From: Emily Boyd
To: Rachael Sawyer
Subject: public comment notes 7/23/24
Date: Tuesday, July 23, 2024 2:02:09 PM
Attachments: notes for public comment portion.pdf

Hi Rachael-

I had some comments prepared and edited to be exactly 3 minutes long to share with the committee today that were slightly different (and more concise) than what I sent to you on Sunday. I will attach them to this email. Can you please share these with the committee when you compile the comments you have received? I will paste them in below in case you want to copy and paste the text.

Thanks,
Emily

Public Comments for 7/23/24 Buncombe County Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee meeting

Last Thursday when Town of Weaverville representatives and members of your subcommittee were concluding the site visit portion of the grant application process in my driveway and I approached to find out what was going on was the first time I or any of my neighbors (including all of the landowners I was able to reach in Eller Cove) had heard about this proposal. I was told that the main entrance (an only vehicular access to the trail system) would be adjacent to my property and that they are putting in a 5-10 space pull-off style parking area (please note that the grant application mentions 14-18 spaces).

The grant application also states, "One primary concern is the potential popularity of the trail system, and how that popularity might overwhelm the parking and capacity of the site. The Town has reached out to law enforcement, the local fire department and the North Carolina Department of Transportation to make everyone aware of the project and to allow ample time for planning and preparation." I'm not sure what they think law enforcement, fire department and NC DOT are going to do to help once the parking capacity is overwhelmed! The design phase is the time to contemplate and solve these issues.

Elk Mountain Scenic Highway is not regularly patrolled by any law enforcement and is a destination for young people at night. We already regularly have people turning into our driveway looking for a place to hang out despite the No Trespassing signs. Buzzard's Rock is a destination day and night. My children regularly see their peers posting pics of drinking and smoking at night at Buzzard's Rock and it and the road are covered in garbage and graffiti, much of it lewd. Creating a place for this to happen near homes where families are trying to live quietly is undesirable. Does Weaverville have a plan to control litter at the parking area and entrance and who is going to be sure the trails are not used at night and that no one camps, poops, or feeds the bears in the watershed?

A similarly sized project in Canton, Chestnut Mountain Nature Preserve, has the ability to close it's trails when weather conditions are such that riding would damage the trails. They were closed due to the rain on Saturday when other mountain bike areas were full of cars and were closed again yesterday. Moving the main entrance to Eller Cove Rd would allow for easier closing of the trails when conditions are not good for biking and help to protect the fragile ecosystem at the top of watershed.

If the Town of Weaverville could identify and purchase some land near the Eller Cove entrance to the Watershed for a dedicated parking area, local residents would more easily be able to use the

trail system and tourists coming to ride or hike the trails would spend their tourism dollars in Weaverville businesses and benefit the people who will be on the hook to pay for the ongoing maintenance costs. Additionally, having the main entrance and parking area in Reem's Creek would make it much easier for Town of Weaverville staff to monitor and maintain the park and for law enforcement to monitor the parking area for overnight use and illicit activities. This would also move the majority of the environmental impact to the bottom of the watershed rather than the top, helping to protect Weaverville's back up water source.

The current grant application is disingenuous in its claims of only benefits for and no negative impacts on the community. Also, early versions of the plan show parking at Eller Cove. I suspect that many of the letters of support were written by groups thinking they would have access from Eller Cove.

I urge you not to fund this project until the Town of Weaverville has engaged the local community in the planning process and has developed a master plan that benefit more than just the mountain biking community.

Thank you-

Emily Boyd

122 Elk Wallow Trl

Asheville, NC 28804

From: WILLIAM LINDSLEY
To: Jill Carter; Rachael Sawyer; botanybg85@gmail.com
Subject: WEAVERVILLE WATERSHED PARKING
Date: Monday, July 22, 2024 6:44:15 AM

BC Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you have received an email from this sender datapax@aol.com.

From: datapax@aol.com
To: public-comment@weavervillenc.org, datapax@aol.com
Sent: 7/21/2024 6:30:02 AM Eastern Daylight Time
Subject: WEAVERVILLE WATERSHED PARKING

ALL OF YOU .. KINDLY READ THIS AS WELL BEFORE MEETING FOR THIS PROPOSAL AND THEN PLEASE READ INTO THE RECORD...

SAFETY FIRST

RE: WEAVERVILLE WATERSHED PARKING AND TRAIL SYSTEM

We are offering a point of caution regarding your proposed parking area for the trail system you are considering for the future... Hopefully we are in plenty of time for you to re-consider this...

There are some dangers... in that 7 mile stretch .. starting at the golf course and .. finishing at the Blue Ridge parkway .. there are 2 very dangerous curves. Both of these curves converge on the very exact place that you want to place a driveway // parking place.

If you take your car and drive downhill toward the Asheville from Buzzard's Rock, that is a straight road and most cars are exceeding the speed limit and arrive at a 90 degree hard right turn . Weaverville highway maintenance people will confirm the danger, because 10 years ago so many people were going straight off the road (missing that turn) and I asked the head of that operation to drive that stretch and let me know... he did place 4 right Arrow Chevrons on that turn !! and … if you are fortunate enough to make that turn

(?) the next curve is exactly where your parking driveway is proposed to be.. ..

Now ...Imagine … your parking lot is full and people park on both sides of the road close by...that narrows the safety lanes.... for cars and bicycles and the other transport – Skate boards (WITH NO BRAKES) coming from Buzzards Rock...

Now coming up from Asheville (?) so many cars wind their way up slowly and then start the straight road in front on the pasture where we see speed racing well over 50 MPH exactly converging on your same curve point of your driveway proposal..

BOTH WAYS – HIGH SPEEDS – NARROWER ROAD – ?

Lets be proactive and save lives and possibly make the parking area at a different location and away from homes.

Bill Lindsley

From: Charlotte Chiott
To: Jill Carter
Subject: Weaverville Watershed Parking &Trail System
Date: Sunday, July 21, 2024 1:53:52 PM

BC Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you have received an email from this sender charlottechiott@gmail.com.

Ms. Carter,

As anyone driving Elk Mtn. Scenic Hwy. knows, this is a curving, narrow road with next to no shoulders with many steep drops.

It is a highly used, dream ride for bikers, both individuals and teams.

There is constant risk to bikers (as well as residents in cars) of unfamiliar drivers passing bikers in blind curves as well as taking

their half of the road in the middle. To add countless new cars through the residential 5 miles to a parking area located between

sharp, blind curves is unnecessarily asking for accidents, injury and possible loss of life!

To place a public parking area adjacent to a private driveway, in the middle of a residential area, while also acknowledging the

expectation of needing extra roadside parking between blind curves defies logic. There are miles of roadway above the

currently suggested area where there are no residences and much straighter sections of the road. This area would also be

more easily reached from Weaverville (Ox Creek Rd) and/or the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The lack of notice of this endeavor to the residents of Elk Mountain, appears this has been a hastily crafted proposal. More

thoughtful consideration, with input from those of us daily driving this road, should make it crystal clear that this is not a

viable or reasonable project.

Charlotte N. Chiott

charlottechiott@gmail.com

Sent from Mail for Windows

From: Andrew Tomlinson
To: Jill Carter
Cc: botanybg85@gmail.com; Rachael Sawyer
Subject: Fwd: Weaverville Watershed calamity
Date: Tuesday, July 23, 2024 8:03:47 AM

BC Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you have received an email from this sender andrewtomlinson48@gmail.com.

From: Tony at Assoc-Desktop-1 <afmassoc@rocketmail.com>
Date: July 23, 2024 at 7:42:16 AM EDT
To: Emily Elk Mtn _Weaverville Boyd <edbboyd@gmail.com>
Subject: Weaverville Watershed calamity

Draft for distribution

Sarah (Marcinko) Sheeran
Stewardship Director
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
372 Merrimon Ave. / Asheville, NC 28801
www.appalachian.org
828.253.0095 x. 212

Sarah <sarah@appalachian.org>

I would echo the concerns below of my neighbor Emily, adding these concerns and ask how they would adequately be addressed:

- That the nature lovers (daytime hikers and bikers) would put added stress on an already fragile echo system, in terms of trail hikers / nature seekers frightening away the wildlife that inhabits the watershed and neighboring wildlife areas.
- The consequences on health and safety of pedestrians, bicycle and vehicular traffic with less-than-ideal roadway engineering colliding with a limited parking area situated on terrain that is "an accident waiting to happen". Also consider the environmental impact of overflow parking on the natural area.
- Nature and wildlife being negatively impacted by motorized vehicles and increased visitors who likely will need to relieve themselves of human waste and trash.
- Without increased private security or law enforcement patrols, we only need to look at Buzzard Rock whose nightly "sleep over" visitors would expand their "artistic recreation" of nature. Can we guess how this would mar and conflict with the daytime true lovers of nature view of a wildlife preserve.

Conclusion

I think the overall impact will erode the natural beauty and pristine nature of the Elk Mountain and surrounding community, We would soon see echo environment deteriorate, A negative impact on natural wildlife, flora and fauna as well as on the purity of the water by bringing increased traffic of both mindful and unmindful and undesirable visitors with dire consequences including eroding real estate tax values. In my mind, this loss of natural beauty strikes at the very reason why people come to visit and live in this area.

Best Regards,
Anthony Motola
Cell: 845-321-5686

From: Margie Green
To: Rachael Sawyer
Subject: Weaverville Watershed Trails and Wildlife Preserve
Date: Thursday, July 25, 2024 6:58:21 AM

BC Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you have received an email from this sender margiejoy1947@gmail.com.

Good Morning Ms. Sawyer,

My name is Margie Green. I live at 791 Elk Mountain Scenic Highway. I am a part time 4th generation Asheville gal.

The idea of a bike trail and a parking lot at the current proposed location is not good placement. Our road is already full of cars, trucks, bicycles, and skaters on their boards. It's surprisingly dangerous, The area suggested has had car and bicycle accidents because of the hairpin curves in the area being suggested,

If you feel this project is a good one then please consider moving the parking lot and beginning of the trail towards land owned by Weaverville near Buzzard's Rock.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Margie Green

From: Mary Scott
To: Jill Carter; Rachael Sawyer; botanybg85@gmail.com
Subject: Weaverville Watershed Trails and Wildlife Preserve Concerns - Elk Mountain Scenic Hwy Full-Time Resident
Date: Thursday, July 25, 2024 9:54:12 AM

BC Email Security finds this email suspicious! The sender of this email Mary Scott is similar by name to your contact Mary S. Corn, this might be an impersonation attempt. | Know this sender?

