

# **PRESERVE THE SEPULVEDA BASIN DOG PARK**

(Re: Los Angeles River Valley Bikeway & Greenway Project - Vanalden Ave. to Balboa Blvd.)

I am Miriam Preissel, the president of the Friends of the Sepulveda Basin Off-Leash Dog Park a 501c3 for the last 9 years. I'd like to make it very clear we are NOT against the entirety of this plan and many of us enjoy the existing bike paths.

We are well known to everyone in the area. We have held community meetings and adoptions, including a popular holiday event with Santa photos. We manned the Eagle Scout projects that built the 3 agility courses, one in each park. We work with Recreation and Parks, with the city arborist and I am personally called when every pipe burst, tree limb falls or the gate is still locked in the morning to contact the appropriate maintenance personal. We are the community group who every elected official says they want to see more of.

Although the plan runs by the dog park and plans to use the existing parking, up until a month ago I could not find information or a way for our group to have input.

After asking our Neighborhood Councils if they knew of the status of this plan, none of them knew; and then I stumbled upon it on the Vision site. <https://eng.lacity.org/about-us/divisions/environmental-management/projects/la-river-valley-bikeway-and-greenway>

In a staff report attachment to Communication dated 04-07-22 found on Council File 22-0247 (<https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=22-0247>) from The Department of Public Works/Bureau of Engineering Signed by Gary Lee Moore/City Engineer it states:

## **Public Participation and Public Review**

The Draft initial Study/MND was circulated for public review and comment from October 7, 2021 to November 6, 2021. A notice of intent/availability was also mailed to interested parties and filed with the City Clerk and County Clerk. The Draft initial Study/MND was available for review at the BOE Environmental Management Group's Office and online at the BOE's website.

Six letters commenting on the Draft initial Study/MND were received during the public review period.

I invite everyone to look at these comments and tell me that community input was involved. We certainly were not considered an interested party.

Before we start explaining the plan it is important to note that there are already two bike paths in the vicinity. This would be a THIRD. The existing one on Victory which is on the north side of our park will be turned into a fancier bike/pedestrian path as well and will be connecting to the bike path coming off the south side of the river on White Oak. The other bike path is on Oxnard along the bus route.

The LA River Bikeway is a project that is attempting to connect to a 51 mile run of paths as much down the river as possible. We are protesting this one particular stretch that plans to run a bike/pedestrian path with a few of feet of landscaping alongside the south side of our park, which is on the North side of the river. They plan on moving the fence and taking 2 to 7 feet of the park along different sections. They say no trees will be removed but this is contrary to the plan's tree appendix.

The plan cites using the existing parking of the dog park for this "bike hub" which is one of our biggest issues. The dog park's peak times are the same peak times of many bikers, the lot is full and even the overflow parking on the grass is sometimes double parked.

The planned access through our parking lot to the bike/pedestrian path, would have bikes rolling through the same parking as is used for the dogs. This will create safety issues because dogs notoriously chase bikes. The bike riders of course would try to blame the dog owner and the dog. This would only be tempting fate. Vehicles could be parked for hours or possibly all day and night. Bike racks attached to the back of vehicles are sometimes invisible to people in our small lot especially the seniors who use our park, one of whom drove into one after not seeing or expecting it to be sticking out.

We see two "mixing areas" on one design on the west side of the park. We do not know exactly what this is, it is not defined. We don't understand why cyclists need to stop and "mix". We are not sure who this will attract but are concerned about a distraction to the dogs.

Construction dates are not firm and although they say they will not close the park, we don't know how much they will fence off and how the equipment will affect the dogs. Just a backfire will upset many, much less a jackhammer or bulldozer. A strong reason to put the path on the south side of the LA River instead of our side on the north side where the dog park is located, which will interfere with NOTHING.

What we are advocating is for them to redesign the path to follow the same path it is coming from and continue on the South side of the River. We've been told that it was the Army Corps that made that decision to bring it to put the bike path on the north side. They have no documentation on this. They say there are a few diamonds and a bull pen that are right up against the edge, so any path that would go there would have to plow through them. Google Earth does not bear this out.

We have 21 working baseball diamonds in the basin. And one dog park. Franklin fields which are the diamonds they are worried about on the south side are in a state of disrepair. I understand they lease it to Franklin fields for \$1 who leased it to Harvard West Lake which ultimately left it abandoned and populated by homeless. It will have to be rebuilt to ever use again. They can easily build around the few feet they say are required.

We have been told that an endangered bird is on this area of the river and they are mitigating this. I think it should be looked into because on 04/29/2022 the Energy, Climate Change, Environmental Justice, and River Committee waived consideration on this plan without comment.

It was suggested for people to adjust their schedules around times when the parking lot is mostly empty to make room for the cyclists.

Let's talk about adjusting our schedule. This plan has in it lighting for the bike path. It will be lit long after the dog park will close at dusk. We have been told for almost 30 years that we cannot have lights in the dog park.

Let's put that in perspective. The Sepulveda Basin Dog Park serves areas from North Hollywood to the entire West Valley. If you add CD3, 12, (neither having one dog park in their districts) 6, and even only a 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of CD4, it is the ONLY dog park serving 867,000 people.

During the winter the park is dark before most people get off work, the earliest days are dark before 5pm. Last year after the pandemic sent people back to work, many adopted dogs were returned to shelters because of the energy and stress of being home alone for the 1<sup>st</sup> time, and I believe the lack of any available off leash dog park to blow off their energy. Because of overcrowding, Animal Services is euthanizing dogs simply based on their fear, stress and anxiety levels.

But the ONE DOG PARK in the area closes at dusk because it doesn't have lights.

We cannot imagine that any person or councilmember would think this plan is wise and doesn't value our park as a city treasure. Maybe they just didn't know how this plan would impact the dog park, along with all of us. I am hoping our actions motivate them to take a serious look into this plan and consider supporting alternatives.

We are asking for this plan to be revised to move the path and the parking to the South side of the river and most importantly not impacting our already inadequate parking. There may be other options as well, we would like them to be considered. Or, as many suggested, use the existing paths and use some of those dollars for more dog parks.