

**STEAMBOAT SPRINGS PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

February 22, 2017

The regularly scheduled public meeting of the Steamboat Springs Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order at approximately 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 22, 2017, in the Citizens' Meeting Room, Centennial Hall, 124 10th Street, Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Parks and Recreation Commission members in attendance were Chair Alan Koermer, Vice-Chair Doug Tumminello, Frank Alfone, Sarah Floyd, Holly Weik and Kady Watson.
Staff members present were Open Space and Trails Supervisor Craig Robinson and Staff Assistant Ally Press.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

E-Bike Use Discussion

STAFF PRESENTATION

Jennifer Bock, Staff Attorney:

We've gotten some questions, especially last summer, about e-bikes from the public. We put out a press release last summer letting people know that e-bikes are currently not allowed on the Core Trail, but we continued to get questions and requests from folks who were interested in using e-bikes in the city. We've been doing some research and talking to other cities.

The federal law that's applicable limits e-bikes definition to 750 watts or less, 20mph or less, motor only. So somebody who's about 170 pounds could ride 20mph on this sort of e-bike classified under federal law without any peddling. Under federal law, these cannot be considered motor vehicles, so the state of Colorado or the City of Steamboat can't decide those are motor vehicles, and you need to go to the DMV. That's about all that we have from the feds on e-bikes.

There are three main types of e-bikes: They're mostly manufactured to reach an assisted speed limit of 20mph and to be less than 750 watts, so they're manufactured to comply with federal law. They provide a throttle or peddle assist. The first two cease to provide assistance at 20mph; the third type goes up to 28mph.

Under state law, the city has the ability to regulate e-bikes, including requiring registration fees, speed limits for parks, use on a bike or pedestrian trail. Currently, our City Code 16-4 addresses vehicles but

does not address e-bikes. The code talks about motor vehicles not being allowed in parks. It does not specifically address e-bikes at this time.

Other Municipalities: Vail is allowing e- bikes for a six-month trial period which started last summer. They are limiting e-bikes to 20mph, 500 watts or less. They also are cutting them out of certain parts of downtown Vail that they feel are pedestrian heavy.

Boulder started a pilot project in 2014, which actually became permanent. They didn't find any conflicts with having e-bikes on multi-use paths in the city. They have a 15mph limit, and they do not allow e-bikes on any of their open space, mountain park land.

Breckenridge allows e-bikes, but they have some conflicts with county rules in Summit County, which don't allow e-bikes on some of their main core trails because of some easement concerns on county land.

Policy Ideas: As we've talked with disability advocates and the Land Trust, one idea that has come up is to pilot the use of e-bikes on the Core Trail in Steamboat. The city owns most of the property along the Core Trail. Much of it is in the CDOT right-of-way for Highway 40. There are some parcels that are privately owned. Mount Werner owns a parcel near Fetcher Park, and there are some other private parcels scattered around.

Questions: Should we draft an ordinance for City Council to allow a pilot project for e-bike use in Steamboat? What sort of framework would you like around that? Speed limit is something that other municipalities have put on the table that applies to all bikes. We don't currently have a speed limit on our core trail. Would we sign the Core Trail with speed limit signs? Would we enforce it? Do we even want e-bikes on the Core Trail with the congestion?

There is an e-bike store on Lincoln Avenue. I'm sure people would be excited to rent e-bikes and take them on the Core Trail. Some of our residents would buy them and use them on the Core Trail. They have advantages for older or disabled residents and visitors.

Future: Emerald Mountain will certainly be something people want to talk about at some point, along with other soft-surface trails in the city. Soft-surface trails that are not part of open space may present different challenges with regard to conservation easements than soft-surface trails that are part of a private development that have a public access easement.

If you want to look for more information on the internet, there's a lot of it out there.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION

Watson: In your research, did you come across the enforcement aspect of this? I would think that would be the biggest challenge. How do we know they're only going 15mph? How do we know it's a certain type of e-bike? How do they even know it's an e-bike? I just got back from California this afternoon. E-bikes are everywhere. It's really hard to tell what's a regular bike and what's an e-bike.

Bock: You're right; it's really hard to tell what an e-bike is, so I think that presents challenges. As far as miles per hour go, they are equipped with speedometers. There's a 20mph max assist. So at least there's some ability to self-regulate. Depending on the direction folks would like to go, we could certainly talk more with the Police Department and other folks about enforcement.

Tumminello: There is legislation pending in the Colorado House that does require labeling of e-bikes as class 1, 2 or 3. The enforcement issue is one that we have for any number of issues.

Weik: In a study in Minneapolis, they were pulling regular cyclists over and asking them how fast they thought they were going and then comparing that to their actual speed. Many people consistently underestimated their speed by 3-5mph. So the e-bikes may have an advantage on this because they'll have a speedometer. Enforcement is difficult even for the conventional crowd because unless you have a bike computer, which is typically only the road bike crowd, they may not even know whether they're violating a specific speed limit or not. So it becomes a little problematic. Not to say we can't do it, but we shouldn't expect that it's going to be followed precisely.

