

Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee Meeting

MINUTES

November 16, 2006

The Columbia Gorge Discovery Center

The Dalles, Oregon

Members Attending: Wayne Stewart, Jerry Igo, Art Carroll, Diane McClay for Jack Wiles, Rich Watanabe for Jason Tell, James Hamrick, Marc Berry

ODOT Staff Attending: Kristen Stallman, Robert Hadlow

Others Attending: George Fekaris, WFLHD; Matt Joerin, WFLHD; Diana Ross, USFS; Jeanette Kloos, Friends of the HCRH; Mark Beeson, ODOT; Adam Markell, ODOT; Sarah Jalving, SHPO; Carolyn Wood; Brian Walker, ODOT

Note Taker: Ellen Dennis, ODOT

Call to Order: Wayne Stewart, Vice-chair, called the meeting to order. The Advisory Committee approved the minutes of the September 21, 2006, meeting without changes. Diane McClay abstained.

Public Comments: None

Oneonta Tunnel Project Update and Review

Adam Markell provided the committee with an update on the tunnel project and asked for guidance on the east portal extension. He presented two alternatives visually described in handouts. Alternative 1 included a random basalt mortared wall encasing the top and north side of the tunnel. The rock work would mimic other walls along the highway. The example presented to the committee looks like the masonry retaining walls below the Vista House. Alternative 2, the project management's team preferred alternative, has masonry on the north side but the top includes loose native rock that looks like it had fallen off the cliff above.

Adam said the consultant team looked at many options but the two options presented best reflect the historic condition and provides protection to the users. There is significant difference in cost between two alternatives. Over time, Alternative 1 would look like Alternative 2 because material from above would ultimately cover the masonry.

James Hamrick explained that Alternative 1 creates a false historic appearance. Jerry Igo thought plants could eventually grow on the tunnel if Alternative 2 were pursued. The mosses and lichens that are in the area will quickly cover the structure.

Alternative 2 would be less enticing for people to climb on. At present there is a problem with people picnicking on the west end portal at Twin Tunnels.

Art Carroll moved to support Alternative 2 because it was the most authentic and would not encourage climbing. Marc Berry seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Prioritization of the Transportation Enhancement Grants

Pat Fisher, ODOT Transportation Enhancement (TE) Grant Coordinator, asked the Advisory Committee to prioritize this year's TE applications for projects within the Columbia Gorge. The grant applications are now in the public comment period and the HCRH AC's comments are valued. Kristen explained that of the five applications only two directly relate to the HCRH--the HCRH: Starvation Creek to Viento Project and Cascade Locks Bike and Pedestrian Improvements Project. She noted that the Cascade Locks proposal was consistent with the current HCRH Programmatic Agreement for Cascade Locks.

The Advisory Committee members were concerned about the need to prioritize the projects that did not directly affect the HCRH. In addition, James Hamrick asked if it would be inappropriate to say that the committee supports both projects that affect the HCRH and not prioritize them.

Jeanette Kloos suggested the committee review the HCRH master plan which prioritizes the projects.

James Hamrick moved that the Advisory Committee send a letter to the TE Committee expressing their support for projects #11 and #59. No second.

James Hamrick then moved that the HCRH Advisory Committee send a letter to the TE Committee expressing their support for project #59, (HCRH: Starvation Creek to Viento) saying nothing about project #11, Cascade Lock Bike and Pedestrian Improvement.

James Hamrick amended the motion to state that it is the HCRH Advisory Committee prefers that funding go first to project #59, but that they also support project #11. Jerry Igo seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

McCord Creek to Moffett Creek Trail Alignment Discussion

Kristen distributed a map to the committee outlining 3 alternatives. The map represents the alignments that several committee members and ODOT staff after two site visits. Preliminary costs estimate for Alternative A, the north side of the I-84, is approximately \$9 million. Southside alternatives will have to avoid talus slopes, a major obstacle that needs further investigation.

Wayne Stewart described the opportunities and constraints associated with the south side alternatives. There was discussion about reducing the standards for the HCRH Trail to allow for the connection. The group discussed using Trail 400, even though it would not be ADA accessible and would not accommodate bicyclists.

Art Carroll discussed how this would not meet the spirit and intent of the HCRH State Trail as we know it today but that it would provide a critical connection. Jerry Igo believes that if the Advisory Committee intends to get the project done within anyone's lifetime, the only option will be Alternative B3, using Trail 400 as the connector. This alternative would provide the most pleasant experience of any alternative being explored.

