



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-26-121
Meeting 26-19
August 12, 2026

AGENDA ITEM 11

AGENDA ITEM

Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection Project -- Status Update

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Receive a status update on the Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection Project.
No Board action is required.

SUMMARY

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District), in partnership with the County of Santa Clara (County) Parks and Recreation Department (SCC Parks), is pursuing a multi-use regional trail with associated facilities to close a gap in the regional Stevens Creek Trail alignment, between Stevens Creek County Park, Picchetti Ranch Open Space Preserve (Picchetti Ranch Preserve), Monte Bello Open Space Preserve (Monte Bello Preserve), and Upper Stevens Creek County Park. The Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection Project (Project) is a priority project in the District's 2014 Open Space Vision Plan and is part of Measure AA Portfolio 17, supporting the District's mission of providing opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment.

In 2024, District and SCC Parks staff initiated preliminary planning and technical studies, conducted the opportunities and constraints analysis, and developed a framework for a focused planning and public engagement process. The analysis is focused on existing site conditions and the technical feasibility of critical project components to support a multi-use trail, including expanded parking capacity options, road crossings, and associated trail connections. Planning, public engagement, and schematic design for the full Project are anticipated to begin in Fall 2026. To formalize roles and responsibilities for each phase of the project, it is anticipated that cooperative agreements between the District and County will be executed. No Board action is required for this project update.

DISCUSSION

Background

Stevens Creek flows from the Santa Cruz Mountains at its headwaters in Monte Bello Preserve and empties into the San Francisco Bay adjacent to Stevens Creek Shoreline Nature Study Area. Between the mountains and bay, Stevens Creek travels over 20 miles through Upper Stevens Creek Park and [Lower] Stevens Creek Park, Stevens Creek Reservoir (Reservoir), and through the cities of Cupertino, Los Altos, Sunnyvale, and Mountain View.

For over 50 years, a regional, multi-use trail has been envisioned along the full corridor of Stevens Creek, known as the Stevens Creek Trail (Trail). The vision for the trail was first identified by the Santa Clara County Planning Department in 1961. The County's vision for a "Stevens Creek Park Chain" was subsequently incorporated into the Santa Clara County General Plan (1980-1995) and designated as a sub-regional trail route in the [1995 Santa Clara County Countywide Trails Master Plan](#) (Countywide Trails Plan). Between 2009 and 2014, a coordinated trail planning effort between the four cities of Cupertino, Los Altos, Sunnyvale, and Mountain View resulted in the [Joint Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study](#) (2015). The study addressed an approximately three-mile gap through the four cities, known as the Middle Stevens Creek Trail that starts from the Dale/Heatherstone bike-pedestrian overcrossing of State Route 85 in Mountain View to Stevens Creek Boulevard in Cupertino.

In 2024, SCC Parks updated the [Countywide Trails Master Plan Map](#), reaffirming Stevens Creek Trail as a key sub-regional trail route to link the Santa Cruz Mountains and San Francisco Bay. To date, approximately 16 miles of the trail have been completed and are open to the public (Attachment 1 – Stevens Creek Trail Gap Closure Map).

The Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection Project addresses one of the primary gaps in the Stevens Creek Trail between Stevens Creek County Park, Picchetti Ranch Preserve, Monte Bello Preserve, and Upper Stevens Creek County Park. In 2014, following an 18-month public planning process, the District Board of Directors (Board) adopted the [Vision Plan](#) that prioritized, among other projects, completion of the Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection. In 2014, the District, with a 50% contribution from the County, purchased the Lysons property as an addition to Monte Bello Preserve, representing the last property needed to ultimately complete the Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection ([R-14-116](#) and [R-15-35](#)).

Completing the Project necessitates a partnership between the District and SCC Parks and will involve both agencies closely collaborating on conceptual and schematic design, technical studies, community engagement, trail scouting, environmental review, final design and permitting, and ultimately construction. In 2024, staff from both agencies began the initial planning process. That same year, in coordination with the District, SCC Parks applied for and was successful in securing a \$500,000 Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Priority Conservation Area grant to fund feasibility and early design work for the Project. In 2025, SCC Parks hired a consultant to prepare the opportunities and constraints analysis to inform and focus the planning process. The analysis focused on critical project elements located near the Reservoir to support the full Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection, including potential options to expand parking, pedestrian road crossings, and associated trail connections. The full Project will be further evaluated in the next phase of work. The components of the Project, phasing, general roles and responsibilities of both agencies, and findings from the opportunities and constraints analysis are summarized below.

