NORTH COYOTE VALLEY RIDGE TRAIL ROUTE

FEASIBILITY STUDY SUMMARY



NOVEMBER 2020

BAY AREA RIDGE TRAIL - TRAIL PROGRAM



PROJECT PARTNERS

Stakeholders

- Caltrans
- City of San José
- Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST)
- Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department (County Parks)
- Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency (SCVHA)
- Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (Open Space Authority)

Consultants

- TrailPeople
- BKF Engineers
- · Pathways for Wildlife
- Wildlife Research Scientist: Tony Clevenger

Landowners

- Caltrans
- · City of San José
- IBM
- Pacific Gas & Electric
- Peninsula Open Space Trust
- Santa Clara County Roads and Airport
- Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department
- Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

ADOPTED PLANS

The Bay Area Ridge Trail is recognized in the following state and regional plans:

STATE COASTAL CONSERVANCY 2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN | Priority project (LINK)

CALIFORNIA RECREATIONAL TRAIL PLAN (2011) | California Trail Corridor (LINK)

PLAN BAY AREA 2040 | Priority Conservation Area (LINK)

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THIS REPORT WAS GENEROUSLY FUNDED BY

a. 2018-2019 Comprehensive Route Alternatives Analysis



b. 2018 Existing Conditions Report

c. Bailey Avenue Conceptual Design



INTRODUCTION

The Bay Area Ridge Trail (Ridge Trail) is an existing and planned 550-mile long distance trail that connects the ridgelines surrounding the San Francisco Bay. The Ridge Trail vision of creating a continuous multi-use trail through the nine Bay Area counties has many formidable challenges, but in few areas is the routing challenge as complex and timesensitive, as in the northern section of Coyote Valley.

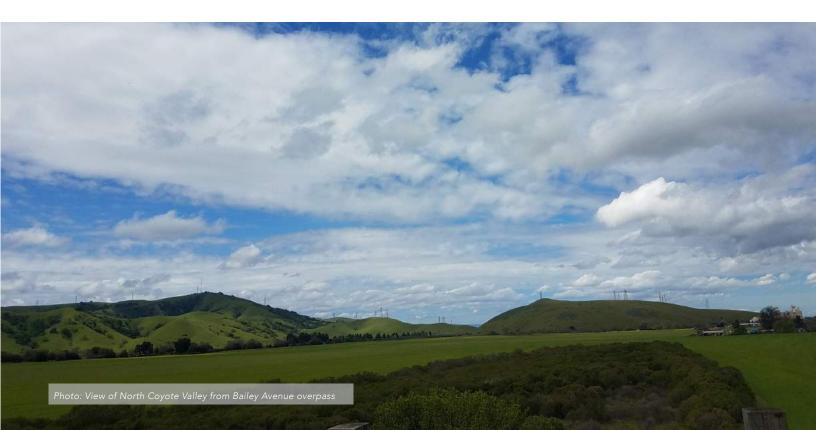
Coyote Valley, located at the southern end of San José, lies between the Diablo Range and Santa Cruz Mountains and is an important corridor for water, wildlife, and people. Coyote Valley has been identified as one of the most important conservation areas in the nation and is the subject of billions of dollars in conservation investments.¹ Coyote Valley is adjacent to California's third largest city, key players in Silicon Valley's tech industry and significant transportation corridors including U.S. 101, Caltrain, and California's planned high speed rail line.

With an influx of conservation acquisition and planning underway in the valley, the Ridge Trail decided to spearhead a feasibility study to identify and build consensus around a prefered feasible route concept in this area. In 2018, the Ridge Trail began the feasibility study with grant funding from the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (Authority) and the Resource Legacy Fund. In 2019, more conservation lands were added to the study area when Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), The Authority and the

1 Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority and Conservation Biology Institute. 2017. Coyote Valley Landscape Linkage: A Vision for a Resilient, Multi-benefit Landscape. Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, San José, CA. <u>Available at this link.</u>

City of San José protected almost 1,000 acres of conservation land now named the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area. When the Ridge Trail is completed through the valley, it will connect trail users, habitat and wildlife along a 35-mile continuous stretch of public lands from Lexington Reservoir County Park and the summit of Mount Umunhum to the Coyote Creek Trail in San José.

