

**STEAMBOAT SPRINGS TRAILS COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**July 17, 2019**

The meeting of the Steamboat Springs 2A Trails Committee was called to order at approximately 12:07 p.m. on Wednesday, July 17, 2019, in the Crawford Room, Centennial Hall, 124 10th Street, Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Trails Committee members in attendance were: Chair Pete Wither, Jason Landers, Dan Bonner, David High and Harry Martin. Absent: Marr, Malia

City staff members present were Assistant to The City Manager Winnie DelliQuadri, city engineer Danny Paul, Parks, Open Space and Trails Manager Craig Robinson and Open Space and Trails Supervisor Jenny Carey. Kent Foster represented the US Forest Service. Mike Mordi represented Routt County Road and Bridge. Kris Middledorf represented Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

None.

**Approval of Minutes: June 5**

David High moved to table the June 5, 2019 meeting minutes. Dan Bonner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**Comparison of Mad Rabbit Proposed Trails to Trails Alliance Proposal**

Kent Foster showed the conceptual trails identified in the Steamboat Trails Alliance proposal.

Foster: With all the discussions we've had internally, conversations with CPW and through public comment, we've identified trails where we want to go in order to maintain large chunks of undeveloped ground and roadless areas. So we align our proposed trails a little bit closer to the highway along existing trail corridors. From the comments we received last winter, we added some motorized trails. We've proposed many unauthorized trails to be closed.

**Mad Creek:** We initially looked at adopting a couple of trails in what locals refer to as the Crystal Peak Trail area. The Forest Service has put investment into some wildlife habitat improvements in this area. It's an important area from a winter range and transitional range standpoint. What I heard at some of the roundtable discussions was this was not as important from the Steamboat Trails Alliance as maybe some of the stuff on Rabbit Ears. To adopt these trails, we would have to have a Forest Plan amendment. We would have to have time restrictions, and it adds a level of management. So at this point in time we're deciding we're just going to close all these unauthorized trails and help maintain these large chunks of habitat. CPW did some survey work this spring up in this area, and they did see quite a bit of wildlife activity. This is an area of concern to the neighborhood.

The County has said that this has caused a lot of deterioration to the road over the last several years. So I thought let's not exacerbate this by having a lot of trails up in this area.

Bonner: How practical do you think it is to enforce those closures?

Foster: When we close a trail down, we really rough it up and it's a lot of work for someone to open up a trail. There is a level of enforcement we need to do to make sure it doesn't get redone.

Wither confirmed that the old road would still be a part of the system.

**Buffalo Pass:**

Foster: We've included a trail that would connect the Power Line Road up to the Wyoming Trail so people wouldn't need to go on the road for the last 1-1.5 miles. We made this motorized.

**Rabbit Ears Pass:**

We ended up not including Walton Rim and Drunken Hogan due to wildlife concerns, but we tried to include some replacements.

We're using the same routes as identified in the Steamboat Trails Alliance Proposal. Segments 23-27 really are pretty similar to what was proposed. A couple things not included were: Lower West Summit Perimeter Trail, Zone 3 infill of downhill trail options. Reasons: Forest Plan calls for lower density here; biologist/water concerns.

We took a look at the Ferndale picnic ground to determine how big of a parking lot to build there. Based on the terrain, fairly easily we could build 20-30 parking spots. Anything bigger than that there would be a lot of ground movement and major improvements. We'd probably be into turning lanes with CDOT. So by reducing it back to a couple downhill-specific trails, the old highway and a loop trail (beginner biking trail, nice hiking trails, accessible trails,) we felt that the carrying capacity of that parking lot would be pretty adequate.

Across the top, staying close to the highway and not impacting Colorado Roadless areas, we've adapted the proposal to stay pretty much along the Highway 40 corridor. We identified some loops and a new parking lot off the west summit and connected them to lower west summit connections. So you could conceivably start from the Ferndale area, work your way up to the top and then come back down. The loops in here are quite a bit shorter than what was identified in the STA proposal, so we did lose some intermediate/medium distance loop opportunities. We did add a trail around the campground; Forest Service would pay for that.

