
Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee Meeting

MINUTES

March 3rd, 2010

Columbia Gorge Visitors Center

The Dalles, OR

Members Attending:	William Pattison, Chair; Wayne Stewart, Vice-Chair; Marc Berry; Art Carroll; Ernest Drapela; Mark Stevenson; Mark Davison; Jerry Igo
HCRH AC Staff:	Kristen Stallman; Samuel Haffner; Susan Hanson; Rich Watanabe
Others Attending:	Paul Lestock; Gayle Mirkin; Dennis Davis; Dick Webber; Michael Tenny; Marianne Fox; Jon Nelson, Peter Cornelison; Michael Bern; Jeanette Kloss; Terry Anderson, Al Gillis; Judy Davis, Mike Odom, Erin Schipp

Call to Order:

William (Bill) Pattison called the meeting to order at 10AM and welcomed everyone to the sunny side of the Gorge.

Minutes from December 9, 2010 Meeting:

The December 9th Minutes were approved with no changes

Opportunity for Public Comment:

Judy Davis and Paul Lestock commented on a permit proposal by the Oregon Rally Group to stage a vehicle race on the Eastern section of the Historic Columbia River Highway:

Judy Davis is a resident of Rowena Dell. It came to their attention that the Oregon Rally Group would like to hold a car rally on the HCRH during the second week of May, and that the event organizers would like to close a section for 2 hours for the race. They estimate there would be 150 cars for spectators, and propose 60-70 at Rowena Crest and

others at alternative spaces such as the Rowena Dell neighborhood and USFS land. The original proposal was between 10pm and Midnight. She understands that they have applied for an event permit with ODOT. Judy does not see this as an appropriate use for the HCRH. Wants to know the policy for events on the highway. She knows there are bike events and commercial filming, etc. These other events pose only a limited nuisance; they don't close the highway for long periods of time, or create loud noises. Wants to raise this issue; is this something that *should* be happening on the HCRH?

Paul Lestock is also a local homeowner and was the liaison with one of the race directors on this event. He added that he thought this was a joke when first proposed. He understands that the proposed time was changed to a mid-afternoon timeslot on the 14th. There was no research done to find out that this coincided with the Gorge Open Studio event as well as prime wildflower viewing time. Rowena is an epicenter of wildflower viewing in the Gorge. Paul sees this as being such a conflict of interests between two types of groups. He understands that ODOT wants to accommodate everyone, and is not opposed to the rally in theory, but sees this event as having a greater impact than two hours. He feels that although this event was not approved this year, the organizers will attempt to have this event next year. He noted that this is a spectator event with over 50 cars that can go 120MPH, and that there is no speed limit to this event- this is a time trial where the goal is to go as fast as possible. As a homeowner who is subject to restrictions on what he can do with his property, having this event is slap in the face to the concept of a Scenic Area. An additional concern is that this will inspire non-professional racers to race on the highway clandestinely after this event. Furthermore, it can be expected that any professional racer would do a practice race of this course outside the 2 hour window. Finally, approval of such a race in the future would set a precedent for other motor sport events.

Bill Pattison asked if there are alternative sites that the group had identified that would be more appropriate. Michael Bern suggested Maryhill Loops; This is also an historic highway that was built by Samuel Lancaster and they are trying to attract this kind of activity there.

Bill asked Jeanette about past highway closures for events. Jeanette responded that her only recollection of closure was for the Columbia Classic Run/walk which was done at night in the western section. This was eventually stopped due to concern of neighbors.

She has never heard of car racing events, spectator events, or car parking anywhere close to the proposal.

Peter Cornielson of Friends of the Columbia Gorge gave testimony stating their opposition to the proposed Road Rally event. Their main concerns were:

- Impacts of closure on peak usage
- Damage to historic features from cars racing
- Parking demands
- Spectator impacts
- Access to highway for residents, hikers, bikers, tourists and visitors
- Damage to sensitive natural areas from spectators
- Setback to conservation efforts

Peter then asked that the Advisory Committee prepare a formal statement to ODOT stating their opposition to this event, or similar events in the future.

