COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA

For the Agenda of:
October 22, 2020

To: Recreation and Park Commission

Through: Liz Bellas, Director, Regional Parks

Subject: Conceptually Approve Area Plan Map Amendments To The Cal Expo And Woodlake Area Plan Maps Adding The Off-Paved Trail As Permanent Use; Provide Director Of Regional Parks A Recommendation On Possible Expansion Of Off Paved Trail Areas In The American River Parkway

Supervisiorial
Districts: Serna, Peters, Frost, Nottoli

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
1) Conceptually approve Area Plan Map Amendments to the Cal Expo and Woodlake Area Plans, adding the off-paved trail as a permanent use;
2) Provide the Director of Regional Parks a recommendation on the possible expansion of Off Paved Trail Areas in the American River Parkway.

BACKGROUND
On June 22, 2017, the Recreation and Park Commission approved the Off-Paved Trail Cycling Pilot Program to open selected fire breaks and maintenance roads in Woodlake and Cal Expo land use areas (Attachment 1, Map) to mountain biking for a trial period, September 2017 to September 2020, consistent with policy 5.17 of the American River Parkway Plan.

5.17 Off-paved trail bicycle use may be permitted on existing or reconfigured maintenance and emergency roadways in the Woodlake and Cal Expo areas, at the discretion of the Parkway Manager, as approved on locally adopted area plans, which requires a public approval process. Off-paved trail bicycle use may be permitted under the following conditions:

a) Develop an Implementation Plan prior to allowing the use of unpaved maintenance roads by users on mountain bikes. The Implementation Plan shall include both an educational and a design component,

b) Acquire additional stable and continued funding to support and monitor the use,
c) Add natural buffers and design elements to minimize off-trail behavior and protect sensitive habitat areas,

d) Use only authorized maintenance and emergency roadways where appropriately signed and designated, and

e) Close maintenance roads to bicyclists at the onset of the rainy season and keep closed until the trails dry out in the spring, as determined by the Parkway Manager. During rainy seasons, signs at access points should inform bicyclists of trail closures, and

f) Provide access points near clustered parking areas.

Periodic reports on the environmental monitoring, trail counts, off trail cycling citations, complaints, and community support were brought to the Recreation and Park Commission during the time of the pilot program.

The Department of Regional Parks (Regional Parks) entered into an agreement with Environmental Science Associates (ESA) for the environmental monitoring plan and to conduct monitoring. In the final monitoring report (Attachment 2), ESA concluded that:

The Cal Expo and Woodlake Land Use Areas off-paved trail system changed very little during the pilot program monitoring period, with respect to environmental conditions that could be affected by cyclists and equestrian use. Trail widths did not increase substantially, nor did the number or size of informal trails. The number of topographic modifications increased over the monitoring period, but these are likely caused more by maintenance and utility vehicles than cyclists and equestrians, and also are unlikely to cause erosion due to the flat topography of the floodplain in this reach of the American River.

Use by cyclists was not measured as part of this monitoring effort, though off-paved trail cyclists and bicycle tracks were observed on most pilot program trails during each monitoring event. It is therefore fair to conclude that the trails are being used regularly by cyclists, and that the environmental monitoring results and conclusions presented in this report adequately characterize the effects of that use on the physical conditions of the trails and adjacent habitats. In the future, if use by cyclists or equestrians increases significantly, Sacramento County Parks may elect to do periodic monitoring to evaluate related environmental effects; however,
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Sustained off-paved trail bicycle and equestrian use at the current level is unlikely to result in conditions that are substantially different from the baseline environmental conditions in this part of the Parkway.

During the pilot program, counts were conducted by National Data & Surveying Services using live technicians at five locations in Woodlake and Cal Expo. Generally speaking, bicycle and pedestrian counts were higher in spring than fall, and the most use was tracked in October 2017, right after the pilot program opened. Equestrian counts remained the same, with zero sightings of equestrian use on any of the count days.

The number of citations issued for cycling off the paved trail in the American River Parkway fluctuated seasonally, corresponding to the increased use in spring. Overall, the number of complaints received through the 311 system remained consistent throughout the pilot program, with approximately nine complaints received per year.

Beginning in September 2017, an online trail user survey using SurveyMonkey was designed and posted to the Regional Parks website to track use of the pilot trails, community support, and trail use conflict. An invitation to take a survey is posted on Trail Rules signs in the pilot areas, as well as on the Department website. Depending on the year, 90-100% of survey respondents rode a bicycle as their primary activity on the trails, which is consistent with user count data. The majority responded that their interactions with others on the trails were positive; negative interactions were usually from off-leash dog encounters, and some from interactions with homeless individuals.

Based on the evaluation of the pilot program, Regional Parks recommends making the off-paved trails in the Cal Expo and Woodlake areas a permanent use and respectfully requests the Recreation and Park Commission conceptually approve area plan map amendments. Upon this approval, Regional Parks will bring the area plan map amendments to the Board of Supervisors for final approval.

Policy 5.17.1 of the American River Parkway Plan states:

5.17.1 Off-pavement bicycle use may be further expanded to other areas of the Parkway after a three-year trial period and evaluation, subject to Parkway manager discretion. Locally adopted area plans shall be updated to reflect permitted areas of use, consistent with conditions 5.17 a-f.
Regional Parks respectfully requests that the Recreation and Park Commission provide the Director a recommendation on possible expansion of off-paved trail areas in the American River Parkway, consistent with Policy 5.17.1 of the American River Parkway Plan. If the recommendation is to expand this use to other areas, the Department will conduct public workshops to receive feedback and would evaluate any possible areas utilizing a tool adapted from California State Parks (Attachment 3).

**FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

There is no financial impact to implement the area plan amendments. There will be a minimal cost associated with environmental review of the map amendments, and these costs have been included in the Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget.

Att 1- Map of Off-Paved Trails  
Att 2- Final Environmental Monitoring Memorandum  
Att 3- Evaluation Tool