As far as epic trails, (which Drunken Hogan and Walton Rim would have provided,) we're proposing a trail that goes across Segment 20, 14 and 14A, across the pass, connect up to either the Wyoming Trail and parallel the existing Continental Divide Trail that would get us around and create a long opportunity. You could start at Dumont Lake. Try to get some bike use off of the Wyoming Trail, which was also the purpose of the STA proposed trails. It also creates a loop for people to hike or bike from the Dumont Lake area. Our thinking is we can create a long-distance route by connecting all of these shorter routes together coming around the top to where the Persey Lake Trail and the Fish Creek Trail takes off. From the Ferndale area to here is about a

30-mile loop, then you come down Fish Creek and Mountain View. By keeping this along the road it creates some different opportunities. Part of this analysis is we do want to offer commercial shuttling opportunities. We've had a lot of companies that have always wanted us to allow them to shuttle up to the Dumont Lake area so people can ride across the Divide Trail; we haven't allowed that. But we want to provide those opportunities because it's going to disperse some of the use. That could be for hiking, biking. Hiking is our main use in the forest. Currently, the Chamber talks about hiking on Fish Creek and Spring Creek. An idea would be to disperse some of that use.

Segment 6 goes around Long Lake and connects to the Mountain View Trail. That would create a nice cutoff if people were hiking up Fish Creek; instead of coming up to Long Lake you could go around and come back down.

Segment 5 would connect Fish Creek Trail back to the Ski Area and maybe alleviate some of the congestion on the lower Fish Creek Trail. We would set thresholds for user conflict and then we would elevate the management level. First thing is to sign it. But if it ever were to become very popular, the next level might be to only allow bikers/hikers on certain days. This is an area of concern for wildlife. It would be a tough build.

Segment 11 is a wheelchair-accessible trail all the way around Dumont Lake except for the wetlands at the top. People love the current quarter-mile trail, so you can imagine how a longer trail would be received.

Segment 10 is a historic jeep trail. We could use the existing winter trailhead, come around the east side of the rabbit ears, relocate some of that old trail because some of it was in a really bad spot. Right now on the 308 road, there's an old logging road that comes through where we do get some trespass with ATVs; it's used pretty heavily. We'd propose closing this road out even further. We'd like to create an opportunity up higher and close lower to help keep the wildlife up in the forest rather than encroaching on the agricultural fields. This 2.5-mile segment would allow OHVs to travel from Rabbit Ears Pass north to the Wyoming border and south to Gore Pass and possibly the Colorado River without being on a state highway; so that would open up a huge opportunity.

We propose connecting some of the existing roads on Rabbit Ears Pass to create some smaller OHV loops and some loops for ebikes. We're seeing more ebike use being authorized on ski areas nationally, and there are some places that have changed specific designations from a trail to an ebike trail – just a class 1 ebike.

Someone asked about the difficulty of 15, 16 and 17 trails.

Foster: They're high-clearance vehicle roads. Anything we put in between would probably make it a jeep trail or a trail for vehicles wider than 50 inches.

For biking, we've got a need for beginner, expert and long-distance trails. We do run the Run Rabbit Run event on the CDT. By having some different trails, we could maybe get some use off of that and spread out the use.

Wither: What's your next steps?

Foster: A lot of the field surveys have been done based on what I presented to you in the past. Tara, our new district ranger, really wanted to get this information out to the public. We'll have our resource specialists look at any of these routes that weren't identified before. We're planning on getting the EA done this fall-winter for formal public comment sometime in the winter. Based on what we get on that, we address those and have a final environmental assessment in the spring along with a draft decision notice. If there's an objection on that, maybe next summer we would get through the objection resolution. We're looking for any new information.

The numbered map will be put on the project website.

High: One of the objectives in the Rabbit Ears area is an epic loop; something that feels it's designed to be one epic trail not a series of little systems where you wonder where you're going.

DelliQuadri: The Committee's charge is going to be to compare each of the trail segments in this Forest Service proposal to what was in the STA proposal and seeing if it meets the purpose. For Drunken Hogan and Walton Rim, it was to get bikers off of the Continental Divide Trail and over to the top of the Ski Area. From a process standpoint, where do you want to start? At Ferndale? With the overall systems of Rabbit Ears Pass and Buffalo Pass? You can either do this as a grassroots trail-by-trail comparison or as a top-down bigger picture comparison. Or you can do a little bit of both. I just need to know which way you would like to approach it first so that I can properly prepare for our meeting in August.

Committee members wanted to start with a trail-by-trail comparison to determine what is eligible for funding.

DelliQuadri: And then you will need to go back and re-rank it because you'll have a clear picture of the trail and its feasibility and all the things that were grey the first time you scored them. But that's probably a winter process. For now, it's what of this do you feel is equivalent and can be funded.

Committee members agreed.

Landers wondered how this would jibe with the funding timeline for the City.

DelliQuadri said that the Committee can go back to Council and make specific funding recommendations whenever it is timely.

Bonner: But by the time this is ready to be built, we'll have two or three years' worth of funding available.

