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- Port of Olympia
- PUD No. 1 of Thurston County

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

- Lacey Fire District #3
- Puget Sound Regional Council
- The Evergreen State College
- Thurston Conservation District
- Thurston Economic Development Council
- Timberland Regional Library

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thurston Regional Planning Council

FROM: Katrina Van Every, Transportation Manager
Paul Brewster, Senior Planner

DATE: September 29, 2023

SUBJECT: Regional Trails Plan Update

PURPOSE

Staff will provide a first review of the draft regional trails plan.

Summary:

- The Thurston Regional Trails Plan is a blueprint for expanding and enhancing a countywide shared-use trail network.
- The draft plan includes detailed information on current conditions; the plan’s vision, goals, and policies; policy and project recommendations; and funding.
- Staff completed a draft version, which was released for public review and comment on September 15th; the public comment period will end October 9, 2023.
- During the public comment period, an online open house will be available that provides an overview of the plan, an interactive map of project recommendations, and a community survey.
- The draft Plan can be viewed at <https://www.trpc.org/DocumentCenter/View/12083/Draft-Thurston-Regional-Trails-Plan---Sept-2023>.
- An online open house and a survey (also included in the open house) are also available and accessible through the project website at www.trpc.org/1043.

REQUESTED ACTION

None – this is a first review.

kva:bl



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EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

Shared use trails are an integral part of an active transportation network and a multimodal transportation system that can connect people to important destinations and improve access to goods and services. Specific ways in which equity has been considered and incorporated in the plan's development include but are not limited to:

- **Surveying Efforts.** Though no requests were made, TRPC offered translation services for the 2021 *How Do You Trail* survey, and a statement to this effect was included on signs installed on the trails – one of the ways the survey was marketed. With both the 2021 and 2023 surveying efforts, demographic information was collected so that TRPC can understand who is under-represented and pull out responses from those groups so their voices are not lost.
- **Demographic Information.** Including demographic information for the Thurston region that identifies gaps and inequities in how the current trail network serves burdened communities. See Chapter 2.
- **Plan Policies.** Policy 1.4 calls for expanding the regional trails network so that neighborhoods with a higher proportion of households that are low-income, racially diverse, or have disabilities affecting mobility have improved access. Policy 2.1 calls for designing trails and associated facilities for users of all abilities and levels of experience. See Chapter 3.
- **Policy Recommendations.** Many policy recommendations either address inequities directly or look at how access/utility for burdened populations can indirectly be improved. For example, Recommendations 1.4 (concerning ADA accessibility) and 4.7 (inclusive processes) address inequities directly while Recommendations 3.1 (low-cost safety improvements) and 2.5 (inventorying trail-supportive facilities) can help address inequities indirectly. See Chapter 4.
- **Project Recommendations.** Many project recommendations address inequitable access to the regional trails network directly. Examples include development of the planned Deschutes Valley Trail Corridor and the proposed SR 510 Phase 2 Extension, both of which will improve multimodal access to jobs and improve access to the trails network for people of color and those living below the poverty line. See Chapter 4 and Appendix A.

BACKGROUND

The Thurston Regional Trails Plan is a blueprint for expanding and enhancing a countywide shared use trail network. The original plan was adopted in 2007, and Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) staff began the update process mid-2019. With the input and expertise of various stakeholders, staff has developed a draft plan for public review.

Today, the existing regional trails network consists of 59 miles of shared use trails with approximately 37,000 people living within a half-mile of a network trail. By 2045, that number is expected to balloon to 82,000 people – or one in five county residents.

If the trail system were built out to the full 169 miles proposed (nearly three times what the system is today), that number would increase to about 160,000 meaning 40 percent of county residents would live within a half-mile of a network trail.

The draft consists of the following:

- **Executive Summary.** Provides a general overview of the Plan.
- **Introduction.** Describes why TRPC has a regional trails plan.
- **Current Conditions.** Describes the regional trails network as it exists in 2023.
- **Vision, Goals, and Policies.** Describes the region's vision for the regional trails network and the five goals and 33 policies that will help our region achieve that vision.
- **Recommendations.** Describes the 34 policy-connected recommendations for improving the regional trails network as well as the 51 project recommendations that represent system enhancements or new trail corridors and extensions.
- **Funding.** Describes sources of funding used for shared use trails, including challenges funding shared use trails.
- **Update Process.** Describes how TRPC will keep the plan up to date.

- **Appendix of Corridor Details.** Includes descriptions, maps, and projects for the 16 trail corridors identified in the Plan.

On September 13th, the Transportation Policy Board (TPB) directed staff to release the draft plan for public review and comment, which began on September 13th and will end on October 9th. An online open house is available for the public to learn about the plan, review an interactive trail map showing the project recommendations proposed for the trails network, and a survey requesting feedback about the plan, its recommendations, and other related information.

To get the word out about the plan and the opportunity to comment, staff issued a press release, posted signs on the region's shared use trails, sent out an email to interested parties, and advertised on social media. Staff continues to identify ways to reach out to segments of our community we aren't hearing from and will provide an update on these efforts.

ISSUES

The draft plan includes three recommendations for TRPC to take on:

- Establish a Regional Trails Planning Workgroup to coordinate on Regional Trails Plan implementation (Recommendation 4.2)
- Convene an annual trail planning meeting with a broad set of stakeholders to promote awareness and support for the region's trails network (Recommendation 4.3)
- Update the Thurston Regional Trails Plan every five years. (Recommendation 5.7)

At their September 13th meeting, the TPB directed staff to come back to them with an estimate of what it would cost for TRPC to do these things; staff will provide this information at a future meeting.

NEXT STEPS

- September 13-October 9: Public comment period.
- October 6: TRPC 1st review.
- October 18: Technical Advisory Committee review of plan and public comments.
- November 8: TPB Recommendation.
- December 1: TRPC decision