

08.05.25



Metro

# HISTORIC WASHINGTON PARK LOOP REPORT

Washington Park Train Task Force



Metro



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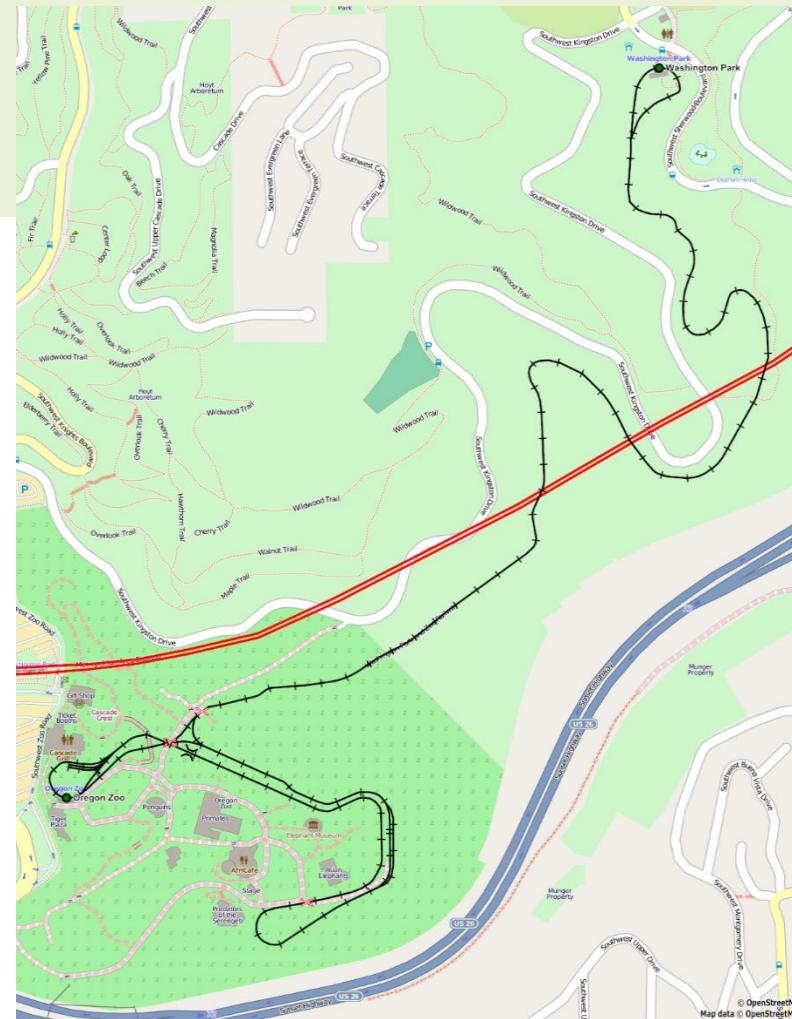
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The Metro Washington Park Train Task Force developed this document to record the history and current state of the potential restoration of passenger train service between the Oregon Zoo and Washington Park along the route referred to as the “Historic Washington Park Loop.”**

The Task Force unanimously endorsed this report and the action of forwarding it to the Metro Council and the Portland City Council for the following considerations:

- Begin conversations between the City of Portland and Metro around the intergovernmental agreement (IGA) that currently exists for train operations. Discussions should include:
  - Identifying secure funding for planning-level work.
  - Clarifying long-term operating and maintenance responsibilities.
  - Aligning stakeholder risk tolerance regarding environmental, logistical and regulatory constraints.
  - Understanding the regional examples for train consortiums and ownership structures, including the interest expressed by the Friends of the Washington Park and Zoo Railway, to assume ownership of the trains. The Willamette Shore Trolley and the Portland Streetcar are potential local models.
- Additionally, the Task Force recommends evaluating the need for a peer or independent review of materials and additional studies, based on the needs of the organizations/governmental agencies moving forward with the train route. Another recommendation is to conduct additional outreach to understand the community’s support/interest after the review of studies is completed.



This map shows the Historic Washington Park Loop (black dashed line) which was located on Oregon Zoo property (darker cross-hashed green) and in Washington Park (light solid green).

The current Zoo Loop includes only the smaller section to the left of the property; the longer loop that is closer to Highway 26 was closed to build the Elephant Lands Exhibit.

The MAX line is also shown (red double line), along with Highway 26 (blue double line).

# OVERVIEW

## **This report was developed and endorsed by the Metro Washington Park Train Task Force.**

The Task Force examined and discussed the opportunities and challenges of restoring regular passenger train service between the Oregon Zoo and Washington Park along the historic trackway.

The Task Force developed this report to:

- Investigate and understand the history (Appendix A) and current status of the train and rail service.
- Consider the information available about the cost of restarting the Historic Washington Park Loop (which leaves/returns to the Zoo grounds from the Oregon Zoo to the Rose Garden station).
- Explore train service as an amenity for visitors, including local residents visiting Washington Park as well as visitors in the context of tourism (those traveling at least 50 miles from their residence).
- Reflect community values, and consider regional objectives, including those related to the Oregon Zoo and Washington Park and acknowledge real-world constraints.
- Provide a range of potential actions, mapping different possible journeys to the extent possible.

The Task Force also sought to make an endorsement regarding:

- Future feasibility of long-term operations,
- Electrification options,
- Management models,
- Possible impact on other zoo operations, and
- Funding strategies for train and track restoration, operation, maintenance and expected revenue generation.

# Menu of Options

**Below is the Task Force's menu of options that could be studied further or implemented in phases.**

## Pursuing the viability of reinstating the Historic Washington Park Train Loop:

The Task Force suggests further conversations between the City of Portland and Metro, along with the Friends of the Washington Park and Zoo Railway, around the intergovernmental agreements (IGA) that currently exist for the train operations.

