

Appendix B: Gorge Trails to Towns (GT2T)

References:

The North Bonneville Comprehensive Plan dated 2007

The North Bonneville Heritage Trails Plan

Friends of the Columbia Gorge (website)

Skamania County Parks Master Plan

Project Overview:

Gorge Trails to Towns (GT2T) is a vision for a comprehensive trail system that wraps around the Columbia Gorge, linking communities with recreation, benefiting tourism, and highlighting and enhancing the beauty and wonder of the Columbia Gorge.

The *Friends of the Columbia Gorge* is leading this effort and is seeking input and partnerships from Gorge communities, citizens and elected officials.

The Project

The Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area (CRGNSA) reached its 25th year in 2011. That year the *Friends of the Columbia Gorge* launched the first phase of GT2T. The goals are:

- To create 60 miles of new trails, connecting urban areas to the CRGNSA lands
- To benefit Gorge economy by connecting trails to communities
- To support sustainable recreation through alternative transportation options
- To create contiguous parcels of protected lands that benefit wildlife

The Trails

The first phase of the GT2T includes three segments; one of which affects the City of North Bonneville. This segment is the Washougal to Stevenson segment. This is a 34-mile trail vision connecting Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge, Cape Horn, Pacific Crest Trail, Beacon Rock State Park, and the Bridge of the Gods as well as the communities of Washougal, North Bonneville and Stevenson. Most (approximately 90%) of the proposed route is on public land, including portions of the Pacific Crest Trail. Advocates have formed a foundation to solicit money for building these trails and will launch a fundraising campaign to purchase or gain access through the remaining 10%. They have been working with business and economic development officials in Skamania County, as well as with the Forest Service and others.

While no specifics are available at this time, it is anticipated that the trail would be utilized by hikers and bikers only. No motorized vehicles would be allowed. Horses may or may not be allowed depending upon existing regulations. (For the city, this would mean only hikers and bikers.)

North Bonneville Participation

The North Bonneville City Council endorsed and pledged to pursue the concept of the GT2T through a letter of support dated February 28, 2012.

Early discussions with the GT2T organizers indicate a couple of possible links between the city and the trail system. One proposed path routes the trail through the City of North Bonneville along a large portion of the existing North Bonneville trail system. This concept is compatible with the North Bonneville Comprehensive Plan and the Heritage Trails Plan as well as the Skamania County Parks Master Plan of 2010.

Comprehensive Plan Goal 7 Circulation and Transportation of the North Bonneville Comprehensive Plan states “bicycle trails or paths may as part of long range planning, link the city to adjacent major areas, e.g. Stevenson, Beacon Rock...”

Comprehensive Plan Goal 9 Open Space, Parks and Recreation of the North Bonneville Comprehensive Plan states “The city should incorporate access to recreational, environmental and historic sites. Examples include Fort Cascade ... and Pacific Crest Trail.”

The Heritage Trails Plan (Appendix A to the Comprehensive Plan) states “... the Heritage Trails Plan will provide an avenue towards a future connection to the PCT [Pacific Crest Trail] and thus meeting this goal in the future.”

Skamania County Parks Master Plan 2010 lists 2 of 9 priorities under Priorities for Improvement as “Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Connecting Carson/Stevenson/North Bonneville” and “Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Connecting Skamania County along River east and west.”

A second proposal involves linking the city with lands the Friends of the Columbia Gorge own along Cedar Creek. This large parcel is not currently linked to any trail.

A map has been generated by Skamania County GIS analyzing the potential for a trail connecting Beacon Rock State Park, North Bonneville and Stevenson. This identified the possibility of following old roads as potential trail locations.

Benefits to North Bonneville

The City of North Bonneville could benefit by participating in the Gorge Trails to Towns project. Hikers would enter the town from both east and west. Those crossing the Pacific Crest Trail could connect with the city for food or lodging. Since North Bonneville is the first city encountered after entering the western end of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, the trail could also benefit the city businesses.

Likewise the trail would further enhance the existing trail system within the city. Much effort has been expended in promoting the Heritage Trails within the city. The further exposure of our trail system to additional hikers can only benefit the city.

Potential Issues:

The proposed route through the city could follow existing paved trails. For the most part this presents no problem, however at the western and eastern terminus of the proposed trail there is the potential for increased conflict with local residents. This could be eliminated by minor modifications to the plan.

