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By **Eliza Ridgeway**



A segment of the Stevens Creek Trail in Mountain View already draws cyclists and hikers traversing the city.

As Los Altos city staff fine-tune a Stevens Creek Trail proposal to bring before the city council next month, residents are jumping on the debate about how, where and whether to build a trail through town.

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The master plan to build a multiuse trail linking the Santa Cruz Mountains to the San Francisco Bay along Stevens Creek has been in the works for decades but requires the independent action of four cities, the Valley Transportation Authority and various county agencies.

Los Altos' trail, if created, would link Mountain View to Cupertino.

The city hired consultant Alta Planning + Design to develop a trail link proposal to stretch from Mountain View High School to Interstate 280, using \$20,000 from city funds, \$80,000 from the VTA and \$5,000 from the Friends of Stevens Creek group.

At a community meeting in December, residents ranked a route stretching along Grant Road and Fremont Avenue as their favorite of the five options Alta presented. This option, starting behind the high school, would snake along the creek beside Fremont Avenue, then continue along Grant Road and Foothill Expressway with 10-foot-wide multiuse paths that accommodate cyclists and pedestrians and are separated from the road by a gutter or barrier.

City staff are working with Alta on a draft study to present to the council. After the council reviews the recommendation, residents will have an opportunity to comment on the plan. The council already specified that the trail will not cross private residents, but some residents have expressed concerns about residential impact nonetheless, including increased foot traffic the trail could attract to their neighborhoods and its possible negative environmental impact.

“I think that it is a natural thing to say, ‘Wait a minute, you’re potentially going to change who is coming through my neighborhood,’” said Curt Riffle, task force co-chairman. “The city council made a good move when they said we’re not going to go across private property. We thought that perhaps as we put this into a public space, it wouldn’t be as concerning to the neighbors.”

Creekside neighbor Connie Mariottini attended the December meeting when residents ranked their favorite trail options and said she was taken aback by some of the consultant’s proposed routes.

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In Our Opinion

“The homeowners own up to the bank of the creek, and it’s real thick vegetation with a steep slope,” Mariottini said. “I truly cannot imagine that they could put a trail anywhere close to the creek in Los Altos without harming the environment.”

Jeannie Bruins, co-chairwoman of the city’s Stevens Creek Trail task force, said that the segment of the proposed trail that runs near the creek is in an area of open field.

“There’s no housing, there’s no residential, it’s completely open,” she said. “Where we are along the creek, we are along the creek in the city of Mountain View and in the city of Sunnyvale. It’s not in anybody’s backyard.

“I think what came out loud and clear was that if we are going to make an investment, we want it to be an asset to the city of Los Altos,” Bruins said. “By making the turn down Fremont and onto Grant, you’ve made it accessible to more of the population of south Los Altos. ... We’re trying to do it on the wider streets that offer the ability to separate the pathway or trail from traffic.”

The city of Mountain View maintains a 4-mile section of the paved trail from Shoreline Park to near El Camino Real and Grant Road. Work to expand that trail to pass underneath El Camino near Highway 85 is scheduled to begin this year.

Contact Eliza Ridgeway at elizar@latc.com.

[Editorial](#)

The scene at the Feb. 28 Los Altos Hills City Council meeting was touching: Dozens of workers from the Los Altos Garbage Company (LAGCo), dressed in their fluorescent uniforms, pleaded with council members to renew the town’s contract and continue a relationship going back 30 years.

The council is seriously considering a staff recommendation to sign with a new company, Green Waste Recovery Services of San Jose, which is offering expanded service at a lower cost.

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