

WINDOM-WOLF LAKE CONNECTION TRAIL PLAN

A PLANNING DOCUMENT FOR THE CREATION OF A NEW
OUTDOOR RECREATION AMENITY IN WINDOM, MN

July 2020



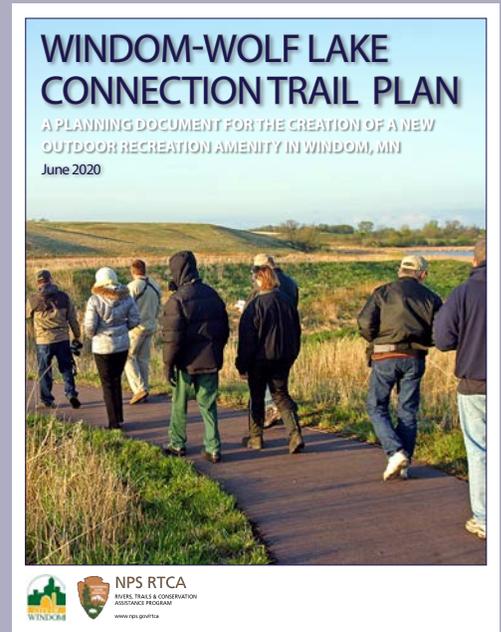
NPS RTCA

RIVERS, TRAILS & CONSERVATION
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

www.nps.gov/rtca

PREFACE

In June 2019, the City of Windom began a trail planning process for the Connection Trail from the City of Windom to the Wings on the Prairie Discovery Center at Wolf Lake Waterfowl Production Area, a property of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. This Trail Plan document is the product of this process.



Content & Editing Team

Barett Steenrod

Drew Hage

Lindsey Englar

Luke Ewald

Phil Nasby

Todd Luke

Special thanks to Barett Steenrod, Drew Hage, Lindsey Englar, Luke Ewald, Phil Nasby and Todd Luke for editing and review of this document.

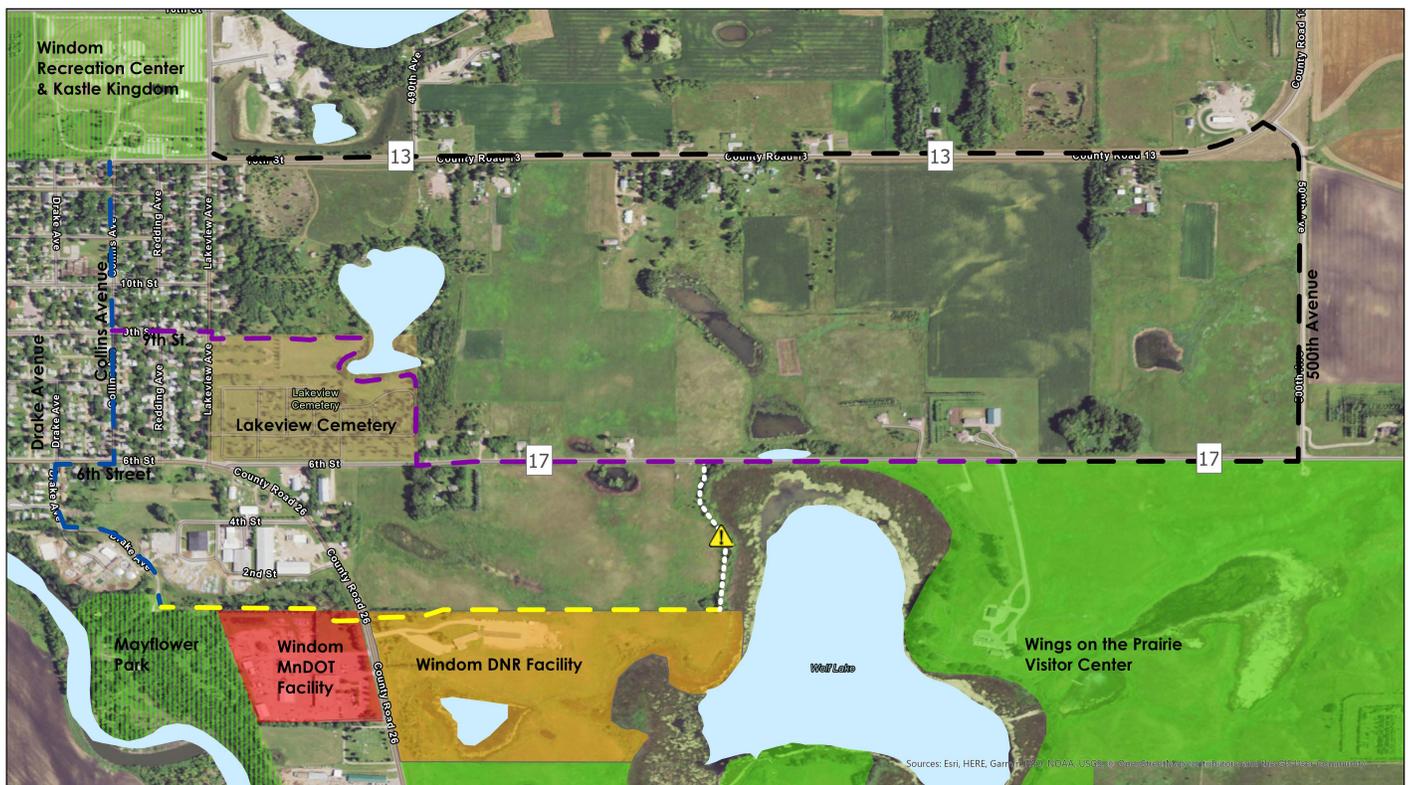
This report was designed using resources from the National Park Service, the City of Windom, Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services, Windom Area Health, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Cover photo from USFWS. All other imagery used with permission from USFWS, NPS, Pixaby or Shutterstock.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wolf Lake Connection Trail Plan is an summary of possible routes based on a community planning process. The preferred trail route is shown in the map and is the product of a nine-month community engagement process whereby the Windom Community was provided multiple opportunities to provide their input. When surveyed, residents of Windom responded with broad support for a connection trail to Wolf Lake. Important goals for the Wolf Lake Connection Trail:

- The Wolf Lake Connection Trail aims to utilize national, state, and local grant monies for design and construction.
- The Wolf Lake Connection Trail will be a multi-use, accessible, recreation trail that will provide a safe connection to a nearby and ecologically significant asset.
- The Wolf Lake Connection Trail can be expected to provide numerous economic and health benefits to existing and future residents of Windom.
- The Wolf Lake Connection Trail will be an attraction and retention tool for new residents and businesses.



A full page spread of this map can be found in the Preferred Route Chapter on page 25.

INTRODUCTION

In June 2019, the City of Windom applied for technical assistance from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service. The National Park Service program supports a partnership-based model of assistance to natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation. The purpose of this technical assistance was to facilitate a planning process for development of a connection trail from the City of Windom to the Wings on the Prairie Discovery Center and other existing paved trails.

Currently, the City of Windom's Comprehensive Plan outlines a goal to establish a connection trail between the City of Windom and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Wolf Lake Waterfowl Production Area. The Wolf Lake Waterfowl Production Area (Wolf Lake) is novel for the USFWS in Minnesota in that it features the Wings on the Prairie Discovery Center, a quarter mile paved trail along with groomed grass trails for exploring the Wolf Lake area, wildlife observation platforms, interpretive signs, and hands-on displays. These features are local and regional assets to Cottonwood County.

The community of Windom seeks a safe, non-vehicular connection to Wolf Lake. Providing a safe space for pedestrians to access Wolf Lake will, 1) encourage community members to walk and bike to Wolf Lake instead of driving,

“The community of Windom seeks a safe, non-vehicular connection to Wolf Lake.”

and 2) provide for expanded outdoor play and recreation destinations for

the 1/8 of the Windom population who are between the ages of 6-15 and unable to drive¹. A recreational connection to Wolf Lake will expand recreational activities in Windom and help to build community interest in an active lifestyle while promoting outdoor activities.

This planning document is a step in assisting Windom to achieve its quality-of-life objectives through trail development. This document outlines the planning process and consequent preferred trail corridor route for establishing a Connection Trail between Windom and Wolf Lake. This document also describes trail construction/maintenance costs, outlines grant funding sources to be used in paying for the project, and recommends the next action steps to take.





VISION

The Wolf Lake Connection Trail will be an appealing and inviting recreation amenity, an asset for bicycling walking, running, physical training, teaching & nature observation, while also acting as a key recreation destination that is safe for all ages and family groups.

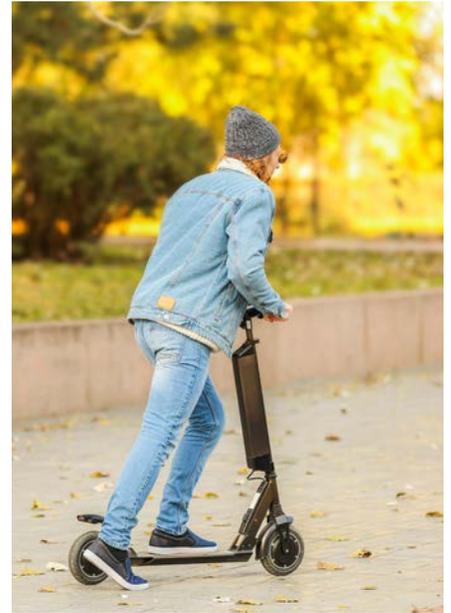
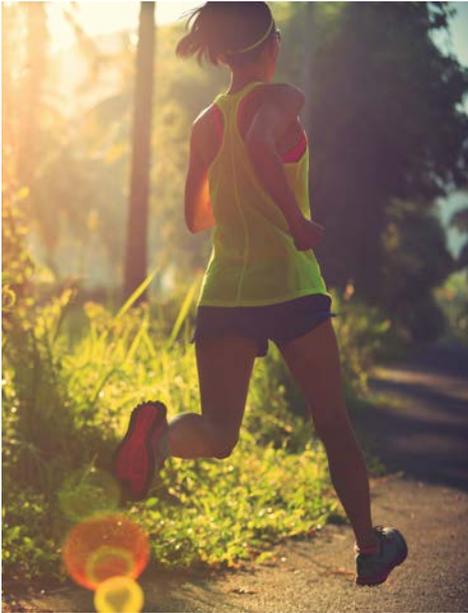
In October 2019 when the Windom Connection Trail Work Committee was first assembled (see the “Current Effort” section of the Trail Planning Process chapter) members were given the opportunity to share their vision for the Wolf Lake Connection Trail. A summary of these individual vision statements is captured in the blue text box above.

A basis for this sentiment comes from the understanding that the Wings on the Prairie Discovery Center, its existing trails, as well as the seemingly boundless natural prairie around Wolf Lake are regional assets and destinations in Southwest Minnesota. Having a trail connection from Windom to this location will make it safer and more convenient for Windom residents, especially teenagers and children, to access and use the Wolf Lake trails and visitor center

without having to rely on an automobile.

A recreation trail such as the proposed Wolf Lake Connection Trail is the type of local amenity that may help “sell” Windom as a place to relocate to for purposes of employment and raising a family, as it is evidence of the community’s effort to invest and improve itself².

Lastly, the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated the importance of park and trail facilities. During the writing of this trail plan, a global pandemic has resulted in quarantine and stay-at-home orders around the world and throughout Minnesota. Park and trail use during this time (a 2-month period and counting) has surged³ as people seek healthy ways to take a break from working and living at home, in isolation.



TRAIL BENEFITS

Trail development and use are becoming more prevalent⁴ as communities welcome the multitude of active-living benefits of having a well-connected trail system. Active living integrates physical activity into daily routines such as walking or bicycling for recreational, occupational or purposeful (transportation) reasons. Active living provides safe, desirable and convenient opportunities for physical activity. Active living policies and practices in community design, land use, site planning and walking/biking facility access are effective at increasing physical activity⁵.

Minnesota communities and organizations have been working to develop and implement active transportation policies, systems, and environmental changes that put cyclists and pedestrians into a position to be more physically active⁶. This response towards supporting physical activity in the general public is a local response to some national problems; the growing

percentage of individuals with obesity, and economic stagnation and population decline in parts of rural America. In the paragraphs that follow, the economic and health benefits of trail development are described.

Economic Benefits

In 2014, the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota stated that, "Outdoor recreation in the United States is big business. Americans spend more money on outdoor recreation than on pharmaceuticals, automobiles, gasoline, or household utilities."⁷ Outdoor recreation spending spurs job development, employing more Americans than finance, construction, transportation, education, or real estate. Data from a variety of organizations that track the economic impact of outdoor recreation in general, and trails in particular, report:

- The Minnesota Recreation Trail Users Association completed a survey in 2008,

concluding that Minnesota consumers spent \$1.4 billion at hiking and walking trails⁸.

- American Trails concludes that 90% of trail users are local, spending \$17 per day per user on the local economy (beverages, snacks, etc.); the remaining 10% of trail users were visitors, spending up to \$104 per day (lodging & dining)⁹.

Americans are also looking for recreational amenities. Data collected by the National Association of Realtors indicates outdoor recreation opportunities are an important neighborhood characteristic when looking for a home to purchase:¹⁰

- 80% of home buyers say walking trails are a top community characteristic when selecting a new home.

- 53% of home buyers say they would prefer a home with a smaller yard close to a park versus a home with a larger yard but no nearby parks.

- 52% of home buyers say nearby bike trails is an important factor when choosing a new home.

- 30% of homeowners say their neighborhood has too few parks and playgrounds.

The development of trails within communities contributes to quality-of-life improvements that influence the decisions people make about where to live, learn, work, play, and age-in-place. Trails have been shown to help improve our physical, mental, emotional and social health; boost our economies and tourism; improve environmental health; and bring individuals together by establishing connection, socializing, and safer locations to gather. The potential Wolf Lake Connection Trail can play a role in encouraging a more active lifestyle, fostering economic development, tourism, and increase use of the USFWS Wolf Lake District.

Health Benefits

According to the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention (CDC), obesity affects 78 million Americans with 24 million Americans having severe or morbid obesity¹¹. The U.S. Surgeon General estimates that 60% of American adults are not regularly active and another 25% are not active at all¹². In 2018, 33% of Cottonwood County adults were considered obese compared to the Minnesota average of 30%¹³. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention parks and trails can improve health in several ways:

- Physical health: decreased risk of chronic health conditions such as osteoporosis, heart disease, cancer, and diabetes; physical activity helps supports a healthy body weight, joints, muscles, cholesterol levels, and immune system. These physiological benefits improve human longevity and quality of life by reducing falls and loss of motor skills as we age¹⁴.

- Mental health: decreased stress and psychosocial disparities, improved concentration, reduced fatigue, increased energy and contributes to a positive body image¹⁵.

- Community health: new opportunities for the community to socialize and participate in special events or gatherings; provides safer locations to play and exercise, especially for neighborhood or residential areas that may lack other outdoor recreation amenities such as parks or playgrounds.

- Environmental health: trails can provide corridors for individuals and wildlife; trails can help improve air quality by providing opportunities for people to move about the community without needing automobiles or motorcycles; trails can provide an environmentally safe way to experience unique habitat areas such as wetlands, wildlife areas, and prairies. When designed thoughtfully, trail corridors may provide ecosystem benefits such as capturing/infiltrating precipitation run-off, acting as a native plant seed source, and helping facilitate movement of species between habitat¹⁶.

TRAIL PLANNING PROCESS

PREVIOUS EFFORTS

Various routes have been discussed previously, but a written plan was not developed. Below is a summary of the previous trail planning efforts:

1999 | Effort 1

The Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) coordinates and facilitates local meetings with nine County regions to assist in the development of a Regional Trails Plan. A committee was formed from appointed county members to develop a final Regional Trails Plan based on a vision of establishing a network of trails in Southwest Minnesota for multiple users.

1999 | Effort 2

City of Windom develops trail plans that include three phases:

Phase 1 project included 1.35 miles of paved multi use trails, three softball fields, 1 baseball field and a soccer field at Legion Field (currently known as the Windom Recreation Area).

Phase 2 included trails that connected the recreation area to additional trails that would be developed on the adjacent lot on the site of the former landfill site.

Phase 3 included trails that connected the Windom Recreation Area to Cottonwood Lake/Tegels Park and the new Community Center. This portion of the project would also include an outdoor amphitheater.

The City of Windom received assistance from the Army's Domestic Action Program to construct

three softball fields and a soccer field on a 40-acre site known as Legion Field. The City was notified from the Dept. of the Army that the project has met the required parameters of a Domestic Action Activity.

Work to begin spring of 2001 – Corp of Engineers called to duty and deployed; unable to begin project.

2003 – City of Windom receives funding for Phase 1 of Windom Recreation Area from DNR Outdoor Recreation Grant Program.

2004 – Construction begins on the Windom Recreation Area trails.

Funding for the final two phases was not obtained.

2004 | Effort 3

Feb 2004 – Trail meeting was initiated by staff from US Fish & Wildlife Service in partnership with City and County staff. The purpose of this effort was to explore the possibility of a Connection Trail from the US Fish & Wildlife Facility to the Windom Recreation Area (previously known as Legion Field) by, 1) discussing in general terms the potential of a trail from their facility to Legion Field in Windom, and 2) obtaining public comments and reactions to a Connection Trail.

USFWS sought to develop a trail in order to provide safety for youth that are traveling to the facility. The facility provides several education programs for area youth to attend. The bike portion of the trail would end at the parking

lot of the facility. The trails within the facility are not designed for bicycles. Other identified usage of the trail includes safety, education, recreation, exercise and family fun. It was agreed that the proposed trail would be a multi-use non-motorized trail.

It was agreed that public involvement is needed to help drive the project and help make the project a success. It was suggested to invite the affected landowners, Fish & Game Leagues, school, individuals that walk, jog, or bicycle along with City and County staff to become a part of the committee.

TEA 21 program funding was explored. At the time, one million dollars of funding was available for 13 counties. However, funding for this project was not obtained as the effort did not result in a trail plan. The main deliverable of the planning process between the City of Windom, the National Park Service, and other community partners is a trail plan that can be used to apply for competitive infrastructure grants.

CURRENT EFFORT

The intended outcome of the Windom-Wolf Lake Connection Trail (Wolf Lake Connection Trail) planning process is the creation of a Wolf Lake Connection Trail Plan document that can be adopted by the Windom City Council. Upon adoption of the Wolf Lake Connection Trail Plan, the City of Windom can begin the next steps that will lead to applying for grants to secure funding to construct the Connection Trail.

The origin of this Wolf Lake Connection Trail Plan was from the activities and community response from the most recent Windom Comprehensive Planning Process. The Planning Committee for the Comprehensive Plan recognized the importance for a safe and convenient pedestrian connection

to the Wolf Lake Waterfowl Production Area. A specific goal and a number of strategies were developed to outline the connection trail project and next steps. The Planning Process for the Comprehensive Plan included nine community meetings and four subcommittee meetings. Community engagement was great during the planning process for the Comprehensive Plan.

In June 2019, the City of Windom invited National Park Service staff from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program to provide technical planning assistance in the creation of the Windom Connection Trail Plan. In October 2019, the National Park Service communicated acceptance of the project and committed technical planning assistance until September 2020.

In October 2019, the City of Windom's Economic Director and the National Park Service reached out to several community organizations and passionate trail advocates to form a Work Committee. The committee is made up of a diverse group of individuals that live in and outside of Windom. The following people and organizations that have been given the opportunity to participate in the Wolf Lake Connection Trail planning process include:

- Baret Steenrod, Community Planner with the National Park Service in the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program.
- Brian L. Cooley, City of Windom Street & Parks Superintendent.
- Dane Nielsen, Community Member, Windom Area Schools Principal and Athletic Director.
- Howard Davis, Park & Recreation Representative and Remick Foundation.
- Denise Nichols, City of Windom and Previous Trail Committee Member.
- Drew Hage, City of Windom Development Director.
- Jenny Quade, City Council Representative



Scenes from the January 7, 2020 Community Input Open House.

and Parks & Recreation Liaison.

- Lindsey Englar, Windom Area Health Wellness Center Coordinator.
- Luke Ewald, Des Moines Valley Health & Human Services, Statewide Health Improvement Partnership.
- Nick Klisch, Cottonwood County Engineer.
- Phil Nasby, Department of Natural Resources Parks & Trails Area Supervisor.
- Rod Byam, City Council Representative and Parks & Recreation Liaison.
- Ron Kuecker, Parks & Recreation Representative.
- Todd Luke, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Wetland Management District.

The Work Committee collaboratively planned

and carried out the trail planning and community engagement strategies for the Windom Wolf Lake Connection Trail (Wolf Lake Connection Trail), in partnership with the National Park Service, resulting in this Connection Trail Plan. In the section that follows, a chronological summary of the meetings, public events, and community engagement activities of the Work Committee are described. Meeting minutes and official results from each of the following activities and events can be located in the Appendix.

**Kickoff Work Committee Meeting
October 28, 2019**

An orientation meeting between all partners was facilitated by the National Park Service.

The purpose of this meeting was to formally kick-off the work group and begin the public planning process for the Windom Connection Trail. Project partners formally met each other, as well as shared their hopes for the Wolf Lake Connection Trail. Additionally, they remarked on what they or their organization could offer to the public planning process. Methods of communication and frequency/style of meetings were also agreed to.

Work Committee Meeting November 25, 2019

National Park Service assembled a block of 33 potential survey questions for the Work Committee to evaluate for inclusion into the Trail Preferences Survey. After evaluation, a final survey of 18 questions was decided upon along with the date and name for the Community Input Open House. The location for the open house was also agreed to, which was the Wings on the Prairie Visitor Center. The flyer design and utility bill mailer promoting the survey and open house were also reviewed and approved.

Following the meeting, National Park Service curated the content for the open house, and designed the stations and user experiences for the visiting public. USFWS handled layout setup, and the City of Windom coordinated volunteers and refreshments.

Trail Preferences Survey December 2, 2019 to January 28, 2020

The Trail Preferences Survey was promoted within the organizations that Work Committee members represent. The survey was also promoted in the memo section of the Windom Utility Bill mailing. 2,400 businesses and residential dwellings with utility accounts were presented with the opportunity to share their opinion within the online Trail Preferences Survey during the

months of December 2019 and January 2020. Additionally, paper copies of the survey were available to the public at City Hall, the public library, post office, the Windom Chamber office, and at the Community Input Open House held on January 7, 2020.

The survey was designed to gauge the level of community support for trail types (e.g., along a road, away from a road, both along and away from a road), trail amenities, expected usage (i.e., frequency of use, length of use per trail outing, using alone or with others), and to capture specific sentiments about having a trail through the use of short-answer sentiment questions.