Hi All!

I wanted to ensure that our statement reaches the appropriate recipients.

Thanks so much!

--

We are the Scott family, residing on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway with our 1-year-old daughter. I am writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposed plan to create a parking lot on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway. It appears that the impact on families who live here full-time has not been adequately considered, and the plan seems to have been developed by individuals who may not fully understand how our road functions.

We have been experiencing dangerous traffic conditions for years, and the addition of a parking lot would exacerbate the situation. We cherish our privacy, peace, and quiet, and it is disheartening to see plans being made without our input.

Currently, when the limited spaces at the Rattlesnake Lodge parking lot are full, people park on the narrow shoulders of the road, creating a hazardous situation. My husband is a first responder with Asheville Fire Department and volunteers with Reems Creek Fire Department. Over the years, he has responded to numerous motor vehicle and cyclist accidents on our road caused by reckless driving. Increasing traffic on the side of the road would only worsen these issues, as a small parking lot would not suffice.

It feels as though this plan is an attempt to shift the parking problem out of sight, but it directly and negatively impacts our neighborhood. The idea of placing a parking lot on the narrow, winding turns of Elk Mountain Scenic Highway would unnecessarily increase traffic and negate the very reasons we chose to live here. The proposed plan for the parking lot is situated on a perilous blind curve where numerous accidents have occurred over the years that my husband has responded to first hand.

Please reconsider this plan, as it simply does not make sense for our community.

Thank you for your time.

--

Kind regards,
Mary & Seth Scott

Rachael Sawyer

From: David Chamberlain <dacwind@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, July 29, 2024 4:04 PM
To: Rachael Sawyer; Jill Carter; botanybg85@gmail.com
Subject: Weaverville Watershed Parking and Trail

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

BC Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you have received an email from this sender dacwind@gmail.com.

David Chamberlain

to A84116@publicinput.com, me

The proposed parking lot and trail, if approved, should both maximize the enjoyment for the hikers and cyclists while minimizing the impact on the residential community on Elk mountain.

The current site plan should be revised for three reasons:

1. Safer location closer to buzzard Rock, as has been pointed out the current site has numerous safety concerns for people using the trail and additional traffic near homes.

2. A level area between Buzzard's Rock and the cell tower would be more accessible from the Blue Ridge Parkway and the **additional parking near Buzzards Rock will be a plus.**

3. Most trails off the Parkway are more enjoyable away from homes (Rattlesnake Lodge trail and parking is a perfect example)

If the project is approved, Please reconsider the location for both the residents and the safety of the people using the parking and the Trail.

David Chamberlain
748 Elk Mountain Scenic Hwy.

From: tchiott@bellsouth.net
To: Rachael Sawyer
Subject: Weaverville Watershed Trails
Date: Tuesday, July 30, 2024 4:19:39 PM

BC Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you have received an email from this sender tchiott@bellsouth.net.

Rachael Sawyer;

Without prior notification to Elk Mtn. Scenic Hwy. residents, the Town of Weaverville developed a plan for 9 miles of trails through the Watershed. To access these trails they have pinpointed a PUBLIC parking lot on EMSH, between two homes in a residential section of the road for a parking lot for 10-14 vehicles. The Tourism Product Development Fund, applicant's organization name, Town of Weaverville, projects the number of visitors as follows: Year 1: 15,000, Year 2: 20,000, Year 3: 30,000. How can that number of vehicles per year manage to park in an area designed for 10-14 vehicles. They anticipate the need for excess parking to be in both sides of this narrow road in a steep area between two blind curves. The results will be a total fiasco. This curvy 7 miles of mountain road, lacking sidewalks, shoulders or pull-off areas, makes this plan designed for failure, resulting in serious accidents.

The EMSH development "Ciel" is now constructing 22 large homes. Construction traffic, large tri-axle trucks, 18-wheeler tractor trailers and truck trailers hauling machine equipment are constantly on this narrow road, getting crossways in one of the many hairpin curves, needing the SHP plus wreckers to reopen the road. These vehicles frequently overpower the majority of the road. Each new home adds hundreds of sub-contractors' trips to a site, frequently 4-10 times or more per house, continuing for years to come, overwhelming for those who plan to use the Watershed from a traffic and safety standpoint. Adding thousands more to that scenario is ludicrous. As more drivers who don't know the road and who round a blind curve by taking the double yellow line as the center of their lane, means there will be constant need for 911 to be on everyone's speed dial.

Since it is not unlawful, there are dozens of young boys who constantly skateboard on EMSH, sometimes at speeds keeping them from staying on their side of the yellow line. Adding more vehicles to that scenario is also ludicrous!! For anyone to sign off and approve of this Project, knowing up front that it may contribute a possibility of a fatality of a young boy, is not what one would want

on their conscience.

The Watershed is no longer being used as a municipal water source, however, for years the area has been considered one of nature's special environmental treasures. It is ironic that now with this development planned, nothing has been determined and formally established on a permanent basis as how to take care of all the various forms of human waste and other rubbish scattered over 9 miles in such a pristine, natural forested area. That, in itself, should be reason enough to table the whole Project. When one considers the many negatives that are associated with making this prime piece of undisturbed beauty into a development with thousands of persons changing it forever, surely other options exist.

J. Travers Chiott

tchiott@bellsouth.net

From: noreply-commissioners@buncombecounty.org <noreply-commissioners@buncombecounty.org>
Sent: Thursday, August 1, 2024 11:30 AM
To: Brownie W. Newman <Brownie.Newman@buncombecounty.org>; Terri Wells <Terri.Wells@buncombecounty.org>; Alfred Whitesides <Alfred.Whitesides@buncombecounty.org>; Jasmine Beach-Ferrara <Jasmine.Beach-Ferrara@buncombecounty.org>; Amanda Edwards <Amanda.Edwards@buncombecounty.org>; Martin Moore <Martin.Moore@buncombecounty.org>; Parker Sloan <Parker.Sloan@buncombecounty.org>; Sarah Gross <Sarah.Gross@buncombecounty.org>
Subject: Weaverville Watershed Proposal

There are new comments from a https://www.buncombecounty.org/commissioners **user.**

Contact the Commissioners

This email was received from a user of the Buncombe County Website.

Name:

Charles Raymond

Email:

cgr2006@me.com

Subject:

Weaverville Watershed Proposal

Questions / Comments:

We recently found out that the Town of Weaverville is seeking funds through the Buncombe County Open Space Bond and from the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority to create a network of multi-use trails in the 309-acre watershed property it owns between Eller Cove Road in Reem's Creek and Elk Mountain Scenic Highway. In 2017, this land was put in a conserva$on easement held by NC Land and Water fund and managed by Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy. The terms of the easement do allow the land to be opened to the public and reserve the right to install bike trails. A private ci$zen (and mountain bike enthusiast) in Weaverville, saw the land and the terms of the easement, raised funds to pay for a trail designer to create a "master plan" and had that plan created.
We recognize that the Town of Weaverville has a legal right to open the watershed to the public. However, we are concerned that no professional planner, neighboring property owner or other stakeholder's input was sought in the planning process and the grant proposals are dishonest or willfully ignorant in many areas. Without contac$ng any of us, the trail designer put the main entrance (and only vehicular access to the trail system) in a small sec$on of road frontage in a dangerous sec$on of Elk Mountain Scenic Highway right in our neighborhood. We discovered the plan and the grant applica$on when we found a grant subcommi7ee comple$ng a site visit of the project in one of our neighbor's driveways two weeks ago. We have reached out to many of the

neighbors on the Eller Cove side of the watershed and did not find anyone there who had been informed of this plan either.
Our neighborhood rallied quickly to let the Town of Weaverville know about the dangers of the par$cular sec$on of Elk Mountain Scenic Highway where they are planning the main entrance to the park. It is in a blind curve almost at the bo7om of the steep descent from Buzzard's Rock to Elk Wallow Gap. We sent emails and went to a recent Weaverville Town Council mee$ng and spoke on the dangers of this loca$on, Elk Mountain Scenic Highway in general, and our concerns about the safety of overflow parking lining the road. The only response we have received is that they will involve the public a=er they get the grant funding. This seems disingenuous because the grant applica$on states that they are "shovel-ready" which would indicate no $me for engagement with the community or modifica$on of the plan.
The Town of Weaverville is limited by the terms of the conserva$on easement and will only be able to provide 5-10 parking spaces on the watershed property. When asked what they have planned for overflow parking, we were told that Elk Mountain Scenic Highway is an NC DOT road and overflow parking would be DOT's problem. The grant applica$on states that Town of Weaverville has reached out the NC DOT to make them aware of the project, but we contacted the head of District 13 and they have no record of this project and no one in their office recalled being informed.
We are also concerned that given the lack of law enforcement in this area, the remote loca$on and the nature of Elk Mountain Scenic Highway already being a desnaon for late-night revelers, this parking area will be another place for

young people to hang out and trash. The grant applica$on includes this paragraph, "The Weaverville Watershed is located adjacent to Buzzard Rock, which is already a popular tourism desnaon in Buncombe County. If the trails are completed it would provide addi$onal recrea$on opportuni$es to an already popular tourist locale." The first problem with this is that Buzzard's Rock is PRIVATE PROPERTY and they are calling it a tourist desnaon. Also, have they seen Buzzard's Rock? Do they want the entrance to their trail system to look like that?
They further state, "Once the trails are opened to the public the Town of Weaverville plans to have… Weaverville law enforcement presence in the area to protect from deteriora$on and vandalism." The property is owned by the Town of Weaverville, but is not in Weaverville's jurisdic$on. Buncombe County is the law enforcement authority here.
In reference to only having vehicular access from Elk Mountain Scenic Highway, the grant applica$on states, "Another safety concern is users a7emp$ng to access the property off of Eller Cove Rd… The Town does not want to create issues for the landowners." Why don't they care about crea$ng issues for landowners on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway?
They clearly foresee parking being an issue. They state in the grant applica$on, "One primary concern is the poten$al popularity of the trail system, and how that popularity might overwhelm the parking and capacity of the site."
The grant applica$on asks ques$ons about community support/involvement in the project and about considera$on and mi$ga$on for poten$al nega$ve impacts on the community. The answers the Town of Weaverville give are all rosy and discuss support mostly from different mountain biking organiza$ons. They say, "We do not foresee this project having any poten$al nega$ve impact on the surrounding communi$es."
When asked if the project is in close proximity to a nearby community or neighborhood, they

