

# **Public Skatepark Management Options & Free-Style BMX Bike Use**



**Discussion Paper**

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This paper has been prepared for discussion purposes only and does not reflect  
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## **Executive Summary**

Portland Park & Recreation (PP&R) is planning for a system of skateparks to be sited throughout the city. This work is being afforded through the 2000 Operating Levy. Early in the planning process, the issue of access, or allowing for BMX bike use in the future skateparks, became a sensitive issue. The subject is complex, as there is no hard data or research to draw from to make a decision. Recognizing this lack of information, PP&R researched BMX use of public skateparks by visiting skateparks, talking with each of the user groups, interviewing park providers, risk management professionals, as well as professional design/build companies. Staff also collected information from over 70 international cities with regards to their skateparks and management policies. PP&R staff determined that the decision to allow for BMX use of skateparks is not uniform and the reasons to allow, or not allow, for this use varies. One thing that was evident in our research is that a vast majority of those interviewed feel that the skatepark in their community is a success and that accommodating BMX use is an issue they have had to address.

The management decision to allow for BMX use distills to five basic issues. These issues include: potential for injuries due to collisions, potential for excessive wear/damage, potential for displacement of skateboarders, and access for all potential users. PP&R will need to weigh each of the issues in developing an acceptable BMX policy.

BMX riders will attempt to use Portland's future skateparks regardless of the recommended management approach. Portland should encourage both groups to work together to address the issues vital to the success and enjoyment of each respective sport. All user groups should collaborate to develop rules for use and a code of conduct or park etiquette for PP&R's skateparks to properly function as a public resource

Newly established skateparks are often crowded. Large numbers of children and adults will want access. Crowding and inexperience often lead to unsafe situations and injuries, collisions and accidents will occur. Collisions will occur between all users, whether bikes are allowed in a park or not. We need to acknowledge and manage for this risk.

PP&R is investing in the construction of skateparks to offer skateboarders and BMX riders legal recreational opportunities and to help reduce the damage of public and private property. PP&R wants each user group to enjoy their sport in an appropriate setting with minimal intervention and park management. Unfortunately the solution to this is not agreed upon within the user communities. There will be acrimony that exists with regards to any management approach recommended and we should be sensitive to this. PP&R will make the final decision with regards to the skatepark management policy. This policy should be included in the skatepark rules and promoted within the user communities. The following are staff recommendations:

## **Recommendations**

1. Develop an emergency response plan to deal with accidents and injuries.
2. Determine the extent of wear/damage to the skatepark surface and coping that is acceptable to PP&R.
3. Work with each user group to establish mutual understanding, respect and a willingness to work together.
4. Work to instill ownership and pride in Portland's skateparks from all users.
5. Work to establish a code of conduct, or skatepark etiquette.
6. Implement a recreation program that teaches skateboarding and BMX skills as well as skatepark etiquette.

7. Develop regulatory signage, in a manner that is geared towards the users groups , to explain the skatepark rules, code of conduct and etiquette.
8. Develop a task force of user groups to evaluate management policies and, if needed, make recommendations for changes.
9. Develop a schedule for routine inspections of the skatepark surfacing, coping and edges by PP&R staff and a task force of users.
10. Design and construct skateparks to allow for flexibility in the management policy
11. Design and build for all levels of skill.
12. Acknowledge the presence of BMX bikes during the design and construction processes
13. Invest in materials and workmanship that can help to protect the skatepark surfaces and reduce maintenance requirements.
14. Work with the BMX community to enforce, through mentoring and peer support and encouragement, a no-peg rule or use of skatepark friendly pegs and other products that help reduce potential wear.
15. Work with both user groups to secure additional development and maintenance funding
16. Make a final decision with regards to management and then promote and enforce this policy.

## **Introduction**

The November 2002, Portland Park & Recreation's Operating Levy identified funding for two "Youth skateboard facilities". By 2008, Portland will have at least two new skateparks and a system of identified locations for future parks. A new skatepark requires the establishment of a management plan and identification of allowed use. This management plan should address allowed usage with regards to the various user groups, such as skateboarders, BMX bike riders, and in-line skaters. BMX bikes, in-line skaters and other users will want access to all of Portland's future skateparks. If not allowed, some users may illegally access, or "poach", these parks if access is not provided.

Early in Portland Parks & Recreation's (PP&R) siting process, the issue of allowing for unlimited BMX bike use of Portland's skatepark system became a sensitive issue. A 22-member Skatepark Leadership Advisory Team (SPLAT) sub-committee, consisting of skateboard and BMX advocates, was formulated to review the issue of BMX access and recommend a user management policy to PP&R. They agreed that BMX should have access, in some form, to the anticipated 10-15 parks currently being sited throughout the city. The degree to which BMX usage will be allowed in Portland's skatepark system is considered by some to be one of the most important decisions to be made with regards to providing a successful public skatepark program. The issue is complex and the purpose of this paper is to identify the most significant issues, present findings of other professionals, present the different management approaches, and identify the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. Unfortunately there is no hard data or studies to draw from in making this decision. It is intended that this paper will help to educate and inform the decision-makers in that regard.

## **Decision-making Process**

The SPLAT sub-committee will make a skatepark management recommendation to PP&R. The PP&R management team will review this recommendation and make the final decision with regards to the management policy. This policy will be implemented prior to beginning design work on any future skatepark.

## **Methodology**

To develop an understanding of the topic of skatepark management and the issues, PP&R staff talked with an array of individuals with experience in this subject area. Parks' staff spoke with each of the various user groups, local and national park providers, risk management professionals, as well as professional design/build companies. Portland also collected feedback from over 70 international cities with regards to skateparks and their management policies.

## **Background**

Skateparks have become increasingly popular recreational facilities for a growing number of children and adults throughout the world. First developed in the 1970's, public skateparks have helped to serve as positive recreational spaces for a broad cross-section of our society. Skateparks are places where some kids can escape the pressures of team sports, engage in a healthy aerobic activity, combat obesity and build confidence and self-esteem. Skateparks get children out of doors and active. For some, skateparks are areas where skateboarders, free-style BMX bike riders (BMX), and in-line skaters can legally practice their sport in a safe, professionally designed facility.

Lacking sufficient public skateparks in Portland, the 2002 Operating Levy allocated money to PP&R for the construction of two skateparks by 2008. It was determined by the SPLAT that skateparks should be sited, planned for, and ultimately built throughout the city. SPLAT determined that simply identifying two locations for skateparks in a city the size of Portland would not meet current or future demands.

