

ZOO/PLAYA DRAIN DISTRICT

CHARACTER

Bounded by the US Route 54 (Patriot Highway)/ Interstate 110 interchange in the northwest and Zaragoza Road in the southeast, the Zoo/Playa Drain District is characterized by the transition from the urban context around the El Paso Zoo and the developing Medical Campus of the Americas to a semi-rural, industrial setting where canals still connect the older neighborhoods east of Downtown. The PDN Trail will run almost entirely along the drains and canals, with a few on-street connections connecting through neighborhoods and along parks where no canals exist.



Numerous irrigation and drainage canals offer many trail connection options.



The newly constructed Playa Drain Trail will serve single- and multi-family residential areas.





Ascarate Park is a centerpiece of this district.



Pueblo Viejo Linear Park offers ample trailhead parking and an existing path that follows the route of a former irrigation ditch.



An existing section of a shared-use path along Playa Drain at Shawver Park provides off-street bicycle facilities.





KEY MAP

POINTS OF INTEREST

- El Paso Zoo
- Ascarate Park
- Medical Campus of the Americas

LEGEND

- PDN Spine Alignment (Proposed)
- PDN Spine Alignment
- PDN Loop Alignment
- PDN Spur Trail
- Historic Camino Real
- Transportation Transfer Center
- Point of Interest
- School
- Trail Head
- El Paso City Limits
- Parks
- Rio Grande



MAP 24. ZOO/PLAYA DRAIN DISTRICT OVERVIEW

POINTS OF INTEREST



EL PASO ZOO



This 35-acre zoo is home to over 200 species of animals, from indigenous to exotic. Together with adjacent Washington Park, the zoo provides educational and recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors.



MEDICAL CAMPUS OF THE AMERICAS



The MCA campus is being developed by the non-profit Medical Center of the Americas Foundation as a “world-class biomedical campus” near the Interstate 10/110 interchange in El Paso. Encompassing several existing medical institutions, the foundation is working toward fulfilling a master plan to develop a cohesive 440-acre campus that will draw on the resources of the many nearby medical research and higher education institutions, including UTEP, Texas Tech University Health Sciences, New Mexico State University, and several universities in Ciudad Juárez.



J.P. SHAWVER PARK



This 30-acre park includes the William W. Cowan Aquatic Center, in addition to tennis and basketball courts, soccer and baseball fields, a covered playground, and a group picnic shelter. Situated between the Playa Drain and Loop 375 Expressway (Border Highway), it is across the street from one of the first built segments of the Playa Drain Trail alongside Independence Drive.



ASCARATE PARK AND LAKE



Totalling more than 400 acres, Ascarate Park features an 18-hole golf course and a 9-hole executive course, a 48-acre surface lake and lakeside boardwalk, fully-equipped aquatic center, playgrounds, and picnic facilities.



See Map 24 for overall region alignments and legend.



MAP 25. ZOO/PLAYA DRAIN DISTRICT KEY MAP 1

TRAIL CONNECTIVITY

PRIMARY ALIGNMENTS

3.0 **Franklin Canal – US Route 54 to Ascarate Park (Proposed Shared-Use Trail)**

Almost as soon as the Franklin Canal re-emerges from under US Route 54, it turns south and cuts through the middle of the El Paso Zoo. This provides a prime opportunity to connect to the popular destination; however, access control will need to be addressed at the two existing bridges that cross the canal, linking the two halves of the zoo. Once through the zoo, the alignment continues along the Franklin Canal as it runs parallel to Paisano Drive past Jefferson High School to Alameda Avenue. At this point, two options exist for continuing along the canal:

- **Option 1:** Cross Alameda Avenue via sidewalks along a newly constructed roundabout and continue along the canal behind several local businesses. This option would require an unprotected at-grade crossing of Paisano Drive (or would require a short detour up to the signalized Paisano Drive/El Paso Drive intersection).
- **Option 2:** Continue east along Alameda Avenue/Paisano Drive to a second roundabout (where Paisano Drive splits off to the north) and then follow Paisano Drive back to the canal. Although the configuration may be somewhat confusing, there are ten-foot wide sidewalks that could serve as the trail surface through both roundabouts, as well as “HAWK” signalized crosswalks for the actual road crossings.