answered, “The nearest communi$es to this project include Weaverville, Woodfin, North Asheville/Beaverdam Valley and neighborhoods across North Buncombe County.” What about our Elk Mountain Scenic Highway community that will be most directly affected by the project?
The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority grant applica$on asks for the number of an$cipated visitors to the project. The Town of Weaverville projects 30,000 visitors per year by year three. That is a lot more cars on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway all parking in a $ny area in our neighborhood. It breaks down to 82 visitors per day every day of the year- but they will not come at regular intervals. Use will be heaviest in the a=ernoons/evenings and weekends Spring through Fall meaning our neighborhood can expect many more visitors than that during the $mes of the week and day when we are home trying to enjoy some down$me. The added cars on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway will impact not just our immediate neighborhood, but all of the people who live on the road and walk with their families and pets.
Regardless of what you think about opening the watershed to the public, we are hoping you will advocate that this project is not funded un$l the Town of Weaverville has more thoroughly considered the impacts the plan will have on the residents of Elk Mountain Scenic Highway.
Thank you in advance for your support!

Commissioners Emailed:

Brownie Newman Chairman
Terri Wells District 1
Al Whitesides District 1
Jasmine Beach-Ferrara District 2
Amanda Edwards District 3
Martin Moore District 2
Parker Sloan District 3
Sarah Gross Clerk to Board

From: greenpaybills
To: Jill.Carter@buncombecounty.org; botanybg85@gmail.com; Rachael Sawyer
Subject: Weaverville Watershed Project
Date: Saturday, August 3, 2024 4:42:02 PM

BC Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you have received an email from this sender greenpaybills@aol.com.

Re: Weaverville Watershed Project.

The proposed project is located on an extremely dangerous curve on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway. I have a home directly adjacent to this section (791) and have personally witnessed two cars go over the edge. On one occasion I contacted 911. The car was about 15 feet down and had it not been for significant undergrowth that stopped the car, the driver would surely have been killed. This project is not a good idea on so many levels.

Thank you,
James Green

From: Forrest Smalley
To: Rachael Sawyer
Subject: Weaverville Watershed Trails
Date: Tuesday, August 6, 2024 6:29:01 PM

BC Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you have received an email from this sender fsmalley@gmail.com.

RE: Weaverville Watershed Trails and Nature Preserve Project

I received a notice from neighbors about this project. We live about 1/2 mile from this proposed entrance on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway, and we were not aware of this project at all. We are in a sort of no man's land that isn't Woodfin, Weaverville, or Asheville up here, but the only direct paved access is to the Asheville Beaverdam area. Weaverville shouldn't be able to put this entrance up here and then not police it. We are in the Asheville city school district and the only direct way to Weaverille is a very poorly maintained dirt road, Upper Herron Cove Road about 1.5 miles from this proposed Preserve entrance on Elk Mountain Scenic. Technically, Weaverville is closer, just not accessible. If Upper Herron cove rd was paved and maintained, we'd probably opt to take our three young children to schools there as we shop there most of the time.

A HOA trail easement exists across my own property and mountain bikers, somewhat illegally, already regularly traverse it, as a secret trail down to Carter Cove Rd where another owner also turns a blind eye to them trespassing. Within reason, I'm fine with cyclists and hikers using our trail, but in general, they take the easiest path regardless of markings, often venturing into people's yards. No one in our community of Fox Trails subdivison gets that up in arms over it as they traverse our conservation area. Some cyclists posted the "secret trail" on the internet and that got people up in arms.

My main issue on this proposal is that if you are going to add this as a park, with some parking at Elk Mtn Scenic, that needs to be sufficient for off street parking for your real expected visitor load. And it needs to be done tastefully to not detract from the residences in that immediate area. No one wants a trashy parking lot near them, and I don't want that up here either. Bears will destroy any non bear proof container also.

We also need police presence, and this is not Weaverville. They have no jurisdiction. At best, we would get Buncombe sheriffs department up here. Buzzard Roost is already a terrible eyesore with no police presense. Neighbors told me that many years ago there was a random unexplained unsolved homicide there also. There were also Arsons at the former Sourwood inn and nearby homes a decade or so ago. Elk Mountain Scenic is barely legal as a road it is so narrow. I don't believe it has a single passing section either. It is extremely popular with cyclists but it has already created hazards, because drivers can't get around the cyclists inching along at 5mph uphill given it is so narrow. As it is now, there aren't that many residents up here so traffic is light, but increased traffic creates hazards around the cyclists we already have. As drivers, we just kind of deal with it with too much fuss with the current load. The main complication is that "skateboarders" have seemingly posted this as a nationwide todo spot, and they "drop in" about mile towards Asheville, and ride Elk Mtn Scenic all the way down to the Robinhood country club neighorhood. These mostly teen skateboarders are crazy and dangerous and as drivers, we're already trying to weave around the cyclists we currently have. The police do nothing about the skateboarders, and at least one neighbor has had what

would be a fatal near miss. Every corner up here is a blind corner, and boarders and cyclists already hug the center line downhill at 25-40mph barely missing our mirrors. There should be no encouragement of more cyclists up this road if Buncombe sheriff's department doesn't add it to a regular patrol and do something about all of the skateboarders and even the minority of cyclists that are especially hazardous in riding the road.

My family has had to call Paramedics for ourselves, and 911 sends a unit from both Beaverdam Fire(up Elk Mtn Scenic) and Reems Creek(around the Ox creek way). Beaverdam reaches us in 20 mins and Reems Creek takes 25 mins. There are just no emergency services. It's risky. If a connection between my own road "rambling ridge rd" and "Black oak drive" existed, we'd cut down Beaverdam Fire reaching us in 5-10 mins, but Black oak drive is a private treacherous road and no easy easment between exists. As an owner, I would however vote in favor of an emergency access throughfare if it was somehow possible...as we would all benefit for having paramedics closer. That's unlikely and would require a lot of buy-in from people.. If the county would take over Rambling Ridge road from my HOA, I'd even give it a bigger vote and help lobby. I personally don't want to pay to pave that road the next 30 yrs as we just spent 190k doing it a few years ago.

Mostly, just please address the nearby neighbors legitimate police, parking, and possible trash concerns to make any "entrance" safe and sightly. And on top of that, be realistic that Weaverville PD is not able to police up here; a real committment must come from Buncombe sheriff's dept to police and at the very least stop the skateboarders before disaster happens, especially if more cyclists are encouraged to use Elk Mountain Scenic Highway. Our personal wish list would be for Upper Herron Cove rd to get paved also, especially if the Asheville/Buncombe school merger becomes a real possibility. It might create another emergency route doable in 12-18 minutes from Weaverville FD. It too is frequented by cyclists.

Forrest Smalley
53 Rambling Ridge Rd
Asheville, NC 28804
510 847 9756 mobile

From: Billy Britt
To: Rachael Sawyer
Subject: Weaverville Watershed Trails and Nature Preserve Project
Date: Wednesday, August 7, 2024 1:13:13 PM

BC Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you have received an email from this sender brittbilly7385@gmail.com.

My name is Billy Britt i am a resident of Elk Mountain Scenic Highway, Please do not fund this project until the Town of Weaverville has more thoroughly considered the impacts the plan will have on residents of Elk Mountain Scenic Highway, Thank you for your consideration and cooperation.

From: Travers Chiott <tchiott@bellsouth.net>
Sent: Wednesday, August 7, 2024 2:56:43 PM
To: Amanda Edwards <Amanda.Edwards@buncombecounty.org>
Cc: TRAVERS CHIOTT <tchiott@bellsouth.net>
Subject: Elk Mountain Scenic Highway Trail Plans

BC Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you have received an email from this sender tchiott @ bellsouth.net.

Without prior notification to Elk Mtn. Scenic Hwy. residents, the Town of Weaverville developed a plan for 9 miles of trails through the Watershed. To access these trails they have pinpointed a PUBLIC parking lot on EMSH, between two homes in a residential section of the road for a parking lot for 10-14 vehicles. The Tourism Product Development Fund, applicant's organization name, Town of Weaverville, projects the number of visitors as follows: Year 1: 15,000, Year 2: 20,000, Year 3: 30,000. How can that number of vehicles per year manage to park in an area designed for 10-14 vehicles. They anticipate the need for excess parking to be in both sides of this narrow road in a steep area between two blind curves. The results will be a total fiasco. This curvy 7 miles of mountain road, lacking sidewalks, shoulders or pull-off areas, makes this plan designed for failure, resulting in serious accidents.

The EMSH development "Ciel" is now constructing 22 large homes. Construction traffic, large tri-axle trucks, 18-wheeler tractor trailers and truck trailers hauling machine equipment are constantly on this narrow road, getting crossways in one of the many hairpin curves, needing the SHP plus wreckers to reopen the road. These vehicles frequently overpower the majority of the road. Each new home adds hundreds of sub-contractors' trips to a site, frequently 4-10 times or more per house, continuing for years to come, overwhelming for those who plan to use the Watershed from a traffic and safety standpoint. Adding thousands more to that scenario is ludicrous. As more drivers who don't know the road and who round a blind curve by taking the double yellow line as the center of their lane, means there will be constant need for 911 to be on everyone's speed dial.

Since it is not unlawful, there are dozens of young boys who constantly skateboard on EMSH, sometimes at speeds keeping them from staying on their side of the yellow line. Adding more vehicles to that scenario is also ludicrous!! For anyone to sign off and approve of this Project, knowing up front that it may contribute a possibility of a fatality of a young boy, is not what one would want on their conscience.

