



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Jon Cicirelli

**SUBJECT: PARKS AND TRAILS VEHICLE
ENFORCEMENT**

DATE: May 30, 2023

Approved

Date: 5/30/2023

BACKGROUND

This Manager's Budget Addendum responds to the direction given as part of the City Council-approved Mayor's March Budget Message for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 to analyze and bring back cost estimates for enforcing the prohibition of private vehicles on city trails and in parks.

ANALYSIS

Vehicles driving along trails and in parks increased during the pandemic as staff was limited to health and safety activities and had less of a presence in parks and trail systems for several months. This was coupled with the suspension of encampment abatement for many months due to public health precautions. The Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS), in coordination with the other City departments, is implementing several measures to address this issue, such as installing physical deterrents at trailheads, partnering with the San Jose Conservation Corps for a Trail Safety Pilot, and coordinating with the San José Police Department (SJPD) on its Trail Patrol Program that is funded jointly by the City and Valley Water.

One key aspect that PRNS and SJPD partner on when evaluating safety along trails and in parks is the utilization of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)¹. Principles include:

1. Natural Surveillance: "See and be seen" is the overall goal. A person is less likely to commit a crime if they think someone will see them do it. Lighting, landscape, and other tools that increase the visibility of the trail play an important role.
2. Natural Access Control: Walkways, fences, lighting, signage, and landscape can clearly guide people to and from the proper entrances. The goal is not necessarily to keep intruders out but to direct the flow of people while decreasing the opportunity for crime to occur.

¹ Trail Planning & Design Toolkit:

<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/9705/636656969262970000>

3. Territorial Reinforcement: Creating or extending a "sphere of influence" by utilizing physical designs such as pavement treatments, landscaping, and signage that enable users of an area to develop a sense of proprietorship. Potential trespassers perceive this control and are thereby discouraged.
4. Maintenance & Management: "Broken Window Theory" suggests that one nuisance, if allowed to exist, will lead to others and ultimately to the decline of an entire neighborhood. A maintenance plan can preserve and make space safer. The 2 foot/6 foot rule enforces this idea and states that no plants on the ground should be above 2 feet and no tree canopy below 6 feet.

The following work efforts, not all of which are fully funded, will help meet the CPTED Principles.

1. Physical Deterrents / Vehicle Prevention Program (Funded)

The 2022-2023 budget includes funding in the amount of \$900,000 for vehicle prevention along trails. This funding is to install bollards, fencing and other deterrents at strategic locations along the Guadalupe River Trail between Hedding and Coleman, as well as Coyote Creek Trail and Los Gatos Creek Trail. The installation of 2,300 feet of fencing, 17 removable bollards, and three landscape bollards is planned for the Guadalupe River Trail, with construction expected to begin in mid-June. Additionally, installations have begun and are scheduled for the rest of 2023 for Coyote Creek Trail and Los Gatos Creek Trail. PRNS will evaluate the effectiveness of these deterrents and consider additional deterrent funding needs as part of the 2024-2025 budget process.

High-event parks, including unpermitted events, tend to have the most instances of vehicles driving into the park to unload and load their supplies. To discourage vehicles in parks, planting trees along the outer perimeter, and on the sides of pathways of the park can enhance safety, increase tree canopy, and assist in reducing the urban heat island effect. Planting and caring for trees can have large start-up costs as they can take three or more years to establish, but the benefits are long-lasting. With funding allocated to PRNS tree services in the 2022-2023 budget², PRNS can utilize these funds to conduct a pilot at high event parks to determine the effectiveness of the project.

2. San Jose Police Department and Park Ranger Support (Partially Funded)

Park Rangers - In the past, a Park Ranger presence at high-event parks and along trails has helped deter unauthorized vehicle use. PRNS continues to experience a high vacancy rate³ in the Park Ranger classification and has focused the program's services on Kelley Park and Alum Rock Park due to frequent fire and medical events in those parks. Once staffing allows, Park Rangers will be assigned again to other regional parks and trails. In light of current vacancies

² See page 708 of the 2022-2023 Adopted Operating Budget:
<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/91585/638029941482130000>

³ Six of the eleven Park Ranger positions are vacant as of May 24, 2023.

and priorities for existing staff, PRNS does not recommend adding Park Rangers for the purpose of trail patrol.

