



Tusayan Community Trails Master Plan Public Comments

May 9, 2018

The Tusayan Community Trails Master Plan was developed by the Town of Tusayan and Trails Inspire, LLC and was unanimously approved by the Town Council in October 2017. The approval was contingent on a period of public scoping to receive feedback on the plan from locals, trail users, stakeholders, and recreational user groups.

Public comment on the plan was open from March 21st until April 21st and then the deadline was extended until May 7th, 2018. The Master Plan and comments will be presented at the Tusayan Town Council meeting on Wednesday, June 13th, 2018.

Jan Balsom, Grand Canyon National Park

The park supports this effort. We appreciate the integration of both NPS and FS standards and objective and the overall recreational goals. You've done a great job.

Kevin Dahl, National Parks Conservation Association

I attended the public workshop and have looked over the plan, which I endorse without any hesitation. It is forward thinking that Tusayan is investing in enhancing the visitor experience. As a frequent visitor myself, I hope to someday hike all the trails that are being proposed, especially the loops to the east and the History trail. Thank you for doing this.

Clarinda Vail, John Thurston, Bess Foster, Bonnie Thurston Trust, Fireside Ridge

It is a great improvement from what had been thrown in, last minute, to the Tusayan General Plan.

On the Acknowledgements page it says Clarinda Vail is part of the working group. She happily met with Sirena as a stakeholder, but is no official consultant to this plan.

We would like to communicate very clearly to the Town, as we have in the past, that before any trails can be located on any of our property, we would require liability coverage with the right to revoke, move, the actual location/surface/width to be determined and agreed-upon by us and Recreational Use Easement from the Town that protects us as required under A.R.S. § 33-1551 that requires certificates of insurance from the Town. In addition, we would want it to cover maintenance requirements, use limitations, and events that result in revocation or termination of the easement. Survey is mentioned throughout the document which we have taken in the broader context as we think no actual land surveys have taken place yet? Is that correct?

Any agreements, and the pertaining paperwork would have to be completed before **ANY ACTIVITY AT ALL** may occur on our property. Other improvements, on our property, we have been waiting for years for

the paperwork to be completed. This doesn't build strong/good faith for entering into anything more with the town.

The town's maintenance of things such as the ADOT landscaping/sidewalk snow removal and the sports complex is not good. Seeing the current maintenance items, under the town's control, being properly/well maintained would help build confidence that the town can handle a trails system yet. Adding to and taking care of the school sports complex was a priority for the town a bit ago. It remains what we think should be THE #1 funding priority to better town's residents' lives, both young and old. Trails to it are important, eventually, and feel a priority order for the trails should come from this plan. Trails that are closer to the current developed areas in Tusayan should be a priority over the others.

Patrick Kell, International Mountain Biking Association

Please accept this comment letter from the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) regarding the planning process in Tusayan, AZ. Founded in 1988, IMBA is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational association, working to unify the national and worldwide mountain bicycling community. Today our network includes 35,000 individual and family members, more than 400 chapters and clubs, and more than 1,000 corporate and retail supporters. We strive to bring a network of recreationists together to protect public lands and the places we ride through education and resource stewardship. We work with advocates to protect public lands and access close to their hometowns, and with state and federal land managers to protect backcountry landscapes. Our work appeals to a broad spectrum of decision makers and elected officials due to the tangible outcomes of protecting public lands—they recognize the power of the recreation economy and the ability of mountain biking to connect people to the land. Along with the recreation values, our work complements rural planning efforts.

We understand that the Master Plan for the Tusayan area consists of approximately 11.5 miles of new non-motorized, multi-use trails for visitors and residents alike. Of these, 8.8 miles will be natural surface singletrack, 1.8 miles will be four-foot wide, crushed gravel path and 0.8 miles will be ADA accessible. We also understand that the Master Plan objectives were arrived at through a combination of the town's objectives from the 2024 plan and stakeholder and public feedback during the scoping process, with those objectives including:

- Develop a non-motorized multi-use trail system providing safe and sustainable recreational trail routes for visitors and residents
- Identify commuter trail routes for residents
- Highlight the natural beauty of the Tusayan area
- Include opportunities for signage interpreting the natural features of the area
- Provide connectivity with existing trails
- Develop the Grand Canyon History Trail – an interpretive trail about the human history of the Grand Canyon area.
- Provide the Town of Tusayan, Kaibab National Forest and landowners with a summary of potential trail alignments and construction notes as well as preliminary construction cost estimates and notes on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process

