

Multnomah County Bicycle and Pedestrian Citizen Advisory Committee

October 2020 MBPAC Two Items:

Transit which benefits Bike and Pedestrian users of the Historic Columbia River Highway

GorgeTranslink.com *Everybody Rides ¡Todos Arriba!*

<p>There is a bus provider in every county. Call them for more info!</p>	<p>HOOD RIVER COUNTY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Columbia Area Transit (CAT) 541-386-4202 Columbia Gorge Express columbiagorgeexpress.com 	<p>SKAMANIA COUNTY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skamania County Transit & WET Bus 509-427-3990 <p>KLICKITAT COUNTY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mt Adams Transportation Service (MATS) 509-493-4662 	<p>SHERMAN COUNTY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sherman County Transit (Dial-a-Ride Service) 541-565-3553 <p>WASCO COUNTY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Link 541-296-7595
--	---	---	---

Eagle Creek Staircase ADA noncompliance, baby step forward!



Multnomah County and Historic Columbia River Highway

Background

1. After the Gorge Fire of 2017, ODOT formed a Congestion Plan effort & a Forum consisting of US FS, ODOT, OPRD, and Multnomah Cty. Commissioner Stegmann is the chair of this Forum. Purpose was to create solutions to solve congestion mitigation.
2. For two years (fall of 2018) Wayne Stewart and I have been pushing for the Historic Columbia River Highway advisory committee ODOT to consider a free trolley along the HCRH with no cars allowed access except for the following: residents, vendors, tourism vendors utilizing large capacity vehicles, bus tourism conveyances, state park users registered for large gatherings (e.g. birthday parties). The benefit for cyclists & pedestrian/hikers is that very few cars and professional transit drivers who know the road and the poor visibility turns.

We modeled this idea from two role models: Zion National Park and our own Washington Park Shuttle Service. Both facilities use parking lot hubs and income from parking to create/sustain the free shuttle service. In our local case, WA Park has 1500 spaces and Parking Kitty. This has 3+ million dollars income which is shared among the Zoo, Japanese Garden, Hoyt Arboretum, Children's Museum, and Forestry Center. The free shuttle which visits all venues costs a little more than 1.6 million. It has service records of increasing low income visitors in 2019-2016.

Congestion occurs due to vehicles. As I have shown before, pedestrian crossings at Mult Falls from the I-84 parking had 1200 per hour crossing the HCHR from 10 to 3-4pm. Vehicles back up almost a mile from the Lodge beyond the Wahkeena Falls parking lot. There are sometimes vehicles in both directions stalled on the highway such that emergency vehicles cannot pass the clogged artery. The parking lots are so filled with predatory vehicles waiting for a park space, that Fire trucks, Police, Ambulance would not be able to attend an emergency or turnaround and emergently return to a hospital.

3. In May 2020 the HCRH ODOT advisory finally voted on saying,

A. "...that maintaining unfettered access to the drivable Waterfall Corridor of the Historic Highway while managing the limited parking supply no longer works."

B. "...we are formally recommending that management of the "Waterfall Corridor" of the Historic Columbia River Highway (from Portland Women's Forum to Ainsworth State Park) be changed from a "car centric" to a "transit and bicycle oriented" approach..."

C. "...The present car centric approach to managing congestion on the Historic Highway is no longer working. Conversion to a transit and bicycle oriented approach offers the best chance of managing use going forward while providing recreationists with a high quality outdoor experience. We ask that you take the lead with agency partners to move forward with this recommendation. The Advisory Committee is ready to meet with you and/or the Oregon Transportation Commission to discuss our recommendation in detail."



In addition, Both Friends of the Gorge and Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway have signed a parallel letter to encourage use of Transit as a solution no matter how temporary for all 'experiments' in congestion mitigation. In the past several weeks a reservation system was put into operation for visitors to Multnomah Lodge. BUT the Gorge Express was completely suspended and not allow to function to bring people to the I-84 parking (exit 31) site for Multnomah Lodge and Falls.

This letter requests that ODOT allow Gorge Express have priority in the provision of services to Multnomah Falls; its absence sends a poor signal of integration of transit within ODOT strategy; reaffirms ODOT is a vehicle centric philosophy and is not considering a multi-modal-non-car centric solution to congestion mitigation for the HCRH. The letter ends with a request for priority of having a full functioning Gorge Express along the HCRH and a fully present member in a decision making body making congestion mitigation decisions.

My request to the Multnomah County Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee is that we send a similar letter.

