



**CITY OF LOS ALTOS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
October 27, 2015**

SPECIAL MEETING

Agenda Item # 1

SUBJECT: Receive background information on the Stevens Creek Trail Project; review and discuss the Four Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study and Joint Cities Working Team Recommendations; and direct staff accordingly

BACKGROUND

Stevens Creek runs primarily north-south and travels through the Cities of Mountain View, Los Altos, Sunnyvale and Cupertino. The goal of the Stevens Creek Trail is to link the Bay Trail to the Ridge Trail and connect to the Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail that extends to the Pacific Ocean. From the northern end, the trail is complete from the San Francisco Bay to the Dale/Heatherstone overpass in Mountain View. In the southern end, the trail is complete from McClellan Road to Blackberry Farm in Cupertino.

The City of Sunnyvale adopted a policy in 1994 that prevented a regional trail connection within the Stevens Creek corridor in Sunnyvale. Because of this policy, the City of Los Altos conducted a Feasibility Study within City of Los Altos limits.

In 2008, the City of Los Altos accepted the Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study. This study focused on a link from the Stevens Creek Trail in Mountain View to a future connection in Cupertino. The purpose of that plan was to review options for extending the trail through Los Altos from Mountain View to Cupertino and to develop preferred alignments for the trail. That report studied five alternative alignments. Alternative 3, the Stevens Creek/Fremont Avenue Connector was determined to be the preferred alternative. Alternative 3 was, in part, chosen because it potentially provided the greatest access to the trail for Los Altos residents.

In the Spring of 2009, the City of Sunnyvale lifted its policy which allowed consideration of the Stevens Creek Trail from Mountain View to Cupertino within the creek corridor in Sunnyvale and modified its General Plan to allow the Stevens Creek Trail within the city limits, thus allowing its participation in the four cities effort with Mountain View, Los Altos and Cupertino. Mountain View was the lead agency for the initial four cities discussions. Once an agreement was reached to embark on a four cities Feasibility Study, Sunnyvale became the lead agency shepherding the process to secure funds, hire consultants and launch the study.

The Feasibility Study team consists of the following:

- Consultant Team
- Staff Advisory Team - five members of agency staff (one from each city and Santa Clara Valley Water District)
- Citizen Working Group - 12 citizens (three from each City, selected by the Policy Working Group through an application process)
- Policy Working Group - Four Council members (one from each Council) and one Santa Clara Valley Water District Board of Directors representative

Work on the current Feasibility Study began in mid-2012.

Feasibility Study

The purpose of the technical Feasibility Study is to provide an evaluation and analysis of potential alignments for completing the Stevens Creek Trail, based on objective and extensive investigation and research to support decision making. The final Feasibility Study does not include recommendations for preferred alignments.

With the goal of connecting completed portions of the Stevens Creek Trail in Mountain View and Cupertino, both working groups and City staff developed study parameters to help guide the consultant in developing the Feasibility Study. The study parameters were:

- Investigate public lands and right-of-ways
- Protect environmentally-sensitive habitats
- Seek routes that accommodate beginner bicyclists
- Develop direct routes that close trail gap
- Connect to parks, schools, shopping and on-street pedestrian and bike system

The Feasibility Study area focuses on public lands bounded by the following:

- North – Dale/Heatherstone Overcrossing
- East – Mary Avenue
- West – Grant Road and Rancho San Antonio County Park
- South – Stevens Creek Boulevard

Focusing within the bounded area allowed research into potential routes that may provide an experience that ranges from a fully separated facility in an open space area to a local road that serves as a connector to a trail head.

Study segments were defined within the boundaries. The study segments are:

1. Dale Avenue/Heatherstone Way to Fremont Avenue
2. Fremont Avenue to Homestead Road
3. Homestead Road to Stevens Creek Boulevard
4. Trail Connections to Rancho San Antonio County Park via Stevens Creek Boulevard

Between November 2012 and February 2013, three public meetings were held to provide an overview of the purpose of the Feasibility Study and to obtain feedback regarding potential routes through Sunnyvale, Los Altos, and Cupertino. On June 18, 2013, a Los Altos-focused meeting was held at Grant Park Community Center. The focus of this meeting was to provide Los Altos residents an overview of the Feasibility Study, how the study affects Los Altos, a process update, and to solicit public feedback on three alternative configurations for consideration on Fallen Leaf Lane.

