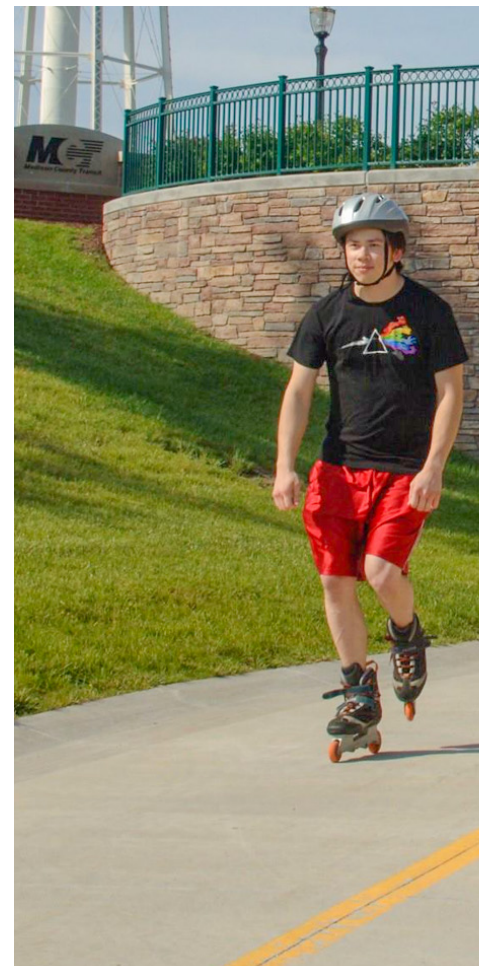
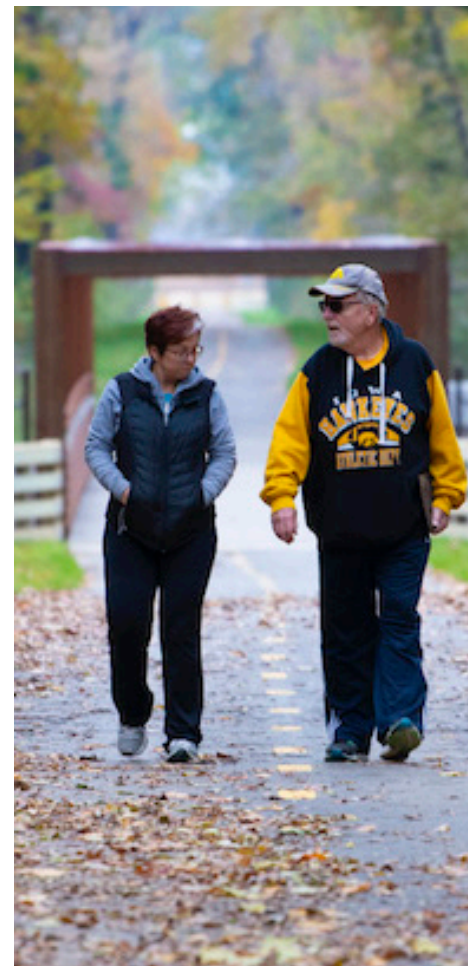




DRAFT MCT TRAILS MASTER PLAN



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

www.mcttrails.org

2024

Executive Summary

HeartLands Conservancy has prepared this Master Plan for the MCT Trails system in Madison County, Illinois. The Master Plan will serve as the long-term guiding vision for this Class I bikeway network serving Madison County residents and visitors. The goals, strategies, and projects recommended in this Master Plan are all focused on helping to achieve the envisioned future for the MCT Trails.

During the planning process, an online survey of trail users gathered input from over 1,000 trail commuters, pedestrians, dog walkers, runners, and bicyclists with vast knowledge of the MCT Trails. The survey results were supplemented with feedback from hundreds of people who engaged with the Project Team over the course of 3 events. One thing is clear, the trail network is held in high regard by experienced trail users across the St. Louis region, who greatly appreciate the safe, extensive, and well-maintained MCT Trails system.

Of course, there is always room for improvement. A key reason for preparing the systemwide Master Plan was to learn firsthand from Madison County’s residents and visitors how to better serve their transportation and recreation needs. Much of the plan is focused on pursuing opportunities that overcome the barriers identified through community engagement. Some of the top suggestions raised during the process and addressed in this Master Plan are:

- » Extend the MCT Trails system to more communities, neighborhoods, and key destinations;
- » Construct more trail-to-trail connections;
- » Enhance the safety of trail intersections and railroad crossings;
- » Provide more comfort and safety amenities;
- » Allocate sufficient resources to maintain the MCT Trails in good condition as the system grows.

Vision Statement

A well-crafted vision statement sets the tone for any planning initiative and guides the overall direction of plan development. It is simply a brief description of the ideal future state of the community or infrastructure being planned. In other words, it is the outcome that is hoped for after the plan is implemented – everything to be achieved.

The vision statement of this Master Plan vision is:

The MCT Trails system is a safe, accessible, and unique network of Class 1 bikeways that connects Madison County residents and visitors of all ages and abilities to employment, education, shopping, recreation, transit, and other destinations.



Photo by MCT

Master Plan Goals

Achieving the desired outcomes of a vision statement requires significant work, time, and resources. Goals are written to break down the efforts and investments into smaller, more achievable components. They are categories of action that help move the organization closer to the envisioned future. The goals of this Master Plan target the “6P” subject areas of: programs, policies, projects, promotions, people, and partnerships.



Programs



Promotions



Policies



People



Projects



Partnerships

Goal 1: Programs

Offer programs that enhance the experience of using the MCT Trails and attract new trail users.

Goal 2: Policies

Establish policies that support the development, maintenance, and operation of a safe, accessible, and unique trail system.

Goal 3: Projects

Prioritize capital investments that are cost-effective, expand access to disadvantaged areas and populations, improve safety, and enhance the experience of using the MCT Trails.

Goal 4: Promotions

Engage in communications that foster a positive image of the MCT Trails and effectively promote MCT events, opportunities, projects, and organizational accomplishments.

Goal 5: People

Ensure that all residents and visitors are informed of and have access to the MCT Trails and their benefits.

Goal 6: Partnerships

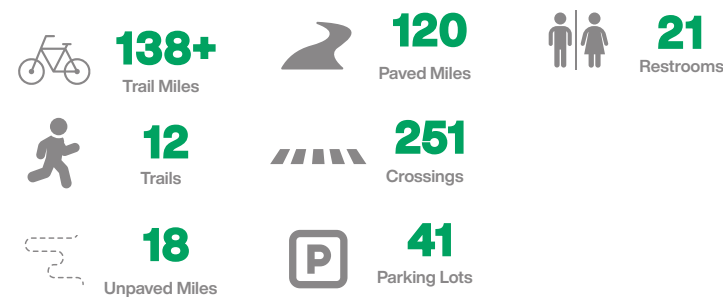
Cultivate mutually beneficial organizational relationships that can be leveraged to support the vision of the MCT Trails.

System Needs

The system assessment compared community and trail user input against the existing MCT Trails inventory. System needs identified by the evaluation include:

- » specific gaps in system coverage.
- » needed trail extensions to unserved communities.
- » areas in need of high-impact investments to overcome barriers to mobility and safe travel.
- » unpaved trail segments in need of improvement.
- » high-priority at-grade intersections recommended for grade separation.

TRAILS AT A GLANCE



Community members providing insight on needs for MCT Trails Master Plan

MCT Trails System Recommendations

Through community engagement and analysis, a total of 33 trail projects has been recommended to address system needs and improve access to the MCT Trails system.

The Recommended Projects Map on the next page is labeled to correspond with the list below. The list in the next column is sorted alphabetically by project type and does not reflect order of priority.

Future trail projects that have been planned to some degree are depicted on the map with a solid bright green line showing the likely alignment.

Projects that are shown with a green dash line are improvements to existing trails.

Recommended projects requiring further study to determine the alignment are identified as future trail corridors.



