

Mountain View troubled by Google's bridge plans

If Google hopes to build a pair of bridges over Stevens Creek, it may have to find a way to cross a much larger divide between it and the Mountain View City Council.

The proposed bridges in the North Bayshore Area would connect the ever-expanding tech giant's headquarters with a new 42-acre campus at Moffett Field. Google entered into a long-term lease with NASA in 2008 for the property on the west side of NASA Ames Research Center and aims to build 1.2 million square feet of offices, housing and other structures.

But the potential impact of the spans on Stevens Creek Trail has some Mountain View council members up in arms.

"This is a very clear step away from protecting the environment," Council Member

[View Proposed bridges](#) in a larger map

Ronit Bryant said at a study session Tuesday night. "This is, in the name of public transit, just adding a lot of cars on the trail where we haven't had them before. My gut feeling is

extremely negative on this."

As proposed, the bridges would be two-lane roads with bicycle paths and sidewalks. They would be open to company shuttles, emergency vehicles and possibly public transportation. No private cars would be allowed, whether from Google or not, but pedestrians and bicyclists from the public would be able to cross, Deputy City Manager Kevin Woodhouse said.

One 180-foot-long bridge would connect with Charleston Road, while the other 175-foot-long span would replace a smaller pedestrian bridge at Crittenden Lane.

Where

Stevens Creek Trail and the bridges intersect, Google is proposing to either lower the path to pass under the spans or build at-grade crossings. Several council members said they didn't like the idea of a road bisecting the trail.

Mayor Jac Siegel said his "priority Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 is the trail."

"What are we going to do, we're going to say, 'Oh, because we're going to get some revenue ... that we're going to let you go ahead and do things with our trail that we fought for 20 years to get to this point?' " he asked. "I've got some real issues."

The Moffett Field campus could generate upward of \$700,000 per year for Mountain View, according to a city staff report.

While Friends of the Stevens Creek Trail executive director Aaron Grossman agreed with some of the council's concerns, he called Google's proposal a "great overall project" that will provide more access to the trail.

Grossman, however, is worried that lowering the path could create a problem, because "trail users don't want to be going up and down a lot."

A Google spokesman said, "The purpose of the Steven's Creek Trail project is to both increase connectivity in the North Bayshore area as well as access and mobility for pedestrians, bicyclist, emergency shuttle vehicles

and public transit. We believe this project will benefit the city of Mountain View by increasing transportation in the area."

In a description of the project, planners say the bridges will improve emergency vehicle access to the area and help reduce traffic.

It's not clear yet how much say Mountain View will have in the project, but it does have authority over whether the bridges can be connected to city streets and will help lead an environmental review, according to city staff. City Attorney Jannie Quinn said she plans to conduct a legal analysis in the coming weeks to determine the city's exact role as the project moves forward.

Woodhouse said environmental documents could be available for public review as soon as October.

"There will be, through that process, much more information to come forward, and more opportunity for public input and more opportunity for council input," he said.

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