



Appendix C: May 2018 Community Engagement Report

By the W-T Group

Appendix to the Metro Parks and Nature Americans
with Disabilities Act Transition Plan

Issued July 2019

oregonmetro.gov

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METRO

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
COMPLIANCE INITIATIVE**

**METRO REGIONAL CAMPUS AND
SELECTED PARKS AND NATURE SITES**

FINAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

June 15, 2018

Introduction

In the fall of 2017, Metro awarded work on two projects related to the accessibility of Metro sites and facilities. The first was to conduct an access audit of the Metro Regional Campus, and prepare a phased retrofit schedule to address access deficits. Cassie Salinas is the Project Manager. The second was to conduct an access audit of selected Parks and Nature sites, including some trails, and to develop a phased retrofit schedule to address access deficits. Nicole Lewis is the Project Manager.

Both projects were awarded to Recreation Accessibility Consultants, which is now the WT Group Accessibility Practice. John McGovern, the Leader of the WT Group Accessibility Practice, co-facilitated with Salinas and Lewis.

The phased retrofit schedule is known as a “transition plan”. The US Department of Justice (DOJ) regulation implementing title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), at section 35.150(d) spells out the transition plan requirements. One of those requirements is that Metro must afford opportunities for feedback from the public in regard to the transition plan priorities and preferences.

It is toward that requirement that this report is addressed. Metro coordinated two community engagement events, one on May 3, 2018 and one on May 5, 2018. The purpose of this report is to note any overarching comments and to describe the ways in which the community engagement events have influenced the final recommendations to Metro. This report is not intended to review every comment made by community members at the two events.

Organization

Salinas and Lewis enlisted the assistance of community members and other Metro staffs to collaboratively plan the two events. The community members represented themselves as persons with disabilities, and in some instances, disability advocacy organizations.

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Community members who facilitated groups included:

- Debbie Timmons
- Georgena Moran
- Patricia Kepler
- Jennifer Wilde

Staff played an integral role in planning the events as well. Metro staff who participated in help co-facilitate the discussions included:

- Lupine DeSnyder
- Gary Shepherd
- Raahi Reddy
- Tim Suelter
- Nancy Somerville
- Jim Caudell
- Gaylen Beatty

Format for Both Events

On May 3, 2018 and May 5, 2018, Metro staff (Salinas and Lewis) planned and facilitated community engagement events, each lasting two hours. Both events were formatted to meet the objectives of the citizen and staff planning committee. The May 3rd event was held at Independent Living Resources, and the May 5th event was held at the Metro Regional Center.

Metro provided an appreciation of participation by community members in the form of a \$50 VISA gift card. This was an effective tool, as 24 persons attended the first event, and 16 attended the second event. Childcare and food were provided as additional incentive to attend either workshops.

Both events included three goals: providing information to the community members, facilitating discussion by the community members, and reporting by community members on access preferences and priorities. Upon arrival members chose the table at which to sit.

To attain those goals, the agenda below was developed by the planning group:

- 1) Welcome, review of Metro, review of Parks and Nature (Salinas, Lewis, 10 min)
- 2) Presentation regarding access audit and transition plan (McGovern, 15 min)
- 3) Questions (Salinas, McGovern, 5 min)
- 4) Small Group Discussions (four tables, each facilitated by a community member and a Metro staff, 45 min)
- 5) Report back (group leaders, 20 min)
- 6) Closing & Appreciations (Salinas, Lewis, McGovern, 10 min)

Small Group Agreements

Groups function well when group members agree to participation by a set of conditions. When group members feel safe and valued, effective participation is more likely. Toward that end, the group members entered into an agreement to:

- Take space/make space
- Step up/step back
- Stories stay, lessons go
- One conversation at a time
- Assume good intent, but own the impact of your words
- Speak from you own experience

Group members introduced themselves, and then began the three activities.

Small Group Activity One (10 minutes)

The small groups were each asked to ***describe a welcoming or challenging experience at a park, cemetery, or government building, and explain their answers.*** What follows is a summary of the comments from both events.

