May 17, 2012

Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
County Government Center
70 W. Hedding St., 10th floor, East Wing
San Jose, CA 95110

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors:

Committee for Green Foothills supports Supervisor Kniss’ proposal to fund the Adobe Creek Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge over Highway 101 in Palo Alto and the Dumbarton link of the Bay Trail in East Palo Alto. These projects will provide valuable recreational opportunities to local residents and constitute an appropriate use of the money from the Stanford Trails Agreement.

This proposal, if approved, will herald the resolution at long last of a contentious issue that has consumed County resources for over a decade. When the County approved Stanford’s General Use Permit (GUP) in December 2000 permitting Stanford to build 2 million square feet of new academic buildings and 3,000 housing units, Stanford assumed an obligation to mitigate the loss of recreational opportunities due to this development. The GUP required Stanford to dedicate two trail easements across Stanford land as shown on the County Trails Master Plan. After years of negotiation, Stanford insisted on constructing one of those trails on a different alignment than the one in the County Trails Master Plan, and insisted that the second trail should be relocated to San Mateo County. Over the next few years, San Mateo County rejected Stanford’s proposal three times, the final time being in December 2011, at which point the trail funding was returned to Santa Clara County according to the terms of the Trails Agreement between Stanford and the County.

The fund, now totaling $10.4 million, is to be used for recreational opportunities near Stanford. As was stated in the GUP, the development on Stanford’s core campus resulted in a loss of recreational opportunities for Stanford residents and facility users. “Facility users” in this case includes anyone who uses or would have used Stanford recreational facilities, including trails such as the informal trails in the “Dish” area that were closed off from public access by Stanford. The Adobe Creek bridge and the Bay Trail linkage fit within this definition of recreational facilities that can mitigate for the loss of recreational opportunities due to Stanford’s development.

It has been over 11 years since Stanford received permission through the GUP to develop nearly 5 million square feet of buildings on its campus. Stanford has been building new facilities during these 11 years, but the full mitigation for loss of recreational opportunities due to campus expansion has not yet been provided. Committee for Green Foothills looks forward to completion of the Bay Trail and a new connection at Adobe Creek so Stanford residents and facility users, as well as residents of the surrounding communities, can access these regional facilities.

Sincerely,

Alice Kaufman
Legislative Advocate, Committee for Green Foothills