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The Feasibility Study team also investigated potential crossing locations in late 2013 in the areas of: Foothill Expressway at Highway 280, a new Highway 280 Pedestrian Bridge west of State Route 85, and Stevens Creek Blvd at State Route 85.

In 2014, the Feasibility Study team met to recap the findings of the additional site investigations and to wrap-up potential trail routes for the study.

After personnel changes within the Feasibility Study team, the group reconvened in March 2015 and defined a process to wrap up the Feasibility Study and develop a recommendations report to be presented to each of the four cities for approval.

EXISTING POLICY

None

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

June 28, 2011; and October 22, 2013

DISCUSSION

The Feasibility Study team reconvened and defined a process to collect public feedback regarding a draft of the Feasibility Study and to develop recommendations for a preferred alignment for the Stevens Creek Trail. See Attachment 1 and 2 for the process map and the Feasibility Study.

On March 27, 2015, the draft Feasibility Study was released for public comment. By the end of the comment period in August 2015, 945 written comments were received. In addition to the written comments, there were seven opportunities after the study was released for the public to provide input regarding the Feasibility Study and potential trail alignments. There were three public meetings held in May and June 2015 and a total of four Citizen Working Group and Joint Cities Working Team (JCWT) meetings between June and August 2015. Technical comments related to the Feasibility Study were reviewed and incorporated as appropriate.

Citizens Working Group (CWG) Recommendations

On June 17, 2015, the CWG discussed the public comments received, including written and oral comments from the three public meetings. At this meeting, the CWG developed general alignment themes which helped guide its alignment recommendations. The alignment themes are:

- Extend the Stevens Creek Trail as a pedestrian/bike path as far south as possible to keep the trail separated from automobile traffic to the greatest extent possible in order to create a family-friendly and recreational route that enhances the bicycle and pedestrian networks of the four cities
- Enhance the habitat along the creek corridor with development of the trail
- For existing bike routes that are in the area but not part of the recommended alignment, modest safety improvements should be considered

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Based on the alignment themes, the CWG recommended preferred alignments for each study segment. Those preferred alignments are:

- Study Segment 1
 - Extend the Stevens Creek Trail through the 22 acres of open space along Stevens Creek/State Route 85
- Study Segment 2
 - Extend the Stevens Creek Trail as a separated off-street pedestrian/bike path along the soundwall on Bernardo Avenue.
 - If the Bernardo Avenue path is not feasible, the second choice is to incorporate modest enhancements to Bernardo, Belleville and Fallen Leaf for bicycle safety.
- Study Segment 3
 - A new grade-separated crossing on Interstate 280 to provide access to the Stevens Creek Trail on a direct route along low-volume, low-speed streets
- Study Segment 4
 - Extend a pedestrian/bike path west from Stonebridge to undeveloped open space land behind the Gate of Heaven Cemetery to provide access to Rancho San Antonio County Park.

A copy of the CWG recommendations is located in Attachment 3, and includes greater detail and discussion around each preferred study segment.

Joint Cities Working Team (JCWT) Recommendations

The JCWT met on July 24, August 5, and August 21, 2015 to discuss the Draft Feasibility Study, public feedback, written and oral comments, and the recommendations from the CWG. The JCWT made its recommendations as a regional body and considered the alignments through all the cities.

The JCWT made the following alignment recommendations:

- Study Segment 1
 - The preferred Stevens Creek Trail route in this segment is an off-street trail through existing 22-acre open space along Stevens Creek/State Route 85
- Study Segment 2
 - The preferred alignment is an off-street bike/pedestrian pathway on Bernardo Avenue including a bike/pedestrian overpass of Fremont Avenue at Bernardo Avenue.
 - Conduct a detailed study to determine parking and traffic impacts on Bernardo Avenue to determine alignment feasibility by the City of Sunnyvale.
 - Consider modest on-street bike/pedestrian improvements on Belleville Way and Fallen Leaf Lane consistent with each city's adopted bike/pedestrian plans. These improvements should be considered regardless if the Bernardo Avenue path is feasible or not and will not include specific signage relating to the Stevens Creek Trail.
- Study Segment 3
 - No off-street facility was recommended in this segment.

