Rocky Mountain National Park Seeks Public Input on a Multiuse Trail

Rocky Mountain National Park (the park) completed a Multiuse Trail Feasibility Study (feasibility study) in 2009 for the developed eastern portion of the park. This study confirmed the feasibility of a trail system that would extend approximately 15.5 miles from the Fall River Entrance to Sprague Lake, with connections to the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center and numerous hiker shuttle stops. The National Park Service (NPS) is continuing the planning process with the development of a Multiuse Trail Plan/ Environmental Assessment (plan/EA), which will examine the possible options for the multiuse trail alignments and analyze their potential environmental impacts.

Public Meeting

The park welcomes public input on potential issues and options to be considered during development of this plan. Please join park staff for a public meeting (details below), where the park will present the purpose of and need for this project, preliminary options being considered for trail alignments, and additional information on the planning process.

Meeting Details
February 19, 2013
4:45pm to 6:15pm

A brief presentation will be made by park staff at 5:00pm, followed by Q&A and time to review the materials provided.

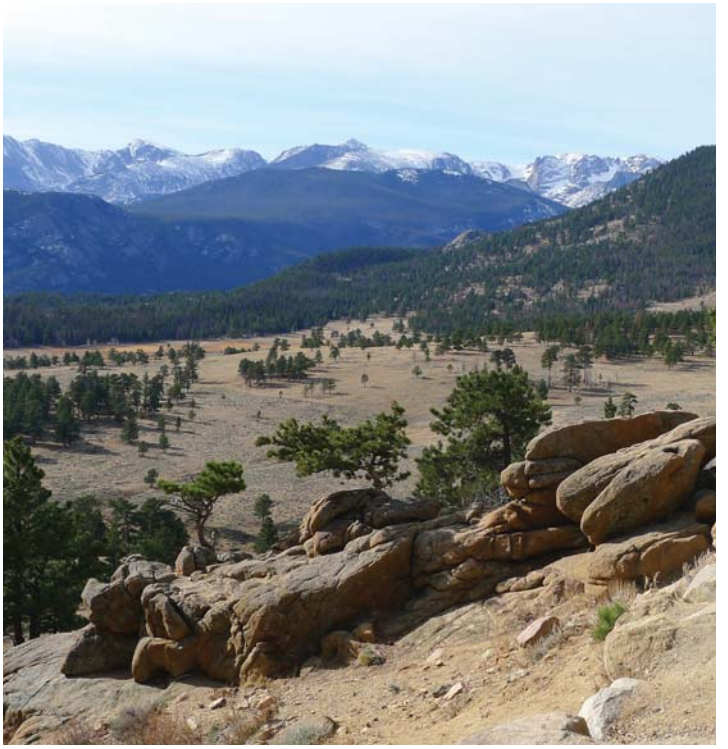
Hondius Room
Estes Valley Public Library
335 E. Elkhorn Ave
Estes Park, Colorado

The park will provide comment forms at this meeting. Comments can also be entered directly into the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ROMO.

Comments are requested by March 21, 2013

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this plan/EA is to provide a multiuse trail system to connect with local trail systems in the Estes Valley, to reduce traffic congestion, and to provide multimodal options (including connections to the shuttle system) along the developed corridor of roads on the east side of the park. Multiuse in a national park setting is defined as self-propelled transportation, which may include bicycle, foot, baby stroller, snowshoe, and/or cross-country skiing.



Why Create a Multiuse Trail?

The park serves as a destination both for the population local to Colorado's Front Range as well as for visitors travelling from afar. The majority of Colorado residents regularly participate in walking, running, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and other trail-based activities. Bicycling is a popular recreational activity for both residents and visitors in Colorado. The creation and maintenance of trail infrastructure is considered a top priority on the Front Range of Colorado, and Colorado residents report that recreational trails are integral to their quality of life. Outdoor recreation is increasingly popular across the country, and current recreation planning emphasizes recreational activities that are healthy, safe, and accessible to a diverse population. Therefore, the project is needed at this time to meet the projected increase in demand for access to recreational opportunities within the park.

