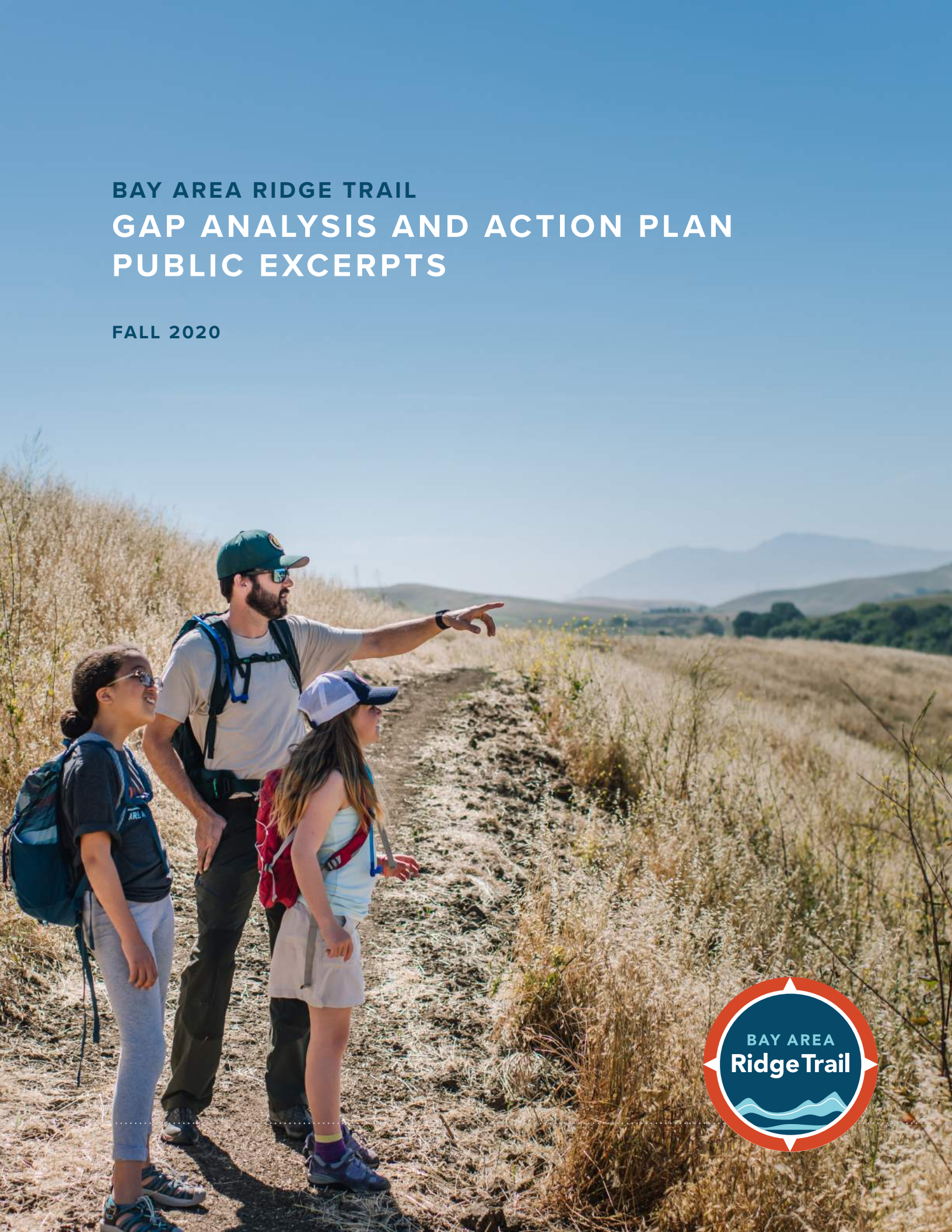
BAY AREA RIDGE TRAIL

GAP ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLAN PUBLIC EXCERPTS

FALL 2020



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their support in the creation of this report. Their contributions of time, funding, or otherwise made this report and the work to follow possible.

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Marin County Parks, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, Sonoma County Parks, Sonoma Ag + Open Space District, Peninsula Open Space Trust, East Bay Regional Park District, East Bay Municipal Utility District, John Muir Land Trust, Contra Costa County, Solano County Transportation Authority, City of Vallejo, Greater Vallejo Recreation District, Solano Land Trust, Napa County Parks and Open Space District, Pacific Union College, San Francisco Public Utility Commission, San Francisco Recreation and Parks District, Sutro Stewards, Santa Clara County Parks, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, and San Mateo County Parks.

This report was generously funded by the State Coastal Conservancy and Ridge Trail members.

Coastal Conservancy

THE RIDGE TRAIL IN ADOPTED PLANS

The Bay Area Ridge Trail is recognized in the following State and regional plans:
STATE COASTAL CONSERVANCY'S 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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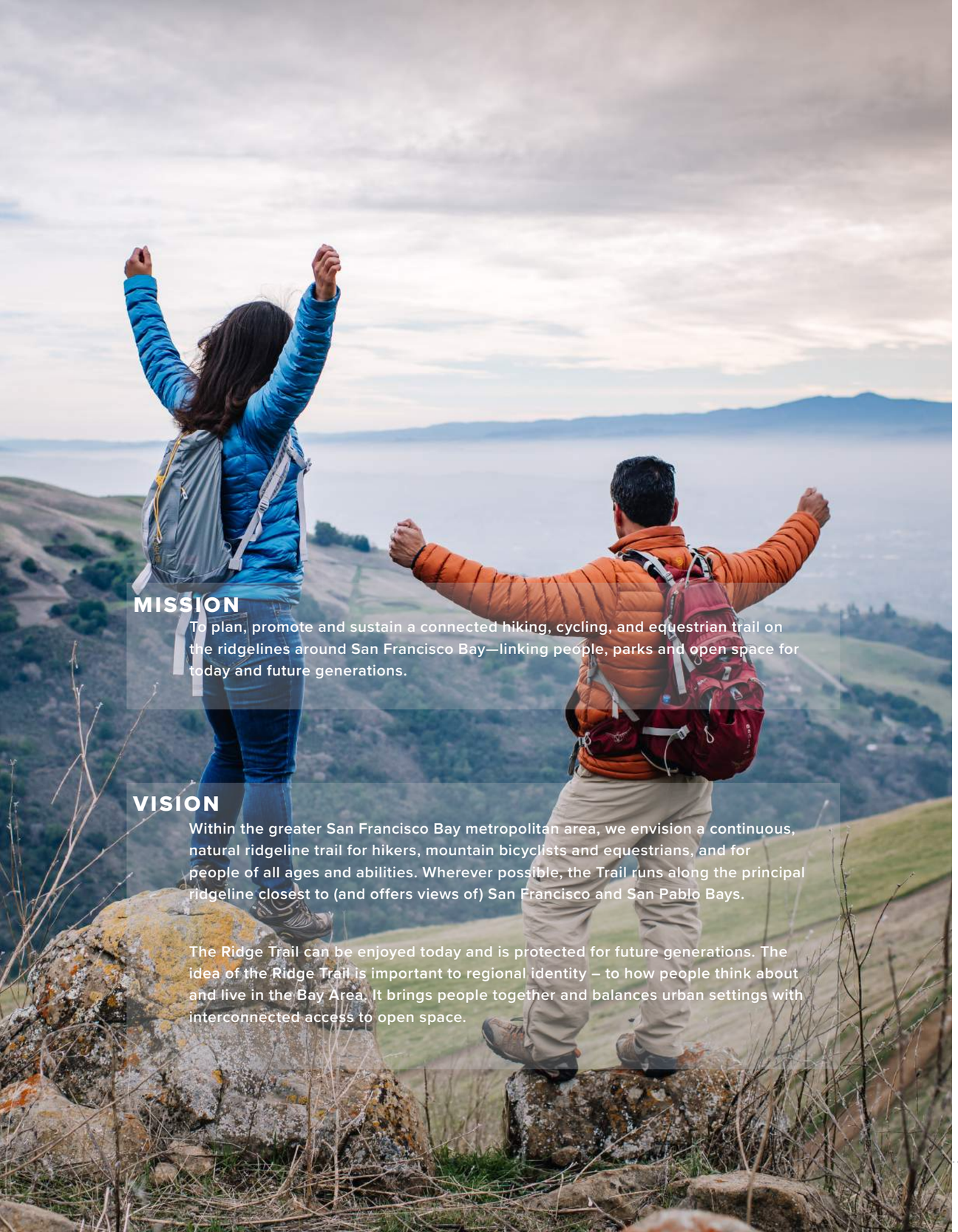


MISSION

To plan, promote and sustain a connected hiking, cycling, and equestrian trail on the ridgelines around San Francisco Bay—linking people, parks and open space for today and future generations.

VISION

Within the greater San Francisco Bay metropolitan area, we envision a continuous, natural ridgeline trail for hikers, mountain bicyclists and equestrians, and for people of all ages and abilities. Wherever possible, the Trail runs along the principal ridgeline closest to (and offers views of) San Francisco and San Pablo Bays.

The Ridge Trail can be enjoyed today and is protected for future generations. The idea of the Ridge Trail is important to regional identity – to how people think about and live in the Bay Area. It brings people together and balances urban settings with interconnected access to open space.

360° OF INSPIRATION

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's been a little over thirty years since a group of visionary leaders and stakeholders from around the Bay Area first gathered, got inspired and decided to create a Bay Area Ridge Trail – and a Ridge Trail Council. The value they saw in a fully connected regional trail network lives on today, as the Ridge Trail connects people to local recreational and outdoor experiences, and fosters a new generation of environmental stewards.

Thanks to the extraordinary leadership of public, private, and nonprofit partners and the tireless work of advocates and volunteers, over 380 miles of the ultimate 550-mile route are now in place for close-to-home outings and epic multi-day adventures, ready to enjoy today and for generations to come.

We recognize the hard work and effort that went into securing each and every inch, and we re-dedicate ourselves to connecting the full Ridge Trail loop.

A focus on "closing gaps" in the Ridge Trail is always front and center to Council efforts. Staff, volunteers, and partners continually study problem gaps and consider strategies to make progress, so gap analysis is not really a discrete effort. However, as the decades pass the rate of opening new trail miles has slowed. The easy sections have (mostly) been dedicated and generally the more challenging ones remain. Routes that thread through private property, conservation lands, or across highways can be particularly daunting. In this report we've collected, updated, and mapped information on all the gaps around the region and have assessed near- and long-term strategies to expedite development. This report and the underlying data will serve many functions: data and mapping tools will continue to inform our work, serve as a guide to setting priorities, and act as a source of inspiration for our work with partners to create a fully connected 550+ mile Ridge Trail.

Thank you to all who worked so diligently on this study, and to all who have rolled up their sleeves and are a part of this inspiring journey!

Janet McBride

Janet McBride

Executive Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council: to plan, promote and sustain a connected hiking, cycling and equestrian trail on the ridgelines around San Francisco Bay - linking people, parks and open space for today and future generations, has remained clear and steady since our founding three decades ago. Today over 380 miles are complete and we are dedicated to connecting a full 550-mile loop!

In the early years, we enjoyed rapid progress, quickly dedicating many miles of existing trails in established parks. We reached 100 miles in the first two years and 200 miles by 1995. It took another decade to reach 300 miles (celebrated in 2006) and we are still working to reach the 400-mile mark, hopefully by 2022. Going forward, the most challenging sections remain, so completion is likely to take another generation.

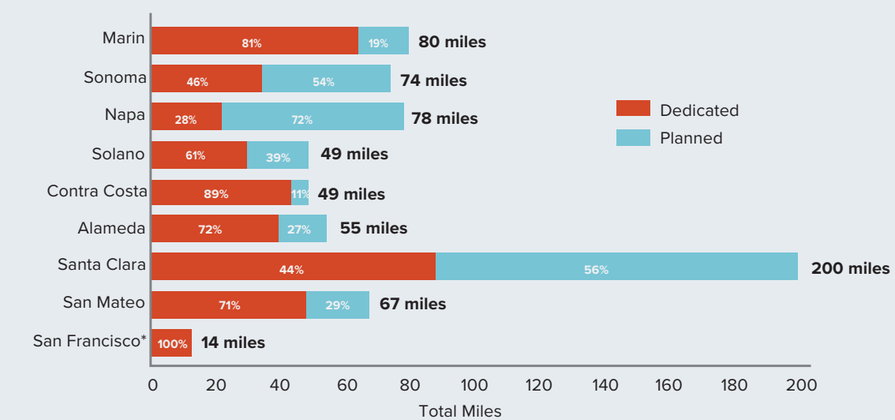
To assess progress to-date, review challenges and opportunities, and refresh plans, priorities and strategies to complete the Ridge Trail, the Council conducted a multi-year comprehensive review of all remaining gaps. The Gap Analysis and Action Plan presents study findings in a strong graphic and map-heavy format to help tell the Ridge Trail story in a clear and compelling way to guide Council efforts and to inspire partners, decision-makers and advocates to prioritize Ridge Trail completion.

Overall, more than two-thirds (70%) of the ultimate Ridge Trail loop is dedicated (383 miles) and about one-third (30%) of the route remains (167 miles). About three-quarters of the dedicated route is open to all our user groups (hikers, cyclists and equestrians) and about one-quarter (94 miles) has a "use gap". Trail progress across the region has been variable, however, with higher completion rates and longer stretches of trail in the center of the region and more left to do in the far north and far south. Over time, the planned route has been extended significantly - reaching up to Mt St Helena in the north and down below Gilroy in the south, and adding many more miles to the ultimate "loop."

The Council tracks all Ridge Trail sections - both developed and future ("gaps") in a robust GIS database. We studied 152 individual gaps that traverse about 285 miles (note this includes over 100 additional miles of side trail loops linked to the main "spine"). Santa Clara County stands out as having the highest number of both planned and dedicated miles, due to the sheer size of the County, as well as the southern county extension.

Each area has its own unique geography, ecology, and planning framework which has shaped progress to date, and which will continue to influence trail completion going forward. The graph below highlights the overall status of existing (dedicated) and future (planned) Ridge Trail in each County:

DEDICATED AND PLANNED MILES BY COUNTY

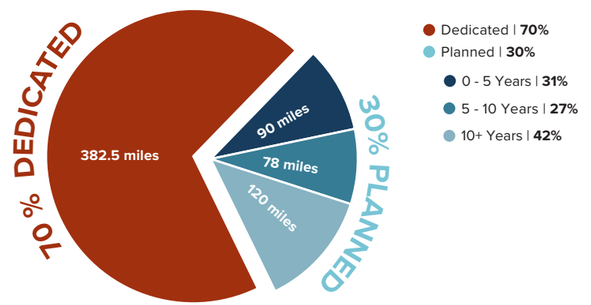


**NOTE: The original San Francisco 14-mile route is 100% dedicated but the planned San Francisco reroute, which will move the trail from sidewalks to iconic open spaces, still has 3 planned miles to complete.*

DEVELOPMENT TIMING

Our study reviewed and assigned potential trail opening or "dedication" timing in three categories: 0-5 years, 6-10 years and more than 10 years. Timing assignments represent a mix of expectations and partner input, and often represent the earliest possible opening, not necessarily a forecast or prediction. Just under a third of the gaps (representing 90 miles) could open by 2025, less than a third (78 miles) could open by 2030 and a little fewer than half the gaps (120 miles) are likely more than 10 years away from dedication.

