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SITE VISIT DETAILS

The Town of West Yellowstone seeks to design and construct a trail network system through the city to adjoining Yellowstone Shortline, Frontier, Boundary, Rendezvous Nordic Ski, and Riverside Trail to create a complete network for travelers. To do so requires working both with adjoining Federal Land Management Agency (FLMA) partners, understanding user and community preferences, and ensuring context-sensitive design solutions.

The site visit seeks to better understand the project context, issues, and opportunities as they inform study development. Attendees met to discuss the project as a whole, walk the proposed route, and discuss key route connections, safety issues, and design considerations.

ATTENDEES

- Brandi Burns, Museum of the Yellowstone
- Cole Grisham, FHWA Western Federal Lands
- Dan Walker, Town of West Yellowstone
- Ellen Butler, Yellowstone Shortline Trail
- Jason Brey, US Forest Service
- Jon Simms, Town of West Yellowstone
- Michael Manship, Museum of the Yellowstone Board
- Rich Jehle, National Park Service

SITE VISIT SCOPE

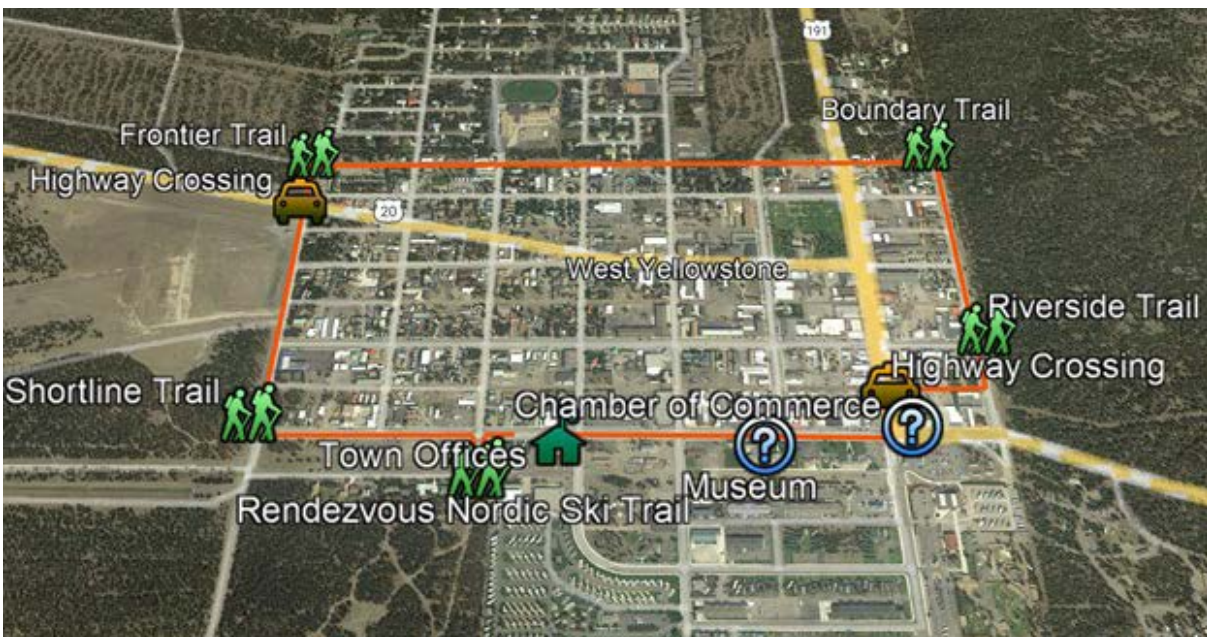
- Safety (Highway crossings)
- Economic Generators (Museum, Chamber of Commerce, Freeheel and Wheel)
- Trailheads and Connections
- ADA Accessibility
- Design (Materials, wayfinding, common signage between USFS and in-town trails, rail bed, alignment with historic corridor design)
- Right of Way and Easements
- Drainage and culverts
- Utilities



SCHEDULE

May 2 nd , 2022		
Time	Topic	Location
9:00 AM	Pre-Site Visit Brief and Logistics	Town of West Yellowstone Government Offices 440 Yellowstone Ave, West Yellowstone, MT 59758
10:00 AM	Departure (Bicycle)	
	<i>Site 1 – Rendezvous Ski Trail</i>	
	<i>Site 2 – Yellowstone Shortline Trail</i>	
	<i>Site 3 – Highway Crossing</i>	
	<i>Site 4 – Frontier Trail (West Connection)</i>	
	<i>Site 5 – Boundary Trail - Frontier Trail (East Connection)</i>	
	<i>Site 6 – Riverside Trail</i>	
	<i>Site 7 – Highway Crossing, Chamber of Commerce, and Museum</i>	
12:00 PM	Site Visit Debrief and Next Steps	Town of West Yellowstone Government Offices 440 Yellowstone Ave, West Yellowstone, MT 59758

MAP & ROUTE



On all subsequent figures, the proposed trail alignment is marked with a green dashed line where applicable. Other markings on figures are noted in the respective figure description.



