

Palouse to Cascades Trail Recommendations Report



Recommendations report to the Legislature per Chapter 413, Laws of 2019 (HB 1102)

**GROWTH MANAGEMENT
SERVICES**

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REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

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Executive Summary

Overview

In HB 1102 Subsection 1066 (see Appendix E), the Washington State Legislature directed the Department of Commerce to hire a contractor to facilitate and mediate ownership, development and use conflicts regarding the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail in Adams and Whitman counties.

According to Washington State Parks, the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail spans 4,956 acres, or 212 miles, and “is part of an emerging multi-state trail system.”¹ Current law (RCW 79A.05.115) directs the State Parks Commission to “develop and maintain a cross state trail facility with appropriate appurtenances” on the right-of-way for the former Milwaukee Road rail line.²

Commerce contracted with SCJ Alliance to facilitate and mediate as well as create this report on the work.

SCJ Alliance began work in November 2019. Key steps included:

- Making information available to the public through an official project website that included information on the history of the trail, SCJ’s intended process and events calendar
- Gathering the voice of stakeholders through an online survey, in-person and telephone interviews, advisory group workshops, public meeting presentations, and collecting feedback on draft report
- Conducting research and compiling a “best practices” study based on experiences from similar trails in the U.S.

Issues

The outreach efforts as part of this process generated a wide set of opinions and values. While a large portion of participants support the trail, some of the landowners are fully opposed to the trail’s development under any circumstances. Those opposed typically cite concerns about the trail’s expected capital and operational costs, management, or worries about incompatibilities between trail use and farm operations.

Many issues identified by participants are rooted in the state’s stewardship of the right-of-way. Participants cited slow response to weed control, inadequate installation and repair of fencing, lack of sanitary facilities, and insufficient investment in policing as persistent problems, even though State Parks has been making efforts to be more responsive and active in these areas.

Participants also expressed concerns about greater incidence of fires, vandalism, trespass, public safety and poor EMS access. This report’s best practices research suggests these fears are common prior to trail development but might prove to be minor issues in practice. However, much of this trail’s study area is more remote than comparable trails, and resolving these fears might require both time and attention.

Many participants identified trail improvements as essential to project success. These include basic surfacing, trailheads, access control, bridge and culvert repair, right-of-way acquisition, detour improvements, wayfinding and interpretive features, and basic services such as water, restrooms and campsites.

¹ Washington State Parks, "Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail," (2019), <https://parks.state.wa.us/521/Palouse-to-Cascades>

² Rails to Trails Conservancy, "Great American Rail Trail," (2019), <https://www.railstotrails.org/greatamericanrailtrail/>

Details are available in the body of the report, with a summary of the 22 maintenance, operational, safety, management, land compatibility, and funding issues listed in Table 4. Table 4 also links each of the issues to use, ownership or development conflict, illustrating how, in many cases, a single issue can be related to different types of conflict at once.

Recommendations

SCJ Alliance offers 26 recommendations designed to build credibility with impacted communities and establish on-going productive communications with landowners, local governments, and trail users.

Broadly, recommendations are structured into three categories: resources and funding, trail improvements, and operations and maintenance. These respond to a wide array of maintenance, operation, safety, management, land compatibility, and funding issues derived from focused interviews and workshop conversations. . Recommendations are listed as high, medium, or low priority based on the extent to which they would help mediate a conflict

The uniting factor among the diverse opinions around the trail is a love for and appreciation of the land through which the trail passes... SCJ Alliance recommends tapping this common ground to help mediate current and future trail conflicts.

Table 1 lists each recommendation, its relative priority, its relative cost, and the type of conflict it addresses. The Recommendations section provides additional details.

Table 1: Recommendations

#	Recommendation	Priority			Cost			Conflict type		
		Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Use	Ownership	Development
Resources & Funding										
1	Develop a wide range of funding sources			x	x				x	x
2	Facilitate in-kind contributions		x		x					x
3	Conduct a fiscal analysis			x		x		x	x	x
4	Conduct an economic analysis			x		x		x	x	x
5	Update the 2016 Classification and Management Plan (CAMP)	x			x			x	x	x
6	Develop localized strategies		x			x		x		x
Trail Improvements										
7	Prioritize improvements near towns and cities		x				x	x		x
8	Allow primitive trail conditions in remote areas	x			x			x	x	x
9	Prioritize and maintain fencing			x		x		x	x	x
10	Address the Othello gap		x			x		x	x	x
11	Create options and improve detours			x			x	x	x	x
12	Provide the basics, at reasonable intervals			x		x		x		x
13	Shore up safety			x			x			x
14	Address Cow Creek crossing			x	x			x	x	x
15	Address Rock Lake alignment		x			x		x	x	x
Operations & Maintenance										
16	Fund and manage weed control			x		x		x		x
17	Coordinate with landowners			x	x				x	
18	Seek partnerships			x	x			x	x	x
19	Adapt management approaches		x		x			x	x	
20	Establish an emergency response system			x		x		x		x
21	Develop educational features and programs	x			x			x	x	
22	Police and monitor			x		x		x	x	
23	Maintain single source, streamlined information			x	x			x	x	x
24	Revisit permitting process		x		x			x		
25	Develop a marketing and user guide program		x			x		x	x	
26	Produce a land use database		x				x	x	x	x

Introduction

Legislative Context

In 2019 session, the Washington State Legislature adopted the 2019-21 capital budget, including a proviso (Sec. 1066, Chapter 413, Laws of 2019) directing the Department of Commerce to contract for:

"...Facilitation and mediation of ownership, development, and use conflicts along the Palouse to Cascades Trail in Adams and Whitman counties."

The proviso provided the following direction to those contracted by Commerce:

"The parties to the facilitation shall include, but are not limited to, the State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Farm Bureau, the Department of Natural Resources, recreational trail user groups, local governments adjacent to the trail, and landowners adjacent to the trail."

Finally, the proviso (presented below and included in its entirety as Appendix E) directed the Recreation and Conservation Office to withhold funding for a single trail project, the Palouse to Cascades Connection Malden and Rosalia, until July 1, 2020.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1066. FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Palouse to Cascades Trail Facilitation (92000833)

The appropriation in this section is subject to the following conditions and limitations:

(1) The appropriation in this section is provided solely for the department of commerce to contract for facilitation and mediation of ownership, development, and use conflicts along the Palouse to Cascades trail in Adams and Whitman counties. The contractor shall convene a process that will make recommendations to the legislature by January 15, 2020. The parties to the facilitation shall include, but are not limited to: The state parks and recreation commission, the farm bureau, the department of natural resources, recreational trail user groups, local governments adjacent to the trail, and landowners adjacent to the trail.

(2) The recreation and conservation office shall not release funding for the following project on Washington wildlife and recreation program LEAP capital document No. 2019-5H: Palouse to Cascades Connection Malden and Rosalia, until July 1, 2020.

Appropriation:

State Building Construction Account - State	\$150,000
Prior Biennia (Expenditures)	\$0
Future Biennia (Projected Costs)	\$0
TOTAL	\$150,000

Despite delays, a contract for the facilitation effort was executed in late October 2019, with deadline for delivery of this report by Jan. 15, 2020. The proviso is the basis of this work and served as the touchstone for all of the conversations, meeting materials, research, and report recommendations. It directed work in Whitman and Adams counties, recognizing that those who are stakeholders in this portion of the trail needed an opportunity to focus attention on the specific landscape and context of the trail alignment.

Provided in this report

SCJ Alliance has conducted research and outreach efforts to meet the requirements of the proviso. This report provides the full recommendations that resulted from this process.

Background and Assumptions

The Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (previously the Iron Horse/John Wayne Pioneer Trail) is envisioned as a 287-mile rail-trail spanning the state of Washington from the western slopes of the Cascade Mountains to the Idaho border. The trail is a key portion of the proposed Great American Rail-Trail, a 3,700-mile trail system traveling through 12 states from Washington state to Washington, D.C.³ Much of the trail – formerly right-of-way for the Milwaukee Road Railway – was acquired by the state in 1981. Plans for the route date back nearly that far, but for the most part, improvements have been made west of the Columbia River, where land ownership, use patterns and user numbers are more favorable. Current law (RCW 79A.05.115) directs the State Parks Commission to “develop and maintain a cross state trail facility with appropriate appurtenances” on the right-of-way for the former Milwaukee Road rail line.

Though some progress has been made in Eastern Washington, the right-of-way remains largely unimproved as surface conditions are typically leftover rail ballast, with occasional gaps and detours associated with missing, damaged or unsafe trestles, or in a few cases, private property crossings.⁴

Eyeing the success of similar trails – including that of the Trail of the Coeur d’ Alenes from Plummer, Idaho to the Montana border⁵ – the state of Washington is seeking to upgrade eastern portions of the trail including surfacing and improved access. The effort to develop the trail has spurred controversy, particularly in Adams and portions of Whitman County. Some farmers and property owners have experienced trespass and vandalism by people using the trail, and they fear an increase in these types of behaviors as the trail becomes more accessible. However, most, if not all of the small towns and cities located along the route support the trail for its perceived economic benefits.⁶ Given this host of conditions, a credible way forward seems less clear.

Efforts to improve the Palouse to Cascades Trail are rippling throughout the Palouse, bringing to light different views on trail development. The route links to existing northern Idaho trails, providing opportunity for users to travel from the Cascades to Lookout Pass – and even further, along the former Milwaukee Road rail right-of-way. Plans envision ties across the Cascades as well, allowing it to continue through to Western Washington as a key step in creating a statewide non-motorized trail network as envisioned in the State Recreation Trails System Act (RCW 79A.35).

This report identifies recommendations for the Legislature to help address the issues surrounding the development of the trail. This report is the result of outreach to the public and key stakeholders, input from an advisory group, and multiple meetings with the advisory group and the larger community to bring together the variety of views to find common direction.

³ Rails to Trails Conservancy, "Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail," (2019), <https://www.railstotrails.org/greatamericanrailtrail/route/washington/>

⁴ Palouse to Cascades Trail Coalition, "History of the Trail," (2019), <https://palousetocascadestrail.org/history-of-the-trail.html>

⁵ Idaho State Parks & Recreation, "Trail of the Coeur d’ Alenes," (2019), <https://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/parks/trail-coeur-d-alenes>

⁶ Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, "Iron Horse State Park Trail Recommendations Report," (2016), <https://parks.state.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/7653/02-Recommendations-Report-6-27-16?bidId=>

The Department of Commerce contracted with SCJ Alliance to design the outreach process, facilitate public conversation, and produce this report.

The process to produce this report involved identifying steps and resources necessary to reflect a well-balanced array of recommendations; building on work done to date by agencies and advocates; meeting with and organizing input from a wide range of participants; and generating effective, grounded and workable recommendations. In shaping the approach, SCJ Alliance used the following assumptions and objectives as a guide:

- The trail is a valuable statewide asset, deserving of preservation as a continuous non-motorized facility;
- Opposing viewpoints on the trail's future have merit and should be fully considered;
- This effort will encourage open conversation, leading to recommendations on how best to improve and manage the trail;
- Private property rights are to be respected, seeking recommendations that preserve the functions and values of adjoining lands;
- The depth and detail of the report might be limited due to the short preparation period and the need to fully involve constituent groups;
- Report recommendations will reflect the ideas and opinions of those who participate in the process – understanding that other ideas and suggestions might emerge in the future;
- The process will target immediate stakeholders first, developing an initial understanding of the issues and interests relevant to the trail's future;
- The process will rely on an advisory group whose membership will be representative of the varied interests and perspectives;
- The final report will essentially be a “white paper” identifying participant concerns and hopes; advancing recommendations on trail connectivity, design and management; and identifying key issues to inform implementation steps and investment.

Process

With the proviso as its guide, the consultant began work to convene the conversation in early November, covering several key steps:

- Creating an official project website with downloadable background and process documents, an online survey, and an events calendar
- Conducting in-person and telephone interviews with numerous individuals associated with the trail in Adams and Whitman counties, informing the consultants on the range of issues requiring facilitation and providing opportunity to invite those interviewed to participate as part of an advisory group
- Convening and facilitating two advisory group workshops, held Nov. 19 and Dec. 19, 2019, clarifying localized issues and solutions; identifying a preferred resource and funding mix; and prioritizing projects and operational activities for trail managers
- Researching and compiling a “best practices” study, relating findings from similar trails located elsewhere in the U.S. toward recommendations submitted in this report
- Making presentations to seven municipalities in the study area, including the town councils of Tekoa, Rosalia, Malden, Lind, Othello and Warden, and the Whitman County Board of Commissioners
- Hosting a “roll-out” meeting on Jan. 8, 2020 in Ritzville, gathering feedback on draft report recommendations.

