

### 3.10 PARKS AND RECREATION

This section assesses impacts on the existing park and recreation areas found within the study area, which is defined as those communities located along the proposed project corridor from Cloverdale in Sonoma County to Larkspur in Marin County. It provides a summary of study methods and offers a discussion of plans and policies governing parks and recreation.

#### 3.10.1 Regulatory Setting

Numerous plans and policies serve as the guides for the protection of existing recreational features and future development of recreational facilities in Sonoma and Marin counties.

#### Sonoma County

##### **Sonoma County General Plan (1998)**

The *Sonoma County General Plan* includes two goals pertaining to recreational resources in the County:

- Goal OS-7: Establish a countywide park and trail system which meets future recreational needs of the county's residents while protecting agricultural uses. The emphasis of the trail system should be near urban areas and on public lands.
- Goal OS-8: Establish a Bikeways Network that provides a safe and supportive environment for bicyclists in Sonoma County, recognizing that bicycling is a viable mode of transportation and popular form of recreation.

##### **Draft Sonoma County Outdoor Recreation Plan (2003)**

The *Draft Sonoma County Outdoor Recreation Plan* includes several recommended goals and advisory policies aimed at providing outdoor recreation for the public:

- Goal 1: Develop a long-range strategy for acquisition and development of new parks, preserves, trails, public access, and related outdoor recreation facilities. Develop this strategy in a manner that is consistent with the County's overall commitment to agricultural preservation and its long-term viability, and the County's respect for private property rights. Ensure that the strategy provides for a balance of recreational opportunities, and recognizes the importance of trails.
- Goal 2: Plan new outdoor recreation facilities to accommodate public recreation needs, while recognizing the rights of private property owners, the need for safety and the requirements of environmental protection.
- Goal 3: Ensure coordination and cooperative efforts among public agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management, State Parks, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Sonoma County Water Agency, and cities involved in public access to and recreational use of public lands.
- Goal 4: Encourage private non-profit organizations to provide regular public access to, and recreational use of, lands acquired with public funds.
- Goal 5: Develop local funding mechanisms for maintenance and management of park facilities.

##### **Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) Countywide Bicycle Plan (2003 Update)**

The *SCTA Countywide Bicycle Plan* is based on a compilation of policies pertaining to bicycle and pedestrian facilities from the various jurisdictions in Sonoma County. The overall goal of the plan is to "create a countywide non-motorized transportation system, which provides safe and efficient opportunities for bicyclists to access school, work, shopping centers, professional services, and transportation to recreation areas. These facilities may also serve as recreational paths in and of themselves" (SCTA, 2003).

## **Marin County**

### **Marin Countywide Plan (2004)**

The *Marin Countywide Plan* includes several implementation programs to achieve the goal of a high-quality park and recreation system (Goal PK-1). Implementation programs include actions such as offering assistance to cities, special districts and other public agencies in their park and recreation planning efforts, conducting a detailed inventory of recreation resources, and preparing an acquisition plan for all proposed new park sites.

### **Marin County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2001)**

The long-term vision and foundation of the *Marin County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* are provided in goals listed below. The plan also includes a set of objectives and policies which provide the recommended measures to realize the goals.

- Goal 1: Make the bicycle an integral part of daily life in Marin County, particularly for trips of less than five miles, by implementing and maintaining a bikeway network, providing end-of-trip facilities, improving bicycle/transit integration, encouraging bicycle use, and making bicycling safer.
- Goal 2: Pedestrian Transportation: Encourage walking as a daily form of transportation in Marin County, by completing a pedestrian network that services short trips and transit, improving the quality of the pedestrian environment, improving the health of all citizens, and increasing pedestrian safety and convenience.
- Goal 3: Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation: Make Marin County a model community for alternative transportation. Aim for a 20 percent mode share of all utilitarian trips to be made by bicycling and walking by the year 2020.

### **Bay Trail Plan (1989)**

The *Bay Trail Plan* was prepared by the Association of Bay Area Governments pursuant to Senate Bill 100. Although never officially adopted, the Plan proposes the development of a regional hiking and bicycling trail around the perimeter of San Francisco and San Pablo Bays. The Plan mandated that the Bay Trail:

- Provide connections to existing park and recreation,
- Create links to existing and proposed transportation facilities, and
- Be planned in such a way as to avoid adverse effects on environmentally sensitive areas.

