



Memorandum

To: Park Board
From: Kelly O'Dea, Recreation Director
Date: February 7, 2018
Subject: Change Memo for February 7, 2018

ITEM 5A – Mountain Biking Report (Attachment 2 – Feedback from Minnetonka Matters)

The attached Minnetonka Matters comments were not included in the park board packet mailed on February 2, 2018.

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

mode' and no decisions have been made commentary, it appears that decisions have been made and these reset mode and no decisions have been made comments are solely to suppress objections. Where is the accountability and to whom?

There are comments floating around about multiuse trails and how well they work in other locations, and about exclusive use for safety concerns. Obviously conflicting comments. Where are we on that subject? The answer could definitely impact the viewpoint of a significant number of the city residents, positive and negative. The closest thing to an answer from the city was after the meeting that the trails would be dedicated for bike use only for safety reasons.

Personally, I feel misled and I know that I am not alone.

Ma Mo · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 10:18 am

👍 5 Votes

Yes, I am concerned. The meetings at the city center have been such a waste of time. First a very Well informed "uniformed" with blue shirts have a cozy party with the city and focus group. No serious questioning or discussion. Then a different meeting with those hearing through the grapevine that an unwelcome change was about to happen. Oooh, the "ununiformed were angry!! So angry they finally shut down the silly game the focus group wanted them to play. Then the big show down with both groups coming together. We were made to endure a lecture. No proof of being a resident required. No questions allowed. ...until the end with no answers given except by a very uninformed city employee or ? No one at my table knew who she was.

A simple raising and counting of hands for or against WILLOW PARK being used would have been nice. (WE COULD HAVE PUT OUR HEADS DOWN ON THE TABLE AND NOT PEEK)

The actual process that is being used is suspect. \$5,000 being paid to the City of Minnetonka by a special interest group Minnetonka High School...pay for a study of only Big Willow Park. Big Willow is closer to St. Louis Park or Hopkins actually. If Minnetonka high school needs a practice run. Why even think of putting it so far away from their school? There must be a hidden agenda. Purgatory is RIGHT THERE! I've heard that that park is not being considered because they don't want to ruin the fragile ecosystem! Well come on over and ruin BIG WILLOW Park's fragile ecosystem!

Obviously I have strong opinions against mountain biking trails being built in a unique wild feeling park. What is wrong with quietly strolling ? No headphones, no distraction from the inner voice? Laugh if you will but this is important to note people than many know. Especially those of a certain age. Here's some wisdom...why cut down trees that Minnetonka has been trying to preserve? The people's whose names memorialized on the benches respected the quiet beauty.

I live on the creek. I walk that park daily. I absolutely believe that the vast majority of people do not want the park disturbed

Oh....the reason the ENVISION MINNETONKA was so swayed toward mountain biking is because the ones who paid for the study were all there. The high school kids were there the MORC group were there. What other things were envisioned? The city didn't take that large group into consideration? Gee, why are there so many people here for mountain biking?

Every objection to the trails being built in BIG WILLOW in this thread are answered by 1 or possibly 2 people. Why?

If this post is taken down, please tell me who is doing it and why?

Response:

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

Brian Wyneken · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 11:33 am
Per the minutes, at the December 2016 Park Board Meeting (in which the Vantage Group made their presentation), someone named "Johnson" (who I think must be a city staff member) " . . . indicated that parks like Purgatory Park are overwhelmed with other activities such as dog walking, and general trail use."

When I read that I had to wonder if anyone had taken the time to visit Big Willow. I go to both parks and (anecdotally) I find Big Willow to be a bit more crowded with "dog walking, and general trail use" than Purgatory (but I assume "experiences will vary").

Darrell Sykes · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 1:29 pm

👍 0 Votes

What has happened to all of the comments made by Joshua R are the related responses? The information contained in the removed items is a very important part of this dialog.

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 2:44 pm

👍 0 Votes

I have emailed the communications manager along with Kelly O'Dea, Perry Vetter and Geralyn Barone on the matter of the disappearance of Joshua's comments and all related conversations to/from Joshua.

Darrell Sykes · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 3:23 pm

👍 0 Votes

This is all very distressing to me. My comments were deleted all of which focussed on the inconsistencies between what we have heard in meetings and the so called "truth" that Joshua R stated in justifying why there should be no opposition to the idea of mountain biking trails on Big Willow Park. Other posters comments were also deleted. It seems just too convenient that this happens just before a holiday. I just hope that the back up for these postings will still be available once those that can correct this matter get back to work on January 2.

Response:

Brian Wyneken · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 3:39 pm
To Darrell and Dian: Another participant's posts were deleted on December 13th. In that case the individual posting was presenting themselves as an authority on the harms of mountain biking to the environment. I did not note anything in the posts that I would have called a personal attack, but the rhetoric was pretty aggressive (in my opinion). The individual was not a resident. I comment on that deletion in a reply post on December 15th in a thread started by Ed Friedman. Since we don't know the ground rules for this forum (other than the suggested discussion, the ability to vote, and the ability to flag), I began copying the forum in those discussions where I participated. I'm afraid, unfortunately, that this did not include any of your posts with Joshua Rebennack so I can't help you retrieve them. My sense is that perhaps the administrators on this site are trying to keep the discussion limited to residents, but I do not know that.

For future forums like this it would be useful to have some posted rules of conduct and guidance, how people participate, and who is invited to participate.

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

City of Minnetonka Admin. · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 3:58 pm

👍 1 Votes

City staff has been informed that posts from one individual to this forum are no longer showing. These posts have not been deleted by city staff. However, staff confirmed with the Minnetonka Matters platform provider that users are able to delete their own posts or replies. If a user deletes their own posts, then all subsequent replies would be deleted as well. If a user deletes their comment to another individual's post, only their comment is deleted. We believe this is what has occurred in this case.

(Similar to other social media platforms, the Minnetonka Matters platform gives users the ability to delete their posts.)

If Joshua R. feels that his posts or comments were removed without his consent, we ask that he contact the city.

Darrell Sykes · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 4:21 pm

👍 5 Votes

This is not social media! The implications of this forum have a bearing on how the City spends its tax dollars and how the residents use facilities provided by the city. For one person to have the ability to truncate a discussion by eliminating posts of others on one side or the other of this issue is inappropriate. The response of the city is inadequate. Is there back-up for these posts? If not, we should be told and some sort solution should be provided to accommodate the loss of those posts. If so, the posts should be reinstated.

Ed Friedman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 4:32 pm

👍 1 Votes

Regarding Joshua R's posts being removed. If he removed them, then I guess that is his choice. I am suspicious based on what I learned about Joshua. He was/is knowledgeable on the subject. He has done trail design work, and I thought he presented straight non-biased information. However, he works for a competitor to WBS, the company conducting this information gathering and diagnostics for the city. I don't know what led to the removal but I am suspicious.

Ed Friedman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 4:39 pm

👍 2 Votes

Brian, I think you have a reasonable grasp on the information that we have from the city. We have no information that any site other than Big Willow and the Civic Center. The Park Board directed City Staff to evaluate the feasibility of other sites, specifically the 494 Corridor. We have been given no information if anything was done on that site or any others. What we have been told is that the project went into reset mode. This information gathering from the public is definitely centered on Big Willow. The Civic Center seldom gets mentioned, and any questions regarding the 494 Corridor are discounted and unanswered.

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

Response:

Brian Wyneken · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 5:15 pm

Thank you for the perspective Ed. What I'm reading on this forum suggests that the public feedback meetings run by the WSB firm were not very satisfactory to at least the group opposing the Big Willow project. That's too bad as this issue will be difficult enough for the Park Board. Let's hope the "reset" is effective to frame the issues and options more clearly (as in both clarity and transparency).

