

Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee - Minutes

Thursday, March 17, 2016, Cascade Locks
10 a.m. to 2:05 p.m.

Members attending	Wayne Stewart (Chair) Art Carroll Judy Davis Mark Stevenson Arthur Babitz	William Pattison Francie Royce Kevin Price Kristin Dahl
HCRH AC Staff	Kristen Stallman, Brandy Steffen (ODOT)	
Others attending	Kevin Van Dyke Terry Anderson Al Gillis Gary Brannan Dick Weber Richard Alfieri Bonnie Clark Lynn Burditt	Jeanette Kloos Ed Hainline Kud Martin Brie Van Cleave Daniel Hunter Aaron Litt Annette St-Pierre Susan Law

Call to order

Wayne Stewart called the group to order at 10:02 a.m. The group approved the minutes from the previous meeting with a change on page 5, with a possible incorrect reference to Segments E and H.

Opportunity for public comment

Daniel Hunter, City of The Dalles is selling Gorge Hub t-shirts for \$20, to help fundraise and promote the Gorge Hubs project.

No other comments were collected.

Oregon Solutions/Historic Highway Collaborative Assessment

Kristen Stallman reminded the group that this effort was convened by Governor Brown in late 2015 to look at short-term implementable solutions to reduce congestion by summer 2016. The concern regarding congestion was raised by the Advisory Committee in June 2015 and led to agency discussions and the convening of the Oregon Solutions effort in October 2015. The Collaborative Assessment will be signing a declaration to commitment of a plan. There will be an open house for the Assessment on March 29 to outline the proposed plan. There are three focus areas including shuttles and tourism; marketing and traffic; and on-site improvements and safety audit.

Kristen said that the focus areas of the plan have been doing a lot of research including interviewing public and private shuttle groups, meeting with Travel Oregon and US Forest Service to extend the "Recreate with Respect" campaign for the Gorge with Travel Oregon hiring a marketing firm, and driving

the congested areas to figure out ways to reduce congestion. One important element is transit/shuttle service. There are currently two options being considered: a private tour shuttle that will travel from downtown, Edgefield, Troutdale to the Waterfall area and a Transit Study that would be publicly operated (which is currently being studied by ODOT). Kevin Price added the US Forrest Service (USFS) and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) are concerned about the protection of these valuable areas and is glad that we're focused on these bottle neck areas; some days it can take an hour from Wahkeena to Multnomah Falls.

- Francie Royce asked if the stewardship marketing talking points would work for someone local driving with out-of-town guests? Kristin Stallman said it's not just about driving but also respecting the local culture; how to prepare people for their visit. Kristen Stallman said that at the tourism summit data showed that 50% of the visitors to the Gorge live within 50 miles and 30% are coming from within 500 miles. So it may be different messaging for the audiences.
- Arthur Babitz asked if the Grayline tour is funded. Kristen Stallman said that they are privately funded and have negotiated parking places; the buses are ADA accessible and fit 30 passengers. Kristen Stallman said that the study is also looking at a gorge-wide transit service in 2018 that would be publicly funded.
- Arthur Babitz asked if social media would be used to help steer people to alternate locations and provide tour directions to these tips. Kristin Dahl said there is a gorge app and we will reach out to them and there is also a USFS interactive map. Arthur said that it is cheaper than a shuttle service.
- Kevin said that the lack of bus parking will be a big issue to address.
- Lynn Burditt added that this is a challenging situation and staff has been doing great work. She encouraged the group to have creative ideas but know that we are doing the best we can. We are really trying to reflect on is what does it take to make transit sustainable and without making things worse; it might just bring more people without additional mitigation efforts. We will be considering things like permit process to protect areas from high volumes of visitors.
- Susan Law at Western Federal Lands introduced herself and said that she has been involved with national parks for 15 years including transit and congestion management. Susan encouraged the group to listen to recent NPR segment on Zion being unable to manage demand for their shuttle. People want to see the parks because it's a centennial, there is an uptick of recreation interest, cheaper gas, etc. which leads to the increase of visitors. This interest may provide an opportunity to pay for staff and maintenance, shuttles, etc.
- Arthur asked how long it will take before we know if the shuttle is working? A few years or months? Kristen Stallman said that the public option will collect data from shuttle users to understand issues this summer and the private shuttle will get information on success right away. Susan added that it typically takes a few years for the word to get out before you know if it can be successful, the Mt Hood Express is a good example that the numbers keep going up.

Gorge Transit Study

Kristen said that ODOT's transit study is looking at the details for the publicly funded shuttle/transit service and is working hard to have a pilot in place for Friday-Sunday service this summer to provide

tourists a way to get to Multnomah Falls without a car. The pilot will be a one-two year project, working on funding for 2-4 year inter-city service. This has been in the works since mid-November and included 40 stakeholder interviews and a public/resident survey with 1,700 responses. The pilot will serve Portland and overflow parking at Multnomah Falls, so working with MTR Western to provide service from Gateway Transit Center to Multnomah Falls and stopping potential at Rooster Rock or Ainsworth. ODOT has committed \$3,000 and we are still working on the rest of the funding and marketing strategy. In the near-term (2-4 years) we are still working on providing intercity service utilizing local providers.

