

Appendix C: Public Outreach Process Detail

Part 2. The Interconnect Challenge

Purpose:

The purpose of undertaking a community-wide tour, sponsored by different user groups was three-fold; (1) allow County staff to better understand the challenges and possibilities of creating interconnected communities through parks and trails, (2) provide user groups the chance to better understand each other's needs by working together to problem solve, and (3) to highlight the recreation amenities and needs of almost every community in the County as well as ten different recreation user groups. A map of the route is provided below.

Research Design:

The Interconnect Challenge was designed to circumnavigate Gallatin County in one week using as many modes of recreational travel as possible. The purpose was to address the various constraints of Gallatin County recreation, such as large distances between communities, multiple land management agencies, and conflicting recreation users. The effort sought to answer the questions: How feasible is it to navigate between the eight major communities in Gallatin County, which spans 49 miles east to west and 123 miles north to south, through parks and trails? How do the various agencies involved in public land management interact? How can user groups, each with different recreation needs, work together? The project included a wide variety of user groups and organizations (See Sampling). A Feedback Form was created to gather input from individuals, which asked questions about parking, trail/route conditions, physical obstacles, shelter, needed improvements, and technical ability. In addition, staff chronicled each day of the event through a blog, which documented various recreation issues across the county through video and text (www.gallatincountyinterconnect.blogspot.com).

Sampling:

The sampling plan targeted various recreation user groups as potential participants in the "Challenge" as well as several land use management agencies as collaborators and guides. Contacts were made with the following organizations:

User Groups:	Land Use Managers:
The Backcountry Horsemen Citizens for Balanced Use G.A.S./Intrinsic Cycling Team Gallatin Equestrian Partnership (GalleP) Gallatin Saddle and Harness Club Gallatin Valley Bike Club Gallatin Valley Land Trust Gallatin Valley Wind Drinkers Grizzly Outfitters Grizzly Mountain Bike Racing Team H2Obsession Masters Velo Cycling Team Montana Mountain Bike Alliance Mystery Ranch Summit Bike and Ski Streamline and Skyline Bus Services Wounded Warrior Veteran Program Yellowstone Foundation Bus	Gallatin National Forest Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Belgrade Planning Three Forks Mayor Manhattan Mayor Bozeman Mayor Big Sky Community Corporation West Yellowstone Mayor West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce Big Sky Search and Rescue Gallatin County Road and Bridge Dept. Gallatin County GIS Dept. Gallatin County Open Space and Parks Dept. Gallatin County Planning Dept.

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Participant Demographics:

A total of forty-nine participants from around the country and a variety of communities throughout Montana participated. The following is a list of where people were from:

Gallatin County	Montana	Other States
Belgrade, MT. (2) Big Sky, MT. (6) Bozeman, MT. (28) Gallatin Gateway, MT. (1)	Billings, MT. (2) Pompey's Pillar, MT. (2)	Lexington, KY. (1) Malden, MO. (1) New York, NY. (1) Medical Lake, WA. (1) Ft. Belvoir, VA. (1) Quantico, VA. (1) Mt. Green, VT. (1) Nashville, TN. (1)

Limitations:

Several constraints limited the participation and, therefore, data collection from the Interconnect Challenge. Due to the time of year, summer-based recreation was the primary focus, though comments regarding winter activities were gathered from some of the participants. Small groups were selected due to the time commitment and route challenges, with an average group size of two to four participants, with the exception of the whitewater section, which had nineteen participants.

Data Collection:

Due to the technical aspect of the course and logistics, those who chose to participate were typically experts in their activity. As a result, the participants were able to contribute authoritative knowledge based on years of experience in their particular recreational pursuit. The information gathered by staff was provided through feedback forms and through direct observations. Feedback forms were collected from every participant. The responses were summarized and posted on the County website. A follow up report and picture CD was sent to every participant at the end of the event.

