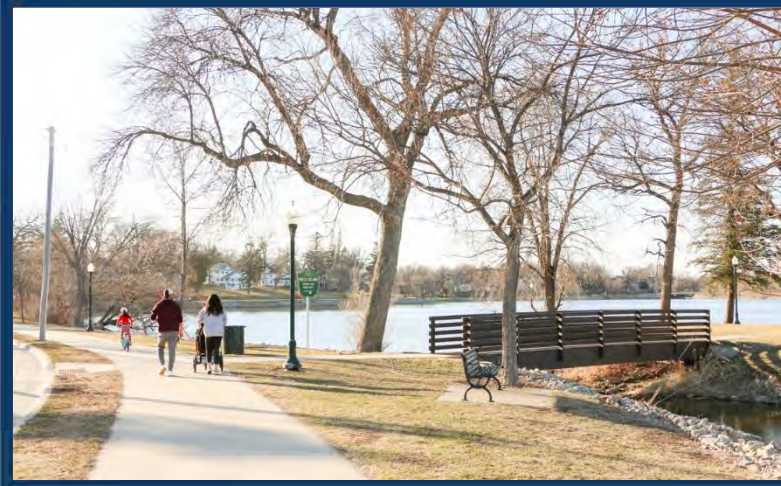
TRAIL ACTION PLAN

Albert Lea and Freeborn County, MN

May 2023



Acknowledgement

Freeborn County Trails Team

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The Action Plan was funded through the Minnesota Department of Transportation's (MnDOT) Active Transportation Program.

Learn more:

https://www.dot.state.mn.us/active-transportation-program/

Planning Assistance Team:

Terra Soma, LLC

HDR, Inc.

Contents

Executive Summary

The Active Transportation Action Plan is the result of an eight-month collaboration from September 2022 to April 2023. The Freeborn County Trails Team came together to set direction, co-create strategy, host a public mapping workshop, lead a walking audit and conduct a biking audit to collect broader input.

The Action Plan serves as a living guide. It establishes clear, evidence-based and action-oriented priorities to guide future trail investments that accommodate everyone—whether they walk, bike, or use a mobility aid. The Plan discusses trail construction priorities that can best serve residents and visitors within Albert Lea and Freeborn County.

Specific trail implementation options are recommended for consideration in the Action Plan, including making strategic improvements to existing infrastructure that create connections within Albert Lea and to neighboring communities.

Introduction

SECTION 1

Why a Trail Action Plan

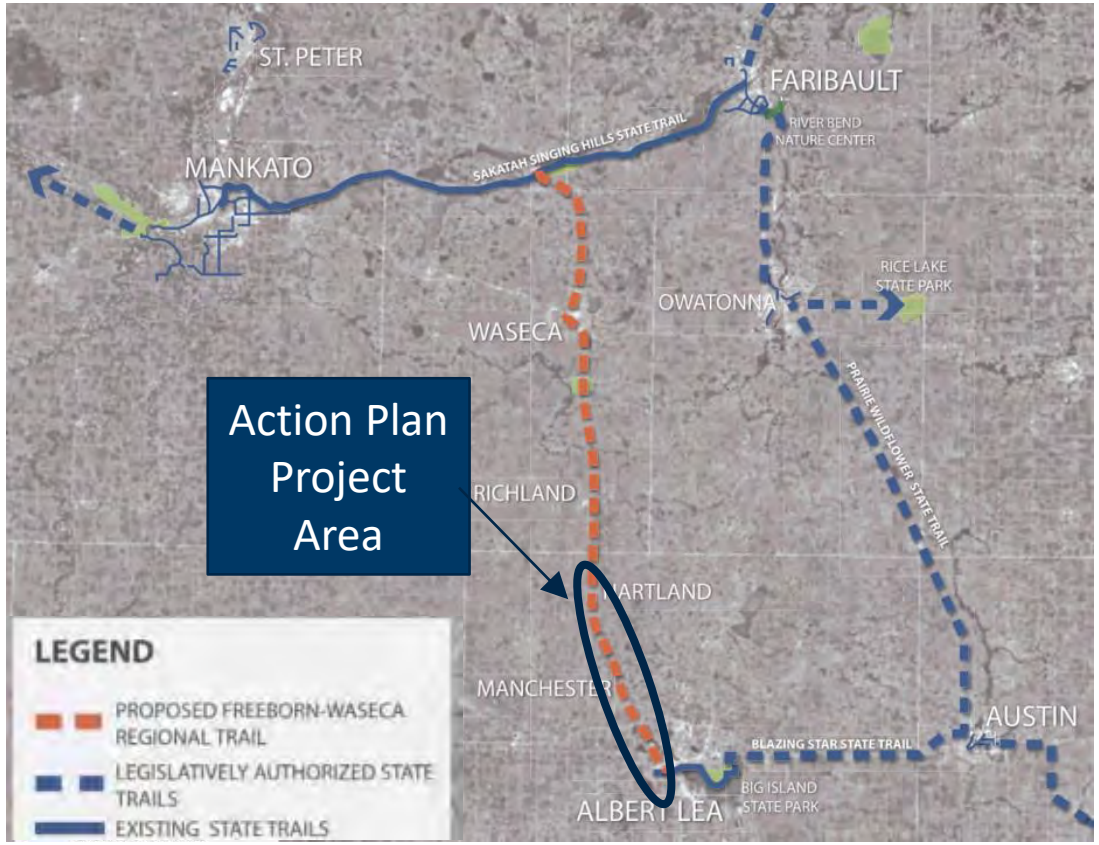
Walking and biking are important ways to reach the places we want to go, connect with people we want to see, improve our physical and mental health and create a more resilient community.

Walking and biking are popular recreational activities as well as essential elements of everyday transportation. Paved trails can serve as both destinations in themselves and as connectors that get people between places they want to go. People need to connect between the trail and the places they live and want to visit, such as the neighborhood school or downtown. Therefore, the trail leads to the need for additional biking and walking facilities through town.

The purpose of this plan is to guide the development of a scenic and unique multipurpose rail-trail that creates connections within Freeborn County along the former Union Pacific railroad grade from Albert Lea, connecting through Manchester, to Hartland. From Albert Lea to the east, connecting to the Blazing Star Trail will link trail users to Big Island State Park, Hayward, and Austin.

Larger regional goals include extending the rail-trail connection into Waseca County, thereby linking to New Richland, Waseca, and the Sakatah State Trail.

The trail will provide opportunities to improve the health and quality of life and serve as a regional attractor for visitors to experience what the city between the lakes has to offer.



Source: Freeborn-Waseca Regional Trail Master Plan, Draft 2018

Why Trails and Active Transportation?

Health

Active transportation is as effective as structured workouts for improving health. Only 52% of Minnesotans meet daily physical activity recommendations.

https://www.dot.state.mn.us/peds/documents/planning-research/minnesota-walks-2017-final.pdf
https://www.apha.org/-/media/files/pdf/topics/transport/apha_active_transportation_fact_sheet_2010.ashx)

Economy

People walking and biking make more frequent trips than people driving, spending more money at local businesses.

Popvich, Natalie; Handy, Susan 'Bicyclists as Consumers' *Transportation Research Board*
Badger, Emily 'Cyclists and Pedestrians Can End Up Spending More Each Month Than Drivers'
https://www.triplepundit.com/story/2012/biking-walking-more-money-spent-local-businesses/61761

Environment

Less driving means cleaner air. Minnesota must reduce transportation related greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 and vehicle miles traveled by 20% by 2050.

MnDOT Statewide Pedestrian System Plan

Happiness

Research by the University of Minnesota found bicycling is the happiest form of transportation.

https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/biking-happiness-commute-study-university-of-minnesota/

Photos by: Samantha Lorenz

Safe System Approach

MnDOT follows a Safe System Approach to traffic safety, which aims to eliminate fatal and serious injuries for all road users, including people walking and bicycling. The Safe System Approach focuses roadway safety efforts on ways to effectively:

1. Design for the people in the system;
2. Manage vehicle speeds by design;
3. Employ proactive tools to manage risks across an entire roadway network, especially for the most vulnerable users; and
4. Foster integrated, collaborative, and coordinated action.

> MnDOT can prevent traumatic life-altering, costly crashes by focusing on creating low-speed environments in population centers and around other destinations where people are likely to walk [and bike]."
>
> - Statewide Pedestrian Systems Plan

Street Design Influences Behavior

Most motorists drive to match the "design speed" of the road, using cues such as lane width, street texture, the distance between buildings, trees and other edge features and sight-line distances rather than relying solely on the posted speed limit.

Historically, streets have been designed by observing the speed of the majority drivers and designing the street for that speed. This speed also becomes the posted speed for the street. **A safe system approach** reverses this approach by first identifying the speed drivers *should* be going or the "target speed" (e.g., 20 mph) and then designing and posting at this speed. This practice **prioritizes vulnerable users like people walking and biking in the design, which is especially important at crossings.** Crossing along the proposed trail must be designed to ensure the visibility and priority of trail users. Crossings should be designed to achieve a target speed of 20 mph. Slower motorists' speeds increases motorists yielding rates, creating a safer environment for all.

Applying Active Transportation Principles

The approaches to network planning and applying Active Transportation Principles are founded in the Safe System Approach. As we consider how to make our built environment more conducive to walking and biking, we apply the Active Transportation Principles. The significance of each principle may vary from route to route and from person to person. For example, we may prioritize directness the most when walking or biking to the grocery store. We may value attractiveness and comfort when out for a recreational bike ride. Safety is paramount for all users, especially when ensuring children have safe routes to school and parks.

Safety – Does the network provide routes that minimize risk of injury and danger (both traffic and personal security)?

Comfort – Does the network appeal to a broad range of age and ability levels and are there user amenities (e.g., places to sit, ways to be protected from the weather)?

Coherence – How easy is it to understand where to go, how to navigate through an intersection? How connected is the network?

Directness – Does the network provide direct and convenient access to destinations?

Attractiveness – Is the network green, well-maintained, quiet, and celebrate local art and culture?

Timeline

Freeborn County set the stage for developing the rail-trail by acquiring the former railroad right-of-way in 2014. The 2018 plan advanced that effort with a regional trail vision including connectivity to other regional trails. This Action Plan focuses on how the Freeborn County and Albert Lea trail segments can move forward to advance both the regional and local trail visions.

Year	Activity
2014	Freeborn County acquired 12 miles of former Union Pacific Railroad corridor from the south part of Albert Lea to Hartland (county line)
2018	Freeborn and Waseca counties developed a master plan for a trail along the rail corridor to connect Blazing Star Trial to Sakatah Singing Hills Trail
2022	City of Albert Lea and Freeborn County entered into a Joint Powers Agreement for maintaining the corridor and developing a trail City of Albert Lea received a Trail Action Planning grant from MnDOT to update the plan for moving forward
2022-2023	Freeborn County Trails Team, comprised of city and county staff and elected representatives, trail advocates and other community stakeholders, gathered input and worked with MnDOT Planning Assistance Team to create this Action Plan

How the Plan Was Developed

INSIGHT
Process of discovery

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2022

Planning Assistance Team (PAT)
Meeting 1 – October 5:
- Assess current policies and plans
- Co-develop engagement strategy

Meeting 2 – November 2:
- Develop and refine vision and goals
- Identify target stakeholders/groups

Local Team Led:
- Create vision and goals
- Identify key/target stakeholders or groups, and engagement strategy

Curbside Coaching

IDEATE
Turning key insights into actions

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2022

PAT/Local Team – November 2:
- Mini-Charrette: Walk and bike audits (mobile workshop);
- Neighborhood/community action workshop

Local Team Led:
- Deepen and/or broaden input: survey, meetings with youth

PAT:
- Synthesize: Draft action steps and priorities

Curbside Coaching

ITERATE
Putting the plan together

JANUARY-APRIL 2023

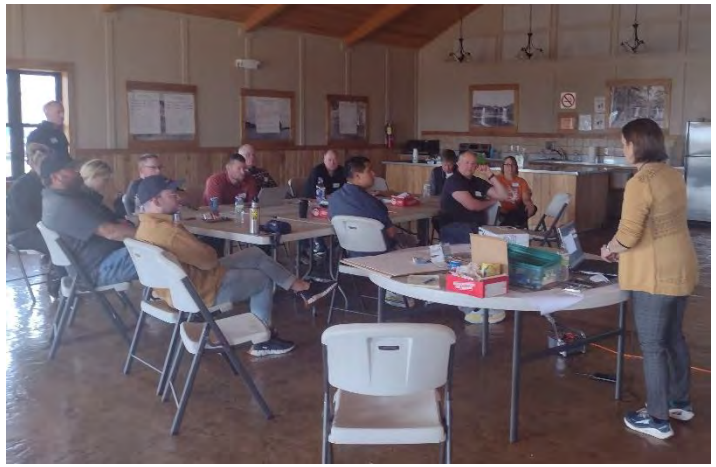
Meeting 3 – February 1:
- Refine actions and priorities, collaboratively

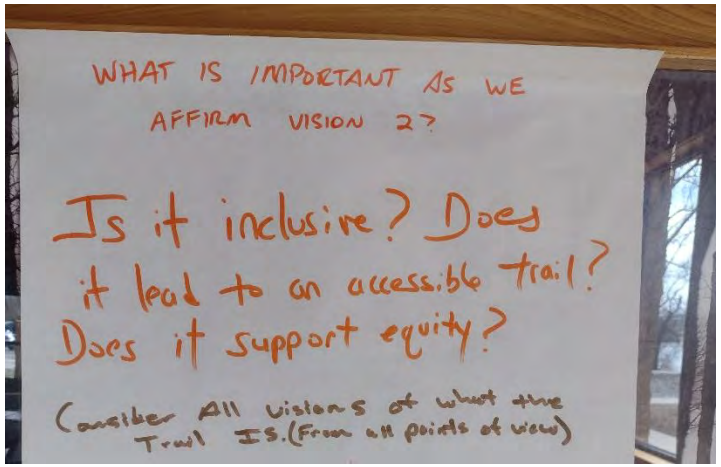
Meeting 4 – April 5:
- Refine draft trail-focused Action Plan, collaboratively

Local Team Led:
- Final Plan (process of adoption)

Curbside Coaching

How the Plan Was Developed





Photos (clockwise from top left): The Trails Committee discusses trail planning principles; a poster shows questions that the Trails Team posed to the Planning Assistance Team; community members brainstorm trail connections and priorities at the mapping workshop.

