



FIGURE 12 – REACH 5: SLEEPER PARK TO FREMONT AVENUE, LOS ALTOS

Feasibility and Site Analyses

REACH 5

SLEEPER PARK TO FREMONT AVENUE, LOS ALTOS

Reach 5 of the Stevens Creek Trail and Wildlife Corridor would travel along the creek on Mountain View-owned park chain land located on either side of Highway 85. Although the trail would be developed on Mountain View property, the majority of Reach 5 is bordered by the cities of Sunnyvale and Los Altos. Therefore, Reach 5 would primarily serve residents of these two adjoining cities. This study details the alignment through Reach 5 in order to demonstrate the entire trail through Mountain View-owned park chain land. It is recommended that the cities of Sunnyvale and Los Altos be contacted prior to any further exploration of this stretch of the creek.

No preliminary engineering was completed for Reach 5. This work should proceed after consultation with the neighboring cities. Preliminary cost estimates for this reach were extrapolated from the cost analysis completed for Reaches 2 through 4.

Location

Reach 5 of the trail would begin on the east bank of Stevens Creek at the Sleeper Park pedestrian bridge (Reach 4) and extend to Fremont Avenue in Los Altos. This 1-1/2 mile section of

trail would cross above Highway 85, exit the creek corridor at Remington Court to bike lanes on Bernardo Avenue and cross Fremont Avenue before entering open space land on the east bank of the creek in Los Altos (See Figure 12).

Trail Alignment

Reach 5 of the trail would continue along the east bank of Stevens Creek for approximately 1/2 mile before reaching the southerly limits of the open space land located to the west of Highway 85. The open space land ends in the area of Dierick Drive and Brook Place. In this location, Stevens Creek flows from the City of Sunnyvale beneath Highway 85 (See Figure 12). Approximately 22-acres of Mountain View park chain land is located to the east between Sunnyvale neighborhoods and Highway 85. An overpass above Highway 85 in the area of Village Court and Knickerbocker Drive would be the preferred trail alignment for providing access to this park chain land.

The overpass would be positioned to bring trail users into the open space land located between Highway 85 and the creek. This pocket of land is

bordered by Highway 85 and the creek and is isolated from the single-family homes located on the opposite creek bank. Sunnyvale residents should maintain their privacy with this trail alignment. The single-family neighborhoods will be buffered from the trail by steep banks along the creek and by the open space land behind their homes (See Figure 12).

Once across Highway 85, the trail would meander for 3/4 of a mile through open space land along the west bank of the creek. The trail would cross over the creek on a pedestrian bridge and exit the park chain to City streets in the area of Remington Court. The Santa Clara Valley Water District maintains an access road into the creek corridor at Remington Court. Joint use of this maintenance road would provide trail users with direct access to City streets and Sunnyvale residents with access to the Stevens Creek Trail. The trail would be routed from Remington Court to Remington Avenue to Bernardo Avenue to Fremont Avenue to rejoin the creek corridor in Los Altos (See Figure 12).

In addition to the trail access at Remington Court, a neighborhood access point could be located at Mockingbird Lane. This site would provide a second location for Sunnyvale residents to access the trail and the park land located on the opposite creek bank. A pedestrian bridge would be required to cross the creek to reach the trail.

Trail Alignment Alternatives

A creek corridor alignment could be further explored as an alternative to the City street trail alignment recommended for the last 1/2 mile of Reach 5. This alternative creek corridor alignment would require the construction of an additional overpass across Highway 85 in the vicinity where the creek flows beneath the roadway for the first time in Reach 5. The cost of a second overpass would double the cost estimates for Reach 5. No previously created access roads which might have been used for the trail are present in the last 1/2 mile of Reach 5. As a result, significant amounts of riparian habitat between the bend in the creek downstream from the overpass site and Fremont Avenue would need to be permanently removed to accommodate the trail and overpass in this location. Removal of the vegetation and creation of the trail in this 1/2 mile of Reach 5 would further add to the costs of construction and would degrade the riparian habitat.

