



To: Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks
Re: Flatirons Vista Trail

BMA supports the planning of these conceptual routes and applaud the many positive steps taken in the TSA process. We anticipate that these new routes will be popular and appreciated by the community, especially to link trail systems and as an alternative to traveling on the Doudy Draw road.

As a responsible member of the community, it is our desire to see that the best possible result comes from the processes laid out in the Visitor Master Plan. Unfortunately, what we've been reduced to is "making lemonade out of lemons". BMA is serious about creating sustainable, fun trails that will serve the community for generations. We consider this so important to our core goals that we have subcontracted professionals to assess the work done to formulate our input. This document incorporates the input from IMBA Trails Solutions.

BMA supports the idea of stacked loops in the area and the new, properly designed trail segments. But because there is little new trail mileage, and most of the proposed trails in this plan are located on old roads or along unplanned social routes, it is our opinion that the trail system falls short of what is possible or meets commonly accepted best practices.

The yellow-flagged accessible trail is excellent and provides a great example of sustainable rolling contour trail design. We believe additional trails in the area should be designed in this style and this trail should be extended to form a loop instead of an out-and-back.

But the many trail segments located on old social routes are disappointing. These segments do not apply techniques for sustainable trails. They were never properly designed nor constructed for recreation. They are too straight, too wide, often located on the fall-line, will not be sustainable and do not provide a high-quality visitor experience. These old routes will be difficult to maintain and may lead to unnecessary user-conflict in the future.

Additionally, the proposed routes can't really be called a stacked-loop trail system because they are not true loops and most of them are old roads. Only the ADA trail segment is a real, purpose-built trail.

Why in this modern era do we still create trails that are anything less than state of the art?

We should close and restore the existing social trail network and replace it with a thoughtfully planned system of trails that places routes in better locations, and along environmentally sustainable alignments.

We are especially concerned about using the social trail that crosses the dam near highway 93 and proceeds southwest. This double track route is too straight, often located on the fall line, will not be sustainable and does not provide a high-quality visitor experience.

This route should be replaced with a contour trail. Yes, constructing a side-hill contour trail requires greater initial vegetation and soil disturbance, but sloping topography above and below the trail bench will clearly define the tread and concentrate traffic on it, thereby preventing future tread widening and off-tread trampling.

The goal should be to design rolling contour trail alignments to minimize soil erosion, muddiness, braiding, and tread widening by focusing traffic on side-hill trail alignments with limited grades and frequent grade reversals.

It is unfortunate that there is a notion that the short term disturbance of closing social trails and creating new, sustainable, fun trails is significant enough to keep trail alignments where they should not be. Those people that have that notion don't have a grasp of time and the ability of the land to recover. This system of trails needs to have a service life of one hundred years at a minimum. Trails like the one we are considering consider the impacts right now, not one, two or three generations down the line. We fear that those that follow will be asking, "What were they thinking when they put the trail here?"

We acknowledge that some areas of the property are very flat and present a difficult scenario for well-drained trails. However, we still believe that limited new trails can be built in these areas that offer significant advantages over the old roads by using trees and slight variations in terrain to craft more natural, narrow, flowing trails.

For example, we support the red-flagged segments that take the route off the existing social trail. These segments demonstrate the appeal of staying off the old roads and using trees and terrain to create a natural route that flows with the landscape. We suggest these segments wind back and forth around trees and other objects and avoid straight lines. By winding among trees, the trail will be more enjoyable and stay narrow.

We agree that in certain limited situations, using an existing social trail makes sense once all factors are considered, but this should be minimized. We also believe that additional routes can be located in sloped areas with positive drainage and away from flat terrain.

In conclusion, it is unfortunate that the TSA process does not create the best possible result, and in doing so, fails to achieve the goal of a high quality user experience and the overall resource will degrade as a result. The expanded access is certainly welcome, but

if we create even more long term problems with maintenance and user conflict, we have to wonder if the short term gains are selling out the long term quality of this resource.

Boulder can do better... we must do better.

BMA is the City of Boulder's partner, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide input and be an active participant in Visitor Master Plan implementation. We are all learning as we go; and we must utilize the best practices in each discipline to attain the best result. BMA will be there with you all the way; heaping praise when deserved, and dishing out the constructive criticism when the results fall short.

We are ready and willing to more fully explain our comments and provide trail location suggestions if appropriate.