Advisory Committee Meeting Summary – 03/16/17

| Members attending | Wayne Stewart  
|                   | Bill Pattison  
|                   | Arthur Babitz  
|                   | Mark Stevenson (OPRD)  
|                   | Ernie Drapela  
|                   | Francie Joyce  
|                   | Judy Davis  
|                   | Mandy Putney (ODOT for Rian Windshiemer)  
|                   | Marc Berry – Emeritus  
| HCRH AC Staff     | Kristen Stallman, Susan Hanson, Brandy Steffen (ODOT)  
| Others attending (13) | Gary Brannan & Jeanette Kloos (FHCRC)  
|                   | Terra Lingley (ODOT)  
|                   | Richard Alfieri  
|                   | Bonnie Lee Clark  
|                   | Dan Hoyt (MCEED)  
|                   | Kevin Van Dyke  
|                   | Kevin Lidurdy (City of Hood River)  
|                   | John Roberts (Hood River County)  
|                   | Lynn Burditt, Stan Hinatsu, & Morai Helfen (USFS)  
|                   | Jason Hildreth (CRGC)  

Call to order
Wayne called the group to order at 10 a.m. The group unanimously approved the meeting minutes as shown from the last meeting.

Opportunity for public comment
No requests to speak.

Acknowledgements/Announcements
Wayne acknowledged the graphics help that Darla has done over the years. The group presented her with the award/recognition.

Wayne asked Mandy Putney to introduce herself. Mandy said that she started as the Major Projects Manager in December 2016 and she oversees Kristen, as well as the larger projects in the region. She worked for a private firm for 12 years to develop and move along projects around the region. Major projects in the future for ODOT include OR 217, Rose Quarter on I-5, and in the Gorge. In the past she worked on the floating bridge on Lake Washington which includes HOV and bike lanes.

Kristen announced that she has a new position at ODOT after working in the Gorge for 11 years. She will be a Strategic Initiative Advisor but will be involved with the Advisory Committee through June. Her current position will be filled in the next few months. She thanked the group for all of the hard work they’ve done over the years. Wayne added that Kristen will still help on the grants and with strategy. Francie hopes that the new person will be a good grant writer. Wayne thanked Kristen for 11 years’ of work.
Election of Officers discussion
Wayne reviewed the bylaws and the group is tasked with electing new officers every two years; it’s been six years since the last election. The six public members are eligible to run for the chair and Vice-Chair. The by-laws say that the vote will be in June 2017. Kristen will contact each of the six citizens to ask if they will run and to talk about roles and interests moving forward. She will compile that information and develop a ballot for June.

Bridge of the Gods Ped/bike Feasibility Study update
Paul Cook, Manager of Port of Cascade Locks informed the group of the Feasibility Study, which is an aggressive proposal to fix the ped/bike access on the bridge over the next 15 years. The Port has been working closely with PTCA to incorporate the ped/bike improvements into the Bridge of the Gods’ structure. The overall structure of the Bridge wouldn’t be changed; expect the ped/bike facilities to hand on the eastside of the Bridge. This is a $13 million project because it includes structural strengthening of the Bridge and the Port is seeking funding. Engineering is expected to start in 2018/19 and take one to two years to complete; about three to five years away from construction.

Paul said the Advisory Committee can help by writing letters to governors and Department of Transportation in Oregon and Washington, reminding them about their commitments to the Gorge. He also suggested writing to congressional representatives from both states.

Hood River Westside concept plan
Kevin Laverty, planner at the City of Hood River said that the City is working on a land use and transportation project to address affordable housing on 450 acres on the west side of the city; planning work will take place through June 2017. Arthur said he will continue to monitor this project and will alert the Committee to important issues. There was concern about the increased traffic in the area and on the Historic Highway. Kevin added that it is challenging to deal with the historic nature of the highway and also create a safe transportation system. Currently several intersections are at or near capacity.

A major, future arterial route on the west side (Mt. Adams Ave.) will intersect with the Historic Highway. The plan will evaluate a roadway cross-section and signal (based on the Advisory Committee’s 2010 study), as well as the potential of a roundabout. Kevin said that the City will be seeking input from the Advisory Committee, both today and in the future. Jeanette said that the cross-section on the Historic Columbia River Highway in Hood River is the subject of a Programmatic Agreement under the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106. This document specifies the width of the highway on Cascade Avenue as “a nominal 43-foot to 44-foot paved width (curb to curb), planter strips, and sidewalks, all within the 60-foot right-of-way.” If a different configuration is selected by this study, the Programmatic Agreement would need to be revised/amended and signed by all parties (City of Hood River, Hood River County, ODOT, State Historic Preservation Office, and Federal Highway Administration). There are currently no roundabouts on the Historic Columbia River Highway, nor have there been any in the past.

