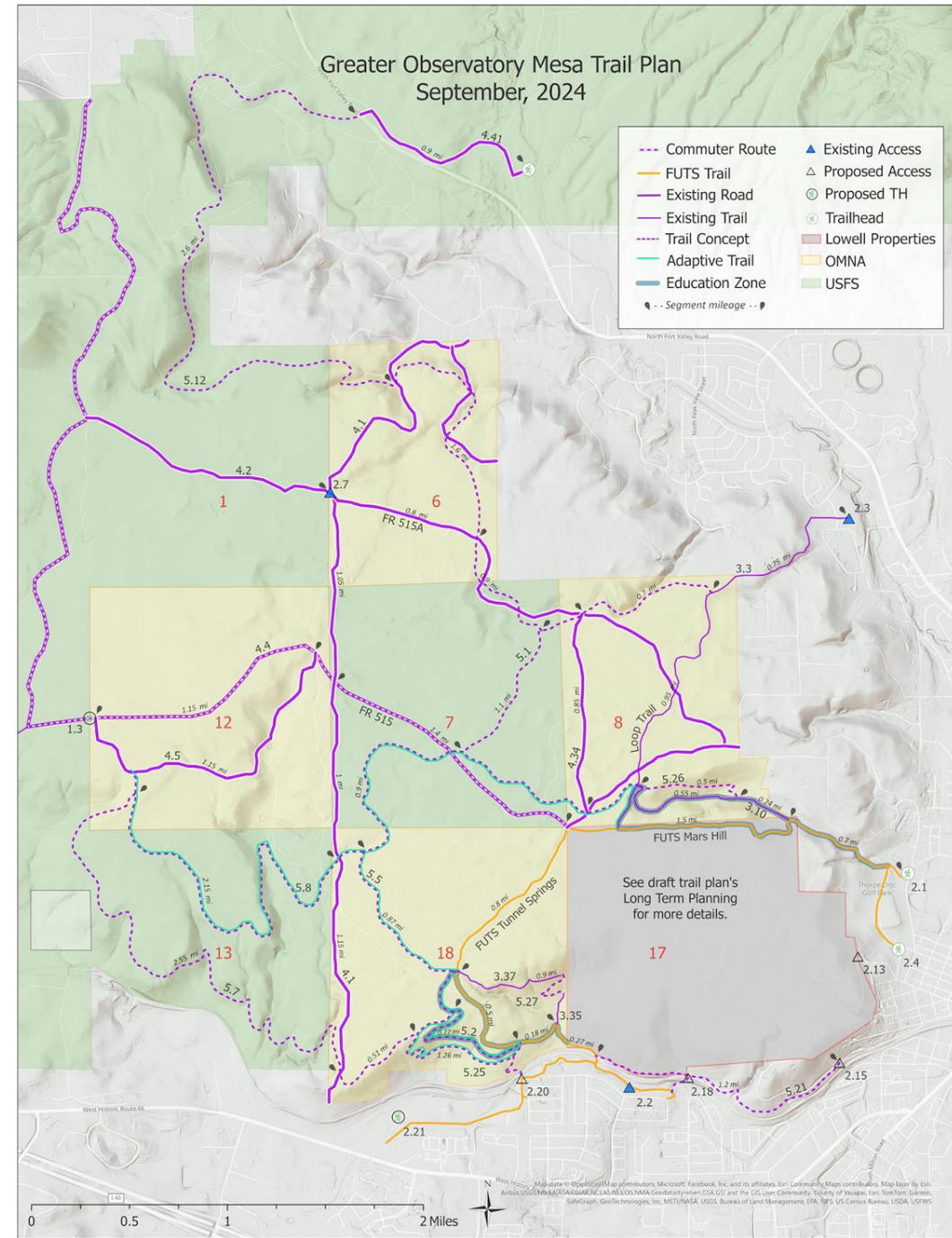


GREATER OBSERVATORY MESA AREA TRAIL PLAN

Phase 3 Public Engagement



HOW WE GOT HERE



MAJOR CHANGES TO THE TRAIL PLAN OVER TIME

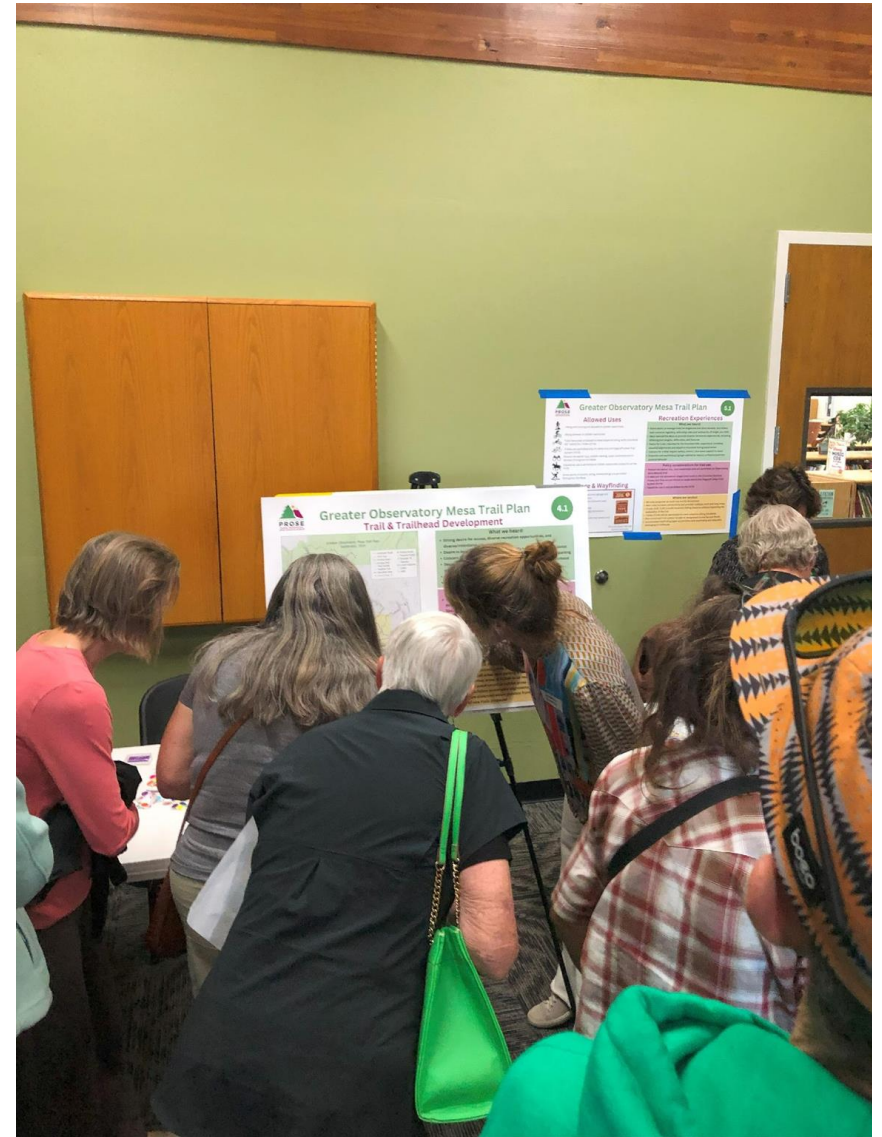
- **Habitat/Conservation:**
 - Increased buffer around important water resources
 - Reduced trail mileage and shifted alignments to create larger no-impact zones
 - **Residential impacts:**
 - Adjusted alignments away from private property & used topography to reduce viewshed
 - Prioritized access and parking to reduce neighborhood impacts & benefit the community
 - **Recreation experience:**
 - Included two bike-optimized trail concepts (5.25 and 5.26)
 - Prioritized multi use trails to enhance overall access for all users
 - Included wayfinding and educational signage
 - Integrated roadbeds into the trail system for dog walkers/side-by-side walkers
 - Identified and incorporated trails with adaptive standards (currently ~8 miles)
 - Added 1 additional access point
-

2024 TIMELINE

March – June: Open Space Commission

August 26 – October 18: Community Survey

September 19: Public Meeting



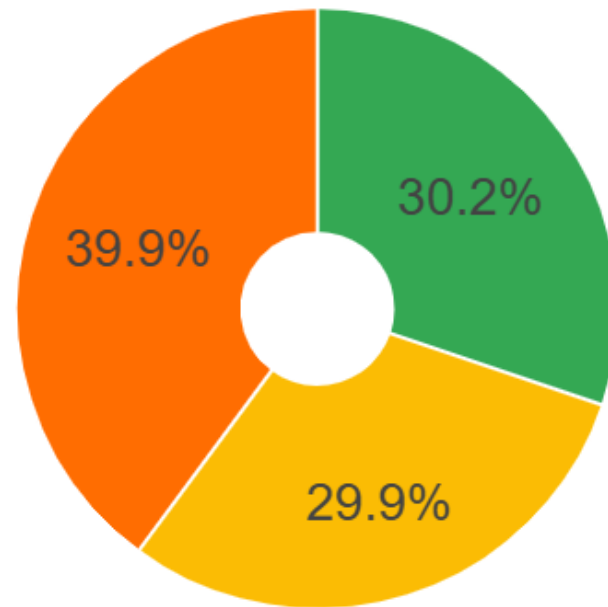
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 2024



