

CHAPTER 6 Trails Existing Conditions

6.0 INTRODUCTION

Trails are very important to the citizens of Bozeman. In fact, the PROST Plan survey indicates that trails are the most-used recreational facility in the City. Trails provide a wealth of community-enhancing benefits, including:

- Trails facilitate exercise and offer a cost-effective weapon against the staggering health-care costs associated with the sedentary lifestyle.
- Trails provide safe transportation corridors for people to move throughout the community on foot or on bike.
- Trails provide an opportunity to experience nature and enjoy the outdoors.
- Trails can enhance property values and contribute to the community's tourism economy.

6.1 HISTORY/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Planning for trails and trail corridors has its roots in the early 1900s. Several planners and landscape architects were advocating for the creation of parkways and interconnected park systems. The early leader in greenway planning was John Charles Olmsted, who wrote "while there are many things small and great which may contribute to the beauty of city... unquestionably one of the greatest is a comprehensive system of parks and parkways" regarding the City of Portland, OR's park system.

Radburn, NY, designed in 1929 by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, was one of the first planned communities in the United States. The design of Radburn introduced a number of new planning ideas, including the "super-block" concept, cul-de-sac (cluster) grouping, and interior parklands. Radburn also featured a trail system (known as "park walks") for the separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic to promote safety. Every home was planned with access to the park walks.

The movement for the creation of trail systems emerged in the mid- to late 1980s as urban conservationists, neighborhoods, and "friends" groups around the country coalesced around a shared vision for creating a community where ribbons of green would flow through every neighborhood. These groups typically embraced smart growth's central tenet of containing urban sprawl through compact urban form, but their support was contingent on the quid pro quo that streams, wetlands, and wildlife habitat be protected, and restored where necessary, to provide access to nature within a short walk or bicycle ride from home.

By 1983, the Bozeman Area Master Plan contained "linear parks" as a park category. Linear parks were described as "corridors of land which provide public access between different locations for recreational or transportation purposes...improvements can include facilities to aid walking, hiking and bicycling, and rest stations."

6.2 CLASSIFICATION OF TRAILS

In 2005, there was approximately 48 miles of trail within the planning area (see Figure 4). Of this, approximately 42 miles are natural fines trails (Classes II – IV) and approximately 6 miles are paved, shared-use trails (Class I). Although the term trail is generally defined as “way designed for and used by pedestrians, cyclists and other similar uses,” the City of Bozeman uses several subcategories of trails including:

Class IA. These trails are heavily used with full access, and are designed for recreational and commuter use along major transportation corridors. These trails are designed to permit two-way traffic using an impervious surface material such as asphalt or concrete. These trails are 12 feet wide with full ADA accessibility.

Class IB. These trails are the same as Class IA trails with the exception of being 10 feet wide. These trails are typically used in interior subdivision settings where Class I trails are appropriate, but a full 12 feet width is not necessary.

Class IIA. These trails receive heavy to moderate use with a very high degree of ADA accessibility. They are intended for multiple non-motorized, recreational and commuter use. Class II trails are constructed of natural fines and are 6 feet in width.

Class IIB. These trails receive moderate use and provide moderate ADA accessibility depending on grades and/or obstacles. Construction standard is the same as Class IIA.

Class III. These trails receive moderate to low use and are typically 3 feet in width. They are either natural trails developed by use, or constructed with natural fines. ADA accessibility is extremely limited.

Class IVA. These trails are generally mowed corridors used for ski trails in winter, or occasional special activities such as cross-country running meets, and are 16 feet in width.

Class IVB. These trails are the same as Class IVA trails with the exception that they are 10 feet in width.

Class V. These trails are used for equestrian traffic, and when constructed parallel to pedestrian trails are built with a sufficient buffer and physical barrier between them to prevent horse/pedestrian conflicts.

