

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Nancy Lesley, Director of Special Events and Marketing

**THRU:** Jeff Woods, Manager, Parks and Recreation

**DATE OF MEMO:** March 10, 2010

**MEETING DATE:** March 15, 2010

**RE:** Aspen Cycling Festival

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**REQUEST OF COUNCIL:** Staff is not requesting action from Council; this is to update you on the plan for growing the Aspen Cycling Criterium weekend into the Aspen Cycling Festival.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:** Council has given staff additional funds in 2010 to increase promotion of the Criterium weekend through the stimulus process.

**BACKGROUND:** The Aspen Cycling Criterium was started in 2005 with the intent of pairing it with the Ride for the Pass creating a weekend of doing “two things in Aspen you can’t do any other time” (ride the pass free of vehicles and race on the closed streets of downtown Aspen). Those first years of our collaborative effort, the Criterium drew a local crowd only, 40 of the Cycling Club racers joining us on that first year. Last year, with additional funds from Council, staff began a very targeted advertising campaign in the Denver and Front Range area, Boulder and Utah. Advertising was very successful as we saw significant growth last year. In 2009 the combined events drew a weekend crowd of almost 700 with two thirds of the Criterium participants being from out of town. Staff believes both the Ride for the Pass and the Criterium have a carrying capacity in which we are just starting to explore. The weekend itself, the Aspen Cycling Festival, has unlimited growth potential with the non-competitive rides and all of the ancillary events throughout the weekend. Staff has demonstrated success with the Nordic Festival Weekend and the Owl Creek Chase. Staff will take that winning formula to create the Aspen Cycling Festival. What is unique and exciting about this weekend is the crowd it draws on Sunday morning to the core of Aspen. While we advertise this event locally and encourage people to come out and watch some very fast paced cycling, word of mouth has been incredible, the core of Aspen has an energy and vibrancy that is usually reserved for only those weekends where we are at 90% capacity.

**DISCUSSION:** This year, staff is working with six additional ideas to increase participation for this weekend: Sanctioning through USA Cycling to make it a national points based race, a weekend of competition winner (the fastest combined time for male and female finisher on both rides), beer garden, vendor booths, non-competitive rides and films and speakers. By sanctioning the Criterium through USA Cycling staff will tap into a large group of racers that otherwise would not come to Aspen during this time. We have received positive feedback regarding the place on the calendar as well as bringing these cyclists to Aspen from the USA Cycling. Staff is discussing with the Ride for the Pass a weekend event winner (top male and female) to encourage more participation in both events. Staff will be approaching local businesses to set up a beer garden and food service area out on the Mall. Staff is approaching manufacturing vendors to set up booths and create a vendor area on the mall. Staff is creating a non-competitive ride up to Ashcroft for those that aren't criterium riders. Non-competitive rides would be scheduled either before and/or after the elite riders' race. Staff is also looking to add a film night, either Friday or Saturday with a featured speaker. Staff is looking to grow this event, and this weekend, in a very similar way to the Owl Creek Chase. Staff has a 5 year plan for this event, including a "Ride with the Pros" but wants to be realistic as far as how much to add in a given year. Staff believes that we are positioned very well from a town perspective: hotel rates are extremely reasonable, traffic is light enough to close down streets, and restaurants and merchants appreciate the business.

### **Vision for 2011 to 2015**

Over the next five years the goal is to make the weekend a true festival with events for families and riders of all ages. Including events such as Ride with the Pros, a touring bike ride with professional or ex-professional athletes will make the weekend memorable. To include families, staff envisions events such as a Kids Bike Rodeo with events like the paper boy, longest roll, and safety checks. Other non-racing events to build on are a catered awards banquet, incentives to visit local restaurants, and a "Tour de Jazz". These events will build on the goal of rebranding the weekend as a true festival.

Improving the bicycle racing aspects of the weekend will also draw larger participation. By sanctioning both events and creating an overall weekend championship, more competitive riders will be inclined to participate. This effect can snowball; having better racers creates better points and will draw more elite racers. The ultimate goal of the improved quality of completion is to bring all regional pro-level teams to the festival.

Over the next five years the two primary goals are to create an inclusive festival and build the competitive nature of the races.

