BLM Tres Rios Transportation and Access Planning Meeting - Travel Area 2

Monday, August 26, 2019
Nucla Community Center, Nucla CO

MEETING IN BRIEF

The meeting was an opportunity to hear from BLM regarding goals for the ‘TAP2’ planning effort in the western portions of Dolores, San Miguel, and Montrose counties, and for community stakeholders to provide input to BLM regarding local needs and priorities. Participants emphasized a desire to leave roads open and generally untouched, but to have some additional loops, connector routes, dispersed camping and parking, and limited signage to support outdoor recreation and ‘off the beaten path’ tourism in the area.

INTRODUCTION

Keith Fox from BLM emphasized that BLM’s focus in this planning effort is not to close roads. It is to direct limited BLM resources into supporting local priorities, such as increasing economic development through outdoor-based recreation on public lands, while making sure these uses are protective of the planning area’s natural, historic and cultural resources. BLM wants to understand local needs, values and priorities for the area as it embarks on this planning effort. There will also other opportunities for public input throughout the process as well.

Meeting participants included representatives from the following entities and interest groups: Montrose County, San Miguel County, City of Montrose emergency services, motorized users from Dove Creek area, motorized users from Montrose area, West End Trail Alliance (WETA), West End Economic Development Corporation (WEEDC), Town of Nucla, and non-motorized users from Nucla and Naturita areas.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Meeting attendees spent the majority of the meeting in small table groups with area maps. They were asked to share their general and specific areas of interest, concerns, and additional input for the planning effort. Participants discussed and responded to the questions below, marking up BLM maps with specific routes, locations, and specific suggestions. At the end of the meeting, the full group discussed the overall input and suggestions that were raised.
1) What are your favorite trails or places and what do you do there?

Participants highlighted the following locations, routes and uses:
  - Dove Creek to Disappointment Road, along Dolores River road – a ‘crown jewel’ or core route for motorized users
  - San Miguel County Road S7 – motorized access to Summit Canyon
  - San Miguel County Road Z1 – Gypsum Valley to Grassy Hills
  - Road to Indian Henry’s Cabin (Montrose County Road GG15) – motorized use
  - Dolores River Canyon – South Branch Chico Creek to Dolores River, downstream, then back out to North Branch Chico Creek – hike/bike
  - Hamm Canyon bench (above canyon, down from Wedding Bell) - motorized use
  - Montrose County II13 Road/Rimrock Mine route – great OHV routes, near San Juan Huts route, with biking opportunities as well
  - San Miguel County Road 19X, Montrose County Road FF16 and GG16, near Bull Canyon
  - Klondike Basin area – good pedestrian trail, not the best tread for mechanized trails
  - Monogram Mesa and Bull Canyon for historic value
  - Road JJ8 for petroglyphs

2) What needs do you see for any of the locations described above?

Participants shared the following suggestions:
  - Wedding Bell - rugged roads are good, including being good for employing guides, and the area has lots of historical value. There’s a need for a signed full-size OHV route(s) up to and on top of Wedding Bell Mountain.
  - Near Gypsum Valley boat ramp – consider dispersed camping and/or group site for RV parking and camping.

3) What other suggestions do you have for the planning effort?

Participants added the suggestions pertaining to signage, connector trails, routes, camping, and the planning process itself:

Signage, connectors, and types of routes
  - Add signage, but otherwise keep roads ‘as is’ to provide an adventure experience.
  - Create loops and connectors.
  - Preserve moderate trails for jeeps – jeep groups tend to prefer ‘moderate’ trails, rather than extreme trails that would require vehicle modifications.
  - Avoid closing any roads.
  - Designate and communicate route numbers for emergency response purposes.
  - Loop the Rimrocker trail to provide access to as many communities as possible.
  - Connect Dove Creek to the Rimrocker trail.
Connect the Rimrocker trail to non-motorized side routes to facilitate day loops, so folks can get off on a side trail and then drive back out to for a shorter (day loops better than bike park).

Preserve lower elevation routes for non-snow-based wintertime recreation.

Reduce route redundancy where possible.

Consider routes that go to overlooks or other out-and-back features.

Consider routes that go to historic sites (mining and otherwise) with interpretive signage, for attracting locals and out-of-town visitors alike.

Provide as much access as possible in areas close to communities.

Camping

Consider a ‘base camp’ approach – i.e., a designated or dispersed camping area that is centrally located with loop trails for motorized or mechanized use out of the ‘base camp’ area, with an additional area for truck-trailer and/or RV parking. Uravan and the Nucla Baseball Field/Ball Park are useful examples.

Consider Montrose County Road JJ8 (Little Gypsum Valley) for dispersed camping locations.

Other planning considerations

Ensure wildlife and other resources are considered in the planning process.

Avoid sage grouse habitat, raptors and big game habitat in Dry Creek Basin when considering a Rimrocker trail connection.

Ensure planning is integrated with BLM’s ‘Connecting w/ Communities’ policy.

Hold meetings like this in the Montrose area.

