

Mayor Kabat,

February 6, 2020

Thank you for your letter by email yesterday. As you may guess, I have concerns about this proposed trail off 29th St., and if the City has asked all the right questions to engineers and planners regarding its location and development. Already people are traipsing through the area, marking trees. A trailer has been left near the proposed entrance for at times weeks.

I looked through ISG's picture portfolio on ISG's website and didn't see any of their projects that were built on a hill. Are there any engineering firms that have experience in designing trails on significant slopes? There is an American Trail Building Association that has professionals who do this and a reputable trail building specialist group out of Georgia. I didn't see anything in the report regarding topsoil amounts, distance to bedrock, or soil types that are conducive to paths or not. Was this consultant chosen because they're local or won a bid process?

In ISG's report, discussion of traffic lines of sight for 29th Street does not take into consideration that the proposed access on 29th Street is near the crest of the hill nor that if cars are parked on the street visibility is drastically reduced. The report speaks to a speed limit of 25 mph on 29th Street. Cars frequently go up and down our street at 40 mph or greater using the street to by-pass traffic lights and railroad crossings as they travel north to south or vice versa. There has been a need for speed bumps on the street long before this project was envisioned. We have many walkers, runners, skate boarders, and bikers go up and down 29th Street in front of our house. UW-L, Viterbo, and Aquinas Track and Cross Country teams utilize the hill frequently for training purposes. So there are many kinds of traffic on 29th Street already.

The steepness of the land from 29th street going up the hill is not a slight grade. I doubt if more than 5 people in La Crosse can go up the slope on a mountain bike. In going up such a steep incline, the rider will have to have to have considerable traction to dig into the trail. Coming down and stopping at the proposed gate/fence will not be easy.

The report doesn't mention anything about wildlife habitat. Obviously no one in favor of this project cares about wildlife.

The root systems of the trees is also an issue. Many of the trees holding back the land have shallow root systems. With removal of vegetation, erosion will occur.

ORA already has 50 miles of trails. This increases their miles of trails by more than 10%. Do they have enough volunteers to maintain the trails adequately and can they sustain this over time? Looking at their website, I still don't know anything about ORA's organizational structure – officers, vision statement, purpose, membership, and member voting rights if there is such. Who does one go to if there is a problem? None of the trails they have previously done (that I know of) were built above homes. Does trail certification mean that someone took a 4 day course, is it tailored to the terrain of a specific area, are they graded for certification? Is there any education / practical work that these certified people have to do to be re-certified? How long does certification last?

Grandad Bluff is a landmark. What if these trails do accelerate soil loss and we have earth slides down the bluff? There has been instability along Bliss Road over the years and the repairs cost the City plenty. This instability also affected the slippage of the Log Trail in Hixon Forest.

Finally foot traffic on a path and mountain bike traffic are not compatible. The hiker will be at risk for being hit or run off the path by a biker. The biker in navigating a trail will not be prepared for or consider that there may be someone around the next bend.

Below is the address of a group out of Georgia that specializes in trail building. I copied some of their website regarding design and assessment.

Trail Design Specialists

800 Homestead Road
Danielsville, GA 30633
678-410-8021

Trail Design and Assessment

Our trail designers will perform an assessment of your existing or intended trail based on current sustainable trail practices, state and forest service trail guidelines, construction practicality, and appeal to users. We'll design your trail to minimize its impact on natural resources and to take advantage of any scenic, wildlife, or challenging terrain opportunities that your area provides. Trail Design Specialists designs trails from the land agency perspective to ensure trails that are environmentally sound, limit resource impacts, and limit the need for intense management practices. Our ability to meet and exceed user expectations allows us to create trails that make sense, are attractive, and keep users coming back to the trail again and again. Our designers have a keen eye on protecting the natural environment from damage while preserving the full outdoor experience. When designing a new trail, our team assesses a myriad of environmental, aesthetic, and logistical factors to arrive at a design that will be naturally sustainable. We also design solutions for existing trails that have experienced erosion or that need to be updated for new uses. Our designers incorporate erosion patterns, grade, and environmental impact considerations into the trail's design to strengthen the trail's sustainability while simultaneously minimizing its maintenance requirements.

Additionally, we carefully consider the users' experience and trail features, accounting for a variety of factors such as the level of use (for instance, a beginner-level bike trail versus an advanced-level bike trail) and the users' perspective points (such as the view and potential barriers that would occur while riding horseback versus walking).

Sincerely,

William Haviland
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“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”
Mahatma Ghandi

