



# RIVERSIDE PUBLIC UTILITIES

## Board Memorandum

**BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

**DATE: JANUARY 24, 2022**

**SUBJECT: GAGE CANAL MULTIPURPOSE TRAIL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT UPDATE**

**ISSUE:**

Consider receiving an update on the Gage Canal Multipurpose Trail Improvement Project.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Board of Public Utilities receive an update on the Gage Canal Multipurpose Trail Improvement Project.

**BACKGROUND:**

In 1996, the City's Trails Master Plan (TMP) was originally adopted by the City Council and has since been overseen by the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department.

On August 24, 2010, the City Council approved the Sixth Amendment to the Agreement for Operation of Gage Canal Facilities whereby maintenance and operational responsibilities for seven segments of the Gage Canal right-of-way were transferred from the Gage Canal Company to the City of Riverside.

On October 1, 2019, the City Council adopted a resolution authorizing the submission of a grant application for the California Natural Resources Agency Urban Greening Grant Program in the amount of \$3,708,509 for the design and construction of the Gage Canal Multipurpose Recreational Trail Phase I.

On April 1, 2020, the City of Riverside entered into an agreement with the State of California Natural Resources Agency for the Gage Canal Multipurpose Recreational Trail Phase I in the amount of \$3,708,509.

On July 21, 2020, the Finance Department/Purchasing Division posted a Request for Proposal (RFP) No. 2032 on the City's online bidding website. On August 11, 2020, three proposals were received. After a thorough review by the Purchasing Division, it was found that two proposals were deemed non-responsive. The selection committee consisted of four staff members from multiple City Departments, who reviewed and scored the remaining proposal and interviewed the firm, Alta Planning + Design, Inc. ("Alta").

On December 1, 2020, the City Council approved the agreement for RFP No. 2032, Gage Canal Trail Improvements Master Plan with Alta of Portland, Oregon, in the amount not to exceed \$532,431.65 and being funded by the grant.

On August 17, 2021, the City Council adopted a resolution to approve the proposed comprehensive Riverside PACT Plan and all four components of the PACT Plan including Pedestrian Target Safeguarding, Active Transportation Plan, Complete Streets Ordinance, and the updated Trails Master Plan.

On December 14, 2021, the City Council approved and authorized the City Manager, or designee, to execute an interdepartmental Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Riverside Public Utilities Department, Water Division, and the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department for the maintenance of the proposed Trail project.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### *Existing Conditions*

The Gage Canal conveys and distributes water to shareholders of the Gage Canal Company. Within the limits of the Gage Canal Trail Phase 1 project, the water is conveyed in an underground pipeline within the unpaved fifty-foot-wide utility corridor owned by Riverside Public Utilities (RPU). Phase I of the project is approximately a two-mile stretch starting at Palmyrita Avenue, running southwest along the edge of the Box Springs Mountain Reserve, and south across Spruce Street ending at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) campus at Blaine Street.

### *Community Input*

Beginning April 1, 2021, Alta and the City of Riverside Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department (PRCSD) polled Riverside residents and stakeholders about their current and anticipated use of, and amenity preferences for, the Gage Canal Multi-Purpose Recreational Trail. The brief five-minute, eight question survey was designed as a “low friction” opportunity for the community to share their experiences and perspectives on walking, biking, and recreating along the Trail without a significant imposition on their time. Survey results and themes were utilized by the City and Alta to inform design direction, programming, and trail amenities.

The survey, which was available in English and Spanish both digitally and in print, was promoted and distributed to Riverside stakeholders in a variety of formats. Each survey question was accompanied by a variety of response options so that respondents needed only to select their relevant choice(s), with a final open-ended prompt provided for those that wanted to share additional thoughts or recommendations for the project team to consider.

While open for input from all stakeholders, the project team targeted advertisements to those that lived, worked, or played near the Gage Canal. This included households within a ¼ mile radius of the project area (including the disadvantaged communities near the Trail's northern and southern ends), UCR students and faculty, Riverside and Alvord Unified School District students and parents, and current Trail users. The survey remained open for input from April 1 through June 1, 2021, with a total of 545 responses.

### *Master Plan*

The Master Plan Design creates a Class I asphalt concrete shared use path and a multi-purpose decomposed granite path within an existing city-owned water utility easement. The Trail corridor will be landscaped with native and climate appropriate trees, shrubs, and will feature additional amenities including entry plazas, trailside seating, bicycle racks, interpretive signage, and solar lighting. It will create a continuous off-street multipurpose trail connection from Palmyrita Avenue to Blaine Street, and will offer residents both recreational opportunities and a connection to the Box Springs Reserve.

### *Construction Budget*

The projected consultant construction budget estimate is \$3,175,000, which is fully funded by the Urban Greening Grant funding.