Discussions should include:

- Identifying secure funding for planning-level work.
- Clarifying long-term operating and maintenance responsibilities.
- Aligning stakeholder risk tolerance regarding environmental, logistical and regulatory constraints.
- Understanding the regional examples for train consortiums and ownership structures, including the Willamette Shore Trolley and the Portland Streetcar.

**Peer review of materials:** The Task Force members generated and shared dozens of documents (Appendix B). These materials were developed by different individuals and organizations in response to their own goals and priorities. As a result, they reflect varying methodologies, levels of detail and degrees of review. They have not been independently verified or reviewed by all stakeholders and may not reflect the most current information.

- The Task Force recommends an independent review of the information by appropriate professionals and additional studies.

**Additional studies:** The Task Force identified gaps in data and planning that would be required to pursue the Historic Washington Park Loop restoration. The Task Force understands that the level of detail will depend on the owner/operator of the train, since government agencies have different requirements on data collection and documentation than a private entity might.

## Glossary

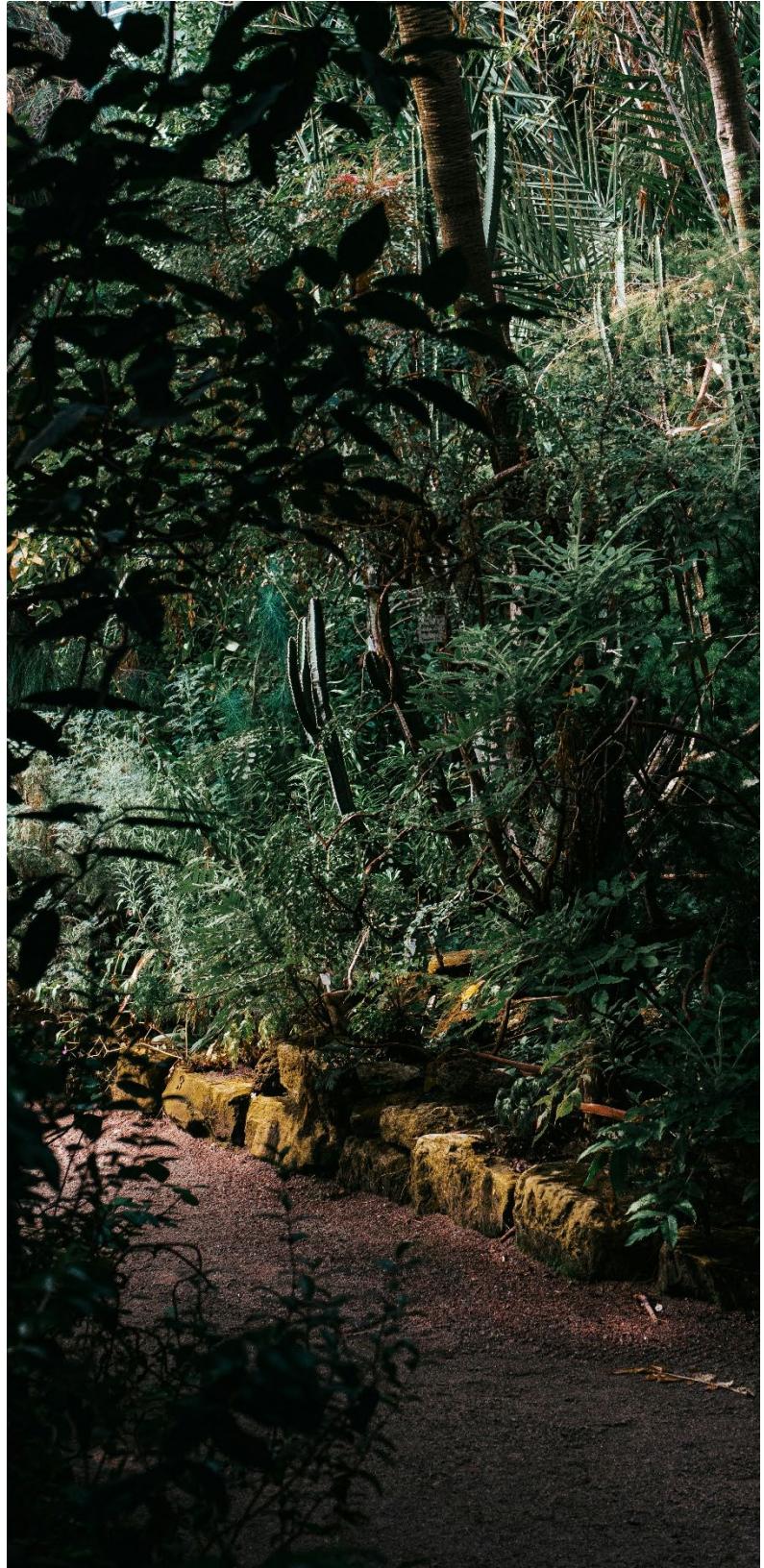
- **Current Zoo Loop:** The current train route that runs today on Oregon Zoo grounds. The map above shows a longer loop on Zoo grounds (closer to Highway 26) which was closed to build the Elephant Lands Exhibit.
- **Historic Washington Park Loop:** The route that was closed in 2013 that ran trains from the Oregon Zoo to the Rose Garden Station near the Rose Garden and Japanese Garden. This is the loop that the Task Force considered for this process.
- **Rolling stock:** These are the engines and train cars that run on a track.
- **Rose Garden Station:** The historic train depot building that is located near the Rose Garden but is currently closed.

