



[May 21, 2004](#)

Publication Date: Friday, May 21, 2004

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Stevens Creek Trail review gains public praise

Extending path past El Camino Real is priority

By Grace Rauh

Avid cyclists, hikers and a rollerblade commuter urged the Mountain View City Council on Tuesday night to continue its work on the Stevens Creek Trail and emphasized the importance of bringing the path across El Camino Real.

Council members discussed the city's environmental impact report for a trail extension to Mountain View High School and appeared united in their desire to move forward with it.

The council has considered extending the trail to the south of El Camino Real since 1998. The trail currently stops north of the strip at Yuba Drive.

For William Symons and his wife, extending the trail across the busy thoroughfare is a top priority. The two often drag their two-year-old daughter in a trailer behind their bicycles, but there's one road in Mountain View they dread crossing with their extra cargo in tow.

"We've actually even turned around before because it was too gnarly to get across El Camino with her in the trailer," Symons said.

Council member Rosemary Stasek agreed with Symon's remarks.

"The absolute priority is to get this trail to the other side of El Camino," she said. "It is such a daunting divider."

According to Tim Ko, Mountain View's assistant public works director, the city is "pretty close" to moving forward on the project.

"If the council approves, we plan to proceed (with) design," he said.

The extension across El Camino Real is estimated to cost roughly \$3.5 million. There is already \$3 million set aside in the proposed Capital Improvement Project fund for the trail extension.

Ko estimated the entire 1.7-mile extension to Mountain View High

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School would cost \$13-\$15 million.

Several council members expressed concern over how the entire extension would be funded.

"That is going to be the next big hurdle," said Council member Mike Kasperzak.

A draft environmental impact report was completed in 2002 and community members and organizations voiced concerns at that time about several issues relating to the trail.

In an updated report, city staff sought to address the six central areas of concern, which included fire protection, safety, river and wildlife habitats, traffic and parking impacts, geology and the cumulative environmental impact of the trail in combination with other projects.

City officials anticipate a public hearing on the environmental review report on June 22, but the date is still tentative. The council is expected to certify the final report following the hearing.

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