



The Case for Safe Bicycling Access to State Parks on the Los Angeles River

A Resource for Creative Planning, Including an Analysis of Needs,
Recommendations for Improvements, Maps of Current and
Planned Bikeways and “Chillways,” and a Portrait of the
Communities Surrounding the Parks

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The Current Lack of Safe Bicycling to State Parks on the L.A. River and an Overview of Plans for Improvements

The people of California have spent hundreds of millions of dollars creating State Parks on the Los Angeles River. But there is a lack of safe bicycling and pedestrian access to the three parks downtown—Los Angeles State Historic Park, Rio de Los Angeles, and the Bowtie Parcel. While future plans include a variety of improvements to bicycling infrastructure and improving the safety of neighborhood streets, current plans do not prioritize improving that access. This is a worrisome mismatch in public investment. The communities surrounding these parks fought for their creation. And now they lack safe access to these parks. This report highlights these grave concerns, proposes priority recommendations for public discussion, and provides a portrait of the communities surrounding the parks, to show the urgent need for support for safe bicycling and pedestrian access to these state parks.

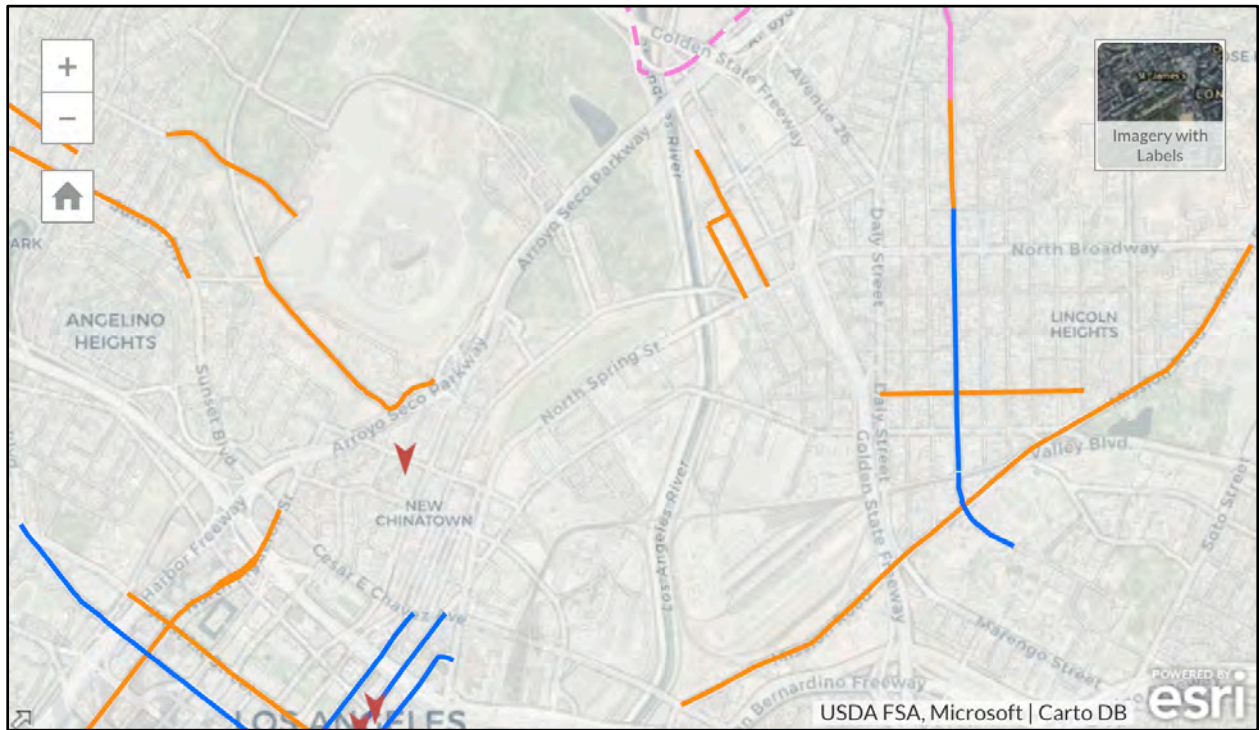


The urgent need for safer access to our state parks is illustrated by the city's "High Injury Network," seen at left, which includes nine streets leading to Los Angeles State Historic Park that have a high rate of pedestrian and bicyclist injuries and fatalities by automobiles. These streets are critical to getting to the park from surrounding neighborhoods.

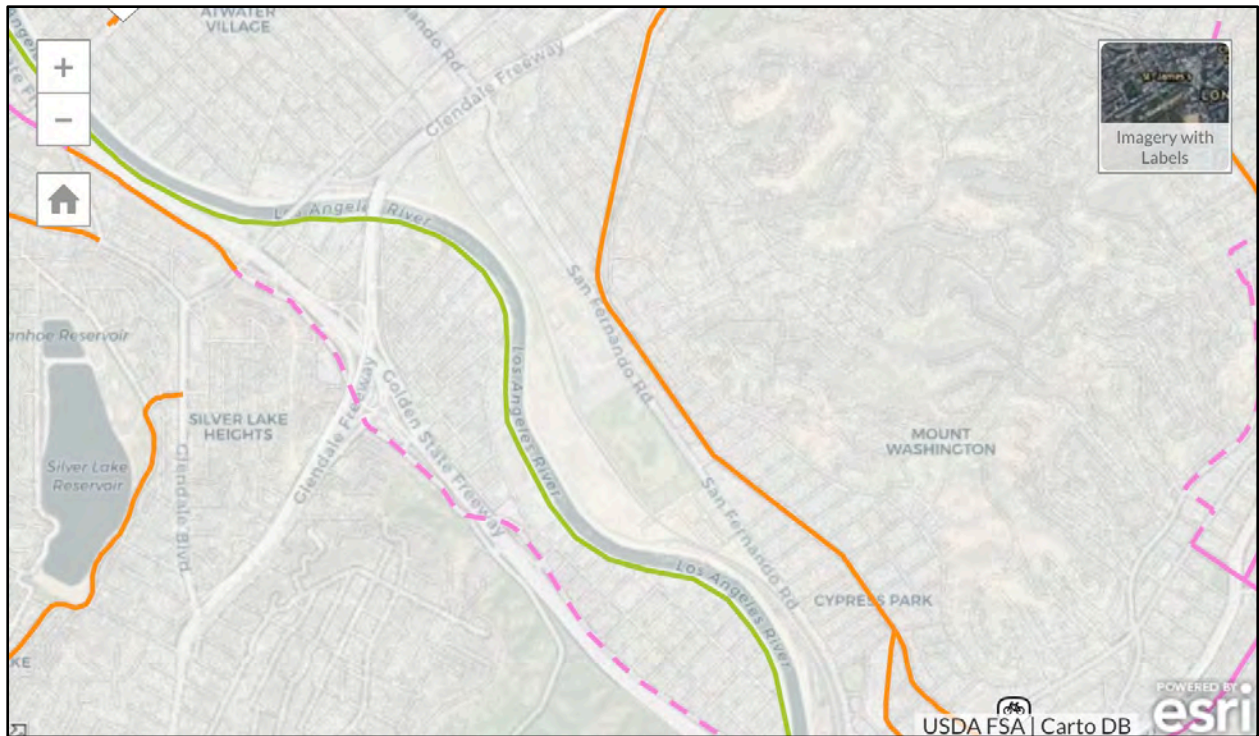
The map to the right shows active Los Angeles Department of Transportation plans for bicycle infrastructure "installed or coming soon," none of which connects directly to any of the three state parks on the Los Angeles River.

