



## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** Thursday, October 13, 2022

**To:** SCVAP Stakeholder Advisory Committee

**From:** Matt Hastie, MIG|APG  
Brandon Crawford, MIG|APG

**Subject:** Advisory Committee Meeting #2 Minutes

### Attendees:

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#### Committee Members

Sara Baughman, US Forest Service [sara.baughman@usda.gov](mailto:sara.baughman@usda.gov)  
Paul Bertagna, City of Sisters [pbertagna@ci.sisters.or.us](mailto:pbertagna@ci.sisters.or.us)  
Chris Cheng, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) [Chris.CHENG@odot.state.or.us](mailto:Chris.CHENG@odot.state.or.us)  
Annie Marland, BPAC, Sisters Trails Alliance, [annie72sisters@gmail.com](mailto:annie72sisters@gmail.com)  
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Ian Reid – USFS, Sisters District [ian.reid2@usda.gov](mailto:ian.reid2@usda.gov)  
Peter Russell, Deschutes County [peter.russell@deschutescounty.gov](mailto:peter.russell@deschutescounty.gov)  
Steve Swisher, Former Deschutes County Planning Commissioner [swishersn@live.com](mailto:swishersn@live.com)  
Matt Cyrus, Current Deschutes County Planning Commissioner [matt@aspenlakes.com](mailto:matt@aspenlakes.com)

#### Consulting Team

Brandon Crawford, APG|MIG [bcrawford@migcom.com](mailto:bcrawford@migcom.com)  
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Karen Swirsky, Kittelson & Associates [kswirsky@kittelton.com](mailto:kswirsky@kittelton.com)

### Notes:

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#### Project Timeline and Status Update

- Brandon Crawford briefly reviewed the project overview/background and provided a status update on the project (see [project website](#)).
  - See complete minutes and presentation for more information on Advisory Committee Meeting #1: <https://projectcomment.com/websites/79/pages/433>

- Sisters Trail Alliance (STA) shared proposed trails with the project team to add to the web map and share in the virtual open house. Local equestrian groups and the Central Oregon Trails Alliance (COTA) helped STA with the proposed trails.

### Open House and Survey Results, Recommendations

- Brandon shared the open house and survey results. He noted the following:
  - The virtual open house had 614 visits, and the survey had a total of 83 responses.
  - Trail connections and access to nature/scenery are the most important trail objectives among survey participants.
  - Access to regional destinations and other communities are less important trails objectives.
  - Hiking/walking is the highest current use for trails among participants, while equestrian is the least trail use type.
  - The strongest support among participants is for more hiking/walking and biking trails, and the least support is for more motorized sports trails.
  - The majority of participants agree with the proposed trails provided by STA.
  - Separation of trail types and trail connections are highly rated needs for trail system improvements.
  - Support for trails from Sisters to Black Butte and Camp Sherman is mixed among participants. Many support trail access to these areas, whereas many others cite private property and privacy concerns.
- Matt Hastie discussed the project team’s preliminary trail recommendations. Those include:
  - Support the STA trail recommendations.
  - Support clear trail signage/typology to ensure/establish separation of uses.
  - Ensure multi-use and walking trails are ADA accessible.
  - Support trail connections to services and between communities (despite lower survey ratings for trail connections to communities and destinations, many respondents identified specific trail connection needs to other communities in open-ended responses and generally expressed support for trails serving mobility needs).

### Open Discussion

- Steve Swisher noted there were contextual pieces missing for the survey results related to Black Butte. He remarked that the original idea was for a trail from Sisters to the Black Butte Trailhead and that some community members were opposed to trail access to the Black Butte Ranch (BBR) community. He also noted that opposition to the trail primarily came from Tollgate community residents who believed a trail would pass directly through their community and were concerned about trail users traveling directly through Tollgate. The proposal ultimately did not include a trail through the community. Instead, it went around the community, with a related connection to it. Steven noted that the Sisters School District was supportive of a trail to the Black Butte Trailhead from the high school and Tollgate trail system, not necessarily to the BBR.
- Annie Marland added that Black Butte residents indicated they wanted a trail to their community from a previous survey several years ago.
  - She also noted the Sisters High School to Tollgate trail was shifted farther east of the subdivision to help preserve privacy.
  - She added that communication between communities got off track during the Black Butte Ranch trail discussions.

