
CHAPTER 2 — ANCHORAGE BOWL TRAILS

The Anchorage Bowl trail system consists of dedicated trails located within the area south of Fort Richardson and north of the Muldoon Road to Cook Inlet, Chugach State Park, and Potter Section House. This chapter will discuss each type of trail use as it is found within these boundaries. General trail use issues that are common throughout the entire Municipality are discussed in Chapter 6.

I. PEDESTRIAN AND RELATED USES

Pedestrian use of trails exceeds that of any other type of use. In the 1993 survey performed for this Plan, the greatest number of households indicated that they walk the trails for pleasure, to get to work, and to exercise the family pet.

“Walkable routes” are important components of Anchorage’s transportation program. These routes are important as: (1) routes to and from schools; (2) ties within neighborhoods; (3) connections to transit stops and Park-and-Ride lots; (4) components of parks and greenbelts; (5) connections to commercial and retail centers; and (6) opportunities to walk for pleasure.

A. EXISTING TRAILS AND FACILITIES

Most pedestrian facilities are in the urban portion of the Anchorage Bowl. The Central Business District has an excellent system of sidewalks, as do many of Anchorage’s newer subdivisions. These sidewalk systems provide linkages to transit, commercial areas, and institutions.

Though not specifically a trail, the “Downtown Anchorage Walking Tour” provides a documented and well-illustrated portrayal of Anchorage’s past. The tour features photographs and anecdotes that are designed to bring the city’s history to life.

The greenbelt trail system, comprised of the Chester Creek Greenbelt trail, the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, the Campbell Creek Greenbelt trail, and the Fish Creek Greenbelt trail, provides important pedestrian linkages to schools, recreation areas, and areas of commerce. These trails are also used significantly as pleasurable walking routes.

B. DEMAND ANALYSIS

Because there is intensive use of pedestrian trails, it is vital to provide for pedestrian safety. Over six percent of Anchorage households have no automobiles and must rely on other modes of transportation, including safe pedestrian facilities. Neighborhoods with the highest number of households without automobiles include Fairview, Downtown, Midtown, and East Anchorage.

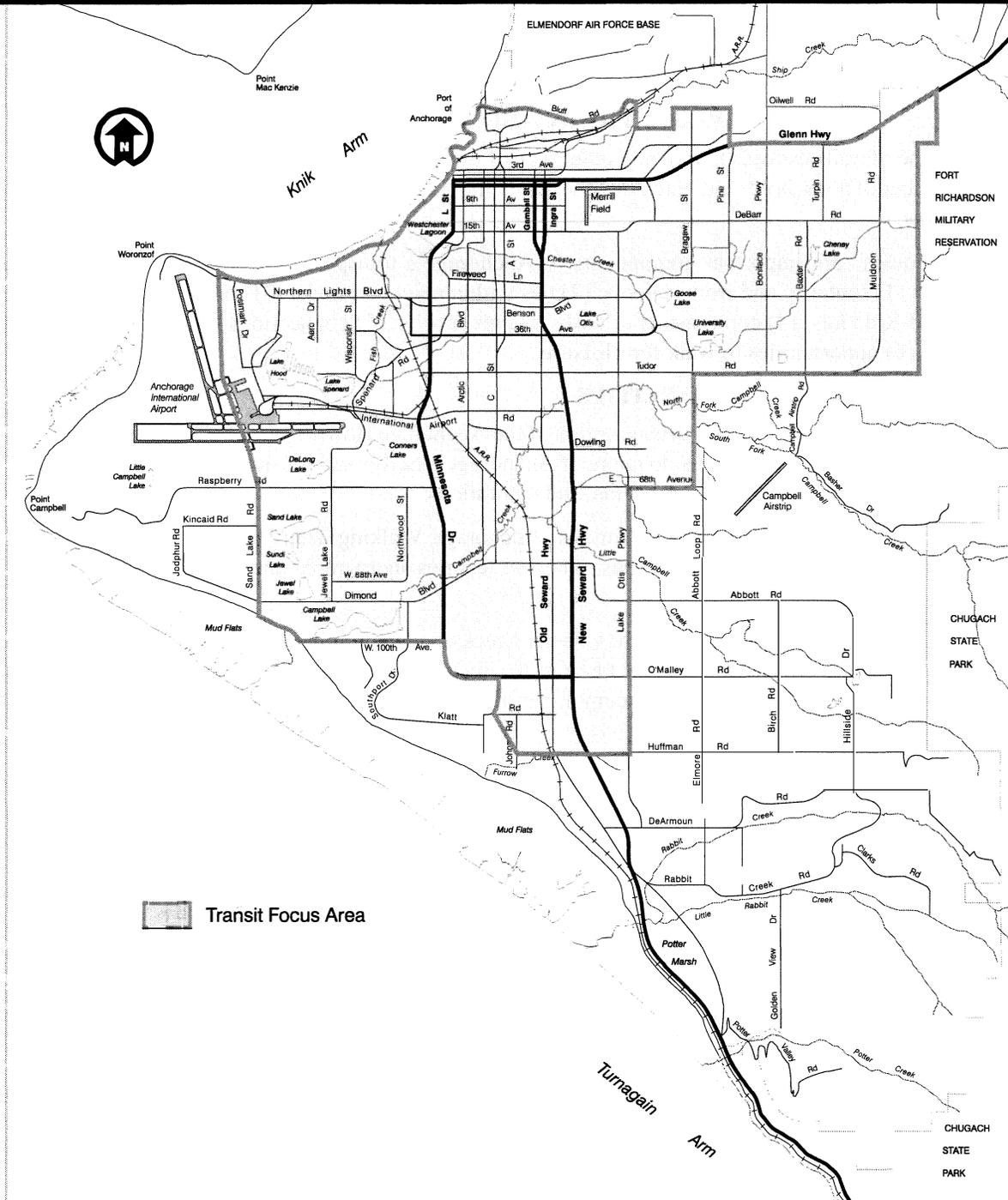
The Department of Public Transportation defined a Transit Focus Area to determine needs for access to transit routes in the Bowl (see Figure 2.1). This study included an analysis of frequently used transit stops and areas where pedestrian or vehicular accidents occurred in 1991. As defined in the “Pedestrian Accessibility and Mobility Assessment” (draft, September 1992), the Transit Focus Area should include Downtown, Midtown, the primary transit corridors of the central portions of West and East Northern Lights Boulevard, and the “C” Street Corridor extending to South Anchorage. The study recommended concentrating transit system improvements in these corridors and in Carbon Monoxide (CO) Non-Attainment Areas.

C. ISSUES

Pedestrian trail use issues relative to the Anchorage Bowl are the same as those for pedestrian facilities throughout the Municipality. These issues, which include provision of pedestrian facilities, separation from street, lack of adequate rights-of-way, inadequate maintenance, and access to transit facilities are discussed in Chapter 6.

1993-1997 Transit Development Plan

Anchorage Bowl Transit Focus Area



Note: Map is not to scale - Illustrative only

Figure 2.1

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

Priorities for construction of pedestrian facilities should include:

- Facilities for walking for pleasure
- Connections to bus stops
- School walkways
- Walkways or sidewalks in areas in which greater than 10% of households are without automobiles, and residential areas with densities greater than eight dwelling units per acre. Areas meeting these criteria include parts of Spenard and the area of East Anchorage to the east of Muldoon Road and north of DeBarr Road
- All commercial areas
- All other areas identified in the “Transit Focus Area”
- Midtown Anchorage
- Connecting the existing Potter Marsh boardwalk with the Old Seward Highway and extending it south

II. BICYCLE USES

Over the years, bicycle use has grown in popularity, not only as a form of recreation, but as a serious mode of transportation. In Anchorage, the enthusiasm for biking is evidenced by a large segment of the population utilizing bicycles for transportation, as well as recreation.

There are two broad types of bicycle trips, utilitarian and recreational. For the utilitarian cyclist, the primary objective is reaching a specific destination quickly with few interruptions. The bicycle is merely a vehicle for making the trip, although secondary objectives such as exercise and pleasure may influence the choice of vehicle. For these riders, bike routes are planned on many of the primary roadways. A noticeable portion of the implementation plan contained in the Anchorage Congestion Management Program, adopted in 1994, includes strategies to encourage bicycle commuter use of the Anchorage trail system and roadway network in the summer.

On the other hand, a bicyclist on a recreational trip is riding for pleasure and the destination may be of lesser importance. For the vast majority of trips, these purposes are not absolute or mutually exclusive.

Others bicyclists ride mountain bicycles on unpaved trails. Many of the natural trails, discussed below, are used for mountain bicycles.

A. EXISTING TRAILS AND FACILITIES

Prior to 1973, there were only 3 miles of paved trails available for biking in Anchorage. Today, there are approximately 180 miles of multi-use paved trails used for biking within the Anchorage Bowl. These trails are located within parks and greenbelts and along road rights-of-way.

