



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-21-145
Meeting 21-30
October 27, 2021

AGENDA ITEM 4

AGENDA ITEM

Designation of the Stevens Creek Nature Trail, Skid Road Trail, and White Oak Trail in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve as part of the regional Stevens Creek Trail

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION *den*

Designate the Stevens Creek Nature Trail, White Oak Trail, and Skid Road Trail in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve as part of the regional Stevens Creek Trail.

SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) has partnered with the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail (FoSCT) to designate and implement a pilot signage program for the regional Stevens Creek Trail corridor in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve (Monte Bello Preserve). The program is consistent with Vision Plan - Priority Action #12 *Peninsula and South Bay Cities: Partner to Complete Middle Stevens Creek Trail* and includes designating existing trails as part of the regional Stevens Creek Trail and installing medallion signage on trail directional sign posts to clearly identify the regional Stevens Creek Trail corridor. The proposed Stevens Creek Trail designation is consistent with Board-approved policies *4.01 Open Space Use and Management Planning Process*, *4.07 Trail Use*, and *5.01 Site Naming, Gift and Special Recognition*. The Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC) reviewed this item at its September 7, 2021 meeting and unanimously supported the recommended designations. Signs to designate the proposed regional Stevens Creek Trail corridor would be purchased under the General Manager's purchasing authority with sufficient operating funds in the adopted FY22 budget.

DISCUSSION

Background

FoSCT, a local community group, was founded in 1992 with the goal of raising community awareness and support for completing this regional trail. Their vision for the regional Stevens Creek Trail corridor is to establish "welcoming trails and healthy wildlife corridors that connect people from the bay to the mountains in the Stevens Creek and Permanente Creek watersheds".

As part of the District's 2014 Board-approved Vision Plan - Priority Action #12, *Peninsula and South Bay Cities: Partner to Complete Middle Stevens Creek Trail*, the District supports regional trails and partnerships to complete the Middle Stevens Creek Trail. A partnership with the FoSCT provides an opportunity to work together in identifying existing trail segments within District preserves to designate as part of the regional Stevens Creek Trail corridor and develop a common, unifying symbol to use on a medallion sign for the Stevens Creek Trail. The FoSCT's

goal for the medallion sign is to “establish a consistent identity for the trail that promotes usage, interest and support”. The Middle Stevens Creek Trail will one day connect to longer-term regional trails planning effort that forms part of Vision Plan Priority Action /MAA #17 *Complete Upper Stevens Creek Trail*.

Letter of Intent

In August 2020, under the General Manager’s authority, the District entered into a Letter of Intent with the FoSCT to collaborate on a pilot signage project in Monte Bello Preserve to potentially name existing trails as part of the Stevens Creek Trail corridor and incorporate the new medallion signage within District lands. The letter of intent between the District and the FoSCT outlines how the District works with FoSCT in the trail designation evaluation process, trail sign procurement, and long-term maintenance. The Letter of Intent includes the following:

Evaluation of District Trails for Designation and Naming

- Outlines the process of identifying proposed trails and District review and approval process for proposed trail designation and naming.
- Discusses how the District will consider future partnerships in later phases and future funding for additional signage.

Trail Sign Procurement and Maintenance:

- Discusses how the District will purchase and install signs for the pilot project at Monte Bello Preserve.
- Specifies the responsibilities when FoSCT will purchase replacements signs, and the District will install replacement signs.

Regional Trail Designation and Naming

District staff worked closely with FoSCT to identify existing District trails to consider for designation as part of the regional Stevens Creek Trail for the pilot signage program (Attachment 2). The regional Stevens Creek Trail designation evaluation process and naming convention are similar to that of the Bay Area Ridge Trail (Ridge Trail) process, whereby existing trail segments retain their original name and are identified as part of the larger regional trail with a metal medallion sign (Attachment 3). The three District trails proposed to be designated as part of the regional Stevens Creek Trail corridor are on the northern portion of Monte Bello Preserve and span roughly four miles of existing preserve trails, including Stevens Creek Nature Trail, Skid Road Trail, and White Oak Trail. The trails were selected due to their proximity to the Stevens Creek watershed and the trail uses. Stevens Creek Nature Trail is the closest trail to the watershed, running parallel to the creek. The White Oak Trail is the closest multi-use trail, and the watershed intersects at Skid Road and Stevens Creek Nature trail.

Similar to the Ridge Trail, the Stevens Creek Trail designation process utilizes three types of trail classifications. The trail classifications are based off the Ridge Trail terminology guidelines and are defined below:

- **Primary trail** – part of the “main” continuous Stevens Creek Trail route or regional loop. Trail segments must meet all or most of the siting criteria, including:
 - Multi-use – does or will accommodate hiking, cycling, and horseback riding.
 - Continuous - does or will provide an uninterrupted, continuous route.
 - Location – runs on or near Stevens Creek where possible.

- **Regional connector trail** – a regional connector trail that connects primary trails along the Stevens Creek Trail corridor to other significant or regional trails (e.g., the Ridge Trail) and functions as a high-value trail in its own right.
- **Spur trail** – provides out-and-back access from primary trail to a point of interest.

