

Comment from A. J. Zelada, OD re: Adding Transportation to 1) Key Issues of this Draft Climate Change Action Plan framework and 2) Strategy and Action Plans

Key issues addition is on page 3 in green fonts; Strategy/Action plan is on page 11 in blue fonts.

A separate document, entitled: GC Mgt Plan June 2020 Z Comment.doc accompanies this document that is the preset explanation for considering these changes to the Climate Change Framework.

Thank you for considering this.

~A. J. Zelada, OD

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TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission

FROM: Jessica Olson, Sr. Natural Resources Land Use Planner, CRGC
Lisa Naas Cook, Vital Sign Indicators Planner, CRGC
Casey Gatz, Land Management Planner, USFS

DATE: May 26, 2020

SUBJECT: Draft Gorge 2020 Management Plan Climate Change Chapter and Framework for a Climate Change Action Plan—Discussion of Commissioner Priorities

Overview

This document was originally prepared in February 2020 and has been updated to reflect Commissioners’ perspectives relating to climate change issues, priorities and policy implications.

The Columbia River Gorge Commission (Commission) and Forest Service are updating the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Management Plan. To begin addressing the urgent issue of climate change, staff convened an expert panel presentation to the Commission in February 2018. The panelists shared local, state, and tribal climate change efforts. Next, staff engaged a consultant to produce a report and presentation describing the observed and predicted impacts affecting protected resources in the National Scenic Area. Following that presentation in October 2019, the Commission began developing a list of options that it could take to address climate change. On May 12, 2020 staff introduced a new draft chapter for the Management Plan that commits the Commission to developing a Climate Change Action Plan. This document provides the Commission’s framework for climate change action, incorporating adaption and mitigation strategies.

May 26, 2020 Commission Meeting Objectives

- Summarize the Commissioners’ feedback and present an updated draft chapter (Staff)
 - Commissioners submitted individual comments on the draft new climate change chapter, presented on May 12, 2020, and the actions and strategies document, presented on February 11, 2020.
 - Staff have reviewed and compiled a summary of input and propose changes to the new draft chapter in response.

- Determine any additional changes to the Climate Change chapter needed before the public comment period begins on June 1, 2020 (**Commission discussion and decision**)
 - One area for discussion: Does the chapter, supported by this action plan framework, provide a clear enough path forward and commitment to action planning? Are there

- changes needed for more detailed actions to be documented (inside or outside the Plan)?
 - Staff can provide additional information about the top Commissioner interests (currently listed in Policy 1 of the draft chapter).
- Discuss how this exercise of reviewing the draft Climate Change Chapter and the Action Plan Framework document informs next steps for developing the Climate Change Action Plan (Staff suggestions and facilitated discussion; **Commission discussion and decision**)
 - Staff will present a conceptual process for action planning.
 - **Commission decision** on whether any further action is needed (and feasible) for Plan Revision.

Summary of May 2020 Commissioner Feedback on the Draft Action Plan Framework for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

Overview of the assignment and purpose of gathering feedback

Commission staff presented a new draft Climate Change Chapter to be included in the revised Gorge 2020 Management Plan on May 12, 2020. Commissioners discussed the chapter and raised questions about what level of detail is appropriate to include in a list of priority issue areas. To expedite the conversation, staff requested that the Commissioners review the draft strategies and actions document (originally presented in February 2020) and provide individual input on adaptation and mitigation issues of particular interest for climate change action planning, and what kinds of information would be needed to support future discussion. The following summarizes input received from the 8 of 13 Commission members who responded.

General themes

- There is general agreement that the Climate Change Action Plan should be a priority next step, and that it should rely on an assessment of vulnerability as well as data and information from the Vital Sign Indicators program. Some Commissioners urged staff to rely on existing vulnerability assessment information.
- Some comments referred to desired changes in the new draft Climate Change Chapter. Staff made these changes in response:
 - Added introductory text to highlight the urgency of action and the unique assets and vulnerabilities of the National Scenic Area relating to climate change.
 - Reorganized language and added to the provisions section a description of the role the Commission desires to take.
 - Updated the list of climate change issues and approaches under Policy 1: Develop and Adopt a Climate Change Action Plan to reflect the information gathered since May 12th.
 - Wrote the policies to be more proactive about the Commission's role and commitments.
- **Commissioners' top interests.** Commissioners ranked their top actions to include in the climate change action plan framework. Results include:
 - Review and include a Vulnerability Assessment as part of the Action Plan
 - Develop Vital Sign Indicators for climate change
 - Develop a Climate Change Action Plan with a target date for completion
 - Review the latest data and develop more protective standards for stream buffers

