

Executive Summary

Highway 9/San Lorenzo Valley Complete Streets Corridor Plan

Shaped by community input about transportation challenges that San Lorenzo Valley residents currently face and desires for the future, the **Highway 9/San Lorenzo Valley Complete Streets Corridor Plan** (Hwy9/SLV Corridor Plan) is a planning study that provides a vision, guiding principles, and realistic strategies to improve how people get around the San Lorenzo Valley.

This corridor plan focuses on the section of Highway 9 which serves as the “Main Street” and economic center for the towns, villages, and communities of Felton, Ben Lomond, Brookdale, and Boulder Creek, as well as connecting county maintained roads (**Figure ES 1**). Priorities identified in the plan improve safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists; improve access to schools, businesses, residences, and transit; and improve traffic operations throughout this travel corridor.

This is a “Complete Streets” plan, which means it is focused on planning, designing, operating, and maintaining transportation facilities that improve mobility for all users, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit vehicles, and truckers, as appropriate to the function and context of the facility. A well-designed complete street does not just work better; it *feels* better, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, and it *looks* better, with enhanced aesthetics and amenities that complement the setting and adjacent uses.

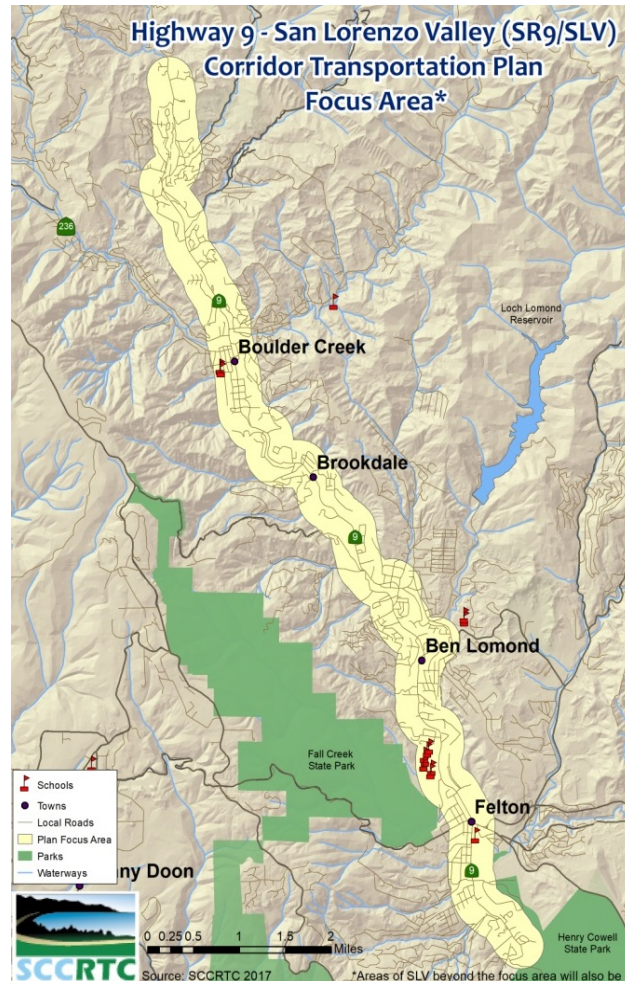
Existing Conditions

This mountainous area of Santa Cruz County has narrow curving roadways frequently impacted by steep terrain, high collision rates, significant gaps in bicycle and pedestrian facilities, limited transit service, traffic backups at a number of choke points, as well as pavement, drainage, and other assets in disrepair.

Daily traffic volumes: Highway 9 is used by over 16,000 vehicles between Ben Lomond and Boulder Creek and over 21,000 vehicles each day between Felton and Ben Lomond, with use expanding with tourism and special event traffic during summer months. (see **Figure ES 2**)

Traffic choke points: While traffic volumes through the SLV are relatively low compared to other state highways and major arterials in Santa Cruz County, during peak travel periods motorists regularly experience moderate to severe backups through the town centers, in front of SLV elementary, middle, and high schools (SLV Schools Campus) just north of Felton, and at

Figure ES 1: Corridor Plan Area Map



major intersections, including the Highway 9/Graham Hill Road intersection in Felton and Highway 9/Bear Creek Road intersection in Boulder Creek.

