

BALDWIN HILLS REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

A public entity of the State of California exercising joint powers of the County of Los Angeles and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy

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TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: May 28, 2013

SUBJECT: Agenda Item IX: Consideration of resolution approving the Park to Playa Regional Trail Project Segments A, B, and D-I.

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution approving the Park to Playa Regional Trail Project Segments A, B, and D-I.

Background: The goal of the Park to Playa project is to create a seamless regional trail that connects urban residents with the natural coast. This goal will be realized through coordination between multiple-agencies and jurisdictions. Once completed, the final trail will be a total of approximately 13 miles and will cross through and connect the trail systems of parks and open spaces within the Baldwin Hills, along Ballona Creek, to the Pacific Ocean. The Baldwin Hills Regional Conservation Authority (BHRCA) is working in partnership with Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, California Department of Parks and Recreation, Baldwin Hills Conservancy, City of Culver City, City of Los Angeles, Office of Los Angeles County Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, and others to realize the vision of the project. Project partners have participated in technical advisory meetings and follow-up discussions to inform alignment recommendations and implementation actions since the project feasibility studies began.

The western portion of the Park to Playa Trail consists of the existing 6-mile Ballona Creek Bike Path and is not part of the current project. Construction Documents are being prepared for the eastern 7-mile portion of the proposed Park to Playa Trail. This eastern portion is a system of walking, hiking and bicycle trails running east-southeasterly through parks and open space areas in the Baldwin Hills. The project has been organized into Segments A through I to represent the various trail alignments as follows: Segment A - Culver City Park; Segment B - Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook; Segment C - Blair Hills Corridor on BHRCA-owned property; Segment D - KHSRA Valley Trail; Segment E -

KHSRA Hilltop Connector Trail; Segment F - Janice's Green Valley Loop Trail, Segment G - Western Ridgeline Trail; Segment H - Eastern Ridgeline Trail, Segment I - Stocker Corridor (see attached map).

The Park to Playa project will improve existing deteriorated paths within several jurisdictions and parklands and will also close gaps between the existing trails by creating new and safe connections where they are needed. Additional improvements include new trailheads and gateway entrances with native plant landscaping and restoring habitat, decorative gates, parking lots, reconstructing sidewalks, crosswalks, shade structures, Storm water Best Management Practices (BMPs), fencing, seating, bike racks, artwork, and interpretive, wayfinding, and connection signage along portions of the entire Park to Playa connection route. The Project also includes trail connections to Ruben Ingold Park, Norman O. Houston Park, and other area parks.

Staff recommends that Segments A, B, and D through I be approved in order for staff to move forward with phased construction of these improvements. The design for Segment C is preliminary and requires further planning and coordination with various stakeholders to refine the trail alignment. Once the proposed new trail in Segment C is better defined and finalized, it will be subject to additional environmental analysis and review by the public and subsequent consideration by the Governing Board at that time.

In 2000, the Park to Playa vision was first articulated. The vision to create a seamless trail that connects urban residents with the Pacific coast has been a priority and topic of discussion amongst agencies and organizations since then and it will be realized through a cooperative effort between these same agencies.

In 2010, the MRCA obtained a grant from the BHRCA to create a "Feasibility Study and Wayfinding Implementation Plan" (Plan) to fully evaluate the 7-mile portion of the Park to Playa trail in the Baldwin Hills. In partnership with the Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, MRCA contracted with Alta Planning & Design (Alta) to prepare the Plan. The "Feasibility Study" evaluates alignment and connectivity alternatives, identifies key connection points, and explores trail design to a level sufficient to determine the feasibility of this portion of the Park to Playa trail. The "Implementation Plan" includes recommendations for short- and long-term phasing alternatives, identifies necessary acquisitions, geotechnical and environmental investigations, and permitting requirements for the successful implementation of this trail.

The development of the Plan involved several phases, including coordination with project partners, data collection, evaluation of the existing environment and planning context, and extensive public participation. Several documents are the guiding resources for information in the Plan. The Baldwin Hills Master Plan-One Big Park, Baldwin Hills Linkages and Access Plan, and Kenneth Hahn State Recreation General Plan Amendment all support

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a trail system from the Stocker Corridor to Ballona Creek. The Baldwin Hills Conservancy Draft 2010 Strategic Plan identified the “Park to Playa” concept as a top priority project. The Plan was completed in November 2011.