



## Legislation Text

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### Mt. Manitou Incline Update - Chris Lieber, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services

**Summary:** The City of Colorado Springs has received a grant from Great Outdoors Colorado in the amount of \$350,000 for stabilization and repairs for the Mt. Manitou Incline. With City Council acceptance of the Grant Agreement on June 10, 2014, the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department, along with funding partners, will have secured the necessary funds to move forward with stabilization and repairs.

**Previous Council Action:** City Council accepted the Manitou Incline Site Development and Management Plan at their February 22, 2011 meeting and subsequently entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Manitou Springs on February 28, 2012. On January 8, 2013, City Council approved the authorization of recreational use of the Mt. Manitou Incline. City Council passed a resolution to support a Local Government Park and Outdoor Recreation Construction grant application to Great Outdoors Colorado on February 26, 2013.

**Background:** After many years of community discussion about the future of the Incline, in 2010, the cities of Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs initiated a planning process that brought together the Incline property owners (Colorado Springs Utilities, Manitou and Pikes Peak Railway Company (COG), and US Forest Service (USFS)), users and area residents to create a Manitou Incline Site Development and Management Plan to guide the management, operation and legal opening of the Incline. The plan was accepted by the Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs City Councils in 2011. The communities later entered into an IGA to establish the roles and responsibilities for each city. In addition, the City of Colorado Springs entered into an Executive Agreement with Colorado Springs Utilities, a License Agreement with the Manitou and Pikes Peak Railway Company, and a Special Use Permit with the USFS for use of the various segments along the Manitou Incline.

During the completion of the Special Use Permit with the USFS, it was brought to light that the railroad corridor was never officially abandoned as a rail corridor. In order for the Special Use Permit to be signed, the Secretary of Agriculture had to accept the quitclaim and relinquish the railroad right-of-way within and adjacent to Pike National Forest. The railroad right-of-way was originally granted to the Mt. Manitou Park and Incline Railway Company on March 3, 1875. Congressman Lamborn and Senator Bennet co-sponsored HR 4073, relinquishing this right-of-way. President Obama signed the Bill on January 10, 2013. On Monday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, the Incline officially was open for authorized recreational use.

In August 2012, the City of Colorado Springs hired Enginuity Engineering to develop engineering plans for the improvements needed to stabilize the Incline. The construction documents generated the engineers' cost estimate. With the construction documents completed, a solid cost estimate, legalization of the Incline, and all legal documents authorized, the Parks Department was well positioned to successfully compete for both the Great Outdoors Colorado grant and the Colorado State Trails grant. At this time all the funding necessary to stabilize the Incline has been identified and appropriated.

The City of Colorado Springs continues to work closely with the City of Manitou Springs to creatively resolve issues that face the Mt. Manitou Incline (Incline). Since the adoption of the Manitou Incline Site Development and Management Plan in 2011, the Colorado Springs Parks Department has been diligently seeking grants and donations, obtaining necessary permits, and exploring engineering solutions required to stabilize and improve the Incline. Through years of deterioration and lack of maintenance, the Incline has reached its

breaking point and has fallen into disrepair. The September 2013 flood event further damaged the Incline by undermining railroad ties and overwhelming the existing drainage systems. The time is right to make necessary improvements to improve the overall experience and provide a safer trail experience for our local, regional, national and international visitors.

In a typical week the Incline will be used by professional athletes, local college kids, aspiring Olympians, firefighters, Fort Carson soldiers, out-of-state tourists, die-hard fitness buffs, casual hikers, and people who huff and puff with every step. It seems the addictive appeal of the Incline is not limited by age, demographics, geography or experience level; all groups seem to be equally attracted to the 2,000 foot challenge. A local resident has the goal of climbing the Incline 1,000 times this year (the equivalent of hiking to the International Space Station), and other stories about a group of hardy souls who got together to do a marathon (13 consecutive round trips with 26,000 feet of elevation gain!) on the trail. However the stories that may be more inspirational are those of the hikers who tackle the trail week after week simply trying to get to the top. They may not make it up the 43% grade their first or second time, but they will eventually make it. For these users the trail is a place of inspiration and challenge, a place to test one's self and a chance to enjoy the serenity that only time spent in nature can provide.

