

Transit to

Trails



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SANTA CLARA VALLEY TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Footloose and Car-Free in the Bay Area

FROM TOP RIGHT, CLOCKWISE: BLUE & GOLD FERRY PASSING BY ALCATRAZ; SANTA CLARA VTA LIGHT RAIL AT GREAT MALL/MAIN STATION (MILPITAS), WITH MOUNT HAMILTON BEHIND; WEST MARIN STAGECOACH PASSING THROUGH SAMUEL P. TAYLOR STATE PARK; BART IN WALNUT CREEK WITH SHELL RIDGE AND MOUNT DIABLO BEHIND.

by David Loeb

When I was growing up in New York City in the 1950s and '60s, my family got around town by bus, subway, taxi, or on foot. We had a car that spent most of its time in a commercial garage five blocks from our apartment; we used it mostly for trips to "the country," as we called it, for nature walks and picnics. Those were major excursions.

When I moved to San Francisco in 1973, I was thrilled to have so many great places to hike nearby. No more "long haul" to "the country"! But I missed New York's robust public transit system that ran everywhere, all day, every day, and frequently. Why didn't (and doesn't) this cosmopolitan Bay region have a ubiquitous transit system that does more than get people to city centers? Unlike in New York City, here I could actually see "the country" from the city. Wild places like Mount Tam, Mount Diablo, the East Bay hills, and the Santa Cruz Mountains beckoned from almost every part of the city. But I still needed a car to get to them.

Or so I thought.

What I didn't know was that there actually are trails and parks you can get to without taking a car. In 2001, *Bay Nature* published an updated version of the Bay Area Open Space Council's "Transit Outdoors" map, originally created in 1995. Now, eight years later,

we're glad to present the latest update of this regional roundup of parks and trails you can visit while leaving your car at home. We invite you to use it as your starting point for all sorts of car-free outdoor adventures around the region, from easy half-day outings on the edge of town to overnight backpacking trips in the backcountry.

I wish I could report that there are many more options for car-free nature excursions now than in 2001. There certainly were more options before the personal car became king in the mid-20th century. But then again, there were far fewer public parks and preserves in those days. Now, in 2009, we have over one million glorious acres of protected open space in the Bay Area, much of it open and accessible to the public . . . if you have access to a car. It's generally not too hard to use transit to get to work or to go shopping. But it can be a real challenge to reach the parks and open space that are "yours" by virtue of residency and taxes.

Yet, as you can see from this updated "Transit to Trails" map, plenty of opportunities do exist. Some of the suggested outings are in the region's urban core, such as sections of the Bay Trail with expansive views, shorebirds aplenty, and great bike and stroller access. But many of these transit-accessible hikes are really "out in the country" and—as one-way trips—give you *(continued on page 4)*

Up and Down at Point Reyes

by Joe Soule

If the Sweet Lumber Company had had its way, the landscape of Inverness Ridge in West Marin would be more tree farm than forest. In the 1950s the company built a mill pond and started logging the giant Douglas fir trees. The creation of the Point Reyes National Seashore stopped the logging in its tracks. But there is still evidence of the loggers' work, including Five Brooks pond, now surrounded by willows, a favorite place for birds and birders. Look carefully along the trail and you'll see old stumps and some scrawny new growth (50-year-old Douglas fir). Mostly though, the old forest is still intact. Spectacular!

West Marin's public transit, West Marin Stagecoach (the Stage), currently travels past Five Brooks trailhead on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays (www.marin-stagecoach.org). Five Brooks is not an official stop but if you ask, the driver will let you off at the entrance (just south of mile marker 23).

Hiking from Five Brooks to Bear Valley Visitor Center makes for a great day hike or overnight trip any time of year but especially in spring, when the landscape is green, the flowers are blooming, and the fog is at bay. Permits are required for camping and should be secured well in advance.

