



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Albert Balagso

SUBJECT: 2008-09 ANNUAL TRAIL REPORT

DATE: 07-20-09

Approved

Date

7/23/09

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Citywide

RECOMMENDATION

Approval of staff report regarding accomplishments outlined in the Annual Trail Report.

BACKGROUND

In September 2000, the City Council approved the *Greenprint*, a 20-year strategic plan for development of parks, trails, community facilities and programs. This document was the result of extensive community outreach and specifically promotes the development of a 100-mile citywide trail system.

In October 2007, Council adopted the Green Vision which included Goal 10, development of a 100-mile trail network by 2022.

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services produces a report annually to discuss accomplishments as it develops the 100-mile Trail Network. On June 29, 2009, the sixth annual report was posted on the Trail Program website and notification was provided to the Mayor and City Council. Notification was also sent to members of the public, advocacy groups, stakeholder groups and funding agencies.

ANALYSIS

The Annual Trail Report discusses program and project accomplishments over the past 12 months. Release of this document provides the Mayor, City Council and community with an update regarding the pace and extent of trail development. As part of this memorandum, an overview of funding challenges and opportunities is discussed. This will assist the City Council in considering options to sustain progress in developing the trail network.

Development of a 100-mile trail network is a challenging endeavor, and San José must seek to differentiate itself from the many other public agencies seeking funds for public improvements. The City needs to emulate lessons learned by international cities with higher

levels of foot and bicycle traffic than is commonly found in North America. Development of a highly functional and user friendly network will support the Green Vision objective of making San José the epicenter of the Clean Tech Economy. Additionally, offering the finest recreational and commute experience will provide San José a competitive advantage to attract new residents, visitors and corporations.

Development of the 100-mile trail network by 2022 requires that the City sustains good working relationships with public entities, seeks funds to develop 3.3 miles of new trails per year on average, identifies and secures resources for regular and preventative maintenance in order for the network to offer long-term recreational and commuting amenities, and identifies the necessary resources for operations. Currently the City is on pace to achieve the Green Vision goal, but substantial new sources of funding will be required in the coming years to keep this pace.

The Trail Program continues to work with the DOT Bike/Pedestrian Program on DOT's update of the citywide Bike Plan. Some of the key recommendations will include providing better connections between on-street bikeways and the Trail system to provide a better citywide system of bikeways. The Bike Plan update is scheduled for consideration by the Transportation & Environment Committee on October 5, 2009.

As we begin the third year of the Green Vision, the trail network has 51.43 miles of trail open to the public (33.87 miles paved, 17.56 miles unpaved or "interim"). The pace set by the Green Vision requires that we be at 47.85 miles; we are currently exceeding the rate by 3.58 miles. Although we are currently ahead of schedule, the rate of trail development is anticipated to slow as funding sources become harder to obtain and the City works on development of some of the more technically difficult trail reaches.

Program Accomplishments

The Trail Program mission is to complete a 100-mile network of trail systems to enhance, strengthen and connect neighborhoods. The achievement of this mission is guided by the vision of making San José the national leader in trail development for recreation and commuting.

As the 2008-09 fiscal year came to an end, the trail network was 51.43 miles across multiple trail systems. Approximately 1 mile of new construction was completed in early July (Coyote Creek Trail and Albertson Parkway), so this additional mileage will be reported as part of the 2009-10 report.

San José's trail program and network were recognized in a number of ways in 2008-2009. Some of the more notable recognitions included:

- Several award designations reinforced San José's leadership.
- An Award of Merit was received from the California Trails and Greenways Conference for the Trail Program website. The website was acknowledged for

effective information delivery, provision of developer resources and support of volunteerism.

- An Award of Excellence was received from the California Parks and Recreation Society for the Airport Parkway Under-Crossing Project (Guadalupe River Trail), recognizing the project as an outstanding contribution to the community.
- San José maintained its Bronze Level, Bicycle Friendly City designation granted by the League of American Bicyclists for its extensive network of bikeways (on-street routes and off-street trails).
- Prevention Magazine and the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) ranked 100 cities for walkability. San José was determined to be the 19th Best Walking City and was distinguished as having “more hiking and walking trails than any of the cities we reviewed.”
- MSNBC referenced San José in its story about “Building a Bicycle Infrastructure.”
- The Federal Department of the Interior designated 16.4 miles of San José’s trail network (Guadalupe River Trail, Highway 237 Bikeway and Coyote Creek Trail) as part of the National Recreation Trail (NRT). These three interconnected trail systems form the basis of the network, and the designation will be extended as trails are expanded and gaps closed. San José was the only California City to secure the designation this year.
- During Bike to Work Month in May, San Jose hosted a Bike to Work Day Energizer Station providing bicycle commuters food, drinks, bike tune-ups, and bicycling info
- San Jose became the first city to receive a platinum-level Bicycle Friendly Workplace award from Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition.
- San Jose’s Bike/Pedestrian Program participated in a Commonwealth Club panel titled “Critical issues in Bicycle Commuting: From First Mile to Last Mile”
- San Jose hosted the national Smart Cycling Conference held by the League of American Bicyclists.
- The image of San José’s Guadalupe River Trail was used as the icon for the NRT story on the American Trails Organization website about the 22 newly designated trail systems across the nation.
- Seventy-one news stories were tracked in 2008-09 about San José trails (Mercury News, KNTV, KLIV, etc.)
- The Florida Department of Transportation acknowledged San José’s website for visual character and organization.
- Outreach to a local author resulted in two urban trails being included in a publication, this is notable because the book’s primary focus was the area’s rural trails.
- The City of San José Official Visitor’s Guide provides one page dedicated to city trails.
- The San Jose Downtown Association includes a map of area trails on its “Getting Here” page.