DEDICATED AND PLANNED MILES BY TIMING



KEY CHALLENGES

Many remaining trail gaps have formidable challenges to solve before they can be dedicated. Key issues or challenges along the planned route include, in order of magnitude: nearly half of the planned route (124 miles) crosses publicly-owned land and will require partner prioritization and resources to advance; about one-third the planned route (91 miles) crosses privately-owned land which will require securing public access rights; gaps on about 38 miles cross property with a mix of land ownership, which will need extra coordination and facilitation; and finally, 14 planned route miles traverse land trust or conservation lands. Other key challenges include: making the trail accessible to all user groups (closing multi-use gaps for cyclists and equestrians); and raising awareness to prioritize Ridge Trail completion, as well as the necessary funding.

In the course of this study, we reviewed and compiled a menu of possible actions to expedite trail development. We then matched up potential strategies for each individual gap or gap type. We also highlighted where and how the Ridge Trail Council can be most helpful such as leading multi-jurisdictional efforts, coordinating with partners, conducting planning studies, fundraising, and advocacy.

Finally, the report considers how several of the Council's ongoing Strategic Initiatives can be leveraged to address key trail progress challenges. Strategic Initiatives include efforts to support multi-day trekking and circumnavigation (traversing the full route); exploring ways to carefully and intentionally get people out to explore trails on properties that might require a special permit, a docent, or agency or private landowner permission; convening focused area planning studies and more.

COMPLETING THE RIDGE TRAIL

The updated database and maps, study results, and Gap Analysis and Action Plan offer powerful insights and will inform and guide nearly all of the Council's near- and long-term planning, advocacy, outreach and communication, and fundraising. They are also tools that will support additional analysis and ongoing trail tracking. We look forward to sharing study findings, exploring next steps, and cutting the ribbon on more miles of trail, along with partners and advocates across the Bay Area.

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

A multi-year study was conducted to identify the path forward for the next 30 years, to complete the outstanding gaps along the Ridge Trail and to realize our shared vision of a continuous world class regional trail.

This report includes a comprehensive review of all remaining gaps along the planned Ridge Trail alignment in order to assess and prioritize our efforts and strategies and to identify resources needed to complete the Trail. The ultimate goal is to gain an understanding of: gap-specific challenges, needs, opportunities and strategies; how long it is going to take to complete; and funding and resource needs and priorities so our organization can strategically and effectively work with partners and advocates to achieve our mission.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Gaps were analyzed according to several thematic, geographic and timing lenses, including land use and ownership, current site conditions, challenges, development timing and project phasing, Ridge Trail priority, and funding needs. Strategies that leverage opportunities to advance the gap closures, both near-term and long-term, were then developed for each gap. Ridge Trail role and, when applicable, our Strategic Initiatives were also considered for each gap.

The Council maintains a GIS database with detailed information on each trail section (both existing and future). Over the last 18 months, we compiled and reviewed gap details from the database; convened a Partner Summit; and held many meetings, listening sessions and calls to update and refine data, maps and strategy options to the greatest extent possible.

A full list of prioritization criteria and the assessment of each gap according to these criteria can be found in the *Gap Prioritization Criteria Appendix* and the *Comprehensive List of Gap Prioritization Analysis Appendix*.

INTENDED AUDIENCES

Primary intended audiences of this report include: Ridge Trail board, staff and committees; park, land trust and agency partners; and other key stakeholders, sponsors, and advocates. Private property owner names are generally not shown and each map has a disclaimer regarding the planned route. Nevertheless, there are areas, such as where the route runs across private property, where sensitivity is high and discretion is critically important.

This report attempts to accurately capture the latest information possible, and with the expansive regional geography, ever-evolving local land and development issues, and scores of partners and stakeholders inevitably means that coverage is sometimes uneven and information will change. While this report captures a moment in time, the underlying data will be continually tracked, updated, and repurposed for various planning, advocacy, fundraising and communication needs. One conclusion is clear: more resources need to be secured to support the actions and effort required to increase the pace of new trail dedications.

TRAIL TERMINOLOGY

Dedicated Ridge Trail refers to sections that are built, open to the public and formally approved by the Ridge Trail Board as meeting the following conditions: follows the Ridge Trail alignment, meets minimum design standards, has Ridge Trail signs installed, is approved by the landowner and a managing entity (if different).

Planned Ridge Trail refers to areas where the route is not yet dedicated either because a trail does not exist or it is not ready, pending property control, site access or improvements, or a designated manager or other reasons discussed in more detail in the body of this report.

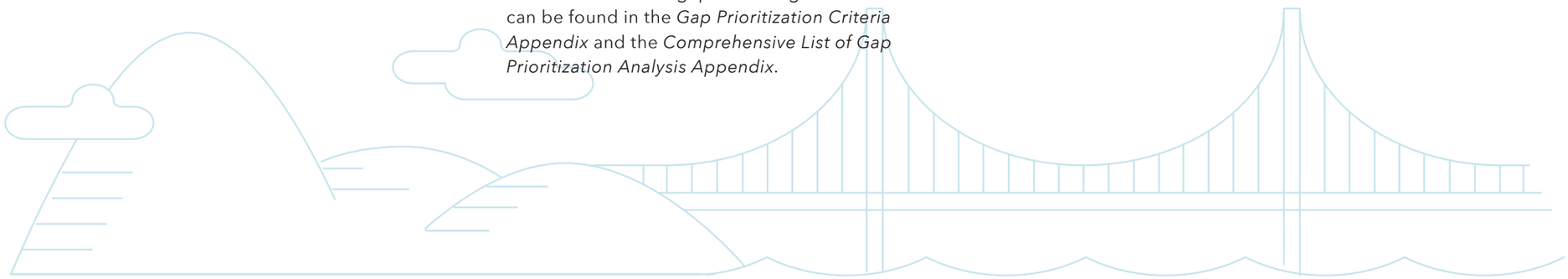
See *Trail Terminology* in the appendices for expanded definitions of all trail types.

RIDGE TRAIL MILEAGE

The Ridge Trail Council typically refers to ~168 "planned route" miles to be part of the main ultimate 550-mile Ridge Trail loop. Note, however, that the full regional network will actually be longer, potentially including over 100 additional miles, consisting of areawide inner trail loops.

Existing and future significant inner loop (totalling ~ 110 miles) include:

- Sugar Hood Loop, adding ~14 miles (Sonoma)
- Suscol/Rockville Loop, adding ~10 miles (Napa, Solano)
- Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop, adding ~6 miles (Solano, Contra Costa), and
- South Bay's southern county loop to Gilroy, adding ~85 miles (Santa Clara)



GAP ANALYSIS

As it stands today, the Bay Area Ridge Trail is a 383-mile network traversing the nine counties of the Bay Area, and is an integral part of life the Bay Area, serving almost 5.7 million residents within 5 miles of the trail[1]. There are 167 more miles planned to complete a contiguous loop around the Bay Area, with an additional 118 miles of planned route to complete the regional loops and other connecting trails. While a majority of the trail has been dedicated, there is still a lot of work ahead to complete the entire Ridge Trail loop.

In this chapter we will take a closer look at the trail gaps in increasing detail, starting with a Bay Area-wide overview, then diving into each county and the smaller subregions within each county (shown in the passage maps). We include details about each gap, including landowner; challenges; strategies that could be used to close trail gaps; and what we envision as the Council's role moving forward. After taking a detailed look at all the gaps, we then step back to analyze the data, looking for patterns and similarities among the gaps. New connections may come to light that reveal how we can leverage funding, partner relationships, and public support in new ways to complete the trail faster than we otherwise would be able to. The ultimate goal of this analysis is to aid us in developing work, funding and strategic plans and above all support our land managing and agency partners in completing the Ridge Trail.

THIS CHAPTER INCLUDES

- REGIONAL OVERVIEW
- COUNTY BY COUNTY SUMMARIES
- KEY FINDINGS, CHALLENGES & STRATEGIES
- STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

1 5.7 million total residents will live within 5 miles of the Ridge Trail route (based on the American Community Survey 2013-2017, and population by Block Group).

REGIONAL STATS

Overall, the number and timeline for completion of the remaining 152 Ridge Trail gaps vary greatly based on patterns in land use, presence of trail advocates and governance. Today, 71% of the Ridge Trail is complete; however, at the county level the completion rate varies greatly.

550* TOTAL MILES

70% complete

383 dedicated miles

167* planned miles

LAND USE & OWNERSHIP

Much of the reason for the variation in gap mileage by county is due to the differing land use patterns and ownership along the trail. Currently, over 90% of the dedicated trail is on public lands, primarily on park and open space district lands, and only 7% of the existing trail crosses private land. Conversely, approximately one-third of the remaining planned trail miles (91 miles) cross private lands, primarily in Sonoma and Napa counties. Just over 40% of the trail gaps lie on publicly owned lands, mostly managed by city governments and park and open space districts. A portion of the planned route (15%) lies in areas with multiple owners, which often require extensive coordination to complete.

DEDICATION TIMING & PRIORITY

After identifying the challenges and strategies for completion, we have identified anticipated timing for completion (using 'best case' scenarios) and prioritized each gap. In the best case scenario, 60% of the gaps (167 miles) will be dedicated over the next 10 years. Accordingly, about 40% of the gaps are deemed high priority and are actively being addressed by the Council. Another 40% of the gaps are deemed medium priority and require active monitoring so they may be completed within the 10 year timeframe.

COMPLETION RATE & MILEAGE

Counties in the central parts of the Ridge Trail loop experience both higher completion rates and longer continuous stretches (Marin, Contra Costa, Alameda, San Mateo, and San Francisco) while counties on the northern and southern extents have lower rates (Napa, Sonoma, Santa Clara) with Solano somewhere in the middle. Santa Clara County experiences the lowest completion rate as well as the largest total miles as it is home to a Central and South County Loop.

LAND OWNERSHIP - DEDICATED

- Public | 350 miles | **92%**
- Private | 27 miles | **7%**
- Land Trust/NGO | 6 miles | **1%**

LAND OWNERSHIP - PLANNED

- Public | 124 miles | **43%**
- Private | 91 miles | **32%**
- Land Trust/NGO | 14 miles | **5%**
- Utility | 18 miles | **6%**
- Multiple | 38 miles | **13%**

*The Ridge Trail Council typically refers to ~167 "planned route" miles to be part of the main ultimate 550-mile Ridge Trail loop. Note, however, that the gap analysis covers 285 miles which includes over 100 additional miles, consisting of areawide inner trail loops.

Note: Planned routes are conceptual and not open to the public.

MARIN

81
TOTAL MILES

81% complete
64 dedicated miles
16 planned miles

LAND USE/OWNERSHIP
PLANNED:

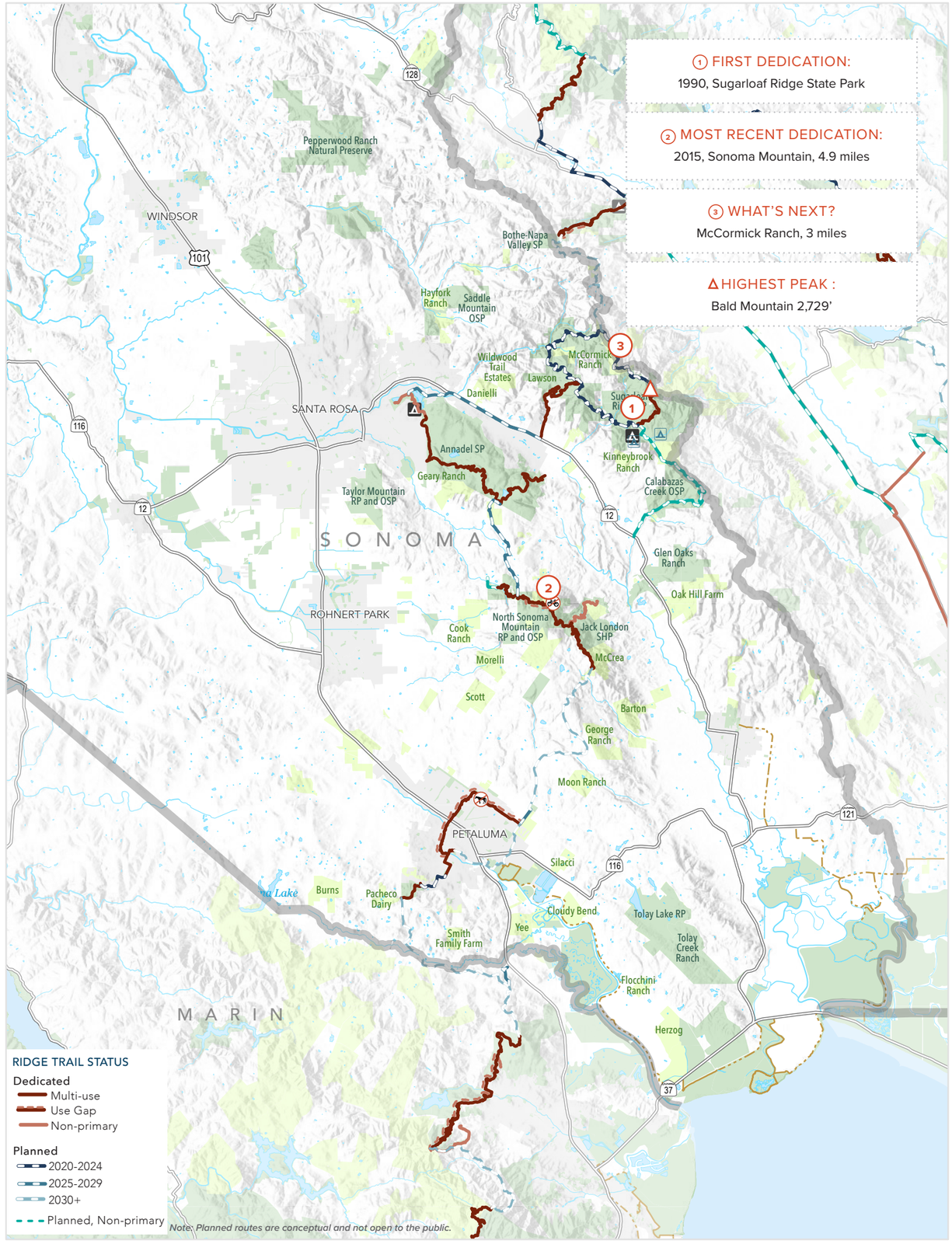
Public **26%**
Private **74%**

DEDICATED MULTI-USE

64 miles open to
57 miles open to
46 miles open to
46 miles

HIGHLIGHTS

- Marin is a popular destination for trail enthusiasts and is 80% complete, thanks to strong partners including Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), Marin County Open Space District (Open Space District), Marin Municipal Water District, and California State Parks.
- Nearly three-quarters of the planned route is on 2 private ranches, and owners of both properties have allowed special-event trail outings.
- The Open Space District is a partner in creating trail easements and other mechanisms to facilitate trail completion on the remaining private property.
- Mountain bikes are excluded on ~15 miles, in Mount Tamalpais SP and Marin County's Indian Tree to Mount Burdell OSPs.
- Marin has the highest number of overnight facilities to support multi-day trekking, with options in GGNRA and Mount Tamalpais and Samuel P. Taylor SPs.
- Ridge to Bridge, an annual signature supported multi-distance and multi-use hike, bike and equestrian ride, traverses Marin in April.
- RT route was adopted in the 2007 Marin Countywide Plan and called out as "governing policy" in the Marin County Parks 2014 Road and Trail Management Plan.
- Marin will ultimately host 12% of the full RT route.
- For Marin's 15.5 miles of planned RT, 2% (0.3 miles) could be dedicated as early as the next 5 years, 22% (3.1 miles) in 5-10 years, and 76% (10.5 miles) after 2030.



