

TECHNICAL ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED CHANGES IN A TRAIL'S USES (CHECKLIST) REVISED JUNE 26, 2009

Trail Name: Alhambra Creek Staging Area Access Trail, Park Briones Regional Park, Location: Northeast Section of Park, Date Reviewed: October 15, 2008

Describe the existing condition of the trail, including user types, use patterns and natural resources: this trail is located in the northeast section of Briones Regional Park and runs adjacent to the road that leads to the Alhambra Creek Staging Area. The trail is almost two-thirds of a mile (3,406 feet) and is now open to hikers and equestrians. The request seeks to open this narrow trail to bicycle traffic.

Neither the trail nor staging area are a regional draw. There are relatively few houses in the immediate area and no large residential communities, so the trail is generally used by locals. This is a popular trail with hikers, dog-walkers and equestrians, as the Briones Horse Center is located at the end of the road and other stables are nearby. However, it is common for hikers and equestrians, as well as bicyclists, to access the staging area on the adjacent road, sometimes in groups. Trail use surveys conducted by the Volunteer Trail Safety Patrol have consistently identified hikers, equestrians (in groups) and dog walkers on this trail. For example, on a weekday in August 2008, between the hours of 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., 14 pedestrians, 3 equestrians and 10 dogs were observed on the trail. In addition, bicycles and a jeep were recently seen on this trail illegally. The trail is most busy on weekends and weekdays in the late afternoon after work hours. There are no records of accidents or emergencies on this trail over the past five years, but the Public Safety and Operations Departments are aware of conflicts in the area among user groups, particularly between dog walkers and horseback riders.

The trail is nearly level. Though the tread of the trail is relatively narrow in places, at less than 24 inches, line of site and passing room are adequate along the length of the trail. The trail is located between Alhambra Creek and the staging area entry road. The trail generally runs right next to or nearby the entry road and in one area the trail ends for a short segment and trail users are forced onto the road at this 'pinch point,' as there is no room between the creek and road. The trail is located on a former farm field and bisects open grassland and oak-bay woodland. The trail is located within federally-designated critical habitat for Alameda whipsnake. However, the closest recorded Alameda whipsnake sighting is more than 4,000 feet away across a major road, and the habitat that bisects the trail does not provide primary constituent elements (or key habitat features) essential for the conservation of whipsnake. In addition, the trail and its immediate surroundings are not part of and do not link contiguous blocks of occupied whipsnake habitat. Therefore, use change adds no further significant potential to harm Alameda whipsnake.

Describe the proposed trail use change, including its general benefits and the physical changes to the existing trail needed to accommodate the proposed new use: The trail use change seeks to allow bicyclists as an additional user group on this narrow park entry trail, now designated for hiking and equestrian use. The adjacent entry road, which is owned and maintained by the Park District, is a narrow two-lane road with several curves and is shared by automobiles, pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists, and can get crowded with multiple user groups. The East Bay Area Trails Council submitted this use change request to improve the safety of bicyclists and motorists by allowing cyclists use of the adjacent trail and to permit cyclists to conveniently enter the park, like other user groups, off-road on a level trail. Use change could reduce user conflict on the park entry road (by removing bicyclists from having to ride on the road). However, this change could also result in transferring existing user conflict to the trail. Outside of the park, a separated paved trail parallels Reliez Valley Road to the east. Currently, bicyclists can enter the park via the entry road itself or on a multi-use trail from Reliez Valley Road that connects to the Tavan Trail and the staging area, but this trail is steep, strenuous to traverse and a less direct route to the staging area than the trail being evaluated.

No new trail would need to be developed to implement this use change request. Proposed improvements to accommodate the request would include clearing of site lines from brush, limb or weed encroachment; replacing a short stretch of barbed wire with smooth wire or another barrier; and installing appropriate signs both on the trail and roadway, specifically at the 'pinch point,' alerting all users of potential conflicts.

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District Staff will use this checklist: to: (1). Determine the feasibility and appropriateness of proposed changes in allowed uses for an existing trail. (2). Determine if Planning or CEQA is needed. (3). Determine the appropriateness of amendments to Ordinance #38 for regulating uses on an existing trail. The addition of new trails will be considered during the development of a park's Land Use/CEQA document and not through this checklist process.

