



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE PARKS & RECREATION

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630

P.O. Box 196650

Anchorage, AK 99519



Date: May 14, 2026

To: Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission

Cc: Taylor Keegan, Superintendent, Anchorage Parks and Recreation

From: Nicolette Dent, Senior Park Planner, Anchorage Parks and Recreation

Subject: **2026 Recreational Trails Plan Update**

Overview

The Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department updated the 1997 *Areawide Trails Plan* to reflect modern trail needs of Anchorage and Eagle River/Chugiak residents and plan for the years ahead. The result is the 2026 *Recreational Trails Plan*, which will serve as the local guide for the management, maintenance, and development of trails.

The plan update was funded by Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS). The AMATS boundary served as the plan area, which includes both the Anchorage and Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation Service Areas.

Purpose of the Plan

While the previous Trails Plan had a dual focus on recreation and transportation, AMATS recommended a separate plan focused on recreational trails during update of the 2022 *Non-Motorized Plan*. The result is a guiding document for how the Municipality and its partners should build, manage, and maintain great trails over the next 10-20 years. This Plan will also help government and partner organizations advocate for and prioritize additional funding and resources to improve trails.

Public Engagement

Project staff from MOA Parks, AMATS, and R&M Consultants led a two-and-a-half year long public process, summarized in Attachment B. Public engagement tools included:

- Advisory Groups: Two advisory groups made up of volunteer members of the public to steer plan development based on public feedback.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Individual meetings with agency landowners and user groups responsible for the management, development, and maintenance of recreational trails.
- Workshops: Four public workshops, two in Anchorage and two in the Eagle River/Chugiak Area.



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- Survey, Online Comment Map, and Pop-Ups: Various pop-ups events at farmers markets, festivals, and events on trails. 2,055 people responded to an online survey and hundreds of people used online comment tools, including an interactive comment map posted in summer 2025.

A Public Review Draft was available online between January 28 and March 31, 2026. The project team made select updates to the Public Hearing Draft based on 260 comments received, summarized in Attachment C.

Key Themes and Plan Goals

The public engagement process found three key themes:

- Trail safety: Top safety concerns include unsafe speeds, poor trail etiquette, and traffic crossings of busy roads.
- Quality maintenance: Maintenance (and the lack of funding available dedicated to maintenance) was brought up most often as the biggest issue affecting the trail system.
- Connecting existing trail systems: 43% of survey respondents said connecting missing links between trails was the most important thing to do over the next 20 years.

These themes show a tension in the Plan between taking care of what we already have and investing in new resources that make the trail system even better. The Plan Goals reflect this duality and provide a framework for moving forward with recommendations:

- Connectivity: Provide a geographically distributed, convenient, and integrated network of trails that link neighborhoods, public centers, and recreational destinations.
- Safety: Ensure trail users can safely and comfortably use trails.
- Quality: Provide high quality trails year-round throughout the network.
- Wellness: Ensure everyone can support their physical and mental well-being by enjoying outdoor activities, nature, and community on recreational trails.
- Variety: Provide a wide range of trail opportunities to support varying activities, abilities, users, and experiences.

Plan Recommendations

The Plan recommendation section proposes a balance of community needs. While many proposed projects focus on improving existing resources, it also outlines key connectivity projects, many of which have been asked for by the public for decades.



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Systemwide Recommendations

The Systemwide Recommendations are guidelines that shape how Parks and their partner groups make decisions about trail projects under six focus areas: planning, policies, partnerships, projects, programs, and personnel.

Highlights:

- Plan ID 7: When planning and designing specialized trail systems, prioritize opportunities for safe skills progression from beginner to advanced (e.g. mountain biking and cross-country skiing).
- Policy ID 11: Elevate trail improvement and construction projects that connect to Natural Resource, Community Use, or Special Use Parks, as defined in the *Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan*.
- Partnership ID 45: Review formal maintenance agreements regularly and update as needed to ensure terms of responsibility and liability are clearly defined.

Trail Projects

The Plan assigns broad category of high, medium, or low priority based on municipal property ownership, gaps in the trail system and people served, and severity of need. They represent mostly improvements to existing trails along with a few major connectivity projects. Most of these projects are in a "proposed" status and will need to go through additional public process before they are funded and built.

