

Tacoma Street - Johnson Creek MAX station
Interpretive Boardwalk Design Workshop
June 10, 2012, TriMet East Segment Field Office

Meeting Attendees: Greg Archuleta (Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde), Matt Clark (JCWC staff), Jeb Doran (TriMet), Norma Dulin (JCWC volunteer), Peregrine Edison-Lahm (JCWC / Creek Committee volunteer), Kathy Fry (Mayer Reed), Catherine Goode (Citizens Advisory Committee), Ron Heiden (Mayer Reed), Jennifer Koozer (TriMet), Ann Kracke, Mat Millenbach (Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League), Claudia Steinberg (TriMet), Russ Stoll (Ardenwald Johnson Creek Neighborhood Association), Marty Urman (JCWC staff)

- Meeting began with introductions
- Matt provided a brief overview of the project: 1) Instream, side channel, and riparian forest habitat; 2) an interpretive boardwalk.
- Ron described preliminary concept for interpretive boardwalk:
 - Education and interpretive elements. A way to get people down to the creek. A stopover while waiting for the MAX.
 - Very early in the design process. At a boardwalk design meeting in December, we reviewed materials and preliminary design / boardwalk alignment (Ron distributed a handout showing boardwalk alignment and examples of decking, railing etc)
 - Curvilinear boardwalk alignment, gives some mystery to the boardwalk, not immediately seeing what's at the end. Boardwalk entrance accessible from the cement walkways that lead to the station platform. Boardwalk passes over stormwater swale, opportunity for education about onsite stormwater treatment. As trees grow, they'll arch over boardwalk. Boardwalk ends near the excavated Johnson Creek side channel (slower water, chance to see some wildlife). Boardwalk terminus sized to accommodate classroom of kids plus some other people.
 - Materials:
 - Open top decking – steel or fiberglass to let water / light through. Russ asked about metal decking. Wasn't that a TriMet requirement? Yes, need to go in that direction, though fiberglass also an option. Wood is a concern. All combustible material should be avoided.
 - Cable railing - thin & unobtrusive to let landscape through. Jennifer liked curved railing, makes it difficult to climb.
 - Boardwalk.Architecturally – single pier vs. double pier. Single pier makes it look like floating. Several people expressed liking the single pier.
 - Question asked about diagram – white striped areas are the concrete sidewalks.
 - Discussion about width
 - Cost is a factor. Decided at last meeting to reduce from 10' to 8'. 8' still allows people to pass one another.
 - Narrower width might make it feel more intimate, create interest in getting to the end of the boardwalk.

- Could go narrower than 8' if cost is a concern? No, you don't really save money by going narrower. 8' planks are standard size. Same number of support posts needed regardless of width.
 - Is the metal decking wheelchair accessible? Yes, the slotted surface gap is ADA-approved and the boardwalk will not be sloped.
 - Ron commented that railings are 42" high per code, and making the boardwalk narrower than 8' could start to feel like a cattle chute.
 - What's total length of boardwalk? 150' estimated.
- Discussion about alignment. Could you offset the boardwalk entrance a bit to keep bikers from riding straight from the sidewalk onto the boardwalk?
- What's at the end of the boardwalk? Anything beside the creek? Matt said his thought was to have interpretive signs at the overlook at the end, something for people to read. Another option is to have the interpretive elements spread throughout the whole length of the boardwalk. People expressed concern about sign clutter that detracts from experiencing the actual creek.
- Russ raised the idea of a plaque and sculpture at the boardwalk terminus honoring donors.
- Norma – somewhat iterative to have the all the interpretive signage at the end. Ron agreed. For example, it makes sense to have the stormwater swale interpretation near the actual swale.
- Kathy – first figure out the big themes. Then figure out how to pace them along the boardwalk. Possible to do that while still having the sense of arrival at the end of the boardwalk.
- Matt – Based on preliminary discussions, an overarching interpretative theme seems to be history and Johnson Creek's place in history through different lenses: tribal, early European, industrial etc. What has Johnson Creek meant to different communities at different times? What does it mean to people now?
- Russ – There's a new way of thinking now. Stormwater / salmon habitat. The modern history of Johnson Creek is of restoration. Local examples of volunteerism and creek stewardship, i.e. JCWC and Friends of Tideman Johnson. But also examples of volunteerism and stewardship throughout Oregon.
- Ron – History theme lends itself to a chronological timeline.
- Kathy – Right now she's working for Crystal Springs Partnership. Familiar with Johnson Creek and possible interpretive themes. Also used to own a home at 32nd and Sherritt and participated in the Ardenwald – Johnson Creek Neighborhood Association.
- Kathy asked, "Is there significant attachment to the creek?" What would be said about the creek through different historical lenses? Would it be sentimental?
- The story could be people's changing attitudes toward water: from thinking of it as a commodity / economic driver to thinking about its restoration. Early Johnson Creek used for water power. The town of Willsburg, and the art installment at the station site will reflect that history.

