



West Houston Trails Master Plan

Workshop Report



October 11, 2008

West Houston Trails Master Plan Workshop Report

Welcome and Overview

Approximately 70 people attended the workshop for the West Houston Trails Master Plan. The workshop was hosted by ConocoPhillips on Saturday, October 11, 2008. The workshop began with an icebreaker of asking people to place a dot on the planning map of showing where they live and work. The group was welcomed by Clark Martinson of the Energy Corridor District (ECD) and Steve Moskowitz of ConocoPhillips. Robert Rayburn of ECD provided a project overview. Overall meeting planning and facilitation was provided by Kathryn Nichols and Tracy Atkins as part of a National Parks Service, Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program planning assistance grant.

Suggested Goals

During the workshop, Robert Rayburn presented the current goals and objectives of the West Houston Trails Master Plan effort and the participants shared additional desired goals. The workshop attendees suggested the following additional goals:

- Provide connections to transit
- Streamline permitting process
- Safety and safe use of trails
- Respect cultural resources
- Identify funding process
- Education
- Coordinate with school districts and Metro
- Communicate use guidelines and trail etiquette
- Communicate goals and objectives on the internet or through a public forum
- Recruit volunteers and establish subcommittees
- Develop trails separated from the driving public
- Create links across Harris County roads and state highways
- Security and anti-crime surveillance should not unduly infringe on civil liberties
- Create rest areas at regular intervals with amenities
- Take advantage of economies of scale by coordinating with different agencies
- Continuously update and publish maps which incorporate trails from all entities and extend across governmental boundaries
- Share a timeline for objectives, work plan deadlines and project schedules
- Develop trails that are light on the land and consistent with USACE criteria for sensitive areas
- Webtools to share trails on the website – GoogleEarth and Texas Trails Network



Suggestions for Objectives:

Workshop participants suggested the following additional objectives:

- Objective 1: Connect new trails... with seamless (no gaps) links to city and state on street network
- Safety for community, users, emergency response, vehicular access, landing locations for life flight
- Cultural education
- Identify San Felipe Trail and other historic resources
- Public historical appreciation – requires interpretation resources



Mapping Exercise

Kathryn Nichols provided instructions for the participants to identify desired trails on the planning maps. Houston Community College student and Energy Corridor District intern Stuart Blumberg developed our maps. These large area maps at 1:300 scale included existing public trails, trails proposed by public entities, private trails and designated bike lanes. Smaller reference maps with additional information such as land use, population density, parks, public easements, USACE Master Plan for Addicks and Barker Reservoirs were located in the same area. Participants completed a trail comment form and drew lines on the map to indicate desired trails. Participants were encouraged to move between the various sections of the planning area. Comments supporting public entity planned trails were also solicited from participants.



Summary comments about desired trail locations from the mapping exercise are as follows:

- Trails along bayous and pipeline easements
- Connect to schools and parks
- Trails crossing Addicks Reservoir north/south
- Trails along Hwy 6
- Linkages with bike trails
- Trail along Barker Cypress across I-10
- Existing trail identified
- Trail loops need to return to start
- Trails should be safe for children and families
- Hwy 6 - 10' sidewalks – Parkline
- School connections
- Langham Creek Trail under I-10
- North-south through Barker reservoir
- Macro Connections
- East-west along Buffalo Bayou
- North-south along Langham Creek
- Brays Bayou: east-west connection
- East side of Barker Cypress going north-south
- Loops within subdivisions
- Coordinate with pipeline companies, must abide by guidelines (Kerry Gilbert has experience)
- North-south connections under I-10 and u-turns, work with TxDOT for pedestrian countdown signals
- Power line easements (higher voltage lines harder than low voltage)
- Work with USACE to allow trails within sensitive areas (endangered prairie dawn flower)
- TxDOT BarkerCypress crossing has pedestrian signals which can be lengthened when trail is built and foot traffic increases
- I-10 frontage - 8' sidewalks from Addicks Howell to Terry Hershey Park
- West and East side of Barker Reservoir
- Connections to the south from maps F & G (to outside planning area)
- 41 mile pipeline easement with Harris Water Authority – could connect subdivisions with parks and trails
- East-west commuter trail north of I-10 along Westview
- East-west commuter trail south of I-10 along Kingsland
- North-south commuter trail on Eldridge



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Trail Criteria

After lunch, generously provided by ConocoPhillips, Kathryn Nichols provided instructions for the breakout sessions to develop criteria for prioritizing trails. The participants were divided into 5 groups with facilitators. The groups reported out high ranking criteria to the plenary session.

