Closing the Gap: Upcoming State Trail Construction

3 Miles of New Trail to Open in 2019: Wyeth to Lindsey Creek

This summer crews will continue building amazing structures including the Summit Creek Viaduct and the Lindsey Creek Bench Cut that will become the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail. These structures will honor our past and their design will integrate into the Gorge landscape and history. Skilled rock masons will reflect the original craftsmanship by using their skills passed down through generations to construct elegant new rock walls. This 3-mile section of the State Trail between Cascade Locks and Hood River will open in Summer 2019.

Closing the Gap: Upcoming State Trail Construction

Coming in 2020: Mitchell Point Crossing

Today we are faced with the question of how to get across Mitchell Point to reconnect the Historic Highway as a State Trail. The Federal Lands Access Program funds will allow us to determine the most appropriate design alternative to get around, or through, this rocky outcropping and to construct the crossing. This year we will be making progress toward the design! Is a new Mitchell Point Tunnel in our future or perhaps it’s a new viaduct? The engineering work is starting to answer this question so we can start construction in 2020.

More Funding Needed

ODOT secured funding to complete the engineering for the remaining 4 miles of State Trail between Viento State Park and the City of Hood River. However, construction funds for the final segments need to be identified. Engineering is scheduled to be completed in 2019 and with permits in hand, the State Trail will be “shovel ready.” This means the project is ready to be bid out to construction contractors. ODOT and project proponents are seeking the remaining funding (approximately $22M) to complete the reconnection of the Historic Columbia River Highway.

Viento to Mitchell Creek: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

In certain locations controlled rock blasting will be necessary to provide space for the trail footprint and the required rockfall protection areas. The same rock cliffs that were initially blasted for the construction of Interstate 84 will need to be carved back again to make room for the trail and improve safety for trail and interstate users.

Ruthton Point to Hood River

Just west of the City of Hood River, a fantastic section of the Historic Highway awaits to be reconnected as a State Trail. This beautiful piece of land is referred to as Ruthton Point.

The old highway provides world-class views of the Columbia River Gorge; however, getting to Ruthton Point is challenging because Interstate 84 is constructed on a steep bank leaving little room for a trail.

Legend

Drivable
State Trail Complete
Future State Trail
(Funded)
Future State Trail
(Funding needed)
Eagle Creek Fire Impacts

The Gorge has faced many challenges in 2017. As the Eagle Creek Fire raged, Oregonians, residents and visitors grieved as our beloved Gorge burned. 2018 is about rebuilding. Restoration of sections of the Historic Highway State Trail is in progress including railing, masonry walls and signs. Project partners are removing burned trees and addressing rockfall hazards by securing damaged rockfall mesh. Fortunately, there was only minor damage to the State Trail and all the bridges were unscathed by the fire.

Despite the minor setbacks from the fire, nature is bouncing back and vegetation is returning. Fire recovery efforts are using the relationships and working agreements developed as part of the State Trail process to restore and reopen the areas affected by the fire. Once restoration is completed and the State Trail is deemed safe for visitors, the trail will reopen this year.

Prior to the fire, project partners started a Congestion and Transportation Safety Plan. The goal of the Plan is to develop a vision of how visitors and residents travel to destinations between the Portland Women’s Forum and Ainsworth State Park in a safer and less congested manner. While the project area is outside of the State Trail segments; this Plan will help cyclists and pedestrians experience the entire Historic Highway.

Columbia Gorge Express

During the 2016 and 2017 summer seasons, ODOT piloted the Columbia Gorge Express, providing weekend and holiday bus service to Multnomah Falls. The service gave Gorge visitors an alternative to driving on the often congested Historic Highway, with stops at Gateway Transit Center in Portland, Rooster Rock State Park, and Interstate 84 parking lot at Multnomah Falls. Over the course of the two-year pilot riders made nearly 60,000 trips on the Gorge Express! Plans for 2018 and beyond include extending service to Cascade Locks and Hood River, operating more days of the week and extending service throughout the year.

Remember

The Historic Columbia River Highway is one of the most significant roads in our nation. Constructed between 1913-1922 as America’s first scenic highway, the Historic Highway soon became known as the “King of Roads” an engineering marvel.

Restore

By the early 1950s, the initial construction of the water-level route through the Gorge obliterated many sections of the old highway, leaving what remained as abandoned and disconnected. Much work has been done over the last 30 years since the passage of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act to restore the America’s greatest highway to its 1920s splendor.

Reconnect

The reconnection of the remaining 4 miles of Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail will create a “King of Trails” allowing pedestrians and cyclists to experience the Gorge car-free.

Historic Columbia River Highway

Advisory Committee

Arthur Babitz, Chair
Hood River County, Governor Appointee
Wayne Stewart, Vice-Chair
Multnomah County Representative
William D. Pattison
Hood River County Representative
Judy Davis
Wasco County Representative
Francie Royce
Wasco County, Governor Appointee
Ernest Drapela
Multnomah County, Governor Appointee
Christine Curran
State Historic Preservation Office
Kristin Dahl
Travel Oregon
Kevin Price
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Rian Windsheimer
Oregon Department of Transportation

In coordination with:

For more information visit: www.HistoricHighway.org