B. DEMAND ANALYSIS

Bicycling has enjoyed high participation rates for many years in Anchorage. Of the households surveyed for this Plan, 76 percent indicated that they use Anchorage trails for bicycling. Twelve percent of those households surveyed in 1993 included a household member who commuted to work using trails in 1992.

C. ISSUES

A number of missing trail links makes commuting by bicycle difficult. This affects even those trying to connect to local routes. These missing links should be completed before new routes are developed. These links include the following:

- Campbell Creek Trail extensions
- Chester Creek Trail near Cheney Lake
- Chester Creek Trail Connections
- Coastal Trail extension from Kincaid to Potter Marsh
- Fish Creek from Minnesota to the Coastal Trail
- Ship Creek Trail

A new bike trail/greenway has been proposed, running north/south, through the center of the Anchorage Bowl. This trail would connect from Town Square in downtown, through Midtown to the Loussac Library and Midtown Park, connecting from there to the Dimond commercial district and then continuing south. This trail would link the Bowl's major commercial, workplace and civic districts with the existing primary greenway bicycle trails. The trail would make it possible for residents and visitors to ride comfortably and safely, walk, rollerblade or even ski to work, to restaurants, to the library, or to meet a friend for a cup of coffee.

Another proposed trail is the Urban Core Loop Trail, which would consist of the Chester Creek trail on the south, the Coastal Trail on the west, the planned Ship Creek trail on the north, and a new separated trail traversing through the heart of Fairview along Karluk Street. This trail would integrate the Fairview neighborhood with other parts of the urban core and reflects the neighborhood's desire for a higher quality of pedestrian infrastructure.

Many trail sections and, in some instances, entire routes are in need of improvement, which forces users onto the road. Examples include the "C" Street trail and portions of the Chester Creek trail. Maintenance of the "C" Street trail is currently the responsibility of the Municipality. The existing portions of the trail may need to be repaired prior to the reconstruction of "C" Street, which is several years away.

Trails must be cleaned frequently in order to encourage use. Broken glass and dirt from winter are disincentives to use. Additionally, snow is often deposited on trails and sidewalks adjacent to many arterial roadways until it can be hauled away. This temporary storage hinders the use of the trails and sidewalks until such time as the snow is removed. The ability to haul snow immediately after it is plowed is affected by maintenance budgets and the availability of snow haul operators.

Commuters find that trails are dangerously punctuated by driveways, require slow travel, are poorly maintained, and are often inappropriately designed, making commuter travel difficult.

Anchorage Municipal Code, Title 9, Chapter 9.38 contains regulations affecting bicycle travel. These include requiring a bicyclist to obey all official traffic control devices, stopping prior to entering a roadway or street and yielding to traffic, and not riding bicycles on a sidewalk within a business district.

High-speed bicycle commuter routes can be provided either by striping a bicycle lane on a roadway or by the use of signage indicating roadway use by bicyclists.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Priorities

Priorities for construction of trails primarily for bicycle use and other recreation should be:

- Campbell Creek Trail completion
- Chester Creek Trail completion
- Coastal Trail completion
- DeBarr Road to Chester Creek via Sitka Street Park
- Fish Creek from Minnesota to W. Northern Lights
- Ship Creek Trail
- North-South Trail (Town Square to Midtown to South Anchorage)

2. Commuter Routes

A system of “high speed” bicycle commuter routes located approximately one mile apart and traveling in parallel directions should be provided. The routes for traveling east to west should be:

- Glenn Highway from Eagle River to Boniface, then to Mountain View Drive, then to 5th avenue
- Northern Lights and Benson
- Raspberry Road
- Tudor Road from Muldoon to Fish Creek

The routes for traveling north to south should be:

- A-C couplet
- Arctic Boulevard
- Boniface Parkway
- Lake Otis Parkway
- Muldoon Road
- Seward Highway frontage road

3. Mountain Bikes

Mountain bicycling is a popular form of trail use and provides good commuting possibilities and recreation. However, mountain bicycling should be prohibited on unpaved trails during spring “break-up” and other periods of wet or muddy trail conditions in order to prevent damage to the trail surface. It should also be prohibited on cross-country ski trails and dog-mushing trails during the winter season to prevent damage to the maintained trail surface.

III. RUNNING/JOGGING/PHYSICAL FITNESS USES

Anchorage offers an excellent network of trails for running and jogging. This network includes paved trails in greenbelts and along roadways, and natural trails offering the full spectrum of challenge levels from easy jogs to strenuous hilly runs.

A. EXISTING TRAILS

Trails for running and jogging use can be described under the following broad categories:

1. Multi-Used Paved Trails

The Chester Creek Greenbelt Trail and the Coastal Trail probably attract more runners and joggers than any other paved trails in Anchorage. This is understandable as they are easily accessible to downtown, well separated from roadways, and have very pleasant environments. Other major trails that attract a number of runners and joggers include Campbell Creek Trail, Jewel Lake Road, “C” Street, Tudor Road, Lake Otis Parkway, Abbott Road, Birch Road, and the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.

2. Natural Trail Users

This category includes any unpaved trail that is in a park, greenbelt, open space, or other undeveloped area within the Anchorage Bowl.

3. Road or Street Routes

Many runners and joggers use the local road system for their running routes. Some of this use is by choice while others use the roads due to the lack of a better alternative. Several roads seem to regularly attract runners. These include Campbell Airstrip Road (in Far North Bicentennial Park), West Northern Lights Boulevard to Point Woronzof and on to Clitheroe, and the Glenn Highway Frontage Road. Most roads in the Hillside area do not have sidewalks or shoulders, which forces many people to run along the edge of the paved roadway.

4. Fitness Trail Users

Existing fitness trails within the Anchorage Bowl include facilities at Arnold L. Muldoon Park, Huffman Park, Davis Park, Sand Lake Park, Forsythe Park, and Section 16 Park. Additionally, there are a fitness “courts” in Johns Park, along the Coastal Trail at Westchester Lagoon, and along Fish Creek, and Campbell Creek. There are also stations at Providence Hospital, British Petroleum, and the University of Alaska Anchorage campus, though the Municipality does not own these facilities. These trails are not lighted.

B. DEMAND ANALYSIS

Surveys conducted in Anchorage over the past 15 years reveal that running and jogging experience high participation rates. According to the latest survey (1993), approximately one household in every three includes one or more members who consider themselves to be joggers or runners and have used Anchorage trails for that purpose. One out of every six of those households surveyed reported trail use for jogging in the winter.

Anchorage also enjoys a very high level of resident participation in local running events. An event is scheduled almost every weekend from April through September with some events attracting over 3,000 participants.

C. ISSUES

There has always been a lack of safe, maintained winter running trails in the Anchorage area. In response to this need, the Municipality of Anchorage began in 1983 to maintain 21 miles of trail for winter running and pedestrian use. The Chester Creek Trail and the Coastal Trail receive a substantial amount of use and, while they are groomed for cross-country skiing, they are also packed for winter running.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

Priorities for development of running and jogging trails should include the following:

- Centennial Park
- Eastchester Park
- Hillside Park
- Kincaid Park
- Midtown Park
- Russian Jack Springs Park
- Storck Park

IV. INTERPRETIVE TRAILS

Interpretive trails educate the public about the natural world and can also display cultural and historical information. Interpretive trails help increase public sensitivity to the different habitats and ecosystems that support an array of wildlife within the Anchorage Bowl.

A. EXISTING TRAILS AND FACILITIES

The Municipality of Anchorage completed an interpretive trail with a boardwalk at Baxter Bog Park in 1984, with supplemental work done in 1991.

Earthquake Park has interpretive displays relating to the 1964 earthquake in Anchorage. This area receives a substantial number of visitors, both tourists and residents, every year. There are plans to update and enlarge the interpretive facilities in Earthquake Park.

There are interpretive facilities at Northwood Park describing the function of wetlands, water quality, and storm water run-off control, such as sedimentation basins.

Between Valley of the Moon Park and Westchester Lagoon along Chester Creek are graphic displays that explain the plants and animals found along the creek and describe their life cycles.

The boardwalk located at Potter Marsh provides an excellent opportunity to view fish, birds and other marsh wildlife. There are several graphics displays along the boardwalk that feature interpretive material.

The Municipality of Anchorage, together with significant contributions from private individuals and corporations, purchased the Business Park wetlands. The wetlands provide a well-used waterfowl nesting area in Midtown and the area is signed to inform visitors about wetland functions.

B. DEMAND ANALYSIS

The Potter Marsh boardwalk receives approximately 68,000 visitors a year. While there have not been user counts on other areas with interpretive displays, the number of cars and tour buses seen in the parking lots on a nice summer day indicate that these areas are also receiving substantial use. In a community like Anchorage where the outdoors attracts large numbers of residents and out-of-state tourists, it is very important to offer facilities that highlight features of Anchorage's natural environment.