Project Components

Trail Connections

To complete the Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection, a combination of new trail segments, improvements to existing trails and former roads, and dedication of existing multi-use trails will be required. As envisioned in the Countywide Trails Plan and the District's Vision Plan, the trail would be multi-use (hiking, bicycling, and equestrian). The existing multi-use Stevens Creek Trail currently terminates at the northern end of Stevens Creek Park near the Stevens Creek

Dam. To complete the multi-use trail gap, the Project is anticipated to connect the Stevens Creek Trail through Fremont Older Preserve, Stevens Creek County Park, Picchetti Ranch Preserve, Monte Bello Preserve, and ultimately Upper Stevens Creek County Park.

Trail Crossings

Stevens Canyon Road and Mt. Eden Road are two-lane County roadways that bisect Stevens Creek County Park in the project area. There are currently no formal pedestrian or bicycle crossings present along the roadway, thus necessitating the addition of a formal trail crossing as part of the Project. This crossing will allow future trail users to safely cross Stevens Canyon and/or Mt. Eden Roads from one side of Stevens Creek Park to the other.

Trailhead Parking Areas

A number of formal trailhead staging areas and shoulder pullouts offer vehicle parking in the Project area. SCC Parks operates and maintains most of the parking areas, apart from District staging areas in Fremont Older Preserve and Picchetti Ranch Preserve. Based on field observations and analysis by SCC Parks staff, parking demand in the Project area regularly exceeds available capacity, particularly on weekends and holidays.

The multi-use Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection will provide expanded public access and connectivity to District preserves and County parks. In addition, the expanded trail will offer more opportunities for longer-distance hiking and biking routes, which may attract additional trail users and increase visitation. As a result, demand for trailhead parking is likely to increase, particularly around existing staging areas near the Reservoir, as well as near trailheads and adjacent roadways. Therefore, the Project team is evaluating new or expanded parking area options in Stevens Creek Park to accommodate both current and future use.

SCC Parks/District Partnership

The Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection Project is a collaborative project between SCC Parks and the District. Collaboration between both agencies is required to plan, design, and ultimately construct and maintain the Project. Anticipated roles and responsibilities for different project phases are summarized in the table below. An associated timeline can be found below in the Next Steps section of the report.

Project Phase	Roles & Responsibilities
Opportunities and Constraints Analysis and Technical Studies <i>Completed in Spring 2026</i>	SCC Parks and the District collaborated on the preparation of an opportunities and constraints analysis, including technical feasibility studies, focused on critical project components near the Reservoir. SCC Parks secured MTC grant funding and managed the Project consultant for this phase of work.
Planning and Schematic Design	SCC Parks and the District are dedicating staffing resources and will collaborate on planning, schematic design, technical studies, community engagement, and trail scouting for this phase of work. SCC Parks will manage the design consultant, funded by the MTC grant with District contributions.
Environmental Review	The District will manage an environmental consultant to evaluate potential environmental impacts and complete CEQA documentation. The District will likely act as CEQA Lead Agency with the County as a CEQA Responsible Agency.

Design and Permitting	Both agencies will coordinate closely on detailed design and permitting. Because the proposed staging areas and road crossing infrastructure, which will demand the most intensive design work, are located within County parklands and right-of-way, SCC Parks is expected to manage the design consultant in this phase of work.
Construction	The District and SCC Parks will be discussing the responsibilities associated with construction. It is generally assumed that the District will be responsible for constructing trail infrastructure within open space preserves and the SCC Parks will construct trails within County parklands. However, prior to this phase of work, the District and SCC Parks will discuss opportunities for efficiency related to trail construction. Parking/staging areas and road crossing infrastructure would be constructed by SCC Parks.
Operation & Maintenance	The District and SCC Parks will be discussing the responsibilities associated with long-term operations and maintenance. Each agency would have the responsibility for maintaining and patrolling trail segments located on their respective lands.

To formalize roles and responsibilities for each phase of the Project, cooperative agreements between the District and County are planned. The first of such agreements will be brought to the Board for consideration in Fall 2026.

Opportunities and Constraints Analysis Phase (completed in 2026)

In coordination with District staff, SCC Parks hired a consultant to undertake the opportunities and constraints analysis to inform and focus the planning process. Completed in Spring 2026, the analysis evaluated expanded parking capacity options, road crossings, and associated trail connections in the area around the Reservoir to support the full Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection (Attachment 2 – Project Area Overview Map).

