

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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TO: All Design Review Board Members

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SUBJECT: Gateway Park (First Review)
(For Board consideration on October 7, 2013)

Project Summary

Applicant: Gateway Park Working Group (Bay Area Toll Authority, California Department of Transportation, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, California Transportation Commission, East Bay Regional Park District, City of Oakland, Port of Oakland, East Bay Municipal Utility District, Association of Bay Area Government's Bay Trail Project)

Project Representatives: Andrew Fremier, Bay Area Toll Authority; Francis Lo, T.Y. Lin International; Sarah Kuehl, EINWILLERKUEHL.

Project Status. This will be the Design Review Board's first pre-application review of the project.

Project Site. Gateway Park is proposed near the east touchdown of the Bay Bridge in Oakland, Alameda County. The new regional park would encompass 170 acres and include various parcels from the waterfront near the Bay Bridge touchdown to Mandela Parkway in West Oakland. The park would be located largely within an area designated in the *San Francisco Bay Plan* as a Waterfront Park Priority Use Area. Existing public access at the site includes an informal windsurfing area at Radio Beach and a new bicycle/pedestrian trail leading to and onto the new east span of the Bay Bridge.

Much of the project site was filled in the 1940s to create the former Oakland Army Base, a major distribution and transportation port facility, which the Department of the Army closed and transferred to the Oakland Redevelopment Agency and the Port of Oakland in 1999. The Key Rail System also operated a substation here to provide electrical power to trains servicing the ferry at this location. Later the Key Rail System operated on the lower deck of the Bay Bridge from 1936 until 1958, when the rail system ceased operations and the bridge served only motor vehicles. Today, the surrounding area is largely industrial and includes property owned and operated by the City of Oakland, East Bay Municipal Utility District, the Port of Oakland, the California Department of Transportation, and the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe and Union Pacific Railroad Companies. The protected Emeryville Crescent State Marine Preserve lies northeast of the proposed park.

Proposed Project and Public Access. For many years, it has been envisioned that Gateway Park would be a regional park operated by the East Bay Regional Park District. Discussion is ongoing to confirm and formalize the governance structure and may require the formation of a Joint Powers Authority. Gateway Park would provide access to the shoreline, enhance bicycle and pedestrian connections to the new east span of the Bay Bridge and other local trails, include active and passive recreation opportunities, and highlight the natural, industrial, maritime, and transportation history of the area.



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The proposed park is divided into the following six areas:

1. **The Link:** A new, elevated bicycle/pedestrian trail would connect bicycle routes within West Oakland to trails in the park. The proposed trail lies beyond the Commission's Bay and shoreline band jurisdictions, but falls partially within an area designated in the *San Francisco Bay Plan* as a Port Priority Use Area.
2. **Bridge Yard:** The Bridge Yard would provide a flexible space for a variety of park activities and programs. The Interurban Electric Railway Bridge Yard Shop (also known as IERBYS and the Sawtooth Building) has the potential to be repurposed for art displays, recreational activities, and/or events. This area of the park would feature historic trains and include an arrival area, a parking lot, and an outdoor event space accommodating up to 1,700 people. The Bridge Yard is beyond the Commission's Bay and shoreline band jurisdictions.
3. **Wind Break (The Lungs):** This area refers to new tree plantings proposed within the park and adjacent to I-80 to diffuse vehicular air emissions. Plantings may include a variety of trees including 40- to 60-foot-tall evergreen trees, trees with rapid leaf regeneration, and understory plantings.
4. **Port Playground:** The Port Playground is intended as a destination for active and passive recreation along the shoreline. It includes a new visitor's center, play areas, active and/or extreme sports areas, kayak launch and storage, a beach, and a trail with picnic and observation areas.
5. **Key Point:** Bicycle and pedestrian traffic from the Bay Bridge would connect to the park at Key Point. This area would emphasize the natural and transportation history of the site, including the historic Key Rail System. Three existing structures have the potential to be repurposed as a café, art space, and a ranger station. At the western end of the point, tide pools would be created using concrete rings.
6. **The Pier:** An approximately 300-foot-long pier would extend west into the Bay along the alignment of the old Bay Bridge. The applicant is considering either repurposing a section of the old east span of the Bay Bridge (also known as "the 288") for public access purposes or constructing a new concrete pier for this purpose.
7. **Radio Beach:** A new trail would extend from Key Point under the new Bay Bridge to the northern end of Radio Beach on the north side of I-80. Bay fill would be required to accommodate the new trail. The design of the trail is under study and may consist of a sheetpile wall, riprap, or a gently sloped shoreline.

