

## 3.9 Recreational Trails and Natural Areas

### 3.9.1 Introduction

Parks and other recreational facilities such as trails, bicycle routes, and open space are important community resources. This section discusses the extent to which these recreational facilities are positively or negatively impacted by the No Action and Proposed Action alternatives. Direct, indirect, and proximate impacts are described. Indirect impacts such as noise and visual impacts are considered to determine whether the use or enjoyment of the facilities analyzed will be impaired.

The City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County maintain recreational facilities within the study area. The study area for recreational trails, bicycle routes, and natural areas extends approximately 1,200 feet south and 1,200 feet north of the existing roadway centerline of Woodmen Road from I-25 to Powers Boulevard, and 400 feet south and 1,200 feet north from Powers Boulevard to US 24. The study area includes the area within which the Proposed Action could directly or indirectly create impacts to existing recreational trails, bicycle routes, and natural areas. Within the study area, consideration included possible trail rerouting, construction interference, ground disturbance, and potential visible and audible impacts.

#### Recreation Resources

- There are no existing public park areas within the study area.
- A neighborhood park is planned in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of Austin Bluffs Parkway and Woodmen Road near Cottonwood Creek.



**Table 3.9-1  
Impacts to Existing Recreational Trails and Parks and Mitigation**

Topic	No Action Alternative Impacts	Proposed Action Impacts	Proposed Action Mitigation
Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Recreational Facilities	Increased potential for dangerous conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians or bicyclists. Construction will temporarily reroute a number of trails and bicycle routes.	Improvements include an on-street bicycle route along Woodmen Road, sidewalks west of Powers Boulevard, and accommodation of all planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Construction will temporarily reroute a number of trails and bicycle routes.	Public notice of temporary detours, and routes; safe multiuse crossings and connections will be provided. Temporary crossings, detours and access will be provided in cooperation with the City and County trail planners.
Noise	Noise will increase with traffic growth on Woodmen Road.	Noise will increase with traffic growth on Woodmen Road.	No feasible or reasonable mitigation available for trails and bicycle routes.

The City of Colorado Springs *Comprehensive Plan* Future Land Use Map designates land use in the study area as low residential, general residential, community activity center, new/developing corridor, employment center, candidate open space, and existing parks and/or open space – in other words, an area where people live, work, and recreate.



The seven trails, two bicycle lanes, and the park described in the following section are those that are part of the city of Colorado Springs *Master Plan (2002-2020) Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan*; the *City of Colorado Springs Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan*; and *City of Colorado Springs Open Space Plan* as referenced in the Chapter III of Appendix IV of the *El Paso County Policy Plan*; Other Regionally Significant Plans and Publications; and maps provided by the El Paso County Parks & Leisure Services (El Paso County Park & Trail Location Map, and Rock Island Regional Trail). The trails and park are currently complete or are currently under construction (see Figure 3.9.1). Many are at least minimally impacted by the No Action and Proposed Action Alternatives.

### 3.9.2 Methodology

Construction of the improvements described in the No Action and Proposed Action Alternatives, Chapter 2, Alternatives Considered, will alter the environment in which trails currently exist or are about to be constructed. Actions with the potential to directly or indirectly affect or alter the use or enjoyment of the existing recreational trails and natural areas were evaluated to consider possible trail rerouting, construction interference, ground disturbance, and potential visible and audible effects. The existing condition of each trail or natural area was compared to the conditions that will be present in, or created by, the No Action and the Proposed Action Alternatives.

### 3.9.3 Affected Environment

Trails and bicycle routes in the study area cannot be characterized in general terms. Several run parallel or nearly parallel to Woodmen Road, several others cross Woodmen Road or approach the study area diagonally.

The Sand Creek Corridor Open Space and Sand Creek Trail both run parallel and diagonally to Woodmen Road. With the exception of Rock Island Trail, most trails are typically new or emerging, and primarily are the result of the corridor's recent residential growth and demand for more recreational facilities. As shown in Figure 3.9-1, the trails include multi-use facilities, on-street bike routes, and/or sidewalks.