### *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Determination*

With guidance from project CEQA consultants and the City Attorney's Office, PRCSD staff have determined this Master Plan project falls within a statutory exemption from CEQA pursuant to SB 288 of the Public Resources Code 21080.25(b), as the proposed project is designed to implement new active transportation while located in an urbanized area and within an existing public right-of-way, does not require the demolition of affordable housing units, and will not add physical infrastructure that increases new automobile capacity or include the addition of any auxiliary lanes. PRCSD Staff has prepared Notice of Exemption documentation for the project and filed it with the County Clerk and State Clearinghouse.

### *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*

An MOU has been drafted by and between the City of Riverside Public Utilities Department and PRCSD to formalize the responsibilities for the monitoring, maintenance, and shared costs associated with the City's right to operate the Gage Canal Multi-Use Trail along the old Gage Canal right-of-way, from Blaine Street to Palmyrita Avenue.

The MOU includes the following key agreements and responsibilities:

- PRCSD will take the lead in monitoring this segment of the trail and responding to any 311 calls.
- PRCSD will retain a contractor to perform the maintenance responsibilities through the City's competitive procurement process.
- PRCSD and RPU will then pay a portion of these costs based on associated responsibilities.
- RPU ratepayer funds will not be used for any costs associated with the operation of the trail or liabilities arising from Trail operations.

### *Presentation to The Gage Canal Company*

On November 9, 2021, RPU and PRCSD presented this project to the Gage Canal Company Board of Directors. The overall response received by the Board of Directors was positive, with a few members having questions/concerns that were responded to as follows:

Q. Does the design of the trail allow for private citizen vehicular access?

A. No. The design includes vehicular access barriers at all entries to only allow authorized vehicular access along the trail for maintenance and repairs.

Q. How do we prevent damage to the underground canal piping from the proposed trees?

A. RPU has with the design consultant to require root barriers placed strategically at every tree location to discourage and prevent tree roots from growing towards the existing underground Gage Canal infrastructure.

Q. How will you handle the homelessness issue that currently exists and could spread by inviting people to the trail?

A. Through improving the trail, hiring a specified maintenance contractor, adding lighting, and encouraging public recreation it is anticipated the homeless will be discouraged from populating the area. By creating a more populated public amenity that would bring attention and exposure to the area the trail would receive more public use and deter the establishment of encampments.

Q. Why doesn't the Gage Canal Company Board of Directors need to take action on this project/presentation?

A. The 6<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Operating Agreement between the Gage Canal Company and City of Riverside Public Utilities Department removed the Gage Canal Company liability, as well as monitoring and maintenance responsibilities for the segment of right of way that this Trail will occupy.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

The Gage Canal Multipurpose Trail Improvement Project contributes to Strategic Priority No. 1 *Arts, Culture and Recreation* and Goal No. 1.3 - to improve parks, recreational amenities, open space, and trail development, and fulfill critical lifecycle and facility maintenance needs, and Goal No. 1.4 - to prioritize safety at parks, trails, arts, cultural and recreational facilities.

1. Community Trust – The PRCSO and its design consultant have done extensive community outreach to obtain stakeholder feedback that has helped drive the overall trail design and amenities selection. The public is currently able to track the projects progress through the PRCSO's CIP tracking map located on the City's website.
2. Equity – With this project's improvements, it will extend the Gage Canal Trail along a section that previously restricted public access, while also offering and encouraging free walking, jogging, and biking recreational opportunities and active transportation routes to the public.
3. Fiscal Responsibility – The procurement of all services for this project are in accordance with Purchasing Resolution No. 23812.
4. Innovation – The improvements for this project along a restricted access easement ensures that new recreational and transportation opportunities are offered in the City.
5. Sustainability & Resiliency – This project contributes to improving existing City facilities and amenities, which encourages and provides access to healthy exercise opportunities. Major components of the Trail Improvement Project design include water efficient drip irrigation, installation of a smart controller, and planting 600 native trees to help with carbon sequestration, improving the overall quality of life for all City of Riverside residents.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Project construction costs for Phase I of the Gage Canal Multipurpose Recreational Trail Project is estimated at a total expenditure of \$3,175,000, which is fully funded by the California Natural Resources Agency Urban Greening Grant Account No. 94092001-440220. All maintenance costs associated with the operation of the Trail will be the responsibility of the Parks, Recreation and Community Services department.

RPU currently spends approximately \$10,000 annually for the overall maintenance of the two miles of right-of-way. The MOU maintains the annual maintenance costs at no more than \$10,000, in alignment with current expenditures.

Prepared by:	Oscar A. Khoury, Engineering Manager
Approved by:	Todd M. Corbin, Utilities General Manager
Approved by:	Kris Martinez, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form:	Phaedra A. Norton, City Attorney

Approved as to Availability of funds:	Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/City Treasurer
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**Attachments:**

1. Presentation
2. Gage Multipurpose Trail Project Site Map
3. MOU