



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Albert Balagso

**SUBJECT:** WILLOW GLEN SPUR TRAIL  
FOCUS GROUP  
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**DATE:** 11-13-08

Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## INFORMATION

### BACKGROUND

On November 6, 2007, City Council acted on a recommendation initiated by Councilmember Oliverio through a memo dated September 28, 2007 and directed staff to move forward in negotiating and purchasing land from Union Pacific Railroad, between the boundary of Los Gatos Creek and Highway 87, that has been identified in the Greenprint as a part of the Willow Glen Spur Trail. This trail alignment is envisioned by the Greenprint to link Los Gatos, Guadalupe and Coyote Creeks and is also referred to as the Three Creeks Trail by the community.

In addition to this specific recommendation for a portion of the trail, Councilmember Oliverio's memo also provided information about the entire alignment and outlined major challenges presented by a portion of this alignment east of Highway 87, including development of a pedestrian bridge to span active railway near Highway 87, mitigation of privacy issues for residences along a future pedestrian bridge, mid-block crossings at Monterey Highway, 7th and 10th Streets, and safety concerns with trail development industrial development. Given the significant challenges for this alignment staff felt it was critical to engage all stakeholders in a substantive discussion on the functional and financial viability of the entire trail, with a special focus on the portion east of Highway 87. To that end a Focus Group was formed to explore opportunities and challenges associated with development of a trail system from Los Gatos Creek to Coyote Creek (traversing Council Districts 6 and 7).

The group included members of the community, representatives of funding agencies, the property owner's representative and City and Councilmembers' staff. A work plan was prepared that would lead to preparation of recommendations by the Focus Group over a six month period. The workplan consisted of the following:

1. Review a traffic engineering report on pedestrian safety at mid-block crossings.
2. Review a conceptual level report for feasibility of a pedestrian bridge structure at Highway 87/ Joint Powers Board (JPB) interface. The report was developed based on interviews with City, Caltrans, Caltrain, JPB, and other staff about environmental, space and engineering challenges. The report offered a cost estimate for the proposal.
3. Review a Police Department report on CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principals and any specific issues with a future trail alignment along industrial uses.
4. Review a Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE) memorandum concerning the General Plan's designation of land uses along the eastern alignment and capability to require trail development.
5. Review a Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department (PRNS) memorandum on existing funding sources and alternative sources available for trail development.
6. Provide recommendations to the City with additional alternative funding strategies/sources to fund acquisition of the project (acknowledging that the City Council makes determinations regarding funding priorities).
7. Review an assessment of the potential for pedestrian and bicycle enhancements along Alma Avenue.

**ANALYSIS**

Consistent with the work plan, four Focus Group meetings were conducted. Each meeting had a special focus with time reserved for discussion. Through the process, attendees developed a better understanding of opportunities and constraints. This understanding permitted the group to offer its recommendations.

The agenda for each meeting was as follows:

<b>Meeting 1 (6/30/08)</b>	<b>Meeting 2 (7/25/08)</b>	<b>Meeting 3 (9/3/08)</b>	<b>Meeting 4 (10/27/08)</b>
Identify Opportunities & Constraints	Site Visit	Street crossings	Alma Ave Ped/Bike Corridor
Planning Process		Community Policing Through Environmental Design (CPTED)	Revisit Opportunities & Constraints
Acquisition Process		Pedestrian bridge relative to active railway	
		Overview of City monitored funding sources	

For purposes of discussion and analysis, the trail corridor was broken into reaches and sub-reaches. The 2.8 mile alignment has two distinct characters. The western reach, from Los Gatos Creek to Highway 87, is within the Willow Glen Neighborhood and is primarily residential. The eastern reach is from the Guadalupe River to Coyote Creek, and passes along some residential

uses near Bellevue Park (from Pomona Avenue to Monterey Highway) but is predominantly along industrial and commercial uses.

Within each reach, the Focus Group discussed the development potential for each sub-reach (the parcel or parcels bounded by roadways).

