

## Mountain Biking Community Engagement Community Conversation Summary – December 13, 2017

### Introduction

In December 2017, Minnetonka residents were invited to attend a community conversation to share their thoughts on the concept of creating mountain bike trails in Minnetonka. They were presented with three options, and asked for their opinions on each option. The options were:

- A. Designate mountain biking trails in Big Willow Park and/or adjacent city-owned location(s)
- B. Designate mountain biking trails in other city-owned location(s)
- C. Do not build mountain biking trails

Residents were asked to write down the pros and cons of each option.

### Feedback

#### *Option A, representative comments*

Pro	Con
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Willow is close to potential trail users, they would not have to drive to the park</li> <li>• Big Willow is connected to the LRT</li> <li>• Big Willow’s terrain is variable and suitable for mountain biking</li> <li>• Trails at Big Willow would help local businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is not enough parking at Big Willow</li> <li>• There may be conflict between bikers and walkers at trail intersections and on the bridge</li> <li>• The neighborhood would be disrupted</li> <li>• Big Willow is not a large enough park to support additional trails</li> </ul>

#### *Option B, representative comments*

Pro	Con
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other parks in Minnetonka are bigger and better able to accommodate trails</li> <li>• Less controversy at other locations</li> <li>• If there are trails at multiple parks, the impact would be lessened and dispersed</li> <li>• There may be fewer environmental concerns at other locations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other locations would be farther from Hopkins high school</li> <li>• Other sites would be less accessible/central for users</li> <li>• Less connectivity to regional trail system</li> <li>• Other parks are flat – would not make for good mountain biking</li> </ul>

#### *Option C, representative comments*

Pro	Con
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current parks would not be disrupted</li> <li>• No money would be spent</li> <li>• Less influx of non-Minnetonka residents to use the parks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes Minnetonka less appealing to young families</li> <li>• Does not support mountain bike community</li> <li>• Unsanctioned use of trails for biking will continue</li> </ul>

**Option A: Designate mountain biking trails in Big Willow Park and/or adjacent city owned locations**

Pro	Con
Get trails closer to the western suburbs.	Very limited parking
Hikers can walk in any of the other city parks. Bikers cannot.	Lacks significant elevation gain
More diversity to our parks.	Concern for elderly residents, especially of Applewood point
Make Minnetonka more marketable to young families looking to relocate.	Bridge bottleneck
It would be fun.	Concern for upkeep/policing of trails
Better mountain bike community.	Use of city resources for installation and maintenance, even with volunteers
City campus accessibility - good parking, near to regional trail, and enough length to be interesting/useful	Concern for Minnehaha Creek preservation
Big Willow but south of creek - and west of Big Willow toward Minnetonka Mills, might be a connector	Concern for use at night
Might reduce illegal trail use by bikes if there's a trail	Influx of non-Minnetonka residents into Minnetonka parks
Might bring more habitat volunteers	Change peacefulness and current traffic in neighborhoods, especially by property owners/houses, risk of theft, collisions, assault
Access	Potentially reduce property values near Civic Center park and more
Any obstacles?	Will change current safety standards
Beautiful environment	Inevitable spread of invasive species (no firm commitment to remediate this)
Outdoor experience	Park is too small
Family activity	Lack of parking
Healing/spiritual	Ecological degradation, loss of trees
Being in nature	Bottleneck of trail around railway
People using the mountain bike trails will support our businesses - brewery, hamburger joint	Change character/peacefulness of parks
Less demand on one specific park	Disruption of wildlife
Maybe bikers from other towns wouldn't come because they don't want to drive	About half of Big Willow is already used with ball fields and maybe other things
There are standards for trails	Sharing with bikers and walkers is not realistic, or how do you share?
Kids love it	Mixed usage is dangerous
Railroad not a threat	Loose off trail hiking
Asset to school	Not maintain pristine open space
Good for businesses	Conflicting shared uses
Growing sport - high school, great sport for kids	Mixed use trails are unsafe
Big Willow is close - don't have to drive	Changing the character of the park (ie machine-built trails)
Not have to drive and park	Only 15 acres when you take out the ball fields
Well-designed trails, sustainable and not damage	Hosting events a concer (racing - competitions)
Can get a lot of trails in a small area	Environmental concerns (wetlands, creek, animals)
Bikers work in parks - will help	Unclear width of trail, and maintenance - who? How often?
Want to be in woods	Unclear how many intersections and where trail goes
Parents want to get home and be able to get kids to trails	Hours of operation
Separate walkers and bikers	Unclear how connects to other parks
Proper design crucial	Safety near railroad tracks
Invasive species removal and maintenance	So many bikes on regional trail now - don't want too many bikes in Big Willow
People who want to bike also pay taxes and have a right to use trails	Having a big ugly gate at trailhead would have a negative effect on community
Remove renegade cyclists who would move to designated trails	Would be problematic to lose trail running on existing single track
Make MTB trails accessible within the neighborhood	Parking - we don't want a huge parking lot (park @ Civic Center)
Give them something to do outside that's safe and communal in a life long sport	Possible too crowded at the park. Too much activity.
Centrally located on LRT	Since it's on the east edge of the city, maybe a more central location would be better
Putting a sustainable MTB trail will fix the eroded deer trails	Is the park big enough for variety of trails?
Makes Big Willow more user friendly and environmentally friendly due to the volunteers who help maintain it	It's bisected by a railroad, tough to design around that?
Centrally located	Potential for neighborhood disruption/inappropriate use
Connected to LRT	Safety at intersection of bike and pedestrian trail
High school bike teams	Parking - where are they going to park?
Promotes healthy lifestyle	Concern about having to add elevation
Can use existing "bootleg trails"	Originally designated as a wildlife area
Easy access to business (food/drink)	Wear and tear on terrain with team competition/training
Local business opportunity	Strangers in neighborhood
Trail maintenance will improve Big Willow	Big Willow smaller than Purgatory
Separated trails safer	Half of acreage at Big Willow is established playing fields and other uses
Participation in a larger community	Loss of trees and wildlife for trail construction
Attracts non-residents	Parking problems - Minnehaha Parkway
Big Willow has good terrain for MTB	Safety - bridge issues (Civic Center)
Large enough area - suitability	Environmental concerns/wildlife impact
Variety of terrain	Too small a footprint for Civic Center - too short
Dedicated trails - separate bikers and walkers	Insufficient buffer (trees go down?!)
Nearby to riders	Lack of space in park
Invasive species removed	Erosion
New park stewards	Change atmosphere of park
Suitable terrain	Can't have walking trails MTB trails in same area, they don't coexist
Proximity to other parks	Parking
Location near LRT	Hours
Adding enough trails to make a good system	Who maintains it