Wither: The only one coming up is the Town Pathways: Walton Creek Hotel Connector.

DelliQuadri: According to Kent's timeline, I don't necessarily see much else happening next summer, except for maybe something like the Old Highway 40 corridor which just needs to be cleared. But the whole process would have to be done before that could happen.

### **Trail Maintenance Endowment Fund**

DelliQuadri: Still hovering around \$500,000. There is currently a challenge match going on, so any donation will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$10,000.

Landers pointed out that the on-trail money collectors were on the news.

### **WHILD Fund:**

DelliQuadri: It continues to be at about the \$45,000 level. I don't think a lot of people are aware of the fund, so we need to do more to get the word out there.

There seems to be significant confusion between WHILD and Keep Routt Wild. So we're trying to figure out how to best address that. Kris has been doing the lion's share of the work on talking to people. Helen at the Community Foundation has done some support. My goal is to probably this fall pull together a core team who can figure out how to push the word out. When I look at all the trails that need to be closed and monitored to make sure that they don't reappear, this funding source is going to be critical for that to make sure that that pristine, undisturbed already-improved habitat actually stays that way. So I think there's a compelling case for it; we just haven't made it.

High: Could we align Keep Routt Wild and that fund in a similar effort?

Beauregard: If this is our proposal and we're getting through Mad Rabbit, and we're sure that the WHILD Fund is not going to be a leveraging point for more trails, I think we could endorse the WHILD Fund wholeheartedly from this point forward.

Landers: Especially with the trail closures.

Lujan: And be engaged on a personal level and a volunteer level with you.

DelliQuadri: We need the NEPA process to start before I think we have the ability to move forward.

Middledorf: We have yet to elect the committee that oversees that fund. It will be Forest Service, BLM, State Forest and two members of the public at large. That's supposed to happen in August. I need the other land managers to help us at their events and across the county. Hopefully in the next six months you'll see different marketing techniques and tools coming out. The purpose of this tool is not just about private donations. During this NEPA process, it's to try to determine how much habitat is still affected by the trails that are proposed, and that would become part of the construction cost to pay into that fund.

DelliQuadri: We still are hoping that the impact on wildlife of the trails that are proposed here is still included in the project cost so that there's that acknowledgement. That's still a part of the discussion; it's just not let's use that as a reason to do something that we shouldn't otherwise do.

We're still hoping that we look holistically at the impacts of the trails and identify some of the impacts and deal with them – especially when it comes to mandatory trail closures. Our City Attorney has said: Anything that is a cost of construction of the trail is eligible for funding out of 2A if it's an eligible trail. The Forest Service owns these trails and is required to manage these trails. One of the reasons for setting up WHILD is to say: For us to build and maintain and manage this trail, we're going to have to have x amount of money each year for enforcing trail closures, to protect wildlife or to do whatever it is.

Landers: Can that be considered a construction cost?

DelliQuadri: Yes, if it is a required part of the construction plan. They could even require us to make donations to the Trail Maintenance Endowment Fund. If it is a requirement of approval of the trail, then we can pay for it. We did not realize this in the whole first phase.

Landers confirmed that CPW will have input into the value of the habitat that could be lost or affected by development.

### **Routt Recreation Roundtable Status Update**

Middledorf: The Steering Committee has met on two occasions: City, County, CPW, Forest Service, BLM; the State Land Board has been added as well. The committee itself of all the different stakeholders has been selected. We have a meeting coming up to seat the roundtable and to start having discussions. There really aren't any big priorities as far as projects coming forward, but I think we want to have a conversation about what we're going to be doing for the many years ahead. We've got diverse representation from around the county. Our goal is to be the first step on a guiding pathway of taking a project from an applicant who wants to go to the Forest Service or BLM to do recreation or whatever that project might be. It's not a vetting process; it's an opportunity for them to identify pitfalls and how to make their project stronger and partner with everybody before it moves forward to a land manager. It's the first of its kind.

### **PROSTR Plan Update**

Robinson: We are in the final review process right now. Parks and Rec Commission and City Council provided comments. Those changes have been made. It's going back to Parks and Rec Commission next week and I believe City Council August 27 for request for adoption. So we're close to getting that document adopted.

DelliQuadri: If you looked at an earlier version of the Plan, I would encourage you to look at the most recent version. The working group has spent a lot of time prioritizing and ranking the actions that were listed in the earlier draft of the Plan.