After crossing Alameda Avenue and Paisano Drive, the trail follows the canal along El Paso Drive until El Paso rejoins Alameda Avenue near Delta Drive. The trail would cross under Delta Drive and continue another 800 feet to the Valley Gate

Lateral, where it would turn southwest toward Ascarate Park. The Valley Gate Lateral connection to the Playa Drain would require an at-grade, mid-block crossing of Alameda Avenue, which could be improved by adding HAWK signals like those at the two roundabouts to the west.

3.1 **Playa Drain Trail – Ascarate Park to Riverside High School (Funded Shared-Use Trail, Under Construction)**

Beginning in 2016, the Paso del Norte Health Foundation became involved in the development of a plan and design for a trail along the Playa Drain—a former underutilized irrigation and storm drainage channel that travels through the Mission Valley area of El Paso. The total length of the proposed trail alignment at this time is 8.3 miles, with the first phase consisting of a 3.4-mile segment that begins at Ascarate Park and travels south to Riverside Park/Riverside High School. Funding for construction of Phase 1 of the trail is through a partnership between the Paso del Norte Health Foundation, the City of El Paso, and the El Paso Water Utility. As designed, this segment of trail will end at Vocational Drive, along the north edge of the high school, where it will connect east to Alameda Avenue via widened sidewalks.

3.2 **Playa Drain Trail – Alameda Avenue Connection (Proposed On-Street/Shared-Use Trail)**

Since the Playa Drain no longer continues across the Riverside High School property, options for continuing beyond the school are limited. The in-progress Phase 1 segment described above ends at Vocational Drive and Alameda Avenue, and the Playa Drain resumes a short distance to the south, thus the most direct connection is to follow Alameda Avenue two blocks southeast where the Playa Lateral Canal crosses under the roadway. Alameda Avenue does not currently have bike

lanes, but crossing the busy roadway twice to take advantage of bike lanes (for westbound trail users) would not be recommended in any case; therefore a sidewalk connection would be the preferred solution. Existing sidewalks through this 1700-foot reach vary in width and are often supplanted by wide driveways into adjacent businesses, so sidewalk improvements such as widening and curb ramp replacement would be highly recommended. For trail users who are not comfortable traveling along a major arterial roadway, an alternative route along Mimosa Avenue and Knights Drive is described in the Loop Alignments section that follows.

3.3 **Playa Drain Trail – Alameda Avenue to Yarbrough Drive (Proposed Shared-Use Trail)**

