



April 28, 2026

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board
Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO)
PO Box 40917
Olympia WA 98504-0917

Re: Foothills Trail – Wilkeson to Carbonado (26-1408 DEV)

To Whom It May Concern,

The Mountaineers supports Pierce County's grant application for the Foothills Trail – Wilkeson to Carbonado (26-1408 DEV). This project advances our shared goals of expanding sustainable outdoor recreation and preserving access to Washington's natural and historical landscapes.

The Mountaineers, based in Seattle, Washington and founded in 1906, is a nonprofit outdoor education, conservation, and recreation organization whose mission is "to enrich the community by helping people explore, conserve, learn about and enjoy the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest and beyond." The Mountaineers Books publishing division expands the mission internationally through award-winning publications including instructional guides, adventure narratives, and conservation photography. 1,800 skilled volunteers lead 4,000 outdoor education trips and courses annually for 16,000+ members. Our youth programs provide over 15,000 opportunities each year for children to get outside. We are a passionate, engaged, and knowledgeable community that cares about the outdoors, and protects the outdoor experience for current and future generations.

Opportunities like the Foothills Trail are an important part of how our community gets outside. They provide accessible outdoor experiences for hikers, trail-runners, families, and youth groups, and support our organization's goals of fostering recreation, stewardship, and connection to place.

The Wilkeson – Carbonado corridor is a unique and historically significant stretch of the Foothills Trail. The route follows an old Northern Pacific Railroad grade that once connected coal-mining towns throughout the Carbon River Valley, offering an opportunity to preserve and interpret an important chapter of Pierce County's industrial heritage. The existing 2.5-mile unimproved path provides a scenic, gentle grade through second-growth woodland making it accessible to a wide range of users.

Despite its value, this section remains underdeveloped, limiting safe and consistent access. Current conditions include narrow dirt surfaces, seasonal mud, downed debris, and limited trail



infrastructure, all of which reduce usability and prevent the trail from reaching its full potential as a regional asset. Completing construction and improving the trail surface will enhance safety, accessibility, and year-round recreation opportunities.

The project also supports broader regional goals. The Foothills Trail is a beloved and growing multi-use corridor that connects communities from Puyallup to Buckley and beyond. Completing the Wilkeson to Carbonado link strengthens this network, expands non-motorized transportation options, and encourages outdoor recreation that benefits public health, local tourism, and small-town economies.

This project is especially important considering the ongoing closure of the Fairfax Bridge. The bridge closure, which blocks access to the popular Carbon River corridor, has significantly reduced tourism to the area and created significant economic challenges for the towns. Completing the Wilkeson to Carbonado segment of the Foothills Trail will help address this gap by drawing visitors back to the area, increasing visibility for these communities, and supporting local businesses through reliable, year-round recreation access.

This project represents an important investment in safe, accessible outdoor recreation, strengthens regional trail connectivity, and helps ensure that Washington's natural and cultural landscapes remain available and meaningful to the public for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Betsy Robblee
Conservation & Advocacy Director
betsyr@mountaineers.org