



January 30, 2012

Rachael Grossman
City of Menlo Park
Community Development Department, Planning Division
701 Laurel Street
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Subject: Menlo Park Facebook Campus Project -- Draft Environmental Impact Report

Dear Ms. Grossman:

On behalf of the San Francisco Bay Trail Project, I am submitting comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Menlo Park Facebook Campus Project. The San Francisco Bay Trail is a visionary plan for a shared-use bicycle and pedestrian path that will one day allow continuous travel around San Francisco Bay. Currently, 325 miles of trail have been completed. Eventually, the Bay Trail will extend over 500 miles to link the shoreline of nine counties, passing through 47 cities and crossing seven toll bridges.

We are pleased that the Bay Trail is recognized in the DEIR as an important recreation and commute corridor. Bicycle and pedestrian access is featured prominently in the project objectives as a way to enhance connectivity, reduce private vehicle trips and promote access to the Bay Trail.

The following topics include comments related to the Bay Trail:

- New Class I segment of Bay Trail. The DEIR states that a new Class I trail along the eastern side of University Avenue between Bayfront Expressway and the railroad tracks will be constructed as a mitigation measure in the DEIR. This Bay Trail improvement will provide off-street bicycle and pedestrian access and will link to the future trail connection to Ravenswood Open Space Preserve. We recommend that the design of the trail terminus at the railroad tracks include a safe crossing of University Avenue to address anticipated mid-block crossings until the Ravenswood connection is completed.
- Exiting bicycle routes. Figure 3.5-3 depicts existing Class I, Class II and Class III bicycle facilities in Menlo Park and East Palo Alto within the vicinity of the East and West campuses. However, the map does not provide a complete picture of the various routes available to bicyclists and pedestrians in the area. The proposed Bay Trail east of University Avenue is not shown on the map and there is no reference to the extended trail system that provides access from cities to the south.

- Bayfront Expressway Undercrossing. The opening and improvement of the Bayfront Expressway undercrossing at Willow Road will provide Bay Trail users with an alternative to the at-grade signalized intersection at Willow Road and Bayfront Expressway. It will also provide improved connectivity between the Bay Trail segments on both sides of the roadway. Enhancements such as lighting and security will improve the experience for bicyclists and pedestrians. While this is an improvement to the alignment, we do not support eliminating the at-grade crosswalk and diverting all Bay Trail users to the undercrossing as identified in Table 3.2-2 (Policy II-E-3) and Figure 2-4. The at-grade crosswalk should remain in place to provide an alternative to the undercrossing should it need to be closed for some unforeseen reason (i.e. flooding).
- People-Mover. The Bayfront Expressway undercrossing at Willow Road is described in the DEIR as “an option for Facebook employees to reduce the time needed to travel between campuses.” The DEIR proposes a motorized people-mover system through the tunnel that would share the tunnel right-of-way and portions of the at-grade Bay Trail with bicyclists and pedestrians. The DEIR anticipates the people-movers to operate at a maximum speed of 25 miles per hour on the campuses and within the undercrossing at maximum speed of 15 miles per hour, with signaling at key locations.

Motorized vehicles are not allowed on the Bay Trail except to provide access for maintenance and emergency access. The Bay Trail enabling legislation (SB 100), approved by the state legislature in 1987, states that “... no motorized vehicles, except to the extent necessary for emergency services, be allowed on the trail.” Operating a motorized people-mover along the Bay Trail is a cause for concern. The DEIR states that two pedestrian crossings of the people-mover lane are proposed, but it does not address bicycle crossings and the conflict areas on both sides of the tunnel are not clearly described. In theory, opening the tunnel to bicyclists and pedestrians along the Bay Trail should result in a safer circulation option, but this proposal is not safe when combined with a motorized shuttle system. Bicyclists and pedestrians using a public trail should not have to share the right-of-way with motorized shuttles functioning as transportation for employees of a private corporation.

- Bay Trail gap completion. A crucial gap in the Bay Trail system is located within close proximity to Facebook’s East Campus south of the railroad tracks between University Avenue and the Ravenswood Open Space Preserve. We enthusiastically encourage Facebook’s contribution towards completion of this Bay Trail gap as part of the development approval process or the development agreement with the City of Menlo Park. Completion of this gap will directly benefit the company’s ability to achieve the trip cap on peak period travel and encourage employees to commute to work by bicycle.

Thank you for considering these comments and please contact me at 510-464-7935 or laurat@abag.ca.gov if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Laura Thompson
Bay Trail Project Manager