The overall results of the survey (see next page) from 133 respondents indicated broad support for a recreational trail for purposes of walking, running, and bicycling. Across all survey questions that asked about levels of support, more than half of respondents provided responses in the “Extremely Supportive” and “Very Supportive” answer categories. The last preference question on the survey, question 15, asked, “Overall, what is your level of support for a recreational trail to Wolf Lake/Wings on the Prairie Visitor Center?” 57.6% of respondents were “Extremely Supportive”, 19.7% of respondents were “Very Supportive”, and 10.6% of respondents were “Supportive”. With 87.9% of survey respondents indicating a supportive attitude, there appears to be broad interest within the Windom Community to pursue development of a recreational trail to Wolf Lake.

Community Input Open House January 7, 2020.

The open house was held at the Wings on the Prairie Visitor Center at the Wolf Lake Waterfowl Production Area, a USFWS facility. This event was promoted by Work Committee partners through poster flyers, Facebook posts, email and via a

Selected Survey Results from Trail Preferences Survey

(full results in Appendix)

Q1) What is your level of support for a trail connecting Windom to Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trail (U.S. Fish & Wildlife property 3/4 east of Windom on County Road 17)?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Supportive		60.2%	80
Very Supportive		17.3%	23
Supportive		10.5%	14
Somewhat Supportive		3.8%	5
Not Supportive		8.3%	11
			Totals: 133

Q2) What is your level of support for a wide paved shoulder along County Road 17 connecting Windom to Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trail (U.S. Fish & Wildlife property 3/4 east of Windom on County Road 17)?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Supportive		33.1%	44
Very Supportive		17.3%	23
Supportive		21.8%	29
Somewhat Supportive		14.3%	19
Not Supportive		13.5%	18
			Totals: 133

Q3) What is your level of support for an off-road trail connecting Windom to Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trail (U.S. Fish & Wildlife property 3/4 east of Windom on County Road 17)?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Supportive		52.3%	69
Very Supportive		21.2%	28
Supportive		9.8%	13
Somewhat Supportive		7.6%	10
Not Supportive		9.1%	12
			Totals: 132

Q4) What is your level of support for a trail that has both off-road and along-the-road segments (wide paved shoulder) connecting Windom to Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trail (U.S. Fish & Wildlife property 3/4 east of Windom on County Road 17)?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Supportive		31.6%	42
Very Supportive		18.0%	24
Supportive		21.8%	29
Somewhat Supportive		12.8%	17
Not Supportive		15.8%	21
			Totals: 133

Selected Survey Results from Trail Preferences Survey (full results in Appendix)

Q6) How desirable is it for you to be able to visit Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trail (U.S. Fish & Wildlife property 3/4 east of Windom on County Road 17)?

Value	Percent	Responses
Extremely Supportive	60.2%	80
Very Supportive	17.3%	23
Supportive	10.5%	14
Somewhat Supportive	3.8%	5
Not Supportive	8.3%	11
		Totals: 133

Q8) How often do you want to use a recreational trail that connects Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trail (U.S. Fish & Wildlife property 3/4 east of Windom on County Road 17)?

Value	Percent	Responses
Extremely Desirable	28.8%	38
Very Desirable	29.5%	39
Desirable	23.5%	31
Somewhat Desirable	7.6%	10
Not Desirable	10.6%	14
		Totals: 132

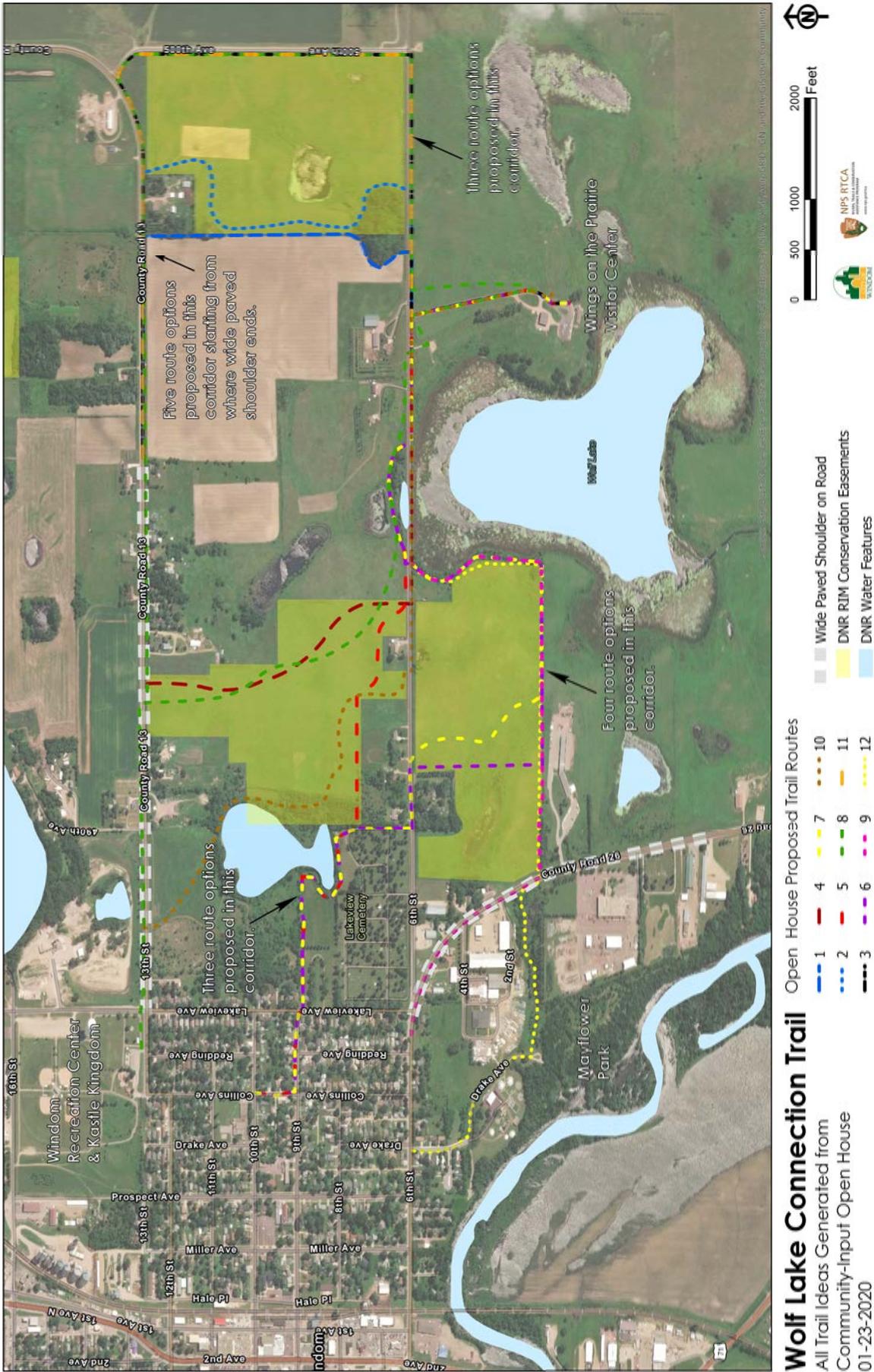
Q14) How do you expect your quality of life to be affected by a trail to Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trail (U.S. Fish & Wildlife property 3/4 east of Windom on County Road 17)?

Value	Percent	Responses
Extremely Positive	35.6%	47
Very Positive	31.1%	41
Positively	18.9%	25
Somewhat Positively	6.1%	8
Not Positively	8.3%	11
		Totals: 132

Q15) Overall, what is your level of support for a recreational trail to Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trail (U.S. Fish & Wildlife property 3/4 east of Windom on County Road 17)?

Value	Percent	Responses
Extremely Supportive	57.6%	76
Very Supportive	19.7%	26
Supportive	10.6%	14
Somewhat Supportive	4.5%	6
Not Supportive	7.6%	10
		Totals: 132

All Potential Trail Routes Collected from the Public at Open House



mailer that accompanied the Windom utility bills. Five stations were set up for the public to gain exposure to and provide feedback on the Wolf Lake Connection Trail concept:

Station 1 consisted of information about the origin of the project.

Station 2 consisted of the opportunity to take the active Trail Preference Survey.

Station 3 consisted of reviewing the Trail Preference Survey results to-date and the ability to ask clarifying questions.

Station 4 consisted of viewing two potential trail routes and also allowed attendees to draw potential routes on a map.

Station 5 consisted of the opportunity to provide feedback or suggestions about how to improve the community engagement or trail design process.

A total of 31 people signed-in, with several parties of multiple people arriving and only one representative from each party observed as signing in. Total visitation for the night was between 40-50 people.

The primary outcome of the open house was the public's creation of a variety of potential trail routes. Input from the open house was used to create a map of all the potential trail corridors that the community felt were worth considering. A few days after the Open House, National Park Service and the City of Windom received word from a landowner who did not wish to have their property used for a trail corridor. The map of all potential trail corridors was updated to reflect this change. See maps on previous page for all trail route ideas that the community provided to think about in the planning process.

Work Committee Meeting January 29, 2020

National Park Service presented the results of the Trail Preferences Survey and the Community

Input Open House to the Work Committee. Themes from the comments received from both the survey and in-person open house discussions were also shared. The updated map of potential trail corridors was shown to the Work Committee, and discussion regarding the feasibility of each route occurred, which resulted in a reduced list of five routes.

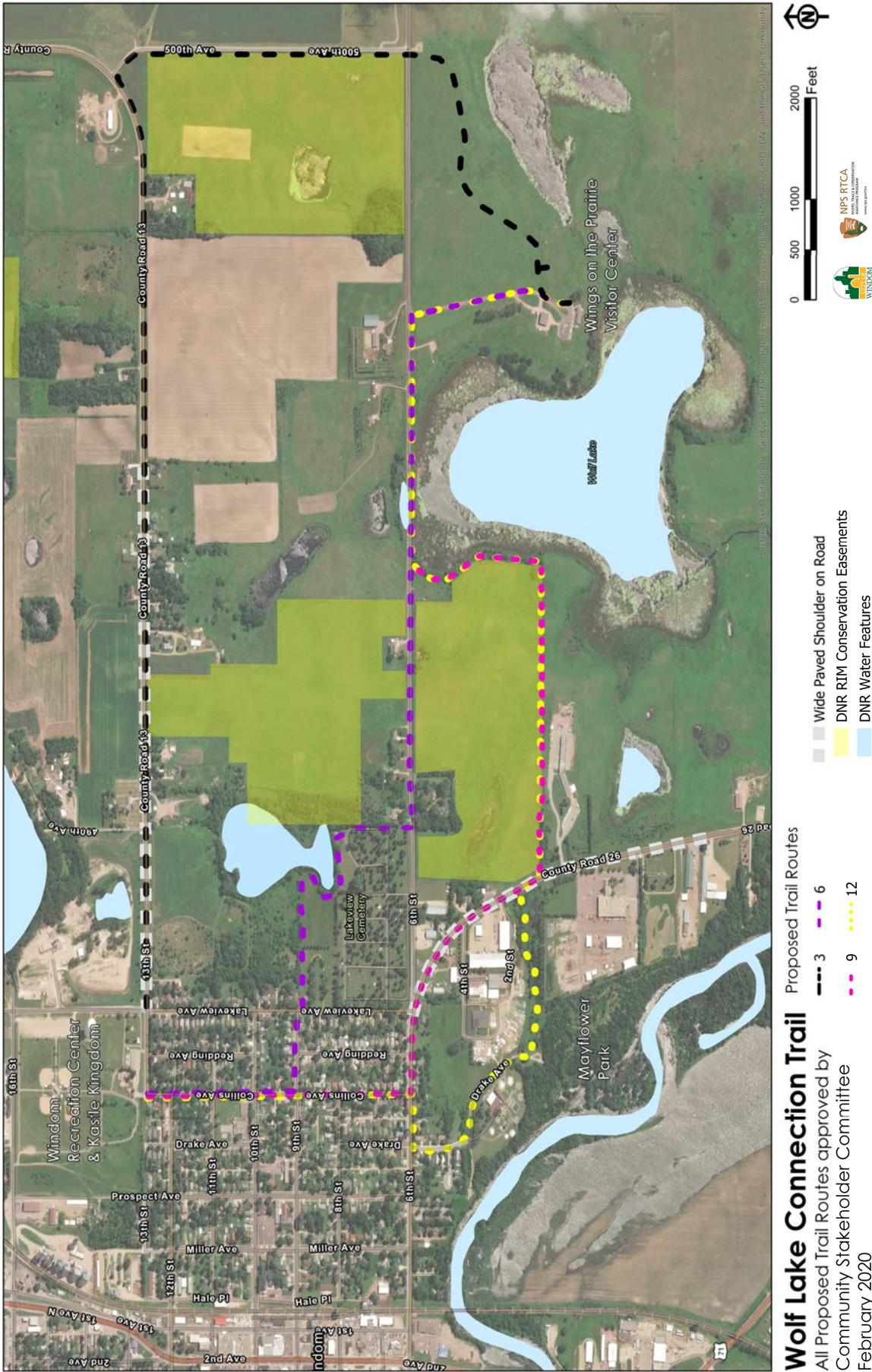
The Work Committee decided to represent the preferred trail routes at the Farm and Home Show on March 7, as well as to commission a Trail Route Preferences Survey during the month of March. The goal of the survey was to get input from the public about which of the five corridors were most preferred, so that a process of cost-estimating the most likely trail routes could begin. The launch of the survey coincided with the Wolf Lake Connection Trail being showcased at the Windom Farm and Home Show, and it remained live for a period of four weeks. Following this meeting, one trail route was removed from the list of preferred routes in mid-February due to a key landowner not responding to inquiries about discussing the trail route.

Farm & Home Show March 7, 2020

A booth at the Farm and Home Show was secured for the entirety of the event so that the public had the opportunity to learn about the potential Wolf Lake Connection Trail as well as learn how to take the Route Preferences Survey.

Work Committee members from the City of Windom and the Remick Foundation manned this booth and were able to answer questions, inform the public, and provide details of the Wolf Lake Connection Trail project. Maps of the four preferred trail routes were displayed and paper copies of the survey link were made available for the public to take.

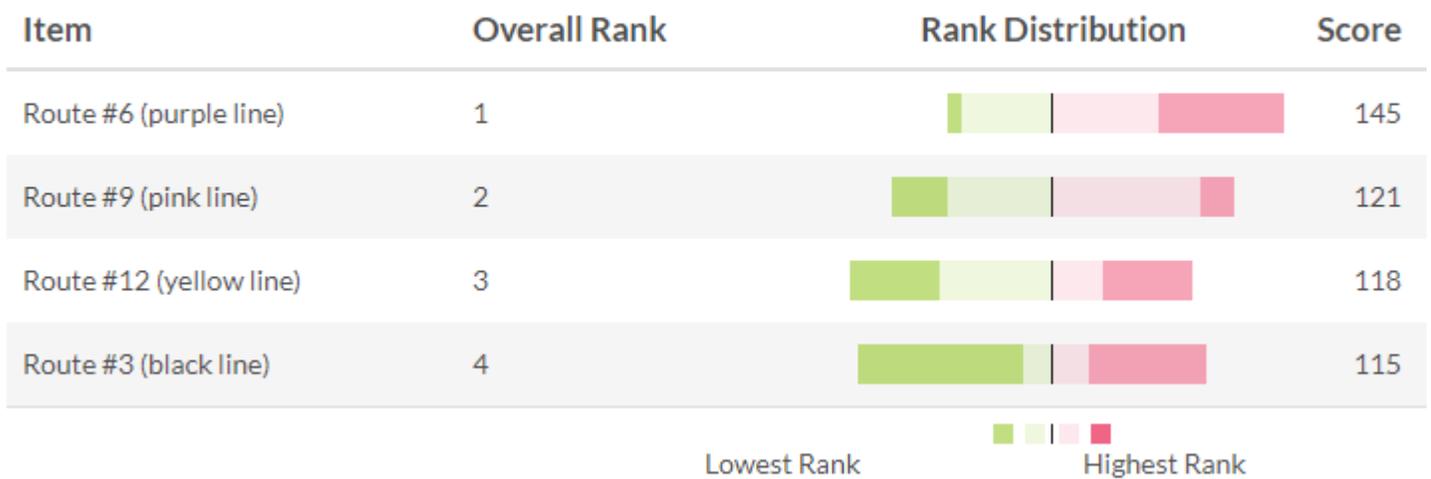
Potential Trail Routes Presented in Route Preferences Survey



Selected Survey Results from Route Preferences Survey

(full results in Appendix)

1) Rank the following routes.



2) When considering the possibility of a connection trail It Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trails, what hopes or concerns do you have?

Summary of comments:

Safety (mentioned 10 times).

Recreational uses people hoped for were biking (6), walking (4) and multi-use (4).

Concerns about scenery or the route being boring (6).

Design comments, such as paved trail (4), bench availability (4), signage/steepness (2) and appropriate length (2) were frequent. Amenities such as restroom prevalence (1) and parking (1) were mentioned.

Concerns around property ownership (5) taxpayer expense (3) and hunting/habitat disturbance (2) were made.

Anger/NIMBY (2).

3) Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #3 (black line).

Summary of comments:

Concerns about separation from road (4 comments). Comments on this route's length (3).

This route being disconnected from town (2).

Not scenic (2).

Like (2).

Don't like (2).

Anger/NIMBY (2).

4) Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #6 (purple line).

Summary of comments:

Scenic quality (6 comments).

Like (6).

Don't like (2).

Traffic/vehicle concerns to trail users (4).

Comments questioning how this route would be achieved (3). Anger/NIMBY (3).

Route Preferences Survey March 6, 2020 to March 31, 2020

National Park Service created maps of the five preferred trail routes (#1, #3, #6, #9, #12) for the City of Windom to use in the online Route Preferences Survey. Prior to this survey going live, several Work Committee members reached out to various landowners that may be impacted by some of the potential routes. One of the five routes was removed (route #1) from consideration due to a lack of response from a citizen regarding their support for a trail route across a portion of their land. Trail maps were updated and a selection of four preferred trail corridors was used in the Route Preferences Survey.

The public was given the opportunity to cast votes on, and make comments about, the four Wolf Lake Connection Trail route options that remained from the original batch of twelve routes. The Route Preferences Route Survey was posted online and promoted using the Farm and Home Show, City of Windom website and Facebook

page, as well as a mailer that accompanied the City of Windom utility bills.

Among the four route options presented to the public, clear distinctions on preference emerged from the respondents. All routes received scores and comments, with the Trail Route #6 (purple color) being a clear favorite. Preference for Routes #9 (pink color) and #12 (yellow color) were nearly the same. Route #9 scored higher, but comments received indicated more interest for route #12. Route #3 (black color) scored the lowest among all four trail corridor routes.

Work Committee Meeting April 1, 2020

The Work Committee met to review and discuss the results of the Route Preferences Survey and make decisions about the next steps in the planning process. Much conversation was spent discussing whether the concerns about the Wolf Lake Connection Trail impact on habitat and hunting land were reasonable. Other discussion centered on comments received within the

Selected Survey Results from Route Preferences Survey - continued (full results in Appendix)

5) Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #9 (pink line).

Summary of Comments:

Traffic/vehicle impact to trail users (4 comments). Scenic quality (3).

Hunting land/habitat fragmentation (2).

Like (1).

Dislike (2).

Anger/NIMBY (2).

6) Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #12 (yellow line).

Summary of Comments:

Like (4 comments).

Dislike (1).

Buggy/Wet trail experience (2). Hunting/habitat fragmentation (3). Scenic (3).

Increase use of Mayflower Park (3). Anger/NIMBY (5).

survey, on the Windom Facebook page, and from conversations at the Farm and Home Show about the possibility of creating a loop trail instead of an out-and-back trail experience.

Four members of the Work Committee volunteered to assist with the effort of preparing the Wolf Lake Connection Trail Plan document, and the subsequent follow-up tasks were determined and delegated out to the remaining Work Committee members:

- 1) Determining a tentative agreement on trail access across a flowage easement,
- 2) Determining lineal feet distances for trail routes for cost estimating purposes, and
- 3) Exploring MnDot and DNR agency interest in partnership agreements for trail and facility access on public lands.

Following this meeting, National Park Service coordinated with Work Committee members from USFWS, Windom Area Health, and Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services on assembling information needed to begin creation of the Wolf Lake Connection Trail Plan document.

Public Q&A Fact Sheet April 2020

A factsheet of frequently asked questions or concerns was created and posted on City of Windom social media websites. A hard copy of this document was also made available at Windom City Hall. A copy of this document is located in the Appendix.

Work Committee Meeting June 4, 2020

The draft Windom Connection Trail Plan is reviewed by the Work Committee for accuracy and accessibility. Errors or omissions found during this meeting were noted and addressed in the plan before being released to the public for comment.

Three Week Public Comment Period June 2020

The draft Wolf Lake Connection Trail Plan was released to the public for comment starting June 10 for a period of three weeks. The trail plan was shared on the City of Windom Website and City of Windom Facebook page. A notice of public comment was published in the Windom Citizen with information provided on how to view and comment on the plan. Comments would be received by the City of Windom Economic Development Director and passed on to the NPS and work committee. No comments were received from the public.

Work Committee Meeting July 8, 2020

The Work Committee discussed potential changes to the trail plan based on a critical landowner not providing support for the phase 5 section of trail. Multiple members of the committee wanted additional safety language added to the plan to reflect the safety concerns the public had shared to date. Conversation about the work committee continuing on as a Friend's Group was discussed, with interest in both continuing to meet as needed and to add more community members to the work committee.

Work Committee Meeting July 22, 2020

The final Trail Plan was reviewed by the work committee for approval to send to the city council.

City Council Review August 12, 2020

Windom City Council takes up trail plan as official business.

ANALYSIS OF TRAIL IMPACT ON HUNTING LAND

The Cottonwood County Game and Fish Protective League (CCGFP) informed members of the Work Committee on January 22, 2020 of a vote-of-support taken with CCGFP members. All but one person voted “not in favor” of the Wolf Lake Connection Trail. A newspaper editorial published in the Windom Reporter on March 22, 2020 made a public declaration of the CCGFP position. A map highlighting local hunting lands and all potential trail routes is shown.

The map illustrates that potential trail routes most in conflict with public hunting lands (MN DNR & US Fish and Wildlife Service) and private (yellow hashed lines on RIM easement land) have been eliminated through the process of community engagement and work committee discussion. Of the twelve original Wolf Lake Connection Trail route ideas, routes #3, #6 and #12 remain.

Route #3 would run inside the right-of-way of County Road 13, 500th Avenue and County Road 17 before arriving at the entrance of Wings on the Prairie Visitor Center.

Route #6 is proposed along city streets, on Lakeview Cemetery Land, and inside the right-of-way of County Road 17.