Alfone: Have you looked into the possibility of whether there's a stretch of the Core Trail exclusively owned by the city where the pilot program might be implemented? If there is one, does it make sense? Is it a contiguous section? You make reference to having to get some sort of waiver for private sections, so I'm wondering if we can look at a section where you wouldn't need to go down that road with waivers and amendments to agreements that entities have with the city.

Bock: There are several stretches. It probably would be the downtown central portion that we could link together with CDOT right-of-way and city property. I think that could certainly be an option.

Alfone: Because I think when you explore the waiver, you're going to potentially open up discussions with those private owners that lead to liability issues, enforcement, etc. So if a pilot program is the direction that makes the most sense, if it could be exclusive to the city-owned property, I think it has a better opportunity of getting some traction to make that happen.

Tumminello pointed out that once someone gets on the Core Trail with their e-bike, they're not likely to limit themselves to city property.

Floyd: Is there any concern about the underpasses and sharp turns with e-bikes? Have you gotten any feedback on how Vail's study has gone in terms of injuries and lack of experience on bikes and people going faster than they should. If people aren't accustomed to being on a bike, this is something they might try. It would seem like the underpasses are pretty sharp.

Bock: I haven't come across anything with regards to that. Most of the literature that I've seen is that people adjust to them pretty well. From the report of Boulder's pilot project and their monitoring of accidents and conflicts, they saw very little if any increase in conflicts. It wasn't due to e-bikes, so they decided to extend their pilot program. Nothing specific on new people who might not be able to navigate.

Watson: I've ridden one. It's like riding a bike. It's not a very steep learning curve.

Koermer asked about enforcement in the other municipalities.

Bock: I haven't seen that, but I can look around and make some phone calls if you're interested in that.

Koermer said that would be helpful so Steamboat would not need to reinvent the wheel. He asked about statistics on injuries, crashes, conflicts with other trail users, etc.

Floyd: My guess would be that commuters on traditional bikes are probably going way faster than most e-bike users. I wonder if it would ever be fun or interesting to put the speed thing down on the bike path so people can get an idea of how fast they're going. My biggest concern with this would be congestion with multiuse and varied speeds and having all kinds of people on the path.

Watson: Eric Meyer wrote in because he couldn't be here tonight. He commented on the commuters and that probably more people would commute. Could they ride an e-bike around town due to the hills? He wanted us to make sure to note that.

Tumminello: I'm supportive of a pilot program because I think that e-bikes are big and getting bigger. So we need to start figuring out what the proper regulation is. I don't think initial congestion is a foregone conclusion. I do think the speed is an issue, but it's not limited to e-bikes. So I think we should be looking at something like a speed limit on the Core Trail. Maybe this is a good way for us to get that into effect. I would be supportive of a pilot program for a year or whatever the appropriate duration is to look at

e-bike use on the Core Trail or maybe other hard-surface trails. I can't think of any.

Watson asked about registration fees in other municipalities; Bock said she didn't see any.

Watson: Just thinking of ways of generating income to pay for enforcement.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Trevan Newfort, 40817 Purple Sage Street:
Manager of Steamboat Bike Park; avid cyclist; professional mountain biker; endure racer. I have also had the privilege to own a Class 1 specialized turbo Levo [?] last summer and into this year. So I've had a chance to put one of these bikes on the ground, really learn the physical and environmental impacts. Probably the bigger issues are the social elements and impacts of these bikes and what it's doing within the industry for our retailers, consumers, land managers which this has kind of been thrust upon. Now we're dealing with it after the fact to some degree, which has been a bit of a struggle.

I will say that once you experience these bikes, a lot of the concerns that I had went away. You really start to realize that these types of bikes, especially class 1, (class 2 and 3 don't have much appeal for me, though I do see their purpose,) tend to open way more doors than they close. Learning how to manage this equipment within the public trails networks is going to be an ongoing item. It's been successful in Europe and a lot of other examples, but it's definitely a tough one.

Core Trail relative to speed limit: The only thing I would say is it's tough to set a rule that you can't enforce at times, so that enforcement is critical. You need to be able to enforce that however you can for all users. At the ski area, we tend not to create rules that we can't enforce.

Within the private land of the ski area bike park, we have decided to operate a Turbo Levo school program. So we have five rental bikes that we've purchased for tours and lessons. We'll see how it goes. We've been working with the Forest Service. There's a lot of practical applications to it from a patrol response standpoint and a number of other avenues where we see the value of this new equipment.

I'm happy to be a resource relative to first-hand experience, impacts on trails, social impacts and things like that if you guys ever need that.

