

TO: Park & Recreation Commission Members
FROM: Bill Waller, City Administrator
Chris Fortsch, Administrative Assistant
DATE: September 4, 2024
RE: Meeting Notice
Monday, September 16, 2024
5:30 p.m., Wieser Park Pavilion at Wieser Park
1817 County Road #6, La Crescent

AGENDA

1. Consideration of meeting minutes – July 29, 2024.
2. Community Development Director Larry Kirch will be in attendance at the meeting to review the following projects with the Commission:
 - a. Root River State Trail Extension – Information included.
 - b. Bike/Pedestrian Bridge to Millers Corner – Information presented at meeting.
 - c. Application for Federal Assistance – Planning and Design Grant – Information included.
 - d. Overlook Plaza Project – Information presented at meeting.
 - e. South 6th Street Improvement Project – Information included.
 - f. USA Cycling Gravel National Championships – Information included.
3. Set date for next meeting.
4. Additional discussion items.
5. Adjournment.

Please call either Chris or Bill at 895-2595, or e-mail us at cfortsch@cityoflacscent-mn.gov or bwaller@cityoflacscent-mn.gov, if you will not be able to attend, have questions, or need more information. Thank you.

#1

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
Park and Recreation Commission Members

FROM: Bill Waller, City Administrator

DATE: July 30, 2024

RE: Meeting Minutes
July 29, 2024

The La Crescent Park and Recreation Commission met at 5:30 p.m., on Monday, July 29, 2024, in the Wieser Park Pavilion at Wieser Park. The following members were present: Maseray Bangura, Patti Martell, Marge Loch-Wouters, Diana Adamski, Jon Steffes and Paul McLellan. Commission member Sarah Wetterlin was not in attendance. Also in attendance were Teresa O'Donnell-Ebner, Tyler Benish, Chris Fortsch, Jason Ludwigson, and Bill Waller.

1. It was the consensus of the Commission to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2024 Park and Recreation Commission meeting as presented.
2. The Commission discussed the 2025 park and recreation season, and the plan to transfer a portion of the responsibility for recreation programming to La Crescent Youth Ball and La Crescent-Hokah Community Education. As proposed, baseball and softball programming for 6,7 and 8 year olds would be transferred to La Crescent Youth Ball; and programming for t-ball, basketball, volleyball, tennis, and golf would be transferred to La Crescent-Hokah Community Education. It was the consensus of the Park & Recreation Commission to recommend approval of the plan to transfer the responsibility for recreation programming to La Crescent Youth Ball and La Crescent-Hokah Community Education.
3. La Crescent-Hokah Community Education Director Beth Theede was in attendance at the meeting to review with the Commission a request by Community Education to develop a pickleball program that would utilize the pickleball courts at Wieser Park for a portion of the programming. It was the consensus of the Commission that Community Education proceed with their plans to develop a pickleball program that utilizes the pickleball courts at Wieser Park for a portion of the programming.
4. Sustainability Coordinator Jason Ludwigson was in attendance at the meeting to review the \$166,116 Outdoor Recreation Grant from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for improvements at Wieser Park. This item was informational, and did not require action by the Commission.
5. Jason Ludwigson reviewed with the Commission a \$5,000 SHIP grant that the City received from Houston County Public Health for new park entrance signs. Design alternatives for new park entrance signs will be presented at a future Commission meeting.

6. Jason Ludwigson reviewed the components of the public education and outreach that the City will be undertaking in advance of implementing the Conservation Partners Legacy Expedited Grant Application for mowing, treating, and then re-planting a portion of the Stoney Point property with hard wood trees and the inter-seeding planned for the Horse Track Meadows property.
7. An update was provided at the meeting on the minor modifications that were made to the ADA Facility Audit of Parks and Recreation Facilities for the City of La Crescent. It was the consensus of the Commission to recommend that the City Council adopt the ADA Facility Audit of Parks and Recreation Facilities for the City of La Crescent.
8. It was agreed that the next Park & Recreation Commission meeting would be September 16th, 2024, and that the topic for the meeting would be a review of the Root River State Trail Extension Plan and the coordination and on-going planning activities related to the future connection to the existing State trail.
9. The Commission reviewed a request from the local soccer organization to display a banner at Old Hickory Park that recognized program sponsors. It was the consensus of the Commission that the request be denied.
10. Public Works Director Tyler Benish provided the Commission with an update on the Blue Lake Canoe/Kayak access project and the dog park project.
11. Commission members provided brief updates to the Commission on a variety of past and future community improvements projects and events.
12. There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:25 pm.

#2a

Root River State Trail Extension Houston-Hokah-La Crescent



Root River Trail Extension - Citizen Exploratory Committee
Adopted Trail Plan
June 12, 2024



HOUSTON COUNTY
MINNESOTA



Growing from River to Ridge

Houston, Minnesota

The Best of Bluff Country

Root River Trail Extension
Houston-Hokah-La Crescent
Trail Plan

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Appendix A – Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate

Acknowledgements

Root River Trail Extension-Citizens Exploratory Committee

- Houston County – Joe Thesing, Ben Horn, Jason Kraft
- City of Hokah – Jake Olson, Kevin Walther
- City of Houston – Jay Wheaton,
- City of La Crescent – Dick Wieser, Larry Stryker

Houston County - Board of Supervisors

Allison Wagner, Board Clerk/Economic Development Director

Sam Jandt, Houston County Attorney

Eric Schmidt, County Surveyor

City of Houston – Mayor, City Council

Michelle Quinn, Clerk/Administrator

City of Hokah – Mayor, City Council

Lindsey Martell, Clerk/Administrator

City of La Crescent – Mayor, City Council

Bill Waller, City Administrator

Larry Kirch, Community Development Director

Hein Bloem, Houston County resident

Christina Peterson, Houston County resident

Resource Groups

- Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota
- Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota
- SMART – Southeast Minnesota Association of Regional Trails
- Minnesota Department of Transportation – Active Transportation Program
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources State Parks and Trails

Plan Partners

There are multiple organizations and entities that contributed to the formulation of this Trail Plan. The primary plan partners are Houston County and the cities of Houston, Hokah, and La Crescent. Each of the entities contributed to the extent they were able with Houston County and the City of La Crescent being able to commit staff resources to the planning effort. All the entities contributed meeting facilities and were committed to exploring the possible extension of the Root River Trail by entering into a formal Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate.

Executive Summary

The Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate (MOA) signed by Houston County and the cities of Houston, Hokah and La Crescent allowed for the creation of an eight member citizens committee with two representatives from each governmental organization. The MOA called for the creation of a trail plan which would be drafted by the committee. The committee of citizens discussed the name of the committee and came up with the Root River Trail Extension – Citizens Exploratory Committee (RRTE-CEC). The committee had no illusions that a trail would ever be built but that one was generally a desirable thing for the county, the three cities and for southeast Minnesota. The committee specifically used the word “Exploratory” to underscore the 40 years of previous efforts and that if a trail was a certainty, it would have been completed already.

This trail plan is an exploration of the previous planning efforts and a path forward for the possible extension of the Root River State Trail. In reviewing the previous three master planning documents, the most recent in 2011 regarding the specific extension from Houston to La Crescent, the committee noted that an ad hoc group met for 12 years before becoming part of the County Economic Development Authority as a subcommittee. That subcommittee met from 2004 to 2010 when a more formal master planning process was undertaken in 2011 which resulted in a master plan that was approved and one that meets the statutory requirements in Minnesota.

The RRTE-CEC met for a little over a year to formulate a process for preparing the “trail plan.” The trail plan was open-ended under the MOA as to its content and format. The committee determined that the trail plan, under the MOA, need not take 12 years or even seven years and that the 2011 Root River State Trail Extension Master Plan Houston to La Crescent, 2011 was the approved plan and that a committee trail plan would simply augment that master plan. The trail plan updates what has transpired over the last 12-13 years and provides community members and state and federal agencies and other stakeholders with a renewed path forward with the most likely action that the trail would be pursued in phases.

This trail plan acknowledges and confirms that the 2011 Master Plan is approved and there is no need to recreate that plan. The next step for the communities is to move forward on the implementation of the 2011 Master Plan by having conversations with landowners and working in partnership with the three communities and the county.

This plan does not indicate which segment of an extension to the Root River State Trail would be built first, just that there is a concerted effort over the long term to see the project completed. Trail development and construction can take decades. For example, the recently completed Wagon Wheel Trail in La Crescent took 21 years from conception to completion. The final segment was the construction of the bicycle-pedestrian bridge over U.S. Highways 14/61 in 2023. For the Root River State Trail, the original land acquisition from the railroad took place in the late 1970s was born in controversy and concern. Discussions regarding completing the Root River State Trail have gone on for more than 40 years. The RRTE-CEC firmly believes that connecting communities within a region is good for the communities and for visitors.

Introduction

The cities of La Crescent, Hokah and Houston have long desired to connect their communities utilizing the Root River State Trail. Houston County has supported the trail extension in a variety of ways over the years as well. The Minnesota DNR finalized a Trail Master Plan in 2011 for the extension of the trail. However, completion of a trail has been complicated for a variety of reasons including wetlands, floodplain, habitat restoration areas, wildlife management areas, MnDOT right-of-way, railroad right-of-way, federal and state ownership, private ownership, and others. A model for completing the existing Root River State Trail was through a Joint Powers Agreement amongst cities in Fillmore County.

The City of La Crescent and Houston County have allowed their staff to co-lead the coordination of trail planning efforts. The Root River Trail Extension-Citizens Exploratory Committee works alongside La Crescent's Community Development Director and Houston County's EDA Director. An eight-member citizen committee makes up the RRTE-CEC and represents the three cities and county all working toward developing a plan and strategy to complete the trail.

The value of the Root River State Trail to the region as a recreation corridor and economic driver is well known. In the short time since the opening of the Wagon Wheel Trail Bridge in La Crescent, there has been a visible and dramatic increase in people biking and walking in the community. The business community has confirmed that the increased bicycle and pedestrian use has had a positive impact on their businesses. Through careful planning and project management, it is hoped that an agreed upon Root River Trail corridor can be identified and pursued over a number of years. **The committee has stressed emphatically that any property acquisition or property interest be handled entirely through a willing seller/willing buyer approach.**

This "trail plan" is a requirement of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to Jointly Cooperate executed by and between the County and the three cities. More information on the MOA is included in other sections of this document and a copy of the fully executed MOA is attached as an exhibit to this trail plan. The content of the trail plan was undefined by the MOA. The RRTE-CEC determined that there was not a need to recreate the 2011 DNR Trail Master Plan as that plan meets the Minnesota statutory requirements for preparation of state trail master plans. This planning document summarizes previous planning efforts, describes alternative routes within the corridor as well as provides an evaluation and recommendations for trail routing options. The trail plan presents options for funding the trail and working with property owners who are interested in seeing the trail come to fruition.

The idea of a trail extending from Fountain to La Crescent has been around for more than 40 years. The trail exists in Houston heading west. Positive impacts and negative feelings of the trail are well established. Previous trail planning efforts have included much public outreach over the last four decades.

This plan reaffirms the strong commitment to the willing seller/willing buyer approach to working cooperatively with any property owner who is interested in working with the three cities and county to bring a trail to reality. The trail plan also outlines the next steps for moving the plan forward.

Exploratory Committee Origin/Purpose/Function

The most recent effort to explore the possibility of extending the Root River Trail began in 2020 with a meeting between the City of La Crescent, Houston County and the Minnesota DNR. At that meeting there was discussion of past efforts and the best way to move forward. The outcome of the meeting was that a Joint Powers Agreement should be drafted and pursued by the communities. The City of La Crescent offered to commit staff resources to the project.

Tragically, the City of La Crescent's Community Development Director, Terry Erickson, passed away in a mountain biking accident in Winona in June of 2021. Terry's passing was a loss to the Winona community, Southeast Minnesota, La Crescent, and this project. Terry was involved for several years in La Crescent and assisted the city in many projects including obtaining funding for the Wagon Wheel Trail. With the loss of Terry, the Root River Trail extension project stalled until mid-2022.

