Dear BLM planners:
I am a Ridgway resident and have hiked and camped in the Silverton area for many years since I moved into the area in 1978. I am particularly familiar with Minnie Gulch and Molas Lake as two of my favorite hiking areas. I value the quiet and the peace of the backcountry, that is why I hike--I am 67 years old and continue to appreciate nonmotorized travel. I understand that there are folks who prefer using a motorized option and I am not opposed to that. But there are plenty of vehicle routes in the same neighborhood--Pole Creek, all the 4WD roads in Silverton of which there are many, including the access to Minnie Gulch trailhead from the north side.

Unfortunately, motorized recreation is not compatible with nonmotorized users. That is why it is so important that the BLM balance the needs of all the users. The rate of travel (including e-bikes) and the noise impact makes it an unfriendly experience for those of us who are looking for the solitude and peace that the backcountry offers. The e-bike use needs to be restricted to motorized routes, not areas where mountain bikes are allowed. They have very different impacts.

Then there is the impact on the wildlife in the area. It is one thing for hikers to pass through but it's a much more significant impact when there is a motorized vehicle trail. If we want to maintain our elk herds and other wildlife (which many visitors come to the area to appreciate), then we need to protect their habitat.

I urge you to preserve what little area remains for non-motorized recreation. It is a significant sector of the Silvertonarea economy--not just locals like myself come here to enjoy this area. There are significant numbers of hikers who come from all over the country to enjoy the spectacular beauty and solitude of the Continental Divide/Colorado Trail. This is a resource that we need to protect.

Thank you for your consideration.