Answer each question with a yes or no.	Yes	No	Describe positive and negative impacts of the proposed change related to this question, and any other details related to this question to be considered before a decision is made.
CIRCULATION			
1. Would the proposed change affect trail use circulation?		✓	Bicyclists already can use the road to access the Alhambra Creek Staging Area so use change would not change circulation
2. Would the proposed change provide a loop connection for an existing group of unauthorized trail users to a multi-use trail, or connection to an adjacent park?		✓	
3. Would the proposed change provide the only alternative for achieving a desirable trail connection for a specific user group?		✓	See #1 above
4. Would the proposed change allow trail access to areas that are not connected or to serve staging areas or other trail heads?		✓	
5. Would the proposed change improve circulation and/or relieve congestion on other high use trails?		✓	But use change could relieve congestion on the road into the Alhambra Creek Staging Area
6. Would the proposed change require a closure of the trail on either a temporary or permanent basis during wet season conditions?		✓	
7. Describe any other circulation impacts of proposed changes not covered above.			Use change would improve the safety of bicyclists by giving them the option of either riding on trail or the adjacent road. Moreover, use change would give cyclists the opportunity now available to other user groups to enter the park off-road on a flat and convenient trail

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND VALUES			
8. Would the proposed trail use change benefit natural resources near the trail or generally in the park?		✓	
9. Would the proposed change contribute to unacceptable breakdown of trail shoulders, or any form of irreparable trail damage?		✓	
10. Would the proposed change eliminate a use that is currently causing unacceptable breakdown of trail shoulders, or any form of irreparable trail damage?		✓	
11. Would the proposed change cause trail tread rutting, impairment of trail drainage, or cause significant erosion?		✓	
12. Would the proposed change eliminate a use that is currently causing trail tread rutting, impairment of trail drainage, or cause significant erosion?		✓	
13. Would the proposed change result in geological instability, landslides or other similar serious safety impacts?		✓	
14. Would the proposed change eliminate a use or need for maintenance that contributes to geological instability?		✓	
15. Would the proposed change introduce a new use that may impact or disturb sensitive listed native plants, animals, or their habitat?		✓	The location of the trail falls within federally-designated critical habitat for Alameda whipsnake. The closest recorded sighting of a whipsnake is 4,000 feet to the northeast across a major road. However, the trail is not located in an area known to be occupied by whipsnake and plant communities that bisect or link the trail do not provide high-value whipsnake habitat. Therefore, use change would not adversely impact Alameda whipsnake
16. Would the proposed change require construction or maintenance that would impact or disturb sensitive listed native plants, animals, or their habitat?		✓	Use change would involve routine trail improvements, which would not adversely affect sensitive or protected plants, animals or habitat
17. Would the proposed change require construction or maintenance that would impact or disturb sensitive archaeological or historic resources?		✓	The immediate area does not contain known archaeological resources
18. Would the proposed change trigger regulatory review or permit requirements with a requirement for mitigation?		✓	
19. Describe any other resource impacts or benefits of the proposed trail use change not covered above			

