

Historic Columbia River Highway



Advisory Committee Meeting

Meeting will be Hybrid
Cousins' Restaurant
2114 W 6th St, The Dalles, OR 97058

Thursday, June 12, 2025
10 AM – 2 PM
Login online: <https://tinyurl.com/AC-June2025>

Meeting ID: 848 9237 5211
Password: HCRHAC

Call in (does not require internet): 1 (253) 215-8782
Meeting ID: # 848 9237 5211

Members

Arthur Babitz, Chair

Vacant

Ernie Drapela, Vice-Chair

Tricia Forsi

Judy Davis

Lisa Farquharson

Clay Courtright

Rian Windsheimer

Kate Baumgartner

Ian Johnson

Hood River County Representative

Hood River County Governor's Representative

Multnomah County Governor's Representative

Multnomah County Representative

Wasco County Representative

Wasco County Governor's Representative

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

Oregon Department of Transportation

Travel Oregon

State Historic Preservation Office

Agenda

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 10:00 AM | Call to Order
Arthur Babitz |
| 10:05 AM | Opportunity for the public to comment on any item not on the agenda |
| 10:10 AM | Approval of Minutes
Arthur Babitz |
| 10:15 AM | Multnomah Falls Timed Use Permits
Terra Lingley and Stephen Elgart |
| 10:25 AM | Bylaws Updates/Charter
All |

11:15 AM Historic Highway State Trail Updates

Perham to Mitchell Update

Mitchell to Ruthton Phase 1 Update

11:30 AM Multnomah Falls Viaducts Update
Photos from Jack Carlson, WFLHD

12:00 PM Lunch Break

12:40 PM Bridal Veil Bridge Rehabilitation
Amer Hmidan, ODOT

1:00 PM National Visitor Use Management Symposium Lessons Learned
Terra Lingley, ODOT and Claire Fernandes, USFS

1:30 PM Updates

ODOT, Friends of the Historic Highway, OPRD, Travel Oregon, USFS, and WFLHD

1:45 PM Committee Round Table
All

2:00 PM Adjourn

Future Meetings

- September 18, 2025 Hood River
- December 18, 2025 Troutdale

Topics:

- State Trail Mile Markers

Historic Columbia River Highway

Advisory Committee Meeting

Summary

June 12, 2025

Zoom only

Members Attending:	Arthur Babitz, chair Ernie Drapela, vice-chair Judy Davis, Wasco County Rian Windsheimer, ODOT Kate Baumgartner, Travel Oregon Lisa Farquharson, Wasco County Clay Courtright, OPRD Wayne Stewart, Member Emeritus Marc Berry, Member Emeritus
Historic Highway AC Staff:	Terra Lingley (ODOT) Kenny Werth (ODOT)
Others Attending:	Martin Hecht, Martin's Gorge Tours Doug Henne Kaylee Crosby, Wildwood Tours Jennifer O'Donnell Kent Kalsch, ODOT Bonnie Clark Richard Alfieri Jeanette Kloos, FHCRH Lynn Burditt Mike & Debbie Standley iPhone 9 Dan Shanahan, ODOT AJ Zelada Tiffany Johnson, ODOT Liz Alvis Mary Rohan Hwyr18b Dov Robert Voeks Kevin Greenwood, Port of Cascade Locks Maurizio Von Flotow User Friends LT

Call to Order

Arthur called to order the meeting at 10:01 a.m.

Public Comment

AJ Zelada: Gorge ride on June 21st next week. Looking at the air quality, hoping the wind will evaporate the particulates. Air quality right now is on the edge, we are also looking at evacuation, etc. We will see what happens. You can go to gorgepedal.com to see alerts for the ride and status updates. Will put on the alerts after this meeting. If you have signed up for the ride, email to all ticket purchasers will go out today for an update. Email shared in the chat about the gorge ride. ajz@zelada.com, Friends of the Highway website is here: <https://www.hcrh.org/>.

Approval of minutes

Ernie made the motion to approve the minutes, and Judy seconded. Minutes were approved.

