



A good year for trails

New crossings will enable walkers, bikers to skirt freeway, Old Middlefield

by **Daniel DeBolt**

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Two major highways will no longer stand in the way of cyclists and pedestrians on two popular Mountain View trails once a pair of bridges are finished in early 2012.

The city broke ground on a milestone engineering project on Dec. 16 that extends the Permanente Creek Trail from Shoreline Park and Google headquarters to residential areas by way of a bridge over Highway 101 and a tunnel under Old Middlefield Way. Meanwhile, bids have just come in under budget for a Stevens Creek Trail crossing over Highway 85 at Dale Avenue, which will probably begin construction in February.

The city is on track to have both trail extensions complete by spring 2012.

Last week, city officials, Google employees and residents celebrated the groundbreaking of the Permanente Creek Trail projects. Google welcomed the ceremony by providing food and allowing the use of one of its parking lots along Alta Avenue.

"What we've heard from the community is the need to connect the city" so that the city is no longer "pieces separated by freeways," said Mayor Ronit Bryant. "It will help give us the walk-able, bike-able city residents tell us they want."

At a cost of \$8.29 million, the project includes a long concrete bridge over Highway 101 and a tunnel under a busy section of Old Middlefield Way. The Permanente Creek Trail is expected to eventually terminate along Permanente Creek near Crittenden Middle School.

Mountain View's City manager of 20 years, Kevin Duggan, said the project would be "well used and well loved," and called it "one of the best projects we've ever done."

The trails will connect the western half of the city to its major office district, which is known for being isolated from the rest of the city by Highway 101. It is home to Google, Microsoft, the city's movie theater, Computer History Museum, and Shoreline Park, all of which are sure to have more pedestrian traffic coming in from the Permanente Creek trail.

"You won't even notice," traffic impacts from construction, said public works engineer Bob Kagiya. Each direction of Highway 101 between Shoreline Boulevard and Rengstorff will be closed in the late hours of the night for only two days, with traffic being redirected onto side streets. During those two days, large support structures will be hoisted up for the reinforced concrete that will be poured as the bridge is built with traffic passing beneath.

==B Stevens Creek Trail update==

The same contractor who is building the Permanente Creek Trail bridge and tunnel, Gordon N. Ball, submitted the low bid last week of \$4.13 million for a Stevens Creek Trail bridge over Highway 85 at Dale Avenue.

The City Council is expected to approve a bid in January, allowing the Highway 85 bridge to break ground in late February. Over half of the funds are coming from state grants.

To discuss construction issues, the city will hold a meeting for neighbors of the bridge on Jan. 21 at 6:30 p.m. in Conference Room C at the Palo Alto Foundation's Mountain View hospital at 701 El Camino Real.

The bridge will connect the well-used five-mile trail from its southern most tip at Sleeper Avenue across the highway to Dale Avenue and the neighborhood around the hospital. Construction could be complete in February 2012, Kagiya said.

The City Council has already approved the concept of extending the Stevens Creek Trail even farther south for its final extension, and has approved an environmental study of the route.

To build that extension the city must locate about \$10 million in funding and engineer the trail around various obstacles, including a tight squeeze between the Highway 85 sidewall and an apartment complex's parking lot near Dale Avenue. Moving

the sound wall or buying a piece of the apartment complex's property would be necessary, Kagiya said.

Fortunately, the city owns the meadows the trail will run through on the east side of Highway 85, Kagiya said. Those meadows are now closed to the public.

The creek itself is also an obstacle and a large bridge over it may be necessary where it connects with a diversion channel midway between the Dale Avenue bridge and a proposed bridge over Highway 85 to Mountain View High School.

"There's definitely going to be some challenges there," Kagiya said. "We've done a lot of trails so we've got the experience. We're pretty comfortable with our relationships in dealing with Caltrans and the Santa Clara Valley Water District. It has definitely been a long-term partnership."

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The Stevens Creek Trail bridge over Highway 85 expected to break ground in February. Image courtesy of the City of Mountain View.

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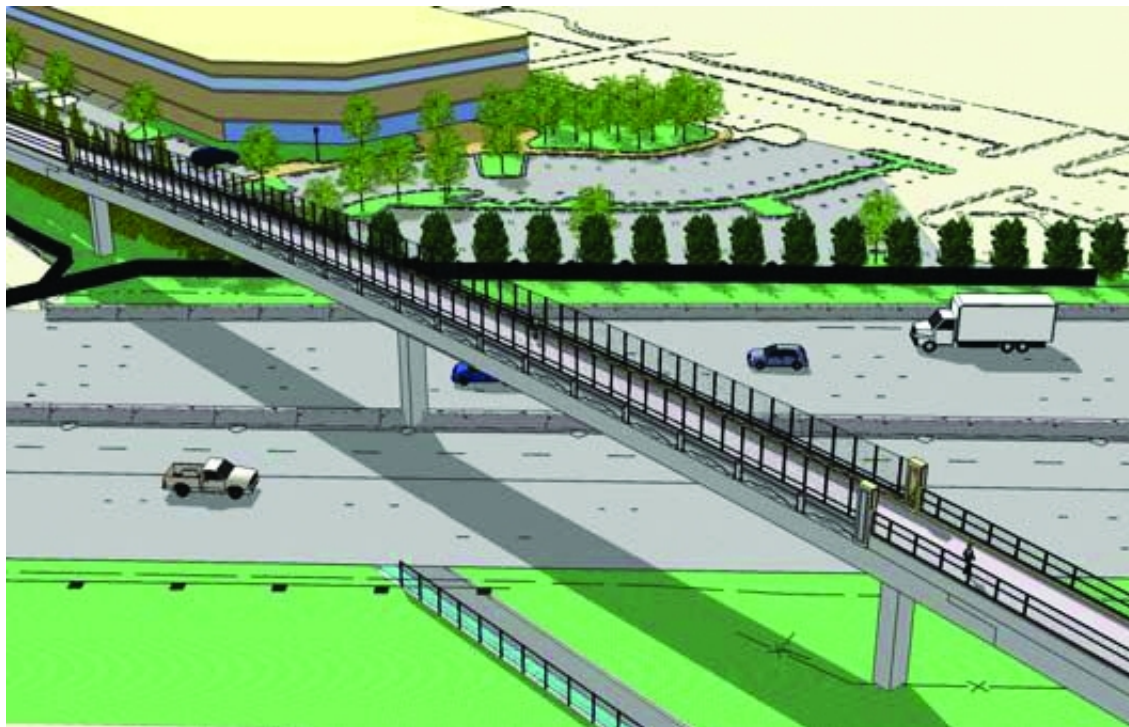
The Stevens Creek Trail bridge over Highway 85 to Dale Avenue. It is expected to break ground in February. Image courtesy of the City of Mountain View.

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A tunnel for the Permanente Creek Trail set for construction under Old Middlefield Way near Highway 101. Image courtesy of the City of Mountain View.

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The Permanente Creek Trail bridge over Highway 101. Image Courtesy of the City of Mountain View.