The *Bay Trail Plan* includes five general categories of policies to guide the selections of the trail route and implementation of the trail system:

- Trail alignment policies reflect the goals of the Bay Trail program and the desire to develop a continuous trail.
- Trail design policies highlight the importance of creating a trail which is accessible to the widest possible range of users and is designed to respect natural and built environments.
- Environmental protection policies define the relationship of the proposed trail to sensitive natural environments.
- Transportation access policies reflect the need for bicycle and pedestrian access on Bay Area toll bridges.
- Implementation policies define the structure of implementation of the trail.

### **Marin County North-South Bikeway Feasibility Study (1994)**

The *Marin County North-South Bikeway Feasibility Study* examined the development of a safe and efficient north-south bikeway from the Golden Gate Bridge to the Sonoma County line. The study

recommended that the bikeway generally following the old NWP right-of-way through the County. It also included a short-term alignment that would run mostly along existing streets and paths due to the possible difficulties of cost, rebuilding tunnels and potential transit use associated with the NWP right-of-way. The study was never officially adopted.

### **City General Plans**

The General Plans of each city along the proposed project corridor include policies and provisions for recreational uses and bicycle path development. See Section 3.6, Transportation for a summary of each city's existing and planned bicycle path network.

#### **3.10.2 Environmental Setting**

There are abundant recreational resources in Sonoma and Marin counties which host a variety of recreational activities. Park and recreation areas range from small community parks to large region-wide park facilities. Recreational facilities are also found at schools and various community centers, which offer recreational programs for the local population.

Parkland can generally be divided into several categories based on size. The smallest parks are neighborhood and community parks which are generally less than 25 acres in size and usually contain playgrounds and equipment, playing fields and paved areas for court games such as tennis and basketball. Regional recreation areas are larger (+/- 200 acres) and can support active or passive activities. Parks supporting active uses generally include patron facilities such as picnic areas, play areas, food concessions, restrooms, and camping facilities. Those parks that primarily support passive recreation such as hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and picnicking are generally managed in their natural condition and support recreation activities which have minimal impact on the environment. There are other parklands of varying sizes that generally protect areas with national or statewide significance including areas of scenic beauty, significant natural or cultural features or special habitat areas and are managed by State or federal agencies (Sonoma County Regional Parks Department, 2003).

#### **Sonoma County**

There are approximately 52,800 total acres of publicly accessible land in Sonoma County (Sonoma County Regional Parks Department, 2003). These lands are owned and operated by state, county, city, park districts, and other local agencies and range from small community and neighborhood parks to regional preserves and state and federal parks. There are 13 State-operated parks in Sonoma County. The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District was formed under Government Code Section 6552 and Section 5500 et seq. of the California Public Resources Code with the intent of furthering the preservation of open space within Sonoma County. As of 2002, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District has protected 108 open space properties in Sonoma County for a total of 56,200 acres. These lands include agricultural grasslands and working farmland, scenic and coastal lands, riparian corridors, greenbelts, forests, and parks. Sonoma County Regional Parks Department operates 36 recreational features including various parks, trails and community centers.

Sonoma County contains over 33 miles of Class I bicycle paths and 64 miles of Class II bicycle lanes (SCTA, 2003). Class I bicycle pathways are pathways that are physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier. These are pathways that are reserved exclusively for bicyclists and pedestrians. Class II bicycle lanes are designated lanes on roadway shoulders with striping, signs, and pavement markings for preferential use by bicyclists. Class III bicycle routes include roads and streets which provide for shared use with motor vehicle traffic as identified only by signing.

#### **Marin County**

Recreation and open space facilities are managed by various entities in Marin County from the federal government to the local cities and towns. Within Marin County there are three federally operated parks,

the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (Marin Headlands), Muir Woods National Monument, and Point Reyes National Seashore and seven state parks. The Marin County Open Space District is the local public agency responsible for preserving public open space lands in the County. It controls 33 open space preserves covering more than 14,000 acres. The Marin County Department of Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services manages 20 parks and several multi-purpose paths on approximately 830 acres (Marin County Community Development Agency, 2004).

