

Newsletter 18-11-15

To: Membership of Newcastle Trails

All-

There are several news items to report:

- Newcastle Trails has launched a **photo contest** with a December 15 deadline.
- The planned logging of the **DeLeo Wall Parcel** adjacent to Cougar Mountain Park has been delayed while negotiations to preserve the parcel continue.
- NT has been working to complete the **Horse Trail** access to May Creek Park on or near the proposed Murray Franklyn development SE of Cottingham.

NT Photo Contest

Newcastle Trails is having a photo contest! Share your best photos from 2018 by December 15, and win a copy of "14 Shorter Trail Walks in and around Newcastle". Post your trail photo(s) to our [Facebook page](#) or on [Instagram](#) (use tag #newcastletrails2018photocontest).

Rules:

Submitted photos must be taken on one of Newcastle's many trails and you must follow Newcastle Trails' Facebook page or Instagram page.

Please note the following on your submission: Name of the trail where the photo was taken, the date, and any story or details you'd like to share about that particular photo or trail. If you didn't take the photo, make sure you obtain permission from the photographer before you share.

The winner will receive a signed copy of the book, "14 Shorter Trail Walks in and around Newcastle", by local author Eva Lundahl. The winner will also have his or her photo featured as the Newcastle Trails' Facebook cover photo in January 2019 (with their permission) and on the Newcastle Trails website.

We will select and announce the winner on December 16, 2018, on Facebook, Instagram, and the NT website at www.NewcastleTrails.org

We can't wait to see your best Newcastle Trails photos. Good luck!!!

DeLeo Wall Parcel

The planned logging of the DeLeo Wall adjacent to Cougar Mountain Park has been delayed while Forterra and the City of Newcastle continue negotiations with the property owner. Our goal is to retain the land as public open space, and a possible addition to Cougar Mountain Wildland Park. Forterra would hold the land for 2 years, until a public/private partnership was established to acquire the property permanently.

Background: In May 2018, the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issued a permit for logging a 38-acre parcel of forest land directly adjacent to Cougar Mountain Park. The parcel includes the DeLeo Wall, a regional landmark with great views, and several trails that connect Newcastle's trails with the trails of Cougar Mountain. A local citizens group, Save DeLeo Wall, is working to preserve the trails and forest here. Thanks to them, 220+ people sent comments to the DNR, and others spoke at Newcastle and Renton Council meetings. Both cities have supported the effort with time and money.

NT supports saving this forest land, and urges you to help (see <https://www.savedeleowall.org/>).

Horse Trail

The proposed Murray Franklyn development just north of May Creek Park (see **Appendix** on page 3) offers a rare opportunity to do two important things: complete the Horse Trail connection to May Creek Trail, and provide safe, direct access to May Creek Park for a growing population.

The Horse Trail (named for its historic use) has provided a pedestrian connection from the Hazelwood community south to May Creek Park long before Newcastle existed. This trail has been in Newcastle's Comprehensive Plan from the beginning. But the final stretch follows May Creek Park Drive from the hairpin turn south to the 124th Ave SE entrance to the Park. Until there's a sidewalk or trail here, the existing informal route – on the shoulder of an increasingly busy road – is unsafe.

At the 11/6 City Council meeting, we asked the Council to defer the proposed Agreement with Murray Franklyn until the connection of the Horse Trail to the May Creek Trail was assured. In exchange for the developer constructing a road between SE 84th Street and the hairpin turn on May Creek Park Drive, the Agreement will allow 47 homes on the site, waiving many of the City's requirements, including an impact fee estimated at \$304K. We stressed the importance of safe access to the Park. The Council voted for an amended Agreement, with Gordon Bisset dissenting. The developer didn't accept the amended agreement, so the Council voted at their 11/20 meeting to reconsider the agreement on 12/4.

NT will continue to pursue a quality trail connection. At our monthly City-NT meeting we discussed the possibility of a trail on the east edge of the MCP Drive right of way, done in conjunction with grading in the development. Also, staff feels they can hold the developer to the trails shown on the map for the Agreement (dashed red lines in Figure 2 in the **Appendix**). If you have comments, let us (or the Council) know.