Marc Berry (committee member) stated that he is also concerned with an event that rewards speed, and sees this as inconsistent with the purpose of the highway.

Ernie added that they make a referral to the Warm Springs Reservation who are looking for these kinds of events, and have unilateral jurisdiction of their roads. He sees this as a more appropriate location.

Bill asked the committee if there is a formal role of the Advisory Committee on these permits. Mark Stevenson responded that the event organizers have approached OPRD, but they were not interested. He asked if there was a public comment opportunity given on this issue. Paul responded that there has been no public comment period, and that is what brought him to the committee today. He added that he had not heard about this event when he contacted Brad Dehart at ODOT, and only heard about it through Judy Davis.

Mark recommended that the AC prepare a letter. He added that this issue is not a done deal- that the race organizers still have this event in their pamphlet and are still hoping to be approved.

Ernie shared that in his former work (not in Oregon) they often denied similar permits because according to their statute, highways could not be used for “contests of speed”. He then asked if such a “contest of speed” is, or should be, a disqualifier for permitting on the HCRH.

Jeanette added that the AC was created to advise ODOT and OPRD on these types of things and that it would be reasonable to advise on this issue.

Bill asked if anyone in the room was a proponent of this. There was no response.

Kristen recommended a formal motion from the committee on this issue.

Ernie then made a motion that the AC recommend to ODOT the denial of all “contests of speed by motorized vehicles”. The motion was seconded.

The motion was passed unanimously by verbal consent.

Rich added that this was an ODOT Region 4 issue and that the appropriate staff to follow up with would be Brad Dehart and Pat Cimmiyotti.

Chenoweth Creek Bridge

Kristen explained that she has been working with Brad Dehart in Region 4 on a new bridge design for Chenoweth Creek. There is potentially a call for National Scenic Byways grants this spring. We are trying to be proactive and get ready. Last year we applied for a similar grant but did not get funded.

At the last meeting there was discussion of an east end gate at Chenoweth Creek, possibly similar to the Troutdale Arches. It is possible that a monument of some kind could be included as part of a bridge redesign. The packet sent to the Advisory Committee lays out some of the issues identified; costs, design concepts, sign opportunities.

After discussing with Brad, it seems there is an opportunity to do some kind of monument on an earthen berm. This would avoid the need for a guardrail and there is ample right of way space on the east side of the road.

Kristen then asked for input from the advisory committee on what they think should be done at this site.

Ernie commented that the highest priority should be the bridge itself, and restoring its historical integrity. Secondly, he shared his hope that we not abandon the possibility of an arch. There may be a cost issue, but there is potential for partnerships and other funding sources. He likes the monument but it does not have the impact we hope to achieve.

Art expressed concerns that we do not get caught placing too many signs in a small area. There is a risk of sign pollution if the situation is left the way it currently is. There is currently a historic mile marker west of the bridge. It is this location west of the bridge on the north shoulder where Art felt that there is the best scenic opportunity and potential for a monument sign.

Bill responded that this viewscape is entirely natural and he would not want to see a man-made archway at this location.

Wayne added that he sees proposing a roundabout in the I-84 IAMP would have value for this area. A roundabout would serve as a signal that the type of road you are traveling on is changing. He also agreed that a monument would be most appropriate on the west side of the bridge.

Jerry added that the monument sample in the AC Packet looks similar to the entrance to Death Valley. He sees the fact that it would be on ODOT land as a plus.

Jeannette added that the Wakeena monument sign was a rebuilt original and that this monument would be entirely new and dissimilar.

Mark D asked if this monument was marking the beginning. He added that the setback and size may be an issue and that the archway proposal does not attempt to be compatible but it is comparable with the Troutdale arches

Art noted that he also did not like the scale of the monument in the concept drawing. He felt that it was twice the height that it needs to be.

