

1 The Villages at Mt. Hood

Visitors enjoy fishing, camping, boating, hiking, hunting, mountain biking, skiing and other snow sports in the winter. Popular destinations include Timberline Lodge and Ski Resort, Lost Lake, Trillium Lake, Rock Creek Reservoir and portions of the Old Oregon Trail. In addition, Mt. Hood offers two other major ski resorts, Ski Bowl and Mt. Hood Meadows. Preserving the pristine nature of Mt. Hood is important to Oregon’s environment, identity and collective legacy.



The project area includes communities along the US 26 corridor in Clackamas County, Oregon in the vicinity of Mt. Hood. The major populated areas include the communities of Brightwood, Welches/Wemme, Zig Zag, and Rhododendron. Together, these areas are recognized as The Villages at Mt. Hood.

The Villages at Mount Hood are home to over 5,000 permanent residents and 15,000 seasonal residents. The surrounding area serves thousands of recreational users every year—estimated at over 85,000 to the Mt. Hood area.

Residents and visitors alike enjoy the area’s beauty and recreational opportunities.

US 26 is the primary travel route connecting the communities, and local roads serve important circulation needs. US 26 is classified as a state highway and National Freight Route, and is part of the National Highway System (NHS). This high-volume section of US 26 connects the Portland metropolitan area with Central Oregon. Generally, US 26 in this area is five lanes with two vehicle travel lanes in each direction and a shared center turn lane. The roadway has wide shoulders that serve pedestrian and bicycle circulation. The roadway serves local needs as well as through travel, with average daily traffic between 15,800 vehicles at the western end of the project area (near Hoodland Senior Center in Welches) and 8,500 vehicles at the eastern end (near Rhododendron).

The Wildwood Recreation Site and the Sandy Ridge Trail System (a mountain biking trail system), managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), are within the study area and have large numbers of visitors in the summer and fall. Several trailheads for camping and hiking in the Mt. Hood National Forest and study area contribute to higher traffic volumes on US 26 and collector and arterial roads, particularly during weekends and summer months. In the winter, snow sports enthusiasts contribute to increased weekend through-traffic while visiting snow parks east of the project area.

Who lives in the Villages?

- 4.5% of population are youths (10-19)
- 18.9% of population are older adults (65+)
- 8.1% of population are low-income
- 10.2% of population have an ambulatory disability
- 98.6% of population identify as White, 1.4% identify as two or more races

1.1 Why this Plan?

The current pedestrian and bicycle network is poorly connected. People walk on shoulders that disappear into ditches or are poorly lit. Many use dirt footpaths worn along roads over time and only known to residents. At open houses, many residents cited bicycling as one of the ways they move around Mt. Hood, and bicycling is also popular in the scenic area for recreation and to access the Sandy Ridge Trail System. Pedestrians, bicycle riders and motorists often share roadway lanes with no shoulders, leading to conflicts. Many residents would like to walk and bike more for their daily needs, but do not feel safe doing so. Crossing US 26, the highway bisecting the Villages, is a significant barrier to pedestrian and bicycle travel.

The area hosts significant numbers of visitors, both for day trips and overnight stays. There is no directional signage for visitors who wish to walk or bike and they are left to use their cars to go to restaurants and stores. A well-connected pedestrian and bicycle system would support the quality of life of residents and allow visitors to leave their car behind when enjoying the area's numerous destinations.

The Villages at Mt. Hood Pedestrian and Bikeway Implementation Plan also provides an important update to the Clackamas County Mt. Hood Community Plan, which was adopted in 1976. The Plan considers changes to land use to support proposed transportation investments and further supports project needs identified in the Clackamas County Transportation System Plan. The Plan provides a long-term, prioritized set of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements aimed at increasing transportation choices within The Villages, including access to transit. The infrastructure improvements create a connected pedestrian and bicycle system, integrated with transit, aimed to meet residents' and visitors' daily needs.

1.2 Project Objectives

Clackamas County received a grant through the Oregon Department of Transportation's Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) program to define solutions. The Plan has been guided by the following project objectives:

- Identify bicycle and pedestrian needs within The Villages at Mt. Hood
- Develop a Safe Routes to School Plan for Welches Elementary and Middle School
- Identify potential locations for additional or enhanced US 26 pedestrian crossings. The project team will consider at-grade and grade-separated solutions, or enhancements to the current crossings.
- Evaluate the feasibility of a multiuse path in the area

The long-term, pedestrian and bikeway system proposed in this Plan meets these objectives within a 20-year timeframe.