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- A recommendation was made to reach out to agencies such as Caltrans and Union Pacific Railroad to express interest in land availability for bike/pedestrian improvements should those agencies make modifications to their facilities or changes their land use.
- Support widening the existing Homestead Road crossing at State Route 85 or building a separate parallel bike/pedestrian bridge to provide a connection to the existing off-street bike/pedestrian pathway on Homestead Road.
- Study Segment 4
 - The preferred route from Blackberry Farms to Rancho San Antonio County Park is a spur alignment which uses the existing Stevens Creek Boulevard on-street bike lanes and then continues west along the north side of Stevens Creek Boulevard starting near Stonebridge.

A detailed report of the JCWT recommendations and meetings is included in Attachment 4.

The culmination of the work of the entire Feasibility Study team was based on regional cooperation for regional benefit. Therefore, the following should be considered by the City Council:

- Support for the overall JCWT recommendations
- Support for modest improvements for the Los Altos portion of Segment 2 consistent with the Circulation Element of the General Plan and the Bicycle Transportation Plan (Attachments 5 and 6). The work recently completed on Newcastle Avenue is suggested as an example of improvements to be made on other streets.
- Support the City of Mountain View in the Stevens Creek Trail Master Planning for Segment 1
- Support the City of Sunnyvale for the Bernardo Avenue Parking and Traffic Impact Analysis
- Support the City of Cupertino should they pursue Stevens Creek Spur Trail to Rancho San Antonio Park

PUBLIC CONTACT

On October 14, 2015, the policy group member and City staff met with representatives of the Fallen Leaf Lane Neighborhood Association core team. At this meeting, the core team was provided a summary of the recommendations made by the JCWT.

Posting of the meeting agenda serves as notice to the general public.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

None

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Categorically Exempt pursuant to CEQA Section 15061 (b) (3)

