

Bill Hoblitzell and Kristin Thomas
262 Taylor St, Minturn, CO 81645
Nov 1, 2023

To:
Minturn Town Council
Minturn Planning and Zoning Committee
Minturn Town Staff

Re: Minturn North Final Plat Issues; pedestrian connector easement width is unsafe

Dear Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to continue to provide public comment on Minturn North. Please accept these comments regarding tonight's review of the Final Plat design.

We are requesting that you review and request staff and developer to amend the proposed pedestrian connector path easement/ROW width in Final Plat document design and increase the easement width from the substandard and unsafe 4' it is currently shown at to a minimum of 8' prior to approval. **The design as-proposed does not currently meet with either quantitative or qualitative sidewalk criteria identified elsewhere in Minturn's municipal code, is inappropriate and unsafe for the intended uses, and should be modified accordingly before final plat approval.**

The Minturn North pedestrian connections to Taylor Street and EcoTrail/Minturn Road in the final plat diagrams that have been provided online identify a trail easement or right of way of only 4 feet. These connectors are intended to accommodate 2-way traffic of bikes, pedestrians, strollers, and pets. This width is insufficient and inadequate for safe for these uses. The specified trail easement and right of way should be, at a barest minimum, 6-7', and preferably 8-10', consistent with contemporary designs in our peer communities.

A review of equivalent pedestrian pathways in Eagle, Edwards, Vail, and other neighboring communities like Carbondale is included at the bottom of this letter. It will quickly highlight the substandard and unsafe design being proposed by Resort Concepts and Minturn. Please do not pass the final plat without this important change.

Appendix C, Chapter 4, Section 1.01, Minturn Municipal Code identifies the minimum target width for non-100 block sidewalks to be 5' (60 inches).

"Minimum Width: All sidewalks used in conjunction with vertical curb and gutter shall have a minimum width of five (5) feet from the back of curb. Tooled or saw cut joints are required at 10 foot intervals."

Although the Minturn North connective ways are not raised on curb, there is no rational basis for why they should be allowed a substandard design width in comparison to the rest of town. In fact, in comparison to the downtown sidewalk minimum of 5', where bikes are not technically permitted on the walkway, these pathways are intended for multi-use bi-directional traffic and need to be wider than the minimum width of downtown sidewalks. The connections between Taylor St, Minturn North, and the EcoTrail/Minturn Road should actually be significantly wider than the town base standard of 5' to accommodate two-way traffic of both bikes, walkers, walkers with strollers, etc.

Average modern bike handlebar width is 750mm to 800 mm, or around 30 inches. Most walking and jogging child strollers are approximately 25 inches, or slightly over 2 feet. For these to even successfully pass each other with 1' clearance without physical contact, a bare minimum of 6-7' is needed.

At times, bikers passing through the neighborhood between Taylor and Minturn road will have important speed differentials from walkers. To pass each other with an adequate buffer for the speed differential and potentially uncertain handling that sometimes occurs with children on bikes, something more like 8' is the appropriate width. Two people passing each other with dogs on a leash, even if the dogs are relatively well behaved and in control, need a greater buffer to adequately control their pets safely and keep separated.

Please review the figures attached below highlighting the design widths of similar neighborhood passageways in our peer communities like Edwards, Eagle, Vail, and Carbondale. These invariably utilize 8'-10' path width for these kinds of public accesses. For example, the multi-use pathways that provide access between residential lots in the Terrace Neighborhood of Eagle utilize this width, as well as similar access ways in Miller Ranch in Edwards and Bull Run Rd in Eagle.

Chapter 16, Section 16-15-70 General Standards for PUDs, further states in standard 3:

"Trails and sidewalks shall be provided to form a logical, *safe* and convenient system for pedestrian access to dwelling units and common areas, with *appropriate connections off-site*." (emphasis added)

Since the connections to Taylor St and EcoTrail/Minturn Road will specifically be multi-use connections by both pedestrian and non-motorized vehicles (bikes, strollers), the design for these connections needs to be both *safe* and *appropriate* to the anticipated end uses. A 4' width clearly does not meet this criterion. A minimum of 6'-7' is the base level for which safe design should be considered, and 8'-10' or more is actually the most appropriate and safe. If unauthorized motorized access at either is somehow a concern, however absurd this claim, then a simple post bollard or rock bollard at the entrance should be sufficient.

