

## **SUMMARY OF OPPOSING COMMENTS RE BIKES ON WEST TSA**

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Prepared for mountain bike opponents by Mike Browning

**1. Hiking and Biking are Incompatible Uses.** The different speeds of hikers and bikers on narrow trails make co-use unsafe and seriously degrade the hiking experience. The West TSA trails are now heavily used by families with small children, people walking dogs both on and off leash, horse riders, the elderly, and those with disabilities. Foot traffic is already heavy. Bikes on the trails would be a real safety issue and result in injuries. Many people have stopped using trails, such as Marshall Mesa and Dowdy Draw, that have been opened to biking. Regardless of any rules, bikers seldom dismount, and hikers always have to stop to let them by, often forcing hikers off the trails. Hikers in the West TSA are seeking a quiet, serene experience. Many families go out with their children and dogs to appreciate nature, teach their children about the outdoors, and pursue other quiet, low-impact experiences. The West TSA trails are serene, peaceful walks in nature; allowing mountain bikes would convert them into expressways of speed and noise fraught with danger. It is now a family place; it would become an adrenaline highway.

**2. New Trails are Not Appropriate.** The West TSA represents a delicate balance between recreation use and environmental protection. This narrow ribbon of land is a refuge for many deer, bears, mountain lions, birds, plants and other native inhabitants whose habitat has already been overrun by development. One reason the West TSA is so special, and makes Boulder special, is the opportunity it provides to escape to nature quickly and conveniently. The creation of new trails, and the resulting increased use of the area, will upset the current delicate balance between nature and recreation, and turn a special area into yet one more playground. New trails will also result habitat fragmentation. Some uses of this area have already, appropriately, been restricted – including seasonal closures for nesting raptors, and the dogs-on-leash program. The addition of a whole new user group is inconsistent with programs that seek to maintain this careful balance. New trails will also mar the visual qualities of this special area, by adding additional scars on pristine meadows and natural areas. The City Charter stresses that City Open Space should “preserve” the environment of the area, and that non-passive use should only be allowed where “appropriate.” This special area is not appropriate for bike use.

**3. Allowing Bikes Will Adversely Impact the Neighborhood.** Adding biking to the list of permitted uses will have major adverse impacts on the areas near existing or new trailheads, whether bikers are on new or existing trails. Traffic and parking are already a problem near many trailheads. Bike use on the West TSA will be a magnet and draw not only Boulder residents to the trailheads, but bikers from across the Front Range. When the trails that bikers use get overcrowded – which will occur quite quickly -- the pressure will be to open or build additional trails, which will only attract even more bikers and worsen the problem. Although the request of some bikers to “just build one north-south trail from Chautauqua to Eldo” may sound modest, the truth is that such a trail would immediately become overcrowded, necessitating more bike trails for “safety.” Additional users will bring additional cars, additional users,

additional noise, additional scars, additional trash, and additional user conflicts. When street parking becomes a real problem, which it will, the pressure will also grow to construct new parking lots in the nearby neighborhoods.

**4. Multiple Use Does Not Mean Bikes Everywhere.** Bikers argue that a “compromise” should be adopted where they have use of either some existing trails, or some new trails built for their use. This logic is flawed. Bikers already have access to 97 miles of City of Boulder Open Space trails (34%), 200 miles (84%) of Boulder County open space trails, and 45% of Forest Service trails in the area. In addition, Boulder recently constructed a \$4.1 million, state of the art, 45 acre mountain bike park just for mountain bikers. Hikers have already given up numerous trails to bikers, including Marshall Mesa, Dowdy Draw, Walker Ranch, Betasso Preserve, Heil Ranch, Springbrook, and many others. Hikers have stopped using these areas in large numbers because of the degraded experience that results from “shared” use. Hikers deserve areas that are limited to low-impact recreational uses. The West TSA is one of the only areas where hikers have not yet been chased away. A “compromise” that allows bikers everywhere is no compromise at all. Bikers do not have the right, or the need, to have access to EVERY Boulder Open Space area. A few areas should remain peaceful, undamaged, and safe for hikers, their children, canine companions, and wildlife.

**5. Any Alleged Reduction in Driving is Illusory.** Some bikers argue that allowing bikers use of the West TSA will be good for the environment by reducing the need for bikers to drive to trails that are farther away. This doesn’t hold water. Bikers from all over will be attracted to use the West TSA and drive from far away to reach the trailheads. This will only increase traffic. It is hikers who will be forced to drive long distances to find other trails - such as the Indian Peaks, Rocky Mountain National Park, or other areas that can only be reached by car – to enjoy the peace and serenity they now can walk or take a bus to.

**6. Bikes were Banned from the West TSA in the 1980’s For Good Reasons.** Bikes were allowed in the West TSA for several years in the early 1980’s. This led to so many complaints, so many dangerous situations, and so much environmental damage that the biker ban was quickly put back in place. The only change since then is that the trails are even more heavily used by low-impact passive users, the number of bikers has exploded, the bikes themselves are bigger, faster, and more versatile, and places for hikers to find quiet contemplation and enjoyment of nature are harder and harder to find.

**7. The “Compromise” Proposals are Either Not Compromises and/or are Unworkable.** Any north-south trail has all of the problems discussed above, especially since the corridor is so narrow, and bikers will demand numerous access points along the way. Alternating days does not avoid the problems, it simply makes the situation worse for everyone and is an enforcement nightmare. Also you also can’t tell Fido to just hold it for a day. Limiting use to only some trails is easy to say, but very difficult to enforce. Access to some leads to access to all. The idea of “courtesy patrols” to enforce rules only admits that user conflicts are inevitable and that many bikers will not follow the rules. Also, courtesy patrols can’t help the child who has been run over by a biker, or the hiker who stops using the area, or the wildlife that have lost their habitat.

Attempting to avoid neighborhood impacts acknowledges that there will be impacts that cannot be avoided; the better solution is to not allow an entire new user group in an already overused and fragile environment, especially when bikers have so many, more appropriate places to ride.

**8. The West TSA Belongs to Future Generations.** Bikers want gratification now. The West TSA is a treasure for future generations. It is not a piece of dirt to be ridden through. It is one of the jewels of the City, a place and experience that makes Boulder special. It was purchased by citizens that believed in preservation, and the long-term value of natural places. We should not squander their gift or abandon their vision. We must keep it a special place for generations to come.

<https://west-tsa-neighborhood-comments.blogspot.com/2010/09/summary-of-opposing-comments-re-bikes.html>