

To: Members of the Public Works Committee, City of Los Angeles
Re: Council File 11-1246-S1

Dear Members of the City Council,

I am writing to provide comments on the Bike/Ped/Equestrian Atwater Bridge project being heard in committee today. My comments are in reference to Council File 11-1246-S1.

I am a project manager at the UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation and one of the authors on the Luskin Center's report, titled "Creating a Complete Los Angeles River Greenway for All: Stories and Guidance."

In our report, we focus on the Los Angeles River greenway. The LA River and its greenway are now center stage in discussions of open space and recreation, active transportation, regional watershed management, ecosystem restoration, climate resilience, and public art transforming the Los Angeles region. The City of Los Angeles has led much of the revitalization effort and the work has been exciting and transformative. In particular, a complete Los Angeles River greenway has the potential to provide numerous social, health, transportation, and environmental benefits for the region. A complete LA River greenway as an active transportation, open space, and recreational corridor involves a network along both sides of the 51-mile river of: community access points; parks and other green spaces; pedestrian, bike, and equestrian paths; and bridges for non-motorized use. A complete LA River greenway provides parks and trails for exercise, bike paths for commuting, bridges for connecting communities, and places to stop, meet friends, or observe wildlife.

Bridges, like the one proposed today, are a critical component of a complete greenway. They offer many benefits, including:

- **Mobility and Safety:** Footbridges can create a continuous, uninterrupted, and secure active transportation network along the LA River greenway. They also link adjacent neighborhoods and broader communities that have been historically disconnected.
- **Accessibility to Economic and Social Centers:** Bridges provide community members with access to important destinations such as transit stations, schools, parks, employment centers, and shopping districts.
- **Aesthetics:** By including artistic elements in construction designs, bridges can enhance user experience by improving the aesthetics of the LA River greenway or even become a destination in and of themselves. Design and artistic elements can be created by local community members strengthening community identity and pride.
- **Health:** Many LA River-adjacent communities are heavily burdened with environmental hazards, and thus have much to gain from the physical and mental health benefits of safe and continuous river pathways, which include increased physical activity, active commuting, contact with nature, and community connectedness.

Pedestrian bridges over the LA River are few in number (relative to the number of bridges for cars and trucks), and often were built with a focus on utility, not aesthetics. Without bridges, there is a severe lack of connectivity, diminishing the value of other greenway elements like parks and pathways. Without bridges, the river is a barrier to community connectivity and accessibility.

Most of the 80 bridges over the LA River were designed for vehicles, not pedestrian, cyclists, and equestrians. The pedestrian crossings that do exist, are decades old and are intended to be purely utilitarian pieces of infrastructure, evident through their structure and materials used.

Bridge projects are typically very costly and it can be difficult for project proponents to secure funding. The proposed bridge has most of its funding already secured which is usually a big hurdle to overcome. Additionally, the bridge is not only a crossing for multiple types of users (who were identified through project development), but also meant to be a gathering place, creating multiple benefits for adjacent communities.

For more information on the development of this bridge and the importance of bridges generally, see the Luskin Center's LA River Greenway Guide (the proposed bridge is featured and called "La Kretz Crossing": www.innovation.ucla.edu/greenwayguide)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelsey Jessup". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Kelsey Jessup
Project Manager
UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation