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MEETING NOTES RTCA and CLT With Kenaitze Tribe representative

DATE: 12/14/24

WHERE: Videoconference

TIME BEGUN: 10:00

PURPOSE: Present the first draft of the Story Map and Pitch Deck for review and response

PRESENT: K. Pace, R. Eddy Harvey, S. Thomas, from RTCA, Michael Bernard, from Kenaitze Tribe, D. Story, J. Cadieux from CLT

DISCUSSION:

- M Bernard, Cultural Resource Supervisor for Kenaitze Tribe, introduced himself as this was his first meeting with the team. With Kenaitze Tribe since July, 2023. He's located in Kenai. Born and raised in the area and has worked for Kenaitze off and on over the past 20 years. He reports directly to Chelsea Hendricks. Email address: mbernard@kenaitze.org
- Individual team members introduced themselves for Michael's benefit:
 - J Cadieux: CLT Secretary since 2009, Walkable Community effort has been ongoing since the 1970s but her involvement began in 2009 when the CL Walkable Community Plan was developed. Kenaitze Tribe was represented at that initial charette with Dan Burdin.
 - D Story: CLT Chair, CLT is a committee of the Cooper Landing Community Club, 501c3 nonprofit. We work on trails, snow trails, and the walkable community project in our area. We started with the 2009 Walkable Community charette that generated our Plan that was adopted by the Kenai Peninsula Borough into the Transportation portion of their Comprehensive Plan.
 - S Thomas: working with RTCA to support mapping and GIS needs, specifically a story map to guide audiences through the community of Cooper Landing and to realize their goals.
 - R Eddy Harvey: a Planning Fellow with RTCA and assisting with the Pitch Deck among other things.
 - K Pace: Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance of National Park Service. They have no acreage but work with small, community-based groups. Our goal for CLT is to develop a pitch deck to put the CLT message out to partners and funding sources. Also creating a story map for the same purposes. RTCA need input and perspectives on the materials they present today.

Pitch Deck:

- Wild Places and Peaceful Spaces
- Significant challenges
- No safe walk, bike, or roll to grocery store: Good inclusion for folks with disability
- Big risks are involved, note fatalities data
- Partnerships: More of them including CLCC to represent the community
- Walk, bike, roll is good to include the adaptive part of our intent.
- Q: Is the pitch deck entirely electronic?
- A: It can be both electronic and paper.
- They started with the legislative version and will work from there on the community audience.
- They've captured all of the various aspects of this complex project that we have discussed.
- Need from David: examples of feet-first planning benefits
- Steps: Should not the first one be the planning funding?
- A slide presentation or a set of cards elec/paper as needed.
- The statement of getting A to B. Needs to disambiguate from the existing ability to drive that route.
- Other partners need to be listed.
- Active transportation def is great. The “feet came first” part is important.
- More of the world’s problems may be solved if we start from a feet first perspective. It’s a net good for environmental, cultural, economic perspectives, evens the playing field.
- Good: Acknowledging the, “If we can do it, others can too.”
- Not just recognizing the people of the past but the culture that exists, highlighting some already identified locations, protecting others that remain “hidden”.
- The Safety Path begins by Sunrise, then traveling west, the Old Sterling Hwy ~MP45 on the right begins the Safety Path, is alternately near and back from the road on the right/North side of existing Sterling Hwy, sometimes along power line, back down to the highway at 46.5, gets squeezed between businesses and roadway till Helen Rhode Park. Beyond that it is separated but it is sometimes below grade of the highway, sometimes 10' wide, other times a foot path is all that is left between the river and the highway guard rail till you pass Alaska Wildland business and the approach to Cooper Creek bridge where you have to hop the guard rail, enter the roadway to cross the creek on the bridge, then go back over the rail. Pathway does not currently exist beyond here. Want to connect the Safety Path and the new separated pathway that will be built with the new alignment of the Sterling Hwy.
- Q: So it’s a mix between existing trail, proposed trail, and old trail that’s not currently used?
- A: Yes, and there’s a lot of room for what that might look like. Part of the reason it’s challenging is right of way issues, easement issues, heritage site issues. This is basically the beginning of “where should this go?” One of the things I envision for the Storymap is it being a tool that can help explain some of those options.
- 2019 UAA Capstone Project designed an alternative active transportation linkage to cross the creek either connecting to the bridge or going up the creek and across to an old roadbed south of the highway and elevated on benchland there.