- Address forest land development and conversion
- Develop measures to address wildfire risk reduction and adaptation
- **Full list of key issues.** Each climate action planning topic below was a primary interest for at least one Commissioner who responded:

Natural Resources

- Evaluate and expand buffers for fish-bearing tributary streams in the GMA as needed
- Consider climate change impacts to groundwater
- Ensure culvert guidelines account for predicted stream changes
- Support bio-dynamic farming principles and pollinators
- Promote habitat restoration projects; remove “unnecessary hurdles” in planning

Land Uses and Permitting Process Improvements

- Engage on OR and WA Forest Practices updates
- Consider energy efficient building requirements
- Limit or prohibit forest land conversion in the GMA
- Limit forest practices in the GMA
- Update fire protection policies; consider applying to other LUDs

Recreation

- Help lead transportation/transit alternatives discussion and actions
- Establish strategies to reduce tourism in high-traffic areas and reduce congestion
(move to Transportation)
- Remove illegal trails
- Enforce trail closures

Cultural Resources

- Protect First Foods

Transportation

- Bring together a policy stakeholder meeting to set common goals for a Gorge Wide Transportation Management Association and Plan
- Two major endeavors of Transportation are Access for communities to have a viable transit system that knits people together and simply reduce congestion due the increase recreational use of the HCRH.
- Consider the congestion mitigation and safety aspects of the Multnomah lodge tourniquet on Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH) a top priority to reduce pollution.
- Insure access for all emergency, enforcement, and all layers of management partners along the HCRH
- Recognize that the expected population growth of 35% over the next decades require Transportation needs that are not dependent on a single car centric approach.

Other suggested actions not included in draft list presented by staff:

- Consider potential climate change impacts of Urban Area Boundary (UAB) revisions on forest, agriculture, or open space lands and whether changing boundaries might exacerbate the effects of climate change.
- Explore possibility of working with Counties and UAs to develop a climate change planning approach that could serve as a nation-wide model for addressing climate change. May involve issues that affect UAs (e.g., transportation, LEED-oriented building codes, carbon neutrality in general, trailheads that start in UAs, etc.).
- Explore Commission authority to address railroad-caused fires.
- Integrate other high priority climate adaptation and mitigation actions into rolling process and schedule for Management Plan update/amendments.
- In order to focus the topics of interest for action planning, some Commissioners noted a desire to prioritize the Commission's direct lead role. Actions to support and partner in efforts are not as important to emphasize in the Climate Change Action Plan, though they may be fruitful areas of staff work that can be ongoing. A common theme in the comments was to consider *staff capacity and best use of time* to assure that limited staff capacity is focused on actions that will be most effective. A more in-depth prioritization of topics and time will be part of the action planning process.

Additional comments and differing viewpoints

- The Commission’s role in groundwater issues and water quantity regulation elicited several comments. Some Commissioners stated deference to the authority and expertise of other agencies and the agriculture industry. Others noted the significance of water as a critical resource influencing everything and influenced by climate change, urging Commission action to protect groundwater in addition to surface water resources.
- There are several forest land issues included in this list of potential actions. Commissioners raised foundational questions about their authorities and what the appropriate role in state forest practices rules might be. There is disagreement about whether to engage in a carbon credit system.
- Commissioners expressed different views on the need for improved grazing management practices. While some commented that requirements, not voluntary actions, are needed, others suggested that the small number of current grazing operations makes this a lower priority for the Commission at this time.

Summary of information and discussion needs for action planning

Commissioners were asked to share what additional information or discussion, if any, is needed for each climate mitigation or adaptation action in the **DRAFT Action Plan Framework: Strategies and Actions for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation**. Commissioners identified needs around a variety of issues. These are noted in blue bullet format in the tables that follow.

Note: For further explanation of each action, how it relates to the Management Plan, and status updates, please reference the full descriptions in the full Draft Action Plan Framework document initially presented in February and shared with Commissioners in updated form following the May 12th meeting.