The Freeborn County Trails Team met with the MnDOT Planning Assistance Team to lay out a vision and goals for a robust Trail Action Plan.

The Team hosted community members at a mapping workshop. The 35 attendees brainstormed ways the community could best benefit from the trail, as well as additional regional trail connections that need to be made.

An online survey solicited 342 responses, providing additional feedback for the team to consider as they developed this Action Plan.

Existing Conditions

SECTION 2

Existing Plans and Policies

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Albert Lea has already started implementing bike-friendly streets and trail connections. Freeborn County is home to the regional Blazing Star Trail, which connects Albert Lea to Myre-Big Island State Park. The Department of Natural Resources plans to connect the trail to the Hayward segment in the near future.

Blue Zones Project

A systemic model for building healthy communities which seeks to expand the options for individuals to make healthy choices in their daily lives.

Complete Streets Policy

Establishes that street construction and improvement projects should design an environment for all street users, including pedestrians and cyclists.

Climate Action Plan

Outlines Albert Lea's greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategy, a large portion of which is encouraging active transportation.

Freeborn-Waseca Regional Trail Master Plan

Lays out steps for a regional trail system in and beyond Freeborn County.

Who is the Trail Serving

Everyone can experience the benefits of using and having a well-designed trail in the community. Some parts of town deserve special consideration due to past and current environmental burdens that exist in their neighborhoods.

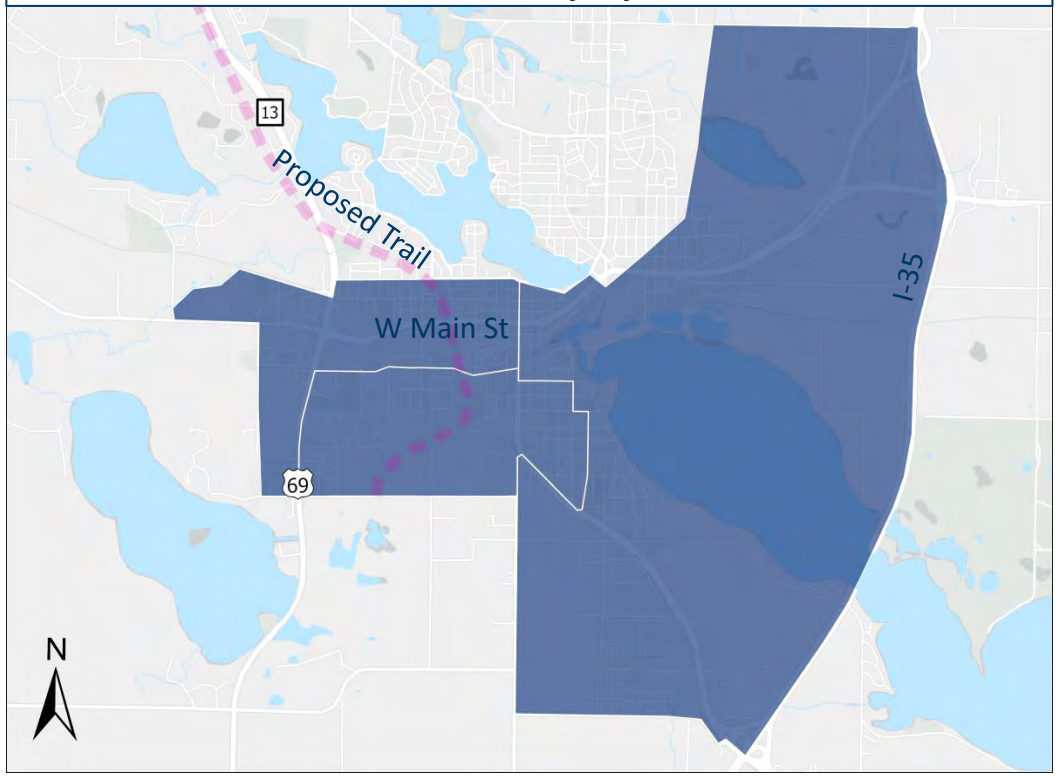
JUSTICE40 INITIATIVE: A COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The Federal Government has set a goal that 40 percent of benefits from Federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities—areas that have been underserved by prior governmental investments and overburdened by pollution, negative impacts of climate change and environmental hazards.

Several areas in Albert Lea (blue areas pictured) have been identified by the Federal Government as "disadvantaged communities" due to experiencing high rates of low income, less than high school education, heart disease, or exposure to hazardous pollution. The Justice40 Initiative prioritizes investments in disadvantaged areas like these through programs offered as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Source: Council on Environmental Quality https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/

Disadvantaged Communities per Council on Environmental Quality by Census Tract



Who is the Trail Serving

MnDOT uses two metrics to determine the need for better active transportation facilities in Minnesota communities:

- an equity score, based on public transit, pedestrian safety, race, age, life expectancy and education of residents; and
- a Priority Area for Walking (PAWS) score, based on infrastructure, public health, safety and equity criteria.

In both metrics, higher scores indicate a greater priority for improvements to active transportation.

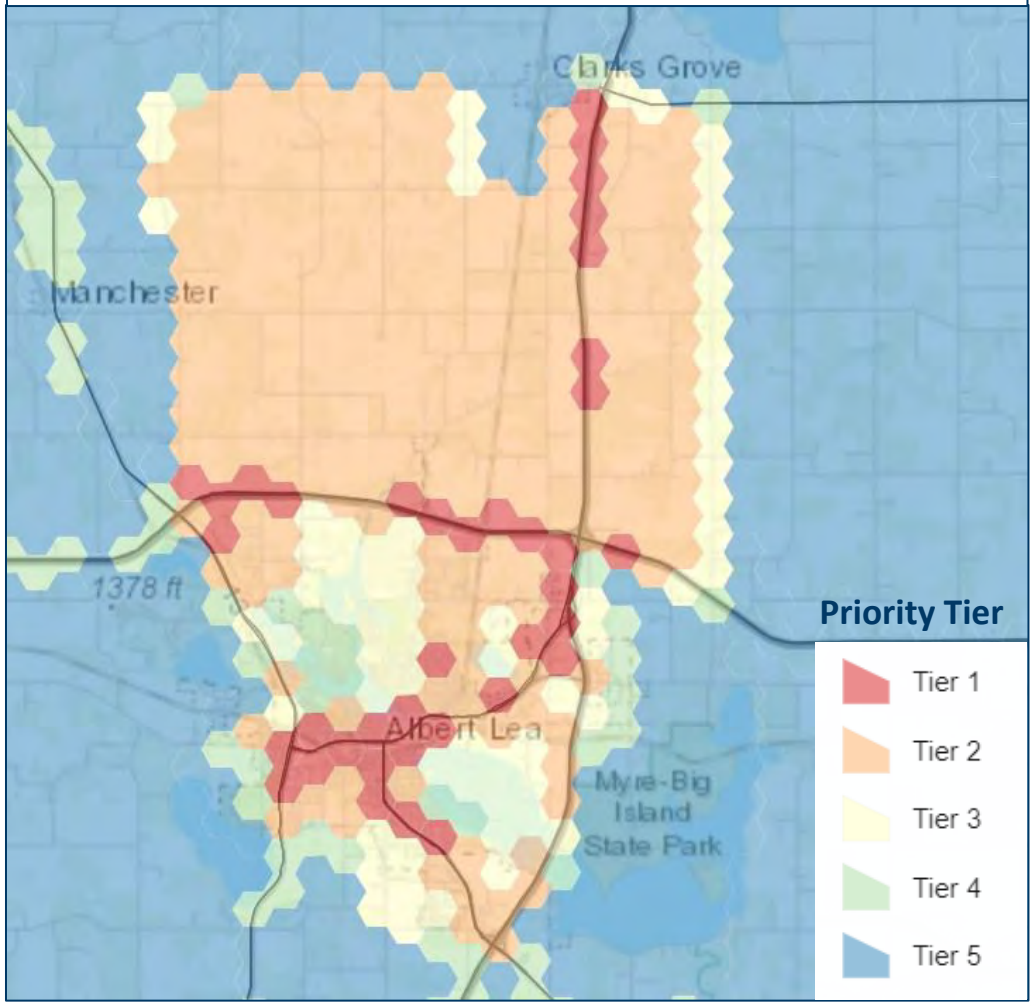
The City of Albert Lea has a maximum of 12 out of 15 in Active Transportation Equity, sharing the highest priority level outside the Twin Cities, and a PAWS maximum score of 14 out of 19, sharing the second-highest priority in the state.

Sources:

Priority Areas for Walking (PAWS) (arcgis.com)

MnDOT Active Transportation Program Equity App (arcgis.com)

Priority Areas for Walking (PAWS) per MnDOT



How Are We Moving Today

3.3% Walk

In Albert Lea, 3.3 percent of commuters walk to work compared to 2.4 percent statewide. ACS, 2020

1% Bike

In Albert Lea, 1 percent of commuters bike to work compared to 1.5 percent statewide. ACS, 2020

0.6% Transit

In Albert Lea, 0.6 percent of commuters take transit to work compared to 3.1 percent statewide. ACS, 2020

11.5% Below poverty level

11.5 percent of residents are living in poverty, compared to 9.3 percent statewide. ACS, 2020

4% No car

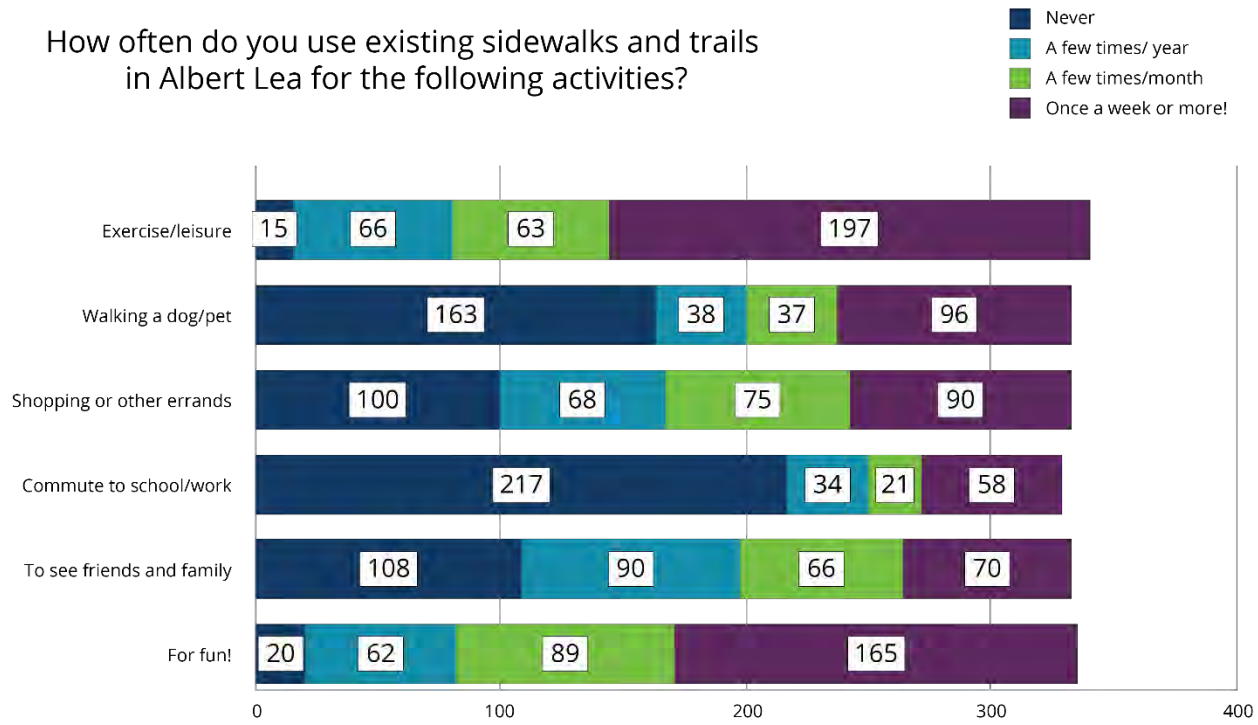
4 percent of households do not own a car, compared to 6.6 percent statewide. ACS, 2020

25% People of color

25 percent of residents are people of color, compared to 23.7 percent statewide. ACS, 2020

13.9% Have a disability

13.9 percent of residents live with a disability, compared to 11 percent statewide. ACS, 2020



What We Learned from the Community

COMMUNITY SURVEY

An online survey was open between December 2, 2022 and January 22, 2023, collecting a total of 342 responses.

