

Transportation plan update on hold

ERICA FELCI • THE DESERT SUN • MAY 26, 2009

An update to a valley wide plan for bike, horse and hiking trails is on hold as officials decide how to respond to a recent deluge of requested changes.

The Coachella Valley Association of Governments spent \$80,000 last year to hire a consultant and update the 2001 non-motorized transportation plan. They solicited input from cities and organizations, hosted workshops, and were finalizing the plan for the CVAG committees' approval.

The deadline for input was May 15, and in recent weeks, interested organizations and residents have submitted even more comments and raised concerns that the update is too close to the existing, 8-year-old plan.

While officials welcome the feedback, CVAG Deputy Director Allyn Waggle said integrating all the changes requires more work that goes beyond the scope of the contract.

A draft had been presented to two committees, but was taken off a recent CVAG executive committee agenda. The valley's city managers, who meet as the CVAG technical advisory committee, will discuss next month whether to accept the draft or spend more money to incorporate the new suggestions.

"We received such an onslaught of comments it was going to change the plan considerably," Waggle said.

The non-motorized transportation plan was designed to be the valley's master plan for bikeways and horse and pedestrian trails.

After CVAG finalizes it, it will be up to each city to approve and help implement it. Officials say it can be a guide for future planning and help secure state and federal funding.

John Lujan, administrator for the Coachella Valley Community Trails Alliance, said he hopes desert officials take more time with the plan.

The 2001 plan wasn't adopted by many cities, he said, and if the update doesn't make significant changes there's a worry that communities won't implement this one, either.

"It's really important that the cities buy into this plan," Lujan said. "Otherwise, it's a waste of money and planning."