

Public Comment

Received via Email, November 1, 2021 (3:57 p.m.)

Dear Ms. Cottle and Ashland Parks Commissioners,

I am writing to submit my public comment about the proposed bike trails in Lithia Park. I believe the city and parks have done an excellent job of creating multiple use trails in the Ashland watershed while minimizing conflict between hikers and bikers.

However, I believe that Lithia Park trails should be set aside for walking and hiking only. The upper part of the park is a natural gem for wildflowers, birds and deer. My spouse and I have walked through it during all seasons for decades. We love the peaceful wilderness feeling and the observation of undisturbed wildlife. During the past year, some of our walks have been disturbed by noise while we have had to get off the trail for bike riders. It is a nuisance and degrades the Lithia Park experience.

With so much land available in the surrounding forests and a great many bike trails already established, we urge you to save Lithia Park for those wanting a calmer, quieter experience.

Thank you,
Patricia Scalo
490 Lit Way

Public Comment

Received via email 11.2.21

Dear Ms. Cottle and Ashland Parks Commissioners,

I've become aware that a plan to add bike paths to Lithia Park has been proposed, and that public comments are being solicited. I would like to express my opposition to this plan.

My wife and I hike extensively not only in Lithia Park, but also in the expansive trail networks in the Ashland Creek watershed and beyond. I am very grateful for the vision and effort that our community has demonstrated in developing and maintaining these trails, especially the sensitive balance between the needs of hikers and of mountain bike enthusiasts, and for the most part, I am satisfied with the compromises made.

However, I think Lithia Park is a unique environment, providing a quiet, safe and peaceful walking/hiking experience within intimate distance from the town center, and most accessible to out-of-town visitors. I support preserving this special venue with its bucolic character. However, I am concerned that casual hikers will be discouraged and/or put at risk if mountain bike trails are introduced into Lithia Park, and I'm also concerned about the risk of hillside erosion on the steep slopes above the creek.

I do support providing and maintaining trails that meet the needs of mountain bikers, and I think those trails do exist and are easily accessible, and that mountain bikers will not suffer if additional trails are not provided in Lithia Park.

Thank you,

Dale Fisher

Public Comment

Received via email 11.2.21

Dear Ashland Parks Commissioners,

It is rare for residents of an urbanized area to be able to access so much wild space without the use of an automobile. I am concerned that opening up some of these trails to mountain bikers will significantly detract from the experience of hiking there. Since there are ample opportunities for mountain biking throughout this area, the foot trails that currently can be accessed from the city should be preserved for pedestrian use.

Sincerely,
Kim Trimiew
824 Garden Way

Public Comment

Received via email 11.2.21

Hello,

I would like to add my support to keep bikes out of upper Lithia Park. It is such a gem and deserves experiencing it on foot rather than as a blur on a bike.

With so much land available in the surrounding forests and a great many bike trails already established, I urge you to save Lithia Park for those wanting a calmer, quieter experience.

Best,

Taite Darlington

Public Comment

Received via email 11.3.21

Dear Ms. Cottle and Ashland Parks Commissioners,

I am writing to submit my public comment about the proposed bike trails in Lithia Park. I believe the city and parks & rec have done such an amazing job of creating multiple use trails in the Ashland watershed while minimizing conflict between hikers and bikers.

My opinion is that Lithia Park should be allocated for walkers and hikers only. It is a beautiful treasure for locals and visitors alike. We have been walking these trails for years and so enjoy the freedom and peace of the seasons, experiencing the abundance of wildlife as well as wildflowers in the spring. We have walked with groups identifying wildflowers and other native plants on the upper trails which add to the Lithia Park experience.

During this past year we have been disturbed by bike riders using the upper trails illegally and feel that this part of the park should be reserved for walkers. We have had to jump out of the way of fast moving bike riders. This has been disturbing to say the least.

There is so much available in the surrounding areas, please keep Lithia Park to those of us who want to hike at a slower, more observant pace.

