

# Save Our Trails!



**Promoting trails in Santa Clara County for the benefit and enjoyment of all**

Office of the Clerk  
San José City Hall  
200 E. Santa Clara St.  
San José CA 95113

Sent via email

SUBJECT: Re: Diridon Station Area Plan:  
An endorsement of removing planned grade-level crossings of the Los Gatos Creek Trail

May 16, 2014

Dear Honorable Mayor Reed and Members of the City Council:

**Save Our Trails: Connecting Santa Clara County Communities** is a California Not-for-Profit Corporation who mission is *"To promote trails in Santa Clara County for the benefit and enjoyment of all."* **Save Our Trails** is pleased to acknowledge the commitment made by the City of San José to the promotion of alternatives to motorized vehicles for transportation; specifically the pledge made in San José's Green Vision to create 100 miles of interconnected trails. The Diridon Station Area Plan makes frequent reference to this commitment.

The Guadalupe River Trail, by offering an off-road connection to the employment centers of north San José, has become one of the key components of the City's trail network, with over half of the one thousand week-day users commuting to work via the trail. When the Three Creeks Trail and Reach 5 of the Los Gatos Creek Trail are completed, we can expect this number to increase substantially, since these trails will offer direct off-road links from the residential areas of Hannah-Gregory and Willow Glen to the enterprises of north San José.

Until recently, though, the City's plans for the Los Gatos Creek Trail in the area of Diridon Station did not adequately support this potential of the new connections. Rather than having an uninterrupted path on the trail from start to finish, the plans require the trail user (heading north) to go onto the sidewalk at Montgomery, cross Park Avenue at grade, turn right and cross Montgomery Avenue at grade, cross San Fernando at grade, cross the light rail tracks at grade, and cross Santa Clara Street at grade, before finally turning north to link up with the Guadalupe River Trail at Confluence Point just east of the Arena. These grade crossings would seriously hamper the flow of traffic, and deter potential commuters from the use of the new facilities.

In addition, to need to cross busy streets like Montgomery Avenue and Santa Clara Street at grade would very much deter families from using the trail to get to the recreational facilities like the SAP Center, the carousel at Confluence Point, and the Guadalupe River Park.

The Diridon Station Area Plan happily removes these deficiencies.

The Plan identifies the Los Gatos Creek Trail as a Class 1 facility for its entire length through the plan study area. In the section labeled “Off-Street Bicycle Trail Network” (pg, 2-97) the Plan identifies the following five grade-separated crossings of the Los Gatos Creek Trail:

- Montgomery Street / Park Avenue intersection crossing
- Caltrain Tracks
- Santa Clara Street Crossing
- San Fernando Street crossing
- VTA Light Rail Track crossing

plus, as an added bonus, adds a grade-separated crossing for the Guadalupe River Trail at Julian Street.

In effect, the Diridon Plan removes the obstacles to commute traffic and recreational use that had been in place in the City’s earlier plans. **Save Our Trails most strongly endorses these elements of the Diridon Station Area Plan.**

One aspect of the Plan should be strengthened however. At the present time, the Plan is not clear whether these various crossings will be an undercrossing or overcrossing. (The map shown in Figure 2-6-8, page 2-101, allows both possibilities).

**Save Our Trails** recommends that, wherever possible, an undercrossing be chosen. Having the trail remain in the vicinity of the Creek, rather than cross a street via an overpass, provides a much more pleasant experience for the user. In addition, it is likely that the ramping will be more gradual for undercrossings, making the trail more accessible for families and less strong cyclists.

We recognize however that seasonal flooding may preclude the practicality of undercrossings in some cases. We also recognize the special circumstances posed by the long culvert through which the Los Gatos Creek is channeled under the intersection of Montgomery Street and Park Avenue.

In this regard, **Save Our Trails** also endorses the option, as expressed on pg. 2-34 of the Plan, of daylighting the Los Gatos Creek, in order to allow Trail users, recreational as well as commuters, to fully enjoy the experience of being in proximity to the waters of the creek. Doing so will also honor the wishes of the Good Neighbor Committee to “restore the natural setting of the waterways in the urban areas, including specifically that of the Los Gatos Creek as it passes under Montgomery Street and Park Avenue, and, to the extent possible, implement a river walk modeled on the one in San Antonio that balances nature and commercial vibrancy.” (Implementation Priority #1 of the *Framework for Implementation* for Parks and Trails.)

Sincerely,



Bill Rankin  
President, **Save Our Trails**  
Web: [www.saveourtrails-scc.org](http://www.saveourtrails-scc.org)