

## Scenic Circle gate to remain locked until city staff looks at alternatives

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A controversial pathway near Blackberry Farm will remain closed off — at least for now — while the Cupertino City Council looks at alternative pathways for students to use as the city moves toward creating safer routes to school.

The pathway at Scenic Circle was among the possible routes identified in the city's safe route plan for students going to Lincoln Elementary, Kennedy Middle and Monta Vista High schools, but neighbors living near the gate protested the trail's reopening. Many said crime and rowdy late-night gatherings at the site were a problem in past years before the city shut down the trail in 2005 due to resident complaints.

Parents urged the council to reopen the gate so their children can use the route to avoid busy streets in the tri-school area. Until the closure, students used the shortcut to go from Scenic Circle through Blackberry Farm up to the schools near McClellan and Bubb roads.

"People in Cupertino are speaking up and wanting that gate open. Well, those people don't live in Scenic Circle," said Steve Moody, a Scenic Circle resident. "We've lived in Scenic Circle with our other neighbors for a lot of years. It has a special little

flavor to it, and we do not want to lose that in our circle. That's what has been our fight over the last nine years."

Many residents, students and parents of students spoke of their personal experiences with the congested school area and pleaded for the path to be opened.

"I've seen way too many close calls on McClellan to think that putting that many cyclists and pedestrians with that many cars is safe," said Nisha Kashyap, a Monta Vista High School alumna. "There's nothing worse than riding uphill with a backpack on your back than riding uphill with a backpack on your back and two tons of metal breathing down your neck."

Kashyap said her sister was injured while bicycling along McClellan when a car opened its passenger door and knocked her off her bike.

City staff will investigate alternative access points to Blackberry Farm, and opening the Scenic Circle gate will remain an option when the council revisits the issue in February.

If the council decides to move forward with opening Scenic Circle, the path leading to the bridge will need some improvements.

Updates will cost about \$125,000 and are subject to environmental review, according to city staff. A bridge project would take four to five months to complete.

Opening the gate has no other operating cost as park service staff already patrols Blackberry Farm and can open and close the gate.

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