The additional studies suggested by the Task Force include (in no specific order):

- **Public approvals:** Clarification is needed regarding zoning, permitting, review of historic preservation status, and potential updates to the Washington Park Master Plan.
- **Project leadership:** A clearly identified organization must take responsibility for funding, development, operations, and governance of the Historic Washington Park Loop. The Oregon Zoo has asserted it will not fill this role because it does not align with and will draw resources from its primary mission. The Friends of the Washington Park and Zoo Railway are willing to take on this role with support from the City of Portland.
- **Comprehensive cost modeling:** A full financial estimate is needed, including costs for start-up, infrastructure, repairs, and refurbishment of maintenance facilities.
- **Electrification analysis:** Electrification of the Historic Washington Park Loop was discussed, but no study has been completed. Costs, benefits, and feasibility are unknown.
- **Business planning:** Any proposal must include a business plan addressing ridership projections, revenue, expenses and long-term sustainability; this plan should be independently vetted.
- **Risk assessment:** Key risks include cost overruns, environmental impacts, safety concerns, conflicting stakeholder priorities, and lack of alignment with current local government agency missions and budgets.

**Stakeholder engagement:** Conduct activities and outreach to understand the level of public support and interest for the Historic Washington Park Loop after these additional studies are completed.

The Friends of the Washington Park and Zoo Railway have collected 44,000 signatures in support of reinstating the Historic Washington Park Loop. Additionally, hundreds of letters and postcards have been sent to the Metro Council in support of a longer train loop.



# TASK FORCE

## **The goal of this Task Force was to convene stakeholders for conversations centered on the Historic Washington Park Loop.**

Councilor Christine Lewis sponsored the Metro budget amendment for fiscal year 2024-25 that outlined her vision for the Task Force, and the Metro Council voted unanimously in favor of the amendment.

### **Meetings**

The Task Force met monthly from March through July 2025 to discuss and develop this report, as well as provide possible next steps based on the available information/data (see Appendix B). The Task Force was co-led by Metro and the City of Portland. Meetings were facilitated by Brandy Steffen of JLA Public Involvement.

### **Decision Making**

The final report of the Task Force will be presented to Metro's Chief Operating Officer (COO), Marissa Madrigal, and Portland's City Administrator, Michael Jordan. COO Madrigal will then present the Task Force's findings and her recommendation to the Metro Council. The final report will also be presented to Portland City Council.

All Task Force members endorsed this report being presented to COO Madrigal and City Administrator Jordan.

### **Members**

Christine Lewis	Metro Councilor, Co-Chair
Olivia Clark	Portland City Councilor, Co-Chair
Mike Murawski	Explore Washington Park
Kimberly Bown	Friends of the International Rose Test Garden
Craig Dirksen	Friends of the Washington Park & Zoo Railway
Kathy Goeddel	Friends of the Washington Park & Zoo Railway
Diedra Krys-Rusoff	Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission (MERC)
Utpal Passi	Oregon Zoo
Susan Hartnett	Oregon Zoo Foundation Board of Trustees
Jason Sipe	Portland Japanese Garden
Adena Long and Brett Horner	Portland Parks & Recreation
Jennifer Parks	Travel Portland

# WASHINGTON PARK TRAIN

## History

### **Train service between the Oregon Zoo and Washington Park operated from 1960 to 2013.**

Multiple times a day, three passenger trains powered by diesel engines ran on a narrow-gauge railroad line, carrying passengers on a 40-minute ride, from Memorial through Labor days, and on weekends in May and September.

The Historic Washington Park Loop closed in 2013 due to construction of the new elephant exhibit area and changes to the railway's route on Zoo grounds. The current Zoo Loop operates one train every 15-20 minutes with a single loop which lasts 6 minutes, all year. In 2020, the railway was added to the National Register of Historic Places, including rolling stock, the tracks/route, and Washington Park Station. More information in Appendix A.

## Current Situation

**To understand the current situation, the Task Force developed the following Problem and Vision Statements.**

Robert and Ethel Kennedy, and astronaut John Glenn on the Zooliner in 1968 (Getty image BET 515542140).



They also gathered and shared as many documents as possible. The group identified additional data needs for making future decisions but moved forward with the information that was available within the time and budget constraints of this process.

### **Problem Statement**

The Historic Washington Park Loop is not currently operating outside of the Oregon Zoo grounds and faces deferred maintenance, geological instability, complex ownership structure, funding/operations/liability challenges and aging infrastructure including the Rose Garden Station. In addition, the rolling stock (diesel engines and passenger cars) are also aged and in need of significant refurbishment or replacement, maintenance/storage facilities have been removed, and several train engineers are approaching retirement age. The Historic Washington Park Loop and the former station at the Rose Garden (which will also need to be refurbished) may present opportunities to activate these areas of Washington Park for the benefit of the community.

## Challenges

The proposal to reinstate the Historic Washington Park Loop service to the Rose Garden station faces multiple challenges, including significant capital expenses with funding uncertainties and concerns over long-term operating costs, maintenance, and preservation of the historical train among others.

### Restoration of the Historic Washington Park Loop

would add about 25 minutes of ride time for passengers per cycle which could impact parking and visitor logistics at the Zoo, the other cultural institutions in Washington Park, and at the Rose Garden Station. Washington Park is owned by the City of Portland, as is the Historic Washington Park Loop, including a 20-foot right-of-way, the rail lines and the Rose Garden Station/depot, along with the rolling stock. The Oregon Zoo, a self-supported Metro function, is located on land owned by Metro, and the Zoo manages the railroad assets but does not own them.

While community interest appears strong, it is unclear if political will exists to pursue the restoration of the Washington Park Loop; liability concerns, financial limitations for capital improvements, and local government budget constraints complicate any decision.