C. ISSUES

Interpretive displays should be designed and constructed for many of the more popular trails in the Bowl.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Municipality of Anchorage, in conjunction with other local, state, and federal agencies, should establish a system of interpretive trails that provide access to natural features in a way that minimizes the adverse impacts of human presence.
2. Potential locations for interpretive displays should include the following:
 - Bentzen Lake Park — wetland
 - Chester Creek Greenbelt — riparian habitat (Tikishla Park)
 - Coastal Trail — Coastal resources
 - Connors Bog — bog
 - Johns Park — riparian habitat
 - Kincaid/Point Campbell Park — ancient delta formation
 - Little Rabbit Creek Bluff Park — views, riparian habitat
 - Oceanview Bluff Park — views, tidal marsh, distant vistas, wetland interpretation
 - Russian Jack Springs Park — springs, riparian habitat
 - Section 36 — Mountain hemlock stand

V. SNOWMOBILES AND OTHER MOTORIZED TRAIL USERS

Snowmobiling and summer motorized recreation are important activities for many Anchorage residents.

A. EXISTING TRAILS AND FACILITIES

Both organized and unorganized summer ORV and ATV use are allowed at the southeast corner of Point Campbell/Kincaid Park. Snowmobile trails are available in the Powerline Pass area in Chugach State Park, accessed through the Upper Huffman corridor. Snowmobile trails are also available on Fort Richardson, however, these trails are open primarily to military members and their guests and dependents. Members of the general public may use the trails after attending training and upon signing in at the Post law enforcement desk.

B. DEMAND ANALYSIS

Of the households surveyed in 1993 for this Plan, 9.5 percent indicated they have used trails for snowmobiling. Surveys of snowmobile owners and dealers conducted by the Anchorage Snowmobile Club in 1993 and 1994 indicated that there are approximately 28,000 snowmobiles in Anchorage. The Anchorage Snowmobile Club has more than 600 members.

Approximately 8.9 percent of those households surveyed included members who had ridden motorized vehicles on trails during the summer.

C. ISSUES

There is currently no area in the urbanized portion of the Anchorage Bowl available for use by snowmobilers. To remedy this lack of family riding area in the Anchorage Bowl, the Anchorage Snowmobile Club has proposed the golf course or the 70 acre tract on the Minnesota-O'Malley curve as possible snowmobile riding sites. As such an area would possibly be adjacent to residential uses, the opinions of nearby residents would need to be addressed.

The present parking lot at Upper Huffman that serves snowmobilers using Powerline Pass in Chugach State Park is inadequate to hold the number of snowmobilers requiring access. A second parking lot needs to be added or the present parking lot enlarged to accommodate the snowmobilers wishing to access the open riding areas within Chugach State Park. Construction of additional parking would be a State project.

The lack of fencing or physical restrictions over much of Fort Richardson allows illegal access from Eagle River to Beach Lake Park, as well as to other non-designated trails, and jeopardizes continued use, even for authorized personnel.

Snowmobilers have requested the South Post area of Fort Richardson for snowmobile recreation purposes, should it become available. Such designation at this point would be premature. At such time as the disposition of this land at Fort Richardson is decided, the need for snowmobile routes and use areas in the south Post area should be addressed. Such action must be done in conformance with the North Anchorage Land Agreement (NALA) and should be negotiated with affected parties, including the State of Alaska, the Municipality of Anchorage, and Eklutna, Inc.

A snowmobile trail from the Anchorage Bowl to Eagle River has been proposed. This trail would start from Centennial Park in the Muldoon area and travel on the east side of the new Glenn Highway within the right-of-way or on military land. In order to create this trail, permission would be needed from the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and the Military. The Department of Cultural and Recreational Services has indicated that Centennial Park in the north Muldoon area may be available as a snowmobile trailhead for this potential trail from Centennial Park to Eagle River.

Snowmobilers have stated a long-term goal for a trail between Anchorage and the Matanuska -Susitna Borough. This trail is proposed to continue from Eagle River, cross the Glenn Highway to the west side at Eagle River, and continue in the right-of-way of the Glenn Highway to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

The Anchorage Snowmobile Club has also proposed a snowmobile trail that would provide a continuous connection from the Glenn Highway area near Muldoon through Army land, connecting to the snowmobile trails in Chugach State Park located at the South Fork of Campbell Creek (Upper Huffman trailhead). This proposal would feature a trailhead connection in the Tudor/Muldoon area. This trail would provide a route for snowmobiles through portions of Far North Bicentennial Park or through the Middle Fork of Campbell Creek, connecting to Chugach State Park near Prospect Heights, and then continuing to the Upper Huffman/South Fork of Campbell Creek area. Issues associated with this proposal include the need for military permission, compliance with the North Anchorage Land Agreement (NALA), resolution of conflicts with other trail users, modification of the Chugach State Park Master Plan, and resolution of conflicts with homeowners living adjacent to any proposed route.

The designation of trails for motorized use within Far North Bicentennial Park would be a significant departure from past use within the park. The park has a multitude of competing interests and uses that would need to be carefully balanced to provide an appropriate and sensitive solution. For example, a trail through Far North Bicentennial Park would conflict with dog mushing trails in the northeast corner of the park. The dog mushing trails would require separated crossings or proper siting to facilitate proper sight distances necessary for the protection of mushers and dog teams. Resolution of such issues is outside the purview of this planning effort and should be addressed at the time an updated master plan is completed for the park.

If the proposed snowmobile trail were to cross Campbell Creek below the canyon in Far North Bicentennial Park, it would require realignment or elimination of a portion of the “Spencer Loop” of the Hillside cross-country ski trails. The affected trail segment currently offers the longest sustained trail climbs in the Anchorage area and is an important component of races held for competition. The Spencer Loop is presently being relocated to accommodate downhill skiing interests.

A snowmobile trail that would travel up the north side of the Campbell Creek Canyon before crossing Campbell Creek would enter Chugach State Park in an area that is closed to motorized uses. This area is one of only a few that are available for individuals looking for a quiet backcountry experience or for cross-country skiing that is not maintained with set track. It is also popular with snowshoers.

A trail from the Glenn Highway to Upper Huffman would have to pass relatively close to housing in the Muldoon area, possibly in the Stuckagain Heights area, and in the Prospect Heights area. Many residents and the Community Councils of the affected areas have voiced opposition to the creation of a snowmobile corridor near their homes.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Investigate creating a snowmobile trail from Centennial Park to the Eagle River on the east side of the Glenn Highway in the right-of-way or on military land.
2. Identify and designate, through the Planning and Zoning Commission site selection process, a suitable area in the urbanized section of Anchorage for family-type snowmobile use. The Anchorage golf course and the 70-acre tract on the Minnesota-O'Malley curve are possible sites.
3. The Anchorage Snowmobile Club should institute a program of user fees (public-private partnership) to construct and maintain trails. This program should be similar to the cooperative agreement between the Municipality and program instituted by the Anchorage Nordic Skiing Association.

4. Priorities for trailhead development should be at the following locations:

- Centennial Park to Eagle River trail
- A family and education snowmobile area, and
- Improved access to Powerline Valley

VI. CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRAIL USERS

Cross-country skiing is an important recreational activity for many people in Anchorage. Anchorage's cross-country ski trails are among the finest in the nation. The junior programs are highly regarded nationally and many students from Anchorage schools go on to compete successfully on national and international levels. The trails contribute significantly to the local economy by hosting state, national, and international competitions. National and world-class competitions have been held in Anchorage almost every year since the 1970's.

A. EXISTING TRAILS AND FACILITIES

For purposes of illustration, this Plan includes some key parks and their associated trails. This Plan does not address or make trail recommendations within parks unless they are major links to the trail network outside park boundaries. Trail recommendations within parks is the responsibility of the Department of Cultural and Recreational Services through a separate planning process.

The Anchorage Bowl currently has approximately 84 miles (111 km) of maintained cross-country ski trails, of which 13 miles (22.8 km) are lighted for night use (see Figures 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6). These trails are maintained by a cooperative effort between the Municipality and the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage. There are many more kilometers of cross-country ski trails located in parks, greenbelts, and open spaces that are not maintained. Most of the cross-country ski areas located within the Anchorage Bowl municipal park system or in association with educational institutions are identified in Table 2.

The Alaska Biathlon Association also uses the Kincaid ski trails on the west side for their activities. The Kimberly Berg Biathlon Range is approximately 800 feet south of the Kincaid Park Outdoor Center on the Andrew Lekisch trail system. The Association has requested the construction of a 5-kilometer paved training roller loop, for summer roller-ski use, in the vicinity of the range.

B. DEMAND ANALYSIS

The Anchorage population continues to exhibit a high rate of participation in cross-country skiing. Enrollment in youth ski programs has skyrocketed in recent years with the inception of the Junior Nordic League. Participation in this program has increased from 38 children in the 1986-87 season to 639 children in the 1992-93 season.