Information

The Trail Program website serves as the primary vehicle to inform the community about trail development and the existing network. The following enhancements were made over the last 12 months to continuously improve the site:

- Video slideshows have been created for all existing trails. The videos report the length of the trail system and visually show the character of each system. Videos are also posted for trail projects under construction so that progress can be tracked.
- A Before/After Video has been created to document how projects over the past 6 years have visually changed and opened the landscape for recreational enjoyment.
- Case Studies have been prepared for two recent and challenging projects along Los Gatos Creek and Guadalupe River (Airport Parkway). The documents respond to a common question as to why trail projects take so long and cost so much to construct.
- Staff has coordinated with local tourism sites to increase awareness of downtown trails and the availability of trails as a travel mode.
- A "Developer Zone" page has been created on the website. It offers resources targeted to the development community and seeks to encourage more trail building as part of new residential communities.

Technical Documentation

Consistent with the program's vision, staff seeks to document research in a form that can be used as guidance by other agencies:

- The Rails to Trails Conservancy has posted San José's reports on the use of Recycled Asphalt and methodology for conducting Pedestrian Bridge Assessments on its national website.
- The second annual Trail Count was completed in September 2008. It documented a 7% overall increase in trail usage and reported an 86% increase due to gap closure near Airport Parkway. The Summary Report documentation prepared for the trail count was studied in the creation of the National Bicycle & Pedestrian Documentation Project.
- Working with the San José Police Department, staff conducted an Aerial Support Unit study to determine what physical elements are required along trails to permit better monitoring and locating of trails during evening hours. The findings are documented in video form on the Trail Program website.
- Presentations about San José's Trail Network were made at the ProBike/ProWalk Conference in St. Petersburg, Florida, California Parks and Recreation Society Conference in Santa Clara, and the California Trails and Greenways Conference in Yosemite.

Funding

A substantial amount of program funding is derived from successful grant writing. Often City funds are used to initiate a project or provide a required match to receive a grant. Because trail projects can take several years to complete and cost between \$2 and \$3 Million per mile to develop, it is important for staff to work with the City Council to identify, prioritize and secure funds in a strategic manner. The high cost of trail development is due to many factors including constrained and sensitive project sites, multi-agency permitting and design conditions, materials, staff and consultant costs, etc.

Over the past five years, approximately \$13.3 Million in grant funding has been secured by the City for Trail development. Additional City funding has been made available for trails as a result of the City Council approval of the use of Park Trust funding for trail development in 2007. With grants and various city sources of funding, the program expended \$9.3 Million in 2007-08 and \$3.7 Million in 2008-09.

The majority of funding used during Fiscal Year 2008-2009 was carried over as part of ongoing trail development projects. Efforts to secure additional funding in Fiscal Year 2008-2009 included:

- \$1,377,000 was secured for the Lower Guadalupe River Trail as part of the CMAQ (California Mitigation and Air Quality) program. By working with the VTA, staff was to tap into this source to augment existing SAFETEA-LU funds for the project.
- Six grant applications were submitted to state and federal agencies, including a Stimulus fund request. Due to state budget issues and the recent submission deadlines, \$3,400,000 in new funding is still pending a final decision from granting agencies.
- \$365,000 in Park Trust funding was approved by Council as a reserve for future development of the Coyote Creek Trail through Kelley Park.
- \$700,000 in Park Trust funding was approved by Council to prepare design and construction documentation for the Guadalupe River Trail from Branham Lane to Chynoweth Avenue.
- \$500,000 in Redevelopment Agency funding was approved for the Coyote Creek Trail as part of the November 25, 2008, Mayor's Redevelopment Agency Budget Message.
- The VTA Board approved the Bicycle Expenditure Plan (BEP). The plan lists seven San Jose trail systems (Coyote Creek, Guadalupe River, Los Gatos Creek, Penitencia Creek, Five Wounds, Thompson Creek, and Willow Glen Spur). Listing in the plan is important because the VTA will seek to fund these projects as it gathers funds from local, regional, State and Federal sources. The plan seeks to make \$44.7M available to San Jose through 2035, with agencies in the region competing for funds as they become available. San Jose's approach of clearly defining projects through master plans will serve it well as it proposes project's ready for design and construction funding.

