

FIGURE 8 – REACH 4: LANDELS SCHOOL TO SLEEPER PARK

Feasibility and Site Analyses

REACH 4

LANDELS SCHOOL TO SLEEPER PARK

Location

Reach 4 would begin at Landels School and extend south past El Camino Real to the creek bank opposite Sleeper Avenue. Neighborhood access would be provided at the end of Sleeper Avenue on Santa Clara Valley Water District land that is currently maintained by the City as open space under a joint use agreement with the Water District. This one mile section of trail would pass beneath Highway 237, across Yuba Drive and beneath El Camino Real (See Figure 8).

Trail Alignment

Reach 4 of the trail would continue on the west bank for several hundred yards before leaving Landels School property and crossing the creek to the east bank. A pedestrian bridge would be constructed just north of an apartment complex located at the end of Mercy Street. The trail would travel along the east bank between the Highway 85 sound wall and the creek. This section of trail would require significant engineering to ensure slope stability and to create a trail

below the looped on-ramp to Highway 237 from Highway 85 and the Highway 237 roadway.

Underneath the on-ramp, the trail would be cut into the sloped bank and require engineered retaining walls both above and below the trail (See Figure 9). At Highway 237 the trail would be ramped down into a secondary flood control area and up into PG&E-owned land located at the end of Yuba Drive. This section of the secondary flood control area is wide and level providing a surface for the trail.

After exiting the PG&E property the trail would cross the Yuba Drive bridge to the west bank of the creek. In order to avoid further travel on Yuba Drive or street crossings at Highway 237 and El Camino Real, the trail would be aligned between the creek and a PG&E employee parking area and commercial property facing Yuba Drive.

The trail would cross the creek from the west bank to the east bank in the vicinity of Woolworth Garden Center and Kelly Moore Paints. The pedestrian bridge constructed in this area would connect the trail to the Monterey Whaling

Company and Brookside Inn. Once on the east bank, the trail would be ramped down below the El Camino Real bridge and ramped up into the largest of the open space parcels located along

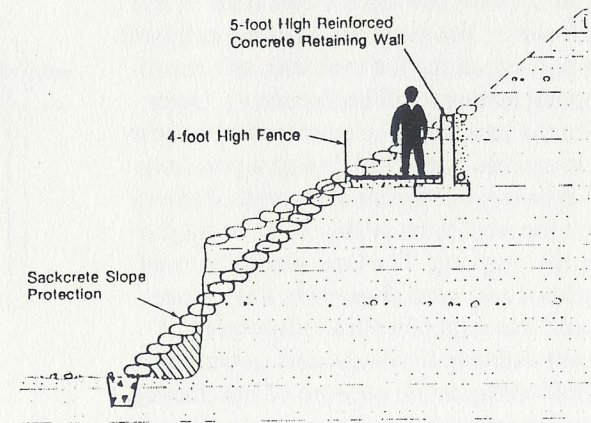


FIGURE 9 – RETAINING WALLS AND SLOPE PROTECTION
ALONG STEVENS CREEK AT MERCY STREET

the creek. The trail would remain on the east bank meandering through an oak grassland and an old apricot orchard. A neighborhood access point is recommended at the end of Sleeper Avenue on Santa Clara Valley Water District land. A pedestrian bridge would be constructed to provide residents south of El Camino Real with access to the trail (*See Figure 10*). Reach 4 would end in this 18-acre open space parcel which is bordered by the creek, Highway 85 and El Camino Real (*See Figure 8*).

Trail Alignment Alternatives

A significant savings in design and construction costs could result if the trail alignment between Landels School and Yuba Drive was located along the west bank of the creek. The proposed trail alignment makes use of City-owned park chain land on the east bank of the creek. However, the steep slopes of the east bank are not best suited for the trail and, as a result, engineering features will be expensive. Open space for the trail could be increased by acquiring a recreational easement though a privately owned apartment complex at the end of Mercy Street on the west bank of the creek, or by purchasing the property. The land along the west bank is level and would provide a far more scenic and less expensive trail alignment. A significant decrease in design and construction costs could mitigate the expense of purchasing an easement or acquiring the property along the west bank of the creek.

On the west bank of the creek, the trail would meander through the mature trees dotting the

property before descending beneath the on-ramp to Highway 237. Along the west bank, the on-ramp is suspended high above the creek. The ground below the on-ramp is fairly level, simplifying the engineering. Passing beneath the on-ramp on the west bank will be less expensive than engineering a trail beneath the on-ramp on the east bank.

After passing the on-ramp, the trail would descend into a secondary flood channel below Highway 237 and ramp up into PG&E-owned property at Yuba Drive. The ramps and retaining walls under the west bank of Highway 237 would be identical in design to those proposed for the east bank trail alignment (*See Figure 11*). Use

of the west bank property would eliminate the need for a pedestrian bridge crossing at Landels School, an engineered trail along the slope of east bank and an engineered trail beneath the on-ramp to Highway 237.

