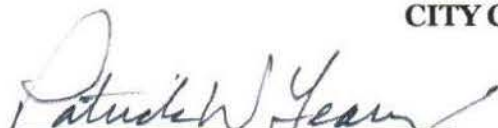




CITY COUNCIL TRANSMITTAL


Patrick Leary, Chief of Staff

Date Received: December 4, 2017
Date sent to Council: December 5, 2017

TO: Salt Lake City Council
Stan Penfold, Chair

DATE: November 21, 2017

FROM: Lisa Shaffer, Director, Public Services Department

SUBJECT: Salt Lake City Foothill Trail System Plan

STAFF CONTACTS: Lewis Kogan, Open Space Lands Program Manager

DOCUMENT TYPE: Informational briefing on the Salt Lake City Foothill Trail System Plan

RECOMMENDATION: Information only

BUDGET IMPACT:

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:

Parks and Public Lands Division is in the process of developing and drafting a Foothill Trail System Plan. The existing trail system is unplanned and does not make full use of available space. Trails currently present challenges for user safety and accessibility, and usage carries a high environmental impact. The Foothill Trail System Plan will produce a blueprint for a thoughtfully-designed, sustainable trails network. Once implemented, this plan will mitigate user confusion, promote connectivity with the City's alternative transportation networks, and minimize environmental issues (including regard to protected watershed areas).

Salt Lake City's foothills are the broad, open grasslands and shrublands extending upslope roughly from the upper edge of development to the forested ridgelines. Between Emigration Canyon and the north City boundary, Salt Lake City is the largest landowner of Foothill lands, with other significant properties under the ownership of the US Forest Service, the University of Utah, Utah State Parks, and several private landowners and homeowner associations. Over the past century, use of the foothills has gradually shifted from livestock grazing to motorized recreation to non-motorized recreation. Motorized recreation is now prohibited in Salt Lake City's foothill lands, and trail-based recreation continues to grow rapidly, especially following the completion of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail through Salt Lake City.

Expansion of residential subdivisions above Capitol Hill and the Avenues neighborhood in the late 1970s through early 2000s substantially limited public access points to the Foothill Trails, and while some trail access easements were retained by the City, formal trailheads with dedicated public parking are extremely limited. The growing popularity of sports such as trail running and mountain biking, combined with SLC's expanding population, continue to increase pressure on foothill access points. Currently, many of these access points are located on small neighborhood streets far from major street arteries and public transit.

In the foothill open space lands between Emigration Canyon and the north city boundary, there are nearly 100 miles of "trails." Of all these trails, only the BST was professionally constructed with the intent of non-motorized recreation. The majority of existing trails follow utility access roads, old jeep tracks, and user-created trails on ridgelines and gullies; many of these trails are unsustainable due to steep grades, widespread soil erosion, and costly maintenance challenges. Trailhead, wayfinding and regulatory signage is virtually absent. Lack of coherent trail design has created a system of trails that is unapproachable to many entry-level trail users, and that becomes increasingly prone to user-conflicts as use increases. Taken as a whole, Salt Lake City's network of foothill trails are a low-quality trail system.

JUSTIFICATION OF NEED:

According to a July 2017 statistically-valid survey of Salt Lake City residents by Y2 Analytics, Salt Lake City's natural-surface trails are used frequently (once or more per month) by **56% of Salt Lake City residents** for hiking, running, cycling, dog-walking, and similar uses. Compared with other SLC parks, trails and open spaces, only Liberty Park is visited more frequently than the foothill trail system.

Salt Lake City's foothill open spaces represent an enormous natural and recreational asset for the City. Few cities of comparable size offer contiguous, mountainous open space lands so close to a major population center. Salt Lake City's foothills provide diverse recreational opportunities, scenery, and intact natural lands that are integral to the City's character and sense of place. Based on trailhead user-counts, public surveys, and data from recreation apps like Strava, foothill trails accommodate hundreds of thousands of annual visits from city residents, and the trail system is also a popular draw for city visitors.

The foothill trails network is currently in poor condition. With thoughtful planning, appropriate construction, and resource investment, it could be a truly *great* recreational trail system and a boon to residents, and a major selling point for the city. The Foothill Trail System Implementation Plan is an effort to guide that transition with directed investments in sustainability, safety, accessibility, and user-experience improvements.

PLAN SCOPE:

Salt Lake City's Open Space Lands Program is taking the lead on plan development, with the assistance of trails consulting firm Alta Planning + Design. Plan recommendations will support transformation of the trail system over a 10-year timeline. The geographic area covered by the Plan will extend from the mouth of Emigration Canyon north to the southern boundary of Davis County. The Plan will not cover protected watershed areas in City Creek or Red Butte Creek canyons, or extend far up Emigration Canyon into the area already covered by the Salt Lake County Emigration Canyon Trails Plan. The foothill open spaces between Emigration and

Parleys Canyons, and regional connections to central Wasatch trails, covers an area that is still primarily under private ownership. A trail system improvement plan for this area is recommended for a later date.