Deferred maintenance and a lack of train storage and maintenance facilities hinder progress without a

The Rose Garden Station (photo by Steve Morgan).



meaningful commitment of funds.

Competition for limited public dollars in the current environment make it difficult for the Task Force to advocate for restoration of the Washington Park Loop without better information.

A complete list of challenges identified by the Task Force are in Appendix C.

## Vision Statement

Fund and undertake the tasks necessary to determine if the Historic Washington Park Loop is feasible, including sustainable ownership/operation agreements, financially stable long-term operations and adequate start-up and renovation funding sources.

The Task Force discussed future scenarios within Washington Park that:

- Considered possibilities of reinstating the Historic Washington Park Loop and seasonal operations; and the potential to electrify the existing trains. These scenarios may impact the current on-grounds Zoo loop, as well as maintenance facilities located within the Zoo.
- Include feasible and sustainable construction/reconstruction, initiation and maintenance costs estimates, funding prospects, positive economic impacts, and potential revenue opportunities.
- Reflect the historic significance, as well as the current tourist and resident interest, in the Historic Washington Park Loop.
- Consider the current limitations of Washington

- Park, including parking, transit access, seismic resiliency, connections between attractions, and agency/organization interest in train ownership and maintenance.
- Consider the long-term ownership, potential partnerships, leadership/decision-making structure, and legal implications/liability of train and tracks operation/maintenance.
  - Provide access to the broadest range of potential users from an accessibility and affordability level.

Additionally, the Task Force identified alternative options for the train route, Rose Garden Station, and rolling stock (Appendix E, some of which came directly from the Washington Park Master Plan)

## Opportunities/Benefits

Restoring the Historic Washington Park Loop offers a unique opportunity to revitalize an iconic attraction while potentially delivering broad community and economic benefits. Achieving these benefits would require a committed project lead, sustainable funding, and operational planning that extends beyond the scope or mission of the Oregon Zoo.

Reactivating the Historic Washington Park Loop may provide an opportunity to enhance travel options inside the Park, support local tourism, create memorable experiences for visitors of all ages, and celebrate Portland's history of innovation and recreation.

Establishing an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) and engaging a dedicated railway operator would ensure clear ownership and operations responsibilities, professional management, streamlined decision making, and address long-term train operations of the Historic

Washington Park Loop. A thoughtfully restored and well-financed train and loop could provide educational opportunities and foster partnerships with community organizations, while generating revenue to sustain its long-term operation. These outcomes would depend on the strength of leadership, funding, and alignment with regional priorities.

Opportunities that need further consideration and evaluation include:

- **Enhanced Visitor Experience/Visitor Attraction:** Create a unique, family-friendly attraction that connects key destinations across Washington Park and attracts visitors.
- **Historic Preservation:** Celebrate and preserve a beloved cultural and transportation legacy dating back to the 1950s.
- **Economic Impact:** Attract more visitors to the park, supporting surrounding businesses and tourism.
- **Accessibility and Equity:** Provide an inclusive mode of transportation for visitors of all abilities.
- **Community Engagement:** Partner with schools, nonprofits, and volunteers for educational programming and stewardship.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Reduce car trips within the park by offering a convenient alternative to driving and parking.
- **Revenue Generation:** Establish a sustainable source of funding through ticket sales, special events, and sponsorships.

Additional opportunities are included in Appendix D.

# SCENARIOS

## The Task Force considered a range of potential scenarios related to the future of the Washington Park Loop.

These scenarios reflect varying levels of ambition and complexity, including how well they align with the missions and operational capacities of different public and nonprofit partners currently involved in the discussions.

- The Oregon Zoo is not positioned to lead development or assume long-term ownership of the Historic Washington Park Loop.
- The Friends of the Washington Park and Zoo Railway have offered to take on the ownership role.

The table below outlines broad categories of ownership, operations, and potential impacts. However, all scenarios involve substantial unknowns (Appendix C). Other scenarios outside the scope of the Task Force are included in Appendix E.

Scenario	Owner / Operator	Startup / Capital Costs <sup>1</sup>	Net Revenue
1 Current Zoo Loop (no change)	Oregon Zoo / Oregon Zoo	NA	NA
2 Historic Washington Park Loop, no trail <sup>2</sup>	Friends of the Washington Park & Zoo Railway / Unknown	To be studied	To be studied
3 Historic Washington Park Loop, with trail <sup>3</sup>	Friends of the Washington Park & Zoo Railway / Unknown Portland Parks would own/operate the trail	To be studied	To be studied

<sup>1</sup> Estimated Startup/Capital Costs come from a variety of sources and would need to be studied further; see following pages for details.

<sup>2</sup> A potential trail on Kingston Drive could provide trail access off the track right-of-way.

<sup>3</sup> The Washington Park Master Plan included a trail in place of or in addition to the Historic Washington Park Loop.

*The range of cost and revenue estimates is based on limited available data and needs to be studied further for more accurate information that is tied to the type of owner/operator, since the costs for a government agency owner/operator are vastly different from one that is a non-profit or for-profit.*

## Current Zoo Loop

### No Change (Scenario 1)

By maintaining the current Zoo Loop (Scenario 1)—entirely within the Oregon Zoo campus—ownership and operation remain with the Zoo. This model aligns with the Zoo's mission and visitor experience goals.

#### Startup Costs

No new startup costs are anticipated as the existing trains and track are operational.

The Zoo is exploring future investments including electric rolling stock, charging infrastructure, and system upgrades as well as a covered storage/maintenance area for maintenance and preservation of the trains. These improvements will enhance sustainability, reliability, business model and guest engagement.

