

# MINUTES

CITY OF FORT COLLINS • BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS



## Land Conservation & Stewardship Board

June 11, 2025

### Regular Meeting – Excerpt

#### Members:

Ross Cuniff, Chair

Scott Mason, Vice Chair

Denise Culver, Member

Jennifer Gooden, Member

Holger Kley, Member

Elena Lopez, Member

River Mizell, Member

Mark Sears, Member

Tom Shoemaker, Member

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**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm.

#### **2. ROLL CALL:**

**LCSB:** Elena Lopez, Mark Sears, Holger Kley, Jennifer Gooden, Denise Culver, Tom Shoemaker, Scott Mason, Ross Cuniff

**Unexcused:** River Mizell

**NAD Staff:** Katie Donahue, Matt Parker, Tawnya Ernst, Aaron Reed, Julia Feder, Emily Shingler, Mary Boyts

**City Staff:** Dave Kemp, Sr. Planner, Park Planning & Development

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### ***Excerpt related to this Council Meeting Agenda Item: Adoption of Strategic Trails Plan***

#### **Strategic Trails Plan**

**Dave Kemp (DK), Sr. Trails Planner** stated he was here to recap the Park Planning & Development (PPD) staff response to the LCSB memo of May 14, share additional elements added to the plan including environmental review and habitat protection, and seek a recommendation for Council adoption.

#### **Discussion**

##### *Environmental review*

LCSB Comments: LCSB appreciated the level of detail that went into the description regarding environmental stewardship and that the plan specifically calls out that the environmental review policy should be created within six months of plan adoption.

##### *Enhancing safety*

LCSB Comment: The safety section leads with statements noting there is a patchwork of laws, many of which were outdated. There is no reference to considering city ordinances, etc. to implement restrictions or regulations. There are no recommendations regarding legislation at the city level or potentially lobbying at the county or state level; it's all about education, outreach, courtesy, signage, etc.

Staff Reply: The Strategic Trails Plan trail safety and etiquette policy is based on the state statutes and local laws pertaining to the use of micromobility devices on paved trails. The Which Wheels Go Where program focuses on all facilities, including sidewalks, bike lanes, streets and

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trails and updating the laws specific to these devices. Staff do not anticipate any changes at this point in time to the local laws pertaining to micromobility devices on trails.

LCSB Comment: Previous City Councils cited the difficulty of enforcement as one of the reasons not to enact a city ordinance limiting speed on the paved trail system.

Staff Reply: Fort Collins does not have a codified speed limit on our trail system today.

LCSB Comment: The Board could add that as part of our recommendation on the trails plan that Council take up the issue of city ordinances regarding speed and safety on the trails. Other municipalities have these laws.

LCSB Comment: Boulder has done a pretty good job on codifying the speed limits for bicycles and e-bikes.

Staff Reply: Safety will be covered during the August 12 Council Work Session: Which Wheels Go Where Council. Staff will address laws pertaining to human and light electric vehicles on city sidewalks, streets, bike lanes, and paved trails. Natural Areas and Parks Rangers and Fort Collins Police Services have limited resources and have indicated they prefer an education approach versus enforcement to address safety concerns.

LCSB Comment: We should at least be open speed enforcement as one pillar of the strategy to control and enhance safety on the trails.

LCSB Comment: There is a monitoring component tied to the safety a plan.

Staff Reply: Staff recognize that there is a trail safety issue. The additional messaging, signage, and social media assets created to address different concerns are noted in the Appendix. Staff will implement the trail safety education campaign for a period of 18 months and then follow up to measure the efficacy of the campaign.

*Integrated communications plan guide trail use*

Comment: The Board thanked staff for including wildlife awareness.

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#### *Overland Trail corridor*

LCSB Comment: Thanked staff for looking again at the location of the north-south paved trail.

LCSB Comment: The ditch road has very limited traffic/use and serves as wildlife corridor.

LCSB Comment: Because we see moderately sized and larger mammals moving along those ditches as well it would be nice to remove "small" (page 35).

Staff Reply: Staff can make that accommodation.

#### *Closing Remarks*

LCSB Comment: Stated appreciation of the discussion and the changes that will help make trails better, a way to partner the trails with natural areas, and get more people to appreciate the natural habitat.

