

# A

## APPENDIX

1. Engagement Phases 1 & 2 Summary
2. Online Social Pinpoint Summary Report
3. Open House #1 Summary & Presentation Materials
4. Pop-up Event Summaries
5. Open House #2 Summary & Presentation Materials
6. SRC & Stakeholder Meeting Summaries

# 1

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Phase 1 & 2 Engagement Summary**

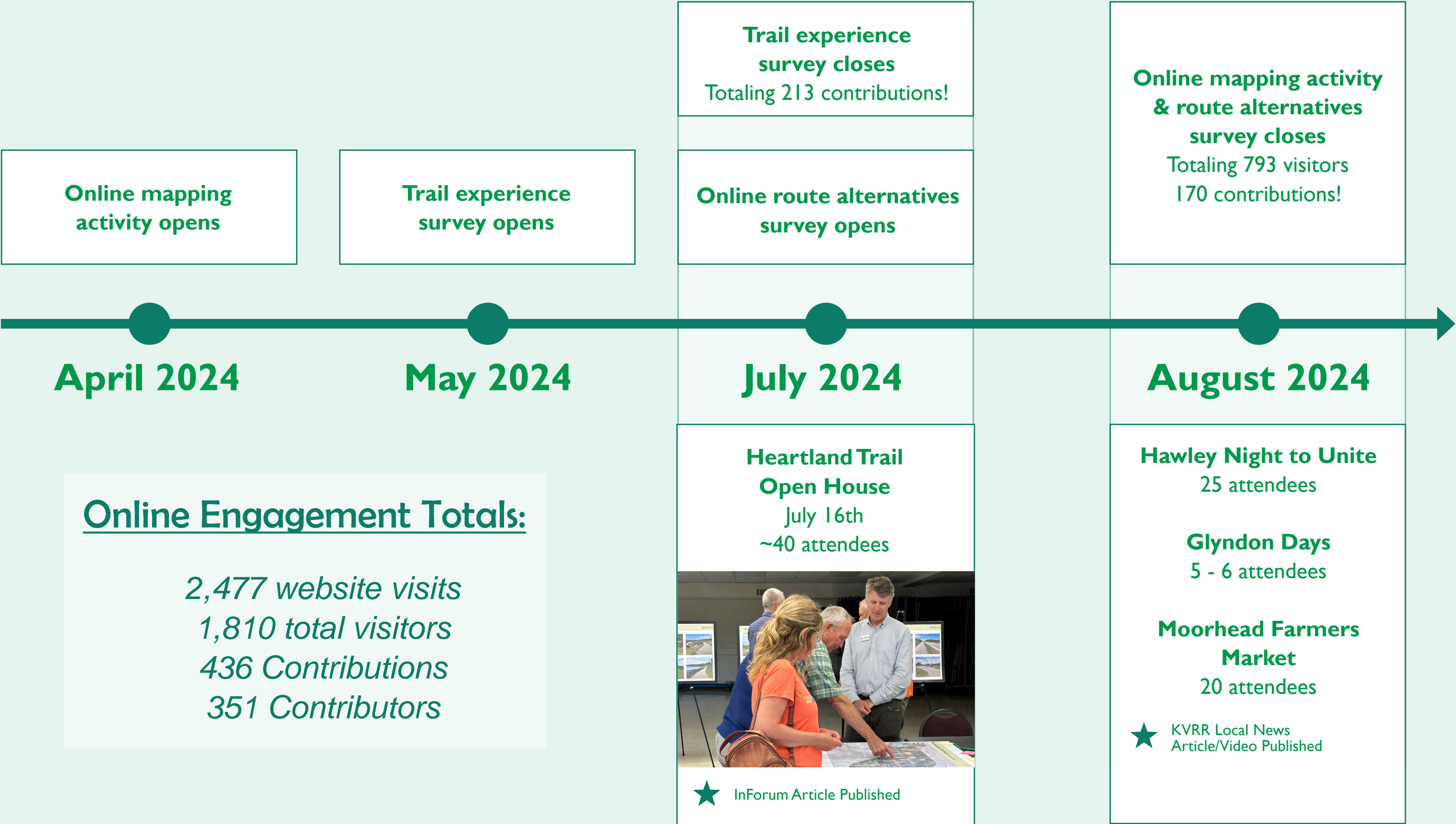
# The Heartland Trail Study

## in Clay County



**September 2024 | Phase 1 & 2 Engagement Summary**

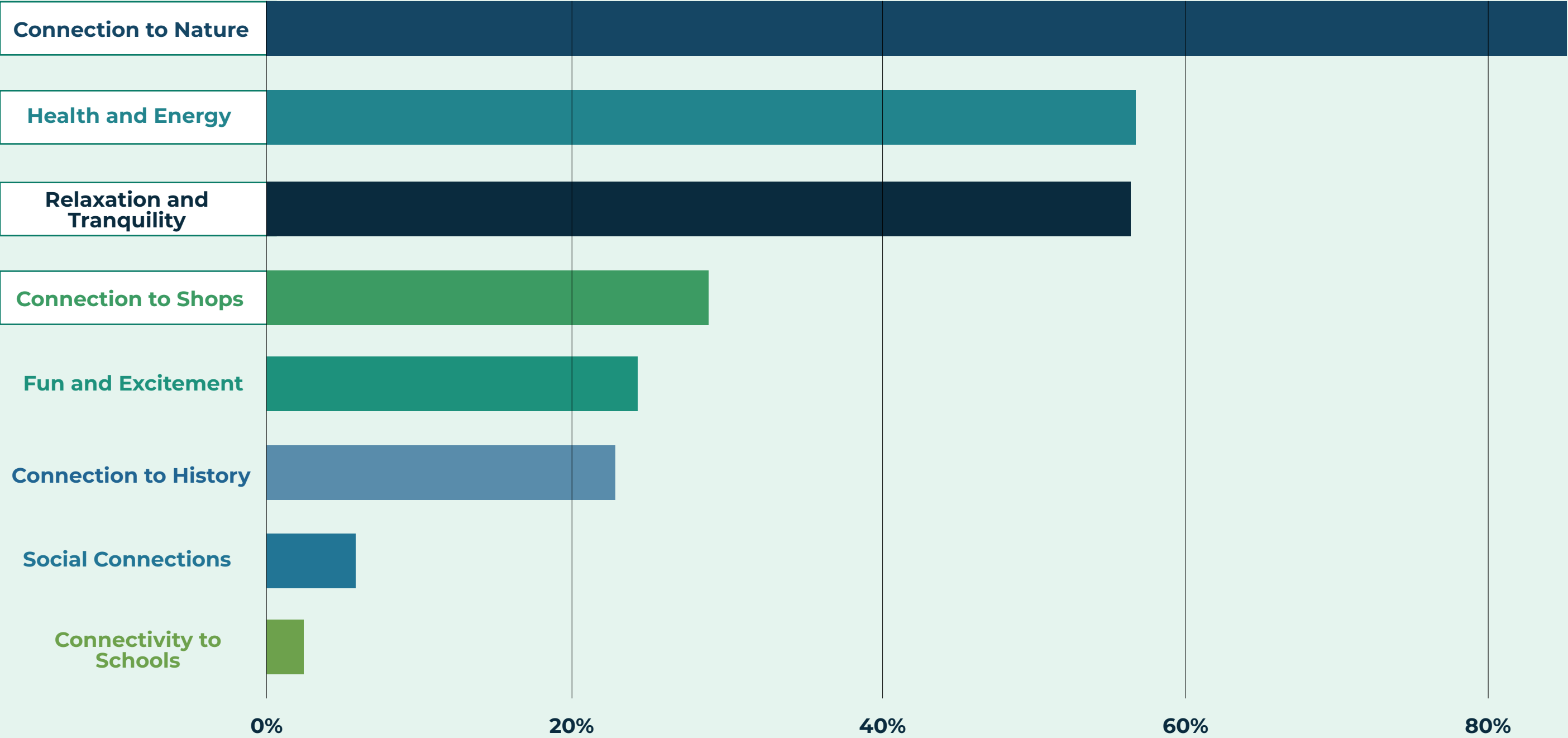
# Community Engagement | Overview



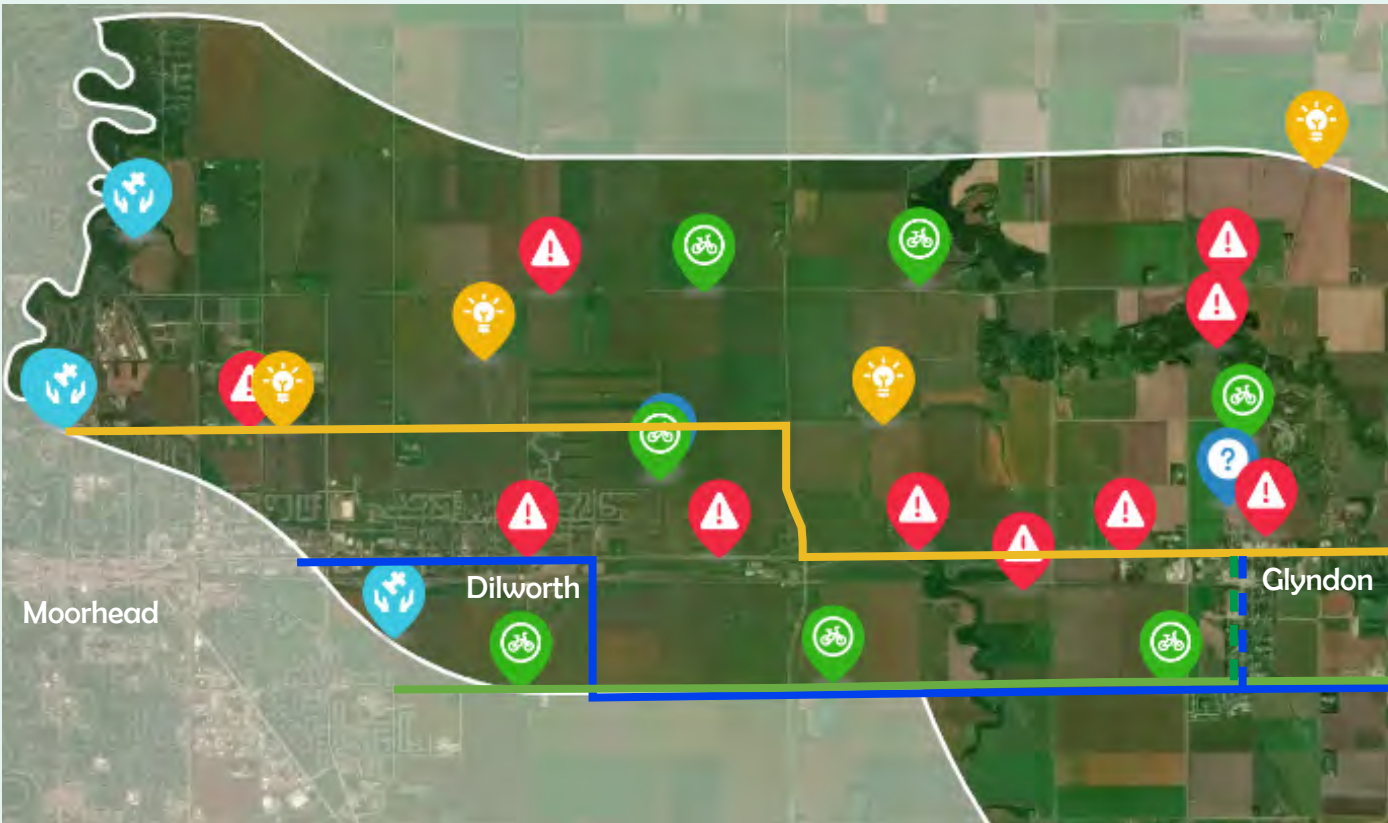


# Community Engagement | Overview

Q:What would you like to experience when using the Heartland Trail? | 213 Contributions



# Western Segment Mapping | General Comments



The Straight Shot | 7%

The Rivers and Forest | 77%

The Town Connector | 16%

“Following Highway 10 is not ideal. The fewer cars I hear, the better.” 18 upvotes

“...staying away from the highway would be preferred even if only on by a tree line...” 16 upvotes



“Consider connecting to the center of Moorhead where the most people will be able to access [the trail]” 10 upvotes

“Moorhead’s soon-to-be-revitalized downtown would be a great destination for people touring on this route...and the proposed northern route that ends at 15th Ave is a really good way to get there.” 6 upvotes 2 downvotes

# West Central Segment Mapping | General Comments



The Straight Shot | 5%

The Rivers and Forest | 85%

The Town Connector | 10%

“Having a trail from Moorhead to Buffalo State Park would be fantastic!!” 👍 15 upvotes

“It would be amazing to have the trail connected to Buffalo State Park for bike and camping.” 👍 8 upvotes

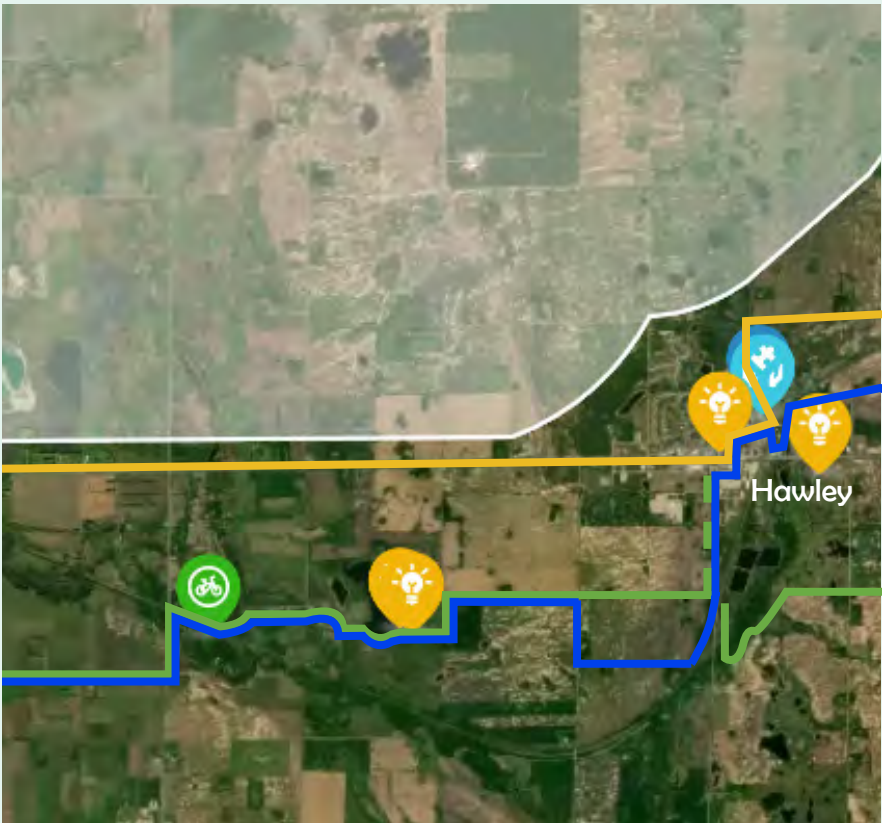
“Could a sister trail be built along the old railroad alignment to connect Glyndon to Downer & Barnesville?” 👍 2 upvotes

There should be a clear distinction between hikers and bikers, especially since there are a lot of people who enjoy slowly exploring the park along those trails...” 👍 7 upvotes





# East-Central Segment Mapping | General Comments



The Straight Shot | 5%

The Town Connector | 19%

The Rivers and Forest | 76% ★

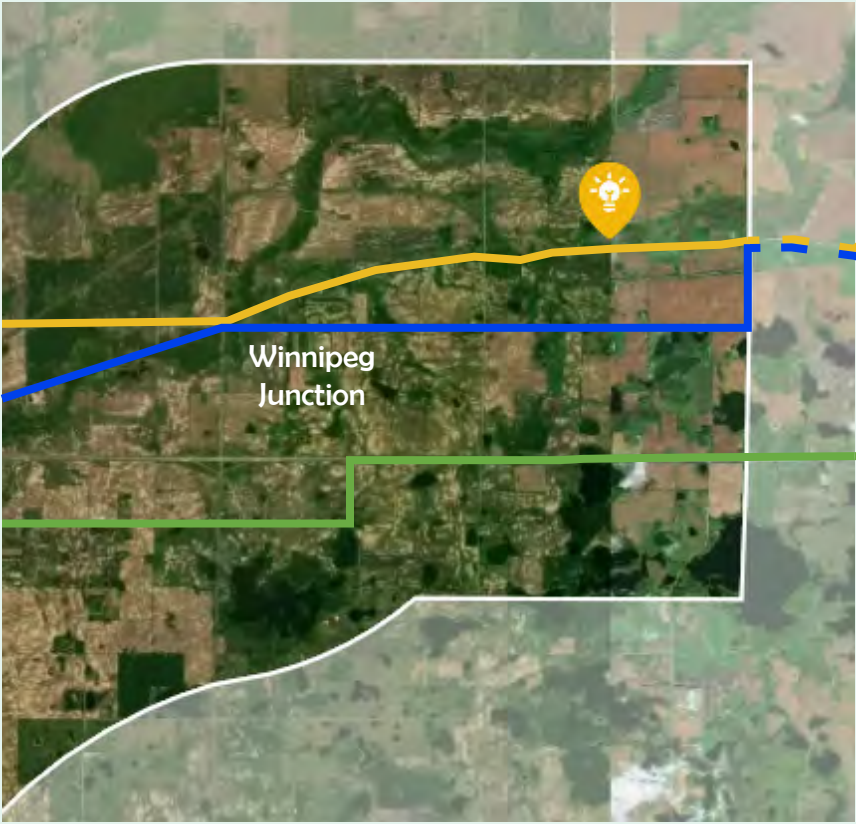
“Would be nice to have access to water fill stations in each city crossing.” 👍 5 upvotes

“This lake has the potential to be a scenic, valuable entity for the Heartland trail. I love when trails cross by lakes and rivers; it makes the journey more enjoyable and less utilitarian.” 👍 11 upvotes

Nice to have [the trail] go along Main Street, but are you just routing people on the road? If so, are you going to add ways to slow down cars along this route...” 👍 1 upvote



# Eastern Segment Mapping | General Comments



The Straight Shot | 7%

The Town Connector | 35%

The Rivers and Forest | 58%



Based on conversations with community members at the July 16th open house, there is a desire to “flip” the green and blue lines to connect to Hawley and the scenic nature of the blue segment.



I have an idea

1

“How about a different name for the trail? “Heartland” could literally be any place in the United States, that’s very generic and doesn’t say anything unique about us.”