Route #12 is proposed along city streets to Mayflower Park, on an unused City of Windom right-of-way, on MnDOT property via an easement agreement, and along the north border of a Minnesota DNR property. A connection between route #6 and route #12 is sought on land on the west side of Wolf Lake. This land is already subject to an existing flowage agreement between the

USFWS and the Linder Family Trust.

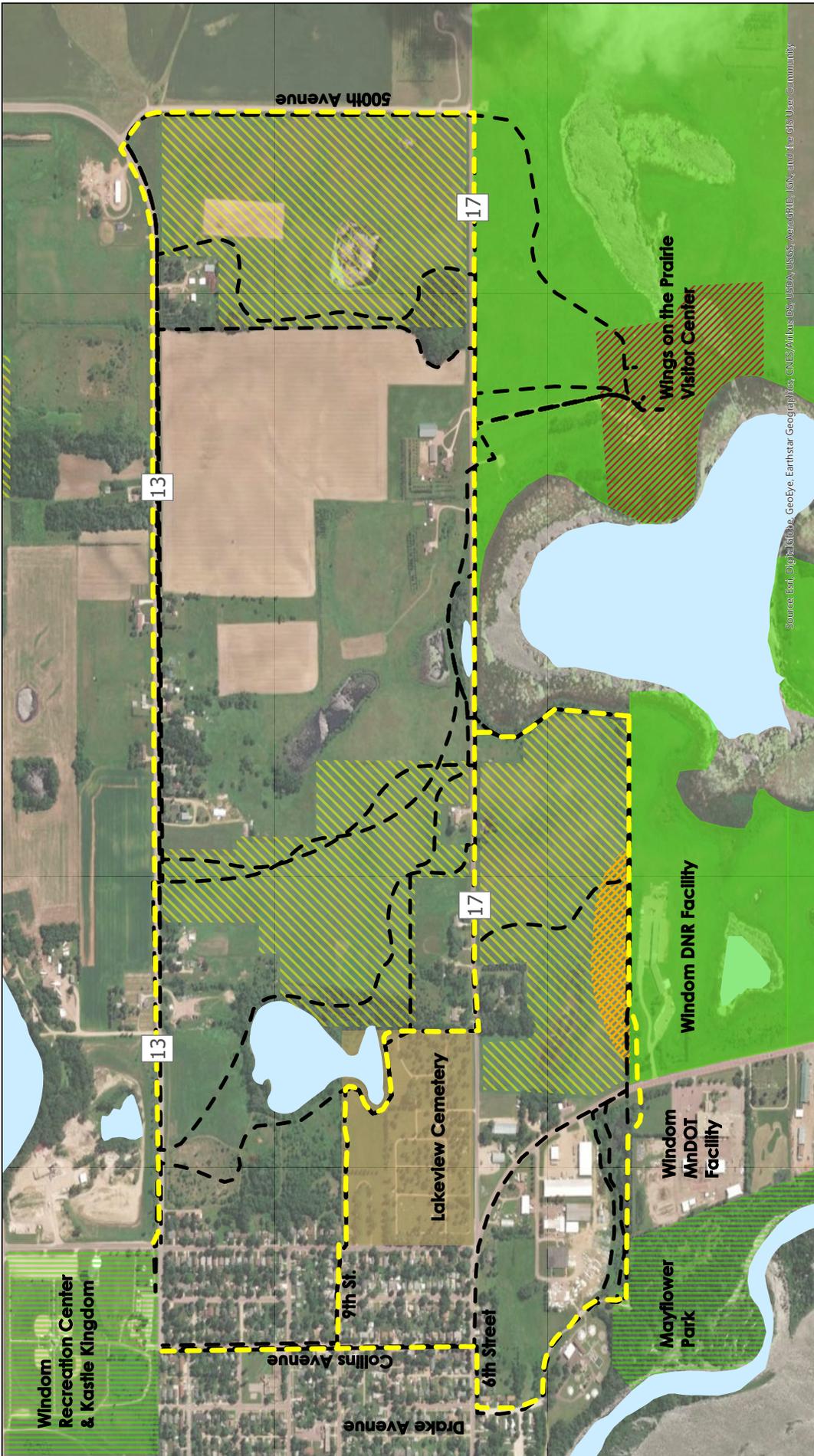
The proposed Wolf Lake Connection Trail route that runs along the property boundary between the DNR and the Linder Trust holdings minimally impacts hunting. Where suspected hunting conflicts may exist on DNR land, the Wolf Lake Connection Trail can be designed to support game species of wildlife year-round and be managed to ensure hunting access during hunting seasons. If permission was granted by the Linder Trust on an easement (private land), it was not as clear what the impact on hunting would be.

In an effort for clarity on the hunting status along this property line, the NDR Conservation Officer for Windom, Dustin Miller, provided comments in a May 7, 2020 email:

“In regards to the properties (DNR Land and Linder Trust Land), people can hunt the public property within 500’ of buildings. On the private property, the only person that can hunt within the 500’ is the actual listed owner (s) of that property. If other people wish to hunt private property within 500’ of the (DNR) buildings they would need permission from whomever is in charge of the buildings.”

“I do not believe there is a lot of hunting pressure on these locations, however, that can change at any point obviously.”

The DNR-Linder Trust property boundary is approximately 2,160 ft long from County Road 26 to Wolf Lake. Due to the hunting restriction created by the presence of an occupied building on the DNR land, approximately 1,320 ft of the property



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Wolf Lake Connection Trail
 Trail Routes and Hunting Conflicts
 June 2020

Trail Information

- Preferred Trail Routes
- Discarded Trail Routes
- Water Features

Hunting Lands

- Public Hunting Land
- USFWS Hunting Restriction
- Minnesota Hunting Regulation Restriction (within 500' of occupied building)
- DNR RIM Conservation Easements (private land)

0 485 970 1940 Feet

NPS RTCA
 RUSTENBERG DISTRICT
 WINDOM

boundary on the Linder Trust land currently is subject to a hunting restriction (as detailed under bullet point four under “Restrictions” in the “Trespass Law” chapter, page 11, of the 2019 Minnesota Hunting and Trapping Regulations).

From the perspective of balancing competing recreational land uses, the preferred trail planning process has resulted in a trail route that mostly avoids physical and temporal (time-of-day/seasonal) conflicts. The physical conflicts are minimal as shown by the map and the comments from the DNR Conservation Officer. The temporal conflicts are also minimal.

Walking and bicycling are activities that see the most use during the months of May-September, and during the warmest parts of the day. The most recent trail use data from across Minnesota show that 63% of trail use occurs between 1pm – 6pm, with less than 7% of use occurring before 10 am¹⁷. In contrast, hunting seasons most

applicable to the Windom region are late fall or spring activities that have little overlap with the warm weather seasons of recreational biking and walking. For example, these are the dates of some 2020 hunting seasons:

- Deer, Firearm Season A: November 7 - 15
- Ducks, Season 1: Sept. 26 – October 11
- Ducks, Season 2: October 17 – December 6
- Pheasant: October 10 – January 3
- Youth Waterfowl Hunt: September 12-13

The Spring Wild Turkey Season runs in several series’ through April and May. It seems to be the one hunting season that could be most in conflict with a recreational trail, depending on how early spring is and how much snow cover remains on the trail. The Wolf Lake Connection Trail can be managed to balance the use of turkey hunters and trail users through temporary trail closures to non-hunting recreational trail users.



Visitors to Wings on the Prairie Visitor Center enjoying the wildlife of Wolf Lake.

PREFERRED TRAIL CORRIDOR

The finished and preferred corridor for the Wolf Lake Connection Trail are loop routes created by combining the most preferred corridors from the trail planning process. Trail loops could be constructed over time as opportunities warrant, utilizing both existing and new infrastructure. Trailhead locations are yet-to-be-determined, but can be supported at the Windom Recreation

Area, Mayflower Park, the MnDOT office, the DNR facility, or Lakeview Cemetery.

A map of all the potential trail corridors and how they would related to each other is shown on the next page.

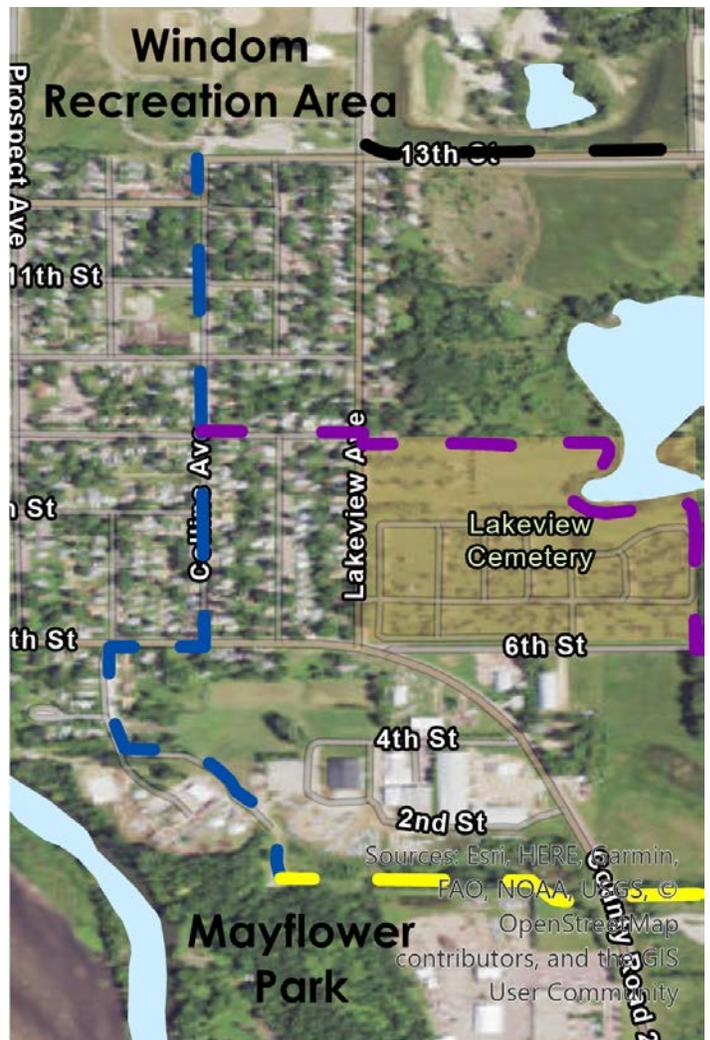
A brief summary of each potential trail opportunity with safety considerations and supporting map is shown.

Opportunity A (Blue Corridor): Windom Recreation Area to Mayflower

The trail would begin at the parking lot for Kastle Kingdom and travel south on the west side of Collins Avenue to 6th Street. The trail could use the existing paved shoulder on 6th Street to travel west to Drake Avenue. The corridor turns south and travels along Drake Avenue to the water treatment entrance before turning and following the gravel road southeast around the water treatment facility to Mayflower Park.

The trail would connect amenities at the Windom Recreation Area to Mayflower Park. This corridor would be an “on ramp” to the trail since most of this route travels through residential neighborhood. Existing sidewalk and paved shoulder can be used on this route, with new sidewalk constructed on the west side of Collins Avenue from 9th Street to 13th Street. Accessible trail could be constructed from Drake Avenue to Mayflower Park.

Safety Considerations: Most of this corridor is expected to be on existing or new sidewalk. Where street crossings/on-street or wide paved shoulder occur, signage, signalled crossings, striping and physical barriers can be used to create separation between trail users and vehicles.



- Opportunity A —
- Opportunity C —
- Opportunity D —
- Opportunity B —
- ↑
N



Wolf Lake Connection Trail
 Preferred Trail Corridors
 July 2020

Preferred Trail Corridors

- Opportunity A
- Opportunity B
- Opportunity C
- Opportunity D
- Opportunity E

Landscapes Designations

- Water Features
- Lakeview Cemetery
- Windom Parks

US Fish & Wildlife Service

- MN DNR Property
- MnDOT Property

0 485 970 1940 Feet

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, ...

WINDOM
 WINDOM PARKS
 NPS RTCA

! A potential phase 5 trail does not have support from a landowner at the time this plan was produced. See page 28.

Opportunity B (Purple Corridor): Collins Avenue & Lakeview Cemetery to Wings on the Prairie Entrance



The opportunity B corridor travels from Collins Ave east on 9th Street to Lakeview Cemetery on existing sidewalk. Accessible trail would be constructed on the north and east perimeter of cemetery land and then would travel east on County Road 17 via new wide paved shoulder to the USFWS entrance. This corridor would be the most direct connection from Windom residential neighborhood to the USFWS entrance, and would provide an off-road connection for half of its length.

Safety Considerations: The shoulder conditions along 6th Street/County Road 17 are challenging; there is not wide shoulder, there are steep embankments falling from the shoulder, and shortened sight lines due to rolling topography. Wetland/shoreline constrain the ability to modify the right-of-way near Wolf Lake. Trail design within the right-of-way of County Road 17 may draw more heavily on best practices in right-of-way design to safely provide access for trail users. This plan recommends future phase 4 planning and design efforts reference all applicable state, county and local standards for pedestrian planning and design near roadways. See the list at the bottom of page 28 for information.

Opportunity C (Black Corridor): Windom Rec. Area to Wings on the Prairie Entrance

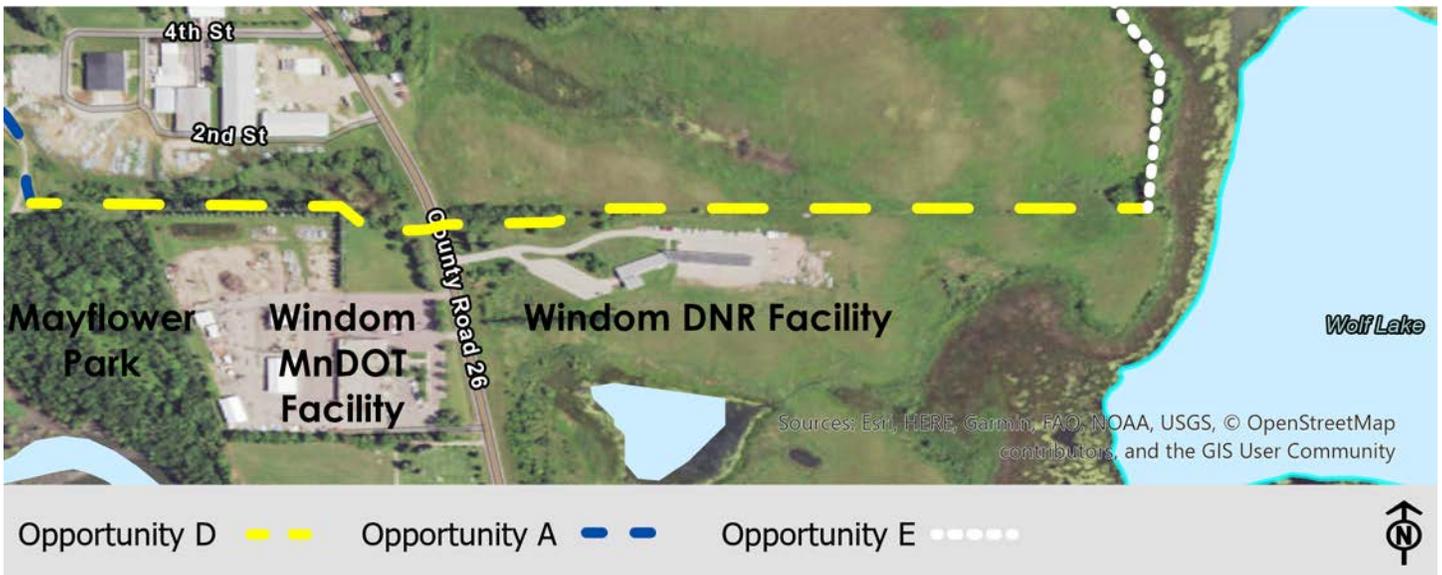


The C corridor trail would depart east from the Windom Recreation Area along County Road 13 and turning south on 500th Avenue to County Road 17, where the corridor heads west to the USFWS entrance. This trail is envisioned as a signed/painted route that utilizes existing and new paved shoulder along County Road 13 with paved trail installed parallel to and separated from 500th Avenue. An ADA accessible hunting/recreational trail could be considered from the parking lot at County Road 17 & 500th Avenue that could traverse the prairie to the Wings on the Prairie Nature Center.

Safety Considerations: When wide paved shoulder is utilized, at minimum, painting and signage can be used to create visual separation between vehicles and trail users. Design elements that provide for trail user safety on paved shoulder include rumble strips between the vehicle lane and the shoulder, reflectors, reflective paint, and signage. Design enhancements that utilize physical separation, grade separation or break-away barriers can be considered to maximize safety along county roads.

Safety of vulnerable trail users has been a consistent topic of conversation received from the public within the community engagement effort and within the work committee. This plan recommends future planning and design efforts for trail opportunity C to reference all applicable state, county and local standards for pedestrian planning and design near roadways. See the list on page 28 for information.

Opportunity D (Yellow Corridor): Mayflower Park to Wolf Lake



The opportunity D trail corridor is envisioned as an off-road trail that starts at the entrance to Mayflower Park, travels east on an existing Windom City Right-of-Way to land owned by MnDOT. From MnDOT, the trail corridor would cross County Road 26 and travel along the DNR-Linder Trust property line before arriving at a scenic overlook at Wolf Lake.

This corridor would connect several public land assets using a variety of public resources. A benefit for this corridor is that the trailhead and parking infrastructure can be co-located at existing facilities at Mayflower Park, MnDOT or the DNR. It would provide a scenic and safe route that has a minimal impact on hunting areas. Additionally, this corridor was part of two options that were given medium high scores in the Route Preferences Survey.

Safety Considerations: Signage, reflective crosswalk striping and motion activated warning lights can help provide for trail user safety where the trail crosses County Highway 26.

⚠️ Opportunity E (White Corridor): Wolf Lake to County Road 17



The opportunity E trail would travel from the scenic overlook at Wolf Lake, ideally connecting to trail established in the corridor along County Road 17. This trail corridor would be entirely away from roads and the most scenic portion of all the trail opportunities identified within this plan.

*****The trail Opportunity E corridor does not have the support of an important landowner at the time this plan was created. The Windom Wolf Lake Connection Trail Work Committee has elected to keep this trail opportunity in the plan in the event that landowner sentiment changes. Alternative ways to connect the east end of trail opportunity D to the Wings on the Prairie Visitor Center and nature trails will continue to be explored by the work committee and the City of Windom.*****

Safety Resources for Detail Trail Corridor Planning

This plan recommends that all future trail corridor design phases reference official guidance and standards in the design of trails approaching and existing within the right-of-way of county roads and city streets. Doing so will allow for flexibility in these future projects as well as demonstrate to the public good faith in working to achieve safe trail conditions in areas that may be perceived as unsafe.

As an example, consider County Road 17. If the shoulder was widened, an 8' paved shoulder would be sought for Bicycles and pedestrians. According to page 3-10 of the Bicycle Facility Design Manual a 4' to 5' shoulder is considered adequate; so the effort to create pedestrian safe trail conditions on a road shoulder would exceed the recommendations from the Bicycle Facility Design Manual.

Official Resources and Publications to Guide Planning and Design

- State Aid Rules and Standards: <http://dot.state.mn.us/stateaid/programlibrary/stateaidrules.pdf>
- Bicycle Facility Design Manual: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/bicycle-facility-design-manual.html>
- Best Practices & Guidance in At-Grade Trail Crossing Treatments: <https://www.lrrb.org/media/reports/201323.pdf>
- Best Practices for Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety: <https://researchprojects.dot.state.mn.us>



COST ESTIMATES OF PREFERRED CORRIDOR

CONSTRUCTION COSTS

Construction costs are determined by a variety of factors: design specifications and materials, terrain conditions, location in the country, and overall dollar costs in a given year related to macroeconomics and inflation. At the time this document is being written, the US economy is poised to enter a recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic and typical inflationary projections to within five years (a likely groundbreaking timeframe) are uncertain.

The location of the Wolf Lake Connection Trail is rural Minnesota, where labor costs are lower than in more urban parts of the state. Terrain conditions for the Wolf Lake Connection Trail do not appear to be severe; there is little evidence

of boulders, rockwork or extensive wetlands that have to be addressed during design and construction.

Trail design has not started and details about the aesthetics of this trail have yet to be addressed. There has been agreement from the City of Windom and the Work Committee that the intent for the Wolf Lake Connection Trail is that it is an accessible recreation trail, closed to motor vehicles (emergency and maintenance vehicles would be allowed). A trail of this type is usually 8-10' wide, with a surface of concrete, asphalt, or hybrid geotextile/hardpacked crushed aggregate.

Construction costs are based on the preferred trail route, which consists of a loop trail made by combining route options #3, #6 & #12. An average construction cost has been determined

Regional Accessible Trail Construction Costs

Project	Year	Original Cost	Cost in 2020
Basic 10' Asphalt Trail, cost per mile	2010	\$ 140,184	\$ 164,828
Honey Creek Parkway, cost per mile	2007	\$ 149,206	\$ 184,500
South Side Trail/Kinnickinnic River, cost per mile	2007	\$ 176,470	\$ 218,214
Hank Aaron Trail, cost per mile	2007	\$ 224,307	\$ 277,367
Root River Trail, cost per mile	2007	\$ 301,014	\$ 372,219
10' Asphalt Trail in Challenging Terrain, Northern MN, 4.56 miles	2018	\$ 404,084	\$ 412,584
Becker County Trail Routing Feasibility Study, 1.748 miles	2016	\$ 406,154	\$ 433,877
Plywood Trail, Iowa, 16 miles, 2020 construction date	2020	\$ 1,125,000	\$ 1,125,000
10' Asphalt Trail Rebuild at MNRRRA, 1.70 miles	2009	\$ 1,127,671	\$ 1,347,658

Average Cost: \$ **504,027**

Asphalt trail cost examples from various sources.

by using data from Construction Costs for Trails, published by American Trails in 2010, as well as surveying 8 completed or pending recreational trail projects in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa. All cost information has been adjusted for inflation and is listed in 2020 dollars. An average price per mile of recreational asphalt trail is estimated at \$504,027. A concrete surface would cost more, and accessible hard-packed aggregate could cost less. Construction costs for sidewalk are based on City of Windom data, indicating a cost of \$40-50 per linear foot of sidewalk, 5' wide¹⁸. Construction costs for paved shoulders is based on high level shoulder construction cost estimates from Cottonwood County, at \$220,000 per mile per side of road on County Road 17. Shoulder construction costs are expected to be half as much for wide paved shoulder on County Road 13¹⁹.

