

Boulder County
Horse Association
P.O. Box 19601
Boulder, CO 80308
Feb. 19, 2003

Scott Robson
Boulder County Transportation Dept
P.O. Box 491
Boulder, CO 80306

Dear Scott:

Thank you for providing an opportunity to comment on the allocation of 2001 Transportation Improvement Tax funds which may be allocated toward regional trail development in Boulder County. The Boulder County Horse Association is hopeful that some long-anticipated trails and trail connections may be built soon with this new source of funding. We strongly urge you to keep as many trails soft-surface as possible to accommodate equestrians as well as other non-motorized trail users.

Following please find our prioritization of the 17-plus projects you have suggested, along with some comments on each.

Highest priority

7. UP Rail Line (Erie to Boulder).

This is an excellent regional trail along an existing alignment. It will provide connections to several other existing and planned trails, and will have minimal environmental impact. It is a quality "destination" trail in its own right. It is also a great commuter alignment, and it needs financial and logistical "help" from many agencies working together -- which makes it a natural for this transportation tax funding. We'd like to see this trail become part of the Front Range Trail system, bringing recreationists north from Golden through Boulder and out to the Weld County portion of the FRT. Relatively low cost to convert the old rail alignment to a trail. Definitely "the most bang for the buck." Not knowing how much you project each of the proposed trails will cost, if you can only do one trail with \$4 million this is the one we hope you will choose!

Next Priority

2. St. Vrain Greenway (Lyons to Longmont to E. County Line). Like #7, we have long advocated this regional trail as it will provide a quality "destination" trail experience as well as connecting municipalities. We hope planning for this trail will include connections to Heil Valley Ranch, Hall Ranch and Rabbit Mountain. We feel very strongly that horses should be allowed on the entire St. Vrain Greenway, including the segment through Longmont.

14. East Boulder Trail (Baseline Reservoir to Teller Farm). East Boulder is still home to quite a few equestrians, but they have fewer and fewer places to ride due to urbanization and increasing amounts of "closed space." We need a safe, off-road connection from the Cherryvale trailhead to Teller Farm. We are strongly opposed to the current proposed Baseline Road segment of this trail, and have advocated instead building this trail from Cherryvale and South Boulder

Road on existing farm roads on City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks land south and east of Baseline Reservoir to the Dry Creek Trailhead. Transportation tax funding would help carry this desirable trail northeast across a couple of tricky crossings at 75th St. and Arapahoe Road to the East Boulder Trail/Teller Farm area.

4, 5. Highway 52 / N. 79th St. / Monarch Business Park /Gunbarrel connections. Getting safe trail connections from Gunbarrel to Niwot, and from Gunbarrel to Boulder Reservoir, have been high on everybody's list for a long time. Most of the land needed is already in the public domain. These could be excellent commuter alignments as well, but there seems to be little enthusiasm from local agencies to get the job done. If money were no object, we'd be thrilled to have a nice underpass at Highway 52 and Monarch Business Park; but due to the apparent high cost of this feature, we would suggest instead extending the "Powerline Trail" northeast along the two irrigation ditches to the intersection of 52 and N.79th and installing a user-activated crossing signal to get to the Niwot Trailhead. To the west, we would like to see the existing between-the-ditches trail extended to Lookout Road in Gunbarrel (or bridged onto the Boulder Creek Feeder Supply Canal), with a spur under the Diagonal to IBM and thence to Boulder Reservoir.

3. Dry Creek Trail (83rd St. to E.County Line). This is a desirable trail alignment, with links to the St. Vrain Greenway and the Weld County Trail system, passing through an area with large Boulder County Parks & Open Space holdings.

13. Marshall to Superior (Community Ditch - S. 66th St.). This is a desirable trail connection, but should be built by the City of Boulder Open Space on that jurisdiction, followed by segments along S. 66th, Coal Creek Road, and Boulder County Parks & Open Space to be built by that jurisdiction. There are also admirable trail alignments along the old railroad grade near Marshall Road (behind Costco) and along a power line west of McCaslin, which should be considered as ways to connect with the Coalton Drive trail. BATCO and BCHA are currently preparing a proposal to champion and build parts of this trail system; help from Transportation would be welcome.

16. Boulder Creek Feeder Supply Canal (Boulder Res. to Walden Ponds at Jay Rd.). We are pleased to see this opportunity on your list, if it can be extended north and south to make meaningful connections to other existing trail systems. It would also be somewhat more expensive to construct than the section north of Boulder Reservoir, as it will entail crossing both Jay Road and Boulder Creek. Therefore we believe it would be a great candidate for Transportation tax funding! (see also safety concerns discussed below).

8. Boulder Creek Feeder Supply Canal (Boulder Res. to Lyons). This alignment seems to have a life of its own within Boulder County and would be comparatively inexpensive to construct, so we recommend that it be built with local funds. Therefore we place it "lower" on the potential Transportation tax list.

With regard to both #8 and #16, we are very concerned about the deep, fast, cold water that flows seasonally in this canal, complete with baffles and siphons. Unless the water is somehow completely fenced off from the public, or the trail

is only open to the public when there is no water in the canal, we believe this entire alignment is fundamentally unsafe for the casual recreational public.

6. Four Mile Creek Bike/Ped underpass (at the Diagonal Hwy and BNSF). This is not a high-priority equestrian trail but we can see its desirability from hikers' and bicyclists' points of view, so we include it here as a recommendation.

Lowest Priority

11. Rock Creek/Coal Creek Trail connections. Even more than the Boulder Creek Feeder Supply Canal, this trail has already developed an infrastructure, volunteers, a foundation and local governments to fund it. They should!

15. Cottonwood Trail (to Twin Lakes). This is a nice local connector and should be funded locally.

17. Baseline to US 36 (Callahan/railroad/Louisville). Ditto -- a local trail opportunity.

9. US Highway 36 Bikeway (Boulder to Broomfield). Equestrians have absolutely no interest in this bikeway.

12. Highway 287 Corridor (Lafayette). Ditto.

1. LOBO Trail (Diagonal Highway Longmont to Boulder). Ditto.

Should Never Get Built

10. BNSF Rail Line (Valmont to Broomfield). A safety nightmare for all types of trail user!

Not on your List but we'd like to see them get there...!

18. Burlington Northern Rail Line (Broomfield to Lafayette, and perhaps beyond). This all-but-abandoned line would make an excellent trail corridor with connections at Rock Creek Farm and other Open Space properties. It is an excellent commuter alignment as well. If it had been included on your list we would have ranked it higher than many others!

19. Abandoned (?) Rail line (Longmont to Mead) Don't even know whose line this is/was -- but it would make a spectacular "plains" connection and freestanding trail experience from Longmont to I-25 through farm country, with lots of local connections possible. Please advise!

As always, please feel free to call on us as a resource to provide additional information and expertise from an equestrian perspective should the need arise.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Webel
President, BCHA