## **Population Numbers**

Based upon survey data collected from the National Sporting Goods Manufacturer's Association, there are an estimated 33.5 million people in the United States that in-line skate, skateboard and/or ride BMX bikes<sup>1</sup>. Using these numbers, PP&R estimates that there will be: 43,940 in-line skaters (6.5%), 25,680 skateboarders (3.8%) and 7,436 BMX riders (1.1%) living in the City of Portland by 2020.<sup>2</sup> These user numbers total more than 77,000 citizens, or 11.4% of our anticipated population.

For purposes of this discussion paper, I have estimated that 5% of each of these users would actively recreate at least once per day. This equates to 2,197 in-line skaters, 1,284 skateboarders, and 372 BMX riders. It should be noted that not all of them would utilize a skatepark to recreate but these facilities do provide safe, legal alternatives to playing in the street and private property. It has been my personal experience that skateboarders are the majority of users in a skatepark with less than 10% being in-line skaters. Because not all skateparks allow access for BMX bikes, their numbers vary from 0-50% of users at a skatepark at any one time.<sup>3</sup>

## **Significant Issues**

The following issues are at the forefront of the decision to allow for BMX access to skateparks. These issues are those most often mentioned by those within the BMX and skateboard communities as reasons for allowing, or not allowing, BMX access to public skateparks. It should be noted that these issues do not represent all BMX rider or all skateboarder positions of these topics. This is simply a representation of the concerns most commonly voiced.

### **Potential for Injuries Due to Collisions Between BMX Bikes and Skateboarders**

It has been stated that BMX bikes are potentially more dangerous in a user collision than one that involves two skateboarders because of the bike's metal protrusions (pegs, axles, and handle bars). Research to date has revealed no statistical data to validate this but anecdotal evidence of BMX/skater collisions and injuries does exist. This potential for collision and severe injury has been said to contribute to the displacement of skaters who would rather not skate with BMX bikes in the park

Another potential for injury are objects that may be transported into the park by a bike tire. Rocks, stones and other debris can be picked up by a bike tire and deposited in the skatepark after they drop back to the concrete from one of their aerial maneuvers. Small objects do not detract from the BMX rider's experience but the potential for injury does exist if a smaller, harder skateboard wheel hits that object and is stopped short. This sudden stop in momentum could cause the skateboarder to crash.

Some free-style BMX bikes are equipped with brakes which allow them to stop, some are not. Those with brakes have the potential to avoid danger. Skateboarders, however, ride purely on momentum and as they approach a potential collision they either steer themselves out of it, jump off the board or collide. However, the potential for collision, be it with a BMX rider or another skateboarder, is part of the experience of using a skatepark. Unfortunately, collisions are one of the inherent risk associated with the use of skatepark facilities, whether bikes are allowed or not.

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<sup>1</sup> Extreme Sports Have National Appeal. Parks & Recreation, October 2004. National Parks and Recreation Association & Gale Group. [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1145/is\\_10\\_39/ai\\_n6335474](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1145/is_10_39/ai_n6335474)

<sup>2</sup> To determine the number of local users, Park staff divided the number of participants identified in the Sporting Good's Manufacturer's Associations Super Study by the population of the United States to determine a percentage. The population of Portland was multiplied by this percentage to determine local participant numbers.

<sup>3</sup> I have been to over 50 skateparks in Oregon, California, Washington, New York, Canada and Europe and spent an estimated 100 hours observing and analyzing skateparks and their users.

### **Potential for Excessive Wear/Damage to Skatepark**

Some skateboarders and skatepark operators report excessive wear to the skatepark surfacing and coping (metal or tile edging installed to facilitate the act of skateboarding) because of BMX use. BMX bikes can damage skateparks by chipping or cracking the concrete on impact from the hard metal surfaces of pegs, pedals and handlebars. Chips in concrete do not cause problems for the bikes because of their larger wheels. However, skateboarders can be more easily thrown off track by chips and cracking. Other contributors to excessive wear are metal pegs used by some BMX riders to perform grinding, or the act of sliding along a change in direction of metal or concrete surfacing. Metal pegs, which are harder than some of the steel coping used in skatepark construction, grind away at the coping. This roughened coping, scored with fine lines from the steel bike pegs, no longer functions properly for skateboarding because the aluminum trucks, or skateboard axles, do not slide along the coping as they should.<sup>4</sup>

Design measures that are implemented to prevent or reduce wear include using a heavier gauged steel coping and higher strength concrete. Builders are also installing metal plates behind the coping to prevent pegs from causing damage to the concrete in this area. There are ways to reduce the wear of a skatepark by BMX bikes but the designer needs to be cognizant of this throughout the design development and construction phases. There are also professionals within the BMX industry that are working to develop products that reduce damage in skateparks caused by bikes, e.g. skatepark friendly pegs, end caps, plastic pedals, etc. Companies such as Hoffman Bikes, MacNeil, and Demolition have all introduced "park friendly" products, i.e. pegs that have a hardened plastic shell around a small aluminum core.<sup>5</sup> They are hoping that these products will aid in reducing damage to skateparks and allow for more access to public skateparks for BMX riders.

The single greatest contributor to excessive wear is poor workmanship or material selection. Skatepark providers and users generally agree that skateparks built by professional design/build companies are of a quality that exceed those built by low-bid contractors. Design/build companies have a knowledge and understanding of skatepark construction, and the wear that these facilities must withstand, and most build to a standard that reduces or mitigates damage to their parks – whether by skateboards or BMX bikes. Chris Hildebrand, of Grindline Skateparks, stated that they are attempting to construct most of their parks to withstand accelerated wear generated by BMX bike use.<sup>6</sup> This quality of park also results in a facility that holds up better to skateboard use.

### **Potential Displacement of Skateboarders**

Some skaters report that combining BMX bikes with skateboarders at a skatepark creates a park that when being ridden by a bike is “unsafe”. Some claim that, “...multiple skateboarders can use the park simultaneously without having to have almost 100% of their attention focused on knowing where the bike is...”.<sup>7</sup> When a bike rider is using the park some skateboarders feel a sense of fear, uneasiness or intimidation. This sense of intimidation detracts from the skateboarder’s concentration that is required to perform their difficult, potentially dangerous aerial tricks and maneuvers. It is generally accepted, by both groups, that BMX riders use the

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<sup>4</sup> Email from Jim Barnum, Spectrum Skatepark Creations, Ltd.; dated 7/21/2004; FW: use of bikes in skateparks; [www.spectrum-sk8.com](http://www.spectrum-sk8.com)

<sup>5</sup> [www.macneilbmx.com](http://www.macneilbmx.com); [www.hoffmanbikes.com](http://www.hoffmanbikes.com); [www.demolitionparts.com](http://www.demolitionparts.com)

<sup>6</sup> Phone Conversation with Chris Hildebrand, Grindline Skateparks, 4/12/05; [www.grindline.com](http://www.grindline.com)

