

Interested public attends project open house in Glenrock and Douglas

Public open house meetings for the Box Elder Canyon trail proposal were conducted Oct. 6 in Glenrock and Oct. 7 in Douglas. Combined attendance at the two meetings was approximately 50, including County Commissioners Robert G. Short, Tony Lehner and Jim Willox.

Meeting attendees were greeted by Commissioner Short, who gave some background on trails that were proposed by members of the public. He advised that nothing has been developed, and there are not yet any plans to proceed. Finally, Commissioner Short expressed that the reason for the public meetings was specifically to gather input as to whether trails should be developed in the County Park. Consultant Todd Thibodeau (TPT Trails LLC), contracted by the county to assess the area for the possible trail system, provided additional background and information.

Attendees were divided into smaller groups at tables for discussion and brainstorming, with a facilitator assigned to record comments and ideas. Attendees were encouraged to express their thoughts and opinions freely and write their comments on "table top" paper sheets. "Potential Questions" were provided as 'conversation starters'.

Nearly all written comments collected at the Glenrock meeting favored proceeding with development of a trail system. Ideas were wide-ranging, with some common themes being a trail into and out of the bottom of canyon, the need for sanitation facilities, the feasibility and need for a bridge to access the East side, how camping and/or yurts might tie into a trails plan, and the need to make the county park more accessible for persons with disabilities. Participants also talked about state-county cooperation, particularly given the county park's proximity to Duncan Ranch, the existing trail system there and the ability to connect trails together.

In Douglas, written comments covered much of the same ground as Glenrock, and discussion was generally in favor of proceeding with a trails plan. However, some of the attendees were opposed to any development of the county park, and if a plan were to be implemented, such development should be very limited.

Comments received via Box Elder trail plan web site

A great majority of attendees (more than 85%) at the public meetings expressed support for trails. Comments received via the web site have been smaller majority (greater than 65%), in favor of trail development.

As of Oct. 20, 43 commenters want some sort of trail system for a variety of reasons, including enhanced recreation opportunities for residents and visitors alike, to make safer access for families and folks with disabilities, access to the creek and the possibility of economic benefit for the surrounding communities. Some posit that well-designed and durable trails improve the landscape, protect habitat by encouraging human usage along established travel corridors and encourage proper use including 'pack it in – pack it out' philosophy where trash is concerned.

Conversely, 21 commenters expressed opposition to concept of a trail system. Reasons include their opinion that the park needs to be kept in a wild state and a fear that development will degrade the perceived wilderness aspect of the canyon and bring an unwanted increase in visitation beyond current numbers. Some questioned whether the cost of development can be justified. Other fears include inappropriate commercialization of the resource and negative impacts to wildlife.

This summary of comments does not include every topic covered by commenters, but encompasses the majority of themes presented by these folks.

Thank you to participants and interested parties

Thank you to all who have participated in this very important process. As we continue to evaluate the potential project, we will update this page with any additional information. Please note that we are not publishing exact comments that were submitted to this page as we did not inform anyone submitting comments that they would be made public.