



## Frequently Asked Questions

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Below is a list of frequently asked questions received to date in the Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail Planning. Questions identified with an (\*) were asked at the joint meeting held October 17<sup>th</sup> with the BOCC, OSTB and Carbondale Trustees.

### Background:

#### *Why do we need this trail?*

The connection between Carbondale to Crested Butte has been a vision of the community for about two decades. Hwy 133, in particular, is a winding, narrow road and is not a setting that most non-motorized users feel safe in using. Currently, there is no other option for non-motorized users but the highway.

This trail will provide the non-motorized user a safer route, connecting the neighborhoods and communities along the way to the greater statewide trail network. It will encourage multi-modal transportation and give recreation users a missing link in the trail network.

#### *Why isn't "no trail" an option?\**

Pitkin County is in a planning process for the potential alignments of a trail that connects to existing trail on both the Crested Butte and Carbondale sides. If any member of the public feels there should be no trail they can indicate that on their public comment.

#### *Who would use the trail?*

The goal is to have a trail that serves both transportation and recreation needs for locals and visitors. The location and surface type of the trail may eventually influence the types of users but our goal would be to have a trail that serves all non-motorized users.

#### *What is multi-use?*

Multi-use is a trail that serves many types of users and is applied when describing an 8-foot or wider trail. The idea is that different kinds of users would have enough space to pass each other comfortably and the trail would have a greater capacity to handle more users and diversity of user types. A singletrack, for example, is much narrower and may also have multiple different kinds of users but the users would need to yield to each other when passing.

#### *How long will the trail be? How many miles of trail are missing?*

The entire trail route connecting Carbondale to Crested Butte is approximately 83 miles. The Pitkin County side has approximately 16 miles in missing links. The route within Pitkin County has been envisioned with a hard-surface trail connection between Carbondale and Redstone and a singletrack trail to the Gunnison County line. The nature of a hard-surface, multi-use trail will also require engineering; major engineering in locations where a platform on the ground may not already exist.

Gunnison County has approximately 32 miles in missing links. The entire route in Gunnison County has been envisioned as a singletrack. The majority of the route within Gunnison County is located on the

GMUG National Forest. The GMUG Travel Management Plan included the trail and the GMUG National Forest staff is working with local volunteers and government staff to lay the route out on the ground.

*How would this trail impact the ability of the Crystal River to be designated Wild and Scenic?*

The trail would not impact the Crystal River's ability to be designated Wild and Scenic. Recreation is a key part of the designation and the trail would not create any dams or diversions from the river.

*Will this trail be open year-round?*

This will depend on where the trail is located. Seasonal closures to protect winter wildlife habitat and proximity to Hwy. 133 winter snow removal are two of the major elements that could limit year-round use of the trail.

*What surface will the trail be?*

The trail was envisioned as a hard-surface, multi-use trail from Carbondale to Redstone. Open Space and Trails strives to have dual surfaces (hard and soft) whenever possible. We are still gathering feedback on the idea of having a soft surface, multi-use trail from the KOA Campground to Redstone. The trail is envisioned as a singletrack trail from Redstone to Crested Butte.

*What is a hard surface and soft surface? What is a dual-surface trail? Singletrack?*

Hard-surface trails can be concrete or asphalt. Depending on the locations and engineering requirements, concrete maybe used for structural purposes. Soft-surface trails are usually crusher fines but can also be native soils or gravel/road base. Dual surface is when there is both a hard and soft surface with in the same trail route. They can be joined or separated based upon available space. Singletrack trails are usually native soils.

*How many bike-car accidents have there been on Hwy. 133?\**

No data has been found.

*How will OST/Pitkin County guarantee the funds for maintenance and enforcement of closures are maintained in perpetuity?\**

The Pitkin County Open Space and Trails program has performed maintenance on all assets of the Open Space and Trails program since 1990. The program is authorized by the voters till 2040. Pitkin County has a great track record of providing the funding for maintenance and enforcement for the past 27 years on over 20,000 acres of protected lands and 80 miles of trail.

## Planning Process and Next Steps:

*What approvals do you need to build this trail?*

The route in the Crystal Valley will could potentially cross lands managed by Open Space and Trails, White River National Forest, CDOT ROW and private landowners.

There would be many levels of review on the trail prior to construction, much of which would be defined by the preferred location. The Pitkin County review process for the project would be a Location and Extent review. This means the proposed project is reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission against the Caucus master plan. The BOCC has ultimate approval authority and budgetary authority. Locations where the trail may cross National Forest would require a NEPA process review

and permit. Locations where the trail is in the CDOT ROW would require environmental and engineering review and permit. All construction would require the appropriate permits for earthmoving, riparian/floodway/waterway work, appropriate seasonal construction window restrictions, etc.

