

8. COMMUTER TRAILS ELEMENT

Trails are made in a variety of shapes, textures, and places. There are numerous types of trails which accommodate a variety of uses, as depicted by terms such as hiking trail, equestrian trail, mountain bike trail, multi-use trail, cross-country ski trail, and rail-trail. The Trails Element describes Humboldt's existing, planned, and desired regional trails network in the context of a regional transportation system. The Regional Transportation Plan Commuter Trails Element will focus on trails used for transportation, meaning trails used

As a major element in California's outdoor recreation industry, trails help generate \$85 billion in consumer spending and \$27 billion in wages and salaries every year.
— *California State Bike & Ped Plan, 2017*

to travel from one destination to another. Regional trails that link destinations within and between communities are particularly important. Recreational trails not used for transportation are not discussed here, but are included in other HCAOG adopted plans.¹ Note that the "Complete Streets Element" covers sidewalks, bike lanes (Class II), and bike routes (Class III).

Other plans and studies have detailed information on local trails and regional trail networks. We rely on those plans for details on the histories, existing conditions, and proposed designs of the region's trails. The Commuter Trails Element's policies are derived, in part, from the goals, objectives, and policies adopted in the Humboldt Regional Bicycle Plan (2018), Humboldt County Regional Trails Master Plan (2010), and Humboldt County Regional Pedestrian Plan (2008).

Other important planning documents to refer to for existing conditions, supporting policies, priority projects, and implementation actions include:

- Humboldt Bay Trail South Project Description Report (County of Humboldt, September 2020)
- "State of the Trails" Report: Expanding Regional and Local Trails (Humboldt County, June 2016)
- Humboldt County Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy (Cal. Coastal Conservancy, 2011)
- Humboldt Bay Trail Feasibility Study: Eureka to Arcata (HCAOG, 2007)
- *Humboldt Bay Trail Feasibility Study* (California Coastal Conservancy, 2001)

GOAL: Humboldt's regional trail network is a complete and seamlessly connected system that gives people options for safe, active transportation within and between communities.


The California Coastal Trail within Humboldt County is a continuous public right-of-way along the coastline and a contiguous trail for non-motorized travel. The CCT fosters appreciation and stewardship of the scenic and natural resources of the North Coast.

OBJECTIVES: To strive for this goal, the policies listed in the Commuter Trail Element will help meet the RTP's main objectives (listed in alphabetical order):

The tree symbol indicates objectives that are GHG performance measures (see Chapter 2 for all GHG performance measures and targets.)



¹ For information on recreational trails in Humboldt County, see the referenced plans, particularly the *Humboldt County Regional Trails Master Plan* (HCAOG, 2010).

| Main Objectives: | COMMUTER TRAILS Policies |
|---|--|
| AT Mode Share/ Complete Streets | <p>Policy Trails-2 HCAOG shall pursue active transportation system funding to implement priority trail projects identified in the Commuter Trails Element and the <i>Humboldt County Regional Trails Master Plan</i>.</p>  |
| Efficient & Viable Transportation System | <p>Policy Trails-3 HCAOG shall pursue and support using existing public right-of-way for trails to the maximum extent feasible in order to preserve land, assets, and financial resources.</p> |
| Environmental Stewardship & Climate Protection | <p>Policy Trails-4 HCAOG shall support entities to design and locate regional trails to minimize impacts to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and prime agricultural lands to the maximum extent feasible.</p> <p>Policy Trails-5 HCAOG encourages municipalities to update Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) to fully address coastal access policies and ensure getting applicable routes designated as the California Coastal Trail.</p> <p>Policy Trails-6: HCAOG supports collaborative, multi-jurisdictional projects that consider adaptation to sea-level rise in trail planning and development.</p> |
| Equitable & Sustainable Use of Resources | <p>Policy Trails-7 HCAOG supports and encourages the design principles, as applicable, that the Coastal Conservancy outlines in "Completing the California Coastal Trail" (2003), which are: proximity to the sea, connectivity, integrity, respect, and feasibility.</p> <p>Policy Trails-8 The regional trails network shall provide travel options for residents and visitors, with equitable access for transportation-disadvantaged populations.</p> |
| Safety & Health | <p>Policy Trails-9 HCAOG will prioritize planning, design, construction, adequate maintenance, and other actions to improve the safety of the regional trails system.</p> |

EXISTING REGIONAL TRAILS

This section describes existing and planned regional, multi-use trails in Humboldt County. For the transportation system, regionally significant trails are those that serve as travel corridors, connecting communities and major destinations in the region (as opposed to being solely recreational trails). Proposed trails projects, including extensions to existing trails, are described in the next section, Action Plan.