Appendix. Trails at Murray Franklyn Development (SEPA 18-009)

Newcastle Trails supports the Trail Connection described on page 1 in the proposed Development Agreement with Murray Franklyn (**Recitals, E**): "a north-south pedestrian trail connection from the May Creek Trail to the 84th Street Trail and Horse Trail/CrossTown Trail system". But the trails the Agreement specifies will **not** complete a safe, direct Horse Trail connection to May Creek Park and Trail, as required by the Comprehensive Plan. And an alternate route may not be feasible.

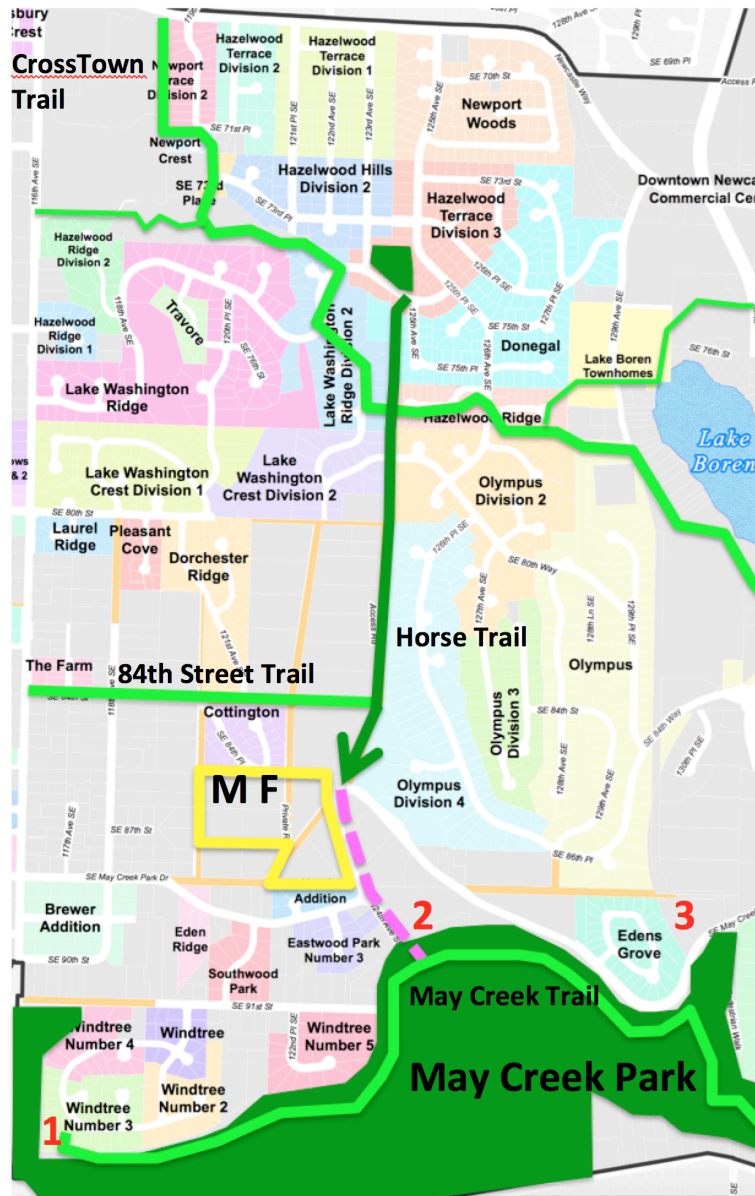
Figure 1: Neighborhoods served by Trail Connection.

Importance of Connection.

If done properly, the Trail Connection will provide many of the neighborhoods shown in Figure 1 with their only good pedestrian connection to May Creek Park (the City's largest park) and May Creek Trail (a major trail with historic sites, woodlands, and creek access).

The map in Figure 1 shows how the north-to-south Horse Trail (dark green line) will provide pedestrian access to May Creek Park from many neighborhoods west of Lake Boren, if its final section (dashed magenta line) is completed as part of the Murray Franklyn project (yellow outline).

