

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: Please find attached the Griffith Park Advisory Board comment letter for LA River Bike Path Phase IV. We look forward to hearing the responses to our questions and concerns.



Griffith Park Advisory Board

Community Stewards of LA's Largest Park & Great Urban Wilderness

Department of Recreation and Parks, City of Los Angeles

www.laparks.org/griffithpark/advisory

March 31, 2025

Christopher Adams
City of Los Angeles
Public Works, Bureau of Engineering
1149 S. Broadway, 6th Floor, Mail Stop 939
Los Angeles, CA 90015-2213

Re: L.A. River Phase IV Bike Path Project Draft IS/MND Comments

Dear Mr. Adams,

The Los Angeles River is a wonderful, and often underutilized resource which our board takes a keen interest in given its proximity to much of Griffith Park. Griffith Park Advisory Board (GPAB) was fortunate enough to receive a presentation from LADOT three years ago that detailed initial plans for this proposed phase (IV) of the LA River Bike Path. We are encouraged to see how this project has evolved through the valuable community feedback from various stakeholders since then. Our board, guided by the Vision for Griffith Park, are large proponents of active transport and have worked hard to shepherd initiatives that hope to expand active transport in and around the park.

As we have continued to monitor the development of this phase of the river project, and listened to feedback from various park user groups, we have some concerns about the CEQA Initial Study's conclusion that this meets a Mitigated Negative Declaration, and think that more analysis needs to be done.

- We have heard feedback from other notable stakeholder groups and organizations that they feel the 30-day comment period for the IS/MND has been too short. Extending the comment period would provide these organizations more time to adequately evaluate these documents and provide more detailed feedback.
- One of the largest areas of concern is regarding necessary tree removal and the ability to adequately mitigate this. The project will require the removal of existing and mature trees on both public ROW (owned by the Department of Recreation and Parks) and CalTrans ROW. Of the combined 77 trees being removed, a total of 26 are protected trees. While we understand there are mitigation measures available, the removal of this

many, particularly protected, trees is excessive. Three restoration sites are identified - "on-site where available", Bette Davis Picnic Area, and "Pump 7".

- We have yet to see the RAP Forestry Division's reviews of the matter and are very sensitive to any projects which potentially add undue stress or workload to RAP's already thinly-stretched department. In short, we are not convinced that this issue can be effectively mitigated to a less than significant impact, particularly as much of the mitigation efforts will fall upon RAP.
 - We are also concerned about who will ultimately be responsible for maintaining this stretch of the bike path. The draft IS/MND states that LADOT has committed to maintaining the entirety of phase IV - can we confirm that this is indeed that case for perpetuity? As stated, RAP's resources are thinly stretched; so, the prospect of adding yet another area that requires their attention and maintenance would provide undue stress.
- At our most recent board meeting we were fortunate enough to receive some updates from representatives from Council District 4. During this presentation we learned that CalTrans has won a grant to study numerous Freeway and Bicycle interactions, which will hopefully be completed later this year. As the project in question constitutes a closed loop for cyclists - where they must dismount, turn around, and return east when they reach the terminus of Phase IV - it brings into question whether this phase should proceed until it is clear what it will ultimately connect to.
- Similarly, as we consider the overall goal of the LA River Master Plan to have a unified connection for active transport along the entirety of the LA River, within the constraints of existing infrastructure challenges, it is not clear that this particular phase is best placed on the river itself until and unless we know what it will connect to. Does this create duplicative connectivity that is better served by bolstering active transport lanes within Griffith Park itself?
- While there has been some valuable engagement with the Equestrian Community, and they have been proactive in providing feedback, their uneasiness about the safety and effectiveness of this project are a major cause for concern
 - There isn't a clear consensus about what the most safe and effective design of the fencing should be. The community seems to be pretty split about whether the fencing should obstruct the view of oncoming traffic or not. Without consensus in design features, the project risks ending up a built feature that just isn't used - much like the North Atwater Bridge.
 - The project isn't clear about minimum widths for the equestrian trail. The virtual public meeting from March 12, 2025 suggests that the minimum width for the entire length is 10 feet; however, the Draft IS/MND says that there is one location where the width drops to 8 feet due to ROW constraints. The community's feedback has been absolutely consistent about minimum safe passing distance.

We appreciate your taking the time to listen to and address our concerns about the project as it currently stands. The goal of increasing active transport connectivity along the LA River is an excellent undertaking and one that we are generally in support of; however, we do question whether more analysis needs to be done before approving a final IS/MND.

Thank you and we look forward to seeing your responses to our questions and concerns,

Alex Crow
Chair, Griffith Park Advisory Board

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Alex Crow', written in black ink.

*BOARD MEMBERS: Chair – Alex Crow; Vice Chair – Alex Phillips; Secretary – Jane Carlson;
Aaron Chung; Jason Greenwald; Billy Griffin; Amy Gustinic, T. Hagans; Cristian Hamilton; Chris Laib; Sarah Lann*