Connect to metro trail system	Creating a park funded by city. Use of MTB trails from outside city.
Big Willow good for beginners	Walkers and bikers together = danger
High school biking huge/it's sanctioned	Hearing it's one-way for walkers (might be for bikers)
Exercise good	Parking is limited
Proximity to users	Railroad track, under is flooded often
Trails may have positive impact on walking	Affect wildlife/environment (conservancy)
If trails can be separate from walking trails, MTB trails greatly expand park usage opportunities	Have designated walk/bike lanes
Good activity	Smallest park in system
Don't have to commute to a trail	Floods
Use fallen tree for obstacle	Parking
Volunteers maintain trails and keep safe MORC	Safety concerns
Small, in the woods	# trails in Big Willow
Take bikers off walk/jog trails	Railroad tracks
People connect to nature	Upsetting wildlife and peace at Big Willow
Kids/exercise	Change Big Willow park
Central location of park accessible	Although mountain bikers learn to follow rules, other bikers who are not rule followers will also be attracted to trails at Big Willow
Control the mountain bike use. Being use no unauthorized	User conflicts until we see plans
Sustainably managed trails vs free form use	Natural resources interactive map/Hennepin County shows ecologically significant areas with parks and trails unfit in Big Willow Park
Accessible from other trails - small carbon footprint	Cost
Good amenity for residents	Use by residents vs non-residents
Good high school sport	Civic Center - north side of creek should be nixed
Provides volunteer incentives to participate in invasives removal	Bridge concerns
Having separation of pedestrians and bikes is important	Will the narrow trails be off limits to walkers? People use them now for walking
More physical activity options is good for public health	Bridge - in both Big Willow and Civic Center - very used now - safety
Bikes no allowed on wet trail	Parking - where?
Central to lots of connections - City Hall as parking - proximity to high schools and other trailheads mitigate unofficial undesignated trail	Near neighbors' property lines - Civic Center
Keeps kids riding on appropriate trails - not playgrounds	Nature - environment wildlife corridor
More butts on bikes	Damages integrity of park/environmental/safety
Hopkins and Minnetonka MTB teams can both practice	Unknown impact to maintained and deer trails
Accessible without car - better for youth and families (via LRT)	Attracting non-residents
Gets MTB off roads	Potentially limiting to other users
Convenient location for exercise - "I can bike there from my house"	Cost (\$130k?)
Great for adult and kid outdoor recreation	Too small (Big Willow and Civic Center)
Convenient near my home, accessible via LRT	Parking at Applewood Pointe
Brings people to our local businesses; DQ, people's organic, pizza	Wetland buffer
Least possible invasive structure to a park: no elec, no pavement, etc. Reverts easily	Traffic
Even if it were experimental, it goes back to nature like it was...unlike a tennis court, etc.	Parking
Love activity within nature - extremely healthy!	Size of trail
At other MTB parks, hikers and bikers coexist in the same park w/o conflict	Protected wetlands and floodplains
MTB is also a winter sport now, so park will get more 4 season usage	Civic Center park location is too small
Providing outdoor activity/amenity for both kids and adults	Recreating all new trails
It is close to nearby schools who have MTB teams	Sustainability
MTB is healthy	Erosion
Most central location with best natural amenities for a MTB trail	Sharing bridge over creek in Civic Center and Big Willow
It's a community draw - brings people in	Not multi-use trail
Separation of bikers and peds	Big Willow too small
It'd be nice to share the park - multi-use without dangerous intersections but no map	No space for multiple trails like other locations
Proximity to other trails, connectivity, centrally located	Habitat restoration is ongoing - what happens to that?
Geography suitable	One feels animals and birds will move away, due to increased traffic and fragmentation of land - but others disagree!
High school team use	Rushes out walkers and existing users
Centrally located/near LRT	Not enough parking
Significant usable area	Environmental concerns of disturbing existing wildlife
Traffic/revenue for nearby businesses	Flooding
Minnetonka residents can ride their bikes there	Environmentally sensitive area due to Minnehaha Creek and disturbing existing habitat
Easy trail access from high school	Erosion is already a problem
Managed by responsible parties	Railroad makes it a safety issue
Reduced illicit activity with increased traffic	Too small a park for both walkers and bikers
	Bikers would be coming from all over
	So what if you have to drive to get to a MTB trail?
	If we allow MTB, what's next? Trap shooting next? When does city have to provide for every sport.
	Is this a big enough park to do it?
	Who will maintain it
	Maybe use football fields or baseball fields
	Destroy integrity of small neighborhood park
	Big Willow is one of the last quiet, tranquil parks
	Historic Mills area is protected
	Only one bridge for both walkers and bikers
	Separate conversation: dogs vs bikes
	Big Willow on very edge of Minnetonka - not centrally located (better for Hopkins)

