



# PORTLAND OFF-ROAD CYCLING MASTER PLAN

Project Advisory Committee Meeting #5

## Meeting Summary

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**MEETING DATE:** THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2016  
**LOCATION:** BUREAU OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY, 1900 SW 4TH AVENUE, PORTLAND  
**TIME:** 4:00 PM – 6:30 PM

### In Attendance

#### **CAC Members Present**

Punneh Abdolhossieni  
Matthew Erdman  
Mike Houck  
Adnan Kadir  
Kelly McBride  
Renee Meyers  
Evan Smith  
Michael Whitesel

#### **Agency Representatives and Resource Members**

Astrid Dragoy, *Portland Parks & Recreation*  
Shannah Anderson, *Bureau of Environmental Services*  
Lucy Cohen, *Portland Parks & Recreation*  
Robert Spurlock, *Metro*  
Michelle Barker, *International Mountain Bike Association*  
Maya Agarwal, *Portland Parks & Recreation*  
Abra McNair, *Portland Bureau of Transportation*  
Jennifer Devlin, *Bureau of Environmental Services*

#### **Audience / Members of the Public**

Andy Jansky  
Bob Lessard  
B. McGillacuddy

#### **CAC Members Absent**

Kelsey Cardwell  
Erin Chipps  
Jocelyn Gaudi  
Carrie Leonard  
Torrey Lindbo  
Jim Owens  
Nastassja Pace  
Bob Salinger

#### **Staff and Consultants**

Michelle Kunec-North\*, *Project Manager, BPS*  
Tom Armstrong, *Interim Project Manager, BPS*  
Lori Grant, *Associate Planner, BPS*  
Kristen Lohse, *Consultant Project Manager, Toole Design Group*  
Rob Burchfield, *Tool Design Group*  
Nat Lopes, *Technical Consultant, Hilride*  
Tim Brooks, *Winterbrook Planning*  
Adrienne DeDona, *Facilitator, JLA Public Involvement*  
Jamie Harvie, *JLA Public Involvement*  
  
John Miller  
Catherine Thompson

\*Attended by phone

## Overview

The committee:

- Received an overview of system-level planning, design and management best practices and environmental inventories.
- Reviewed the environmental portions of the Impacts and Benefits report and Best Practices research.
- Worked in small groups to identify additional impacts or best practices that should be considered; whether any criteria should preclude a site from consideration; and how best practices could balance recreational and environmental needs.

## Welcome, Agenda Review & General Announcements

Adrienne DeDona, JLA Public Involvement, welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the agenda. She explained the meeting would focus on the Impacts Assessment and Best Practices research, with a primary focus on environmental impacts. Staff, committee members and agency representatives introduced themselves.

- A committee member asked the protocol for providing comments on the documents in the meeting packet. Adrienne replied that comments could either be shared during the small group discussion, during the time for clarifying questions, or be sent directly to the project team.

## Overview of System Level Planning

Kristen Lohse, Toole Design Group, provided an overview of system-level planning and how best practices shape the approach. She said that the Off-Road Cycling Master Plan is intended to take a comprehensive approach to system-level planning, supported by a broad range of research. She noted that drafts of the Impacts and Benefits Assessment and Best Practices reports were included in the meeting packets. She said the Impacts and Benefits Assessment was divided into three categories: Environment, Human Health and Safety, and Economics. She said the conversation tonight would focus on the environmental section in order to allow time for in-depth discussion of this important topic. She said the Best Practices report focuses on planning, design and management of off-road cycling resources. She said the best practices would also inform the Site Suitability Criteria, which would help vet potential sites based on well-informed criteria that meet the project goals. She said that the impacts assessment and best practices research may not be all the information available, but the team has done their best to be comprehensive and to identify what they know and what they don't know.

Kristen explained that candidate sites would be reviewed using the Site Suitability Criteria and that this process would be the topic of the next meeting. She said candidate sites would be considered against three broad categories: Ownership and Regulatory Framework, Physical Framework, and System Planning. She noted that some of aspects of the categories were straightforward while some included many complicated factors; the shades of gray were where the Best Management Practices will be most helpful and also where the project team would like input. Kristen explained that the screening process would start very broad and then begin to whittle sites down. It would include a fatal flaw analysis, then a high-medium-low suitability analysis, and finally a benefits-tradeoffs discussion, in which committee members would play an important role.

Kristen provided the example of Metro's North Tualatin Mountains off-road cycling planning process, which followed a similar process to the current project. She said that process began with four potential sites and then used the same

three categories (ownership, physical characteristics and system needs) to screen sites and arrive at one proposed site. She noted that, though a site has been identified, Metro is not finished with the planning process.

Kristen said the process of developing the Off-Road Cycling Master Plan would be iterative. The team would initially use modelling and then continue to refine based on the process she had described. She said transparency was important and the team would “show their work” about how certain sites are identified.