Figure ES 2: Average Daily Traffic Volumes on Highway 9

| Post Mile | Location Description – HIGHWAY 9 | Daily Traffic Volume |
|-----------|---|----------------------|
| 5.64 | FELTON, north of SAN LORENZO AVENUE | 7600 |
| 6.46 | FELTON, south of GRAHAM HILL ROAD | 12,100 |
| 6.46 | FELTON, north of GRAHAM HILL ROAD | 20,800 |
| 8.11 | BEN LOMOND, south of GLEN ARBOR ROAD | 19,600 |
| 9.71 | BEN LOMOND, SAN LORENZO RIVER BRIDGE | 15,200 |
| 11.3 | BROOKDALE, north of ALAMEDA AVENUE | 11,400 |
| 13.04 | BOULDER CREEK, south of SOUTH JCT. RTE. 236 | 12,000 |
| 13.24 | South of BEAR CREEK ROAD | 17,700 |
| 13.24 | North of BEAR CREEK ROAD | 10,700 |
| 20.86 | North of WATERMAN GAP, NORTH JCT. RTE. 236 | 2800 |

Credit: Caltrans Traffic Census Program, 2017

Collisions: There have been a number of significant collisions in the past decade in the SLV. Leading causes of injury and fatal collisions from 2013 to 2017 involved unsafe speed or improper turning (*CHP SWITRS*). Residents are justly concerned about speeding on roadways throughout the SLV, especially near schools, residential, and commercial areas. The narrow curving right-of-way and close proximity to buildings, fences, and trees meant nearly 40% of all collisions 2013-2017 were “hit object” collisions, rather than a collision between two vehicles. Impaired driving from alcohol or drugs is also a significant challenge. There have been about 30 collisions involving bicycles and pedestrians in the corridor over the past ten years. California Highway Patrol (CHP) is responsible for traffic enforcement through the SLV, though officers are responsible for covering very large areas. Caltrans conducts investigations of major incidents.

Walking: While there are some pedestrian facilities (sidewalks, paths, and crosswalks) in town centers, the rural nature of the area has left most pedestrians outside of the town centers walking in dirt along the shoulders of Highway 9 and on local roads. Especially as more vehicles use the roads, more formalized separation of pedestrians is desirable. Many existing sidewalks in town centers are not compliant with the latest accessibility (Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA) standards. Narrow roadways, pinched by hillsides, gullies, and trees make construction of walking paths between town centers difficult.

Bicycling: While there are no dedicated bicycle lanes or paths along Highway 9 or local roads in the SLV, the highway is regularly used by bicyclists commuting through and between town centers, cyclists accessing parks, as well as recreational cyclists, sometimes traveling the entire length of Highway 9 from Santa Clara County/Saratoga to Santa Cruz. Where shoulders exist, cyclists often use that space, but otherwise are sharing the road surface with motorists.

Figure ES 3: Downtown Felton Looking North



Credit: SCCRTC

Transit: The SLV is served by three public bus routes, school buses, as well as paratransit services for seniors and people with disabilities offered by Santa Cruz METRO and Community

Bridges Lift Line. Santa Cruz METRO's three bus routes have an average monthly ridership of approximately 40,000.

Goals and Objectives

The primary purpose of the Highway 9/San Lorenzo Valley Complete Streets Corridor Plan is to create an actionable short-term and longer-term multimodal complete streets corridor plan that addresses transportation challenges for all modes of transportation along the Highway 9 corridor through the San Lorenzo Valley (generally Felton to Boulder Creek) and within the town centers. In evaluating potential transportation projects, the project team considered how well projects address objectives identified by the community. Chapter 1 *Introduction* provides greater detail on objectives and criteria used to evaluate priority projects.

