

# Residents voice opposition to trail connection through neighborhood



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Photo Ellie Van Houtte/Town Crier

Some Los Altos residents at a June 18 public meeting favored a trail alignment that includes a portion of Foothill Expressway, above.

Los Altos officials last week updated residents on proposed Stevens Creek Trail alignments through the city and opened the discussion to audience input. Input they received – in spades.

A standing-room-only crowd of 250 residents packed the Grant Park meeting room June 18 to offer their perspectives and review potential trail connections through Los Altos as part of the four-cities Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study. The study involves a regional approach in connecting the trail between Mountain View and Cupertino – and includes potential alignments through Los Altos, Sunnyvale and along the creek corridor itself.

The study includes the cities of Los Altos, Mountain View, Cupertino and Sunnyvale.

“This is a very long vision to connect the Bay to the ocean,” said Jana Sokale, a consultant hired by the four-cities team to conduct the study.

The city scheduled the meeting to address residents’ concerns and to get them “on the same page,” Los Altos City Councilwoman Jeannie Bruins noted.

In recent months, several residents on Fallen Leaf – one of the study’s potential alignment areas in Los Altos – organized to oppose alignments through the city’s residential streets, including theirs.

Sokale described three potential trail alignment concepts that would affect Fallen Leaf Lane: a bike route connector with signage through the neighborhood, a more elaborate design calling for marked bike sharrows to share the road with

motorists along Fallen Leaf and a 6-foot-wide colored paved walkway and landscaped bulb-outs at intersections to reduce vehicle speeds.

Bruins notified residents that the 60-foot-wide Class I Pathway Design Concept proposed for Fallen Leaf – which would have required Los Altos to reclaim up to 18 feet of public right-of-way that has been built up with residents' fencing and yards over decades – was "no longer being considered."

## REACTIONS

Several residents voiced concerns that placing a trail of any kind along Fallen Leaf would increase vehicle and bicycle traffic. Some objected on grounds that it would negatively affect their home values.

Noreen Miller, a 28-year resident, said placing a trail along Fallen Leaf could eliminate street parking for residents and turn the neighborhood into a busy thoroughfare for trail users.

"It really frightens me to think we're going to open (the neighborhood) up to the rest of the world or something," she said.

A self-described biking fanatic, Los Altos resident David O'Ryan said he feared that placing a dedicated trail bike route in the neighborhood would result in another Foothill Expressway – a popular biking route for area cyclists. O'Ryan was one of several nearby residents who favored alternate trail connections along Fremont Avenue, Grant Road and Foothill – similar to a route outlined in a 2008 feasibility study conducted solely by Los Altos.

"I would really be happy to see the trail extended, but taking it through someone's neighborhood is not the way to do it," said Los Altos resident Tracy Gibbons.

Fallen Leaf resident Ross Lapin added that he was "very disappointed" to see that all three trail concepts presented at the meeting focused on his street.

"The only presentation made was to mess with Fallen Leaf Lane," he said.

Far fewer supported a trail alignment along residential streets.

Michael McTighe, a Los Altos Planning and Transportation Commissioner speaking on his own behalf, drew a chorus of boos when he said a trail would increase safety for younger bicyclists.

“As a parent, one of the major groups of people not represented are the students who ride (bikes) up and down Fallen Leaf,” he said.

GreenTown Los Altos volunteer Susan Runowicz-Smith, an 18-year resident, also received a smattering of jeers after noting that some residents’ attitudes toward the trail made her feel uneasy riding her bike in Los Altos.

“It really, really hurts that Los Altos could be viewed as not welcoming to cyclists,” she said.

The study’s Citizens Working Group is slated to meet Aug. 1, followed by an Aug. 12 meeting of its Joint Cities Working Team, comprising one elected representative from each city.

## 2 Comments

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"CEO, Wonktastic Inc."  
by **Bob**

1

at Wednesday, 26 June 2013 14:28

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These people are complaining about 'additional bicycle traffic?' Please. Perhaps they should take a stroll through East Palo Alto and see what 'additional drive-by gunfire' feels like.

Get off your high horse and realize that there are greater problems than your home value. They must be worried about all of those bike bells and gear changes... could become a real rush-hour nightmare of noise.

Selfish NIMBYs.

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Comment  
by **parent**

2

at Wednesday, 26 June 2013 14:29

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The trail must be safe for children. Foothill Expressway is not safe for children. Residents trying to force children to bicycle on an expressway are reckless and selfish.

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# POST COMMENT

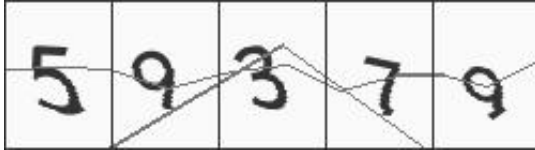
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