



MEETING DATE: 8/2/04
ITEM NO. 10

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: JULY 27, 2004
TO: MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL
FROM: DEBRA J. FIGONE, TOWN MANAGER 
SUBJECT: RECEIVE AND FILE FINAL REPORT ON THE VASONA LOOP TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file final report on the Vasona Loop Trail Feasibility Study.

BACKGROUND:

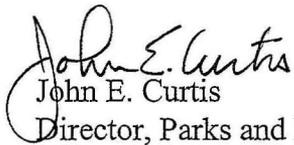
A study concerning the feasibility of constructing a Vasona Loop Trail was approved by Council at the regular meeting on April 15, 2002. Council appropriated up to \$25,000 for this feasibility study. This proposal originated from the Trails and Bikeways Committee and was recommended to Council by the Planning Commission. The study was conducted by LandPeople and Jakaby Engineering, who submitted their findings in January, 2004.

The purpose of this feasibility study was to review possible solutions to link the existing trails at Vasona Lake Park from the trail that ends on the west side of the lake to the trail immediately east of the dam, and the associated costs and impacts. This report will discuss the feasibility study's report and outcome. This report was received and filed by the Parks Commission at their May 4, 2004 meeting, without comment.

DISCUSSION:

The feasibility study determined it is possible to construct a trail to link to the existing trail system but there are several considerations: geological issues due to the local flood plain and embankment; protecting local indigenous trees; protecting the integrity of the adjacent roadway on University Avenue; and access and flow considerations for the dam structure. How to construct a trail with as minimal impact to these items was reviewed by the consultants.

PREPARED BY:


John E. Curtis
Director, Parks and Public Works

Reviewed by: DSJ Assistant Town Manager JK Attorney _____ Clerk _____ Finance
_____ Community Development Revised: 7/27/04 2:46 pm

PAGE 2

MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL

SUBJECT: ACCEPT FINAL REPORT ON THE VASONA LOOP TRAIL

July 27, 2004

The report reviewed these constraints and offered several options and engineering solutions to construct a trail. Overall, it is possible to construct an extension trail, however it is perhaps more complicated than originally conceived mainly due to geological issues.

There are two basic trail construction areas: alongside University Avenue (Site A) and to cross the water and connect to an existing trail (Site B). The following summarizes the two sites and their issues. Site A, alongside University Avenue, is steep and narrow with native and non-native trees. A major engineering issue is the steepness of the trail area and its relation to the adjacent roadway, where surcharge load occurs due to vehicles traveling on University creating impact to the downward slope where the proposed trail is located. To address the slope and surcharge load issues, four sidehill bridges will be necessary to ensure stability of the trail and adjacent roadway. There is one location in particular where additional geological study is needed to determine if a retaining wall, rather than a sidehill bridge, will be necessary. The cost to conduct the additional geological study and construct a retaining wall are not included in the Consultant's cost estimate, however the Town Engineer estimates it could cost between \$75,000 to \$150,000, depending upon the outcome of the geological report.

Site B is across the waterway at the north end of Vasona Lake. Two possible crossing locations exist. One location is north of the dam, across Los Gatos Creek and the flood plain. This option could place a prefabricated, 10-foot wide pedestrian bridge over Los Gatos Creek, connecting to the existing creek trail on the eastside and adding a short trail to connect it to the westside, Site A trail. Several issues exist concerning this site: flood control, unknown biological impacts and impacts to adjacent residents. This location is in a designated flood plain, which requires significant review by Department of Fish and Game, biological studies and review by the Division of Safety of Dams, for which these costs are also not included in the report. Additionally, placing a bridge over the flood plain will require a 210-foot long bridge that needs to be quite high to be built above the storm water levels. During winter storms, a 15-foot rooster tail can develop when the dam overflows and the creek channel extends the full width downstream from the dam. The height of a bridge at this location could impact the privacy of nearby residents.

The other location for Site B is to place a pedestrian bridge directly over the existing dam catwalk. This site would connect a prefabricated 6-foot wide catwalk bridge to the existing smaller catwalk on the dam face. Discussions with the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) who owns and manages the dam, indicate this location may be feasible as long as their access and operations are not impacted. Staff believe a bridge/catwalk design could be created to meet the SCVWD's needs. This is the less expensive and more practical location to cross the waterway.

Considering the optional locations to cross the waterway and their potential impacts, constructing a bridge over the existing dam catwalk is the most practical of the two. Additional considerations include estimated costs to construct the trail and bridge, and related funding sources.

July 27, 2004

The following summarizes the site locations, options and estimated construction costs:

SITE A- Trail Alongside University Avenue

<i>Site Details</i>	<i>Options</i>	<i>Construction Cost</i>
Location is steep section currently used as a "volunteer" trail between roadway and lake.	Four sidehill bridges, and trail improvements	\$372,472
One section of trail along roadway appears to be unstable.	Geological studies and possible retaining wall	Cost not included in report. Town Engineer's estimate is from \$75,000 to \$150,000
	SUB-TOTAL ESTIMATED COST FOR SITE A	\$447,472 - \$522,472

SITE B - Pedestrian Bridge Crossing Dam

<i>Site Details</i>	<i>Options</i>	<i>Construction Cost</i>
Bridge over existing dam	Attach bridge over dam	\$129,464
Bridge north of dam, crossing creek and flood plain	Separate 10' wide bridge	\$260,024
	SUB-TOTAL ESTIMATED COST FOR SITE B	\$129,464 - \$260,024

ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COST	\$576,936 - \$782,496
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Cost Issues:

Cost estimates to construct the trail and bridge are for construction only and do not include geological studies, biological studies, permits and mitigation fees that could arise depending upon which direction is chosen. The estimated costs are broad largely due to the unknown geological issues at Site A (geological study and possible retaining wall). The total project is the sum of Site A and Site B costs.

Funding Issues:

At this time, funding is not designated to construct this trail. SCVWD has indicated they may allocate some funding and County has not indicated they would help fund. Possible state and local grants include the State Local Water Conservation Fund and State Recreational Trails Program, both offer competitive annual grants for trails or parks improvements. It is possible this trail extension would not be considered a priority by the grant review board.

PAGE 4

MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL

SUBJECT: ACCEPT FINAL REPORT ON THE VASONA LOOP TRAIL

July 27, 2004

Additionally, Prop.12 or 40 funding might be available, however only for the portion of the trail that is owned and maintained by the Town, which is the portion adjacent to University Avenue.

Land issues:

Santa Clara Valley Water District owns a portion of the area at & near the dam where the trail would cross, other trail area alongside University Avenue is right-of-way owned by the Town. The trail itself would become part of Vasona Lake Park, which is owned & maintained by the County. Issues of ongoing maintenance need to be discussed and will impact possible grant fund opportunities.

CONCLUSION:

The feasibility report for constructing an extension trail and bridge indicates it is possible, with constraints and some unknown future issues (geological and biological). Funding is not designated at this time. Council may choose to direct staff to pursue obtaining grant funding, and advise Council when that grant application occurs. At this time, staff recommends waiting to determine funding sources before advancing on this large project. Its priority relative to other projects in the 5 year Capital Improvement Program can be considered during the preparation of the 2005-10 Capital Improvement Program.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This study is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact at this time, because no funding is designated to pursue constructing an extension trail and bridge at the northwest corner of Vasona Lake.