In 2022, Houston County and the City of La Crescent began discussions to create a Joint Powers Agreement. The discussions were primarily between the County Attorney and City Attorney. The result of the discussions was the formulation of a Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate. The MOA was executed in September of 2022 by the City of Houston, City of Hokah, City of La Crescent and Houston County. In October of 2022 each entity appointed two members to serve on a committee to create a "trail plan." The committee began meeting monthly in the Fall of 2022.

Early on, the committee reviewed the MOA and conducted a tabletop workshop to create a game plan for creating the trail plan. The committee agreed to work by consensus, did not create a chair or vice chair and did not create bylaws. The committee felt that time was better spent on the trail plan rather than administrative process. The task at hand was the trail plan. The committee agreed to name the committee the Root River Trail Extension – Citizen Exploratory Committee. The committee chose that name because the committee felt that the creation of a trail was not a forgone conclusion and that the committee was simply exploring the completion of a trail system. That exploration would come through drafting a trail plan.

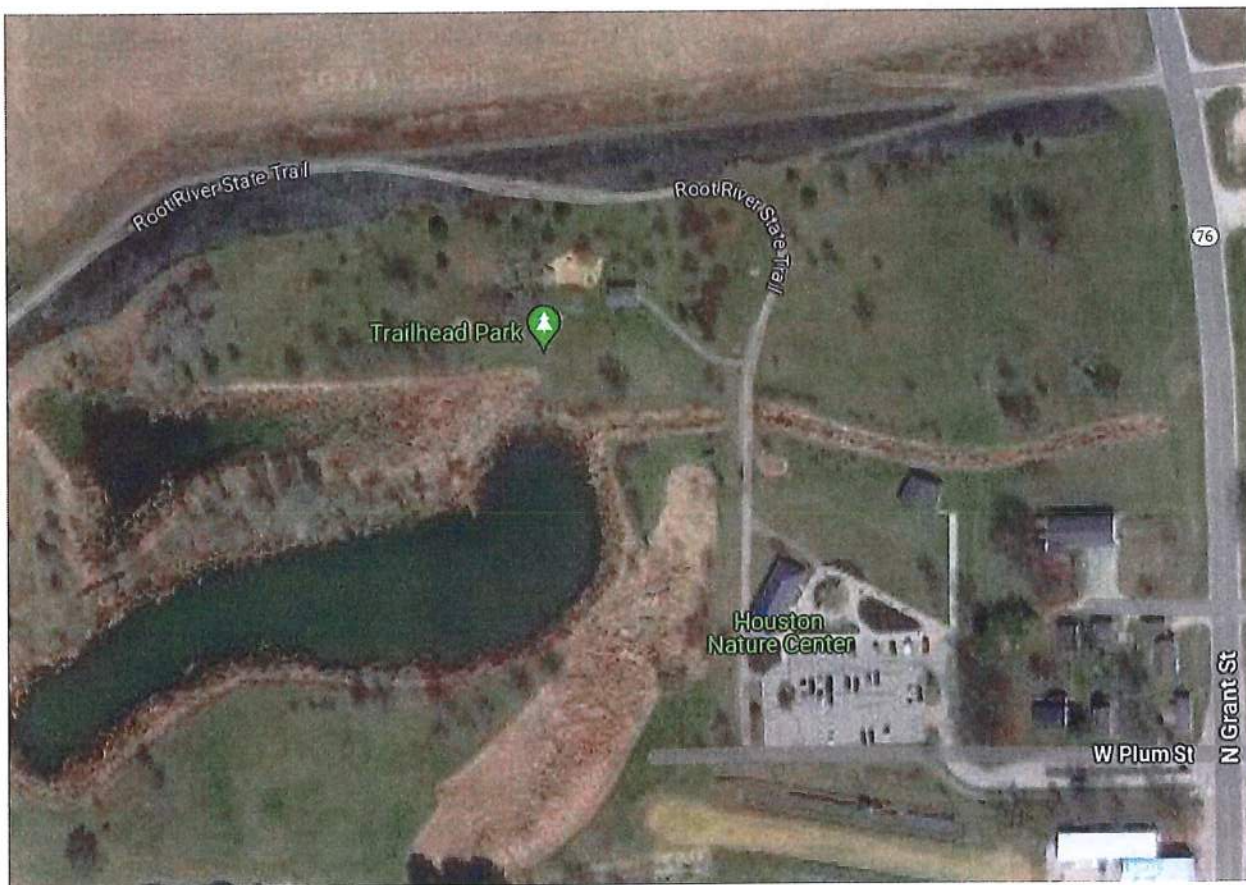
The committee approved a Project Charter which spelled out the role of each community, the role of the committee and the role of staff. The committee next worked on a Fact Sheet and the City of La Crescent created a web page on the city's site to post information and resources for the project. The Committee spent several meetings looking at aerial photos and ownership information in the trail corridor. After meeting for approximately 18 months, the committee decided on the table of contents of the trail plan and to have staff draft a planning document. This document serves as the "trail plan" that is a requirement of the MOA.

History-Background of Trail/ Previous Trail Planning Efforts

The Root River State Trail was authorized in 1971. In 1979, the Chicago, Milwaukee, Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad was abandoned and therefore the trail planning could be undertaken. The DNR ultimately acquired 49 miles of the 100-mile corridor. Fifteen of those 49 miles were designated as a Scientific and Natural Area. Thirty-five miles were made into the Root River State Trail from Fountain to the Money Creek Woods. The balance of the abandoned rail corridor was transferred to the abutting property owners.

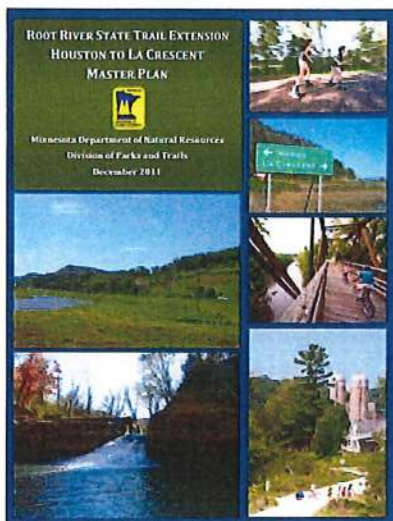
A 6.7-mile extension of the Root River State Trail to Houston was made part of a subsequent planning effort in 1998, nearly 27 years after the original authorization of the trail (Houston Extension of the Root River State Trail Master Plan, 1998). The trail was constructed in 1999 to the Houston Trailhead Park and Houston Nature Center. This extension brought the trail to a total of 41.7 miles in length and when added to the Harmony-Preston Valley trail brought the total trail length to 59.2 miles.

The Root River State Trail was constructed where the state kept ownership and was not completed east of Houston where the property was transferred to abutting property owners.



Root River State Trail Extension Master Plan – Houston-to La Crescent, 2011

In December of 2011, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources approved the Root River State Trail Extension Master Plan. The master plan fulfilled the requirements of Minnesota Statutes, Section 86A.09 for the administration of the extension of the Root River State Trail. The plan covered the distance from the existing trail terminus in Houston to La Crescent. The trail extension was authorized in Minnesota Statutes, Section 85.015, Subdivision 7 in 1992 as one part of the Blufflands Trail System. As noted in the plan, groups in Houston County began working with the Minnesota DNR in 1992 to extend the trail. In 2004, the informal group was formed as a committee under the county's Economic Development Authority (EDA). That committee (the Houston County Trails Subcommittee) met for five years. The 2011 planning process and resulting plan evolved from that 5-year effort by the Houston County Trails Subcommittee and was folded into the Master Plan.



The 2011 Master Plan for the extension of the Root River State Trail consists of seven chapters. Chapters are devoted to the planning process, purpose and scope; potential trail uses; trail alignment in segments/subsegments; trail management, natural resources, history and cultural resources; and implementation. This document intentionally does not try to recreate the existing approved Master Plan and the reader is encouraged to peruse the 2011 Master Plan which can be found on the City of La Crescent's RRTE-CEC webpage as well as on the Minnesota DNR trails website.

Throughout the last forty years, there has been both positive and negative viewpoints to the extension of the trail system. As the plan notes "Concerns were addressed regarding many issues with trails on private property: liability, trail maintenance, wildlife management, hunting, and safety issues. Other topics included avoiding displacement of rare species and whether a trail would bring economic benefits to the area." The central issues remain, trails on private property, liability, hunting, trespass, and safety. Displacement of rare species or more aptly, habitat loss, will be mitigated as it is a requirement of any trail construction.

The economic benefit of trails is undisputed. Minnesota now has 588.5 miles of paved state trails. Nation-wide there are 25,000 miles of these types of trails with another 9,000 miles being planned. A coast-to-coast 3,700-mile-long Great American Rail Trail is coming closer to reality. Communities are still clamoring for trail extensions to their communities. Rampant crime does not happen on the trails. Community members who did not want the trail eventually say that they were wrong. A good example is a high school class-project video from the community of Lanesboro where an outspoken trail critic, comes around to facts not fears. The trail is a good thing for their community.

How does a private property owner then co-exist with a trail and avoid liability, possible trespass issues and safety concerns? The answer lies along those 588.5 miles of existing paved trails, 41.7 of which are in the Root River Valley. The issues are real but the answer is that, the issues are manageable or not as

bad as feared. The 212-page Root River Trail Master Plan from 1983 also provides a detailed illustration of the careful consideration that was given to abutting property owners to evaluate trail impacts to properties along the trail. The 1978 plan gives ample illustration how the state worked closely with private property owners to relocate trail sections to both the benefit of the property owner and trail user.

As the 2011 Master Plan states, the recommended trail uses are the same as the rest of the Root River State Trail and include; bicycling, hiking, walking, running, X-country skiing, and similar uses. These user groups are recreation enthusiasts and good stewards of outdoor recreation facilities. Hunting will be allowed except where regulated by community ordinances. Snowmobiling will be allowed between Houston and Miller's Corner. Snowmobiling is generally not viewed as compatible with winter silent sports like cross country skiing, snowshoeing, fat tire biking, walking and could only be done if speeds were regulated and policed. Horseback riding will be accommodated on portions of the trail where sufficient right-of-way is available.

Public Outreach – 2023-24

The extension of the Root River State Trail to Hokah and La Crescent had its origins in 1992 with a Houston County subcommittee of the Economic Development Authority in 2005. That subcommittee met for approximately five years. Meetings were posted and open to the public. The 2011 master planning process for the extension of the Root River State Trail had two public meetings to gain input on the master plan. The summary of public comments is included in the appendix to the 2011 master plan.

2011 Root River State Trail Extension Houston to La Crescent Master Plan Process Chart

Trail Planning Process Chart

Who's Involved

- Houston County EDA Trails Subcommittee
- National Park Service
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- University of Minnesota
- DNR Resource Managers
- Community Leaders
- Scenic Byways
- Elected Officials
- Other Agencies
- Citizens
- Adjacent Landowners
- Trail Users

The 2011 approved DNR approved master plan involved the list of communities, agencies, community leaders, landowners and the general public presented in the chart.

Under the MOA for this Trail Plan, it was understood that public outreach continues to be a basic requirement of any trail planning process. Early in the planning process, during a roundtable discussion, the following stakeholders were identified: Houston County, the three cities, townships, landowners, Southeast Minnesota Association of Regional Trails (SMART), Minnesota Parks and Trails Council, Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, Harmony Trails Commission (Gabby Kinneberg, President – Preston), Root River Trail Towns, Bluff Country Scenic Byway, MnDNR, MnDOT, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Rails to

Trails Conservancy, CPKC Rail, snowmobile clubs, landowners, Houston County residents, County Engineer, La Crescent Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, Houston Chamber Commerce, Houston Nature Center, National Owl Center.

The City of La Crescent created a resource page on the city's website under the City Government Tab, and under the Root River Trail Extension-Citizens Exploratory Committee: [Root River Trail Exploratory Committee \(cityoflacrescent-mn.gov\)](http://cityoflacrescent-mn.gov) for the work of the committee and a repository of information related to the Root River State Trail. Information includes the agendas and minutes from the committee meetings, copies of the 1983, 1988 and 2011 DNR Master Plans, the MOA, a Frequently Asked Questions information sheet, and committee member information.