***Chair Cunniff made a motion that the Land Conservation Stewardship Board feels that the concerns in their May memo were sufficiently addressed. LCSB thanks staff for diligence and responsiveness to their concern and further recommends that council adopt the Strategic Trails plan. Member Gooden seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.***

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** June 11, 2025

**To:** Land Conservation Stewardship Board (LCSB)

**Through:** Katie Donahue, Natural Areas Director  
Mike Calhoun, Parks Director  
Jill Wuertz, Senior Manager, Park Planning & Development

**From:** Dave “DK” Kemp, Senior Trails Planner, Park Planning & Development

**Subject:** Response to LCSB’s Strategic Trails Plan Considerations

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a staff response to LCSB’s May 14, 2025 memorandum regarding additional considerations to address in the final *draft* [Strategic Trails Plan](#) prior to anticipated City Council adoption on July 1, 2025.

Park Planning & Development and Natural Areas Department staff appreciate the opportunity to further coordinate with LCSB to address the items that are of high importance to the board and the City of Fort Collins. Your input has helped make the Strategic Trails Plan stronger and more comprehensive from a habitat and wildlife protection standpoint. Staff take these aspects seriously and will continue to keep them in front of mind throughout the trail development process.

The following sections of this memorandum include staff’s response to the LCSB’s May 14, 2025 memorandum and additional information regarding the integration of new material in the Strategic Trails Plan specific to habitat and wildlife protection.

For memo brevity, staff have included an abbreviated LCSB request and staff response below while pointing to discrete page numbers in the *draft* [Strategic Trails Plan](#) containing the full language. Thank you again for your consideration of a letter of recommendation and we look forward to our discussion on June 11.

### **May 14, 2025 LCSB Memorandum**

1. **LCSB:** The STP should refer explicitly to an Environmental Review Administrative Policy:

*Staff response: Page 39: Information pertaining to the administrative policy is included.*

2. **LCSB:** The STP should commit to a multi-pronged strategy for limiting speeds and enhancing safety on the trails...Recognize and address potential impact on wildlife if unchecked.

*Staff response: Pages 59 & 61: Trail safety, etiquette, and impacts to wildlife are addressed.*

3. **LCSB:** The STP should provide an integrated communications plan to guide trail use. The plan should address trail safety, well-being, etiquette, wildlife and habitat protection.

***Staff response:** Page 59: An integrated communications plan is captured in the development of a FoCo Trails Program. Appendix M: A wildlife awareness sign is included in overall trail safety and etiquette campaign: “Share the Space – Wildlife lives here too- stay alert and give animals space.” Note: Additional signs can be produced for the campaign as it evolves.*

4. **LCSB:** The STP should postpone the development of all segments of the Overland Corridor from the short term to the medium- or long-term. The LCSB finds that the STP does not make a compelling case for this route, and we suggest exploring alternatives.

***Staff response:** Page 33: User Experience: identifying “a soft surface alternative to paved trail tread is considered if surrounding environmental context allows and habitat protection is needed,” and page 32 for changes to Proposed Trails map. Note: The western paved trail alignment has been relocated back to Overland Trail (road). Staff acknowledge the community’s desire for a recreational trail running north-south below the foothills and we recognize the context of the urban wildlife interface in this area. Instead of a paved trail, staff have included a non-prioritized, soft surface trail alternative to connect the former Hughes Stadium site to Laporte Rd. One option to explore is to utilize the existing ditch rider road, if approved by Northern Water (Dixon Canal). Additional aspects of this conceptual alignment will be further determined during the predevelopment phase.*

### **Additional New Information Incorporating Aspects of Habitat and Wildlife Protection**

1. **Page xii:** Additional themes for Phase III: Community Engagement
  - **Continue proactive community engagement:** The planning process for the STP has done well to engage community members. On-going communication with the community regarding trail-related topics should continue past plan adoption.
  - **Expand outreach focus:** Trail safety and etiquette education should expand to include community awareness that paved trails impact sensitive habitats and that bicycle volumes and speeds within these areas affect wildlife. Outreach should provide ways to avoid or mitigate these impacts.
2. **Page viii:** Glossary is expanded to include the following terms with definitions: Habitat, Avoid Impacts, Minimize Impacts, Mitigate Impacts, Buffer Zone, Sensitive Habitat, Zone of Influence, Reconciliation Ecology
3. **Page 30:** Inserted “Simplified decision tree for trail siting with wildlife in mind” graphic from page 17 of the [Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind](#) document.

