

## Frequently Asked Questions Ben Burr Trail

*Description: The City is seeking input on improvements that will leave the Ben Burr Trail better for all types of pedestrians/bikers.*

Input is still coming in on the proposed Ben Burr Trail improvements that would connect it to the Centennial Trail and the downtown bicycle corridor. The Ben Burr Trail was designated in the [Comprehensive Plan](#) (pg 41) as one of three major shared use transportation pathways for pedestrians and bicyclists. Also designated are Fish Lake Trail and the Centennial Trail which have both been completed. The Ben Burr Trail is currently being designed for construction in 2014.

- **Where is the Ben Burr Trail?**

The Ben Burr Trail starts at Liberty Park near the I-90 Hamilton St. Bridge interchange and extends approximately 1 mile to the southeast to the south side of Underhill Park on an old rail road grade.

- **What surfacing currently exists on the trail?**

Crushed rock (gravel).

- **How wide is the trail?**

The trail is generally 8'-10' with some areas narrower due to topography or overgrown shrubs.

- **Is the trail widely used?**

Because it connects to no other trails, it is not widely used. The current users are mostly pedestrians.

- **Why not leave the trail just the way it is?**

The Ben Burr Trail is identified on the Bike Master Plan and in the Comprehensive Plan along with the other two paved regional trails (Centennial and Fish Lake Trails). A number of years ago the East Central Neighborhood together with the City Planning and City Capital Programs departments explored ways to improve the Ben Burr Trail making connections on the east end, to the west and north to complete the non-motorized system. City Capital Programs applied for and received federal transportation grant funds. These grant funds are for designing and constructing a multimodal paved trail (i.e., a trail suitable for a variety of non-motorized uses including pedestrians and bicycles) making connections to the rest of the non-motorized system, including the Centennial Trail.

- **Some have suggested paving a connection between Liberty Park and the Centennial Trail but leaving the existing Ben Burr Trail southeast of Liberty Park as is. Why not do that?**

This trail is part of a regional system that needs to support all users and meet ADA requirements. Funding for this project is inclusive of the total project. Partial completion and only using part of the funding is not allowed.

- **Are trails serving pedestrians and bicycles safe?**

The Centennial Trail and Fish Lake Trail has been in use for many years safely serving both pedestrians and bicycles. The upgraded Ben Burr Trail will be the same width as the Centennial

and Fish Lake but is expected to serve far fewer people so potential for pedestrian/bicycle conflict will be lower than exists on the Centennial Trail.

- **Ben Burr is one of the few nature trails available on the South Hill. If the City paves it, won't it change the character of the trail?**

Paving the trail is intended to enable all users' access to the trail. A paved surface allows physically challenged individuals the ability to enjoy the trail that until now has been only accessible for individuals who are not limited by a gravel surface. As an urban regional trail all users should be able to benefit from its use.

In addition, there are actually numerous nature trails, some less developed than others, on the south side of Spokane including those in Lincoln Park, Manito Park, High Drive Park, Thornton Murphy Park, Polly Judd Park, Cliff Park and others.

The Ben Burr Trail is not a designated nature trail with natural wildlife that is protected. It is a trail in a City setting that is an overgrown old undeveloped interurban rail line from the early 1900's.

- **It's been reported that the existing trail will have to be widened which will potentially involve rock/tree removal, retaining walls, fences, etc. Is that true?**

In order to make the trail safe enough for pedestrians and bikes to share the path for multi use, and to be ADA compliant, the funding program guidelines require a minimum 10' and ideally 12' trail width with 2' gravel shoulders. To achieve this width, rock/tree removal, fences and retaining walls will be required along significant portions of the existing trail.

- **There aren't many access points to the Ben Burr trail. Will the City fix that problem?**  
Additional access points are being added.

- **How will the Ben Burr Trail connect to the Centennial Trail?**

The connection of Ben Burr Trail to Centennial Trail is proposed as follows: from Liberty Park, the trail is on Perry St. beneath I-90, crossing 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. then becomes a separated trail north of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. on the east side of the Hamilton St. bridge embankment, passing under Sprague Ave. and the railroad in existing underpasses. The trail will then connect to the striped bike lanes on the proposed Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd (construction scheduled 2014) which then routes the user to the west and to the existing Centennial Trail spur located behind the Shade Towers near west end of the Spokane Falls Blvd. bridge over the Spokane River.

- **Why not turn this funding in, revise the project and reapply next year?**

Funding is non-transferable. A new grant would need to be applied for without a guarantee of it being funded.

- **What are the main arguments for preserving the trail?**

- Destroying a natural environment
- Destroying a piece of history
- Destroying a beautiful pedestrian environment
- This is one of the South Hill's best kept secrets – it is a quiet, private trail that will become busy and public
- The speed of bicyclists on the trail would increase becoming harmful to the pedestrian community who use the trail

- Trees and natural plantings will be destroyed with the project construction
  - This is an underprivileged area where residents continually are marginalized and asked to sacrifice
- **What are the main arguments supporting the trail?**
    - Increased access and safety for a broader group of users including those with disabilities
    - Increased safe bike routes for our increasing cycling community
    - Providing connectivity, safety and increased use for
      - Commuting
      - connections to other trails
      - connections and increased use of city parks
      - connections to other bike paths
    - Improved access and safer trails for many residents for outdoor activity and exercise, including for children
    - Increased exercise and improved health for the community and children
    - Improved economic vitality for the community, neighborhoods and small business
    - Transforming Spokane into a more vibrant, dynamic and diverse place with more choices for where and how to live, and more modes of transportation and types of activities
    - Safe and accessible connections to adjacent neighborhoods
    - Safe access for students to schools and higher education facilities
    - Healthier environment with increased pedestrian and bike commuting and more cars at home.
    - Economic stimulus to the community by drawing younger generations to our City as a great place to live, work and commute without using a car