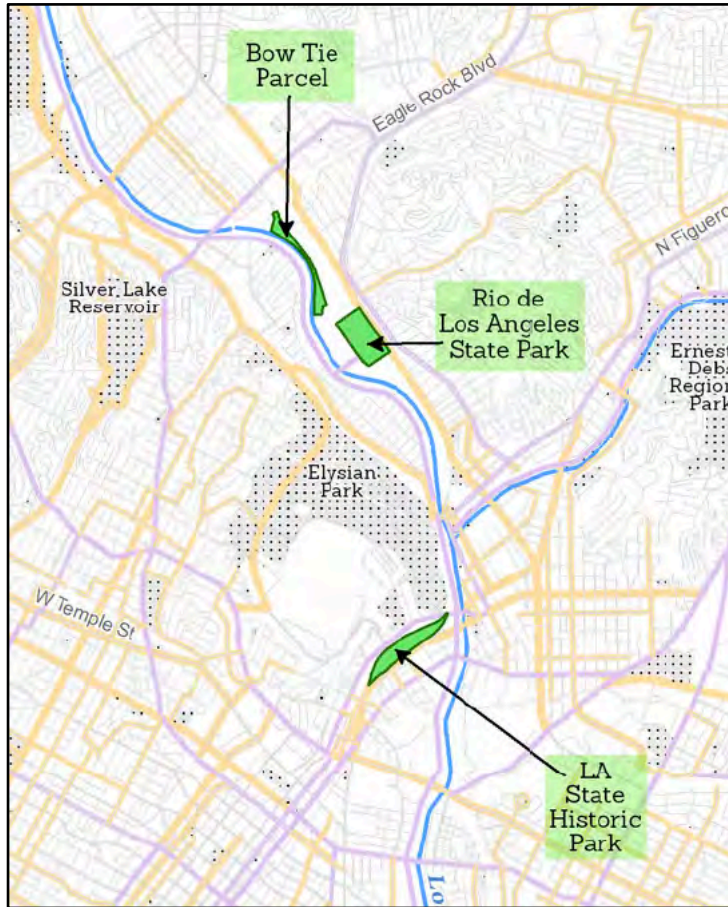


This map shows a close-up of Los Angeles State Historic Park:



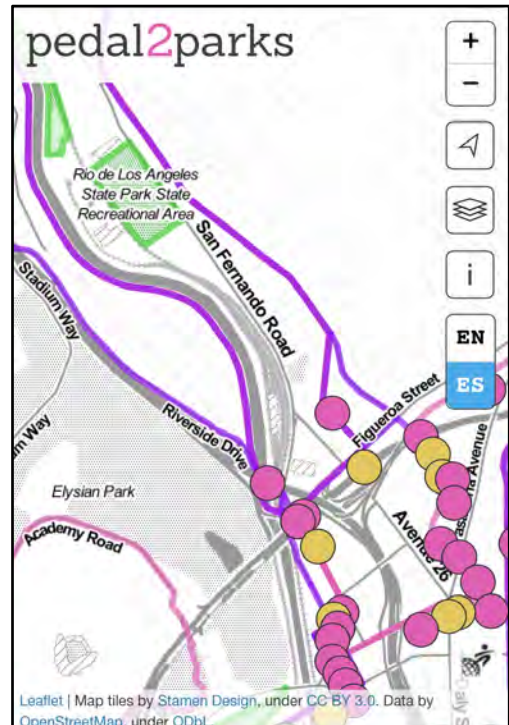
And this map shows a close-up of Rio de Los Angeles State Park, the Bowtie Parcel, and the G2 parcel, which the city has acquired to create a park.





This map shows bike infrastructure planned around the three state parks in the City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2035. The purple lines are bike paths and bike lanes, the yellow lines are neighborhood networks where street design changes are recommended to slow traffic and enhance safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. Many of these plans look good on paper, but we are concerned that they are not adequate and they are not prioritized sufficiently to address urgent community concerns. And we recommend a robust effort to engage surrounding communities in identifying priority solutions that include community knowledge. This is a start.

Our “pedal2parks” app, available at pedal2parks.org, identifies existing bicycle routes around our L.A. River State Parks, as well as “chillways,” more relaxed ways to get to the parks that are known by people who regularly bike around the city. And in this report we make further recommendations for improvements to the bicycling network to ensure safe access to these parks.



Priority Recommendations for Improvements

We offer these recommendations for priority improvements to inspire creative community discussion, planning, and action in the light of the urgent need for better access to our state parks.

Key Projects for Making Los Angeles State Historic Park Pedal-Friendly

Los Angeles State Historic Park (LASHP) is an unprecedented investment in park space in the historic core of our city. Those who live and work in the surrounding neighborhoods should be able to ride their bikes to the park without encountering barriers or fearing for their lives on busy streets dominated by car traffic. Below are six key projects that could dramatically improve the accessibility of the park to people on bicycles.

A Bridge to Broadway

Currently there is no way to access the park from Broadway, despite it being only a stone's throw away from the park for its entire length. A bridge over the Gold Line tracks and into the park would dramatically increase the accessibility of LASHP to people on foot and bike alike.



There used to be a pedestrian bridge connecting Broadway to Spring Street over the old railyard.



A Stoplight and Crosswalk at North Spring and Ann Streets

Currently there are no marked crosswalks on North Spring Street between College Street and the east side of the L.A. River (a distance of about 1 mile). This makes no sense in a dense urban area with a park on one side of the street. The residents of William Mead Homes live only a quarter-mile from the park, but they have to more than double the distance of their journey to avoid crossing busy Spring Street without a marked crossing.

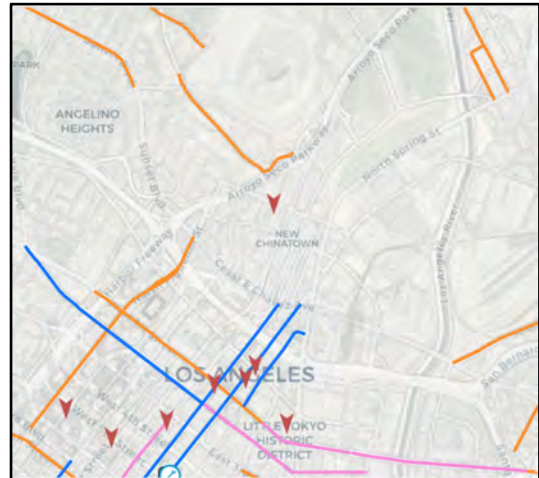
People crossing North Spring Street without a crosswalk.

Los Angeles River Path Connection

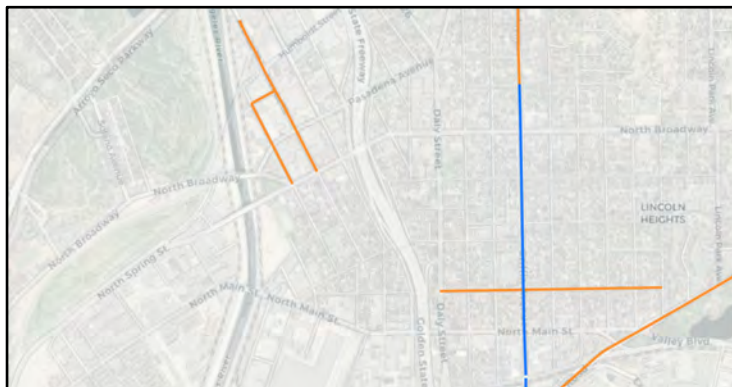
To the north, the L.A. River Bike Path ends about a mile short of LASHP and necessitates a 1.5 mile winding ride on busy industrial streets to reach the park. Metro is currently working on a plan to close the 8-mile gap in the LA River Path. This project should be completed as soon as possible and should include a direct connection to the park.

Closing the Chinatown Gap

Downtown has some of the best bike infrastructure in the city, but it fails to connect with LASHP. The buffered bike lanes on Spring and Main Streets end at Cesar Chavez Avenue, only half a mile from LASHP, forcing cyclists to either weave inefficiently through the side streets of Chinatown or ride on dangerously busy Alameda Street. A clearly marked, safe, bicycle corridor connecting El Pueblo to LASHP through Chinatown needs to be established.



Screenshot from LADOT Bike Program map showing downtown bike lanes falling short of LASHP



Screenshot from the LADOT Bike Program map showing Lincoln Heights.

East-West Bike Lanes in Lincoln Heights

There is a severe lack of east-west bike infrastructure in Lincoln Heights, which borders LASHP to the East. The 5 freeway cuts north-south through the heart of the neighborhood and none of the three busy streets that cross the freeway have bike lanes. The only alternative to

these dangerous streets is a poorly maintained, isolated, and out-of-the-way pedestrian bridge off Mozart Street. Protected bike lanes on Broadway, and on Pasadena Avenue and Main Street, are essential for making LASHP accessible from the east.

Boyle Heights Connection

The safest way to ride from Boyle Heights to LASHP involves riding First Street all the way into downtown and then riding north into the park (and confronting the “Chinatown Gap”). This route is extremely inefficient. The most direct route to LASHP is over the L.A. River on the Cesar Chavez Avenue Bridge and up Vignes Street, which is currently a harrowing ride with lots of high speed car traffic and no protection. Bike lanes on these streets would create a direct connection between LASHP and one of L.A.’s most vibrant, historic communities.