👍 5 upvotes 🗨️ 3 downvotes



# Trail Type Preference

Generally, people really liked these types of trails:



👍 Trail along a lakeshore



👍 Trail along a wetland



👍 Trail along a boardwalk



👍 Trail along a county road

Generally, people do not like these types of trails:



👎 Trail adjacent to HWY 10



👎 Trail between HWY 10 & local street



👎 Trail along a county road with curb



👎 Trail along a highway



# Trail Type Preference

Generally, people really like these trail amenities:



👍 A rest stop



👍 Trailhead parking



👍 An overpass



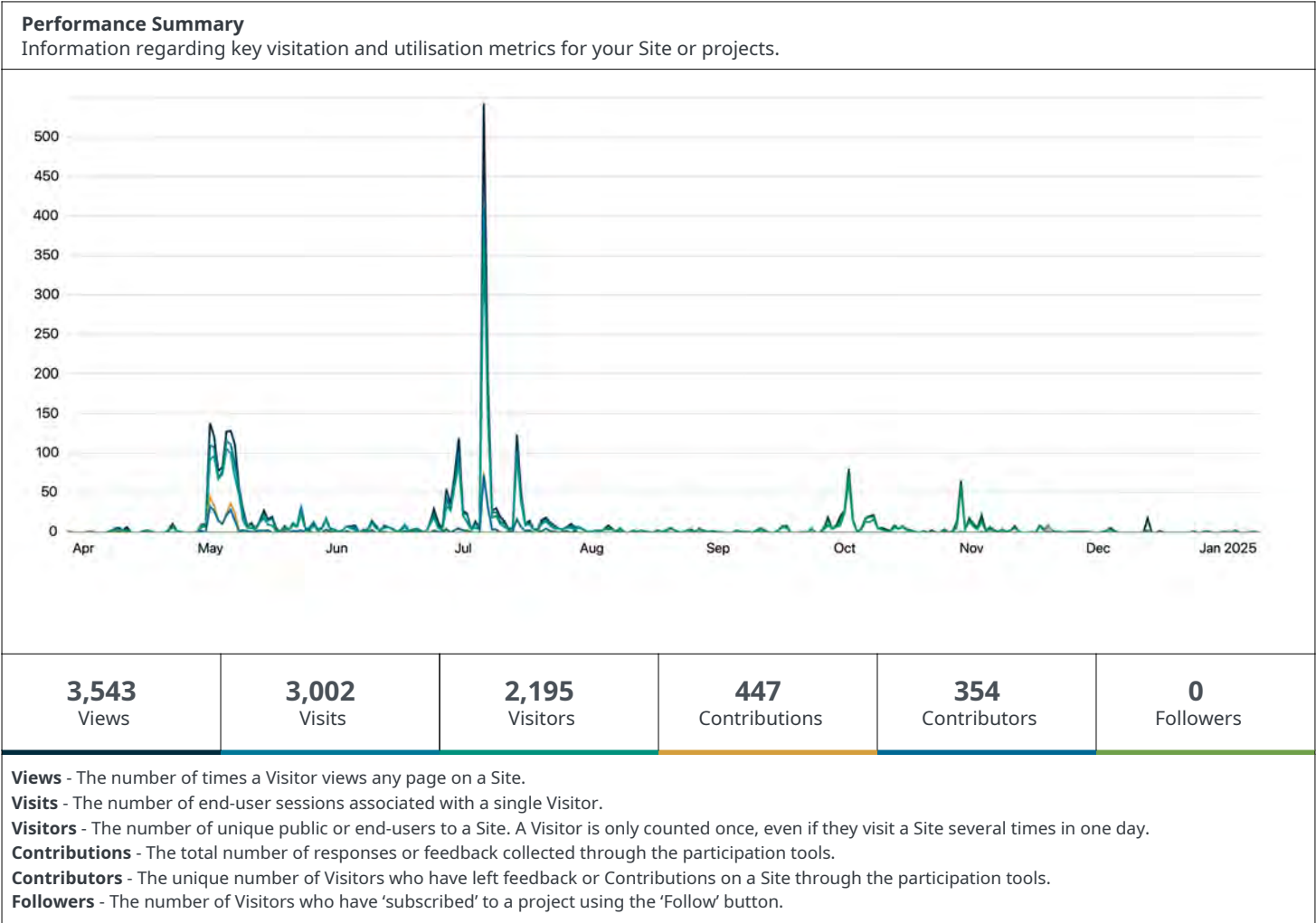
👍 An underpass

# 2

## **APPENDIX 2**

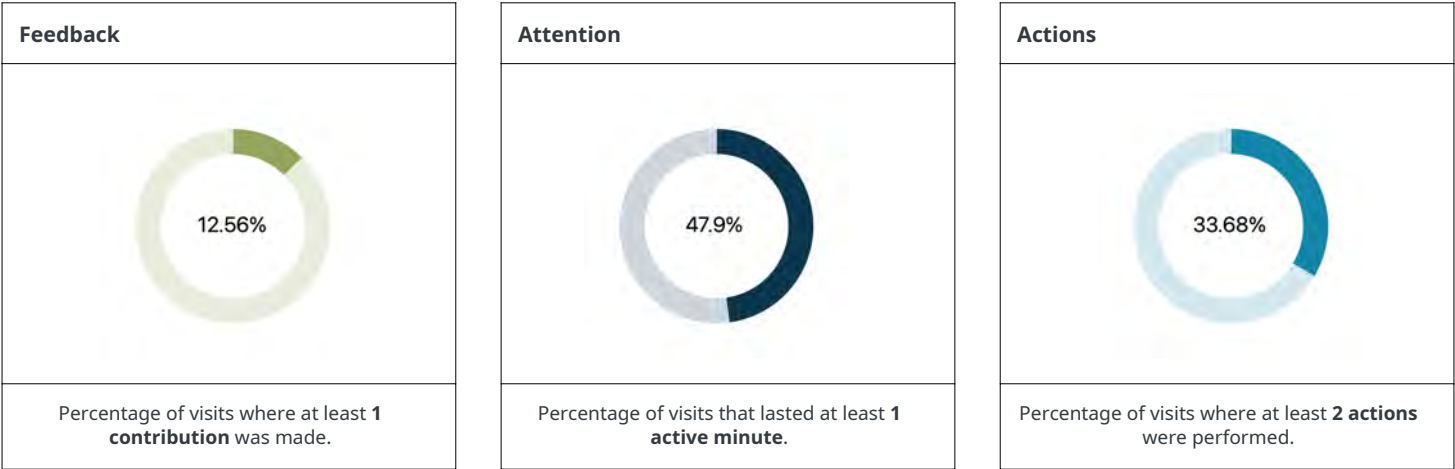
### **Online Social Pinpoint Summary Report**







Conversions






Information regarding how well your engagement websites converted Visitors to perform defined key actions.



## Participation

Information regarding how people have participated in your projects and activities.

Contributions by Activity			
Contributions by Activity is a breakdown of contributions across each tool			
Activity	Contributions		%
 Form	379	<div><div></div></div>	84.79%
 Social Map	68	<div><div></div></div>	15.21%

Top Activities			
Top Activities is the top 5 tools that received the highest contributions			
Activity	Page Name	Contributions	Contributors
 Form	The Heartland Trail Study in Clay County	213	201
 Form	The Heartland Trail Study in Clay County	166	157
 Social Map	The Heartland Trail Study in Clay County	57	32
 Social Map	The Heartland Trail Study in Clay County	11	4
 Quick Poll	The Heartland Trail Study in Clay County	0	0

## Projects

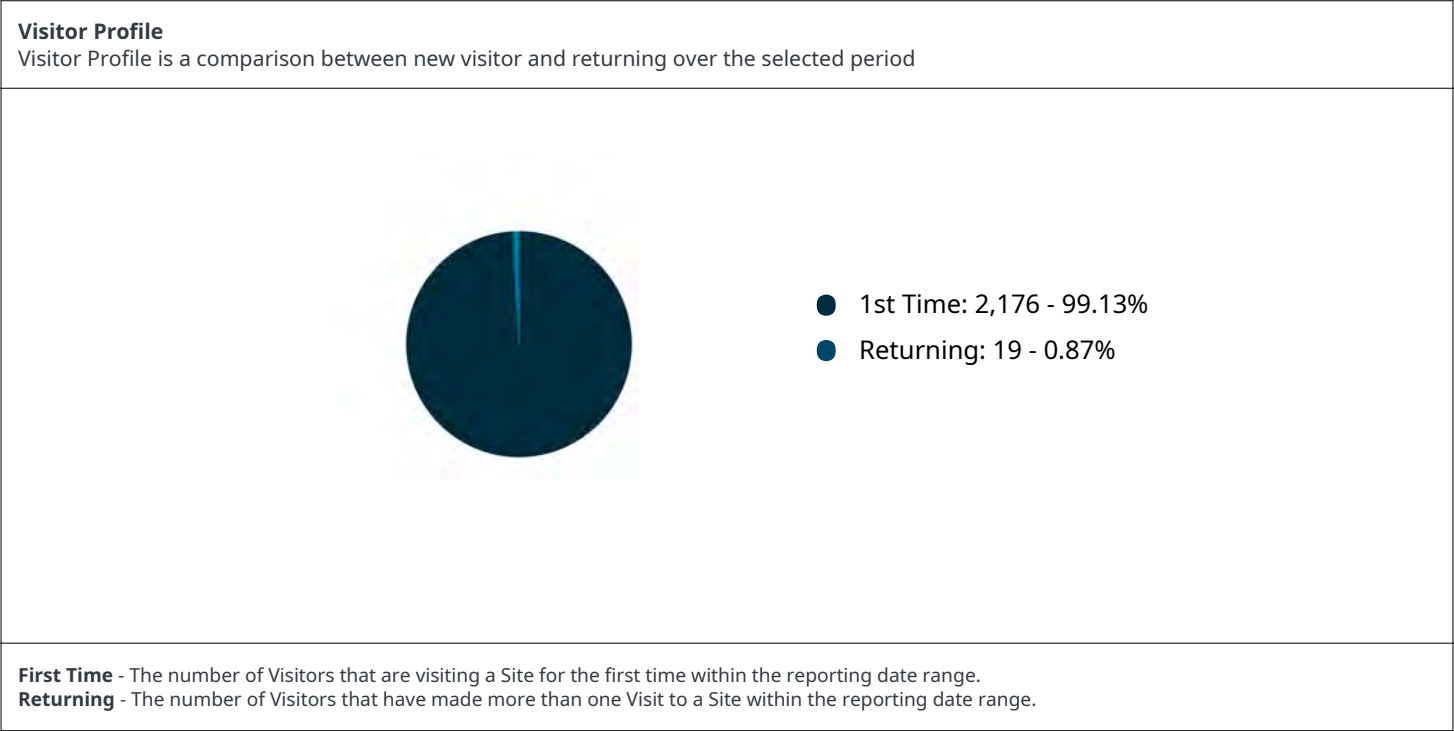
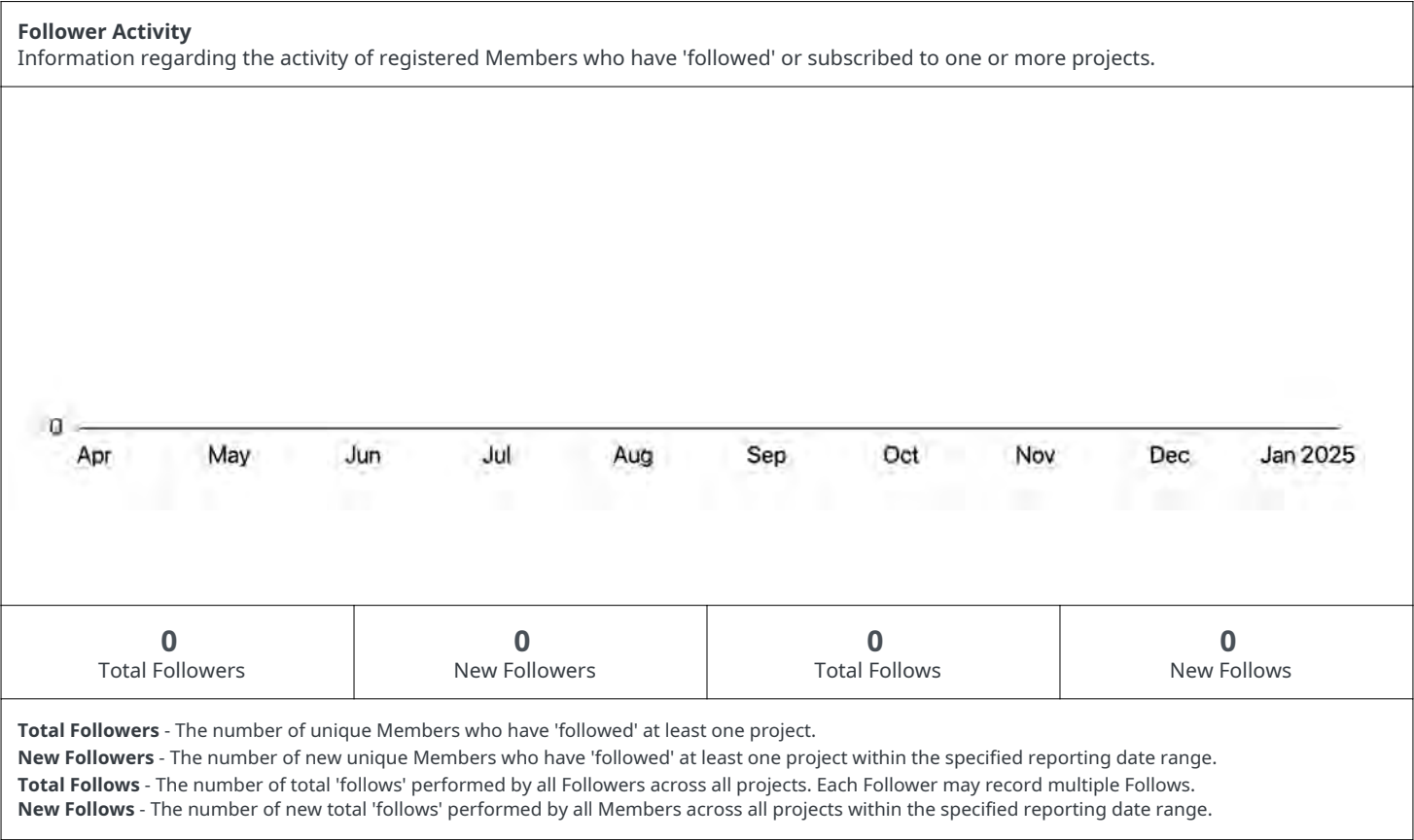
The current number of published projects on your site

Engagement Time			Top Visited Pages			
			Summary information for the top five most visited Pages.			
			Page Name	Visitation %	Visits	Visitors
			The Heartland Trail Study in Clay County	100%	3,000	2,193

4		17	56
Days		Hours	Minutes
Jul 21st 2024		Sunday	
Peak Visitation Date		Peak Visitation Day	

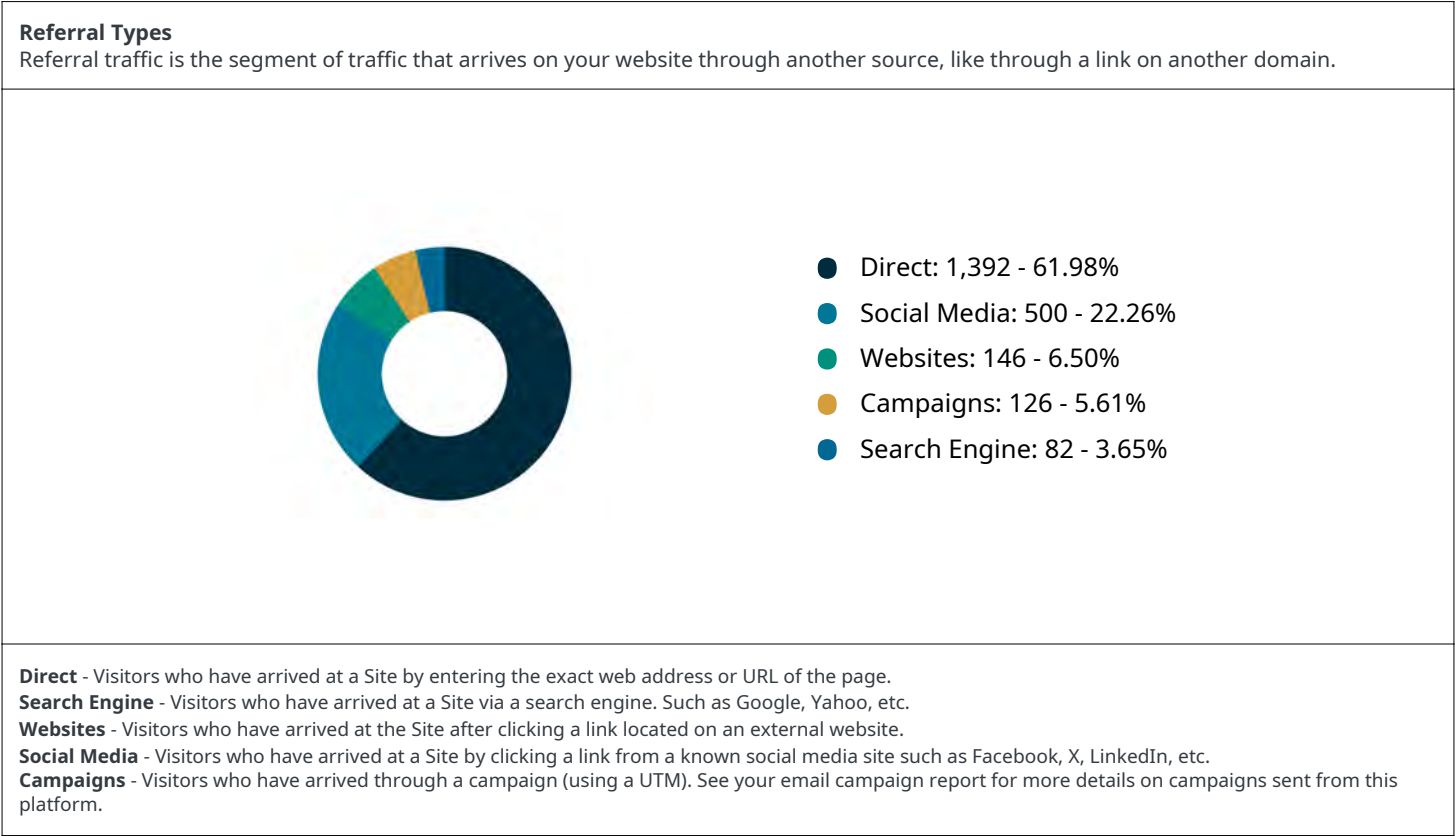
People

Information regarding who has participated in your projects and activities.




# Acquisition

Information regarding the method by which Visitors arrived to your Site or projects.



## Downloads

Information regarding your downloads, the total set of unique documents downloaded, total downloads of all files, and your top downloads.




**264**  
Total Downloads


Top Downloads		
Top file downloads in your selection, ordered by the number of downloads.		
File Title	File Type	Downloads
Heartland_Trail_FAQs.pdf	PDF	50
Heartland_State_Trail_Extension_Master_Plan.pdf	PDF	44
20240926 Engagement Result Data Final.pdf	PDF	36
240319 SRC meeting #1 summary notes.pdf	PDF	28
20240920 Phase 1 and 2 Engagement Summary.pdf	PDF	24

## Email Campaigns


Information regarding your email campaigns, your total campaigns, the total number of recipients, and your top campaigns by click-through rate (clicks as a percentage of total recipients).



**0**  
Email Campaigns Sent



**0**  
Total Recipients



**0%**  
Click-through Rate

No Data Available
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# 3

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Open House #1 Summary & Presentation Materials**



## Open House Record

*SRF No. 17185*

**Location:** Glyndon Community Center  
**Client:** Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments  
**Date:** July 16, 2024  
**Subject:** Heartland Trail Study in Clay County – Open House

**Attendees:** Twenty nine attendees signed the sign-in sheet, but several other attendees did not. The total attendance was approximately 40.

