

Shadow Mountain Drive traffic a concern

Residents say a proposed bike park would add to unsafe conditions

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If Jefferson County considers Shadow Mountain Drive unsafe for motorists now, why would it entertain a proposal for a mountain bike park that would add up to 1,000 trips a day?

That was the message of a virtual meeting on Oct. 17 hosted by the Conifer & South Evergreen Community Committee with Colorado State Patrol troop commander for the Conifer area, the Jefferson County traffic operations manager and a traffic engineer as the guest speakers. They

discussed issues with safety on the road and possible solutions with about 50 residents.

Phil Bouchard, one of the developers of the proposed Shadow Mountain Bike Park, also spoke about the road's safety.

Bouchard and Jason Evans hope to submit their proposal to Jefferson County in November for a downhill mountain bike park on 230 acres two miles down Shadow Mountain Drive from Highway 73. They plan to ask for a special-use permit on the property that is zoned Agriculture-2.

While they have had some support from mountain bikers, they also have received vocal opposition from Stop the Bike Park, a nonprofit formed to bring awareness to the project and to convince the Jeffco Planning Commission and county commissioners that the bike park is



Residents along Shadow Mountain Drive hosted a meeting on Oct. 17 to discuss traffic concerns on the road where a developer wants to build a downhill bike park.

FILE PHOTO BY DEB HURLEY BROBST

a bad idea.

"When is common sense going to come into play here, and who can come to the conclusion that adding any more traffic on the road we al-

ready have is actually going to make it better?" John Lewis, a resident and member of Stop the Bike Park,

SEE SHADOW MTN, P20

SHADOW MTN

FROM PAGE 5

asked Bouchard. "You explain to me how your little facility will make the road tolerable when it's intolerable already."

Bouchard countered: "Common sense is not the governing body of what can and can't be allowed on the road. That's why Jefferson County Planning and Zoning exists. ... That's something as we go through the process that Jefferson County will weigh in on, and it very well may come down to the roadway on whether the proposal moves forward for not. ... Any proposal is going to come with an increase in traffic, and it is a question of whether the roadway can support it ... and if you can effectively mitigate where there are issues as a result of an increase of traffic."

Accidents on Shadow Mountain Drive

Colorado State Patrol Capt. Larry Oletski said the majority of accidents are on a curvy section of Shadow Mountain Drive within a mile of Highway 73, so it's important for drivers to pay attention

to the speed limit and watch for vehicles pulling out of driveways.

Two of Oletski's troopers spent time on the road on three occasions recently, and Oletski said casual speeding was prevalent. He defined casual speeding as drivers going about 10 mph over the limit.

"The math is simple: The faster you go, the less time you have to react to things," Oletski said. "There are lots of driveways and little shoulder access. Drivers have to be on their best behavior."

Data shows that between 2012 and 2021, Shadow Mountain had 74 crashes with three fatalities.

"It would be easy to say there is one fatality every three years," Oletski said. "Folks, that's just not OK. We don't want any fatalities on this road."

In 2015, Jefferson County recognized a safety problem on Shadow Mountain Drive, and Joe Wienand with Conifer & South Evergreen Community Committee, who moderated the meeting, said the 2015 study said it best: "This road experienced a relatively high number of accidents given its length."

Suggested road improvements

A 2021 Jefferson County traffic

study suggested guardrails be put along the road at a cost of \$900,000, though traffic engineer Paul Olson was concerned about the lack of right-of-way to install them. Olson also suggested the county consider other ways to slow traffic such as roundabouts, speed bumps, narrow lanes and clear zones, which are shoulders that can provide stopping areas for errant vehicles when there are no guardrails.

Shadow Mountain Drive already has striping and rumble strips, and the county is considering lowering speed limits in some areas and adding signs warning of curves, Kelly Dunne, Jeffco's traffic operations manager, said.

Data questioned

Residents questioned the discrepancy between the two traffic studies done by Jefferson County — one in 2015 and one in 2021. The 2015 traffic study said there were 2,600 vehicles per day traveling on Shadow Mountain Drive while the 2021 study said there were 1,000 vehicles per day.

Dunne said she would look at the discrepancies between the two studies.

According to Dunne, a collector road like Shadow Mountain Drive

can handle about 2,000 trips per day. She said based on the 2021 study, the proposed bike ranch would put vehicle trips at the upper limit of what the road can safely accommodate.

Safety

Dunne said while the bike park, if approved, will add more vehicles to the road, it is not changing the characteristics of the road such as adding curves, hills, medians or obstacles.

"In 2022, we don't have county regulations to require a developer to mitigate for safety," she said. "In 2023, the safety regulation will be in effect."

Bouchard said the developers were studying the bike park's potential roadway impacts and will submit findings and recommendations to the county, though he didn't know yet what the recommendations would be.

"As a general comment, we are open to roadway improvements," Bouchard said. "A lot of what we heard tonight are things we are considering."