

FIGURE 4 – REACH 3: WHISMAN SCHOOL TO LANDELS SCHOOL

Feasibility and Site Analyses

REACH 3

WHISMAN SCHOOL
TO LANDELS SCHOOL

Location

Reach 3 would begin on the west side of Stevens Creek at the Whisman School pedestrian bridge (Reach 2) and extend to Landels School. This one mile section of trail would pass beneath the Middlefield Road bridge and Highway 85 bridge and over Central Expressway, Southern Pacific Railroad and Evelyn Avenue (See Figure 4).

Trail Alignment

The trail alignment in Reach 3 would continue south along the west bank of the creek from the pedestrian bridge at Whisman School. In order to avoid a street crossing at Middlefield Road, the trail alignment would meander west away from the creek toward Highway 85. The trail alignment would pass beneath the Middlefield Road bridge and run parallel to Highway 85. The trail would encroach on Caltrans right-of-way when it passes beneath the overpass. The level area between Highway 85 and the Middlefield Road bridge abutment would be widened to accommodate the trail. A retaining wall taller than the one

currently in place would allow the present pathway to be widened. Additional sound walls or safety barriers would also be required to protect trail users from Highway 85 traffic. All of these modifications would require approval from Caltrans (See Figure 5).

After traveling beneath the bridge, the trail would meander back toward the creek through City-owned land before reaching the first of several Highway 85 bridges which span the creek. At this first bridge, the trail would be ramped down into a secondary flood control area under Highway 85

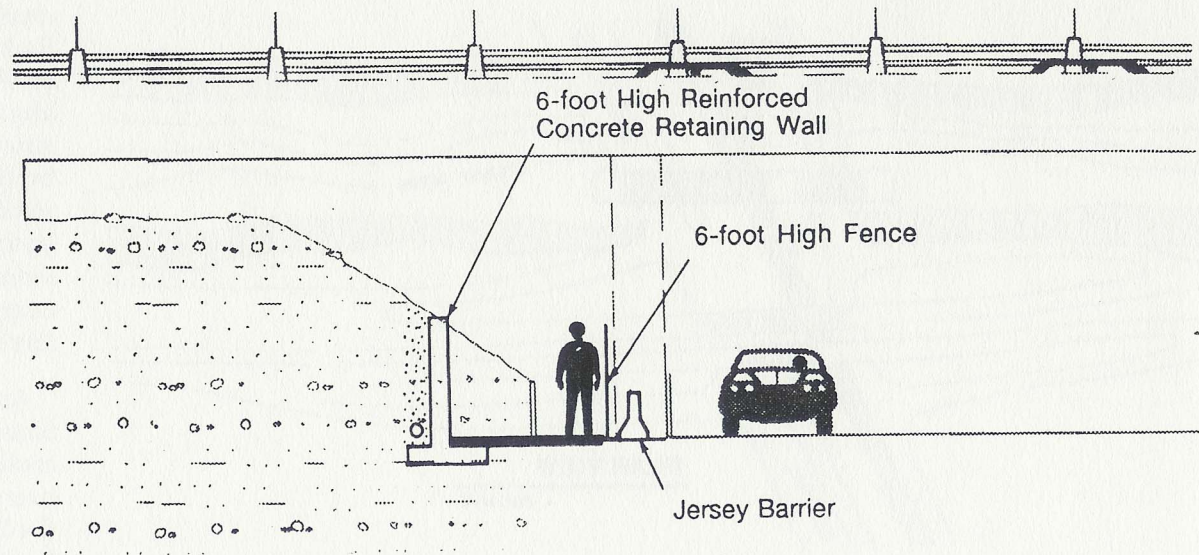


FIGURE 5 – CONCEPTUAL ENGINEERING DESIGN OF STEVENS CREEK TRAIL BELOW MIDDLEFIELD ROAD

and ramped back up into another parcel of City-owned open space land at the end of Central Avenue. The secondary flood control area under Highway 85 is lined with sakrete bags. Much of this lining would be excavated to widen the embankment for the trail. The engineering design used at this bridge would be the same as that employed at Highway 101 (See Figure 6).