Though the proviso (and late-season schedule) suggested reliance on an advisory panel, it quickly became apparent that many others wished to take part as well. The consultant nearly doubled the number of interviews

as a result, made events open to the public, and conducted events in ways that did not require participants to attend all meetings.

Observations

Based on meeting results and conversation, it appears many participants are excited and hopeful about the trail and look forward to its eventual completion. However, some - especially those who have land that the trail abuts or bisects - still consider it a nuisance. This report's recommendations outline a path forward to mediate trail conflicts. Broadly, they direct the state to reestablish its credibility with locals by honoring its stewardship commitments, including weed control, fence and gate repair and maintenance, and periodic policing. These, together with improved and ongoing communication, comprise an essential strategy to help the state rebuild strained relationships and demonstrate its commitment to becoming an excellent neighbor.

The participant comments in the November, December, and January meetings and the results from the best practices study suggest ways to boost credibility and speed progress. They recommend adopting diverse funding and operational strategies, partnering with local jurisdictions, agencies, user groups and landowners along the way. Broadened involvement can assist in State Parks' efforts to address the range of trail issues and potentially alleviate the department's almost singular reliance on state funding. Some noted the relative scarcity of trail users, suggesting that cost-to-benefit ratios might never balance. This report recommends research to address these questions, and though indirect and induced benefits might be difficult to measure – to say nothing of qualitative benefits – such work could also help prioritize future investment. Other recommendations suggest progress be made in an incremental, localized fashion, especially where physical and other conditions are more favorable or where in-kind participation is more available. That phased approach could provide opportunities for proponents to create and demonstrate local successes, including economic returns.

The trail in Adams and Whitman counties cuts through highly remote country. While communities along the route are small, they are urban compared to long stretches of the trail. Issues that weigh heavily in one area might be easily managed elsewhere. Even built out, it is likely that some sections of the trail will see heavier use than others. Unlike the trail's alignment in western Washington, private properties predominate the land in eastern Washington, though Department of Natural Resources (DNR) sections, a National Wildlife Refuge, and other public lands are found along the way. Such conditions recommend differing treatments for differing areas, ranging from ways the trail might be improved to ways the trail might be operated and managed. The sheer scope of the landscape, varying use patterns and the range of improvements needed seem to require a more context-sensitive approach versus "one size suits all" policies.

A common thread among all participants seemed to be a love for and appreciation of the land through which the trail passes. In fact, many of the challenges enumerated through this effort concern qualities of the landscape. Participants frequently mentioned its sometimes-extreme remoteness, its geographic history and diversity, the ways in which farming and ranching operate there, and the small-town pace of life. Just as these qualities captivate those who live here, they have clear potential to attract visitors, helping overcome the trail's current conflicts and creating a feature of intense regional – and perhaps national – value.

Recommendations

This report makes recommendations for the Palouse to Cascades Trail. These recommendations are generally consistent with the state's previous work in its 2016 Classification and Management Plan (CAMP) for most of the Whitman and Adams County trail alignment. But they are specifically targeted to address conflicts related to property ownership, use, and development as requested in the proviso.

This trail is a unique type of recreational asset. It is completely different than the other state park inventory, traversing more varied terrain, crossing through multiple jurisdictions, and adjoining far more landowners with far greater ranges of interests, needs, expectations, and land uses. In some cases, these recommendations seek only minor adjustments in management approach. In others, they suggest more transformative change, adapting current practice to align with established strategic objectives.

The recommendations generally fall under three categories: Resources and Funding, Trail Improvements, and Operations and Maintenance. The following pages discuss each of these recommendations in further detail, including connections to best practices, adopted policy, and the conversations conducted as part of this process, as appropriate.

Resources and Funding Recommendations

These recommendations address the economic and financial issues as well as discuss the resource coordination that will make the operational and improvement recommendations possible.

1. Develop a wide range of funding sources - High Priority

Tapping a variety of resources might create a deeper, more sustainable pool for trail improvements and operations. Many participants communicated concerns about trail funding and expressed support for creating a wider range of funding sources to ensure the trail's fiscal sustainability (Figure 1). Those who participated in this exercise recommended that the state fund only about 50% of the trail's needs and look to other sources for the rest. Participants believe inviting others to participate in funding the trail will incorporate a wider range of interests in determining how the trail will evolve over time, strengthening partnerships for trail success. While the state might still be a major contributor to trail funding, additional funding could be obtained through utility lease agreements, taxing districts, private sponsorships, and grants other than those awarded by the state of Washington. This recommendation urges additional research be done to configure, coordinate, and implement a wide range of funding sources that can work together to achieve the goals for the trail, and consider how they may interrelate with grant or funding restrictions already in place.

These thoughts are echoed in best practice and in the adopted policies of local jurisdictions along the trail. For instance, best practice study acknowledges that innovative approaches and funding diversity are keys to trail success. And Adams County's comprehensive plan policy supports pursuit of local, state and federal funding to develop facilities that attract new business.

The state can consider memoranda of understanding (MOU) to implement this in some areas, similar to the Centennial Trail in Spokane County. An MOU can outline shared funding expectations and responsibilities, spreading the burden of trail funding across multiple organizations.

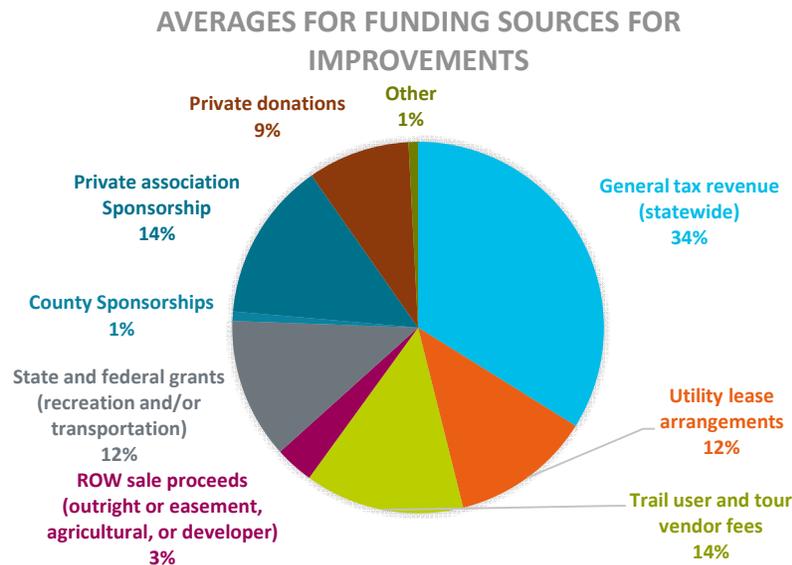


Figure 1: Proposed Diversity of Funding Sources. Source: Workshop 2 Results, Appendix C

2. Facilitate in-kind contributions - Medium Priority

Encouraging active community engagement with trail development and improvement would help build community support and make trail projects more likely to receive grant funding. This recommendation urges development of an in-kind program fostering local partnerships, volunteer effort, donation of proceeds from fundraisers, donated materials and labor, and other activities that could support trail improvement, maintenance, and management.

Volunteer organizations already exist to serve some of these purposes, but this recommendation aims to enhance these programs by expanding volunteer efforts surrounding the trail so that they include an even broader range of people who use the trail and other stakeholders. One example to draw from for these new programs is the Palouse to Cascades Trail Coalition, which works to promote, maintain, and develop the Palouse to Cascades Trail. This organization has been providing in-kind services for many years. Engaging the communities, landowners, and state officials in coordinated in-kind programs can build a greater sense of ownership of the trail throughout the Palouse.

Best practice study highlighted the importance of volunteer work and other in-kind contributions, with some trails sponsoring community trail construction, maintenance, and clean up events. The comprehensive plans for Adams and Whitman counties are in line with this, too, advocating for cooperation with volunteer organizations in the maintenance of transportation and recreation facilities.

The Centennial Trail MOU can serve as an example here, too, where expectations for participation in trail improvement and maintenance are assigned to individual MOU participants. Not every contribution is provided in the form of cash.

3. Conduct a fiscal analysis - High Priority

Trail development is not cheap. One of the concerns surrounding trail development is that there might not be a significant return on investment from new trail improvements. A fiscal analysis would help quantify expected trail costs, comparing them to potential revenue for trail operations.

Participants understand the costs needed to construct and maintain the trail, but it is difficult to quantify the trail's benefit. A review of best practices show that trail revenue streams generally do not pay the full cost of trail development. However, worthwhile secondary benefits can be difficult to quantify, like the quality-of-life considerations and improved health outcomes.

This analysis should include the costs to build and develop the trail and the trail's operations and maintenance costs. Costs can be compared to the benefits of the trail, including expected increases in tax revenues, and the less easily quantified community development, public health, and environmental quality values associated with increased trail use and activity. This can inform further discussion about the value of the trail's development and its impact. An understanding of the costs needed to develop and maintain the trail is necessary for budgeting purposes and calculating needed revenues from partner organizations. This type of analysis will be able to provide the costs needed for developing and phasing funding requests.

4. Conduct an economic analysis - High Priority

If the fiscal impact analysis reveals that the trail itself does not generate the revenue to support the costs it entails, the trail might still have value in stimulating small-town economies nearby. An economic analysis would shed light on this, informing investment and operational decisions. In eastern Washington, the focus would be on those areas where the trail is more popular, like near Rosalia and Tekoa. And a study of economic impact of even busier trail segments in western Washington might hint at how local economies can be impacted as the eastern Washington trail segments become more popular.

These economic impact analyses often use trail user surveys to reveal how much money trail users spend on various goods and services during their travels. The best practices study confirms that trails can have economic impact, either by directly supporting local commercial and lodging business along the trail or by indirectly stimulating investment in properties along the trail for development. Results differ across the regions, but the lesson appears to be that economic activity increases. Examples include the following:

- The Economic Significance of Bicycle-Related Travel in Oregon⁷
- Analysis of Touring Cyclists: Impacts, Needs, and Opportunities for Montana⁸
- Trail Investment: A Good Deal for the American Economy⁹
- D&H Rail-Trail 2016-2017: User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis¹⁰
- Rural Trails Survey Data¹¹

5. Update the 2016 Classification and Management Plan - Low Priority

The 2016 Classification and Management Plan (CAMP) might benefit from updates that incorporate the findings from this current effort and clearly reframe things like project phasing, and findings from subsequent studies. This recommendation urges periodic updates to the plan so that trail developments remain clear, compelling, and relevant.

This is not necessarily a high-priority item. However, this recommendation would help keep trail development moving forward by setting a time in the future to monitor and evaluate the progress of the trail, and to update its plan. It is important to the people along the trail that State Parks take action on what they propose, with sincerity and timely progress.

⁷ Travel Oregon, "The Economic Significance of Bicycle-Related Travel in Oregon," (2013), https://headwaterseconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/Trail_Study_68-bicycle-travel-oregon.pdf

⁸ Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, Univ. of MT, "Analysis of Touring Cyclists: Impacts, Needs, and Opportunities for Montana," (2013), https://headwaterseconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/Trail_Study_73-touring-cyclists-montana.pdf

⁹ Rails to Trail Conservancy, "Trail Investment: A Good Deal for the American Economy," (2018), <https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/trail-investment-a-good-deal-for-the-american-economy/?tag=Economic+impact>

¹⁰ Rails to Trails Conservancy, "D&H Rail-Trail 2016-2017: User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis," (2017), <https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/dh-rail-trail-2016-2017-user-survey-and-economic-impact-analysis/?tag=Economic+impact>

¹¹ Rails to Trails Conservancy, "Rural Trails Survey Data," (2016), <https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/rural-trails-survey-data/?tag=Economic+impact>

6. Develop localized strategies - Medium Priority

Participants suggest that work on the trail should proceed in phases, organized to capture local energies, opportunities, and needs. Trail features and design might differ from area to area, so this recommendation suggests that as work on the trail moves forward, the state develop area-specific plans to reflect localized needs and conditions.

The flexibility of localized plans and strategies can help communities tailor the trail experience in each area to the unique context of that place. These localized strategies should consider the long-term park boundary adopted in the 2016 CAMP (Figure 2). The CAMP document recommends different uses and purposes for the various trail segments. This could provide a starting point for local improvement strategies. The resurfacing project proposed between Malden and Rosalia fits squarely in this category, creating a site-specific solution conceived in cooperation with trail users and the local communities.

Specific locations for trailhead and trail improvements include Kenova, Rock Lake, Revere, Marengo, Lind, Roxboro, Warden, Othello, Corfu, Smyrna, and Beverly. Improvements east of the CAMP limits would include Malden, Rosalia and Tekoa.

This approach will also allow the nearby towns to consider "off-trail" strategies to complement "on-trail" investments. An example discussed in the November meeting is the potential development of a locally funded trail segment that creates a loop system between Malden and Rosalia.

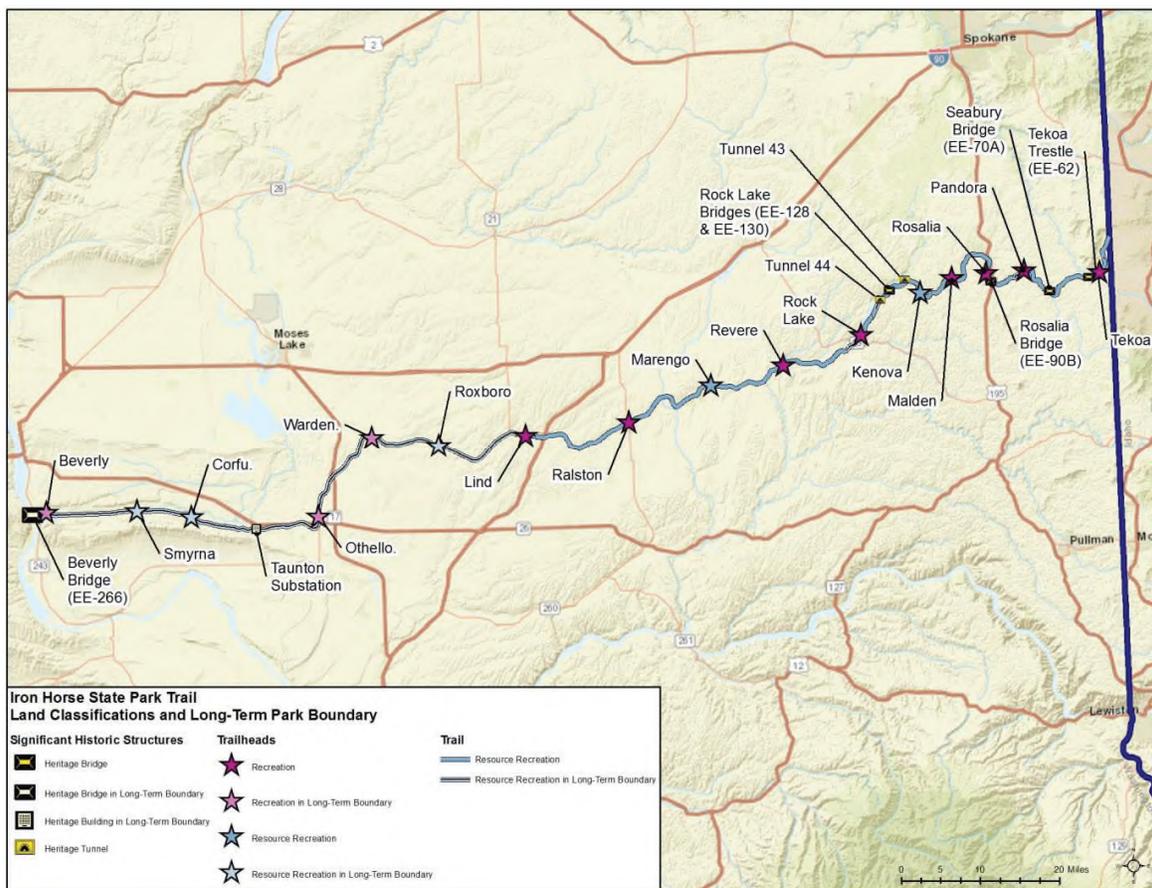


Figure 2: Palouse to Cascades Trail Long Term Park Boundary Map. Source: 2016 CAMP

Trail Improvement Recommendations

These recommendations cover the types of infrastructure improvements that can address the main structural improvement needs and issues that this planning process identified.

7. Prioritize improvements near towns and cities - Medium Priority

It will take time to develop this trail in its entirety. The Palouse to Cascades Trail within Adams and Whitman counties traverses remote landscapes. Many advocates hope for improvements sooner rather than later to contribute to the nearby small-town economies.

This recommendation urges that trail improvements be prioritized accordingly, supporting local needs and hopes. Participants in this conversation realized that trail improvements will need to be prioritized over time, and they hope that the first investments in trail and facilities improvements will occur near the small towns that really value the trail. This could alleviate pressure to improve the trail through its more remote landscapes, allowing trail users to take advantage of the trail for “out-and-back” trips that originate and terminate in the same small town. Continuity could happen over the years, but a town-based focus would allow those users who appreciate shorter rides to taste what the trail might offer in an environment suited for shorter day trips.

The best practices study supports the notion of the short “out-and-back” trip. Trail segments near towns are the most popular, with trail use dropping at distances greater than 10 miles from a town trailhead. This is also consistent with the Washington Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. And CAMP recommendations are similar, prioritizing improvements to trail facilities where trail use is likely the highest. The trail surfacing work proposed between Malden and Rosalia is an example of a project already proposed. Others would include further trail surfacing enhancements west of Malden, potentially partnering with local in-kind donation of labor and materials.

8. Allow primitive trail conditions in remote areas - Low Priority

Participants noted that some of the trail's most remote areas are unlikely to serve large numbers in the near future. This suggests that improvements to the trail facilities in the more remote portions of the trail have a lower priority. However, no portion of the trail should remain surfaced with only railroad ballast. Though “primitive,” the trail should still be rideable and safe.

The CAMP process recommended that a uniform trail surface improvement is not a universally high priority, acknowledging that some segments of the trail will maintain a more basic character.

9. Prioritize and maintain fencing - High Priority

Fencing is one of the top priorities for landowners, and it ranked high in the best practices research¹². The phrase "good fences make good neighbors" came up in multiple conversations during this process, and, based on the consultant's study of other trails, that appears to be true.

State Parks has begun installing fencing in some areas, but this recommendation urges quick completion of the work, reducing conflicts along the Adams-Whitman alignment. The work program can prioritize improvement based on locations where trespass is tempting, where safety indicates that additional protection is warranted, or where livestock and trail users might conflict. Funding can be a challenge, but other trails have found ways to make it work.

The Mickelson Trail in South Dakota used state funds to construct a fence. Property owners were then responsible for fence maintenance, with the state supplying the necessary materials. The state has identified five different types of fencing, and the adjoining property owners choose the type installed along their trail-adjacent property line. The Katy Trail in Missouri provides materials to property owners, relying on property owners to then build and maintain the fence.

The CAMP project recommended a comprehensive fencing assessment to identify specific fencing locations and appropriate types. While that study is not complete, the state has installed approximately one mile of fencing west of Rosalia and has repaired five gates.

10. Address the Othello gap - Medium Priority

A stretch of the former Milwaukee Road right-of-way is still an active rail line and is an important factor in the Othello area economy. Alternative trail routes should be explored, including the potential passage through the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, where potential partnership might be of mutual benefit. Another alternative could be a trail alignment generally parallel to the existing rail, taking advantage of the active rail line to enhance an interpretive experience of the region's agricultural economy and railroad history.

Participants confirmed that this operating rail is crucial to Adams County's economic vitality, and the county's comprehensive plan confirm that this rail line must be preserved.

11. Create options and improve detours - High Priority

For places where gaps or primitive conditions will remain for a long time, this recommendation urges work to improve the user experience along road or highway detours. These might include new separate but parallel paths, widened shoulders, traffic calming, wayfinding and interpretive signs, and user services. Such efforts might also identify new detours in response to farming or ranching operational needs.

Rerouting the trail on these detours might involve some innovative strategies to provide a clear and safe route. This might include land swaps, easements, parcel dedications, or lot adjustments. In addition, any rerouting efforts should be compatible with adjacent agricultural operations.

¹² Appendix B: Rail-Trail Development: Best Practices Report

This recommendation also suggests that there be further exploration of the potential to use the Columbia Plateau Trail as a partial alternative to the Palouse to Cascades Trail in certain locations where it makes sense. This was suggested a few times throughout the process, but the Columbia Plateau Trail and the Palouse to Cascades Trail serve different purposes, traveling in different directions through the state. Further exploration would reveal how these trails can work together and share infrastructure where it is feasible to do so.

12. Provide the basics, at reasonable intervals - High Priority

Participants noted the need for basic services such as water, food, restrooms, and camping/lodging along many portions of the trail. The 2016 CAMP¹³ acknowledges this, suggesting basic services be located approximately every eight to 10 miles. This recommendation suggests this become a priority, helping reduce trespass and the need for users to seek help from adjacent landowners.

Trailheads could prove to be good locations for providing basic services and information on distance to next services, with the type of services provided reflecting the condition and development intensity of the section of the trail that they serve. While the more intense trail development and improvements will likely occur near towns, at minimum there should be provisions of water and restroom facilities at practical intervals along the entirety of the trail. The Malden Town Council suggested improvements to the Malden trailhead to facilitate overnight stays. And participants in the workshops noted that the lack of water and sanitary facilities in the trail's more remote areas - particularly in Adams County - adds to the trespass issue.

By knowing that these facilities exist, and where to find them, trail users would be less tempted to trespass in search of these services from adjacent property owners. Research into best practice confirms that availability of services was critical, even where trails traverse more remote areas.

13. Shore up safety - High Priority

Some trail sections have deteriorating infrastructure and present safety concerns for users and non-users alike. The Tekoa trestle and the Rosalia bridge are two examples of deteriorating infrastructure, with the Tekoa trestle project identified for funding but not the Rosalia bridge. This recommendation urges prioritized funding to ensure basic user safety along all sections of the trail and to preserve key features over time.

Infrastructure deterioration can put non-trail-users at risk as well. For example, pieces of concrete are dropping from the Rosalia bridge onto the road below it.

The best practices research confirms the value of investing in safety improvements, including consistent monitoring to ensure safety is maintained.

14. Address Cow Creek crossing - High Priority

A missing trestle along the route across Cow Creek creates one of the major gaps along the trail. According to the consultant's interviews and outreach, landowners near the Cow Creek alignment are willing to align, design, and construct a workable trail connection in this area if they can reach a workable agreement with the state. While the new trail corridor might not align with the current right-of-way, the potential for a land swap or lease agreement appears strong. This recommendation urges quick action on the Cow Creek opportunity.

¹³ Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, "Iron Horse State Park Trail Recommendations Report," (2016), <https://parks.state.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/7653/02-Recommendations-Report-6-27-16?bidId=>

15. Address Rock Lake alignment - Medium Priority

Though Rock Lake is one of the most attractive sections of the old right-of-way, there is now limited legal access to it. This recommendation urges continued outreach, coupled with the creation of a clear, convenient and easy-to-follow detour with signs guiding users away from the privately owned section. Further efforts should also be made to educate trail users about the legality of riding on the Rock Lake section.

A northern portion of this scenic part of the trail can be accessed on public right-of-way, but there are two sections of the trail near the lake that do not permit public use. Part of the old Milwaukee Railroad right-of-way was purchased by the adjoining landowners for one mile along the middle section of the lakeshore and for another 500 feet to the south of the lake. Though the alignment is still visible and retains the ballast and elevation of the old rail line, there is no legal access to it.

Operations and Maintenance Recommendations

The following recommendations deal with the operational side of the trail and outline processes and systems that can help keep the trail functional and safe going forward.

16. Fund and manage weed control - High Priority

Controlling the spread of noxious weeds along the trail is challenging as they can easily spread to adjacent farms and disrupt crop production.