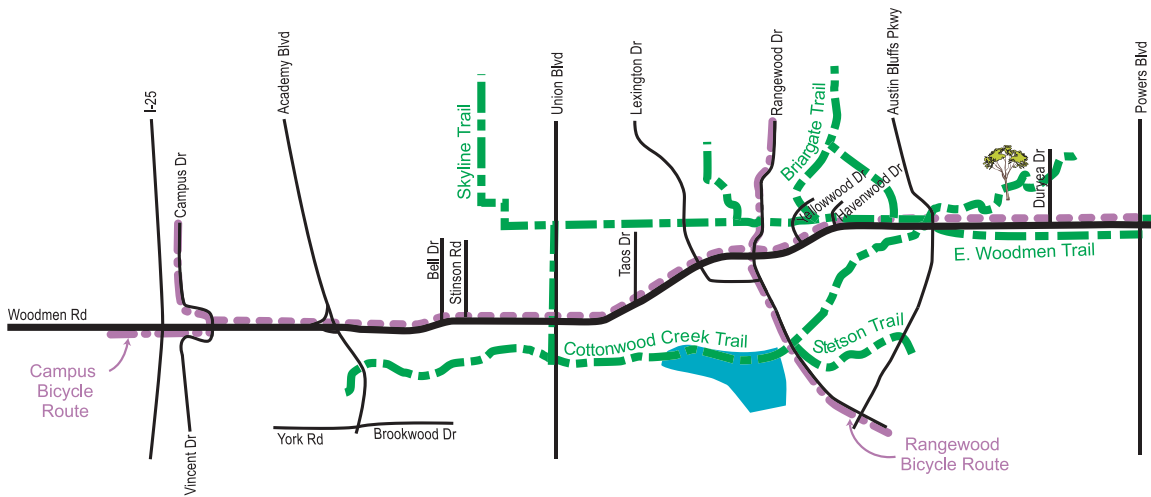


Figure 3.9-1  
Recreational Areas.

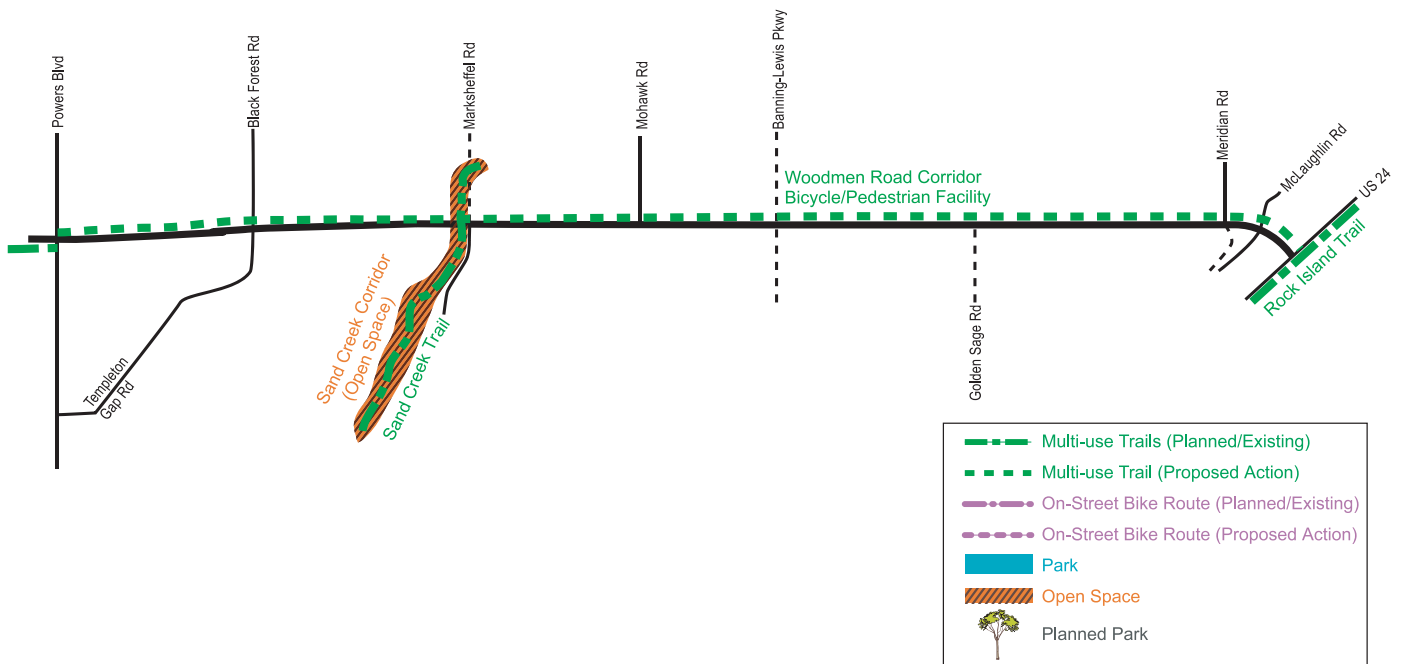
The existing Campus Drive Bicycle Route is a City of Colorado Springs designated on-street bicycle route that starts at the Pikes Peak Greenway west of I-25 and follows Woodmen Road east to the intersection of Campus Drive. The bicycle route then heads north along Campus Drive and into the Falcon Estates Neighborhood.

