

# STAGING AREA OPENS UP REGIONAL BIKE PATH

## Area set aside in Swiss Park will allow for better access to two routes

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CHULA VISTA — A staging area at Chula Vista's Swiss Park will provide a vital link between the Bayshore Bikeway and Otay Valley Regional Park trail beginning Oct. 12.

The area provides a gathering place for people to meet up, park and access the two trail systems and is a collaboration between the county's Parks and Recreation Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Swiss Park.

County Supervisor Greg Cox said the Swiss Park staging area was created to further trail connectivity. It includes nine parking spaces, one place for an ADA accessible van with an accommodating portable restroom, and bicycle rack.

"The bottom line is this will be available to the public free of charge from sunrise to sunset," Cox said.

The trail itself is surrounded by history.

Tony Odermatt, Swiss Club president, said his family has been in the area for three generations.

In the 1930s and '40s, a group of farmers formed the Swiss Club to keep their heritage alive.

"My grandfather bought the property back in the '30s and made it into a public park," Odermatt said. "He traded that with another piece of property with city of San Diego ... and it became Swiss Park."

Today Swiss Park is used mostly as a place that people can rent for wedding receptions, banquets, birthday parties, corporate events and dances.

"A while back Greg Cox came to me and asked if we could allow them to use an area of our parking lot," Odermatt said. "We thought it was a way to give back to the city and in turn they could help us."

So he worked out an agreement that had the county redo its parking lot while Swiss Park became responsible for the upkeep of the area.

"We wanted to be good will ambassadors to the city, county and community," Odermatt said.

The San Diego Association of Governments' board passed a \$200 million Regional Bike Early Action Plan on Friday with an annual grant amount of \$1 million beginning in 2014.

The plan borrows against Chula Vista's half cent sales tax, allowing funds to be used for the highest priority bike projects in the region.

Projects in Cox's district include Class 1 bikeways along the Bayshore Bikeway from Main Street to Palomar in Chula Vista and Imperial Beach, the National City Marina to 32nd Street, Barrio Logan, Plaza Bonita bike path and San Ysidro to Imperial Beach Bayshore Bikeway connection.

In January 2011 the California Conservation Corps was contracted by the Department of Parks and Recreation to construct a quarter-mile trail running south from the Bayshore Bikeway and intersecting with the Otay Valley Regional Park multi-use trail system, which opened to the public in June 2011.

Vegetation along the trail includes various southern willow scrub, California sagebrush, flat-top buckwheat, laurel sumac and monkey flower, according to a feasibility study from Otay Valley Regional Park.

The Bayshore Bikeway is a 24-mile bicycle facility around San Diego Bay. Currently, about 13 miles of dedicated bicycle paths are in use with the remaining consisting of on-street sections designated as either bicycle lanes or bicycle routes.

The Otay Valley Regional Park is one of the major open space areas in the South County, linking south San Diego Bay with lower the Otay Lake. It provides recreational opportunities including fields and picnic areas to hiking, biking and horse trails and has 13 entry points.

A ceremonial ribbon cutting will be held at 2001 Main St. in Chula Vista at 10 a.m. Oct. 12.

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