

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/1/2024 6:26:04 PM

First name: Kellen

Last name: Zale

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing in support of Telluride Mountain Club Trail Proposal 2023 #65616. I seasonally reside in the Telluride area and have recreated in the area (primarily hiking) over the past 20 years, and I am personally familiar with the locations of each of proposed trail improvements/alignments. I support all of the proposals in the trail package, as they will each contribute to improved trail connectivity and recreational access for a variety of users, both residents and visitors. Below are specific comments providing additional details about why I particularly support certain specific improvements within the overall TMC proposal:

#### Mountain Village to Valley Floor Connector trail:

As close as Mountain Village and the Town of Telluride are to each other, and as many residents and visitors commute from one to the other regularly, getting from one to the other without driving or taking the gondola is not easy. I have hiked the existing Boomerang trail between Mountain Village and the Valley floor, and it is rocky and steep, posing safety issues when there are multiple users (for example, a hiker walking up with a leashed dog and a mountain biker coming down). The proposed connector trail would be a way to provide greater connectivity and encourage non-motorized travel between the two communities and offer a safer recreational experience than the existing Boomerang trail.

#### South Side Perimeter trail:

Of all of the proposed trail improvements, this would be the most valuable in my opinion, since it would fill a major gap in the existing trail network and allow non-motorized travel safely between the end of the existing River trail/Town Park and the Bridal Veil trail/parking area. Currently, to get between these areas, a non-motorized user must walk approximately 2 miles each-way along 145 spur, where after the end of the Idarado Legacy trail, there is no sidewalk/no trail separating the non-motorized user from vehicular traffic (and this stretch can be quite heavy with vehicular traffic in the summer, since Bridal Veil is a very popular recreational area). Particularly for hikers, this would be a major safety improvement and make it possible to get to/from Bridal Veil and town without a risky road walk, as well as create connectivity for a variety of longer hiking loops with the existing trail network entirely on trails, rather than a vehicular road.

#### Sheep Mountain Traverse:

The east side of 145 in the area around Lizard Head Pass lacks recreational trails, other than the Galloping Goose trail (which is a dirt road), and so the addition of the proposed Sheep Mountain Traverse trail would be beneficial by offering another alternative for non-motorized recreation, and thereby potentially easing trail congestion on the trails on the west side of Lizard Head Pass. Particularly in light of the proposed SMA and the possible addition of a USFS campground to this area, a new designated trail near Sheep Mountain on the east side of the pass could be protective of the proposed SMA, by offering campground users a designated trail to explore this area, which could then hopefully make it less likely campground users would attempt off-trail use of the proposed SMA).

#### Sunshine Mesa Backcountry Trail Loop Rehabilitation:

I have hiked this loop, and it is beautiful but it has very degraded trail conditions: there is little to no signage near the intersection of Trail #420/505, making it easy for users to get disoriented and lose the trail, and the trail crossing at this section over Bilk Creek lacks a bridge, so it can be a treacherous crossing when water levels are high. The proposed trail rehabilitation would therefore be valuable, since rehabilitating this trail loop will make it a safety recreational experience for existing users and will also potentially make it a more appealing trail for other recreational users to consider, thereby helping disperse recreational users across the area and alleviate congestion on other heavily trafficked trails.

