

# The Desert Sun

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2011

WWW.MYDESERT.COM

A GANNETT COMPANY

SERVING THE COACHELLA VALLEY SINCE 1927

## Trail for golf carts and cyclists a visionary idea

Wouldn't it be great if the Coachella Valley were known not only for golf courses and world-class resorts, but also as a place where people can get around without fighting traffic and fouling the atmosphere?

Thanks to the leadership of the Coachella Valley Association of Governments Executive Director Tom Kirk and Riverside County Supervisor John Benoit, we're one step closer to that possibility.

The two presented a plan on Monday to the valley's mayors and city managers to create a 50-mile, 14-foot-wide trail roughly along the Whitewater River for electric vehicles, golf carts, bikers, horseback riders, joggers and hikers.

The concept has been debated for years, but always hit the dead end of a price tag, estimated at \$1 million a mile. However, the developers of the Sentinel Power Plant near Desert Hot Springs were required to set aside \$53 million to offset environment impacts. The trail project could go a long way toward reaching that goal.

Because of the emphasis on electric vehicles — including charging stations along the way — the trail could qualify for the funding, which will be in the hands of the South Air Quality Management District. Benoit sits on the board.

The Desert Sun has long advocated for Class 1 bike lanes, dedicated for cyclists, and the use of golf carts for short trips. We've supported Palm Desert's push to allow golf carts on city streets. Launched by Assembly Bill 1229 in 1993, it is estimated that the Palm Desert golf cart program saves 16 tons of carbon monoxide a year. Rancho

### ELECTRIC CAR SHOWCASE

**What:** Electric vehicles, including a Tesla Roadster, Leaf, Volt, a converted PT Cruiser and solar conversion cars, will be on display.

**When:** 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday

**Where:** Camelot Theatres, 2300 E. Baristo Road, Palm Springs.

**Film:** "Revenge of the Electric Car" will be shown starting at 12:15 p.m.

**More information:** Call (760) 325-6565 or visit [www.camelottheatres.com](http://www.camelottheatres.com)

Mirage, La Quinta and Indio also have golf cart programs.

But a path just for golf carts and other pollution-free modes of transportation is safer and should be more attractive to residents and tourists. The trail is intended for vehicles that usually top out at 20-25 mph.

There is growing interest in electric vehicles in the valley. Last week, Assemblyman V. Manuel Pérez test drove a plug-in Toyota Prius at Potere Solar in Rancho Mirage. Pérez chairs the California Select Committee on Renewable Electric Energy Economy in Rural California. His legislation created the power plant's environmental fund.

On Saturday, electric cars will be on display at Camelot Theatres in Palm Springs, which will show "Revenge of the Electric Car." The newly formed Greater Palm Springs Area Electric Auto Association will be there, too.

The Neighborhood Electric Vehicle/Bicycle Parkway project could take a decade to complete. Benoit called it "something dramatic, something iconic." His colleague, Supervisor Marion Ashley, called it a "lasting legacy."

The Desert Sun agrees and encourages the Air Quality Management District to approve the funding.