

Date of Hearing: April 18, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE

Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, Chair

AB 1212 (Hart) – As Amended April 3, 2023

SUBJECT: Scenic bikeways and trails

SUMMARY: Requires the Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) to establish a scenic bikeway network. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Enacts the California Scenic Bikeways and Trails Act, which requires State Parks to establish a scenic bikeway network.
- 2) Requires State Parks to consider specified criteria in selecting and designing scenic bikeway routes, including:
 - a) Historic routes;
 - b) Routes connecting or highlighting communities of interest;
 - c) Routes of unique scenic significance;
 - d) Routes with diverse topographies; and
 - e) Routes with diverse bicycling challenges.
- 3) Encourages State Parks to form an advisory committee to assist in implementing this bill.
- 4) Encourages State Parks to establish a regional process for nominating a route for inclusion in the scenic bikeway network, with nominations coming from any interested organization, including, but not limited to, local bicycle and trail organizations, private entities, and local or state governmental entities.
- 5) Requires State Parks, in consultation with the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), to develop criteria for the design, placement, and installation of signs relative to scenic bikeway routes.
- 6) Requires the scenic bikeway network to include unique gravel and mountain bicycle routes to the extent practical.
- 7) Makes the implementation of this bill contingent upon an appropriation by the Legislature.
- 8) Makes findings and declarations regarding the importance of cycling for health and economic reasons.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the California state park system and vests State Parks with control of the state park system and responsibility for administering, protecting, developing, and interpreting state parks for the use and enjoyment of the public (Public Resources Code § 5001 *et seq.*).

- 2) Establishes the California Scenic Highways program and prescribes the requirements of the program (Streets and Highways Code §§ 260-284).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill is keyed fiscal.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose of this bill.** This bill requires State Parks to establish a scenic bikeway network. According to the author, “[This bill] builds on the amazing successes of California’s scenic highway program and Oregon’s bikeway program by promoting California’s existing unique landscape. The California Scenic Bikeways and Trails Act will boost local tourism, attract visitors from all over the country, and encourage healthy and sustainable outdoor activities, all while showcasing our diverse and historic topography.”
- 2) **Background.** In 2008, the State of Oregon established a Scenic Bikeways Program. The scenic bikeways are intended to be Oregon's “best-of-the-best bicycle rides” for exploring the state. The Oregon program now includes 17 designated bicycle routes that are intended to “showcase Oregon's breathtaking landscapes, cultural treasures and western hospitality.” The bikeways range from half-day, family-friendly outings to multi-day, remote and challenging routes. Official route signs are posted along each bikeway.

Under the Oregon program, proposed scenic bikeways are reviewed, rated, and recommended for designation by the Scenic Bikeway Advisory Committee. Members includes citizens, land managers, governmental organizations, and tourism organizations. Committee members appointed by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Director may serve two consecutive four-year terms on the committee. Other committee members are nominated by their respective directors for appointment.

This bill would create a similar program in California that could highlight existing scenic bikeways and trails while exploring California history, connecting communities, and encouraging tourism. The routes are intended to focus on cycling routes but most, if not all, would likely allow for multiple user groups. The findings and declarations of the bill call out roadway loops, such as Gibraltar Road Loop in the County of Santa Barbara, Old Caz Loop in the County of Sonoma, Mount Tam Loop in the County of Marin, the Malibu Canyon Loop in the County of Los Angeles, and the Lake Tahoe and Yankee Jim’s Loops in the County of Placer. This bill also requires the scenic bikeway network to include unique gravel and mountain bicycle routes to the extent practical.

There are various efforts in California to build multi-use trails to connect communities and increase access to the outdoors. Some larger examples include:

The Lost Sierra Route is an effort to connect 15 mountain towns for economic prosperity through outdoor recreation in Plumas, Sierra, Butte, Lassen, and Nevada counties as well as Washoe County, Nevada. This route will link over 600 miles of trails across the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Range. The trail is multi-use and allows for hikers, mountain bikers, moto riders, and equestrians.

The California Coastal Trail (CCT) is an integrated network of trails that, when completed, will provide a multimodal opportunity to walk and bike the length of California’s 1,230-mile-

long coast. ACR 20 (Pavley, Resolution Chapter 99, Statutes of 2001) declared the CCT to be an official state trail and found that completion of the CCT is an integral part of the State's responsibility to provide public coastal access for all in perpetuity. Today, roughly 70% of the CCT is complete, and the Coastal Conservancy has been tasked by the Legislature to help complete it in collaboration with Caltrans, California State Parks, and the Coastal Commission. The Coastal Conservancy pursues this mandate in part by awarding grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations to acquire land rights, and to develop, operate, or manage lands for public access to and along the coast.

State Parks trails. State Parks manages more than 5,200 miles of trails. Additional thousands of miles of trails are found on other state lands, federal lands, and in regional, county and city parks. These trails range from meandering and narrow footpaths that may provide beach access or entry into a redwood forest to a variety of other types of trails that can accommodate bicyclists, runners, equestrians, hikers, in-line skaters, and wheelchair users.

California Recreational Trails Act. In 1974, the Legislature passed the California Recreational Trails Act (CRTA), which requires the Director of State Parks to prepare and maintain a comprehensive trails plan for the development and operation of a statewide system of recreation trails. The trails plan assesses present and future demand for recreational trail use and recommends a system of trail routes designed to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities. State Parks first completed the trails plan in 1978 and later updated it in 2002. The 2002 plan update identified 12 goals, including to develop adequate and stable funding for planning, acquisition, development and management of trails; to prepare regional and statewide inventories of existing, planned, and potential trails; and to promote and encourage the incorporation of trails and greenways development and linkages into all local and statewide land use planning.

The CRTA requires State Parks to submit a report that highlights progress on the plan to the Legislature every two years. The last available update is from 2011. It reported on progress on the 12 goals and on specific trails around the state. In particular, it noted a need for more funding for trail maintenance, planning, and increasing access. AB 1789 (Bennett), Chapter 522, Statutes of 2022, requires State Parks to prepare a full update of the plan by January 1, 2024.

- 3) **Arguments in support.** The City of Goleta writes in support, stating that this bill “will encourage policies and practices that encourage the promotion and advancement of nonmotorized road, trail, and gravel cycling activity and connectivity for all Californians and visitors.”
- 4) **Related legislation.** AB 1789 (Bennett), Chapter 522, Statutes of 2022, requires State Parks to prepare a full update of the California Recreation Trails System Plan by January 1, 2024, and report to the Legislature on progress in implementing the plan.

AB 1396 (Laird), Chapter 375, Statutes of 2007, requires certain state and regional transportation planning agencies to coordinate with the Coastal Conservancy, California Coastal Commission, and Caltrans regarding development of the CCT.

SB 908 (Chesbro), Chapter 446, Statutes of 2001, directed the Coastal Conservancy to develop a plan for the development of the CCT. The plan was completed in 2003.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

City of Goleta

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Keith Cialino / W., P., & W. / (916) 319-2096