From the trailhead it's a steady uphill climb on Stewart and Greenpicker trails to Firtop, elevation 1,324 feet. Watch for bikes and horses on the trails. At Firtop there are several options. Here is my suggested route: Continue on Stewart Trail to Ridge and then to Alamea. Then tighten your boots for the downhill on Old Out Road to the Coast Trail and on to Wildcat Beach. The terrain changes gradually on the western slope of the ridge from lush forest to coastal scrub. As you near the Coast Trail you'll be rewarded with exceptional views. Those



VIEW OF PACIFIC OCEAN AND POINT REYES FROM INVERNESS RIDGE.

"icebergs" off in the distance are really the Farallon Islands. At Wildcat, besides the pounding surf and the phenomenal sandy beach, you might be lucky enough to see a bobcat, so bring your camera.

From Wildcat it's back uphill toward Glen Camp via Coast to Glen Trail to Glen Loop. Alternatively, stay on the Coast Trail to Arch Rock. From Glen Camp continue to the Bear Valley Trail and the easy saunter back through the forest to the Stagecoach stop by the visitor center.

The whole hike is about 14 miles, though there are several shorter options, including an enjoyable five-mile hike staying on the east side of the ridge in the Olema Valley along the Rift Zone Trail.

Overnight on Mount Diablo

by Ryan Branciforte

It has been over a year now since I took the plunge into car-free existence. After too many parking tickets, a broken transmission, smashed windows, and hours looking for parking, I decided that I could make do with my legs, my bike, and the Bay Area's public transportation network. The one-way, overnight backpack trip up and over Mount Diablo that I took last fall is one example of the kind of adventure I have been enjoying since I said good-bye to my car.

I meet my friend Jereme at the Walnut Creek BART station on Friday afternoon after a ride across the Bay from San Francisco's Mission District. After a short stroll on sidewalk through a residential area, we hit the Kovar Trail at Howe Homestead Park and begin ascending Joaquin Ridge into Shell Ridge Open Space, with views of rolling hills dotted with oak trees on one side and the

POPPIES ALONG THE BRIONES-MOUNT DIABLO REGIONAL TRAIL IN SHELL RIDGE OPEN SPACE.



A Bayshore Getaway in Silicon Valley

By John Dorrance

Stevens Creek is a 20-mile stream that originates on Black Mountain at the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains before cutting through the heart of Silicon Valley and out into San Francisco Bay. Eventually, the Stevens Creek Trail will run the entire length of the stream. For now, the \$12 million highly engineered six-mile trail follows the creek as it cuts a riparian corridor across urban Mountain View. Bicycle bridges were built, pedestrian tunnels lighted, sound-barrier walls erected, and levees landscaped, so that South Bay residents could escape, via pedal-power or on foot, to the relative tranquility of this six-mile pathway to the Bay.

Caltrain and VTA light-rail provide access to the trail at the Mountain View Transit Center. Local buses can also drop you off at El Camino Real near Yuba Drive where Stevens Creek Trail starts.

The city parks that border the creekside pathway every few blocks are a definite plus. Cottonwood, oak and willow mixed with exotic eucalyptus, ornamental vines, and bushes block the nearby cityscape. Raccoons still feed on crayfish when Stevens Creek brims with winter rain. The chatter of squirrels and sparrows in the trees mixes with traffic noise to give this trail its combined natural and urban character.

The cacophony of Silicon Valley melts away as the Stevens Creek Trail meets the Bay Trail at



CYCLISTS AND STROLLERS ON THE BAY TRAIL AT MOUNTAIN VIEW'S SHORELINE PARK.

Mountain View's Shoreline Park. The Bay Trail abuts tidal salt marshes, ponds, and sloughs from here into Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve and all the way north to Ravenswood Open Space Preserve. These wetlands are an important site along the Pacific Flyway for thousands of migratory and resident shorebirds and waterfowl. Not surprisingly, this is a favorite locale for birders to observe egrets and herons stalking prey on the mudflats, killdeer crying from nests in the pickleweed, ducks and grebes feeding on algae, terns banking over shallow salt ponds, and a small colony of black skimmers dipping their beaks into Charleston Slough. Seems incredible that this 700-acre park, with its scenic bay-front and burrowing owl habitat, was a landfill through the 1970s.