**FINANCIAL/BUDGET IMPACTS:** Because this isn't a new event and Council has already given additional funds for this event, staff is confident the proposed new items will not negatively impact the budget.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:** Since this is a biking event, and streets are closed, this positively impacts our community as people are either walking or riding their bike to the event.

In addition, by promoting bicycling and including a citizens bike ride, bicycle riding will be encouraged. It would be possible to combine the event with promotions of the air quality, greenhouse gas savings, and health benefits of bicycle commuting, working with Environmental Health, Canary Initiative, Transportation, Police and/or Parks. In any case, even though bringing people to town adds traffic and resulting air pollution, doing so in the off-season when traffic levels are low is the best way to bring additional visitors to Aspen without causing negative air quality impacts. May is one of the months with the best air quality Aspen experiences, because low traffic is combined with streets that have been cleaned of dirt and debris.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Staff would like to hear from Council on whether the direction they are taking this event is what Council would like to see.

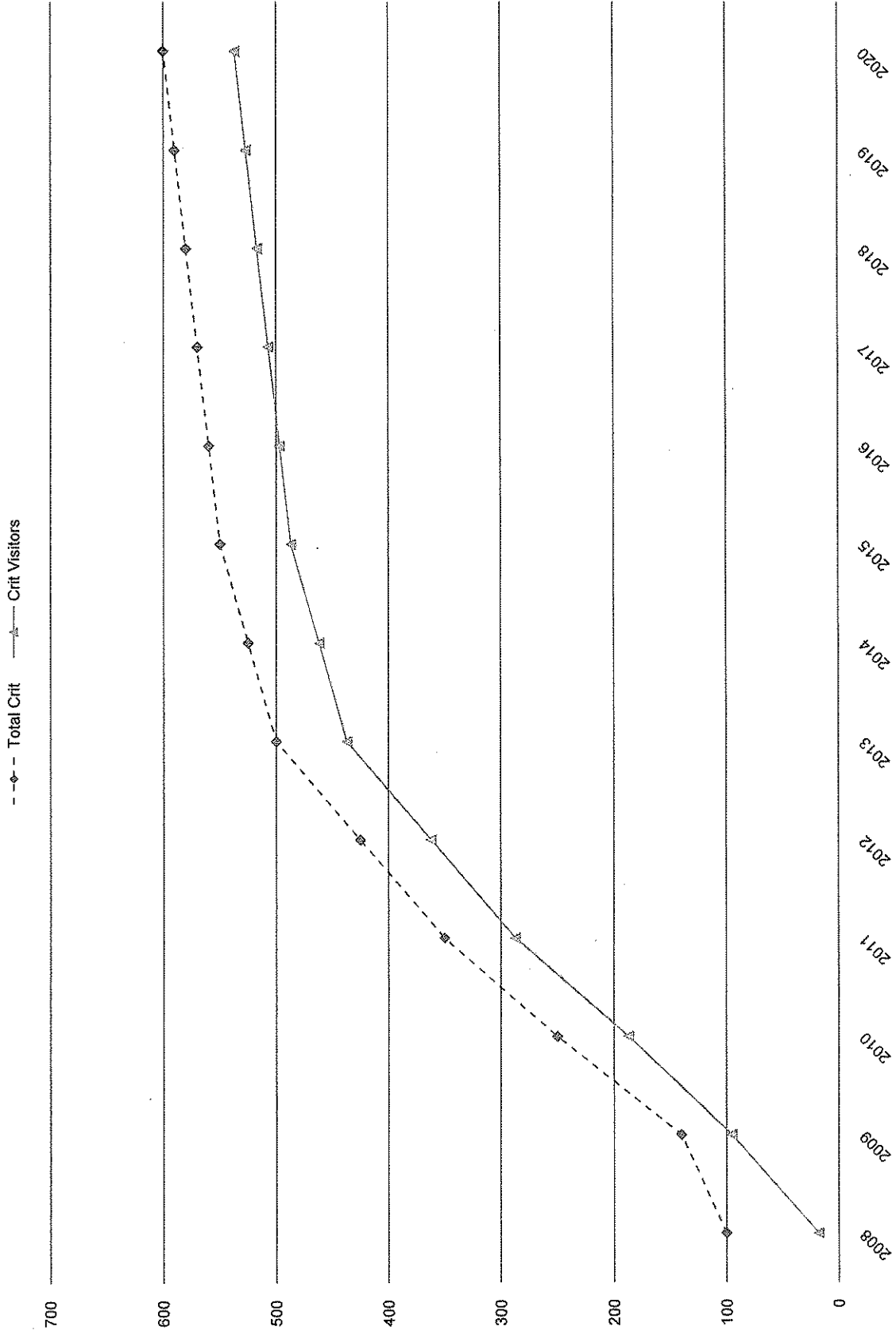
**ALTERNATIVES:** If Council disagrees with the direction Staff is taking the Criterium and the Cycling Weekend, then Staff can simply go back to previous year's format (Ride for the Pass on Saturday, Criterium on Sunday).