CALIFORNIA COASTAL TRAIL



The California Coastal Trail (CCT) is a partially completed trail from the Mexican border to the Oregon border following Highway 1 and the California Coast. Approximately 70% complete, the CCT is currently comprised of discontinuous segments along the coastline. When completed, the CCT will extend the length of California's 1,230 mile coastline along beaches, bluffs, seaside roads, and through coastal towns and communities. While primarily for pedestrians, the CCT accommodates various user groups, such as bicyclists, wheelchair users, equestrians, and others as opportunities allow.

The CCT is envisioned as a continuous public right-of-way along the California coastline; a trail designed to foster appreciation and stewardship of the scenic and natural resources of the coast through hiking and other complementary modes of

Humboldt is California's longest coastal county, and it has the longest portion of the CCT. There are 154 miles of CCT in Humboldt County; the Coastal Conservancy deems 92 miles to be "adequate" (the most of any county). These trail miles are a mixture of separated multi-use paths (such as the Hammond Trail), rural roads, designated bike lanes, bike routes, and shoulders on State Route 101. Many miles still need to be improved, or even rerouted. For example, trail segments on the highway, or where the trail detours inland from the coast to avoid private lands.

The *Humboldt County Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy* (California Coastal Conservancy, 2011) outlines a proposed CCT route along Humboldt's coastline. The Strategy was developed locally, which included talking with stakeholders from residents to agency staff. The Strategy recommends actions to complete the CCT in Humboldt County. (The Coastal Trail symbol  identifies trails that are and/or would be a designated part of the California Coastal Trail.)



PACIFIC COAST BIKE ROUTE

The Pacific Coast Bike Route (PCBR) runs the length of California, from the California/Oregon State line to the California/Mexico border. The northern tip begins on Highway 101 in Del Norte, takes local roads around Crescent City, and enters Humboldt County via the Newton B. Drury Scenic Parkway in Redwood National & Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park. Within Humboldt, the PCBR travels local roads in McKinleyville, Arcata, and Eureka. Several of these roads are also part of the California Coastal Trail.

HAMMOND TRAIL

The Hammond Trail links the south bank of the Mad River with Clam Beach County Park and travels through coastal McKinleyville to the Hammond Bridge. The trail is approximately 5.5 miles long of Class I multi-use trail, paved, and separated from motorized traffic. The Hammond Trail is part of the Pacific Coast Bike Route, and was designated a part of the California Coastal Trail in June 2010.

EUREKA WATERFRONT TRAIL & PROMENADE



The Eureka Waterfront Trail runs along the city's bayfront, from Tydd Street (near the Eureka Slough) to Herrick Avenue at the Pound Road Park-and-Ride. The trail is comprised of several segments. A Class I paved trail from Tydd Street to the Samoa Bridge Boat Ramp then turns into a multi-use path from Halvorsen Park past the Adorni Center and to the Old Town Boardwalk. The City of Eureka completed the G to I Street road and sidewalk connection in 2018. From C Street south to Elk River the trail is a separated Class I trail that includes the popular 1.5-mile Hikshari' Trail. Hikshari' is the Wiyot place name for this coastal area west of Broadway Street where the Elk River flows into Humboldt Bay. Segments of the Waterfront Trail are part of the Pacific Coast Bicycle Route.

HUMBOLDT BAY TRAIL

What is now collectively referred to as the Humboldt Bay Trail has been the region's top trail priority for over a decade. The grand vision is to have a multi-use trail for non-motorized travel from Trinidad and Blue Lake to College of the Redwoods. This is a multi-jurisdictional trail within Humboldt County.

The following briefly summarizes current progress on the trails.