Multnomah Falls Timed Use Permits

Terra: Timed use permits started on May 23, going through September 1, required for private vehicles to use exit 31 to access Multnomah Falls. Highest days were the first Saturday and Sunday. Because the U.S. Forest Service is responding to wildfires, don't have the rec.gov data but for first weekend, permits were all reserved online. January through May of this year was much higher exit volume, most folks diverting to I-84 to access the falls which is what we want. Peak months are June through August from around 1,500 to 1,700 vehicles per day on average. This year, gate activations are much higher this year. Hopefully that will go down as the Historic Highway is open and permits are now required.

The Timed Use Permits is a partnership with USFS, travel partners providing funding, ODOT also providing funding. Partners did not have funding for a crossing guard this year, though the private lot is still charging for parking across from the Lodge. Both shuttles are running and there is a new service from the Troutdale outlet mall call the Multnomah Falls Express. These shuttles do not required a permit at exit 31.

Arthur: Who is running the shuttle from Troutdale outlet mall?

- That is Sasquatch shuttle. They are not here today at this meeting. They did say that it is busy. Memorial Day weekend was the busiest

Arthur: Any early season complaints?

- The actual rec.gov permit site was accurate, but a news article had old dates so people were showing up on the 23rd when they thought permits started on the 26th. Also, if folks have a reservation for a meal at the lodge, you do not need a permits, some staffers had some confusion about that. I still get a few calls per day asking of how to access the gorge. Most folks are used to permits at this point, but folks from out of state are still calling and asking about how to access.

Ernie: How many seats on the double decker bus?

- Kent Kalsch believes that the bus holds 77 people

- AJ Zelada says that there are rooms for two bikes and can put bikes inside if room and that it's only \$5 per round-trip ride.

Bylaws Updates/Charter

Terra: The packet includes the original 1989 revised 2005 bylaws. Page 20 is the original bylaws. Breaking down the original charter going through all the sections. We updated the vision right before 2017. The vision is more than just a vision, it kind of talks about the "how". Rian's suggestion is to truncate the "how" vision statement.

Page 24 of the packet are red-lined suggestions based on updated vision from 2017.

Removed "HCRH" to make it more reader friendly.

Membership working to make the terms staggered

Arthur: Are there any requirements beyond residency?

- Not even age requirements, nothing to note beyond the residency. Residence in the county that you represent. Interest in history, recreation, preservation. That you can attend 4 times a year.

Terra drafted Members Emeritus language and wants the committee to review to ensure the suggestions hit the mark.

Meetings say 6, typically we meet 4 times a year and some other language changes.

Questions/Comments

Liz Alvis [in chat]: How long has the Hood River Gov Rep spot been vacant?

- More than 9 months, Letti Moretti became too busy to attend meetings

AJ Zelada: OR bike / ped advisory to ODOT has a student -age required seat.

Jeanette Kloos: object to any suggestion to change the name of the State Trail - it is Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail. "Columbia River State Trail" could be in Washington or a river trail. There are a lot of documents and signs with the HRH ST name.

Current adopted vision statement 2017-2025 finalized around the time that Terra started

- Rian explained his comments about the vision statement being too long. What is the overall vision? The current vision statement talks much more about what the actions are. Our overall vision should be a more timeless statement and we can keep it a little more broad. What is the committee's overall objective? What is our role in the future?
- Wayne shared thoughts on existing vision and the objectives. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd vision statement seem okay. Is the 4th statement the one at issue?
- Rian thinks that 1, 2, 3 make sense
- Arthur thinks that it might be good to provide context and vision for when the Highway was built – lower speeds, smaller vehicles, recreation opportunities, working to get back to that ethos, and what the highway was used for in the past.