Trail Rating Criteria - Combined Results from All Groups

Criteria	Votes
Origin/destination connections – residential, retail, parks, schools, work centers	35
Trail connections to destinations, public facilities, urban mixed use centers	
Fill in missing links, trails connecting to larger park systems and existing trails, hierarchy of trails	30
Encourage long distance spine trails to serve maximum population	20
Funding available, good value, cost efficient	19
Safety: Safe, continuous trail design connecting high traffic trails, (avoiding hazards, on street paths and cars)	15
Accessibility to trails from outside and visa-versa – open access, multiple access points	13
Reduce VMT, overcome barriers to non-motorized mobility, increase physical activity	12
Experience: trails along bayous, trails away from roads, scenic variety, aesthetics	12
“No Brainer,” low hanging fruit - can be completed quickly and used to promote awareness and funding	11
Collaboration/Ease of relationships/Public support (number of jurisdictions/companies/neighborhoods involved)	11
Use of existing ROW, resources and easements	9
Proper trail linkage signage for ease and sensibility of use	8
Multi-purpose, multi-modal, varied activities	8
Connect trails to Metro stations, parking facilities, bus stops	7
Respect ecological systems and habitat	7
Contributes to a significant landmark trail system	5
Security for users	4
Meaningful perpetual maintenance agreement	4
Suitable for all ages, family friendly	4
Natural surface/alternate routes with technical features	4
Encourages landowners to make connections to trails and provide amenities i.e. bike racks, showers, connecting paths	3
Education potential through interpretation (history, habitat, ecology)	3

All criteria generated by the individual groups will be reviewed by the Criteria and Prioritization Subcommittee.

Partnership Opportunities

To move this effort to the next phase, additional volunteers will be needed. Subcommittees will begin meeting in early 2009. Subcommittee volunteers from the participants were as follows:

Criteria/Priorities

Nadia Nijim - Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services
Phillip Teitel - Greater Houston Off-Road Biking Association
Verneath Hronas - HC MUD 167
Gary Nathanson - Langham Creek UD
Mary Sullivan - Northwest HC MUD 12
Jim Beavers - HC MUD 120
Jim Young - ConocoPhillips
Chris Holmes - Bicycle World and Fitness
Lee Greb - Houston Striders

Funding Development

Miguel Hull - Memorial MUD
Lee Greb - Houston Striders
Michael McGlaughlin - HC MUD 238
Mary Sullivan - Northwest HC MUD 12
Barry Chambers - Houston Striders

Design Standards

Susan Cita - TBG Partners
Ray Pavlovich - Nottingham Country MUD
Matt Stoops - Kerry R. Gilbert & Associations, Inc.
Jim Beavers - HC MUD 120
Midge Zak - Nottingham Country MUD
Michael McGlaughlin - HC MUD 238
Peter Wang - Bike Houston, Citizens Transportation Coalition, Sustainable Living Houston

Use Guidelines, Operations & Maintenance Standards

Susan Cita - TBG Partners
Lee Greb - Houston Striders
Jim Beavers - HC MUD 120
John Lincoln - Technip USA, Inc.

Education/Outreach/Marketing

Nadia Nijim - Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services
Peter Wang - Bike Houston, Citizens Transportation Coalition, Sustainable Living Houston
Janet Wagner - J.K. Wagner & Company, Inc



Workshop Feedback

The final action was to provide feedback on the workshop. Positive comments included: the food and facilities, the mapping process and dots, breakout sessions, mapping support from HCC and the facilitators. Areas for improvement included having more handouts and smaller copies of the maps, need for updated aerials since 2006, request for morning food and a veggie option for lunch, and lack of participation by Harris County Precincts, USACE, Metro and school districts at the workshop.

Workshops depend on the efforts of sponsors and facilitators. We would like to thank the sponsors who provided meeting space, food, maps and other logistics support for the workshop.

Sponsors:

ConocoPhillips
Energy Corridor District
Houston Community College
National Park Service, RTCA

Facilitators:

Yuhayna McCoy - City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department
Rennisa Garza Montalvo - City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department
Brian Crimmins - Houston Planning Department
Eric Pietsch - Houston Planning Department
Jennifer Dyke - Harris County Flood Control District
Wayne Crull - Harris County Flood Control District
John deBessonnet - Harris County Public Infrastructure