This report documents the preferred and most feasible route identified during the two-year North Coyote Valley Ridge Trail route feasibility study. The feasibility study analyzed route alternatives to close the 5 - 6 mile Ridge Trail gap from Santa Teresa County Park to the Coyote Creek Parkway and the protected Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve (Coyote Ridge). The study resulted in the identification of one preferred and feasible route through the study area. The information gathered through the study will provide background for the upcoming North Coyote Valley Conservation Area (NCVCA) Master Plan process and will inform the next phases including design and fundraising for necessary trail connections.



WHY IS THIS GAP IMPORTANT?

Coyote Valley is one of the world's top 25 most important biodiversity hotspots and a critical link between open spaces across the Bay Area. The valley is identified as one the least developed valley floor connections between the Diablo Range and Santa Cruz Mountains and most feasible locations where the Ridge Trail to reasonably connect through the highly urbanized Santa Clara County. Significant public investments in land acquisition, transportation infrastructure including existing overpasses, and local trail networks including the Coyote Creek Parkway, make this area a critical link for the regional trail network. Creating a regional trail connection in this area will further goals for recreation, active transportation, wildlife, and land conservation for multiple stakeholders.

CONNECTS WILDLIFE HABITAT AND CORRIDORS

Balancing wildlife, conservation and sustainable and well-planned public access is essential to the long-term success of a future trail project in the area. Creating a trail which connects the surrounding conservation lands may provide opportunities for safe passage for wildlife over major road and rail barriers as well.

The study prioritized the enhancement of wildlife habitat and movement corridors in trail design, exploring opportunities such as roadside alignments, to allow for the greatest protection of natural resources.

PRIORITIZES EQUITABLE PUBLIC ACCESS

A completed trail will improve access to open space via a protected and safe trail route for people of all ages and varied abilities, including youth and seniors. Residents and visitors to the area will enjoy long distance regional trail connections and broaden access to nearby local green spaces. The trail will serve residents of deep engagement communities in San José and Morgan Hill along the popular Coyote Creek Parkway¹.

Once complete, the Ridge Trail connection would extend residents' ability to explore significant regional open space. The regional trail will ultimately link Santa Teresa County Park, Almaden Quicksilver County Park, Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve and Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve with potential future trail connections to Calero County Park and beyond.

¹Deep Engagement Communities (DEC) are defined in the Open Space Authority's August 2020 Understanding our Community Report. This trail would benefit DECs #3, 4, and 6.



SUPPORTS NORTH COYOTE VALLEY CONSERVATION AREA (NCVCA) GOALS

This trail will support NCVCA goals of enhancing wildlife habitat and ecological connectivity, protecting water and agricultural resources, and connecting people to open space. The project will be designed through close coordination with partners and land managers to ensure that the project does not conflict with any of the NCVCA goals and enhances the area's benefits to conservation and the public.

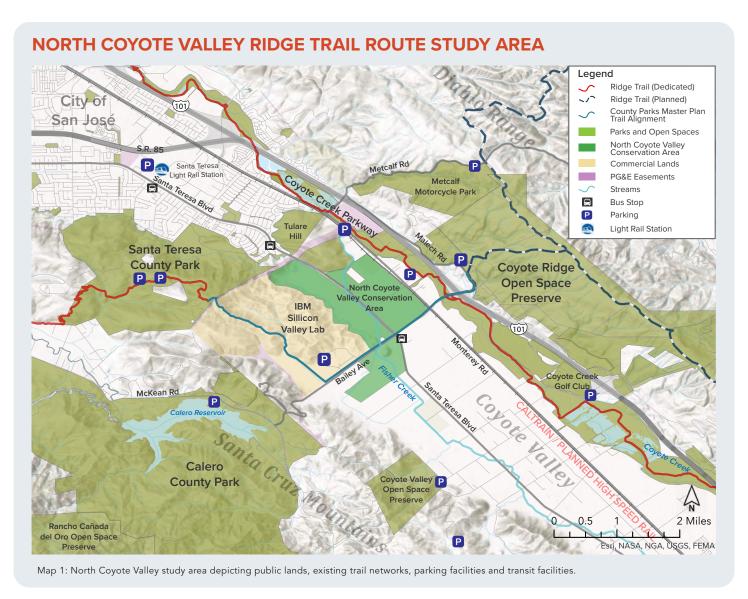
CLOSES A GAP IN THE JUAN BAUTISTA DE ANZA NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail (Juan Bautista Trail) is a 1,210 mile trail which follows the historic route that the Spanish commander Juan Bautista de Anza travelled to establish missions from Mexico to the San Francisco Bay. The planned Ridge Trail overlaps with the Juan Bautista Trail, closing two gaps in the National Historic Trail along Santa Teresa Boulevard and Bailey Avenue.

IMPROVES BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Bailey Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard are already popular bike routes and have experienced an increase in use during the 2020 shelter-in-place restrictions. The current bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the study area is minimal and forces bicyclists to ride on high speed roads with limited to no shoulders and deter pedestrians with narrow or broken sidewalks. There are no existing facilities for equestrians. Once completed, portions of the proposed trail can be used by commuters (active transportation) or for recreational access by hikers, bikers, and equestrians. Without this key trail alignment, the region is left with a series of unsafe and disconnected trails and parks, with limited safe passage across Highway 101.

Additionally, this trail connects to transit system hubs including the following (shown on Map 1 and 2): Santa Teresa Light Rail Station, Bus Line 68, Blossom Hill and Morgan Hill Caltrain Stations, and Berryessa BART along the Coyote Creek Trail/Parkway.



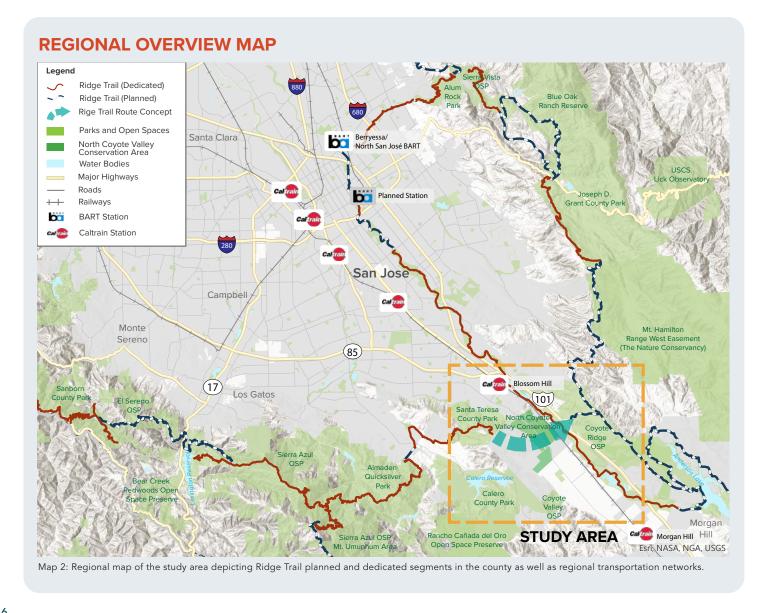
METHODS

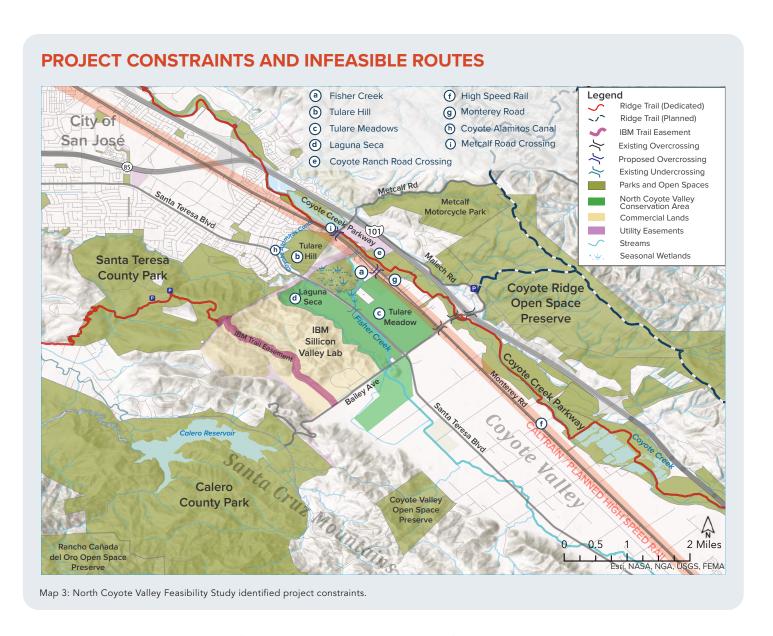
The study analyzed a dozen possible alternatives to determine the most feasible route for the Ridge Trail within the study area. Feasibility was defined in the study as a trail route that is cost effective, viable and implementable within five to ten years. It also required that the route was supported by the partners and land managers.