Participation rates in cross-country skiing remain the highest of all winter recreation activities. Almost half of the Anchorage Bowl households surveyed for this Plan indicated they used trails for skiing last year. According to the Department of Cultural and Recreational Services, visits to two major Anchorage ski areas, Kincaid Park and Russian Jack Springs Park, have risen from 11,588 visits in 1986 to 42,066 visits in 1991. Surveys completed in 1990 and 1991 by the University of Alaska Institute of Social and Economic Research and by Dittman Research indicated that at least 60,000 Anchorage residents cross-country ski at least three times per year on local trails.

C. ISSUES

Anchorage has experienced a significant increase in the use of cross-country ski trails since the advent of new skating techniques and the provision of lighting on a number of ski trails. Lighting of trails should be continued and expanded because of the short number of daylight hours in the winter. Important segments to light include the Hillside Park loops, more of the Chester Creek Greenbelt, and the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.

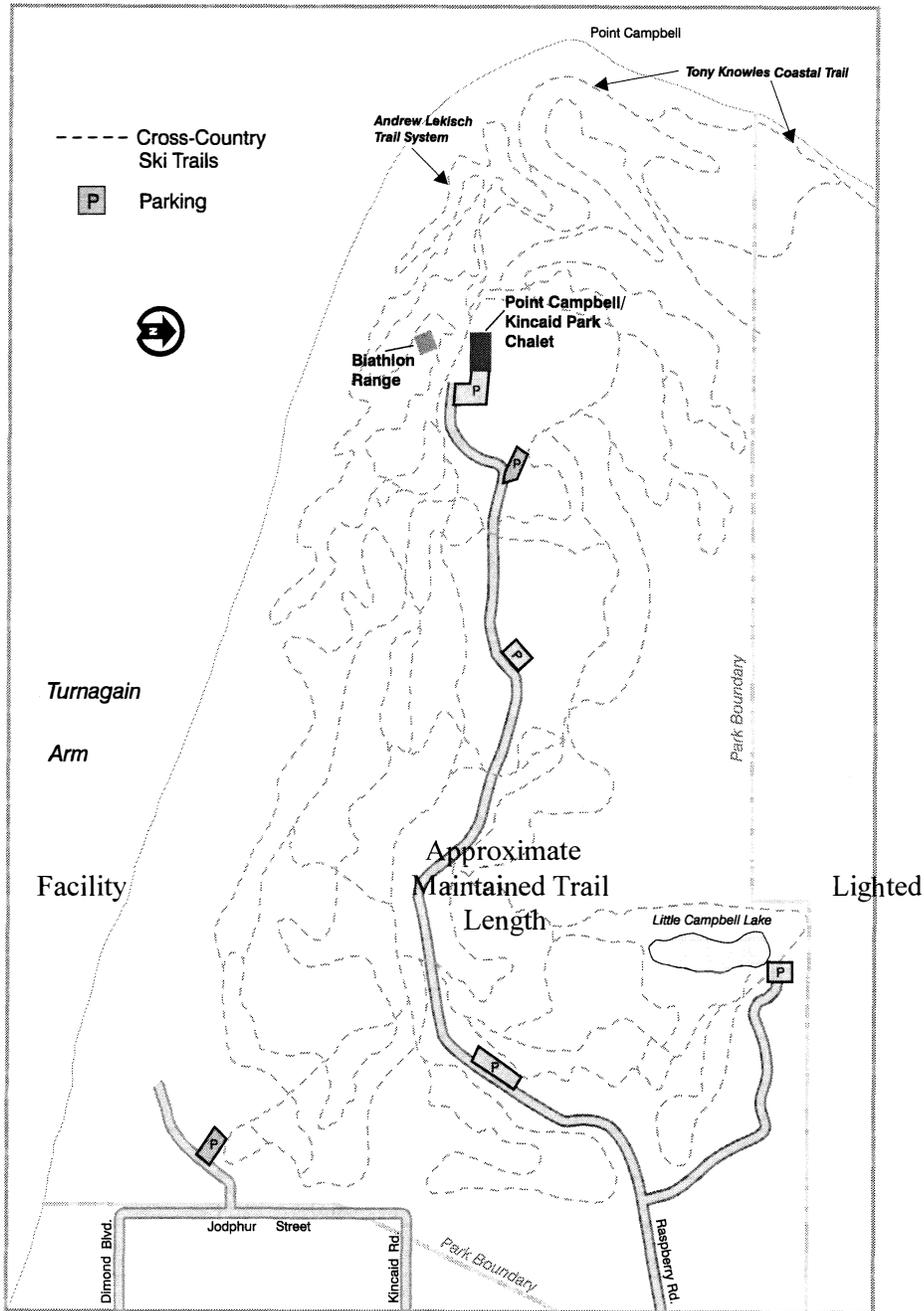
Use of ski trails that threaten skiers and result in significant maintenance costs, such as motorized uses and dog sled use, need to be positively addressed. The maintenance of ski trails is heavily dependent upon volunteers and the contributions of the public. Positive separation of these uses from ski trails is important.

The proposed Chugach Mountain Rim Trail appears to have the capacity for considerable usefulness. This trail would traverse the edge of the Bowl area from a saddle below McHugh Peak to Arctic Valley Road at about the 1,500-foot elevation, contouring the entire Front Range of the Chugach in the trees just below timberline for a length of about 21 miles. Most of the southern part of the trail would lie on private land, while the middle section would lie within Chugach State Park. The northern trail section would be almost entirely on the Fort Richardson Military Reservation. Access would be available through existing and proposed trail heads at Upper O'Malley Road, Rabbit Creek Road, Little Rabbit Creek Road, Prospect Heights and Arctic Valley Road. The Chugach Rim Trail would provide the opportunity for an extended ski trip up to 21 miles in length without leaving the Anchorage Bowl.

Another ski trail of importance will be the extension of the Coastal Trail south from Kincaid Park and north from 2nd Avenue. These extensions of the Coastal Trail are discussed in Chapter 5.

Facility	Approximate Maintained Trail Length		Lighted	
	Miles	Kms.	Miles	Kms.
Kincaid/Point Campbell Park	43	69	6	9.7
Centennial Park	2	3.2	1	1.6
Far North Bicentennial/Hillside Park	11	17.7	3	4.8
Lanie Fleischer Chester Creek Trail	6	9.7	1	1.6
Bartlett High School	2	3.2	1	1.6
Alaska Pacific University	5	8.0	-	-
Tony Knowles Coastal Trail	7	11.3	-	-
University of Alaska, Anchorage	2	3.2	-	-
Russian Jack Park	4.2	6.7	1.8	2.9
TOTAL	82.2	132.0	13.8	22.2