Bicycling, both road biking and mountain biking, are growing in popularity. Currently bicycles are only permitted on paved and unpaved roadways within the park; bicycles are currently not permitted on trails within the park. Therefore, the project is needed at this time to better accommodate bicycles as part of an overall increase in multimodal access to the park.

The park currently experiences heavily concentrated use at popular activity areas and trailheads resulting in congestion at parking areas, heavy traffic to popular destinations, and natural resource impacts. This congestion stems from the fact that, although many visitors choose to take advantage of the park's shuttle system, many visitors prefer to use their private vehicles as the primary method of travel within the park. Therefore, the project is needed at this time to provide additional alternative methods of transportation to access the park and for travel within the park.

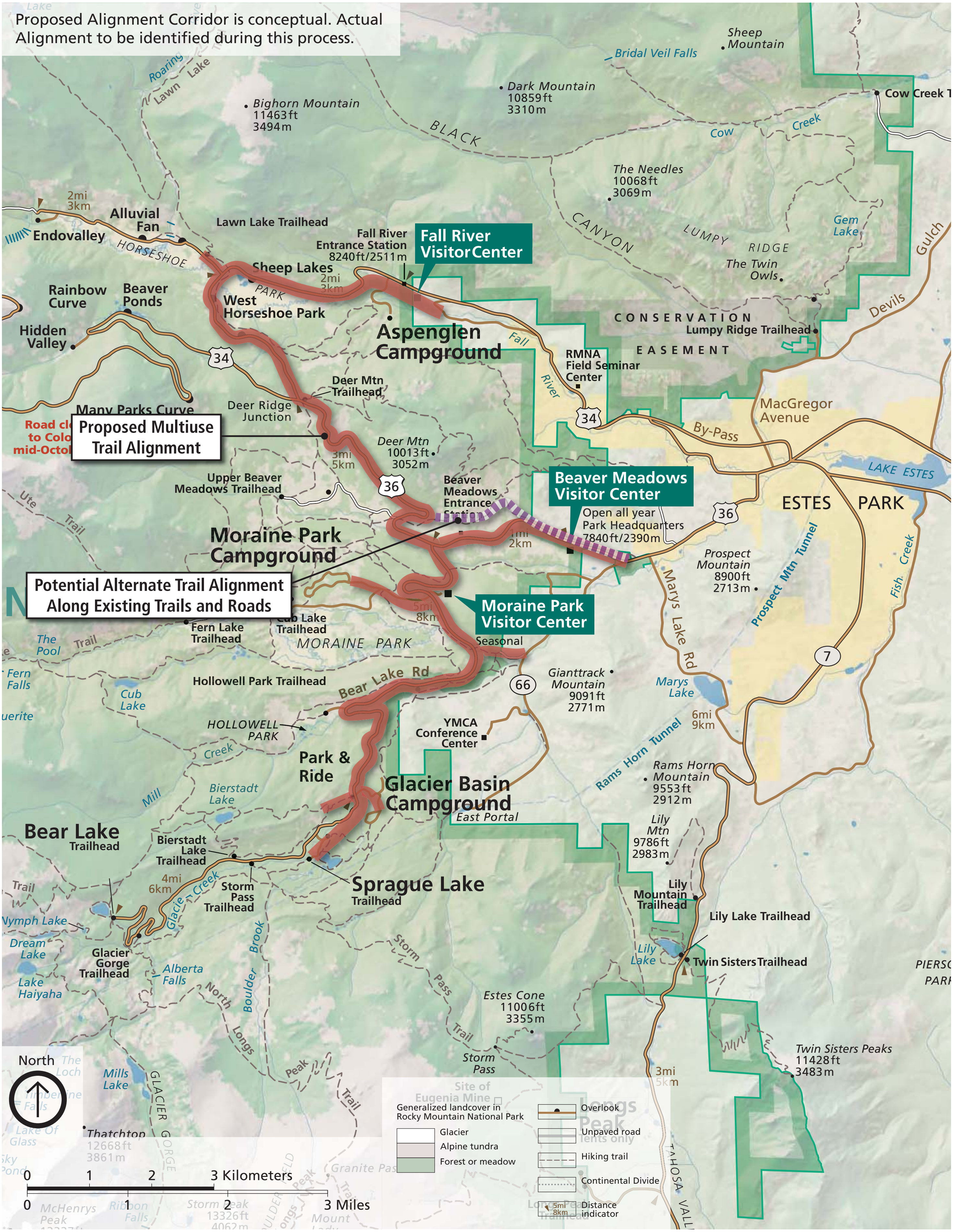
What Does the Park Hope to Accomplish with this Plan?