More questions/comments:

- Ernie: Earlier there was a distinction between role and implementation. 1-3 are role, 4 is implementation. Implementation may change over time, roles do not. It's like the weather, it changes, and we adjust.
- Terra: It is probably time to update the vision since it's 2017-2025
- AJ: Consider the notion of stewardship as the maturity and completion of HCRH/trail is on the decade horizon.
- AJ: For action plan, will the Gorge Forum be associated with the HCRH Advisory committee? It really helped create the congestion plan, it's one of the few places where the whole actually came together with the jurisdiction parts.
 - o This committee was a good entity for some high-level issues
 - o Arthur - it seems rational for the committee to state that they can put together discussion groups still in an advisory role
 - o AJ agreed, these could be valuable in the future. Should members of other Gorge commission join? Should there be a USFS member?
- Judy Davis: Not sure that this convening of discussion groups is not part of the powers of the group
 - o Terra - membership bylaws as currently established include subcommittees. ODOT is fine with something like this
 - o Arthur asks if we can convene subcommittees – Terra added this
- Lynn Burditt: The forum was convened by the Multnomah County Commissioner following one of the FLAP grants.
- Clay Courtright: I support the vision update and it is clear that bylaws need updating. Full support from Parks.
- Liz: For example: we had requested a private homeowners meeting to discuss our concerns and it was not permitted.
 - o Terra shared the requirements about public meetings
 - o Liz asked what if it was a private homeowners subcommittee and Terra explained that it would just need to be a public meeting. Liz wanted more time to discuss – potential for a supplemental meeting?
- Arthur: Suggesting language that clarifies meetings can be held more often than quarterly, can have additional meetings as required, specialized work sessions or work groups
- Jeanette: Meetings - minimum of 4 per year - often had more.
- Question of Citizen word, quick discussion on this
 - o Terra has seen other committees replace citizen with community member
 - Judy supports
 - o If there are any issues, jump in and there will be a vote at the end
 - o Age? Arthur has no issue with county or governor appointing someone to the committee of any age. Arthur suggests leaving it up to governor
 - AJ: Defer age but may want to include phrase re: people of all abilities.
 - o Members emeritus change “insight” to “historic context and technical expertise”
 - Ernie points out that members emeritus are self-appointed. When they end their term, they choose to be involved in whatever capacity.

- Arthur and Terra suggest clarification
- Arthur: Do we request emeritus members?
 - Wayne's original idea was to have emeritus members in discussion with Kristen. The thought was that emeritus members who have been term-limited out. These people typically have more interest.
 - Wayne suggests deleting the last sentence of the members emeritus description
- Arthur noted that Terra is providing discretion to the chair
 - Updates clarify how the chair engages the emeritus members
 - Arthur thinks that the way things have been going with emeritus members is working
- Judy Davis brought up term limits
 - Arthur responds that this came up under Governor Brown and the specificity of term limits will change governor to governor
 - Judy likes the idea that emeritus members are invited
 - Arthur agrees with Judy
 - Ernie thinks that the committee extends a greeting to an emeritus member and can comment if they wish. Functionally it seems that they may come and go as they wish.
 - Clay thinks that there may need to be some level of process to vet emeritus requests. Need to be conscious of too many emeritus members and then not even a quorum
- AJ: Technical, historical, cultural knowledge
- AJ: e·mer·i·tus /ə'merədəs/ adjective (of the former holder of an office, especially a college professor) having retired but allowed to retain their title as an honor.
- Terra talked about the standardizing charter because the governor's office is working to standardize all committee charters
 - The outline has very similar titles to existing charter outline, conflicts of interest is a good addition, many of these bullets could be good
 - No action on this, just a notice that this is coming
 - Arthur: So this is something that will need edits and changes in the future?
 - Terra - yes

Rowena Fire Update

Dan Shanahan, ODOT provided a Fire Update

- Fire grew and grew, ran out of fuel along the I-84 which eventually led to reopening the Interstate
- Last night, every time we tried to open the freeway, the winds would pick up
- Freeway opened at 1:30am