Figure 2: Existing walking conditions on Welches Road

Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

The PAC included:

- neighborhood representatives
- local pedestrian and bicycle advocates
- local business owners
- community volunteers
- agency-based technical advisors

Technical Advisory Committee

The TAC included representatives from:

- Clackamas County Transportation Engineering and Planning
 - US Forest Service
 - Oregon Department of Transportation
 - Mt Hood Express
 - Clackamas County Tourism
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It is important to note that while funds do not currently exist to implement proposed projects, the Plan provides a foundation from which Clackamas County, agency partners and other stakeholders can seek funding through programs or grants. The existence of a well-supported, prioritized, community-driven plan provides credibility and heft to grant and program applications.

The Plan has several improvements for US 26. All US 26 improvement projects are subject to ODOT review and approval.

1.3 Planning Process

Stakeholders within The Villages at Mt. Hood communities contributed to the development of the Plan, as have technical staff at every stage. A public advisory committee, made up of stakeholders from the community, and a technical advisory committee, made up of Clackamas County and other agency staff, reviewed and advised development of the Plan. In addition, two public workshops were held to gain public feedback on proposed projects, their priority and the draft Plan.

The advisory committees and public workshop attendees provided substantive feedback on the projects, including design elements and prioritization, which is reflected in this Plan. Section 3 provides details about each project, and includes a short summary of public feedback regarding individual project proposals.

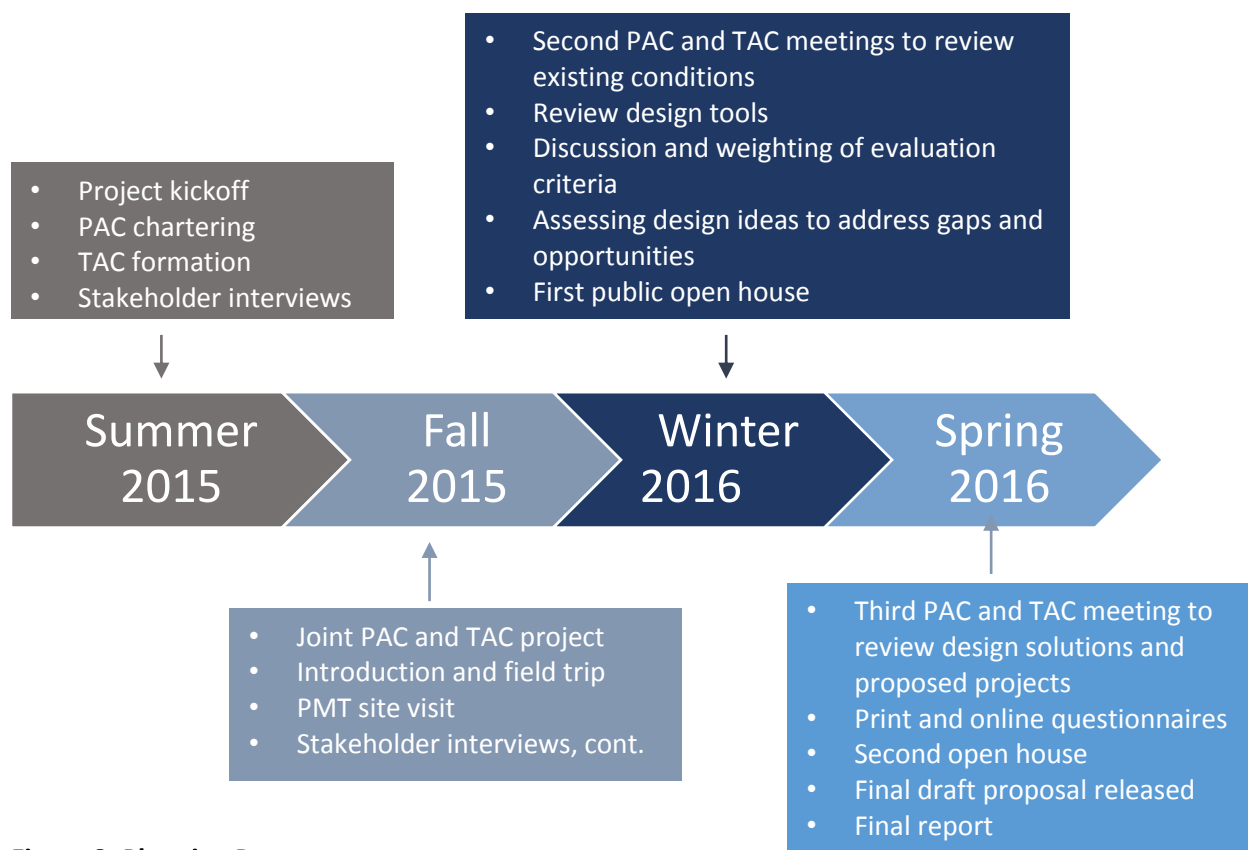


Figure 3. Planning Process

1.4 Planning Context

The Plan builds upon and recommends implementation of several plans.

