

March 26, 2018

TO: Patricia Frobles, Chair
Portland Parks Board

FROM: Jim Owens, Parks Board Representative to Off-Road Cycling Advisory Committee; Land Use and Infrastructure Co-Chair

SUBJECT: **DISCUSSION DRAFT**
OFF-ROAD CYCLING MASTER PLAN

A. CONCLUSIONS AND ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS FOR BOARD CONSIDERATION

Key Conclusions

- The ORCMP planning process was well-supported technically, with robust public outreach and applaudable efforts to reach underserved communities. While it may not be apparent in the public testimony focus on Forest Park, there was conscious effort to outreach to other parts of the City and to engage families and minority communities.
- The ORCMP is responding to trends regionally and nationally of greater and growing demand for a variety of types of off-road cycling opportunities.
- In general, the ORCMP's proposed trail system provides a well-distributed, relatively geographically balanced series of improvements to meet demand and serve all parts of the city.
- The ORCMP implements applicable policy direction and there are no specific conflicts between the conceptual ORCMP and this policy direction.
- The ORCMP balances policy direction for trails in Forest Park as defined by the FPNRMP with goals of resource protection and conservation. Proposed trail improvements are in alignment with the FPNRMP.
- All proposed projects will require additional planning, design, public input and budgeting. Projects in Forest Park will also require environmental review and public input as specified by the FPNRMP.
- The Plan appropriately relies on best management practices and recommendations for trail design and management and for protection of natural resources that are based on state-of-the-state national standards. They present an opportunity to establish a new, updated set of best management practices for trails based upon the Forest Park experience and lessons from around the country. This would be a major step forward.
- Significant new resources will need to be secured in order to implement much of what is proposed in the Plan and the Plan should be viewed as a "menu" of choices for consideration as resources are secured.
- The consequence of limiting the Plan's geographic scope to City-owned properties and not better addressing connectivity is that the ORCMP is an incomplete look at the potential for off-road cycling in the City and region.
- A key deficiency in the Discussion Draft is the lack of priorities for implementation, as well as measurable outcomes.
- Given budget constraints, the reality is that partner group funding and labor will be needed to implement much of consequence in terms of proposed improvements and new trails. The ORCMP represents an opportunity/need for public-private partnerships to design facilities and trails, manage/maintain facilities and trails, monitor physical and social conditions, and enforce expectations for how facilities and trails will be used appropriately.

- The trail recommendations being considered for Forest Park are generally supported by BPS’s advisory committee (which included Portland Audubon representatives) and the Forest Park Conservancy, particularly avoidance of the North Unit and the goal of achieving net ecological benefits. Of the six concepts proposed, the most feasible appear to be Options C and D.
- Establishment of baseline biological and botanical values called for in the 1996 Forest Park Natural Resource Management Plan Management Report has not been implemented and is still needed.
- Recommendations presented in the Plan for River View adequately address BES’s concerns about resource impacts and are a reasoned and incremental approach to the potential of off-road cycling at River View.

Alternative Actions for Board Consideration

1. Support the ORCMP as a good conceptual road map for developing an expanded citywide system of off-road cycling.
2. Work with BPS and its advisory committee to develop a “roadmap” that outlines the next steps moving forward, demonstrates integration with other plans, and indicates responsible parties and a timeframe for accomplishing Plan recommendations.
3. As an initial step in Plan implementation, quantify the proposed trail opportunities identified in the Plan, so it is clear what gaps need to be filled to fully meet the Plan’s vision, goals and objectives.
4. Work with BPS and its advisory committee to develop priorities for implementation and measurable outcomes for inclusion in the Recommended ORCMP.
5. Integrate ORCMP proposals into planned parks projects and master planning.
6. Ensure that new trail/ improvement projects are accompanied by adequate, committed maintenance funding.
7. Support adoption of the best management practices proposed in the ORCMP.
8. In general, prioritize trail improvements and new trail projects in underserved areas, as well as those that offer potential for additional benefits like employment and connectivity opportunities. To promote entry skill level cycling, prioritize easy-to-get-to neighborhood-based facilities in diverse areas of the City where there are few existing opportunities.
9. To capitalize on the momentum and partnerships generated through the ORCMP planning process, partner with the off-road cycling community in designing and building a model shared-use, sustainable natural trail as a pilot project
10. Integrate schools and community centers into the off-road cycling planning and design process.
11. Institutionalize best management practices and measures identified in the ORCMP to minimize impacts and optimize safety.
12. Develop guidelines for determining whether existing and future trails are designated as shared use or exclusive use.
13. Review the existing trail classification system to ensure that it responds to current off-road cycling practices, user management, and natural resource impacts of all trail uses. In consultation with the Portland Fire Bureau, review the classification of fire lanes to better reflect trail uses.
14. Invest in signage, trail design and public education efforts to identify appropriate trail uses, improve trail stewardship efforts, and reduce unsanctioned trail creation.
15. Invest in oversight of trail use through public-private partnerships and/or volunteer efforts.
16. Support moving Forest Park Concepts C and D forward for detailed planning and design. Consider programs to provide transportation to Forest Park for diverse users living on the eastside.
17. Update the best management practices in the Forest Park Natural Resource Management Plan and/or undertake a wholesale revision of the Plan, including an evaluation of habitats, plant

communities and other natural features that may be adversely affected by changes to the trails in Forest Park.