Alternative route options were identified through a review of past studies including the Draft Existing Conditions and Background Report (November 2018), field reconnaissance and observations, partner review and stakeholder input. A total of 12 routes and many more combinations of route alternatives were analyzed. Routes were analyzed based on a variety of factors including safety, scenic qualities, land ownership, and expense. Additionally, each alternative was evaluated based on their relationship

with wildlife habitat and movement corridors, existing or planned wildlife crossings, impacts to water resources and overall trail user experience.

Although the primary purpose of the study was to determine the most feasible Ridge Trail route, it became clear that the broader trail connections are critical to the long-term success and equitable access of the Ridge Trail and the NCVCA. The study examined opportunities for Class I Trail networks, or 8 to 12-foot-wide multi-use trails separated from vehicular traffic by a physical buffer, to enhance safety and access to the study area. Transit to trail connectivity, locations of existing staging areas and popular road cyclist routes, as well as the broader trail goals of County Parks were also taken into consideration.





Routes that were determined to be infeasible at this time were eliminated from consideration and are documented in the appendices for reference. The primary reasons that routes were deemed to be infeasible include:

- WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AND CONSERVATION PLANNING Several routes were determined to be too close to existing wildlife corridors or other sensitive natural resources. This includes routes following (a) Fisher Creek, (b) Tulare Hill, (c) Tulare Meadows and (d) Laguna Seca.
- WATER RESOURCE PLANNING These routes may have negative impacts or are infeasible due to water resources and flooding including (a) Fisher Creek, (d) Laguna Seca and the (e) Coyote Ranch Road Crossing, which was washed out in the 2017 Coyote Creek flood.
- HIGH SPEED RAIL The planned statewide (f) high speed rail corridor in the study area made several routes infeasible as they are either unable to cross the rail at-grade or it would be cost prohibitive to construct a crossing.
- COST PROHIBITIVE DUE TO INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS In addition to or because of the reasons documented above, several of the routes would require capital improvement projects which would be cost prohibitive. This includes the (g) overcrossing of Monterey Road (estimated \$11 21 million) or the overcrossing of Santa Teresa Boulevard which may take years of coordination and millions to construct. Additionally, routing the trail in (h) the Coyote Alamitos Canal area was estimated to cost over \$50 million and (i) construction of a crossing at Metcalf Road was also determined to be cost prohibitive.

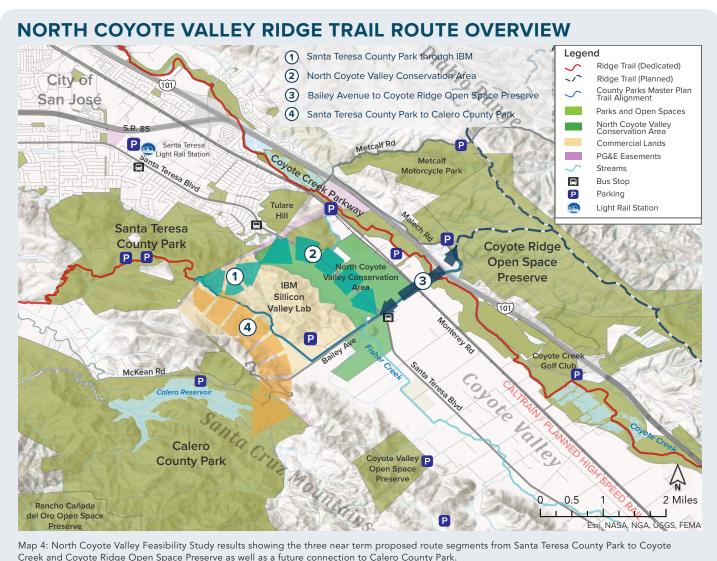
RESULTS

Of the 12 alternative routes studied between the Coyote Alamitos Canal and Tulare Hill to the north and Bailey Avenue to the south, one broader feasible route was identified. The feasible route was divided into three route segments. We identified each segment's project lead, opportunities and constraints and the Ridge Trail's desired outcomes and next steps. The three route segments are described in the following pages. A fourth trail segment, the connection between Santa Teresa and Calero County Parks, is also identified and described due to its significance for the partner agencies and potential for a future Ridge Trail connection.