Steve Williams, South Routt:

I've had extensive experience riding an e-bike for the last two years to go along with the other bikes I have from mountain bikes to tandems to road

bikes. Mine is a Felt Outfitter, so it's a fat-tired e-bike. It adds 15 pounds to the bike to carry the battery and motor around. So it actually changes the dynamics a little differently than you might think if you run out of battery power or your switch goes bad and you have to get back. The reason I bought it was having test drove something more similar to what Trevan mentioned at the IMBA World Summit here in Steamboat, I realized that these things do go up the hill. I use it extensively at my ranch. I have a trailer for the back, and I can haul chainsaws and fence repair material, sprayers, and go just about anywhere with that e-bike assist. With the wide tires, it will literally go most anywhere. So it's been an incredible work vehicle for me. Last year when my wife had some heart problems, it was the only way she could ride. She had a lot of fun on the Core Trail around Stagecoach and things like that. That's when I realized it would be a great application for my brother who is handicapped due to a spinal cord tumor. So he can't ride anymore; he can just barely get around on a cane. But you put him on an e-bike and he can go. He loves it. That's when I realized that the class 2 e-bikes have a place because that's the one that will actually allow you to throttle it and not peddle. You can peddle with it, but you don't have to. He can't get started pushing peddles. Once he gets it going, he can peddle, but if his leg gives out, he has to stop. The throttle would get him home. So for a person in that situation, they're fantastic. You certainly would not want to discourage someone from using the Core Trail in that situation.

As you look beyond the Core Trail, e-bikes don't help you have the technical ability to ride on Emerald Mountain. I have about five miles of nicely-built mountain bike trail on my ranch, and I can get around the uphill corners easier. But if you don't know how to setup and ride around, the average rookie person is going to be pushing that thing a lot. So it will have its limitations on how many people are just going to flock to more technical riding environments based on my own experience of having handled one extensively for several years.

You asked about registration. I've been on the County Multi-Modal Advisory Board since its inception. The first year we did an extensive look into registration all over the country. We found that there's not a program anywhere that ever paid for itself. That was the frustration. They've only been useful on things like college campuses where they're built into your student fees and mostly for theft recovery.

On the conservation easement issue, I think it's going to be interesting to see if the state redefines e-bikes as no longer motor vehicles. Having just placed my ranch under a conservation easement, we spent a lot of time researching that issue. To make it simple, we just wrote into our conservation easement that you can use a class 1 or class 2 e-bike on my trails for recreational purposes. It's not a problem for trail maintenance or something like that to use a "motor vehicle," but for recreational purposes there certainly was – given that some of the funding came from GOCO.

We initially plowed a little bit of that ground with those folks to allow them to put that language in a conservation easement that they were helping to fund. So things are definitely evolving.

To me, the whole issue with all of this is really going to be education of new users and trying to get some courtesy and respect for the other users. I would never ride the Core Trail because I don't think it's an appropriate place to ride a road bike at 18-25mph. I would encourage all of you to go try one.

Somebody was asking how you tell them. There's a number of ways you can tell because we're not trying to hide the motors. The big batteries and motors are either in the hubs or the bottom bracket. They're pretty noticeable, but performance-wise they're no different because they're dead quiet. So it doesn't bother wildlife; it doesn't bother the person you ride by. That's what's unique about them compared to anything using an internal combustion engine.

Tumminello: If the pending legislation does pass, e-bikes will be excluded from the definition of motor vehicles.

John Kowalski, 489 Mountain Vista:

I have no experience on an e-bike. I have two areas of concern with it. One is safety on the Core Trail. I do feel that it brings out people onto the Core Trail who possibly shouldn't be on the Core Trail perhaps going too fast when you can get up to 20-28mph on them.

Another concern is back country use. It probably will happen. I think it would be very possible that search and rescue gets involved. You have people out there further than they probably should be. I don't know the logistical aspects of operating an e-bike, but I do know that given the tools, people are going to try and get further and further. Therefore, there will be more issues. I'm obviously speaking from the standpoint that I like hanging out there when there's no one around, and that will start to proliferate I believe. I think it opens the door for injuries to search and rescue volunteers who are helping out someone who gets themselves into a bad situation.

I do get concerned about Core Trail congestion with the amount of people that would be on it. I'm not trying to say that I don't want people out enjoying the outdoors.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION

Alfone: Steve, you seem to have a lot of experience with various types of bicycles. In your opinion, is it harder to handle and control and maneuver an e-bike compared to a road bike or mountain bike for an average user?

Williams: No, not really on the Core Trail or just a normal road environment. It might be slightly trickier on more technical mountain bike terrain just because it's a little bit heavier bike. Getting the feel of the peddle assist and getting it engaged comfortably is a little different, but most people just get on them and after a few minutes can ride it like a bike.

