

Open Space and Mountain Parks Accessible Trails and Issues for People with Disabilities Summary of Community Input

Input Sources

The following are comments collected from the community. They were solicited through the following venues:

- OSMP sponsored public meetings on accessibility;
- OSMP sponsored Trail System Assessment (TSA) meetings;
- OSMP staff meetings with advocacy groups such as the Center for People With Disabilities (CPWD) and the Disability Task Force (DTF);
- Education Program attendees for OSMP and other agency programs;
- Agency staff from a variety of city, county and state departments;
- Conversations with national and international accessibility organizations;
- Conversations with staff at universities involved in accessibility related research;
- Solicited and unsolicited conversations with individuals.

Comment Organization

The comments are categorized under five main headings:

1. Trails, trailheads and physical features;
2. Non-mobility disabilities and programming;
3. Information dissemination that will be more accurate, timely and user friendly;
4. Community involvement and promoting accessible trail use;
5. General comments about accessibility issues.

Sub-headings have been added in some categories for easier reference. For example, the “Trails” heading has sub-categories for comments on trail usage, trail length, specific trails, etc. A few comments are listed more than once if they apply to more than one category.

Summary of Comments

July 10, 2006

1. Trails, Trailheads and Physical Features.

Trails and Trail Usage

- Dogs jumping on people in wheelchairs. Accessible trails have no dogs or dogs on-leash.
- I want a wheelchair accessible trail where I can bring my dog.
- Perhaps alternate days with dogs and bikes.
- What do studies show about wheelchairs vs. mountain bikes? Erosion? There has been debate over whether bikes cause more erosion than foot traffic.
- OSMP is doing monitoring on the relationships between bikes, hikers, horses. Parallel trails result from people going around others in avoidance.
- Power chairs and scooters need to be considered. Speed ~ 3mph

- Have there ever been any problems with mountain bikes and wheelchair use together? (We have not heard of any).
- If there will be a lot of other use (bike) make sure the trails are wide enough that there's room to pass and see each other coming.
- Are down hill mountain bikes OK? (for people with disabilities, in no bike areas)

Trails-

Trail Desirability Factors

- The best trails for accessibility right now are Bobolink (S. Boulder Creek), Wonderland Lake and the Sensory trail (group of people "voting".)
- Anything west of Broadway and out of the prairies
- Shade/water/ resting spots
- Shade (this came up several times)
- Keep up on the maintenance.
- Crusherfines preferred to pavement.
- There should be a mixture of shade and sun.
- Make more mountainous trails
- Trails with a DESTINATION are desirable.
- A trail with several switchbacks in the beginning that went through a forest about ½ mile would it be very desirable to the public affected by limited mobility. (posed as a question about the "new" FIV trail)

Trails-

Trail Difficulty

- Build a range of trails, make some of the new ones graded as easy.
- I like to have a challenge.
- Depends on the level of the person to know what can and can't do.
- Preference for difficulty- Some people wanted easy trails but to keep the trail as natural as possible. Others said that it would depend on the day, therefore basically meaning that the more diverse the trails the better. So that people can choose what they feel like doing. (as able body hikers would sometimes choose a hard hike or an easy hike)
- Consider building shorter, easier "nature trails" at trailheads that are accessible and then have longer steeper trails for other uses such as mountain bikes.

Trails-

Benches

- Benches should be strategically placed in areas where there is shade and views that are worthwhile.
- There should be benches more often on trails that senior citizens might take to ensure resting spots. This might occur about every ¼ mile or ½ mile. It will also depend on the type of traffic that uses each particular trail. The benches could be made of stumps or pieces of log that can simply be placed on the side of the trail and would not interfere with the natural surrounding.
- Benches should have a back and at least one arm rest.
- Benches should be higher than a normal chair so that they are easy to get out of.

Trails-

Trail Length / Width

- For seniors, trails do not need to be long (1/4 of a mile)
- Longer does not always mean better.
- A longer trail is nice if there is shade or an interesting destination.
- Lots of short trails would be best.
- We can't use "single track"
- Wheelchair athletes need long trails to train on.
- Most attendees said four miles is the longest you would need.
- At least over a mile long. Example: Mesa trail/ Eldorado Canyon

Trails-

Barriers

- The spacing at the gates is sometimes too narrow for most chairs to get through.
- There are rocks at some trailheads that make it hard for chairs to get through.
- We should also have no more accessible trails than we can maintain successfully.
- Tread washes away and sometimes creates problems. There are steps at accessible restrooms. (DB3- They were not talking about one of our sites)
- OSMP needs to identify the trails where crush trails can be constructed in the tread of a roadbase access road. Roadbase is a frustrating tread.
- Better parking at trailheads.
- Transportation is a barrier...RTD alliance?
- Bridges- Regular maintenance to make/keep bridges and risen areas accessible. This factor was mainly caused by dirt and sand levels eroding away and leaving big gaps that wheels cannot go over.