The feasibility study resulted in one corridor across North Coyote Valley which was determined to be feasible by partners and land managers within the next 5 to 10 years. The first two segments of the route are described as a 'Route Concept' as the specific alignment would depend on the successful outcome of future land negotiations

and ongoing community engagement processes. Further study, advocacy, and close coordination with partners and land managers would be needed to secure the trail alignment as a 'Planned' Ridge Trail segment. Below is a brief description of the three Ridge Trail segments noted on the map below. Detailed descriptions are available on the following pages.

- **ROUTE CONCEPT** Santa Teresa County Park through IBM Lands
- **ROUTE CONCEPT** North Coyote Valley Conservation Area to Bailey Avenue
- PLANNED ROUTE Bailey Avenue Class I Trail to Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve
- **ROUTE CONCEPT** Santa Teresa County Park to Calero County Park



TERESA THROUGH IBM LANDS

PROJECT LEAD | COUNTY PARKS

ROUTE CONCEPT | RIDGE TRAIL GAP #765 | 1.0 - 1.5 MILES

TIMING 10 Years

DESCRIPTION

The proposed route concept travels from Santa Teresa County Park from the Boundary Line Trail across the IBM Silicon Valley Campus east towards the Laguna Seca property and Santa Teresa Boulevard. With permission, a trail route could travel on the existing ranch and utility road networks, requiring minimal construction to complete.

County Parks holds a floating trail easement from the 1980's across the westernmost open space portion of the IBM Silicon Valley Campus. The easement is shown in the Santa Clara County Trail Master Plan as running from Santa Teresa County Park to Bailey Avenue on the western side of IBM campus. The easement could be used by County Parks to develop future connections between Santa Teresa and Calero County Parks (Route Concept 4, pg. 13).

There are several opportunities to cross towards NCVCA. An easement modification would be required to connect from Santa Teresa County Park to the newly acquired NCVCA properties. Additionally, County Parks holds a trail easement on a narrow section of PG&E-owned property between the County Parks and IBM campus properties.



DESIRED OUTCOMES & NEXT STEPS

The proposed trail alignment requires minimal trail construction if the existing road network was negotiated to allow trail users to connect to the Laguna Seca property in the NCVCA.

County Parks has a neighborly relationship with IBM that may allow for positive negotiations to modify the trail easement. County Parks will need to negotiate a specific alignment of the trail that differs from the existing Master Plan alignment to connect to both Bailey Avenue and Calero County Park.

Next steps:

- Negotiate trail easement modifications.
- Conduct site visits with County Parks, IBM and PG&E staff, as appropriate.

NORTH COYOTE VALLEY CONSERVATION AREA

LANDOWNER I SANTA CLARA VALLEY OPEN SPACE AUTHORITY, POST, CITY OF SAN JOSE, SANTA CLARA VALLEY HABITAT AGENCY

PROJECT LEAD | SANTA CLARA VALLEY OPEN SPACE AUTHORITY

ROUTE CONCEPT

RIDGE TRAIL GAP #764 | 2.0 - 2.5

TIMING

DESCRIPTION

There are several opportunities for the proposed trail to connect through the NCVCA property with minimal impact to the sensitive natural resources in the area. The trail will be designed to balance impact and public access. Design options to be explored include travelling along the existing network of utility roads or constructing a Class I Trail for bike, pedestrian and equestrian use complete with a vegetative buffer and scenic overlooks for wildlife viewing along Santa Teresa Boulevard. A longer term alternative could construct a trail through the Laguna Seca property to a connection on the IBM campus connection. The trail will connect with the subsequent segment along Bailey Avenue.

NCVCA Laguna Seca parcel and several other properties in the study area were acquired by POST, the Authority and the City between November 2019 and October 2020.

NCVCA has a network of existing ranch, levee and PG&E access roads as well as wetlands and oak woodlands.

There are multiple benefits for aligning the trail along Santa Teresa Boulevard including reducing the impacts to wildlife and water resources and building on an existing, albeit incomplete, bicycle and pedestrian network. Additionally, the Juan Bautista de Anza Historic Trail has a 0.8-mile dedicated bike route along Santa Teresa Boulevard parallel to the NCVCA. Additionally, constructing a Class I Trail along Santa Teresa Boulevard between Bailey Avenue and the Santa Teresa Light Rail Station (Map 5) will allow for a direct and safe route for all users to and through NCVCA. An example of this type of buffered trail design is described in more detail in the Bailey Avenue Trail Segment.

DESIRED OUTCOMES & NEXT STEPS

In late 2020, the Authority and its partners began a community-engaged master planning process for the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area to identify where trails may be feasible across this landscape linkage area. Routes through this area may be identified and coordinated with project partners as the master planning process unfolds.

Next steps:

- Advocate and engage in the master planning process.
- Secure funds for trail design and construction.

PUBLIC ACCESS

The Ridge Trail applauds the Authority's creation of a docent-led outing program for the NCVCA property soon after it was acquired. The docent-led access program utilizes existing fire roads, levee roads, sidewalks, and right-a-way corridors along public roadways. The program showed that interim public access may be possible in more environmentally sensitive areas via these restricted access opportunities. Until a longer-term trail solution is planned, designed, and constructed, the Ridge Trail proposes maintaining and possibly expanding the existing NCVCA docent-led access program through the IBM campus. Additional permission would be needed. Visitor experience and wildlife community response may be subject to monitoring and adaptive management.

The docent program aligns with the Ridge Trail's Very Important Trails (VIT) initiative which provides opportunities for the public to access restricted trails and roads through special outings or docent-led programs.



BAILEY AVENUE CLASS I TRAIL

LANDOWNER I CITY OF SAN JOSE, CALTRANS, SANTA CLARA COUNTY AIRPORTS AND ROADS

PROJECT LEAD | BAY AREA RIDGE TRAIL COUNCIL

PLANNED ROUTE | RIDGE TRAIL GAPS #763, 762.1 | 2.0 MILES

TIMING 5 - 10 Years

DESCRIPTION

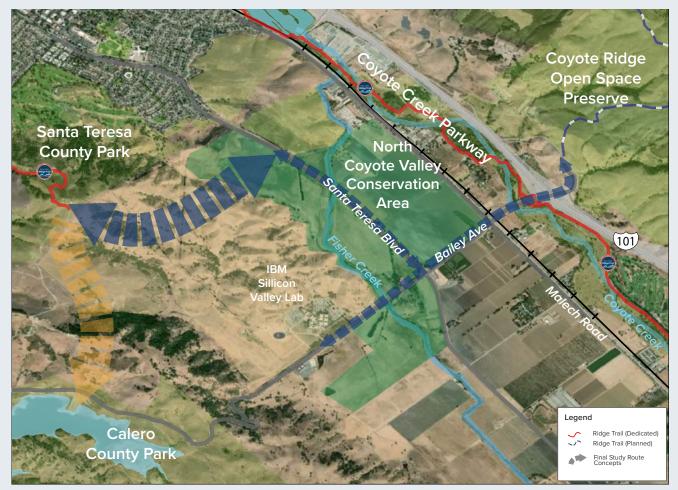
The feasibility study identified the existing Bailey Avenue corridor as a key link and the most efficient near-term solution for crossing North Coyote Valley. A Class I Trail will be constructed to connect the IBM Campus entrance on Bailey Avenue to Coyote Creek Parkway and the proposed Malech staging area at Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve.

Modifying the Bailey Avenue right-of-way including existing overcrossings was determined to be the only feasible and cost-effective solution to passing the major transportation corridors bisecting North Coyote Valley including Caltrain, high-speed rail, Monterey Road and U.S. 101. This route would take advantage

of the existing on- and off- ramps connecting to the Coyote Creek Parkway. The alternative over and under crossings of the major transportation corridors were either 7 miles north or 4 miles south of the Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve connection.

Development of the trail will improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to create a safe route for commuters and recreationists.