The Watershed is no longer being used as a municipal water source, however, for years the area has been considered one of nature's special environmental treasures. It is ironic that now with this development planned, nothing has been determined and formally established on a permanent basis as how to take care of all the various forms of human waste and other rubbish scattered over

9 miles in such a pristine, natural forested area. That, in itself, should be reason enough to table the whole Project. When one considers the many negatives that are associated with making this prime piece of undisturbed beauty into a development with thousands of persons changing it forever, surely other options exist.

The following is my response as part of correspondence I had with a member of the NCDOT.

Thank you for your email. I know that NCDOT does not regulate land use. I copied you and some of your associates because a contact was made to NCDOT in the last few days, and that official of NCDOT said this was the first they have heard anything about this Project, even though the Town of Weaverville through the grant application states that the Town has reached out to NCDOT. A conversation took place with the Town of Weaverville by one of the EMSH residents. When asked what they have planned for overflow parking, they were told that Elk Mountain Scenic Highway is a NCDOT road and overflow parking would be DOT's problem!!! As it has been in the works for over a year, one wonders why it has gotten this far along and NCDOT has not heard of it, and Elk Mountain residents just found out about it by accident just a couple of weeks ago when a group of proponents were trespassing on one of the resident's posted driveway!

I primarily sent my email to you and the NCDOT as I thought you would certainly want to be aware of the thousands and thousands of vehicles that would have to park, not just attempting to on the narrow shoulders, but primarily in the road, therefore obstructing traffic. When you have a parking lot designed for 10-12 vehicles with thousands of visitors, where else are they going to park other than in your road?

Some of my buddies from Barnardsville and Fairview would call this a..."GOM"...

I also know NCDOT has no control or authority over the skateboarding issue. My mentioning/videoing the skateboarding in my email was in order that those decision makers who are considering funding this project, will take this into consideration as they contemplate adding that much more traffic and possibly affecting that many more lives.You, along with quite a few other persons in authority were sent copies of my email.

As NCDOT's role in this Project is to approve the driveway/parking lot connecting Elk Mountain Scenic Highway, and the approach thereof, from the ordinances already on the books that pertain to Parking Restrictions along State roads, please, let me know how these existing ordinances .(attached)...would not be germane to this proposed driveway/parking lot.

Further, we understand the DOT requires channelized parking which, as you know, basically means cars can't just pull off the road into a space- neither parallel nor perpendicular to the road. A parking lot entrance would be required with space to either pull through to an exit or turn around and exit facing forwards out of a combined entrance/exit.

Perhaps a site visit by you will indicate the proposed Project does not meet the stated Parking Restrictions as outlined in the ordinance.

I look forward to your thoughts after you all have personally visited the site in reference to these Parking Restrictions.

I would be more than happy to meet you at the subject location if you would like. Just let me know.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Travers Chiott

tchiott@bellsouth.net

From: WILLIAM LINDSLEY <datapax@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 7, 2024 5:27:43 PM
To: Brownie W. Newman <Brownie.Newman@buncombecounty.org>; Terri Wells <Terri.Wells@buncombecounty.org>; Alfred Whitesides <Alfred.Whitesides@buncombecounty.org>; Jasmine Beach-Ferrara <Jasmine.Beach-Ferrara@buncombecounty.org>; Amanda Edwards <Amanda.Edwards@buncombecounty.org>; Martin Moore <Martin.Moore@buncombecounty.org>; Parker Sloan <Parker.Sloan@buncombecounty.org>; Sarah Gross <Sarah.Gross@buncombecounty.org>
Subject:

BC Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you have received an email from this sender datapax @ aol.com.

Weaverville Watershed Proposal

We recently learned that the town of Weaverville is trying to get a grant from Buncombe County to develop biking/hiking trails in the watershed it owns off of Elk Mountain Scenic Highway. As a property and homeowner on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway we are concerned about this project. None of the residents here were contacted about this project. The project hopes to put a parking lot just past a blind curve on the mountain next to a neighbors driveway and close to ours. This is a dangerous area as well as near homes. **The curves are do dangerous at this junction that the DOT had installed 4 large turn arrows warning drivers. and bicyclists of these two curves..**. now please ...imagine over flow parking on this area street sides - narrowing the passage.-- cars , skateboarders (no breaks) and bicycles definitely will have serious injuries..

Our fear is that it will become like Rattlesnake Lodge trail head where the cars are parked all along the road. This would be dangerous to cars, bikes and hikers. We would appreciate any help you can give us in trying to move this parking area and entrance down to Reems Creek since this is owned by Weaverville. Elk Mountain Scenic Highway already has problems with Buzzards Rock and the terrible mess it has become. Please help us keep Elk Mountain Scenic Highway safer. The watershed is a beautiful pristine forest and we also worry about the changes that will occur. Thank you for your time,

BILL LINDSLEY
772 ELK MTN SCENIC HWY
ASHEVILLE, NC 28804

Rachael Sawyer@buncomecounty.org

To: Members of The Buncombe County Passive Lands Recreation Subcommitte

Re: **Weaverville Watershed Trails and Nature Preserve**

We, the undersigned have been residents living On Elk Mountain Scenic Highway ("EMSH") for 44 years. It was a dirt road when we first built our residence on the mountain.

We have learned by rumor and recent neighborhood concern that that the Town of Weaverville ("Town") is seeking bond money and a grant from the Tourism and Development Authority ("TDA") for biking and hiking trails on its watershed property bordered by EMSH and Eller Cove Road. Access to and parking for the trails is proposed to be off of EMSH near Buzzard's Rock in a blind curve. Only a total of 5-10 parking spaces are planned on the watershed. Yet the Town in a related grant application for additional funds from TDA states the Town anticipates the proposed project will draw 30,000 visitors to the site per year. When asked about overflow parking that will undoubtedly impact EMSH, the Town explained that NCDOT would have to solve that problem. When an inquiry was made to NCDOT about this project NCDOT denied having any knowledge of it or its impact on EMSH and public safety.

We have run, walked and biked EMSH, and it is beautiful. We don't want to deprive anyone from responsibly enjoying its scenery and abundant wildlife, However, EMSH has always been a dangerous road, and since it was paved it has become exponentially more dangerous. we witness this almost daily when we run and/or drive the road. It is narrow (no bike lanes), it follows an old wagon trail with sharp hairpin turns, numerous blind spots and minimal if non-existent shoulders. Almost every morning EMSH becomes a raceway for construction traffic with little concern for pedestrians, bikers or other oncoming traffic. In the evenings long boarders appear coming downhill with no lights, no brakes and crouching in the curves. The road also sees many tourists who inexplicably stop in curves to gaze at or feed bears. Then there are the bikers. Many are very courteous and aware of traffic. However, a large number of them ride abreast in the uphill traveling lane, and refuse to ride single-file. Coming downhill some bikers will pass vehicles regardless of sight distance or double yellow lines. The North Carolina Motor Vehicle Code may not apply to long boarders (and it should), but it does apply to bicyclists. Finally, there are motorcyclists who revel in the speed and noise of their transportation. As time has gone on, we have witnessed ever increasing traffic, including tractor trailers, on EMSH. Planning for increased traffic, including an additional 30,000 annual visitors that this project is expected to bring, has to be addressed in any plan involving the use of EMSH. As residents of EMSH we received no notice from the Town about this possible project, Consequently, we have not seen or reviewed any formal safety studies that have been conducted. If they don't exist or have not been thoroughly researched, then the public and current and future users of EMHS will be exposed to much greater danger and risk.

EMSH is dangerous. It certainly doesn't need to become more dangerous, particularly in areas of restricted or essentially unsafe visibility. Any plan to access Weaverville's watershed using EMSH and account for overflow parking must be carefully considered, studied, and coordinated with NCDOT, law enforcement, those who regularly use EMSH with informed input from the residents of EMSH that travel the road each and every day. No funding for such a project should be considered and moved forward without reasonable due diligence.

Thank you.

Phil Smith

Patricia A Smith

Aug. 8, 2024

August 11, 2024

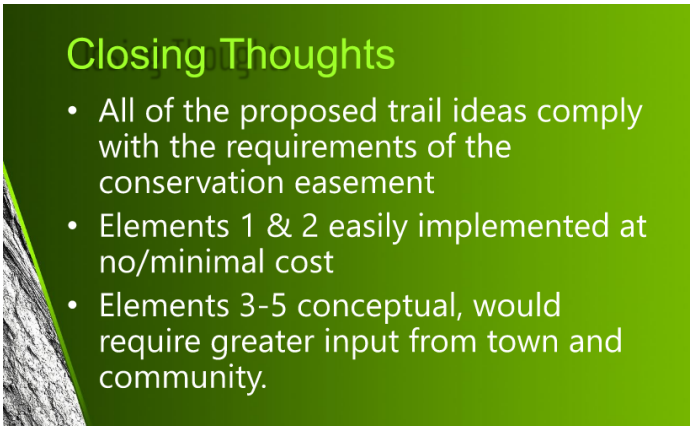
Dear members of the Buncombe County Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee,

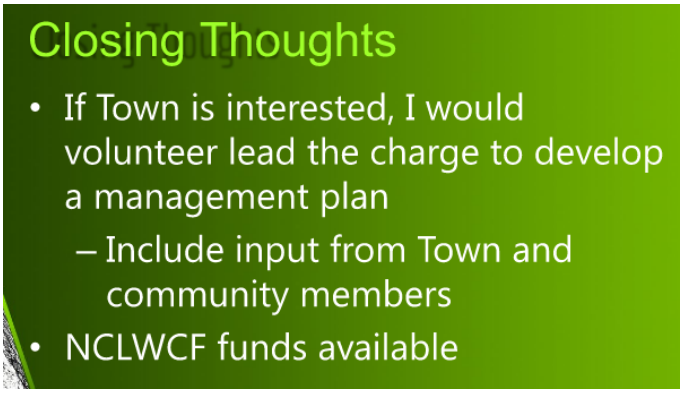
This letter is to update you on developments since my comments on and before your meeting on July 23rd, 2024. Since then, I have continued to dig into this project trying to figure out how it got this far without anyone in the surrounding neighborhoods being informed about it and without a proper planning procedure.

A review of Weaverville Town Council meeting minutes and the Town Manager's Monthly Reports shows the following timeline:

February 2023- Mark Endries, a private citizen, proposes several potential trail projects, including this one, to Town Council.