- A lot of damage on the Historic Highway, 30 or 40 signs that burned up, historic mile markers are OK, wooden guardrail damaged.
- Plan is to keep the freeway open with some rolling stops
- A lot of safety considerations between the geohazard issues, trees, etc. before opening the historic highway. Forester will come out Monday to assess trees.
- ODOT Flickr account is online here: [Fire and smoke at Exit 76 | I-84 is closed between Mosier and... | Flickr](#)
- Questions
 - o Liz Alvis: do we know how it started?
 - Some investigation going into rail. USFS and state investigation. If there are any deaths, that adds another layer of investigation.
 - o Rian: Thank you to all the staff, Dan Shanahan and his team especially. ODOT doing their best to try and manage the traffic difficulties. Back open this morning is a credit to the team that worked hard. We are also on standby to re-close if conditions warrant it.
 - o Clay: Nice work Dan keeping people safe while allowing traffic flow. We are very fortunate to have such strong partners with ODOT.
 - o Kevin: The Port appreciates the partnership with ODOT and Dan's team. Thumbs up!
 - o Arthur: I have requested that if there any after the emergency things we can do to prevent some of this local emergency gridlock? But right now, it is all about property and safety
 - o Rian: Agreed that this can be an after action. Do we want to just close the freeway at Troutdale? There is room to talk about what to do better. Luckily emergency response could get through
 - o Tiffany Johnson from Region 4 introduced herself as new Region 4 manager

Historic Highway State Trail Updates

Terra: Perham Creek to Mitchell Point

- Schedule:
 - o July 2025 100% design package complete
 - Resubmitted NSA land use permit for this piece, anticipate approval in the next month.
 - Three years ago, when we went to construct the full State Trail project, bids were 40% over budget, and we created the phases.
 - o August through November 2025 WFLHD project advertisement will close
 - o December 2025-December 2026 construction
- Funding FLAP and CDS
 - o FLAP funding already allocated and ~\$1 million of CDS

Mitchell Point Drive to Ruthton Trailhead Phase 1 (M84)

- Design funding secured with \$1.5 million from ODOT
- Fall 2026-December 2027 construction schedule
- So far, we anticipate that money from NSFTLP funding will still be allocated in fall of 2026

Questions

- Arthur: Couldn't the new bid costs change things for Perham Creek to Mitchell Point?
 - o Yes, but fairly confident that bid will still come in within range of available funding.
- AJ: And is the FLAP grant safe from the present Rescission bill in Congress now?
- Arthur: Extensive discussions with residents of Mitchell Point Dr.
- Terra talked through the November opening celebration; tunnel officially opened in March 2025 due to a few delays. Since March, traditional media and social media coverage has led to a lot of visitation. The OR state parks kiosk contains information related to park rules, OPRD manages and maintains the trail with a 6am-9pm operating hours. Clay says that there are 43 parks in the Gorge, that is a lot of properties to manage. Prior to trail completion, no parking signs added up and down Mitchell Point Dr. There is also clearer one way signage towards the tunnel and a "trail ends" sign. Want to add some more signage to clearly direct folks away from the one-way tunnel.
- Liz Alvis comments: I am the point person but there are others on the call and have support from Morton Rd residents but won't speak as much on their behalf. There are 8 homes, about 25 on west side (Mitchell Point Drive) and 9 homes and about 30 Residents on east side (Morton Road). Has gone from being very quiet to extremely busy
 - o Issues
 - Safety:
 - A lot of people are not paying attention to the existing signage
 - Maps provided are showing that it is a car free zone
 - What is happening is that people are walking or biking the entire width of the road and users need to understand that there are vehicles on that road
 - o The sheriff would attest to this through their own experiences
 - If there was an accident (crash), what is the liability? There is no marking currently. If someone is going through the tunnel on a bicycle, who is at fault? It is scary for drivers regularly using the road
 - Solution: Moving the trail end to the east end of the tunnel until it can be designated as a bicycle and pedestrian trail
 - o Until there is a clear designation, asking that the trail end be moved so that peds and bikes are not on our road
 - Until the connection is made on the other side, there is nowhere for the trail users to go. Wants to keep users just to the trail.
 - o Arthur response: I think that a request from ODOT for clear statements on liability, that's a reasonable request but no one will be giving legal advice today
 - o Arthur response: What is the process for ODOT to make changes?
 - Terra: Our sign person has drawn up a sign and then need to identify funding to fabricate signs and put them up. Signs are relatively affordable and fit within the budget. Once those signs are approved, will be shared out.
 - Liz: What do we do to request the trail end sign move?