Given both ODOT's and OPRD's current ADA policies, would it be possible to use federal or public monies to improve Trail 400 if result does not meet current ADA standards? Art Carroll believes that Trail 400 can be paved and that it could be biked today.

Diane McClay urged the committee to consider the end user. Diane believes that many of the HCRH users are the cross country traveler. The trail would need to be wide enough to accommodate bicyclists with trailers and be wide enough to allow two bicyclists to pass without pull outs.

Jeanette Kloos reminded the committee of state and federal standards for bike paths. These standards require 8ft with shoulders. If the project intends to use federal transportation funds it will need to meet the minimum requirements. She also informed the committee that groups like Cycle Oregon would not use a narrower path. She referred the Advisory Committee to the Master Plan which specifies a trail that meets the standards for a multi-use trail.

George Fekaris encouraged the Advisory Committee to keep investigating alternatives. If a new alternative is found that costs \$3 million dollars that is much better than a \$9 million dollar alternative

Diana Ross discussed that the two trails would most likely need to be consolidated and it would be good to work with the USDA Forest Service recreation specialists on this issue.

Wayne Stewart, Art Carroll and Jerry Igo agreed to study the options in more detail and report back to the committee.

Committee Expense Reimbursements

Kristen explained the reimbursement options to the committee. HCRH Advisory Committee members are eligible for reimbursement for travel and mileage. The same rules apply to state employees. If any committee member would like help claiming a reimbursement they should contact Kristen and she will assist them. Forms were included in the meeting packet.

Friends of the HCRH

Jeanette Kloos informed the Advisory Committee that they have turned in their forms to become a 501.C.3 non-profit and a determination will probably occur in two months. She distributed a brochure. They are planning a kick-off bike ride and fundraising event for this summer. Jeanette also distributed a brochure on a product that allows visitors to receive interpretive information on a cell phone.

Mosier Waste Water Treatment Plant

John Grimm, an engineer representing the city, provided an update of the Mosier Waste Water Treatment Plan. The current facility is not the most aesthetically pleasing for people using the highway as they approach Mosier from the Twin Tunnels. They are presently looking at ways to improve the fencing and landscaping. The fence must provide security but does not need to be razor wire like the fence that is there now. Kristen will be the point of contact for the committee.

CRGNSA Comments on Plan Amendment

The Columbia River Gorge Commission is considering amending the definition of maintenance. Included in the meeting packet was a letter drafted by Kristen on this subject for the committee's review. The definition change has ramifications for maintenance along the HCRH right of way.

ACTIVITY STATUS REPORTS

Western Federal Lands Highway Division, FHWA Update

George Fekaris introduced Matt Joerin who has taken over for David Sell.

The Gutter Project is over 90 percent complete. The project is in a holding pattern because of the weather. James Hamrick asked for a presentation describing all the great work on this endeavor.

USDA Forest Service Update

Diana Ross updated the committee. USFS property in the vicinity of Rowena will be underburned this spring. Adventure Cyclists are looking to do an event on the highway in June of every year. They will be working with ODOT on the permits. Eagle Creek Bike Trail Plans have been reviewed by ODOT and the plans are being revised. A new road is going on Multnomah Falls and should be complete by December.

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Update.

Diane McClay explained that there has been minimal flood damage with the recent rains. Two sections of the trail are being exposed to root upheaval. She will contact ODOT to see if they will help with the tree removal because the trees could potentially fall on to the interstate.

OPRD has been staffing the Vista House even though the HCRH was closed. Even with the road close, visitor counts range between 200 and 250 per day. Cameras have been installed in the lift.

ODOT Project Updates

I-84 Bridge Bundles

Kristen will get the committee members on the mailing list as they didn't get the brochures in the mail. Of particular concern the HCRH Advisory Committee will be the Moffett Creek Bridge – eastbound replacement, the 15 mile Creek Bridge, the Mosier Creek Bridge, and the Sandy River Bridge replacements.

Maintenance Update

Brian Walker provided the committee with a maintenance update. Brian reported no major problems, just a typical winter along the highway.

Larch Mountain Road Slide

Rich Watanabe provided the committee with an update on the Larch Mountain Road Slide project. Wall should be back up as of today. Then the contractors will work on putting on first lift of paving and putting up guard rail and striping. They found quite a lot more asphalt than expected. They will have to be come back next summer to put down final paving.

Development Reviews

ODOT right of way and representatives from the Department of Justice are reviewing a Scenic Area application for a residence near Ruthton Point.

World Road Congress

Bob Hadlow announced that his paper proposal for the September World Road Congress in Paris has been accepted.