

Regional Trail & Bikeway Systems Plan 2006

VOLUME II

Oregon & Washington Territory

Proud Past, Promising Future

Regional Trail & Bikeway
Systems Plan
2006

SECTION IV
APPROACH



Proud Past, Promising Future



SECTION IV. APPROACH

How did this plan come about? This answer to this question is very important to relay to the citizens of Clark County that this plan is for the citizens by the citizens. A systematic, cooperative, and collaborative approach was taken represented in two major approaches, the plan approach and the public involvement approach.

A) PLAN APPROACH

The 2006 Clark County Trail & Bikeway Systems Plan was undertaken as an update to the 1992 Clark County Trail & Bikeway Systems Plan. As such, the planning process followed a series of research and public process activities, and a workshop with the Park Commission, Planning Commission and City Council in late 2005 and early 2006. These activities included:

- Assessment of current bicycling and walking conditions and facilities in Clark County.
- Evaluation of bicycle and pedestrian needs, such as safety problems, demographic and geographic population and employment demands and facility deficiencies.
- Development of comprehensive and connected systems of bikeways and walkways.

- Development of bicycling and walking support programs.
- Public outreach

In addition, park and transportation planners reviewed other relevant documents produced in and around the county, to understand established goals. The primary plans that were reviewed are summarized below and include various brochures and materials related to parks, open spaces, the Columbia River Renaissance, Lewis and Clark 2005-2006 Bicentennial activities, and trail projects:

- A. 2005-2010 Clark County Transportation Improvement Program
- B. 2004 City of Vancouver Paths & Trails Element
- C. 2003 Vancouver Transportation System Plan
- D. 2002 “Rediscovery of the Rivers – Lewis & Clark Discovery Greenway”
- E. 2002 Urban Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan
- F. 2001 Clark County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, Draft Report
- G. 2000 Vision Symposium
- H. 2000 Clark County Transportation System Plan – Vision for the Future
- I. 2000 Clark County Transportation Vision Research Report

- J. 2000 Clark County Transportation Improvement Program
- K. 2000 Clark County Recreation Program & Cost Recovery Plan
- L. 2000 Clark County Regional Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan
- M. 2000 Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Report
- N. 2000 Recommended Bicycle Facility Design Implementation Practices
- O. 1999 Clark County-Clark Facilities & Services Strategic Plan
- P. 1999 Metropolitan Transportation Plan for Clark County
- Q. 1999 Downtown Transportation System Plan
- R. 1999 C-TRAN Pedestrian Accessibility Program Report
- S. 1998 Clark County Comprehensive Sports Fields Master Plan
- T. 1995 Clark County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan
- U. 1994 Clark County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan
- V. 1994 Clark County Growth Management Plan
- W. 1992 Columbia River Renaissance Project
- X. 1992 Clark County Open Space Commission Report
- Y. 1992 Clark County Trail and Bikeway System Plan
- Z. 1991 Columbia River/Evergreen Highway Trail Study
- AA. 1990 Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA)



***B) PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT
APPROACH***

The community's investment in this legacy project is crucial to the success of a buildable systems plan. The overall purpose of the project is to develop a Trail and Bikeway Systems Plan through a comprehensive public outreach process that also serves as a platform to develop viable funding options, while at the same time honoring and celebrating the Lewis and Clark legacy.

To successfully achieve this objective, the program focused on accomplishing several goals.

- A. Reaching a broad spectrum of people to ensure that all critical issues are considered and addressed in the outcome
- B. Engaging key stakeholders at a level that elicits their active ownership of the outcomes of the project
- C. Building a more informed base of public participants who can actively contribute to the public conversation
- D. Generating trust in the process and the outcomes by the general public, key stakeholders and leaders
- E. Capturing the interest of the news media, to increase the reach of public education
- F. Demonstrating broad citizen support for the outcomes
- G. Providing policy makers with confidence in the process and the outcomes

One major component of the public outreach plan was to direct interested citizens to the project web page and online survey. Participants were also able to learn more about the program, register their preferences and opinions through an online survey, sign up to be in the project mailing list, and learn about project updates and special events. The project website was predominantly featured throughout the outreach materials and connected to the Lewis and Clark event activities and planning. The following items served as an educational role for the program:

- **Project website:** An interactive project website was posted on the Vancouver/Clark Parks and Recreation home page.
- **Web survey:** Linked to the project website and used to determine public preferences for parks program priorities and funding options, an online survey was developed. The survey functions much like an online public meeting by providing information and asking for a response.
- **Project database:** A project database – including email contacts – was constructed from existing sources and then added to throughout the duration of the program.
- **Articles for local magazines and newsletters –** Three articles were profiled as feature articles in the Lacamas Life magazine, Walkabout magazine, Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce and the Columbian.