SONOMA

74
TOTAL MILES

46% complete
34 dedicated miles
40 planned miles

LAND USE/OWNERSHIP
PLANNED:

- Public **48%**
- Private **38%**
- Land Trust / NGO **6%**
- Multiple **9%**

DEDICATED MULTI-USE

34 miles open to

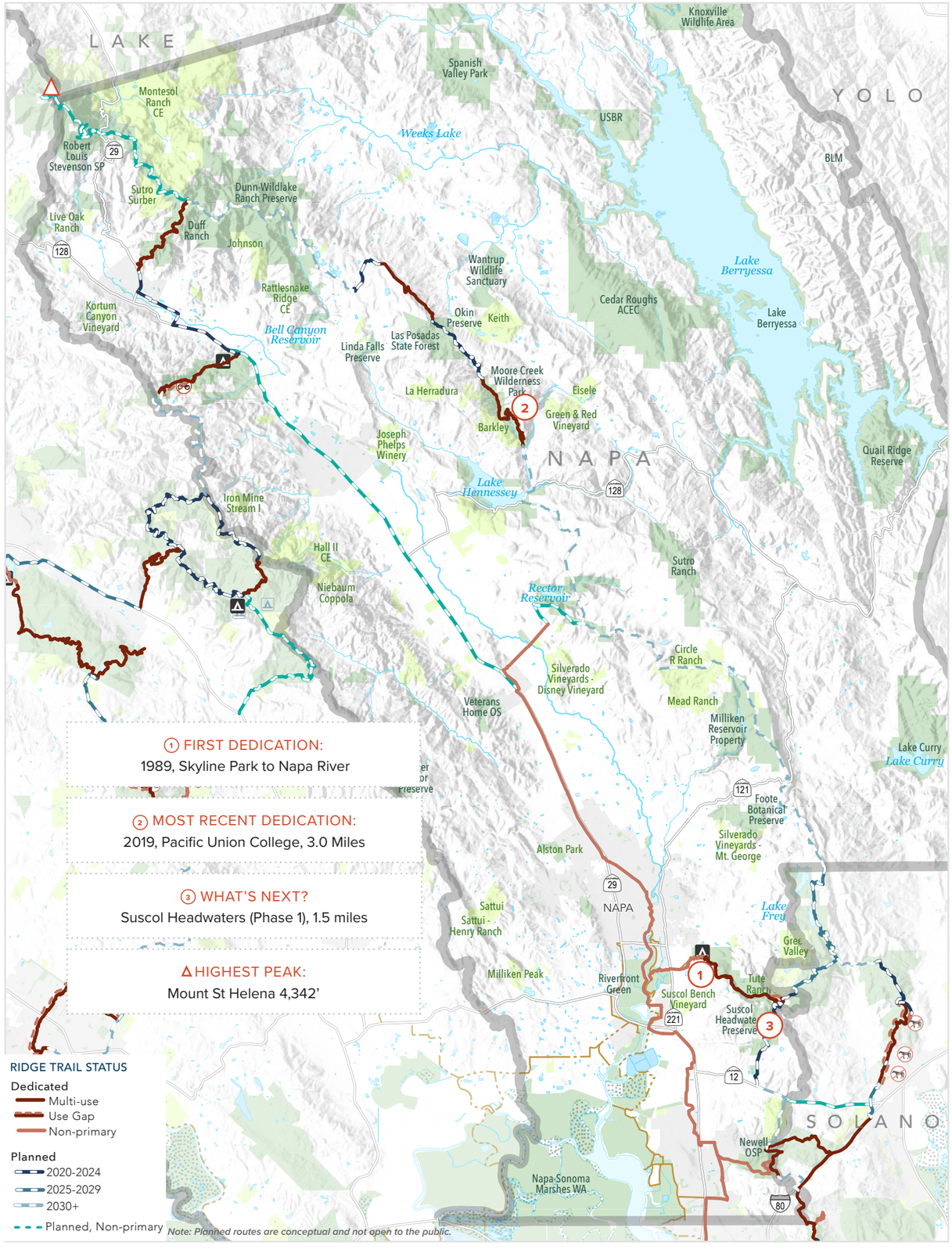
33 miles

29 miles

28 miles full multi-use

HIGHLIGHTS

- Just under half the ultimate route is dedicated.
- After decades of advocacy and partnership among many private, public and non-profit partners, 2 new trails and preserves opened on Sonoma Mountain in 2015. The North Sonoma Mountain Trail and East Slope trails are on either side of Jack London State Historic Park, creating a 9-mile continuous stretch and an anchor for future trail extensions.
- Sonoma voters created the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District (Ag+Open Space) in 1990 and approved 2 separate funding measures that now extend a quarter-cent sales tax through 2031.
- Sonoma Land Trust is working to acquire McCormick Ranch, which would complete the Sugar-Hood Trail Loop and extend the trail north of Sugarloaf Ridge and Hood Mountain (17-mile loop).
- The planned route is evenly split between public and private ownership, with the public portion in State Parks, County RPs, and the City of Petaluma.
- Opportunities to create multi-benefit projects in Bennett and Sonoma Valleys could expand regional trail networks and conserve wildlife habitat.
- Overnight facilities exist in Hood Mountain RP and Trione-Annadel and Sugarloaf Ridge SPs, with more planned for Sugarloaf.
- Sonoma will ultimately host 11% of the full RT route.
- For Sonoma's 40 miles of planned RT, 39% (15.2 miles) could be dedicated as early as the next 5 years, 25% (9.8 miles) in 5-10 years, and 36% (13.9 miles) after 2030.



NAPA

78
TOTAL MILES

28% complete
22 dedicated miles
56 planned miles

LAND USE/OWNERSHIP
PLANNED:

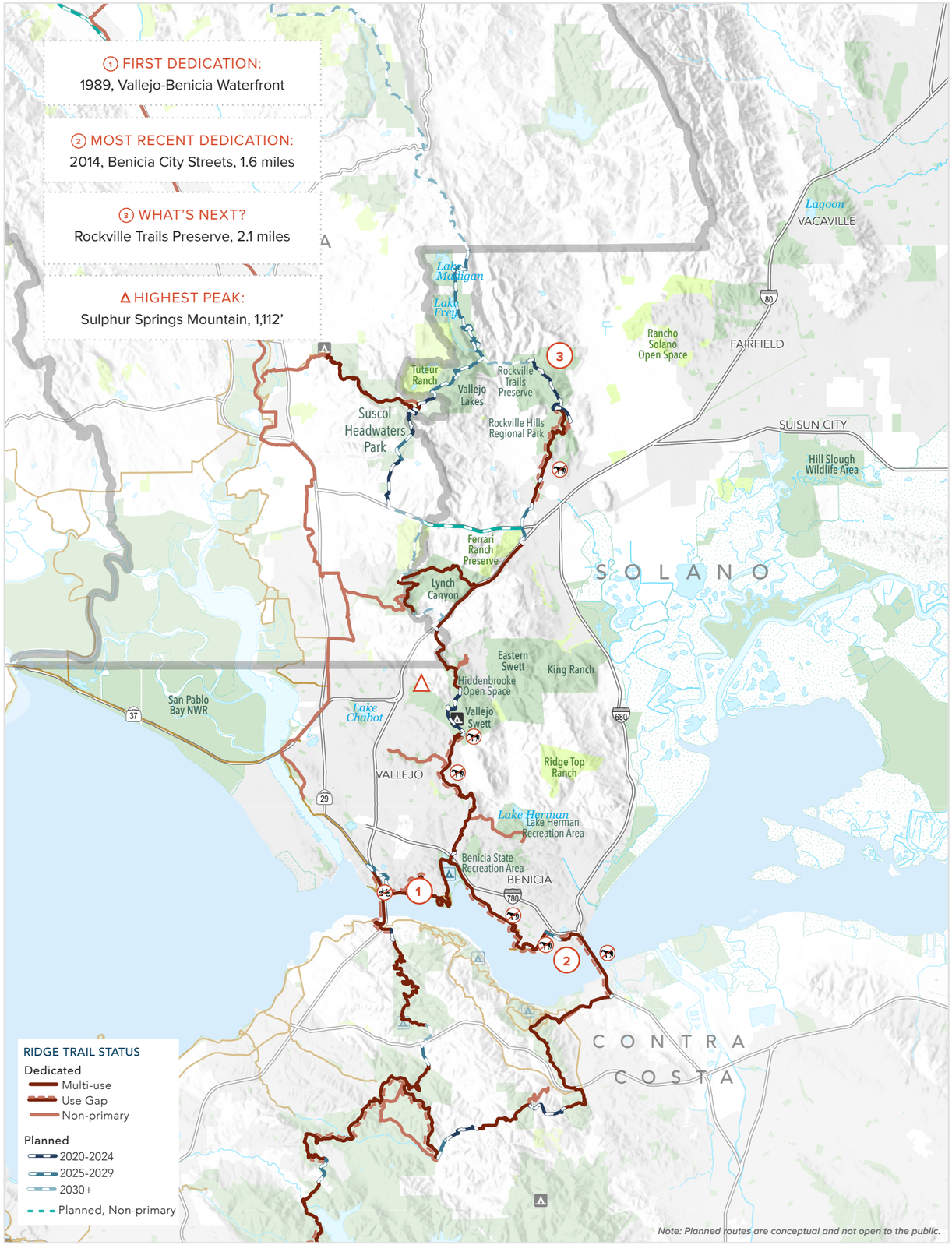
- Public **26%**
- Private **50%**
- Land Trust / NGO **12%**
- Multiple **12%**

DEDICATED MULTI-USE

22 miles open to
22 miles
21 miles
21 miles full multi-use

HIGHLIGHTS

- Napa hosts 5 key sections, including Bothe-Napa Valley SP and Oat Hill Mine, Moore Creek, Skyline, Napa-Solano, and River to RT.
- The RT route has changed significantly over time, with 2 major northward extensions in 1990 and 2012 to include Calistoga, Mount St. Helena, and iconic existing and future open space/conservation corridors.
- Napa voters created the Napa County Regional Parks & Open Space District (NCRPOSD) in 2006, establishing a strong foundation for parks, conservation, and recreation. A ballot measure to create dedicated funding for this District (a quarter cent sales tax) was narrowly defeated in 2016 and another measure was defeated in 2020.
- The Napa-Solano RT opened in 2006 with a model trail easement on private property. It was built and managed for many years by the RT Council and recently transferred to the NCRPOSD.
- Almost two-thirds of the planned route is on private or land trust property. More private-public partnerships will be essential to connecting these planned stretches.
- Overnight facilities exist in Bothe-Napa SP and Skyline Wilderness Park.
- Napa will ultimately host 12% of the full RT route.
- For Napa's 55.9 miles of planned RT, 33% (18 miles) could be dedicated as early as the next 5 years, 0% in 5-10 years, and 67% (37.1 miles) after 2030.



SOLANO

49
TOTAL MILES

61% complete
30 dedicated miles
19 planned miles

LAND USE/OWNERSHIP
PLANNED:

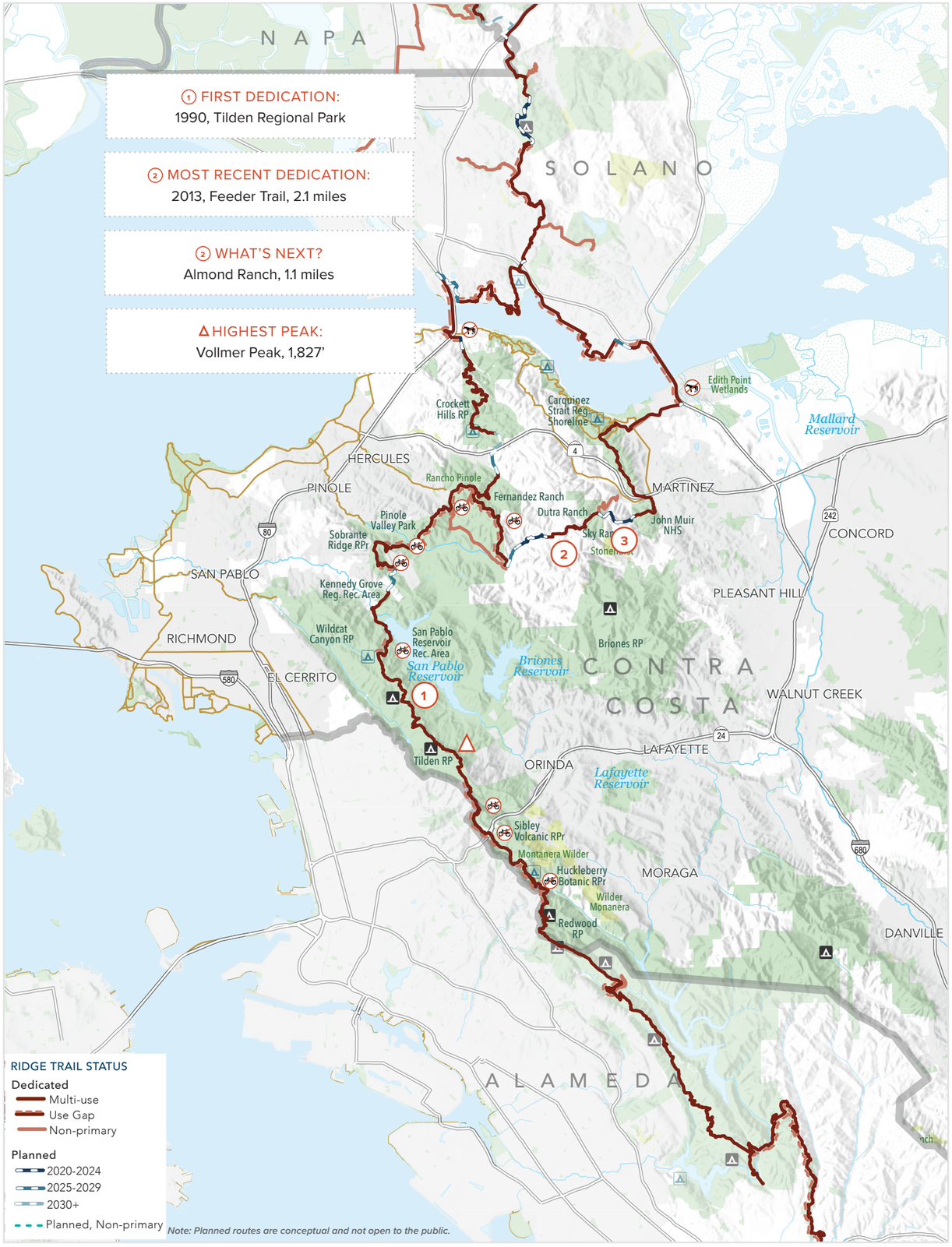
- Public **13%**
- Private **9%**
- Land Trust / NGO **24%**
- Utility **43%**
- Multiple **11%**

DEDICATED MULTI-USE

30 miles open to
29 miles open to
15 miles open to
15 miles full multi-use

HIGHLIGHTS

- Thanks to partnership with the Cities, State Parks, Greater Vallejo Recreation District, Solano Land Trust (Solano LT), and Solano Transportation Authority, and dedicated local-trail advocates, nearly two-thirds of the RT is completed in Solano.
- Solano lacks a county park and open space agency or district. However, a campaign is underway to bring a measure to voters to create one in the near future.
- The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program supported the planning efforts on the Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail (CSSLT) with the creation of a Vision Plan and the trail design in Solano Land Trust's Lynch Canyon and Brown Property.
- Planning and design are underway to complete the Vallejo Bluffs Trail, a complex 2-mile gap in the RT, San Francisco Bay Trail, and Great California Delta Trail, all part of the CSSLT. This critical gap requires multiple agencies' participation and an expensive highway crossing.
- Much of the planned route is on land trust property or public watershed land and road/ ROW.
- Overnight facilities were recently completed at McIntyre Ranch, with more planned for Benicia State Recreation Area.
- Solano will ultimately host 7% of the full RT route.
- For Solano's 18.9 miles of planned RT, 37% (6.5 miles) could be dedicated as early as the next 5 years, 19% (3.4 miles) in 5-10 years, and 43% (7.6 miles) after 2030.



