TRAIL TECHNOLOGY:
SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT TRAILS WITHIN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Photo Credit: Daykations Blog
PREVIEW OF TODAY’S DISCUSSION

1. Making authorized trail information accessible

2. Lessons learned since the launch of the website

3. Determining where we go from here
LA COUNTY TRAILS

MAKING AUTHORIZED TRAIL INFO ACCESSIBLE
“TRAIL USERS ARE AMONG THE MOST PASSIONATE AND INFORMED OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS...”

Russ Guiney, Former Director of LACo Parks
Recognized the growing popularity of outdoor recreation enjoyed on paths through parks and natural areas

Running/jogging/trail running, bicycling and hiking were among the top five most popular outdoor activities*

*Source: 2014 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report by the non-profit Outdoor Foundation
MAKING AUTHORIZED TRAIL INFO ACCESSIBLE

EXPANDING AWARENESS OF AUTHORIZED TRAILS

- Encourage residents and visitors to take advantage of one of the world's most diverse and expansive multi-use trail systems
- Expand opportunities to enjoy healthy outdoor recreation
- Deepen their knowledge about trails and our natural resources
- Decrease incidents of trespassing and degradation to environmentally sensitive areas

Photo Credit: Your Favorite Hiker
MAKING AUTHORIZED TRAIL INFO ACCESSIBLE

PRE-2014: FOLD-OUT MAPS

LACo Riding and Hiking Trails (2001)

LACo Riding and Hiking Trails (1986)
Making Authorized Trail Info Accessible

Pre-2014: LA County GIS Data Portal

Department of Parks and Recreation Trails

2009-2012 GPS and field verified existing Los Angeles County trail alignments. Field data corrected using LAM-ICW imagery. Trail data includes only Department Regional trail alignments. Internal park trails will be added as they are mapped. This data does not include City or Conservancy trail alignments.

Download data here:

DPR_TRAILS

Using GIS Data on this site

GIS Data downloaded from this site generally requires GIS software to view. Click here for a list of GIS Data Viewers

GIS data available on this website is provided AS IS - please read the GIS Data Portal Terms of Use

Data Field Descriptions

- name_common: Common name of trail
- idType: yes or no
- id: yes or no
- flags: yes or no
- length_in: yes or no
- avg_elevation: GPS data, average elevation of trail in feet
- feet: Length of trail in feet
- miles: Length of trail in miles

GIS Source Information

Database Name: eGIS, Transportation
Feature Class Name: EGISDPR_TRAILS
Feature Dataset Name [if applicable]:
Reference Date: 2012
Accuracy Plot:
Update Frequency: Quarterly
Access Constraints: None

Contact Information

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MAKING AUTHORIZED TRAIL INFO ACCESSIBLE

DIGITALIZING OUR ASSETS

Detailed, foot-by-foot assessments collected on 210 miles of trails into a rich GIS database

Included a geo-referenced inventory of:

- A variety of maintenance issues
- Access points, trailheads, and amenities
- All existing signage
- Trail type, surface, grade
MAKING AUTHORIZED TRAIL INFO ACCESSIBLE

DEVELOPMENT OF TRAILS.LA COUNTY.GOV

1. WEB DEVELOPMENT
   [August 2012] Began developing desktop and mobile trails website. New components of the site were tested as they were developed.

2. WEB & MOBILE LAUNCH
   [November 2014] Publicly launched desktop and mobile trails website hosting multiple agencies' trails and trail-related information. Changes in web development software provided additional features and budget savings.

3. WEB & MOBILE REFINEMENT
   [February 2015] Began refining desktop and mobile app website with additional features based on feedback using portion of cost savings from web development efficiencies.
Provide regularly-updated information on trails in the county, and allow users to:

- Show or search for trails based on current location or city/zip
- View, sort, and filter trail results to be viewed in list view or map view
- Provide trail information, directions to trailhead and access points, an interactive map, elevation profile, etc.
- Data synchronization between the mobile and desktop site
MAKING AUTHORIZED TRAIL INFO ACCESSIBLE

INTERAGENCY WEBSITE PARTNERS

Website includes trails operated by a number of partner agencies:

- National Park Service
- California State Parks
- Mountains Restoration Trust
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
- Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

