

BUSINESS NEWS

CV LINK COULD GENERATE MORE THAN \$1 BILLION IN ECONOMIC BENEFIT

CVAG staff and the design team are working hard on preparing the master plan, preliminary engineering, and environmental documents for the CV Link, a 52-mile pedestrian, bicycling and low-speed electric vehicle facility that will run along the Whitewater River and roughly parallel Highway 111. The goal is to use the top of the levee next to the river but there may be places where the Link will diverge onto local streets.



The Master Plan will assess the ultimate route from Desert Hot Springs to the Salton Sea but the segment from Palm Springs to Coachella will be looked at in-depth. The Plan will also look at keeping the Link separated from roads to the extent possible by going under or over roads, bridges and drainage ways.

Once the master plan and environmental document is complete, an "Early Action" segment or segments will be identified for construction. The number of miles that can be built will depend on available funding. The "Early Action" segments have not been identified yet. A critical element of the design of the project is the path that it will take.

The consulting team and CVAG staff are currently evaluating different alignment options that provide the best route. While the Master Planning is progressing, CVAG is actively seeking funding sources to help pay for the project. A total of \$2 million from the California Strategic Growth Council, the Riverside County Park and Open Space District, and Caltrans has been secured for the Master Planning, Environmental Documents and preliminary engineering. In addition CVAG has received \$17.4 million from the Southern California Air Quality District, \$20 million from Measure A, and \$10 million, pending a match, from the Desert Health Care District for construction.

The project has extraordinary benefits to residents and visitors of the Coachella Valley. Based on economic and air quality studies, the CV Link will generate more than \$1 billion in economic benefits over the next 20 years and create 690 permanent jobs. It will also reduce vehicle miles traveled by 12 million annual trips and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 3,700 tons per year by 2035. That is in addition to significant reductions in other air pollutants. Probably the greatest benefit will be the fitness options for the young and old alike. Because obesity and its associated disorders such as heart disease and diabetes can be reduced by regular exercise, the CV Link will play a major role in combating those health risks. The first phase (the "Early Action" segments) is planned for construction at the end of 2015 or the first of 2016.