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 6:36 pm

👍 2 Votes

I am concerned with what will be presented at the Jan. 8 meeting. The plan, according to the city, is to have a "short list" of parks to consider at that meeting based on the feasibility study conducted by the city. According to the city manager, only one park out of 51 parks has a sign announcing the trail project -- that one park is Big Willow Park. And why is that? I found the public feedback meetings unproductive because there was conflicting information shared based on the table you were at, no framework was provided from from the city/WSB as to what "requirements" were needed for a bike trail, people didn't have a definition of "mountain biking" -- in particular at the last meeting because some of those people didn't attend a focus group, and though they were called "community engagement" meetings, there was not a lot of opportunity to ask questions and get clarification. To point, at the first focus group meeting, the moderator didn't want to field ANY questions. We just kept asking questions and finally she recognized we were not going to do her planned activity and she then responded to our questions. At the Dec. 13 meeting, you were not allowed to speak. You were required to write your question on a card. I'm aware of people who presented questions on a card(s) and the questions weren't presented to the group. And Heaven forbid you spoke to clarify an answer . . . I think it's so unfortunate that \$17,000 was spent on this project. I agree with you, Brian, I think this will be very hard for the Park Board. In general, it's been a frustrating process -- truly, how can WE recommend a park for this type of activity??? That's not the role for those on either side of this issue. I think it's the job of the city to present a list of parks based on sound protocols for mountain bike trails, and then get the community engaged. I have found this forum to be educational and I appreciate everyone's perspective. I sense we will not seeing any more posts from Joshua; personally, I found him to be very informative.

Response:

Brian Wyneken · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 22, 2017 9:28 pm

Thank you for filling us in on the meeting experience Dian - I'll add a few remarks on process.

The city calendar indicates a Park Board meeting on January 3rd, and the "Mountain Bike Trails Study" page indicates a public meeting with "city staff" and "project consultants" (the same group that is supposed to review this forum for feedback) on January 8th. If that is correct, then the January 8th meeting may be for informing the community after board decisions/direction five days earlier (or maybe not - it isn't that clear). Accordingly, it may be useful for some of you with first-hand experience as these WSB facilitated meetings to give Park Board members some direct feedback. If the meetings were as ineffective as described from the public's perspective (not allowed to speak . . . good grief!), that is something the board and city staff should hear about and should consider.


For the most part, I also have found this forum to provide a good opportunity for

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

exchange of information and perspectives. I hope that the city staff will review it and present the board with a fair accounting. Based on what I've heard 2nd hand about the contractor (WSB), however, I hope the city staff will keep an eye on the "project consultants" (as they should anyway). On that note, for the most part people have been respectful on this site, and that's a pretty good reflection on our town especially considering the strongly felt opinions on this issue.

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 23, 2017 7:11 am

 1 Votes

Brian and Ed: Thanks so much for your comments and information. All the best to you.
D

Carol Frank · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 23, 2017 5:12 pm

 4 Votes

I have just reviewed some of the recent comments regarding the bike trail proposed for Big Willow Park. I am concerned when I hear remarks regarding confusion about what is said in the meetings, what is documented in the minutes and what I am reading on this website. Personally, I think Big Willow Park is a poor choice. It is a tranquil area used by parents with children, people with pets and seniors. Who will be responsible for their safety? This seems to be a very poor choice for a mountain bike trail.

I have lived in Minnetonka since 1978. I lived on Ford Road. I don't know how many of you are familiar with what happened when Ford Road was widened but I am seeing signs of the same fiasco we experienced back then. Ford Road needed to be repaved and government money was available if it was widened. The city council held a public meeting and invited the residents to discuss the options. At the end of the meeting it was decided to widen the road with parking on one side. The work was done. One morning the residents woke up and there were signs posted that read "No Parking Any Time" up and down both side of the road. When the residents questioned the city council they were told there was another meeting the following month where they changed their minds. Of course that meeting agenda was not publicized nor were any of the residents invited. Experiences like this make me reluctant to even express my opinion.

MountainBike Family · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 23, 2017 8:11 pm

 3 Votes

We are a young family that lives a couple of miles from this potential trail. We would love to have this as an option for mountain biking instead of having to pack up the family and travel 15 minutes to another city. We would use this 3 times a week on average. I think there are many more young families who are like us and would really enjoy this. It provides the youth a healthy activity and keeps them off the streets doing way worse things. One of the best ways to keep kids out of trouble is to give them fun and exciting things to do. Mountain Biking is just that. It is not like other sports where few athletes can compete at a time. The high school mountain biking sport is exploding because everyone can compete at every event. Let's support this amazing sport and keep our kids from getting caught up with the other bad things in this society.

Thanks for your consideration!

MountainBike Family!

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

Tom Cox · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 23, 2017 9:23 pm

👍 4 Votes

I'm really looking forward to mountain bike trails in Minnetonka! Then I can bike to the trail head for a great ride instead of traveling by car to Wirth Park or Bloomington's Minnesota River Bottoms trails. I've ridden those trails and found bikers and walkers getting along with no trouble at all.

Ed Friedman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 27, 2017 7:17 am

👍 0 Votes

Have we gotten any results from the feasibility study of alternate locations?

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 28, 2017 8:17 am

👍 0 Votes

Best practices for mountain bike trail development start with the weighted requirements and would include such items as:

- Length of trail
- Difficulty of trail
- Location
- Parking availability
- Safety
- Environmental impact
- Other factors as determined

I have heard that the meeting on Jan. 8, 7 - 9 p.m., at the MTKA Community Center will include a discussion around the requirements or criteria that will help the city continue this process.

Darrell Sykes · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 28, 2017 3:09 pm

👍 0 Votes

Ed and Dian. This is a followup to Ed's question regarding the feasibility study. Has a study actually been completed? From what I understand from Kari Spreeman, Communications Manager, and Kelly O'Day, Parks and Recreation, the city does not monitor this discussion page. That being the case we will need to go directly to the city staff to get information on the status of the feasibility study. Dian, have you discussed this with any of the city staff? It would be good to get this information prior to the January 8 meeting. If you have not asked for this information, I would be glad to request it and try to get it posted on this discussion. Best regards, Darrell

Response:

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 28, 2017 7:08 pm

Hi, Darrell. I've not heard that they have completed the feasibility study. I recall at Focus Group 2 they said they wanted to create a list of "feasible" sites for the discussion at the Jan. 8 meeting and invite the communities of those "feasible" sites to the Jan. 8 meeting. At this point, it appears their plan has shifted because the announcement in Minnetonka Memo is a general invite to the community. I think it's a good idea to contact the city about the status of the feasibility study, and I appreciate

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

your offer to make the reach out to the city, Darrell. And thanks for your willingness to share what you find out, Darrell.

Ed Friedman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 28, 2017 3:39 pm

👍 0 Votes

Let me just say getting any information regarding this project from anyone involved with the city has been frustrating. I have been thanked for presenting my questions and concerns, but no responses to the questions.

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 28, 2017 7:10 pm

👍 0 Votes

Ed, I understand your frustration. If anything, we should be able to present questions at the Jan. 3 Park and Rec Board meeting.

Jon Richie · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 30, 2017 5:32 pm

👍 7 Votes

I have been a resident of Minnetonka since it was a village prior to the existence of many areas, which are now formally city parks. Over that time I have enjoyed many activities along with the great natural surroundings and witnessed many others enjoying their activities of choice along with nature as a backdrop. From hiking with their family and friends - two and four legged to horseback riding to biking to bird watching to canoeing, kayaking or tubing down the creek or enjoying a picnic with their families.