	Participation
Public Meeting	115 attendees
Community Survey	327 respondents
Total participants	442
Public Meeting Open Comments	55
Community Survey Open Comments	247
Total Open-Ended Comments	302

GOAL 1. DESIGN A TRAIL PLAN FOR GOMA BASED ON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK AND INPUT, GUIDING POLICY, AND BEST PRACTICES OF SUSTAINABLE TRAIL DESIGN

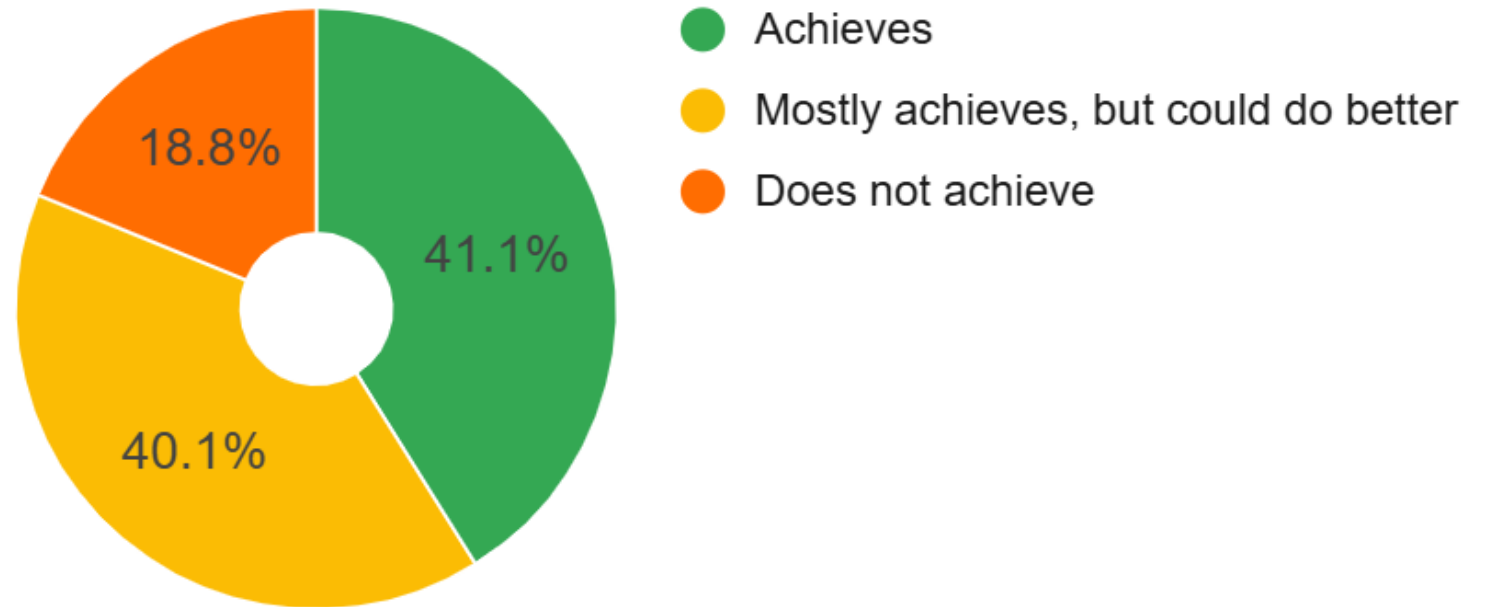
Goal #1



- Achieves
- Mostly achieves, but could do better
- Does not achieve

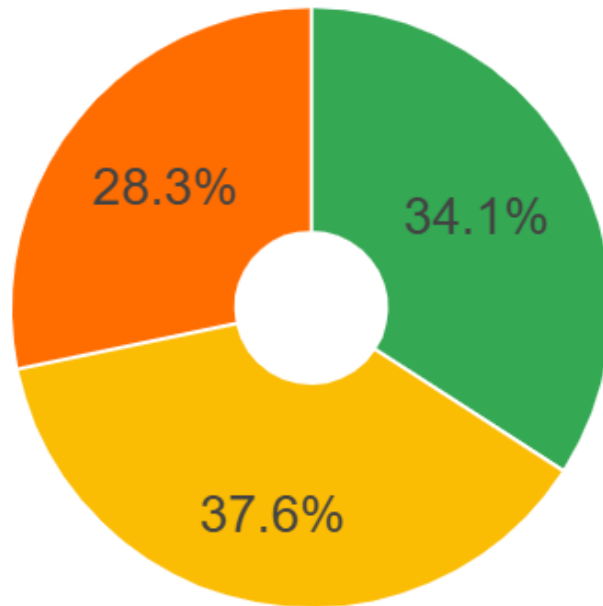
GOAL 2. REDUCE THE IMPACTS OF MOTORIZED USE IN THE GOMA, AND WORK TOWARD A NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL SYSTEM

Goal # 2



**GOAL 3. ADDRESS
UNSUSTAINABLE
AND
UNAUTHORIZED
TRAILS TO
IMPROVE
ENVIRONMENTAL
CONDITIONS IN
GOMA**

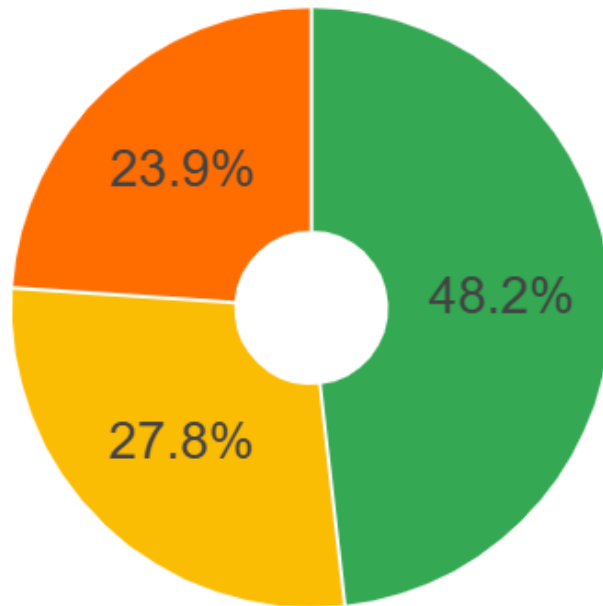
Goal # 3



- Achieves
- Mostly achieves, but could do better
- Does not achieve

GOAL 4. INCREASE LOCAL ACCESS TO THE FORMAL TRAIL SYSTEM TO ADVANCE THE "10 MINUTES WALKING DISTANCE TO OPEN SPACE" GOAL OF THE CITY OF FLAGSTAFF.

