



## ELDORADO CANYON TO WALKER RANCH CONNECTION FEASIBILITY STUDY

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POSAC meeting  
Dec. 20, 2018



A feasibility study was conducted to consider opportunities for a multi-use trail between Eldorado Canyon State Park and Walker Ranch Open Space.

The purpose of tonight's open house is to present the findings and preliminary recommendations.

The feasibility study is supported by three partner agencies – Boulder County, the City of Boulder and the Colorado Parks and Wildlife. It is co-funded by Boulder County Parks & Open Space (BCPOS) and the City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) departments. The local agencies are working in partnership with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Eldorado Canyon State Park on the study.

## Land Ownership and Management

### Eldorado Canyon State Park

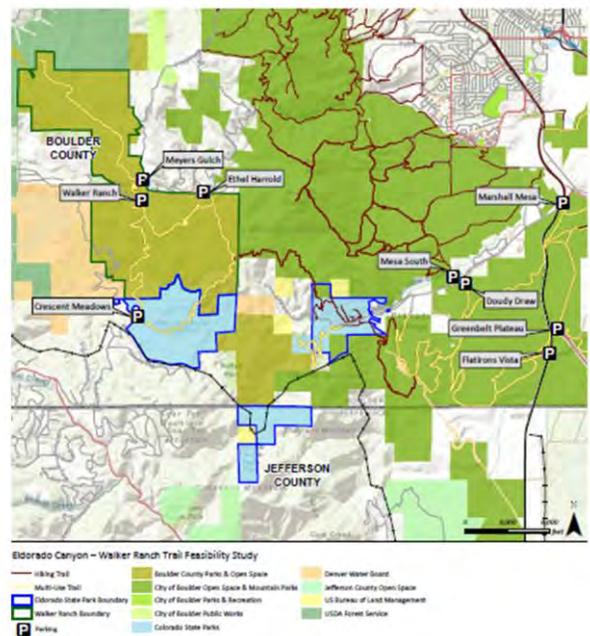
- Eldorado Springs gate
- Crescent Meadows
- Trails within ECSP

### City of Boulder Open Space

- South Boulder trail network
- Eldorado Canyon Trail

### Boulder County Open Space

- Walker Ranch Open Space
- BLM South area



Located in south-central Boulder County, Eldorado Canyon State Park and Walker Ranch Open Space are part of a broad landscape of publicly-owned, protected lands in the South Boulder Creek watershed.

The three partner agencies each own and manage public lands within the feasibility study area

## Trail Feasibility Study Process with Partner Agencies and Consultants

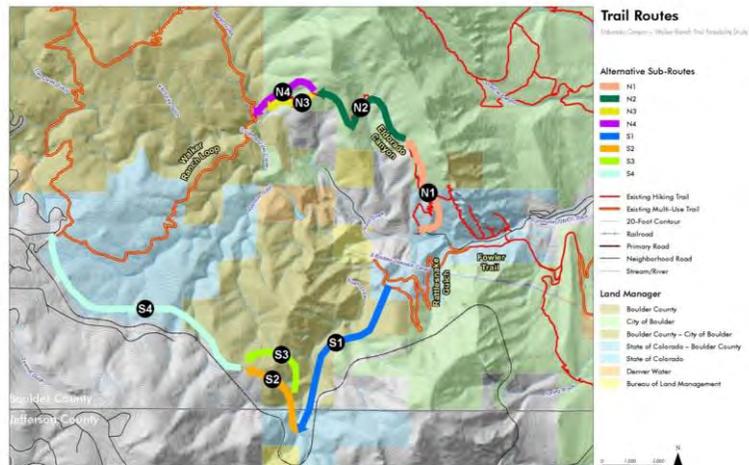
- Minimize environmental impacts
- Provide a meaningful visitor experience
- Meet design standards to construct and maintain a sustainable trail
- Technically feasible and fiscally responsible
- Consider ECSP impacts



Envisioned as a trail similar in character to the Walker Ranch Loop, an evaluation of conceptual trail alignments seeks to determine whether there are options that would

## Options under consideration

1. North Route
2. South Route
3. No Action



Two alignment corridors, each with four sub-alignments were retained for further analysis. The project is considering options to complete the connection on either the Northside or Southside of South Boulder Creek.