D. **Proposed Concept related to Greenways and Biking**
Mark Endries presented to Council some ideas that he has regarding the Town's land lying beyond the Public Works Facility and the section of proposed greenway in that area and some potential passive recreational uses of the Town's property within the Eller Cove Watershed that is subject to a conservation easement. See attached slides.





May 2023- Selena Coffey, Town Manager, notes that Mark Endries has modified the Rough Creek Canton management plan to fit the Eller Cove Watershed in preparation for opening it to the public. They are still working through revisions and hope to have a draft for Town Council approval by June of July of 2023.

Note: The two properties are very different… Rough Creek is 850 acres with 1400 feet of elevation gain and 10 miles of trails, only 3 miles of which are single-track (283 acres/mile of single-track trail). The other 7 miles are preexisting gravel roads, most of which are around the perimeter of the property rather than through the middle. Access to Rough Creek is at the end of a dead-end private road and Town of Canton owns property on which it provides parking outside of the conservation area. There is also a caretaker's house at the entrance to the trail system which is 5 miles/11 minutes from downtown Canton. In contrast, the Weaverville Watershed is 309 acres, with 1100 feet of elevation gain, 9 miles of

proposed single-track trails (34 acres/mile of single-track trail), minimal area available for parking on a dangerous through road in an existing residential neighborhood, no on-site caretaker and a proposed main entrance 7-11miles/20 minutes from downtown Weaverville.

July 2023- Town Manager Coffey says they are still trying to address concerns in the management plan regarding monitoring of the property, security of the watershed, security for visitors, etc… "The draft management plan calls for Town resources to include funds and staffing, which has not been budgeted and cannot be accomplished with current staffing."

August 2023- No more discussion about the management plan. Town Manager Coffey recommended the Town Council approve the authorization of Elevated Trail Design to complete a proposed "study". Town Council did approve this item. The scope of the "study" is solely related to designing a single-track trail system and did not include any feasibility study components related to access, parking, safety, etc:

Date: June 6, 2023

Quote Valid for: 45 Days

Overview:

My local trail design and construction firm would like to work with the Town of Weaverville, Mark Endries, and all other interested parties to help bring natural single-track trails safely and sustainably to Weaverville. The watershed property is ideally suited for passive recreation and could easily hold several miles of trail that could become a valuable asset to our community members and visitors. The best next step for this small trail system to become a reality is to have a full trail system flagged and professionally planned. This will ensure all trails fit within the parameters of the conservation requirements and will help with potential grants and funding to bring these trails to fruition. Having the trails flagged in the field will provide an opportunity for people to see the potential in the forest. The associated trail plan will provide the necessary information to discuss this project with the public and help with fundraising publicly and privately to bring this to fruition.

Scope:

- Pre-Field visit meeting with all stakeholders to fully understand the goals for this beautiful property.
- Meet the Client on-site to discuss goals and vision.
- Four full days of ETD staff on-site exploring all terrain available and flagging.
- Develop trail alignments that meet the client's needs and are based on the initial concept performed by Mark Endries.

- ETD will explore all available options and determine the best for long-term sustainability and designed as a minimal single-track trail system that takes advantage of the existing logging roads when feasible.
- Hard Flagging of Trail alignments
- Identify trail features such as bridges, steps, staircases, and or drainage features.
- ETD will collect GPS data.
- Produce a basic map of proposed trail alignments.
- Mark Endries has expressed interest handle GIS tasks for our firm on this project in an effort to reduce the cost of professional trail planning services.
- Provide a basic trail plan with a construction proposal.
- Review in the field with the client after the final deliverable has been submitted.
- Final field visit when to ensure all party's questions are answered and the construction process is discussed in any detail required.

Timeline:

- ETD can get this into our schedule in August or September 2023.

- Anticipate receiving final deliverables 4 weeks after completion of field time.

Total Cost: $4,980.00

Payment Terms: One Invoice will be provided upon completion of the scope. Payment will be due 45 days after receipt.

COI will be issued to the client once the contract is signed.

October 2023- Town Manager Coffey updates that they met with Elevated Trail Design and they should have the final product completed in January of February.

January 2024- Town Manager Coffey updates that Elevated Trail Design is working on field work.

February 2024- Town Manager Coffey says they have received the final report from Elevated Trail Systems, but have decided to delay the presentation of the report until after Elevated Trail Systems' report on another proposed project is completed. Hopes to present both to Council in March or April.

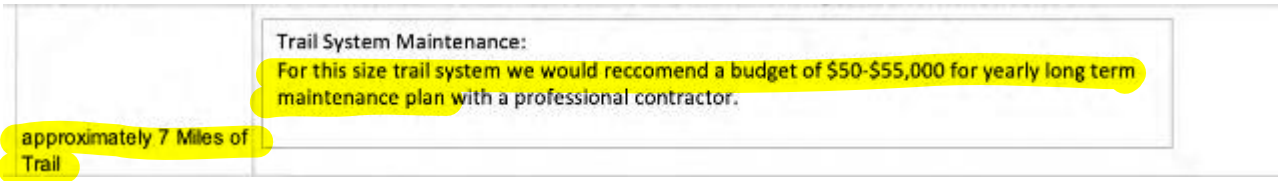
Town Council passed a resolution in support of an application for the Buncombe County Passive Recreation Lands Grant on February 26th (without seeing the "study") without seeing the actual plans.

March 2024- Town Manager Coffey reports that staff, Mark Endries and Byron Hamstead have been working on this grant application and are on track to have it complete by the March 31st deadline.

April 2024- Town Manager Coffey reports that Peter Mills, President of Elevated Trail Design will not be at April meeting, but will present his report on the Eller Cove (Weaverville Watershed) trail system at the May 20th Town Council meeting.

May 2024- Peter Mills gives presentation to Town Council on the Weaverville Watershed trail system. Maps presented to Town Council show three parking areas- one on Eller Cove Rd, one near the cell tower on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway and one at the currently proposed main and only parking area at the corner of Elk Mountain Scenic Highway and Elk Wallow Trail.

Also of note in this presentation is a chart showing the individual trails and total trail length along with the estimate of ongoing maintenance costs. Peter shows "approximately 7 miles of trail" and states, "For this size trail system, we would recommend a budget of $50,000-$55,000 for yearly long term maintenance plan with a professional contractor." The issue here is that they are now proposing 9.5 miles of trails, but are still quoting the $55,000 for yearly long term maintenance. Does that increase the maintenance costs proportionally to $67,850-$74,640? This also calls into question whether their trail construction costs are accurate given they are saying they are building 36% more trail than the trail designer specifies in his plan.



Overview: Our local trail design and construction firm has been contracted by the town of Weaverville to explore their "watershed" property to design a trail system in alignment with the long-term conservation goals. The watershed property is ideally suited for passive recreation and our trail design plans for a low-density approach with just under 7 miles of multi-use trails.

June 2024- Town Manager Coffey reports that Sarah Myers and Peter Mills will share a presentation and Q&A with the grant subcommittee on June 25th. Town Manager Coffey will be on a leave of absence. She also reports that they have been invited to participate in Phase II of the Tourism Product Development Fund Grant Process. This is the grant application that states they expect 30,000 visitors/year by year 3.

July 2025- Buncombe County Passive Recreation Lands subcommittee has a site visit to The Weaverville Watershed Trail project on July 18, 2024. This is the first time any neighboring property owners found out about the project. Many neighbors attended the Weaverville Town Council meeting on Monday, July 22, 2024 and spoke about concerns during the public comment portion of the meeting. Neighbors also tried to speak during the grant subcommittee's meeting on July 23, 2024, but due to technical difficulties we did not get the opportunity.

Since that meeting, I repeatedly reached out to the Town of Weaverville with suggestions for decreasing the number of cars, relocating the parking, etc. They were not receptive to discussing any modifications to the current plan to deal with traffic or safety concerns. My neighbors and I have continued to fact-check the grant application and have noticed many misleading statements and outright lies which I will detail below:

FROM PAGE 8:

cultural uses that meet the requirements of the conservation easement and this Open Space Bond. The Town has a professionally-designed trail master plan that identifies over 9 miles of potential trails. The trail design utilizes an existing network of old logging roads, and adds trails throughout the property with a minimal impact approach. Public access will be possible from cyclist-friendly Elk Mountain Scenic Highway where we also plan to create a small parking area. The existing water supply equipment and reservoir will be fenced off

This shows that they were already planning to only have access from EMSH when they submitted the grant application in March. They still presented three parking areas to Town Council in May. I called Vice Mayor, John Chase on July 18, 2024 when I found out about this project and the one parking area. He said he thought there was access from Eller Cove Rd.

ALSO FROM PAGE 8:

and animals. The property is located in Buncombe County situated between Eller Cove Rd and Elk Mountain Scenic Highway, with public access proposed off of Elk Mountain Scenic Highway. If awarded Bond funds, the timeline to implementation fits perfectly within the Bond schedule. The project is essentially "shovel ready" and work could proceed almost immediately after funding is secured. The Town anticipates a project completion timeline of under two years. Long term management and maintenance of the property has been thoroughly considered and a clear plan is in place. The Town has developed a draft management plan that details management and maintenance. Furthermore, the trail master plan discusses trail specifications,

This states that the project is "shovel-ready". **This is not true.** The project has not received approval from Weaverville Town Council. They have only approved seeking funding for the project, but not the project itself. Also, I confirmed with Sarah Sheeran from SAHC that they have not seen a final draft of a management plan that the stewardship manager for the State has approved. Sarah said that he is very "by the book" and will want to see that diverse voices are heard and that there are funds available for ongoing maintenance. Additionally, when I met with Sarah Myers and Mark Endries on July 31st, they repeatedly told me that they would engage neighbors *after* they receive grant funding. They also reiterated that the Town of Weaverville has not approved the plan. They said that if they get funding, the Town of Weaverville will do their due diligence and decide whether or not to approve the project. **They are not "shovel-ready."**

FROM PAGE 11:

How will the applicant ensure that the project is completed?