The draft and final Trail Plan will be posted on the committee webpage. Public input from the general public and stakeholders will be summarized in the document. The MOA requires that the Trail Plan be presented to the County Board and the city councils of the three cities.

Alternative Routing

The 2011 Root River State Trail Master Plan to extend the state trail from Houston to Hokah to La Crescent broke the 18 miles of possible trail into five segments. The segments include connections between La Crosse and La Crescent and connections within La Crescent as Segment 1. The Wagon Wheel Trail from the West Channel Bridge/Sportsman Landing to downtown La Crescent took over 21 years to complete with multiple funding sources and years of grant writing. Segment 2 is the segment between the Wagon Wheel Trail/Bridge and Miller's Corner. The master plan recommended the trail be placed between Highway 26 and the Kansas City and Southern Rail Road (now CPKC) tracks along the east side of the highway.

The City of La Crescent has completed four phases of the Wagon Wheel Trail and the City of La Crosse, with federal money, is building a bicycle-pedestrian bridge across the West Channel of the Mississippi providing a safer and more direct route from/to Wisconsin's state trail system and La Crosse's city trail system. The City of La Crescent completed an Active Transportation Action Plan in 2023 to assist in determining a safe route from the Wagon Wheel Bridge to Miller's Corner. That plan confirmed the route identified in the 2011 Master Plan, a route between the highway and the rail road tracks with a separated path. The city then sought funding at the end of 2023 to build a portion of the path from the Wagon Wheel trail to S. 14th Street with federal Transportation Alternatives (TA) funds. That project was not funded but the city will continue to seek funding for a multi-use path to Miller's Corner. Segment 2 can be broken down into one or two phases depending on funding availability and coordination between the CPKC railroad and the County, City of La Crescent and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Segment 3, between Miller's Corner and Hokah, does not have a preferred trail alignment identified. The three options remain the same, use of the former rail corridor for most of the route as well as Minnesota Highways 16 or 26/County Road 7 in the state or county right-of-way. Close coordination with Houston County, the state DOT, property owners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the DNR will be needed to acquire and construct a trail. Connections within Hokah are part of Segment 3.

Segment 4, connects Hokah and Mound Prairie. The most desirable, from a trail user perspective and natural area perspective is to use the abandoned rail corridor. Segment 5, lies between Mound Prairie and Houston. Potential alignments include the general corridor of the abandoned rail corridor, to highways and along the Root River.

As noted in many other sections of this trail plan, working cooperatively with landowners, local government and state and federal agencies is a necessary component of finalizing any of the segments. Routing will be determined by evaluating the 2011 Master Plan and informal conversations and formal discussions with all the property owners whether private or publicly owned. The challenge here is to align the desire by some to create a complete trail system and landowners seeing a benefit. Benefits could be looked at in terms of health and wellness, social connections and economic impact. Impacts or imposition to landowners include possible trespassing, loss of usable land, intrusion near homes, among other perceived or real negative impacts.

Method for Acquiring Property

At the outset of the committee meetings, the committee participants unanimously agreed that any property acquisitions would be done without condemning property. The committee was adamant in this fundamental parameter or principle. The committee reflected on the past use of condemnation in the Root River Valley to acquire property and the committee unequivocally rejected the notion that condemnation would be used. While condemnation is typically associated with government overreach, there may be tax advantages to a property owner whose property is condemned in terms of acquiring a replacement property. Regardless, the committee decided to take this off the table and any property acquisitions for trail purposes would only be done with willing buyer/willing seller approach.

The committee also discussed the history of property acquisition discussions/activities in the Root River Trail corridor. In previous discussions, if there was opposition to the acquisition of a piece of property in the corridor, it seemed to put the entire trail project on indefinite hold. The committee determined that if there were willing sellers in the overall corridor, the acquisition should move forward. The completion of a trail will never occur if the project is stopped because of 1 or 10 property owners not wishing to participate. For example, if there were 100 parcels to acquire and 10 property owners were not interested in selling, the committee stated that the other 90 properties should be acquired through the willing seller/willing buyer approach. In this way, the committee felt that alternative properties such as road right-of-way would then be pursued for acquisition. Just as there is highway right-of-way used from Houston to Rushford, that may have to be the case with segments from Houston to La Crescent.

Typically, property acquisition starts with a conversation. Is a property owner interested or not? Perhaps they are not interested in selling now but maybe someday? Or yes, I will sell if my neighbor sells or, sure, if you can get that strip from DOT, I will work with you. If you can go around at the edge of my field, then I will think about it. Regardless of the positive or negative interest, an outright purchase may not be necessary. Maybe the owner will give a right of first refusal that would give the buying entity the first right to match an offer if the property is ever sold. Property owners also have the ability to donate or sell permanent easements for trail segments. An easement or outright sale of land gives the property owner assurance that they are not liable for accidents or injuries on the trail as an easement can provide for recreational immunity to the underlying property owner. Each property owner has to decide for themselves if they are a willing seller or not. There may be tax benefits for an owner who donates property or donates an easement for trail purposes.

Readers of this Trail Plan should know that the Root River Trail Extension – Citizens Exploratory Committee would like to hear from landowners of their interest or non-interest in selling a parcel or selling an easement for trail purposes.

The committee discussed ways to purchase or obtain an “interest” in a property.

- 1) Granting a Right of First Refusal to a buyer
- 2) Entering into an Offer to Purchase with a buyer
- 3) Executing a Purchase Agreement with a buyer
- 4) Granting a permanent easement to a buyer

The actual transfer of the fee title to a property is typically done via a Warranty Deed or Quit Claim Deed. Some land is purchased/sold on a “Land Contract or Contract for Deed” where the transaction is completed once the final payment is made.

As part of the discussion of ways to acquire property, the following general real estate transfer methods were briefly mentioned. The project is a very long way out from acquiring any property and it was noted that the Trail Plan had to be approved by the County and the three cities before the project moves along. There is no funding for acquiring any property at present and one of the Trail Plan’s next steps is the identification of possible funding sources for the acquisition and construction of the trail.

Trail Implementation Funding Options

The 2011 master plan does not provide a list of possible funding sources but simply states that “State trails are typically funded through a variety of sources that include state bonding appropriations, federal Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds and federal trail grants.” The landscape for funding has improved in recent years with the advent of Federal Transportation Alternatives (TA) funds, and federal discretionary transportation programs such as RAISE funds, Safe Streets 4 All funds, and Connected Communities funding. Additionally, the Federal Highway Administration has launched the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) which funds projects that have to have a minimum application of \$15 Million dollars.

For many state trails, the most likely source for trails has been through the State of Minnesota Capital Budget process either as a request by state agencies or local government. This funding source is known as state bonding appropriations or “State Bonding Bill” funding approved by the state legislature every other year. The Minnesota DNR also has several trail grant programs and grants for park improvements that could be used in a city park for trail head improvements. Federal trail grants (through the MnDNR) are now available through the reauthorization of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), funding which hadn’t been funded for over a decade.

With funding for trails being a competitive process along with funding constraints, it is likely that land acquisition for the trail will take several years. Funding for the construction of a trail will take multiple years and will very likely have to be done in phases. Most trails now are funded in phased segments as projects are generally too big to fund all at one time. This will be the case with the extension of the Root River State Trail. The trail can logically be broken down into phases with funding coming over multiple years.

The committee will collectively work to seek funding for land acquisition and construction over the next several years.

Trail Plan - Next Steps

The draft plan will be presented to the governing bodies of Houston County and the cities of Houston, Hokah, and La Crescent. Once that step is complete, it is recommended that Houston County, the City of Houston, the City of Hokah, and the City of La Crescent enter into a Joint Powers Agreement. This is the method that is most commonly (routinely) used in Minnesota by many communities who wish to work together to complete a multi-use recreational trail between their communities.

The 2011 Master Plan outlines nine next steps.

1. Complete the master plan.
2. Explore feasibility of each alignment (alignment within each segment).
3. Initial informal landowner contact.
4. Formal landowner contact; complete acquisition process.
5. Seek funding.
6. Trail engineering and design.
7. Construction on one or more segments, while the processes of negotiation and design continue on others.
8. Ongoing maintenance and stewardship.
9. Orientation and Interpretation (signage and kiosks).

Some of these next steps are complete while others are part of the design and construction phase and considerations for long-term maintenance and installation of wayfinding and cultural and natural resource informational kiosks. Item #1 is complete. Items #2, 3, and 4 are really one step. The feasibility of any trail alignment begins and ends with landowner conversations. Item 5, funding can be sought for land acquisition now and funding for construction can be applied for as property is secured for a particular phase. For item #6, this item tends to precede funding as funders want to see that preliminary engineering and design is already complete for a particular phase. Items 7 and 9 are typically done in tandem as construction must include signage for safety and funding can be sought for installation of wayfinding and kiosks for interpretive signage. Ongoing maintenance and stewardship (Item #8) will primarily be a state responsibility (DNR/DOT) for portions of a trail segment that are owned and operated by the state, whereas there may be some trail segments that are city or county maintained.

Other recommendations to keep the plan moving forward include:

- Continue regular meetings of the RRTE-CEC under the Joint Powers Agreement
- Proactively support La Crescent's efforts to obtain Federal funding to complete a trail segment from the Wagon Wheel Bridge to Miller's Corner
- Work on steps 2,3, 4, and 6 while seeking funding
- Continue to engage with all divisions within the Minnesota DNR, MnDOT and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- La Crescent and Hokah should become a member of the Root River Trail Towns organization
- Each community should join and maintain membership in the Southeastern Minnesota Association of Regional Trails (SMART)
- Each community should join and maintain membership in the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota

Appendix A

Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate

#2c

OMB Number: 4040-0004
Expiration Date: 11/30/2025

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424		
* 1. Type of Submission: ☐ Preapplication ☒ Application ☐ Changed/Corrected Application		
* 2. Type of Application: ☒ New ☐ Continuation ☐ Revision		
* If Revision, select appropriate letter(s): * Other (Specify): 		
* 3. Date Received: Completed by Grants.gov upon submission.		4. Applicant Identifier: FVBMS395VGA7
5a. Federal Entity Identifier: 		5b. Federal Award Identifier:
State Use Only:		
6. Date Received by State:		7. State Application Identifier: MN
8. APPLICANT INFORMATION:		
* a. Legal Name: City of La Crescent Minnesota		
* b. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN): 41-6005291		* c. UEI: FVBMS395VGA7
d. Address:		
* Street1: 315 Main Street		
Street2:		
* City: La Crescent Minnesota		
County/Parish: Houston		
* State: MN: Minnesota		
Province:		
* Country: USA: UNITED STATES		
* Zip / Postal Code: 55947-1158		
e. Organizational Unit:		
Department Name: Administration		Division Name: Community Development
f. Name and contact information of person to be contacted on matters involving this application:		
Prefix: Mr.		* First Name: Larry
Middle Name: Joseph		
* Last Name: Kirch		
Suffix:		
Title: Community Development Director		
Organizational Affiliation: City of La Crescent Minnesota		
* Telephone Number: 5078954096		Fax Number: (507) 895-8694
* Email: lkirch@cityoflacrescent-mn.gov		

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

* 9. Type of Applicant 1: Select Applicant Type:

C: City or Township Government

Type of Applicant 2: Select Applicant Type:

Type of Applicant 3: Select Applicant Type:

* Other (specify):

* 10. Name of Federal Agency:

DOT Federal Highway Administration

11. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:

20.205

CFDA Title:

Highway Planning and Construction

* 12. Funding Opportunity Number:

693JJ324NF00012

* Title:

Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program

13. Competition Identification Number:

Title:

14. Areas Affected by Project (Cities, Counties, States, etc.):

Add Attachment

Delete Attachment

View Attachment

* 15. Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project:

La Crescent MN ATIIP Planning and Design Grant - Active Transportation Spine Project

Attach supporting documents as specified in agency instructions.

