


**EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
BOARD LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
AGENDA STAFF REPORT**

DATE	February 24, 2025
TITLE	Local Government Engagement Strategy Pilot Program Update
DIVISION	General Manager's Office
FROM	Erich Pfuehler, Division Lead of Government and Legislative Affairs
APPROVED	Sabrina Landreth, General Manager 

RECOMMENDATION

Informational update on the Local Government Engagement Strategy Pilot Program.

BACKGROUND

In May 2024, the East Bay Regional Park District Board of Directors approved the Local Government Engagement Strategy Pilot Program through Resolution No. 2024-05-088. This program was designed to foster consistent and coordinated interactions with local elected officials across cities, counties, and special district agencies in the East Bay. The primary objective of this initiative is to strengthen regional partnerships and address shared priorities, with meetings planned between the Park District Board of Directors, General Manager, or their designees, and local government leaders. The pilot program is scheduled to conclude in December 2025, with findings to be integrated into a final report and the upcoming District Plan.

ANALYSIS

From May to December 2024, the Local Government Pilot Program engaged with 11 public agencies, averaging two meetings per month. October saw the highest level of engagement, with four meetings. Participating agencies and municipalities included the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), the cities of Pittsburg, Concord, Brentwood, Richmond, Moraga, Clayton, Lafayette, Newark, and Walnut Creek, as well as Contra Costa County District Supervisor Andersen.

The local government meetings are primarily designed as open-ended discussions with community leaders, to better understand their priorities and explore how the Park District could enhance services for their communities. One of the key questions asked during these meetings was what each agency believed should be included in the upcoming District Plan. In response, the Park District received a wide range of valuable suggestions.

Listed by frequency of mention, these priorities include:

- Community Engagement: Building strong relationships with local government entities, community-based organizations, and community members is essential to the work of the Park District. This input allows the Park District to actively support the public's interest in service delivery. In many of the discussions with local government leaders, the Park District was encouraged to participate in community celebrations and events, as well as to include park programming in the organization's newsletters and websites.

Continued collaboration and partnerships with local communities and agencies, such as watershed councils and city planning departments, was also identified as critical for creating resilient parks that meet the needs of growing populations.

- Trail Safety, Expansion, and Connectivity: Interest in trail access and concerns about visitor safety were identified by local government partners. Local government leaders expressed interest in mitigating trail user conflicts by establishing lanes or other ways to separate uses, as demonstrated in the Briones Pilot Program. To address these challenges, the Park District will need to explore innovative solutions, environmental compliance strategies and funding mechanisms (including partnerships with local governments) to balance user safety, environmental preservation and community needs as it works to enhance trail experiences for all.
- Equitable Park Access and Transportation: Local partners emphasized their support for expanding access to parklands by public transportation. Additionally, they encouraged the Park District to consider strategies for expanding trail networks that could connect more urban communities with parklands. Lastly, the need to prioritize project initiatives that support all community members, especially those that are under-resourced, aging, or disabled, was emphasized across all discussions.
- Educational and Recreational Programming: Local partners requested the Park District expand both educational and recreational programming across the region. Specifically, there were requests for programming with a focus on watershed protection, the effects of climate change, youth education, and recreational programming for the elderly. Promoting park programming through local communication channels and partnerships with community centers was seen as a way to enhance public participation and support for park initiatives. Community leaders were enthusiastic to collaborate with the Park District on enhancing educational programs and promoting recreational activities and events. Challenges in expanding and enhancing programming included staff capacity and broader community funding.
- Wildfire Management and Emergency Preparedness: Fire safety was identified by multiple local partners as a critical priority for the region. Specific examples offered to the Park District for supporting management of wildfire risk include monitoring wiring and pipeline maintenance by utilities, as well as implementing vegetation management practices. These efforts will help protect both the public and the Park District from the potential of future catastrophic fires. In the event of an emergency, communities shared an interest in identifying efficient evacuation routes, including passageways through East Bay Regional Parks, to ensure both the public and first responders have the necessary resources to safeguard the community when needed.

- Acquisitions and Stewardship: Local government partners shared the importance of identifying potential future acquisition opportunities, as well as the need to activate communities to participate in the care and support of regional parks.

It was also emphasized that, as new parks and trails are opened and provide expanded access to nature, ongoing stewardship by the Park District will be essential in ensuring long-term sustainability and enjoyment of these resources. In addition, continued partnerships with developers and land acquisition organizations were seen as significant for expanding regional park access and preserving open space. Acquisition and stewardship of land to enhance regional parks and wildlife corridors, as well as ensuring adequate staffing and funding to maintain these spaces, were also highlighted as essential priorities moving forward.

- Funding Partnerships: Identifying potential opportunities for partnership on securing grants and other funding mechanisms was shared as a local priority. In discussions, partners emphasized the importance of working with local stakeholders to explore funding avenues and promote both community participation and effective resource allocation. This discussion was inclusive of federal and state competitive grant programs, as well as local and regional funding sources, supported by tax and bonding revenue. Addressing funding gaps for park improvements and collaborating with local jurisdictions was also emphasized as crucial for expanding and maintaining park access for all communities.
- Environmental Resiliency and Extreme Weather Response: Planning for climate impacts, such as sea level rise, extreme weather events, drought and wildfire was identified as important for protecting park lands and ensuring sustainable access to natural spaces. Efforts to reduce emissions and electrify transportation and equipment were identified as strategies for cities to help the Park District mitigate the effects of climate change while maintaining park accessibility.
- Park Infrastructure and Growth: Ongoing efforts to repair and replace aging infrastructure, such as park facilities and swimming areas, and expand park access were deemed important to improving the overall park experience. These efforts will be key to supporting growing populations and ensuring all community members benefit from high-quality park services.

In addition to the above categories which spanned multiple meetings, topics including ways to address illegal dumping, supporting future job opportunities, promoting innovation in parks, and providing support for the unhoused population throughout the region were mentioned in at least one meeting. As the Local Government Pilot Program continues, it is expected that these, and other topics will be highlighted for consideration in the future District Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

ATTACHMENTS

C. Presentation