

Birch Trail Shared Use Feedback Summary:

Trail System Overview -

At the April 18th meeting of the Board of Park Commissioner's the request to approve usership of Birch Trail from hike only to shared use, including bicycles was deferred 90 days to provide a summary of hike only/shared use trails, what would change and allow public input.

The requests for these items has been completed and are summarized with a trail system summary, and public input feedback results.

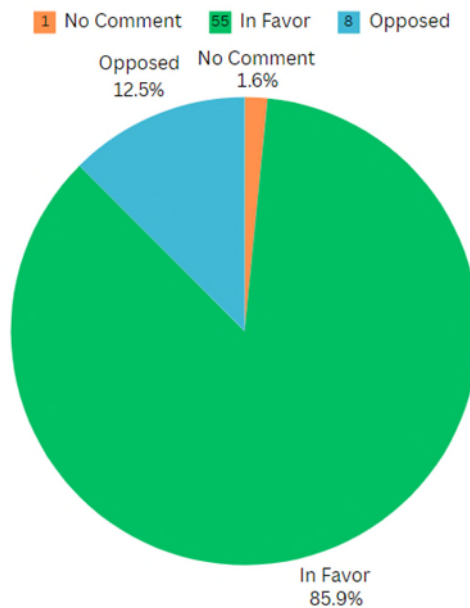
There are about 56.5 miles of trails in the City of La Crosse maintained by the Parks dept, and available for public use.

Of these 56.5 miles, about 38.25 of them are part of a greater bluff trail system, the bulk of which are shown in Exhibit A below (not pictured, Dobson, Hass & Welch/Juniper). 12.19 of these bluff trails are currently hike only, and 26.06 are designated as shared use. Hike only trails are dispersed throughout each map, with majority of hike only trails (9.94 mi) located within the maps in exhibit A the remaining 2.25 mi of hike only trails are within Dobson, Hass, or Welch/Juniper tracts, further south from the trails mapped in exhibit A.

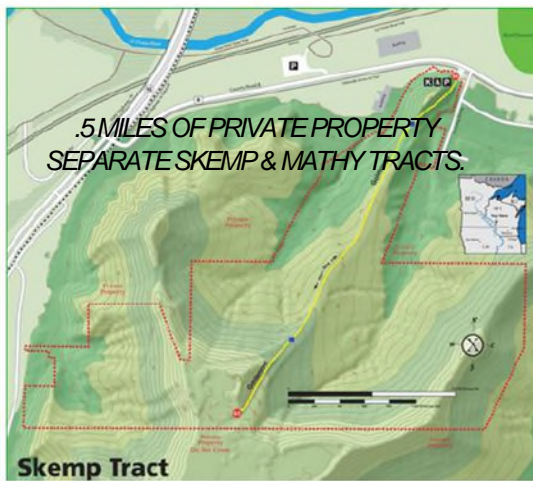
Adjusting the usage of Birch Trail to shared use would change the mileage of hike only to 11.74 miles, and shared use to 26.51, a change of about .45 miles.