- 47% of respondents bike monthly
- 54% of respondents walk weekly
- Increasing recreational opportunities and health for residents was voted most important benefit

Survey Participant Demographics

- 73.5% Albert Lea residents
- 22.7% Freeborn County residents
- 56% Female, 41% Male
- Ages:
  - 14% under 35
  - 64% age 35-64
  - 16% over 64

COMMUNITY BIKE AND WALK AUDITS

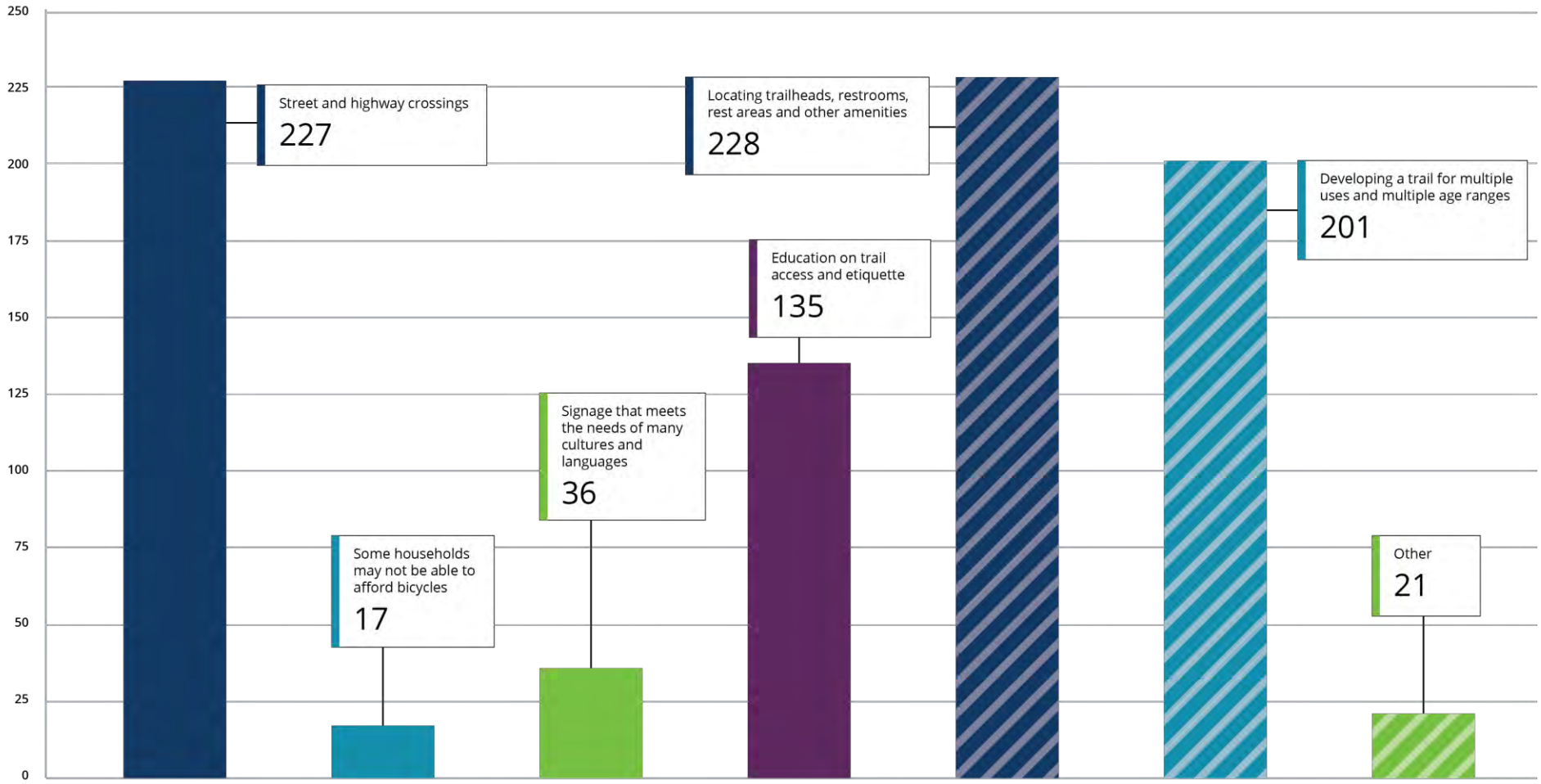
The biking and walking audits took place on November 2, 2022. The biking audit consisted of 26 participants and the walking audit consisted of 20 participants. Both events included city and county staff and residents.

- Head-in angle parking makes downtown streets uncomfortable for cyclists
- High vehicle speeds create barriers for people of all ages and abilities crossing Front Street and Fountain Street
- Highway 13 creates a significant challenge for extending the trail northwest
- Connection to Hartland, Manchester, and Waseca is desired
- Strong connection to Blazing Star Trail is necessary for regional attractiveness

What We Learned from the Community

COMMUNITY SURVEY

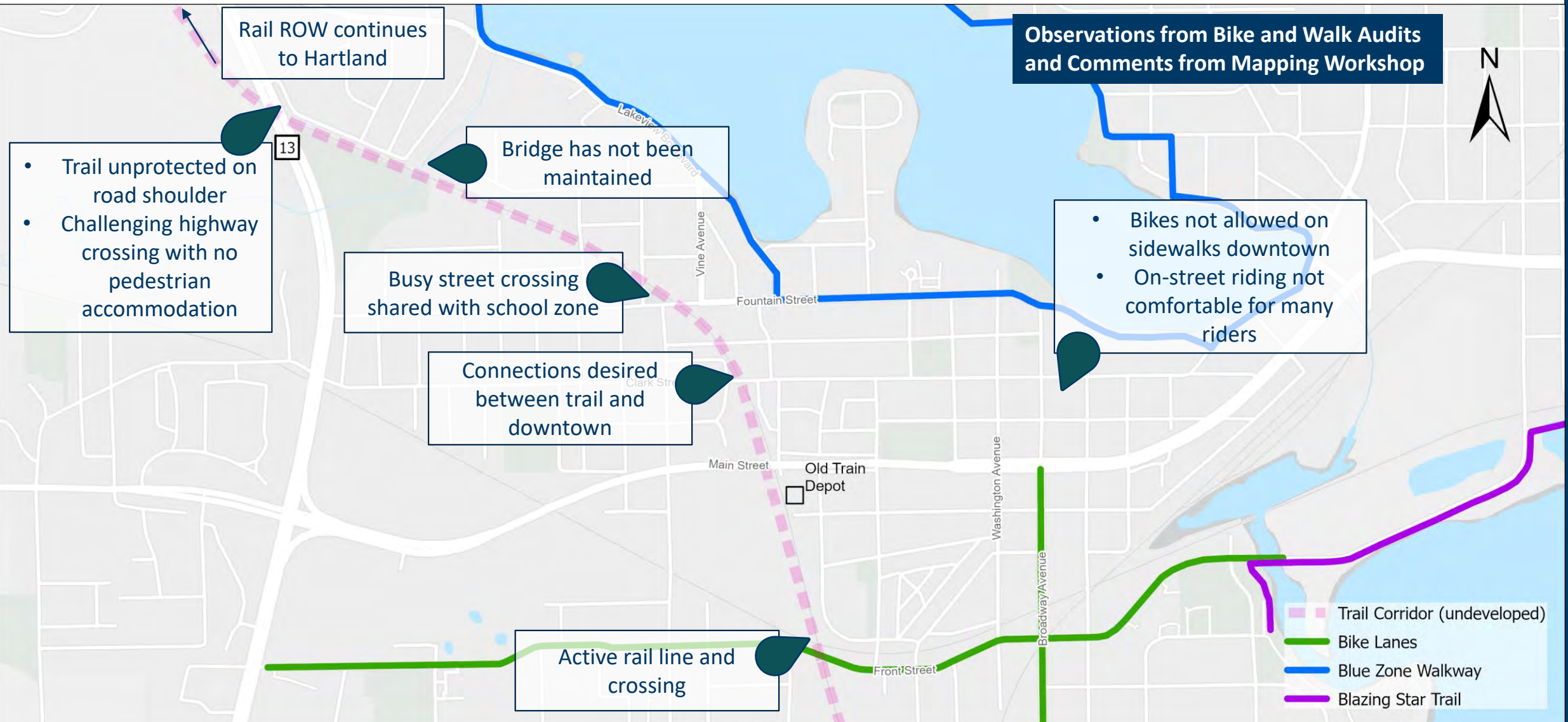
What are your top three concerns about developing a safe and accessible trail?



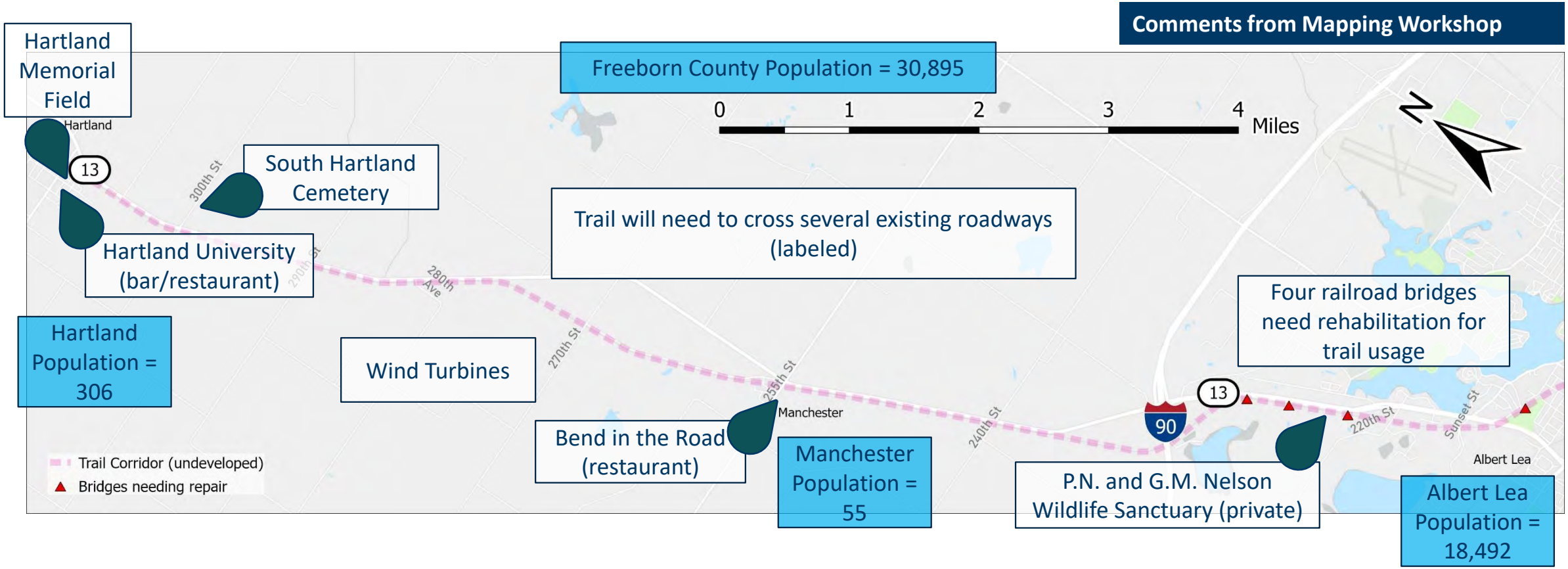
The community's two biggest concerns are roadway safety and amenity location, closely followed by ensuring accessibility for all ages. Also important is educating users on trail use and access.