Weik: Trevan, have you guys had enough mountain e-bike use on the trails on the bike park to see any additional trail impact on the corners either due to breaking or acceleration or weight that's creating any additional trail wear and tear?

Newfort: Personally, I haven't seen e-bikes out there. I have heard a few accounts. Coming from personal experience having ridden a performance mountain version of a class 1, I really struggle to see additional impacts that an e-bike impacts the trail more than a standard mountain bike. IMBA has done some studies relative to that and found that there's the same level of impact. They may weigh 15 pounds more, but so does one rider to another rider. A lot of these bikes are either 29-inch wheels or plus tires, so they're a larger contact patch which tends to disturb the dirt less. What it will impact more is it's going to increase use; it's going to increase traffic; you're going to go further. Whether that's a bad thing or a good thing that we're increasing usage of our trail system and people are getting out there because it's breaking down the physical barriers to the sport to some degree, that's a double-edged sword. Some of our individuals that are purists in the sport and can access terrain that people typically wouldn't otherwise, that's definitely a social element that we have to look through. Relative to that bike impacting the trail further, climbing-wise, it fills the gap between your power stroke. Typically you're laying down the most power on your down stroke, and there's a gap there. It tends to create cyclical torque on the rear tire, which can break traction. In the snow it's actually phenomenal; you can climb and not break through and create a rut compared to a regular bike because you have that assistance in between each power stroke. So there's a much smoother power delivery. I think with dirt you're not going to be torqueing the surface loose as much, either. Around a switchback it will help fill the gaps so you'll have a nice, smooth, round turn through a tight switchback. It eases the ability to climb terrain, but there's technical speed limits on any trail so you can only go so fast. So I see the biggest impact being increased use and traffic.

MOTION

Commissioner Tumminello moved that the commission recommend the implementation of a pilot program for the use of class 1 and class 2 e-bikes on the Core Trail with a directive to staff to consider the safety impacts, including the implementation of an appropriate speed limit on the Core Trail as part of that pilot program.
Commissioner Watson seconded the motion.

Commissioner Alfone requested a friendly amendment to notify private land owners of the program and allow them to weigh in on the proposal.

DISCUSSION ON MOTION

Weik: I agree with a pilot program for class 1 and the establishment of a speed limit. I realize that it's not always helpful to establish a rule if we don't plan to enforce it, but I think what that does is in the long run it will give the police or Parks and Rec an opportunity if someone is egregiously violating that, you have something to cite them against as opposed to just reckless endangerment or being a bad trail user. We'll actually have a statute to cite them with for violating the speed limit on the Core Trail. I wonder if we shouldn't look at potentially requiring that class 2 bikes be restricted to only somebody with a demonstrated physical disability in order to have that additional assistance.

Tumminello: In my view, that's tough to implement, and it's certainly tough to police. I'm concerned about the perceived discriminatory aspect of it for lack of a better phrase.

Koermer confirmed that class 1 and class 2 both have the same speed.

Weik: Then I would rather see it limited to class 1 only with a speed limit. I think it's fair to require some sort of peddling action or input on the part of the user. When we're talking about using a motor scooter or electric wheelchairs on the Core Trail, nobody has ever said that it's unfair to limit their use to people who have a demonstrated need for it.

Tumminello accepted Alfone's friendly amendment.

Floyd: Is there a time limit on this pilot program?

Tumminello: One year.

VOTE

The motion carried 4-1 with Commissioner Weik opposing and Commissioner Koermer abstaining.

Spring Creek Proposed Bike Trail

STAFF PRESENTATION

Craig Robinson, Parks, Open Space and Trails Manager:
Tonight we're here to talk about a proposal for a Spring Creek directional bike trail. This is information only tonight; it's the beginning of the public process and dialog to talk about the concept of a trail that was first proposed by the 2A accommodations tax, which was a voter-approved funding mechanism to develop a certain set of multi-use trails throughout the community. While the trails were proposed, they have not been approved. That's what this process is.

The trail is proposed to go from the Dry Lake Parking Lot on Buffalo Pass and connect down to town. The concept was that there are conflicts on Spring Creek Trail today, and as the 2A trail system is developed on Buffalo Pass, which is in the works through 2018, we're going to see more multiuse in that area – particularly bike use. A lot of those bikers might go up Spring Creek, ride the trail system and then want to come down to town. A lot of people are going to drive to Dry Lake parking lot, which is going to see improvements as well. Maybe not everybody is going to take that car ride back to town; some bikers are going to ride down to town.

We're anticipating some increased use from this new trail system.

The proposed expenditure is kind of a guesstimate at this time. We don't know the trail length, the corridor, but it could be around \$160,000 for design and construction. If it's not the entire trail length, the price would be cheaper. The funding source is the 2A Trails budget. We may get grants to assist with that as well.