Furthermore, in winter, snow accumulation and encroachment typically further narrows most roads, streets and pedestrian ways in Minturn to the point that it is likely people on foot trying to

traverse a 4' sidewalk will in practice be left with only 2-3' total to pass each other abreast. This is effectively unworkable for a public passageway.

If Minturn North developer (Resort Concepts/Minturn Crossing) or any future neighborhood legal entity is persistent in opposing a safe connector path width of 8', the town should specify that that the property owner has been made fully aware that their proposed design does not meet safe design criterion, and the property owner should be required to hold joint liability with the town for future accidents or incidents occurring on the easement, rather than the municipality holding it solely as would be the typical arrangement.

Please do not approve the plat without this remedy. Minturn North is already being permitted to proceed with substandard street, sidewalk, and drainage design for a downtown neighborhood, and has successfully avoided addressing any other longstanding problems in the area it abuts, such as insufficient year-round and legal parallel parking on Taylor St. In addition, town should have required sidewalks on *both* sides of 4th street, as well as on internal streets in Minturn North. Instead, an out of place suburban design has been allowed to proceed to appease the developer's desire to avoid the construction cost of this infrastructure and nominal loss of developable lot areas adjacent to streets.

Repeating past mistakes

The current town manager and several present members of this council have spent significant amounts of time and money in the last several years trying to tackle the legacy of substandard road and sidewalk design that has historically prevailed in parts of Minturn. Michelle and others have doggedly chased down state and federal money to address the previous substandard road and sidewalk designs on Main St/Hwy 24, thankfully and to their much-deserved credit--with great success.

Town planning staff has also repeatedly engaged residents in ongoing dialogue and process regarding how to better connect the 100 block to Eagle River and from Williams St. to Toledo Ave in a manner that invites safe and welcoming pedestrian passage between these areas.

These problems on Main St/Hwy 24 and in the 100 block are direct results of previous generations of Minturn residents and leadership failing to assertively and proactively plan for the future in platting our streets, sidewalks, and pedestrian connections, and instead allow the cheaper or politically/socially easier alternative to prevail.

Yet now we are choosing to essentially make the same mistakes once more on the north side of town. When we actually had the chance to build something correctly from its inception, rather than lament its poor designs and function later on, we are instead choosing to merely duplicate the same public design mistakes of past town residents and leaders.