Design Review Issues. Staff requests that the Board consider the following issues in reviewing the proposed project:

1. **Physical Access: Connections to and Movement within the Park.** The *San Francisco Bay Plan* Public Access policies state: "Improvements should be designed and built to encourage... movement to and along the shoreline..." The proposed park includes a variety of trails, including an elevated bicycle/pedestrian path that would connect Mandela Parkway in West Oakland to the existing bicycle/pedestrian trail on the south side of I-80, which leads to the Bay Bridge, and beyond to Radio Beach. The park would be accessible by car from West Burma Road.

The Board should advise the Commission and the applicant on whether the proposed connections to the park from public streets and trails are desirable and adequate. While the elevated trail connecting to West Oakland is beyond the Commission's Bay and shoreline band jurisdictions, the Board's advice is sought on whether the design provides a secure and desirable connection to the park and the surrounding setting. The Board should also consider whether connections to and from Maritime Street and existing Bay Trail segments are adequate. The Board should also consider whether the park design encourages movement to and along the shoreline within the park. As part of the Board's review concerning physical access, the Board should consider whether the design provides access to persons with disabilities to the maximum extent feasible.

2. **Visual Access.** The *San Francisco Bay Plan* Appearance, Design, and Scenic Views policies state: “Maximum efforts should be made to provide, enhance, or preserve views of the Bay and shoreline, especially from public areas, from the Bay itself, and from the opposite shore.” The proposed project includes vertical recreational elements, such as a possible climbing wall, zip lines, vertical ride, and also 40- to 60-foot-tall windbreaks along the southern side of I-80 to diffuse vehicular emissions.

In balancing concerns regarding air quality and Bay views, the Board should consider whether adequate visual access to the Bay and its natural setting within the watershed has been provided from public trails and roads, the Bay, and opposite shorelines.

3. **Proposed Park Amenities.** The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that public access spaces should be “designed and built to encourage diverse, Bay-related activities along the shoreline”, to create a “sense of place”, and be “designed for a wide range of users”. The *Guidelines* further state “view opportunities, shoreline configuration and access points are factors that determine a site’s inherent public access opportunities.” The project provides a variety of amenities, including recreation and event space, tidepools, boating access, a fishing pier, and a trail to Radio Beach.

The Board should advise the Commission and the applicant on whether there is a desirable mix of passive and active recreation opportunities and if the proposed amenities are appropriate for and compatible with the site and surrounding area. The Board should consider whether the proposed fishing pier, which could either consist of a preserved section of the old east span or a new concrete pier, would be a desirable and pleasing amenity for the park.

4. **Water Access.** The *San Francisco Bay Plan* Recreation policies state: “Public launching facilities for a variety of boats and other water-oriented recreational craft, such as kayaks, canoes and sailboards, should be provided in waterfront parks where feasible....” The applicant proposes water access be provided for non-motorized small boats at a beach near the southeast end of the park.

The Board’s advice is sought on whether this is the optimum location for a non-motorized small boat launch, considering navigational safety with adjacent Port uses, wildlife compatibility, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. The Board should also consider how the launch area would function and integrate with other park facilities and nearby launch areas.

5. **Wildlife Compatibility.** The *San Francisco Bay Plan* Public Access policies state that, “public access should be sited, designed and managed to prevent significant adverse effects on wildlife.” The proposed trail north of I-80 would intensify the use of the shoreline along Radio Beach and adjacent to the protected Emeryville Crescent State Marine Preserve. Further, water access for non-motorized small boats on the south side of the park and windsurfing access from Radio Beach may increase boating activity in this area.

The Board should consider if the new trail leading to Radio Beach is appropriate in light of potential adverse impacts to wildlife and sensitive habitat. The Board should advise the Commission and the applicant regarding potential strategies, such as signage, fencing, or visual screening, that may reduce or prevent adverse interactions between humans and wildlife.

6. **Sea Level Rise.** The *San Francisco Bay Plan* Public Access policies state that, “public access should be sited, designed, managed and maintained to avoid significant adverse impacts from sea level rise and shoreline flooding.” The *San Francisco Bay Plan* policies on climate change state “within areas that a risk assessment determines are vulnerable to future shoreline flooding that threatens public safety, all projects...should be designed to be resilient to a mid-century sea level rise projection.” Furthermore, “[i]f it is likely the project will remain in place longer than mid-century, an adaptive management plan should be developed to address the long-term impacts that will arise...” The applicant is currently evaluating design approaches taking into account sea level rise projections.

The Board’s advice is sought on how the park may be designed to adequately avoid significant adverse impacts from sea level rise and shoreline flooding. The Board should consider the configuration and materials used in the design of the proposed public access features and how the park may adapt to and transform with projected sea level rise over time.