



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**AUTOMOBILES TO CEDE ACCESS TO NILES CANYON ROAD TO HIKERS, BIKERS ON SEPT. 30
*ROAD CLOSURE FOR RECREATIONAL ACCESS, PUBLIC EDUCATION ON TRAIL PROPOSAL***

Alameda County is offering the public a unique opportunity on Saturday, September 30, when Niles Canyon Road will be closed to automobiles to allow hikers, runners and bicyclists to travel the scenic roadway and learn about a proposal to build a new public trail through the Canyon.

To make way for “**The Niles Canyon Stroll and Roll,**” automobiles will not be allowed on a 6.4-mile stretch of Niles Canyon Road between Old Canyon Road in Fremont and Main Street in Sunol **from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, September 30.** The closure will allow hikers, runners and bicyclists to have full access to the road without automobile traffic. Staff from the from Alameda County and the East Bay Regional Park District will also be on hand with visual displays and other information to help the public understand a proposal to build a recreational trail through the canyon.

The closure of Niles Canyon Road to automobiles follows the completion of a Project Study earlier this year that favored a pathway running mostly along the north side of Niles Canyon Road as the preferred route for a paved, 10-foot-wide trail for pedestrians, bicyclists and possibly equestrians through the picturesque Canyon. While funding has not been secured for the project, proponents hope the trail will be supported by State and federal funds and Alameda County’s Measure BB transportation sales tax.

It is the second time in three years that officials have temporarily closed Niles Canyon Road to motor vehicles to enhance bicycle and pedestrian access, and to promote the proposed trail between Fremont and Sunol. An estimated 10,000 people turned out for the first “Niles Canyon Stroll and Roll” in October 2015.

Proposals for a public trail through Niles Canyon date back to the 1970s, driven by the fact that its breathtaking scenery is accessible only via Niles Canyon Road, a winding two-lane portion of State Highway 84. Bicyclists have repeatedly called for a trail due to safety concerns related to sharing the narrow roadway – which includes no shoulder space in some sections - with automobiles. Recreation enthusiasts point out that hiking access to the Canyon is limited, and that a trail would provide a vital link between trail networks in the Tri-Valley and Alameda County’s bay-front corridor.

Traffic data compiled by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) indicates there were 507 traffic accidents involving motor vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians on Niles Canyon Road between 2000 and 2014, with 390 injuries and 14 fatalities. Data from 2015 to present is not available. On May 13, a bicyclist was killed when a truck struck him from behind on a portion of Niles Canyon Road near Sunol where there is no roadway shoulder. The driver of the truck said she did not see the bicyclist because the sun was shining in her eyes, according to the California Highway Patrol.

Alameda County Supervisors Richard Valle and Scott Haggerty, who represent communities at both ends of the Niles Canyon, are promoting the project to address safety concerns caused by increasing vehicle and bicycle traffic through the canyon.

Valle said safety issues and limited public access to the scenic canyon make the trail project a priority for his district. “Tri-City residents have known for a long time that Niles Canyon contains some of the East Bay’s most stunning scenery and is ripe for exploration,” Valle said. “There is more that can and should be done to protect public safety in the canyon.”

Added Haggerty, an East Bay leader in transportation issues: “Opportunities for recreation and alternative transportation are at the top of the list in terms of what our residents want and this project provides us with a rare opportunity to respond to the community’s wishes in multiple ways.”

Go to the County’s event website, www.84strollroll.com to learn more about the Niles Canyon Multi-Use Trail proposal and the September 30 roadway closure.