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City Council

Olympia Woodland Trail Phase IV Alternatives Analysis Study

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Title

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Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Receive and discuss report. No formal action requested.

Report

Issue:

Phase IV of the Olympia Woodland Trail is a critical section that will link Olympia to Tumwater. The section is complicated and expensive given topographic constraints, railroad crossings, pending commercial developments and environmental concerns. The Phase IV Feasibility Study provides an assessment of the challenges, opportunities and alternative routes for the future design and construction for this section of trail.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

David Hanna, Associate Director

Scott Sawyer, Project Manager, SCJ Alliance

Background and Analysis:

The Olympia Woodland Trail was conceived in 1989 by Jim and Carol Rainwood. They brought forward an exciting vision of utilizing an abandoned railroad for an urban bike and pedestrian trail that would connect Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater. The trail proposal was included in *The Railroad Right of Way Strategy Report* and the *Cities of Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater Urban Trails Plan* prepared by the Thurston Regional Planning Council in 1990 and 1993 respectively. In December 2007, the Thurston Regional Planning Council published the *Thurston Regional Trails Plan* which also includes the Woodland Trail-Olympia and Woodland Trail-Lacey. The Olympia Woodland Trail is an important

link of a regional trail network that connects Olympia to Lacey, Tumwater, Yelm and Tenino.

The Rainwood vision evolved into a collaborative partnership between a newly formed Olympia Woodland Trail Greenway Association and then Olympia Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department. In 1990, City Council approved funds for a matching transportation grant to acquire the railroad corridor. Since the railroad corridor was officially abandoned, the City undertook a decade-long effort to acquire over 30 parcels from the original grantors to the railroad or their assigned heirs. After acquiring the corridor properties and completing the *Olympia Woodland Trail Feasibility Study* in 1998, the City constructed the first two phases of the trail from Eastside Street easterly to the City limits.

Phase 3 is a section of trail that extends from the Eastside Street Trailhead to Henderson Boulevard. This trail corridor is primarily within Watershed Park and some WSDOT I-5 right-of-way. Recently, Jim Rainwood has expressed growing interest to move forward with this section as well.

In 2013, the City retained the firm of SCJ Alliance to prepare a route analysis for Phase 4 of the trail which extends from Henderson Boulevard to Tumwater Falls Historic Park. This phase of the trail has some challenges including crossing a commercial development, intersecting an active railroad line, skirting a small lake/wetland, and crossing Capitol Way. Given some of these alignment challenges, both the Woodland Trail Greenway Association and City agreed that additional analysis of Phase 4 alignment options would be critical to moving forward with future design and construction.

To analyze the corridor options, staff assembled a technical team of engineers from Olympia, WSDOT, Tumwater; as well as staff from the Federal Highway Administration, Port of Olympia and Woodland Trail Greenway Association. This technical team met on several occasions to discuss issues and help direct the consultant's work.

The study focused on three alternate routes to connect Tumwater Historical Park to Henderson Boulevard. The preferred alternative alignment starts at Henderson Boulevard and proceeds westerly through the Henderson Commercial Park Development to the Interstate 5 right-of-way over the Union Pacific Railroad tracks via a bridge. The trail continues westerly past the north edge of Moss Lake and crosses under the Capitol Boulevard Bridge over I-5. Just west of the bridge arches, the trail immediately turns south, running along the Capitol Boulevard embankment slope until joining an existing unused rail spur that heads into the Old Tumwater Brewery. At that point, it crosses the Deschutes River on bridge to reach Tumwater Historical Park. Tumwater Historical Park is a connection point to the future Deschutes River Trail in Tumwater and the Deschutes Parkway sidewalk and running course. This will provide a connection to the future Big W trail, Percival Canyon Trail and downtown Olympia. The concept-level trail cost estimate is \$17 million (2014 dollars).

A public meeting on August 27, 2014 provided staff and consultants an opportunity to inform a dozen attendees about the study and next steps. Several people who attended the meeting hope the City will fund additional design work. They believe that in doing so, the City will be prepared to take advantage of funding opportunities to ultimately construct the trail.

Completing Phase 4 is a large and expensive project. It will take many partners and resources. The bottom line is that the Phase 4 section of trail is feasible to build. Proceeding with additional design will be up to Council when it approved future annual Capital Facilities Plans.

The feasibility study can be found at www.olympiwa.gov/owt <<http://www.olympiwa.gov/owt>>.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The Woodland Trail Greenway Association has a long-standing interest and partnership with the City to improve completed section of the OWT and progress toward completion of future phases.

Options:

1. Receive the report and provide comments.

Financial Impact:

There are no financial impacts if the Council simply receives the report. Pursuing next phases of design for Phase 4 will require additional funding. The request for funding additional design will come through future annual capital budget processes.