

SEELEY LAKE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

May 2, 2011

Board of County Commissioners
200 West Broadway
Missoula, MT 59801

Dear Commissioners,

The Recreation/Trails Committee of the Seeley Lake Community Council has been active and successful for several years. Their efforts have left a lasting mark on the community. The recent Parks Department parks and trails survey has confirmed the high value placed on "trails" by our residents.

Developing a safe pathway along the Airport Road and through the Seeley Swan High School property to the Morrell Creek bridge (map attached) is one of the most significant projects that have been undertaken. The first phase of the project started with a State Recreation Trails Grant in 2004. A trail construction agreement with Missoula County was executed November 23, 2005. Refer to attached description.

Over the past few years, incremental work has been done to survey the route, designate the pedestrian crossings, substantially prepare the sub-grade, install several driveway culverts, haul great quantities of fill material, and move utilities

The Council Committee is currently collaborating with the Seeley Swan ATV Club for them to seek another State Recreation Trails Program Grant to finish the sub-grade work and apply a gravel surface. The RTP grant requires 20% matching funds, which can be work and materials. Most of the finish work is equipment intensive construction with little opportunity for significant volunteer work to offset costs.

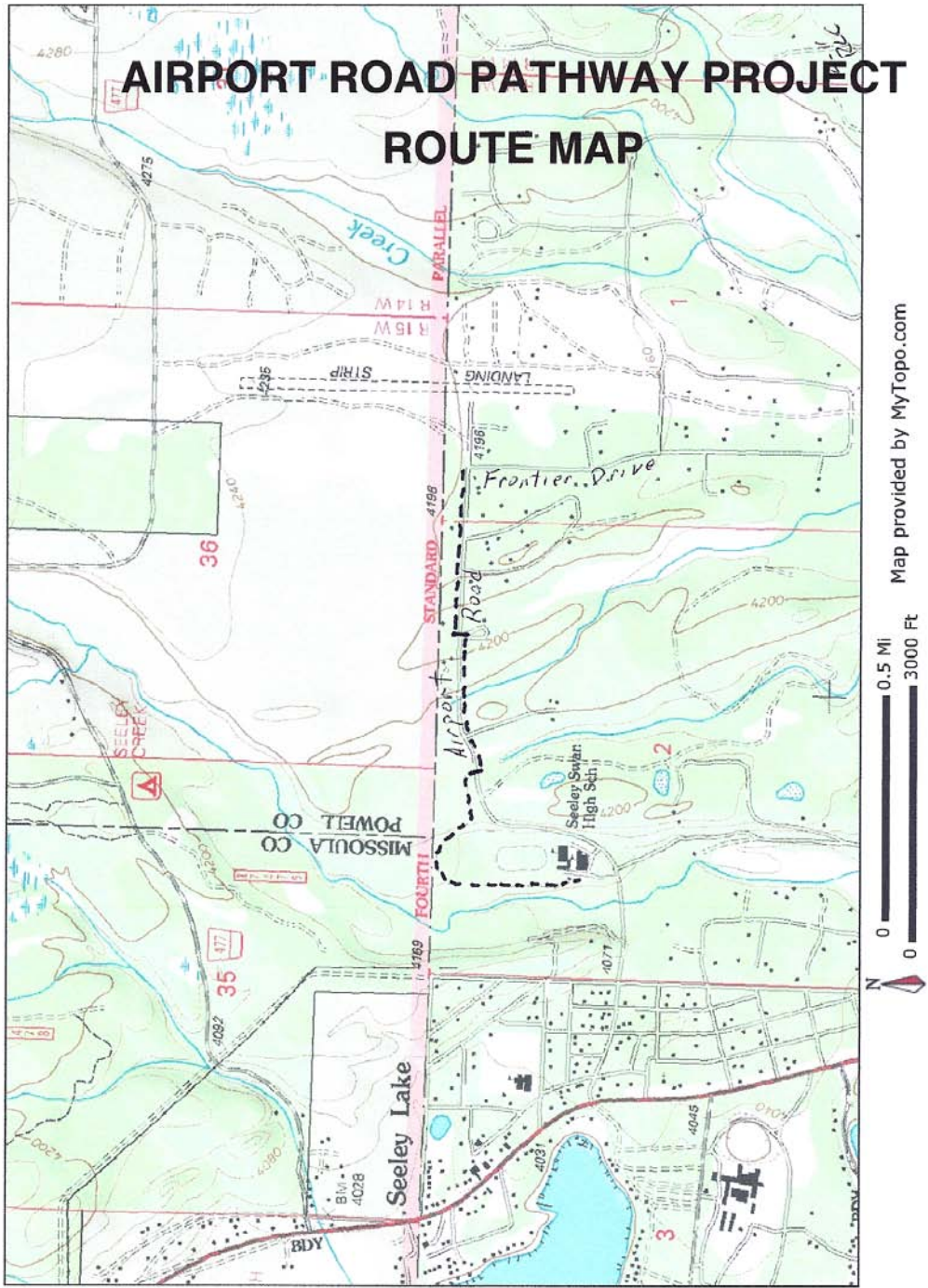
One solution to make the project doable would be for the County to provide the gravel as an in-kind donation so the grant reimbursement would off-set the construction equipment cost. Quantity estimate for the entire project is 675 yards.