- Greg shared a Native perspective. Ongoing connection to land / fisheries. Salmon, eel, other food resources. The creek being channelized highlights how important the sloughs and backwaters were for food resources. Creek also provide materials for making things, i.e. cattails. Alder and maple trees for spoons and dishes. Cedars for plank houses. This is ongoing. From time immemorial to the present. Multiple uses from multiple parts.
- Russ – modern history includes big engineering projects to restore ecological function. Floodplain restoration projects. Installation of large woody debris at the mouth of Johnson Creek. Greg agreed it's important to the Tribes to recreate that ecological function. Also remember that Johnson Creek is a small piece of a bigger system (entire Willamette system).
- Water is always part of a system. A piece of a whole.
- Norma stressed the idea of diversity. When you're experiencing a creek, you're always only looking at a small part of it. She's interested in placing the creek within the context of the neighborhoods around it. Show growth over time, the creek in relationship to buildings and development around it.
- Jeb. Originally came to the creek for sustenance. People increasingly needed to change the creek to get what they wanted from it. Slowly changed the creek over time. It's a two-way relationship between creek and people. The creek influencing people, people influencing the creek.
- Discussion about the historical timeline in zoo light rail tunnel.
- Interpretive signage usually focuses only on history. Can we continue on into the future? Present a vision for the future, not just stop at present day.
- Is there an opportunity for interactivity, changing interpretive elements? Classroom of kids drawing a new mural every two years?
- Kathy asked, "Is the intent for this boardwalk to be a destination? Or is the point to complement an existing facility, draw people in for a short time while they're waiting for a train?"
- Matt thinks the entire space is not big enough to become a destination. You could see the whole thing in ten minutes; it's not going to be a place you spend hours exploring. It's an "introduction" to these topics, a chance to engage people for a short time.
- Discussed the importance of doing the interpretation in an understated way for those who want to just experience the nature. Plaques built into railing, into the ground. Don't take away from nature with obtrusive interpretive signage.
- Mat Millenbach. Stress people's connection to creek / part of larger system. The creek provided for and drove development of the area over time. Industrial development and the town of Willsburg is part of the story too. The art work at the station stresses the site's industrial history. Not just about creek restoration
- Catherine – Yes, but for a while it's been a failure as a town. Urban eyesore. That's also part of the story.
- Mat – McLoughlin was a big part of the decline of the area.

- Greg – There are seasons. Summer when everything is blooming, and winter when everything is dormant. Human communities go through that too.
 - Matt – what’s next? How do we get from this brainstorming session to an actual workable concept?
 - Kathy – As a next step, she would develop a couple of potential interpretive plans / lay out how we would tell that story. Outline different approaches to decide how to best communicate the themes. Complex ideas that overlap with unifying themes. Lay out the interpretive plan in diagrammatic form, and find the right weight to place on different stories / themes. Kathy noted that everyone always thinks in terms of timeline; it’s always the first idea proposed for an interpretive concept. May be able to find a different way (not a timeline) to link the interpretive themes.
 - Jeb. Leave the interpretation open-ended. Let people take the message from it that they want. The Giving Tree.
 - Catherine – chronological approach / life of salmon. Way to unify themes / messages.
 - Kathy asked, “Is there a call to action?” Russ, yes. Catherine – no, caution about being preachy.
 - Iconic salmon in the NW. Why do we care though? Ron shared a story about Cascade Streamwater up near Welches. Introducing lots of inner city kids to salmon, kids who have never been out of the city before. Ron sees something similar at this boardwalk. Kids can ride MAX to this station platform, have their interest piqued by something they see. That’s the value. It’s almost accidental – getting someone interested who wasn’t interested before. “Joe Six-Pack Impact”
 - Discussion about the danger of “salmon fatigue”. Everyone uses salmon in their interpretive signage.
- Group started talking about donor recognition. Matt shared the idea of the name-engraved salmon plaques. The group thought we should focus on other imagery. Ferns, vine maples, herons. A whole ecosystem with only a few salmon. That way we avoid “salmon overload.”
 - We will need some marketing materials to show donors how they’ll be recognized – i.e. on interpretive signs, plaques etc. Donor recognition materials should be complementary with interpretive elements.
 - Timing – develop our interpretive concepts and donor recognition concepts and associated marketing materials to start selling name-engraved plaques for Christmas 2012, Valentine’s Day 2013, Earth Day 2013.
 - Part of the point of raising money from small donors is to generate buzz that hooks in the big foundation and corporate donors.
 - Interpretive concepts will influence the design of the boardwalk. Need to be developed in concert.

Next steps:

Mayer Reed will develop 2 - 3 preliminary concepts about interpretive / donor recognition (they needed to discuss how soon they could produce these). Next meeting with stakeholders to review the concepts developed by Mayer Reed. Matt will schedule that meeting as soon as Mayer Reed sets a timeline for concept development.

A few ideas discussed after the meeting:

- 1) Opportunity for new interpretive technology – i.e. iPhone apps with downloadable “stories ”
- 2) Donor recognition engraved in the upright stanchions between the rails – something that’s tied in with the cement wheels / station art.
- 3) Opportunities for interpretive signage at the station platform as a way to reduce signage clutter on the boardwalk.