18. Continue to pursue development of a perimeter trail in the River View Natural Area and employ best practices to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse environmental impacts and restore ecological health.
19. Give serious consideration to Northwest Trail Advocates' proposition for volunteer time and funding to address erosion problems on existing trails in River View in exchange for permitting off-road cycling there.

B. CONTEXT

These comments on the Discussion Draft Off-Road Cycling Master Plan (ORCMP) are provided in my role as the Portland Parks Board representative to the Off-Road Cycling Advisory Committee convened by the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS). They have been vetted with the Board's Land Use and Infrastructure Subcommittee; however, they have not been formally endorsed by the subcommittee and individual members may have additional or divergent comments.

Over the past year, the Parks Board has been briefed twice on the ORCMP by BPS staff and has received public testimony at its last five meetings. These comments have been informed by those briefings and testimony, as well as by the numerous communications to the Board about the ORCMP, most notably:

- Public comment to BPS and to the Parks Board.
- Responses by BPS and PP&R staff to questions posed by the Board's subcommittee.
- Draft ORCMP Advisory Committee letter to City Council.
- Forest Park Conservancy position statement.

The comments that follow respond to direction from the Parks Board at its January 2018 meeting regarding topics/questions to be addressed in input that the Board may choose to provide to BPS. As noted in previous presentations to the Board on the ORCMP:

- The Board is reviewing a Discussion Draft prepared by BPS. Parks Board input has been requested by BPS to help inform a Recommended Plan to be submitted to City Council.
- While the Plan has been developed by BPS, it will be implemented primarily by PPR.
- The ORCMP Advisory Committee has not yet submitted final committee comments and is not being asked to formally endorse the ORCMP.
- **The ORCMP proposes a system of cycling opportunities, not merely mountain biking trails.** Existing and proposed off-road cycling facilities include natural surface trails, bicycle parks, urban off-road cycling trails, and competition facilities (PIR).
- **It is a concept plan.** The plan provides recommendations for consideration of biking trails in parks and natural areas across the city. This is NOT the same as approval of these trails. **Proposed trails will be subject to additional land use, environmental and budget review before they can be developed.**
- While the vast majority of public input and advisory committee process has focused on Forest Park, **it is a citywide plan with facilities proposed throughout the City.**
- The Discussion Draft ORCMP is the product of a two-year planning process informed by nationally-recognized trail consultants, a broad-based advisory committee, and a robust public outreach effort. In providing direction on topics to be addressed in potential comments to BPS, the Parks Board recognized that it would be inappropriate to second-guess BPS's process and the Plan's specific proposals and instead directed that observations and recommendations focus

on conformance to policy direction, comments on Plan implementation, and observations about controversial elements such as Forest Park and Riverview Natural Area.

C. CONFORMANCE WITH POLICY DIRECTION

How does the ORCMP fit into the overall program for parks and recreation? Specifically, how does it conform to Vision 2020, PPR's Strategic Plan, Equity Plan and other key policy direction.

The City has previously undertaken several site-specific planning efforts that considered off-road cycling use on public properties, most recently as part of the Riverview Natural Area Management Plan. As a result of these processes, the City recognized the existing and growing need for additional off-road cycling experiences within the City, as a natural complement to the City's other active transportation and recreation systems and plans, including PBOT's Bicycle Plan for 2030 and PPR's efforts to create a connected system of natural areas, parks and trails. According to the Discussion Draft, **a key goal is to better understand the potential for Portland to meet the off-road cycling needs of its residents through a connected system of off-road cycling trails and bike parks. Another key goal is to identify a distributed network of opportunities across the city.**

In proposing a citywide network of different types of off-road cycling facilities, the ORCMP is responding to trends regionally and nationally that can be expected to affect the demand for off-road cycling over the next 5-10 years. The current level of participation is expected to increase given the following factors:

- The population of Portland and the surrounding region continues to grow.
- There is a national trend of increasing participation in off-road cycling.
- Regional participation in off-road cycling is higher than national levels.
- The ORCMP documents latent demand in the City for a variety of types of cycling facilities that is currently not served by existing facilities.
- Portland is a major location for competitive off-road cycling events, with increasing participation.
- A National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) mountain biking league for grades 6 to 12 is starting in Oregon. Competition will begin in 2018.

A variety of policy documents address the provision of off-road cycling as a recreation option in the City. A summary of applicable policy follows:

Vision 2020

- Goal on page 30: Double the amount of PP&R's paved and soft-surface trails (from 150 miles to 300 miles of trails)
- Objectives on page 44:
 - Continue to implement the recommendations of the Forest Park Natural Resources Management Plan.
 - Expand recreation opportunities and connections in the Central City/Northwest area: Willamette River and adjacent neighborhoods.....Forest Park and adjacent North Slope neighborhoods.