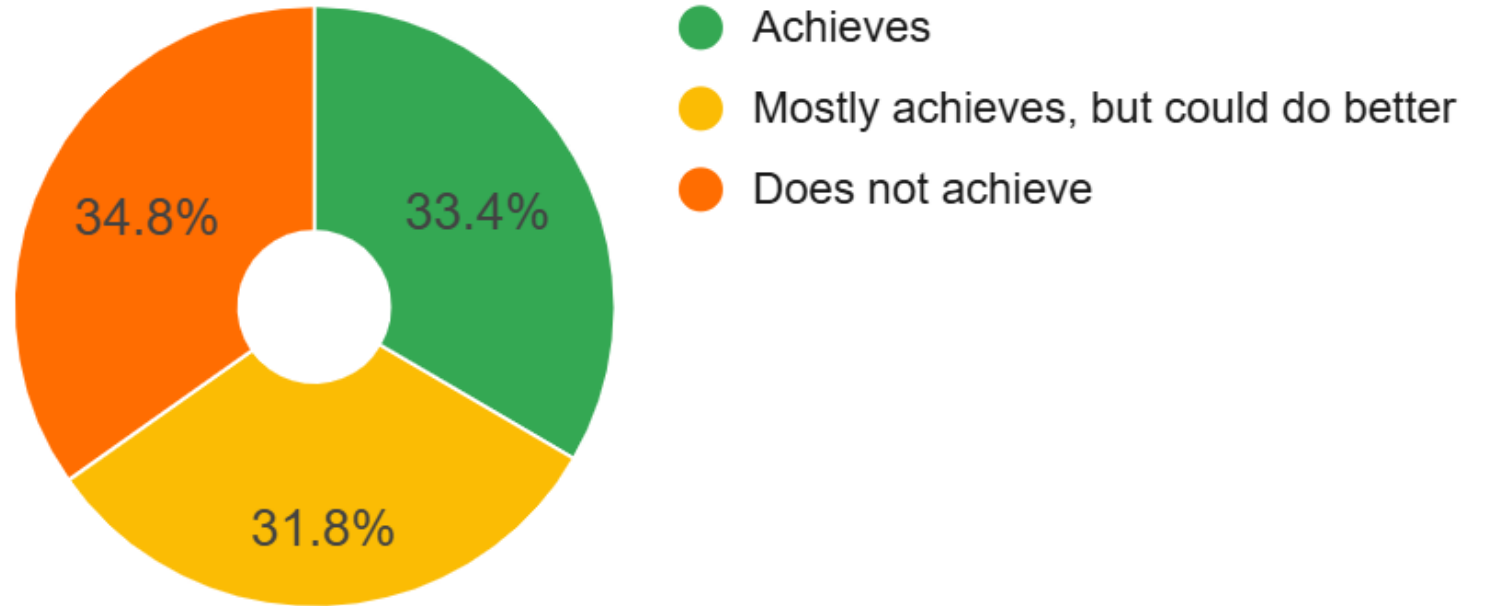
Goal # 4



- Achieves
- Mostly achieves, but could do better
- Does not achieve

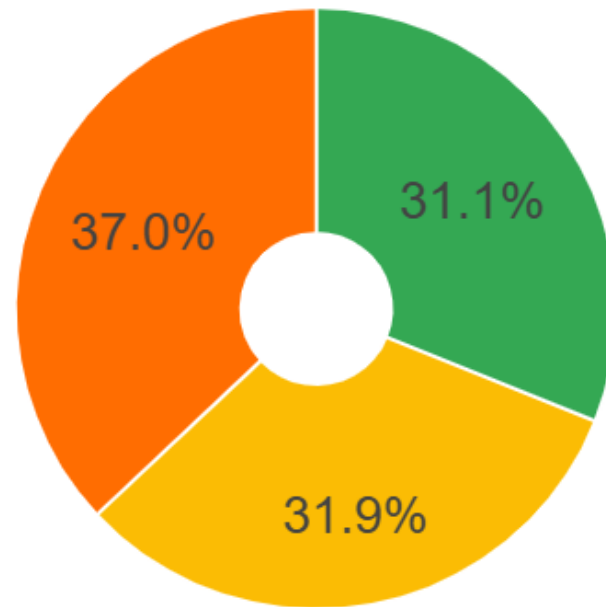
GOAL 5. DESIGN A SUSTAINABLE TRAIL SYSTEM THAT ADDRESSES IMPACTS OF UNAUTHORIZED RECREATION AND BALANCES ALLOWED USER EXPERIENCES WITH OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION.

Goal # 5



GOAL 6. PROVIDE
A VARIETY OF
EXPERIENCES TO
ACCOMMODATE
THE DESIRES OF
THE COMMUNITY.

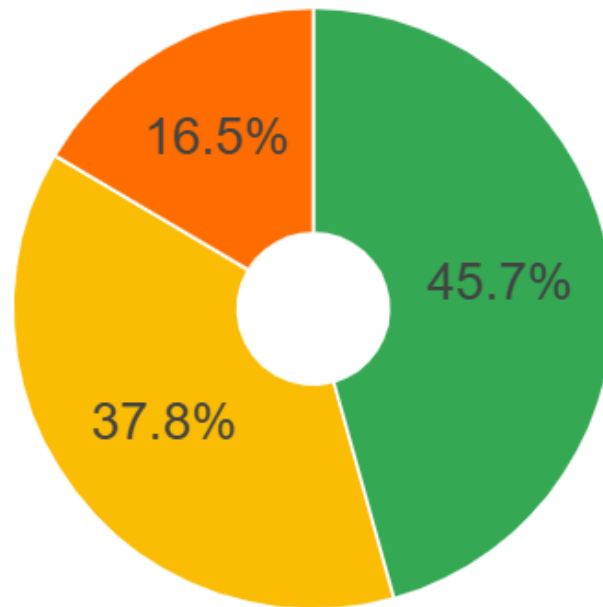
Goal # 6



- Achieves
- Mostly achieves, but could do better
- Does not achieve

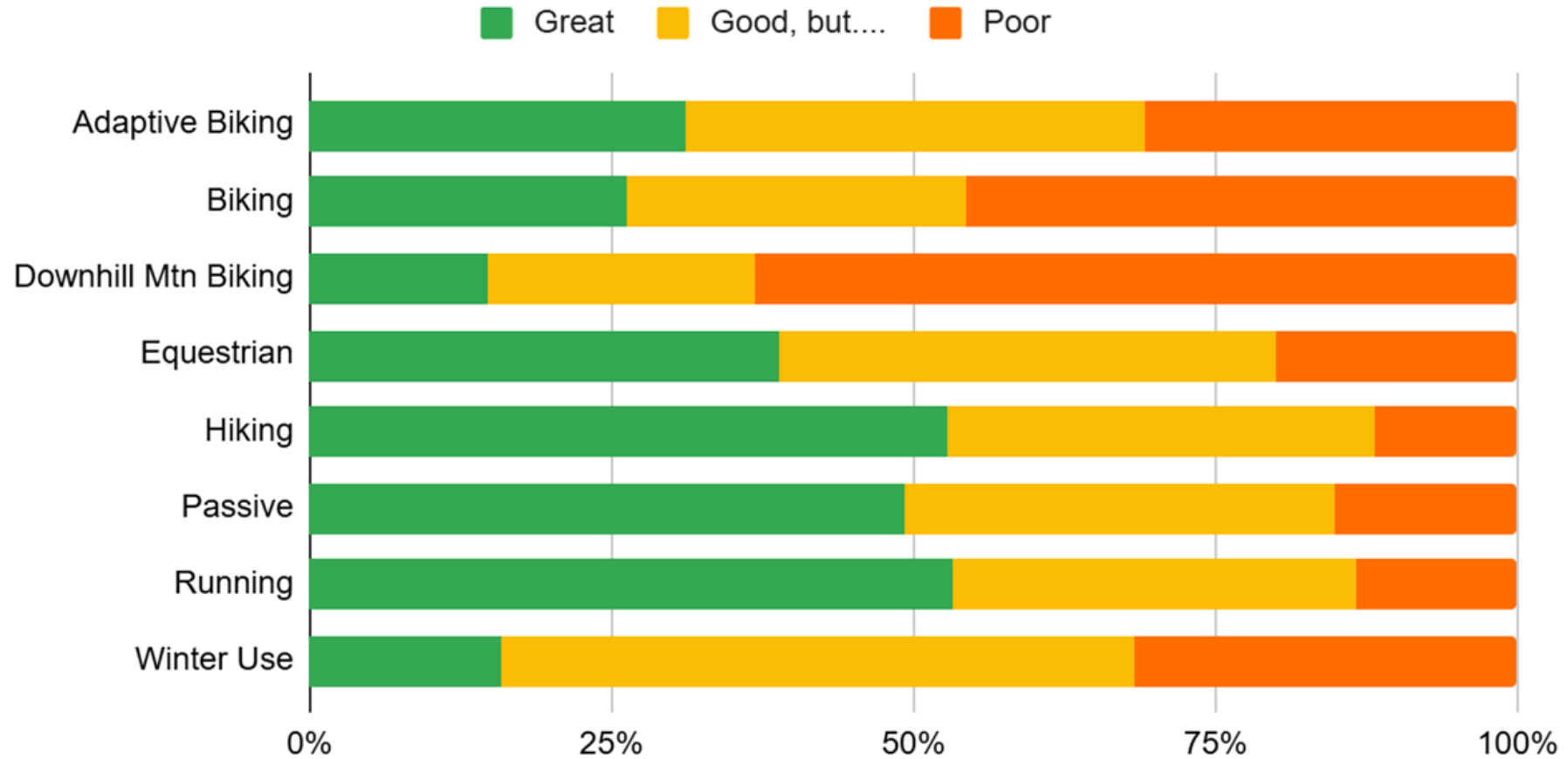
GOAL 7. IMPROVE SAFETY AND WAYFINDING WITH INCREASED SIGNAGE AND INFORMATION FOR THE FORMAL TRAIL SYSTEM.

Goal # 7



- Achieves
- Mostly achieves, but could do better
- Does not achieve

HOW WELL DOES THE TRAIL PLAN MEET YOUR DESIRED RECREATION EXPERIENCE?



KEY PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TAKEAWAY:

There Is A
Fundamental
Difference In How
People See
Observatory Mesa.