Close to Minnehaha Creek - can cause erosion
Damage environment
Ground cover destroyed
Not many walkers there (?)
Railroad - very dangerous
What will happen to the wildlife?
Dog people - 6' leash - accidents
Bikers don't let you know when they're coming
Bikers upset wildlife
Not enough parking
Current map shows bikers and walkers on the same trail
Parking - Applewood cannot allow that
Overuse for the scale of Big Willow
Trails for biking and hiking should be separate
Photography, hiking, serenity interrupted
Big Willow is not big enough to accommodate trails. Too small to be attractive to mountain bikers
People coming from other cities will be a disruptive congestion
Bridges in Big Willow could not support both uses
High school use would be concentrated to certain times and be very disruptive
Parking
Business conflicts of interest - what city is Minnetonka ski/cycle located in?
Construction process / \$
Influx of non-Minnetonka users, Minnetonka tax payers funding regional park
Why conflate with LRT?
Compliance with laws, legal challenges, \$
MTB practice density
Lack of study/process
Lack of NR staff involvement
Multi-use
City liability/safety
Density of trails and use
Big Willow park too small
Need to identify all environmental concerns
Wildlife habitat
Vegetation disruption
Hydrology
Ruins character of park
Trail becomes a regional resource - too many bikes drawn in from other schools and cities
Habitat and nature preserve will be degraded
Pinch points @ bridge over creek and railroad track blind corner
Little parking at Big Willow
Conflict with kids from Big Willow and seniors walking there
Big Willow not large enough to support the length of trails desired and maintain high quality habitat
Introduce more garlic mustard and weed seeds on bike tires
Big Willow is one of few parks where you can bird watch. You also can walk your dogs there. I think we should try to keep natural, undeveloped area in Minnetonka