PPR's Strategic Plan

- Outcome 1 (page 5): Implementation of new management practices and systems to improve the maintenance, ecological health and overall quality of park lands" with strategic initiatives that have a focus on trails, and in particular, the Renew Forest Park Initiative that seeks to

“address emerging infrastructure needs in the Park (Rebuild) and improve regional access to the Park (Reconnect).

Forest Park Natural Resource Master Plan (FPNRMP)

The FPNRMP recommends that PP&R construct new, extend and improve existing foot, bike, and horse trails where desirable; provide connections to nearby regional trails; construct new connections between existing trails to extend usefulness of trails. At the same time, the FPNRP calls for significant protection and conservation of Forest Park. It recommends that PP&R look at other areas in the City to redirect demand so that Forest Park is not bearing the full burden of accommodating bike trail demand. The ORCMP has identified citywide sites for bike use, with at least an unstated goal of not concentrating trails in Forest Park.

- Page ix: “build the bike trail connections that will broaden the recreation opportunities in (the central management) unit.”
- Page 73-86: The need for, and potential impacts of, recreational use in the park, including for hiking and cycling, are identified.
- Page 107: “plan trails with least impact”.
- Page 174: Identifies existing ‘trails’ on which off-road cycling is an allowed use as well as development guidelines and standards for cycling trails.
- Page 178-9: “Accommodate recreation trail activities while causing little or no impact on the park’s natural resources” and:
Trail use “...is heavy in some areas now and demand is expected to increase in the future. Foot and bike trail use in particular will increase...(and) there is room for many (trail) improvements and additions to accommodate present and future levels of use.”
“Construct new, extend and improve existing foot, bike and horse trails where desirable; remove unused trails; provide connections to nearby regional trails; construct new connections between existing trails to extend usefulness of trails”.
- Pages 216-17: Establishes a process for considering and approving new projects through Type II /III environmental review and establishes criteria for these reviews.

The ORCMP considers FPNRMP goals, strategies, and criteria in the identification of potential, and recommended trail improvements. In alignment with the FPNRMP, the recommended trail improvement concepts focus on initial areas that could a) create meaningful enhancements to off-road cycling access, b) achieve a net ecological benefit, and c) minimize impacts to other users

Adoption of the ORCMP will not amend or change the FPNRMP or the NW Hills Natural Areas Plan to directly allow or authorize any recommended trail improvements in Forest Park. Public comment has asserted that, because it was adopted by ordinance, the FPNRMP is sacrosanct and additional off-road cycling trails cannot be considered in the Park. That is a spurious argument that ignores the policy direction cited above, that the FPNRMP establishes environmental review as the process for considering improvements not explicitly allowed in the Management Plan, and that master plans are regularly updated in response to changing conditions and public policy, e.g. last year’s adoption of the 2035 Comprehensive Plan which supersedes prior land use planning direction

During the ORCMP advisory committee process, BPS concluded, based upon City Attorney input, that proposed trail facilities could comply with FPNRMP through the existing exceptions process in the FPNRMP through a Type II or Type II environmental review process. As a concept plan, the ORCMP does not authorize specific projects nor does it allocate funding for those projects. Specific projects will require additional trail planning and design work (with public input) and will need to go through Type II or Type III environmental review (with additional public input), as required by the FPNRMP.

Absent in the FPNRMP are a baseline on ecological values and measures for assessing potential impacts to natural resources, i.e. ability to measure whether ecological conditions are improving or deteriorating. The Forest Park Conservancy, in partnership with other organizations and City and regional agencies, is preparing a Greater Forest Park Conservation Strategy that is intended to define baseline ecological values. This will be an important tool for assessing the appropriateness of new/expanded trails in Forest Park.

Additional comment on proposed trails in Forest Plan follows in Section C.

Renew Forest Park Initiative

As noted above under PP&R Strategic Plan, a major goal of this initiative is to increase access to Forest Park by providing a visitor center which the Park does not currently have, with parking, outdoor gathering area for groups, a nature education center, and links to trails in the park. The ORCMP proposes a new bike-optimized trail that would connect to and pass close to the planned visitor center in the central unit of the Park. Another goal is to “Rebuild” the Park’s trails and its deteriorated bridges and culverts. A third goal is to “Restore” the ecological health of the Park by removing invasive species and replanting with native plants. One of the ORCMP’s recommendations is to include restoration where new or rebuilt trails are being proposed. This includes the trail passing by and connecting to the planned visitor center, because this area of the park is substantially degraded and in need of renewal. A new trail here would have less ecological impact than other areas in the park, in keeping with the “plan trails with least impact” goal in the FPNRMP. This trail needs to be designed to avoid or minimize conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians accessing Forest Park from the visitor center.

5-Year Equity Plan

The ORCMP speaks primarily to three of the Equity Plan’s six goals:

- #3 – “Strengthen outreach and public engagement for communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities”.
- #4 - “Increase access to culturally and linguistically responsive services for communities of color and refugee and immigrant communities”.
- #5 - “Provide equitable access to City Services to all residents.”