Applying active transportation principles throughout the planning and design of a trail can ensure that safety, accessibility and coherence (easy to understand where to go) are implemented.

Existing Conditions – Albert Lea Section



Existing Conditions – County Section



Transforming the Rail to Trail

SECTION 3

Vision and Goals

COMMUNITY VISION

The Freeborn County trail will provide a scenic and unique experience connecting people and places.

COMMUNITY GOALS

QUALITY OF LIFE: Provide a safe and accessible trail that instills community pride.

CONNECTIONS: Strengthen the physical, social, visual and transportation connections throughout the community.

TOURISM: Attract visitors to Albert Lea and Freeborn County to share our trail experience.

HEALTH: Improve health and wellness through outdoor activities for all.

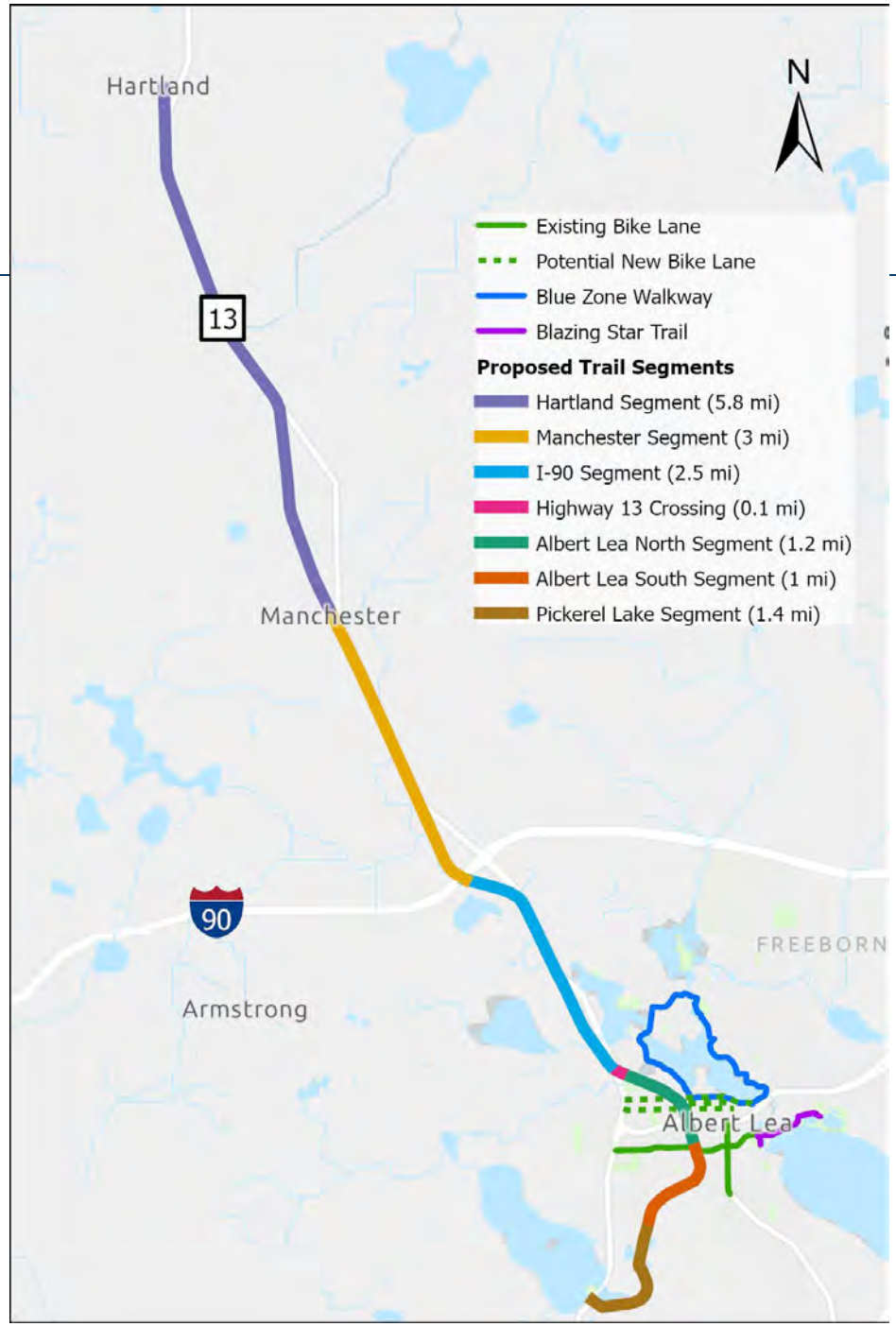
Trail Segments and Construction Packages

Successful trail projects are often broken into smaller segments to more easily obtain funding, create feasible construction packages and take incremental steps to achieve the long-term vision for a regional trail. Communities who break a project into consecutive segments have successfully built trails faster, in many cases.

This Action Plan divides the 15-mile-long trail into seven segments. These segments have been divided at logical termini, such as cross streets, which connect into the transportation system to avoid dead-ends.

These segments could be grouped into construction packages based upon estimated cost and available or potential funding. For example, if sufficient funding is available, the Albert Lea North Segment could be designed with the Highway 13 Crossing and the I-90 Segment as a single construction package. Some principles to keep in mind for construction packages include:

1. Create construction packages that can be completed in one construction season
2. Establish logical termini if using Federal funding (i.e., do not create dead ends, which is a good principle even if not using Federal funding)
3. Connect to existing trails or bike lanes rather than just roads to build upon the existing active transportation network
4. Don't leave a challenging gap, such as crossing Highway 13
5. Connect a population center to a particular destination like a park, another trail, another community, etc.
6. Group similar construction items into one packages, such as all structural elements
7. Budget enough funding for the project plus at least a 10 percent contingency



Trail Development Segments

Segment	Considerations
Hartland	• Connects county residents to trail system • Provides longer-distance recreation opportunities for residents and tourists • Generates positive economic impact to small towns along the route
Manchester	• Connect additional county residents into trail system • Connects trail users to local bar/restaurant
I-90 Segment	• Connects outlying residences into trail system • Runs alongside the P.N. and G.M. Nelson Wildlife Sanctuary with wildlife views (no public access) • Requires rehabilitation of three bridges
Hwy 13 Crossing	• Creates key connection point and gateway between City and County segments • Requires intergovernmental (MnDOT, County, City) coordination and partnership • If a roundabout is constructed, creates a safer intersection by design not only for trails users, but all Hwy 13 users • If federal funding is used, the trail will need to have logical endpoints (no dead-ends) so must connect to another facility on both sides of the highway • May be eligible for additional funding sources as part of the highway system
North AL - West Front Street to Shoff Park	• Creates a critical connection to, and extension of, the Blazing Star Trail, to Albert Lea's downtown and neighborhoods, providing more residents (and tourists) with safer, all ages and abilities recreation and active transportation opportunities • Promotes trail development and economic opportunity given the proximity to downtown Albert Lea, and supports sustainable land use practices • Serves low-income and immigrant populations, addressing barriers to transportation access and equity • Builds support and momentum to address Highway 13 crossing and trail extension to Hartland • May require rehabilitation of one bridge
South AL - W 9th Street to W Front Street	• Completes connection along railroad grade to southern Albert Lea • Serves low-income and immigrant populations, addressing barriers to transportation access and equity
Pickerel Lake Park	• Creates a logical termination for the trail at a county park and provides connection to more recreational activities • Routes through scenic greenway for a different trail experience • Requires a crossing of Highway 69

Planning Level Cost Opinions

Rail-trail construction costs can vary considerably based upon design factors such as drainage and culverts, bridge rehabilitation or replacement, potential realignments, street and highway crossings improvements, right-of-way acquisitions, and unforeseen field conditions. The cost of construction materials is subject to market conditions and can sometimes change unexpectantly. Funding sources may also have requirements that impact costs, such as federal funding that requires clearance from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or contractor wages as determined by the Davis-Bacon Act prevailing wages.

When estimating paved rail-trail construction costs at the planning stage, it is common to use a "ballpark" cost opinion. To estimate costs, planners may use $270,000 per mile for trail construction along a former railroad grade, not including bridge rehabilitation, street crossing improvements, or amenities. Urban railroad grades may cost more per mile due to issues such as the need for additional drainage features or more realignments to create perpendicular crossings. Also, smaller scale projects will cost more per mile, while larger scale projects will cost less per mile. The costs presented herein include planning level unit costs for the rail-trail and for crossings. A breakdown of these costs is included on the following pages.

A civil engineer can provide a pre-design, project-specific cost opinion to assist with budgeting and funding applications. Engineering design and construction phase services can add approximately 20 percent to the total project cost.

Planning Level Cost Opinion for Trail Segments

Trail Segment	Miles	Cost Estimate	Approx Cost per Mile
Manchester to Hartland	5.8	$ 1,614,000	$ 278,276
I-90 to Manchester	3	$ 844,500	$ 281,500
Hwy 13 to I-90	2.5	$ 1,076,500	$ 431,400 *
Highway 13 Crossing	0.1	$ 212,000	n/a
AL North - W Front Street to Shoff Park	1.4	$ 499,000	$ 356,429
AL South - W 9th Street to W Front Street	1	$ 295,500	$ 295,500
Pickerel Lake Park to W 9th Street	1.4	$ 429,000	$ 306,429
Total Estimated Cost	**15.2**	**$ 4,970,500**	**$ 327,138**

*Includes rehabilitation for 4 bridges

In 2022, Freeborn County retained a structural engineer to complete an inspection of the four railroad bridges and assessment of repairs needed to convert the bridges to trail usage. The report identified minor deficiencies and recommended repairs and retrofit improvements to use the bridges as part of a trail. The estimated costs were based upon 2021 MnDOT bid prices and totaled approximately $330,000 (Source: HDR, *Freeborn County Rails-to-Trails Bridge Assessment and Repair and Retrofit Recommendations for Bridges 91, 92, 93, and 95*. July 2022). To account for inflation over the past two years, this estimated cost would be close to $367,000 in 2023.

Planning Level Cost Opinions by Segment

Trail Segment - Manchester to Hartland		Estimated Unit Cost	Total Cost
Trail	**Miles**	**Per Mile**	
10' wide Paved Trail - Former RR Grade	5.8	$ 270,000	$ 1,566,000
Crossings	**Quantity**	**Per Crossing**	
Continental Markings – All streets	6	$ 2,500	$ 15,000
Crosswalk Static Signs – Main St, 310th St, 300th St, 290th St, 280th St	5	$ 2,000	$ 10,000
RRFB – 270th St	1	$ 23,000	$ 23,000
TOTAL PRE-DESIGN COST			**$ 1,614,000**

Trail Segment - I-90 to Manchester		Estimated Unit Cost	Total Cost
Trail	**Miles**	**Per Mile**	
10' wide Paved Trail - Former RR Grade	3	$ 270,000	$ 810,000
Crossings	**Quantity**	**Per Crossing**	
Continental Markings – All streets	3	$ 2,500	$ 7,500
Crosswalk Static Signs – Cross St, 240th St	2	$ 2,000	$ 4,000
RRFB – 255th St	1	$ 23,000	$ 23,000
TOTAL PRE-DESIGN COST			**$ 844,500**

Trail Segment - Hwy 13 to I-90		Estimated Unit Cost	Total Cost
Trail	**Miles**	**Per Mile**	
10' wide Paved Trail - Former RR Grade	2.5	$ 270,000	$ 675,000
Bridge Rehab (4 bridges – incl Shoff Park)	1	$ 367,000	$ 367,000
Crossings	**Quantity**	**Per Crossing**	
Continental Markings – All streets	3	$ 2,500	$ 7,500
Crosswalk Static Signs – 225th, Sunset St	2	$ 2,000	$ 4,000
RRFB – 220th St	1	$ 23,000	$ 23,000
TOTAL PRE-DESIGN COST			**$ 1,076,500**

Trail Segment - Highway 13 Crossing		Estimated Unit Cost	Total Cost
Trail	**Miles**	**Per Mile**	
10' wide Paved Trail - Former RR Grade	0.1	$ 270,000	$ 27,000
Crossings	**Quantity**	**Per Crossing**	
Continental Markings – doubled due to width	2	$ 2,500	$ 5,000
PHB	1	$ 150,000	$ 150,000
Pedestrian Refuge Island	1	$ 30,000	$ 30,000
TOTAL PRE-DESIGN COST			**$ 212,000**

This cost opinion assumes a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon with a center pedestrian refuge for crossing Highway 13. However, the preferred crossing for Highway 13 would be grade-separated, such as a trail tunneled under the road. An engineering feasibility study and cost opinion should be completed to evaluate the viability of that preference. The next preferred intersection treatment would be a roundabout with a dedicated trail crossing at a nearby intersection of Highway 13.