Thank you,
Jane Fisher
847 Sander Way

Public Comment

Received via the online, "Contact the Commission," form, November 3, 2021

*** FORM FIELD DATA***

Name : **JoAnne Eggers**

Phone: **5414823305**

Email : ejo.eggers@gmail.com

Subject: **Lithia Park**

Message : **I would like to be informed of and participate in any meetings or tours or study sessions related to the Lithia Park Master Plan and the proposed bike trail.**

Public Comment

Received via Email, November 3, 2021

To: Dorinda Cottle and Ashland Parks Commission

Please consider this email as public comment to the Parks Commission on proposed mountain bike trails in Lithia Park.

To the credit of the City of Ashland and the Ashland Parks Department there are miles of bike only trails in the hills above the Park. This results in safe and enjoyable use for all parties.

I strongly urge that Lithia Park trails be for walking and hiking only. Lithia Park is a treasure in it's peaceful, wilderness feel. What a tragedy for the community if that quality were to be lost or diminished.

It seems the mountain biking community has a loud voice and very visible presence. But please listen to other quieter voices requesting that Lithia Park be for walking, hiking, birding, observing undisturbed wildlife and for simply "being" in nature. Keep Lithia Park mountain bike trail free.

Patricia Smith
882 Sander Way
Ashland
510-388-7986
pasmith1021@gmail.com

Public Comment

Received via Email, November 4, 2021

From: Melody Noraas <mitznoraas@yahoo.com>

Date: November 2, 2021 at 10:37:26 AM PDT

To: 541.488.5314dorinda.cottle@ashland.or.us

Subject: Biking trails in Upper Lithuanian park

Sent from my iPhone

Hello Dorinda, Just heard from some friends that the parks system is considering biking trails in upper Lithia Park.

As a resident of Ashland for 42 years, and as a former Parks Commissioner, I'd like to explain why I think this is a bad idea.

I regularly walk to the very top of the park and back around from my house on Allison Street. I'm not alone in these walks. There are people of all ages on those roads and in those areas that use this as their exercise and as a chance to be out in nature.

There is a history of conflict between walkers and bikers on those trails above the park. Even though The watershed is decomposed granite and bikes have quite a detrimental impact on the soil's there, we have a lot of trails from Mt Ashland to the top of the park available for bikes. The valley is full of bike trails and places for bikers to enjoy themselves.

That portion of the park is still the park. It is still a fragile area that a lot of people use as a multipurpose area. I believe that bikers would have a lot worse impact than dogs which we ban.

Actually it is the more natural area where wildflowers and the critters that live in conjunction with us still survive.

There is a very large senior population here. Please consider the demographics of this city. Lithia Park is important to everyone. Bike trails are not the right change to steward this jewel.

Thank you,

Melody Noraas (75 years old)

Former Parks and Recreation Commissioner

Date: November 4, 2021

To: Trails Master Review Committee:

The following comments were submitted to APRC as part of their goals discussion. I have reviewed the video from your first two meetings and I would like to resubmit these comments to this committee for your consideration.

TO: Ashland Parks and Recreation Commissioners

FROM: Richard Katz

DATE: April 5, 2021

SUBJECT: APRC 2021-2023 Biennium Goals Discussion (Information) **Item #3**

Explore the feasibility of and decide on the addition of a low-angle trail within the east side open space of Lithia Park as proposed by the Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association.

East Lithia Trails Proposal - RVMBA

I would like to offer my input and concerns regarding the proposal from the Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association to create a trail for mountain bikes in Lithia Park. It is my understanding that the commission will consider this proposal for the APRC 2021-2023 Biennium Goals Discussion at your meeting in April.

3. (Area 1: 3) Explore the feasibility of and decide on the addition of a low-angle trail within the east side open space of Lithia Park as proposed by the Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association.

I am responding to the East Lithia Trails Proposal recently received by the Parks Commission.

I have lived in Ashland since 1980 and have been a regular, nearly daily hiker on the trails in Lithia Park. This is one my greatest pleasures in living in Ashland. Currently bicycles and dogs are prohibited from the park for good reason. I, and many others, cherish the park as a refuge for wildlife as well as an easily accessible place to hike or walk in a quiet natural environment. Unfortunately bicycles and dogs seem to be ever more in evidence in the park despite prohibitions.