West – The existing trail system lies between Pahatu and Far West streets, bringing hikers in uncomfortably close proximity to residents' homes. Constructing a new extension of the trail along the north side of Cascades (approximately 600') would eliminate this conflict.

East – The existing trail system lies between Look-In Lane, Lakeside Way and Shady Oak Lane. Constructing a new section of trail along the south side of East Cascade Drive beginning at the intersection of East Cascade Drive and Hot Springs Way and continuing east to intersect with Corps of Engineers property at Bass Lake would eliminate the conflict.

North – Other alternative routes could follow existing utility easements that run east to west through the city limits. These would require some kind of crossing over Hamilton Creek. The Friends of the Columbia Gorge own a parcel of land along Cedar Creek to which they would like to possibly incorporate into this trail system.

Potential Funding Sources

- The National Park Service oversees the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. Given that Lewis and Clark came through this area in 1805-1806, the NPS is a potential partner.
- The US Forest Service oversees the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The proposed GT2T lies within the CRGNSA,
- The Friends of the Columbia Gorge are seeking financial partners for this project.
- WA State Recreation and Conservation Funding Board provided a grant to Stevenson for their portion of the trail to the Bridge of the Gods.

North Bonneville Funding Sources

With the potential for attracting additional visitors to our city, this project could qualify for partial funding through Hotel/Motel tax revenues. In addition, it may be possible to apply for a grant from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Funding Board.

(The following is provided for the purpose of seeking grants to assist with funding of the North Bonneville portion of the GT2T trail. This utilizes the guidelines established in WAC 286-26-080.)

1. Goals and Objectives

GT2T is a vision for a comprehensive trail system that wraps around the Columbia Gorge, linking communities with recreation, benefiting tourism, and highlighting and enhancing the beauty and wonder of the Columbia Gorge. The *Friends of the Columbia Gorge* is leading this effort and is seeking

input and partnerships from Gorge communities, citizens and elected officials. Starting in 2011, the *Friends of the Columbia Gorge* launched the first phase of GT2T. Their goals are:

- To create 60 miles of new trails connecting Gorge urban areas to National Scenic Area lands
- To benefit Gorge economy by connecting trails to communities
- To support sustainable recreation through alternative transportation options
- To create contiguous parcels of protected lands that benefit wildlife

2. Description of Planning Area

The first phase of the GT2T includes three segments; one of which is the Washougal to Stevenson segment. This is a 34-mile trail vision connecting Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge, Cape Horn, Pacific Crest Trail, Beacon Rock State Park and the Bridge of the Gods as well as the communities of Washougal, North Bonneville and Stevenson. Most (approximately 90%) of the proposed route is on public land, including portions of the Pacific Crest Trail. Advocates have formed a foundation to solicit money for building these trails and will launch a fundraising campaign to purchase or gain access through the remaining 10%. They have been working with business and economic development officials in Skamania County, as well as with the Forest Service and others.

While no specifics are available at this time, it is anticipated that the trail would be utilized by hikers and cyclists only. Those portions of the trail system wholly within the boundaries of the city of North Bonneville will comply strictly with the regulations and desires of the city.

3. Analysis of Need

From the beginning of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) in 1986 there has been a call for a way to connect the various trails throughout the gorge. In addition, the various communities within the gorge have sought avenues to improve their economic development. Skamania County identified bicycle/pedestrian trails connecting the county as one of their highest priorities in the 2010 Skamania County Parks Master Plan.

4. Public Involvement

The public has been invited to and participated in various surveys and public meetings concerning recreation in the gorge. Skamania County distributed a survey in 2008 addressing local recreation. As summarized in the 2010 Skamania County Parks Master Plan, bicycle/pedestrian trails connecting the east and west sides of the county were among the highest priorities.

In June 2012, at a North Bonneville Planning Commission meeting, various members of the public provided positive input and support for the GT2T proposal. Surveys were distributed asking for public input at that time. Results indicated strong support from those who responded (11 out of 12).

5. Capital Improvement Program

The portion of the proposed GT2T trail through the City of North Bonneville would utilize the existing pathway system. These trails are collectively known as the Heritage Trail System. The Heritage Trails committee has designated five separate loops through the town, the most recent of which is the Bigfoot Discovery Trail designed for children.

6. Plan Approval

The Skamania County Parks Master Plan has been approved by the Skamania County Commissioners, and the North Bonneville Heritage Trails Plan has been approved by the North Bonneville City Council.