



WESTSIDE TRAIL MASTER PLAN

May 2013 open house summary

Introduction and overview

In May, the Westside Trail master plan project team and stakeholder advisory committee members hosted two open houses at the following locations:

- Deer Creek Elementary School on May 8 from 6 to 8 p.m.
- Stoller Middle School on May 14 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Approximately 94 people attended the open houses and offered preferences on potential trail routes and priorities for trail funding. Many of the participants had attended the 2012 open houses in May and October and were familiar with the project. The largest new user group consisted of equestrians, of which there were many at both open houses.

Open house materials included segment maps, information on how public feedback shaped the master plan, the benefits of habitat restoration along the trail and a questionnaire. The same information was provided through a virtual open house posted on the project's web page for those unable to attend one of the meetings but interested in providing feedback. The questionnaire was available online from May 15 to May 31.

28 questionnaires were completed: 25 at the open houses (11 at south, 14 at north) and 3 online. This document provides a summary of the feedback from the questionnaires and comments recorded on flip charts and maps at the open houses.

Open house outreach

More than 14,000 postcards announcing the open houses were mailed to neighbors and local businesses within one half-mile of the trail study segments. An email was also sent to the project's interested person list.

Information about the project and the open houses appeared in the newsletters for CPOs 1, 4k, 4b and 6 as well as in the Oregonian. The open houses were also advertised in the Asian Reporter.

An announcement about the open houses was posted on Metro's website. A link to the online questionnaire appeared in a number of blogs and web pages including oregonlive.com. The meetings were also advertised on the Tualatin Hills Park and

Recreation District website. A media release was issued to local newspapers the Thursday prior to the first open house.

Open house format

Metro staff, project consultants and members of the project stakeholder advisory committee staffed the two open houses. Metro Councilors Kathryn Harrington and Craig Dirksen attended the open house in their district and spoke briefly about the project. Project manager Robert Spurlock gave a 20 minute PowerPoint presentation to provide a general project overview for the public which was then followed by a 20 minute question and answer session. Attendees also talked with staff and members from the advisory committee and provided comments on flip-charts as well as sticky notes that could be posted on segment maps.

There were six stations at each open house:

- Station 1 – welcome/sign-in. Staff at this station welcomed participants and asked them to sign in. Participants were given a questionnaire and asked to fill it out before they left. Greeters also oriented attendees to the station flow and pointed out the children’s activity area and refreshments.
- Station 2 –segment maps. Each individual trail segment was displayed on boards which allowed participants to circulate freely and view the draft final alignments in larger detail. Comments were captured on flip charts in addition to sticky notes that could be placed on the map boards.
- Station 3 - benefits of habitat restoration. Elaine Stewart from Metro staffed this area and informed participants on the opportunity to improve habitat along the trail.
- Station 4 – cost of transportation projects and responses to public feedback. The transportation funding board provided a comparison of costs of transportation projects to provide context of how the cost of the trail compared to other transportation infrastructure projects. The public feedback board demonstrated how the project team had responded to public input gathered at prior open houses.
- Station 5 – children’s activity table. This station provided art supplies and activity books.
- Station 6 – refreshment table. Coffee, water and juice was available to meeting attendees. Sandwiches were available to members of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee who were volunteering at the meeting.