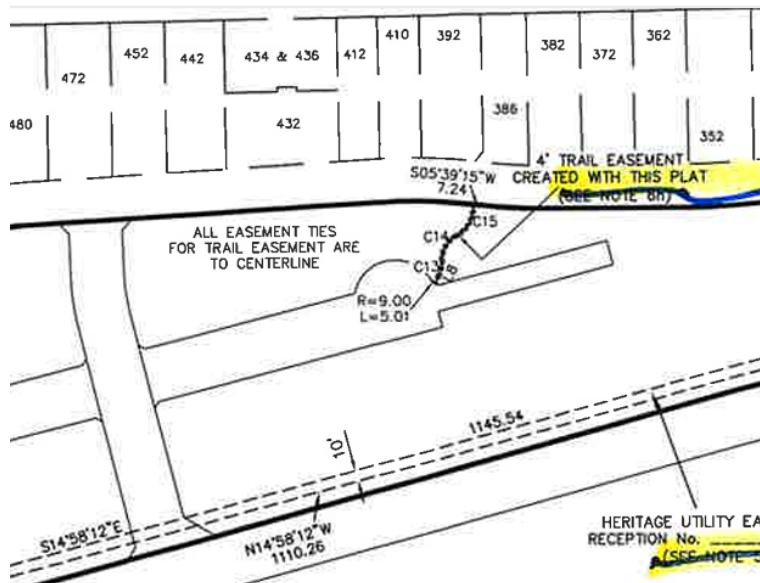
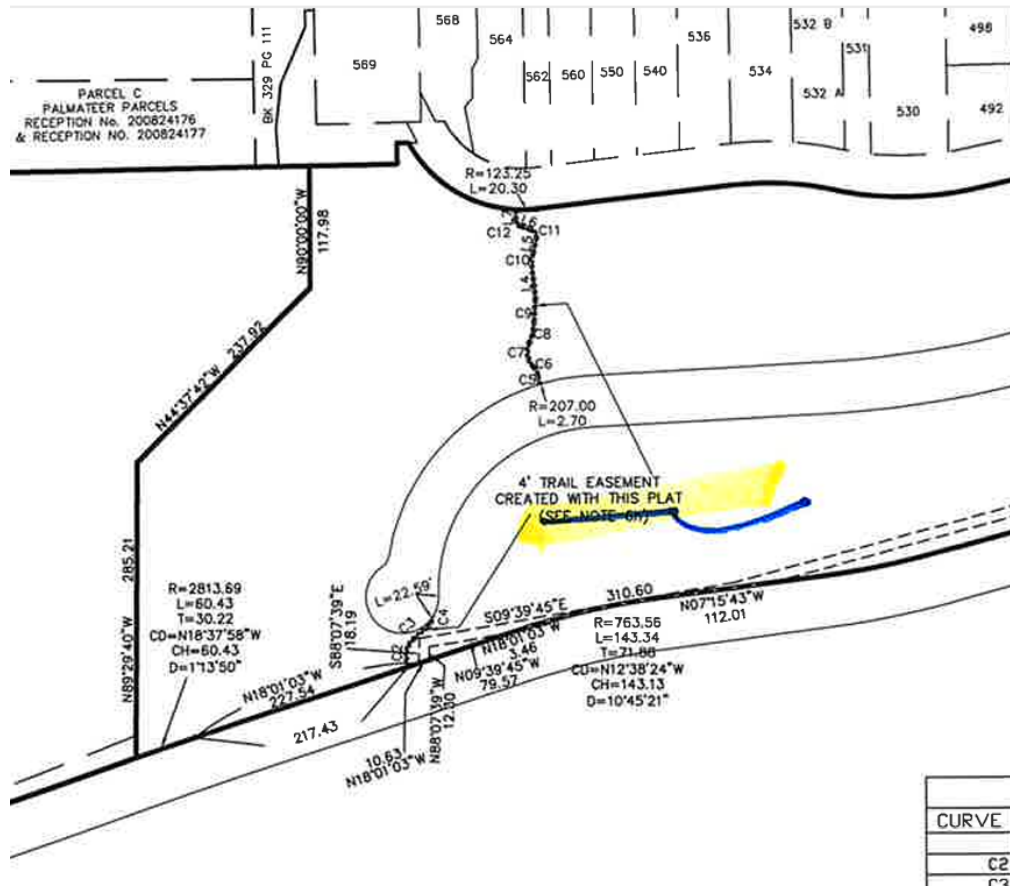
Too many unsatisfactory compromises that purely served the developer's ~~needs~~ wants without providing substantial long term community benefits to either the town or the adjacent neighborhood have already been made during this process.

We sincerely hope we will not make yet another one on this issue. Please remedy the pedestrian connection easements and widths to 8-10', equal to or better than the designs of the same infrastructure in our peer communities. Why should Minturn yet again be content to build its community infrastructure to a lesser standard than any other?

