

Boulder County Parks & Open Space
P.O. Box 471
Boulder, CO 80306

April 14, 2003
Re: St. Vrain Creek Trail

To POSAC, Consultants, BCPOS Staff and County Commissioners:

Like you, the Boulder County Horse Association (BCHA) has been looking forward to a safe, high-quality recreational trail along St. Vrain Creek between Lyons and Longmont for many years.

We are pleased that Boulder County has been acquiring a lot of acreage along this alignment for open space purposes, and that County acreage is now almost continuous from Lyons to Longmont. There are many existing features in the corridor that could be utilized as trail connections, such as farm roads and other short trail segments. We recommend that the entire trail system be built of crusher fines or a similar soft-surface material, that it be an off-road experience, and that it be open to equestrians.

We do not support a rails-with-trail option for this corridor, and we don't want to wait until the entire line is abandoned. Even if there are only a couple of trains a day, we believe using a shared corridor with a train would be a very unsafe, unpleasant experience for equestrians and other trail users. We hope you will reject the rails-with-trail alternative.

Similarly, we submit that, when presented with a map showing a "trail" alignment along three existing roads (St. Vrain, Crane Hollow, and Hygiene), most citizens will reject that "Route B" proposal as well -- and so should you. Those roads already provide an alternate-mode transportation alternative, but it's not a trail, and it's not the reason Great Outdoors Colorado awarded us a Legacy Grant for the St. Vrain corridor!

Surely an off-road trail alignment can be found that would maximize people's appreciation of the St. Vrain corridor while minimizing any environmental impacts from the trail. The ERO/BCPOS map shows a trail alignment along the creek at the western end (part of "Route A") through the CEMEX mining area. The riparian corridor is exceptionally wide and pleasant here; the trail should be constructed at least partially in it, with physical buffers such as vegetation, berms and fencing between it and the quarrying operation.

We agree with the map showing a small portion of the trail utilizing the all-but-abandoned railroad grade on the south side of Highway 66 west from the CEMEX plant to Highway 36.

We urge you to explore several attractive options here for extending the St. Vrain Trail westward to the Town of Lyons, perhaps along some of the many ditches that parallel the river near the Loukonen stone yard (the old Ideal Cement facility would make a great trailhead parking area!). The ultimate westward connection of the St. Vrain Trail with the Hall and Heil Valley Ranch Open Space areas is a very desirable element of a meaningful regional trail plan. We would also like to get a trail connection northward to Rabbit Mountain Open Space using either N.53rd St. or the St. Vrain Supply Canal, or both (which would make an attractive loop trail, especially in winter).

A new trailhead where the trail intersects N.61st/N.63rd St. would provide ample space for parking near the midpoint between Lyons and Longmont. Unless there are plans to expand both the existing Pella Crossing and Golden Ponds parking areas, we believe they are too small to accommodate this regional trail.

Approaching the town of Hygiene from the west, the new trail should merge with the Marlatt trail extension and the Pella Crossing trail system in the middle or on the south side of those properties, minimizing exposure to the railroad. Similarly, from there east to Golden Ponds the trail should stay off the railroad alignment and off the neighborhood streets.

Finally, we would like to reiterate our desire to open the St. Vrain Greenway in Lyons, at Golden Ponds, the Fairgrounds, and from downtown Longmont to Sandstone Ranch, to equestrians. We feel that we were unfairly excluded from those areas and that horses are an appropriate part of the trail mix.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our input. We look forward to the successful completion of this important regional project in the near future.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Webel
External Vice President
BCHA