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RECOMMENDATION

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ALTERNATIVES

Not applicable

Prepared by: Cedric Novenario, Transportation Services Manager

Reviewed by: Susanna Chan, Public Works Director

Approved by: Marcia Somers, City Manager

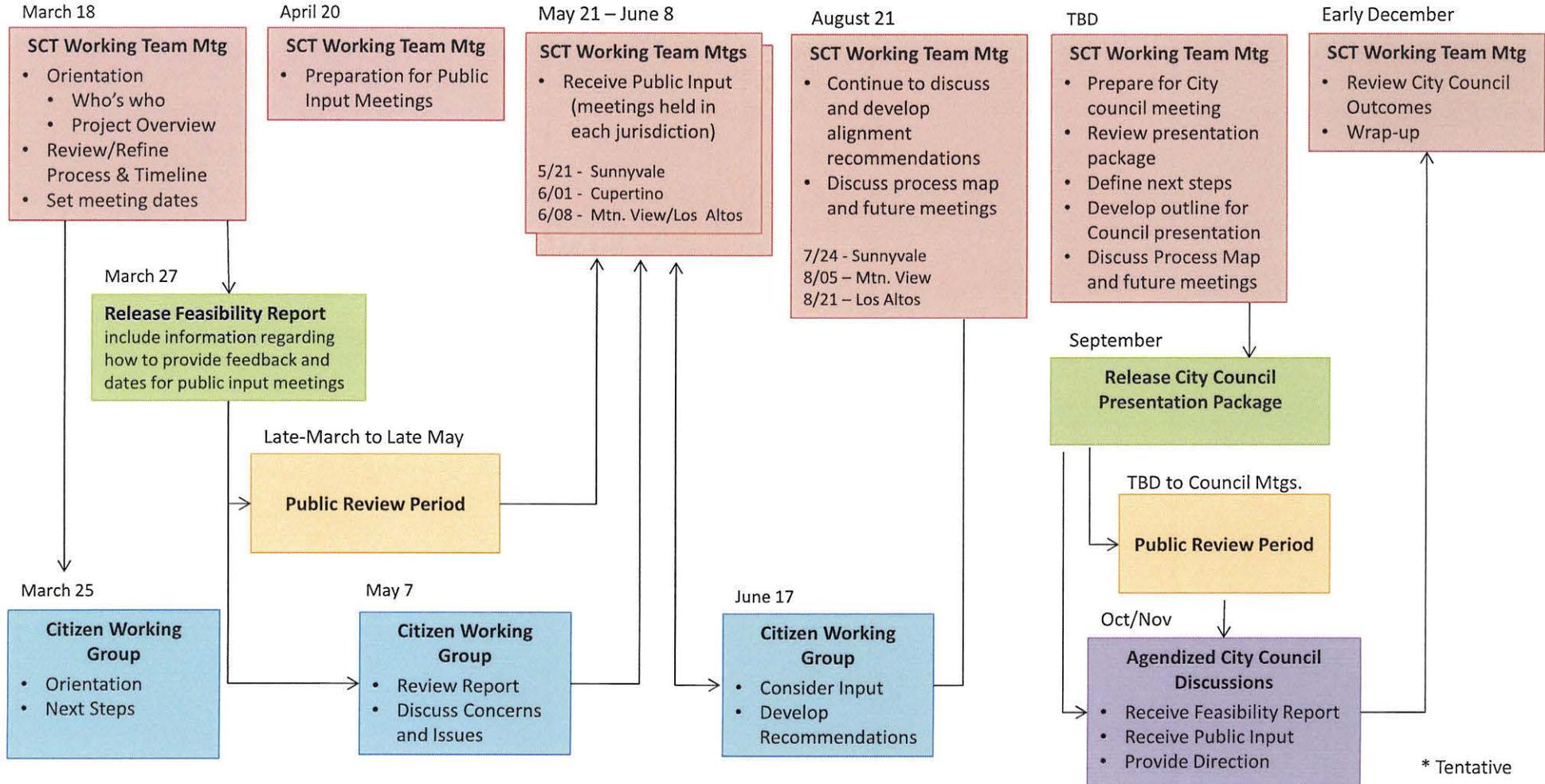
ATTACHMENTS:

1. Stevens Creek Trail Process Map
2. Four Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study
3. Citizens Working Group Recommendation Document
4. Four Cities Coordinated SCT Feasibility Study – JCWT Recommendations to the Councils
5. Figure C-4 Bikeways – Los Altos Circulation Element
6. Figure 5-2 Proposed Complete Bikeway Network – Los Altos Bicycle Transportation Plan

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STEVENS CREEK TRAIL PROCESS MAP

Updated 8/18/15



ATTACHMENT 2
FOUR CITIES COORDINATED STEVENS CREEK TRAIL
FEASIBILITY STUDY

This attachment will be distributed once it is received by the City

Citizens Working Group Recommendations to the Joint Cities Working Team on the Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study

The Citizens Working Group, comprised of three citizens from each city, was selected by the Joint Cities Working Team (JCWT) to assist agency staff, the consultant team and policy representatives to prepare a feasibility study for connecting the completed segments of the Stevens Creek Trail in Mountain View and Cupertino. The Citizens Working Group reviewed technical feasibility findings including ownership and land availability information, habitat and wildlife data, geologic and hydrological materials, assessments of on-street conditions, institutional opportunities and constraints, and cost estimates over the course of two years. The Citizens Working Group members were provided a summary of themes from community input meetings held in May and June 2015 and were provided copies of all written comments submitted by the public on the draft feasibility study report. Their volunteer efforts have culminated in these recommendations discussed at a meeting of the group on June 17, 2015. These recommendations set a long-range vision for the development of the trail. A map is also attached that shows the preferred trail alignment and key connecting routes.

