

American River Flood Control District

Request from the City of Sacramento to Allow a Portion of the Two Rivers Trail on Top of the Levee

Staff Report

Discussion:

Staff from the City of Sacramento Department of Transportation submitted a letter to the District on February 15, 2019 requesting that the Board of Trustees consent to allowing a short segment of the Two Rivers Trail in River Park to be constructed on the levee crown.

Background:

The American River Flood Control District is an urban levee district with facilities located adjacent to pristine riverine aquatic habitat and residential neighborhoods. Recognizing the strong attraction for the public to enjoy the open spaces and parkways adjacent to District levees, the Board of Trustees of the District also envisioned the development of recreational trails along the levees. To promote the safe and sustainable implementation of levee trails, the Board created the District Recreational Trails Policy in 2002.

The Board foresaw the possible nuances and complications of adding paved trails to the levees and developed a policy that acknowledged the numerous benefits of established trails while maintaining a priority for flood control. The District policy seeks to uphold the highest practices of public safety by separating trail traffic from workflow traffic and O&M use of heavy equipment on the levee crown.

To this end, the policy states that wherever feasible, all new trails must be located at the levee toe. This is done to preserve the essential work area of the levee crown for levee O&M activities and to reduce the chance of collisions between District equipment and the recreating public. The policy states that this is to be observed wherever feasible but also reserves the flexibility to consider case specific variances due to physical landform geography or engineering complexity.

The District's Recreational Trails Policy was provided to the staff at the City of Sacramento Department of Transportation at the inception of the Two Rivers Trail project. To date, the City has pursued the development of a trail design that adheres to this policy and has been respectful of its objectives. In 2018, the City developed and presented to the public a trail plan that located the trail off the crown for the entire length of the levee through River Park. For most of the levee reach, the trail was shown to be constructed on the waterside toe of the levee where there is currently an unpaved levee toe road. For a short reach of trail at the downstream end of River Park, there is no waterside bench to construct a trail due to high erosion having destroyed the waterside bench in 1986. For this reach, the City investigated the possibility of constructing a mid-slope bench on the waterside slope of the levee for placement of the trail. The City invested considerable time and resources for the study and engineering of the mid-slope bench alternative.

The trail plans depicted in the City's 2018 Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Two Rivers Trail showed the mid-slope bench alternative for the trail's Segment 4. The District formally commented on the document during the review period and supported the alternative shown. The District comments indicated that the notch in the levee for the mid-slope bench alternative did not necessarily impact the strength of the levee if it was designed properly. The District comments noted that the US Army Corps of engineers has design standards for incorporating retaining walls in levees (utilized in the mid-slope bench alternative) and that the specific reach of levee for Segment 4 has excess freeboard above that required by federal standards.

Subsequent to the circulation of the City's Mitigated Negative Declaration, the City received considerable feedback from the public regarding safety concerns over the mid-slope bench alternative. City staff concluded that additional studies and environmental documentation would likely be required to continue with the mid-slope bench design. The additional studies and documentation coupled with substantial permitting requirements from the State and Federal levee authorities led the City to reconsider the feasibility of a mid-slope bench alternative.

On February 15, 2019, the City provided a letter to the District (attached to this staff report) requesting that the Board of Trustees consent to allowing the short reach of the Two Rivers Trail designated as Segment 4 be allowed to be constructed on the levee crown.

Per the District's Recreational Trails Policy, consent can be given by the Board for short reaches of the trail to be constructed on the levee crown where it is deemed not feasible to place it at the levee toe. In this case, the City has conducted a substantial effort to pursue an off-crown alternative and effectively demonstrated the complexity involved in implementing such an alternative for this reach. The District may be able to accommodate the trail on the crown in this special circumstance.

Factors that affect the District staff's ability to work with a trail on the crown include:

- The trail should be placed as close to the waterside crown hinge point as possible to preserve access to the landside toe.
- This reach is relatively short and isolated to roughly 1400-feet. This allows for visual cuing of equipment and temporary stoppage of bikes and work.
- District would have to adapt work practices and have more barricades, fencing, flaggers, and signage.
- Consider special work scheduling and possible outreach to bike community.
- Perhaps include assistance from City to periodically close trail or provide flaggers.
- City will need to perform frequent maintenance on the trail to address crumbling pavement edges, shoulder compaction, potholes, clearing of sediment and leaves, etc.