ROUTE CONCEPT AERIAL OVERVIEW



Map 6: Final route concept to connect Santa Teresa County Park, Coyote Creek Parkway, Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve and Calero County Park identified in dark blue. The exact location of the route will depend on several factors and require close coordination with partners.

BAILEY AVENUE EXISTING CONDITIONS



LEFT: Cyclist using the existing Bailey Avenue overcrossing without safe bicycle infrastructure.

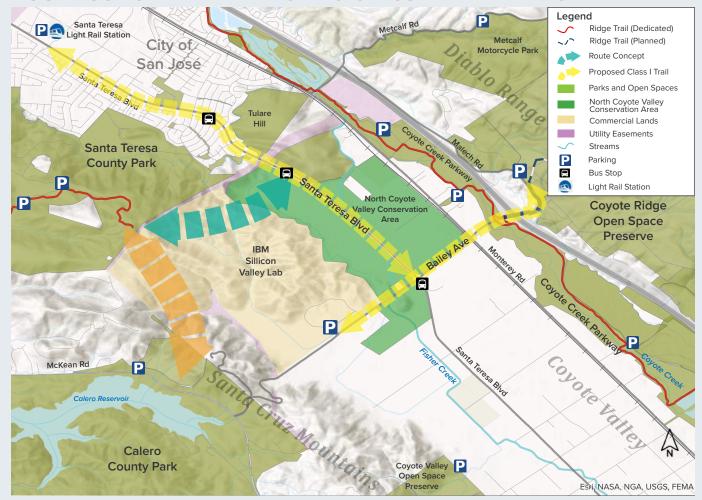
TOP RIGHT: Typical view of Bailey Ave right-of-way near the IBM Campus entrance.

BOTTOM RIGHT: View of Bailey Ave Overcrossing from the existing Coyote Creek Parkway Trail. The Bailey Ave Class I Trail would utilize the existing on/off ramp to access Bailey Ave.



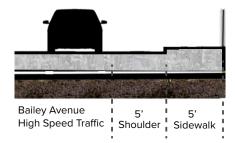


ROUTE CONCEPT IN RELATION TO CLASS I TRAIL NETWORK

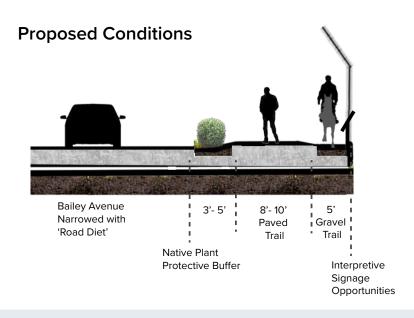


BAILEY AVENUE CLASS I TRAIL CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

Existing Conditions



The Bailey Avenue Conceptual Design takes advantage of the existing overcrossing of Malech Road, the High Speed Rail, U.S. Highway 101 and the Coyote Creek Parkway. The proposed design would narrow the existing Bailey Avenue to develop both paved and gravel trails. The trails would be separated from vehicles by a vegetative buffer of native plants. The trail will provide several opportunities for interpretation signage of Coyote Valley.



DESIRED OUTCOMES & NEXT STEPS

The conceptual design plans to create a protected Class I trail on the Bailey Avenue overpass with safety barriers, landscaping, a pedestrian and bike path, and a gravel path for joggers and equestrians. Development of this trail would require coordination with the following jurisdictions: City of San José, Caltrans and Santa Clara County Roads.

The conceptual design proposes narrowing Bailey Avenue in some locations, which will likely slow traffic and reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. In addition, further study in the area will seek opportunities for transit-to-trails linkages from nearby Deep Engagement Communities and the broader San José community. Completion of this project would provide immediate benefits to reducing the need for parking spaces and increasing Transit-to-Trails ridership in this time of increased park usage.

Further study to develop a more complete design and engineering documents, environmental review, and a traffic study for the U.S. 101 overcrossing would be needed prior to the completion of this project.

SEGMENT #4

SANTA TERESA TO CALERO COUNTY PARK

FUTURE CONNECTION

PROJECT LEAD | COUNTY PARKS

DESCRIPTION

County Parks is actively working on a Santa Teresa to Calero connection that could also become a Ridge Trail reroute through the highly scenic Calero County Park. As partners including the Authority and POST purchase more conservation lands in the area, connections between the existing Ridge Trail in Almaden Quicksilver County Park to Calero County Park and then finally to Santa Teresa County Park may become available.