Point Campbell/Kincaid Park Cross-Country Ski Trails

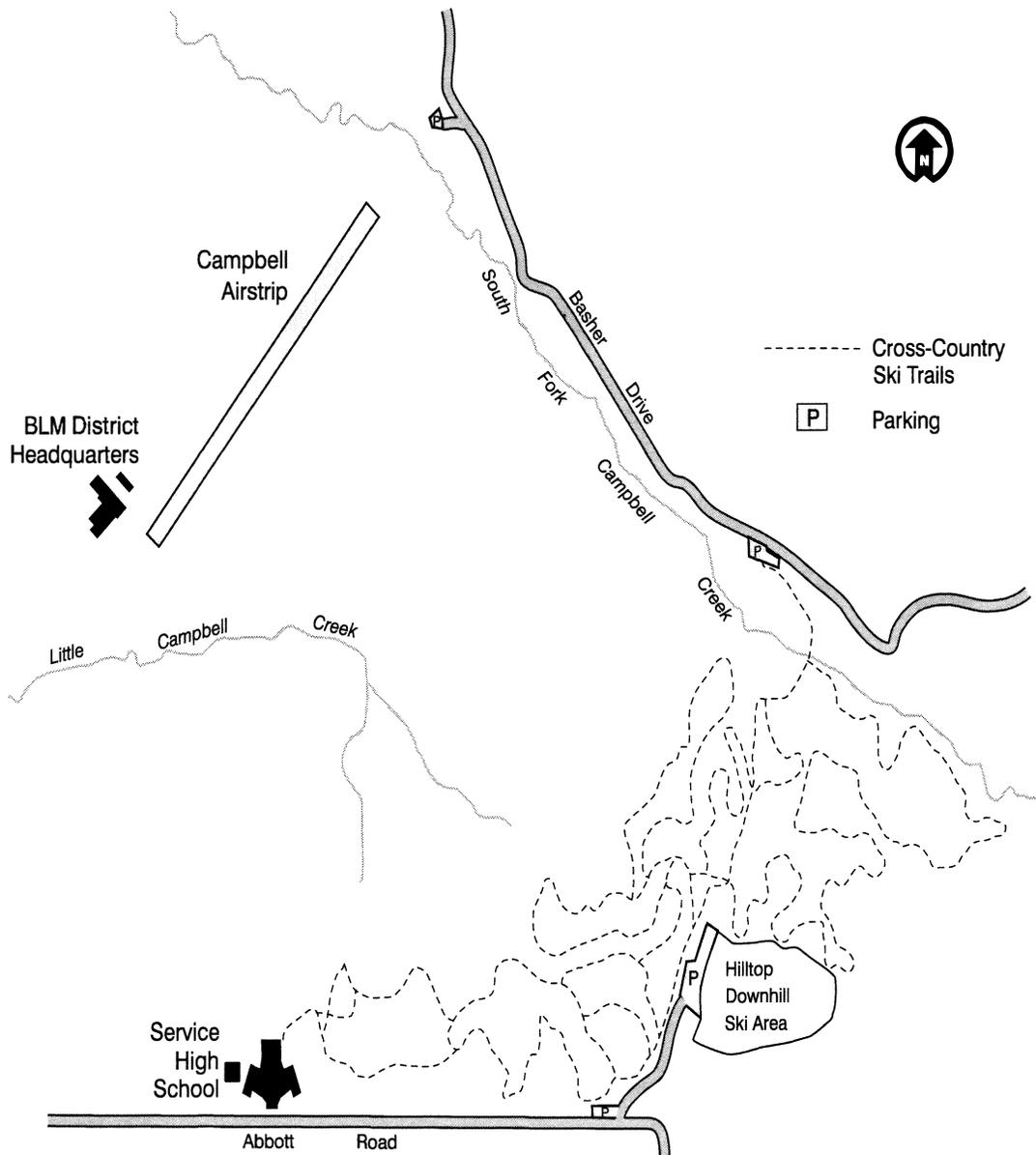


Note: Map is not to scale - Illustrative only

Figure 2.2

Designated cross country ski trails that are eliminated will need to be replaced with similar quality trails in order to maintain the diversity and accessibility of the system, as well as to accommodate increasing public demand. Trails of concern in this regard are those at Bartlett High School and the Alaska Pacific University.

Far North Bicentennial Park and Hillside Park Cross-Country Ski Trails



Note: Map is not to scale - Illustrative only

Figure 2.3

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Trail lighting should be provided on additional cross-country ski trails in order to increase their usefulness during the winter months. Additional lighting and trail grooming on trails connecting residential areas to Midtown and Downtown Anchorage have the potential for encouraging commuter use.
2. The design and construction of the Chugach Mountain Rim Trail and the extension of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail should be priorities.
3. A 5-kilometer paved training loop, so that roller-skis may be used for summer training, should be provided near the biathlon range.
4. No motorized vehicles, sled dog teams, family pets, mountain bikes or people on foot should be allowed on groomed and designated cross-country ski trails in order to maintain their quality during winter months and to avoid unnecessary safety hazards and grooming costs. Acceptable uses of the cross-country ski trails should be indicated through signing at the trail entrances. Groomed cross-country ski trails require permanent physical barriers at trailheads and junctions to prevent trespass by unauthorized users.

Bartlett High School Cross-Country Ski Trails

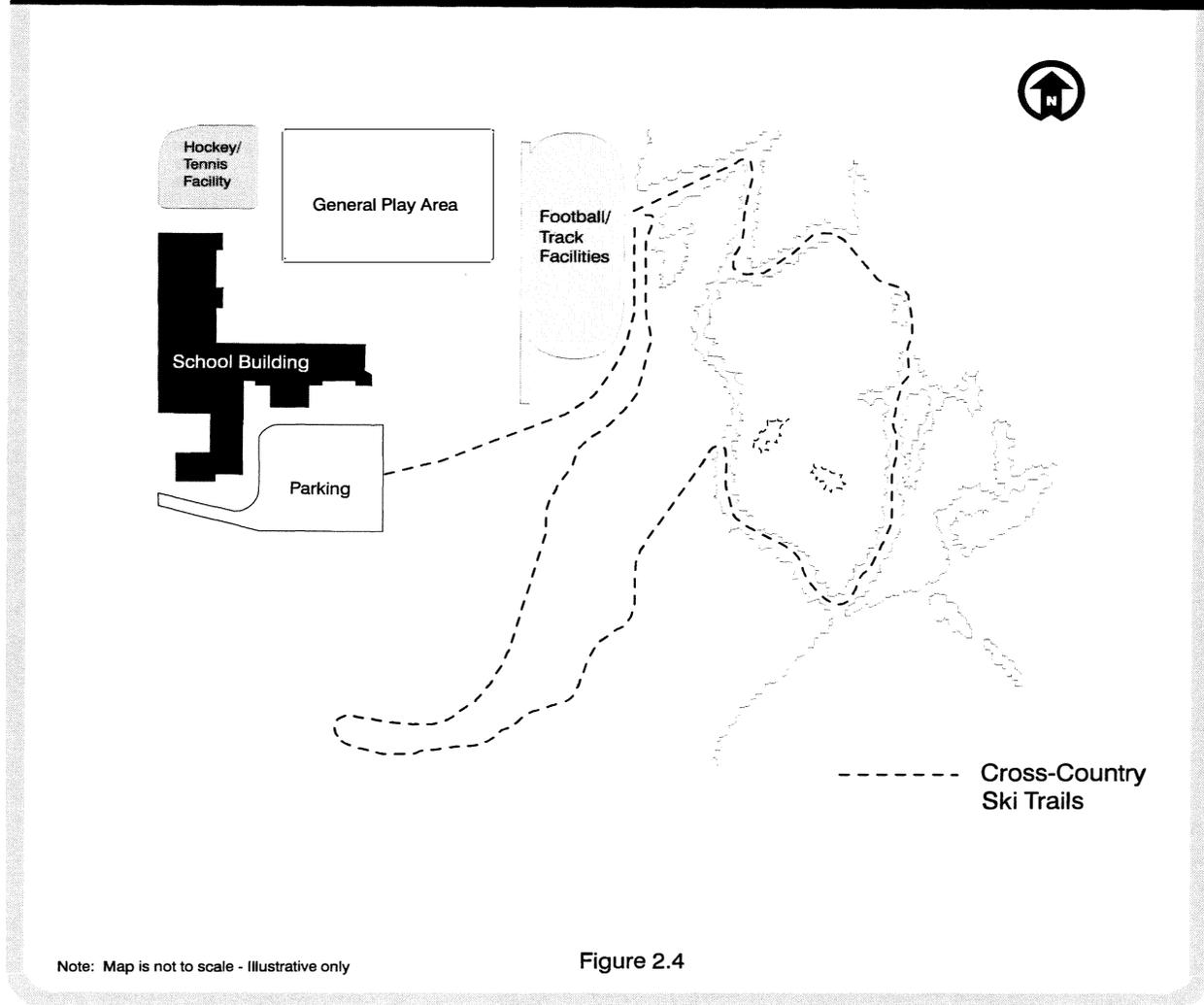
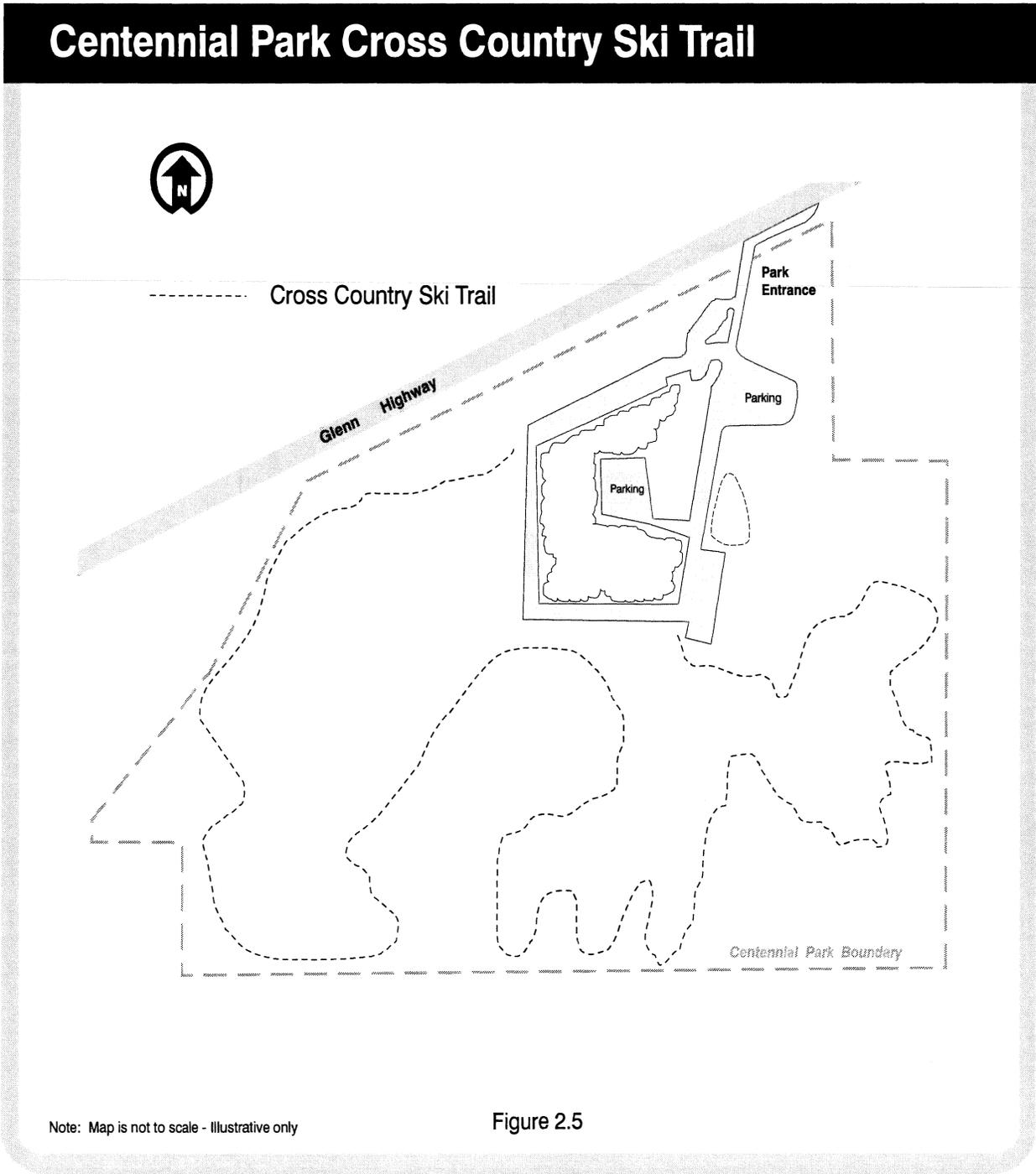
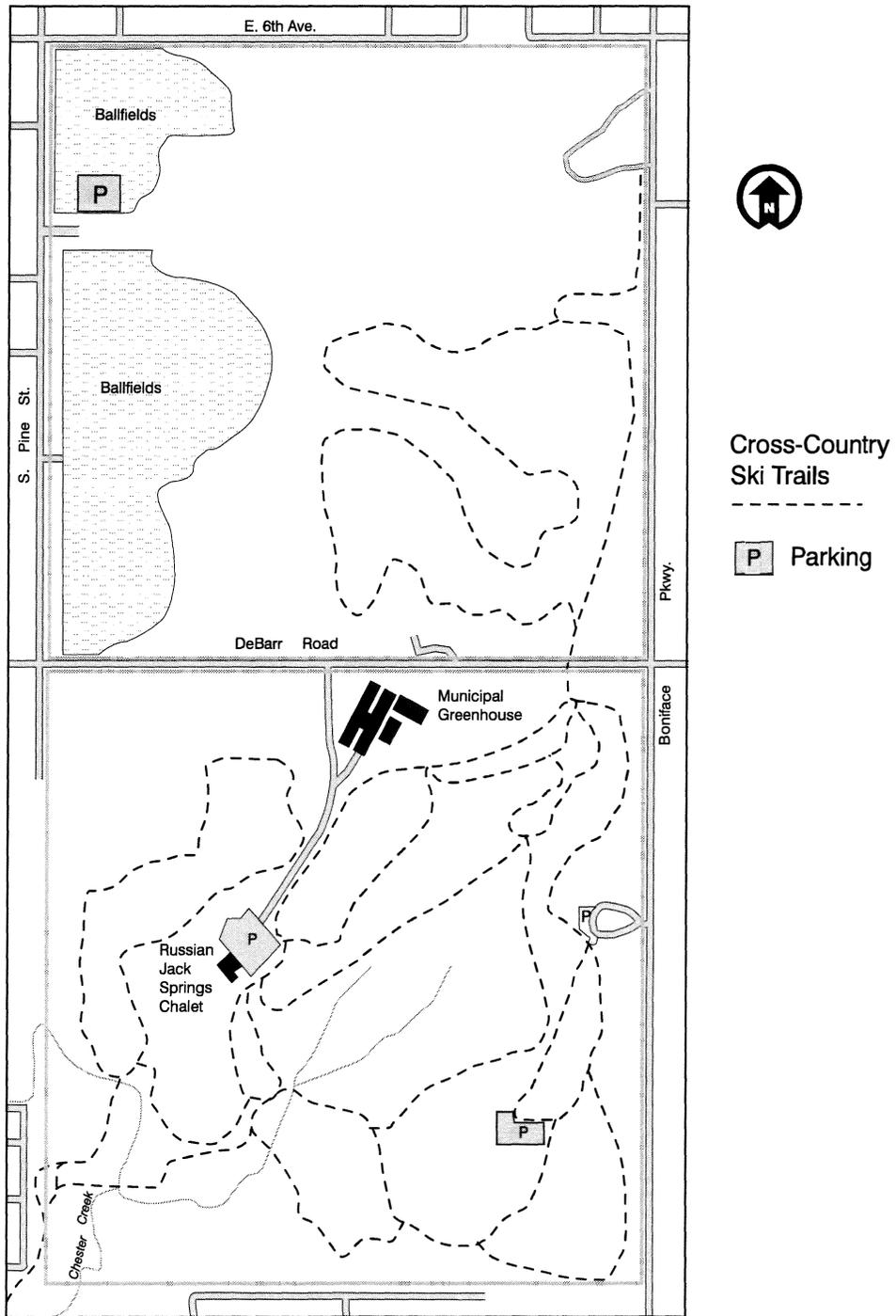