The Cottonwood Creek Trail currently has two branches from the main trail within the study area. One branch connects to the existing sidewalk along Woodmen Road. The other branch leads to a planned crossing of Woodmen Road that will be located about 100 feet west of Woodmen Road's intersection with Austin Bluffs Parkway. This crossing is planned to be under Woodmen Road and Austin Bluffs Parkway along Cottonwood Creek.

When completed, the trail will follow Cottonwood Creek from Monument Creek to Black Forest Road.

Skyline Trail is in development and is proposed to start at the Cottonwood Creek Trail near Union Boulevard; then extend north to cross the Union Boulevard and Woodmen Road intersection; then travel northwest through Briargate, to the northern city limit of Colorado Springs.





The existing Rangewood Drive Bicycle Route is a City of Colorado Springs designated on-street bike route that starts at Austin Bluffs Parkway, travels north along Rangewood Drive, crosses Woodmen Road at its intersection with Rangewood Drive, and continues north to Research Parkway.

The East Woodmen Trail between North Union Boulevard and the intersection of Austin Bluffs Parkway and Woodmen Road is nearly complete. In the future it will be extended past Austin Bluffs Parkway via a paved bicycle/pedestrian trail adjacent to Woodmen Road to Powers Boulevard. Near Austin Bluffs Parkway, a connection to the Cottonwood Creek Trail is planned. At Powers Boulevard, the East Woodmen Trail will connect to the proposed Woodmen Road Corridor Bicycle/Pedestrian Facility discussed below.

East Woodmen Trail's future crossing at Powers Boulevard near Woodmen Road has been accommodated by CDOT in the design of the grade-separated interchange at that location.

The Woodmen Road Corridor Bicycle/Pedestrian Facility is a proposed trail that will extend from Powers Boulevard east to a connection with the Rock Island Trail in the vicinity of the Falcon Town Center.

The Sand Creek Trail and Sand Creek Corridor Open Space follow Sand Creek as it crosses Woodmen Road. The trail is proposed to parallel Sand Creek through the existing Sand Creek Corridor, a natural area following Sand Creek that is proposed for Open Space designation. Some sections of the trail in the southern part of Colorado Springs are complete. Within the study area, the trail will cross under Woodmen Road at the Sand Creek Bridge just west of Marksheffel Road.

Rock Island Trail is built on a former railroad bed that follows US 24 between the towns of Peyton and Falcon. When completed, the trail will continue to Monument Creek, and ultimately Cripple Creek, Colorado. Within the study area, the trail currently passes under Woodmen Road through a large box culvert located between Meridian Road and US 24.

### 3.9.4 Environmental Impacts

#### No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative will have impacts on several of the facilities in the Woodmen Road study area as a result of anticipated traffic growth and construction of roadway improvements that are part of the No Action Alternative. The noise levels in the corridor will also change due to this alternative.

The projected traffic growth under the No Action Alternative would increase the potential for conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians or bicyclists in the Woodmen Road corridor where on-street bicycle/pedestrian facilities cross Woodmen Road at unsignalized at-grade intersections. The specific facilities affected are: Campus Bicycle Route, Skyline Trail, Rangewood Bicycle Route, East Woodmen Trail, and the Woodmen Road Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail. At locations where there are existing signalized intersections, conflicts would be minimized.

