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October 10, 2016

Pam Leopold, City Planner
City of Thousand Oaks
2100 Thousand Oaks Blvd,
Thousand Oaks, CA 91362
pleopold@toaks.org.

Re: Letter of support for the Sapwi Trails Community Park Master Plan

Dear Ms. Leopold,

My name is Steve Messer, and I currently serve as President of the Concerned Off Road Bicyclists Association (CORBA), the Los Angeles and Eastern Ventura County chapter of the International Mountain Bicycling Association. On behalf of CORBA and the Los Angeles Bike Park Collective, of which CORBA is a member, I wish to express our support for the Sapwi Trails Community Park Master Plan and associated Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration.

CORBA is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) charitable organization, advocating for trails and open spaces, and public access to them, including by Mountain Bicyclists. In operation since 1987, CORBA has been instrumental in advocating for and supporting multi-use trail networks and bicycle infrastructure with local land managers. Our volunteer programs provide trail maintenance, patrols, and educational outreach to the Santa Monica Mountains, COSCA, State Parks, National Park Service, Los Angeles County, the Forest Service and many smaller agencies and conservancies in the greater Rim of the Valley corridor.

In 2012, at the first public scoping meeting for this new master plan, about one hundred cyclists turned out, asking for a bicycle skills park and multiple use trails to be incorporated into the revised plan. Over a series of subsequent meetings, the cycling community continued to engage with the CRPD in the development of a master plan for this unique community park opportunity.

Since that time, CORBA has been actively engaged in promoting the benefits of bike parks throughout our territory in Los Angeles and Eastern Ventura Counties, These benefits include

health and well-being, youth and community engagement, volunteerism, and quality of life. Such facilities can encourage healthier lifestyle choices and alternative transport usage. We helped form the Los Angeles Bike Park Collective to actively engage youth in the planning efforts for such facilities around the greater Los Angeles area.

There are now more than twenty public bike skills parks in operation or in planning around California. New York, Chicago, Portland, Seattle, Boulder and numerous smaller cities and towns across the country are realizing the benefits associated with these facilities. In the last four years the public awareness of and demand for bike skills parks is ever-increasing. The Los Angeles Bike Park Collective has a petition with close to 4000 signatures supporting bike skills parks in Southern California.

In early 2015 the City of Fillmore opened their first Bicycle Skills Park. Next week (Oct 25) the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors will be voting on a master plan for Puente Hills Landfill Regional Park, a plan that includes two bike park facilities in phases 1 and 2 respectively of that project. We are in talks with the City of Los Angeles to provide a bike skills park in the San Fernando Valley.

Also, the Conejo Valley is home to at least three High School Mountain bike teams who will utilize and benefit from such a facility. Calabasas, Newbury Park, El Camino high schools all now have high school mountain bike teams. The SoCal High School mountain biking league now consists of over 80 teams, with over 1000 student-athlete cyclists training and competing around Southern California. High School Mountain biking is now in 19 states across the country, and continues to grow.

We are especially supportive of the Sapwi Trails Master plan's bicycle skills park, neighborhood park beginner pump track, and multi-use trails with optional bicycles skills stations along the way. These features were asked for by a large proportion of those attending the initial meetings in 2012.

We feel that the CRPD and First Carbon Solutions, the contractor charged with the development of the plan and environmental documents, have done an excellent job of reaching out to the community, listening to and actively engaging the community in the development of the plan. This is true for the cycling community, as well as other recreational interests, amenities for which are included in the plan, such as Frisbee Golf, model aircraft enthusiasts, and others. While it has taken some time, community enthusiasm and anticipation over the project has steadily increased since the process began in 2012, and after a previous plan was deemed technically infeasible. We also feel that the development of a Mitigated Negative Declaration was the appropriate environmental document for the project.

The draft Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration state that the Bike Park components of the master plan will be subject to a separate community-driven design and implementation process. CORBA and the cycling community will continue to engage in these planning and implementation processes going forward, and look forward to continuing to work with the CRPD.

Again, we wish to express our vehement support for the Sapwi Trails Community Park master plan, initial study and MND, and our commitment to continuing to work with the CRPD going forward. We respectfully urge this commission to approve and adopt the plan.

Sincerely,

Steve Messer
President, Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association