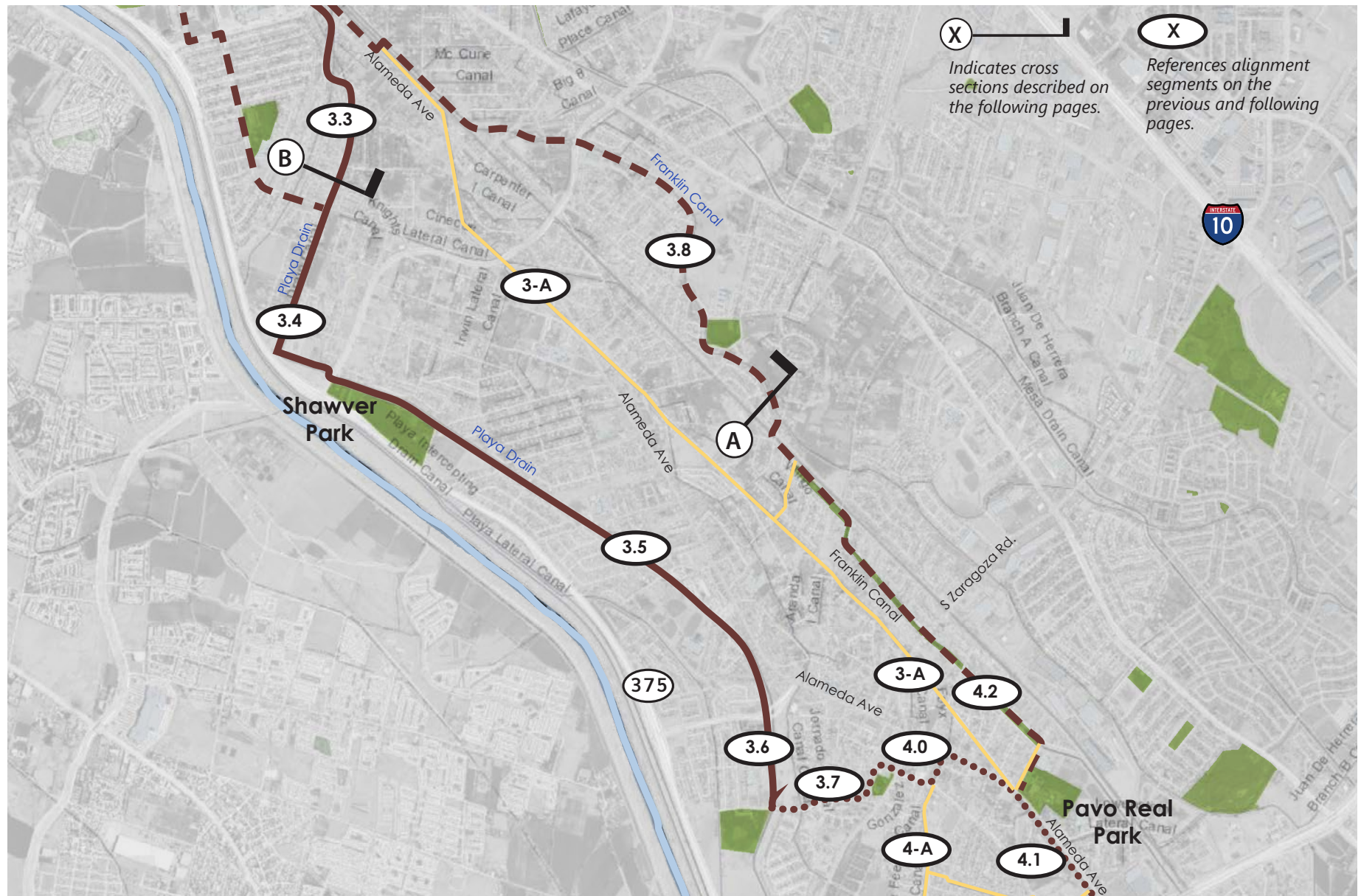
From Alameda Avenue, the primary alignment follows the Playa Lateral Canal for a short distance before jogging over along a small ditch that runs along the Cesar Chavez Academy property and rejoining the Playa Drain. From there the trail would follow the Playa Drain south almost to the Border Highway, where it again turns west and crosses South Yarbrough Drive via an at-grade crossing at Independence Drive.

3.4 **Playa Drain Trail – Yarbrough Drive to Whittier Drive (Existing Shared-Use Trail)**

In 2016, the City of El Paso constructed nearly a mile of paved trail along the northeast side of Independence Drive, in keeping with the Playa Drain Trail Master Plan that was concurrently under development. The trail provides local connections to J. P. Shawver Park across Independence Drive; however, the paved trail stops just short of the roadways at either end, so ramp construction would be needed to facilitate eventual incorporation into the PDN Trail system.



See Map 24 for overall region alignments and legend.



MAP 26. ZOO/PLAYA DRAIN DISTRICT KEY MAP 2

3.5***Playa Drain Trail – Whittier Drive to Ysleta High School (Proposed Shared-Use Trail)***

It should be relatively simple to extend the trail another half-mile from Whittier Drive to Ysleta High School, just east of South Davis Drive, following the same design parameters as the constructed segments to the west. However, the Playa Drain goes underground beneath the school property—a corridor that consists of driveways and parking lots that serve the high school sports fields and separate it from the adjacent Ysleta Middle School grounds. It may be possible to work with the school to develop a trail facility that continues across the school grounds; otherwise, on-street connections via Independence Drive to the west, or Alameda Avenue, to the east, would be the only alternatives.

3.6***Playa Drain Trail – Ysleta High School to Capistrano Park (Funded Shared-Use Trail, Under Construction)***

At the same time the Paso del Norte Health Foundation Phase 1 construction got underway, construction had already begun on another segment of paved trail extending from the southeast side of Ysleta High School approximately 0.8 miles east and south to Padilla Drive, opposite Capistrano Elementary School and Capistrano Park. This segment was funded by a Community Development Block Grant. Construction should be completed by the time the PDN Trail Master Plan document is released.