Figure 2.4

- 5. The acquisition of easements across public and private lands should be pursued so that a groomed cross-country ski connection linking the Hillside trail system and the University trail system, through Far North Bicentennial Park to the Tudor overpass, could be completed.
- 6. If existing, designated cross-country ski trails are eliminated, they should be replaced with similar quality trails.



Russian Jack Springs Park Ski Trails



Note: Map is not to scale - Illustrative only

Figure 2.6

VII. EQUESTRIAN USERS

Historically, horses were used as a major means of transportation to and from settled areas in Alaska. While the use of horses for transportation has decreased, the sport of riding, like many other outdoor participation activities, continues to climb. However, the rapid development and growth of Anchorage have eliminated many of the open spaces that once contained horse trails so that only remnants of the original trails remain. To preserve this traditional activity, efforts should be made to provide unpaved trails for equestrian use so that horseback riding may continue to be a recreational pursuit in Anchorage.

A. EXISTING TRAILS AND FACILITIES

Among the trails most widely used by equestrians in the Hillside area are roadside trails, which are usually located within the road right-of-way along the ditch line. These trails have evolved over time as transportation corridors have developed and alternate trail riding opportunities have been lost as a result of residential development.

A considerable amount of riding takes place along many of the unpaved, residential streets in the Hillside area, with horseback riders weaving their way through the residential areas and subdivisions. Many riders use these smaller, unpaved streets to make a connection with one of the major trail corridors. These corridors must be protected and improved as part of multi-use trail development along major roadways on the Hillside.

Ruth Arcand Park is an important recreational asset to equestrians and it serves as a center for Hillside equestrian activities (see Figure 2.7). This park provides trail riding, a show arena, and other arena facilities.

Additionally, Far North Bicentennial Park is an important component of the Anchorage equestrian trail use system. The park connects to many of the roadside trails mentioned earlier, including the Birch Road trail that is specifically dedicated to equestrian travel. This component of the trail system is used for competitive events, some nationally sanctioned, held by the Alaska Club, Chugach Range Riders, Arctic Fox Trotters, and Alaska Endurance Horse Association.

B. DEMAND ANALYSIS

Equestrian activity is growing in the Bowl, however, most use is concentrated in the Hillside area where zoning allows equestrian facilities and where many private boarding stables exist. Higher participation rates on the Hillside are also a consequence of boarding stables and horse activity being phased out of other areas of the Anchorage Bowl through zoning regulations and development pressures.

C. ISSUES

A critical concern to equestrians is a safe connection from Ruth Arcand Park to Far North Bicentennial Park at the corner of Abbott Road and Abbott Loop Road. Far North Bicentennial Park is an important component of the equestrian use network and an updated master plan must be prepared that provides for equestrians within the park.