In order to maximize the exposure for this Trail and Bikeway Systems Plan, it is essential the plan is considered a legacy project and incorporated into our community's Lewis & Clark Bicentennial celebration activities. In addition, careful thought and strategic alliances in the health community was also essential. A few of these community partnerships could potentially include, but are not limited to:

- A. Lewis & Clark Expedition Bicentennial Committee
- B. The Confluence Project

- C. Washington State Parks Department
- D. Cottonwood Beach Improvements
- E. The Historic Reserve
- F. Fort Vancouver
- G. Lewis & Clark Landscapes Project
- H. Discovery Walk
- I. Community Choices 2010
- J. Health and Human Services
- K. Southwest Washington Medical Center, Passport to Wellness
- L. School districts
- M. Native American tribes

Overall, community members have been involved at each step of developing the 2006 update to the Clark County Trail and Bikeway Systems Plan. The public involvement effort sought to engage community members early in the planning effort and offer opportunities for public input throughout the process. Key public involvement activities included a series of open houses, community advisory committee (CAC) meetings, and an on-line survey. Public information included postcard notice of the open houses, a web page, a project display and fact sheets.

Public Involvement Tools

The Trail and Bikeway Systems Plan CAC met seven times between June 2005 and February 2006. Twenty-four members representing a range of user groups and other advocacy groups met to discuss goals for the plan, where new trails were needed and what criteria should be used to compare trails in the plan. At their final meeting, the CAC reviewed public input,

suggested revisions and endorsed the plan. The CAC also made additional recommendations about funding and plan implementation that will be forwarded to the Parks Commission. In June 2005, the public was invited to review the county's current trail and bikeway plan and provide input



on changes and updates that should be included in the next plan. Comments, questions, and ideas were gathered on maps, flip charts, and feedback forms. An on-line survey was posted on the Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation web site from June through August 2005. The survey was taken by 96 people and was advertised by a link on the site and with cards distributed to interested people. In addition to the on-line survey, the web site included information about meetings and the development of the plan.

Trails Symposium



BLAZING NEW TRAILS – 2005, a community symposium held at the Hilton Hotel on November 4, 2005, provided valuable input to the evolving Clark County Trail and Bikeway Systems Plan. The event brought together 302 people

including many business and community leaders, planners and engineers, trail and bike advocates, neighborhood representatives and interested citizens to focus on future trail planning efforts. The date was significant because it was the 200th anniversary of the very day on which Lewis and Clark set up camp on the Columbia River in what is now Clark County.

The primary event sponsor was the Vancouver-Clark County Lewis & Clark Planning Committee, bringing years of preparation for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial commemoration. The opening presentation provided an opportunity to reflect on the lasting legacy of the Corps of Discovery and its nation-building journey. Re-enactors who traveled down the Columbia River earlier that day in dugout canoes were introduced to a warm applause.

Then attention turned to issues of present and future concern. Where do we want to be able to walk, hike and ride a bike in

years to come? What trails and other facilities are needed to make this a more active and connected community? What needs to be done to make these trails a reality sooner rather than later?

With a mandate to “make history,” participants took advantage of the chance to begin shaping a strong, verifiable trails vision for Clark County and the region. Large county trail maps were provided, allowing participants to envision and sketch ideas for future trail extensions and connecting routes.



Table discussions – with up to eight people per table, they looked at many aspects of the current trails system - the wants and needs of residents and ideas for future development. Key concerns included accessibility of trails to neighborhoods, trail safety and funding mechanisms. Many participants expressed the need for shared-use trails and more “soft” paths for bikers and walkers. “Connectedness” was a word heard frequently, with full linkage suggested from north to south and east to west



for bicyclists, pedestrians and equestrians. Strong support was voiced for a “rail trail” using the Chelatchie Prairie Railroad to develop a trail stretching from urban Vancouver to far-reaching rural areas. Others proposed utilizing available natural gas line and electric utility corridors for trails.



The evening concluded with a brief summary of table discussions. Lists of suggestions were long and varied, providing fresh thinking about trails from people who use them on a regular basis or are curious and want to know more. In all, over 200 pages of notes were generated that night. These and the large county trail maps are part of the event record.



