



May 3, 2024

Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
5657 Warm Springs Avenue
Boise, ID 83716

Re: Ashton to Tetonia Trail Development Projects

Dear Director Buxton:

Teton Valley Trails and Pathways has been working on trails with citizens and government partners for 25 years in Teton Valley. Thank you for providing an opportunity to comment on development plans for the park. We have been listening to stakeholders from this community on the project goals and ask you to consider the following:

- Consider all users of the trail. Specifically, there has been regular and historic use by horseback riders on the trail. Asphalt is not friendly to horses, and we ask that the entire trail not be paved.
- We understand that an asphalt surface is easier to navigate for some user groups. Specifically, users, very young and senior population. If paving is the goal of the park, we ask that you consider only paving short sections that provide links to historical sites like the iconic trestles or historic agricultural sites. Providing these “destination nodes” to users will meet the goals of economic development while allowing historical use of the trail to continue.
- During the public meeting on 4/26/24 we learned that the trail easement is approximately 50 feet wide or wider throughout. If there are short sections paved as we previously recommended, please look at the entirety of the easement width to plan for continued horse rider use. If the trail with shoulders is only 12 feet wide (10 asphalt and 1-foot shoulders on each side), 38 feet remains to plan for that user group to have continued access to a desirable trail.
- We are concerned maintenance has not been adequately considered. Based on history, this trail has not seen regular or robust maintenance/management. Understanding that IDPR does manage other long distance asphalt trails in Northern Idaho, please look at the annual cost of maintenance per mile and plan for those costs to only increase over time. In 2024 numbers, that cost is likely between twelve and fifteen thousand dollars per mile. There are other iconic trails in the United States like the Katy Trail in Missouri and the Mickelson Trail in South Dakota that are a natural surface trails to compare annual maintenance cost. They are less per mile AND regular maintenance is still necessary. It is possible to meet State Park goals without paving the entire trail and keep maintenance costs lower.

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- During the public meeting on 4/26/24 we learned there are several sections of trail with steep embankments and there are safety concerns. These safety concerns should be addressed with interventions before considering an asphalt surface.
- Lastly, if the park plans to use resources for asphalt surfacing of the trail, we ask that IDPR consider asking for an extension of the grant terms for **an additional year**. With spending of Federal money, it is required there is adequate public outreach. There has been only one meeting in Ashton, Idaho on 4/3/23. There has been no other public engagement in the planning of how these public dollars should be spent on public facilities.
- Moving forward, we hope to further engage with park staff by scheduling annual community volunteer workdays. Engaging the community this way builds bridges & understanding between the managing agencies and the neighboring communities. Historically, we have worked with the Forest Service on volunteer days in our local area with great success for both organizations. This engagement will serve all users and park employees as we navigate the future of the Ashton to Teton Trail State Park.

Thank you for considering our feedback and we look forward to working with Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation in the future.

With thanks,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Verbiten".

Executive Director
Teton Valley Trails and Pathways
dan@tvtap.org