Add Attachments

Delete Attachments

View Attachments

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424**16. Congressional Districts Of:*** a. Applicant * b. Program/Project

Attach an additional list of Program/Project Congressional Districts if needed.

 Add Attachment**Delete Attachment****View Attachment****17. Proposed Project:*** a. Start Date: * b. End Date: **18. Estimated Funding (\$):**

* a. Federal	367,500.00
* b. Applicant	227,500.00
* c. State	0.00
* d. Local	0.00
* e. Other	0.00
* f. Program Income	0.00
* g. TOTAL	595,000.00

*** 19. Is Application Subject to Review By State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?**☐ a. This application was made available to the State under the Executive Order 12372 Process for review on ☐ b. Program is subject to E.O. 12372 but has not been selected by the State for review.☒ c. Program is not covered by E.O. 12372.*** 20. Is the Applicant Delinquent On Any Federal Debt? (If "Yes," provide explanation in attachment.)**☐ Yes ☒ No

If "Yes", provide explanation and attach

 Add Attachment**Delete Attachment****View Attachment**

21. *By signing this application, I certify (1) to the statements contained in the list of certifications** and (2) that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I also provide the required assurances** and agree to comply with any resulting terms if I accept an award. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 1001)

☒ ** I AGREE

** The list of certifications and assurances, or an internet site where you may obtain this list, is contained in the announcement or agency specific instructions.

Authorized Representative:

Prefix: * First Name:
Middle Name:
* Last Name:
Suffix:

* Title: * Telephone Number: Fax Number: * Email: * Signature of Authorized Representative: * Date Signed:

Project Narrative - City of La Crescent, Minnesota

1. Basic Project Information

a) Project Description:

The City of La Crescent and its partner communities Hokah and Houston, and Houston County, all in Minnesota, are requesting \$367,500 in Federal funds for a Planning and Design Grant to fill in a missing link between existing trail networks and complete an active transportation spine project. La Crescent (population 5,200) is considered suburban, while Hokah (population 553) and Houston (population 997) are considered rural.

The planning and design study will focus on an eighteen-mile multi-use path that will connect these three cities within Houston County to eight other communities in Southeast Minnesota along the Root River State Trail, including Rushford, City of Rushford Village, Peterson, Whalen, Lanesboro, Fountain, Preston, and Harmony. The Minnesota DNR has completed three state trail plans: the first in 1983 for the corridor between Fountain and La Crescent, the extension to Houston in 1989, and the extension to La Crescent in 2011. The 2011 plan did not establish a preferred alignment. This funding request aims to finalize the alignment through a community planning process to facilitate the construction of a multi-use facility. A project location map is included in Appendix V.

Once built, this missing active transportation spine will connect the existing Root River Trail from Houston eastward to the Wagon Wheel Trail in La Crescent (recently completed after twenty-one years) and the active transportation network in La Crosse, Wisconsin (population 51,000). This means that all of the rural communities along the Root River trail will have active transportation access to the jobs, shopping, schools and health care institutions in La Crescent and La Crosse that they currently do not enjoy.

This missing link will also allow a network effect with existing trail systems that stretch far into Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. To the east through La Crosse, the interconnected state trail system including the Great River State Trail, the La Crosse River State Trail, the Elroy-Sparta State Trail (nation's first rail trail) and the 400 State Trail. To the west, the Root River State Trail connects to the Preston-Harmony Valley State Trail. The Preston-Harmony Valley State Trail is currently being extended to the Iowa border and Niagara Cave and is planned to connect with trails in Northeast Iowa.

Project History: If it's so key, why does this missing link not already exist? This spine project began in 1971 when the Minnesota State Legislature authorized the Root River State Trail. The state purchased the entire 100-mile Chicago, Milwaukee, Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad corridor in 1979. Fifteen miles of the corridor were designated as a Scientific and Natural Area. Political pressure allowed adjacent property owners from Money Creek Woods east to La Crescent to reacquire the railroad property. Consequently, the trail was constructed and completed in the mid-1980s only from Fountain, MN, to Money Creek Woods (35 miles). Where the underlying land reverted to individual ownership, progress on the trail was stymied. After many years of contention, the trail was extended 6.7 miles from Money Creek Woods to the City of Houston (Nature Center) in the late 1990s. The resulting state trail extends just 41.7 miles from Fountain to Houston, Minnesota.

To accomplish the 6.7-mile extension, some land was acquired through "condemnation". Other sections of the trail ended up in the State Highway 16 right of way. In the meantime, some property owners had removed the rail bed for farming purposes. Condemning land undermined local support for the remainder

of the corridor connecting Houston to La Crescent. As a result, completion of a trail spine has been impeded in the intervening years, with no agreement on a specific alignment.

Recently, efforts to complete this active transportation spine have resumed. MnDOT's Active Transportation Program funded an Active Transportation Action Plan (ATAP) in 2022/23 for a portion of the spine from La Crescent (Wagon Wheel Trail terminus) to Miller's Corner (approximately two and one-half miles south of the city limits). The high-level plan that recommended both in-town and "south of town" active transportation improvements. In-town work consisted of Safe Routes to School implementation projects and others that were included in the city's Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan (2017) as well as other network connectivity. The city's SRTS plan was adopted in 2022. The city used the ATAP to apply, unsuccessfully, for MnDOT's Transportation Alternatives program (Federal funds) for the multi-use path spine segment from the Wagon Wheel Bike-Ped Bridge to South 14th Street. That TAP application was supported in the ATAP, and would have constructed the first section of the Root River State Trail south of La Crescent. It also would have created an in-town connector between two low-income communities and the high school.

Social, economic and environmental benefits: The communities of La Crescent and Hokah have wanted this spine to be completed since 1971. Houston has seen some economic benefit from the state trail as it is connected to the seven other communities to the west but has lacked a connection to the east and the potential users in the La Crosse/La Crescent MSA (population 140,000). Routinely, trail users drive from the La Crosse-Onalaska and La Crescent areas to the trail head at the Houston Nature Center rather than bicycle. Therefore, the economic revitalization benefits of a complete spine have not been realized for Hokah and Houston. Now that the Wagon Wheel Trail is largely complete, La Crescent is witnessing a high level of Wagon Wheel Trail use from La Crosse, Wisconsin to the east.

The Wagon Wheel Trail is an intrastate connector between La Crosse and La Crescent. The \$3.5 million dollar bicycle-pedestrian bridge over U.S. Highways 14/61 was completed in 2023. A bike-ped counter has documented increasing use, even in the winter months. A Phase 4 Wagon Wheel Trail bridge from Wisconsin to La Crescent over the West Channel of the Mississippi River has been funded with a WisDOT Transportation Alternatives Grant (TAP) and is slated for construction in 2025/26. This will improve access for more La Crosse residents to bicycle to La Crescent, and vice versa – but without the missing spine, Houston, Hokah and the Root River Trail communities will not benefit from this increased access.

This planning and design project can further quantify a reduction in emissions. While it is known that bicyclists drive to Houston, Minnesota from Wisconsin and La Crescent, that number is not quantified but can be quantified during the planning and design process. Potential trail users include disadvantaged communities from within La Crescent, but also from the City of La Crosse which has a much higher population of very low-, low- and moderate-income persons. The West Channel of the Mississippi River Wagon Wheel Phase 4 bridge will carry more users of all ages and abilities to La Crescent, but without the missing spine to Hokah and Houston, those users will not experience a multi-use trail that would enable more disadvantaged community members to experience the natural environment that exists in the Root River Valley.

This missing spine would cross what is known as the "Neutral Ground" to Indigenous tribes. An interpretive sign on the Wagon Wheel Trail currently educates trail users on this history. La Crescent is further working on an Indigenous History Project (through Blandin Foundation grant) to develop an "Overlook Plaza" at the Wagon Wheel Bike-Ped Bridge terminus in downtown La Crescent. The includes persons from the Ho-Chunk Nation, the Meskwaki Nation (Fox and Sac) in Iowa, and the Prairie Island Indian Community (Dakota Sioux) and the Lower Sioux Indian Community (Dakota Sioux). The planning and design project requested in this application will be inclusive and will be another opportunity

to bring forth the mostly untold history of the original inhabitants of this land in southeast Minnesota. There is no tribal community currently in close proximity to this area. But commemorating the Neutral Ground (intended to separate the Fox and Sac from the Dakota Sioux by using the Ho-Chunk peoples as a "buffer") and its establishment is an important public history project. This spine project can be a path for healing.

Safety: To make the safest possible facility for vulnerable users, the remaining stretches of railbed must be re-used for an off-highway spine trail. A multi-use trail facility that is separated from highway traffic also offers the best user experience and therefore increased ridership. In the section of the corridor between the Wagon Wheel bike-ped bridge in downtown La Crescent and south to Miller's Corner (approximately 2.5 miles), previous plans/studies recommend a facility between the Canadian Pacific Kansas City Southern (CPKC) rail tracks and Minnesota State Highway 16, separating the vulnerable users from the highway.

La Crescent city staff was recently informed that Minnesota DOT was compelled to raise the speed limit in the corridor to 60 mph the state legislature's bill raising the speed limit on all rural state highways. This legislative action raised the speed limit on the two National Scenic Byways (Great River Road/MRT/USBR 45, and Historic Bluff Country), without any speed study. This seems to run contrary to a Safe Systems Approach, and Minnesota's Toward Zero Deaths program. While the local communities are attempting to make the highway corridor safer for bicyclists, raising the posted speed compels the communities to pursue a separated multi-use spine to safely connect these communities. The MnDOT funded Active Transportation Action Plan's foundation is the Safe Systems Approach.

Proposed improvements: This is a planning and design project. Ultimately, a construction project will build an eighteen-mile-long multi-use path for all ages and abilities following federal, state, MUTCD, AASHTO, and NACTO standards for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Facilities will include trail heads, secure bicycle parking, bike repair stands, water fountains, benches, shade trees, picnic tables, rest rooms, parking, vehicle charging stations, signage and wayfinding, kiosks, and educational signage depicting the Driftless Region's environmental features, endangered and threatened species, Indigenous and recent history.

Previously incurred project costs:

- 2024 MnDOT - La Crescent Active Transportation Action Plan (Wagon Wheel Bridge to Miller's Corner - approximately \$50,000)
- 2011 - MnDNR Root River Trail Plan Extension (approximately \$80,000)
- Staff costs for the City of La Crescent and Houston County 2020-2024 (approximately \$20,000)
- Wagon Wheel Trail - \$5.5 million
- City of La Crosse WisDOT Transportation Alternatives Grant for the Active Transportation bridge over the West Channel of the Mississippi River (approximately \$500,000 in engineering and environmental documentation) for an eventual bridge cost of \$5.6 million

b) Location

The project is located the far southeast corner of Minnesota in Houston County. Houston County borders Wisconsin and Iowa along the Mississippi River (see Appendix IV). The project is south of Interstate 90 and accessed via U.S. Highways 14/61, which is the Great River Road National Scenic Byway. Along the Mississippi River, U.S. Highways 14/61, Minnesota state highways 16 and 26 are part of the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) and U.S. Bike Route 45. This corridor is a Tier I bicycling corridor for MnDOT and MnDOT District 6 in the state and regional bicycle plan. The spine is also located adjacent to the Historic

Bluff Country National Scenic Byway corridor, along Minnesota State Highway 16 and the Root River Valley. The Root River is also a state water trail. This area is connected by Interstate 90, U.S. Highways 14/61, Minnesota State Highways 16 and 26, and a series of county roads including the Apple Blossom State Scenic Byway (Minnesota) and County Highway 6 and 21.

