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A look at trails from a South Bay perspective

By Vice Mayor Judy Chirco
Special to the Times

One of the goals for San Jose's Green Vision is a commitment to build 100 miles of interconnected trails in San Jose. Our sunny weather and beautiful river corridors make trails an excellent option for both recreation and transportation. A completed trail system would allow us to travel from Almaden Valley through downtown all the way up to the Bay.

I'd like to give you an update on our current progress in achieving that goal, and a look ahead at what the future holds.

At the end of 2008 we reached an important milestone: 50 miles of completed trails. As we reach that halfway point, we have much to be proud of. Two partially completed but very popular trails run near our corner of the city: the Guadalupe River Trail and the Los Gatos Creek Trail.

With 11 miles currently open for use, the Guadalupe River Trail is broken into three segments: lower, upper, and downtown. The lower and downtown segments, stretching from Alviso to Highway 280 (just south of downtown) are largely complete. One segment of the upper portion—near Almaden Lake Park—is also complete. This section connects two other trails, the Los Alamito Creek Trail and the Calero Creek Trail that run south into Almaden Valley, and connects to Santa Teresa County Park.

The segment between Almaden Lake and 280 has yet to be constructed, but our Parks Department is making progress. Using parks bond money approved by voters in 2000, they're currently planning construction of an extension south from 280 to Willow Street. When the entire trail is completed, it will run a total of 25 miles, from Almaden Lake, through District 9, through downtown, all the way to the Bay.

The main challenge in completing the rest of the trail will be funding. There is substantial grant money available from the state and other sources for trail construction, and the city has an active grant-writing program. In the period between January and June, 2008, the city has received more than \$6 million in grant reimbursements for parks projects. We plan to continue pursuing grants as we build out the rest of the trail system.

At 11.2 miles in length, the Los Gatos Creek Trail has completed construction in Los Gatos, Campbell and Santa Clara County and has segments just west of the Cambrian District, along Highway 17. The trail is on the western side of 17, so there are only a few access points from District 9.



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Camden Avenue does provide access, but there's another, less obvious way to reach it. Driving on Highway 17, you may have noticed the pedestrian overcrossing just north of the Highway 85 interchange—it actually connects to the trail, and is slightly safer for cyclists and pedestrians than braving Camden Avenue. You can find the entrance by turning onto Mozart Avenue, the first street that intersects with Bascom north of Highway 85. If you follow Mozart until it ends in a cul-du-sac, you'll find the trail that leads to the overcrossing, and eventually the Los Gatos Creek Trail.

Once complete, the Los Gatos Creek Trail will be a total of 19 miles long, spanning from downtown Los Gatos to downtown San Jose. The trail is currently complete all the way to Meridian Avenue; construction is now focusing on the portion between Auzerais Avenue and West Santa Clara Street, with construction slated to begin in 2012.

Whether used for transportation or recreation, trails remain very popular with residents. A recent user count on the Los Gatos Creek Trail found that almost 1,500 people used it in a single day. As we complete a fully interconnected trail system, there's an opportunity to increase the number of people who use trails for transportation, especially commuting. Connectivity will make it possible for commuters to bike across the city without having to ride along large, busy streets.

One hundred miles of interconnected trails is an ambitious goal, but one that I think we can reach.

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