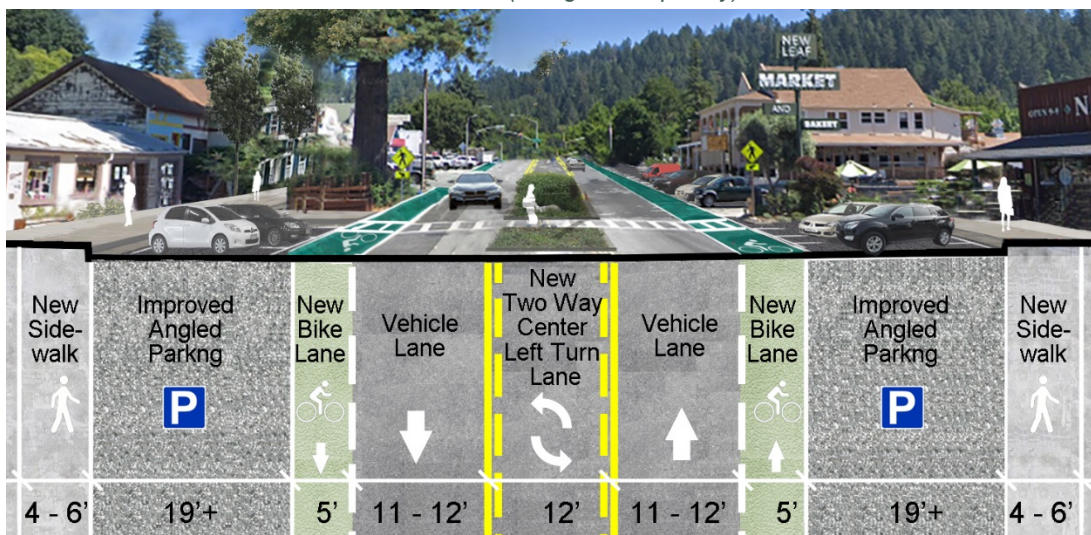
Project Objectives

- Safety
- Pedestrian Access and Connectivity
- Bike Access and Connectivity
- Sustainability/Reduce emissions and vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
- Traffic Flow for Vehicles
- System Preservation/Maintenance
- Transit Connectivity
- Economic Vitality
- Town Character Compatibility
- Public Support
- Ease of Implementation, including cost and available funding
- Anticipated Use Level

Implementation Priorities

In recognition that funding for transportation projects is limited, the Highway 9/San Lorenzo Valley Complete Streets Corridor Plan prioritizes transportation investments that improve multimodal transportation access and connectivity, safety and security, operations, economic vitality, and environmental quality through the San Lorenzo Valley. In order to identify priorities, the project team (SCCRTC, Caltrans, County Public Works, County Planning, Santa Cruz METRO, and consultants) reviewed existing conditions (collisions, facilities, traffic volumes, etc.), conducted extensive community outreach, and considered information from other relevant documents and past community input. After reviewing hundreds of project ideas and challenge areas, the project team developed a consolidated list of a priority projects. The team then

Figure ES 4: Town Center Enhanced Cross Section (Design concept only)



Credit: Trail People; photo: Google Streetview

evaluated how well those projects address goals and primary objectives and solicited stakeholder feedback on project components. The overall vision for the corridor, including corridor-wide priorities and sample cross sections (see **Figure ES 4**), are included in Chapter 2.

Priority Projects: Chapter 3 *Priority Projects by Location* identifies priority projects along the corridor. A more exhaustive list of ideas and concepts for the SLV are included in Appendix B *Identified Projects List*. A range of potential short- and longer-term infrastructure modifications in these areas are described in Chapter 3 and are listed in **Table ES 4**. **Figures ES 6 to ES 9** show components of these priority projects, split according to mode of transportation.

Based on how well the priority projects meet objectives listed above and public input, some of the highest priorities for the corridor include the following:

- SLV Schools Campus Circulation: improving traffic flow and bike and pedestrian access to SLV elementary, middle, and high schools has consistently been identified as one of the highest priorities for the SLV. (Projects 9 and 10)
- Highway 9/Graham Hill Road Intersection: redesign intersection to improve circulation, pedestrian, and bicycle access through the intersection (Project 8)
- Felton: pedestrian, roadway, and parking modifications (Projects 4, 6, and 7)
- Ben Lomond: multimodal improvements in the town center and Highlands Park connection on Highway 9 (Projects 13 and 16)
- Brookdale: crosswalk safety improvements (Project 20)
- Boulder Creek: crosswalk improvements (Project 23) and Bear Creek Road/Highway 9 intersection modification (Project 27)
- Corridor-wide priorities: roadway maintenance, speed reduction, crosswalks, pedestrian visibility, and wider shoulders for bicycles

Additional information regarding implementation priorities can be found in Chapter 4 *Project Evaluation and Implementation Plan*.

