



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Albert Balagso

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** 08-18-08

Approved

Date

8-25-08

**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** Citywide  
**SNI AREA:** N/A

**SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR NATIONAL RECREATIONAL TRAIL  
DESIGNATION FOR SAN JOSE'S TRAIL NETWORK**

## RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the City Manager, or designee, to submit an application to the American Trails organization in order to seek National Recreational Trail designation for San José's 100 mile Trail Network and to execute all necessary documents to accept the designation.

## OUTCOME

The City Council's action results in submission of an application seeking designation of the City's Trail Network as part of the National Recreational Trail system, which in turn increases the potential for grant funding, national recognition, and educational resources.

## BACKGROUND

The National Trail System Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-543) authorized creation of a national trail system. The act sought to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the nation. To accomplish this, trails were to be established primarily near urban areas and within scenic areas and along historic travel routes.

In 1990, the National Trails Agenda Project created a task force of 15 trail leaders who solicited advice from a broad cross section of the trails community nationwide. The American Trails organization published the resulting report entitled, "*Trails for All Americans.*" It calls for a vast, interconnected network of private, local, state and federal trails linking neighborhoods, communities, towns and cities, businesses, parks, and states throughout the country. According to the report, "most Americans would live and work within 15 minutes of this system."

There are now more than 900 National Recreation Trails (NRTs) that have been designated throughout the United States, totaling more than 10,000 miles. Trails range from less than a mile to 485 miles in length. Trails may be nominated for NRT designation each year.

NRTs are components of the National Trails System and recognize trails that connect people to resources and improve their quality of life. The program is jointly administered by the National Park Service, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program and the U.S. Forest Service, in conjunction with other federal and nonprofit partners, notably American Trails. The Secretary of the Interior is the designating official for NRTs on all other federal lands and on state, local, and private lands, and has delegated responsibility to the National Park Service for the overall administration of the NRT program under that department's jurisdiction. Through designation, these trails are recognized as part of America's national system of trails.

In 2007, Mayor Reed identified Goal 10 of the Green Vision as development of a 100-mile interconnected network of trail systems within 15 years ("City's Trail Network"). Development of trails occurs in large part through funding support from local, state and federal grant sources.

The City's Trail Program's vision is for San José to be the recognized leader in trail development for recreational and commuting purposes. The program's mission is to develop a 100-mile network of 32 inter-connected trail systems.

## **ANALYSIS**

Pursuing NRT designation for the City's Trail Network is a strategic opportunity to secure greater access to grant funding, increase public awareness and access educational resources. Beyond a few hours of staff time, there is no expense related to submission of a 3-page application.

Staff conducted a review of existing NRT trails prior to considering the application process. To date, the Department of the Interior has designated individual trail systems throughout the country. The City's approach of developing a 100-mile interconnected network of trail systems is unique. The City's approach is driven in part by the desire to

meet both recreational and commuting objectives. Staff consulted with NRT representatives on how to designate the City's trails; a single application for the entire network or 32 applications for each individual trail system. NRT representatives acknowledged that the entire network serves a common objective and that a single application would suffice. NRT staff reported that the commuter aspect of the unified network would distinguish the City of San José amongst other NRT organizations. This differentiation has been an asset to the City in pursuing federal transportation funds for several recent projects.

The City's approach has been to substantially fund development of the 100-mile Trail Network through local, state and federal grant sources. Securing the NRT designation can increase the number of grant sources available to the City. With NRT designation, the City would be eligible for grant funding through the following:

- National Park Service's Challenge Cost Share Program
- Bureau of Land Management's Challenge Cost Share Program
- USDA Forest Service's Challenge Cost Share Programs

These three programs present new grant funding opportunities that are currently unavailable to City.

NRT designation also positively influences state funding programs that allocate Recreational Trails Program, Transportation Enhancements, and other funding administered through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration.

Securing the NRT designation will increase national awareness of the City's developing Trail Network.

1. New designations are announced annually by the Secretary of Interior as part of the nationwide celebration of National Trails Day on the first Saturday in June and recognized at the National Trails Symposium (location yet to be determined).
2. Other national publicity can be secured through the annual NRT Photo Contest, sponsored by the American Trails organization.
3. The NRT logo can be used as part of trail signage and on publications like the Trail Program's Annual Report, public information documents and website.

Development of trail projects requires that staff be aware of best practices, grant opportunities, and design approaches. Securing NRT designation can offer staff access to a number of educational resources:

1. Technical assistance from NRT Program partners.
2. NRT newsletter with program updates, newsworthy activities, technical information, and innovative solutions to trail issues from around the country.

