

Mountain Biking in Hubbard Park

The proposal before you for opening up limited access for mountain biking in Hubbard Park is brought to you by MAMBA (Montpelier Area Mountain Biking Association) and the Montpelier Bicycle Advisory Committee. MAMBA is a collection of central Vermont mountain bike enthusiasts who enjoy the sport and want to make it available to riders of all ages. MAMBA advocates for responsible trail use, performs sustainable trail building/maintenance, and secures additional riding areas in the Montpelier vicinity through collaboration with the Montpelier Parks Commission, East Montpelier Trails, Inc., Berlin Conservation Commission, and the State of Vermont Forest and Parks. The Montpelier Bicycle Advisory Committee is a group of enthusiastic community members who work to improve the state of cycling in Montpelier. The Committee has been charged with the following tasks: 1) to gather information and opinions about bicycle-related issues from people who live, work or bike in the city, and from model programs in other cities. 2) to recommend policies and actions by the city that will promote bicycling for all purposes and that will provide safe and convenient access to all parts of the community via bicycle, and 3) to advise the city in its pursuit of Bicycle Friendly Community designation.

The proposed expansion of mountain bike access within Hubbard Park will broaden the user groups of the park while also remain in keeping with the goals of the Montpelier Parks.

Objective

Of the many miles of maintained trail within the City of Montpelier, one mile is open to mountain biking – the North Branch Park mountain bike trail, which provides a link between the Montpelier Recreation Fields to the East Montpelier Trail. Due to our topographic position, trails leading from town must climb several hundred feet, thus demanding a level of skill and fitness that a novice rider does not yet have. Hubbard Park affords the opportunity to provide a unique locale for mellow terrain for young and novice riders. Montpelier residents, and specifically the youth of the community, who do not have access to mountain bike trails out of town, will benefit greatly from having a neighborhood destination for their sport. With the increasing evidence of childhood obesity, it is important that the City of Montpelier do all we can to support physically active opportunities for our youth and mountain biking would provide another. Teens often complain about the fact that their options for recreation are limited in Montpelier. Community Connections has been outspoken in support of having a mountain bike trail in Hubbard Park, furthering the relationship that already exists between Montpelier Parks and our schools. Offering the healthy option of a mountain bike ride adds to the community efforts that make Montpelier a place for all ages to grow and prosper.

Proposed Trail

New trails will be built by MAMBA and the Park Department and existing trails will be maintained by MAMBA and the Parks Department. MAMBA will draw on its 100 member community to provide volunteer labor for any required construction. New trails will be built to specifications listed in the International Mountain Biking Association's (IMBA) handbook and existing trails will be strengthened to meet this standard of sustainable trail design. MAMBA will follow IMBA's core elements for a sustainable trail, which include: trails which protect the

environment, (e.g. overall trail grade will average 10% or less, use of grade reversals to minimize erosion, etc.) meet the needs of users, require little maintenance, and minimize conflicts between users.

MAMBA proposes the following operating conditions under which any proposed trails would be planned and implemented to ensure safety and a quality experience for all user types.

- 1) Trail sections will not exceed 15% grade at any point and will not average more than 10% for any given section of 100 feet in length. Ideally, as we foresee the target user group to be young and novice riders, the average grade for any slope will be closer to 5%.
- 2) Adequate sight distances will be maintained to lessen potential user conflicts or unwanted surprises.
- 3) Downhill speeds will be minimized by use of chock points and other trail elements.
- 4) Education of users to the IMBA code of conduct for safe, responsible trail use.

A map of the proposed mountain bike accessible trail is included as Attachment 1 of this proposal. Detailed within the map are sections of the proposed route that fall in to three categories – sections of existing trail that require no construction; sections of existing trail requiring a reroute due to grade or drainage issues; and sections of new or reclaimed trail.

To ensure that trail users won't stray from the existing trail, clear signage will be erected that designates the trails approved for mountain biking. MAMBA will let our membership know that accessing unauthorized trails could lead to the loss of all trails for everyone. The bikemamba.org is currently undergoing an overhaul; however, trail user education is a core mission of MAMBA. The IMBA Code of Conduct can also be provided on trail kiosks located at access points.

Management of the Trail

This trail will be managed similar to other trails in Hubbard Park and the North Branch Park, which currently has one mountain biking trail. Through a combination of park work and MAMBA volunteer work, the existing was built and is currently maintained. Mountain bike trails in the park would be managed similarly.

Timeline

We propose to begin laying out portions requiring re-routes of new construction in the spring of 2014. Upon concurrence of the proposed layout with the Parks Department and other project stakeholders, as required, construction can begin in the summer of 2014. Completion of the project will depend, in part, on the proposed layout

Cost

Cost estimates for trail construction have not been developed, as it will largely depend on the selected route. The City of Montpelier has just allocated money for bicycle improvements and the money for trail construction will come out of this budget. In addition, MAMBA is researching additional trail grant pools, such as the Norcross Foundation or the Vermont Recreation Trails Program grants.

Public Involvement

MAMBA requests that the Park Commission schedule a public meeting to solicit input on this proposal before the final plan is adopted. MAMBA will attend the meeting, assist in responding to concerns, and modify our proposal, as necessary and appropriate.

On behalf of MAMBA, we appreciate your time and consideration of this proposal. We are sure that, by collaborating and active involvement projects such as the one we propose here will enrich our Parks and provide more opportunities for their use.

We welcome your feedback and questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Voisin and Tim Flynn, on behalf of the MAMBA Board of Directors