Planning Level Cost Opinions by Segment

Trail Segment - AL North - W Front Street to Shoff Park		Estimated Unit Cost	Total Cost
Trail	**Miles**	**Per Mile**	
10' wide Paved Trail - Former RR Grade	1.2	$ 270,000	$ 324,000
10' wide Paved Sidepath - Urban	0.2	$ 390,000	$ 78,000
Crossings	**Quantity**	**Per Crossing**	
Continental Markings – All streets including W Front	6	$ 2,500	$ 15,000
Crosswalk Static Signs – Winter Ave, Summer Ave, Water St	3	$ 2,000	$ 6,000
RRFB – W Fountain St, W Clark St	2	$ 23,000	$ 46,000
Curb Extension – W Fountain St, W Clark St	2	$ 15,000	$ 30,000
TOTAL PRE-DESIGN COST			**$ 499,000**

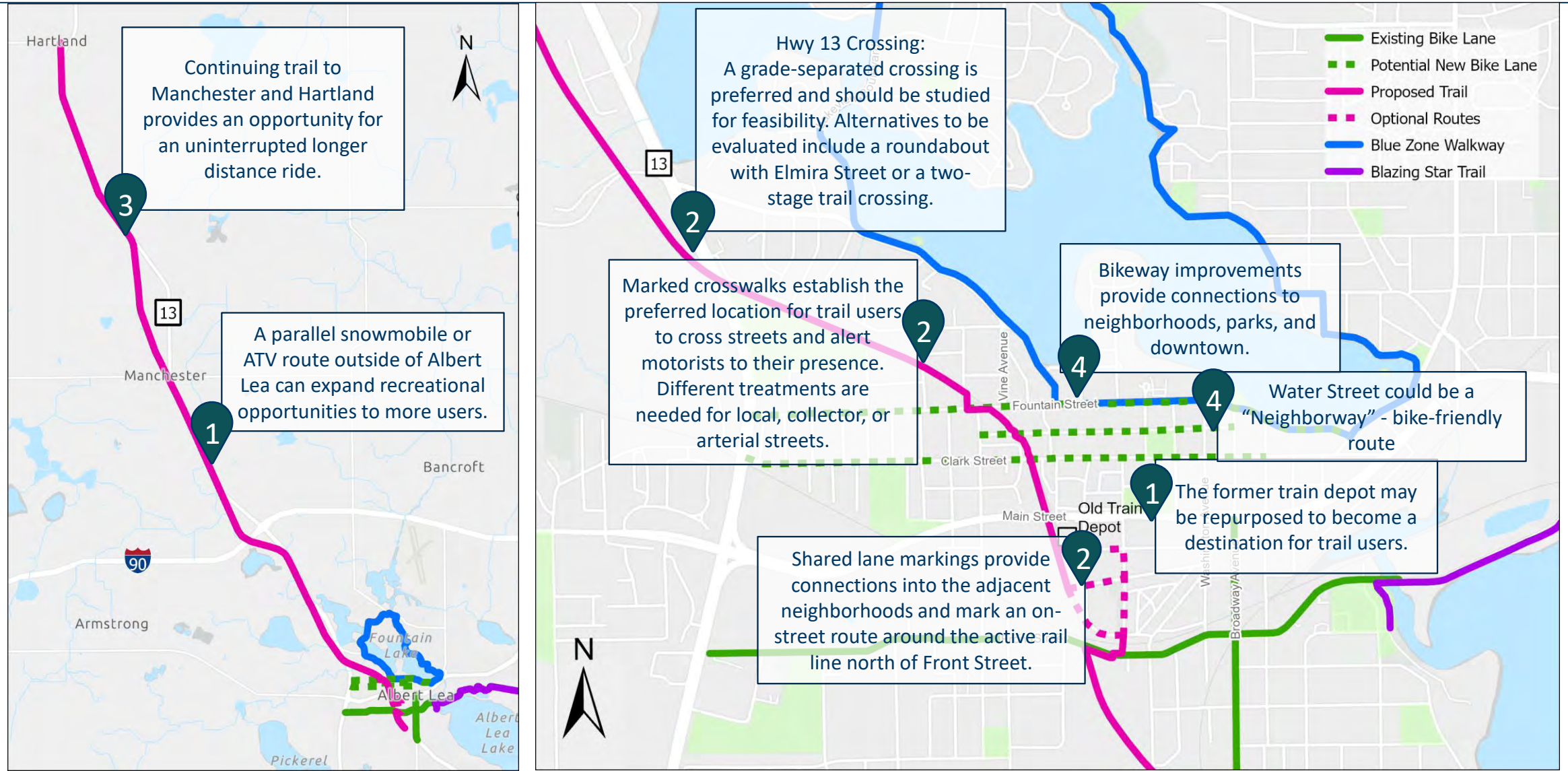
Curb extensions work when on-street parking is retained. If on-street parking is removed to allow for buffered or protected bike lanes, then a raised crosswalk may be considered instead.

Trail Segment - AL South - W 9th Street to W Front Street		Estimated Unit Cost	Total Cost
Trail	**Miles**	**Per Mile**	
10' wide Paved Trail - Former RR Grade	1	$ 270,000	$ 270,000
Crossings	**Quantity**	**Per Crossing**	
Continental Markings – All streets	1	$ 2,500	$ 2,500
RRFB – S 4th Ave	1	$ 23,000	$ 23,000
TOTAL PRE-DESIGN COST			**$ 295,500**

Trail Segment - Pickerel Lake Park to W 9th Street		Estiamted Unit Cost	Total Cost
Path/Trail	**Miles**	**Per Mile**	
10' wide Paved Trail - Former RR Grade	1.4	$ 270,000	$ 378,000
Crossings	**Quantity**	**Per Crossing**	
Continental Markings – All streets	2	$ 2,500	$ 5,000
RRFB – W 9th St; Hwy 69	2	$ 23,000	$ 46,000
TOTAL PRE-DESIGN COST			**$ 429,000**

Priority Routes and Projects

These maps present key strategies to advance Albert Lea and Freeborn County's trail vision. The numbers correlate to the table to follow.



Short Term Priority Projects

Projects identified in the following tables are the result of a planning process involving the Freeborn County Trails Team and the Planning Assistance Team. In order to move towards implementation, each project will need additional public engagement and engineering analysis.

What are we working to achieve?	What are we going to investigate?	Who is involved?
1) Create a trail that serves as a regional destination	• Develop connections between the trail and existing pedestrian and bike facilities to create longer trip opportunities and connect multiple destinations • Create unique features, trail amenities, and beauty that establishes an identity for the trail route • Convert blighted area along Adams Avenue into an appealing trailhead and park space, including the old train depot • Create and use a brand identity for physical infrastructure and promotional efforts • Promote the trail through creative special events and programming • Ensure many trail uses are accommodated, including snowmobiles and ATVs	• Trail advocacy groups: Freeborn County Trail Association, Albert Lea Area Cyclists, BikeMN • Freeborn Co Snowmobile Assoc. • City of Albert Lea • Freeborn County • CVB and Chamber

2) Ensure safety for all trail users	• Construct trail crossings that prioritize trail users over motorized traffic, shorten crossing distances, and promote visibility.
	• Study trail/Highway 13 intersection for major trail crossing treatment such as:
	  • Grade separation
	  • Roundabout - with Elmira Street or Sunset Street
	  • Two-stage trail crossing
		• State
		• City
		• Neighborhood resident support

Medium Term Priority Projects

What are we working to achieve?	What are we going to investigate?	Who is involved?
3) Improve recreation and active lifestyle opportunities for Freeborn County residents	• Extend trail north toward Manchester and Hartland • Complete Blazing Star Trail connection • Plan bike routes and wayfinding signage to trail in south Albert Lea	• Residents along trail corridor • ATV/Snowmobile groups • City of Albert Lea • Freeborn County

4) Attract trail visitors to downtown	• Create an all ages and abilities bikeway along a local street that connects between the trail and downtown.
	  • Fountain Street and Clark Street could have buffered or separated bike lanes
	  • Water Street could be a “neighborway” – a bike- and walk-friendly route with traffic calming
	• Install multi-language wayfinding signage that directs visitors to trail connections and downtown
		• Residents along proposed bikeways
		• CVB
		• Mayo Clinic
		• City of Albert Lea

Long Term Priority Projects

What are we working to achieve?	What are we going to investigate?	Who is involved?
5) Maintain enthusiasm among residents for active transportation	• Continue to engage with youth • Continue to engage with immigrant communities • Continue to engage with adjacent neighborhoods and schools	• Skatepark users • Church communities

Trail and Bikeway Development Toolbox

SECTION 4

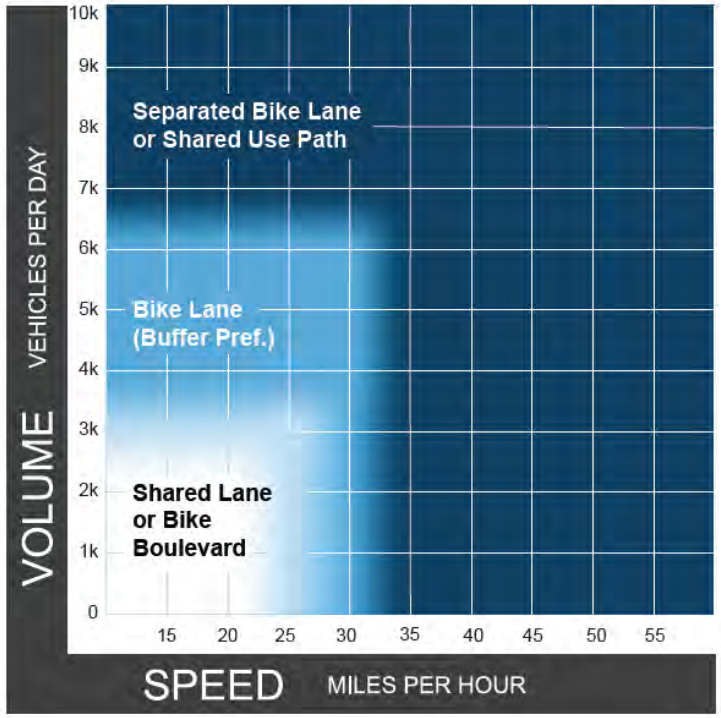
Trail and Bikeway Planning and Design

This Trail and Bikeway Development Toolbox presents design techniques that can be used to create a trail and experience that fulfills the active transportation principles of safety, comfort, coherence, directness and attractiveness.

Transforming the old railroad corridor to a trail route development requires consideration of:

- the trail corridor itself, including:
  - trail route and design
  - trail amenities
  - landscaping
- improvements at street and highway crossings, such as:
  - marked crosswalks and signage
  - curb extensions
  - rectangular rapid flashing beacons
  - pedestrian hybrid beacons
  - roundabouts
  - grade-separated crossing (e.g., tunnel)

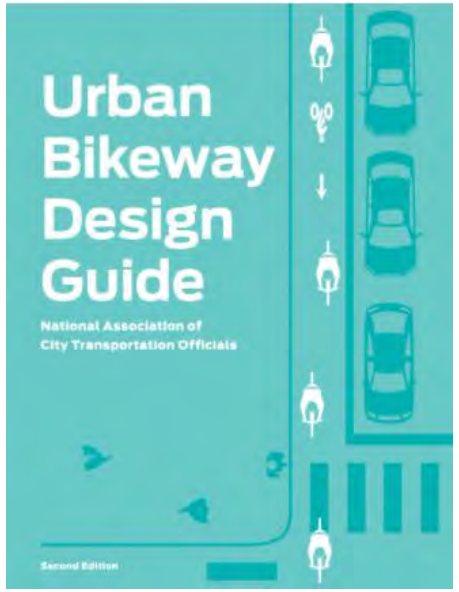
The design should also consider pedestrian and bikeway connections to nearby destinations to begin to create an active transportation network. On-street connections may be created through shared lane markings along "neighborways", standard bike lanes, buffered bike lanes or separated bike lanes, as suitable for the particular street characteristics.



The greater the traffic volume and speed, the greater the need for separation for people biking and walking.

