

April 6, 2019.

Subject – Crystal Spring/Skyline blvd

Hi All –

I'll be missing the April BPAC meeting but I wanted to convey my thoughts about the new part of the Crystal Springs Trail south of the new bridge that crosses the dam. Today, I cycled to the area and I want to relay what I saw and what needs to be improved. They are:

- Reduction of the speed limit between the bridge and the junction of Skyline with the RT 280 offramp located about 0.3 miles from the bridge. The speed limit should be no more than 25 and arguably it should be 15 when pedestrians and bicyclists are present.
- The signs with respect to having cyclists use the road instead of the new path adjacent to Skyline (about 450 ft) need to be consistent. Southbound, the sign requests cyclists to use the road. Northbound, there is no sign.
- Further north on Skyline, near the intersection with Crystal Spring Rd, the speed limit is 30. Again, with all of the parked cars related to activity on Sawyer Camp Trail, the speed limit should be no more than 25, and preferably 15 when when pedestrians and bicyclists are present.

I suggest that the BPAC write a letter encompassing these points and the letter should be addressed both Public Works and County Parks. At the end of this note, I offer such a draft.

As an aside, there is some potential confusion with respect to routing cyclists from Canada onto the Ralston bike path. For someone who is new to the area could miss the turn-off to the Ralston Path and then see a sign later with directions to San Mateo – following that sign would dump the cyclist onto the RT92 freeway.

Below, are pictures and some commentary on my route – From Black Mtn Rd, I traveled south on Skyline, crossed the new bridge and continued another 0.3 miles to the RT280 offramp. There, I turned around and doubled-back to the new Crystal Springs Trail. I followed the trail south to its terminus on Skyline. I continued south crossing RT 92 (light didn't trigger), and onto Canada.



Looking south on Skyline before Sawyer camp. The speed limit is posted at 30 mph; but there are a lot of parked cars, and as you get closer to the trailhead, a lot of people are milling around. I suggest that the speed limit be dropped to 25 or even 15... Would you drive more than 15 mph through a parking lot?



Looking south on Skyline just past its stop sign at Crystal Springs – Sign announces 25 mph ahead



It is now 25 mph on the bridge, but not for long!

End 25 mph. I assume that the *prima facie*, 55 mph limit is now in effect!

This is located at the south end of the bridge and just at the start of the so-called “Complete the Gap” where the path is adjacent to Skyline for about 800 ft.





At the end of the new bridge, cyclists are requested to “ride with traffic” – note from previous picture that there is no posted speed limit from this point southbound.



I've turned around at the RT 280 offramp and I'm looking northbound on Skyline. It announces that the speed limit will be 25 mph ahead (only on the deck of the bridge). Meanwhile, there are plenty of parked cars and bicycle traffic (it being Saturday morning).



At the gate where the new trail intersects Skyline 800 ft south of the bridge, there is no message to cyclists that they should ride with traffic between this gate and the bridge. Recall, in the southbound direction, there is a sign requesting cyclists to ride with traffic. There should be a consistent message....

I'm attaching a letter that I wrote to the Parks And Rec. Commission in late 2017 after Cecily Harris made a presentation to the BPAC on the “complete the gap” project. Near the bottom of that letter, I reflected on a comment by Joe LoCoco at the BPAC meeting about setting speed limits on the, soon to be opened Skyline. Perhaps he was “thinking a bit more broadly”, but if I captured his comment

correctly, then he wasn't necessarily against the concept of reduced speed limit for this section of Skyline. (When I looked at the BPAC minutes, I did not see a reference to Joe's comment).

I looked into the potential problem with respect to blind curves on Skyline at the two intersections of the new Crystal Spring trail with the roadway. I think it is a minor issue. At the southern entrance, the roadway is Caltrans and I doubt that that agency would respond; perhaps the only "fix" would be erect a yellow sign saying "trail crossing" (W11-15, W11-15P or W11-15a). Perhaps DPW can request Caltrans to install a sign. At the north end of the trail, reducing the speed limit, as I suggest, should help to fix the possible problem of the trail junction near a curve.

### A bit off topic:



This is looking north on Canada near its intersection with RT 92. This location is north of where the Ralston Bike path intersects Canada. The directional signs mounted below the bike route sign points to the left for Skyline, and to the right to San Mateo. Should a cyclist follow that direction to San Mateo, (s)he would be dumped onto the RT92 freeway.

I also found that the entrance to the Ralston bike path inadequately signed. About 100 ft before the entrance from Canada, there is a yellow sign saying "trail entrance". Perhaps that sign could be augmented indicating the name of the path and/or where the path goes. (Ralston Bike Path to Ralston and Polhemus).