Key Projects for Making Rio de Los Angeles State Park and the Bowtie Parcel Pedal-Friendly

Rio de Los Angeles State Park (Rio) and the nearby undeveloped Bowtie Parcel (the Bowtie), are significant investments by California State Parks in the vision of the Los Angeles River as an open, green space that threads the city together. Connectivity is key. For too long, the river has been a barrier. Despite improvements such as a bike path on the west side of the river, Rio and the Bowtie are still isolated. Today, the vast majority of visitors to Rio arrive in a car. Below are five key projects that could dramatically improve the accessibility of these open spaces to people on bicycles.



The service road on the east side of the river at the Bowtie.

Legalize the East Side Path

Currently, many people use the service road on the east side of the river south of Fletcher Avenue. This road is not technically open to the public, but enforcement is thankfully, currently lax. Rather than forcing the public to use a hole in the fence, the service road should be officially opened to the public much like other stretches of the river’s east side further north in Atwater Village. The path should also connect to Rio and the future Taylor Yard Bridge.



Rendering of the proposed bridge.

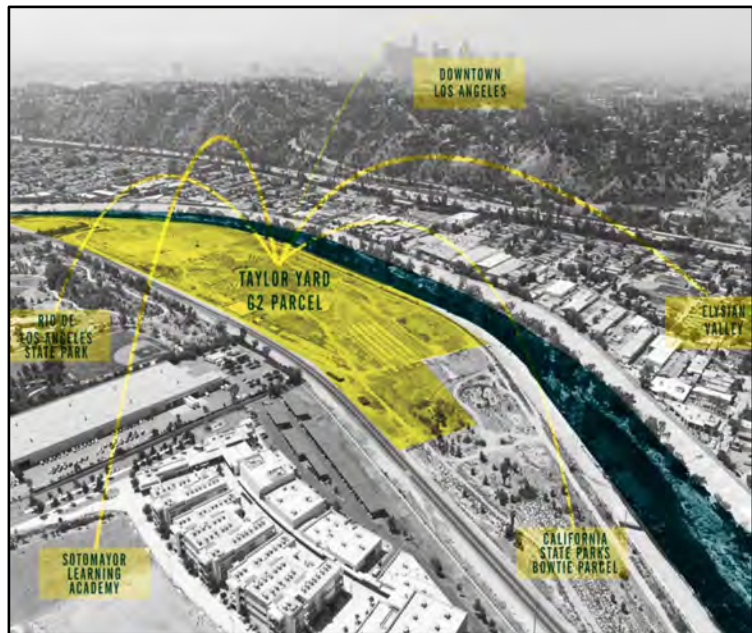
Build the Taylor Yard Bridge

Between the Fletcher Bridge and the Riverside-Figueroa Bridge, a distance of over 2.5 miles, there is not a single crossing of the Los Angeles River for pedestrians or cyclists. It is hard to imagine a more needed bridge than the planned Taylor Yard Bikeway and Pedestrian Bridge that would connect Frogtown and Cypress Park right where a connection is most needed. This

bridge would allow cyclists on the L.A. River Bike Path to connect directly to Rio de Los Angeles State Park and the future park the city is planning on the G2 Parcel.

Develop the G2 Parcel as an Accessible Park

The 42-acre G2 parcel sits between Rio, the Los Angeles River, and the Bowtie. The City of Los Angeles recently bought G2 with the intention of turning it into a flagship park on the river. We think the new park must be integrated with Rio and the Bowtie, allowing people on bikes and pedestrians to easily move between the parcels. The key challenge is making connections either below or above the train tracks that separate Rio and G2. As the G2 plan is developed, and the parcel is opened for interim use, connections to Rio and the Bowtie should be prioritized.



The G2 parcel's potential connections to the rest of the city.

Fletcher Drive Bike Lanes

Despite being an officially designated bikeway, Fletcher Drive between Glendale Boulevard and San Fernando Road is an extremely unpleasant and dangerous street to ride on. Cyclists coming from Silver Lake to the west or Glassell Park to the east are forced to use Fletcher Drive to access the Bowtie. We think the road diet and bike lanes that were added to Fletcher Drive east of San Fernando need to be extended all the way to Glendale Boulevard.

Figueroa Street Bike Lanes

In 2014, the City of Los Angeles was preparing to remove one lane of car traffic on Figueroa Street between Avenue 26 and Avenue 52 to create space for bike lanes. Unfortunately, the project was stopped. Bike lanes on this stretch of Figueroa would connect with bike lanes on Cypress Avenue and the L.A. River Bike Path, which are the key corridors for accessing Rio and the Bowtie by bicycle. This project should be restarted.

Maps of Current and Planned Bikeways and “Chillways”

Map 1: A screenshot of the pedal2parks app. For a live version, see pedal2parks.org.

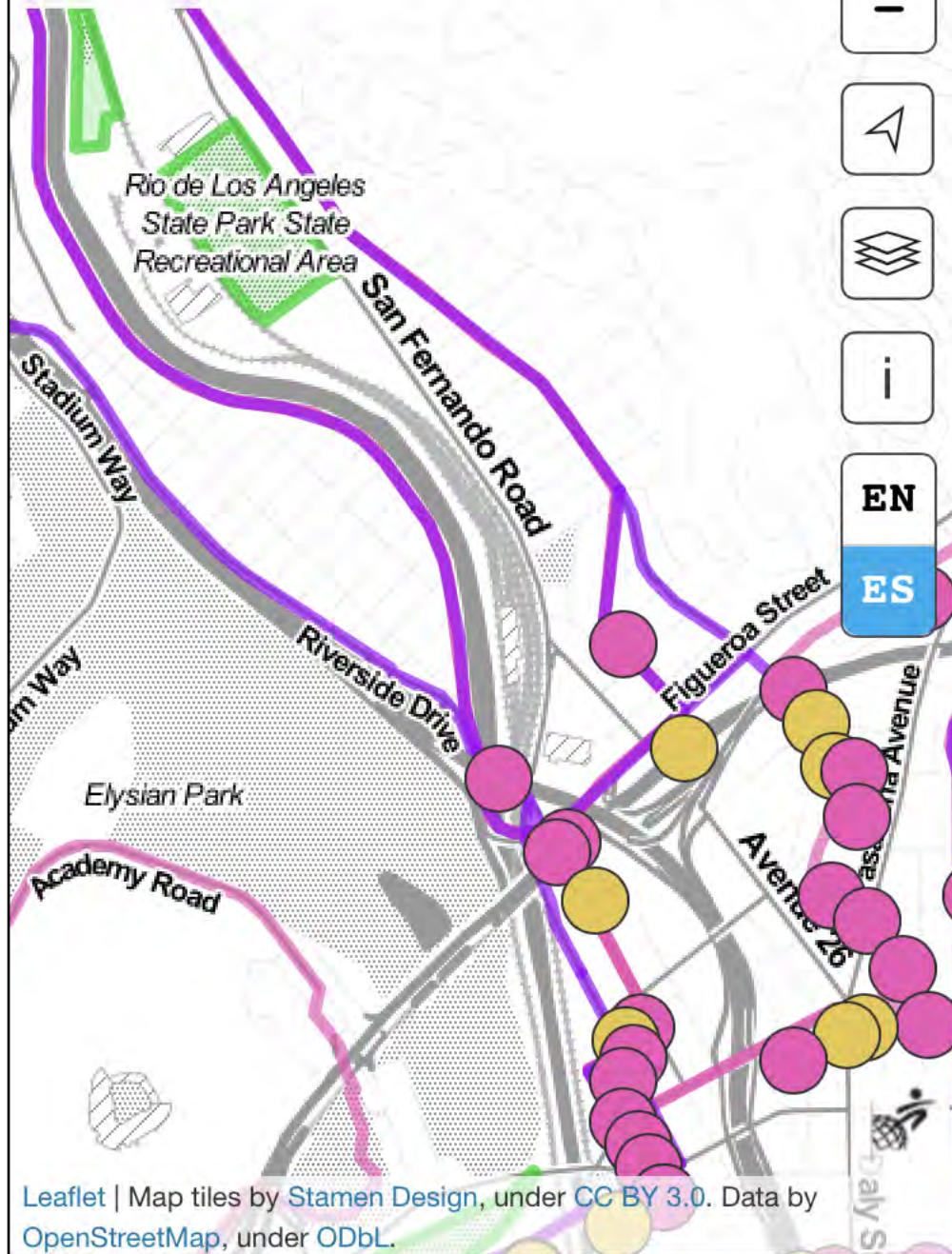
Map 2: Existing official bikeways to Los Angeles River State Parks downtown.

Map 3: Planned official bikeways to Los Angeles River State Parks downtown.

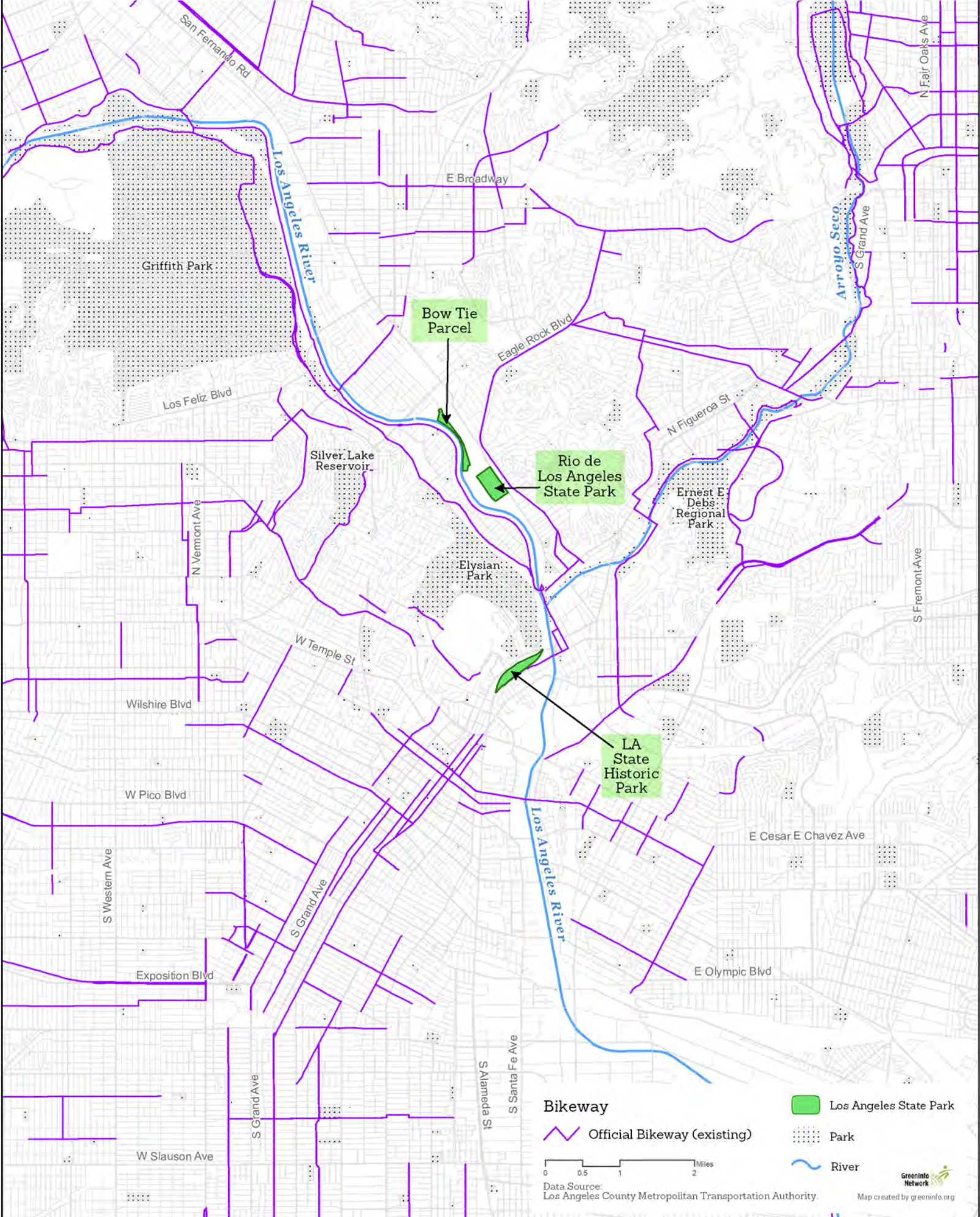
Map 4: “Chillways” to Los Angeles River State Parks downtown, more relaxed routes known by regular bicyclists in the community.

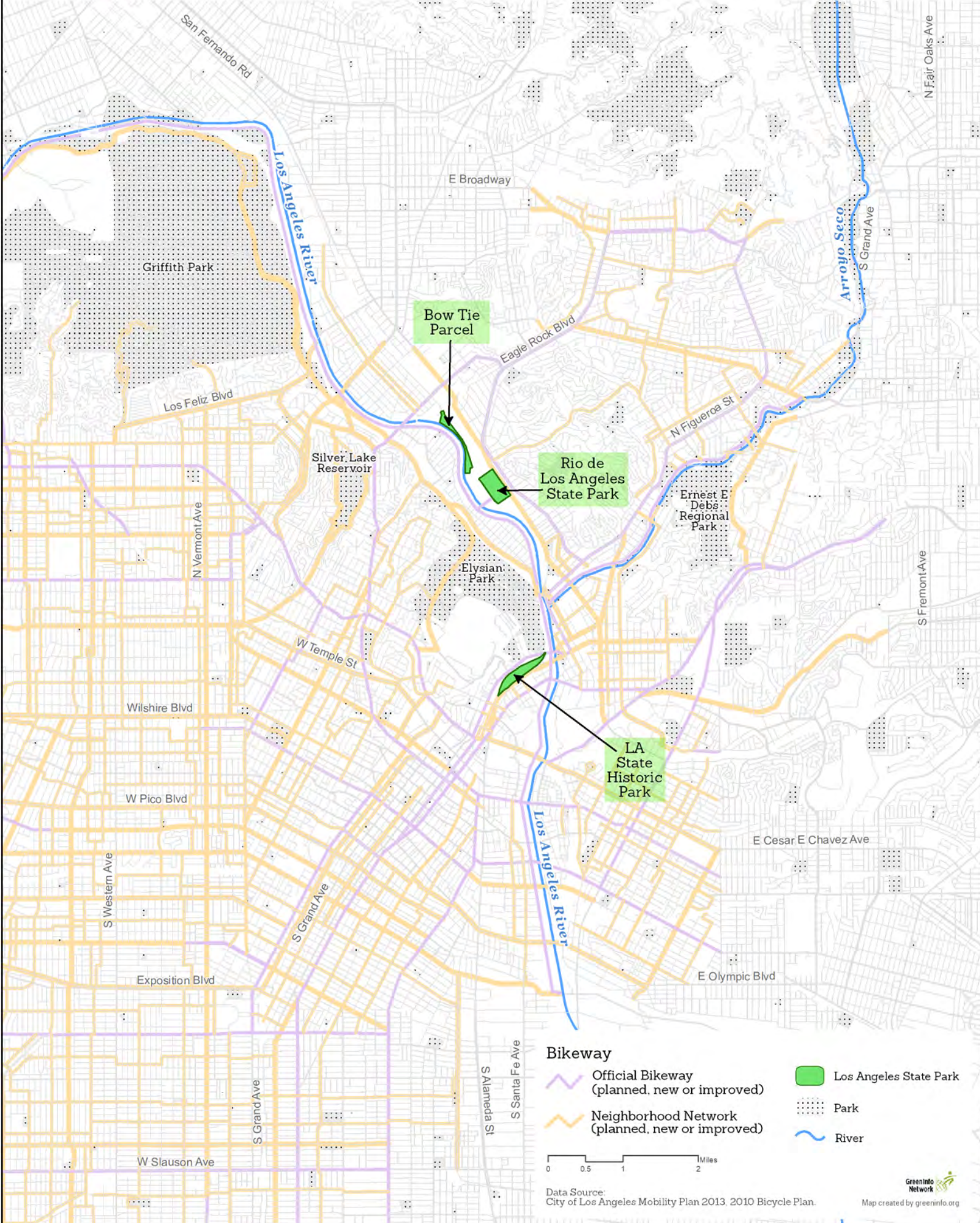
Map 5: A combined map showing all of the routes above on one map.

pedal2parks



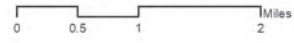
Leaflet | Map tiles by [Stamen Design](#), under [CC BY 3.0](#). Data by [OpenStreetMap](#), under [ODbL](#).



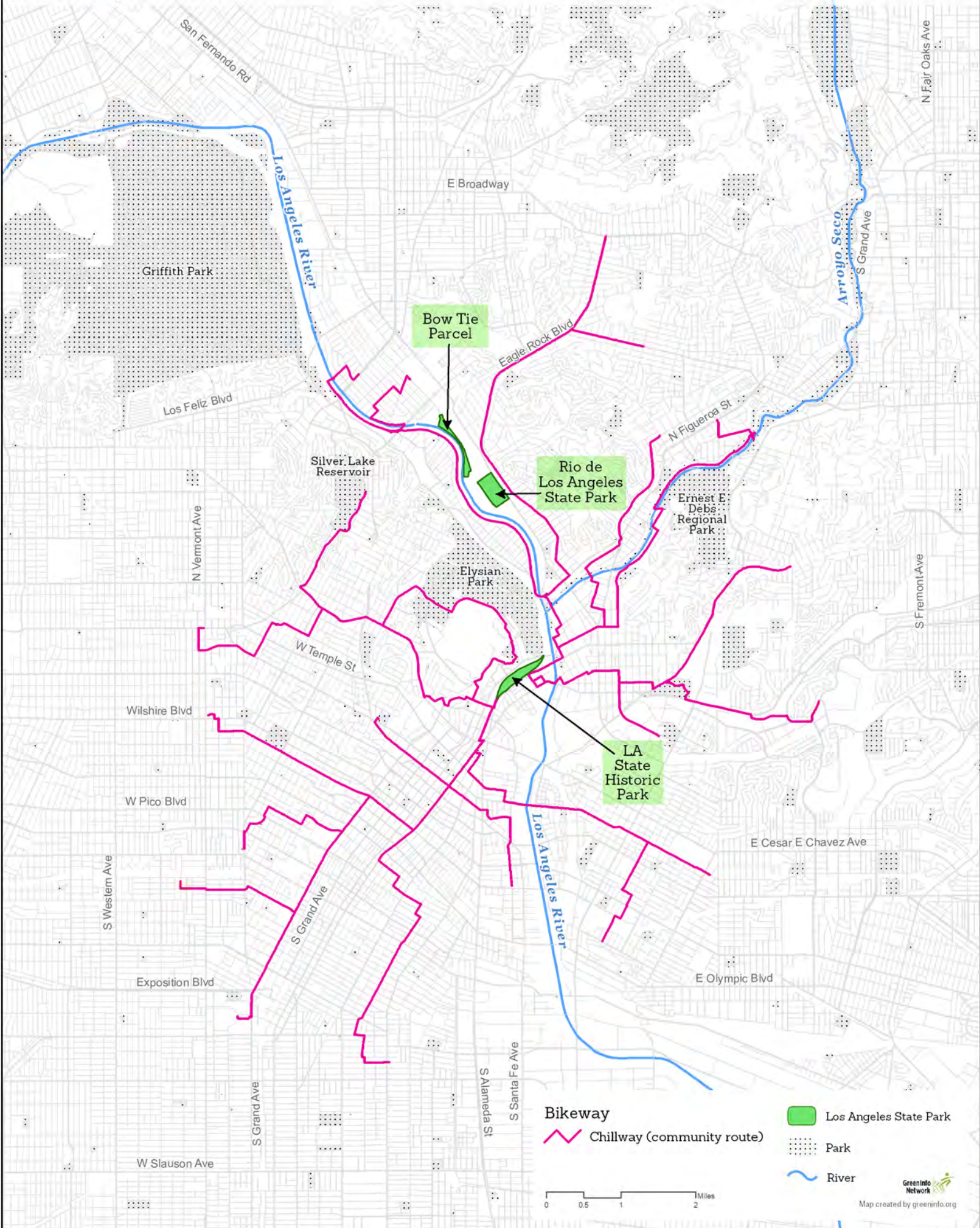


- Bikeway**
- Official Bikeway (planned, new or improved)
 - Neighborhood Network (planned, new or improved)

- Los Angeles State Park
- Park
- River



Data Source: City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2013, 2010 Bicycle Plan.



Bikeway

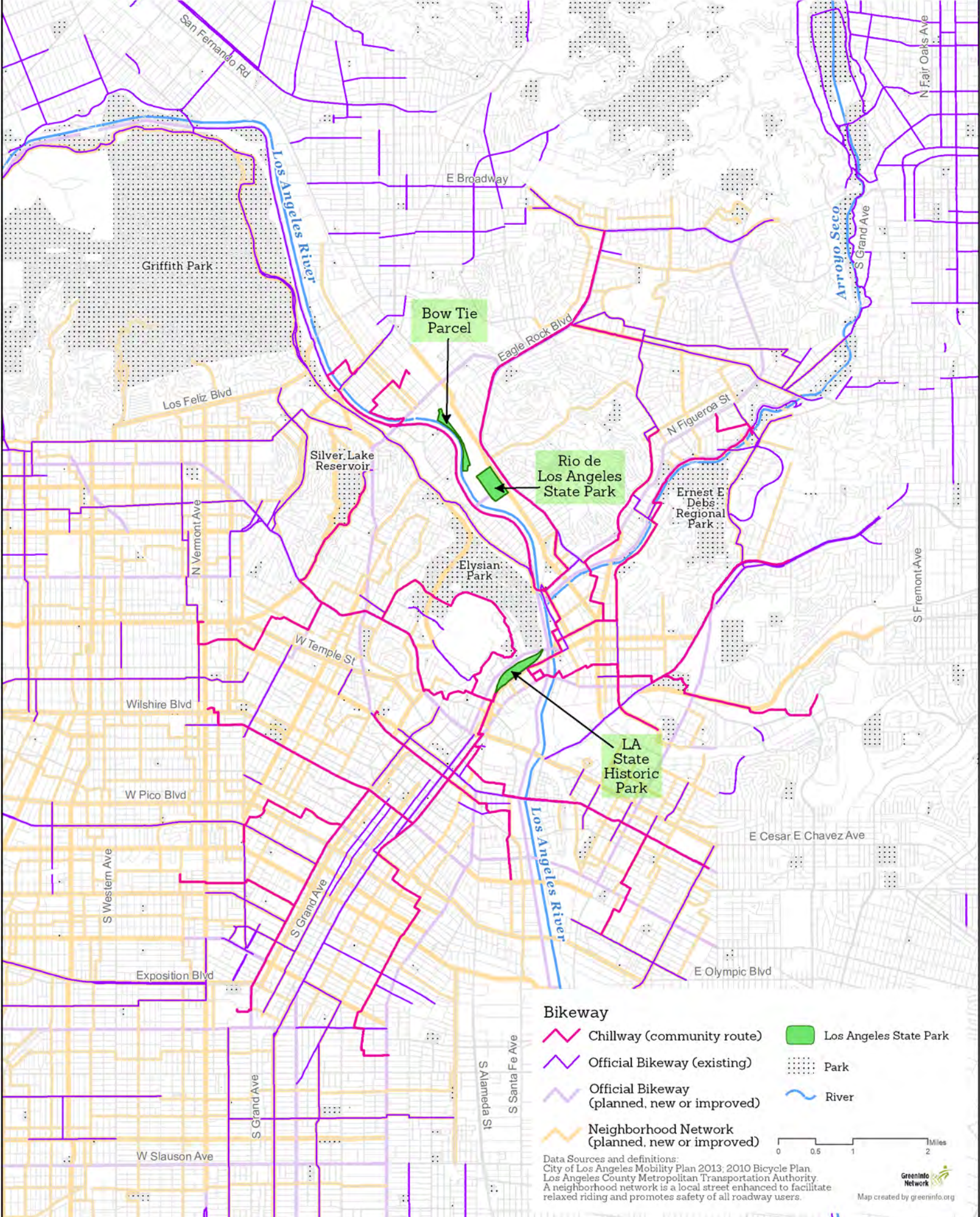
Chillway (community route)

Los Angeles State Park

Park

River

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

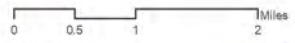


Bikeway

- Chillway (community route)
- Official Bikeway (existing)
- Official Bikeway (planned, new or improved)
- Neighborhood Network (planned, new or improved)

Los Angeles State Park

- Los Angeles State Park
- Park
- ~ River



Data Sources and definitions:
 City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2013, 2010 Bicycle Plan
 Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
 A neighborhood network is a local street enhanced to facilitate relaxed riding and promotes safety of all roadway users.

A Portrait of the Communities Surrounding Los Angeles River State Parks

The seven neighborhoods around the three state parks on the Los Angeles River in downtown Los Angeles — L.A. State Historic Park, Rio de Los Angeles State Park, and the Bowtie Parcel — are home to 95,000 residents who live in 28,900 households in census block groups within a mile of one of the state parks.