The use of City streets was discouraged throughout the process of this study. However, throughout the last 1/2 mile of Reach 5 a City street trail alignment has been recommended. This alignment proved superior to that along the creek corridor on three accounts. The proposed

trail alignment provides Sunnyvale residents with easy and safe access to the trail and, as a result, may increase the use of the trail. Second, the recommended trail alignment represents a significant cost savings over the alternative creek corridor trail alignment along the entirety of Reach 5. Finally, the alternative trail would require the removal of significant riparian habitat which is contradictory to the goals of the study. Throughout the study the recommended trail alignment makes use of preexisting improvements including maintenance roads, levees, bridges and underpasses and park and school facilities. The lack of these features in last 1/2 mile of Reach 5 pointed to the need for a City street trail alignment.

Land Use and Ownership

In Reach 5, the trail would be located on City-owned Stevens Creek park chain land and surface streets in Sunnyvale and Los Altos (See Figure 12). Single-family residential neighborhoods are located on the developed creek banks throughout Reach 5. Mountain View homes are found along the creek bank opposite that of the trail from Sleeper Avenue to Brook Place where the creek crosses Highway 85.

Sunnyvale neighborhoods are found on the opposite side of Highway 85. These neighborhoods are separated from the recommended trail alignment by the creek. The trail will enter into Los Altos after crossing beneath Highway 85 on Fremont Avenue. In Los Altos single-family homes abut both creek banks. One commercial property is located between the creek, Highway 85 and Fremont Avenue. This Sunnyvale property is used for light industry.

Creek Character, Plant Community and Animal Life

Stevens Creek from Sleeper Avenue south to Brook Place is part of the 18-acre open space parcel described in Reach 4. Stevens Creek, along the opposite side of Highway 85, is characterized by disturbed oak-grassland and riparian habitats. The creek banks along the Sunnyvale neighborhoods are steep and, in places, eroding. The cottonwood-sycamore forest, which is present throughout the downstream reaches, is fragmented. Blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*) and Pacific plum (*Prunus subcordata*) are dominant along the creek banks.

The oak-grasslands which border the riparian habitat are interspersed with a few aging oaks and numerous coyote brush shrubs (*Baccharis pilularis var. consanguinea*). The area closest to Remington Court is disked annually and is characterized by herbaceous weeds and grasses. Just north of this area the parcel takes on more of a rolling landscape, possibly due to the earth moving that occurred during the construction of Highway 85. This area has not been disked and the grassland is dominated by wild oat grasses (*Avena species*).

To the south of Remington Court, the creek gradient changes dramatically. A fish ladder was installed just downstream of the first Highway 85 crossing to mitigate the elevation change. The riparian habitat adjacent to the fish ladder and upstream beyond the first Highway 85 crossing is healthier. Mature and young cottonwoods, sycamores and oaks line the creek banks. The understory is lush and is diminished only by the

presence of non-native periwinkle (*Vinca major*) which has taken hold along portions of the creek bank. Year-round stream flows provide the moisture necessary to sustain many of the herbaceous riparian plants.

Opportunities

Approximately 22-acres of City-owned park chain land adjacent to the creek on either side of Highway 85 would provide area for the trail and opportunities for exploring the natural environment. Year-round stream flows allow study of fresh water plant and animal life.

Neighborhood access points could be developed at Mockingbird Lane and Remington Court where the streets dead end into the east bank of the creek.

Reach 5 connects with bike lanes on Fremont Avenue allowing access to other areas within the cities of Sunnyvale and Los Altos.

Constraints

The first crossing of Highway 85 over the creek in Reach 5 and the limited open space land in this area require a City street trail alignment.

The second crossing of Highway 85 over the creek in Reach 5 requires the use of an overpass to provide for continued trail alignment and access for Sunnyvale residents.