

Plan for Kona Open Space Network one step closer

PUBLIC IS INVITED TO REVIEW PROPOSAL, SUBMIT INPUT AT EVENT ON SATURDAY

BY JOHN BURNETT

HAWAII TRIBUNE-HERALD

The West Hawaii community is invited to a walk-through and talk-story event Saturday about the Kona Open Space Network.

The event will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the West Hawaii Civic Center, Building G and Pavilion.

Hawaii County planning staff, consultants and KOSN Subcommittee members will present the draft conceptual plan for the project, which was initiated by the Kona Community Development Plan. The project — which has been in the works for more than a decade — aims to connect and preserve public open spaces by linking corridors such as trails, bike paths, shorelines and roadways that support multimodal access.

During the event, the public will have an opportunity to view the



Alameda



Darrow

plan and provide feedback.

“By establishing an open space network, we can enhance recreational opportunities for our residents while protecting natural and historical resources,” said Mayor Kimo Alameda. “I’d like to thank the Kona Community Development Plan Action Committee and the Kona Open Space Network Subcommittee for their leadership in moving this community- initiated effort forward.”

Jacobs Engineering Group was hired in 2023 at \$485,000 to be primary consultant on the project. The project covers mapping of existing and planned future hubs and links and aims to develop recommendations for implementing the open space network, including establishing key partnerships for overall management and identifying funding opportunities.

Planning Director Jeff Darrow called the KOSN “a shining example of what can happen when community members come together with a shared vision.”

“This plan was truly shaped by the people of Kona,” Darrow said. “What began as a concept in the Kona Community Development Plan has grown into fruition with the guidance of the Kona Open Space Network Subcommittee and community partners who rolled up their sleeves and helped guide the process.”

An open house for the project held Aug. 20, 2023, drew “well over 100 community members,” according to Bethany Morrison, the county’s long-range planning program manager.

“The feedback gathered at the open house was incorporated into this draft plan,” Morrison said. “This event is the first time the public will be able to review and provide feedback on the maps.

“Upon finalization of the draft plan, the final task is to prepare an implementation plan for execution and implementation of the steps identified to achieve the KOSN,” she added. “The plan will include cost estimates, suggested funding solutions, stakeholder analysis and engagement plan, land use, financing strategies, policies and regulatory framework.”

That regulatory framework will include “further project design and environmental review,” Morrison noted. “Feedback from the community walk-through and talk-story event will be recorded and used to make final edits to the plan which will be rolled out at a future community celebration event.”

She said she expects the KOSN plan, including the implementation plan, to be complete by December. “The implementation plan will identify cost estimates and financing strategies.”

Depending on project eligibility, there could be potential state and federal grant funding, according to Morrison.

“Although not specifically funding partners, there may be opportunities for private land owners to grant easements that support the KOSN,” she said.

Added Darrow, “We’re excited to share the draft plan at the open house and continue working hand-in-hand with the community to bring it to life.”

Community members are encouraged to view the draft conceptual plan by exploring an interactive StoryMap ahead of the event. It can be found online at <https://arcg.is/Ora550>.

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