CHALLENGES:

- Doorways – power assist, timing of opening
- Pathway surface
- Stairs without rails
- Steep paths in parks
- Old sidewalk, paths, curb cuts
- Lack of accessible bathrooms
- Digestive flare up – bathroom distance, restrooms too far away
- Parking lot – proximity to park assets
- Use online view of park layout to plan my visit
- Important to access info online with images
- Special site to help folks plan a visit with an ADA expert
- Kids with mobility issues – hard to utilize facilities
- How to make accessible and fun for all kids
- Transition area for play areas to grass surfaces
- Reduce transit area from park (grass)
- Maintain roots – so not mess up asphalt
- Benches are critical – have railing to grip
- Lighting/light adjustments from one area to another
- More light the better
- Obstacles in areas of changing light
- Sturdy seating with arm rest
- Map parks with benches so know where the next one is
- Background and lettering contrast on signs
- Site maps in parking areas
- Regular placement of telephones (zoo does well)
- Being able to access area just to be involved
- Parking (ramp deployment)

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- Surface material – wood chip is bad
- More direct access routes
- More info on area before guests arrive – online resource
- Irregular location of telephones
- Anything that isn't logical where it is
- Increase area in restrooms
- Kid-sized changing tables do not work for adults with disabilities
- RR – toilets that are supported from the ground (wall hanging mount can be dangerous)
- Soap/paper towels in a consistent place
- More areas for resting along routes
- Getting close to the action
- Raised campsites – Yurts
- Used needles in park (add sharps containers?)
- Economics of park use...sometimes fees are higher than can be afforded
- Lack of accessible features
- Need more accessible tables
- Glendoveer Park walks are bark dust – tough if have mobility issues
- In rain – loose surfaces people will get stuck
- Blue Lake, don't take kids because roots are tearing up the cement routes
- Blue Lake trails – I use stroller to help care for my kid
- Scouters Mountain in Clackamas, should be less steep
- Transportation – not every park has a transit stop – need more regular, direct transit
- Small font size on signs is hard to read
- Powell Butte (safe, sturdy black top – could do w/cane) or single track, consistent edges
- Lack of audible cues, e.g., wind chimes

WELCOMING:

- Parking was close, firm
- Route surface was softer surface – not just paved, packed dirt, gravel
- Playground – new surface examples such as poured-in-place
- Accessible routes to the “good” stuff and connecting features
- More places to sit, more benches and types– along trails, play areas, use areas
- Aides available – proactively provide, make availability known
- Concrete surfaces
- Blue Lake staff is always available and helpful
- Accessible egg hunt
- Power-assisted door openers
- Paved trails
- Van accessible spaces connected to trails, dispersed and not just grouped together
- Litter bags provided
- Surface materials...planked, concrete, asphalt good

Small Group Activity Two (20 minutes)

The small groups were each asked to ***describe the order in which physical assets should be retrofit, and to explain their answers.*** What follows is a summary of the comments from both events.

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- Parking lot – transition areas to trails – must be clear and reasonable to navigate safely
- Benches for people with needs – some need a place to sit frequently
- Restrooms - need more near accessible parking
- Signage – at access point, gives people info to make informed decisions
- Accessible route bathroom to benches to accessible picnic area
- Wayfinding to benches
- Be clear about what type of accessibility is provided, degree of difficulty
- Make borders – visual and tactile, landmarks too
- From trail to benches and isolated grassy areas
- Lighting – if it is dark outside good lighting helps with wayfinding and safety
- Use color scheme of highway signs
- Thinking about kids with different abilities, maybe a park more accessible that's covered, people using hands
- Shelter from sun and weather, covers or fabrics
- Use GoPro videos of trails so guests know what to expect on trails
- Metro should have links for sites and parks on website
- Access process - if can park, then need to move around
- Start with the basic infrastructure and access to that
- Basic improvements to existing facilities - smooth out walkways, restrooms, benches
- Share Information about sites on the website

Small Group Activity Three (5 minutes)

The small groups were each asked to ***identify specific parks to have a higher priority for retrofit***. What follows is a summary of the discussions from both events. In some groups, access to a type of asset was described.

- Glendoveer Park
- Blue Lake (fishing pier, events, all bathrooms need access)
- How to bring youth and others to parks
- Oxbow Park
- Howell
- Broughton Beach – access to beach
- Access to water
- Access to parking
- Access to restrooms
- Clear signs
- Online information

Themes

Each small group reported out to the entire group, on both days. These were brief reports. The themes of the reports are highlighted below. These themes are not an order of priority. Metro should, as it has in the past, remain flexible in how it orders retrofits. This allows Metro to take advantage of opportunities to accelerate retrofits, or when the need arises, make other retrofits a higher priority.

