



P.O. Box 771471
Cleveland, Ohio 44107
216-233-3990

April 27, 2007

Mr. Richard J. Kerber
Director of Planning, Design, and Natural Resources
Cleveland Metroparks
4101 Fulton Parkway
Cleveland, Ohio 44144

Dear Mr. Kerber:

This letter is CAMBA's response to your letter dated April 24, 2007. The trail we are currently constructing in Cleveland Metroparks' Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation has enormous potential both for mountain biking and for Northeast Ohio. It is a fact that Northeast Ohio urgently needs forms of recreation, such as mountain biking, that are relevant to area residents. These forms of recreation help our region solve a critical issue: attracting and retaining area residents. It is also a fact that Cleveland Metroparks must seek ways to connect people to the outdoors if it wishes to enjoy the level of community support that it has had in the past. This project between CAMBA and Cleveland Metroparks is *much more than just a trail*; it represents a solution to the issues that our region and the park face today.

In general, Cleveland Metroparks has been an excellent partner and we are pleased with the progress we have made. However, the lack of oversight regarding landfill issues relative to performing the first "on the ground" inspection has caused serious delays, the loss of hundreds of hours of volunteer labor, and possible elimination of portions of trail.

We are disappointed in certain aspects of support we have received from Cleveland Metroparks in our attempt to add value to our parks and to the community. Cleveland Metroparks knew that this was not an ideal property due to the area's history as a landfill. Your emphasis of the word "experiment" in describing our trail is not consistent with any previous discussions or documentation about this project. The "experiment" in this situation is the land we have been given to work with. Given the "experimental" nature of the land, CAMBA rightfully had expectations that Cleveland Metroparks would take all due precautions and work with us in a timely manner to evaluate potential problems such as instabilities, garbage and unknown substances before they became a crisis.

In your letter, point number 1 cites concerns with "the amount of trash uncovered in the construction of the beginners loop, and ... the steepness of the slope along the canal". The trash has been our concern as well but we were under the impression that it had already been investigated and no other land was available to build on at the time. It was never our desire to build on a landfill. Seeing trash around is not a pleasant Cleveland Metroparks experience and not up to the quality that visitors expect at other Cleveland Metroparks reservations. With assistance of Cleveland Metroparks, the problem of visible trash can be resolved and we can offer technical solutions to this problem. The steepness of the slope along the canal is not a concern from our perspective. Similar slope has proven sustainable at parks such as West Branch for many years.

Point number 2 in your letter cites multiple concerns over "slope stability issues" and calls into question our commitment to using sustainable trail building techniques. The slope failure is unfortunate. Anything that causes unnecessary disruption to the environment should be avoided. The back slope required to put the trail in was not beyond what is commonly considered an acceptable trail building practice. Although this is CAMBA's first experience with this amount of back slope, we did research this with other trail professionals at a National Trail Building Conference and found it to be an acceptable practice depending on the soil conditions. Clearly the soil conditions were unpredictable, but that could not have been known prior to construction.

CAMBA is rigorous with trail alignment and construction. Hours are taken before soil is broken to constantly evaluate our trail to make sure the best lines are chosen. Even with the most extreme reviewing measures, unexpected issues may arise.

CAMBA does not knowingly act contrary to proven IMBA trail building methods. Our leaders and members have attended many forms of education for trail building such as seminars (IMBA Mountain Bike Conferences), trade shows (Professional Trail Building Association), training classes (from various trail building professionals), and we have brought the IMBA Trail Care Crew to Northeast Ohio multiple times. Our members and leaders make these trips at all or most of their own expense. Our commitment to sustainable trail building methods is unequivocal.

Point number 3 of your letter indicates concern over the cinder piles. We agree that any unknown substances should be investigated. However, as was pointed out earlier, it would have certainly been appropriate for Cleveland Metroparks to review the area prior to now. Maps given to the park many months ago clearly show the trail being aligned in this area.

It is important that Cleveland Metroparks recognize and respect our trail building volunteers' commitment and the amount of work they have dedicated to this project to ensure that the time these individuals choose to donate is used wisely in the future. The total of more than 2000 volunteer hours dedicated by CAMBA volunteers through the Cleveland winter clearly shows the commitment and desire for a mountain bike trail in Cuyahoga County. Currently, the projected result is a trail that will be less than two miles in length. This is far below the five miles of trail CAMBA has repeatedly requested and far below the 4 miles originally committed by Cleveland Metroparks. Moreover, it will negate hundreds of hours of volunteer time (if already completed sections are deemed unworkable). Our membership of over 400 individuals as well as the many volunteers who contributed to this project will be justifiably disappointed by this lack of mileage and the inefficient use of volunteer hours. By joining our organization and donating their personal time, our members have demonstrated a commitment to our community. CAMBA believes that the success of this project is dictated by the commitment of the parties involved. CAMBA's commitment is clear.

At the start of the project, we were aware that this was not the ideal location but we were repeatedly told that this was the best that Cleveland Metroparks could provide. We have been and continue to be willing to do everything in our power to make this work. We hope the Cleveland Metroparks will use their knowledge and experience to help us open this trail for use during the Summer of 2007.

Sincerely,

Michael Farley
Founder & Advocacy Director

cc: Vern J. Hartenburg, Executive Director
Patti Barz, Law Director
Bill Binggeli, Director of Park Operations
Nancy Desmond, Visitor Center Manager
Gary Baran, Park Manager