The trail will cross over the creek on a pedestrian bridge a short distance from Highway 85 in the vicinity of Central Avenue. A neighborhood access point is recommended at the end of Central Avenue where the road dead ends at the creek corridor.

Once on the east bank of the creek the trail would meander through open space land toward Central Expressway. The bridges that span the

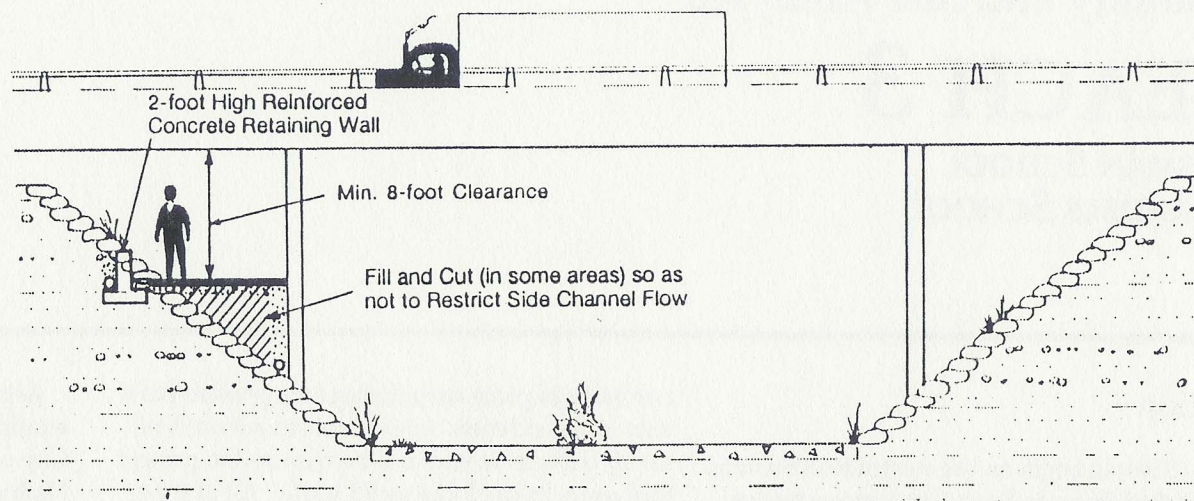


FIGURE 6 – CONCEPTUAL ENGINEERING DESIGN OF HIGHWAY 85 UNDERPASS

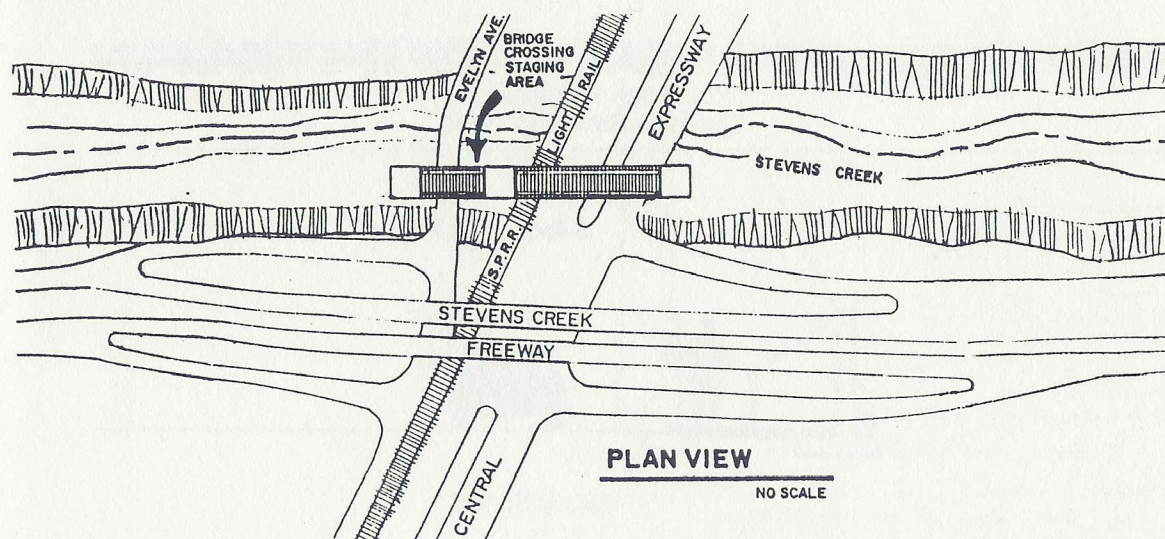


FIGURE 7 – PLAN VIEW OF OVERPASS AT CENTRAL EXPWY., SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD AND EVELYN AVE.

creek at Central Expressway, Southern Pacific Railroad and Evelyn Avenue present the greatest challenge to providing for an uninterrupted trail alignment. The creek channel is the most constricted beneath the Southern Pacific Railroad bridge. Underpasses cannot be employed as a result of the narrowing of the flood control channel beneath these three bridges. The solution to providing trail alignment in this area is to employ an overpass to go above all three thoroughfares (See Figure 7).

An overpass in the area of Central Expressway, Southern Pacific Railroad and Evelyn Avenue could be designed to fulfill three needs. First, the overpass would provide the best alignment for the Stevens Creek Trail. Second, the overpass might be designed to serve the needs of both light rail riders and trail users. A mid-span down

ramp from the overpass would allow light rail riders and trail users to access the proposed Evelyn Avenue light rail station. The proposed light rail park and ride lot could feed into the overpass safely bringing light rail passengers across Evelyn Avenue and the railroad tracks. Third, the overpass would connect neighborhoods north of Central Expressway with downtown.

After passing above these three major thoroughfares, the trail would cross the creek from the east bank to the west bank north of the Dana Street bridge. The precise placement of the pedestrian bridge crossing would be dependent upon the design and location of the overpass. Once on the west bank of the creek, the trail would travel beneath the Dana Street bridge and continue to Landels School using a preexisting trail that was installed when the Dana Street bridge was reconstructed in 1980.