GENERAL STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

General Strategy: Plan for climate change; direct future actions

Actions:

- Assess climate change vulnerability in the NSA, in order to set priority climate change actions
 - Consider impacts on drinking water supplies and availability of water for fire suppression in Urban Areas and rural areas (e.g., Burdoin Mountain).
 - Consider relationship between railroad traffic and fire ignition sources. Explore Commission’s authority to act on this issue.
 - Need to prioritize which Vital Signs to implement first to provide necessary data.
- Create a climate change adaptation and mitigation strategic action plan
 - Need to consider that NSA is uniquely vulnerable to climate change, and especially wildfire, given high winds and topography.
- Update and implement indicators for the VSI program and implement VSI for scenic, natural, cultural, recreation, and economic resources

- Need to identify appropriate metrics that partners will be using for a shared understanding of tracked changes.
- Learn more about groundwater in the NSA
 - More information on the impacts on drinking water supplies and availability of water for fire suppression.
 - Recommendations from the Water Resources Board on whether they are the best agency to deal with this subject and what actions Commission might consider.
- Consider methods to address water use, conservation, and management
 - More information on staff time and effort required and how this might affect capacity to work on other climate change priorities.
- Map and model risks to protected resources
- Partner to produce an Integrated Water Resources Management Plan
 - More information on Yakima Basin IWRM effort and how a CRGC effort might impact other climate change work.
 - Evaluation from other agencies on whether this would be an applicable concept or efficient use of resources.

General Strategy: Articulate vision, goals, agency positions on climate change

Action: Develop a resolution or vision statement

- Vision should call attention to the NSA's unique: 1) vulnerability to climate change and 2) ability to serve as an effective model to address climate change.

NATURAL RESOURCES STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Natural Resources Strategy: Protect intact, resilient habitats and ecosystem functions

Actions:

- Limit habitat fragmentation in priority habitats
 - More discussion on relationship between development in forest lands and carbon storage. Consider prohibiting development in forest zones, or, at a minimum, instituting a moratorium on development in forest zones until our climate change research policies have been approved. Consider prohibiting (if allowed) or discouraging (if prohibiting is not allowed) the conversion of forest lands and require full mitigation when forest lands are converted to other uses.
- Ensure culvert guidelines account for predicted changes to streams
 - Better understanding of how high a priority culverts are compared to other efforts to protect stream and stream habitat: widening stream buffers, ensuring no further loss of wetlands, etc.
 - Request other agencies to advise/inform us and then decide how and whether we might require improvements or replacements.

- Create prescriptive habitat mitigation requirements for priority habitats
 - More information needed overall, including how climate change affects growing conditions.
- Support local land trusts in prioritizing and protecting priority lands
 - More information on land trusts' challenges and how CRGC can best assist.
 - Rationale for why this should occur outside the Plan.

Natural Resources Strategy: Protect biodiversity, by protecting and enhancing sensitive species and sites

Actions:

- Evaluate buffers for fish-bearing tributary streams in the GMA
 - Identify what evidence the Commissioners would want in order to support increasing the buffers. Hear reports from agencies and researchers (who are not CRGC employees) and others on the basis for and nature of the regulations. Understand what the actual implications would be for property owners, depending on the nature of the proposed changes to the buffers. A field trip would be helpful.
 - Consider policy changes: (1) On fish-bearing streams and rivers that flow through both SMA and GMA lands, we should adopt the widest buffer currently in place for the entire stream (200' apparently); (2) Adopt the SMA standard for wetlands (no loss) for the GMA (no net loss); and (3) Look at other, similar provisions.
 - Need input from all stakeholders if buffer policy changes are proposed.
- Promote habitat restoration projects
- Require and encourage the use of native plant species
- Support efforts to collect and share native seed sources
 - More information on staff time required and whether other high priority climate change efforts would be displaced.
- Support conservation practices and water quality (agriculture and forestry)
 - Explore developing and supporting efforts that “require” mitigation, rather than have them be “voluntary.”
 - More information on staff time required and whether other higher priority climate change efforts would be displaced.
- Develop Best Management Practices and design guidance for applicants
 - More information on the effectiveness of best management practices and design guidance when “required” versus “voluntary.”
 - More information on how much influence the Handbook has had on development practices.
- Require or encourage grazing management practices
 - More information on how much of this topic relates to climate change and how much is part of regular monitoring and updating of Plan.