Recreational opportunities for bicyclists, joggers, and others are available on the portions of the Bay Trail that run through Marin County. The Bay Trail is currently 240 miles of recreation corridor throughout the Bay Area. When it is complete, the Bay Trail will be a continuous 400-mile corridor that would circle the entire Bay Area and link the shorelines of all nine Bay Area counties and 47 cities (ABAG, 2004). The Bay Trail is made up of several trail types including: off street, shared-use paved or gravel paths, on street bicycle lanes and sidewalks, off street narrow paths and/or rough surfaces, on street without bicycle lanes and/or no sidewalks, and other paved or gravel paths connecting to the Bay Trail.

### **Recreational Areas Adjacent to the Proposed Project Corridor**

Several parks are located adjacent to the proposed project corridor. They are listed below:

- Cloverdale – River Park, located at along the Russian River from McCray Road to East First Street/Crocker Road (located north of Cloverdale Station and just south of the proposed maintenance facility site).
- Healdsburg – 0.6-acre Railroad Park in Healdsburg located on the western bank of the Russian River at Front Street and Healdsburg Avenue and on the eastern bank of the river is the 11-acre Healdsburg Veteran’s Memorial Beach Park.
- Windsor – 10-acre Windsor Ranch Soccer Park, located east of the railroad right-of-way on Cameron Drive.
- Santa Rosa – 0.5-acre Railroad Park, located between 4th and 5th Streets on Wilson Street.
- Rohnert Park - The South Rohnert Park Municipal Golf Course is located along the eastern side of the right-of-way between Golf Course Drive and Rohnert Park Expressway while the small neighborhood park, Lacrosse Park, is located adjacent to the western side of the tracks at Lacrosse Court and Lancaster Drive.
- Petaluma - Sunset Park on Lakeville Street and portions of the Petaluma River, which are adjacent to and crossed by the railroad.
- Novato - Slade Park is located on Manuel Drive and sits adjacent to the east side of the railroad. The Rush Creek Open Space Reserve and Petaluma Marsh Wildlife Area – Novato Creek Unit are located along the eastern side of the railroad.
- San Rafael – 441-acre John McInnis Park, located on the east side of the railroad at Smith Ranch Road.

Table 3.10-1 lists all major recreational facilities found within ¼ mile of the proposed project alignment and provides the approximate location along the project corridor based on the railroad milepost.

**TABLE 3.10-1  
PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES WITHIN 1/4 MILE OF THE  
PROPOSED PROJECT ALIGNMENT**

<b>Park</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Approximate Milepost</b>
Cloverdale River Park	Cloverdale	86.6
Class II bike lane on Asti Road adjacent to the railroad right-of-way (First Street to Santana Drive)	Cloverdale	85.5 – 84.0
Plaza Park	Healdsburg	68.4
Railroad Park	Healdsburg	67.8
Healdsburg Veteran's Memorial Beach Park	Healdsburg	67.7
Class II bike lanes on Grove Street adjacent to the railroad right-of-way (Healdsburg Avenue to Dry Creek Road)	Healdsburg	70.2 – 69.5
Class II bike lanes on Healdsburg Avenue adjacent to the railroad right-of-way (Front Street to Highway 101)	Healdsburg	68.8 – 66.5
Class III bike lanes on Healdsburg Avenue (Parkland Farms Blvd to March Avenue)	Healdsburg	70.3 – 69.5
Class III bike lanes on Front Street (Matheson Street to Healdsburg Avenue)	Healdsburg	Crosses railroad at 67.8
Los Robles Park	Windsor	63.7
Windsor Town Green	Windsor	63.1
Windsor Ranch Soccer Park	Windsor	61.8
Vintage Oaks Park	Windsor	61.7
Mitchell Park	Windsor	61.6
Windsor Golf Club	Windsor	61.5
Class I bike lane adjacent to railroad right-of-way (Trione Circle to just south of 18th Hole Drive)	Windsor	61.8 – 61.3
DeTurk Round Barn Park	Santa Rosa	54.1
Railroad Park	Santa Rosa	53.7
Class II bike lane on Airport Road (Skyline Boulevard to Old Redwood Highway)	Santa Rosa	Crosses railroad at 59.9
Class II bike lane on Fulton Road (Old Redwood Highway to Highway 12)	Santa Rosa	Crosses railroad at 58.5
Class II bike lane on Guerneville Road (Fulton Road to Range Avenue)	Santa Rosa	Crosses railroad at 55.3
South Rohnert Park Municipal Golf Course and Roberts Lake Park	Rohnert Park	48.0
Colegio Vista Park	Rohnert Park	46.8
Caterpillar Park	Rohnert Park	46.7
Benicia Park	Rohnert Park	46.6
Lady Bug Park	Rohnert Park	45.6
Lacrosse Park	Rohnert Park	45.3
Class III bike lane on Rohnert Park Expressway (Commerce Boulevard to Snyder Lane), Copeland Creek, Southwest Boulevard, and East Cotati Avenue	Rohnert Park	Crosses railroad at 47.4
Class I bike lane on Copeland Creek (Commercial Boulevard to Sonoma State University)	Rohnert Park	Crosses railroad at 47.0
Class I bike lane on Southwest Boulevard (Commercial Boulevard to Sonoma State University)	Rohnert Park	Crosses railroad at 46.8