The trail cuts through an agricultural landscape and provides a route for the spread of weeds and non-native plant species. For example, horses can spread noxious weeds if they are not fed "certified hay". Seeds contained in their manure might introduce noxious or invasive plants into new areas

This recommendation is consistent with best practices and local planning policy, requiring consistent attention and dedicated resources. CAMP recommendations focus on control and abatement. This recommendation also addresses prevention, helping trail users act to minimize the introduction of invasive and noxious plants.

17. Coordinate with landowners - High Priority

This recommendation urges the state to maintain good-neighbor relationships with the nearly 2,000 property owners along the trail's alignment. However achieved, the state must deliver on its promises and coordinate every aspect of growth and operations with locals. Such relationships are also more likely to evolve as partnerships. Many of the adjoining landowners might have ideas unique to their circumstances that can enhance the trail experience or minimize conflicts about use and development.

This recommendation urges State Parks to take the lead on coordinating with adjacent property owners to help bridge the interests of the state with the interests of the property owners. This type of symbiosis is encouraged by findings of the best practices research, where neighbor relationships facilitated virtually every aspect of trail management, if approached appropriately. The state's agricultural use permit system can be part of this, allowing adjacent agricultural landowners use of the trail right of way.

18. Seek partnerships - High Priority

Just as trail development can be funded by a diverse range of sources, it might also benefit from a range of partners and stakeholders. Because the trail could benefit multiple agencies - including the counties and towns it passes through - trail promoters can look to these and others as potential partners, streamlining trail progress and uncovering improvement and operational opportunities.

In addition, the trail provides an alignment attractive to various providers for potential development of a utility corridor, providing lease income in support of the trail and bringing new or upgraded services to rural communities. This was a popular idea among workshop participants.

The Centennial Trail MOU again may serve as a helpful example of employing partnerships to maintain the trail. Sharing the burden of trail maintenance is a necessity, something learned and put into practice by the rail trails studied in the analysis of best practices.

19. Adapt management approaches - Medium Priority

The trail is a linear park, but the reality is that it passes through a highly diverse region, with each mile presenting its own opportunities and challenges. It is composed of local segments, with limited services along its length and close association to the towns it adjoins. Centralized management treating the entire trail as a single organism might be necessary, but it should not override localized understanding and adaptive management.

This recommendation recognizes that the trail could benefit from a fine-grained management approach, urging the state to treat the trail as a collection of unique features that requires a unique approach to development and operations. Along with coordination at the state level, communities might have creative ideas in how the trail is managed within the context of that particular place.

One way to implement these more fine-grained management approaches would be to hire a trail manager for the Eastern Washington section of the Palouse to Cascades Trail. The trail travels through three different management areas, creating the potential for conflict in priority, approach and message. A trail manager can be a singular point of contact and coordination among the various localized efforts for trail improvement and management.



Figure 3: Participants at Workshop 2 in Lind, WA

20. Establish an emergency response system - High Priority

Participants frequently mentioned the need for improved emergency response along the trail. This recommendation urges consideration of items such as milepost markers for improved public safety and emergency medical response, improved cellular networking, streamlined gate access, and criteria for trail closure during unsafe conditions. Trail safety was one of the top issues discussed in this process, making this one of the higher priority recommendations.

Examples of emergency response systems include something similar to the system on Iowa's Raccoon River Valley Trail, providing posts marked with coordinates every half-mile. Provided they have mobile phone service available, trail users can quickly and intuitively describe their location to emergency responders.

For the Palouse to Cascades Trail, trail literature, online information, and information signs can educate users on the trail's emergency protocols. This recommendation suggests that mileposts and reliable cellular phone service are critical elements for emergency response. It recommends broader understanding of what trail users should consider in the case of emergency and better emergency response infrastructure to aid in communication and response location.

21. Develop educational features and programs - Low Priority

This recommendation highlights the need to showcase the wonders of the region, including the unique Palouse, channeled scabland and pothole lake areas the trail crosses. Such efforts could help frame and greatly enhance the user experience, leaving visitors with a deep appreciation for the area's geography, its history, its people and the various ways the land sustains them.

This recommendation calls for an education program that includes interpretive trail amenities and other opportunities to increase awareness of the importance of the agricultural activities, cultural resources, geological conditions, and ecosystems along the trail. Best practice study shows that when people understand, are knowledgeable about, and appreciate an area, they are much more likely to be respectful of the land.

22. Police and monitor - High Priority

This recommendation urges development of an immediate and sustainable means for trail monitoring, perhaps using a volunteer group of trail rangers, oversight by adjacent landowners and communities, or other strategies. It also recommends more official monitoring systems be established, ranging from periodic sweeps of the entire trail, emphasis patrols during certain times of use, and strategic spot checks to maintaining reliable points-of-contact for emergency needs.

An example of a good policing and monitoring trail system can be found on South Dakota's Mickelson Trail where two people patrol the trail regularly. Due to its rural nature, the Palouse to Cascades Trail might need this same level of patrol where a pair of patrollers could monitor and respond to needs along the entire trail.

23. Maintain single source, streamlined information - High Priority

Over the years, the Palouse to Cascades Trail has been the subject of dozens of reports and plans, and, given its scope, it makes sense that things are complex. But finding answers shouldn't be arduous. The public needs a single point for information, ranging from details for user access or conditions, to advocacy data, easy access to progress on plans and projects, operational alerts and much, much more.

Whether it's a master plan, a classification and management plan, an alignment study, an experimental pilot project, or an interagency lease agreement, the work on the trail has resulted in hundreds of recommendations, rules, processes, projects, and programs. Those who are interested in the trail are also interested in a single location for finding information about the trail, about what is going to happen, and about the discussions that have occurred. This source would help improve trail advocates' understanding of where to direct their energies, and those with land adjoining the trail, to know what to expect, what promises have been made, and how trail improvements are progressing.

24. Revisit permitting process - Medium Priority

This recommendation urges making trail permits easier to get, while ensuring users are well-informed and equipped to enjoy the trail. With a clear path to attaining a permit, users would be more likely to comply. This would also provide trail managers more information about how and when the trail is used, by whom, and for what purpose.

Trail permitting can help track trail use, allowing trail managers to pinpoint popular trail segments, understand seasonal fluctuations, support funding requests, identify potential partnerships, and direct needed improvements or maintenance. A permitting process can also reinforce trail rules, notifying trail users of private property rights, trail etiquette, trail use limitations, surface conditions, service availability, and other information necessary for a safe, respectful, and enjoyable trail experience.

25. Develop a marketing and user guide program - Medium Priority

This recommendation would develop ways to properly market the trail, enhancing economic returns and educating the public on how, where, and when to best access and use the resource. This might include development of trail user guides for distribution by communities along the way or anywhere else the trail is advertised.

Other trails studied in the best practices research demonstrated that marketing programs for trails produce a significant economic impact in communities along the trail's route by increasing the amount of recreational trips. Trail branding and promotion played a role in ecotourism, cultural tourism and increased business activity for restaurants, hotels, campgrounds, and bike shops.

26. Produce a land use database - Medium Priority

This recommendation urges that a comprehensive analysis be carried out to determine the ownership and use status of all land along and adjacent to the trail corridor. This would help State Parks anticipate the different needs its neighbors have, facilitating more sensitive, strategic, and active coordination for project design, and management approaches.

Part of this recommendation is to develop an interactive mapping tool that can locate data on the types of agricultural activity, trail gaps, active rail lines, and other important features in one place. This map can also include information about trail conditions, planned improvements, and locations where issues have occurred. It could potentially be made available to trail users to inform trip choices.

Maps and Spatial Analysis

This section introduces three maps showing the trail study area (Adams and Whitman counties). Figures 4, 5, and 6 display images of these three maps, and full-sized versions can be found in Appendix D of this document.

All maps were generated from available GIS datasets gathered from a wide variety of sources, compiled and amended with aerial imagery from DigitalGlobe-Vivid, Spokane County and ESRI “Living Atlas.” Terrain imagery was gathered from ESRI “Living Atlas,” the USGS National Elevation Dataset and the SRTM Digital Elevation Data Review. Consideration of information such as existing land use, ownership, land contours, utilities, easements and flood zones were either incomplete or unavailable from known sources. Detour routes and trail gaps were derived from a variety of sources including WSDOT and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. These maps were developed to advise high-level policy recommendations only and might vary from actual conditions.

The following presents consultant team observations related to the trail in Adams and Whitman counties.

Alignment and Gaps

Within the study area, the Palouse to Cascades trail generally follows the state’s right-of-way purchased from the Milwaukee Road Railroad in 1981. Points of divergence or “gaps” referred to during the process, are known to exist. These gaps are included in the following list, proceeding from west to east.

- **The Crab Creek Detour:** The Port of Royal Slope purchased this former right-of-way that is maintained as a short-line railway between Warden and Smyrna south of Highway 26. This rail section actively serves local agricultural purposes. The trail detour route parallels the rail path along Highway 26 to Othello, then proceeds north along Booker Road to Warden (Grant County), where it rejoins the state’s trail right-of-way.
- **The Lind Trestle Detour:** Missing trestles force travelers a short distance onto Highway 21 to downtown Lind, and then they rejoin the main trail route near the Lind Airport.
- **The Cow Creek Detour:** A missing trestle (destroyed) over Cow Creek forces travelers onto Highway 261 from Ralston north to Ritzville, then along Wellsandt Road, McCall Road and Marengo Road to the trail right-of-way near Marengo.
- **The Rock Lake Detour:** The former rail right-of-way fronting the scenic eastern shoreline of Rock Lake was purchased by private landowners and is closed to trail users. This detour routes users from Ewan to Pine City along Highway 23, Rock Lake Road, Gene Webb Road and Stephen Road. It should be noted that the Rock Lake section is one of the most scenic sections of the entire trail.
- **The Rosalia Detour:** Missing trestles force travelers along a short detour down 1st and 7th streets in the town of Rosalia.
- **The Lone Pine Detour:** Marshy conditions might force users to take a short detour along Lone Pine Road near Lone Pine (east of Tekoa).
- **The Tekoa Detour:** Closure of a visually prominent trestle near downtown Tekoa forces users to detour along Washington Street. In 2019, the state awarded funds to Tekoa to restore this trestle. The trail route then proceeds north and east from Tekoa to the Idaho border.

In most cases, the long-term aim is to establish a continuous link across the entirety of the state. This will involve acquiring right-of-way where it either is out of public ownership or where the trail might be better served by alternate routes. Given the economic importance of the Crab Creek Detour section, this report does not recommend re-acquisition and closure of the Royal Slope short-line rail. As implied above, trail completion

would likely require the reconstruction or placement of bridges, tunnel restoration or other facilities to overcome topographic impediments.

The eastern terminus of the Palouse to Cascades Trail coincides with right-of-way continuing to Plummer, Idaho, where the existing Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes begins, continuing a rail-trail pathway as far as the Montana border. As noted elsewhere, the Palouse to Cascades Trail is envisioned as part of the Great American Rail-Trail, a proposed 3,700-mile cross-country route linking the Puget Sound to Washington, D.C.

Land Use and Physical Characteristics

Though insufficient GIS data exists to locate or quantify existing land uses along the trail’s route, review of satellite imagery and public ownership lands suggests the following, proceeding west to east:

- In Grant County, between Beverly (Columbia River, near Vantage) and Smyrna, users are likely to see little to no development and minor amounts of agricultural land uses within the Crab Creek canyon. West of Othello, the detour route passes the southern portion of the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge.
- From Othello to Warden (detour route), much of the surrounding lands are in irrigated agricultural use.
- From Warden to Roxboro, adjacent lands continue as irrigated agricultural use. From Roxboro to Ralston along Highway 261 (south of Ritzville), dry-land agricultural uses predominate.
- From Ralston, crossing Cow Creek to Paxton, the landscape could be classified as “channeled scablands,” largely unsuitable for crop agriculture but useful as ranch land. These areas, as with much of the study area, exhibit characteristic landforms resulting from the Ice-Age Missoula Floods. Here, the Columbia Plateau State Park Trail – another of the state’s major rail-trail opportunities – crosses the Palouse to Cascades route.
- From Paxton, near the Adams/Whitman county border, the trail follows the northern edge of the Rock Creek Recreation Area and Revere Wildlife Area, two DNR-operated preserves that feature numerous ponds or “pothole” lakes, again typical formations left by Ice Age floods. Land uses outside reserve boundaries are typically ranchlands.
- From the Adams/Whitman county border to Ewan (south of Rock Lake), the route skirts the southern edge of a western offshoot of “Palouse Country” land, typified by rolling hillsides composed of rich, glacial loess (another remnant of the Ice Age) supporting dry-land farming. The trail’s route, and Rock Lake itself, represent significant channels cut through Palouse lands by Ice Age flooding.
- From Rock Lake to the Idaho border, the trail passes through the heart of Palouse Country, typified by highly productive, dry-land farms planted in wheat, legumes and other crops.

