

# Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan



## Public Review Draft



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Prepared For:  
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## 1. Executive Summary

The Fairbanks North Star Borough's Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan is the primary decision-making tool guiding the Borough and its partners to prioritize the allocation of available resources to local trails. The Plan is used to identify, preserve, and manage important recreational trail corridors throughout the FNSB and inform Borough policies that will help facilitate the coordination of trails with other land development. The Trails Plan is part of the Borough Regional Comprehensive Plan and is primarily implemented by the Borough's Parks and Recreation Department with advisory support from the Trails Advisory Commission (TAC).

Trails are a significant part of Interior Alaska's history and its future. Over 1,000 miles of trails at varying levels of development provide Borough residents and visitors opportunities to exercise, recreate, commute, and gain access to wilderness and subsistence areas. Establishing and preserving access to outdoor recreational opportunities is a priority. As the Borough continues to grow and develop, demand for outdoor experiences increases, and new trends in trail use emerge. Recreational trails' importance is reflected in other adopted Borough Plans and confirmed throughout the rigorous process by which this Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan was updated.

The Trails Plan was updated through a six-step process driven by engagement with the community. The TAC served as the steering committee, participating in nine work sessions dedicated to Plan development. Contributions from the community were gathered through multiple avenues including; public work sessions at TAC meetings, in-person public workshops, a Borough-wide online survey, a web-based interactive comment map, project website, meetings with partnering agencies and Borough Departments, meetings with major landowners, and presentations to the Planning & Zoning Commission. The vision, goals, guiding principles, and recommendations in the Plan are the cumulation of extensive public input.

The community's long-term vision for Borough recreational trails is:

*The Fairbanks North Star Borough trail system is cherished and essential to our community identity, health and economy; connects our communities to each other and their surrounding wild landscapes through an expansive network; and provides all ages and abilities an unparalleled variety of high-quality experiences for every season.*

To actualize the vision, the Plan specifies eight goals and identifies actionable recommendations and implementation strategies for trail management and development within the Borough.

### Goals:

1. Establish & Protect Public Access
2. Invest in Our Community Trail System as a World-Class Asset
3. Foster Lasting Stewardship
4. Improve Access for All Ages & Abilities
5. Increase Connectivity
6. Improve User Experience
7. Expand Recreation Opportunities
8. Plan for Change, Act for Sustainability

Recommendations are considered in two primary sections of the Plan, System-Wide Recommendations (Chapter 6) and Trail Recommendations (Chapter 7). System-wide recommendations include ten categories of actions applicable to the management, maintenance and programming of Borough trails. Trail Recommendations include maps of current and future trail corridors, descriptions and planning-level details of trail facilities including intended use type, seasons of use, trailheads and dedication status.

System-Wide Recommendations Categories:

1. Approval of Trails Plan
2. Authority
3. Staff Capacity
4. Funding
5. Trail Establishment
6. Design & Maintenance Standards
7. Construction / Implementation
8. Planning
9. Education
10. Partnerships

Trail recommendations illustrate the issues trying to be addressed and the goals working to be achieved. Map recommendations are to preserve future opportunities. Trails may not be developed in the short or mid-term, but their inclusion in the Plan necessitates their consideration for protection, development and maintenance. Borough Code 17.56.040 requires that on lands through which certain categories of trails pass, the platting board shall require the dedication of easements to conform to the adopted comprehensive recreational trail plan. The trail opportunities recommended in the Plan reflect the input received from the community through a multi-year planning process and focus on maintaining and expanding opportunities for a variety of experiences for a variety of users. This Plan is intended to be dynamic and should be periodically updated to accurately reflect current conditions and adapt to changing circumstances.

## 2. Introduction

### Purpose

The Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) set out to collaboratively develop a new Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan (Trails Plan) with a system-wide approach that will be the primary decision-making tool guiding FNSB and its partners to prioritize the allocation of available resources to local trails. This updated plan is a product of the most recent available data and public participation, and defines a vision, goals, actionable recommendations and implementation strategies for the next 10-20 years of trail management and development within the FNSB.

The FNSB's Trails Plan is a tool used to identify, preserve, and manage important recreational trail corridors throughout the FNSB. The Plan identifies priority trail corridors and Borough policies that will help facilitate the coordination of trails with other land development. It also provides a framework for the recreational trails program, investments into recreation facilities and programs and makes a connection between improved recreational opportunity and potential economic benefits for the Borough.

Part of the Plan's significance is regulated through Borough code regarding subdivisions (Title 17); trails of applicable categories included in the Trails Plan must be dedicated if land that trail crosses subdivides. This is especially apparent for areas anticipating significant development such as the Salcha-Badger area. Eielson Air Force Base is preparing to bring two squadrons of F-35A fighter jets to base, which includes pilots, maintenance and other squadron personnel and their families. Approximately 3,300 new FNSB residents are anticipated in association with the new squadrons and most will need housing off-base. The significant influx in new residential housing developments presents an urgent opportunity to protect and dedicate trail alignments to provide area residents a variety of high-quality recreational opportunities.

The Trails Plan is part of the Borough Regional Comprehensive Plan, which is overseen by the Planning Commission with staff support from the Community Planning Department. The Plan is primarily implemented by the Borough's Parks and Recreation Department with advisory support from the Trails Advisory Commission (TAC).

### Background

The Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) trail program was formally initiated in 1980 in response to local trail concerns and the continued loss of existing trails due to private development and other changes in land uses. The original Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan (Trails Plan) was adopted in 1985 to provide guidance to the Borough for the protection and management of local trails. The Trails Plan is a tool used to identify, preserve, and manage important recreational trail corridors throughout the FNSB. The existing plan has three functions: it establishes a categorized system of trails, establishes maintenance policies for trails, and calls for a trail dedication authority to protect public access to trails.

The list of trails included in the Trails Plan has not been updated since 2006 and the issues, goals, strategies, and objectives identified in the Trail Plan remain artifacts from its original draft produced in 1985. Since 1985, FNSB communities have experienced considerable changes in local plans, ordinances, land uses, demographics and recreational pursuits and use patterns. These changes have impacted how

Borough residents use and access recreational trails. Updating the 2006 Trails Plan will improve its usefulness and relevance, addressing the most salient needs of contemporary local trail users.

### Relationship to other Plans & Policies

The Trails Plan is a comprehensive functional plan that will become part of the Borough Comprehensive Plan upon adoption by the Borough Assembly. Planning documents provide guidance on development, change, and decision making for implementing agencies and the communities for which they apply. Guidance on the development of lands, transportation, and the economy shape a community over time, and therefore can directly or indirectly impact the development, management and protection of recreational trails.

As part of the Trails Plan development process, adopted plans, policies and studies applicable to the location, dedication, maintenance and management of trails throughout the Borough were reviewed. Appendix C. Literature Review summarizes existing plans and policies that have the potential to impact access to and use of recreational trails throughout the Borough.

Plan and Policy review focused on identifying relevant goals, objectives and actionable recommendations of higher-level plans (such as the FNSB Regional Comprehensive Plan) that may support the content of the Trails Plan, as well as review specific actions or projects identified in area-specific plans (such as the AK DNR State Parks Recreational Trails Plan). Findings from the literature review advised the FNSB and Trails Advisory Commission during the development of the updated Trails Plan, as well as helped foster a greater understanding of plan applicability, interdependency and functionality.

Plans, studies, Borough code and State statutes reviewed include:

1. **Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan, 2006** – This plan is the most relevant resource for the Trails Plan update and served as a basis for comparison between past and current recreational trail needs, issues, goals and recommendations.
2. **State Statutes and Borough Code** – codes and statutes provide the legal context and limitations of Trails Plan recommendations.
3. **Adopted Area Plans** – These plans have a legal basis for implementation due to adoption in Borough code and generally have more direct relevance to the Trails Plan, as they affect the same geographic context (in whole for FNSB-wide plans and in part for sub-area plans). Some Area Plans, including the FNSB Regional Comprehensive Plan recently adopted Salcha-Badger Road Area Plan include goals, objectives and recommendations specific to recreation, trails, open-space and other development impacting access to recreation.
4. **Functional Plans and Studies** – these plans focus on a specific area or aspect of a community rather than comprehensively addressing multiple facets of an area. Some of the recreation-related plans specific to areas within the FNSB are highly relevant to the Trails Plan (ex. Chena River State Recreational Area Plan and University of Alaska Interior Alaska Community Recreation Study). Statewide plans described in this section may provide useful policy guidance but offer limited recommendations specifically for FNSB trails (ex. Alaska Statewide

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Alaska Recreational Trails Plan).

5. **Ongoing Plan Updates and Initiatives** – These plans, studies, and initiatives may have significant relevance to the Trails Plan, but information is often limited since they are not yet complete. The purpose of listing these ongoing plans and initiatives is to remain apprised of relevant findings and find opportunities to complement planning work.

### 3. Plan Development Process

#### Plan Objectives

The updated FNSB Trails Plan is a system-wide, comprehensive plan guiding development, preservation, management and maintenance of the recreational trail system in the FNSB for the next 10-20 years. The Trails Plan and was developed through a collaborative process to ensure it is representative of and supported by the community.

The Plan and its development process:

- Is based on the most recent available data, significant public participation, and trail and planning best practices
- Focuses FNSB’s involvements in recreational and transportation trails within its boundaries and its platting authority, land management powers, and Parks & Recreation control.
- Completed an extensive inventory of the existing trail system, public access and trail attributes.
- Identifies trail issues and needs of the FNSB community and defines a vision and goals for the trail network.
- Establishes planning, development, and management strategies for achieving the defined goals, including identifying high-value trails to receive dedicated or protected public access.
- Developed a series of Future Recreational Trail Corridors Maps to determine locations of future trail and recreational areas.
- Defines an implementation plan to guide the FNSB Parks & Recreation Trails Office, Trails Advisory Commission, and the community to achieve the goals, objectives and overall vision of the Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan and obtain the public access to recreational experiences the community desires.

#### Development Process

The FNBS Parks & Recreation Department, with assistance from a consulting team of planning and trail development professionals, completed this update of the Trails Plan with funding provided by a federal grant from the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (formerly the Office of Economic Adjustment).

The Trails Plan was updated through a six-stage process. Each step included significant contributions from the Trails Advisory Commission and the public that informed the products created or presented in the next stage of the process.

- **Step 1: Data Collection, Inventory & Analysis – *Understanding what we have***  
The initial step in the process inventoried the condition, use, and status of existing FNSB trails

and an analysis of the systems by which they are created and managed. This included asking the public to identify what trails they use, when and how they use them, the review of adopted plans and policies, assessment of Parks & Recreation Department operations and limitations, and learning from the TAC. Tools to collect data included a project website, TAC meetings and public workshops, an online interactive comment map, a community Trail User Survey (see Public Engagement Summary below), and historic trail files housed within the Parks & Recreation Department.

- **Step 2: Vision, Goals, Issues & Opportunities Identification – *Defining holistically where we want to be***  
Working closely with the TAC over multiple meetings and review and contributions by the public, a rounded, representative vision for the future of the FNSB trails network was defined. The focus of this stage was to determine what the recreational trail system should be 10-20 years from now, and what goals are most important for that future system. By identifying a vision and its supporting goals, issues and opportunities with the existing system were more easily defined. The online interactive comment map and Trail User Survey also significantly contributed to this step in the Plan development process.
- **Step 3: Future Trail Corridors Identification – *Identifying physically where we want to be***  
One of the most significant roles of the Trails Plan is to identify indispensable trails to be designated for formal protection. This rigorous stage of the Trail Plan update included reviewing, amending, and updating existing trails data, and reviewing and considering public suggestions for altered trail alignments, new trails, and new connections for trails to be included in the final plan. Criteria for reviewing suggestions and selecting preferred trails was developed based on the defined goals and guiding principles, and trail design best practices, and were applied to create the draft trail recommendations. The online interactive comment map, geographic comments on the static draft maps, and TAC public work sessions were tools used to collect data on future trail corridors. Informed conversations with major landowners in the Borough upon who's land recommended trails may cross were also part of this step of the Plan development process.
- **Step 4: Recommendations & Implementation Strategies Determination – *Deciding how we are going to get there***  
To achieve the community's defined goals and actualize its vision for FNSB trails, improvements or actions relevant to the management, maintenance, and planning of the trails system-wide should be made. This step in the process identified those recommended actions and defined implementation strategies and responsible parties. Consultation with a professional land surveyor and other FNSB departments, including Community Planning, Natural Resource Development and Legal, informed the recommendations made in addition to close work with the TAC.
- **Step 5: Plan Development & Public Review – *Brining it all together & verifying it represents our community***  
Products of Steps 1-4 of the development process were compiled together into a draft Trails

Plan and presented to the public for their review and comment. A TAC work session and a series of in-person workshops supported the public review of the plan. Comments on the draft plan were reviewed and incorporated as appropriate into the final plan.

▪ **Step 6: Plan Adoption – *Formalizing our plan for future recreational trails***

The final stage in the Plan development process is formal review and approvals by FNSB commissions and the assembly. This Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan, with a recommendation and support from the TAC, will be presented to the Planning Commission and Platting Board at a public hearing and, with a recommendation of approval from the Planning Commission, then to the Borough Assembly for final approval. Once approved, the Trails Plan will become an adopted element of the Borough Comprehensive Plan.



## Public Engagement Summary

Contributions from stakeholders including the Trails Advisory Commission, trail users and user groups, land management agencies and major landowners, and the public informed the most essential components of the Trails Plan. The majority of the Trails Plan Update occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which required most meetings to be held virtually. Despite the lack of physical face-to-face conversations, interactive and iterative opportunities to participate in the process resulted in higher-than anticipated levels of engagement. Primary components of the Public Engagement Process were:

- **Trails Advisory Commission (TAC):** members of the TAC served as the primary steering committee for the Trails Plan update and were an active and informed sounding board for the community throughout the Plan’s development, approval and adoption. Nine work sessions with the TAC were dedicated to the Trails Plan throughout its development.
- **TAC Public Workshops:** the public was actively invited to attend and participate in six TAC Public Workshops. While all TAC meetings are open to the public, these workshops were targeted engagement opportunities for members of the public to share their ideas with the TAC and Plan development team and were advertised as such.
- **In-Person Public Workshops:** ahead of the formal comment period on the Draft Trails Plan, two in-person workshops were held in tandem with the FNSB Comprehensive Roads Plan undergoing a concurrent update to present the updated draft trail recommendations maps and recommendation and implementation actions. The workshops occurred over the same week, presenting the same materials, but targeted residents of different regions of the FNSB.
- **Trail User Survey:** online survey supported issue and opportunity identification, collected user demographics and engaged the general public via self-selecting and random sampling methods. 1,213 responses were collected, and the results of the survey were used to inform multiple steps in the Plan development process.
- **Project Website:** hub for Plan development information, opportunities to participate, materials to review, and project team contact information.
- **Online Interactive Comment Map:** collected geolocated comments and input from the public and current trail users on specific existing and desired trails. Information gathered served as the base for the final trail alignments recommended in this updated Plan.
- **Coordination with Partnering Agencies & FNSB Departments:** informed recommendation and implementation strategy development and ensured continuity with other adopted plans and policies. FNSB Departments also reviewed the draft Trails Plan and provided comments that were incorporated ahead of its adoption.
- **Coordination with Major Landowners:** essential to making future trail corridor recommendations, conversations with major landowners informed final recommended trail alignments and defined reasonable paths to varying levels of trail protection, use agreements, etc. to allow the public to continue to enjoy existing recreational opportunities and provide new ones.
- **Presentations to the Planning & Zoning Commission:** two work sessions on the Trails Plan development with the Planning and Zoning Commission were held prior to the Plan’s formal public hearing. Political preferences and concerns were expressed which helped informed the recommendations made in the Plan.

- **News and Media Outreach:** All TAC meetings and work sessions were publicly noticed in the newspaper in accordance with the Open Meetings act and available for the public to listen or participate. Multiple newspaper articles, television interviews, radio interviews and public service announcements were published during the process. Ample invitations and notices of project milestones and participation opportunities were shared on local social media pages for trail use and outdoor recreation as well as email list-serves and newsletters.

Documentation and summaries of public engagements are available in [Appendix E. Trail Use Survey Report](#) and [F. Public Engagement Summary](#).

## 4. Today's Trails

The following chapter is a summary of the existing conditions of the Fairbanks North Star Borough and its recreational trail system. Additional and more detailed information is available in [Appendix D. Status of the System](#), [E. Trail User Survey Report](#), and [A. Trail Descriptions & Recommendations](#).

### Who the Trail System Serves

#### FNSB Demographics

The Parks & Recreation Department provides facilities and services to all residents of the Fairbanks North Star Borough, and therefore the trail system strives to provide beneficial recreational opportunities to those of all ages and abilities.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough is home to 96,849 residents over 7,444 square miles, according to the US Census Bureau's 2019 Vintage Population Estimates. Since the original CRTP was adopted in 1985, the FNSB population has grown approximately 35.6%, primarily in the urban areas of Fairbanks and North Pole, see Table 1 below. According to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 8,517 FNSB residents (8.8% of total population) were active duty military in 2019. Eielson Air Force Base expects to bring approximately 3,300 new residents to FNSB with the anticipated arrival of two squadrons of F-35A fighter jets. This significant influx in new residents will require new housing developments outside of the Air Force Base, primarily in the Salcha-Badger Road Area, and presents an urgent opportunity to protect and dedicate trail alignments to provide area residents a variety of high-quality recreational opportunities.

According to the 2019 American Community Survey and US Census Bureau, 23.8% of FNSB residents are under 18 years of age, 7.4% are under 5 years, and 11.2% are 65 years and over; 57.6% of FNSB residents are between 18 and 64 years old. The majority of FNSB residents identify their race as White (75.6%); 8.2% Alaska Native or American Indian, 8.2% Hispanic or Latino, 6.9% two or more races, 5.3% Black or African American and 3.4% Asian. 7.2% of FNSB residents are considered in poverty and the median household income is \$76,464 (2016-2020 in 2020 dollars).

*Table 1. Fairbanks North Star Borough Population by Year. Sources: US Census Bureau & Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development*

Year	Population	Active Duty Military
1980	53,983	
1985	71,433	

1990	78,091	7,500
1995	82,515	
2000	82,944	6,861
2005	88,248	
2010	98,260	8,166
2015	99,636	
2019	96,849	8,517

## Trail Use

The FNSB covers 7,444 square miles with more than 1,000 miles of trails used for recreation and transportation. Activities enjoyed on the trails reflects historic use of the areas and growing recreation trends. Motorized, non-motorized, multi-use (all modes), and specialty or single-use trails all exist within the FNSB. A variety of developed and primitive trails provide users opportunities to exercise, recreate, commute, and gain access to wilderness and subsistence areas.

Extended winter seasons provide unique opportunities for winter recreation including dog mushing, skiing, snowmachine riding, snowshoeing, and fat-tire biking. Trails in the summer and shoulder-season have a similar mix of motorized and non-motorized users including hikers, bikers, ATV and other off-highway-vehicle riders, horseback riders, and more. The FNSB trail system has diverse recreation potential for both traditional and trending types of trail use. Downhill or alpine skiing, fat-tire and mountain biking are gaining popularity statewide and have been identified as quickly growing uses in the FNSB. Motorized activities have also grown in their popularity, range, and impact due to technological improvements and availability of snowmachines and off-highway vehicles of all shapes and sizes. Intentional consideration and planning to provide desired experiences for all users is a leading charge of the updated Trails Plan.

A survey was conducted online in 2021 to support the update of the FNSB Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan and was distributed via randomly-selected mailings as well as online advertisements. Information was gathered on FNSB residents’ current and desired trail use, limitations they may have using the trails, opportunities, and how they value trails. The following was collected via the survey from 1,213 respondents about who is using trails, how and when they are recreating, and why they do so (see Appendix E. Trail Use Survey Report for more information):

### Who uses trails and why:

- *Trails serve all ages:* Responding Trail Users’ age groups are distributed relatively evenly for those 26 years and older.
- *Trails impact quality of life:* 84% of respondents said recreational trails are “Very Important” to their quality of life (13.6% said recreational trails are ‘somewhat important’).
- *Trails provide physical, mental and social benefits:* Responding Trail Users identified the following top 5 reasons for why they use trails:
  - Exercise or to maintain a healthy lifestyle (86%)

- Enjoy nature, views, fresh air (84%)
- Reduce Stress or improve mental health (78%)
- Spending time with family or friends (71%)
- Escape crowds or experience solitude (55%)

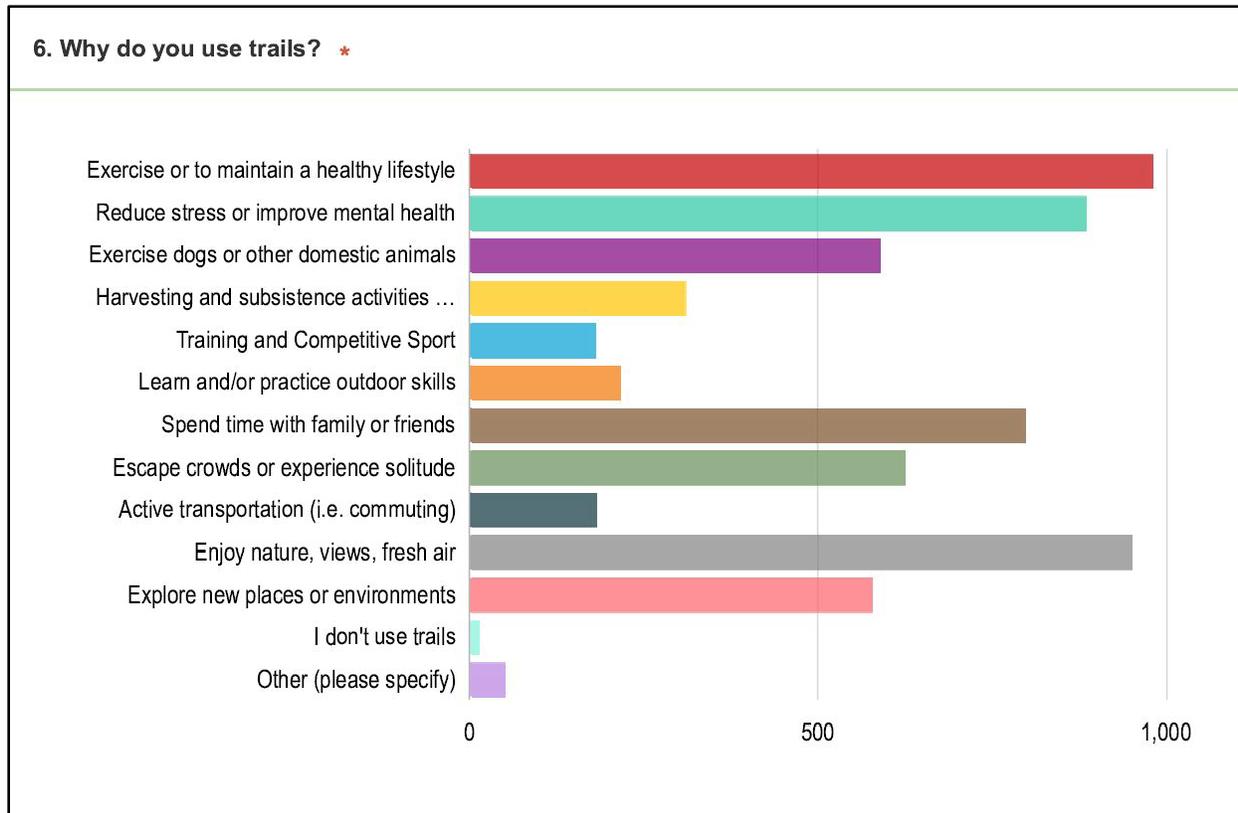


Figure 1. Self-Selecting Online Survey Question 6 Summary

**When and how we use trails:**

- *Trails are used year-round:* Respondents were asked to select all seasons they used trails. Spring (April-May) ranked lowest with 83% of respondents reported using trails during the season, followed by Winter (November-March) at 84.83% use, Fall (September-October) at 91.87%, and Summer had the highest reported use of 93.78%.
- *Trails are used most frequently for non-motorized activities:* Respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they participated in specific non-motorized or motorized activities in the last 24 months; respondents indicated that **about 80.86% of all trail use is for non-motorized activities.**

Table 2. Frequency of Trail Use by Mode Summary, FNSB Trails Plan Trail Use Survey Report

Frequency	Reponses by Trail Use Type (total number of responses and percentage of reported use type by frequency)			
	Non-Motorized Use		Motorized Use	
<i>Less than once a month</i>	1134	75%	368	25%
<i>A few times a month</i>	1587	77%	471	23%
<i>A few times a week</i>	1534	85%	270	15%
<i>Daily or almost Daily</i>	667	85%	116	15%
<b>Combined Total Use:</b>	<b>4589</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>1108</b>	<b>19%</b>

### Trail User Groups and Organizations

Groups have coalesced around almost every major mode of trail travel participated in currently. User groups advocate to improve access and experiences for their users, generate support to keep their favorite trails maintained, and host events. Groups are in various states of organization. Some are formally established as 501c3 non-profits, others informal. They host a wide array of gatherings, sojourns on trails, and competitive events. User groups in the area communicate through email list-serves, social media, websites, and online forums.