For some, it is a **quiet place of refuge for people and wildlife**, that should remain unchanged. Preserving the environment should take precedence over human interests in the area.

For others, it is a **high-quality place for outdoor recreation** in Flagstaff's backyard. Good trails on the Mesa are an overall positive for the community and for everyone who enjoys trails.

ADDITIONAL LAND MANAGER PERSPECTIVES

Arizona Game and Fish Department

- No concerns with proposed Trail Plan; no concerns with Hot Pockets (3.36)

Arizona State Parks and Trails

- No concerns with Trail alignments, no concern with Hot Pockets

Coconino National Forest

- *Matt McGrath and Patrick McGervey*

After review, the Department does not believe that the GOMA Trail Plan, including the adoption of the Hot Pockets trail, will have any significant impact on the wildlife and habitat on

ARIZONA

azgfd.gov | 928.774.5045

FLAGSTAFF OFFICE: 3500 S. LAKE MARY ROAD, FLAGSTAFF AZ 86005

GOVERNOR: KATIE HOBBS COMMISSIONERS: CHAIRMAN CLAY HERNANDEZ, TUCSON | MARSHA PETRIE SUE, SCOTTSDALE | JEFF BUCHANAN, PATAGONIA
JAMES E. GOUGHNOUR, PAYSON | TODD G. GEILER, PRESCOTT DIRECTOR: TOM P. FINLEY DEPUTY DIRECTOR: JOSHUA W. HURST

GOMA Trail Plan
December 6th, 2024
Page 2

Observatory Mesa. At present, no official trail system occurs on Observatory Mesa. As a consequence, many unauthorized trails have been created. Recreational trails, especially unauthorized trails, can have adverse effects on wildlife with trail density being a main factor. Currently, unauthorized trails on Observatory Mesa are dense. With an official trail system and proper signage, creation of new unauthorized trails will be minimal resulting in less impact on wildlife and habitat than present conditions.

Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy



Final - April 2020



Trail Development and Connectivity Recommendations

This category includes 74 recommendations for new trails, realignments, connections between existing trails and adoption or restoration of unauthorized trails

Notes: 1) Projects that did not receive consensus from the planning team for that area are indicated by an asterisk*. 2) Estimated trail miles per priority level are entirely conceptual. If projects move forward additional on-the-ground design and evaluation are needed.

Priority	ID#	Trail Recommendation Description
HIGH	16	Construct a new stacked loop system of directional, mountain bike-preferred trails west of Fort Tuthill to meet regional need and bolster the site as an event venue
	18	Construct a new accessible trail in Fort Tuthill County Park to address a regional shortcoming
	49	Construct a new stacked loop system on Observatory Mesa accessible from downtown Flagstaff and Thorpe Park to help address local demand and unauthorized trails
	13	Construct a new shared use trail connection from Fort Tuthill/Soldiers Trail to Rogers Lake to create longer loop opportunities
	15	Connect Woody Mountain Road/Forest Road 532 trailhead and south end of planned FUTS as part of Loop Trail
	27	Connect Fort Valley and Observatory Mesa to help link two popular areas
	83	Connect Loop Trail and Fay Canyon trail to provide loop opportunities and enhance usability of in area south of town
	130	Connect the Loop Trail and existing, de facto trailhead on Lake Mary Road recommended for development
	136	Connect Inner Basin, Lockett Meadow, and Waterline Road to help enable an "around the peaks" loop opportunity as well as improve access to Lockett Meadow
	9	Evaluate unauthorized trails in upper Fort Valley for closure and restoration to reduce impacts
	94	Realign the Arizona Trail from the top of Anderson Mesa to just below the rim to improve sustainability
	147	Realign Humphreys Trail where grades and conditions are unsustainable to reduce erosion and accommodate visitor use
	211	Realign Rocky Moto Trail off of pipeline between Moto and Secret Trails to improve sustainability
	7	Adopt Dogfood Engineer as a shared use nonmotorized system trail to help disperse use in the Schultz/Fort Valley

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Forest Plan Direction for the Project Area

Flagstaff Neighborwoods Management Area



- **Desired Conditions**

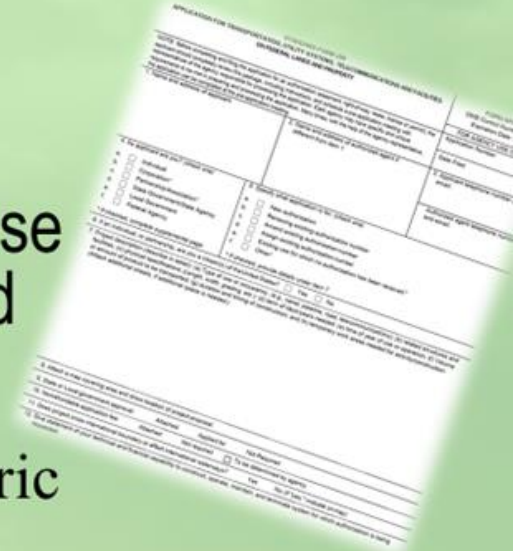
- An interconnected trail system is accessible through strategically located trailheads and connector trails. The National Forest System trail system connects to the Flagstaff Urban Trail System, Flagstaff Loop Trail, and/or Coconino County trails to provide continuous access to urban recreation opportunities.
- Many trails in this area provide easy to moderate recreation opportunities.

- **Objectives**

- Create three additional connections with the Flagstaff Urban Trail System, Flagstaff Loop Trail, and/or Coconino County trails within 10 years of plan approval.

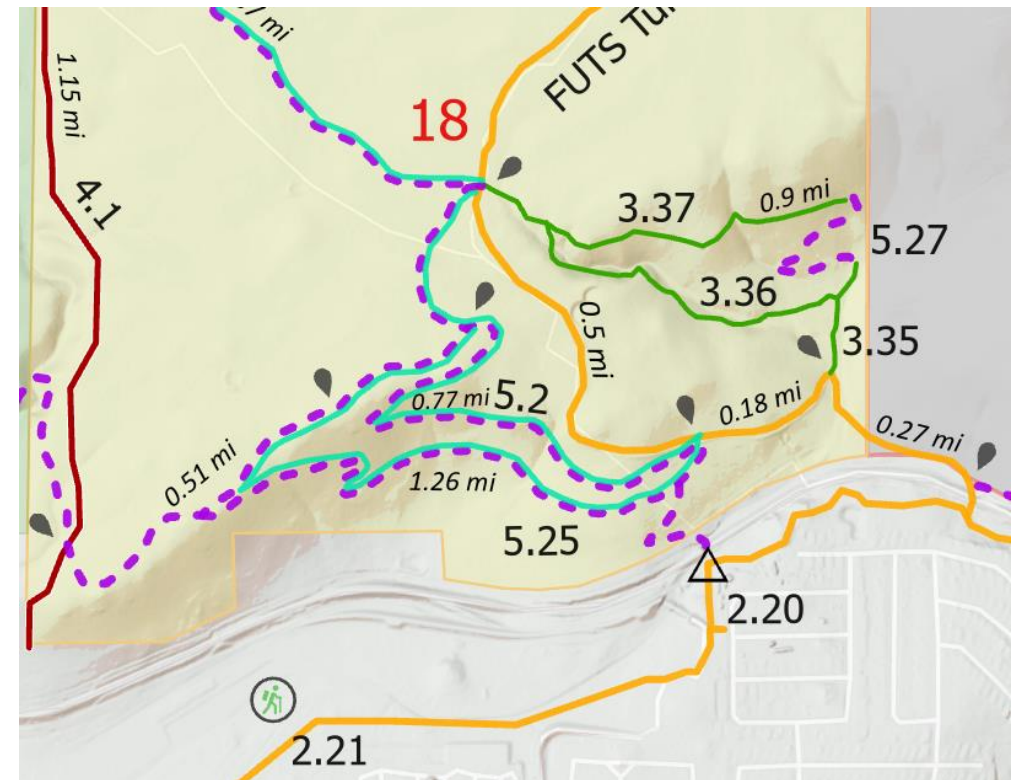
Process for Forest Service Acceptance

- **City of Flagstaff Applies for Special Use Permit**
 - After City Council approves trail plan, City applies for a Special Use Permit to “Construct, Operate, and Maintain” trails on Forest Land
- **Environmental Compliance**
 - Ensure compliance with Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation Act – current proposal don’t show initial concerns
 - NEPA – Likely Categorically Excluded (CE) from Documentation in an Environmental Assessment(EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
 - *Approval of special uses that require less than 20 acres of NFS Lands 36 CFR 220.6(e)(3)*
 - No additional public scoping anticipated – use City’s public participation to analyze public scoping
 - No Forest changes to City’s proposal (i.e. no increase or reduction of trails)
 - If all goes well - Release Decision Notice and issue City a Special Use Permit
 - Similar permit process took place for the Sheep’s Crossing FUTS Trail near Ponderosa Trails and Fort Tuthill



