

Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project Plan

The schematic design for the Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project contained in this Clerk File (Attachment A) (endorsed unanimously by the Board of Park Commissioners) will provide local recreational opportunities for families and under-served communities who may not always have access to nature. The project site is an urban greenspace that has been heavily logged and is overgrown with invasive species. Work is underway by the Green Seattle Partnership to restore the area. The trail is designed to work in harmony with this restoration effort.

The schematic design provides space for both pedestrians and mountain bikes, while at the same time addressing safety concerns. The proposed trails have been designed to minimize environmental impacts by utilizing best management practices for protecting wetlands and enhancing the stability of the steep slopes. The Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project:

- Provides recreational opportunities for currently under-served communities, providing families with the opportunity to experience nature and recreation in their own neighborhood;
- Provides a link between the Rainier Vista community and North Beacon Hill;
- Responds to environmental and geological concerns within the Cheasty Greenspace that were raised by the community during the public review process and highlighted in environmental and geological studies through a schematic design that is intended to deliver a net-positive outcome.
- Supports strong community demand for the trails;
- Recognizes that volunteer restoration work is a high priority for the surrounding community and there is a strong commitment to this project and the maintenance necessary to maintain the trails;
- Is a creative way to provide recreational opportunities in our urban environment, which is experiencing unprecedented growth; and
- Provides a network to build community within the Rainier Vista and Beacon Hill neighborhoods.
- Provides Parks and Recreation the opportunity to observe and learn from the pilot project's successes and challenges.

Public Involvement Process

Seattle Parks and Recreation completed a five-month public Project Advisory Team (PAT) process for the Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project in 2014 and 2015. The PAT, consisting of 12 members, was selected from a broad range of applicants. Membership

represented a variety of interests, contributed a wide range of professional expertise, and exhibited the ability to work together in a respectful and professional manner on a contentious issue. The meetings, facilitated by an outside consultant, consisted of informational discussions, presentations from outside experts and public comment. The PAT process started in September 2014 and culminated in February 2015 (Attachment C). In response to the desire for more technical information during the PAT process, Parks and Recreation retained a Geotechnical Engineer and Environmental Consultant to provide more detailed information on the condition of the site. The consultants concluded that there were no red flags with the schematic design layout of the soft-surface bike and pedestrian trails. They also determined that there should be no cause for concerns about environmental impacts as designed, and that the trail could contribute to improved slope stabilization. Parks and Recreation's plan is based on information and input from the five PAT meetings, a public outreach meeting, two site tours, significant public input and expertise from professionals in the trail design, engineering and environmental community. All of the information from the public process can be found at http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/cheasty/g_s_bike_trail.htm.

Following Seattle Parks and Recreation's public process, the Board of Park Commissioners received a staff briefing, held a public hearing, organized an information session, and voted unanimously, at their May 28, 2015 meeting, to support the pilot project that Parks and Recreation is forwarding to the City Council.

The Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project Plan

The Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation concurs with the Board of Park Commissioners recommendation to move forward with the proposed Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Pilot Project as follows:

Design

Seattle Parks and Recreation will move forward with the proposed schematic design (Attachment A) for the loop pedestrian and bike trails. The current design is based on environmental analysis, geotechnical review, professional landscape design, on-site layout, Project Advisory Team and citizen input. The bike and pedestrian trails are mostly separated but parallel in the schematic design to improve safety, and minimize geological and environmental impacts. Parks and Recreation is confident that this design achieves project goals, while using the best management practices in design to protect the environment and public safety.

Long-term Trail Plan

Provided the Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot project is successful and the evaluation studies come back favorable, and funding is available, a second phase will be implemented. The second phase adds a cross trail component to create a safe walking route from Rainier Vista to North Beacon Hill and a skills trails component on the south side of the proposed project area. During the pilot, a long-term plan will be developed for these additions to the trail system and the necessary environmental and geotechnical studies will be completed. These elements will help address many of the concerns about limiting the pilot project to a perimeter loop trail, heard during the public review process. Due to the direction provided by Ordinance 124546, these trail elements could not be incorporated into the first phase of the schematic design.

In addition, the long-term plan will explore the possibility of moving the pedestrian trail section of the path, currently on Cheasty Boulevard, into the interior of the greenbelt.

Duration of the Pilot Project

Seattle Parks and Recreation agrees with the Board of Park Commissioners that a 15-month pilot project makes the most sense based on the limited scope of the loop trail. The three-year pilot, initially recommended by the Board of Park Commissioners, assumed a more substantial trail system. Without a direct trail linking Rainier Vista and North Beacon Hill, as well as an area where bikers can be challenged and children can bike without having to complete the full perimeter loop, it will be hard to sustain the loop trail for more than 15 months. Concerns were expressed that without these additional elements, use may decline over time and that social trails will develop to link the communities and shorten the loop. In addition, the Board of Park Commissioners requested that Parks and Recreation establish a stakeholders committee for the duration of the pilot project. This is an important component of the pilot's success and a venue to communicate with the community throughout the project.

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria (Attachment B) reflect feedback heard from the PAT process, citizen input, and elements of the pilot that can objectively be measured. There are other issues that came up, such as environmental education, which will be addressed programmatically if there are resources available. The evaluation criteria consider wetlands, erosion, habitat, social impacts, user safety and maintenance. Also, there is a response plan and methodology for quarterly reporting. Parks and Recreation will monitor the project for environmental impacts throughout the pilot.

Environmental Review

Trail construction will conform to all applicable policies and regulations. The completed trail will not adversely impact the existing wetlands and is expected to enhance the slope stability.

Under the City's Environmentally Critical Areas Code, trails are expressly allowed pursuant to SMC 25.09.045.H.3.f. Parks and Recreation will follow all applicable provisions of the ECA Code during the construction of all trails at Cheasty Greenspace and will employ best management practices. This is a low-impact bicycle and pedestrian trail that complies with the City's existing Natural Areas and Greenbelt Policy.