A “No Action” option that would not complete a connection accommodating biking activities also is included in this analysis.

### South Route

New trail construction

Connects into the Walker Ranch Loop at the Crescent Meadows Trailhead.

On lands owned and managed by BCPOS, OSMP and  
Eldorado Canyon State Park  
Approximate Length: 7.7 miles

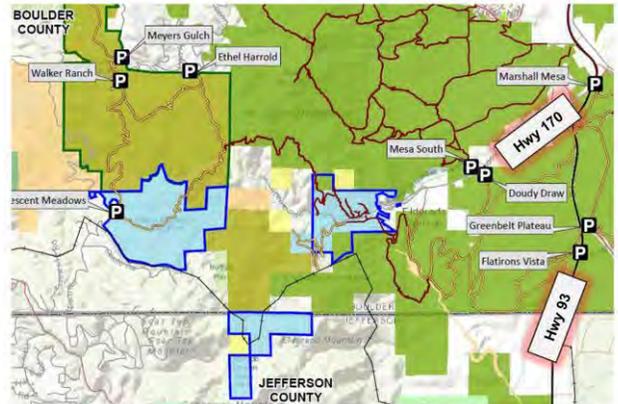
## No Action Option

- Maintain the status quo conditions.
- Would not complete a multi-use connection that accommodates biking activities.
- Would not address current issues or achieve desired improvements

With no new trail connection, the No Action option would not achieve the desired objectives of the project that have been codified in public planning and policy documents guided by public engagement.

## Existing Condition Challenges

- Eldorado Canyon Road and parking are private in Eldorado Springs
- Parking capacity within the park is often full on weekends and holidays during peak summer months
- Erosion and resource impacts along Eldorado Canyon Trail



There also are a number of existing conditions that present challenges which the three partner agencies are committed to working with the community towards long-term solutions

Eldorado Springs area has experienced transportation, parking and access issues for decades.

Highway 170. There is only one road extending several miles from Highway 93.

The road serves entrances for trailheads for city public lands, the state park, Eldorado Springs, Artesian Springs pool, and residences to the west of the state park.

It also is transitions from a public

Eldorado Canyon State Park's parking spots are filled during peak times, particularly on weekends and holidays during the summer months. On many days, visitors cannot enter the park due to capacity issues. Illegal parking on the road's shoulder in the community of Eldorado Springs and along the road back to Highway 93 is a common challenge for the public land managers and the community.

Choosing a North or South route will strengthen the capacity and momentum for the community and partner agencies to collaborate on providing accessing, connecting visitors to enjoyable experiences, and addressing transportation issues. Therefore, the focus of the feasibility study is on analyzing and comparing the north and south route alternative options

# Analysis Criteria



## Environmental and Cultural Resources

- Wetland and riparian areas
- Significant natural communities
- Wildlife habitat impacts
- Undisturbed habitat impacts

## Visitor Experience

- Regional trail connectivity
- Trail aesthetic and character
- Access and parking
- Trail access opportunities
- Seasonality
- Visitor density
- Visitor conflict management



## Trail Construction Costs

## Trail Management and Maintenance

- Trail sustainability and maintenance
- Emergency response
- Interagency management

## Eldorado Canyon State Park Interface

- Park capacity and visitation
- Access and parking
- Revenue and fee collection
- Trail and facility sustainability
- Visitor conflict and enjoyment

## Summary of Overall Findings

				
Major Benefit	Minor Benefit	Insignificant	Minor Impact	Major Impact

Analysis Category	North Route	South Route
Environmental and Cultural Resources		
Visitor Experience		
Trail Construction Costs	\$360K to \$660K	\$410K to \$810K
Trail Management and Maintenance		
Eldorado Canyon State Park Interface		

- We've provided The Summary of Overall Findings as hand out to help you become more informed about the analysis results of the feasibility study.
- More information on the benefits and impacts can be found in the following analysis topic summaries below and in the corresponding sections of the report.
- Please use the handout as guide as you review the open house posters presented at the open house.
- All the information also is available on the project web page, which is posted on the project web page.