Objectives for the proposed action include:

- Connecting to other recreational opportunities in the area such as campgrounds and other multiuse trails managed by the Town of Estes Park and the Estes Valley Recreation and Park District
- Expanding recreational opportunities for self-propelled transportation
- Providing an alternate means of transportation within the park's developed eastern side
- Providing connections to the park's shuttle bus system
- Reducing vehicular congestion
- Providing for temporal and spatial dispersal of visitors
- Providing for new visitor experiences within the park
- Minimizing adverse impacts on existing visitors
- Minimizing conflicts among visitors
- Providing a safe multiuse trail system

Preliminary Options for the Multiuse Trail Alignment

The 2009 feasibility study identified approximately 15.5 miles of potential trails that would generally follow the existing park roads, as shown on the map to the right. The trail may be attached to existing roads, may be separated slightly, or may extend away from the road (examples of each situation are included on the back of this newsletter). In addition to the alignment proposed in the feasibility study, the park is considering aligning the trail along High Drive instead of the heavily used Highway 36.

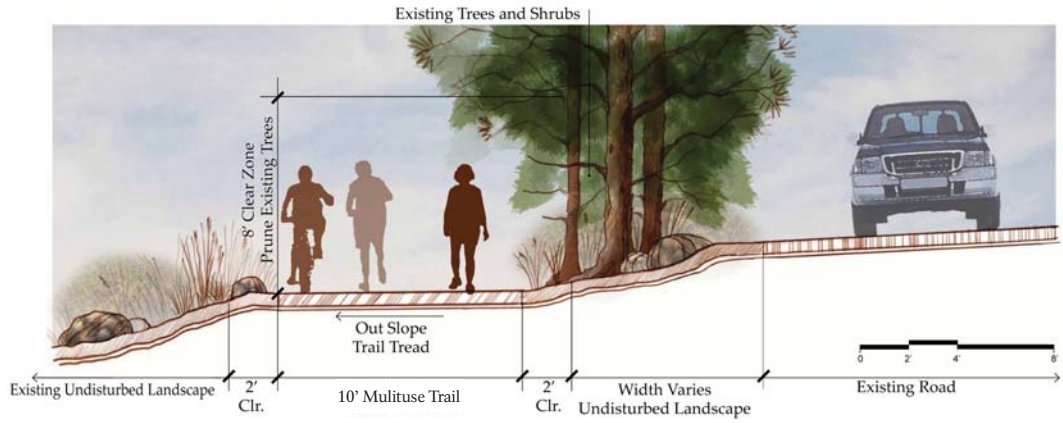


Proposed Alignment Corridor is conceptual. Actual Alignment to be identified during this process.
Proposed Multiuse Trail Alignment
Potential Alternate Trail Alignment Along Existing Trails and Roads
Fall River Visitor Center
Beaver Meadows Visitor Center
Open all year
Park Headquarters
7840ft/2390m
Moraine Park Visitor Center
Seasonal
Aspenglen Campground
Moraine Park Campground
Glacier Basin Campground
Bear Lake Trailhead
Sprague Lake Trailhead
Park & Ride
ESTES PARK
LAKE ESTES
Fall River Entrance Station
8240ft/2511m
Beaver Meadows Entrance Station
Sheep Lakes
West Horseshoe Park
Alluvial Fan
Endovalley
Lawn Lake Trailhead
Deer Mtn Trailhead
Deer Ridge Junction
Deer Mtn
10013ft
3052m
Upper Beaver Meadows Trailhead
Cub Lake Trailhead
Fern Lake Trailhead
Hollowell Park Trailhead
Bear Lake Rd
MORAINE PARK
YMCA Conference Center
Bierstadt Lake Trailhead
Storm Pass Trailhead
Glacier Gorge Trailhead
Lily Lake Trailhead
Twin Sisters Trailhead