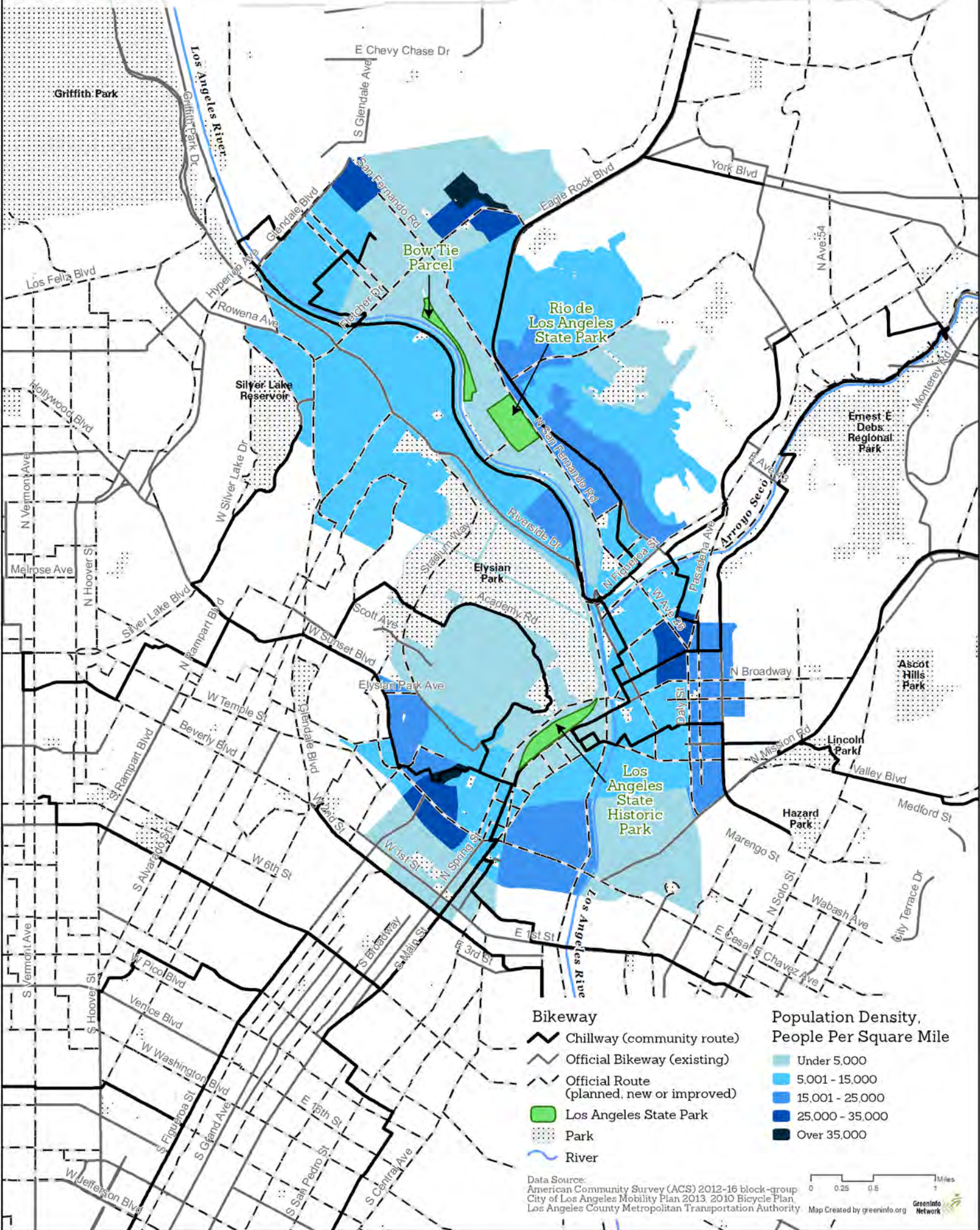
The following maps and chart provide insight into the people living within a mile of these parks.

One quarter of these residents are living in poverty, with a higher percentage of households earning less than \$45,000 a year than in the rest of Los Angeles County and the state of California. Nearly two-thirds of the households live in disadvantaged communities, where the median household income is less than \$51,000 (80 percent of the statewide median household income), and 42 percent live in severely disadvantaged communities, where the median income is less than \$38,000 (60 percent of the statewide median).

Eighty-three percent of residents are people of color, significantly higher than statewide and the rest of Los Angeles County. Six out of seven neighborhoods have a higher percentage of Asian residents, and four out of seven a higher percentage of Latino residents than the rest of Los Angeles County. All of the neighborhoods have a higher percentage of foreign born residents, with residents most commonly coming from Mexico, China, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

The neighborhoods surrounding the parks are generally younger than the rest of the county and state, with a higher percentage of children under 18, except for Chinatown, which has a higher percentage of people over 65.

All of the neighborhoods have a higher percentage of renters than the rest of the county and state, with 70 percent of the households in census block groups within a mile of the parks being renter occupied households.

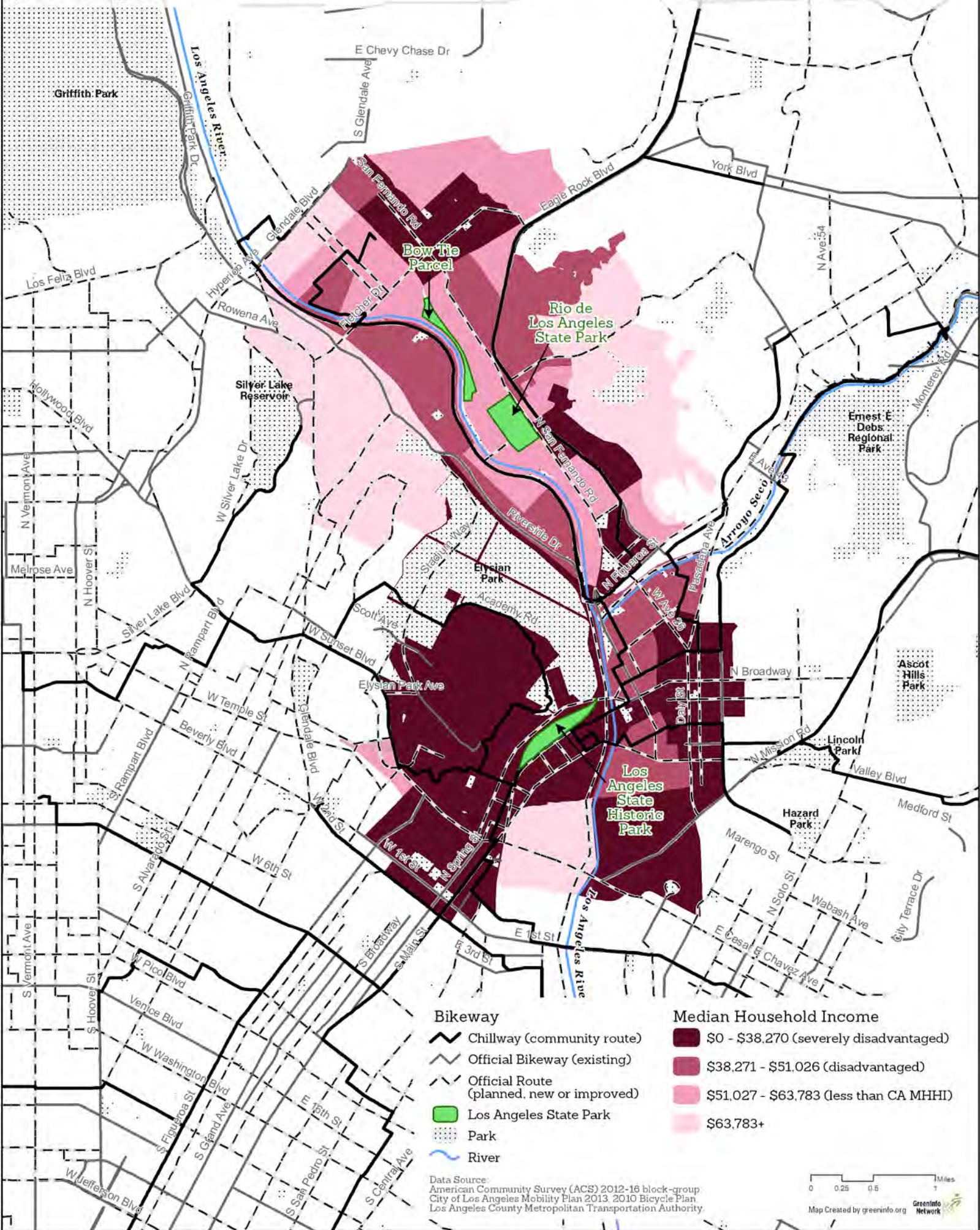


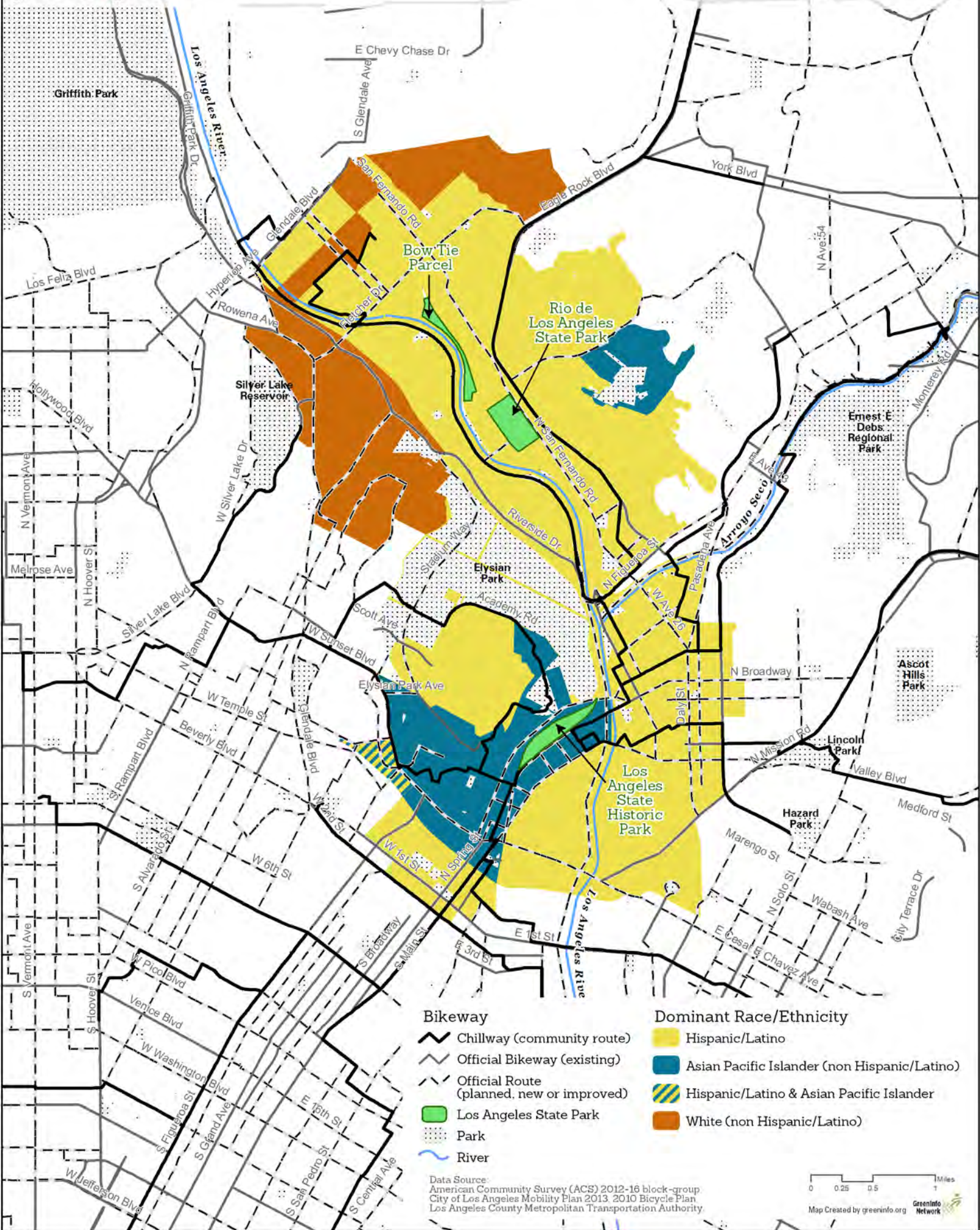
- Bikeway**
- Chillway (community route)
 - Official Bikeway (existing)
 - Official Route (planned, new or improved)
 - Los Angeles State Park
 - Park
 - River

- Population Density, People Per Square Mile**
- Under 5,000
 - 5,001 - 15,000
 - 15,001 - 25,000
 - 25,000 - 35,000
 - Over 35,000

Data Source:
 American Community Survey (ACS) 2012-16 block-group
 City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2013 2010 Bicycle Plan
 Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles
 Map Created by greeninfo.org
 GreenInfo Network





Bikeway

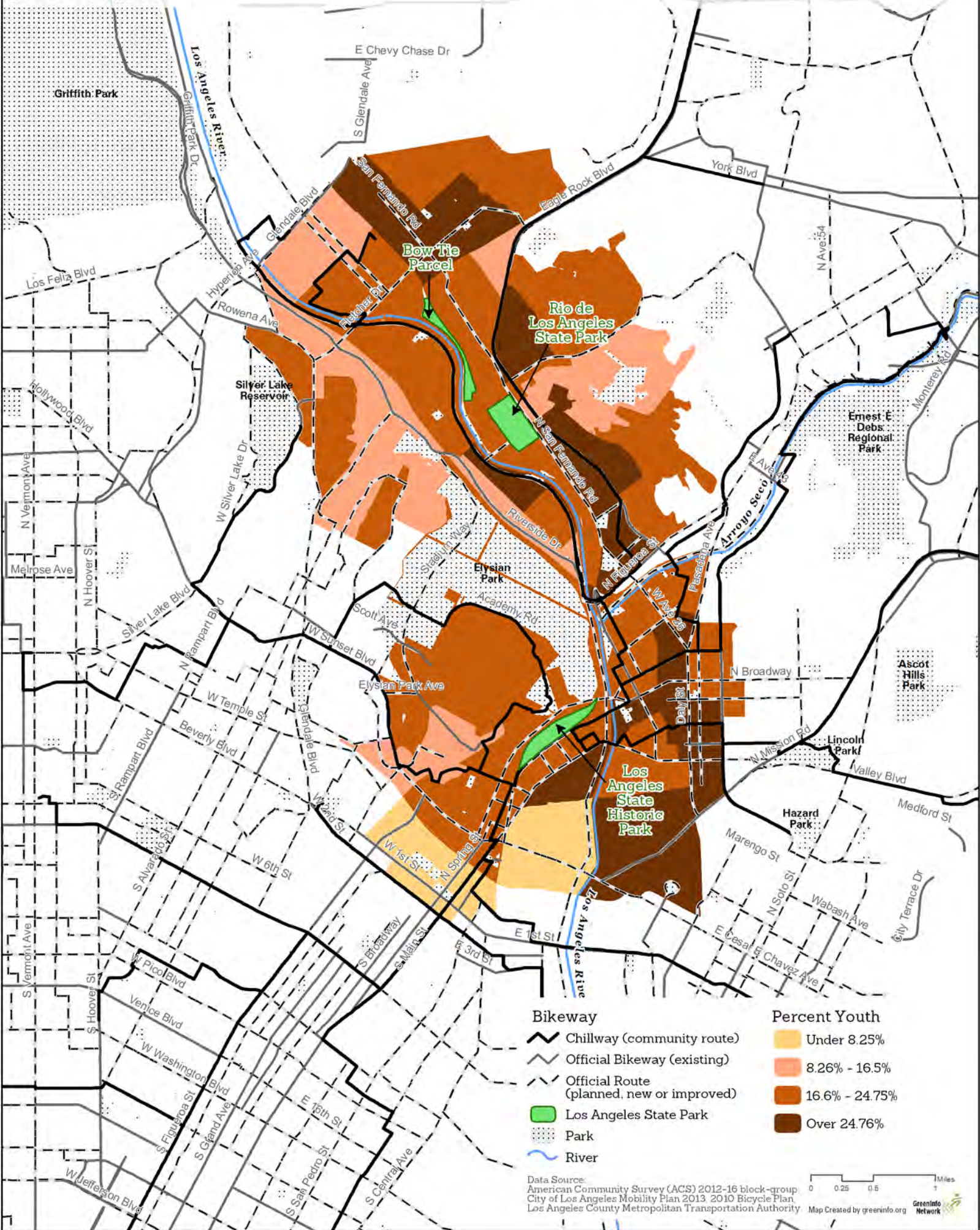
- Chillway (community route)
- Official Bikeway (existing)
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Dominant Race/Ethnicity

- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian Pacific Islander (non Hispanic/Latino)
- Hispanic/Latino & Asian Pacific Islander
- White (non Hispanic/Latino)