- Participate in local and regional planning
- Ensure sensitive species and rare plant communities data sets are updated
- Support stream habitat restoration to benefit cold water refugia

Natural Resources Strategy: Anticipate shifting ranges of biomes, plants, insects, pests, and pathogens

Actions:

- Actively engage working lands professionals to promote research and voluntary conservation practices
 - More information on staff time required.
- Support bio-dynamic farming principles and pollinators
 - Discuss how to codify best bio-dynamic farming practices and demonstrate a strong effort to support pollinators.
- Support plant surveys and monitoring, invasives management
 - More information on whether CRGC support has made a significant difference in other agencies' and organizations' surveys and monitoring.
- Ensure landscaping and screening plants include climate adapted species
 - More discussion on applicability of this requirement to all landscaping, i.e., if part of a landscape plan involves irrigation and vegetation is maintained, this requirement should not apply to that portion.

LAND USES AND PERMITTING PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Land Uses Strategy: Anticipate increased emergency response needs.

This strategy responds to expected increases in **flooding, landslides, wildfire**, and other events.

Actions:

- Update Emergency Response policies for severe weather events, flood and rock fall, and wildfire
 - More information on impacts of these events, and related emergency response actions, on cultural resources, especially Native American cultural resources.
- Support and participate in county natural hazard mitigation planning
 - More information on wildfire impacts on scenic, natural, cultural, recreation, and economic resources.
- Require and/or encourage building materials and design to minimize fire risk
 - More information on cost/benefits.

Land Uses Strategy: Support energy conservation, greenhouse gas emissions reduction

Actions:

- Consider energy efficient building requirements
 - Consider inviting former CRGC Executive Director Dick Benner, who has expertise on this topic, to present to Commission.
- Support walkable and bikeable transportation improvements

Land Uses Strategy: Support renewable energy

Actions:

- Simplify the permitting process for residential and agricultural solar
 - More information on which aspects of permitting process can be streamlined or eliminated, as well as rationale for focusing on simplification as means to support renewable energy.

Land Uses Strategy: Protect farm and forest lands.

This strategy provides **carbon storage** by retaining forests, and retains open lands with natural functions (**hydrology, temperature regulation**, etc.) while limiting development and hardened surfaces.

Actions:

- Update fire protection policies; consider applying to other LUDs
 - Identify what kind of information, if any, would lead Commissioners who currently oppose applying new fire protection policies to other LUDs to reconsider their position (e.g., experience with similar standards in other places).
 - More information on which of these policies are most easily applied across LUDs to achieve the greatest overall impact.
- Clarify Forest Practices in the GMA
 - More information on what the problems are.
- Limit Forest Practices in the GMA
 - Explore development of forest protection practices for all landowners.
 - Given the requirements of the NSA Act, what are the best pathways that the Commission can take to limit forest practices in the GMA?
- Limit forest land conversion to other uses in the GMA
 - Need review and statistical summary of forest land conversions, including home construction in the Gorge and evaluation of impact on other resources and loss of carbon storage.
 - Are there non-timber producing acreages included in forest zones? Would there be uses in such a case that make sense since they might not “convert” actual forest, or would the other use conflict with forestry practices (which would fall under a different policy)?

- Better understanding of CRGC authority and constraints.
- Update Forest Practices policies in SMA
- Update policies to promote voluntary forest health improvement projects
- Participate in future updates of OR and WA states' Forest Practices policies
 - Update Commission on OR and WA Forest Practices policy updates as they are completed.
 - More information on need for CRGC participation in this effort.
- Create carbon credit system for deferring harvest
 - Consider brief presentation and discussion on cost/benefit (e.g., staff time, funding required, etc.)

RECREATION STRATEGY AND ACTIONS

Recreation Strategy: Support energy conservation, greenhouse gas emissions reduction

This strategy addresses **carbon emissions reduction** and **air quality**.

Actions:

- Update Recreation policies to further support transit, ridesharing, and alternative transportation
- Use policies to direct development and visitor use to protect sensitive resources and during certain times of year
 - Provide periodic updates to Commission on other agencies' visitor use management efforts to protect sensitive species.
 - Overall, more discussion, and information from agency partners, needed on how this can best be accomplished.
- Participate in regional transportation planning

SCENIC STRATEGY AND ACTIONS

Scenic Strategy: Consider future climate implications for vegetation

Actions:

- Ensure topographic screening is used
- Promote vegetation that is climate adapted

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural Resources Strategy: Consult with Columbia River Treaty Tribes to identify actions to protect cultural resources

Transportation

Transportation Strategy: Support energy conservation, greenhouse gas emissions reduction; This strategy addresses **carbon emissions reduction** and **air quality**; protect forest lands, trail heads, Anticipate increased emergency response needs; **Reduces pollution byproducts by eliminating stalled traffic on HCRH**; increases ability of residents to travel within the Gorge Scenic Area efficiently for medical services, social services, for shopping needs, and beyond the Gorge for access state, regional, national and international travel.