The ORCMP includes a detailed discussion of equity, including a summary of outreach to underserved communities. The plan addresses equity both in terms of decision-making and outcomes (pages 6-8). The plan states that:

It is critical that the City carry out this plan in a way that extends equitable outcomes – including access to healthy and safe physical activity, active transportation, and nature – for communities of color, people with disabilities, and other historically under-served and under-represented communities in Portland.

Achieving this goal will require conscious efforts to prioritize future investments, extend associated benefits, and address any negative impacts in a manner that furthers equity.

In general, the ORCMP’s proposed trail system provides a well-distributed, relatively geographically balanced series of improvements to meet demand and serve all parts of the city, with coalition-area specific recommendations. In terms of geographic equity, the proposed level of service goals include at least one trail experience of 3-5 miles and 2-3 bike parks per district. The goal is that these facilities should be accessible by bike, on foot or via transit. Building new

trails and off-road cycling experiences throughout the City is expected to increase the percentage of households of color within walking distance of a park or trail access point, a performance measure in PP&R's Strategic Plan (Page 42).

The plan's recommendations reflect a focus on all skill levels, especially for youth and beginners, that allows for progressive skill building but provides interest for more advanced riders. For example, the plan envisions loop skill trails at neighborhood parks that would create family-friendly natural surface trails for cycling, or for running or walking. The plan also seeks to reduce barriers to off-road cycling by providing experiences that do not require specialized equipment or bicycles; supporting partnerships for educational programming/loaner bicycles; and improving information about the level of difficulty of trails and bike parks.

The ORCMP also includes a section devoted to improving accessibility for those who use adaptive equipment or non-traditional bicycles (e.g. handcycles), through improvements to user information, removal of barriers to access, and the creation of an accessibility 'hub'. Such improvements are likely to increase access for other users as well (such as families with strollers).

2035 Comprehensive Plan

- Guiding Principle 2: ...improve opportunities for Portlanders to lead active, healthy lives.
- GOAL 3.E: Connected public realm and open spaces. A network of parks, streets, City Greenways, and other public spaces supports community interaction; connects neighborhoods, districts, and destinations; and improves air, water, land quality, and environmental health.
- Policy 4.78 Access to nature. Promote equitable, safe, and well-designed physical and visual access to nature for all Portlanders, while also maintaining the functions and values of significant natural resources, fish, and wildlife.
- Policy 8.53 Public trails. Establish, improve, and maintain a citywide system of local and regional public trails that provide transportation and/or recreation options and are a component of larger network of facilities for bicyclists, pedestrians, and recreational users.
- Policy 8.54 Trail system connectivity. Plan, improve, and maintain the citywide trail system so that it connects and
 - improves access to Portland's neighborhoods,
 - commercial areas, employment centers, schools, parks, natural areas, recreational facilities, regional destinations, the regional trail system, and other key places that Portlanders access in their daily lives.
- Policy 8.55 Trail coordination. Coordinate planning, design, improvement, and maintenance of the trail system among City agencies, other public agencies, non-governmental partners, and adjacent landowners.
- Policy 8.56 Trail diversity. Allow a variety of trail types to reflect a trail's transportation and recreation roles, requirements, and physical context.
- Policy 8.59 Trail and Habitat Corridor coordination. Coordinate the planning and improvement of trails with the establishment, enhancement, preservation, and access to habitat corridors.
- Policy 8.60 Intertwine coordination. Coordinate with the Intertwine Alliance and its partners, including local and regional parks providers, to integrate Portland's trail and active transportation network with the bi-state regional trail system

Summary Observations

- The ORCMP implements policy direction contained in Vision 2040, PPR’s Strategic Plan, and other key policy documents, including the Forest Park Natural Resource Management Plan, Renew Forest Park Initiative and the 2035 Comprehensive Plan. There are no specific conflicts between the conceptual ORCMP and this policy direction.
- Plan recommendations for an expanded citywide system of different types of off-road cycling facilities are intended to respond to trends affecting the demand for this type of recreational activity.
- The ORCMP balances policy direction for trails in Forest Park as defined by the Forest Park Natural Resource Management Plan with goals of resource protection and conservation. It avoids concentrating new off-road cycling facilities in Forest Park, instead recommending trail improvements in alignment with the FPNRMP.
- Establishment of baseline biological and botanical values called for in the 1996 Forest Park Natural Resource Management Plan Management Report has not been implemented and is still needed.
- All proposed projects will require additional planning, design, public input and budgeting. Projects in Forest Park will also require environmental review and public input as specified by the FPNRMP.
- The ORCMP proactively responds to PP&R’s Equity Plan and BPS’s targeted outreach efforts to underserved communities during the planning process should be complimented.

D. IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

What are the implications to PP&R and what is a cost-effective, efficient and timely approach to implementation?

At its January meeting, the Parks Board identified the following as key implementation considerations:

- Design and management considerations, including safety for all trail and facility users.
- Priorities/opportunities for implementation.
- Opportunities for partnerships, near-term and longer-term.

