Transportation and Restoration Communities: Can We Work Together?

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Restore America’s Estuaries and Coastal States Organization
9th National Summit on Coastal and Estuarine Restoration and Management
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We are used to planning in silos...

How do we find common ground?
Sea Level Rise
Highway 37 Case Study
The Flyway Highway

Photo courtesy of USGS
Restoration to Date and Planned
State Route 37 Policy Committee

- Elected Officials from North Bay Counties
- Goal: Reconstruct SR 37 to withstand flooding while reducing congestion.
The Fear: A Dam Across the North Bay?

The restoration community said "No!"
State Route (SR) 37-Baylands Group

Formed in June 2017 in response to accelerated action by the SR 37 Policy Committee
Sea Level Rise Will Inundate SR 37 in 30 Years

Photo courtesy of The Press Democrat

Vallejo
Novato
CDFW
Napa
Sonoma Marshes
San Pablo Bay NWR
Sonoma Land Trust
Marin Audubon
Coastal Conservancy
Marin Audubon
Sonoma Land Trust
San Pablo Bay NWR
CDFW Napa Sonoma Marshes
Coastal Conservancy

Google Earth
Vision: Integrate, Don’t Mitigate

Integrate infrastructure improvements for SR 37 with existing and future habitat planning, conservation and restoration to ensure healthy ecosystem function and resilience to landscape scale change of the San Pablo Bay.
Baylands Goals, 2015:

“Elevate Highway 37... to allow the full passage of sediment, water and wildlife.”
Improve Ecological Connectivity
Choices

Road on embankment?

Move the road?

Use alternative modes of transportation?

Causeway on concrete piers?
Many meetings later....

- Technical Working Groups
- Environmental Stakeholder Workshop
- Public Meetings with Elected Officials
Evolution of the SR 37 Project/Program Purpose

**PROGRAM PURPOSE**

**Deliver a Corridor Program that Results in Community Benefits for All**

- **Sea Level Rise Adaptation**: Improve resiliency of transportation infrastructure to sea level rise and flooding
- **Transportation**: Improve traffic flow and peak travel times by relieving congestion and increasing person throughput
- **Equity**: Enhance the quality of life for residents and build stronger local and regional economy for all
- **Ecology**: Restore ecological and hydrologic flows to enhance productivity of wetlands and Baylands
- **Public Access**: Provide accommodation for multimodal use and facilitate public access to natural resources

Source: State Route 37 Resilient Corridor Program, Metropolitan Transportation Commission-Led Team, November 8, 2018
Success: MTC-Led Team Agrees to Analyze Alternative Alignments

Source: State Route 37 Resilient Corridor Program, Metropolitan Transportation Commission-Led Team, November 8, 2018
Lessons Learned

• Look for opportunities to “Integrate, not Mitigate” and collaborate

• Engage with all levels of transportation decision makers, from planners to elected officials

• Build a broad environmental constituency, including land managers, advocacy groups and regulators
Thank You!

Photo courtesy of Ducks Unlimited