- Terra has this request and it's in process, complying with the sign regulations
- Terra explained that some signs are getting moved, some signs are getting added, trail ends sign is getting moved to where the bike/ped section ends.
- Terra explains another complication that Mitchell Point Dr is a public facility and we cannot legally excluded from the public roadway. The public is being given information that the trail ends
- Robert Voeks: What people are doing is that they are treating the Mitchell Point tunnel like the Mosier twin tunnels. Liability is a challenge. Since we don't have the other sections open, I don't think that it is going to stop people from coming there.
 - Clay responds: Individuals have some culpability if they make choices to use the facilities. What do residents suggest we do? What would be a different solution?
 - Arthur recommended Terra forward Liz's request – Terra will send
 - Liz responds that all the maps/written comms need to be corrected so that they all reflect the same info that Mitchell Point Drive shows that it's a shared roadway.
 - Add no loop language – hikers are looking for a loop.
 - Other issues such as packages disappearing, dog poop bags, interesting trespassers
 - Separate bike/pedestrian users from the State Trail.
- Mike & Debbie: Reiterating what's been said already. Our house is closest to the entrance. Seeing more pedestrians and bikes than we've ever seen before. Much more vehicles coming in and out. No trespassing signs only work so well. Moving the signs will not deter everyone but may discourage other folks.
- Arthur response: Great sympathy for these residents, has a similar situation in Hood River. Hope to improve the likelihood that all agencies can address the issue to the best of their ability
- Liz: Another huge issue is fires; homeless campers are a source of fires. Don't have fire hydrants on Mitchell Point Drive.
 - Arthur: Suggest that request signage from Sheriff's office to put up that no fire and no fireworks, summer ban. Thank you to all who shared their concerns.

Bridal Veil Bridge Rehabilitation

- Purpose of project: repair concrete, replace rebar, clean off moss and add a coating along the bridge railing.
- Terra shared photos of repairs, and then Arthur shared a historic photo of the bridge with no trees near the original bridge when completed over 100 years ago.

Multnomah Falls Viaducts Update

Jack from Western Federal Lands Highway Division was unable to attend the meeting, but sent a presentation that Terra shared.

- Purpose of project: Repairing the two 100-year-old elevated roadway or viaducts on either side of Multnomah Falls including repairing concrete and rusting rebar and adding concrete decks.
- Workers had specialized equipment to ensure that the concrete pour was even and the required fitness. Concrete poured in April, cured that month, and then re-opened.
 - o First vehicle and cyclist crossed the viaduct on May 15
 - o Final striping was done a bit later due to weather
- Terra shared photos of repairs to east viaduct
 - o Connect anodes to rebar to help reduce future rust

National Visitor Use Management Symposium Lessons Learned

- Held last week in Vancouver, WA
- The National Scenic Area staff presented at the conference for the visitor use within the waterfall corridor
- Terra ran through the presentation
 - o Statistics
 - from 2011 to 2016 annual visitation increased by 55%
 - 55% of visitors are from within 50 miles
 - o Overuse – Terra walked through the variety of strategies that have occurred over the last decade.
 - o Walked through the 2016 Gorge Tourism Studio and the 15 year vision – transportation is one piece and focuses on allowing visitors and residents to navigate around the Gorge without using a vehicle.
 - o Present day
 - ODOT and partners have completed 10 of 13 projects from the 2019 Historic Columbia River Highway Congestion and Transportation Safety Improvement Plan
 - CAT ridership has increased, happy to see folks moving out of their vehicles. Private shuttle companies have also moved folks out of their vehicles.
 - o Future – where do we go next? We likely need a paradigm shift to achieve future goals.
 - Public-private partnerships – already have some but could do more.
 - Is there a way to reconfigure Exit 31 lot?
 - Traffic pattern modifications: one-way comes up year after year
 - o Questions
 - Kate Baumgartner: Can ODOT not leverage a fee for the parking lot but maybe a public-private partnership?
 - Terra: Our understanding is that OPRD owns the land since it was part of the Benson Land Grant, ODOT could charge for parking, but the money would just go into the general fund and couldn't be targeted to support other activities within the Gorge. There are state rules for what we can or cannot do with the money. Could a concessionaire be brought in?