### Comments Received on Comment Sheets:

- Routes that showcase the diversity of land, water and prairie vs. woods would help educate users as to the wonderful ecology in this area. We're not just flat, wide-open prairie.
- What is the distance of each of the trail options?
- Concern about funding for trail development and about who will pay for maintenance. And, charge bicyclists for using the trail.

### Other Comments:

- A trail along Highway 10 would be noisy and not the preferred route.
- There is a desire to connect to Buffalo State Park, and if possible, south of the railroad.
- There was interest in the trail corridor along the Buffalo River.
- An attendee noted that loops to and from the communities is a good idea.
- The suggestion was made to switch the orange and blue route lines east of Hawley.
- It is important to connect to or have the trail go through the communities along the corridor.



# OPEN HOUSE

July 16, 2024

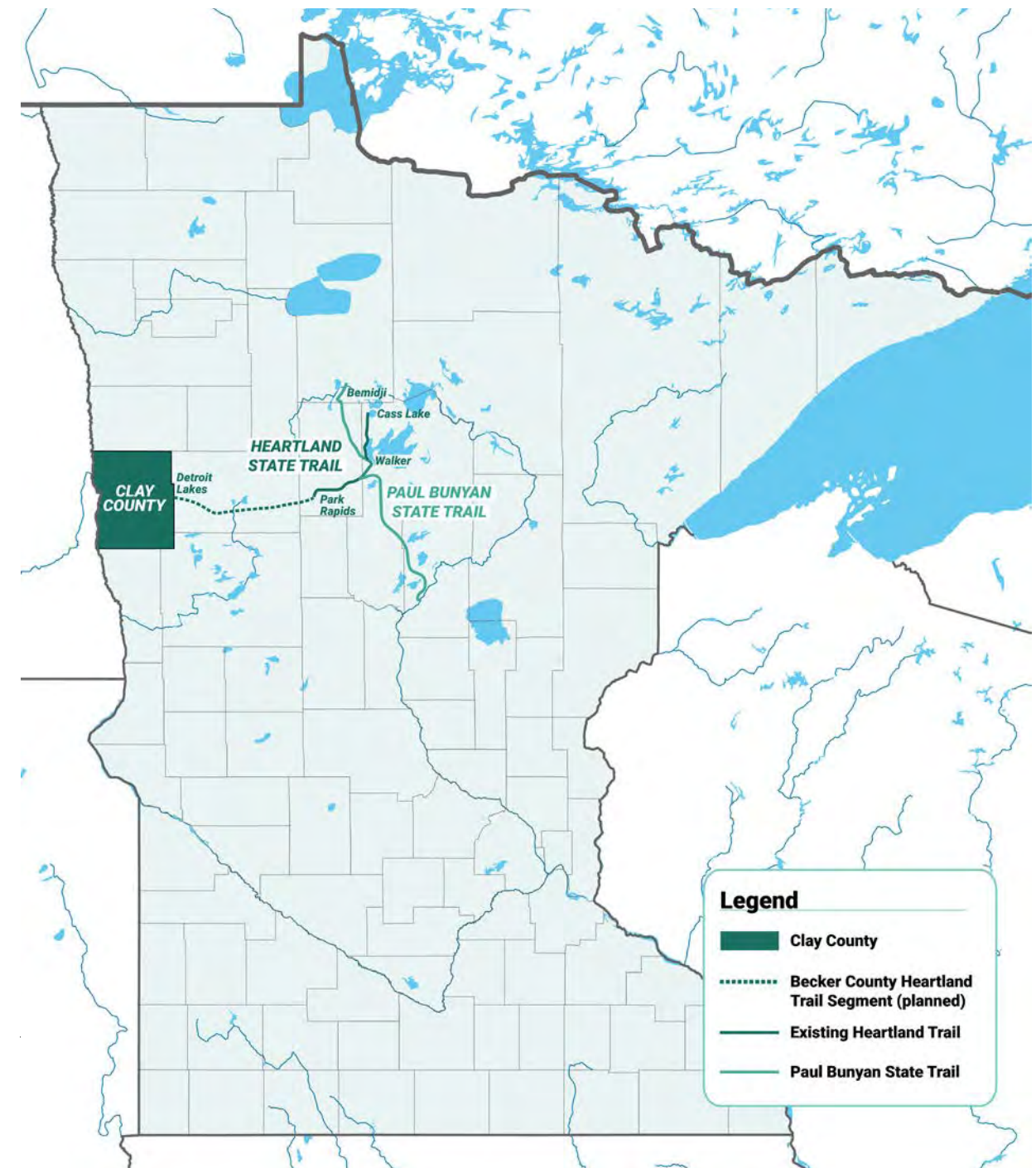




## Project Overview

- ▶ The Heartland Trail is a recreational and transportation corridor for residents and visitors alike that winds through north-central Minnesota.
- ▶ Currently spanning a total of 49 miles, the Heartland Trail stretches from Park Rapids to Cass Lake, providing a seamless pathway for leisure and connectivity.
- ▶ It is a paved state trail offering opportunities for walking, running, cycling, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing throughout the year.
- ▶ Initially constructed in 1976, the trail saw further expansion in 2002 with the addition of a segment from Walker to Cass Lake.

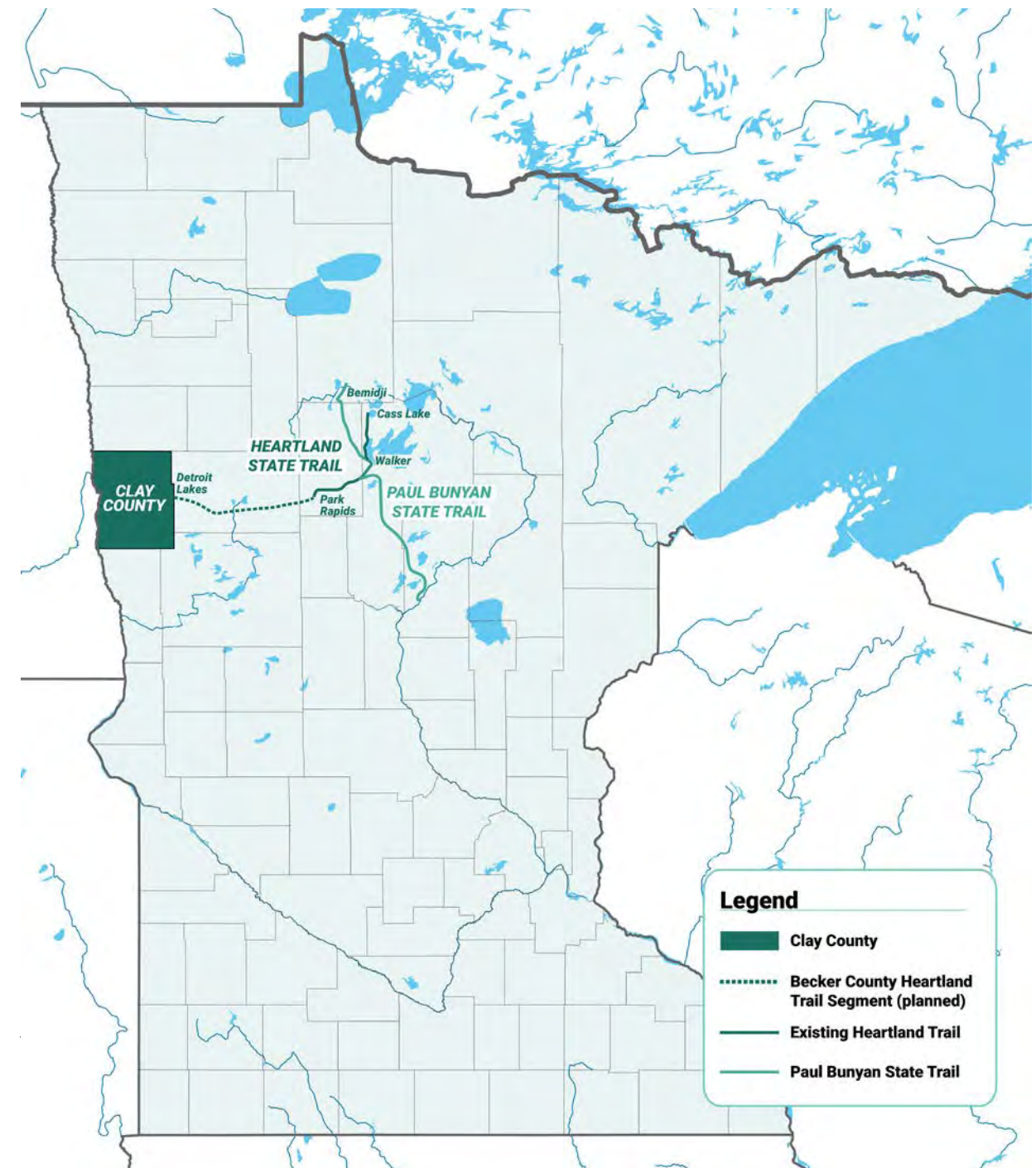
## Corridor Study Area



## Project Overview

- ▶ In the communities where it has already been constructed, the Heartland Trail has created opportunities for recreation, everyday transportation, and has served as an economic engine for tourism and small businesses along the Trail.
- ▶ In Clay County, collaborative planning efforts with local authorities, stakeholders and the public commenced in 2014. These endeavors have led to the identification of potential routes for the trail's extension through the County.
- ▶ The objective of this study is to make final decisions about trail placement through in depth public and stakeholder engagement which will move us one step closer to the construction of the 27-mile Clay County segment of the Heartland Trail.

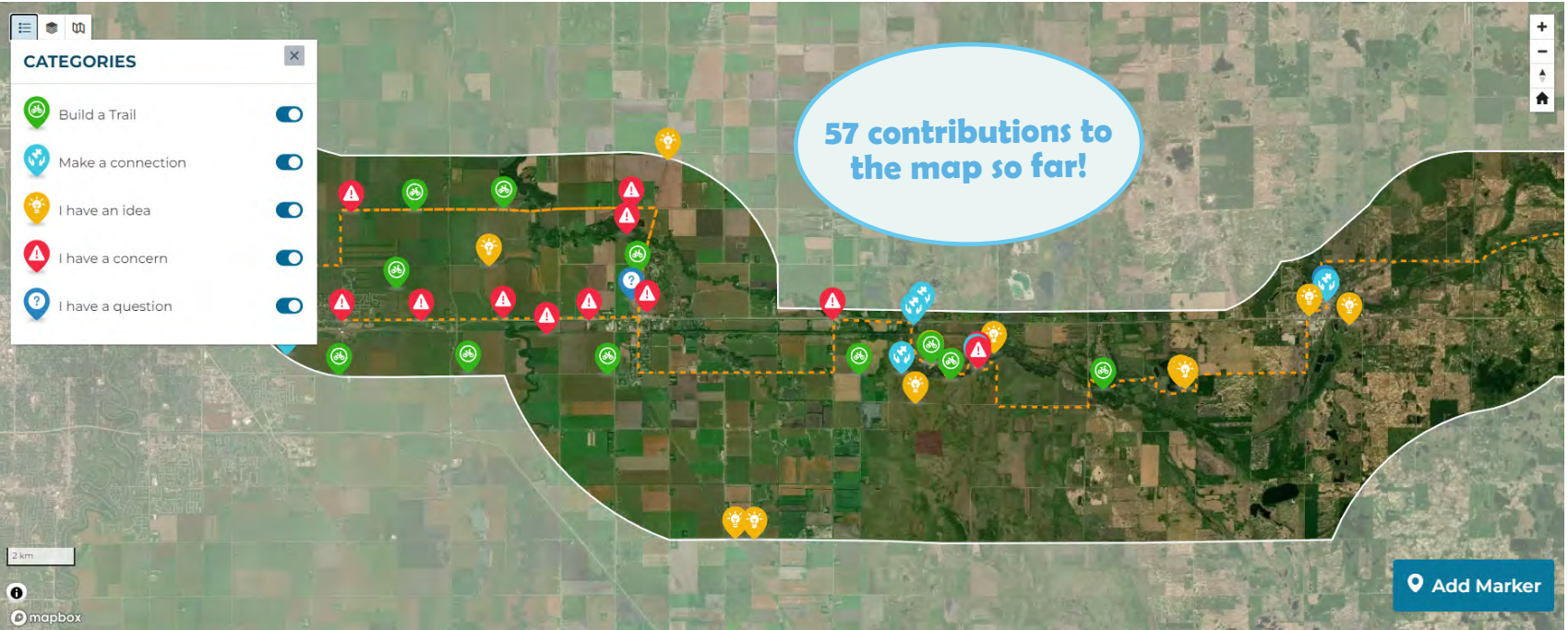
## Corridor Study Area



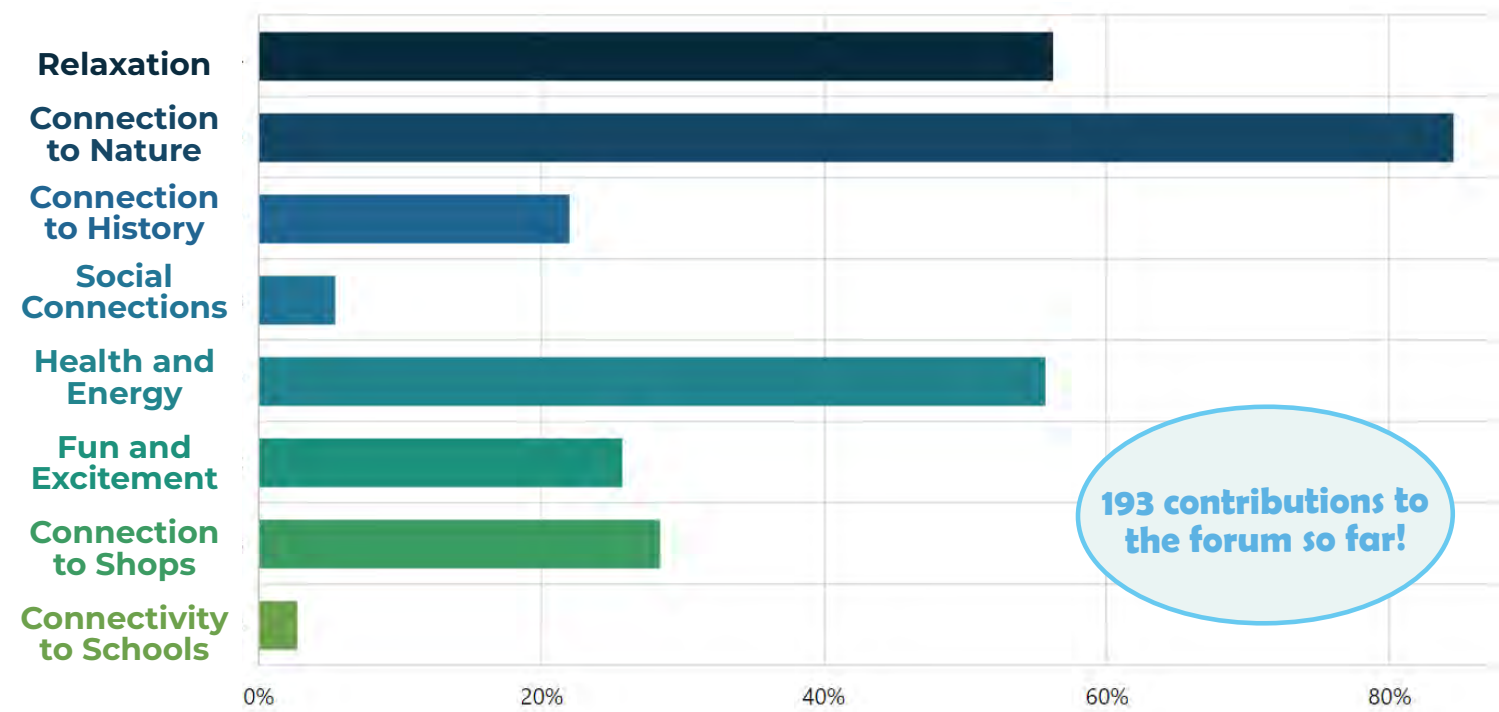


## Online Engagement To Date

### Mapping Activity | Comment on the map!



### Forum Activity | What would you like to experience when using the Heartland Trail?



## Project Timeline

- Existing and Planned Condition Analysis
- Alignment Analysis
- Cost Estimates
- Implementation Plan
- Draft Study Document
- Final Study Document



# The Heartland Trail Study in Clay County

## Precedent Images



Trail along a gravel road



Trail along a highway



Trail adjacent to wetlands



Trail underpass



Boardwalk



Trail overpass



# The Heartland Trail Study in Clay County

## Otter Tail County - Heart of the Lakes Trail



Driveway crossing



Trail along a county road



Trail adjacent to a county road with curb



Trail crossing



Rest stop



Trailhead parking



## Common Questions About the Heartland Trail Project

➤ Who's pushing this trail?

The extension of the Heartland Trail has been desired by communities in Clay County for over 15 years with the Minnesota legislature approving the extension of the trail from Park Rapids to Moorhead in 2006.

➤ Will land be taken?

No land will be condemned for the purposes of this trail. Any land needed for the construction of this trail will be purchased or an easement will be set up on a voluntary basis by the adjacent landowners.

➤ How do you plan to build a trail without taking land?

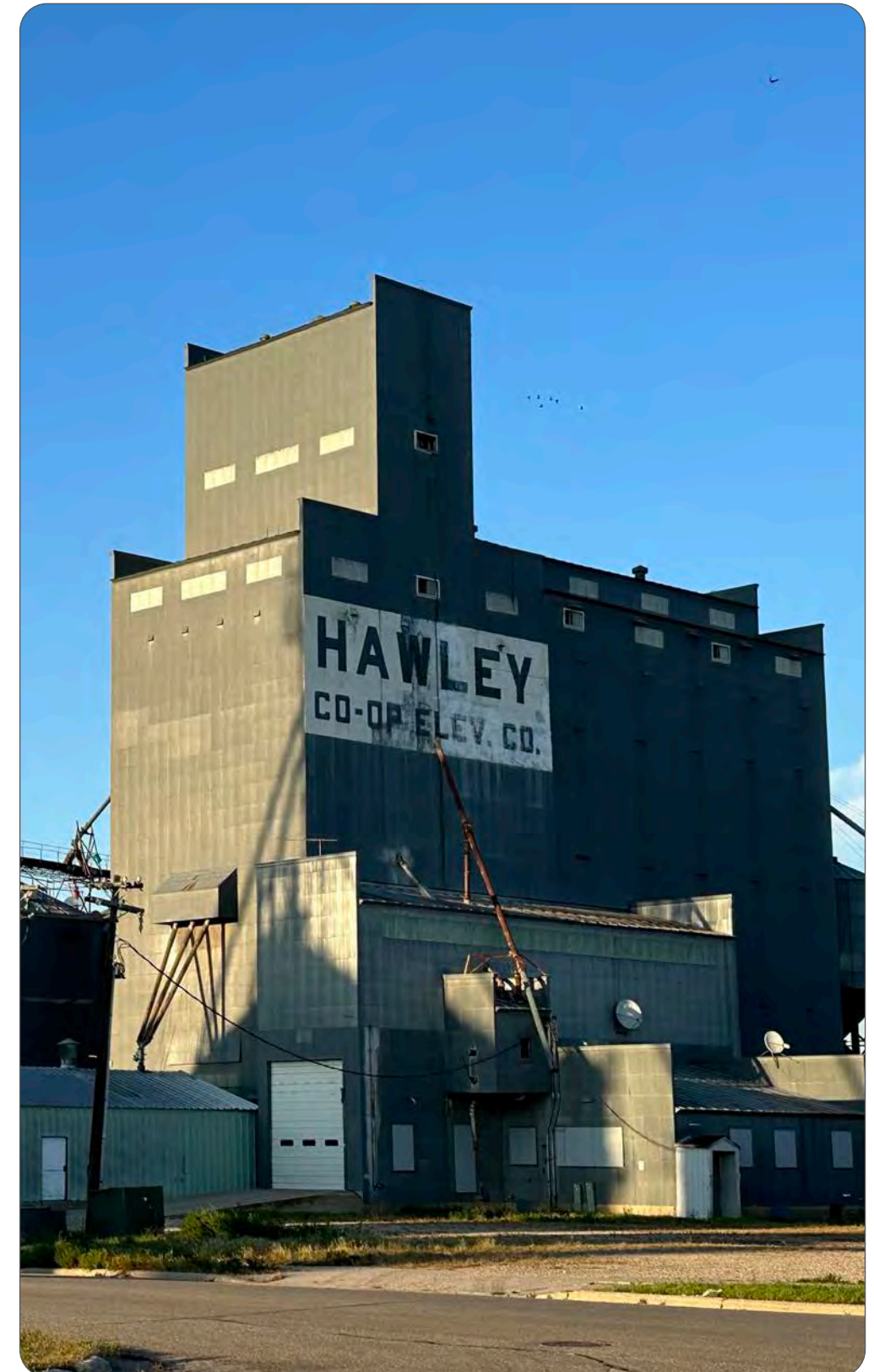
If landowners are not interested in selling land for the Heartland Trail, existing road right-of-way would be considered. In some areas publicly owned land could be utilized for a potential trail alignment.

➤ Will there be other opportunities to get project updates?

Additional public engagement is anticipated as this study progresses. To stay informed, you can sign up to receive future emails by visiting the project webpage at [fmmetrocog.org/HeartlandTrail](http://fmmetrocog.org/HeartlandTrail) or you can request to be added to the email list by putting your email list on the sign-in sheet

➤ How will this trail be funded?

Once a plan is in-place, Metro COG and other agencies will work on finding funding opportunities for the Heartland Trail. This could come from a variety of sources such as grants, MN legislative bonding funds, local funds, and more.



## Common Questions About the Heartland Trail Project

➤ How much will the trail cost?

The cost of this trail is still being evaluated. Costs will vary based on terrain, wetlands, and many other factors. In addition to these costs, possible easements and property purchasing could also incur costs to the trail building effort. As a result of this study, planning-level cost estimates will be developed.

➤ Why are you building a paved trail next to a gravel road?

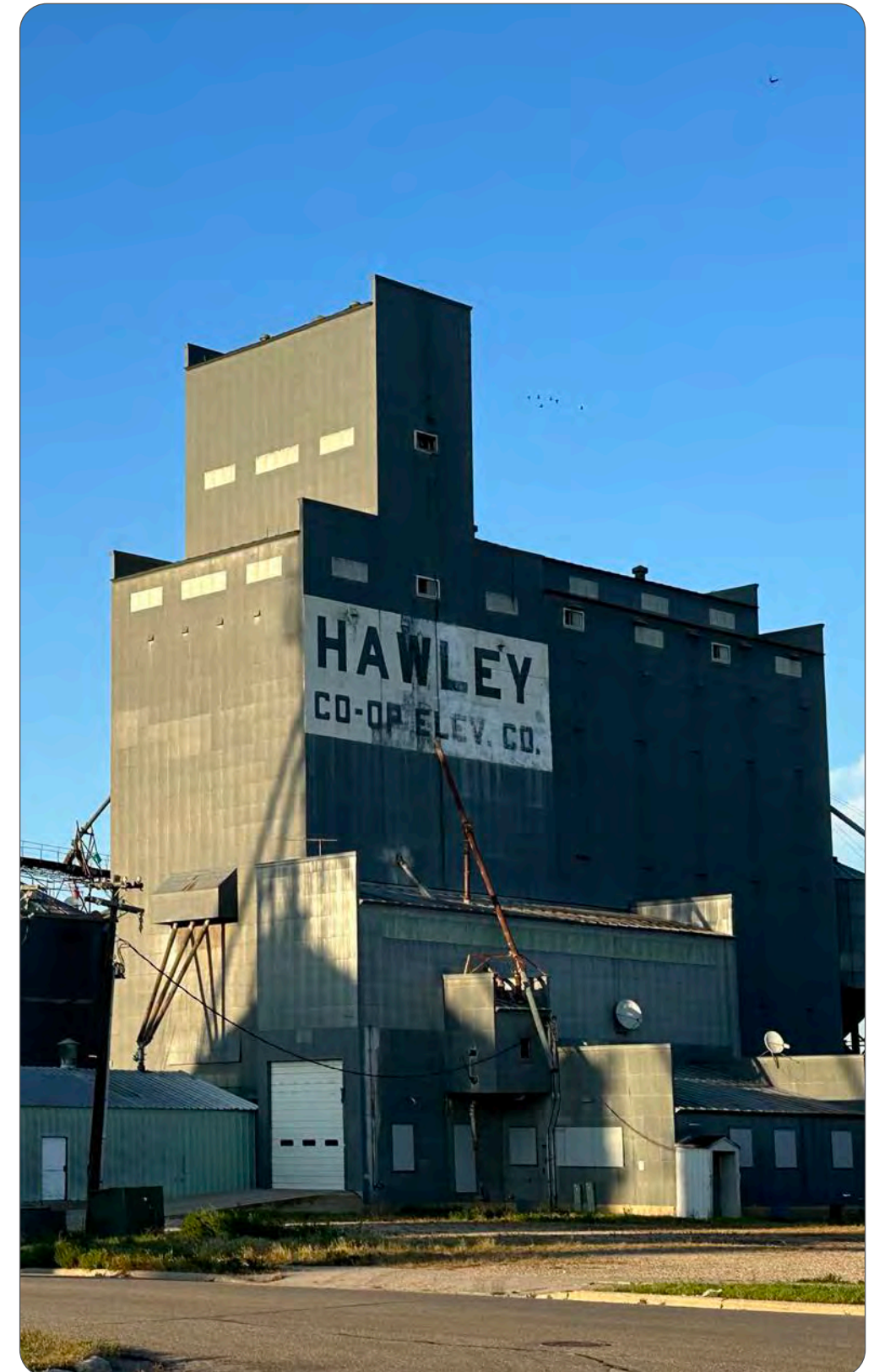
Paved trails are less costly to maintain than gravel trails, and they provide a safer surface for more users.

➤ If there is an accident on the trail, who is liable?

Minnesota has recreational use statutes that provide a shield from liability for landowners who allow public access to trails across their land.

➤ When will the trail be built?

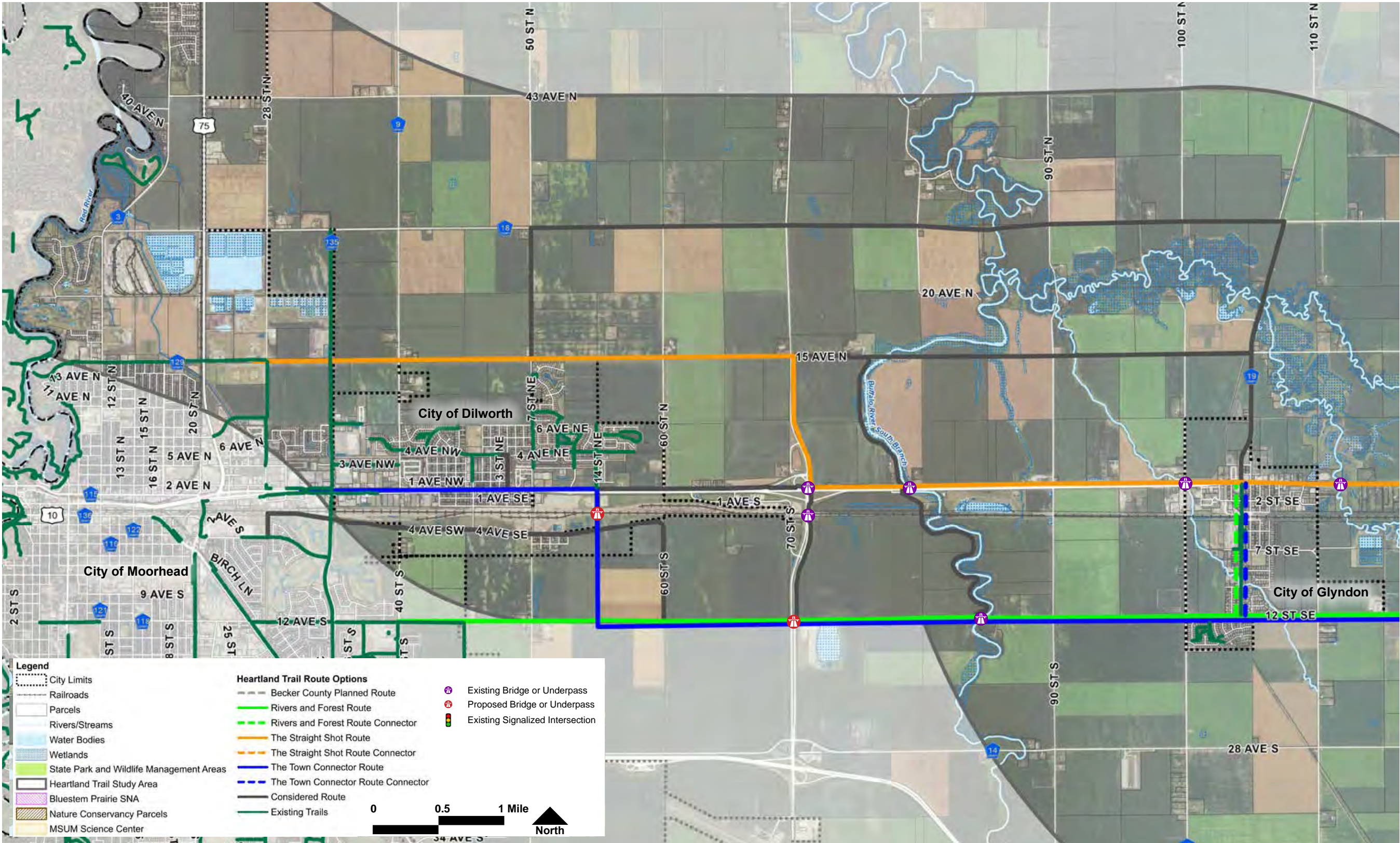
At this stage it is hard to say exactly when the entire Clay County Heartland Trail will be built. Smaller segments of the trail may be built through towns such as Hawley and Glyndon with the larger segments being built further in the future. This is all contingent on funding for the trail.