How this Plan will be Used

This Complete Streets Corridor Plan is a high-level planning document. While implementation of any of the projects will require additional feasibility analysis, this plan will be used to guide and coordinate transportation investments along the Highway 9 corridor through the SLV. It serves as a resource for Caltrans, County Public Works, County Planning, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), SLV Unified Schools District (SLVUSD), residents and businesses to use to improve this transportation corridor. It prioritizes infrastructure projects (Chapter 4 *Project Evaluation and Implementation Plan*); shows preferred roadway cross sections for town centers, suburban areas, and rural areas, which can be used as a framework for future updates to infrastructure in areas not identified in the priority projects (Chapter 2 *Corridor Vision*); includes a “toolkit” illustrating a range of potential transportation facility modifications, projects, and programs, and answers questions about what can be done within Caltrans’ right-of-way (Appendix A *Complete Streets Improvements Toolkit*); and identifies



potential funding sources, including opportunities to use \$10 million of Measure D revenues earmarked for the area to leverage other local, state, and federal funds (Chapter 4 *Project Evaluation and Implementation Plan* and Appendix C *Funding Opportunities*).

While it is anticipated that many projects will be implemented independently, as other transportation and non-transportation projects are implemented along the corridor, public and private entities are expected to consider and incorporate complete streets components and concepts identified in this corridor plan. This may include Caltrans maintenance, operational, and preservation projects (SHOPP), new land use developments, or major infrastructure modifications.

Table ES 5: Priority Projects

| Area | # | Projects/Concepts |
|---------------|----|--|
| Corridor wide | A | SLV Corridor Safety Measures |
| | B | SLV Corridor Transit and Travel Demand Management |
| | C | SLV Corridor Bicycle Facilities or Separated Paths |
| | D | SLV Corridor Increase Turnouts |
| | E | SLV Corridor Pedestrian Crossing Safety, Lighting and other Visibility |
| | F | SLV Corridor Roadway Maintenance |
| | G | SLV Corridor Emergency Preparedness and Resiliency |
| Felton | 1 | Henry Cowell State Park Access and Parking |
| | 2 | Southern Felton Neighborhood Bicycle and Walking Paths |
| | 3 | Henry Cowell State Park to Downtown Felton Pedestrian and Bicycle Connection |
| | 4 | Downtown Felton Crosswalks |
| | 5 | Downtown Felton Bicycle and Walking Connections near Library |
| | 6 | Downtown Felton Pedestrian Walking Facilities |
| | 7 | Downtown Felton Roadway, Bicycle, and Parking Improvements |
| | 8 | Highway 9 and Graham Hill Rd Intersection Redesign |
| SLV Schools | 9 | Pedestrian and Bicycle Connection to SLV Schools Campus from Felton |
| | 10 | SLV Schools Campus Site Access |
| | 11 | North SLV Schools Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections |
| Ben Lomond | 12 | Willowbrook Drive Commercial Area Improvements and Glen Arbor Bike/Ped Connection |
| | 13 | Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections from Ben Lomond to Highlands Park |
| | 14 | Ben Lomond Crosswalk and Transit Improvements |
| | 15 | Mill Street and Glen Arbor Rd Pedestrian Improvements |
| | 16 | Ben Lomond Downtown Core Multiuse Improvements |
| | 17 | Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections from Mill St to Alba Rd |
| | 18 | Hubbard Gulch/Alba Rd Operational Improvements |
| Brookdale | 19 | Brookdale Sidewalks |
| | 20 | Brookdale Crosswalk Improvements |
| | 21 | Irwin Way/Highway 9 Intersection Improvements |
| Boulder Creek | 22 | Boulder Creek Elementary Neighborhood Multimodal Improvements |
| | 23 | Boulder Creek Crosswalk Improvements |
| | 24 | Parking Modifications or Bicycle Facilities in Downtown Boulder Creek |
| | 25 | Sidewalk and Storefront Improvements in Downtown Boulder Creek |
| | 26 | Bike/Ped Connections to Boulder Creek Library & Bear Creek Rd, Traffic Calming Hwy 236 |
| | 27 | Highway 9/Bear Creek Rd Intersection Improvements |
| North | 28 | Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements at Garrahan Park and Mt Store |