6.3 LAND ACQUISITION, TRAIL DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

6.3.1 Land Acquisition

The acquisition of land for trail development currently occurs in four basic ways. 1. The land is dedicated as parkland which would include linear parks and trails within neighborhood, community, regional or natural area/open lands parks; 2. Public trail easements across private lands are purchased or donated; 3. Trails are placed within the public right-of-way; these are typically Class I shared-use trails; and 4. Non-public right-of-way, such as railroad right-of-way, is used.



Trails in Burke Park

6.3.2 Trail Development

Most trails in newly developing parts of the City are installed by the developer. The City may install or make improvements to trails as part of the capital improvements program. For example, during FY05 the Parks Division installed a trail to the Children's Memorial Park.

The City also partners with a variety of groups to install trails, including: Gallatin Valley Land Trust, property owners associations, user groups, service organizations, nonprofit organizations, and clubs. Development is accomplished with a variety of funding sources and combinations, including budgeted capital improvement funds, cash-in-lieu funds, City Park Improvement Grant funds, private donations, and grant monies. Many improvements are also completed with the use of donated time, labor and materials.

The proposed location of trails, as well as planned trail-related improvements, within the City must be reviewed and approved by the City. In addition, trail development must comply with the City's standards, including construction, materials, depth, width, etc. (see Appendix C for Design Standards).

Most of the trails within the planning area, but outside the City of Bozeman, were installed by the developer or the property owners association.

6.3.3 Trail Maintenance

Most existing trails are maintained by the City Parks Division. A more thorough description of the Parks Division's maintenance responsibilities are described on Page 3-15 through 3-17. The Parks

Division also partners with a variety of groups for assistance in maintaining City parks and other recreational lands, including: Gallatin Valley Land Trust, Bridger Ski Foundation, property owners associations, user groups, service organization, and nonprofit organizations and clubs.

Most trails in new developments created since the beginning of 2004 are maintained by property owners associations because the City Parks Division lacks the funds, equipment and personnel to maintain new trails while maintaining an acceptable level of service for existing trails. It is expected that maintenance of linear parks by property owners associations would cease if and when a Citywide park maintenance district, or similar alternative for funding, is created.

Most of the trails within the planning area but outside the City of Bozeman are maintained by property owners associations.



Trailhead in the New Hyalite View Subdivision

6.4 TRAIL GROUPS/ORGANIZATIONS

There are several groups in the Bozeman area that contribute greatly to the planning, acquisition, development and maintenance of trails. These groups include:

Gallatin County Trails Advisory Committee. This committee was appointed in 1999 as a formal advisory committee to the Gallatin County Planning Board. It includes eleven volunteer committee members from around the county, with a mix of experience and skills relating to public trails. The Trails Advisory Committee is charged with two primary tasks: 1) to inventory existing trails and planned trails in Gallatin County, and 2) to develop a proposal for a countywide trail system. This second task includes

developing criteria for siting trail corridors, identifying potential corridors, estimating costs and other resource requirements for the potential trail corridors, and setting priorities among the possible new trails.

Gallatin Valley Land Trust (GVLТ). GVLТ is a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the conservation of open space, agricultural land, and wildlife habitat and the creation of public trails in and around Gallatin County. GVLТ has been a leader in planning, building, and maintaining trails in the Bozeman area through their Main Street to the Mountains Trail System program. In particular, GVLТ has been instrumental in obtaining easements and other links between critical sections of the trail system. For example, as a result of GVLТ's persistent negotiations, the Montana Rail Link leased the Story Mill Spur Trail to the City of Bozeman for ten years.

Bozeman Area Bicycle Advisory Board. This Board is comprised of citizen volunteers who are appointed by the City Commission. Board members have knowledge of bicycling and/or traffic safety in the Bozeman area. The Board is advisory to the City Commission on matters which may have an impact on bicycling, including usage of public streets and other public ways. The Board provides advice to the Commission regarding bicycling issues pertaining to the PROST Plan and the Transportation Plan, and the Board is also represented on the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC).

Rotary Club. Rotary is a service organization of business and professional leaders worldwide who provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world. The two local Rotary Clubs have been very involved in trail and park acquisition, development, and maintenance.

