



Shared Use Proposal Executive Summary

The Proposal

Three sets of existing trails providing easy riding opportunities distributed across Genesee, plus the addition of the new Malachite Trail upon construction. All existing trails would need some additional work before being ready for bicycle use.

The Trails

Canyon Creek and Courtside Trails

With community parking provided at the Montane (aka Solitude) Recreation Area, the Courtside-Canyon Creek trails would provide an out-and-back experience combining forest and meadow sections with long views over Bear Creek Canyon. The grades are mostly quite gentle as much of the route is along utility roads and there is only one public road crossing at Daisy Lane. The out and back route would be approximately 1.5 miles and would accommodate a 10-15 minute ride. Hiking use is low on weekdays, moderate on weekends. Alternatively, riders could use portions of Bitterroot Lane, Montane Drive East, and Stonecrop Way to make a loop.

Hillrise Loop. Lower portion of Hillrise East, Red Fox Way, and all of Hillrise West Trails.

This loop in the center of Genesee provides a short (0.75-0.90 mile), quick (5-10 minutes) ride with meadow and forest views and minimal housing. The grades average 2-7% on average, with some pitches up to 15% and low to moderate hiking use. It would be an ideal single track learning loop. Bridging Foothills South and Montane Drive, it could serve as an off-road connector for area residents to access Montane Recreation area, the Courtside-Canyon trails, and the Foothills Clubhouse and Pool. Parking is available at the Tot Lot.

Wildflower Loop – Northeast to Southwest Sections only

Wildflower Loop has four access points – two on Foothills Drive North and two on Foothills Drive South. The southwestern leg of the trail (accessed by the western access point on Foothills Drive South) crosses private property and is not recommended for shared use. The remaining legs would provide short cycling experiences for residents of the northwest sections of Genesee (the most densely developed area) along with access to the Foothills Clubhouse and Pool and allows cycling access with road connections to the other trails in the proposal.

Malachite Trail (added upon construction)

The Malachite Trail is in the top tier of priorities for new trails in the Recreation Facility and Trails Master Plan. It has generated interest for years and has been talked about as both a shared use trail and a hiker-only trail. A preliminary route has been laid out and visited by a number of community residents. If constructed it would be one of the longer trails in the Genesee Trail System at approximately 1.8 miles. Malachite offers views ranging from the Great Plains and Bear Creek Canyon to Mt. Evans and the James Peak Wilderness, surely the most comprehensive and spectacular views on the trail system!

Upon construction, the Malachite Trail would comprise an “inner loop” to the hiker-only Montane Loop. It could also be linked with the Courtside-Canyon Creek shared use trails described above to form the “Canyon Loop”. The Canyon Loop would include short segments of the connector trails Lower Montane and Hillrise East and use of Montane Drive East and West, Stonecrop Way, and Bitterroot Lane for a total distance of approximately 3.8 miles. The trails portion would comprise approximately 2.8 miles. Overall, the time of the experience would range from 20 to 35 minutes for one circuit with parking provided at the Montane (aka Solitude) Recreation Area or the Tot Lot.

Malachite does not meet the objective of trails for beginning trail cyclists due to several pitches of 15 to 25%. It would however allow for growth into the intermediate level and use for resident riders that are already there. Steep cross slopes in those same areas may necessitate a wider trail tread than the preceding trails to allow safe passage of bicycles and hikers. It would also require new construction with approximately 40% of the trail *potentially* requiring contract labor and equipment. If a budget proposal were to be submitted and approved by the board, the trail could be completed by the end of the 2022 season.

Management Tools

Shared Use only on Designated Days. Designate odd-numbered calendar days for shared use and even-numbered calendar days for hiker only. This enables all hikers to have the choice of any trail without cyclists on any given day and knowing when they might encounter a bicycle on select days on designated trails.

One Way Use for Cyclists. Until and unless the Malachite Trail is constructed, one way use for cyclists is not practical for Courtside-Canyon Creek due to the out and back aspect. Neither is it practicable for the Wildflower Loop section due to the transportation connection aspects and multiple access points. Hillrise West between Foothills South and Montane Drive West would likewise need to be two-way, but the Red Fox Way-Hillrise East sections could be designated for one-way use. In the event Malachite is designated for shared use and constructed, the Canyon Loop (see above) should be designated for one way travel to enhance safety for both cyclists and hikers and reduce erosion potential.

Training and Communication Program. Safety for hikers and cyclists is always a concern. The trails evaluated in detail have parameters that affect inherent safety such as corridor width, sight distances, and volume of use. Designation of one-way use is also a safety measure. Three additional measures are proposed to address safety:

1. Conduct a seasonal orientation and training session on rules such as even/odd days, direction of travel, safety measures, and trail etiquette.
2. Use the website, Genescene, eBlasts, etc to convey shared use rules, safety, and etiquette in at the beginning of the use season and throughout the year, if needed.
3. Add signage indicating "No Bike" trails to existing signposts, plus for odd-even days and one-way travel sections of those trails designated for shared use.

Discussion

The Wildflower Loop segments, Hillrise Loop, and Courtside-Canyon Creek trails would offer relatively short, easy rides in alignment within the established shared use trail objectives and target users. They meet the stated objectives of short easy rides close to home and places children can learn to ride. The trail opportunities are well distributed across the community and allow access to some of the recreation facilities. This would also provide safer transportation options off Foothills and Montane Drives.

For those desiring longer cycling rides, all three sets could be linked together with some road sections for a trans-Genesee experience traversing northwest, central and southeast sections. To enable these longer experiences, the designated days would be the same for all trails.

The construction of the Malachite Trail would be the most dramatic addition to the Genesee Trails system in many years, since the construction of the Bear Creek Highlands Trail. It offers the opportunity to add something to the system for those hikers who may feel they are losing something by allowing shared use on other trails. They would in essence be gaining a spectacular trail for hikers only for 3-4 days a week in exchange for allowing shared use on other trails for 3-4 days.

A construction concept, including contributions of volunteer labor and a budget estimate for contract construction in 2022 should be part of any final proposal to the community and board.