Actions:

Create a Convening Table to integrate Transit as a solution for

- Reducing pollution,
- Increasing safety for vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, hikers at trail heads intersecting with highways, trail heads, vendors, state parks, visitor sites
- Encourage employee transit choices access to employment where increased housing costs may have priced them out, and
- Creating continuity for Gorge Transit to connect to regional, national, and international travel resources. Unify the regional transit and dovetail transit policies as best possible for bi-state and metropolitan access
- Designing a financial system of payment methods of Transit for Gorge residents and visitors that dovetail with the larger regional methods. (Continuity of fee methods assists the user in paying for parking, reservations, and potential needs for maintenance of services.)
- Encourage more discussion, and information from agency partners, needed on how Transportation and Transit in the Gorge can best be accomplished

Through formal consultation and staff-to-staff work, the Commission can continue to improve the protection and enhancement of cultural resources. We reviewed several tribal plans in producing this actions list. Actions that protect water, salmon, big game, and forest resources, for example, are consistent with tribal priorities relating to climate change. Shortcomings that could be improved include protections for roots, berries, and plant gathering places. Some feedback we received is that the locations of culturally important plants and other sensitive cultural resources are not shared. They cannot necessarily be mapped or buffered in the manner we address many other sensitive resources in the Management Plan. These topics deserve more time and attention beyond the Gorge 2020 process.

If the Commission decides to pursue any of the General Strategies and Actions described in this document, we expect they will be framed to be meet the purposes of the National Scenic Area Act, and to consider each of the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources.

ECONOMIC VITALITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Economic Vitality Strategy: Increase planning efficiencies and responsiveness in the development review process. See Land uses and Forest/Ag Lands for specific actions.

Economic Vitality Strategy: Promote sustainable, resilient economies

These strategies support **social and economic adaptation** to climate change and support economic sectors that contribute to mitigation and adaptation solutions.

Action: Support regional economic development plans' objectives to diversify and strengthen local businesses that promote sustainability and reduce carbon footprints

- [More information from partners on what CRGC's role could be.](#)

AGENCY OPERATIONS STRATEGY AND ACTION

Operations Strategy: Assess and minimize the Gorge Commission's operational carbon footprint. This strategy addresses mitigation by **reducing emissions and energy consumption.**

Action: Assign staff resources to evaluate and reduce CRGC's carbon footprint.

Gorge Commission: Framework for Climate Change Action Plan Creating Transportation and Transit Policy & Congestion Mitigation

The omission of Transportation as a pressing and significant impact on Climate Change in the National Scenic Area is momentous. Both the adaptation management of risks and mitigation actions by use of Transportation Management tools to protect the Gorge assets is a huge endeavor which requires Leadership beyond the individual stakeholders wrestling within their own sovereigns. The Gorge Commission and this redeployment of the Columbia River National Scenic Area Management Plan is just that: a place to bring together a unified Gorge-Wide Transportation Plan vision within the Climate Change umbrella. This potential Plan could govern the pillars of Safety, Asset Management/Resource Protection, Visitor Experience, and Transportation Finance. This does not mean the Commission to take on the day to day management of a Transportation Management Plan but our region needs that peregrine view of land use to create a table for all parties to convene a common purpose for Transportation integration throughout the Gorge. And just as important is the recognition the greatest asset of the scenic area is its people whose needs in transportation connections and recreational growths but also the companion understanding of our liabilities to produce more pollution.

We strongly feel that the full key issues on page 3 of the Draft Climate Change Action Plan Framework should include a **separate key issue and line item for Transportation** in addition to Natural Resources, Land Uses/Permitting, Recreation, and Cultural Resources.

Transportation in the Gorge is often thought of as a recreation issue. This helps introduce the public into the blatant observations of the Multnomah Falls tourniquet of stalled traffic directly spewing particulates in the Gorge. However, there are significant Transportation benefits in our future with the 35% expected increase in Oregon population. We are already seeing the positives greater Transit within the entire Gorge Scenic area and we know we will need even greater services down the road.

