



Cheasty Mountain Bike / Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project Project Advisory Team (PAT)

Meeting #3 November 20, 2014

--Meeting Summary--

PAT Members Present

Connie Bown
Dan Moore
Darrell Howe
David Couture
Edward Ewing
Kathy Colombo
Sarah Welch
Weston Brinkley

PAT Members Absent

Curtis LaPierre
Melanie Coerver
Phillip Thompson
Tom Linde

Project Team Staff and Consultants

Doug Critchfield, Project Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Jon Jainga, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Paula Hoff, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Margaret Norton-Arnold, PAT Facilitator
Casey Rogers, PAT Administrator
Maggi Johnson, Landscape Architect

MEETING OVERVIEW AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Margaret Norton-Arnold opened the meeting and thanked members for their emailed contributions to the draft design principles the group had brainstormed on October 23. The primary purpose of tonight's meeting is to review the preliminary schematic design prepared by Maggi Johnson. A preliminary geotechnical report has also just been issued. Information from that report will be presented by Maggi, and the report will be posted to the PAT and public websites.

Margaret also noted that the PAT had asked for additional environmental information and analysis before the group is asked to make recommendations on trail design. In response to this request, the Parks Department is contracting with Environmental Science Associates (ESA), an environmental

consulting firm based in Seattle. ESA will perform an analysis of a number of key environmental factors associated with the green space. The previously-scheduled December meeting of the PAT has been postponed until after the completion of ESA's work. Doug has suggested a new meeting date of January 29, 2015.

In response to some member emails over the past couple of weeks, Margaret also reminded the PAT that they are working in an advisory capacity to Parks, and are not the final decision-makers for the pilot project trail design. The Parks Department, with the support of the Mayor's Office and Seattle City Council, will make final decisions on the pilot project. That being said, all of the associated parties are eager to hear the recommendations from the Project Advisory Team.

Doug Critchfield provided members with a chart that highlighted upcoming public meetings, the work of ESA, and a revised PAT schedule. He noted that the scope for ESA will include a habitat review, a comprehensive wetlands evaluation, a detailed geotech and soils report, and a vegetation study. ESA will bring a recommendation back to Parks regarding how the trail might be used and whether or not it is likely to negatively impact the environment.

Paula Hoff noted that a public meeting will be held at the Rainier Boys and Girl Club on December 3. The Department has been reaching out to numerous neighborhood organizations, and the meeting has been set up primarily for those individuals and groups that have not yet been included in the outreach effort. Paula welcomed PAT member volunteers to assist with the small group discussions at the meeting.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: PRELIMINARY SCHEMATIC TRAIL DESIGN

Maggi Johnson of Johnson/Southerland landscape architects presented the preliminary schematic design for the pilot project. Questions from PAT members included:

Q: Why are there only two entry points for bicycles?

A: Those were the two main entries at-grade, but there could probably be more access points integrated into the design. At the north end it is difficult; because it is so narrow the bikes would have to wind down very quickly given the topography. Better opportunities would be the P-Patch entry, or even the Cheasty Viewpoint.

Q: Why are we only seeing one layout? I thought we would be seeing two – one that separated the trails and another one that shows a single multipurpose trail. Is there a reason you didn't present what the City Council wanted us to review?

A: We thought about a unified dual-purpose trail, but it quickly became apparent that that would not be the optimal experience for both sets of users. The preliminary plan I presented works best, in our professional opinion, for this site and for different users. We did not want to show you a plan that is not feasible. If you tried to do this as a single trail, that trail will look more like the bike path. The bike path is harder to fit into the slope because it has more rigorous requirements. The single trail would have a bigger impact; if it is a four-foot trail, for example, it will require 13 feet of excavation. Combining trails does not offer the optimal experience for pedestrians, and it is likely to have a much larger environmental impact.

Q: Can you clarify the differences between the single and multi-use trails? I know there's a lot of clearing involved.

