

BOULDER NIXES PLAN FOR ANEMONE HILL MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL (DAILY CAMERA)

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By Heath Urie

The Boulder City Council on Tuesday night rejected a plan to develop a connector trail for mountain bikes that would traverse the Anemone Hill open space west of downtown.

But unlike the outcry that took place after the council's decision last month not to allow bikes on a new pedestrian loop on Anemone Hill, bike advocates and council members ended up agreeing that a relatively small connector trail would not achieve much.

"Not all trails are good trails," said Jason Vogel, president of the Boulder Mountainbike Alliance.

The proposals considered by the leaders included a potential trail from Settlers' Park to Fourmile Canyon, or a loop-like trail from Settlers' Park to the Boulder Creek Path.

Vogel and others said the trail in either form would be short and lacking a connection to a major bike area.

"I believe that the changes ... probably wouldn't be all that attractive to mountain bikers," said former Boulder Mayor Shaun McGrath, an avid mountain biker.

In making the motion to reject the trail, Councilman Macon Cowles said it would not have addressed "any real need that we have in the community, and may exacerbate some problems."

The council also agreed to do away with a series of switchbacks that it approved last month for the larger of two planned pedestrian trails on the north side of Anemone Hill. That action will break up the loop, leaving only one smaller true loop on the property.

The decisions essentially put to rest the final piece of the West Trail Study Area, a plan approved in March that defines public access to the 11,250-acre swath of open space west of Broadway that stretches from Linden Avenue south to Eldorado Springs Drive.

The council previously upheld a ban on mountain biking in the vast majority of the West Trail Study Area but decided to revisit the issue on Anemone Hill -- a 226-acre open space property just west of downtown and north of Boulder Canyon Drive.

The council's decision not to develop the connector trail follows the recommendation of the Boulder Open Space Board of Trustees.

All five of the board members opposed making a connection to Fourmile Canyon due to "environmental, neighborhood and safety impacts," according to a memo on the topic. They also rejected a proposal to connect the trail to the Dome area for mostly the same reasons.

Instead, the board urged the city to consider extending the Boulder Creek Path to the Betasso trailhead in Boulder Canyon and to look for alternative connections to Betasso from the intersection of Boulder and Fourmile canyons.

Vogel, the Mountainbike Alliance president, asked the leaders to take that advice to heart.

"We've heard 'no' too many times," he said. "I think you need to commit to addressing that kind of mountain bike connectivity in a really serious way."

While about 60 people spoke out about a proposed Anemone Hill bike loop last month, only about a dozen showed up Tuesday night.

Members of PLAN-Boulder County and Friends of Boulder Open Space asked the council not to move forward with the connector trail. So did Brad Davidson, who owns property on Anemone Hill near the city's open space. He said he's had to fight social trails that cross onto his property for years.

Bruce Vaughn, a mountain biker, said none of the opportunities presented for biking on Anemone Hill appeared to be "a right fit for this area."

Heather Swanson, Boulder's wildlife ecologist, told the council that portions of Anemone Hill are "high-quality habitat" for species including Abert's squirrels and black bears.

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