Archived

NILES CANYON TRAIL

Response to Written Questions

COMMUNITY MEETING
March 11th, 2021

Note that some of the questions were responded to live during the meeting. We have edited some responses for clarity.

1. **Niles Canyon Railway was not among the groups credited on the meeting's presentation materials. Was there a reason they are not included in this discussion of the trail options?**

   The groups listed on the cover sheet are public agencies that have jurisdiction over the trail and/or have provided funding for the planning effort. The Niles Canyon Railway is part of our focused community advisory group. We plan on continued discussion with the railway as the project develops.

2. **What kind of help do you need from local residents to make this project happen?**

   Great to hear this! Participation in meetings similar to this one helps advance the trail. Please write your representative to Congress and the State Legislature letting them know you support the project.

3. **During the presentation, you showed a 14 foot wide trail. Earlier in the presentation, a speaker said it was a 10 foot trail. So, which is correct?**

   The trail has a 14 foot wide clear width. It has a paved width of 10 feet with two 2-foot wide shoulders composed of soil on each side.

4. **During the poll, I tried to show support for "Equestrian" uses but it failed to accept. Why wasn't more than one choice allowed?**

   We apologize for the issue with the Zoom poll but have recorded your feedback. We will include a multiple choice answer in future polls.

5. **How tall will the Palomares Bridge be from bottom of bridge to the top of the entire new bridge?**

   The new bridge will be at least 23 feet above the existing Niles Canyon Railway's tracks. While the new bridge has not been designed, we expect it to be about 25 to 30 feet from its base to its highest point.

6. **Will there be public restrooms for users of the trail?**

   Similar to other regional trails, restrooms within the trail are likely not possible. However, at Niles Plaza there are public restrooms. At the Tyler Ranch Staging area, bathrooms are planned. Within the Palomares staging area, the project plans a dry restroom.

7. **In reference to one of the bridge options, wouldn't crossing the tracks at-grade be more desirable in terms of the visual impact of the bridge?**

   At grade crossings are not a desirable option due to the potential conflict between trains and trail users. In addition, the location of the trail at the crossing is much higher than the rail due to the existing topography.

8. **(Follow up to #7) The original 1928 highway used to cross the tracks at-grade at the east end of the Farwell bridge. The aerial bridge crosses the railway at a location that is very popular for rail-enthusiast photography.**

   Thank you for the comment; we believe that the bridge could offer a viewing platform that could serve future photographers.

9. **Is it possible for pedestrians using the Alameda Creek Trail to be able to access downtown Niles?**

The project is planning on linking the Alameda Creek Trail to downtown Niles.

10. **Do any of the changes proposed to Niles Blvd. affect the AC Transit buses that run along that road?**

    There are no anticipated impacts to transit service.

11. **Do any of the changes along Niles Blvd. change on-street parking?**

    Within the downtown area where angle parking exists, there would be no change. South of downtown, street parking options will be evaluated during the development of the Environmental Document.

12. **How well coordinated is this project with Caltrans' current proposal for Hwy 84 changes, including the stop light at 4 corners?**

    This project should have no impact on the proposed traffic signal.

13. **Is there going to be any barrier or fence on the sides of the trail in Phase 1 and Phase 2 sections? These sections mostly represent deep woods and forests compared to nearby trails where the land is grasslands like Garin, Vargaus, or Dry Creek.**

    A fence or barrier is expected in locations where there is a safety concern due to fall height or the presence of a railroad.

14. **Who would be responsible for continued maintenance and repair of the trail?**

    The responsibility for maintenance and repair has not been decided. It will likely be a shared responsibility between the project's stakeholders.

15. **Will there be any WiFi provided throughout the canyon for the safety of trail users?**

    The project does not expect to add WiFi. However, we encourage the community to contact AT&T, Verizon, and other wireless service providers to improve coverage within the Canyon.

16. **How will you keep people experiencing homelessness from living along the trail?**

    Constructing the trail will provide more "eyes" on the Canyon, which has the tendency to reduce folks experiencing homelessness from congregating. In addition, the trail will allow social workers and other professionals to access the Canyon to provide support to these folks.

17. **How do we email comments and questions about this project?**

    Please send an email to info@nilescanyontrail.org.

18. **One of the stated goals for the trail is to minimize impacts to environmental resources? How are you planning to accomplish this?**

    Where possible, the trail uses existing disturbed areas such as access roadways and the aqueduct for its alignment. A secondary benefit of the trail is that it will provide better access to the Canyon for patrols to prevent the deposition of trash and graffiti, which harms the water quality of Alameda Creek.

19. **Where is the Tyler Ranch stagin area in Sunol?**

    Tyler Staging Area will be located along Foothill Road about 2,500 feet west of Kilkare Road.