**CITY MANAGER COMMENTS:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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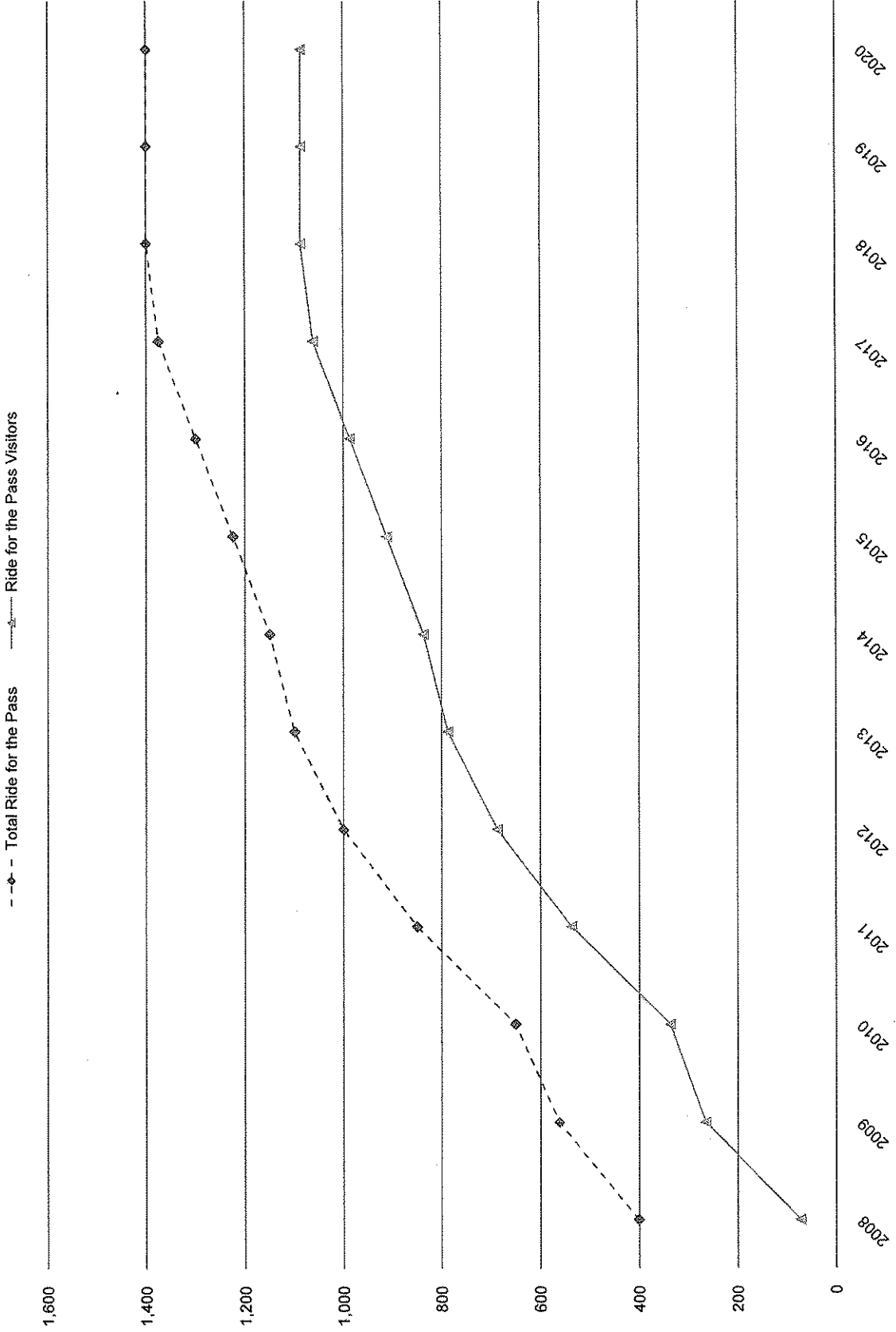
**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Criterion Participation Growth Graph
- Ride for the Pass Participation Growth Graph
- Aspen Cycling Festival Growth Graph
- Bicycling Festival memo (history for growth assumptions)