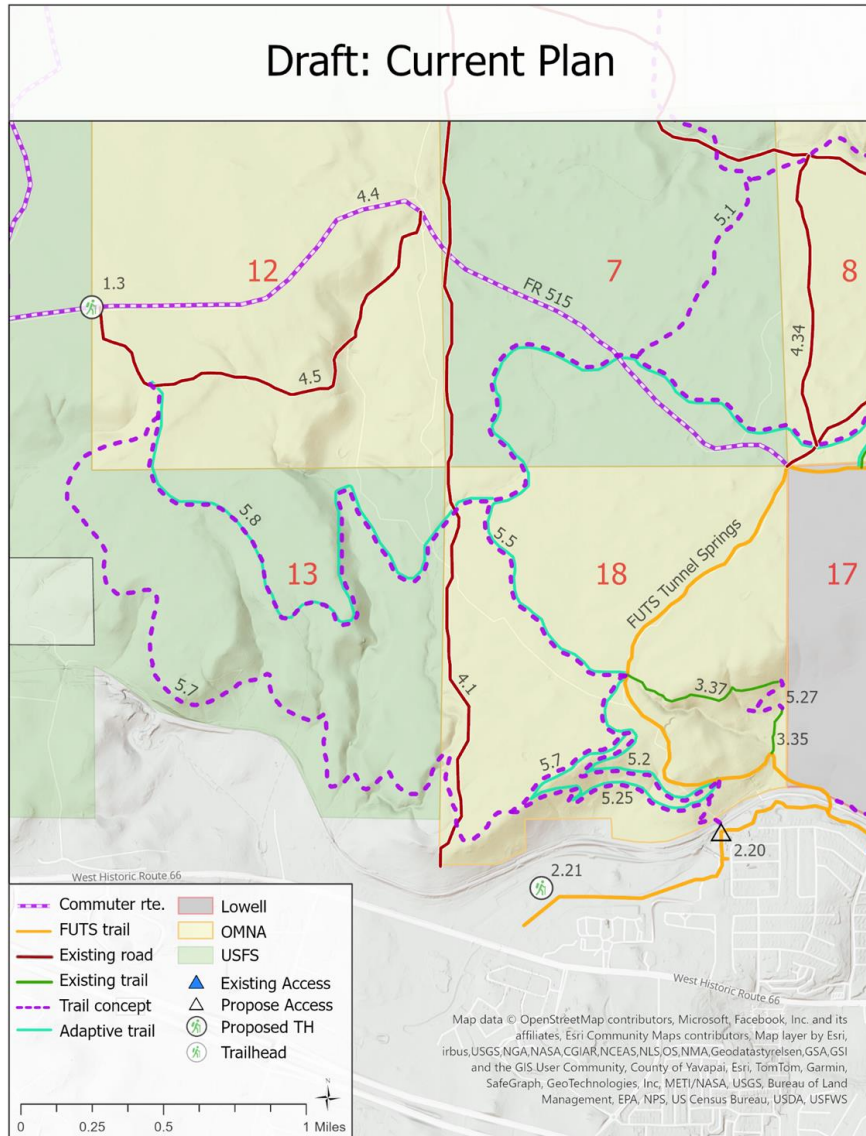
Trail Alignment 3.36 Hot Pockets

- **OSC Input:** Should the Trail Plan integrate Trail 3.36 (Hot Pockets)?
- **Staff considerations:**
 - Strong public support
 - Difficulty of closure
 - No habitat/conservation concerns from land managers

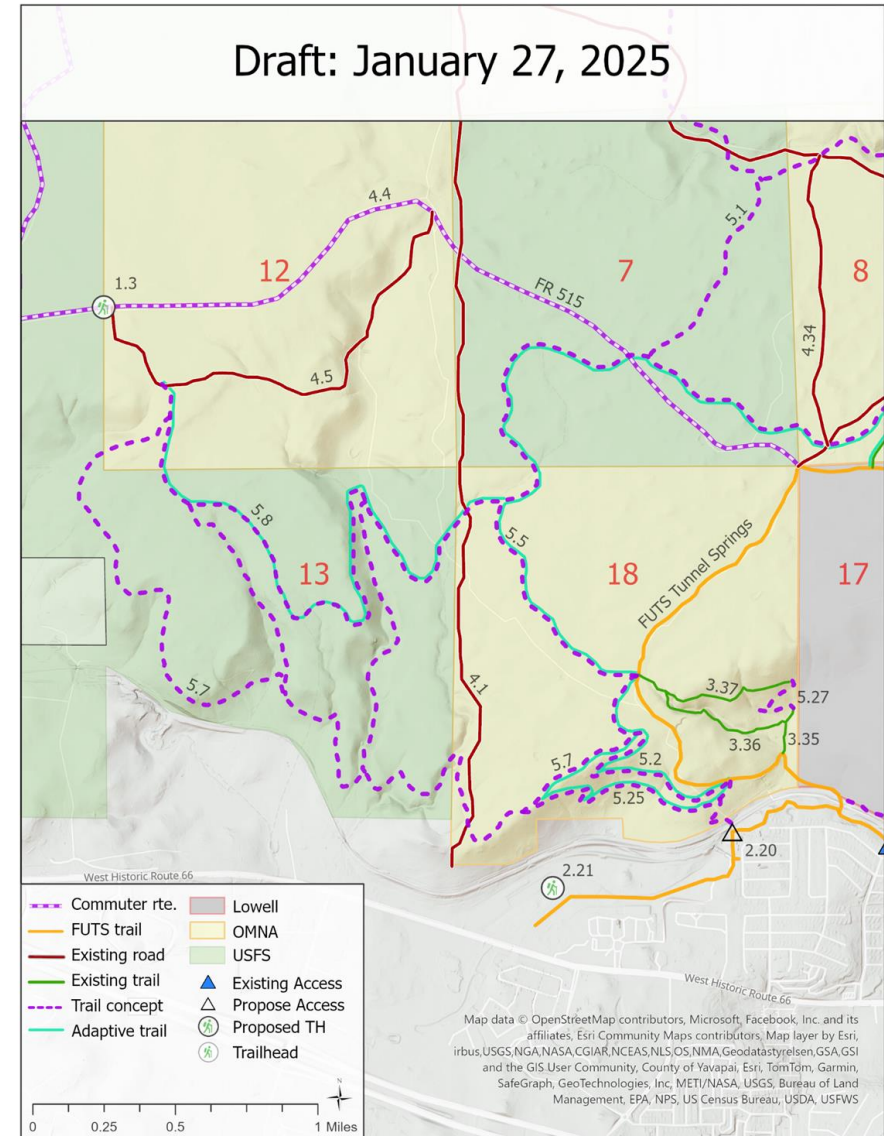


Mountain Bike-Optimized Trails

A. Keep plan as is



B. Add additional bike-optimized trail alignments



Trail Density

Low Density: In more rural, natural, or wilderness areas where conservation is a priority, trail densities can range from **1 to 3 miles** of trail per square mile. Lower density helps minimize environmental impact and preserves large, uninterrupted natural habitats.

Moderate Density: In more developed recreational areas, densities can range from **4 to 10 miles** of trail per square mile. This allows for a balanced mix of recreation infrastructure and environmental conservation.

High Density: In highly developed or urban recreational areas, densities can **exceed 10 miles** of trail per square mile. High densities are often seen in city parks or densely populated regions where recreational demand is high and space is limited.

