

## EDITORIAL: Finally, progress on Fresno trails



A runner crosses a bridge over Dry Creek canal along the Dry Creek Trail just north of Herndon Avenue in 2014. Two concerns about liability and maintenance funding for trails were allayed on Wednesday.

ERIC PAUL ZAMORA — Fresno Bee File Photo [Buy Photo](#)

The idea of building trails on Fresno canal banks has been around for decades. But uncertainty about liability and maintenance funding have stopped this excellent suggestion from becoming reality.

Finally, it appears that the questions have been answered and work can begin.

In an email to the Editorial Board received Wednesday, trails advocate Mark Keppler said that the California Legislative Counsel issued an opinion “that local jurisdictions have ‘absolute immunity’ regarding trails.”

Indeed, a letter sent by the Legislative Counsel Bureau in response to a query from Assembly Member Henry T. Perea states, “... it is our opinion that, under the Government Claims Act, a public entity that builds and maintains a bicycle and pedestrian trail on public land has absolute immunity from liability for an injury that is caused by a condition of the trail.”

In addition, the Fresno County Transportation Authority approved an amendment Wednesday will allow Measure C sales tax funds to be used for trail maintenance for a trial period of one year.

This is important, because although there are many state and federal grants available to build trails, cities struggle to

find the on-going funding to maintain them.

Before the amendment, Measure C funds designated for trails could only be used to build new ones. It should be noted, however, that the maintenance money will be available only for trails that are built without Measure C trail funds.

“I am, of course, excited to see the very real prospect of new trails in the city’s urban areas,” Keppler said. “The first project we are looking at is a one-half mile segment along Shields Avenue east of (Highway) 41.

“Our goal is to have this segment designed this year and built by next year. Our hope is that this example of what an urban parkway looks like in the city’s urban core will inspire the ultimate build-out of the entire Master Urban Parkway Plan... Once we get the ball rolling, there is no reason we can’t be building miles of these trails every year.”

The Master Urban Parkway Plan calls for about 200 miles of trails along Fresno and Clovis canals. If the plan is realized, it will enhance the quality of life in our metro area.

Keppler deserves thanks for his efforts on this project. Other key contributors to solving the maintenance funding challenge were former Clovis Planning Director John Wright, Fresno Public Works Director Scott Mozier, former Fresno Irrigation District Director Sayre Miller and Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin.

We can’t wait to walk the Shields Avenue canal trail on a beautiful spring or fall evening.

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