For the pilot signage program, the General Manager recommends the following designations:

- Designate the White Oak Trail and a section of the Stevens Creek Nature Trail as primary trails of the regional Stevens Creek Trail corridor (both segments allow multi-use).
- Designate the Skid Road Trail as a regional connector trail, connecting the Stevens Creek Trail corridor to the Ridge Trail.
- Designate the Stevens Creek Nature Trail as a spur trail since the trail leads to a destination from the Stevens Creek Trail corridor. Since the Stevens Creek Nature Trail is hiking-only, this precludes it from being part of the main multi-use regional trail.

District Staff met with Santa Clara County Parks to discuss the proposed signage and participate in a multi-agency signage working group. A sign plan has been developed and reviewed by FoSCT to identify the Preserve locations for installing the proposed medallion and will be reviewed for final approval by the District General Manager.

Under Vision Plan - Priority #17, *Regional: Complete Upper Stevens Creek Trail*, the District and Santa Clara County Parks will be collaborating on a future planning effort to complete a multi-use regional trail connection between Stevens Creek County Park, Picchetti Ranch Open Space Preserve, and extending further up the ridge to Monte Bello Open Space Preserve. This project is identified on the Board-approved Measure AA 5-Year Projects List. Pending completion of a Trails Plan for the Upper Stevens Creek Trail, District Staff would bring additional Stevens Creek Trail designations to the Committee and Board for review. At this time, Stevens Creek Nature Trail, Skid Road Trail, and White Oak Trail are the only trails being considered for the Stevens Creek Trail designation. The trail designation and installation of medallion signage is the first phase of FoSCT's vision for the Stevens Creek Trail corridor. In future phasing, the District may partner with FoSCT to develop trailhead signage and/or interpretive signage on the Stevens Creek Trail within District preserves.

Continued Regional Trail Planning and Collaboration

FoSCT has taken the lead in facilitating partner agency discussions with multiple cities, Santa Clara County Parks, and the District who have jurisdiction along the Stevens Creek Trail regarding planning and implementation of a sign program and obtaining input on the medallion. On June 22, 2021 they hosted a multi-agency meeting with representatives from the cities of Cupertino, Sunnyvale, and Mountain View, Santa Clara County Parks and the District to obtain alignment on the proposed medallion signage and sign plan. With the Stevens Creek Trail's regional trail connections to both the Bay Area Ridge Trail and Bay Trail, representatives from both agencies were also in attendance. At this meeting, all agency staff shared their support for the regional trail signage project and are interested in moving forward as a working group to allow an opportunity for the agencies to work together on shared interests in design, implementation and communications about the regional trail. Pending District designation of the Stevens Creek Trail alignment, the District would be the first agency to use the medallion, which is an important first step towards encouraging other cities and agencies to adopt the use of a unifying symbol for the Stevens Creek Trail.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Letter of Intent with the FoSCT states the District will purchase and install the signs for the pilot program. The sign purchase in FY22 will be under the General Manager's purchasing authority. There are sufficient funds in the adopted FY22 operating budget for the sign purchase and implementation. Sign purchase and implementation are not funded by Measure AA.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

On September 7, 2021, LFPAC voted unanimously to forward a recommendation to the full Board to designate the Stevens Creek Nature Trail, Skid Road Trail, and White Oak Trail in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve as part of the regional Stevens Creek Trail to the full Board ([R-21-118](#), draft meeting minutes attached as Attachment 4). Questions and comments raised by committee members included:

- Proper installation of the medallion signs to prevent theft and combining signage to reduce the number of signs in the Preserve. Staff confirmed the medallions will be firmly secured and co-located on existing signposts to reduce to addition of new signposts.
- Whether District lands are the first place where medallions will be installed along the regional trail and if there are any other hiking-only trails that will be considered for the Stevens Creek Trail designation. Staff confirmed that Monte Bello Preserve will be the first location for the new medallions, and the District will be the first agency to install the medallion signage. The District will continue to participate in the FoSCT working group to share the designation and installation experience with other agencies. Since the goal of the Stevens Creek Trail is focused on designating trails that serve multiple uses (hiking, cycling, and horseback riding), staff does not anticipate additional hiking-only trails for the Stevens Creek Trail designation.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. Members of the Monte Bello preserve and Regional Trails interested parties list and adjoining landowners were notified via email by the District. In addition, the FoSCT notified members on their interested parties list.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

NEXT STEPS

If the trail designation is confirmed by the Board, Staff will purchase and install medallion signs on existing trail directional signposts on the designated trails. Digital maps will be updated showing the Stevens Creek Trail designation.

Attachments:

1. Letter of intent
2. Map of trails to be designated
3. Stevens Creek Trail medallion sign
4. Draft Meeting Minutes from September 7, 2021 LFPAC Meeting

Responsible Department Head:
Jane Mark, Planning Department

Prepared by/Contact person:
Melissa Borgesi, Planner II, Planning Department

Graphics prepared by:
Francisco Lopez Tapia, GIS Technician