- The *Clackamas County Active Transportation Plan* (ATP) identifies key active transportation routes connecting destinations and communities in Clackamas County, both rural and urban. The Clackamas County ATP identifies Barlow Trail Road within the project area as a principal active transportation route. The *Implementation Plan* provides more detail for implementation of Barlow Trail Road as a principal active transportation route.
- The 15-year *Mt. Hood Multi-Modal Transportation Plan*, with a planning time horizon of 2014-2029, is a multi-jurisdictional plan created to improve safety for all highway users and expand travel options along the Mt. Hood Highway Corridor. While the plan does not call for any projects specifically in The Villages at Mt. Hood, it does call for expansion of pedestrian and bicycle options integrated with transit, and of multi-modal directional signage within Mt. Hood. The *Implementation Plan* further describes the intent of the Mt. Hood Multi-Modal Plan with complementary projects.

The *Villages at Mt. Hood Pedestrian and Bikeway Implementation Plan* will be used to update the Mt. Hood Community Plan and Chapter 10 of the Clackamas County Comprehensive Plan. The Mt. Hood Community Plan provides land use and transportation guidance for The Villages at Mt. Hood, such as facilitating pedestrian movement across US 26 within Rhododendron. The *Implementation Plan* also provides an update to Chapter 5: Transportation System Plan (TSP) of the Clackamas County Comprehensive Plan. Prioritized projects from this Plan will include improvements for pedestrians, bicycle riders and transit users. The projects will be integrated into the prioritized list of projects for the countywide TSP.

Priority

Priority indicates how important the improvement is to implementing a pedestrian and bicycle system.

- High – very important
 - Medium – important
 - Low – somewhat important
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1.5 Types of Transportation System Users

Descriptions of area improvements state what type of users would benefit from the improvement. It is important to note that throughout the public involvement process, the team learned many individuals often fall into multiple categories of users. For example, many residents also recreate in the area regularly and find the recreational opportunities a great benefit to living within the community.

- **Residents:** Residents want to walk and bicycle safely within their own community. In particular, low-income and zero-car households may have less access to auto travel and rely on transit, walking or riding a bicycle to meet their daily needs. Important destinations for residents include food markets, schools, medical offices and community centers or churches. Crossings and improvements along US 26 would be most heavily used by residents.
- **Transit Riders:** Mt. Hood Express and The Villages at Mt. Hood Shuttle serve both commuters and recreational users. Bus stops are not typically served by sidewalks or marked crossings. Pedestrians and bicycle riders rely on road shoulders and demand paths on US 26 to access bus stops. Two bus stops (at Welches Road and E Salmon River Road) are near crosswalks on US 26.
- **Lodgers:** Visitors staying at local area inns, resorts and vacation rentals may drive up to the area, but prefer to walk or bicycle during their stay. Many guests like to park their vehicles and enjoy the scenery by walking to area restaurants, stores or recreation attractions. These users may benefit from improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities and directional signage that link lodgings and commercial areas.
- **School Children/Older Adults:** These groups are particularly vulnerable as they may have slower reflexes, use mobility devices and need more time to cross roadways. The Welches Elementary

School, Middle School, area parks and the Hoodland Senior Center are common destinations. Sidewalks, separated paths and crossings would particularly benefit these user groups.

- **Recreational Visitors:** Mt. Hood is a common destination for both road cyclists and mountain bikers. Many recreational users ride through The Villages at Mt. Hood while traveling recreational routes advertised by Travel Oregon, Clackamas County Tourism and local cycling groups. These users often prefer to ride roads away from US 26 to avoid heavy and fast-moving vehicles. Improvements to roadway shoulders, particularly those designated by the Clackamas County Transportation Plan, would improve the experience of these users.



Figure 4: Example of recreational users

2 Proposed Projects in The Villages

Projects proposed in the *Implementation Plan* reflect an analysis of existing conditions that considered the needs, opportunities and constraints within the existing pedestrian and bicycle system. Community stakeholders and PAC members helped define needs related to walking and bicycling, and defined the system values such as safety, access and safe routes to school.

PAC members, TAC members and the general public validated and augmented the team's assessment of needs, opportunities and constraints during Public Workshop #1. Following analysis of existing walking and bicycling conditions, the project team created a series of improvement projects to address needs, opportunities and gaps.

This section describes the background and need for each area improvement; the recommended improvement; any alternatives considered and dismissed; feedback from the public, committees and team; an order-of-magnitude cost factor, and priority for the improvement. Projects are grouped by geography in the communities of Brightwood/ Wemme, Welches and Rhododendron.