



Legislation Details (With Text)

File #:	ID17-475	Version:	1	Name:	
Type:	Action Item	Status:		Agenda Ready	
File created:	3/28/2017	In control:		City Council	
On agenda:	4/6/2017	Final action:			
Title:	Comments on San Joaquin River Conservancy Eaton Trail Extension Project Draft Environmental Impact Report 1. ***RESOLUTION providing comments on the San Joaquin River Conservancy Eaton Trail Extension Project Draft Environmental Impact Report and recommending the adoption of Alternative 5.				
Sponsors:	Planning and Development Department				
Indexes:					
Code sections:					
Attachments:	1. Attachment B.pdf, 2. River Conservancy EIR alternative 5 Comment resolution.pdf, 3. Supplement - San Joaquin River Conservancy Eaton Trail Extension.pdf, 4. Supplement Letter from Jeffrey Reid.pdf				

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

April 6, 2017

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SUBJECT

Comments on San Joaquin River Conservancy Eaton Trail Extension Project Draft Environmental Impact Report

1. ***RESOLUTION providing comments on the San Joaquin River Conservancy Eaton Trail Extension Project Draft Environmental Impact Report and recommending the adoption of Alternative 5.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt a resolution providing comments on the San Joaquin River Conservancy Eaton Trail Extension Project Draft Environmental Impact Report and recommending the adoption of Alternative 5 as it is consistent with the City's 2035 General Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The San Joaquin River Conservancy proposes to extend the existing Lewis S. Eaton Trail by constructing a multipurpose trail extension with ancillary recreation support features. The Eaton Trail would be extended approximately 2.4 miles, from the current end of the trail near the northwestern corner of Woodward Park to Spano Park at Palm and Nees avenues on the west. The proposed trail would be about 22 feet wide, which would include a 12-foot-wide paved surface and a parallel 8-foot-wide hard natural surface for equestrian use.

As proposed, automobile access and a parking lot for 50 vehicles would be constructed at the beginning point of the extension near the northwestern corner of Woodward Park. Vehicle access to the parking lot would only be available by crossing the river into Madera County. Pedestrian and bicycle access would be provided at four locations-Perrin Avenue, Spano Park, and the West Riverview Drive and Churchill Avenue entrances to the Bluff Trail.

The Draft Environmental Impact Report identifies several alternatives, including one which would provide auto access on the Fresno side of the river, near Palm and Nees avenues (Alternative 5).

Alternative 5 would mitigate the impacts of introducing vehicle traffic into the adjacent neighborhoods in addition to addressing quality and vehicle miles traveled related issues associated with the project and would provide greater, more convenient vehicle access for the entire community. In addition, Alternative 5 is consistent with the City's 2035 General Plan and reflects previous Council actions and the manner in which access would be provided to the public.

BACKGROUND

The San Joaquin River Conservancy proposes to extend the existing Lewis S. Eaton Trail by constructing a multipurpose trail extension with ancillary recreation support features. As proposed, the trail would be about 22 feet wide, with a 12-foot-wide paved surface, a parallel 8-foot-wide hard natural surface for equestrian use, and a 2-foot shoulder. It generally would proceed from SR 41 to a point below the Spano Park overlook. A parking lot for 50 vehicles with a controlled vehicle entrance would be constructed adjacent to SR 41, near the northwestern corner of Woodward Park. Vehicle access to the parking lot would be at the Perrin Avenue undercrossing of SR 41. A gate and an unmanned parking pay station would be included to manage vehicle access. The parking lot would accommodate up to three horse trailer stalls and would have a fire hydrant, a drinking fountain, a public information bulletin board, a small pet station, and a two-vault restroom.

Pedestrian and bicycle access would be provided at four locations: Perrin Avenue (near the northwestern corner of Woodward Park), Spano Park, and the West Riverview Drive and Churchill Avenue entrances to the Bluff Trail. The Bluff Trail is an existing neighborhood trail, located on land owned by the City of Fresno. A 12-foot-wide paved connector trail would be constructed to provide access from the Bluff Trail to the trail extension near West Riverview Drive, and a wide staircase with bicycle guides would be constructed from Spano Park to the proposed trail. The Spano Park access and Bluff Trail access would be constructed on the steep slope of the San Joaquin River Bluffs.

The trail extension would be landscaped at intervals with native vegetation for habitat enhancement, visual screening, and shade. The landscaping would be irrigated until the vegetation is permanently established. Picnic areas, tables, benches, public safety and information signs, and wildlife observation areas would be provided along the trail extension at various locations. An ADA accessible vault restroom would be added near the toe of Spano Park.

Existing unimproved hiking paths to the riverbank would be connected to the trail extension. These

paths would be widened up to 6 feet and overlaid with a permeable surface, such as decomposed gravel. These hiking paths would not be landscaped. On completion, the project would provide low-impact public recreational activities along the San Joaquin River, such as hiking, bicycling, horse riding, fishing, and nature observation. The project would cover approximately 8.9 acres within approximately 358 acres of public lands.

The Draft Environmental Impact Report identifies several alternatives, as follows:

Alternative 1: Added Parking. Addresses potential impacts on air quality and vehicle miles traveled associated with the project to provide greater, more convenient vehicle access for Fresno metropolitan area residents, including providing equal access for disadvantaged communities or census tracts, and to provide more parking capacity.

Alternative 2: Bluff Trail Alignment. Reduces the circuitous proposed trail alignment and may reduce potential impacts on the riparian habitat.

Alternative 3: River's Edge Trail Alignment. Provides multiuse trail access close to the river and to possibly reduce the potential effects of wildland fires on residences located on the bluffs.

Alternative 4: No Parking. Addresses the potential significant effects of parking at the project site.

Alternative 5: Palm and Nees Access. Addresses the potential impacts on air quality and vehicle miles traveled associated with the project, to provide greater, more convenient vehicle access for Fresno metropolitan area residents, including providing equal access for disadvantaged communities, and to provide more parking capacity.

Alternative 6: No Project. Included in accordance with Section 15126.6(e)(3)(B) of the State CEQA Guidelines. Analysis of this alternative considers the effects under which the project would not proceed, and no trail extension, parking, or recreational amenities would be constructed.

Alternative 5 would provide auto access on the Fresno side of the river, near Palm and Nees avenues, and was designed to address the potential impacts on air quality and vehicle miles traveled associated with the project. It would also provide greater, more convenient vehicle access for Fresno area residents, including providing equal access for disadvantaged communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

This action is not a "project" for the purposes of CEQA.

LOCAL PREFERENCE

This action does not include the expenditure of any public funds.

FISCAL IMPACT

This action does not include the expenditure of any public funds.

Attachments:

Resolution- providing comments on the San Joaquin River Conservancy Eaton Trail Extension Project Draft Environmental Impact Report and recommending the adoption of Alternative 5.
Draft EIR Executive Summary