Trail Density

Current Plan Draft:

January 27, 2025 Draft:

Total Planning Area Trail Density=

Total Planning Area Trail Density=

6.7 trail miles / square mile

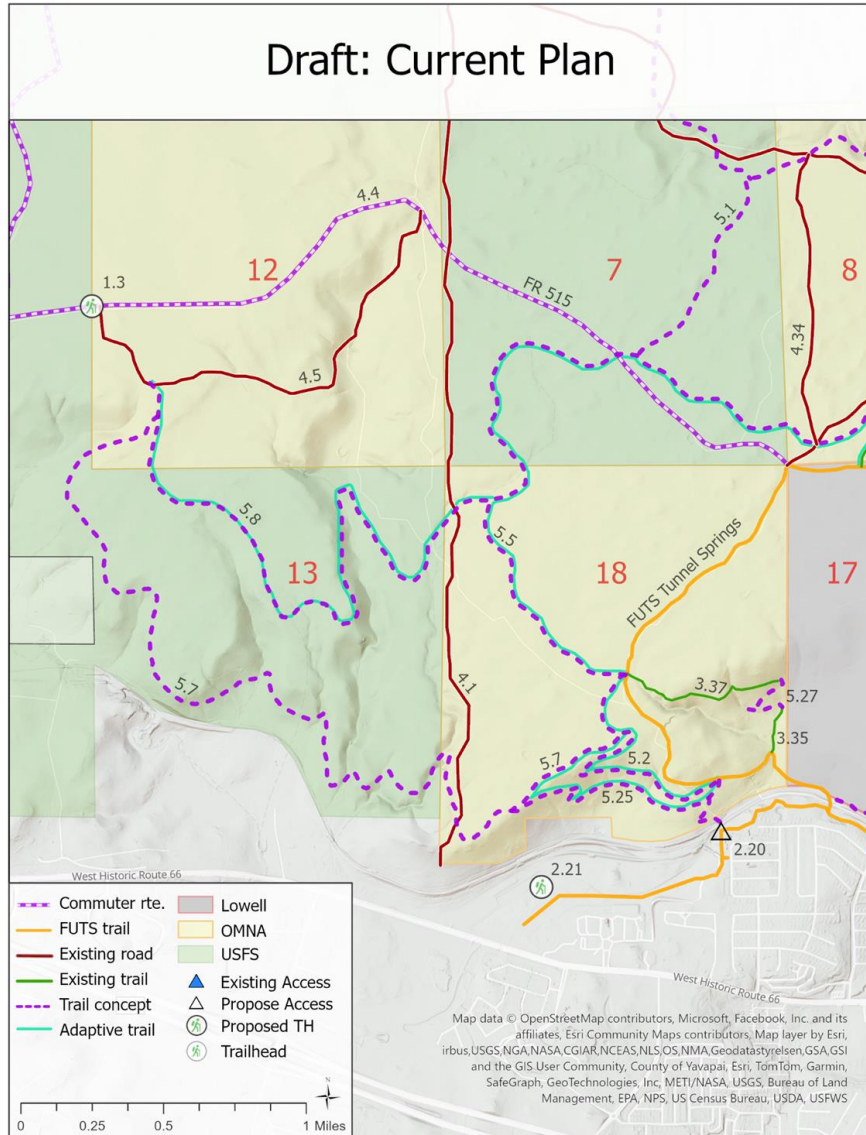
6.86 trail miles / square mile

- Sections 1, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 17, 18, 36
- Total road/trail length= 53.19 miles
- Total square miles= 7.94

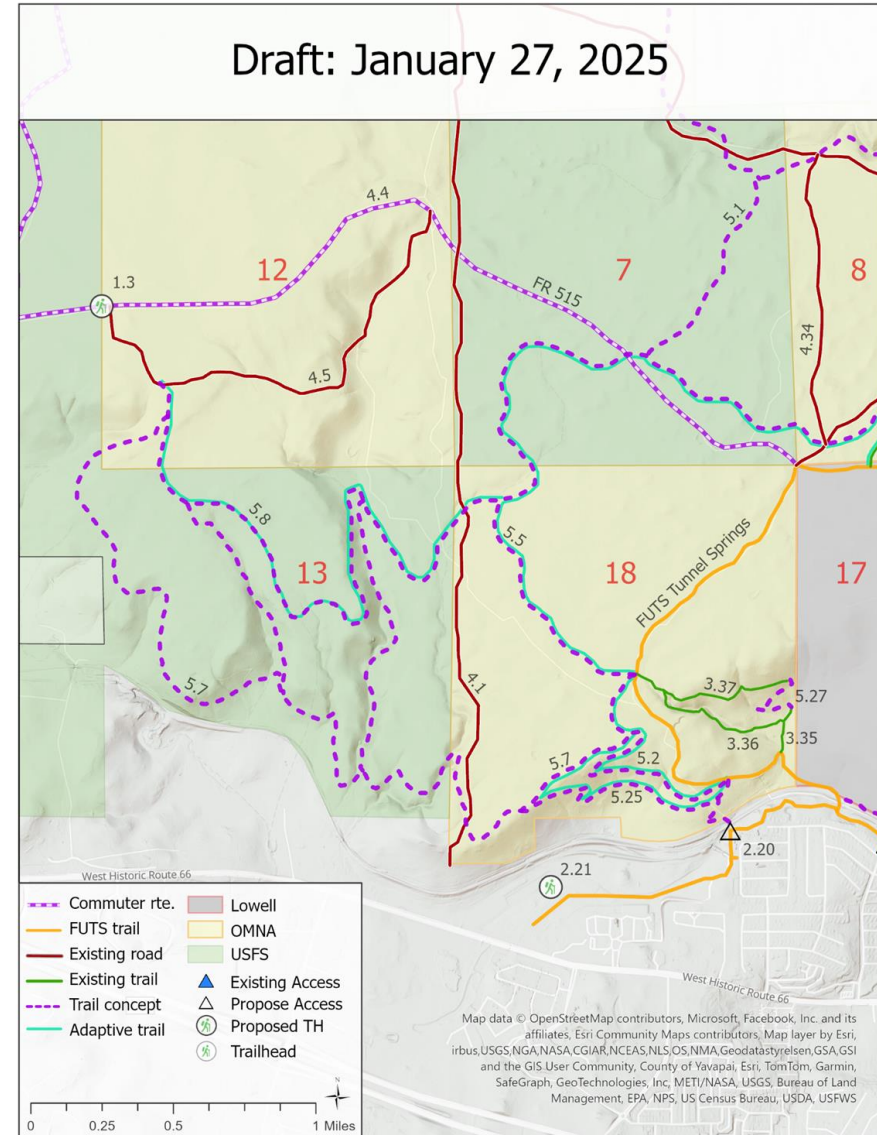
- Sections 1, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 17, 18, 36
- Total road/trail length= 61.78 miles
- Total square miles= 7.94