- A committee member said that the current land base of city-owned properties would not support the type of system that the mountain biking community would like to see. He said that over the past 20 years, environmental advocates had created bond measures to fund the purchase of properties for habitat and wetland protection. He said that an outcome of the Off-Road Cycling Master Plan process should be identifying the needs and desires for parks, trails and natural areas and how to fund them.
  - *This committee member later clarified his remarks, saying that a larger land base would be needed to create a truly satisfactory off-road cycling system. He said that the next time the city or environmental advocates go after a bond measure, off-road cycling advocates should join forces with them to get additional land and operations and maintenance funds. He said the goal should be to work together to increase the resources available for an integrated parks system.*
- Another committee member said the “type of system” had not yet been defined. Kristen Lohse, Toole Design Group, added that facilities may include a mix of trails and other facilities such as bike parks and pump tracks.
- A committee member asked whether the process could expand their analysis to non-city-owned properties that may be able to be developed. Kristen replied that the purview of the project was limited to city-owned land; however, the project team would not ignore opportunities on other properties that may be uncovered during the process.

Robert Spurlock, Metro, provided a clarification regarding a point in his presentation from meeting 2. He told the committee in meeting 2 that “Metro had promised that there would be mountain biking in the North Tualatin mountains,” whereas the resolution actually stated that “Mountain biking would be considered in the North Tualatin Mountains.”

## Impact Assessment & Best Practices: Focus on the Environment

### Overview of Ecological Resources

Lori Grant, BPS Associate Planner, presented an overview of ecological conditions in Portland (presentation attached). She said Portland had been inventorying and mapping natural resource features in the City for about 30 years. She said that state planning laws required an inventory of environmental features and programs to protect them. There are a variety of regulations and management plans currently in place to do so. She said the inventory maps and regulatory documents would help guide the project team and committee as they considered site locations and suitability for off-road cycling. She provided an overview of the natural resources inventory, including examples of inventory maps. She explained that this inventory and computer modeling was also used to rank the value of the functions of identified natural features, and environmental regulations are typically applied accordingly. She noted some inventories and subsequent protection methods had not been recently updated, but that a lot of data about environmental resources existed that could inform the site suitability considerations and later, site-specific planning.

## **Ecological Impacts and Best Practices**

Nat Lopes, Hilride Progression Development Group, and Tim Brooks, Winterbrook Planning, presented their research and findings on ecological impacts of off-road cycling and best practices to avoid and mitigate for impacts (presentation attached).

Tim provided an overview of the scientific research related to the ecological impacts of off-road cycling facilities. He explained the limitations and gaps of the research, which is primarily focused on cross-country trails. He said the report would inform development of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Portland and explained what BMPs are, how they would be used and how they relate to an adaptive management approach. He said the report had been provided to the committee for review.

Tim and Nat presented the ecological impacts and corresponding best management research. The majority of ecological research has focused on impacts to soil, vegetation, wildlife and waterways. Tim described the potential impacts on each feature based on case studies in the literature, and Nat presented best practices for facility siting, trail design, construction and management to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts to each feature. It was noted that many more examples were provided in the full report.

## **Small Group Discussion**

Committee members were divided into three groups for discussion. Agency representatives were also included in the group discussions. Groups were facilitated by members of the project team and asked to discuss the following questions:

- Are there other impacts or best practices that should be considered that are not addressed?
- Thinking about the overarching mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, then mitigate ecological impacts), are there potential negative impacts that you believe would preclude consideration of a site for off-road cycling? Why?
- How might we use the best practices to balance the need to preserve natural resources while at the same time providing for increased recreational opportunities?

Adrienne explained the goal of the exercise was to hear and collect ideas from committee members. She said it was not expected that groups come to consensus on the feedback or address all issues in this meeting. She noted that any questions or concerns raised during the discussion could be addressed during the report out or during the following meeting.

## **Report Out and Larger Group Discussion**

### **Group 1 report out (Nat Lopes, Hilride)**

- Impacts and best practices that should be considered:
  - Impacts of dog walkers and dog usage of the parks.
  - Are there City standards regarding trail density within parks? Would trail density recommendations be part of the plan?
  - Indirect environmental impacts, such as the carbon footprint of driving to trailhead.
    - Nat noted that this is sometimes considered during NEPA processes.

- An agency representative said there had been studies regarding urban cycling and correlations with public health / carbon emissions, but was unsure whether this would be relevant to off-road cycling.
- Best practices for reducing invasive species distribution, such as bike washes.
- Need to consider existing regulations during vetting of potential sites.
- Prioritize low-hanging fruit, such as surplus properties and inventories.
- Consider the benefits of replacing nuisance uses with sanctioned uses.
- Is there an inventory of current trails and whether they meet trail building standards?