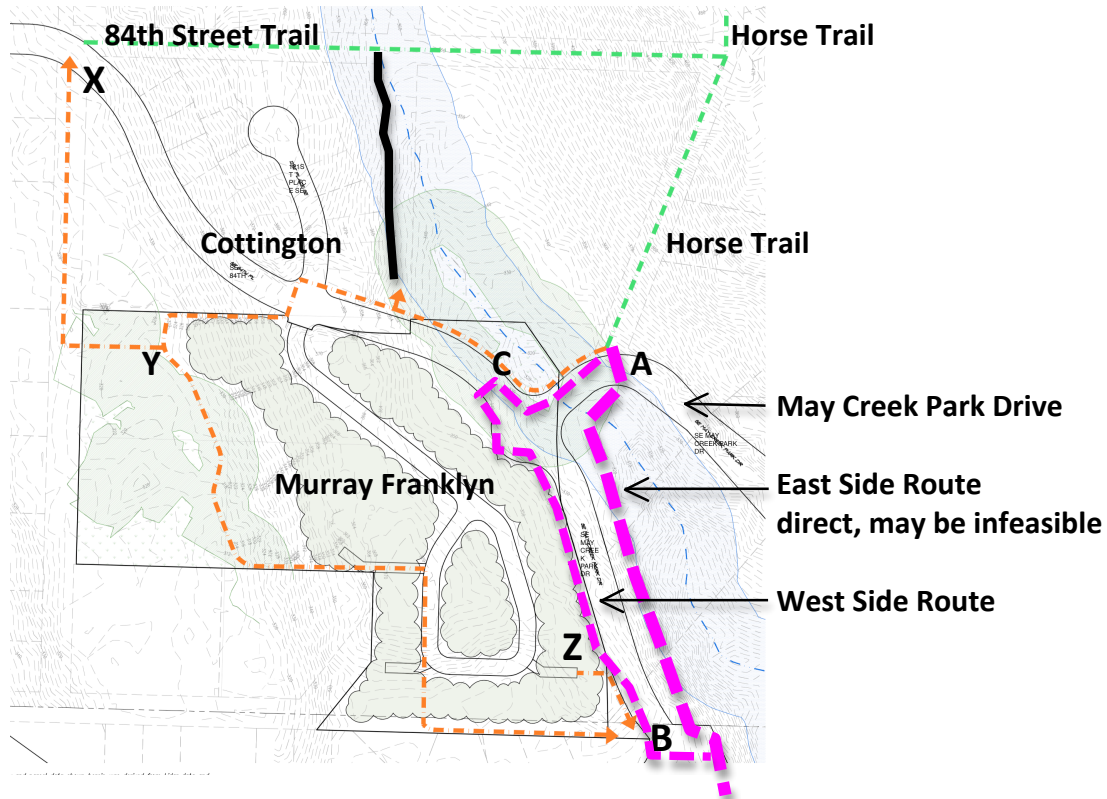
The park has 4 entry points from Newcastle. Entries 1-3 are shown on the map; entry 4 is on Coal Creek Parkway. Entry 1 has 43 descending steps; entries 2 and 3 require pedestrians to cross May Creek Park Drive, and entry 2 requires walkers to use the shoulder of this busy arterial. Safe access to entry 2 should be provided when the new development is built.



Concerns. The body of the Agreement describes a Trail Connection that does **not** connect to May Creek Trail; it connects **only** to the SE corner of the Murray Franklyn development and does **not** provide safe access to May Creek Park. Section 2.b (Trail Connection) says in part "MFLA shall design and construct the Trail Connection via a north-south pedestrian connection from the southeast portion of the property near the May Creek Trail access at 124th Ave SE to the existing trail near the boundary of the Cottingham plat (84th Street Trail), incorporating soft surface trail through the Property."

Figure 2 below shows the Conceptual Trail Exhibit referenced in section 2.b. I've added labels (in black) and three trail routes: an existing access trail (thick black line); and two proposed routes (dashed magenta) that would complete the Horse Trail as described in Newcastle's Comprehensive Plan. The most direct route follows the east side of May Creek Park Drive after crossing at A; the west-side route follows sidewalks west on the roundabout to C, with crossings at C and B.

Figure 2. Conceptual Trail Exhibit from Murray Franklyn



From B, the Horse Trail follows 124th Ave SE to May Creek Trail in May Creek Park

The thinner dashed lines show the existing 84th Street Trail and Horse Trail (green), and the trails proposed by Murray Franklyn (red). The trail XYB satisfies the Agreement, but so does a trail on sidewalks from X to Z plus a soft surface trail Z to B. Both options would force Horse Trail users on a lengthy detour into Cottingham. And, since they stop at B, neither provides a safe connection to May Creek Park or May Creek Trail. Surely, any agreement that puts 47 homes near a park should provide for safe access to the park.

