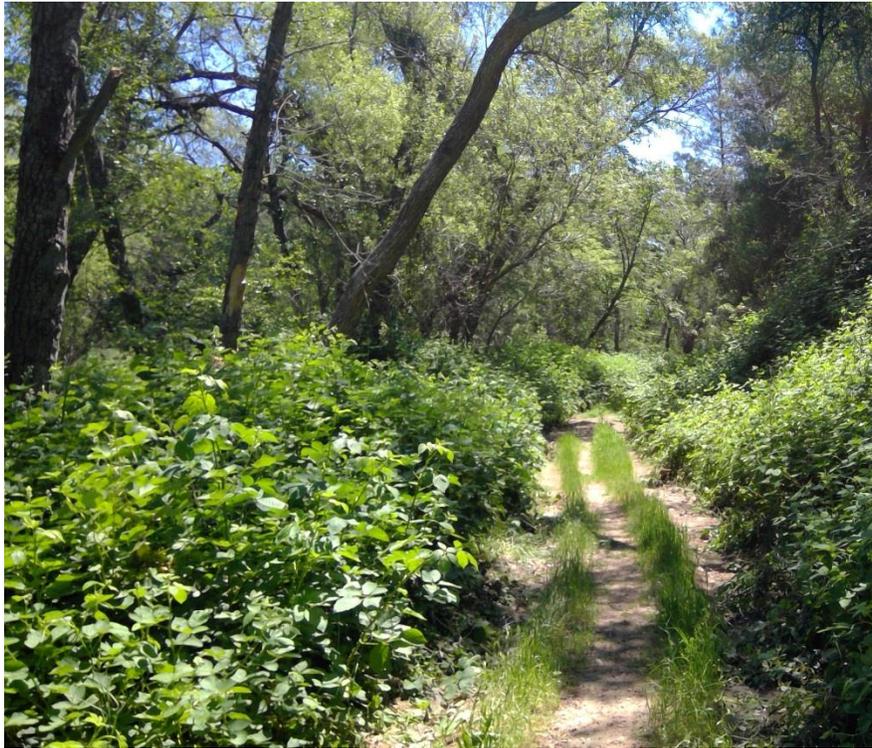




Mariposa County Local Transportation Commission



Mariposa Creek Parkway Phase III Conceptual Plan & Phase I and II Enhancement Program



by



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I. INTRODUCTION

The Mariposa Town Plan, Section 4.4: Parks and Recreation addresses a variety of existing and proposed park and open space facilities and improvements to serve visitors to the Town of Mariposa residents, businesses and residents. The combined Mariposa Creek Park (Arts Park) and Parkway represent a key open space and active transportation resource serving the community. The Mariposa Town Plan envisions the linear Parkway as a multi – use recreational facility that provides an off – street active transportation link to destinations within the town and surrounding open space areas and serves as a means to preserve, protect and enhance biological and visual resources.

Existing and planned Parkway segments generally follow the course of Mariposa Creek, approximately 4 miles from the Fairgrounds on the south to the offices of the California Department of Forestry on the north. A conceptual plan for the park is illustrated in the Mariposa Town Plan on Exhibit 31, provide an off – street route for bicycles and pedestrians (active transportation).

The Parkway segments located within the Mariposa Town Planning Area (TPA) is intended to link visitor and local shopping and services include the History Center, the Mineral Exhibit at the Fairgrounds, historic Downtown Mariposa, and Mariposa Park. Parkway segments I-III provide an active transportation corridor that ties together a number of visitor destinations within the Town of Mariposa including the historic downtown, the History Museum, shopping and services.

The Parkway segments I-III are especially suited for integration with the on-site pedestrian circulation of adjacent businesses along the Creek frontage with outdoor seating areas, expansive windows, viewing platforms and locations for formal Parkway access. Designed Pathways from nearby hotels, restaurants, businesses and residents will link directly to the Parkway which will include passive recreational uses such as picnic and interpretive areas.

The Mariposa Town Plan envisions that the Parkway will serve to protect and enhance the ecological values of the Mariposa Creek as a naturally flowing perennial stream with minimal disturbance from adjacent development. Mariposa Creek is the primary drainage channel for a watershed of approximately 3,000 acres, which includes fairly large areas of paved surfaces (within the TPA). The project will ensure that banks throughout the proposed park area will be maintained in a stable condition, which is important to minimize soil erosion and flood damage. The Mariposa Creek Parkway project will enhance the aesthetic values of the Mariposa Creek by opening up views, softening the appearance of adjacent commercial areas, and removing invasive, non-native vegetation within and adjacent to the stream channel. These areas will be revegetated with native species to restore and enhance riparian habitat along the creek.

