



October 31, 2017

Dear San Francisco Rec and Park Commission,

We are writing to conditionally support the McLaren Visioning Plan. Our particular interest is in the Trails and Paths area. We urge that the commission request some modifications to the plan before approval.

SF Urban Riders promotes off-road cycling (mountain biking) in San Francisco for people of all ages and abilities. Over the years, we have dedicated thousands of volunteer hours to McLaren park building trails, advocating for the bike park, and holding popular community events. These events attracted hundreds of people to the park, both locals and first timers.

We would like to recognize the hard work of the Department and its consultants, and support the Vision Plan goals of:

- Maintaining McLaren Park's natural landscape;
- Enhancing community access and safety into and through McLaren Park;
- Improving McLaren Park's important points of interest; and
- Creating diverse opportunities for play.

However there are some important details which must be adjusted to better accomplish these goals.

In keeping with the community's repeated preference in surveys for trails open to biking, SF Urban Riders believes that the following needs must be met to honor the public's preference for providing ample trails for riding bicycles, which is one of the diverse opportunities for play present in the park:

- * Provide multiple options for that cater to the variety of user levels and needs, from young beginners to experts.
- * Maintain and improve the existing narrow trails that are open to cyclists, including segments of Philosopher's Way, the University Switchbacks, and other trails south of Mansell.
- * Maintain and improve the existing wider trails in the core of the park (inside the Shelley loop) that get high pedestrian and dog usage.
- * Create a sustainable connecting trail near the west edge of the Golf Course to connect the new Bike Park (and Crocker Amazon) with the upper part of the park. This trail should be both open to bikes and optimized for bicycles.
- * Provide for park activation by making it easier for events. This includes both appropriate trails and ensuring that the Gateway and other plan projects enable events of all sorts.

We support the parts of the Vision Plan which addresses the above points. For example, the plan designates a system of trails for mountain biking and proposes the creation of a new bike-friendly trails. The plan proposes several priority projects which address ongoing trail condition issues.

However, there are a few areas of concern. The primary two are excessive trail width and excessive trail consolidation.

Trail Width: One Size Does Not Fit All

The first concern is the creation of wide standard for trails, particularly a 5' wide standard for multi-use trails. A wide trail requirement is a step backwards from the current practices and does not match the top user request from surveys or the response from the larger community during this process.

It is also not in alignment with the direction other local agencies use, including Marin County Open Space District, Mid Peninsula Open Space District, East Bay Regional Park District, California State Parks, and many other successful local, national, and international urban trail systems. These agencies use trail widths appropriate to the intended use and context, and do not rely on a "one size fits all" 5' wide standard.

Narrow natural surface trails better support the goal of Maintaining McLaren Park's natural landscape, they match the 'wild' character which makes people fall in love with many areas of the park.

In addition, the construction of narrow trails have lower environmental impact, help to reduce speeds to prevent user conflict, and are a more efficient use of limited funding.

We request that the Department adopt a modern best practice of context sensitive widths, which for multi use trails in McLaren Park is likely to be from 3' and wider.

Trail Consolidation: Unintended Consequences

In addition, we are concerned that some areas of the plan propose excessive trail consolidation. This increases the likelihood for problems such as the creation of new unsustainable trails or trash dumping in newly difficult to access parts of the park. Many miles of existing trails are not currently listed on the Plan map. Most are important to retain and enhance to meet the goal of Enhancing community access and safety into and through McLaren Park.

Regardless of the issues we've outlined, SF Urban Riders is glad to see progress and look forward to continuing to contribute to McLaren Park. We urge the commission and the department to address the issue of inflexible standards and excessive trail removal before approving this plan.

Thank you,

Matthew Blain Nick Birth Sasha Magee Robert Peters
SF Urban Riders Leadership Committee