

4.2 Guiding Principles

The guiding principles listed below are aspirational and intended to provide direction for future trail construction and maintenance practices on Eugene’s trail system and have been used to identify and prioritize the proposed trail network included in this plan. Full implementation of these principles is based on available funding.



Shared-use segment of the Ridgeline Trail

Principle #1: Provide an Outstanding User Experience

- Construct a sustainable, safe, high-quality, diverse, interesting, and scenic trail system that includes appropriate surfacing, adequate drainage, well-designed grade, and clarity of route.
- Provide trail loop options of varying lengths to provide a variety of route alternatives and improve system connectivity.
- Provide access to key viewpoints and vistas to highlight the local landscape and maintain these view areas through vegetation management.
- Provide access to points of interest such as unique geological features, rivers and streams, historic landmarks, and a range of native vegetation communities.
- Generally locate and align trails to maximize the experience of nature and minimize visual intrusion of urban/suburban development.
- Provide adequate support facilities including safe bicycle and auto parking at trailheads, way-finding signage and maps, benches, interpretive signage, lighting, restrooms, and drinking water.
- Where existing and proposed trail systems intersect roadways, especially those with high traffic volumes or speeds, ensure safe crossing by trail users through utilization of warning signage,

pedestrian medians, pedestrian crossing stripping, and other traffic calming and warning techniques as appropriate.

- Work with individual neighborhoods to identify and improve interesting walking routes that utilize available trails, paths, and sidewalks. Creating and publicizing a network of walking routes easily accessed from people’s homes will help to reduce the need to travel a great distance to access trails and will help promote exercise and public health.
- Integrate public art, temporary art installations, and interpretive pieces into the trail system in order to enhance user experience and interest.

Principle #2: Provide Trail System Connectivity

- Develop connector trails that provide direct bicycle and pedestrian access from neighborhoods, parks, public transit, schools, and parks onto the City’s major trail networks.
- Provide connections to regional trail systems found in areas such as Buford Recreation Area, Fern Ridge Wildlife Area, and the cities of Springfield and Coburg.
- Provide trail connections to the regional network of hard-surface shared-use paths (e.g. Willamette River and Fern Ridge paths).
- Where trail connections are not possible due to existing development patterns, designate alternative on-street routes that provide safe passage for bicyclists, walkers, and runners. These designated on-street connections should include sidewalks, bicycle facilities (lanes or routes), safe intersection crossings, and pedestrian-scale directional signage.

Principle #3: Increase Equity and Access to the Trail System

- Plan trails so the geographic equity of the system is increased.
- Plan and improve the trail system so that underserved user groups have more opportunities to use the trail system.
- Plan and improve the trail system to provide additional trail options for users with limited mobility including access to points of interest and viewpoints.
- Locate trails and trail access points so they are accessible by public transportation where possible. Work jointly with Lane Transit District to provide access to key trailheads and parks with trails and make this information easily available to the public.

Principle #4: Accommodate a Variety of Users and Disperse Use to Alleviate Crowding

- Expand the trail system in order to provide more user options and help alleviate crowding on heavily used trails and paths.
- Develop shared-use access along all major trail corridors (e.g., Ridgeline corridor) for a variety of non-motorized trail users including pedestrians, runners, and mountain bikers where feasible. This could be achieved through a combined approach of developing carefully designed shared-use trail segments (bicycles, pedestrians, and runners on same trail), constructing parallel segregated-use trail segments (parallel single-track trail open to mountain bikes), or providing parallel on-road bicycle bypasses where feasible. Implement design features such as chokes and turns to limit bicycle speeds and improved sight lines to help reduce user conflicts on shared-use trail segments.

- Provide soft-surface running and pedestrian trails parallel to the heavily used Willamette River path system where feasible to increase capacity and to help alleviate user conflicts.
- Provide designated running trails throughout the community. These designated trails would be closed to bicycles in order to avoid user conflicts and to limit impacts to these specially surfaced trails.
- Provide special-use trails for a variety of user groups with a range of skill levels and ages. Trail types could include:
 - Water Trails (see Section 5.5)
 - Single-Track Mountain Bike Trails (see Section 5.6)
 - Designated Running Trail (see Section 5.7)
 - Nature Play Trails (see Section 5.8)
 - Barrier-Free Trails (see Section 5.9)
 - Explorer Trails (see Section 5.10)
 - Equestrian Trails (see Section 5.11)
- Utilize and maintain navigable waterways in and around Eugene for use as water trails with support facilities such as boat put-in/take-out areas, signage, life vest loan stations, and route maps. Future improvements could include removal of safety hazards and integration of a white-water skills area. The McKenzie River, the Main Stem, Coast Fork, and Middle Fork of the Willamette River are currently designated as segments of the *Willamette River Water Trail* and the Canoe Canal in Alton Baker Park is utilized by paddlers. Amazon Creek currently has limited use, but could potentially be utilized as an urban water trail in the future.

