

At the August 5th Land Use and Transportation Committee meeting, the Committee endorsed the following concept for discussion and proposed approval at the August 13th Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) meeting:

A conceptual plan for a pedestrian corridor along the Section Line that overlies the undeveloped 156th Ave alignment, starting at Golden View Drive and heading east with a few meanders, to eventually connect with Section 36 and Bear Valley School.

This corridor along the 156th Avenue alignment is identified in the Hillside District Plan (HDP) as a Special Study Area for future transportation connections. There is both opportunity and need to develop a pedestrian corridor that connects Golden View and Bear View Schools to surrounding neighborhoods, Section 36 Regional Park, and possibly Chugach State Park. The 156th alignment is suitable for near-term development as a multi-use, non-motorized corridor. This non-motorized corridor will have lasting public value, whether or not a road is ever built along this alignment. This corridor follows a Section Line that extends east to Chugach State Park.

As evidence of the need at the western end of this corridor, student sports teams from Golden View have trained on sections of private road parallel to this corridor in order to avoid the hazards of training on Rabbit Creek Road. At the eastern end of this corridor, the Bear Valley PTA and other individuals have developed primitive paths from the school toward the section line, including brush clearing, wood chip placement, and a rudimentary bridge across a small stream. Shangri Lai subdivision residents have also developed social trails into this area at the east end of the proposed corridor.

The non-motorized trail could be built in segments, with Phase One extending from Golden View uphill (east) to recently-platted Spruce Terraces, where there are imminent connections to new subdivisions to the north and south. Spruce Terrace easements will connect neighborhoods to the south of the pedestrian corridor. Neighborhoods to the north should be connected to the pedestrian corridor via the pending River Hills plat which is now open for public review and comment. Otherwise, there is no north-south connectivity for almost 1.5 miles (from Golden View Drive up to Jamie Street in Bear Valley). Although the unbridged creek poses a barrier, a pedestrian easement should be platted perpendicular to the creek on both sides, in anticipation of a future pedestrian bridge.

The concept of a pedestrian corridor meets numerous policies of the Hillside District Plan, the Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan, the pending non-motorized transportation plan, the Anchorage Bowl Parks Plan and the Climate Action Plan. This pedestrian corridor meets the overarching goal of connecting schools, neighborhoods and parks. More specifically, a pedestrian corridor will:

- reduce driving trips on hazardous and sometimes-congested stretches of Rabbit Creek and Golden View Drive;
- reduce parking demands by encouraging non-motorized travel to schools and parkland;
- improve community health through convenient exercise opportunities; and
- improve neighborhood cohesion.

First steps to develop a non-motorized corridor:

1. RCCC should write a letter asking the non-motorized trails coordinator to identify this corridor as an appropriate non-motorized connection, given the recognition in the HDP and current or pending subdivision plats.
2. RCCC should specifically ask for a pedestrian easement perpendicular to this corridor to be platted through the pending River Hills subdivision, extending from the 156th alignment to and across Little Rabbit Creek and then north to Mesa Place.
3. The Rabbit Creek LUTC should work with neighbors and Golden View School to identify and initiate grants for 156th Ave non-motorized trail construction, with student and faculty involvement as much as possible.