<sup>7</sup> Email from Randy Gawlik (Skate and Annoy), 4/15/05, Re: Skatepark siting public comment period closes this Friday; [www.SkateAndAnnoy.com](http://www.SkateAndAnnoy.com)

park in a slightly different manner than skateboarders. Because of their ability to generate speed, and accelerate through pedaling, BMX bikes can travel different lines or routes within a skatepark. It is this ability that allows them to come from areas within the park that are potentially unexpected by a skateboarder. The ability for BMX riders to travel in a manner that is unpredictable to a skater can contribute to a sense of unknowing and unease. These factors are said to displace some skateboarders who are forced to abort their skating runs or leave the park altogether because they would rather not skate with BMX bikes. However, research by the SkatePark Association of the United States of America indicate that many skaters will choose to ride a free, unstaffed park where BMX bikes are allowed over a staffed park for skateboard only.<sup>8</sup>

Portland will utilize a reputable skatepark design/build firm to build the parks. Well designed parks will draw users from outside of Portland. High quality parks will draw both inexperienced and experienced skaters and BMX riders. It is good for children to see what a highly skilled skater or biker can do as this creates an atmosphere of mentoring, learning and striving for excellence. There will be many who come to the park to watch these highly skilled individuals but fewer will elect to skate or ride because of the skill level required to participate in the aggressive session. These situations will also contribute to the displacement of less experienced skateboarders during the 'session'. Having areas that are suitable for a wide range of skill abilities will lessen the potential for displacement in these situations.

#### **Inexperienced & Experienced Users of Both Communities**

An important issue that deserves attention is how to deal with the inexperienced user. Young kids, whether they ride a bike or a skateboard, are felt by some to be the single greatest hazard in a skatepark – especially a crowded skatepark. Inexperienced users, whether they are young or old, are typically unfamiliar with the etiquette of a skatepark. They don't recognize situations that put them in harms way or lead them to create a hazardous situation for others. Beginners, small children and parents new to these facilities lack the judgment, understanding and experience needed to keep them and/or their child from being a hazard in a skatepark. Larger parks allow for the inexperienced user to drop in on another's run and cut them off or create a collision because children are able to set up their tricks/runs from areas outside the immediate area and user's peripheral vision. The smaller the park the easier it is for users to perceive what is happening around them. Smaller parks, however, are often more crowded

The inexperienced often utilize a skatepark when it is not crowded – typically mornings. This time period is also the one most often dedicated for BMX use. It was the experience of the West Linn Parks Director, Ken Worcester, after they opened their skatepark to BMX use (daily, before 12:00 pm), that this led to the displacement of the less experienced, typically younger, skateboarder.

The SPLAT sub-committee reported that inexperienced BMX riders can quickly create a hazardous situation for others in the skatepark who are not expecting the lines that the inexperienced BMX rider is able to take. It was reported that when multiple users are in the park at the same time, there's a fair amount of navigation by 'predicting the lines' that other users will take based on typical flow patterns. When an advanced skater or a BMX rider enters the park, the ability for others to predict the flow pattern is reduced since advanced skaters and BMX riders carry more speed and take atypical lines. The sub-committee also discussed the domination/intimidation by 'experts' of either sport. Those with higher skill levels can displace other users in

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<sup>8</sup> Email from Heidi Lemmon, Director of SPAUSA, dated 4/6/2005; BMX

the skatepark. It was mentioned that some will not skate when someone is ‘tearing up’ the park or skating aggressively.<sup>9</sup>

### **Equitable Access for All User Groups**

For the purposes of this discussion, free-style BMX bike riding should not be confused with other forms of BMX bike riding as there are basically five different styles of BMX. These styles include dirt track racing, dirt jumping, flat land, vert riding and free-style park riding.<sup>10</sup> Free-style BMX bike riding, or the act of performing aerial maneuvers while riding a bicycle is different from Bicycle Moto-Cross which centers on the activity of racing against other competitors. Both sports use bicycles as their vehicle but the equipment is used differently and the bikes are not the same. Free-style BMX bikes are built more solidly (steel frame) while Bicycle Moto-Cross bikes are lighter and are built for speed (aluminum frame), to race in a dirt track environment.

Free-style BMX riders who seek access to public skateparks claim that their needs are not met by dirt track racing or dirt jumping. A skatepark offers, “...the most versatile type of riding and the types of ramps available are unlimited, incorporating elements of all of the various types of riding.”<sup>11</sup> Also, the dirt-jumping aspect of BMX is completely different from skatepark riding. Compared to skateparks, dirt jumps have more limited opportunities for tricks, require more maintenance, and are sensitive to rain events – requiring much longer to dry out.

Chris Corcoran, the BMX buyer for each of the six Bike Gallery stores in Portland, estimated that 80% of all BMX bikes sold are free-style BMX bikes versus 20% that are BMX dirt racing frames. He estimated that they will sell 400 free-style BMX bikes through the Bike Gallery in 2005.<sup>12</sup> Ryan Manner reported that, “...nationally trends run more like 70% / 30% suggesting that Portland metro has a stronger than average freestyle community.”

Conversations with members of the BMX community have revealed that the design of today's skateparks satisfy the needs of most free-style park riders. Free-style BMX riders seek access to skateparks because there is a level of safety and security in these facilities. In a skatepark, BMX riders are safe from conflicts with pedestrians and automobile traffic and they don't run the risk of being fined for destroying private or public property. Most cities that have been contacted regarding the subject of BMX use of skateparks report that free-style bikes ride their skateparks, whether they were allowed or not.<sup>13</sup> In these situations, where it is not allowed, BMX riders are being ticketed, fined and/or having their equipment confiscated.

Seven of the nine skateparks in the Portland metropolitan area allow for BMX access. Some allow for unlimited access and others allow for separate sessions. Portland's Pier Park is unlimited access while the Burnside Bridge operates as a separate sessions facility.

### **Other Observations**

The following are other issues or observations that have been presented or discussed with PP&R during the skatepark siting process.

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<sup>9</sup> SPLAT BMX/Skate Sub-Committee Meeting, 7/14/04

<sup>10</sup> <http://encyclopedia.lockergnome.com/s/b/BMX>

<sup>11</sup> <http://encyclopedia.lockergnome.com/s/b/BMX>

<sup>12</sup> Email from Ryan Manner, dated 4/20/05, Re: BMX and Fundraising

<sup>13</sup> BMX Use of Skatepark Questionnaire. <http://www.surveymonkey.com>; Portland Parks & Recreation, April 2005.

