

# CV Link Golf Cart Highway: Significant Issues

## Summary.

The Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) plan to build a new CV Link vehicle road along the Whitewater River embankment faces many hurdles. Their view that speeding motorized vehicles and slower-moving bicycles can safely coexist on their proposed two-lane highway runs counter to prevailing examples and studies. And proposing to construct a trail that does not conform to existing valley cities' Non-Motorized Transportation Plans begs the question whether there are any practices and standards to which CVAG planners adhere.

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**Palm Springs, California.** The proposed CV Link Electric Vehicle Highway (EV Highway or Golf Cart Highway) will span a 52 mile series of interconnected streets and Whitewater River embankment routes from Desert Hot Springs to Coachella. The design intent is to create a specialized Multimodal route for use by motorized and non-motorized users such as electric vehicles, bicyclists and others. It won't qualify as a legal Bicycle Path and is not intended as one. There will be two lanes for vehicles along with a third one for pedestrians. The motorized lanes will include sufficient roadbed width to accommodate 4-wheel vehicles (of varying size, speed capabilities or road worthiness).

Although promoted as an Electric Vehicle (EV) route, no physical barriers are planned that will prohibit use by other vehicles. In addition to Electric Vehicles the wide two-lane roadbed could see use by non-electric vehicles, dune buggies, go-carts and other types of fast moving entertainment/transportation conveyances. Bicyclists and motorized vehicles will share the roadway in the same manner as currently exists on other city streets and highways. What is missing from the design, and it's a serious omission, are the dedicated bicycle lanes required for all new streets, bridges and highways. Since CV Link will not meet Bicycle Path standards, and it will be a public vehicle route, a revised design that includes dedicated bicycle lanes should be prepared. Separation of bicycles from speeding motorized traffic is the goal of the mandatory bicycle lane requirement and CV Link should not be exempt.

After the CV Link highway is built CVAG designers may wash their hands and walk away. They are not the ones responsible for the route following completion of construction. Each valley city will be responsible for that portion of the CV Link within their city limits. Route maintenance, usage regulation, policing and safety issues will be the responsibility of the cities. Annual costs each city must bear to support their portion of the route are unknown, as is also the case with the type and frequency of maintenance, usage regulation (speed limits, signage, etc.), police access and patrol, and general safety concerns. Before walking away CVAG should prepare a series of recommendations cities would be expected to follow with respect to their support responsibilities. Without a uniform set of support standards the quality of the route may differ, and even deteriorate, from city to city.

All valley cities currently have Non-Motorized Transportation Plans (NMTP) that classifies routes. The CV Link Multimodal Route does not qualify as an NMTP route. Existing NMTP route classifications include the following:

- Class I Bikeways
- Class II Bikeways
- Class III Bikeways
- Paved Multipurpose Paths
- Sidewalk Paths
- Hiking/Equestrian Trails
- Golf Cart Paths
- Golf Cart Lanes

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CV Link roadbed needs will require the sacrifice of a number of Class I Bikeway routes to obtain their rights-of-way. Those Bikeway paths will become part of the CV Link highway and no longer qualify as non-motorized transportation trails. Routes that may be affected include the Jenkins Trail and Tahquitz Creek route in Palm Springs, Whitewater River bicycle path in Cathedral City, and Butler-Abrams Trail in Rancho Mirage. The sacrifice of Class I Bikeways, which are shared with pedestrians, in order to serve the motorized vehicle community, will represent a backward step in the move to promote such healthful exercise activities as bicycling, walking and jogging, etc. away from motorized vehicles.

It would be unfortunate if bicycling supportive cities such as Palm Springs permitted Multimodal routes to replace any of their Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Bikeways. And, if a CV Link useable by fast moving vehicles is constructed without dedicated bicycle lanes, valley cities should consider whether that approach is one best for their community.

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