#### Operations/Revenue

Maintenance costs are expected to increase with the aging diesel fleet which is why the Zoo is actively exploring new electric equipment. The current maintenance staff is below the level needed for preventative maintenance. Benchmarking other zoo railroads showed staffing at 2.5 to 3 FTEs, not 1 mechanic. This has led to higher repair costs and deferred maintenance. No plans are in place to restore the locomotives and passenger cars or to build a dedicated storage and maintenance facility. Without such investments, the railway's infrastructure and rolling stock will deteriorate over time, raising future restoration costs and leaving the long-term status of the railway uncertain.

The train requires a separate ticket and does generate direct revenue, although its profitability fluctuates seasonally. Events such as ZooLights drive higher ridership and overall engagement, contributing to broader guest satisfaction and return visitation. While revenue is recorded, the Zoo does not fully allocate

### Additional Questions

Key questions related to this scenario primarily concern modernization and sustainability within the Zoo. The Oregon Zoo has not expressed interest in extending the track or operations beyond its campus. Suggestions for future phase extensions into Washington Park fall outside the Zoo's mission and strategic priorities.

- Are there parts of the Historic Washington Park Loop that could be added over time, in a phased approach with the current Zoo Loop?
  - For example, could some of the additional data needs that the Task Force identified be accomplished in a way that would benefit both the current Zoo Loop, as well as move the Historic Washington Park Loop forward?
- What happens to the state of the rolling stock and tracks outside the Zoo? How long could they last as-is? What happens if the storage/maintenance facility is not built and the rolling stock is not restored in the next decade?
  - These are helpful questions to answer if there is a delay in advancing the longer loop into Washington Park. Answers will have implications for the startup costs for any other scenario.

all associated operational expenses for the train, which are distributed across departments.

## **Visitor Amenity**

The current Zoo Loop remains a popular part of the Zoo visit. Its draw is integrated into the overall Zoo experience.

# Historic Washington Park Loop

Scenarios involving restoration of the Historic Washington Park loop—whether with or without an adjacent multi-use trail—introduce a wide range of unresolved questions regarding startup costs, long-term operations, legal responsibility, and funding. These scenarios presume a broader effort that would require a separate organization or agency to take on ownership, capital development, and ongoing management.

*The range of cost and revenue estimates is based on limited available data and needs to be studied further for more accurate information that is tied to the type of owner/operator, since the costs for a government agency owner/operator are vastly different from a non- or for-profit organization.*

## Without Mixed-Use Trail (Scenario 2)

This scenario would restore the Historic Washington Park Loop without introducing a new multi-use trail beside the tracks as contemplated in the 2018 Washington Park Master Plan update. The Task Force proposed an option to include a mixed-use trail on Kingston Drive instead of adjacent to the train tracks. This Kingston Drive trail is included in the Washington Park Master Plan, but was not tied to the restoration of the train (Appendix E). Portland City Council discussed the idea of moving the trail to Kingston Drive during the Master Plan update adoption, but did not modify the document to reflect this.

This scenario would repair aging crib walls, clean up the tracks and culverts, as well as restore the Rose Garden Train Station and make it ADA accessible.

### Startup Costs

A detailed study is required to estimate planning, permitting, and capital construction needs.

The capital cost of this option has been estimated to be less than \$3,000,000, with startup costs of \$60,000 (Shannon & Wilson, 2023, “Revised Geotechnical Engineering Report and Executive Summary,” Appendix B). The Oregon Zoo estimates an initial \$1.75M would be required to restore the tracks and station to operating standards, plus an additional \$828K to complete

## Additional Questions

Key questions related to Scenarios 2 and 3:

- **Feasibility and phasing:** Could the loop be implemented incrementally? How would early phases be funded and governed?
- **Public interest:** What is the actual demand for the Historic Washington Park Loop service, and how would it be measured? What is the potential for the Loop as a visitor amenity and a revenue-generating asset?
- **Technical planning:** What engineering, zoning, and permitting challenges would need to be addressed? How would environmental and historic preservation factors be resolved?
- **Park-wide implications:** How would restoration of the loop affect Washington Park circulation, parking, seismic resilience, and transit access?
- **Volunteer involvement:** What are the safety and liability risks of involving volunteers or unpaid labor in restoration or operations?
- **Operational model:** What staffing and scheduling model would be used? Would the system be seasonal or year-round?
- **Governance:** Who would own, insure, maintain, and be accountable for the infrastructure and operations?

additional track restoration within four years, resulting in a total capital investment of \$2.75M. (Oregon Zoo, 2025, “Updated; Lower Washington Park Railroad Track” Appendix B).

## **Operations**

Costs are expected to increase due to aging rolling stock, staff recruitment challenges, and maintenance of infrastructure beyond current capacity.

## **Revenue**

Projecting increases in revenue is speculative. Using historical financial analysis from the Zoo (2008-13) for estimated riders, revenue is estimated to average approximately \$2.0 million/year, over \$460,000 higher than the Zoo Loop with a fare that is double the shorter route. This is in line with the historically higher profitability of the longer route.

Expenses are anticipated to increase due to additional staffing, operations and maintenance costs, which will reduce total revenue. However, more study (with current and historical data) is needed.

## **Visitor Amenity**

Proponents suggest expanded service could increase usage by local and out-of-town visitors, which was historically the case, but no validated market study has confirmed this.

## With Mixed-Use Trail (Scenario 3)

A combined train and trail option was an option in the 2018 update to the Washington Park Master Plan, but no funding, detailed design, or lead agency has been identified for this Loop extension. Adding a trail would introduce additional permitting, design coordination, and long-term maintenance obligations that fall outside Zoo operations and the City's existing Parks and Recreation budget.

