

Bike Colorado 2026 Colorado Springs Park System Master Plan Comments

To the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Team and City Leadership,

Bike Colorado Springs appreciates the opportunity to provide formal public comment on the draft 2026 Park System Master Plan (PSMP). First, we want to congratulate PRCS on the draft of this important and ambitious Parks Systems Master Plan. We did notice one of America's most popular sports didn't make the cut on page 41's "Top 5 Most Participated-In Sports" list even with an estimated 112 million riders according to PeopleForBikes, we recommend including bicycling on this list. Bike Colorado Springs strongly supports the 2026 Park System Master Plan's focus on completing missing trail gaps (**Goal G.8**) and modernizing our regional network (**Goal G.13**). As Colorado Springs grows, our trail system must function not only as a recreational amenity, but as vital active transportation infrastructure connecting everyday origins and destinations; linking our neighborhoods directly to schools, commercial hubs, employment centers, and transit.

In order for Colorado Springs to achieve a resilient trail network that serves both recreation and transportation focused users, we urge PRCS to prioritize the following targeted asks in the final plan:

1. Build Network Redundancy: Elevate the Eastern I-25 / InterQuest Corridor

We strongly support prioritizing the "Ring the Springs" loop, once connected this will be both a recreational draw for the city and will serve as a crucial transportation connection for its residents. Yet, relying on a single alignment through the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) creates a major vulnerability in our regional network. Roughly seven miles of this loop (the New Santa Fe Regional Trail) passes through Academy land which has remained closed for the majority of 2026, completely severing a primary north-south connection for residents.

- **Establish a Secondary Spine:** PRCS must formally elevate the **Eastern I-25 / InterQuest Corridor** (identified in Map 4.4.6) as a named priority. This off-street route provides a crucial alternative connecting northern neighborhoods directly to the Pikes Peak Greenway and major commercial centers.
- **Protect Right-of-Way in Phase 1 (2027–2029):** Rapid development in the northern and eastern growth sectors risks burying viable trail corridors under pavement. PRCS must secure corridor right-of-way during Phase 1 before land is permanently lost to development. More broadly, we recommend PRCS revisit the plan's phasing (p.88) to allow parallel priorities rather than a strict sequence, so time-sensitive actions like this aren't delayed behind unrelated work.

2. Prioritize Low-Stress Neighborhood-to-Destination Connections

A regional trail loop is only as useful as a resident's ability to safely reach it from their front door. The final plan should place equal weight on short, high-utility urban connectors that bridge neighborhood gaps:

- **Safe Crossings at Arterials (G.13.E):** Prioritize grade-separated crossings and low-stress retrofits where trails intersect high-speed roadways, ensuring families and commuters can cross safely between residential areas and trail spines.
- **Coordinate with ConnectCOS:** PRCS and City Transportation must align capital budgets to ensure off-street trails seamlessly meet on-street bike networks at key neighborhood access points.
- **Urban Standards & Maintenance:** Adopt transportation-grade maintenance (e.g., year-round clearing) and clear wayfinding (**G.13.G**) for primary commuter greenways linking residential zones to work and shopping centers.
- **Prioritize Multi-Modal Accessibility to Trails and Trailheads:** We recommend the final plan make walking, biking, and transit genuinely attractive alternatives for reaching trails, trailheads, and parks, not just a parking fallback. We recommend expanding on Goal G.13.F "integrate parks and trails with transit and multimodal corridors," to establish implementation strategies and named priority sites. While parking access is a real and documented need, the Plan's response should not rely on expanded parking alone. Creating multi-modal access plans for the system's highest-demand destinations (e.g., Garden of the Gods, North Cheyenne Cañon, Red Rock Canyon) will be important to reduce overall reliance on driving to access the trail and park network.

3. Formalize Stakeholder Role in the Upcoming Trail System Master Plan

Bike Colorado Springs recommends that **Goal G.13** explicitly state **that the trail system is an integral part of the City's multimodal transportation network**, not solely a recreation asset. We recognize that detailed operational and design specifics (such as transportation-grade maintenance standards, grade-separated crossing prioritizations, and measurable network connectivity metrics) may be best captured in the upcoming **Trail System Master Plan (Goal G.13)** rather than this high-level Park System Master Plan.

Because trails increasingly serve as active transportation corridors rather than purely recreational assets, we formally request that **Bike Colorado Springs, as well as local active-transportation and trails advocates be included as direct stakeholders to assist in shaping the Trail System Master Plan (Goal G.13.A)**. Partnering with local bicycle advocates will ensure the trail plan incorporates:

- **Inter-Agency Alignment:** Formal coordination between PRCS and City Transportation Engineering to maximize TOPS/Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) funds alongside municipal transportation grants.
- **Maintain Trail Classifications:** The proposed Regional/Connector/Open Space classification system (Table 4.4.9) is built for a mature, fully connected network. Until

Colorado Springs' trails reach that point, we recommend retaining the current Tier 1/2/3 designations and revisiting classification as part of the Trail System Master Plan.

- **Actionable Test Cases:** Using projects like Priority Corridor #4 (*Palmer Park / Ute Valley Park / Blodgett Open Space Connector*) as a test bed for low-stress bike network integration and grade-separated crossings.
- **Measurable Connectivity Progress Targets:** Concrete metrics tracking the percentage of trail gaps closed and the percentage of residents within a low-stress, 10-minute bike ride or walk to a regional trail spine.

4. Establish an Honest, Comprehensive Framework for Low-Power Electric Mobility Devices

The draft PSMP is largely silent on the growing range of low-power electric personal mobility devices now used on urban trails - e-bikes across all three classes, e-scooters, e-unicycles, and similar devices. Rather than treating these piecemeal or by exception, the final plan should direct a structured examination of how each device type is best accommodated across the trail network:

- **Device-by-Device Review:** Evaluate appropriate access by trail surface, speed, and context (urban connector vs. natural-surface trail vs. shared-use path), rather than applying a single blanket rule to all "e-mobility" devices.
- **Right-Sized Rules & Access Definitions:** Where a device type doesn't fit existing trail-use categories, the plan should propose a fit-for-purpose rule. We recommend PRCS preserve existing urban trail access while the Trail System Master Plan develops a durable, well-defined solution for the full range of low-power devices - ones that exist today as well as future technologies that may be considered.
- **Fold into the Trail System Master Plan:** As with other operational specifics, we ask that a full device typology and access framework be developed collaboratively with Bike Colorado Springs and other mobility stakeholders as part of the upcoming Trail System Master Plan (Goal G.13.A).

We recognize that these targeted priorities will not resolve every gap across our trail network overnight. However, explicitly embedding these concepts in the Park System Master Plan codifies the necessity of these connections, laying the policy groundwork to secure funding and build toward a fully connected network over time.

By securing redundancy for critical transportation corridors, focusing on neighborhood-scale connectivity, and collaborating directly with active transportation stakeholders, Colorado Springs can build a safe, reliable trail system that serves all residents every day.

Sincerely,

Bike Colorado Springs