

Purpose:

King County Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) met with the Northwest Association of Blind Athletes (NWABA) to talk about ideas to improve accessibility at the restored Red Cedar Trailhead as part of the Coal Creek Sewer Upgrade Project. At the briefing, Monica Van der Vieren and Madeleine Brown from King County Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) gave background on the project and shared some accessible recreation possibilities the project team is considering. They asked for feedback on those ideas from NWABA representatives, and for any additional comments or suggestions that NWABA might have.

Attendees:

- **Monica Van der Vieren**, King County Wastewater Treatment Division
- **Madeline Brown**, King County Wastewater Treatment Division
- **Tara Rogowsky**, NWABA
- **Megan Ahleman**, NWABA
- **Alex Cole**, Envirolssues

Comments:

General:

- NWABA would like to see braille on everything, whenever feasible. NWABA likes the idea of a braille trail, which has been popular among people who are low vision/blind. For a braille trail, it is preferred to be 1/4 mile or longer. The trailhead should be a destination with other things to do/enjoy in addition to the braille trail.
- NWABA would also like to see accessible elements extend for the length of the trail (could be an app or guide). The low vision/blind athletes are looking for an experience and exercise. If the trail extends on for miles, content along the length of the trail would be beneficial.
- Suggestion to have a bin of bear bells/bracelets people can use. Small bells can be attached to a trail guide's shoes or elsewhere and can be useful to help people hear the guide and follow.
 - This could also be a helpful option to deter bears/cougars for all trail users.
 - Families with small children may find them helpful as well.
- Tara and Megan asked if they could share WTD's contact information. Monica encouraged them do so, and to feel free to add any input or encouragement as written comment or in the current project survey.

Kiosk:

- NWABA suggested a button on a sign to trigger audio track, whenever feasible. Making a sign audible is helpful because people who have recently lost their vision often do not have a smartphone to access online content. This option can also help people who can't afford a smartphone.
- NWABA is in favor of increasing going with the kiosk option that allows people can stand fully under it.

Apps and brochures:

- Apps can be helpful, but a QR code leading to online content may be preferable on site. People don't have to worry about privacy considerations when accessing a website. Some people may also delete the app soon after they download it. In this case, the extra content which can be added to an app doesn't help.

Having a QR code at the trailhead will help encourage people to access content. A QR code with a marker also makes it easier for a vision impaired person to line their camera up with it.

- Sensory tours are popular with people who are low vision/blind. The group encouraged sensory stops.

Signage:

- NWABA noted that content accessibility is important. Red is a very difficult color for people who are low vision. Black and white is the best high contrast option to go for. Large print is technically 16pt font or larger, 18pt is even better.
- In areas along the trail that have signage or lead to a braille trail, they encouraged use of a guide on the ground that visually impaired people can feel with their cane. The guides are usually in segments about 8 inches long and raised about an inch.
- NWABA liked the idea of tactile maps but noted there would be challenges accessing them on site. They really like the idea of tactile signage. If WTD pursued including tactile maps the Corvallis Arboretum in Oregon has a good example made of wood. Tactile maps help people who are low vision/blind follow the trail with their fingers; for people who are blind, it helps them know if they are on an out and back or looping. It includes:
 - Ridges along the trail that are the depth/width of a finger so that you can trace your finger along the trails.
 - Trails painted in high contrast for those who are low vision.
 - Pond with different texture.

Education on Hiker Etiquette:

- NWABA likes the idea of signage and education to help visitors share the trail with people living with disabilities. They strongly encouraged signage linking responsible dog management (leashing, keeping dogs on trail) with environmental impacts and risks to the dog.
- Signage educating able-bodied hikers on letting disabled hikers know when they are near and going to pass would be helpful. When visually impaired people are hiking they often can't tell if someone is trying to pass them. Saying "hello" or "passing on your right" or "passing with a leashed dog on your right" is very helpful.

Transportation:

- Transportation is important. In addition, when people are taking public transportation, it is even more important to have a bathroom, sanican, or pit toilet at the trailhead. People with disabilities may need more frequent access to bathroom facilities and taking public transit to the trailhead can mean even more of a need for bathroom facilities.

Action Items:

- Discuss suggestions at meeting with Bellevue Parks on August 15, 2021.
- Research items:
 - Ground-installed trail guides
 - Potential for solar to power kiosk audio

Photos Provided by NWABA:



Photo left: ground-installed trail guide for low-vision people who use canes

Photo right: Tactile trail map, with trail routes carved out

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Call or email: Monica Van der Vieren at 206-477-5502 or monica.vandervieren@kingcounty.gov

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