The Town of Weaverville feels it has done much preparation and planning to ensure that the project is well situated to be completed successfully. The Land and Water Fund requires a management plan in place prior to passive recreational public use within the watershed easement area. We currently have a draft management plan that has been reviewed both by Town and easement staff and could be formally adopted with approval by the Weaverville Town Council, which is strongly supportive of the trail system concept. A trail master plan has been funded by the Town and has been completed by a professional trail design and construction firm, making the project "shovel ready". Throughout the entire management and trail master plan development, the Town has developed a collaborative relationship between the Town, easement staff, and the community. The amount of community support for this project is tremendous. Private citizens have informally organized into a friends group that includes members of local hiking and bike advocacy groups, contributed significant planning effort to date, and has the capacity to provide trail maintenance if feasible. The Town feels it has a well thought out trail concept and has addressed all of the potential impediments to successful implementation. All required and interested parties are in full support to see the property opened to public use.

Much of this statement above is not true. They state that the draft management plan could be formally adopted with approval by Weaverville Town Council. **This is not true.** It has not been reviewed or approved by the stewardship manager for the Land and Water Fund. The town has not completed a true feasibility study for this project. The only study they completed was a trail design study. The people who planned this only involved community that they knew

would be supportive of the trail system (bikers, hikers and schools). **They did not contact any neighboring property owners on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway or Eller Cove Road.**

What are the potential risks/impediments to completion?

- How will these risks/impediments be addressed?
- What other factors may affect the project's timeline?

Thanks to the variety of people involved in the planning and preparation of this project, the Town has thought a lot about potential risks and impediments to completion. One primary concern is the potential popularity of the trail system, and how that popularity might overwhelm the parking and capacity of the site. The Town has reached out to law enforcement, the local fire department, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation to make everyone aware of the project and to allow ample time for planning and preparation.

When I stumbled upon the grant subcommittee site visit in my driveway and heard about the plan, I immediately inquired about parking and overflow parking. I was told that because of the conservation easement, they are only able to provide 5-10 parking spaces and that overflow parking would be NC DOT's problem because EMSH is a state road. My neighbors and I reached out to NC DOT, Division 13 and spoke with Gabe Johnson, Nick Durado and Tim Anderson who said they had not heard about the project. They said that Town of Weaverville will be required to obtain a driveway permit and that they will not be able to do the pull-off parking that they propose. Instead, they will have to provide channelized parking so that no one is backing into the roadway. They said that the Town of Weaverville needs to do more planning to create a dedicated parking area. ***The requirement for channelized parking or a parking lot will mean they can provide fewer than the 5-10 parking spaces that they were going to be able to provide as pull-off spots. The parking requirements will also increase the amount of money they need to spend on parking as their current budget is just for simple pull-off parking at the side of the road.***

Tim Anderson eventually reached out to the Town of Weaverville and let them know about this issue:

From: "Anderson, Timothy W" <twanderson@ncdot.gov>
Date: August 2, 2024 at 10:37:46 AM EDT
To: tchiott@bellsouth.net, "Medlin, Christopher D" <cdmedlin@ncdot.gov>
Cc: "Deyton, Christopher S" <csdeyton@ncdot.gov>
Subject: RE: [External] Elk Mountain Scenic Highway Skateboarders and Trail Plans

Travers,

I have shared your email with the Town so they can understand your concerns about the parking plan. I have also requested an update on the status of their plans and when they anticipate submitting for a driveway permit. Once we have the plans, our district office will review them to ensure they meet the standards in our driveway manual before the access permit can be approved. We have also requested that there is verification of the parking lot size in regard to the number of visitors they are anticipating having on site.

Sincerely,

Tim Anderson

Timothy W. Anderson, P.E.
Division Engineer

We (neighbors on EMSH) let the Town of Weaverville know that we would like to see an independent professional analysis of the number of visitors they anticipate having on-site since that number is used to determine the size of the required parking lot. Note that they stated in their TDA grant application that they anticipate 30,000 visitors/year by year 3. Mark Endries told me in our July 31st meeting that he envisions people using the trails like he would- riding on the road to get to the trails and then through and out with no car. He seems to say whatever is convenient to the conversation at hand.

FROM PAGE 15:

Describe the community support/involvement in the project.

- How was the community involved in the design and implementation of the project?
- Describe any community outreach completed or planned.

In addition to a group of Town Staff dedicated to this project, we have a group of community members supporting the development of this grant application and the development of these trails. There is community support to develop a Friends of the Watershed group that would assume a level of responsibility and ambassadorship. As you will see from the Letters of Support, we are in communication with established hiking and biking groups in the area and have their support, including the Carolina Mountain Club, Pisgah Rage, and Pisgah Area Sorba.

As previously mentioned, they only reached out certain parts of the community. In addition to this, they misled potential supporters by showing them maps that included parking and access from Eller Cove Rd. How are school buses going to drop kids off at an entrance in a blind curve on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway? The letter from Chris Papaioannou, Scoutmaster for Troop 15 in Weaverville, specifically states he supports the trails with access within 2-3 miles of downtown Weaverville with parking for half dozen or more vehicles. I mentioned this to Mark Endries when I met with him and he said his son is a boy scout and they would be in favor of the trails even without access from Eller Cove Rd.

FROM PAGE 20:

Alignment with Evaluation Criteria: Safety (5%)

How will the project be managed to address safety concerns?

The Town of Weaverville has done much planning and preparation with the Weaverville Watershed Trails project to address the issue of safety. The Town of Weaverville has reached out to law enforcement, the local fire department, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation to make everyone aware of the project and to allow ample time for planning and preparation. Another safety concern is users attempting to access

The property is outside of the Town of Weaverville police jurisdiction. The main entrance and parking area are in Buncombe County. However, Elk Mountain Scenic Highway begins in the City of Asheville and ends at the Blue Ridge Parkway, so it is in a law enforcement desert. Neither City of Asheville police, nor Blue Ridge Parkway law enforcement travel this road. Buncombe County sheriff's deputies only come when they are called or to issue warrants. ***There is no plan for safety of this parking area that they want to create in a residential neighborhood where residents already feel vulnerable due to being in a remote location on a heavily traveled through road.*** The grant writers likely did not reach out to law enforcement about this plan. We know that they lied about contacting NC DOT.

How will the project be protected from deterioration and vandalism?

Once the trails are opened to the public the Town of Weaverville plans to have skilled trail maintenance staff and Weaverville law enforcement presence in the area to protect from deterioration and vandalism. Additionally, the Town would like to leverage the strong community support of the project to potentially mobilize an official friends group and/or established hiking and biking groups to serve as trail ambassadors to further assist with preventing deterioration and vandalism.

See above note and visit Buzzard's Rock to see what this parking area may end up looking like. It is covered in graffiti and litter including numerous empty alcohol bottles.

How does the project mitigate against potential conflict between different user groups?

For example, how might the project mitigate against accidents between hikers and cyclists?

The Weaverville Watershed Trails master plan has identified bike only and hike only trails to better serve each user group and also to reduce potential conflicts between the groups. Additionally, ample signage and

The hike-only trail section is quite short as if it was created only to be able to answer this question. A hike-only option does not exist in the trail system. HIkers would have to spend considerable time on shared-use trails.

A final additional concern and warning is that the Town of Weaverville government is in transition right now. Both of the contacts that Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy had for this project at the Town of Weaverville are no longer

with the Town. Town Manager Selena Coffey (who wrote the grant application with Mark Endries) has been on a leave of absence for quite some time and it is not clear if she will be back. Currently, the town is operating with an Interim Town Manager, Scottie Harris. Jennifer Jackson, Town Attorney, resigned at the end of June in part due to conflicts with the Town Manager over her employment contract. Ms. Jackson will be replaced by an outside counsel who has not been involved with this project at all.

I urge you not to recommend funding for this project. The Town of Weaverville has not followed proper planning procedures for this proposed park. As a result, they have not figured out how to deal with foreseeable logistical and safety issues and cannot accurately predict how much this project will cost. ***They paid for the wrong study. They should have spent their $5,000 on a true feasibility study rather than a design of the trail system.*** Obviously, trails can be installed where there are existing logging roads. Their question should have been, "what do we need to consider if we want to open this land up to public use?" That study would have flagged the lack of space available for parking and then they could have decided on a public-use for the space where the projected number of users matched the available parking. Allowing hiking on the existing logging roads would generate many fewer cars than allowing biking on nine new miles of single track. However, even that could overwhelm the very limited parking that they are able to provide.

As I have told the Town of Weaverville repeatedly, I am not opposed to opening the watershed to the public, I am opposed to the current incomplete and inadequate plan. My neighbors and I on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway would be the ones to bear the burden should the park be built without proper consideration of parking needs and other safety issues. You only have to look at the recent installation of pickleball courts in Weaverville to see an example of a project in which they failed to foresee potential issues. The Town of Weaverville is currently having to install landscaping and sound mitigation boards because neighbors are upset about the noise from the pickleball courts. Those items were not in the original plan or budget and have had to be added.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns.

Sincerely,



Emily Boyd

122 Elk Wallow Trail and 9999 Elk Mountain Scenic Highway

828-713-0549

From: Sarah Myers
To: Rachael Sawyer
Subject: A Statement and the List of Participating Team Members
Date: Sunday, August 4, 2024 8:01:50 PM
Attachments: Outlook-xs1ff5jx.png
Approach from West (Weaverville, Asheville) to Parking.png
Approach from East (Blue Ridge Parkway, Bull Gap) to Parking.png

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Hello!

Here are the names and emails of the folks who will be joining the Wednesday 9am call.

Scottie Harris: sharris@weavervillenc.org
Jennifer Jackson: jjackson@weavervillenc.org
Mark Endries: markendries@hotmail.com
Peter Mills: elevatedtraildesign@gmail.com

The grant committee has developed a statement that we would like to be shared with the Subcommittee Members. Would you mind passing this along to them?

Thank you for all of your work,
Sarah

Note: Red markup text added by Emily Boyd

Dear Buncombe County Passive Recreation Lands Subcommittee.

Please accept this statement in response to Public Comments that have been received about the Weaverville Watershed Trails grant application. The grant team has spent a considerable amount of time and effort on the Watershed concept design and continues to do so in light of the public feedback. The Town of Weaverville is committed to providing public use access on this property, ideally in a way that would benefit Buncombe County residents. We would like to clarify the following.

