

2012 Public Lands Transportation Scholar Program

Refuge and Contact Information

Land Management Site Name

San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Type of Unit

National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS)

Project Information

Project Title

The San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex Alternative Transportation Project.

Project Abstract

Please provide a 2 - 3 sentence description of your proposed transportation issue/project.

The San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex (the Complex) is a network of protected lands set in one of the country's most densely urbanized environments. The focus of this project would be to create a transportation plan for the Complex to follow that would identify our transportation issues, opportunities, and partners and from this information to develop a work plan. Scholar would also initiate several transportation projects that would make our refuges safer to visit and would increase use and ease of access by public transportation.

Project Description (250 word limit)

Please describe the need for a Transportation Scholar at your refuge. Carefully describe the project on which the Transportation Scholar would work.

The Complex is spread out over nine counties and surrounded by millions of people. Many of our public access areas are off of busy and dangerous highways and lack public transportation options. We would like to work with the transportation scholar to create a transportation plan for the Complex in order to identify our key issues, to establish a work plan to resolve them, and to strengthen local transportation partnerships. The transportation scholar would also work on two of our most pressing transportation issues (described below), and through them, gain the

practical knowledge needed to create the overall transportation plan.

San Pablo Bay NWR access

Safety is a key issue in accessing any portion of the San Pablo Bay NWR. The main entrance area is off of State Route 37, which sees 40,000 cars/day traveling upwards of 65 mph. San Pablo had to phase out its environmental education program in 2005 because there was no safe access for the school buses. There is a Public Lands Highway Discretionary project underway to realign the entrance road to create safe vehicle access to the Refuge. The scholar will assist the staff in the preliminary phases of this project, specifically for public transportation and school bus access.

Don Edwards NWR

The Don Edwards SF Bay NWR has two main public visitation areas: Fremont and Alviso. Although the Refuge sees over 800,000 visits/year, almost none of these visits are done using public transportation. Despite its proximity to a dense urban infrastructure, the Refuge has been cut out of local public transportation routes. There is not a bus stop located within two miles of either area. The Complex would like to work with local transportation agencies to change this, as well as to increase safe bicycle access to both areas.

Project Products and Benefits

Describe the potential products of the project. Describe how unit resources and/or visitors will benefit from the alternative transportation project.

By helping to move the entrance road project at San Pablo forward, we will be able to provide safer access to the refuge. Once accomplished, the environmental education (EE) program can restart, and this piece is critical for our community outreach and partnerships. Local schools, school children, and teachers all benefit from our free curriculum-based EE programs, and in turn, the refuge receives increased awareness and support from the community. Improved and safer access will provide a direct benefit to the general public as well as well as potentially having the refuge served by public transportation.

Providing public transportation alternatives for Don Edwards NWR will help to diversify its visitation. It would also help support the Complex's efforts to offset and decrease the environmental impact of personal vehicle visits to the refuge. In addition, it would increase field trip opportunities for local public schools. With budget cutbacks, many schools in the area no longer have money to rent school buses. Public buses provide a cheaper alternative and may be the only way for some schools to get to the refuge.

Through these practical examples, we hope that the Scholar could develop a transportation plan that will help us anticipate and resolve our transportation issues. We are expecting visitation to top 1,000,000 within the next 10 years. Without

proper planning and increase public transportation opportunities, these visits could either directly or indirectly harm the natural resources we are seeking to protect. Staff numbers and budgets are shrinking, and a proper plan will provide us with a tool to work smarter and more effectively with less resources.

Project Contributions

Describe how the scholar's work will contribute to the unit's long-term transportation planning as described in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Objective 6.1 of the San Pablo NWR CCP reads “Within the life of the Plan, establish a permanent headquarter site for the Refuge that is accessible to the public.”

Objective 3.1 of the Don Edwards' CCP states, “In five years, develop a visitor services plan that provides and promotes high quality, safe recreational opportunities such as wildlife observation, wildlife photography, hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreational programs for up to 1 million visits per year.”

For both objectives, transportation planning is critical to providing safe and accessible access to the refuges. We have identified in both CCPs the need to work on transportation issues as part of the strategies for achieving the objectives: to build acceleration and deceleration lanes on highways, work with local authorities to create bus stops, work with Bay Trail on bicycle access, etc.

Project Partners

The Complex realizes that accomplishing the projects' results will require identification of and extensive cooperation with a wide range of partners in the Bay Area. Potential partners could include Caltrans, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Bay Area Rapid Transit District, Santa Clara County Transportation Authority, Alameda County, Santa Clara County, Marin County.

Project Requirements

Identify any issues the refuge would have in meeting the program requirements listed in Section B of the RFP.

Housing will be in shared employee housing, and we cannot accommodate children or pets. Couples are OK, but quarters are still shared with other occupants. Accommodations are furnished, and there is no onsite storage available for household items. As noted, there is limited public transportation to and from the refuge, so a personal vehicle is highly recommended.