New or expanded trailhead staging area locations were initially explored for additional vehicle and equestrian parking to support the project. Factors such as capacity, construction costs, driveway sight lines, potential grading, and potential impacts on sensitive habitat were evaluated.

The analysis also assessed preliminary trail route options for connecting the Stevens Creek Trail alignment from east to west in the area around the Reservoir and connecting to potential parking areas by exploring a combination of existing trails, existing and former road cuts, existing service roads, and new trail construction. The evaluation for each potential trail segment have focused on a variety of factors (e.g., grade, property access, construction complexity, potential impacts to sensitive habitat, and trail user experience). Potential road crossing locations were identified at key points to connect the trail across Stevens Canyon Road and/or Mt. Eden Road, with factors such as sight lines and existing/potential demand considered.

In addition, the project team evaluated opportunities to remove barriers and increase accessibility, as well as design parameters that reflect a blend of both agencies' trail design guidelines to support a positive user experience.

Results of the Opportunities and Constraints Analysis

Parking. Expanding the available parking in both the existing Canyon Picnic Area and Madrone Group Area within Stevens Creek County Park offers the greatest viability and ease for providing more parking spaces (Attachment 2). Other parking areas would result in higher construction costs due to the amount of grading required, potential conflicts with existing uses and the need to renegotiate property easements to accommodate expanded parking.

Trail Routes. Three east-west trail routes using existing and new trails segments stand out as the most viable based on an extensive evaluation of potential options and will advance into the next phase of work (Attachment 2). Other trail options were not selected due to greater impacts to sensitive habitat, limited property access, steep grades, and constructability issues. All three viable options allow the trail to connect Fremont Older Preserve to the east side of Stevens Canyon Road. From the road crossing, the trail route would travel either west through Picchetti Ranch Preserve and Stevens Creek County Park or only through Stevens Creek County Park toward Monte Bello Preserve.

Road Crossings. Two road crossings are advancing into the Planning and Schematic Design phase. One crosses Stevens Canyon Road to connect to the Canyon Picnic Area. The second is an informal crossing on Stevens Canyon Road currently used by trail users between the existing Zinfandel and/or Creek Trail and Tony Look/Lookout Trails and would connect the Madrone Group Parking Area to the trail system. Other crossings were excluded due to a lack of accessible parking, insufficient sight lines and the need for more extensive construction.

Planning and Schematic Design Phase

SCC Parks is in the process of hiring a design consultant to assist with development of conceptual and subsequent schematic designs for the multi-use trail alignment and associated facilities (staging areas and road crossings), building off the results of the opportunities and constraints analysis. This scope of work also includes geotechnical, biological, and cultural technical studies to inform the design. The future trail connection through Monte Bello Preserve (connecting Stevens Creek and Upper Stevens Creek County parks) was not evaluated in the opportunities and constraints analysis phase but will be included in the Planning and Schematic Design phase of work (Attachment 2; see “Monte Bello Connection”). Staff anticipate two alternative conceptual trail alignments options through Monte Bello Preserve and will return to the Board for input on selecting one alignment to move forward into schematic design.

District and SCC Parks staff will also conduct stakeholder and public engagement during this phase of work, which will include coordinating with the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail (the Friends), a local community group with the goal of raising community awareness and support for the Stevens Creek Trail. Staff from both agencies presented an overview of the Project at a recent Stevens Creek Watershed Summit hosted by the Friends in March 2026.

The Planning and Schematic Design phase of work will begin in Fall 2026 and conclude in Summer 2027, where the schematic design will inform environmental review.

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommended action has no immediate fiscal impact. The Board is receiving a status update on the Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection Project (VP17-001), which is currently in the

feasibility phase and is funded by General Fund Operating, as well as external partnership support with SCC Parks.

If deemed eligible for Measure AA reimbursement, funding will be recommended in future fiscal year budgets during the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

Due to the high level of Board interest in Stevens Creek Trail and regional trails planning and partnership work, staff is presenting the update to the full Board. There have been no Committee presentations.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. In addition, public notices were provided to parties interested in the Project, regional trails, Monte Bello Open Space Preserve, Picchetti Ranch Open Space Preserve, and the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An evaluation of the proposed project will be completed in accordance with CEQA following the identification of the multi-use trail alignment and further design of associated facilities.

NEXT STEPS

SCC Parks, in coordination with District staff, are developing the scope of work with the County's design consultant for the Planning and Schematic Design phase of the project (including community engagement), with work beginning in Fall 2026. Following identification of conceptual trail alignments through District open space preserves, staff will seek input from the Planning and Natural Resources Committee prior to proceeding into schematic design, estimated in Winter 2026/27.