The proposal to build a new mountain bike trail in the upper area of the park is largely based on the statement that **“This area holds the key to a major connectivity and traffic flow issue stemming from bikes leaving the watershed trails of BTI and Jabberwocky, and being forced to exit down the heavily used Winburn Way and into the Plaza downtown area.”**

I have studied this assumption and find it bewildering. I understand that there are traffic safety issues for bikes on Winburn Way. However, if bike traffic exiting BTI and Jabberwocky simply continued along Glenview where the trails let out, the route to the downtown area lies straight ahead. Continuing down Glenview, which is a wide dirt road, leads to Fork Street, which takes you to Pioneer Street, which is precisely where the proposed new trail would let out. Also, if Granite Street is the route of choice, Winburn way could easily be avoided by turning onto Pioneer Street which is closed to traffic and would lead you to the same place the proposed trail would provide. The idea of being **forced** to exit down Winburn way seems to be a matter of habit and choice rather than any kind of imperative. In fact, exiting watershed trails by taking the route down Granite Street through the park to Winburn Way involves going back around the reservoir and the top of the park before heading down to town.

The proposal goes on to state “The impact of bikes on the current hike trail would be nonexistent, with the **main hike trail** never crossing either bike trail. Crossings of current pedestrian trails would only occur in areas with appropriate grade and sightlines. Signage should be placed at the intersections to alert trail

users of traffic patterns. There are four to five trail crossings that will be necessary to accommodate the climb/descend trails.... While close in proximity to the watershed trails, the Lithia Park hillside trails still do not see the traffic as other city trails such as Bandersnatch and Red Queen.”

It is true that the **main hike trail** does not cross either bike trail, however there are **four or five access trails** that would necessitate bike crossing and appropriate signage. Part of the reason for the popularity of Bandersnatch and Red Queen is that dogs are allowed on these trails. The experience of walking on a quiet trail without bikes and dogs is a big part of the appeal of the upper trails. The impact of bikes on the current hiking trail would be far from non-existent. Construction disruption, noise, erosion, need for maintenance and monitoring, and too easy bike access to other park trails that prohibit bikes are some of the likely negative impacts.

Besides connectivity to downtown which I have addressed as a very questionable need, two other reasons that have been put forward for these bike trails are trails for beginners and tourism. It is hard for me to imagine that a young rider would benefit greatly from a limited one-mile trail rather than finding sections of existing mountain bike trails on which to practice. In fact, perhaps goal #7

(Area 3: 6) Build East Main Street neighborhood park including the dog park, bike-skills park and pump track could include a bike skills park for young mountain bikers?

I am well aware that mountain biking trail opportunities attract many people from Ashland, Southern Oregon, and perhaps other areas, but it is the many adventurous trails in the watershed that have appeal regardless of whether the proposed trail is built.

Lithia Park geography is delicate. There are many areas that currently show the clear effects of erosion through use, both authorized and unauthorized. Despite the idea of using volunteers to save costs, there will be a continued need for maintenance and monitoring that would likely involve park personnel on an ongoing basis. There will also be an increased need to enforce the bicycle prohibition on intersecting hiking trails in the park. This is already an issue on the main upper hiking trail where I see numerous bike tracks and have had encounters with mountain bikers on several occasions.

I know that the RVMBA has many members who would voice their support for this proposal. This is an organized group that has done a good job to further their agenda in creating an excellent system of mountain bike trails in the watershed around Ashland. There is no doubt that these trails are well used and attract large numbers of mountain bikers. This system that is appropriately located outside of Lithia Park boundaries is an asset for residents and tourists alike.

I’m sure that the Parks Commission will receive many letters of support from RVMBA members for this proposal, and probably very few letters of concern. It is my view that Parks Commissioners are entrusted with the public good of all park users, and the residents of the City of Ashland. Rather than relying too much on input from an interest group, I would hope that the Parks Commissioners use discernment and good judgment to represent all park users. In my view, this proposal is a solution in search of a problem. The problems will arise if this proposal moves ahead.

Based on the extensive list of Parks Commission biennium goals, embarking on implementing this misguided proposal could only detract from other more pressing issues facing the Parks Commission and park management. Please act responsibly for the benefit of all park users and carefully consider the implications of this proposal.