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TRAIL USER SAFETY			
20. Will a change in existing trail use require staff to make substantial changes in design and maintenance procedures for the trail regarding:			
a. Steepness		✓	The trail is nearly level
b. Outslopes		✓	
c. Visibility or line of sight		✓	Trimming brush, limbs and weeds, consistent with the Park District's general practice, would maintain line of site
d. Turn outs or Pull outs		✓	
e. Emergency response		✓	The trail is easily accessible to public safety vehicles
f. Police enforcement		✓	Conflicts now occur between user groups and use change should not increase conflicts nor result in the need for increased police presence or response
g. Exposing trail users to additional major road crossings		✓	This proposal seeks to give bicyclists the choice of either riding on the road or the trail. This would likely provide a safety benefit to both cyclists and motorists
21. Would the proposed change invite undesired off trail use adjacent to the trail?		✓	
COMPATIBILITY OF USES			
22. Would the proposed change in use be compatible with current trail width to allow multiple trail user groups to safely pass each other?	✓		In general, the trail has adequate site lines and passing room to accommodate multiple use. The proposal includes clearing vegetation and replacing an existing barbed wire fence with smooth wire or other barrier
23. Would the proposed changed use conflict with circulation at facilities such as a stable, interpretive facility, nature study area, other? If yes please describe potential conflicts		✓	There are horse stables nearby and this trail is popular with equestrians, but use change should not conflict with circulation at these facilities
24. Would the proposed changed use be located in a high use area that can't handle more use? (ie: limited staging, few trails, etc.)		✓	
25. Would the proposed changed use be in an area that already experiences documented trail user conflict?	✓		User conflicts occur among motorists, pedestrians, equestrians and bicyclists along the entry road. Use change could alleviate (or perhaps transfer) some of the existing conflicts by giving bicyclists the option of riding on the trail
26. Would the proposed changed use significantly affect the experience of existing trail users?		✓	Though use change could slightly alter the character of the trail through minor trail maintenance, the conditions for existing trail users should not be significantly affected because this trail can accommodate additional users and is located adjacent to the road, in an active area of the park
27. Describe any other compatibility issues related to the proposed change in trail use			

Answer each question with a yes or no.	Yes	No	Describe positive and negative impacts of the proposed change related to this question, and any other details related to this question to be considered before a decision is made.
TRAIL MAINTENANCE			
28. Would the proposed change require additional annual or ongoing brush clearing or vegetation management?	✓		To accommodate multiple use, the Park District would implement minor trail improvements, consisting primarily of vegetation management and other routine activities, to maintain trail width and site lines
29. Would the proposed change require additional drainage improvements or annual or ongoing drainage maintenance?		✓	Regardless of use change, sections of road/trail will eventually need to be improved because of poor drainage and erosion
30. Would the proposed change require additional and/or ongoing trail stabilization or trail surface maintenance?		✓	
31. Would the proposed change require additional retaining walls or structures be constructed and require ongoing maintenance?		✓	
32. Describe any changes in maintenance related to the proposed change not covered above			
CONSTRUCTION			
33. Describe any construction that would be required on the trail to accommodate the proposed trail use change			Barbed wire is located along a short section of trail, and prior to opening it to bicycles it should be removed and replaced with smooth gauge wire or removed and replaced with boulders or other barrier. Standard signs alerting park visitors of potential conflicts should be installed on the trail and road, which are owned and maintained by the Park District
34. Would the proposed change require an increase or reduction in funding for construction? If yes describe how much?		✓	
35. Would the proposed trail use change require that the District complete a construction project that is not on its current work list or plan?		✓	
36. Would the construction to accommodate the new proposed trail use be handled by someone other than the District? If yes please describe		✓	

Answer each question with a yes or no.	Yes	No	Describe positive and negative impacts of the proposed change related to this question, and any other details related to this question to be considered before a decision is made.
PLANNING/CEQA			
37. Would the proposed trail use change require additional land tenure, a new maintenance/operating agreement? If yes please describe.		✓	
38. Would the proposed trail use change occur in an area that has a history of litigation or create any unusual legal exposure for the District? If yes please describe.		✓	
39. Would CEQA review be required (as determined by CEQA Planner in Planning/Stewardship Dept.)?		✓	
40. Would the proposed change require an amendment to an existing LUP (realignment of an existing trail or a new trail)?		✓	
DISTRICT STAFF EVALUATION SUMMARY			
Category:	Note any unresolved major issues		
Circulation			
Resources			
Trail User Safety			
Compatibility			
Maintenance			
Construction			
Planning/CEQA			
Construction Costs: <u>Less than \$500</u> , Annual Park Operation Costs: <u>Nominal</u> , Annual Maintenance Costs: <u>Nominal</u> , Annual Public Safety Costs: <u>\$0</u>			
EBRPD Staff Team Members: Laura Comstock, Unit Manager; David Vance, Park Ranger II; Raphael Breines and Anne Rivoire, Planning; Terry Noonan and Sean Dougan, Regional Trails			