CONTRA COSTA

48
TOTAL MILES

89% complete
43 dedicated miles
5 planned miles

LAND USE/OWNERSHIP
PLANNED:

Public **59%**
Private **41%**

DEDICATED MULTI-USE

43 miles open to

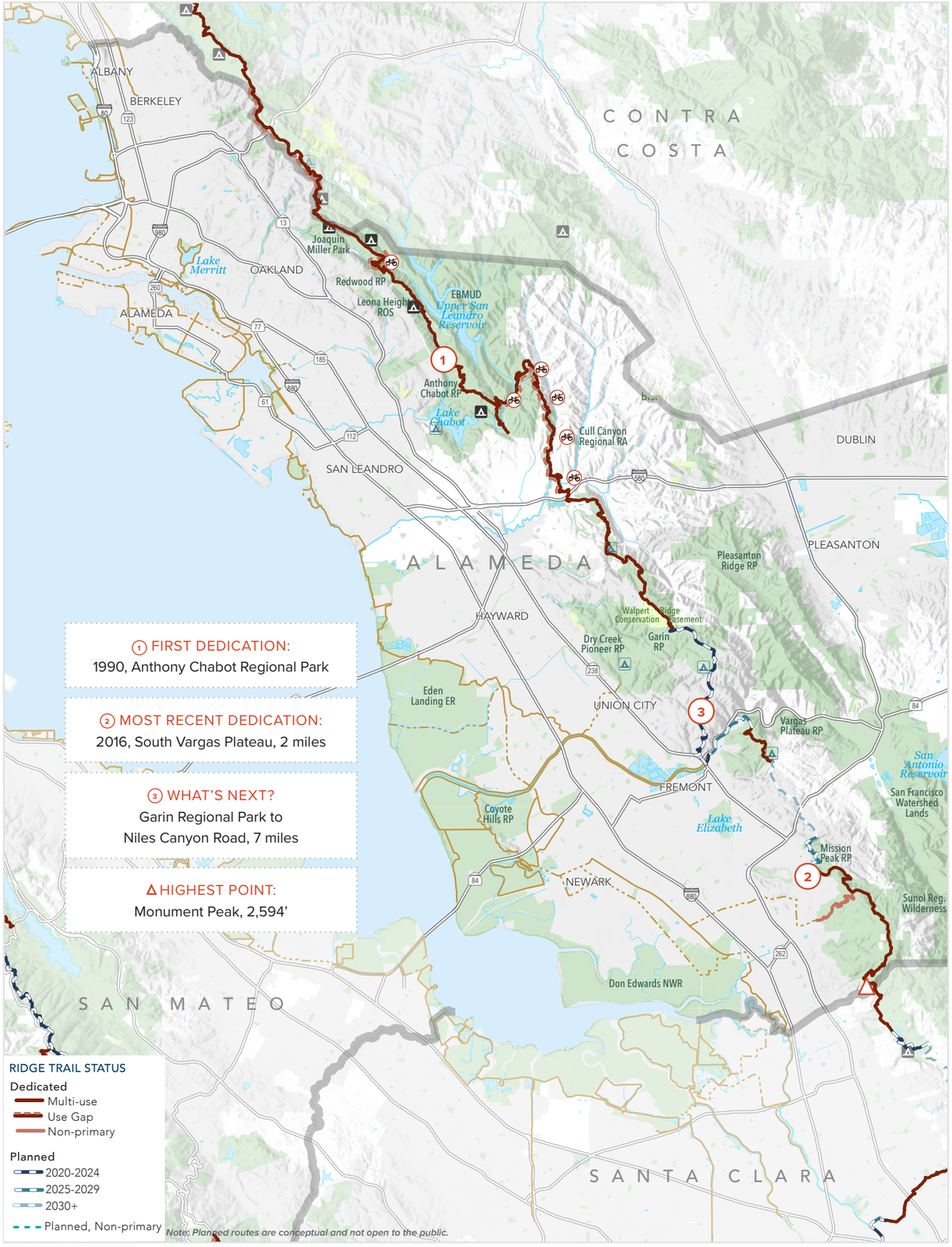
41 miles

34 miles

31 miles full multi-use

HIGHLIGHTS

- Contra Costa enjoys one of the highest completion rates (89%) in the region, thanks to strong partnerships with East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) and John Muir Land Trust (JMLT).
- The Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail (CSSLT) in Solano and Contra Costa Counties is a unique convergence of the RT, San Francisco Bay Trail, Great California Delta Trail, and Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail with 2 bridge crossings and a route through 5 historic downtowns.
- JMLT's campaign to purchase Almond Ranch could close a key 1.1-mile gap in the loop between Mt. Wanda and Sky Ranch.
- EBMUD recently adopted a Watershed Master Plan Update that will allow two key bicycle gaps (7.5 miles) to be closed.
- Planned RT route is featured on the 2013 EBRPD Master Plan Map.
- Opposition to multi-use on single-track trails will make it challenging to close the remaining 6 miles of multi-use gaps.
- The gaps between Crockett Hills and Fernandez Ranch and from Sobrante Ridge to Kennedy Grove will require complex crossings of private properties and roads/highways.
- Overnight facilities exist in Wildcat and Tilden RPs, with plans to build additional facilities in Crockett Hills and Carquinez Strait RPs.
- Contra Costa will ultimately host 7% of the full RT route.
- For Contra Costa's 5.4 miles of planned RT, 48% (2.6 miles) could be dedicated as early as the next 5 years, 37% (2 miles) in 5-10 years, and 15% (0.8 miles) after 2030.



ALAMEDA

55
TOTAL MILES

72% complete

40 dedicated miles

15 planned miles

LAND USE/OWNERSHIP
PLANNED:

- Public **68%**
- Private **22%**
- Multiple **10%**

DEDICATED MULTI-USE

40 miles open to

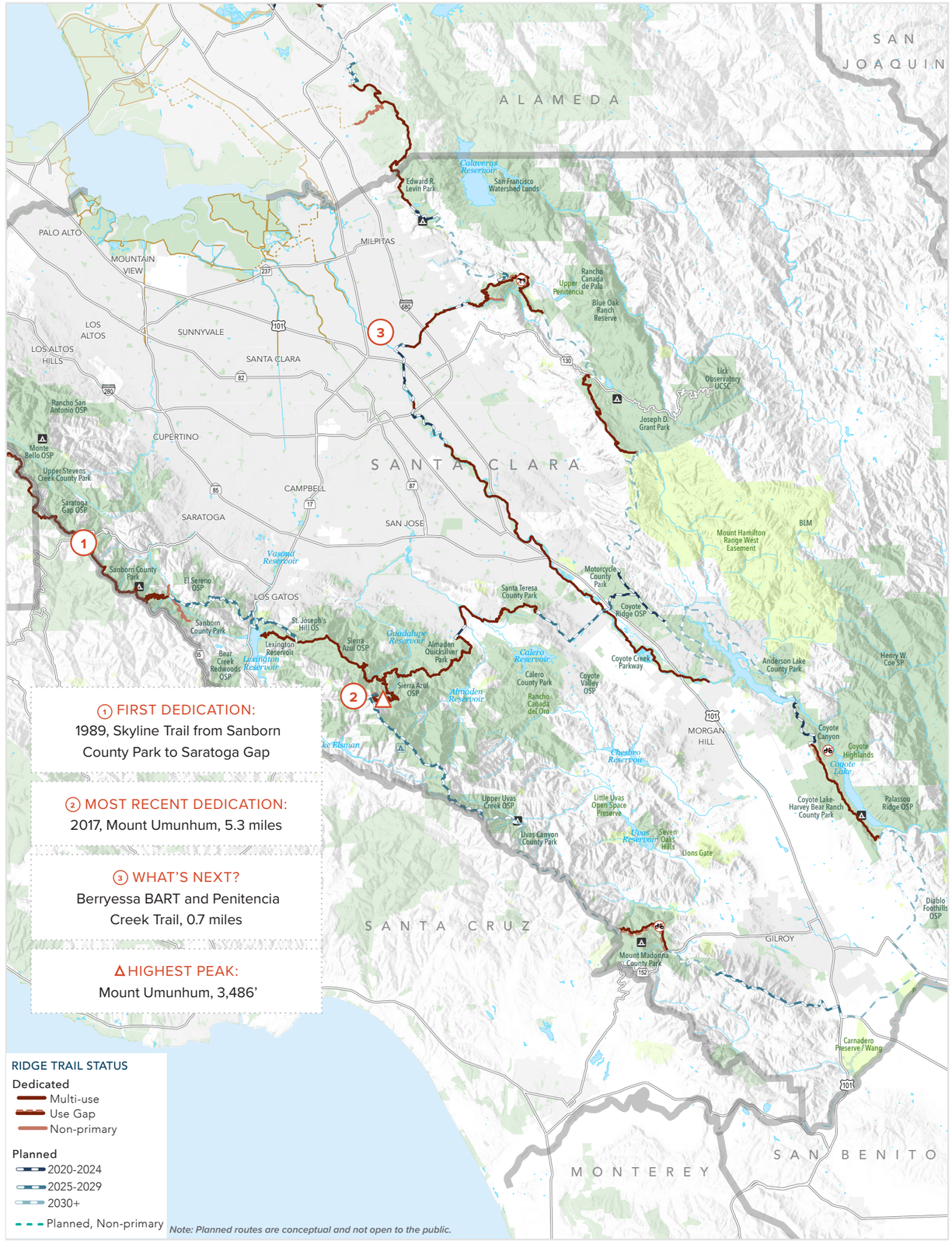
40 miles

29 miles

29 miles full multi-use

HIGHLIGHTS

- Alameda is almost three-quarters complete, thanks in large measure to leadership by East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), the largest urban regional park district in the U.S. and a champion of regional trails. EBRPD has completed over 34 miles in Alameda alone and almost 60 miles total in the East Bay.
- After 35 years of planning, advocacy, and private-public partnerships, EBRPD opened 3.5 miles of multi-use trail through Stonebrae and Garin regional parks in Hayward, connecting 3 properties and creating an almost 45-mile continuous stretch.
- A current 45-mile continuous stretch will extend to over 50 miles when the gap from Garin Regional Park to Niles Canyon Rd is completed in the next couple of years.
- Opposition to multi-use on single-track trails is a challenge for closing about 10 miles of mountain bike use gaps.
- Overnight camping facilities exist along the RT in Sibley, Anthony Chabot, and Mission Peak RPs, with more facilities planned further south in North Garin, Garin/Gelderman, and Vargas Plateau RPs.
- For over a decade, the RT and partners have hosted a 5-6 day supported Labor Day East Bay Hills hike and equestrian ride along a 45-mile continuous stretch of RT. Volunteers shuttle gear and cook hot meals for happy campers.
- Planned RT route is featured on the 2013 EBRPD Master Plan Map.
- Alameda will ultimately host 8% of the full RT route.
- For Alameda's 15 miles of planned RT, 47% (6.9 miles) could be dedicated as early as the next 5 years, 30% (4.4 miles) in 5-10 years, and 23% (3.3 miles) after 2030.



1 FIRST DEDICATION:
1989, Skyline Trail from Sanborn County Park to Saratoga Gap

2 MOST RECENT DEDICATION:
2017, Mount Umunhum, 5.3 miles

3 WHAT'S NEXT?
Berryessa BART and Penitencia Creek Trail, 0.7 miles

△ HIGHEST PEAK:
Mount Umunhum, 3,486'

RIDGE TRAIL STATUS

Dedicated
- Multi-use
- Use Gap
- Non-primary

Planned
- 2020-2024
- 2025-2029
- 2030+
- Planned, Non-primary

Note: Planned routes are conceptual and not open to the public.