SITES

1. Rendezvous Ski Trail

Site Visit Element	Observations
Safety	None.
Economic Generators	Rendezvous Ski Trail serves winter skiers, biathlon training, and connections to shooting range. Is under-utilized for summer use. The current trail is not used frequently for hiking, but attendees said the trail could be used as such
Trailheads and Connections	Connects Town and future trail to US Forest Service Rendezvous Ski Trail.
ADA Accessibility	Not specifically designed for ADA accessibility, but otherwise flat and level trail.
Design	US Forest Service trail design standards
Right of Way and Easements	US Forest Service owned trail. Trail head between a privately-owned building and a Rendezvous Ski Trail service facility.
Drainage and culverts	None.
Utilities	None.



Figure 1.1. Rendezvous Ski Trail head and adjacent skier service building.
Source: Google Earth, 2022.

2. Yellowstone Shortline Trail

Site Visit Element	Observations
Safety	Bears in the area in spring. Some 'out-of-bounds' camping noted in US Forest Service lands along trail, which is technically day-use only.
Economic Generators	Major cross-country race in winter on Shortline Trail, which the US Forest Service grooms trail for.
Trailheads and Connections	Connects to Shortline Trail, which is on US Forest Service lands. The Shortline Trail is a rail line across US Forest Service lands that was abandoned in the late 1980s. Documents regarding rail abandonment available from US Forest Service as needed.
ADA Accessibility	The USFS portion of the Yellowstone Shortline Trail will be paved with ADA accessibility in mind. Many hope to see the in-Town portion equally accessible
Design	On Town right of way; likely AASHTO design standards. Separate development and design effort underway for Shortline Trail (https://yellowstoneshortlinetrail.org/the-trail).
Right of Way and Easements	<p>The Town has annexed 80 acres into the Town for future residential use west of Iris Street. The future trail's western segment would likely be entirely located on the Town-owned parcel.</p> <p>US Forest Service willing to accommodate parking on Forest lands, if needed.</p> <p>Town interested in delineation of use in Town-owned portion of rail bed and future linear park and trail. Currently a mixture of public works, empty lot, and other uses.</p> <p>There is a Preservation/Conservation Easement between the Town of West Yellowstone and SHPO for the Union Pacific Dining Lodge property, which includes a portion of the YST. This is a 50-year easement that began in 2008 after the Dining Lodge received federal funding for a preservation project. A copy of the easement is available from Yellowstone Shortline Trail.</p>
Drainage and culverts	None.
Utilities	Town notes a water line approximately four feet north of Obsidian Avenue in former rail bed. Unclear where water line terminates or turns at Iris Street.



Figure 2.1. Intersection of Obsidian and Iris Streets, looking south to Plateau Rd. (FS 1700).



Figure 2.2. Intersection of Obsidian and Iris Streets, looking north.



Figure 2.3. Intersection of Obsidian and Iris Streets, looking west to Shortline Trail (US Forest Service).



Figure 2.4. Intersection of Obsidian and Iris Streets, looking east to Town-owned lands and site of proposed linear park.



Figure 2.5. Intersection of Obsidian and Iris Streets, looking north. This land to the west of Iris Street includes 80 acres of recently annexed Town land proposed for residential uses.

3. Highway Crossing (US 20)

Site Visit Element	Observations
Safety	<p>High congestion during peak travel season, which can back up vehicle traffic for miles at intersection. Vehicles often cut across adjacent southern property to get around congestions, which the Town has addressed with a wooden fence barrier (Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.4).</p> <p>Proposed trail would need to cross US 20, creating vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian conflicts.</p>
Economic Generators	None.
Trailheads and Connections	None.
ADA Accessibility	Trail crossing would likely follow AASHTO design standards for ADA accessibility

Design	<p>AASHTO design standards. Any proposed changes to intersection require input from Montana Department of Transportation. Attendees preferred options are a grade-separated crossing, roundabout, or similar safe traffic calming designs.</p> <p>Project team should review any Montana DOT plans that relate to this corridor or intersection.</p>
Right of Way and Easements	The highway is owned and maintained by Montana DOT.
Drainage and culverts	None.
Utilities	Town waterline may run under the west side of Iris Street, north-south.



