

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: May 15, 2025

To: The Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395, City Hall
Attention: Honorable Adrin Nazarian, Chair, Energy and Environment Committee

From: Laura Rubio-Cornejo, General Manager 
Department of Transportation

Subject: **LOS ANGELES PHASE IV RIVER BIKE PATH – ADOPTION OF FINAL INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION (STATE CLEARINGHOUSE NO. 2025021226) AND PROJECT APPROVAL**

SUMMARY

In accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), in collaboration with the Bureau of Engineering (BOE), this report provides the Los Angeles Phase IV River Bike Path Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) and recommends its approval to advance the Los Angeles River Bike Path Phase IV Project (Project) as described in Council File (CF) [23-0722](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the City Council:

1. Find that, on the basis of the whole record, with imposition of mitigation measures, there is no substantial evidence that the Project will have a significant effect on the environment; that the Final IS/MND was completed in compliance with CEQA; that the Final IS/MND was presented to the Council, as the decision-making body of the City of Los Angeles (City); that the Council reviewed and considered the information contained in the Final IS/MND; and that the Final IS/MND reflects and expresses the City's independent judgment and analysis;
2. Adopt the Final IS/MND as reflected in the attachments in this transmittal;
3. Adopt the Mitigation Monitoring Program as reflected in the attachments in this transmittal;
4. Specify that the documents constituting the record of proceedings in this matter are at the Office of the City Clerk, 200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, California 90012; in the files of the Department of Transportation located at 100 S. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012 and at the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering, 1169 South Broadway, Suite 600, Los Angeles, California 90015; and any other relevant City department;
5. Approve the Project as described in the Final IS/MND.

BACKGROUND

In August 2009, Council authorized LADOT to submit a funding application through Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) and execute the necessary funding agreement for the implementation of the Project (CF [09-0099-S1](#)). LADOT and LACMTA executed Agreement Number LAF3516 on September 24, 2009.

Due to staffing shortages at LADOT and the Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA), the design of this project did not begin in earnest until 2019. As the design advanced and reached a 30% design milestone, LADOT and BOE's Environmental Management Division retained the services of a consultant, Environmental Science Associates (ESA) to support the environmental clearance phase of this project. This project is subject to CEQA to inform government decision-makers and the public about the potentially significant environmental effects of a proposed project, ways to mitigate or eliminate those effects and to indicate alternatives to the project. This report seeks the approval from the City Council to adopt the recommendations in the attached IS/MND to fulfill the CEQA requirements.

The Project is part of a multi-phased project that will construct a Class I bike facility from the West Valley to the City of Long Beach, which when completed, will result in a 51 miles facility. Other phases of the Project have either been implemented or are in various stages of design and led by other departments.

The Project site is located in the Hollywood Community Plan area along the LA River, specifically an approximately one-mile alignment along an existing paved service road owned by the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP). The eastern terminus of the alignment includes a locked gate which is also the western terminus of the existing Los Angeles River Bikeway segment to the east of the Project area, and the western terminus of the Project alignment is located approximately 200 feet east of the northern terminus of Forest Lawn Drive.

The proposed project will upgrade an existing maintenance road into a new section of the Los Angeles River Bikeway. The Project scope includes constructing an asphalt concrete pavement Class I bicycle and pedestrian path along the south bank access road of the Los Angeles River (LA River), and a separated equestrian trail. Once complete, this will expand the Los Angeles River Bikeway by approximately one mile from its current western terminus near Riverside Drive and would provide new equestrian trail facilities near the Los Angeles Equestrian Center (LAEC), connecting to the active transportation network throughout the region and providing new pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian access. The project aims to improve connectivity to transit, residential homes, schools, jobs, parks, and other community-serving amenities for the surrounding communities.

From the summer of 2023 through 2024, LADOT coordinated with BOE, StreetsLA, and Council District (CD) 4 to engage community members in five community meetings about the proposed project and incorporate feedback into the project design.

In February 2025, BOE's Environmental Management Division completed the environmental impact analysis of the project and published the IS/MND. The IS/MND documents are provided as electronic transmittals and can also be found on BOE's website at <https://eng.lacity.org/about-us/divisions/environmental-management/projects/los-angeles-river-phase-i-v-bike-path> and as an attachment to this letter.

All costs associated with the design and environmental documentation (including approval of this CEQA document) of this project are fully funded. The allocation of \$4.96 million of construction funding

requires an adopted CEQA document. LADOT continues to seek an additional \$4.156M through various external funding opportunities to fully fund the construction of the project.

DISCUSSION

Project Scope

The Project area is an approximately one-mile alignment along an existing paved service road with an existing, 10-foot right-of-way (ROW) width, and is bordered by the LA River, LAEC, Bette Davis Picnic Area, State Route 134 (134 Freeway) and Griffith Park. The existing service road is owned by RAP with easements from Los Angeles County Flood Control District and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. Although RAP are the underlying fee owners, it is operated and maintained under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and is currently accessible only to pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrian users via an existing pedestrian/equestrian bridge to the west and a tunnel beneath the 134 Freeway that connects to Griffith Park/Zoo Drive to the south. The Project will expand the LA River Bikeway from its current terminus at Riverside Drive until 200 feet East of the Forest Lawn Drive on and off ramps.