To the east, you can see Moffett Federal Airfield with its huge dirigible hangars and research facilities. By mid-2009, a new segment of the Bay Trail will open along the bayshore side of Moffett Field, connecting to another seven miles of Bay Trail in Sunnyvale.

A good end for your outing might be a stop at Shoreline Lake, where you can rent a kayak, sailboat, or windsurfing board. After an hour on the water, you can grab a sandwich at the dockside café, then ask directions to the nearest bus stop a few blocks away at Charleston and Amphitheater Parkway (VTA #40). Or you can retrace your route back to the Mountain View Transit Center.



BLACK-NECKED STILTS TAKE FLIGHT AT PALO ALTO BAYLANDS.

urban sprawl of Contra Costa on the other. It's a moderate, steady climb up the Briones-Mount Diablo Regional Trail on our way across the western flank of the mountain.

Soon the urban views disappear and we're in Diablo Foothills Regional Park, passing through a sea of golden grasslands alongside manzanita-filled chaparral and the impressive rock feature known as the China Wall; hard to believe I had left the urban streets of the Mission just a few hours ago.

It's not long before we're catching glimpses of the fiery sunset behind us. We pick up the pace and arrive at Wildcat campground via the BBQ Terrace Trail, set up our sleeping bags, and kick back to watch the blazing sky fade to twilight, with the crest of Diablo looming behind us.

Early Saturday morning we tackle the summit trail. The previous day's laid-back ascent turns into a heart-pumping climb. Within two miles we've gained 1,100 feet and are rewarded with breathtaking vistas, from Mount Tamalpais and

the city in the west to the faint outline of the snowcapped Sierra Nevada in the east.

We stop for a few photos and a snack before the brisk fall breeze encourages us to get moving. Without a parked car waiting for us back in Walnut Creek, we're free to make our way down the north side, enjoying new trails and scenery. We snake our way down the North Peak Trail, traverse the length of Meridian Ridge, and head down the heart of Donner Canyon on our way to the outskirts of Clayton. Near the trailhead, with the suburbs already in view, we are reminded of the wildness around us when we encounter a tarantula on the trail, out looking for a mate. We stop to watch it for a moment, take a photo, and then walk the final stretch to the CC110 bus stop on the outskirts of town. Ten minutes later we're on our way to the Concord BART station, on the final leg of our two-day, car-free escape from the city.

(Note: As of April 2009, the CC110 will no longer run on weekends.)

(continued from page 1)

the opportunity to cover more ground than if you had to turn around and retrace your steps to the parking lot. There are other benefits to leaving the car at home, such as being able to take a post-hike nap while you let the bus driver deal with the traffic. It's true that gasoline prices plummeted back down to 2001 levels late last year (2008), but you know that won't last. So you can add saving money to the benefits.

Ultimately, though, we all know the biggest payoff for taking transit: the health of the planet and all living things, including us. Climate change is a reality, it is happening here and now, and already altering our local ecosystems. (See "Taking the Heat: Bay Area Ecosystems in the Age of Climate Change" in the January–March 2009 issue of *Bay Nature*.) And those of us who drive to the park in our cars are part of the problem. According to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, 41 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the Bay Area come from transportation, with 64 percent of that coming from autos and light-duty trucks. Given that 75 percent of these motor vehicle trips are not work related, our personal driving habits have a huge impact. Reducing our "vehicle miles traveled" can take a big bite out of the Bay Area's carbon footprint and make a big difference in the health of those natural places we love to visit.

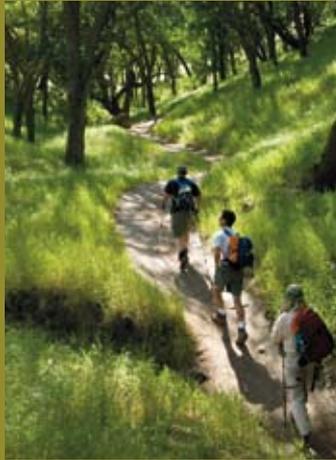
I'm as guilty as the next person. All week I bike to work, leave the car at home, and wear a halo. But come the weekend, I load up the car

with my hiking boots, lunch, and friends, and head off to another great place to explore.