### **Access for Effort**

It has been asserted that only skateboarders should benefit from the efforts exerted by the skating community to get public skateparks built. Skaters point to national examples, as well as local efforts, in the advancement of public skateparks as work they have done to provide for skateboarders and that the BMX community is benefiting from their hard work. Local efforts, led by Skaters for Portland Skateparks, have helped to organize skateboarders, raise awareness of skateparks, develop support for the Levy, and secure funding for the redevelopment of Pier Park. Tom Miller, co-founder of Skaters for Portland Skateparks offered the following, "...the notion that skaters do all the work to build the new park, and only get a portion of safe access doesn't seem as fair. As for bmxers wondering why skaters get the fancy new park (Pier Park) and they get only dirt jumps and one bowl, I wouldn't have any qualms reminding them that (a) skaters outnumber BMXers 13 to 1 or more, and (b) skaters built the new park. In a fair world one reaps what one sows."<sup>14</sup>

Some recommend that the BMX community organize themselves and commit to the effort it takes to build public skateparks. Some skaters feel this will help the BMX community develop ownership and work towards their ability to access public skateparks. For some, having the BMX community sit aside and simply complain about lack of access is not enough. However, organizational efforts are happening on national and local level with organizations like AccessBMX, BMX Riders Organization (BRO) and PDXBMX.<sup>15</sup>

There are cities that are basing access on public meeting attendance. "Bikes were not originally allowed in their park because they were not involved in the community design process"<sup>16</sup> Some cities did not recognize that BMX riders participated in the public process.<sup>17</sup> In Portland's skatepark process, while the number of BMX attendants at meetings has been smaller, the BMX community has been involved. On the advisory committee, there is a BMX representative and an individual who was selected because he works within the bike industry. The BMX advocate has not been at all meetings but has identified someone to be there in his place and there have been BMX advocates at 95% of our committee and public meetings.

### **The BMX Community is Smaller**

Both on a national as well as local level, the BMX community is smaller than the skateboard community. In Portland, both groups generally agree that the BMX community is smaller. Some feel that this should preclude the BMX community from having equal access to public skateparks. During Portland skatepark planning process each group has shown an effort to be involved. Of the three on-line comment opportunities Portland conducted, the BMX community has represented ¼ to ½ of the respondents. Some skateboarders have argued that the BMX numbers are inflated because of the number of out-of-town responses. Parks staff analyzed this and determined that, while 34% of the respondents of the BMX community were from outside of Portland, 35% of the skaters who responded to the survey were also from outside of Portland.

### **Other Opportunities for BMX riders**

It has been reported that the BMX community has access to other facilities such as (dirt jumps and flat land opportunities, etc.) and therefore, should not automatically be given access to a skateparks because skateboarders have more limited opportunities for safe, legal recreational outlets. This is because of their wheel size and equipment limitations. It should be noted that,

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<sup>14</sup> Email from Tom Miller, dated 4/11/05, Re: BMX/Pier

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.accessbmx.com>; ; <http://bmxriders.org/bro/home.cfm>; [www.pdxbmx.com](http://www.pdxbmx.com)

<sup>16</sup> SPLAT BMX/Skate Sub-Committee Meeting, 7/14/04; Jim Rowe, Oregon City Recreation Supervisor

<sup>17</sup> NW Skatepark Sessions seminar, December 5, 2003; Carolyn Weiss, City of Eugene.

using this same logic, PP&R should include Mt Tabor and Washington Park in our public skatepark portfolio because the longboard skating community uses the long downhill runs at these sites for their recreational purposes.

### **Skaters for Portland Skateparks Position**

Skaters for Portland Skateparks, a local advocacy group focused on promoting skateparks, has presented their position with regards to access - they recommend separate facilities. Tom Miller, co-founder of Skaters for Portland Skateparks, offered the following with regards to separate facilities. "Skaters and bikers don't care about management approaches, limited budgets, and doing the best we can. All they care about is riding as much as possible without hassle. There's only one way to provide what each group needs: separate facilities. Separate facilities work because there's no sharing- each group gets its own spot...As a primary spokesperson for Portland's skate community, I'd be willing to negotiate a reasonable sum of PP&R funds to be dedicated for a bikepark. I'd be willing to offer more than what the math says is fair, i.e. 7%. I'm interested in solving this problem before it ever becomes real on the ground and PP&R has a major headache...Bottom line is that we've never changed our baseline position on use of bikes in skateparks. We're actually more united and consistent than ever. We don't even debate the issue anymore: we all agree (a) bikes deserve a spot (b) somewhere away from skaters (c) where they're free to create their own terrain and fun (d) without conflict from authority or other users (e) in a manner consistent with our best understanding of how many users they're actually are."<sup>18</sup>

### **Park Design**

Good park design allows for a variety of graduated challenges for different skill abilities. Good design will encourage riders to collect in an area of the park that is appropriate to their ability level. They will tend to be with other riders who do not intimidate them. As their skill level grows, they will transition on to new areas of the park.

The type of parks that PP&R will provide will be another issue that needs to be address. From PP&R's research, we have determined that there will be a demand for street style parks, transitional or 'tranny' parks, and vert ramps or half-pipes. Street style parks replicate the urban environment and consist of stairs, ledges, handrails, benches, etc. Tranny parks are the inter-connected bowl or pool type parks that allow users to continue a run for a considerable length of time without stopping as they carve and flow around the park. Burnside skatepark is a good example of this type of skatepark. Skateboarders and BMX riders will want access to all of these types of facilities

### **Opportunities for Combined Recreation**

There are those who like to do both sports. It has been noted by many in the BMX community that they also know how to skate as they want to enjoy these facilities but are not allowed to on their preferred 'wheels of choice'. Brothers have been witnessed playing together at Oregon City's skatepark and one skates while the other rides bike. Their mother frequently takes them there because she has the opportunity to see them enjoying their respective sports together, sharing a bond and she does not have to drive them to separate parks or to the same park at two different times on the same day. Skateboarders and BMX bike riders do intermix successfully in their normal social lives and Portland should recognize this.

### **Crowding**

One of the biggest problems of newly established skateparks is crowding. Many park operators report that their skateparks were inundated with users for the first two to three months. This

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<sup>18</sup> Email from Tom Miller, dated 1/14/05, Re: Bike Park

occurs until the users develop an understanding of the carry capacity of the park. Portland will see large numbers of children and adults who will want access to the newest skateparks in Oregon. They will come from outside of the neighborhood and they will come from outside of Portland. PP&R should acknowledge this and prepare for the situation.

Crowding and inexperience can lead to unsafe situations. Even though skateboarding is considered to be a relatively safe sport (7 injuries per 1,000 participants)<sup>19</sup>, injuries, collisions and accidents will occur. Education on skatepark etiquette may help to reduce collisions but there will always be instances of collisions and injuries. Developing a task force to address the issue of safety and accidents would be a positive step toward addressing this issue. The task force could work with PP&R to establish an emergency response plan that would be posted at each park to inform and educate users and spectators about what to do to prevent and respond to accidents. Portland should prepare for situations that may need medical attention. This issue was identified and included in SPLAT's site evaluations by including a criterion that looked at the opportunity for emergency vehicle access.