The letter would urge Multnomah County commissioner Chair Kafoury and all County commissioners to

1. To concur that a non-car centric solution is necessary to solve congestion mitigation and that we support the HCRH ODOT Advisory committee decision to support this strategy and

2. To continue present Transit temporarily suspended in 2020 due to Covid-19 in a safe manner as demonstrated in many other cities and

3. To reinforce that the Gorge Express is an integral solution to the Historic Columbia River Highway congestion mitigation and

4. To support increased safety along the Multnomah County eastern county for the Multnomah County Sheriff, Emergency Medical services, and the Fire Response system.

We would end requesting that Multnomah County send a concurrent letter agreeing with letters from HCRH Advisory to ODOT, Friends of the Gorge, and Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway.

I would like to make a motion at our meeting in October to enable this be done as soon as possible.

A. J. Zelada, OD

Attached:

HCRH ODOT FinalLetter Letterhead.pdf, Letter from HCRH Advisory to ODOT
ODOT.LOS.GorgeAccess.pdf, Letter from Friends/Gorge & Friends/HCRH





Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee

Region 1 Headquarters
123 NW Flanders Street
Portland, Oregon 97209
Phone: (503) 731-8200
Fax: (503) 731-3266

Director Strickler
355 Capitol St, NE MS 11
Salem, OR 97301

September 24, 2020

Dear Director Strickler,

The Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee is a body dedicated to providing advice to the Oregon Department of Transportation along with the Oregon Parks and Recreation District (OPRD) on the reconnection and rehabilitation of the Historic Columbia River Highway and the Historic Highway State Trail. Our focus of the past 33 years has been how to reconnect the Historic Highway, and we're proud to be able to say that the full reconnection of the 73 miles is within reach. As we near completion of the State Trail, we recognize that the Historic Highway and Trail will continue to draw cyclists and hikers to the Oregon side of the Gorge to observe the breathtaking vistas and take in the world-class destination that we are working to create.

The Historic Columbia River Highway is notable and important as the first scenic highway in the United States, and the designer, Samuel C. Lancaster, ensured that the Highway reflected the highest aesthetic and engineering standards for its time, that "laid lightly on the land." In addition, the highway was designed as a tourist facility, so, as Sam Hill said, "We can cash in year after year on our crop of scenic beauty, without diminishing it in any way."

In order to continue this scenic experience in the Columbia River Gorge, the Historic Highway Advisory Committee has articulated a vision statement, which includes the following:

Preserve, restore and maintain drivable portions of the Historic Columbia River Highway, including historic features, for slow speed enjoyment of waterfalls, cliff faces, tree-lined "canopies", colorful wildflower meadows, and open vistas. It is the journey, not the destination that matters.

Provide a safe and positive visitor experience throughout the length of the Historic Highway and the State Trail between Troutdale and The Dalles. Given the expected population growth of the Portland – Vancouver metropolitan area, this may require limiting speeds, limiting access to certain attractions at specified times, encouraging alternative modes of transportation, controlling and charging for parking, and encouraging visitors to start their Gorge experience from Portland or from one of the Gorge communities.

Over the past thirty or so years, we have also seen an increase in congestion and safety issues throughout the corridor as the number of vehicles traveling the Historic Highway has grown, creating concerns that the current situation is not meeting the committee's vision statements.

Since 2014, the Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee has been confronted with congestion issues along the "Waterfall Corridor" of the Historic Highway (Historic Highway) between Portland Women's Forum and Ainsworth State Park. Some of the major issues include:

- Multnomah Falls is the most visited natural recreation site in Oregon.
- Between April and November, parking lots often fill before 10 am and remain full until around 5 pm.
- Frequent traffic back-ups near Multnomah Falls on the Historic Highway exasperate motorists and hinder search and rescue, police, fire and other emergency service providers.

- Careless drivers create a serious safety hazard at the I-84 Exit 31 parking lot, which is frequently full. Vehicles occasionally back up onto the fast lane of Interstate 84 at this left exit while trying to enter the lot. There have been fatal crashes at this exit and serious safety concerns remain.
- Designated parking areas for other waterfall trailheads accessible from the Historic Highway are often full by mid-day and motorists waiting for available parking spaces back up traffic and/or park illegally.
- Completion of the State Trail, expected in the mid 2020's, will significantly increase the number of bicyclists (and pedestrians) on the Historic Highway between Troutdale and The Dalles as visitors and recreationists will be drawn by the world-class facility under development. Conflicts already exist between motorists and bicyclists along the "Waterfall Corridor" and these conflicts will increase as visitor demand increases.
- Because the Historic Highway pavement is narrow and curves are sharp, larger vehicles — such as RVs and tour buses — have trouble maneuvering when the Historic Highway is crowded with smaller vehicles.

