**Trail Concept Review Committee (TCRC) Meeting Notes**

**Meeting Location:** City of Wallowa Senior Center

**Time:** 7 p.m.

**1. Project Background and Committee Charge**

Steve Kay, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), welcomed the TCRC provided a brief background statement regarding the partnerships that has resulted in the Joseph Branch concept study. He discussed OPRD’s and Eastern’s responsibilities in producing a concept report to the Wallowa Union Railroad Authority. Mr. Key briefly outlined the three stages of the concept study and that TCRC members will be asked to provide guidance and research and other and more complete information becomes available in selecting trail concept alternatives, examining concerns and mitigation strategies, and formulating recommendations. Mr. Kay also noted Sheri Stuart, Oregon Main Street Program Director, will be working with community volunteers to collect information regarding community downtown assets.

**2. Introductions**

Persons in attendance were asked to introduce themselves and briefly explain their interest in the Joseph Branch Trail concept effort. Persons in attendance:

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| **Participants** | **TCRC Members** |
| 1. Stephen Adams | WURA Board Representative (Conference Phone) |
| 2. Bob Aschenbrenner | Adjacent Landowner  |
| 3. Jody Berry | Business Owner |
| 4. Brad Stephens | Retired, Community Volunteer |
| 5. Mary Hawkins | Nez Perce Homeland  |
| 6. Pat Hines | Business Owner |
| 7. Vikki Knifong | City of Wallowa Mayor |
| 8. Kim Metlen | WUHTC President, Joseph Business Owner |
| 9. Sara Miller | NEOEDD Planner |
| 10. Susan Roberts | Wallowa County Commissioner, WURA Board Member |
| 11. Dennis Sands | City of Joseph Mayor |
| 12. Ed Spaulding | Friends of the Joseph Branch, President |
|  | **Public Participants** |
| 1. David Arnold | Friends of Joseph Branch |
| 2. Anita Aschenbrenner | Adjacent Landowner  |
| 3. Joe Kresse | WUHTC Board Member, Past Friends of Joseph Branch President |
| 4. Anita Metlen | Joseph Business Owner |
| 5. Katy Nesbitt | La Grande Observer Reporter |
| 6. Dick Seymour | WUHTC Board Member, Nez Perce Trail National Monument Foundation, VP |
| 7. Ralph Swinehart | Friends of Joseph Branch Treasurer, WUHT Board Member |
| 8. John Baker | Adjacent Landowner |
|  | **Staff Present** |
| 1. Steve Kay | Oregon Parks and Recreation Department |
| 2. Rocky Houston | Oregon Parks and Recreation Department |
| 3. Dana Kurtz | EOU Graduate Student Project Manager,  |
| 4. Laura Stroud | UO Graduate Student (Conference Phone) |
| 5. Terry Edvalson | EOU Project Development/Facilitation  |

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| **TCRC Members Absent** |
| 1. Nils Christoffersen, Out of state on business |
| 2. Carey Miller, Didn’t receive meeting packet |
| 3. Charlie Kissinger |
| 4. Gordon Wolfe |
| 5. Doug McDaniel |
| 6. Rick Weatherspoon |
| 7. Chris Horn |
| 8. Ted Freels |
| 9. City of Enterprise Representative |
| 10. City of Lostine Representative |
| 11. City of Elgin Representative |
| 12. Union County Representative |

**3. Stakeholder Interviews**

Dana Kurtz, Project Manager, reviewed the Stakeholder Interview Report she compiled from the information collected by six volunteer interviewers. Her review included demographics (gender, occupations, proximity of homes to rail corridor, landownership in corridor), length of time a resident of Union or Wallowa counties and the impacts on respondents’ opinions. Mrs. Kurtz noted that the longer the respondent lived in the counties, the more nuanced their opinions. Landowners were the most polarized in their opinions with concerns about incursions on their property and impacts on their farming operations. Other business owners were positive about the potential trail in they believed, when built, it will have a positive impact on the economy.

Her conclusion is the respondents’ demonstrated cautious optimism the trail will be of benefit economically and to the quality of life. Respondents indicated an interest in the process and want to be certain they are kept informed of developments related to concerns and proposed mitigation strategies. Twenty-five of the 26 respondents indicate they will use the trail if built.

