

Off-Road Cycling Plan may lead to future developments at Gabriel Park

By Jack Rubinger
The Southwest Portland Post

Gabriel Park in Multnomah is one of the 16 Portland parks that are “finalists” for one of the new bike parks being planned by the Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation, as part of its Off-Road Cycling Master Plan.

Portland has taken a piecemeal approach to addressing the need for off-road cycling facilities across the City.

The Plan establishes the role of the city and its public spaces in meeting off-road cycling needs and provides a comprehensive framework for successfully meeting community needs.

The Plan defines off-road cycling and develops a baseline understanding of who does, or would like to, ride off-road in the city now and in the future.

According to city planners, people of all ages participate in off-road cycling. In Oregon, total adult participation is split roughly evenly between people 18-29 years old, 30-39, 40-49, and 50 or older.

While limited local data is available for youth participation, the National Outdoor Recreation survey indicates that road, mountain, and BMX biking rank as the most popular outdoor

activity for young between ages of 6 and 17.

In 2017, city planners conducted virtual open houses, which featured an on-line map soliciting input on candidate sites, held seven public open houses, held in various locations across the city and led multiple one-on-one listening sessions with cyclists.

Bike parks, such as pump tracks, jump parks, and skill trails, are dedicated places for people of all riding abilities to practice their riding skills and have fun.

They can be built on a portion of a property, or around the perimeter. For this master plan, bike parks were only being considered for developed parks, not in natural areas.

Northwest Trail Alliance believes that Gabriel Park could be a good place for off-road cycling use as outlined by the plan. Many alliance members live in the neighborhood and would love to see this park incorporate features where they could ride with their families.

“Nothing gets built in this city without a plan. It’s great to see the resources and the effort to getting such a high profile plan in place. However, lots of plans sit on shelves and do very little. We’d like to see the public



Gateway Green bike park in East Portland. (Photos by Bike Portland)

and political support to dedicate some money to get trails on the ground and some mountain bike parks built,” said Alex Criss from Rose City Bicycles.

Off-road cycling and mountain biking have been growing in popularity since the 1970s.

Many factors have led to this popularity. The ability to access and experience nature, spend time with friends and family while riding and having a low impact on the environment are

some of the leading reasons.

The State of Oregon has identified off-road cycling as more popular in Oregon than skateboarding, tennis or golf.

“The Off-road Cycling Master Plan recommends a medium-sized bike park at Gabriel Park. That’s great. We’re all for building jumps, pump tracks, and easy trails to help create fun and safe access for riding bikes on dirt,” said Criss.

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