

Steven's Creek Trail makes headway in Mountain View and surrounding cities

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In 1961, Santa Clara County published a sepia-toned brochure promoting a chain of parks along Stevens Creek, saying the parks would provide "a bit of nature in the closely packed metropolis."

That vision of a trail stretching from the bayshore in Mountain View to the Santa Cruz Mountains has yet to be realized. But last week, the Mountain View City Council accepted a new round of grant money to finish the second-to-last section of the trail in that city, and momentum is building for the other cities along the creek to make progress on their own portions.

"We've been working on this since 1993 and it seemed to take forever," said Aaron Grossman, executive director of Friends of the Stevens Creek Trail. "All of a sudden, the last few years, the pace has really picked up."

The trail currently stretches 4.8 miles in Mountain View, from Shoreline Park to Sleeper Avenue, with the Sleeper section just completed in June.

Last Tuesday, the Mountain View City Council accepted more than \$800,000 in grant money from the Valley Transportation Authority and Bay Area Transportation Development funds to complete the next section, which crosses Highway 85 from

Sleeper Avenue to Dale Avenue and Heatherstone Way. That short new section is expected to cost \$5 million, and the difference will be covered by various city funds, said Mike Fuller, assistant public works director. City officials hope to begin construction early next year.

The final section, to Mountain View High School, is estimated to cost about \$13 million and is not currently funded.

"Until Mountain View made enough progress," Grossman said, "there was never enough reason for other cities to pay attention."

Now, the other cities along the creek — Los Altos, Sunnyvale and Cupertino — are starting to develop their own plans. Cupertino opened a three-quarter-mile stretch of trail in July. Los Altos conducted a feasibility study last year, where consultants analyzed potential routes through the city.

A recent decision in Sunnyvale, though, is a "major breakthrough," Los Altos Council Member Val Carpenter said. In April, the Sunnyvale City Council voted to rescind a policy that had been in the city's general plan since 1994 prohibiting the trail from coming through the city.

The trail has been controversial in Sunnyvale and other cities — residents brought a petition with 300 signatures opposing the policy change to the April council meeting, according to minutes from the meeting. Residents who live along the creek say they are fearful the trail will be sent through their backyards, and it will bring crime and traffic near their homes.

Sunnyvale Vice Mayor Christopher Moylan said those fears have proven to be unfounded in Mountain View so far and sought to reassure residents that the trail won't go through anyone's

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property. April's vote does not mean the trail will necessarily go through Sunnyvale, he said, but rather allows Sunnyvale to participate in discussions.

"Each year more people want (the trail), and it's the same group of people opposed," Moylan said.

Moylan said he hopes the cities, which meet quarterly in a working group, will soon apply for grants for another feasibility study, this time looking at routes for the whole trail.

Determining those routes won't be easy. Large portions of the trail will likely have to zig-zag through Cupertino, Sunnyvale and Los Altos on surface streets, Grossman said, because much of the land adjacent to the creek in those cities is private property. When Highway 85 was built in the 1960s, the state gave those three cities and Mountain View the land adjacent to the creek but Mountain View was the only one to keep it, Grossman said.

With the cooperation of Sunnyvale, though, there are more options on the table, Carpenter said.

"Now we can really work together to put together the best route," she said.

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A bicyclist pedals along Stevens Creek Trail near Sleeper Avenue in Mountain View. The Mountain View City Council last week accepted a new round of grant money to finish another section of the trail, and momentum is building for other cities along the creek to complete their portions. (Kirstina Sangsahachart/Daily News) (Kirstina Sangsahachart)



A woman and her dog jog down Stevens Creek Trail near Sleeper Avenue in Mountain View. The Mountain View City Council last week accepted a new round of grant money to finish another section of the trail, and momentum is building for other cities along the creek to complete their portions. (Kirstina Sangsahachart/Daily News) (Kirstina Sangsahachart)



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