City of Phoenix



Thursday, September 10, 2026

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General Information Packet

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City of Phoenix

Report

Date: 9/10/2026, **Item No.** 1

Citizen Request: Tim Sierakowski and Jeremy Thacker - District 6

This report provides the City Council with information in response to public comments made by Tim Sierakowski and Jeremy Thacker at the August 26, 2026, Formal City Council meeting regarding the Echo Canyon Trailhead at Camelback Mountain.

Summary

During public comment at the August 26, 2026 City Council meeting, speakers raised concerns regarding communication, operational consistency, and early-morning access at the Echo Canyon Trailhead. The Parks and Recreation Department provides the following clarifications and information in response to this comment.

Gate Operations and Planned Improvements

An existing development agreement with the Echo Canyon Home Owners Association states the Echo Canyon Trailhead shall be open from sunrise to sunset. The Echo Canyon Trailhead has an established manual gate that is closed nightly and reopened each morning. While the department does not intend to open any City trailhead gates before 5:00 a.m., there have been instances and even long periods of time where early-morning janitorial crews have left the gates open. These occurrences do not reflect standard operating procedure and have been addressed through additional staff coordination to ensure consistency. As with all high-use trailheads, vehicle queuing may occur when gates open, regardless of the specific opening time; adjusting the opening time typically shifts, rather than eliminates, when queuing occurs.

The Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) has temporarily closed Echo Canyon Trailhead from September 2 through September 18 to install new automatic gates and trail posts. These planned improvements will automate the existing gates in the same location, increasing reliability and allowing park rangers to focus on other operational needs. Camelback Mountain will be accessible from the Cholla Trailhead during this time.

Communication and Coordination

To ensure the public was aware of the coming construction timeline and impacts to trailhead users, PRD posted signage on site, added a web banner to all phoenix.gov/parks webpages notifying the public of the closure, added information on

the Camelback Mountain webpage, shared a social media post on all relevant platforms, and emailed the Trail Updates distribution list.

Department staff coordinated with the Town of Paradise Valley on multiple occasions, including meetings in March and May 2026, to discuss the gate improvement project elements and ensure alignment on operational procedures. Staff will continue coordinating with the appropriate personnel as the project advances. Park rangers regularly share field observations with department leadership, and those insights are incorporated into operational decision making.

System Wide Standards and Operational Context
Current traffic patterns are expected to adjust as hikers become accustomed to the established automated gate opening time. A formal traffic study is not required for this project. Across the Phoenix Mountain Preserve system, no trailhead opens before 5:00 a.m., and Echo Canyon's operations remain consistent with this system-wide standard. The planned gate automation will further enhance consistency in gate operations and support broader operational efficiencies across the Phoenix Mountain Preserves.

The Department will continue to evaluate operational needs, incorporate park ranger and stakeholder feedback, and communicate with partner agencies to ensure trailhead management remains safe, consistent, and aligned with Citywide Phoenix Mountain Preserve policies.

Location
4925 E. McDonald Drive
Council District: 6

Responsible Department
This item is submitted by Deputy City Manager David Mathews and the Parks and Recreation Department.