



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**15-2608

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**Agenda Item Number:** 9.

**Agenda Date:** 4/15/2015

**In Control:** Governance Committee

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**DEPARTMENT:** Police

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Anthony L. Treviño, Jr.

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** Citywide

### **SUBJECT:**

Linear Creekway Safety

### **SUMMARY:**

On February 18, 2015, Councilman Ron Nirenberg issued a Council Consideration Request (CCR) to direct City staff to develop a strategy for bolstering safety and security throughout the Howard W. Peak Greenway Trails System (Trails System) with input and guidance from the Parks and Recreation Department and Linear Creekway Advisory Board. The request includes consideration of a security camera system, additional staff and/or Trail Watch Program resources, emergency blue light devices, and an intensive public education campaign.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The Trail System is a growing network of multi-use hike and bike trails that wind through natural landscapes along San Antonio creeks. There are currently 46 miles of developed greenway trails open to the public, and an additional 40 miles of paved, multi-use trails are planned on Salado, Leon, and Medina River Creeks and other San Antonio waterways through various sales tax propositions. The CCR authored by Councilmember Nirenberg and signed by Councilmembers Treviño, Saldaña, Krier, and Lopez cited the Trails System as a quality-of-life issue and requests a proactive strategy for safety as a way to protect and sustain the investment in the linear creekway parkland.

Uniform Park Police patrol the Trail System (developed and undeveloped) by bike, All Terrain Vehicles and vehicle patrol at the trailheads, seven days a week, from 6:00A.M. to sunset. Occasionally, covert officers

patrol the trailhead parking lots to deter and provide surveillance in an effort to build cases against suspects in vehicle burglaries. Park Police have mounted game cameras at Valero, Fox, Bamberger, Buddy Caulk, Lady Bird Johnson, and W.W. McAllister Park trailheads. Cameras are reviewed periodically based on criminal activity. Surveillance is reviewed for possible suspects and Park Police Officers work with SAPD Property Crime Detectives to build cases for arrest warrants.

The Parks Department implemented a Trail Steward Program in spring 2013 and launched a Trail Watch Volunteer Program in June 2014. Collectively, these programs have been beneficial in increasing visibility on the greenway trails and promoting a safe environment throughout the Trails System. Both programs assist with identifying greenway maintenance needs while serving an overall observe and report function directly to Park Police. The programs are managed in tandem for maximum service delivery to engage and educate the public on park rules, proper trail usage and etiquette, and provide safety tips and assistance such as the distribution of trail maps and emergency water.

Trail Stewards are non-law enforcement staff who traverse the four primary creeks which comprise the Trails System seven days a week at various times with a focus during non-peak public use with the goal to include greenway tributaries as those trails are constructed. Trail Watch Volunteers occupy the Trails System at various dates and times and to date there are nearly sixty (60) participants enrolled with a goal of seventy-five (75) by the end of Fiscal Year 2015. Both Trail Stewards and Trail Watch Volunteers are easily identifiable with a standard uniform and go through an orientation provided by Park Police and volunteers must also pass a background check. Since the Trail Watch Volunteer Program launch, volunteers have dedicated over 1,300 hours of service and activity is updated on a monthly basis.

Previously both Woodlawn and Espada had call box systems within their respective parks which failed and were removed. The challenge arose in keeping the phones at the call box operational due to extensive and ongoing vandalism. On multiple occasion calls for service from these call boxes turned out to be prank phone calls as opposed to legitimate calls for service. With the advent of personal cellular phones, there are greater, more reliable avenues for contacting authorities in cases of emergency. Rather than call boxes Park Police recommend a layer of surveillance security utilizing a camera system that would record activity at the trailhead parking lots 24 hours a day. There are approximately twenty-four trailhead parking lots on the Trail System and this infrastructure improvement is a viable measure for consideration. A camera system on the Linear Creekway's trails would need to be evaluated on a case by case basis and may not be feasible since the majority of it is not only within the flood plain, but in areas of full immersion.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

SAPD and the Parks Department are in support of exploring additional measures and resources to bolster Linear Creekway safety and recommend bringing this item before the Public Safety Committee.