Current barriers to community connectivity for active transportation include the busy highways, adjacent rail lines and a lack of safe facilities for users of all ages and abilities. The Mississippi River as a barrier is also a connector. The Mississippi River and its associated bluffs define the Driftless Region (a hilly three-state area untouched by ice age glaciers). Safer active transportation facilities will better connect Wisconsin and Minnesota. It is widely known that bicycle and pedestrian facilities increase economic opportunities whether located in an urban area or in more rural areas. Additionally, the reuse of abandoned rail corridors have been proven to be drivers of economic development for rural areas. Just as the railroad brought economic vitality to communities along its path, rail trails on the same spines link communities economically and socially. Communities along the Root River Valley are economically linked to either Rochester, Minnesota (home of the Mayo Clinic) on the western edge of the spine, and La Crosse/Onalaska, Wisconsin on the east. While La Crescent is now experiencing the benefit of the Wagon Wheel Trail, Hokah and Houston do not. Houston is too far east from Rochester to receive the same benefit as the currently-bustling trail town of Lanesboro, Minnesota.

c) Lead Applicant

The City of La Crescent, Minnesota is the lead applicant. The city and its staff have extensive experience in receiving and delivering Federal aid highway projects. Because the City of La Crescent is a small community, the City Engineer works through a contracted engineering firm. That firm has six offices in three states and routinely delivers Federal aid highway projects. The city administered three federal discretionary grants for the Wagon Wheel Trail and the Wagon Wheel Bicycle-Pedestrian bridge totaling more than \$1.7 million dollars. The city also has decades of experience delivering MnDOT State-Aid projects. The city's project manager for this grant has 38 years of planning experience as an MPO director, city and county planner, and planning consultant. The project manager is an American Planning Association Certified Planner (AICP) and a Certified Transportation Planner (CTP) as well as a Certified Professional Transportation Planner (PTP) with the Institute of Transportation Engineers.

d) Other public and private parties

The City of La Crescent is working closely with the cities of Hokah and Houston, as well as Houston County, Minnesota. The city is coordinating this active transportation spine project with the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the La Crosse-La Crescent MSA. The city is closely coordinating this project with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and District 6 staff in Rochester, Minnesota.

- The cities of Hokah and Houston, as rural communities, will be playing a supportive role, primarily in assisting with public meetings and providing municipal buildings for public involvement meetings.
- Houston County (population 18,883) is providing staff support through the Economic Development Authority and through the County Engineer. Houston County has been a strong advocate for this project for over two decades.
- The LAPC (MPO) staff have been assisting with the ATIP application and have provided assistance in coordinating meetings. The MPO will continue their role as coordinating bi-state communications and coordinating with MnDOT District 6 and their Areawide Transportation

Partnership (ATP) group. The LAPC will assist in any TIP amendments if funding is received as part of this grant or future Federal aid discretionary grants.

- MnDOT and District 6 staff have funded and participated in La Crescent's recent Active Transportation Action Plan which created an action plan for a portion of the corridor in La Crescent south along the Great River Road approximately 2.5 miles to the intersection of Minnesota Highways 16/26. MnDOT District 6 staff will be involved as a primary stakeholder in the planning and design project.
- The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Parks and Trails and Wildlife divisions will be key partners and stakeholders in the planning and design process. Kent Skaar and Louise Thompson will be directly involved in this project.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Department of Interior) manages extensive lands on the west end of this corridor along the Mississippi and Root Rivers. The manager of the Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge, Tim Miller, has been involved and will continue to be involved as a key stakeholder. The planning and design project will make every attempt to avoid any encroachment onto Federal lands. The planning and design process will result in a definitive plan for the corridor and will endeavor to avoid the necessity for any future cooperative agreement.
- Citizens and representatives of disadvantaged communities will be sought out as key stakeholders; these community members would be beneficiaries of the eventual construction of an active transportation spine.
- The eight-member Root River Trail Extension-Citizens Exploratory Committee (RRTE-CEC) will be asked to serve as a resource group as part of planning and design process (see Criterion #2 below).
- Landowners along the corridor are fundamental stakeholders to this process, and the public involvement program will be the at the center of the planning and design process.
- The Root River Trail Towns Organization (non-profit organization) will provide assistance in the form of coalition building amongst the eight communities where the trail exists today, and the value that an extension to the east could provide for all the communities.
- Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railroad (CPKC) is a landowner along the active transportation spine, between the City of La Crescent to Miller's Corner. They are a principal player in this project as Minnesota State Highway 16 is partially on CPKC right-of-way and any spine project in this segment would have to negotiated to be placed on an additional easement.
- Active transportation and active living advocacy organizations will be involved as stakeholders and perhaps as a focus group as part of the information gathering phase and include the La Crescent Healthy Living Partnership and its La Crescent Bike Shoppe, Houston County Health Department, La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility and the Apple Express (La Crescent Transit System), the LAPC Committee on Transit and Active Transportation, City of La Crescent Safe Routes to School Committee and the Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and La Crescent hiking groups.
- Explore La Crosse (regional destination marketing organization) and the Area Chambers of Commerce in La Crescent/Hokah and Houston will provide input from the businesses and travel and tourism industry.

2. Grant Funds - Project Funding (Source/Uses)

USES AND SOURCES OF FUNDS							
Trail Spine Planning and Design Project (Two-year schedule)	\$ Non-Fed	Percent	\$ ATIIIP	Percent	Total \$	Notes:	Other Fed. Funds
Project Activity							N/A
Grant Contract Finalization - RFQ/RFP Solicitation	\$5,000	100		--	\$5,000	City in-kind	
Consultant Contract Negotiation/City Council Award (City Attorney Fees)	\$2,500	100		--	\$2,500	City in-kind	
Consultant contract (not to exceed) see scope and cost estimate in Appendix VII	\$157,500	30	\$367,500	70	\$525,000		
Project / Grant Administration	\$60,000	100		--	\$60,000	City in-kind	
Contingency (N/A - Contract will be fixed fee)							
Total Funds	\$227,500	38	\$367,500	62	\$595,000		
Potential/Intended Future Federal Fund Requests			Federal	Fed Match			
MnDOT Transportation Alternatives			\$ 1,500,000	80/20			
RAISE Grant			\$ 9,000,000	80/20			
SS4A Implementation Grant			\$ 3,000,000	80/20			
Federal Trails Grants (RTP program)			\$ 2,000,000	80/20			
Congressionally Designated Spending (CDS)			\$ 9,000,000	TBD/last dollar			

Plan for non-federal funds: As the Lead Sponsor/Applicant, the City of La Crescent guarantees the matching funds if an ATIP grant is awarded. However, the city will seek support from the cities of Hokah and Houston, acknowledging that as those communities have a population of under 1,000, their ability to contribute is limited. The city will also seek funding from Houston County, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation IJA Match Program ([IJA Match Program - MnDOT \(state.mn.us\)](#)). Additionally, the city will also seek funding from the LAPC under their Local Studies Program (80/20). That program typically has approximately \$20,000 available on an annual basis. Finally, the city may apply to local, state and national grantmaking organizations for matching funds if need be. If these funding sources do not materialize, La Crescent guarantees the non-federal match as a requirement of this application.

A draft table of contents for the planning and design study report is found in Appendix VI. A draft budget and scope are found in Appendix VII. It should be noted that this estimate is a qualified estimate as the RFQ/RFP has not been issued. A ten percent budget contingency has been added to the estimate the total to allow for fine tuning of the scope as the RFQ/RFP is finalized and advertised. Grant funding will result in a design study report for the future construction of a multi-use active transportation spine. The specific scope will be finalized upon award and articulated in an RFQ/RFP solicitation, which will include DBE requirements.

3. Merit Criteria

The completion of the Wagon Wheel Trail, and the recent construction of the Wagon Wheel Bicycle Pedestrian Bridge over U.S. Highway 14/61, highlights the city's twenty-one-year journey and dedication to enhancing Active Transportation in La Crescent and the bi-state metropolitan region. This application further demonstrates of the city commitment to advancing Active Transportation throughout Southeast Minnesota.

Criterion #1: Mobility and Community Connectivity

Spine connectivity: The proposed planning and design project is a missing-link spine project connecting three southeast Minnesota communities to eight others, making possible a much larger network with already-existing facilities. Connecting Houston and Hokah with La Crescent will also connect those communities to La Crosse, Wisconsin as well Dresbach, Minnesota, which is six miles north of La Crescent. La Crescent is connected to Dresbach, Minnesota via the Mississippi River Trail (MRT/US Bike Route (USBR) 45 along the highway corridor and a multi-use path north and parallel to Interstate 90 between the freeway and the CPKC rail line.

Transit - mobility and regional connectivity: The City of La Crescent's Apple Express is a fixed route transit system that is funded by the city and the State of Minnesota (with federal funds). The system is operated by the City of La Crosse's Municipal Transit Utility. This service adds an additional layer of community connectivity between La Crescent and La Crosse. Cyclists and commuters can (and do) bring their bicycle on the bus and can extend their journey once they get to their destination in La Crosse or La Crescent. Trips on Apple Express are utilitarian, with many of the ridership commuting to jobs in La Crosse. The Wagon Wheel Trail offers another safe, active transportation route to employment, schools, grocery stores and health care in La Crosse.

Passenger rail mobility and connectivity: Added mobility is also provided by the new twice-daily Borealis Amtrak service from Chicago to Minneapolis/St. Paul, in addition to the existing Empire Builder long-haul service. With four daily stops in La Crosse, Borealis ridership is already exceeding forecasts in its first months. The region has an opportunity to promote active

transportation to the rail passengers who want to use the regional multi-use trail system. Adding the extension to the Root River State Trail thereby connecting La Crosse (Amtrak Depot) to eleven Minnesota communities should be factored into potential users of the spine.

Access opportunities for mobility and connectivity: A main consideration for mobility and connectivity is with non-driving, school-aged youth. The La Crescent-Hokah School District has a large service area that includes the City of Hokah. The spine connection between La Crescent and Hokah can serve to bring students and families together for daily classroom studies and extracurricular activities. The multi-use path can be another pathway for “bike bus” connections from Hokah to the middle and high school located in La Crescent. Other destinations for the spine include employment centers in La Crosse such as the two major medical centers (Mayo Health Systems and Gundersen-Bellin Health System), and manufacturing jobs such as Crest Precast and the Truss Company in La Crescent.

Small business and boutique businesses will benefit from a spine facility such as the new coffee shop in La Crescent (Affogato Lane) which opened when the Wagon Wheel Bicycle - Pedestrian bridge was completed, and the newly opened Owl City Cycles bike shop in Houston. The Free Range Exchange in Hokah (breakfast, coffee, bakery) is another example of a small business that is prospering and recently opened up a second restaurant in Historic Downtown La Crosse. Such small businesses will be supported by a spine connecting the La Crosse-La Crescent area with Hokah and Houston.

Lanesboro, Minnesota (at the western edge of the Root River State Trail) is a prime example of how proximity to a metropolitan area can be an economic boon to a small community. Lanesboro is close to Rochester, Minnesota and therefore has proximity to a larger market. Lanesboro currently enjoys business traffic from bicyclists, canoeists and kayakers, theater-goers, brewery and coffee shop patrons – while Houston, Minnesota has not enjoyed the same success. By contrast, Houston is at the dead end of the trail, without any nearby large market. Houston has been missing out on the La Crosse metropolitan consumer base for 40 years because of the missing link, and the volume of business activity in Houston is several orders of magnitude less than in Lanesboro and Rushford. But Houston could pull visitors by trail from La Crescent and La Crosse if the missing connection were made.

Key destinations include the International Owl Center in Houston and the Houston Nature Center, community events and festivals like La Crescent's Apple Fest, Houston Hoedown Days, community schools, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife trails, the Minnesota Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), churches, downtown merchants, the La Crescent Aquatic Center at Kistler Park, and the La Crescent Community Ice Arena and Lancer Youth Hockey camps/tournaments.

