

TRAIL: Work will improve trail, add benches, kiosks

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for the project with a number of fundraising events, including a raffle for Alaskan salmon, and securing donations from STA members. Plans were on course to apply for a \$5,000 grant from the Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund, which is part of the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

When the donor had some questions about the project, he was given the worksheet prepared for the grant request and after reviewing it, offered to

cover 90 percent of the cost of the project instead of the original \$10,000. That gift makes it unnecessary for STA to apply for the grant.

On Tuesday evening, January 22, STA was scheduled to appear before the Tollgate Homeowners Board to request they provide \$1,875 toward the effort. The trail is accessed in Tollgate at the exit gate located at the end of Wagon Wheel Road. The first 220 feet beyond the gate is on property that belongs to Tollgate. The trail actually starts where it turns off of the access road into the woods next to the Tollgate well that provides water for the subdivision.

When built, the crushed rock donated by local

business did not compact as well as expected, thus limiting access to only pedestrians and wide-tire bicycles. Loose gravel has made travel difficult and potentially hazardous for cyclists. At the south end of the trail adjacent to the high school athletic field, sod encroachment has resulted in narrowing of the trail from its original eight-foot width to a 550-foot long single-track trench.

Trail restoration work will involve removing the encroaching sod and laying a fresh aggregate base along the 550-foot section. The entire eight-foot wide trail, which is three-quarters of a mile in length to the high school, will be capped with a compacted



PHOTO BY SUE STAFFORD

Sisters Trail Alliance members took a stroll along the Tollgate-to-Sisters High School multiuse trail on a drippy, slushy day last Saturday.

two-inch-thick layer of one-quarter-minus bentonite clay mix. The same process and materials were used in 2015 on the Whychus Creek Overlook trail, which is wheelchair accessible. The compacted surface will be barrier free and fully compliant with the Safe Routes to School initiative.

Much of the trail runs through an environmental reserve owned by Sisters School District, and managed by the Deschutes Land Trust. Within the reserve is a sensitive species of plant called Peck's penstemon.

The restoration work will be completed by Quade Construction, an experienced trail contractor, who will bring in smaller equipment to reduce disturbance of the natural environment. Any disruption to the conservation easement will be restored by STA volunteers.

Additional trail amenities

will include rest benches and interpretive kiosks that were requested by the donor. Sisters middle and high school students and art departments will be involved in designing the graphics for the kiosks.

Once complete, the restored trail will be available for use by all types of bicycles, cross-country skiers, walkers, hikers, joggers, and their dogs, geocachers, and people in wheelchairs and pushing strollers. It will benefit Tollgate students and district staff who will have a more direct, convenient, non-motorized access to Sisters middle and high schools. It will also serve walking and biking commuters to downtown who wish to safely avoid high-speed traffic on Highway 20. The trail will also serve as a community-wide recreational extension to the Tollgate pathway network that is open to the public.

Development of a Sisters trail

Information provided by Jeff Sims, Tollgate resident and former USFS employee

2003 – The forerunner to the present Sisters Trails Alliance (STA), the Trail Committee of the Sisters Community Action Team, identified the Tollgate-to-Sisters High School trail in the Sisters Community Trail Plan. This path was a high priority in the plan because it connected the 440-lot subdivision of Tollgate to the high school and middle school.

2006 – Approvals secured from the various landowners — Tollgate Homeowners Association, Sisters School District (SSD), U.S. Forest Service Sisters Ranger District and Deschutes Land Trust (DLT). In April, volunteers from Community Trails, Sisters Park & Recreation District (SPRD), Tollgate, SSD, DLT, and others began construction on the trail, with donations from the following sources: Robinson and Owen

Construction, construction equipment; Bill Wil-lits, coordination on behalf of his real estate partners; Todd Taylor, Taylor NW, material and hauling; and John Nordquist, bridge design and construction.

The path was constructed as a compact gravel path, with Taylor NW providing the gravel, hauling it to the site, and spreading it. Robinson and Owen Construction cleared the pathway, helped spread the gravel, and rolled the bentonite (clay) into the gravel.

SPRD continues to be involved with the trail by providing insurance on behalf of STA to cover the Tollgate well property adjacent to the trailhead. STA will continue to provide maintenance of the trail.

The path is identified in the Sisters Transportation Plan and Deschutes County Transportation Plan as a non-motorized, multi-use path.

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For information, contact Zeta Seiple at 541-549-6157