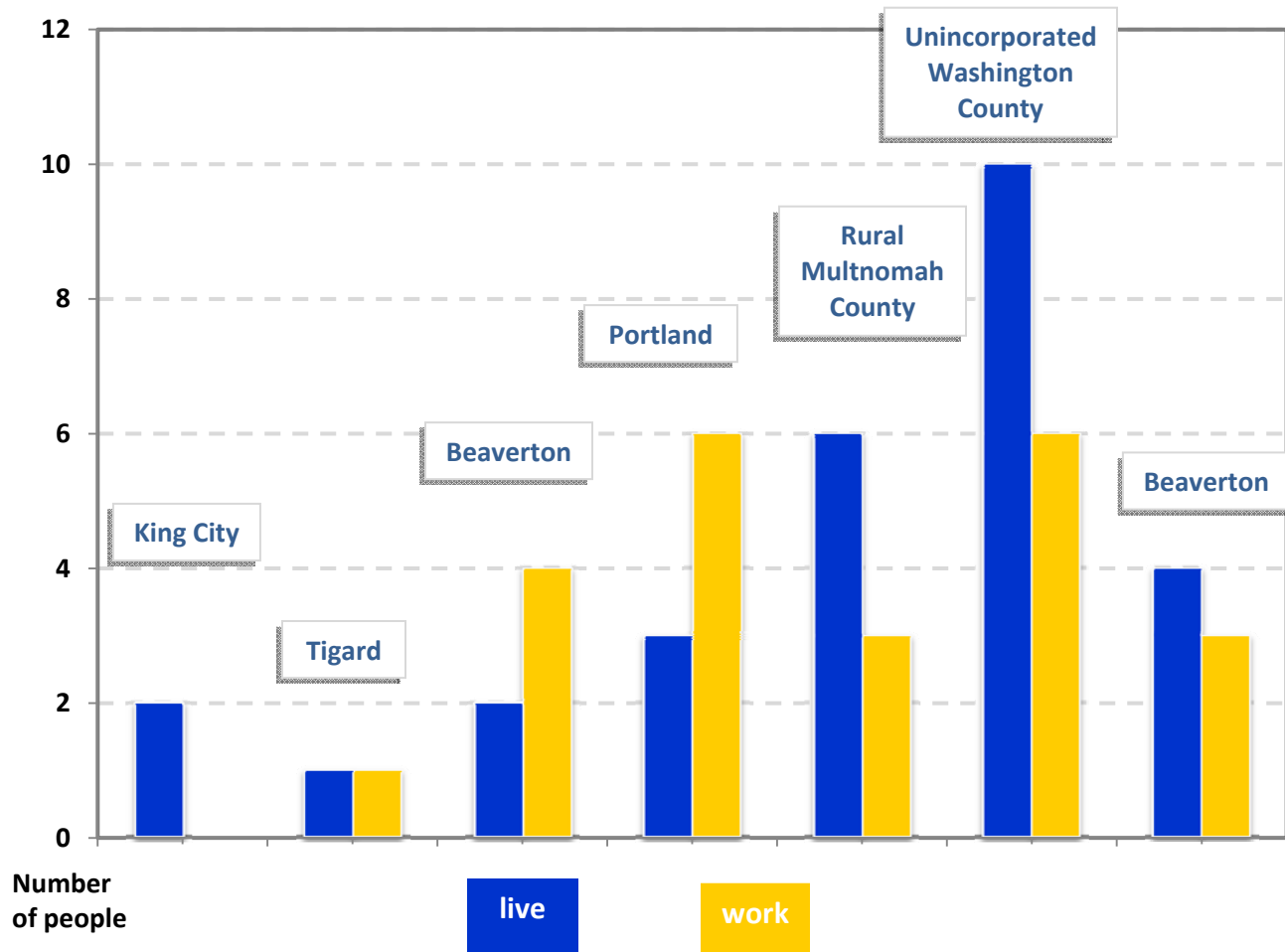
Respondent profile

The questionnaire asked commenters where they live and work. As shown in Figure 1, 36% of respondents reported living in unincorporated Washington County. Rural Multnomah

County and Other locations were the second most-identified areas of residence. Few respondents reported living in Portland, Tigard, Beaverton or King City.

A quarter of respondents reported working in Portland, with unincorporated Washington County and Beaverton also commonly identified work locations. Overall, more commenters reported where they lived than where they worked. Five respondents did not identify a work location, with only one noting he / she was retired.

Figure 1.



Responses to open-ended questions

The questionnaire posed five open-ended questions:

- “What areas of the Westside Trail are you most interested in? Please be as specific as possible in describing the location(s).”

Commenters asked for information on a range of topics. They were particularly interested in equestrian use of the trail including soft surface trails to accommodate horses and trailhead designs that accommodate horse trailers. Respondents were also interested in the maintenance of native habitat. Suggestions included avoiding the use of pesticides and fertilizers along the trail and forming a stewardship program to remove invasive species and maintain planted habitat. Additional interest was expressed about the dangers from the power lines, how the trail will integrate with existing Forest Park trails, creating canoe and kayak access at the Tualatin River Bridge and the project timeline and costs.

“Please share your thoughts and ideas about potential routes we shared with you tonight.”

Attendees were asked to share what they thought about the potential trail routes that were presented. During the open house it was made clear that many of the alignments have already been changed based on public input (such as the modification at Bull Mountain) but that comments were still being received regarding trail alignment. Many individuals approved the proposed alignment without additional comments.

Of those individuals that did have comments the majority requested the addition of soft surface trails for equestrian use along the entirety of the trail. Equestrians also specifically emphasized the need for a soft surface trail for horses around Bull Mountain. Cyclists and pedestrians expressed a need to improve the on-street cycling and pedestrian facilities on NW Skyline Blvd. and NW Springville Road in order to safely connect to Saltzman Road and access Forest Park. Commenters noted the existing safety issues on these facilities for pedestrians and cyclists as the roadways have high speed limits and narrow shoulders. Other concerns included ensuring the route does not impact wildlife.

Only one individual expressed concern that the routes seemed pre-decided by the planners and that public input was not being integrated into the proposed alignments.

“Which part of the trail is the highest priority to you to complete, and why?”

