

# California Coastal Trail San Mateo County Midcoast Pillar Point to Montara Beach

CCT Committee – Midcoast Community Council  
**Draft Report – Not for Distribution**  
March 22, 2013



The PP-FMR Walkable Coastline Trail (to be edited in)

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## Introduction

This report by the California Coastal Trail (CCT) Committee of the Midcoast Community Council (MCC) has two primary objectives:

- To identify coastal trail routes in the Midcoast from Pillar Point to Montara State Beach that provide local residents and visitors the opportunity to enjoy the varied views and access to the coast that is a primary feature of our area
- To work with appropriate San Mateo County agencies to have selected routes designated as part of the California Coastal Trail.
- The Committee especially wants to identify a walking trail that provides the closest access to the shoreline. This Walkable Coastline Trail should be identified so that it gains public recognition and support.

Such routes will, to the greatest extent possible, meet the key objectives for the CCT stated in the current version of the San Mateo County Local Coastal Program

- (a) Provide a continuous walking and hiking trail as close to the ocean as possible*
- (b) Provide maximum access for a variety of non-motorized uses by utilizing alternative trail segments where feasible*
- (c) Maximize connections to existing and proposed local trail systems*
- (d) Ensure that the trail has connections to trailheads, parking areas, interpretive kiosks, inland trail segments, etc., at reasonable intervals*
- (e) Maximize ocean views and scenic coastal vistas*

*See Appendix A for further details*

From Pillar Point to the north boundary of the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve existing trails and roads provide continuous views of the ocean beaches, coves and tidepools. In order to accommodate various users and modes of travel, the Midcoast CCT will need to be comprised of braided segments.

North of Fitzgerald, the only route of the Midcoast CCT is away from the shoreline for significant stretches, so it is particularly important to point out and develop vertical access points to the shoreline along the route where road stubs end at the coast, providing bluff top vistas and occasional beach access.

## Overview

This report has sections for three major areas of the Midcoast:

- Pillar Point to Fitzgerald Marine Reserve via Seal Cove
- Moss Beach – Fitzgerald Marine Reserve to Lighthouse
- Montara – Lighthouse to Montara State Beach

For each segment the report will address a segment and discuss:

- **Route:** A specific route, shown either by map or list of recognized roads and features, is a basic concept plan for the CCT. The Midcoast CCT Concept Plan defined for these three areas has not appreciably changed since a 2001 study by the MCC (see Appendix B).
- **Issues / Required Projects:** To qualify as a CCT trail segment, particular issues may be noted along with projects to address these issues. The minimum standard for the CCT in the Midcoast is considered to be the currently approved signed and mapped segments CCT the Midcoast.
- **Issues / Improvement Opportunities:** The minimum goal of the CCT is to identify to the public a minimum passable and connected trail. Beyond this criteria there may be one or more additional issues to address that make valuable enhancements to the trail.
- **Parking:** Areas, other than the street, that provide designated parking with direct trail access should be identified
- **Vertical Coastal Access:** short trail segments off the main CCT which connect to areas with coastal views or to the ocean beach are important trail components to list.
- **Signage:** The combination of kiosks, small mounted signs and bollards of varying size prove the appropriate label options for the trail.

Two additional report sections involve areas where primary responsibility rests with state agencies:

- Highway 1
- Montara State Beach

## Pillar Point to Fitzgerald Marine Reserve – The Midcoast Walkable Coastline Trail

### Route

For many years a collection of trails and road segments via Pillar Point Bluff trails, Seal Cove streets (Ocean Blvd. & Beach Way), FMR Bluff Trail, and San Vicente Creek Bridge has been used locally to walk a route is entirely within sight/sound of the ocean, and includes beach access at Ross's Cove and Seal Cove staircase, and historical point of interest/restaurant, Moss Beach Distillery. This route, termed is identified here as The Midcoast Walkable Coastline Trail is shown in blue in the map below. The green line is a multi-modal/ADA accessible existing signed CCT.

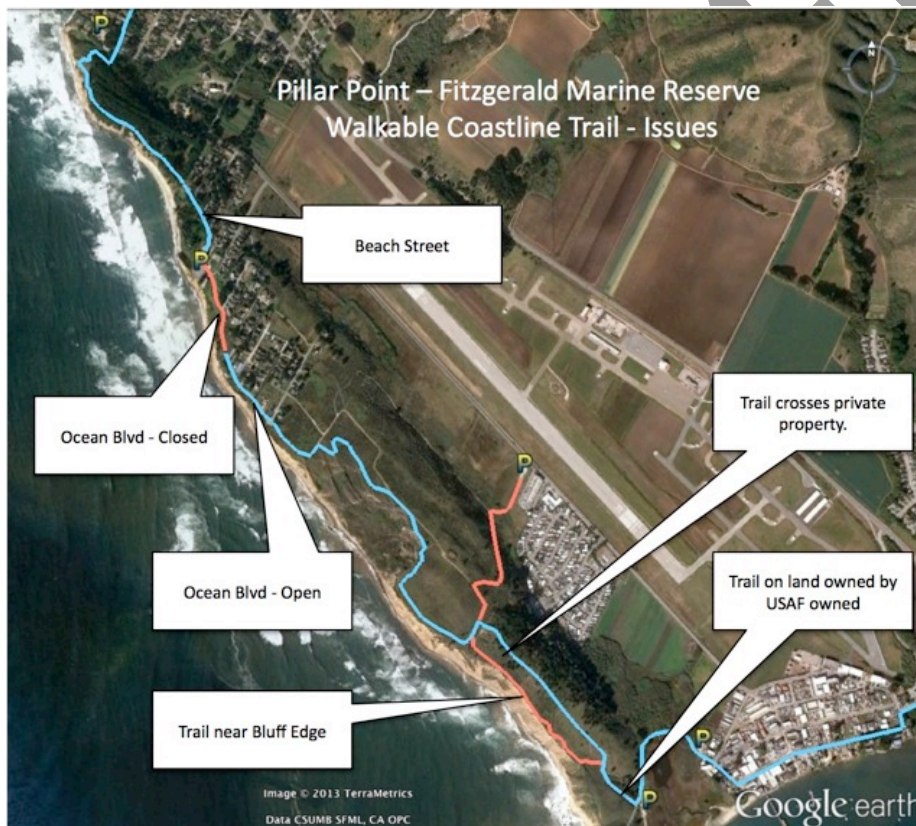


The Walkable Coastline Trail is an ideal fit for the CCT from the initial CCT objective in the San Mateo County Midcoast LCP: Provide a continuous walking and hiking trail as close to the ocean as possible. It would be a braided option to Airport Street route.

## Issues / Required Projects

### Known issues

- Beach Street - Walking / Parking
- Ocean Boulevard – Closed Section
- Ocean Boulevard – Open – Neighborhood concerns
- Trail Crossing Private Property
- Trail Crossing USAF Property
- Poor trail quality near bluff edge



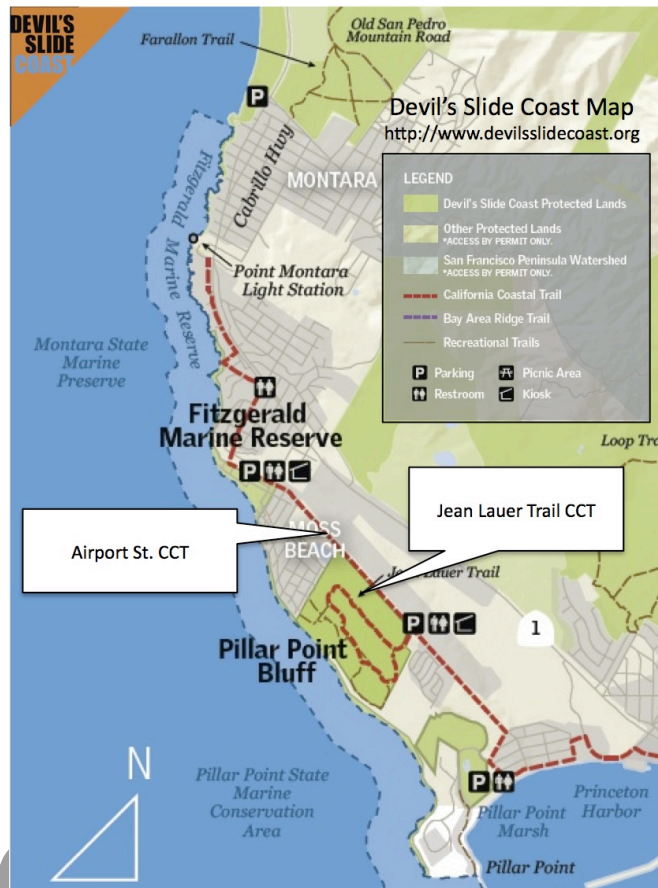
**The currently mapped and signed CCT** follows County streets, staying to the east of Pillar Point Bluff and Seal Cove residential neighborhood:

(from south to north)

- West Point Ave. in Princeton
- Stanford Ave.
- Airport St. to Cypress St.
- Dardenelle Trail through Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
- San Vicente Creek bridge

The route is level and paved, and out of sight or sound of the ocean.