Construction costs for the Wolf Lake Connection Trail may be lower than the average shown. The Minnesota DNR uses an estimate of \$300,000 per mile when estimating trail construction costs for southern Minnesota²⁰. For a trail project that National Park Service was involved in northern Minnesota in challenging terrain, an estimate of \$404,084 per mile was developed as part of construction estimate by an engineering firm. This estimate was considered to be a high price at the time due to the isolated location and prevalence

of rock and boulders within the corridor. In each of these cases, the cost per mile is well below the average price shown in the table. For the four costs reported from the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area, each estimate is a "bare bones" cost that does not include important site amenities such as signage, bridges, or drainage solutions, which means total cost to get the trail into a finished state, is actually going to be higher than reported.

Using the sources mentioned, an estimated construction cost for the Wolf Lake Connection Trail is \$1,389,354 for completion of all potential trail opportunities. See the Construction Cost Estimate Table for details.

There are several factors worth taking into account that can have a sizable impact on project cost. One factor that can help swing the project cost lower is to ensure plenty of time for potential contractors to bid on and fit the project into project schedules. Another factor is to ensure an RFP for bids gets plenty of bidders. Ensuring the project is attractive and able to be bid on by three or more parties can help find cost savings. The quality and quantity of amenities, such as signage, seating elements, parking, storage, or restroom & water features can affect cost too. Lastly, the economic downturn facing the nation due to the COVID-19 pandemic may result in variability in material and labor costs. If an extended recession

results from the pandemic, labor or material costs may be depressed, creating cost savings.

MAINTENANCE COSTS

According to the Parks & Trails Council (PTC) of Minnesota, “trail maintenance costs can vary wildly based on location, trail characteristics, and maintenance performed (e.g., sweeping/mowing frequency, whether or not you crack seal, etc.)²¹. The PTC cites \$200,000 per mile as the cost to rehabilitate a trail at the end of the trail surface service life²². This number is based on recent DNR projects and is the average cost of replacing one mile of trail once it’s deteriorated into poor conditions²³. That cost would be averaged out over the life of the trail (25 years) and does not include routine work (mowing, sweeping, tree and trash removal, seal coating, etc.). Based on these numbers, amortized rehabilitation costs per trail mile would be \$8,000 per year.

Wolf Lake Connection Trail Work Committee members reached out to local and regional organizations and entities who are already maintaining trails. The results of these conversations indicate that management methods and maintenance cost tracking vary greatly.

Butterfield

The City of Butterfield does two major things to maintain its trails: crack filling and seal coating. Every other year, the city has the trail cracks filled. For 2020, \$3,800 is budgeted for crack filling. The city also sealcoats the trail’s asphalt using a soybean-based seal coating oil that is supplied by Barga Inc. of Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Sealcoating is scheduled once every 6-7 years and was recently completed in 2019 for a cost of \$11,154²⁴.

Other than routine maintenance, other trail

maintenance issues have sprouted up. A segment of the Butterfield trail that runs between a lake and a wetland had trees on one side whose roots started to uplift the asphalt. In 2017, Butterfield had to eliminate the trees and remove the asphalt. The trail surface was replaced with concrete at a cost of \$9,473. There are also deck boards for a floating bridge that will likely need to be replaced in the future. Eventually, a budget will be created for bridge replacement²⁴.

Jackson

Jackson County Engineering uses fog seal (thin layer of oil) every seven years to keep the trails functioning for several years at a time²⁵. The City of Jackson has not created a trail maintenance forecast but does work with the street supervisor each year when budgeting to determine what would be appropriate for trail maintenance and fog sealing. The city then allocates funds each year in the budget. Funding that is budgeted but is not used rolls over to the city’s Capital Improvement Fund. For example, if the city budgets \$20,000 for trails/maintenance, and only \$5,000 is used, the remaining \$15,000 can be transferred over to the trails capital improvement fund²⁶. The City of Jackson also has an active Adopt-a-Trail program which helps give residents the opportunity to keep trails clean and maintained during the warm weather seasons. Interested residents formally adopt a trail and notify the city when trail maintenance issues are identified²⁷.

Minnesota Parks and Trails Council

Andrew Oftedal, a research and policy manager, provided some information he has collected on trail maintenance costs (see table above) as well as a weblink to a presentation by SRF Consulting on planning for trail maintenance (<http://www.cts.umn.edu/sites/default/files/files/sessions/7->

SURVEY OF OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE COSTS:

Trail	Year	Miles	Expenditures	Per/mile	Notes
Cannon Valley Trail	2013	19.7	\$170,654	\$8,662	Includes \$126,000 for personnel, \$26,000 for office and building supplies, and \$18,000 in service costs. The trail's capital improvement and construction expenditures (including their asphalt fund, bridge fund, asphalt sealant, erosion repair, and equipment purchases) averaged \$64,046 between 2011-2013, or \$3,251 per mile (half of which was due to a major flood in 2012).
Three Rivers Park District (Baker Regional Trail Extension)	2014	11.4	\$26,600	\$2,324	Includes routine operation costs and staffing. Three Rivers Park District budgets an additional \$33,000 per year (\$2,894 per mile) through their asset management program for trail surface preservation and rehabilitation.
Mesabi Trail	2014	109	\$220,000	\$2,018	Includes signage, painting, herbicide, tree removal, sweeping, crack sealing, gravel, fleet costs, and staff time (1 full-time, 4 interns, and 1 seasonal). A number of the cities along the trail are responsible for mowing the trail in city limits. The trail budgets an additional \$75,000 per year for long-term capital maintenance.
Wisconsin DNR	2014	---	---	\$2,000	Was given as a per mile estimate for rail trails or similar. Estimate includes contact and part-time but not permanent staff time.
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy	2005	---	---	\$2,000	Based on a survey of 39 bike trails across the country. Of respondents, the average maintenance and operation costs were \$1,500 per mile. The research report concluded, ("annual costs for government-run trails were just over \$2,000 per mile.)
Lake Wobegon Trail, Stearns Co.	2014	54	\$94,834	\$1,756	Includes crack filling, tree pruning, weed removal, pothole filling, mowing, root severing, fog sealing on 4-year cycle, and bridge/culvert repair.
Raccoon River Valley Trail (IA)	2014	56	\$78,240	\$1,397	Includes full-time and part-time wages, and cost of materials, repairs, chemicals, and patching. This estimate does not include the costs of equipment purchases and maintenance.
Average: \$2,879					

Table of maintenance costs shared by Minnesota Parks and Trails Council.

crosby.pdf).

USFWS within District

A recent concrete hiking/biking trail had accrued essentially no maintenance costs mainly because it is only a few years old. When inquiring with other managers within the USFWS district, the following response was received from the MN Valley NWR which maintains a fair amount of public trails, mostly aggregate:

"Maintenance costs are difficult to pin down as, with the flooding, it is so variable. For the past

three years we have not even been able to get into our trails to do maintenance work other than some clearing of flood debris. Generally speaking though, with a properly constructed gravel trail, there should not be a whole lot of maintenance other than a load of gravel every once in a while for potholes if it is driven. Most walking trails need little attention. We mow edges every 2-3 weeks.

Our flood-prone areas require a full day on each trail to clear debris with heavy equipment. Pavement in the floodplain is not a good idea.

Other trails require several tons of gravel just to get them back to being walk-able again. The maintenance staff has developed a method for building gravel trails that works out very well. Essentially, they start with fabric, a layer of packed class 5 with fines; then the finish layer is 3/8" minus, packed with moisture. The surface becomes very hard, erosion resistant and wheelchair accessible.²⁸

USFWS Wolf Lake Waterfowl Production Area

Todd Luke, manager of the Wolf Lake Waterfowl Production Area reports, "It cost \$8,300 to clean/fill cracks and sealcoat trail back in 2015. The Rails to Trails Conservancy has information regarding annual trail maintenance cost; they listed \$1,200/mile as an absolute minimal annual maintenance cost and \$2,077/mile as a government run trail annual maintenance cost. The Wolf Lake Waterfowl Production Area annual maintenance

cost is a little higher and closer to \$2,500/year because of the maintenance cost for structures and signage along the trail. We also have YCC/seasonal staff clean/clear debris from the trail and structures on a daily and weekly basis during the summer. Our trail is approximately ¾ of a mile with several different types of structures. \$1,500/mile is a minimum annual maintenance cost if there are no structures to maintain; increase the price with each structure added to the trail²⁹."

Windom Area Health Be Well Path

The average annual maintenance cost is \$1,240³⁰.

Windom Recreation Area Trail

This trail floods during periods of high precipitation after winters with big snowfall. Despite this, no maintenance costs have been spent on this trail since it was constructed³¹.

TRAIL FUNDING SOURCES

Funding for the Wolf Lake Connection Trail should come from a broad variety of sources, but the bulk of the monies are sought from grants. The biggest grants will be from federal and state sources, with private grant sources being more numerous, but with smaller awards. Requirements are going to vary by each grant. Some grants will be limited to municipalities or registered 501(c)(3) organizations. For many grants, matching funds will need to be on-hand at the time of application. Funds can come from the City of Windom, in-kind donations, corporate or philanthropic sponsorship,

or other forms of fundraising.

In the tables shown, a wide variety of public and private grants are described. The tables are organized by funding source, chronologically by application period, and whether the grant supports infrastructure. Applicants usually have 30 days to complete their application. Applications may need letters of support from partner organizations and financial statements to provide evidence of due-diligence or requirements being met.

Some data within the tables is missing (indicated with an N/A) and could not be obtained.

National, State and Public Grants

Grant Source	Infrastructure/ Non- Infrastructure	Trail Elements Eligible for Funding	Amount Available Annually	Grant Min/Max	Matching Funds Requested	Applications Due
People for Bikes Community Grants	Both	Trails, paths, lanes, racks, parking, storage	\$100,000	Up to \$10,000	100%	January & July
DNR Federal Recreational Trail Program	Both	Trailhead, trails, parking, restroom, signs	\$2.4 mil statewide	\$1000 - \$150,000	33%	February
DNR Local Trail Connections	Infrastructure	Trailhead, trails, parking, restroom, signs	Share of \$850K +	\$5000 - \$150,000	33%	March
DNR Regional Trail Grants	Infrastructure	Trailhead, trails, parking, restroom, signs	Share of \$850K +	\$5000 - \$250,000	33%	March
DNR Outdoor Recreation	Both	All elements	Share of \$850K +	\$10,000 - \$250,000	100%	March

National, State and Public Grants- Continued

LCCMR	Both	All environment & recreation related	\$70 million	No min or max	None	April
Parks & Trails Council Friends Groups Grants	Both	Youth engagement or habitat restoration	\$15,000	\$500 - \$2500	None	April
GMRPTC Regional Park/Trail Development Grants	Both	Need Regional Trail Designation & Master Plan to be eligible	About \$10 million	No min or max	None	July
State Bonding (usually only even numbered years)	Infrastructure	All capital improvements	In 2018 \$36.4M for parks & trails of \$825M total bonds	Generally large projects	None	Local gov't requests: July Through legislators: 2020,2022 Sessions
Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	Infrastructure	Trailhead, trails, parking, restroom, signs	Varies by ATP district	\$100,000 - \$1,000,000	25%	1 st step due October
USDOT Federal Lands Access Program	Infrastructure	Flexibility in wide range of projects that connect to federal lands	Subject to obligation limits from highway trust	No min or max	18.58%	Varies

Private and Local Grants

Grant Source	Infrastructure/ Non Infrastructure	Trail Elements Eligible for Funding	Amount Available Annually	Grant Min/Max	Matching Funds Requested	Applications Due
Southwest Initiative Foundation	Both	Varies.	Southwest	\$1,000- \$20,000	50%	Through July 1 st
AARP Community Challenge Grants	Non- infrastructure	All Elements, focus on ADA Compliance	\$1 million (2018)	No Limit	In-Kind optional	April/May
Odell Wind Farm (SWIF)	Both	All Elements	\$40,000	Varies	In-Kind optional	January & July
America Walks Community Change Grants	Non- infrastructure.	Signage, facilities, traffic calming, education, programs, shelters, health & wellness, recreation.	\$30,000	\$2,500	None	November (moved to September due to COVID19)
National Recreation & Park Association	Both	Outdoor Recreation Acquisition, Development and Planning.	Varies by grant.	Varies by grant.	Varies by grant.	Varies by grant.
BlueCross BlueShield Center For Prevention	Both	Trail maintenance, signage, education, traffic calming, planning, advocacy,	\$100,000- \$150,000 (multi-year)	\$5,000- \$25,000	In-Kind optional	Autumn
Bremer Foundation	Both	Trails, trail maintenance,	\$50 million	\$5,000- \$50,000	In-Kind optional	June

Private and Local Grants- Continued

Apex/Big Bend	Both	Trails, signage, maintenance, facilities, education, programming, bike facilities, general health wellness.	Not defined	Applicants encouraged to include what would be funded at different financial levels.	None	Contributions are made quarterly.
Clif Bar Family Foundation	Both	All environment & recreation related	\$3.4 million	\$4,000-\$7,000	In-Kind optional	Grant deadlines are the 1st of February, June, and October.
Recreational Equipment, Inc (REI)	Both	Trails, trail maintenance, education, general conversation	\$8.4 million (2018)	\$10,000	In-Kind optional	Invitation Only
Xcel Energy (Invite Only)	Both	Trail maintenance, general conservation/rec.	\$3.5 million	\$5,000-\$30,000	In-Kind optional	February
International Mountain Bike Association	Non-infrastructure	Planning, designing	\$200,000	\$15,000-\$20,000	In-Kind, must be matched	May
American Hiking Society	Both	Trails (only AHS members are eligible to apply)	\$560,000	\$500-\$3,000	None	February

Private and Local Grants- Continued

Toro Community	Both	Greenspace Enhancement Program Grant.	Annual funding varies based on projects.	Project dollar amounts vary.	None	January
Union Pacific Fund	Both	General health/wellness	\$8.3 million	\$2,500-\$25,000; \$10,000 is average.	In-Kind	May
Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP)	Non-Infrastructure	Trails, Trail Maintenance, Education/Programming, General Conserv. & Recreation.	Varies by grant cycle	Varies by grant cycle and grant requests.	In-Kind Optional	August
Walmart Foundation	Both Emailed	Communities near Walmart	N/A	\$250-\$5,000	N/A	December
Surdna Foundation, NY	Non-infrastructure	Education, programming, planning, advocacy,	\$3,035,000 (2018)	\$25,000+	N/A	Opens July
Sanford Health Foundation	Both	General Health/Wellness	Varies	Based on Needs/Impact of Community	None	Application is readily open
Remick Foundation	Both	Supports education, scholarship, historical societies, environmental programs, towns, schools, performing arts and alternative instruction programs.	N/A	\$1,000-\$10,000	N/A	Quarterly



NEXT STEPS

Plans and actions to take after city council adoption

CITY OF WINDOM IDENTIFIED STEPS

1.

Adoption of trail plan by Windom City Council.

2.

Add the cost of the preferred route into the City's Capital Improvement Plan to provide a match for a grant. Within five years of the completion of the Connection Trail Plan, funding will need to be secured for trail construction.

3.

Identify any of the needed right-of-way along the preferred route.

4.

Apply for grants through Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Other grant opportunities will be explored from both traditional public and private sources.

NPS & WORK COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED STEPS

5.

Creation of a Wolf Lake Connection Trail Friends Group

The Windom City Council can make a commitment to stand up a Friends Group and can demonstrate intention in this effort by ensuring that one city council member is part of this new group. Friends groups play an important role in advocating for and ultimately stewarding public outdoor recreation facilities. A Friends Group would be able to utilize the Windom Foundation, a tax-exempt non-profit organization that was set up to provide fund management for non-profits in Windom. Additionally, having a Friends Group may provide more opportunities for accessing a wider variety of funding sources as some grant sources require the applicant to have a non-profit status to be eligible for applying for funds.

The following websites provide good resources about the benefits, costs and action steps of creating a successful friends group:

- 1) <https://www.parksandtrails.org/friends-groups/resources/>
- 2) <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2016/february/friends-groups-people-with-passion-for-parks/>
- 3) <https://www.the-napf.org/single-post/2015/08/08/What-is-an-Optimally-Functioning-Friends-Group-or-Park-Foundation>

6.

Develop Seed Funding for Next Steps

Using the finished trail plan, the City of Windom should seek funding from private grants or from a charitable trust. This funding could be used for cost estimates, setting up a friends group, or as leveraged funds for new grant applications where a match is required.

7.

Issuing an RFP for Preliminary Cost Estimating

When applying to grants, having some detailed cost estimates will help make the case that the project is close to shovel-ready and ready to use funds. Using seed money acquired from a private source, an estimate for trail construction should be sought and paid for.

8.

Evaluate comparable trail usage & plan to count users as part of trail design

Gather data about trail usage from trails in communities similar to Windom and use this information to inform trail design. A conversation with trail stewards in neighboring communities, such as Jackson, that have trails and are measuring their use will likely be easier and provide more useful information than trying to make a forecast of trail use. However, if the City of Windom feels a trail forecast is needed, many methods for estimating use of a future trail exist³².

NPS & WORK COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED STEPS

Trail counting should be built into the design and long-term management of the Wolf Lake Connection Trail. The importance of being able to forecast trail use is that some competitive funding sources may ask for this information, especially if those funding sources come from state funds where lawmakers are making funding decisions. Knowing trail use helps with funding or initiatives where benchmarks are being set, efficiency is being assessed, operations are optimized, and research is planned. Having information about how the trail is used, especially for planning purposes (such as when a trail should be temporarily closed for maintenance or other purposes) is an important part of trail maintenance.

Another advantage of tracking trail use is for the City of Windom to position itself to share information with other communities. Trail planning in Windom benefits when other communities and trail organizations track the usage on their trails and make that available to decision makers for this project. There is no harm to the city for gaining notoriety for sharing the knowledge and expertise it acquires through the process of developing and managing the Wolf Lake Connection Trail.

REFERENCES & NOTES

- 1) United States Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP05&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP05&g=0400000US27_1600000US2770798, Accessed May 15, 2020.
- 2) Active Transportation Transforms America: Rails-to-trails Conservancy, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, <https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/active-transportation-transforms-america/>, Access May 13, 2020.
- 3) Kapp, Amy; Using Trails and Outdoor Spaces Safely in the Wake of COVID-19, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, <https://www.railstotrails.org/trailblog/2020/march/24/using-trails-and-outdoor-spaces-safely-in-the-wake-of-covid-19/>, Accessed May 15, 2020.
- 4) Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) resource guides; <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ship/ourwork.html>
- 5) Meeker County Draft Trails Plan: A Plan to Guide Future Trail and Bicycle Routes in Meeker County. Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, May 2019, www.mmrdc.org/cushyfiles/index_92_1417425820.pdf.
- 6) Bicycling and Walking, Public Health Law Center, <https://publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/active-living/bicycling-and-walking>, Accessed May 13, 2020.
- 7) Source Outdoor Industry Association. (2012). The Outdoor Recreation Economy. Boulder, CO
- 8) Source Schneider, I., A. Schuweiler, and T. Bipes. 2009. Profile of 2008 Minnesota Recreational Trail Users. University of Minnesota Tourism Center.
- 9) Source J.M. Bowker, USDA Forest Service Southern Forest Research Station; John C. Bergstrom and Joshua Gill, University of Georgia Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics; Ursula Lemanski, National Park Service.
- 10) What Home Buyers Really Want, National Association of Home Builders. Washington, DC: Builder Books, 2013.
- 11) Prevalence of Obesity Among Adults: United States, 2011–2012. (2013) Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (October 2013), <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db131.htm> AND Obesity in America, American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery, <https://asmbs.org/resources/obesity-in-america>, Accessed May 13, 2020.
- 12) Physical Activity and Health: A Report Of the Surgeon General, <https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/adults.htm>
- 13) Cottonwood County, MN, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/cottonwood-county-mn#health>, Access May 13, 2020.

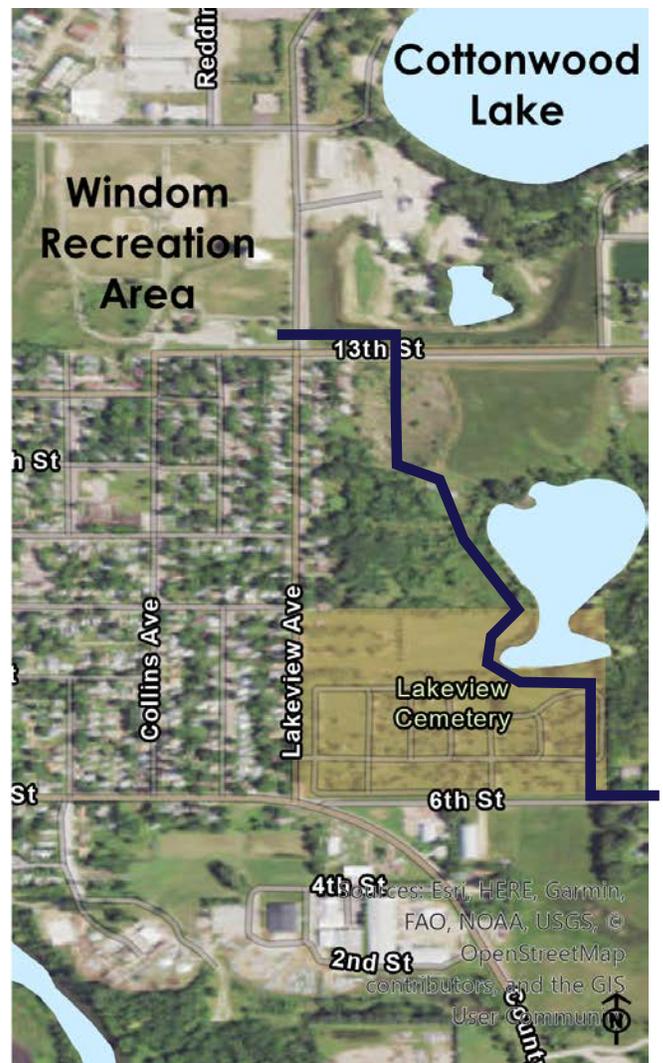
- 14) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention HealthyPlaces https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/parks_trails/# AND Merriam, D.; Bality, A.; Stein, J.; Boehmer, T. 2017. Improving Public Health through Public Parks and Trails: Eight Common Measures. Summary report. US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and US Department of the Interior, National Park Service. <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NationalParkService/GetAsset/f09e69fc-2696-45e8-b4d5-90e4cea5e689>
- 15) Gatti, Elise. Using Parks and Trails to Promote Mental Health: The Mood Walks Program. 2018, [https://www.recpro.org/assets/Conference_Proceedings/2018/Tuesday/Gatti 2018NORC.pdf](https://www.recpro.org/assets/Conference_Proceedings/2018/Tuesday/Gatti%202018NORC.pdf).
- 16) Resource Handler, Rail to Trails Conservancy, <https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?id=3062>, Access May 15, 2020.
- 17) Oftedal, Andrew, Trail Use Has Surged in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, www.parksandtrails.org, Accessed on May 18, 2020.
- 18) Email from Drew Hage, Economic Development Officer, City of Windom, MN, May 28, 2020.
- 19) Email from Nick Klisch, Cottonwood County Public Works Director, Cottonwood County, MN, June 6, 2020.
- 20) Conversation with Phil Nasby, MN DNR, on May 14, 2020.
- 21) Email from Andrew Oftedal, Park and Trail Council of MN, May 07, 2020.
- 22) Trail Maintenance directly from Andrew Oftedal (Park and Trail Council of MN), received on April 28th, 2020.
- 23) Email from Andrew Oftedal, Park and Trail Council of MN, May 07, 2020.
- 24) Reported by Lindsey Englar from an email received from Nick Mathistad, City Council Member, hCity of Butterfield Staff, April 2020.
- 25) Jackson County Trail Demand and Maintenance Reported by Luke Ewald, from Tim Stahl (Jackson County Engineer) on April 15th, 2020
- 26) City of Jackson Trail Demand and Maintenance reported by Luke Ewald, from Matt Skaret (Jackson City Administrator) on April 22nd, 2020.
- 27) Email from Luke Ewald, Jackson County State Health Improvement Program, May 2, 2020.
- 28) Email from Todd Luke, US Fish and Wildlife Service, April 21, 2020.
- 29) Email from Todd Luke, US Fish and Wildlife Service, April 21, 2020.
- 30) Reported by Lindsey Englar with conversation with maintenance staff at Sanford Health Center, Windom, MN, May 2020.
- 31) Reported by Drew Hage, Economic Development Directory, City of Windom, MN, March 2020.
- 32) Aoun, Alisar et al., Bicycle and Pedestrian Forecasting Tools: State of the Practice, Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, April 2015.

APPENDIX

Within this section, meeting minutes and documents from community engagement are listed. Meeting minutes are listed chronologically from October 2019 to summer 2020. Community engagement results follow, with the Trail Preferences Survey results, Open House Summary, Route Preferences Survey results, and the project Question and Answer sheet listed.

Early Trail Route Elimination

One of the early potential trail routes that was identified by a previous trail process was eliminated after a key landowner expressed a lack of interest in their route being considered as a connection trail route. After receiving this feedback, the route was removed from public engagement and consideration. This route would have utilized city land south of County Road 13, and then private land before connecting continuing on Lakeview Cemetery Land. This route can be considered a variation of the Phase 4 (Purple Route) discussed in this document.



Windom US Fish & Wildlife Trail Connection

10.28.2019 Partnership Meeting Notes

What is your vision for a connection trail?

Nick Klisch- no vision for trail, am new.

Drew Hege- Destination for residents and visitors, links back to town.

Dane Nielson- Great to have something extra. Our residents don't take full advantage of the route from Kastle Kingdom to Cottonwood Lake. Good exercise opportunity.

David Howard- Never walked to Wolf Lake, but it makes sense. Sons and grandkids from the Cities do lots of biking, to family activities like a trail would be good for families. A loop, reasonable for a variety for a variety of ages. There is lots in the rec. area, with more coming.

Denise Nichols- I helped design and obtain funding for the rec area. We had permission to connect on lakeside on private property, but funding never happened. Tegels to Kastle Kingdom to Cottonwood to Wolf Lake would be a good connection.

Rod Byam- Support a straight across trail or make it interesting, want to see all the trails connected. Avoid road, use the trail for training, teaching, observation. Want this connection to contribute to the notion that people will say, "Geez, have you been to Windom?!!" The trail should help people come to Windom just for using it.

Jenny Quade- Tired of the same boring loop. Want to see more! Want to have a complete workout.

Lindsey Englar- The topic of walkability comes up in my work at the hospital. This trail connection will improve that. I am excited to see this happen.

Todd Luke- Want the trail and Wolf Lake to be inviting to all walks of life. Should appeal to youth and be family oriented. A multi-use trail caters to all conveyances. Am open-minded to alternatives to connect to town. There has always been a vision to make this connection. Trail needs to abide by the laws of land protection.

Luke Ewald- I live in Jackson because of the trails. My work can compliment this. No vision yet.

Forms of community engagement that partners have experienced:

Luke Ewald- Free radio talk. Public health pulse. Letters to editor, Ron at paper is always looking for a story. "Tuesday Folders." Local TV.

Todd Luke- Have hosted events, such as "Wings Over the Prairie," and "Youth Hunting Rendezvous." River Fest. Have partnered with local civic groups.

Lindsey Englar- Spooktacular event, Easter events for kids. Have engaged schools, corporate health. Marketing, print and social media promotion. Have done a 4th grade Food, Fun, Fitness engagement. Have partnered with 4H and HiVee.

Jenny Quade- Manage the city's Facebook Page. Talk at city council.

Windom US Fish & Wildlife Trail Connection

10.28.2019 Partnership Meeting Notes

Rod Byam- Have done volunteer work with Red Cross. Fire Backpack program with students. I can get a lot of help quickly.

Denise Nichols- Penny Drive and other fundraising events. Teen concert. Coordinated activities with skateboarders. Can involve clubs w/ user groups. Can send out info on the Monday Chamber E-Blast.

David Howard- Beast Cancer Walk. Riverwalk. Could change the route of these events to highlight proposed trail connection. Church youth groups could meet at pertinent locations to draw attention to them. "Golden Eagles" group could also meet at pertinent locations. Could bus people to events or venues to help with drawing awareness or education. Signage can be placed to direct people to options they should explore.

Dane Nielson- School events, school district can get anything done. We can expand community education.

Drew Hage- Can send out digital surveys. Can send a mailer with utility bill. Can send info to the schools.

Nick Klisch- Social media, such as website and Facebook can be used to promote info. We can send a mailer with tax statements. Can place an add in newspaper or on radio.

How will we build trust with each other and the community?

The group will send the information out.

Be transparent with communication, have good communication.

Decisions will be vetted and explained.

Be transparent with costs and estimates.

What can you or your organization contribute?

Dane Nielson- We can get the word out. We can get volunteers and have people power. We can engage our Seniors for their "Eagle Achievement" projects to help with this effort.

Luke Ewald- SHIP has many grants that could be tapped for a variety of support projects. We can help with funding for route signs, maps, etc. We can do similar things as the schools.

Davis Howard- The Remick Foundation supports non-profits. Our giving tends to support youth and the arts. We give away \$500K/year. Have wide latitude about what to support, but funds need to go through a non-profit.

Rod Byam- I find ways of empowering people. I can get volunteers from the Fire Dept.

Windom US Fish & Wildlife Trail Connection

10.28.2019 Partnership Meeting Notes

Lindsey Englar- We can provide incentives for people to volunteer as part of employee wellness programs. Can get word to kids. We can grant write for community enhancements.

Drew Hage- We can put all the volunteer efforts together. Can get city to match efforts. Can help with fundraising.

Denise Nichols- I have grant writing experience, including for DNR grants. Can coordinate the city council. Can do media creation.

Todd Luke- Provide land for some of the trail as well as the destination. Have a "Discovery Room" for public meetings. Can help with environmental compliance and assessment. Have AV system. Have a friends group that might be able to help. Am a nexus for federal transportation grant opportunities. Can type up proposals for regional trail and road coordinator. Can offer a letter of support.

Nick Klisch- Can provide limited technical assistance. Can cost estimate. Maybe provide on road facilities along ROW of routes 26, 17, and 13. Can get county sponsorship.

What should the nature of the trail be?

Denise Nichols- It should be a safe route. It is unsafe to bike in this town. I speak as a user.

Luke Wald- Trail etiquette is important. Education needs to be done. Pedestrian scale lighting, visibility are important.

Rod Byam- Safety. Cheaper to go along roads, but not safe.

Nick Klisch- Average Daily Vehicle Traffic on Wolf Lake access road is under 500.

Todd Luke- Want to hear from community about design selection.

Windom US Fish & Wildlife Trail Connection

10.28.2019 Partnership Meeting Notes

Follow-Up Thoughts for Partners:

1) There was positive energy about using December as the time to kickoff announcements and conversation about the Windom US Fish & Wildlife Connection Trail Project. What actions should be taken by the partnership to begin promoting this idea to the community?

An NPS brainstorm of an awareness building campaign could look something like this:

- Press release before Thanksgiving announcing the Windom US Fish & Wildlife Connection Trail Project Partnership.
- Official City Council Introduction to the Windom US Fish & Wildlife Connection Trail Project Partnership.
- Information promotion campaign for the schools, hospital, SHIP and others.
- Posters, flyers, mailers, radio, web pages.... How do you want to inform the community? When would your organization be able to push out information in December?
- Commission of online survey from _____ until community workshop in January.
- Community workshop (January)
- Follow-up press release and survey results.

2) Deciding on the strategy of the awareness campaign for the late fall/early winter is an important first step for the project partners! Who within the partner group can take the lead on implementing the awareness campaign?

3) Do partners want to figure out the next meeting/call shortly after having a meeting, OR do project partners want to tentatively schedule out next meetings or calls? Potential dates would be:

November 25 or 26

December 9 or 10, or December 16-20

January 6 or 7, or January 13 – 17, or 20-24

February 3 or 4

4) Can you think of anyone to invite to the project partnership meetings who lives with an alternative perspective (this could be a physical impairment or disability, skin color, language ability, artistic ability, etc.) that can benefit the project?

Windom US Fish & Wildlife Connection Trail Project

11/25/2019 Conference Call Summary | 4:30 – 5:30 pm

The purpose of the meeting was to decide on community engagement actions that will run through December and into January.

1. Review mailer options and approve the style to be included in a mailer.

Mailer design was approved with edits to survey link text.

2. Review the bank of survey questions. (See list of questions starting on page 2)

33 potential survey questions were narrowed down to 16 and one maybe. Language edits were made based on group discussion.

Todd Luke from the US Fish & Wildlife service requested a copy of the questions so that he could make text edits to the wording to best represent the description of the facility that the connection trail arrives at.

3. Solicit help from project partners in helping push information to community.

Two brochure designs with center and left-aligned layouts were evaluated by the group. A brochure design was selected and an edit to one of the photos in the brochure was approved.

Text edits to the survey link were approved.

Meeting participants agreed to share the brochure on the distribution channels they typically use.

4. Discuss date, time, and location of a proposed January community engagement workshop.

Tuesday, January 7 was determined to be the best date for a community engagement event. A time from 5-7 pm was determined to be the best time to hold the event.

Discussion about the name and function of the event determined that the event should be a Community Input Open House, whereby the community can will participate in providing information, but is not obligated to stay the entire two hours.

The National Park Service will start designing/planning for the Community Input Open House.

Windom Stakeholder Meeting Summary & Next Steps

01.29.2020

Notes are as thorough as could be recorded via the conference call connection. Some meeting attendees could not be heard. If you attended the meeting, shared an idea, and your name or comment is not recorded, or recorded improperly, please feel free to notify Barrett Steenrod (barett_steenrod@nps.gov).

Survey Results

Final results were reviewed and discussed for 20 minutes.

Community-Input Open House

Stats on this event were shared, as were interesting observations/results from interaction with community members- about 5 minutes were spent on this topic.

All Trail Routes Map

Was reviewed and discussed for 10 minutes, with this map being referred to the rest of the meeting for next-steps planning.

Trail Routes Discussion

Opportunities and constraints on routing trails across RIM conservation easement land was discussed.

Barett shared explained answers he received from David Bucklin, a RIM technician with the local Soil and Water Conservation District. Trail along the edge of an RIM easement may be possible, but would involve adding new land to the easement at a 2:1 ratio, and a formal review with a state level board of water and soil resources.

Phil Nasby said that the opportunity to use the trail to educate about RIM and the benefits of this program is an opportunity that is worth exploring.

Todd Luke explained that some adjacent lands to the RIM easements are in an easement status with NRCS and USDA, and that with NRCS is rigid about maintaining the intent of the easement and that there is slim to no chance of accommodation with USDA.

Drew Hage brought up the option of trying to run a trail on the edge of an agriculture field from County Road 13 south to Wolf Lake. Todd Luke responded that there could be an opportunity to include a bit of easement for conservation along such a trail corridor without having a significant impact on field production.

Discussion about trail routes that would run from the city to Mayflower Park and along the north edge of the DNR property to Wolf Lake were had.

Sidewalk connections in part of town would have to be made. Both Collins and Lakeview streets were discussed as connections, although Lakeview is regarded as being a pass-through street for traffic. No traffic county data for either street currently is available.

Windom Stakeholder Meeting Summary & Next Steps

01.29.2020

Notes are as thorough as could be recorded via the conference call connection. Some meeting attendees could not be heard. If you attended the meeting, shared an idea, and your name or comment is not recorded, or recorded improperly, please feel free to notify Barrett Steenrod (barett_steenrod@nps.gov.

One person (Jenny Quade) brought up the need for park and rec to develop a plan for Mayflower Park. Another person mentioned that the flooding frequency in the park combined with the mosquitos makes the park less than desirable to use for a trail.

Drew Hage mentioned that the task of relocating the disc golf course to an uphill location in the park and the thinning of trees for this relocation could also benefit trail routing efforts that would run the trail through the park and east to the DNR property along the unused road right-of-way.

Barrett explained to the group that one potential trail route had been removed from consideration due to an affected landowner not being spoken to about the route before the public meeting, and that the group may want to discuss how to reach out to engage with landowners who are potentially affected by any of the proposed trail routes.

Phil Nasby agreed to talk to the DNR about hosting the trail on the edge of their property.

Todd Luke agreed to talk to landowners and conservation easement administrators about these trail route options.

Drew Hage said he would be in communication with the Lakeview Cemetery Board about the route option on cemetery land.

Rod Byam volunteered to speak to the landowner of the farmfield north of Wolf Lake and south of County Road 13.

All landowner conversations will need to happen in the month of February so that a final map of doable/permissible trail routes can be prepared for surveying. The survey will go live on March 1.

Trail Routes Survey

Survey to use the same platform as the previous survey. Notification by utility mailer, stakeholder promotion, and hosting a booth at Farm & Home Show.

Important dates to work towards:

Drew Hage to create a mailer to accompany the utility bills that will promote the survey... TBD.

Barrett Steenrod will create a flyer to share with stakeholders for promoting the survey by February 10.

Windom Stakeholder Meeting Summary & Next Steps

01.29.2020

Notes are as thorough as could be recorded via the conference call connection. Some meeting attendees could not be heard. If you attended the meeting, shared an idea, and your name or comment is not recorded, or recorded improperly, please feel free to notify Barrett Steenrod (barett_steenrod@nps.gov.

Results of conversations with landowners reported to Drew and Barrett by Monday, February 24.

Barrett assembles updated trail routes map on February 26-27. Print version of map mailed to Drew Hage for use at the Farm & Home Show.

Barrett and Drew design and publish the trail routes survey February 27-28.

Survey goes live on March 1st for one month.

Farm & Home Show

Who will file the registration?

Chamber of commerce members can get discounted rates. Registration deadline is not known. Register by last week of February? (**\$150 may need to be allocated to register a booth.**)

Farm & Home Show booth on March 7.

Booth could be unmanned, although one person did mention that manned booths will have a much higher response rate. The person(s) manning the booth ought to be knowledgeable and prepared to answer as many questions as the public has.

Howard Davis has tentatively volunteered to man this booth.

Other volunteers?

Other business and/or topics...

Todd Luke reiterated the importance for stakeholders and the process to be transparent.

Jenny Quade reiterated that the route that runs through Mayflower Park is an important route to consider while we wait to hear about results from conversations with landowners.

Windom Connection Trail Committee Meeting

04.01.2020 SUMMARY

Attendance: Drew Hage, Barrett Steenrod, Todd Luke, Lindsey Englar, Nick Klisch, Luke Ewald, Howard Davis, Denise Nichols, Rod Byam, Phil Nasby.

Agenda

1) Share March survey results & feedback from Farm & Home Show.

Drew and Howard attended the Farm and Home Show.

There was an initial surge of people who expressed negative feelings about the project, but the rest of the day, the people that were spoken with were neutral or positive about the project. Over 50 printed forms with the trail preference survey website were taken by the public.

This experience provided good visibility for the project.

Online survey had 62 respondents. Some of the earlier survey results were shared on the City of Windom Facebook page, which also generated some comments. The results of the survey showed that of the four remaining trail route options, the route that was the most preferred by residents was route #6, followed by routes #9, #12 and #3. Route #6 was a clear favorite, with the other three routes having very similar scores. Routes #9 had a higher score than route #12, but #12 had more overall positive comments.

a) Discussion about adapting routes in the order ranked by survey respondents.

Drew- Impressions from both the Farm & Home Show and some comments in the survey indicated that Windom residents are interested in a loop. Staging the trails together in a way to build out a loop over time maybe a good way to go.

Todd- Some negative responders may have misconceptions about funding (responding to comments in survey about funding and taxation); they may not be aware of where the money comes from for projects like this.

Howard- I understand how people do not want their grandkids to be on a road shoulder- this is an opportunity to teach awareness to kids about being safe on a bicycle.

b) Share loop options, get feedback from committee about which loop seems most desirable.

Drew- the Linder Trust is not actively engaged on route options that affect their property. The Trust manager, Clay, has indicated that the family may or may not be supportive. This would affect land along Wolf Lake on the west of the lake.

Todd- USFWS has a flowage easement here now.

Barrett- regarding some of the loop possibilities, there were a lot of comments about how the trail will fragment the habitat landscape and further encroach on hunting land. It is worth creating a map that shows available hunting land compared to available non-hunting recreational trail lands?

Todd- Not a bad idea to open people's eyes to other hunting opportunities. Emotions play into answers on hunting, the responses about impacting hunting do not seem factual based- for

Windom Connection Trail Committee Meeting

04.01.2020 SUMMARY

example, some folks may assume a trail will close more area to hunting, which is very unlikely to be the case. As far as fragmentation, I don't really see that. That is not an issue on the north side of the Wolf Lake Unit, there would be minimal impact to habitat.

Denise- Mountain Lake trail runs through hunting land.

Lindsey- I live in Mountain Lake. Mailers are sent out notifying residents of hunting activity around the trail. There has never been a problem. My husband and his friend hunt on the land and are not impacted by the trail.

Barett- is there a chance that hunters feel like they are not being heard?

Phil- Hunting and trails coexist. Examples of this are in Pipestone and Woodstock. Examples of trail/hunting coexistence need to be shown to the public.

Todd- I agree. It doesn't seem to be an issue of "being heard", it seems like it is an attitude of "My way or no way." Because hunters pay to fund hunting land, they may feel they have a right to force their will.

Rod- I feel they are being heard. They seem to feel they have more say than anyone else. In general, people are being shortsighted. 4-6 year-olds will be 10-12 by the time this gets built. We will need more input meetings. Need to whittle this down, and then get stronger feedback.

Howard- We can extend an invitation to Pheasants Forever and Ducks Unlimited to have a meeting with their people about the project.

Todd- The hunting presence on the north end is low.

- 2) Reporting of preferred routes/loops and cost estimate information back to citizens via mailer, Facebook, or newspaper report?
 - a) Is additional feedback needed?
 - b) Addressing concerns that critics have of project
 - i) Transparency of process
 - ii) Cost/Benefit
 - iii) Blanket opposition/NIMBYism

The action items in section 2 were covered via the discussion from Section 1. The committee moved onto discussing section 3.

- 3) Cost estimate information needed for preferred alignments.

Drew- Make a loop, then you do the whole thing over a 20 year period. I see how taking the Lakeview route to Wolf Lake, then come back to Mayflower Park and back into town.

Denise- So make a smaller loop... might this be easier?

Windom Connection Trail Committee Meeting

04.01.2020 SUMMARY

Nick- The county can collaborate. We would want to do an 8' shoulder. It is not in the plan, but since it is a short distance, we can probably make it happen. We can collaborate on funding with the city.

Drew- The whole Lakeview Cemetary board is in favor. We have talked to them. All the routes are possible as shown on the map.

Todd- Can we use this DNR land as trail? I can fit on land west of Wolf Lake, it is a flowage easement, but would have to get permission of the landowners.

Phil- I will bring this up (DNR land to host the trail) to the regional leadership, but I want to be sure on a route before doing so.

Barett- Regarding cost estimates, how does the committee want to proceed?

Drew- We can do a rough comparison using lineal feet and average cost for a trail. This would be a high view estimate.

Barett- Where there is wetland, how would you accommodate that? Route #12 encounters wetland on the way to Mayflower Park.

Drew/Rod/Denise- (Discussion about this area, the summary as follows-) The trail would be routed to stay on the high ground adjacent to the property line of the neighboring industrial site. For trail improvement near Mayflower Park, LAWCON funds could be used.

4) Trail plan creation discussion

Proposed Trail Masterplan Plan Design

PREFACE

VISION

INTRODUCTION

BENEFITS OF TRAILS

TRAIL PLANNING PROCESS

Previous Efforts

This Effort

Work Committee

Survey

Public Meeting

Preferred Route Survey

PREFERRED TRAIL CORRIDOR

COST ESTIMATES OF PREFERRED TRAIL CORRIDOR

TRAIL FUNDING SOURCES

APPENDIX

The language used in the NPS Technical Assistance Grant Application can be used. Denise will help with providing content on earlier trail efforts that preceded this committee's work.

Windom Connection Trail Committee Meeting

04.01.2020 SUMMARY

NPS will work with Todd (USFWS) on document layout, and with Luke (Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services) and Lindsay (Sanford Health) on writing and editing of content. City of Windom and possibly Cottonwood County will provide this information.

Follow-up actions from this meeting:

Drew will talk to Clay about the Linder Trust providing land access where the flowage easement is.

Barett will coordinate with Todd, Lindsey and Luke about document creation for the strategic trail plan that will be produced to share with the Windom City Council.

Luke Ewald contributed his thoughts about the survey results and resulting meeting discussion separately in written form the next day. Those notes are on the next page:

I needed a few things to digest first before speaking about the survey results. It was great that Phil Nasby was able to be at the meeting in person. Not only does he have several years of trail experience, he also is part of the Jackson County Trails committee like I am.

Here are a few thoughts I can relate too from living in Jackson-- hopefully they are somewhat helpful.

1. Scenery: if you ask folks in Jackson what they like about the trails, scenery is definitely something they bring up. They like the river, creek, wildlife, flowers, trees, etc. However, if you ask about safety first, most folks would take safety over scenery.

2. Benches: While I am not from Jackson (or SW Minnesota), I was surprised to see the number of trail benches that are along the trails in Jackson. When I joined the trails group in Jackson County, the benches are beneficial to the elderly population that frequent the trails or those who might need to take a rest going up a hill since we have a few hills in Jackson. From a health equity standpoint, they are a needed amenity, especially in community with an aging population.

