

Chester Creek Single Track Trail Project

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, January 24, 2019

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Speedway Cycles, 1231 W Northern Lights Blvd

Attendance: 111 people signed in



PROJECT TEAM

Maeve Nevins-Lavter, Project Manager, MOA Parks & Rec

Brad Muir, Natural Resources Manager, MOA Parks & Rec

Michelle Fehribach, Community Engagement Coordinator, MOA Parks & Rec

Van Le, AICP, Planner & Outreach Lead, R&M Consultants, Inc.

Taryn Oleson, Planner & Outreach, R&M Consultants, Inc.

John Underwood, Expert Trail Builder, Happy Trails

ATTACHMENTS

1. Fact Sheet
2. Proposed Single Track Trail Map
3. Display Information Boards
4. Comment Forms
5. Meeting Sign In

OVERVIEW

The public open house for the Chester Creek Single Track Trail Project was held on Thursday, January 24th at Speedway Cycles on the main store floor. Bikes had been cleared from the area, allowing for gathering and free movement throughout the space. A sign in table was placed near the door, where Taryn Oleson greeted attendees as they arrived and provided a brief overview of the project and the request for feedback on the proposed trail concepts. The meeting was open house style with members of the project team available to answer any questions and hear feedback from attendees.

Four informative boards on example trail features, trail types and intersection scenarios were stationed on easels around the room. A large map of the project corridor showing the proposed single track trail segments, color coded by constructability, was placed on a table in the center of the room and a second copy of the same map was mounted on an easel on the side of the room. Sticky note pads, pens and comment forms were placed around the maps encouraging attendees to leave geographic comments. A table dedicated for writing comments was available at the back of the room, a TV displayed two videos of urban single track examples, and pizza and light refreshments were provided.

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SUMMARY

Attendees and commenters overwhelmingly support the proposed integration of single track trails into the Chester Creek Greenbelt between Valley of the Moon Park and Goose Lake Park. Discussions on what Class level the trails should be built at proved a point of contention; some attendees want the trails to remain narrow social trails to maintain the 'in the woods' feeling while others support the trails being wide enough for multi-use two way passing. Beginner to intermediate skill level is preferred by most attendees with an expressed desire for the development of skill loops in spurs off the main single track areas. Concerns were voiced over the illegal camps in the greenbelt and how these trails may or may not impact the people who inhabit them.

Written Comments:

Trail Use:

Current Use:

- I use this trail frequently in the summer months and a little in winter.
- I am a mountain biker, fat biker, runner, dog walker and skier.
- Please ensure the trails are open and welcoming spaces for kids and families.
- I use the Chester Creek Trail for bike commuting, walking, skiing and teaching my daughters how to bicycle.
- I am a runner and cyclist – existing social trails add variety and fun to my runs and rides along the main paved trail, and if they were improved and added to they would be even better and see more use and enjoyment by more people.

Future Use/Planning for Single Track Use:

- Chester Creek Trail is a highly used multi-use trail and any alternative routes/trails could potentially alleviate multi-use traffic crowds. It would also provide trails for people that live in the area to share with their children.
- The proposed trails will likely be used for more than cycling – winter time running options become very limited in Anchorage for those seeking off-trail, hard packed and natural setting running as most options are either groomed for skiing only or are snowed over – do expect runners to be drawn to these routes as the fat bikes keep it groomed! Design criteria and clearing width could be adjusted to account for this
- Design needs to keep in mind that many walkers, runners and dog walkers use these trails now and will use anything out there in the future so design the trails will all uses in mind. This means not expert terrain and skills areas on main route. Just simple Class 2 trails, slightly better for biking than what exists now.
- Single track serves a different purpose than the existing multi-use paved trail. The paved trail is for everyone and serves as the fastest way to get to a location without driving, single track is intended for mountain bikers out to have fun. It would be sad to see this effort try to make it easy for all users and duplicate the paved path.

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- Accessible single track right in town would give every rider a chance at real trail riding
- Trails right next to the paved pathway doesn't make sense for bikers but would work for runners
- I am only somewhat supportive of this proposal and ONLY if it's multi-use – open to runners, etc, as well as bikes – if people want to ride mountain bikes fast they should go to the existing Hillside etc. trails.

Safety:

- I would love to feel safe along the Chester Creek Trail and I currently do not. I won't use it to run or bike alone right now and hope there is a comprehensive plan to curb homeless camps and to patrol the area
- Proposed trails would improve the safety of the main trail by expanding the area along the trail that receives frequent use by the public.

Trail Features:

Skill Level:

- Want to see a mix of beginner and intermediate trails and maybe some skills work areas.
 - Like the idea to make trails fairly technical, so kids in the area can practice, but not too difficult/dangerous, just not plain dirt trails.
- Love the idea of Skills Loops!
- Implement skill building bicycle trails throughout the entire corridor
- Skills terrain should only be on offshoots or spurs and minimal at that
- I support adding technical sections and incorporating hills wherever possible since it's otherwise a mostly flat stretch. Improving existing social trails so wet ground doesn't get destroyed would be important.
- Tikishla Park area is prime for a skills trail
 - Would like to see a skills course in the chunk of land south of Tikishla Park ballfields and where the ball fields currently are
- Should be slow speeds and no trick logs, jumps, etc. to entice more extreme riding.

Trail Class:

- Please make the trails usable year-round so they need to be wide enough for people to pass each other. Class 3?
- Keep the footprint of the existing social trails near Tikishla Park small (Trail Class 1 or 2).
- Keep the single track trails between Goose Lake and Lake Otis Class 2 trails.
- Class is too big (proposed class 3) – keep it small and limit the amount of tree clearing, maintain the “out-in-the-woods” feeling
- Sitka Street Park area could use a good Class 3 loop
- Put in a Class 1 single track between Woodside Park and Sitka Street Park on the north side of the creek

Trail Design/Features:

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- Suggest directional trails that split and rejoin for one-directional to reduce conflicts and increase mileage.
- We need an entry level pump track between C and A Streets that's accessible from Fairview as well. We should encourage the kids to practice their skills in a pump track so this project serves them as well.
- Build some jumps!
- Spread play features along the trail corridor, don't duplicate the amazing experiences available at Kincaid, Hillside and Bicentennial Park
 - Play session areas between Hillstrand Pond and Goose Lake Park and around Woodside Park. Skills feature near Valley of the Moon park
- Utilize as many hills as possible and provide access points from neighborhoods.
- For these to be a true draw to mountain bikers, the trails will need bragging features like berms, bridges, whoops, etc.
- Have a boardwalk with raised platform for ornithology and astronomy in the middle of Sitka Street Park area, the trails are already roughed in places.

Intersections and Safety:

- Intersections with the paved trail and the sections of single track are of concern for general safety – they will have to be well marked and the public educated on the right-of-ways etc.
 - Side trails must yield or stop when they merge with the main Chester Creek Trail.
- Minimize single track trail crossing/weaving in and out of paved trail, especially in busy areas such as Valley of the Moon Park
- Maybe trail phones would increase safety?
- Trees grow back – cut them all down where needed as safety and sightlines are important
- Agree with the plan to NOT cut down trees for the new trails (unless they are an invasive species) but clearing of brush is important so runner/rider don't scare the moose

Trail Alignments/Locations:

Extensions and Connections:

- Consider Loop Trail in undeveloped parkland adjacent to Norther Lights across from Goose Lake
- Let's take the trail in Valley of the Moon from 16th and E intersection directly through the woods to the pedestrian bridge across the creek.
- Please develop single track system from existing walking trails at Valley of the Moon Park – easy construction (not wetlands and it's flat)
- Recommend extending trail to Spenard Rod and install a pocket park at the former Frisbee golf course area. There is already a social trail between Valley of the Moon Park and Spenard Road tunnel – this would allow for complete connectivity as best as possible for single track along Chester Creek, and connect the new Spenard Bike Lane and Midtown to the single track.

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- At the existing trail west of Hillstrand Pond and east of Woodside Park, I recommend NOT spending money on a parallel trail or new trail through the woods. The forest is very boggy and wet and would require a lot of fill – save the effort for areas with more potentially interesting terrain.
- The forested slope north of Rogers Park (between Maplewood Spur and Seward Hwy), all the way to Seward Highway could have potential for fun and interesting terrain and trails.
- I can see this trail being extended along the Coastal Trail, through Earthquake Park and continuing to the Kincaid STA Trails.
- Connect the existing trail on the west side of the North Fork of Chester Creek near Sitka Street Park (which now runs on the west side of Sitka Street) this would require a bridge across the creek. This connection would enhance public safety and public use of Sitka Street Park and the Chester Creek Greenbelt south of the park
- Old Rondy Sled Trail (winter only) parallels the existing paved trail to the north of the trail, south of the creek, south of Sitka Street Park – brush and it's good to go in winter.
- Senior Center trail off Karluk/20th Spur could be connected to Old Rondy trail with a bridge (area is wet)
- 20th Street corridor needs a bridge at east end and brushing but it's pretty easy to get to year round.

Routing:

- I strongly support the development of multi-use/mountain bike trails adjacent to the existing paved trails
- I strongly support routing the trails through “traditional camp areas” – if trail routes avoid “traditional camp areas” the problem of environmental degradation and unsavory encounters will persist. Improvement to the trails without disturbing the camps would make them more appealing to the homeless population. Perhaps building a pump trail in each “traditional camp area” would be the best idea. The more engaging the trail design, the more likely the trail will incur more users and hopefully deter camping and other unsavory activities.
- I support routing trails through the camp areas – I am concerned about the increasing trash from camps along this stretch. If we route the trails to avoid the camps we effectively condone the camps and it will continue to be a problem. Of course solutions to the homeless issue should be addressed, but we need to reclaim the parks for safe recreation.

Prioritization:

- Don't waste money bringing in fill to go through wetlands. If an area isn't conducive to single track just let people continue to use the paved trail. Boardwalks would be better than fill.
- Given the limited budget, I think the most important goal is to provide lots of good tie-ins to neighborhoods.
- With limited funds, don't just duplicate existing paved trail (such as trail segment between Woodside Park/Seward Hwy and Hillstrand Pond (largely wetland area)).
- Connect the new trails to neighborhood roads as much as possible – easy of accessibility for all

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- Better to use combo of existing paved trail with some dirt trail than tear up existing wetlands and natural areas for another trail.
- There are many trails cut through the woods already and I think maximizing those first and then focusing on where new trail connections can be made would be awesome.
- Suggest focusing efforts on two or three “seasonable” areas with optional skill-building features.

Illegal Camps:

- Concern about how you will keep homeless from accosting riders along more remote sections?
- I’m concerned that without a comprehensive plan to address the homelessness, the trails won’t be enough to activate the spaces. For example, a short section south of the sports complex, right along the creek, used to be very frequently used. Now it’s all but posted to the camps there.
- As far as the homeless goes: my observations is a lot of these people are choosing to live like this. There are many of these people that are dangerous and we need to take back our lovely trail system
- This feels guised as a ploy to move homeless camps out of the greenbelt – but hopefully not at the expense of cyclist safety. How will the city handle this conflicts?
- I am always a proponent of programs that expand access to bike trails, but over the development of this program I have been shocked at the vitriol I have seen towards displaced citizens from an otherwise friendly and inclusive cycling community. I worry that this program will not only serve to further displace Anchorage residents without prospect of addressing the issue of homelessness. Again, I love the prospect of being able to ride single track across the city, I would love to see efforts to support affordable housing, mental health and substance abuse rehabilitation programs.
- It would be great to see an effort made to accommodate the homeless. Donation to low income housing, or real effort to help the homeless.
- What will happen to the people who currently reside in camps along these routes? It seems like the Muni is using us (cyclists and trial users) as a veiled tool of displacement. For the record, I am pro-trail development, but the idea of pushing the camps out for our entertainment (via new trails) irks me. I don’t know what the budget is for this, but I feel that money would be better spend in our social service programs.

Statements of Concern or Outstanding Questions:

- Will the trails be lit for safety? Who will patrol, who will maintain? Some of the trails in the video look pretty overused.
- Project is a great idea with one serious **concern**: intersections with the paved trail and the sections of single track.
 - The existing trail is a well-used trail for all types of people from kids learning to ride a bike to the elderly walking the corridor. There are many other areas of town for

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technical trails and even intermediate level single track like Kincaid's STA. If single tracks are put into Chester Creek it should be very easy and not attract speedy and technical riders. Otherwise I don't think it will be safe and will contribute to the already existing perception that serious bikers are taking over the trails and parks.

Statements of Support:

- I am in full support of this project.
- Even small sections of fun single track add a lot of interest, variety and challenge to a run or ride along the trail and could turn what could otherwise be a somewhat boring trip into an exciting urban adventure.
- More positive uses will only help this troubled part of town.
- Consider it an excellent way to ACTIVATE the area for use by the entire community.
- Thank you for initiating this tremendously positive recreational and community building project.
- Chester Creek Trail system is one of the jewels of Anchorage; anything that can promote a healthy lifestyle and encourages people to exercise is beneficial to everyone.
- Overall love the idea of more single track in neighborhoods; it would be great to not have to drive to get to bike trails.
- Single track would add fun elements to the parks used by families, increases use that would discourage chop shop operations that thrive in the woods now, make another path for bike commuters, dog walkers would love it (would be a great addition to the dog park at Valley of the Moon), reduces litter, needles, etc. that is there now and would overall be a fun addition to Anchorage!
- Great concept overall and will be great for bikes, runners and walkers alike.
- As someone who lives close to the project corridor and uses the paved trail system often, I'm very excited about this idea.
- The proposed trails are really exciting.
- Totally supportive of this project, appreciate the early efforts to engage the public for input and ideas. There is a very large constituency of people who tend to be dependable voters who are very enthusiastic and supportive of this project.
- I grew up riding and building social trails around Chester Creek – thank you for working on actual single track trails!
- Improved trails for biking, hiking, and skiing improves the quality of life in Anchorage. It promotes healthy and civic discourse by bringing people together with a shared common interest. We need these trails.
- I support all of the trails you can build – please make sure we can feel safe using them!
- I've been commuting by bike along the Chester Creek Trail for more than 15 years – I've been chased, yelled at, threatened and pushed, I've had knives brandished and garbage thrown at me by people marginalized by our society. I've ridden by MOUNDS of trash. These new trails won't solve the issues that plague these people, but these trails WILL help prevent these camps from becoming a permanent fixture along Chester Creek.
- Whatever is done will be positive for our city.

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- Looking forward to helping build this great trail system
- This project is a fantastic idea. A parallel trail to Chester Creek connecting neighborhoods will give many mid-level adventurous residents a quality mountain biking experience. This will also be good for businesses and tourism, giving visitors a place to ride without having to figure out how to get to Hillside or Kincaid.
- This trail project is a wonderful idea and will only add to the incredible active outdoor lifestyles of Anchorage citizens. Hopefully the city will have many volunteer trail building days to get the users involved and create a sense of ownership and appreciation for the work it takes to build a trail.
- This would help develop the future of our city – schools could benefit from these trails and offer outdoor PE classes, our youth and our future will benefit.
- I wholeheartedly support the efforts being made to increase the number of safe trails available for Anchorage residents to Use.