Caltrans: Caltrans will be implementing a large-scale wetland mitigation project and has taken responsibility for incorporating, within that project, most—and possibly all—of the wetland mitigations required for the Bay Trail North segment.



City of Arcata - Bay Trail North

City of Arcata—Bay Trail North (Samoa Blvd to Bracut Industrial Park): The City of Arcata constructed this portion in the summer/fall of 2017, and the trail opened in October.

County of Humboldt—Bay Trail South (Bracut Industrial Park to Eureka City limits): The County is the lead agency for developing this four-mile segment. The County released a project description report and 60% design plans in September 2020.



The County is finalizing land acquisition negotiations and seeking permits from regulatory agencies. The timeline currently calls for a construction bid to be awarded in late 2021 and construction to begin in 2022.

City of Eureka—Eureka Waterfront Trail: The City of Eureka completed constructing Phase A in 2016 (from Hikshari' Trail at Truesdale Street north to Del Norte Street), and in 2017 constructed Phases B (Del Norte Street north to C Street) and C (a 600' boardwalk near Eureka slough).



City of Eureka - Eureka Waterfront Trail

The *Regional Trails Master Plan* describes the local trail networks within the jurisdictions of the seven cities and County, and within territories/communities of the Hoopa Valley, Karuk, Wiyot and Yurok Tribes, and the Blue Lake and Trinidad Rancherias.

Annie and Mary Rail Trail

The Annie & Mary Trail is a multi-jurisdictional regional trail network that will connect the cities of Arcata and Blue Lake. The trail would generally follow the Mad River and former Arcata & Mad River Railroad Company corridor, with alternate alignments as needed based on geographic constraints. The City of Blue Lake, in November

2020, completed Phase 1 of the project, a one-mile paved Class I trail. Phase 2 proposes a Class 1 trail from Chartin Road in Blue Lake to the community of Glendale. The City of Arcata, thanks to an ATP grant, will continue their trail network by continuing the existing trail at the Skate Park/ Sunset Avenue/Larson Park area to West End Road, Aldergrove Industrial Park, and continuing further east to the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District Park 1. The end of that trail will someday link to the Annie & Mary Trail to Blue Lake.

Proposed and existing Class I regional commuter multi-use trails are mapped on Figure 8.1 (see Maps Tab).

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The *Regional Trails Master Plan* (HCAOG 2010) documents regional trails system needs, which were assessed through reviewing state and local adopted plans (literature review), getting community input for a trail vision, and analyzing constraints, trail development strategies, and trail priorities. The *Regional Trails Master Plan* was funded in response to a growing and intensified interest on the part of Humboldt County residents for enhanced development of a non-motorized (“active”) transportation facility network. A regional active transportation system is of particular interest in this region because there are limited options for active travel between north coast communities, other than small, narrow two-lane county roads and/or highway shoulders.

Significant progress has been made on the Humboldt Bay Trail between Eureka and Arcata, a reach that has been a regional trail priority for more than a decade. The last 4.25 miles of the Bay Trail South are funded for construction and currently in the permitting phase. A separated multi-use trail south of Eureka is needed to extend the Waterfront Trail south to the College of the Redwoods, connecting the communities of Humboldt Hill, King Salmon, Fields Landing. The Little River bridge crossing is an identified connectivity gap, where a separated bicycle facility is needed to connect the northern end of the Hammond Trail to the communities of Westhaven and Trinidad.

GREAT REDWOOD TRAIL

In September 2018, Governor Brown signed Senate Bill SB 1029, known as the North Coast Railroad Authority Closure and Transition to Trails Act, to dissolve the North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA) and transfer the rights-of-way and other properties to a successor agency that would create a Great Redwood Trail for hiking, biking and riding. The bill directed the California Transportation Agency, Caltrans, Department of Finance and Department of General Services to prepare an assessment of NCRA’s debts and assets, and a preliminary assessment on the viability of constructing a trail on the NCRA corridor. SB 69 passed the California legislature in September 2021 and formalizes the wind-down of the NCRA which will transition to the Great

Redwood Trail Agency. The Agency will be tasked with the planning and construction of the Great Redwood Trail, which is envisioned to be a 300-mile rail-trail running from the edge of the San Francisco Bay Area in Marin County, through the Eel River Canyon, and terminating in Blue Lake and Samoa. Existing Class I trails such as the Humboldt Bay Trail are part of this larger proposed interregional system. The Carlotta Branch line of the NCRA right-of-way would connect the communities of Hydesville and Carlotta, while other sections would connect Rio Dell, Fortuna, and Loleta. Plans to extend the Humboldt Bay Trail south to the College of the Redwoods would benefit from rail-banking and the ability to build rail-to-trail.