Much of the alignment through Adams and Whitman counties is rural, and the uses of land along the trail right-of-way are diverse in nature and intensity.

Ownership

The Palouse to Cascades trail winds its way through privately owned farm and ranch lands, public preserves and a host of small towns, representing a broad spectrum of individual and jurisdictional ownerships. As indicated above, detailed ownership data was not available from county sources.

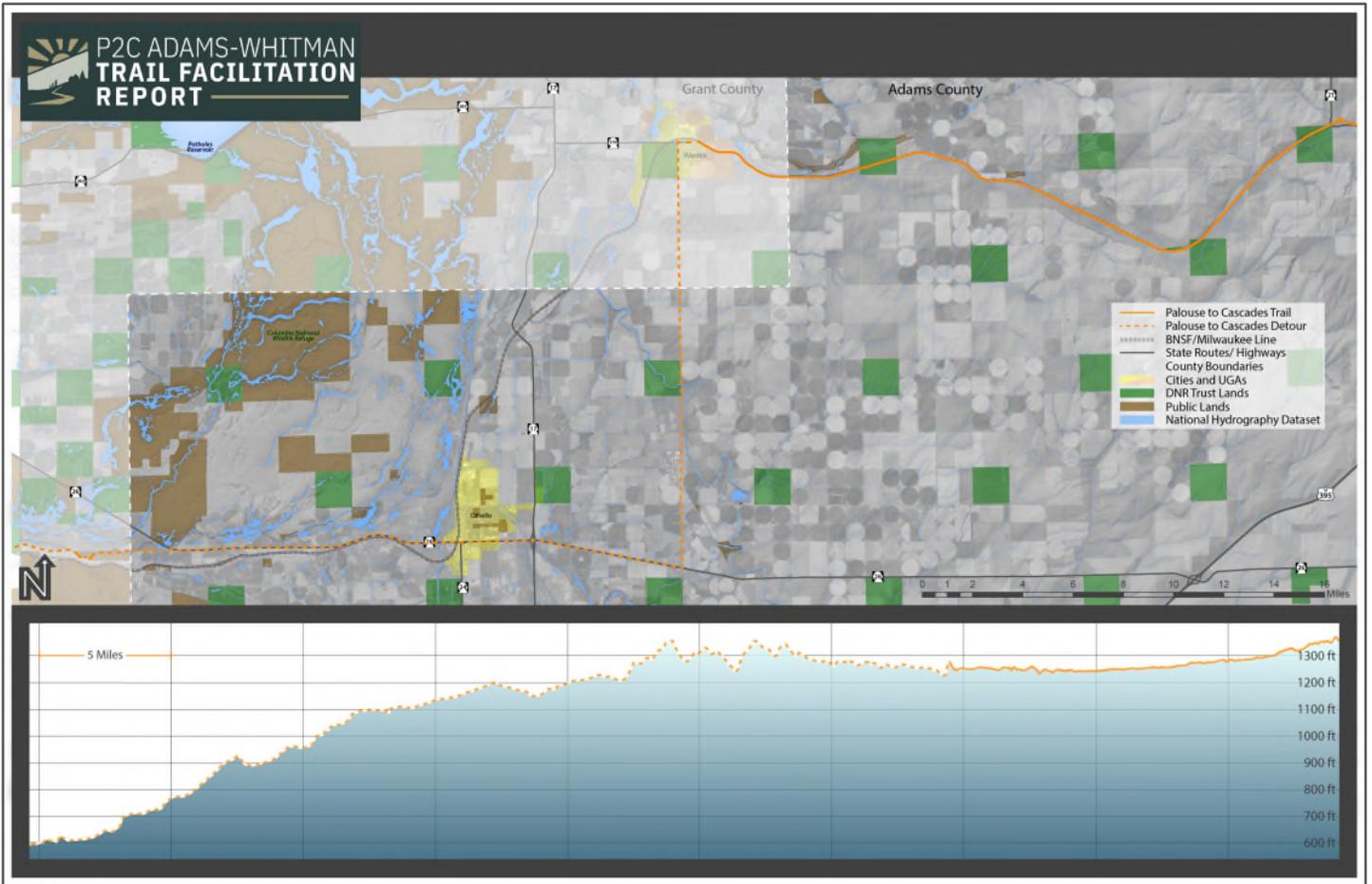


Figure 4: Western portion of the trail

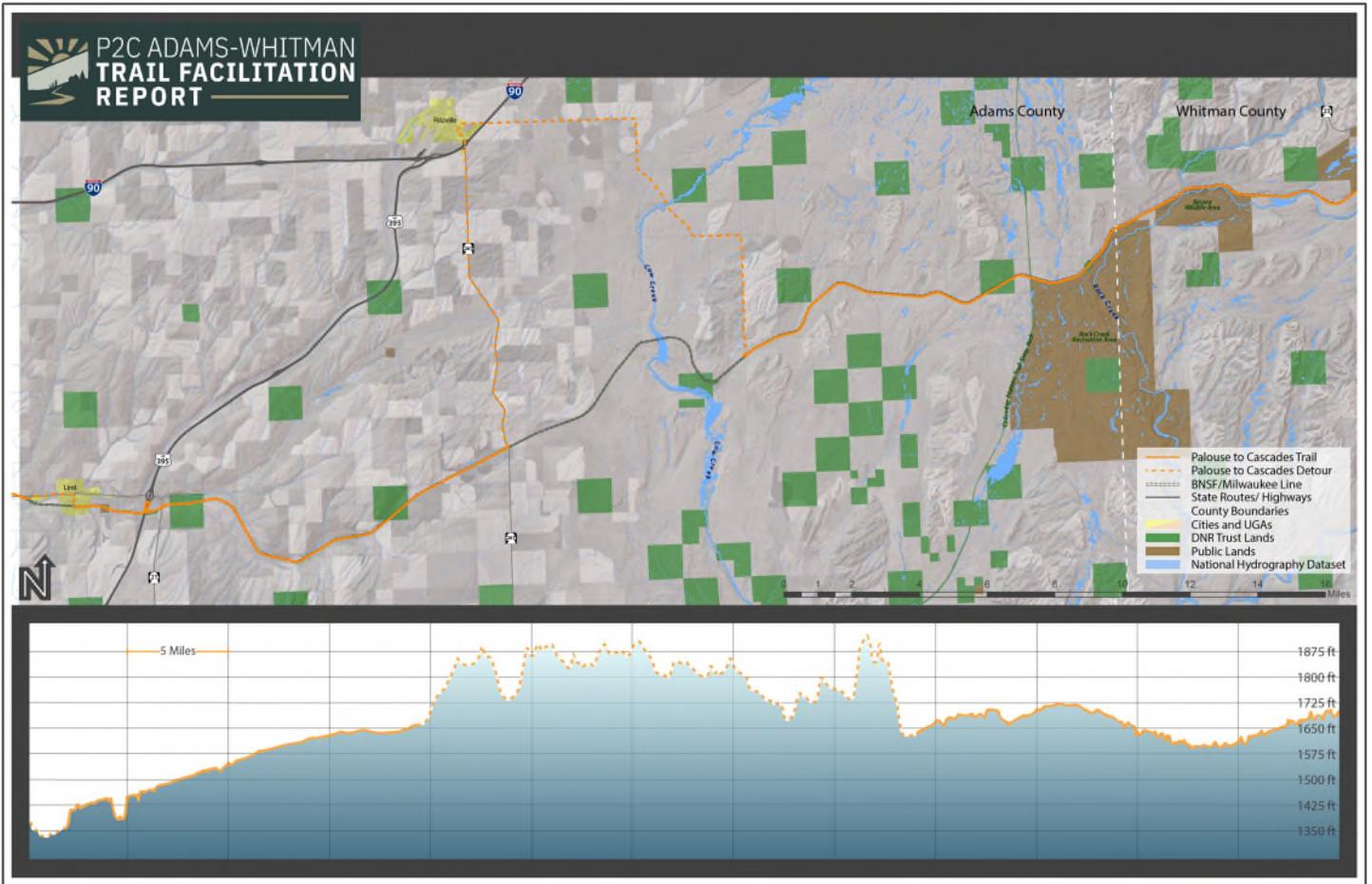


Figure 5: Central portion of the trail

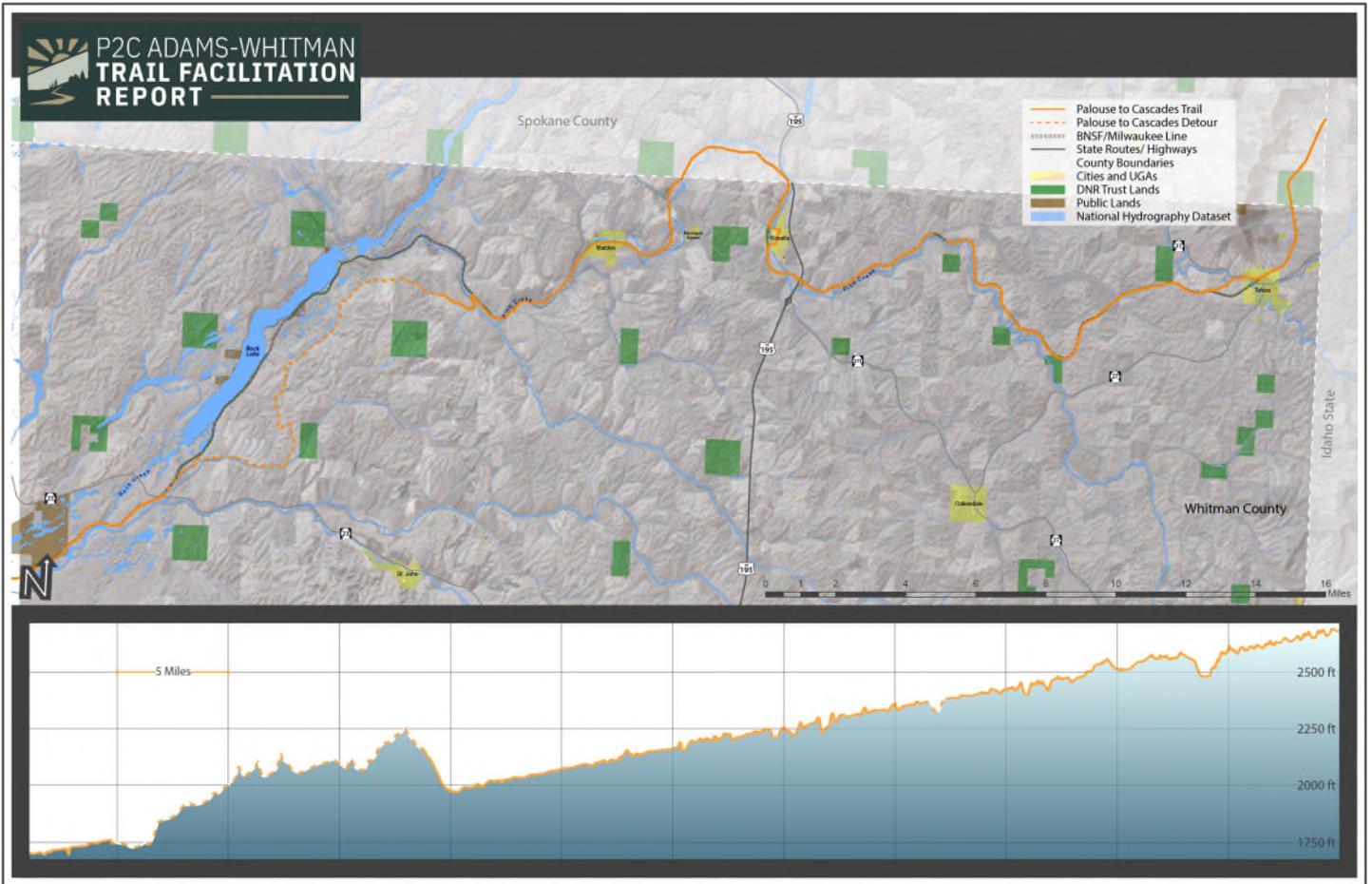


Figure 6: Eastern portion of the trail

History and Context

The trail's background, the policy context within which the trail exists, the findings from previous planning efforts, and the existing plans for funding and development of the trail inform the baseline for this report.