Yes, but that's a bigger change than what we've discussed so far. ODOT wouldn't do a concessionaire.

- Banff Case Study
 - o Area plan considerations: ecological parameters, visitor use management, sustainable development, indigenous cultural use, facility reconfiguration; expanding, linking, improving
 - o As a single entity, it is a different management structure, but very similar challenges.
 - o Lake Louise
 - 3.5 million visitors that has increased 70% over the last decade.
 - What they monitor: Traffic patterns, shuttle ridership, visitation volumes, wildlife movement, compliance incidents, ecological integrity, annual review of tactics, compliance, annual review
 - Strong push to get the word out on shuttles
 - Takeaways:
 - Don't be afraid to take management actions
 - Use data to inform and refine tactics
 - Partnership, collaboration, engagement
 - o It was both heartening and disheartening to hear this case study. So much has been done, but there is still no perfect answer to these issues, since we're all continuing to adjust, monitor, and pilot pieces to address the issues.
- Questions/Comments
 - o Arthur: Any dispersal?
 - This focus was on the two lakes, and one way in one way out locations
 - o Kate [in chat]: The more I learn about visitor management the more I understand no one has perfectly figured it out :)

Updates

AJ Question: I realize Stephen Elgart is away-but wondering if there is progress with design & pre-engineering for the Eagle Creek staircase rehab? Did a committee convene?

- Terra response: the project got caught up in the Federal freeze for signing contracts, and they just got permission to move forward.

Jeanette Kloos, Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway

- Portland regional group of the Horseless Carriage Club of America provided insurance and antique car tour is back on for July 12, 2025
- Gorge ride on June 21, watching the Rowena fire very carefully – hoping to continue to have the ride in 10 days.
 - o AJ [in chat]: 103 gorge ride registered as of jun11 including 4 kids under 6 yrs old
 - o AJ [in chat]: Big thanks to Lisa and Laurie at Dalles Chamber in securing discounts at restaurants, breweries for our 'hopeful' gorge rider this year!
- First work party June 14
 - o John B. Yeon to paint white guardrail
- Edgefield concerts

- 27 scheduled, 14 have volunteers

Kate, Travel Oregon

- Very final stages of the competitive grant application, final news on that next week.
 - Folks were impressed with the map update proposal for the Historic Highway.
- Wheel the World audit
 - Statewide program to make Oregon the first state in the country to be wheel the world verified
 - Working with media outlets to get some awareness out about that

Committee Round Table

Judy Davis

- Parking along US 30 during wildflower season. Memaloose parking area easily has 70 cars parked along the side of the road
 - At the end of the wildflower season, ODOT put up signs “no parking on shoulders” which seemed to work, but then the next weekend parking was back
- Lots of people with dogs, small children walking in the road – safety concerns since it’s on a curve.
- Rowena Crest gets lot of parking along the road but it is straighter and there is more parking up there
- Informed Wasco County that she is ready to step away from her board position – they have a candidate, but not sure where it stands at the moment.

Lisa Farquharson

- Fire updates and warnings
- Super excited about the Gorge ride, working with businesses to get riders into community
- Chamber put out a public bid for the tourism contract, 5 applicants, but we were awarded – moving forward with that work, which will include a new director position to take on tourism for The Dalles.
- Cherry Festival was a success, 1500 folks in for the events, businesses saw sales growth.
- Questions
 - Arthur: What is The Dalles saying/messaging on the fire?
 - Lisa response
 - Our tourism dies as soon as people hear the word fire
 - <https://www.thedalleschamber.com/fire-information---resources>
 - we don’t have an update on this upcoming weekend – working to get information up and share what we know.

Ernie

- Thank you all for indulgences absences and hope to be back in September for the next meeting

Arthur

- Is there a chance that we can get The Dalles back in rotation?
 - o Terra: Yes, we can plan on that

Meeting adjourned at 1:38pm