



Open Letter Regarding Strategic Investment in Trails in the 2019 Metro Parks and Nature Bond

January 28, 2019

Metro Council
Metro Regional Center
600 NE Grand,
Portland, OR 97217

Cc: Martha Bennett, Jon Blasher, Elissa Gertler

Dear Metro Council,

Thank you for your work to continue Metro's legacy of stewarding voter-approved investments in the Metro area network of regional parks, trails, and natural areas to support clean water, healthy fish and wildlife habitat, and opportunities to connect with nature. We celebrate Metro's commitment over the last year to a robust stakeholder engagement effort to ensure a potential 2019 parks and nature bond renewal increases equity in our region while continuing to make crucial investments in conservation and livability. We also support Metro in continuing to invest in projects that connect our residents to nature *and* in natural area land acquisition both inside and outside the UGB.

Regional investments in trails from both previous parks and nature bond measures and regional transportation funds have provided critical connections to nature, outdoor recreation, and active transportation to the residents of our region. Metro, in partnership with local agencies and community groups, has developed a robust regional trails plan to increase access to green spaces, and to safe, healthy active recreation and transportation for residents across our region.

We believe that building out our regional trails plan is critical to increasing equity and access to nature and to meeting the climate, safety, and health goals of our transportation system.

We wholeheartedly support a 2019 parks and nature bond renewal that:

- Acknowledges the value of both paved, multi-use paths and natural surface trails and recognizes trails as a vital component of regional equity, livability, and conservation strategies
- Explicitly provides funding for trails across land acquisition, capital projects, and local government grants programs
- Provides funding for trails that increase access from neighborhoods and transit centers to regional and neighborhood parks and natural areas and to the regional trails system, especially in neighborhoods that currently lack safe, walkable and bikeable connections to these community assets (e.g. direct bike/ped connection for Fairview and Troutdale)



residents to Blue Lake Park, off-street connections to neighborhood assets like Cully Park, etc)

- Strategically leverages significant future *transportation* investments in the regional trails system to complete major gaps, not just in our trail network, but in the regional bike and pedestrian system in general (e.g. Oak Grove to Lake Oswego Bridge over the Willamette, French Prairie Bridge over I5, Westside Trail bridge over Hwy. 26, Council Creek Trail providing off-street alternative to TV Hwy, North Portland Greenway connecting North Portland neighborhoods to Esplanade and central Portland jobs, etc)

Further investments in the regional trails system and soft surface trails are critical components of the parks and nature bond and should be explicitly identified as vital to regional strategies to increase equity, access to green space, and positive health outcomes for vulnerable communities.

At the same time, we seek Metro Council's commitment to further invest in trails outside of the parks and nature bond renewal, as our regional trails system also provides the backbone of our regional bike and pedestrian network. As Metro shapes a future transportation bond, addressing the major gaps in our regional bike/ped network through major bridge and off-street corridor investments must be part of a comprehensive multi-modal transportation strategy.

Thank you for your leadership. We look forward to putting our full support behind a parks and nature bond measure that makes critical investments in trails.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Noll,
Oregon Trails Coalition

Francie Royce,
npGreenway

Jess Thompson,
Oregon Walks

Jim Sjulín,
40 Mile Loop

Jillian Detweiler,
The Street Trust

Steve Kruger,
Trailkeepers of Oregon