Map Comments:

Geographic Comments:

- Bring the trail to Spenard and build pocket park in former Frisbee golf course
- In segment just west of C street to Valley of the Moon, stay on north side of trail to minimize traffic crossing busy section of paved trail
- Old paved trail between Westchester Lagoon and the Bunker St Spur on the south side of the creek is deteriorating and unmaintained – turn it into single track too
- Focus between Valley of the Moon to Gambell Street for improvements
- Tons of walking trails north of Valley of the Moon between E Street and C Street – would love single track system for kids and a diagonal southeast route
- Connect Sitka Park to single track system
- Connect the 16th and E intersection directly to the pedestrian bridge between C St and the C St. Spur
- Existing social trail south of Chester Creek Trail at the C St Spur is already too close to the creek
- Build entry level pump track for kids near the Chester Creek Sports Complex, between C Street and the complex
- Would be fun to have more hills like the slope near the 23rd Ave Spur
- Increased traffic on the 23rd Ave Spur multi-use trail would be great
- Use more of the space around the Juneau Spur, south of Woodside Park, and the area not currently labeled as park property (proposed New Trail-natural surface trail in the area) – there are good hills and could connect a beginner loop to neighborhood, encouraging more use
 - Support the development of the existing social trail, moderate improvements shown between the 23rd Ave Spur and the Eagle Street Spur
 - Excellent terrain for a trail, now completely unused

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- Add pump track between Seward Hwy and Juneau St Spur
- Follow AWWU Sewer ROW south of the E 20th Ave Spur
- Senior Center Trail Spur running east could connect to Old Rondy cut on south side of the creek
- Spur loop around/through Sitka Street Park!
 - Build class 3 Sitka Loop with raised platform in the middle for nature education, enjoyment and astronomy
- Add connection across Chester Creek to Sitka Park on the east side, wets of Hillstrand Pond
- At light pole IZO on Chester Creek Trail, south of Sitka Street Park, there is a trail through the woods to the creek where the population of illegal campers use both sides of the creek but prefer the north side.
- Old Fur Roundy Sled Trail is north of paved Chester Creek Trail and south of the creek, south of Sitka Street Park. Easy winter use if brushed.
- Update/fix bridge off Sitka Street into Sitka Street Park. Create/widen path around the perimeter of Sitka Street Park and possibly build/extend boardwalk for birders and astronomers – no lights please
- Leave existing social trail north of Lake Otis Spur as is/Class 2 as it's a fun single track
- Trails south of Chester Creek Trail between Lake Otis and Goose Lake should have skill loops/skills park that come off the main single track trail – add a teeter totter
- Would love a small loop through the woods between Goose Lake Parking lot and Northern Lights
 - Keep existing social trails in this area as class 2
- Trail shown as existing social trail, moderate improvements, on the south west of the greenbelt between Lake Otis and creek undercrossing of Northern Lights is fun in the winter and if improved would be fun in the summer too
 - Keep this trail class 2 – both minor improvements and moderate improvement social trails between Lake Otis and Goose Lake
 - Keep this area as winter biking only
- Bridge work on Bumstead is needed
- Very heavy dog-walk users between Tikishla Park, Goose Lake , and Lake Otis
- Any “improvements” in the Natural Resource areas of Tikishla Park must be consistent with the park’s Master Plan. New skills trails are not.
- Add pump track around the perimeter of Tikishla (between the Tikishla Park Spur and the E 20th Ave Spur connections to the main Chester Creek Trail)
- Existing Chester Creek Trail connection shown on map from Nichols St, north of Community Park Loop, to Bragaw St “doesn’t exist here – verify connector and the potential for a connector to Russian Jack Springs Park”

General Comments:

- New trail should be multi-use
- Plans should show where bridges are needed
- More trail less tents
- I like clear bike trails with no violence – I’ve been scared using the trail

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- If waterbodies or wetlands cannot be avoided, use the opportunity to install environmental education infrastructure
- Make sure that you cut a narrow path only- no more than 4'
- Route improved new trails through camp areas to discourage camping in park
- Innertube skinny bridges over wetlands to build trail connections
- Suggest directional east and west trails that split off and rejoin for uni-direction trail – better flow, reduce conflicts
- Winter only single track use on trails proposed on wetlands

DRAFT