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ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORY

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**HERITAGE Letter Report 13-32: Archaeological Survey for the Gibson Hill Road Sidewalk Project, North Albany, Benton County, Oregon (ODOT Key #18115)**

This letter report describes the results of a survey for archaeological resources undertaken in connection with proposed construction of sidewalks on both sides of Gibson Hill Road in the North Albany, Benton County, Oregon. The survey was undertaken on July 2, 2013, by HERITAGE archaeologist Rick Minor. The objective of this survey was to locate any surface evidence of prehistoric or historical archaeological artifacts, features, or sites that might be disturbed by implementation of this project.

This survey was undertaken to determine if prehistoric or historical archaeological sites that may be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are present. This survey ensures compliance with federal regulations such as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) and with Oregon state laws requiring identification and protection of archaeological resources.

Gibson Hill Road lacks sidewalks, and as a result pedestrians are forced to walk in the on-street bike lanes. The proposed project will construct setback sidewalks along both sides of the roadway, provide separate facilities for bikes and pedestrians, improve access to schools, and connect to streets and neighborhoods via sidewalk and path connections.

**Project Location and Description**

The project area is along Gibson Hill Road in North Albany between North Albany Rd. and Scenic Hill Rd., with an overall length of 11,500 lineal feet. Specifically, the project area is located in T10S, R4W, Sections 35 and 36, W.M. (Figure 1). The new sidewalks will link two existing





**Figure 2. Location of the Gibson Hill Road project area on 2009 aerial photograph.**

multi-use paths to adjoining neighborhoods characterized as single family residential (Figure 2). All work can be within the existing City ROW. No detour route is proposed, but single lane closures in sections are likely during sidewalk construction.

The earliest map of the area, made for the General Land Office (GLO) in 1852, depicts the project area as within a large area of relatively featureless plain. The project area appears to fall within a larger area described as “Land Rolling Soil 2nd Rate” with “Timber Scattered Oak & Fir” (GLO 1852).

Claims by early Euro-American settlers A. Daniel (in Sections 26/35) and a man identified simply as Carter (at the intersection of Sections 25/26/35/36) are shown on the GLO map, but for the most part the project area is north of the main area of early settlement along the Willamette River closer to Albany. No topographic features or other aspects of the environment that might distinguish the present project vicinity as attractive for Native American or Euro-American settlement are apparent on this map.

## **Cultural Background**

Human occupation of the Willamette Valley encompasses all of the Holocene, with some archaeological evidence that past occupation may extend back as early as the late Pleistocene (Connolly 1994; Minor 1985; Ozbun and Steuber 2001). The chronology during the Early (8000–6000 BP), Middle (6000–2000 BP), and Late (2000–200 BP) Archaic periods has been well documented through excavation at numerous sites throughout the valley (Minor and Toepel 1981:11–176; Pettigrew 1990).

At Euro-American contact, the Native American populations inhabiting the Willamette Valley south of Willamette Falls consisted of groups of peoples who spoke related languages belonging to the Kalapuyan language family. Based on these linguistic differences, the Kalapuya peoples were identified as belonging to at least 13 dialectically distinct “bands” or “tribes.” The territories of these bands generally correspond with the individual basins of major tributaries of the Willamette River. The Santiam occupied a portion of the Willamette Valley from slightly north of Salem to just south of Albany, encompassing this project area (Minor and Toepel 1981:49-60; Minor et al. 1980:54-55; Zenk 1990:547-548).

The migration of Euro-Americans into the valley during the Historic period resulted in the spread of infectious diseases to the Kalapuya, which led to catastrophic declines in population prior to the 1840s. The influx of traders and trappers, then settlers, resulted in the rapid displacement of the native peoples from much of the valley. Treaty initiatives undertaken in 1851 failed to induce the Kalapuya to move east of the Cascades; however, most of the surviving Kalapuya were removed to the Grand Ronde Reservation after the ratified Treaty of 1855 (Beckham 1990; Zenk 1990).

