

SUMMARY

East Mountain Trails and Bikeways Facility Plan Combined Steering Committee/Technical Team Meeting Summary March 11, 2004 4:30-6:30 p.m. Los Vecinos Community Center

Agenda

Introduce and Project Update
Report Back from Committee Members
Review & Discuss Input to Date (map overlays)
Identify & Discuss Key Nodes and Corridors (map)
Next Steps

Materials

Summary of 12-9-03 Steering Committee Meeting
Summary of 12-9-03 Technical Team Meeting
Summary of 1-29-04 Public Meeting
Revised Steering Committee List
Color wall map of existing East Mountain trails and bikeways, mylar overlays of proposed.
Six color maps of existing conditions: Elevation and slope, TRAM, land use, two population maps, and vegetation from GAP analysis

Summary

Following introductions, Jackie Bouker from the Greater Albuquerque Recreational Trails Committee (GARTC) gave an account of trails used by equestrians in the East Mountain Area, and Mary Bean from the U.S. Forest Service recapped Forest Service policies. The project team then reviewed the map and overlays of existing and proposed trails and bikeways that emerged from the prior meetings, including the public meeting. Participants spent the remainder of the meeting discussing key nodes and corridors as well as potential obstacles and other issues. They also reviewed the maps of existing conditions. The next public meeting is scheduled for April 6, 2004.

Committee Reports, Issues

Greater Albuquerque Recreational Trails Report

- Equestrians are riding up N. 14 on the west side trail. This is signed for horses.
- From Sandia Knolls they ride up the arroyo through Campbell Ranch
- People who live along Steeplechase (S. of I-40) complain about horses in large groups dropping manure on the roads
- They ride along Gutierrez/Ryder Road up to Frost where there is a wide dirt trail on the south side.



EAST MOUNTAIN TRAILS MASTER PLAN



- Trails connect Gutierrez Canyon open space to San Antonio open space—some may be through private land. Link there could be important.
- Most private property owners don't want motorcycles on their land.
- Ride along Pinion Trail Road—south side of San Antonio Open Space.
- Triangle Grocery is relocating to south of the Bella Vista Restaurant site so there may be a traffic light installed there. May be a horse crossing further north near the old Marco Polo's restaurant.
- Some riding through state land
- Need information from Elaine Morrell's group and people who ride in the Knolls and Campbell Ranch.

Meeting with Carnuel Land Grant

- The Land Grant wants no trails in or along the Tijeras Arroyo on their land. The Land Grant has a corridor probably south of I-40 that backs up to the arroyo.
- Developer of the old Beaverton site got County Planning Commission approval for SU and is working with City open space.

U.S. Forest Service Meeting Summary

- Forest plans get updated on 10-year cycles. All are beyond 10 years now. Cibola revision will likely start in 2005. The East Mountain Trails Plan could lead to some amendments of the Forest Plan.
- The Forest Service distinguishes between various types of motorized vehicles. Not all motorized use is the same and they have different needs. Current USFS policy is to allow all motorized uses except where expressly prohibited. No motors or mechanical uses (including bicycles) are allowed in the wilderness areas. Snowmobiles are prohibited in most places.
- There was a separate planning document (1996) addressing the military withdrawal area south of I-40, west of 337 that discusses the uses allowed on a trail-by-trail basis.
- The Forest Service has provided input from this into the debate over the proposed closure of public trails in Otero Canyon. It is a work in progress and unclear when we'll see a resolution. The Governor recently wrote a letter to the new Colonel. Some reason for optimism that policy won't be as rigid as originally proposed.
- In general, south of I-40, motorized use is allowed north of Raven Road but not south because it is an important area for wildlife. There has been some motorized use there because of fuel thinning.
- The population has grown and no one foresaw the amount of demand on the trails, so that needs to be revisited. Some trails are too steep for mountain bikes. About 80 percent of the trails have been inventoried by GPS and they keep finding new trails. About half are not officially designated trails and not designed properly, so they erode with use. It is against the law to make trails on USFS land.
- There has been some misinformation being broadcast that the Forest Service is beginning to revisit and sign the uses for various places. They are not making any new decisions, just implementing the Forest Plan and subsequent Environmental Assessments.
- The City and County should consider opening up trails in their properties to motorized uses.

County Public Works Dept.

- There is not much topsoil out in the East Mountains, so the trails wear down to the rock after a few years.

County Parks and Recreation Dept.

- There are risk management issues regarding motorized uses on trails in City and County open space

Other Comments

- There is lots of motorized use through Sedillo Ridge open space, which seems to be from local residents. The horses and bicycles seem to come from other places.
- Motorcyclists complain about the ATVs, because the former use single track and the ATVs create two tracks. The ATVs are also a newer use.
- ATVs have knocked over junipers. We don't have as much experience with the jeeps. They go 8 miles an hour and winch up cliffs. We've seen damage with the woodcutting that we didn't foresee, such as punching in roads.
- Once the trails accommodate equestrians, it will take an ATV. If design for hikers, than can discourage other uses.
- For example, in Chamiso Canyon, jeeps are coming up with out winching and have damaged the hillside.
- Enforcement is an issue. Some users are self-regulating, but some are reckless and damaging.
- It comes down to finding appropriate places for various uses. Lots of East Mountain people don't like regulations.
- We need to accommodate everyone somehow.
- The S. I-40 area has potential for being a regional recreation area.
- Where possible, links included in the East Mountain Trails and Bikeways Plan should go to existing Forest Service trailheads. USFS spent millions of dollars up on the Crest Road to improve the trailheads and picnic areas and won't be doing a lot more. It's an opportunity to link to existing trailheads. It's a struggle to care for what exists, so they are interested in working with the City and County.
- USFS has a recreational trails grant for adding bulletin boards at trailheads encouraging users to stay on the tracks and not tear down the sides. We need other financial resources to help maintain. Friends of the Forest has identified mapping needs.
- USFS has a memorandum of understanding with City Open Space but not the County—we can't expend money on County open space until that is in place.
- There is pressure for trail access from Paa'ko and San Pedro Creek Estates. On the west side of the Sandias, USFS has jointly developed trailheads with High Desert. One idea is to have an entrance to the US Forest from Paa-ko off La Madera Road.
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Report on meeting with Tijeras Mayor Gloria Chavez

- Tijeras wants to improve the pedestrian connections in the Village.
- OHVs had favorite area of trails closed off S. of 333 near 4 Hills Open Space.

- We realized a potential connection from Carlito Springs to Ojito is too steep—20 percent slope.

List of Attendees

Steering Committee

Sam Beard (Hiker, Cross-Country Skier)
Jackie Bouker (GARTC, Equestrians)
Don Carnicom (Hiker)
Pam Gravagne (Hiker)
Elaine Morrell (Equestrians)

Technical Team

Mary Bean, US Forest Service
Loretta Tollefson, Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments

County Staff

Clay Campbell, Senior Park Planner and Co-Project Manager
Nathan Masek, Senior Park Planner and Co-Project Manager

Consultants

John Barney, Community Designer and Project Manager, Sites Southwest
Barbara Herrington, Planner, Sites Southwest
Maura Lewiecki, Designer, Sites Southwest
Karen Aspelin, Engineering Sub-Consultant, Parsons Brinkerhoff
Diane Scena, Trails Sub-Consultant