Foothill trail users do not perceive jurisdictional boundaries when using the foothill trails, and improving the foothill trail system requires an integrated approach across land ownership boundaries. For this reason, Salt Lake City is working to coordinate with the three other largest owners of foothill open space in the region: the US Forest Service, the University of Utah, and Utah State Parks. The final plan will include recommendations for trails on both SLC and non-SLC lands, but cooperation in implementing trail recommendations on non-SLC lands will clearly be up to individual landowner entities. Details on opportunities for inter-jurisdictional collaboration will be included in the final Plan document.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY:

Development of the Trails Plan includes many public engagement elements. Solicitation of broad public feedback on preliminary trail recommendations is currently underway, including use of an online feedback tool that can be accessed from the project webpage: www.slcgov.com/TrailsPlan.

Other public engagement activities which are ongoing or have already occurred include:

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY	NOTES	TIME PERIOD
ONLINE TRAIL USER SURVEY	1,466 TRAIL USERS SURVEYED	JUNE 2016 – JUNE 2017
Y2 ANALYTICS SURVEY	STATISTICALLY-VALID SAMPLING OF ALL SLC RESIDENTS. 10,000 INVITATIONS TO PARTICIPATE ISSUED, RESULTING IN 768 RESPONSES ACROSS ALL DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS.	JULY 2017
TRAIL USER INTERCEPT SURVEYS	OVER 100 IN-PERSON SURVEYS CONDUCTED AT VARIOUS TRAILHEAD LOCATIONS AROUND THE FOOTHILLS.	AUGUST 2017
PHYSICAL TRAIL USE COUNTS	OCCURRED AT 18 TRAIL ACCESS POINTS ACROSS MULTIPLE DAYS.	AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2017.
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS	NEARLY FIFTY STAKEHOLDERS WERE INTERVIEWED DURING A WEEKLONG INTENSIVE WORKSHOP.	OCTOBER 16 - 20, 2017
COMMUNITY COUNCIL PRESENTATIONS	DETAILED PRESENTATIONS WILL BE GIVEN TO CAPITOL HILL NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL AND GREATER AVENUES COMMUNITY	DECEMBER 2017

	COUNCIL. INFORMATION ABOUT ONLINE FEEDBACK OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED TO SEVERAL OTHER COMMUNITY COUNCILS.	
ONLINE MAPPING AND FEEDBACK TOOL	ONLINE FEEDBACK PLATFORM WILL BE WIDELY ADVERTISED THROUGH A VARIETY OF MEANS.	DECEMBER 2017

Additional public engagement, including additional stakeholder interviews, neighborhood engagement, and presentations to relevant boards & commissions, will occur prior to finalization of the plan.

PROCESS & TIMELINE:

JUNE 2016 – JUNE 2017
AUGUST – OCTOBER 2017

OCTOBER 2017
NOVEMBER 2017 – JANUARY 2018
DECEMBER 2017
DECEMBER 2017 – JANUARY 2018
JANUARY 2018
JANUARY 2018
FEBRUARY 2018
MARCH 2018
MAY 2018
JUNE 2018 (TENTATIVE)

TRAIL USER PRE-PROJECT ONLINE SURVEY
EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS & REVIEW OF RELEVANT DATA & DOCUMENTATION
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS
PUBLIC OUTREACH AND CITY EVENTS & ACTIVITIES
PRESENTATIONS TO SELECT COMMUNITY COUNCILS
ONLINE MAPPING & SOLICITATION OF PUBLIC FEEDBACK
PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE
PLAN REVIEW BY CITY BOARDS & COMMISSIONS
PLAN REVIEW BY LAND MANAGERS & AGENCIES
PLAN REVIEW BY INTERNAL CITY DEPARTMENTS & MAYOR
PLAN REVIEW BY COUNCIL (WORK SESSION)
FINAL PLAN ADOPTION

CONCLUSION:

Salt Lake City's foothill open spaces represent an enormous natural and recreational asset for the City. Few cities of comparable size offer contiguous, mountainous open space lands so close to a major population center. The foothill trails network is currently in poor condition. With thoughtful planning, appropriate construction, and resource investment, it could be a great recreational trail system. The Foothill Trail System Implementation Plan is an effort to guide that transition with directed investments in sustainability, safety, accessibility, and user-experience improvements.

Major public engagement is currently underway, including use of an online feedback tool that can be accessed from the project webpage. Formal adoption of the plan in 2018 is desired. The City Council should expect to see a draft version of the plan in late-spring 2018 for review. Following the City Council review and feedback from the community a final draft will be prepared for City Council adoption.