# The Heartland Trail Study in Clay County

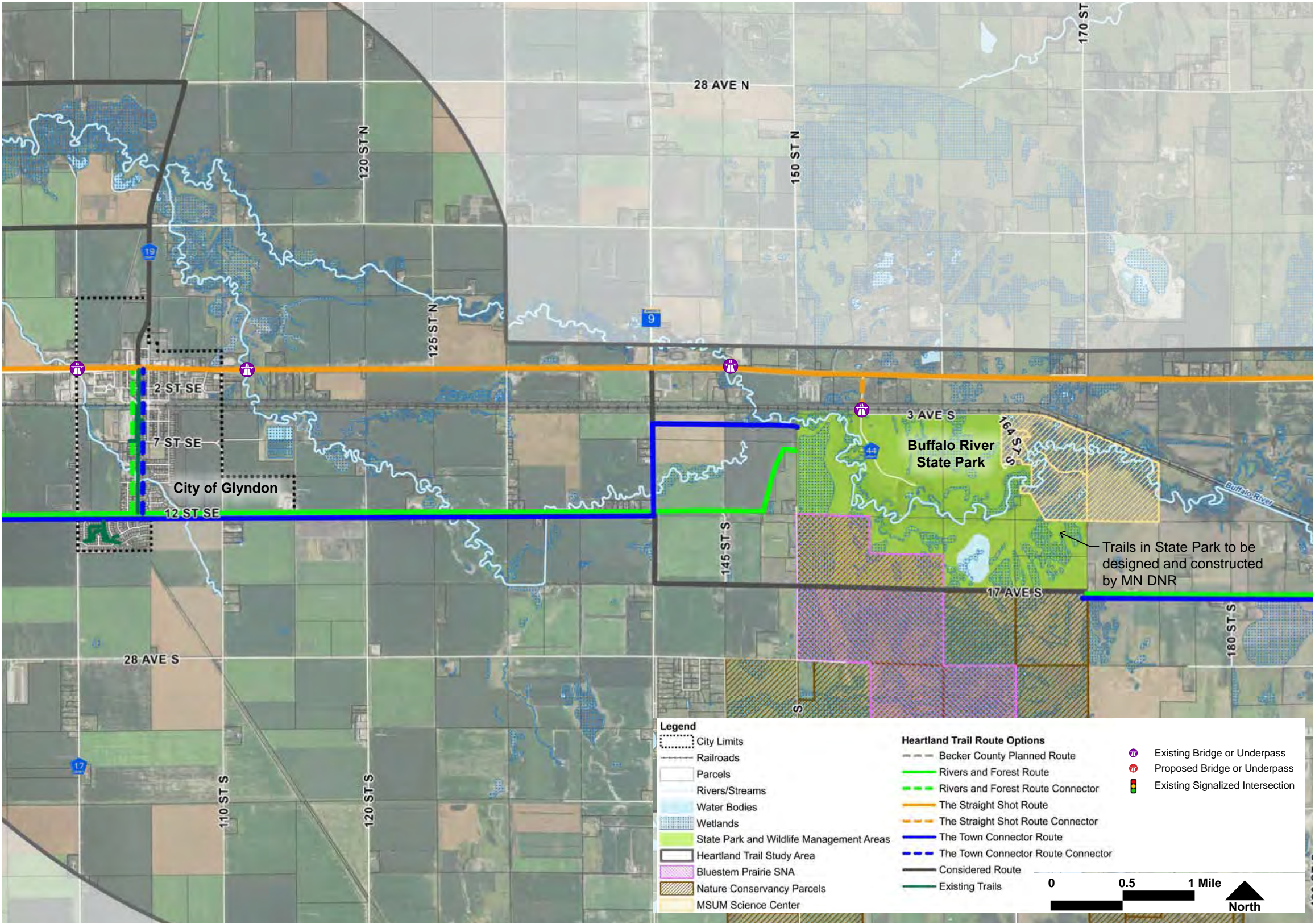
## Corridor Overview - Segment 1





# The Heartland Trail Study in Clay County

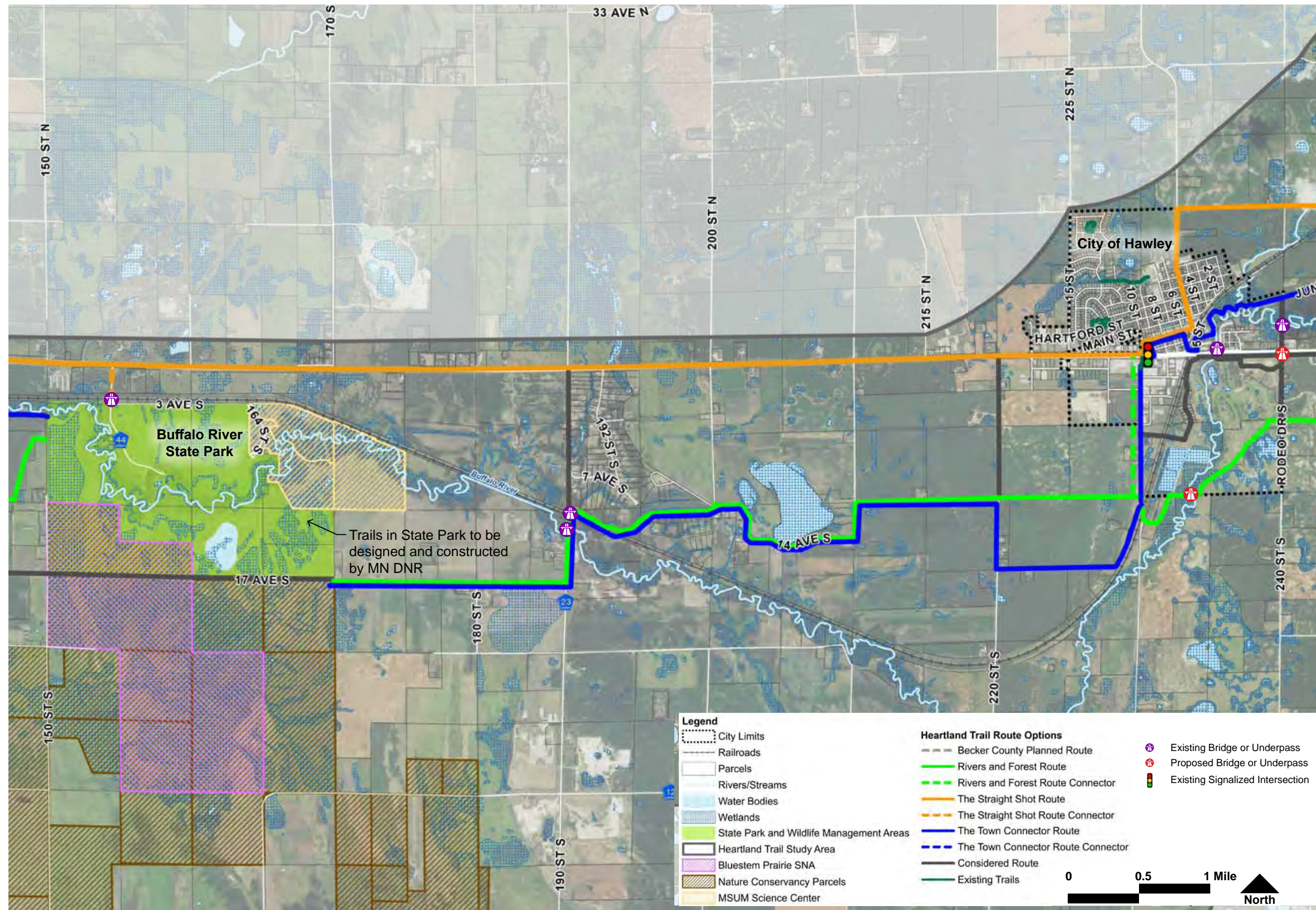
## Corridor Overview - Segment 2





# The Heartland Trail Study in Clay County

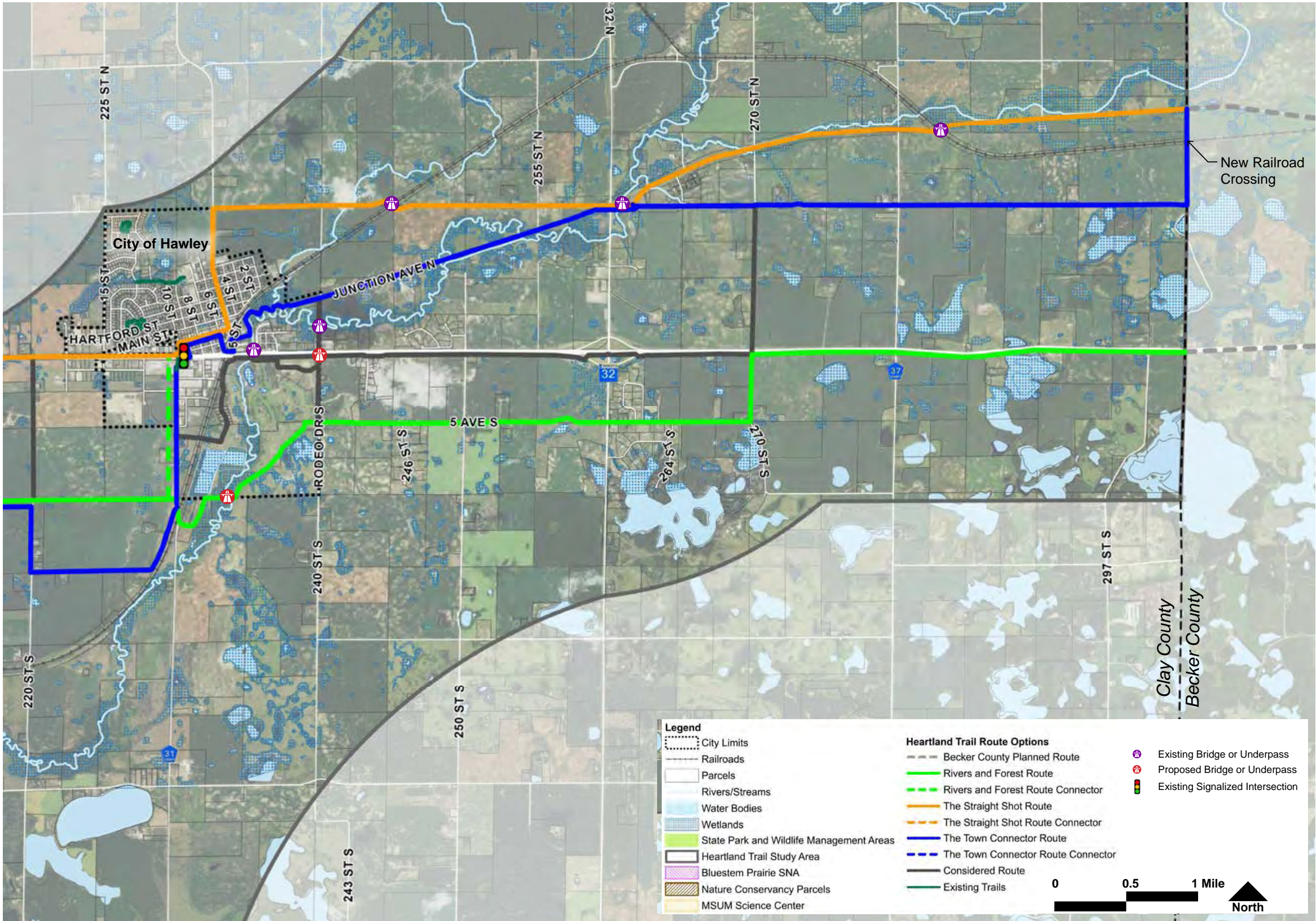
## Corridor Overview - Segment 3





# The Heartland Trail Study in Clay County

## Corridor Overview - Segment 4





# 4

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Pop-up Event Summaries**



## Event Record

*SRF No. 17185*

**Location:** Cities of Glyndon and Hawley  
**Client:** Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments  
**Date:** August 6, 2024  
**Subject:** Heartland Trail Study in Clay County – Glyndon and Hawley pop-up events

### **Hawley Night to Unite:**

This was a well-attended event with many families as well as a number of other age ranges. We believe we handed out roughly 25 postcards and had conversations with all who we handed the postcards to. Some stuck around for several minutes to provide input and insight. It was good to learn specifics about the trail alignments from many who knew the area very well. It seemed like almost all were in favor of the trail. Some even lived in the rural areas in which the train would go right by their property – they didn't seem too bothered by the trail. We also had two Hawley council members and the mayor swing by and provided input. One thing they all noted was that the city of Hawley would like to see the trail leave Hawley to the east following the blue line (from Hawley to Hwy 32(260<sup>th</sup> St)).

We had a number of kids swing by, so we had them vote on the precedent images. Some adults also voted on these images. See attached results (green tally marks = in favor, red tally marks = not in favor).

### **Glyndon Days (Night to Unite):**

While the Glyndon Night to Unite was not as busy as the Hawley one, we handed out roughly 50 postcards. A couple people requested a small stack of postcards for groups they are a part of. Some attendees participated in the route map exercise. They had good conversations with those who stopped at the table – roughly 5 or 6 conversations. This event ended up being indoors as part of Glyndon's Night to Unite was indoors and other events were outdoors.



## Event Record

*SRF No. 17185*

**Location:** City of Moorhead  
**Client:** Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments  
**Date:** August 13, 2024  
**Subject:** Heartland Trail Study in Clay County – Moorhead Farmers Market pop-up event

### **Moorhead Farmers Market:**

It was a good pop-up event at the Moorhead Farmers Market. We estimate roughly 20 people/families stopped at our table. Each person or group we had some type of a conversation with – mostly for about 30 seconds to one minute. We then handed out postcards to each who visited. We did have some that stayed longer and provided input. We received input on the maps, but none on the precedent images. The feedback seemed to be all positive.

# 5

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Open House #2 Summary & Presentation Materials**



## Open House Record

*SRF No. 17185*

**Location:** Glyndon Community Center  
**Client:** Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments  
**Date:** October 23, 2024  
**Subject:** Heartland Trail Study in Clay County – Open House #2

**Attendees:** Seventeen attendees signed the sign-in sheet, but several other attendees did not. The total attendance was approximately 30.

### Comments Received on Comment Sheets:

- Overall looks good. Make sure to plant trees on the south side of the road wherever possible. Don't be afraid to use eminent domain.
- Copies of two typed comments that were printed are attached to this record.

### Other Comments:

- There was concern about impacts to private property along 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Highway 23 and Maria Lake.
- There was general interest in the trail following 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> Street west of and down to Dilworth.
- There were questions about the timeline of trail construction. It was noted that some portions of the trail might be constructed within cities in the next 5 or so years, however the more rural portions would likely take longer to construct.



# HEARTLAND TRAIL STUDY IN CLAY COUNTY

Open House #2

October 23, 2024





# Project Purpose and Background

- Currently the Heartland Trail is a 49-mile paved shared-use path traveling from Park Rapids, MN to Cass Lake.
- Park Rapids to Walker constructed in 1976. Walker to Cass Lake constructed in 2002.
- In 2006 the state of MN authorized the extension of the Heartland Trail from Park Rapids to Moorhead.



15th Avenue N. between Moorhead and Dilworth.

# Project Purpose and Background

- In 2014 Metro COG assisted with ongoing efforts and developed the Clay County Heartland Trail Task Force. A preliminary alignment was developed.
- After a multi-year hiatus, this study was kicked off in January 2024. SRF was selected as the firm to lead this study with support by Clay County and local jurisdictions.
- This is the second round of public input that focuses on sharing the preferred alignment for the Heartland Trail in Clay County. The preferred alignment was developed based on input from several sources, including significant public input.



Downtown Hawley.



## Common Questions About the Heartland Trail Project

### ► Why build a trail? Who's pushing for the extension of the Heartland Trail?

*The trail effort is a collaboration between several communities and agencies, with Metro COG leading the current planning effort. The extension of the trail has been the goal of communities in Clay County for over 15 years with the Minnesota legislature approving the extension of the trail from Park Rapids to Moorhead in 2006.*

### ► Will land be condemned to build the trail?

*No land will be condemned for the purposes of this trail. Any land needed for the construction of this trail will be purchased or an easement will be set up on a voluntary basis by the adjacent landowners.*



Buffalo River State Park access under BNSF Bridge.



## Common Questions About the Heartland Trail Project

➤ How would the trail be built without taking land?

*If landowners are not interested in selling land for the Heartland Trail, existing road right-of-way would be considered. In some areas publicly owned land could be utilized for a potential trail alignment.*

Are there concerns with trail users interfering with farming operations?

➤ *With nearly 600 miles of state trails in Minnesota, any of the trails travel through lands adjacent to private properties. We are not aware of any issues or complaints about users interfering with farming operations.*



Heart of the Lakes Trail in Otter Tail County.

## Online Engagement Totals:

2,477 website visits  
1,810 total visitors  
436 Contributions  
351 Contributors

### Trail Experience Survey:

What do you want to experience when using the Heartland Trail?

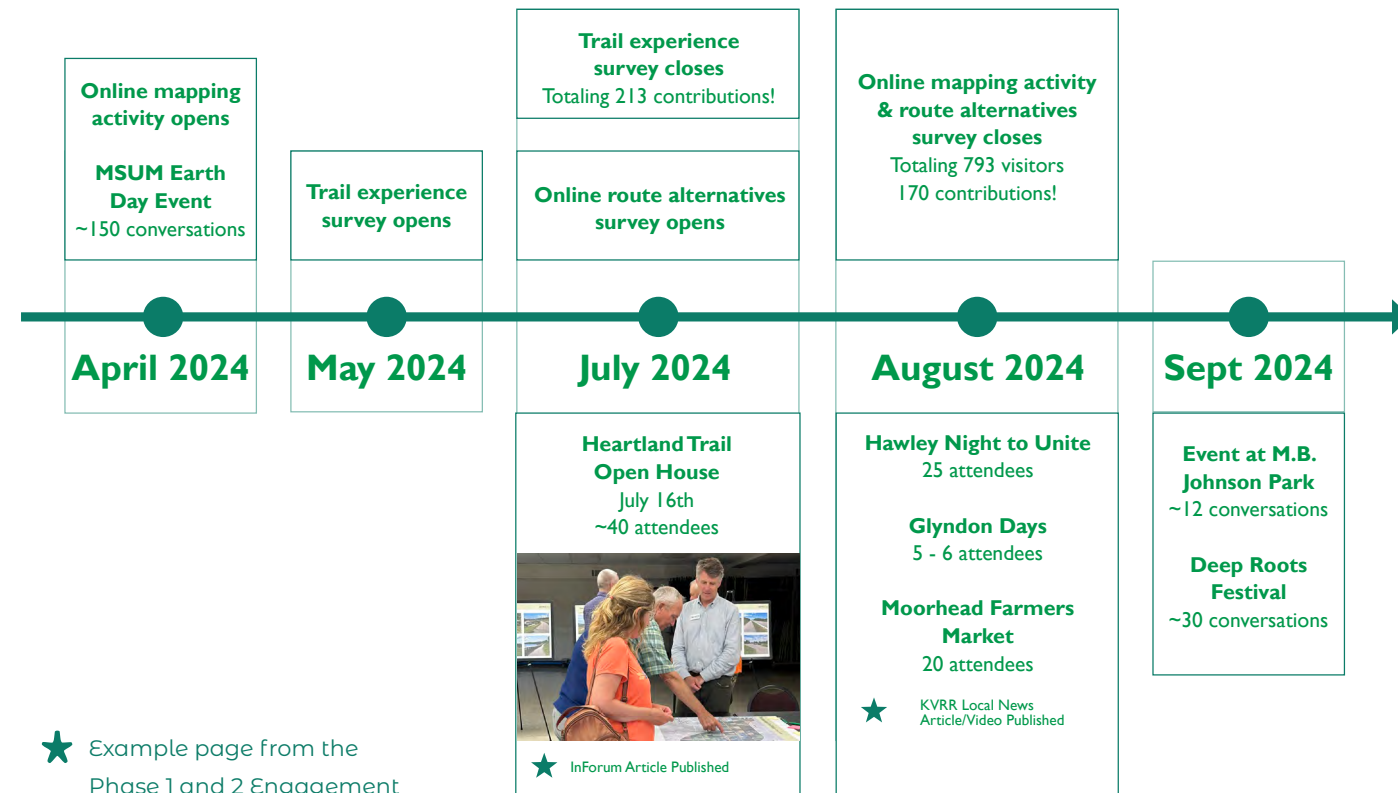
### Route Alternatives Survey:

What type of trail do you prefer riding on and what amenities would you like to see along the way?

### Online Mapping Activity:

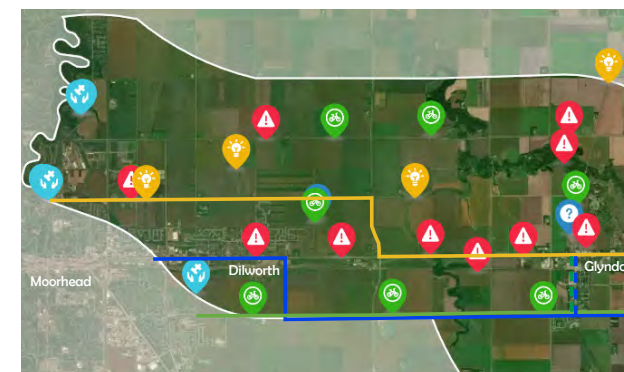
This interactive map contains comments about participants' favorite places, concerns, and ideas for the Heartland Trail from the first phase of this study. The map is now closed to comments, however you may still review other participant's comments online!

★ Review the Phase 1 and 2 Engagement Summary Document here!



★ Example page from the Phase 1 and 2 Engagement Summary Document

## Western Segment Mapping | General Comments



The Straight Shot | 7%

The Rivers and Forest | 77% ★

The Town Connector | 16%



"Following Highway 10 is not ideal. The fewer cars I hear, the better." 👍 18 upvotes



















































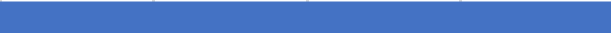




"...staying away from the highway would be preferred even if only on by a tree line..." 👍 16 upvotes

"Consider connecting to the center of Moorhead where the most people will be able to access [the trail]" 👍 10 upvotes

"Moorhead's soon-to-be-revitalized downtown would be a great destination for people touring on this route...and the proposed northern route that ends at 15th Ave is a really good way to get there." 👍 6 upvotes 🗳️ 2 downvotes

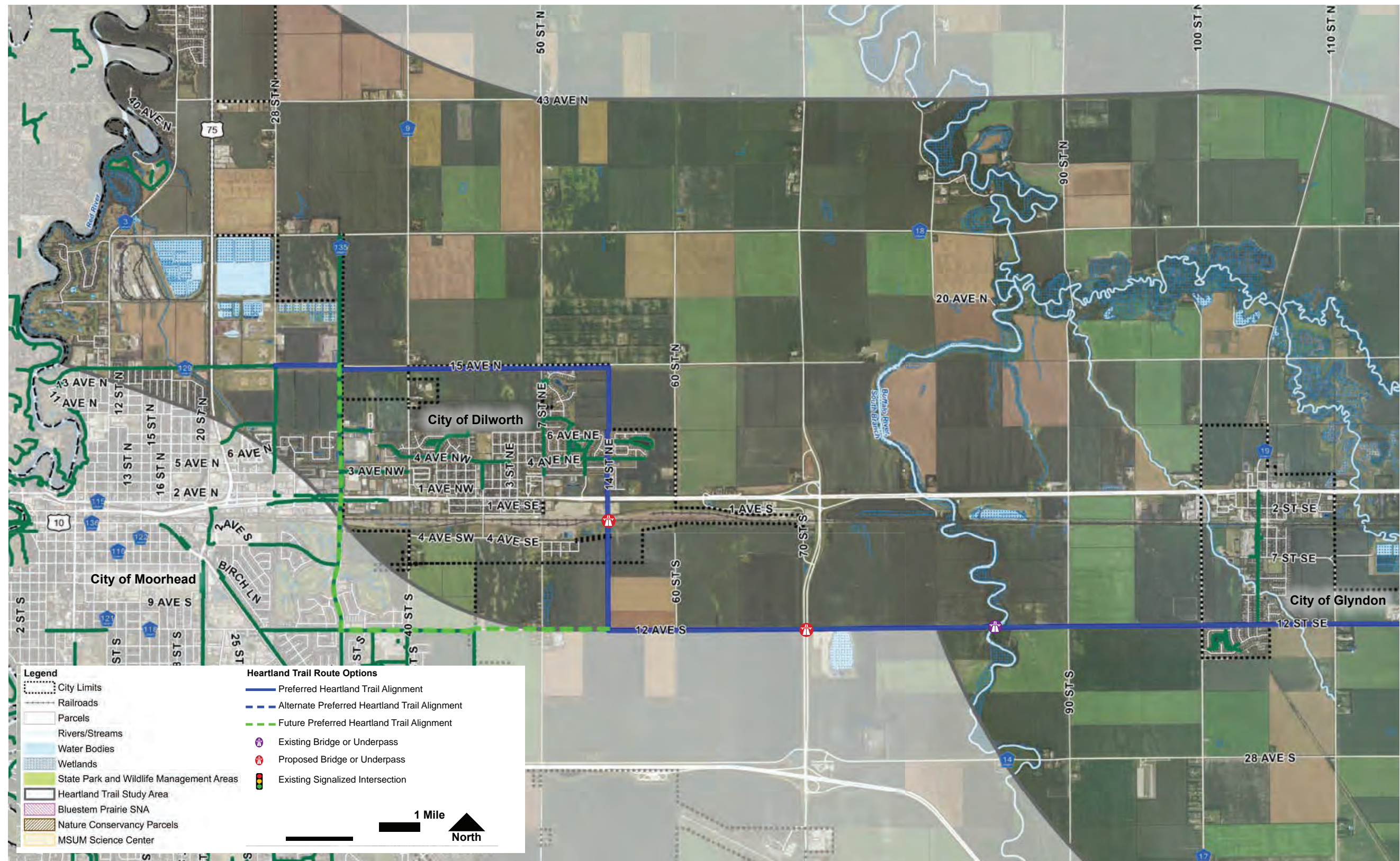


Metro COG Clay County Heartland Trail Routing Analysis Study Project Schedule

	2024												2025			
	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	
1. Project Kickoff, Management & Coordination																
Bi-weekly Metro COG staff update meetings (virtual)		 	 	 	 	 	 	 	 	 	 	 	 	 		
2. Existing & Planned Conditions Analysis																
3. Alignment Analysis				  On-site Analysis												
4. Cost Estimates																
5. Implementation Plan																
6. Draft Study Document																
7. Final Study Document																
8. Public Engagement																
Study Review Committee (SRC) (5)																
Stakeholder Meetings (6)				  					  							
Public Meetings (2)																
Landowner Meetings																
Online Engagement																
9. Final Presentations to Local Boards & Communities (4)														   		