Commitment to mobility and connectivity: La Crescent is continually improving its city walking and bicycling infrastructure and Active Transportation culture. This is evident in the city's recent designation of Bronze in the League of American Bicyclists – Bike Friendly Community Program. This is also exemplified by the Healthy Community Partnership and its all-volunteer Bike Shoppe which is constantly promoting health and active living. The city has its Bicycle Pedestrian Plan and committee and a Safe Routes To School Plan and committee [Safe Routes to School La Crescent, Minnesota 2020: A Plan to Make Walking and Biking to School a Safe, Fun Activity \(cityoflacscent-mn.gov\)](#). The city has been awarded 12 implementation projects by the Minnesota DOT for Safe Routes To School with local, state and federal dollars. These projects are to be constructed in 2025 and 2028. The city has actively promoted adding bike lanes to existing city streets and county highways, and is implementing a Complete Streets project for the Reimagining Walnut Street Corridor in the city's downtown. That project will connect Veterans Park and the

north side hotel to the downtown and the Wagon Wheel Trail. Once the spine is complete to Houston, hotel guests can bicycle or walk along the multi-use path to Hokah (six miles from La Crescent) or Houston, which is eighteen miles from downtown La Crescent. La Crescent also just received a \$201,000 MnDOT Active Transportation grant to install curb extensions on County Road 6 and South 6th Street as well as install a 10' multi-use path to connect the two elementary schools to the city aquatic center and to neighborhoods to the south and west. This project was programed and prioritized in the city's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and includes a stormwater and raingarden component.

The city has memberships in the Rails-To-Trails Conservancy, the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, the League of American Bicyclists, the Southeast Minnesota Association of Regional Trails, the Root River Trail Towns group, and the Committee on Transit and Active Transportation. The city and Explore La Crosse put in a bid for USA Cycling's Gravel National Championships for 2025 and 2026.

Criterion #2: Community Support

The Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate between the three cities and Houston County is the single biggest demonstration of community commitment from the four governmental partners. As that MOA is replaced by a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), it will further exemplify and strengthen the support from the elected representatives of the area. The citizens and business supporters of this project have never wavered in their commitment, even through decades of slow progress. With various committees holding meetings for over 25 years, there is clearly enduring community support. Not all affected property owners have agreed to past proposals, something that is natural and not unexpected; making public choices is difficult. The purpose of this planning and design process is to finally narrow down the corridor to a specific alignment that must address property owner concerns in a fair and straightforward manner. The final alignment may have to go around a property instead of through it, as was done previously in the segment from Houston to Rushford. With over 18,000 residents of the county, there are likely only a handful who are firmly against the multi-use trail. A thoughtful and transparent public process can avoid legal entanglements in the future. Just as there are property owner concerns/constraints, there are environmental constraints that may require realignment of a portion of the spine. The 2011 Minnesota DNR Root River State Trail Plan extension to Hokah and La Crescent outlines a number of endangered and threatened species in the broad corridor. Fine-tuning will have to occur as part of the environmental screening process for a trail.

Planning and plans: Public input was part of all the previous and existing plans enumerated in this section. The first MnDNR plan for the entire Root River State Trail corridor was in 1983: [Root River State Trail Master Plan](#). In 1998, the MnDNR completed a plan for the extension to Houston, Minnesota. In 2011, the MnDNR completed the plan for the extension to Hokah and La Crescent. The 2011 plan was approved by the MnDNR Commissioner and is the adopted trail plan for the corridor: [Root River State Trail Extension Master Plan](#). A specific alignment for the missing active transportation spine was not part of that plan, as the effort has been hampered by several property owners who do not want the trail going through their property (in addition to environmental concerns). Those issues were not resolved in 2011; hence the need for a planning and design plan to finally address them. The City of La Crescent completed an Active Transportation Action Plan in 2023 for a portion of the spine from La Crescent south to Miller's Corner; this segment also has space constraints between the bluffs and the CPKC railroad and Minnesota Highway 16 [Engagement Activity Menu \(cityoflacrescent-mn.gov\)](#). Other plans in the City of La Crescent make note of this effort, including the Downtown La Crescent Vision and Strategic Plan [Downtown-](#)

[Vision-Adopted-2017.pdf \(cityoflacrescent-mn.gov\)](#), the City Comprehensive Plan ([City-of-La-Crescent-Comp-Plan-2016-1.pdf \(cityoflacrescent-mn.gov\)](#)), and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan ([Microsoft Word - Final La Crescent Bike Ped Plan 3-2013 4 .docx \(cityoflacrescent-mn.gov\)](#)). The "Trail Plan" under the MOA has been adopted by the eight-member citizen's committee, as well as Houston County and the cities of La Crescent and Houston. The City of Hokah is expected to adopt the MOA trail plan in August. The "Trail Plan" is a reiteration of the 2011 plan, and calls for a Joint Powers Agreement as well as pursuing grant funding for more detailed planning and construction, including the ATIIP program. This corridor is a High Priority Corridor in MnDOT's Statewide Bicycle System Plan [Statewide Bicycle System Plan-15532433-v1.PDF](#) and is also a High Priority in MnDOT's District 6 Bicycle Plan [file:///C:/Users/lkirch/Downloads/district-6-bicycle-plan-34217751-v1.PDF](#).

Letters of support: There are nine Letters of Support (LOS) attached in Appendix IV and include: a multi-jurisdictional letter from the three Mayors' and Houston County; the Executive Director of the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (MPO); the Mayor of the City of La Crosse, WI; U.S. Senators Klobuchar and Smith (pending); State Representative Greg Davids; the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota; the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, the Root River Trail Towns Organization and the La Crescent Bicycle Pedestrian Committee.

Criterion #3: Commitment to Increasing Active Transportation

The City of La Crescent demonstrates its commitment to improving traffic safety, shaping development for active living, and instituting community design policies in a number of ways. The City of La Crescent is not in a position to provide financial incentives to reduce auto-oriented trips other than financially supporting the Apple Express fixed-route bus service in the city with connections to La Crosse, Wisconsin.

1. **Speed limits:** The City of La Crescent recently worked with Houston County to reduce school zone speed limits on the county highway and two city streets, adjacent to two schools. The city council is also considering lower speed limits on all city streets (especially residential), to improve traffic safety and bicycle and pedestrian safety.
2. **Vision Zero:** The city supports Vision Zero and has a Police Officer on the regional Vision Zero committee.
3. **Subdivision regulations:** The city requires sidewalks in all new developments and has a plan to connect the city for active living through six miles of trail that connect neighborhoods and parks through the city's bluffland trail plan, found in the recently updated Park and Recreation Plan ([La Crescent Park and Recreation Plan by MSA Professional Services - Issuu](#)).
4. **Complete Street:** The city has an adopted Complete Streets Ordinance ([Ordinance-536-Complete-Streets-Policy-1.pdf \(cityoflacrescent-mn.gov\)](#)). The plan for the revitalization of the Walnut Street Corridor is a complete streets plan ([Walnut-Street-Corridor-Plan-1.pdf \(cityoflacrescent-mn.gov\)](#)). Funding from the State of Minnesota through its Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) requires that the project be a complete streets project. The project is being done to create a walkable urban environment in the downtown, and replaces the irregular, ADA non-compliant, and incomplete sidewalk system along Walnut Street.
5. **Infrastructure:** The city has installed bike racks at all city facilities and parks, including City Hall, Library, Community Aquatic Center, and encourages all private development to provide bike parking during the design review process. A recent Conditional Use Permit for an ice-skating training facility was required to include a bike rack to encourage youth to bicycle.
6. **Regulation:** The city has committed to future work on regulations that improve conditions for active transportation. The city plans to update the zoning code in 2025, which should include

requirements for bicycle parking and other accommodations at work places. The city can also include the requirement for active transportation facilities as part of a development agreement for Tax Increment Financing. Current design policies focus on the architectural appeal of buildings but not on prioritizing safety, comfort and accessibility for active transportation.

Criterion #4: Financial Completeness

As noted in the “Grant Funds - Uses/Sources” section of this application, the City of La Crescent has committed to funding the planning and design project at a 30 percent match. The city also will provide an in-kind match for all administrative aspects of the project. The city-required match and in-kind contributions will amount to a 37 percent overall match. In-kind city contributions will include upfront staff time to work through the grant award process, RFP/RFQ solicitation process, consultant contract negotiation and City Attorney fees for reviewing the contract as well as work to award a consultant contract through the city council approval process. Additionally, the city commits to in-kind self-funding of two years of grant administration, as well as project administration including all meeting facilitation/coordination, public engagement coordination, and coordination among the three cities and Houston County.

Criterion #5: Equitable Development

As part of the planning and design study, the City will include a scope item in the RFP/RFQ and final study contract to examine and document the transportation disparities for bicyclists, as well as pedestrian fatalities based on race and income. The RFP/RFQ will also require attention to the need for access for jobs, schools and services for low-income persons and other disadvantaged persons and communities, including people with disabilities. From information gathered from the U.S. DOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer, the City of La Crescent has 0%, disadvantaged census tracts, while all of surrounding Houston County in the project area has 100% of the area as disadvantaged census tracks. The metropolitan area within certain census tracks in La Crosse has a very high level of disadvantaged persons. The planning and design project can further define the populations and communities that will benefit from an active transportation spine for access to jobs, schools, training programs and services for disadvantaged populations. Access to persons with disabilities is a high priority. La Crescent has ABLE, Inc., which provides residential care and learning opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities. The City of La Crescent employs persons from ABLE to perform job tasks at City Hall. Planning and design funds will be used to engage the public and disadvantaged communities in a variety of ways in a variety of ways including the possibility of using the PlaceIt! community planning tool.

Criterion #6: Other DOT Goals and Priorities

This project aims to create an implementable plan for a multi-use active transportation spine facility that connects two states and 11 communities in Southeast Minnesota and Southwest Wisconsin. The City of La Crescent has been highly effective in active transportation projects for decades. For a small community that is one part of a larger metropolitan region, the city has been able to plan and implement numerous active transportation projects. An example is when the city, over 20 years ago, implemented the Apple Express fixed route transit service that brought residents of the region together. This success is attributed to the city’s active participation in the LAPC (the federally-required MPO). Completing the Wagon Wheel Trail over a twenty-one-year period has been a shining example of the city's commitment to active transportation. The city can now concentrate on the eighteen-mile extension of the Root River State Trail.

Addressing Active Transportation Goals: Completion of this multi-use spine addresses and enhances all five active transportation goals outlined in this criterion. The planning and design process and study report document will include sections that respond to the U.S. DOT goals and priorities of safety; destinations; environmental benefits, constraints, protection and restoration; and quality of life.

Improving Safety: A multi-use trail facility will improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists by providing a separated path away from motor vehicles. Currently, walking or jogging from La Crescent to Hokah along the highway is unthinkable. However, a separated facility will make it feasible for school-aged children to bicycle safely to middle or high school in La Crescent.

Identifying Key Destinations: The planning process will identify additional key destinations not noted elsewhere in this application. While there is strong support for Safe Routes To School, there should also be safe routes to other community destinations such as the grocery store, hardware store, church, aquatic center, pizza parlor, farmer's market, fishing piers, dog park, Eagle Scout kayak and canoe launch, and more. Completing this intra-state and intra-community active transportation corridor spine will create a comprehensive network of safe places to bike and walk.

Economic and Health Benefits: The economic and health benefits of trails are well-documented. Regional trails attract visitors to towns along the spine, boosting local economies. For instance, a new bike shop, Owl City Cycles, recently opened in Houston, Minnesota, supported by nearby attractions such as Barista's Coffee Shop, the International Owl Center, and the Houston Nature Center. The Root River Trail Extension will bring visitors from La Crosse and La Crescent, helping to sustain local businesses like the bike shop.

Environmental Considerations: The 2011 DNR Root River State Trail Extension from Houston to La Crescent Master Plan included detailed information on the environmentally sensitive areas and habitats in the Root River Valley. The planning and design process will ensure that all environmental considerations are addressed to determine the best trail alignment. As highlighted in the most recent Rails-to-Trails Conservancy magazine, trails can be constructed in harmony with natural resources serving as demonstration projects for habitat protection and restoration.

Enhancing Quality of Life: The active transportation connector spine inherently improves quality-of-life. Access to nature for urban residents, disadvantaged and underserved communities is known to improve the quality and quantity of life. This trail facility can serve the high percentage of disadvantaged persons in La Crosse by connecting people with nature in the Mississippi and Root River valleys. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can aid in bringing people to the Upper Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Refuge and therefore improve quality of life for area residents and visitors.