Figure 3.1. Intersection of Iris Street with US 20 (Targhee Pass Highway), looking north. The wood barricades on the left side of the image were placed by the Town to deter drivers from cutting through the adjacent lot when highway is congested.



Figure 3.2. Intersection of Iris Street with US 20 (Targhee Pass Highway), looking north. The wood barricades on the center of the image were placed by the Town to deter drivers from cutting through the adjacent lot when highway is congested.



Figure 3.3. Intersection of Iris Street with US 20 (Targhee Pass Highway), looking north.



Figure 3.4. Intersection of Iris Street with US 20 (Targhee Pass Highway), looking west.



Figure 3.5. Intersection of Iris Street with US 20 (Targhee Pass Highway), looking south from adjacent Town lot with wood barricades.

4. Frontier Trail (West Connection)

Site Visit Element	Observations
Safety	May not be a safety issue so much as a usage issue, but Town and Forest Service noted 'transient workforce' camping is common in adjacent Forest lands. About one to three campers live in the Forest in peak travel seasons due to housing shortages in Town.
Economic Generators	Two Top Snowmobile Rentals and Tours is adjacent to Town-owned parcel and proposed trail route. Customers often use the Town-owned parcel for parking when visiting the business.
Trailheads and Connections	Connects to Frontier Trail and Powerline Road (both US Forest Service).
ADA Accessibility	None. Primarily used by local dog walkers.
Design	Frontier Trail is US Forest Service Trail design standards. US Forest Service plans to improve Frontier Trail alongside any Town trail improvements. US Forest Service interest in using GAOA and FLTP funds for trail improvement.
Right of Way and Easements	Proposed trail would be on Town-owned parcel.
Drainage and culverts	None.
Utilities	Town water line runs north-south and east-west under the west side of Iris Street and north side of D Parkway (Figure 4.5)



Figure 4.1. Intersection of Iris and Alley D/D Parkway, looking south to US 20. The area to the right of the street is the 80-acre parcel owned by the Town.



Figure 4.2. Intersection of Iris and Alley D/D Parkway, looking northeast.



Figure 4.3. Intersection of Iris and Alley D/D Parkway, looking east.



Figure 4.4. Intersection of Iris and Alley D/D Parkway, looking southeast. The company shown is Two Top Snowmobile Rentals and Tours, whose customer often park across the street in Town-owned land proposed for future trail.



Figure 4.5. Intersection of Iris and Alley D/D Parkway, looking southeast. The utility access shown is a Town water line that aligns with the two streets as approximated by the dashed line.



Figure 4.6. Intersection of Iris and Alley D/D Parkway, looking west-northwest. The snow-covered road at left is Powerline Road, which connects to other US Forest Service roads and the southern portion of the Yellowstone Airport. The trailhead at center-right is the Frontier Trail.



Figure 4.7. Intersection of Iris and Alley D/D Parkway, looking west-northwest. The snow-covered road is Powerline Road, which connects to other US Forest Service roads and the southern portion of the Yellowstone Airport.

5. Boundary Trail - Frontier Trail (East Connection)

Site Visit Element	Observations
Safety	Frontier Trail crosses US 191 north of Town at truck stop (not within scope of project, but a concern for system completeness).
Economic Generators	Skier parking in area common.
Trailheads and Connections	Boundary Trailhead and connections to Frontier Trail to the north through US Forest Service lands. Forms the east trailhead for Frontier Trail in Town. Adjacent to Yellowstone National Park western boundary.
ADA Accessibility	None.
Design	<p>US Forest Service trail design standards. The short width of Town-owned land where proposed trail would be suggests bicyclists would likely ride on adjacent road instead of trail; consider in-road bicycle markings.</p> <p>Proposed trail location used for snow storage (see Figures 5.5 and 6.1), making future trail unusable in winter months. Town says they have no plans to maintain trail in winter and usually maintain about four inches of snow cover in roads as well in winter to allow for winter recreation uses.</p>
Right of Way and Easements	<p>Future trail to be located on Town-owned land for eastern trail segment along Boundary Street.</p> <p>Large lot at Boundary Trailhead is split between Town and privately owned. Town engineer can provide tax lot lines for area, but onsite suggested lot is split at about midway across Boundary Street.</p>
Drainage and culverts	None.
Utilities	<p>Natural gas line located in proposed trail route (see Figure 5.5). Unclear where the natural gas line routes to and from connection, but Town engineer can provide these details.</p> <p>Water line from D Parkway reaches Boundary Street but turns south on west side of street. Does not interfere with proposed trail alignment.</p>



Figure 5.1. Intersection of D Parkway and Boundary Street, looking south.



Figure 5.2. Intersection of D Parkway and Boundary Street, looking north to the entrance to the Boundary Trail. The Frontier Trail connects to the Boundary Trail and terminates at this intersection.



Figure 5.3. Intersection of D Parkway and Boundary Street, looking north to the entrance to the Boundary Trail. The Frontier Trail connects to the Boundary Trail and terminates at this intersection.



Figure 5.4. Intersection of D Parkway and Boundary Street, looking west.



Figure 5.5. Intersection of D Parkway and Boundary Street, looking north. The area to the left (east) of the fence shown is Yellowstone National Park. The area to the right of the fence shown and street are Town-owned. Note the natural gas connection center.

6. Riverside Trail

Site Visit Element	Observations
Safety	None.
Economic Generators	Fly fishing connections in Park.
Trailheads and Connections	<p>Riverside Trail is a National Park Service trail and is approximately 1.1 miles long. Connects to Barnes Hole Road and Madison River in Yellowstone National Park with further fly fishing uses.</p> <p>One of the only non-paved National Park Service facilities that allows bikes, due to the historical use of the trail facility as a road.</p>
ADA Accessibility	None.
Design	<p>Unclear what standards used in trail design and maintenance. Figures 6.2, 6.4, and 6.5 provide examples of trail markings and signage.</p> <p>Proposed trail in Town-owned land may be too narrow for bicycles. Users may instead ride on adjacent Boundary Road.</p>
Right of Way and Easements	Proposed trail would be in Town-owned land adjacent to Riverside Trailhead.
Drainage and culverts	None.
Utilities	None.



Figure 6.1. Boundary Street at the Riverside Trail entrance, looking south. The area to the right (east) of the fence shown is Yellowstone National Park.



Figure 6.2. Boundary Street at the Riverside Trail entrance. The signs shown are to indicate trail markings used currently.



Figure 6.3. Boundary Street at the Riverside Trail entrance, looking east.



Figure 6.4. Boundary Street at the Riverside Trail entrance. The signs shown are to indicate trail markings used currently.



Figure 6.5. Boundary Street at the Riverside Trail entrance, looking north.



Figure 6.6. Boundary Street at the Riverside Trail entrance, looking north.



Figure 6.7. Boundary Street at the Riverside Trail entrance, looking west to Madison Avenue.

7. Chamber of Commerce, Highway Crossing (US 191), and Museum

Site Visit Element	Observations
Safety	<p>High vehicle congestion during peak travel seasons at Yellowstone Avenue (US 191) and Boundary Street. Attendees preferred options for intersection are (1) grade-separated crossing, (2) roundabout, or (3) other safe traffic calming designs.</p> <p>No safety issues for Chamber of Commerce or Museum sites</p>
Economic Generators	<p>Yellowstone National Park (West Entrance), Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center, Museum of the Yellowstone, Yellowstone Giant Screen Theatre, Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center, other business district restaurants and shops.</p>

<p>Trailheads and Connections</p>	<p>Yellowstone Avenue (US 191) connects to Yellowstone National Park (West Entrance) to the east.</p> <p>The portion crossing through Chamber of Commerce property would connect the proposed trail back to the Museum and former rail bed property.</p>
<p>ADA Accessibility</p>	<p>Sidewalks and curb ramps exist in some areas. AASHTO design standards.</p>
<p>Design</p>	<p>AASHTO design standards. Proposed trail route partially or entirely within historic district and would need to comply with Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) requirements (https://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/).</p> <p>Yellowstone Shortline Trail is engaged in separate design effort for Historic District signs, wayfinding, and other elements through a contract with Sea Reach (http://www.seareach.com/the_firm/contact.asp). Yellowstone Shortline Trail expects design guidelines to be available in 2022, which proposed trail design and wayfinding can align with.</p> <p>Additional work on the redesign for the Casting Pond group is also through Sea Reach, which may be led by the Town.</p>
<p>Right of Way and Easements</p>	<p>Proposed trail would be on Town-owned land.</p> <p>The Museum identified building the proposed trailhead as part of a wider landscaping improvement to the area behind the Museum in the former rail bed. Additionally, a redesign and landscaping of the casting pond is already planned (see Figure 7.13). Town also identified the Chamber of Commerce parking area as the proposed trail head, but peak season traffic may make this unfeasible.</p>
<p>Drainage and culverts</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>Utilities</p>	<p>None identified, but project team should verify with Town engineer.</p>



Figure 7.1. Intersection of Boundary Street and US 191 (Yellowstone Avenue), looking south.



