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December 13, 2023

The Honorable City Council
c/o Holly L. Wolcott
City Clerk
Room 360, City Hall

COUNCIL FILE NO. 23-0559-S1 – BIKE PATH AND DOG PARK DESIGN BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

This report provides design recommendations for co-locating a bike path adjacent to a dog park, with a summary of the Bureau of Engineering's (BOE) research and design suggestions for the stretch of the Segment 2 LA River Path Project that is adjacent to an existing dog park in the Sepulveda Basin, just east of White Oak Boulevard.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council RECEIVE AND FILE this report.

BACKGROUND

For over 25 years it has been a goal of the City of Los Angeles (City) to complete an off-street active transportation path along the 32 miles of the Los Angeles River (LA River) within the City limits, which will provide considerable opportunities for active and passive recreation. This goal is shared with the County of Los Angeles's goal to similarly complete an off-street active transportation path along the entire 51 miles of the LA River from its headwaters in Canoga Park at the confluence of Bell Creek and Arroyo Calabasas, to the River's outlet to the ocean in Long Beach.

The goal of a continuous LA River path has been reflected in many City and County planning documents. In the City of Los Angeles, the City has prioritized completion of the LA River trail system per the Executive Directive No. 07 (Mayor Garcetti) Sustainable City pLAn, the City's 2007 LA River Revitalization Master Plan, the City's 2010 Bicycle Plan, and the 2014 Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) Great Streets Strategic Plan. The County of Los Angeles (County) has also prioritized the LA River trail system in its 1996 LA River Master Plan, the 2012 Bicycle Master Plan, and the 2022 LA River Master Plan. City Community Planning Areas (Canoga Park – Wests Hills – Winnetka, Reseda – West Van Nuys, Encino – Tarzana, Van Nuys – North Sherman Oaks, Sherman Oaks – Studio City – Toluca Lake – Cahuenga Pass) encourage LA River access and



open space opportunities. Furthermore, the Community Plan Areas fully endorse the implementation of the City's Bicycle Plan, which designates a bikeway along the LA River.

In 2017, the City developed the Los Angeles River Valley Bikeway and Greenway Design Completion Project Feasibility Study Report (FSR) as part of a broader effort to enhance the LA River area and its surrounding communities. The FSR synthesizes the overall vision for the LA River by referencing the prior planning work and re-evaluating in detail the existing conditions to produce a blueprint for the implementation of a multi-use path design also known as a bikeway or greenway. The conceptual design of the FSR includes key infrastructure elements and phasing scenarios that are designed to embrace the surrounding built and natural environments and to realize the vision of the LA River becoming the backbone of the City's active transportation system and a citywide recreational and cultural destination. The FSR was developed with multiple community outreach meetings.

DISCUSSION

Bikeways are dedicated paths or lanes for bicyclists. Greenways incorporate pedestrian paths, open spaces, and landscaped areas, emphasizing the use of environmentally friendly and sustainable infrastructure elements. The 2017 FSR identified and studied the ability of a bike path, pedestrian path, landscaping, and park areas to be constructed along the LA River to support the overall vision of the LA River as a continuous bikeway and greenway.

The term, "multi-use path" is based on the Caltrans-defined Class I bike path. A Class I bike path provides bicycle travel on a paved right-of-way, completely separated from vehicular traffic. A multi-use paved path allows for a variety of users, in addition to bicyclists, including pedestrians, joggers, and non-motorized scooter users. If space allows, a standalone pedestrian path can be provided to provide further separation of uses and enhance safety.

BOE follows State and Federal design standards for Class I bikeways. The Bicycle Transportation Design Chapter in the Caltrans Highway Design Manual (<https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/design/documents/chp1000-a11y.pdf>) and the County of Los Angeles Bicycle Master Plan (<https://pw.lacounty.gov/tpp/bike/docs/bmp/Appendix%20F.pdf>) provide guidance for bike and pedestrian facility dimensions and materiality.

Project Design Considerations

Dog parks are located in active recreational settings throughout the City, offering convenient opportunities for canine exercise, socialization, and play. During the design phase for all recreational facilities, BOE works to ensure new amenities are implemented in a way that is compatible with existing uses. These considerations span spatial, visual, and auditory aspects to provide for the safety and enjoyment of all park users.

Recent stakeholder feedback has raised a concern about interactions between path users and dogs along the fence line separating the multi-use path and dog park. Heightened interest from dogs towards passing bicyclists could trigger undesirable canine behavior, such as excessive barking, affecting the overall user experience and raising safety

concerns. Seating areas along the multi-use path, if placed adjacent to the dog park, may encourage users to congregate, leading to visual distractions and potential noise disturbances.

