

PRC Bike Skills Area Sub Committee Report June 22, 2022

Background

- At the June 2022 meeting the PRC created a 3-member sub-committee consisting of Peter Struck, Paul Burstein, and Jodi McCarthy to review the 24 potential sites presented by City staff for a Bike Skills Area (BSA), develop a methodology to evaluate and narrow the number of sites down to a more manageable number for further consideration and recommendation to the City Council.

Process

- The sub-committee held three meetings (6/8, 6/15 and 6/22) to review and discuss materials and information.
- The sub-committee evaluated the criteria initially established by City staff.
- Using that information, the sub-committee elected to eliminate two broad categories of sites:
 - Flat sites (no elevation differential) – a crucial element of a bike skills area is the need to allow bikes to go down a slope of some steepness and length.
 - Open Space designation – a number of sites were identified as “open space” and not a park. As noted in the 2022 Mercer Island PROS Plan, open space is designed to be “managed in their natural condition.” Following that definition, the sub-comm did not want to set a precedent of installing recreational amenities (other than trails) in open spaces.
 - The numbers:
 - # of Potential Sites 24
 - Parks - Flat Areas 4
 - Open Space 12
 - Remaining 8
- Of the remaining 8 sites, the sub-comm developed a weighted score for each site using 15 variables that were weighted as to their relative importance (see table for final scores).
- Of the remaining 8, 6 sites were dropped for the following reasons:
 - Upper Luther Burbank Park (ULBP), current location of a BSA, despite being in a designated open space, the sub-comm believed it should be included for comparison purposes.
 - Slater & Roanoke park sites were deemed to be too small to host a BSA.
 - Aubrey Davis Park (Gallagher Hill area) was deemed to be in a natural state with limited slope variation and not easily accessible.
 - Homestead and Luther Burbank park sites were dropped due to their potential impact on existing uses.
- The remaining two, Deane’s Children’s Park & Aubrey Davis Park – 24th St, scored the highest and with appropriate design could support a BSA.

Weighted Average Score for the Remaining 8 Potential BSA Sites							
Deane's Children's Park	Homestead Park	Luther Burbank Park	Aubrey Davis Park 24th St	Slater Park	Roanoke Park	Aubrey Davis Park Gallagher	Upper L-B Park Snake Hill (current)
222	212	204	222	185	164	200	153

- Received input from the MI Mountain Bike Group and have requested feedback from MIPA

Deane's Children's Park Summary

Pros

- Supported by city operations
- Centralized location and proximity to facilities
- Ample space to provide range of courses meeting many user types
- Natural hill lends itself to unique step-up feature

Cons

- Limited elevation change – requires additional structures to gain elevation
- Mitigate proximity to playground
- Bike access is known issue location on ICW corridor
- Won't fully replicate jump lines from ULBP due to limited elevation profile

Aubrey Davis – 24th St Area Summary

Pros

- Limited impact areas
- Proximity to facilities
- Ample elevation profile

Cons

- Isolated location
- Very limited space between trail and paved walkway
- Non-city property adds uncertainty (WSDOT property)
- Proximity of walkway and bike area can lead to user group conflicts, will likely require removal or reconfiguration of walkway.
- Limited space for different skill level lines

Additional Information and Inputs

- Public Engagement Process on the Two Candidate Sites (or possibly 1), likely to occur as City proceeds with design. Update Let's Talk BSA page to indicate possible site change for the BSA and give an opportunity for comments before the next PRC meeting
- Input from Property Owners – WSDOT in the case of Aubrey Davis Park – 24th St
- Immediate City engagement with identified groups that are impacted with the proposed Deane's site, including:
 - Mercer Island Preschool Association (MIPA)
 - MI School District which will also involve Island Park School Principal and PTA
 - Appropriate baseball and soccer organizations that currently use the ball fields
 - Mercer Island Mountain Bike Team
 - Senior Walking groups
- Initial Specific Site Evaluation to ensure an acceptable BSA would fit within the parameters of the park (e.g., not exceed the footprint of the existing BSA site at Upper L-B)

- Evaluate how to mitigate concerns such as:
 - Bicycle – Pedestrian conflicts
 - Impacts on existing amenities, park users and recreational activities (spillover effect)
 - Environmental impacts and sustainability
- Cost Differentials – while not the direct purview of the PRC, the PRC assumes the development of either finalist site is about the same, and if that assumption is not correct, that information should be made available to the City Council.
- Multiple steps running concurrently ie. Site rehabilitation, already required at Deanes due to impacts from the Adventure Playground started while design is being made.
- BSA development at Deanes park considered with playground replacement project – Deanes playground equipment is at end of life and slated for replacement already per PROs plan

Other Issues

- At its April special meeting, the PRC adopted a motion recommending that the City Council allocate sufficient funds to temporarily re-open the existing BSA at Upper Luther Burbank while a permanent site is fully evaluated and designed.