Currently, I continue to walk with my dog everyday in Jidana, Evergreen, Lone Lake or Big Willow to name a few favorites. We go to different parks on different days and hike along many areas, which are off the maintained trail referred to by many as deer trails, or footpaths. These are some of our favorite places. We used to enjoy going to Purgatory as well until it became well, less enjoyable. This wasn't due to people on mountain bikes; it was due to people who don't pick up after their dogs, or are too busy talking on their phone to control their dogs. Of all the parks in Minnetonka we visit the biggest problem is not bikes it is irresponsible, inconsiderate people. Some irresponsible people walk dogs. Some inconsiderate people ride bikes, but what from I have witnessed by listening to both sides at City Council meetings, following message boards and witnessed first hand by attending and participating alongside others doing invasive species removal is that the people who are proposing mountain bike trails in Minnetonka are a responsible group who are working in a positive manner to achieve what they desire.


Mountain biking is a silent sport that fits in with nature. It is not like having a hockey rink plopped down next door that can be loud with pucks banging off boards, lots of yelling with bright lights at night and all the associated high maintenance costs e.g. flooding, plowing (repeat) warming house attendants etc... It is also not like the tennis court craze Minnetonka went through during the early 1970s. Many were built at high cost e.g. earth grading, paving, painting, line striping, netting and high fencing. Now many sit under utilized, but still require costly upkeep. Mountain bike trails require minimal cost to establish and maintain - along with the fact that much of the work can be done by volunteers to keep cost down - which also allows for personal investment of sweat equity by those citizens who are working to make them become a reality.

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

Minnetonka is fortunate to have an abundance of natural beauty and over 50 city parks and the parks belong to all. After waiting for a considerable amount of time, listening to many on both sides and learning what is being proposed, I have no problem sharing our parks and feel there is room for mountain bike trails in Big Willow. I will continue to walk my dog without fear of mountain bikes or diminished enjoyment of the natural surroundings due to their presence.

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 30, 2017 6:53 pm

 1 Votes

Hi, Jon. Welcome to the discussion. I have been following the many discussions, too. I'm only going to speak relative to Big Willow regarding size. As was pointed out at the last community meeting, though Big Willow is about 95 acres, there's only a small, limited area that's not wetlands, creek and developed playing fields. In the northwest quadrant of the park, south of the rail lines, there's about 13.5 acres that's not creek/wetlands. Using the trail density ratio (mentioned in earlier posts), that will allow about 1 mile of mountain bike trail. And, from what I gather from meeting conversations, there's interest to have trails in many Minnetonka parks, including Civic Center, Hilloway, Victoria-Evergreen, Purgatory . . . many parks that are near the Lake Minnetonka Regional Trail. Hopefully there will be more clarification at the Jan. 8 community meeting regarding the requirements for mountain bike trails and which, if any, Minnetonka parks would meet the requirements.

Ed Friedman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 31, 2017 1:11 pm

 1 Votes

Jon Richie: I would not be surprised if we have met on the trails without exchanging names. I follow much the same routine as you have described, (Today is the first day in 2017 that I have not been to one of the parks and won't be going later today.) I have a similar viewpoint to yours, but not the same outlook. The City Manager was specifically asked about the Mountain Bike Trails if established, Would they be exclusive to Mountain Biking or shared with pedestrians that currently walk those trails with children and pets. She was very clear that the trails if developed would be exclusively for the Mountain Biking community for safety reasons. To view that statement from a different perspective, that means that access to these trails would be taken away from a much larger population of users with Big Willow having the what is currently probably the most used of all the parks.

Dian La Pointe: Your comment that there's interest to have trails in many Minnetonka Parks. During the June Park Board meeting the Park Board requested that the city start conduct a feasibility study of other locations including but not limited to the 494 corridor. We have heard nothing about this study and when I asked about the results, I was told that the project had been reset and public input was being initiated. BUT that public input is without the benefit of the results of this study. The public input has been steered forcibly toward a decision of Mountain Bike Trails in Big Willow or No Mountain Trails. I don't think that is the real question, nor should it be. Someone is driving the issue to that conclusion and responses to public questions are being suppressed at these information gathering meetings. When someone tries to force a question out or tries to correct an inaccurate response, they are criticized and reprimanded for being disrespectful of the leaders, when the real impression is that the leaders are being

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

disrespectful of the invited audience.

I am not against Mountain Bike Trails. I don't believe that Big Willow is the best choice for the community as a whole. But discussing alternatives is suppressed. And it appears that sharing the trails is also not going to be an option. Even my discussions with the trail proponents indicate that they believe the trails can be shared and everyone will respect each other. But this is apparently not getting through to the city leaders.

Response:

Brian Wyneken · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 02, 2018 7:51 pm

Ed, having not attended the meetings I've no basis for an opinion on what's been represented other than noting (as I have previously) that there have been contradictory representations on mixed use reflected in park board meeting minutes.

My opinion, however, is that safety concerns would mitigate against mixed use trails. Certainly if I was an attorney or insurance carrier for the city I would advise against placing hikers and mountain bikers on these trails as they are currently mapped and described. It would not take very many less responsible riders to make it very clear that mixed trail use would present too high a risk factor for both hikers and riders.

I know that in this forum there have been many assurances that this type of concern is ill-founded, but this has mainly come from people who appear to be very involved with promoting this project. I certainly accept their sincerity as I've no reason to question that. My anecdotal experiences with mountain biking, however, leave me with very little confidence in these assurances. This is why, if the city pursues this venture, I would favor a mountain bike trail in a location not as extensively used by hikers.

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Dec 31, 2017 5:34 pm

 1 Votes

Ed Friedman: My statement regarding the exploration of trails in multiple parks is based on multiple conversations at different meetings, despite what appeared to be a focus on Big Willow Park at the last community meeting and the "reset" of the project. The discussion options at the last community meeting were: Big Willow and/or other parks; other parks only; no mountain biking in Minnetonka. Some people at the meeting expressed interest in a segment of Big Willow and I've heard there's interest in the northwest quadrant south of the rail line. That will support only about 1 mile of bike trail in that section. Bikers don't want only one mile of trail. I've heard an alternative being considered is placing mountain bike trails in a number of parks so the bikers can ride to a variety of parks. And this alternative being suggested is without benefit of the feasibility study, as you also noted. I, along with you, question the process. I have a bit of hope that, given the delay in the feasibility study results, the city is truly taking a set back, hearing what we're saying, and will use the meeting on Jan. 8 to discuss the requirements for the trails. My assertion is this information is necessary to assess the feasibility of each park. Ultimately, the results of the feasibility study should provide a lot of clarity as to whether any parks in Minnetonka would lend themselves to mountain biking trails.

Ed Friedman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 01, 2018 10:30 am

 1 Votes

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

Dian, It is not my intent to argue with you. I have also been at several meetings on this subject and have asked many questions. I have only gotten two responses for city officials. (1) The City Manager told me that if Mountain Biking Trails are developed in the Minnetonka Parks they will be exclusive for the bikers and not for pedestrians for safety reasons. My interpretation of that statement is that they will be taking away a significant resource for pedestrians exercise and appreciation of nature. (2) The response to the Staff Recreation Director, Kelly Odea to any question asked is that the project is in reset and public input is being taken.

The public input is being inhibited or misdirected because responses to questions are not being provided and even being allowed to ask a question is suppressed.

I have also had severa discussions with others and have heard all kinds of plans being evaluated, discussed, and solutions to problems that may develop. Unfortunately, these reasonable inputs have come from Mountain Bike Trail proponents, not from the city staff or government. And many of the plans and ideas that were discussed with me are wiped out with the city managers statement.

These public input meetings should be rescheduled until after the feasibility studies are complete and the results made public. It has been 6 months since these studies were requested by the Park Board. What is the schedule and plan for completely them and publishing the findings?

To put a negative implication on what has transpired, it appears to me that the someone decided that Big Willow was the location and they didn't want to get other locations into the decision process so that went into a reset mode and negated the request for the studies.

I am not sure what this means, 'Some people at the meeting expressed interest in a segment of Big Willow and I've heard there's interest in the northwest quadrant south of the rail line.' The map presented to the Park Board includes all the available land south of the railroad tracks. If this is implying the land north of the railroad tracks also, that would commit all the land to Mountain Biking exclusively and the much larger pedestrian population of Minnetonka would be effectively excluded from using the park. I understand the Mountain biking community wants a place to enjoy their activity, but they don't deserve to take over a precious resource enjoyed by a larger portion of the community.

