



**TO:** T.C. Broadnax, City Manager  
**FROM:** Elliott Barnett, Associate Planner, Planning and Development Services;  
Chris Storey, Professional Engineer, Public Works Department  
Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services and;  
Kurtis D. Kingsolver, P.E., Public Works Director/City Engineer  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Prairie Line Trail Historic Interpretation Plan and Implementation – Resolution authorizing staff to submit a \$400,000 grant application to the Washington State Historical Society – May 13, 2014  
**DATE:** April 28, 2014

---

**SUMMARY:**

A Resolution authorizing City staff to prepare and submit an application to the *Washington State Historical Society* for a \$400,000 grant to develop a Prairie Line Trail historic interpretation plan, and to fund its implementation through the installation of interpretive features on the City's segments of the corridor. The granting agency requires an authorizing resolution on the part of the applicant. Staff recommends that the Council adopt this resolution authorizing submittal of a grant application to the *Washington State Historical Society* for *Capital Heritage Funds*.

**STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:**

- Plan for and improve public infrastructure that meets the transportation needs of all Tacoma residents and visitors.

**BACKGROUND:**

Through multiple policy actions, including the 2013 adoption of the South Downtown Subarea Plan, the City Council has recognized the development of the Prairie Line Trail as being uniquely positioned to build on Downtown Tacoma's assets, highlight its historic character, connect existing public spaces and neighborhoods, and improve its' economic position and livability.

Substantial progress has been made to achieve these objectives. The University of Washington Tacoma (UWT) has acquired the corridor through its campus and is currently constructing that trail segment. The City is now working with Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) to finalize the donation of the Brewery District and the UWT-Campus-to-the-Waterfront segments of the corridor, and has secured \$2.465 million in grant funds for the design and construction of these segments. Including both UWT and City segments, approximately two-thirds of the planned one-mile trail is now funded through construction. Future phases of the project include the design and construction of the Brewery District segment, as well as potential future expansions and enhancements to the corridor. The City has also developed a Public Art Framework for the corridor. A project summary and supporting materials are available at [www.cityoftacoma.org/planning](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/planning).

**ISSUE:**

The *Washington State Historical Society* administers the *Heritage Capital Projects Fund* for the purpose of partnering with local communities to preserve, interpret and provide public access to sites and facilities of historic significance to the state. The *Historical Society* is accepting applications through May 15, 2014, and requires official authorization prior to application.



Through the public discussions to date, substantial public and stakeholder input identifies the Prairie Line corridor as one of Tacoma's most significant historic landscapes. The construction and ongoing development of the corridor had a formative influence on the City's economy, history and culture. Prior to the arrival of the railroad, the area generally was the cultural center of the Puyallup Tribe of Indians. As the site of the original 1873 transcontinental railroad connection to the Puget Sound, the Prairie Line served as the spine for commerce and travel for over a century. Today, many of the historic rail features and its much of its character remain in place.

Should the City successfully apply for this funding, the resulting project would develop and implement an historic interpretation plan for the City's segments of Tacoma's historic Prairie Line corridor (as a state agency, UWT is not eligible for this funding source). The planning effort would engage key stakeholders and consultant expertise, utilizing the trail conceptual design and public art strategy as starting points, to identify appropriate and innovative interpretative strategies, locations and features. Subsequently, design and implementation phases would follow the resulting plan. The project would take place between 2015 and 2017.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

The City could forego this opportunity, or delay it for future grant application rounds. The primary risk of delay is likely the potential loss of opportunity resulting from alterations to the corridor.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Council adopt a resolution authorizing the appropriate City staff to prepare and submit a grant application to the *Washington State Historical Society for Capital Heritage Funds* to enable the development and implementation of a Prairie Line Trail historic interpretation plan. This action presents the opportunity to build on the momentum and community enthusiasm for the historic significance of the Prairie Line corridor. If authorized by Council, staff will submit the application by May 15, 2014. Work would take place from 2015 to 2017.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The granting agency requires a 2-to-1 local funding match. In this case, the \$2.465 million in grant funds already secured by the City for the design and construction of segments of the trail would be considered eligible, and are more than sufficient to meet the match requirement. There is no fiscal impact for the current biennium.