Citizens Working Group Recommendations

1. Alignment Themes

- Extend the Stevens Creek Trail as a pedestrian/bike path as far south as possible to keep the trail separated from automobile traffic to the greatest extent possible in order to create a family-friendly and recreational route that enhances the bicycle and pedestrian networks of the four cities.
- Enhance the habitat along the creek corridor with the development of the trail.
- For existing bike routes that are in the area but not part of the recommended alignment modest safety improvements (such as adding sharrows, other street markings, and/or additional signage) should be considered.

2. Recommendation Details by Segment

a. Dale/Heatherstone Pedestrian Overcrossing to Fremont Avenue

- The preferred alignment and top priority is to extend the Stevens Creek Trail through the 22 acres of open space along State Route 85 from Dale/Heatherstone to Fremont Avenue. The trail should incorporate habitat enhancements and the 22 acres along the creek corridor should be managed as passive open space.
- Develop the project in phases, as needed, to construct as soon as possible. Suggested phases include Dale/Heatherstone to Remington and Remington to Fremont Avenue.
- Include a neighborhood access point at Remington Avenue.
- Continue to explore the potential for an overcrossing over Highway 85 to provide a connection to Mountain View High School, which would provide

Citizens Working Group Recommendations to the Joint Cities Working Team on the Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study

- an east-west connection between Mountain View and Sunnyvale via Remington Drive. This is the lowest priority feature in this segment.
- The preferred crossing of Fremont Avenue is a pedestrian/bike overcrossing to Bernardo Avenue to continue the separated pedestrian/bike path.
 - A second connection to Fremont Avenue is also recommended via a trail underpass beneath State Route 85 connecting to Fremont Avenue west of the Highway 85 interchange adjacent to the southbound off-ramp. A preferred alternative to make this connection is to pursue a trail easement along the creek through the parking lot located at 1195 W. Fremont Avenue (current Stanford medical office).
 - When the Fremont Avenue bridge over Stevens Creek is replaced in the future, consider a trail underpass to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle crossings of Fremont Avenue and provide an access point to the trail.

b. Fremont Avenue to Homestead Road

- If a pedestrian overcrossing at Fremont Avenue is considered feasible, the preferred alignment to extend the Stevens Creek Trail is a separated off-street pedestrian/bike path along the soundwall on Bernardo Avenue. This pedestrian/bike path would continue the experience of the trail by providing a route free from automobile traffic.
- The feasibility study indicates that a road reconfiguration of Bernardo is necessary to support the off-street pedestrian/bike path. Conduct traffic and parking studies to determine the feasibility of either one-way traffic or two-way traffic with loss of parking.
- If a separated pedestrian/bike path were not feasible on Bernardo, the second choice would be to modestly enhance Bernardo, Belleville and Fallen Leaf streets with bicycle safety improvements and wayfinding signage to the trail. None of these on-street routes would be designated as the Stevens Creek Trail. Even if the off-street route on Bernardo is considered feasible, evaluate bicycle safety improvements that could be made with modest improvements to Belleville and Fallen Leaf.
- Connect the pedestrian/bike path on Bernardo to the pedestrian/bike path on the north side of Homestead Road in Los Altos. The Homestead Road path currently extends from Stevens Creek west to El Sereno Avenue near the Grant Road/Foothill Expressway intersection. Continue to explore either a) widening the existing Homestead Road Bridge over State Route 85 or b) placing a new pedestrian/bike bridge parallel and just to the north of the Homestead Road bridge and making path improvements in Sunnyvale west from State Route 85 interchange to Stevens Creek to provide for a continuous off-street path. Extension of the Homestead Road path could proceed as a

Citizens Working Group Recommendations to the Joint Cities Working Team on the Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study

stand-alone project intended to improve walking and bicycling access to Cupertino Middle School and Homestead High School.

