

## Cities plot course for Stevens Creek Trail

As one of the last extensions of the Stevens Creek Trail in Mountain View begins to take shape, plans to bring the pathway all the way to Cupertino are also starting to come to fruition.

Los Altos, Sunnyvale and Cupertino recently pitched in funds for a "unified Stevens Creek trail alternatives" study, and the Mountain View City Council is expected to authorize a contribution on Tuesday. The study will analyze potential routes through Los Altos and Sunnyvale, with the objective of connecting Mountain View's section to portions being built in Cupertino.

Aaron Grossman, executive director of the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail, called the feasibility study "so huge."

"It's really going to set the future route, both in Sunnyvale and Los Altos, and will directly impact the connections to Mountain View and Cupertino," Grossman said.

For decades, advocates have longed to see the trail follow Stevens Creek all the way from the Santa Cruz Mountains to the Mountain View bayshore.

Mountain View's 4.75-mile stretch is now approaching the Sunnyvale border, thanks to a bridge being built over Highway 85 to Dale and Heatherstone avenues. That \$4.1 million project could be finished by year's end, according to project manager Robert Kagiya.

Mountain View has one more planned one-mile segment, which will bring the trail to Mountain View High School. However, that extension is expected to cost about \$10 million and there is no money

allocated to build it. Kagiya said the city plans to apply for various grants and set aside money.

Meanwhile, plans are moving forward to bring the trail through other cities. Sunnyvale, which because of community opposition prohibited it from coming through the city until April 2009, has done little planning to date and will likely be a focus of the study. The city has agreed to pay \$75,000 of the alternatives study's estimated \$100,000 cost, according to a May 31 city memorandum.

The study should have plenty of funding: The Los Altos City Council voted Tuesday to contribute \$12,500, and Cupertino allocated \$10,000 earlier this month. Mountain View is expected to contribute \$5,000, and Grossman said the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail plans to give \$5,000, for a total of \$107,500.

Sunnyvale spokesman John Pilger said that the security and privacy of homes along the trail -- a major concern for residents who opposed it in the past -- will be a key issue as plans move forward.

"We're also looking at, when we look at specific routes, what kinds of costs are involved," Pilger said. "Is there a route, for example, that is fairly easy from a construction standpoint, or are we going to have to build bridges and overpasses to go over other barriers."

Los Altos did its own trail study a few years ago, but only analyzed how it would bring the trail through the city. The preferred route in that study went along city streets, west on Fremont Road, south on Grant Road, and then followed Foothill Expressway to Cupertino -- quite a distance from Stevens Creek.

One major hurdle to building a more natural trail along the creek is that some of the land it would have to cross is privately owned. While the trail will almost certainly have to traverse public streets or other routes to skirt those private parcels, Sunnyvale has more public property available on its side of the creek compared with Los Altos, officials said.

Much of the land around the creek in Sunnyvale is under the authority of the Santa Clara Valley Water District, said Los Altos Mayor Pro Tem Val Carpenter.

"Now that Sunnyvale's in the game," she said, "I think there's much more possibility of coming up with a trail that makes sense."

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