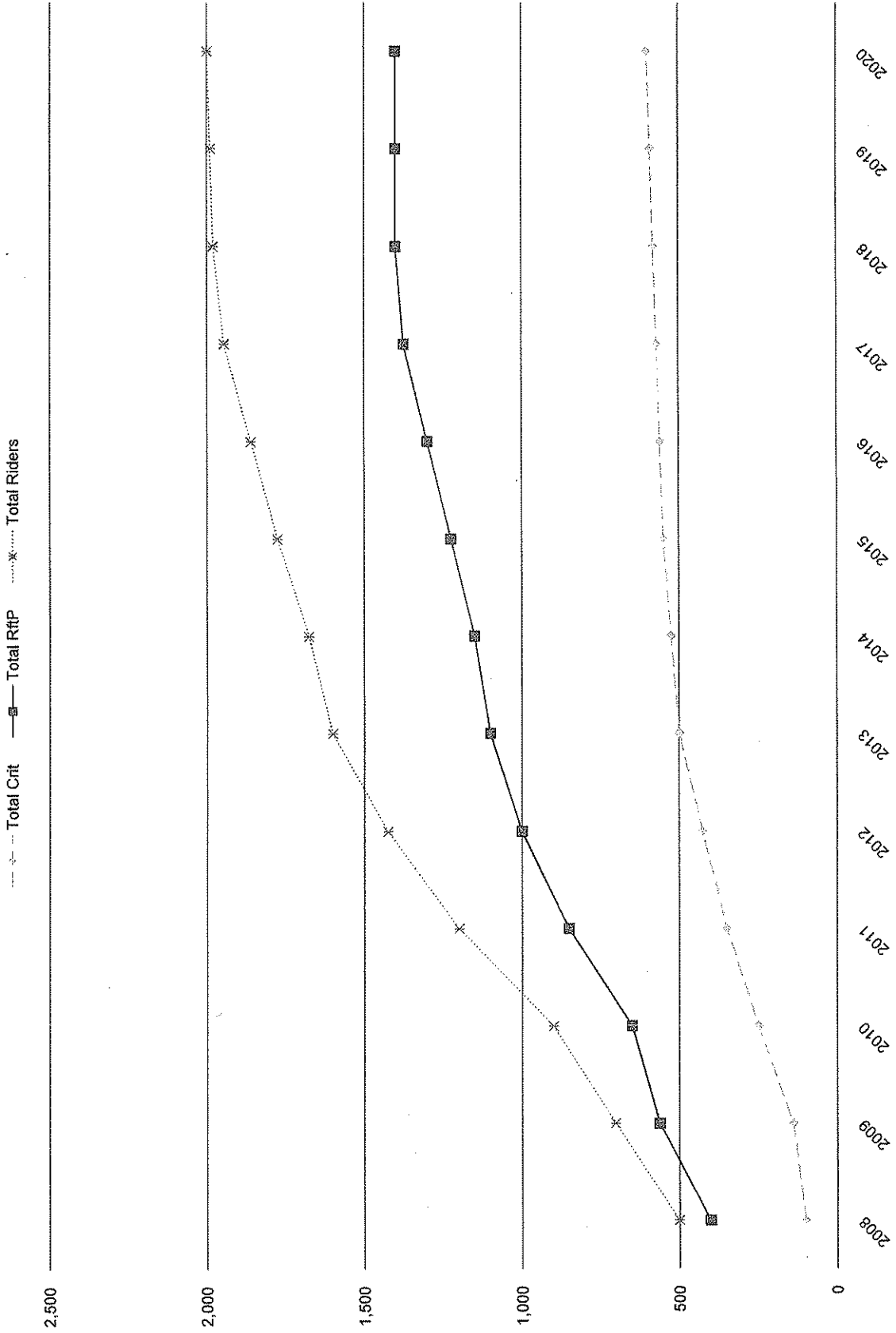
# Criterion Participation Growth



# Ride for the Pass Participation Growth



# Aspen Cycling Festival Participation Growth



# Background – Aspen Cycling Festival

## Aspen Parks and Recreation, Special Events

March 10, 2010

### Contents

Introduction .....	2
History of Other Events.....	2
Vision for Aspen Cycling Festival.....	2
Vision for 2010.....	2
Vision for 2011 to 2015.....	2
Vision for 2016 to 2020.....	3
Benchmarks for Success.....	3
Benchmarks 2010.....	3
Benchmarks 2011 to 2015 .....	3
Benchmarks 2016 to 2020 .....	3
Appendices.....	4
Appendix 1 – History of Successful Events .....	4
Banff National Park Bike Fest.....	4
Tour de Palm Springs .....	4
Air Force Cycling Classic .....	4
ING Capital Criterium / Giro d'Italia – DC .....	4

## Introduction

For the past 16 years the Independence Pass Foundation has hosted a bicycle race, the Ride for the Pass, up Independence Pass as their major fundraiser. Five years ago the Aspen Parks and Recreation, Special Events Department added the Aspen Cycling Criterium through the streets of down town Aspen. While the Ride for the Pass has always draw riders from around the region, the addition of the Criterium has allowed for dramatic growth and leads itself to the formation of a two to three day bicycling festival. The descriptions bellow outline staffs vision for future growth of the Aspen Cycling Festival over the next ten years.

## History of Other Events

By researching past successful events throughout the United States, the programming and strategy for growth has a results based approach. Staff has drawn on experiences in the Tour de Palm Springs, Air Force Cycling Classic, Banff National Park Bike Fest, ING Capital Criterium, and the Lobster Ride in Rockland, Maine. Each of these events has a history of steady growth and feature similarities to Aspen in their status as a resort destination or type of bike event. Please refer to [Appendix 1](#) for a more detailed history of each event.