Place flyers in hotels to reach interested out-of-town visitors.

Coordinate travel planning efforts with Uncompahgre Field Office and adjacent Field Offices in Utah.

Consider making Google Earth available at meetings, to help users connect their on-the-ground experience with route names and planning discussions.

Provide education and partner with user groups to increase stakeholder participation in maintaining the rugged, natural character of the landscape.

Continue to coordinate closely with county commissioners in the three counties, as BLM transportation planning is integral to local planning efforts.

Continue to integrate the planning effort with the critical economic development needs between Montrose and the Utah state line.

**WRAP-UP**

BLM will consider the input from the August and September meetings in Nucla, Dove Creek and Montrose in formulating an initial plan for the TAP2 area. Based on input received thus far, this is likely to consist of very few closures and will generally preserve the existing roads and routes in the area. Stakeholders will continue to receive updates and have opportunities to share input and priorities as the plan goes through the NEPA process starting next year. Planning information can be found at https://www.blm.gov/office/tres-rios-field-office.
MEETING IN BRIEF

The meeting was an opportunity to hear from BLM regarding goals for the ‘TAP2’ planning effort in the western portions of Dolores, San Miguel, and Montrose counties, and for community stakeholders to provide input to BLM regarding local needs and priorities. Participants emphasized a desire to leave roads open and generally untouched, but to provide more information to the public regarding trails, routes, and camping opportunities to support outdoor recreation in the area.

INTRODUCTION

Connie Clementson from BLM emphasized that BLM’s focus in this planning effort is not to close, but to designate roads. The goal is to be able to direct limited BLM resources into supporting local priorities, such as increasing economic development through outdoor-based recreation on public lands, while making sure these uses are protective of the planning area’s natural, historic and cultural resources. BLM wants to understand local needs, values and priorities for the area as it embarks on this planning effort. There will also other opportunities for public input throughout the process as well.

Meeting participants included representatives from the following entities and interest groups: Montrose County, City of Montrose, Uncompahgre Valley Trail Riders, Western Slope Four Wheelers, other jeep users and non-motorized users from Montrose area.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Meeting attendees spent the majority of the meeting in small table groups with area maps. They were asked to share their general and specific areas of interest, concerns, and additional input for the planning effort. Participants discussed and responded to the questions below, marking up BLM maps with specific routes, locations, and specific suggestions. At the end of the meeting, the full group discussed the overall input and suggestions that were raised.

1) What are your favorite trails or places and what do you do there?

Participants highlighted the following locations, routes and uses:
- Bull Canyon/Indian Henry’s Cabin
Wedding Bell Mountain
Historic mine areas
Slickrock/Gypsum Valley area
Jeep loops
Hunting access

2) What needs do you see for any of the locations described above?

Participants shared the following suggestions:
❖ Suggest a full-sized road to the top of Wedding Bell Mountain (not low clearance, not graveled).

3) What other suggestions do you have for the planning effort?

Participants added the suggestions pertaining to signage, connector trails, routes, camping, and the planning process itself:

Camping and parking
❖ Identify and designate camping areas, with graded and gravel road access, to provide parking and camping for groups of RVs and tents, from which various day trips on OHVs could be staged (but not a developed recreation site).
❖ Motorized users tend to prefer unimproved camping areas with no amenities and no fees.
❖ Suggest creating fire rings to avoid new ones being constructed.
❖ Designate destination areas (not necessarily recreation loops) for hike/bike opportunities with nearby tent camping.

Signage, connectors, and types of routes
❖ Name the routes, particularly those that stich together other roads and routes (e.g., Rimrocker), but don’t fix them or close them.
❖ Make quality maps available to the public, including camping areas and what trails are available for the various uses. Maps should include GPS coordinates.
❖ Create brochures of loop opportunities with description of experience, conditions, and/or difficulty rating.
❖ Brochures should highlight the history of the area and cultural sites of interest.
❖ Develop or help with a road experience communication tool such as Facebook page for TAP2 motorized users.
❖ Washed out/highly eroded roads could be converted to hiking/biking use.
❖ Motorized users welcome difficult, unimproved roads.
❖ Keep at least one motorized route to an area, even if you convert others to hike/bike routes.
❖ Designate user-specific loops and routes.
Identify, designate and promote routes with special attractions (e.g., cultural and historical).

Other planning considerations and ways to draw out-of-town users to the area

- More presentations and exposure of the area to western slope trail riding groups.
- Keep the area as ‘backcountry’.
- Avoid ‘over-touristing’ the area by keeping county roads as the somewhat maintained, ‘core’ routes, with BLM side roads as rugged and unimproved. This will preserve the backcountry experience and keep the number of routes manageable. It will also bring recreation to key areas while protecting others.
- Montrose and other out-of-town users don’t always feel welcomed to come and recreate on the TAP2 lands. Consider ways to attract and welcome out-of-town users, such as these planning meetings, on-line maps with route information, and brochures and other marketing materials at Chambers of Commerce.
- Provide GIS mapping data and updated maps with road names to Montrose County for emergency response purposes, particularly since 911 dispatchers in Montrose aren’t generally familiar with the TAP2 area and roads.

