



304 12th Street, Suite 2A
Oakland, CA 94607
(510) 540-5008
www.altaplanning.com

MEMORANDUM

To: Ken Tam, Sonoma County Regional Parks
From: Jeff Knowles and Emily Shandy, Alta Planning + Design
Date: June 10, 2019

Re: Lower Russian River Trail Feasibility Study: Summary of May 2019 Workshops

Two workshops were held in early May to gather input from the community on the Lower Russian River Trail Feasibility Study. The workshops were initially planned for March, but were postponed due to severe flooding. This memo summarizes the format and feedback received at the two workshops.

Details

Both workshops were held in the Community Room at Guerneville Elementary School. Dates, times, and attendees are summarized below.

Date	Time	Attendees
Tuesday, May 7	6 – 8 pm	23
Saturday, May 11	9 – 11 am	39

Outreach

The workshops were promoted using the following strategies:

- Workshop information posted on the project website and the Guerneville Elementary School website
- Sonoma County Regional Parks mailed approximately 1,200 postcards to residents living along the project corridor, including a second postcard with the rescheduled workshop dates
- Workshop flyers in English and Spanish were distributed by Sonoma County Regional Parks and project stakeholders
- Press coverage in the Press Democrat
- Facebook post by Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Announcement in the Russian River Chamber of Commerce weekly newsletter

Format

The workshops were primarily “open house” format, with activities at different stations around the room. Participants were invited to complete the activities in any order they wished, and members of the project team were available to answer questions and discuss comments. Stations are summarized below.

Station	Description
Welcome	Participants were asked to sign in and provide an email address for project updates, received a comment card to fill out, and were given a brief overview of the workshop format.
Corridor Map	Participants placed dots on a large format map of the project corridor: yellow for their home, green for destinations they would like the trail to connect, and red for areas where walking or bicycling are currently challenging. They were also invited to discuss their comments with members of the project team, and write or label areas on the map.
Online Survey	Two tablets were available for participants to complete the online community survey.
My Big Idea	Participants wrote their vision for the Lower Russian River Trail project on a large sheet of paper and had their photo taken with their Big Idea.

Approximately 30 minutes after the workshops started, Jeff Knowles from Alta Planning + Design welcomed attendees and presented an overview of the Lower Russian River Trail Feasibility Study, explaining the planning history, project funding and scope, and vision for the trail. At the end of the presentation, he fielded a number of questions from participants and facilitated a discussion with input from Sonoma County Regional Parks staff. Following the presentation and discussion, each workshop returned to the open house format.

Summary of Feedback

Overall, participants at both workshops were generally supportive of a trail along the Lower Russian River. The Big Ideas included visions of safe, comfortable places to walk and bike between communities along the river. A summary of feedback themes gathered at each station is provided below.

My Big Idea

- Have bicyclists on a trail rather than the roads
- Use closed roads and abandoned fire trails
- Picnic areas and scenic spots
- Bicycle rentals and e-bike rentals
- Creekside Park as a trailhead and rest stop
- Provide level segments of trail for seniors and others who do not prefer hills
- Safe walking trail from one community to another

Corridor Map

Yellow dots were placed to indicate where the participant lives, to evaluate whether workshop participants represented a reasonable distribution throughout the project area and identify any communities that were underrepresented. Tuesday workshop participants were distributed throughout the project area, with a notable absence of any attendees from the Guerneville community. Saturday workshop participants included a number of Guerneville and Monte Rio residents, as well as a few from other areas in the corridor or county.

Green dots were placed to indicate destinations participants would like to see a trail connect. Clusters of dots were placed on or near the following locations:

- Jenner
- Jenner Headlands
- Willow Creek Campground
- Duncans Mills rodeo grounds
- Moscow Road bridge
- Monte Rio Beach
- Creekside Park
- Northwood Golf Club and the Monte Rio Post Office
- Vacation Beach summer crossing
- Guernewood Park
- Downtown Guerneville
- Korbel Winery
- Sunset Beach
- Steelhead Beach

Red dots were placed to indicate areas where it is currently particularly challenging or uncomfortable to walk or bicycle. Clusters of dots were placed on or near the following locations:

- Curves in SR 116 across the river from Willow Creek Campground and Casini Ranch Campground
- SR 116 west of Monte Rio Elementary School
- SR 116 between Monte Rio Beach and Northwood Golf Club
- SR 116 between Guernewood Park and Guerneville
- River Road in Rio Nido
- Hacienda Bridge
- River Road from Westside Road to Scenic Drive
- Steelhead Beach

Comment Cards

- Preference for trail along the river bank
- Local artists should be engaged for public art and interpretive signs along the trail
- Concerns about feasibility of a trail with steep terrain, narrow roads, and private property
- Concerns about an influx of visitors into currently rural or natural river areas
- Need for thoughtful trail design to promote personal security and comfort
- Consider coordinating this effort with the Lower Russian River water trail
- Interest in environmental impacts of a potential trail, and concern about mature redwoods being preserved

Discussion

E-Bikes

Participants were interested to learn whether the trail would be open to e-bikes, and how these faster bicyclists could be accommodated without making it uncomfortable for other lower-speed trail users.

Connections & Context

Participants expressed a desire for a connection to the West County Trail, and showed support for the idea of a more detailed Specific Area Plan for the Lower Russian River to evaluate needs and opportunities comprehensively. This could also include an evaluation of “spur” trails to connect to other nearby destinations off the Lower Russian River corridor including Korbel, Armstrong Redwoods.

Amenities

Participants were interested to know how parking for trail users would be accommodated, and requested that the study include a review of where additional public restrooms should be provided. Others suggested the local art community be engaged to create public art and interpretive signs along the trail.

Flooding

Participants questioned whether a trail along the river would be feasible given frequent flooding, and expressed interest in design strategies and features that would support flood resistance.

Property and Right-of-Way

Some participants were concerned about whether property owners along the trail alignment would be forced to allow the trail on their property, and whether eminent domain was being considered. The project team confirmed that publicly available right of way will be used wherever possible.

Homelessness

Some workshop attendees noted concerns about homelessness along a future trail, citing challenges on existing trails in Sonoma County.