Proposed Highland-to-Greenbelt Walkway Trail Endorsement

Bike-Ped Committee Meeting of May 19, 2021

The South Portland Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee, by a vote of [vote results] held on May 19, 2021, endorses a trail connecting Highland Avenue with the Greenbelt Walkway approximately as shown on the attached map dated April 19, 2021.

The trail as currently considered would cross three properties: a City parcel; the wooded, rear portion of the Highland Memorial Cemetery, and a small section of land owned by the Portland Pipe Line Corporation (PPLC). The Manager of the Cemetery indicates that he foresees no concerns by the Cemetery Board and that an agreement to use and sign the existing trail likely is doable. (This is due in part to how the proposed trail would reduce the number of people using the Cemetery road to access the existing trails.) In terms of PPLC, the City has agreed to discuss the possibility of access rights in an upcoming meeting with PPLC on the renewal of other pedestrian access licenses that PPLC has granted to the City.

The use of the trail would be limited to pedestrians, mountain bikers, and other bicycle riders. Motorized vehicles like ATVs would be prohibited.

A substantial portion of the trail already exists and would only need a few small signs. A portion of the trail on the City property would need to be constructed. As with the existing trails, the surface treatment of the new section would be natural earth. The construction would be done by volunteers with some City assistance; the work is not expected to take more than a few days. A curb-cut off of Highland Avenue already exists and could be used to provide access in the future to a small gravel parking area.

There already are trails in this area being used by neighborhood walkers and mountain bikers. The intent of this proposal is not to develop an elaborate trail project but to formalize existing trails and to make a simple loop on the City parcel to enable a connection to the Greenbelt Walkway. This will provide better access, through pleasant natural areas, to the Greenbelt Walkway for residents on both sides of Highland Avenue and to the growing number of mountain bikers in the area.

The City parcel currently is an unused wooded area that is suffering from a substantial incursion of bittersweet vines. While other uses for this property, such as a dog park, may have been talked about in the past, it is not felt that a low-budget trail loop providing access through the woods would substantially interfere with any long-term re-uses for it.

As part of this endorsement, the Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee respectfully requests that the City:

1. Proceed as planned to gauge Portland Pipe Line's appetite for another, short, pedestrian access license;
2. In case #1 doesn't work, see if there is any feasible (i.e., non-interfering and low-cost) way to bypass the PPLC property by altering the route of the existing trail on the Transfer Facility property;
3. Ensure that there are no existing restrictions on the use of the property (for instance, in case some portion has a landfill cap with restrictions in its permitting);
4. Assist volunteers in flagging the route for the portion of the trail that would need to be cleared and constructed on the City property;
5. Assist volunteers in clearing and constructing the natural earth trail on the City property;
6. Provide trail signs at the Highland Avenue and Greenbelt Walkway trailheads;
7. Plan in the future to design, permit, and construct a small gravel parking lot connected to the existing Highland Avenue curb-cut.

The Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee appreciates City consideration of this proposal as well as the many other efforts made in the past and currently underway to provide high quality options in South Portland for pedestrians and bicyclists.