3.7***Padilla Drive to Socorro Road Connector (Proposed On-Street)***

Since further extension of a trail along the Playa Drain would be of limited use (and would dead-end at the 375 Loop Expressway/South Americas Avenue highway), an on-street connection between the Playa Drain and the Franklin Canal is proposed along Padilla Drive, Lone Star Place (passing Ysleta Park), and Socorro Road, continuing into the Mission Valley District (described in the following section). Bicycles would be accommodated along Padilla Drive with the addition of shared lane (“sharrow”) markings, while Lone Star Place and Socorro Road have adequate width to add striped bike lanes.

LOOP ALIGNMENTS**3.8*****Juan de Herrera Lateral Loop (Existing/Proposed Shared-Use Path with On-Street Connections)***

Where the primary alignment leaves the Franklin Canal near Ascarate Park, this loop would continue southeast along the Franklin Canal for another 2.7 miles to Rosedale Street. At Rosedale Street, the route would cross the railroad tracks and join the Juan de Herrera Main Lateral canal, looping past Marian Manor Elementary School and the adjacent park of the same name, to New Haven Drive. At New Haven Drive the route would become an on-street facility (although there may be sufficient right-of-way to add a side path along the east side of the road) which connects to Roseway Drive after crossing the Union Pacific tracks. Once across the tracks, the trail would turn southeast for two blocks to Pueblo Viejo Linear Park. A preferred alignment would add a shared-use side path between Roseway Drive and the railroad tracks, but if the road right-of-way is insufficient, the alternative would be an on-street connection. At North Davis Drive, the trail would shift into the park and follow an existing cinder/stone dust path that follows

the former route of the Middle Drain canal past a number of basketball courts, playgrounds, and picnic tables. The linear park continues past Zaragoza Road into the Mission Valley District (becomes 4.2, which is described in the Mission Valley District section).

3.9***Riverside High School Loop (Proposed On-Street/Shared-Use Trail)***

For trail users who may not be comfortable traveling even a short distance along busy Alameda Avenue, an alternative path around Riverside High School might be more to their liking. From the corner of Vocational Drive and Mimosa Avenue, where the primary alignment turns east to Alameda Avenue, this loop would instead travel south along Mimosa Avenue, between the high school and middle school properties, then turn east on Midway Drive, and south again on Knights Drive, past Thomas Manor Park and Elementary School and then meet the primary alignment along the Playa Drain again. Mimosa Avenue does not currently have bike lanes, but appears wide enough to add them without sacrificing any vehicle travel lane widths. Both Midway and Knights drives already are striped for bike lanes. Midway Drive offers buffered bike lanes, while Knights Drive has bike lanes with adjacent parallel parking. All three of the roadways have reasonably good sidewalks to serve pedestrians.

SPUR TRAILS**3-A*****Franklin Canal Spur***

This proposed trail spur would follow along the Franklin Canal from Rosedale Street south to Pavo Real Park. It would connect with the primary alignment at three points: Rosedale Street, Davis Drive, and Presa Place.



TRAILHEADS AND PUBLIC TRANSIT

Washington Park Trailhead (Existing Parking Lot)

Just north of the Franklin Canal as it turns south to pass through the zoo there is an underutilized parking lot in the southwest corner of Washington Park that could become a trailhead. A gated service drive crosses the canal to provide vehicular access into the zoo. It would need to be modified, along with the other zoo access control measures to enable pedestrian access.

New Park Trailheads (Newly Constructed)

Three trailheads have been built at area parks. The trailhead at Ascarate Park, a former baseball field, is situated very close to the beginning of the newly constructed first phase of Playa Drain Trail. Capistrano Park has a trailhead with parking across Padilla Drive from the Playa Drain Trail alignment. There is also a trailhead to the Playa Drain Trail at Riverside Park.

An existing, lightly used Mimosa Pond Trailhead (Proposed)

An empty lot just to the north of the municipal well pump station on Mimosa Avenue, north of Vocational Drive, appears to be well suited for a potential trailhead. The Playa Drain Trail itself will pass just north of the pump station within the lot, which is currently surfaced with recycled asphalt.

An existing small Hidden Valley Park Trailhead (Existing Parking Lot)

An existing small parking area in the southeast corner of Hidden Valley Park is located immediately adjacent to the Playa Drain Trail Phase

1 segment that is currently under construction. Only some signage and a few feet of sidewalk along Polo Inn Road would be required to turn this into an actual trailhead.