Figure 7.2. Intersection of Boundary Street and US 191 (Yellowstone Avenue), looking north.



Figure 7.3. Intersection of Boundary Street and US 191 (Yellowstone Avenue), looking west at the Town entrance signs.



Figure 7.4. Intersection of Boundary Street and US 191 (Yellowstone Avenue), looking west at the Town entrance signs and highway.



Figure 7.5a. Intersection of Boundary Street and US 191 (Yellowstone Avenue), looking west at the Town entrance monument (covered), titled “Union Pacific Pylon.”



Figure 7.5b. Example of Union Pacific Pylon town Monument when uncovered (Source: Museum of the Yellowstone, 2022).



Figure 7.6. Intersection of Boundary Street and US 191 (Yellowstone Avenue), looking south at the Chamber of Commerce parking.



Figure 7.7. Intersection of Boundary Street and US 191 (Yellowstone Avenue), looking east to the entrance to Yellowstone National Park.



Figure 7.8. South Canyon Street, looking east to the Chamber of Commerce and parking.



Figure 7.9. Area behind Museum of the Yellowstone, looking east to Canyon Street and Chamber of Commerce parking.



Figure 7.10. Area behind Museum of the Yellowstone, looking east to Canyon Street. The railcar shown is located behind the Museum on the former rail line.



Figure 7.11. Area behind Museum of the Yellowstone, looking east to Canyon Street. The railcar shown is located behind the Museum on the former rail line.



Figure 7.12. Area behind Museum of the Yellowstone, looking south to casting pond.



Figure 7.13. Area behind Museum of the Yellowstone, looking west.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The May 2nd site visit provided the project team with valuable information and images to inform future trail design and construction. This final section outlines engagement opportunities, possible project goals and assumptions, and other overall site visit reflections.

ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the information shown in the Sites section, attendees identified the following groups to engage with in the public and stakeholder engagement process:

- Sea Reach
- Freeheel and Wheel
- Town of West Yellowstone Council
- West Yellowstone School (K-12)
- Montana DOT
- Chamber of Commerce
- Greenup West Yellowstone
- Greater Yellowstone Trail
- Town of West Yellowstone Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
- Town of West Yellowstone Planning Board
- Town of West Yellowstone Business Improvement Advisory Board
- Gallatin County
- Yellowstone Shortline Trail Committee
- Yellowstone Historic Center Board of Directors
- Casting Pond project team
- West Yellowstone Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID)
- West Yellowstone Ski Education Foundation (WYSEF)

The project team will use this list as basis for developing the project engagement strategy as well as any specific engagement activities.

GOALS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The site visit generated a number of considerations that could be translated into project goals going forward. They include, but are not limited to:

- Network completeness between Town, US Forest Service, National Park service, and other partner trail systems
- Consistent signage, design, and wayfinding for proposed trail and connections
- ADA accessible
- Parallel bicycle and pedestrian education programming, possibly through and in collaboration with the Museum
- Parallel bicycle repair stations, possibly in collaboration with Museum and other local partners
- Grade separation for bicycle and pedestrians from vehicles
- Trail construction materials that can withstand snow cover for long portions of the year
- Prioritize trail construction on Town-owned lands only
- Identifying opportunities for improving proposed and existing trail usage in under-utilized seasons
- Ensure continuous and comprehensive engagement with public and stakeholders throughout project
- Bike Repair Stations - The Yellowstone Shortline Trail Committee does have plans to install 2-3 bike repair stations along the Yellowstone Shortline Trail. Exact locations or designs have not been determined yet, but project should coordinate related designs Bike Repair Stations - The YST Committee does have plans to install 2 or 3 bike repair stations along the Yellowstone Shortline Trail. YST Committee has not determined exact locations yet or the specific design or type, but will coordinate with the Town to have a consistent design throughout both trails.

For questions or further information about the content of this report, contact the following staff:

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<https://highways.dot.gov/federal-lands/programs-planning>