

BPAC Resolution on the Belle Meade Highlands Study and Proposal

A recent decision by the Metropolitan Planning Commission proposes an option to take public land in Percy Warner Park, including highly utilized mountain bike trails, for a new road for alternate access to Cheekwood Estate and Gardens. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) strongly objects to the allocation of any public property, especially a valuable community asset like Percy Warner Park. We urge Mayor O'Connell and the Metro Council to prevent such an appropriation of public land.

For background, the Metro Planning Commission voted January 9, 2025 to support a finding there is a "public interest in the establishment of new State Route 100 access" for Cheekwood Estate and Gardens. The Nashville Department of Transportation (NDOT) was directed to "evaluate the current alignment alternatives outlined in the implementation plan – and any additional alternatives it deems appropriate...in consultation with NDOT, Metro Parks, Cheekwood and other stakeholders. NDOT should provide a final recommendation for the specific location, planning, and phasing to implement new access." Metro Parks was directed to "oversee an evaluation of whether SR 100 supports long-term Metro Parks' purposes for its programming and meets its goals for equitable access to parks."

According to the Metro Planning Commission, multiple potential routes for a new road will be evaluated, including an option that would traverse directly through Percy Warner Park. This proposed route could lead to the destruction of mountain bike trails currently enjoyed by thousands of Nashville residents, including many young people engaged in this healthy and valuable sport.

BPAC heard from several students on February 10, 2025 who testified to the benefits of trails in Percy Warner Parks in the development of life skills and re-direction from time "spent in front of a screen." The commission also heard about the significant contributions of the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association and other volunteers, whose dedicated work in developing and maintaining trails has created an essential recreational resource for the citizens of Davidson County.

In the November 2024 referendum, Davidson County residents overwhelmingly approved the "Choose How We Move" initiative, with 65.5% of voters supporting the measure. Spending significant funds to build a new road, especially through public parkland, simply extends and amplifies our dependence on automobile transportation. More modern and progressive methods, including public transportation and traffic demand management, can offer alternative means to ameliorate the over-dependence on automobiles.

BPAC members recognize their duty to advocate for diverse park users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and specifically the mountain biking community, all of whom benefit from access to Percy Warner Parks. We are prepared to engage in a constructive dialogue exploring alternatives to the proposed road project. We are committed to collaborating with our partners at NDOT and the Parks Department, offering valuable input as they develop a comprehensive plan that serves the best interests of all Nashville residents.

Approved by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission on May 19, 2025

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission, made up of eleven diverse members, is authorized by Metro Code 2.513 to promote biking and walking in Nashville. BPAC is also tasked with providing guidance to the Mayor and Council along with Metro Departments including NDOT, Planning and Parks.

A copy of this resolution is to be forwarded to:

Honorable Mayor Freddie O'Connell

Vice-Mayor Angie Henderson and members of the Metro Council

Greg Adkins, Chair, and members of the Metro Planning Commission

Dr. Michelle Steele, Chair, and members of the Board of Parks and Recreation

Brandon Mason, Chair and members of the Traffic and Parking Commission