Trail Alignment Alternatives

The above-ground crossing at Central Expressway, Southern Pacific Railroad and Evelyn Avenue could be accomplished through the use of a bike lane suspended from Highway 85. This alternative could be employed if the overpass were to serve only trail users and not be combined with the planned light rail pedestrian overpass. The suspended bike lane would require ramps over the Highway 85 on-and off-ramps which are present between the roadway and the creek. As a result, the suspended bike lane could be as expensive an engineering feature as the overpass. However, the use of a suspended bike lane would consolidate the engineered features to one area,

thereby enhancing the aesthetic qualities of this section of downtown Mountain View. (A cost estimate for this alternative was not included in this study, but it could be pursued during the design phase of Reach 3.)

Land Use and Ownership

In Reach 3, the trail would be located on City-owned Stevens Creek park chain land. In a few instances, the trail would encroach on transportation agencies' rights of way while passing beside, beneath or above major roads (*See Figure 4*). Land use patterns on the creek bank opposite the trail vary.

Apartment buildings and Mountain View Well Site #18 are located on the creek bank opposite the trail between Whisman School and the first creek crossing of Highway 85. Dense riparian vegetation growing on either side of the creek make it impossible to view the apartments from the trail. Single-family homes are located on the creek bank opposite the trail between the first creek crossing of Highway 85 and Central Expressway. Again in this area, dense riparian vegetation screens the houses from the trail.

Central Avenue dead ends into the creek just south of the Highway 85 overpass. The homes located at the end of Central Avenue are in view of the trail. The construction of a ramp at the end of Central Avenue is recommended to provide residents with access to the trail.