What will it take to get us out of our cars? Certainly more extensive transit coverage and weekend service would help. But in the meantime, another major barrier to car-free outings is coming down: lack of information. With the revamped "Transit Trip Planner" on the 511.org website (sponsored by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission), it is now not only possible but easy to get up-to-date transit directions (including schedules, time, cost, and walking directions) to and from almost any point within the nine-county Bay Area. And an Open Space Council-sponsored website launching later this year, transitandtrails.org, will incorporate selected trailheads (including the ones highlighted in this publication) into a 511-linked trip planner.

Of course, not every place you'll want to go is transit-accessible (yet), but with the information provided by "Transit to Trails" and these new online resources, you can find out which places are accessible, and then make "getting there" part of the adventure. And part of the solution.

Note: Transit routes and schedules change frequently, and are not the same every day of the week, so it is important to check 511.org (or call 511) for the latest information before you head out.



HIKERS ON THE TRAIL AT SHELL RIDGE OPEN SPACE.

SCOTT HEIN, HEINPHOTO.COM

Transit to Trails was sponsored by the following agencies and organizations:



511 is a free phone and web service, sponsored by MTC, that provides transportation information for the nine-county Bay Area, including traffic conditions, public transit routes, fares and transit trip planning, carpool referrals, bicycling information, and more. Call 511 or visit 511.org.



The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is responsible for protecting public health by maintaining clean air in the San Francisco Bay region. Activities include regulation of stationary sources of air pollution, programs to reduce air pollution from mobile sources, initiatives to address climate change, and public education. (www.baaqmd.gov)



The Coastal Conservancy is a state agency that protects and restores the natural environment, invests in communities, and helps people get to and enjoy the coast of California and natural lands around San Francisco Bay. (www.coastalconservancy.ca.gov)



The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) is dedicated to preserving open space and operating an integrated system of parks, trails, and recreation areas in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. With almost 100,000 acres, it is the largest urban park district in the nation. (www.ebparks.org)



The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is a regional governmental agency responsible for planning, financing, and managing transportation in the Bay Area. MTC strives to weave the region's highways, bridges, and public transit services into a seamless network that enhances mobility and promotes sustainability. (www.mtc.ca.gov)



Save Mount Diablo, founded in 1971, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Mount Diablo's peaks and surrounding foothills through advocacy, education, and land acquisition. SMD also promotes responsible recreation in the area. (www.savemountdiablo.org)



The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District has protected over 75,000 acres of agricultural, natural resource, scenic, and recreational property through conservation easements and land acquisition since 1992. (www.sonomaopenspace.org)



TransForm (formerly the Transportation and Land Use Coalition) is an award-winning nonprofit organization working to create world-class public transportation and walkable communities in the Bay Area and beyond. Get involved at www.TransformCA.org.

Ryan Branciforte brings ten years experience working for open space to his position as Director of Conservation Planning for the Bay Area Open Space Council. When not preserving open space, he spends his time recreating in it, and getting to it by bus and BART.

John Dorrance is an interpretive specialist with Santa Clara County Parks and freelance journalist. He is now testing his recently purchased electric bicycle on many Bay Area bike trails.

Joe Soule, a resident of Point Reyes Station, has been hiking the trails of the National Seashore for over 30 years. The advent of the West Marin Stagecoach has allowed Joe and his wife Sue to take many of these hikes and leave their car at home.

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Transit to Trails is project of the "Nature Within Reach" program of the **Bay Area Open Space Council**, a collaborative of more than 55 member public agencies and nonprofit organizations actively involved in protecting and stewarding parks, trails, and agricultural lands in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. (www.openspacecouncil.org)