20. **What are CEQA and NEPA?**

    The "California Environmental Quality Act" (CEQA) is a law designed to inform project stakeholders, designers, and the public of potential impacts to

environmental resources and minimize them as much as possible. The "National Environmental Policy Act" (NEPA) is a federal law that requires agencies to assess the environmental effects of federally-funded projects prior to implementation.

21. **Can you show the creek on the same diagram as the trail so the impacts on riparian habitat are more clearly shown?**
The environmental analysis will include this information. Please check back in at www.nilescanyontrail.org to review this information in the coming months.

22. **What kind of mitigations and remediations are anticipated for impacts on natural and cultural resources? What if the visual impact of the bridges and retaining walls is significant?**The environmental analysis will include this information. Please check back in at www.nilescanyontrail.org to review this information in the coming months.

23. **Why was the Calaveras Road alternative rejected?**
This will be included in the Environmental Document as a project alternative. Calaveras Road provides a link between Sunol and Milpitas. As it is both narrow and winding it does not comply with the Class 1 standard. This project is intended to link Sunol with Niles.

24. **Will there be any trail amenities like benches, picnic tables, restrooms?**
The project proposes benches and picnic tables. Restrooms will likely be located at the staging areas.

25. **Will there be interpretive signage along the trail providing information about the history, geology, wildlife, plants, etc.**
Yes, the project plans to add interpretive elements.

26. **How will emergency responders access this trail for fires (as has happened along the canyon on previous occasions)?**
The trail will be 14 feet clear which will provide the ability for a small fire apparatus to gain access to the Canyon.

27. **Will Joyland Park, the old park near Alameda Creek, reopen now?**
This project does not anticipate creating access to the former Joyland site.

28. **Will this be accessible for wheelchair users?**
The trail is designed to be accessible in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act

29. **Will there be opportunities to volunteer as a docent or trail guide?**
Docents and guides are great ideas and can become part of the future programming effort.

30. **How will you make sure pedestrians are safe from collisions with bicyclists along the trail?**
As with other regional trails, bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians must use the facility responsibly. The trail will include features such as signs and an alignment to discourage bicyclists from traveling at high speeds.

31. **Will the trail continue to Highway 84 at Palomares Road on the south side, or will riders need to cross the bridge and then cross back over the highway to continue east on the highway?**
From Niles to Palomares Road, the trail is on the

Canyon's south side. At Palomares Road, there is the option to cross the highway at the bridge. However, the trail travels along the southside of the Canyon from Palomares Road to Brightside. At Brightside, it crosses using a new bridge to the north side of the Canyon to Niles.

32. **Will there be garbage cans and trash pick-up along the trail?Will it be by electric or gas carts and, if so, how will it not be in the way of horses, walkers, strollers, and bikes?**

    At this point, the project proposes waste receptacles at the staging areas. Within the trail, we would want to encourage users to "pack it in and pack it out."

33. **Niles Canyon is an important vehicular route, but I don't see that being considered in the presentation. Are you planning to maintain the vehicle usage along the trail?**

    The trail will not impact vehicles traveling along State Route 84.

34. **How will you keep the users of the trail safely away from the UPPR and Niles Railway? Will signage be added for safety concerns?**

    The project will install fencing and advisory signs when the trail is located near railroad tracks consistent with the guidelines of the California Public Utilities Commission.

35. **How many trees will be cleared out along the "Secret Sidewalk?**

    This project seeks to reduce tree removal. The environmental analysis will include this information. Please check back in at www.nilescanyontrail.org to review this information.

36. **Will this project remove the "Secret Sidewalk"?**

    The "Secret Sidewalk" is the former aqueduct that served water for San Francisco. The project contemplates either modifying or removing a portion of the aqueduct to facilitate the trail.

37. **Will emergency phones be installed because WiFi is lacking in the canyon for emergencies?**

    Thank you for the comment, we will review with emergency services.

38. **Can you send all those who attended this webinar access links to this presentation, as well as ways to volunteer to help support this project?**

    Please check back in at www.nilescanyontrail.org for all information related to trail planning.

39. **The Tyler Ranch staging area relies on EBRPD funds, as their plan is to build a ranger station, parking lot, and create trails there. Will this project work closely to make sure EBRPD has the funding in place before building Phase 3?**

    Yes, EBRPD is part of the technical team developing this project. We are working closely with the District in planning the Niles Canyon Trail.

40. **How will the Niles Canyon Trail link to the SFPUC Water Temple? How will cyclists and pedestrians cross SR84?**

    At this time, the Niles Canyon Trail does not contemplate going through the Town of Sunol and connecting to the SFPUC Water Temple as the trail ends at the Niles Canyon Railroad Station. In the future, based upon the public's interest and funding availability, the project could consider additional alternatives to extend the trail.