## Summary of Overall Findings

				
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### Environmental and Cultural Resources

- **North** has minimal new impacts
- **South** has major impacts

### Eldorado Canyon State Park Interface

*Both:*

- Adversely impact the park
- Increase traffic, congestion, visitation, and visitor density and potential for conflict on trails

Eldorado Canyon State Park Interface		
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## Summary of Overall Findings

### Visitor Experience

**Both** would provide an enjoyable and quality visitor experience.

#### **North**

- is shorter (3.9 -4.8 miles)
- will accommodate more year-round use

#### **South**

- provides a new trail experience in an area that is currently inaccessible.
- may result in temporal and seasonal use restrictions.

### Trail Construction

- **Both** have comparatively similar construction cost estimates

### Trail Management and Maintenance

- **Both** are sustainable and can be constructed to achieve desired bike trail design standards (exception of the Rattlesnake Gulch Trail)
- **North** improves trail sustainability and emergency access

**Both** would provide an enjoyable and quality visitor experience, expansive views and go through a similar diversity of landscape types and meet desired bike trail design standards, with the exception of the Rattlesnake Gulch Trail which would be the access trail for the south route in ECSP. They also may result in increased visitor conflict, due to increased trail visitation and the introduction of a new visitor type into the trail system.

#### **North:**

is shorter (3.9 -4.8 miles) with an elevation gain/loss of +1,010/-610 (E to W), will accommodate more year-round use due to the combination of aspect and shade cover, and have no temporal or seasonal use restrictions are anticipated.

#### **South:**

is longer 6.5 – 7.1 (7.8 including Rattlesnake Gulch Trail) with an elevation gain/loss of +930/-480 (+1,860 including Rattlesnake), provides a new trail experience in an area that is currently inaccessible, and may result in temporal and seasonal use restrictions.

## Summary of Overall Findings

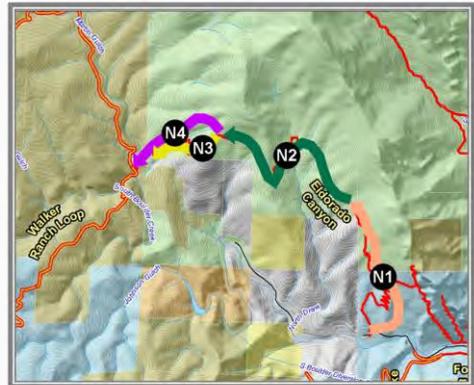
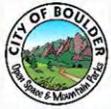
				
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## Interagency Recommendation

With a commitment to continue working collaboratively to address the current capacity related challenges facing the Eldorado Canyon State Park as part of future planning, design, and implementation phases.



Preliminary Recommendation  
N1+N2+N4

After collaboration to complete the Trail Feasibility Study and careful consideration of the findings, Boulder County Parks & Open Space, the City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife are jointly recommending the North Route (using segments N1-N2-N4) as the preferred alignment for an Eldorado Canyon to Walker Ranch multi-use trail connection.

We presented the feasibility study findings and preliminary recommendation to the public for feedback.

## Public Input

### Engagement opportunities

- Attend Nov. 28 Open House
- Project web page
- Complete online questionnaire
- Feedback received by
  - By Dec. 9 will be considered by partner agencies in developing final recommendation
  - After this date will be forwarded to Boards for consideration
- Attend Public hearings

