

STANFORD WEEKEND ACRES

RE: Lower Alpine Trail Project

Date: October 30, 2011

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Residents of Stanford Weekend Acres

Subject: Response to Assistant County Manager's Proposal

RECOMMENDATION

We, as residents of Stanford Weekend Acres, firmly oppose any expansion of the path known as "Lower Alpine Trail" between Piers Lane and Menlo Park City Limits. We urge the Board of Supervisors to vote "NO" on this proposal. While we agree that portions of the existing trail are in need of repair, the project proposed by Stanford University is no solution. It would create far more problems than it could ever solve.

This project would result in a wide bi-directional sidewalk/trail putting users directly in the path of vehicles. The sidewalk/trail would cut across the 280 freeway exit ramp as well as in front of the entrances to SWA neighborhoods containing some 140 homes. The project is ecologically unsound; it is proposed in a location, between Alpine Road and a steeply banked residential area that cannot accommodate the trail's parameters without restructuring portions of the road, removing trees, and possibly further "grading" 14-22 feet from the hillside opposite. In addition, this project stands to encroach on the safety, privacy and basic enjoyment of the private property of many SWA residents.

Conditional acceptance of this plan is not acceptable to Stanford Weekend Acres. This project has been thoroughly reviewed and twice rejected by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, yet Stanford continues to push the issue on a community unwilling to accept its plan. We do not want to spend another year or two on engineering and environmental studies when there is no way to avoid the conflicts between increased numbers of trail users and residents trying to get in and out of SWA.

This time, we ask you to finally, soundly defeat it.

PUBLIC PROMISES & OUTREACH

The true experience of David Holland's two September community trail meetings is not accurately reflected in the Staff Report presented to you, and the reality of those meetings does not support the recommendation staff has made. In those meetings SWA residents asked whether the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors would impose this trail on residents if the majority of SWA objected to it. We were told that it would not. (The same question was raised at a 2006 meeting and we were told the project would not be forced on us against our will.) In fact, Supervisor Horsley was quoted in the San Francisco Chronicle (Oct. 19, 2011) regarding this controversial project as saying, "we are not going to force anything down people's throats." We are relying on the county to keep its promises.

BACKGROUND

Stanford agreed in its original General Use Permit of 2000, to develop "portions of the two trail alignments which cross Stanford lands shown in the 1995 Santa Clara Countywide Trails Master Plan (Routes S1 and C1)" to mitigate the environmental impact caused by its development of 5 million square feet of open space for new academic & academic support use, student & faculty housing, and parking.

Rather than build the "C-1" trail on the Santa Clara side of the creek as required by the Environmental Impact Report, Stanford pushed for expanding the existing footpath that runs along Alpine Road in front of Stanford Weekend Acres. Santa Clara County, in which the original agreement was made, consented to consider the landscape degradation from Stanford's development to be mitigated if San Mateo County agrees to use Stanford's funds to develop a recreational trail along Alpine Road. We contend that the amount of environmental destruction caused by Stanford's funding of this project along Alpine could, in itself, require mitigation.

IMPACT ON ROAD, ENVIRONMENT & PROPERTY

There are obvious implications from building a 10-12 foot wide trail in a space where the current trail dwindles to 3 feet across with some sections literally hugging Alpine Road on one side and bordering SWA residents' yards on the other. Given the required parameters, there is no way to build the proposed sidewalk/trail in this location without seriously restructuring Alpine Road. The impact on our SWA community would be severe.

Because the proposed multi-use trail does not fit where the current footpath is, a major portion of Alpine Road would need to be moved at the SWA location. In

order to fit the lanes of traffic, either the hillside opposite would need to be massively graded, or the County would have to acquire property from SWA homeowners, likely by eminent domain, in order to accommodate the necessary width of the sidewalk/trail.

The last time the hillside opposite SWA was graded, it became, for a lengthy period of time, more “open sore” than open space. Grading and excavating a hillside makes it increasingly prone to silt buildup and runoff, falling rocks, and it means loss of trees. It has taken many years for some of the trees to grow back in that area since the last excavation. Currently there are buckeyes, toyons, and oak trees on the steep slopes and atop this 70’ hill, which would have to be sacrificed for this major construction project.