A fundamental constraint to ORCMP implementation will be PP&R’s budget. Funding for improvements to the existing off-road system will compete with all the other demands on the City’s parks and recreation system and it’s highly unlikely that the City will have the resources -- financial and personnel – to implement all the recommendations in the Discussion Draft. Successful implementation will be dependent upon credible management and enforcement resources being in place. It is difficult to imagine the Plan being fully implemented unless significant new resources are secured. Rather, the Plan should be viewed as a “menu” of choices for consideration as resources are secured.

To avoid exacerbating the maintenance funding deficit, PP&R will need to ensure that trail improvements are accompanied by committed maintenance funding.

Gateway Green’s mix of facility types may serve as a good case study to give a perspective on the implementation process, effort, duration and cost.

Successful implementation of the ORCMP will require excellent and planning and design, expanded and ongoing education and enforcement, and a solid maintenance scheme with strong volunteer assistance. As noted in draft comments by BPS’s advisory committee:

Planning and design will need to be thorough and engaging. Wildlife habitat and water quality concerns will require very thoughtful planning and design to avoid facilities on steep/erodible

soils, and to avoid fragmentation of natural areas that provide refuge for wildlife. The design will need to be engaging to maintain a strong interest level in the off-road cycling community to generate needed volunteer maintenance. A central focus will need to be developing stout Best Management Practices to guide a multi-stage planning and design process of preliminary trail alignment, review and revision, field flagging, review and revision, and construction using adaptive management. Strong education and enforcement programs will need to be created to guide desired use patterns and behaviors. Considerable testimony has been given demonstrating a history of rogue trail development, unsafe riding including night riding, and surprisingly frequent rude behavior by a significant minority of off-road cyclists. There will need to be a credible education program with an intensive startup effort, that will hopefully taper after new behavior patterns are established.

The advisory committee also notes that the Plan falls short in terms of plans and priorities, as well as measurable outcomes, for implementation. It is suggested that quantitative measurements (such as 3 bike parks and 10 miles of narrow trail per district of the city) be included to measure progress and that the timeline for implementation should be made clear. The final Plan needs a “roadmap” that outlines the next steps moving forward, demonstrates integration with other plans, and indicates responsible parties and a timeframe for accomplishing Plan recommendations.

Geographic Scope

Only City-owned properties were considered in the ORCMP. Off-road cycling is a regional issue, not Portland's alone, and Portland's resources are not sufficient to address the issue. As was pointed out repeatedly throughout the process by BPS' advisory committee, the existing land base is currently inadequate to achieve the project's facility goals and to satisfy the needs for off-road cycling. Coordinated, interjurisdictional planning and land acquisitions are needed at both the regional and the local scale, especially on the east side of Portland. Limiting the ORCMP to City-owned properties artificially limits its scope and creates the potential of creating isolated, unconnected cycling facilities.

In addition, the process screened out sites for consideration very early based on draft criteria that were later modified. Those eliminated sites were never re-evaluated. Further limiting the pool of sites to evaluate, PP&R and BES eliminated many of the natural areas under a blanket belief that a large on-site trail system would compromise the environmental goals.

Connectivity was identified as a key goal at the inception of the planning process, but then never really addressed in terms of identifying trail opportunities to connect parks to parks, parks to schools, and parks to trails. It's especially unfortunate that Portland Public Schools did not participate in the planning process, as trail connectivity is key to achieving Safe Routes to Schools. Other opportunities exist for sharing resources, including PBOT's Southwest In Motion effort, and other active transportation initiatives that PBOT is engaged in.

The consequence of these combined actions/lack of action is that the ORCMP is an incomplete look at the potential for off-road cycling in the City and region.

Design and Management Considerations, Including Safety

The ORCMP identifies safety as the top priority in trail design and management. It indicates that trails will be planned and designed using best management practices (BMPs). The Plan's best management practices and recommendations for trail design and management are based on national standards. Best management practices will also be applied to the protection of natural resources, with an

“avoid/minimize/mitigate” hierarchy based on science and best management practices for natural resource management.

Included in the Plan are measures to minimize impacts and optimize safety, e.g. the Plan’s Impacts and Benefits Assessment devotes sections to “Safety” and “Trail Experience and Social Interaction”.

Findings cited in the Assessment include:

- Conflicts on shared-use trails can be real or perceived and are often rooted in concerns over personal safety, variations in social norms and expectations, and concerns about perceived environmental degradation. While research is limited, surveys of land managers have found few actual conflicts between hikers and cyclists.
- Communication strategies (education and awareness programs) are more effective at addressing real or perceived safety concerns than enforcing trail width-based regulations for mountain bikers (e.g. bikes only allowed on trails greater than 6 feet wide).
- Trail design and maintenance techniques, such as improving sight lines and controlling speed, are widely accepted as best management practices to promote positive social interaction and reduce conflict.

