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Testimony today is on behalf of SWTrails, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations dedicated to improving the pedestrian and bicycle environment of SW Portland. We have about 100 members and sponsors and an interest list of about 1200 people.

## **Background**

SWTrails, working with the City of Portland Transportation Bureau, developed the SW Urban Trails Plan comprising over 40 miles in 7 linear trails, 2 north south and 5 east west across our part of the city. Between 80 and 90 percent of these trails are on City of Portland Rights of Way, most of which are low traffic, low speed streets mostly without sidewalks. The trail segments not on right of way are through Portland Parks and Portland Public School property.

With annual funding from the City of Portland's Bureau of Transportation in the years 2000 to 2007, we developed and maintained 25 to 30 connections on unbuilt rights of way in the SW Urban Trail network to provide essential connections for transportation and recreational purposes. We also did the field engineering necessary to install 600 or so city funded way finding signs along 6 of the 7 routes. The seventh route is the proposed Red Electric Trail, a multimodal trail connecting Washington County trails to the Willamette Greenway by several alternative routes. The Red Electric is an important TSP project.

The 30 or so connections developed by SWTrails comprised about 2 miles of trail and the installation of about 600 steps throughout SW Portland. The steps were installed on steep ground to make steep slopes safer and more walkable. Due to the terrain, the steps do not meet ADA requirements. We understand that volunteer constructed facilities in such circumstances are allowed under the City of Portland's interpretation of the ADA rules.

In 2007, we stopped bulding and maintaining the SWTrails due to the City position on liability. To remedy that situation, in 2011, the City of Portland, supported by members of SWTrails, requested the Oregon State Legislature to pass a modification to the recreational use of trails liability law to provide a waiver of liability for the adjacent property owners and the building

nonprofit organization providing proper permits were acquired. The law became effective in late 2011. SWTrails has been waiting patiently for reasonable policies to be put into place to implement the new law. In our opinion, we do not yet have a reasonable city proposal on the table to discuss.

### **Clarification of previous testimony**

First, I want to restate my request to transfer the Trails Policy from Parks to the general section of the Comp Plan. My intent was to request that all planning for active transportation facilities be handled in one location. Using the Red Electric Trail as an example, it appears to us that in 2007 when the Red Electric Plan was being developed, Portland Parks focused their planning on recreation uses to the exclusion of consideration of the greater need for a safe pedestrian and bicycle **transportation and recreation** connection from Washington County through Hillsdale to the then proposed Hooley Bridge. The community was successful in getting an alternative route included in the City Council adopted plan, over Parks staff objections. For the last 8 years, the entire SW community has been trying to get Portland Parks to focus on an inexpensive alternative using Slavin Road rather than building a very expensive set of ADA compatible switchbacks from near Corbett up to and above Barbur, about 150 to 200 feet higher on the hillside. A 5% grade route rising 150 feet would be 3000 lineal feet plus the length added for switchbacks.

My testimony was intended to centralize the planning, but let whichever organization can do construction most efficiently should do it. We also want the respective organizations to be responsible for the maintenance of the trails in their respective areas of interest: Parks for trails in Parks, Transportation for trails on public rights of way. It also was intended to assure SWTrails will continue to work with the Transportation Bureau on trails issues related to trails on rights of way and with the Parks Bureau on trails located in Parks. While not explicitly stated, it appears to us that PBOT would like to shift the responsibility for all trails to Portland Parks, to which we are strongly opposed.

A related issue is the absolute road blocks erected by Portland Parks in discussing the use of trails to move bicycles through what are frequently super blocks where alternative bicycle routes are a long distance away or developing them will be very expensive for the City of Portland.

Two examples: 1. For children seeking to ride their bicycles to Jackson middle school, a very reasonable route would go through Maricara Park. The alternative would involve riding

longer distances on streets that are more hilly, narrow and not safe. 2. There is a need for a safe bicycle route north south on SW 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue from Vermont to Multnomah. To build a safe bicycle facility will be very expensive do to the lack of space in the right of way. An alternative separated bicycle route through Gabriel Park would cost much less and be much safer to ride. In essence, Portland Parks needs to become a team player in our active transportation planning and cease being a dog in the manger.