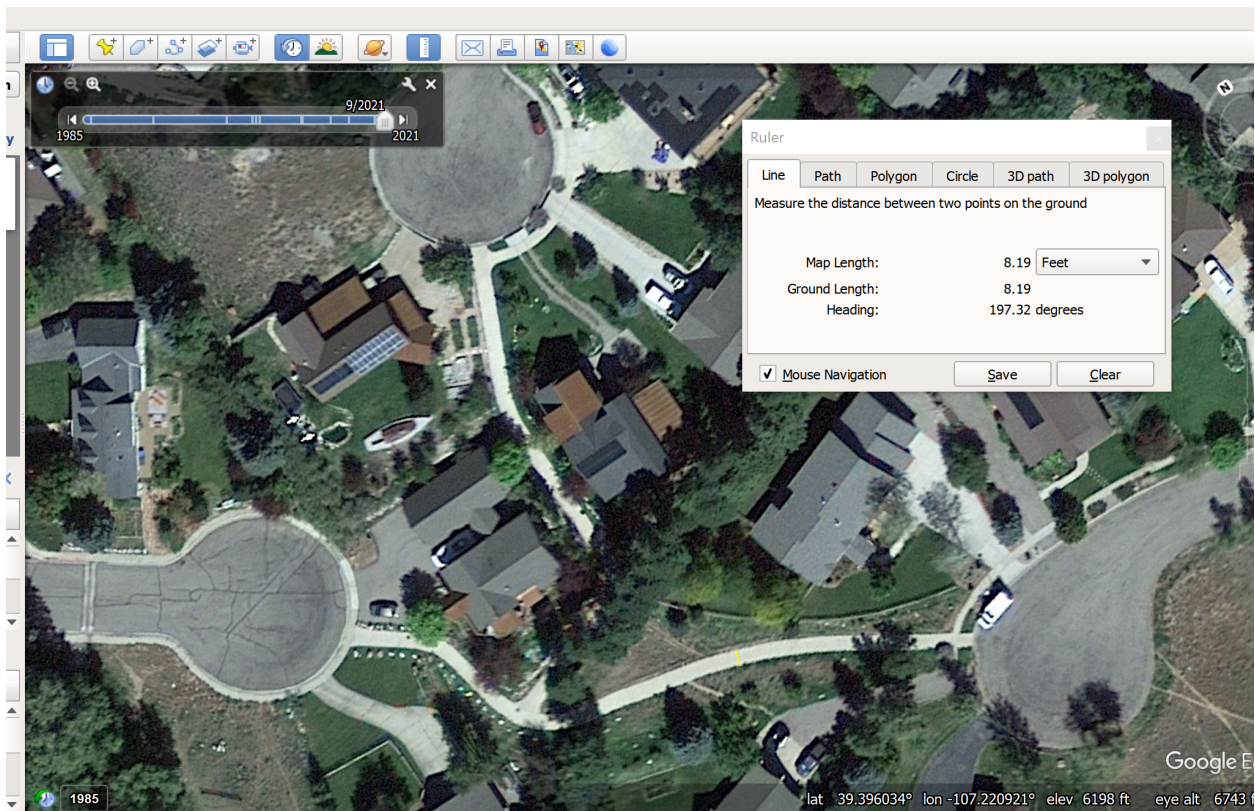
Thank you for your time and consideration,

Bill Hoblitzell, Kristin Thomas
262 Taylor St

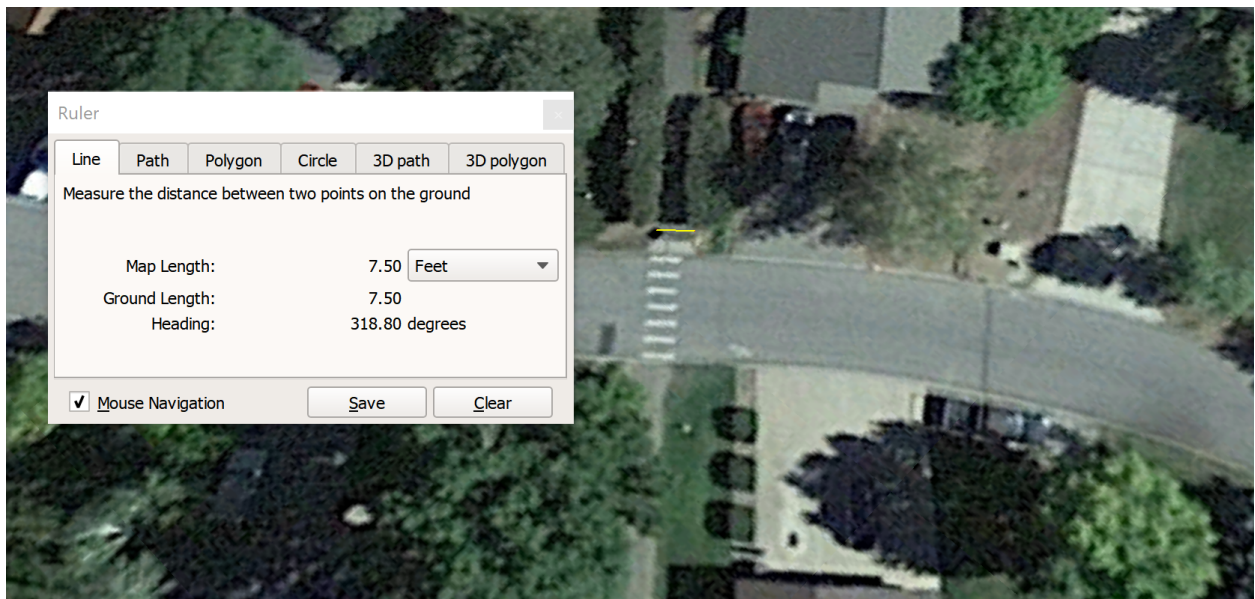
Figure below from Final Plat documents shows proposed 4' trail easement for pedestrian connector ways between streets in Minturn North. This design is substandard to Minturn code even for downtown sidewalks and insufficient and unsafe for two-way traffic that includes bicycles.