SJPD Trail Patrol Program - PRNS and SJPD have seen great progress and results from the SJPD Trail Patrol Pilot along Coyote Creek Trail started in late 2021. This program has one Sergeant and one Officer per shift conduct daily patrols on bicycles at Coyote Creek Trail and Guadalupe River Trail from 10:00 am – 8:00 pm (two shifts, one on each trail). The City’s portion of the funding for this jointly supported program is \$800,000 and has again been included on a one-time basis in the 2023-2024 Proposed Operating Budget to continue the program with the hope that Valley Water continues to provide matching funds. These teams enforce vehicle prohibitions on the patrolled trails. It is recommended that this program be funded, as proposed, to continue its efforts at fostering safer trails including prohibiting vehicles on them.

Removing Lived-in Vehicles from Parks, Trails and City Streets - When addressing abandoned vehicles, the City has two options: using a contractor to tow a vehicle to a tow yard, or using a contractor to direct junk and crush on site. Currently, PRNS uses the ongoing towing budget of \$150,000 to address towing and junking of lived-in vehicles as part of BeautifySJ cleanup/abatement efforts. There is currently no BeautifySJ positions in the 2023-2024 to specifically address towing and junking of vehicles. Current BeautifySJ encampment trash program staff resources are redirected to address towing/junking of lived-in vehicles when this service is needed, which impacts other services. The cost to remove a vehicle from a trail or park is significantly higher than a vehicle along a city street due to the complexity of getting to the vehicle. If the vehicle is along a waterway, there is an additional charge to address the environmental protection needed to remove it. Typically, teams are able to tow 4-6 vehicles per day to a yard or can direct junk and crush approximately 7-8 vehicles per day. Direct junk and crush efforts need to be permitted and planned in advance. To adequately address vehicles located in parks or on trails, the BeautifySJ Team would need dedicated staff at the levels listed below to complete this work.

City Staff to Address Towing and Junking of Vehicles located on Parks/Trails/City Streets	Cost	Notes
Two Secondary Employment Officers (per Officer, 2 full days or \$1,700 per week)	\$176,800	SJPD Officers are needed to assess vehicles for towing/junking and to issue junk slips as needed.
Community Coordinator (1.0FTE)	\$143,000	Staff to coordinate the towing process, post vehicles, coordinate storage of personal property.
Encampment Management Vendor	\$75,000	Funds to process personal property for towed/junked vehicles for storage
Vehicle	\$65,000	Purchase of pickup truck for program operations

Vehicle Maintenance	\$5,000	Fuel and routine maintenance
Materials and supplies	\$15,000	Office supplies, computer, iPad, cell phone, PPE, safety gear, education and outreach materials and supplies
TOTAL	\$480,000*	

* This amount is in addition to the \$150,000 that is currently budgeted for towing and junking of vehicles.

3. Enhanced Trail Maintenance (Partially Funded)

The Trail Safety Pilot with the San Jose Conservation Corps (SJCC), launched in late 2021, was focused on the Coyote Creek Trail, between William Street and Tully Road, where SJCC members assisted with customer service along trails, light trail vegetation management, debris clean-up, and detection of issues that required further support from SJPd, Park Rangers, BeautifySJ, homeless outreach, or park maintenance teams. The City extended the contract for the Trail Safety Pilot in April 2023, and it will expire in December 2024 when the funding ends. Though the continuation of this funding will be evaluated as part of the 2024-2025 budget development process, there is currently no secured funding stream established to continue the program beyond the term of this contract. The annual cost to continue the same program model beyond 2024 is estimated below.

Trail Safety Cost	Number of Contracted Hours	Estimated Billing Rate	Total
SJCC Members	3,100	\$49.84	\$154,504
Supervisor	600	\$59.80	\$35,880
TOTAL			\$190,384

A well-maintained trail is more inviting and feels safer for users. Currently, PRNS Park Districts are responsible for landscape maintenance along trails and on average can dedicate approximately 2 hours per week to address health and safety checks, litter pick up and small repairs. PRNS has created a model for a future dedicated citywide trail maintenance team consisting of 1.0 Parks, Recreation and Facilities Supervisor to oversee staff, projects and contracts and have 3 teams of 1.0 Groundworker and 1.0 Maintenance Assistant. This dedicated team would assist in clearing lines of sight through weed abatement and tree pruning, address any safety issues along the trails system, and act as a physical presence and report issues. The cost for this team is estimated in the table below.

Trail Maintenance Team	Cost
1.0 Parks, Recreation and Facilities Supervisor	\$173,000
3.0 Groundworkers	\$329,000
3.0 Maintenance Assistants	\$308,000
4 Vehicles	\$400,000
Supplies and materials	\$150,000
TOTAL	\$1,360,000

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COORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with SJPD and the City Manager's Budget Office.

/s/
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Director of Parks, Recreation, and
Neighborhood Services