Most organized user groups center around non-motorized modes of travel. Among popular modes of travel, summer ATV riding is one trail use currently without a formally organized club. Clubs organized around OHVs are more focused on snowmachining or off-roading in full-size 4x4 vehicles. This may be because ATV travel facilitates an especially broad range of experiences (trail riding, dirt biking, mudding, obstacles, etc.), some of which are more dominated by another destination-oriented motivating activity, such as hunting, fishing or camping.

Certain groups have organized around a specific area or trail system and have even formalized relationships with the underlying landowners/managers. Examples include the Alaska Dog Musher's Association (Jeff Studdert Sled Dog Trails, ADF&G), Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks (Birch Hill ski trails, FNSB & US Army Fort Wainwright), Two Rivers Ski Club (Two Rivers Ski Trails at Two Rivers Elementary, FNSB), and Salcha Ski Club (Darrell Coe Nordic Racing Trails at Salcha Elementary, FNSB). Through their agreements with landowners, these groups provide basic maintenance of the trails systems for their constituents, for special events, and the general public.

### Management Authority

#### Borough Authority

Alaska State Statute establishes the legal authority for governing bodies to exercise their appropriating and prioritization authority. The FNSB is authorized under Alaska Statute Title 29 as a second-class borough, AS 29.35.210 defines their powers. The Borough defines its powers, privileges, rules and

regulations in the FNSB Code. Multiple titles within the FNSB Code contribute to planning, establishment, maintenance and management of the trail system, including Title 17 *Subdivision & Trail Dedication*, Title 18 *Zoning*, and Title 20 *Land Acquisition, Management & Sale*.

The FNSB Recreational Trail Program was formally initiated in February 1980 with the adoption of Resolution 80-9. This resolution established the policy “for creation and management of a recreational trail system within the Fairbanks North Star Borough.”

There is currently not specific set of regulations in the FNSB code to direct the use of Parks and Recreation powers. Title 2 *Administration & Personnel* of the FSNB Municipal code includes a chapter on Parks & Recreation where the director position, their powers and duties, and the process for naming parks and installing memorials and plaques are described. However, this chapter is very limited and does not contain language on trails. The FNSB Parks & Recreation Department and Trails Advisory Commission are the entities primarily responsible for the Recreational Trails Program.

**Liability:**

Concerns about the Borough’s level of authority and private landowners’ potential liability is especially relevant to the Trails Plan, the trail system, and programming as the existence of private landowners who allow recreational activities on their land but do not charge a fee is prevalent throughout the FNSB. Alaska Statute Title 9 (AS 9.65.202) defines Tort Immunity which is intended to provide some protection from liability for landowners who are providing access to their land for public use. Alaska Statue Title 34 defines tort immunity from personal injuries or death arising out of the use of land subject to a conservation easement, provides protection from liability for landowners specifically with land that has a conservation easement 50 feet or less in width, except in cases of gross negligence or reckless or intentional misconduct. These State Statutes are the primary legal tools protecting private landowners and the FNSB from incidences occurring on the trail system.

**Parks & Recreation Department Role**

Responsibility of the recreational trails program is with the FNSB Parks & Recreation Department, specifically under the Parks Maintenance Division and Recreational Trails Office. The Department’s mission is *to preserve and create an inclusive community culture by providing places and programs designed to enrich the quality of life.*

The Parks Maintenance division provides and maintains athletic, recreational, and park facilities to meet the community’s needs for healthy recreational activities that are accessible to all borough residents. The division fosters relationships and partners with civic organizations, youth and adult sports organizations businesses, and other governmental agencies to provide cost effective and affordable recreation opportunities. The division provides facilities and locations for activities that improve physical and mental health, attract and retain community members, contribute to the economic base, and decrease deviant behavior by providing healthy alternatives for at risk youth.

Six basic management areas make up the Parks Maintenance Division: Parks Maintenance, Birch Hill Recreation Area, Chena Lake Recreation Area, Tanana Lakes Recreation Area, Recreational Trails Office, and the Project Office. The staff performs a variety of recreation facility management, renovation, and development functions at over 130 indoor and outdoor park facilities located throughout the Borough. The division works closely with partner organizations and the community to provide recreational

activities at these locations. Additionally, staff provides support for large community events and landscaping beautification efforts.

### *Funding*

The Parks & Recreation Department is primarily funded through appropriates from the Borough's General Fund. Parks & Recreation's budget is divided between all borough recreation facilities, including parks, major recreation areas, pavilions, athletic fields, ice rinks, pools, and recreation centers, and the staff needed to maintain and manage them. Aside from the Trails Coordinator position, there is no funding specifically dedicated for recreational trails in the budget.

Trail needs compete for available funding for contractual services and commodities lines within the Parks Maintenance budget (\$369,000 and \$312,000 respectively for FY2021-22). Nearly all the Parks Maintenance contractual and commodities budget is spent to take care of non-trail facilities. Depending on need, a small number (1-3) of small projects (<\$5,000) are funded through the parks maintenance budget each year to address urgent trail issues. Larger projects are typically funded through external grant programs. Separate project-specific general fund appropriations cover grantee match requirements.

Many recreational trail projects and planning, including this update of the Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan, are funded through state and federal grants. The Recreational Trails Program (RTP), a Federal Highways pass-through grant administered by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, is currently the only regularly applied for grant for trail-specific projects. RTP provides reimbursable, matched funds to develop and repair recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail users, and can also provide for trail related environmental protection, safety and educational projects. One round of applications and awards occurs each fiscal year; as this is a state-funded program, long term stability of the grant program and amount of potentially available funds is not guaranteed and fluctuates with administrations. To access RTP funds, the FNSB Parks Department competes against projects nominated for the State Parks system, other municipalities and Boroughs, and NGO/non-profit organizations.

Other funding sources, such as the Federal Highway Administration's Transportation Alternative Set-Aside Program (TAP) program help fund a variety of activities related to improve surface transportation assets, including on-and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, environmental mitigation, and recreation or improving recreational trails projects. To access these funds, the FNSB Parks Department and trail users must participate in FAST Planning's Transportation Improvement Program and Metropolitan Transportation Plan updates to ensure recreational trail projects are identified and therefore eligible for funding allocations.

### *Trail Staff*

The Trails Coordinator heads the Recreation Trails Office within the Parks Maintenance Division. Currently, the Trails Coordinator is the only position dedicated specifically to the planning, management, and maintenance of recreational trails within the FNSB trail plan. Chena Lake and Tanana Lakes Recreation Areas have staff who can perform basic maintenance and grooming on their trails when time allows. The major functions of the trails coordinator position are to implement the Trail Plan and facilitate trail planning efforts; seek and apply for funding sources for trail development; coordinate trail maintenance or construction projects; provide technical expertise and information about trail use,

design and construction; act as liaison for trail user groups and staff support for Trails Advisory Commission.

#### *Trail Maintenance*

The Parks Department relies on a combination of contracted labor, staff labor, and volunteer labor for trail maintenance and development. All maintenance and development efforts require coordination from the Trails Coordinator position. Most major trail projects are completed by contracted labor funded through external grant programs, namely the Recreational Trails Program (see Chapter 6 for further information). Each year the Trails Coordinator plans one or two projects and applies for the competitive program. If awarded, the Trail Coordinator will bid the projects and manage the contracts.

No Parks Maintenance division labor staff (caretakers, laborers, groundskeepers, youth crews, etc.) are dedicated to Borough trail systems included in the Trail Plan outside of Chena Lak and Tanana Lakes Recreation Areas. Mobilizing a FNSB staff member or crew for trail maintenance currently requires moving staff, vehicles, and equipment from assigned duties at another park or recreation.

Formal volunteer maintenance events are rare due to the relatively high time cost associated with organization and recruitment and the relatively low output. Volunteers are typically untrained and prohibited from using necessary tools like chainsaws due to risk and liability and so may be less productive than staff or contracted labor. Many trail users seem to prefer to take care of the trails on their own, outside of FNSB's knowledge, rather than deal with formalities and requirements associated with FNSB volunteer policies. Some barriers for volunteers include indemnification language, lack of formal organization or non-profit status, ability to fund insurance for the work performed, limited support, inconsistent membership, or lack of specific expertise.

#### *Trail Challenge Program*

The FNSB Parks & Recreation Department has one primary trail program which is funded through Parks Department allocations, the Fairbanks Trail Challenge. The Fairbanks Trail Challenge is an all-ages, all-abilities, outdoor scavenger hunt designed to get residents exploring more local trails and develop new skills. Each summer and winter season, Parks & Recreation Department staff temporarily install special signs in various locations along a dozen or so local trails. While the signs are up, residents are encouraged to visit the trails, find the signs and take pictures with them to prove what trails were completed.

Part of the growing success of the Trail Challenge is due to the Trail Challenge guide, which is updated for both the winter and summer challenges. The guide provides detailed maps and descriptions of the trails included in the challenge, including difficulty level, trail distance, allowed activities, and directions on how to access the trails. Directions on how to take the challenge, contact information, tips for participating, and educational information on Leave No Trace practices and trail etiquette are also included in the guide.

#### *Trails Advisory Commission*

The Trails Advisory Commission (TAC) was established in 1980 by ordinance and is governed by Chapter 4.112 of Fairbanks North Star Borough Code. The TAC is the advisory body to borough government matters relating to trails within the Borough and the Trails Plan, a component of the Comprehensive Plan of the FNSB. Borough residents of various geographic areas of the borough with demonstrated

interest in the trail system make up the volunteer commission. The TAC replaces the duties of the Parks and Recreation Commission regarding trails and the Borough trail system.

Responsibilities and duties of the TAC include:

- Making recommendations to the Mayor concerning present and future trail needs, trail routing, and trails as part of state and Borough land disposals
- Providing a forum for citizen input into the trails assessments and needs for the borough and to advise the Mayor on these findings
- Encourage public and private subdividers to incorporate a trail system where needed on a voluntary basis along property boundaries, section lines and public rights-of-way.
- Provide initial review of proposed amendments to the comprehensive recreational trail plan and shall make a recommendation to the planning commission and borough assembly on such proposed amendments.

Efforts by the TAC are frequently working to address appropriate designations of trails as motorized, non-motorized, or multi-use, and most commonly the lack of legal easements and rights-of-way for much of the trail system. Recommendations made by the TAC should support a safe and enjoyable trail system for diverse users.

### Partners

Partners throughout the FNSB provide residents and visitors with high-quality trail experiences by managing, maintaining and otherwise supporting trail systems in their respective areas or managed lands. These partners range from the federal to local level with varying levels of effort or operational context.

#### Federal:

- Bureau of Land Management
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Military Installations and Bases
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Alaska Public Land Information Centers (made up of nine State and Federal partners)

#### State:

- Alaska Department of Natural Resources: Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation; Division of Forestry; Division of Mining, Land and Water; and Division of Agriculture
- Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
- Alaska Department of Fish & Game
- 

#### Regional:

- City of Fairbanks
- City of North Pole
- University of Alaska Fairbanks
- Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

- Fairbanks North Star Borough Departments
  - Public Works
  - Community Planning
  - Health & Social Services
  - Natural Resources Development

#### Private & Local:

- Interior Alaska Trails & Parks Association
- Alaska Dog Musers Association
- Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks
- Salcha Ski Club
- Two Rivers Ski Club
- Running Club North
- Fairbanks Offroad Lions
- Greater Fairbanks Racing Association
- Fairbanks Cycle Club
- Alaska Trails, non-profit
- Interior Alaska Land Trust

### Trails Creating the System

The 2006 Trail Plan contains 62 recommended trails or trail systems consisting of nearly 1,000 miles of trail. A far greater number of trails exist within the FNSB boundary than are documented in the Trail Plan. Many were inventoried in 1984, and more new trails have been developed or been used in the decades after. The most notable or unique qualities of the FNSB trail systems include extensive access in the winter due to frozen ground and waterways, extended use in the summer due to the midnight sun, wide diversity of types of trail use, connectivity of trail systems throughout the populated area, and ultra-long-distance trail routes (50 miles or more) connecting communities to each other and to special landmarks.

Trails in the FNSB are used year-round for nearly every conceivable use or mode of travel. During winter, available trail miles increases considerably. Trails crisscross the community, taking people between neighborhoods and to and from recreation areas. Most trails have a multiple-use character, blending all kinds of trail users. There are a mix of formalized public trail systems managed by different agencies as well as trail systems meandering through and between residential neighborhoods, crossing private property, with varying levels of protection.

The 1985 FNSB CRTP categorized its trails by:

1. Status: “proposed for dedication” or “existing publicly dedicated trails”
2. Priority / Intended Managing Authority: Category A “State or Federal”, Category B “Proposed Components of the FNSB Trail System,” or Category C “Neighborhood Trail Networks”
3. Use Designation: “non-motorized” and “multi-use”

The established system provides clear delineation of primary management, maintenance, and funding authority, as well as how Borough right-of-way acquisition authority and dedication processes will apply. It has been in use since its inception and is understandable by FNSB staff, other agencies, and the public.

## Public Access Status

The Fairbanks North Star Borough and other public agencies own and operate land dedicated to public recreational use. Examples of publicly accessible Borough parks with trail systems include Birch Hill Recreation Area, Tanana Lakes Recreation Area, and Two Rivers Recreation Area ski trails. Examples of state and federal areas dedicated to public recreation include Chena River State Recreation Area (Alaska State Parks), White Mountains National Recreation Area (US Bureau of Land Management) and Creamer’s Field (Alaska Dept of Fish and Game). These and other such trails fall under the categories of “existing publicly dedicated trails.”

The Trail Plan, past and present, focuses on identifying indispensable trails that lack legal public access so that they may be protected in the future. As such, most trails fall under the category of “trails proposed for public dedication.” This means the Borough will cooperate with, negotiate with, or in certain cases require that a landowner grant or “dedicate” to the public permission to travel through their property via the existing or planned trail corridor. “Dedication” to the public can be achieved by different methods, most commonly through a written easement document or a subdivision plat. As most trails in the Plan cross a great number of properties, considerable coordination, time and resources may be required to have a trail corridor that is fully dedicated to the public across each and every property affected. For example, among the Category B Trails (see next section), approximately 35 miles of trail across approximately 200 private parcels currently lack public access. Until all segments of a trail are granted to the public for recreational use, the Borough will not allocate resources to develop or encourage the use of the trail, so as not to inadvertently encourage trespass. Resources must go toward securing public access prior to trail development or maintenance.

## Priority Trail Categories est. 1985

The three-category system (A, B, C) for prioritization defines where efforts of the borough trail program should be concentrated and where other agency responsibilities lie. The established system provides clear delineation of primary management, maintenance, and funding authority, as well as how Borough right-of-way acquisition authority and dedication processes will apply. It has been in use since its inception and is understandable by FNSB staff, other agencies, and the public. Based on management changes, some trails may be more appropriate in different categories. Recategorization can occur during the planning process.

Category A: Trails with statewide or regional significance that are located primarily on state or federal land and are therefore intended for management by state or federal authority. Dedicated easements are required to reserve these trails during any subdivision of land the trail crosses.

Category B: Trails with community-wide significance and can cross both public and private lands that are intended or proposed to be managed by the borough. Dedicated easements are required to reserve these trails during any subdivision of land the trail crosses.

Category C: Trails with neighborhood or local significance and can cross both public and private lands. Maintenance and management of these trails will typically be by local trail user groups, neighborhood associations, or other volunteers. Easement dedication is not required during any subdivision of land the trail crosses. In the event rights-of-way are established, other uses may

be noted as available and the borough does not assume responsibility of these easements or trails.

### Use Designation

The Trail Plan divides trails into “Multi-Use” (including motorized uses) and “Non-motorized” use designations. There is little or no more specific definition of these categories. The wide range of off-highway vehicle types and sizes are not considered in the current plan and as such are not reflected in easement language or FNSB park regulations. While other agencies create limits based on curb weight, width, or number of drive wheels, FNSB makes no such distinction in its park rules or Trail Plan. There is also little consideration for the seasonal suitability of specific trails, though policy recommendations in the Trail Plan suggest considering seasonal closures for motorized use when applicable.

### Gaps in the System

Throughout the Plan development process and emphasized during Step 1 *Data Collection, Inventory & Analysis* and Step 2 *Vision, Goals, Issues & Opportunity Identification*, limitations, barriers or gaps in the management and maintenance of the FSNB recreational trail system were expressed. Concepts identified by the Trails Advisory Commission were echoed at public workshops and were strongly correlated with the results of the Trail Use Survey.

Frequently expressed concerns related to poor trail conditions or lack of maintenance, confusion or lack of information on trail locations, if a trail is on public land, insufficient signage or wayfinding and user conflicts. This is reflected in the Trail Use Survey responses summarized below (see Appendix D. Trail Use Survey Report):

The Trail Use Survey asked respondents to rate limitations or barriers to trail use on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being not limiting and 5 being very limiting. Table 3 below includes limitations that were rated at or higher than 2.5. **Lack of knowledge on whether a trail is on private or public land was the highest rated limitation** to trail use, followed closely by a lack of knowledge on where trails are located.

*Table 3. Average Rating of Limitations to Trail Use, Trail Use Survey*

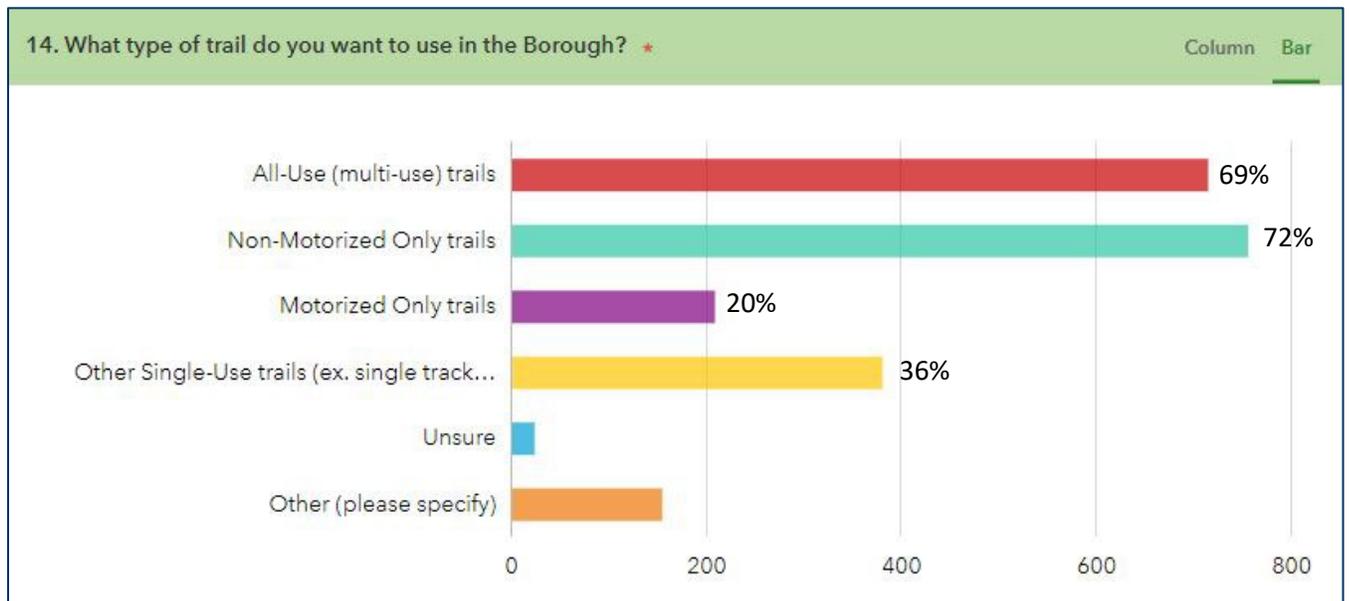
Limitation or Barrier	Combined Response Average
Lack of knowledge on where trails are	2.6
Lack of knowledge on allowed trail uses	2.7
Lack of knowledge if a trail is private or public	2.7
Poor trail conditions or lack of trail maintenance	2.5

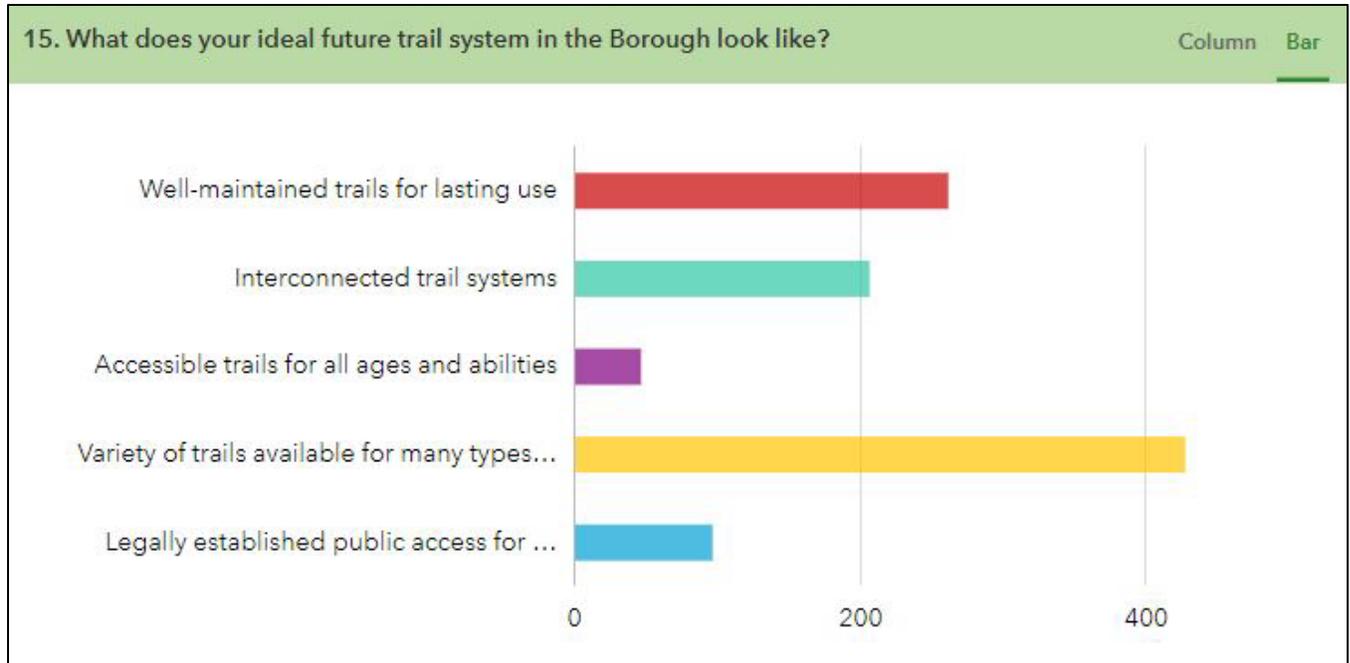
Additionally, Trail Use Survey respondents were asked to rate potential priority activities for improving trails in the Borough. Selecting a 1 indicated the activity was “Low Priority” and selecting a 5 indicated the activity was a “High Priority.” Table 4 includes priorities that rated 3.5 or higher. **Maintaining existing trails had the highest average rating of 4.3**, followed by establishing connects to link existing trails, constructing new trails, providing more and better locational information, and improving trail conditions.