### Questionnaire responses

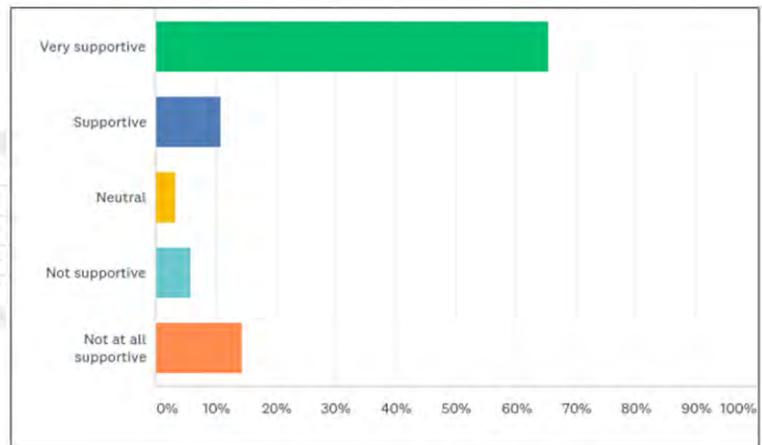
- 671 unique respondents
- 590 completed questionnaires
- 260 written comments

### Written correspondence

- 8 individuals commented
- 4 organizational letters
  - Boulder County Audubon Society
  - Boulder Mountainbike Alliance
  - Boulder County Nature Association
  - Eldorado Springs Community Association

## What's your level of support for this preliminary interagency trail connection recommendation?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very supportive	65.42%	439
Supportive	10.89%	73
Neutral	3.28%	22
Not supportive	5.96%	40
Not at all supportive	14.46%	97
TOTAL		671

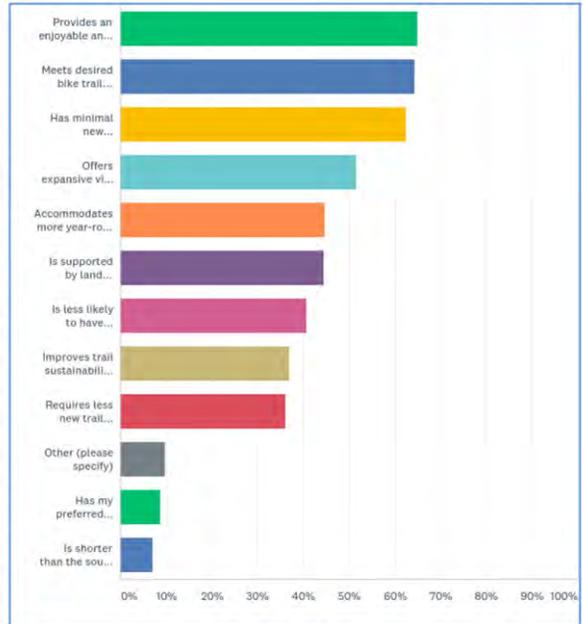


• Answered: 671 Skipped: 0

Around three quarters 76% (512) are either supportive or very supportive .  
About 20% are not supportive and just 3% are neutral

# I support the agency recommendation because the North Route:

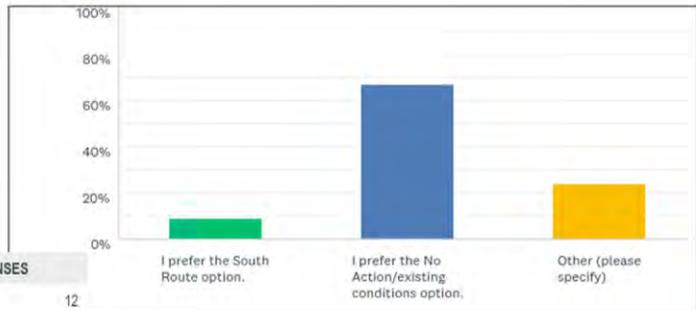
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Provides an enjoyable and quality visitor experience.	64.99% 284
Meets desired bike trail design standards.	64.53% 282
Has minimal new environmental impacts.	62.47% 273
Offers expansive views and goes through a similar diversity of landscape types.	51.72% 226
Accommodates more year-round use due to the combination of aspect and shade cover.	44.85% 196
Is supported by land managers.	44.62% 195
Is less likely to have seasonal/temporal trail closures.	40.73% 178
Improves trail sustainability and emergency access.	37.07% 162
Requires less new trail construction.	36.16% 158
Other (please specify)	9.84% 43
Has my preferred elevation gain/loss profile.	8.70% 38
Is shorter than the south route.	7.09% 31
Total Respondents: 437	



Answered: 437 out of 439 Skipped: 234

Respondents in support of the partner agency recommendation expressed that they prefer the north route because Achieves the intended objectives of providing an enjoyable and quality visitor experience, meets desired bike standards, and has minimizing environmental impacts.