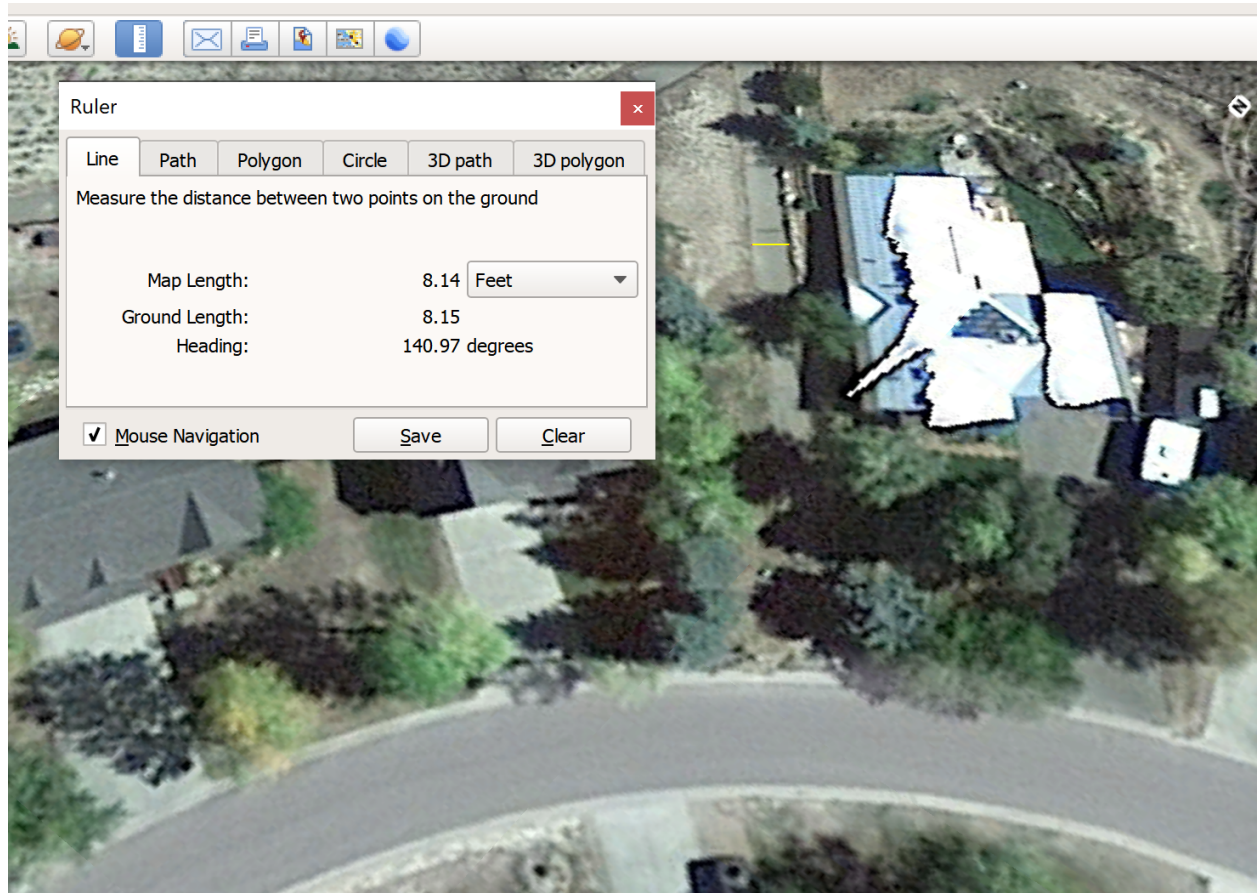
All pedestrian pass-through connections of this neighborhood example in Carbondale connecting Oak Run Dr, West Ridge Ct, and Graceland Dr are 8' in width, allowing safe and adequate 2-way passing of pedestrians, bikes, and strollers.



