



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Regarding the Shared Use Trails Proposal

1. *What is the problem shared use designation is trying to solve? Who wants this? Wasn't this resolved in the Recreation Facilities and Trails Master Plan (RFTMP) in 2017-2019? Aren't mountain bikers a small group in Genesee?*

There was considerable interest in designating or creating trails for mountain biking use during the RFTMP planning process, as expressed during community meetings and in written comments. There were also many comments in opposition to any mountain bike use on Genesee's trails. Comments on the RFTMP ran 2:1 against mountain bikes on trails, but there was no specific proposal to respond to as there is here, and only a total of 98 responses addressed the general question. In the end, the Genesee Board of Directors (the Board) chose to defer any decisions regarding this decision until such time that it could be studied in greater detail, starting on page 49: "The possible benefits of multi-use/mountain bicycle trails ... is a topic that requires further discussion within the community."

Several Genesee residents, especially our youth and those with families, have continued to ask for designation of some trails for bicycle use. Bicycle trails have become a part of the set of amenities provided by many communities that seek to remain vibrant and contemporary places for residents of all ages.

Beyond the limited responses on the topic in the RFTMP (98 out of 883 homes, or 11%), just as there is no data on hikers, there is no data on the number of mountain bikers or potential mountain bikers among Genesee residents. The questionnaire developed for this process will address these questions.

Many of the activities provided in Genesee, such as tennis, pickleball, lap swimming, fitness facilities, and playground use are most likely enjoyed by minority percentages of residents but are part of the set of amenities expected by current residents and prospective residents in communities such as ours.

2. *How did the Trails Committee select the trails in the proposal?*

The first step taken by the committee was to identify trail objectives, target users, and criteria for evaluating suitability of Genesee's trails. These are displayed in the document "Shared Use Trails Evaluation" dated January 4, 2021 and available on the Genesee Foundation Trails Committee webpage.

All 25 of Genesee's trails were considered for suitability with the criteria, and 15 were quickly eliminated due to excessive grades (too steep), lack of sufficient sight lines that enable

awareness of other users on the trail, relatively high volumes of use by hikers, and known sections on private property. For these reasons, trails such as Ryan's Streamside, Bear Creek Highlands, Plains View, Elk Run, Deer Run, and others quickly fell out of consideration.

The remaining 10 trails that fit the objectives, target users, and evaluation criteria were then analyzed in detail through field visits by committee members to determine potential suitability. The findings are summarized in Shared Use Trail Evaluation Summary, dated April 28, 2021, available on the Trails Committee webpage. The document notes that: "Suitability is based on physical characteristics and effect of other criteria, such as Volume of Use. It does NOT imply or anticipate the degree of community support, committee recommendations, or board approval." The Malachite Trail, a proposed trail within the top tier of priorities for new trails in the RFTMP, was also analyzed due to frequent interest in its creation for this purpose. More information about the Malachite Trail can be found at .....

From the set of trails analyzed (10 existing trails plus Malachite Trail), the committee considered several alternatives with different themes such as transportation to recreation facilities, recreational emphasis, and levels of distribution across the community.

All or parts of six existing trails, plus the Malachite Trail, were selected as a proposal for consideration by the community and Board. The selected trails with high suitability, include:

- The north and east parts of Wildflower Loop
- The Hillrise Loop, comprised of
  - Hillrise West
  - The lower part of Hillrise East
  - Red Fox Way
- The Courtside and Canyon Creek Trails, which connect across Daisy Lane

These trails can be accessed by parking at either the Foothills Clubhouse or Solitude Courts (Montane). Trails that were analyzed and not selected include trails with only moderate (rather than high) suitability as determined by the evaluation criteria agreed upon by the Trails Committee. These trails include several near Vista Clubhouse: Marsh Meadow, Lower Vista Meadow, and Hilltop. Smaller segments in this area, such as Currant Spur and Meadow's edge were not evaluated in detail. Miner's Mile and the southwest side of Wildflower Loop were also not selected due to conflicts with private property.

The total length of the existing trails with high suitability is approximately 1.8 miles or 15% of the total twelve-mile Genesee Trail system. Nineteen trails, comprising 85% of the trail mileage, would remain hiker-only. If Malachite were to be constructed and designated for shared use, its 1.8 additional miles would change those figures to 26% shared use/74% hiker-only.

### 3. *How do the designated days and one-way travel stipulations work?*

The proposal recommends allowing shared use on the designated trails only on odd-numbered calendar days, with even-numbered days being hiker-only on all trails. This

simple, easy to remember device, often used by recreation managers, allows hikers to know when they can hike trails designated for shared use without the presence of bicycles. Moreover, with 85% of trail mileage designated as hiker-only, Genesee residents are assured of always having trails they can hike without bicycles. This is a safety measure and also a user experience consideration.

One-way travel for mountain bikers allows hikers to know from what direction bicycles will approach if they are hiking on a designated trail and day. This enhances sighting of the other users and the use of appropriate safety responses. Hikers can always hike in either direction but may choose to hike counter to bicycle travel on the designated days to improve their sighting ability. Until and unless the Malachite Trail is constructed, one way travel for bicycles may not be practical on the other trails due to their out-and-back and transportation aspects save for the short Red Fox Way – Hillrise East portion of the Hillrise Loop.

