

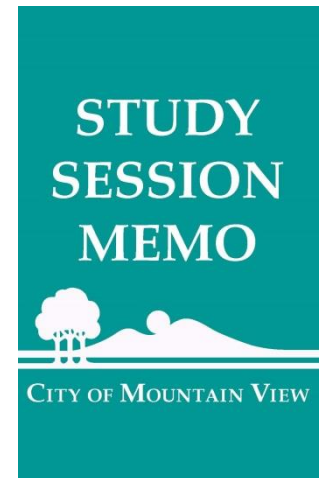
DATE: December 1, 2015

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: John R. Marchant, Recreation Manager
J.P. de la Montaigne, Community Services
Director

VIA: Daniel H. Rich, City Manager

TITLE: **Four Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail
Feasibility Study**



PURPOSE

The purpose of the Study Session is to provide Council with background information on the Four Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study and its findings as well as to review the recommendations forwarded by the Joint Cities Working Team.

BACKGROUND

In 1961, the County of Santa Clara trail planners originally proposed to create an interconnected system of trails that would connect parks along Stevens Creek.

In 1991, the City completed a Stevens Creek Trail and Wildlife Corridor Feasibility Study which explored the possibility of creating a pedestrian and bicycle trail along Stevens Creek extending approximately six miles to the City's boundary to Los Altos at Fremont Avenue. The Feasibility Study provided details of potentially completing the trail and included a total of six separate reaches. To date, the Stevens Creek Trail within the City of Mountain View currently parallels Stevens Creek and extends from Shoreline at Mountain View Park to Dale Avenue/Heatherstone Way, totaling approximately five miles. The current trail fulfills the first five reaches in the 1991 Feasibility Study. The final reach is described as "Sleeper Park to Fremont Avenue, Los Altos." This reach could provide an opportunity to create access to neighborhoods in Sunnyvale and complete the Mountain View Stevens Creek Trail goal by terminating at Fremont Avenue.

In addition to the approximate five miles of Stevens Creek Trail in Mountain View, a segment of the trail has been completed in Cupertino south of Stevens Creek Boulevard through Blackberry Farm Park and McClellan Ranch Preserve. The gap between these existing trail segments has been the focus of the most recent Feasibility Study. The City has actively participated in the Joint Cities Working Team (JCWT), a cooperative group of policy representatives from Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Cupertino, Los Altos, and

the Santa Clara Valley Water District, that was formed in 2009 with the goal of developing and coordinating a mutually agreeable concept for completion of the Stevens Creek Trail and then to seek resources to construct the remaining trail in a cooperative and unified effort. As part of this effort, the four cities agreed to funding contributions for a Feasibility Study to identify feasible alignments that would close the gap between Mountain View and Cupertino. Funds for the study were also provided by the Friends of the Stevens Creek Trail and a Project Readiness Initiative grant from the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA).

DISCUSSION

To complete the Feasibility Study, the four cities contracted with Jana Sokale Environmental Planning (through Sunnyvale as lead agency) in 2012 and subsequently the JCWT sought out three volunteers from each city to act as the Citizens Working Group (CWG). The CWG was tasked with reviewing the technical Feasibility Study findings and serve in an advisory role to the JCWT. The scope of the Feasibility Study was to identify alternatives for the completion of a public bicycle and pedestrian connection and to gather community input throughout the process. The Feasibility Study analyzed a wide variety of possible routes and evaluated a range of possible improvements, including fully separated off-street bicycle/pedestrian trails, on-street bike lanes, and neighborhood greenways on lower-volume residential streets. The Feasibility Study report presents numerous routes that are considered feasible and documents routes that were evaluated but considered infeasible. This analysis is presented in the Joint Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study (Attachment 1). While the Feasibility Study itself does not make any recommendations on preferred routes, it provided the framework for the JCWT on feasible alignments. The JCWT was tasked with making preferred alignment recommendations upon conclusion of the public input.

With the goal of connecting completed portions of the Stevens Creek Trail in Mountain View and Cupertino, both working groups and City staff developed study parameters to help guide the consultant in developing the Feasibility Study. The study parameters were:

- Investigate public lands and rights-of-way.
- Protect environmentally sensitive habitats.
- Seek routes that accommodate beginner bicyclists.