Data Source:
 American Community Survey (ACS) 2012-16 block-group
 City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2013, 2010 Bicycle Plan
 Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



Bikeway

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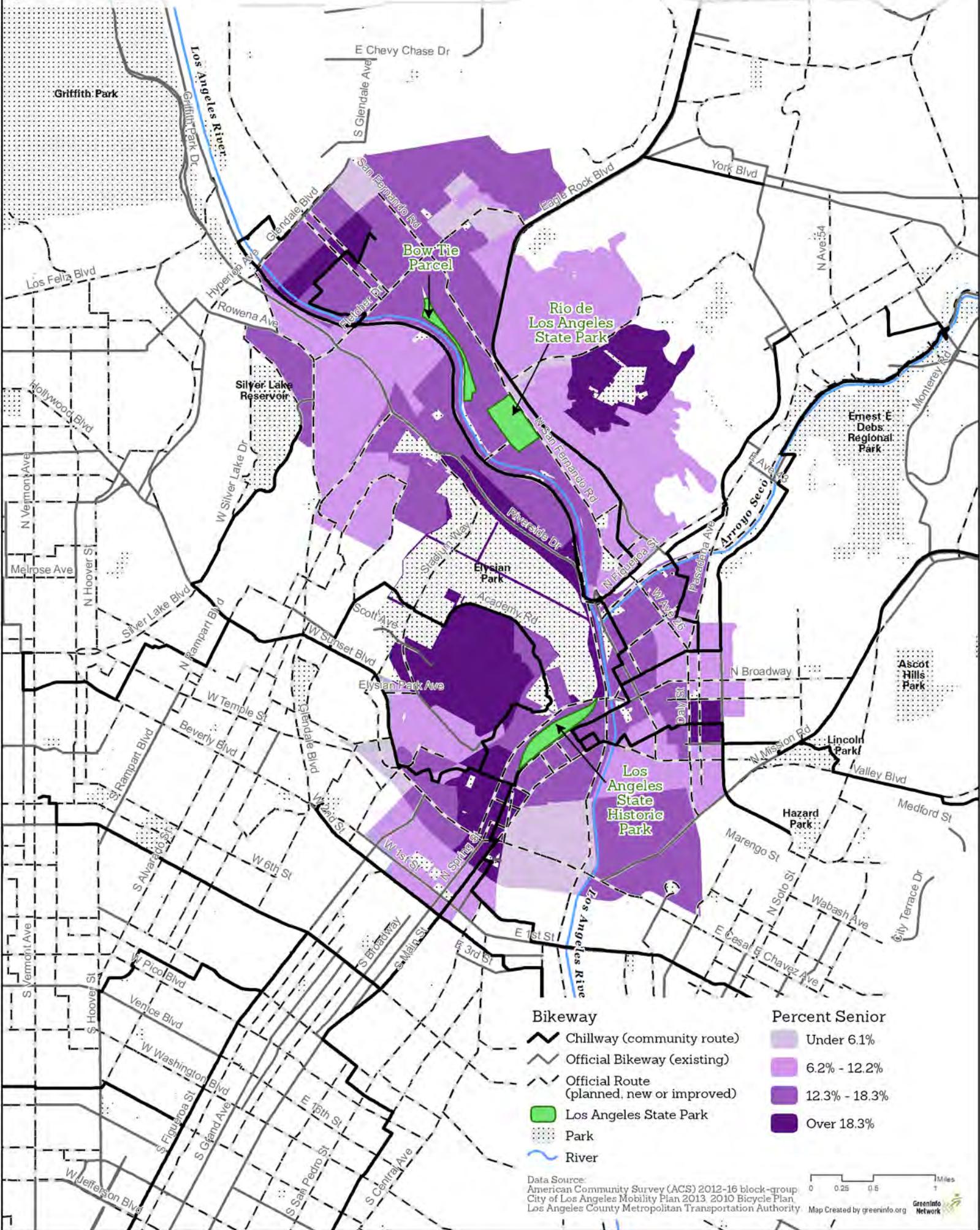
Percent Youth

- Under 8.25%
- 8.26% - 16.5%
- 16.6% - 24.75%
- Over 24.76%

Data Source:
 American Community Survey (ACS) 2012-16 block-group
 City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2013-2010 Bicycle Plan
 Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Map Created by greeninfo.org GreenInfo Network



- Bikeway**
- Chillway (community route)
 - Official Bikeway (existing)
 - Official Route (planned, new or improved)
 - Los Angeles State Park
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- Percent Senior**
- Under 6.1%
 - 6.2% - 12.2%
 - 12.3% - 18.3%
 - Over 18.3%

	AREA OF INTEREST		LOS ANGELES COUNTY	CALIFORNIA
	POPULATION	PERCENT		
TOTAL POPULATION	95,310	--	10,057,155	38,654,206
AGE				
Youth (under 18)	18,490	19.4%	16.5%	17.1%
Senior (65+)	11,165	11.7%	12.2%	12.9%
18 - 64	65,655	68.9%	71.3%	70.0%
RACE / ETHNICITY				
White, NonHispanic	15,912	16.7%	26.7%	38.4%
Black, NonHispanic	4,985	5.2%	8.0%	5.6%
Asian & Pacific Islander, NonHispanic	21,416	22.5%	14.3%	14.1%
Native American, NonHispanic	121	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%
Other, NonHispanic	147	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Two or more races, NonHispanic	1,466	1.5%	2.9%	2.9%
Hispanic/Latino, Any Race	51,263	53.8%	48.3%	38.6%
People of Color	79,398	83.3%	73.2%	61.6%
People in Poverty	21,317	24.5%	17.8%	15.8%
HOUSEHOLDS, Occupied				
Owner Occupied Households	8,588	29.7%	45.7%	54.1%
Renter Occupied Households	20,313	70.3%	54.3%	45.9%
Population in Occupied Households	86,761		9,881,693	37,838,221
Population in Owner Occupied Household	26,554	30.6%	48.4%	54.8%
Population in Renter Occupied Household	60,207	69.4%	51.6%	45.2%
INCOME				
Under \$10,000	2,517	8.7%	6.5%	5.7%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	2,521	8.7%	5.6%	4.9%
\$15,000 - \$19,999	2,055	7.1%	5.1%	4.5%
\$20,000 - \$24,999	1,807	6.3%	5.2%	4.6%
\$25,000 - \$29,999	1,477	5.1%	4.6%	4.3%
\$30,000 - \$34,999	1,632	5.6%	4.7%	4.4%
\$35,000 - \$39,999	1,429	4.9%	4.3%	4.0%
\$40,000 - \$44,999	1,281	4.4%	4.3%	4.1%
\$45,000 - \$49,999	1,048	3.6%	3.8%	3.7%
\$50,000 - \$59,999	2,285	7.9%	7.2%	7.1%
\$60,000 - \$74,000	2,203	7.6%	9.3%	9.4%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	2,952	10.2%	11.6%	12.1%
\$100,000 - \$124,999	1,880	6.5%	8.5%	9.1%
\$125,000 - \$149,999	1,078	3.7%	5.5%	6.1%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	1,283	4.4%	6.3%	7.3%
\$200,000 Plus	1,453	5.0%	7.6%	8.7%
Median Household Income Range	\$12,276 - \$114,018			
DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES				
Disadvantaged (MHHI is less than \$51,026)	63,524	67.5%	42.5%	33.6%
Severly Disadvantaged (MHHI is less than \$38,270)	42,924	45.6%	22.0%	17.1%

Credits and Contact Information for this Report

This report was prepared by Jon Christensen, an adjunct assistant professor in the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA and a board member of the Los Angeles River State Park Partners, with assistance from Public Matters, GreenInfo Network, and the Los Angeles River State Park Partners.

"The Current Lack of Safe Bicycling to State Parks on the L.A. River and an Overview of the Planning Process" was written by Jon Christensen and Omar Vargas.

"Priority Recommendations for Improvements" was written by Taylor Fitz-Gibbon and Jenny Alemán-Zometa.

"Maps of Current and Planned Bikeways and 'Chillways'" were designed by GreenInfo Network with research by Taylor Fitz-Gibbon and Jenny Alemán-Zometa.

"A Portrait of the Communities Surrounding the Parks" was written by Jon Christensen with data analysis and maps by GreenInfo Network.

The pedal2parks app at pedal2parks.org was designed by GreenInfo Network, with research and informational tips on "chillways" by Taylor Fitz-Gibbon and Jenny Alemán-Zometa, and Spanish translation by Jon Christensen and Ursula K. Heise.

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