Green to Cedar Rivers Trail – North Segment
SUMMARY: Online Town Hall (May 2017)

King County
PARKS
Your Big Backyard

Background and Context

Using an online civic engagement tool called Peak Democracy, King County Parks hosted an online Town Hall to gather community input on two design options for the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail North Segment. The online survey was open for eight days in May 2017. Some 627 people visited the survey, with 229 visitors completing. Of the 229 people who completed the survey, 85 were registered and 144 were unregistered. Being "registered" means that a participant's responses are publicly viewable on the survey site. The responses of participants who chose not to register are still recorded, but viewable by internal staff and not shared on the survey site.

The survey was promoted widely, using Facebook ads, distribution to partner organizations, and announcements via email lists, social media, and multiple King County webpages, among other channels.

Survey questions and responses can be found at: bit.ly/g2ctraildesigns.

Survey Findings

Trail Usage Questions

- 41.5% responded using trail 3-5x/week or daily (add in 1x/week and that becomes 53.3%)
- Top Uses:
  - walking (65.9%)
  - riding a bicycle (62.3%)
  - running (53.8%)

  **majority of respondents selected multiple ways they use the trail.
- Of the 68 responses to *"if you don't use or rarely visit, what would make it more likely for you to use the trail?"*
  - One quarter expressed support for paved surface
  - Other frequently-mentioned items include: better connections, access, wayfinding/information, and trail amenities (i.e. benches, restrooms, garbage cans, etc)

Design Option Questions

Option 1 (Separated)

- Favorite characteristics: Of the 139 responses to the question about favorite characteristics, nearly half mentioned liking the separation (both the accessory trail and shoulders) and expressed concern about equestrian use and potential user conflicts. The next most cited characteristic was the availability of soft surface options. Several respondents noted that there was nothing about this option they liked, and several noted that this option would mean less impact on trees/environment/aesthetics.
- Least favorite characteristics: Of the 142 responses, approximately a quarter expressed that the soft surface sections were too narrow (both on the accessory trail and trail shoulders) and approximately a quarter expressed a dislike for having a paved surface at all. A small percentage disliked the idea of the separated accessory trail in general; other least favorite things mentioned included impact on the environment and trees, greater expense, and a general dislike of the design option for the constrained area of the corridor.

Option 2 (Combined)

- Favorite characteristics: Of the 144 responses to the question about favorite characteristics, nearly half mentioned favoring the wider soft surface trail of this option. The combined, wider overall trail was mentioned favorably in many contexts (ex: trails seems safer, easier to transition from one surface

type to another, more consistent throughout corridor, better for runners, better to accommodate people with limited mobility, easier to maintain, and less impact on trees were some of the reasons mentioned.).

- Least favorite characteristics: Of the 114 responses, a little more than a third expressed a dislike for having a paved surface at all, with some mentioning the soft surface areas as not being sufficient and/or too narrow. Nearly a third of the responses expressed concern the potential for user conflicts with a combined trail, mentioning that the trail could get crowded and lacks separation, especially if there is equestrian usage of the trail.

Ranking Preferences for Options 1 and 2
Option 2 (Combined) was preferred or seen as neutral by more respondents than Option 1 (Separated). Forty-six percent said that they strongly preferred or preferred Option 2, as compared with the 26% that were neutral and the 12% that were against or strongly against Option 2.

In comparison, Option 1 (Separated) seemed to be more polarizing. Forty-four percent said that they were against or strongly against Option 1, as compared with 34% that said they preferred or strongly preferred that option and the 7% that were neutral.

Ranking Factors
Respondents were asked to rank how important certain limitations were to them for each option. In both cases, all 229 respondents ranked the factors in the same order of importance: trail width (i.e. design's ability to maintain consistent width throughout the corridor), aesthetics/trees (i.e. design's impact on look and feel of trail, including tree removals), and ADA accessibility (i.e. design's ability to meet ADA standards across all trail surfaces).

When asked what would make the trail most usable for the individual, some 168 people provided responses. A little less than a third expressed that they find the trail usable as is and do not want to see the trail surface changed, and a small percentage specifically called for a paved trail while another small percentage called for a wider soft surface. Other items brought up frequently included accessibility and connections (such as ADA, places to get onto the trail, parking, links to other trails, etc) and safety (safe crossings, safe trail conditions and amenities/lighting, and safe design to minimize potential user conflicts).

Overall Conclusions
- Overall, having this trail is valued by the respondents.
- Option 2 (Combined) was more strongly preferred by more respondents than Option 1 (Separated) or seen as neutral. Option 1 (Separated) was more polarizing with respondents, with larger percentages falling into preferring it or opposing it in comparison to Option 2.
- It is hard to draw definitive conclusions regarding responses to questions about design options and ranking of design factors.
- That said, a soft surface trail was brought up frequently and in a variety of ways, making it a consistent theme throughout all survey questions.
- Regardless of surface type, other topics most frequently mentioned included:
  - Connecting the trail to other trails and locations in the community
  - Access (i.e. entry points to get onto the trail, safe crossings, parking)
  - Potential for user conflict