WRAP-UP

BLM will consider the input from the August and September meetings in Nucla, Dove Creek and Montrose in formulating an initial plan for the TAP2 area. Based on input received thus far, this is likely to consist of very few closures and will generally preserve the existing roads and routes in the area. Stakeholders will continue to receive updates and have opportunities to share input and priorities as the plan goes through the NEPA process starting next year. Planning information can be found at https://www.blm.gov/office/tres-rios-field-office.
BLM Tres Rios Transportation and Access Planning Meeting - Travel Area 2
Tuesday, August 27, 2019
Dolores County Public Service Center, Dove Creek, CO

MEETING IN BRIEF

The meeting was an opportunity to hear from BLM regarding goals for the ‘TAP2’ planning effort in the western portions of Dolores, San Miguel, and Montrose counties, and for community stakeholders to provide input to BLM regarding local needs and priorities. Participants emphasized a desire to leave roads open and generally untouched, but to have some additional loops, connector routes, dispersed camping and parking, and limited signage to support outdoor recreation and ‘off the beaten path’ tourism in the area.

INTRODUCTION

Keith Fox from BLM emphasized that BLM’s focus in this planning effort is not to close roads. It is to direct limited BLM resources into supporting local priorities, such as increasing economic development through outdoor-based recreation on public lands, while making sure these uses are protective of the planning area’s natural, historic and cultural resources. BLM wants to understand local needs, values and priorities for the area as it embarks on this planning effort. There will also other opportunities for public input throughout the process as well.

Meeting participants included representatives from the following entities and interest groups: Dolores County, Town of Dove Creek, Dove Creek Chamber of Commerce, and motorized and non-motorized users from the Dove Creek area.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Meeting attendees spent the majority of the meeting in small table groups with area maps. They were asked to share their general and specific areas of interest, concerns, and additional input for the planning effort. Participants discussed and responded to the questions below, marking up BLM maps with specific routes, locations, and specific suggestions. At the end of the meeting, the full group discussed the overall input and suggestions that were raised.

1) What are your favorite trails or places and what do you do there?

Participants highlighted the following locations, routes and uses:
Spring Creek Basin and Horse Range Mesa
West Rim of the Dolores River Canyon
Dolores River Canyon road – access for picnics and swimming holes, great route for ATVs, and bike & jeep use
ATV hunting in south Disappointment Valley area (Pole Canyon) into the ‘Glade’
Nicholas Wash – rock crawling
Bush Canyon
East and west routes in Summit Canyon
South of ‘Cape Horn’ – rock crawling

2) What needs do you see for any of the locations described above?

Participants shared the following suggestions:
- Open ‘King Springs’ road (San Miguel County Road 5H) where it is closed on private land, in order to provide access to upper Bishop Canyon and south end of Summit Canyon.
- Designate and maintain camping areas off the Dolores River road, north of the existing Box Elder campground.
- Identify a connector route from the bottom of Summit Canyon to the east rim/Highway 141.
- Improve and maintain the Dolores River Canyon road from the pump station to the ‘Joe Davis Hill’ area, to allow use by ‘standard’ ATVs and OHVs.
- Improve hunting access off of San Miguel County Road 28 T near Dry Creek Basin State Wildlife Area.
- Re-establish access to historical mines on the eastern Dolores River Canyon rim off San Miguel County Road 15 R.

3) What other suggestions do you have for the planning effort?

Participants added the suggestions pertaining to signage, connector trails, routes, camping, and the planning process itself:

Signage, connectors, and types of routes
- Designate the Dolores River road as multi modal from Bradfield campground to Mountain Sheep point. Also consider this section for an OHV route.
- Designate a single-track trail and connectors on Dolores River Canyon (western rim).
- Consider a bike trail from Bedrock to Bradfield.
- Designate a single track, non-motorized trail following the existing two-track at the bottom of Summit Canyon.
- Identify a loop route up Summit Canyon, up to the east rim, connecting over to Bush Canyon and back to the mouth of Summit Canyon.
- Create a loop opportunity on west Summit Canyon.
Identify loop routes from Dove Creek to provide for 4x4 day use and or hunting activities on BLM lands, so visitors can return to Dove Creek to spend evenings.
Identify multiple single-track connector routes in the vicinity of Dolores River Overlook, to connect with Mountain Sheep Road and the southern end of the ‘Pines’ area.

Camping
- Develop BLM camping area at Slick Rock.
- Identify areas on public lands for semi developed camping.

WRAP-UP
BLM will consider the input from the August and September meetings in Nucla, Dove Creek and Montrose in formulating an initial plan for the TAP2 area. Based on input received thus far, this is likely to consist of very few closures and will generally preserve the existing roads and routes in the area. Stakeholders will continue to receive updates and have opportunities to share input and priorities as the plan goes through the NEPA process starting next year. Planning information can be found at https://www.blm.gov/office/tres-rios-field-office.