

4.13. Parks and Recreation

4.13.1. Introduction

This section of the revised EA includes a summary of parks and recreation resources, as presented in the January 2006 EA and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation for the Bigelow Gulch/Forker Road Urban Connector (Jones & Stokes 2006), as well as additional information relating to comments received in letters of comment and during the March 22, 2006, public hearing.

No comments were received specifically regarding parks; however, several comments were related to recreational activities at the East Valley School District and to the accommodation of bicycles on the proposed Urban Connector Alignment.

4.13.2. What parks and recreation resources are present in the project area?

East Valley School District Sports Fields

As previously mentioned in the January 2006 EA, no state or county parks exist within the Urban Connector Alignment project area; however, school and general public-related recreation occurs at sports fields located at the East Valley Middle School and adjacent East Valley High School. Recreational resources at the middle school include four baseball/softball fields and adjacent multiple use sports fields (e.g., soccer). The high school recreational resources include a track, baseball diamond, and tennis courts. The fields are used during school hours by the school district and during non-school hours by the Spokane County and City of Spokane recreation programs, sports associations, and the general public. The fields are used for school sporting events, community league play, and general recreational uses for approximately 8 months of the year.

Bicycling

The Spokane County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan (Spokane County 2006d), has identified a number of roads in the project area, including Bigelow Gulch Road, Forker Road, Jensen Road, and Argonne Road, as bikeways. Bicycle lanes currently exist on portions of Argonne Road.

4.13.3. What regulations apply to parks and recreation?

The federal regulation that applies to this resource is the Section 4(f) evaluation process presented as Chapter 5 of this Revised EA.

4.13.4. How were potential effects evaluated?

Potential impacts related to parks and recreation were analyzed based on information drawn from a variety of sources, including the Spokane County Comprehensive Plan and a review of Chapter 2, *Project Description*.

Of importance was the consideration of potential impact of the proposed action to cause a permanent loss of existing parks and recreation facilities or to violate any environmental law or regulation designed to protect parks or recreation.

4.13.5. Environmental Consequences

Proposed Action

How would construction of the project affect parks and recreation?

East Valley School District Sports Fields

Construction of the proposed Urban Connector Alignment would disrupt recreation-related activities on a portion of the East Valley Middle School (see more discussion below). Construction would require those activities to be conducted on the remaining sports fields until such time as the replacement fields have been constructed. Construction would also eliminate vehicular parking on Sullivan Road for recreational activities.

Bicycling

Bicycling on Bigelow Gulch Road would likely be interrupted during construction of portions of the Urban Connector Alignment. The combination of a narrowed roadway, rough surface, and the presence of construction barriers, equipment, and activities would make bicycling difficult during the construction period.

How would operation of the project affect parks and recreation?

East Valley School District Sports Fields

As indicated in Chapter 5 of the January 2006 EA, the proposed Urban Connector Alignment would impact 2.36 acres of sports fields and 1.06 acres of open space (used for a variety of general recreational activities) at the East Valley Middle School. One of the concerns expressed in comment letters and in public testimony was the impact of the proposed action on available vehicular parking for recreational activities. During sporting and recreational events, vehicles are often parked along North Sullivan Road (see Appendix 3, comment 163-7).

Construction and operation of the Urban Connector Alignment on North Sullivan Road would curtail parking along the roadway, thereby requiring sports field users to

find alternative parking on public roadways such as Wellesley Avenue, Progress Road, and North Moore Road, or in parking on the school grounds.

Bicycling

Between Forker Road and Wellesley Avenue, the proposed Urban Connector Alignment would include 4-foot-wide bicycle lanes and 6-foot-wide sidewalks in each direction (Figure 2-3) for a distance of 0.8 mile, while the Rural Roadway (Figure 2-2) would include 8-foot shoulders as designated by Spokane County's Regional Bike Plan. The shoulder areas would provide sufficient room for cyclists, making the Bigelow Urban Connector Alignment a Class III bikeway.

Indirect Impacts

Indirect effects are those caused by the proposed action that are later in time or farther removed in distance, but still reasonably foreseeable.

There would be no indirect effects from the proposed Urban Connector Alignment.

Environmental Commitments and Mitigation Measures

- Mitigation for the loss of parking along North Sullivan is defined in Chapter 5, *Section 4(f) Evaluation*.

Analysis of the effects of the proposed action on parks and recreation in the project vicinity indicates that none would rise to a level of significance. The mitigation referenced in this section was considered in combination with mitigation measures listed in Section 4.13.3, Bigelow Gulch Road EA dated January 2006 in reaching this conclusion.

No Action

How would construction affect parks and recreation?

Under No Action, the Urban Connector Alignment would not be constructed; therefore, there would be no impacts on parks and recreation activities.

How would operation affect parks and recreation?

Under No Action, public parks and recreational areas would not be impacted, and no improvements would be made for cyclists along the Urban Connector Alignment.