4. **Page 66:** Added environmental reference to recommendation in Irrigation Ditch Compatibility section:
  - As pre-development work commences, assess environmental impact of co-locating a trail adjacent to an irrigation ditch's existing alignment. Some irrigation ditches may provide a wildlife habitat and migration corridor. Determine if impact can be avoided and/or minimized or mitigated.
5. **Page 65:** Revised: 3. Revised bullet under Environmental Impacts and Benefits – Irrigation Ditch Compatibility:
  - Wildlife Corridors: Trails along ditches can impact wildlife habitat and migration corridors. Ensure that new trails support rather than adversely affect biodiversity and wildlife passage for birds, small mammals, and insects.
6. **Page 69:** Added performance metric: “Environmental Impact Assessment: Decrease likelihood of causing negative environmental impact through trail development by implementing a thorough environmental review and mitigation process for each trail project. Conduct post project environmental audit to measure efficacy.”

**Attachment:**

May 14, 2025 LCSB Letter to Park Planning & Development

14 May 2025

Memo

To: DK Kemp, Parks and Recreation

From: Land Conservation and Stewardship Board

Through: Katie Donahue, Natural Areas

Re: Strategic Trails Plan

Having reviewed the March 2025 Public Draft of the Strategic Trails Plan (STP), the Land Conservation and Stewardship Board (LCSB), at its June 2025 meeting, is prepared to recommend adoption of the STP to Council, provided that the final draft of the STP addresses the following.

- 1) The STP should refer explicitly to an Environmental Review Administrative Policy to govern review of all trail projects stemming from the STP. While the policy is expected to evolve over the lifetime of the plan, its goals must include:
  - a. Protection of high priority habitat and natural features
  - b. Trail planning that enhances and protects the environments it impacts
  - c. Mitigation of trail alignments that cannot avoid natural features and habitats, most critically within City Natural Areas.
- 2) The STP should commit to a multi-pronged strategy for limiting speeds and enhancing safety on the trails. Recreational users and wildlife are increasingly impacted by high-speed trail use via heavy, motor-assisted, or motor-driven conveyances. While a vigorous awareness and education campaign may mitigate these effects over the next five to ten years, it is equally possible that the concerns that today's trail users are clearly expressing will intensify. The strategy must allow for engineering solutions, the pursuit of legislative measures at the local, county, and state levels, and vigorous enforcement of existing and future laws and regulations. The STP should acknowledge the possibility that if unchecked, evolving usage patterns may fundamentally alter the ability of the trails to be "multi-use" and undercut the implicit assumptions that paved trails do not pose a significant risk to wildlife.
- 3) The STP should provide for an integrated communications plan to guide trail use. The plan should address trail safety, well-being, etiquette, wildlife and habitat protection, and environmental stewardship. The communications plan should guide appropriate trail uses and enhance user experience through increased understanding of the environmental context of various trail segments.
- 4) The STP should postpone the development of all segments of the Overland Corridor from the short term to the medium- or long-term. The LCSB finds that the STP does not make a compelling case for this route and we suggest exploring alternatives. The west-side neighborhoods are mature, and well-served by access to Natural Areas and the trail network. Overland Trail itself, between Laporte Ave and Spring Canyon Park, provides an alternative that could easily be enhanced with sidepaths and protected bike lanes.

Meanwhile, adding a paved trail in proximity to Pineridge, Maxwell, and Reservoir Ridge Natural Areas and the County Open Lands along Horsetooth Reservoir has the potential to have significant impact on areas heavily used by wildlife. Until the possibility of increased high-speed use of paved trails has been addressed (see item 2)), it seems uncertain that the benefits of the Overland Corridor outweigh the impacts.

In closing, the LCSB thanks you for your efforts to inform us of the STP and substantively address our questions and concerns. We appreciate that key staff from Natural Areas Department were part of the project leadership team as well as your attendance at multiple board meetings.

DRAFT