Shawver Park Trailhead (Existing Parking Lot)

As with the previous two proposed trailheads, an existing parking lot in J. P. Shawver Park next to the William W. Cowan Aquatic Center could serve as trailhead parking across Independence Drive from the existing segment of trail. With the addition of wayfinding signage, it could lead trail users to crosswalks at nearby Yarbrough Drive.

Pueblo Viejo Park Trailheads (Existing Parking Lots)

Several small parking lots within Pueblo Viejo Linear Park could serve as trailheads for the Juan de Herrera Lateral Loop Trail.

Bus Stops

Bus stops are located at regular intervals along Paisano Drive west of the Alameda roundabouts, which are easily accessed from the Franklin Canal alignment. East of the roundabouts, where the Franklin Canal diverges from the roadway, the Alameda BRT and bus stops are generally only accessible along Alameda Avenue at major road crossings. Along the Playa Drain alignment, this trend continues, with bus stops generally located within one to two blocks of each road crossing.

Mission Valley Transfer Center

This public transportation hub is located just two blocks from the primary alignment on-street route, where Socorro Road crosses Zaragoza Road.

NEARBY SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS

Schools in walking distance include:

- Burleson Elementary School
- Henderson Middle School
- Cooley Elementary School
- Ascarate Elementary School
- Cedar Grove Elementary School
- Tejas School of Choice
- Riverside High School
- Riverside Middle School
- Cesar Chavez Alternative School
- Thomas Manor Elementary School
- Cadwallader Elementary School
- Rio Bravo Middle School
- Alicia R. Chacon Elementary School
- Marian Manor Elementary School
- Plato Academy Alternative School
- Ysleta High School
- Ysleta Middle School
- Ysleta Elementary School
- Ysleta Community Learning Center
- Center for Employment Training
- Capistrano Elementary School



Capistrano Elementary School

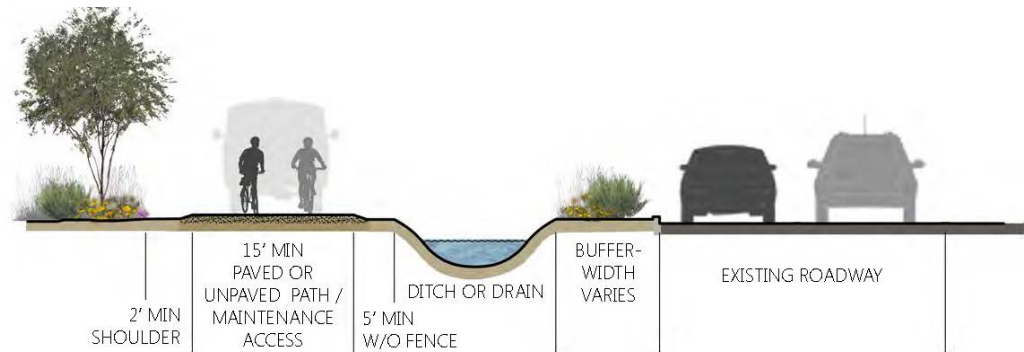


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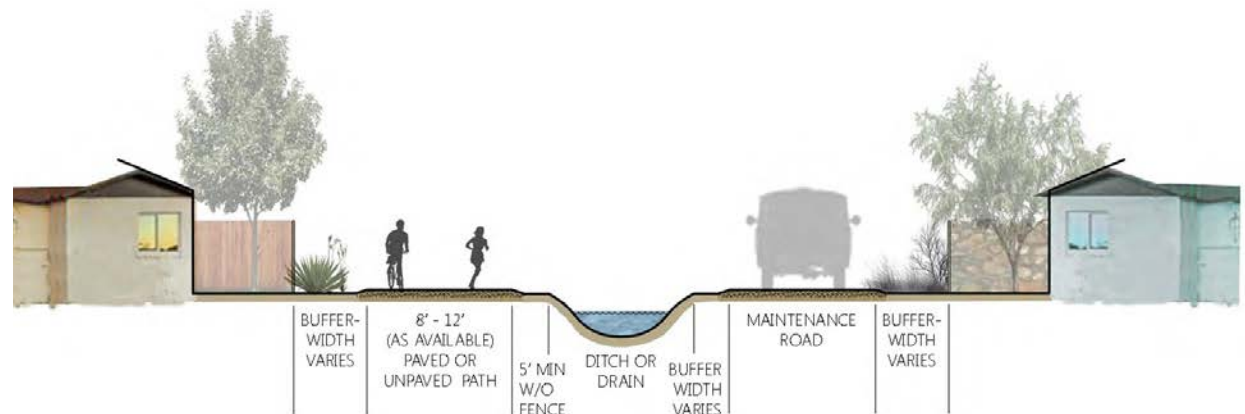
Shared-Use Path along Canal: A ten- to twelve-foot wide paved trail can accommodate multiple uses comfortably. Since the ditch banks are also used by maintenance vehicles, coordination with the maintaining agency would be required to determine whether maintenance can be done from one side of the ditch, reserving the other side for trail use, or whether the paved trail surface will also need to be able to withstand maintenance vehicular traffic. In either case, the unpaved ditch bank opposite the trail can provide an alternative for runners or other trail users who prefer a softer surface.

