

GRIFFITH PARK ADVISORY BOARD  
MINUTES, MEETING THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2018

1. Roll Call 6:35pm, Chip Clements, Laura Howe ,Ron Deutsch , Sheila Irani
2. Minutes June 2018 reviewed and approved.
3. Comments from City: No representatives in attendance.
4. Public Comments items not on the agenda:
  - Marian, P22 Day is October 27 at Park Center
  - Emmy, opposing gondola along with other chapters of the Sierra Club, letter attached.
  - Merry go Round Lot 3, lights out
  - JOE REQUESTS items 5.6 MOVE. Laura moves, Chip 2nds
6. Discussion with City Wide Film Office on policies and procedures for filming on Park Property. Park Film Office, Mayors Film Task Force, VP of Teamsters for Location, Film LA, LAPD. Discussion centers around procedures and protocols for filming in Griffith concerning wildlife and habitat. It is not a requirement to have a biologist and there is no codified law to prohibit filming near nests. There are 'sensitive areas' that PFO does not allow film shots. Filming never permitted off-trail. Locations for shoots are approved on a case by case basis. Outcome of discussion is that GPAB would like a biologist to identify ecologically sensitive areas and will be preparing ideas for review at next month's meeting that may include suggestion of a fee increase for permits to cover biologist salary.
5. Updates from the Superintendent: Haunted Hayride is Sept. 29-Oct.31 w/ total of 17 show nights. Way finding signs installed around Greek Theatre and Observatory areas. Playground projects include Greek Theatre Playground ,Fern Dell Playground and upgrade to Shane's Inspiration.
  - OBS sidewalk/lighting Project pushes back to March 2019, new Smokey Bear signs, removal of sign blight in Griffith.
7. Rodenticide policy: Letter from RAP to Park Concessioners read. Laura recommends approval, Sheila seconds.

8. Discussion and possible action on drafting a letter to LA Tourism requesting funding to offset the cost associated with high volumes of tourist related impact to the park. Ron will draft letter ,PAB members will send in suggestions.

Brief update on recycling, waiting to see if we are awarded the grant in 2019, in the meantime Concessions will purchase and place several bins in Griffith. Update on Trails Café #2, moving forward.

9. Adjournment Chip moves, Laura seconds 8:23pm

Next mtg: 10/25/18

## Resolution On Proposed Griffith Park Aerial Tram/Skyway

The Angeles Chapter Conservation Committee recommends that the Angeles Chapter Executive Committee adopt a resolution to oppose the recent proposal by Warner Bros. Studio to build an aerial “skyway” to take riders from its property in Burbank to the top of Mt. Lee in Griffith Park, behind the Hollywood Sign, and to also oppose other proposed aerial trams into or within the Park.

### Background:

In 1896, Colonel Griffith donated the Park to the citizens of Los Angeles as “a place of recreation and rest for the masses.” He envisioned the Park as an oasis for residents and visitors to reconnect with nature. Today the Park is used by a diverse set of Angelenos for hiking, bicycling, picnicking, and more. The Park is also the largest natural wilderness within the City of Los Angeles parks department, containing a diverse ecosystem that houses a substantial number of native plant and animal species who rely on it to survive, including the world famous urban mountain lion, “P-22”. The Park is designated a Significant Ecological Area by the County of Los Angeles General Plan and a wildlife corridor linking the Santa Monica Mountains to the Verdugo Mountain range. It is considered one of 34 biodiversity hotspots for conservation worldwide by Conservation International. As such, the Park requires special consideration whenever its flora and fauna are threatened.