*How would you gain access through private property?*

If a portion of the preferred route is identified across private property, the County would like to work with private landowners to gain the right for the public to cross private property on the trail.

*Is the County going to use RS-2477?\**

The County has not determined an alignment for the trail and once an alignment is chosen the County will work with property owners along the preferred alignment.

*Why do cost estimates lack cost of property acquisition and ongoing maintenance? Financial analysis that looks at all of the costs requested.\**

Without a preferred alignment coming up with costs is difficult and will be evaluated if any private land is in the preferred alignment. While specific costs have not been developed for the alternatives evaluation, both maintenance and property or easement acquisition costs have been accounted for under the cost section of the segment summary sheets and rated on a scale of from least to most impactful. For example, any segment where private property is being considered has received a “most impactful” rating. Specific costs cannot be accurately estimated at this time.

*Why are segments in Gunnison County going through a different process for a preferred route?*

The remainder of the Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail within Gunnison County is on the GMUG National Forest. The GMUG adopted the trail within their Travel Management Plan. This means their staff is working directly on the project, laying out the route and performing site-specific review as they define a route.

*Who are the consultants?*

Our environmental and engineering consultants were both chosen by selection committees with members from County staffs, the Crystal Caucus, the National Forests, Crested Butte, Gunnison County, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

ERO was chosen as the environmental consultants. They are responsible for collecting and analyzing wildlife, vegetation, and cultural resource data for the proposed alternatives. They will also work on the NEPA for any segments on the White River National Forest.

Loris and Associates is the engineering firm for the development of the draft plan. They are reviewing potential trail routes and the engineering feasibility around those routes. They have experience working on the planning for other large-scale, regional trail projects.

*What is the Colorado 16?*

In 2016, Governor Hickenlooper identified the State of Colorado’s highest priority trail projects. The 16 represent the trail gaps around Colorado, that would connect into the statewide network of trails, expand outdoor recreation opportunities, provide safe alternative transportation routes and economic development opportunities for adjacent communities.

### *Who makes the decisions?\**

Pitkin County will make the decision on a preferred alignment in Pitkin County. The preferred alignment then has to go through further analysis before construction. Further analysis is any acquisitions that would be necessary from private landowners, full review and approval from the USDA Forest Service, CDOT, and other regulatory agencies.

### *Do people from Carbondale have any standing?\**

Public comments are being sought from all citizens. The survey asks where you are from so the Pitkin County Board of County Commissioners can hear what citizens of Pitkin County feel about the trail alignments and see what neighboring citizens feel about the trail alignments.

### *What is the process moving forward?*

The goal is for the Open Space and Trails Board (OSTB) and the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to adopt a draft plan with a preferred trail alignment early in 2018. This plan will have gone through two different public comment periods prior to draft plan development (the first in January and the second in September-November). OST staff will present the draft plan to the public who will also have the opportunity to comment on the plan. Staff will then update the draft plan with the comments from the BOCC, OSTB and the public. The final plan will lay out phasing for implementation; this will include further environmental reviews and engineering designs before any construction.

### *When will the trail be built?*

The *Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail Plan* will identify the preferred route for trail planners to pursue for environmental review and final design. Those processes will inform the decision further and may lead to realignments or a need for further evaluation. Based on the preferred alignment identified in the plan, the plan will identify the next steps and phasing of implementation.

### *How will this be funded?*

The construction of a regional trail of this magnitude will require grants, private/public partnerships, a portion of Open Space and Trails dedicated property tax, partnerships with our adjacent jurisdictions and volunteer days spread over many years. Looking at the big vision first helps identify where there can be cost savings by bundling and partnering for design, environmental review and construction of segments.

## Wildlife and Seasonal Closures:

### *Do seasonal closures work or don't they? More information on their effectiveness requested.\**

A review of seasonal closures was included in the ERO Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail Study – Crystal River Section Environmental Review and is copied below:

#### **Background on Existing Seasonal Closures**

Considering the seasonal sensitivity of wildlife to recreational access and use – particularly for bighorn sheep and elk – the presence and effectiveness of seasonal trail closures is an important topic for this

study. Several areas within the Crystal Valley study area are currently subject to administrative seasonal closures to public recreational access, as follows:

- Red Wind Point – The existing railroad grade is managed as a county open space trail, and is subject to a seasonal closure from December 1 to April 30. The upper slopes of the open space property are permanently closed to public access.
- Janeway Meadow – All National Forest lands north of Avalanche Creek Road, including the Janeway Meadow, are closed to all human occupancy from November 23 to April 30. County OST access from the road match this restriction.
- Avalanche Creek – All National Forest lands on both sides of Avalanche Creek Road are closed to dogs from November 23 to April 30. (The road itself is closed to vehicles but remains open to non-motorized access, without dogs, during this period).
- Filoha Meadows – The existing railroad grade is managed as a county open space trail, and is subject to a seasonal closure from October 1 through June 30. During the open period, pedestrian access is limited to the trail itself, with the exception of guided interpretive access. Dogs and bike access are prohibited year-round.