Background and Development Efforts

Most of the 287-mile trail is owned by the State of Washington, with a few sections owned by private property owners. The 110-mile western section of the trail is operated by Washington State Parks, extending from North Bend to the west side of the Columbia River at the Beverly Bridge. This section is mostly developed and open to the public. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources manages the next 74.5-mile section, from the Columbia River to Lind, and is in the process of negotiating a trail operation agreement with State Parks. The following 102.5-mile portion, from Lind to the Idaho border, is operated by State Parks. There are a number of gaps in the state-owned sections of the trail because of privately owned portions of the old right-of-way.¹⁴

There have been various efforts to plan for and improve the eastern sections of the trail to make it more usable and contiguous from end to end. These efforts have met unfavorable feedback from some private property owners in Whitman and Adams counties, claiming that the plans do not adequately address the issues that most concern them.

Improvement efforts

Trail advocates believe recreational trails advance economic development, improve public health, and increase opportunities for recreation and enjoyment. Many of the small towns along the trail corridor support the trail for its perceived economic benefits. The Palouse to Cascades Trail Coalition, a volunteer organization devoted to advocating for the trail, also supports the completion of the trail.¹⁵

With the support of small towns and the Palouse to Cascades Coalition, the state conducted multiple outreach and planning efforts to identify trail development and management recommendations. The state has funded multiple efforts to complete the trail, upgrading its eastern portions by improving safety, security, surfacing, and access.

Issues and Concerns

The trail has a history of opposition from many adjacent landowners. Much of this opposition centers on one or more of the following concerns, described in greater detail in Appendix F of this report:

Existential opposition – Some landowners fully oppose the trail's development under any circumstances, typically citing concerns about the trail's expected capital and operational costs, management, or worries about incompatibilities between trail use and farm operations. Past efforts to convey the trail's right-of-way to adjacent property owners might have emerged from this opposition. However, those conveyance efforts generated pushback among municipalities, trail proponents and the at-large populace.

¹⁴ Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, "Iron Horse State Park Master Plan Addendum, Iron Horse Palouse- Malden to Idaho Border," (2014), <https://parks.state.wa.us/853/Iron-Horse-Palouse-Planning>

¹⁵ Palouse to Cascades Trail Coalition, "Information on the Palouse to Cascades Trail," (2019), <https://palousetocascadestrail.org/>

Operational failings – To date, the majority of issues cited by participants seem rooted in the state’s stewardship of the right-of-way. From weed control to fencing, gate issues to policing and trespass, the state – as told by many – has proven an unreliable neighbor.

Operational fears – Many participants expressed concerns about potential issues including greater incidence of fires, vandalism, trespass, public safety and poor EMS access. This report’s best practices research suggests these fears are common prior to trail development and might prove minor issues in practice. On the other hand, much of this trail’s study area is more remote than comparable trails researched, and the state’s somewhat uneven reputation with its many neighbors might play a factor.

In the eyes of many who oppose the trail or are skeptical of its eventual success, State Parks has failed to deliver on its commitments and has not maintained the level of accountability necessary to sustain trust. They believe the planning processes to date have not been open to their concerns and have not developed effective strategies to resolve them. Despite more than 20 years of input and conversation, the problems of trespass, noxious weeds, and vandalism persist, while incompatibilities between agricultural use and trail use remain unaddressed.

Those who advocate for the trail acknowledge these persistent issues and hope that they can be addressed incrementally and in partnership with those who are impacted. They support State Parks increased efforts in recent years, which include the hiring of a statewide trail coordinator. They also argue for the state's right as a property owner, noting that trespass violations could go both ways with agricultural uses encroaching in some places on trail land.

The legislative proviso set into motion a process designed to explore these issues in more detail, facilitating conversations about strategies and recommendations that could address stakeholder concerns.

Policy context

Four governmental jurisdictions along the trail's alignment have adopted policies relevant to the trail's operation and future, often looking to the trail as a valuable transportation, recreation, heritage and economic development asset. All plans support developments like the Palouse to Cascades Trail, but usually within reasonable limits so as not to interfere with agricultural activities and other economic forces in the region.

Adams County Comprehensive Plan¹⁶

The Adams County Comprehensive Plan establishes goals and policies that provide context for trail development. These goals and policies are supported by values including protecting agricultural lands, maintaining and increasing economic stability, and using existing transportation networks to promote growth. Adams County's goals and policies support promoting recreation and tourism for economic development purposes including non-motorized interpretive trails. The county also aims to provide efficient transportation systems which includes identifying suitable bicycle routes. While these goals and policies tend to support trail development, they must be compatible with the other goals and policies that aim to protect agricultural land and coordinate with other jurisdictions and organizations.

Whitman County Comprehensive Plan¹⁷

Whitman County's Comprehensive Plan aims to enhance bicycle facilities, support non-motorized paths between communities and economic centers, and provide multi-modal transportation facilities designed to reduce conflicts and hazards where bicycle traffic uses major state and county roadways. These routes should be coordinated with commercial and tourism activities to support non-motorized access and economic development.

PALOUSE 2040¹⁸

The Palouse Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) is the regional planning entity for Whitman, Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin Counties. They published a Regional Transportation Plan in 2018 titled PALOUSE 2040, which outlines goals and policies for the area's regional transportation system. The plan aims to promote regional and local trails and bike paths and provide multimodal transportation systems based on regional priorities. The plan supports rail-banking as a way to preserve rights-of-way while allowing for other interim uses such as non-motorized trail systems.

City of Othello Comprehensive Plan¹⁹

The City of Othello's Comprehensive Plan aims to implement a parks and recreation trails plan as part of its transportation and recreation goals. The city also aims to develop a linkage of open space in the community, work with the county and the state to support the regional transportation system, and coordinate street improvements with trail improvements.

¹⁶ Adams County, Washington, "Adams County Comprehensive Plan," (2005),

http://www.co.adams.wa.us/document_center/Building/Adams%20County%20Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf

¹⁷ Whitman County, Washington, "Whitman County Comprehensive Plan," (2014),

<http://www.whitmancounty.org/download/Public%20Works/Planning/WC%20Comp%20Plan%20-%202017-04-14.pdf>

¹⁸ Palouse Regional Transportation Planning Organization, "PALOUSE 2040," (2018),

https://www.palousetpo.org/index_htm_files/Palouse%20RTP%202040%20final%20adopted%20March%202013%202018.pdf

¹⁹ City of Othello, Washington, "City of Othello 2015 Comprehensive Plan," (2015),

<https://evogov.s3.amazonaws.com/media/49/media/37803.pdf>

History of State Parks Planning Efforts

The state's trail-related planning efforts come from the need to better understand the trail context and how best to improve and manage the trail to achieve the vision of a cross-state non-motorized pathway, as part of a cross-country trail system. The plans devoted significant resources to inventory trail condition, establish management structures, strategize funding approaches, tailor improvements to meet local needs, and prioritize action to optimize the expenditure of limited funds for the trail's benefit. As part of the planning processes, the state solicited community and trail advocate input to balance the needs of trail users and trail neighbors.

Iron Horse State Park and The John Wayne Pioneer Trail Management Plan (2000)²⁰

This document identifies the natural, cultural, and recreational resource management issues that face Iron Horse State Park and recommends management approaches designed to address the issues. The plan aims to describe how park management intends to balance recreational use with appropriate measures to protect natural and cultural resources, and it provides three different land classifications for the trail: resource recreation areas, recreation areas, and heritage areas. State Parks land classifications in WAC 352-16 define these areas:

- **Recreational areas** are suited and/or developed for high-intensity outdoor recreational use, conference, cultural and/or educational centers, or other uses serving large numbers of people.
- **Resource recreation areas** are suited and/or developed for natural and/or cultural resource-based medium-intensity and low-intensity outdoor recreational use.
- **Heritage areas** are designated for preservation, restoration, and interpretation of unique or unusual archaeological, historical, scientific, and/or cultural features, and traditional cultural properties, which are of state-wide or national significance.

The plan then states which areas of the trail are designated under each land classification. Finally, approaches are identified for addressing and managing natural resource issues, cultural and historic resources issues, and recreational resource issues.

Iron Horse State Park Master Plan Addendum, Malden to Idaho Border (2014)²¹

The intent of the master plan addendum is to develop consistency with the developed portion of Iron Horse State Park, from Cedar Falls to the Columbia River, while considering the unique characteristics of the Palouse portion of the park, and to help guide future phases of development, and assist in acquiring funding for trail development.

This document focuses on the 34-mile section of the trail between Malden and the Idaho border. It provides specific development recommendations for the trail and trailheads in this section, within the context of the

²⁰ Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, "Iron Horse State Park and The John Wayne Pioneer Trail Management Plan," (2000), <https://parks.state.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/1282/Iron-Horse-State-Park--John-Wayne-Pioneer-Trail-Management-Plan-PDF>

²¹ Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, "Iron Horse State Park Master Plan Addendum, Iron Horse Palouse- Malden to Idaho Border," (2014), <https://parks.state.wa.us/853/Iron-Horse-Palouse-Planning>

environmental, cultural, and permitting constraints of the trail. It then proposes a development plan in four different phases and provides an analysis of estimated construction costs for these phases.

Iron Horse State Park Trail Recommendations Report (2016)²²

The State Parks and Recreation Commission sponsored this study -- also known as the 2016 Classification and Management Plan (CAMP) -- to make recommendations for the development of the Palouse to Cascades trail, stemming from a public outreach effort aimed at addressing the concerns of rural property owners and small towns along the trail. The 70-mile segment between Lind and Malden through Grant, Adams, and Whitman counties was the focus of this planning effort.

Some main points from this report are noted below.

- Land classifications along the corridor were identified as a combination of recreation, resource recreation, and heritage areas, according to the official State Parks land classification definitions. The trail itself was classified as a resource recreation area. Land classified as recreation areas were proposed for potential trailheads where they fall within or adjacent to communities, and for those providing water, sanitary, parking, and/or picnic facilities/services.
- A long-term park boundary was created to provide an analysis of the park potential for all land surrounding the park. This included all public and private trail gaps from Lind to Malden, totaling approximately four miles of disconnected gaps, ranging in length from 500 feet to two miles.
- The report identified the need for a phased transition of management responsibility from DNR to State Parks.

The following management issues were identified and are discussed in the management recommendation table included in the report: *Noxious weeds and vegetation management, trespass, fencing and gates, trailhead facilities, camping facilities, trail surfacing, bridges and trestles, permit requirements, long-term park boundaries, park/trail naming, land classifications, natural resources, and cultural/historic resources.*

From these issues, four of them emerged as focus issues through the course of the planning process. These were: noxious weed control and vegetation management, trespass on adjacent private property, recreational use permit requirements, and park/trail naming. In order to address these issues, the report provided a list of management recommendations. Park/trail naming issues are no longer relevant as the trail has been renamed since this report was published. Some example recommendations for the other three top issues are listed below.

Trespass

- Provide trailheads at 8- to 12-mile intervals. Trailhead funding at Malden and Rosalia could come from grants that have been submitted.
- Camping areas should be 5-8 miles from trailheads and 8-10 miles from each other. This can be addressed as trailheads are implemented.

²² Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, "Iron Horse State Park Trail Recommendations Report," (2016), <https://parks.state.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/7653/02-Recommendations-Report-6-27-16?bidId=>

Noxious Weeds

- Prioritize noxious weed control in proximity to agricultural and grazing uses.
- Develop weed control prescriptions, provide to the jurisdictional weed board and contract with them to conduct weed control.
- Have State Parks staff provide noxious weed control and vegetation management but hire contractors and Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) to supplement weed control beyond the resources or capability of State Parks staff.

