



April 11, 2018

Mr. Tom Armstrong
Bureau of Planning and Sustainability
1900 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 2100
Portland, Oregon 97201

Re: Off-Road Cycling Master Plan Discussion Draft

Dear Mr. Armstrong,

Board Members

Patricia Frobes, Chair

Kendall Clawson, Vice Chair

Paul Agrimis

Tonya Booker

Michelle Dedeo

Jenny Glass

Ian Jaquiss

Joseph O'Leary

Jim Owens

Gladys Ruiz

Judy BlueHorse Skelton

Kathy Fong Stephens

Christa Stout

Paddy Tillet

Jeff Anderson, Ex Officio

Meryl Redisch, Ex Officio

As you know, the Portland Parks Board has spent a substantial amount of time considering drafts of the Off-Road Cycling Master Plan (ORCMP). Board member, Jim Owens, has served as a liaison to the ORCMP Advisory Committee, the Plan has been reviewed by the Board's Land Use & Infrastructure Working Group, the Board as a whole has had two briefing sessions on the Plan and, over the last six months, the Board has received voluminous public testimony on various aspects of the Plan, particularly those aspects relating to off-road cycling in Forest Park and Riverview Natural Area. On April 3rd, after an extended public comment period, the Board considered a report to me prepared by Mr. Owens in his liaison capacity and approved sending you the following comments on the ORCMP Discussion Draft for your consideration.

As you will see, the Board is generally supportive of the Plan, subject to specific concerns detailed below. However, while expressing support for the Plan, the Board expressly noted that the Board would not, at this time, assign a high priority to the allocation of resources to Plan implementation. Given current budget constraints and competing priorities, it is unclear when and how the Plan can be implemented.

With that limitation in mind, the Board believes the ORCMP is a good conceptual road map for a city-wide system of off-road cycling. The Plan is the product of a technically well-supported planning process with substantial community involvement and outreach to underserved communities. It is consistent with the 2020 Vision for Portland Parks, Portland Parks & Recreation's Strategic Plan, 5-Year Equity Plan and Renew Forest Park Initiative, the Forest Park Natural Resources Management Plan (FPNRMP) and the city's 2035 Comprehensive Plan.

The ORCMP responds to national and regional trends of growing demand for a variety of off-road cycling opportunities. The trail system proposed in the Plan provides a well-distributed, relatively geographically balanced series of improvements to serve all parts of the city. The Parks Board is particularly supportive of the fact that the Plan relies on best management practices and state of the art national standards for trail design and natural resource protection. The best management practices proposed in the ORCMP should be immediately adopted to minimize impacts and optimize safety. Finally, the ORCMP envisions a variety of partnership programs that will be critical to successful plan implementation.

However, the Board has several concerns that it hopes will be addressed in the final Plan. Specifically, the Plan is limited to city-owned properties which artificially

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constrains the scope of the Plan and risks creating isolated, unconnected cycling facilities. In addition, some potential sites were eliminated by the drafters of the Plan based on criteria that were later revised and other sites were eliminated based on an untested assumption that trails would compromise environmental goals.

The Plan does not adequately identify implementation funding sources or priorities or specific outcomes against which progress can be measured. The Board respectfully recommends that the ORCMP Advisory Committee be enlisted to develop implementation priorities and measurable outcomes. Without the recommendations being prioritized, it is unclear which projects should move forward, and when.

Although the ORCMP proposes a good locational mix of bicycle parks, it proposes no new urban off-road cycling trails on the west side. Further, the ORCMP does not adequately identify opportunities to connect parks to parks, parks to schools and parks to trails. The Plan does not include guidelines for determining whether existing and future trails are designated as shared use or exclusive use.

The ORCMP should require increased investment in signage, public education, trail design and enforcement to minimize user conflicts before expansion of off-road cycling trails. Finally, the Plan should require the identification of a reliable funding source for trail maintenance before new trails are constructed.

With respect to the Plan recommendations on off-road cycling in Forest Park, the Board believes the ORCMP appropriately balances policy direction for cycling trails in Forest Park with the goals of resource protection and conservation. Specifically, the Plan includes a goal to achieve net ecological benefits while increasing access to off-road cycling. The Board supports the continued investment in the collection of biological and botanical data called for in the FPNRMP and affirms its support for environmental review and public input before new projects are implemented as specified by the FPNRMP. Finally, if the ORCMP is approved and funding for new trails identified, the Board would support moving forward only with Concepts C&D for detailed planning and design. The Board does not support moving forward with other Concepts described in the Plan.

With respect to Riverview Natural Area (RVNA), the Board supports the recommendation that Portland Parks & Recreation pursue a shared-use perimeter trail as a reasoned and incremental approach to off-road cycling in RVNA. The Board believes the recommendation is based on best practices for trail design and management to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse environmental impacts and restore the ecological health of the site

Thank you for considering the Board's comments. We look forward to working with you and the Parks Bureau on Plan implementation.

Sincerely,

Patricia Frobes

Chair

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