In 1986, the voters approved 1% of lodging accommodations to be used to support amenities that promote tourism and enhance the vitality of Steamboat Springs as a premier destination resort, as well as enhancing the community identity, environmental desirability and economic health of the community. Since 1986, these funds have been used to construct the tennis center, Haymaker golf course, Haymaker club house. In November, 2013, City Council set up a group to prioritize and make recommendations to City Council on what projects should be brought to the voters. The 2A Trails project was one, and they added the downtown promenade and park concept as part of that.

Over 10 years, we have \$5.1 million that's going to be invested in trails infrastructure in the Steamboat Springs area. A committee of residents was formed, and they are rating and prioritizing the expenditures of this investment.

In 2016, they did approve some funding for 2017 for design of this trail corridor. While 2018 funds have not yet been allocated, later this year the committee will meet to prioritize 2018 projects. In 2017, they are working on Buffalo Pass trails. Kent Foster is here with the National Forest Service; he may be able to speak more to that if you have any specific questions.

On Buffalo Pass, there were existing trails that were social trails which were not sanctioned by the Forest Service. People were allowed to ride them, but they were not sanctioned or maintained, and they were not on maps. You weren't allowed to maintain them because they weren't sanctioned. What they want to do is legitimize these trails, make them sustainable to industry standards, maintain them and map them. There are other new trails that are being constructed in the area catering to a variety of abilities from beginner to expert.

When we talk about this trail on the Spring Creek corridor being a downhill directional trail, it perhaps sounds more intimidating than it is. It's not a trail like NPR or like downhill racers are using; it is just a one-way trail for bikes to get down off the mountain. The concept is to construct the trail in such a way that it is low maintenance. We're not talking about jumps, berms or features that require large amounts of maintenance because it's difficult to get to, and maintenance is very expensive. So we want sustainable, low-cost trail to get people off the top of Buffalo Pass, across Forest Service property, down to city property and out through Spring Creek Canyon.

There are some challenges. Spring Creek Canyon follows several creeks through the valley. There are steep embankments of ledge on either side of the valley there. There's dense trees, dead trees from beetle kill, steep grades and wetlands. Just to build the trail that we have today, while it was a different type of trail with different requirements, that was a challenge to get that one in. This trail will be easier because it's going to be a narrower trail with less impacts to the environment, and we're talking about a different type of surface for this trail.

We have heard about conflicts on the current Spring Creek Trail: biker-biker, biker-pedestrian crashes. It's heavily used by dog walkers, hikers, runners, nature lovers, and there are wildlife encounters as well. There is a wildlife closure that happens up there for the elk winter range. That would continue, so the trail would be closed in the wintertime.

The trail would allow for downhill directional travel of bikes only. We're talking with the Forest Service and Routt County Riders about a stacked loop system utilizing the existing bridges that are in place crossing the creeks. This would allow for people to ride up and not go all the way up and come back down the trail. Hikers could go up and down the same trail that they're on. As you get higher and higher on these stacked loops, you

always have the opportunity to bail, or you can go all the way to Dry Lake and then come down after you've ridden up top.

At this point, we're looking at this trail being designed for intermediates and experts. But we're not talking about features that beginners would be afraid to go down.

One section of the trail would go from the Dry Lake parking lot following a single track all the way to where the single track meets the county road.

Robinson showed the sections owned by various land managers.

Once the single track hits the two-track county road at the bottom of Spring Creek, we have some challenges. The county road is our trail easement and access to the Spring Creek Trail city property. So we don't have a way out of the canyon at this point in time. We are in discussions and looking at alternatives on how we could perhaps obtain an easement if we can work within the right-of-way of the county road. But the vision is that we try to obtain a separate access that will parallel the county road all the way down to the ponds. Once you get to that location, depending on access easements, road right-of-way widths and what the final alignment looks like, it will be challenging to get passed that point with a separate trail all the way to Amethyst. It is a county road from the ponds down to Amethyst. As I've talked to County Road and Bridge, it appears that there is a speed limit on county roads that could be between 20 and 30. It's not posted today. Parking is at Amethyst. Handicapped parking is allowed at the ponds; it's very limited. The parking system is not great down at that intersection. The road is shared today by all types of users, including moose and mountain lions.

A movement that's happening within the industry is road sharing. In a document called Small Town Rural and Multi-Modal Networks, they talk about yield roadways, which is a new term I guess. It's a combination of sharing road for bikes, pedestrians and motor vehicles along with any other user group that is out there. It's a two-way road; it has no markings on it; and it generally has a slow speed. It's signed very well; people are educated; and they're supposed to follow the rules. That's where we run into problems because not everyone is going to do so.

We anticipate having some challenges this year with increased use on Spring Creek. We will be working with Kent and the Forest Service about creating some additional signage to let people know that Spring Creek is a two-way trail. The buzz is already out there that Steamboat has great trails, so we're going to be working with people up top and also down by the ponds and on the county road – probably at least three different locations with new signage.