*As noted in Scenario 2, there is an option to include a trail on Kingston Drive instead of next to the train tracks.*

### Startup Costs

This scenario would require a study to evaluate the design, including environmental review, for both the trail and the Historic Washington Park Loop track design.

Train costs remain unchanged from the previous scenario, but trail costs are estimated at \$10,200,000, which includes contingency, management, general requirements, overhead and profit, bonds and insurance, as well as escalation through construction, permitting and project management (Portland Parks & Recreation, 2018, "Washington Park Master Plan," Appendix E.)

### Operations

Train costs remain unchanged from the previous scenario, but trail maintenance would fall to Portland Parks & Recreation.

### Revenue

Train-related revenue would be unchanged. Trail use would not generate revenue.

### Visitor Amenity

Proponents believe the trail could add flexible access, though year-round benefits remain speculative.



This map from the Washington Park Master Plan (2018) shows the Mixed-Use Trail line (number 5) which could include the train or just the trail.

# Electrification

**Electrification was discussed as a potential sustainability strategy for both the Current Zoo Loop and the Historic Washington Park Loop.**

There are two separate efforts for electrification which the Task Force was interested in pursuing:

- The Oregon Zoo is exploring a transition to electric trains for the current Zoo Loop at this time.
  - This includes a procurement process for electric rolling stock and the installation of charging infrastructure sized specifically for the current Zoo Loop. A 30-inch, narrow-gauge battery-operated train is not available for purchase and would require one to be custom built through the requisition of a new engine or conversion of the Oregon Express or Zooliner.
  - This effort aligns with the Zoo's sustainability goals and utility partnerships.
- A comprehensive technical or operational feasibility study has not been conducted for electrifying the Historic Washington Park Loop.

The Task Force was interested to see if:

- The Oregon Zoo transition to electric trains for the current Zoo Loop could support the Historic Washington Park Loop electrification in the future.
- The battery capacity, charging logistics, and system integration could be transferable to the Historic Washington Park Loop (which has longer distances, different route conditions, and infrastructure needs).

The City of Portland and Metro both have climate goals that support the transition away from diesel fuel.

# ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

**These options were suggested for consideration by the Metro Council and Portland City Council.**

The Task Force identified gaps in data and planning that would be required to pursue the Historic Washington Park Loop restoration. The Task Force understands that the level of detail will depend on the owner/operator of the train, since government agencies have different requirements on data collection and documentation than a private or non-profit entity might.

- **Public approvals**
- **Project leadership**
- **Comprehensive cost modeling**
- **Business planning**
- **Risk assessment**
- **Electrification analysis** (see previous page)

Additionally, the Task Force noted the following options for consideration:

- **Peer/independent review of materials:** The Task Force recommends an independent review of the information by appropriate professionals and additional studies.
- **Engagement:** Conduct outreach to understand the level of public support and interest for the Historic Washington Park Loop after filling in some data gaps.
- **Non-train scenarios:** Other scenarios were outside the scope of the Task Force, but still considered important to document (Appendix E).

