

Location: Metro COG Office

Client: Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

Date: September 16, 2024

Subject: Heartland Trail Study in Clay County – Study Review Committee (SRC) Meeting #3

Attendees: Dan Farnsworth and Chelsea Levorsen, Metro COG; Jonathan Atkins and Forrest Steinhoff, City of Moorhead; Peyton Mastera, Dilworth; Justin Sorum and Matt Jacobson, Clay County; Patrick Hollister, PartnerSHIP 4 Health; Cleone Stewart, Detroit Lakes; Zakcq Lockrem and Olivia Halsne, Mend Collaborative; Colin Harris, Tom Natwick and Isaac Hase, Alta Planning + Design; Stewart Crosby, Stacy Johnson, SRF Lonnie Neuner, City of Hawley

Summary of Meeting

Introductions and Engagement Summary

- The planning team summarized engagement activities for the project. We had an open house, pop up events throughout the corridor, and good online engagement. Traffic increased after Facebook promotions. To date, there have been over 2,400 visitors to the project site.
- Patrick used the alignment maps at two different events, one at MB Johnson and last Saturday at Deep Roots Festival in Detroit Lakes. The feedback mirrored the input received online. Patrick will prepare a brief summary of these engagement events so this can be added into the project summary document.
- The information is also posted on the Metro COG website, and it will be on the project website as well.

Preferred Alignment Discussion

- Tom walked through the preferred alignment from west to east, using the Felt map pdf that Alta prepared for the meeting.
- From the City's perspective in Dilworth, they would like to see the most direct connection into the city. The most important piece is to have a connection.
- It is still many years before the 14th Street connection into town.
- The Main Street crossing is right at the RR yard and the gate can be down for many minutes. The question was asked whether we want to direct people to this location if there will frequently be long trains crossing the tracks.
- Peyton said coming from the south along 12th Ave makes the most sense because of the lack of obstacles. Connection to 15th Avenue N would get good connection into Moorhead and

Dilworth. Coming in from the north into Dilworth would be nice, but the south along 12th Avenue would likely be easiest to connect to the existing Moorhead system.

- 15th Avenue N has always been considered the connection point into Moorhead. 12th Avenue also looks like a good option. Highway 10 will be a work in progress for many more years, through 2029 and 2030 to have a sidepath along the roadway.
- 15th Avenue N does provide a better connection to the regional system. This will connect with the ND trail system. 12th Avenue doesn't support regional connections as well.
- We should change the preferred alignment to go from Centennial Park on the northeast side of Moorhead to Dilworth via 15th Ave N, then north-south through Dilworth (via 40th St/CR 9, Main St, or 14th St) to 12th Ave S, and then east to Glyndon.
- 12th Avenue is going to be difficult from a ROW perspective.
- In Dilworth, part of the 15th Avenue Corridor Study, Main Street will extend north through the current ball diamonds to 15th Avenue. The park would get redeveloped. If this happens, this would be a nice connection.
- Patrick noted that when the trail in Glyndon was constructed in 2019-2020, it was considered to be part of the Heartland Trail. We should confirm this with Glyndon.
- The Glyndon segment was designed to be the Heartland Trail, but a spur trail would likely be okay.
- The bridge over the Buffalo River on 12th Avenue will be reconstructed by the Township and the County as a Township bridge improvement. At this point, there is not a plan to add a trail to this bridge.
- All five townships will need to agree to the final route if using township roads because the County does not own the right-of-way.
- The planning team will look at two options to get into the park on the west side, including one that comes in along the existing road (155th Street S off of Highway 10) into the park, and the other south of the railroad and Buffalo River, noting that this is a sensitive landscape.
- The Hawley City Council has noted that the well-used crossing over the tracks might be a good location for the trail crossing.
- In Hawley, the narrow bridge under the railroad is not a comfortable space for vehicles, especially for bicycles in its current layout.
- The question was asked about widening the underpass under the railroad at Valley Street. The city has approached BNSF about this. It would be a very costly underpass improvement.
- Consider both crossings, the at-grade that is already used by pedestrians, and the underpass.
- Becker County representatives are looking at route options. Cleone has a map of the options that they reviewed. The current route they are looking at would travel east-west through Lake Park and would likely connect to Clay County north of Hwy 10.
- It was noted that if the trail goes outside the approved DNR master plan, then the plan needs to be amended, which is a lengthy process.
- This Heartland Trail Study in Clay County will show the feasibility of a trail along 12th Avenue and whether it will be financially feasible.
- The DNR and Becker County have a contract to start the bid process for the next segment of the trail to encumber the 2020 bonding bill funds. Construction will likely start in 2025.

- March 2025 is when bonding submittals are due. Once this study is complete, Metro COG may begin looking closer at funding.