## **Feedback from Professional Consultations**

### **City of Portland Risk Managers**

The risk managers for PP&R and the City of Portland have found that with regards to BMX use of a skatepark either during separate sessions or combined use, "The city's liability associated with BMX users is congruent with that for skateboard users. Liability hinges on the city's negligence, and does not encompass the interactions between users. Users of this recreation facility need to abide by all laws, codes and regulations set forth in local, state and federal jurisdictions."<sup>20</sup>

### **Other Risk Management Professionals**

Doug Wyseman, author of "Risk Management and Skateboard Parks", reported that through 2004 he had surveyed over 1,700 international skatepark operators. Of those surveyed, 27% allowed for BMX access to their skateparks. This number was up from 16% in 2002.<sup>21</sup> His largest area of concern is with the design of the park. He reported that if the skatepark was not designed with bikes in mind, "...it may not be safe for bikers alone, never mind bikers and boarders mixed!" Wyseman's preference for BMX access was for 'separate days'. He also recommended that cities, "...examine design, maintenance, and user issues before finalizing your rules."

### **Skatepark Association of the United States (SPAUSA)**

"We did 4 years of research and the bottom line is that in every other country bikes are allowed in public parks. Repair the damage or build separate BMX parks...All parks need to be maintained. Our position is that skateboarding is a HRA (hazardous recreational activity). It is not the city's job to protect skateboarders (from collisions with other users). We want facilities to be free and open to the public." Also, "Many of the parks in the USA that are experiencing damage would be damaged no matter who rides it. They were built before we had proper standards. In addition some builders continue to ride their parks before the concrete is cured."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> US Consumer Product Safety Commission 2002, American Sports Data Inc. 2002). Journal of Trauma; Injury, Infection, and Critical Care: Volume 53(4), pp 686-690.

<sup>20</sup> Email from Barbara Aguon (Risk Manager), dated 4/19/05, Re: BMX & Risk Assessment

<sup>21</sup> Risk Management and Skateboard Parks, D.R. Wyseman, 2004. pg. 37.

<sup>22</sup> Email from Heidi Lemmon, SPAUSA Director, dated 4/20/05, Re: BMX

### **Southern California Skatepark Coalition**

Allan Amico, the point person for skateparks and BMX issues for the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority, the largest insurer of public agencies in California responded that, "...private insurance carriers for public agencies in California can limit or prohibit BMX access, based on their assessment of risk factor. For public pool carriers, like the JPIA, they would not prohibit, but would recommend specific conditions such as having the park staffed and setting aside separate times for bikes and skateboarders."<sup>23</sup> In most states, the hazardous activities list includes bicycle riding along with skateboarding and in-line skating.

### **Feedback from National On-Line Questionnaire**

PP&R is currently conducting an on-line questionnaire asking skatepark administrators to share their experiences with BMX use of their skateparks. For purposes of the analysis of that data with regards to damage, Parks staff evaluated only that feedback from those cities who built concrete skateparks utilizing professional design/build skatepark companies. Initial results show that:

- 84% reported that their skateparks are unsupervised
- 64% reported that their skateparks provide services for more than 50 kids a day
- 72% reported that their skateparks are 'crowded' or 'overly crowded'
- 41% reported that their skateparks allow for BMX use of their facility
- 88% of those that allow for BMX use combine uses with unlimited access for all
- 82% of those that do not allow bikes reported illegal bike use of their facility
- 43% of those parks built by professional design/build firms and designed for BMX bike use reported damage to their skatepark from BMX bikes
- 0% of those parks built by professional design/build firms and designed for BMX bike use reported injuries as a direct result of collisions between skateboarders and BMX bikes.
- 17% of those parks built by professional design/build firms and **not** designed for BMX bike use reported injuries as a direct result of collisions between skateboarders and BMX bikes.
- 91% report responding to their skateparks less than 2 times per month to deal with BMX bike issues
- 62% reported that their skatepark management policy is 'working'

As part of the public siting process, PP&R also benefited from a group of Masters in Urban & Regional Planning students who reviewed the impacts of skateparks on neighborhood parks. As part of their research, they interviewed 9 cities throughout Oregon and Washington. They reported that all 9 cities stated that BMX access was an issue to contend with; 6 of the 9 allow for BMX use; 2 of the 6 changed their policy after realizing that BMX bikes were using their parks regardless of the rules. They recommended defining the access policy at the beginning of the design process to help alleviate potential problems.

PP&R is also in receipt of a questionnaire conducted by the City of Issaquah, WA regarding skatepark management. Of the 15 cities that responded, 13 do not allow bikes. When asked "What reason they have for calling the police to their skatepark?"; 9 of those 13 cities mentioned – "altercations, fights and bike use".

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<sup>23</sup> Email from Dick Guthrie, Director of Southern California Skatepark Coalition dated 3/24/04, Re: Multi-Use of Skatepark Facilities

## **Feedback from Cities around Portland Metropolitan Area**

To develop a better understanding of the different management options for skateparks within the Portland metropolitan area, PP&R brought together three cities that have utilized different approaches to accommodating BMX access to their skateparks.

### **West Linn**

Ken Worcester, Parks Director for the City of West Linn, reported that they opened their park to BMX bikes during specific hours (mornings until 12:00 pm daily) after their City Council received complaints from community members about lack of BMX access to a public facility. Up until being given legitimate access, BMX riders attempted illegally to access of West Linn's park. He indicated that he has seen BMX riders displace skaters – typically younger skaters. He indicated that BMX riders, while few in number, can quickly dominate a skatepark. He mentioned that their park wasn't designed for mixed use and BMX use of their park was not their original intent. He said there have been some disagreements between users since their park has been opened to BMX bikes. He said they have a 'No peg or covered pegs' rule and haven't seen much damage as a result – maybe a few more knocks, chips, etc. but he couldn't place the blame on the bike usage. West Linn's skatepark is considered by skateboarders to be one of the very best in the Portland metropolitan area and this skatepark serves 50-100 kids a day.