SANTA CLARA

200
TOTAL MILES

44% complete

88 dedicated miles

112 planned miles

LAND USE/OWNERSHIP
PLANNED:

- Public **51%**
- Private **25%**
- Utility **4%**
- Multiple **20%**

DEDICATED MULTI-USE

88 miles open to

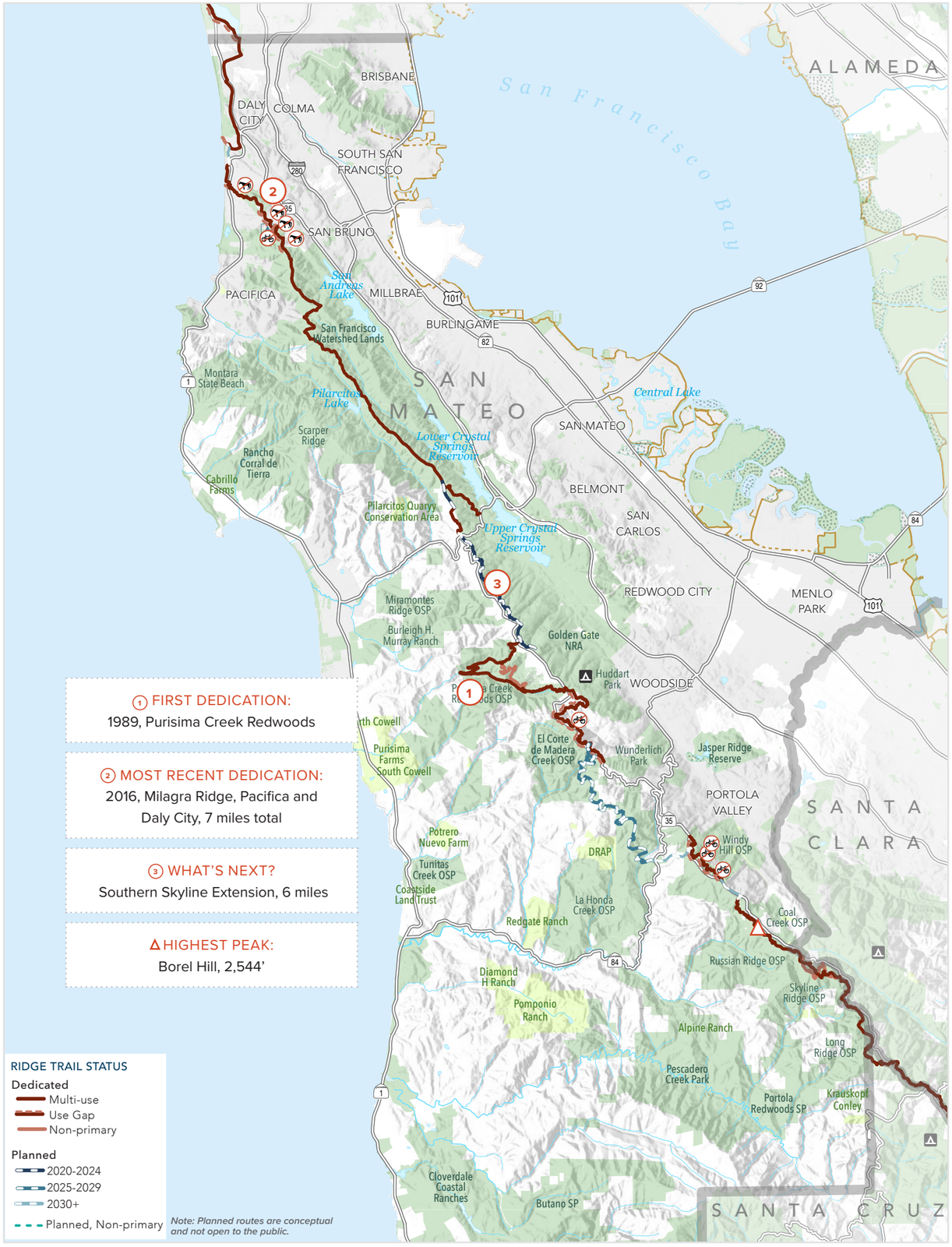
86 miles

83 miles

82 miles full multi-use

HIGHLIGHTS

- Santa Clara hosts nearly one-third of the total route, including 85 miles dedicated and 112 miles planned, with an overall completion rate of 44%.
- Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Dept. hosts almost 60 miles (16%) of the total dedicated miles of the region.
- The route splits into a "Central County" stretch, which is two-thirds complete and a "South County" extension, which is only about one-quarter complete.
- Gaps on the Central County stretch will be expensive to close, due to highway crossings (Hwys 17 and 101) and other infrastructure, topographic/geologic, and floodplain constraints. Alternatively, private ranches pose a challenge along the South County planned route.
- In 2017, after almost a decade of planning and site clean-up, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) opened over five miles of trail on Mt Umunhum, the highest point on the trail in this part of the region.
- BART is coming to San José, and the Berryessa BART station will include a section of RT, closing a key gap and connecting to nearby trails, transit, parks, open space preserves, and urban destinations.
- Overnight facilities exist at Joseph Grant, Coyote Lake-Harvey Bear, Mount Madonna and Sanborn CPs as well as Castle Rock SP, with more planned for Sierra Vista and Coyote Ridge OSPs, led by the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority.
- RT route is adopted in the 1995 Santa Clara County Trail Master Plan and recognized as a regional overlay along several systems within San Jose's Trail Network; noted and approved by the City Council in the City's General Plan and Climate Smart Plan.
- Santa Clara will ultimately host 30% of the full RT route.
- For Santa Clara's 112.2 miles of planned RT, 13% (14.5 miles) could be dedicated as early as the next 5 years, 33% (37.6 miles) in 5-10 years, and 54% (61.2 miles) after 2030.



SAN MATEO

68
TOTAL MILES

71% complete

48 dedicated miles

20 planned miles

LAND USE/OWNERSHIP
PLANNED:

- Public **57%**
- Private **3%**
- Utility **33%**
- Multiple **7%**

DEDICATED MULTI-USE

48 miles open to

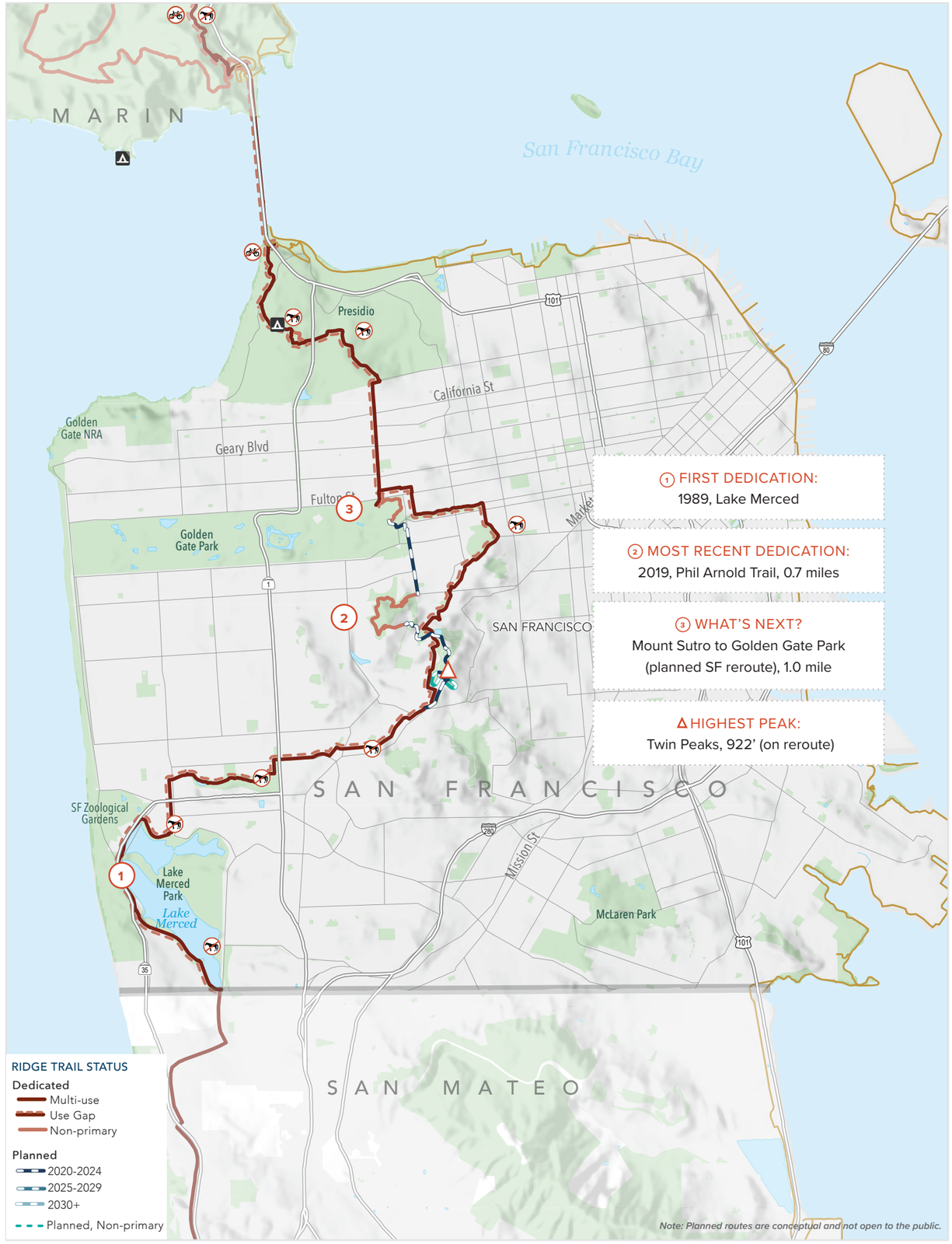
46 miles

38 miles

37 miles full multi-use

HIGHLIGHTS

- San Mateo is more than two-thirds complete, thanks to historic trails and successful partnerships with Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen), San Francisco Public Utility District (SFPUC), San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Dept. (SMCP), and Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA).
- In 2016, over 7 miles of trail on Milagra Ridge (GGNRA) and Pacifica and Daly City streets were dedicated and signed to complete an 88-mile continuous stretch from Hwy 92 to northern Marin.
- The 6 planned miles on SFPUC's Southern Skyline Extension will create a 20-mile stretch from Hwy 92 to Wunderlich County Park when it opens in the next couple years.
- SFPUC started a docent-led access program in 2003, allowing the 10-mile Fifield-Cahill Trail through the Crystal Springs watershed to be dedicated.
- Almost 90% of the remaining gaps are on publicly-owned land, and about 10% of the planned route crosses private property.
- There are overnight facilities in Huddart County Park and nearby in Portola Redwoods SP. Additional facilities are planned in Montara Mountain SP near Pacifica.
- RT route was adopted in the 2001 update of the San Mateo County Trails Plan.
- San Mateo will ultimately host 10% of the full RT route.
- For San Mateo's 20 miles of planned RT, 56% (11 miles) could be dedicated as early as the next 5 years, 33% (6.4 miles) in 5-10 years, and 11% (2.2 miles) after 2030.



SAN FRANCISCO

14
TOTAL MILES

100% complete

14 dedicated miles

2 planned reroute miles

LAND USE/OWNERSHIP
PLANNED:

Public **96%**

Private **4%**

DEDICATED MULTI-USE

14.6 miles open to

14.6 miles

Equestrians are not permitted in San Francisco.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The San Francisco route is completely dedicated for hikers and bicyclists, though much of the route is on sidewalks and along city streets.
- A reroute to move the RT off streets and across Twin Peaks, Mount Sutro Open Space Reserve (OSR), and Golden Gate Park is underway, made possible by Sutro Stewards, traffic closure on Twin Peaks, and other stakeholder efforts.
- The first phase of the reroute in Mount Sutro OSR was dedicated in 2017. City agencies, SFPUC, and private landowners are working to complete the remaining 3 miles of the reroute in the next 5 years.
- Project costs will be higher and timelines extended, due to the complexities of this urban setting and its political processes. However, SF is home to supportive agencies and many well-connected, engaged trail advocates and volunteers.
- The Presidio hosts the Rob Hill group campsite. No other overnight facilities currently planned.
- The SF Reroute was adopted in the 2014 San Francisco General Plan.
- San Francisco will ultimately host 3% of the full RT route.
- For San Francisco, 100% of the planned route (2.3 miles) could be dedicated in the next 5 years.

KEY FINDINGS

GAPS, CHALLENGES & STRATEGIES

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings and overarching themes resulting from the expanded gap analysis in the previous county-specific chapters. By stepping back and taking a higher-level view of the gaps and data, we aimed to find patterns both in the challenges, and in the strategies available, to close trail gaps.

The first part of this chapter reviews the key findings from a regional perspective including: (1) trail status: completion rates throughout the region; (2) land use/ ownership type along the dedicated and planned route; (3) development timing for the remaining gaps; and (4) Ridge Trail prioritization of the gaps.

The second part sorts the gaps into the key challenges to complete the Ridge Trail and summarizes gap-specific strategies. The key challenges include: (1) route within park or publicly-owned land; (2) route across private property; (3) route across conservation or watershed lands; (4) transportation crossings (addressed in strategic initiatives chapter); (5) use gaps; (6) limited awareness/lack of leadership; and (7) financial need. Passable gaps are discussed last because they do not fit neatly into any of the challenges and are important to consider as a group.

The strategies discussed in this chapter encompass only a subset of the potential strategies one could use to close trail gaps. Only the gap-specific strategies discussed on the passage maps are summarized in the following sections. A more complete menu of potential strategies can be found in the *Menu of Strategies Appendix*. Additionally, the Ridge Trail's Strategic Initiatives (a set of unique approaches designed to overcome challenges and also to engage landowners and trail users), are covered in more detail in the next chapter.

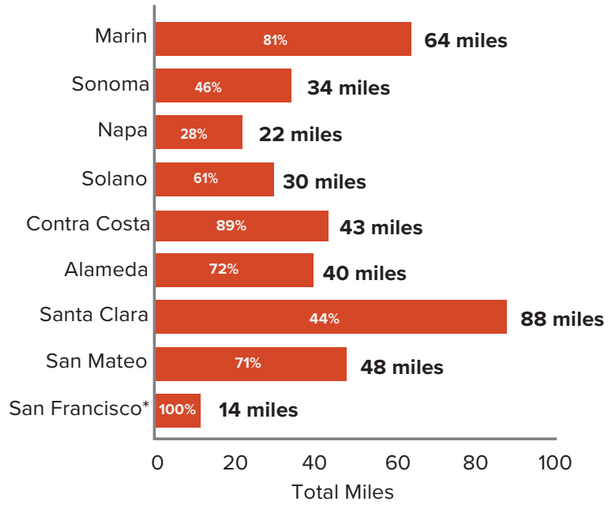
DEVELOPMENT STATUS, LAND OWNERSHIP & TIMING

DEVELOPMENT STATUS

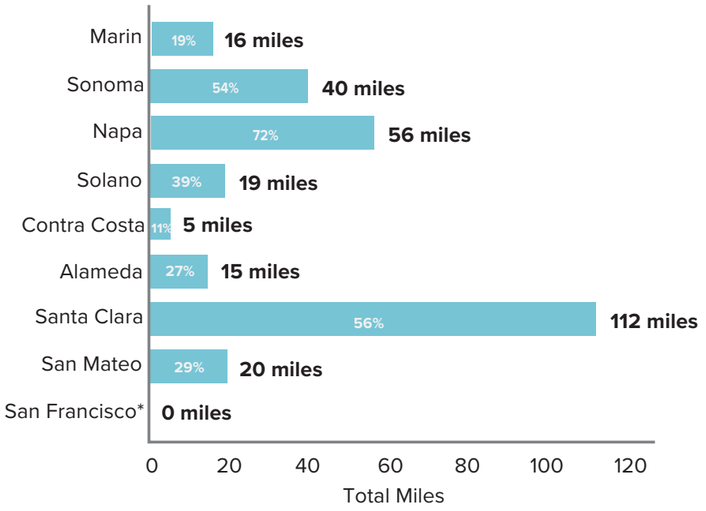
With more than 380 miles completed to-date, the rate of completion varies widely throughout the region. Counties with longstanding park and open space agencies (Marin, Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo, San Francisco) tend to have more protected land and trails and many of these partner agencies have been involved with the Ridge Trail from its inception. Similarly, the amount of private land ownership can be an indicator of Ridge Trail completion rates - counties with the largest amount of privately owned land also have the highest number of miles to complete (Napa, Sonoma, Santa Clara). These differences have resulted in a Ridge Trail route that is more complete in the central part of the region, with longer continuous stretches in place, and in a pattern of more planned miles remaining and shorter connected stretches in the northern and southern parts of the region (shown below).