Principle #5: Identify and Acquire Land for Key Trail Corridors

- Conduct detailed site analysis to determine preferred routes and alternative alignments for proposed new trail corridors and connector trails to help inform future land acquisition.
- Work with land owners to secure necessary access easements or property to accommodate planned trails. Land and easements should be obtained through voluntary participation of property owners.
- Work collaboratively with other regional open space providers and land trusts to accommodate proposed trails and to plan for connections to other nearby trails and paths.

Principle #6: Limit Negative Impacts

- Carefully locate and align trails to limit direct negative impacts to sensitive natural areas and rare plant and animal populations and carefully align and cluster new trail networks that fall within larger natural area parks so that impacts to the highest quality habitat areas are minimized.
- Where possible, locate and align trails and trailheads in a way that maximizes privacy of adjacent property owners and avoids direct sight lines of trails and related facilities from private homes.
- Locate, design, and monitor trailheads and associated parking areas to maximize public safety and reduce parking conflicts with neighboring property owners.
- In larger parks such as Spencer Butte and Suzanne Arlie, consider the use of park hosts to help monitor and reduce public safety issues and to provide information to trail users.
- Block and eliminate undesigned trails to reduce natural resource impacts, avoid user confusion, and to protect public safety.
- Utilize a cost effective and fiscally sound approach when expanding the trail network by:

- Increasing the extent of the trail system only as far as it can be safely and effectively maintained by staff and volunteers;
- Locating and developing trails in a way that minimizes implementation and construction costs; and
- Locating and developing trails in a way that minimizes long-term maintenance and management costs.

Principle #7: Construct Sustainable Trails and Maintain Trails at a High Standard

- Locate, construct, and maintain Eugene’s trail system at a high standard with the goal of limiting ongoing maintenance problems and reducing risk of injury to trail users.
- Establish a sufficient dedicated operational budget that is able to adequately support routine trail maintenance activities and increase budget over time as new trails are constructed. Routine trail maintenance is important for maintaining an outstanding user experience and for preventing major problems such as washouts from occurring.
- Evaluate existing and future trails using the Universal Trail Assessment Process or similar method, which provides a standard methodology for documenting trail conditions such as slope, surface characteristics surfacing materials, and clearance. This information can be used for both planning maintenance activities and informing trail users of conditions and level of accessibility.
- Utilize an adaptive management model to gauge the success of trail system improvements and management efforts and adjust future maintenance and construction practices as necessary.
- Work jointly with trail user groups such as the *Obsidians*, the *Disciples of Dirt*, and neighborhood volunteers to maintain trails and promote responsible trail use.
- Regularly monitor trail usage by collecting and compiling data at key locations along Eugene’s trail system. Data can be collected by volunteer counters or through the installation of low-cost infrared electronic counters or similar systems.

Principle #8: Strengthen and Maintain Broad Support for Trails

- Conduct outreach and form partnerships with a variety of existing and potential trail user groups to solicit input on potential trail improvements and increase partnerships with volunteer groups to help build and maintain trails.
- Develop partnership agreements with user groups enabling them to build and maintain trails under City supervision and to City standards.
- Work collaboratively with neighborhood groups to identify and improve recreational trail routes in specific neighborhoods and improve access to from neighborhoods to the broader trail network.
- Highlight and promote awareness and use of Eugene’s trail network through public outreach, installation of directional signage, creation of maps and trail guides, and promotion through trail-oriented public events such as runs, rides, and guided hikes.
- Prioritize projects that have the highest potential for use and level of support by the community (see Prioritization Criteria in section 5.3.1).
- Consider expanding the City’s *Park Ambassadors Program* or seek volunteer trail guides or docents to provide information and suggestions to trail users, to help monitor trail use, to enforce park rules, and to record maintenance needs. This program could focus on higher use areas or days when heavy trail use is occurring.