Public Communications:

Since some of the District's residents could be impacted by the City's proposal, District staff took steps to inform residents adjacent to the levee along Segment 4 of the request and the Board's consideration of the request at their March 8th meeting. Flyers notifying the public of this discussion were put on doors of the 26 adjacent parcels. Also, the flyer was distributed to

the contact person for the River Park 'Save Don't Pave' group and the River Park Neighborhood Association. At the time of this writing, two comments were received on the District's website contact form and one call was received from the Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates.

Recommendation:

The General Manager recommends that:

1. The Board of Trustees acknowledge the City conducted a considerable effort to develop an off-crown alternative for the entirety of the proposed Two Rivers Trail but faced significant challenges in trying to span the reach of Segment 4 near the 1986 washout; and
2. The Board consent to allowing the short reach of Segment 4 to be constructed on the levee crown.

February 15, 2019

Mr. Tim Kerr
General Manager
American River Flood Control District
185 Commerce Circle
Sacramento, CA 95815

SUBJECT: TWO RIVERS TRAIL (PHASE II)

Dear Mr. Kerr,

Thank you for your continued and on-going coordination and communication with the City regarding the Two Rivers Trail Project (Phase II). The City is respectfully requesting that ARFCD (District) grant a variance to the District's Recreational Trails Policy and allow the City of Sacramento to construct a short portion of the Two Rivers Trail project on top of the Southerly levee of the Lower American River.

As you are aware, the trail project has been in planning phases since 2012. The initial plan was to construct the entire trail on top of the levee between H Street Bridge and Sutter's Landing Park. After the District informed the City of the requirements within the District's Recreational Trails Policy, the City began analyzing a waterside levee toe option for the trail. This option created more extensive biological impacts but appears to be mitigatable and would adhere to the District's policy. However, in segment 4 of the trail (see attached segment map), there is no lower bench. After collaborating with SAFCA and ARFCD, the City developed an alternative that essentially constructs a notch in the levee, staying above and outside of the theoretical levee prism.

The City has diligently pursued this plan, presenting it to Central Valley Flood Protection Board and Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The efforts required to obtain USACE approval is anticipated to be extensive.

In November 2018, the City circulated an Initial Study- Mitigated Negative Declaration describing the trail along the toe with the notch in segment 4 as the preferred alignment. We received public comments concerning flood safety and levee stability if the levee is notched. This project component also involves more impacts to biological resources.

The City has performed an exhaustive study to show the stability and safety of the mid-levee alternative. The USACE coordination, higher construction costs, increased biological impacts, and public comments received during the environmental document review period have led us to the conclusion that constructing a mid-levee trail through segment 4 poses enough of a risk to the implementation of the project to make it infeasible. We are requesting a variance to **construct the trail on top of the levee in segment 4 only**. The remainder of the trail is still planned along the levee toe, as per the District's policy.

Per the District's Recreational Trails Policy, Section 3a, the District can allow a crown trail where any other alternative is not feasible. This segment lends itself best to a shared levee top, being relatively short and straight. This means that potential conflicts are contained within a short area with the best possible sight distance.

We request consideration for the request to place this short segment of the City's trail project on top of the levee. City staff is available to meet with the ARFCD board to petition them directly and answer any further questions. We request that this be arranged at the earliest date possible to help preserve the project schedule.

Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Randolph'.

Adam Randolph, P.E.