Irrelevant because they never contacted SoHum and they knew the property had changed hands. The Town of Weaverville was involved in annexation talks with SoHum and Town of Woodfin who ultimately did annex the SoHum property.

Community Engagement Plan

Public engagement has always been a part of our project plan, with initial outreach to neighboring Sourwood Inn (now SoHum Healing Resort) in 2022 and outreach to potential community partners in 2023 and 2024. Public engagement with neighboring residents of the property and the greater community was planned once funding was secured. Given the feedback we've received, we have now met with an Elk Mountain Scenic Highway resident, and plan to host Public Input Sessions in advance of trail construction. These public input sessions will include neighbors, community partner organizations, and Weaverville Town Residents, with the goal of gathering feedback and opinions on the project design and park operations in order for us to optimize our designs to best serve the community. We know this will help to create a stronger project in the long term.

This was me. We met on July 31st. They were not interested in any suggestions I made about ways to reduce the impact on our neighborhood. They doubled down on all plans as they currently exist. It was not a productive or constructive meeting.

Needed to be done prior to completing a design and budget.

Intended Park Audience

We are intending to build a multi-use trail system for walkers, hikers, and bikers of all ages, designed to offer access for people who are mobility impaired. There is no comparable public passive recreation space in North Buncombe. The plans call for both hike-only and bike-only routes to allow users trails where hikers won't be impacted by bikers, and vice versa. Mountain bikers looking for highly technical trails with jumps and drops will need to look elsewhere, and there are other locations in the regional area where mountain bikers looking for serious adventure will prefer to go. Our trails will be built with a natural approach and minimal impact. As a result, we will see some mountain bike use, but more likely it will be nature lovers, hikers, trail runners, birders, and gravel bike riders passing through the property. We intend to communicate the 15-mile round-trip loop from Downtown Weaverville as an attractive option for Weaverville residents and visitors.

How does this square with their claim in the grant application that these trails are needed because the Alexander Bike Park at the landfill closed?

There is only one short section of each requiring spending considerable time on mixed use sections just to get to the hike and bike only sections.

Moving the Proposed Elk Mountain Parking Location

We have assessed the entire property while identifying where to install a small parking area, including the right of way access on Eller Cove Road and a location further up Elk Mountain Highway towards Buzzard Rock. While we feel the best space for the 5-10 car parking area is where we currently have it situated in our application, we are looking at the opportunity to situate the parking area further East on Elk Mountain Scenic Highway.

The town of Weaverville was notified of NC DOT parking requirements before this letter was written and is apparently choosing to leave these details out of their correspondence with the grant subcommittee.

Regarding a parking area on Eller Cove Rd., we would like to keep folks away from the water reservoir and water supply equipment located at the Eller Cove access point to the property. This area is very steep and narrow, hence the switchback trails from this entry point into the trail system. Steep, switchback trails would not allow for the accessibility that parking on Elk Mountain, near the old logging roads, would provide. The space on Eller Cove does not connect directly to a public road, instead access is through a right of way easement that passes through the property at 181 Eller Cove Road. This entry is narrow passing within 30 ft. of two houses and 100 ft. of a third house. Currently, the closest house to the Elk Mountain Scenic Highway proposed parking location is 500 ft. and out of any direct sight lines.

This is untrue. Our house is located as far from EMSH as we could site it- approx 500' straight down our driveway. It is more like 420' from the proposed parking area and I can see the area from my office window now and will be able to see it much clearer from everywhere on our property when the leaves are off the trees.

As we investigate placing the small parking area further east along Elk Mountain Scenic Highway, the two limitations we see are: less flat land and less access to the accessible trails. These are not insurmountable limitations; they would result in greater expense and effort, while potentially limiting the number of residents physically able to use the trail system.

**There are other houses being built that will be much closer to the proposed parking area and will feel like they have the parking area right in their yard. Please see graphic next pg.

Our original Elk Mountain parking placement takes advantage of a relatively flat terrain, eliminates non-native invasive plants, is situated at a location where three trails meet, and relies on existing logging roads.

Who are the sightline experts? Are they discounting the experience of the people who have lived at that curve for years?

The Safety of Elk Mountain Scenic Highway

With safety as a priority, we have spoken with sightline experts about the concern that the proposed parking area is in a blind curve. As you will see in the attached photos, visibility of the parking area from the West (Weaverville/Asheville) would be approximately 400 feet. From the East (Blue Ridge Parkway/Bull Gap) visibility would be approximately 250 feet, with existing signage warning of

From the West is not the direction anyone is concerned about

My husband installed the "existing signage" because of so many close calls when exiting our driveway which is further from the curve than the proposed parking area is from the curve.

This does not make sense. The road still curves and people still drive too fast down the hill. Removing trees in the watershed doesn't improve visibility of the entrance.

hidden driveways. We expect that a parking lot location will improve driving sight lines and safety around the curve by removing obstructions to view by road users.

Furthermore, the availability of safe parking will reduce/eliminate vehicles parked in unsafe locations or locations that would obstruct flow of traffic. We are reaching out to NCDOT to discuss and share the project design. We intend to place signage, in partnership and with permission, about parking on the road and driving carefully. "Share the Road" signage and outreach during project events (e.g. grand opening) could be implemented.

Admission that they lied on their grant application. Also, note that the NC DOT reached out to Town of Weaverville prior to Sarah Myers sending this message. They make no mention here of the requirements that they now know exist for driveway permit, channelized parking or sizing of the parking area for expected use.

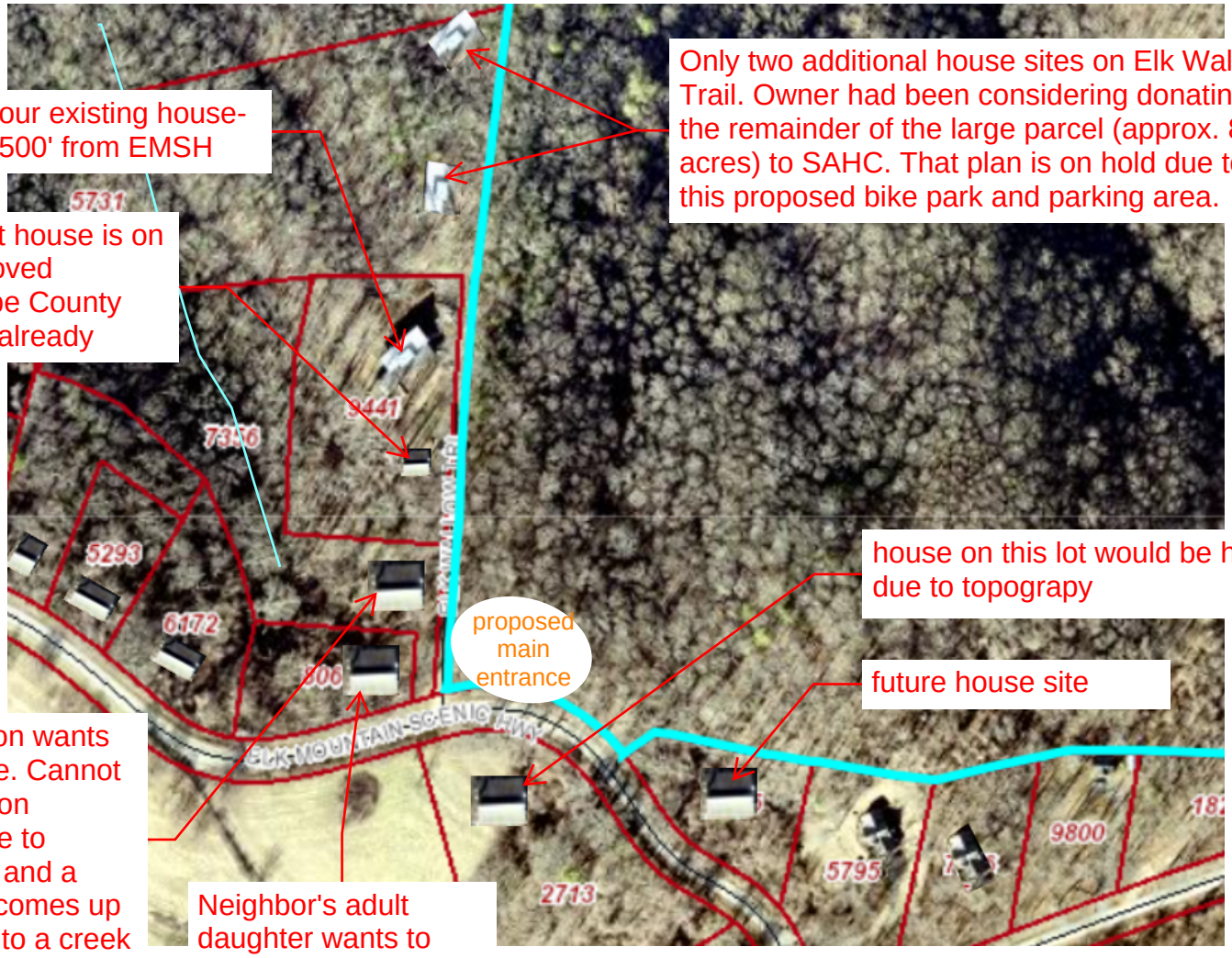
Overstated Visitation Numbers from the TDA Grant Application

