

Multi-Use Trails in Wilderness Park

Goal Increase trail route options *available to all users with minimal increase to the overall miles of trail.*

Multi-use trails in Wilderness Park have been discussed by staff and park users for several years. While there are sometimes concerns with user conflicts, this type of trail is used successfully in many parks through the U.S. and abroad. Educational materials and appropriate signage can help users to understand safe behaviors in order to make trails function safely for all users.

Multi-use trails have the advantage of allowing trail users to greatly increase the route options available to them, without the impacts to the environment and maintenance needs that an increase to the miles of trail would have. However, a multi-use trail must be designed to serve all intended users, which may mean needed improvements to facilities such as trailheads and stream crossings. Multi-use trails must also be maintained to those standards.

Wilderness Park has several places where the Bike and Hike trails are shared for a distance. There are also places where Bike and Equestrian Trails are shared. However, in general, Hikers and Equestrians do not share trails. Bridges that have been constructed over the past several decades have all been built to accommodate all users, however some crossings exist that are either not usable by all or are not comfortable for all.

In previous input from users, there are a few notable concerns regarding multi-use trails. One is the perceived damage done to trails by different users, particularly the rut that often forms from bicycle tires, or the hoofprints of horses. Another is the discomfort some have with horse waste on the trails. And finally, the concern about the safety of fast-moving bicycles and unpredictable horses.

We would like to receive input on three possible scenarios from the public:

1. Wilderness Park Trails continue as three separate user specific trails that occasionally come together to share crossings or avoid obstacles. This would maintain the current level of access. No need to upgrade stream crossings in order to continue with current users.
2. Wilderness Park Trails are all opened to all users and become Multi-use Trails. This would roughly triple the trails available to horses and hikers and increase the trails available to bikes by about 75%. There would be several crossings that would need to be upgraded, or alternative routes developed in order to allow horses. We would also have to determine how to handle horses in the areas where the Wilderness Trail needs to use the Jamaica Trail space.
3. Two of the main trails in Wilderness Park are opened to all users while the third is reserved for Bike and Hike use only. This would about double the trails available to horses, triple the trails available to hikers, and increase trails available to bikes by about 75%. Careful planning would keep horses off the Jamaica except in one area near Rokeby Rd. Careful planning would allow existing crossings to continue although hikers would have some wet crossings. Keeping one trail closed to horses would give hikers and cyclists a “no horse” option if they were concerned about equestrian users.