in its April 2019 *Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail Feasibility Study* (Heritage Trail Study) as a continuous trail extending from San Bruno to Woodside.
- F2. The Heritage Trail Study gives the CSRT gap between the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments a high priority ranking and presents options for completing the CSRT gap which overlaps with the proposed Heritage Trail.
- F3. In the Heritage Trail Study, the Parks Department has requested that multiple alternatives be considered for completing the one-mile gap and integrating with the proposed roundabout at the Highway 92/35 intersection in the “Connect the Coastside” *Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan* report.
- F4. The Parks Department has not adopted a schedule for further improvements to close the remaining one-mile gap in the CSRT.

- F5. Five percent of the proceeds from SamTrans' Measure W (2018) must be used for bicycle, pedestrian, and active transportation projects throughout the County. The Measure presents a possible funding source for helping to close the gap or improve trails like the CSRT .
- F6. Usage among County residents in the CSRT has been increasing.
- F7. The entrance of the Sawyer Camp segment at Crystal Springs Road is the most popular access point along the CSRT.
- F8. Currently on sections of the CSRT and along certain adjacent roads, specifically the area of the gap and the section of Highway 35 between Hayne Road and Crystal Springs Road, bicycle riders and pedestrians must travel along roads with little to no shoulder and along roads that are shared with vehicles entering and exiting the freeway.
- F9. There are three access points north of the Sawyer Camp segment entrance at Crystal Springs Road, covering a span of 8.6 miles. The Parks Department currently has no plans to add additional access points along the CSRT, and it has not asked the SFPUC for additional easements to provide such access.
- F10. The Parks Department originally envisioned having more trail entrances, which would more evenly distribute users and reduce parking requirements at individual locations. However, these multiple access points have not been implemented.
- F11. Based on the parking design goals set forth in the *San Mateo County 2001 Trails Plan*, there is inadequate parking along the 17.5-mile Trail at almost all entrances and intersections north of Highway 92, not only at the Crystal Springs Road entrance, but also at the Larkspur, Hillcrest, and South of Dam Trail extension entrances as well as at the Millbrae, Trousdale, and eastern Highway 92/35 intersections.
- F12. The Parks Department has not asked the SFPUC for easements for additional parking spaces along SFPUC land.
- F13. As of March 2019, the Planning Department has not taken the CSRT into account in planning the redesign of the Highway 92/35 intersection proposed in its Connect the Coastside report.
- F14. Four separate studies have been undertaken in 2019 that involve or could involve trail improvements relating to the CSRT, particularly in the area of the Highway 92/35 intersection. The studies are: Connect the Coastside (Planning Department.), the *Unincorporated San Mateo County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* (Office of Sustainability), an update to the *San Mateo County Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan* (C/CAG), and the Heritage Trail Study (Parks Department). The Heritage Trail Study has been finalized and was recommended for acceptance and approval by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors at their June 25, 2019 meeting.
- F15. The CSRT could experience increased use and benefit from additional funding if the Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail becomes recognized as a state historic trail.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. By March 31, 2020, the Parks Department should present a report to the County Board of Supervisors at a public hearing assessing the options for completing the gap between the Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs segments of the CSRT.
- R2. By March 31, 2020, the Parks Department should present a report to the County Board of Supervisors at a public hearing assessing the options for providing additional access points along the CSRT north of the Crystal Springs Road entrance to the Sawyer Camp segment.
- R3. By March 31, 2020, the Parks Department should present a report to the County Board of Supervisors at a public hearing assessing the options for providing additional off-street parking at all intersections as well as at existing and any proposed new entrances along the CSRT north of Highway 92.
- R4. By September 30, 2019, the County Planning Department, the County Parks Department, the County Office of Sustainability and C/CAG should establish a means of coordinating their planning efforts related to the CSRT, including planning related to the intersection of Highways 92 and 35, just east of the reservoirs, as well as closing the CSRT gap and providing additional access and parking along the Trail.

## **REQUEST FOR RESPONSES**

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

From the following governing bodies:

- San Mateo County Board of Supervisors (R1, R2, R3, and R4)
- City/County Association of Governments (C/CAG) (R4)

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted subject to the notice, agenda, and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Documents**

- In investigating the San Mateo County Crystal Springs Regional Trail, the Grand Jury sought information from published articles and referenced web sites from the County of San Mateo Parks Department and the County of San Mateo Planning Department, among others. The bibliography contains a full list of these documents.

### **Site Tours**

- The Grand Jury conducted site visits to the Crystal Springs Regional Trail several times during the period November 2018 through May 2019 to investigate matters presented in this report, take photographs of the Trail and roads surrounding the Trail, and take measurements of road shoulders.

### **Interviews**

- The Grand Jury conducted nine interviews with persons inside and outside of San Mateo County, including the County of San Mateo Parks Department, Planning Department, Office of Sustainability as well as the City/County Association of Governments (C/CAG), the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), and representatives of bicycle and equestrian organizations who have knowledge of the Crystal Springs Regional Trail.

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## APPENDIX A

The chart below, supplied by the County of San Mateo Parks Department, lists visitor counts taken along the CSRT since the Department started tracking visitors in 2006. Visitor counts are tracked through December 2018.

### Visitor Count

Crystal Springs Trail: Sawyer Camp, San Andreas (North, Middle, & South)
In 2015-2016: Installed Counters for Sawyer Camp Trail
Installed electric counters at San Andreas North, Middle & South in November 2017

FY	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Total
2006-07	20,731	21,243	16,285	12,525	8,695	6,087	16,709	12,185	11,790	10,038	12,440	11,145	159,873
2007-08	36,778	31,315	20,635	28,775	29,595	21,500	14,800	16,045	26,925	25,620	24,779	24,406	301,173
2008-09	24,795	28,546	27,453	28,185	28,682	21,345	26,640	18,235	22,835	24,722	24,613		276,051
2009-10	29,050		17,494	19,820	17,850	15,090	14,483	13,986	19,492	16,010	17,125	17,934	198,334
2010-11	21,440		19,396	18,885	16,710	15,145	18,230	14,870	14,240	17,745	17,640	17,934	192,235
2011-12	21,440	18,345	33,325	34,120	32,800	34,975	25,080	21,905	30,615	31,260	34,215	34,005	352,085
2012-13	36,710	34,085	34,085	34,085	33,235	34,085	12,912	13,345	19,175	20,065	20,070	27,897	319,749
2013-14	26,147	28,546	29,260	27,972	22,300	21,160	27,085	15,210	21,885	23,422	21,956	21,375	286,318
2014-15	25,724	28,593	28,390	28,166	34,161	23,699	28,227	15,210	21,885	23,422	23,592	23,055	304,124
2015-16	25,724	28,593	28,390	28,166	20,631	24,396	32,307	38,695	31,164	39,099	15,411	27,600	340,176
2016-17	50,259	43,575	37,672	29,695	32,700	30,339	21,915	28,395	44,515	35,923	34,342	38,918	428,248
2017-18	50,307	38,807	25,874	22,182	34,592	46,914	56,268	55,224	44,930	54,370	112,750	60,636	602,854
2018-19	70,157	65,150	48,841	46,735	27,944	45,061							303,888
2019-20													-
Totals	439,262	366,798	367,100	359,311	339,895	339,796	294,656	263,305	309,451	321,696	358,933	304,905	4,065,108

Issued: July 25, 2019