- Might we need to stay opposite side of the highway to the river? Might we need to stay in the ROW and on the north side without crossing the highway? These are some of the questions that we hope to answer in our CL Town Road Pathway Planning Project.
- How will folks respond when they see ROW that they have been managing as a part of their property up to this point? We want folks to have input regarding that and other issues. The Story Map would help folks to see this. The maps that will be utilized don't exist yet.
- The Safety Path west of the Kenai River bridge to Troutfitters will very likely stay where it is currently. For places where it doesn't exist yet, we may need to be creative and leave the ROW.
- Access to the trail may be from private to State lands, Borough lands, etc. The easiest construction is to keep it within the highway right of way but this is not practical in some places so we may have to leave that ROW. If a land manager like USFS grants us permission to use e.g. the old road bed behind Two Brothers going towards Russian River campground, then we might be able to leave the ROW.
- Public lands are easier to navigate than private.
- Q: What can Michael do to help? Can he or a Kenaitze representative please actively help shape what this project should be? Please provide direction, express goals of the Kenaitze whether guide people to K'beq or protecting and routing traffic away from sensitive sites.
- A from MB: Don't take no for an answer. Reach out to folks who find something about the project objectionable. He would like to consult the Tribe for their perspective. There seems to be a benefit from getting more traffic to K'beq. Down the river where guide areas are most active, MB sees the need for safe transit of this area. He sees potential for interpretive signage and likely the Tribe would be interested in helping with that. He will do some more homework. (The existing website is still available at walkcooperlanding.org and cooperlandingtrails.org is our new website and still under construction.) He saw last summer that someone tried to have a bike race that traversed the area and he feared someone might die.
- Past requests for letters of support were in support of the TAP and FLAP grants we have submitted. These are available on the walkcooperlanding.org website. Kenaitze Tribe helped with one existing interpretive sign currently located at CL Museum.
- Bones of the pitch deck are a good point to flush out from.
- The current look is boney structure and can develop graphically from here.

Story Map Web Version:

- Encouraged to offer ideas for e.g. photos in specific places
- Where: Start with geographical and address location in time. This is a place that has been significant to the Kenaitze and their forebears for a long time. This will help identify where Cooper Landing is and where are we trying to reach.
- Where is the trail? Where does it start and end? Helpful starting point.
- The more people know, the better. The less sharing the more angst is created. Any mapping will help.
- The river itself is a trail.

- Even trails that the first miners traveled were existing Dena'ina hunting, berry and caribou gathering trails.
- This could open a whole network of trails. It could be a very large project so it might be helpful to nail down the beginnings of where you want to start and end and then have potential offshoots of where it could go.
- A lot of what would have been used is probably still being used today by everybody that goes through that area.
- Could be helpful to identify the beginnings for perspective but also recognizing all the trails that have existed since pre-historic time.
- The highway is likely already covering some of the original trails. This captures two components of the story map. 1. The physical place. Where is the project? Where does it begin and end? Narrow from state map to local. We need to help e.g. legislators know where exactly are we talking about. 2. Location in time and use. How do we create room for transportation other than by motorized vehicles given the roadway already occupies the likely space that people originally used. There is imbalance between vehicular and active use of this space.
- Maybe the timeline should be moved up the page? How do we get them to the spot that they recognize and can latch onto. Especially if they're dispassionate, don't care. Everyone will have a different reason why it's important to them if it is. And the more of that importance we can capture, the more people will become a fan or an advocate.
- Access points a defining issue: Easier for the general public to accept if there are many locations that they can access this trail. Not just from lodges, etc. but how it passes through public lands. Where can they pull over and begin walk/bike/rolling the pathway?
- The project has always wanted to both protect, as appropriate, and highlight, as appropriate, both habitat and cultural sites. We want to help establish proper river access trails that, if done in the right way, can protect the sensitive places but still allow public the access to the river that they desire. The same for cultural sites. We don't want to worsen any negative impacts that have already been made. A lot of people are grabbing that access wherever they can find it. We can help them get the access without trashing the habitat or any cultural site they happen to be wandering through.
- The Tribe would probably not want to highlight any cultural features that aren't already known. Additionally, it will be pivotal for you to establish proper river access points along the trail. If a trail is created in an area where it doesn't currently exist, that will create probably more traffic for people that are searching for access to the river. That could be not a good thing. But if it's done in the right way it could be a positive. If we're providing access in places where there isn't currently, somebody at some point will imagine this looks like a good place to jump off and throw in a line. That could be the flipside to something wonderful is it could provide more damage.
- We want to do it right. If it's possible to do. It can be done. It'll just take everybody sitting down and thinking about it together, creating a plan.
- 360 view of complex area, e.g. Cooper Creek or leading up to, where trail is below highway grade perhaps.
- Community interest: locals' involvement, Native Alaskan presence

- Make suggestions for Headings. ST has entered space holders
- Google treks a neat idea including elevation changes
- Contracting with Lexi Trainer, from [Yaaruin Consulting, LLC](#) for photos, sound bites, etc.

Story Map Paper Version:

- Recyclable card stock. Possibly avoid glossy. Is this reasonable given the intent of the materials? It would be preferable if the brochures were recyclable.
- Cameron Sanders: GIS specialist, creates parallel electronic and paper story maps. He's worked with State of Oregon, emphasizing recreation, State Parks, etc. Motivated to help on things like this. He doesn't work entirely for free but he appreciates our linkage here in Cooper Landing for biking. Email address:

TASKS ASSIGNED:

- All assist in preparing the notes from today's meeting for accuracy.
- RTCA members to provide CLT with electronic versions of today's first drafts of the Pitch Deck and Story Map so that CLT may further review and provide further feedback.
- CLT members will review the Pitch Deck and Story Map and provide further content and feedback including possible pics or video for Story Map.
- MB: Do some homework to get deeper into the project via websites. Get the Tribe's take on things.

TIME ENDED: 11:34 a.m.