

Cupertino reviews feasibility study that could connect the Stevens Creek Trail

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The Joint Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study has been accepted by the Cupertino City Council, the last of four cities to review a plan that aims to some day bridge gaps in the trail.

The study looked at public lands and rights of way, protecting environmental habitats, accommodating bicyclists of all levels, closing the gap between Mountain View and Cupertino and connecting to parks, schools, shopping and on-street bicycle and pedestrian systems, according to a city staff report.

Council members Darcy Paul and Rod Sinks and Vice Mayor Savita Vaidhyanathan all voted June 21 in favor of accepting the study and adopting the recommendations made by the Joint Cities Working Team. Mayor Barry Chang was absent, and Councilman Gilbert Wong had to recuse himself because he lives near the trail.

Approval of the feasibility study doesn't solidify any preferred routes for the trail but rather acts as a framework for the cities to work with, according to city staff.

The study area is bounded by the Dale Avenue and Heatherstone Way overcrossing in Mountain View to the north, Mary Avenue to the east, Stevens Creek Boulevard to the south and Rancho San Antonio County Park to the west.

Entire neighborhoods showed up in droves to send a message to the council that they don't want the trail going through their neighborhoods for safety, security and privacy reasons. The council's discussion, which began after midnight, saw nearly two hours of public comment from Cupertino residents and the surrounding community in Mountain View, Sunnyvale and Los Altos.

"I can't believe you could own a home in a quiet cul-de-sac and be willing to put this major trail in your front yard," Ed Blum, a resident from the Oakdale Ranch neighborhood, said during the public hearing. "It's not a question of whether this will harm us; it's a question of how much it will harm us."

Blum cited concerns regarding parking, strangers, robberies and litter. He said that having the trail go through their neighborhood would hurt property values.

Some other speakers were supportive of the plan, but expressed dismay about the project timeline.

"I really feel that it's disappointing that it took over 25 years to do a 20-mile stretch of the Stevens Creek Trail and 10 years to do a 1-mile stretch in Cupertino," said Michelle Hawker. "I really believe that as a city it's important to take a look at the feasibility studies and figure out which ones are best suited for our purposes. I think it's common sense that our cities be connected. [But] we don't have bike trails that are for all of the people to use at all different levels, pedestrian and recreation use."

The project's working team, which consists of an elected official from each of the four cities involved, has been working on the plan since 2011. In 2009, a committee was formed to discuss the trail, and one representative from each city and one representative from the Santa Clara Valley Water District were involved.

Councilman Darcy Paul is Cupertino's current working team representative. There is also a Stevens Creek Trail citizens working group that brings in voices from the community to give their opinion and have a say in the process.

The feasibility study "seeks to provide a comprehensive study to the city councils of Sunnyvale, Cupertino, Los Altos, and Mountain View that will assist them in determining next steps in narrowing feasible alternatives and selecting and coordinating a preferred alternative for completion of a multi-use trail in the Stevens Creek Corridor," according to the city.

There are currently 5 miles of the trail running from the San Francisco Bay in Mountain View to Dale Avenue and Heatherstone Way in Mountain View. A mile of the trail runs through Cupertino, from McClellan Ranch Preserve through Blackberry Farm to Stevens Creek Boulevard.

According to Gail Seeds with the city's department of recreation and community services, now that the council has approved the feasibility study, the Joint Cities Working Team will get together to review the decisions made by the four city councils and make plans for next steps.

For more information, visit cupertino.org/stevenscreektrail.

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