At El Camino Real, the proposed trail alignment would be ramped below the roadway, through the flood control channel and into the large open space parcel on the east bank of the creek. This trail alignment would provide only seasonal access. An alternative would be the construction of a tunnel below El Camino Real. A tunnel would offer year-round use of the trail. Costs for constructing a tunnel vary tremendously and are dependent upon the method of

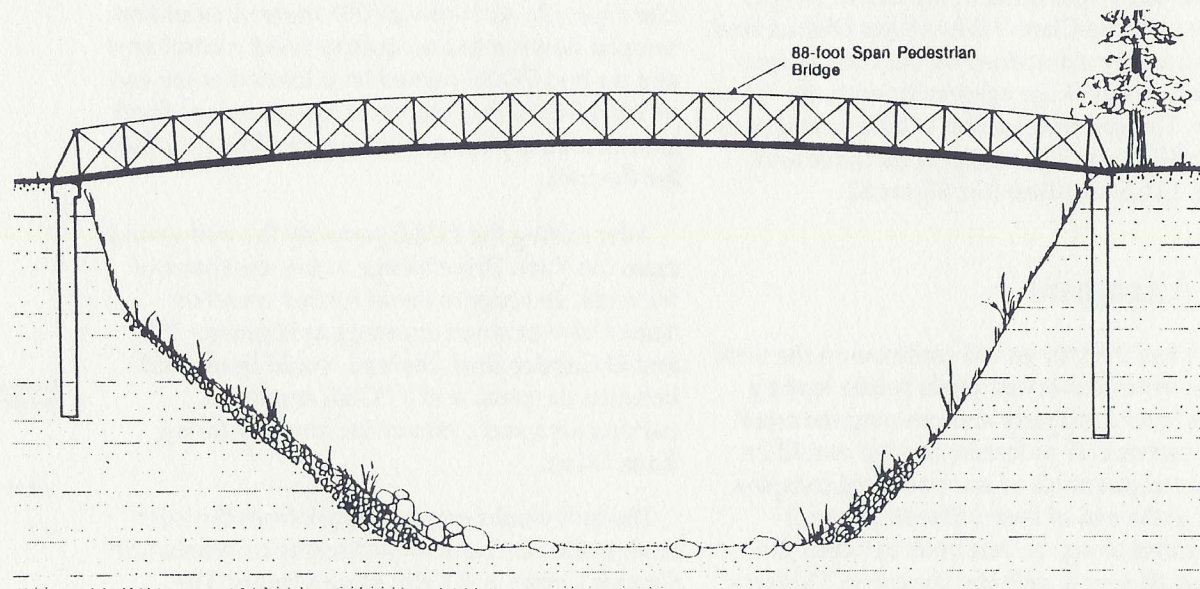


FIGURE 10 – PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE AT SLEEPER PARK