District and SCC Parks staff are also developing a cooperative agreement to formalize each agencies' roles and responsibilities for the upcoming phases of work. Staff anticipate bringing an item to the Board to authorize execution of the cooperative agreement in Fall 2026.

The Upper Stevens Creek Trail Connection Project tentative schedule is as follows:

Project Phase/Milestones	Estimated Completion
Planning and Schematic Design	Summer 2027
Environmental Review	Fall 2028
Final Design and Permitting	Spring 2030
Construction	<i>To be determined</i>

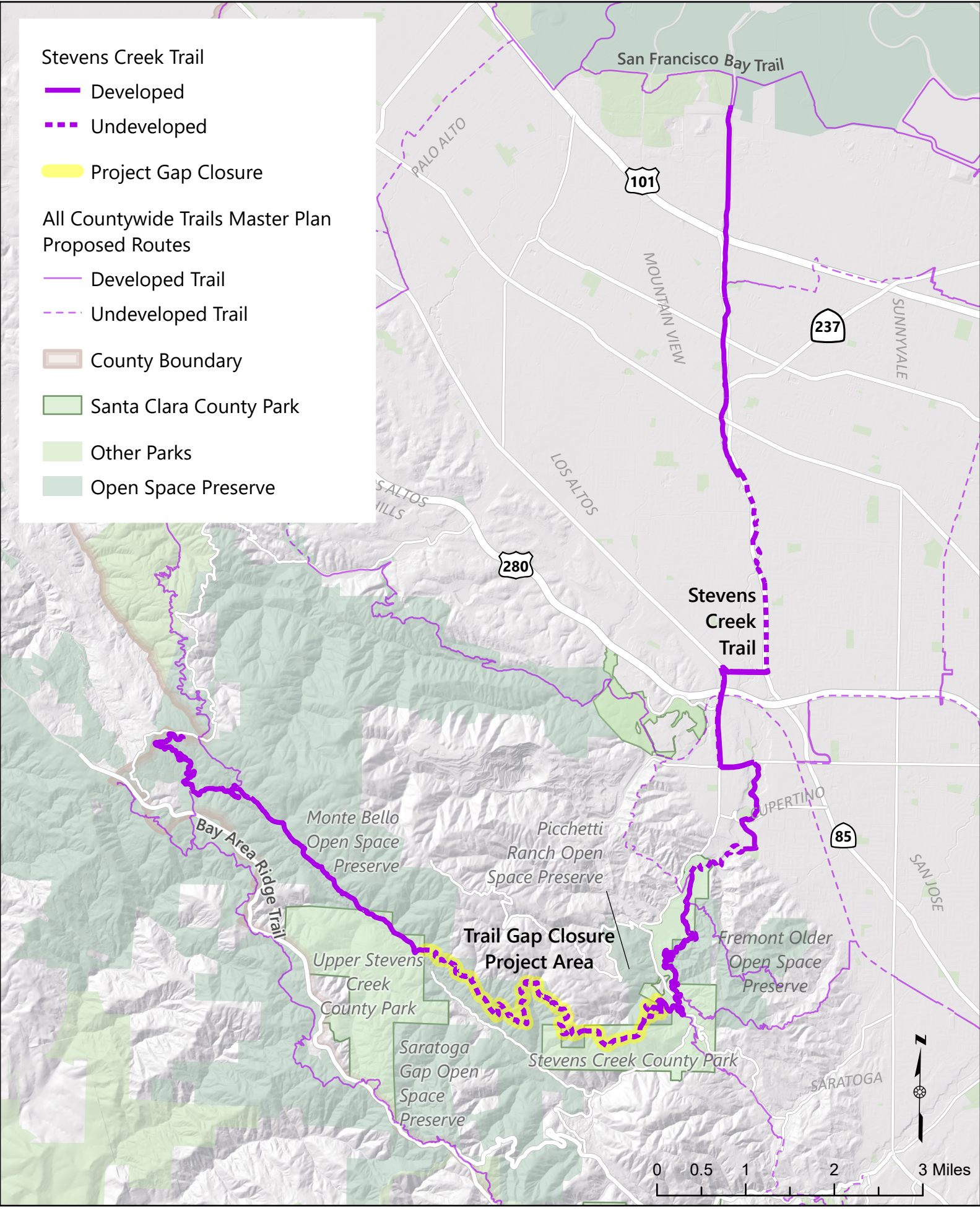
Attachments

1. Stevens Creek Trail Gap Closure Map
2. Project Area Overview Map

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