- Bicycle safety improvements to existing on-street bike lanes on Mary Avenue and Fremont Avenue.

c. Homestead Road to Stevens Creek Boulevard

- A new grade-separated crossing of Interstate 280 is recommended to provide access to the Stevens Creek Trail on a direct route along low-volume, low-speed streets. The potential grade-separated crossing alternatives in order of preference include:
 - i. The preferred crossing is a trail underpass beneath Interstate 280 using one of the existing tunnels that convey the Stevens Creek flows to San Francisco Bay. This option is potentially technically feasible but was previously not supported by Caltrans. The use of one of the tunnels should continue to be pursued as a long-term solution to extending the trail south. The tunnel route would connect Barranca Drive to Madera Drive. The trail would use Madera Drive to Phar Lap Drive to access Stevens Creek Blvd., where it would connect to the existing trail in Cupertino.
 - ii. An alternate choice is a pedestrian overcrossing that spans both Interstate 280 and the UPRR tracks connecting Peninsular Avenue to Madera Drive.
 - iii. Another option to consider if the previous two alternatives for crossing I-280 were considered infeasible is a pedestrian overcrossing that spans only Interstate 280 connecting Caroline Drive to Somerset Square Park located off Stokes Avenue.
- Safety improvements to Mary Avenue from the Don Burnett Bicycle-Pedestrian Bridge to Stevens Creek Boulevard and the Stevens Creek Boulevard crossing of State Route 85. These improvements are important, but should not be considered part of the Stevens Creek Trail. The State Route 85/Stevens Creek Blvd. interchange is not appropriate for the wide range of cycling abilities that currently use the Stevens Creek Trail in Mountain View and Cupertino.
- Pedestrian and bicycle improvements along Foothill Expressway/Foothill Blvd. between Vineyard Drive and Cristo Rey Drive. These improvements are important, but should not be considered part of the Stevens Creek Trail. The expressway environment is not appropriate for the wide range of cycling abilities that currently use the Stevens Creek Trail in Mountain View and Cupertino.

Citizens Working Group Recommendations to the Joint Cities Working Team on the Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study

d. Trail Connection to Rancho San Antonio County Park and Open Space Preserve

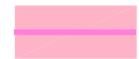
- A pedestrian/bike path that extends along the north side of Stevens Creek Boulevard west from Stonebridge to undeveloped open space land behind the Gate of Heaven Cemetery is recommended to provide access to Rancho San Antonio County Park. This alignment would include a pedestrian/bike bridge over the UPRR tracks to provide a connection to the Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail in Rancho San Antonio County Park. This route is viewed as an important recreational amenity for the community and could be developed as a stand-alone project.
- A trail staging area with parking, restrooms and signage is recommended. The additional parking area would provide a more convenient access into Rancho San Antonio County Park and would also help reduce parking demand at the busy Rancho San Antonio parking lots.