Mountain Bike-Optimized Trails

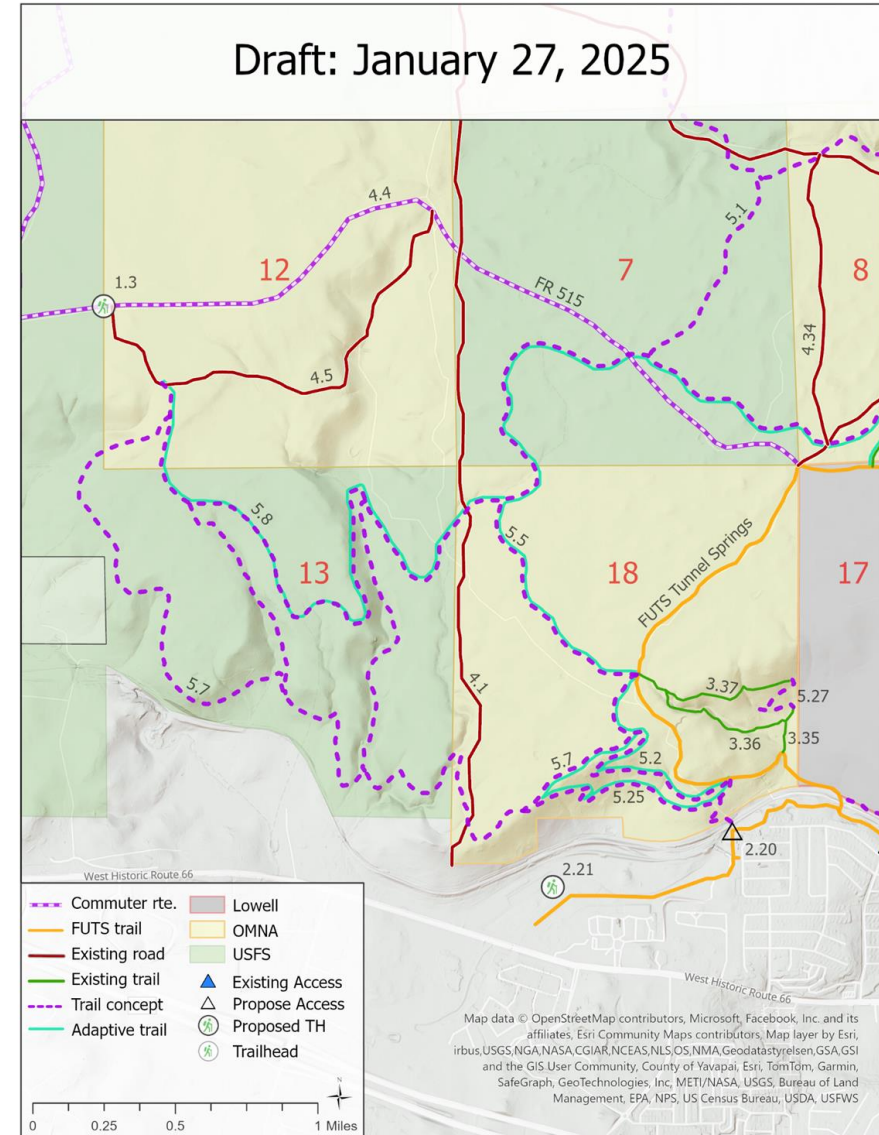
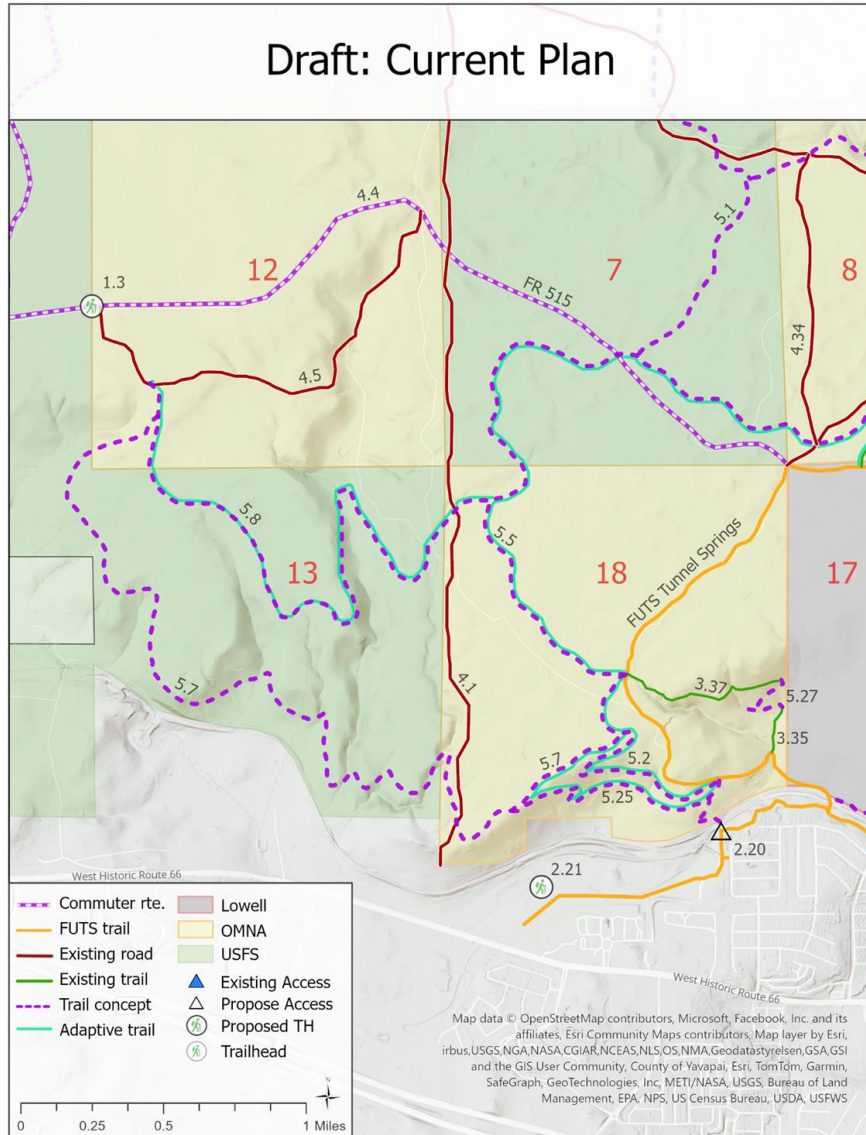
A. Keep plan as is



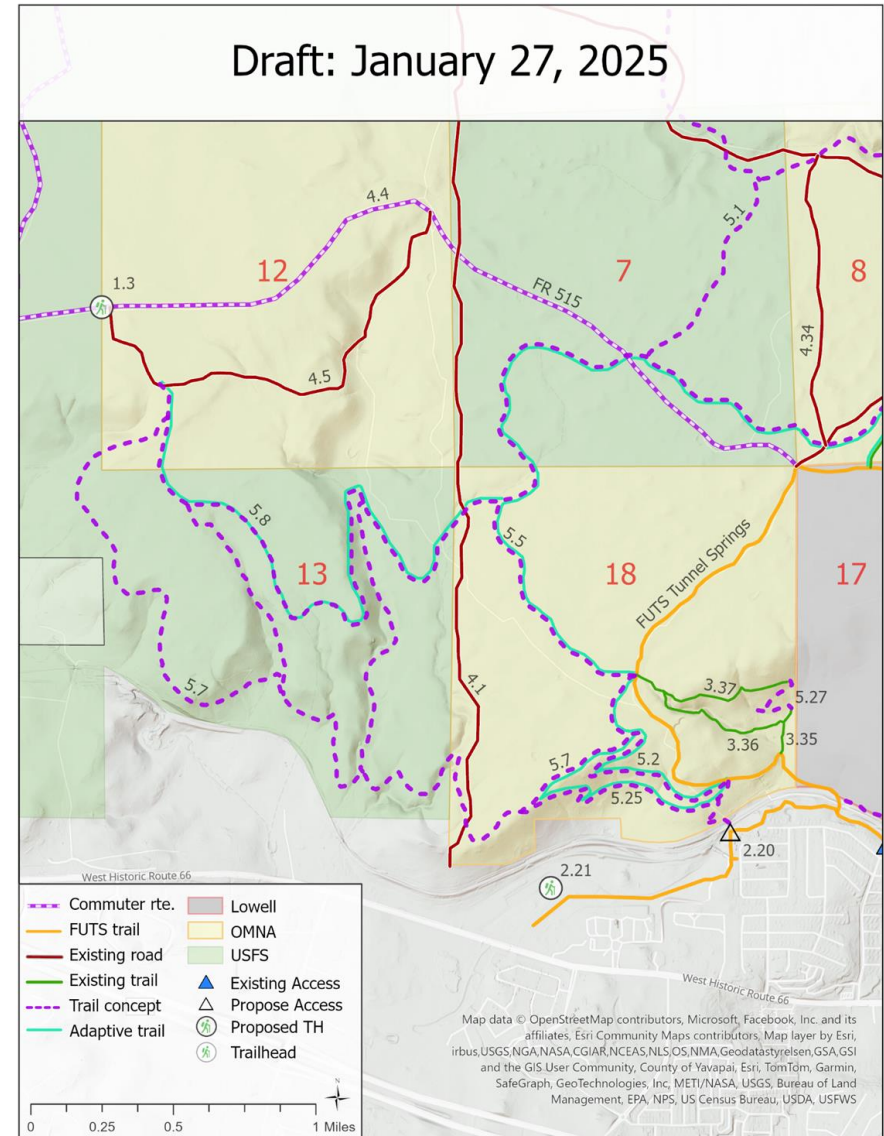
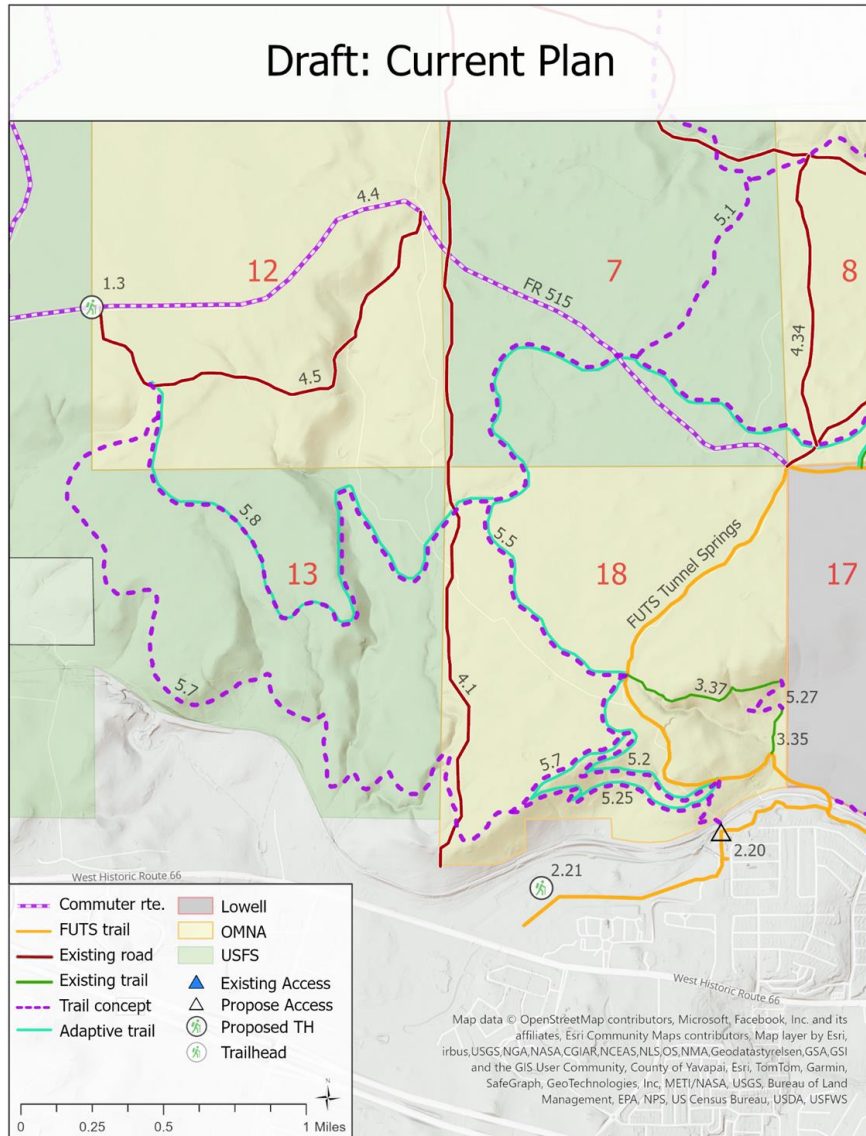
B. Add additional bike-optimized trail alignments



