



MEMORANDUM

Date: April 2, 2015

To: Board of Park Commissioners

From: Paula Hoff, Strategic Advisor, Doug Critchfield, Manager, Natural Resource Unit, Jon Jainga, Planning and Development Supervisor, Natural Resources Unit

Subject: Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project

Requested Board Action

Parks is seeking a recommendation from the Board of Park Commissioners on the proposed Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project. The schedule calls for a briefing and public hearing at the April 9, 2015 Board meeting, a working session on April 23 and a vote at the Board's May 14, 2015 meeting. The preliminary design and evaluation criteria have been developed based on feedback from the Project Advisory Team (PAT), a community outreach meeting, as well as internal Seattle Parks and Recreation review. In January 2014 the Board recommended that Parks should initiate a pilot project to allow mountain bike trails to be built at Cheasty Greenspace, in conjunction with restoration and foot trails. We are coming back to you with a proposal for consideration.

Staff Recommendation

Staff is requesting support for the proposed schematic design (Attachment 1) and evaluation criteria (Attachment 2) for the Cheasty pilot project. We are also requesting that the pilot project be limited to 15-month period, rather than the three-year period that was recommended for the original mountain bike park proposal.

Project Background

Parks is proposing a schematic trail design that provides local recreational opportunities for families and under-served communities who may not always have access to nature. The trail design provides space for both pedestrians and mountain bikes, while at the same time addressing safety and minimizing environmental impacts to the site. This proposed trail has been designed to utilize best management practices for protecting wetlands and enhancing the stability of the steep slopes. We are also proposing monitoring criteria to help thoroughly assess the impacts of the pilot project.

Mountain bike trails at Cheasty Greenspace were originally proposed by a group of neighbors as a project through the Parks and Green Spaces Levy Opportunity Fund process in 2012. Because the project was contrary to Parks' existing bicycle policy, the project was not successful in the Opportunity Fund process. Rather than revise the bicycle policy, in January 2014, the Board of Park Commissioners recommended a pilot project to accommodate bike and pedestrian use in the Cheasty Greenspace.

Following a recommendation from the Board of Park Commissioners on the pilot project, the Parks Superintendent will make a final decision on the basic trail design and monitoring criteria, and the project will move to Parks' Planning and Development Division for development of a refined design, permitting and implementation.

Public Involvement Process

Seattle Parks and Recreation recently completed a five-month public Project Advisory Team (PAT) process for the Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project.

Based on information and input from the five PAT meetings, a public outreach meeting, two site tours and input from a Landscape Architect, Geotechnical Engineer and Environmental Consultant, in addition to the significant public comment and input throughout the process, Parks is returning to the Park Board with the PAT recommendations for a pilot project (Attachment 3). This includes evaluation criteria for the pilot.

The PAT meetings were all posted on the Cheasty PAT website, and communicated broadly to the PAT members and community. All PAT meetings were open to the public. The information from the PAT process can be found at:

http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/cheasty/gs_bike_trail.htm. In addition, a community outreach meeting occurred in early December that was advertised through community agencies, including the Department of Neighborhoods, Neighborhood House, Rainier Vista Boys and Girls Club, Horn of African Services, SHA, Asian Counseling and Referral Service and some leafletting at Rainier Vista. At the outreach meeting, after a brief introduction of the project, attendees broke into small groups and were asked a series of questions about their knowledge of the greenspace, the access they would like to see through this public space, travel patterns from Rainier Vista to Beacon Hill and what would make this space more inviting (Attachment 4). Although the turnout wasn't as large as we had hoped, the input was extremely beneficial and many of the attendees brought the information back to their neighbors and friends. There will be an additional public open house once the final trail design has been determined.

Why we think the Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project being proposed makes sense:

- The trail will provide recreational opportunities for currently under-served communities, providing families with the opportunity to experience nature and recreation in their own neighborhood.

- This project will provide a link between the Rainier Vista community and North Beacon Hill.
- The trail responds to environmental issues within the Cheasty greenspace and has been designed to work with the geology of the property.
- There is strong community support for the trail.
- 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.
- Our City is experiencing unprecedented growth. We need to look at creative ways to provide recreational opportunities in our urban environment.

Environmental Sustainability

Parks will monitor the project for environmental impacts throughout the pilot. All trail construction, that is part of the pilot project, will conform to the Department of Ecology Erosion Sediment Control Standards. If constructed properly, the trail will protect the existing wetlands and enhance slope stability. (ESA report – Attachment 5)

Budget

Future costs for Parks will include: permitting; contract and engineering documents; staff costs; and monitoring. Trail construction costs are the responsibility of the proponents; a \$100,000 Neighborhood Matching Fund grant was approved by the City Council, pending their approval of the design. Additional fundraising is underway. Parks will not have a cost estimate until the final trail design is known.

Schedule

The schedule will be developed when the project is transferred to Parks' Planning and Development Division. It is dependent on permitting and funding.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Proposed Schematic Design
Attachment 2: Evaluation Criteria
Attachment 3: Project Advisory Team Recommendations
Attachment 4: Outreach Meeting Notes
Attachment 5: ESA Report

Additional Information

Project web page: http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/cheasty/g_s_bike_trail.htm

Paula Hoff: paula.hoff@seattle.gov