**Option B: Designate mountain biking trails in other city-owned location(s)**

Pro	Con
Is there really a site suitable in Minnetonka? Purgatory? South? Jidanna? Hilloway? Lone Lake	Where ever is proposed people will have issue with NIMBY.
I 494 - No landowner conflicts	Need an idea of where bike area will be
Hilly terrain at 494	People walk dogs, watch birds, ski, and snowshoe
Near city campus parking (494)	There are now a pair of eagles living and hunting from 494 to I69 along Minnehaha Creek
Might be room @ Purgatory for one trail	City parks not large enough to accommodate the separate mountain bike trails
Relieve congestion in Big Willow	Lack of off-street parking at most parks (e.g. Purgatory), Big Willow would not accommodate a lot of extra cars
Achieves goal of both "sides"	We have not been presented other viable options
Improvement of environment along 494	Time/cost of thorough study
Longer trail options	Get the RIGHT solution for all parties
Other option for mountain bike trails have less traffic (Civic Center/along 494) so would be more suitable	Fewer miles of trails for the mountain bikers
Limestone trail interconnecting cities may be more suitable and provide many more miles for mountain bikers. Would require inter-city cooperation	Potential overuse to those parks
With more people using the parks there will be more interest in maintaining all parks	Civic Center not any better - has to be linked with other area
Many believe high schoolers should be accommodated somewhere	Bikers in our group did not seem to be aware of Lone Lake or other locations
Less demand on any single park	Park board will have to notify other neighborhoods (oh well!!)
Bigger area	Needed to create enough trails for people to utilize
Wouldn't need to do a loop with other locations	Centrally located at Big Willow
Protect small park like Big Willow	Distance from Hopkins high school
More area for biking	Environmental study
Would create a compromise - keep MTB but go to bigger park	Habitat restoration being done by city currently
Topography better suited to MTB	Erosion
Wouldn't bigger park be better - 3 Rivers?	Big Willow too small (and Civic Center)
More staff to oversee	Damages integrity of park/environmental/safety
Hilloway Park is near, has large hills and is virtually unused - this would be a good place to develop trails	Cost (\$130k)
Both Hopkins and Minnetonka teams have place to practice	Too small (Big Willow and Civic Center)
Big Willow can't support 2 miles of trails within its small acreage	Purgatory - too steep?
Other parks have less use and activity	Not environmentally sustainable
Purgatory Park - size, much better suited for MTB: parking, near a school, family oriented	Hard to say cons w/o site chosen
Lone Lake Park - suited for MTB	Efficient use of city resources?
Purgatory is big enough	See new current trail in Civic Center = boondoggle. Make sure trails are long enough!
Attracts non-residents	Big Willow is centralized and off a bike trail
No parking at Applewood Pointe	Less accessible for users
Larger park would be better	Parking limited
Longer trails, more parking	Safety concerns w/ people walking
Having the trails is a pro	Not centrally located
Hard to say without knowing where?	Design issues for larger bike park
Planned trails as opposed to bootleg trails - give someplace to do it	Couldn't use city hall as parking hub if at Purgatory, for example
Lone Lake park larger, non-intersecting trails with fewer walkers, great riding	494 trail route - not very long, not long enough to be interesting and not connected to access other trails - no connectivity
How about Hilloway?	Purgatory is designated wetlands
Less controversy	Loss of trees and wildlife for trail construction
Lower multi-use trails	Other parks are very flat, not good for MTB
Have more than one park host the trails	Not enough length to make a worthwhile trail
Connect to metro trail system	Trails more spread out? Location of singletrack trails should be close enough together for the flow of the whole system
More land	Walkers and dog walkers
If several small trails, won't get over-crowded	Mixed usage is dangerous
Not going to attract hard-core bikers	Existing formal walking trails may need to be redesigned to accommodate trails
Great for residents, esp. kids	Purgatory would require more redesign
Still quiet park	
Riders in the woods	
People connect to nature	
Multiple trails disperse parking, trail traffic, and wear; also improves access for more Minnetonka residents	
Other parks may be larger	
May have better topography in another park	
Seek larger footprint	
Support regional use	
Bikes not allowed on wet trail	
Great terrain at Purgatory	
Purgatory = 155 acres, Big Willow = 95 acres	
Could create a more interesting trail and more challenging terrain if not limited to Big Willow	
Would mitigate, reduce use of unofficial trails	
Provides volunteer incentive to improve environment - removal of invasives, etc.	
More central location easier for all Minnetonka residents to access	
More parking?	

Less contentious? Less opposition?
Separation of bikers and peds
Opponents more satisfied
Fewer environmental concerns
More elevations for singletrack biking
494 corridor: suitable for biking
Less damage to pristine areas
Not using existing park land
Size of Lone Lake and Purgatory parks are better (a bit larger than Big Willow)
Place for kids to ride "free" on the trails
Local, safe option for riding
Purgatory close to high school
Possible other sites: Hennepin County home school property ~150 acres, already has parking, open land, and not the high quality nature areas; a site that is not already in use as a park
Lone Lake would provide more elevation and space







## Questions

Who paid for this study? I believe there is bias

Why did you solicit specific feedback from Applewood?

