

# Presidio Coastal Trail Improvements Project

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Golden Gate  
National Recreation Area



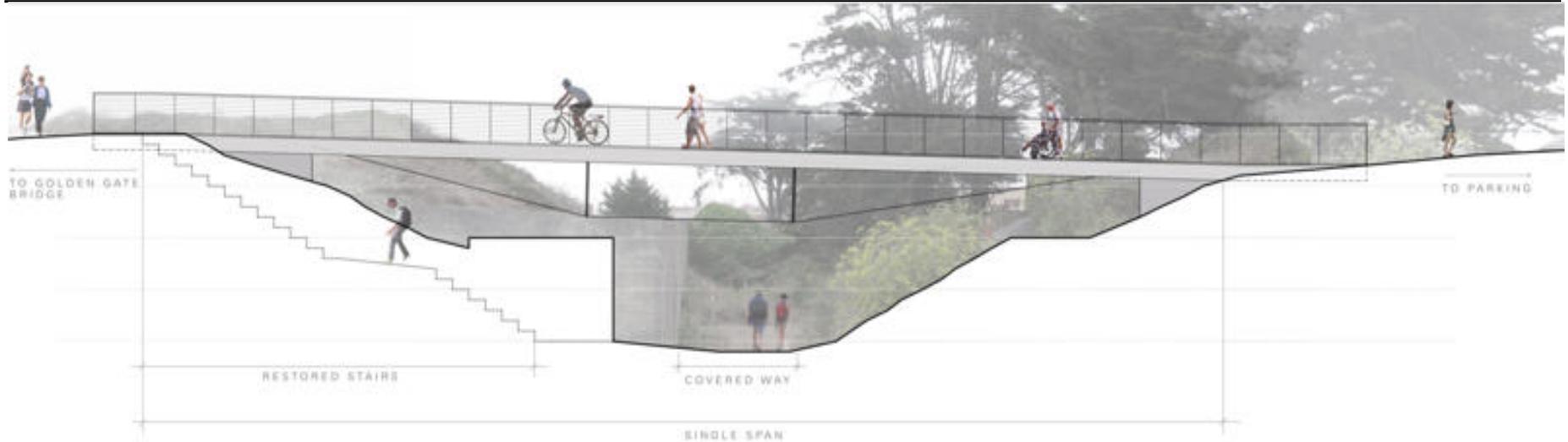
In November 2009 the National Park Service (NPS) solicited public comments on a proposal to improve three miles of the California Coastal Trail within the Presidio of San Francisco. The NPS had planned to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) in 2010 for the proposed improvements, which would have included an accessible, multi-use trail from the southwestern end of the Golden Gate Bridge to the Baker Beach area and removal of the Sand Ladder. Following the review of public comments that were received and a preliminary environmental analysis, the NPS has decided to discontinue indefinitely its preparation of this EA. If sometime in the future the NPS reconsiders extending an accessible trail to Baker Beach an EA with public notification and scoping will be done. Described below is a brief explanation why the NPS will not move forward on this EA, and a summary of which Presidio Coastal Trail (PCT) actions will be implemented.

## **NPS Discontinues Presidio Coastal Trail Improvements Project Environmental Assessment**

In 2003, the NPS and Presidio Trust (Trust) adopted the Presidio Trails and Bikeways Master Plan and Environmental Assessment (Master Plan). The Master Plan guides efforts to develop a network of trails and bikeways within the Presidio. Since mid-2008, the NPS,

together with the Trust and Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (Conservancy), has been working to implement Presidio Coastal Trail improvements called for in the Master Plan.

**Figure 1: Artist Rendering Battery Marcus Miller Bridge**



**Site Planning**

In evaluating site-specific conditions and needs, it became clear that some Master Plan projects would require modifications in order to comply with emerging federal guidelines for accessibility in outdoor areas. On October 19, 2009, the U.S. Access Board published the *Draft Final Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas* which establishes accessibility requirements for federal land management agencies that construct or alter trails and viewing areas. To comply with these guidelines, the NPS identified the following Coastal Trail modifications:

- Construct a new trail bridge to span the Battery Marcus Miller Covered Way to provide an accessible as well as multi-use trail from Merchant Road to the Golden Gate Bridge. The Master Plan had identified a route that was no longer feasible due to a 2006 landslide and no other route was identified in the site planning process that could meet the goals of providing an accessible and multi-use trail.

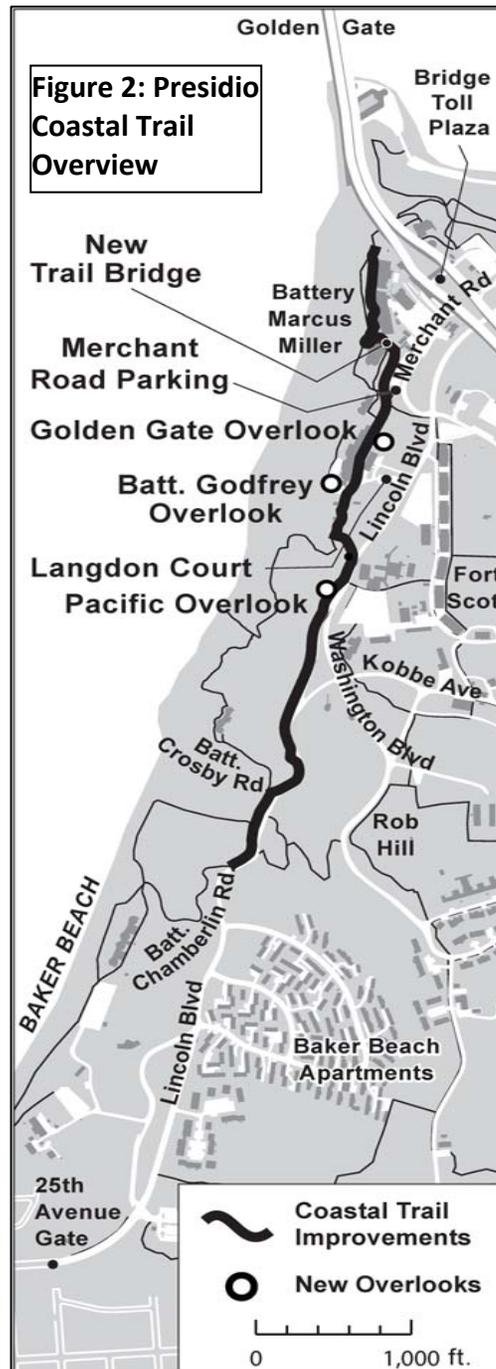
- Realign the Coastal Trail away from Lincoln Boulevard between Battery Crosby and Bowley roads in order to provide a trail that complies with the draft final accessibility guidelines. This requires making several switchbacks across a habitat area that is home to two federally listed endangered plant species. The Master Plan had identified upgrading the existing roadside trail; however, in the site planning process, this alignment was too steep to comply with the draft final guidelines.
- Decommission the Sand Ladder and reconfigure beach access to other parts of Baker Beach. Removing the sand ladder was necessary to mitigate for impacts to the endangered plant habitat caused by the new proposed accessible trail. The Master Plan had identified maintaining the Sand Ladder Trail.

Because these modifications substantially differ from or are not included in the Master Plan, the NPS determined the proposed actions required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance in the form of an EA.

**Scoping**

Public scoping for this EA began in November, 2009 when comments from the public were solicited on the proposed actions. The comment period closed December 15, 2009. Over 50 comments were received including from one public agency; several environmental, neighborhood and recreation organizations; and many individuals. Although many favorable comments were received about upgrading the existing trail and supporting improved bicycle access to the Golden Gate Bridge, a majority of the comments opposed decommissioning the Sand Ladder and paving the new trail. Many comments, including a joint letter signed by eight environmental organizations, expressed significant concern over the proposed new accessible trail from Battery Crosby to Baker Beach through what is relatively intact and remnant habitat that supports federally endangered and other sensitive plant, wildlife, bird, and invertebrate species.