4. Project Readiness

The City of La Crescent has the technical capacity to deliver on a ATIIP grant. The city has previous experience with DOT grants, and complying with Federal agencies including FEMA, HUD, and other requirements. The city has the professional staff with significant experience with Federal discretionary grants. Previous sections addressed the city's capacity to make matching funds available both in-kind and monetarily. City staff have read and understood the requirements and obligations in F. 1-3.

5. Administration Priorities and Departmental SP Goals

Safety, Climate Change and Sustainability, Equity, Workforce Development Job Quality and Wealth Creation

This application summarized the city's progress in improving traffic safety in terms of reducing traffic speeds in the community, advancing Safe Routes To School implementation activities and construction projects through its Safe Routes To School Committee, and the city's participation in the Vision Zero program through MnDOT.

With the work of the city's part-time Sustainability Coordinator, the following achievements have been accomplished. The city is a Minnesota Green Step Community and has achieved its highest rating of Step 5. The city recently was awarded Platinum Status as a Sol Smart Community, again the highest ranking. The city has a very active Green Step Committee and recently received a \$500,000 watershed restoration grant to restore portions of Pine Creek as part of the WinLac Watershed plan for Winona County and La Crescent. The city adopted an Energy Action Plan in 2021 and has several solar installations on city buildings, including the water treatment plant and Fire Station/Community building. More solar installations are planned for the Community Ice Arena and Aquatic Center. The city is part of a Solar Farm that in which several Minnesota communities are enrolled. The city has developed electrical charging stations and recently put an electric Police car into service through funds accessed through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Finally, the city has plans for tree planting, prairie plantings, rain garden installations as well as invasive species removal in the city's bluffland parks.

This application has outlined the plan to further document and explore equity in the proposed transportation planning project. All of Houston County outside of La Crescent has 100 percent disadvantaged census tracts. This planning and design project will address those issues during the process, as the spine traverses through those disadvantaged census tracts in and around the cities of Hokah and Houston, Minnesota.

The application presents the economic development considerations for when the region can finally connect a total of eleven communities along an active transportation spine project. The planning and design process will further document the avenues for workforce development opportunities as part of construction of a multiuse trail or small business creation. Houston County has been losing population for the past decade, albeit at a small rate. But trail town economies can flourish when adjacent to larger metro areas as noted in this application for Lanesboro, Minnesota where the Root River State Trail has sustained this community since the early 1980s. That is already beginning to happen as evidenced in La Crescent with the completion of the Wagon Wheel Trail. Connecting La Crescent to Hokah and Houston can extend those opportunities to the two communities that are much smaller than La Crescent.

6. FHWA Priority Selection Considerations

Section E. 1. i. Merit Criteria considerations:

This application addresses the six priority Merit Criteria in Section 3) of this Project Narrative in more detail. This summary emphasizes concisely how this project will advance the six priority Merit Criteria.

The active transportation spine missing link connects eleven communities, in two states and one metropolitan area. The project has wide community support from citizens and elected officials. All

stakeholder and property owner voices are important, and will be heard during the planning and design process. The city and the region have devoted decades and significant funds to active transportation and are deeply committed to creating safer walkable and bikeable communities. La Crescent citizens, with the support of officials, were able to intervene in the Interstate 90 Bridge design process to ensure that the \$400,000,000 bridge would accommodate bicyclists in the future when Wisconsin replaced several bridges over the Black River and channels of the Mississippi River. This plan was incorporated into the Regional Transportation Plan. Other examples of commitment are included in the Project Narrative, including the twenty-one years of unfaltering commitment to complete the Wagon Wheel Trail and Bridge project. The city's financial commitment is outlined in Section 2) of the Project Narrative Grant Funds - Project Funding (Source/Uses) wherein the city has stated its commitment to this effort with actual funds and in-kind professional staff support. The planning and design study report will address equitable development as a specific component of the planning process and final report. The planning and design study report will address the five DOT goals and priorities as a specific component of the planning process and final report. The RFP/RFQ scope of services and final contract will address the Merit Criteria and the five DOT goals and priorities and reflect the Administration's Priorities and U.S. DOT's strategic plan goals.

This planning and design project must be viewed, studied and presented as something larger than just a trail project. To succeed, this effort must shake off forty years being thought of as a trail project, and must now include a much larger list of considerations including safety, mobility, equity, sustainability, and economic advancement for both communities and disadvantaged community members. A successful and inclusive community planning process, as outlined in this application, is the pathway to future construction of an active transportation spine that is currently missing.

7. Letters of Support

There are nine Letters of Support (LOS) attached in Appendix IV.

Appendices

Appendix I - Planning Document - Root River State Trail Extension Houston-Hokah-La Crescent- Citizen Exploratory Committee Adopted "Trail Plan" June 12, 2024 [Root-River-Trail-Plan-Adopted-6-12-24.docx.pdf \(cityoflacrescent-mn.gov\)](#)

Appendix II -Planning Document - ROOT RIVER STATE TRAIL EXTENSION HOUSTON TO LA CRESCENT MASTER PLAN, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Trails, December 2011 [Root River State Trail Extension Master Plan](#)

Appendix III - Planning Document - 2024 Active Transportation Action Plan - La Crescent - Wagon Wheel Trail to Miller's Corner (Mn STH 16) [Engagement Activity Menu \(cityoflacrescent-mn.gov\)](#)

Appendix IV - Letters of support include: a multi-jurisdictional letter from the three Mayors' and Houston County; the Executive Director of the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (MPO); the Mayor of the City of La Crosse, WI; U.S. Senators Klobuchar and Smith (pending); State Representative Greg Davids; the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota; the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, the Root River Trail Towns Organization and the La Crescent Bicycle Pedestrian Committee.

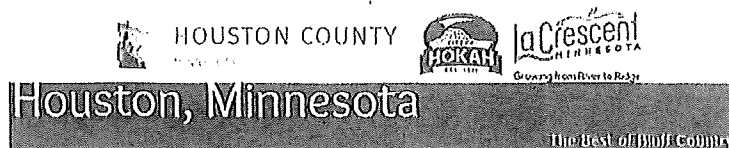
Appendix V – Location Map

Appendix VI - Draft Planning and Design Study Report Table of Contents

Appendix VII – Draft Scope and Cost Estimate for consultant contract

Appendix IV - Letters of support

- ☐ Multi-jurisdictional letter from the three Mayors' and Houston County
- ☐ The Executive Director of the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (MPO)
- ☐ The Mayor of the City of La Crosse, WI
- ☐ U.S. Senators Klobuchar and Smith (pending)
- ☐ State Representative Greg Davids
- ☐ The Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota
- ☐ The Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota
- ☐ The Root River Trail Towns Organization
- ☐ The La Crescent Bicycle Pedestrian Committee.



U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration
Mr. Shailen Bhatt, Administrator
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: **City of La Crescent – Root River Trail Towns ATIIP Planning and Design Spine Extension**

Dear Review Teams and Administrator Bhatt:

It is with great pleasure that we jointly support for the City of La Crescent's ATIIP Planning and Design application. Once completed, an Active Transportation plan and design can be implemented with a construction project (likely phased), to connect the cities of La Crescent, Hokah and Houston, Minnesota to the eight other Root River State Trail towns. This multi-use active transportation spine facility will connect the trail network in Minnesota to the multi-use path and trail system across the Mississippi River in La Crosse, Wisconsin (La Crosse-La Crescent MSA) and Wisconsin's state trail system.

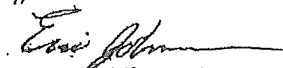
Houston County and the three cities currently are operating under a Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate and will continue to cooperate throughout the grant period to develop a plan and detailed design of the multi-use spine. The cities and county are also drafting a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) under Minnesota State Statute to further cement the commitment to completing the Root River State Trail in its entirety.

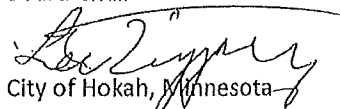
For over 40 years, the cities of La Crescent, Hokah and La Crescent have been working to connect their communities to eight other trail towns along the Root River Valley in Southeast Minnesota. A Planning and Design Grant will give the three communities, Houston County and the bi-state region an implementable construction project. A robust planning process will allow the communities and the many stakeholders to create a realistic and buildable spine facility.

We believe that this grant request reflects the administration's priorities and the U.S. DOT's Strategic Plan Goals including safety, climate change and sustainability, equity and economic benefits and job creation. The application fully addresses the six merit criteria outlined in the NOFO. Collectively, we support this grant request as it will bring to fruition a feasible plan that the communities have been striving to achieve for over 40 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this funding request.

Sincerely,


Houston County, Minnesota
Board Chair


City of Hokah, Minnesota
Mayor


City of La Crescent, Minnesota
Mayor

City of Houston, Minnesota
Mayor



LA CROSSE AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

212 6th Street N La Crosse WI 54601
www.lacrossecounty.org/mpo | 608-785-5977

To: Mr. Shailen Bhatt, FHWA Administrator

Cc: ATIIP Technical Review Team

From: Bob Gollnik, Director – La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC)

Subject: Letter of Support – City of La Crescent, MN Federal ATIIP Planning and Design Grant Application - Root River State Trail Active Transportation Spine Extension

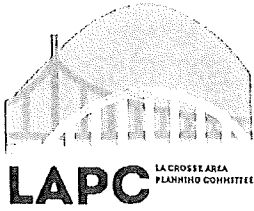
Dear ATIIP Review Teams and Administrator Bhatt:

On behalf of the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the La Crosse, WI - La Crescent, MN region, I am writing to offer my strong support for the City of La Crescent's application for the Federal Highway Administration's Advanced Transportation and Innovation Infrastructure Program (ATIIP) Grant. This application seeks funding for a Planning and Design Grant to develop a multi-use active transportation spine facility connecting the cities of La Crescent, Hokah, and Houston, Minnesota. This spine facility serves as a critical linchpin, supporting several MPO planning factors and unlocking active regional transportation connectivity for residents and tourists alike.

The Root River State Trail, first authorized by the Minnesota State Legislature in 1971 and with its initial trail plan approved in 1983, represents a visionary project aimed at connecting various communities within Southeast Minnesota. For over 40 years, La Crescent, Hokah, and Houston have tirelessly worked to link their cities to the eight other trail towns along the Root River Valley. The completion of this trail will not only connect these three cities to the eight communities to the west but also establish a vital link to La Crosse, Wisconsin, thereby integrating into local commuter routes, Wisconsin's State Trail network, the Mississippi River Trail, and more.

This initiative will connect three rural communities to the eight Root River Trail Towns and a larger metropolitan area of over 120,000 residents. The project aligns seamlessly with the administration's priorities and the U.S. Department of Transportation's Strategic Plan Goals, particularly in terms of safety, climate change and sustainability, and equity. Additionally, this project meets the six merit criteria outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

As a regional bi-state agency, the LAPC strongly supports this grant request as it will culminate in a feasible plan that will benefit communities both near and far. The successful implementation of this project will significantly enhance our transportation infrastructure, promote sustainable living, and foster regional economic growth.



LA CROSSE AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

212 6th Street N La Crosse RM 1600, WI 54601
www.lacrossecounty.org/mpo | 608-785-5977

Moreover, the City of La Crescent staff has rigorously pursued funding strategies for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure with MnDOT and other agencies. ATIP funding for this effort would consolidate and solidify a comprehensive actionable blueprint for moving toward construction in the foreseeable future.

Thank you for your consideration and support of this transformative project. Please reach out with any questions.