Moving forward, we will work to manage those impacts. We will continue to work towards a final alignment and work through the public process listening to folks as we move forward, and come back with a final alignment once we have that in place.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION

Koermer clarified that the idea is to alleviate congestion that already exists on the trail by creating a downhill access specifically for bikes.

Tumminello: Are you able to feed potentially this new downhill trail directly onto the county road so that it never crosses the uphill portion of the trail?

Robinson: At this point in time because there are so many street crossings, and one side of the creek is going to be better for construction than the other, we anticipate having to cross some of the existing bridges. We can design and construct the trail in such a way to minimize impacts. With NPR on Emerald, we cross several existing trails and access points, and we've minimized conflicts through design to prevent people from speeding before those crossings. We think we can take the same type of approach with Spring Creek.

Tumminello asked about any other crossings or accesses down the uphill portion of the trail.

Robinson: There will be no random crossings in the middle of nowhere. At the bridge crossings, you would be able to access the downhill. It would be signed once the two trails left the bridges. The hiking trail would stay the hiking trail and the uphill for bikers; the downhill trail, you could access it but there would be a point where it would say "downhill; you cannot go uphill passed this point."

Floyd asked where the two trails would meet.

Robinson: Point A to Point B big picture is all we have right now. Dry Lake Parking Lot to where the single track meets the two-track road in the Spring Creek Canyon. Then from the road out, we are continuing to look at a separate trail. But it's a much narrower window to operate within because the county road is surrounded by private property. We're looking into the possibility of easements from these property owners; we're also looking at building within the right-of-way with the county to see if there's room to fit a trail in there. So the concept on the two-track section would be to avoid it completely as best as possible all the way down to the ponds.

Alfone confirmed that the 2A group would have to prioritize the funding if this were to be constructed in 2018. The most efficient way is to combine a design-build project.

Robinson: You did receive several public comments: general environmental concerns about bikes on trails, speed of mountain bikers, conflicts with existing users, very busy trail, possible conflicts on the road itself from the ponds down to Amethyst, crossings on existing bridges.

Alfone confirmed that the Spring Creek Trail as it exists today would allow for two-way traffic for everyone except bikers, who would go down the downhill section.

Weik: One of the comments from Mr. Keefe was a concern about busses hauling tourists up to Dry Lake trailhead and enabling a lot of downhill-only bike traffic. My understanding is that would be a commercial venture which would require a permit and would not be permitted under USFS rules.

Kent Foster, Forest Service:

Correct. If there were any busses or shuttle opportunities up there, they would have to be under permit from the Forest Service. We would be regulating that. When we did the Buffalo Pass Trails project, one of the concerns from some of the land owners and the county was increased traffic. That's something we would be addressing if we did go forward with allowing for shuttling.

Robinson said the city would need to approve the permit as well because it is a shared trail.

Weik: So there is a mechanism in place to regulate that and prevent that sort of scenario from happening of thousands of vehicles flocking to that trailhead for an uphill shuttle.

Foster: It was approved to have about three miles of alternate trail developed. We're in a preliminary alignment right now; once we get a final alignment, we'll wrap up our specialist step. But we've already done our public involvement for that part of it. Craig is doing this for the city part. We're here because we are working collaboratively. People don't realize it's one trail when they pass the Forest Service Boundary sign.

PUBLIC COMMENT

David Scully, 1484 Morgan Court:

Spring Creek used to be one of my go-to trails. The goal was to be off the trail by 7:00 a.m. because at that point in time it would be packed with joggers, hikers, dog walkers and other users. It just became a stressful situation. The idea to create this kind of safety valve of a directional trail for downhill cycling is one of the best ideas I've heard in a long time, and I highly encourage you to recommend this to City Council and get ahead of the curve. Because while we don't have commercial vehicles now, the current trend is people are carpooling to Dry Lake Campground. There's now a great uphill access bike trail to these new downhill trails. What's happening is somebody out of a carpool situation is drawing the short straw and getting stuck driving the vehicle down while the others are enjoying the rest of their downhill down Spring Creek Trail. This could be in the middle of the day. The new technology with these bikes and suspensions allows you to travel at a much greater rate of speed over obstacles. I think we're just going to see more and more issues created. So this is a fantastic opportunity to be proactive and create something that's a positive for all trail users.

When these trails are done in 2018 or even this fall, there will be an amount of traffic on that trail that's going to be bogging. Thanks for getting ahead of this and creating this safety directional trail. It's a great idea.

Roddy Bell, 1350 Blue Spruce Court:

He registered his excitement about the possibilities of this trail and reiterated the importance of getting it done right.

Bell: Collaboration with the Forest Service is really important. Keep the lines of communication open. Forest Service can do all sorts of work up top, but it doesn't matter at all if the city isn't working on the connection down to the trail. I'm sure you guys are already doing that, but I figured it was important to say it.