Program Challenges

There are a number of challenges to be overcome to achieve the goal of 100 miles of trails by 2022. The four key challenging areas are (1) Funding and prioritization, (2) Project Implementation, (3) Paved Trail Development, and (4) Trails Operation and Maintenance. Each of these challenges, as well as the steps staff is taking to mitigate them, is described below.

1. Funding

Considering the cost of project development over the past several years, it is estimated that completion of the remaining network will require approximately \$200 Million. The cost of construction has been volatile over the past few years, so this cost estimate looks at projects from the past four years to hopefully provide a more long-term and accurate cost estimate.

To further support funding of trails, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services is in the process of forming a Park Foundation. The organization would seek to raise funds from private and corporate donations to fund the maintenance and development of PRNS facilities within San José.

Staff monitors 24 funding sources from local, state and federal agencies. Each grant program follows its own schedule, and not all grants are offered annually. To maximize grant competitiveness, staff has developed documents to distinguish San José applications from other agencies:

- Trail Network Overview (brochure and video) – Targeted for a national audience, highlighting the diversity and extent of trail experiences within the city.
- Fact Sheets – Addressing nine issues commonly raised by the community, including impact of trails on housing prices, design approaches, integration with the overall transportation system, usage, and common development challenges.
- Designations – Alignment with larger regional and national systems is seen as a means to increase credibility with funding agencies and organizations. Staff pursued a number of opportunities including: 1) San José was designated as part of the National Recreation Trail system and is now eligible for three new grant programs, 2) Staff continues to work with state representatives to include San José as part of a US Bicycle Route System, and 3) The Penitencia Creek Trail and Coyote Creek Trail have been designated as part of the Bay Area Ridge Trail.
- Association with Transportation System – San José's trails will be interconnecting in order to accommodate both recreation and commute users. Trail Count and other data collection efforts reinforce that bicycle commuting is a primary function of several trail systems. Alignment with transportation, particularly alternative transportation means, strengthens grant writing efforts and potentially expands the number of funding sources available. Successfully securing funds through the 2005 Federal Transportation Bill (SAFETEA-LU) is evidence of this approach.

Staff coordinates regularly with funding agencies like the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) to stay apprised of upcoming grant opportunities. Recently the SCVWD Board recommended staff prepare a grant program to support creekside trail development. SCVWD staff will coordinate development of the funding program through an advisory committee and anticipates that it will provide grant guidelines and application documents in December 2009. At this time SCVWD staff is not aware of the size or number of grants to be made available. The Prioritization Process followed by the City helps to define high priority projects and align them with the special provisions of grant programs offered by agencies like the SCVWD.

Securing grants is a viable means of funding the program. However, the rate and amount of grants is unknown from year to year due to the competitive nature of grants. Staff has made efforts to increase grant competitiveness, but grant awards are not guaranteed. Developing a method for securing a sustainable and long-term inflow of funding could address the biggest impediment to reaching the Green Vision goal by 2022.

2. Project Implementation

Trail projects are often multi-year, multi-phase efforts. A number of conditions contribute to lengthy project schedules:

- Projects developed along and within sensitive riparian environments must meet strict guidelines to preserve, replace and/or enhance sites.
- Land may be owned by other public agencies and private parties, so acquisition, leases, easements and/or other arrangements must be addressed.
- The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires investigations and outreach in order to inform governmental decision makers and the public about the potential significant environmental effects of proposed activities; identification of ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced; changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures when feasible; and disclosure to the public the reasons why a project was approved if significant environmental effects are involved.
- When federal funding is in place, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires additional studies and documentation, as well as coordination with the federal regulatory agency implementing the funding program. The NEPA requires between 6 and 8 additional months to complete beyond the time required for CEQA.
- The Bay Area has more stringent requirements pertaining to storm water run-off that require more fully developed documentation and costly construction methods than may be necessary elsewhere in the state, and certainly more so than other places nationally.
- San José is often dependent upon many local, state and federal agencies for permits.