### **Project Updates**

- *Town Pathways: Fish Creek Highway 40 Trail Segment:*

Paul: We bid the project and Native Excavating won that bid within our budget. 2A funds are contributing \$300,000 to the construction effort. Now we're in pre-construction planning mode. With the late runoff, we're getting a little bit later start than we had hoped. My best guess is we'll be starting construction mid-August with completion by early November.

Middledorf confirmed that the City did obtain a wetland permit through the Army Corps of Engineers and consulted with Billy at CPW along the way.

Paul: We are restricting our contractor to having in-stream channel work completed by October 3 prior to the whitefish passage through that reach. We've also said if we're able to, we'll do a release from the reservoir to flush that creek and remove any sediment that may have accumulated in the channel prior to October 3.

Middledorf asked if there was an official SB40 clearance done through CPW.

Paul: We went through an extensive three-year CDOT review and received environmental clearance through them.

Middledorf: I haven't seen an SB40 clearance come across my desk. I just wonder whether we need to tie that loose end up if it exists.

Paul: As far as I know, that was coordinated through CDOT's review and issuance of the Form 128, which gave us full environmental clearance.

Landers asked for the total budget of the project.

Paul: With design we're over \$1 million; construction is on the order of \$900,000. Pretty high cost per square foot, part of that being because it is CDOT funded so there's a lot of extra administrative things you have to do and also the fact that we're going through a waterway underneath a highway.

- Town Pathways: Walton Creek Hotel Connector:  
DelliQuadri: Ben Beall says he is meeting with the owner of the vacant parcel this week to discuss easement dedication. He has a call into the owner of the Fairfield to revisit easement dedication. If we can't get the easement, it will require us to do some additional mitigation with the creek. The plan is to have final cost estimates by early winter 2020. Final construction plans for bidding would be available in February or March. We may at a future meeting bring a request for some additional planning dollars if it's determined that it's going to need to stay in the City open space because we'll need to do the wetlands survey, etc.
- Howelsen Hill Directional: Robby's Cut Phase II:  
Robinson: We are in the process of collecting three bids for this project. We went to the Historic Preservation Commission, which oversees Howelsen's historic boundaries making sure we don't have negative impacts to the historic designation. They supported this project. We're reducing the pitch from 25% to closer to 6%. The side grade we're cutting

into is about 45% of the hillside, so it's going to be a bit of a cut just like the rest of the area is. But it's significantly less than the other area on Mile Run that we've looked at in the past that was the more expensive option. We have races in early August and early-mid September, so we have to fit it in those windows sometime.

High asked if there would be any impact to Wither Chute; Robinson said there might be a little bit of a bench there, but it will probably be safer than it is today. The grades will be less than they are today.

Robinson: If the bids come back as low as we think they're going to, we have \$30,000 approved from this group which we believe we can use to extend NPR down further a little bit closer to the corner of Mile Run. So instead of ending at the top of Wither Chute, we'll be closing that for biking and bringing NPR further down the ridge.

- Spring Creek Alternative:  
Carey: Kent and I were out last week; we met with RCR and did the final walkthrough on the lower section. There's one middle section that we'll still need to connect; that will happen this fall. We have signed agreements from all the landowners on the ditch, so in the fall we'll get that culvert in and the trail will cross. Right now it's not even a half mile that users are sharing as they downhill; we've got good signage up; I think it seems to be working well. We're using a portion of the Ditch Loop so we do not cross private property anymore. It's about a half mile of newly constructed trail; we're currently working on that with Rocky Mountain Youth Corps.

DelliQuadri: 2A dollars are paying for that hiking trail because that was a condition to get the easements that we needed for the downhill trail.

Beauregard reported that he heard feedback from hikers about high-speed bikers on the county road and asked if anything is being done to extend the alternate hiking trail.

Carey: We are working with the county to address some issues on that road because it's so busy.

Robinson: There is no alternate alignment at this point. We've talked to property owners and the county. We're working with the Bike Town Ambassador Program to have people present to educate bikers and all users around there. We will continue to look at options for easements, but we don't have any in place. Over the winter, we'll finalize ordering signs, replacing kiosks and updating the entire area.

- Buff Pass:  
Foster: It's beginning to melt. RCR is starting to wrap up Soda Mountain and other trails up there. We're coming up with a game plan.

- Mad Rabbit NEPA:

See above.

**Next Meeting: August 21**

Compare trails on a trail-by-trail basis between the latest Forest Service proposal and the original Trails Alliance proposal.

**Adjournment**

David High moved to adjourn the meeting at 1:33 p.m. Jason Landers seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES PREPARED, REVIEWED AND RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY: Timothy Keenan and Winnie DelliQuadri. Approved this 4th Day of September, 2019.