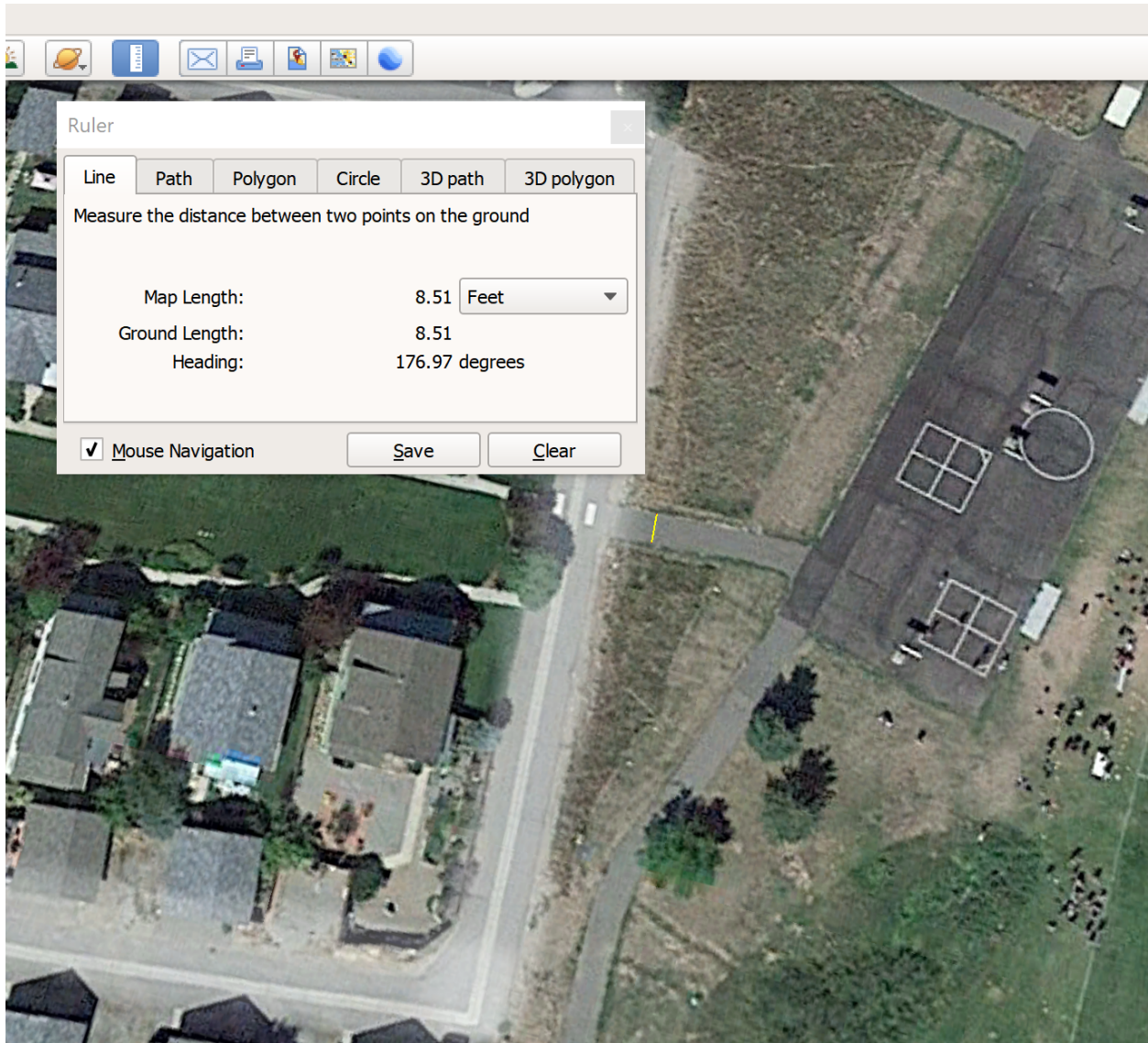
This between-street connecting sidewalk on Bull Run Rd in Eagle is over 7' in width to safely allow 2-way passage of pedestrians and bikes.



Ringneck Circle pedestrian passageway in The Terraces neighborhood in Eagle. The width of the pedestrian pass-through between roads and house lots is 8 feet. Wide enough for two bikes or a bike and a pedestrian with a stroller to safely pass in opposite directions, as well as wide enough to be accessed with a small gator for maintenance and snow removal.



At this pedestrian pass-through between Miller Ranch Neighborhood and Berry Creek Middle School, the width is 8-9', allowing for safe and adequate 2-way passage in opposite directions.



At this pedestrian pass-through in Vail from Hanson Ranch Rd between the Tivoli Lodge and the private residence, width is 10', allowing appropriate and safe passage of two-way traffic that includes bikes and pedestrians with strollers.