Current improvements to the overall concept include: the Mariposa Arts Park to include a handicapped accessible trail between 5th Street and the 4th street alignment, a trail connecting Highway 140 to the Creek along the 4th Street alignment, a main entrance at the bottom of 5th Street, a creek overlook or plaza area, and a foot bridge crossing the creek and connecting to the continuation of the trail along the Best Western property. The proposed project recommends enhancement of these existing improvements.

The Mariposa Town Plan recognizes that a majority of the future development of the Mariposa Creek Parkway will require acquisition of land along its proposed alignment. The Mariposa Town Plan suggests that the width of the Parkway will vary depending upon adjacent development, adjacent roadway improvements and characteristics of the creek channel. For example, the width the easement for Phases I and II is 50 feet from the creek centerline, or 100 feet overall. The Town Plan recommends that, in general land acquisitions for the park be 50 feet from the edge of the creek's floodway in order to ensure that adequate buffering between the park and adjacent development. Additional land may be needed to ensure that there is enough land for parallel trail extensions or loops above the top of the Creek bank and to enable trail maintenance and increased safety. The Mariposa Town Plan includes prescriptions for trail design as follows:



- Trail width to accommodate two-way pedestrian and bicycle traffic;
- Surfacing for the trail to withstand walkers and runners, bicycles, wheelchairs and strollers;
- Accessory improvements to include seating areas, trash receptacles, interpretive exhibits and markers, areas for passive recreation and possibly a restroom facility;
- Main entrances will be recognized and overlooks or widened plaza areas to be included. Along the trail, typical facilities may include benches or seating areas, trash.
- Low level lighting and native landscaping for safety, shade, habitat enhancement and slope stability.
- Park features to have a consistent design and consequently the standards of the Historic District may have a park-wide impact.
- Parking to be within fairly small and dispersed locations designed to be subordinate to the open space value of the park.

The Mariposa Creek Parkway project began as a Master Plan and Phase I in the 1980's, Phase II in the 1990's, the Arts Park in 2005, and efforts to move ahead with design and grant funding for Phase III in 2010. With each stage, an interested and energetic group gathered to further the goals of the original proponents – to provide a recreational and transportation corridor that celebrates the natural, historical and cultural qualities of the Mariposa Creek corridor.

The current effort to advance the parkway from the end of Phase II at 8th Street to a location close to the Joe Howard Bridge or Coakely Circle was funded by a Regional Planning Assistance Grant from Caltrans with substantial assistance from County staff. Interest in the corridor was sparked by work in the community on the Transportation Center Feasibility Study – Phase 1 and the Economic Vitality Strategy, which prioritized the Mariposa Creek Parkway as an important link in the overall transportation, recreational, and economic development plans for the County. With a limited budget to exhaust before the end of the grant period, the County mobilized staff from numerous departments along with an outside landscape architectural consultant to re-energize the efforts on Phase III with a particular goal to not only generate a solid Conceptual Plan for the project, but to also position it to move efficiently into permitting, design and construction of the project.

An important aspect of this project is its context in the community and the ability of the project to benefit and connect parts of the larger community, including connections to:

- parking and transit at the Roadside Rest or YARTS station,
- food and dining at nearby stores and restaurants,
- the picnic area at the Museum,
- historical points of interest at the Museum and Courthouse.

Additionally, the Parkway will be a link in non-motorized travel between residences, businesses downtown, hotels, the Arts Park and soon to the County Park. All these considerations went into the development of the Phase III Conceptual Plan.



II. PHASE III PLAN BEGINS

Previous concept plans for development of Phase III focused on land that was mostly owned or controlled by the County. This land included the creek bed itself which is an Open Space Easement of 1.36 acres and a large (2.69 ac) portion on the northern slope of the creek purchased earlier by the County. Additionally, other adjacent owners had been approached as part of the 2010 Proposition 50 design and grant writing effort and had shown support for the project. The grant effort was not successful and efforts to secure the necessary property and easements stalled.

When investigation began anew in 2017, participants were encouraged to consider routes on any property that would enhance this project. Two new parcels began to generate interest among the participants: property along the South bank of the creek, belonging to the Fiske family and the flat land just north of the proposed parkway at 8th Street.

- Some of the original land purchases and easements for the Parkway originated with the Fiske family. This new piece borders Mariposa Creek inside the 50 foot setback from the edge of the FEMA flood boundary and contains a MUPD sewer easement running parallel to the creek which is used informally as a walking path through the private property. This option gained credibility as County staff and the consulting team realized the ease of developing a trail in this location compared to previous location traversing the steep slopes above the North side of the Creek.
- The second interesting parcel is north of the creek at 8th Street, also within the 50' creek setback. The owners have expressed a willingness to consider a portion of the property for Parkway use.