Photo Credit: The Plaid Zebra
MAKING AUTHORIZED TRAIL INFO ACCESSIBLE

OVERVIEW OF THE DESKTOP HOME PAGE

- Featured trail every month
- Search for a trail by city or zip, trail name, or park name
- Use the interactive map
- Create an account to rate and review trails
- Other information on preparedness, trail etiquette, events, FAQ, and relevant planning documents
MAKING AUTHORIZED TRAIL INFO ACCESSIBLE

OVERVIEW OF THE MOBILE HOME PAGE

- Trail locator
- Featured trail
- Things you might see, safety and etiquette, news, events, and alerts, list of trails
- ...and more
Making Authorized Trail Info Accessible

2nd Generation Refinements

New features that allow users to:

- Rate trails
- Report trail maintenance issues
- Learn about native ecology
- Search by park name
- Added features to the interactive maps
Tracking Website Traffic

Since the 2014 launch, trails.lacounty.gov:

- Desktop site has received 29k sessions (53%)
- Mobile site has received 25k sessions (47%)

Traffic is low when compared to the Department's website.
LESSONS LEARNED

MARKETING STRATEGY

No formal marketing strategy to-date, limited promotion has been made through:

‣ Board meeting presentation
‣ Press releases
‣ Department's social media channels

Recommended that we:

‣ Consider new strategies to promote the site through county channels, park signage, local businesses
‣ Seek out partner sites that would provide links to trails.lacounty.gov to increase traffic from referrals
‣ Invest resources into search engine optimization
LESSONS LEARNED

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Photos on the site typically don't show people actually using the trails.

Recommended that we get more pictures with people in them by:

▸ Utilizing the Department's photographer and county staff on a semi-regular basis
▸ Developing a program to encourage trail users to submit their own pictures to be posted
LESSONS LEARNED

EFFORTS TO BRING ON MORE PARTNERS

- Before launch, we made a significant effort to get trails from federal and state agencies, conservancies, and trusts on the website.
- One-stop source for authorized trail information within the County of L.A.
- Develop a strategies to reach out to more local jurisdictions to join the trails website.

Photo Credit: Wikipedia
DIRECTION
MOVING FORWARD

LA COUNTY TRAILS

Photo Credit: NPS
Quickly changing and competitive marketplace for outdoor recreational apps

We needed to answer the following questions:

- What are the available options to reach more users? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?
- Who is our target audience?
- How much are the initial development costs of a new or improved platform? How much will it cost to update and maintain?
- How long will it take to develop?
DIRECTION MOVING FORWARD

FEASIBILITY STUDY:
ASSESSING THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE

A. Add functionality to existing desktop and mobile sites
B. Create a fully-featured native app from scratch
C. Develop an app using a minimum viable product approach
D. Leverage the framework of other app developers
OPTION A: ADD FUNCTIONALITY TO EXISTING DESKTOP AND MOBILE SITES

Advantages:
- Economical
- Low barrier to access
- Guaranteed compatibility

Disadvantages:
- Limited ability to accommodate all desired features
- Less desirable user experience
- Not discoverable on app store and google play
OPTION B: CREATE A FULLY-FEATURED NATIVE APP FROM SCRATCH

Advantages:
- Endless possibilities to customize
- Discoverable on app store and google play Compatibility

Disadvantages:
- Relatively expensive
- User adoption uncertain
- Lengthy timeframe to develop
**OPTION C:**
DEVELOP AN APP USING A MINIMUM V IABLE PRODUCT APPROACH

**Advantages:**
- Economical
- Less risk for user adoption
- Learn from the directly from the users
- Improved metrics

**Disadvantages:**
- Initial launch will have limited features
- Costs could increase as it progresses
**OPTION D:**
LEVERAGE THE FRAMEWORK OF OTHER APP DEVELOPERS

**Advantages:**
- Economical
- Quick deployment
- Enables county to keep up with quickly changing technology

**Disadvantages:**
- May require flexibility to integrate data into existing framework
CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

▸ Goal is to make information about trails as accessible and user-friendly as possible

▸ Learned that there is tremendous room for growth with a strong marketing strategy and more partnering jurisdictions

▸ Looking forward, the County has many avenues to expand the reach of authorized trail information