- Develop direct routes that close trail gap.
- Connect to parks, schools, shopping, and on-street pedestrian and bike systems.

The Feasibility Study area focuses on public lands bounded by the following:

- North—Dale Avenue/Heatherstone Overcrossing
- East—Mary Avenue
- West—Grant Road and Rancho San Antonio County Park
- South—Stevens Creek Boulevard

Focusing within the bounded area allowed research into potential routes that may provide an experience that ranges from a fully separated facility in an open space area to a local road that serves as a connector to a trailhead.

Study segments were defined within the boundaries. The study segments are:

1. Dale Avenue/Heatherstone Way to Fremont Avenue
2. Fremont Avenue to Homestead Road
3. Homestead Road to Stevens Creek Boulevard
4. Trail Connections to Rancho San Antonio County Park via Stevens Creek Boulevard

Between November 2012 and February 2013, three public meetings were held to provide an overview of the purpose of the Feasibility Study and to obtain feedback regarding potential routes through Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Los Altos, and Cupertino.

The Feasibility Study team also investigated potential crossing locations in late 2013 in the areas of Foothill Expressway at Highway 280, a new Highway 280 pedestrian bridge west of State Route 85, and Stevens Creek Boulevard at State Route 85.

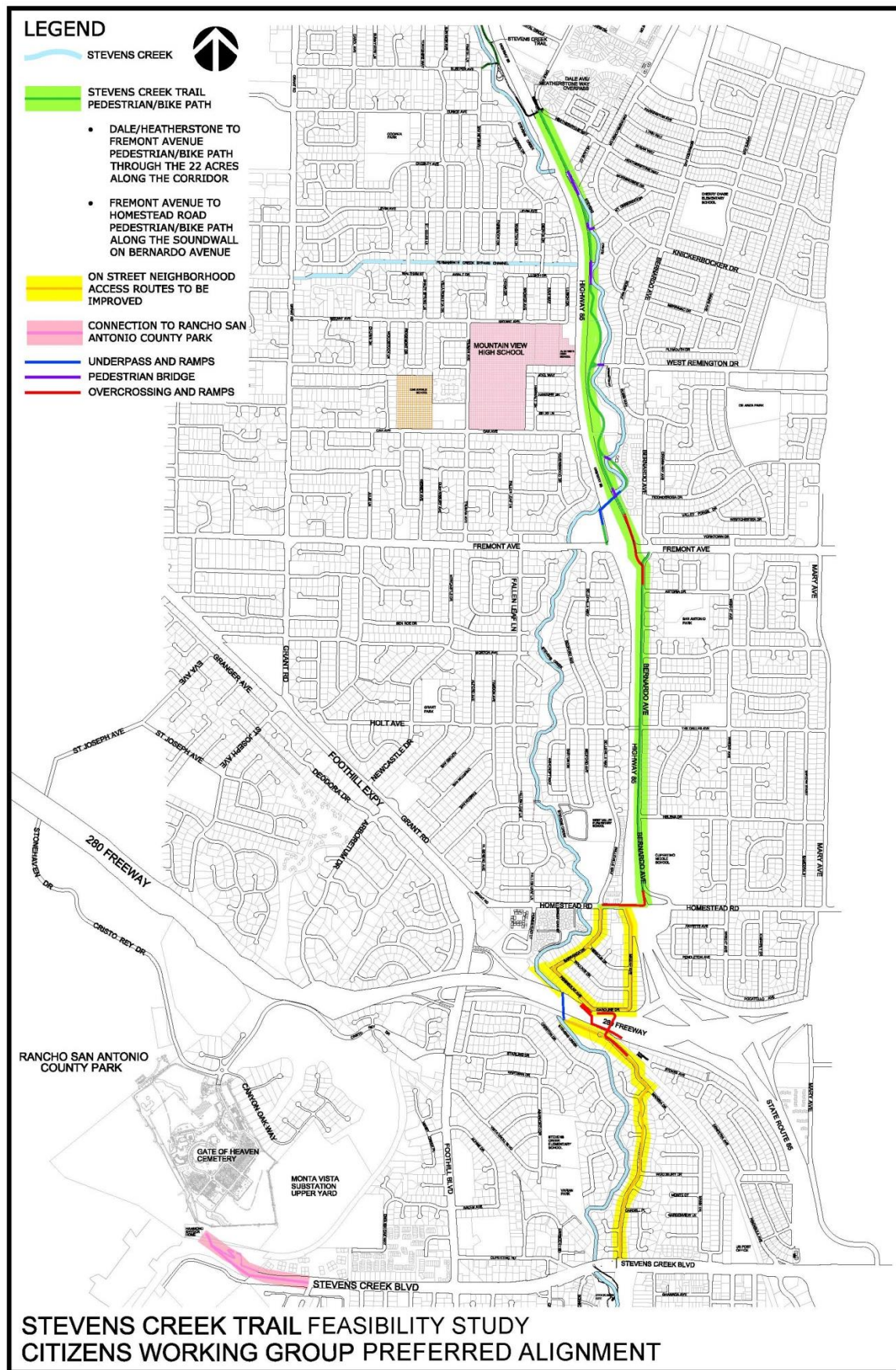
In 2014, the Feasibility Study team met to recap the findings of the additional site investigations and to complete potential trail routes for the study. After personnel changes within the Feasibility Study team, the group reconvened in March 2015 and