4. *Aren't there plenty of trails for bicycle use in nearby parks and open space?*

Genesee is virtually surrounded by Jefferson County Open Space, Clear Creek County Open Space, Denver Mountain Parks, and Golden and Lakewood Open Space, many of which offer “multi-use” (hike/bike/horse) and “hike-bike” trails, along with hiker-only trails. Beyond those, the Arapaho, Pike, and Roosevelt National Forests offer thousands of miles of trail, predominantly for hiker and hiker-equestrian use but with some bicycle use as well.

While there are substantial opportunities for bicycles and hikers near Genesee, those are not a complete substitute for the Genesee Trail system. Such public trails can be very crowded, many are much more difficult, and nearly all require vehicular transportation to reach. They do not provide the out-the-door access for Genesee residents like our private trails. They can be seen as a complement to our system, providing longer, more challenging and remote trail opportunities when desire, time, or physical and skill levels increase to the degree required. The same is true for both hikers and cyclists.

The first objective in the Shared Use Trails Evaluation document reads:

*“Create safe cycling trail opportunities for Genesee residents that enable skill development and enjoyment for beginner to intermediate riders closer to home (access to trails without vehicle transport or riding long distances on collector roads – Genesee Vista, Genesee Ridge, Genesee Trail, Foothills Drive, and Montane Drive).*

The public park and open space trails do not meet this objective.

5. *What is being done to address the safety issue of mixing bicyclists with hikers? What about hikers with dogs?*

The first step toward consideration of safety came in the criteria that drove identification of trails suitable for shared use. Criteria included:

- Long or open sight lines that enable awareness of other users on trail
- Broad corridor width or space to allow safe use and passage of cyclists and hikers

- Relatively low volume of hiking use, at least on days or at times that bikes are allowed

The application of these criteria led to the recommendation of only 6 trails (or portions thereof) of the 25 total trails, or 15% of the total mileage in the Genesee Trail system, allowing hikers the choice of selecting trails where bicycles will not be encountered on any given day. The alternate-day use by bicyclists also allows hikers to choose days where any trail can be hiked without the presence of bicycles. Designation of one way travel for bicycles would be a further safety measure where utilized.

Dogs with hikers do present another potential safety issue. The risk is minimized if dog owners have their dogs on leash and control them in the same manner they should when encountering other hikers.

6. *Won't designation of shared use trails encourage more cyclists from outside Genesee to come up and use our trails?*

The use of Genesee's trails and facilities by nonresidents is always a concern expressed by residents. Other than road bicycle use on the Jefferson County public roads that serve Genesee, there hasn't been a great deal of evidence of this occurring. Even during the pandemic, when nearby public park and open space trails were overrun by people seeking outdoor activity, there was not a large surge in trail use nor evidence of that by nonresidents. Unlike the trails in nearby public open space, our trails have not been trampled and widened by overuse.

The scale of the proposed shared use trails is not enticing enough to draw outside use. Three distinct sections ranging in length from one half mile to less than one mile is insufficient motivation for someone to load up their bicycle and drive to a distant location. Even with the construction and designation of the Malachite Trail, a total of 3.6 miles of trail would provide less than a half an hour of riding at average trail cycling speeds (9.72 mph). Nonresidents are much more apt to use the myriad opportunities that offer much more challenge and riding time on the public lands nearby (see FAQ #4).

7. *How will "no bicycles" on hiker-only trails and hiker-only days be enforced? What is there to prevent bicyclists from just riding on hiker-only trails once they finish with the shared use trails?*

In many ways, Genesee residents are expected to comply with bylaws and policies of the Genesee Foundation without explicit enforcement. Residents look out for themselves and each other with the general belief that self-enforced compliance benefits us all. This approach has been applied to use of the trails and the shared Open Space as well.

If shared use is designated on select trails, this "honor system" would largely apply. Some measures are recommended to inform bicyclists of expectations and make the self-enforcement approach more successful:

- Signage would be added to designated trails indicating availability for bicycle use on odd-numbered calendar days only, and where one way travel is required. All other trails would have “No bicycles” international symbols added to existing signposts.
- Orientation and training sessions would be held each spring and at events such as the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration to inform residents, both bicyclists and hikers, of shared use rules, expectations, and etiquette. Articles and reminders would also be shared through the *Genescene* and community emails.
- Peer-to-peer enforcement and education would be encouraged between bicyclists to sustain a safe, harmonious co-existence with hikers and minimize adverse environmental impacts. This could be enhanced through formation of a trail cyclists club in Genesee or participation in community events and media.

8. *How will environmental impacts such as soil erosion and wildlife habitat be addressed?*

The environmental health of our Open Space and community at large is vitally important and is the reason most of us chose to live in Genesee. Soil erosion is a continuous threat to ecosystem productivity and can be exacerbated by improperly located and maintained trails. For that reason, the Trails Committee and Trail Stewards have continuously focused on improving locations and drainage management on the existing trails. With proper location and design, adverse impacts from hikers and bicyclists can be mitigated as long as sufficient maintenance is provided. The current focus of the Open Space Manager and crew, along with the efforts of the Trail Stewards, will continue to address this issue.

The trails recommended for designation in the proposal considered the grade (steepness) of trails, a primary factor in erosion potential, with the following criteria (from “Shared Use Trails Evaluation” dated January 4, 2021):

- Lower average grades (<10%) with maximum short pitches < 20%
- Stable, well-drained soils with a minimum of large rock and the ability to withstand impacts of tires

Impacts to soils and vegetation from bicycle and hiking use will be monitored by the Open Space Manager and Trail Stewards, with adaptive measures taken as needed.

Wildlife population health is also important to the ecosystem within which Genesee resides and the quality of life residents enjoy here. Wildlife populations in Genesee are generally healthy and stable. Resident and migrating species have adapted well to the housing development, roads, automobile traffic, and use of Open Space that has grown since the 1970s.

Consultation with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) District Wildlife Officer for the Genesee area have indicated:

- The local elk herd is generally healthy and under the carrying capacity for the area. although chronic wasting disease is present in the herd.

- Mountain bike activity or new trails could impact the herd by slowly (over the years) pushing them out, although the elk along the Front Range are more accustomed to human activity than those in other parts of the state.
- Additional development can add to habitat fragmentation for lions, elk, deer, bear, coyote, and other wildlife. The Genesee trail system is small in the overall scope of Jefferson County, but it contributes to cumulative habitat fragmentation.
- Bear and elk likely use the relatively undisturbed, shaded areas of Open Space such as the proposed Malachite Trail area, during hot days.

9. *How much will this cost to implement? Is there money in the budget for this purpose? Won't this increase maintenance costs for our trails?*

The initial costs to implement shared use trails includes procurement and installation of signs and signposts at the trailheads, road intersections, and trail junctions where shared use is permitted. Additionally, "No bicycle" international symbols will be installed on all other trails. The trail signs and signposts installed in recent years cost approximately \$100 each, and a quote for "No bicycle" symbols in the past year was just over \$40 each. While detailed planning and design of signage will not occur until a decision is reached on this proposal, the cost for signage would be in the range of \$1,000 – \$1,500. These costs are well within the annual operating budgets of Open Space and the Trails Committee.

Relatively minor improvements to trail treads such as removal of steps, tread restoration, and corridor clearing to improve safety and visibility are well within the capabilities of the Open Space crew and Trail Stewards, as is the ongoing maintenance and improvement program. Most of these actions are consistent with the approach underway for the past two and a half years to provide safe, sustainable trails for hikers.

The cost to construct the Malachite Trail has been the subject of debate for some time. Approximately 40% of the 1.8 miles traverses steep rocky terrain where "force account" (volunteer Trail Steward or Open Space crew) work would be challenging. Contract trail construction has been discussed for this section. The remaining 60% of the trail traverses fairly gentle terrain with good soils or follows old roadbeds. Force account efforts have been successful constructing trails on this type of soils and terrain in reasonable timeframes.

The community engagement process will indicate the level of support for building the Malachite Trail, whether for shared use or as hiker-only. Depending on that outcome, a professional trail designer/contractor with current experience in trail construction techniques and costs can be enlisted, at an estimated cost of \$2,000 - \$5,000, to provide cost estimates, considering shared use and/or hiker-only use. The estimates will be used to inform the construction approach (force account versus contract) and form the basis for a budget proposal to the board, if needed. Based on the large number of variables regarding the possible ways to construct the Malachite Trail, an estimate is difficult until such an evaluation occurs. If the 40% were to be constructed via contract, planning estimates range from under \$20,000 to over \$50,000. If force account approaches were used, costs could be minimized.

*10. What about increased liability from hiker/biker accidents? Won't this affect our association's insurance cost?*

The safety measures described in Question #5 above are intended to reduce bicycle-hiker conflicts and resultant potential liability.

Trails and trail use are included in the Genesee Foundation general liability coverage. Adding bicycle use would entail a cost of \$58 annually, in accordance with a recent assessment from the insurer's servicing agent.

*11. How will trailhead parking be impacted? Has the impact to neighboring residences from increased parking been considered?*

Please refer to the citation regarding the first Shared Use Trail Objective in item #4 above. Consistent with that objective, most bicycle use on the proposed designated trails in Genesee would occur from "out-the-door" use, requiring no designated parking. Specific considerations related to proposed shared use trails are:

- Wildflower is not a "destination ride" and would be used primarily by those in the surrounding northeast Genesee neighborhoods for a quick out and back ride or connection to Foothills Clubhouse.
- The same is most likely true for the Hillrise Loop, accessible for those who live in central Genesee.
- Those desiring to use the Courtside-Canyon Creek Trails for an out and back ride could park at the Montane (aka Solitude) Recreation Area.
- Montane Recreation Area and the Tot Lot could also serve as parking areas away from residences and serve the Malachite Trail, if it is built and designated for shared use.
- The existing parking that occurs near the Miner's Mile/Bear Creek Highlands and Ryan's Streamside trailheads would not be affected by shared use designations as those trails are not a part of the proposal.