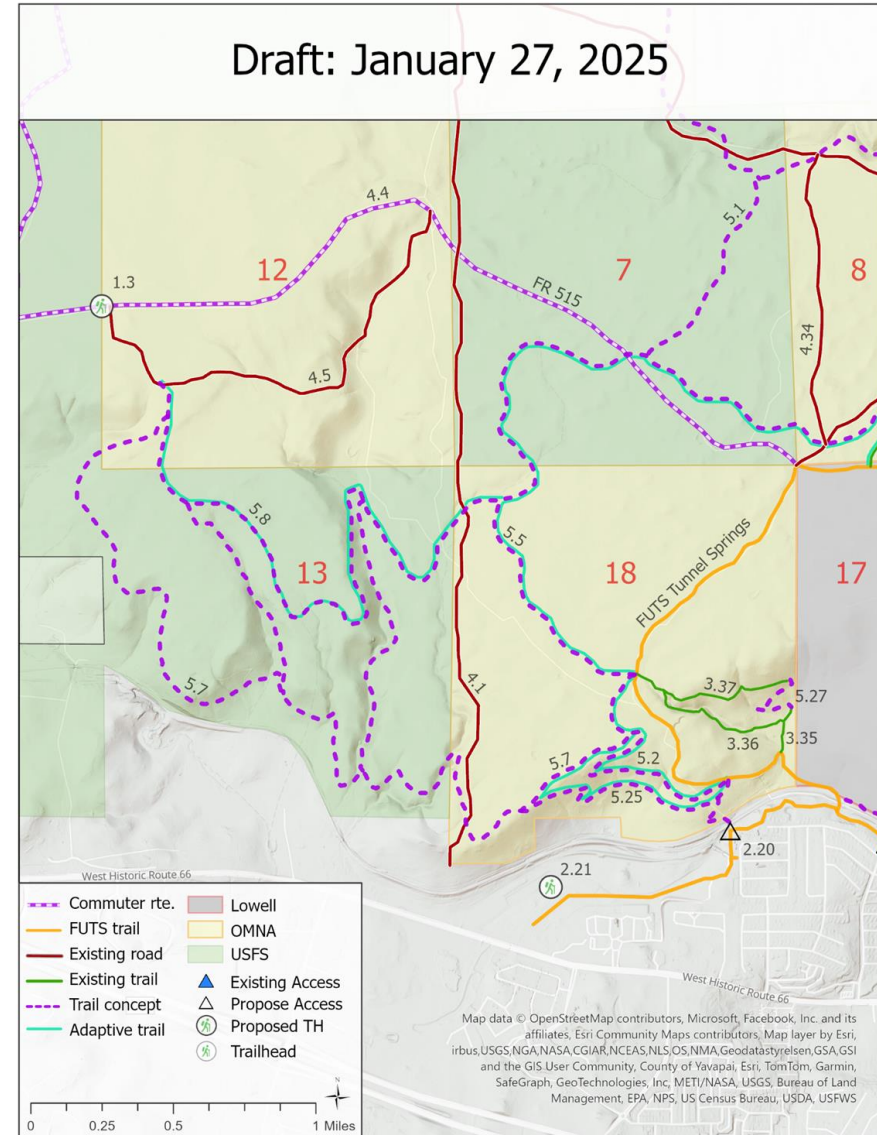
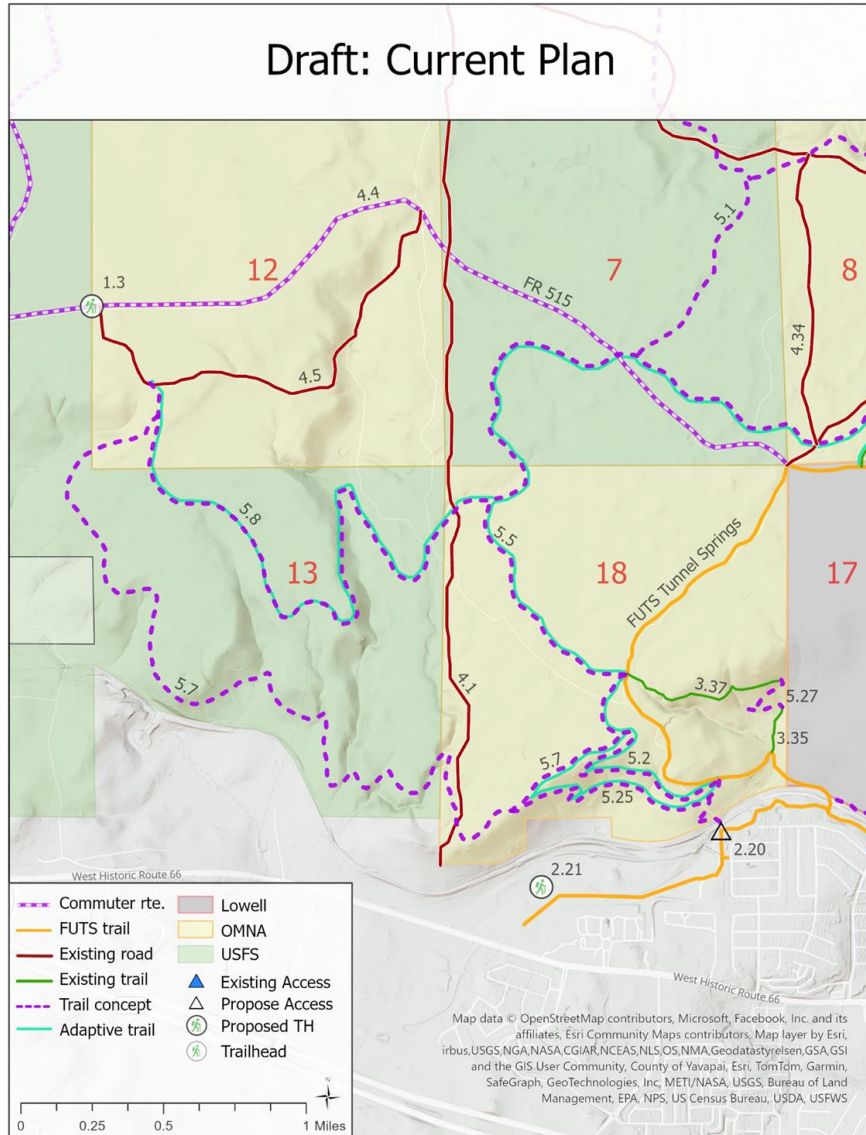
Commission Questions and Clarifications



Public Comments



Commission Discussion, Motions, and Voting



Trail Alignment 3.36 / Hot Pockets

Option A: Move to recommend that the GOMA trail plan be kept with alignment 3.36 / Hot Pockets identified for restoration in the final version for City Council review.

Option B: Move to recommend that the GOMA trail plan be updated to include alignment 3.36 in the final version for City Council review.

Mountain Bike-optimized Alignments

Option A: Move to recommend keeping the GOMA trail plan as it is and not including additional mountain bike-optimized trail alignments in the final version for City Council review.

Option B: Move to recommend updating the GOMA trail plan to include the two additional mountain bike-optimized trail alignments for inclusion in the final version for City Council review.

Overall Plan Recommendation for City Council

Option A: Move to recommend that the City Council consider the Greater Observatory Mesa Area Trail Plan for adoption and implementation as discussed.

Option B: Move to recommend that the City Council consider the Greater Observatory Mesa Area Trail Plan for adoption and implementation, *subject to ...*

THANK YOU

Open Space Section - PROSE
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Southwest Decision Resources
Mark Loeth
mark@swdresources.com