defined a process to wrap up the Feasibility Study and develop a recommendations report to be presented to each of the four cities for approval.

The Feasibility Study team defined a process to collect public feedback regarding a draft of the Feasibility Study and to develop recommendations for a preferred alignment for the Stevens Creek Trail (Attachment 2). On March 27, 2015, the draft Feasibility Study was released for public comment. By the end of the comment period in August 2015, 945 written comments were received. In addition to the written comments, there were seven opportunities after the study was released for the public to provide input regarding the Feasibility Study and potential trail alignments. There were three public meetings held in May and June 2015 and a total of four CWG and JCWT meetings between June and August 2015. Technical comments related to the Feasibility Study were reviewed and incorporated as appropriate.

CWG Recommendations

On June 17, 2015, the CWG discussed the public comments received, including written and oral comments from the three public meetings. At this meeting, the CWG developed general alignment themes which helped guide its alignment recommendations (Attachment 3). The CWG's recommendations were then forwarded to the JCWT. The following map was used to assist the CWG and present their recommendation to the JCWT.



JCWT Recommendations

The JCWT met on July 24, August 5, and August 21, 2015 to discuss the Draft Feasibility Study, public feedback, written and oral comments, and the recommendations from the CWG. The JCWT made its recommendations as a regional body and considered the alignments through all the cities based on study segment locations (Attachment 4). The following provides an overview of each section and recommendations from the JCWT:

The feasibility study area is as follows:

Study Segment 1: Dale Avenue/Heatherstone Way to Fremont Avenue

This segment extends from the Permanente Creek Bypass Channel overpass at St. Giles Lane in Mountain View and to Mary Avenue in Sunnyvale and it borders Mountain View High School and Cherry Chase Elementary School. The study identifies an off-street pedestrian/bike path along the 22 acres of open space within the shared space along the creek between Mountain View and Sunnyvale.

This is the only segment within the Feasibility Study boundaries where a trail along the creek was found to be feasible based on the availability of public land and the physical space required for trail construction. However, implementation of a trail through this segment is very challenging due to limited creek bank area. Several bridges would need to be built crossing the creek and lengthy structures would be needed to span narrow areas between the State Route 85 sound wall and areas of very narrow creek bank. A lengthy environmental review and permitting process will be required prior to any construction in this area.

Study Segment 2: Fremont Avenue to Homestead Road

This study segment extends from Louise Lane in Los Altos to Mary Avenue in Sunnyvale and includes West Valley Elementary School and Cupertino Middle School.

The JCWT recommended alignment is an off-street pedestrian/bike path along the Bernardo Avenue sound wall between Fremont Avenue and Homestead Road, including a bike/pedestrian overpass at Fremont Avenue. The alternatives for implementation of this path include either the conversion of Bernardo Avenue to a one-way street or significant reduction in parking. While the preliminary investigation completed as part of the study determined that this option is feasible, further studies must be conducted to fully evaluate the impacts of the roadway change. The JCWT recommended that a detailed traffic and parking study be conducted for this segment, with the findings being considered by the City of Sunnyvale prior to any further trail

master planning work in this segment. If based on the findings of the comprehensive traffic and parking study the off-street bike/ pedestrian path was found infeasible or if this option was not supported by the City of Sunnyvale, the JCWT recommended modest bike and pedestrian safety improvements and/or wayfinding on Belleville Way, Bernardo Avenue, and Bedford Avenue.

