



## Memorandum



TO: Pitkin County and City of Aspen Open Space and Trails Board  
FROM: Gary Tennenbaum-Director of Pitkin County Open Space and Trails, Austin Weiss-City of Aspen Parks and Open Space Director, and Gerald Fielding-Pitkin County Engineer  
SUBJECT: Castle Creek Trail and Corridor Planning  
DATE: August 2, 2018

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The County and City have been working over the past year on planning safety improvements along the Castle Creek Road corridor from the Music/Aspen Country Day schools to the Marolt Trail. This is the third joint meeting between the Pitkin County and City of Aspen Open Space and Trails Boards to discuss the proposed trail and road improvements in the Castle Creek corridor. At this meeting, staff is seeking final guidance and recommendation to the BOCC and City Council on design and budget for the trail.

The engineering is 30% complete at this stage and staff and our consultants feel a design-build contract is the best option for completion of this trail. This will allow a contractor to participate in the final design to provide the best options for constructing this trail at the best cost. We learned from the first attempt at constructing this trail that this constrained corridor needs both engineers and contractors to find the best way to construct this trail with the least impact to the road during construction and the most cost-efficient materials for the retaining walls.

If both boards approve this design and budget, staff will then go to the City Council and BOCC for final project and budget approval to include in the 2019 budget.

### **Background**

At a joint meeting between the County and City Open Space Boards in September 2016, the Castle Creek Trail was prioritized for planning in 2017 in response to many community members' requests. The Castle Creek Trail planning began on July 24, 2017 with an open house to start soliciting public feedback on the opportunities and challenges associated with improving pedestrian and bicycle safety along Castle Creek Road. Staff also has met with interested parties, including neighbors and the Music and Aspen Country Day schools, to get feedback on what data to get to help the Open Space Boards and elected officials make decisions with regard to improvements.

The public comment period was extended till September 29<sup>th</sup> to ensure all stakeholders had time to submit comments. All public comments were included in the open space boards' packet and are still available online. There was a community survey, Aspen Music Festival and School survey, comment cards received at the public open house, letters and emails received, website comment submissions, and the insights from the kickoff meeting. This generated a large amount of public feedback.

The consultants hired a firm to provide user counts along the road via video camera for two weeks. The first week counted use from August 2-9 and the second week was from September 17-24.

Neither the Music nor Aspen Country Day schools were notified that the cameras were in use during those weeks. The data is available on the project's website.

The consulting engineers have considered all of the public feedback and have analyzed the corridor for what is feasible. A survey of the right-of-way that included all trees over 4 inches in diameter was completed, so all impacts along the alignments could be evaluated. Alignment concepts and estimated costs were created and presented at a joint meeting of the City and County Open Space Boards on November 2, 2017.

At the joint meeting on November 2, the boards recommended releasing the alternatives to the public for feedback. An open house and presentation on the alternatives was held on November 15, 2017. The public comment period was open through January 1, 2018, providing the opportunity to participate in a survey about options and to provide open comment.

Staff worked to combine all the comments and survey responses into a recommended preferred alignment. The recommended alignment is a modified east-side, separated trail. This modified design would include the uphill bike lane and as much separation between the trail and the roadway as possible by narrowing the trail to less than 6-8 feet wide, uphill bike lane to less than 4 feet wide, and buffer to less than 3 feet wide where necessary to limit the disturbance to vegetation, height or need for retaining walls, and to reduce cost. This design will include increased safety signage and speed tables along the corridor. Staff will also propose lowering the speed limits in this corridor.

A modified east-side alignment will significantly reduce the current east-side cost estimate of \$3.8 million, limit the impacts to aesthetics and vegetation, and provide a much safer corridor for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Open Space and Trails will work with Pitkin County Public Works on rockfall mitigation strategies and recommend an alternative to the BOCC to determine if and how to fund rockfall mitigation.

At the joint open space boards' meeting in February, a recommendation was made to design a modified east-side alignment to reduce widths and impacts where possible, but still provide a significantly safer separated trail with increased width on the climbing shoulder for road cyclists. The BOCC and City Council agreed with that direction and staff worked with our consultants to update the plans.

### **Discussion Items**

The latest design incorporates public and board feedback to reduce impacts on the east side of the road, keep a separated trail on the east side of Castle Creek Road, reduce width where appropriate to significantly reduce costs, and provide safety improvements to Castle Creek Road to slow vehicle traffic.

The design has a 6-foot-wide, east-side trail that will be separated with removable delineators and 2 to 4-foot shoulders on the uphill vehicular travel lane to improve safety for road cyclists. All retaining walls along private property are located on the west side and most tree impacts are on the west side. It also incorporates speed tables before and after the school entrance with increased signage along the entire length of the trail.

All trees over 4 inches in diameter are surveyed in the corridor and the total number of trees removed comes to 79. Breaking that down:

City total 35 – 17 on east side and 18 on west side  
County total 44 – 6 on east side and 38 on west side

The estimated cost has been reduced to \$2,623,000 and direction was given to separate costs of what is proposed in the City and County. The City portion of the trail is estimated at \$530,000 and the County's is \$2,093,000. The County received \$250,000 from the development approval of the new Music and Aspen Country Day schools and is not included in the cost for the County, so the County portion with those funds included would be \$1,843,000.

Additional costs for rockfall mitigation have been estimated for anchored wire mesh along the large existing cuts above the retaining walls and a full replacement of the pavement along the trail corridor. OST and City staff are recommending that these costs be funded by Public Works/County general fund. For the wire mesh, the estimated cost is \$344,000 and to replace the full pavement of the road beyond what is needed for trail and shoulders is \$114,000.

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends that both the City and County Open Space Boards forward a recommendation to City Council and the Pitkin BOCC directing staff to budget, procure, design and obtain land-use approvals for the current design with any modifications made at the joint meeting.