## Vision for Aspen Cycling Festival

### *Vision for 2010*

Staff has taken significant steps to build on the prior Ride for the Pass Weekends in 2010. The first step to growing participation is to sanction the criterium by a cycling governing body. Staff is currently working to with both American Cycling Association and the United States Cycling Federation for approval. Sanctioning the criterium will help with marketing and potentially double elite participation.

The second idea to enhance Sunday for spectators and recreational riders is to add group touring rides. A ride up Maroon Creek and a ride up Ashcroft will leave at 9:00 AM and 2:00PM. An important part of Sunday will also be the Mall Expo, which will feature vendors and manufactures, include mall shops, and feature a BBQ and beer garden. The goal of the Mall Expo is to include races, spectators, and family in an all inclusive event.

The third major component of the 2010 expansion is to include evening events on Friday and Saturday. Events will potentially include expert speakers, bike themed films, and restaurant deals.

The goals of the 2010 expansion are to start to build towards a larger weekend and create a buzz about the event that will carry to other teams and families for future participation.

### *Vision for 2011 to 2015*

Over the next five years the goal is to make the weekend a true festival with events for families and riders of all ages. Including events such as Ride with the Pros, a touring bike ride with professional or ex-professional athletes with make the weekend memorable. To include families, staff envisions events such as Kids Bike Rodeo with events like the paper boy, longest roll, and safety checks. Other non-racing events to build on are a catered awards banquette, incentives to visit local restaurants, and a 'Tour de Jazz'. These events will build on the goal of rebranding the weekend as a true festival.

Improving the bicycle racing aspects of the weekend will also draw larger participation. By sanctioning both events and creating an overall weekend championship, more competitive riders will be inclined to participate. This effect can snowball; having better racers creates better points and will draw more elite racers. The ultimate goal of the improved quality of completion is to bring all regional pro-level teams to the festival.

