Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection: Project Background & Next Steps

The Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection is an envisioned corridor between downtown Tacoma and downtown Puyallup for people walking & rolling that is physically separated from car traffic and safe for people of all ages and abilities. The Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection cohort is a coalition of local leaders dedicated to seeing this project come to fruition.

As a next step in making this trail connection a reality, the Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection cohort plans to work with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) on a route analysis study to assess the opportunities, constraints, and next steps for completing active transportation connection(s) between downtown Tacoma and downtown Puyallup. This study will be funded through a partnership between cohort member organizations and WSDOT, with in-kind support from the Puyallup Watershed Initiative Active Transportation Community of Interest, Downtown On the Go and ForeverGreen Trails. The study is anticipated to take approximately nine months and be completed in 2019.

The Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection cohort has come to consensus on the following goals for this project:

**PROJECT GOALS**

The Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection will...

**Safety**
- Be safe for, and be perceived as safe by, community members of all ages and abilities.
- Ensure safety & access for all active transportation modes.
- Protect vulnerable road users, reducing opportunities for vehicle collisions.

**Health & Equity**
- Provide residents, workers, and visitors with viable transportation options that are safe, healthy, and affordable – particularly those who are unable to drive due to age, ability, legal status, or access to a household vehicle.
- Make exercise and activity easier to incorporate into daily life.

**Livability & Economy**
- Strengthen the region’s position as a vibrant community to live, work, and play.
- Create a spine that will connect with employment centers, transit nodes, community destinations, and existing and future trails.

**Environment**
- Provide transportation options that reduce oil consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and stormwater runoff.

**PROCESS GOALS**

- Build cross-jurisdictional community buy-in on the route and design.
- Build jurisdictional buy-in on the selected route with local jurisdictions making connections to the spine.
- Select a route and design that balances aesthetics, efficiency and economy.
- Ensure project continuity beyond elected terms.
- Align this project with other significant projects in this corridor, including the Sound Transit Tacoma Dome Link Extension and Canyon Road Extension.
CURRENT CONDITIONS

Currently, there is no safe route between downtown Tacoma and downtown Puyallup for people travelling on foot or by bike.

Natural barriers - including the Puyallup River and the 373-acre Swan Creek Park - make State Route 167/River Road the only direct route, but this 50 mph, five lane roadway has no sidewalks or bicycle facilities.

The Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection represents a significant gap in our active transportation network. This map shows our community’s existing paved regional trail network (dark green), fully funded trail connections (light green), and trail connections in active planning phases (yellow). The Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection will fill a critical missing link - not only allowing residents and visitors to safely travel between downtown Tacoma and downtown Puyallup but also linking local communities - from the Key Peninsula, Gig Harbor, Fife, Ruston, Tacoma's Waterfront, Eastside and South End neighborhoods, Orting, South Prairie, Buckley, Enumclaw, and beyond - to one another.

Map: Regional Trail Connections: Existing, Funded, and Projects in Active Planning Stages

This trail network represents the backbone of our active transportation network – with on-street infrastructure such as bike lanes, sidewalks, and bike boulevards providing additional local connections.

POTENTIAL CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENTS

The Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection cohort has identified three potential alignments for further study:

- SR167 Alignment (following the new completion of SR167) - Purple
- Levee Road Alignment - Blue
- River Road Alignment - Orange

These are high-level conceptual alignments – the Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection Route Analysis Study will help further solidify route options and their relative merits.
WHY THIS PROJECT?

Transportation Access: Linking our Communities
The Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection will provide safe access to jobs, schools, parks, and housing in our regional centers and beyond.

Connections to Transit
This project will provide connect local residents and visitors to two regional transit centers: the Tacoma Dome Station and the Puyallup Station as well as future Sound Transit Link Light Rail stations.

Safety
There were 358 people hit by cars while walking or bicycling in Pierce County in 2017 – one person every day. We need to build safe active transportation infrastructure if we have any hope of reducing these collisions.

Equity
In Pierce County, low-income residents are more likely to bike & take transit than higher income residents (walking rates are consistently high across income levels). However, national data shows us that low income communities and people of color are less likely to have safe places to walk and bicycle in their neighborhoods. While active transportation is often framed as a great choice for getting around – for many folks it’s the only feasible option – due to finances, age, legal status, or ability. A safe, connected, and accessible active transportation network is a critical element of an equitable transportation system.

A Shared Priority
A safe bicycle and pedestrian connection between downtown Tacoma and downtown Puyallup is referenced in the adopted policy documents of every jurisdiction along the route, including:

- Puyallup Tribe of Indians Tribal Transportation Improvement Program 2016-2020
- Puget Sound Regional Council 2014 Active Transportation Plan Regional Bicycle Network Gap Map
- Pierce County 2014 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan
- City of Fife Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Element
- City of Puyallup Comprehensive Plan, River Road Corridor Plan
- City of Tacoma Transportation Master Plan

Tahoma to Tacoma Trail Network: $13 Million per Year in Community Benefits
The Tacoma to Puyallup Connection is a critical missing link in the Main Alignment of the Tahoma to Tacoma Trail Network, a 62.5-mile trail from Tacoma’s Point Defiance Park to Mount Rainier National Park. In 2016, the Puyallup Watershed Initiative’s Active Transportation Community of Interest commissioned a Tahoma to Tacoma Trail Network Benefit Report, and found that, once complete, the Main Alignment will provide approximately $13 million per year in health, transportation, environmental, and economic benefits. The full report is available at www.pwi.org/tahomatotacomareport.

WHY NOW?
There are major infrastructure projects planned for the Tacoma to Puyallup corridor and critical decisions are being made now that will affect this corridor for decades to come. These projects include:

- WSDOT’s Puget Sound Gateway Program: SR167 Completion Project
- Sound Transit’s Tacoma Dome Link Light Rail Extension – including the Puyallup River crossing
- Pierce County’s Canyon Road Northerly Extension – including the Puyallup River crossing

We must act swiftly and collectively to ensure that these projects help us reach our shared vision for this corridor.
THE TACOMA TO PUYALLUP REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTION COHORT

The Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection cohort is made up of decision makers committed to seeing this trail connection come to fruition.

Tacoma to Puyallup Trail Regional Trail Connection Cohort

- Annette Bryan, Tribal Council Member, Puyallup Tribe
- Roger Millar, Secretary of Transportation, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Victoria Woodards, Mayor, City of Tacoma
- John Palmer, Mayor, City of Puyallup
- Kim Roscoe, Mayor, City of Fife
- Dennis Hanberg, Director of Planning and Public Works, Pierce County
- John McCarthy, Commissioner, Port of Tacoma
- Erik Hanberg, Commissioner, Metro Parks Tacoma
- Andrew Strobel, Director of Planning and Land Use, Puyallup Tribe
- Jane Moore, Executive Director, ForeverGreen Trails
- Kristina Walker, Executive Director, Downtown On the Go
- Liz Kaster, Manager, Puyallup Watershed Initiative Active Transportation COI
- Hannah Miner, Community Engagement Lead/Trip Support, Puyallup Watershed Initiative Active Transportation COI

The project is co-led by the Puyallup Watershed Initiative's Active Transportation Community of Interest (AT COI) and Downtown On the Go.

For more information about Tacoma to Puyallup Regional Trail Connection and to sign up for project updates, visit www.pwi.org/connect253.