On-Street Bike Lane or Shared Route with Sidewalks: In several locations, existing conditions dictate that on-street facilities are utilized, at least in the short term. At a minimum, such routes should be marked for shared lanes intended to accommodate both cars and bicycles. Striped lanes would be preferable, and already exist in several locations. In others, it may be possible to restripe the roadway to include bike lanes, or, with some utility relocations and minor right-of-way adjustments, to convert sidewalks or wide shoulders to shared-use side paths on at least one side of the road, changing those segments to off-street facilities. If bike lanes or sharrows are used, sidewalks should be evaluated for ADA accessibility, and improved as necessary.

Typical cross sections indicated by letters on previous maps.



A SHARED-USE PATH ALONG CANAL AT ROADWAYS



B SHARED-USE PATH ALONG SUBURBAN CANALS WITH SEPARATE MAINTENANCE ACCESS

FIGURE 17. TYPICAL CROSS SECTIONS A & B – ZOO/PLAYA DRAIN



TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS



Scottsdale, Arizona has featured its canals with development and promenades fronting them.

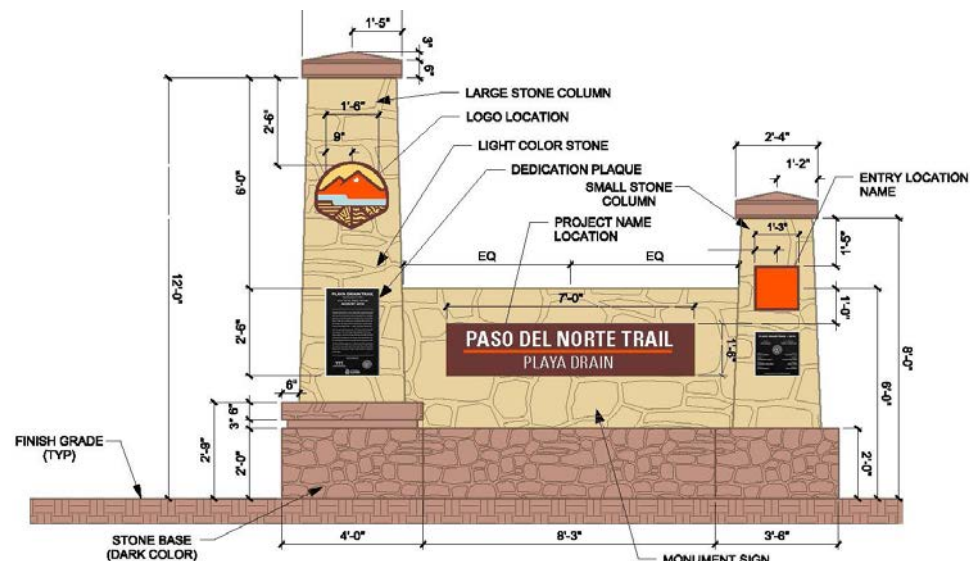


Trail connection through El Paso Zoo will require access control in form of grade-separated crossings or new manned entry gates (above). The canals in this area could become waterfront promenades like those in Scottsdale, Arizona (left).



There are opportunities for murals on underpasses.





Consistent wayfinding and entry point signage will help people recognize and use the trail.



Public art can mark the trail.