3. Hunters: I have to agree with Todd... "it is either my way or the highway" when you try to work/negotiate trail implementation. I still think it is worth bringing in a hunter that would be willing to act as a neutral party. As for the wild parsnip comment-- I think I might know who posted this comment based off Drew's facebook post-- it was likely a hunter... Jackson has an issue with this as well. Typically the city will send out mailers, post on social media to avoid these areas during their peak season. I want to say the street department will put up signs in the area as well. I might have an idea on who posted that comment!

4. Negative Trail Comments: The "not in my back or front yard" folks exist in Jackson County as well. Rumor has it there are folks who live along trails in Jackson that opposed them and will not use them to this day (i.e. they walk on the street only). There are also folks who have moved to a different part of town because they do not like trails near their property. From what I gathered from the Jackson County Trail group it can be challenging to change views... However, it has been

Windom Connection Trail Committee Meeting

04.01.2020 SUMMARY

done-- specifically with farmers who once opposed trail development; having a farmer that advocates for trails helped.

5. The Three Phase Trail Approach: I am for this project. It is similar to what Jackson has for the Memorial Park project, which includes adding additional trail or sidewalks over the next few years. It gives the community something to look forward to.

6. Maps: I loved the idea of having maps available that show hunting, walking, etc. A similar idea was brought up in Jackson County several years ago-- possibly for the county parks that have hunting, but there are trails in those parks. I don't think the idea came to fruition, but the idea, in my opinion, is good.

Wolf Lake Connection Trail Work Committee Meeting

June 4, 2020

Attendees: Barrett Steenrod, Lindsey Englar, Drew Hage, Phil Nasby, Luke Ewald, Denise Nichols, Nick Klisch, Howard Davis, Dane Nielsen, Todd Luke

Intro & Purpose of Meeting

- The rough draft is going to be reviewed and then sent to public review.
- Adoption by City Council and be able to secure funding for future projects.
- The document will be updated based on what is discussed today.
- There will then be a 2-3 week public review of document, followed by another committee meeting to make updates, make edits, and have the copy go to city council on August 12th, 2020.

Recap to date & Acknowledgements (Luke, Lindsey, Denise, Drew, Phil and Todd).

Overview of Trail Plan

- *The document was put together in Microsoft Word—some minor adjustments will need to be made in InDesign.*
- Executive Summary = main points what the document will plan to accomplish, trail/project maps.
- Introductions = the “why” of the trail project.
- Vision = created from what the committee put together.
- Trail benefits = information on why trails are useful.
- Trail planning process = previous efforts from 1999-2004; page 10 has the current effort moving forward into the current trail planning process (ex. survey briefings are included, trail route collection, farm and home show booth, work meetings,).

Chapters: Cover to Hunting Section

- The content from Cover to Hunting Section was well received among committee members—limited concerns, but there was speculation to have neutral parties review the document as well.
- The Hunting Section has a map showcasing boundaries and potential barriers—it is a useful resource for public review and future council member review.
- Trail Impact on Hunting Land = provides an overview of hunting, habitat, and public land. Denise thought this section was helpful to include.
- Questions/thoughts: Phil read through this and thought it is good (but would also like a neutral party to review it because he is in favor of this project); Todd mentioned (in summary) potentially new approvals or disapprovals of trail development in the area, including the Linder Property, and focusing on DNR and other state departments. If easement lands are held by the Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) then there are options- the board would have to review an application of using this land for trail and approve. If easement lands are in CREP, there is no chance of approval from the USDA. If trail is on DNR lands, no problem, but the Phase 1 trail to Wolf Lake is an out and back and would not gain much support; trail plans that

Wolf Lake Connection Trail Work Committee Meeting

June 4, 2020

lead to loops and connections will have easier DNR support. Overall, work committee members felt the first half of the plan was fine as is.

Chapters: Preferred Route to Next Steps

- Work Committee Members continued to discuss the phases of the trail plan. Phil reiterated the importance of talking about the trail as a loop. Drew spoke of how Phase 2 would connect Highland School to two parks. Luke was in favor of Phase 2 from a public safety, safe-routes-to-school opportunity. Drew mentioned how Phase 3 caters to a different category of user, such as the adult cyclist compared to Phases 1 or 2. Todd mentioned that a property the connects from County Rd 17 to County Rd 13 is on the market and USFWS is pursuing it. This may make the trail connection between these routes easier to do if USFWS can purchase it. Phil likes the Phase 3 route and how it completes a trail loop. Denise voiced concerns about safety on the Phase 3 and 4 routes, which lead into conversation about constructions and maintenance costs.
- Construction estimates for trail and sidewalk surfaces were minimal; most discussion was on costs and feasibility of modifying road shoulders or placing trail along sides of County Road 17.
- Grants = public vs. private; Drew would prefer adding a section based on infrastructure and non-infrastructure options; aim for heavy hitting grants that provide funding. Howard mentioned that Remick has not been asked to help trails before now. It indicated that such an ask, while being new, would not be out of the ordinary as the foundation gave \$40K for a splashpad on an ask of \$30K. He pointed out that grant meetings are every three months, with the next meeting being June 30.
- Next Steps = what will be done next (pg. 37-38): develop a Wolf Lake Trail groups sooner than later; switch steps 5 and 6; step 7 should be 5; Windom Foundation can be the project “foundation” to collect funding for this project.
- References and Appendixes = everything found in the references will be referenced in the primary content; survey results and other documents will be put into the Appendix.

Discussion of various aspects of trail phases:

Mayflower Park to MnDOT to DNR Regional Office to Wolf Lake (out and back)

- Phase 1 is identified as what the public would like to see developed.
- The Phase 1 trail will be an off road trail that starts at the entrance to Mayflower Park, travels east on an existing Windom City Right-of-Way to land owned by MnDOT. A benefit of this route is that trailhead and parking infrastructure can be collocated at existing facilities at Mayflower Park, MnDOT or the DNR.

Wolf Lake across Linder’s property to CR 17 to US Fish and Wildlife Regional Office and paved trails

- Phases 2-3—there is interest in phase 2 (Luke) and interest with phase 3 (Denise, Phil, Todd); Phil would like to see phase 3 ultimate become a loop; we have to leave the phases to what the public preferred during engagement activities.

Wolf Lake Connection Trail Work Committee Meeting

June 4, 2020

East Connection to CR 13

- A Phase 3 route would depart east from the Windom Recreation Area along County Road 13 and turning south on 500th Avenue to County Road 17, where the route heads west to the USFWS entrance. Nick added that paved shoulder costs for County Road 17 are estimated at \$220K-\$225K per mile per side for County Road 17, with the construction costs being about half that for County Road 13. Drew asked about an off-road trail connection from 500th Ave to the Nature Center. This is hunting land and would be a hard sell. Barrett asked about how much of the state's hunting land provides access to hunters with a disability; could it be possible to make an ADA hunting trail in this area. Todd thought this was a great idea in that it would help open hunting up to more people and could provide an off-road trail connection. Phil thought that if the USFWS lead the way in ADA hunting access, this would show the state of MN what was possible, and lead to more hunting access on state lands.

Phase 4 & 5

- Accessible trail would be constructed on the north and east perimeter of cemetery land and then would travel east on County Road 17 via new wide paved shoulder to the USFWS entrance. For Phase 4, Drew said that the trail would be on the cemetery road on the western part of the property due to needing to avoid disturbing grave sites. For discussion on routing trail along County Road 17, Phil asked about whether a trail example near Fort Ridgley (sp?) could work. Nick responded that he was familiar with this, but the issue is the size of the right-of-way. The county ROW is narrower than state highway, which presents challenges; there is not enough information now to make a determination about what is best to do along County Road 17. The further the trail travels east on 17, the more technical it gets to fit the trail in. Drew said that at this point, we are learning where our limits are, which is good because we did not know these limitations when we started.
- Top of the ditch vs. wide-paved shoulder in the right of way; it is recommended not to put a trail in the area where the road would be reconstructed in the near future; be cautious about run off and water build up along a top of a ditch trail; the biggest concern with state aid standards is 50ft of right of way; surveying and designing is needed to ensure everything would flow easily; Butterfield has a water bridge (Lindsey will inquire about estimated costs).

Other:

- Drew mentioned he would like kayak lockers for the area to allow folks to rent and use a kayak to paddle throughout the lake (this would be piloted at Cottonwood Lake first); Barrett mentioned that he is going to be using Paddle Share for recreational purposes in the Twin Cities; Drew felt like this kind of idea can help make the trail more popular by providing an inexpensive and novel recreation opportunity along the trail route.
- Barrett is going to get edits made by next week Monday, June 9th, 2020 and send a Doodle Poll for some time in July 2020. Drew will post trail plan on city website and city Facebook page,

Wolf Lake Connection Trail Work Committee Meeting

June 4, 2020

with links being shared by project partners. Comments from public will be sent to Drew, shared with the Work Committee, placed into the Appendix for the final draft.

Windom Wolf Lake Connection Trail Work Committee Meeting

Summary- July 8, 2020, 2:30-3:30pm CST

Attendance: Barrett Steenrod, Drew Hage, Todd Luke, Luke Ewald, Nick Klisch, Lindsey Englar, Rod Byam

1. Welcome and Purpose

Steenrod communicated his thanks to participants for their involvement so far through this process.

2. Grant Table Update

Ewald provided a walk-through update of the grant table since the last meeting. His updates added clarification about whether the grant can be used for infrastructure or not. He also provided insight into which private grant sources have been sought regionally:

- AARP- has provided funding for ADA investment and signage.
- America Walks- applications have been made locally, no awards given.
- Blue Cross- Pelican Rapids has won money to help with overall improvements in pedestrian system.
- Bremer- is open to funding trail development, but has not done so yet.
- Apex- is supportive in Jackson County; they want to know what Windom needs and they can work with the city.
- Toro- has indicated interest in providing support, but has not provided other details.

Hage added that these private funding sources can be sought for the purpose of having matching dollars so that the city is better equipped to go after public funding sources that require a match.

3. Public Comment Update

Steenrod reported that no public comments were received on the trail plan. The plan was posted online on the Windom City Facebook page and the Windom City Website. A notice was provided in the Windom Citizen with a link to the Windom City Website.

4. Answer from Linder Family about Phase 5 Trail

Steenrod shared the information about the June 24 email that Hage received from Klay Walinga, speaking on behalf of the Linder Family Trust. The Linder family wants to keep their property natural and does not support a trail on or near their land to the west of Wolf Lake. This email was shared with Steenrod, Todd Luke, and Phil Nasby.

Steenrod opened up discussion to the committee on how to proceed with the trail planning with this information.

4.1. DNR support without loop

Nasby had previously indicated (via email) that DNR support for a trail that is not part of a loop would be extremely difficult to obtain.

Discussion touch on these points:

Changes in DNR leadership and leadership of the Linder family can alter priorities; what was not agreeable can become agreeable in time.

It may depend who is talked to at the DNR; Nasby's opinion is fine on this matter, but the decision comes from others within the department.

The USFWS is pursuing purchase a property between county roads 13 and 17- if this goes through, this may change some of the options for a trail loop by the end of summer.

Windom Wolf Lake Connection Trail Work Committee Meeting

Summary- July 8, 2020, 2:30-3:30pm CST

Could the phase trail that was proposed on the Linder Trust land be shifted to the Radio Tower land? No, as the radio tower land does not share a border with the DNR land and would still involve crossing land owned by the Linder Trust.

4.2. Impacts to trail planning for phases 1 & 2

General agreement that a phased approach is the best way to go about this trail planning effort and that the trail plan phasing should be left as-is with explanation given within the document for why the Phase 5 option is not viable for now.

5. Other Business on Connection Planning

Hage shared an alternative for connecting from the Phase 1 terminus at Wolf Lake to the Wolf Lake Visitor Center. A chain ferry could be used to cross Wolf Lake directly. Chain and cable ferries exist around the world and are used to cross various water bodies. A chain would be strung along the bottom of Wolf Lake from one shore to another and a human powered ferry platform can traverse between the two shorelines along the strung chain.

Hage and Byam liked this idea and thought it could solve the problem of not being able to connect across Linder Trust land to County Road 17, as well as being a novel draw to the area. Cost and safety did not seem to be prohibitive with this idea, but this would have to be studied.

Todd Luke said it was a neat idea, but felt that such a device would be perceived as more egregious potential impediment to hunting than a trail. Luke also felt that vigorous aquatic vegetation growth could impede the function of this device. He wondered about USFWS liability and maintenance.

Byam wondered about how effective a chain ferry would be as there would be a 50/50 chance that the ferry would be on the opposite side of the lake from where trail user demand is.

Steenrod brought up the opportunity for the chain ferry to act as an ADA hunting access platform. There was discussion about how this platform could work with hunting, but it seemed that it might cause more disturbance to hunting than access to hunting.

The committee agreed that this is not an idea that needs to be in the trail plan other than mentioning that alternatives for crossing or using Wolf Lake are ideas worth exploring and discussing as part of the trail development process.

6. Discussion on edits and approval of final draft of trail plan

Steenrod asked the committee about any other changes to the trail plan based on previous discussion as well as how they would like to go about approving the final plan.

Byam said the city and park board are pushing for the existing phasing. Mayflower Park is a Lawcon Park, which means that it must remain a park. The City of Windom wants to make use of that park and this trail plan helps to do that. Byam also brought up safety concerns with the other phases of the plan, citing the risks in all of the trail being along roadway. Byam said the plan currently does not speak to potential safety enhancement along each phase, such as paint stripping and narrower roads. Byam felt that the city can get the DNR onboard and that the phase 1 and 2 segments should not be abandoned.

Windom Wolf Lake Connection Trail Work Committee Meeting

Summary- July 8, 2020, 2:30-3:30pm CST

Todd Luke also added that the safety component needed to be described better in the plan. He cited curbing for trails, more buffer between trail users and vehicles, and to go beyond stripping. If safety is prioritized, the trail will get more support and more use. Grant monies can be sought to pay for the higher costs associated with safety improvements.

Englar added that while the phase 3 and 4 routes have few intersections and less chance for conflict between trail users and vehicles, that signage and visibility are important. More can be said in the plan and done in practice to address safety.

Byam wondered about the use of reflectors on the road- they are effective until a snowplow hits them... Byam reminded the committee that time is on their side if they are willing to be patient. Since this would be a phased trail solution, time can work for the City.

Hage acknowledged that safety improvements can and should be made and made an inquiry to Klisch about this. Klisch had dropped off the call or was unable to unmute, so he did not have a chance to respond.

Steenrod asked about how the committee wanted to address safety in the plan; as a separate chapter or as part of the trail phase discussion.

Englar said that separate chapter was not needed, but that safety could be discussed phases 3 and 4.

Hage added that at this point the City has not committed to anything, that the routes shown are corridors. During design planning and development of each phase, the county engineer would be involved and that all the options for safety (off road, wide shoulder, etc.) would have to be explored.

Steenrod summed up the discussion on safety and said that he would add the safety discussion to the phases where it was applicable. Steenrod asked about issues other than safety that should be added or edited to the trail plan, reminding the group that we are running shorter on time and that the goal is to have a trail plan that is defensible and can stand up to scrutiny. No other topics were suggested.

7. Work Committee Future

Steenrod asked the work committee about its future after the trail plan has been submitted to the Windom City Council. He asked about interest in the group being involved in setting up or transitioning into a friend's group.

7.1. Setting up Friend's Group

Englar asked about the time commitment, would it be similar or more?

Hage said that such a group could meet when it is convenient to do so and would assemble to advocate on specific work projects, such as applying for grants.

Byam said that there are many others in the community that are walkers and already take an active living role in the community and that these people should be invited into this group. He said he would be willing to reach out to these people.

Windom Wolf Lake Connection Trail Work Committee Meeting

Summary- July 8, 2020, 2:30-3:30pm CST

Ewald said that Sanford Health is putting up a brochure/info stand that would be used to communicate about health related events and opportunities in the community and that this committee or a friend's group could be promoted.

Steenrod mentioned the importance of taking this step, as the NPS has been leading this effort so far, but that the next steps for the trail planning must come from the people who live here. NPS is only a visitor; local people who will be here need long-term need to take the active role going forward.

Ewald said that he liked the idea of a friend's group and would be willing to help.

7.2. Helping advance other recommended next steps

Byam stated his opinion that the trail phase for along county road 13 should be thrown out and that the focus for trail development should be the phase 1,2 and 4 routes. Viewing nature is the important aspect of this trail.

No other next steps were advocated for or discussed at this point.

Steenrod invited committee members to email him or Hage with any other thoughts or ideas from today's conversation that are important but not expressed during the call.

Ewald shared these thoughts with Steenrod via email after the meeting:

I think that a safety assessment would be good. Safe Routes To School Plans typically do hazard assessments. I think it would be worth exploring this OR as Drew mentioned working with Nick at the County Engineering Department to address safety as a trail is developed. In Jackson County, Hazard Assessments have been completed for school districts during SRTS Planning.

As for the Friends Group, I think that is a good idea. I believe the Park Commission has a group that meets in Windom already; I am not sure if the commission is involved in recreational activities/improvements, but perhaps they would have interest to have representation in a Friends Group? Jackson County has a very good Friends of the Jackson County Trails Committee that meets monthly.

Windom Wolf Lake Connection Trail Committee Meeting

Meeting Summary, July 22, 2020, 2:30 – 3:30pm

Attendance: Barrett Steenrod, Drew Hage, Lindsey Englar, Luke Ewald, Dane Nielson, Todd Luke, and Phil Nasby

Intro & Purpose of Meeting

Steenrod- explained meeting purpose is to review and update content in order to complete plan work and release to the Windom City Council.

Overview of July 2020 Draft of Trail Plan

Steenrod- provided overview of changes to plan based on conversation from the last meeting. Specifically added the language on safety and reorganized the trail sections in pages 24-28.

Nasby- spoke first and reiterated his concerns that creating an initial phase 1 dead-end doesn't seem like a good idea. Not the best way to move forward- the critics of this plan would "eat this up".

T. Luke- Agreed with that comment. Phase 2 should be Phase 1. Phase 5 is the most scenic; we should check with Linder Family and see if there is a chance.

Hage- any chance to cross Wolf Lake w/ the chain ferry idea that was proposed last meeting?

T. Luke- the lake is not a straight channel, more of a hemi-marsh. Enhanced disturbance would be a problem. May not pass a test on appropriate use.

Nasby- it is a neat idea in the right place. It is creative, but seems like a long-shot in this situation.

T. Luke- maybe the Linders would be interested in a different easement? A fit for trail could be explored. There is no crop history closer to Wolf Lake, it was not involved in CREP. If the trail could push east onto the bluff, it would be unencumbered by easement.

Hage- the city would not be looking to do anything at this time. For the Linder family, it may be a group decision. We've looked at it and discussed, but it is not a next step for now. There has been more interest in a trail near Cottonwood Lake, which could happen sooner. For connecting to Wolf Lake, this plan is our best, even though we can't do anything now.

T. Luke- So if phase 2 changes to phase 1, and phase 4 changes to phase 2, and if USFWS is able to acquire a land parcel near that connects county road 13 and 17, then this increases confidence in the plan. For the land parcel, that could be decided by end of summer. We would still need to get funding and approvals for a trail on this land, but it could help make the connection to Wolf Lake without first having to present a one-way trail to the DNR.

Hage- the other reason that this project would not happen right away is that there may be funding cuts next year based on the economic impact from COVID-19, so new projects may not happen.

Englar- I like the phase reorder, this changes is taking everything into consideration.

Windom Wolf Lake Connection Trail Committee Meeting

Meeting Summary, July 22, 2020, 2:30 – 3:30pm

Nielson- I agree.

Ewald- I also agree with the phase reorder.

Nasby- do we still need phases if we ultimately do not know when each part of this connection trail loop is going to be built? What if called these “Trail Opportunity A, B, C... We get rid of the number and that allows flexibility to work on any of these parts as opportunity allows.

Hage- there would be more flexibility to do it this way.

Englar- it would add a convenience factor to this process, especially for finding funding.

Hage- what kind of language does the National Park Service use? What do other trail plan the NPS has done say?

Steenrod- other language includes, corridors, sections, segments. There may be other synonyms. I could look into it, but to simply use “trail opportunity” or “trail corridor” would be fine, as it communicates well and works to your advantage in this situation.

Steenrod- as far as the language goes on safety, are there any changes needed?

Hage- safety is better reflected.

T. Luke, Nasby, Ewald- nothing else to add.

Hage- I did speak with Dr. Koecker who has been invited to attend this committee; he did not have much feedback, he just had questions about why a plan was needed.

August City Council Meeting

Steenrod- after the changes are made to the plan from the discussion, how does the work committee want to finalize and send plan to the city council? By vote? In person or email?

Hage- once this group feels like it has a plan complete, then the plan is sent to city council. I don't think a vote is needed. Is anyone here against sending a completed plan to city council?

(No one spoke up against sending to city council.)

Steenrod- with the edits needed, we may not have time to complete, review, and send to city council before August 7. Will committee members be able to help with proofreading in order to get plan ready in time?

Hage- there are other council meetings; we can push the trail plan business back to a later council meeting.

Windom Wolf Lake Connection Trail Committee Meeting

Meeting Summary, July 22, 2020, 2:30 – 3:30pm

Friend's Group Discussion

Steenrod- wanted to revisit the idea of a friend's group from last meeting. Ewald and Byam expressed interest in helping start such a group. Englar expressed interest depending on time commitment. How are others feeling?

Ewald- am fine being on a trails group.

Hage- I can be available as needed.

Nasby- I can be advisory on this. I can help with organization.

Nielson- I could maybe recruit others, help out where I can with some participation.

Englar- I can help with writing and grants. Not sure of future schedule.

T. Luke- I can be tentatively involved. Depends. Am really swamped with work now.

Hage- there are not tasks at this point. One scenario for such a group is to activate people based on needs and convenience.

Steenrod- would Ewald be willing to reach out to others from work committee who are not in attendance and see what their interest is in a friend's group?

Ewald- yes, I can do that.

Next Steps

Steenrod- I will make the edits to pages 24-28 of the trail plan to reflect the changes discussed today. (Current trail phases are: 1,2,3,4,5. Change to 2,4,3,1,5 and then rename A,B,C,D,E and label as 'Trail Opportunity').

Steenrod- Discussed proofread needs and worked with group to delegate proofreading assignments. Promised to send an email with p. 24-28 updates within 48 hours and asked that committee members proof their section of document then.

Other/New Business

No new business.

Adjourn



Image Credits:USFWS

Wolf Lake Connection Trail Community Input Open House

With support from the National Park Service through a technical assistance planning grant, help us identify the best trail route from Windom to:

- Wolf Lake
- Wings on the Prairie Nature Center
- Existing paved/grass trails

Please join us Tuesday, January 7th, 2020 for our first community input open house.

Stop anytime between 5-7pm @
Windom Wetland Management District
49663 County Road 17, Windom, MN 56101

Please provide input by completing the survey below and attending the workshop:
<http://sgiz.mobi/s3/Wolf-Lake-Connection-Trail>



Community-Input Open House Results

01-07-2020 from 5-7pm

Participants

31 people signed into the event

New Survey Results

24 pull tabs taken so that meeting participants can take survey later

1 paper survey filled out (submitted online on 1-15-2020)

Windom Connection Trail Survey Follow-Up Questions & Answers

1 Green

Q. If you have lukewarm feelings about this project, what would have to occur for you to feel more strongly?

1- Safety along connecting trails of utmost importance, 2- Guarantee of no impact on hunting opportunities, 3- No ongoing expenses, 4- Approval by county highway department and county commissioners.

2 Red

Q. If a wide-paved shoulder is part of the final trail route, what are some specific actions you suggest to maximize safety for trail users?

Obviously it would be much safer and more scenic to stay off the right of way. If that is not possible, the speed limit should be reduced along that segment. And make sure it is wide enough for separation.

Double line and rumbles between w/ clear markings that it is a trail.

If used after dark would definitely need to be lighted, striped and signed.

3 Gold

Q. Short of not building a trail, how can the City of Windom best address your concerns for an off-road trail?

I would like to see bicycles included in the traffic.

4 Lavender

Q. Suppose you were out using a trail for 40 minutes... and part of that trail experience was on a wide paved shoulder along a rarely used country road, how much of your time would have to be spend on that road before you felt you were not really having a trail experience anymore?

Community-Input Open House Results

01-07-2020 from 5-7pm

How much time on city road? 2 minutes.

I think you are wrong to label the county highway as "rarely used".

I think I could give it about 5 minutes.

5 minutes.

5 Blue

Q. When traveling to Wolf Lake by trail, would you rather travel by way of Mayflower Park or Lakeview Cemetery?

I think both should be connected. But the cemetery would lead toward the Windom Recreation Area.

Lakeview Cemetery.

Mayflower.

Lakeview Cemetery. Mayflower is not very accessible.

Lakeview Cemetery.

Mayflower.

Lakeview Cemetery.

Both!

6 Pink

Q. Any additional thoughts to share on this topic?

Windom has an extreme shortage of trails compared with many of our neighbors. And city streets are challenging for bikes, so I would like to see bikes included.

Even though I am generally a trail user- especially when visiting places, I have never been out to the Wolf Lake area or used the trails. I did not even know they were here until about a year ago.

Where would people park in Windom before embarking on trail?

7 Yellow

Q. What are trail-specific reasons why you spend more or less time than you planned when using a trail?

The views and informative signs & displays.

Trail maintenance, weeds, bugs, cracks, safety

Community-Input Open House Results

01-07-2020 from 5-7pm

Attractive scenery. Smooth path. Slight challenge- hills, e.g.

Stay away from vehicles- trail good thing.

8 Orange

Q. What time of the day do you prefer to use the trail?

Late afternoons.

Daytime.

Daytime when sun is out.

Midday, or morning when it gets hot. Evenings tend to see lots of bugs.

Early evening.

9 Yellow

Q. What amenities are we missing?

No responses provided.

10 Hot Pink

Q. What is your main reason for using the Windom trails now?

Photography, nature, solitude.

I don't. I walk on or ride river road because it is close to home and rather scenic. Current trails are too short.

Too old, heart won't take inclines.

For exercise + scenic view.

11 Lavender

Q. How do you currently get to the trails in your community?

I don't, we go out of town because Windom doesn't have any trails.

Drive by car.

Drive to them.

12 Blue

Q. Additional thoughts on this topic?

Community-Input Open House Results

01-07-2020 from 5-7pm

Option 2 has great wildlife in wetlands area.

I have rarely used trails after dark w/o my own lights. Excessive lighting would likely have a negative affect on the naturalness.

We want at least 5 miles of trail connected.

Safety is a concern as it is multiple sites for Wolf Lake. Parking are used for meet-ups and "concern gatherings"

Don't spend too much. Weigh expense to actual (projected) use.

13 Gold

Q. Would you be reluctant to use the trail without being with a family member or friend? If so, why?

Late in evening I would be apprehensive. Smalltown is usually safe but could attract opportunities for a bad situation.

No- can go solo.

Safety in #'s + lack of nearby help.

No- I use trails by myself all over the country & never have had reluctance (I am female)

14 Pink

Q. In what ways do you expect to benefit or be harmed by this trail?

Could harm hunting opportunities.

I like the opportunity to get out of town to a destination with wildlife.

Benefit for exercise.

15 Red

Q. What ideas do you have about where funding could come from to support this trail?

DNR has plenty of money!

DNR. St MN? Grants.

Comments from Map Boxes:

Table 4.1

No comments given

Community-Input Open House Results

01-07-2020 from 5-7pm

Table 4.2

No comments given

Table 4.3

East Route, 13, Bruce Slocum 831-2026

No Scenic, draw on Ct Rd 13

CR 13 not good to walk on- busy or wide enough

Other Questions

What questions do you have for us?

No responses given.

What values should the planning team use to rank and decide on the preferred route?

Scenic. Wildlife.

Safety- Less on county rd.

1

Windom Stakeholder Meeting 01.29.2020

Review of Survey, Open House & Discussing Next Steps

2

Survey Results

1. What is your level of support for a trail connecting Windom to Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trails (U.S. Fish & Wildlife property 3/4 mile east of Windom on County Road 17)?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Supportive		60.2%	80
Very Supportive		17.3%	23
Supportive		10.5%	14
Somewhat Supportive		3.8%	5
Not Supportive		8.3%	11
			Totals: 133

3

Survey Results

2. What is your level of support for a wide paved shoulder along County Road 17 connecting Windom to Wolf Lake?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Supportive		33.1%	44
Very Supportive		17.3%	23
Supportive		21.8%	29
Somewhat Supportive		14.3%	19
Not Supportive		13.5%	18

Totals: 133

4

Survey Results

3. What is your level of support for an off-road trail connecting Windom to Wolf Lake?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Supportive		52.3%	69
Very Supportive		21.2%	28
Supportive		9.8%	13
Somewhat Supportive		7.6%	10
Not Supportive		9.1%	12

Totals: 132

5

Survey Results

4. What is your level of support for a trail that has both off-road and along-the-road segments (wide paved shoulder) connecting Windom to Wolf Lake?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Supportive		31.6%	42
Very Supportive		18.0%	24
Supportive		21.8%	29
Somewhat Supportive		12.8%	17
Not Supportive		15.8%	21
			Totals: 133

6

Survey Results

5. Which amenities in Windom should the trail definitely connect to on its way to Wolf Lake? (check all that apply)

Value		Percent	Responses
Windom Community Center		35.4%	46
Tegels Park		57.7%	75
Windom Recreation Area/ Trails/ Kastle Kingdom/ etc.		77.7%	101
Highland School		8.5%	11
Wide paved shoulder along County Road 17 that starts by Lakeview Avenue		37.7%	49
Sidewalk along Collins Avenue (fill in the sidewalk gap between 9th Street and the Windom Rec Area)		35.4%	46
Mayflower Park & Disc Golf Course		39.2%	51
DNR Office and Land (along County Road 26)		33.8%	44
Lakeview Cemetery/ Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Cemetery		16.9%	22
Other - Write In		11.5%	15

7

Survey Results

6. How desirable is it for you to be able to visit Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trails without needing a vehicle?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Desirable		28.8%	38
Very Desirable		29.5%	39
Desirable		23.5%	31
Somewhat Desirable		7.6%	10
Not Desirable		10.6%	14
			Totals: 132

8

Survey Results

7. When using a recreational trail, how many minutes or hours would you like to spend at any one time?

Value		Percent	Responses
0-20 minutes		6.1%	8
21-40 minutes		13.6%	18
41-60 minutes		46.2%	61
More than an hour but less than two hours		27.3%	36
More than two hours		6.8%	9
			Totals: 132

Survey Results

8. How often do you want to use a recreational trail that connects Windom to Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trails?

Value	Percent	Responses
Daily	6.1%	8
2-4 times per week	42.4%	56
1-3 times per month	34.1%	45
1-3 times a year	10.6%	14
Never	6.8%	9
		Totals: 132

Survey Results

9. Please rank the importance of a trail having the following amenities on a 5 point scale:

	Level of Importance
Drinking Water	★★★★☆ Count: 124 Not Applicable: 0
Restrooms	★★★★☆ Count: 130 Not Applicable: 0
Bike Racks	★★★★☆ Count: 123 Not Applicable: 0
Educational Signage	★★★★☆ Count: 129 Not Applicable: 0
Wayfinding Signage	★★★★☆ Count: 128 Not Applicable: 0
Benches or Seating	★★★★☆ Count: 128 Not Applicable: 0
Shade	★★★★☆ Count: 128 Not Applicable: 0

Survey Results

10. What types of recreation should the trail be designed for?

	Level of Importance
Walking	★★★★☆ Count: 130 Not Applicable: 0
Jogging	★★★★☆ Count: 127 Not Applicable: 0
Biking	★★★★☆ Count: 128 Not Applicable: 0
Cross Country Skiing	★★★★☆ Count: 125 Not Applicable: 0
Snowshoeing	★★★★☆ Count: 125 Not Applicable: 0
Viewing Scenery	★★★★☆ Count: 127 Not Applicable: 0
Photography	★★★★☆ Count: 125 Not Applicable: 0
Birding	★★★★☆ Count: 127 Not Applicable: 0

Survey Results

11. When using a trail, how important is parking access to you?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Important		23.3%	31
Very Important		29.3%	39
Important		25.6%	34
Somewhat Important		14.3%	19
Not Important		7.5%	10
			Totals: 133

13

Survey Results

12. What is your level of support for use of the trail after dark?

	Level of Importance
Use of the trail after dark? (lighting)	★★★☆☆ Count: 126 Not Applicable: 0

14

Survey Results

13. Are you likely to use the trail with family or friends?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Likely		54.1%	72
Very Likely		21.8%	29
Likely		9.8%	13
Somewhat Likely		8.3%	11
Not Likely		6.0%	8
			Totals: 133

15

Survey Results

14. How do you expect your quality of life to be affected by a trail to Wolf Lake?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Positive		35.6%	47
Very Positive		31.1%	41
Positively		18.9%	25
Somewhat Positively		6.1%	8
Not Positively		8.3%	11
			Totals: 132

16

Survey Results

15. Overall, what is your level of support for a recreational trail to Wolf Lake?

Value		Percent	Responses
Extremely Supportive		57.6%	76
Very Supportive		19.7%	26
Supportive		10.6%	14
Somewhat Supportive		4.5%	6
Not Supportive		7.6%	10
			Totals: 132

Windom Wolf Lake Connection Trail Survey Results

Question 16 Answers

- 2 Safety - particularly safe from vehicular traffic
- 3 Stay off private property.
- 4 Hope there is funding to complete a trail connection
- 9 I would love to have a paved running trail with mile markers that is in or near Windom.
Upkeep. Who is responsible for maintenance/cleanliness. Adequate trash receptacles to reduce littering.
- 11 Possible volunteer group for regular and minor jobs. Community pride in and promotion of a recreational asset.
- 12 Overall environmental impact of trail building.
- 13 I hope it will be a safe place to walk or bike with my family. I have no concerns.
- 14 It would w w
- 15 Safe running path would be great
This was designated as hunting land. We had an office all set up of site to maintain the land for public usage.
US fish and wildlife came in and removed part of that usage so impacting usage further WILL impact
- 17 support. I would support the trail add long as we're talking about not taking away from the most prominent usage of this land as huntable land.
- 19 Only concern is cost for windom residents
- 20 We really need an ATV trail.
- 21 I like to take my tractor for a drive on County 17 every night, please do not interfere with my pleasure ride
- 23 I'm excited to see this happen!!!
- 26 Water, restrooms, garbage cans and recycling cans , shade and sitting and safety
- 27 None
- 28 It would be a nice place to walk/job to stay healthy and a nice place to exercise. It would be an asset to Windom for visitors and potential residents.
The disruption of wildlife, the destruction of private property, the cost to build and maintain it, the damage people will do to the area I.e. garbage and vandalism, the impact to the public hunting area, loss of private for the people effected by eminent domain, lack of use after the "newness" wears off. There are plenty of walking path options for people in Windom, there is no need to make another one.
- 31 Not to take away an hunting of the area. It is dollars form hunting that purchased the site and now many acres are no longer useable. Quit biting the hand that feeds you. Will there be any user fees? Why do Hunters have to pay to use and hikers and sightseers do not??
- 32 to keep it maintained adequately
- 33 Too little of effort for a real trail - get with the program
- 35 I would like to see SWMN get 9n the map! So many gems exist down here and no one knows about them!
- 36 Would love to have a trail in windom!
- 37 None
- 39 I don't care to walk were vehicles are going by you.
- 43 Would love a bike trail to enjoy with the family rather than worrying about my children on the side of the road close to cars.
- 44 That this will be a good addition to the residents and visitors to Windom
- 45 The cost. Having unnecessary amenities. Not being long enough.
- 47 Na
- 48 Hopefully the trail will come full circle, so to speak, where onec can go around it as many times as they want.
- 50 I hope that it is built quickly
- 51 I am super hopeful as we need a bike trail
- 52 A must! Severe lack of trails, safe walking in Windom
- 54

56 I hope I can take my dog on a nice long walk daily with beautiful scenery
57 Lighting at night, castle kingdom area needs this. Plowed during winter so walkers can use it year around.
58 That it is a precursor to future trail development in the area.
59 Good long paved trail to walk dog
60 I'm from Jackson and would drive there to bike it.
62 Disturbing hunting opportunities, invasive species spread. Contact with wild parsnip along cr26.
?? It would be ideal to have it connect across highway 60 to both sides of Windom. There is not a safe way to cross Hwy
60 on foot.
73 It would be nice to have better signs to tell people that they are there. I'm fairly new to windom and haven't used the
existing trails because I wasn't aware they were there.
74 There is a need for more trails
75 Benches, connections. Interesting terrain, signage, hope to connect to mayflower its an under used resources
76 Can't use bikes on Wolf Lake trails. Trails need to be widened and repaired.
77 Hope for addition that adds to the peaceful area, concern of trails along highway
78 Safety for anyone using the trail and motorists
Concerns that other major roads would be disrupted by construction, or something would have to be taken out in
79 exchange. HOPEFUL because I love wolf lake!! I just moved to the area and that has been a highlight. Greater
accessibility and connection to the community would deepen my connection to this town!!!!
80 My hope is to have a safe, longer bike route near Windom. We love to bike and the trails in Windom are not long
enough, or connected to any other nearby trails. We go out of town to find longer bike trails.
81 None
84 There are higher priority needs than a trail to Wolf Lake. The money would be better spent elsewhere.
We need a trail where family and friends can exercise and enjoy the outdoors together. We love to walk, bike, Cross
86 Country Ski and Snowshoe. We don't go very often because there is no good place to go.
90 Traffic
92 bothering people on private property
93 Safe for kids
94 Future Costs of Maintainence
95 I hope that it can be a destination for travel. I also believe that it should be Easily accessed by people who might be
campers. My wish is that we had a campground that was well developed and desirable.
96 I have concerns that people think it will take away hunting land. It won't. This plan should exclude impacts to any
hunting land.
97 It happens soon!
98 Long term maintenance
?? That the city and EDA aren't padding their pockets with developer money while giving away tax dollars
101 Concerned that it would not be maintained properly
103 Concerned that we will lose more public hunting land, given that land was purchased with money collected from
hunting licenses and stamps
104 None
106 Safety, no or few hills, shade and seating
107 Finally having a place to walk with my children and pets
110 None
111 Children on co rd 17, dangerous. Affect swan and other waterfowl nesting with the added human movement around.
This area needs an atv park, that would bring more tourism to the area
112 That it would happen.
115 Hope to keep it safe for all who are using it and the roadways. Minimal shared roadways would help reduce the risk of
accidents.
117 None
118 I do not believe you give 2 hoots what the public thinks , you will do as you wish anyway .
121 I hope this gets done and not just talked about.
122 Safety
123 Maintenance, especially in winter months.

- 124 That it would be maintained better than the one that by castle kingdom. It's underwater a lot and no one removes snow.
- 126 Concern would be safety after dark.
Gives more opportunities for getting out to walk/exercise. I walk my dogs out at wolf lake and love the paved trails. We have walked back on county road 17 and there was a lot of traffic and a very very small shoulder. It would be more safe. I love the scenery and how relaxing it is and not having to worry about other dogs when walking! I've seen a lot of people use the wolf lake trails. I wouldn't mind the path even going to that gravel road (500 th ave) to county road 13 to the legion ball field walking path.
- 128 Cost to construct and maintain.
- 131 My hope is the trail will provide free, outdoor, and scenic exercise. My concern is the cost to local taxpayers.
?? My wife and I spend most days in the summer hiking elsewhere because Windom has no good trails. We WOULD USE THIS TRAIL!!!
- 133 easy accessibility for people with physical disabilities
- 134 Impact on wildlife, diminishing hunting.

17

Survey Results

16. When considering the possibility of a connection trail to Wolf Lake, what hopes or concerns do you have?

82 provided written responses to this question. Most responses were single topic, but some covered multiple topics.

Of the responses given...

- 37 - were positive, hopeful, or offered design/amenity suggestions
- 16 - concerned about safety in some form
- 10 - wondered about maintenance
- 8 - stated they had "none" to say
- 7 - expressed lengthy concerns about impacts to hunting
- 5 - expressed concern about impacts to the environment, wildlife, other projects
- 5 - made comments around funding and financing
- 4 - advocated for private property rights
- 3 - were critical of the project

18

Survey Results

17. What is your interest in participating in design and planning for this connection trail project? (If you are interested, contact Drew Hage at the City of Windom: drew.hage@windommn.com or 507-832-8661).

Value	Percent	Responses
Extremely Interested	6.8%	9
Very Interested	8.3%	11
Interested	22.0%	29
Somewhat Interested	29.5%	39
Not Interested	33.3%	44
		Totals: 132

19

Open House

Took place from 5-7pm on 1/7/2020.

Format was a series of 6 stations that participants could visit in the order they wanted:

Project Background

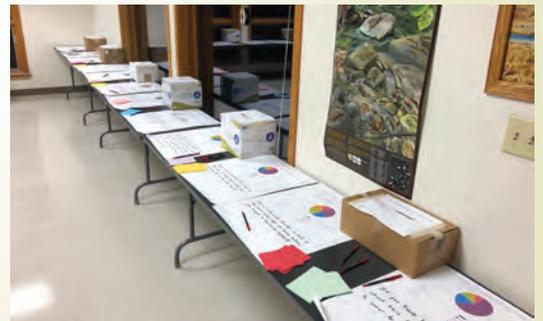
Survey

Survey Result & Follow-Up Questions

Trail Map- review, edit, comment

Sidewalk gaps map

Exit Questions



20

Open House

Stats-

- 31 people signed into the event
- 24 pull tabs taken with survey website
- 1 person filled out a paper copy of survey
- 10 proposed trail routes were drawn on maps, with some overlap in parts.

Interesting Comments-

- When open house participants were asked a qualitative question about the appropriate amount of time to spend along a road on a 40 minute trail walk, 2-5 minutes were the answers given (4).
- Hunters have expressed a strong lack of support due to potential trail affect on hunting.
- People were split on whether trail should run through Lakeview Cemetery or Mayflower Park.
- Ideas were shared for how to make wide shoulder portions as safe as possible.
- People are driving by car to get to trails.



Wolf Lake Connection Trail
 All Trail Ideas Generated from
 Community-Input Open House
 01-23-2020

Open House Proposed Trail Routes

1	4	7	10
2	5	8	11
3	6	9	12

Wide Paved Shoulder on Road
 DNR RIM Conservation Easements
 DNR Water Features

0 500 1000 2000 Feet

21

Next Steps

All Trail Routes Map

Trail routes proposed for RIM conservation easement land.

- On RIM land likely not permissible.
- Adjacent to land has been permissible (example of this in Mountain Lake).
- On RIM land at edge may be permissible, but would involve...
 - Buying out land at a 2:1 ratio (for every sq ft of land taken out of RIM, 2 sq ft of land would have to be added to RIM next to the affected parcel).
 - The proposal would have to be reviewed by a Board of Water and Soil Resources at the state level.
 - The property owner would have to be on board with this.

Next Steps

All Trail Routes Map

Trail routes proposed for other private land (Lakeview Cemetery, Private Citizens)

Outreach options to landowners- what do you prefer?

Do no outreach (not recommended)

Send survey results and all trails map for their review and comment

Call affected landowners to discuss the trail

Invite affected landowners to a meeting to discuss the trail

Go and meet with landowners one-on-one to discuss the trail

Who can volunteer to take part in outreach to landowners?

Next Steps

All Trail Routes Map

Survey of Preferred Route

Your thoughts about best way to outreach to public on the preferred trail route?

Same methods as before?

Same methods as before + some new outreach methods?

Use new outreach methods?

What do you suggest?

Keep survey open for-

A specified length of time?

OR

Until a specified number of participants complete the survey?

When to begin the survey?

Next Steps

All Trail Routes Map

Other steps to discuss?

Route Ranking Survey

3.31.20



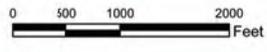
Wolf Lake Connection Trail

All Proposed Trail Routes approved by
Community Stakeholder Committee
February 2020

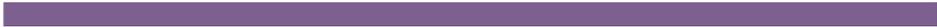
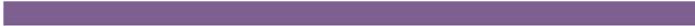
Proposed Trail Routes

- 3
- 6
- 9
- 12

- Wide Paved Shoulder on Road
- DNR RIM Conservation Easements
- DNR Water Features



Response Counts

Completion Rate:	100%		
	Complete		62

Totals: 62

1. Rank the following routes.

Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score
Route #6 (purple line)	1		155
Route #9 (pink line)	2		127
Route #12 (yellow line)	3		123
Route #3 (black line)	4		118

Lowest Rank
Highest Rank

2. When considering the possibility of a connection trail to Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trails, what hopes or concerns do you have?

Response

Safety - considering vehicular traffic. The possibility of enjoying the view along the way. I feel that there might be vandalism to the cemetery if the trail travels through the cemetery.

Hope to be able to bike. That would mean a paved trail. Restrooms located at several location. Parking for my vehicle to unload bicycle.

I am concerned with the trail being on the highway with very little shoulder room.

I want something that doesn't just follow a road.