BOE recommends establishing sufficient spatial and visual separation between the dog park and the multi-use path, including a minimum landscaped buffer and visual screening along at least the bottom half of the fence that separates these two uses. Visual screening will reduce the distraction caused by passing bicyclists while spatial separation will reduce the intensity of any interactions that may still occur. BOE further recommends avoiding placing any public gathering amenities, such as seating, along this segment of the multi-use path adjacent to the dog park.

The multi-use path will provide a new route for dog owners from surrounding communities to access the dog park, potentially leading to additional use of this segment of the LA River bike path. BOE recommends not creating a new access point directly into the dog park from the multi-use path, instead directing users to the existing access points located adjacent to the parking lot. BOE recommends providing an accessible path of travel from the multi-use path to these existing parking lot access points. BOE further recommends that the entrance from the parking lot to the multi-use path be designed to maximize visibility of people entering the multi-use path and of people walking or biking along the multi-use path.

To mitigate potential conflicts along the path, BOE recommends the use of educational signage advising dog owners of leash laws and suggesting to bicyclists that they audibly announce themselves when overtaking other path users. BOE further recommends strategic placement of trash receptacles and pet waste disposal facilities on the path. Ongoing educational efforts may be needed to establish and maintain responsible use of the shared space, which may require additional operational efforts and resources.

Recommended Design Features

To address the above-described issues, BOE plans to incorporate the following design features into the final project, subject to stakeholder input:

1. Visual and Spatial Separation:

- *Physical Barrier with Visual Screening:* Install fencing between the multi-use path and the dog park, ranging from 6 feet to 8 feet in height. Vinyl-coated chain-link fencing is a preferred choice to deter damage. The installation of fence straps or screen covers along at least the bottom half of the fence as a visual barrier will help reduce barking and distractions. Preserving views of the River at standing height is desirable. See visual barrier options in Images 1 and 2 below.
- *Buffer Zones:* Establish a spatial separation of at least three feet with a landscape feature, such as non-toxic, low-maintenance vegetation, to minimize interactions between bicyclists and dog park users, as well as enhance aesthetics and biodiversity.
- *Controlled Access Points:* Avoid direct access points from the multi-use path to the dog park. Instead, provide a walkway leading to existing controlled access points to the dog park to mitigate potential conflicts.

- *Amenities:* Avoid installing seating on the multi-use path adjacent to the dog park to reduce disturbances. Proper waste disposal facilities, including trash receptacles and pet waste bag dispensers, should be strategically placed.



Image 1 – Chain-link fence with vinyl privacy slats



Image 2 – Decorative fake ivy and flower fence cover

2. Safety and Regulatory Compliance:

- *Entry Signage:* Post signage at multi-use path entry points near the dog park outlining yielding protocols, leash requirements, and safety precautions for all users. Include specific wording requiring all dogs to be on a non-retractable leash, enhancing safety for both cyclists and dog owners.
- *Path Signage:* Place signage along the multi-use path indicating the nature of the facilities and advising bicyclists to slow down in shared areas and yield when required.
- *Lighting Considerations:* Ensure adequate lighting along the multi-use path, especially in areas adjacent to the dog park and at access points, to enhance safety during low-light conditions. Well-lit spaces contribute to a safer environment and to better visibility for all users.

3. Maintenance and Educational Initiatives:

- *Regular Maintenance:* Establish a regular maintenance schedule to keep the path clean and clear of debris. Prompt removal of hazards, such as

fallen branches or dog waste, contributes to a safer and more pleasant experience for all users.

- *Educational Campaigns:* Develop an educational campaign to inform cyclists and dog park visitors about the shared space and encourage responsible use. Educate users on leash regulations, yielding protocols, and general guidelines for harmonious coexistence.

The recommendations noted above to separate off-leash dogs in the dog park from bicycles and pedestrians on the multi-use path align with what homeowners implement on private property that is adjacent to public right-of-way sidewalks and streets. By carefully addressing these design considerations, BOE can create and implement a shared space where bicyclists and dog park users can coexist safely and enjoyably in a well-balanced and harmonious recreational environment.

In order to best address the concerns of various stakeholders who will be using these adjacent facilities, BOE will work with the Council Office to host a design workshop to review the prior planning documents, review site characteristics and constraints, and to refine the design solutions described above to address the various concerns. This design workshop will include select representatives from various stakeholder groups to ensure diverse perspectives are considered, leading to a more inclusive and effective design solution.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this report will have no impact on the General Fund. This project is funded by several grants and other transportation special funds. The project is anticipated to be advertised for construction in 2024.

If you have any questions, please contact Marcelino Ascensio at Marcelino.Ascensio@lacity.org.

Respectfully submitted,



Electronically Signed by Deborah Weintraub
on 07/12/2022 9:23:13 AM

For: Ted Allen, P.E.
City Engineer

TA/DW:sf:ma;eg

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cc: Randall Winston, Office of the Mayor
Aura Garcia, Board of Public Works
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Marcelino Ascensio, Bureau of Engineering