## Aspen Parks and Recreation, Special Events

Over the next five years the two primary goals are to create an inclusive festival and build the competitive nature of the races.

### ***Vision for 2016 to 2020***

As a larger festival grows possible directions for future growth include making the festival into a nationally recognized event. This is achieved by recognition in biking and travel publications. The ultimate goal is to make visitors want to come back to Aspen throughout the year.

Future visions include a three to four day event that includes events such as a Prolog/Sprint on Friday, Ride for the Pass Saturday, the Criterium Sunday, and a road race or time trial Monday. The focus would remain on the Ride for the Pass; the multi day event would draw people into Aspen for multiple nights.

In the long range plan there would be a focus on events for spectators, families, and recreational riders. At the same time, the addition of multiple events will raise the profile of the festival by including some of the continent's best racers.

## **Benchmarks for Success**

### ***Benchmarks 2010***

- Sanction both races by one of the cycling governing bodies
- Increase criterium participation to 250 riders
- Add a Mall Expo of manufactures
- Add recreational touring rides up Maroon Creek and Ashcroft

### ***Benchmarks 2011 to 2015***

- Add notable professional racers as ambassadors
- Add sustained regional pro-level participation
- Add family oriented events such as Kids Bike Rodeo, Tour de Jazz, and food options
- Build overall participation to 1,500 riders

### ***Benchmarks 2016 to 2020***

- Achieve national recognition
- Expand the event to a four day points series race
- Build overall participation to 2,000

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – History of Successful Events

#### ***Banff National Park Bike Fest***

Banff National Park in Canada hosts a 4 day Bike Fest in June that holds the model of what the Aspen Cycling Festival could look like in ten years. From a racing standpoint, they open the weekend with a prolog past some of the most famous vista in Banff. The second event is a 7km (4.3 miles) Hill Climb, gaining about 200m (650ft). The third day is a mass start sprint (80km or 50mi) starting in Lake Louise. The fourth day is a 21km (13mi) individual time trial and a criterium in the evening. The final day is host to a 117km (72.7mi) road race. The weekend of racing concluded with the awarding of nearly \$8,000 in General Classification (Stage Race) awards. The total cash prize purse for bike fest was \$20,000 in 2009.

Outside of racing the festival has grown to include many evening and spectator events. For kids, organizers have added “Little Crits” and booths at their “Marketplace”. The Marketplace includes vendors and serves as a central staging area in downtown. They have also partnered with local shops for mountain bike rentals and offered free “Bike and Hike” tours. The Banff organizers (Banff Lake Louise Tourism) have added very informative website for participants including a “Race Bible” that has schedules, course information, and prize money listings. The rest of the website gives a “Spectator Guide”, information on the race’s environmental policies, other things you need to know.

#### ***Tour de Palm Springs***

The Tour de Palm Springs in Palm Springs, CA provides Aspen with important insight and guidance for creating a world class bicycle festival. Palm Springs status as a premier resort destination provides parallels that the City of Aspen can leverage. Organizers of the Tour de Palm Springs have grown the event to include the entire community with two days of family and spectator friendly events. By including ideas like downtown sponsor tents, kids corner with a kids race, and a Tour de Jazz at night, organizers have grown the event from 400 riders in 1998 to nearly 10,000 this year.

#### ***Air Force Cycling Classic***

Held in the Washington, DC area, the Air Force Cycling Classic had grown to bring elite and recreational riders to two days of well organized events. Thirteen years ago the event was expanded to include the Clarendon Cup, a criterium format event around a popular section of Arlington, VA. The success of the criterium helped to bring notoriety and more professional teams to the event in addition to spectator presence.

#### ***ING Capital Criterium / Giro d'Italia – DC***

In 2012 Washington, DC may be host to the prolog of the world famous Giro d'Italia stage race. This opportunity stems from a spectacular race in the 2008 ING Capital Criterium. Support from the Mayor's Office and the DC Convention and Sports Authority have been critical to their success. By combining a history of successful events and passionate organizers the Washington DC has an opportunity to make history as Giro host city for the first time outside of Europe.