During the public and stakeholder outreach process, some community members have questioned the effectiveness of seasonal closures as a tool to limit impacts to wildlife. Based on the following examples from the Crystal and Roaring Fork Valleys, seasonal closures have been effective in locations where access points are limited and not easily accessed by the public; and where they are clearly and consistently enforced. Closures in areas where there is limited enforcement capacity or multiple access points from private land (Red Wind Point and Avalanche Creek) are have been less effective. While closures are not impervious to violations, the County has demonstrated the ability to effectively implement seasonal closures on its properties and trails.

### **Rio Grande Trail Wildlife Monitoring Report**

Beginning in 2007, the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA) implemented a robust program to monitor the ecological management of the Rio Grande Trail corridor along the Roaring Fork River between the Catherine Store Bridge and the Rock Bottom Ranch. Monitoring has included field surveys and deployment of motion sensitive cameras.

This area is subject to a seasonal closure from December 1 through April 30. Dogs are prohibited on this section of trail year-round. Violations of the closure do occur, and some are documented in the wildlife cameras. While the number of dogs and people recorded by the cameras during the winter closure has increased, the total annual number of violations remains relatively low.

The report states that the results of the seven-year monitoring effort suggest current management strategies are exceeding expectations in minimizing the effects of recreation on wildlife. Herons, other waterbirds, songbirds, deer, elk, and other mammals all seem to have adapted to the increased recreational activity and are benefiting from the winter closure. The report further states that wintering animals are benefiting from the reduction in human disturbance due to the trail closure (Lowsky 2014).

### **Red Wind Point Closures**

The existing railroad grade trail at Red Wind Point is subject to a seasonal closure, while the remainder of the property is closed permanently. County OST staff report that trail closure violations are

infrequent, but do occur. In addition, illegal access to the upper sections of the property have also been observed, originating from the adjacent subdivision (Groves 2017).

### **Avalanche and Janeway Closures**

Seasonal closures of USFS lands north of Avalanche Creek Road have been established by the USFS. The area is closed to dogs year-round. While enforcement is limited, the seasonal closure north of the road appears to be effective, largely due to steep terrain and dense vegetation. The restriction on dogs, however, has been less effective. The area south of the road functions as a local dog run and appears to be used year-round for this purpose.

### **Filoha Meadows Closures**

The seasonal closure of Filoha Meadows is in place October 1 through June 30. This closure is clearly marked at the only public access point, and is strictly enforced by Pitkin County and CPW. These factors, in addition to the visibility from Highway 133, has made this closure successful with few violations (Thompson 2017).

### **Sky Mountain Park**

Sky Mountain Park is seasonally closed for the protection of wildlife from December 1st through May 15th. OST monitors the closure with five different wildlife cameras both to track wildlife use and any closure violations. Violations average less than 10 per year and are usually within the first 2 weeks and last 2 weeks of the closure. OST will issue tickets based on images from the cameras. The property is closed year-round to dogs and seems to have minimal violations.

### **North Star Nature Preserve**

The back side of North Star, west of the river, is completely closed to the public unless part of a permitted educational tour. About a once a winter, skiers coming down from Aspen Mountain are caught on the back side of North Star. Summers are pretty much free of violators. North Star is bordered by private property to the north and south. Documented violations from the private property are rare. North Star is closed to dogs year-round and has minimal violations.

### **Glassier Open Space**

Glassier Open Space is seasonally closed for the protection of wildlife from December 1st through May 15th. The adjacent BLM property has a shorter closure. OST monitors the trails with two cameras. Almost all closure violations are in the spring within two to three weeks of the opening date. The difference in closure timeframes between the OST and BLM lands does create confusion and better signage is in the works. Glassier is closed to dogs year-round. Dog violations are seen when the property is open; they are minimal.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife, through Madelaine West, Department of Natural Resources Assistant Director for Parks, Wildlife, Lands, provided the following response on a question if Colorado Parks and Wildlife has an official policy on seasonal closures: "To answer your question directly: No. CPW does not have a policy or formal position that seasonal closures are inadequate mitigation. I am aware that CPW often utilizes seasonal closures to mitigate impacts that cannot be otherwise avoided. Yet it can be challenging to enforce closures in some areas."