

Trail from Kitsap county awaits grant

'Missing link' between two peninsulas in planning phase

By **JEFF CHEW**
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SHINE — A trail connecting Kitsap County with Jefferson County and the westward Olympic Discovery Trail depends upon patience, trail-routing and grant dollars before trekkers will hit the dirt.

"The big connection taking concrete shape now is that from the Olympic Discovery Trail down to Bainbridge," said longtime non-motorized trail advocate and volunteer Chuck Preble, a Blyn resident and the vice president of Peninsula Trails Coalition, which works in partnership with Jefferson Trails Coalition.

"The planning is getting very serious in Kitsap County," he added.

Don Willott, Bainbridge Island Non-Motorized Group chairman, calls the trail "a missing link" intended to offer a human-powered transportation option connecting Bainbridge Island with the Olympic and Kitsap peninsulas.

Greenway connection

"It could be connected to the Mountain to Sound Greenway, a cross-state trail," Willott said, stressing it would be designed so that trail users could hop onto public transit buses easily.

The Mountains to Sound Greenway, which encompasses a trail system that Willott calls "the I-90 of bicycle-pedestrian transportation," stretches more than 100 miles along Interstate 90 from the shores of Puget Sound in Seattle, over Snoqualmie Pass and into Central Washington.

The trail's planning is only in the concept stage, but Josh Peters, Jefferson County principal transportation planner, said one route is under serious consideration.

That route would go from the Hood Canal Bridge to Port Ludlow, move close to Anderson Lake State Park — possibly tying in with the proposed Tri-Area Rick Tollefson Trail — and make the Olympic Discovery Trail connection somewhere near Eaglemount, overlooking Discovery Bay.

Peters and other Jefferson County and volunteer

trail planners now are negotiating for right of way from Four Corners Road over Eaglemount, down south to the head of Discovery Bay at U.S. Highway 101.

There, it would connect with Olympic Discovery Trail west through Gardiner to the Clallam County line, making a Blyn connection via state-owned land in the Miller Peninsula and the Old Blyn Highway.

The Blyn segment now connects with Sequim and Port Angeles.

'Mountain to Sound'

Peters explained that the Kitsap-Jefferson county connection would be a part of a larger idea called "Mountain to Sound" or "Desert to Sea" running east with connections beyond to southern Idaho and northern Utah.

Willott said the Bainbridge to Olympic Peninsula connection is intended to run through the so-called "North Kitsap String of Pearls," linking that region's historic waterfront villages with a system of interconnecting trails and open space corridors.

The Bainbridge-Hood Canal Bridge route would run from Winslow along state Highway 305 to Agate Pass Bridge, Willott said.

It likely would run along Lemolo Drive north to Poulsbo, along the waterfront at Liberty Bay, cross state Highway 305 and then move on to Big Valley Road, which comes out near Manzanita Park near Hood Canal. The trail would then follow state Highway 3 the east end of Hood Canal Bridge.

Since the floating bridge's east half was replaced and reopened in June with pedestrian shoulders that are wider and safer than on the old span, its popularity among cyclists and walkers has increased, Peter said.

Willott said the entire system is part of a health concept "to give people more choices so people can make more healthy choices.

"It's kind of exciting how interest is catching fire."

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