

Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Interactive Trip Planner Gets Users to Bay Area Park Sites Via Public Transportation

Park Visitors Can Lower Carbon Footprint and Still Visit Nature

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF., September 24, 2009 - Don't own a car but eager to get out to a park or beach you thought was inaccessible? Trying to reduce your carbon footprint? Now you can get out to your favorite trails and find new ones, all on public transit.

The brand-new website, *Transit and Trails* < www.openspacecouncil.org >, was developed by the Bay Area Open Space Council (BAOSC), a collaborative of over 55 member organizations actively involved in permanently protecting and stewarding important parks, trails and agricultural lands in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

The site has been in Beta testing for several months, and print versions have been produced since 1995; the site is being fully launched this week.

According to Bettina Ring, Executive Director of the BAOSC, "*Transit and Trails* is the first-ever trip planner focused on parks and trails, and is interactive. It coordinates transit schedules for almost all local public transit—even ferries—with all of the Bay Area's campgrounds, key trailheads, and featured trips. It brings all the needed information to your fingertips so you can easily plan your outing."

The new interactive website identifies hundreds of trailheads and campgrounds on a Google map and links directly to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's 511 Transit Trip Planner. Once users enter their start location and choose a destination, they can get a detailed trip itinerary with a map, transit times, fares and walking directions to and from the transit stops.

There are numerous benefits of the free resource. "The Bay Area has almost 1.2 million acres of preserved lands," said Ring. "In an increasingly urban area, more and more residents live without cars, relying on public transit. *Transit and Trails* makes it easy for them to access our parks. It's cheaper – no gas, bridge tolls or parking fees, there's less need to pay the hidden costs of owning a car, and it's better for the environment. You can also avoid car shuttles from

- more -

one trailhead to another. In a time when we're all increasingly aware of our role in climate change, *Transit and Trails* allows us to dramatically reduce our carbon footprints. Plus, many of us plan outdoor experiences for the weekends or after work, when public transit is under-utilized."

Transit and Trails is built entirely on free and open source software and doesn't require a single software license fee. The website is supported and promoted by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission through a connection to their comprehensive public transit trip planner at 511.org. The 511 Transit Planner is the key tool for getting Bay Area visitors and residents from their home or other location to their chosen site, and back again.

Using the *Transit and Trails* Site

You start by **Finding** trailheads and preset trips, then **Plan** your trip from home to the start and from the end back home. Eventually you will be able to **Share** your trip experience.

When you search the website, you will note three different features - Trailheads, Campgrounds and Trips. The site will take you to nearly all the Bay Area campgrounds and to hundreds of trailheads, representing the starting points for the best hiking spots in the region. Once you find the place you want to visit, then the site will help you plan your trip to the trailhead and back home on public transportation.

You can also read about 20 featured trips that people have already hiked via transit.

To use the site, visitors can easily plan their trip by doing the following:

- Visit the site at **www.openspacecouncil.org**
- Drag the start icon around the map or type any address and choose your search radius and the map will display trailheads, trips and campgrounds in that area as well as list them on the side panel.
- Choose from the map or the list and get more information about what is at that particular location (i.e., water and/or bathrooms at the trailhead or a description of the featured trip).
- When a desired area to visit is identified, hit the "Go to this trailhead" or "Go on this trip" and the next page will allow you to plan out your trip on public transit.
- Set your origin and where you want to come back to after your trip and then click on 511 or Google Transit for detailed public transit directions, then you are on your way!

Features Under Development

Development of the website is ongoing, and soon it will facilitate community input and social networking. Local conservation and recreational groups have begun linking their events to the site to facilitate access for their events.

Other planned features include a carbon calculator to measure how you are reducing your carbon footprint with each *Transit and Trails* adventure, the ability to add in new trips and new trailheads as well as descriptions about each of those, and uploading photos of your trips and sharing them with friends and family. These new features will allow you to plan trips and invite friends to come along with you, each of them using the site to get to the trailhead on public transit.

Background

According to Ring, "The Open Space Council began producing the printed *Transit to Trails* maps in 1995. Creating an online trip planner was a natural next step."

Transit and Trails is the result of a collaboration that began in the mid-1990s when the Open Space Council created and GreenInfo Network designed the first *Transit to Trails* map with

support from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District). In 2001 and 2009, the map was updated and printed in *Bay Nature* magazine, with support from the Air District, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and others.

The new interactive version is hosted by the Bay Area Open Space Council. It has tapped into the expertise of many Bay Area organizations including the East Bay Regional Parks District, Bay Area Hiker, GreenInfo Network and Save Mount Diablo for trail and campground information, as well as MTC for help in connecting with the 511.org Transit Trip Planner. Other partners include *Bay Nature* and Pease Press.

Tech

Transit and Trails was developed by Jereme Monteau and Ryan Branciforte with site and logo design by Justin Moline. It has been in a Beta testing phase for the past few months.

The site is built entirely on free and open source software. According to Branciforte, "It's amazing what you can build today thanks to the incalculable number of hours spent by the open source software community."

Software contributors include Django, GeoDjango, Apache Web Server, MySQL, PostgreSQL, Python, Eclipse IDE, Ubuntu, Firefox, and OpenStreetMap. The site also makes extensive use of Google technologies: Google Maps API, Google Transit, Google Apps, and Chrome. *Transit and Trails* is running on hardware donated by ServePath.

Launch Party

The public is invited to attend a launch party for the official release of the new *Transit and Trails* website on Wednesday, September 30th from 4:30-7:30 p.m. Hosted by the Bay Area Open Space Council, the party is at the David Brower Center, 2150 Allston Way, Berkeley, one block from the downtown Berkeley BART station. The program includes a live demo and speakers at 6 p.m. Refreshments will be provided.

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