

### 5.3 For Lardo, West Valley, and greater McCall: Develop a non-motorized pathway system

McCall residents repeatedly mentioned the need for more bicycle and pedestrian pathways. Both Lardo and West Valley planning should explicitly include a network of pathways that link to the rest of McCall and the surrounding area. The City has begun to plan and build pathways linking the town with area outdoor recreations sites such as Ponderosa State Park and the Little Ski Hill community ski area just west of town. These facilities are important investments. In the future, pathways should be envisioned as elements of a comprehensive network that includes:

- Separated pathways – multi-use facilities that provide continuous corridors for bicycling, walking and running, skating, and, potentially, wintertime Nordic skiing.
- On-street bicycle lanes – serving bicyclists along busy roads and streets, providing connections for bicycle circulation in addition to the pathways.
- Bicycle routes – low-speed neighborhood streets where bicyclists share the roadway with motor vehicles.

McCall would benefit from an approach that connects these three types of facilities together in a network that serves the community internally and connects externally to surrounding recreation places. The benefits would fall in two categories:

*Improved quality of life for residents and workers.* By enabling walking, bicycling and other means of human-powered travel, McCall can open up new choices for local residents and workers, increasing daily travel flexibility, allowing some children to travel to school independently (rather being driven), supporting more active lifestyles with attendant community health benefits, and providing home-based and job-based recreational opportunities.

*Increased recreational opportunities for visitors and tourists.* As the City works to develop a viable four-season tourism economy, pathways and other elements in the network could provide additional activities for visitors and new reasons to choose McCall as a destination.

Three ideas are important in the context of recreational use of pathways to provide recreational opportunities for visitors.

#### 1. Longer Pathways Create Cycling Destinations

First, the length of pathways is important because longer facilities attract visitors who are seeking opportunities for half-day to all-day rides. Experience in resort communities has shown that bicycling facilities of at least 15 miles in length (one-way or loop) will draw weekend users from the immediate area. Bicycling facilities (or combinations of facilities) that are at least 30 miles in length will strengthen the community's appeal as a multi-sport destination and will draw some destination visitors. Bicycling networks that provide trips in excess of 45 miles and those that offer multiple ride opportunities (especially those that offer rides for different skill levels) become bicycling destinations in their own right, and may draw visitors from throughout the country. The bicycling population that vacations in the West is attracted by places that have both paved routes and off-road mountain biking trails. There are not many of these – Jackson, Wyoming is an emerging example, as is Ketchum/Sun Valley although to a lesser extent. Colorado examples include Breckenridge, Aspen and Glenwood Springs. Other bicycling destinations in the West (e.g., Moab, Telluride and Crested Butte) are focused primarily on mountain biking – a market in which McCall could

compete only to a limited degree. However, McCall could have success as a bicycling destination that offers both paved routes and unpaved trails.

### *2. Create Opportunities to Bike from Lodging Areas to Trailheads*

Second, a key opportunity for McCall would be to develop a viable “garage to forest” network. The experience of taking half-day or day-long rides on nice facilities without having to drive to a trailhead is virtually non-existent in urban America. (Boulder may be the sole exception in the West, and even in Boulder trailhead parking is a major source of bicyclists.) Certain mountain towns can however, with careful planning, develop networks that free bicyclists from the inconvenience, expense and distraction of driving to gain access to rides. Flagstaff, Crested Butte and Aspen have all pursued this strategy with some success. Jackson has this as an important objective of its valley-wide pathways program, and is currently working to provide a direct trail connection from town to Grand Teton National Park. In the tourism business, a place that offers the ability to ride directly from a campground, condo or motel on safe, pleasant facilities that connect directly into major regional trails in the countryside represents a major attraction – one that will garner national notice.

### *3. Use Bicycling to Lengthen the Tourist Season*

Third, resort communities cannot achieve stable economies with primary employment until they become multi-season destinations. Places that are only busy in the summer lose their workers in the fall and thus have low percentages of year-round owner-occupied housing. Grocery stores, banks and even restaurants find such communities to be marginal business locations. At nearly 45° latitude and 5,000 feet, McCall faces special challenges in achieving year-round visitors. . It has solid appeal and a long-standing reputation as a summer destination. But its ski season is only about 100 days long and its mud season (April and May, November and December) is quiet indeed. Bicycling can help fill in the early fall months (September and October). However, for the town to thrive as a recreation destination, it should consider adding to its wintertime appeal. Nordic skiing would seem to be a natural way to do this. Area assets are considerable: the valley floor is relatively flat, snowfall is more than adequate, Ponderosa State Park with its winter trail network is nearby, and the availability of Alpine skiing opportunities in the area makes McCall a feasible base camp for visitors who want more than just one kind of ski experience. For these reasons, McCall should consider following Aspen’s example by developing a groomed Nordic ski network using some of the pathways that serve bicyclists in the summer. Nordic skiing can generally use the same facilities that bicyclists do, although bridge design must take grooming equipment and snow characteristics into account. Grooming of trails can extend the skiing season well into and, in some years through, April in this climate.

A comprehensive non-motorized network in McCall would contribute to community sustainability in numerous ways. The benefits for children and resident families are obvious. In the event of fuel price increases, the community can make increased use of a bicycling network for commuting and basic mobility (as has occurred in other mountain towns). A non-motorized network also offers McCall a way to attract recreational visitors who are less auto-dependent and who will spend more money in local sporting goods and clothing retail, thereby strengthening the economy and at the same time partially mitigating the traffic impacts of growth.