Ernie added that bike safety is a concern at roundabouts. Kevin said they are looking at a buffered bike lane; Kristen said that the recommendation in 2010 was to keep bikes and pedestrians separate. Kristen has shared several plans and meeting minutes with Kevin and that information has been incorporated into the current planning process. Arthur said the consultant suggested an alternative bike path on
Westcliff Drive, but the City mentioned that the Advisory Committee may be concerned about a non-official bike path route. Wayne reminded the group that there is an alternate route to the Historic Highway near the Discovery Center in The Dalles.

**Gorge 2020 Overview**

Jason Hildreth from the Gorge Commission presented the plan that the Commission is updating now which will be implemented in 2020. He said they are currently in the first phase, which is soliciting public comment and the plan will be adopted in June 2019. There will be a summary of all comments received and that can be shared with the Committee.

Kristen said that WSDOT and ODOT provided feedback to the Commission this week, focused on maintenance and construction, as well as asking the Commission to get a handle on the recreational class in the Gorge, particularly related to transit. Marc asked what tools or abilities are available to promote public transit. Jason said that the Committee can write letters of support to the governor to craft a management plan to allow the projects to be done and to encourage development. He said that written comments are best, particularly focused on what has been working well and what can be improved. Kristen suggests reviewing the plan and drafting a letter that is relevant (including Judy and Wayne in developing that letter).

Judy asked that Kristen provide feedback/presentation about the plan as it affects the Historic Highway. Judy said that as a former commissioner, we didn’t get to the project list last time and it’s hopelessly out of date. She suggests that projects should be moved out of the plan, since it should be more about goals and strategies, less about project lists. Jason said that something they’ve been looking at, as a small staff with limited skills, to figure out how to work with specialists on how to integrate their work with the Commission’s Plan. Kristen said that the ODOT congestion mitigation plan can provide the Commission with a lot of data. Arthur asked if the information in the Plan is explicit enough for the Committee to seek funding for the State Trail. Stan Hinatsu said that the original plan removed the list of projects because it was not prioritized. The State Trail is included in the ACT; is it useful to include the State Trail in the Plan?

Wayne asked if the Plan will address how to deal with the significant increase in population and the impacts to natural and cultural resources in the Gorge. Jason said that the Commission is working with the Forest Service to explore parking limitation, crowding issues and the connection to population and housing demands in our communities. Wayne added that the recreational intensity class numbers don’t match between the capacity of the sites and the site use; those numbers may be impediments and would like to see that addressed in the Plan.

**Update on Historic Highway State Trail**

Mike Odom from Western Federal Lands told the group that they opened bids two weeks ago for the next segment of State Trail between Wyeth trailhead and Lindsey Creek (the end of the last project). Steller Jay in Washington was the low bidder and there is currently enough funding for the portion from the Mossy road to Wyeth (includes Shellrock); however, $5 million more is needed for the Lindsey Creek Benchcut. Western Federal Lands have until June 2017 to get a commitment for the future funds. The extra expense is due to the railroad and highway control required for the hillside blasting, as well as the
beautiful rock walls. Kristen and Mike are working every angle to get the funds and hope to give an update in June since there is efficiency to do the work now. Kristen has already put in two letters to new administration. Arthur said he's trying to reach Congressman Walden. The notice to proceed for construction will be in late April/May and it usually takes a few weeks to mobilize. Construction will be allowed between that time through June 2019.

George Ficarus of Western Federal Lands presented on the FLAP Access Program, which awarded over $90 million last year, including to the Historic Highway, and will award $40 million next year. Current projects include the Columbia Gorge Express with expansion to Hood River, the Multnomah Falls Viaduct, Multnomah Falls circulation study, Mt Hood Transportation project (on OR 35), Mitchell Point ($35 million committed) design, and congestion management for the entire Historic Highway. Western Federal Lands is also looking for funds for the last $5 million needed for the current trail project. Matt Fletcher will take over for the Access Program in Oregon since George is retiring, and will oversee the next call for projects, which is next winter. Matt worked on the Crown Point Viaducts project.

George and Mike discussed the delays in the Multnomah Falls Viaduct project, which is in the process of design and coordination with the railroad. The viaducts are currently load rated and one is in pretty bad shape but it is being reviewed constantly for safety.

For the Mitchell Point project (the crossing only) there were three firms that proposed but they were all returned for re-submission. Survey work will be done by Western Federal Lands in the next few months so that data is ready to go for the consultant. Then the concept plan will be developed, which will build off of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, and will go out to review by the public and stakeholders before a selection of the preferred alternatives. Kristen said that Rian encourages the Advisory Committee to focus on keeping the cost in-check so that we can build it.