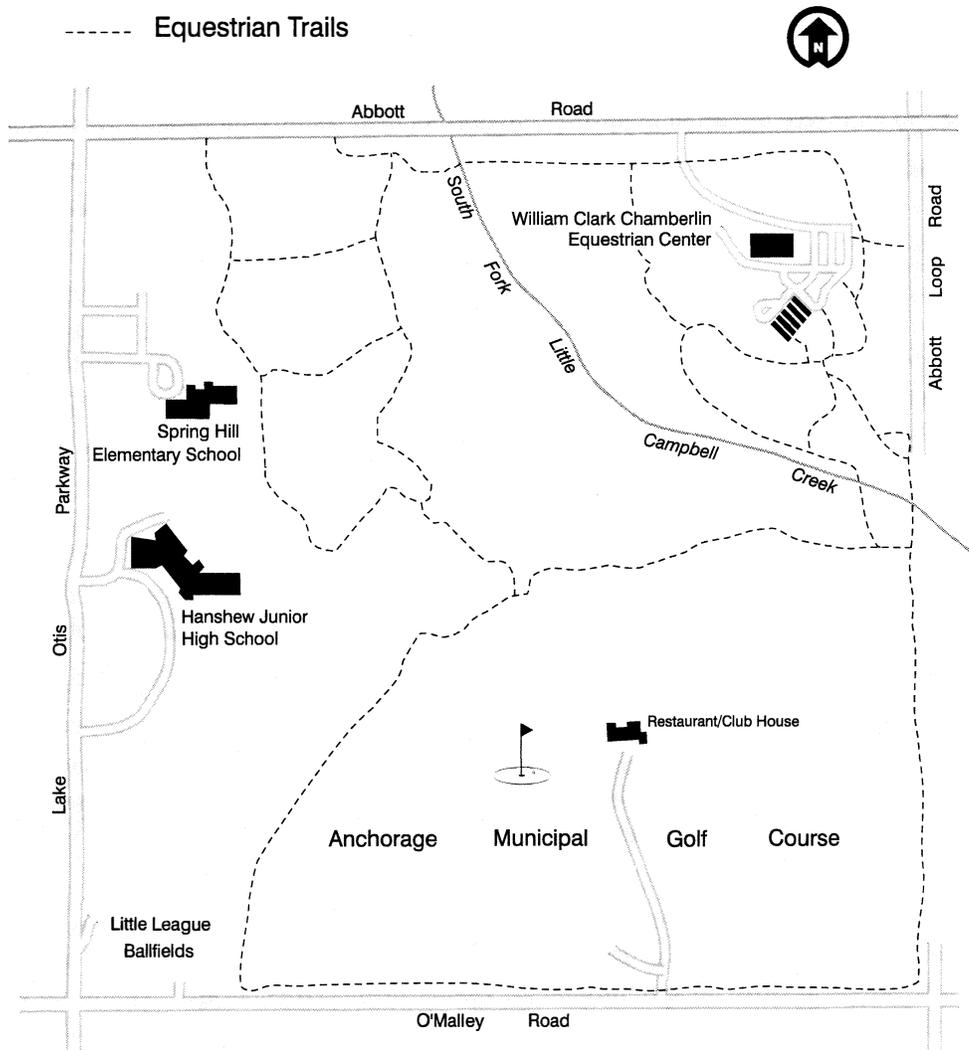
As the city has grown, equestrian use has been compressed into the Hillside area. This area is developing to the point that primarily road rights-of-way are available to provide for a continuous trail network. This sometimes requires riding in difficult circumstances. Roads in the Hillside area should be developed recognizing the need to accommodate equestrians within the right-of-way. In some circumstances, this may require acquiring additional right-of-way or adjusting the road centerline relative to the right-of-way centerline. In addition, horse trails could be established under overhead or above underground utility easements as there would be no impact to the ability to maintain the utility lines.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

Priorities for equestrian use development should include:

- safe crossing at Abbott Road and Abbott Loop Road;
- network of trails along major roads in the Hillside area (see the trails maps);
- inclusion of equestrian trails in the Far North Bicentennial Park Master Plan; and
- inclusion of equestrian trails in the Campbell Tract (BLM).

Ruth Arcand Park Equestrian Trails



Note: Map is not to scale - Illustrative only

Figure 2.7

VIII. SLED DOG MUSHING TRAILS

Anchorage citizens cherish their historical tie to Alaska's truly indigenous sport of sled dog mushing. Symbolic of Alaska's heritage, dog mushing offers a great deal of appeal to the public. The importance of sled dog teams to the development of Alaska prompted the 1971 Alaska State Legislature to designate sled dog mushing as the official state sport.

In the early days of Anchorage, settlers, trappers, and miners used sled dog teams as a common means of transportation. In those days, sled dog trails boasted a more substantial mileage in Anchorage than did roads.

The rapid growth of development in Anchorage during the intervening years has eliminated many of the open areas that once contained sled dog trails. Now only remnants of the original trails remain. Every effort should be made to protect sled dog trails so that dog mushing can continue to be a recreational pursuit in the Anchorage Bowl.

Virtually all programs and events in sled dog mushing in the Anchorage Bowl relate to competitive racing. Tudor Track and the Alaska Sled Dog and Racing Association host weekly senior and junior races from January through April. Some of the major races each year include the Women's Championship Race and the Fur Rendezvous World Championship Open. The Fur Rendezvous and the start of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race are the only events that do not originate at the Tudor Track.

A. EXISTING TRAILS AND FACILITIES

There are few opportunities for sled dog mushing in the Anchorage Bowl. Most of the sled dog mushing trails originate from the Alaska Sled Dog and Racing Association Headquarters located on Tudor Road between Lake Otis Boulevard and Bragaw Street. This 10-acre site serves as a "trailhead" access to some 16 miles of sled dog mushing trails in Far North Bicentennial Park.

The Anchorage Fur Rendezvous sled dog racing trail is a 25-mile loop that begins on Fourth Avenue in the Downtown area, follows Cordova Street to the Chester Creek Greenbelt, continues to Alaska Pacific University property, then traverses along a power line easement and a public use easement to Tudor Road where it crosses into Far North Bicentennial Park. Far North Bicentennial Park contains the major portion of this trail, as well as the most natural and scenic segment. Anchorage Assembly Resolution No. 54-76, passed in May of 1976, recommends the dedication of the Anchorage Fur Rendezvous Sled Dog Racing Trail in its present location. It also confirms the Municipality's intent to keep this trail open and usable. The Tudor Road Crossing at Bragaw is part of the sled dog racing trail.

B. DEMAND ANALYSIS

Sled Dog mushing is the Alaska State sport. Throughout the community, mushing is popular as a spectator sport. The Fur Rendezvous race is the most widely attended spectator event in Anchorage with approximately 100,000 persons watching the race annually.

C. ISSUES

The major problems facing sled dog mushing in the Anchorage Bowl are further encroachments on existing trails and conflicts with incompatible uses.

Far North Bicentennial Park is the single most important location for dog mushing in the Anchorage Bowl. The protection of the trails within the park is important for the survival of the sport in Anchorage. Although the trails are adopted by Assembly ordinance, ensuring there are adequate bridges, crossings, and intact, dedicated trail easements is important for the continuance of safe dog mushing. There are currently many conflicts between competing mushers and other users on the bridge over Campbell Creek.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All sled dog trails in Bicentennial Park should have a base of packed dirt or frozen ground.
2. The existing 16-mile sled dog mushing trails within Far North Bicentennial Park, in addition to the section used for the Fur Rendezvous World Championship, should be dedicated for future use in their entirety.
3. Any rerouting of the existing trails shall only be undertaken after a revision of the Areawide Trails Plan and an update of the *Far North Bicentennial Park Plan*.
4. Grade-separated crossings should be built at all road crossings and at any high-use trail intersection to increase safety to trail users. In particular, this applies to Campbell Airstrip Road.
5. Priorities for development of sled dog mushing trails should include:
 - Campbell Creek bridge to provide separation from other users
 - Fur Rendezvous Sled Dog Mushing Trail to connect with the Tudor Road Crossing.

IX. SKIJORING USES

Skijoring involves skiing with harnessed dogs, providing skill enhancement and conditioning for both skier and dog. Several years ago, very few people were aware of skijoring; today it is a recognized winter sport that is growing in popularity. The North American Skijoring and Ski Pull Association (NASSPA) maintains trails for skijoring and conducts educational clinics and organized tours and races.

A. EXISTING TRAILS

Existing trails used by skijors include segments at Far North Bicentennial Park known as Run Rover, Moose Meadows and the Moose Ridge trails. These trails are about seven to eight kilometers in length, respectively. The Far North Bicentennial trail includes a segment aligned with the “Spencer Loop” that then travels down the Campbell Creek corridor. Approximately six to seven kilometers of maintained trails are also found in the Connors Bog area with connections to Dela Vega Park (see Figure 2.8). In addition, the Chester Creek Trail and the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail are popular with skijors.

B. DEMAND ANALYSIS

Skijoring is a rapidly growing sport in the Anchorage Bowl. The demand for lighted trails for training and races is increasing as the sport grows. Most recent polling information indicates that 2.5 percent of the households surveyed include a member that participated in skijoring in 1992. There are currently 135 Anchorage members in the North American Skijoring and Ski Pull Association (NASSPA).