There is no question that a project of this size would ultimately change the rural look and feel of Stanford Weekend Acres, which many of us cherish.

SAFETY ISSUES

No amount of engineering can make this sidewalk/trail safe. It crosses directly in the way of vehicles at multiple places including a busy interstate freeway ramp. Even Ladera residents would be required to cross Alpine in order to access it.

Experienced cyclists will continue to ride the road’s bicycle lane and the inexperienced cyclist or child is the one more likely to ride along the “trail”. It is already hazardous pulling into our neighborhood from Alpine, as joggers frequently run along the old path directly in front of our vehicles. Spending millions of dollars to expand this trail and encourage yet more walkers, joggers, strollers and the more inexperienced recreational cyclists, is highly irresponsible.

Portola Valley, with Stanford's agreement, was able to move its stretch of this trail far away from Alpine road traffic. Stanford can do the same with this lower portion of the “trail” by keeping its original promise to put it on its own land.

WIDELY DIFFERING NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACT

Mr. Holland’s report is remiss in combining feedback from Ladera residents who largely support the proposal but personally have nothing to lose from it, with feedback from SWA residents who overwhelmingly reject the proposal and have nothing to gain from it. These two opinions should not be weighed equally. Ladera is much larger than SWA, so it stands to reason that a greater number of opinions will come from Ladera. Stanford Weekend Acres, however, is on the front lines of this proposal and we are overwhelmingly opposed to any further

consideration of it. Feedback from residents living in Ladera and those living in SWA must be looked at in perspective as we face widely differing situations.

Here are some of those differences:

Proximity to Massive Sidewalk Site

- Ladera residents live across the road, up a hill, and at least a mile from any sidewalk/trail construction or hillside grading.

- *SWA residents live at the construction and ultimate use site for sidewalk/trail, road, and hillside.*

Vastly Different Traffic Volume

- Ladera residents face approximately 12,000 vehicles along their stretch of Alpine Road daily and they would have few to no construction delays in their neighborhood.

- *SWA residents face approximately 25,000 vehicles along our stretch of Alpine Road daily (more than twice Ladera's volume) and we would face heavy construction if the project were to proceed.*

Impact on Private Property and Home Values

- Ladera residents would see absolutely no impact on their housing prices or private property. Their home life would not be disturbed in any way.

- *SWA residents would have to worry about diminished home value when our neighborhood loses its secluded, rural charm and a wide recreational path is placed smack across the entry to our neighborhood. Barriers will likely need to be constructed along our section of Alpine Road to meet bicycle lane safety requirements. Some SWA residents would have construction literally encroaching on their yard and/or directly above their homes.*

Impact on Safety and Privacy

- Ladera residents would, if construction were completed, continue to enter and exit their neighborhood with no fear of a trail user crossing their path. They would also face no loss of personal safety or privacy.

- *SWA residents would, if construction were completed, have an even more difficult time safely entering and exiting our neighborhoods, as a brand new trail would likely attract many more people. Experienced cyclists and the occasional daredevil skateboarder would still use the Alpine bike lane. This would give SWA residents at least three layers of traffic to contend with – one on the shoulder of Alpine, one crossing our streets we pull onto or off Alpine, and normal vehicular traffic.*

Personal safety for SWA residents would be diminished. Building a brand new trail would expose our neighborhoods to increased crime, potential for loitering, and the potential for what precious little parking space we do have, to become clogged with trail users' cars.

APPEARANCE OF BIAS

We are concerned about the apparent bias in Mr. Holland's proposal and statements:

- The report ignores, or understates the many inescapable negative impacts of this development project on Stanford Weekend Acres,
- The report weighs support of Ladera residents equally with opposition of SWA residents while the impact of this project on the two communities is vastly lopsided, as is the size of the communities,
- The report fails to mention vociferous opposition to the trail proposal expressed by some Ladera residents,
- The report dismisses the numerous vocal objections of SWA residents,
- The report admits that residents cannot agree to this project without details, yet Mr. Holland conditionally recommends this proposal without details. No details can fix the fundamental problems with this proposal,
- The report seems eager to please Stanford's interests but reluctant to fairly represent the constituents at the meeting,
- Mr. Holland stated at the meeting that he would not make changes to his draft proposal based on feedback from those present. This begs the question of what he meant by calling his proposal a "draft."