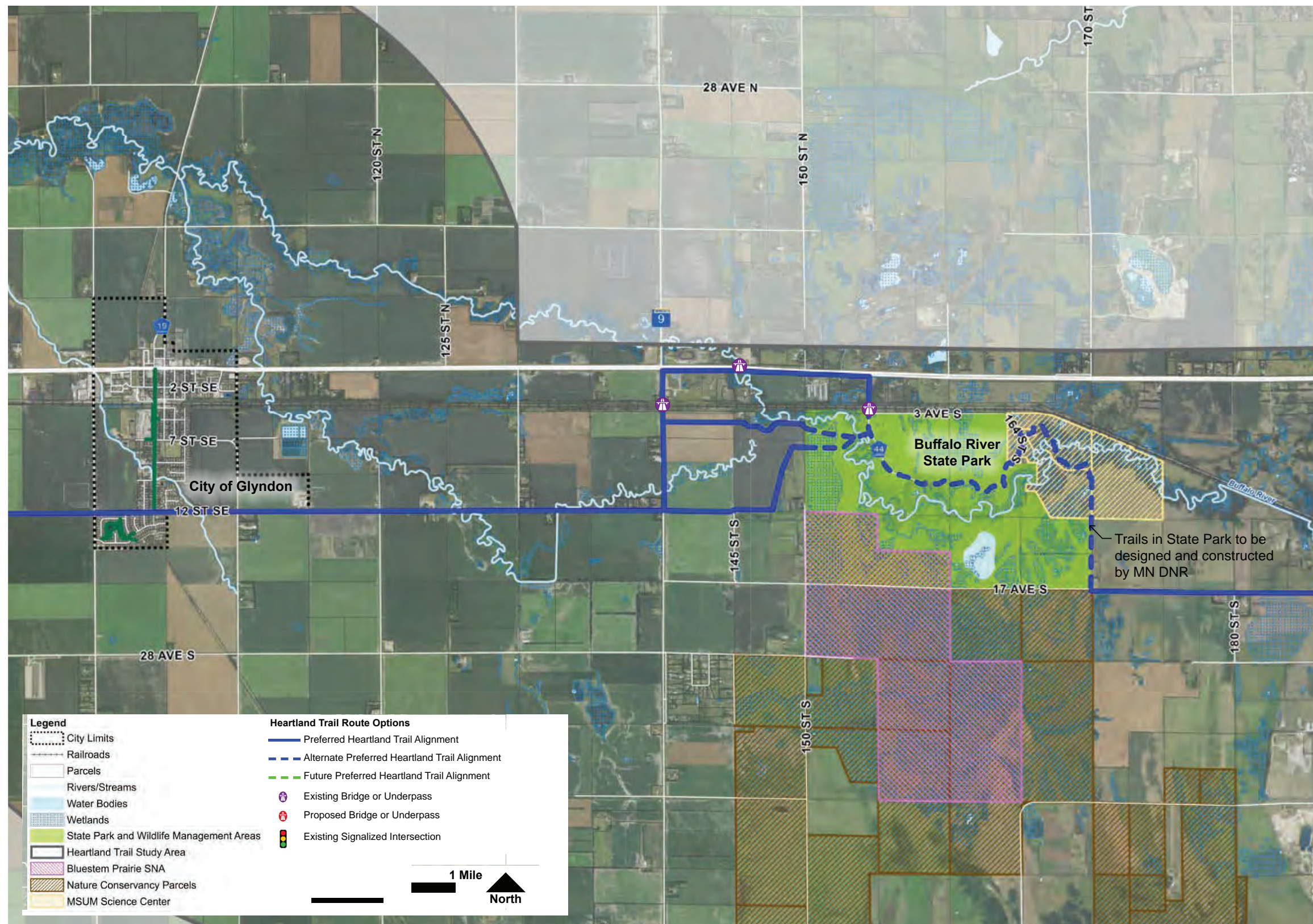


## Corridor Overview - Segment 1



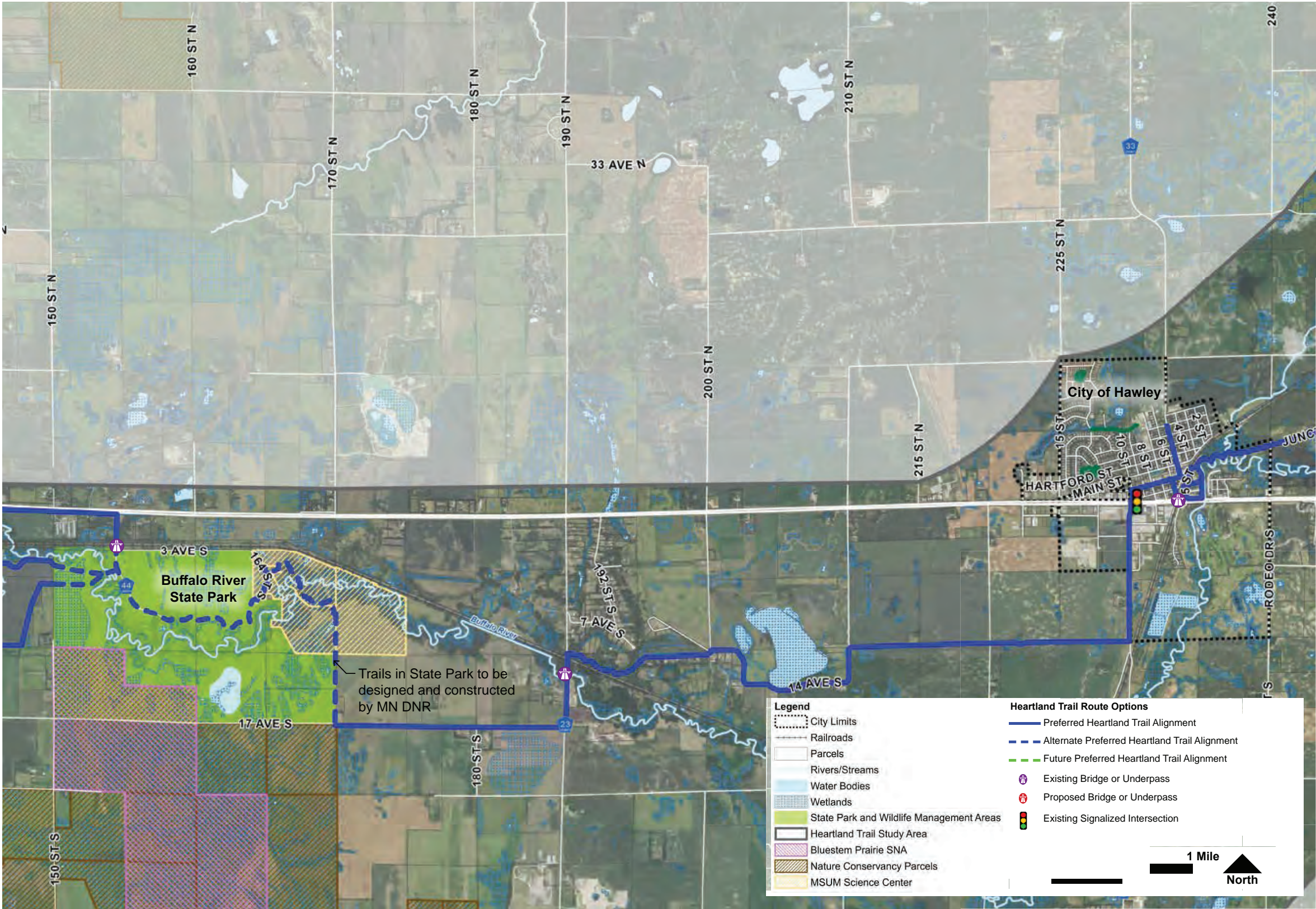


## Corridor Overview - Segment 2



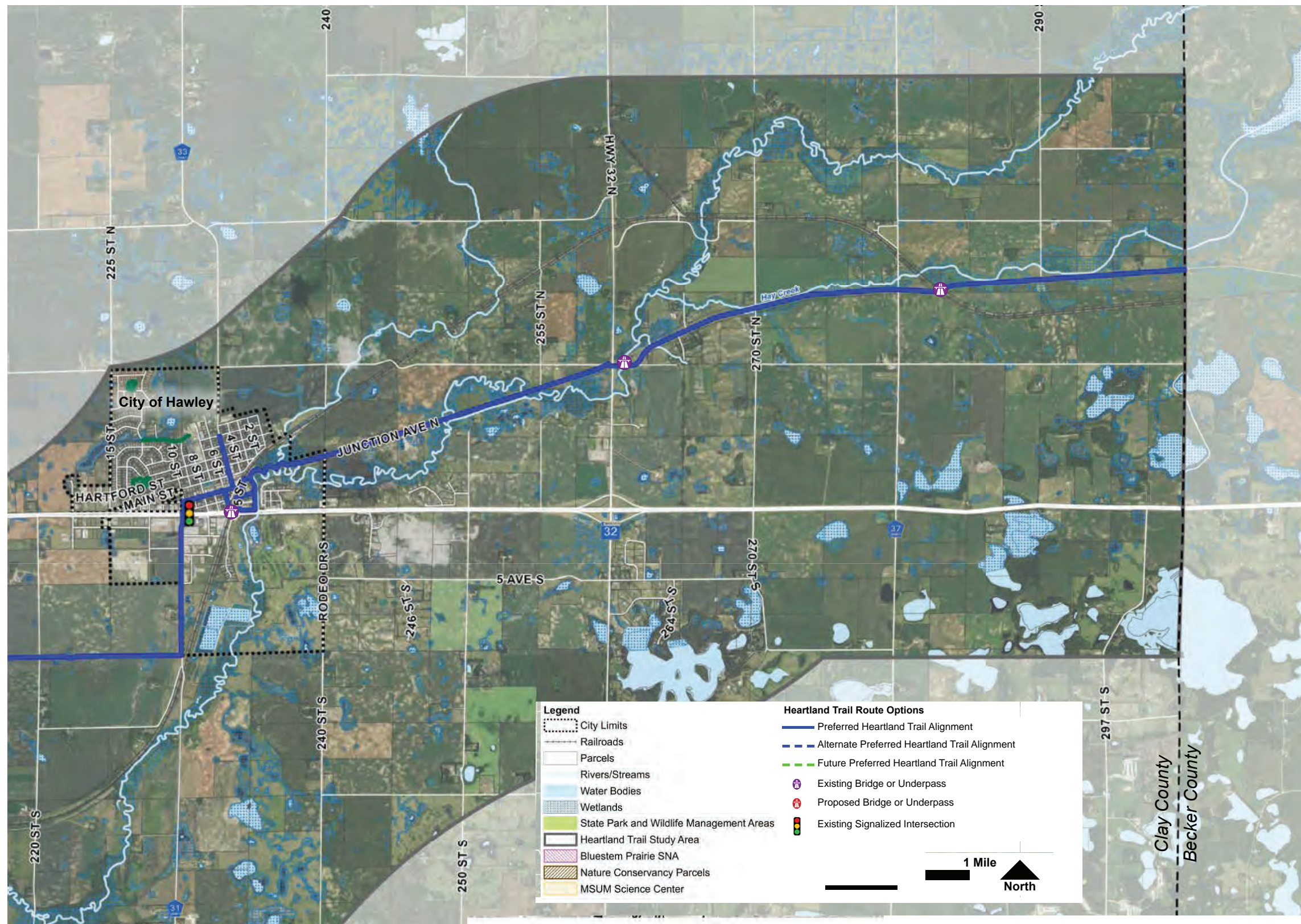


## Corridor Overview - Segment 3

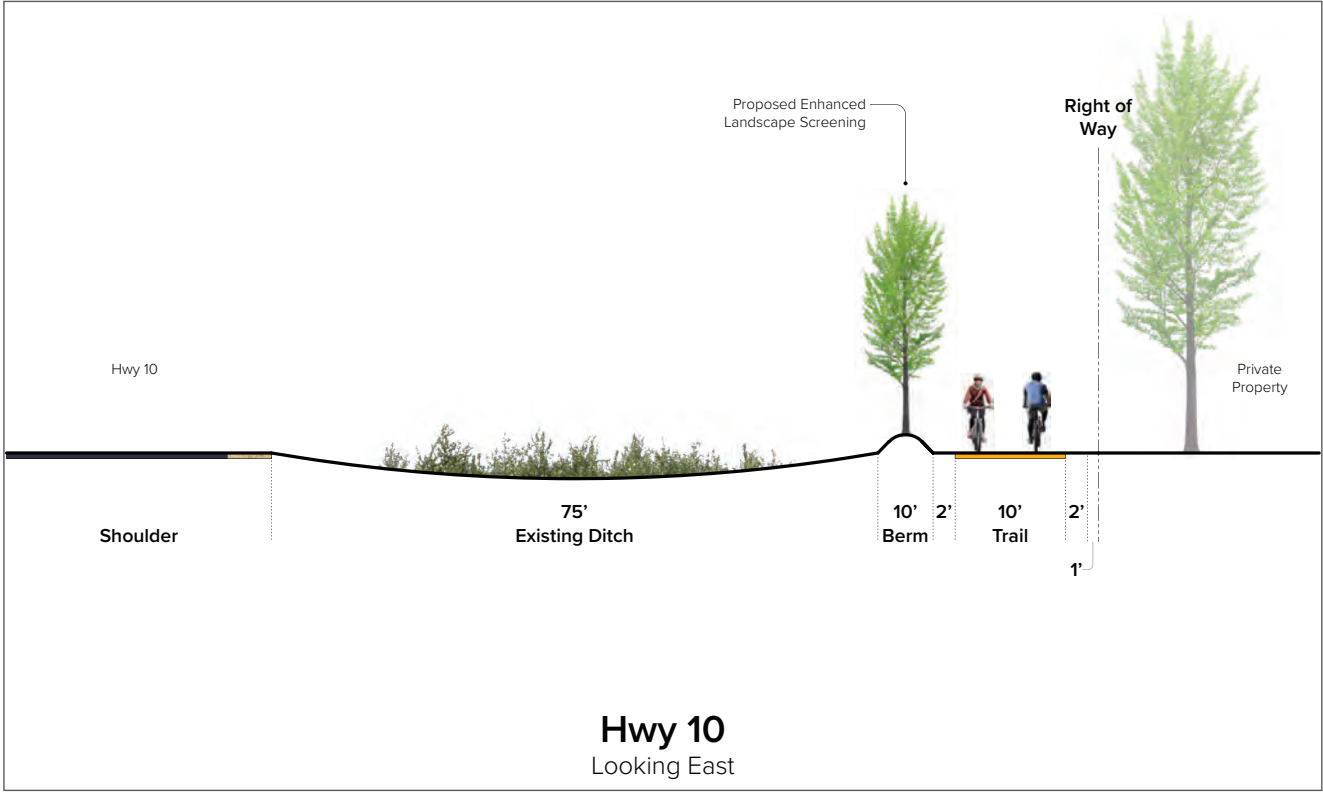
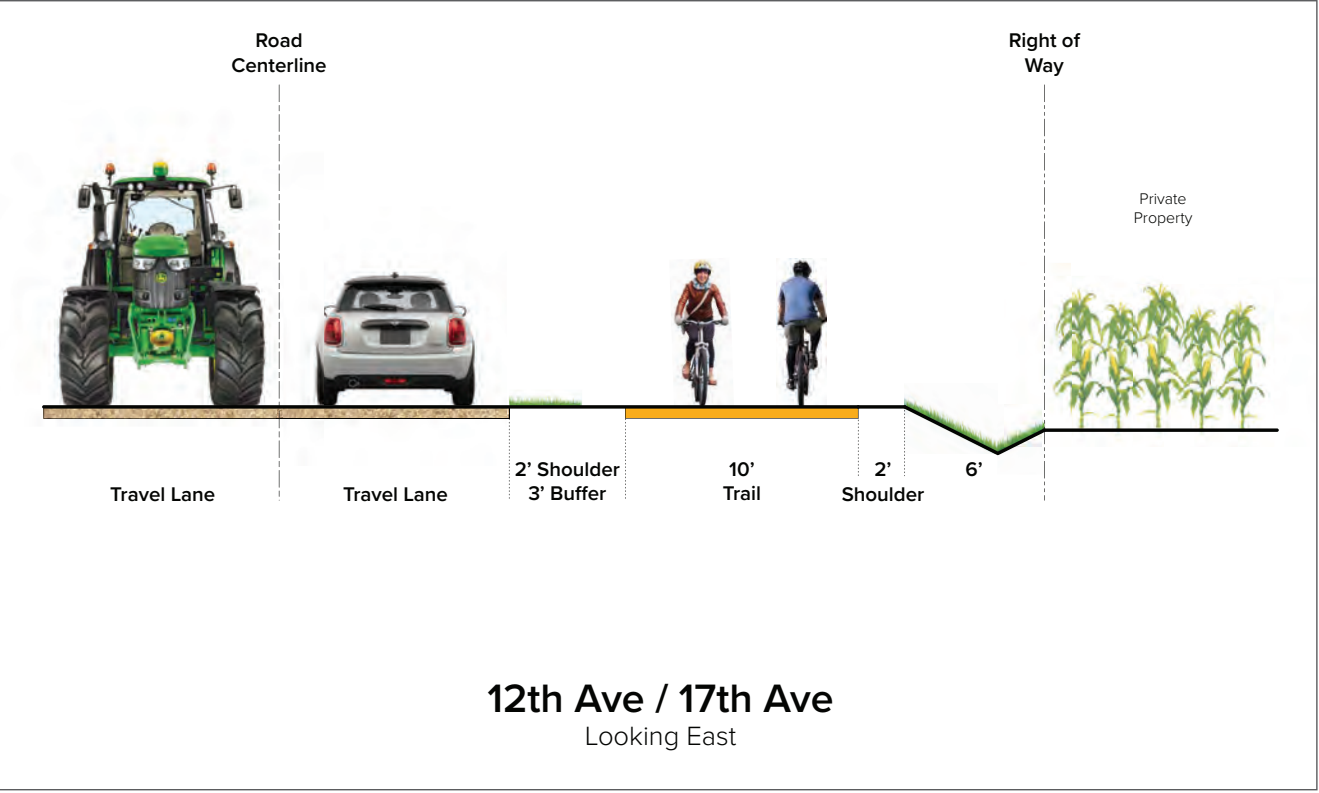
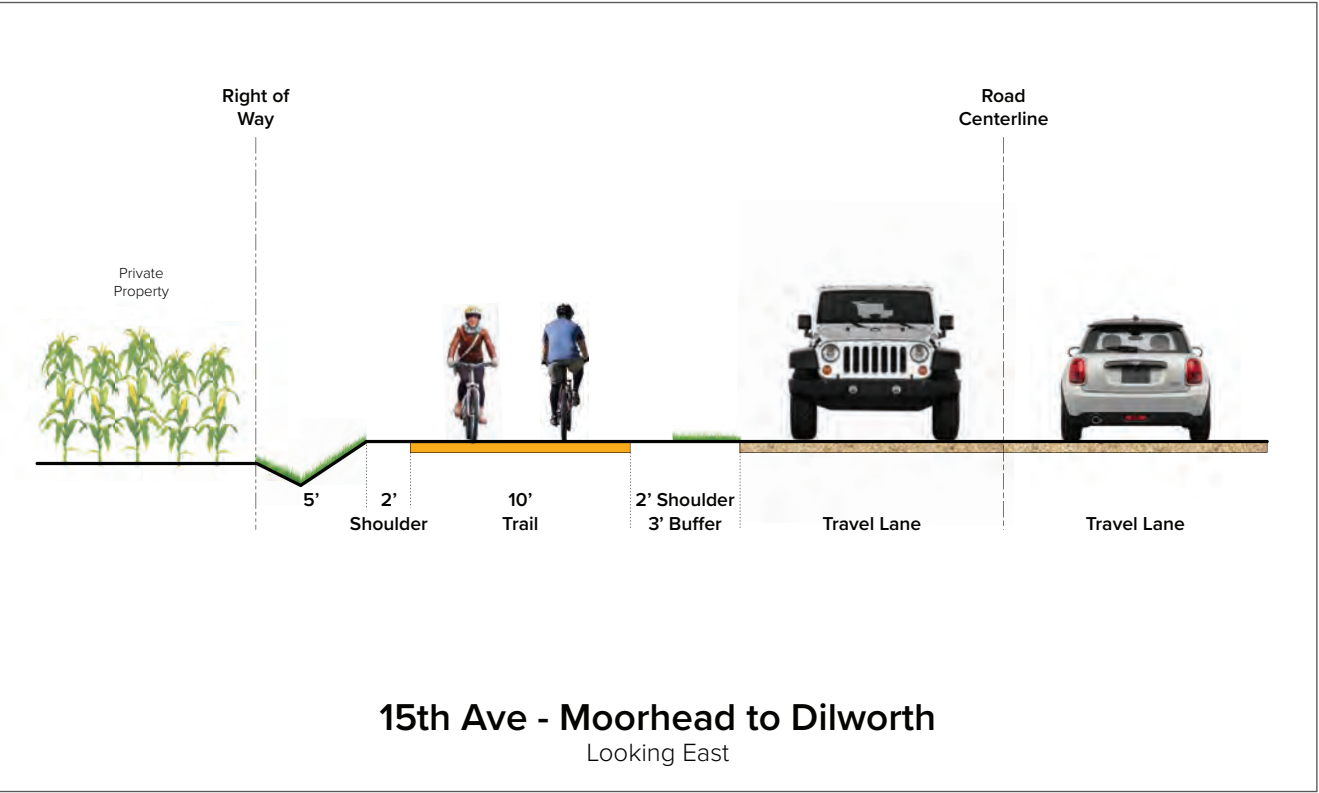