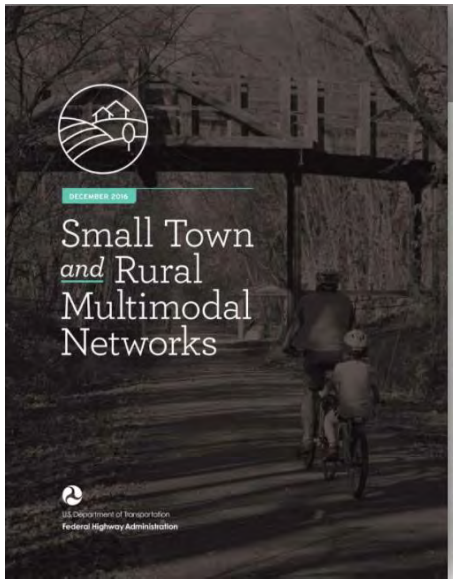
Source: FHWA Bikeway Selection Guide, 2019

Trail and Bicycle Facility Design Guidance



Urban Bikeway Design Guide

National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), 2014

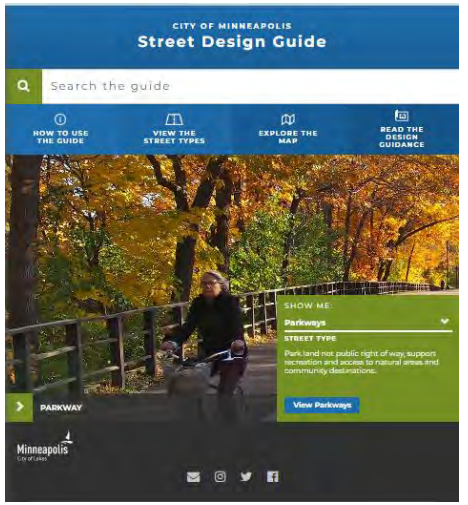


Small Town and Rural Design Guide

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), 2016

Bicycle Facility Design Manual

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), 2020



Minneapolis Street Design Guide

City of Minneapolis, 2021

There are several excellent national design resources available for trails and bikeways. The *Urban Bikeway Design Guide* is excellent for developing all ages and abilities networks. The *Small Town and Rural Design Guide* provides design details for trails as well as on-street bikeways. A little closer to home, Minnesota Department of Transportation has developed their own design manual, including a bicycle facilities section, and the City of Minneapolis has their own street design guide. These local guides provide designs that are suitable for the challenges of winter maintenance.

Paved Trails / Shared Use Paths

SHARED USE PATHS

Paved trails (also known as shared use paths) are completely separated from motorized traffic and are shared by people walking and biking and traveling in both directions. They are generally 10 to 14 feet wide. In constrained circumstances, 8 feet wide is allowed.

Source: AASHTO (2012), Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 4th Edition

Greenway or Rail-Trails: are shared use paths on independent alignments that might follow former railroads, waterways, utilities, or other types of greenway corridors. The proposed Freeborn County Trail would primarily be considered a rail-trail since it follows a former railroad corridor.

Sidepath trails: are bidirectional shared use paths that run parallel to the roadway. Roadway intersections and driveway crossings require consideration to protect trail users. Portions of the proposed trail along West Front Street and West Fountain Street would not follow the former railroad grade and would instead be aligned parallel to the roadways; those segments would fit the definition of a sidepath trail.

Mid-Block Crossings

PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY

The former railroad crossed the streets at an angle; however, people biking and walking should cross streets perpendicularly. Perpendicular crossings are shorter and therefore reduce the time that people walking and biking are exposed to people driving (potential conflict). Additionally, when the trail approaches the crossing at a perpendicular angle, people can easily look both left and right for oncoming traffic.

All mid-block crossings should include pavement markings and signage along with sufficient lighting for improved visibility. The crossing design should make it clear to motorists to expect people in the roadway.

RRFBs could be added to any crossing as an enhancement and are recommended for West Fountain Street and existing at West Front Street.

Continental Marked Crosswalk: are high-visibility pavement markings recommended for safe routes to school and other pedestrian priority areas (also note pedestrian refuges).

Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs): uses standard bicycle and pedestrian warning signs coupled with brightly flashing rectangles, which may be passively activated or upon someone pushing a button. This is a proven safety countermeasure which improves motorists' compliance with yielding to pedestrians in the crosswalk.

Crossing Enhancements

PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY

Crossings prioritize people walking as the most vulnerable users of the roadway. People biking are also prioritized as vulnerable users when they share space with motorists. Crossing enhancements elevate these vulnerable road users—both literally and figuratively—to increase their visibility and make it clear to motorists to always expect and yield to crossing users.

Curb extensions are recommended for West Fountain Street (if on-street parking remains in place) due to its function as part of a safe route to school. These enhancements should be considered for West Clark Street and other local streets such Water Street.

Raised Crosswalks: serve double duty as a traffic calming measure and a pedestrian facility. The raised crosswalk elevates pedestrians to improve visibility and indicate their priority for crossing the street. The taper of the raised table can be designed for snow removal. This example also includes a pedestrian refuge where people can pause to watch for oncoming traffic.

Curb Extensions: extend the protected pedestrian area into the parking lane, which alerts motorists to the presence of a crossing and narrows the roadway width, encouraging lower vehicular speed. The reduced crossing distance means trail users spend less time exposed to vehicular traffic, and motorists don't have to wait as long for people to cross the street.

Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons

PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY

Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (also known as HAWK - High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk) are a proven safety countermeasure suitable for crossing higher speed (35 mph or more) and higher volume (9,000 annual average daily traffic or more) roadways and wider crossings. The signal remains dark until activated, then turns yellow to slow traffic before tuning red to allow pedestrians to cross while motorists wait behind at the stop bar. The crossing must also include a marked crosswalk and pedestrian countdown signals.

This treatment could be considered as an optional upgrade at the proposed trail crossings of West Fountain Street (30 mph, 4,800 AADT) due to its dual role as a safe route to school and trail crossing and West Front Street (30 mph, 6,200 AADT), if needed upon increased trail usage.

Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons are proven to reduce pedestrian crashes by 55 percent, total crashes by 29 percent, and serious injury and fatal crashes by 15 percent.

Source: https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures/pedestrian-hybrid-beacons

MN Highway 13 Crossing

BALANCING PRIORITIES

Minnesota Highway 13 was built across the former railroad corridor, creating a barrier for continuing the trail along the preferred railroad grade alignment. To address the challenge of crossing a higher speed (45 mph) and higher volume (6,900 AADT) roadway, the trail may continue under the highway, it may be diverted to a nearby intersection (which would be reconfigured to a roundabout), or it may continue to cross with two-stage at-grade improvements. A grade-separated crossing would be preferred and should be studied for engineering feasibility.

Grade Separation: eliminates conflicts between trail and highway users by providing separated facilities and no intersections. The preferred trail route would provide a tunnel under the highway so that both motorists and trail users can continue along their journeys without interruption.

Roundabout: a single-lane roundabout can handle up to 25,000 vehicles per day, while traffic slows to the design speed and yields to trail users in the crosswalk. A pedestrian hybrid beacon can be added to the crosswalks to establish the trail users' priority. A roundabout at Elmira Street, or farther north with Sunset Street, should be studied as an option for the trail to cross the highway.

Two-stage crossings: are designed for trail users to slow down, yield to motorized traffic, and cross one direction of traffic at a time. This design prioritizes motorized traffic by allowing it to continue uninterrupted, while trail users wait for a gap in traffic. However, the addition of a marked crosswalk and Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon would establish the trail user as having priority for crossing and motorists would need to stop when the beacon is activated.

Right-Sizing Streets

To make streets safer for people walking, biking and driving, many communities are reallocating the number of vehicle lanes or lane widths in order to direct additional space towards trails, wider sidewalks, bike lanes, street trees, on-street parking and more.

Narrower Lanes: Narrowing lanes can reduce the operating speed of traffic while also providing the width needed for bikeways. Ten-feet-wide lanes have a positive impact on a street's safety without impacting traffic operations (NACTO.org). A default street width of 10 feet, with allowances to widen to 11 feet in certain circumstances (e.g., transit or truck routes), can improve traffic safety community-wide. On multiple-lane transit or truck routes, the outside lane may be 11-feet-wide, while the inside lanes remain at 10-feet-wide.

AASHTO's *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*—commonly referred to as the "Green Book"—provides flexibility to use 10-feet-wide travel lanes in a variety of situations depending on operating speeds, volumes, traffic mix, horizontal curvature, use of on-street parking and street context. Ten-feet-wide lanes do not result in an increase in crashes or reduce vehicle capacity on roads with speeds of 45 mph or less. Narrower lane widths can contribute to lower vehicle operating speeds, which can increase safety for all roadway users (FHWA Bicycle Selection Guide).

Reduced Number of Lanes: Right-sizing streets from 5- or 4-lane roads to 3- or 2-lanes works best on streets that have daily traffic volumes of less than 20,000 vehicles. As streets reach the higher traffic volumes additional intersection treatments such as the modern roundabout might be needed to more effectively manage the vehicular traffic.

MnDOT's *Performance-Based Practical Design Guide* notes that given, "the obvious economic and environmental advantages of narrower cross sections, designers should favor narrower lane dimensions unless wider dimensions can be justified on the basis of expected performance. **Consideration should originate at 10 feet for design speeds of 20 to 35 mph and 11 feet for 40 mph design speeds and greater,** with flexibility either wider or narrower depending on circumstances"(page 25).

Main Street in Hamburg, NY is a major state truck route carrying 12,000 vehicles per day. The town of Hamburg and NYDOT removed two travel lanes and narrowed the remaining two lanes to 10-feet-wide, allowing wider sidewalks, park assist lanes and additional street trees.

Parking / curb zone	"park assist" lane	10-ft travel lane

Buffered and Separated Bike Lanes

DEDICATED BIKE LANES

The standard 5-feet-wide bike lane has evolved to better meet the needs of all types of bicyclists. Increasing separation and protection of people biking improves comfort and safety for riders. It also improves coherence since the preferred place for people riding is clearly marked on the pavement and with signage.

West Front Street would be most suited to separated bike lanes due to its speed and traffic volume (30 mph, 6,200 AADT). West Fountain Street would be most suited to buffered bike lanes (30 mph, AADT 4,800). West Clark Street may be improved with standard or buffered bike lanes (25 mph, AADT 1,950).

Buffered Bike Lanes: provide a painted buffer between the bike lane and the travel lane to increase the separation between the two modes. The buffer width is typically 2 to 3 feet wide, while the bike lane is typically 5 to 7 feet wide. A buffer may be provided between the parking lane, if present, and the bike lane as well, to help prevent 'dooring' of bicyclists. Green paint can be added either behind the bike symbol (as shown) or within the full width of the lane to further call attention to the bike lane.

Physically Separated Bike Lanes: provide a vertical barrier between the bike lane and the motorized travel lane. This may be in the form of flexible bollards, a row of parked cars, a raised curb, concrete barriers, landscaped planters and more! A wider buffer of 3 to 4 feet accounts for a "shy distance" for the bicyclist from the vertical element. (Separated bike lanes are also known as protected bike lanes or cycle tracks.)

Neighborways

BICYCLE-FRIENDLY SHARED ROUTES

Local streets with low volumes and low speeds can be used as bicycle and pedestrian-friendly routes. Signage and pavement markings indicate the street is a preferred route for people biking. If speeds are greater than 20 mph, traffic calming measures may be implemented to slow traffic. If traffic volumes are greater than desired (the maximum is up to about 3,000 AADT), then traffic diversion measures may be implemented.

Streets such as Winter Avenue, Summer Avenue and Water Street are good candidates for shared routes.

Shared Lane Markings: mark the bicycle-friendly routes and should be accompanied by the “Bikes May Use Full Lane” sign.

Traffic Diversion: To reduce traffic volume, diverters can prevent motorists from continuing on a prioritized neighborway, while allowing people biking and walking to continue through. Diverters may be used for neighborhood beatification and stormwater management as well.

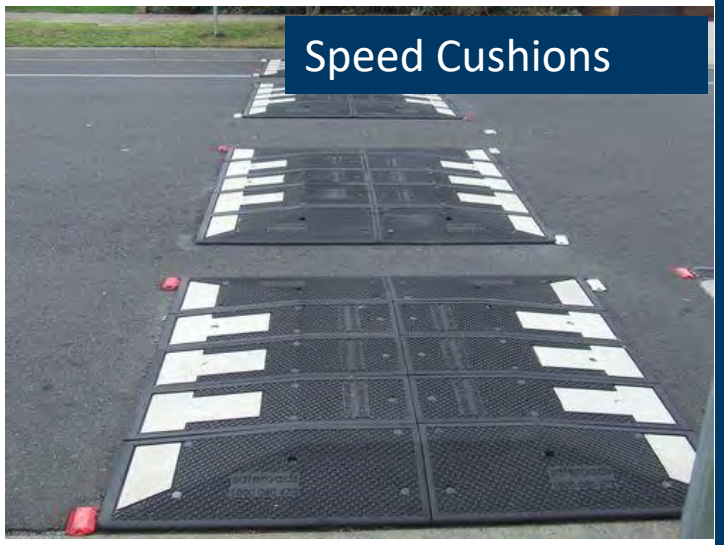
Traffic Calming Measures

SLOWING TRAFFIC BY DESIGN

In areas where people biking and walking are sharing space with people driving, such as along neighborways, traffic speed should be slowed to 20 mph or less. Posted speed limits alone are insufficient to ensure compliance. Street design can slow traffic by requiring motorists to either move up and down (e.g., over a speed table or speed cushion) or move left and right (e.g., chicane, medians, roundabout).