Anchorage Area Highlights:

- Projects 05, Tony Knowles Coastal Trail Widening: Widen segments of the Coastal Trail to Class 6, starting with most popular corridors between Elderberry Park and Earthquake Park, and evaluate opportunities for improved access to the trail from Downtown.
- Project 10, South Coastal Trail Extension: Support and participate in the evaluation of alternatives and development of a continuous nonmotorized extension of the Coastal Trail from Kincaid to Potters Marsh Watershed Park. Alternatives should consider seasonal variations and braided routes to continue the experience and access to viewshed offered by the existing on-coast alignment of Coastal Trail.
- Project 23, Lanie Fleischer Chester Creek Trail Widening: Widen segments of these trails to a Trail Class 6 standard, starting with most popular corridors between Westchester Lagoon and Eastchester Park.
- Project 37, Muldoon Perimeter Trail: Provide continuous north-south access between Muldoon neighborhoods, FNBP, and Chugach State Park.



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Trail Classifications

This Plan introduces a classification system of multi-use Summer and Winter Class 1 – 5 trails that reflect updated standards throughout our network. The Plan also introduces a new type of trail standard, Trail Class 6, that provides separation for bicyclists, pedestrians, and skiers on a wider or parallel multi-use path. This is typically bicyclists and pedestrians in the summer. In winter, separation could also provide groomed ski trails separate from a path maintained for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The Trail Class 6 proposal is a response to comments about discomfort and safety concerns where trail use is high and where bicyclists, skiers, and pedestrians intermix, such as along the Coastal Trail near Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage. Any Class 6 development should be accompanied with site-specific planning and design interventions such as painted markings, light projections, and signage.

Non-Motorized Projects

45% of survey respondents said they walk, bike, or ski to the trails and many indicated that they are looking to reduce their reliance on vehicles to access trails. The Plan includes a table highlighting important, highly-desired on-street projects that would complement our recreational trail system. Projects on this list are within or adjacent to road rights-of-way or on private property and will require significant coordination with partnering entities (municipal departments, state agencies, private property owners, recreational user groups, etc.).

Anchorage Area Highlights:

- Non-Motorized Project 09, Bike Lane Improvements from Russian Jack Springs Park to Mountain View Neighborhood: Improve bike lanes and other nonmotorized facilities to connect the recreational destination to nearby neighborhoods
- Non-Motorized Project 14, Alaska Railroad Corridor Pathway: Project would construct a multi-use pathway along the Alaska Railroad corridor from Tudor Road to Northern Lights Blvd. This project would connect to the existing trail to the north and existing trail on Taft and Tudor Road.

Implementation

The Plan outlines implementation tools including updating park master plans for major trail destinations, expanding funding sources, and establishing legal access for trail easements and rights-of-way that are essential for trail development and long-term management. One major



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implementation tool that received positive community support is the development of a comprehensive inventory of existing easements and rights-of-way within the AMATS area. While Parks cannot take on this project in isolation, it is an important step toward connecting existing trail systems.

Staff Recommendation

Anchorage Parks and Recreation staff recommend approval of this plan by the Commission. A substantial public engagement process revealed clear themes of improving existing trails and connecting multi-use trail systems. The Plan also provides clear guidelines for decision-making to accommodate additional project opportunities that may be funded by partners or grant programs. This flexible approach will help the Parks Department align projects with community priorities across Anchorage, Eagle River, and Chugiak.

Attachments

- A. Trails Plan Guidebook
- B. Public Involvement Summary
- C. Public Comment Period Memo

More Information

Project Website: www.publicinput.com/rectrails

Plan Draft: <https://publicinput.com/Custommer/File/Full/96bf6277-1ca3-4e82-8cd7-de690de46956>

StoryMap: <https://arcg.is/1vfWDP2>

Anchorage and Chugiak-Eagle River Recreational Trails Plan Update

Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The following table summarizes activities conducted during the development of the Recreational Trails Plan Update. Summaries and any associated reports are provided for activities bolded in the table.

Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting 1	Monday, June 17, 2024
Technical Working Group (TWG) Meeting 1	Monday, June 24, 2024
Community Trails Online Survey	July–August 2024
CAG Meeting 2	Tuesday, October 15, 2024
TWG Meeting 2	Monday, October 21, 2024
Public Workshop #1 C-ER – Goals, Issues & Opportunities	Wednesday, November 20, 2024
Public Workshop #1 ANC – Goals, Issues & Opportunities	Thursday, November 21, 2024
Stakeholder Meetings:	January – March 2025
Eklutna Inc. & Native Village of Eklutna	Friday, January 10, 2025
Single Track Advocates	Monday, January 13, 2025
Chugach State Park	Monday, January 13, 2025
Alaska Sled Dog Racing Association	Tuesday, January 14, 2025
Alaska Trails	Wednesday, January 15, 2025
Bureau of Land Management	Thursday, January 16, 2025
Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage	Thursday, January 16, 2025
Anchorage Park Foundation	Friday, January 31, 2025
Chugiak Dog Musers Association	Wednesday, February 19, 2025
Chugach Mountain Bike Riders	Thursday, February 20, 2025
Chugiak–Eagle River Nordic Ski Club	Thursday, February 20, 2025
Joint Base Elmendorf–Richardson	Friday, March 7, 2025
TWG Meeting 3	Monday, March 17, 2025
Joint CAG #3 and TWG #4 Meeting – Systemwide Recommendations	Monday, June 2, 2025
Public Outreach Event – Bear Paw Festival	Friday, July 11, 2025
Joint CAG #4 and TWG #5 Meeting TWG 5 – Draft Recommendations and Implementation Chapters	Monday, December 15, 2025
Public Comment Period for Draft Plan	January 28 – March 31, 2026

Anchorage and Chugiak-Eagle River
Recreational Trails Plan Update

Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary

Public Workshop #2 – Anchorage – Public Review of Draft Plan Anchorage	Wednesday, January 28, 2026
Public Workshop #2 – Chugiak-Eagle River – Public Review of Draft Plan	Thursday, January 29, 2026
AMATS BPAC Meeting – informational presentation	Monday, February 2, 2026
AMATS TAC Meeting – informational presentation	Thursday, February 5, 2026
Stakeholder Meetings:	
MOA Heritage Land Bank	March 23, 2026
Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage	March 25, 2026
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson	March 24, 2026
Mayor’s Office Representatives	April 23, 2026
Alaska Railroad Corporation	April 27, 2026
Approvals (Resolutions to be attached following approval)	
Eagle-River Chugiak Parks & Recreation Board of Supervisors	
Anchorage Parks & Recreation Commission	
AMATS Technical Advisory Committee	
AMATS Policy Committee	





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Date: May 4, 2026

To: Aaron Jongenelen, AMATS Executive Director/MPO Coordinator

Cc: Shanna Gamble, Director, Anchorage Parks and Recreation

From: Nicolette Dent, Park Planner, Anchorage Parks and Recreation

Subject: **2026 Recreational Trails Plan – Summary of Public Review Draft Comment Period**

Overview

The Public Review Draft of the Recreational Trails Plan was posted online on January 28, 2026, which kicked off a 60-day public comment period open through March 31, 2026. During this time, the project team hosted open houses in Russian Jack Springs Park and Beach Lake Park. An interactive map and project website provided an overview of the plan and a link to the plan draft. Hard copies were available at the open houses and at Anchorage City Hall.

The project team received 123 individual comments through the online form and 17 letters via e-mail with an additional 137 comments extracted. These comments were categorized into themes (some comments had more than one theme).

Comment Theme	Number of Comments
Document Edit	57
Project Support	39
New Proposed Project/Recommendation	38
Recommendation Support	30
Design Standards	29
Project Concern	28
Recommendation Concern	23
Project Prioritization	22
Landowner/Land Management	5
Maintenance	2

Based on comment review, the project team made the following notable changes to the draft.