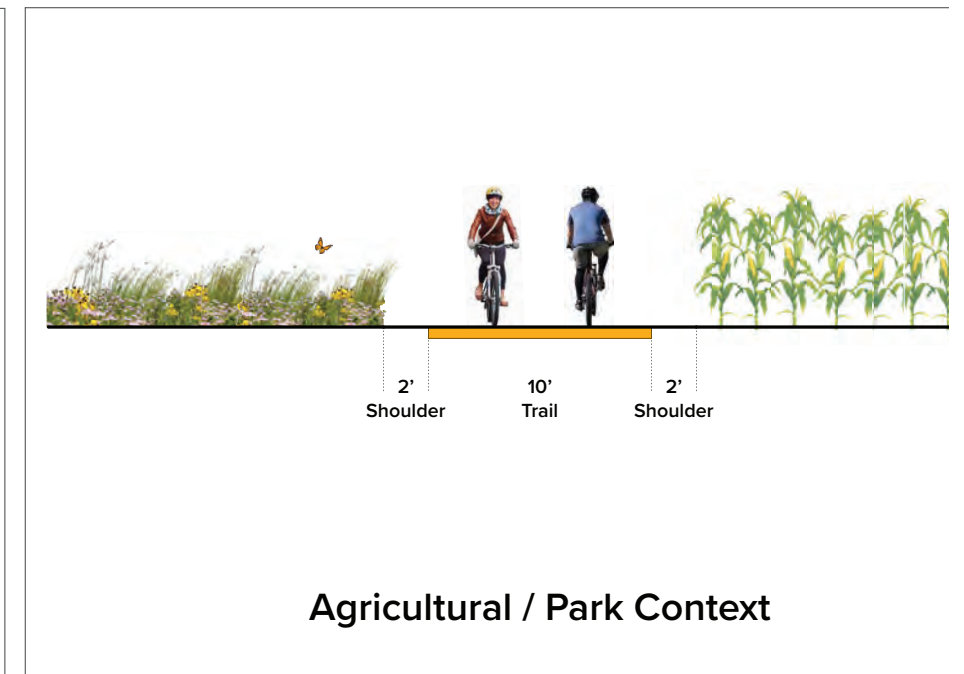
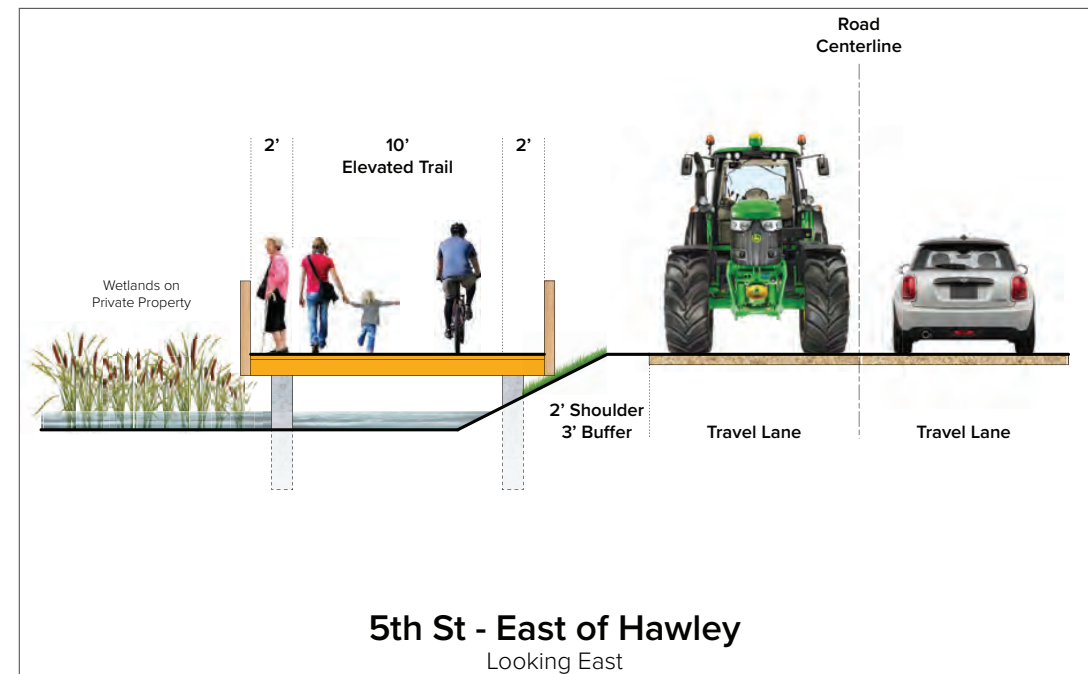
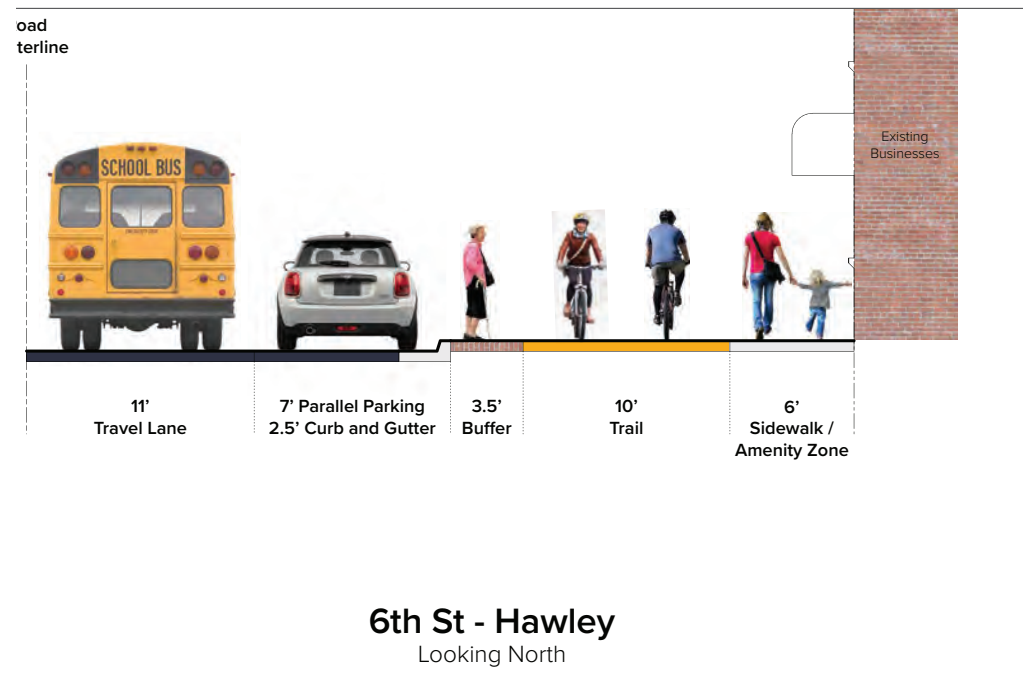
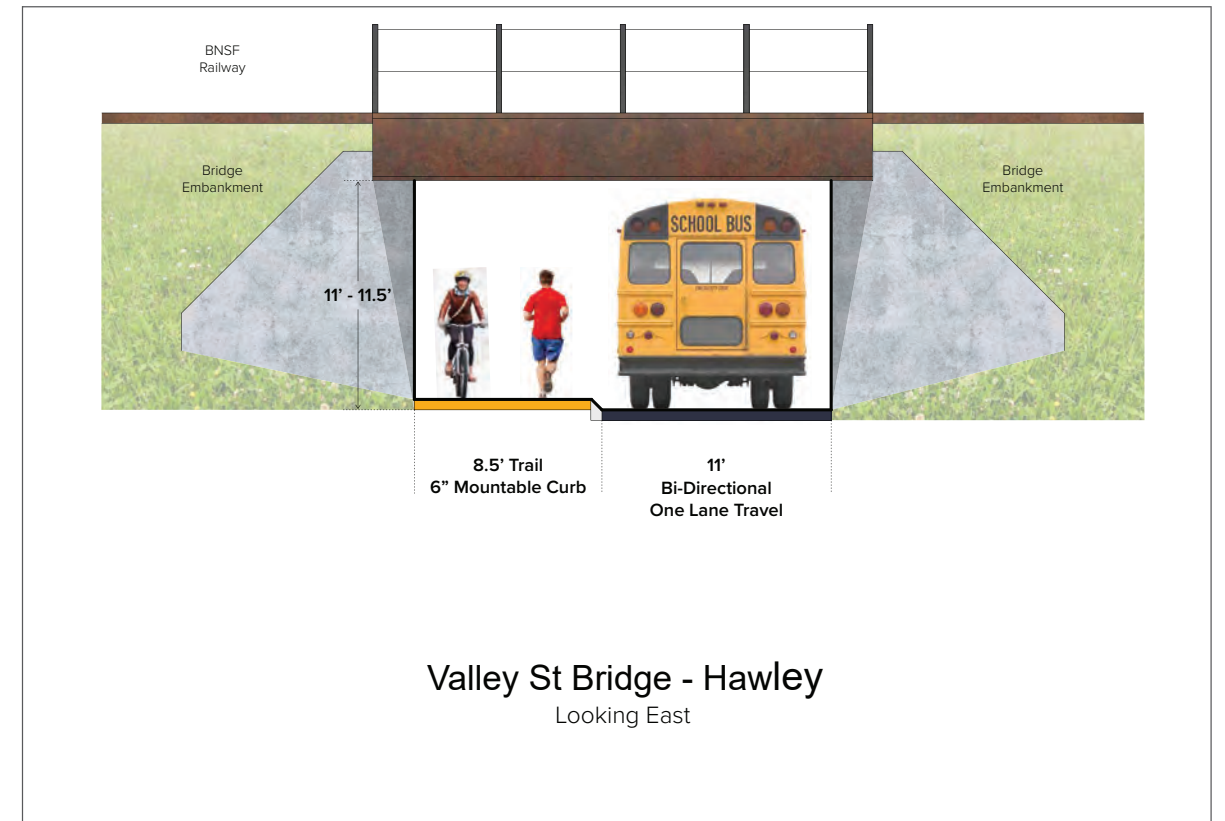
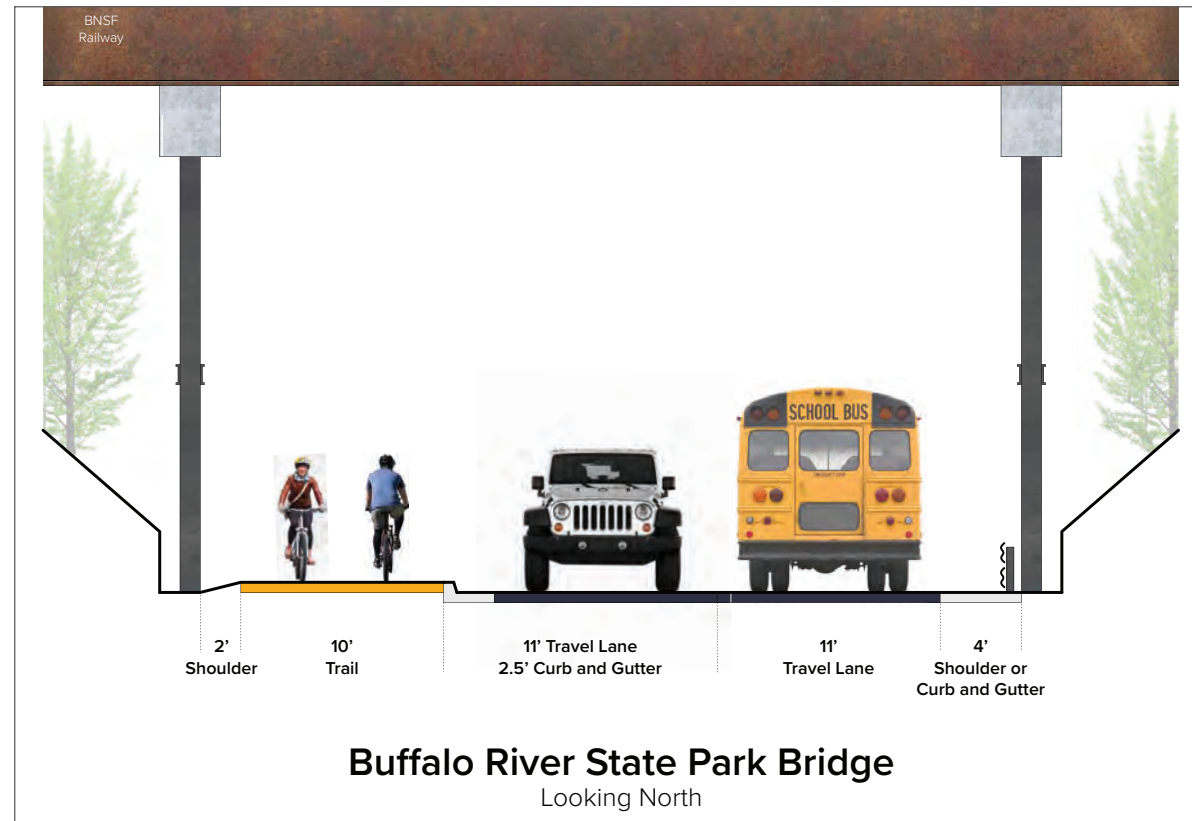


## Corridor Overview - Segment 4













Path along a gravel road



Path along a highway



Path along wetlands



Trail underpass



Boardwalk



Trail overpass



# HEARTLAND TRAIL STUDY IN CLAY COUNTY

Open House #2

October 23, 2024





# 6

## **APPENDIX 6**

### **SRC Meeting Summaries**

### **Stakeholder Meeting Summaries**





## Record of Meeting

SRF No. 17185

**Location:** Metro COG Office

**Client:** Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

**Date:** March 19, 2024

**Subject:** Heartland Trail – Clay County Segment Route Analysis Study Review Committee (SRC) Meeting #1

**Attendees:** Dan Farnsworth and Chelsea Levorsen, Metro COG; Patrick Hollister, PartnerSHIP 4 Health; Forrest Steinhoff, City of Moorhead; Lonnie Neuner, City of Hawley; Peyton Mastera, City of Dilworth; Justin Sorum, Clay County; Kent Skaar and Jeff Fjestad, DNR; Cleone Stewart, Detroit Lakes; Colin Harris and Tom Natwick, Alta Planning + Design; Zakcq Lockrem and Olivia Halsne, Mend Collaborative; Stacy Johnson, Jonathan Fillmore, Mike McGarvey, and Stewart Crosby, SRF

### Summary of Meeting

- Discussion around calling it "Heartland Trail" vs. "Heartland State Trail" - Metro COG would like flexibility at this point (spurs, additional alignment options may be presented); DNR supports this, but they would be secondary if it's not a State trail.
- Be sure to identify both the Paul Bunyan and the Heartland State Trail on context maps and in text and be clear on the relationship of these trails to the current segment in this study.
- There is a large parcel of land south of Buffalo River State Park that is owned and managed by the Nature Conservancy. The Bluestem Prairie Scientific and Natural Area is also south of the state park.
- Existing State Plan for Heartland State Trail is within the 'shaded' area of the 2023 Clay Co Heartland Tr (as long as we stay within that 2 mi buffer then the State trail master plan remains valid).
- State Trail would be a 'straight line' - if considering spurs to connect to interpretive areas, etc., then state would not support those (85.015 - check Statute).
- The team shared an overview of the Engagement Plan and the group discussed locations for engagement events.
- PartnerSHIP 4 Health has a newsletter that would be good for sharing events. Patrick is happy to coordinate getting events in the newsletter.
- Other potential events include the Hawley Rodeo and Greater Moorhead Days. Minnesota State University Moorhead Earth Day, which is on April 25 is an event that Patrick Hollister will be attending, and he has offered to provide outreach materials.
- It was noted that all public-facing materials need to be provided to Patrick by September 30, as PartnerSHIP 4 Health is a funding partner.
- We confirmed that Buffalo River State Park is a stakeholder in the project.

- Hwy 10 reconstruction in Dilworth in 2029 (D4 has consultant working on design right now) [SRF engaged as sub on that project].
- Some areas of east Moorhead may have some reconstruction coming up as well.
- Clarification that this process may create additional route options that aren't part of the previous master plan. If the 2-mi shaded area is still overlapping, then no DNR master plan amendment would be required.
- There was interest in splitting the difference, going to 15<sup>th</sup> Ave N and Buffalo River South Branch east of Hwy 336 (15<sup>th</sup> Ave provides better 'spurability').
- Park Ave S in Glyndon has been constructed as a shared use trail, near the Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton High School.
- North of Dilworth, 28<sup>th</sup> Ave is Co Rd 18. This is a typical 'road biking' route, but otherwise may not make sense to go that far north out of the way.
- There aren't many ways to get into Buffalo River State Park (RR is on 30' berm); snowmobiles wouldn't be allowed in (but some secondary corridor around the park may be allowed for motorized use (secure/same permanency as non-motorized section); it would still count as one route from the State's perspective); however, this is one of the areas that Dan would like the Team to explore options for increasing access; Science Center/educational opportunities; there are some existing bridges that get into the park (may accommodate future trail); Nature Conservancy property is to the south of the park (keep in mind that it's nearby, could be opportunity).
- The Heart of the Lakes Trail is being constructed in Maplewood State Park. The DNR is leading this effort. It will follow roads in the park, but also cross-country.
- A subdivision near 12<sup>th</sup> Ave S was approved (east of Buffalo River State Park). This may have some right-of-way set aside for a trail.
- Hawley has a new development with a trail crossing of Hwy 10. There is interest in an alignment that gets near to businesses. The city of Hawley would prefer having the trail travel east-west on Main St rather than on Hobart St
- East of Hawley there are two railroad crossings that may be constrained.
- Many roadways are assumed to have a 66' ROW. Dan will check to see what ROW maps are available.
- Clay County has good maps of existing snowmobile trails that can be added to our mapping efforts.