Visually narrowing the roadway (striping, landscaping, buildings closer to the street) can have a positive effect on lowering traffic speeds.

Chicane



Speed Cushions

Citywide 20 mph Speed Limit

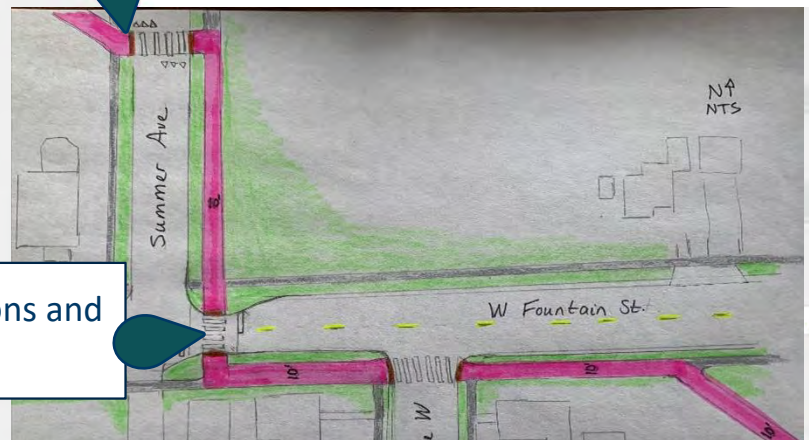
Short Medians and Chicanes

West Fountain Street and Summer Avenue

Summer Avenue connects directly to Lakeview Elementary School with sidewalks along both sides of the street. A **marked and signed crosswalk** for the trail across this local street will further establish this pedestrian-friendly route.

Marked and Signed Crosswalk

Curb Extensions and RRFBs

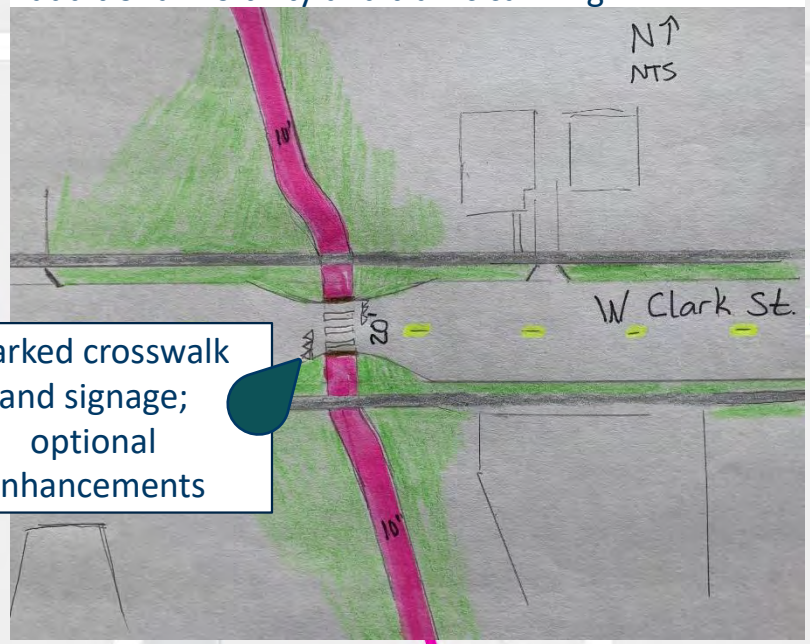


The trail alignment should cross perpendicularly rather than at the angle that the former railroad crossing would suggest. The trail crossing can be given priority with the recommended addition of **curb extensions** (if on-street parking remains) and an optional enhancement of a **raised crosswalk**. **RRFBs** should be added to call attention to the crosswalk in use. An optional upgrade to a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon could be considered since children walking to and from Lakeview Elementary would benefit from the increased compliance by motorists and the countdown crosswalk timer that provides clarity to them on when it is safe to cross. A school zone speed limit of 15 mph using signage that indicates the speed applies "when flashing" can also improve the visibility of this crossing for students.

Buffered bike lanes on West Fountain Street provide extra comfort and encourage trail users to connect from the trail towards downtown to the east and to the neighborhoods and Shoff Park to the west. An alternative cross section would allow retention of parking on one side of the street by narrowing travel lanes, bike lanes and buffers.

West Clark Street

A **marked crosswalk** and **trail crossing** signage should be installed at West Clark Street. Optional **RRFBs, curb extensions** (if on-street parking remains)**, and/or raised crosswalk** could provide additional visibility and traffic calming.



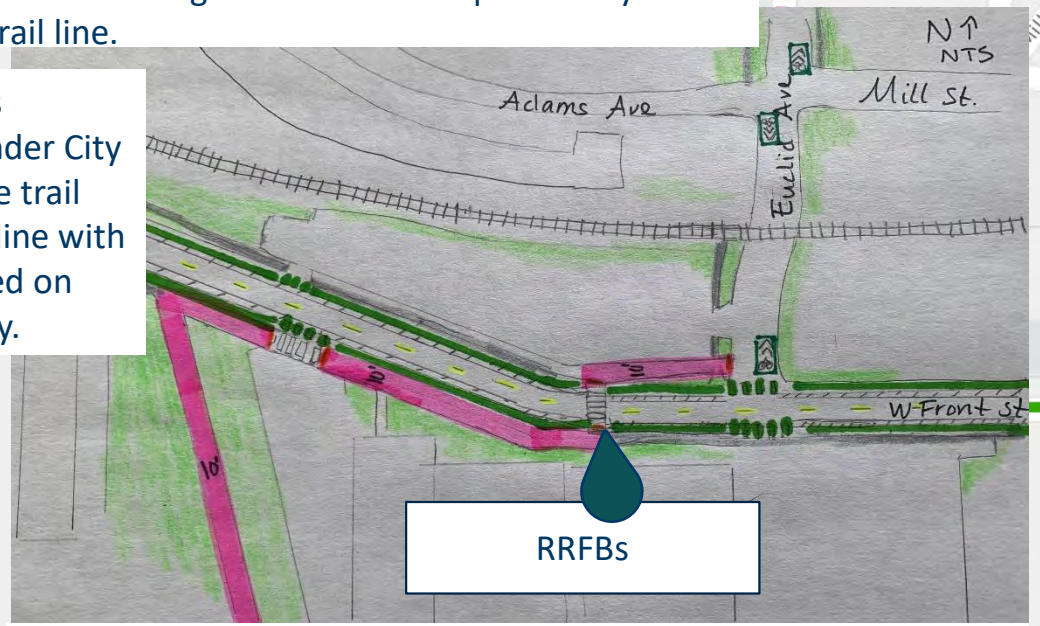
Marked crosswalk and signage; optional enhancements

Buffered bike lanes on West Clark Street provide extra comfort and encourage trail users to connect from the trail towards downtown to the east. Clark Street also connects between Hayek Park and Central Park. On-street parking could remain on one side of the street.

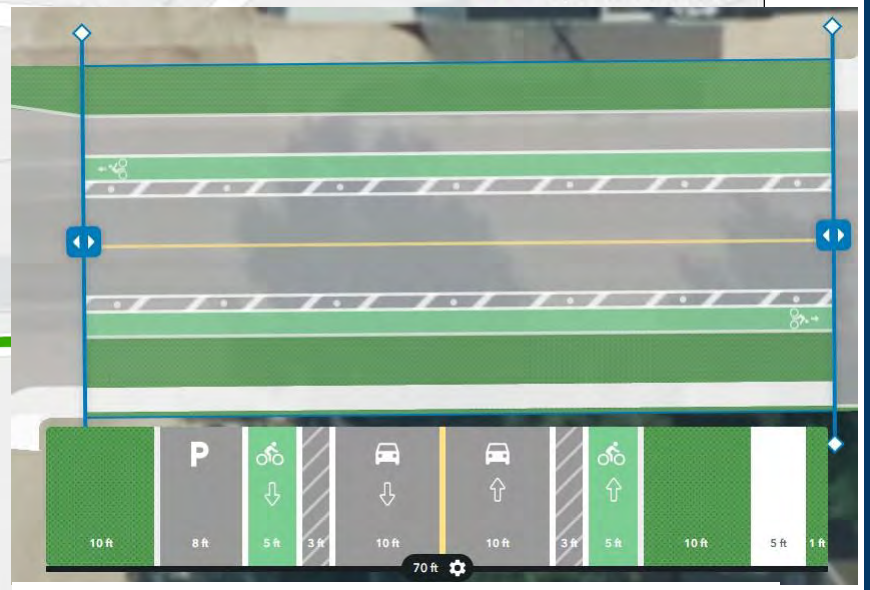
West Front Street and Euclid Avenue

People biking may feel comfortable mixing with traffic on the low-speed and low-volume road of Euclid Avenue. **Shared lane markings** along with Bikes May Use Full Lane signage may be used to mark the route between the trail segments that are separated by the active trail line.

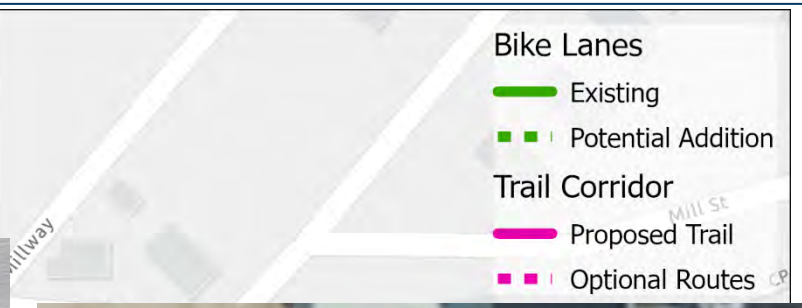
If the buildings south of Adams Avenue, which are currently under City ownership, are demolished, the trail route may cross the active rail line with Euclid Avenue and be developed on the vacant City-owned property.



There are existing **RRFBs** at a pedestrian crossing of West Front Street, which may remain sufficient signage to mark the trail crossing. The City should monitor the crossing after the trail is built to determine if enhancements, such as a **Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon**, are needed as bicycle and pedestrian crossing volumes increase and traffic volumes potentially also increase.



The bike lanes along West Front Street could be improved with a painted buffer and vertical elements to create **separated bike lanes** which would improve comfort for all ages and abilities.



Amenities

Amenities help create a unique trail experience while also establishing community character and sense of place.

NOTE ON PRIVACY FENCING

When developing trails near private property, adjacent property owners may have concerns about loss of privacy due to the public using a trail near their backyards. Privacy fencing and landscaping may alleviate those concerns.

When fencing and landscaping are included with trail design and construction, be sure to clarify in writing who will own and maintain the fence or landscaping – the local governmental jurisdiction or the private property owner – to avoid questions in the future.

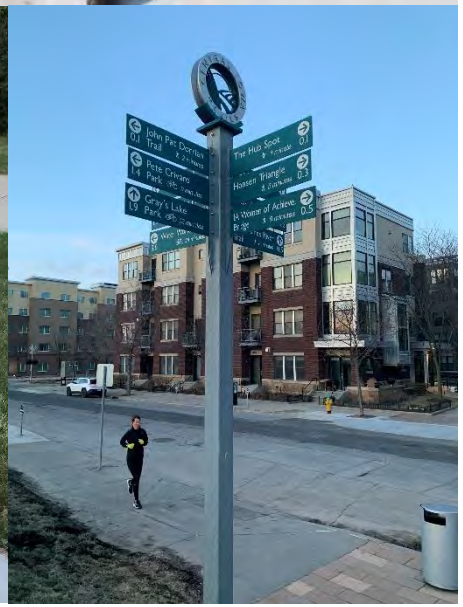
What features would you like to see along the proposed trail?

Rank these improvements from most (1) important to least important (10).

OPTIONS	AVG. RANK
Amenities such as restrooms, drinking fountains, bike fix-it stations, etc.	2.33
Lighting or other safety improvements	2.62
Seating or picnic areas	3.72
Nature and signage describing the environment	5.02
Play areas for children	5.57
Historical features and signage describing history	5.68
Mountain bike trail offshoots or similar dirt trails	5.94
Outdoor exercise equipment	7.11
Artwork	7.57
Skateboard amenities	8.01

MOST ▲ LEAST

Survey respondents also wrote in “dog waste stations” as a desirable amenity.



Shifting the Culture

SECTION 5

How Do We Spread the Word?