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 01, 2018 2:44 pm

 1 Votes

Hi, Ed. I see that we're completely on the same page. :) I had no intent to suggest otherwise - my apologies. Regarding your statements in your last paragraph regarding my statement about the northwest quadrant, yes, the map initially submitted included all of the available land south of the rail lines. Based on conversations I've had with others, I believe the bikers are focusing on the northwest quadrant south of the rail lines. This is probably a "compromise" with the city that they cannot develop mountain bike trails on both sides of the creek on the south side of the rail line. And by selecting the northwest quadrant, they would use the Burwell Street access point. In addition, based on conversations with others, I believe the ultimate goal will be a push to develop mountain bike trails in Big Willow Park on the north of the rail line. Bikers are already

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

using the access point near Cedar Lake Road to ride in the northern section of the park. This would support my observation that the discussions are focusing on smaller sections of mountain bike trails in multiple parks/locations, primarily near the Lake Minnetonka Regional Trail. My position is I don't think any mountain biking trails should be developed in any location in Big Willow Park and my rationale has been stated in many of the prior posts in this discussion. Thanks for sharing your observations and posing questions about the process. These would be important items to present to the Park and Rec Board this Wednesday night.

Darrell Sykes · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 01, 2018 3:17 pm

 3 Votes

Dian and Ed: I have to agree with both of you. This is all very frustrating without any hard facts to make an evaluation. We don't have a feasibility study and we don't have any idea what the Mountain Biker's really are requesting. It seems as if in each of the public meetings questions were answered with whatever answer was convenient at the time and almost always in conflict with prior answers to questions. So what is the trail system going to be? A trail of low ability so it will not be a destination or a trail that would be used for competitive events between schools as was provided to the city in the original documents. At the last meeting it was suggested that multiple parks should be used and interconnected, yet we have been told this will be isolated to Big Willow Park. We have been told that trail would only be 18 or 19 inches wide yet 42 inches of parkland will be consumed by the construction of the trails. It can't be both ways. Walkers and bikers cannot coexist of an 18 inch wide path. The list goes on and on.

Jon also brings up a good point about the tennis craze. Construct the facility and they will come (for a short while). Mountain Biking will be no different with one exception. Who will fulfill the promise of the Mountain Bikers that our park lands will be maintained by a dedicated group of people? They are making a commitment that they will be unable to fulfill into the future.

Some say that once all of the compromises are made all will be okay. Yet it looks like there is no room for compromise. Big Willow Park will either remain in it's present well used state or be for the exclusive use of mountain bikers.

Finally, there has been a large contingent of mountain biking proponents that do not live in our community. An example is an individual that sat at my table at one of the meetings. He was from St. Louis Park and very angry because he was tired of driving his children to parks to mountain bike. He felt completely justified having another community eliminate his cost of driving and time to drive by imposing costs and inconvenience on others. We have no way of knowing who in reality is pushing the Big Willow solution to the mountain bikers wishes. By the look of those who attended the meetings it is not the high school children who we are told need Big Willow as a Mountain Biking facility.

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 02, 2018 7:24 am

 1 Votes

As an observation, if any mountain biking trails were developed in Big Willow Park, it would be the most dense (trail:acreage) development locally. As a comparison, Hillside Park and Theodore Wirth Park have a bit over 5 miles of mountain bike trail in just over 80 acres.

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

Response:

Andy Braun · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 04, 2018 3:30 pm
big willow park is 103.11 acres. so there's plenty of space.

Penny Harris · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 02, 2018 12:01 pm

👍 1 Votes

We shouldn't be wasting our time working on places for mountain bikers to ride when we have roads that need help paving and other issues the city needs to spend time on.

I think we should work on legislation about bikers riding on our roads (like when there are more than 10, they take over the road, even if they are going 20 miles below the speed limit.) this will only encourage more of them to bike here from all over the metro area - clogging our roads and creating frustration for residents.

Response:

Andy Braun · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 04, 2018 3:27 pm
Yes issues like climate change and social inequality. But biking and public land usage is way more fun to argue about.

Danny McCullough · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 02, 2018 12:23 pm

👍 2 Votes

I do not live in the City of Minnetonka so my opinions will likely not have a major impact, however I do work in the west metro and would use mountain bike trails in the west metro if there were any available. This is a fast growing sport with both youth and middle aged people and our local park departments should consider responding to changing recreation demands. The incredible growth in High School Mountain Biking is proof that ball and stick sport alternatives are in demand. Trails can be built environmentally sustainable, and if it gets more people outdoors experiencing nature and exercising, then why should we not support this? There is no doubt in my mind that the trail would be a huge draw to the area, and will have some positive economic impacts as well. Users of outdoor resources should not compete against one another, both share equal passion for protection and access. If our youth don't get outdoors and experience public resources, then why should we expect them to protect those resources in the future?

Linda Brody · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 02, 2018 12:45 pm

👍 3 Votes

I have been a resident of Minnetonka for 20 years. My family and I enjoy walking and jogging through the lovely trails. We appreciate the serenity, beauty and quietness of nature. There are occasional bicyclists that pass through the trails. For the most part they are respectful of those of us walking or running on the trails.

I am opposed to adding any additional trail/ paths for mountain bikes in the area. There are few serene and quiet places to walk and run in the community that don't include traffic and noise and don't disrupt nature. I believe that mountain bikers have other options. No additional trails should be added to accommodate this small(er) contingent of bicyclists at the expense of Minnetonka residents and our trails as they are today.)

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

Thank you
Linda Brody

Judy McClellan · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 02, 2018 2:41 pm

👍 2 Votes

I have mixed feelings. I love to bike. I have lived here for 35 years. I worked as a park naturalist for 13 years and love the outdoors and was thrilled when Minnetonka finally started recognizing and actively working on improving the quality of their natural areas; however, I might feel more comfortable if they looked at several parks and compared. Also, I would favor an environmental impact statement that will honestly address the impact of erosion and effects on wildlife these trails would have. I know that there would be an impact, but I can't make an informed decision without that information. It seems we have put some serious efforts to eradicate buckthorn and garlic mustard as well as replanting natives in Big Willow. It also is part of a larger wetland. Does this make sense? If that can be honestly presented by the proposal, then I might consider it.

Response:

Brian Wyneken · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 02, 2018 7:13 pm

Judy, (with your background you may already know this) if the City does not engage in the environmental impact assessment, there is a petition process for submitting a request to the state board. The petition (requires 100 individuals) has to be submitted before the proposed project receives final approval by the City.

Darrell Sykes · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 02, 2018 4:11 pm

👍 3 Votes

I have finally after two weeks received a repose from Kelly O"Dea on the feasibility study. Here is his response.

"At this time, city staff does not have a feasibility study. Based on the amount of feedback regarding mountain biking, we decided to take a step back and go through a more in depth public engagement process. The final public engagement meeting will be held on Monday, January 8 in which individuals can provide feedback on criteria that will be used to determine project feasibility."

Seems as though the meetings which we are having will be used instead of a feasibility study. So it boils down to a bunch of contradictory rhetoric by the biking advocates that will justify making Big Willow Park into a bike park.

Elise Lieberthal · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 02, 2018 9:51 pm

👍 2 Votes

My favorite thing to do, year-round, is walk with my dog on the paths in Big Willow Park. I am there several times each week, and have brought many friends there to discover the beauty of the park. I am so sad to think that I might have to share, or sacrifice, those tranquil paths to bikes. There are so many places to bike in the Twin Cities, and I am so against turning Big Willow into a bike park. Please don't do this.

