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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE – ASSISTANCE AWARD

For the Development of the “Blue Mountain Region Trails” Plan

Walla Walla, WA, November 3, 2016– Blue Mountain area cities, counties, health departments, ports, and others were recently awarded technical expertise and support through the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program for the development of a statewide trails plan.

The National Park Service will help local entities, agencies, and stakeholders prepare a blueprint for a seamless network of bicycle, pedestrian, and non-motorized connections that combine walking and cycling commutes, recreational travel, and hiking, cycling, and horseback trails to the many cultural, historical, and natural treasures the Blue Mountain Region has to offer.

In an unprecedented regional effort, the cities of College Place, Dayton, Milton-Freewater, Waitsburg, and Walla Walla, joined forces with the counties of Columbia, Umatilla, and Walla Walla, the county health departments, the Partnership for Greater Burbank, the ports of Columbia and Walla Walla, as well as the Walla Walla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Community Council to kick off the development of a “Ridges, Towns, and Rivers” trails plan that will span all local jurisdictions.

Inspired by citizen input and Community Council’s 2015 study on “Enhancing Outdoor Recreation Opportunities”, local planners met and convened interested key partners and stakeholders in April and May of this year to brain-storm this regional planning project, and to prepare and submit an application for technical assistance from the National Park Service. The NPS grant will focus on public outreach, trail and route identification, and plan production. The grant is for one year of assistance with an option to extend it for another year. The lead project manager for NPS is Dan Miller, from their Portland field office. Dan has 17 years of experience providing assistance through the RTCA program and has worked on numerous regional trail system projects across the Pacific Northwest over those years.

Dan "is excited to be working with Community Council and all of their partners on this exciting effort."

The “Blue Mountain Region Trails – Ridges, Towns, and Rivers” planning effort will enable local entities to adopt identified sidewalk, bike route, and trail recommendations into their own comprehensive plan - transportation and recreation elements. The regional planning effort will thereby unlock federal and state grant funding opportunities for the implementation of these coordinated facilities, and will increase outdoor recreation opportunities, enhance health and mobility, improve safety, and promote higher quality of life for all citizens within the region.

Stay tuned for the first round of community outreach – scheduled for late January – where interested citizens will be able to view maps and information on existing infrastructure, and provide their input on additional destinations and connectivity.

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If you would like more information about the Blue Mountain Region Trails – Ridges, Towns, and Rivers Plan, please contact Mary Campbell at Community Council or email at director@wwcommunitycouncil.org.