

Stevens Creek Trail and Wildlife Corridor

Mountain View, California

In the early 1960s, Mountain View was an agricultural town. Forty years of sustained growth has transformed it into a major residential and employment center in the heart of today's Silicon Valley. Regional transportation planners report that the daily influx of commuters from surrounding communities doubles the city's workforce. In the North Bayshore Area alone, 16,000 employees come to work each morning at the NASA-Ames Research Center and large high tech companies such as Silicon Graphics (SGI) and Sun Microsystems.

The new Stevens Creek Trail gives many of these commuters the option to bicycle, skate, jog or walk to work. Since 1992, almost \$3 million in Transportation Enhancements (TE) awards have helped complete two segments of a four-phase trail plan. Mountain View's 6-mile section of the 34-mile Stevens Creek Trail provides safe travel links between residential neighborhoods, jobs and schools.

FOUR PHASES OR "REACHES" OF TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

The recommendation of the 1992 trail master plan to segment development into Reaches has proved key to keeping the project moving over its multi-year time frame. Each Reach was scoped to begin and end at a developed school or park and to connect to the city's on-street system of bike lanes and sidewalks. This ensured that each Reach had its own integrity in the event that the whole trail could not be completed.

Reach One provides direct access to a 700-acre recreation and wildlife conservation area that is visited by more than a million people

annually. It also passes through the expanding North Bayshore commercial area which includes six million square feet of developed office space and a cinema complex.

Reach Two is the only safe bicycle and pedestrian access route that "bridges" the barrier of U.S. 101, an eight lane expressway. Utilizing an underpass next to the creek, it connects city dwellers, 95 percent of whom live south of 101, with the North Bayshore commercial area and park, located north of the highway.

Reach Three, funded in part with two TE awards, was the most costly. It includes multiple bridges and underpasses crossing the creek and major highways, and a 1,100-foot bridge spanning an expressway and four rail lines. This Reach passes through Mountain View's downtown business district, and is directly adjacent to the new transit center where intermodal travelers can catch a commuter train, light rail trolley, or local bus.

Reach Four extends through 40 acres of open space, linking residential neighborhoods to an elementary school and a high school. It will use a third TE award to take the trail over a busy freeway. The local match has been devoted to repairing the creek's riparian habitat and floodplain area, which was extensively damaged during road construction in prior decades.

Outside of Mountain View the trail will extend eight more miles through the communities of Sunnyvale, Los Altos and Cupertino, then another 20 miles, to the top of the Santa Cruz Mountains. When completed the Stevens Creek Trail will link these Silicon Valley communities to the Pacific Ocean, Bay Area Ridge Trail and San Francisco Bay Trail.

LESSONS LEARNED

The existence of an effective local citizen group, The Friends of the Stevens Creek Trail, was essential to the trail's success. Their



list of over 5,000 trail supporters were routinely rallied for public hearings and ribbon-cuttings. An annual 10k community run, combined with a nature walk for families and kids, raised thousands of dollars to support their work and promote the trail vision in the community. Numerous corporate sponsors and a gift catalog raised over \$35,000 for trail amenities. Their policy to publicly advocate only for full completion of the trail, and not take positions on particular alignment options or design solutions, minimized political headaches. When faced with concerns raised by adjacent property owners or neighborhood groups at public meeting, The Friend's consistently open-minded approach on how the trail goes through, avoided putting city officials in a position of having to choose whether or not the trail would go through.

SUMMARY

The Stevens Creek Trail and Wildlife Corridor creates viable transportation options for the residents of Mountain View and daily commuters to the area. Developing a long-term vision and enlisting public support from the beginning helped produce this important link to multiple community resources.

CONTACT

Jana Sokale Environmental Planner & Grants Consultant Janaslc@aol.com