Given the progress to date with this project, we wish to offer our full support of these objectives as listed. We feel that the town of Tusayan is a great place to develop trails, given the proximity to Grand Canyon National Park and Interstate 40 and we support Trails Inspire, Kaibab National Forest and local officials in this endeavor. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Greg Brush, Tusayan Fire District

I think the connectors looks great, and I especially like the layout of the short/big loops. I'm chomping at the bit to take my bike out!!

Tom Da Paolo, Stilo Development Group USA

Thank you for the opportunity to comment upon the Tusayan Trails Master Plan. Stilo Development Group USA is very supportive of most forms of inter-modal transportation that enhance the visitor experience by providing hiking and biking trails, mass-transit and other alternatives that reduce automobile congestion and do not degrade the natural resources of the area.

While scheduling conflicts precluded our attendance at public meetings, we did have the opportunity to meet in person with the Trail Facilitator, Sierra Dufault, early in the process to offer input.

Our primary comment to the proposed trail plan and maps as indicated within the Master Plan dated March 20, 2018 concern the proposed location of the Grand Canyon History Trail as indicated on Pages 9 and 10 of the report as depicted here. While we do not profess to have expertise in either trail design nor its subsequent management, we do believe we have an historical knowledge that may be useful during the Environmental Analysis of the overall trail system as proposed.

For a period of six-years from 1994-1999, the National Forest and Park Services collaborated upon an Environmental Impact Statement for Tusayan Growth and issued a favorable Record of Decision approving the contemplated action on August 6, 1999.

The analysis, in large part was predicated upon two large planning studies: The 1987 Kaibab National Forest Plan and the 1995 Grand Canyon National Park General Management Plan. Visitation to Grand Canyon National Park was slightly over 4,000,000 annual visitors—a mere two-thirds of those who visited the Park in 2017. Visitation through March of 2018 (the most recent figure available) indicate that visitation is up again an astounding 14.03%.

One of the most important components of the Tusayan Growth analysis and conclusion was the decision to construct a large staging area outside the Park boundary whereby all vehicles (other than those used for overnight stays in the Park) would be staged in an area between the south side of North Long Jim Road and to the north of the Imax Theater in Tusayan as depicted here (Tusayan Growth EIS, pg.10). Some form of mass transportation (shuttle, light-rail, etc.) would than transfer visitors from the staging area to the Park. The corridor for the transportation followed the northerly portion of North Ling Jim Road and merged with the old, disturbed road that went into the Park prior to the construction of Highway 64. An approximately 5,000 vehicle staging area was planned along each side of North Long Jim Road.

And therein lies the concern.

The EIS cooperating Agencies (that, beside the NPS and USFS, included the Northern Arizona Council of Governments and Coconino County) initially considered 19 Alternatives and 4 locations in the general vicinity of Tusayan and the Grand Canyon Airport and concluded that the selected site was superior for a variety of environmental, economic, cultural and visitor experience considerations. While the full plan was not implemented, the NPS has constructed and operates a smaller staging area in the general location of the previously contemplated larger facility.

Unconfirmed reports have alluded to the possibility of reconsidering a plan for a much larger staging area in Tusayan and presumably, a current study could reach the same conclusion as to the most suitable location for it will be the area currently selected for the Grand Canyon History Trail.

Another aspect of the study that seems somewhat at odds with the proposed location of the Grand Canyon History trail is the lack of connectivity to either the Big and Short Loop trails or the larger Arizona Trail.

The History Trail is also far removed from the hotels in Tusayan which presumably represent the primary source of hikers that will likely use the trails to begin with and the trailhead indicated at Highway 64 and FS 302 would seem to be an ideal opportunity to familiarize a guest with three options for hiking from a single point of departure.

The Town of Tusayan has made an application with the USFS for access to properties it owns at the Kotzin and TenX ranches and while the NEPA analysis for the access is temporarily on hold, it is expected to resume with the next 30-60 days. Several of the public comments offered during the scoping period for the access suggested alternatives of a land exchange in lieu of access and the most suitable location for a land exchange, if any, was determined by the Tusayan Growth EIS to be where the planned Grand Canyon History Trail is suggested in the Trails report.