Feedback Summary Overview –

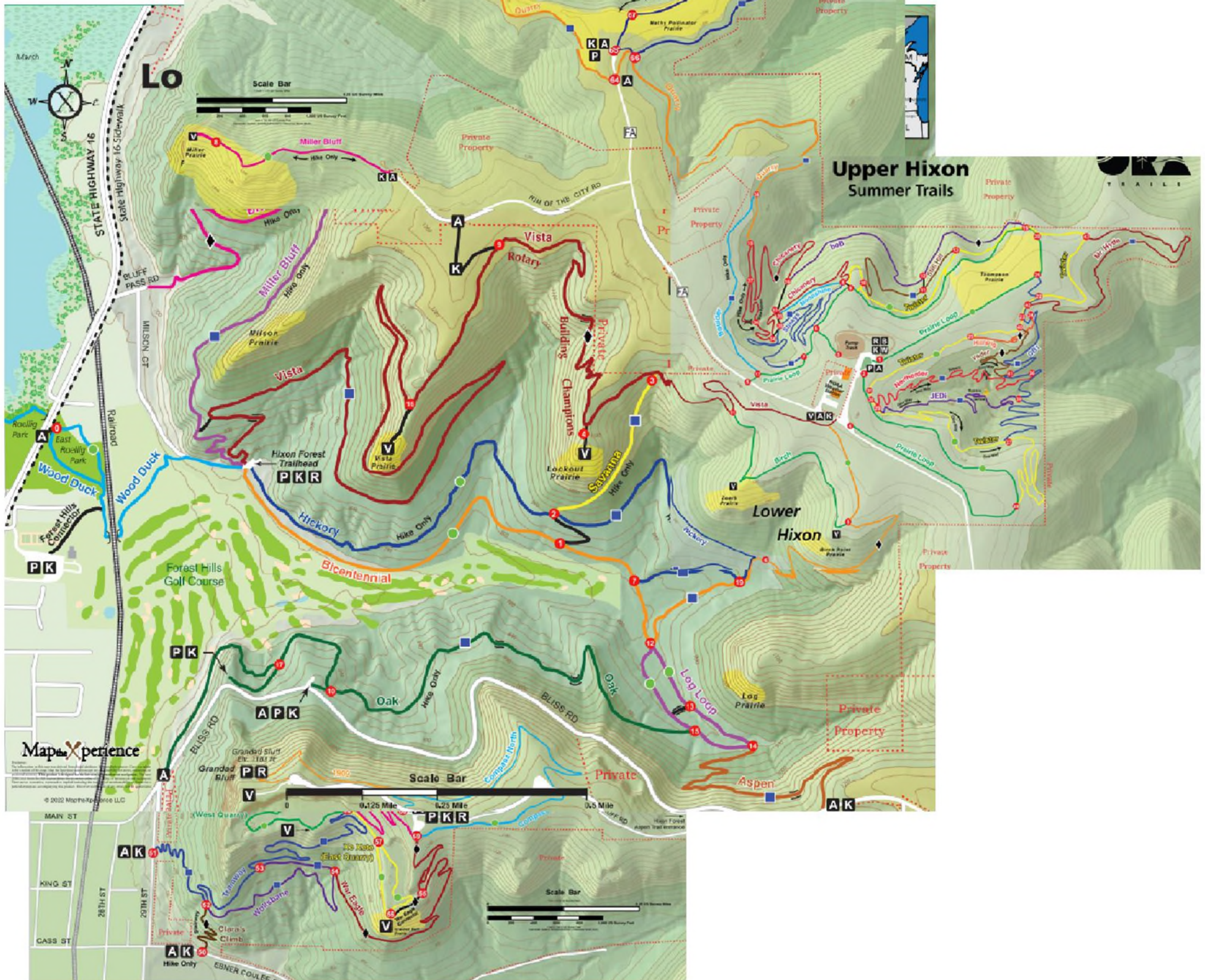
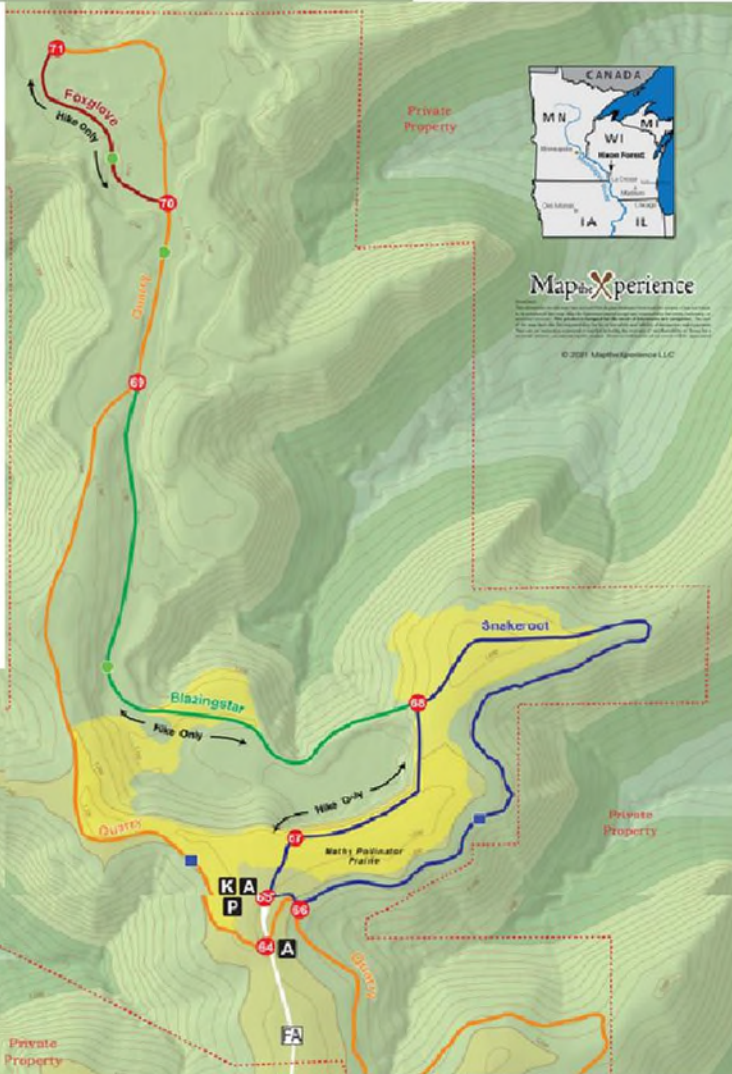
A public input session Wednesday, June 5th top of Hixon Forest, upper Hixon trail head, attend invited to email. A total of 64 received, which are summary, majority of feedback are in favor change.



