



RIMROCK NEIGHBORHOOD TASK FORCE
INNER BELT LOOP Connection POSITION PAPER

Rimrock Neighborhood Task Force (RNTF) is strongly opposed to using Zimmerman Trail as a link in the Inner Belt Loop.

RNTF opposes using Zimmerman Trail as a direct connector to the Inner Belt Loop because of concerns for safety, suitability, capacity, and frequent closures on the Trail.

Zimmerman Trail is an historic landmark, originally built in 1890-91 by brothers Joseph and Frank Zimmerman who sought a route to move hundreds of sheep from their homestead to the springs atop the Rimrocks. (Source: Zimmerman Trail Marker located on U.S. 3 ¼ miles west of Zimmerman Trail.)

Zimmerman Trail is a steep, narrow, two-lane road with hairpin curves that winds for approximately 1 mile through a cut in a narrow canyon from the top of the Rimrocks at U.S. 3 to Rimrock Rd. and continues south for several miles and is not suitable for additional Inner Belt Loop traffic.

1. **Safety. Frequent accidents.** Zimmerman Trail and the Rimrock Road intersection on Zimmerman Trail have the highest number of traffic accidents in the RNTF area. There have been many serious accidents on the Trail causing rollovers, injuries, and deaths. Many trucks, including fuel trucks, use the road which is a serious safety concern. The Trail has a difficult to enforce 25 mph speed limit which is often ignored, adding safety concerns.

In addition, bicyclists currently use Zimmerman Trail, and the planned addition of shoulders on Zimmerman Trail will probably encourage more bicyclists to use the Trail alongside ever increasing automobile and truck traffic.

2. **Catastrophic incident.** An accident or incident at the airport, on Zimmerman Trail or on top of the Rimrocks could put people, property and neighborhoods at risk by impeding emergency responses. For example, the grass fire alongside Zimmerman Trail on Tuesday afternoon August 1, 2017 could have resulted in a catastrophic incident under different circumstances. Thankfully, the fire was put out without any incident.
3. **Capacity.** Currently the road is used by approximately 9,000 vehicles daily. Traffic is frequently bumper-to-bumper as commuters from the Rimrocks and the Heights drive to the West End and back home. Planned expansion and development in the Inner Belt Loop corridor and on top of the Rims would add potentially thousands of additional drivers to a road that is now near capacity.
4. **Suitability.** The shifting sandstone formation of the Rimrocks is unstable and is notorious for rockslides and falling boulders causing damage to the road and closures for repairs. The city was forced to hire a geostabilization company to identify and fix weak points after a rock slide in March of 2014.
5. **Frequent closures.** On March 25, 2014 Zimmerman Trail was closed for two months and eighteen days because of a rockslide and since then it has been closed numerous times because of rock slides, accidents and winter conditions.

Recommendation: Therefore, in consideration of safety, possible catastrophic incidents, capacity, suitability and frequent closures on Zimmerman Trail, the RNTF recommends that any future Inner Belt Loop be connected to a new route off the Rimrocks and constructed west of the historic Zimmerman Trail where the Rimrocks are more stable and the grade is less. This new route would be a more suitable all-weather and, most importantly, safer connection for the Inner Belt Loop and its users.

The RNTF also recommends that a dedicated Bike/Ped trail be constructed along Zimmerman Trail in the future.