In late 2020, the NCRA Board approved two proposals for converting the parts of the rail right-of-way in Humboldt for trail use. The NCRA Board approved the City of Eureka's project proposal for their trail south of Eureka, permitting the City to remove some railroad track. In December, they approved a lease agreement with the County of Humboldt for the Humboldt Bay Trail South project, which also includes removing track in a portion of the trail.






Regional trail needs are also assessed when HCAOG updates the *Regional Bike Plan* (currently every five years) as well as annually when HCAOG performs a progress report of plan implementation. HCAOG convenes and facilitates an ad-hoc Bicycle Advisory Committee for each progress report.



ACTION PLAN: PROPOSED PROJECTS


HCAOG's Action Plan is to carry out the policies of the Commuter Trails Element and ultimately implement the projects identified in Table *Trails-1*. Projects come from the HCAOG plans incorporated here by reference. Projects were identified and prioritized by agency staff, public and private stakeholders, and community members at-large as part of agency coordination, public outreach, and public review. The Action Plan projects are proposed multi-use trails that scored high in the *Regional Trails Master Plan* (RTMP) and/or are top priorities in one or more adopted HCAOG plans.

Table *Trails-1*. Regional Commuter Trail Projects

| Trail Project | Jurisdiction | Description | In Other HCAOG Adopted Plan(s) ¹ : |
|---|---|---|---|
| Annie and Mary Rail Trail | Arcata, Blue Lake, Blue Lake Rancheria, Humboldt County | 6.8-mile trail corridor that would run east from the Aldergrove Industrial Park in Arcata to the City of Blue Lake, following the inactive NCRA railroad corridor and a segment along SR 299. | HCCTIS, RPP, RTMP |
| Arcata Rails with Trail  | Arcata, Humboldt County | Trail from West End Road to Samoa Boulevard, with segments along railroad tracks. This trail would link the Annie & Mary Trail and the Humboldt Bay Trail. | HCCTIS, RBP, RPP |
| Baylands Trail  | Arcata | Within Baylands Park – Class I | RTMP |
| Bay-to-Zoo Trail | Eureka | Paved 2-mile trail that will provide connection between Waterfront Trail and Sequoia Park and Zoo. | |

| Trail Project | Jurisdiction | Description | In Other HCAOG Adopted Plan(s) ¹ : |
|---|-------------------------|--|--|
| California Coastal Trail  | HCAOG | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage Caltrans to design improvements for pedestrians and bicycles on the bridges crossing the Eel River and Mattole River. Work towards implementing the <i>Humboldt County Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy</i>, in coordination and cooperation with local jurisdictions, agencies, and other public and private stakeholders to design, locate, fund, acquire, and maintain segments of the California Coastal Trail. Work with private landowners to acquire public access rights at locations from Centerville Beach to Cape Mendocino. | HCCTIS, RPP |
| Eureka Loop Trail* | Eureka | Multipurpose trail connecting the north and south ends of the Eureka Waterfront Trail to key destinations in the south, east and west of Eureka and portions of the Greater Eureka Area. | |
| Hammond Trail  | Arcata, Humboldt County | Extend the Hammond Trail from the Mad River bridge south, connecting to the City of Arcata (downtown) and Eureka. Extend the trail north to Westhaven and Trinidad. Replace the Hammond Trail pedestrian/bicycle bridge across the Mad River. | HCCTIS, RBP, RPP, RTMP |
| Hoopa Valley Trail | Humboldt County | A 6-mile segment along SR 96 from the south end of Shoemaker Road northward (in Caltrans right-of-way). The long-term vision is to expand the trail throughout the Hoopa Valley. | RPP |
| Humboldt Bay Trail South*  | Arcata, Humboldt County | <u>Bracut</u> to Eureka Segment: 4.25 miles of a Class I/multi-use path around the east side of Humboldt Bay to complete the link between Arcata and Eureka. The trail would follow the North Coast Railroad rail corridor and parallel U.S. 101. | HCCTIS, Humboldt Bay Trail Feasibility Study, RBP, RPP, RTMP |
| Humboldt Bay Trail (Eureka to College of the Redwoods)*  | Eureka, Humboldt County | This would continue the Class I/multi-use path from Humboldt Bay Trail south in three conceptual segments: Elk River to King Salmon; King Salmon to Fields Landing; and Fields Landing to the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge and College of the Redwoods. | |
| John Campbell Memorial Greenway* | Fortuna | Multi-purpose from the Riverwalk Trail to the south entrance of the Headwaters Reserve | RBP, RTMP |
| Little River Trail (Hammond Trail Extension)*  | Humboldt County | Multi-use (Class I) trail between Clam Beach and Moonstone Beach. The trail would connect the Hammond Trail and Clam Beach Road to Scenic | RBP |