STANFORD'S RESISTANCE TO ALTERNATE ROUTES

Safe and relatively simple alternatives to Stanford's plan exist, yet they are not even addressed in Mr. Holland's proposal. A better and safer alternative is for Stanford to reroute the current trail away from all traffic. This gets trail users out of the path of oncoming vehicles and pollution. In order to do this, Stanford would reroute the trail from Piers Lane across San Francisquito Creek, east of the golf course.

That would allow for building a better trail. It would be far less expensive, far safer, and far more recreational than moving hillsides and restructuring a road in order to put pedestrians and cyclists in harm's way. Portola Valley's portion of this trail did so by rerouting the trail away from the road – a far more responsible solution than that being proposed.

CONDITONAL AGREEMENT TO THE PLAN IS UNACCEPTABLE

- All proposed solutions to this plan involve restructuring a portion of Alpine Road,
- There is no way to engineer safety into this sidewalk/trail ,
- An on-demand stop light at Alpine and Bishop Lane would do nothing to get pedestrians out of the way of ingress/egress traffic ,
- There is no design and as such there can be no conditional agreement,
- David Holland, himself, said that he doesn't know of a single case in which a conditional agreement has been reached that has ultimately been turned down. Thus, a conditional vote would equate to agreeing to Stanford's plan.
We say "NO."

CONCLUSION

This sidewalk/trail proposal has twice been defeated by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors. Nothing has changed since that time. Ladera residents and Stanford Weekend Acres residents face dramatically different realities when it comes to this proposal. To weigh both opinions equally would be vastly unfair. Those who have nothing at stake and a little to gain should not be making decisions for those who have nothing to gain and everything to lose. Further, this proposal does nothing to satisfy Mitigation Measure OS-3 in the EIR for the General Use Permit for Stanford's campus expansion.

Indeed, refusing the funding for the trail in San Mateo County does not mean local residents lose the benefits of the money. Stanford is still required by the 2000 General Use Permit to provide recreational facilities for the community to offset their development. Let them do so in a more appropriate location.

WE IMPLORE YOU TO VOTE "NO."

Signed,

Mary Margaret Peterson
John W. Peterson
Ron Miller
Ginger Holt
Massimiliano Fatica
Gayle Spencer
Scott T. Spencer
Leslie Muennemann
Alicia Torregrosa
Barbara Ann Barnett
Margaret Williams
Elizabeth Brown
Joseph Brown
Jeremy Thorpe
Dina Gabriel
Amanda Nelson
Bill Nelson
Martha Davis
Virginia Vania
Luke Vania
Rebecca Altamirano
Antonio Altamirano
Lucia Tedesco
Diana Gerba
Nina Peled
Sidney Overland
Ramone Espanol
Jennifer Kinzelberg
Chad Kinzelberg
George Cordello
Mary Wolf
Dennis Carter
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Michael Feary
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Cynthia Whipple
Edgar Whipple
Greg Fountain
Annette Chavez
Ward Rodriguez
Susan Rodriguez
Oscar Firschein
Theda Firschein
Victor H. Lee
Dave McNally
Susan Delzell
Tobias Freccia
Lisa Freccia
Lisa Giblin
Elena West
Elinor Offil
Walter Nelson
Delores Nelson
Susan Martin
Frances Sun
Daniel Spielman
Tim Broderick

Trail Photos – Taken near Alpine Road & Bishop Lane



Cars turning into Bishop Ln from Alpine face oncoming traffic coming around a blind curve. Having to stop for recreational traffic just after the turn compounds the hazards.



There is only a few feet of space between Alpine road and homeowner property along Alpine. The hill drops off sharply on the other side of the fence. There is no way 12' of trail construction, along with a required 5' road setback, can fit in this space without massive construction, encroachment on home owner's property, and destruction of mature tree cover.



Crossing Hazards Along the Lower Alpine Trail Route