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Map of Interconnect Challenge Route:



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Staff Observations:

1. The primary use of parks and trails in Gallatin County is for recreation.
 - a) A transportation plan for the County could address a broader range of issues.
2. The long distances between communities and the rural location of towns make physical connections difficult in Gallatin County.
 - a) Urban and Suburban Trails are trails that serve both transit and recreation and connect nearby communities and area parks and spur trails. These types of trails may be appropriate in areas such as Manhattan to Three Forks or Belgrade to Bozeman.
 - b) Criteria for Trail Establishment should be developed as part of the updated parks and trails plan.
3. Transit is critical.
 - a) Gallatin County's rural areas are potentially where transit systems are most needed. Many of the rural areas in the Gallatin Valley are where popular recreational areas exist (Big Sky, West Yellowstone, Three Forks). Tourism may also benefit from a rural transit system.
 - b) Unfortunately, the large distances between towns could make a rural public transportation system prohibitively expensive. More information about ridership and motivational factors would lead to a better cost/benefit analysis of a rural transit system in relation to recreational users.
 - c) Expanding the relationship between existing transit systems in the County may be one way to improve ridership, better accommodate tourists, and increase travel safety and cost effectiveness for commuters.
 - d) Recreation should be part of transit planning-
 - i. It can increase access to recreation for youth and elderly and address health concerns.
 - ii. It can potentially better serve tourism.
 - iii. It could lead to less parking area requirements in subdivision and site plan review, which in turn may result in a higher net amount of land in parks/rec. areas.
 - iv. If trails, parks, and transit are better integrated it could reduce traffic congestion and increase the safety of pedestrian users.
 - v. It is likely that as the Gallatin Valley grows, offering park/trail/transit services on a level appropriate to each community's needs will continue to be important.
 - e) Private sector benefits to recreation-oriented transit should be explored
4. Physical park and trail connections will not be achieved without first better addressing user group conflicts.
 - a) One of the most useful aspects of the Interconnect Challenge was the collaborative nature of the event, which sought to involve as many user groups as possible.
 - b) The participants and the route allowed the specific needs of each user group to be highlighted and better understood.
 - c) The event not only showed some of the conflicts between user groups, but it also demonstrated ways they are complementary.
 - d) It is unlikely there will be enough resources to build all the infrastructure and improvements needed to accommodate every user group's specialized demands. Facilities that accommodate a broad variety of uses will therefore be necessary. If user groups don't work together to ensure new facilities are built and maintained, the resources needed to complete them will most likely be unavailable.

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- e) The Interconnect Challenge laid the foundation for different user groups to begin cooperatively planning future recreation needs.
 - f) The current lack of exchange between different users may be resolved by a yearly event to share concerns.
 - g) Improving education, involvement, and information sharing could benefit both residents and visitors.
5. Areas of Concern:
- a) Weeds
 - b) Funding
 - c) Maintenance
 - d) Safety standards
 - i. Location and design of trails and parks
 - ii. Intersections
 - iii. Parking
 - iv. Vandalism & trespass
 - e) Amount of current and projected future use of roads for recreation purposes
 - f) Establishing a number value on demand for Parks and Trails

Participant Observations:

- h) Pathway links between trailheads, curb breaks and signage would improve safety.
- i) Create trails along rivers.
- j) Be sure to think of trailers when planning parking areas.
- k) Trails along roads are noisy and unsafe. Trails should be located away from roads. If a trail must be located along a roadway it should have a wide enough shoulder.
- l) Trail maintenance and infrastructure like bridges and culverts are important. (A Volunteer Trail Crew was mentioned several times.)
- m) Having tree cover is a plus in some areas, other areas should remain open.
- n) Access in wilderness areas: It would be nice to have more access for everyone.
- o) Good maps improve navigation as well as adequate trail marking.
- p) Horse Traffic Signs would be great.
- q) Create a bike trail from Bozeman to Belgrade, even to Three Forks. Create a bike trail from Story Hill to the "M".
- r) It would be wonderful to have a bike/ped./equestrian trail from S. Cottonwood Road to 19th, then connecting to Hyalite. So many people use S. 19th, Cottonwood, Hyalite Roads for biking, horseback riding, running. This would be a perfect area to make trails for commuters or recreationalists. When driving Cottonwood Road to get to the trailhead I had to pass a least half a dozen bikes in a 6 mile stretch.
- s) A trail connecting all the canyons along the Sourdough, Hyalite, Cottonwood, Little Bear area would be awesome