By a motion passed at the regular monthly meeting of the Seeley Lake Community Council on the 2nd day of May 2011, we formally request Missoula County to provide the gravel to allow the Seeley Swan ATV Club to complete this project.

Sincerely,

ADDRIEN MARX
Chairperson

ATTACHMENT A. ROUTE MAP.



ATTACHMENT B. DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION. --DRAFT--

Purpose:

This project is to apply a compacted, gravel surfacing to an existing trailway. This project is the second phase of developing a pathway from the Seeley Lake airport to the Seeley Swan High School. The first phase was subgrade construction for this financed under a previous RTP grant (Stump Prairie, RT2004-34A).

Over the past few years, incremental work has been done in cooperation and collaboration with the County Road Department, Public Works engineers, State Highway Department, local contractors, high school students and volunteers. The route has been surveyed, pedestrian crossings designated by the County, subgrade work substantially completed with several driveway culverts installed from Frontier Drive to the Lutheran Church. Montana State Highway Department has hauled numerous loads of fill material for the low segments. Utilities have been moved. Rental equipment (at very favorable rates) with volunteer operator has leveled infill and excavated much of the treadway.

Although suitable for ATV and motorcycle use, the surface is rough, the native material is subject to dust during dry season and puddling during wet weather. Speed of motorized vehicles causes rocks and pebbles to loosen causing uneven surface. The unconsolidated, rocky glacial gravel material discourages bicycle and pedestrian use, causing them to use the adjacent paved road.

Benefit:

This project will improve user safety, increase resource protection and provide greater user satisfaction. This trail route is a key link in the "Connecting The Community" network for commuting to the schools and townsite, and connects to access the expansive public lands via the trail north across National Forest and Montana State school trust lands. The roadway serves about 600 properties, 200 of which are within one mile.

Location and Use:

SEGMENT A. The 0.6 mile route is located on Seeley Swan High School property near its northern and western boundary. It starts from the northwest corner of the main parking lot, northerly along the upper creek bank to near the property boundary with National Forest land, thence easterly up the hill to the County Airport Road. An informal non-motorized pathway connects to the Morrell Creek outdoor classroom near the beginning.

SEGMENT B. The 0.8 mile route is adjacent to the Airport Road, east of Seeley Swan High School. The pathway is on the north side of the road from the top of High School Hill to near the fence at the east edge of the High School property. It crosses the road to the south side to the Lutheran Church where it crosses back and continues on the north side of the road to the Seeley Lake Airport.

This segment is located entirely within the County road easement. The trail is for multipurpose use. The mix of use types in this area has a history of non-conflict. The users are almost exclusively from the same neighborhood and respect each other whether they are on a horse or ATV, snowmobile or ski, alone or with a dog. Mixing the

various uses encourages all to exhibit good behavior and tends to foster appreciation and understanding of each other's preference for outdoor recreation

Need:

An increasing population, along with an increasing popularity of alternative means of transportation, has created a situation where mixed use of leisure traffic and regular vehicle traffic on the road is hazardous and stressful. A safe route is needed to accommodate and encourage various user groups off the County paved road. Because of the variety and increased amount of use, the airport road between the airport and the Seeley Swan High School has become unsafe for pedestrian travel. Parents are reluctant to allow children to ride bicycles or otherwise travel on the road. It is even discouraging for families to take walks or bicycle rides. In the winter, snowmobiles riding on the road create additional safety hazards. As one parent stated "There are too many Dodges to dodge." Sight distance because of a few hills is limited, making even ATV travel on the roadway risky. Bicycle users dread it when two vehicles meet at the same time while passing.

Background:

Residents in the vicinity have traditionally been able to access public lands for horseback riding, hiking, biking, driving for pleasure, snowmobiling, cross country skiing and other outdoor recreation pursuits by heading north from Frontier Drive. There has always been a 200-foot strip of private land to cross, but it was undeveloped and owners were very lenient about allowing the public to cross it. However, in recent years the area has become more developed, and owners are not inclined to allow trespassing. Subsequently these various uses have been funneled onto the Airport Road. For a few years access to the public lands was restricted and local residents needed to travel about four miles (west to Highway 83, north to Cottonwood Lakes Road and back east to the north end of the airport) to reach public land that was once 200 feet away.

The first phase, RTP grant accomplished the development of this segment of the trail plus the one-mile loop around the Seeley Swan High School property. Phase 1 of this project prepared the sub-grade for a roadside pathway. This route will be used yearlong, potentially groomed in winter for snowmobiles. The existing surface is native, gravel and rock material.

The terrain is very suitable to design facilities for disabled access, suitable for novice users, and located in a very attractive setting. Trail gradient generally does not exceed five percent. Road crossing will have standard pedestrian crossing markings and signs. The topography is mostly flat, with a few depressions and rises to cross which provide grade variety and affect sight distance. The surrounding land is timber covered, with very light brush in the understory. Soil is a glacial gravel with a high content of various size, rounded rocks. The unconsolidated surface material is not conducive for use by novice bicycle users, joggers or easy walking. The route does not cross any perennial streams.