Trails-

Specific Trails

- The Hwy 93 underpass should be accessible so that the whole community ditch trail can be used.
- Bear canyon to the left (Bat pond [fire road]) that goes up to the Mesa trail.
- Ute trail would be great (to be accessible) because it is forested and in the mountains.
- Bear Canyon (Table Mesa)
- Marshall Mesa- alternate way over to the Community Ditch trail?? (working on a new trailhead)
- Fowler Trail (Eldorado Canyon State park)
- Mt. Sanitas- steep grade of over 8 %, great surface (power wheelchair could possibly make it but would be hard manually). Widen the gate there so people can get through.
- Shanahan ridge (Left fork) make accessible. Despite the consensus from the public that surrounds that area. Make the parking and trailhead accessible. The only parking availability is on Lee Hill and that parking area is steep. However, there might be an easement in that area that belongs to OSMP. Transform that property into wheelchair accessible parking??

- S. Mesa trail (Homestead) Go further out than it already does for the limited of mobility.
- The Ute trail would feel more like “real hiking.”
- The “new” FIV trail would be great as it has views and a shady forest to rest in.

Trails-

General Comments

- Boulder has a great trail system for people in chairs!
- We should also have no more accessible trails than we can maintain successfully.
- Make more of our existing trails accessible.
- Horse trailer parking could double as parking for buses with lifts.
- The Denver Botanic Gardens would like to see more trails available that show those who have limited mobility wild flowers up close and personal like most individuals with full mobility. These hikes should take place on OSMP property.
- Suggestion- planting a wildflower garden somewhere in the first loop close to the trailhead at S. Mesa. Flowers that are obviously authorized to be in that location but of course they will have to be caged for the first couple of years.
- Would like to see more senior citizens on trails, however know that most senior citizens have a hard time getting to our trails or health reasons will not allow them to go so high up into the foothills. Recommended sponsoring a bus service, or special transit service that will escort these individuals to and from trailheads. The same principle applies to the citizens with low vision and for senior citizens who cannot get too far away from home.
- Do an assessment of whole system for wheelchair options.

2. Non-Mobility disabilities and programming

- Address non-mobility disabilities in an on-going fashion
- Partnership with Mapleton rehab would be good...field trip: low-vision, hearing impaired, variety of issues (not just wheelchair).
- Transportation is a barrier...RTD alliance?
- Make another sensory trail in the Boulder-proper area.

3. Information dissemination that will be more accurate, timely and user friendly

- Put topographic lines on our display maps, as people with disabilities can't tell grades from the maps and have no way of getting out to see the area.
- Have info at trailheads about grade, outslope, tread elevations and length
- Topo lines could be on a GIS layer and we should look at using IMS
- IMS – Internet Mapping Service is now available:
http://gisweb.ci.boulder.co.us/website/pds/pds_osmp/viewer.htm
- Redo accessibility guide?
Printing costs are “huge”...it is downloadable on web
- Suggestions for guide: Elevations of trailheads need to be noted for people with breathing problems. Starting point to destination (elevation changes)

- (Jen) OSMP needs to define “accessible”. EXPAND has:
http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1472&Itemid=848
- OSMP needs to define standards and criteria for accessible trails.
- Consider work done at University of Illinois:
http://www.ncpad.org/fun/fact_sheet.php?sheet=85&view=all
- Ensure that all signs and markers had “easy reading” available on them. The language should be easier to understand. Basically clearer signage.
- OSMP should look into the possibility of getting a grant to publish a hard copy of the accessible trails book for senior citizens and the low-income public. OSMP could also do “book on tape,” and even place the reading on a CD.
- Get documentation of this project (accessibility) up on OSMP web page. So others can learn from it.
- Idea for senior citizens is to develop a map and have a key that shows all of the easier and more local trails offered. This map can contain markers which show where the resting areas are located. These benches should be strategically placed in areas where there is shade and views that are worthwhile. This could also work for accessible trails. The map can show the trails, grade, difficulty, rest marks, shading and distance. This concept could all be color coded. (we then informed them about the accessible guidebook)
- The trails that were talked about should have a variety of grades, and distances marked on a map. This map should also include a universal system that helps to identify and simplify the details of trails.
- Do not use “dog images” to advertise for accessibility issues. People will look right past the bullet if they don’t have a dog.
- Shoot videos of some of the accessible trails to create a virtual trail so that people will know what they are getting in to and to “advertise” the nice trails we have. Get film students to do it as a school project.

4. Community involvement and promoting accessible trail use

- Take people who work with seniors and special pops around on tours so they will lead trips with their groups.
- What type of planning document is being prepared to inform the Board of trail accessibility issues? Updates to the city council should be done, too.
- We should build formal partnerships with Expand, Blaze and other local groups.
- Promotion of sensory trail is needed.
- Make info available at the Chamber of Commerce.
- Shoot videos of some of the accessible trails to create a virtual trail so that people will know what they are getting in to and to “advertise” the nice trails we have.
- Speak to hotels and businesses about making their establishments more accessible. In hotels putting in more accessible rooms.
- Develop outdoor education programs sponsored by Craig hospital and the Mapleton Rehab center.
- If you build it, *then tell people about it*, they will come.

5. General Comments about accessibility issues

- There are a lot of exciting possibilities.
- Boulder already has a great transit system for people with disabilities and a lot of adaptive athletics, so people will really respond to adaptive hiking.
- If you build it, we will come!
- If you build it, *then tell people about it*, they will come.
- It's great that you are doing this.
- Transportation is a barrier...RTD alliance?
- Disabled people pay taxes in Boulder and you use the tax money to build trails. It's only fair that you build trails that all your tax payers can use.