**4. Existing Conditions Assessment and Opportunity and Constraint Maps**

Rocky Houston provided a condensed section-by-section overview of the corridor assessment work completed by Oregon Parks and Recreation Department staff members in March 2014. He used PowerPoint slides to briefly explain the mapping system, assessment process and technology used, the natural setting and conditions, and physical structure of the corridor. The sections are:

 The slides summarized the length and physical structure of each segment. The segments are at obvious breakpoints.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Segment** | **Segment Length/Miles** | **Constrained/****Miles** | **Bridges** | **Culverts** | **Road Crossings** |
| Elgin to Lookingglass | 13.01 | 6.22 |  6 (304.6 lf) | 71 | 7 |
| Lookingglass to Minam | 13.28 | 5.24 |  4 (452.2 lf) | 58 | 4 |
| Minam to Wallowa | 12.79 | 2.55 |  4 (430.31 lf) | 35 | 15 |
| Wallowa to Lostine | 8.14 | 0.11 |  12 (806 lf) | 26 | 16 |
| Lostine to Enterprise | 10.05 | 1.6 |  8 (583 lf) | 9 | 23 |
| Enterprise to Joseph | 5.75 | 0.42 |  10 (470.84 lf) | 13 | 14 |
| Totals |  63.05 |  16.14 | 44 (3,046.95 lf) |  212 | 79 |

In response to questions, Mr. Houston noted he has worked on five rail-with-trial projects. While some have been completed, others are under construction and/or in planning. OPRD’s assessment team included a landscape architect, recreation planners, and trail specialists. There will be 32 map tiles when the Elgin to Joseph Atlas is complete.

Opportunities on the maps indicate a range of possibilities: possible trail head, camping site, day use activities, and viewpoints. Mr. Houston noted it is too early in the project to really determine if constraints are minor, moderate, or major and to indicate restroom locations and similar amenities. He noted the right-of-way varies from 60 to 200 feet with 100 feet being the norm. Typical trail distance from the midline of the tracks is 8.5 feet. The railroad track may not be located in the center of the right of way. Mr. Houston also noted the Joseph Branch Rail Trail has more constraints than other projects he has worked on, but generally constraints can be solved with time and engineering. He noted it is too early in the project to determine the degree of the specific constraints. From his experience most can be dealt with by engineering.

It was suggested that the road crossings be noted as paved or not paved and public or private.

**5. Land Use Analysis**

Laura Stroud, UO Graduate Student in Planning, participated by conference phone to discuss her partially completed Joseph Branch Trail Draft Land Use Assessment Report. The report, including land use classification and zoning maps for Elgin, Wallowa, Lostine, Enterprise, and Joseph were mailed TCRC members in their meeting packets. Unfortunately her PowerPoint presentation did not work. Her report reviewed the work in progress—she reports being assisted by another student. She reported the tax file and land use maps available to her did not line up, but she was able to make adjustments.

There were questions about corridor/right-of-way zoning. Mr. Houston indicated railroad rights of ways are considered to be transportation zones, similar to roadways. “Active” transportation activities are allowed in transportation corridors. “Active” refers to physical exertion.

It was suggested adding urban growth boundary information to the maps and a description of allowed uses in the different zones would be useful in planning for responses to economic opportunities.

**December Community Meetings**

Mr. Kay described OPRD’s intended organization and process that can be expected for the December public workshops. The workshop will begin with a brief large group project background presentation, primarily focused on the draft existing conditions report. Participants will be asked to participate in small group discussions to identify challenges and concerns from different perspectives. Maps of the corridor will be provided for participants to share local knowledge to amplify information provided by the draft existing report and maps. Participants will also be asked to identify recreation, business development, and other potential opportunities if a trail is developed. Discussions will be facilitated with facilitators reporting on the discussion. The result should identify common themes. Mr. Kay asked meeting TCRC meeting participants if they would consider assisting by volunteering to be a facilitator at one or more of the December workshops. The workshops are: 1) December 2, 2014, City of Elgin Community Center; 2) December 3, 2014, City of Wallowa Senior Center; 3) December 4, 2014, City of Enterprise Senior Center

It was suggested because of winter driving conditions the workshop sessions be advanced one hour to start at 6 p.m. with an 8 p.m. adjournment. Mr. Kay agreed. Mr. Kay asked participants to contact him if they are willing to assist. Mr. Kay can be contact at:

Steve Kay, AICP, Division Manager

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(Mrs. Kurtz’s, Mr. Houston’s, and Ms. Stroud’s reports were distributed to TCRC members prior to the meeting. The reports will be made available to the public at *eou.edu/rails-with-trails.*

Notes prepared by Terry Edvalson 10/31/14