



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

23-0028

Agenda Date: 2/16/2023

REPORT TO BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMISSION

SUBJECT

Recommend to City Council to Confirm the Preferred Alignment of the Stevens Creek Trail from Remington Drive to Fremont Avenue Segment Consisting of an Off-street Trail Along the Creek with Two Connections at Fremont Avenue on Both Sides of SR85 with the Adjustments Due to Changes in Creek Conditions

BACKGROUND

The idea and vision for a Stevens Creek Trail for pedestrians and bicyclists was first identified by the Santa Clara County Planning Department in 1961. The County's plan for a "Stevens Creek Park Chain" created a framework for preserving land along Stevens Creek for an interconnected system of parks and trails. Today, the Stevens Creek Trail extends approximately five miles from the Bay Trail at Shoreline Park to the Dale Avenue/Heatherstone Way bicycle and pedestrian overcrossing of State Route 85 in Mountain View. An additional one-mile trail segment is in place from Stevens Creek Boulevard to McClellan Road through Blackberry Farm Park and McClellan Ranch Preserve in Cupertino.

A coordinated trail planning effort between the cities of Cupertino, Los Altos, Mountain View, and Sunnyvale started in 2009 with the involvement of elected officials, staff, a consultant team and public members. The goal of the effort was to study options to complete the trail. The consultant team prepared a feasibility study that evaluated potential routes in Mountain View, Sunnyvale, and Cupertino. The Joint Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study was completed September 2015.

The team presented recommendations to the four city councils in 2015 and 2016. These recommendations included trail alignment preferences as well as policy recommendations, such as protecting and improving wildlife habitat, preserving public land, and continuing the collaboration with regional partners. Overall, the cities supported the recommendations. The Sunnyvale City Council selected a preferred alignment at their February 9, 2016, meeting (RTC No. 16-0034). The preferred alignment selected between Dale Avenue/Heatherstone Way to Fremont Avenue included an off-street trail along the 22 acres of open space along State Route (SR) 85, and two connections at Fremont Avenue, on both sides of SR 85. Attachment 2 illustrates this alignment from the Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study, Map 9.

The City of Mountain View is leading the effort for the trail segment from Dale/Heatherstone Way to W. Remington Drive. The City of Sunnyvale will be working jointly with the City of Mountain View on this project. The City of Sunnyvale is leading the effort for the trail segment from W. Remington Drive to W. Fremont Avenue.

In April 2020, City of Sunnyvale staff submitted a grant application for the Stevens Creek Trail

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Extension (from W. Remington Drive to W. Fremont Avenue) to the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) for the 2016 Measure B Bicycle and Pedestrian Program - Capital Projects Competitive grant funds for FY 2020/21 totaling \$26.8 million.

In July 2020, VTA notified staff that this project was recommended for funding. A total of \$3.5M for the environmental and design phases of the project was awarded (Attachment 3). The Measure B Program requires a 10% non-2016 Measure B contribution. The 10% local match required for this project is \$389,000. On April 20, 2021, the City Council accepted the 2016 Measure B grant and approved the local match amount (RTC No. 21-0320). These funds will be utilized for the environmental clearance and final design phases of the project.

On June 7, 2022, the City Council awarded an engineering services contract to Mark Thomas and Company to perform preliminary engineering, environmental clearance, and final design of the W. Remington Drive to W. Fremont Avenue segment of the trail (RTC No. 22-0373). The consultant started data collection and field investigations in June 2022 to determine the feasibility of the recommendations from the Joint Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study dated September 2015 and to evaluate any changes in conditions in and around the creek.

For purposes of an environmental review, a preferred project scope must be selected by the City Council. The City Council is scheduled to consider this item at their March 21, 2023 meeting.