Montana Conservation Corps. The Montana Conservation Corps teaches the rewards of service and instills values that carry throughout life. The MCC seeks to achieve its mission by performing service projects which have a lasting and beneficial impact on our natural environment and communities. Many of the MCC's service projects involve restoring, building, and maintaining trails.

Gallatin County Board of Park Commissioners. The Gallatin County Board of Park Commissioners was formed pursuant to the authority granted under in Sections 76-16-2301, et. seq., MCA. The Board's mission is to provide a system of interconnected parks and trails for a wide range of recreational opportunities for Gallatin County. The Board adopted the following goals for its strategic plan to move toward a higher recreational level of service for the residents of the county:

- Goal 1 - Complete Master Plan for Parks and Recreation
- Goal 2 - Address the issues of operation and maintenance requirements for county parks and trails
- Goal 3 - Update current rules and regulations
- Goal 4 - Implement existing Trails Plans
- Goal 5 - Involve the community in the planning, development, and maintenance of county parks and trails

These groups often work closely with each other. For example, during the spring of 2000 the Bozeman Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, the Gallatin County Trails Advisory Committee, GVLТ, and City and County staff worked together to prepare a countywide inventory of existing trails using global positioning system (GPS) technology. This inventory was very useful for the preparation of a future trails map for the Bozeman area, as well as a future trail map for all of Gallatin County. The GPS trail

map allowed the group to better view existing trails, and determine where future trails are needed for connections.

Bridger Ski Foundation. The Bridger Ski Foundation (BSF) is a non-profit community based volunteer organization that provides organized recreational and race programs for the three skiing disciplines: Alpine, Nordic, and Freestyle. The Nordic ski program has been grooming ski trails at Lindley Park for 30 years and has enjoyed a cooperative relationship with the City of Bozeman. BSF is working with GVLТ to include some winter grooming, where appropriate, of the Main Street to Mountains Trail System. BSF advocates for Nordic skiing as an amenity in our health-oriented community. They also view Nordic skiing as an important economic tool for the Bozeman area as BSF is increasingly able to conduct ski racing events that attract skiers and fans from around the world. The Bridger Ski Foundation and GVLТ have worked together to identify many possible future ski trails. Please refer to Appendix E.

6.5 PARTNERSHIPS

The partnership with GVLТ is critical for the expansion of the City's trail system. Often important trail corridors and connections lie on private property, and GVLТ's expertise and experience is critical for negotiating with the landowner and securing the needed easements. GVLТ has also contributed significantly to the maintenance of trail easements.

As stated above, the City partners with BSF for the grooming of Nordic ski trails in the winter. Grooming has been occurring at three in-town venues, including Lindley Park, Bridger Creek Golf Course and the Snowfill site on the City's landfill property.

The City also partners with property owners associations for the maintenance of private open space and trail easements. The City's development regulations contain requirements for the development and maintenance of common areas, including common open space, by property owners associations. However, there is always room for improvement in ensuring that private open spaces and trail corridors with public access easements are adequately maintained.

6.6 PROST PLAN SURVEY RESULTS

As noted in Chapter 1, a community survey was conducted as part of the preparation of the PROST Plan. Of the 315 survey respondents, 221 listed trails as one of the recreational facilities that are most often used by members of their household (70 percent of the respondents) and 216 listed walking/hiking as one of the recreational activities that are most important to the members of their household (69 percent of respondents). When asked to think of a recommendation to improve the City's recreation opportunities, more and/or better trails was the most frequently listed response. When asked to list an additional recreational facility they would like to see developed in our community, more and/or better trails was the most frequently listed response. Finally, when asked which recreation activity and related facility should be the highest priority for the City, more and/or better trails was the most often listed facility.

In terms of trail maintenance, 15 percent rated it Excellent, 42 percent Good, 30 percent Adequate, 5 percent Inadequate and 2 percent Poor; 5 percent of respondents did not use the trails and 1 percent did not respond. The most frequently listed maintenance problems included: dog waste, mud and puddles on trails, unleashed dogs, garbage, weed control and bikes in Burke Park.



Story Mill Spur Trail



Shared use path along South 3rd Avenue