Mark added that signs are often popular places to stop for photographs and that there needs to be ample shoulder space to accommodate this.

Bill noted that the number one priority was the bridge redesign and that as this is developed, the area can be cleaned up of signs and the monument can be a work in progress.

Jon Nelson opined that this does not seem like the appropriate place for a monument- that is should be west of this area. He would like to see the bridge returned to historic look, but noted that the area may have a different look if the Walmart proposal goes through. A roundabout would also be an opportunity to create a historic feature.

Kristen thanked everyone for their comments and added that there will be more study done on this project and that this input will be valuable in developing a plan for the area.

Implementation Plan

Wayne began by explaining his thought process in developing the memo on the implementation plan. Because there is a lack of funding, there is a need to be strategic about the order of implementation so as to ensure momentum. He then explained the details of the memo and the order in which he felt the trail should be developed. He noted that the alternate scenarios hinge on whether there is a large earmark to develop the Mitchell Point Tunnel. He also added that Lindsey Creek seems like the natural next step once the Starvation Creek to Hole-in-the-Wall Falls Project is complete. *(See the March, 2011 Advisory Committee Packet for the complete memo)*

Additionally, Wayne noted the issues that will be faced with auto congestion and the need to address the placement of trailheads and parking areas including the Bauman property east of Mitchell Point, and the former shooting range pit near Chenoweth or the Discovery Center.

Art asked if we should start this conversation with the Discovery Center. Wayne responded that this would be in the long-term.

Mark D asked if trailheads could be added to the diagrams of the memo.

Update on John B. Yeon to Moffett Creek

Rich Watanabe gave updates on ODOT's John B. Yeon to Moffett Creek State Trail Project. He started by reviewing that at the time of the last meeting there had been some delays due to a lack of geotech drilling bids. The good news is that these exploratory drills were just completed and that preliminary plans are set to be completed mid-march. At this point there will be an opportunity to better refine and quantify the construction cost estimates. Rich added that he was pressing on his ODOT team to get this completed. He has been told that preliminary engineering funds will be gathered and that there is a search for complete construction funds.

According to the schedule, Plan Specifications would be completed by August 8th and that bid let would begin in September. However, if the project is not completely funded, there may be a need to figure out how to divide the project. ODOT will commission a Value Engineering (VE) Study to find ways to cut the costs of the project.

Wayne responded that he and other members of the AC have been frustrated for a while with the progress of this project. He sees a lack of project leadership and project management on this project at ODOT and that it is getting caught up in silos of discipline internally at ODOT. Additionally, he expressed that he is frustrated in not seeing a schedule in an entire year and the fact that the cost increased by 2 million dollars without any explanation or updated cost summary with detail.

Rich explained that while there was a gap in PLT meetings, there have been continuous subgroup meetings.

Wayne added that he is also concerned that the VE would not include designers or consider standards of the NSA and Trail Guidelines.

Rich responded that he has discussed with the VE people the need to consider the guidelines, and that any plans deriving from this study will be presented to the AC after the preliminary plans are completed in mid-march.

Mark B asked how high a priority this trail project was at ODOT Region 1.

Rich responded that it is a very high priority, one of the top three priorities currently at Region 1.

Jeanette expressed her concern with stakeholder involvement. The last email she received from the Project Leader, Kyle Crate, was in 2009. She also recalled only one public meeting, which was a virtual tour and open house.

Kristen noted, however, that the AC meetings are public meetings and that updates to the project have been a consistent agenda item.

Rich added that once the plans are complete, they will prepared for this type of meeting and he agreed that this would be appropriate at this juncture.

Wayne asked if a specific date could be set for a special stakeholder meeting.

Rich replied that he would establish and schedule a specific date after the meeting, most likely mid-to-late March. He suggested March 21st as a tentative date.

Kristen said she would organize a workshop back at the office to prepare for this stakeholder presentation.

