



January 13, 2023

VIA EMAIL

City of Elk Grove
Office of Strategic Planning and Innovation
c/o Christopher Jordan
8401 Laguna Palms Way
Elk Grove, CA 95758

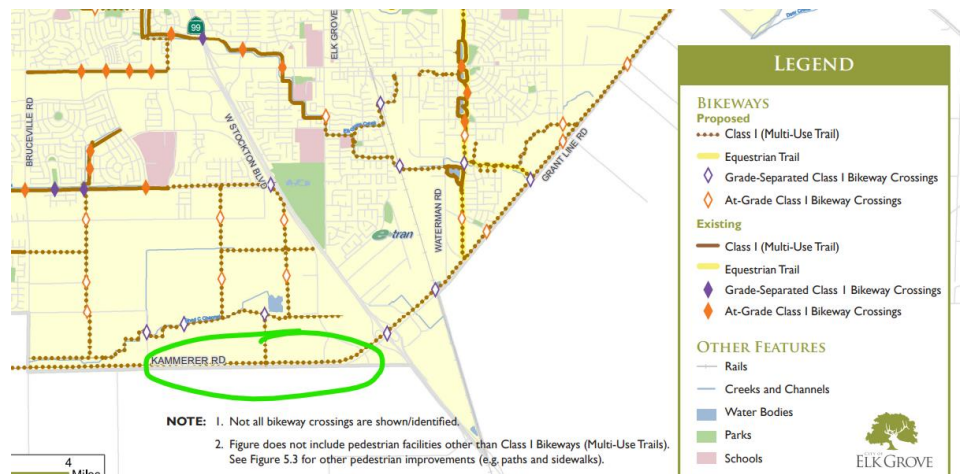
RE: New Elk Grove Zoo - Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report

Dear Christopher Jordan:

Thank you for providing Civic Thread the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Preparation for the Elk Grove Zoo. This is an exciting project that will bring an important recreational opportunity to Elk Grove and provide more space for the animals at the Sacramento Zoo.

As a nonprofit that advocates for mobility access and active transportation, we see several opportunities in the early stages of this project to set it up for success from a transportation access standpoint. While the new zoo will be located on an as-yet undeveloped parcel in the Kammerer Urban Design Study Area, several future trail connections are planned as noted in the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Master Plan¹. A Class I multi-use trail is proposed on Kammerer Road which could in the future connect the Elk Grove Zoo with the Elk Grove Regional Park, as well as to an existing Class I trail along Whitelock Parkway, offering greater regional connectivity and options to get to the Zoo via active transportation. See Figure below.

¹ <https://www.elkgrovecity.org/sites/default/files/city-files/Departments/GIS%20Department/Download%20PDF%20Maps/trails-master-plan-map.pdf>



Civic Thread encourages the project team to conduct a transportation analysis that considers options to minimize new vehicle trips induced by this project or mitigate impacts from vehicle trips by improving active transportation and/or transit infrastructure elsewhere. Due to the rural nature of the proposed location, we anticipate that the majority of visitors will choose to take a personal vehicle to the Zoo due to a lack of other options. However, there is an opportunity for innovative design that could redirect a portion of trips to active transportation, particularly for people who already are inclined to bike long distances for recreation or those who use public transit. To that end, we offer the following suggestions for potential design elements to evaluate in the environmental review:

Class I Bike Trails:

- The NOP states that Lotz Parkway on the eastern boundary of the site will receive a Class I shared-use path, and that Road B on the western boundary will receive a Class IV separated bikeway. We recommend studying the impact of constructing a Class I path on Road B as well as Lotz Parkway. Class I trails can provide a safer and more pleasant biking experience, particularly for inexperienced bicyclists. Though Class IV trails provide a buffer from vehicle traffic, the buffer may not be as wide (or solid, in the case of some barriers such as bollards) as the space buffer inherent in a Class I trail.
- We suggest looking into the feasibility of beginning construction of the planned Class I trail along Kammerer Road as part of this project's scope, due to the high value a connecting trail would bring. Kammerer Road currently connects to East Stockton Blvd via a Class II bike lane on a busy arterial road, which will not

incentivize bicycle travel due to the lack of comfort and safety. Connecting the Zoo to East Stockton Blvd via a Class I trail would offer a feasible connection to more developed residential areas of Elk Grove and encourage bicycle travel to the Zoo for bikers of varying skill and comfort levels.

- We note that in the Laguna Creek Inter-Regional Trail Master Plan, future ACE and Amtrak services were identified to be expanded south of Franklin Boulevard, which would coincide with the proposed Class I trail on the west side of the zoo site. This is supportive of improving connectivity for the regional audience the zoo site will attract.

Street Design

- We hope to see roadway designs that prioritize bicycle and pedestrian movement equal to autos. Where Lotz Parkway is set to be widened, we hope to see traffic calming and complete street strategies employed, such as buffers between the sidewalk and the vehicle lanes, sidewalks of at least 6-8 feet depending on expected pedestrian traffic, bulb-outs at pedestrian crossings, and shade provided via tree planting to reduce urban heat island effects and offer a pleasant walking experience. Pedestrian-friendly street design is an important VMT mitigation strategy that should be considered under the scope of this environmental review.

Active Transportation Amenities

- We understand that the Zoo design is not final, but we note that for the proposed bicycle parking on site, it is critical to locate it strategically to maximize convenience for bicyclists, offer lines of sight to visitors to increase security, and for optics – seeing well-utilized bicycle parking may encourage others to bike.

Transit

- Currently, the closest bus line to the Zoo site stops off Promenade Parkway, which is within 2.0 miles of the proposed Zoo site. We encourage the project team to work with Sacramento Regional Transit to consider the option for and impact of expanding the reach of existing lines or adding a line that stops in close proximity to the Zoo's entrance.

- Noting that rail service will be extended to the future Elk Grove Station north of Laguna Blvd, there is opportunity for bus lines to connect this station to the zoo in the future.
- We recommend analyzing the impact of providing a bus drop off loop directly in front of the Zoo, which could offer access to touring, charter, and/or school buses.

Sustainability

- Since a restaurant will be located on site, we hope that the environmental review will include consideration of the benefits of procuring healthy food locally to reduce VMT and cost for visitors, as well as using sustainable packaging.

Development projects that lead to more walking and active travel are critical to our community's future. Civic Thread is working to support increased physical activity such as walking, rolling, and bicycling in local neighborhoods as well as helping to create community environments that support active modes. The benefits include improved public health and physical fitness, better air quality, a stronger sense of cohesion and safety in neighborhoods, and more sustainable communities and local economies.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at kcanepa@civicthread.org.

Please notify Civic Thread of future routings or notices for this project.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Canepa
Project Manager, Civic Thread