

PLAN-BOULDER COUNTY OPPOSES BIKE ACCESS IN THE WEST TSA

PLAN-Boulder County published a letter opposing bike access in most of the West TSA. While they raise many important issues, we are disappointed by their failure to reach out to BMA to discuss solutions before issuing their opinion. We at BMA believe that we have a wealth of experience and ideas that would be useful to address the many legitimate concerns raised by PLAN-Boulder County. Hopefully someday soon we will find a way to use our mutual expertise to mutual advantage. The text of their letter is reproduced below. You can also find it on their website here: <http://www.planboulder.org/OpenSpace>

WEST TRAIL STUDY AREA

The following letter was delivered to the City of Boulder's Open Space and Mountain Parks Director on January 11, 2011.

Mike Patton, Director
Department of Open Space & Mountain Parks
PO Box 791
Boulder, Colorado 80306

Dear Mike:

As you know, PLAN-Boulder County has been involved as a supporter of the Boulder Open Space program since its inception, and we have also taken a keen interest in good stewardship of both Open Space and the Boulder Mountain Parks, both before and after their merger. We are committed to proper funding and wise management for all the Charter purposes, and, most importantly, to the preservation of the resources intact in perpetuity.

Since Mavis McKelvey, one of the visionary founders of the open space program, died last month, it's appropriate to remember her succinct statement of our responsibility:

Greenbelts are for children,

And their children,

And their children

PLAN-Boulder County has also long supported bicycling, both for transportation and for recreation, as we support the use of open space for the recreation of Boulder's citizens and our visitors. Open Space provides all of Boulder's citizens an opportunity to renew themselves and to reconnect with a natural setting that is unique and world renowned for its beauty, the wildlife and ecosystems it preserves, and the unparalleled opportunities for recreation that it affords. But we also strongly believe this must be calibrated to prevent degrading the irreplaceable wildlife, plant communities, and ecosystems.

PLAN-Boulder County continues to support development and improvement of bicycling infrastructure and opportunities in our area by city, county, and state entities, singly and in cooperation. Some current priorities we support in Boulder County are:

- Continued efforts to build a pedestrian-bicycle underpass under SH 93 at Community Ditch
- Improvement and maintenance of the bike shoulder on Eldorado Springs Drive (SH170) to provide safer access by cyclists to the three OSMP trailheads and to the state park
- Connection of the trails open to mountain bikes in the Marshal Mesa area to the new county 'Dirty Bismark' system
- Reenergizing efforts to build the Feeder Canal Trail, with better advance preparation in outreach to Northern Colorado Water and to the adjoining homeowners
- Extension of the Boulder Creek Trail up at least to the Betasso Link that this extension would be completely within the CDOT right of way
- With regard specifically to OSMP responsibilities and to West TSA management, PLAN-Boulder County supports the department proposals in May to explore mountain bike access to Walker Ranch through Eldorado Canyon and to make efforts to gain access on Chapman Drive for uphill travel from Boulder Canyon to Flagstaff Road.

However, PLAN-Boulder County opposes designating trails for mountain bike use in the main part of the West TSA from Baseline to Eldorado Springs Drive. All of the proposals for such use in this area would entail unacceptable additional stress on natural systems that are already under pressure from very high and growing recreational use. It would also generate user conflicts that would create ripple effects on those stressed ecosystems.

Specifically, a north-south mountain bike trail from Chautauqua to Eldorado Springs Drive inevitably (because of terrain constraints in a narrow north-south corridor between the city and the Flatirons) would generate habitat fragmentation and deleterious effects on riparian systems where it crosses drainages like Bear and Skunk Creeks.

We are particularly concerned about proposals for mountain bike trails in the tallgrass prairie areas south of Shanahan Mesa. This area not only supports important relict grasslands, recognized by the Colorado State Natural Area designation; it also is the site of a valuable undisturbed ecotonal transition between native mixed grasslands and ponderosa forest.

It is important that the unique resources of the West TSA continue to be managed with careful balance between providing rich recreational opportunities to all users, while remaining good stewards of the unique heritage that has been placed in our care. The best recreational use of the core of the West TSA is its continuation as an opportunity for the traditional low-impact uses that it now serves. We urge you not to designate mountain bike trails in the West TSA between Baseline and Eldorado Springs Drive.

Thank you for considering this important request.

Sincerely,

Ruth Blackmore, Co-chair

Pat Shanks, Co-Chair