- Peter Russell noted that trails are often enjoyed more by the people visiting them than by the people who live by them. He was surprised there wasn't more input on impacts on wildlife and habitat.
  - Karen Swirsky responded that impacts on wildlife and habitat would have to be assessed by the US Forest Service (USFS) through an environmental review process if they move forward with proposed trail recommendations.
  - Matt added that part of our next steps will be to outline a process for moving forward with the proposed trails, including steps that would need to be undertaken by the USFS or others.
- Matt noted that despite the somewhat low number of survey responses in comparison to the area's entire population, the online open house had many visits (614 total visits) and that the large discrepancy between open house visits and survey responses may be an indication that people were fine with the proposed trails or satisfied with the current trail system. People generally feel more compelled to respond to a survey when they feel strongly opposed or supportive of its recommendations.
  - Ian Reid added that more trails advocates likely saw this survey due to the distribution list or they were more likely to seek it out.
- Ian noted that the previous BBR trail proposal to Forest Service was specific to BBR as an alternative to Highway 20.
  - Steve noted that it started as a discussion for access to the Black Butte Trailhead but shifted to a proposal to BBR.
  - Ian commented that the Forest Service started to move forward with the BBR trail but received a notice to sue from an area resident. They dropped the trail proposal and decided they would revisit it if there were broad-based support from the community. That support could be in the form of letters of support from County Commission, Sisters City Council, and/or the BBR Board of Directors or the Tollgate and Crossroads Community Homeowners Associations. Without the broad community support, the Forest Service likely will not initiate a process to move forward with planning for this trail.
  - Ian added the original proposal would likely have relatively little impact on wildlife since it would be in an already highly disturbed area running along Highway 20.
  - The BBR trail would need federal approval since it would go through Forest Service land and would need to go through an environmental review process pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Ian noted the NEPA process is a heavy lift, so the Forest Service needs to prioritize trails that won't face as much local opposition.
  - Karen commented that the County BPAC outlined several proposed trails, which included BBR trail. As part of that process, the County moved the trail from a low to a high priority.
  - Peter added that the BBR trail is a high priority from County staff and for the County Transportation System Plan (TSP) update process, but the TSP requires approval from the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners. He noted that since the BBR trail would go through Forest Service land, it would need to get federal approval and require preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. He added that ODOT is also looking into wildlife crossings in that area along Highway 20, which could alleviate the wildlife impacts of the trail and potentially include a trail crossing opportunity for the trail users.
- Chris Cheng noted that ODOT is supportive of Bend to Sisters and Sisters to Redmond trails. There will still need to be a lot of conversations related to alignment/design, etc.

- Peter noted that the County has looked at many options for connections between communities, including wider shoulders on roads. The County is not prioritizing separated multi-use trails since those are significantly more costly than other improvements.
- Ian noted that a Sisters to BBR trail is not something the USFS has been working on with STA. The Forest Service has been focusing on areas with less controversy. He reiterated that the Forest Service would shift their attention back to the BBR trail if there were broad community support.
- Annie asked about trail surface types and how much of a barrier they could be. She would like to see more trails with accessible surfaces and more trail connections.
  - She added that at the beginning of the BBR process, STA was hoping the trail would be paved, which is very expensive. The Sisters High School to Tollgate trail is covered in bentonite, which essentially turns into pavement when it gets wet. She would like to see more similar surface types for flatter trails. This surface type helps prevent tire marks and reduces erosion impacts too.
- Ian asked whether e-bikes are being considered in this project. He noticed there weren't many comments regarding e-bikes.
- Matt shared an anecdote that other biking events have cautioned e-bike users to consider other cyclists around them – active transportation specialists are more concerned about how e-bikes are used rather than their general use.
- Ian noted that the Forest Service currently has restrictions on e-bikes – they're currently considered motorized. The Forest Service made recent amendments to allow local jurisdictions to regulate or recommend regulations for e-bike use on federal lands within a given jurisdiction. In this case, the County could recommend or provide rules associated with e-bike use. They would like to know if any of the proposed trails would allow or be designed for e-bikes. Sara added that the Forest Service would prefer to look at e-bike analysis Forest District-wide rather than trail by trail.
  - Sara noted that there are national classifications of e-bikes which local jurisdictions can use to determine how best to regulate them.
- Sara commented that connector routes that connect destinations/communities are more appropriate for higher developed surface types. They are particularly beneficial or necessary for trails that are more heavily used and/or are more intended for commuting rather than just recreation.

## Action Items

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- Draft Trail Concept Recommendations and a Sisters Country Trails Map with proposed trails for the TSP
- Stakeholder Committee Meeting #3 will be held in mid- to late-September