

NOTES FROM THE MAY 7, 2015 COLONNADE PUBLIC WORKSHOP ON BICYCLE FEATURES

Drafted by Lewi Vasseur; edited by Chris Leman

The workshop was held on a Thursday at the Agora Conference Center (1551 Eastlake Avenue), with 16 volunteers in attendance. The Colonnade study area is 20 acres of WSDOT land, of which 7.5 acres is currently under lease to the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation.

Background. About 3 acres of the current I-5 Colonnade Open Space are devoted to mountain bike features. Mountain bikers are among the few users who not only tolerate but welcome steep topography, so most of the Colonnade acreage currently used or proposed for mountain biking is not suitable for any other use.

As City funds for the original 2005 buildout of the I-5 Colonnade Open Space were tight, the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance (then called the Backcountry Bicycle Trails Club) and its hundreds of volunteers stepped up from 2005 to 2009 with sweat equity to design and build the mountain bike features with the equivalent of hundreds of thousands of dollars in donated labor, materials, and funds. For the entire period of 2004 to 2016, no more than about \$50,000 in City funds were spent on constructing the current mountain bike features.

Stemming from discussion at this workshop and other public events, the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance produced a suggested master plan for improvement and redesign of the mountain bike features in the I-5 Colonnade Open Space. That design can be seen on the project web site, <http://eastlakeseattle.org/?page=colonnade>.

Recasting some existing features. Many users consider some current mountain bike features within Colonnade to be too difficult or dangerous to use. Some of these same features are deteriorating and need to be replaced by something more sustainable.

Pump track. A pump track is a loop with many and varied hills and dips, including parallel “progressive jumps” that provide the user two or three choices of varying difficulty. The current dirt pump track is near Lakeview Blvd., above the current dirt jumps. A.J. Johnson, owner of the Go Huck Yourself Bike Shop, has suggested designs for relocating and building the dirt pump track. [Note: a pump track layout later contributed by the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance is posted on the Colonnade project web site; subsequently, EMBA has proposed that the pump track be paved and possibly relocated to a sheltered site—unlike a dirt pump track, it would not need rain.]

Dirt jumps. Colonnade currently lacks dirt jumps like those in the mountain bike dirt jump area just west of the playfields in Woodland Park (near the skatepark). The hope is for a similar set of dirt jumps at Colonnade that would, as at Woodland Park, be built and maintained by volunteers.

The Waterfall. This feature has no falling water, but is a steep descent that feels to the user like riding down a waterfall on large steplike rocks westward from Lakeview Blvd. on the Blaine Street alignment. Indeed, it is not easily used either by mountain bikers or pedestrians

(rated a double black diamond for highest level of difficulty). There was uncertainty at the workshop on whether to keep it. [Note: the EMBA master plan and the Colonnade long-range schematic plan later proposed to convert this route to a pedestrian stairway.]

Maintenance. Build jumps in a manner that they are easy to maintain. Maintaining dirt jumps is low cost and pretty easy, but requires sweat equity. Have it understood that in order for anyone to ride a new jump line, you must lift a shovel. You just can't show up to new trails and expect to ride the big beautifully shaped jump lines without helping make and keep them that way. This is also a plus in promoting safe and knowledgeable users. In order to really understand how a jump will send you through the air, you must spend time lifting a shovel for six hours.

Smaller jump lines can be easily maintained by beginners and would need it because of their heavy use. The larger jumps would likely need less maintenance and would stay in better running order due to lower volume or riders.

Soils. The native soils in Colonnade are largely clay, which without water tends to break down and produce dust. The dirt jump area in Woodland Park uses some special red soil that when watered keeps its form, and this surface is recommended for the dirt jumps proposed for Colonnade.

Water. A key feature of mountain biking is riding on dirt trails and other features which, if not kept moist, break down and kick up dust that is tough for breathing and gets on the mountain bikers and other nearby users. The parts of the existing Colonnade mountain biking area that are exposed to precipitation are particularly valued by riders, although in dry summer months, even these mountain bike features benefit from water.

Especially for the mountain bike features that are under cover of the freeway, a water supply is desirable to help maintain the dirt trails and other features. During dry weather, the application of water would help keep the dust down and would keep the shape of trail and jump features, which can quickly deteriorate without it.

The mountain bike community has donated some long hoses. Burying hoses or PVC lines might help reduce tripping and vandalism. Volunteers would prefer that no special tool be needed to access the water, although without some kind of security there would be a risk of vandalism or of flooding. A possible solution is a timer to shut the water off at certain times or after a certain amount of use.

Cross country trails. There was strong support for keeping and expanding the cross country trails, which would not be paved; these trails are normally only 12 to 24 inches wide. Many people who ride dirt jumps or use pump tracks also like to race, train, or travel on cross country trails. Others simply prefer cross country and see it as the true type of mountain riding. Having the presence of active people consistently in there may discourage people from tenting in the mountain bike areas.

Multiuse bicycle and pedestrian pathways. Paved pathways north and south will benefit the mountain bike features by providing access and moving people through. Access south all the

way to Aloha St. will be welcome, especially if the paved trail is paralleled by a dirt cross country trail for mountain bikers.

Lighting. Lighting of the mountain bike features is desired, consistent with not disturbing adjacent homes. The dirt jump area would be popular for night use, and is not close to homes. Timers or motion sensors could help reduce the use of lighting except when it is truly needed. Lights could be set so that they cannot be turned on past a certain time each night.

Proximity to off-leash area. Does the dog park area have pet owners concerned about bikes? Dogs do love trail running, following their owners.

Parking. As many mountain bikers come to Colonnade from far away, parking is an issue. Currently the on-street parking is not limited in duration. Placing a couple of hours' limit on parking would help free up parking for more users.

Accommodating children. As Colonnade becomes more fully used, there will be flying bikes, skateboards, cross country riders, runners, etc. Creating spaces just for children would help reduce the risk of their getting in the way of more dangerous activities. No one wants to run over little kids.

Notes on public art. Art would bring people in--tourists, people of all ages. Do we embrace street art? Graffiti?

Personal note by Lewi Vasseur, who drafted these minutes: “Jamie Lynn is an amazing local artist. Designer of Lib Tech snowboards. His art is on the Stevens Pass snowboard shop, and is featured by the band Candy Coated, which my tattoo artist played for back in the day.”