Table 4. Average Rating of Priorities for Trails, Trail Use Survey

Priority Activity	Combined Respondent Average
Maintain existing trails	4.4
Construct new trails	3.7
Establish connections to link existing trails	3.9
Improve trail conditions (ex. resurface trails for extended use)	3.5
Provide more and better information on where trails are located	3.6

The desire for a variety of trails experiences, including all use trails, non-motorized or motorized-only trails and single-use trails, most frequently single-track mountain bike trails, was frequently expressed through all methods of public engagement. This desire for variety extended beyond activity type and included difficulty levels and experiences had while recreating on the trail. The Trail Use Survey asked respondents to identify what type of trail they want to use in the Borough, and the responses again correlated to information received through other engagement opportunities including the online interactive comment map, TAC work sessions and public workshops.





### Local Recreation Context – FNSB Parks & Recreation Niche

Public feedback indicates demand for a wide variety of available trails. An inventory of existing trails generally shows a variety of trail types, designated uses, types of terrain and distances available in the region. This Plan must take care, however, not to interpret this demand to mean the Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department should provide every possible trail experience to every potential trail user. Other non-Borough recreation areas provide ample trail opportunities that may not need be duplicated by the FNSB. The Chena River Recreation Area (State Parks) and White Mountains National Recreation Area (BLM) provide longer distance, developed trails in a more primitive environment conducive to multiple-day trips and weekend adventures. They also offer more trails properly designed for small, motorized off-highway vehicles. These systems are farther from town and less convenient for day use during the week. The FNSB’s parks and trail systems and vacant lands are in contrast much closer to the populated areas and smaller in acreage. The FNSB is uniquely suited to accommodate the need for convenience by offering proximal, short-duration, weekday recreation that is not provided by other land managers. Similar conclusions were found in the 2014 Interior Alaska Recreation Study.

### Pervasive Trail Problems

An inventory of existing trails identified the following types of issues as the most pervasive and in need of consideration when proposing a comprehensive trail system.

#### Access:

Mentioned in the previous section, lack of public access is the number one issue throughout the local network of regularly used trails. Access is a prerequisite for trail development and improvement.

### *Poor Conditions & Trail Degradation*

The two primary culprits of trail degradation are poor trail alignment and inappropriate uses of seasonally wet trails. Remedies in a new trail plan can include proposing new, sustainable alignments and designating trails for uses compatible with the underlying soils and topography. Capital improvements such as realignments and tread hardening will be necessary to make many trails viable and maintainable in the future.

### *Usability and Awareness*

Trail systems outside of developed parks generally lack developed trailheads, adequate parking, restrooms where needed, onsite information and wayfinding. The culprit is often lack of complete public access. Once a trail is made accessible, trailhead facilities and amenities may be developed and maintained in a way appropriate to its contextual needs to increase the trails usability.

### *Service Gaps- What We're Missing*

#### *Uses*

Attempts to meet demand for trail variety may incorrectly lead to designating as many trails as possible for multiple-use. Multiple-use trails will tend to require similar design characteristics, which could lead to an overabundance of a particular trail experience, where variety is only obtained based on the chosen mode of travel. Current evaluation indicates there is a surplus of multiple use trails: roughly 66% of trail mileage in the 2006 Trail Plan is designated for motorized multiple-use and 33% for non-motorized multiple-use, despite the majority of actual trail use being non-motorized based on the 2021 survey. Trails for specific uses and specific ability levels are also in demand but may be undersupplied near populated areas of the FNSB. With exception of multiple trail systems dedicated to cross-country skiing, a small number of systems designed for sprint dog mushing, and one singletrack mountain bike system, there are few public trail systems designed for specific uses. Single-use systems can help increase local proficiency and investment in an activity by providing an area for safe, stepwise skill development from novice to mastery. Growing areas of interest that may lack sufficient supply are dedicated mountain biking areas, singletrack hiking trails with views near town, and dedicated motorized areas for mudding and challenge courses. Despite several bridle trail projects of the past, most of these trails have evolved to become multiple use. There is also no area in the Borough developed specifically for equestrian riding, though the user group may be dwindling.

#### *Areas*

The North Pole and Salcha areas of the FNSB appear to be the most underserved with respect to both trail mileage and trail variety. There is little variety of trail terrain available, especially for summer uses, as most vacant land in the areas is flat and seasonally wet. Providing for these communities may require targeted planning and strategic connections to more varied terrain.

## 5. Trails for Tomorrow

An essential component of this updated FNSB Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan (Trails Plan) is a central vision and a set of goals that reflect the community's priorities and desire for future recreation. Recommendations made in Chapters 6 and 7 of this Plan are centered on, were developed around, and guided by the community's defined vision for recreational trails in the Borough.

The Trails Advisory Commission (TAC) worked collaboratively over multiple meetings with FNSB Staff, the project team, and the public, to develop the following vision, goals and guiding principles to guide investments in the recreational trails system and trail program for the 20-year horizon. Goals and guiding principles reflect priorities of the community and will be a base-line consideration for evaluating trail projects and initiative in the FNSB.

### Vision for the Future FNSB Trails System

*The Fairbanks North Star Borough trail system is cherished and essential to our community identity, health and economy; connects our communities to each other and their surrounding wild landscapes through an expansive network; and provides all ages and abilities an unparalleled variety of high-quality experiences for every season.*

### Goals & Guiding Principles

Community-defined goals provide a roadmap to achieving the longer-term vision for the FNSB Trail System. Actionable guiding principles defined under each goal provide additional guidance for decision-makers on how available resources should be allocated. For more detail on the Goals and Guiding Principles, see Appendix F. Vision, Goals & Strategy Report.

#### 1. Establish & Protect Public Access

**The FNSB has the authority and ability to (1) protect existing access, (2) establish new access, (3) maintain trails, and (4) enforce applicable regulations.**

- a. Expand administrative methods to protect and establish trails beyond the FNSB Code Title 17 Subdivisions process.
- b. Clarify the level of autonomous decision-making authority of the Parks & Recreation Department and expand where needed.
- c. Develop and implement processes to ensure adequate corridor widths are secured to protect the long-term experience and goals trail users are seeking, as well as the rights of enjoyment and use of adjacent lands by their owners. Processes should include design considerations and metrics necessary to ensure safety, longevity and enjoyment of trails.

#### 2. Invest in Our Community Trail System as a World-Class Asset

**The community & FNSB continue and expand their investments into the trail system, programs, and planning to benefit the community, meet current needs and future demand, and support growing and dynamic use of local trails.**

- a. Highlight and develop the uniquely world-class potential of our trail system.
- b. Invest in protecting and creating essential legal public access.
- c. Invest in building and development the necessary physical access.
- d. Invest in the regular maintenance and upkeep of trail systems.

- e. Invest in programs to raise awareness of and help people access our trail system.

### 3. Foster Lasting Stewardship

**The trails are cared for and valued by the community as a shared public asset and an environmental resource.**

- a. Increase the availability of resources and frequency of opportunities to education current and potential trail users.
- b. Continue to provide and expand trails programming to educate and engage more users.
- c. Increase active participation in the care and maintenance of trail facilities by local trail users, organized groups, and community partners.
- d. Leverage FNSB resources to foster partnerships and volunteer opportunities.

### 4. Improve Access for All Ages & Abilities

**The FNSB trail systems provide essential, desired, and inviting trails that are accessible and enjoyable for users with differing abilities and activity preferences.**

- a. Provide a system as diverse as the community it serves.
- b. Expand ADA opportunities.
- c. Strive for equitable geographic distribution of trail facilities.
- d. Provide wayfinding, mapping and signage for public trails.
- e. Develop trailheads for improved accessibility, visibility, and safety, including emergency response.

### 5. Increase Connectivity

**The trail system is expansive and interconnected, providing recreation and transportation opportunities between residential, urban, natural areas, and wilderness.**

- a. Facilitate cooperation and coordination with public and private landowners.
- b. Consider trails as potential transportation solutions.
- c. Provide and improve safe connections across natural and man-made barriers (e.g. rivers and highways).
- d. Disperse users to reduce pressures including crowding and user conflicts.
- e. Provide opportunities for different district trips/outings.
- f. Support regional or national destination trail connectivity projects, such as 100-Mile Loop Trail and Alaska Long Trail, to complement the local trail system.
- g. Improve access for emergency response; increase safety and make trails less intimidating.

### 6. Improve User Experience

**The trail system provides desirable outdoor experiences for users of varying activity types and ability levels year-round.**

- a. Improve user safety.
- b. Reduce user conflict.
- c. Maintain user experience by maintaining integrity of trail conditions.
- d. Direct users to the trail that provide the experience they are looking for.
- e. Provide facilities, amenities, and resources that support trail use and access.
- f. Create desirable experiences for varying skill levels.

## 7. Expand Recreation Opportunities

**The trail network and programming are adaptable to new trends in outdoor recreation and are expanding to provide opportunities to current and future trail users.**

- a. Increase dispersal of different trail types and experiences.
- b. Repair, rebuild and maintain trails where needed to retain historic use of existing trails.
- c. Prioritize new facilities that support under-served users or areas.
- d. Provide niche experiences through trail development.
- e. Extend and expand summer seasonal use.

## 8. Plan for Change, Act for Sustainability

**Use, management, and maintenance of trails considers long-term sustainability, is guided by strong environmental stewardship, and is proactive to changes in climate to continue providing the community with world-class recreation opportunities.**

- a. Respond to recurring and anticipated changes in trail conditions to ensure long-term usability, enjoyment and access.
- b. Design and development of trails should consider sustainable goals and criteria
- c. Use temporary, seasonal, or permanent use closures when needed to protect user safety and the environment.
- d. Use trails as educational opportunities, especially as climate change is exacerbated in areas where trails are.

# 6. System-Wide Recommendations

The Trail System of the FNSB is dependent on and comprised of more than the trails on the ground. The following system-wide recommendations, organized by a general category or type of action, are made to work toward actualizing the community-defined vision and goals for the FNSB Trails System.

## 1. Approval

The first recommended action is for **the FNSB Assembly to adopt this Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan**. Once adopted, the plan becomes part of the Borough's Comprehensive Plan and is recognized as a guiding document for decision-making. Support by the Trails Advisory Commission and the recommendation for approval by Planning and the Zoning Commission should accompany the Plan as it goes before the Assembly. The FNSB Parks and Recreation Department will represent the Plan in the approval process as it is the primary implementer.

## 2. Authority

Goal 1 of the Trails Plan is to *Establish and Protect Public Access* and ensure the Borough has the authority and ability to do so. **Clarification or definitions for the authority or roles of the Park & Recreation Department and its Trail Office is recommended.** This clarification should pertain to its decision-making ability, maintenance and management authority, jurisdictional reach relationships with

landowners of public trails, and the FNSB's role in enforcement. Beyond clarifying and defining the level of authority, **processes defining activities the Parks & Recreation Department have responsibility and autonomy over should also be established or clarified.** This should include which actions require additional review or concurrency by other FNSB entities or non-FNSB partners and landowners.

It is recommended that the Trails Office have the authority to temporarily close trails for maintenance reasons, an authority currently unclear, the ability to establish use designations, and have a process to change designations. Appropriate review processes required for permanent closures or use changes should be more clearly defined to include a public process involving the TAC at a minimum, as it will be changing an aspect of the adopted Trails Plan.

Updates to the FNSB code to define roles and responsibilities, including the authority of the Trails Office, will likely need to occur. The Parks & Recreation Department, Trails Advisory Commission, FNSB Mayor's Office and Assembly will all have implementing responsibility for these recommendations.

### 3. Staff Capacity

One of the most apparent needs for achieving the goals of this Trails Plan is the staff capacity to manage and maintain the trail system desired by FNSB residents. To invest in our community trail system as a world-class asset, foster lasting stewardship, improve access and user experience, and expand recreation opportunities, sufficient resources will need to be available. This Plan recommends the FNSB **provide sufficient staff capacity to the Parks & Recreation Trails Office to allow satisfactory performance of the following functions:**

- Maintain and implement the Borough's Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan;
- Provide facilities that encourage outdoor recreational activities for residents of all ages and abilities;
- Coordinate and supervise available staff, contractor, and volunteer resources to complete trail construction and maintain project;
- Engage with landowners to facilitate trail building, use, maintenance, and establishment of legal public access;
- Complete summer maintenance projects and winter grooming of high-priority trails;
- Apply for and assist in managing grants (federal, state, NGO) for trail development projects;
- Coordinate with agencies and other partners regarding trail issues, including reviewing development plans for consistency with the Trails Plan;
- Advise and inform the public on local trail issues, resolve user conflicts, and generate trail information including maps, guides, signage and other resources;
- Monitor trail usage, inspect trail conditions and respond to trail user concerns; and
- Manage and produce trail programming; including new and ongoing educational and engagement activities.

Updated job descriptions are recommended for new positions that may be added to the Parks & Recreation Department budget. Beyond personnel, acquiring equipment and vehicles for staff and volunteers is recommended to help create and maintain satisfactory trail conditions. As they do today, volunteers will continue to play an essential role in maintaining the trail system as staff capacity is limited. The continued development of a volunteer policy, including clear insurance and liability

coverages, is needed; volunteer applications and training programs should be developed. The Parks & Recreation Department will be the primary implementer of these recommendations.

#### 4. Funding

Funding is an essential component of maintaining and improving the FNSB Trail System and is applicable to all stages of trail development.

**An increase in funding is recommended:**

- **To establish and protect legal public access**, including funding for surveying, acquisition (Right-of-Way, easements, land, etc.), and site planning.
- **For regular maintenance and upkeep of trails**. This includes funding for staff to supervise available labor (staff, contractors, volunteers, grand-funded seasonal workers, etc.) and investing in making trails that are maintainable, then maintaining their good condition.
- **For planning and design** to develop skills and capacity within the Parks & Recreation Department and invest in professional services to conduct outreach and design for developing trail systems, including their access, alignments, and features.

#### Funding Sources

Potential funding sources include the FNSB Operating Budget and Bond Packages, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) allocations, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), grant awards, private donations, user fees and other local revenue generating strategies.

FHWA funds for trails or alternative transportation corridors are allocated through a variety of discretionary and competitive programs, all of which have qualifying criteria for eligible project, including;

- Recreational Trails Program (RTP)
- Alaska Federal Lands Access Program (AFLAP)
- Alaska Community Transportation Program (CTP)
- Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)
- Competitive Highway Bridge Program (CHBP)
- Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act; Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TAP)

Close coordination with Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) Planning, the area's metropolitan transportation planning organization, and other pass-through entities is recommended to determine upcoming funding opportunities and ensure the Trails Office and FAST Planning have identified eligible projects. The recently passed infrastructure bills and modifications to FHWA's allowable TAP allocations is expected to broaden the funding outlook for recreational trails.

Grants can be federal, state or private, but most require matching funds; continued research and pursuit of grant programs is needed to fund project recommendations. Seeking out matching grants (i.e. state grant money can often be considered as match to federal grants) to leverage resources for trail development is recommended. Private donations, often from 501c3 nonprofits or trail user or advocacy groups, are most frequently seen as a funding source for capital projects. Meetings with park and trails

foundations and individual user groups to coordinate opportunities and use of private donations is recommend. The Parks & Recreation Department should develop and install donation collection infrastructure or develop a direct working relationship with a nonprofit organization that would fill that role.

Revenue generating funding sources should be researched for consideration, such as user fees or trail/park pass programs (e.g. State Park Day-Use Pass program). User fees could be applied to special use areas such as maintained ski-only trail networks or motor-parks or be implemented for a limited time until a specific funding goal is met. Other revenue sources for maintenance could be through a modification of the existing Road Service Area or creation of a new Recreation District or Parks Service Area, where borough residents pay into their service area for maintenance of upkeep of facilities within their boundary.

## 5. Trail Establishment

To establish and protect public access and continue to expand recreation opportunities in accordance with the community's goals, **expanded administration methods to protect and establish trails beyond the current process in FNSB Code Title 17 Subdivisions is recommended.** As part of the subdivision process, FNSB Code requires that easements be dedicated for Category A & B trails. While Title 17 is a powerful tool, it's an unavoidable fact that many properties in the Borough have already been subdivided. Unless a property owner wishes to subdivide their property further, the provisions of Title 17 will not protect trails.

Other methods of establishing or preserving trail corridors are necessary to maintain a viable trail network within our community. There are multiple existing techniques and strategies that can be used by the FNSB for the protection of trails to ensure their recreational uses continue, but some are more implementable, politically viable and financially preferred than others. Those strategies are identified in [Appendix B. Trail Protection Toolkit](#) and includes some benefits and drawbacks of each.

Beyond those existing techniques, there are recommendations that the FNSB Parks & Recreation Department, the Borough Assembly, and major landowners should consider and pursue to expand the protection and establishment of trails:

- Coordinate with state, federal and major landowners to **streamline easement establishment processes.** The FNSB should establish minimum standards for accepting an easement and have draft language prepared which can be modified to best fit the access agreement to the given landowners needs.
  - The development and formalization of a shorter-term agreement with Land Management for owner-management agreements should be considered.
- **Coordinate with utility companies** and develop agreements or a standard policy to address or permit allowable recreation within utility easements, primary extended corridors such as those for pipeline and electrical lines.
- **Encourage private landowners to grant easements** that allow recreational use (AS 34.17.100)
  - Explore the feasibility of FNSB property tax breaks or other incentive programs for private property owners to formally dedicate public access for trails identified in the Trails Plan.

- Utilize FNSB Code 20.21 Land Acquisition as a primary means for proactively acquiring trail easements for the benefit of the public.
- Review and improve process for fee simple land purchases.
  - If this tool is improved to be more accessible to the Parks & Recreation Department, the Borough should also be prepared with funding to compensate landowners for purchases of property or easement through fee simple.

There are other actions for supporting the establishment and protection of trails that the Parks & Recreation Department, Community Planning Department, and public are recommended to pursue including:

- **Review and amend the existing Outdoor Recreation District (FNSB Code Title 18.20) and Open Space Buffer District (18.24) to support trail development and expansion.** For example, currently golf courses and shooting ranges are allowed by-right uses within the Outdoor Recreation zoning district, but organized trail facilities are a conditional use. The departments and the public should consider if the planning associated with these uses accurately reflects the districts intent.
- Work with the Community Planning Department to consider the development of a recreational overlay district to support and encourage recreational trail development within compatible primary zoning districts.
- Consider amendments to FNSB Code language and definitions to ‘dedication,’ ‘subdivision,’ and ‘trails’ such that the granting of a trail easement does not effectuate a subdivision.
- **Review FNSB Code and improve the process for addressing changes made to the Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan** after its adoption, including changes in use designation, trail additions and alignment modifications, and how they may need to be reflected or documented in accordance with previously recorded plats.

If any modifications to FNSB Code are found to be advantageous and supported by the community and the Assembly, they will undergo a formal public review process.

## 6. Design & Maintenance Standards

### Standards

Significant aspects of the community’s vision and goals for the FNSB trail system are applicable to the trail facilities themselves and the recreation opportunities they can offer to the community with diverse interests, ages, abilities and desired experiences. **The development of trail standards based on intended use, safety, longevity and enjoyment of trails is recommended.** FNSB’s Parks & Recreation Department should create a trail design and management manual based on best practices including those used by Alaska State Parks, US Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management that identifies standards for trail design and trail maintenance. The manual would serve as a resource for Department staff as well as volunteer leads to develop trails in a manner driven by intended use and sustainable management.

Trail standards should consider:

- Achievable Trail Management Objectives to establish and document designed use, managed use, and design parameters for different types of trails;
- Minimum easement widths, driven by intended trail use;
  - If pursued, codifying determined easement widths is recommended to aid in subdivision and access establishment processes.
- Minimum standards for trailheads, including signage and wayfinding, parking and other amenities;
- On-trail wayfinding and off-trail mapping for public trails; and
- Allowed uses and anticipated experiences (e.g. difficult levels, elevation changes, distances).

**Trailheads are to be improved or developed to sufficiently support their intended purpose**, including improved accessibility, visibility and safety, including emergency response. Trailheads are context-sensitive: not all require the same level of development and are depended on type of use, season of use, volume of use, location, adjacent land uses, traffic impacts and more. **The development of systematic levels or categorization of trailheads is recommended to clarify what facilities and amenities exist or are desired at different trail types.** This will require an inventory of existing trailhead deficiencies, needs and opportunities and input from the public on trailhead standards for different recommended trailhead development categories. If trail standards or planned trailhead development categories are pursued, cost estimates for recommended improvements can more easily be generated, improvement projects can more readily be added to the capital improvements program (CIP) and grants may be more easily applied for.

### Maintenance

A primary consideration and concern of the public heard throughout the Plan development process was trail maintenance. **The development and implementation of a Trail Maintenance Program that addresses needs through a combination of staff labor, contracted services and volunteer assistance is recommended.** While trail maintenance is an ongoing action and priority of the Trails Office, little formalization or documentation to the process has been established.

The Trail Maintenance Program would:

- Establish a policy and standards for maintenance that facilitate staff and volunteer success and meet high expectations for trail quality;
- Establish standards or a process for responding to trail maintenance needs as they are identified;
- Provide PRD with the staff capacity to coordinate with partners, contractors, and volunteers and conduct outreach;
- Employ supervisory staff to oversee Program operations, maintenance, development, and implementation of the Trail Plan;
- Provide support, training and equipment to volunteers to complete projects;
- Streamline the volunteer process to increase participation;
- Work cooperatively with user groups and maintain activity-specific trail systems; and
- Work cooperatively with other organizations to trail lead volunteers and build trail maintenance knowledge in the community.

Defining staff and volunteer roles and responsibilities will be a priority for the Program and a focus on recruitment and utilization of volunteer services will be needed. Parks & Recreation Department coordination with stakeholders, including the Trails Advisory Commission, trail user groups, existing volunteers, and major landowners of public trails, to discuss needs and opportunities for a trail maintenance program should occur early in the Program's development to ensure priorities are accurate and support is built.

## 7. Construction/Implementation

**To realize the community's vision for trails, the adopted Trails Plan, including the recommendations made in this chapter and the Trail Recommendations Map and List in Chapter 7, must be implemented.** Implementation advances all the community's goals for the FNSB trail system and will require adequate funding resources and staff capacity. Beyond the list of trails themselves, the following guiding principles are to be considered when selecting priority projects and implementing the Plan:

- Increase connectivity to complete missing links in access, expand accessibility, improve emergency response, amplify trails' utility, disperse users or reduce pressure and conflicts, and provide opportunities to travel different distances;
- Strive for equitable geographic distribution of recreational trail opportunities and increase dispersal of different trail types and experiences;
- Prioritize new facilities that support underserved users or areas
- Expand ADA opportunities and improve major trailheads to comply with ADA requirements

**The formalization of Trail Improvement Prioritization Process is recommended to allocate resources for trail improvements in a way that will be defensible, transparent and in the lasting best interest of the community.** This is anticipated to be led by the Parks & Recreation Trails Office and the Trails Advisory Commission and include prioritization criteria that includes connectivity and geographic equity to align with the above guiding principles for implementing the Trails Plan Map.

## 8. Planning

Continued and improved involvement in trail, recreation and community planning efforts is important for the long-term success and implementation of the Trails Plan. The Parks & Recreation Department and Trails Advisory Commission, with support from other stakeholders and trail users, should:

- **Actively participate in the 5-year updates to the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)** to remain eligible for federal funding allocations and ensure FNB trail priorities are documented;
- **Actively participate in Borough planning processes for area, functional and comprehensive plans** to ensure recommended trail locations and improvements are incorporated;
- **Implement applicable recommendations made in other jurisdictional plans** that are consistent with the FNSB Trails Plan (e.g. Chena River State Recreation Area Management Plan, Historic Preservation Plan, Comprehensive Roads Plan, Alaska Recreational Trails Plan, etc.);
- **Develop and refine plans for Trail Recreation Areas** (e.g. Skyline Ridge, Peede Road Open Space, etc.) to provide a variety of trail experiences, including areas for specific single-use or

separated uses in a dedicated area with supporting facilities, wayfinding and amenities (see Chapter 7 *Recreational Trail Areas*); and

- **Review the Trails Plan and update as necessary.** Incremental reassessment of the CRTP should be done every 5 to 10 years with a full reevaluation and update every 20 years to ensure the goals, actionable guiding principles and recommendations are still relevant, compatible and representative of the community's needs and desires.