- Daniel Hunter asked if anyone is talking about an app; with Grayline developing the app? They are very good to work with and talked about opportunities to coordinate services.
- Since parking at Multnomah Falls is free, how are you going to convince people to pay for parking at Rooster Rock. Kevin said the plan is to remove the day use fee for those people using the shuttle. Kristen added that it will be hard to pull people out of their car, but we are considering using the VMS sign at Troutdale to help inform people of the shuttle. Francie asked if charging for parking at Multnomah Falls in the plan. Kristen that is a longer term issue, because it's a bigger lift to meter the parking. Lynn added that there are conflicts, including business impacts to the Multnomah Falls Lodge. We are exploring creative ideas such as entry fee/day pass to the Gorge. Between ODOT, WSDOT, OPRD, USFS there are a lot of questions including jurisdictional ownership and ability to charge for parking/entrance and the economic impacts to lower income people. Additionally, once you charge a fee you need a way to collect it. Kristin Dahl asked about a permit/reservation system. Kevin is concerned about visitor confusion since we all appear similar to the public but some do/don't charge.

Historic Highway State Trail Construction

Knud Martin and Brie Van Cleave presented the history of the trail and Historic Highway. The second Wednesday of the month they have a walk through of the project area to talk about construction issues immediately. Everyone is welcome to attend with hard hat and vest; just let Wayne Stewart know that you will be coming out. This segment is 1.32 miles with five waterfalls in this stretch; there are a few trees removed so it's easier to see from the highway.

- Wayne Stewart asked if the schedule is ok? Knud said there is always an issue with schedule but August 31 is the fixed completion for the project. No major problems along the way.
- How much does this project close off access to public? It closes off that section of trail from Monday 6 a.m. to Friday 6 p.m., still have trail users walking through the area but trying to ensure safety by having people use alternative routes.
- For Starvation Creek Trailhead west of that parking will the oven and ant hill be saved? Yes, we are preserving the ovens and the ant hills are still intact but one was abandoned.
- Art commended Knud and Brie on the February tour; had some meaningful conversations with the contractor. Kevin would like to commend the contractor on customer service.

Kristen received 70% plans for segments A-C; it's coming together well and they are now looking at material choice and architecture details. The new bridge and viaduct are going in and both will have rest/pause locations. Still waiting on Scenic NSA permit, ODOT is reviewing detailed plans, and we

haven't seen any comments from Tribal Groups. Kristen has a letter written by Wayne and William to Rian Windsheimer to summarize the Mitchell Point recommendation from the Advisory Committee.

Susan said that Oregon will receive \$15 million more per year than what we've received due to reallocation. Just did a request for proposals in 2015 which funded the congestion and viaduct projects and with the additional funds will have another call for projects this year. This might be a good opportunity for transit planning or Mitchell Point; this is a good group to brainstorm and strategize which projects to recommend for funding. Susan said that trailhead enhancement is a possible project to fund.

- Art Carroll asked if we need to have a decision on Mitchell Point by July 1 to get funding, perhaps through a vague application stating a preference for 2A or 2B. Wayne said that the group recommends these two alternatives but we still need geological work to see what we can do. Nothing has been removed from table but we recommend focusing on 2A/B; ODOT is concerned about blasting impacts to I-84 and more study is needed to see if they are feasible form construction impacts.

Lunch - 2016 Centennial Updates

Brandy Steffen reviewed the status for the centennial, including the 30+ events and exhibits that are co-branding with the Centennial. We have a fact sheet in the packet and a press release will go out soon to promote all of these events and exhibits. We've already had an article in the LaCamas magazine and are expecting one in the Gorge Magazine, among others. We've developed a poster that will be mailed to 25,000 people in the Gorge in Oregon and Washington in early April.

Jeanette Kloos talked about the June 7 events at Multnomah Falls and Vista House; we will try to recreate as much of the original ceremony as possible. Have antique car cavalcade from Troutdale to Multnomah Falls and a small bike component from Corbett to Vista House and Multnomah Falls. Working with Cycle Oregon for those that don't want to ride up the hill can go back by car. The people not in antique cars at Vista House will be asked to park at Women's Forum and shuttle to Vista House; people at Multnomah Falls shuttle from Rooster Rock. There will be a smaller program at the Vista House and a larger celebration with focus on media at Multnomah Falls. The post office will have new Gorge Stamp that is \$22.95 and special postmarks starting that day at Multnomah Falls and maybe Vista House. Cycle Oregon gave \$2,500 banners on street lights in towns. Friends have purchased lapel pins which will be given to participants on June 7.

Other big grant was for keepsake map thanks to Oregon State Parks with postcards on the back and fit into envelope. This is a keepsake that will be archival printed, 15000 copies and a surprise. Jeanette added that ODOT is also working to create a travel exhibit "road trip of historic proportions" that should be ready in late May and showcased at the Rose Festival and will be at events throughout the year. Thanks to Advisory Committee members for donations, have \$10,000 to spend.