### **Oregon City**

Jim Rowe, Recreation Services Manager for the city of Oregon City, reported on their experience of allowing BMX use of their skatepark over the past four years. Bikes were not originally allowed in their park because they were not involved in the community design process. They agreed to allow bikes into their park on a trial period basis. Their management policy is one of 'combined' or shared use. Jim mentioned that Oregon City received more complaints when the bikes were banned from the park than they receive now. In the three years since the park was opened to bikes, Jim has received one letter from a parent of a child who collided with a bike. He has not received a bike-related complaint in the last two years. He said that there has been some wear or damage but couldn't attribute it specifically to bike use. They also have a separate session called Slow Skate or times for inexperienced users which run from 9:30-11:30 am on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. He felt this separate session for inexperienced users didn't work very well. Oregon City is a street oriented park which accommodates beginner to intermediate skill abilities. Oregon City's skatepark is considered to be an 'average' quality park by local skateboarders. This 8,000 sf skatepark serves more than 100 kids a day, of which less than 10% are BMX riders.

### **Vancouver, WA**

Johnny Tucker, Vancouver-Clark Parks & Recreation Teen Coordinator, reported on their experience of not officially allowing BMX use of their skatepark. They officially do not allow for BMX use of their park but they do not enforce it strictly. Their park is monitored by a P&R staff member for 20 hours a week. He mentioned that he would rather have rotating times for BMX use than set times so each user is able to take advantage of the best times. Vancouver is beginning to put in place an educational component to their skatepark by teaching classes to both skaters and BMX riders about park etiquette. He said that the BMX community now works with skaters and there are less conflicts. He said the design of their park is for the less experienced user. The Vancouver skatepark is considered to be an 'below average' quality park by local skateboarders. This 8,000 sf skatepark serves more than 25-50 kids a day, of which 25-50% are BMX riders.

## **Feedback from Design/Build Companies**

As part of our research process, Parks' staff attempted to contact professional design/build skatepark companies in Oregon, Washington, California and Western Canada. Of the eight companies contacted, four offered input into this subject.

### **Grindline Skateparks**

The following is from an email correspondence from Chris Hildebrand of Grindline Skateparks, "Our stance here at Grindline is that the use of bikes in skateparks is a programming issue and therefore falls outside the realm of our specific expertise. Obviously as skaters and users of skateparks we have opinions on the matter, but our opinions are no more valid than any other end users. If you want to know my personal opinion, here it is: I absolutely hate having bmxers at skateparks. But my civic sense tells me they have a right to enjoy these public parks as much as I do, regardless of whether or not they wreak physical damage to the facilities! As a skater I hope bmxers never enter my favorite parks, as a conscientious citizen I hope bmxers get the same rights and privileges as everyone else."<sup>24</sup> A phone conversation with Grindline Skateparks indicated that they are spending no more on park construction to accommodate BMX use than they do to simply build to withstand general park use. In an email to another skateboarder, regarding the subject of bikes and skatepark construction, Chris responded that, "...it is not very expensive or difficult to pour concrete that can handle the extra abuse. Of course, a little more wear and tear is to be expected, especially in poorly-built parks, but what of it? Is that a reason not to let people enjoy them? Who should we be saving them for? And again, as a skater, I've never ridden a park rendered lame by BMX abuse...Skateparks are meant as places for kids to have fun, get exercise, and feed their inner fires."<sup>25</sup>

### **Airspeed Skateparks**

Stephanie Mohler of Airspeed Skateparks reported that they have built five skateparks that were designed to accommodate BMX bikes. They report that the only damage those parks have experienced has been when users skate or ride the park before the concrete has had time to thoroughly cure. They are recommending that cities wait 6 months before allowing bikes on the park surface. She has heard that the steel coping at Eugene's Bethel skatepark has some burrs in the surfacing due to bike pegs but has not seen the damage to verify. She reports that they are using galvanized coping and do not recommend installing pool coping in a public skatepark. They are installing "continuous poured in place pool coping (which) seems to be holding up amazingly in the public skateparks we've built-- Waldport, OR, Reedsport, OR, and Florence, OR." When asked to recommend how a city should accommodate BMX use in a public skatepark, she responded, "Maybe certain hours or certain days ... skaters can ride if they want to deal with the bikes. Maybe a bike only park. Man, it's a hard one- big city problem."<sup>26</sup>

### **Spectrum Skatepark Creation Ltd.**

Jim Barnum, with Spectrum Skatepark Creations, Ltd, of Canada, reported that they have built 30 parks, of which 10% allow bikes. They commented that "...the 'no bike policy' does not seem to be enforced by many municipalities." Jim has noticed bike specific impacts including scored coping and damage to the concrete deck behind the coping. With regards to damage, Jim stated that "...the worst damage to our parks has been to the coping." He followed up this exchange with, "Bottom line is probably allow bikes, pegless. I'd strongly suggest combined usage-PEGLESS-over separate sessions! Having to go to the park at certain times on certain days just isn't where it's at. Skating=freedom!"<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Email from Chris Hildebrand, dated 7/21/04, Re: use of bikes in skateparks; [www.grindline.com](http://www.grindline.com)

<sup>25</sup> Email from Chris Hildebrand, dated 7/23/04, Re: use of bikes in skateparks; [www.grindline.com](http://www.grindline.com)

<sup>26</sup> Email from Stephanie Mohler of Airspeed Skateparks, dated 4/15/05, Re: Skatepark Construction

<sup>27</sup> Email from Jim Barnum, Spectrum Skatepark Creations, Ltd., dated 7/21/05, Re: use of bikes in skateparks

### **Placed to Ride, Inc.**

Stefan Hauser, of Placed to Ride, reported that they have built skateparks that were designed to accommodate BMX bikes. They report that, “The main damage occurs to the coping and directly behind the coping on the (concrete) decks.” To address the damage to the concrete they recommend that a city, “...weld a steel plate to the coping that acts as part of the decking. It will withstand the damage of the bicycle pegs better than concrete.” This approach does involve additional costs. When asked to recommend how a city accommodate BMX use in a skatepark, Stefan offered the following, “Design a park with BMX in mind. Don't let bikes on the concrete surfaces for the first six months after construction is finished to let the green concrete additional cure time plus it gives a chance for skateboarders to get used to the park before introducing another liability... Basically can skateboarders and BMXer's get along. A big problem is that bikes can be a huge liability to a crowded skatepark. A bike is big, heavy and bulky. They can cruise through a park in different directions and angles very quietly interfering with normal skateboarder flow. I know some parks that have been in existence since the seventies that allow bikes and are still functional. One must consider if wear and tear (and how much) can be considered a normal and expectable effect. Perhaps split hours can help the battle, even if it is just a suggestion. This dilemma is a terrible mess really. The best answer is to build more and keep some off limits to bikers while opening others whole-heartedly to bike use.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Management Options**

With a basic understanding of the issues and experiences of others, five different management scenarios will be presented. These will include the advantages and disadvantages to be considered when recommending a management policy.