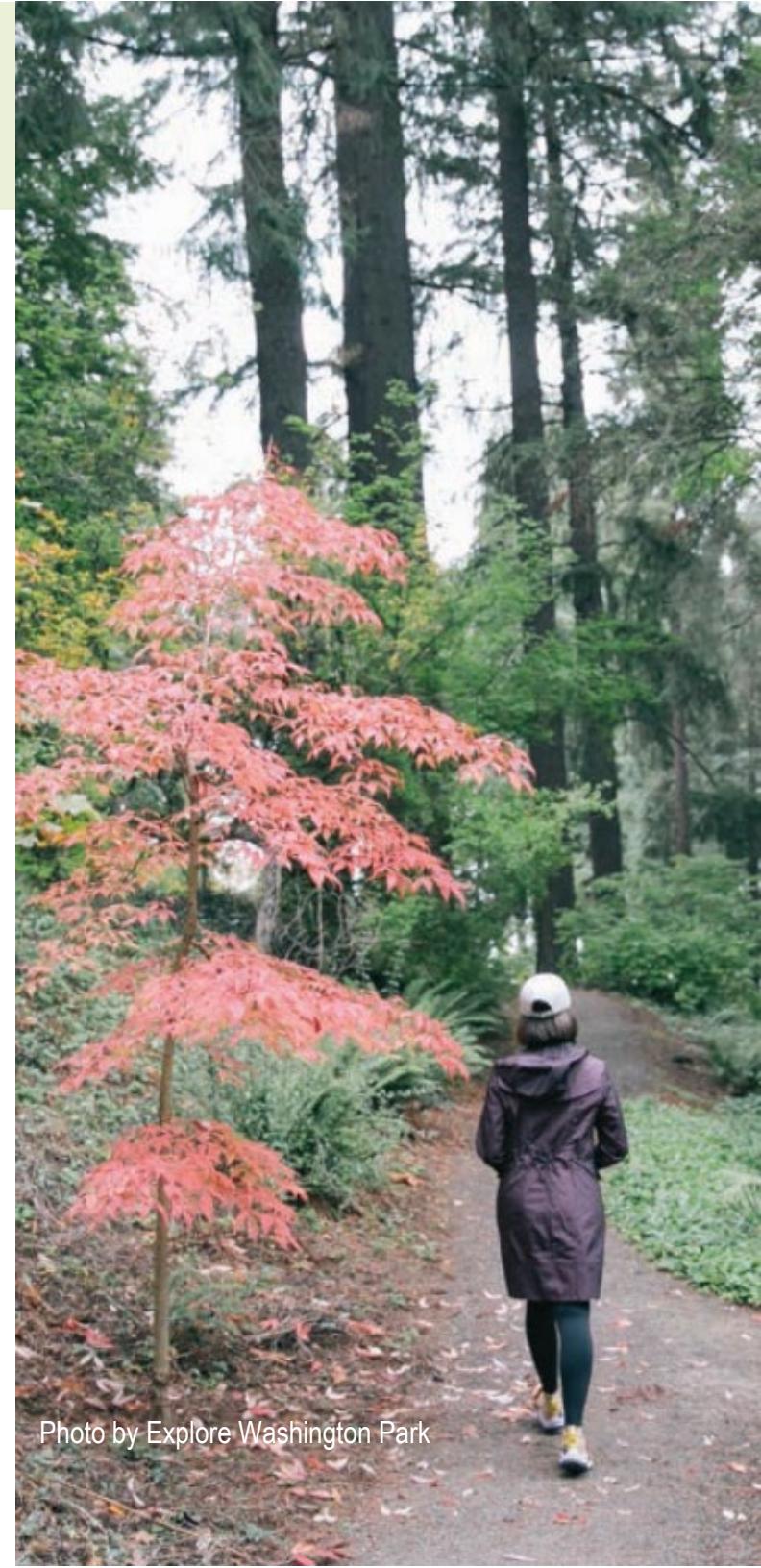


Photo by Explore Washington Park

# Public Approvals

## Clear Public Process and Required Approvals

A step-by-step outline is needed to understand what public agencies would need to do to move forward including whether the Washington Park Master Plan would need to be updated, land use and zoning rules that might need to be examined, applying for permits, impact of historic preservation status, and complying with environmental regulations.

It is also important to identify which agencies would need to be involved and what the early steps would look like to make progress forward with an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) between new or existing parties.

## Project Leadership

**A clear and accountable lead organization is necessary to advance any future vision for restoring the Historic Washington Park Loop.**

The Friends of the Washington Park & Zoo Railway are willing to be the lead organization to lead restoration of the Historic Washington Park Loop with support from the City of Portland and Metro.

This lead organization would be responsible for securing funding, managing planning and construction, and overseeing long-term operations of a recreational train experience that operates on the Historic Washington Park Loop and the Rose Garden Station.

An Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) would be needed to establish the leadership, ownership and operations of a restored route to Washington Park.

## Regional Consortiums

- The Willamette Shore Trolley operates through a consortium of organizations through the application of an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA).
  - The first IGA for this project was in 1988 between Portland, Metro, Lake Oswego, Clackamas County, and Multnomah County.
  - In 1994 TriMet was added to the IGA and the formal establishment of the Willamette Shoreline Right-of-Way Consortium.
  - Since then, both Multnomah and Clackamas Counties have departed the IGA.
- The Portland Streetcar is a regional consortium that could serve as a model, as is the Oregon Rail Heritage Center.

# Comprehensive Cost Modeling

**A complete, independently reviewed cost estimate will be necessary to fully understand the financial feasibility of reinstating the Historic Washington Park Loop.**

Over the course of the Task Force process, various members submitted financial estimates related to potential restoration efforts. However, these estimates were developed using differing methodologies and no unified cost assessment or consensus was reached. Such a study might include:

- Infrastructure restoration and upgrades (track, bridges, stations)
- Rolling stock acquisition or refurbishment, including potential electrification
- Support facilities such as power systems and maintenance areas
- Safety, accessibility, and regulatory compliance upgrades

# Business Planning

**Any proposal to reinstate the Historic Washington Park Loop should be supported by a comprehensive, independently reviewed business plan.**

This plan should clearly outline how the train would operate day-to-day, including projected ridership, seasonal variations, staffing requirements, maintenance needs, and cost structures. It should also provide detailed revenue assumptions—such as fare structures, potential subsidies, and fundraising strategies—as well as contingency plans for covering operational shortfalls over time.

Preliminary modeling has been produced by the Friends of the Washington  
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Park and Zoo Railway, based on input from professional geotechnical engineers and architects. An independently reviewed business plan will be needed for final evaluation, but existing analysis provides a valuable foundation for further exploration.

## Risk Assessment

### **Restoring the Historic Washington Park Loop involves a range of financial, operational, environmental and governance considerations.**

- Financial risks include potential cost overruns for capital improvements, ongoing operational expenses, and uncertain funding sources that could strain resources.
- Operational risks involve the complexities of managing and maintaining the train system, including staffing challenges, volunteer liability, aging equipment, and scheduling complexities.
- Environmental and safety risks relate to protecting sensitive park ecosystems, geology, and ensuring passenger and public safety throughout the route.
- Legal and liability risks stem from complicated ownership and jurisdiction, potential volunteer involvement, and unclear governance structures that may expose stakeholders to legal challenges.
- Current and future funding uncertainties at the local, state and federal levels including Metro and the City of Portland (including Parks and Recreation).
- Finally, community and stakeholder risks include managing differing priorities and expectations that require clear communication and coordination to maintain public support.

Together, these risks highlight the need for clear leadership, sustainable funding, and mission alignment before moving forward with restoration efforts.