C) TRAIL PROJECT CRITERIA

Developing the criteria for establishing the project prioritization and the phasing of the plan is a fundamental cornerstone of the successful future of this plan. Selecting the perfect criteria and the perfect weighting of said criteria to each will ensure successful completion of the plan, but if this element is poorly done, it could cripple the plan's future.

Below is a draft list of criteria by which trail projects can be prioritized. The term "trail project" will be used to refer to the individual sections or "reaches" of a proposed trail, as well as amenities that improve the quality of the trail use experience such as trailhead access projects that could include such elements such as restrooms, parking facilities, and access to bodies of water through docks, trails, etc.

Trail Accessibility

How well does the project improve overall access to the trail system? This can include consideration of overall improvements to the quality of the trailhead access point such as construction of restroom, parking facilities, parking, docks for water access, etc.

Trail Connectivity and Linkage

How well does the trail project complete the overall trail network? Consider the land uses that are made accessible by the trail project. Does it improve access to employment centers, schools, residences, other important activity centers? Are there any historic, cultural or natural resources or significant scenic areas associated with this proposed trail?

Diversity of User Groups

How many user groups is this trail designed to serve?

- Adult bicyclists
- Children bicyclists
- Walkers
- Equestrians
- Paddlers
- Runners

How diverse a proportion of users within a group could this trail serve? Are there any obstacles with it becoming fully ADA compliant?

Maximize Volume of Users

Is the trail located in places that is accessible to users who live, work or go to school nearby? How dense are the surrounding residential, institutional or commercial land uses?

Vulnerability: Risk of Lost Opportunity

Is the opportunity to build this trail project at risk of being lost due to purchase of the right of way by a private entity, development or rising land prices?

Cost

"Costs" may include hard fiscal outlays for right of way and/or construction, unacceptable harm to the environment.

- A. Cost of right of way acquisition:** (Does the project require the purchase of private property, or expensive

land or can this trail be built on railroad, public road or utility right of way?)

B. Cost of Opportunity: (Are there many hurdles to acquiring the right of way to get it built?)

C. Cost of construction for the project: (Is the cost of construction anticipated to be higher or lower than the per-mile higher or lower than average in Clark County?)

D. Cost of Maintenance: (Are the long term maintenance costs likely to be higher than average for Clark County?)

E. Cost of Alternatives: (What alternatives to the project were considered and why were they rejected in favor of the current proposal?)

Funding Opportunity

Are there special funding opportunities available for the trail project? Is it eligible for federal, state, local or private grants? What is the current budget? . . . Some grants require local matches.

Environmental Constraints and Opportunities

A. Environmental Constraints

(What are the environmental constraints related to the natural settings of the project that may lead to disturbance, fill and/or bridging, etc. of sensitive environmental areas. These may require permitting.)

B. Environmental Opportunities

(What are the opportunities for environmental restoration and rehabilitation. For example, the trail project may allow for the restoration of native species and the elimination of non-native species. What are the opportunities for increasing environmental education?)

Trail Ambiance and Environmental Context

A. Quality of Trail Experience

What is the quality of the experience provided by the trail project? Does the trail provide an opportunity to view wildlife, a natural area or attractive views?

B. Trail Surroundings

Does the trail project pass through?

- Natural environment
- Wetlands, lakes, rivers, streams
- Woodlands, old growth
- Meadows, valleys
- Parklands
- Railway
- Urban Places
- Industrial
- Roadway
- Historical Features/sites (L&C, Old RR, etc.)

C. Continuity: Uninterrupted Flow

How many stops and/or interruptions (road crossings, etc) are there along the trail project?

Community Safety

- A. Does the project help users avoid hazardous locations?
- B. Does the project provide children safer access to school, parks, libraries, etc.?

Project Partners/Community Support

- A. Are there special partnerships that can help realize the trail project?
 - o Neighborhood
 - o Multiple Jurisdictions
 - o Corporate support
 - o Other community groups (Scouts, Charities, trail advocacies)
- B. Can this trail be placed on an existing railroad, public road or utility right of way?
- C. Is there neighborhood association support for the project?
- D. Is there greater community support for the project?

Maintenance

- A. To what degree will the trail project increase recreational trail maintenance work? Ask such things as:
 - Typically, how often do the connecting trail(s) require maintenance work?
 - When was the last time maintenance work was performed on connecting trail(s)?

Redundancy

Is there another trail project that offers a similar transportation option (travels along a parallel alignment, is within a reasonable distance of this proposed trail project, etc.) How would this trail be unique within the system?