Efforts to increase approachability to planning processes should be made by sponsoring agencies. This may include improving the process by which the public nominates trails for inclusion in the Trails Plan. Infographics and action-oriented text with explanatory attachments may increase public understanding of the process and the amount of effort required for a successful nomination. An update to the *Guide to Nominating Trails to the FNSB Trails Plan* to a more user-friendly, condensed format is recommended to encourage future participation.

## 9. Education

To work towards Goal 3 *Foster Lasting Stewardship* and expand the care and value of the trails by members of the community, educational efforts should increase. The Parks & Recreation Department, with support from the Trails Advisory Commission and trail user groups, should consider the **development and implementation of a Trail Education Program**. The program would promote Leave No Trace ethics and education, provide instructions on trail etiquette, encourage sustainable use and enjoyment of trails and improve approachability to recreation for new users. Information on trails and their access should be provided through digital and physical resources including maps and descriptions for using FNSB trails and onsite interpretive signage.

The Education Program would incorporate the existing and popular Trail Challenge program and add new programs as capacity allows. Through work with partnering organizations and businesses, equipment and instruction for different types of recreational activities could be provided to incentivize more FNSB residents to get outdoors. Approachability should be a primary focus of the program across all aspects.

## 10. Partnerships

Partnerships are an essential component for long-term success of the FNSB Trail systems. From volunteer maintenance, to fundraising and hosting of educational events, partners help keep the trails in use. **The Parks & Recreation Department should continue to support other organizations seeking compatible use of the trail system** for public events such as races, field trips, athletic training programs, school programs, lifelong learning, health-promoting activities and more. Consideration and development of a fee schedule for use of recreational facilities for non-Parks & Recreation sponsored events, including for-profit events, is recommended.

**Summary**

The following table summarizes the recommended actions to implement the Trails Plan’s goals and work toward actualizing the community-defined vision for the FNSB Trail System. The table also identifies the primary parties responsible for implementing the identified actions and a general timeframe to accomplish the recommendations. Timeframes represented are Short (0-4 years), Mid (5-9 years), and Long (10 years +).



TYPE/CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS	IMPLEMENTING RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	GOALS BEING ADVANCED
1. Approvals	1. Adopt the FNSB Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan	i. Local approval process through TAC, Planning Commission and FNSB Assembly	FNSB Parks & Recreation Department	Short	All
2. Authority	<p>1. Clarify or define the roles and authority of the Parks &amp; Recreation Department (PRD) and its Trail Office, including its decision-making ability, maintenance and management authority, jurisdictional reach relationship with landowners of public trails, and role in enforcement.</p> <p>2. Establish or clarify processes defining activities PRD has responsibility and autonomy over and which actions require additional review/concurrence by other FNSB entities or non-FNSB partners/landowners.</p> <p>a. Provide the PRD Trails Office the authority to temporarily close trails for maintenance; clarify appropriate review processes required for permanent closures or use changes.</p> <p>b. Provide the PRD Trails Office the ability to establish use designations and a process to change them.</p>	i. Update the Borough Code to define roles and responsibilities including authority of the Trails Office	FNSB Parks & Recreation Dept., Trails Advisory Commission, FNSB Mayor's Office, Assembly	Short	<p>1. Establish &amp; Protect Public Access</p> <p>8. Plan for Change, Act for Sustainability</p>
3. Staff Capacity	<p>1. Provide sufficient staff capacity of the Parks &amp; Recreation Trails Office to allow satisfactory performance of the following functions:</p> <p>a. Maintain and implement the Borough's Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan.</p> <p>b. Provide facilities that encourage outdoor recreational activities for residents of all ages and abilities.</p> <p>c. Coordinate and supervise available staff, contractor, and volunteer resources to complete trail construction and maintenance projects.</p> <p>d. Engage with landowners to facilitate trail building, use, maintenance, and establishment of legal public access.</p> <p>e. Complete summer maintenance projects and winter grooming of high-priority trails.</p> <p>f. Apply for and assist in managing grants (federal, state, NGO) for trail development projects.</p> <p>g. Coordinate with agencies and other partners regarding trail issues, including reviewing development plans for consistency with the Trail Plan.</p> <p>h. Advise and inform public on local trail issues; resolve user conflicts; and generate trail information including maps, guides, signage and other resources.</p> <p>i. Monitor trail usage, inspect trail conditions and respond to trail user concerns.</p> <p>j. Manage and produce trail programming, including new and ongoing educational and engagement activities.</p>	<p>i. Develop job descriptions for recommended positions</p> <p>ii. Recommend the positions in the department budget</p> <p>iii. Revise and continue to develop a volunteer policy, including insurance and liability coverages</p> <p>iv. Develop volunteer applications</p> <p>v. Develop volunteer training programs</p> <p>vi. Acquire equipment and vehicles for staff and volunteers</p>	FNSB Parks & Recreation Department	Short to Mid	<p>2. Invest in our Community Trail System as a World-Class Asset</p> <p>3. Foster Lasting Stewardship</p> <p>6. Improve User Experience</p>

TYPE/CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS	IMPLEMENTING RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	GOALS BEING ADVANCED
<p><b>4. Funding</b></p>	<p><b>1. Increase funding to establish and protect legal public access</b>, including funding for surveying, acquisition (ROW, easements, land. etc.), trail planning and design.</p> <p>a. Explore and develop funding incentives for easement acquisition.</p> <p><b>2. Increase funding for capital improvements and development</b> including trail construction and restoration, parking areas and trailhead amenities.</p> <p>a. Build basic trail infrastructure such that it can be used and maintained with minimal effort.</p> <p><b>3. Increase funding for regular maintenance</b> and upkeep of trails.</p> <p>a. Staff to supervise available labor (staff, contracts, volunteer, grant-funded seasonal, etc.)</p> <p>b. Invest in making trails that are maintainable, then maintain their conditions.</p> <p><b>4. Increase funding for planning and design</b></p> <p>a. Develop in-house skills/capacity and invest in professional services to conduct outreach and design for developing trail systems.</p>	<p>i. Research grant programs to fund project recommendations.</p> <p>ii. Research user fee and park pass programs</p> <p>iii. Develop and install physical and/or web-based fee and donation collection infrastructure.</p> <p>iv. Work closely with Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) Planning and other pass-through entities to map upcoming funding opportunities through recent infrastructure bills and Federal Highways programs.</p> <p>v. Meet with parks and trail foundations, and individual user groups to coordinate the use of private donations.</p>	<p>FNSB Parks &amp; Recreation Dept., Trail Users, Advocacy Groups, Trails Advisory Commission</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>2. Invest in our Community Trail System as a World-Class Asset</p> <p>7. Expand Recreation Opportunities</p>
<p><b>5. Trail Establishment</b></p>	<p><b>1. Expand administrative methods to protect and establish trails beyond the current process in FNSB Code Title 17 Subdivisions</b></p> <p>a. Coordinate with state, federal and major landowners to streamline easement establishment processes.</p> <p>b. Coordinate and develop agreements, plat amendments, and /or policy to permit recreation within utility easements. Likely most applicable for extended corridors (pipeline, electric lines, etc.).</p> <p>c. Encourage private landowners to grant public recreation easements or conservation easements that allow recreational use to provide protection from liability per AS 34.17.055.</p> <p>d. Utilize FNSB Code 20.12 Land Acquisition as a primary means for proactively acquiring trail easements for the benefit of the public.</p> <p>e. Explore feasibility of FNSB property tax breaks or other incentive programs for private property owners to formally grant public access for trails identified in the Trails Plan.</p> <p>f. Review and improve processes for fee simple land purchases.</p> <p>g. Review and amend the existing Outdoor Recreational District (18.20) and Open Space Buffer District (18.24) where appropriate to support trail development and expansion.</p> <p>h. Consider development of a recreational overlay district to support and encourage recreational trail development within compatible primary zoning districts.</p> <p>i. Review FNSB Code and improve process for addressing changes made to the Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan after adoption, including changes in use designation, trail additions, and alignment modifications, and how they may need to be reflected on or documented in accordance with previously recorded plats.</p>	<p>i. Meet with key stakeholders to discuss streamlining the easement establishing process.</p> <p>ii. Draft a memorandum of understanding to solidify agreements.</p> <p>iii. Work closely with Community Planning Department to review and explore Title 18 changes to support recreational trails.</p> <p>iv. Work with Planning Commission when proposing updates to code language for 18.20 and 18.24 and overlay district if supported.</p> <p>v. Consider amendments to FNSB Code language and definitions (e.g. "Dedication," "Subdivision," and "Trails") such that the grant of a trail easement does not effectuate a subdivision.</p> <p>vi. Develop a process to efficiently accept easements that are compatible with public recreation use and trail development. Establish acceptance criteria, including standards for trails and easement terms.</p> <p>vii. Meet with Community Planning Department, platting officers, legal, and finance departments to determine opportunities for tax breaks and incentives for formally granting public access on private land.</p>	<p>FNSB Parks &amp; Recreation Dept., Planning Department, Assembly, Utility Providers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>1. Establish &amp; Protect Public Access</p> <p>2. Invest in our Community Trail System as a World-Class Asset</p> <p>7. Expand Recreation Opportunities</p>

TYPE/CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS	IMPLEMENTING RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	GOALS BEING ADVANCED
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>viii. Formalize a process with Land Management for shorter-term owner/management agreements.</li> <li>ix. Be prepared with funding to compensate landowners for purchases of property or easements through fee simple.</li> <li>x. Investigate options specific to FNSB-owned land.</li> </ul>			
<b>6. Design &amp; Maintenance Standards</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Develop trail standards</b> based on intended use, including trail and easement widths, trail design considerations and metrics necessary for safety, longevity and enjoyment of trails.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. PRD standards for design and maintenance                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Develop achievable Trail Management Objectives to establish and document designed use, managed use, and design parameters for different types of trails.</li> <li>ii. Trail Design &amp; development should be driven by intended use and sustainable goals and criteria.</li> </ol> </li> <li>b. Codify easement width minimums (especially helpful for subdivisions).</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. <b>Develop &amp; implement minimum standards for trailhead signage and wayfinding.</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Provide trailhead signage, on-trail wayfinding, and off-trail mapping for public trails.</li> <li>b. Communicate allowed uses, anticipated experiences (e.g. difficulty levels, elevation change, distance).</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Create a trail design and management manual based on best practices including those used by Alaska State Parks, US Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management.</li> <li>ii. Codify minimum trail development standards, especially those applicable to easement provision including easement width needs for different types of trails to aid in the subdivision and public access establishment processes.</li> <li>iii. Include chapters on trailhead signage and wayfinding standards in the trail design and management manual.</li> </ol>	FNSB Parks & Recreation Dept., Planning Dept., Trails Advisory Commission, Assembly	Short to Mid	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish &amp; Protect Public Access</li> <li>2. Improve Access for All Ages &amp; Abilities</li> <li>6. Improve User Experience</li> <li>7. Expand Recreation Opportunities</li> <li>8. Plan for Change, Act for Sustainability</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. <b>Develop trailheads</b> to be used for their intended purposes, including improved accessibility, visibility, and safety, including emergency response.</li> <li>4. <b>Develop systematic levels or categorization of trailheads</b> to clarify what facilities and amenities exist or are desired at different types of trails. Trailheads are context-sensitive; not all require the same level of development and are dependent on type of use, season of use, volume of use, location, adjacent land uses, traffic impacts and seasonality.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Inventory specific trailhead deficiencies, needs, and opportunities.</li> <li>ii. Develop cost estimates for recommended improvements.</li> <li>iii. Recommend improvement projects in the CIP.</li> <li>iv. Pursue grant funding.</li> </ol>	FNSB Parks & Recreation Dept.	Mid to Long	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Invest in Our Community Trail System as a World-Class Asset</li> <li>3. Foster Lasting Stewardship</li> <li>4. Improve Access for All Ages &amp; Abilities</li> <li>6. Improve User Experience</li> <li>7. Expand Recreation Opportunities</li> </ol>

TYPE/CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS	IMPLEMENTING RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	GOALS BEING ADVANCED
	<p><b>5. Develop &amp; implement a Trail Maintenance Program</b> that addresses needs through a combination of staff labor, contracted services and volunteer assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Establish standards for maintenance that facilitate staff and volunteer success and meet high expectations for trail quality.</li> <li>b. Establish standards or a process for responding to trail maintenance needs as they are identified.</li> <li>c. Provide PRD with the staff capacity to conduct summer maintenance and winter grooming of high priority trails.</li> <li>d. Provide PRD staff capacity to coordinate with partners, contractors, and volunteers and conduct outreach.</li> <li>e. Employ supervisory staff to oversee Trail Program operations, maintenance, development, and implementation of the Trail Plan.</li> <li>f. Provide support, training and equipment to volunteers to complete projects.</li> <li>g. Remove unnecessary administrative barriers to increase volunteerism.</li> <li>h. Work cooperatively with user groups to maintain activity-specific trail system.</li> <li>i. Work cooperatively with other organizations to train lead volunteers and build trail maintenance knowledge in the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Meet with stakeholders to discuss needs and opportunities of a trail maintenance program.</li> <li>ii. Define staff and volunteer roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>iii. Develop a streamlined process to recruit and utilize volunteer service.</li> <li>iv. Draft trail maintenance policy.</li> <li>v. Budget for contractual services to address maintenance and improvement projects beyond the capabilities of staff and volunteers.</li> </ul>	<p>FNSB Parks &amp; Recreation Dept., Trails Advisory Commission, Trail Users, Trail User Groups, Volunteers</p>	<p>Short to Mid</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Invest in Our Community Trail System as a World-Class Asset</li> <li>3. Foster Lasting Stewardship</li> <li>6. Improve User Experience</li> <li>8. Plan for Change, Act for Sustainability</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Construction / Implementation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Implement Trail Recommendations Map &amp; List</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Increase connectivity to complete missing links in access, expand accessibility, improve emergency response, amplify trails’ utility role, disperse users to reduce pressure and conflicts, and provide opportunities to travel different distances</li> <li>b. Strive for equitable geographic distribution of recreational trail opportunities, and increase dispersal of different trail types and experiences</li> <li>c. Prioritize new facilities that support underserved users or areas</li> <li>d. Expand ADA opportunities &amp; improve major trailheads to comply with ADA requirements</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Formalize a Trail Improvement Prioritization Process</b> to allocate resources for trail improvements in a way that will be defensible, transparent and in the lasting best interest of the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Identify trailheads without adequate ADA accessibility</li> <li>ii. Work with transportation organizations (FAST Planning, FNSB Public Works, etc.) to identify opportunities for funding and project collaborations – alternative transportation funding, river and highway crossing projects, etc.</li> <li>iii. Develop trail improvement prioritization scoring criteria, including connectivity and geographic equity</li> <li>iv. Ensure PRD staff capacity to implement recommendation Map and List.</li> </ul>	<p>FNSB Parks &amp; Recreation Dept.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish &amp; Protect Public Access</li> <li>2. Invest in Our Community Trail System as a World-Class Asset</li> <li>4. Improve Access for All Ages &amp; Abilities</li> <li>5. Increase Connectivity</li> <li>6. Improve User Experience</li> <li>7. Expand Recreation Opportunities</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Planning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Actively participate in the 5-year updates to the Statewide Comprehensive Recreational Plan</b> to remain eligible for federal funding allocations and ensure FNSB trail priorities are documented.</li> <li><b>2. Actively participate in Borough planning processes</b> for area, functional and comprehensive plans to ensure recommended trail locations and improvements are incorporated.</li> <li><b>3. Implement applicable recommendations made in other jurisdictional plans</b> that are consistent with the FNSB Trails Plan. (Ex. Chena River State Recreation Area Management Plan, Historic Preservation Plan, Comprehensive Roads Plan, Alaska Recreational Trails Plan, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Attend stakeholder meetings and provide comments.</li> <li>ii. Meet with implementing authorities to coordinate efforts.</li> </ul>	<p>FNSB Parks &amp; Recreation Dept., Trails Advisory Commission, Trail Users</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish &amp; Protect Public Access</li> <li>2. Invest in our Community Trail System as a World-Class Asset</li> </ul>

TYPE/CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS	IMPLEMENTING RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	GOALS BEING ADVANCED
	<p><b>4. Develop and refine plans for Trail Recreation Areas</b> (e.g. Skyline Ridge, Peede Road Open Space) to provide a variety of trail experiences, including areas for specific single-use or separated uses, in a dedicated area with supporting facilities, wayfinding and amenities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Propose trail system or recreation area master plans &amp; updates in the department budget.</li> <li>ii. Initiate area recreational plans or updates.</li> </ul>	FNSB Parks & Recreation Dept., Trails Advisory Commission, Planning Commission	Short-Mid Term	<p>6. Improve User Experience</p> <p>7. Expand Recreation Opportunities</p>
	<p><b>5. Review Plan and Update as necessary:</b> Incremental reassessments of the CRTP should be done every 5-10 years with a full reevaluation and update every 20 years to ensure the goals, actionable guiding principles and recommendations are still relevant, compatible and representative of the community's needs and desires.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Improve the process or increase approachability to the process for the public to nominate trails to the FNSB CRTP. Infographics and action oriented text with explanatory attachments may increase public understanding of the process and the amount of effort required for a successful nomination.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Include periodic reassessments and updates in the department work plan and budget.</li> <li>ii. Systematically review the Plan as new census data is updated, new infrastructure projects are developed that could change the population and needs of Borough residents.</li> <li>iii. Update the <i>Guide to Nominating Trails to the FNSB CRTP</i> to a condensed, more user-friendly format.</li> </ul>	FNSB Parks & Recreation Dept., Community Planning Dept., Trails Advisory Commission	Mid to Long	All
<b>9. Education</b>	<p><b>1. Develop &amp; implement a Trail Education Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Promote Leave No Trace ethics and education</li> <li>b. Encourage sustainable use and enjoyment of trails</li> <li>c. Improve approachability to recreation for new users</li> <li>d. Provide digital resources and maps for accessing and using trails</li> <li>e. Expand use of interpretive signage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Advertise and promote recreation opportunities.</li> <li>ii. Provide information on trail access (where, how and when).</li> <li>iii. Develop a handbook and/or programming on trail ethics, including rights-of-way, conflict reduction, Leave No Trace, etc.</li> <li>iv. Continue the Trails Challenge and develop similar programs.</li> <li>v. Partner with other organizations and businesses to provide equipment, instruction and incentives needed to get outdoors.</li> </ul>	FNSB Parks & Recreation Dept., Trails Advisory Commission, Trail User Groups,	Short to Mid	<p>2. Invest in Our Community Trail System as a World-Class Asset</p> <p>3. Foster Lasting Stewardship</p> <p>8. Plan for Change, Act for Sustainability</p>
<b>10. Partnerships</b>	<p><b>1. Support other organizations seeking compatible use of the trail system</b> for public events such as races, field trips, athletic training programs, school programs, lifelong learning, health-promoting activities, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Develop a list of relevant organizations and initiate coordination meetings.</li> <li>ii. Consider and develop a fee schedule for use of facilities for non-PRD events, including for-profit events.</li> </ul>	FNSB Parks & Recreation Dept.	Ongoing	3. Foster Lasting Stewardship

## 7. Trail Recommendations

This chapter describes the processes for evaluating trail recommendations, selecting future trail corridors, refining trail alignments, and categorizing and prioritizing trails. The chapter includes the list of trails proposed as future trail corridors in the Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan along with descriptions and recommendations for each.

### Trail Evaluation & Recommendation Determination Process

An overwhelming number of trail recommendations came out of the online trail inventory, TAC public workshops, written responses, and verbal conversations. Recommendations from the public were for existing trails (*e.g.* “*Save this trail!*”) as well as new ideas and concepts (*e.g.* “*We need a trail here!*”). Some ideas were clear winners, and some were clearly unfeasible, but the majority required significant investigation. A process to evaluate, refine and ultimately recommend certain trails was developed.

### Selection Criteria & Trail Values

What makes a trail good or bad? What old trails are worth keeping? What new ideas are worth pursuing? Answers to these questions were guided by the vision and goals, developed by the TAC with input from the public, and refined using the guiding principles and trail design and development best practices. Major considerations and preferences for selecting recommended trails included:

- **Plan History:** Trails from the 2006 Trail Plan and prior versions were kept in this update. These trails were significantly evaluated decades ago and most have been in use for decades prior and since. Several trails needed updates and adjustments, but the original concepts remain.
- **Connective Potential:** Trails that connect people to each other, trail systems, and special places including neighborhoods, recreation, civic, employment and educational centers.
- **Loop:** Trails that can be done in a contained loop or facilitate a convenient loop in combination with a nearby road or trail system.
- **Views, Scenery & Special Landmarks:** Trails that provide panoramic views or access to special features like bald ridges, granite tors, historic mining infrastructure or culturally important sites.
- **Problem Solving:** Trails that solve an identified problem such as safety (ex. safer location for a road crossing) or access (ex. missing connection or neighborhood impact mitigation).
- **Convenience:** Trails near populated or commercial areas that could be enjoyed with little travel cost, available time or access to special equipment.
- **Unique Experience:** Trails that provide a new or unique experience not already offered in the Borough.
- **Addressing Disparity:** Trails in a geographic location where there are few nearby trail opportunities.

## Drafting Trail Alignments

Is the trail route realistic or feasible? Even the most exciting ideas faced barriers. With trails, the ground typically determines what can be established. Land characteristics such as soil types, topography and drainage, and land ownership were carefully considered. The planning team, with technical advice from a professional trail builder, evaluated concepts and made recommendations based on the suitability of the ground for construction and proposed use. Property research, GIS analysis, and site visits for ground-truthing influenced recommendations.

## Realignments

Many existing trails and new trail ideas suffered from poor alignment. Trail alignment is one of the primary determinants for the sustainability of a trail. Sustainability means the trail, with minimal maintenance, can withstand the use it's meant for over time. A poorly aligned trail often suffers from erosion and entrenchment, as many of our existing trails do. Experience around the world shows it is often less expensive to build a completely new trail with a better alignment than to repair heavily eroded or deeply entrenched trails. Reducing our vulnerability to these issues in the future requires planning ahead and recommending alignments in this plan that meet industry design standards for sustainability.

Overly steep trails, trails on a "fall-line" (straight down a hill or perpendicular to the contours), and motorized trails through wet areas were abundant in the trail inventory. These trails often had an important purpose, like connecting trail users through an area. The planning team looked for and drafted sustainable realignments that could meet the trails needs, be constructed in a way to reduce degradation and cost and improve user experience.

## New Trail Concepts

Several large areas of developable vacant land had no existing trails and received no new trail recommendations. Recognizing the potential for integrated trail systems to increase property values in the future, some new concepts were added. New concepts were focused on vacant land owned by the Fairbanks North Star Borough, except for the mostly vacant Steele Creek and Alder Creek valleys owned primarily by the University of Alaska and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, respectively. These concepts are purpose-driven, and alignments depicted on maps are approximations based on preliminary analysis. Additional investigation, design and further consultation with land managers will determine final layouts and trail mileage.

## Limitations

Private property was avoided to every extent possible when adding trails to the updated trail plan. The plan focused on identifying trails on public properties so they can be protected in the event of disposal and subdivision. If a highly valuable trail crossed private property, substitute alignments were pursued along existing public access easements or nearby public property where available. Trails from the 2006 Trail Plan were also reevaluated. Where there were no substitutes, only the most critical connecting trails were kept in the plan.

Bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities were generally omitted from plan recommendations. While many miles of trail in the plan have great transportation value, the focus and scope of this plan is to consider recreational trails. Bike and pedestrian facilities receive planning support through the

Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation Planning and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

### Public Review

The first round of draft trail concepts was developed during Step 3 of the Plan Development Process (see Chapter 3) and presented to the public and Trails Advisory Commission for review and feedback. Major public and private landowners were also contacted and sent preliminary trail data for feedback. The public and stakeholder map review process is detailed in Appendix E. Public Engagement Summary. Public and landowner feedback heavily influenced the redrafting and finalization of trail recommendation maps.

### Trail Recommendations Map

Data for trail maps are sorted in a geographic information system database. This data was used to prepare static maps for viewing digitally or in print. The maps are separated into regions on the east and west sides of the Borough for readability and to encourage discussion during planning. The following sections describe the map information, how it was generated and how to interpret it.

### Trail Attributes

#### *Use Designation and Seasonal Distinctions*

Three types of trails depicting use are included on the trail maps; maps are showing limited information regarding use designation and display the most impactful types of trail use. The primary criteria by which trails were evaluated for use designation were the presence or absence of wetlands to determine if the ground can adequately handle motorized vehicles, and the proximity to dense residential areas to consider the significance of potential noise impacts. The three primary trail use types are:

- **Multi-Use / Motorized:** Wheeled Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs) are allowed in summer, snowmachines are allowed in winter, non-motorized uses are allowed year-round.
- **Seasonal Motorized:** non-motorized uses are allowed year-round, wheeled motorized vehicles are prohibited, snowmachines may be allowed in the winter.
- **Non-Motorized:** non-motorized uses are allowed year-round and motorized recreation is prohibited all times of the year.

There are other trail use types not illustrated on the trail recommendation maps. Those not shown include single-use trails and those regulated and managed for specialty activities or events. More detailed information on recommended trails is provided in [Appendix A. Trail Descriptions & Recommendations](#).

**Motorized Uses:** This planning document does not make precise distinctions between types of motorized vehicles in its recommended use designations. Rather it recommends developing more specific trail management objectives for each trail in the future while considering the applicability of broader policies on Borough land and easements. In general, “Multi-Use/Motorized – Year-Round” means wheeled motorized vehicles, smaller than a full-sized off highway vehicle, are allowed in the summer. Examples include “four-wheeler” ATVs, “side-by-sides” and dirt bikes. A few trails may be open to 4x4 highway vehicles (“jeeps”) based on state regulations. This plan makes some such

recommendations. Available in equipment in each of these categories is expanding and evolving more quickly than trail managers and trail construction can keep pace. This topic will continue to need to be addressed.

**Motors on Non-Motorized Trails:** E-bikes are currently not considered in the motorized vehicle category. As technology and available equipment changes, this subject should be reviewed and potentially reconsidered. Use of motorized vehicles may at times be necessary for construction, repair or maintenance of non-motorized trails. For example, hauling tools or materials for summer trails, or dragging groomers for winter skiing trails. The maps have a more generous selection of seasonal motorized trails due to the lower impact of snowmachines on frozen, snow-covered trails and the fact that snowmachine traffic packs snow and makes winter trails more usable for all other non-motorized uses.

### *Recommended & Existing*

'Recommended' trail alignments are trail sections that have not been constructed or may be only partially constructed. These are depicted on the maps as a dashed line in contrast to the solid line for 'existing' trails. Recommended trail alignments indicate an approximate or conceptual location and in all cases will require some level of additional planning and design work to determine the final, precise location. Some recommendations indicate a proposed realignment meant to address problematic layouts due to conflicting use (e.g road development), property ownership, poor ground conditions, or topography (e.g. too steep, poor drainage, etc.). Realignments may only require design work and construction, while other recommendations display new concepts. New trail concepts show what trail opportunities are feasible in an area, solve trail problems, and complement and add value to future land development. Concepts will require more substantial planning and consultation prior to being realized.

### *Trailheads*

Trailhead locations were chosen to facilitate access to trails and address the impact of trail user visitation. Impacts are often concentrated around access points. Trailhead development at varying levels can reduce traffic congestion, neighborhood disturbance, litter, and vandalism while making trails easier to access and more enjoyable. Locations are typically determined by use; where trails start or end along the transportation network are natural access points. Where multiple options were available, access points along more major road classes were favored.

### *Recreational Trail Areas*

Most trail recommendations represent linear corridors to be protected among surrounding land development. Some recommendations are for an area or entire parcel where a trail system is concentrated, or system layout needs to be determined through future planning. These areas, primarily located on Borough property, may be existing parks for proposed for retention for recreational trail use. Recreational Trail Areas are identified and described in [Appendix A. Trail Descriptions & Recommendations.](#)

To maintain high-quality detail and improve legibility, the Trail Recommendation Maps are provided as separate online documents. To view the Public Review Draft Trail Recommendation Maps, use the following links:

- Public Review Draft – [West Trail Recommendations Maps](#)
- Public Review Draft – [East Trail Recommendations Maps](#)

### Recommended Future Trail Corridors Categorization

The future trail corridors recommended carry forward the three-category system (A, B, and C) of trails established in the original 1985 Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan (see Chapter 4). The Trail Categorization Summary Table provides a preliminary means of prioritizing the trail list with respect to Borough resources and reflect management authority.

Table 5. Trail Categorization Summary

Category	Primary Management Responsibility	Maintenance Responsibility	Funding Mechanism	Application of Borough Title 17 Subdivisions	Borough Acceptance of Grant of Trail Easement or ROW
A. Federal & State Recreational Trails	Federal or State agency. May be a cooperative agreement with FNSB	Maintenance provided through managing agency.	Funding provided by Federal or State agency.	Borough Subdivision Code will apply where these trails cross private land.	Borough will not formally accept dedication of ROW. ROW remain available for public use; Borough does not assume responsibility.
B. FNSB Recreational Trail System	FNSB.	Maintenance by FNSB as resources allow, or by formal agreement with trail user groups.	External grant sources, Parks Department budget, Capital Improvement Plan.	All Borough Subdivision authorities will apply.	Trail easements formally accepted by Borough. Borough assumes primary responsibility for the trail.
C. Neighborhood Recreational Trail Systems	Trail user group or neighborhood association.	Maintenance provided by trail users.	Funding primarily derived through a service area or user group.	Easement established on a cooperative voluntary basis.	Borough may assist in recording easement; Borough does not assume primary responsibility for trails.

## Future Trail Corridors List

The following is a list of trails proposed for inclusion in the Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan. Detailed descriptions for the recommended trails can be found in [Appendix A. Trail Descriptions & Recommendations.](#)

### I. Trails Proposed for Public Dedication

*The Borough seeks to gain and/or protect legal public access to these trails. If access is formally granted by another landowner, the Borough will accept an easement or other grant in trust for the public. These trails may be subject to Borough subdivision regulations.*

#### A. State or Federal Trails

<u>Trail Number</u>	<u>Trail Name</u>	<u>Proposed Use Category</u>
<b>Existing Trails</b>		
<i>Existing trails are fully or mostly constructed, though sections may need to be realigned and rebuilt.</i>		
I-A1.	Chena Hot Springs- Steese HWY	N = Non-Motorized
I-A2.	Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail	M = Multi-Use/Motorized Year-Round
I-A3.	Circle-Fairbanks Trail	M
I-A4.	Davidson Ditch Hiking Trails	N
I-A5.	N. Fork of the Chena Trail	M
I-A6.	Old Murphy Dome Road Trail	M
I-A7.	Old Saulich Trail	S = Seasonal/Winter Motorized
I-A8.	Murphy Creek Trail	M
I-A9.	Flood Control Levee Trail	Varies N/M
I-A10.	Zephyr Creek Trail	N
I-A11.	Herning Hills/Bilikin Trails	M
I-A12.	Bev's Loop Trail System	M
I-A13.	Rosie Creek Forest Trail Connections	Varies M/S
I-A14.	Bonanza Creek Forest Trail Connections	Varies M/S
I-A15.	Smallwood Creek Loop	S
I-A16.	Old Chatanika Trail	M
I-A17.	Far Mountain Traverse	N
I-A18.	Harding-Salcha Connectors	S
I-A19.	Little Salcha River Trail	S
I-A20.	Silver Fox – Pedro Dome Road	M
I-A21.	IOWA-ALPA Loop	S

I-A22.	Alder Creek Trail	S
I-A23	Salcha River Trail	S

[Recommended New Trails](#)

*Recommended trails may be unconstructed. Additional planning and design may be necessary.*

I-AR1.	North Star Bridle Trails	N
I-AR3.	Creamer’s Crosstown Commuter	S
I-AR4.	Fairbanks-Nenana Upland Forest Traverse	M
I-AR5.	Fortune Creek Ridge Trail Loop	M

*B. Proposed Components of the FNSB Recreational Trail Network*

<u>Trail Number</u>	<u>Trail Name</u>	<u>Proposed Use Category</u>
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[Existing Trails](#)

*Existing trails are fully or mostly constructed, though sections may need to be realigned and rebuilt.*

I-B1.	Big Eldorado Creek Loop Trail	Varies M/S
I-B2.	Chena-Gilmore Connector Trail	Varies M/S
I-B3.	Chena Hot Springs Road Trail	M
I-B4.	Chena Lowland Winter Trail Connections	S
I-B5.	Chena Ridge F.E. Ditch Trails	Varies N/S
I-B6.	Clearly Summit-Gilmore Dome Trail	M
I-B7.	Cripple Creek-Rosie Creek Trail	M
I-B8.	Equinox Marathon Trail	N
I-B9.	Eva Creek Trail	N
I-B10.	Goose Island ORV Area	M
I-B11.	Jeff Studdert Sleddog Trails	Varies N/S
I-B12.	O’Connor Creek Trail	S
I-B13.	O’Connor Creek E. Ridge Trail	Varies N/S
I-B14.	Sheep Creek Dredge Path Trail	S
I-B16.	Tanana Valley Railroad Trail	S
I-B17.	Skyline Ridge Trail	S
I-B18.	Gilmore Trail-Fairbanks Creek Connector	M
I-B19.	Eldorado Ridge Connector Trail	Varies S/M

I-B20.	Chena Slough Trail	N
I-B21.	Noyes Slough Trail	N
I-B22.	Eldorado Creek Trail	S
I-B23.	Little Chena River-Potlatch Creek System	Varies S/M
I-B24.	Cranberry Trail	N
I-B25.	Ester West Ridge Trail	Varies S/M
I-B26.	Chena Flats Winter Trails	Varies N/S
I-B27.	Pearl Creek Commuter Trail	N
I-B28.	White Mountains Winter Pipeline	Varies S/M
I-B29.	Moose Ridge Trail	M
I-B30.	Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline	S
I-B31.	Chena Lake to Hot Springs Winter Trail	S
I-B32.	Ace Lakes Connector	N

#### Recommended Trails

*Recommended trails may be unconstructed. Additional planning and design may be necessary.*

I-BR1.	100 Mile Loop Trail	Varies S/M
I-BR2.	Ester Community Trail Network	N
I-BR3.	Skyline-to-Goldstream Connections	S
I-BR4.	Goldstream Hills Trail Network	Varies S/N/M
I-BR5.	Solstice Summit Trail Area	N
I-BR6.	Tanana 440 Trail System	N
I-BR7.	Peede-Chena Lake Connector	S
I-BR8.	Salchaket Bluff Scenic Loop Trail	N
I-BR9.	South Harding Ridge Traverse	M
I-BR10.	Birch-to-Bluff Trails	M
I-BR11.	Pleasant Hills Trail System	N
I-BR12.	Abe Lincoln Glades	N
I-BR13.	Alaska Long Trail	Varies S/M/N
I-BR14.	Farmer Mine Trail	N
I-BR15.	Peede Road Open Space	Varied N/S/M
I-BR16.	Birch Hill to Steese Highway	N
I-BR17.	Murphy Dome Ski Trails	N

C. *Neighborhood Trail Networks*

<u>Trail Number</u>	<u>Trail Name</u>	<u>Proposed Use Category</u>
I-C1.	Cripple Creek Trail System	N
I-C2.	Lincoln Creek Loop Trail	N
I-C3.	Twenty-three Mile Slough Sleddog Trails	S
I-C4.	Koponen Homestead Trails	N
I-C5.	Happy Valley Ski Trails	N
I-C6.	Alder Creek Hillside Trails	S
I-C7.	Steele Creek Hillside Trails	Varies S/M

II. Existing Publicly Dedicated Trails

*Public access to these trails is already granted and/or protected by an easement, public land ownership, and/or management policies. They are currently managed as recreational facilities by their respective owner or manager.*

A. *State or Federal Trails*

<u>Trail Number</u>	<u>Trail Name</u>
II-A1.	Chena Dome Trail (state)
II-A2.	Chena River Flood Control Project (federal)
II-A3.	Creamer’s Nature Path (state)
II-A4.	Granite Tors Trail (state)
II-A5.	Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail (federal)
II-A6.	UAF Ski Trails (state-portion of Skarland Trail System)
II-A7.	White Mountains Summer Trail: Summit Trail Boardwalk (federal)
II-A8.	White Mountains Winter Trail (federal)
II-A9.	Colorado Creek Trail (state)
II-A10.	Stiles Creek and Connector Trail (state)
II-A11.	Angel Creek Valley Trail (state)
II-A12.	East Fork Valley Trail (state)
II-A13.	South Fork Valley Trail (state)

- II-A14. Angel Rocks Trail and Connector (state)
- II-A15. Mastodon Trail (state)
- II-A16. Compeau Trail (state)
- II-A17. McKay Creek Trail (state)
- II-A18. Goldstream Valley Public Use Area Trails (state)
- II-A19. Ester Happy Valley Singletrack Trails (state)
- II-A20. Mike Kelly Trail (state)
- II-A21. Upper Angel Creek Valley Trail (state)

*B. FNSB Recreational Trails*

<u>Trail Number</u>	<u>Trail Name</u>
II-B1.	Birch Hill Ski Trails
II-B2.	Salcha Ski Trails
II-B3.	Two Rivers Recreation Area
II-B4.	Sauna Avenue/O'Brien Street Trails
II-B5.	Skyline Ridge Park Trails
II-B6.	Isberg Recreation Area
II-B7.	Chena Lake Recreation Area
II-B8.	Tanana Lakes Recreation Area
II-B15.	Skarland Ski Trail

*III. Future Concepts*

*Future concepts represent trails or trail ideas that have notable recreational value or potential but require substantially more investigation and consultation with trail users and landowners to determine their feasibility. These will be offered no protection or other resources by the Fairbanks North Star Borough. They are listed only as topics for further research or consideration for future amendments.*

1. Engineer Creek – Gold Mine Trail Loop
2. East Birch Hill to Nordale
3. Trans-Chatanika Trail
4. Fireplug—Allen-Dunbar Trail
5. Potlatch & Jenny M Hills Trails
6. North Pole—Salcha Pedestrian Path

7. Moose Creek Bluff Trail System
8. 9-Mile Offroad Area
9. Johnson Road Hillside Trails
10. Neighborhood Cul-de-Sac Pedestrian Connections
11. West Henderson Hillside Trail
12. True North Mine Trail Park

## Priority Actions for Trail Recommendations

While the Trail Categorization (see Table 5) provides preliminary guidance on determining which trail recommendations to prioritize for implementation, additional methodology for allocating resources is needed. A draft Trail Prioritization Matrix was prepared through this process in consultation with the Trails Advisory Commission. One of the system-wide recommendations made in this Plan is for the formalization of Trail Improvement Prioritization Process to allocate resources for trail improvements in a way that will be defensible, transparent and in the lasting best interest of the community.

## Project Development

Once a trail or trail project is identified through the prioritization process and is allocated resources for its actualization, development will follow a necessary sequence of events:

1. **Acquisition & Protection**

The priority of any trail is to first gain legal access by coordinating and negotiating with the landowner. The Borough will not develop a trail that is in trespass across another's property.

2. **Planning**

Once legal access is obtained, the Borough can consult with the community about purpose of the trail and what is needed. Planning may also determine specific management objectives/standards and maintenance prescriptions, so expectations are clear between trail users and landowners. Nearly all 'recommended' trails will need additional planning and most trail areas will benefit significantly from a site master plan.

3. **Capital Improvement**

Design and construction to improve, repair, realign or build new trail in a way that can sustain the intended use, reduce maintenance burden and facilitate desired experiences. Improvements make the trail usable.

4. **Maintenance**

Scheduled maintenance can eventually take place when the trail is legally accessible, standards and expectations are clear, and the trail is constructed and usable.

The development, maintenance and management of trails in the borough is guided by this Plan and trail specific recommendations (Appendix A) work in tandem with and may be dependent on system-wide recommendations.

# Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan



## Appendices

# Appendix A.

## Trail Descriptions & Recommendations

### I. Trails Proposed for Public Dedication

#### I-A1. Chena Hot Springs- Steese Highway Trail

This trail is proposed for establishment by the State as a non-motorized recreational trail. This trail is partially coincident with the Circle-Fairbanks Trail. The portion of the trail extending south from the Circle-Fairbanks has a protected 60 ft public access easement via ADL 402674. This trail was originally proposed by citizens as a non-motorized hiking trail in the 1985 Trail Plan. A portion of this trail is also included as a hiking trail in several of the alternatives of the Bureau of Land Management's draft resource management plan for the Steese National Conservation Area. This trail could be approached as a joint federal and state effort. The southern end accessed from Chena Hot Springs Road utilizes a private material site and takes a fall-line trail straight up the hill face. This plan recommends a realignment providing access from the nearby trail parking west of the gravel pit and east of West Fork. A trail can gain the ridge with a lesser grade and multiple switchback turns.

#### I-A2. Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail

The Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail is a portion of the route used in the 1,000 mile "Yukon Quest" Sleddog Race and is recommended for legislative designation as a State Recreation Trail in the draft Tanana Basin Area Plan. The trail lies mainly on state lands and should most-logically be the primary responsibility of the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. Access corridors and trail heads need to be established between the trail and Chena Hot Springs Road and the North Pole Badger Road area. Primary routes are recommended as the Chena Lowland Winter Connections. The route has been designated a RS2477 trail #278. A 2007 effort to map the trail and understand use patterns and impact on property owners remains a useful resource. Portions through neighborhoods in Two Rivers have nearly been abandoned in favor of the Baseline trail. The historic crossing of the Little Chena River is no longer usable. Trail users have been routed around at the courtesy of private landowners. This bypass route, or some alternative, needs to be formally established in consultation with landowners.

#### I-A3. Circle-Fairbanks Trail

The Circle-Fairbanks Trail is a long-standing priority of the Borough Trails Advisory Commission. Because this trail lies almost entirely on state land it should be within the jurisdiction of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, though the Borough can maintain an active role in coordinating trail use with mineral development in the Cleary Summit area and promoting the route's recreational potential. The Borough should consider establishing a cooperative agreement with the Department of Natural Resources to clarify responsibilities for the trail and to establish necessary parameters to ensure that recreational designation of the route does not limit access to or development of mining claims. When mining claim development requiring surface disturbance occurs in this area in the future, the trailhead should be relocated. This route is popular with the motorized crowd and has great potential as a premier, renowned long distance 4x4 trail. The soils are mostly well-draining along the

ridgeline route. Careful realignments of steep, wet, or fall-line sections will improve the sustainability of the trail. One such reroute that is recommended for investigation is to construct a contoured trail around Mt. Ryan, south of Smith Creek, and in doing so bypass the wet, fragile sections crossing Smith Creek.

#### I-A4. Davidson Ditch Hiking Trails

The Davidson Ditch Hiking Trails have been proposed by the Bureau of Land Management as access routes into the White Mountains National Recreation Area. Portions of these trails have been reserved and identified as “no staking areas” in the state’s White Mountain Remote Parcel disposal. The Davidson Ditch corridor and some of the existing BLM recreation sites along the Steese Highway may be transferred to the State in the future. Until final land ownership is determined, the project should be approached cooperatively by the State and BLM. In addition to the proposed hiking trails, a major aspect of this project is acquisition, restoration and development of interpretive information on the Davidson Ditch and its siphon structures. Trailheads with interpretive displays should be established adjacent to one or more restored siphons. The Davidson Ditch Corridor provides a link to create a series of loops between the ridge line hiking trails. The remainder of the ditch corridor should be retained as a greenbelt through the Chatanika Valley. This includes the portion of the Ditch from approximately 32 through 67 mile Steese Highway and crosses entirely on land owned by the State and BLM. Coordination between the Borough and these two agencies to establish protective rights-of-way and management guidelines focusing on historical and recreational enhancement should be pursued. The Davidson Ditch structures and corridor have the potential to provide a variety of historic and recreational opportunities ranging from small historic waysides to an extensive trail and greenbelt corridor.

#### I-A5. North Fork of the Chena Trail

The North Fork of the Chena Trail is an extension of the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail which is used for the Yukon Quest Sleddog Race. The trail lies mainly on state lands and should be established as part of the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail project. Near Chena Hot Springs Road, the trail is used to access remote recreational parcels, and as such sees a variety of vehicular traffic. The ridge between the North Fork and the headwaters of Birch Creek marks the boundary of the BLM Steese National Conservation Area and restrictions on summer off-highway vehicle use. It is recommended for the State and BLM to work together to make the boundary and change in regulations clear to trail users.

#### I-A6. Old Murphy Dome Road Trail

The Old Murphy Dome Road is heavily used as a recreational trail and is also the legal access to several state subdivisions. The trail is important for its use as a link between other trails in the Goldstream Valley such as the O’Connor Creek and Big Eldorado Creek Trails. It is recommended that the southern twenty feet of the Old Murphy Dome Road right-of-way be designated for recreational purposes. If the present road/trail clearing is upgraded to regular vehicle standards in the future, a new trail clearing should be provided as part of the project. Well-used trails exist and crisscross on the north and south sides of the road in the conveniently cleared firebreak and the aerial powerline utility

#### I-A7. Old Saulich Trail

The Old Saulich Trail identified in the Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan maps is a combination of the Martin-Dunbar Trail and Allen Creek-Dunbar Trail listed in the 1984 Jurisdictional Responsibilities and Trail Inventory background paper and includes the Ester-Dunbar trail designated under RS2477 as trail #70. This combined route is the approximate location of the main recreational trail now in use in the lower Goldstream Valley. The route takes winter trail users, motorized and not, west to the Dunbar Trail, facilitating for ultra-long distance travel beyond the Borough boundary. Much of the route in the Goldstream Valley closely follows the Alaska Railroad and likely exists within its right of way. Portions of this trail may require realignment due to being displaced by residential developments, or to avoid conflict with the railroad or other land development. The intent of this recommendation is to retain a major recreational corridor in the lower Goldstream Valley which is accessible from both the north and south sides of the valley. The eastern extent of the trail is more accessible from the north via Murphy Dome Road and Cache Creek Road. As the trail travels west, this plan recommends crossing south at the established railroad crossing at Standard Creek Road and continuing west on the Ester Dunbar trail.

#### I-A8. Murphy Creek Trail

The Murphy Creek Trail provides an important connecting link between the old Murphy Dome Road Trail and the Chatanika River. This trail receives a wide variety of summer and winter recreational use. It also provides access to the Chatanika Valley for property owners, loggers, hunters and trappers. Because this trail lies entirely on State land it is within the jurisdiction of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. The Borough should consider establishing a cooperative agreement with the Department of Natural Resources to clarify responsibilities for the trail and to establish necessary parameters to ensure that recreational use of the route will continue but does not limit access needs such as logging, mining, or access to State land disposals.

#### I-A9. Flood Control Levee Trail

The flood control levee stretches 18 miles across the southern edge of Fairbanks from the Chena Flood Control Project to the mouth of the Chena River. The levee was constructed to protect Fairbanks from flooding and any recreational trail use on the levee should be compatible with that purpose. For many years the Flood Control Levee Trail has been the main recreational trail connection between South Fairbanks and North Pole. It receives a great deal of winter use. The Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan recognizes this route as the primary option to connect the southern portion of the 100 Mile Loop Trail. A three-mile segment of the levee crosses property owned by Fort Wainwright being used as an Army firing range. The levee trail must be rerouted around the firing range. The most likely proposal would be to reroute the trail to the north and then adjacent to the Richardson Highway to avoid any conflict with the range. A reroute along the Richardson Highway would also be beneficial to connect to the Badger Road community and could utilize the Richardson Highway Mile 356-362 Pedestrian Path proposed in the 2021 FAST Planning Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. Users of the Flood Control Levee Trail must coordinate with the Borough, State of Alaska, Fort Wainwright and Army Corps of Engineers to address issues of safety and maintenance. Signing road crossings, ramping the reroute connection, and providing ways to encourage use of the reroute are some of these issues.