Implementation of projects providing safe connections for communities

New Trails & Extension Projects

1. Alton Greenway Corridor
2. Cahokia Mounds Trail (Schoolhouse Trail to Cahokia Mounds)
3. Chain of Rocks Bridge Corridor
4. Chain of Rocks Road Shared Use Path
5. Confluence Trail to Wilson Park
6. Confluence Trail to Piasa Park
7. East - West Confluence Trail Connection (Bluff Trail to Confluence Trail)
8. Eastern Madison County Connector (Heritage Trail to Nickel Plate Trail)
9. Formosa Trail East
10. Formosa Trail West
11. Foster Township Trail Corridor
A: Foster Township Trail - Phase 1
B: Foster Township Trail - Phase 2
12. Godfrey Trail Corridor
13. Gordon Moore Park Trail (Wood River Township to Gordon Moore Park)
14. Goshen Trail to Bethalto Corridor
A: Goshen Trail to Bethalto - Phase 1
B: Goshen Trail to Bethalto - Phase 2
C: Goshen Trail to Bethalto - Phase 3
15. Goshen Trail to Gov Pkwy & Plum St Corridor
16. Goshen Trail to St. Louis St. Edwardsville
17. Heritage Trail to YMCA
18. IT Trail - Phase 2 (Irma to Schwarz)
19. IT Trail - Phase 3 (Schwarz to Nickel Plate Trail)
20. Madison/Venice Connector Corridor
21. Quercus Grove to Nickel Plate Connector Corridor
22. Silver Creek Trail - Phase 3 (C.A. Henning to IL-4)
23. Silver Creek Trail - Phase 4 (IL-4 to St. Jacob and Bridge into St. Jacob)
24. Silver Creek Trail - Phase 5 (St. Jacob to Highland Park & Ride)
25. South Roxana Spur
26. Wood River Station to East Alton Spur
27. YellowHammer Trail & Bridge (SIUE - Goshen Trail Connection)

Grade Separation Projects

28. Schoolhouse Trail Bridge @ 111 & Horseshoe Lake Rd
29. Schoolhouse Trail Bridge at Pleasant Ridge Rd

Paving/Reconstruction Projects

30. Nickel Plate Trail Improvements (Marine Rd to Blackburn Rd)
31. Confluence Trail Improvements (South of Lock & Dam)
32. Nature Trail Improvements (Along 255)
33. Nature Trail Reconstruction (Mockingbird Lane to Sand Road)

Master Plan Implementation

The Master Plan is built around a framework with the vision and goals guiding overall direction. Objectives and strategies complete the framework and set the plan in motion toward implementation. Objectives organize the work efforts into actionable categories. Strategies are the actions and efforts that move the plan forward. The implementation strategies of the Master Plan are organized by goals and objectives, then prioritized to establish a manageable and realistic plan of action. A total of 93 implementation strategies are prioritized as follows:

Continuous Priorities: 16 strategies that should be initiated as soon as practical, if not underway already, and sustained after initiation.

Immediate Priorities: 16 strategies that should be initiated within **1 year**.

Short Term Priorities: 38 strategies that should be initiated in **1-5 years**.

Mid Term Priorities: 19 strategies that should be initiated in **5-10 years**.

Long Term Priorities: 4 strategies that should be initiated after **10 years**.



Installation of trail amenities often includes trees for shade

Implementation & Funding

Before any project can be constructed, costs must be determined, sources of sufficient funding must be identified and secured, and the project must be programmed in the Capital Plan. Significant resources are invested into the development, maintenance, and operation of a trail network such as the MCT Trails system.

The amount of available funding and the number of funding sources fluctuates continually. This is especially true for governmental and not-for-profit grant programs. Securing project funds through grant programs takes substantial effort. It requires continuous tracking, determining project eligibility, gathering information, completing applications, and writing proposals. In addition, grant programs are extremely competitive and the hard work is often a losing effort. Nevertheless, grants are very much worth pursuing. Organizations that are willing to put forth the effort can be tremendously successful at winning grants to fund projects.

Grants alone cannot fully fund a trail system. Most programs require matching funds from other sources. Public agencies must utilize every funding tool at their disposal – sales taxes, property taxes, user fees, or other mechanism – to leverage sufficient funding for a successful capital program. This is especially true when actively implementing a Master Plan.

The following recommendations are provided to assist in securing adequate funds to complete the recommended MCT Trails projects.



Art on the Trails - Newt Installation

- Investigate grants continually.
- Investigate public/private partnerships.
- Explore low-interest loans or bonds
- Develop a fiscal plan to create an endowment.
- Conduct community fundraising campaigns.
- Seek private donors.
- Develop partnerships to offset costs.
- Develop shovel-ready projects.
- Pursue projects within Special Service Areas and TIF districts.
- Enact equitable increases.
- Review projects for funding opportunities on a regular basis.
- Keep detailed and accurate records of all grants awarded.
- Leverage in-kind work as a grant match.
- Subscribe to grant notification services.



Community Interpretive Panels unveiling

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