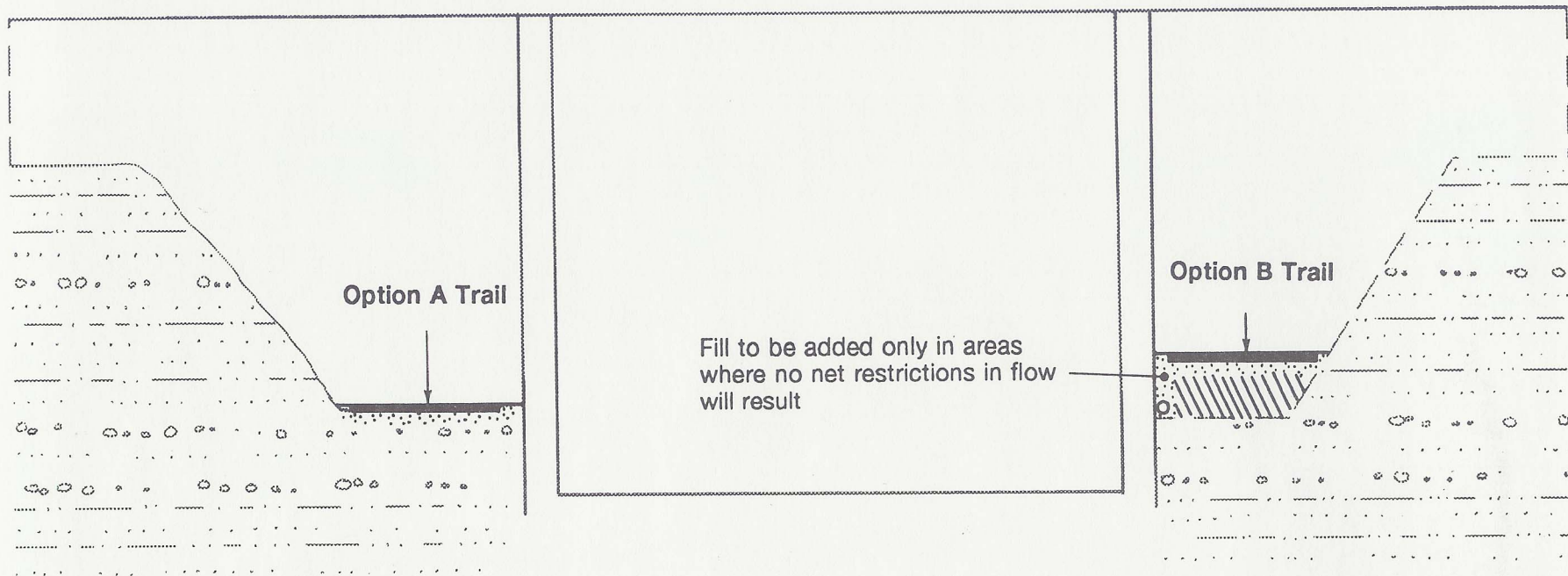


FIGURE 11 – ENGINEERING OPTIONS BELOW HIGHWAY 237

installation. A cost estimate for this alternative had not been determined at the time of writing. This alternative should be pursued during the design phase of Reach 4.

Land Use and Ownership

Although much of the trail in Reach 4 is on City-owned land, portions of the trail travel through other publicly held properties. PG&E owns land on both sides of the creek at Yuba Drive. The City will need to acquire land or an easement from PG&E if the trail is to continue along the creek in this location.

The west bank of the creek between Yuba Drive and El Camino Real is also congested by a PG&E staff parking lot and retail shops facing El Camino Real. The Santa Clara Valley Water District retains a right of way through this area and a joint use agreement will be necessary to bring the trail along the west bank and under El Camino Real. The Monterey Whaling Company and Brookside Inn occupy the east bank of the creek and are screened from the trail by dense vegetation.

Single-family residential neighborhoods and a mobile home park are located on the west bank of the creek south of El Camino Real. Residents of these

neighborhoods will be able to access the trail and the open space land located on the opposite creek bank via the Sleeper Avenue pedestrian bridge. The land use pattern of single-family homes continues upstream to the study limit at Fremont Avenue.

Creek Character, Plant Community and Animal Life

Stevens Creek between Landels School and El Camino Real is steep and constricted. Portions of the banks are unstable and eroding. The cotton-



ILLUSTRATION 4 – NATURE TRAIL AND OBSERVATION DECK OPPOSITE SLEEPER PARK

wood-sycamore forest continues to be the dominant plant community in Reach 4. The riparian community is healthy with young trees replacing the old canopy and a full understory complete with many herbaceous riparian species. Erosion threatens to topple a few of the mature trees which line the edge of the creek bank.

The riparian community at the southern end of Reach 4 continues to receive year-round stream flow from dam releases from Stevens Creek Reservoir located in Lower Stevens Creek County Park. The creek bed downstream from El Camino Real is dry except during the rainy season when excess runoff is released from the reservoir and from street drainages located throughout the creek corridor.

The 18-acre parcel of open space land south of El Camino Real is dominated by both the cottonwood-sycamore forest along the creek corridor and by remnants of an oak-grassland community across the floodplain. Valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*) found along the edges of the open space parcel hint of the former oak woodland which dominated much of the valley floor before development.

The oak-grassland community has been diminished by orchard planting many years ago and by today's practice of disking the land in an effort to reduce fire danger. Dead and decaying apricot trees dot the most upstream portion of this open space parcel. Replacing these fruit trees with coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) trees would assist in the restoration of the oak-grassland community.

The current practice of disking to reduce fire danger must be discontinued if perennial grasses and wildflowers are to return to the site. Cherry trees, gifted to Mountain View from its Sister City of Iwata were planted in the meadow adjacent to Highway 85. This four-acre section of the open space parcel has not been disked for three years. In this area, native bunch grasses and wildflowers are making a come back. On the remainder of the parcel, the process of disking has encouraged the growth of non-native weedy species, adapted to colonizing disturbed areas.

Opportunities

Privately held property at the end of Mercy Street on the west bank of the creek could be added to the park chain. The trail alignment could be switched from the east bank to the west bank if this property were acquired or an easement through the property granted. Addition of this property would provide a superior trail alignment and a neighborhood access point.

The 18-acre parcel of open space land south of El Camino Real lends itself to the exploration of the oak-grassland community. A nature trail leading to a decked study area could be designed to interpret the oak-grassland and would provide a resting place for trail users (*See Illustration 4*).

Constraints

The narrow east bank of the creek at the end of Mercy Street would require engineering to provide a trail alignment underneath Highway 237.

Steep and unstable slopes downstream from Yuba Drive would require engineered ramps.

The crossing at El Camino Real would be solved with an underpass or a tunnel.