Park	Location	Approximate Milepost
Class II bike lane on East Cotati Avenue (Old Redwood Highway to Petaluma Hill Road)	Rohnert Park	Crosses railroad at 46.2
Sunrise Park	Petaluma	40.3
Jack Cavanaugh Park	Petaluma	38.5
Sunset Park	Petaluma	38.3
Class II bike lane on McDowell Boulevard (Petaluma Boulevard to East Washington Street)	Petaluma	Crosses railroad at 40.7
Slade Park	Novato	27.3
Novato Skate Park	Novato	24.1
Shared-use path adjacent the railroad right-of-way between Hanna Ranch Road and Digital Drive	Novato	25.9 – 25.2
Rush Creek Open Space Preserve	Novato	29.4
Petaluma Marsh Wildlife Area – Novato Creek Unit	Novato	26.6
John McInnis Park	San Rafael	21.1
Bay Trail on Smith Ranch Road, McInnis Parkway, and Andersen Drive	San Rafael	Crosses railroad at 21.0
Bay Trail on McInnis Parkway to Civic Center Drive	San Rafael	Crosses railroad at 19.7
Bay Trail on Andersen Drive	San Rafael	Crosses railroad at 16.0
Bay Trail at Sir Francis Drake and Ferry Terminal	Larkspur	14.8

Source: Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc., 2004.

### 3.10.3 Significance Criteria

Project-related effects on park and recreation resources are considered significant if they would result in the following conditions:

- Loss of a recreational facility or disruption to long-term function of the facility; or
- Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.

CEQA Guidelines Appendix G includes an additional criterion: “include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.” This criterion generally applies to the impacts of a recreational facility on other resources rather than the impacts on recreation. The impacts of the recreational components of the proposed project on environmental resources are addressed throughout the other sections of this DEIR. This section focuses solely on impacts of the project on parks and recreation.

### 3.10.4 Impact Assessment Methodology

Park and recreation facilities have been identified through review of available mapping, previous studies, community planning documents and field review. Impacts were assessed based on proximity of the recreational resource (¼ mile) to the existing railroad right-of-way and a determination of any direct impacts (e.g., acquisition of land, limiting access) or indirect impacts (e.g., increased noise). A ¼ mile distance was determined to be the maximum distance at which potential impacts associated with noise, vibration or air quality would occur. The analysis also examined the potential for the proposed project to lead to the physical deterioration of existing facilities and the need for new recreational facilities.

### 3.10.5 Impact Summary

Short-term adverse, but not significant impacts may occur at recreational uses adjacent to the proposed project corridor in areas where construction would take place, due to potential increases in noise and dust. However, all parks could remain open and be accessible during the construction period.

No recreational facilities would incur direct long-term impacts from the implementation of the proposed project. No park lands would be physically disturbed or converted to non-parkland use, nor would the proposed operation of passenger rail service disrupt the function of existing recreational facilities.

The implementation of passenger rail would improve access to some recreational facilities near stations, while the proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway would provide additional recreation facilities and connections to existing facilities. The improved access and connectivity provided by both the passenger and bicycle/pedestrian pathway is considered a beneficial impact of the proposed project. The improved access is not expected to lead to an increase in the use of existing park and recreational facilities to a point that substantial physical deterioration of the facilities would occur or be accelerated. Access provided by the passenger rail would be limited to the weekdays, while primary use of recreational facilities occurs during the weekends. The additional bicycle/pedestrian pathway constructed as part of the proposed project would not result in an adverse physical effect on the environment. It would provide more area for bicyclists and pedestrians to recreate and lessen the burden on the existing facilities.