A: If the trail is flat, you can have a very limited footprint from both bike and pedestrian trails, because you don't have to impact the sides of the trail. But, we are dealing with slopes at Cheasty. And when you cut a trail into a slope, there can be a significant environmental impacts depending on the width. As I noted earlier, a 4-foot trail requires a cut of about 13 feet of soil to allow that trail to fit into the slope. And when you consider a 13-foot wide notch, you are more likely to hit trees and have other impacts.

Q: Because this is a pilot project for a bike trail, and there are a lot of bike riders here tonight as well, let's get to the fun. Do we know what the sample size is of the bikers who are likely to use this trail? I'm also concerned about features of this trail. If we dumb it down for the lowest skilled biker, maybe we won't get many bikers using the park. What other features will you consider when designing this bike park?

A: For this initial pilot trail we are only creating a perimeter trail, so we may not have the most exciting trail design to offer. I think this is a fuzzy area, to what extent the trail can be made engaging. We have tried to be careful to stay with what the Parks Department is asking; to make do with what we have.

Q: What are the standards for mountain bike trails, and how did you come up with some of the components you mentioned? What are you basing the design on?

A: We are using existing trail standards that have been published. There is an abundance of reference works about mountain bike trails; we could make those titles available to PAT members.

Q: Seeing this map it appears as if the Cheasty Boulevard is now part of the project trail, I see a trail that is sending pedestrians right back onto the loop there. If we're going to do this, why aren't we looking at the SHA property, or the property around the golf course? I'm just trying to understand where the project site is located.

A: There isn't a firm project site, but it is approximately along Cheasty Boulevard. There was an earlier bike concept that extended beyond Andover, but that didn't really make sense. It does make sense to include Cheasty Boulevard as part of the pedestrian trail.

Q: Given the fact that it looks unlikely there won't be more intricacies and level of interest, I want assurance that the bike trail will be worth it. Is it similar to the trail design that was originally presented?

A: Yes, it's pretty close to the original design; but without the cross trails.

Additional discussion and comment from members:

Project Advisory Team members were divided on the subject of one vs. two trails. Several members of the group felt the City Council had determined that the trail would be a single pathway to accommodate both bicycles and pedestrians. Others felt that two tracks would be safer and more accommodating for each user group, and likewise that the environmental impacts are likely to be less with two narrow trails than with one wider trail. Some members urged the group to agree to endorse the two trail lanes if it could be proven that those would be better for the environment and for users. But the group as a whole was not ready to endorse the two trail lanes, noting that the environmental review must be completed before any recommendations/endorsements can be considered. Other comments included:

- I would like to encourage more access points, and it also seems that people would really benefit from cross trails. Will we be able to consider more access trails and smaller bike loops? More trail access would give us more data to help assess the pilot project.
- The plan we're looking at right now favors the bike trail, and almost eliminates the pedestrian trail. What we're seeing, from my viewpoint, is a very clear emphasis on bicycles and not on pedestrians, and that is the trade-off if we don't want to make a significant environmental impact.
- The Cheasty view site is an excellent idea, and I like the opportunity for people with disabilities to be able to get there and get a view. I commend you on that component.
- I'd like to second the suggestion that we look at additional access points – pedestrian, bike, or both. One of the most frequent comments we heard at the last few meetings was access for folks moving from the top to the bottom of the site.
- I want the trail to be exciting for users, something that can consistently challenge school kids, new bikers, and others.
- I think the trail design looks beautiful, the way it's been designed with the contour. I run on that trail all the time and I think it's more of a maintenance issue than a design issue. It makes a ton of sense to maintain the pedestrian trail as it is up above. In terms of access, in terms of pedestrian trails - they have more access, given that they will move slower than the bikes versus bicycling. It would be ideal to have a third access point on the north end, maybe the P-Patch.
- I would like us to carefully consider the markers; I like the granite that Seward Park has. More entrances would mean more markers so I just don't want us to take away from the green space; there's a balance there to keep in mind. Have we talked about having some environmental education points along the trail?
- I'm pretty concerned about the potential environmental impact of a 4-foot-wide trail. I was really struck by how wide the excavation has to be to accommodate that width. That seems like an environmental impact that would be really hard to mitigate.
- The downed timber on the property serves as habitat for woodpeckers. A group in Mount Baker wants to rebuild the connection there to celebrate the Olmsted legacy. How could we maintain that visual connection and feel?
- Why not consider using the Seattle Housing Authority property? It's part of the green space and it's owned by the City. It begs to be addressed.
- I propose that we move up the evaluation period from 3 years to 1 year. If younger riders get bored on the trail, the usage may drop down. Then the pilot project would be a failure. So