### **Management Options Analysis**

1. No BMX bikes allowed, Unsupervised
2. Unlimited Access, Shared Facility, Unsupervised
3. Separate Access, Shared Facility, Unsupervised
4. Unlimited Access, Separate Facilities, Unsupervised
5. Unlimited Access, Shared Facility, Supervised

### **Option 1: No BMX bikes allowed, Unsupervised**

PP&R and the SPLAT sub-committee working on the BMX access issue have stated that eliminating bikes from all of Portland's skateparks is not acceptable. However, this management approach may be implemented at a skate-only facility.

Advantages:

1. Skaters have opportunity for access to facilities without potential of collisions with BMX bikes
2. Skatepark designers can provide materials that are preferred by some skaters, i.e. ceramic tile pool coping.
3. Potentially cheaper construction costs because the park is not built to withstand BMX bike use.

Disadvantages:

1. Unmet need for BMX user group
2. Inevitable bike usage of skatepark regardless of regulatory signage.
3. Potential for user conflicts, fights, and/or harassment.
4. Need for 'policing' or supervision of the skatepark and removal of BMX user from the skatepark.

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<sup>28</sup> Email from Stefan Hauser of Placed To Ride, Inc., dated 4/25/05, Re: Skatepark Construction; www.pterskate.com

5. Currently there are limited resources to respond to non-scheduled users accessing the park.
6. BMX riders return to the streets and public areas to practice their sport and damage of these areas continues.
7. Unanticipated maintenance costs due to damage of skatepark that was not constructed to withstand bike use.

**Option 2: Unlimited Access, Shared Facility, Unsupervised**

The SPLAT sub-committee working on this issue has stated that they feel this management policy would work for certain smaller skatespots – size limits have not been determined.

**Advantages:**

1. Equal access for all user groups. If allowed at district parks BMX users could get access to a larger facility
2. Allows testing of impacts by BMX use and demand by BMX users.
3. Potential increase in BMX population if given local access to skatepark.
4. Reduced maintenance costs because park was designed/built to withstand BMX use.
5. Each of the neighborhood kids have an opportunity to access their local skatepark.
6. Commingling of users allows for influence and acceptance of other user groups

**Disadvantages:**

1. Potential need for ‘policing’ or supervision of the skatepark during crowded sessions to reduce crowding and potential displacement of younger, more timid skaters.
2. Potential for user conflicts with regards to shared use. Certain users least preferred management approach.
3. Potential for BMX domination of the skatepark..
4. Potential for greater capital investment
5. "Taking turns" may not be realistic at a crowded skatepark.
6. Potential for injuries due to collisions between all bikers, skateboarders and in-line skaters.

**Option 3: Split Access, Separate Sessions, or Separate Area within the same facility, Unsupervised**

The SPLAT sub-committee working on this issue has stated that they feel this management policy was one of their least preferred.

**Advantages:**

1. Skaters have opportunity for access to facilities without potential for collisions with BMX bikes
2. Free-style BMX bikers has opportunity for access to public facilities.
3. Allows testing of impacts by BMX use and demand by BMX users.
4. Potential increase in BMX population if given local access to skatepark.
5. An equitable distribution of times would include weekends and peak use hours for each user.
6. There is a successful, local example of this management approach at Burnside Bridge skatepark. However, Burnside is a unique skatepark in that most users understand how this park got built and by whom. There is a high degree of respect for this park and its success.

**Disadvantages:**

1. Least preferred approach from standpoint of certain users
2. Possibility of use by either user group during unscheduled times
3. Limited resources to respond to un-scheduled user violations
4. Potential for increased enforcement and administrative costs.

5. There are varying degrees of compromise in a mixed-use skatepark; from a user standpoint some feel policies like this actually do not work.

#### **Option 4: Separate Facilities Constructed for Skate and BMX Use, Unsupervised**

The SPLAT sub-committee working on this issue has stated that they feel this management policy was their most preferred.

Advantages:

1. Skaters have opportunity for access to facilities without potential for collisions with BMX bikes
2. Free-style BMX bikers get unlimited opportunity for access to public facilities. Potential increase in BMX population if given local access to skatepark.
3. Allows testing of impacts by BMX use and demand by BMX users.
4. Skatepark designers can provide materials that are preferred by some skaters, i.e. ceramic tile pool coping which mimics the pool skating of the sports early history.
5. BMX riders are able to be creative in a design that is strictly for bike riding.
6. Allows for separate fundraising efforts.

The BMX Riders Organization (BRO) does favor the building of BMX only parks.

Disadvantages:

1. Possibility of use by either user group at other park
2. Limited resources to respond to un-scheduled users
3. Additional land costs associated with dedicating specific facilities to sole user group
4. Additional construction costs
5. Additional maintenance costs
6. Kids/adults from within a neighborhood would not be allowed access to their local skatepark. This would require the user to have means of transportation to get to other parks.
7. Requires determination of amount of funding to be distributed to each separate park.

#### **Option 5: Unlimited Access, Shared Facility, Supervised**

The SPLAT sub-committee working on this issue has stated that they feel this management policy was one of their least preferred.

Advantages:

1. Equal access for all user groups
2. Reduced maintenance costs because park was designed/built to withstand BMX use.
3. Each of the neighborhood kids have an opportunity to access their communities skatepark.

Disadvantages:

1. Supervision costs for PP&R staff to monitor = \$23,040/yr<sup>29</sup>
2. Potential for increased liability if someone gets injured in a supervised setting
3. Both user groups report supervision as least preferred type of park to recreate

### **Current SPLAT Sub-Committee Observations**

- Eliminating bikes from all of Portland's skateparks is not acceptable. They want to have access in some form for all users immediately.

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<sup>29</sup> Recreation Coordinator @ \$16.34 + benefits/hr x 4 hrs/day (busiest times 3 pm – 7 pm) = \$80/day during the week + \$160/day on weekend day (8 hours) = \$720/wk x 4 weeks = \$2,880/month x 8 months (busiest months) = \$23,040/yr.

- **Separate Sessions** - Same facility with different times or days was not eliminated but also not the preferred approach. Set up different sessions/days but leave it open for the individual disciplines to decide for themselves if they want to ride during that time.
- **Separate Areas** - Same facility with different areas. This strategy could work but would require additional management/oversight to administer
- **Separate Parks** – Two different facilities; either at the same site or different sites. Their preferred alternative but there is disagreement on how much should be spent on each individual park. Skaters for Portland Skateparks recommend 93/7 split of the available funding.
- **Shared Use** – Combined use was decided that it could work in selected small skateparks (<5000 square feet). Shared use was not recommended for district and regional parks. The smaller the skatepark, the more feasible it could be to share the space – in smaller spaces users can more easily see one another.

The sub-committee worked on two alternatives for recommendations on the first two parks to be built in Portland. Their alternatives included:

**Alternative #1** - Construct a larger park for a ‘skate only’ facility and a smaller park for a ‘bike only’ facility. They felt that this alternative would allow for access for both user groups and be proportionate to user demand. It would exclude users from both sites.