Should either Tusayan desire future growth or the NPS elect to expand its existing staging area—or both, a trail system in that area complicates either option from implementation when it appears there are better trail options to be considered.

It has been said that the USFS is reluctant to connect either of the Loop Trails to the developed area of Tusayan due to their concern of fire threats from activity at nearby hotels. This is curious for several reasons: the more significant Arizona Trail comes within feet of the very area the USFS believes needs to be avoided and, carelessness can occur on any trail in any location.

We are looking forward to the NEPA analysis that will consider a variety of alternatives such as those mentioned herein and evaluate the impacts of various locations for these trails.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment upon the Tusayan Community Trails Master Plan.

Haley Johnson, Pink Jeep Tours

I fully support the incorporation of a healthy activity lifestyle trails systems and an Interpretive handicap accessible trail system. I believe this plan will support local recreation and activities as well as the same for tourists.

I'd love to see a viewing platform for astronomers as well but I highly recommend against it being paved to create a level viewing area.

Astronomers don't need a man-made viewing platform. We are perfectly fine using a sectioned off piece of land in a suitable area. Perhaps a small sign or small Interpretive marker could designate an area for night sky viewing.

On a different note...how will night sky viewers be able to view the night sky if Tusayan builds more lighting.

I, as a Tusayan resident and Grand canyon hiking guide, fully support this trails system.

Though I am entirely against building any more buildings in conjunction with this project or street lights to light the pathways, that is an absolute NO. NO more lights!!

Frank Insana, Pink Jeep Tours

At the Tusayan Trails Meeting on March 28th it was said that there was consideration of a telescope platform made of cement that would be built to show the night sky, so to not be destructive to the environment and to get less light pollution why not have the sight built in a quarry, there are a few of those in the surrounding area, they are already disturbed sights and have slopes that can protect against light pollution. Also Tusayan needs to cut down the light pollution tremendously for the sake of looking at the natural beauty of the night sky more clearly, for the health of the residents and visitors, the animals and the environment, and to conserve energy, in other words there are too many bright lights in Tusayan and too many lights in general, its a sore eye on dark sky / light pollution maps. If Tusayan and the Grand Canyon National Park could cut down on the light pollution even further to the point that the south rim area would possibly become a Bortle 1, meaning zero light pollution, that would be ground breaking. Also Tusayan needs to build a wooden platform made from smaller younger pines that would have been thinned out of an area nearby anyways for natural forest restoration which would be less damaging to the soil and ground, instead of a cement slab that constantly sucks up oxygen and releases carbon dioxide. It was said at the meeting that there would be no damage to plants but how can that be when building and maintaining trails? We need to just turn all the surrounding forest service roads in the Tusayan area into trails with no motorized access. That's what many of trails we hike on in Arizona were in the past, former roads for motorized vehicles. Also turning existing heavily used social trails into official ones so that there would be no damage to the surrounding plants, instead of paving a new one, would certainly be far more environmentally friendly, especially if choosing the ones that could cause the least amount of erosion and least need of maintenance.

Also at the meeting there was talk about interpretive signs on natural features of the area like the plants, and that would be great, but we should also have a lager focus on conservation/environmental issues in the area, such as how the uranium mines in the Kaibab National Forest and in other areas surrounding the Grand Canyon could contaminate the water table and soils, and dry up many springs and seeps, plus other conservation subjects like overgrazing of cattle, the need for the reintroduction of grey wolves to more properly maintain the elk and deer herds, condors still getting ill and dying of lead poisoning thanks to many hunters not using other bullets like copper, the lack of water in the area for the future growth of the town of Tusayan and how that could affect the Havasupai Tribe and their wondrous waterfalls along with countless species of animals and plants in the area that depend on the springs and seeps in the Grand Canyon if more drilling for water was implemented, the affects of the noise pollution from air tours flying over the canyon on wildlife and visitors, etc...

Craig Sanderson, Mayor of Tusayan

From Canyon Pines/Fireside Ridge, use road to Sports Complex, the Town would work with the sanitary district to build sidewalk here.

The comment period has closed but people are still welcome to submit their questions and concerns to tusayantrails@gmail.com.