| Trail Project | Jurisdiction | Description | In Other HCAOG Adopted Plan(s) ¹ : |
|---|-----------------|---|---|
| | | Drive. | |
| Manila Shared Use Path* | Humboldt County | Class I multi-use trail adjacent to Highway 255, from the intersection of Dean Street and Pacific Avenue, to Carlson Avenue intersection. | RBP |
| Orick Levee Coastal Trail  | Humboldt County | Multi-purpose trail on north Redwood Creek levee to the U.S. 101 bridge (0.69 miles), south levee to Redwood National Park Visitor Center (2.45 miles). | HCCTIS (Priority Project) |
| Riverwalk Trail  | Humboldt County | Fortuna City limits to Sandy Prairie | RTMP |

The symbol  identifies trails that are or would be part of the California Coastal Trail.

¹HCCTIS=Humboldt County Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy (2011); RBP=Regional Bicycle Plan (2017); RPP=Regional Pedestrian Plan (2008); RTMP=Regional Trails Master Plan (2010).

*See the Complete Streets Element, Table *Streets-4* for estimated project costs.

REFERENCES

CITATIONS

California Coastal Conservancy 2001 Humboldt Bay Trail Feasibility Study.

California Coastal Conservancy 2003 *Completing the California Coastal Trail*. (January 2003)

California Coastal Conservancy 2011 *Humboldt County Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy*. Prepared for State of California Coastal Conservancy by Redwood Community Action Agency Natural Resources Services Division, Alta Planning + Design, Planwest Partners, and Streamline Planning Consultants. (January 2011)

HCAOG 2007 *Humboldt Bay Trail Feasibility Study: Eureka to Arcata*. Prepared for HCAOG by Alta Planning + Design and Redwood Community Action Agency.

HCAOG 2008 *Humboldt County Regional Pedestrian Plan*. Prepared for HCAOG by Alta Planning + Design, Redwood Community Action Agency, SHN Consulting Engineers. (June 2008)

HCAOG 2010 *Humboldt County Regional Trails Master Plan*. Prepared for HCAOG by Planwest Partners, Redwood Community Action Agency Natural Resources Services Division, Alta Planning + Design.

RESOURCES

Annie & Mary Rail Trail Feasibility Study. Prepared for the California Coastal Commission by Redwood Community Action Agency. (2003)

Annie & Mary Trail: Next Steps. Prepared for HCAOG by Alta Planning + Design. (June 2008)

Coasting: Wandering the California Coastal Trail in Humboldt. Rees Hughes, North Coast Journal. (February 21, 2013)

Little River Feasibility Study. Prepared for the State Coastal Conservancy by Redwood Community Action Agency. (April 2014)

Manila Community Transportation Plan: Phase II Final Report. Prepared for the County of Humboldt by Whitlock & Weinberger Transportation, Inc. (December 28, 2005)

"State of the Trails" Report: Expanding Regional and Local Trails in Humboldt County. County of Humboldt. (June 2016)

Humboldt Bay Trail South Project Description Report. County of Humboldt. (September 2020)