One obstacle to creation of an implementable design was the lack of accurate survey data for the creek corridor coupled with the lack of accessibility to the site due to the thicket of invasive non-native blackberry. Some survey work in the Phase III area had been done earlier to establish the property descriptions of the purchase and open space easements transferred to the County in during the preparation of the Proposition 50 grant. It was difficult to determine by viewing the extent of the existing easements that were suitable for trail development. In order to get a visual sense of the limits of the open space easement (the creek bed), the Public Works Department installed flags on most of its property corners. This visual clue was very helpful to see what land had been previously secured by the County.

Linking the ground to the paper maps to allow development of a Conceptual Plan was a challenge. The consultant and the County's GIS department worked to tie together aerial photos, flood maps, historic USGS topography maps, existing survey data, new survey data and APN property maps. Snapshots of these maps are included in the Appendix, and the full size maps are in digital files at the Mariposa County Planning Department. The accuracy of these maps is not guaranteed; however, by using this massaged data, a base file suitable for Conceptual Design was created.

As the project moves toward construction additional site information will be required. Before the design and survey teams can access the site, a dense, tall thicket of invasive Himalayan Blackberries will be tamed.

III. PLAN CRITERIA

On morning of May 4, 2017 County staff, consultants and guests met at the Planning Department to review the past work done on Phase III, available mapping resources and the goals of the County for this phase of the project. Staff shared previous efforts to connect with adjacent landowners and the manner in which this phase of the project supports, and is supported by, other efforts being undertaken in the County, particularly the *Mariposa Transportation Center Feasibility Study Phase I* and the *Economic Vitality Strategy*. After the meeting, the team visited the site, viewed the flags installed by the Public Works Department indicating the corners of surveyed property, and discussed challenges and opportunities in the corridor.



Staff and the consultants met with the members of the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) in the afternoon to learn more about the community's vision and concerns about this project. The consultants led the CAC in a visioning exercise to help list and then prioritize the elements that were utmost in the minds of the CAC. Expectations for grant and ultimately construction milestones and timelines were also discussed.

The vision of the CAC and County staff were blended to generate the goal statements for the project. The goals adopted for this project were:

- To continue the Mariposa Creek Parkway closer to its ultimate length in a way that showcases and enhances the spirit of Mariposa.
- To create a Mariposa Creek Parkway that furnishes a recreational and transportation resource for residents and visitors connecting points of interest and destinations in town.

Design criteria were based on the goals of the project and the more specific ideas generated by the CAC. These criteria included:

- Desire to emphasize conservation, natural resources and history.
- A concern for safety of the user and resource.
- Desire to reflect a theme that enhances a positive view of the town of Mariposa, and not an urban feel.
- Connections to previous phases, Highway 49, other parts of the community, transit, and potential future connections to residential areas such as Idle Wheels.
- Provision of amenities such as:
 - Drinking fountains
 - Picnic tables, benches and lots of trash cans
 - Pet waste stations
 - Play areas for kids, but not structured playgrounds
 - Signage for wayfinding, interpretation, and rules. These signs could be combined into information kiosks, or installed like mile markers along the trail.
 - Public art
 - Possibly a restroom
 - Possibly exercise stations
 - Lighting
- Landscape development, including some meadow-like areas for lounging. Keen interest in native plant materials, plants that attract birds and butterflies, and eradication/control of the berries and dead trees;
- A concern that the landscape should be open enough along the trail to make the trail feel safe;
- Trail should be paved and bicycle and stroller friendly. A dual-surface (both asphalt and DG for various users) might be considered;
- Maintenance is a major concern and the parkway should be designed to minimize the need for on-going maintenance.

A summary of all the items identified in the visioning exercise is included in the Appendix A.



During consideration of overall concepts County staff contacted adjacent property owners and generally discovered much support for the project. Those who had been contacted during the earlier planning effort remain amenable to participating in the Phase III project, and letters of support have been provided by property owners and potential partners. It is quite likely that boundaries of the Parkway will be wide enough to accommodate the trail, trail meanders, and areas needed to enhance safety and to enable appropriate maintenance and upkeep. Therefore, letters of support are not intended to advocate for a particular design solution, as it is recognized that extensive survey, design and some engineering will be necessary to determine the final Parkway boundaries.

Nonetheless, with guidance from the Advisory Committee, expressions of support from neighbors, and new base material generated by the consultant, County GIS staff, and Public Works Departments, the consultants proceeded with the design of three alternatives for the trail alignment.

