



Approve Draft-Final Regional Trail Network and Prioritization Framework

Action

**Prepared by:** Victoria Cacciatore

**Attachments:** Yes

**Approved by:** James Corless

**Referring Committee:** Transportation

**1. Issue:**

Approval of the prioritization framework and final regional trail network to connect communities in the region and further progress towards regional goals. The prioritization framework will be used to develop a regional action plan for the board's consideration in June.

**2. Recommendation:**

The Transportation Committee recommends that the board approve the final regional trail network and prioritization framework, with the understanding that staff will present any revisions to the version of the prioritization framework shared with the April committees prior to action at the board meeting. Staff made clarifying revisions to state how the prioritization framework will be used, how trail connections were identified as furthering goals during the trail network identification phase, and to expand on how trail connections could provide critical regional access.

**3. Background/Analysis:**

SACOG is leading the development of the Sacramento Region Parks and Trails Strategic Development Plan. Through this work, we will develop a regional trail vision and strategic implementation approach for a connected trail system across all six counties. The strategic development plan will also help us identify how we grow the regional trail network to create low-stress active transportation access for disadvantaged populations to parks and other community destinations—the 2020 analysis uncovered that connected trail access for lower-income residents is 30 percent less than connected trail access for average- and higher income residents in our region.

The three-year planning effort started with staff reviewing close to 80 local, regional, and state plans addressing trails and active transportation throughout all six counties. The goals of safety, all ages and abilities networks, economic vitality, environmental justice, health, and recreation were universally present throughout these plans. Planning partners from cities, counties, and other invested organizations emphasized the potential for environmental justice, economic vitality, and health goals to deliver community and regional benefits as our region recovers from prolonged shutdowns and pandemic-related societal impacts.

The public survey in spring 2021 uncovered what residents value in their biking and walking connections. These learnings shaped the prioritization metrics for identifying the regional trail network. The SACOG Board of Directors released the draft regional trail network on December 16, 2021. The December draft network

recommended leveraging over 250 miles of existing trails, adding 500 miles of new trails, and further examining 90 miles of study corridors to equitably increase access to trails, support healthy lifestyles, and connect people to important destinations tied to economic vitality efforts. The December draft network also identified gaps in the regional network that needed additional partners and collaboration to address.

Following the board release of the draft network, staff shared the network with a wider range of partners and collected public input through early February. Staff shared public comments with the staff from affected jurisdictions for use in related planning efforts. A January 13, public webinar introduced the draft network and the process used to identify trail network connections and served as another outlet for comments and answer questions. Staff conducted focused engagement with community serving partners to discuss ways the trail network could be strengthened. To address these comments, suggestions, and questions, staff worked with cities and counties to identify how to fill in gaps and identify trails that would help our regional network achieve regional goals.

#### **4. Discussion/Analysis:**

##### *Prioritizing the network*

Prior to the April Transportation Committee, City of Sacramento staff shared concerns that the metrics identified under “Regionalism” did not recognize the City’s role as a regional destination for employment and entertainment. SACOG staff worked to address these comments by adding an introduction of the prioritization framework (Attachment B) and connect it to the trail network performance goals from last June. Staff added language to clarify how the performance metrics under “Realizing Plan Goals” were discussed and applied to trail connections when identifying the regional network with local staff from cities, counties, and districts starting in 2021. Lastly, staff added clarifications and examples for how Regionalism metrics would be applied to discuss critical access for trail connections.

The qualitative prioritization framework builds on the Trail Performance Targets (Attachment C) to couple the foundational goals and learnings of the regional trail plan with the most current input from policy makers and partners. The February Transportation and Land Use & Natural Resources Committees reviewed and provided input on draft framework to prioritize trail segments and identify near-term and longer-term actions to implement the regional trail network. Staff also consulted with the Youth Leadership Academy in February to shape the prioritization of regional trail connections. Partners from the technical committee (community serving organizations, cities, counties, and park districts) provided input to refine metrics and hone the prioritization process.

The prioritization framework emphasizes priority policy goals expressed by the board and the Youth Leadership Academy. However, instead of requiring that projects achieve all trail network goals and all regionalism goals to be a priority, the framework would elevate trail connections that demonstrate potential through different combinations of performance outcomes. This approach addresses concerns that aggregating six trail performance criteria with three regionalism criteria through the prioritization would ignore the diversity of community contexts and connectivity needs throughout the region.

Readiness metrics will help identify the needed steps to move the proposed connection forward and closer to implementation. By refining the measures for readiness, staff will be able to develop a more accurate action plan for board adoption in June.

##### *Trail network performance*

The final regional trail network is attached and viewable online here: <https://bit.ly/3JOKPo7> (Attachment A).

The final trail network focuses on equitably creating regional trail connectivity and increasing access to the destinations that support the vitality and livability of the region. The majority of the identified connections (over 250 miles of existing trails and more than 800 miles of planned trails) are selected from local plans for their potential to make connections across boundaries in the region. Over 300 miles of trail study corridors—connections identified for further study in future planning documents, planned connections with known implementation challenges, and high-concept connections—are also identified for their potential to connect via trails or trail-like facilities across the region.

The planned network collectively achieves most of the outcomes identified at the onset of the network identification last June (Attachment C), the regional trail network would increase access for 406,000 residents, or a 17.1 percent increase over existing trail access conditions. Locally identified study areas can help fill in remaining gaps in the trail network and further expand access to residents. The improved analysis techniques used to analyze household access increases from the regional network also identified a decrease in the region's baseline existing trail access, which is 31.9 percent instead of 41 percent as originally measured.

#### *Attachments*

A: Final Regional Trail Network

B: Prioritizing the Regional Trail Network with Qualitative Metrics

C: Performance Targets for Trail Network Identification

### **5. Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:**

This three-year effort is funded with a Caltrans Sustainable Communities grant for \$229,000 and \$39,670 of SACOG Transportation Development Act funds.

### **6. This staff report aligns with the following SACOG Work Plan Objectives:**

#### **Goal 1 : Advance Economic Prosperity**

**Objective 1:** Invest in and protect the transportation infrastructure needed to implement the region's economic prosperity plan.

**Objective 3:** Improve people's ability to get to jobs, schools, and other economic opportunities.

**Objective 5:** Begin sustained effort to address the racial inequities related to economic prosperity indicators associated with housing, transportation, and opportunity.

#### **Goal 2 : Connected Communities**

**Objective 2:** Support innovative mobility options that develop equitable, accessible transportation options for all residents.

**Objective 3:** Prioritize cost-effective transportation investments that enhance mobility while improving safety, air quality, and the condition of transportation infrastructure and assets.