City staff and consultants have experience in working within these regulatory parameters. Practices in place for all master planning and design efforts include formation of a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) which includes representation from City departments, permitting agencies, and other interested parties. By engaging the TAC early in the design process, staff

is able to identify possible roadblocks that can be addressed or avoided as the project moves to the permitting stage. Staff has also developed a good understanding of objectives from the many agencies with jurisdiction within riparian corridors. This knowledge permits initial proposals to be shaped in a manner that can often be acceptable with some fine tuning. Because not all regulatory agencies can attend meetings in San José, staff makes presentations to regional watershed groups to inform and respond to general questions in advance of the permitting stage.

As an example of the extensive coordination required, the TAC formed for the Coyote Creek Trail Master Plan (Highway 237 to Story Road) includes representatives from 18 agencies and private entities. The project’s proximity to the riparian corridor is similar to other trail projects and requires that many state regulatory agencies be involved in our planning and design process. Represented agencies were:

Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services	Santa Clara Valley Water District
Department of Public Works	Environmental Protection Agency
Department of Transportation	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Police Department	Department of Fish and Game
Redevelopment Agency	Department of Fish and Wildlife Services
Office of Cultural Affairs	Caltrans
County of Santa Clara	Guadalupe Coyote Resource Conservation District
Regional Water Quality Control Board	Santa Clara Valley Water District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Private land owners

Staff incorporates a number of strategies in development of projects to shorten the schedule and project cost as much as possible. Coordinating TAC meetings is one such strategy. Additionally, the City strategically uses staff and consultant resources best suited for individual projects, includes standardized design approaches as part of project plans, and meets early with regulatory and watershed groups to preview a project to catch design issues as early as possible.

Through the Collaborative Action Plan approved by the City Council in 2003, the City regards the SCVWD as a primary partner and benefits from use of SCVWD maintenance roads for several trail alignments. Staff meets regularly with its SCVWD counterparts to track on-going projects and consider partnership opportunities.

3. Paved Trail Development

San Jose’s trail network serves recreational and commute users. A paved surface is important to both, but perhaps more so for bicycle commuters as they transition from the paved roadway to trails in order to reach their destinations. The use of “road” bikes with thin tires is a preferred means of commuting due to speed and weight. San Jose has 17.56 miles of trails in an interim state. By working with the SCVWD, staff has and continues to process

Joint Trail Agreements to make existing gravel maintenance roads available to the public (Lower Guadalupe River Trail as one recent example). The installation of pavement permits a greater number of users to commute to and from work along the trails. Survey data collected as part of Trail Count 2008 documented that trail users seek to have interim trails paved in order to improve the convenience and viability of bicycle commuting. As the City considers trail funding, it is important to keep in mind two points about interim trails:

- Although considered open, they are projects still in need of funding for design and construction of paved trail improvements.
- The installation of pavement changes the quality of the network but not its size since mileage is allocated for in the “open” category.

4. Trail Operations and Maintenance

According to the Trail Count survey, the public perception of trail maintenance is excellent, but concerns about safety limit the number of users, particularly by gender. Efforts should be made to continue funding each new mile of trail sufficiently for day-to-day maintenance as well as preventative maintenance. San José enjoys a positive opinion from daily trail users, and preserving that perception can retain and build an important stakeholder group for the long-term Green Vision trail development effort.

Newer trails include architectural gateways to draw attention to the trails and contribute to the character and sense of place of surrounding neighborhoods. In some instances, trail projects include significant landscaping when they are not along a riparian corridor. In other instances, a project may include mitigation plantings that must be monitored and successfully established in order to meet the permitting requirements. Funding for landscape maintenance is important if the City seeks to increase trail usage and take the necessary steps to continue securing permits from regulatory agencies.

An Adopt-A-Trail Program continues to seek community volunteers to monitor trails and help with clean up. Staff is modeling a volunteer Trail Watch program after a successful effort in Anchorage, Alaska. In 2010, staff expects to train volunteers to serve as “eyes” on the trails, respond to user questions and report issues early to the Police. In addition, staff is evaluating the Ranger Program to determine if there is an opportunity to utilize the Park Rangers to assist with the operations of the trail system.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Monthly status reports about the Trail Network are posted on the Trail Program website. Periodic presentations are also made to the Transportation and Environment Council Committee regarding trail development.

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)**

This project does not meet any of the above criteria. This memorandum will be posted on the City's Internet website for the August 4, 2009 Council meeting. A copy of the Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Annual Trails Report is posted on the City's website and the link has been emailed to residents and agencies who have attended community meeting and requested to be kept up to date on the City's Trail Network.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office, the City Manager's Budget Office, and the Department of Transportation.

FISCAL/POLICY ALIGNMENT

This memorandum is for approval of the Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Annual Trails report and does not have a specific impact on the operating and maintenance budget.

CEQA

Not a project.


ALBERT BALAGSO
Director of Parks, Recreation and
Neighborhood Services

For questions, please contact YVES ZSUTTY, Trail Manager, at (408) 793-5561.

Attachment: Annual Trail Report