

May 13, 2022

Lake Oswego City Council
380 A Ave, Third Floor
Lake Oswego, OR 97034



CC: Lake Oswego Parks, Recreation & Natural Resources Advisory Board

Subject: Support for the City of Lake Oswego's work to advance ADA+ access to parks, trails and natural areas

The Intertwine Alliance is a coalition of 80 public, private and nonprofit partners working to nurture and preserve a healthy regional system of parks, trails and natural areas throughout the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area. We advocate for regional funding for and equitable access to nature. The City of Lake Oswego has been a long-time partner in the Alliance and is active in our regional park directors group. We thank you for your investment and involvement in our nature coalition's broadly shared goal of working with partners across transportation, housing and healthcare to better serve all communities of our region.

We're joined in this letter by the Oregon Trails Coalition, a coalition of broad-based, statewide trail interests dedicated to supporting, promoting and advocating for the preservation, development and stewardship of a statewide network of sustainable, world-class trails that provide access to outdoor recreation and active transportation for all.

Our two coalitions support the work the City has begun to increase ADA and other forms of equitable access to parks, trails and natural areas throughout Lake Oswego. We are excited that you've created a full-time position to refine and accelerate the City's ADA transition plan begun in 2018, and that you've engaged a group of community stakeholders to set priorities. We recently had the pleasure of speaking with ADA Coordinator Kelli Byrd about accessibility concerns at the Stevens Meadow Trailhead, and we're supportive of her mission to steadily and equitably roll out ADA improvements over the next several years. We would like to see this work move forward with strong engagement from communities most impacted.

We encourage you to increase and diversify the Lake Oswego ADA Stakeholder Advisory Group to include greater representation of people experiencing various types of disabilities and with lived experience related to lack of access, including people of color. Within our coalitions are experts, including Georgena Moran of Access Recreation (already on the advisory board), who can help you widen this stakeholder group. The Intertwine Alliance wants to be a partner with you in ensuring that Lake Oswego parks, trails and natural areas be accessible to users of all abilities, safe and welcoming for all communities, and as open to the general public as possible. The parks, trails and natural areas



of Lake Oswego are beautiful and abundant, and our goal is for all community members to be able to experience their mental, physical and social benefits.

The citizens' measure passed last November that amended the city charter to restrict development, as you know all too well, has created obstacles to ADA compliance and to operationalizing our shared values of equitable access. The Stevens Meadows Trailhead Project, for example, which would have included two ADA-accessible parking spaces and an ADA accessible bathroom, has been canceled. With its close proximity to another currently inaccessible park and trail, Cooks Butte, the upgrades at Stevens Meadow would have provided access to both sites.

We understand that the charter amendment was not the City's idea, and that it has blocked many of your plans. What can our coalitions do to help the City find a way forward? Meeting ADA standards is not just a nice thing to do, it's a legal requirement for the building or altering of public parks and trails. The current situation at Stevens Meadow does not meet even basic ADA needs, much less go beyond ADA to achieve equitable access. We join our colleagues at Access Recreation in calling for a solution that delivers this planned and much-needed access.

The 2019 Metro Parks & Nature Bond that provides regional funding for parks and nature also calls for prioritizing access. The City of Lake Oswego will struggle to be competitive or successful at getting bond funds for its local projects if unable to meet Metro's requirements to make parks and natural areas more accessible and inclusive. In referring the bond, the Metro Council resolution approved principles to guide the bond investments including this one stating:

"Make parks and natural areas more accessible and inclusive. Increase access for those experiencing disabilities through investments using universal design principles and projects that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Work with communities of color, greater Portland's Indigenous community and other historically marginalized groups to identify opportunities for culturally responsive public improvements."

Intertwine Alliance Board President Owen Wozniak and Georgena Moran serve on the oversight committee for bond implementation. A year-one report from this Natural Areas and Capital Program Performance Oversight Committee to the Metro Council states:

"The committee has emphasized the importance of ensuring [that] bond investments promote accessibility, taking into account the multiple factors that impact the ability of individuals to visit and interact with parks and natural areas in the region. This includes work to make Metro's sites truly safe, welcoming and inclusive for all with a focus on engaging individuals experiencing disabilities to help shape this work. This also includes the identification of opportunities for investments across the bond to address areas of the region that have minimal parks and natural areas nearby or [are not] easily reachable via transit."



Thank you for prioritizing ADA accessibility throughout Lake Oswego. We look forward to working with you to find solutions for increasing public investment in and equitable access to parks, trails and natural areas.

On behalf of our coalitions,

Tara Wilkinson and Katie Gavares, Intertwine Alliance Co-Directors
Steph Noll, Oregon Trails Coalition Director