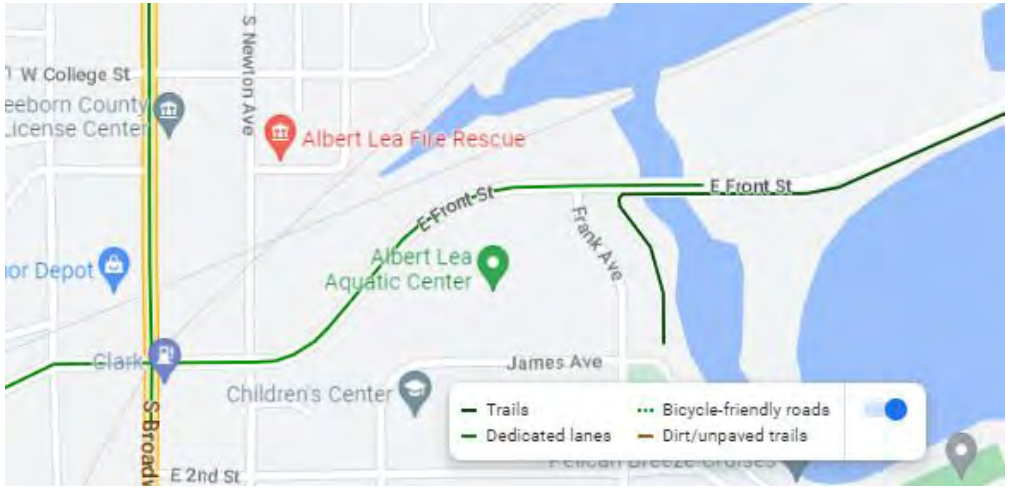
SHIFTING THE CULTURE

Part of the success of a new trail network is ensuring the residents and visitors can see, understand, and be excited about it! In addition to safe infrastructure, other factors that influence a culture that supports trails and active transportation include marketing, programming and the City's maintenance policies.

The City of Albert Lea has already completed several efforts to establish a culture of wellness and physical activity through the Blue Zones program. Remember to celebrate your successes and let others know how these efforts benefit the community!

Branding and Marketing Campaign – Creating a brand for a trail can help people, especially tourists, recognize the local opportunities for walking and biking. The branding can help establish an identify for the trial by reflecting local culture, history, or character.

Mapping – A map is essential to bring new users to experience a trail. The map should include points of interest, amenities such as parking, restrooms and water. Additionally, newcomers often use an online tool such as Google or Apple maps to find a good route, so online resources should be kept up-to-date through coordination with those platforms. Wayfinding signage and physical maps along the trail are helpful for a more coherent experience.



How Do We Make it Fun?

Special Events – Hosting special events for education and encouragement purposes can encourage new riders to get out and explore. These types of events may be hosted by the City, a non-profit organization, or a neighborhood group.

- National Bike Month
- Bike Rodeos (with helmet or bike give aways)
- Cyclovia! Open Streets
- Organized Rides
- Group Rides
- Bike Commute Challenges
- Bike Repair Classes

Recognition Program – Businesses can benefit from more people biking and walking. A "Bicycle Friendly Business" designation can indicate where active transportation users might find water, food, restroom, or even bike repair tools and supplies. Even a hair salon could offer a warm, wet towel to wash your face after a ride.

How Do We Educate about New Facilities?

Education – Both riders and motorists need to understand the rights and responsibilities of all users of the transportation system. When new facilities are installed, such as a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon, the City should provide information to the public on how that device functions and the benefits that it provides.

Pursue educational efforts with students through physical education and health classes, or through programs like Walk! Bike! Fun! offered through the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota. Empowering youth to bike safely and confidently aids a group that is often dependent on active transportation and ensures that the next generation sees biking as a both a fun activity and an important mode of transportation.

Existing Resources – For all education and encouragement efforts, make use of existing resources! There are national organizations, such as the League of American Bicyclists and AARP, that provide resources for advocacy, education and encouragement. There are state resources, such as Explore Minnesota that can boost marketing. Of course, the Bike Alliance of Minnesota can serve as a first stop for your resource needs. You don't need to start from scratch.

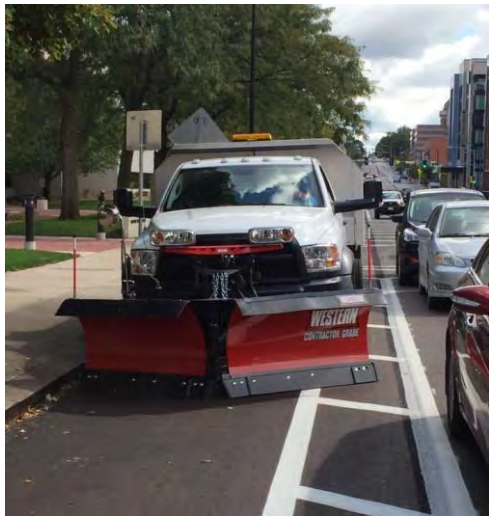
Winter Maintenance

PEOPLE WALK & BIKE YEAR ROUND

People biking and walking are susceptible to the negative impacts of delayed maintenance. People walking, biking or using a mobility aid are often discouraged from venturing outdoors when snow and ice can impede their ability to safely access their destination. Year-round maintenance of walking and biking surfaces, pavement markings, and signage are necessary to ensure equitable mobility for all.

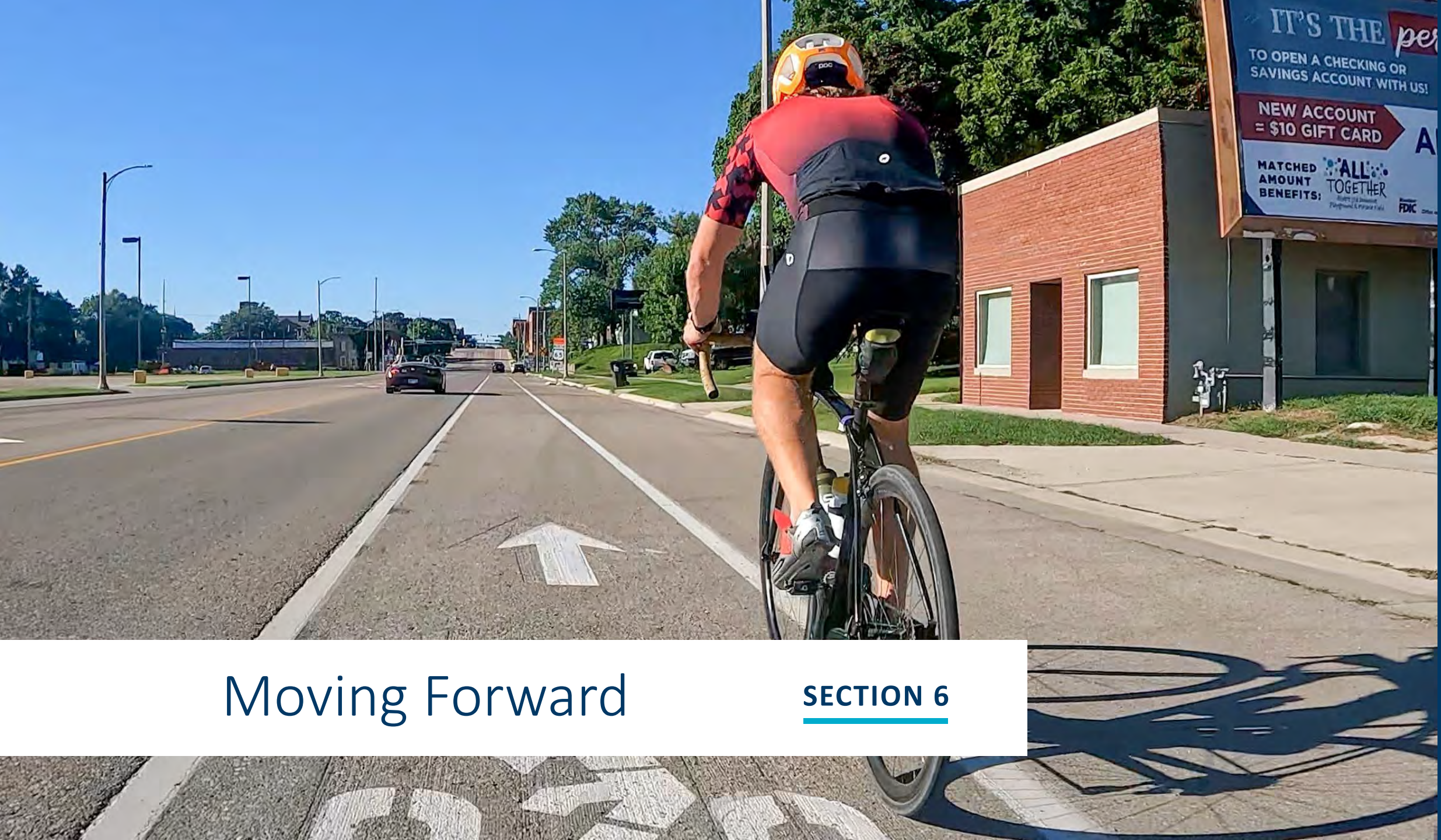
Key principles to guide how to winter maintenance policy and practice:

- Priority Network: Identify which routes are the highest priority for snow clearing (e.g., route to school).
- Frequency of Clearing: Specify the amount of accumulated snow that is acceptable before clearing will commence. Common accumulation is 1 inch.
- Clear Width: What minimum width of cleared path along a bikeway or multi-use trail is allowable? For example, cities specify a minimum of 4 feet for narrowest operable space along a separated bike lane.
- Responsibility: Identify the responsible party and put into place necessary agreements.



All Clear: Historic snow volumes didn't stop Cambridge, MA from prioritizing snow removal of separated bikeways. A small bobcat style plow was used.

A small portion of a trail could be plowed for biking and walking while another portion could be left unplowed for skiing and snowshoeing. Alternatively, some communities do not plow rural trails (but do plow in-town), to allow for snowmobile, skiing, or snowshoeing usage. Snowmobiles with metal traction devices can damage paved surfaces and should not be used on trails.



Moving Forward

SECTION 6

State and Federal Funding for Active Transportation

Source	Grants	Purpose
FHWA	Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)	Planning and infrastructure that improves transportation safety for all modes
MnDOT	Active Transportation	Infrastructure, planning assistance, quick-build/demonstration projects and technical assistance.
MnDOT	Safe Routes to School - Boost grant	Support current SRTS plans and programs
MnDOT	Safe Routes to School - Infrastructure	Construct sidewalks; improve crossings
MnDOT	Transportation Alternatives (TAP) – Federal funding	Pedestrian and bike facilities
MnDOT	State Aid for Local Transportation (SALT)	Highway projects
MnDNR	Regional Trail Grant	Motorized, non-motorized, and joint trail usage
MnDNR	Bus grant	Up to $5,000 for bus service to state parks to attend programming
MnDNR	Federal Recreational Trail Program – Federal funding	Trails and trailhead construction
GMRPTC	Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program	“Regionally Designated” parks and trails can be funded
LCCMR	Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)	Activities that protect, conserve, preserve and enhances Minnesota's air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources

In addition to local Capital Improvement Program funds, local jurisdictions may seek state and federal funding to assist with development of the active transportation network. Most programs involve applying through one of these agencies:

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR)
- Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC)
- Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)

Grants are sometimes also available through organizations that support economic development and tourism, public health, and conservation and the natural environment. Private donations are popular for projects that support community recreation and well-being.

What Comes Next?

The planning process ends, but the Plan continues to help Albert Lea and Freeborn County take steps toward advancing this first trail segment into a longer trail vision.

As the community moves forward with implementing the priorities identified in this plan, coordination will be an integral theme. Intergovernmental coordination is needed for projects along or across highways that are under the County or State jurisdiction. Additional coordination with the public is needed as the ideas in this plan are developed into concepts and progress through engineering design and onto construction.

Next Steps

- City of Albert Lea and Freeborn County continue to advocate and implement priorities and collaborate on funding for the four phases.
- City Parks and Recreation Board
- City Council Adoption
- County Commission Adoption
- MnDOT District – Coordination
- Ongoing Public Engagement
  - Businesses
  - Schools
  - Residents – All Ages and Abilities

A Call to Action

COMMUNITY CHARGE

The planning team is excited to present this Union Pacific (UP) rail-to-trail plan based on extensive input from our community. **We believe this trail will play a key role in enhancing our quality of life and opportunities to stay active, attracting more residents and visitors, and improving pedestrian safety.**

We will seek support for the plan from the Albert Lea Parks and Recreation Board, Albert Lea City Council, Freeborn County Board and Freeborn County Trails Association. City and county governments will then work to secure grant funding to build the trail in phases.

The community can continue to support the plan by staying informed, helping maintain existing trails, and taking part in events that celebrate our local trail system such as Rock and Roll the Lakes and Bike to School Day.

> As an avid user of trails, I look forward to the development of the UP property. Residents of Freeborn County will benefit from an extended trail that encourages all of us to be outdoors, exercising, enjoying nature, and interacting with members of our community. Trails can revitalize businesses in small towns, and such development demonstrates how private and public local leaders care about community well-being."
>
> - Freeborn County Commissioner Nicole Eckstrom