

PDN TRAIL

1st Public Meeting Notes

August 9th, 2017 – 6:00 PM TO 8:00 PM

Westside Regional Command Center, 4801 Osborne Drive, El Paso, TX

Attendees: XX

Vision

- The River:
 - “Embrace it and celebrate it”
 - Would like the trail to stick as closely to the river as possible (River = border; river = best trail route to represent border culture)
 - Touch on crossing points
- Emphasize cultural landscapes of route
 - The levees and canals represent the cultural identity and history of the area (farming, the flow of the Rio Grande, etc.)
- Potential pollinator corridor/wildlife habitat in rural areas
- Highlight neighborhoods on both sides of the border to “re-personalize” it and bring out community stories
 - Businesses along both sides of route.
 - Local artist opportunities to make it truly local
- Educating the community is very important!
 - Navigation info: (Trailheads to use)
 - History of area, etc.

Amenities & Trail Design Features

- Plan for wide accessibility for multiple user groups, especially those with disabilities.
 - Signage could indicate difficulty levels and distance/walk/bike times
 - Mile markers to identify where you are...
- Sustainability and environmental concerns
 - Look into the use of sustainable materials
- Surfacing materials are important to consider
 - Concrete is hard on runners – the Katy Trail in Dallas has a good paved surface
- Wayside exhibits and interpretive signage.
 - Make interactive and use new technologies to appeal to multiple age groups.
 - Scavenger hunt, QR codes, learning opportunities and prizes)
 - Sponsorships from businesses

- Need for shade: create shade “oases” along route.
- Make pet friendly and provide access to water
- Community gardens along route
- User groups (for example, marathon group) provide opportunities for trail maintenance. Other groups are cycling groups, hikers, etc.
 - “Adopt a trail”

Important Connections

- Rio Bosque Wetland in Socorro is an important asset to connect to. The wetlands are a draw for bird watching, internal trails, and other outdoor amenities.
- Possibility to connect to Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park in Mesilla, NM
- Old Asarco Plan is the “keystone” to this project as it is a barrier as well as close to the original “Paso del Norte”
 - Tie into the historic “Paso del Norte” site
- Camp Pioneer (South of the Willows) is another connection opportunity.
- Highway 621/180/Montana are another possible connection/corridor to consider
- Transit connections
 - Park and ride areas
- Tigua Indian land/areas are important (they own sites along the river)
- EPCO Historic District

Route Challenges

- How do we plan to work with Railroad, the Water District and other entities that own right-of-way along trail route? There are areas along existing railroad tracks that are hard/impossible to cross. Will the various railroad companies allow the use of their right-of-way? Are there liability concerns near tracks or ditches?
 - Railroad is a major obstacle in Downtown – can be 30-minute wait for train switching
 - Need over/underpass connections
- There may be challenges as well as opportunities in following ditch/irrigation channels due to service roads.
- Border fence creates “militarized” area along downtown – how do we deal with that?
 - Coordinate with IBWC regarding access to and near the river.
- It’s really hard to bike on the west side due to traffic/connection issues
 - EP Bike Club, Velo El Paso are aware of routes through Downtown/UTEP
- Upper Valley to Downtown Gap:
 - Paisano Bike Corridor – a clear connection opportunity that TxDOT has not supported
 - There may be a way to use EP Electric Company easements
- Chamizal Area:
 - Problems and opportunities in this area to creating connections and safe routes to school
- There are issues with the existing County Club Trail that “just ends”
- El Paso Marathon Routes

- Could be a national draw
- It's hard to find places to run in El Paso
- Ft Bliss used to allow access for the route, but no longer
- I-10 is a major impediment to finding a route.
- Fabens and Mesilla are the closest opportunities for riverside bike and running routes.
- General safety concerns of biking in El Paso

Questions

- How will this project be phased and built?
- Questions about how and when environmental assessments/issues will be addressed in this project
 - Wildlife corridors
 - Viewsheds
 - Environmental contamination on some sites

County Wide Map Notes

- Prioritize Trail Crossings (vehicles yield)
- Lots of side paths to local destinations (schools, shops, parks)
- We are the hidden gem of the world, crossroads of North America, Anchored by El Paso, Cd. Juarez, and Las Cruces! Best accessed by the "International Ft Hancock – Las Cruces I-10 Bypass:
 - Bike Routes: international Ft. Hancock – Las Cruces. I-10 bicycle bypass: Exit 72 TX > Knox > TX20 > 258 > Main (San Eli) > Glorieta (San Eli) > 258 > Schultz ? > Padilla > Mecca/Independence > Yarbrough > North Loop > Delta > Paisano > Doniphan/NM 478