understanding how the trail is being used sooner than the three years makes sense. Last night I did a little research about the Olmsted Brothers and I was amazed by the audacity of the people of the City of Seattle. They hired the Olmsted Brothers from Brookline, Massachusetts, and those brothers wanted everyone in the city to have a park within ½ mile of their house. We're talking about accessibility here, and I want to leave a legacy for my grandchildren. I saw the original proposal and it's nothing like this. You should make this work so you can get on a bike and have fun riding this even after three years.

Margaret also read a comment letter from Tom Linde, who was unable to attend the meeting. Tom's letter, as well as all of the other meeting materials, have been posted to the PAT OneHub website.

Next Meeting

Doug Critchfield had proposed that the next PAT meeting be scheduled for January 29. Margaret will check in with members about this proposed date to determine if it will work for the majority of the PAT.

Public Comments

I'm here representing the NRB community, and have brought a stack of 42 letters/signatures from people who support this project. -- *Nathan Hedin*

Thank you to everyone on the PAT for guiding this along. The Cheasty area is an incredibly unhealthy forest; the largest single species of biomass is an obnoxious weed – English Ivy. I would caution you against being overly cautious, because that's what I hear a lot of you saying. I'm a teacher and we just had a mock debate last week and some of these meetings sound like that sometimes. Don't fall into squabbling; let's have a place we can use for recreation. --*Matthew Weintraub*

I own the bike shop in Beacon Hill. I don't have any vested interest in the mountain bike park, but I support Beacon Hill being a cohesive community. I support something that would make this a community not just for people who live here but a neighborhood for people to talk about and respect. I'm very conscious of the environmental impact and that's all about data. Clearly we have people studying it who are experts, and if we discredit the experts we are missing an opportunity. --*Miki Nishihata*

I've been a resident of Beacon Hill for 5 years and a mountain biker for 18 years. I joined the work party when I saw the sign for the trail. I bike with a network of friends. A lot of them are women in their 40s and their kids are just getting on their bikes. They would be excited to get on their bikes and ride from their home and enjoy mountain biking. Thank you. -- *Jennifer Day*

This is my son Tim who is 4, and he's yawning because it's almost bed time. Tim just got his second bike and we ride just outside this building on Jefferson's trail. It's a fantastic experience for kids who aren't on training wheels. Now I don't think about riding on dirt, I drive 45 minutes to a place called Novelty Hill for that. I would love to bring my kids one stop north on the light rail so they could ride on Cheasty. -
--*Jeff Nachtigaz*

I'm a forest steward for the Cheasty green space. Last weekend we had another work party. 35 people came. We are connected, and we're looking for kids right now, and at every single work party we have a lot of common participation. --*Martin Niset*

I live in Rainier Vista; I'm also a forest steward. The woodlands at Cheasty green space are different than other areas of the city. Many of the parks considered environmental conservation have continued to allow building. The only difference here is that we want to include bicycles, so let's let that actually be tested. --*Jay Gairson*

I am the president of the New Rainier Vista homeowners association, and my daughter and I are veterans of public comment on this project. Lately I saw many maple trees that had come down in the wind. That was the first time it struck me about how close we are to not having a real forest there. (PiElla also notes that she likes Cheasty). --*Celeste and PiElla Gilman*

I live down in the valley just south of Genesee and I fully support the mountain bike trail, this all looks great as a pilot project. If we're supporting a young community of people who appreciate the environment – in order to make the pilot project sustainable, it has to have cross trails, so that we are building an experience for people who will engage. We have to build opportunities for people who will protect it in the future. --Kari Stiles