Response:

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

Andy Braun · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 04, 2018 3:17 pm
yeah its a shame when the city decides to benefit the few rather than the many, whilst simultaneously undermining the wishes of the local residence. They effectively told us 'we know better than you' 'trust us, its better this way'

<https://eminnetonka.com/current-projects/planning-projects/1490-shady-oak-rd-redevelopment>

[https://eminnetonka.com/images/projects/Shady%20Oak%20Area%20Development/07_Civil%20Plans%20and%20Preliminary%20Plat%20\(pdf\).pdf](https://eminnetonka.com/images/projects/Shady%20Oak%20Area%20Development/07_Civil%20Plans%20and%20Preliminary%20Plat%20(pdf).pdf)

Ed Friedman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 03, 2018 3:21 am

👍 3 Votes

I don't understand Kelly O'Dea's comment, 'go through a more in depth public engagement process. The final public engagement meeting will be held on Monday, January 8 in which individuals can provide feedback on criteria that will be used to determine project feasibility.'

This process has not permitted public questions, or explained what other locations are feasible or not. The public input has not been considered important enough other than to request responses to very vague criteria. It does not appear to be an effort to find out if Minnetonka has a location that might provide Mountain Bike Trails, it appears to be an effort to decide if there will be Mountain Bike trails at Big Willow, or not Mountain Bike trails. Information that providing Mountain Bike Trails in Big Willow would be exclusive to the Mountain Bikers and that area would be taken away from the much larger pedestrian activity that currently uses those park trails has not been clearly stated. We only found that out when a question got asked by an individual AFTER the meeting was over..

The southwest quadrant of Lone Lake Park, larger area, much larger parking facilities, and much less used by pedestrians has not been mentioned. The land west of the creek at Purgatory Park has not been mentioned. The center are at Evergreen Park which is totally unused, except for some sledding in the winter has not been mentioned. The unused 494 corridor property has not been mentioned. The feasibility study on these areas that was requested by the Park Board has apparently been ignored and this very restricted public input process has been initiated, and a significant amount of that public input on use of Minnetonka parkland is coming from non-residents of Minnetonka. How do we get our city employees to respond to the resident public and Boards?

Response:

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 03, 2018 7:24 am

Well stated, Ed.

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 03, 2018 7:47 am

👍 2 Votes

Darrell Sykes -- So they "reset" the "reset." At the first focus group meeting, which was a part of the "reset," the said they'd have a "short list" of parks by the Jan. 8 meeting based on the feasibility study. So in the midst of the "reset," the city extinguished the feasibility study that they were to complete. The minutes of Nov.1 stated "Staff is conducting a feasibility study and it is anticipated to be presented to the Park Board in

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

early 2018." Also, in the same minutes, "Allendorf asked if the feasibility study includes looking at other big parks such as Three Rivers Park District that have built trails such as these. O'Dea said that will be part of the study." The public engagement meetings were one leg of the process; the feasibility study was a separate leg. Yes, they decided to take a "step back" to engage the community, but that had nothing to do with the feasibility study, which was to be done concurrent with the public engagement meetings. As you pointed out in your last post, they're leaving it to those who are attending the meetings to provide feedback on criteria that will be used to determine "project feasibility"? And what about site feasibility??? My head is hurting just thinking about this.

Darrell Sykes · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 03, 2018 8:56 am

👍 3 Votes

It appears that this mountain biking issue has gained the attention of the Center of the American Experiment <https://www.americanexperiment.org/2018/01/minnetonka-residents-fight-city-hall-bike-trail/>. A post on that site mentioned the difficulty that Edina residents had with the building of a bike trail. Here is an example of the city staff making a decision and then going forward with it regardless of public input. What is it that has caused our non-elected governmental officials to spend our tax dollars in a way that is against the will of the people? And what is it that causes our elected officials to not respond to inquires on these matters?

Response:

Andy Braun · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 04, 2018 3:10 pm

Here's an example of Minnetonka going against the wishes of its constituents.

[https://eminnetonka.com/images/projects/Shady%20Oak%20Area%20Development/07_Civil%20Plans%20and%20Preliminary%20Plat%20\(pdf\).pdf](https://eminnetonka.com/images/projects/Shady%20Oak%20Area%20Development/07_Civil%20Plans%20and%20Preliminary%20Plat%20(pdf).pdf)

Jason Goetz · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 03, 2018 1:59 pm

👍 3 Votes

I am all for the potential to have carefully thought out Mtn. bike trails throughout the beautiful Minnetonka woods. Properly laid out trails could protect private property line concerns as well as the current walking trails already established throughout these areas. Mtn. bike trails have been very successful in many areas in MN to give residents access to the outdoors and bring in others to show them our beautiful outdoor areas. This creates the desire by many to come visit the area businesses as well as consider Minnetonka a great place to live and raise a family. I look forward to attending the upcoming meeting and helping get these trails from concept to reality ASAP.

Response:


Ed Friedman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 03, 2018 2:24 pm

So you are in favor of eliminating the opportunities you seek from a larger portion of the population so that you can give it to a smaller group. Yes, I mean take it away from others because the city has taken the position that the bikers and pedestrians can not use the same trails for safety reasons. So the trails I currently walk almost daily, that I have taken my kids through on a regular basis, and currently enjoy with my grandkids will no longer be useable by me and 1000s of others.

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

Mike Funk · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 03, 2018 2:20 pm

 1 Votes

I live at Minnehaha Place, across from where the current gravel trail (from the bridge) connects to the road. Our family sees all sorts of people using the trail: walkers, joggers, and bicyclists. We use it also. It's a great amenity for our neighborhood and from an anecdotal perspective the level of use today seems appropriate. The expanded use of public property proposed for mountain bike use would potentially add recreational value for our neighborhood - but more so for the community. We would only support the measure if the following concerns are properly addressed.

1. Parking. There should be no on-street parking allowed and signs should be installed accordingly. Minnehaha Place, for all practical purposes, is a long cul-de-sac street where the only traffic comes from residents and their guests. As such, Minnehaha Place should not be a parking lot for those wanting to use the trail.

2. Buffering. We appreciate the city's efforts to remove buck thorn and other invasive vegetation growing between Minnehaha Place (the street) and Minnehaha Creek. We were told by city crews working on vegetation removal that we would likely have a more clear view of the creek from our property. As a result of the thinning, the mountain bikers would be easily seen and heard. We respectfully request that extensive buffering (plantings) be installed as to preserve the natural feel of the open space. This was one of the major reasons we decided to purchase our home in 2009. As I look at the photo in the background of this internet page- it speaks to the character of the neighborhood. Proper buffering will keep this intact.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Matt MacPhail · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 03, 2018 8:17 pm

 3 Votes

I fully support the creation of mountain biking trails in Minnetonka. One of the reasons my family moved to Minnetonka is to enjoy the great parks and trails. I occasionally mountain bike elsewhere and would love to have trails closer to home. I know that my kids and their friends would enjoy the trails as well. I hope that the community and city can work out the logistics in order to make this project happen.

Brian Wyneken · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 03, 2018 10:41 pm

 3 Votes

I am noticing that almost all the participants on this forum (especially more recently) who are responding "yes" to the forum question ("Are you in favor of the potential creation of mountain biking trails in Minnetonka - yes, no or unsure?") are NOT engaging here on the "Big Willow" issue. At the same time, almost all the participants on this forum who are opposed to this proposal have specifically engaged on the "Big Willow" issue.

If the City proceeds with building trails they will have to go somewhere and "somewhere" is and will be the rub for a lot of people. At present it is an issue for the frequent hikers in Big Willow, but if this project shifted to Lone Lake or Purgatory there would very likely be a new group of opponents. In an earlier post I noted that the project consultants and city staff appear to have proceeded with a Big Willow project despite recommendation from

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

the Park Board to look at alternative locations.

Mark Broin's comments earlier in this forum looked at this issue from a more inclusive and broader perspective, and I strongly recommend those be considered and specifically presented to the board in any review and summary prepared by the city staff and project consultants.