Santa Clara County is unique and worthy of a separate call out. It has the largest number of dedicated miles as well as more than double the number of planned miles as compared to any other county. This is due to the County's large size and to the inclusion of two parallel routes: one that creates a "Central County Loop" reaching across the valley to connect Sierra Azul near Los Gatos with the hills south of San José (almost three-quarters complete) and a "South County Loop" that stretches along a series of ridgelines south of Gilroy (only one-quarter complete).

DEDICATED MILES BY COUNTY



PLANNED MILES BY COUNTY



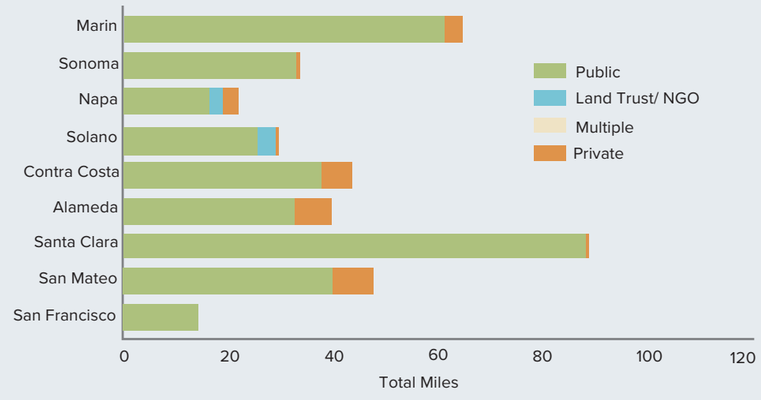
**NOTE: The original San Francisco 14-mile route is 100% dedicated but the planned San Francisco reroute, which will move the trail from sidewalks to iconic open spaces, still has 3 planned miles to complete.*

LAND OWNERSHIP

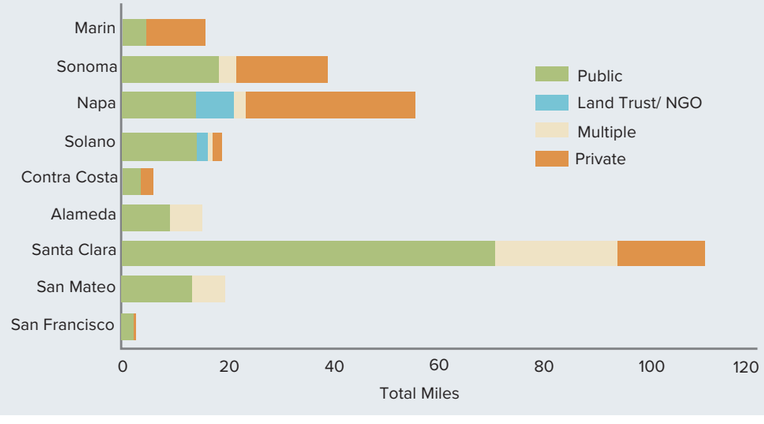
To determine dedication timing and strategies for the future route, we considered the role of public versus private land ownership, as well as land use patterns. Currently, over 90% of the dedicated trail is on public lands, primarily on park and open space district lands, and only 7% of the trail crosses private land. Conversely, approximately one-third of the remaining planned trail miles cross private lands (32%, 91 planned miles), primarily in Sonoma and Napa counties where the completion rates are some of the lowest. For the remaining gaps, a little less than half of the planned route is on public lands (43%, 124 planned miles) and non-profit-owned conservation lands (5%, 13.6 planned miles), which are highly variable in their policies and prioritization for public access. The remaining 13% (38 planned miles) of the gaps cross multiple land ownership types. These gaps are often challenging because they can be combined with other complex elements including highway crossings, utility right-of-ways, or multiple parcels of private and publicly-owned lands.

Each land ownership type presents unique challenges and opportunities but experience has shown that gaps crossing private lands and multiple landowners will be much more challenging to complete than those on public lands.

PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE LANDS - DEDICATED TRAIL



PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE LANDS - PLANNED ROUTE



DEDICATION TIMING

Dedication timing was estimated for each gap based on expectations, partner suggestions or best guess in the event of no unforeseen challenges. About a third of the planned route could be dedicated as early as the next 5 years, with a quarter of the planned miles dedicated within 6-10 years and nearly half of all gaps closing after 2030. The Ridge Trail may reach the major milestone of 400 dedicated miles by 2022, when both the Garin to Niles and Southern Skyline Extension gaps are expected to open.

RIDGE TRAIL PRIORITY

At the regional level, setting priorities for individual gaps underlines the issue that for a regional trail like the Ridge Trail to be connected, all gaps - even the most remote and long-term trail sections - are essential. The nature of our mission means we need to actively track progress on all gaps, even those which might take over 10 years to complete, and we also need to make sure future options are not foreclosed and that, ultimately, each section is part of a continuous route. Overall, about 80% of the gaps were identified as high or medium priority. Ideally, resources and staffing would allow work and monitoring as part of the Council's annual Ridge Trail work plan.

DEDICATION TIMING

- 0 - 5 Year | **31%**
- 6 - 10 Years | **27%**
- 10+ Years | **42%**

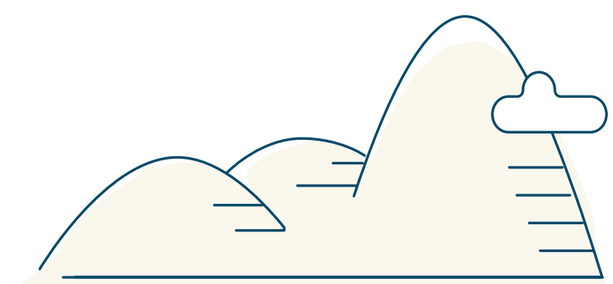
RIDGE TRAIL PRIORITY

- High | **38%**
- Medium | **42%**
- Low | **20%**

CHALLENGES & STRATEGIES

The following section organizes the gap strategies according to the major challenges to complete the Ridge Trail, including: (1) route within park or publicly owned land; (2) route across private property; (3) route across conservation or watershed lands; (4) transportation crossings (addressed in detail in the Strategic Initiatives chapter); (5) use gaps; (6) limited awareness/lack of leadership; (7) financial need; and (8) passable gaps.

Strategies were developed to address each of the greatest challenges. Note, there is overlap among the categories and most gaps would benefit from multiple strategic responses. For example, a particular gap could be: within a public open space, need funding to design or build, AND be a part of a strategic initiative such as a focused planning area.



CHALLENGE #1

ROUTE ACROSS PUBLIC LAND

Almost half of the planned Ridge Trail route is on publicly-owned land, of which almost two-thirds (63%) are park, open space, or city- or county-owned land. The remaining third are a mix of primarily institutional and educational landowners. Most of the open space properties are awaiting comprehensive management plans or significant restoration efforts and are often considered "land banked".

Challenges identified with park or public land include: the route is undetermined or crosses difficult terrain; development of the route will be very expensive; and the route includes complex crossings of highways, roads or railroads. Additional concerns include the presence of sensitive cultural and/or natural resources along the route and lack of prioritization from partner agencies.

Publicly-owned gaps are generally considered easier to close because regional and county park agencies have public access mandates or have the Ridge Trail route formally adopted into their planning documents. These gaps still require maintaining active relationships with partners and closely tracking their available resources, priorities, and work plans so the projects will be funded, prioritized and completed.

PUBLIC LAND OWNERSHIP
PLANNED ROUTE

- Park or Open Space District
  59 miles | **38%**
- City | 44 miles | **28%**
- Caltrans | 10 miles | **6%**
- Unknown | 42 miles | **27%**

NEAR-TERM STRATEGIES

- **Coordinate with Partner Agencies:** Monitor progress on closing gaps where Ridge Trail is not leading the effort and provide support to partners as needed. Request notification of projects impacting the existing or planned Ridge Trail route. Offer to provide briefing presentations to boards, commissions, legislators, etc.
- **Facilitate Planning and Coordination with Partners:** When route is not defined or multiple partners are involved the Ridge Trail can initiate and facilitate the preliminary planning efforts and communicate Ridge Trail priorities.
- **Provide advocacy and rally public support:** Lead or support public outreach and input process throughout the project phases. Recruit and train board and volunteers to participate in local planning efforts
- **Support fundraising efforts:** Leverage funding for partner's efforts on Ridge Trail projects through SCC Partner Grants, Trail Opportunity Funds or other grant opportunities to: bring additional funding to the table, to advance Ridge Trail priorities, including expedited trail development, multi-use, increased awareness of the trail, etc.

OVERALL STRATEGIES

- **Explore restricted access opportunities:** See details in the Restricted Access section of the Strategic Initiatives chapter.
- **Assess alternate routes:** When current route is not feasible, consider route alternatives.
- **Support Park and Open Space Bond Measures:** Advocate for ballot measures that support funding or the creation of open space and park districts.
- **Advocate for Ridge Trail Incorporation into County Plans:** The placement of the planned and dedicated Ridge Trail route in active transportation, trail and general plans significantly relates to the ability to advocate for the prioritization of RT project. Work to include the Ridge Trail in public plans in Sonoma, Napa, and Solano counties.

CHALLENGE #2

ROUTE ACROSS PRIVATE LAND

Almost one-third (29%, 82.5 miles) of the planned route crosses private property. Gaps across private property are often the most difficult to close - to date only 27 miles (7%) of the current dedicated Ridge Trail are on private property. About half the future route crosses private agricultural or grazing lands. Whereas, over a third of the planned miles are in mixed land uses, captured on the chart as "unknown".

Challenges identified with private land include: the need to acquire public access rights (in fee or easement); route is undetermined and requires further study; the land owner is uninterested and/or opposed to public access; and landowner concerns regarding liability, privacy, and trespassing. Additionally, more than half of the gaps cross grazing and agricultural lands where there may be concerns regarding interaction between people and active agricultural operations.

LAND USE ON PRIVATE PROPERTY-
PLANNED ROUTE

- Grazing & Agricultural | 42 miles | **51%**
- Developed | 6 miles | **7%**
- Conservation/Recreation | 5 miles | **6%**
- Unknown | 29 miles | **35%**

NEAR-TERM STRATEGIES

- **Provide funding or acquisition support:** Leverage funding and/or provide landowner outreach materials (a list of materials can be found in the Outreach Materials Appendix). Work with potential funders, including the California Coastal Conservancy to ensure public access (ideally with a floating trail easement) on properties they help acquire along the Ridge Trail corridor. Also, consider requiring as a condition of grants the creation of interim public access along the Ridge Trail route until a property can be opened to the public.
- **Monitor County/City Development Plans:** When possible, integrate trails as a condition for development in new plans (include successful case studies).
- **Continue to Host or Pursue Restricted Access:** See details in the Restricted Access section of the Strategic Initiatives chapter.
- **Coordinate with Partner Agencies:** to prioritize RT land or easement acquisitions. See the *Menu of Strategies Appendix* for a list of acquisition techniques.

OVERALL STRATEGIES

- **Conduct route feasibility study:** Partner with lead agency to consider alternative routes.
- **Explore restricted access opportunities:** See details in the Restricted Access section of the Strategic Initiatives chapter.
- **Build/Maintain Relationship(s) with Private Landowners and Organizations:** to understand concerns related to public trail use and seek common interests to lay groundwork for obtaining future trail rights.

CHALLENGE #3

ROUTE ACROSS CONSERVATION LANDS

About 12% of planned route passes through lands with the primary objective to conserve habitat for sensitive species (7%) or preserve public watershed lands (5%). For these lands, the primary land use objective is to protect water quality or habitat value, rather than promote public access or trails, which have the potential to impact resource value. These gaps are challenging and resource-intensive to close as they can experience opposition and require extensive partner coordination to maintain momentum and interest.

Corridor planning for connectivity is key to achieving common goals in land and water conservation, wildlife protection, and trail recreation. Maximizing the multiple public benefits of these properties and reducing silos between natural resource groups (wildlife/habitat conservation versus parks) is essential to furthering sustainable conservation in the Bay Area.

NEAR-TERM STRATEGIES

- **Facilitate partner meetings:** Build relationships with Conservation and Utility partners to brainstorm public access opportunities via restricted access or other opportunities.
- **Explore Partnership with Conservation Land Network (CLN) and others:** Work to highlight the multi-benefit opportunities where RT route overlays or abuts essential conservation lands.

OVERALL STRATEGIES

- **Conduct route feasibility studies:** Partner with lead agency to consider alternative routes.
- **Explore restricted access opportunities:** See details in the Restricted Access section of the Strategic Initiatives chapter.

CHALLENGE #5

MULTI-USE GAPS

Approximately 94 miles of primary Ridge Trail do not meet the Ridge Trail standard of being open to all trail user groups (hikers, equestrians and cyclists). Challenges for creating a completely multi-use trail include: equestrians cannot cross the toll bridges; mountain bicyclists are prohibited in some areas; and the need to identify alternative and equally rewarding routes so that all user groups will ultimately have a continuous route. A table of all use gaps can be found in the *Comprehensive List of Multi-Use Gaps Appendix*.

DEDICATED MULTI-USE

383 miles open to

335 miles

347 miles

289 miles (76%) full multi-use

NEAR-TERM STRATEGIES

- **Classify use gaps based on significance:** Some use gaps are significant or problematic whereas others will either never be closed (e.g. equestrian access on the Golden Gate Bridge or in San Francisco) or do not significantly hinder the trail experience for that user group. Explore how to best address these distinctions in work plans, maps, and outreach materials.
- **Serve as an informational clearinghouse:** Stay up-to-date on multi-use trends and issues and continue to advocate for multi-use access. Share information through partner and membership channels.
- **Prioritize multi-use on new trails:** Experience shows that once a trail is dedicated with a use exclusion, it is very difficult to change to full multi-use. Work with partners to address all user groups early in the process.

OVERALL STRATEGIES

- **Identify alternative route(s) or acquisition needs:** When full multi-use on the primary route is not feasible, identify alternatives so all groups will have an equally rewarding experience and continuous route, to the extent possible.
- **Explore multi-use management strategies:** Where fear of user conflicts is high, or multi-use is otherwise not viable, explore best practices in management strategies including accessible days or directional restrictions.

CHALLENGE #6

PUBLIC AWARENESS & PARTNER PRIORITY

Limited awareness of the Ridge Trail among both the general public and key stakeholders is a significant challenge in securing needed resources. Limited awareness or partner support impact a Ridge Trail project's ability to be prioritized within a partner agency's work plan.

Cultivating a community of trail advocates and strengthening partner support is essential to completing the Ridge Trail.

