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August 17th, 2016

Re: Griffith Observatory Circulation and Parking Enhancement Plan (Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration)

To whom it may concern:

Griffith Park is the largest municipal park and urban wilderness area in the United States with over 4300 acres of natural terrain, parkland, and picnic areas. It is also designated a Historic Cultural Monument (#942 in 2009), a recognition that the preservation of limited natural park space (i.e. open space and wilderness areas) is of primary interest to Los Angeles residents.

Conservatively, over 10 million people visit Griffith Park annually. The challenge is in dealing with that love of both the open space and the built, including the Griffith Observatory, itself a huge and popular draw, and also a Historic Cultural Monument (#168, 1976).

Access to the Griffith Observatory is limited and not easily modified or improved due to the difficult terrain on the west, and the built environment on the east. Access to the Griffith Observatory is also solely via Los Feliz Boulevard, which bears the brunt of the ensuing traffic jams. This also constitutes a clear public safety risk as that access is blocked by eager visitors unaware of the very limited parking.

We find that the Griffith Observatory Circulation and Parking Enhancement Plan straddles that fine line of safety vs public access through a balanced method of re-aligning the traffic flow along Western Canyon Road on the west and developing the East and West Observatory Roads as a one-way loop on the east. The installation of pay stations for parking at the Observatory and the use of that income to increase the number and frequency of the Dash buses will only further benefit the greater public, and encourage tourism, which is always good for Los Angeles at large.

While clearly intersections on Los Feliz Boulevard are still severely impacted, we will continue to push for enhancements from our Council Member for Council District 4, David Ryu, and from the Department of Transportation. Clearly coordinated traffic signals, left turn arrows, and other measures are needed to ensure adequate access and public safety. Those issues, however, lie outside the purview of the Department of Recreation and Parks, and we recognize those limitations.

In voicing our support for the Griffith Observatory Circulation and Parking Enhancement Plan (Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration) we want to thank Joe Salaires, Superintendent of Recreation and Parks Operations for the Griffith Park region (and everyone with the Department of Recreation and Parks) for their commitment to ensure both safe access to the Park and their dedication to ensuring that the urban wilderness factor is protected.

Sincerely,

Susan Swan
President*

George Skarpelos
Vice President*

*signed electronically