ODOT and its partners (USFS and OPRD) have worked together for years trying to mitigate congestion while continuing to allow unrestricted access to the Historic Highway and Multnomah Falls. There is a need for all organizations involved in land and transportation management in the Columbia River Gorge to collaborate on developing a vision for the future. Organizations on the Oregon side of the River include the USFS, OPRD, ODOT, Gorge Commission, Hood River, Wasco, and Multnomah Counties as well as local transportation and transit providers.

Mitigation actions accomplished or underway to date include:

- Installing overhead VMS signs warning when the Exit 31 parking lot is full.
- Installing gates to close the eastbound Exit 31 exit ramp.
- Removing or blocking informal parking areas along the Historic Highway.
- Striping fog lines to allow for parking enforcement.
- Posting pedestrian crossing guards at Multnomah Falls.
- Subsidizing public transit service from the Portland Metro Area (Gateway Transit Center) including a shuttle between Rooster Rock State Park and Multnomah Falls.
- Instituting an additional restriction on vehicle length between Portland Women's Forum and Ainsworth State Park from 50 feet to 35 feet.
- Lowering the speed limit east of Corbett to Bridal Veil from 55 mph to 40 mph.
- Creating a "Gorge Forum" to continue conversations on access and congestion challenges amongst agency partners in the Gorge.
- Coordinating with existing programs, such as Ready, Set, GORge! communication and outreach to move visitation further east and to less busy times to reduce peak demands on the Waterfall Corridor.
- Developing a long-term Columbia Gorge Express transit funding and governance strategy: Columbia Area Transit took over inter-city service in November 2019. The Rooster Rock shuttle has funding through summer 2021.

While these actions help reduce congestion, they are unable to keep pace with the overwhelming increasing population of the Portland-Vancouver metro area. Looking forward, the population of the Portland Metro area is projected to increase 30-35% by 2040 — adding an additional 525,000 people. Many of these newcomers will be outdoor enthusiasts who will be heading to the Gorge and other outdoor recreation destinations within a 90-mile radius to recreate on a frequent basis. How are we going to accommodate them?

Historic Highway Advisory Committee Recommendations

After careful consideration, the Historic Highway Advisory Committee concludes that maintaining unfettered access to the drivable Waterfall Corridor of the Historic Highway while managing the limited parking supply no longer works. We must find a new approach to providing a quality recreational experience consistent with the National Scenic Area and the historic nature of the Highway. Visitors are less likely to enjoy the scenic vistas and take in the grandeur of the journey when they are stuck in traffic congestion or searching for a rare parking space in a corridor full of vehicles. Today's experience is not consistent with the world-class destination the original designers envisioned.

Therefore, pursuant to the Advisory Committee's responsibilities under Senate Bill 766 (1987), we are formally recommending that management of the "Waterfall Corridor" of the Historic Columbia River Highway (from Portland Women's Forum to Ainsworth State Park) be changed from a "car centric" to a "transit and bicycle oriented" approach

that is more welcoming to all forms of transportation. We understand ODOT, USFS, and OPRD staffs will need to undertake much integrated planning with stakeholders and the public in order to make these kinds of changes.

For example, our discussions have included the following points to consider:

- Develop a free Waterfall Corridor shuttle to encourage the spreading of recreation use over the entire 13 miles of the Waterfall Corridor.
- Convert the Exit 31 lot to a transit hub, excluding personal vehicles. Tour bus operators and regional transit providers will use the transit center.
- Control visitor personal vehicle access to the Waterfall Corridor during heavy recreational use hours and days. Maintain access for the approximately 50 homeowners, businesses, including access for vendors, bicyclists, emergency services and employees.
- Allow the public to have full access via private vehicles to the Historic Highway when the shuttle is not in operation.
- Secure one or more large parking lots (e.g., Rooster Rock, Troutdale, Cascade Locks) to intercept motorists heading to Multnomah Falls. Recreationists will need to be shuttled to and from Multnomah Falls (Exit 31 on I-84).
- Identify sustainable funding such as a parking charge or other visitor fee to pay for this shuttle service and the Waterfall Corridor shuttle.
- Continue regional transit service linking Portland, Troutdale, Multnomah Falls, Cascade Locks, Hood River, Mosier and The Dalles. This will ensure that persons without access to a personal vehicle will have equitable access to Multnomah Falls and the Waterfall Corridor.
- Work with USFS, FHWA, Oregon, Washington, transit providers, tour operators, local governments, transportation management organizations, other stakeholders and the public to develop a Regional Transportation Access Plan
- Consider the development of an online app to provide prospective visitors with a way to book their time to visit the falls or ride transit.
- Request federal funds for the U.S. Forest Service, in partnership with Oregon and Washington to develop a set of alternatives and lead a NEPA effort to identify any legislative changes and enable the agency to move forward with implementing a new approach.