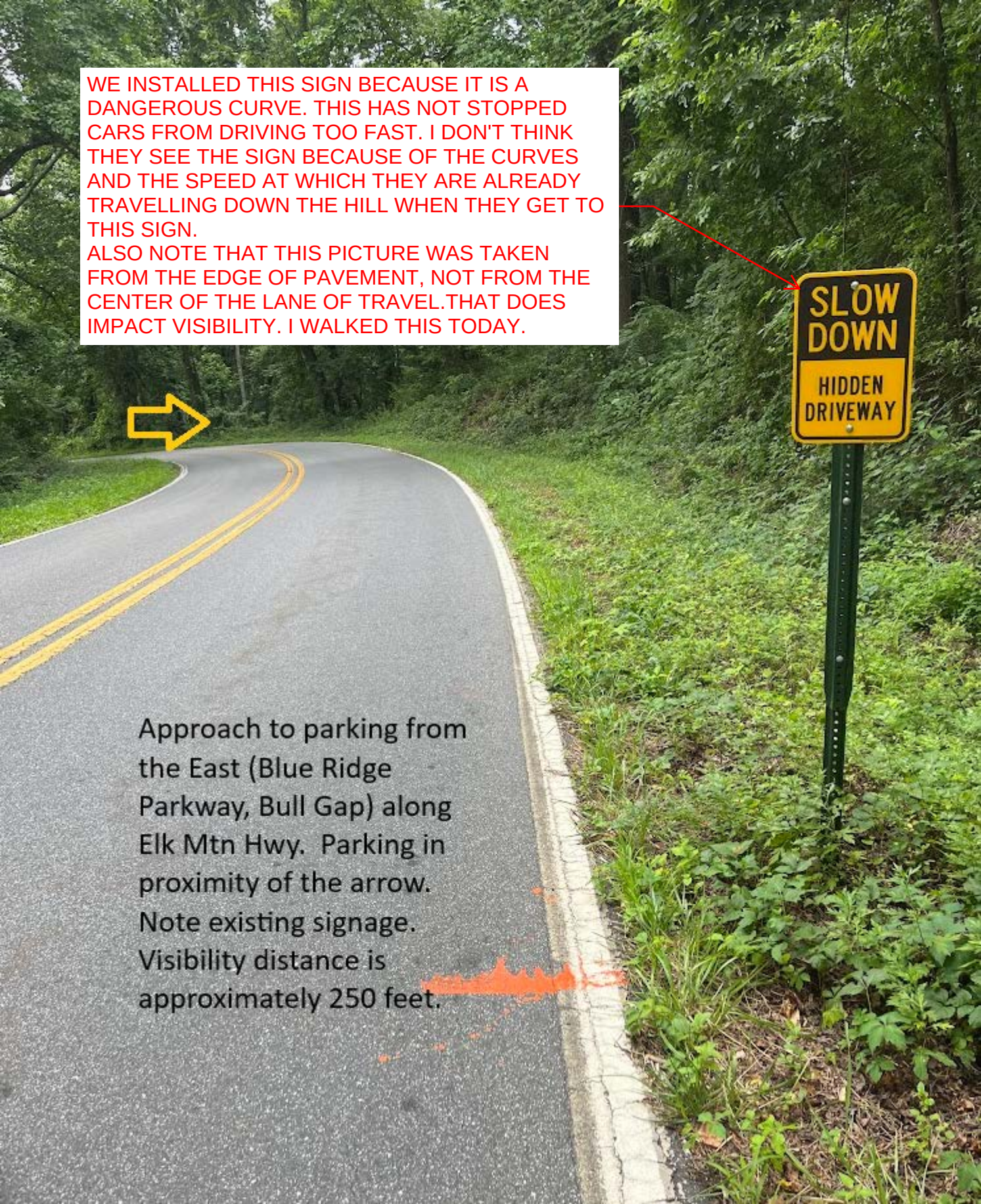
After conversations with our Trail experts, we have been informed that the visitation numbers in the application we submitted to the Tourism Development Authority are overstated. We will do more research to identify more accurate numbers, and we don't anticipate the usage to be as high.

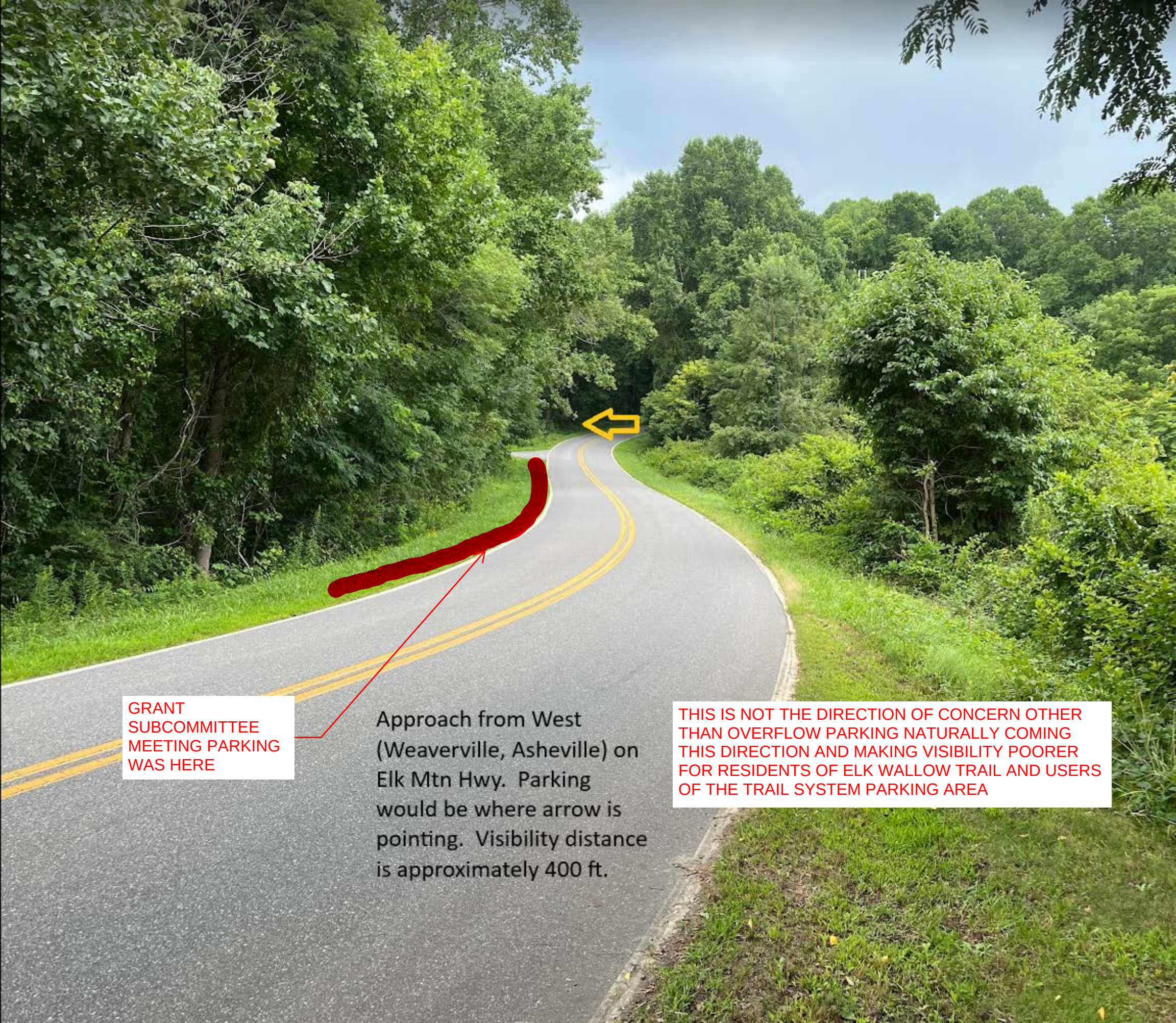
Admission of untruthful statements in another grant application. We have requested that the Town of Weaverville utilize an outside professional to develop these numbers. So far, they have not responded to that request.

Sarah Myers

NEIGHBORHOOD IMMEDIATELY SURROUNDING THE PROPOSED PARKING AREA




WE INSTALLED THIS SIGN BECAUSE IT IS A DANGEROUS CURVE. THIS HAS NOT STOPPED CARS FROM DRIVING TOO FAST. I DON'T THINK THEY SEE THE SIGN BECAUSE OF THE CURVES AND THE SPEED AT WHICH THEY ARE ALREADY TRAVELLING DOWN THE HILL WHEN THEY GET TO THIS SIGN.
ALSO NOTE THAT THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN FROM THE EDGE OF PAVEMENT, NOT FROM THE CENTER OF THE LANE OF TRAVEL.THAT DOES IMPACT VISIBILITY. I WALKED THIS TODAY.
SLOW DOWN
HIDDEN DRIVEWAY
Approach to parking from the East (Blue Ridge Parkway, Bull Gap) along Elk Mtn Hwy. Parking in proximity of the arrow. Note existing signage. Visibility distance is approximately 250 feet.


GRANT SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING PARKING WAS HERE
Approach from West (Weaverville, Asheville) on Elk Mtn Hwy. Parking would be where arrow is pointing. Visibility distance is approximately 400 ft.
THIS IS NOT THE DIRECTION OF CONCERN OTHER THAN OVERFLOW PARKING NATURALLY COMING THIS DIRECTION AND MAKING VISIBILITY POORER FOR RESIDENTS OF ELK WALLOW TRAIL AND USERS OF THE TRAIL SYSTEM PARKING AREA

From: Maur
To: Rachael Sawyer
Subject: Weaverville watershed Trails and Nature Preserve project
Date: Monday, August 12, 2024 12:26:57 PM

BC Email Security couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you have received an email from this sender mbjfeuston@gmail.com.

Dear Ms Sawyer

It has recently been brought to my attention by The Residents of Elk Mountain Scenic Views that the Town of Weaverville is seeking funding for the subject project stated above. I do not support funding of this project out of the Open Space Bond funds.

I live on a single street community that accesses EMSH - it is my sole roadway to go anywhere so it is used daily. Not only has vehicular use increased considerably in the past years, but resident and recreative use (jogging, cycling, etc) has also gained in popularity. Switchbacks and overgrown foliage make it difficult to anticipate what may be coming around the curves. Having the entrance of these trails directly on EMSH will cause additional safety concerns - especially if parking is limited. An example of the potential over flow parking chaos can be seen at the entrance to Rattle Snake Lodge trails off of Ox Creek.

It appears that the appropriate and safest access to the proposed project would be from Eller Cove Road. If it's a Weaverville project, let's keep access in Weaverville. ' EMSH Residents ' that commute regularly should not be inconvenienced.

Recommendation for funding of the project needs to be evaluated when all issues have been adequately addressed and have included input from impacted EMSH communities, as well as planning professionals. Let's keep EMSH scenic and safe.

Thank you

Maureen H Feuston, PhD
Elk Trail resident
Sent from my iPhone