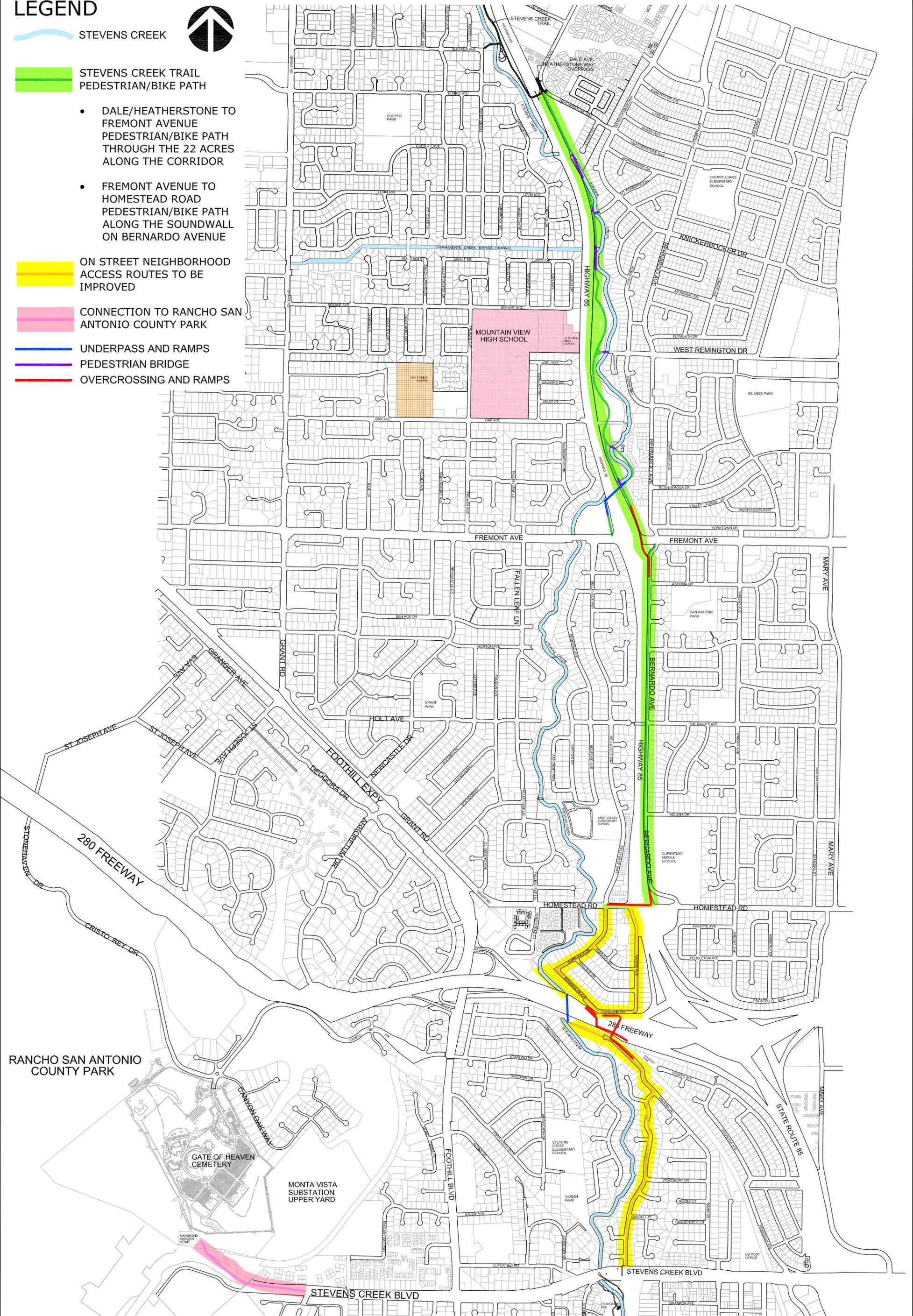
3. Additional Recommendations

- Encourage the Joint Cities Working Team to continue to collaborate throughout the trail planning and development process.
- Continue to seek long-term opportunities to make the creek corridor publically accessible.
- Retain all publicly owned land along the creek corridor.
- Connect the Stevens Creek Trail to a trail using the UPRR corridor when and if this land becomes available.

The feasibility study is the first step in a trail planning process. The feasible alignments identified in the Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study report provide a range of choices for decision makers to consider for extending and improving connections to the trail. The next step is an evaluation of the study findings, the public input and the Citizens Working Group recommendations by the Four Cities Working Team. This will be followed by presentations to the four respective city councils. The next step would involve the development of a trail master plan for the alignments selected by the four city councils. A trail master plan would be evaluated under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). All future trail planning and environmental review will provide opportunities for public involvement.

LEGEND

-  STEVENS CREEK
- 
-  STEVENS CREEK TRAIL PEDESTRIAN/BIKE PATH
 - DALE/HEATHERSTONE TO FREMONT AVENUE PEDESTRIAN/BIKE PATH THROUGH THE 22 ACRES ALONG THE CORRIDOR
 - FREMONT AVENUE TO HOMESTEAD ROAD PEDESTRIAN/BIKE PATH ALONG THE SOUNDWALL ON BERNARDO AVENUE
-  ON STREET NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESS ROUTES TO BE IMPROVED
-  CONNECTION TO RANCHO SAN ANTONIO COUNTY PARK
-  UNDERPASS AND RAMPS
-  PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
-  OVERCROSSING AND RAMPS