Below are two discreet topics of how important Transportation is a unique construct that deserves the Gorge Commission's attention immediately. At the end of these two examples are a **sample Transportation Strategies and Actions for Transportation** in addition to Natural Resources, Land Uses/Permitting, Recreation, and Cultural Resources.

We present a 1) recreational tourniquet of stalled cars at the Multnomah Lodge on the Historic Columbia River Highway and 2) the Transportation network along the entire length of the Scenic Area with the needs to connect to the major metropolitan transit system.

Part One: The Recreation Contribution to Climate Change impact

The Tourniquet on Historic Columbia River Highway

Prelude:

According to the EPA, motor vehicles collectively cause 75 percent of carbon monoxide pollution in the U.S. The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) estimates that on-road vehicles cause one-third of the air pollution that produces smog in the U.S., and transportation causes 27 percent of greenhouse gas emissions.

Our personal vehicles are a major cause of global warming. Collectively, cars and trucks account for nearly one-fifth of all US emissions, emitting around 24 pounds of carbon dioxide and other global-warming gases for every gallon of

gas. About five pounds comes from the extraction, production, and delivery of the fuel, while the great bulk of heat-trapping emissions—more than 19 pounds per gallon—comes right out of a car’s tailpipe.

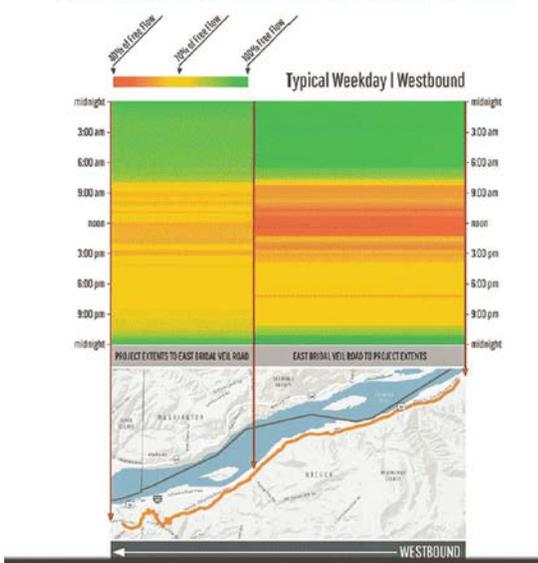
Constriction threatens Safety

The most famous & visible congestion tourniquet exists at Multnomah Lodge and Falls on the Historic Columbia Highway (HCRH). No different than a restriction of blood flow to an appendage, this event creates a backup of single lane traffic for 1 mile to 1.5 miles during a majority of the 9 Am to 5 Pm westward from Multnomah Falls. The congestion is dangerous as it will prevent 1) emergency response vehicles from attending medical events at the Lodge plaza and Falls viewing areas 2) ODOT Incident Responder Trucks from access, 3) Multnomah County Sherriff emergency response and 4) and Volunteer Fire Response trucks. These areas are fed by an additional pedestrian average flow of 1200 people an hour from the I-84 parking lots across the HCRH. As a reminder, the busiest crosswalk in Portland for tourism is Burnside at Powell’s Bookstore which has 800 people crossing at noon +/- one hour.

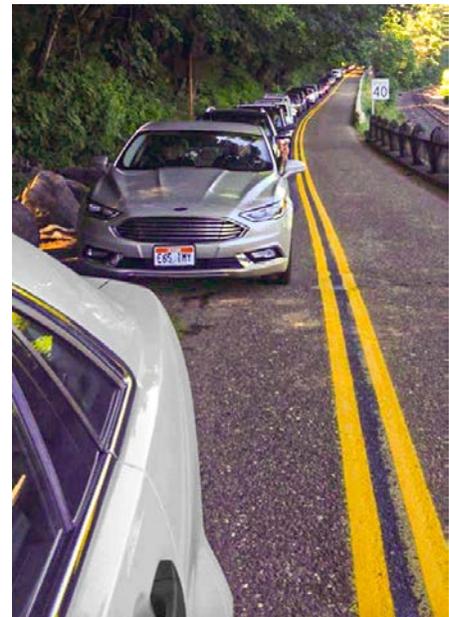
Climate Degradation due to a mile and half of stagnant traffic

ODOT’s data shows the traffic movement is halted and procession is significantly reduced from 9am to 4pm with the elongating tourism season and around school/national holidays.

