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Bay trail may extend through Hayward

Park district schedules meeting for public to comment

By Matthew Artz, STAFF WRITER
Inside Bay Area

UNION CITY — Plans are afoot to extend the planned 400-mile San Francisco Bay Trail throughout all of Hayward and into the northern half of Union City.

On Wednesday evening, the East Bay Regional Park District will host a scoping session to get public comments on construction of a 21/2-mile segment of the trail from Eden Landing in Hayward to just south of Silvertide Drive in Union City.

The park district has proposed a gravel trail for cyclists and pedestrians atop levees about a mile from the shoreline.

The trail would run just west of residential neighborhoods and the Union Sanitary District plant and terminate at Union City Boulevard and Deborah Drive.

Public comments will be incorporated in an upcoming environmental study of the project. Construction on the trail is scheduled to start in 2009 and finish by March 2010.

When more money becomes available, the district plans to extend the trail into Fremont, which has an established coastal trail system. To that end, Union City will seek grants to build a pedestrian and bicycle bridge spanning Alameda Creek, said Deputy City Manager Tony Acosta.

Extending the trail into Union City would shorten one of the trail's biggest gaps in encircling San Francisco Bay, said Raphael Breines, the park district's senior planner. About 240 miles of the trail — which also would extend north into Sonoma and Napa counties — have been completed.

Unlike many already completed sections of the trail in the East Bay, the proposed segment won't have Bay views and may not have Bay access.

The trail will run well east of the shoreline to protect salt ponds to the west that are being restored as marshes.

A proposal to build a boat launch with access to Eden Landing in Hayward is not part of the trail extension project and won't be discussed Wednesday, Breines said.

Cost estimates for the trail extension depend primarily on how many bridge crossings the district will need to build, Breines said. Also, if Alameda County officials decide at some point to increase the height of the levees, the park district might have to realign the trail. Breines said the \$1 million now available for the project will not be enough to cover construction costs, but that Union City and Hayward won't be asked to contribute, other than to provide public safety resources once the trail is built.

The park district is studying the idea of placing the trail on parallel levees: the eastern one owned by Alameda County, and the western one owned by the state Department of Fish and Game.

Union City would be happy with either option, Acosta said.

Neither the county nor Fish and Game has given its approval for the trail. As far as building the trail through Union City is concerned, from a purely aesthetic standpoint the state land could have more to offer. "The farther west, the better, because it's a better trail experience," Breines said.

Matthew Artz can be reached at (510) 353-7003 or martz@anqnewspapers.com.



AN EMPLOYEE of the East Bay Regional Park District looks out over the Eden Landing Ecological Reserve in Hayward. (Jane Tyska - File)