**Congestion Study update and discussion**

Terra Lingley, a planner at ODOT updated the Committee on the Congestion Study. She said that ODOT is working on refining the issues and developing a scope that has a clear problem for a consultant to use for the study. She added that the first step is to establish the vision for the Historic Highway, then set up goals that will be used to score the recommendations. The study will require filling data gaps including looking into anticipated future growth and how to accommodate visitor growth. Then the team will develop safety management and congestion suggestions; the team will examine other areas that have handled similar issues such as Griffith Observatory in LA and SR-24 in Nevada. The recommended solutions will be evaluated and divided into implementation strategies before being finalized in the action plan along a timeline for implementation. Public and stakeholder involvement will be done throughout the project. The management structure will be similar to the Mt. Hood Multi-modal plan, with the Advisory Committee serving in an advisory review role. The study should start in June 2017 so that summer data can be collected and the plan should finished by the end of 2018.

Francie wanted to highlight the Committee’s discussion from December 2016 and particularly Judy’s comment about “what is the vision for the Highway itself?”

**Break for lunch**
HCRH AC Priorities – work session
Wayne reconvened the meeting and asked the group to review the 13 priorities identified in December 2016. The group agreed that the biggest priority should be construction and reconnection of the State Trail. There was also general agreement that the congestion discussion and other efforts may distract from the main focus of construction, though the group would like to be kept informed about these other projects. There was a request for a handout that the Committee can distribute about all of the projects on the Historic Highway and status/timeline. There was also acknowledgement that the construction of the State Trail helps reduce congestion and is part of the solution.

Lynn Burditt asked how the Committee can be strategic about how to handle trail usage (and associated congestion, conflicts, etc.) once it is built. It might be how the Committee weighs in on the other planning processes. Kristen also said that the Committee can comment on the historic features of the highway and how congestion impacts those historic feelings. Perhaps by clarifying the role of the Committee in relationship to congestion, there would be greater ability to address them as a group. The 2017 work plan focus is as follows.

Construction completion:

- Mitchell Point Crossing design
- Final five engineering
- Construction of segments A-C underway
- Construction/restoration Chenoweth Creek Bridge/Mosier/Dry Canyon
- Twin Tunnels Safety Improvements Implementation
- Historic guardrail research/analysis
- Multnomah Falls site design
- Wayfinding Implementation – RTP grant
- HR Route 30 sign installation – Cascade Locks/Rock Creek Road
- Continue to identify funding for State Trail
- Connect with partners about funding needs

Beyond construction:

- Congestion mitigation planning
- Ready, Set, Gorge Phase II
- Create positive visitor experience; actions for the Committee
- Protect natural, cultural, and historic resources; actions for the Committee
- Vision for the drivable portion

Winter recovery/maintenance updates
Mark Stevenson said that the OPRD set goals for the winter recovery to get Vista House and Multnomah Falls open, then the campgrounds, then the trails. They’ve had inmates clearing for the last two weeks but it’s barely put a dent in the downed trees. Flush toilets will be open at West Hatfield in April 2017.
Kent Kalsch with ODOT maintenance said that between Angel’s Rest and Multnomah Falls there has been debris flows/landslides more than four times at one location, so the Historic Highway is closed. In the last month and a half ODOT maintenance has cleared 30 landslides. Jeanette said there was a huge debris flow in 1996, but this year seems worse and is all over the place. Arthur said that in 1920 the Highway was closed for six months because of slides. There are some damages to the historic features (rails/fences). The road is sagging between Larch Mountain and Vista House.

Updates
- **ODOT**: Kristen wanted to stay that the Historic Highway Centennial won the Oregon Heritage Excellence Award!
- **Friends of the Highway**: Wayfinding project had a site review in December 2016, it is delayed a bit, but proposal is to do construction in fall/winter 2017. Went to DC for the congressional meeting. Have volunteer needs for multiple events.
- **OPRD**: Eclipse is happening August 21 and we are encouraging people to go to state parks (day use areas will be open to camping).
- **Travel Oregon**: Continuing to work on Ready, Set, Gorge project. Have an idea to create a tear off map for visitors.
- **USFS**: in the same situation as OPRD, it’s interesting to see some areas are disaster zones and others are clear. Hope to have Wakeena open in mid-April. Multnomah Falls Lodge getting 90% design package in April but contract will be awarded in next fiscal year. Had a significant leak at the Lodge near the garbage receptacle area and will be able to fix it in the next few weeks.

June 8 will be the next meeting in The Dalles at the Discovery Center.

Arthur will monitor the west side plan. Bill questioned when we are going to paint the guardrails; there is one stretch from The Dalles to the Discovery Center is in need of painting. The meeting was adjourned at 1:37 p.m.