

# a Parkway 1e1 1



CVAG is evaluating a project that would connect all nine Coachella Valley cities with a neighborhood electric vehicle/bicycle/walking path. The parkway would extend along the Whitewater River from Palm Springs to Coachella with a connection to Desert Hot Springs.



The concept builds upon a decade's old plan to build bike and hiking paths along the Whitewater River. In 2009, the Desert Recreation District and Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District commissioned a study that estimated the 45 mile path (all the way to the Salton Sea) would cost millions of dollars and was projected to take decades to assemble the funding, local agency commitments and construct the project.

CVAG's chairman, Supervisor John Benoit, is leading efforts to "kick-start" this long time dream with an infusion of funding. The funding could come from environmental mitigation payments made by Sentinel Power Plant, a natural gas fired power plant located between Palm Springs and Desert Hot Springs. While the plant includes



some of the best and cleanest emission control technologies, the plant's emissions were subject to regulation by the South Coast Air Quality Management District and mitigation payments authorized by legislation authored by Assemblyman Manuel Perez and co-authored by then State Senator John Benoit and Assemblyman Brian Nestande.

Taking advantage of our wonderful climate (most of the year) and encouraging biking, hiking, and golf cart use is not a new concept in the Coachella Valley. What would be new is a dedicated path that was safe from conflicts with faster moving automobiles.



Undoubtedly, the concept of a Parkway 111, largely parallel to the existing Highway 111 could be even more expensive than the original bike trail plan. However, if the project is designed correctly, a mix of environmental mitigation funds, conventional transportation dollars and perhaps less conventional funding could be used to build and maintain such a system. Perhaps this infrastructure could stimulate the use of new technologies in the Coachella Valley and be the first of its kind in the State and Nation.



While the project is still being conceptualized and studied, we know the project could benefit the Valley by relieving some congestion on Highway 111, provide air quality benefits, offer another amenity for our tourist industry, provide an avenue for people to get off their sofas and get exercise, and, last but not least, stimulate the economy with the need for engineers, surveyors, and many construction related jobs.



CVAG looks forward to working with the public, our partnering agencies and many others to determine if such a Parkway is feasible. Some of the challenges that must be addressed is how best to work around, under, over or through golf courses, bridges or other constraints built over time in and around the channel.

By the way, next time you travel down and around the Whitewater channel, notice for yourself how much of the route is already in place, or as is the case with bridges under construction now, how elements of the project are currently under construction, like the undercrossing at Adams Street in La Quinta.

For more information, please contact [cvag@cvag.org](mailto:cvag@cvag.org) or 760-346-1127.

# a Parkway 1e1 1

