

Closed during construction, Iowa Street trail scheduled to reopen Nov. 1

SOUTHWEST TRAILS

By Janet Goetze
The Southwest Portland Post

After a four-year wait, hikers may return to the Iowa Street section of Southwest Trails, east of George Himes Park, according to an Oregon Department of Transportation spokeswoman.

The 500 feet of trail was scheduled to be open by Nov. 1 along with new Iowa Street viaducts that replace deteriorating 55-year-old spans at milepost 298, north of the Terwilliger curves on Interstate 5.



SW Trails PDX president Don Baack (center) will receive the Sandy Diedrich Environmental Stewardship Award at the Spirit of Portland Awards ceremony on Nov. 6. in the atrium at Legacy Emanuel Medical Center, 501 N. Graham St. Baack has spent the better part of two decades building a trails network for Southwest Portland. The awards, started 30 years ago, recognize individuals and organizations who have made positive changes in the community. Visit www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/29024 for more information. (Post photo by Janet Goetze)

In addition, the state has repaired the Newbury Street and Vermont Street bridges on Southwest Barbur Boulevard, said Susan Hanson, an ODOT community affairs coordinator. Work on those spans was slower than expected and delayed the reopening of the Iowa Street trail, originally expected in early October, she said.

This section of trail under the freeway was closed for safety reasons while construction continued overhead, Hanson said. The trail was rebuilt on ODOT right-of-way to trail standards of the City of Portland, which will maintain it, she said.

Twenty-eight people, led by Don Baack, president of SW Trails PDX, took a 4-mile hike on Oct. 11 that included the new steps and surface of the Iowa Street trail. The hikers went ahead with the previously scheduled inaugural trek on a Saturday, when safety problems didn't arise, Hanson said.

"We value the partnership we have had with SW Trails on the design," Hanson said at a ceremony near Wilson High School before the hike began.

After the hike, Baack, who has been working on trails for two decades, praised the new section. "I think it's really nicely done," he said.

The rebuilt trail includes a spur leading to a view area where hikers may pause to gaze at Mount Hood and portions of the city on clear days. Baack said SW Trails hopes to pay for and maintain a bench for those who want to rest at the viewpoint.

Those who want to take a short walk on the new section can reach it from Southwest Iowa Street off View Point Terrace, following signs toward George Himes Natural Area.

The October hike was a return trip for some members of SW

Trails, a community membership group promoting wellness and supporting walking and biking in Southwest Portland and surrounding areas.

In 1996, volunteers resurfaced the trail with a bucket brigade, according to a post on the organization's website, www.swtrails.org. The group obtained three dozen buckets and distributed them at several gravel piles near signs that encouraged hikers to voluntarily carry loads to cover the trail.

Above the trail segment, the work on the freeway viaducts meets current roadway and seismic standards, Hanson said. It also provides wider shoulders, wider center medians, three travel lanes in each direction and a new retaining wall, with a design developed after 400 Southwest residents responded to a survey.

On Barbur Boulevard, the Newbury Street and Vermont Street bridges, built across two ravines in 1934, were deteriorating from water seeping into joints, rusting steel rebar inside the decks and causing other damage, Hanson said.

ODOT repaired the concrete deck of both spans at the bridge joints, improved drainage, improved ramps leading to the walkways, installed a taller safety railing, replaced signs and paved both bridges, she said.



Robin Vesey, Friends of Terwilliger president, points out the new Iowa Street trail, rebuilt by the state, passing under Interstate 5 and Barbur Boulevard viaducts. Grass is growing beside the trail and plants are being added. (Post photo by Janet Goetze)

The construction areas, including slopes beside the trail, have been seeded with grass, and trees and shrubs are being planted. ODOT also removed invasive ivy and blackberry brambles.

"We are pleased to see that native plants have been coming back in areas where we removed noxious weeds," Hanson said.

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