We also note that one or two attendees preferred that trails not be paved. We are in support with that, but do not agree that trail tread surfaces can be dirt, grass or larger stone.

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Decomposed granite, crusher fines, or other similar materials can make an excellent trail surface. These surfaces do require more maintenance than other surfaces.

- As to what to retrofit, start with the basics
 - Parking
 - Restrooms
 - Benches
 - Trail maintenance
- Provide information more effectively
 - Signs at site entrance
 - Online
 - Good signs in parks at assets
 - QR codes
- More benches, of a wide variety of types
- More benches alongside trails for those needing more frequent rests
- How Metro staff greet park visitors
 - Training (people-first)
 - Training (about accessible assets, about location of assets)
- Specific park assets
 - Fire pit
 - Trail head
 - Trail width (the wider the better)
 - Relief areas
- Parking
 - Space location and dispersion
 - Proper dimensions
 - Signage
- Trail
 - Consider challenge levels, not unlike those used in ski areas (green, blue, black)
 - Surface in trails should be poured or planked
 - Tell us where accessible trails are located
- Camping
 - Need paved areas
 - Proximity to restrooms good, but consistent odor

- Info
 - Improve online information
 - More print info
 - Media
 - Signage for wayfinding
- Paths
 - Paved is better than chips, planked good alternative
- Restrooms
 - Variety of seats
 - Adult sized changing tables
- Use a variety of sizes and types of seats
- Beach access (use mats)
- Location of accessible parking access aisle (L or R)
- Public Transit Stops helpful...seek route changes or use shuttles
- Other underserved groups (economically challenged, etc.) need attention
- Use social stories as does PDX

Transition Plan Influence

Out of the two sessions and the subsequent discussions, we have derived the points below as “influencers” for our transition plan priorities.

1. We will “start with the basics” and recommend that assets such as parking, exterior accessible routes, signage, and restrooms be made accessible as a part of Phase One retrofits.
2. We will create a new recommendation that addresses the development of Metro website information about sites that is more robust and perhaps includes GoPro imagery as well as data such as that required by the 2013 Outdoor Developed Areas Final Guideline.
3. We will recommend that Metro gradually phase out the use of engineered wood fiber (EWF) as a playground surface. While this surface may cost less to acquire and install, it is not being maintained properly and to do so would increase the operating cost significantly. EWF may have a role as a trail surface, but here too it will require significant maintenance.

- We do note some confusion on this issue. Some referred to a surface called “bark chip”. There is no such surface. There is a wood chip playground surface and it is not, and never has been, an accessible surface. This issue deserves attention as a training and awareness topic and can be incorporated into items 2 and 3 above.
4. We will recommend that Metro acquire and experimentally use surfaces such as [Mobi-Mat](#) and [AccessMat](#) at sites, for routes through parks, beach access routes, and routes in cemeteries.
 5. We will recommend that Metro consider a community discussion regarding trails. The purpose will be to identify sites where new accessible trails can be developed, and to discuss the types of surfaces that can be used for the trail tread. Current trail sites typically feature difficult terrain. The “program” of trails must include trails with easier to use slopes, wide tread, easy cross-slope, and other characteristics. This discussion can also seek feedback regarding a classification of trails, much as in the way ski runs are classified. By engaging the community, Metro can determine how high a priority this should be.
 6. We will recommend that Metro approach TriMet and seek the location of transit stops at heavily used Metro sites.
 7. We will recommend that Metro, as a standard practice, deploy a variety of types of seats, some with arm rests, some without, and some as single seats, and some intended for group seating. Additionally, we will recommend that more seats be made available at sites.
 8. We will recommend that Metro leave electrical outlets operational at sites, for use by persons with disabilities.
 9. The community members who participated in this process have a lot to offer to Metro. It may be wise to consider the establishment of a standing disability-centric advisory committee.

Other points made by community members are a part of our recommendations to Metro.

Conclusion

Community engagement is a critical part of developing a transition plan. At Metro, both staff and community members played a key role in the process. As time passes, Metro should modify the plan and the order in which plan work occurs. Take advantage of opportunities such as unplanned work that must occur at a site, and incorporate access into those projects.

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