Public comment to date has focused on conflicts between hikers and cyclists and many of the public comments opposing bikes in Forest Park have centered either on conflicts between user groups, or concern for the potential of off-road cycling in natural areas to degrade or damage resources, or both. The reports on trail conflicts are largely anecdotal and BPS data indicates a relatively low incidence of reported conflicts. However, whether conflicts are real or perceived is not the point – trails need to be designed to avoid conflicts, they need to be well signed so that there is no confusion about allowed uses, and monitoring and enforcement needs to be increased. To that end, PP&R should: (1) explore means of providing oversight of trail use behavior through public-private partnerships or volunteer efforts; and (2) review its existing trail classification system to ensure that it responds to current off-road cycling practices, user management, and natural resource impacts of all trail uses. For example, “high-use” and pedestrian-only designations require more definition and clarification. Also, PP&R and the Portland Fire Bureau should consider classifying the fire lanes differently to better reflect trail uses.

Investments in signage, trail design and public education will be key to successful Plan implementation. Stronger partnerships with the off-road cycling community will be needed to improve trail stewardship efforts and to avoid unsanctioned trail creation.

The blanket exclusion of bikes on ‘pedestrian only trails’ in Forest Park was unilaterally decided by staff with only limited advisory committee input. Committee members commented that no data was presented backing up this blanket exclusion and made the point that trail user density is likely not uniform. There was also no detailed trail sharing discussion for other non-Forest Park sites. The question is how did trails become designated as ‘pedestrian only’ in Portland with no public process, especially when trail sharing has been demonstrated to work well at Powell Butte and in other U.S. and Canadian cities. BPS’ advisory committee suggests that there should be some standardized factors for determining whether existing and future trails are designated as shared use or exclusive use, and that data and geographical equity should be used to support decisions about trail use. They encourage the City to look to the planning and implementation of shared use trails in other cities to inform guidelines for future use and to inform policy moving forward.

Implementation Priorities/Opportunities

An initial step in Plan implementation should be to quantify the proposed trail opportunities identified in the Plan, so it is clear what gaps need to be filled to fully meet the Plan’s vision, goals and

objectives. For example, how many miles of beginner trails are identified, and so on for each level of rider and desired experience. The Plan's quantitative measurements could then be integrated with PP&R's service goals for the entire city within the context of Parks Vision 2020 (and, in the future, Vision 2030).

A process will be needed for prioritizing and phasing investments, if and when funding becomes available, as the ORCMP Discussion Draft Plan does not include a prioritized list or phasing program for future improvements. Rather, it relies on future prioritization via the PP&R Capital Improvement Program and the PP&R/City budget process. Such processes would consider off-road cycling improvements alongside other PP&R and City projects and needs. Improvements could also be realized via site-specific master planning and development, unique opportunities or through the support of community or private partners.

Most participants in the planning process agree that funding should be prioritized for sites that are in underserved areas, as well as those that offer potential for additional benefits like employment and connectivity opportunities. Other considerations in prioritizing implementation include:

- Partner with the off-road cycling community e.g. Northwest Trails Alliance, in designing and building a model shared-use, sustainable natural trail.
- Take advantage of upcoming opportunities to integrate ORCMP proposals into planned parks projects and master planning. Candidates include Parklane Park (beginning design soon), the Forest Park Visitor Center project, Gateway Green, and Gates Park.
- Prioritize easy-to-get-to neighborhood-based facilities for entry skill level cyclists in diverse areas of the City where there are few existing opportunities.
- Address the strong demand for single-track trail experiences.
- Capitalize on the great potential of existing locations in East Portland, including improve access and infrastructure at Gateway Green, improve and expand the Ventura Park bike park and add a loop trail, and develop a beginner-friendly skill trail at Gates Park to complement Powell Butte.
- Focus on locations near schools, with safe pedestrian/bicycle access, and near neighborhoods with many children and/or communities of color.

Partnership Opportunities

Another key to successful Plan implementation will be capitalizing on the momentum and partnerships generated through the ORCMP planning process and to sustain that engagement through the planning and construction of trail improvements and new trail projects. Given budget constraints, the reality is that partner group funding and labor will likely be required to implement much of consequence, at least in the short term.

Trail management and maintenance is also an area in which partnerships with the off-road cycling community will be particularly needed. The ORCMP also represents an opportunity to develop public-private partnerships to manage/maintain facilities and trails, monitor physical and social conditions, and enforce expectations for how facilities and trails will be used appropriately. These public-private partnerships will need to engage interests across the current divide: off-road cycling stakeholders, neighborhood stakeholders, and habitat conservation stakeholders. Schools or community centers will need to be other key partners in ORCMP implementation.

The ORCMP recognizes the role for community groups, park users and volunteers and their potential contribution in building, managing and sustaining an off-road cycling system. It specifically envisions a

variety of partnership programs, including with ‘Friends’ groups, trail user organizations, and community volunteers. Examples of current partnerships that can serve as models include PP&R’s active partnership with the Forest Park Conservancy in the management of Forest Park and NWTAs’ partnership agreements and work parties with PP&R (Gateway Green), Oregon State Parks, and the Bureau of Land Management.

