

The Big Picture: a SAFE trail connecting Four Great Parks

Mendocino Headlands State Park	Russian Gulch State Park	Point Cabrillo Lighthouse State Park	Caspar Headlands State Reserve & State Beach	Jug Handle State Reserve
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Mendocino

high speed section of Highway 1

Just north of one of northern California's most visited destinations, Mendocino, the coastline is graced with four beautiful and unspoiled State Parks. The parks are conveniently connected by a highspeed "freeway" section of Highway One (red) – convenient if you're driving, but for the many bicyclists and pedestrians, the highway is frightening and dangerous.

Also connecting these parks is an *almost complete* section of old Highway One (yellow). There are, however, two missing links in this route: the northern access to the trail adjacent to Jug Handle State Reserve, and the crossing of Caspar Creek. Because of these two lapses, the present alternative route along the off-ramp and across Caspar Creek bridge places pedestrians and bicyclers at mortal risk, as they must travel within inches of the traffic.

There is considerable year-round walking traffic, and would be more, since Caspar is a "walking village" whose residents walk to the parks, to get their mail, and to stay healthy. In the summer, the bicycle traffic is constant – this is one of the best rides on the Coast.

This route has the potential to be one of the most used and enjoyed stretches of the proposed Coastal Trail.

The Missing Links in Caspar



New trail follows old highway roadbed, across a new trestle above Caspar Creek's wetland, connecting to Point Cabrillo Drive

New trail runs along the foot of the existing embankment for the high speed (and deadly) North Caspar off-ramp.

On Caspar's south side, the trail could follow the historic roadbed of Highway One down the bluff to the edge of the riparian zone. Trails through this area are opposed by local Audubon leaders, because the wetland is a precious unimpacted wildlife zone. But they note that a raised trail following the historical path of the old Highway One trestle across the Caspar Lumber Company's log pond is acceptable. Remnants of the old trestle are still in evidence here. The trail joins Point Cabrillo drive, a moderately traveled road traveled slowly by tourist and local traffic.

Legend

- Trail on sidewalk or beside road
- Trestle over riparian follows route of historic trestle.
- Trail along old Highway 1 roadbed
- Trail along embankment separated from deadly off-ramp

On Caspar's north side, an all-weather path at the foot of the embankment below the deadly off-ramp would keep people out of the wetland and frog habitat, but well out of range of cars speeding off Highway One before decelerating into Caspar.

There is controversy about the north entrance to Caspar – see the detailed proposal on the next page. Relocating the trail removes the danger and connects with the existing Jug Handle Ecological Staircase trail that passes beneath Jughandle Creek bridge, down a set of stairs, across the creek, and up the northern slope.

Making Caspar's Dangerous North Entry Safer

Jug Handle S. P.



Plan A: Relocate the trail

The dangerous north entry to Caspar has already claimed one life – a beloved member of the Caspar Community. This proposal would re-route pedestrian and bicycle traffic along a new path constructed at the foot of the off-ramp embankment just above the level of the seasonal wetland. Cobbled traffic calming at the end of the off-ramp would help drivers remember to slow down before entering the pedestrian-intense village of Caspar.

Legend

Trail below off ramp at foot of embankment, possible traffic calming

Replaced straight off ramp with double turn exit

Plan B: Change the offramp

Some members of the Caspar community favor realigning the off ramp, abandoning the straight ramp entirely (and devoting it to pedestrian and bicycle traffic) but adding a right-turn lane and turn paralleling the existing northbound entrance.

Some years back, a CalTrans safety engineer advised us that such a realignment would cause exiting vehicles to slow the line of traffic on Highway One, thereby causing a hazard. Does it make sense to endanger the large majority of traffic on the highway in order to slow the few cars entering Caspar. Wouldn't a cobbled traffic-calmer work as well, and less dangerously?

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