Figure 16. Westbound Traffic Congestion and Slowing During Typical Weekday Conditions



(Left) The red zones indicate 40% restricted movement. This is however a standstill line of traffic. It is compounded by vehicles turning around in the middle of the traffic. The west bound traffic this past autumn is now accumulating west of Mult Falls and contributing to further particulates from standing vehicles running their engines



continuously while they wait for a few parking spaces to turn over. (Right) Mile long cars heading east toward Mult Falls.

Asset Management/Resource Protection

The HCRH is a backbone of the scenic area on the Oregon side. It is governed by several sovereigns which have created a Congestion mitigation analysis led by Oregon Dept. of Transportation after the Gorge Fire of 2017. The recovery shows how alive our Gorge is. The post fire rock slides, mitigation of trails being a magnet after the trail closures, the struggles to replace the fencing, the increase of scofflaw parking and populations hiking...all these factors have made it difficult for the sovereigns to achieve a vision to move forward to protect the assets.

The responsibility of Visitor Experience and Economic Development

We request that recognition that number of vehicles on the highway is the rate limiting step which

produces the funnel to overflow congestion. We need to shift away from the RIC use of parking evaluation for trail heads, road side views, and state parks as a method to 'define' access or tolerate congestion caused VMT along HCRH.



Moving away from a Car Centric approach to reduce Climate Change and reduce the 24 lbs of global warming gases for every gallon of gas begins on the HCRH.

Wayne Stewart and A. J. Zelada have created a base model of a transit solution for the HCRH which uses a Waterfall Shuttle to help access from Women's Forum to Ainsworth for those wanting a more intimate view of the hundred years plus old HCRH and the number of scenic waterfalls. This simply creates a partial closure to the HCRH. Full 100% access 24/7 would include:

1. All residences and their guests
2. All Vendors within the Gorge, e.g. your Bed and Breakfast, Mult Lodge
3. All Service vehicles for residences, businesses
4. All Agency vehicles, sheriff-police, ODOT rescue trucks, Emergency responders, all govt and agency vehicles (e.g. USFS, Union Pacific, Gorge Express, etc.)
5. Registered Vendors/Tourism (Gray Line buses, Martin's Gorge Tours, etc)
6. Registered users of state parks for parties, reunions, group events
7. Other users???

This concept is based on Washington Park Shuttle, Portland, OR. Simply put, it convenes major stakeholders with the Park and its connection to major transit and its reservoir of parking lots/meters. It is able to provide free shuttle service by its parking meter revenue. **It has been able in the pre-covid days to reduce 15% of Green House emissions with its 23% decrease in private vehicle trips and 23 % increase in shuttle use from 2015-2018.**

With mid long range planning creating Eastern and Western Hubs for parking these Shuttle pickup zones allow a reduction in all strangling consequences of the HCRH due to stalled traffic at Multnomah Falls, westward beyond Wahkeena and recently eastward from Multnomah Lodge. With a min of 8 buses, each point of interest could be visited 8 to 18 minutes apart.

We know the HCRH and the Columbia Gorge National Scenic are not national parks (NPS). This concept follows the solutions that the NPS National Long Range Transportation effort. The Long Range Planning Documents parallel solutions for congestion mitigation and reduce climate change pollution products are very applicable to the Gorge Commission's Climate Change Policy.

Part Two: The Gorge Regional Transit Network Asset Strategy

Creating a Transportation Management Plan can knit the Gorge communities to the Portland Metro center and its resources.

The Gorge Link transit strategy of the bi-state, 5 county Mid-Columbia River and the Mid-Columbia Economic District (MCEDD) is the central place of individual transit crossroads. The Original Gorge Express began as the attempt to reduce congestion along the HCRH. Pre Covid, this service evolved very quickly into the Columbia Area Transit which connects Gateway Transit Center (Max and TriMet buses connected to central Portland, PDX), Troutdale, Multnomah Falls, Cascade Locks, Hood River, Mosier and the Dalles. The Gorge link maps out the splinter transit zones.



