



**CHEASTY PROJECT ADVISORY TEAM  
DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA  
SUMMARY OF MEMBER RESPONSES AND NEXT STEPS  
FOR PRESENTATION AT NOVEMBER 20, 2014 PAT MEETING**

**Overview**

At their October 23 meeting, members of the Cheasty Project Advisory Team engaged in a brainstorming session on possible design principles and criteria for the Cheasty Trails Pilot Project. A draft of these principles was distributed to all members on October 29, with members then asked to respond with additional edits and ideas on the draft. Seven out of the 12 PAT members offered their responses. What follows is a list of the key themes that emerged from the responses, along with the “next steps” in the trail design process to address these themes.

**AREAS OF AGREEMENT AMONG MEMBERS**

**1) Environmental Protection, Enhancement, and Sustainability**

Regardless of whether they are mountain bike enthusiasts or not, PAT members are in agreement that the environment of the Cheasty Greenspace must be protected. All are concerned that the trail be designed in a manner that preserves the environment; no one is willing to accept environmental degradation in exchange for the trail. Several commented on the ongoing restoration work currently underway in the forest, and suggest that the trail be designed and built in a way that complements this restoration.

Members realize that the future environmental review of the project will be instrumental in determining what actually gets constructed. Some members argue that no additional trail design should occur until all of the environmental information is documented. Others suggest that the preliminary trail design should be used in order to evaluate potential environmental benefits and impacts; that we “have to start somewhere” before the environmental analysis can occur.

There are some contrasts in how PAT members express their concern for environmental issues. Those who are supportive of the more active bike riding on the trail suggest that by attracting new trail users, a greater level of stewardship will develop as these users become more familiar with the forest and feel responsible for its well-being. Those who do not support bike riding are concerned that that activity could cause erosion, increased vulnerability to slope sliding, and damage to native plants and wildlife habitats.

Several members state that the trail must offer a “net environmental benefit” to the greenspace, with minimally invasive design and construction, thoughtful consideration of the site’s hydrology, and trail construction and usage timed to match with sensitive wildlife activities and ongoing site restoration.

### **Next Steps**

Seattle Parks has met with Environmental Science Associates (ESA), a Seattle-based environmental consulting, firm to discuss the scope for a project that will include an independent evaluation of the baseline hydrology, vegetation, soils, wetlands, bird/wildlife habitats, and other environmental factors present in the greenspace. Once under contract, ESA estimates that a majority of the analysis will be completed by January.

ESA staff will need to evaluate these factors in light of the preliminary trail design, so they can focus their efforts most efficiently on possible benefits and impacts of the trail. They will use the preliminary schematic trail design developed by Johnson/Southerland as a place to begin this analysis.

### **2) Safety**

All of those who responded to the draft design principles indicate that safety is one of their primary concerns. This is described on two levels – first, there is the concern for trail users, especially in avoiding any collisions between bike riders and pedestrians. Second, there is concern about the overall safety of the area, with the expression that users need to feel safe from crime, and that the design itself should incorporate crime prevention elements.

PAT members indicate that trail safety can be enhanced through the proper location and messaging of the entrance signs that direct bike riders, in particular, to the most appropriate routing and riding on the trail. Appropriate trail surfacing materials are also noted.

### **Next Steps**

The preliminary schematic design will address safety. Safety features are likely to be further refined and enhanced as the design progresses from the preliminary to final stages.

### **3) Educational Opportunities**

All respondents are supportive of providing educational opportunities in association with the trail. They agree that any educational signage should be as minimal and unobtrusive as possible, noting the importance of preserving the natural area, and commenting that signs can be subject to graffiti. There is some disagreement about the way in which the site's wetlands should be approached; some feel the wetlands offer a prime opportunity for more education, while others are more cautious about the need to make sure the wetlands are protected.

### **Next Steps**

Educational signage will be addressed somewhat in the preliminary schematic design, with further refinements and specifics determined as the project moves into the field design and construction. The preliminary schematic will provide a sense of if, and if so, how, the site's wetland(s) might be incorporated as part of the trail experience. If wetlands are incorporated in some way, this will require further environmental review and analysis.

### **4) Research on Potential Trail Usage**

All respondents are supportive of continued research that includes the opinions and ideas from potential trail users. Some of these members emphasize upcoming additional opportunities to gather more information. A few note that the original trail proponents have already conducted some of this research; this previous research will be made available as background information to the PAT.

### **Next Steps**

Seattle Parks is conducting a public meeting to gather community feedback on the trail proposal. This has been scheduled for Wednesday, December 3, 2014 from 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at the Rainier Vista Boys and Girls Club, 4520 Martin Luther King Jr. Way S. Seattle, WA 98108. Any previous research will be documented as part of the preliminary trail design.

## **AREAS WHERE THERE ARE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION**

### **1) Trail Layout**

PAT members have divided opinions over the benefits of two parallel trail “lanes” vs. a single trail that accommodates both pedestrians and bikes. Some assert that the trail will be safe only if separate lanes are built. Others assert that the City Council directive mandates only a single trail. Still others suggest that the design and subsequent environmental analysis should be used to determine the physical layout of the trail.

A few examples have been provided of other trail systems with similarities to Cheasty that could be used “so we are not reinventing the wheel;” these include the City of Portland’s trail plan and King County’s Big Finn Hill Park.

### **Next Steps**

Seattle Parks believes that two separated and parallel trail lanes, as long as they remain on the perimeter of the property, fall within the guidelines set by the Seattle City Council. The preliminary schematic design that the PAT will review on November 20 includes two separate trail lanes, one for pedestrians and one for bikes, although there are places where the two are joined, and some special view/feature areas where both lanes come together so that all users can enjoy these features. These ideas will be reviewed by the PAT, with additional environmental and design review to follow. The environmental review will be key in determining the type of trail design that will have the least environmental impact while still providing recreational activities for a variety of user groups.

### **2) Mountain Bike Experience**

Those PAT members who had hoped for cross-trails through the greenspace continue to feel that those trails would have offered a significantly better mountain biking experience than the perimeter trail can provide. They offer up suggestions for the ways in which the perimeter trail biking could be enhanced to attract these users, for example, offering “two choices – one being a jump or a feature, and the other being the beginner route.”

PAT members concerned about the biking activity believe there should not be any such features or “side loops,” noting that the pilot should be kept “simple and variables to a minimum so we can determine if this is working.”

### **Next Steps**

The preliminary schematic design will note areas where some mountain biking features could be incorporated. These are likely to be closely integrated into the trail itself, rather than designed as separate “loops” off of the main trail. Additional details about these features will be added in as the design is further refined and field-tested. The subsequent environmental analysis will determine whether or not these features can be constructed in a manner that avoids significant environmental impacts.