Summary Observations

- Funding for proposed improvements to the existing off-road system will compete with all the other demands on the City’s parks and recreation system. Significant new resources will need to be secured in order to implement much of what is proposed in the Plan.
- The Plan should be viewed as a “menu” of choices for consideration as resources are secured.
- Trail improvement projects will need to be accompanied by committed maintenance funding.
- Gateway Green’s mix of facility types should be considered as a good case study on the implementation process, effort, duration and cost for off-road cycling facilities.
- Only City-owned properties were considered in the ORCMP. In addition, the process screened out sites for consideration very early based on draft criteria that were never re-evaluated.
- Connectivity was identified as a key goal at the inception of the planning process, but then never really addressed in terms of identifying trail opportunities to connect parks to parks, parks to schools, and parks to trails.
- The Discussion Draft ORCMP falls short in terms of plans and priorities for implementation, as well as measurable outcomes.
- A variety of ideas for prioritizing trail improvements and new trail projects have been identified, including sites that are in underserved areas, as well as those that offer potential for additional benefits like employment and connectivity opportunities; partnering with the off-road cycling community in designing and building a model shared-use, sustainable natural trail as a pilot project; integrating ORCMP proposals into planned parks projects and master planning; prioritizing easy-to-get-to neighborhood-based facilities for entry skill level cyclists in diverse areas of the City where there are few existing opportunities; focusing on locations near schools, with safe pedestrian/bicycle access, and near neighborhoods with many children and/or communities of color.
- Given budget constraints, the reality is that partner group funding and labor will likely be required to implement much of consequence in terms of proposed improvements and new trails at least in the short term. The momentum and partnerships generated through the ORCMP planning process should be capitalized on, sustained and expanded to include schools and community centers.

E. CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO SPECIFIC FACILITIES

What direction is appropriate to provide without second-guessing BPS’s process and its specific proposals?

As noted under Context, the Parks Board has previously indicated that it would be inappropriate to second-guess the project-specific recommendations coming out of a two-year planning process informed by nationally-recognized trail consultants, a broad-based advisory committee, and a robust public outreach effort. Instead, observations follow on both the overall trail system proposed by the Plan and the more controversial elements, specifically Forest Park and Riverview, on which the Board has received much public testimony.

Overall Off-Road Cycling System

A key concept for the ORCMP is the notion of ride to ride. Currently, there are five existing off-road cycling facilities in the City: New Columbia Bike Park and PIR in North Portland; Gateway Green and Powell Butte in NE Portland; Mt. Tabor and Ventura Park Pump Track in SE Portland; and the only westside facility -- Forest Park in NW Portland. The ORCMP identifies 20 facilities throughout the City for enhancement and development. These facilities are found primarily on the east side of the City as indicated below.

Geographic Distribution of Off-Road Bicycle Facilities	
North	5
Northeast	5
Southeast	7
Southwest	2
Northwest	1

While the Plan proposes a good locational mix of bicycle parks, it proposes no urban off-road cycling trails on the westside. Recommended future locations for new natural off-road cycling trails are either in north Portland or on the westside, which, considering existing trails, creates a fairly balanced mix between the west and east sides of the river for this type of trail.

Combining existing and proposed trails, the net result is that Portland will have 0.02 miles/1,000 population of off-road trails, compared to cities such as Tucson, Louisville, and Chattanooga having approximately 0.5 miles/1,000 population. Portland population density ranges from approximately 2 to 7 times that of those comparison cities; by this density metric, the City will be challenged to provide facilities that might approach comparability in terms of quantity.

Developing and maintaining off-road facilities are confronted with a number of challenges. In addition to starting with a very limited base of facilities, there is the challenge of rapid population growth and relative higher population density. Also, the City already faces an equity issue for access to parks in Northeast and Southeast Portland particularly. Adding to this challenge is that development funding is more available than maintenance funding, and off-road facilities require regular maintenance for safety and water quality protection.

Forest Park

Much of the controversy around the ORCMP has focused on new trails/expansion of trails in Forest Park and on implementation of the River View Natural Area Management Plan. To the detriment of planning for other areas in the City, it is fair to say that much of the ORCMP process has been dominated by Forest Park. The conversations on these issues have been decidedly animated, with the cleavage joint appearing to be the intersection of three interest planes. Two of these planes form one side of the divide: a wide-ranging safety concern over mixing pedestrians and off-road cyclists, and habitat and water quality degradation concerns. The interest plane on the other side is providing meaningful local opportunities for off-road cycling in a community that is otherwise perceived as bike-friendly. The result is a sharply divided community where people on either side of the cleave feel aggrieved.

The trail recommendations being considered for Forest Park are generally supported by BPS's advisory committee, particularly avoidance of the North Unit and the goal of achieving net ecological benefits. Similarly, the Forest Park Conservancy (FPC) indicates that the trail alignments are reasonable and potentially viable proposals to move forward for further consideration. This means that they will have to

compete in the budget cycle with other PP&R priorities and then they will have to go through the review process and meet the criteria set in the Forest Park Natural Resource Master Plan.