Numerous concerns from area residents were expressed during the public outreach process regarding this alignment. Potential changes to the roadway in this segment generated concerns about traffic diversion in the neighborhood, loss of parking, and degradation of already difficult traffic conditions around Cupertino Middle School during pick-up and drop-off times. The current Feasibility Study was limited to evaluating roadway widths and physical constraints necessary for trail construction and did not evaluate the potential traffic impacts from narrowing the roadway. Conversely, the Feasibility Study also did not attempt to quantify the potential benefits of a separated off-street bike/pedestrian trail that could provide safer access to the school for area students.

Study Segment 3: Homestead Road to Stevens Creek Boulevard

This segment extends from Grant Road/Foothill Boulevard in Los Altos and Cupertino to Mary Avenue in Cupertino and includes the area contiguous to Homestead High School and near Stevens Creek Elementary School.

In this segment, only potential improvements along Homestead Road near Highway 85 are within the City of Sunnyvale. The Feasibility Study concluded that no feasible routes exist that could accommodate an off-street facility and connect through to the existing trail that ends at Stevens Creek Boulevard. Although several on-street routes were considered feasible, the JCWT recommended no specific preferred routes through this area. Rather, a long-term vision was articulated that trail routes continue to be evaluated as conditions change in the area such as the reconstruction of the I-280/State Route 85 interchange, or the Union Pacific Railroad property becomes available.

Improvements to Homestead Road at the Highway 85 crossing would consist of widening the existing bridge or constructing a new bike/pedestrian bridge to create a separated bike/pedestrian path on the north side of Homestead Road. Highway 85 on-/off-ramps would also be realigned to promote bike/pedestrian safety. Improvements in this area could be extended along Homestead Road to connect to an existing off-street bike/pedestrian trail in Los Altos. These improvements would be designed to improve safety for students walking and cycling to nearby Cupertino Middle School and Homestead High School.

Study Segment 4: Trail Connections to Rancho San Antonio County Park via Stevens Creek Boulevard

This segment is in Cupertino and connects east-west along Stevens Creek Boulevard to Rancho San Antonio County Park. This connection would not be considered part of the Stevens Creek Trail but could provide an important connection from the existing trail through Blackberry Farm Park to an extensive trail network in Rancho San Antonio County Park. Now that the JCWT has made their recommendations on preferred alignments to close the gap between Mountain View and Cupertino, they ask their colleagues on the councils of the four cities to support their mutually agreed-upon concept for completion of the Stevens Creek Trail.

The Feasibility Study is complete and currently under review by each of the respective city councils. While the City of Mountain View is limited to the decision-making process within its own jurisdiction, *the JCWT asked the cities to support each other in a collaborative effort to close the existing gap of the Stevens Creek Trail.* This would include coordination and sponsorship in seeking grant funding, coordination during the planning and environmental review process, and coordination with construction of any improvements.

RECOMMENDATION

Receive background information on the Stevens Creek Trail Project, review the Four Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study and JCWT recommendations, and provide direction to staff and Vice Mayor Showalter, who serves on the JCWT

NEXT STEPS

Each of the four cities will present the Feasibility Study and the JCWT recommendations to their councils in accordance with each cities' schedule and procedures. The JCWT agreed that a meeting will be scheduled once each council has reviewed and provided any specific direction to staff. Based on this feedback, the JCWT will discuss any next steps that could be followed up on in a collaborative nature. After that, or as part of the Capital Improvement Program budget process, the Council can discuss what, if any, next steps it wishes to pursue relative to sections within Mountain View's jurisdiction.

PUBLIC NOTICING

In addition to regular posting, the meeting has been noticed to the official project website located on the City of Sunnyvale website and e-mailed to individuals signed up to receive project updates.

JRM-JPdIM/CV/7/CAM
231-12-01-15SS-E

- Attachments:
1. Joint Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study
 2. Stevens Creek Trail Process Map
 3. Citizens Working Group Recommendations to the Joint Cities on the Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study
 4. Joint Cities Working Team Recommendations to the Councils