Staff from the NPS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had preliminary discussions regarding ways to mitigate the potential impacts in the area identified as recovery habitat for the federally-listed species, the San Francisco lessingia and Raven’s manzanita as well as potential cumulative impacts from other projects underway or anticipated in the Presidio. Based on the complexity of this issue, the in-depth impact analysis that would be required to adequately address this issue, lack of community consensus



regarding this proposal, and limited resources for undertaking such an analysis, the NPS has decided to discontinue indefinitely preparation of this EA. PCT actions consistent with the Master Plan will still be implemented according to agency priority and available funding. Below is a brief summary of these actions.

**Improvements Consistent with Master Plan**

**Trail Improvements**

- Upgrading and widening the existing Presidio Coastal Trail from the southwestern end of the Golden Gate Bridge down and through the Merchant Road, Battery Godfrey, and Pacific Overlook areas. The trail would be widened to between 10 and 14 feet and would be opened for use by pedestrians and bicyclists. The trail would comply with the draft final accessibility guidelines for outdoor developed areas. The trail surface will use compacted chert or shale to form a firm and stable surface.
- To support the creation of a through-accessible trail between the Golden Gate Bridge and Merchant Road, a new trail bridge is proposed to span the Battery Marcus Miller Covered Way. This trail bridge was not included in the Master Plan; therefore, NEPA and Section 106 review pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) is required.
- Upgrading and widening the roadside trail between the Pacific Overlook and Battery Chamberlin Road. The trail would be widened

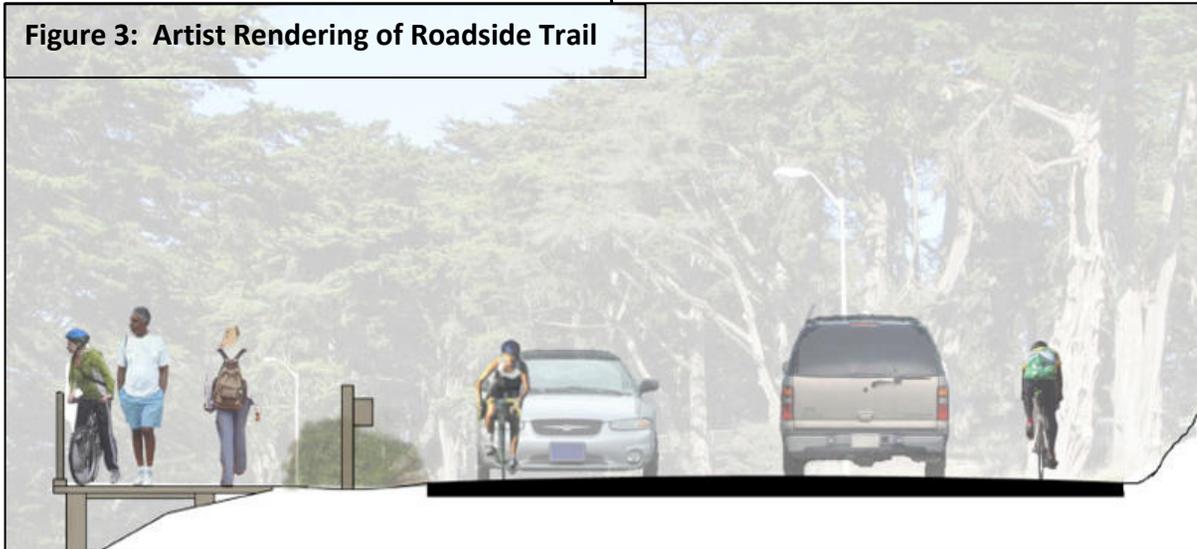
to between 8 and 14 feet and would be opened for use by pedestrians and bicyclists. The trail would comply with draft final accessibility guidelines for outdoor developed areas except for short distances between Battery Crosby and Battery Chamberlin roads where the trail would exceed gradients allowed under these guidelines.