Construction-related effects, such as temporary detours and/or closure of bicycle and pedestrian facilities would occur. The No Action Alternative includes roadway turn lane additions at intersections where sidewalks, trails, or bicycle routes cross Woodmen Road. Construction would affect Skyline Trail, Rangewood Drive Bicycle Route, and East Woodmen Trail due to noise, dust, and vibrations; temporary lane closures and rerouting; and increased crossing distance.

#### No Action Impacts

The No Action Alternative will result in impacts from noise and temporary closure/rerouting during construction.



There would also be similar temporary construction-related effects to existing sidewalks near Academy Boulevard, Union Boulevard, Rangewood Drive, and Austin Bluffs Parkway. The other trails and bicycle facilities near the corridor would not be affected by construction.

Noise is expected to increase along the corridor by an average of less than two decibels as the volume of traffic increases on Woodmen Road, Union Boulevard, Austin Bluffs Parkway, Powers Boulevard, and other streets that intersect Woodmen Road. As a result, noise will increase along the segments of the trails and bicycle routes that are adjacent to or cross Woodmen Road. Users of existing and planned corridor trails and commuter bicycle routes will experience higher noise levels. Increases in noise levels along trails and commuter bicycle routes will occur primarily as a result of future increases in traffic.

Traffic noise is an accepted characteristic of on-street bicycle routes. The functionality of these routes depends on efficiency and safety of travel. While the functionality of recreational trail facilities is more sensitive to increasing noise levels, noise level increases under the No Action Alternative will not alter trail use or enjoyment. This is because traffic noise is consistent with the urban environment of the corridor, and noise levels will decrease to below the Noise Abatement Criteria (66 dB(A)) as the user walks or rides away from Woodmen Road.

Recreational trail noise levels in excess of 66 dB(A) will be limited to areas immediately adjacent to the roadway. This will occur at existing and proposed crossings of Woodmen Road, and along the segments of existing and planned trails that are, or will be adjacent to Woodmen Road. The extent of these effects is or will be limited to short distances and will not alter the use or enjoyment of the existing or planned trails. Furthermore, no impact to the proposed Sand Creek Corridor Open Space is anticipated.

Because of the linear nature of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, the construction of noise barriers would not be feasible or reasonable, and the barriers themselves would have negative impacts to users, such as the loss of an open setting, and reduced safety due to the isolation.

### **Proposed Action Alternative**

The Proposed Action will improve many of the corridor's bicycle and pedestrian facilities.



## Connectivity

The Woodmen Road project will provide connectivity benefits by providing a regional-scale link between emerging facilities in the urbanized west, with existing trail facilities in urbanizing eastern portions of El Paso County.

Like the No Action Alternative, the noise and construction related impacts would result from traffic growth and construction of roadway improvements.

Although bicycle and pedestrian facilities will be temporarily rerouted during construction, no permanent closure or circuitous rerouting will occur.

The positive effects of the improvements are described below:

- On-street bicycle lanes added along both sides of Woodmen Road between Campus Drive and Powers Boulevard will allow users of the Campus Drive and Rangewood Drive Bicycle Routes increased access to the east and west.
- The Proposed Action will provide space for the planned Woodmen Road Corridor bicycle/pedestrian facilities, which include a combination of on-street bicycle lanes along the frontage roads between Powers Boulevard and US 24, and a shared use trail connecting the north and south frontage roads at Sand Creek. No adverse impact to the proposed Sand Creek Corridor Open Space is anticipated.
- New sidewalks will be constructed on both sides of Woodmen Road between Campus Drive and Powers Boulevard.
- All other trail and bicycle routes along or crossing Woodmen Road will be accommodated.
- Access to the Rock Island Trailhead and to the proposed trailhead at Sand Creek will be accommodated.

The Proposed Action Alternative would reduce the potential for conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians or bicyclists in the Woodmen Road corridor by:

- providing bicycle/pedestrian facilities where none exist today;
- improving roadway crossings through signalization and grade separations; and
- separating bicycle/pedestrian traffic from vehicular traffic, where possible.