Recreational use permit requirement

- The trail-specific recreational use permit should be eliminated for developed portions of the trail with adequate signage, fencing and educational materials to prevent issues such as trespass and unauthorized use of campfires.
- Work with adjacent property owners to address concerns (i.e., trespass, fire danger, pets off-leash) so that formal property owner notification is no longer required.
- Work with local communities to determine an alternative to individual permits for local trail users.

The report also identified gaps in the trail created by privately owned parcels and active rail operations. The report says that State Parks will pursue easements, property agreements, and other means of establishing management for trail purposes. State Parks will also work with active rail line operators to explore opportunities such as trails next to the active rail line.

Funding and Project Timeline

Funding for the following projects within the study area (the length of the Palouse to Cascades Trail through Adams County and Whitman County) has been approved by the Legislature for Washington State Parks 2019-2021 Capital and Grant Projects.²³

Malden to Rosalia Trestles and Surfacing - \$1.8 million

Includes: Repair trestles, build a trailhead and provide a user-friendly trail surface between two rural communities.

- Jan. 1, 2021 Project start
- April 1, 2021 Construction started
- June 30, 2021 Construction complete

Tekoa Trestle Decking and Railings - \$1.7 million

Includes: Open an existing 975-foot trestle located in the rural community of Tekoa.

- June 15, 2020 Project start
- March 1, 2021 Construction started
- June 30, 2021 Construction complete

The Legislature wanted to conduct a process to facilitate and mediate ownership, development, and use conflicts along the section of the Palouse to Cascades Trail in Adams County and Whitman County before the \$1.8 million in funding is released for the Malden to Rosalia Trestles and Surfacing. According to the proviso, this funding will be released not before July 1, 2020 (Appendix E).

The Tekoa Trestle Decking and Railings project is another planned project in the study area, but funding for this project is not contingent on the proviso.

In addition, the Legislature approved \$9.5 million for other trail improvements west of the study area identified in the budget proviso.

While the Legislature has approved the funds for these trail projects, the funding for trail maintenance and improvements typically comes from the following sources:

- Grant funding through the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office
- Legislative appropriation through the capital budget
- General fund and Discover Pass funds (typically used for maintenance and operational needs)

Funds to support capital, maintenance and operational investment in the trail are coming almost entirely from the state. This reinforces the state's position as the trail's steward, but it also might constrain trail resources based on the state's fiscal condition and political disposition.

²³ Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, "Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail 2019-2021 Capital and Grant Projects," (2019), https://palousetocascadestail.org/FS19-007_Palouse_to_Cascades_capital_and_grant_projects.pdf

Process

This conversation spanned three months to identify and employ a small group of representative stakeholders. The participants worked through a series of interviews and activities to reveal the trail’s topics and issues, learn from best practices, and consider options to align, design, build, and manage the trail to best effect. The schedule, shown in Table below, was driven by the need to deliver this report to the Legislature by mid-January 2020, incorporating these multiple levels of conversations. The process concentrated on drawing out the thoughts and ideas of those most directly impacted by the trail and those who have a stake in its use, improvement, and management. By sponsoring the dialogue through the process, Commerce hoped to generate recommendations to identify and address the use, development and property ownership conflicts as the proviso required.

Table 2: Report Schedule

Task	Oct		Nov				Dec					Jan			
	20	27	3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26
Background															
Advisory Group formation															
Orientation interviews															
Advisory Group meeting 1															
Roadshow															
Project website/survey															
Draft report															
Advisory Group meeting 2															
Rollout meeting															
Report issuance & distribution															

Advisory group

The group, nominated by the Governor’s Office, consisted of more than two dozen trail users, agency representatives, landowners, and local elected officials. The list grew as advisory group members identified additional key players relating to the future of the trail. SCJ Alliance initiated a set of orientation interviews with advisory group members, assembled an informational packet to stimulate, advance, and track discussion, and conducted two workshops with group members to dig into issues associated with the trail and to consider strategies to address them.

SCJ Alliance also produced an advisory group orientation packet (Appendix A), with a project introduction and related trail and process information to ensure all participants had a consistent understanding of the assignment and a common baseline of information from which to work. The consultant updated the packet through the course of the process, adding in workshop summaries, the best practices report, and results from the orientation interviews. Keeping the packet updated at the pace of the project – and making it available to advisory group members and anyone else visiting the project website – helped the process stay on track and advance conversations during the workshops and rollout open house.

Orientation interviews

Taking place over the course of the entire three-month process, the consultant conducted phone conversations with individuals and small-group stakeholders that included advisory group members, agency representatives, extension agents, elected officials, user group leaders, and landowners. SCJ Alliance worked

with the Department of Commerce to schedule appointments and arrange all meetings, adding to the list of interviewees based on suggestions at the two advisory group workshops.

Twenty-seven of the 38 invitees participated in the phone interviews, averaging 30-60 minutes per call. The consultant then reflected on the topics discussed and distilled the thread of the conversations into a set of issues and preliminary suggestions. The conversations covered a wide range of design, construction, maintenance, operation, and management topics, each of which informed the approach to the workshops and are considered in the recommendations presented in this report.

Conversations with interviewees brought up multiple topics, generally categorized as associated with trail use, alignment, ownership, maintenance and economic consequences. Many of these appeared as issues or challenges to be addressed over the short or long-term. Appendix F contains the full report on the results from the orientation interviews.

Summary Notes

The following sections coalesce all interviewee comments and their various dimensions into distinct challenges future efforts must tackle. Resolutions for some issues evolved as part of this report's preparation, while resolution of others might take time, supported by additional study, future policy development, and committed action.

○ **Credibility Gap**

Many discussions included stories of management issues with specific locations along the trail including noxious weeds, trail surfacing, fencing and much more. Some feel the state hasn't been a reliable partner in addressing known issues, and thus are deeply skeptical that it might be relied upon for future, ever more complex needs. This, perhaps, in contrast to local perception of the John Wayne Pioneer Trail Riders, who seem generally well regarded as stewards of the trail. Addressing this gap will take time and institutional commitment, requiring a consistent, in-person presence, and making sure measures and agreements are fully honored as plans progress.

○ **Building Partnerships**

Based on these interviews, opportunity exists – and perhaps requires – the development of local partnerships with landowners and communities along the trail's path. The capacity of the state to go it alone seems limited, so involving locals offers potential in terms of gaining capital, operational knowledge and insight, on-site stewardship and lasting support. Many expressed a desire to be included on a more intimate level with decision-making and implementation of plans, including landowners hoping for effective, reliable partnerships matching the type of relations they have with other neighbors. Perhaps owing to the nature of rural, highly remote areas like Adams and Whitman counties, collaboration is key.

○ **Demonstrated Return, Over Time**

Many noted the relative scarcity of trail users, suggesting that cost-to-benefit ratios might never balance. While evidence elsewhere offers hope that trail investments will indeed pay dividends, the sheer distance, often-harsh environment, thin service network and other unique circumstances along this route pose formidable challenges. Embracing these realities by working in incremental, localized fashion – especially where physical and other conditions are already more favorable – can provide proponents with opportunity to build and demonstrate local successes, including economic returns.

○ **Suit to Fit**

The trail in Adams and Whitman County cuts through remote and rural areas. Some include rolling wheat fields; some include channeled scabland. While communities along the route are small, they are essentially urban compared to long stretches of the trail. Issues that weigh heavily in one area might be easily managed elsewhere. Even built out, it seems likely that some sections of the trail will see heavier use than others. Such conditions, it was suggested, recommend differing treatments for differing areas, ranging from ways the trail might be improved, to ways the trail might be operated and managed. The sheer scope of the landscape, varying use patterns and the range of improvements needed seem to require a more context-sensitive approach, versus “one size suits all” policies.

○ **Management Realities: Policing**

In urban areas, destructive behaviors are regulated to a large degree by the presence of others. Such visual surveillance or “eyes on” does not eliminate the need for policing, but it can greatly reduce incidence of crime. It is unlikely that the trail – or at least large portions of it – will ever see sufficient visitor volume to reduce the need for active oversight. Behaviors mentioned in interviews – particularly those related to illegal hunting, dumping, vandalism and theft – are often seen in rural areas, but could be enabled by access to remote rights-of-way. Future efforts must recognize this, including work to limit unfettered access and associated abuse, improved oversight/policing efforts that partner with and support local landowners, and work with user groups to aid surveillance and reporting of issues.

○ **Management Realities: Funding**

Given sufficient funding, moving trail improvements forward might be relatively simple, with operations and maintenance handled as the railroads once did, which, according to some interviewees, was reliable, if perhaps blunt and indifferent to local conditions. But rail operations are wildly different from trail operations, including funding streams that support them. Several interviewees noted that as a matter of priority, trail planning must include serious consideration for ways in which the trail can support itself over time, not only for capital improvements but for operations and management. Some offered ideas and suggestions for this, but it’s clear that the difficult work to identify resource streams able to sustain operations and partner relationships is a critical priority.

○ **User Education**

Many of the interviewees’ comments suggest the need for better user communication and education. Large sections of the trail present formidable physical and logistical demands that some are unprepared for, leading to trespass and intrusion, and in some cases, behaviors that put users and/or the landscape at risk. Similarly, users – perhaps accustomed to trails in more urban, or publicly owned landscapes – might feel entitled to camp, hike, take water from or disturb private holdings. Lacking the type of physical cues and services common to more typical trails, behavioral boundaries must come from user understanding and respect, acknowledging the unique context where this trail exists. Active farm and ranchland areas differ greatly from woodland, urban, and mountainous ones. According to interviewees, some, like the John Wayne Pioneer Wagons & Riders group, understand the trail, while others do not.

○ **Visitor Attraction**

A common thread in all interviews, stated or not, seemed to be a love for and appreciation of the land through which the trail passes. In fact, many of the challenges enumerated in the interviews concern qualities of the landscape – including its sometimes-extreme remoteness, its geographic history and diversity, the ways in which farming and ranching operate there, and small-town pace of life. Just as these qualities make locals love the place, they have clear potential to attract numerous visitors.

Many of those interviewed see the trail as a rare and important opportunity for small-town economic development. Successes elsewhere, perhaps especially the Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes in north Idaho, have many locals excited about the trail. Such energies have already helped move planning and project funding along in Whitman County, specifically in Tekoa and the trail section between Rosalia and Malden. Other towns along the route seem equally excited about the trail's potential, leading some to suggest that a phased approach be developed – one that, perhaps, identifies and matches key areas of the trail's path with host communities. Such an approach could offer multiple advantages, including:

- Helping visitors identify and more easily experience unique portions of the trail – for example, out-and-back trips or possible loops in the Palouse, scabland or pothole lake areas, or along Rock Lake
- Tying improvements to active, local proponent groups and municipalities
- Creating localized “wins” for the trail, elevating the awareness and interest of families and more casual users
- Allowing the trail to develop over time, as funds and localized support for it grows
- Providing a more context-sensitive approach, matching trail design, features, amenities and management practices to differing areas.

Advisory Group Meetings

The process included three advisory group meetings, two of which were conducted as workshops, and the third as an open house format. These meetings helped foster discussion about the issues and helped shape the recommendations to address those issues that are presented in this report. This section summarizes these three meetings and their results, but a full report can be found in Appendix C of this document.

Meeting 1: Rosalia Workshop

On Nov. 19, 2019, approximately 27 persons representing a wide range of user groups, state agencies, municipalities and landowners took part in the first Palouse to Cascades Trail facilitation meeting. The first meeting with the Advisory Group clarified the group’s scope and purpose, facilitated discussion on issues and opportunities, conducted small group exercises to refine and prioritize issues, and developed draft recommendations on ways to optimize the trail for all concerned.

Meeting summary

Following a presentation introducing the project context and scope, participants were asked to work with at least two other attendees to identify known issues and potential solutions pertaining to the trail within five areas spanning the entirety of Whitman and Adams counties. Each group received a table-sized map of the study area, configured as a worksheet. Each group then considered and identified specific examples (good or bad) of issues noted, including, as possible, mapped comments. Each group then made a presentation to the entire audience on their findings and recommendations.

Outcomes

Participant reviews identified a list of needs, issues, threats, opportunities and examples. Comments underscored several key matters including:

- The need for trail operators to attend to the basics, including fencing, weed control, policing, marketing and management
- The need to foster relationships with adjacent landowners and municipalities, supporting ongoing operations as well as potential partnerships
- Interest and support for lease arrangements with utilities or other, non-intrusive users of the ROW remains high.
- The trail is and will remain a very different type of recreational facility than most state parks, requiring a highly diverse and context-specific approach to operations, public relations, feature sets and programming.