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### Possible wording of a letter to Public Works and County Parks:

Now that the project of rebuilding the Crystal Spring bridge is complete and that trail access south of Sawyer camp trail has been extended, the BPAC has looked at the existing configuration of the trail and the newly, reopened portion of Skyline Blvd. As you know, this area attracts a lot of hikers and bikers, many who use there cars to travel from home to the trailhead. Consequently, between parked cars on the shoulder of both Skyline and Crystal Springs Rd with pedestrians and bikers milling around, ie "staging", while getting ready to hike or ride, this area is very congested during the daylight hours. The posted speed limits vary from 25, to 30 mph, and unposted (therefore the prima facie limit of 55 mph). To the north of Skyline's intersection with Crystal Springs, the speed limit is 30 mph despite the number of cars parked on the shoulder. On the short section of the deck of the bridge, the speed limit is 25 mph. South of the bridge, there is no posted speed limit; the last sign says "end 25 mph". For this last section, at least for cyclists who going southbound and transferring from Sawyer Camp to the New Crystal Springs Trail, they are instructed to exit the side-path adjacent to Skyline and to "ride with

traffic". Furthermore, along the 0.3 mile section from the bridge to the RT280 offramp, there is parking on the shoulders, where permitted. The mix of parking, bike and pedestrian traffic and an unposted speed limit is incompatible with the existing use. Given the heavy mixed use for this short section of roadway, both Skyline and Crystal Spring, we strongly suggest that the speed limit be set such that is compatible with a parking lot; 15 mph.

In addition, we found that the instructions for north versus southbound cyclists that desire to used the new side-path adjacent to Skyline to be inconsistent. Southbound cyclists are instructed to use the roadway, but there is no instruction for northbound cyclists. Given that the side-path is a 7% grade descending to the bridge, it is possible that northbound cyclists could easily exceed 20 to 25 mph on the narrow path which is not compatible with pedestrian use. We suggest that northbound cyclist should use Skyline; posting the speed limit to 15 mph should help with respect to safety.

*(note – I'm being a bit inconsistent with my argument of 15 mph – on one hand, I request a 15 mph speed limit but then state bikes can travel at 20 to 25 mph. So, feel free to ask for a blanket 25 mph)*

## Complete the Gap trail proposal

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Date: Saturday, November 25, 2017, 4:41 PM PST

Parks and Recreation Commission  
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At the last County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), I heard Cecily Harris's presentation on the "complete the gap" proposal that would provide a short, 800 ft connection between the new Crystal Springs bridge and the new, un-opened trail to the south. While I agree with the goal of this proposal, that is to provide a multi-use trail connector between the popular Sawyer Camp trail and the unopened portion of the Crystal Springs trail, I question whether any of the four proposed alternatives discussed at the BPAC would provide essential safety to the users of the trail.

Due to a combination of very limited (and expensive) real-estate next to road on SFPUC land and the slope of the existing right of way, the narrow trail gap-trail could be hazardous. Ms Harris' presentation stated that the existing slope is 7%, which for most bicyclists is considered a steep grade. Due to limited real-estate in width the alternatives provide only 8 or 9 feet of asphalt pavement for two-way traffic. Given that steep grade and examination of the Caltrans Highway design manual for Class I, multi-use facilities (<http://www.dot.ca.gov/design/manuals/hdm/chp1000.pdf>, Table 1003.1) indicates that the design speeds should be for 30 mph. Although 30 mph might be a bit excessive for the short segment of the gap trail, cyclists can easily ride downhill in excess of 20 to 25 mph over the short length of the gap trail.

Going uphill also presents some challenges. My observations of inexperienced bike riders is that they tend to tack or weave back and forth when confronted with a steep grade. The weaving takes space and probably spans more than half the width of the proposed asphalt surface.

So, for a popular weekend scenario, one might see a cyclist whizzing down the path in excess of 20 mph potentially crashing into any cyclist weaving back and forth going uphill.

My suggestion is to think about the existing facilities. Skyline in this section has been closed for, probably, 5 years now. Unlike for bikes that want to travel the Skyline corridor from RT 92 to San Francisco, motorists have convenient and fast alternatives, primarily RT280. The existing bike detour is circuitous and not particularly convenient and the opening of the bridge and adjacent roadway is much anticipated by cyclists. My thought is that, if Skyline remains closed in the future to motor vehicles between the RT280 exit at Bunker Hill and the new bridge, it would not be missed by the motoring public. Of course, Skyline should be opened to emergency vehicles and non-motorized users. Consequently, rather than providing a paved, multi-use path, the "shoulder" could be left unpaved and developed for equestrians and hikers. Bikes would use the exiting road.

Alternatively, one could open the road to motor vehicle traffic, but restrict the speed to 15 mph. As it happens, Joe LoCoco of County Public Works (director of roadway services) was also that the October BPAC meeting. He mentioned, that since this segment of Skyline has not had any motor vehicle traffic for a long time, that there are no relevant speed surveys (which are needed to set speed limits based upon a "speed trap law"), then one might set an artificially low speed limit. So rather than spending a lot of money on cantilevering the gap trail, one might spend some money on the roadway to discourage motor vehicles from exceeding the posted (15 mph?) speed limit.

I have previously made my thoughts known to Ms Harris, so, perhaps what she will present to the Commission will solve the potential hazardous condition on the "gap-trail".

John Langbein