

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS BRIEFING PAPER

Topic: Lookout Mountain Road Overnight Closures

Presented by: Tom Hoby

Date: 2/27/2024

For Information

For Discussion/Board Direction

Consent to
Place on Business/
Hearing Agenda

Issue: Proposed nighttime closures to motorized vehicles on Lookout Mountain Road (LMR) which is in Windy Saddle (Jefferson County Open Space) and Lookout Mountain Parks (Denver Mountain Parks). This closure would be accomplished with two automated closure gates at the east (Golden) and west (Lookout Mountain) entrances. This closure would curtail illegal and destructive after park hours use while improving safety and protecting natural, cultural and park resources.

Background: A group of 13 supporting stakeholders including all effected law enforcement and fire rescue agencies and Denver Mountain Parks initiated a public engagement process in November of 2023. The process was developed to seek input on a proposal for a year-round overnight motorized vehicle closure of Lookout Mountain Road. The closure would follow existing park hours of one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise. To allow night views, pedestrian and bicycles would be permitted on the LMR only.

Following two public meetings with over 185 participants and extensive media coverage across three networks, community support for the proposed strategy is overwhelmingly positive.

Discussion: Resident issues/concerns cited during the engagement process included:

1. The process is not moving fast enough. Residents want to see LMR overnight closures as soon as possible, preferably before summer. *If consent to proceed is supported, we will work toward implementing this strategy as soon as possible.*
2. Residents want to understand if responders will be able to open the gates for emergency access in the case of overnight road closures on I-70 and/or Hwy 40 or in the case of an evacuation order. *Law enforcement, Fire Rescue, Park Managers and Transportation officials will have the ability to open LMR for these purposes if deemed necessary, safe, and appropriate.*
3. Residents are concerned about the undesired behavior being displaced into the adjacent communities when the gates are closed. This is a valid concern that is shared by the supporting stakeholders. Restricting vehicle access overnight will not end all illegal behavior. Enhanced regulatory signage outside the gates as well as enhanced patrol plans for JCSO, GPD, and Denver and Jeffco Rangers

will help mitigate the potential impact. Comments and letters received from stakeholders and residents about this project are attached.

Since Lookout Mountain Road is almost entirely on park property, JCOS and DMP Park Hours - *one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset*, apply. Additionally, the Board of County Commissioners has delegated park management decisions to the Director of Jefferson County Open Space. However, given the collaboration required to implement this strategy and its importance to the community, JCOS has sought and received support for this strategy from all stakeholders. We are now seeking consent to proceed from the Board of County Commissioners.

Fiscal Impact: This project will be paid for using existing operational funds from Jeffco Open Space and Jeffco Road and Bridge.

Revenue Limits Impact: yes no

SPA Review: Supports/No concern

County Attorney Review: The proposed action has been reviewed by Carey Markel, Russell Johnson, and Anthony Chambers (written communication, 10/2023).

Facilities Review: Does not apply/no fiscal impact

BIT Review: Does not apply/no fiscal impact

Fleet Review: No fiscal impact

Human Resources Review (new FTE only): N/A

Recommendations:

JCOS recommends BCC consent to proceed with the project as proposed.

Originator: Mary Ann Bonnell, Jefferson County Open Space

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