**Location:** Metro COG Office

**Client:** Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

**Date:** May 22, 2024

**Subject:** Heartland Trail Study in Clay County – Study Review Committee (SRC) Meeting #2

**Attendees:** Dan Farnsworth, Chelsea Levorsen, and Ayden Schaffler, Metro COG; Jonathan Atkins and Forrest Steinhoff, City of Moorhead; Peyton Mastera, Dilworth; Justin Sorum, Clay County; Isabella Valenzuela, PartnerSHIP 4 Health; Rosemary Bruce-White, MnDOT D4; Matt Jacobson, Clay County; Kent Skaar, MnDNR; Nick Gulden, MnDOT; Cleone Stewart, Detroit Lakes; Zakcq Lockrem, Mend Collaborative; Tom Natwick, Alta Planning + Design; Stewart Crosby, Luke Champa, Mike McGarvey and Jonathan Fillmore, SRF

### Summary of Meeting

#### Introductions and Project Updates

- The planning team summarized engagement activities for the project. To date, there have been over 500 visitors to the project site, with additional comments rolling daily.
- We reviewed precedent images for the trail.
  - Adding a trail along a railroad would be helpful.
  - Winter – consider state trails are authorized for snowmobile use (for example boardwalks wouldn't be used in state trail).
  - It was noted that it may be easier to keep the trail within public ROW.
  - Dust conditions along township roads can be bad in dry conditions. Consider placing the trail on the north or west side of gravel roads.
  - Showed an image of the Heart of the Lakes Trail by Perham that has a paved trail adjacent to a gravel road.
  - Paved trails along gravel roads can result in gravel being thrown on the trail, which poses user and maintenance challenges.

#### Segment 1 Alignment Discussion (Moorhead to Glyndon)

- A route along the Buffalo River would be challenging because of floods, floodplain issues, and private property.
- North/south routes are challenging because of private property impacts and the need to cross highways, and the railroad.
- The South route along 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue will have a challenge crossing MN 336. This will require grade separation (underpass).

- Access to downtown Dilworth would likely be along Highway 10.
- Crossing the railroad would be best near MN 336. It will be very challenging anywhere else near BNSF Yard in Dilworth.
- There may be an overpass at 14th Street in Dilworth, which may provide another option for getting over the railroad.
- The route along the Buffalo River would take a lot of effort to make usable during most of the season consider corridor that has to be closed. The DNR is building a trail in Bloomington along the Minnesota River that is in the floodplain and will be closed when flooding occurs.
- Trails built in floodplains have special considerations for maintenance due to flooding. There are design characteristics for where and how a trail is sited that can help minimize flooding impact.
- It was suggested that a paved trail in the river buffer zone may still comply with sediment control requirements, but this would need to be verified.
- It was suggested that we look for the preferred corridor for the trail. Where do we want it to go? Use this as a guide.
- It is likely to cost a minimum of half-million dollars per mile, which bridges and tunnels costing about \$1 million.
- The DNR has not yet been successful in developing trails within railroad right of way, passing through railroad property. This could be a major barrier for the project.
- The question was asked how far will a casual biker go?
  - Two miles in either direction outside of town is typical, if a trail goes through town.
  - Trail access and specific destinations for shorter trips should be considered.
- Engagement results so far indicate that people are interested in connecting with nature, which speaks to what people want to experience on the trail.
- People like having separation from roadways, which is better with a wider right of way.
- One other trail alternative that was suggested is the Moorhead HS drain alignment north of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The Buffalo River Watershed owns this drainage. Construction might be difficult, and expensive.

## **Segment 2 Alignment Discussion (Glyndon to Buffalo River State Park)**

- This is the most popular segment, based on the number of public comments received thus far. People seem to be interested in connecting to the state park.
- It was suggested we look for alternatives that cross narrower locations of the Buffalo River.
- It was noted that The Nature Conservancy will not allow a paved trail through the prairie preserve, which is a very pristine prairie remnant.
- The 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue alignment with the spur that extends east into the park (tan/yellow connection) was noted as desirable because it enters the park just north of the campground. This could be a unique selling point for Buffalo River State Park users, providing out and back trips.
- The trail may need to follow 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, southeast of the park to keep away from private property.



### **Segment 3 Alignment Discussion (Buffalo River State Park to Hawley)**

- It was noted that there may have been right of way set aside near the Bison Estates area in Clay County, north of the river and east of Muskoda, along 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- There are options to connect up to Highway 10 further east from 190<sup>th</sup> Street, at 220<sup>th</sup> Street, east of Lake Maria.
- Along Highway 10, there are some areas with snow fences, which are outside of the right of way. It may be that there is a higher chance of success getting a trail on private property in those areas.
- Along snow fences, snow will be deposited on the path, if the path is on the downwind side of the fence.
- It was noted that a trail along Highway 10 would be less enjoyable, but potentially easier to develop.
- It was noted that the Heartland Trail near Akeley has winter use with snowmobiles on one side and cross-country skiers on other side. The trail is groomed for these uses.

### **Segment 4 Alignment Discussion (Hawley to County Line)**

- The route that extends north along 230<sup>th</sup> Street would be easiest to access Hawley because there is a signalized crossing of Highway 10 with trail and pedestrian elements incorporated.
- Options southeast of Hawley would still provide a connection through Hawley but would require an underpass under Highway 10.
- It is important to coordinate with Becker County on trail connections. Becker County is looking at route options that connect Dunton Locks south of Detroit Lakes, and one option that continues further west toward Cormorant.
- The question was asked how you phase the east section of trail which ends at the County line? We may need to propose a temporary terminus in Hawley until connections into Becker County can be realized.
- It was noted that planning has been underway for 15 years and nothing has yet been developed. It was noted that starting development in Moorhead and working east could help get momentum, spurring more rural development of the trail. Starting near population centers/destinations would be helpful. The population in the Fargo/Moorhead area could be the biggest draw to build west to east.
- The question was asked how do we address trail concerns with landowners who may be vehemently opposed to spending money on the trail?
  - People using it on a regular basis, making it known that they want to go further.
  - It was noted that no eminent domain will be used to develop the trail.
  - Nearly every bike facility is opposed because people don't see the vision, until it's done.
  - This planning effort is an exercise in communication to listen to different perspectives and provide input on options.
  - There are funds available specifically for trails that do not impact road or highway improvements.
- It was noted that getting feedback from other trail corridors where there has been success would be beneficial.

- One idea is to invite some landowners along proposed segments of the Heartland Trail to tour the Heart of the Lakes Trail in Otter Tail County to talk with farmers and adjacent landowners to show an example of a trail along rural roadways.
- It is important to note that all input will be posted on website. This is a very transparent process.





**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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> Ave makes the most sense because of the lack of obstacles. Connection to 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue N would get good connection into Moorhead and

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

- 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue N has always been considered the connection point into Moorhead. 12<sup>th</sup> 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.
- 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue N does provide a better connection to the regional system. This will connect with the ND trail system. 12<sup>th</sup> 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.
- 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue is going to be difficult from a ROW perspective.
- In Dilworth, part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue Corridor Study, Main Street will extend north through the current ball diamonds to 15<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 (155<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.



## Record of Meeting

SRF No. 17185

**Location:** Metro COG Office  
**Client:** Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments  
**Date:** January 29, 2025  
**Subject:** Heartland Trail Study in Clay County – SRC Meeting #4  
**Attendees:** Dan Farnsworth, Metro COG; Peyton Mastera, City of Dilworth; Jonathan Atkins and Forrest Steinhoff, City of Moorhead; Patrick Hollister, PartnerSHIP 4 Health; Lonnie Neuner, City of Hawley; Kent Skaar, Jeff Fjestad, and Shawn Donais, DNR; Will Hutchings, North Dakota DOT; Cleone Stewart, Detroit Lakes; Matt Jacobson and Justin Sorem, Clay County; Colin Harris, Isaac Hase, and Tom Natwick, Alta Planning + Design; Zakcq Lockrem, Mend Collaborative; Stewart Crosby and Stacy Johnson, SRF

### Summary of Meeting

- Preferred Trail Alignment
  - Noted that 12<sup>th</sup> Ave S will be a challenge with property owners, but it makes sense as the proposed alignment.
  - The City of Dilworth stated that they are completing the 15<sup>th</sup> Ave N corridor study. The corridor study should be gaining approval within the next month.
  - The City of Dilworth is planning on moving forward with design / future project from 40<sup>th</sup> St S to 14<sup>th</sup> St NE. This would include adding the roadway and trail.
  - MnDNR representatives noted that a path through the park would be ideal, but that there will be several hurdles to jump through due to protected and sensitive species of plants that are located inside the park.
  - MnDNR representatives also stated that the MSUM property could also potentially have archaeological sites of significance.
  - It was noted that the intersection of Hwy 10 in Hawley would include a new crossing on the east side of the intersection, due to running along Hobart Street.
  - It was noted that the property owner at the corner of Junction Avenue and Highway 32 has concerns about the trail dividing their property because they use their land for hunting and managing wildlife.
- Trailheads
  - The City of Dilworth liked the trailhead concept but would like to see it a few blocks south to be closer to the Rail District, since this is a growing destination in Dilworth.
  - Glyndon Stop – This stop is adjacent to the Evangelical & Lutheran Church Parking Lot. One thought would be to request to utilize the church parking lot for additional trailhead parking.
    - MnDNR staff pointed out that if this segment becomes a state trail than any state-owned trailhead could not be “shared spaces” i.e. a church parking lot.



- Hawley Stop – The City of Hawley liked the concept, as it is city owned property, so it wouldn't require any additional land acquisition.
- Crossings
  - 12<sup>th</sup> Ave S & MN 336 – This intersection would include a longer underpass with 2 retaining walls and a pump station. This could be spendy.
    - It was noted that there is currently wider ROW at this intersection, and that there may be an interchange at this location, but that has not been determined at this point.
    - Due to the length of the underpass, it was suggested to put a lighted opening in the median. Like the Milwaukee Trail under 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave in the City of Fargo.
  - Hwy 10 & Hwy 31 in Hawley – It was noted that the trail crossing should be on the east side of the roadway to improve access to Hobart Street. This eliminates the additional crossing at Hobart so close to the intersection.
- Typical Sections
  - 15<sup>th</sup> Ave N – Between 34<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> St NE – It was noted due to ROW and the existing drainage ditch along this corridor that the existing centerline of the roadway may need to be shifted to the north. Based on the 15<sup>th</sup> Ave Corridor Study, it is anticipated that the trail will be between the roadway and the drainage ditch, not on the south side of the drainage ditch.
  - MN 9 Bridge under the BNSF railroad – It was noted that the concept looks interesting, but there may be possible implications with the raised trail under a railroad bridge. The railroad may not prefer this concept.
  - Valley Street Bridge – City of Hawley noted that this bridge is in poor condition already and is currently being utilized as a one way. There are concerns about pedestrian safety in its current configuration. It was noted that the future bridge concept looks good, and it would be nice to have this become a reality sooner rather than later. Hawley staff would like to attend future meetings with BNSF to start conversations about bridge improvements and offer to meet for a site visit.
- State Trail vs. Regional Trail
  - A regional trail could be constructed and then eventually turned over or reclassified as a state trail, as long as all state trail design requirements were followed.
- Phasing of the trail
  - It was noted that the residents of areas along Phase 5 (east of the park) would be happy to know that the area is proposed for later phases.
- Next Steps
  - The planning team will complete cost estimates.
  - The planning team will complete the draft document.
  - Once the draft document is completed, it will be sent out for review prior to the next (and final) SRC meeting.
  - The next SRC meeting will likely be in March, and then the study will be finalized by late March / April for final approval.



## Record of Meeting

*SRF No. 17185*

**Location:** Glyndon City Hall  
**Client:** Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments  
**Date:** May 23, 2024  
**Subject:** Heartland Trail Study in Clay County – Stakeholder Group Meetings

### Stakeholder Group One (11:00 am – 12:15 pm)

**Attendees:** Dan Farnsworth and Chelsea Levorsen, Metro COG; Zakcq Lockrem, Mend Collaborative; Stewart Crosby, SRF; Frank Gross, Clay County; Nathan Germolus, Cromwell Township; Matt Schlauderaff, Buffalo-Red River Watershed; Jerry Gee, Oakport Township; David Ebinger, Clay County; Fred Kuehl, Glyndon Township; Wayne Lepper, Highland Grove Township; Lee Alu, Riverton Township; Michael Astrup

#### Summary of Meeting:

- There will be a new bridge over the Buffalo River on 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Glyndon Township. It would be good to check to see if space for a trail can be included.
- The township would not want to re-align the road to make room for the trail. This would be costly.
- The snowmobile trail previously located on 12<sup>th</sup> Ave S has been moved several miles south. The reason for this is both due to the maintenance of 12<sup>th</sup> Ave S near the new Bison Estates development and also due to opposition of snowmobiles from the new homes in the Bison Estates development.
- It was asked about the possibility of placing a trail next to, or over existing drains. Matt from Buffalo-Red Watershed District noted that they typically don't allow trails within their right of way due to maintenance. However, Matt will provide .kmz and shapefiles of Buffalo-Red Watershed District-owned land and right-of-way.
- It was noted that there is concern about maintaining the township roads with impacts from snow drifting from a trail that is constructed adjacent to the roadway.
- Two attendees questioned the usefulness of the trail along CR 18 as this jogs one mile north and then back south two miles. One attendee was concerned about the distance that this would take users from their destinations, while the other was concerned about conflicts with farm equipment. It was noted that this alignment was carried from earlier trail analysis and noted that there are some advantages to a trail alignment along CR 18 due to the wider right-of-way as compared to township roads.



## Stakeholder Group Two (1:00 pm – 2:15 pm)

**Attendees:** Dan Farnsworth and Chelsea Levorsen, Metro COG; Zakcq Lockrem, Mend Collaborative; Stewart Crosby, SRF; Greg Strommen, Clay County Trails Alliance (Snowmobile Club); Brian Nelson, Buffalo River State Park; Tony Bormann, MSUM Science Center; Terry Steen, Flatlands Cycling Club

### Summary of Meeting:

- Consider looking into a spur toward Downer, parallel to Highway 9.
- Consider using the old railroad bed north out of Glyndon west of County Road 10.
- It might be worth including the railroad in Heartland Trail meeting discussions.
- Several comments were provided specific to Buffalo River State Park and adjacent areas:
  - The trail will be designed and developed by the DNR inside Buffalo River State Park utilizing the trails team out of Fergus Falls.
  - Concern was noted for incorporating a trail in the Bluestem Prairie Scientific and Natural Area.
  - The Science Center is on a unified front with the state park and maintains the same level of oversight and operations.
  - There are protected orchids located in the southeast area of the park, not too far south of the Buffalo River.
  - One option for trail alignment within Buffalo River State Park that might be acceptable by the park/MSUM could parallel to the roadway from the entrance of the park to the MSUM Science Center. Another route could be using the old park entrance road.
  - From a bicycling perspective, the prospect of entering Buffalo River State Park is very exciting.
- There are deer stands just east of Buffalo River State Park. Some people hunt deer leaving the park. It was noted that the homeowners east of Muskoda want their privacy.
- 
- The Snowmobile club has a contract with the county to groom trails. Presumably, they would be a part of the maintenance plan for the Heartland Trail as well. Snowmobile grooming equipment weighs up to 15 tons and provides a minimum 8.5 feet wide grooming path, but up to 12 feet wide.
- The Lee Lake area south of Hawley is a nice location for potential spur connections.

## Stakeholder Group Three (3:00 pm – 4:15 pm)

**Attendees:** Dan Farnsworth and Chelsea Levorsen, Metro COG; Zakcq Lockrem, Mend Collaborative; Stewart Crosby, SRF; Deb White, City of Moorhead; Amber Borah, City of Dilworth; Tracy Tollefson, City of Glyndon; Jim Joy, District 4B Representative

### Summary of Meeting:

- It was suggested we coordinate with MnDOT on future road and bridge improvements.
- Entering the park south of the railroad would be more desirable.

- The further the trail can be from the highway and railroad, the better from a user's perspective. Using vegetation for separation between the trail and highway could be considered to make for a more comfortable environment to trail users.
- There are new homes being built near the south side of Lake Maria.
- In the future, the river south of Hawley will get re-meandered.
- It will be best for communities to connect the trail to downtown.
- Discussion regarding engagement:
  - Send this group the social media language for their use in promoting the project.
  - Send information to the Moorhead Business Association.
  - Consider the National Night Out as an event to promote the trail (first Tuesday in august).
  - Consider Back to School as an engagement opportunity





## Record of Meeting

SRF No. 17185

**Location:** Glyndon Community Center  
**Client:** Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments  
**Date:** October 23, 2024  
**Subject:** Heartland Trail Study in Clay County – Stakeholder Group Meetings #2

### Stakeholder Group One (11:00 am – 12:15 pm)

**Attendees:** Dan Farnsworth and Chelsea Leverson Metro COG; Zakcq Lockrem, Mend Collaborative; Stewart Crosby, SRF; Carol Kurtyka, Moorhead Township; David Ebinger, Clay County; Wayne Lepper, Highland Grove Township; Jerry Gee, Oakport Township

#### Summary of Meeting:

- It was pointed out that the area along Junction Ave is wet with a lot of water crossings.
- One attendee mentioned that landowner(s) on the north side of Junction Ave won't be interested in a trail.
- Someone asked if there are any plans to replace the old trail tunnel under the BNSF tracks on Junction Ave. just west of the Becker Co. line. The study team will reach out to the Clay County Engineer to learn more about that tunnel.
- It was pointed out that 12<sup>th</sup> Ave S in Moorhead & Glyndon townships is designated as a county rd. (CR 74)

### Stakeholder Group Two (1:00 pm – 2:15 pm)

**Attendees:** Dan Farnsworth and Chelsea Leverson, Metro COG; Zakcq Lockrem, Mend Collaborative; Stewart Crosby, SRF; Greg Strommen, Clay County Trails Alliance (Snowmobile Club); Rick Wedrer, Hawley Township; Terry Steen, Flatlands Cycling Club; Matt Schlauderaff, Buffalo-Red Watershed

#### Summary of Meeting:

- Matt Schlauderaff pointed out that if a trail were to be put along Junction Ave, fill for the trail would involve soil and water (department) approval, which would be difficult. The south side of Junction Ave might be better for a trail than the north side as it might be less wet and have fewer difficult properties.
- Terry Steen noted that if the trail were to be located near a busy roadway, a buffer between the trail and roadway should be included. Terry also noted that he, as a bicyclist, enjoys going through/stopping at the towns along trails. The Heartland Trail should travel through towns where possible.

- From a snowmobile perspective, Greg had some concerns of the trail getting plowed in the winter in some areas, making it unusable for snowmobiles. As Moorhead and Dilworth expands, more portions of trail might end up plowed in the winter.
- There was some discussion about winter users. It was noted that fat bikes and snowmobiles shouldn't be on the same trail in the winter.
- The desirable treadway width for snowmobiles is 8.5 ft minimum. However, 12 ft or greater is preferred.
- When asked about designated snowmobile trails on private land, Greg noted that snowmobile clubs are required to have written agreements with landowners in order to use their land for their trail.
- (Discussion after the meeting) According to Matt Schlauderaff (BRRWD), there needs to be a 16.5 ft buffer (spoil area) between the drain and any development (such as a trail)

### **Stakeholder Group Three (3:00 pm – 4:15 pm)**

**Attendees:** Dan Farnsworth and Chelsea Levorsen, Metro COG; Zakcq Lockrem, Mend Collaborative; Stewart Crosby, SRF; Deb White, City of Moorhead; Rob Kupec, Minnesota State Senator; Chelsie Wertman, Greater Fargo-Moorhead Economic Development Corporation

#### **Summary of Meeting:**

- Senator Kupec noted that future MN bonding bills may not include earmarks for trails as has been the case in the past. However, there is trails funding included in the bonding bills, but this is for the entire state and most recently may have been in the tune of \$26 Million.