IV. ALIGNMENT ALTERNATIVES

Three alignment scenarios were generated by the consultants for review by County staff and the CAC. Alternatives reflected three approaches to the alignment of the trail that would or could be influenced by:

- the availability of property which the trail could legally traverse;
- cost factors driven by length, width and difficulty of construction of the trail; and
- the ultimate vision of how the trail would be used (a through-route or a loop trail) and its connections to the larger community.

The three alternatives are included in Appendix C. In summary, the features of each are as follows:

Alternative One “Out and Back”:

This alternative was the shortest and used mostly land on the north side of the creek already available to the County. It began at a connection with 8th Street uphill from the low-water bridge, traveled westward and looped back to the beginning location. Other features included a trail constructed of Decomposed Granite (DG), approximately .3 miles long, allowing for a .4 mile out-and- back walk.

Pros: takes advantage of the attractive and partially shady “shelf” area of the site on land mostly owned by the County;

Cons: Short and doesn’t connect to a future section of the parkway, or to sites in the rest of Mariposa. Not suitable for bike riding unless paved and difficult to supervise from a vehicle.

Alternative Two “Out and Up”:

This alternative began similar to the route of Alternative One, also on the north side of the creek, and when it reached the steep slope below the Pioneer Market it skirts the slope on a boardwalk or cut slope heading west until it connects to the sidewalk on Coakley Circle near the O’Reilly’s Auto Parts. It also offers a trail that heads up the hill, connecting with a proposed easement between the market and O’Reilly’s to connect to Coakley Circle. Other features include:

- The main part of the trail would be asphalt, and DG would be used on steeper or narrower sections.
- The trail from 8th Street to the portal on Joe Howard Street would be approximately .4 miles.
- Stairs are proposed to exit the creek corridor behind the Pioneer Market.



Pros: This alternative is primarily on parcels already considered for inclusion in the project, and it provides a good connection to the Coakley Circle commercial area.

Cons: The side slope portion of the trail could become quite expensive to construct, and may be difficult or impossible to provide full ADA-compliance. Maintenance could be more expensive, and the route is not easily integrated into the larger bicycle plans for the community.

Alternative Three “Out and Over”:

Alternative Three was considered the most expansive option because the alignment is principally located on property not controlled by the County. This alternative’s primary trail would be the easiest and probably least expensive to build. Features of Alternative Three include:

- The trail was proposed to enter the corridor at 8th Street, travel on the north side of the creek until a point about below Pioneer Market where the land gets steep,
- The trail would cross the creek via a footbridge and continue west to a portal near the Joe Howard Street bridge.
- A second part of this alternative was to add the portion of the trail from the bridge back easterly to 8th Street.
- The total length of trail shown in this alternative is approximately .6 miles.

Pros: This alternative meets the goal to provide a route that connects the previous phases of the Mariposa Creek Parkway to the start of a future phase. The trail would be suitable for bicycles and would be reasonably easy to supervise.

Cons: This alternative does not include a connection to the town at its midpoint, such as at Pioneer Market, and at the time the southern route easement was not guaranteed. At the time of this report, this route is anticipated but still not definite.

After some deliberation, the CAC recommended a hybrid plan incorporating principal design elements of both Alternatives One and Three. The CAC’s design directive was to:

- Establish a trail along the south side of the creek. The original direction from the CAC was that the surface of this trail would be decomposed granite (DG). Over the course of the project, this has been changed to asphalt to provide better long-term maintenance, with DG as a phasing option if funding is not available for the paved surface;
- Establish a paved trail on the north side with enhanced amenities similar to the previous phases;
- Include secondary trails, a natural play area and possible beach on the north side immediately prior to the bridge;
- Establish some kind of secondary connection to Coakley Circle near the Pioneer Market or Post Office.



V. FEATURES OF THE PROPOSED PHASE III CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

The plan for the proposed Conceptual Design for Phase III is included in the attachments. The proposed plan incorporates all of the elements recommended by the Mariposa Town Plan including:

- Access via formal trail heads and footbridges;
- Trail design to include plazas, overlooks;
- Parking within small, dispersed parking areas;
- Ancillary improvements with seating, lighting, trash receptacles, restrooms;
- Multi-use considerations in surfacing for walkers, runners, bicyclists, strollers;
- Passive recreation (resting, picnic and interpretive natural play areas); and
- Riparian and upland habitat conservation and enhancement

The highlights of the plan include the following:

- The primary pathway is shown as an asphalt surface 10 feet wide for use by both pedestrians and bicycles. Selection of asphalt for this surface provides a more easily maintained surface which will remain ADA compliant over time. If necessary for funding reasons, a DG surface would be a functional interim solution and could be considered a base to future asphalt.
- Several culverts under the south side trail will be required to accommodate drainage from offsite. An unknown number of culverts, boardwalks or other crossings may be required on the north side.
- As shown on the plans the paved south side trail is approximately 1865' long and the paved north side trail is approximately 980 feet long. Together the two trails provide approximately one-half miles of walking/biking surface.
- The secondary decomposed granite trails on the north side will be determined at a later time based on the opportunities and limitations presented by the creek environment. These decomposed granite trails will access the north side amenities, including picnicking, bench overlooks, places to access the creek or areas designed for play for youth.
- A trailhead with user amenities is proposed for the flat area north of the low water bridge on 8th Street. This area, which may be a project unto itself in support of the parkway efforts, would provide a small parking area, major entry point to the Parkway with interpretive, regulatory and wayfinding signage, and possibly a restroom and picnic shelter. This area is envisioned to be a good gathering point for educational or tourist tours of the creek corridor, an enjoyable mid-point rest area for walkers and bicyclists traveling from points west to the Arts Park, into town, or to the County Park.
- There are two overlooks attached to the main southern trail, and one "remote" overlook projecting out to the edge of the waterway. The attached overlooks provide a gathering place for families and small groups, and the remote overlook offers users an opportunity to look up and down the creek from a location slightly elevated over the water. All the overlooks will be furnished with benches and trash receptacles. The plan also illustrates a few bench locations which are simply a seating area off but adjacent to the trail for momentary resting. The precise location of these seating areas will be confirmed during the future design phase(s) of the project based on shade and view.
- Two bridges are included in the Conceptual Plan for Phase III. The required height and length of these bridges is unknown at this point but will be determined during final design with the additional information regarding anchoring options for the bridges, high flow elevations and so on. Though the final design of the bridges is yet to be



determined, they are shown at this time as suspension-style bridges. This type of bridge has a light footprint on the creek environment and can possibly span a good distance. In addition, the structure of the bridge is interesting and could be designed to provide an invitation to the parkway from surrounding streets.

- A third bridge at the trailhead is possible but not shown at this time. It would offer visitors a way to access both sides of the parkway without walking on the narrow 8th Street low water bridge.
- A connection to a stairway up the steep slope below Pioneer Market is shown on the Conceptual Plan as a desired feature but one that will take more investigation to see if it is feasible. This walkway would not be ADA-compliant but would offer a good connection to the community assets on and near Coakley Circle. The route would connect the top of the stairs to Coakley Circle and is highlighted by wayfinding and orientation signage.
- The paved trails would be designed to be fully ADA-compliant. The DG trails would also be designed to be universally accessible, but their compliance with ADA is partially determined by their level of maintenance. Stairs to Joe Howard Street or up to the Pioneer Market would not be accessible, though if possible some accommodation to ease their use by those pushing bicycles or strollers could be designed into the structure.
- The CAC expressed the desire for lighting along the trail. While not shown throughout the alignment, the intention to install lighting at the portals is indicated on the plan. Consideration of the desirability of nighttime lighting on the trail should be considered and if desired, locations can be plotted and at the least conduit laid during construction of the trail.
- Site amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, dog-care stations, drinking fountains, picnic tables, and signage are anticipated to be included in the project, with the final number and locations to be determined during final design.
- The west end of the trail is anchored by a bridge and connection to Coakely Circle just downhill of the O'Reilly's Auto Parts store. The path includes both a stairway to walk directly up to the city sidewalk as well as a ramped walkway to provide ADA, stroller and bicycle access. This portal design would include signage and some celebration of this entry to the parkway. It also assumes that the County will extend the public sidewalk on Joe Howard Street between the O'Reilly's and the existing bridge at Joe Howard Street.

VI. PROPOSED ENHANCEMENTS TO PRIOR PHASES

Along with development of a Conceptual Plan for Phase III, the consultants, in collaboration with County staff, toured Phase I and II of the Parkway with an eye towards developing a schedule of enhancements that would expand the utility and attractiveness of these prior phases. Enhancements to Phases I and II include the following:

Phase I and the Arts Park:

The enhancements to Phase I seek to improve access and visibility from Charles Street/Highway 140/49, and to expand the capacity and utility of the Arts Park. The enhancements include:

- Add terrace seating on the upper level slope now covered with rosemary shrubs. The terraces would add seating capacity on the upper slope without sacrificing lawn area. The terraces are envisioned as low stone or concrete



walls backfilled and planted with turf or another surface suitable for seating. It appears three to four terraces would be possible. Some pruning of downhill trees and shrubs may be required to create views of the stage area.

- Revise the interface between the Arts Park and the highway:
 - Consider raising walls in some spots and replacing vine-covered fencing to reduce highway noise in the park
 - The raised wall may provide a space for attractive signage
 - Continue the wall closer to 4th Street and bend it around the entry, highlighting the entry to the park.
 - Consider raising the existing Arts Park sign and rotating toward inbound traffic, or making it two sided.
 - Add a walkway on the shelf behind the wall at the top of the slope that descends toward the Cal Trans drainage structure where it would turn and descend via steps to the park on the east side of the 911 monument.
- Add a split-rail type fence on the 4th Street side of the planters along 4th Street in the park. Children play in this area and a conflict with traffic is a concern. There is a concrete rail fence that looks very similar to wood and will be maintenance-free for a long while. This product should be investigated.
- There are opportunities to replant several areas in the park where trees and shrubs have been lost, including:
 - Behind the stage (in areas that are not used for dancing) which improves the view of the back of the stage. Additionally, a designated parking spot for service and delivery vehicles should be established, protected with boulders, and marked (with paint and/or signage) to keep vehicles out of the planted areas.
 - Along the front of the stage some turf could be added (and irrigated) if the DG walkway in that area is not needed.
 - Small numbers of plants could be added in locations currently bare of material. These areas are indicated on the plan.
- There are spaces at the rear of the site that would be good for a new picnic tables. These spots are shown on the plan.
- The request has been made to add a sound system to the park to help sound reach the furthest parts of the park. This addition, coupled with the expanded terrace seating and sound blocking wall changes would make more areas of the park available for attendees at park events.

Phase II:

The primary enhancement proposed for Phase II involves adding planting, especially trees, to the south side of the trail to create a more “parkway” appearance. Currently this area is used for quite a bit of haphazard on-street parking. With some structuring of the parking, trees and shrubs could be added to this area which would enhance the appearance of the trail and provide shade for parkway users.

County staff has indicated that there are plans to widen Stroming Road and move the alignment of 8th Street. This realignment would necessitate the removal of some plantings and boulders. The County would be in the best position to decide whether the likelihood and timing of these improvements would preclude this new planting, or whether careful selection of tree locations could anticipate the future improvements. The planting scheme shown in the plan set is conceptual and could easily be adjusted to reflect this new information if it exists.



- The new plantings of trees and some shrubs along the Phase II trail between Stroming Road and Mariposa Creek features native large shade trees and smaller native flowering trees protected from vehicles by locally sourced boulders. These boulders would be located to define reasonable parking areas and to protect tree areas. Additionally, toward the west there is a significant grade difference between the trail and the roadway. This grade change could serve to enhance the user's experience on the trail if it were planted with native shrubs and trees, dotted with groups of protective boulders and possibly defined on the uphill side by bollards or a rail fence. The portion designated for parking should be graded to an appropriate cross-slope for parking.
- It is reasonable to assume the irrigation system installed per the 2000 Phase II plans has the capacity to service this new area. It is unknown whether the existing system on the creek side is in need of repair or upgrade after 17 years.
- The Master Gardeners are doing an excellent job maintaining and interpreting the existing plantings on the creek side. They should be approached to see if they would expand their outreach to include this new area.
- The original Master Plan for this section (drawn in 1999) included soft (DG or similar) trails on the north side of the creek potentially connecting to the backs of the motels on the highway and to the parkway via a low-water bridge or stepping stones. These trails opened up areas for summer and fall picnicking and created a good connection to the parkway from the community. This feature is still a valid idea and would be a nice enhancement to the project.
- When the bridge across the creek to the parking on 5th Street was installed there was a good backdrop of trees behind the landing on the south side. These trees should be replanted to call attention to the crossing and to provide shade. Additionally there is a narrow parkway in the Stroming Road extension leading up to the bridge from 6th Street. This parkway should be planted with several small trees, such as Redbuds to continue the parkway theme to the bridge.
- The Transportation Center Feasibility Plan proposes a new vehicle bridge across the creek between the pedestrian bridge and the 6th Street vehicle bridge. If this project comes to pass, the County should investigate expanding the new vehicle bridge to graciously accommodate pedestrians and bicycles. This would allow the County to remove the existing pedestrian bridge (assuming it is still structurally sound enough) and utilize it upstream for use in another location.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES: PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING

Partnerships:

Partnerships with others in the community will be critical to the execution of the plans for Phase III of the Parkway as well as for future phases and enhancements to the built sections. Partnerships offer many advantages, including:

- Providing a conduit for input from the larger community and interest groups at every level;
- Building a constituency that will support the project as it matures and requires both advocacy and TLC;
- Diversifying the talent available to the project for efforts ranging from organization of community work days to grant writing; and
- Demonstrating to funders that the project is broadly supported in the community



The Mariposa Creek Parkway is widely supported in the community and has already established many valued partnerships. This new effort gives the County the opportunity to utilize this Phase III Conceptual Plan as a call to action for local residents and an invitation to participate in making the project come to life. The County should consider the following approaches to reach out to, inform and excite residents, civic groups and other potential project partners.

- Prepare a graphic brochure to highlight the overall project and specific components that can be independently implemented and use it as a project marketing tool;
- Prepare and update website content with graphics, phasing and specific project components and cross market with social media accounts, as well as via the Chamber of Commerce and other potential partner email lists;
- Present a summary of the Conceptual Plan and a call for participation to local civic groups, such as Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions, as well as the Chamber of Commerce, Yosemite/Mariposa Tourism Bureau, and Sierra Foothill Conservancy. The civic groups have a history of sponsoring or funding community improvement projects, and they can be great assets in mobilizing for specific elements of Phase III;
- Prepare and install an outdoor sign with a graphic of the planned Phase III project at the existing access points to Mariposa Creek Parkway to inform current trail users of the intent to develop the next phase. The sign should also include a web address to a project page and a QR code for mobile users to get more information and sign up for announcements;
- Utilize members of the Parks and Recreation Commission to engage with local groups as part of a Speakers' Bureau to share information about Phase III, seek volunteers for the effort and explore funding and partnership opportunities. Groups could include local civic groups, scout troops, PTAs and business associations; and
- Undertake a public relations and social media campaign.

The County is investigating a major partnership with the Sierra Foothill Conservancy to participate in the implementation of the Conceptual Plan for Phase III of the parkway. The SFC could be particularly helpful in the following roles:

- Working with County staff, the SFC can use their experience in consolidating property for conservation and recreation to help establish agreements with nearby landowners that meet the needs and goals of all concerned;
- The SFC has relationships with funders and with permitting agencies that they are willing to exercise to help the County apply for grants and permits for the project;
- The SFC has offered to participate in outreach and advocacy on behalf of the project, and can offer educational and programming expertise.

Adjacent landowners form another important partnership with the project. Future use and development of the corridor are impactful on their property. Respect for their concerns and their reciprocal support of the project is of keen interest to the success of the project.

Funding:

Funding the design and construction of the third section of the Mariposa Creek Parkway is a challenge that remains on the horizon. There are many sources of funds that could be used to build the parkway, from local General Fund allocations to private donations to grant programs at the state or federal level. Appendix E includes a discussion of



many of these options. Additionally, the Appendix includes a spreadsheet highlighting various funding opportunities from the U.S. Department of Transportation referenced by types of projects.

The Conceptual Plan for Phase III is designed for opportunistic construction based on the availability of grants, local funds, private donations or other resources. The project is broken into pieces that could be funded in whole or in part, depending on the program. While it is always hoped that funding can be assembled to design and construct the entire Phase III, the project can move ahead with smaller grants each moving the project toward the final vision of the Conceptual Plan. For example, partial funding of the trail could begin by building the trail on just one side of the creek. Small amounts of monies from smaller granting agencies could provide funds for revegetation or tree planting. Health-related agencies may have funding for exercise stations or signage highlighting walking routes. Smaller grants may be able to fund the supplies needed to host a community event to plant trees or pull weeds. Individuals may offer to finance the purchase of a bench or picnic table to honor a loved one.

The Appendix includes a comprehensive list of funding sources, and below are some options that may be particularly appropriate:

➤ For Land Acquisition:

- General Fund;
- Transient Occupancy Taxes;
- Land and Water Conservation Fund, a National Park Service program administered by the State Parks;
- Cal Fire Green Innovations Grant Program; and
- California Natural Resources Agency offers several grant that include acquisition, including the California River Parkways Grant Program.

➤ For Pre-Construction Activities - such as cultural surveys, topographic surveys, design and engineering, grant writing, permitting and environmental document preparation:

- There are very few granting agencies that fund pre-construction activities for a proposed project. Cal Fire has offered planning grants in the past.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife offers a restoration grant funded by Proposition 1 that may be applicable for some of the clearing of invasives and replanting of natives. Depending on funding from the legislature, the grant is offered annually with a mid-July deadline.
- Many of the grants for development of the river trails will allow agencies to budget up to a certain amount (often 25%) for design and engineering. Some non-reimbursable design prior to the grant application (such as this Conceptual Plan) is essential, however, in securing the grant as it clearly demonstrates the scope of the work and makes the budget request far more realistic.
- Community partners such as utility companies may offset some of their fees as charitable donations to the community. Likewise, a larger organization such as a bank or hospital may wish to be a primary partner by sponsoring some of the unfunded pre-design work. Donations of this kind can help with later grant-seeking by serving as matching funds.



- CCC (California Conservation Corps) or CDC (California Dept of Corrections) can provide aid at reduced costs for clearing and land preparation.

➤ For Project Construction:

- Most of the grants listed in the Appendix support actual construction of the project.
- Transportation Grants, such as from CalTrans, have funding available for trails.
 - Bicycle Transportation Account Program
 - Active Transportation Program
- Natural Resource Grants, particularly from the State Natural Resources Agency and State Parks are one of the best sources of funding for river development projects.
- Local groups may be able to help with specific tasks, such as tree planting. The high school may be able to grow plant material for the project or construct the benches or kiosks.

➤ For Enhancements – such as specific elements like site furnishings, signage, plants and irrigation, and for additions to the previous phases.

- Several of the Cal Fire grants are specifically for trees. Their programs also help fund other planting that help with greenhouse gas reduction. Whether a project is a rural community with plenty of trees will be competitive for these grants is unknown at this time.
- Some smaller foundations with focused giving will fund specific items – items made from recycled materials from Solid Waste organizations and agencies, interpretive signage from Audubon Society or Native Plant groups, health-related signage or activity stations from healthcare providers, etc. Public safety organizations may have funding for items that increase safety, such as lighting or emergency call boxes.
- Local entities such as service clubs, family foundations, and individuals can play an important role in the project, especially coupled with additional funding support from larger agencies like state grants or County funds.
- Eagle Scout (Boy Scouts) and Gold Award (Girl Scouts) projects
- County General Funds

In an effort to focus County resources, the following grants represents the consultants’ condensed list of granting sources to place at the top of the list to consider in more depth and pursue:

- California River Parkways Grant Program
- Recreational Trails Program Grant
- Habitat Conservation Fund
- Kaiser Permanente Healthy Environments – Community Benefit Programs



IX. NEXT STEPS

The implementation of Phase III of Mariposa Creek Parkway will depend on many items including availability of property, availability of funding, available of talent, and the commitment of the community. At the point when these issues are resolved enough to begin, the process leading to dedication day could look something like the following. Months listed assume a start date of July 1.

Month 1 and 2 (August - September)

- A. Present Conceptual Plan to Local Transportation Commission/Board of Supervisors and obtain approval to proceed with development of the project.
- B. Application for Stream Alteration Permit to allow berry removal which will facilitate complete survey of both sides of the creek. The permit is available from California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The fee is a percentage of the cost of the activity, with approximately \$550 the minimum, and the cost for preparation of the application (by a consultant) is approximately \$2,000. In some cases the permit must be preceded by a biological survey and CEQA.
- C. Share plans with and obtain letters of support from participating landowners. Draft Memorandums of Understanding with Sierra Foothill Conservancy and Mariposa Public Utility District to establish primary partnerships with these entities.
- D. Identify and obtain funding for the pre-construction/pre-grant activities listed in item F.
- E. (Early in Month 2) Thin vegetation per the Stream Alteration Permit. This work is limited to certain months (generally starting in August until weather and creek flow prevent access). Anticipate two weeks of a CDC crew at \$200/day per crew (June 2017 estimate).
- F. As soon as site is cleared proceed with:
 - Survey for verification of property agreements
 - Additional survey as required for CEQA or permit applications
 - Have the design team flag the proposed trail and locations of bridges and other features, make adjustments, and add trail and features to the topographic survey. A new Schematic Design based on the topographic survey should be prepared.
 - Total cost for item F work is to be determined.
- G. Prepare option agreements, appraisals, easement documents, descriptions, etc. as required to secure property.

Month 3-4 (September and October)

- H. Topographic survey, cultural resource survey, and geotechnical survey (if required for bridge footings or pathway paving cross-sections). Biological survey has a target for field work timing, generally spring.



- I. Prepare Grant Applications for design, engineering and construction. Generally grant applications require that property is under control of the applicant and that environmental documents are done or at least underway before grant applications will be considered. This fact puts the item F work items on the critical path.
- J. The design team should further refine designs and cost estimates to support the specific requirements and limits of each specific grant application.

Month 5-10 (November through April)

- K. Design and engineering
- L. Apply for and receive permits from State and Federal agencies required for construction (Stream Alteration Permits, 404 permits, etc.)

Months 11 – 17 (May through November)

- M. Construction contracting and construction. Access to the creek corridor may be limited until August to protect nesting birds.

Month 18 (December)

- N. Dedication

