

LA PARKS ALLIANCE

Defending Public Space

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Contact: Jon Christensen, 650-759-6534

jon.a.christensen@gmail.com

John Given, 310-471-8485

john@johngivenlaw.com

LA Parks Alliance Will File Lawsuit to Invalidate the Environmental Impact Report for Frank McCourt's Gondola Project ***Public Land Preservationists Cite Fatal Flaws in Report Certified by LA METRO Board***

Los Angeles, Calif. (February 22, 2024) – Los Angeles Parks Alliance (LAPA) today announced its intention to file a lawsuit under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and ask the court to throw out Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit's (LA ART's) fatally flawed Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR). The gondola project is the brainchild of former Dodgers owner Frank McCourt and would cause irreparable harm to the communities on the proposed route between Union Station and Dodger Stadium.

The gondola would seize nearly two acres of public land, destroy more than 250 trees, displace wildlife and permanently ruin Los Angeles State Historic Park's amazing vistas. "We are extremely disappointed by LA METRO's decision to certify this deeply flawed EIR," said Jon Christensen, Adjunct Assistant Professor, UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, and founding member of LA Parks Alliance. He added, "The board's action ignores the 20 years of community advocacy that went into building a park in a neighborhood in dire need of green space and recreational opportunities and essentially gifts the public's land and air rights to a billionaire for an illegal commercial exploitation."

One focus of LAPA's lawsuit is Frank McCourt's plans for the current Dodger Stadium parking lots, which will likely include a retail and entertainment complex similar to LA Live that could house a hotel and luxury housing. The gondola would enable the developer to reduce the number of required parking spaces and build the tourist attraction. This EIR does not study the environmental impact of those obviously foreseeable plans, which greatly undercuts the primary claimed benefit of reduction in traffic and greenhouse gases. That is piecemealing and it's a clear

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violation of CEQA. The lawsuit also criticizes the EIR for failing to recognize that this use of the land and airspace of Los Angeles State Historic Park is illegal. State parks are set aside to protect their natural, historical, cultural, and recreational values in perpetuity. State historic parks have even greater limits imposed on their use, and facilities and uses are prohibited unless required for the safety, comfort, and enjoyment of visitors. Commercial exploitation is only permitted where the proposed activities are an authentic part of the individual park's history. "This project clearly violates CEQA, but more importantly is being forced on a neighborhood that has had to endure more than its share of projects that don't benefit the community," said John Given, legal counsel to LAPA. "I believe the courts will recognize what our elected representatives on Metro's Board have not, and correct this egregious abuse of discretion."

LAPA was formed in 2019 as a response to threats to Los Angeles State Historic Park, which was built as the result of more than 20 years of advocacy by local community members. It is made up of park and public space advocates who recognize the imminent danger of a private gondola's impact on LA State Historic Park. "Today's outcome was shameful, but this fight is far from over. We are resolute and will continue to advocate for this community using any legal or political means at our disposal," said Christensen. "The neighborhoods of La Plaza, Chinatown, Solano Canyon, William Mead, Elysian Park, and other areas that would suffer the impacts of this invasive project deserve better and we look forward to giving them their day in court."

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