



San Francisco Bay Trail Project
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street, Suite 700
San Francisco, CA 94105

TO: Bay Trail Steering Committee

DATE: January 2, 2020

FR: Laura Thompson, Lee Huo, Maureen Gaffney

RE: 30th Anniversary Board Meeting: Summary of What We Heard & Next Steps

We are extremely grateful to the board members and guests who spent an afternoon in November with us sharing creative ideas to build capacity and secure new resources for the Bay Trail program. It was a very inspiring and rewarding 30th year milestone meeting.

With the help of our fantastic facilitator, Sarah Seward, we sifted through your brainstorming, best ideas and small bets, and organized them into common themes (see attachment). We then identified several key proposals that combine board and staff ideas (shown below). The Steering Committee will review and discuss these ideas at their January 9 meeting, providing feedback to staff on which proposals to explore further.

Key Proposals

As a reminder of our goals for this exercise, we wish to advance efforts that build capacity and lead to additional resources to expand our impact as an organization and expand the Bay Trail. We also wish to position the program to be as effective as possible in addressing the changing nature of our work. Given our current limited staff and discretionary funding capacity, we have identified some discrete next steps for each of these proposals that we can accomplish now to move each idea forward. The Steering Committee can help us decide which proposals should be prioritized.

1) Establish a Bay Trail Foundation

The concept of a membership-based foundation for the Bay Trail was an idea that came out of several group discussions. It is envisioned as an entity that could generate a significant level of funding for the program, with active public and private sector board members and a strong advocacy role. In order to be successful, it would likely need to be distinct from our public sector sponsors, MTC and ABAG. There are structural questions, such as how a foundation differs from the existing 501 (c)(3) Bay Trail non-profit organization and how we would launch it.

Benefits: A distinct entity with the ability to solicit funds from foundations, corporations and individuals. As a membership organization, it could expand the breadth of public exposure and provide a mechanism for citizens to take action for the Bay Trail.

Level of Effort: High. This effort would likely require the creation of a new organization, or a substantially modified Bay Trail non-profit, including new staff to launch and manage the entity. Advice from legal counsel would be necessary.

Challenges: Care in creation of a foundation to ensure that a new separate entity wouldn't be at odds with the strong financial, administrative and political support we currently receive from ABAG/MTC. A new source of funding for a foundation manager would need to be secured.

Next steps: Explore successful foundation models, i.e. East Bay Regional Park District's Regional Parks Foundation and the National Park Services' Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy.

2) Create Legislative Champions and Change

Throughout its history, legislative champions have created substantial positive change for the Bay Trail Project. As we work to complete our most difficult remaining gaps, we need strong support from decision-makers in Sacramento and at the local level to advance new and creative ways to complete the Bay Trail. We have reached a turning point in the program and we need to work with our legislators on a different approach, one that has strong political backing that makes it easier for us to carry out our work, such as increasing our legislative authority and support through dedicated sources of funding.

Benefits: The Bay Trail vision began in Sacramento and continues to rely on strong state support for implementation. A strong legislative champion will elevate the importance of the program and position it for success as funding proposals and policy changes are developed at the state level.

Level of Effort: High. Establishing a champion takes work to introduce the program to legislators and find a good match for advancing our vision. Developing materials, setting up meetings and traveling to Sacramento for meetings with members and aides is a substantial level of effort.

Challenges: Developing and maintaining legislative champions takes time, and with term limits, requires regular attention.

Next steps: Study the remaining trail gaps and develop a list of existing and potential champions for each section at the local and state levels. Research the Bay Area legislative delegation in Sacramento for potential champions.

3) Leverage Partnership with ABAG/MTC

This proposal builds on and expands the benefits that have been realized with the 2017 integration of ABAG and MTC staff. By leveraging the resources already provided at our sponsor organization, we can build capacity for the program, especially as we begin to define our new position in the Local Government Services section.

Benefits: The Bay Trail is a positive project that is popular among local agencies, elected officials and the public. It makes sense for ABAG/MTC to highlight this program as a successful regional project that helps meet the goals of Plan Bay Area 2050.

Level of Effort: Medium. Leveraging support internally takes time and should include discussions with MTC Commissioners and ABAG Executive Board members in addition to agency executives.

Challenges: Staff at ABAG/MTC are oversubscribed and new funding for staff is not easy to secure.

Next steps: Share outcomes of the board discussion with Local Government Services leadership and begin the conversation of how specific needs of the Bay Trail program can be supported by ABAG/MTC.

4) Establish Staff in Key Organizations to Focus on Bay Trail

This idea is based on a model used by BCDC that placed a staff person with BCDC expertise at Caltrans in order to expedite permit applications and strengthen working relationships between the two agencies. The Bay Trail Project could use a similar approach by working with key organizations, such as Caltrans and the San Francisco International Airport, to assign an internal staff person within those agencies to focus on completing key Bay Trail gaps.

Benefits: Focuses staff resources directly on specific Bay Trail gaps. A dedicated internal staff person could be more effective than external Bay Trail staff in advancing work to complete complex gaps.

Level of Effort: High. This effort will need support from agency executives and an agreement between ABAG/MTC and the public agency that outlines expectations from the arrangement.

Challenges: This approach will likely require funding to support staff in outside agencies, and it is unclear where these funds would come from.

Next steps: Meet with people who were involved in establishing this relationship to learn more about how the BCDC-Caltrans staff arrangement worked. Identify the potential tasks of a Bay Trail expert housed at Caltrans or SFO. Meet with ABAG/MTC executives to propose this idea and explore funding options.

Timeline

The Steering Committee will help guide this discussion with the goal to bring a recommendation to the full board for consideration at their spring 2020 meeting.

January 9, 2020 Steering Committee meeting

- Summarize what we heard at the meeting and discuss the innovation exercise results
- Preliminary review and feedback of potential key proposals
- Steering Committee feedback on proposals that should move forward with identified next steps

March 12, 2020 Steering Committee meeting

- Report back on completed tasks agreed upon at previous meeting
- Present more in-depth review of selected projects
- Narrow focus and create more refined next steps

April 2020 board meeting, date and location TBD

- Consideration of a staff/Steering Committee recommendation