I also think that the city staff and project consultants need to distinguish between comments that are favorable (or unfavorable) to mountain bike trails in a location neutral context, and those comments that specifically address the presently proposed location of Big Willow and the Civic Center. Failing to address those distinctions in any summary of this forum would be very misleading.

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 04, 2018 7:45 am

 3 Votes

comment...Brian Wyneken, I wish by this point in the process the city would have completed the feasibility study that they said that would do. We could then have discussions specific to those parks. At this point, in this discussion, we're either responding to a specific park du jour (initially it was Civic Center and Big Willow; today it's Big Willow) or responding to mountain biking in general. At the Jan. 8 community meeting, they're going to rely on public feedback on criteria that will be used to determine project feasibility. What happened to a qualitative assessment based on criteria that's laid out on the project webpage: location(s), safety, environmental impact, parking, signage, and feasibility? Then, after that is done, you bring in the resident input. I'm glad they created this board for people to express their thoughts. Resident input is an important piece of the process.

Melanie Lundheim · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 04, 2018 2:04 pm

 3 Votes

Last summer while walking in the woods at Purgatory Creek, specifically up the hill off the parking lot at Stodola road (on the human-beaten path, not the city-paved part), my daughter and I almost got hit by a mountain biker who was speeding down the hill with his friends. For this reason, I'm not in favor of converting these paths to mountain bike trails. If there was a specific area for mountain bikers only that prohibited walkers, I'd be OK with that, as long as mountain bikers didn't use the walker-designated trails to get there. Thanks!

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 04, 2018 7:00 pm

 2 Votes

Melanie, I believe an area that might fit the bill you described is the 494 corridor. As I understand that area, it's undeveloped and could be designed specifically for mountain biking. And the topography looks like it would be challenging and fun.

Kara Bancroft · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 04, 2018 7:38 pm

 6 Votes

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

I'm very excited about the possibility of a true mountain bike trail becoming part of Minnetonka's city amenities. As a road biker, mountain biker, and runner, I appreciate that the city puts money not just into the traditional city parks with playgrounds and sports fields, but other activities that city residents enjoy. We all enjoy the great outdoors in different ways. I really appreciate that the city is looking to find a place for this - never an easy task in a developed city. My husband and I will be riding our bikes, not parking - and I'm guessing most of the users will. As for the trail length - we'll take whatever fits. Since we won't be going far to get there, no extensive trail system is needed to get us to come enjoy some riding. We'll just really appreciate not having to ride to Wirth to hit the dirt! I've spent quite a bit of time at Wirth riding, running, walking, and have never found there to be problems between the different people using the park for different purposes. In response to some concerns about fast riders in other city parks/trails, I can only imagine giving mountain bikers a true mountain bike trail to ride on while help to relieve problems you are seeing in parks not meant for mountain biking. In response to concerns about erosion, I know it is common for mountain bike trails to be closed when the ground is wet to help avoid erosion, so would anticipate the same on these trails. Thanks so much looking to add a mountain bike trail to the city's amenities.

Rick Bruce · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 06, 2018 10:53 am

👍 6 Votes

I live near the Civic Center area where mountain bike trails are being proposed. I use the Civic Center trails frequently for walking and to enjoy the natural environment. I also bike on some of the city trails.

I think the proposal to add mountain bike trails in the Civic Center area is a bad idea. I feel it will totally change the quite, park like setting that so many of us enjoy. I agree with those who feel that adding mountain bike trails will make it unsafe for the walkers where the trails intersect.

The bridge over the creek is my biggest concern. It's rather narrow and there are already problems when walkers and bikers simultaneously cross the bridge. I really doubt that many of the bikers will slow down enough to make it safe for all. After looking at the map, it seems to me that there are several areas where the bike paths and walking paths intersect. I'm concerned about those areas too. I think that fast bikers and slow walkers really don't mix very well.

Do we really need to develop every square inch of every park? The woods and natural areas serve an important purpose and are a major asset for our quality of life. Why can't we leave some of the natural areas relatively undisturbed for residents to enjoy?

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 06, 2018 11:04 am

👍 1 Votes

Andy Braun: Good morning. I'm responding to your followup post to me on Jan. 4, 3:30 p.m. You wrote: "big willow park is 103.11 acres. so there's plenty of space." I was discussing how dense the proposed trail would be in Big Willow compared to other parks. My numbers were based on area allotted for biking, not total acreage of the park. You're correct, based on the Hennepin County Natural Resources Interpretative Maps, Big Willow Park, from border to border, is 103.11 acres. That's including the ball fields,

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

marshes and creek, parking lots, none of which can be considered for a proposed mountain bike trail. Using the interactive map, by dropping in polygons into feasible areas in the park, you can then determine the acreage that's remaining. There's currently a focus on the area north/northwest of the creek. That total area, minus the marshes, is about 13 acres. Using the standards in mountain biking trail development, this will permit a bit over one mile of trail. The other parks I referred to have a ratio of 1(trail mile):20 (acres) -- in actuality, 5 trail miles to 80 acres. Big Willow's area in that north/northwest section by Burwell is less than 1/5th the size of the acres for mountain biking trails in those two other parks (Hillside and Theodore Wirth). I don't think anyone is proposing transforming other parts of Big Willow (ball fields) into a mountain bike trail (at least I'm not proposing it). If anything, parts of the ball field could be transformed into a dirt bike park (Cottage Grove has a dirt bike park), but again, I'm certainly not proposing this, either. Thanks for contributing to the conversations, Andy.

Response:

Brian Wyneken · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 06, 2018 3:56 pm

Thank you Dian - and I've attached the proposed trail map (again) so we can see how much of this 13 acres or so is planned for mountain biking.

Craig Hedberg · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 07, 2018 12:47 am

👍 5 Votes

I am a local resident, and my family and I use the Big Willow trails frequently for running and walking. We do not support mountain bike trails in the park. There are a lot of pedestrian users who would be adversely impacted by increasing bike traffic at the expense of untouched green space. Minnetonka has seen so much development recently that I am loathe to see our quiet little patch of wild carved up any more. One of our greatest assets as a community - and what drew our family here over twenty years ago - is the easy access to pristine parks where we can find moments of peace watching the creek flow past, encountering wildlife, hearing wind blow through the old oaks, and observing the changing seasons. We would be very sad to see this park lose this magic, and we're concerned that the proposed development would do just that.

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 07, 2018 12:24 pm

👍 1 Votes

Good afternoon, Brian Wyneken. Thanks for attaching the map. That map was a part of the proposal submitted last summer/fall to the city by Trail Source. I've heard that the mountain biking group is currently interested in the portion of Big Willow Park on the north side of the creek. The acreage of that area is between 11 - 13 acres. If trails are approved for the south side of the creek, too, that's also around 12 acres. I don't know if the mountain bike group is looking to fill the area on the north side of the creek or take a smaller portion of it, but if they wanted to fill the area on the north side of the creek, they'd be able to get in about one mile of trail.

Response:

Brian Wyneken · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 07, 2018 12:54 pm

Thank you Dian. That was the only map that I saw in the Minnetonka Park Board meeting minutes of proposed trails for Big Willow, but I certainly accept your point (which you're made previously) that we do not yet actually know where this "process" will lead. Since, however, Big Willow appears to have been the initial targeted location

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

(perhaps as the poor cousin to some more developed parks), it's appropriate that those concerned speak up on this forum - even if they are getting ahead of the "debate" and the specific question posed for discussion.

I made note of that earlier, thinking it was interesting that on the "opposition" side we were mainly hearing from people who would be more affected by changes to a particular park (Big Willow). That leads me to believe that some on the "opposition" side may be more accepting to development somewhere other than the park they enjoy going to frequently. I think that the project consultants, staff, and Park Board should recognize that this similar concern is going to arise with any proposal to development to an existing park. That's why I've several times referred to Mark Broin's analysis and comments about use of the city parks generally.

