



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: July 26, 2017

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XIV: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for Proposition 12 and 50 funds for a survey of physical and structural barriers and development of an accessibility improvement plan.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for Proposition 12 and 50 funds for a survey of physical and structural barriers and development of an accessibility improvement plan in the amount of \$100,000.

Background: As a Title II entity under the American with Disabilities Act, MRCA is required to provide accessibility to all offered programs, services, and activities. With a variety of park locations, MRCA is already able to achieve compliance by relocating activities as needed. The vast majority of MRCA's buildings and parking facilities were constructed by other entities, prior to enactment of the ADA in 1990. Specific facilities are only required to be upgraded to current standards if major renovations are undertaken. With limited maintenance funds and such outdated facilities, major renovations are uncommon, and therefore there have been few opportunities to upgrade facilities to accessible standards. A standalone plan for accessibility improvements will be more effective in the long term.

The first step in the accessibility improvement plan is to survey physical and structural barriers to park facilities, including parking, restrooms, public meeting areas, and the paths of travel between these areas. MRCA staff recently completed such a survey for the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens. The final report (which also included restrooms that are not open to the public) identified over 300 noncompliant ADA findings. It is expected that similar results will be found at other park locations where buildings are of the same age--or older.

Although some of the noncompliant conditions, such as signs, can be easily corrected, it is clear that an agency-wide prioritization will be necessary to ensure that the funding reaps the most public benefit. The overall general strategy will be

an incremental, but consistent, move toward greater accessibility. The subject grant funding will be used to survey physical and structural barriers at other MRCA owned or operated sites. The reports will identify various architectural barriers that may need modification or complete reconstruction, such as sidewalks, parking, curb ramps, handrails, ramps, stairs, accessible entrances, door hardware and widths, drinking fountains, signage, lifts, and seating.

The initial focus will be those sites that frequently host public meetings or events, and parks that accommodate a variety of experiences. Prioritization will include a cost/benefit analysis so that low-cost projects that create new access to programs, services, and activities for a large number of users can be highlighted. Park sites with less intense uses, such as trailheads, may be surveyed but those improvements are likely to be a low priority.

Consideration: The grant application is for \$100,000, which will cover both the staff time required to produce the report and prioritization and some initial improvements. Exact park locations and the specific improvements that can be completed will be identified after the report is complete.

Fiscal Impact: The subject grant is included in the fiscal year 2017-18 budget. Without the subject grant, work on the accessibility improvement plan would be funded by the general fund. Once the necessary improvements are prioritized, staff can seek a variety of capital funding sources to complete the work. Completion of the improvements could avoid potentially costly litigation in the future, and will make the MRCA's facilities more attractive for public meetings and special events.