



The Trail Foundation Comments for the City's Boardwalk Design Public Participation Process, September 2008

The Trail Foundation has grown to understand that the Trail offers users many different types of recreational opportunities in a unique environment. The Boardwalk could and should support multiple activities and varied user needs; provide amenities to this eastside area in keeping with the rest of the Trail and with its place as Austin's most heavily used Trail.

The main considerations we would ask the City to make are the following:

Intentionally design the boardwalk trail to support multiple, simultaneous uses. Uses that already occur on the Trail are both mobile like running and walking and stationary like fishing and bird watching. Wheelchairs, bikes, dogs on a leash, strollers should all be contemplated and incorporated into the design. We should design in way to support safe peak simultaneous use in east and west directions.

The current lake front private property owners should be respectfully considered. They deserve safe private access, continued access to the lake for their canoes and kayaks and design that is considerate of their proximity to the structure.

In the same way, citizens who view the structure from the other side of the lake or the roadway, should see something attractive with some design elements that are deliberately pleasing to the eye and in keeping with the urban environment nearby.

We should deliberately select surface materials that are conducive to regular runners and other pedestrians. In the big picture, we should explore how this bridge can be built with materials and methods that are as environmentally sensitive as practical and possible.

If there are innovative steps we can take to improve habitat for the wildlife nearby, we should include those.

Let's be bold enough to create a boardwalk with a design and supporting amenities like educational signage, gardens with native plants, and some shaded areas that create a unique sense of place.

The trailheads should provide adequate access for the nearby neighborhoods and connectivity to nearby trails and adequate amenity infrastructure like water fountains, mutt mitt dispensers and trash receptacles as well as the infrastructure required by public safety officials.

Lighting plans, to the extent needed, should be carefully vetted with all stakeholders to minimize its intrusions into the lives of residents and wildlife. And in a similar vein, we should note that we don't see this Boardwalk as a good venue for large gatherings.

We are frequently humbled by what we don't know, but our experience in the last 5 years as passionate stewards for the Trail has led us to even better understand the Trail's place in Austin and how many people and community needs it serves. As we work to close the gap and better connect the community, we should keep our community's broad needs and diverse interests in mind.