Thank you again.

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 07, 2018 12:27 pm

👍 0 Votes

Good afternoon, Rick Bruce. Would you be able to attached the proposed trail map for Civic Center park or reference its location on the internet? I haven't seen that map. Thanks much!

Response:

Brian Wyneken · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 07, 2018 2:12 pm

Not to butt-in, butT attached is a map of the proposed Civic Center trail from the same meeting as the map for Big Willow.

Dian La Pointe · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 07, 2018 6:27 pm

👍 2 Votes

Brian Wyneken, thanks for attaching the Civic Center proposed trail diagram. I really appreciated it. Yikes! I have a long list of issues: shared bridge; and trails appear too close to private lot lines, walking paths, activity areas, and marsh areas. Regarding the trail length to acreage ratio. here's my best guesstimate. There's about 7 areas of land in the trail areas north and south of the bridge, for a total of 14 acres. The total trail length is 1.8 miles. Just looking at total trail length to acreage (not splitting it between each section), that's about 2 miles of trails to 15 acres. The standard is one mile of trail to 10 to 20 acres. So, with 15 acres, you should have about 1.5 miles of trail. The map shows 1.8 miles of trails, so it's designed to be tighter than recommended, but not overly so. Here's my general observation: now that I see both diagrams for Civic Center and Big Willow parks, it seems like there's an attempt to shoehorn a fit within a couple of very small parks, coupled with about 2 miles (using Lake Minnetonka Regional Trail) connecting each park. The mountain bike trails are, in essence, taking over a couple of parks. After seeing the Civic Center map, I'm even more disappointed with the original proposal. As we know, the City is relooking (doing a "reset") at the designs and assessing is there is a fit, so I continue to hope that others will come to tomorrow night's meeting to express their thoughts and help develop the criteria that the City is seeking to see if any parks can meet the criteria for mountain bike trails in Minnetonka. I'm in no way against mountain biking -- I hope there's a park in Minnetonka that can be used to develop mountain biking trails. Maybe there needs to be a refocus on Purgatory???

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

Darrell Sykes · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 07, 2018 7:14 pm

👍 6 Votes

As I look at these maps, I am saddened by the fact that we are looking at closing down a precious treasure in Big Willow Park to people of all abilities and ages. Big Willow is a very unique park in the Twin Cities area. First, it borders on Minnehaha Creek. Secondly, it is a rustic park that is accessible to all. There are very few areas where Minnehaha Creek is not bordered by private property allowing access to all individuals. As I have walked through Big Willow I have seen children able to run freely in the woods. I have seen families of multiple generations sharing a time quietly by the creek. I have seen dog owners throwing a frisbee into the water and playing catch with their pet. There are few, if any other, parks of this nature in the Twin Cities. We have this treasure as a community resource available to all. To sacrifice a rustic park such as Big Willow to the relative few who wish to mountain bike truly would take away this jewel from future generations.

I do believe that those who wish to mountain bike have a case for the community to build a trail in our city, But, please do not take away such a precious resource from the community at large. Build the trail in an area that does not have the unique characteristic of Big Willow.

Marcy Lundquist · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 07, 2018 11:19 pm

👍 4 Votes

I'm concerned because the Conversation Summary from December 13 did not include two important points -- liability and effect on our natural habitat/walkers.

Liability -- (copied from a Mountain Bike Association) Liability and risk management are some of the most daunting topics faced by trail managers today. In our litigious society, exposure to liability cannot be taken lightly, and the ability to manage risks appropriately can make or break an operation. It seems like every time you open the newspaper, another lawsuit is splashed across the pages. The number of civil cases filed in U.S. District Courts more than doubled from 1980 to 2000, climbing from 113,000 to more than 259,000. The increasingly litigious nature of society is having a significant effect on trails. Landowners are reluctant to allow recreation on their property, government agencies are wary of building new trails, and non-profit associations struggle to find affordable liability insurance. If someone is hurt riding trails in your community, who can be found liable? Generally speaking, every organization involved in the trail's design, construction, and maintenance could potentially be named as a defendant in a lawsuit. This would include the landowner, the trail management agency, and even related non-profit groups... potentially everyone involved in the trail.

Nature -- a few years ago my husband and I were walking in Big Willow when a bike passed unannounced, too fast, and too close. I jumped and the biker glanced back and laughed. Traumatic experiences like that are probably very good reasons why the Minneapolis Park Board made bike and walking paths around the major lakes completely separate. The vast majority of BW trail use is walkers (many days we see no bikes at all). Walkers include families with strollers, children, teenagers, and a variety adults, young, middle-aged, and senior -- some with reduced mobility, eyesight, and hearing. Recently, a very large senior housing project opened at the entrance to BW. No one wants walkers to be scared like I was -- and not dogs or all of the wild animals or birds that can be both seen and hidden. BW is also very lush and green which would require tree/bush/plant removal and significant ongoing maintenance. We always think of BW

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

as a nature park but mountain biking would completely change the character. Two friends are volunteer bike patrol at a National Park and they say the number one complaint is bikers going too fast.

I sincerely hope the mountain bikers can find an appropriate location without the added challenge of BW's soft moist soil (even the hardened main trails develop significant ruts). Maybe add a jump, too!

Lisa Gose · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 08, 2018 8:38 am

 1 Votes

I support the Mtn Bike trail in Big Willow! It's fun, relaxing, peaceful and a quiet thing to do. I live in Minnetonka will bring my property value up to. I look forward to the meeting tonight. I also just want to say that this site is really funny - it's like the Ed Freeman show, that guy is hilarious, every other post is Ed Freeman!

Andy Braun · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 08, 2018 9:16 am

 3 Votes

Basically boils down to two options.

1) Sanctioned trails.

Or

2) Non-sanctioned trails.

Non-sanctioned trails will continue to be used by foot and cycle (whether or not we build sanctioned foot and/or cycle trails). just the way it goes. Best move is to embrace that fact and align our efforts and resources with the use-case. Design the trails properly and sanction them.

OR you're choosing to support non-sanctioned trails.

Darrell Sykes · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 08, 2018 10:04 am

 4 Votes

Andy Braum.... Why is it so important that Big Willow be the center of mountain biking in Minnetonka? This is not an either /or situation. The City has declined, so far, to look at Big Willow alternatives. There are several. I do not believe that there is a single poster on Minnetonka Matters that is opposed to mountain biking. Instead, the opposition is to the dedication la a very unique and irreplaceable resource to use by the select few who do bike. The only concrete information the City has provided thus far is that Bike Willow will not be used for both biking and hiking. It will be off limits to hikers if the trails are developed. I believe that there would be widespread agreement to a mountain biking trail if the trail were to be constructed in an area that does not have the unique characteristics of being rustic in its nature and occupying land following Minnehaha Creek. I for one support that concept and would come to the aid of those who wish mountain biking in Minnetonka. I would like to here from others who would be willing to support mountain biking at another location.

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

Margot Barry · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 08, 2018 2:45 pm

👍 3 Votes

Hi all! I support well-planned and executed mountain bike trails that take into consideration all users of Minnetonka public lands. There is a very large number and growing of mountain bikers in Minnesota - youth and adults - and although I do not personally ride (my daughter rode with MHS) I think it's another great sport and activity for Minnesotans. There is a well-run high school league and many adults who participate across the state. I actively take advantage of the trails in Minnetonka and around the metro and state on foot (walking, hiking, running.) There is poor planning and there is good planning! There are "bad mannered" mountain bikers (AND road cyclists and trail trollers for that matter), but that vast majority (of all) I've come into contact with are pretty great. We do so much in the outdoors in Minnetonka and in the region. We have so many casual and road cyclists. (... that we don't have real bike lanes and ped cross walks going to the high school continues to baffle me, but that's another thing.) I would love to see more pedestrian trails AND gladly invite more opportunities for two-wheeled human powered recreation on well-planned and executed public lands.