### **Group 2 report out (Tim Brooks, Winterbrook)**

- Impacts and best practices that should be considered:
  - Core habitat is a fundamental consideration, which should be strongly recognized in the best practices.
    - The City’s natural resource inventory maps core habitat, so this should be included in the reports.
  - Narrower trail widths may not be appropriate for users who need more width, which could lead to those users going off-trail and result in more impacts.
  - Education and signage; Powell Butte could use more signage indicated where mountain bikers should be.
  - How are rules going to be enforced? People are still riding at Riverview.
  - Include more case studies on pocket parks and smaller parcels; several examples were given.
    - A committee member noted that Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park, East Bay, CA was included in the report; however, the scale of the land mass was much larger than what is available in Portland. Need to consider differences in scale.
  - Consider invasive species impacts.
    - Consider bike wash stations.
    - Open access trails could cause problems.
- Reasons to preclude sites from consideration:
  - There are key habitats that we want to protect, such as wetlands. Also, some areas are not appropriate for any human use or access. These should be called out specifically.
- Answer to question 3: Apply best practices.

### **Group 3 report out (Kristen Lohse, Toole)**

- Impacts and best practices that should be considered:
  - Trail density/carrying capacity
  - Studies about wildlife in urban settings
- How best practices may help:
  - Displacement of nuisance activity, including homeless camps.
  - How to consider the potential for environmentally degraded sites. For example, they might be appropriate for development because they don’t currently have environmental value or alternatively it might be better to consider their potential environmental value if they were restored.
  - Consider “leftover landscapes” as possibilities for trails, such as dead-end roads that aren’t maintained or edges of parks.
- Need to consider off-road cycling opportunities that aren’t just single-track on a mountain to other opportunities, such as placing gravel next to Springwater Trail.

- It was noted that making use of smaller sites was also brought up in Group 2.
- An agency representative gave the example of decommissioning streets to use them as trails.
- A committee member said discussions should be based on the experience being sought – defining a site by size (medium, small) is not necessarily appropriate.
- Nat Lopes agreed, that their recommendations refer to sites as natural areas, open spaces, developed parks, linear park spaces, right of ways, etc.

Adrienne asked the group to identify any common themes from the small group discussion. One theme identified was the best practices research should consider trail densities and sizes of core habitats.

Nat Lopes made a comment about trail width and density in relation to the Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park. He said Pleasanton Ridge had similar characteristics to a lot of the properties in the Portland region, including wide fire trails. He said they were able to increase trail density while reducing the square mileage of the overall, existing trail system. A committee member asked whether the ideal trail width would depend on intended use. Nat agreed but noted that all research shows that narrower trail width have fewer environmental impacts.

## Community Engagement Update

Adrienne explained that the project team is working on developing a multicultural outreach approach based on feedback from the committee at the previous meeting. She said they are collaborating with the Community Cycling Center.

Lori said that current outreach activities are focused on input to the Needs Assessment, but that the project would continue to do community engagement throughout the summer, including getting input on potential sites when we reached that point in the process. She noted that the questionnaire responses are being sorted to separate self-selecting respondents from those approached at events. It was noted that the differences in responses may provide some insight into different community desires.

- A committee member said it could be valuable to also separate questionnaire responses by event.
- A committee member asked how many people had replied to the survey. Lori replied they had received 230 responses so far.

## Public Comment

Catherine Thompson commented on the Survey of Design, Planning and Management Best Practices for Off-Road Cycling Facilities document, Appendix A. She said that she felt that pedestrians who use Forest Park were not being talked to. She said she was concerned that summaries of Portland documents were not representative of actual results. She specifically called out the summary for the Forest Park 2012 Recreation Survey, saying she felt that it misrepresented the respondent population, the age of park users, the number of people entering the park on foot, and the number of people that supported additional bike trails by not including enough detail from the original report. She also spoke about the Forest Park Resources Management Plan, saying that the summary did not include trail requirements. She suggested that the summaries be reviewed for accuracy and that links to the full studies should be provided for those that want more information. She provided in writing references to sections of the survey that should be incorporated into Appendix A. She said that the committee and documents had not included a discussion about the laws governing Forest Park and she felt this was an oversight.

Robert Lessard submitted a written comment:

1 – With respect to both biodiversity and “ecological function” indices, there needs to be more quantification of the relative contributions of trail development versus urban development, to the loss of biodiversity or “ecological

function,” that is, how much was lost from 1900 to present from urban development and what additional fraction will be lost to trail development?

2 – In any discussion about environmental impacts, there needs to be an analysis of wildlife population trends, what are the abundance trends of wildlife populations? Are they declining, what caused declines. Surely trail development can’t be the cause.

3 – In the Taylor & Knight 2003 study, the study found no difference between hikers and bikers in the response of the three species studied. The authors note that as bikers travel faster and may cover more ground in a given period of time, then bikers may disturb more wildlife per unit time. The authors make this speculation but did not study it; therefore, it should not be treated as a finding.

## Next Steps

Adrienne said the next meeting would be June 23 from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. The focus would be Site Suitability Screening Process, following up on questions and comments from today’s meeting, and providing an update on the community outreach process.

Adrienne thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting.