

March 13, 2025

Megan Eno, Norwood District Ranger
1150 Forest Street
Norwood, CO 81423

RE: Comments on Draft Environmental Assessment for Telluride Mountain Club Trails
Proposal Project

Dear Megan,

On behalf of the Town of Mountain Village, we write to express our strong support for the Telluride Mountain Club's (TMtC) proposed trail improvements as part of the NEPA review process. In particular, we wish to highlight the importance of the proposed Mountain Village to Valley Floor Connector Trail, which has long been a desired addition to the region's trail network.

This new connector trail will provide a much-needed safer downhill route from Mountain Village to the Town of Telluride, reducing conflicts on existing high-traffic trails while offering a more manageable climbing route—something that does not currently exist. The trails within Mountain Village already experience heavy use, and this addition will help disperse users while enhancing accessibility for both biking commuters and recreationalists.

Currently, those seeking a non-motorized route between these two primary employment centers must choose between trails that are either excessively circuitous, adding unnecessary time and effort, or too steep and technically demanding for novice users. As a result, active transportation commuters are often left without a viable alternative to driving. This new connector trail would fill that critical gap by providing a direct, accessible, and efficient option for those who prefer or rely on biking or walking for daily travel, reducing vehicle dependency while promoting a healthier, more sustainable commuting alternative.

Taking a wider view, Mountain Village supports Alternative 2 as the preferred option while recognizing the environmental benefits outlined in Alternative 3. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft EA.

Enhanced Public Access to Outdoor Recreation

It should be noted that the trails within the Telluride Ski Resort Special Use Permit Area (referenced on page 30 & 31) are pay-to-access trails, meaning only those with a paid pass

are able to use them. In stark contrast, TMtC's proposed trails are free, publicly accessible, and open to all members of the community, regardless of financial means. Providing accessible, non-restricted trails ensures that all individuals, including residents and visitors who may not have the financial resources to access ski area trails, have equitable opportunities for outdoor recreation. TMtC's proposal emphasizes inclusivity and public access to outdoor recreation, which are critical to the long-term health and well-being of our community.

Community-Driven Trail Development

TMtC's 2021-2022 trail survey, which gathered over 769 responses, underscores the strong public demand for improved trail connectivity, maintenance, and expansion. With 78% of respondents supporting thoughtful trail expansion, the proposed trails directly align with the community's vision for the future of outdoor recreation in the region. This project has also garnered strong support from the local governments, gear shops, guiding services, and other recreation-based businesses, recognizing the positive impact these trails will have on residents, visitors, and the local economy. By using this data-driven approach and broad community backing, TMtC ensures that the project is responsive to community needs rather than self-directed, maximizing success in meeting user expectations and regional recreation goals.

Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship

We are encouraged by the Draft EA's commitment to minimizing environmental impacts. The proposed alignments take into account the unique ecological features of the area, and the incorporation of adaptive management strategies will help ensure the preservation of sensitive wildlife habitats and the overall health of the ecosystem. The environmental review should also consider how access to well-planned, designated trails will help combat rogue trail-making in the region. Providing organized, legal access to these trails will not only protect the integrity of our public lands but also contribute to better environmental conservation by reducing the creation of unsanctioned, environmentally damaging trails.

Support for Local Economic Growth

The Telluride area has a rich history of outdoor recreation, and maintaining access to public trails is crucial to preserving this identity. TMtC's trails contribute to the town's unique character and support a thriving outdoor culture that attracts residents and visitors alike. The proposed trails will contribute to the local economy by attracting visitors, enhancing our region's reputation as a premier outdoor destination, and supporting local businesses.

TMtC's proposed trails will ensure that the community and visitors alike can enjoy the outdoor recreation opportunities that help sustain the local economy.

The Town of Mountain Village firmly believes that the proposed trails outlined in the Draft Environmental Assessment will provide substantial benefits to the community by enhancing public access, responding to local demand, promoting environmental stewardship, and supporting economic vitality. These trails represent a critical step toward ensuring equitable, sustainable, and thoughtfully planned outdoor recreation opportunities for both residents and visitors.

The Town of Mountain Village fully supports this effort to expand and improve our regional trail system, promoting both sustainability and safety. We appreciate the Forest Service's consideration of this important project and encourage its approval as part of the NEPA process.

Thank you for your time and dedication to public land stewardship. Please do not hesitate to reach out should you require any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Prohaska", with a stylized, cursive script.

Martinique Prohaska
Mayor
Town of Mountain Village