

## **GUEST OPINION: A MODEST BIKE PROPOSAL (DAILY CAMERA)**

February 7, 2011

By JASON VOGEL

As President of the Boulder Mountainbike Alliance, as a passionate environmentalist, and as a Boulder citizen, I would like to respond to the OSMP staff recommendation against allowing even limited mountain bike access in the West TSA. To be clear, there are real issues of social and environmental sustainability that must be addressed to make bikes in the West TSA successful. But to cite “irreconcilable visitor conflict” and then place the burden entirely on the mountain bike community because a new shared-use trail “is not a reasonable option from either an environmental or a cost perspective” ignores the reality of the very modest BMA request (access to perhaps four miles of the 128 miles of designated and undesignated trails in the 11,200 acres of the West TSA).

OSMP’s West TSA plan somehow manages to conclude that allowing bikes on perhaps 4 percent of the system will irrevocably destroy the environment and visitor experience for all users everywhere. Boulder, Larimer and Jefferson Counties, Fort Collins, Colorado Springs, and many other places across the state and the nation successfully manage intensely used shared-use trail systems. There is no reason that Boulder can not do the same in the West TSA. OSMP management should focus on managing bike use on our public lands using state-of-the-art best practices.

To set the facts straight: mountain bikers asked for 1) a trail connecting the core of Boulder to Eldorado Spring Drive and 2) a 2-3 mile “lunch loop” close to downtown. This serves two purposes: to get mountain bikers away from the high-user-density areas of the open space system to the places which already have shared-use trails (e.g., Marshall Mesa, Betasso Preserve, Walker Ranch) without having to use a car and to provide just one trail close to home so that people working in the core of Boulder on their lunch hour and young families can take their kids on a ride without using a car or jockeying with traffic.

The mountain bike community wants to be a constructive partner in City affairs. BMA has already proven to be the premier source of open space volunteerism — receiving Boulder County’s first ever Partnership award through their Land Conservation Awards Program in 2009. Since 1991, BMA has contributed over 27,000 hours of service to Boulder County’s land management agencies (valued at over one half million dollars) to build and maintain many of your favorite trails, while advocating with staff to make those trails more socially and environmentally sustainable.

When all other recreation groups stayed silent on the 2010 Boulder County tax issue, BMA came out in full support, lobbying our members and friends to vote yes, and revamping the campaign Web site to better market and explain the issues to the marginal voters we knew would prove critical to passage. That tax initiative succeeded by a mere 1,029 votes.

Twenty years ago, BMA was formed to lobby for responsible trail access for all trail users. We have done everything that has been asked of us and more during the West TSA process. We have behaved well and supported OSMP staff in their process in the good faith that our issues would be treated with respect and fairness in return. We are very disappointed in the outcome.

BMA has created a community of people that care about the future of open space. Give us a reason for hope and to remain engaged and constructive. We ask the OSMP Board of Trustees and the City Council to direct OSMP staff to engage with BMA in an open and transparent discussion of the issues. We believe we have the answers to make bike access work. There are no real reasons the modest addition of four to six miles of shared-use trail through the West TSA would cause “irreconcilable visitor conflict” or unreasonable environmental impacts. We are confident that modest bike access in the West TSA can be successful if we focus on solutions rather than exclusion.

Check out the our Web site for BMA’s modest proposal:  
<http://bouldermountainbike.org/takeaction>

*Jason Vogel is President of the Boulder MountainBike Alliance.*

<https://www.dailycamera.com/2011/02/07/guest-opinion-a-modest-bike-proposal/>