FPC specifically points out the Plan's goal to achieve a net ecological benefit while increasing access to off-road cycling. The Conservancy notes that: *"This will be achieved through the implementation of plan recommendations and pursuit of all opportunities to pair restoration of water and habitat resources with any project to add additional mountain biking access."*

Of the six concepts that are proposed in the Discussion Draft, the most feasible appear to be Options C and D. Combined, they would add approximately 6.5 miles off-road cycling trails and provide the best opportunity to improve access to off-road cycling and reduce impacts to valuable habitat. In addition, these concepts will have minimal impact on pedestrians. In Concept C, Firelane 4 would be opened to off-road cycling and connected to Saltzman Road. Trail improvements would enhance user experience and safety and reduce erosion. Concept D would improve Firelane 1 and build a new trail parallel to Highway 30. This concept provides the longest loop for cyclists and a safer alternative to Highway 30. There is potential for additional restoration of degraded habitat by planting native trees and shrubs, as well as removal of invasive species. Options A, B, E and F do not appear to be feasible due to geographic constraints, potential environmental impacts, and potential user conflicts.

Forest Park is one of the only areas in the City in which to provide a single-track trail experience of any significant length (more than a few miles) and without a lengthy auto trip, which is known to be a barrier to all users, but particularly to diverse communities of color. A strategy that should be considered in the Recommended Plan is to develop recreation programs that provide transportation to Forest Park for diverse users living on the eastside. This could be linked, in conjunction with Concepts C and D, to the planned Forest Park Entrance and Nature Center at Highway 30 and NW Kittridge.

The ORCMP process also represents an opportunity to update the best management practices in the Forest Park Natural Resource Management Plan and/or undertake a wholesale revision of this 1995 document.

River View Natural Area

At the very tail end of the advisory committee process, the Bureau of Environmental Services expressed strong reservations about the Plan's recommendation that PP&R pursue the proposed perimeter trail alignment included in the River View Natural Area Master Plan. This recommendation included following best practices for design, monitoring, management and identifying risk factors. It was also intended to avoid sensitive interior habitat.

The ORCMP is based on best practices for trail design and management to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse environmental impacts and restore ecological health. The Plan's recommendations were drafted in consultation with BES staff and represent modest trail improvements that are balanced with natural resource protection and other uses of the area. The advisory committee and BPS and PP&R staff have all expressed the belief that the recommendations presented in the Plan address BES's concerns and take a reasoned and incremental approach to the potential of off-road cycling at River View, given the property's environmental assets and topography.

Northwest Trail Advocates are circulating a proposal to commit considerable volunteer time and financial resources to address erosion problems on existing trails in River View using sustainable trail repair BMPs, in exchange for permitting off-road cycling there. Similar to their efforts at Gateway Green and past efforts at River View, the stated goal is to rebuild positive relationships between the City and the cycling community.

Summary Observations

- While the Plan proposes a good locational mix of bicycle parks, it proposes no urban off-road cycling trails on the westside. Combining existing and proposed new facilities, there would be a relatively good balance between the west and east sides of the river for natural off-road cycling trails.
- Even with the Plan's proposed new or expanded trails, Portland will continue to lag behind many jurisdictions in the country in terms of trail miles per capita.
- The consideration of new trails/expansion of trails in Forest Park has been the single most controversial aspect of the planning process, with safety concerns over mixing pedestrians and off-road cyclists as well as habitat and water quality degradation concerns pitted against providing meaningful local opportunities for off-road cycling. There is a strong perception, however, that off-road cycling advocates are more embracing of addressing the safety and resource concerns than those advocates are of embracing consideration of off-road cycling in Forest Park.
- Trail recommendations for Forest Park seem to have overall support from all but a vocal group of Forest Park neighbors and associated advocates. There is universal support for avoiding trail development in the North Unit and for the goal of achieving net ecological benefits.
- Of the six concepts that are proposed in the Discussion Draft, the most feasible appear to be Options C and D, which combined would add approximately 6.5 miles off-road cycling trails and provide the best opportunity to improve access to off-road cycling and reduce impacts to valuable habitat.
- The development of recreation programs that provide transportation to Forest Park for diverse users living on the eastside should be linked with new trail development and the planned Forest Park Entrance and Nature Center at Highway 30 and NW Kittridge.
- The ORCMP process represents an opportunity to update the best management practices in the FPNRMP and/or undertake a wholesale revision of this 1995 document.
- BES's last minute objections to implementing the off-road cycling recommendations in the River View Natural Area Master Plan have been frustrating to most parties involved in development of that Plan, especially given the commitment in the ORCMP to pursue only perimeter trail development and to employ best practices for trail design and management to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse environmental impacts and restore ecological health. The ORCMP's recommendations seem to take a reasoned and incremental approach to the potential of off-road cycling at River View. Northwest Trail Advocates' proposition should be given serious consideration by all parties as a cost-effective approach to addressing existing erosion problems while rebuilding a meaningful partnership with this volunteer organization.