Figure ES 6: Auto Priority Projects Map

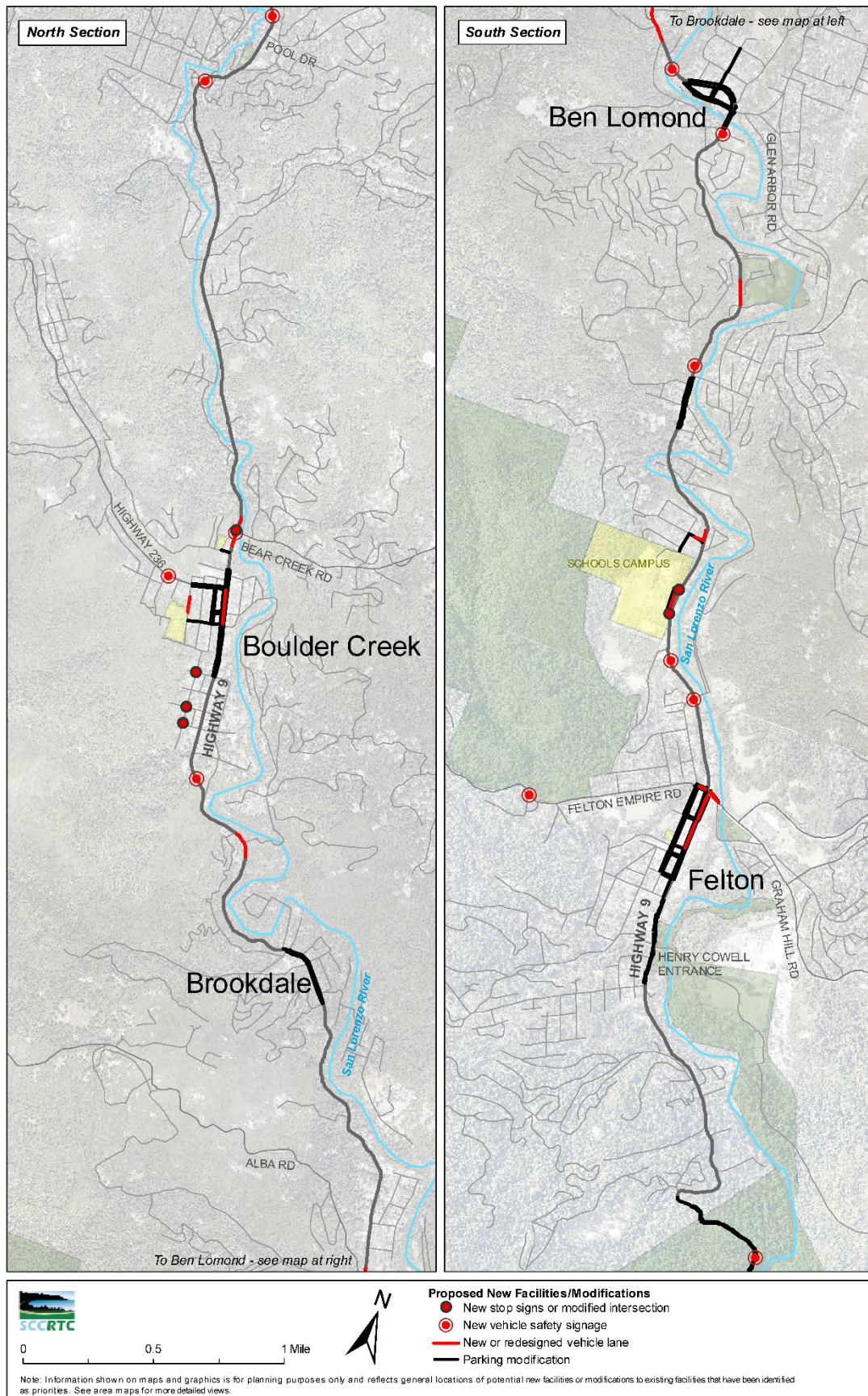


Figure ES 7: Pedestrian Priority Projects Map

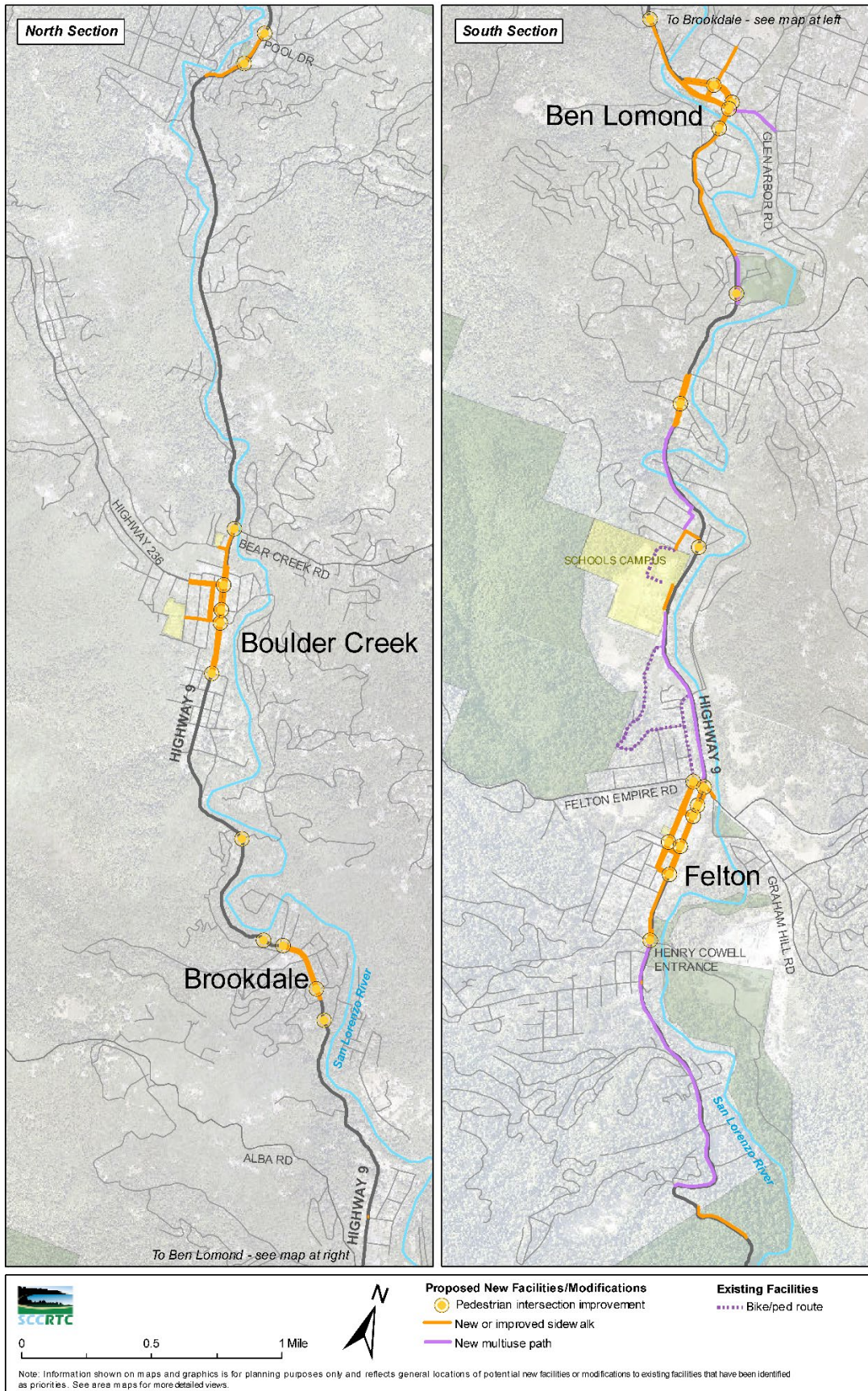


Figure ES 8: Bicycle Priority Projects Map

