

February 11, 2025

Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

We are deeply concerned that the city has misrepresented community support for the extensive development of mountain bike trails in our canyons. It is essential to refocus efforts on preserving the natural beauty of these areas and prioritizing access for hikers, ensuring a balanced and environmentally sustainable approach to trail development.

To begin, we will highlight key concerns regarding the 2019 survey, which has been used as the foundation for the current trail project. We will then outline specific recommendations for the next steps we urge city officials to take in response to these issues.

2019 Community Survey Results

Based on a review of the data and the results, here are the findings and our concerns.

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Findings / Concerns</u>
Misleading Results ----- 200 Responses were from Nonresidents ----- Survey Question 3	The 2019 survey used to support the current trail project included a significant number of nonresident responses, leading to a distorted representation of community preferences. Of the 600 total survey responses, 200 (33%) came from nonresidents. Among these nonresident responses, 70% identified as mountain bikers. Given that only 3% of our local community participates in mountain biking, while hikers represent 15-16% of residents, the survey results are significantly skewed (see data here: Letter to the City). The disproportionate representation of bikers—particularly nonresidents—creates a clear bias, making the data statistically unreliable for accurately assessing community needs and guiding decision-making.
Demographic Bias ----- Survey Question 1	The survey exhibited a clear age demographic bias. A disproportionately high percentage (78%) of respondents fell within the 25–54 age range, which aligns with the demographic where mountain bikers are typically represented. This overrepresentation further skews the results in favor of biking. Additionally, the survey failed to include a question about gender, making it impossible to assess whether the responses accurately reflected the diversity of our community.
Inadequate Consideration of Safety Concerns ----- Survey Question 15	The survey included only a single question regarding perceived safety in the mountains. While 24% of residents reported feeling “definitely safe,” the remaining 76% expressed some level of concern. However, the survey failed to include a follow-up question to identify the specific reasons for these concerns. Additionally, the master plan does not appear to address any potential safety issues. A proper follow-up question should have asked respondents to specify whether their concerns were related to: (a) mountain bikes, (b) wildlife, (c) trail erosion, or (d) other factors. This omission leaves critical safety issues unexamined and unaddressed in the planning process. It also fails to bring to light the safety concerns residents have when it comes to bikers.

Misleading Data and Missed Opportunity Survey Question 7	Another survey question asked why respondents did not visit the mountains, but it provided only a limited set of vague response options—none of which included concerns about mountain biking. This poorly designed question resulted in only 2 out of 600 respondents selecting an answer, stating they did not visit because they didn't know where the trailhead was. Despite the extremely low response rate, the city presented this data in a bar graph at the same visual scale as other responses, creating a misleading impression that a significant portion of the community shared this concern. This is a quote for the 2019 Master Trail Plan, as shown in the Nov 2019 city council meeting report, "Tellingly, respondents that do not use the trail system unanimously answered that it is because they do not know where the trails start." This misrepresentation undermines the credibility of the survey results and skews public perception. Additionally, this was a missed opportunity to gather meaningful insights by asking whether increased mountain bike usage was a factor in residents choosing not to visit the canyons. A well-structured survey should have included this option to ensure a more accurate understanding of community concerns.
Majority of Responses Favored Hiking Survey Question 9	Despite the survey's demographic bias— 75% of residents expressed support for expanding hiking trails. Based on these findings, the master plan should have prioritized developing hiking trails over biking trails. However, this is not reflected in the current plan.
No New Trail System but wanted more Hiking Trails Survey Question 10 & Question 11	The city has clearly disregarded key survey responses. The responses for Question 10 stated that 67% were either extremely satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the current system. While 10% stated they were somewhat dissatisfied (9%) or extremely dissatisfied (1%) with the current system. However, in Question 11, 66% of respondents indicated a desire for more trails. Taken together, these responses suggest that residents support maintaining the current trail system while making improvements and expansions where necessary—not replacing it entirely. Despite this, residents were informed that existing trails would not be addressed, and instead, an entirely new system would be developed. The city hired a Michigan-based company specializing in mountain bike trail systems, and as reflected in the master plan, a completely new trail network has been introduced, disregarding the community's actual preferences.

Conclusion: The current trail plan does not reflect the true desires of our community. **The extensive network of trails being constructed was not what residents agreed to—we envisioned a plan that preserves the natural beauty of our mountains with minimal environmental impact.** As stewards of these landscapes, we believe in responsible trail development that allows people to enjoy nature while leaving as little trace as possible.

The current plan, however, appears chaotic and excessive, disregarding the interests of the majority—hikers who seek to experience these mountains in their most natural state. Given this

misalignment, we strongly urge the city to reconsider and develop a new plan that prioritizes sustainability, balance, and the actual preferences of our community.



Trail Project Requests

Even though the survey results were biased, the majority of the community residents still expressed their interest for hiking trails over bike trails. As residents of Bountiful, we are asking for the following things to happen regarding the trail project.

1. Stop All Trail Building	We want all trail building to cease. This includes trails already approved to be built from the Forest Service because we believe these trails do not represent the needs of our community . We want a new plan developed that focuses on building and providing maintenance to current hiking trails.
2. Designate 4 Trails as Hiker-Only & Work to Maintain Them	These existing hiking trails need maintenance! We want our city to improve the foot traffic trails. This should be a priority. Permanent foot bridges need to be built, and steps added to deter bikers. Holbrook Canyon Trail: There are several bridges needing repair (see images below in Appendix).

	2. Millcreek Trail (trailhead starts at Mueller Park Canyon Picnic Area, that turns into Burro Trail): There are 8 bridges that need maintenance. 3. Kenny Trail: This trail needs to be for horses and hikers only. (The current biker trails being planned through this trail need to be halted. They will completely disrupt the natural hike trail that so many of us enjoy.) 4. Stone Creek Trail (trailhead at the “B”): This trail is already marked to be widened and trees demolished. We want this to remain a hiker-only trail. We want these trails to remain hiker-only trails, and a focus be on upkeeping these trails. We do not want these trails widened for bikes. We want the taxpayer funds to be spent on upkeep of these trails by improving the foot bridges that are breaking down, to protect the safety of our hikers.
3. New Trail Committee Assigned	We believe a fresh start with new decision-makers is necessary to ensure fair and unbiased trail planning. Given that the current Trail Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman are both avid mountain bikers, there is a clear potential for bias in decision-making. To create a more balanced and representative committee, we propose restructuring its composition to better reflect the community’s diverse trail users. We recommend the following representation: 3–4 Hikers, 1 Mountain Biker, 2 Dog Walkers, 1 Equestrian This structure more accurately aligns with the actual usage of our trails by residents and ensures that all perspectives are considered. Additionally, we strongly believe that the Chairman should be a hiker, as hikers represent the majority of trail users in our community.
4. Secure Safety of Pedestrians	This includes installing pedestrian gates, adding better signage, etc. (More details can be found in this document to the City.)

We appreciate your time and attention to this matter and look forward to working together to protect our canyons for future generations.

Signed,
-The Concerned Citizens of Bountiful

*Letter written by
Dr Angie Holzer
Maria Givler
(Representing a growing list of concerned citizens, [see petition for full list of names](#))*

A Few Pictures from Holbrook Canyon Bridges that Need Repair



And here's a picture of the bike bridge the city built - illustrating the imbalance of bikers being prioritized. And there are several of these bridges built already.

This bridge is at the end of a one mile biker-only trail already built, and the trail underneath is a hiker trail where the city allows bikers to go, making it extremely unsafe for hikers. Another example of how the city prioritizes bikers.