Airport St, the major portion, is a narrow rural road with no bike/pedestrian improvements, where cars frequently travel at 50 mph.



from California Coastal Trail.info

The 2010 Midcoast CCT Report, Pillar Point to Mirada Surf, routed the CCT to the parking lot at Pillar Point at the western end of West Point Ave. It was assumed that the CCT would connect from there to the existing Jean Lauer Trail section of the CCT on Pillar Point Bluff, but remaining private property issues on the bluff have not yet been resolved. Street routes in Seal Cove are in flux due to loss of section of Ocean Blvd. for vehicle traffic.

## Issues / Improvement Opportunities

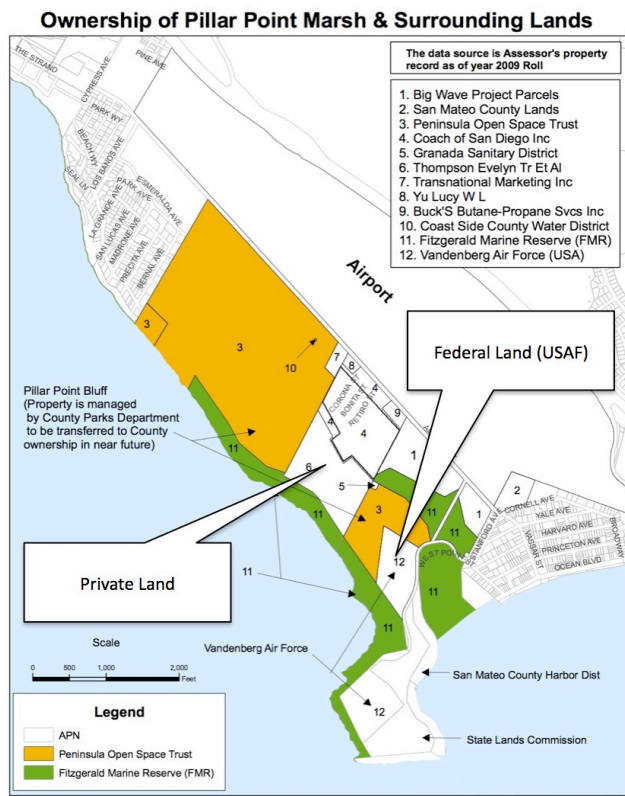
**Airport St.** is a Class 3 Bike Route which follows the western boundary of the HMB Airport. It is an important local transportation route and merits bike/pedestrian improvement. SamTrans bus service follows this route. There is a 10-car County Parks parking lot and trailhead to Pillar Point Bluff at about the halfway point. While posted at 35mph, cars often travel at 50 mph on this long, flat, straight rural road. Along the

developed section on the west side are a pedestrian sidewalk, 4 industrial driveways and the busy entrance to 227-home Pillar Ridge Manufactured Home Community. The curb and road shoulders in this section are used extensively for parking on both sides. In the southern undeveloped section, airport stormwater drainage is culverted under Airport St. into Pillar Point Marsh. There are guard rails in the culvert area, requiring bikes/pedestrians to use the traffic lane.

Recommendation: There is an excellent opportunity for an uninterrupted multi-use trail along the east side of Airport St. A bridge or culvert extension would be required where airport stormwater runoff drains into Pillar Point Marsh. If this option cannot be implemented because of airport constraints a western multi-use trail opportunity exists on the west side of Airport St. north of the Pillar Point Bluff parking area.

**Pillar Point Bluff** is open space land bordering the ocean, extending north from Pillar Point to the residential neighborhood of Seal Cove. It contains a U.S. Air Force parcel on the south end, two County Parks parcels, and one remaining parcel of private land (Thompson parcel).

At the west end of West Point Ave., the Harbor District maintains a parking lot, toilet, and the West Shoreline Access Trail which leads to the south side of Pillar Point.



Across West Point Ave. from the parking lot is the entrance to Pillar Point Bluff via a gated paved road leading rather steeply uphill to a communications tower on US Air Force land. The gate is designed to only block motorized vehicles. Bicycles, pedestrians and equestrians are free to pass through. There is currently no signage either prohibiting or welcoming. The asphalt pavement ends at the communications tower. Northward beyond that is an informal network of old rutted dirt farm road and hiking trails on the southern County Parks parcel and the Thompson parcel. An overall loop trail exists with an old farm road on the inland side and a narrower trail following the bluff edge. There are two steep informal trails down to the sandy beach in Ross's Cove (just north of Pillar Point), one at each end of the beach. There should be no question that the public has a prescriptive trail easement on Pillar Point Bluff.

On the northern County Parks parcel, a trail network was developed by POST and the Coastal Conservancy in 2007, with a 10-car parking lot and vault toilet on Airport St. and two additional trailheads on Bernal in Seal Cove. The trails are packed dirt and include the Jean Lauer segment of the CCT.

Recommendations: The packed dirt trail surface developed by POST and the Coastal Conservancy suits this natural area and should be continued in the southern portion of the bluff at the time when trails can be formalized and developed. It is recommended that the route of existing dirt roads be used wherever possible in order to minimize habitat disturbance and weed infestation.

Seal Cove: It had long been assumed that the CCT would traverse Seal Cove residential neighborhood via Ocean Blvd and Beach Way to connect to Fitzgerald Marine Reserve at Cypress St. In 2007 several blocks of Ocean Blvd were decommissioned due to irreparable landslide damage. The slide section is still walkable, though steep in places, and for now serves as the Walkable Coastline Trail. The route passes historical point of interest, Moss Beach Distillery, with outdoor dining deck, and adjacent public access parking lot.

Recommendation: Revisit the possibility of routing the primary CCT through Seal Cove once street circulation and road improvements are made.

Fitzgerald Marine Reserve uplands lie between Cypress St. on the south and San Vicente Creek or North Lake Street on the north. The primary signed/mapped CCT is the Dardenelle Trail along the eastern boundary which lacks coastal views. The Walkable Coastline Trail follows the Bluff Trail with coastal views through cypress trees. At the southern boundary there is beach and tidepool access is via the Seal Cove staircase.

## **Signage**

## **Parking**

## **Vertical Coastal Access**



# Moss Beach - Fitzgerald Marine Reserve to Lighthouse

## Route:

**Primary CCT** (as yet unsigned):  
Residential streets (south to north):  
California  
Wienke Way  
Juliana  
Vallemar  
MWSO frontage road  
exit Lighthouse Dr. to Hwy 1

**Future CCT or Walkable Coastline:**  
blufftop west of MWSO  
(currently closed to public)



## Issues / Required Projects

## Issues / Improvement Opportunities

### Recommendations:

Improve informal trail on County property between Vallemar and MWSO frontage road.

## Signage

## Parking

## **Vertical Coastal Access**

### **Beach access/views:**

- FMR tidepools at N. Lake St. Parking lot and restroom.
- Ellendale/Strand – side street off California for valley/ocean views, informal trail to Sunshine Valley and beach.
- Juliana – Vallemar Bluff trail, Wienke Cove beach access, informal parking.
- Point Montara Lighthouse – historical point of interest, hostel, café, informal trail to beach at Montara Creek

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## Montara – Main Street to the State Beach

### Route:

Lack of west-side highway shoulder space in several places in Montara requires the CCT to move to the east side of the highway, away from the coast, through this segment.

Route (south to north):

- Hwy 1 crossing to east side at Lighthouse/16<sup>th</sup> St.
- Hwy 1 ROW to 14<sup>th</sup> St.
- abandoned old hwy trail (or 14<sup>th</sup> to Farallone to 9<sup>th</sup>)
- Main St.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> St
- Hwy 1 crossing to west side.
- Restaurant parking lot to Montara Beach stairs (or highway shoulder to bluff trail)



In Montara the CCT will use the proposed Parallel Trail route, for which the County is seeking funding. In addition, planning for two safe crossings is getting underway for 2<sup>nd</sup> and in the vicinity of 7<sup>th</sup>. SamTrans bus service is routed via Main St.

### Issues / Required Projects

#### Recommendations:

- Safe highway crossing at Lighthouse/16<sup>th</sup> St. is badly needed. Caltrans recent left-turn project created more pedestrian/bike danger and no crossing. Highway 1 Safety/Mobility Study had good concept plan.
- Improve and maintain adequate walking access on west side of highway from Lighthouse to Montara Beach. No traffic safety improvements should be allowed that decrease pedestrian/bike safety such as recent moving of west-side fog line immediately north of Lighthouse.
- At several sections of abandoned old highway/Main St. trail, the roadbed is undercut and should be shored up. Vegetation along the route needs pruning to improve trail clearance.

- In front of restaurant at Montara Beach, a trail is needed in the highway ROW where restaurant landscaping now encroaches.
- 

## Vertical Coastal Access

Beach Access or Viewpoints of this spectacular section of rocky shoreline are available from west side Highway 1 between 9<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> (or Seacliff). A safe crossing is proposed in the Highway 1 Study at 7<sup>th</sup> St. or vicinity.

- **9<sup>th</sup> St:** west side informal parking for 2 cars, informal trail & viewpoint part way down bluff. Recommend: Improve trail, add viewing bench.
- **8<sup>th</sup> St:** steep informal trail to wild and beautiful granitic beach with lateral rocky shoreline access north 2 blocks to Seacliff (though no access at Seacliff). Recommend: Protect this public access and consider stairs/trail improvement to beach.
- **7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> (Seacliff):** viewpoints. Recommend: County should pursue removal of view-blocking fences and vegetation at these street ends. Add a viewing bench at each location.
- **5<sup>th</sup> “paper” St.** is used as a private driveway with no public access. It leads to a viewpoint of rocky shoreline with seal haul-out not otherwise viewable to the public. It is the only safe access to an undeveloped State Parks blufftop parcel with spectacular views at the south end of Montara State Beach. Recommend: County should restore this public coastal access for non-motorized use.
- **4<sup>th</sup> “paper” St.:** opportunity to create trail up to bluff with spectacular views, and continue north to Montara Beach. Would require grading to access 4<sup>th</sup> St. and vegetation pruning on State Parks land.

## Issues / Improvement Opportunities

### Signage

### Parking

## Montara State Beach

## Highway 1 –Crossings and Roadside Safety

The Coastal Trail must cross Highway 1 in the vicinity of the Lighthouse, near second street in Montara and at the north end of Montara State Beach. While other conceptual studies have considered this issue (Highway 1 Safety and Mobility Study) and other trail

projects in this area have been defined (Parallel Trail, Safe Routes to School, TA Grant for Crossings, Raised Medians and Left Turns), the specific needs for crossing citing in this study should be considered and provision made for Caltrans review and buy in, if the CCT is to be safely supported in the Midcoast.

A segment of old main street is proposed as a section of CCT in Montara and is a part of the Highway 1 Right of Way. Caltrans consideration for the use and improvement or removal of this section is needed for planning in this area.

Caltrans should also provide plans for bicycle lanes for the Highways near the coast.

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# Appendix A – Local Coastal Program and the CCT

## 10.37.1 excerpts on California Coastal Trail (CCT)

### a. Definition:

The Trail system is to be located on a variety of terrains, including the beach, bluff edge, hillsides providing scenic vantage points, and within the highway right-of-way. It may take many forms, including informal footpaths, paved sidewalks, and separated bicycle paths. When no other alternative exists, it sometimes connects along the shoulder of the road. While primarily for pedestrians, the Trail also accommodates a variety of additional user groups, such as bicyclists, wheelchair users, equestrians, and others as opportunities allow. The CCT consists of one or more parallel alignments.

### b. (4) Goals and objectives:

- (a) Provide a continuous walking and hiking trail as close to the ocean as possible
- (b) Provide maximum access for a variety of non-motorized uses by utilizing alternative trail segments where feasible
- (c) Maximize connections to existing and proposed local trail systems
- (d) Ensure that the trail has connections to trailheads, parking areas, interpretive kiosks, inland trail segments, etc., at reasonable intervals
- (e) Maximize ocean views and scenic coastal vistas

### (5) Siting and Design Standards:

- (a) The trail should be sited and designed to be located along or as close to the shoreline where physically and aesthetically feasible. Where it is not feasible to locate the trail along the shoreline due to natural landforms or legally authorized development that prevents passage at all times, inland bypass trail segments located as close to the shoreline as possible should be utilized. Shoreline trail segments that may not be passable at all times should provide inland alternative routes. Special attention should be given to identifying any segments that may need to be incorporated into water-crossing structures and that may need to be placed within Caltrans right-of-way.
- (b) Where gaps are identified in the trail, interim segments should be identified to ensure a continuous coastal trail. **Interim segments** should be noted as such, with provisions that as opportunities arise, the trail shall be realigned for ideal siting. Interim trail segments should meet as many of the CCT objectives and standards as possible.
- (c) The CCT should be designed and located to minimize impacts to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and prime agriculture lands...
- (d) The CCT should be located to incorporate existing oceanfront trails and paths and support facilities of public shoreline parks and beaches to the maximum extent feasible.

# Appendix B – CCT– Midcoast Community Council ~2001

Panels from the Midcoast California Coastal Trail Study in 2001

