

BITTER ROOT STOCK FARM
P.O. Box 496
Hamilton, MT 59840

Ravalli County Commissioners
215 S. 4th St., Suite A
Hamilton, MT 59840
Via email: commissioners@rc.mt.gov

April 21, 2021

Dear Commissioners,

We write to support the RAL Trail extension along Golf Course Road. As you know, motorized and non-motorized use of Golf Course Road has substantially increased in recent years. Safe access to schools and town from the neighborhoods in this part of town has not been available, leading to either risky non-motorized use of the roadway by adults and children alike, or car trips that could be avoided if a safe alternative existed, creating further traffic on this busy road.

The tragic death of Robert Leonardi on Golf Course Road in 2019 revealed the deep, and frankly unacceptable, cost of this situation. In response to this tragedy and the resulting anguish and desire for action within our community, we established a non-motorized trail on our land between Golf Course Road and Marcus Street. With the support and encouragement of Robert's family, we named the trail after Robert, and we opened for public use the RAL (Robert Anthony Leonardi) Trail in December 2020. The RAL Trail allows for a safe (and, we believe, fun) access route between Gold Course Road and Marcus Street, near Hamilton High School.

The RAL Trail extension would enable similarly safe (and fun) access between these same Golf Course Road neighborhoods to Daly Elementary and town. We thus urge you to sanction and support this effort.

To the extent our experience with the public use of the RAL Trail to date can help in your decision-making, we are happy to report that we have had near uniform respect for our property. This is true in terms of use and activity within the trail corridor itself, and on our adjacent agricultural field, outbuildings and residences, to which uninvited access is trespass.

Further, our management and maintenance of the trail corridor has been less than expected, largely due to the incredible volunteers that have come from area neighborhoods and elsewhere to support this project. Looking forward, we are humbled and excited to be planning for roughly 480 people hours of (unsolicited yet deeply appreciated) volunteer work on the RAL Trail in May 2021, which will allow us to further improve the safety and experience of the trail, including improving wildlife habitat and minimizing weeds and their propagation.

Thank you for your consideration of our input, and we urge your support for the RAL Trail extension.

Sincerely,



Ilona Besseney/Bitter Root Stock Farm