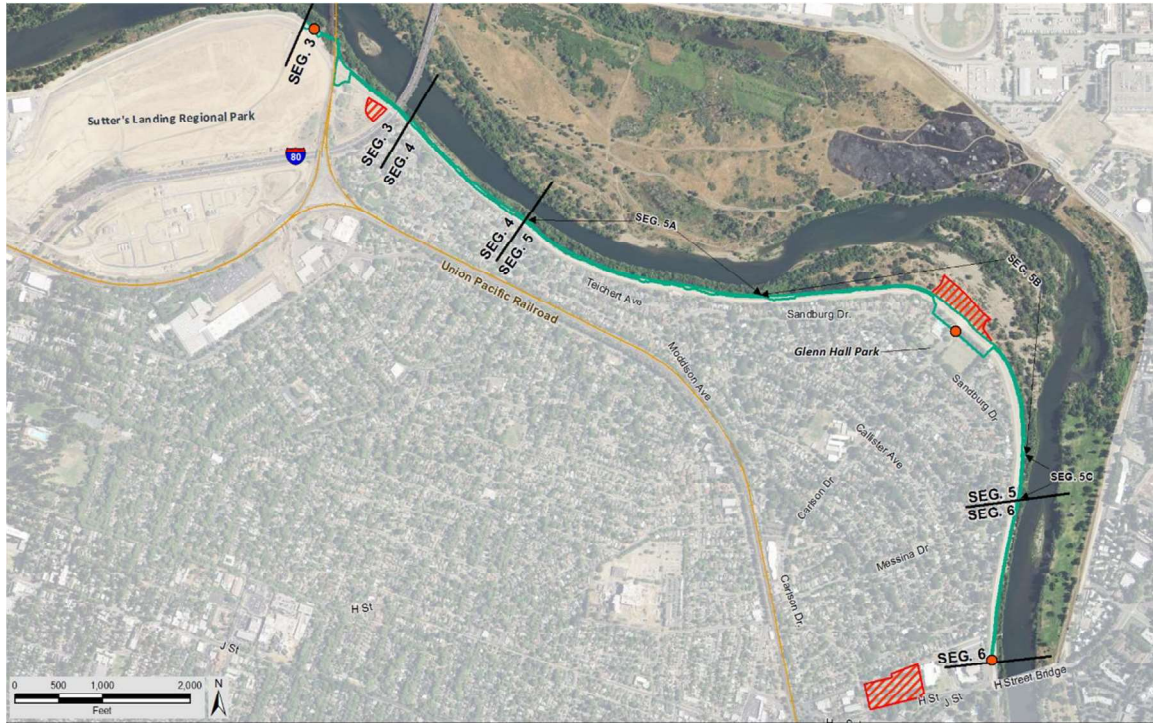
Senior Engineer

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Attachments:
Segment Map

Attachment 1: Segment Map



Tim Kerr

From: Adam Randolph <ARandolph@cityofsacramento.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2019 4:29 PM
To: Tim Kerr
Cc: Judith Matsui-Drury; Nader Kamal; Shephard, Andrea
Subject: ARFCD- Work associated with trail relocation

Hi Tim, you had asked for a bullet-pointed list of the activities the City has engaged in to comply with the District's Recreational Trails Policy. The list below may not be comprehensive, but I hope conveys that the City has been diligently pursuing compliance with the District's policy.

- Re-design of trail between Sutter's Landing Park and H Street to be within the channel
- Identification of additional costs, and Application for Additional Funds (a \$3.3 million increase, over 250% construction cost increase)
- Submitting a Feasibility Memo for CVFPB and USACOE review
 - Conducting Hydraulic Study as part of the Feasibility analysis
 - Conducting a Levee Stability Geotechnical Analysis, also as part of the Feasibility analysis
- Meetings and correspondence with Maintenance and Regulatory Agencies
 - ARFCD Meeting (7/14/2017)
 - SAFCA meeting (6/1/2017)
 - CVFPB Meeting (8/21/2017)
 - USACOE Pre-ap meeting (10/4/2017)
 - USACOE Follow-up (6 months of correspondence)
- Other Stakeholder Correspondence
 - LARTF Meeting (12/12/17)
 - River Park Neighborhood Meetings (10/6/17, 4/7/17)
 - ARPAC (6/12/18)
 - City of Sac ATC (1/11/19)
- CEQA Document prep and circulation
 - Identifying additional biological impacts
 - Public Meetings (10/27/19)
 - Native American Consultation
- NEPA Document prep and studies
 - Identifying additional biological impacts
 - Native American Consultation

If you need anything else, please let me know.

Adam Randolph, P.E.
 Senior Engineer

City of
SACRAMENTO

Department of Public Works

Civil Design Section

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