



Regional Mountain Trails Master Plan Initiative

PROJECT PURPOSE

Develop a long-term, multi-agency master plan for a network of access points and travel corridors for non-motorized users in the foothills and mountains of Boulder County.

It is envisioned that this multi-agency master plan will guide the implementation of a network of regional trails incrementally, opportunistically, and cooperatively over time. The public planning process begins in April 2013 and is scheduled to be completed by Summer 2014 (see *Preliminary Schedule*).

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Partners have identified the following characteristics as important to the master planning process:

- Provide numerous opportunities for citizen input as a way to gauge public opinion and generate broad support for the process and the master plan;
- Utilize a collaborative, multi-agency planning process that creates buy-in from all public land managers in the Mountain Area in the process and the master plan;
- Respect the management considerations of the individual land management agencies including resource protection goals and objectives, review processes, rules and regulations for use of public lands, and any means of implementation;
- Consider a range of options for the extent and design of the access points and travel corridors, including the status quo; and,
- Result in a realistic yet versatile master plan that allows for incremental, opportunistic, and cooperative implementation.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

There are a number of opportunities and challenges associated with identifying such a trail network. Challenges include the complex urban interface patterns in the area, the presence of important natural resources, physical constraints of the mountain environment (e.g., topography, drainage patterns, soils, etc.), in addition to the fragmented pattern of public and private land ownership. However, an abundance of roads, trails, and other corridors already exist. Further, this plan creates an opportunity to identify more sustainable travel and transit opportunities to better serve an increasing human population in the mountains and plains of Boulder County and enhance access to the many parks and recreation areas in the Mountain Area that draw visitors locally, regionally, and even internationally.

An additional consideration in this process is the identification of potential corridors for the Rocky Mountain Greenway (the RMG). The RMG is an endeavor of the US Department of the Interior, through the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, to support a federal, state, local and stakeholder partnership for trail development. Its aim is to create uninterrupted trails/transportation linkages connecting the Denver metro area's trail systems, the three National Wildlife Refuges in the metro region, Rocky Mountain National Park, and community trails systems. Its vision entails a long-term and ongoing partnership to steward and, where feasible and appropriate, increase and enhance public access to the region's natural resources.

EXISTING MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL AGENCIES

A goal of the RMTMP initiative is to provide a collaborative, multi-jurisdictional approach to comprehensive non-motorized trail system management in the Mountain Area within which the partners can each integrate their local, site-specific decisions and activities. It is not meant to supersede any partner's discretionary authority to make its own decisions about trails, roads, or other related facilities within their individual jurisdictions, however. To that end, the following important existing management considerations of individual agencies have been identified as influencing the development of the RMTMP. Additional more site-specific considerations will be identified during the planning process, especially in Phases III and IV (see Preliminary Schedule).

US FOREST SERVICE

- Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (1997) identifies management areas in which trails can be considered
- RMTMP is intended to be a pre-NEPA process. Planning /decisions making can only be made to a certain level/scale before triggering need for NEPA analysis
- Trails in wilderness area are outside the scope of this planning process (no bikes allowed)
- Use of existing roads/trails may require a less-intensive NEPA process in the future than any new roads/trails

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE/DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

- Consideration should be given to potential corridors that link Rocky Mountain National Park and Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge as potential components of the Rocky Mountain Greenway

COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE

- Eldorado Canyon State Park (ECSP) serves a state-wide constituency in its mission and purpose
- ECSP is currently working with Boulder County and the City of Boulder to study potential multi-use trail connections between Walker Ranch (BCPOS), Eldorado Canyon State Park, and OSMP-managed trails

BOULDER COUNTY PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

- Property-specific management plans are the decision-making process that guide the locations of trail facilities
- These plans weigh any potential facility development against specific resource concerns and /or any potential impacts
- In areas where significant resources are located, trail development is strongly discouraged

BOULDER COUNTY TRANSPORTATION

- Connections to the existing regional trails network are strongly encouraged
- County roads, Jeep roads, and historic public rights-of-way should be considered in the planning
- Planning should be consistent with the Transportation Master Plan and other related plans/policies

CITY OF BOULDER, OPEN SPACE AND MOUNTAIN PARKS

- Trail Study Area (TSA) Planning is the primary decision-making process for area-specific plans that determine the design of the trail system and the permitted activities on the trails.
- West TSA decisions are considered "givens" for the RMTMP. Proposals for lands near or in the West TSA planning area will be evaluated based on their consistency and compatibility to the plan
- The RMTMP process will be integrated as appropriate with the North TSA planning process for OSMP lands generally north of Linden Drive and west of Broadway.

CITY OF BOULDER, UTILITIES DIVISION OF PUBLIC WORKS

- Management priority is watershed and infrastructure protection

CITY OF LONGMONT, DEPT. OF PUBLIC WORKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

- Management priority at Button Rock Preserve is watershed and infrastructure protection
- Passive recreation that protects the watershed, wildlife, water quality and other natural resources are supported
- The property's acquisition agreement prohibits public thoroughfare. In 1992, the City's right to permit passive recreation, including hiking and fishing, were challenged in District Court based on this agreement. The City was successful in retaining only hiking and fishing (no biking, horses or vehicles); see Longmont Municipal code 13.20.025.