Viewshed Management Strategy

Kristen gave an overview of the plans for developing a Viewshed Management Strategy. The memo enclosed in the packet explains the plan developed by Kristen, Christine Plourde (USFS), and Mark Davison. Angie Brewer will be presenting on the work completed by the Gorge Commission on viewshed management at the next AC meeting.

Mark Davison added that there is a challenge in the fact that many viewsheds existed historically because trees were cleared for road construction. Some of these clearings became home for invasive species so were natural candidates for viewshed maintenance. However, some have become critical habitat area, and this creates an additional challenge.

Lewis and Clark Development Plan

Mark Davison presented an overview of the Draft Development Plan for Lewis and Clark State Park. He asked for final comments by the 17th of March and that any problems can be brought back to the next meeting.

Mark distributed the Plan to those present at the AC Meeting, and explained with the attached map the plan to increase the parking capacity to a maximum of 250 spaces. They also plan to create barriers to eliminate illegal parking. They plan to also include paths and road crossings to reduce natural resource impacts, and additional information on the HCRH, etc. He then detailed the other natural resource management aspects of the plan.

Ernie asked if there was a plan to address the homelessness issue at the park.

Mark Davison responded that they hope with gaiting, policing, and cleaning area will help mitigate this issue.

Mark Stevenson added that this was more of an issue at the 1000 Acres property.

Mark Davison responded that larger issue of homelessness in the area would need to be addressed with involvement from the USFS as well.

Scenic Bikeway

Jeanette thanked the AC for responding to the emails regarding the Scenic Bikeway the week before. The proposal has now been submitted.

She explained that the proposed Bikeway extends from Troutdale to Wyeth.

The application is the first step in the process and will be followed by a review by the Oregon Scenic Bikeways Committee. The Committee will then inform us as to whether we should go forward with a management plan. The Plan would include signing, promotion, and designation.

Jeanette was told in the application that they should not include the planed sections between Wyeth and Hood River. However, they did include the Moffett Creek section of State Trail as this was a project in the pipeline to be developed. A designation of a Scenic Bikeway would not happen until a management plan is complete.

Kristen added that Christine Plourde has raised the question of how to manage even more cyclists on the HCRH and how to appropriately sign it without increasing the number of signs on the highway already. She was not against the idea of a Scenic Bikeway designation but thought these issues should be considered, and a need to consider if this is a priority.

Jeanette added that she would like to see signage on Herman Creek Road in Cascade Locks as there is nothing indicating that cyclists should take this to Wyeth.

Art responded that this is a Hood River County road and that signing this would be a small matter to recommend to the County.

Marc B disagreed with Christine on questioning if this is a priority. This designation is the beginning of making the route bicycle friendly.

Mark D asked if the route would be amendable once the remaining 10 miles of State Trail was complete. Jeanette responded that the she didn't expect this would be a challenge.

Crown Point TS&L Report

Mike Odom began by introducing himself and Erin Schipp, the project environmental specialist. Mike passed out the engineering documents related to the Viaduct Restoration and summarized the project plans.

Michael Bern asked if they would take care of the gutters to solve bulging. Mike Odom responded that they were looking at this.

Mike noted that they may look at expanding the project limits to include repairs to the road between Larch Mountain Road and Latourelle Falls. He added that they would know by April if this will be included in the Project.

Erin explained that the public involvement process has just been kicked off, and that over the next few months they will be plugging the AC into the public involvement events.

Wayne asked the status of the Starvation Creek to Hole-in-the-Wall Falls Project. Mike responded that this project is still sitting on his desk. A project schedule and delivery plan is being developed next week. Once that plan is in place, he will update those interested among the AC.

Synopsis of Federal Government Relations Update

Kristen explained that Travis Brouwer with ODOT Government Relations was unable to come to the rescheduled meeting, so Wayne would give a synopsis instead.