Summary

The present car centric approach to managing congestion on the Historic Highway is no longer working. Conversion to a transit and bicycle oriented approach offers the best chance of managing use going forward while providing recreationists with a high quality outdoor experience. We ask that you take the lead with agency partners to move forward with this recommendation. The Advisory Committee is ready to meet with you and/or the Oregon Transportation Commission to discuss our recommendation in detail.

Regards,



Arthur Babitz, Chair
Hood River County Governor's Appointee



Wayne P. Stewart, Vice-Chair
Multnomah County Appointee



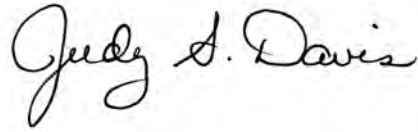
Bill Pattison, Hood River County Appointee



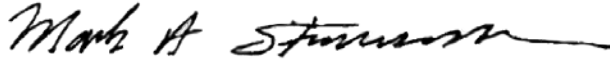
Ernie Drapela, Multnomah County Governor's Appointee



Francie Royce, Wasco County Governor's Appointee



Judy Davis, Wasco County Appointee



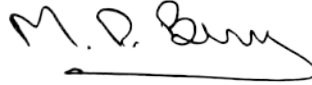
Mark Stevenson, OPRD



Rian Windsheimer, ODOT R1 Manager



Art Carroll, Member Emeritus



Marc Berry, Member Emeritus



Kristin Dahl, Travel Oregon

Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee



September 10, 2020

RE: ODOT Strategy for Gorge Express and Columbia Area Transit

Dear Director Strickler,

The Friends of the Columbia Gorge, along with the Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway affirm support for the Columbia Area Transit (CAT) and specifically the Gorge Express to continue providing passenger service within the Columbia Gorge National Recreational Area.

We understand the complexity of closing and re-opening access to our different unique areas governed by ODOT, OPRD, US Forest Service, etc. while ensuring public safety during natural or people induced catastrophes, addressing safety associated with congestion, and maintaining public health during our current pandemic event.

At the same time, we see a huge need to continue the Gorge Express as the various agencies are rolling out access. There is ample evidence that with proper safety practices, transit can carry passengers at low risk. The New York subway and bus system continues to provide a clean and safe environment while following the present CDC guidelines. TriMet is able to provide transportation safely for passengers relying on buses and the MAX.

As you employ novel strategies of opening up access to trails within the waterfall corridor in association with OPRD and US Forest Service, and opening up the use of I-84 intra parking lots, we urge you to allow the Gorge Express to have priority in the provision of services. Its absence sends a poor signal of integration of transit within the ODOT strategy. This absence directly hurts people of color and people with low incomes. It signals that access to the Gorge remains based on an automobile centric philosophy. As you have from the Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee to ODOT, we need multi-modal, non-car centric solutions to congestion mitigation along the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH). The Gorge Express has been a great success in bringing a more equitable balance of access options to the Gorge. The Gorge Express offers a sustainable solution to climate change while meeting the needs of businesses, tourists, visitors, residents, and employers.



HOOD RIVER | PORTLAND | WASHOUGAL

GORGEFRIENDS.ORG

Please raise the priority for having a fully functioning CAT Gorge Express along the highway and at the table for making decisions for the Historic Columbia River Highway's re-opening and congestion mitigation.

Sincerely,

Kevin Gorman, Executive Director
Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Jeanette Kloos, President
Friends of the Historic Highway

Cc: OTC Chair Bob Van Brocklin
ODOT Region 1 Manager Rian Windsheimer
ODOT Gorge Express Manager Valerie Egon
ODOT Regional Transit Coordinator Jason Kelly
Multnomah County Commissioner Lori Stegmann

Historic Columbia River Trail Staircase West of Eagle Creek/Bonniville Dam ADA non compliant asset from 1987.



1. ADA Law suit: ODOTLost:

Update statewide curb ramp inventory
Inventory of pedestrian crossing signals

2. Trail and OPRD requirements are pushed forward 3 to 5 years. Accomplishment of the list in these items are expected to be accomplished 3-4 years after that point in time.

3. I pushed for reconsideration in middle Sept for intersection of I-84 parking lot (exit 31) and Mult Lodge Falls as to their pre covid pedestrian crossing of 1200 people/per hour which has no ADA signalization

4 I requested consideration of pre-engineering dollars to accomplish ADA satisfaction for both Staircase and Pedestrian crossing -in order that the project be shovel ready incase monies became available during the next Transportation ACT. (More rural dollars are projected.

5. David Evans and Associates has agreed to do a Pro-Bono Scoping of an ADA solution to the staircase. SAY: HOORAY !

Staircase solution is difficult engineering feat.