#### I-A10. Zephyr Creek Trail

The Zephyr Creek Trail provides a connecting link between the Steese Highway corridor and the Alpine Tundra uplands, northeast of Fairbanks. From the uplands area, trail users can travel east to the Pinnell Mountain and Circle-Fairbanks Trails or west to the Mount Prindle area within the BLM Steese National Conservation Area. The trail is located on state and federal land and provides access for a variety of recreational trail users, including hunters, backpackers, and rock climbers. The area in the vicinity of the Zephyr Creek Trail has significant mining history and potential. Recreational trail use should be coordinated with the present and future mineral developments.

#### I-A11. Herning Hills/Bilikin Trails

The Herning Hills/Bilikin Trails provide important connecting links between residential areas in the Chena Hot Springs Road/Nordale Road area and the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail. These two connecting trails are located on state land and receive a wide variety of recreational trail use.

#### I-A12. Bev's Loop Trail System

The Bev's Loop Trail System provides an important connecting link between Murphy Dome and the Chatanika / Washington creek drainages. The 7-Mile trail, Bev's Loop Trail, Blueberry Trail, Ralf's Ridge Trail and Wounded Thumb Ridge Trail make up the majority of this trail system. These trails were linked together over the years and provide a wide variety of year-round use including skiing, trapping, snow machining and access to private parcels. All the trails in the Bev's Loop Trail System exist except for a three-mile proposed trail from a parking area off Murphy Dome Road to the 7-Mile Trail. This three-mile proposed segment of trail is intended to provide a re-route around the Military's Murphy Dome Radar Station. The proposed re-route is on land owned by the State and would need to be constructed in order to provide public access from Murphy Dome Road to the rest of the trail system.

#### I-A13. Rosie Creek Forest Trail Connections

Forestry roads in the Tanana Valley State Forest south of the Parks Highway are valued for recreational trail use. Many of the forest roads are suitable for summer trail use, including the use of off-road vehicles, while those at lower elevations are suitable for winter use only. Access to the trails is from the via the Cripple Creek-Rosie Creek trail from the Cripple Creek subdivisions off Cripple Creek Road and from the Parks Highway. Platted trail easements in the Aspenwood subdivisions can also provide access in the future. These trails connect the Cripple Creek-Rosie Creek Winter Trail to and through the forested uplands. Recreational use of the trails is a byproduct and secondary to timber harvest. As forestry operations continue and the landscape changes, existing routes may be altered or abandoned. This plan recommends working with the Division of Forestry to identify and maintain recreational access to critical connecting routes. Connectors from the Cripple Creek-Rosie Creek Winter trail to the upland trails, and especially to the proposed Alaska Long Trail route should be protected.

#### I-A14. Bonanza Creek Forest Trail Connections

This area is currently designated a research forest for long term study of forestry practices, ecology, wildlife management and recreation. A substantial portion of this forest land is to be conveyed to the University of Alaska in the year 2055 via Alaska Senate Bill 96 from 2005. After the transfer the University

of Alaska may, with certain provisions, disestablish the research forest and develop, dispose of, or retain the land as it suits the University. Prior to any conveyance, it is recommended that the trail user community work with the state forest to identify high value, priority trail connections that can be preserved for recreational use and enjoyment. Maintaining an east-west route for the proposed Alaska Long Trail, as well as connections between the Long Trail and the Cripple Creek-Rosie Creek winter trail, will be most important. In the event of sale and subdivision, these routes can be dedicated to the public for recreation via the platting process or other reservation methods.

#### I-A15. [Smallwood Creek Loop](#)

Trails in the lower Smallwood Creek valley provide important connections between Gilmore Trail, Chena Hot Springs Road, and the Little Chena River-Potlatch Creek areas. Trails are primarily used in the winter for dog mushing, snowmachining, fat biking and skiing. Short connectors across the creek create a system of small loops that can accommodate short, convenient outings from the residents of the Nine Mile Hill area. Meanwhile, trails across this valley link to other major trails, facilitating long distance connections important to snowmachiners and dog mushers. Recreational uses take place alongside active forestry operations. Access to this trail from the road system, including Adventure Road, is difficult due to private property along the Chena Hot Springs Road corridor and the Little Chena River serving as a barrier. Additional access recommendations found in the Chena-Gilmore Connector description.

#### I-A16 [Old Chatanika Trail](#)

The Old Chatanika Trail connects the Circle-Fairbanks Historic Trail from its southern end at Fairbanks Creek to Chatanika at its northern end. The route is important to connect the many multi-use trails and roads near Cleary Summit and Fairbanks Creek to the Chatanika River area, including to the Chatanika Gold Camp, Chatanika River Lodge, and the historic Chatanika gold dredge #3. The trail is also established as RS2477 trail #1929 as the Old Chatanika-Cleary-Fairbanks Creek trail. Portions of the trail at the north end near the roadhouse and historic gold camp are used as access roads. It is recommended to conserve the ability to use this trail as a recreational route.

#### I-A17. [Far Mountain Traverse](#)

The “Far Mountain Traverse” is a spectacular and challenging hiking route made even more popular in recent years by a local hiking guidebook. The ridgeline route is generally undeveloped and lacking a proper trail. It is similar in character and appeal to the alpine ridges of the Chena Dome trail, and promises comparable views, difficulty and encounters with impressive granite tors. The route starts and ends on Chena Hot Springs Resort property on either side of Monument Creek. The rugged and often steep terrain and lack of a developed trail make this route suitable primarily for summer hiking. The route is nearly 29 miles long. While almost entirely on State of Alaska land, it is not part of the Chena River State Recreation Area. Establishing easements across resort property at the north terminus achieve public access is essential for the viability of the route. The common southern terminus can be adjusted to continue along a ridgeline west and connect with the Angel Rocks-to-Chena Hot Springs trail, then follow existing public access easements through the resort property.

### I-A18. Harding-Salcha Connectors

A handful of trails conveniently connect the Harding Lake and Salcha communities to the Salcha River Trail, also known as the Salcha-Caribou Sled Road or RS2477 Trail #322, and cabins along the river. Primary connections exist on the northeast side of Harding Lake near the end of Salcha Drive, at the northwest end near the Harding Lake State Recreation Site and campground, and the Hollies Acres subdivision in Salcha, north of Harding Lake. Like the Salcha River trail, the Harding-Salcha connectors are best suited for winter access. They are primarily used by snowmachiners traveling long distances along the Salcha River, or to and from cabins. Connections cross properties under a variety of land ownerships: Fairbanks North Star Borough, University of Alaska, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority land, and a private parcel with a trail easement. The University of Alaska properties are “subject to existing trails.” This plan can serve to document current use and location of the primary trails and aid in the eventual formal public dedication of those routes.

### I-A19. Little Salcha River Trail

This trail provides winter recreational access along the Little Salcha River, from the Richardson Highway in the west to the Yukon Flats Training Area in the east. The trail runs north of the Little Salcha River, south of Johnson Road, and features multiple spurs that connect to Johnson Road. An easement for the main trail is recorded as ADL 39870, described as a “60 ft ROW, Public Access Trail and Road” for the “Little Salcha Military Trail.” It is recommended that if FNSB land along Johnson Road in T4SR5E is developed, additional public access connections to the Little Salcha River trail be established through the property.

### I-A20. Silver Fox – Pedro Dome Road

Silver Fox Road and Pedro Dome Road combine to connect northwest and northeast trail systems by spanning the upland terrain between the Elliott and Steese Highways south of the Chatanika River. The road, popular for ATV and offroad vehicle riding, begins across the Elliott Highway from Old Murphy Dome Road and follows ridgelines to Pedro Dome and to the Steese Highway near Cleary Summit. Both roads are established RS2477 trails and are maintained as dirt roads by nearby mining operations. The 2022 trail planning process identified this as a northern connection for the proposed 100 Mile Loop Trail, preferred over the previously suggested Engineer Creek route due to established public access, separation from residential communities, and more durable, better draining soils. While the dirt road character is suitable for summer offroading and biking, coordination with mining activity during winter will be important to maintain a snow-covered corridor for trail users.

### I-A21. Iowa Creek-ALPA Ridge Loop

The Iowa Creek-ALPA Road connection makes possible an impressively long winter loop. The loop encircles the Fort Knox open pit mine and connects three major area high points: Iowa Dome, under Gilmore Dome, and Cleary Summit. This is a connection of two major trails. On the southern end, the Iowa Creek trail begins at the confluence of Iowa Creek and Smallwood Creek, heads north along the creek and ridge to Iowa Dome, and follows the timber road along the ridge before dropping into Fish Creek in T2N3E Section 4. The route crosses an active mining area in the Fish Creek valley before gaining the ridge to a decommissioned Alaska Long Period Array (ALPA) site between Solo Creek and Bear Creek.

Trail users follow the ALPA access road right-of-way across University of Alaska, Mental Health Trust Authority and State of Alaska properties. This is primarily a winter route used by long distance snowmachiners and dog mushers. The trail from Iowa Creek to Cleary Summit is roughly 20 miles. Combined with the Chena-Gilmore Connector and Smallwood Creek trails, this trail facilitates a winter loop around 40 miles. Both trails utilize active timber harvest and mining access routes along the Iowa Dome Ridge and across Fairbanks Creek, respectively. As the area continues to develop for mining and forestry, trails must be coordinated with other land uses so that a recreational corridor for this long distance loop is preserved. Most of the route is on dry, well drained soils at higher elevations, but wet creek crossings are prohibitive for summer motorized travel. This could possibly be developed into a future summer ATV route through coordination with other landowners, and upgraded creek crossings, strategic tread hardening and minor realignment.

#### I-A22. Alder Creek Trail

This trail is located in the Alder creek drainage immediately southwest of Ester, north of the Parks Highway. It provides winter trail recreation for the growing community of residents living off Old Nenana Highway ridge. The historic trail, identified as RS2477 Trail #1824, is in the lower elevations of Alder Creek and suitable only for winter use. The trail can serve to connect the Old Nenana Highway community to Ester and to the Cripple Creek-Rosie Creek trail and Isberg Recreation Area south of and across the Parks Highway. The historic RS2477 route parallels a major powerline that is kept clear, and thus attractive for trail use.

#### I-A23 Salcha River Trail

This trail is designated under RS2477 as the “Salcha-Caribou Sled Road” or trail #322. It is primarily used in winter, serving as land-based access to recreational cabin sites along the Salcha River. The trail conditions are more predictable than winter travel on the river. The historic trail route begins at the Richardson Highway, mostly stays south of the Salcha River, crossing the river a couple times, until turning up Caribou Creek after more than 40 miles. Given the status as an RS2477 and the State Parks maintained trailhead at the Richardson Highway bridge, this is State-managed trail. The Borough is expected to have little involvement except when positioned to improve or document access, such as by protecting connecting trails or recording rights of way through the platting process.

#### I-AR1. North Star Bridle Trails

The North Star Bridle Trails is a recommendation to establish a system of trails to support equestrian use in the Two Rivers- Pleasant Valley area. A trail network can span trails within the Tanana Valley State Forest, Chena River State Recreation Area, the Borough’s Two Rivers Recreation Area and on other vacant Borough land. The trails can utilize the historic Governors Cup North Star Competitive Trail Ride route, part of which is incorporated in the proposed Pleasant Hills Trail System (I-BR11). The trail network may have multiple uses depending on the underlying management, though some sections should be non-motorized. A proposed non-motorized ridgeline connection between the Pleasant Hills Trails concept and the existing Mike Kelly trail has potential to facilitate riding loops of different lengths. This proposed trail location can also provide good scenic qualities with fewer adjacent intensive land uses for a better recreational experience.

### I-AR3. Creamer's Crosstown Commuter Winter Trails

Multiple routes are proposed to facilitate access to and through Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in the winter. These could be developed as combinations of existing trails within the Jeff Studdert Sled Dog Trails and new recommended trails. Connections on the east and west sides, across Farmer's Loop near North Tanana Drive and across the Steese Highway near the Johansen Expressway, respectively, would serve to connect the two major cross-country ski systems at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Birch Hill Recreation Area. North-to-South connections could expedite winter trail commuting between neighborhoods off Farmer's Loop Road and commercial areas along and south of College Road. Access locations off Farmer's Loop may exist across from Shuros Drive, at the Musher's Hall, and near McGrath Road. Locations along College Road could include Hayes Avenue and at Creamer's Field off Danby Road. Specific alignments are not yet determined and will require additional planning. The Jeff Studdert Trail System is used and maintained primarily by the Alaska Dog Musers Association via an agreement with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Snowmachining can be permitted by Fish and Game, but is at times a source of conflict. This trail recommendation may serve to delineate a limited number of specific corridors open to snowmachine commuting. These trails could channel that use and be developed (widened) in such a way as to reduce conflict between user groups. As ADF&G, is the primary land owner and manages the majority of trail miles in this area. Trail development and use must be consistent with the mission of the Refuge. The FNSB can facilitate the concept by working with neighboring landowners to gain and develop access routes.

### I-AR4. Fairbanks-Nenana Upland Forest Traverse

A major component of the Alaska Long Trail concept, the Fairbanks-Nenana upland Forest Traverse proposes to be the primary connection between Nenana and the Fairbanks North Star Borough. The hilly, forested uplands between the two communities, south of the Parks Highway, is ideal for multiple-use trail recreation and a long-distance connection. Views, south-facing aspects, well-draining soils, varied terrain, and many miles of existing forestry roads make this a favorable route. The concept may be realized as a combination of new trail sections and existing forestry roads. The alignment depicted on maps is conceptual only, based on preliminary analysis and site visits. Further planning and design are needed to identify a final alignment. Recreational use of the existing trails is a byproduct and secondary to timber harvest. This plan recommends working with the Division of Forestry to identify a corridor that can be dedicated to recreational access for the Alaska Long Trail.

### I-AR5. Fortune Creek Ridge Trail Loop

A ridgeline connection between the Murphy Dome and Cache Creek area has potential to become a popular motorized trail ride relatively close to town. Most long distance trail routes suitable for summer motorized travel are situated east of Fairbanks and may require significant drive times. The route begins nearly 6 miles down the Murphy Dome Road Extension, also known as the Bennett Highway, which begins just below the summit of Murphy Dome. From an alpine high point off the road, the route follows bare ridges south for 5.5 miles before turning east and entering the forested ridge south of Fortune Creek. Users exit the ridge to drop down to Cache Creek logging road. A vehicular loop more than 35 miles long can be made via Cache Creek Road, Murphy Dome Road, and the Road Extension. There are sections of existing trail along the route, though some miles may need realigned or drainage improved

to provide a sustainable path. Other sections, such as along the bald ridge, lack designated trail completely. Two small clusters of remote private parcels exist along the route: near the Murphy Dome Road Extension and on the southern ridge of Fortune Creek. While an improved route can enhance access for owners, care should be taken with a new alignment to avoid unwanted disturbance of these properties. If the trail is not constructed and aligned properly, it has the potential to be degraded and rendered unusable for all due to errant offroad vehicle use. Development of this trail route will require planning and consultation with landowners and trail professionals to ensure it is designed and constructed in a way that can sustain continuous offroad vehicle use in the appropriate seasons.

#### I-B1. Big Eldorado Creek Loop Trail

This trail lies in the Big Eldorado Creek drainage and the ridge line to the east in the Goldstream Valley. The trail also ties in with the Old Murphy Dome Road Trail. Completing the loop has been a challenge. In the summer, trail users can travel the 2.5-mile distance along the Goldstream Road shoulder between Waterford Road and the trailhead, but the first three miles of trail north from Goldstream Road are extremely wet and not suitable for summer use. In the winter the trail is usable, but the Goldstream Road distance is unenjoyable or unpassable depending on conditions and mode of travel. This plan proposes completing a winter loop through the Eldorado Ridge Connector concepts and the Goldstream Valley Public Use Area trail recommendations. This trail is designated by RS2477 as trail #1596 and is subject to other uses such as vehicular access to mining claims. Because of potential conflict between recreational use and mineral access, and because of the seasonally wet ground, this plan recommends hardening the first  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of the trail and realigning for motorized use a portion of trail at a higher elevation along the north hillside. The east ridgeline trail is owned mostly by the University of Alaska. This section may also require a realignment where a road corridor is planned. In the case of a land disposal and subdivision or road development, the trail should be realigned to a slightly lower elevation, where a sustainable contour trail can be built and driveway crossings minimized.

#### I-B2. Chena-Gilmore Connector Trail

This trail forms a connecting link between trails in the Gilmore Dome area and the Chena Hot Springs Road Trail. It is also part of the proposed 100 Mile Loop Trail. The trail historically follows a steep ridgeline to eventually reach Amanita Road from where the unbuilt concept followed miles of section line easements and road rights of way to reach Chena Hot Springs Road. A new route (in addition to a spur connecting to Amanita Road) is proposed instead to leave the ridge after the high point in T1NR1E Section 7. A new trail is proposed to contour and switchback down a ridge south of Rex Creek, take the undeveloped road right-of-way for Hopper Creek Road in the Smallwood Creek Valley, then follow the Smallwood Creek Trails across State of Alaska property to reach Adventure Road via a Section Line Easement. Additional planning is recommended to determine the best method of connecting trail users from Smallwood Creek or Adventure Road to Chena Hot Springs Road. The proposed realignment intends to preserve a recreational corridor in an area underlaid with mining claims and thus reduce potential conflicts between mining and recreational trail activity.

### I-B3. Chena Hot Springs Road Trail

This is a dirt path in the Chena Hot Springs Road right-of-way which should eventually link the Steese Highway to the Chena River State Recreation Area. The majority of the trail was first upgraded in 1984 when a cooperative agreement between Alaska Department of Transportation, Fairbanks North Star Borough and a telephone utility was executed for use and maintenance of the path. The original scope of the project started the trail at 4.5 mile Chena Hot Springs Road. This plan recommends extending the trail all the way between the Steese Expressway and Chena Hot Springs Resort.

Major needs for this trail include developing a pedestrian crossing or widened shoulder at the Little Chena River bridge and filling in many low, wet sections of trail, especially between miles 8 and 13. Some sections may need to be rerouted to the north side of the road due to thawing ground, which may necessitate an additional agreement with the Department of Transportation.

### I-B4. Chena Lowlands Winter Trail Connections

There are many trails in the Badger Road area which make potential links to the winter trail network along the Chena River and the area to the north. The primary intent of this recommendation is to reserve multiple connecting routes so that residents of the North Pole Badger Road area and Two Rivers can have access to the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail and reserved public lands such as the Peede Road Open Space, the Chena Flood Control Project and the Chena River State Recreation Area, and more. Additional trails could be identified in this area if requested by local citizens. This proposal identifies multiple segments of an extensive network which lie mainly on public land or navigable waterways. These trails are primarily winter trails.

### I-B5. Chena Ridge F.E. –Ditch Trails

Both the upper and lower Chena Ridge F.E. Ditches are used as recreational trails. Portions of these trails have been reserved in state and private subdivisions or alternative routes have been provided. Some parts may be relocated within road rights-of-way. These trails can provide connecting routes to the Cripple Creek-Rosie Creek Trail and 100 Mile Loop Trail for residents of Chena Ridge.

### I-B6. Cleary Summit- Gilmore Dome Trail

This trail provides an important link between the Cleary Summit area and trails around Gilmore Dome. This route can also connect the Circle-Fairbanks Trail to the 100 Mile Loop Trail. In 2017 the RS2477 protected portion of this trail was rerouted due to the Fort Knox Mine's westward expansion. A long term plan for this trail should be considered in the face of possible continued expansion of Fort Knox.

### I-B7. Cripple Creek – Rosie Creek-Trail

The Cripple Creek – Rosie Creek Trail is a primary component of the proposed 100 Mile Loop Trail and connects the Isberg Recreation Area to the Tanana River. Portions of the trail have been reserved in Borough land disposals. Parts of the trail extend into the Tanana Valley state Forest and will have to be coordinated with the forest management plan. The trail is suitable for winter use only and has seen significant damage from wheeled ATV use. Current access points off Sonata Drive and Rosie Creek Trail

Road are problematic. A new access point on Cripple Creek Road at the end of Potter Road is recommended, as are access control at all locations during summer months.

#### I-B8. Equinox Marathon Trail

The Equinox Marathon Trail is a route delineated for the Equinox Marathon Race which lies largely within trail and road rights-of-way. This race is an important state-wide running event and its trail should be incorporated in future land and road developments along its course. More than the event, the trail sections making up this route are popular for year-round, non-competitive outdoor recreation. This trail should be designated non-motorized recreation except where the Trail coincides with an established road right-of-way or active mineral access trail.

#### I-B9. Eva Creek Trail

The Eva Creek Trail is a portion of the Ester Dome – Ester Trail identified in the Jurisdictional Responsibilities and Trail Inventory background paper from 1984. This trail connects the Equinox Marathon Trail along Henderson Road to the town of Ester. This trail should be designated non-motorized recreation except where the trail coincides with an established road right-of-way or active mineral access trail. The lower portion of the trail passes through residential areas, making a non-motorized designation more desirable. Several residences have recorded public trail use easements along their property for the trail. Adjacent to Lower Stone Road, mining development has obliterated the historic route. It is recommended to reroute the trail farther away, west of the mining claim and onto vacant State of Alaska property.

#### I-B10. Goose Island Off-Road Vehicle Area

Since the establishment of Tanana Lakes Recreation Area, recreation patterns in the area have changed and some motorized use displaced. Off-roading use of Goose Island has shifted to the north and west to a new area on the east side of the South Cushman Extension, though the name remains the same in this plan. The Borough has partnered with the Fairbanks Offroad Lions Club to lease this portion of the recreation area for off-road vehicle practice and competition under a joint agreement with the State of Alaska and the Borough's Natural Resources Development division. This land South of the Tanana River Levee is ideal for this particular type of trail recreation. It is recommended that the Borough continue to work with the Fairbanks Offroad Lions Club and/or other interested organizations to promote this area as a learning playground for responsible and fun motorized trail use.

#### I-B11. Jeff Studdert Sled Dog Trails

The Jeff Studdert Sled Dog Trails are the site of the North American Sled Dog Championships and are a long standing priority of the Borough Trail Program. The vast majority of the trail system lies on state property that is part of Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge. The Alaska Dog Musher's Association is the primary user group and caretaker of these trails via a cooperative agreement with the landowner, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Bordering the refuge are many private residential neighborhoods. Many easements have been platted through the Borough's subdivision code over the decades, though there are a small number of parcels remaining which do not have easements. The current trail system also crosses University of Alaska property in the southwest which has been leased developed as a peat mining pit. It is the recommendation of the University of Alaska Land Management

and FNSB Parks to ultimately reroute the mushing trails north and away from the lease area to avoid conflicts and reduce barriers to land development. Additional recommendations for the system can be found in recommended trail #I-AR3.

#### I-B12. O'Connor Creek Trail

The O'Connor Creek Trail is a multi-use trail in the O'Connor Creek drainage used mainly for dog mushing. The trail is heavily used by local residents and provides a link between the Old Murphy Dome and the Goldstream Valley. The route is identified by ADOT/PF as an R.S. 2477 right-of-way. Alternative vehicle access routes should be developed for any public land disposals in the area. Because the trail lies mainly on permafrost terrain it should be left a recreational route with new roads built on better terrain. Alternative trail alignments, more suitable for wheeled motorized off-highway vehicles, are proposed in the Goldstream Hills Trail Network #I-BR4.

#### I-B13. O'Connor Creek East Ridge Line Trail

The trail historically used primarily for cross country skiing and now sees a variety of uses. Some degradation is occurring and likely to continue with the use of wheeled ATVs in summer and it is therefore recommended this ridgeline trail remain non-motorized in the summer. Motorized connections to the main valley trails can be accommodated instead via the proposed Goldstream Hills Trail Network, #I-BR4. A portion of the trail was accommodated in the Vista Gold subdivision the ridge. Remaining segments should be incorporated in the design of future subdivisions and public land disposals in the area. Reroutes may be necessary in the future as road development may require some of the ridgeline. It is recommended that the trail retain some of the ridgeline, and where realigned, it follow a contour at high elevation on the southeast aspect, far enough from the road as to avoid multiple driveway crossings. Access from Skyflight through state land should be coordinated with DNR to minimize impact on potential developments, but maintain a sustainably designed trail corridor to connect to the ridge north the valley west. It is recommended to work with neighboring landowners to formally establish a connection west to Jones Road.

#### I-B14. Sheep Creek Dredge Path Trail

This trail is extensively used for snowmachines, cross-country skiing and fat tire biking. The alignment, connecting the Goldhill Road and Ester Communities to the Goldstream Valley, has particular value for winter commuting. A few segments have had easements established at the edge of private subdivisions, though new trail has never been cleared and rerouted. Some realignment may eventually be required on other portions which do not have easements. On the north end the trail shares the Alaska Railroad right of way. It is recommended to acquire easements instead along the eastern border of the Pepler subdivision. The trail is proposed as part of the 100 Mile Loop Trail and creates an important link between the Cripple-Rosie Creek Trail and the Tanana Valley Railroad Trail.

#### I-B16. Tanana Valley Railroad Trail

The Tanana Valley Railroad Trail forms a link of the proposed 100 Mile Loop Trail and is the main arterial trail across the protected Goldstream Valley Public Use Area, east and west of Ballaine Road connecting various trails and trail systems north and south of Goldstream Creek. The main uses of the Trail are dog

mushing, fat-tire biking, cross-country skiing, snowmachining. A large portion of the trail lies on state lands. Mining claim development at the eastern end of the trail near Fox has rendered the trail unusable.

#### I-B17. Skyline Ridge Trail

The Skyline Ridge Trail lies on the ridge north of Farmer's Loop Road and provides a link between the Skyline Ridge Road and the Skarland Ski Trail System. This trail has a long history of development. Once a mining access trail it became a military road, then began its recreational history through a cooperative effort between the Borough and ADOT/PF called the FNSB Bridle Path project. A great deal of the original path, originally meant to connect to the Old Steese Highway, is now overlain by roads. Decades of residential development and hundreds of driveway crossings have made the complete connection unfeasible. Instead, recreational use is focused between the west end of Skyline Drive and the Skarland Trail. Parks and Recreation Department has completed multiple major renovation projects on this trail and others throughout the park. This plan recommends changing the use designation to accommodate winter snowmachine use due to the importance of connecting to the Goldstream Valley and packing snow for other winter activities. Additional recommendations for the park are compiled in the description for Skyline Ridge Park Trails #II-B5.

#### I-B18. Gilmore Trail-Fairbanks Creek Connector Trail

The Gilmore Trail-Fairbanks Creek Connector Trail is a segment of a branch of the Circle-Fairbanks Trail established in the early 1900's. It appears on a map of the Fairbanks area published by the U.S. Geological Survey in 1913 and in subsequent USGS maps. The trail was recognized in the Environmental Assessment/Land Report for the Gilmore Creek Tracking Station upon transfer of that installation from the National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in 1985. In addition to the historic significance, this trail functions as both a recreational trail by itself and a connecting trail between longer trails within the Borough Trail System. The trail is accessible – from the Gilmore Trail Road, the entrance to the Gilmore Tracking Station on the Steese Highway, and the Fish Creek Road by way of the Cleary Summit ski area entrance on the Steese Highway. The Trail provides an excellent connection between the proposed 100 Mile Loop on Tungsten Hill to the Circle-Fairbanks Trail. The current trail crosses areas of active and inactive mining claims, research facilities, and utilizes a fall-line alignment. For this trail to remain viable, it may need to be realigned in the future in coordination with these uses and to create a more sustainable layout.

#### I-B19. Eldorado Ridge Connector Trail

The Eldorado Ridge Connector Trail provides an important connecting link between the Goldstream Alaska Subdivision and the Big Eldorado Loop Trail. The original trail begins at Waterford Road, close to the northeast corner of Goldstream Alaska. It then runs to the east about ¼ mile before connecting into the Big Eldorado Loop Trail. To further facilitate the loop concept and access to it, this plan recommends a new winter trail connection just north of the Goldstream Alaska Subdivision, north of Molly Road, going west along the ridge to reconnect with .the main trail across Eldorado Creek Ground is suitable only for winter use while summer traffic can take Molly Road west to complete the loop. A small trail exists off the west side of Molly Road. This plan's maps depict a possible alignment, but the precise location must be determined through additional planning and consultation. Any new road projects affecting this trail

should be coordinated with the Borough to maintain the continuity, utility, and safety of this connector trail on both ends of Molly Road.

#### I-B20. Chena Slough Trail

The Chena Slough runs from the Richardson Highway through the North Pole Badger Road area connecting to the Chena River just east of Fort Wainwright. It has been recognized for its year-round multiple-use recreational value with an emphasis on canoeing, skiing, snowmachining, and dogmushing. The slough offers an excellent opportunity especially during the winter for North Pole residents to access the Winter trail network along the Chena River and the area to the north and east. Over the years, roads constructed over the slough without bridging or with inadequate sized culverts have impeded trail user access. This has created a segmented trail use pattern along the slough and dangerous on-grade road crossings. It is recommended that any further road crossings of the slough provide adequate passage through the roadway to accommodate all trail uses. If existing road crossings are upgraded, all possible steps should be taken to provide safe trail passage through the roadway at that time. If trail access is not feasible through proposed or existing road crossings then the Borough should coordinate with Alaska DOT/PF and trail user groups to create safer existing on-grade crossings where necessary.

#### I-B21. Noyes Slough Trail

Noyes Slough has long been recognized for its year-round multiple-use recreational value with a major emphasis on canoeing, skiing, snowmachining, and dogmushing. A feasibility study for the Noyes Slough Canoe Trail was prepared in 1982. This study may provide some guidance for future development but should be revisited since the community has seen much change since. The slough which runs primarily through an urban area is in some places lacking adequate buffers between development and trail use. The Borough should actively pursue negotiations with landowners to establish outdoor recreational zones and trail/greenbelt easements along both sides of Noyes Slough. Addressing safety related problems primarily dealing with non-motorized and motorized use conflicts should continually be a top priority in managing and planning for the Noyes Slough Trail.

#### I-B22. Eldorado Creek Trail

The Eldorado Creek Trail provides an important connecting link between the Tanana Valley Railroad Trail and the Big Eldorado Creek Loop Trail. This trail is primarily used in the wintertime by dog mushers, skiers, and snowmachiners. A trail easement has been established through Call of the Wild Subdivision for a ½ mile segment of the trail just south of Goldstream Road, though it was never cleared and the historic route is still in use as the alignment is preferred by trail users. This plan amends the original by adding the southern section of the Eldorado Creek Trail, connecting Goldstream Creek south to Eldorado Road, improving access for the Musk Ox subdivision.

#### I-B23. Little Chena River – Potlatch Creek Trail System

This network of trails north of Chena Hot Springs Road connects the Little Chena River Valley with the Potlatch Creek drainage west of Two Rivers Elementary School. A winter trailhead has been developed off Two Rivers Road south and west of the Elementary School. Access for summer use is needed on either side of the system, off Two Rivers woodcutting road and near Heritage Hills Road. The existing trail system suffers from damage due to fall-line alignments and a lack of separation or distinction between

summer and winter corridors. This plan recommends developing a new, contoured trail along the upland hillsides to facilitate year-round, motorized trail use. As much of the higher elevation land is developable, the FNSB should incorporate and retain new and existing trails and large swaths of greenspace into future subdivisions. A portion of the current recreational use is located on a State and Borough wood cutting access road which is not part of the trail system. The Borough should work with local trail users, and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources on State land, to establish a safe, legal, recreational trail separated from this wood cutting access road. This system also includes an important feeder trail that connects residential areas north of Chena Hot Springs Road with the main trail systems in the area. Public access through these neighborhoods is limited as most connecting trails begin at and cross private parcels. Future planning should work with these residents to identify corridors where access can be negotiated. This trail system connects to the existing Chena Hot Springs Road Trail at two locations, one at approximately 13 mile Chena Hot Springs Road near Heritage Hills Road and the other at Two Rivers Road at 18 mile. Safe crossings of Chena Hot Springs Road need to be coordinated and established with Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

#### I-B24. Cranberry Trail

This trail is a 2 ½ mile loop trail that provides connecting links to the O'Connor Creek East Ridge Line Trail. The Cranberry Trail receives a variety of year round non-motorized recreational use including skiing, biking, dogmushing, hiking and horseback riding. The trail is accessed by local residents from multiple directions and other trail systems. Neighborhood access can be found off of September Court or Skyflight Drive, each using the O'Connor Creek East Ridgeline Trail. To facilitate access for trail users driving to the trail system from other areas, this plan recommends that a simple trailhead be developed off of the end of Pandora Drive where vacant FNSB land can be utilized and impact on the neighbors reduced. The Cranberry Trail should be designated for non-motorized recreation with an exception to allow dog mushers training sled dogs with ATV's between August through October on the south segment of the trail crossing Tax Lot 104, Section 01, Township 1 North, Range 2 West, and Fairbanks Meridian.

#### I-B25. Ester West Ridge Trail

This trail follows the ridgeline from Ester Dome, west then south above Ester Creek, terminating on the north side of Old Nenana Highway. The trail is used year-round, popular for multiple uses. This is a primary connection proposed for the Alaska Long Trail route, helping hikers get from the Parks Highway all the way to Ester Dome and ultimately to Fairbanks. It connects the Old Nenana Highway community to the Ester area and its many trails. Despite its elevation, the southern extent of this trail crosses wet ground of a slight northern aspect. Frequent summer ATV use has resulted in trail entrenchment and ponding. Until realignments and trail hardening are possible, this section is not recommended for summer motorized use. The ridgeline is also sought after for future road development. Because of the potential value of this trail corridor as a highlight of the Alaska Long Trail, this trail plan recommends reducing development along the ridgeline to preserve special views and recreational character. Two realignments are proposed for this trail. The southern leg, which currently takes a straight north-south direction along the ridge center, should be realigned to the hillside west of the ridge to provide an outslope for better integrated drainage opportunities along the trail. The northwest segment in T1NR3W Section 34 and T1SR3W Section 3 will require two or more switchbacks to rid the trail of the overly steep fall-line alignment that is subject to erosion.

#### I-B26. Chena Flats Winter Trails

The Chena Flats are located under the Chena Ridge community, north of the Chena Landing along Chena Pump road near Chena Point Road and below Pickering Drive. The ground is a mixture of muskeg, slough and seasonal ponds suitable only for winter use. With an improved crossing at Chena Pump Road, this trail system can become backdoor winter access to the Tanana River for much of the Chena Ridge and Chena Marina community. A relatively minor effort to develop basic access points from neighborhood roads with strategic pullouts, signage and maps, and winter grooming could result in a very popular neighborhood winter trail system.

#### I-B27. Pearl Creek Commuter Trail

This trail is a popular connecting path between the neighborhoods off Ballaine Road and Auburn Drive and the University of Alaska. Segments of this trail were dedicated to the public in the Happy Girl Too and Pearl Creek subdivisions. It is recommended that the Borough work with remaining residents to negotiate permanent access easements. A short section of trail is perpetually wet in summer, making the full trail only viable for winter commuting. A trail hardening project could achieve a summer-accessible connection for walking, running and cycling commuters.

#### I-B28. White Mountains Winter Pipeline

Winter trail connectivity from Fairbanks to and through the Goldstream Valley can be extended even further to the White Mountains National Recreation Area. Long distance winter trail travel is growing in popularity especially with the advent of fat-tire biking and increasingly capable snowmachines. A popular dog mushing route from Old Murphy Dome Road Trail uses existing trails to connect to the WMNRA. A trail along the ridge above Treasure Creek takes trailgoers northeast to the pipeline corridor where they continue north across the Chatanika River. A trail then goes east across the flats of Willow Creek and across the Elliott Highway. From the Elliott, trail users traverse vacant State land to gain Haystack Mountain ridge and the popular ridge trail to the White Mountains trails just east of the Moose Creek cabin. A realignment in the Willow Creek drainage and climbing Haystack may be needed to bypass private property and utilize FNSB property. A preferred location for crossing the Elliott Highway can then be established and improved with safety features such as an on-grade apron and signage.

#### I-B29. Moose Ridge Trail

A popular ridgeline trail in winter and summer connecting the end of Moose Mountain Road, near the top of the ski resort, to the west portion of Old Murphy Dome Road. The route offers connectivity and views. A multi-use trail easement platted through the Moose Mountain subdivision ensures connectivity from the neighborhood. The current alignment is also sought after for future road development. As roads are developed, it is recommended that major viewpoints remain vacant and accessible by trail, and where the trail must be rerouted that a contoured alignment be established along the southeast aspect of the hill and that driveway crossings be minimized.

### I-B30. Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline

A portion of the decommissioned pipeline corridor connects the Harding Lake community, starting at Little Harding Lake, to the Birch Lake community. The route crossing mostly undeveloped Borough property. Among a small number of private parcels, one has a platted recreational trail easement where the pipeline corridor crosses the lot. The historic pipeline corridor through this area crosses wetland terrain and is only suitable for winter recreation. Trailhead access at the Little Harding Lake end and the Birch Lake end needs development. Public access across private lots around Little Harding Lake, mostly owned by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, will need to be negotiated.

### I-B31. Chena Lake to Hot Springs Winter Trail

This trail connects the Chena Lake Recreation Area to the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail and the many miles of winter recreation trails. Part of the route is identified by the State of Alaska as an RS2477 trail, trail #1598. Winter use dominates the trail due to lack of a public bridge across the Chena and wet terrain north of the river. Facilitating public recreational access across the Chena River and determining the best location for crossing is the main challenge this trail faces. The proximity to the US Army Corps of Engineers Moose Creek dam means security concerns, hydrological forces, and eroding streambanks challenge the development of a permanent crossing. A summer-accessible crossing would be highly valuable to the North Pole community. It is recommended that the FNSB and landowners continue to investigate the feasibility of establishing a crossing point for the recreating public. Ground conditions around the woodcutting hills near lower Potlatch and Jenny M Creeks may prove suitable for a summer connection to Chena Hot Springs Road near Pheasant Farm Road and Grange Hall Road.

### I-B32. Ace Lakes Connector

Several comments were received about trails north of Goldhill Road in the vicinity of Happy Creek and Ace Lake. A relatively dense population of houses and rental cabins in the area result in demand for and use of nearby trails. Permafrost and poor, wet ground conditions make the terrain unsuitable for summer uses beyond walking. A maze-like system of social trails along old mining claim transects and boundaries crosses multiple private parcels. This trail plan recommends obtaining and protecting only the main trail, roughly paralleling Goldhill and connecting Sheep Creek Road to the Sheep Creek Dredge Path trail. The trail crosses government lots and tax lots owned by the State of Alaska, University of Alaska, and private parties. It is recommended for winter use only and should connect to ends of roads off the north side of Goldhill Road. The connection to Sheep Creek Road through T1SR1W Section 1 is unconstructed and should be developed in consultation with the University of Alaska

### I-BR1. 100 Mile Loop Trail

The 100 Mile Loop Trail is a concept originally proposed in the Borough's draft Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan. The draft Parks and Recreation Plan proposes linking existing trails within the Borough to form one major trail which other trails can connect into. It is the recommendation of the Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan that this concept be adopted as a long-range objective of the Trail Program. It should be kept in mind that this proposal is a general concept and in any given segment of the trail there may be several existing trails which could provide the necessary link in the 100 Mile Loop. Decisions on the final routing of this trail should be based on potential links to other trails and recreation

areas and the feasibility of incorporating the trail into the land developments occurring in the particular area. For example, the 2006 plan recommended a northern connection through Engineer Creek near Gold Mine Trail Road and Gilmore Trail Road, but the 2022 planning process has recommended a preferred route farther north via the Silver Fox and Pedro Dome roads.

#### I-BR2. Ester Community Trail System

Much of the existing trail system in the Ester area is used seasonally for mining access or other road purposes. A high degree of interest in non-motorized and multi-use trails has been expressed by residents of the area during the Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan process. It is recommended that a parcel of Borough land in the general area of Moose Gulch be made available to residents of Ester for development of a trail use area. Many existing trails in the Ester Creek valley area are poorly aligned, fall-line trails destined for degradation. This concept also proposes new, contoured, sustainable trail alignments along and across the Ester Creek Valley to connect trail users between Ester and Old Nenana Highway and from ridge to valley. Much of this Borough land is covered by mining claims and is not well suited for residential development at this time. Location of the trail use site should be coordinated with mining activities in order to avoid a location where future surface disturbance is known to be likely.

#### I-BR3. Skyline Ridge – Goldstream Valley Loop

The original proposal in the 2006 plan called for the creation of what has become the legislatively designated Goldstream Public Use Area. The remaining portion of the proposal is to establish connecting trails between the Tanana Valley Railroad Trail and the Skyline Ridge Trail. This will form a large loop trail which has outstanding views of the City of Fairbanks and Alaska Range from the ridge and the more natural setting of the Goldstream Valley along the Tanana Valley Railroad Trail. Two existing trails currently provide this connection, but their alignments are problematically steep and trespass on private property. This plan recommends realignments based on sustainable trail design standards. Multiple loops at different elevations are recommended. The Goldstream Valley is fragile, permafrost-laden ground not suitable for summer trail use. A loop cutoff at higher elevation can accommodate summer use and prevent unwanted summer traffic in the Goldstream. Means of connecting to the Ballaine Road trailhead in winter and summer should be investigated.

#### I-BR4. Goldstream Hills Trail Network

The Fairbanks North Star Borough owns most of the vacant land that makes up the hillsides north of Goldstream Road and Murphy Dome Road. Existing trails up these valleys and ridges are popular for winter and summer recreational trail loops, connecting the Goldstream Valley to Old Murphy Dome and beyond. Limiting trail use, however, are ground conditions, trail degradation from vehicular use, and lack of trails connecting the ridges and valleys from east to west. This plan recommends integrating sustainable designed trails into developments throughout the hills of the upper Spinach Creek, Moose Creek, O'Connor Creek and Upper Eldorado Creek valleys. Goals of these trail systems are to forge shorter and more sustainable connections across the hills and valleys, provide convenient loops for residences, reduce conflict between motorized and non-motorized use by separating uses based on ground conditions, reduce driveway crossings, separate road and trail corridors, and ultimately add considerable value to surrounding development. Alignments shown on the trail plan maps are at a conceptual stage informed by existing trail locations, planned road developments, topography, presence

of wetlands and other ground conditions. Further planning and consultation with FNSB Natural Resources Development, land developers, trail users, neighbors and trail professionals will be necessary to establish and develop these trail systems over time.

#### I-BR5. Solstice Summit Trail Area

A high point above Spinach Creek Road and Keystone Road in Section 6 is a popular destination for views and trail recreation. A trail from Keystone known as the Solstice Trail takes hikers to the summit where the sun can be viewed touching the top of Ester Dome during solstice. As most topographical high points around Fairbanks are capped with communications equipment, this bald peak is a unique and highly sought-after recreation opportunity. This plan proposes reserving this section of Borough property for trail-based recreation and developing sustainable trails to get hikers to and from an eventual trailhead parking location at Moose Mountain Road (to reduce traffic on neighborhood roads).

#### I-BR6. Tanana 440 Trail System

A Borough-owned vacant plot of 440 acres at the end of Cripple Creek Road boasts gentle, south facing slopes above the Tanana River. The land may be highly valuable for real estate development and is also ideal for constructing year-round trail. The Cripple Creek Road and Rosie Creek Road communities in west Fairbanks are blessed with an abundance of winter trails, but few summer trails designated for recreation, and particularly non-motorized recreation. As developments and future subdivisions are considered for this parcel, it is the recommendation of this plan that acreage and corridors for non-motorized recreational trails be integrated into the development and retained by the Borough.

#### I-BR7. Peede-Chena Lake Connector

A winter motorized connection between the Peede Road Extension and the Chena Lake Recreation Area Mike Agbaba Trail System is recommended. The route can take advantage of state and Borough lands as well as existing trail easements. This would serve to increase outdoor opportunities for the North Pole community and improve access to Chena Lake and the Chena River. The terrain is flat and wet with many slough crossings and therefore not suitable for summer motorized use.

#### I-BR8. Salchaket Bluff Scenic Loop Trail

A rocky bluff off the Richardson Highway above Munson Slough exhibits ample opportunity for summer hiking with panoramic views of the Tanana River and the Alaska Range. Few such opportunities are available in the Salcha Area. A proposed non-motorized hiking trail loop, one or two miles length, would start at the Munson Slough Road, climb the bluff and traverse the edge of bluff near the Darrel Coe Nordic Ski Trails used by Salcha Elementary and Salcha Ski Club. At a rock outcropping near this location is a burial site which will limit alignment options for the proposed trail. A feasibility study and impact analysis is recommended prior to development.

#### I-BR9. South Harding Ridge Traverse

A trail across is proposed to span the ridge south of Harding Lake, connecting Little Harding Lake to the Salchaket Heights subdivision. A spur trail could also connect the ridge to a material site along Salcha

Drive near the Bingle Camp and retreat center. The proposed trail will cross property owned by the Borough, State of Alaska and Mental Health Trust Authority.

#### I-BR10. Birch-to-Bluff Trails

This trail concept intends to connect visitors from the Birch Lake pullout along the Richardson Highway south to spectacular bluffs above the Tanana River. Local rock climbers, searching for rare rock-climbing opportunities, found cliffs above the Tanana suitable for roped climbing and rappelling. A makeshift trail across Borough land was cut to access the crag. A new trail system is recommended that can be constructed with a sustainably layout and create a loop with multiple spurs. The terrain may be suitable for a variety of recreation opportunities including camping and public use cabin rentals. Further investigation and planning is recommended to take best advantage of this unique area.

#### I-BR11. Pleasant Hills Trail System

A prominent spur of hills behind the Pleasant Valley community, between Jenny M Creek and Flat Creek, shows development potential and should eventually incorporate a trail system among planned roads, future subdivisions, and other developments. The hills are vacant and owned almost entirely by the Fairbanks North Star Borough. The area has a prominent trail up the ridgeline beginning in the west at Chena Hot Springs Road across from Grange Hall Road, continuing east and ending at the topographic high points. Another trail traverses the base of the ridge behind the Pleasant Valley neighborhoods north of Chena Hot Springs Road, eventually connecting to the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail system and part of the Yukon Quest Sled Dog trail. Both Trails in the area were historically used in the Governor's Cup competitive horse ride. Developing the area may require that a major road corridor displace the existing ridge trail. The south face of the ridge is likely too steep to develop but may provide terrain suitable for a contoured trail system to be built. Further investigation is recommended. On all sides side of this area are trail systems with ample year-round motorized recreation opportunities: to the west the Two Rivers logging road and Little Chena-Potlatch Creek trails, to the north the Mike Kelly Trail, to the east the Compeau Trail and other Chena River State Recreation Area motorized trails, and to the South the final miles of the Chena Hot Springs Road multiuse trail. Due to that abundance of nearby motorized opportunities, and the proximity of this area to residences, it is recommended that this trail be designated for non-motorized uses only, with the exception of winter use of the lower elevation trails. Additional planning and design work done by a trail professional will be necessary to identify sustainable alignments for future development. Trail Plan maps provide a preliminary conceptual layout of what a trail system here might look like.

#### I-BR12. Abe Lincoln Glades

Input during the comprehensive plan update revealed a desire for an area dedicated to off-piste alpine skiing. An area of FNSB property between Murphy Dome Road and the Lincoln Creek subdivision off Abraham Road was identified as having the necessary qualities: steep slope angles, higher elevations, sufficient acreage, and road access at top and bottom. Skiers will be able to access runs from above near Murphy Dome and Yellowknife or off the top of Abraham Road, or from below along Cache Creek Road. A skinning track through the glades or road shuttles up Murphy Dome Road will make ski laps possible. While the topography is suitably steep for skiing, the glades must be significantly thinned- a timber

harvest project that might be managed by the Borough's Natural Resources Development division. In addition, off-street parking must be developed prior to promoting use of the area to reduce impact of traffic and nearby residential developments.

#### I-BR13. Alaska Long Trail

The "Alaska Long Trail" (ALT) is a concept of growing popularity to someday connect Fairbanks to Seward via recreational trails. The ALT is meant to compete with internationally recognized through-hiking routes across the world such as the Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, Continental Divide Trail, New Zealand's Te Araroa "Long Path" and others. The Alaska concept would require building new trail segments to stitch together many miles of existing trail along the final corridor. Land managers and trail users across the state have coalesced around the common vision, gaining bipartisan political support along the way. A statewide trail non-profit, Alaska Trails, is spearheading and coordinating with stakeholders, including the FNSB, to determine preferred routes for different user groups across the affected regions. Currently, the preferred route through the FNSB boundary brings trail users from Nenana into the Tanana Valley State Forest (TVSF) south of the Parks Highway, heading east across the Bonanza Creek and Rosie Creek forests on a mix of new trail and existing forestry roads. From Rosie Creek trails, trail users can head north onto proposed trails along Old Nenana Highway (ONH), then north onto the Ester West Ridge Trail and east to Ester Dome. From Ester Dome, trail users would follow their preferred route along sections of the Equinox Marathon Trail to end at the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus trails. Trails from the Isberg Recreation Area and trails in the Ester Community will also connect to this system and can serve as alternate routes. Multiple route options can provide for a variety of user groups, motorized and non-motorized, summer and winter. New trail segments needed to complete the vision include the proposed Fairbanks-Nenana Upland Forest trail connecting Cripple Creek to the TVSF, the Farmer Mine Trail connection portions of the EMT to Ester Dome, and a length of trail along the ONH to connect the Parks Highway to the Ester West Ridge trail. A precise route for the ONH segment has not yet been determined. The goal of this connection will be to separate the trail from the road; utilize existing easements, public lands, and rights of way where possible to reduce burden on private property; keep to good soils as much as possible; and reduce or avoid driveway crossings. Some miles of this section may require sharing the road right of way. Eventual development of this concept will require improved access points to sections of this trail and thorough, high-quality wayfinding.

#### I-BR14. Farmer Mine Trail

The Farmer Mine route proposes to connect the bottom of the "Alder Chute" portion of the Equinox Marathon Trail (EMT) to the Tri-Con mining road farther west of Ester Dome. The contoured trail along the south face of Ester Dome would provide fantastic views, gentle hiking, biking and skiing, and a more accessible means of enjoying Ester Dome than existing alternatives. The Farmer Mine route was originally proposed due to limited access to the Alder Chute portion of the Equinox trail; there is not public access to the Alder Chute and year-round use of other trail segments of the Equinox suffer. The proposed trail crosses Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority land. The FNSB obtained a use license from the MHTA for other portions of the EMT. In order to gain access and construct the remainder of the Farmer Mine trail, a long-term easement agreement must be reached with the MHTA. Given the

prevalence of mining claims along the route, any agreement must be protective of the recreational use of the proposed trail.

#### I-BR15. Peede Road Open Space

In 2019 a nomination to sell FNSB parcels off Peede and Brock Roads failed amid outcries to protect the area for conservation and outdoor recreation. The Borough parcels have now been designated for use as open space and natural area. These Borough parcels are adjacent to what was once the Heritage Forest Outdoor Education Site. Since the Borough's lease for that site was not renewed, the area has become increasingly popular for off-road vehicle use of all kinds. The flat and wet terrain is attractive for off-road mudding but is not able to withstand the abuse. Many trails are unusable for any other form of recreation and will eventually also be unusable for terrestrial vehicular recreation. The area needs to be rezoned to accommodate recreational development. Then a dedicated planning process is needed to consider what recreation demands the area is currently meeting, what this area can realistically supply in the long term, and what preferred substitutes may be available nearby.

#### I-BR16. Birch Hill to Steese Highway

As part of a larger goal to connect Birch Hill ski trails the UAF ski trails, a strong community desire to connect the Birch Hill Recreation Area with the Creamer's Refuge Trails across the Steese Highway surfaced prior to the planning process and gained momentum during. Discussion with Borough and City representatives and neighboring landowners continued the enthusiasm with multiple formal letters of support. Talks with the Department of Transportation about incorporating a pedestrian tunnel into the Steese-Johansen interchange project have been promising, though inconclusive yet. A trail connection here should be usable year-round and designed to accommodate cross-country skiing and grooming equipment. The project is still in a conceptual phase, and no precise route has been determined, though a preference for an area north of the Johansen Expressway and south of Farmer's Loop Road was expressed. A route through the US Army Garrison Fort Wainwright Post is not recommended and, apart from some future change in interest by the Army Post, will not be pursued. Discussion with the Army revealed security concerns, access controls and environmental stipulations that would make the southern route unattractive if not unfeasible. More northern routes will require cooperation from and compensation for other landowners if the trail is to cross their property. The FNSB can play a roll in providing planning support and technical expertise to determine alignment an construction standards as well as ultimately adopt any dedicated easements in trust for the public.

#### I-BR17. Murphy Dome Ski Trails

The Murphy Dome Ski Trails are an approximate proposed location for development of a high elevation cross-country ski trail network. This proposal is consistent with the proposed habitat and recreation designation of the north slope of Murphy Dome area in the state's draft Tanana Basin Area Plan. The actual site and plans for the trail development should be coordinated with local ski clubs to ensure the best terrain and snow conditions. These trails can provide an early season training area for competitive skiers prior to adequate snowfall at lower elevations.

#### I-C1. Cripple Creek Trail System

With the development of the Borough's Cripple Creek II Subdivision, several non-motorized trail tracts were reserved which can eventually form a trail network similar to the Skarland Trail System. New state, borough, or private subdivision in this area should be encouraged to establish links to lie into this trail network. The Cripple Creek-Rosie Creek Trail is presently the primary multi-use trail in the area. Access to this trail and to the Isberg Recreation Area should be provided through new subdivisions when possible.

#### I-C2. Lincoln Creek Loop Trail

There are several non-motorized trail easements within the state's Lincoln Creek and Murphy Subdivisions. All the land in the area surrounding these subdivisions is owned by the State or Borough. The trail plan map depicts how these existing trail easements can be connected together, primarily across Borough property, to eventually form a loop trail between subdivisions. Connections between the Lincoln Creek Trail and the Old Saulich Trail and to the Murphy Dome Ski Trails should also be reserved.

#### I-C3. Twenty-three Mile Slough Sleddog Trails

Both the state's Twenty-three Mile Slough Agricultural disposal and Eielson Agricultural II disposal contain reservations for trails in the area. Many of the trails are winter trails located on frozen waterways. Future road development or additional land disposals should be designed to retain the continuity of these trails to the greatest extent possible. There are two loops of this extensive Trail system which already have the majority of their legal rights-of-way established by designated tracts in state ownership, section line easements, or R.S. 2477. Retaining these loops and establishing connections to them should be the primary focus of efforts for this trail system.

#### I-C4. Koponen Homestead Trails

The Koponen Homestead trails are on private land and developed for the benefit of the Koponen Homestead subdivision and neighborhood off Haman Street. The trails were constructed and improved in 2015 with Federal Highways Administration pass-through funds via the Alaska State Parks Recreational Trails Program. A Public Recreational Easement was granted for a period of 5 years from 2016-2021. Since the general public became accustomed to using the trails and they were improved with federal funds, this plan recommends renewing and recording a Public Recreational Trail Easement via AS 34.17.100 for a perpetual time period. By recording an easement, Alaska Statutes 34.17.055 and 9.65.202 provide that the landowner can be protected from liability for injuries and death due to recreational use of the land. Without a recorded easement, there may be no such immunity. Management and maintenance should remain the responsibility of the landowner or homeowners' association. The FNSB can assist with technical advice and to establish and protect legal access to the trails if granted.

#### I-C5. Happy Valley Ski Trails

This trail system, also known as the Goldstream Sports Classic Ski Trail, is used in winter only for classical cross-country skiing. Three loops make up the system to total a little more than 5 miles of trail. The trail

weaves throughout the Happy Creek subdivisions entirely on private property. The plan recommends that the user group work with landowners to cooperatively establish public recreational trail easements for length of the trail in order to reduce potential liability. Terms can be such that recreational trail use only occur during winter. Management and maintenance should remain the responsibility of the landowner or homeowners' association. The FNSB can assist with technical advice and to establish and protect legal access to the trails if granted.

#### I-C6. Alder Creek Hillside Trails

The hillside north of Alder Creek and below the Old Nenana Highway, is a gently sloped woodland, south-facing, mostly vacant, and likely developable. The vacant land is mostly owned by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority with some FNSB-owned acreage. This plan recommends that a basic, non-motorized trail network be incorporated through future subdivisions as this area develops to ensure current and future residents along Old Nenana Highway gain the value of nearby trail recreation and access to the Alder Creek Trail and valley. New trails should be designed and built according to sustainable trail standards to ensure they add value to the land rather than create problem. The Trail Plan map depiction should be interpreted as a conceptual layout only. Management and maintenance should remain the responsibility of the landowner, future homeowners' association or trail user group. The FNSB can assist with planning, technical advice on trail layout, and to establish and protect legal access to the trails if granted.

#### I-C7. Steele Creek Hillside Trails

The hillside north of Steele Creek and below the Gilmore Trail Road, is a gently sloped woodland, south-facing, mostly vacant, and likely developable. The vacant land is mostly owned by the Alaska University of Alaska with some FNSB-owned and Mental Health Trust Authority acreage. This plan recommends that a basic, trail network be incorporated through future subdivisions as this area develops to ensure current and future residents along Esro Road and Tungsten Trail gain the value of nearby trail recreation and access to the nearby trail systems along Gilmore Trail Road and Amanita Road. Given the proximity to residential development and fragile ground, a trail system should be non-motorized with one exception: a motorized contour traversing under Gilmore Trail Road to facilitate access to popular motorized trails, the Cleary-Gilmore Trail and the Chena-Gilmore Trail. This trail system can also improve neighborhood access to the Riedel Nature Preserve and trail system owned by the Arctic Audobon Society. New trails should be designed and built according to sustainable trail standards to ensure they add value to the land rather than create problems. The Trail Plan map depiction should be interpreted as a conceptual layout only. Management and maintenance should remain the responsibility of the landowner, future homeowners' association or trail user group. The FNSB can assist with planning, technical advice on trail layout, and to establish and protect legal access to the trails if granted.

## II. Existing Recreational trails

*Most current information on trails in this list can be found through the managing agency. Selected trails or trail systems are described here to give context to planning recommendations.*

### II-A18. Goldstream Public Use Area Trails

The Goldstream Public Use Area is a legislatively designated public use area in the Goldstream Valley, consisting of vacant State land on either side of Ballaine Road. It was created in 1990 and scheduled to sunset in 2010 but for an outcry from the public that removed the sunset clause so that it has remained protected since 2010. The state passively manages the area which contains the Tanana Valley Railroad Trail, the Eldorado Creek Trail and many other trails. Though multiple uses are statutorily permitted, the terrain is only suitable for winter use except for summer walking in rubber boots. The footprint and trails of this area have expanded in the last decade thanks to efforts of the Interior Alaska Land Trust to purchase adjacent properties and create a contiguous conservation corridor. Future recommendations for this area for the State, Borough and Land Trust to coordinate to acquire vacant properties within the greenbelt along the Tanana Valley Railroad Trail. The Plan also recommends two new trails: One that will connect the Eldorado Creek Trail, north of Goldstream Creek, across State Land to the southern terminus of Waterford Road; and a second trail connecting the Tanana Valley Railroad Trail eastward through State and Borough lands to Skyridge Road near the Old Steese Highway.

### II-B1. Birch Hill Recreation Area Ski Trails

This facility is co-managed through an agreement between the FNSB, Nordic Ski Club (NSCF) of Fairbanks, and the US Army Garrison Fort Wainwright. The world-class trails are established and maintained by the NSCF and used exclusively for cross country skiing in the winter. This Plan recommends updating the management agreement and facility plan for Birch Hill. Recommendations from this plan regarding Birch Hill include: 1. To consider the developing a trailhead and ski trails within a Borough parcel off Bias Drive, north of the existing ski trails and; 2. to investigate the potential for expanded summer trail uses to include a dedicated singletrack mountain biking system. The community indicated a desire for additional mountain biking opportunities located centrally or east of Fairbanks. Birch Hill has the type of terrain necessary, but any developments must be compatible with the primary use and landowner regulations.

### II-B3. Two Rivers Recreation Area

The Two Rivers Recreation Area was established through the Two Rivers subdivision of 2001 when multiple large Borough parcels were retained for recreational use off Two Rivers Road. Part of the recreation area is home to the Two Rivers Ski Trails used by neighbors and the elementary school ski club. A parking lot was also developed adjacent to the winter trails along lower Two Rivers Road. This plan recommends developing a system of non-motorized loop trails in the upland hillsides of Tract F north of the subdivision. Based on a desire for singletrack biking trails east of Fairbanks, this area may present an opportunity. Further planning and consultation with the trail community in Two Rivers must take place prior to trail development.

### II-B4. Sauna Avenue/O'Brien Street Trails

These trails area dedicated for public use via multiple trail easements. They connect to the southern extent of the O'Connor Creek Trail which connects the Goldstream Road neighborhoods south to Sheep Creek Road. Unfortunately , the trail right of way spills into the Alaska Railroad right of way before

intersecting with Sheep Creek Road. This plan recommends improving this corridor for recreation and trail-based commuting, coordinating with neighboring property owners to facilitate legal access to Sheep Creek Road, and improving and/or relocating the bridge across Goldstream Creek. The feasibility of constructing this trail to a standard that can sustain summer use should be investigated.

#### **II-B5. Skyline Ridge Park Trails**

The 470 acre Skyline Ridge Park contains a portion of the Skyline Ridge trail as well as other popular trails: Secret Trail, After Hours Trail, and the Goldstream Connector (AKA the “Van Trail”). The area has a long history of use from mining access to military surveillance to equestrian trails. The land was conveyed by the State of Alaska to the Fairbanks North Star Borough in 2010. The park was subsequently rezoned as Outdoor Recreation in 2017 and two Recreational Trails Program grants were completed to restore and harden the main ridge trail in 2016 and 2018. Additional needs include trailhead development, new trails, and a reroute of the Goldstream Connector around private property. A preliminary trailhead and parking area design was purchased in 2020 to address parking and traffic issues but has yet to be constructed. Park improvements are scheduled in the most recent 2021-2030 Capital Improvement Plan to address some of these needs. The most urgent need and recommendation of this plan, however, is to prepare a master plan for the park ahead of additional development.

#### **II-B6. Isberg Recreation Area**

The Isberg Recreation Area was retained by the FNSB for recreational use during the Cripple Creek subdivision process. A Master Plan for the area was developed in 2007 and several Recreational Trails Program grants have been completed to implement the plan. Most funding has gone toward hardening the very wet trails. This plan recommends pursuing access options at the east end of the park or from near the Isberg and Chena Ridge intersection. A section line easement currently provides access. This could be improved, and neighborhood impact reduced by acquiring vacant land or access through the Graceland subdivision.

#### **II-B7. Chena Lake Recreation Area**

Trail recommendations for Chena Lake Recreation Area are focused on facilitating access to and from the park and trails. The North Pole area is underserved with respect to outdoor recreation and trails. Chena Lake Recreation Area is a critical resource for the community, but access made unnecessarily challenging by the commute to and around Laurance Road. This plan recommends road access from Plack Road, a trail circumnavigating the lake (accessibility from all sides), a trail connection along the river to Peede Road extension, and a trail connection across the Chena River, north to the Potlatch Creek and Jenny M logging hills and the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail network.

#### **II-B8. Tanana Lakes Recreation Area**

Borough management of Tanana Lakes Recreation Area began in 2007 when it leased the area from the State of Alaska and adopted a master plan via Assembly resolution. Millions of dollars in state, federal and private grants have been invested in developing the area into one of the most-visited recreation sites in Fairbanks, including establishing a high quality recreational trail network. This plan recommends continuing to construct and complete a non-motorized trail loop circumnavigating Cushman Lake and continuing to support the development of a dedicated offroad vehicle park east of South Cushman Street Extension.

## II-B15. Skarland Ski Trail

The Skarland Ski Trail (previously Proposed Trail #I-B15) is perhaps the most well-known and firmly established trail within the Borough Trail Program. The non-motorized trail was initially developed as a recreational cross-country ski trail, but remains one of the premier singletrack summer hiking trails near Fairbanks. The trail originates on the University of Alaska Fairbanks North Campus which houses the 6 mile loop. The 9 mile and 12 mile loops extend north of campus through the Magoffin, College Hills and Musk Ox residential subdivisions. Portions of this system which lie on private property are now entirely protected via platted trail easements and used for casual recreation and occasional competitive events. Since the trail has been fully dedicated for public recreational use, it should be managed as a recreational facility. The trail is currently maintained by dedicated volunteer trail users.

# Appendix B.

## Trail Protection Toolkit: Techniques and Strategies for Public Access

The following are techniques and strategies that can be used by the Fairbanks North Star Borough for the protection of trails to ensure their recreational uses continue. Evaluations consider the processes (how access is to be granted and accepted) and the recording instrument (how are delineated property interests recorded). It is recommended that processes continue to be reviewed, improved or amended where possible, prioritized and considered in concert with the wide variety of situations that may affect different trails and parcels of land.

### FNSB Code Title 17 “Subdivisions”

The subdivision and platting process outlined in FNSBC Title 17, Subdivisions requires that, in the event of subdivision, easements be dedicated for Category A & B trails that pass through the property. The easement width and intended use for existing and realigned trails, as well as some limited grade, slope and geometry requirements are included.

Easements granted through this process are recorded on a paper plat that details the trail and all other characteristics of the property subdivision.

#### Pros:

- Default timeline is perpetual
- Alteration (“vacation”) of an easement requires public process
- Requires survey for clarity and accuracy

#### Cons:

- Costly (typically requires a survey and a fee for a Major Plat)
- “Dedication” of a trail may effectuate the Subdivision process and initiate unwanted review or changes to property (e.g. road construction requirements, other subdivision requirements, etc.)
- Time consuming
- Hard to change trail location in event of migration or use designation in event of new trends or management
- Reactive; requires the owner initiate the subdivision process
- LAND MAY NEVER BE SUBDIVIDED. Cannot rely solely on this tool

### Purchase Easements via FNSB Title 20.12 Land Acquisition

FNSB Code Title 20.12 contains the process for land acquisitions by the Borough.

#### Pros:

- Owner is compensated.
- One of few options with much room for negotiation, depending on circumstances.
- Proactive: FNSB can work directly with landowners to initiate the process if parties are willing.

#### Cons:

- Little room for negotiation still. Subject to Title 20 Acquisitions.

- Refers to process for acquiring easement but doesn't answer how it should be recorded.
- Lacks clear language about acquiring easements for public use of trails
- To distinguish this process from a "dedication" (and subsequent initiation of the subdivision process), the formal recipient of the easement is likely the "FNSB," not the public, though it would be accepted for the purpose of public use. This may affect perception of the FNSB's level of involvement and responsibility for the trail.

### Alaska Public Recreational Easement (AS 34.17.100)

Alaska Department of Natural Resources provides form 201-4054 for a landowner to record a Public Recreational Easement.

#### Pros:

- Simple and fast; can be completed by property owner with minimal cost, time, or expertise.
- Minimal mapping requirements, are more flexible as trails migrate or use designation changes.
- Best for private property owners

#### Cons:

- Limited standards may present unacceptable risks for FNSB and trail users
- Period of protection determined by owner. Perpetual access not guaranteed.
- Mapping requirements may be insufficient and lead to confusion.
- Uncertainty over who manages the easement or FNSB's role in non-CRTP trails recorded this way.
- Records don't go through FNSB but are recorded with the State. FNSB does not have a process to formally accept one of these easements or allow public to review. FNSB may not even know of an easement until some other issues happens on the trail or property.
- Unclear whether or how this process may interact with FNSB Title 17 Subdivisions and AS 29.040.090 Abbreviated Plats & Waivers.

### Revised Statute 2477 Easements

Historic trails under State management protected via Revised Statute 2477, Section 8 of the Mining Act of 1866. Generally protected within 100 ft. wide rights-of-way.

#### Pros:

- Already researched and have been identified. While some may not be fully adjudicated, the State has asserted their interest on behalf of the public.
- Open to highway vehicles.
- Having it in the trails plan protects it so FNSB will be formally part of the development/changes/etc. of the easement – it allows for inclusion or realignment of the trail asset

#### Cons:

- Open to highway vehicles/highway use, they can become roads (no reason the 100 ft. ROW could not accommodate a road and a trail).
- Unlikely to have restrictions that protect trail for recreation (see Rex Trail history).
- State-managed. Unlikely to incorporate FNSB policy in management of trail.

## Section Line Easements

Easements that may exist along certain boundaries corresponding to section grids on a USGS topographic quadrangle map. Easements are reserved and managed by the State of Alaska for transportation and highway purposes.

Pros:

- Same as RS2477.

Cons:

- Same as RS2477.
- Typically poor alignment. Drawn on a grid of cardinal directions. Does not follow topography or historic travel route.
- Sometimes less right-of-way as easement widths vary depending on date of survey and presence/absence of easement on either side of section line. Total widths may range from 30 ft – 100 ft.

## Fee Simple Land Purchase or Transfer (FNSB Code 20.12)

A land purchase or exchange resulting in fee-simple, outright ownership of all land interest.

Pros:

- Managed under FNSB park powers.
- Flexibility in management and regulations.
- Flexibility in trail design, alignment, and trends in use over time.
- Protects area around trail, not just corridor.
- Single owner simplifies management.

Cons:

- Requires most real-estate compared to other options.
- More acreage is more expensive.

## Cooperative Agreements

Agreements of various types and forms are intended for use with major landowners in the FNSB. Each landowner may have different preferences. FNSB needs to determine what kind of agreements or substance needs to be captured in these agreements.

Pros:

- Room for negotiation with major landowners.
  - Decides whether or not you get access and to where, and you determine how it gets recorded
- Flexibility in timeline.
- Can address major gaps (these landowners have most miles of trails crossing their property).

Cons:

- Certain kinds of agreements (leases >5 years) are still subject to Title 17.

- Only realistic for landowners with considerable property and resources (MHTLA, UA Lands, Native Corps, Railroad, etc.).
- Uncertainty. Subject to changes in partner-landowner management, political swings, etc.
- Unlikely to have perpetual access unless Title 17 is initiated.
- Viability of agreement success is dependent on trail user behavior; property ownership needs to be respected
- Crafting and coming to agreement may be time consuming

### Prescriptive Easements (AS 09.45.052 Adverse Possession)

If a trail has been in use for 10 years, there is potential to gain a prescriptive easement by adverse possession through the state court system. Alaska Statutes require government involvement in prescriptive easement cases.

#### Pros:

- Option to pursue historic trail access from property owners who cannot be negotiated with.

#### Cons:

- Only some, possibly rare cases are defensible.
- Cost of legal fees are likely much higher than negotiating.
- In event of settlement in public's favor, repayment may still take a long time.
- Long timeline, depending on courts, appeals, etc.
- Outcome is not certain.
- Considered after exhausting other options.
- Refers to process for acquiring easement but doesn't answer how it should be recorded.
- Not a practical way for the FNSB to be part of a trail acquisition

### Eminent Domain

FNSB has limited powers per Title 20.12.050. If applicable, it is the method of last resort.

#### Pros:

- Option for property owners who cannot be negotiated with.
- Owner is compensated.

#### Cons:

- Expensive.
- Heavy-handed.
- Likely politically unpopular. Should be seen as very last resort after exhausting all other options.
  - Assembly approval required
- Refers to process for acquiring easement but doesn't answer how it should be recorded.