- June 7 Rip Caswell event at 3 p.m. Historic car with statue with Sam Hill and Sam Lancaster

- Francie said that the Mosier and other Gorge post offices created a postcard and selling for \$.50, also selling bookmark and there is a unique post mark for each post office.

Gorge Tourism Workshop Discussion

Kristin Dahl gave an overview of the Gorge Tourism Workshop, which is the flagship program to work with different regions to figure what to do for tourism. Since January the large steering committee has been working to guide the program and will also stick around implement the plan.

The national park service gave money to have Washington participate. Each session brings people up to speed on the trends and perspective to develop programs/plans to make Gorge a world class destination; it's not just about growing tourism but balancing the economic impacts of that growth. We're working on creating cohesive marketing within the Gorge to maximize the available funds.

- Art asked how to get arms around private marketing? Kristin said it's more about focusing on the chambers and agencies that overlap; we don't need seven visitor's guides for the Gorge.

Kristin said that the 15-year tourism vision is a work in progress, being developed during the workshops. The initial first steps that will be brought into strategic plan for management (one gorge pass for public lands, car-free travel), marketing (one-stop online planning), food system, community awareness/education (Native American culture), stewardship.

- Who comes up with the action? The Steering Committee will take action priority (3 max) and then they will bring to final workshop.

Updates

Advisory Committee staff:

Kristen thanked Judy Davis and Wayne for presenting on Feb. 9 to the Gorge commission. A-C segment will cost \$16.8 million and we should have enough money start construction in 2016. We will need to consider what to do about the final five miles if we get less than full amount of funding. Lots of great work on the Hubs, each community gave them \$4,000 for each community.

- Wayne: What about the desire to have a clear separation of the Wyeth campground and trailhead? Kevin said it shouldn't be a problem with proper signage.

Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway:

Jeanette said that we need a ton of volunteers for June 7, June 18, July 23, and Sept 10. Thanks to Lee Weinstein the Friends will have a booth at The Dalles Cherry Festival. In cooperation with State Parks, we've have applied for recreational trails funds for wayfinding signs on the Historic Highway State Trail. We are passing funds to the bike fixit stations. We'll have two work parties Viento before Grand opening of next trail section.

- Wayne said that the Gorge commission is so short staffed the Friends gave them money to hire a consultant to help with review of permits.

ODOT Maintenance:

Maintenance is removing trees below Vista House, Corbett, and Plough house; there was an accident with tree hitting a car and we're trying to prevent that from happening again. Chenoweth falls summary from ODOT discussion summarized in handout. Bridge that will be improved to look more historic, also work going on at Mosier Bridge.

OPRD:

Mark Stevenson said that there are a lot of staff changes; Mark will take over for Kevin. Staff is heavily involved in the Centennial Celebration. Hazard trees are a problem. ODOT taken the lead about tree removal, state parks have been removing hazard trees (2 staff full time to remove); identify and remove the worst ones first. Vista House walls were hit by vehicles, both replaced. The mural at Vista House was recently redone. Kevin said that he wishes our agency had the partnerships around the state that we do in the Gorge. We've worked hard together and accomplished a lot of things.

- William asked about the outcome with the railroad at Mayer State Park? Kevin said they are still working with them, they want to install double tracks but they are still working through the process.

Travel Oregon:

Kristin said that an increased tourism tax and change in legislation will allow funds to be used on a broader range of projects. Mandates 10% grant program, close to \$3 mill per year. Matching grant cap is \$100,000 and is open until June 30, need to have 50% cash match.

- Wayne asked if there are opportunities that we've discussed today that would fit your criteria? Wayfinding and signage, mapping/information, or event marketing for transit service.

Gorge Commission:

- Judy said that they had a good meeting with them. Commission has one planner on staff and two openings that they are hiring for; can't move a lot through now.

USFS:

Lynn said they are fully staffed now and have restructured how they are doing committees, tribal affairs and assessment, communication and marketing. There have been a lot of staffing changes. That means we need to keep the great communication going, often you don't know what you have don't always see how far we've come or what we've done. Every county has a new planning manager/director so that reinforces early/often communication. This year is the 30th anniversary of the scenic area and 100th year of Eagle Creek campground.

Roundtable

Wayne asked for next meeting date and roundtable.

- Art – Happy Saint Patrick's day!
- Judy – Francie and I have gone to Dalles/Mosier city council to talk about Centennial. Huge turnout in The Dalles and tiny turn out in Mosier, all appreciative.

- Mark – NA
- Wayne – NA
- Kevin – I want to remind partners that this is the second summer with no smoking tobacco products allowed, but you can smoke on your camp site but at day-use areas you have to be in motor vehicle.
- Francie – Has Harney County affected your work? Lynn said there has had some impact, has settled out a bit. We are trying to assess what it means for staff time and approach to similar situations. In our area, it raised an underlying tension about the scenic area, particularly in low income areas that are restricted in funding.
- Kristen – On June 16 the Oregon Transportation Commission is meeting in Hood River and we are planning a film premier open to the public at Columbia Gorge Hotel.

The group decided that the next meeting would be Thursday, June 23 at the Hood River fire station.

Adjourn

The meeting was finished at 2:14p.m.