The Focus Group studied the opportunities and constraints by focusing on six core issues:

1. Desired outcome
2. Site opportunities (Pros)
3. Site constraints (Cons)
4. Challenges
5. Approach to address challenges
6. Funding strategy

A detailed analysis of the opportunities and constraints for each project reach is attached. Pertaining to suggesting a funding approach, the Focus Group was provided with a list of all known grant sources that the City's Trail Program staff monitors and seeks Council authorization for grant preparation. The Focus Group was made aware of the City Council's authority in defining project priorities for grant and lobbying activities. The discussion on this subject was based upon an informational memorandum provided to Council on August 26, 2003 defining the Prioritization Process and Grant-Seeking Process utilized by staff to propose candidate projects as part of the Annual Budget Process. A subsequent informational memo dated October 29, 2004 further explained the grant-seeking process. The process requires an annual review and rating of all trail projects that make up the network of 36 trail systems within the City. By prioritizing the workload annually, Council is able to authorize staff to proceed on a course for strategic and expeditious development of the trail network. The highest ranked projects are aligned with grant opportunities when funding from City sources is not feasible.

The Focus Group was able to make the following recommendations after carefully analyzing each project reach and sub-reach in respect to the six core issues noted previously.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Los Gatos Creek to Highway 87

Develop a continuous trail from through use of open space or ensuring that developments retain sufficient right of way for trail access.

a. Lonus Avenue to Broadway Avenue

Preserve parcels for open space and trail development where possible. Alternatively leverage development of a trail as part of development projects. Preserve trestle structure and connect to existing Los Gatos Creek Trail. Use available funding and PDO/PIO (developer fees).

b. Broadway Avenue to Minnesota Avenue

Preserve parcels for open space and trail development. Complete existing negotiations already underway by City and owner. Use available funding.

c. Minnesota Avenue to Highway 87

Develop the trail and link to the Highway 87 Bikeway. Install a traffic signal at the Minnesota Avenue on-street crossing.

2. Highway 87 to Almaden Road/Expressway

Make efforts to incorporate pedestrian/bicycle access across an active railway corridor.

a. Coordinate with high speed rail project team and existing rail service to develop a pedestrian bridge to span rails.

b. Lobby federal government for resources due to anticipated high cost of a bridge structure. Propose project as linkage to transit to broaden available funding sources.

c. Pursue necessary funding in compliance with prioritization and grant-seeking processes utilized by the City Council.

3. Almaden Road/Expressway to Senter Road

Permit pedestrian/bicycle access through this area through limited land use changes or on-street improvements.

a. Pursue project funding within the context of the Prioritization Process for grant development. Should funds be secured for limited acquisition, coordinate with Planning to institute design measures to improve the interface with the trail on sites that redevelop while preserving the industrial uses. Continuous trail development is unlikely due to mid-block crossings and/or guiding trail users against traffic to nearby signals. This is a key employment area and needs to be preserved for industrial uses so more trail-friendly development is not likely feasible in the future.

b. Develop Alma Avenue as a pedestrian/bicycle corridor with striped bike lanes (short-term) and a change in the public right of way to permit widened sidewalks (long-term).

c. Acquire land adjacent to Bellevue Park (Pomona Avenue to Monterey Highway) to permit future park expansion and/or trail development.

It should be noted that the Focus Group members did not reach consensus on recommendation 3d. There is still an interest amongst some members of the group to purchase the land as soon as possible. However, based upon the input received from the various focus group meetings, as well as the potential for creating a dedicated bike lane along Alma without significant capital costs, City staff feels that this section of the trail should only be purchased if substantial land use changes provide the ability for a recreational trail experience along the corridor.

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### **PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST**

A webpage was created for the Focus Group. It is accessible from the City's Trail Program homepage ([www.sjpark.org/trails](http://www.sjpark.org/trails) > Trail Systems > Willow Glen Spur > Focus Group).

The webpage included contact information, the work plan, agendas, meeting notes and presentations (posted after each meeting) and background documentation. Supplemental information was posted on the Willow Glen Spur webpage, including Status Maps and Status Matrix/Report.

A link to the Focus Group webpage was provided to Council Offices 6 and 7 to help community members understand the process and status of project development.

### **COORDINATION**

This memorandum was coordinated with the Focus Group members and the Police Department.

ALBERT BALAGSO  
Director of Parks, Recreation,  
and Neighborhood Services

Attachment: Focus Group members

For questions please contact Matt Cano, Division Manager, at 408 535-3580.