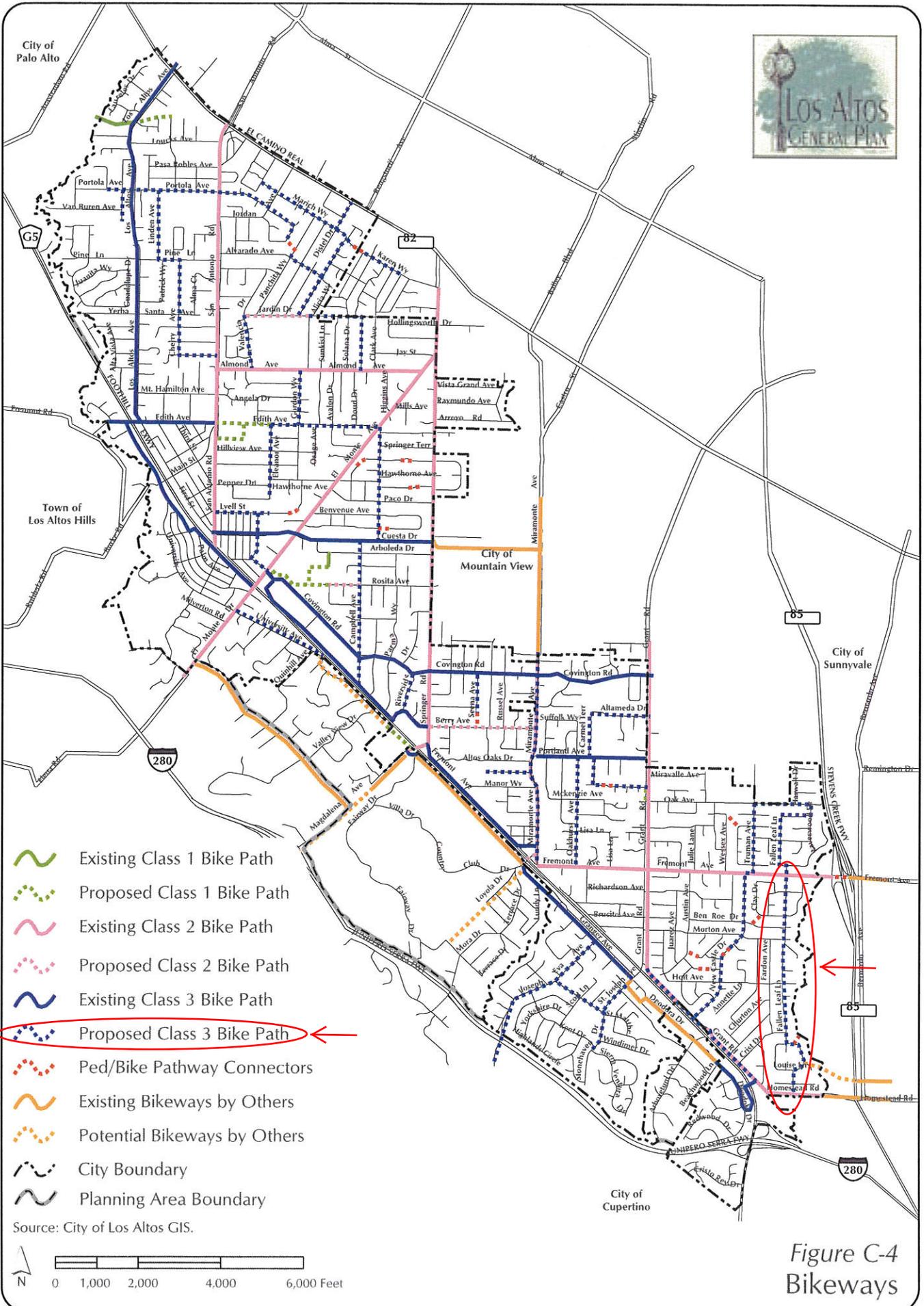


STEVENS CREEK TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY CITIZENS WORKING GROUP PREFERRED ALIGNMENT

ATTACHMENT 4

FOUR CITIES COORDINATED SCT FEASIBILITY STUDY – JCWT
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCILS

This attachment will be distributed once it is received by the City



Source: City of Los Altos GIS.

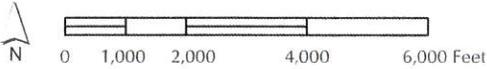


Figure C-4
Bikeways



Figure 5-2: Proposed Complete Bikeway Network