



MARIN COUNTY BICYCLE COALITION

Marin County Parks
3501 Civic Center Drive, Suite 260
San Rafael, CA 94903
Attention: Jon Campo

September 21, 2015

Dear Mr. Campo,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Bob Middagh Trail Study and the Gas Line Trail Study. Marin County Bicycle Coalition (MCBC) Off-Road Program stands on three guiding principles: education, environmental stewardship, and expanded opportunities for mountain biking. We believe that MCBC has consistently demonstrated that all three of these objectives are equally important to us.

Providing safe connectivity is one of our mission objectives, and the Open Space staff recommendation to allow bikes on the Bob Middagh Trail advances that goal. We do not take actions like change in use lightly. We have established a list of criteria to help inform us as we consider trail proposals, including connectivity, potential displacement of visitors, conflict reduction and environmental impacts. We also consider what need is being met by a proposal and what actions will result in the best possible outcome.

After careful review, we have concluded that Bob Middagh Trail is an ideal candidate for a change in use action, and Option 3 will produce a result most consistent with the policies and goals outlined in the Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP). The trail is a natural connector between five Corte Madera and Mill Valley neighborhoods (Scott Valley, Alto/Horse Hill, Meadowsweet, Chapman Park and Enchanted Knolls) and the public lands to the north, which include the popular Camino Alto and Blithedale Ridge Open Space Preserves and the MMWD watershed. Connectivity for all visitors is a goal of the RTMP and is supported by Policy SW12: Road and Trail Connectivity and GOAL TRL-1: Trail Network Preservation and Expansion.

The Middagh Trail also connects two popular bike routes, Camino Alto Road and the Alto Bowl Fire Road, which bicycle commuters use on a daily basis, including children heading to and from school. Adopting an existing trail to bridge this gap avoids the expense and impacts of building a new trail, which is supported by Policy SW.4: Overall Reduction of Road, Trail and Visitor Impacts, and the overall goal of the plan to establish and maintain a sustainable system of roads and trails.

We recommend the following actions be taken to accommodate bicycle use on the Bob Middagh Trail:

1. Reroute the steep trail connection at the west end coming off Camino Alto to reduce the grade
2. Add switchbacks as outlined in the TrailPeople study, and add speed control measures if needed, to the steep segment at the east end of the trail
3. Remove vegetation (Coyote Brush) to improve sightlines at blind corners
4. Improve drainage at two wetland stream crossings and one ephemeral stream crossing
5. Place signs at each end of the trail to encourage safe and respectful trail use

In conversations with neighbors about the proposal, the number one concern seems to be the large drain dips that were recently installed to shed water off the trail at its steepest segment. The reroute and installation of switchbacks along this segment identified in Option 3 would eliminate a potential safety hazard, dramatically reducing the chance of conflict on the trail. Additionally, after conversations with staff at the Scott Valley Swimming and Tennis Club, we support placing signs at both ends of the club property (Underhill Road to the north and Vasco Ct to the South) directing bicycle traffic to stay on the city streets and not cut through the club parking lot.

Regarding the Gas Line Trail, we recommend Option 3, which would reroute the trail to maintain a grade of 10% or less. This option will result in the most sustainable, enjoyable and accessible trail for hikers and equestrians. We also support staff's recommendation that the trail remain closed to bicycle use, as it creates a buffer between Bob Middagh Trail and the Horse Hill Trail.

MCBC is prepared to help Parks with initial outreach efforts. This would include communications to the bicycle community alerting them of the change and reinforcing the need to demonstrate safe and respectful trail etiquette, and to encourage others to do the same.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Tom Boss, Off-Road Director
Jim Elias, MCBC Executive Director

MCBC Off-Road Program Committee:

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