Stephanie McNamara, 13099 CR34, Spring Creek Trail:

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Little cabin on the right just up the trail. I have great concerns about the increased use on the lower portion and about what kinds of provisions are going to be made for the safety of the other users of that trail. I have seen the increased use; I have seen the conflicts between riders and walkers. It doesn't sound to me like there's any provision made for speed limits in the lower portion of the canyon. It terrifies me to hear from Craig that it could be as high as 30mph in that canyon. That should be a concern for anyone who's going to authorize this kind of use for this trail.

From what I understand, you're talking about an upper portion easement to separate the hikers from the bikers, but you're not talking about any of that sort of thing on the most-used portion of the trail. I think there are some grave safety concerns. The little one-track trail that exists in the summer is rarely used. I have seen bikers come down that hill at a great rate of speed – well more than 30mph. If we don't have some sort of consideration for what's going to happen on the most travelled part of the road, I think it's an accident waiting to happen.

I also have concerns about the maintenance on that road. It is a county road that is not maintained by the county. A lot of people enjoy that road without realizing that there is no money for maintenance. If more use is going to come about as a result of these floods of downhill users, there should be some consideration for who pays for the maintenance on that portion where it is the most used and there are more people with kids.

We're talking about road sharing but without any provisions for how that road sharing is going to look. I would caution you to make that a consideration before we just say it's great for tourism. I would encourage you to think about the other tourists who walk that trail and the locals who enjoy that trail and how that's going to impact them.

Kirsten Tidic, 1335 Sparta Plaza:

Craig, you said that there might be problems getting that downhill-only trail from the ponds to Amethyst. I'm wondering what the probability is that there will be a downhill portion of that trail. Like Stephanie said, that's the highest-traffic area, and it would be great if we could get separation on that section.

Robinson: I agree, and it's one of my highest priorities to keep working on. But I don't have an answer for you today.

Arleen Van'Bock, 39100 RCR34:

Across the road from Stephanie. I think the downhill trail on the upper part is a wonderful idea. I'm an equestrian user. I'm one of the people that maintains what you call the Ditch Trail – the Steamboat Gardens ditch. So I'm up there almost every day all summer on my horse. I've had encounters with downhill cyclists that see me on a big horse in the middle of their trail, and they bail off and they get hurt and it's terrible. So I would encourage you to accept this as a good idea and move forward with it.

There's a big challenge in the canyon, and I don't know how to do it. But having observed who uses the trail that goes along CR34, maybe you could make that the downhill bike trail. It's so grown in and so narrow that no one walks on it, but it might be perfect for downhill bikers. I know it doesn't yet run all the way from the ponds to Amethyst, but maybe there's a way. Maybe that would be a fiscally inexpensive solution.

Deborah Black, Steamboat Digs Dogs:

I don't want to speak for the whole group other than to say that we are aware of the trails being built on Buffalo Pass. We are aware of the concept for the downhill connector. Speaking as an off-leash dog walker and mountain biker who uses Spring Creek from the bottom up to Buffalo Pass and back down, I support the connector.

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I think in the interim and while the trails are being built, our group will be able to work with the biking group to address any of the issues that might come up.

One of the concepts we've been talking about is to have our dogs leashed from the parking area up right passed the cabin. That might be one of the things that can help that particular area.

I think this would be a very positive thing for our community, and I hope to be using it soon.

Paula Silverman, 1502 Fish Creek Falls Road:

She registered her support of the downhill-only trail and her unease with the way things are now with downhill bikers on the current trail.

There needs to be education done from the parking lot up passed the privately-owned places and consideration given to the residents who live there.

Frankie Hannah, 1515 Blue Sage Drive:

Excellent idea for the downhill bike trail; will solve a lot of issues up there. Once the Buff Pass Trails are built, a lot more people are going to be coming down there no matter what.

2A has done an excellent job with these trails; they're sustainable. Biking up the old Spring Creek Trail can be difficult now. It was built in the old days; it's not very sustainable; it's rutted out. If we want to have this part of our tourist draw for mountain bikers, I think we need to also address improving the up track – especially if we do the stacked loop thing.

This is going to be popular no matter what once all these trails are built.

McNamara wanted to know who would enforce any speed limits and laws up there. The leash law is rarely enforced.

Robinson: I don't have an answer, but I can talk to Chief Christensen. I believe the ranger program was funded for 2017. We could perhaps see if that could be expanded to this section. Animal Control officers are patrolling more. I think they've backed off a bit as the Steamboat Digs Dogs proposal moves forward. Just today, it seems like Bike Town USA has a Bike Ambassador program that they're trying to pilot this year. So maybe there's some collaboration opportunities, but I can't commit the Police Services resources at this time.

McNamara asked whether it would be the county sheriff who has responsibility since it's a county road.