Don't the park belong to all residents?

What other areas are being considered?

What is overall city budget? Parks budget?

Why do people who don't know get to decide?

Would the same selection criteria applied in the future lead to Big Willow being selected again?

High school teams - do they practice all at once? How many at a time?

What is the end date for a decision?

How do I get copies of the pie charts shown tonight?

Does the city have an articulated policy on the use of a city park for regional benefit?

Does the no biking off trail ordinance apply to Big Willow/Civic Center and other parks or just Purgatory?

How big in acres is Big Willow?

Would walking and biking be separate trails?

Would there be parking added?

Who would maintain trails open/close when weather is bad?

Where in the six steps at the beginning of the program was the \$130,000 approved and by whom?

Has there been a survey to determine the present Big Willow usage?

If no decision has been made with regard to MTB, why has money been allocated to construct the trail in Big Willow park?

So was there a sign in other Minnetonka Parks?

Why was Big Willow park zeroed in on right from the start?

Has Lone Lake been considered?

Where or when can we view the environmental study?

What are the parking plans in Willow park?

Will non-Minnetonka residents be required to purchase access permits?

How do you stem the flow from people who do not live in Minnetonka?

Has there been a study on any other location?

How were people selected to attend the invite-only focus group sessions?

What other locations would the city consider? Bryant Lake? Purgatory? Lone Lake? Along limestone out to Excelsior? Behind Deephaven School?

Will you have to cut trees to make the course?

Can Minnetonka work with other communities on this to connect trails?

Have to you talked to Cargill?

Why is Lone Lake not being considered?

Who would be responsible for maintaining the trails (from the city - that's who's liable) and making sure they aren't expanded with berms and jumps?

Why did the park board wait so long to notify the general public?

Who's going to design the trail?

Why has there been no Environmental Impact study done?

Can that little park handle that kind of traffic?

The vast majority of Big Trail users and neighbors are senior tax payers. They are totally opposed. They have made their feelings known through emails and phone calls. Why are you prolonging the process?

Will the trails be created or will you be using existing trails?

Will you take soil samples to see if soil is suitable?

Define mountain biking

How is Big Willow a "central" Minnetonka location?

What does a future LRT trail in Hopkins have to do with MTB (close) to Big Willow?

Is the 494 corridor a (good) possible location?

Is the trail proposal set in stone? Or can it be changed for the better. It seems too environmentally impactful

Would there big changes in the landscape of Big Willow park - would you make larger hills?

Why isn't the Civic Center park called out specifically as part of option A or B? Does Big Willow in these options include the "Civic Center" portion previously proposed and mapped out?

Why was Big Willow selected?

Why not all parks being used?

How many non Minnetonka residents?

## Miscellaneous comments

north of Cedar Lake Road and west of 73; Space west of Dominik Drive, north of Regional trail, near Mudd lake - owned by Minnetonka and Hennepin Co?; Hennepin County boys school land; Purgatory park; Carver Park (3 rivers); Could there be enough space at Minnetonka high school for some trail (con = might only be open to students)?

Option D: Single loop on periphery of Big Willow, connecting to 494; do you expect civil lawsuits from nearby property owners for decreased property values?

We would like to see a nearly complete design plan to be presented at next meeting to facilitate decisionmaking.

Start at a less popular location = (not Big Willow), see how it goes. Opposition may decline and you can expand

Option D: Build trails in all parks in Minnetonka to spread usage across many places

Wants A plus B - some @ separate parks for residents and not attractive to people from other areas

Note: Presenting more information about details of what mountain biking/singletrack actually is would have led to a much more productive assessment of pros and cons

Option D: Partner with non-city entities (Cargill, Hopkins, MnDOT, Churches, Hennepin co) to develop a comprehensive trail network throughout Minnetonka and ultimately neighboring cities

Option D: We really don't have enough information to evaluate these options. Many if not all of the above pros and cons are based on supposition, emotion and opinions, not experiences and facts

Option D: Look at collaboration with other regional parks (Cities, hennepin county, three rivers); do you have a silencing comments (providing necessary information) does not generate confidence in the process (and also I understand need for order - there's a way to keep it and also get clarifications or info)

Possible compromise: Only use a portion of Big Willow (north of Minnehaha) for dedicated MTB trails, south of Civic Center only for MTB - away from neighborhoods and not crossing the bridge; If you make the trails short, and don't promote the park and use the light rail, it should be a good community park

One of the major outcomes of Imagine Minnetonka is that residents want to conserve the natural character (and trees) in the city. MTB will achieve the opposite results = environmental degradation