Wayne began by explaining the types of federal funds, including formula, flex, programmatic, and discretionary funding. There is also potential for State gas tax funding if a project is within the highway right-of-way. This includes are requirement to commit 1% of State Highway Funds to bike-ped funds. He added that most states grant are small.

Wayne explained that it would be useful to continue to apply for formula funds. When practical, grant requests should be tailored to the promotion of transportation mode-shifts. The AC should keep pushing to get a funding commitment from the OTC, and speak to Jason Tell about this as well. Areas within the ROW should be identified so as to be available for State Highway Funds. Grants through the 1% bike-ped set-aside should also be explored.

Hood River IAMP Action Item

Kristen turned the AC's attention to page 60 and 61 of the AC Packet. She asked the Advisory Committee to make a formal motion in support of the IAMP plan for Modified Option 1. A sidewalk was added to the north side due to the shifting land use demand for the area.

Jerry Asked if we currently have the right-of-way for this project. Kristen responded that the City would need to acquire this.

Wayne proposed to carry the motion for a 3-lane option. Kristen asked if we should reserve the 4th lane as a future option. Wayne said he is OK with this as a future option.

Kristen added that there is a need to determine future right-of-way for developers. She asked if they should the language be changed to satisfy.

Wayne stated that he sees this as two questions: the curb-to-curb width *and* whether a 4th lane is needed. He suggested writing a set-aside for "possible future development." He does not want to be in the position of suggesting this additional lane.

A motion was made to change the language to say "the Historic Columbia River Highway AC supports the City of Hood River's effort to amend the programmatic agreement *no. 19942* to accommodate a wider cross-section of Cascade Avenue between Exit 62 and the proposed Mt. Adams Avenue to include a 3-lane cross-section and a curb-to-curb width of 50ft."

Kristen agreed to make an administrative addition to the agreement including this language.

The motion was carried by verbal consensus.

Action Item 2: Final State Trail Plan

The Advisory Committee formally approved the State Trail Plan by verbal consensus.

Wayne suggested as a follow up that a formal letter be drafted to Brian Bainson thanking him for his work on the State Trail Plan

Action Item 3: State Trail Guidelines

The Advisory Committee formally adopted the Trail Guidelines with two additional comments.

1. That this be considered a working, living document, amendable in the future after projects are completed.
2. That the Plants List Appendix be updated per Jerry Igo's corrections.

Mark also suggested that there is a need to identify what features are historically contributing, compatible, and non-compatible. If things go in that are non-compatible, they need to be documented

Kristen responded that we can in the future incorporate a record of decision, identification of authority within specific areas, and an index of compatible features.

The Guidelines were approved by verbal consensus.

Comprehensive National Scenic Area Permit

Kristen explained some of the challenges faced in developing a Natural Scenic Area Permit for the John B. Yeon to Moffett Creek Trail Project. Though this process it was concluded that there would be a need to get started on the permitting process for future trail development. Kristen has started drafting two contracts, one for cultural resources, and one for natural resources that will act as a comprehensive resource for future NSA Permit applications. These contract will not propose new trail alignments but will tell up impacts and help determine if there are practical alternatives

Updates:

Jeanette presented updates from Friends of the HCRH

- *(included in a handout)*

Kristen provided updates on behalf of ODOT

- *(included in AC Packet)*

Ernie Drapella:

- His wife is member of PEO, looking for speaker, he will be speaking on the HCRH
- New client of Wyden and Kennedy is a Gorge marketing group. His daughter works there, and he may get involved

Mark Stevenson

- *OPRD is in the process of developing a corridor management plan*

Mark Davison

- *No updates*

Mark Berry:

- *GAS sign in Mosier is being removed*

Jerry Igo:

- *He plans resign from his committee position before the next meeting. Will still plan to attend meetings, but his term officially ends in May/June*
- *Kristen suggested that the AC committee schedule a wildflower hike.*

Plans for the Next Meeting:

Kristen suggested that the Committee meet on June 23rd at the Cascade Locks Pavillion.

The meeting was adjourned.