



NORTH SOUND TRANSPORTATION ALLIANCE (NSTA)

TRAILS & ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION WORKSHOP EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Draft report date: August 8, 2019

INTRODUCTION

The North Sound Transportation Alliance (NSTA) is a coalition of citizens, elected officials, and agency staff from Washington State's five northwestern-most counties: Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan, Island, and Snohomish. NSTA strives to improve ways for people to travel in the region by pursuing the following objectives: 1) Collect travel and system data to identify needs; 2) Improve regional connections and sustain and expand services; 3) Enhance mobility through sustainable, equitable, and innovative transportation solutions; 4) Inform the public about transportation services to enhance awareness of the regional transportation network.

The first goal of the **April 26, 2019 Trails & Active Transportation Workshop**, held in Mt. Vernon, Washington, was to **develop a list of active transportation goals that are prioritized and can be used to identify future project strategies**. A second goal was to subsequently identify those regional trail and active transportation projects that have the potential to be a regional connector.

During the workshop, participants worked through a five-step exercise: *from purpose to practice*:

- Purpose: Why is active transportation and trail development important for our region?
- Principles: What are the key factors to successful multi-regional trail system planning?
- Participants: Who can contribute to achieving these goals and must be included?
- Structure: How must we organize and distribute responsibility to achieve these goals?
- Practice: What projects can we accomplish to achieve these goals?

GOALS

The first task of participants at the workshop was to identify the top active transportation goals. Twelve separate goals were listed and later prioritized. The top four active transportation goals for the NSTA region are:

1. **Transportation** – safe and connected pathways
2. **Public health** –equitable access to nature (and cultural sites)
3. **Community vitality**
4. **Environment** – including positive climate change impacts

STAKEHOLDERS

Participants were asked to identify key people and entities needed to complete a regional trail network that meets the goals stated above. The key actors included the following:

1. Policymakers/elected officials
2. Agency staff
3. Landowners (including public right-of-way owners)
4. Environmental and activity advocacy groups
5. Trail users

FACTORS FOR REGIONAL TRAIL SUCCESSES

Participants were asked to identify key principles that define a successful trail system development project. The focus of the question was on regional trail planning across multiple jurisdictions and involving numerous stakeholders. Fourteen key factors for success were identified, with eight rising to top priority (in order):

1. Build relationships early with stakeholders in differing jurisdictional boundaries
2. Have a pragmatic approach and look to cost effectiveness and feasibility
3. Consider available funding opportunities for all user groups (consider dedicated funding at a percentage level)
4. Identify barriers, connection points, and key trail destinations
5. Focus on intermodal connections
6. Have a long range vision and plan
7. Good signage and communication about the network
8. Have good leaders for the effort

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Stakeholders were asked what regional trail projects should be included in any mapping efforts to illustrate how a regional network could look – and to also include the missing links that would require completion. Suggestions of projects and trails to add to the map were collected.

NEXT STEPS

Many of the suggested trail improvements are already seeking funding; some are new concepts that need to be further explored. Numerous projects can be seen as part of a larger trail project like the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail.

The Whatcom Council of Governments hopes to work with San Juan County and other jurisdictions to pull together a NSTA Regional Trails map that will illustrate what exists, what is being planned, and where there are gaps in the system.

MORE INFORMATION

Melissa Fanucci, Principal Planner, Whatcom Council of Governments
(360) 685-8385 • melissa@wcog.org • www.wcog.org/nsta