NEAR-TERM STRATEGIES

- **Lead Planning Efforts in Complex Gaps:** Facilitate preliminary planning and feasibility work for complex multi-jurisdiction gaps where no lead managing entity has been identified. In priority areas without partner priority, conduct initial landowner outreach, route assessment, negotiation of a trail easement, etc.
- **Cultivate Local Champions:** Where there is limited awareness and public support, cultivate advocacy groups or partner to create annual events in the region.
- **Incorporate the Ridge Trail in Partner Plans:** Ensure the Ridge Trail route (dedicated and planned) is adopted in General Plans, Specific Plans and/or Master Trail Plans. This will strengthen the ability to require new development to mitigate impacts to loss of trail connections and open space.
- **Participate in focused planning area working groups:** Contribute or lead sub-regional working groups such as the Peninsula Working Group or Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail Committee to address multi-jurisdictional Ridge Trail gaps that need support and facilitation across many agencies.
- **Host periodic partner convenings:** Convene partners to highlight successful partnerships, accomplishments, current initiatives and demonstrate the leadership role for the Ridge Trail in trail planning and facilitation.

OVERALL STRATEGIES

- **Develop an Outreach and Marketing Plan:** Identify the best strategies for raising the visibility of high-priority gaps with agency staff and leadership and the public.
- **Promote the benefits of multi-use trails:** Create and promote case studies that show how trail management can prevent negative impacts on adjoining land and ensure compatibility with agricultural lands and watershed/conservation lands.
- **Expand the RT audience:** Create/nurture alliances and partnerships with environmental, outdoor, and recreational groups to expand our "reach."
- **Seek National Recreational Trail designation:** For continuous sections of completed trail, apply for National Recreational Trail designation. In the future, apply for National Scenic Trail status (a more arduous process).
- **Consider alternate routes:** Lead or convene parties to consider alternative routes when new routing opportunities arise or when the existing route is no longer viable.

CHALLENGE #7

FINANCIAL NEED

Above all, financial need is the biggest challenge facing the completion of the Ridge Trail. Property acquisition, trail construction and trail management are all incredibly expensive and resource-intensive. Availability of funding for individual projects, as well as stable institutional funding for land management agencies, is directly correlated with Ridge Trail success.

The gap analysis study identified funding needs on 128 miles of planned route, the vast majority of which were high and medium priority gaps. Creative and interim solutions, including the Ridge Trail Opportunity Fund, will be required to greatly accelerate the likelihood of completing the remaining gaps.

GAPS NEEDING FUNDING SUPPORT BY PRIORITY

- High Priority | 50 miles | **39%**
- Medium Priority | 67 miles | **52%**
- Low Priority | 11 miles | **9%**

NEAR-TERM STRATEGIES

- **Build and leverage the Trail Opportunity Fund:** The goal is to create a Trail Opportunity Fund that would allow the Council to overcome obstacles or expedite trail progress by providing timely funding (or matching funds) for items including: feasibility studies, easement acquisitions, fee acquisitions, and management and maintenance support.
- **Seek transportation funding:** Support partner applications or directly apply for highway transportation funding for RT gaps expected to provide alternative transportation benefits including Vallejo Bluff Trail, Bailey Ave/North Coyote Valley and Highway 17 Crossing and trail connections.

OVERALL STRATEGIES

- **Advocate for Park and Open Space Measures:** The creation of and decent funding for open space districts tends to be directly related to the Ridge Trail's success in a region. Napa County and Solano Counties both have new or no regional open space districts with minimal funding. The Ridge Trail needs to invest in and provide support for the ballot measure related to improving the presence and financial health of these districts.
- **Advocate for land agency management and operation funding:** Advocate to secure stable funding for public land agencies for operations, management, and maintenance in order to expedite trail openings.
- **Expand public-private partnerships:** and other new fundraising opportunities: Identify gaps that might be of special interest to specific funders: corporate, foundation, agencies, or individuals. Develop customized case statements and marketing materials for specific gaps and special focused planning areas.
- **Support and develop funding initiatives for open space, parks and trails:** Participate in developing federal, state, regional, and local funding initiatives for open space, parks and/or trails, and support these initiatives. This could include increasing Council representation on conservation organization boards and committees involved with funding initiatives.

CHALLENGE #8

PASSABLE GAPS

Passable gaps are navigable gaps that are considered "passable" by trail users but not dedicated because they do not meet minimum trail standards, which can be found in the *Minimum Ridge Trail Standards Appendix*. Many of the passable gaps are within or along public streets or rights-of-way. These gaps are typically small in length and represent relatively few miles, but are large in terms of importance and connectivity. In total, there are 12 segments of passable gap trail covering almost 5 miles along the planned route. These gaps are important because they link two completed sections to form a longer continuous stretch for trail users/ circumnavigators. There are also numerous longer-distance multi-use gaps along public roads that are considered passable by cyclists, but which are not included in this category.

OVERALL STRATEGIES

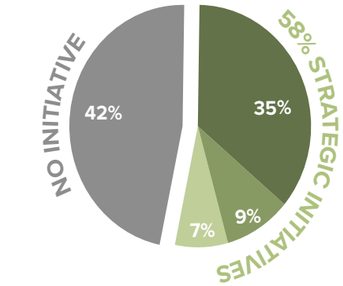
- **Identify barriers and solutions for access:** Identify concerns and barriers with the landowning entity and develop solutions to address.
- **Assess planning needs:** Coordinate with partners to identify dedication options and timing.
- **Promote safe navigation of passable gaps:** Where appropriate, install signs and information to help users navigate safely.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

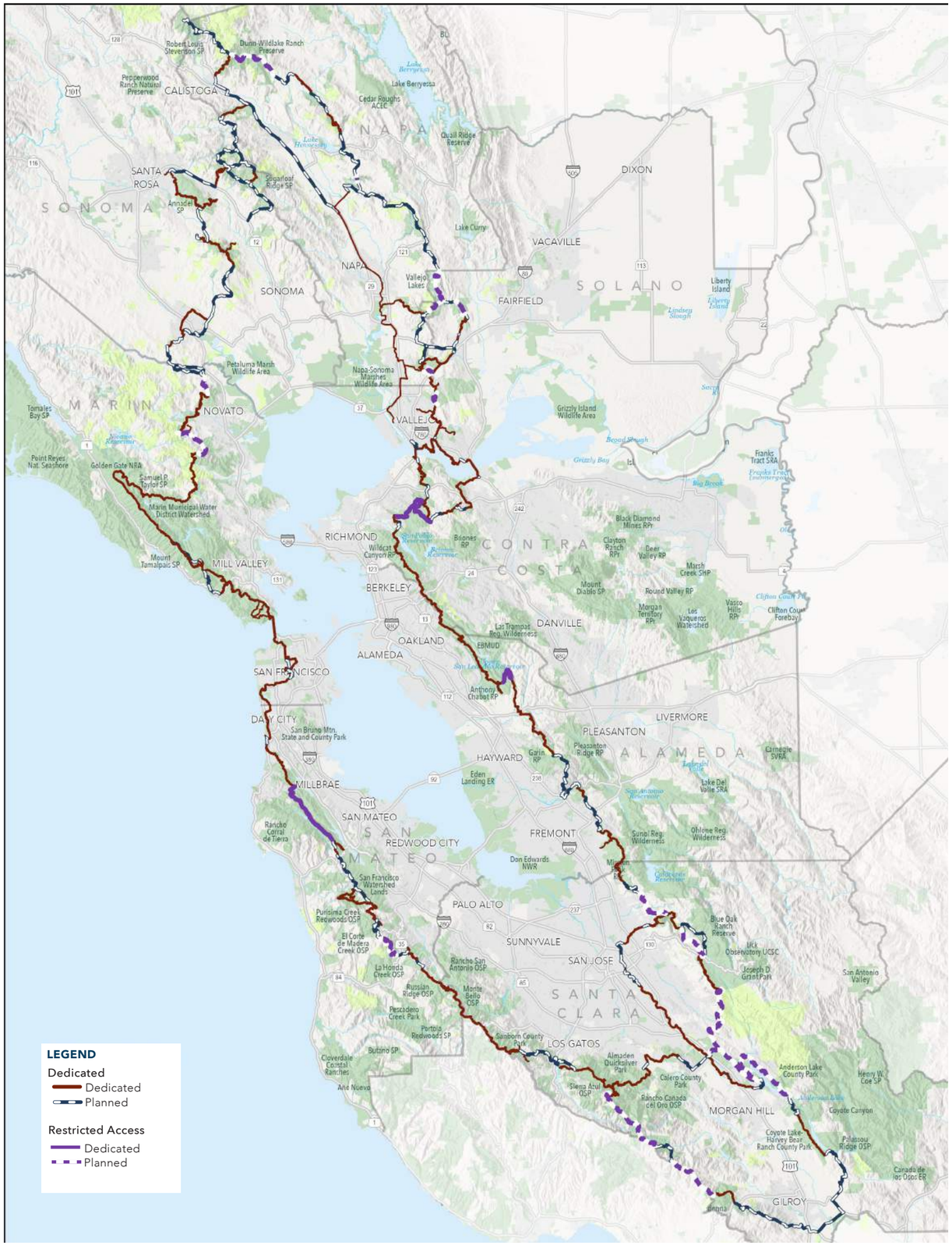
Strategic initiatives refers to a set of approaches and special projects that the Ridge Trail Council has been exploring and developing to help address and overcome especially significant challenges (such as opening a public trail on private property or conservation lands) and to leverage opportunities (such as the enthusiasm around multi-day treks and circumnavigation) to raise awareness and build support to drive our mission forward.

Strategic Initiatives in this report are: (1) Restricted access; (2) Focused planning areas; and (3) Transportation crossings. One or more of the initiatives encompass over half (56%, 148 miles) of the planned route as shown below. Future strategic initiatives not covered in this report will address multi-benefit opportunities between conservation and regional trails using resources including the Conservation Lands Network's analysis.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES COVERAGE-
PLANNED ROUTE



- Strategic Initiave Miles | **148 miles total**
  - Restricted Access | **94 miles**
  - Focused Planning Areas | **27 miles**
  - Transportation Crossings | **21 miles**
- Gaps without Strategic Initiave | **131 miles**



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #1

RESTRICTED ACCESS

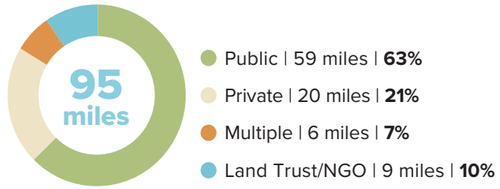
AKA VERY IMPORTANT TRAILS (VIT)

Over a third of the planned route (95 miles) may have the opportunity for restricted access outings, which means the gap has the presence of existing roads or trails that are on or near the proposed route, however, public access is limited in some way (i.e. not open to the public or require permits, docents or owner permission to access).

Our study identified almost 100 miles where opportunities to explore access may be possible through the restricted access initiative. There are currently 19 additional dedicated miles with access restrictions already existing on utility-owned land (SFPUC and EBMUD).

The Ridge Trail created the Very Important Trails (VIT) initiative to address this specific gap type, which provides opportunities for the public to access these restricted trails and roads through special outings or docent-led programs. These outings not only strengthen public and member support for closing gaps through restricted access areas, but also help build positive relationships with landowners and property managers. In 2019 and early 2020, the Ridge Trail hosted VIT outings with almost 200 participants on 12 different planned sections of the trail that covered over 30 miles of future Ridge Trail. Restricted outings are prioritized in the Council's annual work plan, and an additional 65 miles of restricted access opportunities are being explored based on this report.

RESTRICTED ACCESS BY LAND OWNERSHIP - PLANNED ROUTE

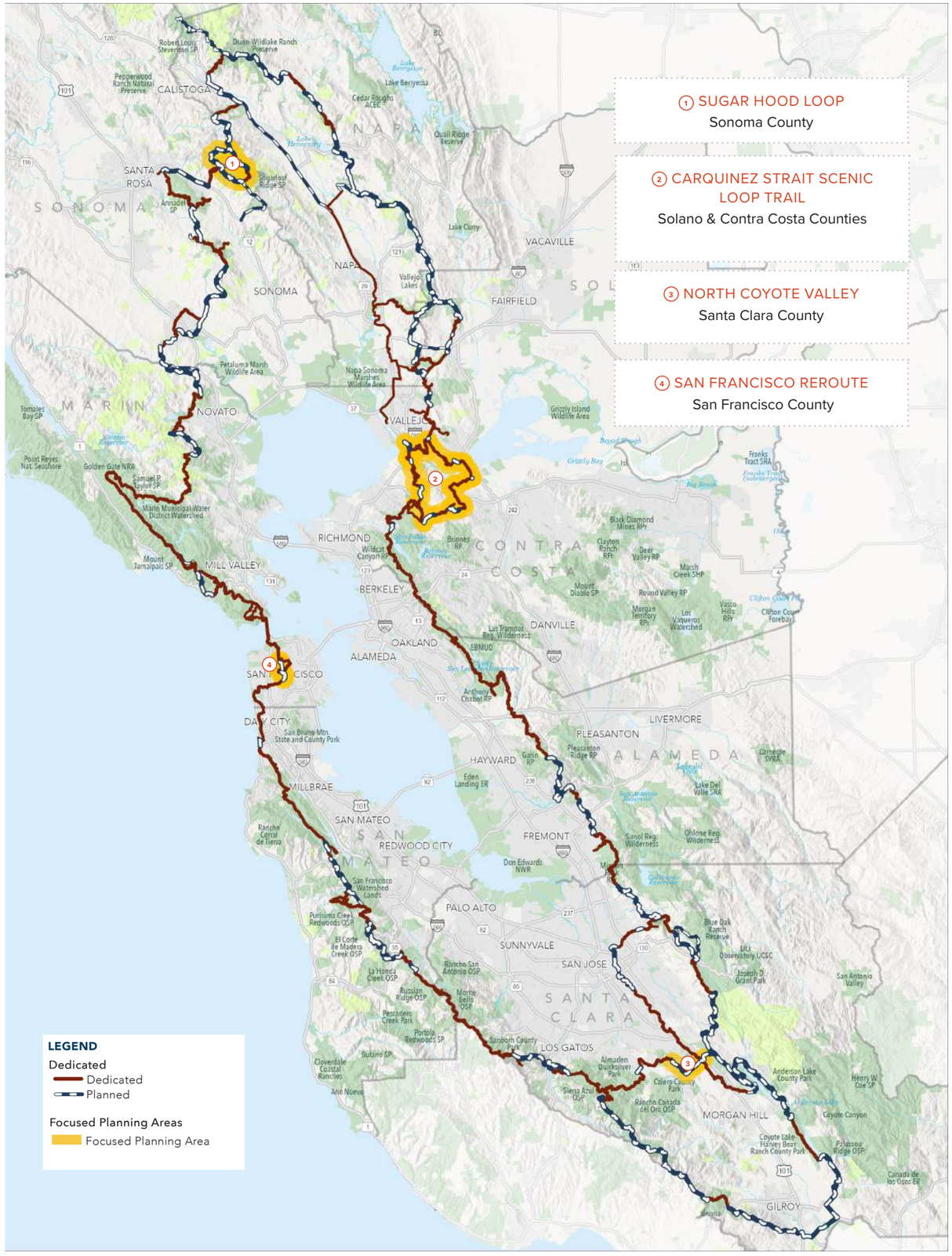


Generally VIT miles on publicly-owned properties are being readied for future opening, though that is not often true on private properties. Of the 95 potential planned miles for VIT outings, about 21% (20 miles) pass across private property. Most of these opportunities were identified due to the presence of existing roads or trails crossing the property. VIT outings may also be possible for properties without existing roads/trails, although it may be logistically more challenging to coordinate outings through those areas.

Timing is a key component here. Initially, it might be possible to host special access outings to some of these properties once or twice a year. Over time it might be possible to host regular outings on a quarterly or monthly basis. One goal would be to establish a schedule so that circumnavigators and others could traverse these additional route miles on an annual basis.

STRATEGIES

- **Private property with existing fire/ranch roads.** If there is an active relationship with the landowner, plan and host outings structured to advance multiple objectives, including building and maintaining a positive relationship with the landowner.
- **Private property without existing roads or trails.** Explore whether hosted outings are possible and how they could be achieved.
- **Utility and Private Conservation Lands with or without existing roads and trails.** Coordinate with utility and private conservation lands partners to gain access privileges in areas such as Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve, Vallejo Lakes, Dunn-Wildlake Ranch and Duff Ranch.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #2

FOCUSED PLANNING AREAS

With over 150 gaps to close all with varying challenges, landowners, and funding needs, addressing multiple gaps through Focused Planning Areas is a strategy to complete the trail more efficiently. Focused Planning Areas are a cluster of gaps that are tackled through development of special study areas to develop solutions for the group. Over the last decade, we have seen great benefit from creating special study areas, usually in collaboration with partners, which offer a compelling story and can capture the imagination.

Benefits of this initiative include: raising awareness and focusing attention both on the larger Ridge Trail mission and the local trail; bringing new partners and stakeholders to the table; building donor interest/excitement & financial leverage; and expediting trail development. Perhaps the best example of what can be achieved with a special planning area is the Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail which has been in process for over a decade and is seeing continued and sustained success.

PLANNING AREAS SHOWN ON MAP:

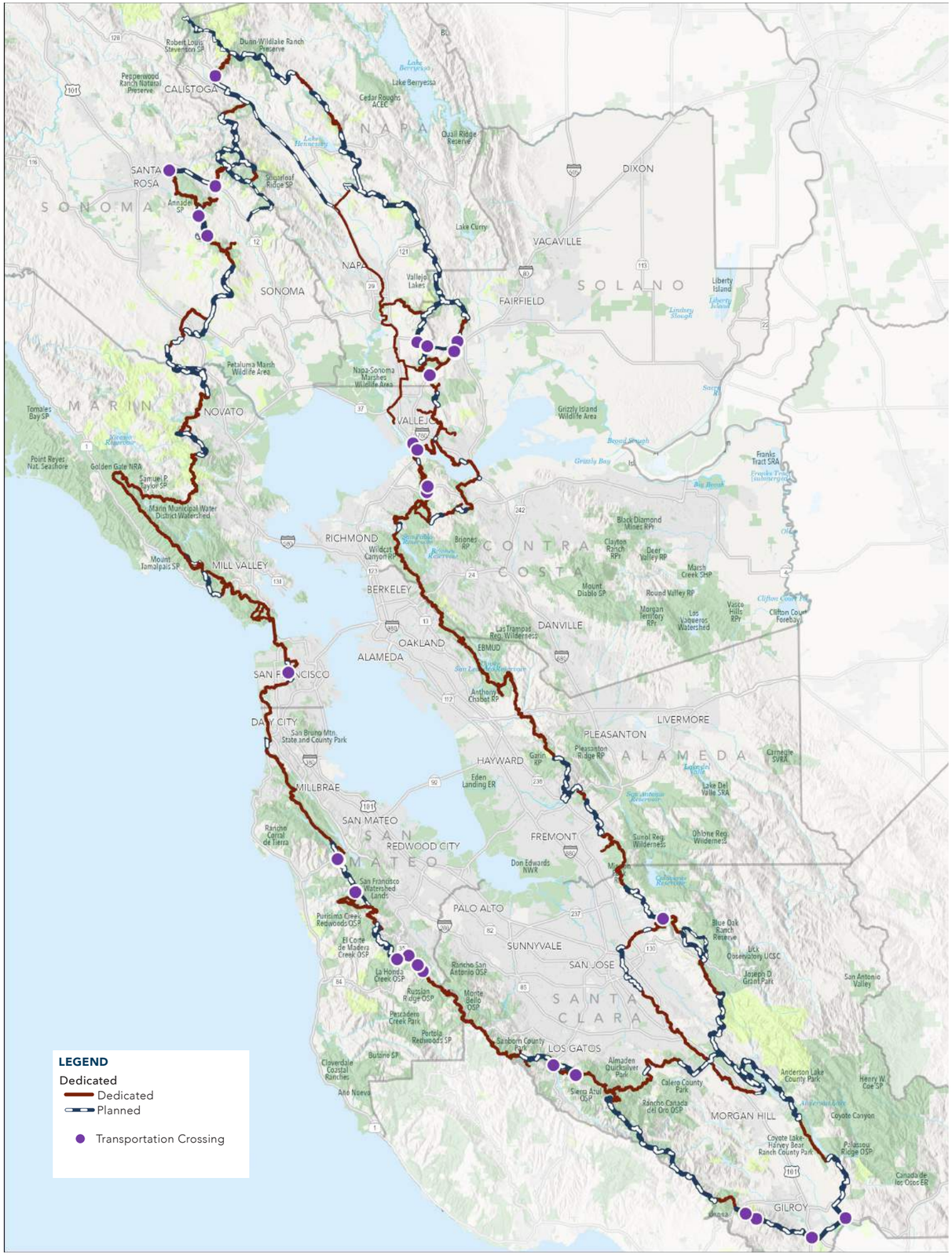
- 1. Sugar Hood Loop (Sonoma County)
- 2. Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail (Solano and Contra Costa counties)
- 3. North Coyote Valley (Santa Clara County)
- 4. San Francisco Reroute (San Francisco County)

ADDITIONAL AREAS (NOT MAPPED):

- Highway 17 Crossing and Trail & Park Connections (Santa Clara County)
- Napa Trail Loop: Ridge, Vine & Bay (Napa County)
- Sucsol/Rockville Loop (Napa and Solano counties)
- Silicon Valley Trail Loop (Santa Clara County)

STRATEGIES

- **Continue to lead and collaborate in existing focused planning areas.** Continue active participation and leadership in groups including the Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Planning Group.
- **Fundraise for focused planning area efforts.** Raise seed funding through partner grants, Trail Opportunity Fund or other methods to support planning and construction in these areas.
- **Identify and pursue new focused planning areas, as applicable.** As new areas are studied and become feasible, such as the Sugar Hood Loop, include in focused planning area initiative.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #3

TRANSPORTATION CROSSINGS

Locations where the RT needs to cross transportation corridors including highways, railroads and major roads can be particularly complex to address. The study shows that there are 21 planned road or highway crossings required to complete the Ridge Trail. Of these gaps, 16 cross state or interstate highways. Planned route highway crossings are found in every county except for Marin, with the most crossings in Santa Clara (6), San Mateo (4) and Solano (4) counties. These complex highway crossings can require lengthy and costly planning, design and review processes and may need expensive infrastructure solutions.

The RT is poised to lead or facilitate the initial planning of these complex transportation crossings as they often cross multiple jurisdictions with the RT being the common thread. These gaps may be some of the last completed, most expensive, and have the longest planning and design timelines of any sections of trail. The solutions are often costly and require strategic partnerships and timely negotiations with public works departments, Caltrans and other agencies. Due to the complexity of these projects, creating region-wide (covered by District 4 Caltrans) and crossing-specific approaches will be critical to the Ridge Trail's success.

STRATEGIES

- **Advocate for project priority.** For high-priority infrastructure projects, actively communicate with partner staff and leadership to elevate the gap's priority and ensure that the needs of the Ridge Trail and trail development costs are incorporated. Strategies to raise the visibility of a gap include emails, phone calls, meetings, invites to special event outings, and briefings/presentations.
- **Build partnerships to address transportation crossings.** Identify key stakeholders and cultivate relationships needed to tackle infrastructure challenges.
- **Leverage existing projects in gap areas.** Identify public right-of-ways in areas with active or upcoming projects that could be used for future Ridge Trail.
- **Explore cost-effective strategies for crossings.** Identify economical strategies to create connectivity following city streets and still provide a safe user experience given the small number of through-users expected to follow the entire route of the Ridge Trail.
- **Incorporate the Ridge Trail in Transportation Plans.** Ensure that Ridge Trail highway crossing needs are identified and included in highway expansion plans, such as Highway 12/Jamison Canyon, Highway 101 at Berryessa, Highway 80 at Highway 12 interchange, across Highway 780 in Benicia, across Highway 84 through Niles Canyon and across Highway 92 at the intersection with Highway 35.
- **Seek highway and active transportation funding.** Encourage partners, or seek highway transportation funding directly, for those Ridge Trail projects expected to provide alternative transportation benefits such as the Vallejo Bluff Trail (Solano), Coyote Creek Trail in San Jose, McGary Road bikeway in Solano County.

CONCLUSIONS

The Ridge Trail is an integral part of the Bay Area, serving as a trailhead to the stunning protected open spaces for all residents. The Ridge Trail connects communities and people to nearby nature or extended multi-day adventures; supports opportunities for active recreation and healing in nature; serves as a catalyst for protecting and preserving open space; creates multi-benefit projects that connect corridors for wildlife; and fosters stewards to care for and protect our region's environmental heritage.

By 2022, the Ridge Trail will reach 400 miles. Within the next ten years, we hope to reach our goal of completing over half of the remaining gaps, given the resources and alignment with partner priorities. This report will serve as the backbone of the Trail Program's analysis and communication over the next decade.

Completing a continuous, connected regional trail will require continual involvement from our long-term partners as well as building relationships with new partners, stakeholders and advocates in order to build political will, secure public and private funding to close the final gaps, and raise awareness among Bay Area residents. Completing our vision of a continuous Ridge Trail also supports our goal of keeping trails accessible, safe, and inclusive for all.

The status of gaps along the Ridge Trails is fluid and ever-changing - this report represents a moment in time to capture and assess the challenges and opportunities to complete the Ridge Trail. Study results will be used to inform the Ridge Trail work plan and Strategic Plan update.

NEXT STEPS

TRAIL ANALYSIS

- **Continue to Update and Adapt the Data and Analysis.** This report is a living document that will require updates and adaptations to remain relevant. Processes will need to be created to streamline our output from our database and spatial data in order to automate the analysis and map updates as efficiently as possible.
- **Continue to Collect and Refine Cost Information.** Understanding the costs associated with Ridge Trail development is essential for future planning and fundraising efforts. Cost estimates for the following should be developed, as applicable, including: average cost of trail development (planning, design, and construction); major infrastructure costs; funding needs for near-term projects (0 - 5 years); and key acquisition costs.
- **Analyze the Ridge Trail's overlap with wildlife corridors and conservation lands.** Deepen analysis of how the Ridge Trail overlaps with the Conservation Lands Network (CLN)'s areas that are essential to conservation. Determine how the Ridge Trail can partner with habitat restoration and wildlife-focused organizations to accelerate these multi-benefit projects.
- **Develop additional analyses for the following issues:** (1) multi-use gaps, (2) multi-day/overnight trekking, and (3) circumnavigation.

PLANNING AND OUTREACH

- **Develop separate summary reports and outreach documents for the following audiences:** (1) public-facing executive summary; (2) specific agency-focused summary reports (e.g. East Bay Regional Park District or Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, or Caltrans); and (3) decision-maker and funder-focused summary.
- **Schedule and make presentations to share study findings with:** partners, stakeholders and other audiences.
- **Update Strategic Plan & Work Plans:** incorporate study findings and recommendations into all our strategic and annual work plans.
- **Continue to raise awareness and cultivate more trail users, advocates and supporters,** including communities that have been historically under-represented in outdoor recreation.
- **Pursue needed funding: grow the Trail Opportunity Fund** to support the Council's ability to make small strategic project grants. This fund, created in 2020 is intended to provide on-the-spot seed funding for projects that have timely needs and are unforeseen in the normal budgeting process.

JOIN US!

Visit ridgetrail.org or contact the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council to learn more or get engaged.

GLOSSARY

ABBREVIATION & ACRONYMS	FULL NAME
~ (i.e., ~1.5 mile)	Approximately
$	Dollars
Ag-rec	Agricultural/Recreational
Annadel SP	Trione-Annadel State Park
ATP	Active Transportation Plan
Bike/ped	Bicycle/pedestrian
CP	County Park
CRHT	California Riding and Hiking Trail easement
CSSLT	Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail
E.g. / i.e.	For example / in other words
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
Esp	Especially
Ft	Foot
HCP	Habitat Conservation Plan
Helen Puntam RP	Helen Putnam Regional Park
Hwy	Highway
I	Interstate (i.e., I-80)
ID	Identify
K	Thousand (i.e., 1,000)
Ln	Lane
M	Million (i.e., 1,000,000)
MU	Multi Use
n/a	Not applicable
NVVT	Napa Valley Vine Trail
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
OSP	Open Space Preserve
OSR	Open Space Reserve
PCA	Priority Conservation Area
Rd	Road
Re	Regarding
ROW	Right of Way
RP	Regional Park
RR	Railroad
RT	Ridge Trail
SHP	State Historic Park
SMART	Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit
SMCP	San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Dept.
SP	State Park
St	Street
STA	Solano Transportation Authority
TBD	To be determined
UP RR	Union Pacific Railroad
Xing	Crossing

PARNTERS	FULL NAME
Ag + Open Space	Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District
Anza Trail	Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail
Cal Water	California Water Service
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
County Roads Dept	Santa Clara County Roads & Airports Department
CRHT	California Riding and Hiking Trail easement
EBMUD	East Bay Municipal Utility District
EPRPD	East Bay Regional Parks District
GGNPC	Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy
GGNRA	Golden Gate National Recreation Area, National Park Service
Golden Gate Bridge District	Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District
JMLT	John Muir Land Trust
JSUSD	John Swett Unified School District
LTNC	Land Trust of Napa County
MALT	Marin Agricultural Land Trust
MCBC	Marin County Bicycle Coalition
MCP	Marin County Parks
Midpen	Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
NCRPOSD	Napa County Regional Parks & Open Space District
NPS	National Park Service
POST	Peninsula Open Space Trust
SCC	State Coastal Conservancy
SCRP	Sonoma County Regional Parks
SCCPRD	Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Dept.
SCVOSA	Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
SEC	Sonoma Ecology Center
SFMTA	San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency
SFPUC	San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
SFRPD	San Francisco Recreation and Park Department
SMCP	San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Dept.
Solano LT	Solano Land Trust
Sonoma LT	Sonoma Land Trust
STA	Solano Transportation Authority
State Parks	California State Parks
UP RR	Union Pacific Railroad
Valley Water	Santa Clara Valley Water District

COUNTY

ALA	Alameda County
CCO	Contra Costa County
MAR	Marin County
NAP	Napa County
SFO	San Francisco County
SMA	San Mateo County
SCL	Santa Clara County
SOL	Solano County
SON	Sonoma County

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Coastal Conservancy

FUNDING FOR THIS REPORT GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL CONSERVANCY.