

Springwater Corridor Review by Julia Reisinger



After over 20 years of living in Portland, I ran on the Springwater Corridor trail for the very first time on Christmas morning 2011. Yes, I had heard of the trail, many friends had recommended it, and I knew many training groups planned runs on it, but I had never bothered to try it out. That was my loss, and I cannot believe I've missed out on one of the best places to run in Portland.



The Springwater Division Line was (according to its website) “developed for rail service in 1903... Many communities developed along the Springwater Line... and to encourage weekend use, the rail corporation developed destination points along the line, such as Oaks Amusement park in Sellwood.” The Sellwood area was where I started my run on Christmas morning with a group of friends. The Springwater Corridor bike path was developed along the rail line, and totals over 40 miles out and back all the way to Boring. There are still a few sections of trail needing to be built to connect the entire trail, but the portion we ran was completed, and very popular. We started at the section just under the Sellwood Bridge near the Oaks Amusement Park. There is an old church parking lot just off the bridge, and another parking lot with a bathroom just one block lower down at the Sellwood River Park. Both are right next to the trailhead marking the 3.5 mile point of the trail (as measured from downtown Portland). We ran a simple out and back, heading toward downtown before turning around just before reaching the Marquam (I-5) Bridge and the OMSI parking lot. Total distance for me was about 5 miles (I turned around a little earlier) while others ran closer to 6 miles (3 out, 3 back).

The trail was beautiful and quiet. On the one side of the path is the rolling Willamette River. On the other side there are railroad tracks, the Oaks Bottom wildlife refuge, an abundance of wetlands, and neighborhood bluffs overlooking the Willamette. There were no roads or cars nearby so it was very nice, and there was a ton of scenery to look at. The trail is also very flat and paved, so an easy route with lots of people, even on a holiday morning. I understand not all sections are paved, some are compact gravel, but still very easy to run on. I ran the path again a few weeks later and there were even more people, so I can imagine it is quite busy on a summer weekend when it's warmer out. The path was wide enough to run side by side with still plenty of room for others to run or walk past, or for cyclists to pass with no difficulty. If I had to guess there was

probably a 50/50 split between cyclists and walkers/runners so if you go, be prepared to share the road.

The scenery was excellent, and I imagine it would be even better in the spring, with the new greenery, or in the fall with the leaves changing color. I fully intend to return and take in the beauty on future runs.

The trail is very simple, you go either one direction or another, and it is marked every ½ mile with a marker. It would be an excellent location for group runs, or interval training. It is paved, so be prepared for a harder surface, especially those of you who like softer, trail running. I enjoyed it since I didn't have to worry about my footing at all. There was a little wind at our backs going out, so it was in our faces coming back, but it wasn't too bad, just enough to notice. It happened both times I ran there so be prepared if that is a regular occurrence.

Both times I ran on the trail we ran toward downtown, however, the trail heads in the other direction as well, and goes as far as Boring. I did not try that direction, but on my friends' suggestion, if you want to head that way, try not starting from the Sellwood area, but heading out to the Johnson Creek Area and picking up the trail there. This is because between the two trailheads is the one portion of path that is not connected. You can run between the two, but you have to do so through neighborhoods, and while it's not difficult, why bother when you can run on bike path by simply driving a little further out to pick up the trail. I hope to run that section of trail in the near future. However again, on advice of friends, I would probably not run that section of trail by myself. While there were plenty of people on the section by the Willamette, I've been told the section past Johnson Creek is a little more isolated, and not quite as safe. Just be prepared to share your runs on this trail with a friend.

But don't waste time like I did and get out on this lovely trail now. You'll love it!
(info on next page)

Directions:

To get to the Sellwood trailhead of the Springwater Corridor:

From the West side of the Willamette, cross the Sellwood Bridge (access to the bridge is on Macadam). As soon as you cross the bridge, get in the left lane and take a left onto 6th Ave. Then take an immediate left onto Spokane and head down the hill. You can park in either the Oaks Pioneer Church parking lot, or head a little further down the hill (across the railroad tracks) to the Sellwood River Park parking lot.

From the East, approach the Sellwood bridge by heading West on Tacoma. Then just before the bridge, take a right onto 6th, and a left onto Spokane and head down the hill. You can park in either the Oaks Pioneer Church parking lot, or head a little further down the hill (across the railroad tracks) to the Sellwood River Park parking lot.

The actual Springwater trailhead is right next to the railroad tracks, just above the Sellwood River Park parking lot, or just below the Oaks Pioneer Church parking lot.

Bathroom: The Sellwood parking lot had a bathroom that was even open on Christmas day (very nice). There were no bathrooms on the trail where we ran. When looking at the map of the trail I thought I saw a bathroom at the Johnson Creek trailhead about milepost 6, but I couldn't tell if there were convenient bathrooms at any other location on the trail.

Parking: There is ample parking at the Sellwood trailhead

Surface: Paved bike path on the Sellwood section. I've heard there is compact gravel on other sections.

Traffic: None. The trail is closed to traffic

Popularity: Even on a holiday morning, there were quite a few people, and a few weeks later it was very busy, so it is very popular on most weekends, with runners, walkers and cyclists.

Plusses: The scenery, the lack of traffic, and the easy route (no hills).

Minuses: I didn't notice any on the section I ran.

Rating: 5 out of 5 (I can't believe I've never run here before... it's GREAT!).