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Help us build happy trails across the valley

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The Coachella Valley Community Trails Alliance (CVCTA) is bringing together the public and private sectors to plan a trans-valley urban trail along the Whitewater Channel and the Coachella Canal.

A network of off-road multi-use trails and on-street bike lanes will save lives. Multijurisdictional adoption of a Coachella Valley Urban Trails Master Plan is the means to achieve this goal. Someday, Coachella Valley residents and visitors will be able to travel from Desert Hot Springs to the Salton Sea without a car, but only if the political will is mustered and sustained.

The Trails Alliance advocates for all types of trail users, not just bicyclists. The off-road trail system is intended for multiple users, including walkers, hikers, joggers, people who use mobility devices and equestrians. Whenever possible, the CVCTA advocates for a dual path system: a paved path and a decomposed granite or earthen trail. Bicyclists will likely be the largest users but the urban trail system will be built to serve as many people as possible.

Trails and golf are compatible

Some say that an off-road path along the banks of the Whitewater Channel is unrealistic because of the existing golf courses. Golf courses and trails are not mutually exclusive. Off-road public trails already exist in the Mesquite Golf & Country Club and Tahquitz Creek Golf Resort in Palm Springs and in the Club at Morningside in Rancho Mirage.

One does not have to look far outside the valley to see examples of successful urban trails along water conveyance channels: for instance, the Santa Ana River Trail runs through three populous counties on its way from Huntington Beach to the San Bernardino Mountains. This trail was begun in the 1960s, and new sections open each year. The latest section to open is in the Hidden Valley Nature Preserve in the cities of Riverside and Norco.

The Trails Alliance was founded by local developers who recognize the value of urban trails. The Trails Alliance was formed because no public entity existed in the Coachella Valley with either the interest or resources necessary to create a regional urban trail network. The private sector organized to fill this gap in public sector planning. Rep. Mary Bono Mack, R-Palm Springs; Supervisor Roy Wilson; the Coachella Valley Water District; and the cities of La Quinta and Coachella have already written letters of support for the Trails Alliance and its mission. The 29 Palms Band of Mission Indians pledged \$50,000 over five years, demonstrating its commitment to improving the quality of life for the entire valley.

A "green" solution

The Trails Alliance is requesting that the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG), which allocates state and federal transportation dollars in the valley, take an active role in urban trails planning and funding. At the request of the Trails Alliance and its allies, CVAG has formed an ad hoc Urban Trails Committee. This new group met Thursday with trail advocates for the first time.

The Trails Alliance is a true alliance of the public and private sectors. Citizens who support an urban trail system as a safe, green alternative to motorized transportation are encouraged to join the alliance today. We need the broadest possible community support, volunteers and donations to achieve our goal. If you support our mission, please visit our Web site at www.cvcta.org or e-mail us directly at info@cvcta.org. Help the Trails Alliance build pathways for a healthier, more prosperous and sustainable Coachella Valley.

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