In the Mount Baker housing apartments near where I live on 39th near Dawson, I've noticed young kids wearing helmets, and I'm hoping they have the experience of using mountain bike trails. These kids will likely never see the Olympic Peninsula. We need to provide the chance for these young people to experience their neighborhood green space. --Scott Amick

I'm a forest steward at Northgate, but we all get to see what happens here and it's going to be a prototype for other parks in this city. I understand about having two trails so you have to take down fewer trees, but if they get placed too far apart they will impact too much habitat. --Ruth Williams

I've have been doing forest restoration for years now, and I grew up with a lack of forest access. I live in Rainier Vista and I look at that forest so I have an emotional physical connection. I want my kid to enjoy the forest. It's about connecting the neighborhoods. I'm disappointed there aren't cross trails, but I hope after this pilot we continue to develop the project. --Paul Fairbanks

I want to reiterate thanks to the PAT members, especially those of you who have been involved in Cheasty green space as it has developed over time. I'm excited to see this project develop. I want to match some of the disappointment to the deviation of the trail from its original plan. We have to make mountain bike trails attractive to beginners as well as more experienced riders. --Arthur Schile

I moved to Beacon Hill about 3.5 months ago. I come with a spirit of gratitude that you are making decisions about the community, and gratitude for the park. I work with a lot of youth with different skills. We want a trail where we can hike, experience the forest, and learn about managing the park. --Carson Bowlin

I have lived on Beacon Hill for 14 years and have been a mountain biker for 15 years. I was very excited to hear about this project, and feel like it's a great opportunity for an underserved community in the south end. The perimeter trail is a good start, but a comprehensive plan is the only way it will be a success. --Debbi Murray

I live right in the area, and am excited that my kids will be able to ride their bikes on the trails. I am wondering if we can't have some diversions within the perimeter trail. Wooden markers will have fewer impacts. I want to commend the Parks Department. --Greg Briggs

I don't like the elimination of the cross trails. The PAT can have an influence on that and present your opinions to the City Council. And, once we start getting more science information back please take that into consideration. Please don't throw it away. --Matt Neilson

My house is the one directly next to the observatory park entry, this project is literally in my backyard. I love this project. I think it's fabulous that my children will be able to use this place. I see children from my kitchen window go out into the view space, and they want to get up in to the trails and the trees. What the kids currently do is leave and play on cement. Children deserve to do what they want to do. They deserve bike paths and they deserve trails. --*Monica Duke*

I'm taking a look at the plan that has been developed here, and I already see places where there's a potential for a combined trail. Especially along the eastern edge in those areas, I think the designer should have explored more combined trails. I am disappointed that the PAT was only presented with one option. Usually advisory teams are presented with multiple options. --*Mira Latoszek*

The Vegetation Management Plan calls the northern section of Cheasty "quality habitat." Maggi just said the opposite, that's not true. The Department of Planning and Development calls it wildlife habitat. If you all want to take this forest go ahead, but don't present yourselves as environmentalists. Environmentalists do not call wildlife habitat unused space. --*Mark Holland*

I support the original comprehensive trails plan, like over 800 other people do. I understand that at phase one we're looking at perimeter trails and the idea is that we want to look at the best trail possible. I'm concerned that we have members of the PAT who aren't concerned about any bike trail at all. Have a look at the bike trails. -- *Bob Downing*

I'm one of the forest stewards and I want to thank Maggi for her work. The access points should be taken into account – I think the Cheasty greenspace would be a good place for additional access. There's a safety component to access. Consider transit centers there and access from transit. Also, the user experience has to be considered. --*Joel DeJong*

First I want to make thank you. This topic is causing much emotion in me. I come from a county where forests are being destroyed, and I think this project needs to put a priority on the environment, the wildlife, and forest. I wish this money and this energy could be invested in projects for children and youth. --*Teresita Bazan*

In a room that feels very much like a group of people who have decide one way or another, I feel out of place. I have not fully decided yet. A lot of money and energy have been invested in physical space. I am also concerned about space. I'm a biker and I bike every day. How do people who have never had a chance to bike do that if they don't have a place to try it out? --*Max Sizeman*