The trail would be located on the developed bank of the creek between Central Expressway

and Landels School. The trail would be adjacent to an apartment complex off of Dana Street. Existing tennis courts and lawn area in the back of the apartment buildings would separate the trail from the apartment carports. A portion of the Stevens Creek Trail near the apartment complex is developed and currently used by the community. Residents of the apartment complex can walk on a trail through the common area and beneath the Dana Street bridge to Landels School. The Stevens Creek Trail would use the portion of this existing trail that is located beneath the Dana Street bridge.

Creek Character, Plant Community and Animal Life

Stevens Creek meanders through Reach 3 making wide sweeping turns through a lush riparian forest. In the open space parcels adjacent to the creek remnants of a cottonwood-sycamore riparian forest dominate. Mature, native cottonwoods (*Populus fremontii*) dominate the corridor. Black walnut (*Juglans hindsii*), big leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), sycamore (*Plantanus racemosa*), California hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta californica*) and a few coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) make up the remainder of the upper canopy. The banks of the creek are covered by dense blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) vines and poison oak (*Rhus diversiloba*) shrubs. The riparian vegetation is rich and will contribute to the scenic beauty of this reach of the trail.



ILLUSTRATION 3 – OBSERVATION DECK OVERLOOKING STEVENS CREEK AT LANDELS SCHOOL

Portions of these open space parcels host pockets of non-native species including eucalyptus, black acacia, kumquat and ivy. This vegetation should be replaced with native riparian species to restore and revitalize the indigenous plant community.

The dense vegetation and the diversity of plant species provides an abundance of food for wildlife. Audubon warblers, goldfinches, house finches, brown towhees, scrub jays, cedar waxwings, mockingbirds, robins, Brewer's and redwinged blackbirds, bushtits, flickers and others are frequently encountered in this section of the creek. Eastern gray squirrels are abundant and Beechy ground squirrels and pocket gophers are common.

Amphibians and reptiles are less frequent than previously reported in 1980 (The Planning Collaborative, 1980). With the exception of the western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), none of the previously reported amphibians and reptiles were observed during the field work for this trail feasibility study. Restoring the creek corridor to meet the habitat requirements of fish, amphibians and reptiles should be a goal of any future project.

Opportunities

Mountain View Well Site #18 is located on the east bank of the creek north of Whisman School. This site could be used as a park facility and trail access point.

A neighborhood access point could be developed at Central Avenue where it dead ends into the west bank of the creek.

Reach 3 intersects with the proposed light rail route. This link has the potential to increase both light rail ridership and trail use.

Privately held land on the east and west banks of Stevens Creek between Evelyn Avenue and the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks is being examined for rezoning by the City of Mountain View as part of the Evelyn Avenue Corridor Study (Freedman, Tung and Bottomley, 1990). The land directly adjacent to the creek would provide the closest access to the downtown. A staging area for the trail, complete with bicycle racks, signage, restrooms and drinking fountains, would enhance this area.

Landels School could serve as a staging area for the trail. Parking, restroom and drinking water facilities are located at the school. Additional facilities could also be built closer to the trail using the utility lines present on the school site.

The lush riparian vegetation lining the creek near Landels School provides an excellent site for observing and studying nature. A deck cantilevered over the creek is recommended as a resting place and an interpretive site for observers (See Illustration 3).

Constraints

In order to avoid a street crossing at Middlefield Road, the trail alignment has been located adjacent to Highway 85 below the Middlefield Road bridge. This trail alignment encroaches on Caltrans right of way and permits will be required for construction.

At the Highway 85 bridge, the creek is lined with concrete sacks. This area must be modified to allow for passage of pedestrians and bicyclists. Permits from a variety of agencies will be required (See Summary of Findings Chart).

An overpass above Central Expressway, Southern Pacific Railroad and Evelyn Avenue will require permits from various agencies (See Summary of Findings Chart).