## Why don't you support this preliminary interagency trail connection recommendation?



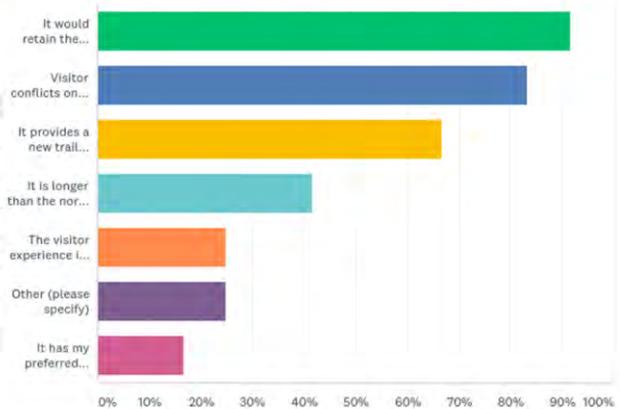
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	COUNT
I prefer the South Route option.	8.96%	12
I prefer the No Action/existing conditions option.	67.16%	90
Other (please specify)	23.88%	32
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>134</b>

Answered: 134 out of 137 Skipped: 537

About 20% of respondents do not support the agency recommendation. Of these respondents, the majority prefer the no action/existing conditions option. Just a dozen representing about 9% of respondents support the south route option.

## I prefer the South Route option because:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
It would retain the existing Eldorado Canyon Trail for hiking/equestrian only.	92% 11
Visitor conflicts on trails may be less than the north route option.	83% 10
It provides a new trail experience in an area that is currently inaccessible.	67% 8
It is longer than the north route option.	42% 5
The visitor experience is better than the north route option.	25% 3
Other (please specify)	25% 3
It has my preferred elevation Elevation gain/loss profile.	17% 2
Total Respondents: 12	



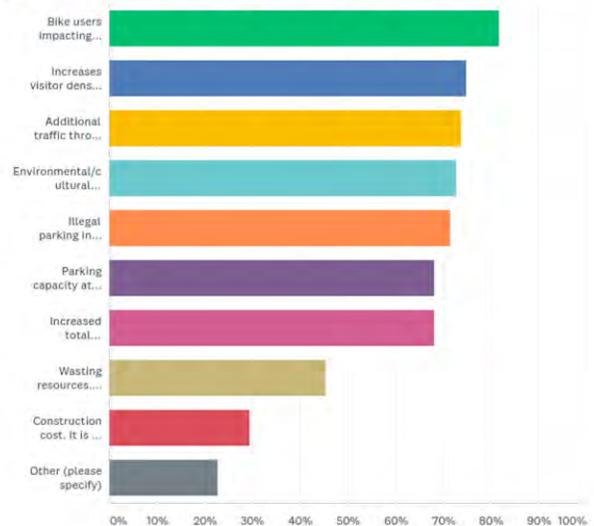
Answered: 12 out of 12 Skipped: 659

The most selected reasons people expressed in support of the south route were that

- It would retain the existing ECT for hiking/equestrian use only,
- Visitor conflicts may be less than on the north route
- And it provides a new trail experience, with many selecting it because it is a longer route than the north route option.