Respondents had different priorities for trail construction. Various commenters supported the trail construction from the Tualatin River through King City while others identified the need for an improved connection between Springville Road and Forest Park. Connections from Forest Park to areas south were also identified, including connections to the following: Tualatin Hills Nature Park, Bethany, Cedar Hills and the Ice Age Tonquin Trail.

Respondents also identified specific crossings (Sunset Highway and the Tualatin River) or routes within specific communities (Bethany and Bull Mountain) as priorities. In addition to pinpointing specific parts of the trail, commenters prioritized building first those parts that:

- Are easier and cheaper to construct because they are flat or soft surface.
- Allow bicyclists and pedestrians to avoid heavy auto traffic.
- Do not impact wildlife.

- Intersect with other existing trails.

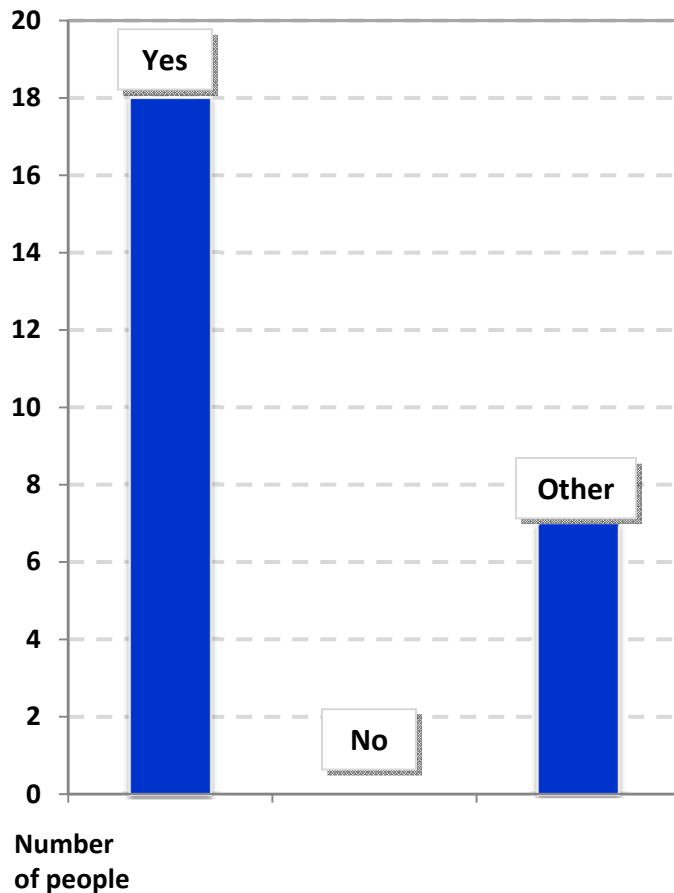
“Please give us your thoughts about the open house”

Feedback on the open houses was largely positive and that the meetings were helpful and informative. Respondents stated that staff was well prepared, the maps were helpful and that their input was well recorded and heard. Those with concerns requested to learn more about the project timeline, cost estimates and potential funding sources. There was also a request to further publicize the meetings to equestrian organizations as many equestrian attendees were unaware that the project was occurring prior to the meeting.

“Were you able to share information with project staff that you feel was important?”

The questionnaire asked about the effectiveness of the open houses. Of those who completed a questionnaire at the events, the majority responded they were able to share information with project staff (see Figure 3).

Figure 3.