Previous proposals for aerial trams in the Park have been criticized by environmentalists and others. In 2005, a draft of a Griffith Park Master Plan including two proposed aerial trams was widely criticized for how it would despoil and commercialize the Park. The Griffith Park Working Group, created in response to that plan, ultimately asserted that the Park should maintain its Urban Wilderness Identity. However, the 2018 Dixon Report (“Comprehensive Strategies Report: Improving Access, Safety, and Mobility Around Griffith Park & the Hollywood Sign”), commissioned by Councilmember Ryu’s office and focusing on ways to alleviate problems associated with people trying to visit or view the Hollywood Sign, mentions the possibility of an aerial tram from one of several locations in the north or northeast parts of the Park (the Headworks Reservoir, the LA Zoo, and the Wilson and Harding Golf Course) to a Hollywood Sign viewing platform somewhere in the park. In a June 2018 written evaluation of the Dixon Report strategies, Recreation and Parks General Manager Mike Shull and City Council Legislative Analyst Sharon Tso rated the aerial tram strategy as feasible, seemed to think it would help alleviate traffic in neighborhoods south of the park, and even appear to propose building an aerial tram in a location not mentioned in the Dixon Report.

In early July 2018, Warner Bros. Studio proposed spending \$100 million to build an aerial “skyway” to take ticket holders from its studio property in Burbank to Mt. Lee, in Griffith Park, upon which rests the world famous Hollywood sign. This aerial tram would be built through Griffith Park and require a visitors center to be built atop Mt. Lee, where currently hikers, cyclists, and horseback riders can sit, rest, and contemplate the view of Los Angeles below. Warner Bros. proposes splitting the ticket fees with the City of Los Angeles. One of the arguments made by Warner Bros. in favor of the tram is that it would reduce congestion in the Hollywood caused by tourists attempting to see and photograph the Hollywood Sign. Warner Bros. Studio cites the Dixon Report as support for its proposal.

The Central Group of the Chapter voted unanimously in favor of a very similar resolution (5/0). The Verdugo Hills Group voted 8/0 to support a very similar resolution with one member absent. The Griffith Park Section voted unanimously in favor of the resolution (6/0).

### **Arguments For:**

Surrounded by a bustling urban area, Griffith Park provides an oasis for an increasingly stressed ecosystem. An aerial tramway would carry an increased number of visitors into the Park, requiring a large amount of new infrastructure to support them and the tram itself, all dramatically increasing pressure on this critical wildlife habitat. This influx of visitors—including ones with little experience in a wilderness area—would likely result in litter, accidents, and increased fire risk in the Park. If the goal is to alleviate the burden of traffic on area neighborhoods, that burden shouldn't be shifted into the Park and onto the wildlife that depend on it.

With regard to the Warner Bros.' proposed skyway specifically, there is little proof that it would alleviate traffic congestion in Hollywood or the damage that visitors inflict on residential neighborhoods south of Griffith Park. Warner Bros. proposes an approach to the Hollywood Sign from the Burbank (north) side of the Park to Mt. Lee that would deliver park guests to an area just above the back of the Sign. This would not offer the many visitors the frontal view of the Sign they want for their photos. As such, visitors would still clog up the residential areas to the south of Griffith Park in order to get a shot of the famous sign.

There are, in fact, a number of options that would actually address the congestion in the neighborhoods south of the park, while giving visitors the photo shot they want. Some are mentioned in the Dixon Report. One promising strategy mentioned is having electric shuttles take visitors from a Metro station through the currently shuttered Beachwood Gate, giving visitors access to the shortest hiking route to the Sign. Other simple strategies in the Report include extending DASH shuttle service to Sign-related trailheads, increasing traffic and parking efficiency, and collaborating with Google and Waze to communicate more accurate information. In addition, a Hollywood Sign Visitors' Center and viewing platform could be created in Hollywood, perhaps atop a commercial building. All of these alternatives would clearly help meet neighborhood concerns while preserving the natural environment of the park.

Finally, there is an intrinsic environmental justice element associated with the monetization of the public Griffith Park by a private entity. Currently, the Park is free and accessible to all Angelenos. Converting a free, open, and wild section of the Park into an attraction only available to those with the means to purchase tickets, chips away at the communal abundance of the Park, intended for all of us to enjoy, at no charge.

**Arguments Against:** Griffith Park is already commercialized with a zoo, museum, and golf course. P-22 is an aberration, and is not in need of protection. Since a portion of the ticket price will go to the City, the tram will add to city coffers. Conceivably, a tram might alleviate some of the tourist traffic on the south side of Mt. Lee.