The proposed project and implementation of the proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway would be consistent with the various recreational plans described in Section 3.10.1.

### 3.10.6 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

#### Construction-Related Impacts

**Impact PR-1: Construction activities may cause indirect short-term impacts on recreational facilities adjacent to the proposed project corridor. (*Less than significant*)**

Construction-related impacts are those impacts that would occur for a short-term period during the construction of the proposed project. There would be no direct impacts on parks or recreational facilities as no construction activities are planned within the boundaries of these facilities and parks would remain open and accessible during construction activities. However, facilities described in Section 3.10.2 and listed in Table 3.10-1 may experience temporary indirect impacts as a result of increased noise, dust and possible detours associated with construction activities. The construction period for the entire project is expected to last approximately two to three years but construction activities would occur at specific locations for a much shorter time period as work progresses along the tracks. The average construction period would last several weeks at any one point. Work associated with major bridges would last for several continuous months. Hours of construction and noise levels would be limited by local sound control and noise level rules, regulations and ordinances. Implementation of Best Management Practices and other environmental compliance measures (see Section 2.9) and Mitigation Measure N-1 (see Section 3.7.4) would further reduce potential construction disturbances. These short-term disturbances would not lead to long-term deterioration or disruption of park facilities. See Sections 3.5, Air Quality and 3.7, Noise and Vibration for more detail regarding noise and air quality.

#### Long-Term Impacts

As described in the impact summary, no significant adverse long-term impacts on recreational facilities would occur with implementation of the proposed project. The implementation of the proposed project would provide a transportation option which would help improve mobility and access to various features throughout the region. The improved access in the region is not expected to lead to overuse of existing recreational facilities. Operation of the passenger rail service would be during weekdays, while the majority of recreation facility use is on the weekends.

**Impact PR-2: The proposed project would provide recreational benefits to both Sonoma and Marin counties with the addition of the bicycle/pedestrian pathway. (Beneficial)**

The proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway would provide improved connectivity to existing recreational facilities and between the communities along the alignment. The proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway would provide an increase in the amount of recreational facilities available and opportunities for use of those facilities in the region. Access to the parks and connections with the existing bicycle pathways listed in Table 3.10-1 would improve with the implementation of the proposed project. Direct connections from the proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway located in the railroad right-of-way and extensions of existing bicycle paths on city roads would occur at:

- Beachwood Drive to the Joe Rodota Trail in Santa Rosa;
- Petaluma Boulevard South in Petaluma;
- North Hamilton Parkway, Nave Drive, Bel Marin Keys Boulevard, Redwood Boulevard and the Bay Trail at Hamilton Drive and Franklin Avenue in Novato; and
- Andersen Drive, Lincoln Avenue, Los Ranchitos Road, and McInnis Parkway in San Rafael.

The additional bicycle/pedestrian pathway would provide expanded opportunities for recreation within Sonoma and Marin counties. The proposed project is consistent with the local and regional recreational policies and their goals of expanding recreational opportunities throughout the region. The proposed project would include the construction of a Class I path for the project rights-of-way depending on physical and environmental constraints and available right-of-way width. Where a Class I path could not be constructed on the railroad right-of-way without further design and analysis due to physical and environmental constraints, a Class II path is proposed to maintain the corridor with a continuous bicycle/pedestrian route. The proposed bicycle/pedestrian pathway would be within the project right-of-way for approximately 50 miles or 70 percent of the corridor.

**Cumulative Impacts**

A review of past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects has identified numerous residential and commercial developments in close proximity to the proposed project corridor, including nine projects adjacent to the rail corridor. None of the projects identified would directly impact recreational resources although there is the potential that the increased population associated with the residential development could result in the increased use of existing recreational facilities. However, the proposed project's contribution to cumulative increased use of existing facilities would be very minor. The recreational benefits of the proposed project along with other planned and current recreational facility improvements and conservation efforts of both Sonoma and Marin counties would help offset the expected increase in demand for recreational resources that would be associated with the projected population growth in the region.