



## MISSION STATEMENT

*To construct and cooperatively maintain a scenic and safe non-motorized urban and backcountry multi-use trail system through Eagle County.*

The ECO Trails program is a department of Eagle County and also a partnership of the towns of Gypsum, Eagle, Avon, Vail, Red Cliff and Minturn and Eagle County working together to construct the planned Eagle Valley Regional Trail System. The completed system will be 63 miles long and connect Vail Pass to Glenwood Canyon and include a connection to Red Cliff. The system will be multi-use and non-motorized, serving pedestrians, bicyclists and citizens and visitors from all age groups for recreation and transportation.

## ECO TRAILS PROGRAM INFORMATION

The Eagle County Trails Program began in 1996 as a result of the passage of the half-percent sales tax to finance mass transportation improvements in Eagle County. Ten percent of the revenues from that tax were designated for the development of a county-wide trails system. The remaining 90% of the tax is dedicated to the bus transit program. The trails portion of the tax must be used to construct trails and cannot be diverted to other uses without a voter amendment.

An oversight board, called the Eagle County Regional Transportation Authority or ECO Board, was created to administer the tax and is made up of representatives from the Towns of Gypsum, Eagle, Avon, Minturn, Red Cliff and Vail, Eagle County and Beaver Creek. The Authority does not include the Roaring Fork Valley side of Eagle County.

In 1996, a citizen Trails Committee was created to advise the Authority on how the taxes collected for trails should be spent. A staff position was added in 1998 to implement the trails program. Staffs from each of the towns and county government also participate on the Committee.

Some Functions of the ECO Trails staff person and the Trails Committee are:

- Trail Planning and Construction
- Trail Events and Public Relations
- Trail Maintenance Management

## COST TO FUND THE SYSTEM

The cost estimate to fund the remaining trail segments to complete the system is \$28 million, due to the design and construction challenges of the river and mountain landscape, and man-made obstacles. The annual mass transportation sales tax revenues that are dedicated to trails have grown from \$280,000 collected in 1996 the first year to an expected \$518,000 in 2010. Grants, donations and development have leveraged the tax funds to help build more miles of trail faster. At current rates of accrual, it will take approximately 15 years to complete the planned system.

## TRAIL SEGMENTS BUILT WITH ECO TRAILS FUNDS:

Vail to Dowd Junction Trail  
Dowd Junction to Avon Trail Phase I  
Town of Avon River Trail Phase I  
Town of Avon River Trail Phase II  
East Edwards Trail  
West Edwards Trail  
Town of Eagle Pedestrian Bridge  
Town of Gypsum West Trail  
Town of Gypsum Downtown Trail  
Gypsum to Dotsero Phase I Trail  
Eagle to Gypsum Phase I Trail  
Cooley Mesa Trail to Gypsum

## TRAIL SEGMENTS LEFT TO COMPLETE:

Eagle-Vail to Avon Trail, 3 Phases – Start 2011  
Wolcott to Eagle Trail, 3 Phases – Start 2011  
Edwards to Wolcott Trail – Start 2012  
Dowd Junction through Minturn – Start 2012  
Minturn to Red Cliff Trail – with development  
Gypsum to Dotsero Trail Phase II - 2012

## ECO TRAILS AND ROADWAYS

In the last few years, the citizen volunteer ECO Trails Committee has increased its advocacy efforts for shared roadways in Eagle County and statewide.

ECO Trails submitted comments to the state legislature in support of the new law that requires a vehicle give a bicyclist three feet of clearance, in the interest of safety. ECO Trails provided support comments to CDOT and Eagle County to widen the shoulders between Edwards and Wolcott. Funding is short for continuation to Eagle, but CDOT and the County remain committed to the project.

A sub-committee of the 18 member ECO Trails Committee formed in 2009 to document issues related to maintenance and signs on Highways 6, 24 and 131 through Eagle County.

Although ECO Trails has no jurisdiction or decision making powers regarding roads, the various towns, the county and CDOT have welcomed our comments.

Citizens can forward their roadway comments to ECO Trails or contact CDOT directly as needed with questions and comments about highway issues in the subdivision boundaries and other locations in Eagle County.

- Maintenance issues are handled locally, contact Emily Trujillo at the CDOT Gypsum office at 524-0625 for questions or requests.
- For signs, including signals and crossings, contact the Traffic Division in Grand Junction at 970-683-6274.

## ECO TRAILS, MOUNTAIN BIKING AND HIKING

The ECO Trails Committee has for several years been a point of contact for the BLM and USFS on local trail use. The Committee spun off a backcountry trails subcommittee to meet as needed on backcountry issues, participating in the USFS Travel Management Plan process, the BLM Travel Management Plan process, USFS and BLM special permit

reviews. Several trail work days have been hosted by ECO Trails on BLM trails popular with mountain bikers, hikers and runners in the Eagle area.

ECO Trails members include mountain bikers, hikers, and equestrians in addition to being community members that use paved trails and roadways. The Committee participated in the 2008-2010 Hidden Gems proposal reviews, meeting with proponents several times, resulting in the Committee supporting over 90% of the Gems proposal.

## UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD CORRIDOR:

Trains stopped running regularly on the track corridor through Eagle County in 1997 as part of the Southern Pacific Railroad and Union Pacific Railroad merger. As part of the merger support from then-Governor Romer, the railroads would abandon the track corridor and sell it to Colorado State Parks for a linear park and 170 mile trail from Gypsum to Canon City.

However, as part of the merger approval, the Federal Transportation Authority conditioned that the track corridor could not be abandoned but must be retained. Their concern was that train traffic could not be handled by the north and south lines. UPRR has since removed the corridor from its abandonment list. Their public statement is that they retain the corridor for future rail traffic needs or national emergencies.

Twice since 1997, consortiums of state and local governments have tried to acquire the corridor, offering millions in the last effort, but UPRR declined to participate. UPRR has indicated that it will consider leasing the tracks for commuter rail with conditions, but will not allow a trail to lease all or part of its corridor, primarily because of hazards and their liability.