I would like a biking trail.

Multi use trail, walking and bike.

Safety. Are these the best parts of town to be walking through.

Wide enough paths for both walkers and bicyclists

That the trail can be used for walkers and bicycles and it will be >=5 miles

that they stay away from Drake

Hoping for the longest option

Property owners along these proposed trails should be taken very seriously. A trail should be designed to make the least amount of impact on a property as possible.

I am someone who really enjoys scenery (i.e. lakes, vegetation, rivers, animals/birds, etc). Looking at the map, Route Six appears to provide this opportunity to see the lake, scenery, etc. Pedestrian and bicyclist safety (for all trails) is also important. There individuals who feel bicyclists should be on trails vs. roads and vice versa. Walkers and Biker safety needs to be considered during the project.

Do not want to be on road way. Would like it tarred/paved for easier walking or riding bike. Wide enough for two way traffic of bikes/walkers. Would be nice for a couple of benches along the way for people who need a break every now and then.

I would hope that we can have some parts of the trail in a more natural setting and not all of it along roads.

These routes go through a lot of private property. How will that work?

Land owner rights for land owners who have property that abuts the trail

When I lived in Jackson I used their bike trail almost daily. It was so nice to have a set path for walkers/bikers to use to avoid as much traffic as possible especially for little kids.

Total waste of money.

They don't bother the privacy of city or farm residents!

2. When considering the possibility of a connection trail to Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trails, what hopes or concerns do you have?

Waste of money No Need for a trail STOP NOW

I would like to see it stay off of highway roads as much as possible.

Hope that there are some "rest" benches along the way.

I would like to see more trails away from roads with car/truck traffic

Not walk right next to busy roads

I do NOT support a trail with a gravel road. I do think it is difficult to get there, but funding will have to be sought for that before would support that.

Safety from traffic. Good connection to wildlife viewing exposure but minimize footprint on FWS land to preserve the prairie. Need to keep up maintenance and keep it clean.

Don't use private property as a method to drive personal agenda. You have far greater concerns in there town of Windom than some hokey trail that will not be maintained properly like much of Windom currently.

No steep paths make them easy to walk or bike and also put in benches to stop along the way

Safety, education

I hunt. Being disturbed is item number 1. Edge effect and invasive plant spread. Wild parsnip is quite prevalent along the Mayflower access as well.

Safety along city roads. Crossing the city highway in no passing zones. Impeding wildlife especially during spring nesting season. Impeding hunting. There is a state law against it. Expansion of the trail system further into wetlands and prairie. This is a wildlife area paid for by duck stamp money which comes from hunters.

Paved with mileage markers

I would hope the new path is paved, has benches for resting, and the shoulder on City Rd 17 is wide enough. County Rd 17 is very steep on the south side of the road near the wetland.

I hope to see as much wildlife and wildflowers as possible

paved is great

I believe Collins Avenue is a terrible choice.....if people want to walk around town they can do it anywhere this seem to defeat the purpose of a nature trail to me. The best trail option that was shown at the public meeting seems to have vanished from the choices.....interesting.

Bad idea nobody wants this trail anywhere.

Safety of the people walking the trails vs the proximate route to current hunting land and how often I see that land used.

Keeping privacy for residents

2. When considering the possibility of a connection trail to Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Nature Center, and the existing paved/grass trails, what hopes or concerns do you have?

Safety Use. Route that will be highly utilized.

My concerns are: 1. The cost to develop, maintain, market, etc. the trail will cost taxpayers money with no return on investment for the vast majority of taxpayers. 2. A proper trail does not traverse through boring and dilapidated city streets, neighborhoods, commercial properties and dangerous county roads. 3. My hope is the trail will not be developed.

Summary of comments:

Safety (mentioned 10 times).

Recreational uses people hoped for were biking (6), walking (4) and multi-use (4).

Concerns about scenery or the route being boring (6).

Design comments, such as paved trail (4), bench availability (4), signage/steepness (2) and appropriate length (2) were frequent.

Amenities such as restroom prevalence (1) and parking (1) were mentioned.

Concerns around property ownership (5) taxpayer expense (3) and hunting/habitat disturbance (2) were made.

Anger/NIMBY (2).

3. Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #3 (black line)

Additional funding will need to be sought out for the paving of the gravel road.

Can cut across the FWS prairie and close any more land to hunting but use road access and existing trails. Otherwise loop this with southern routes to make a full loop would be great to have a larger route

Keep it off private property.

Have they considered a new campground near the scenic areas on wolf lake?

No

This is the only acceptable route.

Not scenic until you get to the WPA... Then you have to construct a new trail. Would need to avoid the remnant prairie on Wolf Lake, as that's basically an endangered ecosystem in southwest Minnesota.

I'm afraid it is too long. I only chose it because it comes by my house

least-reduced access to lake views and nature

to me this is the obvious and best choice for a nature trail(which makes me feel it is what someone in charge of the project wants and is forcing forward like many other city projects). This is the only real choice for bikers or runners to get in any real distance.

Bad idea nobody wants this trail anywhere.

Nice long route. The initial path along 13 is not great viewing, but ending on the high ground/bluff on the USFW property has nice views and not a lot of hunting is done on this high ground.

I like this route it's a nice quite country walk!

3. Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #3 (black line)

I do not like this route at all. It is somewhat unsafe as it is on roadways most of the way and it isn't scenic. I don't think it would be heavily utilized.

Boring and dangerous county road. Most people will find the route too long and therefore it won't be used.

Summary of comments:

Concerns about separation from road (4 comments).

Comments on this route's length (3).

This route being disconnected from town (2).

Not scenic (2).

Like (2).

Don't like (2).

Anger/NIMBY (2).



Wolf Lake Connection Trail

Closeup of One Trail Route Option
February 2020

- Proposed Trail Route
- Wide Paved Shoulder on Road
- DNR RIM Conservation Easements
- DNR Water Features

0 440 880 1760 Feet

4. Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #6 (purple line).

Response

- Think it would be a scenic route and less vehicle traffic to contend with.
- Has the smaller segment in residential
- I like the route
- Same answer
- This seems very invasive to me. It goes down Collins Ave which is highly residential and then cuts through peoples property going East off 9th Street. As a property owner, I would definitely not like this.
- Route 6 appears to have most scenery opportunities. I like this one most.
- If Route 6, 9, and 12 were used, a person would have lots of options for getting on and off the trail and a person could take a different trail each time they went. Would be fun to see how many different ways a person could find to walk/bike.
- I like that it comes along the lake. Seems like that would be a nice scenic walk in that area. Traffic considerations for CR 17 like there is with CR 13?
- It's a waste of tax dollars
- Just like how it passed 2 water areas
- Waste.
- Also a nice route
- Not bad but still to much on a highway
- I like it as it seems to be most scenic.
- Good option
- How will the trail be marked? As a lifelong resident I am not even sure how this route would work....
- Least impact to wildlife. Need to consider safety along the road.
- What's your plan for the public waste that is discarded along the trail? What is the cost of maintenance?
- This route would require widening of shoulder with extension into refuge and hunter access. It would also have to be closed or lighted for night travel. Evening travel would be very dangerous esp spring and fall when sun lines up directly down the road.
- Most scenic with least busy road

4. Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #6 (purple line).

County Road 17 is a very busy road. A little more scenic than a couple other routes.

I like links to the cemetery

best- most access to lake and nature views

second best choice since it actually has some nature when going around the cemetery.....but again.....the use of Collins is silly and really who wants to go walking in a cemetery?

The extra cost in widening the shoulder may make this route cost prohibitive.

Bad idea nobody wants this trail anywhere.

Better viewing to start with on the route, but the end of the route on 17 is not as good as the high bluffs. This is a good option, but like the longer black route.

I think it's less fun

4. Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #6 (purple line).

Not a fan of this route running on CR 17. I think purple or pink route would be more heavily utilized.

Exposes users to dilapidated city streets and neighborhoods and a dangerous and boring county road.

Summary of comments:

Scenic quality (6 comments).

Like (6).

Don't like (2).

Traffic/vehicle concerns to trail users (4).

Comments questioning how this route would be achieved (3).

Anger/NIMBY (3).



Wolf Lake Connection Trail

Closeup of One Trail Route Option
February 2020

- Proposed Trail Route
- 9
- Wide Paved Shoulder on Road
- DNR RIM Conservation Easements
- DNR Water Features

0 410 820 1640 Feet

5. Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #9 (pink line).

Response

- Would be a nice route also with less vehicle traffic.
- Ditto
- Again, I don't like this because it goes down Collins Ave which is highly residential.
- Route 9 appears to be somewhat similar to route 6. Bicyclists would like this for a nice bike ride BUT also have an option to see the lake (i.e. scenery) .
- I like that it's going to cross by DNR ground and have more scenic (less road) views.
- Nothing to see or do
- Seemed like one of the more scenic routes
- of.
- Not so good
- Not bad but, still a little to much on a highway.
- No comments on this track
- Best option
- Disturbs and fragments more wildlife habitat. Keep along roads. Easier maintenance along roads.
- Takes away conservation land that is dedicated to wildlife management. You realise we have a great park for hiking in Kilen Woods right?
- This would travel along west shore of wolf lake. It is on private land prob in a gov program that wont allow it.
- The curve off Cty Rd 26 is rather dangerous.

5. Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #9 (pink line).

less-reduced access to lake views and nature

worst route! The MAJORITY of this route is not nature at all but mostly all roads and just another walk around the city, traffic and chances to be hit by a unaware driver.

Bad idea nobody wants this trail anywhere.

Both the pink and yellow route run along the North side of Wolfe Lake and that area is used by hunters. Options for duck, goose, pheasant and deer exist in this area. I am assuming it will have a no hunting 'set-back" similar to the other areas and because that area offers a narrow hunting area, that will really limit the % of hunting area w/set back. Line of site is also more difficult in this area. The black route is more open on the bluff.

Ots less fun

5. Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #9 (pink line).

My second favorite route. One disadvantage is that the route doesn't connect to Mayflower Park, and follows CR 26 for a distance.

Exposes users to dilapidated city streets, neighborhoods and commercial properties.

Summary of Comments:

Traffic/vehicle impact to trail users (4 comments).

Scenic quality (3).

Hunting land/habitat fragmentation (2).

Like (1).

Dislike (2).

Anger/NIMBY (2).



Wolf Lake Connection Trail

Closeup of One Trail Route Option
February 2020

- Proposed Trail Route
- Wide Paved Shoulder on Road
- DNR RIM Conservation Easements
- DNR Water Features

0 410 820 1640 Feet

6. Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #12 (yellow line).

- Like this route also for same reasons.
- Past the waste water plant...?
- Same again
- stay away
- Again, I don't like this because it goes down Collins Ave and 5th Street which are both highly residential areas.
- Route 12 isn't as scenic in my perspective.
- I like that this has the least County road trail distance. It also crosses Mayflower park, which I feel is a very under utilized park in Windom. And I like that it stays fairly natural.
- Sucks, waste of tax dollars
- All routes sound fine
- Money.
- Not so good route
- Waste of Tax Dollars City Staff working on Proejcts outside of the city limits STOP NOW WE WILL ELECT A NEW MAYOR
- This is the best option.
- Not sure how many would walk through Mayflower Park, but could increase use of that park?
- Too buggy and wet by park in this one
- I am not sure why the travel down to Drake is necessary.
- Fragments more wildlife habitat. Keep along road sides.
- Same concerns as before. Waste, conservation land, maintenance ect
- Best possible connection
- Same as pink line.

6. Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #12 (yellow line).

More scenic. The trail would go along a wetland that has a ton of wild parsnip, which is a major public safety issue.

I like the link to Mayflower Park

good- additional access to nature and lake views

At least this route has some nature BUT we all know what happens to Mayflower park almost every spring or heavy rainy season - floods which to me says trails will be damaged often and need extensive upkeep or closed all together for safety.

The route through Mayflower Park seems to be prone to flooding and may have an overabundance of bugs.

Bad idea nobody wants this trail anywhere.

Both the pink and yellow route run along the North side of Wolfe Lake and that area is used by hunters. Options for duck, goose, pheasant and deer exist in this area. I am assuming it will have a no hunting 'set-back' similar to the other areas and because that area offers a narrow hunting area, that will really limit the % of hunting area w/set back. Line of site is also more difficult in this area. The black route is more open on the bluff.

This one connected with black line would make a good route!

6. Please provide additional feedback regarding Route #12 (yellow line).

I like this route the most. The route is scenic, provides critical connections to Mayflower Park, and looks like a safe route that will be highly utilized. A future phase to this route could be a trail that follows the Des Moines River to Island Park.

Exposes users to dilapidated city streets, neighborhoods and commercial properties. Goes through city's wastewater treatment center which increases liability and possibly entices vandalism to a multi-million dollar facility.

Summary of Comments:

Like (4 comments).

Dislike (1).

Buggy/Wet trail experience (2).

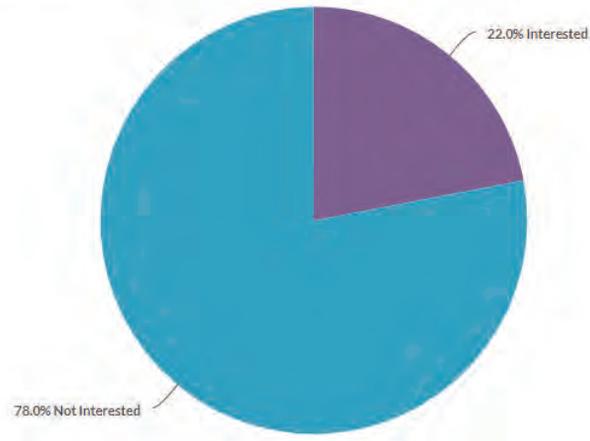
Hunting/habitat fragmentation (3).

Scenic (3).

Increase use of Mayflower Park (3).

Anger/NIMBY (5).

7. What is your interest in participating in design and planning for this connection trail project? (If you are interested, contact Drew Hage at the City of Windom: drew.hage@windommn.com or 507-832-8661).



Windom Connection Trail Committee Meeting

04.01.2020, 3-4pm. Conference Call and /or City Council Chambers with social distancing.

Agenda

- 1) Share March survey results & feedback from Farm & Home Show.
 - a) Discussion about adapting routes in the order ranked by survey respondents.
 - b) Share loop options, get feedback from committee about which loop seems most desirable.
- 2) Reporting of preferred routes/loops and cost estimate information back to citizens via mailer, Facebook, or newspaper report?
 - a) Is additional feedback needed?
 - b) Addressing concerns that critics have of project
 - i) Transparency of process
 - ii) Cost/Benefit
 - iii) Blanket opposition/NIMBYism
- 3) Cost estimate information needed for preferred alignments.
- 4) Trail plan creation discussion

Proposed Trail Masterplan Plan Design

PREFACE
VISION
INTRODUCTION
BENEFITS OF TRAILS
TRAIL PLANNING PROCESS
 Previous Efforts
 This Effort
 Work Committee
 Survey
 Public Meeting
 Preferred Route Survey
PREFERRED TRAIL CORRIDOR
COST ESTIMATES OF PREFERRED TRAIL CORRIDOR
TRAIL FUNDING SOURCES
APPENDIX

Drew Provides?

Barett Provides? (editing help for Barett provided by 2 other committee members; can other committee members provide layout help?)

Drew/Partner Provides?

Question & Answer – Wolf Lake Trail Plan

Why add a trail in this area?

The Windom Wetland Management District includes the Wolf Lake Nature Area and the Wings on the Prairie Discovery Center. These are local and regional assets that were identified in the Windom Comprehensive Plan. The Wolf Lake Nature Area includes the Wolf Lake Nature Trail which is a quarter-mile paved trail located within the Windom Wetlands Management District. US Fish & Wildlife (USFW) also maintains mowed grass paths on the property. The Wings on the Prairie Discovery Center is unique for USFW and features a visitor center, nature trail for exploring, wildlife observation platforms, interpretive signs, and hands-on displays.

These local and regional assets are less than a mile from Windom, but there is no convenient connection. A specific goal to establish a trail between the City of Windom and the Windom Wetlands Management District was outlined in the Windom Comprehensive Plan and is set forth below.

Windom Wetlands Management District Trail Connection

Dev. Dept. & Park & Rec.

Medium Priority

Goal: Establish a trail between the City of Windom and the Windom Wetlands Management District.

Strategy: Conduct further research of possible routes for establishing a trail connection between Windom and the Windom Wetlands Management District.

Rank possible trail connections between Windom and the Windom Wetlands Management District.

Explore possible funding sources with US Fish & Wildlife Staff.

Existing Conditions:

Multiple trail connections between the City of Windom and the Windom Wetlands Management District have been discussed.

Possible Destinations to Connect:

1. Mayflower Park & Disc Golf Course
2. Minnesota DNR Nature Area
3. Wolf Lake Nature Area & US Fish & Wildlife Visitor Center
4. Windom Rec Area & Tegels Park

What steps have been taken thus far in the planning process for the trail?

The City is working with the National Park Service on a Connection Trail Plan between the City and Wolf Lake. The trail plan will summarize community input, outline potential routes, and provide an overview of next steps in the process. The City Council will use the trail plan to discuss options for moving forward.

The Windom Active Living Plan focused on sidewalk gaps within the City. These sidewalk gaps will be addressed in conjunction with street projects. The City Council will evaluate future street projects and potential sidewalk projects. Existing and potential new sidewalks are links in potential trail connections with Wolf Lake.

Will the trail provide for separation from vehicle traffic?

A connection trail to Wolf Lake will likely utilize the shoulder of the highway for a small portion of the trail. To create a completely off-road trail connection would require acquisition/donation of land from private land owners. At this point we do not have the commitments by private land owners to participate in the project.

Safety is a top priority. How do you plan to create a safe connection?

All of the routes will likely utilize a small section of the highway shoulder at some point. Different sections of the connection trail can be designed for different user groups. The end goal is to create a trail loop from the Windom Recreation Area to Wolf Lake.

According to community feedback, the top option is the Yellow Route that connects Mayflower Park, DNR Regional Office, Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Interpretive Center, USFW property, and the existing paved Wolf Lake Trail. This would be a very scenic portion of the loop that would primarily be off road with a small portion of the trail along County Road 17. The off-road section from Mayflower Park to Wolf Lake would be ideal for younger ages, since this portion of the trail is not adjacent to the road.

Other sections of the loop would likely incorporate a wide paved shoulder. These sections would be more appropriate for older children or children who are accompanied by an adult. Incorporation of these sections into the trail is necessary to create the trail loop. Construction of the trail loop could be completed in segments, and these different segments would be more appropriate for diverse age groups and ability levels.

I am not a fan of the route along County Road 17. What can be done to avoid that section?

To create a trail loop, a portion of the trail will likely utilize the shoulder adjoining County Road 17. This area is adjacent to Wolf Lake as you travel east up the hill. This will be one of the more challenging sections that will be more appropriate for older children or children accompanied by an adult.

This area of County Road 17 adjacent to Wolf Lake will need to be widened to accommodate a wide paved shoulder. Construction of this segment will be a more expensive component of the project, since you are working by a wetland. The other option is to purchase right-of-way from a private landowner along the north side of County Road 17 by Wolf Lake, which would also be an expensive option.

Other sections along County Road 17 could parallel the high side of the ditch. This would be a less scenic option, but would help to create a trail loop depending on what routes are pursued.

I am not a fan of the route along County Road 13. What can be done to avoid that section?

To create a trail loop, a portion of the trail will likely utilize the shoulder along County Road 13. Currently there is an existing wide paved shoulder along County Road 13. Utilizing this wide paved

shoulder will decrease the total project costs and help to create a trail loop. This section of the trail loop may be more appropriate for older children or children who are accompanied by an adult.

I am not a fan of the route along Collins Avenue. What can be done to avoid that section?

To create a trail loop, a portion of the trail must connect the north and south sections of the trail towards the west. Several options have been discussed including passage through the Lakeview Cemetery, across private property, and across the old landfill. We do not have permission for the trail route to cross this private property. For that reason, we need to consider options for connections along city streets.

Collins Avenue was identified as the north-south connection towards the east side of Windom in the Windom Active Living Plan. Collins Avenue has several blocks of existing sidewalks and provides a connection to Highland School. Lakeview Avenue was discussed, but there are higher traffic volumes on Lakeview Avenue compared to Collins Avenue.

What is the estimated cost for the trail?

The cost of the trail will depend on the route selected and whether there are existing sidewalks and shoulders that can be utilized as segments of the trail. The number of segments of the trail that can be completed will depend on the available funding. A trail grant will likely be part of any funding package for construction of the trail. If the proposed trail project is approved, the City Council can discuss estimates for the City match for trail grants during the next Capital Improvement Plan Meeting in the fall. The City Council will compare the proposed City projects and consider the level of funding available for all proposed projects including this trail project.

How would a trail be funded?

A formal trail plan is the first step to secure funding for a trail. Creation of a Wolf Lake Connection Trail Plan will place the City in a more competitive position to apply for trail grants. The Wolf Lake Connection Trail Project will likely score well because (a) there is a potential to connect a number of locations (multiple linkages), (b) there are opportunities for multiple trail heads with different trail characteristics, (c) the project promotes existing local and regional amenities, and (d) the project promotes an active lifestyle, (e) the project connects people with nature and cultural resources. However without a formal plan, the City will not be competitive when applying for grants.

What is the maintenance plan for the trail?

It will be the responsibility of the City to maintain the trail if it is constructed. A grant will be pursued to cover the costs for construction of the trail. However, the long-term maintenance costs will be the responsibility of the City.

What is the return on investment on this trail project for the City Of Windom?

There are a number of individual and community benefits in creating a more pedestrian-friendly community. These benefits range from economic benefits to an overall healthier community. The economic benefits are centered on livability which is a primary economic development strategy.

Attracting new residents and retaining existing residents can be accomplished, in part, by promoting existing amenities and expanding recreational opportunities. The Wolf Lake Nature Area is a local and regional amenity. A trail connecting Windom to Wolf Lake, Wings on the Prairie Discovery Center, Wolf Lake Nature Trail, and other amenities will help to increase use by community members and can be promoted when recruiting new employees to Windom. A connection trail will be an amenity to help grow our community.

I hunt in this area. What are you doing to minimize the impact on hunting?

Hunting is one of the uses US Fish and Wildlife Staff will need to balance in this area. The mission of the agency is "working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people". In past experience in other areas, USFW has been able to accomplish this goal and balance uses with trails. The Mountain Lake Trail is able to balance hunting and trail use.

What are the next steps?

We are still in the planning stage. The Wolf Lake Connection Trail Plan will identify the top routes and enable the City Council to discuss the options and consider allocating funds in the next Capital Improvement Plan. If the City Council approves the proposed project, staff could be directed to apply for grants to help fund the construction of the trail.