Robinson: That's a good point. We've had intergovernmental agreements in the past as I understand for the city to enforce county regulations in areas adjacent to or within the city. At one point in time, we were able to actually write tickets in that area. Now we can only do that on the city property portion and not the county portion between your house and Amethyst. If that IGA moves forward, perhaps there's some sort of agreement that can be reached with Police Services so they can help with enforcement.

McNamara: If enforcement is the only thing that can protect people, we need to know who can enforce it – who has authority and who will be responsible for that.

Robinson: We'll be working on a signage plan to make it very visible that you're entering high-traffic zones, especially once you enter the pond area. But that's signage; people have to follow that.

Koermer thanked McNamara for bringing up the challenging topic of enforcement on this front.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION

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Watson: What are the next steps as far as the public process?

Robinson: We'll continue to accept public comment and work on alignment. We would like to identify a corridor and obtain easements and have everything in place for work in 2018 if it's funded. A corridor would be very clearly identified so that a contractor could come in and operate within 20 feet or something like that on city property and flex-fit the trail in that corridor. Once I have more information, I'll bring it back to the Commission and we'll make sure it's advertised. We'll also look into questions of enforcement and other questions that were raised tonight.

Koermer reiterated the importance of a downhill-only trail in the most heavily-used part of the area.

Weik said that if a separate downhill trail cannot be constructed, she would want to look into what would be involved in making the area off limits to bike traffic.

Koermer asked if Routt County Riders has been involved in the planning for the downhill-only trail.

Robinson: The RCR Trail Building division has an MOU with the Forest Service. They have looked at the upper sections on Forest Service property. We are talking about the possibility of having the Forest Service oversee the work on the city property in some regards on the upper section. They're able to look around. We just want to make sure that if they want to bid on the project that they're not involved in any way that would preclude them from participating in the bidding process.

Floyd: It sounds like you're talking about planning from the top of the trail down. It seems like the greatest problem is really the bottom up. I would be concerned that everything would work out all the way down to the funnel at the bottom where it doesn't work, and then there would be this we've come so far, put in money, done design, etc. Why wouldn't you start solving the bottom up and then figure out if it's going to work because it seems as though that's the most challenging part? I think all the new trails up there will be wonderful for people to use, and I understand the amount of traffic. But if we can't solve that and really maintain Spring Creek for all user groups, I think we're really doing a disservice to the community. I think that Spring Creek has always been available to everyone, and I agree with Dave Scully regarding his comments about after a certain time of day, it can be downright scary. But I think it's something that's important to maintain for hikers and family use with the gazebos and such. I'd be a fan of investigating it from the bottom up to see if there is a solution in the canyon and on the road, as some of the homeowners mentioned, before we spend money and time on the easy part up top on Forest Service property.

Robinson: I agree. We are looking at the lower section. It's like a bike ride; you start at the top and you end up at the bottom. But if we were to do two phases of the project, we are investigating how to get Phase II done, and we would likely do that first or in conjunction with the upper project so we can solve the lower portion conflicts first and then work on the upper portion.

Floyd: So we agree that Phase I, the upper portion, wouldn't get done until we had a solution for Phase II?

Robinson: I can't say with 100% certainty, but that would be the ideal path. We are looking at all alternatives. How do we get people from Dry Lake to town? Without contiguous ownership, there's challenges of easements. We will try to solve the most heavily-conflicted areas first.

Koermer agreed with Sarah's comments.

Final Approval of Goals

1. Improve communications with the public and Council by creating a communication network which consists of articles for the newspaper, social media, receiving quarterly updates from each division head in the department, having at least one commissioner attend a Council meeting with a relative parks and recreation issue.
2. Assist the department in prioritizing facilities and amenities: Yampa River Management Plan (address commercial tubing locations, lodging drop-offs;) Howelsen Hill (public input on plans to increase usage;) Rita Valentine Plan.
3. Continue to participate in the discussion regarding excess 2A funds.
4. Recommend alternative funding suggestions to Council.
5. Assist the department in prioritizing the CIP list.

Goals will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated as needed.

MOTION

Commissioner Alfone moved to approve the goals as amended.

Commissioner Weik seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

Howelsen Hill Discussion

Commissioners would like direction from Council regarding moving this discussion forward.

Koermer said he had correspondence with John Overstreet that reiterated that the commission would be involved with the process, but it was not more specific.

Koermer reported that Overstreet discouraged him from reaching out directly to Council at this point.

Commissioners would like to put this on a future agenda as an item to officially discuss.

Weik would like to clarify with Council the chain of command between Council and the Commission.

Koermer and Tumminello agreed.

Koermer thanked staff, and Robinson thanked Winter Sports Club, for their efforts during Winter Carnival.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Alfone moved to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:16 p.m.

Commissioner Tumminello seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.