EXISTING POLICY

General Plan, Chapter 3, *Land Use and Transportation Element*:

- Goal A: Coordinated Regional and Local Planning - Protect the quality of life, the natural environment, and property investment, preserve home rule, secure fair share funding, and provide leadership in the region.
- Goal B: Environmentally Sustainable Land Use and Transportation Planning and Development - Support the sustainable vision by incorporating sustainable features into land use and transportation decisions and practices.
- Goal C: An Effective Multimodal Transportation System - Offer the community a variety of transportation modes for local travel that are also integrated with the regional transportation system and land use pattern. Favor accommodation of alternative modes to the automobile as a means to enhance efficient transit use, bicycling, and walking and corresponding benefits to the environment, person-throughput, and qualitative improvements to the transportation system environment.
- Goal H: Options for Healthy Living - Create a city development pattern and improve the city's infrastructure in order to maximize healthy choices for all ages, including physical activity, use of the outdoors, and access to fresh food.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The selection of a preferred trail alignment of the project will be the "Project" for purposes of the environmental clearance. The next stage of the current project will include the required environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The appropriate CEQA document will be prepared based on the results of an Initial Study and presented to City Council at the appropriate time for approval prior to starting final design.

DISCUSSION

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Conditions along Stevens Creek between W. Remington Drive and W. Fremont Avenue and within the open space adjacent to the creek were reviewed as an initial task of the project consultant team. This alignment evaluation was performed to reconfirm the feasibility of the 2016 City Council trail alignment direction. This evaluation was performed with the goals of identifying the challenges, user comfort, and construction costs of the alignment under current existing conditions, and to design a project that is consistent with past planning efforts and approvals.

The trail alignment was evaluated in three segments:

- Segment 1: Connects to Remington Drive and the fork in the trail at the two connections to Fremont Avenue
- Segment 2: Connects Segment 1 to Fremont Avenue on the west side of SR 85 and goes underneath SR 85 at the creek
- Segment 3: Connects Segment 1 to Fremont Avenue on the east side of SR 85 and goes over the creek and Segment 2

The project team made recommendations for adjusting the previously selected trail alignment as a result of the changed conditions, specifically erosion, in and around the creek. Attachment 4 illustrates the currently proposed alignment. The overall alignment selected by City Council remains the same; however, a few adjustments are recommended. Some of the differences between the originally approved alignment and the currently proposed alignment include:

- In Segment 1, the location of northernmost creek bridge shifted southward due to the creek bank erosion on the west side of the creek adjacent to SR 85. This shifts the trail from the west side of the creek to the east side of the creek for approximately 500 feet.
- In Segment 3, a structure is recommended for a segment of the trail where the creek bank has eroded closer to SR 85, just south of the large open space.

The evaluation also identified challenges and opportunities of each segment, for purposes of confirming the project scope.

Segment 1 has the following characteristics:

- Includes a single bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the creek.
- Utilizes the open space.
- Stays on top of creek bank elevation.
- Has minimal flood control impacts.

Segment 2 has the following characteristics:

- Goes down in elevation to travel underneath SR 85 along the creek.
- Includes a sharp turn on the west side of SR 85 to remain outside of private property.
- Requires retaining walls and grading.
- Requires extensive coordination and permitting with Caltrans.
- Requires flood control improvements.
- Could potentially be closed during major rain events.
- Includes extensive environmental and permitting requirements.

Segment 3 has the following characteristics:

- Goes up in elevation to travel over the creek and Segment 2.

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- Stays at top of creek bank or higher.
- Includes two bridges over the creek.
- Requires some coordination with Caltrans for trail alignment along SR 85 northbound on-ramp.
- Has minimal flood control impacts.

On January 18, 2023, the project team hosted a community meeting via Zoom. The updated data, conceptual alignments and segment characteristics were presented at the meeting, and the community provided feedback on the alignment. Additionally, community members also sent in feedback via email. A summary of feedback from both the community meeting and emails include the following:

- Preferences to keep connections to Fremont Avenue on both sides of State Route 85.
- Preferences to keep only one connection to Fremont Avenue, some prefer west side of State Route 85, some prefer east side of State Route 85.
- Interest in seeing the trail run along Stevens Creek behind 1195 Fremont Avenue property parking lot to connect to Fremont Avenue, instead of along State Route 85 southbound off-ramp.
- Concerns about running the trail along Stevens Creek behind 1195 Fremont Avenue property parking lot to connect to Fremont Avenue due to exposure to private properties and backyards on north side of trail.
- Concerns regarding trail users (bicyclists and pedestrians) crossing Fremont Avenue at and adjacent to State Route 85 ramps and Bernardo Avenue due to traffic volumes and speeds.
- Interest in building an overcrossing of Fremont Avenue as part of this project.
- Interest in directing trail users to cross Fremont Avenue at Belleville Way.
- Interest in updating the existing Fremont Avenue bridge over Stevens Creek to include a trail crossing, as mentioned in the Feasibility Study.
- Interest in using native and locally native plants for landscaping and how it will be maintained.
- Interest in other uses for open space, such as dog runs, frisbee fields, pickle ball, and including Parks and Recreation Commission in discussions.
- Excitement to see project move forward.
- Interest in trails and bridges wider than in other existing segments due to “tight” feeling when there are many users.
- Request for project team to consider possible funding sources (2014 Measure AA) for creek corridor restoration, interpretive signage, and other open space purposes.
- Concerns about trail closures due to flooding during normal rain events, similar to what occurs on other trails (Guadalupe Creek Trail).
- Interest in keeping slopes gentle especially at bridges and ramps.
- Concerns about maintenance of trail to avoid trash accumulation and graffiti.

For purposes of an environmental review, a preferred project scope must be selected by the City Council. The currently proposed trail alignment (Attachment 4) with the adjustments discussed above meets the original City Council direction from February 9, 2016 (RTC No. 16-0034) where they selected an alternative with an off-street trail along Stevens Creek with connections to Fremont Avenue on both sides (east and west) of State Route 85. A reconfirmation of the alignment, with the adjustments, is required to select the preferred project for the purposes of environmental review. No new alternatives are presented, only adjustments due to erosion of the creek. The City Council is

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scheduled to consider this item on March 21, 2023. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission is requested to provide a recommendation for the project team to present to City Council.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funding for this phase of the project is available under Project 835630 - Stevens Creek Trail Extension (Project No. TR-22-01). The current action does not impact the existing budget. As a result of erosion of the creek channel and the changes in alignment, the previous estimated construction costs will need to be increased and additional funding allocated prior to finishing final design and advertising for construction. An additional funding request will be brought to City Council for consideration as construction costs are refined during the design phase.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, at the Sunnyvale Public Library, Senior Center, Community Center and in the Department of Public Safety Lobby. In addition, the agenda and report are available at the Sunnyvale Public Library, Office of the City Clerk, and on the City's website.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend to City Council to Confirm Preferred Alignment of the Stevens Creek Trail for the Remington Drive to Fremont Avenue Segment Consisting of an Off-street Trail Along and the Creek with Two Connections at Fremont Avenue on Both Sides of SR 85 with the Adjustments Due to Changes in Creek Conditions.
2. Do Not Recommend to City Council to Confirm the Preferred Alignment of the Stevens Creek Trail, Remington Drive to Fremont Avenue.

RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1. Recommend to City Council to Confirm of the Preferred Alignment of the Stevens Creek Trail for the Remington Drive to Fremont Avenue Segment Consisting of an Off-street Trail Along the Creek with Two Connections at Fremont Avenue on Both Sides of SR85 with the Adjustments Due to Changes in Creek Conditions.

The currently proposed alignment is in concurrence with the original City Council direction. The adjustments made as part of this project design are based upon the initial alignment evaluation which identified changes in the existing conditions of the creek and adjacent topography and are not substantiative to the intentions of the original direction. The confirmation of the Preferred Alignment is necessary for the environmental clearance to move forward and for the completion of project.

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Reviewed by: Chip Taylor, Director, Department of Public Works
Reviewed by: Teri Silva, Assistant City Manager
Approved by: Kent Steffens, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Reserved for Report to Council

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2. Sunnyvale City Council Selected Alignment, Map 9 - Study Segment 1
3. VTA 2016 Measure B Award Letter
4. Currently Proposed Trail Alignment