The 2,741-step, mile-long Incline is an extremely popular trail for a broad variety of users. Last summer a permanent trail counter was installed along the trail to quantify exactly how many users enjoy and benefit from the Incline. From July 20, 2013 to April 21, 2014, 185,256 hikers tested themselves against the trail. This equates to a daily average of 558 hikers. The busiest day thus far has been Saturday April 12, 2014 with 2,300 total trips up the Incline. Using these numbers, we predict the Incline sees an annual hiker total of 375,000 people. This on a trail that foot for foot is perhaps the most grueling in the entire country.

**Financial Implications:** Established in the IGA with Manitou Springs, the City of Colorado Springs is responsible for the general oversight, trail enhancements, and maintenance of the Incline to include applying for grants to fund improvements. The cost to repair the Incline is \$1.6 Million. Funds for the Manitou Incline Trail Enhancement Project have been compiled from a variety of sources. In 2012, \$50,000 was appropriated from the Trails, Open Space, and Parks Program (TOPS) (Trails Category) and \$80,000 was appropriated from the Conservation Trust Funds (CTF). The City of Manitou Springs appropriated \$40,000 from their 2014 budget within the Barr Parking Lot Fund. Colorado Springs Utilities has contributed \$300,000. The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department was successful in receiving two large grants to assist with the construction, from Great Outdoors Colorado for \$350,000 and from Colorado State Trails for \$200,000. The Incline sustained significant damage from the September flood event; as a result, the Incline has submitted a project worksheet to FEMA totaling approximately \$556,000. If approved, the City could expect reimbursement from FEMA of approximately \$476,000 (reimbursement will be based upon actual costs incurred and submitted for eligible work). Finally, the Incline Friends have been actively fundraising and are able to contribute \$60,000 for construction. The grant request to Great Outdoors Colorado was submitted prior to the September flood event and does not reflect the additional FEMA funding that is expected to make additional repairs. Staff will be seeking City Council approval on June 10, 2014 to accept the grant from Great Outdoors Colorado in the amount of \$350,000.

**Board/Commission Recommendation:** Staff will recommend approval of the Grant Agreement between Great Outdoors Colorado and the City of Colorado Springs on June 10, 2014.

**Stakeholder process:** Staff has met with the Manitou and Pikes Peak Railway Company, the US Forest Service, Colorado Springs Utilities and Manitou Springs staff, as well as the Incline Friends, to discuss construction methods and potential impacts.

During the creation of the Manitou Incline Site Development and Management Plan there was an extensive public involvement process. The Manitou Incline Task Force was created to assist the Planning Team with

decisions that needed to be made regarding the development of the plan. The Task Force was made up of property owners, residents of Manitou Springs, and organizations and individuals who had a specific interest in the Incline. This committee met regularly during the formulation of the plan. Six (6) community meetings were held. At the community meetings the public had the opportunity to voice their opinion about the existing conditions and the elements being proposed in the plan. There were a combination of group exercises, reporting of the small group information to the larger group, and comments were also taken through comment cards at the public meetings or submitted through email, mail, or phone. Engineering solutions for the Manitou Incline Trail Enhancement Project were guided by input received during these community meetings.

The Incline Friends Group was established in February 2011 to support fundraising, public outreach, marketing, and volunteering. In addition, over the past two years there have been a number of volunteer projects to help repair the Manitou Incline. An Incline Oversight Committee comprised of staff and citizen representatives from each community has been meeting on a regular basis to guide plan implementation and advise on current and future management issues.

During their May 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board reviewed and directed staff to continue to move forward with the acceptance of the Grant Agreement between Great Outdoors Colorado and the City of Colorado Springs. Staff will present an update to the City of Manitou Springs' City Council at their work session on May 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Alternative:** N/A

**Recommendation:** N/A

cc: Kurt Schroeder, Park Operations and Development Manager

Chris Lieber, Park Development Manager/TOPS Program Manager

**Attachments:**

Exhibit A: Grant Agreement between Great Outdoors Colorado and the City of Colorado Springs  
Exhibit B: Colorado Springs Resolution No. 13-13 Support of GOCO Local Government Grant Application  
Exhibit C: Colorado Springs Resolution No. 40-12 Intergovernmental Agreement  
Exhibit D: Manitou Springs Resolution No. 0812 Intergovernmental Agreement  
Exhibit E: Intergovernmental Agreement for the Manitou Incline  
Exhibit F: Colorado Springs Resolution No. 33-11 Acceptance of Site Development Plan and Management Plan  
Exhibit G: Colorado Springs Resolution No. 177-09 Support of GOCO Planning Grant Application  
Exhibit H: Site Plan