



Washington State
Department of Transportation
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Secretary of Transportation

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November 15, 2010

The Honorable Steven Lacy
Mayor, City of East Wenatchee
271 9th Street NE
East Wenatchee, WA 98802

The Honorable Ken Stanton
Chair, Douglas County Commissioners
PO Box 747
Waterville, WA 98858-0747

Dear Mayor Lacy and Commissioner Stanton:

Thank you for providing me a copy of your October 12, 2010, letter to Senator Parlette regarding the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) riverfront property near East Wenatchee. This is a follow up to that letter as well as my letter to you on February 2, 2010.

It is disappointing you were unable to complete planning for the riverfront property and Apple Capital Loop Trail corridor this year as expected. It has been nearly three years since discussions with the community at the Eastmont Junior High in November of 2007. The local agencies and elected officials need to move the planning efforts forward or the opportunity to plan the development in the areas adjoining the trail could be lost. The community visioning efforts documented in the "More Than a Trail" project report suggested a definite priority providing some momentum for moving forward. Hopefully that momentum can be resurrected soon.

I would encourage you to:

- 1) Develop some form of minimum trail right-of-way plan to protect the trail proper as well as a plan with provisions to provide public access to the river, while a more formal complete community plan and vision for the area is developed. This plan can then serve as a contingency plan should the legislature direct WSDOT to begin selling the property. The existing trail leases could be basis for the contingency plan or other work that has been accomplished. We understand that developing a plan to address the communities desires for the adjoining space, including keeping some or all in public ownership takes time.
- 2) Focus on developing a plan and vision first without letting the lack of known funding sources to acquire the property bog the process down. We understand the need to address the community interests and the challenges of transforming those interests into a workable reality for all vested parties. We encourage that process and note there needs to be continual progress or the opportunity could be lost.
- 3) Update the comprehensive plans and associated zoning designations between the two bridges so expectations are clear.
- 4) Identify an acquisition and maintenance strategy. Once you have updated the comprehensive plans and associated zoning designations, including the areas you feel would be appropriate to stay in public ownership, it should be easier to develop an acquisition and maintenance strategy. Whether that is some form of conservancy area with associated taxing area (we understand the existing Metropolitan Park District might already be able to serve this function), as has been done in other parts of the state, or

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grants, or some other means. I know your legislative delegation stands ready to assist you should legislation of some type be required to implement your plan. As an example, designation as a state conservancy area would require legislative direction and authorization, and likely would require a legislative study prior to designation. If you are considering this as an option, historically this process has taken several years and should be started sooner rather than later.

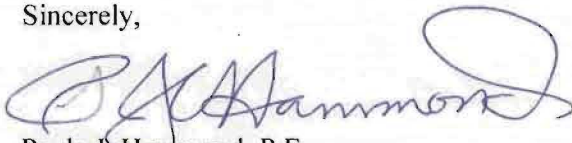
WSDOT remains committed to assisting in any way to keep the portions of the Apple Capital Loop Trail in Douglas County and within the City of East Wenatchee in public ownership, as well as supporting continued public access to the Columbia River. The riverfront property was acquired with gas tax funds protected by the 18th amendment and, as such, can only be retained in WSDOT ownership for as long as there is an identified highway purpose. WSDOT has not declared this property surplus, and does not plan to do so until corridor improvements on SR 28 between the junction with US 2 /97 on the north and 9th Street on the south are funded. However, the legislature in its search for opportunities to fund future projects could direct the department to sell the property at any time.

The Apple Capital Loop Trail and adjoining lands are tremendous community assets. Thus, there is an urgency to develop a plan as soon as practical, as a minimum to protect the trail, but also to develop a land use plan for the adjoining property as well as begin the process to secure funding to acquire property envisioned to remain public. Sustaining the trail as an independent non-motorized corridor is feasible, but we must address the issue of funds protected by the 18th amendment to do so, or lands acquired with said funds that must be replaced.

I will withhold any action on surplusing the property for as long as feasible. However, I would encourage you to complete the planning efforts in the very near term to ensure there is time to put funding strategies into place before the opportunity is lost forever. I cannot stress your timely completion of this process enough and offer the continued commitment of Dan Sarles and the WSDOT North Central Region staff to assist you in that endeavor.

Again, thank you for sending me a copy your letter.

Sincerely,



Paula J. Hammond, P.E.
Secretary of Transportation

PJH:jaa

cc: Senator Linda Evans-Parlette
Representative Mike Armstrong
Representative Cary Condotta
Lori Barnett, City of East Wenatchee
Mark Kulaas, Douglas County
J. C. Lenzi, P.E., Chief Engineer, WSDOT
Dan Sarles, North Central Regional Administrator, WSDOT