**Alternative #2** - Construct one park for a ‘skate only’ and a second, equal sized park that would be shared use or separate sessions. This would allow for both users get access to a larger facility. It would exclude BMX from one facility.

**Community Expectations**

In November 2004, PP&R asked those responding to our siting surveys to identify their preference for the different management options. A total of 92 respondents provided us with feedback. Of the 92 respondents 46 were skateboarders, 18 BMX riders, and 4 in-line skaters. The rest were parents or spectators. Of those responding, the following was the preferences:

<b><u>Skatespots (&lt;10,000 sf)</u></b>	<b><u>Response Percent</u></b>	<b><u>Response Total</u></b>
Shares Access at all times	42.4%	39
Separate Sessions	10.9%	10
Separate Facilities	30.4	28
No Strong Opinion	16.3%	15
<b><u>District Parks (&gt;10,000 sf)</u></b>	<b><u>Response Percent</u></b>	<b><u>Response Total</u></b>
Shares Access at all times	38%	35
Separate Sessions	8.7%	8
Separate Areas within the park	23.9%	22
Separate Facilities	18.5%	17
No Strong Opinion	10.9%	10
<b><u>Regional Park (&gt;30,000 sf)</u></b>	<b><u>Response Percent</u></b>	<b><u>Response Total</u></b>
Shares Access at all times	38.5%	35
Separate Sessions	2.2%	2
Separate Areas within the park	31.9%	29
Separate Facilities	17.6%	16
No Strong Opinion	9.9%	9

The following results are the findings of a question asked have the respondent recommend how to accommodate BMX use and establish a management policy for the first two parks to be built,:

<b>Management Approach</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
One park skaters/One park BMX	14.4%	13
One park skaters/One park BMX/skate (shared)	13.3%	12
One park skaters/One park BMX/skate (separate sessions)	22.2%	20
Two park skate/BMX (shared or separate sessions)	43.3%	39
No Strong Opinion	6.7%	6

### **Observations**

PP&R wants for both user groups to enjoy their respective recreational activities in an appropriate setting whereby minimal park management intervention is required. PP&R should provide support for the BMX and skate communities to come together, to work side by side, and to develop a workable solution to the management policy. PP&R is investing in the construction of skateparks to help reduce the illegal aspects of skateboarding and BMX riding which result in damage of public and private property. Banning a legitimate user from all of Portland’s skateparks is not a viable management solution.

Whether the decision is to eliminate a user group, combine use, or establish separate use times, there is the potential for confrontation between user groups and parks staff and/or the police. There are those on both sides of the issue that are extremely passionate and try as we might, we will not get everyone to agree with, or accept, the rules for use. Tom Miller, co-founder of Skaters for Portland Skateparks, stated that “...shared use creates an eternal tension between user groups. PP&R will never get each group to accept that it has to share one facility with the other... It's contrary to community expectations.”<sup>30</sup> There will be acrimony that exists with regard to any of the management approaches selected for Portland’s skatepark system. PP&R should recognize this and be sensitive to the issues presented from both sides.

PP&R is unlikely to ever have the resources to provide supervise and enforce scheduled use. Portland should encourage both groups to understand the policy as well as those concerns of the other user groups with regards to access, displacement, injuries, and damage. PP&R should work with both user groups to develop rules for their skatepark and encourage all users to abide by these rules to make use of Portland’s skateparks as safe and enjoyable as possible. It is vital to have both groups work together to establish rules for use and a code of conduct or park etiquette for PP&R’s skatepark program to be a success.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Design, Construction and Management Recommendations**

1. Develop an emergency response plan to deal with accidents and injuries.
2. Determine the extent of wear/damage to the skatepark surface and coping that is acceptable to PP&R.
3. Work with each user group to establish mutual understanding, respect and a willingness to work together.
4. Work to instill ownership and pride in Portland’s skateparks from all users.
5. Work to establish a code of conduct, or skatepark etiquette.

<sup>30</sup> Email from Tom Miller, dated 1/14/05, Re: Bike Park. [www.pdxskaters.org](http://www.pdxskaters.org)

6. Implement a recreation program that teaches skateboarding and BMX skills as well as skatepark etiquette.
7. Develop regulatory signage, in a manner that is geared towards the users groups, to explain the skatepark rules, code of conduct and etiquette.
8. Develop a task force of user groups to evaluate management policies and, if needed, make recommendations for changes.
9. Develop a schedule for routine inspections of the skatepark surfacing, coping and edges by PP&R staff and a task force of users.
10. Design and construct skateparks to allow for flexibility in the management policy
11. Design and build for all levels of skill.
12. Acknowledge the presence of BMX bikes during the design and construction processes
13. Invest in materials and workmanship that can help to protect the skatepark surfaces and reduce maintenance requirements.
14. Work with the BMX community to enforce, through mentoring and peer support and encouragement, a no-peg rule or use of skatepark friendly pegs and other products that help reduce potential wear.
15. Work with both user groups to secure additional development and maintenance funding
16. Make a final decision with regards to management and then promote and enforce this policy.

### **Conclusions**

Free-style BMX bike riding is an exciting recreational activity that engages a young segment of Portland's community. PP&R recognizes that free-style BMX bike riding offers an active recreational outlet for youth and this activity aligns with Portland Park's 'Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland' mission. PP&R has stated throughout the process that BMX bikes will have access, in some form, to at least one of the two parks to initially be built. Based on research and discussions, it is likely that BMX riders will attempt to use each of Portland's future skateparks; regardless of the recommended management approach. Quality design/build firms are designing and specifying materials that will withstand BMX use, thereby reducing the potential for damage or excessive wear. For this reason the recommendation is to build skateparks that can withstand BMX use. The designers can also base their designs on providing the proper sight lines and protective measures required to make for a safer experience for all.

Although PP&R will make the final decision with regards to the skatepark management policy, community participation and involvement are needed to make the policy a success. Portland must identify the management policy, acknowledge the advantages and disadvantages and enforce the rules.

### **Next Steps**

Upon completion of the siting process, available Levy funding may allow the construction of two 4,000 square foot (sf) skateparks. PP&R's existing skatepark at Pier is 10,000 sf. However, two 4,000 sf skateparks will meet neither the need nor the expectations of the community with regards to the skateparks to be constructed. The ability to provide large facilities is contingent on additional fund raising. PP&R would like to work with both the skate and BMX communities and local businesses on fundraising efforts. We feel this is the best way to build support for the skatepark system and leverage the resources we currently have. Some of the larger potential corporate contributors are allied with both the skate and BMX communities and may consider a shared use or equal access to a park as a way to maximize their promotional investment.