One Possible Solution. The **West Side Route** ACB shown in Figure 2 would provide a safe, reasonably direct Trail Connection to B at little cost to the developer. It would use sidewalks planned for the roundabout, and a soft-surface trail on the west side of May Creek Park Drive. The trail would cost little to build; and a trail in the existing right-of-way would not affect lot sizes. There's a possibility of some grade separation from the road (see Peggy Price's comments below).

If the developer agreed to build trail ACB, the City could agree to provide a safe crossing at B and complete the trail into May Creek Park. It would follow the east side of 124th Ave SE, avoiding the homes and driveways on the west side, and could be built cheaply. Since the development would benefit from the trail connection, the developer could be asked to provide a portion of the normal impact fee to reimburse the City.

Background. The City decided not to ask for the direct Horse Trail connection because there was not an "essential nexus" between the Murray Franklyn development and "the future trail planned on the east side" of May Creek Park Drive. But the Comprehensive Plan does not require a specific route, just a direct connection. The West Side Route meets the requirements of the Plan. And the alternate **East Side Route may not be feasible:** It would pass homes and driveways near the hairpin turn (A); further along, the ground behind the guard rails slopes steeply down to a retention pond.

Trail Connection: Now or Never. The development of this area SE of Cottingham has always been seen as a one-time opportunity to complete the Road Connection through Cottingham **and** the Trail Connection into May Creek Park. There won't be a similar development east of the road: much of the area is a retention pond. If the full Trail Connection is not built when this area is developed, it may not get built at all. This would be contrary to the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and the Non-Motorized Plan, and the need for safe access to May Creek Park for the increasing population to the north.

Summary. If the Murray Franklin Agreement is accepted in its present form, the Horse Trail will not be completed as described in the Comprehensive Plan, and a safe entrance to May Creek Park will be deferred indefinitely. **The Agreement should not be approved** until both the road and trail connections are assured. The Trail Connection will benefit the development and the larger community; it will cost very little compared to the road; it's required by City policies; and this may be the last chance to provide it.

The developer wants immediate approval, before purchase options expire. But the landowners are apparently eager to sell, so that shouldn't be a problem. And the benefits to Murray Franklyn are substantial; if they won't cooperate, perhaps other developers will.

ADDENDA

Comment by Peggy Price.

There's a reasonable argument for putting the trail on the west side of SE May Creek Park Drive going by the Murray Franklyn development to take pedestrians between the Horse, Sylvan, and May Creek Trails. It would allow pedestrians coming south on the Horse Trail to cross MCP Dr. at a less confusing and congested location where the sight distance would be better--the rise immediately east of the SE corner of the Murray Franklyn development (an extension of the half-width road right of way owned by the City). That's where I prefer to cross because I can see traffic better, and they can see me better, even with the broad turn where the trail would go into May Creek Park along 124th Ave. SE. Pedestrians coming from the Horse Trail could cross the new road (SE 84th Place) just west of the traffic circle to go toward the May Creek Trail, so they wouldn't have to cross at the hairpin with its poor sight distance. South of the circle, the trail could be elevated on a terrace above the road, and it wouldn't have to be paved in that location. Another advantage of this plan is that the trail could be created relatively quickly and easily even if the street improvements were delayed, so pedestrians would have a reasonably safe route off the busy arterial. I hope this plan will be considered. I'd be OK with reducing the east setback of the affected lots to accommodate the trail.

Comment by Garry Kampen.

A trail connection on the west side of May Creek Park Drive is important, because there may be no good alternative. Eventually the trail here should be an all-weather trail, perhaps asphalt, since it will get heavy use: it's the narrow part of a funnel bringing pedestrians by trail and sidewalk from all the neighborhoods to the north.

In 1980, when I moved into my home in the Hazelwood community, the Horse Trail already existed as a well-used informal trail from Hazelwood into May Creek Park, using the shoulder of May Creek Park Drive. But the current Newcastle Trails website shows the Horse Trail ending at the 84th Street Trail, with a safety warning for the informal route into May Creek Park. With the increasing population served by the Park, it's time to complete the trail on a safe, direct route.

The Agreement provides major benefits to Murray Franklin: no impact fees to the City, and valuable waivers (on streets, sidewalks, setbacks, etc.) that will allow more homes at less cost. In return, the City gets a street connection from May Creek Park Drive through Cottingham to 116th Street. But isn't this street connection already required by the rule that developments of this size have two entrances? Is this large benefit essential to get the site developed and the road built? If the City must give up a proper Trail Connection to get the desired Road Connection, I'd wait for a better deal.