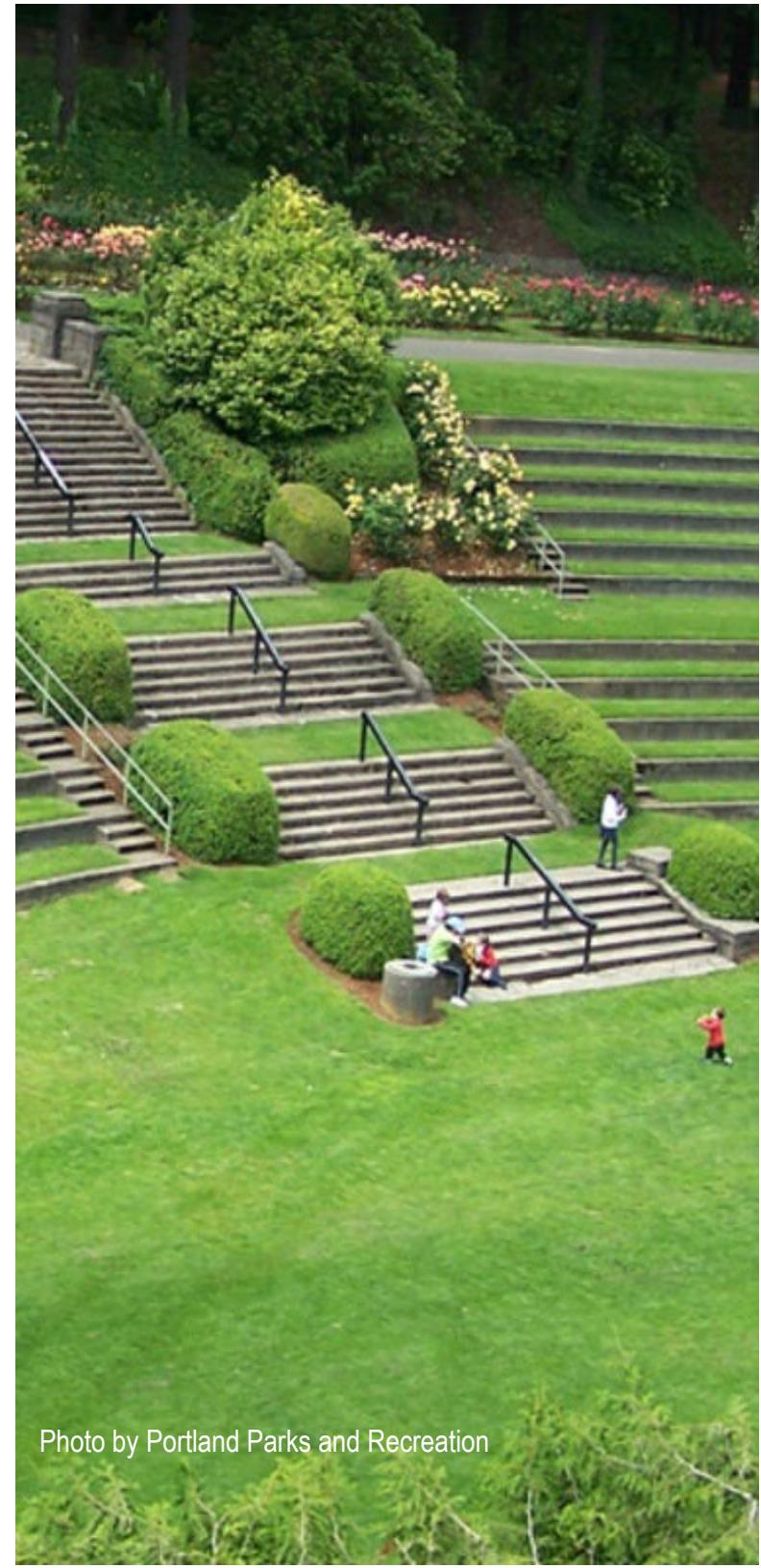


Photo by Portland Parks and Recreation

# Peer Review of Materials

## **The Task Force recommends a peer/independent review of significant data.**

The Task Force members generated and shared dozens of documents over their time together (Appendix B). These materials were developed by different individuals and organizations in response to their own goals and priorities. As a result, they reflect varying methodologies, levels of detail and degrees of review. They have not been independently verified or reviewed by all stakeholders and may not reflect the most current information.

The Task Force recommends a peer review of significant data in the future. A peer review means having a neutral and equivalent expert look at any contested data/materials to ensure the data is up-to-date and reliable.

# Engagement

## **Conduct outreach to understand the level of public support and interest for the Historic Washington Park Loop in future planning.**

The Task Force acknowledged strong community interest and noted future efforts should prioritize inclusive outreach. Public enthusiasm, demonstrated by over 44,000 petition signatures collected by the Friends of the Washington Park and Zoo Railway and local fundraising indicates a high level of engagement that should be more fully explored in future planning, regardless of the scenario selected.

Polling completed in 2023 by Metro for a Zoo Bond showed voters prioritized restoration of the Washington Park Loop at a much lower level than other Zoo improvements (see Appendix B for more details).

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Metro would like to acknowledge the Task Force for their time and commitment to this process.**

- Christine Lewis, Metro Councilor
- Olivia Clark, Portland City Councilor
- Mike Murawski, Explore Washington Park
- Kimberly Bown, Friends of the International Rose Test Garden
- Craig Dirksen, Friends of the Washington Park & Zoo Railway
- Kathy Goeddel, Friends of the Washington Park & Zoo Railway
- Diedra Krys-Rusoff, Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission (MERC)
- Utpal Passi, Oregon Zoo
- Susan Hartnett, Oregon Zoo Foundation
- Jason Sipe, Portland Japanese Garden
- Adena Long and Brett Horner, Portland Parks & Recreation
- Jennifer Parks, Travel Portland

**Staff that supported this process:**

- Ina Zucker, Metro
- Brandy Steffen, JLA Public Involvement
- Mallory Anderson, JLA Public Involvement

**Photos:**

- Steve Morgan (including the cover photo)
- Mary Ray on Unsplash
- Caroline Ashley on Unsplash
- Portland Parks and Recreation
- Explore Washington Park

**Maps:**

- OpenStreetMap from Wikipedia

**The Task Force following the final meeting in July 2025.**