In addition, support also emerged for detailed economic studies, helping gain and/or meter levels of investment for the trail, and aiding the state with implementation strategies.



Figure 7: Participant comments from meeting 1 in Rosalia

Meeting 2: Lind Workshop

On Dec. 19, 2019, approximately 20 persons representing a wide range of user groups, state agencies, municipalities and landowners took part in the second Palouse to Cascades Trail facilitation meeting. The second Advisory Group meeting presented all findings to date and provided the group with the draft report for review and discussion, facilitated via small-group critiques and prioritization refinement exercises.

Meeting summary

Following a presentation introducing the project scope and results from the first workshop in November, participants were asked to work with at least two other attendees in reviewing and refining a list of issues associated with the trail developed to date. For this first exercise, each group received a table-sized list of issues and a map of the study area. Each group then considered a second table-sized worksheet containing potential strategies for trail funding and operations, arranged for review in three main activities:

- Resources and Funding – Identifying viable funding sources, with participants asked to assign a percentage figure to each of their line items for improvements and ongoing operations.
- Improvements – This activity listed specific or categorical improvements needed in the study area, and participants were asked to rank each as a “short,” “medium” or a “long-term” priority for the trail in Adams and Whitman counties.
- Operations – This activity presented a list of planning, management and operational work likely associated with trail development, with groups asked to assign a “low,” “medium” or “high” priority to each activity, followed by work to identify whether those activities would be best as led by the state, or by a partnership of both state and local entities.

Upon completion, each group made presentations on their findings to the entire audience and event organizers.

Outcomes

Participant reviews seemed to affirm that the draft list of needs, issues, threats, opportunities and examples was generally complete. In addition, strong support was expressed that the short-line rail operation at Othello remain operational and viable, given significant economic benefits already being realized (with potential for more). These exercises helped illuminate participants’ preferred approach to funding trail improvements and operations, shedding light on practical approaches the state could undertake as it pursues trail development. The activities also affirmed several trail considerations, including giving higher priority to trail improvements in areas near towns and cities and embracing a wide variety of funding sources.



Figure 8: Participants share their thoughts at meeting 2 in Lind

Meeting 3: Ritzville Open House

On Jan. 8, 2020, approximately 30 people attended an open house in Ritzville, Wash. At this open house, the consultant presented the report's proposed core recommendations, and participants responded to and refined the recommendations on the worksheets provided at the open house stations.

Outcomes

Participant reviews of the core recommendations were generally favorable, but the conversations and comments from this meeting did result in several refinements, as well as the addition of another recommendation underscoring the need for better and more reliable understanding of the land use context surrounding the trail.

Website

The project website launched after the first workshop, creating an on-line portal for those on the advisory group and the public at large. It contained links to workshop presentations, exercises and results, relevant plans and reference materials, the advisory group packet – and its amendments. The site also linked to a spatial survey, allowing respondents to identify places, segments and areas of special concern.

2016 CAMP Status Update

As part of the process, the consultant asked State Parks to provide a progress update on the recommendations outlined in the 2016 CAMP (Appendix F). This accounted for the more recent work that has been done, providing the most up-to-date information with which to make recommendations.

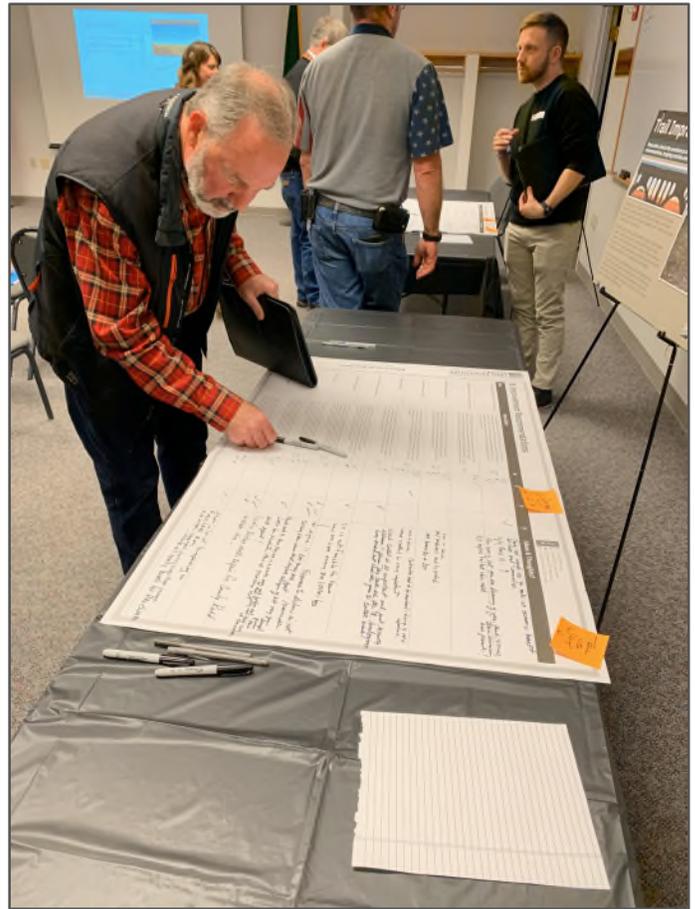


Figure 9: Participants at meeting 3 in Ritzville

Best Practices

As part of this process, a best practices analysis was carried out to identify how similar issues have been successfully addressed on other trails with similar characteristics to the Palouse to Cascades Trail. This report identified some main issues that were common among different rail-trail developments, and these main issues are listed below. A full best practices report constitutes Appendix B of this document.

Main Issues

Vandalism/Littering

Some adjoining property owners fear greater trail access to public trailheads could increase incidents involving vandalism, littering, and illegal dumping, emphasizing the need for agency or volunteer management and maintenance as well as improved systems of monitoring and policing. The trails studied in the best practices report had established systems for trail cleanup when these incidents occur, and for monitoring to help avoid them in the first place. Studies also indicate that increased trail use may actually reduce vandalism.

Trespassing

Trail users could trespass on private property, especially if trail signage isn't clear or if water, restroom, and camping facilities are not provided frequently enough. Trespassing was a concern for adjacent landowners of the trails studied in the best practices report, and this was addressed through better fencing, signage, wayfinding, and trail patrolling.

Safety

A lack of safety can mean many different things, such as a lack of necessary resources like water, food, or shelter. It can also mean the absence of a functional emergency response system, the lack of cell phone service to make calls for help, or a high presence of crime. The best practices research revealed a whole host of ways to address safety issues along these trails.

Noxious Weeds

Farmers might be impacted by noxious weeds spreading along the trail if they are not maintained properly. This was another major issue discovered in the best practices research. Trails studied demonstrated mature systems for weed management, and they did so by applying a sufficient amount of the operations and maintenance budget to weed control. This will prove to be a top priority issue in order to ease the concerns of adjacent farmers and other landowners.

Agricultural Activity

Farmers might be impacted if the trail is adjacent to or crosses grazing or harvesting land. The other trails studied in the best practices research also passed through agricultural land, so some dealt with compatibility issues between recreational trail use and agricultural use. However, these issues were addressed successfully by working with farmers to establish systems that allowed flexibility for farmers to use trail crossings. This involved strategic placing of fencing and gating.

Trail Operations and Maintenance

Long stretches of rail-trails through rural areas still need regular maintenance, which might be costly. Conversely, if trails are not maintained there is a greater risk of accidents along the trail. The cost for operations and maintenance was one of the top issues in the best practices research, indicating that there are real financial constraints for recreational trails throughout the country. Other trails have dealt with this issue by developing lists of prioritized funding items, such as weed control and fencing, but they have also responded by going after other funding sources.

Best Practices Examples

In the best practices report, three other rail-trails were investigated for how they addressed similar issues to what the Palouse to Cascades Trail is currently experiencing. Trails researched were the Cowboy Trail in Nebraska, the Mickelson Trail in South Dakota, and the Raccoon River Trail in Iowa.

Table 3 presents a summary of these findings based on the main issues identified above. These findings provide a quick take on what makes rail-trails successful and how trail sponsors, adjoining landowners, and other stakeholders have worked together make these trails inspiring.

These findings led to a list of best-practices recommendations that were used to support the final core recommendations found in this document. Findings from the three trails investigated included the following:

- Address property rights
- Develop a crime-control plan
- Develop a maintenance plan
- Conduct an economic development analysis

Table 3: Summary of issues addressed by best practices

Issue	Cowboy Trail	Mickelson Trail	Raccoon River Trail
Crime/Safety	Crime hasn't been a significant issue.	Vandalism sometimes occurs at one of the trailheads along the main highway. Trail hires two people to patrol the trail. Trail is closed at night.	TEAS system provides markers every half-mile. In emergencies, people can call 911 and tell them which marker they are at so responders know exactly where to go. Vegetation is cleared for more visibility, and intersections are treated for safe crossings.
Maintenance & Clean-up	Annual maintenance cost is \$150K, the minimum to maintain the trail. Includes spraying for weeds.	The state parks department comes in periodically or as needed to clean up the trail. Trail is currently being resurfaced at a cost of \$7K/mile.	Repaving projects are necessary to maintain quality of asphalt.
Facilities	There are only 3 trailheads that provide water, restrooms, parking, trail info, and bike repair stations. The towns along the trail provide enough access between trailheads.	16 trailheads offer restrooms and water stations. Camping allowed on Forest Service property along parts of the trail.	Restrooms and water provided at a couple of locations, but towns are frequent enough that trail users can use town services when needed.
Trespass	Fencing for adjacent landowners	Education of trail users about proper trail use and strategic fencing help keep users on the trail.	Fencing for adjacent landowners
Compatibility w/ Agriculture	Crossing leases allow farmers and adjacent landowners to cross at designated spots along the trail. Access gates are installed.	Agricultural crossings are designated. The state has installed underpasses and culverts in certain locations as well for cattle transport.	There are designated crossings for farmers, and these crossings are treated to handle heavy farm equipment. There isn't much conflict due to seasonal use of crossings.

Issues

Table 4 assembles a list of all of the major issues that were discussed throughout this process, connecting each to the recommendations that help to address or resolve it.

Table 4: Recommendations that address the issues

Issue	Recommendation #	Use Conflict	Ownership Conflict	Development Conflict
Maintenance				
Noxious Weed Control	16	x		x
Fencing installation and maintenance	9	x	x	x
Trail surfacing and maintenance	8, 11	x		x
Clearing and cleaning the trail regularly	2, 9, 12, 16, 19	x		x
Operation				
Catering to localized needs	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 17, 18, 21	x	x	x
Coordination of planning efforts	1, 5, 17, 18, 19, 23	x	x	x
Unclear navigation: wayfinding and detouring	7, 10, 11, 14, 15	x	x	x
Seasonal use	22, 24, 25	x		
Lack of education: proper trail use and trip preparation	21, 22, 23, 24, 25	x	x	x
Safety				
Illegal activities: Hunting, dumping, littering, vandalism, theft	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19	x	x	x
Basic services: water, restrooms, camping	12, 13, 20	x		x
Emergency services	20, 22	x		x
Trail and Infrastructure Reliability	7, 8, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19			x
Management				
Working with adjacent landowners and other stakeholders	17, 18, 19, 26		x	
Gaps in the state-owned right-of-way	10, 11, 14, 15, 26	x	x	x
Confusion on ownership and responsibilities	9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26	x	x	x
Land Compatibility				
Compatibility with agricultural activities	9, 16, 17, 18, 21, 26	x	x	x
Compatibility with privately-owned land	9, 16, 17, 18, 21, 26		x	x
Compatibility with active rail lines: Othello	10, 11, 26	x		x
Funding				
Trail development funding	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6			x
Trail maintenance funding	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6			x
Value of the trail	3, 4, 21, 25	x	x	x

Appendices

[A. Advisory Group Introductory Packet](#)

[B. Rail-Trail Development: Best Practices Report](#)

[C. Workshop Results](#)

[D. Trail Maps](#)

[E. Proviso](#)

[F. Orientation Interview Summary](#)

[G. 2016 Iron Horse State Park Trail Recommendations Report Status Check](#)