



Friends of Griffith Park

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Response to Comprehensive Strategies Report

Access, Safety, and Mobility around Griffith Park and the Hollywood Sign

The Hollywood Sign has become a symbol for the City of Los Angeles and a popular tourist destination. Tourism is great for the city and its economy; however the surge of visitors has created unpleasant and unsafe experiences for both residents and visitors. Just as concerning, the surge of visitors creates new risks and pressures on already-stressed habitat and wildlife. Friends of Griffith Park commends Councilmember David Ryu for creating a group of community representatives, including Friends of Griffith Park, to brainstorm potential strategies to mitigate the problems.

Friends has reviewed the 29 strategies proposed in the Comprehensive Strategies Report prepared by Dixon Resources Unlimited. Friends' primary concern is to maintain good public access to the park while protecting the sensitive habitat of the urban wilderness park.

Public Access to Public Parks:

One of the most important ideas proposed is a small electric shuttle to take visitors from the Metro stations in Hollywood up Beachwood Canyon through the gate to the Hollyridge Trail (p.13). This proposal could be implemented relatively quickly and would reduce the number of vehicles significantly by providing easy public transit. From the trailhead, visitors would have a very short, safe hike on a wide trail to the park's premier vista for Hollywood Sign viewing. They would also have the opportunity to hike further, if they wish, knowing that public transportation will be available upon their return.

However, the proposal does not recognize the importance of providing access to the park for hikers and local residents, many of whom were drawn to Beachwood Canyon so they could walk out their front doors and into Griffith Park for a nice hike. The Alternate Access Trail Plan (p.16) would solve that issue by supplementing the electric shuttle with a pedestrian gate to the right of the vehicular gate. A similar plan, the Alternative Access Plan, includes modular steps which would take hikers up a 50-foot vertical rise to the old Hollyridge Trail. This plan is even simpler, would shield habitat from impacts, and enjoys strong community support.

Constructing a new trail in order to by-pass the short walk on the street to the end of Wonder View Drive (p.18) has been put before the public's scrutiny previously and did not receive traction of any kind. Since the Sign is not at all visible from this trail, it has little to do with the tourist problem and visitors' attempts to see the Hollywood Sign. It is a treacherous ascent, and then decent, to get to Mt. Lee from the Cahuenga Peak trail. Griffith Park already has 53 miles of good trails so there is no compelling reason to impose further impacts on the wilderness area of the park by adding more.

Optimize Visitor Opportunities:

We recognize that many tourists merely want to get a good photo of the Hollywood Sign, so providing a close-up, low-impact vista reduces adverse environmental impacts to the park, and at the same time minimizes impacts to the surrounding residential zones.

Friends has long encouraged the creation of a Hollywood Sign Visitor Center on Hollywood Boulevard because the tourists are already there (p.54). Instead of charging a small admission fee, which discourages visitors, the center could sell drinks, snacks, and souvenirs to generate revenue. The visitor center must be located *outside* of the park and not near residential areas.

Developing other sign viewing sites *outside* the park should be considered a priority and would give visitors alternative areas for getting that perfect photo. Placing mini Hollywood Signs or replica letters in various parts of the city like the airport might also help mitigate congestion.

In considering a district-wide wayfinding plan, social media, and a dedicated website (p. 59), the question should be seriously posed whether the measure enhances the experience for those who would come to see the Hollywood Sign anyway or in reality just increases the volume of tourists that come. The implementation of mitigating measures should not be conflated with tourism marketing, especially as the 2028 Summer Olympics approaches.

Expand Transit Opportunities:

The use of public transit such as shuttles should be expanded.

We urge caution in accommodating ride-sharing, since the goal is to reduce vehicles, not encourage more. Strategies to drop off passengers at locations where shuttles are available should be explored, perhaps through geo-fencing. The growth of ride-sharing into the future is well studied and could be huge, particularly when driverless ride-sharing becomes the reality. We currently see ride-sharing at the Observatory and the Greek Theatre which doubles the number of vehicle trips. Recent studies have shown that ride-sharing programs are actually drawing patrons away from public transportation and increasing traffic congestion in cities.

The idea of an aerial tram pops to the surface about once a decade. Big ideas such as a tram are complex, expensive and required much analysis. The three locations floated for the base of the tram and a Griffith Park Transit Hub are Martinez Arena, LA Zoo, and Wilson/Harding Golf Courses. Those areas are already heavily used by equestrians, zoo guests, and golfers. One of the major goals of the Griffith Park Vision was that new development should not displace current park users. The Department of Recreation and Parks' stated goal is to encourage visitors to park *outside* the park and take public transportation to and around the park. This plan does not meet that goal.

Another disturbing aspect of the tram proposal is to make it a part of the "broader circulation system of Griffith Park." A ride of this type to an interior-park viewing area would need to strictly contain its riders in order to prevent damage to the wilderness zone. With Griffith Park's current popularity, creating a better visitor experience is the goal, not attracting more visitors.

The aerial tram proposal requires very careful evaluation and would take a long time to implement. The community deserves relief now with ideas that can be implemented now.

Parking Efficiency and Compliance Rates:

Increasing enforcement of existing laws would go a long way toward improving the situation. Small tweaks to the existing Preferential Parking Districts could make them more effective. as well.

One of the proposals is to implement paid parking in popular parking areas such as in the dirt lot and street at the top of Canyon Drive, along Lake Hollywood Drive, and Beachwood Drive. Paid parking always causes people to seek free parking in the adjacent residential areas which means Preferential Parking Districts then become necessary. Having to pay for parking in Griffith Park is contrary to Griffith's wish that the park be free and accessible to all. Paid parking at the Griffith Observatory lot was reluctantly accepted by the public because the revenue generated was promised to go towards supplying more shuttles to provide public transit into the park so that even those who do not own a car could enjoy the park and to reduce vehicular traffic. Furthermore the paid parking at the Observatory is not adjacent to a residential zone.

Friends of Griffith Park will continue to work with CD 4 and community groups in the Access and Mobility Committee to find ways to enhance the visitor experience for the Hollywood Sign and to protect the urban wilderness experience of Griffith Park which is its greatest asset.