C. ISSUES

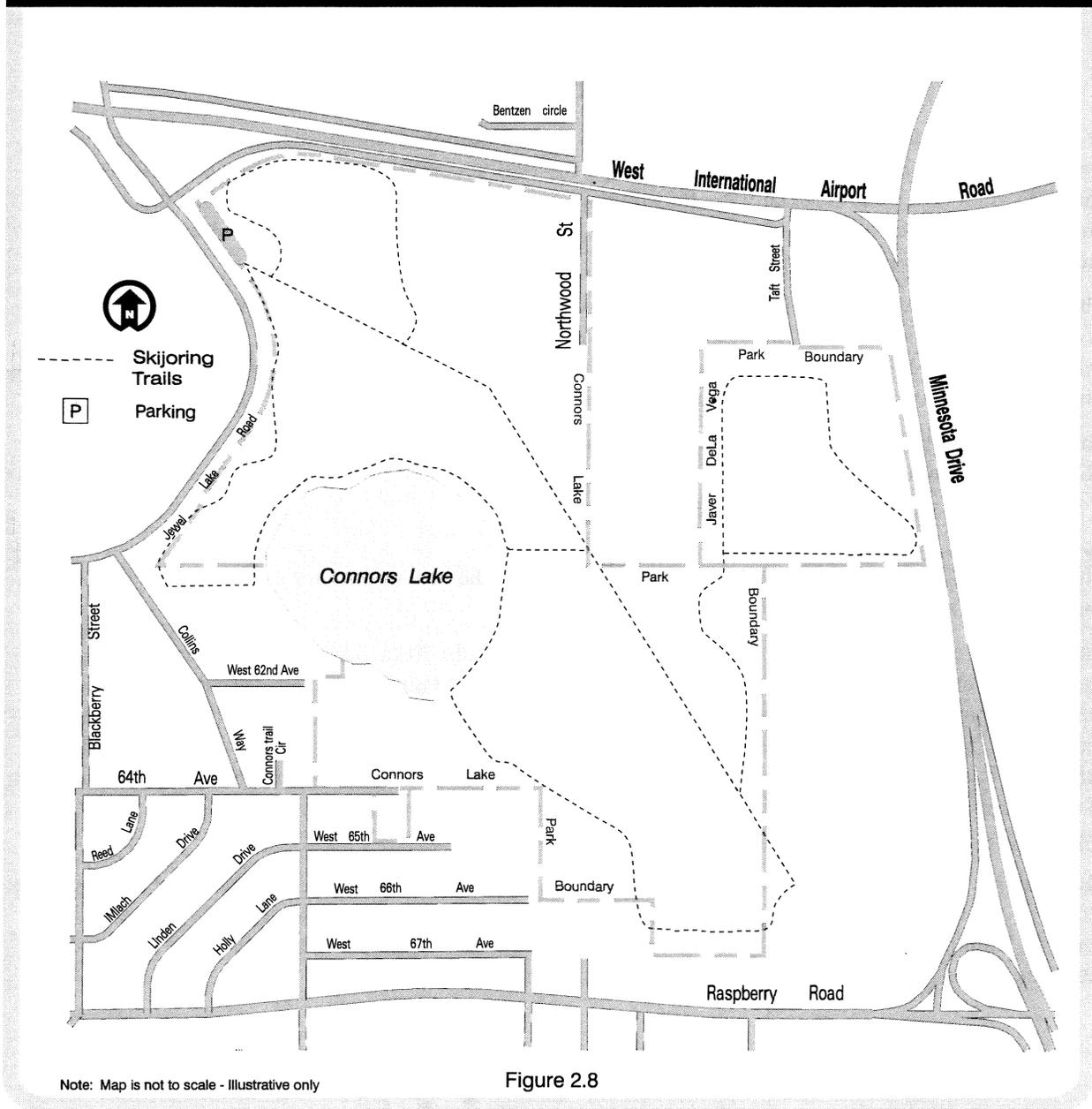
The issues relating to skijoring in the Anchorage Bowl are centered on available sites and compatibilities with other trail user groups. Skijors see the need for more groomed, technically challenging trails. They also desire a shared-use plan that would provide for use of the groomed, designated cross-country ski trails, however, this use would degrade the track quality and compromised safety when dogs use the groomed trails. Separation of these uses would seem to be a better solution.

Multi-use trail development, usage and maintenance in Far North Bicentennial Park will continue to be an issue with skijors, as well as cross-country skiers, equestrians and other users. Continuing cooperative planning and maintenance is important, as noted from past meetings of members from the Anchorage Nordic Ski Association and NASSPA. The dedication of a skijoring trail should be addressed through future planning of Far North Bicentennial Park. Scheduling skijoring access to lighted trails the night before trails are groomed, provided that trails are cleaned of all dog droppings, was discussed during the public review of this Plan. The issue is to provide skijors with challenging lighted trails on which to practice and train.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Skijoring trails should be dedicated in Connors Bog
- Trails improvements and possible dedication within Far North Bicentennial Park either through cooperative agreements between users or as part of a more formal trail development through a park plan
- Investigate the potential for more lighted segments of the multi-use trails, such as Chester Creek and Coastal Trails

Connors Lake Skijoring Trails



X. NATURAL TRAILS

Natural trails are unpaved, unlighted, ungroomed, non-motorized, generally narrow, relatively lightly used trails that occur in a natural setting enjoyed by non-competitive walkers, bird watchers, outdoor educators, skiers, etc. There is no clearing done to either side of these trails. This category includes unpaved trails that are in parks, greenbelts, open spaces, and other undeveloped areas within the Anchorage Bowl.

A. EXISTING TRAILS AND FACILITIES

Major areas in the Bowl that include many miles of natural trails are Far North Bicentennial/ Hillside Park, Kincaid/Point Campbell Park, Russian Jack Springs Park, the University area, and Chugach State Park. There are also natural trails around Baxter Bog and at Potter Marsh.

XI. WATER TRAILS

Water-based activities usually do not come to mind when traditional land-based trail activities are considered. Historically, waterways have been transportation corridors and recreational facilities. Water naturally attracts people, especially the free-flowing water of rivers, streams, and creeks. Water “trails” provide similar opportunities for transportation and recreation, and the benefits from these activities, as the more familiar land-based trails.

The Anchorage Bowl has several major creeks flowing through it including Ship Creek, Chester Creek, Fish Creek, Campbell Creek, Little Campbell Creek, Furrow Creek, Rabbit Creek, Little Rabbit Creek, and Potter Creek. Numerous studies and greenbelt master plans have identified many of these waterways. These creeks are very important and have potential to offer excellent water “trail” opportunities.

Ship Creek used to get canoe and kayak use between the hatchery and the dam until toxins (lead and PCB’s) were found along the creek in mid-80’s.

A. EXISTING TRAILS AND FACILITIES

There are two creeks within the Anchorage Bowl that offer the best opportunities for canoeing, kayaking, and rafting: Campbell Creek and Ship Creek.

Campbell Creek originates in the Chugach Mountains, enters the Municipality of Anchorage through Far North Bicentennial Park, and flows through the Anchorage Bowl until it reaches Turnagain Arm. The creek is within the Campbell Creek Greenbelt from Piper Street to Dimond Boulevard, except for a short section between Harper Drive and Cache Drive. The Municipality has identified the area between Piper Street and Far North Bicentennial Park through the State of Alaska land selection process as the final link in the greenbelt. The meandering course of the creek provides the opportunity for local residents to experience a “wilderness” environment within an urban setting.

Most people who float Campbell Creek put in at Campbell Park, located east of Lake Otis Parkway. The most popular take-out points are Taku Lake Park, located at “C” Street, and Emerald Hills Park, located between Dimond Boulevard and Minnesota Drive. There are several other parks and open spaces along the creek where people could stop and enjoy a picnic lunch or a brief rest.

B. DEMAND ANALYSIS

It is not possible to quantify the actual number natural trail users, however, one only has to look at history or any naturally vegetated area in an urban setting to see myriad natural trails created by local residents.

Natural trails should be designated in a variety of ecosystems and geographic locations in the Anchorage Bowl.

The main issue for these trails is that they be formally designated and protected so that they are not lost in response to requests for “improvements” by other types of users. Natural trails should be designated in a variety of ecosystems and geographic locations in the Anchorage Bowl.

C. ISSUES

The University Lake Community Council has requested that the trails in University Lake Park be designated as natural trails. Their goal is to rehabilitate University Lake Park into a natural wildlife habitat and plant preserve.

The primary issue relating to these trails is that they be formally designated and protected so they are not lost in response to requests for “improvements” by other types of users. Natural trails should be designated in a variety of ecosystems and geographic locations in the Anchorage Bowl.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

Natural trails should be established and maintained in:

- Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge
- Cheney Lake Park
- Far North Bicentennial Park
- Goose Lake Park
- Hillside Park
- Johns Park
- Kincaid
- Russian Jack Springs Park
- Section 36 park lands
- University Lake Park

