



Via USFS Comment Portal and eMail

December 7, 2023

Red Rock Ranger District,
Attention: Red Rock Trails Enhancement,
P.O. Box 20429, Sedona, AZ 86341

Subj: Substantive Comment on the USFS Red Rock Trails and Access Plan Proposed Actions

Re: Your letter File Code: 1950 and 2350 of November 20, 2023 Project: Red Rock Trails and Access Plan

Dear Coconino National Forest, Red Rock Ranger District,

The Verde Valley Cyclists Coalition (VVCC) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments on the Red Rock Ranger Districts Red Rock Trails and Access Plan (RRTAP). This plan is in alignment with the VVCC's vision of creating a world class bicycle environment in the greater Verde Valley region.

The mission of the VVCC is to advocate for Verde Valley Cyclists by providing memorable, safe riding experiences while preserving and expanding biking access through partnerships. The VVCC appreciates your careful consideration of this substantive comment. Our point of contact is Lars Romig who can be reached at 6 Vista Bonita DR, Sedona, AZ 86336 or via email at Lars.Romig@me.com

The VVCC offers substantive comments to the RRTAP. Listed below is our input to the proposed action.

Turkey Creek System The VVCC believes this will be a very beneficial system and supports its construction. The VVCC is excited to continue its strong relationship with RRD on implementation of this system. Below are our recommendations

1. The first alteration that we would like to see is shown on page 10 of the proposed action. The new construction trail that connects from the Transept trailhead and connects to the north back on to



the user trail being adopted would be a better user experience to keep up higher on the fort apache limestone layer and keep traversing to the saddle south of “Napoleons Tomb”. This would offer better views and a more interesting alignment.

2. We recommend that trailhead developments include the installation of sturdy bike racks. This may encourage trailhead access by area residents and visitors, via non-motorized means, reducing vehicle traffic and/or provide for a place for cyclists to temporarily place their bikes while awaiting other cyclists or reviewing the kiosk materials and keep bikes out of the parking area.
3. Ensure that the new trail construction segment west of the Turkey Creek West Trailhead will physically connect with the Red Rock State Park access point. This connection is critical to the Verde Valley Circle Trail (VVCT) Plan because it will connect the Turkey Creek Trail System to Red Rock State Park, which is one of the intended Oak Creek crossing points on the VVCT. The Turkey Creek Trail System will also be a segment of the VVCT.
4. The reroute of this FS system trail segment on the northeast side of Verde Valley School Rd at the Turkey Creek Trailhead is critical as it will allow a connection to the Baldwin Trail. This connector and the west section of the Baldwin Trail will allow connectivity for the VVCT from the Turkey Creek Trail System to Red Rock Crossing. This is one of the intended Oak Creek crossing points on the VVCT. It is also important that the West Section of the Baldwin Trail be evaluated as an appropriate connector for this section of the VVCT. This would allow for multiuse non-motorized trail usage. If rerouting or augmentation part of west Baldwin Trail is necessary in order to accommodate all non-motorized trail users, then it would be most appropriate to include this work in the Red Rock Trails Access Plan #62415d.
5. We recommend that the USFS work with the VVCC to incorporate a stocked bear bell station at the trailhead – the station can easily be affixed to the above bike rack – as part of the VVCC’s upcoming *Chime In* campaign of bear bell stations at select District trailheads. The bear bell station will permit trail users, especially mountain bikers, to alert other trail users of their presence on the trail and help eliminate user conflicts.
6. In regards to the system as a whole we feel the exclusion boundary of equestrian users may have been an oversight. There are a number of the social trail adoptions that have been historically used by the equestrian community that are included within this boundary. We think the FS should re-evaluate this boundary or consider none at all. Any trail closure to a non-motorized user should only be done if it is in the interest of safety due to the nature of the trail or leave that decision up to the user to take risks based on their desired experience. Trails that have features not conducive to certain user groups should be signed in such a manner to alert users to the nature of challenges one might encounter on the trail.
7. VVCC respectfully recommends the addition of designated horse trailer parking for approximately three horse trailers at the expanded Turkey Creek Trailhead. An additional consideration is to format parking in a circular drive formation, which would allow for ease of entry and departure. The horse trailer parking would be designated for equestrian use only and therefore allow equestrians to park in specifically designated locations rather than along the road



or in multiple vehicular parking spaces. This would enable safe loading and unloading of horses and safe access to the new Turkey Creek Trail System by equestrian users.

8. VVCC supports trail enhancements that have optimal appropriate access for all trail users to the practical extent possible. Equestrians currently ride in the large area on the proposed map labeled “closed to equestrian use.” The VVCC recommends re-evaluation of this large area and limit any user restrictions for trail safety by trail and area to the smallest footprint possible to protect fragile environmental concerns.

Bell Rock Area Bypasses

Rector Connector does not directly affect cyclists but many of our members are also hikers and equestrian users. This connection will greatly benefit and legitimize this logical connection that will also prevent the high number of users from increasing threaded social trails. VVCC will also be willing to bring to the table our robust volunteering membership to help assist the RRRD in implementation of this project.

Singletrack Bypass is also a logical connection that has been used for many years but needs better connectivity to the Bell Rock Vista TH. We only have two concerns with the current layout of this trail.

1. The map on page 12 shows the trail departing from the north end of the Bell Rock Vista TH which we feel will cause numerous users to leave out from the parking lot. VVCC was involved in the planning of this trail and understood that part of the goal was to reduce conflict on the congested Bell Rock Pathway (BRPW). If the trail was connected into the TH further south it would prevent users intending to hike BRPW from inadvertently overcrowding Singletrack Bypass. The designed use of singletrack bypass is better suited to capturing the large amount of bike traffic coming from the town and the two bike shops. Leaving out from town you only have two and hopefully three direct connections into the broader system. Slimshaddy, BRPW and hopefully Singletrack Bypass.
2. The current plan also includes obliterating the connection from Singletrack Bypass to BRPW and Courthouse Butte Loop. VVCC believes this will be problematic to close and removes a needed connection. The current alignment does have maintenance issues but we believe this can be mitigated.

Cornville School Trail System will be a great addition to a underserved area of the Verde Valley and we are excited to see this expansion of trails benefiting the bike club at the school as well as the community.

Doe Mesa Loop does not directly affect cyclists but many of our members are also hikers. This loop will greatly benefit the user experience of Doe Mountain. VVCC will also be willing to bring to the table our robust volunteering membership to help assist the RRRD in implementation of this project. We do see that this trailhead is very commonly over capacity and the TH could benefit from site hardening to manage the safety issue created on Boynton Pass Road for road cyclists losing ample room to share the road.



Hardline Trail will make for a great connection off of the Hiline Trail for more advanced cyclists. Sedona has had a good amount of growth on intermediate trails in the last ten years and a little bit of beginner. This project will give a good challenging alignment with great sustainability on mostly slick rock.

Schuerman Trail

Access to the Scheurman and Carroll Canyon Trail systems from this trailhead is popular for West Sedona residents and visitors. Ensuring sufficient access from parking at the W. SR 89A Park and Ride/Sedona Shuttle parking area via the Over Easy Trail is important to accommodate trail access. The path along Upper Red Rock Loop Rd from the Sedona Shuttle/Pst & Ride should be improved on FS land to also serve as a connector. The proposed map does not show a connector from Over Easy to the road at the parking area. This should be included as should signage across the road from the Shuttle/Park & Ride area that directs trail users to the Scheurman and Carroll Canyon Trailheads.

VVCC is excited to continue seeing the Red Rock Ranger District implement new projects to meet the diverse needs of non-motorized trail users. We are very excited for the project as a whole and seeing the results of our partnership with RRRD and numerous other partners. We again stress that we will offer up our assistance to all of the projects listed regardless of whether they benefit cycling as so much of our membership crosses over as hikers and equestrian users.

Sincerely,

Tracy Randall

President