Temporary detours will be required for some bicycle and pedestrian facilities which exist at the time of construction on Woodmen Road. The Skyline Trail is being constructed as development occurs in the area. The Skyline Trail crossing of Woodmen Road at Union Boulevard does not exist today, but the interchange is planned to accommodate the trail crossing. It is likely that the Proposed Action would construct the Skyline Trail crossing. Construction of the Proposed Action would affect the on-street Rangewood Drive bicycle route, but this work will be coordinated with the City Traffic Engineering Division, and detours will be provided. The East Woodmen Trail will not be directly impacted by construction although dust and noise may be encountered by trail users. No impact to the proposed San Creek Corridor Open Space is anticipated, and construction would not affect other trails and bicycle facilities near the corridor.



As with the No Action Alternative, under the Proposed Action, users of existing and planned corridor trails and commuter bicycle routes will experience higher noise levels. Increases in noise levels along trails and commuter bicycle routes will occur primarily as a result of future increases in traffic.

Traffic noise is an accepted characteristic of on-street bicycle routes. The functionality of these routes depends on efficiency and safety of travel, and is not sensitive to increased noise levels. While the functionality of recreational trail facilities is more sensitive to increasing noise levels, noise level increases under the Proposed Action will not alter trail use or enjoyment. This is because traffic noise is consistent with the urban and urbanizing environment of the corridor, and noise levels will decrease to below the Noise Abatement Criteria (66 dB(A)) as the user walks or rides away from Woodmen Road.

Recreational trail noise levels in excess of 66 dB(A) will be limited to areas immediately adjacent to the roadway. This will occur at existing and proposed crossings of Woodmen Road, and along the segments of existing and planned trails that are, or will be adjacent to Woodmen Road. The extent of these effects, as previously detailed, is or will be limited to short distances and will not alter the use or enjoyment of the trails. Because of the linear nature of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, the construction of noise barriers would not be feasible or reasonable, and the barriers themselves would have negative impacts to users, such as the loss of an open setting, and reduced safety due to the isolation.

### **3.9.5 Cumulative Impacts**

The Pikes Peak Region has a long history of recreation development and open space preservation including parks, bridle and foot paths, scenic drives, and roadways. In 1994, a partnership between local governments and citizens developed the *Master Plan for the Pikes Peak Greenway* to extend a multi-use trail serving as the spine of the countywide trails system. The 2003 study *Sustaining Nature and Community in the Pikes Peak Region* (RCEA) identifies both policy-level and project-level strategies intended to sustain quality of life, including the protection of natural areas and the development of outdoor recreation facilities.

Ongoing development of recreational trails and parks by the City of Colorado Springs, El Paso County, regional trail advocates, and residential developers continue to add and maintain open spaces, natural settings, and a diverse system of recreational resources.



The accommodation and integration of trails and bicycle lanes in the Proposed Action will have long-term, positive, cumulative effects, as they are combined with the implementation of proposed trails and parks in other transportation and residential development projects. Urban and rural trails within the region will continue to be an important part of the community and its quality of life.

The implementation of the Proposed Action will contribute to the accumulation of these positive effects. It will link to trails, bicycle routes, and parks developed by the City and County for this project, and thereby help promote general community cohesion, improve local neighborhood identity, add to transportation choices (bicycle, equestrian, and pedestrian) throughout the corridor and region, help reduce local and regional car trips, conserve regional resources, and will maintain and add to the general high quality of life in the Pikes Peak Region.

### **3.9.6 Mitigation for the Proposed Action**

Improved safety measures for pedestrian and bicyclists, such as crosswalks, refuge islands, and improved signalization, and connections will improve access to and use of recreational trails and natural areas along the corridor. The following mitigation measures will be implemented:

- Disruption of recreational facility use due to construction activities, including trail detours, will be coordinated with City and County recreation planners and other appropriate officers.
- Temporary detour routes for pedestrians and bicycle users will be developed wherever possible.
- Signs, fencing, and barricades, as necessary, will be provided for safe trail use.
- Advance notification will be made to City and County offices, the Trails and Open Space Coalition, and to the news media.
- All appropriate BMPs will be applied.

Noise mitigation for trails will not be provided. The linear nature of bicycle and pedestrian facilities would make the construction of noise barriers not feasible or reasonable, and the barriers themselves would have negative impacts to users, such as the loss of the open setting, and reduced safety due to the isolation.

