



February 4, 2015

Kalem Lenard
Bureau of Land Management
Royal Gorge Field Office
3028 E. Main Street
Cañon City, CO 81212

RE: Salida Area Trail Systems-New Trail Construction

Dear Mr. Lenard:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Proposed Salida Area Trail Systems-New Trail Construction. This letter contains the formal comments of the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA).

Founded in 1988, IMBA leads the national and worldwide mountain bicycling communities through a network of 80,000 individual supporters, 175 local Chapters, and 600 dealer members. IMBA teaches sustainable trail building techniques and has become a leader in trail design, construction, and maintenance; encourages responsible riding, volunteer trail work, and cooperation among trail user groups and land managers. Each year, IMBA members and affiliated clubs conduct more than one million hours of volunteer trail stewardship on America's public lands and are some of the best assistants to federal, state, and local land managers.

We support the proposed action. The increase in mileage, variety of experiences, trails that span the range of difficulty, and increased connectivity are all components that make a world class trail system as it relates to recreation destinations. The additional trails system functionality that will be achieved by this plan will increase user capacity, improve the experience for all users, and mitigate potential resource damages.

In addition to the substance proposed by the plan, we support some procedural and technical elements of this proposed action. To start we greatly appreciate that the trails plan was developed in collaboration with Salida Mountain Trails. The technical expertise and authentic local voice they provide can facilitate communication regarding the types of experiences locals are looking for and how the system will be used. When the experiential demand is unmet, the result is often unmanaged recreation and unauthorized trail building. The breadth of experiences in this plan will help reduce the likelihood of the undesirable effects.

As a technical planning document we appreciate the language the EA uses to establish the desired experience of the trail rather than simply making more trails where the experience is undefined. Without a predefined desired trail experience, trails can become homogenous and force users to put all the experiential demands on a single trail. When users place their own perception of what experience a trail

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should provide any activity that deviates from that perception is a perception of conflict. By defining the experience up front; you can establish the nature and degree of what the user will expect on a given trail therefore reducing any perception of conflict.

In addition to our support of the general principles of this plan we would like to offer some suggestions on the specific components of the plan.

Spartan Trail:

The intended experience for the Spartan trail includes training for the Salida High School Mountain Bike Team. Providing this type of direct access and designed experience will do amazing things for turning athletic instincts into lifelong outdoor enthusiasts and stewards of our public lands.

In addition to training the High School Mountain Bicycling League needs venues for races and events. In order to have an event be successful it needs a venue that provides an incredible experience and has the infrastructure necessary support the racers and support teams. The National Interscholastic Cycling Association and the Colorado High School Cycling League are constantly on the lookout for quality venues and those venues become destinations. This plan offers the opportunity to design that facility from the start. We strongly recommend consulting with the Spartan Team and the State and National organizations during the detailed planning of these trails.

Sole Train:

The description of Sole Train Trail is amazing in that finding directional trails on public lands is becoming a necessity. As mentioned before, providing this type of experience in the proper place will reduce the likelihood that those experiences will be found in undesirable locations. However, we do recommend that the direction of the trail be downhill only, rather than the suggested direction. If uphill travel is permitted it can degrade the experience as riders will need to be aware of oncoming traffic. Uphill travel may also present a safety concern for users who do not understand the nature and character of the trail. Uphill travel on directionally designed trail with manmade or natural features can damage the features or cause trail braiding as uphill users attempt to find a route around them.

The Sole Train proposal also discusses the connection to Forest Service trails and trail systems. Great trail systems do not stop at public land boundaries they interconnect them. We are very pleased to see this and strongly encourage the BLM to continue collaboration with the Salida Ranger District to connect the experiences on these adjacent public lands. If there is conflict of uses between the agency boundaries or other hindrances to full collaboration we highly recommend using a facilitator such as the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program or the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution to assist with the effort.

Castle Rim Trail:

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We strongly support the objective to provide views of Castle Gardens. Providing designed routes to these types of scenic destinations helps to avoid the most common form of unauthorized trails, which are those just worn in as visitors try to get to popular destinations.

Partnership with Local Trail Stewards

As a partner organization and leader in trail stewardship we were very pleased to see the reference to partnership with local trail stewards. We encourage the BLM to develop a site specific Volunteer Stewardship Plan and agreement that will help keep resource impacts to a minimum and the recreation experience destination quality. IMBA and Salida Mountain Trails can leverage the strengths of our national partnership with the BLM to help facilitate and execute this necessary component.

We applaud the BLM's efforts to provide a broad spectrum of trail recreation including some bicycle optimized trails on our public lands. Thank you for your time and careful consideration of our comments. We look forward to continuing a productive relationship in the future. Please feel free to call us (303) 545-9011 or email (jeremy.fancher@imba.com) if we can be of further assistance.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeremy Fancher
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