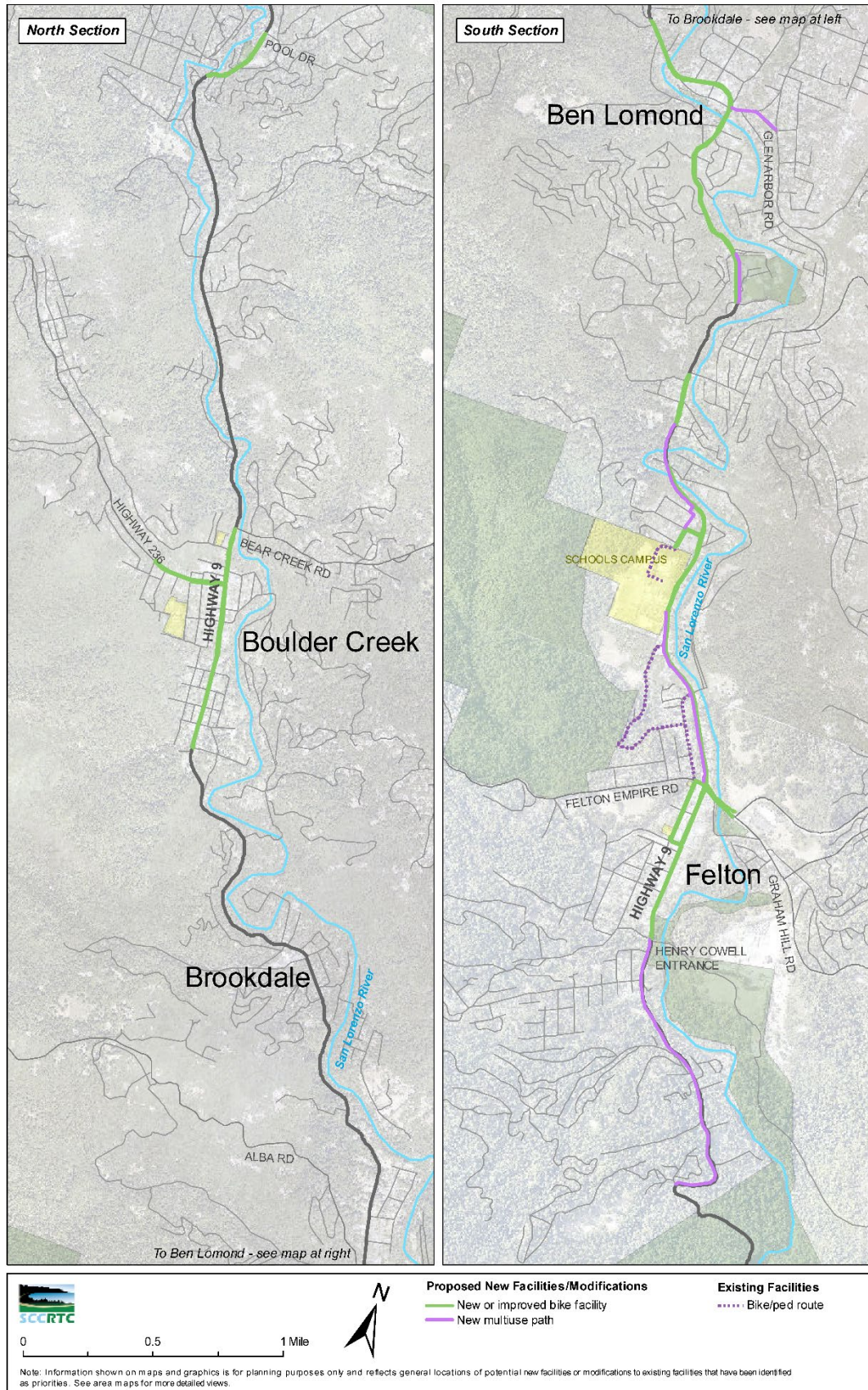


Figure ES 9: Transit Priority Projects Map