## I prefer the No Action/existing conditions option because I am concerned about:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Bike users impacting existing trail/park visitors.	82%	72
Increases visitor density and potential conflict along existing trails.	75%	66
Additional traffic through Eldorado Springs town site.	74%	65
Environmental/cultural resources impacts.	73%	64
Illegal parking in Eldorado Springs town site.	72%	63
Parking capacity at existing OSMP trailheads.	68%	60
Increased total visitation to the park.	68%	60
Wasting resources. Agencies should focus on maintaining existing trails.	45%	40
Construction cost. It is not fiscally responsible.	30%	26
Other (please specify)	23%	20
<b>Total Respondents: 88</b>		



Answered: 88 out of 90 Skipped: 583

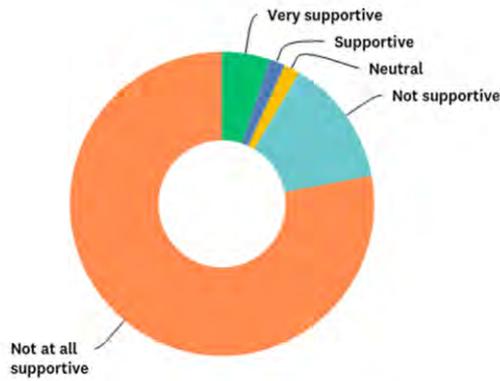
About 13 percent of respondents expressed support for the No action/existing conditions option.

Expressing concern for bike users impacting existing trail/park users

Environmental / cultural issues

And the overarching concerns for impacts to the state park and eldorado springs community associated with traffic, parking and access.

## Eldorado Springs Residents Level of Support



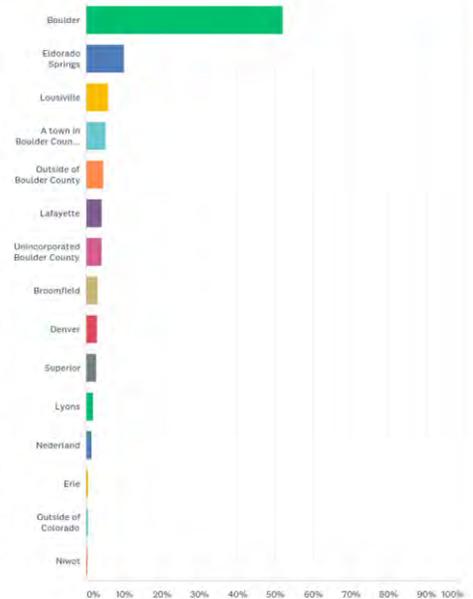
	Very supportive	Supportive	Neutral	Not supportive	Not at all supportive	Total						
Eldorado Springs	5%	3	2%	1	2%	1	14%	8	78%	46	100%	59

Answered: 59 Skipped: 0

94% all the 59 respondents from Eldorado Springs do not support the partner agency recommendation – these 54 respondents unanimously prefer the no action/existing conditions option.

## Where do you live?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Boulder	52%	304
Eldorado Springs	10%	59
Louisville	6%	34
A town in Boulder County not listed	5%	31
Outside of Boulder County	5%	27
Lafayette	4%	24
Unincorporated Boulder County	4%	24
Broomfield	3%	18
Denver	3%	17
Superior	3%	16
Lyons	2%	11
Nederland	2%	9
Erie	1%	4
Outside of Colorado	1%	4
Niwot	0%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>584</b>