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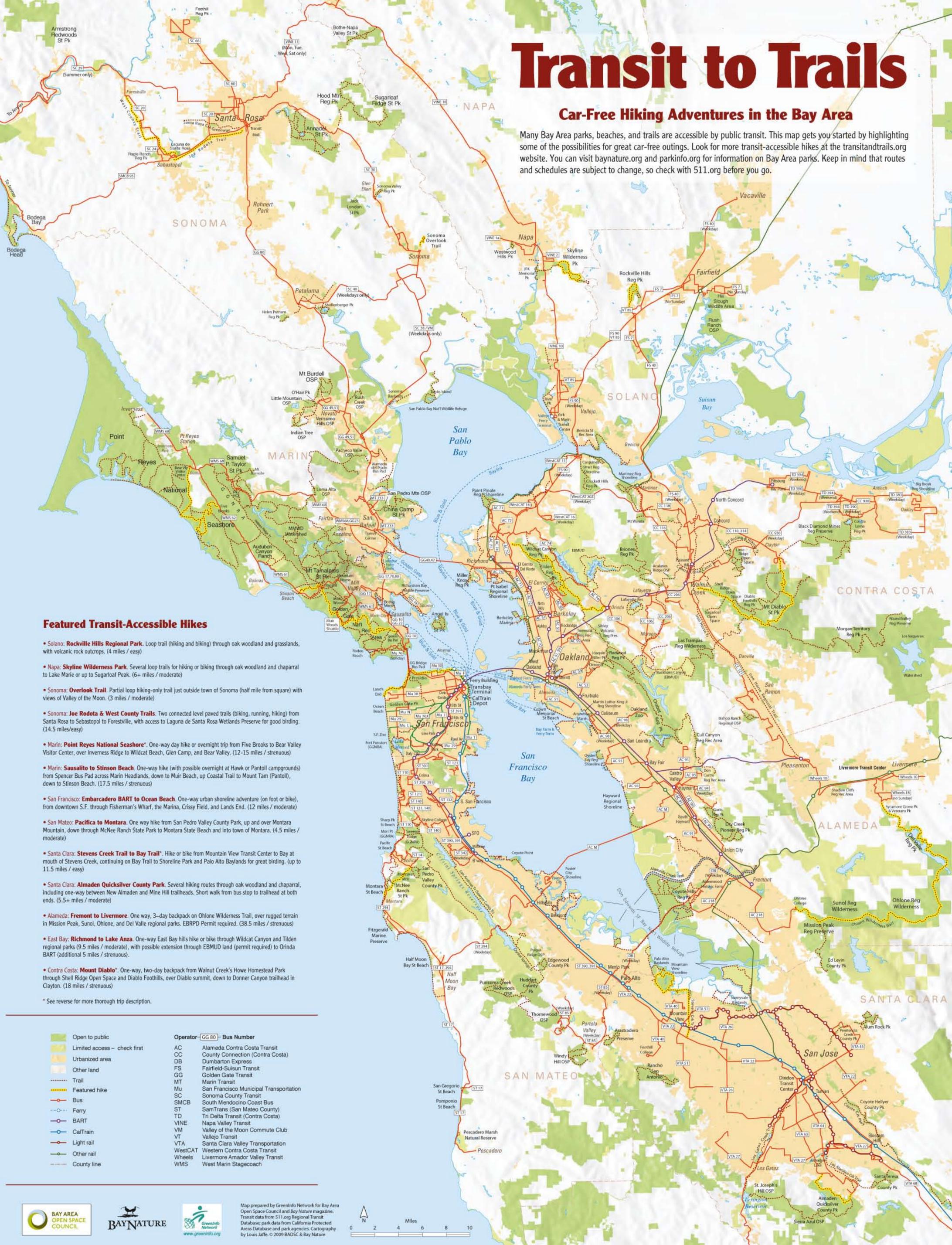
issues, as well as additional copies of **Transit to Trails**, are available online at www.baynature.org or by calling 1-888-4BAYNAT.

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Transit to Trails

Car-Free Hiking Adventures in the Bay Area

Many Bay Area parks, beaches, and trails are accessible by public transit. This map gets you started by highlighting some of the possibilities for great car-free outings. Look for more transit-accessible hikes at the transitandtrails.org website. You can visit baynature.org and parkinfo.org for information on Bay Area parks. Keep in mind that routes and schedules are subject to change, so check with 511.org before you go.



