



TO: The Deschutes County Board of Commissioners

FROM: Deschutes County Road Department / Deschutes County Administration

DATE: August 15, 2018

SUBJECT: Harper Bridge Update

BACKGROUND

South County's Harper Bridge boat launch is (and has been for years) a popular destination for locals and visitors to access and float the Deschutes River. Its popularity, combined with a lack of established parking, has caused traffic congestion and parking issues on Spring River Road and has sparked concern over pedestrian safety, degradation of the river bank and trespassing on nearby private property.

On June 6, the Board had a preliminary discussion about the history of the Harper Bridge site. Administrative Services Intern Chris Ogren presented a history of the site and highlighted five potential options for Board consideration, including:

- Maintaining the status quo
- Restricting access to the site by placing barriers on the shoulders of Spring River Road and leaving a small loading zone
- Restricting access to the site and pursuing the feasibility of a shuttle that would run from a nearby parking lot to the bridge
- Pursuing a lease agreement with the Sunriver Owners Association or Crosswater to build a parking lot near the bridge
- Building a parallel parking area along Spring River Road

At the conclusion of the June 15 work session, the commissioners asked staff to solicit additional feedback from key stakeholders about community and safety concerns and the five options listed above. They also asked that the Road department bring back additional information about potential safety improvements in the area.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Prior to the conclusion of his internship, Chris Ogren contacted key stakeholders and asked them to provide feedback on the Harper Bridge report and the options that were outlined in it. A complete version of the public comment that was received has been provided to the Board. A summary is also attached (Appendix 1).

PARKING / SAFETY OPTIONS

In 2015, the Road Department developed a parking lot concept in which two parking lots would be constructed on each side of Spring River Road within the open space/buffer areas of the Sunriver Owners Association (north side) and Crosswater Owners Association/Sunriver Resort (south side). After several discussions with each entity, it became clear that this concept contained potential insurmountable hurdles to development due to the difficulty in acquiring common area as well as the impact to the adjacent properties associated with elimination of buffer area.

In 2016 another alternative was developed consisting of a widening of Spring River Road to accommodate improved parallel parking spaces to create more space for vehicles to park without occupying the adjacent bike or travel lane. In this concept, additional paved width will provide a buffer to the bike lane such that car doors will not open into the bike lane as well as provide additional buffer for pedestrians to the travel lane.

The concepts will be presented and discussed in a PowerPoint presentation (attached).

NEXT STEPS

Staff seeks Board direction on next steps:

- Public meeting to gain further input
- Specific outreach to specified entities
- Selection of parking option
- Other

SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

(APPENDIX 1)

Sunriver Service District

- Harper Bridge is outside of Sunriver Service District's jurisdiction. Requested parking enforcement will require additional resources.

Crosswater HOA

- Prefers a relocation of the launch site but understand the difficulties associated with the solution.
- The report minimizes the ongoing concern of both Crosswater and SROA residents about the noise generated from the strips, which is close to a bald eagle nest. From a Crosswater standpoint, complaints about the rumble strips have not dissipated. Crosswater HOA has consistently and strongly argued that the strips should be removed. Crosswater's understanding is that once a permanent solution is implemented, the rumble strips will be removed.
- Page 6 of the report stated that the area was never formally recognized as a public boat launch area. The launch access was formally required and approved by the County as a written condition of the development of Crosswater.
- Bridge jumping is popular, which is unsafe since jumps are blind to any watercraft heading north on the river and coming under the bridge. Bridge modifications should prevent jumping.
- Provided clarifications on which entities would be involved in potential leasing of land and/or easements. A lease provision with Crosswater HOA would be very difficult due to governing document requirements/procedures for entering into a lease regarding land. For Crosswater HOA, the easement route has been discussed.

Sunriver Chamber

- Believes public safety has become a serious issues and far outweighs the recreational benefits the site offers and that the use of alcohol and marijuana by some river users exacerbates safety problems. Would like to see the following safety concerns addressed:
 - Prohibiting consumption of alcohol on the river
 - Use of life jackets
 - Use of "approved" water craft and/or flotation devices
- Recommends that the BOCC close the Harper Bridge site and/or pursue launch facilities with other public and private land owners (including the USFS)

- Believes that other options (adding parallel parking or considering a shuttle option) do not resolve safety problems
- Believes staff should expand scope to include a larger stretch of river (Wickiup to Lava Lands).

SROA

- Believes the report that was presented to the BOCC in early June appears overly suppositional, lacks essential facts and data and contains omissions, inaccuracies and mis-representations including:
 - A photo of a posted 35 mph speed limit sign that conflicts with the report's text, which calls out a 30 mph zone for the area
 - The omission of the 2014 joint stakeholder Harper Bridge River Access Taskforce report
 - The omission of the County's tentative plat approvals relative to the Crosswater development.
- Indicates that in order to provide feedback on proposed options, it would be necessary to understand the BOCC's primary goals and objectives.
- If vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian safety is the highest priority, then using the immediate Harper Bridge area in its current condition or through improvement may not be achievable. There is no means of providing a safe and adequately-sized recreational facility in the immediate area.
- Would like to see discussions address where floaters would exit the river. Sunriver experiences a significant amount of trespass and degradation along its 5-plus miles of river frontage.
- SROA property owners and guests staying at the Resort can use a river shuttle. Sunriver is not contributing to the negative impact upon the current Harper Bridge area.
- The best time to establish a safe and adequately sized recreational facility in the area would have been in 1992-93 before the recording of Crosswater's final plat.
- Believes that addressing parking issues is not a sufficient solution
- Supports restricting access to the site or pursuing the option of a shuttle
- SROA has invested in development of its own boat launch and shuttle services so as to not exacerbate matters on Spring River Road and downstream. SROA also manages the maintenance of the canoe takeout road (Forest Service Road 600) that is open to the public.

USFS

- Looks forward to engaging in the discussion of how proposed actions might be implemented.

Feedback from Residents

- Staff received many submissions from residents who live near the Harper Bridge site. Each submission is included in the record that has been provided to the Board.

Upper Deschutes River Coalition

- The Upper Deschutes River Coalition (UDRC) has not taken a position on possible boat launch areas.