

Users and Needs Assessment

Understanding the needs of trail users is an important step to accomplish before any trail design begins. Taking these needs into consideration will help determine the criteria and parameters to consider during the design of the trail.

Walking/Hiking

Most of the users of the Blacks Run Greenway are expected to be recreational and commuting pedestrians. This group includes people walking, strolling, jogging/running and hikers. Considerations for each group are listed below.

Pedestrians: Generally, this is the largest user group of trails. Trail width is the consideration with this group. Pedestrians use trails in pairs in most instances, therefore, the width should allow for a pair of people.

Pedestrians With Strollers: This is typically the slowest moving group on a trail. A smooth, hard, and clean surface works best with strollers. Occasional rest areas and wider paths best accommodate this group.

Pedestrians With Leashed Dogs: When designing for this group, the following rules should be included:

- ☞ All dogs should be on a leash that is short enough so that the dog does not block more than one-half of the trail with the leash at its longest length.
- ☞ All dogs should walk on the edge of the trail.
- ☞ Owners should clean up after their dogs.

Hikers: Hikers tend to like a more challenging trail than the ones that pedestrians use. They prefer trails with soft informal surfaces, locations that will let them view more wildlife, and locations that are more secluded. Blacks Run Greenway should expect the occasional hiker but this is not a major use group.

Handicapped Users: This group can consist of people with many different kinds of handicaps (i.e. persons bound to wheelchairs, vision and hearing impaired individuals, elderly people, etc.). When designing the trail the Federal Law for the Americans with Disabilities Act needs to be considered. There are no specific guidelines for path development, but the 1991 edition of the ADA Handbook states "all new design, construction and renovation projects will be readily accessible to users with disabilities, except where an entity can demonstrate that it is structurally impractical, excessively difficult or expensive to meet the requirements". By designing your trail to meet or exceed the ADA standards you will directly benefit more than half of the users (handicapped and non). Some trails just cannot be made accessible for all handicapped users, but those who wish to partake in trail activities should be provided for whenever possible.

Bicycling

Bicyclists will be the second major user of the Blacks Run Greenway system. It is anticipated that the system will need to accommodate an increasing number of bicyclists given the increased popularity of recreational bicycling and commuting by bicycle. The following are sub-groups of this group that all have different needs to consider when planning your trail design:

- ☞ Accomplished Recreational Cyclists: This sub-group prefers roads to off-street trails. They should not be discouraged from using roads rather than trails. They are typically only interested in off-street trails if they are designed for higher speeds and they will use them, as opposed to the roads, because of grade separated street crossings, etc.
- ☞ Accomplished Commuter Cyclists: This sub-group prefers to use their bicycle in place of their automobile for daily travel and will use the fastest route, whether that is on or off the street.
- ☞ Less Accomplished Cyclists: This sub-group will travel with the other groups on the trails, so as to avoid auto traffic.
- ☞ Family Cyclists: The preference of this sub-group is off-road trails that are easy to negotiate and are slower paced.
- ☞ Children Cyclists: This sub-group is under the age of 13. This group should stick to off-street trails for safety. The design would be beneficial if the trail was to go under busy highways and streets and have direct connections to parks and schools.

Equestrian

It is not expected that the greenway will need to accommodate much equestrian use. Typically equestrians are more likely to use rural greenways. Some portions of the Blacks Run Greenway could accommodate equestrians particularly at the southern end. Mounted police officers may also use the more urban sections of the Greenway while policing the trail.

This group prefers a separate, soft-surfaced trail. Some features to better accommodate this group are:

Higher railings on bridges.

Tie-ups and water troughs at the rest areas.

The cross section of hard surface and soft surface trails should have signs and stripes to alert the equestrian crossing.

Others

Skaters: Skate boarders and rollerbladers are typically the main users of this group. The main consideration for them is to reduce the width of control joints and expanding the width of the trail itself. This also includes non-motorized scooters.