3. News group to receive updates on funding, resources, and technical assistance opportunities.

The City Council's recommended action will authorize the City Manager, or designee, to submit an application to the American Trails organization that certifies that the following is true about the City's Trail Network. The certifications are made as part of the application and National Park Service staff reports that no further written agreement is required between the City and any third party.

<b>Certification</b>	<b>Background</b>
The City's Trail Network is partially developed and will be available for public use, to the best of the City Manager's knowledge, for at least 10 consecutive years after designation.	The General Plan and Greenprint define the City's Trail Network as long-term facilities. Pursuant to the Collaborative Action Plan, the City routinely enters into agreements with the SCVWD and other landowners for public access for a minimum period of 25 years.
Over 50% of the Trail Network has been designed, constructed, and is maintained according to best management practices, in keeping with the use anticipated.	The City of San José follows the Public Works Standard Specifications for trail design, adheres to the County's Trail Design Guidelines and meets all permitting requirements from resource agencies with oversight for developments along riparian corridors. Maintenance of trail facilities is consistent with service levels for other park facilities within San José.
The Trail Network is in compliance with applicable land use plans and environmental laws.	Trail systems are developed per the General Plan and Greenprint, and in compliance with the City's Riparian Corridor Policy Guideline. All trail construction is consistent with permitting requirements issued by resource agencies.
All landowners, public or private, whose property the trail crosses, have been notified and have given their written consent to this application.	Written consent was secured from property owners along existing alignments. Copies of the letters are kept on file with the associated agreements, as part of the Trail Program filing system. If so designated, all new access agreements will indicate the trail's NRT designation.

Designation as an NRT requires that the City immediately notify the National Park Service if a trail system or the entire network were to become permanently closed to public use. The Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services manages the Trail Program and will ensure that this communication occurs if the status of a trail system or network changes. As new trail systems are developed, the Park (Trail) Manager will communicate updates to the National Park Service so that the agency's database may be kept up to date.

Designation of the City's Trail Network as an NRT does not change the City's jurisdictional responsibilities for the planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of the trails.

### **EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

An informational memorandum will be submitted to the City Council if the Secretary of the Interior designates San José's Trail Network as an NRT. Designation is anticipated in June 2009.

### **POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

**Alternative #1:** Do Nothing

**Pros:** Does not require staff time in the preparation of an application package, subsequent coordination activities, or notification of a future closure of designated trails to the National Park Service.

**Cons:** Limits the number of potential grant opportunities, national recognition and educational resources made available through NRT designation.

**Reason for not recommending:**

The application is a 3-page document that is easily prepared with readily available data. NRT recognition provides the City a number of valuable resources.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST**

- Criterion 1: Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater.  
(Required: Website Posting)
- Criterion 2: Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City.  
(Required: E-mail and Website Posting)
- Criterion 3: Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, Council or a Community group that requires special outreach. (Required: E-mail, Website Posting, Community Meetings, Notice in appropriate newspapers)

The proposed City Council action does not meet any of the three criteria. The NRT Application and associated attachments will be posted on the Trail Program website as a public information item under the "reports" link. This memorandum will be posted on the website for the September 9, 2008 City Council meeting agenda.

### **COORDINATION**

Preparation of this memorandum has been coordinated with the Department of Public Works, Planning, Building and Code Enforcement and the City Attorney's Office.

Coordination with property owners and interest groups also occurred, and included the Friends of the Guadalupe River Park & Gardens, Pacific Gas & Electric, Santa Clara Valley Water District, and the County of Santa Clara. For informational purposes, the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council and the San Francisco Bay Trail (ABAG) were notified of the possible NRT designation of the several trail systems within the City's Trail Network for which they advocate.

**FISCAL/POLICY ALIGNMENT**

There is no cost beyond staff time for preparation of the application package. Staff will be utilizing existing documents that offer an overview of the Trail Network to enhance the application. As a result, new work is limited to preparation of the 3-page application.

Should the City secure the NRT designation, there may be a need for a representative to attend a designation ceremony in June 2009 and/or the National Trail Symposium.

**COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS**

1. COST ELEMENTS OF PROJECT:  
N/A

**SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

Should San José secure the NRT designation, staff would seek City Manager authorization to attend the dedication event and/or National Trail Symposium. Funding for any travel expenses would be provided from the Construction Tax and Property Conveyance Tax Fund: Parks Purposes Central Fund (Fund 390), Appropriation 4189: Parks and Community Facilities Development Office.

**CEQA**

Not a project.

  
ALBERT BALAGSO  
Director of Parks, Recreation  
and Neighborhood Services