

GUEST OPINION: EXPAND BIKING ON WEST TSA (DAILY CAMERA)

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By ADAM SKLAR

Boulder is a beautiful place because it allows us to connect with the outdoors. This past fall I was lucky enough to be a member of Boulder High School's brand-new mountain bike team. Our club not only let me enjoy the beauty that Boulder has to offer, but let me share it with more than 40 riders who joined our team. Nearly half of these riders had little to no biking experience. In fact, many of them had never taken advantage of the amazing open space and trails in Boulder before joining our team and experiencing these assets on a bike.

From the start our goals were to introduce kids to cycling, to enjoy the outdoors, and most importantly to have fun. Mountain biking is a great choice for kids. A lot of the students on the team wouldn't be in to traditional school sports like football or baseball, but because mountain biking is so different it allows people who don't fit in to other sports to get involved in something positive and spend their time outdoors, doing something that they enjoy. As team captain I helped teach other riders the respectful and positive attitude that our team embodies. As a team, we worked hard to instill values of community and support — not just for our own club, but also for other people on the trails. On team rides, everyone was supportive of each other and we grew as a team, eventually going on to win the NICA state championship. But what does the success of our team have to say about Boulder's youth in general? We like to ride our bikes.

In a few days, the City Council will be deciding whether or not to allow bicycles into the West TSA open space area. It honestly came to me as a surprise that there was such serious opposition to this measure. Perhaps it's the fact that I spend all of my time with young people like me, and was never exposed to the anti-bike point of view, but when my friends want to go enjoy a nice spring day, they don't ask me, "Hey, want to go for a hike?" or see if I'd like to walk my dog on some trail. They want to go ride bikes.

Unlike other kids who want to sit in front of video games or watch TV, we want to get out, have fun and be active. Hiking is cool, and so is walking a dog, but what is fun for kids like me is to ride a bike. I'm not crazy, out of control or disrespectful. I won't, and my friends won't ride you off the trails, or yell at you to get out of our way. Expect a smile and a "how's it goin'?" when you see us out on the trails. We're just trying to have fun and be outdoors and I hope you can too whether you're on a bike or not.

Currently, bicycles are not allowed in the West TSA. I'm lucky that I have access to a car, but for many of our club's younger riders who aren't old enough to drive, getting to many of Boulder's trails is a challenge.

The newly proposed trails would not require a car to get to, and could even be accessed right from school, giving young people the opportunity to ride and enjoy the open space that is such an asset to Boulder's high quality of life. Allowing cyclists a stretch of multi-use trail to connect

Sanitas valley to Eldorado Canyon would provide a safe way to get to the beautiful trails in south Boulder. And the small Anemone Loop trail near Red Rocks would be a perfect ride from school. Not only would these trail benefit young riders, but they would help keep cars off the road in general as more cyclists could bike to trails from their homes. Although the land we`re asking for is only 4 percent of the West TSA area`s trails, the new trails would be a huge gain to our cycling community.

We may not be able to vote today, but the next generation looks to enjoy Boulder`s outdoors on two wheels. This town has something special that is not owned by one group of people: bikers, hikers, dog-walkers or equestrians. We all hold a share in our public lands and the right to enjoy them should be exclusive to no one.

Adam Sklar attends Boulder High School.

<https://www.dailycamera.com/2011/03/10/guest-opinion-expand-biking-on-west-tsa/>