Developing and Sustaining an Official Statewide Multi-Modal Trails Database and Mapping Tool – Key Objectives, Purpose, Outcomes

Vision
Establish a statewide multi-modal trails system and database that can be managed, coordinated, and regularly updated by the state in coordination with local agencies and stakeholders.

Key Goal - "The What?"
To connect communities across Washington State via an accessible multi-modal, inter-connected system of "hub and spoke" trails where State designated trails (WSDOT, State Parks, DNR, WDFW) serve as the hub, linked local and regional trails serve as the spokes, and gaps in the system are readily identifiable.

Proposal
Allocate $200,000 in the 2021-23 Capital Budget to the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to define and designate a statewide system of paved and unpaved multi-modal public trails. Deliverables would include inventorying and mapping a state-wide network of public recreational and commuter routes, using and building off of existing spatial data. Data will be collected and used by RCO – in coordination with other state agencies such as Washington State Parks and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) -- to help fulfill its State Trails Plan responsibilities and to facilitate the stewardship of a "statewide trails system" as a priority asset. The multi-modal trails database will be developed so it can be regularly updated by cities, counties, and state agencies.

Purpose- "The Why?"
1. By maintaining an inventory and providing a mapping tool of public recreational trails across Washington State, gaps in connectivity, access limitations, and site conditions can enable trail planners and managers to better direct resources in achieving an interconnected and equitable system of local, regional and statewide trails.
2. Maintaining a comprehensive database and deploying a mapping tool reduces inequities and enables greater engagement by smaller communities with limited planning resources.
3. Trails are a primary outdoor recreation asset with economic, health and ecological benefits that help distinguish Washington's unique tourism character while promoting quality of life.
4. An interconnected network of regional and statewide trails serves as a critical multi-modal transportation corridor.
5. By leveraging resources from multiple sectors and organizations, financial barriers can be overcome and duplicative efforts that strain finite resources can be avoided.
6. Longstanding data needs of community leaders, trail advocates and coalitions, park and transportation planners, elected officials, public health officials and funders can be effectively served and sustained over time.
7. The state would help fulfill its Trails Plan responsibilities as described in RCW 79A.35.040 to facilitate the stewardship of a "statewide trails system" as a priority asset of statewide significance.

Desired Outcomes

1. To inform the development and implementation of the Washington State Trails Plan enabling the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to facilitate the development of a comprehensive statewide multi-modal trail system.
2. To develop common attributes for the designation and characterization of regional and statewide trails with local connections.
3. To build and maintain a current database of regional and statewide trails with local connections administered by the Recreation and Conservation Office on behalf of the State of Washington.
4. To enable more effective advocacy for the planning and funding of trail projects that enable greater connectivity between communities, improved access for all trail users, and address historical inequities and disparities.
5. To establish a uniform system and process for collecting and updating State trail metadata for regional and statewide trails.
6. To provide trail planners with access to a state supported multi-modal trails database and mapping tool informing their trail planning and development priorities, development of local transportation improvements and capital facilities plans, and application of grants and other requests for funding.
7. To build upon current statewide trail datasets and enhance existing interactive and publicly accessible maps, optimized for the web and smart devices.