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Trail Classifications and Design

- Trail tread and clearance widths were edited throughout Trail Classifications 1-6 for summer and winter to better align with accessibility guidance, trail character, and intent.
- 28 commenters requested a new trail classification that would describe parallel progressive singletrack trails alongside a multi-used paved path, such as those found on the Chester Creek Trail.
 - Parks is supportive of these types of trail developments (such as Project 07) as project-specific developments rather than standards. Added narrative in Chapter 5 under “Trail Classifications and Design.”
 - Added narrative to clarify that while Trail Classifications focus on multi-use trails, they do not prevent specialty trail development (i.e. mountain biking trails, cross-country ski trails, etc.).

Trail Project Recommendations

- **Modified Project 10, South Coastal Trail:** Rerouted the line outside of the boundary of the Conservation Easement on the Campbell Creek Estuary Natural Area. Revised project description to demonstrate that a route should prioritize park land, greenbelts, and low-traffic corridors to minimize impacts to private property and the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge.
- **Modified Project 37, Muldoon Perimeter Trail:** JBER requested removal from plan, citing its “incompatibility with military mission. This section of the installation border is mostly unsecured, easily accessible by the public, and has a high incidence of trespassing resulting in delayed and cancelled training opportunities impacting Soldier readiness.” However, there was substantial public support for this project throughout this plan and in historic plans. JBER was removed from the recommended project title, and the route is now shown as a hatched line north-south in the region, reflecting the public priority to connect Far North Bicentennial Park/Chugach State Park with Northeast Anchorage neighborhoods.
- **Modified Project 68, Coastal Trail North Extension, Beach Lake Park to Mirror/Edmonds Lake:** This segment will be shown as a hatched fill instead of solid line to emphasize the need for more route planning to address trespass concerns from Eklutna, Inc. and other landowner concerns and to coordinate with the conservation easement in place through Great Land Trust.
- **New Project 73, Eagle River Greenbelt Mountain Bike Trail Development:** Develop mountain bike trails connecting Eagle River High School, Eagle River Campground and Briggs Bridge. Trail development should be consistent with and support the Chugach State



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Park Trail Management Plan, specifically Trail Management Recommendation 223a. Eagle River Greenbelt Pathway – Glenn Hwy to Eagle River Nature Center.

- **New Project 74, Carol Creek Trail:** Connect the McDonald Center to Chugach State Park at Mt. Baldy in accordance with adopted plans and through close coordination with landowners.

Trail Project Descriptions or Priority Level

- **Project 04, Earthquake Park Rehabilitation:** Priority recategorized as high priority due to many supportive comments. This is also the nearest Coastal Trail access to the residential area and contributes to better connectivity.
- **Project 12, Section 36 Master Plan:** Clarified that the project boundary includes the bounds of the Master Plan, which includes HLB parcels south of Clark Rd.
- **Project 24, Westchester Lagoon Master Plan:** Project description was expanded to clarify goals of the project to address trail congestion and safety concerns shared during the comment period by three community councils.

Project Recommendation Narrative Edits

- **Major Connectivity Projects:** New narrative section to describe intent and challenges of the “big dream” projects and to add information about the record of public support for many of these projects.
- **Connectivity Language:** The narrative in Chapter 5 under Project Recommendations was revised on land acquisition and how that relates to non-motorized and Chugach State Park connectivity.
 - While land acquisition was not explored in depth by this plan, multiple organizations and individuals requested a revision of the draft language because they felt that it did not reflect the public's support for land acquisition with the goal of connecting to Chugach State Park or connecting existing trails.
 - The intent is to clarify that the findings of this plan are both that 1) the public wants to prioritize taking care of existing resources over building new ones, and 2) connectivity of existing trail systems is a long-term public priority.