Gorge Arterials

1. Vancouver to Carson
2. White Salmon to Bingen
3. Goldendale to the Dalles
4. Parkdale to the Dalles
5. Portland to Hood River & the Dalles
6. Rufus to Moro

This introduction of services is a reminder that splinters of Transportation exist. These unique routes are fragile. Many of these routes struggle to have pickup/discharge points dependent on courtesy of businesses to allow the 'sandwich' board marking the pickup/discharge point in a town. This pickup point may centrally located or maybe in a different place during the year. Funding and consistency may be varied. One may need different payment systems for Trimet, Gorge Express, the Salmon Bingen line. For the user, this multi payment system presents one more barrier.

Transit provides regional solutions in the National Scenic Area: efficient workforce mobility, allows affordable housing in a larger catchment, helps tourism visitors, reduces traffic congestion, increase access to higher education, jobs, medical services, large impact on reduction of pollutants.

These splinter services provide a huge asset to the Gorge's residents. Simple examples of the service is that veterans from Goldendale can make a very long journey to the Portland Veteran's Hospital, shoppers from White Salmon can go to Hood River, and Hood River residents can get to the Portland airport. These services are illustrating single travelers but Transit is the base of pollution reduction. 30 riders on a bus means 18-20 vehicles eliminates their polluting the environment.

Recognize that a larger transportation management plan can serve to increase efficiency of individual

Transit providers by reduction of financial competitors of similar funding streams, creation of singular payment system for users for parking, bus pass, etc., branding a web access portal which congregates all National Scenic area transit with larger bi-state systems and Northwest corridor integration.

Another area is the mixed funding of different services. Some “transit” providers for senior services only come from Dept. of Health dollars; some city/town governments may not be able to enact transit services without a tax revenue sources. Aligning services and financial resources may provide a simpler, more direct ability to benefit all when integrated.

Summary

Accept my apologies for discussing so many ways that Transportation is a wildly large array of topics. But I hope you see that Transportation for both recreation and real connection of people and is the real asset of the National Scenic Area’s heart of Climate Change Policy. These two realms provide the call for facing the fact that Oregon’s population will grow by 35% in the next two decades. Our trails will be trampled. Our roads will be clogged similar to the long standing example of the Multnomah Lodge Tourniquet to produce even more pollutants from vehicles waiting for parking places. Our residents will suffer the consequences of being more separated from resources in their regional communities as they may not have vehicles.

Transportation

Transportation Strategy: Knit Communities by Arterials that are climate friendly, equity and inclusive based

And serve the Gorge Residents and Visitors

Actions: Create a Table to integrate Transit as a solution for

- 1) Reducing pollution,
- 2) Increasing safety for vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, hikers at trail heads intersecting with highways,
- 3) Providing employee access to employment where increased housing costs may have priced them out, and 4) Creating a continuity for Gorge Transit to connect to regional, national, and international travel resources.
- 5) Designing a financial system of payment methods of Transit for Gorge residents and visitors that dovetail with the larger regional methods. (Continuity of fee methods assists the user in paying for parking, reservations, and potential needs for maintenance of services.)

Sincerely,

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References:

Long Range Transportation

<https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/car-emissions-global-warming>

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/transportation/congestion-management.htm>

Long Range Transportation Congestion Toolkit

https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1548/upload/NPS-CMS_Toolkit.pdf

Below are Toolkit studies of the Volpe Long Range Plans for National Park Service (NPS)

Congestion Assessments

These new report formats short-term, low-cost efforts available to parks who have minor to moderate congestion. As of 2018, Congestion Assessments have been completed for:

- Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
- Capital Reef National Park
- Cedar Breaks National Monument
- Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park
- Chickasaw National Recreation Area
- Colorado National Monument
- Cuyahoga Valley National Park
- Devil's Tower National Monument
- Fort McHenry National Monument
- George Washington Memorial Parkway (Great Falls only)
- Glacier National Park (does not include Going-to-the-Sun-Road)
- Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve
- Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site
- Joshua Tree National Park
- Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park
- Mesa Verde National Park
- Minute Man National Historical Park
- Montezuma Castle National Monument
- Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
- Virgin Islands National Park
- White Sands National Monument

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

<https://www.mcedd.org/about/about-mcedd/#:~:text=MCEDD%20serves%20a%20bi%2Dstate,all%20bordering%20the%20Columbia%20River.>

Gorge Link Transit

<https://gorgetranslink.com/gorge-transit-strategy/>

CAT Columbia Area Transit

<https://www.ridecatbus.org/>