No trail improvements would be made south of the intersection of Lincoln Boulevard and Battery Chamberlin Road nor would a new accessible trail through the habitat be completed without environmental review. It is anticipated the accessible trail would be addressed in Phase III of the Park's Accessibility Transition Plan and/or when the NPS designates the Special Management Zone established under the 2002 Vegetation Management Plan for a 62-acre area between Baker Beach and Baker Beach Apartments. No action to decommission the Sand Ladder would take place before completing this additional review.

**Overlooks and Visitor Parking Improvements (Area A)**

Independent of the trail improvements, the NPS will develop a viewing area southeast of Merchant Road to be known as the Golden Gate Overlook. Initially identified in the 1994 General Management Plan Amendment for the Presidio (GMPA) and included by reference in the Master Plan, this overlook will provide a view of the Golden Gate Bridge and nearby coastal defense fortifications. To further support visitor access to this overlook, the existing parking lot will be expanded by 18-20 spaces including ADA parking spaces. Although expansion of visitor parking was identified in this location in the GMPA, additional NEPA review may be required.

**Figure 3: Artist Rendering of Roadside Trail**



A second overlook will be created on the frontal (western) slope of Battery Godfrey as called for in the GMPA. The existing dirt parking lot in front of the battery will be relocated, the historic slope of the battery restored, and a new pedestrian plaza created to provide views of the Pacific and Golden Gate. The NPS may expand and make more efficient the nearby parking lot at Langdon Court. Additional compliance under NHPA and NEPA may be needed to address visitor parking needs here. In the interim, minor improvements will be made within the existing footprint at Langdon Court to provide one to two ADA parking spaces and access to the improved trail.

### Presidio Trust/Area B Improvements

The Master Plan envisioned not only improvements to the Presidio Coastal Trail but also improvements for in-road bicycle use and traffic safety on nearby and adjacent Lincoln Boulevard, located within Area B of the Presidio managed by the Presidio Trust. In support of this vision, the Trust will construct new five-foot wide Class II bicycle lanes in both directions on Lincoln Boulevard between the Highway 101 overpass and the intersection with of Lincoln and Washington Boulevards. Between Washington Boulevard and South Pershing Boulevard, a five-foot wide Class II bicycle lane will be added in the uphill direction and a wider lane will be provided in the downhill direction for shared bicycle and vehicular use (Class III). To facilitate these improvements, some minor roadway widening will be required for short distances on both sides of Lincoln Boulevard in some areas.

The Trust plans to improve the existing overlook located on Lincoln Boulevard to be known as the Pacific Overlook. Plans include improving the viewing area, providing an ADA parking space, establishing more separation between roadway and viewing area, and adding a crosswalk. This crosswalk will also link to a planned trail to Rob Hill campground along Washington Boulevard.

Subject to available funding and completion of required compliance, design and construction of these near term projects could begin this year. Estimated dates for constructing the improvements are as follows:

- Removal of hazardous trees along the trail, tree removal and thinning, and control of invasive plant species will be conducted starting in late 2010.
- In phases, the Lincoln Boulevard bikeway and road safety improvements are estimated to begin in 2011.

- The Coastal Trail from Golden Gate Bridge to Merchant Road, the new trail bridge, the Golden Gate Overlook, and the Merchant Road parking are estimated to be completed in time for the Golden Gate Bridge's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012.
- Some project improvements depend on remediation of environmental clean-up areas including Baker Beach Disturbed Area 1A (BBDA1A) located north of Merchant Road and Baker Beach Disturbed Area 2 (BBDA2) located southwest of Battery Godfrey. BBDA1A is scheduled for clean up in 2011 and BBDA2 in 2012. Because remediation efforts for Fill Site 2 will be staged from the Langdon Court/Battery Godfrey area, this section of the trail and this overlook may be delayed until 2013.

### Stay Informed

To stay informed about Golden Gate National Recreation Area projects, please sign up for email updates through the park's website at <http://www.nps.gov/goga/parkmgmt/planning.htm>. Presidio Coastal Trail project staff will be available to discuss the project at the next quarterly open house on Tuesday, May 18, 2010 from 4-7pm at the Aquatic Park Historic Bathhouse Building, San Francisco, CA 94123. This brochure is posted at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/goga> and click on the project title.