

**T or C Segment Rio Grande Trail
Project Team “Group Memory”
December 11, 2019**

Participants: Attila Bality (National Park Service), Merry Jo Fahl (Jornada RCD), Gina Kelley (Hot Springs Marketing), Heidi Hubble (Citizen Trail Guide), Kyle Cunningham (Trail Lovers of TorC), John Masterson (Trail Lovers of TorC), Tara Neeley (4_H Council), Joe Baca (HS JROTC & Cross Country Running), Bill Sallee (Village of Williamsburg), Lillis Urban (NM State Parks), Brent Tanzy (Bureau of Reclamation), Kim Skinner (Sierra County Tourism), Linda DeMarino (MainStreet TorC), Sandy Whitehead (TorC Mayor)

ACTION LIST

What	Who	When
Develop Talking Points	Gina	December 16
Review and edit talking points	All project team members	December 18
Follow up on Planning Team participants	See page 2 of notes	Jan 7
Explore Website and Social Media Presence report out at next mtg	Kyle Cunningham	Jan 14
Compile and distribute group memory	Attila, Merry Jo	Dec 18
Plan Familiarization Tour	Merry Jo, Brent Tanzy	Jan 7

Desired Outcome:

Agree on the key planning elements and determine roles and responsibilities for all the partners.

The Big Idea is to create a 4 mile segment of the Rio Grande Trail on the east side of the Rio Grande, accessible through new pedestrian bridges in TorC and Williamsburg, and develop a non-motorized trails network on adjacent BLM and BOR public lands.

Background:

Merry Jo provided a project development overview to the group. Ideas for a pedestrian bridge crossing the Rio Grande in the area around Rotary Park began emerging last year. Several trail runners, hikers and mountain bicyclists desired easier access to the public lands on the east side of the Rio Grande. Much of the land on the east side of the river is managed by the Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management and the Armendaris Ranch. Following additional conversations, an idea emerged to develop a small segment of the Rio Grande Trail connecting ToC to the Village of Williamsburg on the east side of the Rio Grande and constructing several pedestrian bridges.

Trail proponents successfully sought resolutions in support of this project from the City of TorC and the Village of Williamsburg. The City of TorC then applied for technical assistance from the

National Park Service to help guide us through a collaborative planning process. The National Park Service accepted the project and the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program is supporting the project in FY20. The RTCA program also helped the City of TorC plan and implement the Healing Waters Trail.

Attila Bality provided an overview of the RTCA program and how it will support TorC and all the partners planning the Rio Grande Trail segment. The RTCA program supports local communities interested in developing or improving their parks, trails, open space, access to those amenities, river recreation opportunities. This is not a National Park Service project, RTCA takes a “back-seat” approach – we expect local champions to lead and engage with the community. We believe in collaborative approaches to conservation and outdoor recreation planning and want to engage as many citizens as possible in developing our trails plan. The RTCA program engages in projects that: (1) build healthy communities through parks, trails and outdoor opportunities, (2) conserve natural lands, rivers and watersheds, (3) engage youth in outdoor recreation and stewardship, (4) and strengthens the organizational capacity of project partners.

KEY PROJECT COMPONENTS

Create Our Planning Team

The group worked on identifying other partners to involve with this team

Traci Burnette, City of TorC Grants/Projects Coordinator	On Committee
Permittee's	Brent will Contact
BLM Las Cruces office	Attila will contact
TorC School District	Merry Jo will contact
Mark Hedge	Merry Jo will contact
Michael Pendleton	Merry Jo will contact
Sierra County Sheriff	Bill Sallee will contact
Sierra County Manager	Kim Skinner will contact
Motorcyle/ATV (that would support non-motorized corridor)	Kyle Cunningham will contact

We also decided to create a Communications Team to develop talking points, web presence and social media for this project. The communications team will develop recommendations and present them to Project Committee for approval. Communications team consists of Gina Kelley, Kim Skinner, John Masterson, Kyle Cunningham.

Initial tasks include development of talking points:

- The project planning is underway and we have broad community representation engaged
- No decisions are being made – will be up to local Councils and Commissions to adopt
- We will strive to get as much input from the community as possible
- Project Benefits – health, quality of life, economic development, tourism, stewardship and conservation

Draft talking points distributed for review on December 16

Review by project committee by December 18

Use this article <https://www.sierracounty.biz/pedestrian-bridge-planning-begins/> and Attila's previously developed talking points as foundations.

The group agreed to monthly meetings. Discussion topics will focus on keeping the project moving forward including civic engagement activity planning, resource assessment tasks, and informational/educational topics. These could include knowledge about BLM planning process, Rio Grande Trail designation criteria, BOR operations, bridge design, trail design concepts, conservation/restoration strategies etc.

Project Team Structure

Address at future meeting. Merry Jo and Gina have agreed to serve as co-chairs for this project. Further discussion is necessary on team decision making and structure. I.E. Is there an "executive team? How are decisions made?

Civic Engagement

Citizen participation is essential to a successfully planned and implementable project. It's critical this project team make a full concerted effort to engage as many TorC, Williamsburg, Elephant Butte, and Sierra County residents as possible. We want to Inform and Engage!

The Project Committee serves as a primary conduit between project planners and community members. The Project Committee serve as ambassadors for sharing information, controlling potential mis-information, assuring community voices are heard and striving for transparency in the planning process.

Civic Engagement needs to occur during all phases of the project including Vision and Goal establishment, Opportunities and Issues identification, alternatives development and management and stewardship strategies.

Some initial ideas for Civic Engagement emerged:

- 5K walk/run during TorC Fiesta.
- Crowd Sourced Mapping
- Pop-Up Display at restaurants, Community Center, Museum, post office, City Hall, County offices, Outdoor Rec shop, hospital, schools
- Project Website
- Project specific social media presence
- Community Kick-off Meeting
- Project Logo, stickers

Other key discussion points:

- The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and Village of Williamsburg entering into preliminary discussions about cooperative land management strategies
- The BOR is working on a suspension bridge design near El Vado and Heron reservoirs that could be applicable to this project.

- The bridge designs would have to accommodate all BOR channel operational and maintenance requirements.
- The BOR has sediment load data available to the project team.
- Depending on bridge construction, the Army Corps of Engineers might be an active partner with this project.
- It will be important to work with leasee's. Assurances that trail project will not adversely affect grazing or land access.
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Next Steps

- Develop and Review Talking Points
- Think about trail project name
- Invite others to participate
- Next Meeting Date January 14, 2020 @ 1pm
 - Familiarization Tour
 - Potential Agenda Topics
 - Project name discussion and agreement
 - Decide on process for vision and goals
 - Plan for community meeting
 - Initial Fiesta ideas