Featured Transit-Accessible Hikes

- **Solano: Rockville Hills Regional Park.** Loop trail (hiking and biking) through oak woodland and grasslands, with volcanic rock outcrops. (4 miles / easy)
- **Napa: Skyline Wilderness Park.** Several loop trails for hiking or biking through oak woodland and chaparral to Lake Marie or up to Sugarloaf Peak. (6+ miles / moderate)
- **Sonoma: Overlook Trail.** Partial loop hiking-only trail just outside town of Sonoma (half mile from square) with views of Valley of the Moon. (3 miles / moderate)
- **Sonoma: Joe Rodota & West County Trails.** Two connected level paved trails (biking, running, hiking) from Santa Rosa to Sebastopol to Forestville, with access to Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetlands Preserve for good birding. (14.5 miles/easy)
- **Marin: Point Reyes National Seashore.** One-way day hike or overnight trip from Five Brooks to Bear Valley Visitor Center, over Inverness Ridge to Wildcat Beach, Glen Camp, and Bear Valley. (12-15 miles / strenuous)
- **Marin: Sausalito to Stinson Beach.** One-way hike (with possible overnight at Hawk or Pantoll campgrounds) from Spencer Bus Pad across Marin Headlands, down to Muir Beach, up Coastal Trail to Mount Tam (Pantoll), down to Stinson Beach. (17.5 miles / strenuous)
- **San Francisco: Embarcadero BART to Ocean Beach.** One-way urban shoreline adventure (on foot or bike), from downtown S.F. through Fisherman's Wharf, the Marina, Crissy Field, and Lands End. (12 miles / moderate)
- **San Mateo: Pacifica to Montara.** One way hike from San Pedro Valley County Park, up and over Montara Mountain, down through McNeen Ranch State Park to Montara State Beach and into town of Montara. (4.5 miles / moderate)
- **Santa Clara: Stevens Creek Trail to Bay Trail.** Hike or bike from Mountain View Transit Center to Bay at mouth of Stevens Creek, continuing on Bay Trail to Shoreline Park and Palo Alto Baylands for great birding. (up to 11.5 miles / easy)
- **Santa Clara: Almaden Quicksilver County Park.** Several hiking routes through oak woodland and chaparral, including one-way between New Almaden and Mine Hill trailheads. Short walk from bus stop to trailhead at both ends. (5.5+ miles / moderate)
- **Alameda: Fremont to Livermore.** One way, 3-day backpack on Ohlone Wilderness Trail, over rugged terrain in Mission Peak, Sunol, Ohlone, and Del Valle regional parks. EBRPD Permit required. (38.5 miles / strenuous)
- **East Bay: Richmond to Lake Anza.** One-way East Bay hills hike or bike through Wildcat Canyon and Tilden regional parks (9.5 miles / moderate), with possible extension through EBMUD land (permit required) to Orinda BART (additional 5 miles / strenuous).
- **Contra Costa: Mount Diablo.** One-way, two-day backpack from Walnut Creek's Howe Homestead Park through Shell Ridge Open Space and Diablo Foothills, over Diablo summit, down to Donner Canyon trailhead in Clayton. (18 miles / strenuous)

* See reverse for more thorough trip description.

Operator	Bus Number
AC	Alameda Contra Costa Transit
CC	County Connection (Contra Costa)
DB	Dumbarton Express
FS	Fairfield-Suisun Transit
GG	Golden Gate Transit
MT	Marin Transit
Mu	San Francisco Municipal Transportation
SC	Sonoma County Transit
SMCB	South Mendocino Coast Bus
ST	SamTrans (San Mateo County)
TD	Tri Delta Transit (Contra Costa)
VINE	Napa Valley Transit
VM	Valley of the Moon Commute Club
VT	Vallejo Transit
VTA	Santa Clara Valley Transportation
WestCAT	Western Contra Costa Transit
Wheels	Livermore Amador Valley Transit
WMS	West Marin Stagecoach



Map prepared by GreenInfo Network for Bay Area Open Space Council and Bay Nature magazine. Transit data from 511.org Regional Transit Database; park data from California Protected Areas Database and park agencies. Cartography by Louis Jaffe. © 2009 BAOSC & Bay Nature