DESIRED OUTCOMES & NEXT STEPS

The feasibility study focused on identifying routes which were viable to begin implementing today; however, there were several potential connections identified in the study which may be pursued in the long term as more conservation lands are purchased and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is built. This route concept will be discussed with partners and noted in the Ridge Trail Gap Analysis report as a 'Route Concept'.

CONCLUSION

The Ridge Trail will continue working with partners and funders to close this gap. As the designated lead for the project, the Ridge Trail will focus efforts on the Bailey Avenue Class I Trail. The following partners will be consulted in the planning, design and environmental review processes: the Authority, POST, Santa Clara County Parks, City of San José, Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, Caltrans and the Santa Clara County Roads and Airports. The next steps for completion of this gap are discussed below. Time frames provided are estimates and subject to change.

NEXT STEPS

> NEAR TERM (0 - 2 YEARS)

- Identify and secure funding to finalize the design of Bailey Avenue Class I Trail to create a shovel-ready and fundable public access project.
- Continue to partner with the Authority to host and advertise public access programs including Bio Blitzs and docent-led outings in the area.
- Advocate for public access and the Ridge Trail route in the upcoming North Coyote Valley Conservation Area Master Plan.
 - Share feasibility study results to partners to inform public access projects.
 - Encourage the continuation of docent-led access on NCVCA through the Authority.
 - Work with local stakeholders to advocate for the preferred Ridge Trail route.
 - Continue to study Transit-to-Trails, active transportation, parking and other low carbon alternative transportation options for safe, inclusive, and equitable access to North Coyote Valley.

► MEDIUM TERM (3-4 YEARS)

- Identify and dedicate Segment 1: Santa Teresa County Park to NCVCA, in coordination with County Parks and pending satisfactory land negotiations.
- Identify and adopt the official planned route for Segment 2: North Coyote Valley Conservation Area and Santa Teresa Boulevard, as identified through the community engagement informed master planning process
- Complete the design and compliance documents for the Bailey Avenue Class I Trail and other segments.
- Secure construction funding for the Bailey Avenue Class I Trail.
- Advocate for overnight facilities between Sanborn County Park and Joseph Grant County Park to facilitate multi-day adventures and loops within the South Bay and beyond.

LONG TERM (5-10 YEARS)

- Construct the Segment 3: Bailey Avenue Class I Trail.
- Construct or dedicate the Ridge Trail route through North Coyote Valley Conservation Area.
- Secure funding, construct and open low-cost overnight facilities for multi-day adventures in the region.



GET INVOLVED!

Let your voice be heard! Sign up for updates from Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority to get the latest information on the Master Plan and provide your input. Follow this link to participate.

Become a North Coyote Valley Volunteer. Get trained as a docent and help others learn about the area. Sign up here.

> POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- Caltrans Active Transportation Program (ATP)
- Bay Area Ridge Trail Council's Trail Opportunity Fund
- San José Urban Greening Grant Program
- Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority Urban Grant Program
- · Other state and regional urban greening grant programs

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (2020). Gap Analysis and Action Plan
- · California High Speed Rail Authority (2020). California High Speed Rail San José to Merced
- City of San Jose (2016). <u>Fisher Creek Trail Alignment Study</u>
- City of San Jose (2004). Coyote Alamitos Canal/Santa Teresa Trail Corridor Feasibility Study
- City of San Jose (2020). Better Bike Plan 2025 (DRAFT)
- City of San José (2020). Access and Mobility Plan: Transportation Directives (DRAFT)
- National Park Service (2020). <u>Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail</u>
- Santa Clara County (1995). Countywide Trails Master Plan
- Santa Clara County Wildlife Corridor Technical Working Group (2019). <u>Recommendations to reduce</u> wildlife-vehicle collisions on the Monterey Road corridor in Coyote Valley, Santa Clara County
- Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency (2012). Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan
- Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (2017). Coyote Valley Landscape Linkage
- Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (2020). <u>Understanding Our Community Phase II</u>
- Sustainable Agriculture Education Center (2012). Conserving Coyote Valley Agriculture Feasibility Study
- · Valley Transit Authority (2018). Countywide Bike Plan