LADOT worked with BOE, StreetsLA, and CD4 to host a series of five community outreach events to inform pedestrians, cyclists, neighboring communities, and the equestrian community of the proposed Project, and provided opportunities for input on the project design. LADOT staff held an open house workshop on May 18, 2023, and a virtual town hall on June 1, 2023 to present the Project and gather feedback on the design. The Project team incorporated community feedback into the design plans and in 2024, resumed outreach efforts with stakeholders to present these project scope changes. LADOT participated in two outreach meetings in 2024:

1. The LA Equine Advisory Committee meeting on July 22, 2024
2. The Forest Lawn Drive Transportation Open House on December 4, 2024

The following summarizes the overall concerns shared during the design and engagement process:

- Width of the equestrian facility
- Concerns about the fence design
- Connectivity to other bike lanes/paths
- Intermixing different users
- Maintenance and operations

LADOT in collaboration with BOE and StreetsLA, further incorporated the feedback and made design changes to address the concerns raised. LADOT acquired Caltrans' right of way in response to the equestrian community's request to have an equestrian path of 10 feet, where the original design consisted of an equestrian path width of 6 feet on average. The project team also revised the height of the chain link fence that separates the equestrian path from the bicycle path from 4 feet to 8 feet at the request of the equestrian community. Stakeholders also provided comments about the project's current design that terminates just south of Forest Lawn Drive and requires users to turn around. Connecting this facility to Forest Lawn Drive presented design challenges that the project team determined would be better addressed in a subsequent phase of the project. Due to the Caltrans on/off ramp interchange at Forest Lawn, Caltrans initiated a planning effort to address future connectivity. This strategy aims to define Caltrans' role in advancing the larger vision for the LA River Bike Path, guide potential future solutions, and also help build partnerships necessary to pursue future funding to extend this connection.

Environmental Review

A draft IS/MND was prepared by ESA with BOE's oversight and approval to analyze the environmental impacts of the proposed Project. The IS/MND was published by BOE on February 28, 2025, and circulated for 30 days for public and agency review and comment. A public scoping meeting was held virtually by CD4, LADOT, BOE and ESA on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm to provide an overview of the Project, share the findings of the CEQA analysis, and receive public comments. There were 25 speakers at the meeting and 39 comment letters were received from public agencies, organizations, and individuals. All of the comments were included and addressed in the Final IS/MND. Also, the City engaged in expanded stakeholder pre-consultation and outreach by conducting three stakeholder interviews with nearby local jurisdictions, Council District 4, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). Through the consultation and public outreach process, the City learned of key concerns related to equestrian trail design, transportation and traffic, land use and planning, and habitat and biological resource impacts, therefore factored these concerns into the project design and environmental analysis.

The Final IS/MND includes seven master responses to the major topics raised over the CEQA comment period related to the separation of user types (horses, cyclists and pedestrians), discussion of the existing site ownership and authorized uses, plans for operations and maintenance, tree replacement and monitoring, project design refinements and ancillary facilities, impacts to sensitive species, and alternative routes to cyclists and equestrians.

There are four project mitigation measures required related to biological resources (MM-BIO-1), construction noise (MM-NOI-1), and tribal cultural resources (MM-TCR-1 and MM-TCR-2).

- **Biological resources:** it is anticipated that construction of the proposed Project would require the removal of 77 trees. The Project was designed in an attempt to minimize tree encroachments and removals; however, based on input from the equestrian community and others, the Project footprint was expanded to accommodate a wider equestrian trail right of way, which also required increased grading and over excavation of slopes to install retaining walls, which in turn impacted the number of trees affected within the Project site. Mitigation Measure Bio-1 requires the City to provide replacement trees on-site and within other suitable locations in accordance with RAP policy. A tree monitoring program during construction and post construction is required.
- **Construction noise due to construction activities:** Mitigation Measure NOI-1 requires that mobile noise barriers, a minimum of 8 feet tall, shall be installed along the northern Project boundary to ensure that the LAEC, the Bette Davis Park, and the Mariposa Bridge equine users and residences further northwest are protected from the sights and sounds of construction.
- **Tribal Cultural Resources (two mitigation measures):** Construction activities will ensure Native American monitoring occurs during ground-disturbing activities (due to the Project's proximity to the LA River)

Additionally, 14 best management practices have also been incorporated that focus on air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, hazards, and water quality. Based on the analysis in the IS/MND, BOE, on behalf of the City, finds that with incorporation of described revisions to the Project and mitigation measures, the proposed Project would not have a significant effect on the environment.

Project Cost and Funding

The design and environmental phase (including this CEQA document) of this project is fully funded. In order to allocate the construction funding, it is required that City Council take action and approve the CEQA findings. LADOT secured \$7.244 million to build this project as described below:

Funding Source	Amount Awarded
CMAQ - Congestion Mitigation Air Quality	\$1,827,000.00
CRRSA - State Only Funding	\$4,960,000.00
Local - City Match	\$457,000.00
Total	\$7,244,000.00

LADOT also continues to seek an additional \$4.156M through various external funding opportunities to fully fund the construction of this project.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

There is no anticipated financial impact to the General Fund at this time.

LRC:DM:cr

Attachments