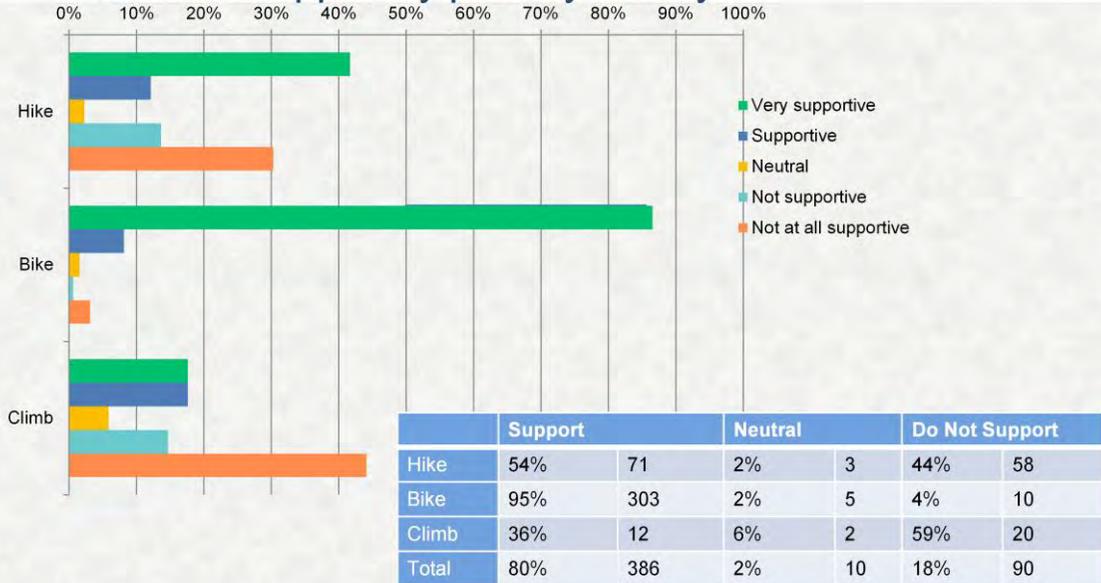


• Answered: 584 Skipped: 87

Another key demographic was residence.

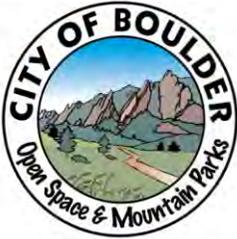
About  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents live within boulder county. With just over half from boulder and 10% from Eldorado Springs

## Level of support by primary activity



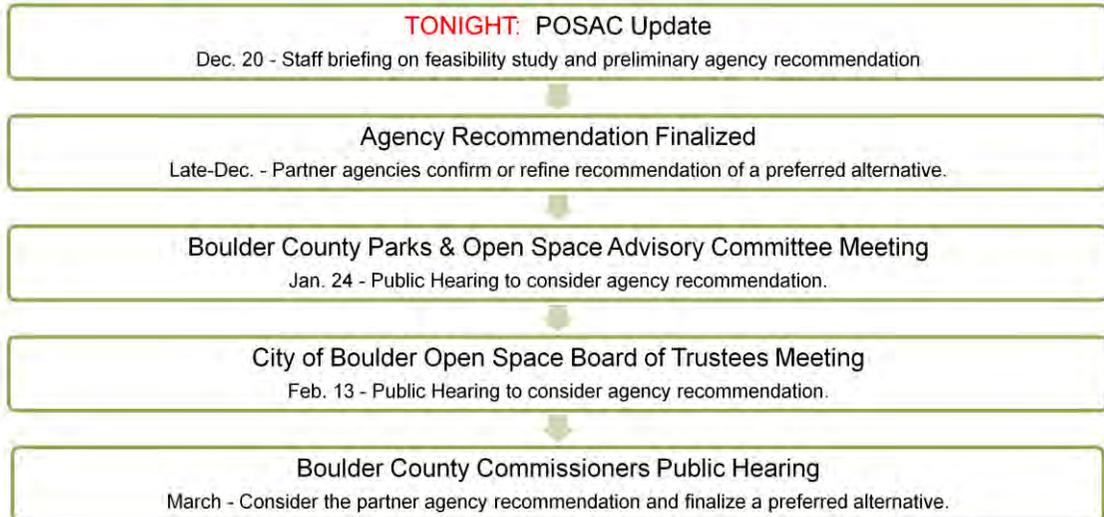
We also looked at the level of support by primary activity, which indicated strong support for the agency recommendation by those who bike, while only about half of hikers and just over a 1/3 of climbers expressed support for the partner agency recommendation.

## Open Space Board of Trustees input



- Impacts the north would have on OSMP Habitat Conservation Area (HCA) lands.
- The process going forward if they were to approve the north.
- Reasonable assurances/knowing more about how the ECSP/town interface can be addressed.

## Next Steps





Questions?

[www.BoulderCounty.org/eldo-walker-connection/](http://www.BoulderCounty.org/eldo-walker-connection/)

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