Brad Anderson · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 09, 2018 4:23 pm

👍 7 Votes

At the January 8 mountain bike meeting, one major criteria needed for a mountain bike trail is to limit conflict between walking and mountain bike trails.

Big Willow Park north of Minnehaha Creek is accessed by one bridge and is constantly being used for nature walks, dog walks, running, and family outings. Mountain bike trails on the north side of the creek will be in constant conflict with pedestrians, especially on the foot bridge over the creek and on the path that goes along Minnehaha Creek and under the railroad bridge. (There is only one way to get over the creek and also under the railroad tracks.)

Another criteria presented was a minimum of 20 acres for mountain bike trails. If Big Willow Park north of the creek is unsuitable, there is not enough acreage for the proposed trail south of the creek.

A list of existing Twin Cities mountain bike trails was shown at the meeting that have five to ten times larger acreage available than the proposed Minnetonka parks in consideration.

An additional point listed that a mountain bike trail would not be a race track. However, high school mountain bike teams will be training on the trails. They compete to see how fast they can complete the circuit, trying to go faster each lap.

To consider Big Willow Park for a mountain bike trail is irresponsible by the city of Minnetonka and an unsafe option the multitude of people now using the park.

Claudia Gundlach · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 12, 2018 8:47 pm

👍 0 Votes

I was not able to stay for the entire meeting Mon.1/8 and did not hear anything about the expected number of people who will use the Mountain bike trails as well as how

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

many will be from neighboring cities. As the number of people using the trails will impact Big Willow usage, character, parking and safety it seems to be hugely important aspect to know about the Project. If I missed this can someone direct me to the data? There has yet been no mention of the costs to maintain the trails, or mention of the city's commitment (or definition) of green space and if that means developed or undeveloped land, even though these were brought up at the first focus group meeting.

Jerry Johanning · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 15, 2018 8:43 am

👍 0 Votes

In my opinion this discussion, starting way back with the Next Door threads has gone on long enough. Back and forth, back and forth between us, the citizens who use the parks. I can't wait for an answer either way. I am all for the mountain bike trails, and I live right by Big Willow Park. I will continue to ride my bike back there through the woods regardless of the outcome of the park board's decision. I also ride the trails with my kids in Purgatory park, Carver park and all of the other trails in all of the other nearby communities and I have never witnessed any trouble, I have witnessed fun, wildlife, neighbors, friends, sunrises and sunsets. I love our parks, see you on the trails...

Jessy Olson · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 18, 2018 10:22 pm

👍 5 Votes

I attended both city meetings and have read a lot of the above dialogue. It seems to me that a good summary would be, most are not opposed to mtn biking trails in Minnetonka as long as the proper location could be chosen. I think the rub comes when an already established nature trail gets targeted for mtn biking- (do I dare say, mostly by those who don't use it for walking?), and then those who have really enjoyed the peaceful nature walks meandering along the creek feel indignant and displaced and not valued. I fall into that category.

As a walker of Big Willow paths for over 25 years, I want the potential bikers to understand that this area is extremely unique and special. How many cities have parkland that roams and rambles along the creek? It is a respite - a peaceful, calm, beautiful area to unwind, clear your head and get AWAY from the hectic, chaotic, break-neck speed of life!!! I feel like adding mtn biking trails to Big Willow would totally change that already established character, and Big Willow trails would no longer be the calm sanctuary they are now, they would become the exact opposite. For that reason, it just does not make sense to add mtn. bike trails to this area. Would you put mtn biking trails in at the Arboretum, or at Minnehaha Falls? There are just some places that deserve to be left alone, to be kept tranquil and restful. I feel even more strongly about this after attending the meetings. If, as its enthusiasts are saying, mtn. biking is growing as a sport, do we want to grow it in our back yard? Does a small, local park have the capacity to grow it?? If Hopkins HS and Mtka. HS want to use the trails, what's to prevent other schools from caravanning over here? And I saw lots of Minneapolis Mtn. Bikers in their club shirts (?) at the last meeting - so this will not just be a locally used trail. Big Willow is not the place to accommodate a whole new sport set with who knows how many schools and groups coming in to these once-calm and peaceful trails. I think a separate, new trail needs to exist, one that will not make walkers feel neglected or displaced, one that can accommodate lots of bikers and make them happy too. I am for that!!! I was encouraged to see all the land available outside of Big Willow that could be used. Specifically the 494 corridor, Lone Lake,... - If you find an area and develop it new, not trying to convert existing walking trails that would make walkers feel displaced, I think you could make many more people supportive and happy. It looks like from the

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

handouts given at the last meeting, you could do that, and get the majority of people in agreement, by using the other, yet-undeveloped acreage that is available.. Big Willow has St. David's School at the West end, and the new senior housing at the east end. I see teachers taking their kids out for hikes on these trails, I see mom's having lunches with their kids on the arched bridge, many strollers, many many dog walkers, seniors leisurely strolling the paths... Do we really want to interject mtn biking into this dynamic? It doesn't seem conducive to the current atmosphere and character. I saw that the proposed trails would intersect with the current trail in 4 different places, one of them being the arched bridge. How will that look at 4:00pm on a school day with multiple school teams on the trail practicing, when walkers coming home from work are walking their dogs? That's just one little example, but truly, if we are going to be honest, am I being too skeptical when I imagine that the bikers may not actually stay only on their paths? Is it wrong of me to doubt that they will? I know the bikers that have expressed their thoughts on this forum sound very respectful, and I'd like to give them all the benefit of the doubt. Even more so, I'd like to give them their own trail Haha! I also am concerned with what increased traffic would do to Minnetonka Blvd., which has really become a too-busy-enough road already! If mtn. biking really does take off as seems to be predicted, the little quaint and charming, Mtka Mills area may turn into a not-so-charming, super congested area. It makes sense to look ahead, and look elsewhere.

Mountain. biking is great, and I want to be respectful and accommodating and supportive, but it needs to be in the right area. Please please consider some yet-undeveloped land (from the chart handout, its there and available!) that can make everyone happy!!

Response:

Ed Friedman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 21, 2018 1:29 pm

Jerry, I could not agree with you more. I think it is important to show up at the park board meetings, (1st Wednesday of the month at the civic center) to express your view and support like minded residents.

Ben Saltzman · Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Jan 31, 2018 1:03 pm

 0 Votes

I've been a resident and taxpayer in Minnetonka for over 20 years.

When I first heard about the idea of mountain bike single track trails in Big Willow park I got excited. I still am.

I've been enthusiastically riding bicycles on and off road since the '80s. Mountain biking single track trails is a great experience. It is technical, physical, and demands complete concentration. A good single track trail can be all those things and exhausting. Sharing that experience with others is great.

My mountain biking receded, and road and trail riding became my norm because of the lack of single track opportunities in Minnetonka. One would have to pack up your bicycle and gear into the car and drive a half and hour or more one way to ride on mountain bike single track trails. Mountain biking became an indulgence in time, money, and resources.

The ability to ride my bicycle a mile and a half and be at Big Willow park with mountain bike single track trails piqued my interest.

Potential Mountain Biking Trails

Closed Jan 31, 2018 · Discussion · 81 Participants · 1 Topics · 288 Answers · 141 Replies · 229 Votes

Now this is not all about me. I know what a good experience it is to accomplish a tough single track trail. It would be nice to share that experience with all of the Jr. High and High School athletes looking for a place to practice and hone their mountain bike skills without having to jump into a car.

Folks could ride their bicycle on the regional trail, cross Minnetonka Boulevard and be at a park with mountain bike single track trails, soccer, baseball, walking trails and more.

Minnetonka's citizens would benefit from this resource along with the businesses on Minnetonka Boulevard down the road from Big Willow.

Persons and families with children would see the inclusive schools, parks, and amenities that the City of Minnetonka has to offer and want to become part of that kind of community.