Lily Mountain Trailhead
Lumpy Ridge Trailhead
RMNA Field Seminar Center
CONSERVATION EASEMENT
MacGregor Avenue
By-Pass
Marys Lake Rd
Prospect Mtn Tunnel
Rams Horn Tunnel
Rainbow Curve
Beaver Ponds
Hidden Valley
Many Parks Curve
Bighorn Mountain
11463ft
3494m
Dark Mountain
10859ft
3310m
The Needles
10068ft
3069m
Sheep Mountain
Prospect Mountain
8900ft
2713m
Gianttrack Mountain
9091ft
2771m
Rams Horn Mountain
9553ft
2912m
Lily Mtn
9786ft
2983m
Estes Cone
11006ft
3355m
Twin Sisters Peaks
11428ft
3483m
North
0 1 2 3 Kilometers
0 1 2 3 Miles
Generalized landcover in Rocky Mountain National Park
Glacier
Alpine tundra
Forest or meadow
Overlook
Unpaved road
Hiking trail
Continental Divide
Distance indicator

Sample Trail Configurations

The scenarios shown here, originally from the 2009 feasibility study, offer examples of potential configurations that could be used in different sections of the proposed multiuse trail, depending upon opportunities and constraints along the trail alignment. In areas where the slopes are relatively gentle and there is room, a detached trail may follow the road alignment but be separated from the road (at right, top). In other cases where conditions are not as favorable, the multiuse trail may need to be attached to the road (at right, bottom). The recent realignment of 1 mile of Bear Lake Road provides an opportunity to use the abandoned section of road for a multiuse trail segment with a good deal of separation from the road (see below).

Typical Detached Multiuse Trail



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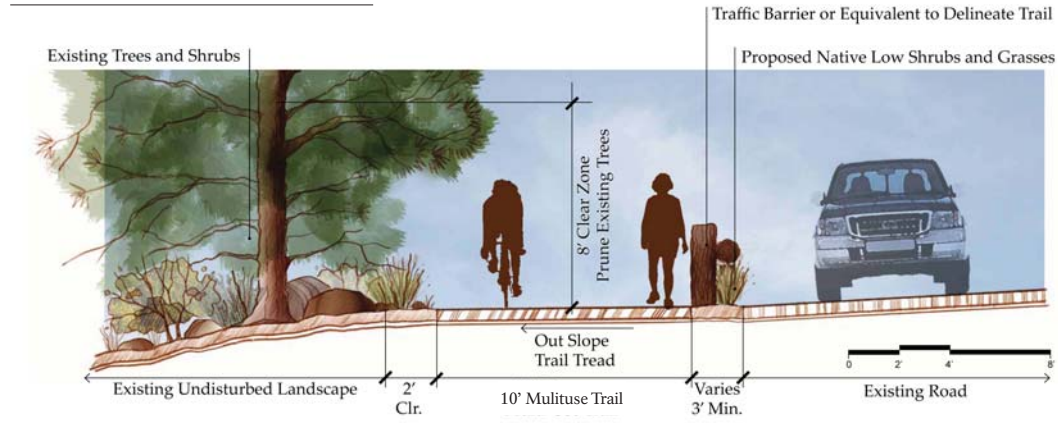

Potential to Reuse Abandoned Road Corridor

Planning Process

The table below outlines the planning process, highlighting where we are now.

2009	Multiuse Trail Feasibility Study
Fall/Winter 2012	Initiate Multiuse Trail Plan/ Environmental Assessment
February 19, 2013 to March 21, 2013	Public and Agency Scoping Period *WE ARE HERE
Winter/Spring 2013	Alternatives Development and Data Gathering
Late Spring 2013	Second Public Scoping Period to Review Refined Alternatives
Early 2014	Public Review of Multiuse Trail Plan/ Environmental Assessment
Spring 2014	Analysis of Public Comments, Preparation of Decision Document
Summer 2014	Announcement of Decision