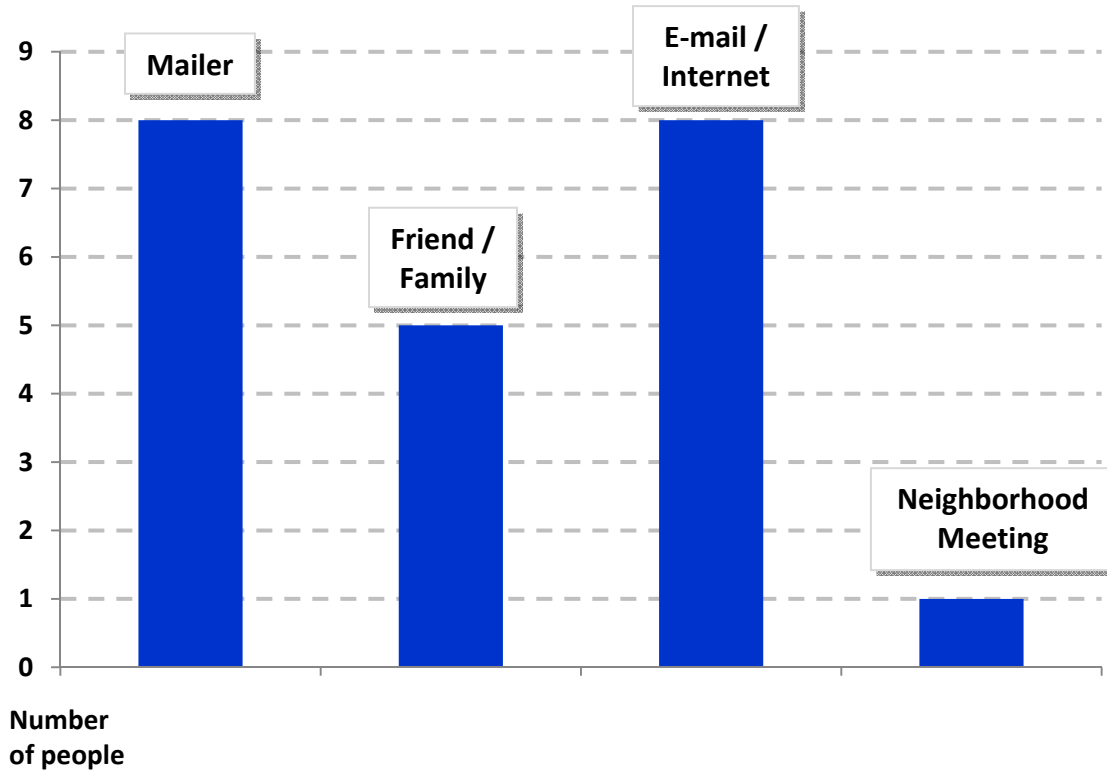


“How did you hear about tonight’s open house?”

The majority of respondents heard about the open house either through a postcard mailer or via e-mail or internet (see Figure 4). Many of the attendees who were informed via e-mail received an alert about the open houses through an equestrian list serve. Other

individuals heard about the open houses by word of mouth from friends and family members. One individual heard about the open house at a neighborhood meeting.

Figure 4.



General Open House Summary by Date

South open house – May 8, 2013

The south open house generated fewer comments than the north open house with fewer questionnaires completed. Almost all of the questionnaires included at least one or two answers to the open-ended questions. Comments included:

- Strong support for equestrian access along the trail alignment. Individuals requested soft surface trails for equestrian use and horse trailer parking areas at trailheads.
- A request for kayak and canoe access at the Tualatin River Bridge.
- A concern about the power lines and potential dangers these structures present.
- Comments about trail alignment, including support for using the transmission corridor for most of the trail and a desire to avoid steep grades to support bicycling and ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Requests to improve outreach to the equestrian community to ensure that individuals are informed about trail development.

There were also two general statements submitted from individuals that were not part of a questionnaire. Both comments requested soft surface trails adjacent to the paved multi-use path for equestrian use. One comment specifically requested a trail to be used as a 'gallop' which would be separated from the paved trail with a low rail.

North open house – May 14, 2013

Nearly all of those filling out questionnaires at the north open house answered at least one of the two open-ended questions and the majority of individuals fully completed the questionnaire. Comments included:

- General expressions of support to the project. Very few comments were in opposition to the project.
- Concerns about wildlife impacts.
- Questions about project cost, timeline and funding opportunities.
- Requests for equestrian soft surface trails around Bull Mountain and along the entirety of the trail alignment. Requests for equestrian access at trailheads so parking lots can accommodate horse trailers.
- Identified existing safety concerns for cyclists and pedestrians on NW Skyline Blvd. and NW Springville Road. Identified that the connection from these roadways to NW Saltzman Road as crucial to providing access to Forest Park.
- Recommendations related to trail design, including ensuring use of native vegetation, formation of a stewardship group, adequate trails for equestrians and improved on-street cycling and pedestrian facilities
- Support for protecting natural wildlife habitats and to restrict the use of pesticides on the trail.

There was also a general statement submitted from an individual that was not a part of a questionnaire. This individual did not believe that a bicycle trail should be located in a rural reserve area due to wildlife concerns.

Virtual open house – May 15, 2013 to May 31, 2013

With only four responses to the questionnaire online, only two of the respondents included detailed answers to the open-ended questions. One of the other respondents did not answer any open-ended questions and the other had difficulty opening the open house materials available on-line and therefore did not provide comments. Of the individuals who provided input, comments included:

- Expressions of general support and opposition for the project.
- Areas of interest included:
 - Bannister Heights neighborhood crossing and Bannister Creek
 - Trail connection to the north and over Highway 26
 - Murrayhill / south Beaverton

- Concerns about project costs and the questioning of project demand.
- A statement that planners made trail alignment decisions prior to the open houses and have little interest in receiving feedback from residents to inform and modify alignments.
- Question about when the trail will be completed.
- Questions about crossings of highways and other roadways, including the costs of creating new crossings versus using existing crossings.
- Concern that without the highway overcrossing the trail will not be touted as a regional connector.