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Non-Motorized Needs List

27 comments received during the comment period referenced projects along a street corridor (non-motorized transportation facilities rather than recreational facilities). Six new projects have been added to the Plan based on public comment:

- **New Non-Motorized Project (NMP) 22, Coastal Trail Extension South, Seward Hwy from Potters Marsh to Indian:** Provide a separated non-motorized pathway from Potters March to the existing pathway at Indian Road.
- **New NMP 23, Huffman Road to Coast Connection along Furrow Creek:** Construct a non-motorized connection from Huffman Road and Old Seward Hwy west, across the railroad, along Furrow Creek or E Huffman Road ROW to improve neighborhood connectivity to Mariner Park, Johns Park and potential South Coastal Trail alignments.
- **New NMP 24, Government Hill to Ship Creek Connection:** Implement the Government Hill Parks & Trails Plan to improve non-motorized connectivity to Ship Creek
- **New NMP Project 25, Government Hill East to West Bluff Trail Connection:** Implement the *Government Hill Parks & Trails Plan* to provide a non-motorized connection from East Bluff Park to West Bluff Park with an improved crossing at E Loop Road.
- **New NMP 26, Barbara Street Improvements from Northern Lights to 32nd Avenue:** Improve non-motorized safety and connectivity along Barbara St. to connect the elevated crossing at Northern Lights to the Fish Creek Trail at 32nd Ave.
- **New NMP 27, Hyder Street Corridor Improvement:** Improve non-motorized connectivity and user experience along the Hyder Street Corridor to better connect the neighborhoods of Fairview and downtown to recreational assets including Chester Creek and Ship Creek trails.

Implementation

- The Chugach State Park Access Service Area (CASA) was *incorrectly* identified as an implementation tool for projects that fall within the Eagle River Chugiak Parks and Recreation Service Area (ERCPRSA). This has been corrected throughout.
- In Chapter 6, under “Legal Access: Trail Easements and Rights-of-Way,” narrative about trail easements, land acquisition, and land swaps as tools for implementation has been added.



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Other Narrative Edits

- Chapter 2, Trail Management:
 - Voluntary membership model explained in Cooperative Use Agreement section.
 - Added narrative section called “State and Federal Regulatory Framework” that describes conservation easements, Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) protections within parks.
- Chapter 5, Recommendations:
 - Narrative added under new sub-headings: Trail Striping, Trail Counters, Snowmaking, and Trailside Facilities.
- Chapter 6, Implementation:
 - Added narrative under Funding Strategies describing historic project costs and survey respondents’ willingness to support new forms of revenue for trail projects.



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PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

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PRC RESOLUTION NO. 2026-09

Recreational Trails Plan Update

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility and duty to provide for the long-term vision of our park system by ensuring that a balance of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities provides for the health, welfare, and safety of all residents of the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS, the *2026 Recreational Trails Plan* (the Plan) is a modern update to the 1997 *Areawide Trails Plan* and reflects current and future recreational trail needs for Anchorage and Eagle River/Chugiak, and establishes a long-range framework to guide the planning, development, maintenance, and management of recreational trails; and

WHEREAS, the Plan was developed through a robust public engagement process conducted over two and a half years, including advisory groups, stakeholder meetings, public workshops, surveys, interactive maps, community events, and a 60-day public review period; and

WHEREAS, the public engagement process revealed key themes including the need to improve trail safety and promote good trail etiquette, enhance maintenance of existing trails, and prioritize connectivity between existing trail systems; and

WHEREAS, the Plan establishes five goals (Connectivity, Safety, Quality, Wellness, and Variety) to balance the community priorities of maintaining existing infrastructure and connecting the trail network; and

WHEREAS, the Plan includes Systemwide Recommendations, which are guidelines that shape how Parks and their partner groups make decisions about trail projects; and

WHEREAS, the Plan recommends Trail Projects that will require future planning, funding, and public process prior to implementation, and which were assigned a low, medium, or high priority category based on municipal landownership, gaps in the trail system, and severity of need; and

WHEREAS, the Plan also recommends Non-Motorized Projects for consideration in future updates to the AMATS Non-Motorized Plan and to highlight important on-street projects that would complement the recreational trail system; and

WHEREAS, the Plan introduces updated Trail Classifications, including a new Trail Class 6 standard to improve user safety and separation users in high-use areas; and

WHEREAS, the Plan identifies implementation strategies including updates to park master plans, expanded funding mechanisms, coordination with partner agencies, and a comprehensive municipal inventory documenting legal access of trail easements and rights-of-way; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission recommends approval of the 2026 *Recreational Trails Plan* as the update to the 1997 *Areawide Trails Plan*.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 14th day of May, 2026.

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

Director
Parks & Recreation Department