**Today's Testimony is focused on a proposed policy that has not yet been presented to the PSC.**

I am working from a draft that is weeks old, copied below with some suggested changes proposed by SWTrails. I understand the proposal will be transmitted to the PSC within the next month. However, given the Comp Plan schedule of the PSC, **there will not be an opportunity for public testimony or comment before the trails policy is recommended to the Portland City Council.** Below are some of the policies that SWTrails would like included in the trails policy:

1. Include maps of the entire Region Trail Network, the SW Urban Trails Network and any future trails networks approved by Portland City Council as overlays in the Comp Plan so that they appear as "STARS" in the planning department and steps to retain and improve the trails are taken with every relevant development. In past years SWTrails has seen some of our work destroyed by development where the City did not take steps to even retain the work we had done, much less to assure it was improved to higher standards.
2. Set a goal to qualify our pedestrian SW Urban Trails and any similar trails as Neighborhood Greenways so that they can receive traffic calming and be posted with 20 mph speed limits. We do this for bicycles. It is our opinion that pedestrians walking in the street are as much at risk of injury from fast vehicles as those riding bicycles. We supported the state law change with the understanding it would apply to our Urban Trail system. To date, PBOT has not figured out how to implement it for our Urban Trails.
3. Include a requirement that the City of Portland **retain and maintain** the trails that are not on sidewalks. As noted above, The City provided funds to build, sign and maintain the SW Urban Trails System from 2000 to 2007. Over the years, numerous stairs and other key connections have been removed for lack of maintenance, resulting in a decrease in our pedestrian connectivity in some of the older parts of the city. We feel it

is important to reverse this trend and figure out how to retain and maintain this important grass roots infrastructure of our hilly city. This maintenance should include the SW Urban Trail Network as well as the hundreds of local trails that provide the close by cutoffs that save many many longer car trips, and contribute to the health of the person walking rather than driving.

4. Include a goal of developing relationships with nonprofit organizations who can partner with the City Parks and Transportation Bureaus to efficiently build and maintain major and minor components of our pedestrian infrastructure. Properly managed, this can be a very efficient component of our transportation infrastructure maintenance group.

# DRAFT new Comprehensive Plan policy section with changes suggested by SWTrails

(to be inserted after "Transportation" and before "Sanitary and Stormwater Systems" in Chapter 8. Public Facilities and Services)

## Trails

The City of Portland's trail system is a key part of both the City's multi-modal transportation system, its recreation system and constitute a tourist attraction. Trails provide Portlanders and out of town visitors with pedestrian and bicycle connections and access to many key destinations within the city. They also provide a place to recreate and allow Portlanders and visitors to experience the city's parks, our transportation system diversity and natural areas. The policies in this section support continued improvement, management, and coordination of the trail system.

- Policy 8.47**      **Public Trails.** Establish, improve, and maintain a citywide system of public trails that provide transportation and/or recreation options that may be a component of larger networks of bicycle, pedestrian, and recreational facilities or a local trail connection between other pedestrian facilities.
- Policy 8.48**      **Trail system connectivity.** Plan, retain and improve the citywide trail system and linkages to connect and improve access to Portland's neighborhoods, commercial areas, employment centers, schools, parks, natural areas, recreational facilities, regional trail system, and other key places that Portlanders access in their daily lives.
- Policy 8.49**      **Trail coordination.** Coordinate planning, design, improvement and management of the trail system among City agencies, other public agencies, non-governmental partners, and adjacent landowners.
- Policy 8.50**      **Public access requirements.** Require public access and/or improvement of public trails along the future public trail alignments shown in Figure 8-1. *Future public trail alignments and any other trails so designated.*
- Policy 8.51**      **Trail and City Greenway coordination.** Coordinate the planning and improvement of trail and City Greenway systems. Incorporate the pedestrian trails into the Neighborhood Greenway network and classify them alike.
- Policy 8.52**      **Trail and Habitat Corridor coordination.** Coordinate the planning and improvement of trails with the establishment, enhancement, preservation, and access to Habitat Corridors.
- Policy 8.53**      **Trail Hierarchy Suggested by SWTrails**

### 1. Regional Trails A. Multimodal Trails

#### B. Pedestrian Trails

### 2. Urban Trails

### 3. Local Trails

### 4. Demand Trails

Map not attached