was conducted on from 4-6pm near the just across from the with those unable to provide feedback via responses were detailed in Exhibit B. In those who provided of the proposed



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Birch Trail Feedback

Position	Date	Comment
Against	5/30/2024	As a La Crosse city resident, lower Hixon volunteer, mountain biker, hiker and cross country skier, please do not permit mountain bikes access to ride on Birch Trail in lower Hixon. The trail is too narrow for both hikers and mountain bike riders to pass safely. It's important the city retain some lower Hixon trails as hike only, especially trails with a spectacular view of the city.
Against	6/1/2024	I received a notice about a public input session June 5 near the weather station to discuss making the Birch Trail "shared." I will be out of town June 5 and am responding here. I strongly object to allowing bikes on the Birch Trail. The Birch Trail is the only "safe"—i.e., no bikes— trail near the weather station parking area. It's a tranquil, fairly flat trail with access to two beautiful prairies and should be dedicated to hikers, even though hikers must traverse shared trails at both ends to complete a loop. It's a good place to take people new to Hixon Forest to show them its beauty with a short (a mile or so), quiet loop hike. I continue to think that trails in most of Lower Hixon Forest, where they are very narrow and sometimes steep, should not have "shared" status. Too many times I and others have been unpleasantly surprised by a bicycle barreling downhill behind us or toward us. Many bikers are polite, but the downhills can be hard to control. Thanks for listening.
Against	6/1/2024	We are writing regarding the public input session to be held on June 5 regarding the changing of the Birch Trail to shared use. Unfortunately, we are unable to attend but wanted to express our opposition to having any more shared use trails in lower Hixon. We are opposed for the same reasons we were opposed in previous years: shared use destroys the peace and tranquillity of hiking. There are many shared use trails from the top of the bluffs to lower Hixon. Upper Hixon is shared use. Why is it necessary to have Birch trail be shared as well? Please consider maintaining the few hike only trails left in lower Hixon so that hikers can enjoy the solitude and quiet of hiking without being on the lookout for bikers. Thank you
No Comment	6/2/2024	Hi. I am not a trail user, but I am an advocate for nondrivers in the area. Even if the trails you are considering are accessible only from the top of the bluff, having input sessions about their future only accessible for drivers (unless you are planning a shuttle service to the site) leaves out many people, I think. The Wisconsin DOT estimates that up to 40% of City of La Crosse residents ages 15 and older are nondrivers. It could be that nondrivers access those trails by carpooling with others and could do also for this input session, but to me, these are two different situations. Choosing to use a facility only reachable by car or, for some, by bike, for recreation is different from having access to provide input for a government decision on a city facility. In the latter case, I believe, ensuring full access by all to the process is very important. Again, I realize that not all residents will be able to use this facility, but since it is a public property, I think all should have access to input opportunities.
FOR	6/3/2024	I won't be able to attend the June 5th session, so just wanted to share my feedback on the proposals. I fully support birch being shared use, since all the trails needed to access it are already shared use. I also am in support of rerouting bicentennial to make it more sustainable erosion wise, and not as steep/straight up and down. We really love the trail systems here and are so grateful to the city and ORA for always trying to improve them.
For	6/3/2024	I will not be able to make the meeting Wednesday, but I support opening up Birch Trail/Educational Loop to bikers. I am volunteering for Adventure Team this year, and having a simpler trail for our younger members would be really helpful! Please consider this a "yes" vote.

For	6/5/2024	I would like to see the Birch Trail opened up to bikes. It was always referred to as the educational loop, which is a very good description as it's a great loop for new bikers to learn on. It's not as steep or narrow as a lot of our trails and is pretty easy to navigate.
For	6/5/2024	Having more trails for elementary and middle school students in the summer school bike program would be extremely beneficial. These summer school courses are designed and intentional in teaching trail stewardship, etiquette and acceptance of all trail users. Bring more people together outside!
Against	6/5/2024	Please leave Hike only. We have very few hike only trails left. If you hike on a shared use trail you always have to be alert to bikes coming at speed. Not relaxing!
For	6/5/2024	Yes to bikes
For	6/6/2024	Yes! Yes! Yes! To Bikes! I love bikes!
Against	6/11/2024	I do NOT think the city should allow biking on the Birch Trail (as has been proposed). It is environmentally sensitive, and this change would disturb the flora and fauna at the adjacent Zoerb Prairie. Keep this short trail for education and long-distance views by walkers. There are PLENTY of trails all around the Upper Hickson for bikers, including the excellent Vista and Bicentennial Trails very near the Birch Trail. Thank you for considering my opinion.
Against	6/14/2024	This is to let you know my preference for the proposed changes to Birch Trail- keep it as hike only that I had asked about 7-8 hikers on Birch who I saw when working what they thought about doing this.
Against	6/14/2024	All were against it except one who said it did not matter to him one way or another. I, myself, am not in favor of making it shared use.