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## Stevens Creek Trail to grow

*Council approval permits expansion to El Camino, MV High School*

**By Jon Wiener**

The image of taking the Stevens Creek Trail from Shoreline Park all the way south to Mountain View High School became more of a reality Tuesday when the City Council unanimously voted to accept the project's final environmental impact report (EIR).

The project will create a new 1.7-mile section of the trail, which currently runs from Shoreline Park to Yuba Drive. The extension will provide a tunnel under El Camino Real and a pedestrian bridge over Highway 85 for bicyclists and pedestrians. Trail supporters expect it to be popular for recreation, commuting and students going to school.

"It will really link the city," said Susie Brain, executive director of Friends of the Steven Creek Trail. "It's a big stepping stone for Mountain View. It's been such a contentious process."

The council will need to approve a design before allowing construction to begin.

Six years after the city first began exploring the idea and nearly two years after the public comment period on the draft EIR ended, city council members, staff and members of the public were pleased with the direction of the project.

"I'm glad it's behind us," said Mayor Matt Pear of the EIR. Pear recalled that city staff did not want to conduct a full EIR, nearly three years ago. "In the end, that analysis made for a much better design and brought out a lot of the issues that need to be addressed."

Several changes to the previous design, particularly keeping the trail away from the creek in certain areas, helped reduce most of the impacts on the stream environment. In its new extension, the trail will impact only 144 feet of shaded stream habitat and 0.31 acres of riparian vegetation, according to the report. Both figures are barely a third of what the previous project proposal accounted for.

The biggest obstacle for the trail now is the issue of funding.

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"The city currently has almost enough money to get it across El Camino, which leaves us about \$10 million short of getting to the high school," said Council member Greg Perry. The city has set aside \$3 million of the \$3.5 million needed to build a tunnel to extend the trail across El Camino. The entire project will cost an estimated \$13 million to \$15 million.

John Brazil, president of the Friends of the Steven Creek Trail, said he believes the city may be able to get partial grant funding for the project from the county. City staff will be exploring this and other options while it proceeds with the design phase.

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