The central portions of the Willamette Valley were among the first areas to be settled by Euro-Americans, especially following the massive migrations along the Oregon Trail in the early 1840s. Much of Linn and Benton Counties were settled under the terms of the Donation Land Act of 1850.

## **Records Search**

A review of the archaeological site records on file at the State Historic Preservation office (SHPO) in Salem indicates that no prehistoric or historical archaeological sites have been recorded in the project area vicinity. The nearest recorded archaeological sites are about 3 miles to the southwest (35BE31, 35BE35), or about the same distance to the southeast in the City of Albany (35LIN733, 35LIN734).

Numerous cultural resource surveys have been conducted to the south of the project area along Highway 20, and even farther south across the Willamette River in the City of

Albany. No cultural resource surveys have been conducted within Sections 35 and 36 in which the project area is situated. The absence of recorded prehistoric and historical archaeological sites is likely due to the prevalence of privately owned parcels in the project area vicinity.

### **Survey Methods and Results**

The survey for archaeological resources was conducted by walking along the sides of Gibson Hill Road while inspecting the ground surface for evidence of prehistoric or historic activity or occupation. From a low point on the east at the traffic circle on N.Albany Road, Gibson Hill Road rises to a crest a few blocks to the west near NW Broadway St. From that high point, Gibson Hill Road is either level or declines slightly in elevation to the west end of the project area at Scenic Drive.

The sides of the road consist variably of (1) ditches 1 to 4 feet deep, usually containing vegetation (Figures 3 and 4); (2) sections where culverts have been laid and covered, which especially occur at entrances to driveways (Figure 5); and (3) banks 1 to 5 feet high where the roadway approaches the crest (Figure 6). In general, exposures of native soil were limited, occasionally occurring in the banks of ditches or in the face of the cutbanks near the crest of Gibson Hill Road where vegetation had been cut away.

During the survey it was observed that the ground along the road margins has been subject to considerable previous disturbance. Aside from excavation of ditches, cutting of banks, and emplacement of culverts, telecommunications boxes, fire hydrants, sewer and storm water systems, and a US West underground cables (along the south side) have all been constructed below ground along Gibson Hill Road.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

No prehistoric or historical archaeological artifacts, features, or sites were identified during the survey for archaeological resources in the Gibson Hill Road project area. The potential that archaeological resources are present in this area is low due to its relatively featureless setting set back from both the river and Thornton Lake. The project area does not cross any drainages and there are no particular topographic features that might have been a focal point for Native American or Euro-American settlement or land use. No additional subsurface archaeological investigations are recommended in connection with this project.

Archaeological sites and, in particular Indian burials, are protected under Oregon state law (ORS 97.740–97.760, 358.905–358-955, and 390.235), and by federal regulations where federal funds or permits are involved (e.g., 36 CFR 800). Disturbance of graves is specifically prohibited, even through accidental discovery and even if reviewing agencies

have concurred that a specific project is in compliance with applicable state and federal regulations.

If archaeological resources are inadvertently encountered during the course of sidewalk construction, all earth disturbance in the vicinity of the find should be halted immediately in accordance with state and federal laws. A qualified archaeologist should be consulted to investigate and evaluate the discovery and to recommend subsequent courses of action in consultation with SHPO and the appropriate tribes.

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**Figure 3. View to east of ditches along north side of Gibson Hill Road.**



**Figure 4. View to west of ditches along Gibson Hill Road near west end of project area.**



**Figure 5. View to west where culverts along Gibson Hill Road have been covered.**



**Figure 6. View to east where cutbanks occur along sides of Gibson Hill Road.**

## SHPO REPORTING DATA

Findings: – (negative)  
Results: Recorded: prehistoric sites 0 historical sites 0 isolates 0  
County: Benton  
Township: T10S  
Range: R4W  
Section: 35, 36  
USGS Quad: Albany 7.5' quadrangle  
Project Area: <2 acres  
Area Surveyed: 100%  
Type: pedestrian survey

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