

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

STANFORD'S OFFER TO SAN MATEO COUNTY AND PORTOLA VALLEY FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ALPINE ROAD TRAIL

Note: The Agreement between Stanford University and Santa Clara County regarding the Alpine Road trail and related documents are online at www.stanford.edu/dept/govcr

1. Why is Stanford offering to pay for trail improvements in unincorporated San Mateo County and Portola Valley?

Stanford is required by Santa Clara County to offer up to \$8.4 million to San Mateo County and up to \$2.8 to the Town of Portola Valley for the purpose of making substantial improvements to the Alpine Road Trail. Stanford's offer fulfills a General Use Permit condition that seeks to increase recreational opportunities by improving the Alpine Road Trail.

2. What trail is proposed to be improved? Why this trail?

The Alpine Road Trail is also known as the C-1 trail in the Santa Clara Countywide Trails Master Plan, and the C-1 trail is specified in the General Use Permit condition that Stanford agreed to fulfill. Trails often go through more than one political jurisdiction with land use authority. The C-1 trail, for example, goes through four political jurisdictions between El Camino Real and Arastradero Road (Palo Alto, Menlo Park, unincorporated San Mateo County, and Portola Valley).

3. What improvements will be made to the trail, and how will this benefit the residents along the trail route and other members of the community?

The existing Alpine Road Trail in San Mateo County and Portola Valley has some good stretches, but in many places it is inadequate, and in some places the trail is in danger of falling into the creek. Aesthetic, functional, and safety improvements would be made to bring the trail up to a high quality, safe, reliable route for pedestrians and bicyclists. The trail will not always be along the side of a road, but in places will dip below or away from the road. The entire recreational experience will be considerably improved, and the trail will provide a safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle transportation route from residential areas in unincorporated San Mateo County and Portola Valley to Stanford University, the Stanford Medical Center, the Stanford Shopping Center, and other places.

4. Who will decide what improvements to make? For example, how wide the trail will be and other features?

Only the responsible jurisdiction can decide the details of a trail constructed within its jurisdiction, including such details as trail width, precise location along the general trail alignment, and type of surface. That is, San Mateo County makes the decisions about a trail in unincorporated San Mateo County, the Town of Portola Valley makes decisions about a trail in Portola Valley. To qualify for the funding that will be provided by Stanford under its Agreement with Santa Clara County, each jurisdiction that is offered funds must agree to build or enhance a trail in a manner consistent with a set of broad guidelines. The guidelines permit considerable flexibility so that the essential decisions will be up to the local jurisdiction.

5. What will be the impact of the improved trail on San Francisquito and Los Trancos Creeks?

One of the many positive advantages of an enhanced trail along Alpine Road will be the correction of serious trouble spots where the road and the trail are in danger of falling into the creek. Detailed engineering plans for each section along Alpine Road identify such vulnerable spots and provide creek bank stabilization along with improved safety and aesthetic enhancement.

6. What strings are attached to Stanford's funding?

There are few conditions that accompany the funds, and there is great latitude on the part of Portola Valley and San Mateo County on the important details of the design and construction of the trail. Santa Clara County and Stanford will only want to ensure that a continuous pedestrian and bicycle trail will exist and that it meet either Santa Clara County Trails guidelines or some other set of trails guidelines that the director of Santa Clara County Parks Department finds satisfactory. Importantly, the key agents making decisions on these trails will be officials from San Mateo County and Portola Valley.

7. Some community groups preferred a new trail on Stanford land in Santa Clara County. Why didn't Stanford accept the trail that was advocated by those community groups?

The alignment of the C1 trail that Stanford agreed to is on the periphery of the western edge of Stanford's lands. Stanford never agreed to trails into the interior of its lands. The so-called "community supported route" is an interior route that deeply intrudes into Stanford's campus lands. Stanford consistently and repeatedly opposed the internal trail route when it was first proposed in 2001. Therefore, claims that Stanford has backed away from a promise are not true. Stanford never agreed to interior trails. Stanford is keeping the promise that it made. Although the alignment of the trail remained a political controversy for five years, in December 2005, Santa Clara County confirmed Stanford's position

on the Alpine Road trail by a vote of 4 to 1 and entered into a formal, binding agreement with Stanford. The Agreement and other related trail documents are available at www.stanford.edu/dept/govcr.

8. What will happen if either Portola Valley or San Mateo County accepts the offer but the other one does not?

The offers are independent of each other. That is, each government can accept or reject its offer regardless of what the other jurisdiction does. If San Mateo County does not accept its offer and Portola Valley accepts its offer, then Portola Valley will receive funds or other resources to enhance its trail. If both accept their offers, both will receive funding.

9. How long will the offers last?

Stanford's offers to San Mateo County and Portola Valley will remain open until December 31, 2011, and there is a possibility for an extension of the deadline for two more years.

10. What will happen to the money if the offers are not accepted?

If San Mateo County does not enter into an agreement before the offer expires, Stanford will give \$8.4 million (adjusted to reflect changes in a specified construction index) to the Santa Clara County Parks Department. If Portola Valley does not enter into such agreement before the offer expires, Stanford will give \$2.8 million (adjusted to reflect changes in a specified construction index) to the Santa Clara County Parks Department.

11. Is there any precedent for one governmental agency (in this case Santa Clara County) seeking to influence a decision in other agencies (in this case, San Mateo County and Portola Valley)?

When a project goes through more than one jurisdiction, the lead agency can suggest but not require that portions of the project in another jurisdiction be improved as well even though the final decision of what is done in the other jurisdiction will be decided by that jurisdiction. For example, when Palo Alto approved the Sand Hill Road improvements in 1997, it also required Stanford to offer to pay for similar improvements in Menlo Park and San Mateo County and that the offer had to remain open for ten years. At first Menlo Park rejected the funds and San Mateo County deferred decision on its offer. After five years, however, Menlo Park and San Mateo County signed agreements with Stanford accepting resources to complete the improvements in both jurisdictions. The result is the very successful Sand Hill Road, Santa Cruz Avenue, and Alpine Road improvements that have been highly praised by the public and that serve important public purposes.

12. How can San Mateo County and Portola Valley protect its citizens against unanticipated cost rises? And how can the public be assured that once the process begins, the outcome will be what is promised.

In finally agreeing to accept the offer on San Hill Road, both Menlo Park and San Mateo County negotiated an arrangement whereby Stanford acted as an agent for each jurisdiction and did the work as an agent for those jurisdictions and also assumed the risk of cost overruns. Stanford, therefore, paid the full costs of the projects. Stanford would entertain the possibility of negotiating such agreements in this instance as well. Before any substantial funding is released there will be a written agreement between Stanford and the affected jurisdiction spelling out the improvements to be constructed and the process for receiving payment.

13. What will happen to the Alpine Road Trail if Stanford's offer is not accepted?

If Stanford's offer is not accepted, any future improvements in the Alpine Road trail in unincorporated San Mateo County will be the responsibility of San Mateo County. The same for Portola Valley: any future improvements to the Alpine Road trail will be the responsibility of Portola Valley. Funds to pay for the improvements will come from taxpayers or other sources.

14. If San Mateo County and Portola Valley accept the offers, when can the work begin and when would the residents be able to enjoy the benefits of a completed, improved trail?

If Stanford and San Mateo County agree on plans for improvements to the Alpine Road Trail in San Mateo County, the work can proceed as quickly as permits can be obtained. The improved trail and all the improvements can be done in a reasonable amount of time so that the improved trail could be put into service within a year of the time permits are issued. The precise time will depend on the nature of the improvements and the weather.

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