Robert Gollnik

Bob Gollnik, LAPC Director



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
LA CROSSE

July 15, 2024

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Technical Review Team/Senior Review Team
Mr. Shailen Bhatt, Administrator
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Letter of Support – City of La Crescent, MN Federal ATIP Planning and Design Grant Application – Root River State Train Active Transportation Spine Extension

Dear Review Teams and Administrator Bhatt:

On behalf of the City of La Crosse, I wish to offer support for the City of La Crescent's application to connect the three cities of La Crescent, Hokah and Houston Minnesota along a multi-use active transportation spine facility. The Root River State Trail was first authorized in 1971 by the Minnesota State Legislature and the first trail plan was approved in 1983. For over 40 years, the cities of La Crescent, Hokah and La Crescent have been working to connect their communities to eight other trail towns along the Root River Valley in Southeast Minnesota. The completion of a trail not only connects the three cities to the eight communities to the west, but it also completes a connection to La Crosse, Wisconsin and therefore Wisconsin's State Trail network. This grant application is a request to fund a Planning and Design Grant. The three cities and Houston County have entered into a Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate with the strong commitment to complete an active transportation facility from Houston, Minnesota to La Crescent, Minnesota.

A Planning and Design Grant will give the three communities, Houston County and the bi-state region a definitive plan for future construction of an active transportation facility. Previous planning activities, while successful in and of themselves, did not



provide a clear blueprint for a construction project. Because this grant request is for both planning and design activities, the communities and the many stakeholders will come together around a supportable and feasible plan and design details and a specific corridor alignment.

This request serves to connect three rural communities to eight other Root River Tail Towns and also to a larger metropolitan area (La Crosse-La Crescent MSA). The request fully supports administration's priorities and the U.S. DOT's Strategic Plan Goals including safety, climate change and sustainability, equity and economic benefits and job creation. The request fully meets the six merit criteria outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

I support this grant request as it will bring to fruition a feasible plan that the communities have been striving to achieve for over 40 years.

Sincerely,

Mayor Mitch Reynolds

MR:as

AMY KLOBUCHAR
MINNESOTA

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
AND FORESTRY
COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
JUDICIARY
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 11, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
United States Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue Southeast
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: City of La Crescent, Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

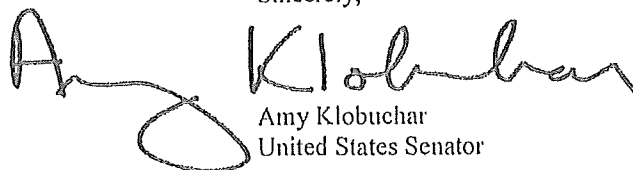
I write in support of the City of La Crescent's application for funding through the Federal Highway Administration's Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program. If awarded, funding would support an expansion of the Root River State Trail in southeast Minnesota.

Located in southeast Minnesota along the banks of the Mississippi River, the city of La Crescent is the largest city in Houston County by population. The city and region are a popular tourist destination in Minnesota, and the area is known for its biking and hiking trails. A major component of the regional trail network in southeast Minnesota is the Root River State Trail. Currently, the Root River State Trail connects eight Minnesota communities along the Root River Valley that are directly west of La Crescent. In collaboration with the Cities of Hokah, Houston, and Houston County, the City of La Crescent is actively seeking to expand the Root River State Trail and connect it to its local trail network.

Funding from the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program would support a planning and design study for an expansion of the Root River State Trail. Specifically, funding would help the City of La Crescent develop a plan and preliminary design for an extension of the Root River State Trail from Houston, through Hokah, and into La Crescent. Extending the Root River State Trail into La Crescent would also connect it to the city of La Crosse, the surrounding communities, and the Wisconsin State Trail Network. Support from the Federal Highway Administration would not only significantly improve regional trail connectivity, but it would also boost tourism and promote economic development in rural Minnesota.

Again, I support the City of La Crescent's application for funding through the Federal Highway Administration's Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program. If you have any questions, please contact Rommel Lee in my Minnesota office at (612) 727-5220 or by email at Rommel_Lee@Klobuchar.Senate.Gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Klobuchar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Gregory M. Davids

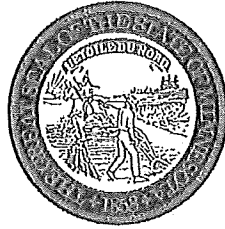
State Representative

District 26B

Fillmore

Houston

Mower



Minnesota House of Representatives

COMMITTEES:
TAXES

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE AND POLICY

July 10, 2024

Subject: Letter of Support – City of La Crescent, MN Federal ATIP Planning and Design Grant Application - Root River State Trail Active Transportation Spine Extension

Dear Review Teams and Administrator Bhatt:

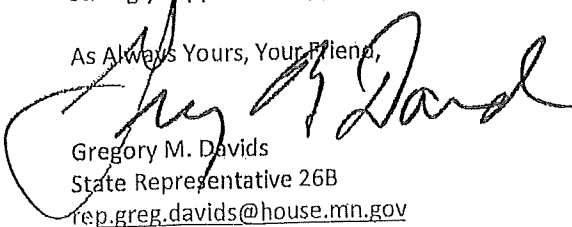
On behalf of Minnesota House District 26B, I wish to offer support for the City of La Crescent's application to connect the three cities of La Crescent, Hokah and Houston, Minnesota along a multi-use active transportation spine facility. These cities are all in my district. The Root River State Trail was first authorized in 1971 by the Minnesota State Legislature and the first trail plan was approved in 1983. For over 40 years, the cities of La Crescent, Hokah and La Crescent have been working to connect their communities to eight other trail towns along the Root River Valley in Southeast Minnesota. The completion of a trail not only connects the three cities to the eight communities to the west, but it also completes a connection to La Crosse, Wisconsin and therefore Wisconsin's State Trail network. This grant application is a request to fund a Planning and Design Grant. The three cities and Houston County have entered into a Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate with the strong commitment to complete an active transportation facility from Houston, Minnesota to La Crescent, Minnesota.

A Planning and Design Grant will give the three communities, Houston County and the bi-state region, a definitive plan for future construction of an active transportation facility. Previous planning activities, while successful in and of themselves, did not provide a clear blueprint for a construction project. Because this grant request is for both planning and design activities, the communities and the many stakeholders will come together around a supportable and feasible plan and design details and a specific corridor alignment.

This request serves to connect three rural communities to eight other Root River Trail Towns and also to a larger metropolitan area (La Crosse-La Crescent MSA). The request fully supports the administration's priorities and the U.S. DOT's Strategic Plan Goals including safety, climate change and sustainability, equity and economic benefits and job creation. The request fully meets the six merit criteria outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

I support this grant request as it will bring to fruition a feasible plan that the communities have been striving to achieve for over 40 years. This would greatly benefit and enhance all these communities and the surrounding areas and I strongly support this application.

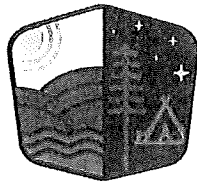
As Always Yours, Your Friend,


Gregory M. Davids
State Representative 26B

rep.greg.davids@house.mn.gov

651.296.9278





PARKS & TRAILS

COUNCIL OF MINNESOTA

July 14, 2024

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Technical Review Team/ Senior Review Team
Mr. Shailen Bhatt, Administrator
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Letter of Support – City of La Crescent, Minnesota Federal ATIP Planning and Design Grant Application - Root River State Trail Active Transportation Spine Extension

Dear Review Teams and Administrator Bhatt:

The Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota (P&TC) enthusiastically supports the City of La Crescent's Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIP) Planning and Design Grant Application. The grant would provide critical funding to connect the cities of La Crescent, Hokah and Houston to each other along a multi-use active transportation spine facility by extending the Root River State Trail.

P&TC is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to acquiring, protecting, and enhancing critical land for the public's use and benefit. Since our founding in 1954, and thanks to our 3,000+ members, we have acquired nearly 10,000 acres that have been added to Minnesota's system of parks and trails. We are a proud supporter of the Root River State Trail and have worked collaboratively with the Minnesota DNR, the City of La Crescent and all of the other local trail towns over many years so that one day these 11 trail towns could be connected.

The ATIP grant would go a long way toward fulfilling a vision that has endured since the Root River State Trail was first authorized in 1971 by the Minnesota State Legislature. The completion of the trail not only connects the three cities to the eight communities to the west, but it also completes a connection to La Crosse, Wisconsin and therefore Wisconsin's State Trail network.

Because this grant request is for both planning and design activities, the communities and the many stakeholders will come together around a supportable and feasible plan and design details and a specific corridor alignment. The request fully supports the Federal Highway Administration's priorities and the U.S. Department of Transportation's Strategic Plan Goals including safety, climate change and sustainability, equity and economic benefits and job creation. For all these reasons, P&TC wholeheartedly supports ATIP funding for the City of La Crescent's request.

Sincerely,

Brett Feldman
President



275 EAST 4TH STREET, SUITE 250 • SAINT PAUL, MN 55101-1626
PARKSANDTRAILS.ORG • INFO@PARKSANDTRAILS.ORG

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Technical Review Team/ Senior Review Team
Mr. Shailen Bhatt, Administrator
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590



July 11th, 2024

Subject: Letter of Support – City of La Crescent, MN Federal ATIP Planning and Design Grant Application – Root River State Trail Active Transportation Spine Extension

Dear Review Teams and Administrator Bhatt:

On behalf of The Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota (BikeMN), I wish to offer our wholehearted support for the City of La Crescent's Planning and Design Grant application to connect the three cities of La Crescent, Hokah, and Houston Minnesota along a multi-use active transportation spine facility. The existing Root River State Trail system has been a gem of the southeastern Minnesota State Trail network over 40 years. It is a year-round regional economic driver, invokes a passionate love of the outdoors for folks from across the Midwest, and instills a love for healthy and family friendly recreation in all who walk, bike, or roll along it.

Since its initial creation, the cities of La Crescent, Hokah and Houston have been working to connect their communities to eight other trail towns along the Root River Valley in Southeast Minnesota. The dream of connecting from Fountain to the Mississippi and beyond to the Wisconsin trail network would further cement this network as one of the best in the country.

BikeMN's statewide network of active transportation leaders looks forward to supporting the planning process in an advisory capacity as requested by our partners within these communities. It aligns well with our goals of making Minnesota the best place in the country to walk, bike, roll.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Wojcik".

Michael Wojcik, Executive Director
The Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota
7.11.2024

*Making Minnesota a place where every person everywhere can easily walk, bike, and roll.
All Ages, All Abilities.*

3745 Minnehaha Ave
Minneapolis, MN 55406

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration
Mr. Shailen Bhatt, Administrator
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: City of La Crescent, MN - Federal ATIP Planning and Design Grant Application - Root River State Trail Active Transportation Spine Extension

Dear Review Teams and Administrator Bhatt:

Please accept this letter as our strong support for the Federal Planning and Design Grant that the City of La Crescent is submitting. The city is the applicant but they are doing so on behalf of Houston County and the cities of Hokah and Houston as well. The eight Root River Trail Towns welcome the completion of the Root River State Trail that was envisioned over 53 years ago when, in 1971, the state legislature authorized the trail. We wish to support this request because the vision of the Root River Trail is not yet complete since our neighboring communities of La Crescent and Hokah are not connected to the rest of the trail towns.

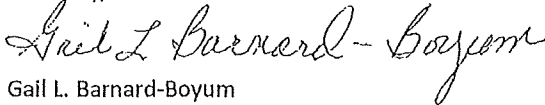
We welcome the planning and design work that will once and for all establish a preferred alignment so that a construction project(s) can be completed. Connecting Western Wisconsin and Southeast Minnesota via a network of spine trails will bring additional jobs and economic opportunities to our smaller rural communities. Connecting the Root River Trail towns to the 130,000 persons in the La Crosse area will be a boost to the economic activity of the entire corridor. Having trail users' bicycle to the trail towns rather than drive (then bike) will be much better for the environment overall.

While there have been plans in the past, no plan ever got to the design level of a detailed route alignment. This planning and design effort is what has been needed from all the previous plans. No trail can be built and therefor benefit the region and its residents unless and until a detailed plan can be executed.

Our Root River Trail Towns recently voted to bring the City of La Crescent into our organization and we hope that the City of Hokah joins as well so that all of the 10 communities can finally work together to support each other and our rural economies.

We hope you give strong consideration of this request and please know that our organization can't wait for the planning and design process to begin!

Sincerely,



Gail L. Barnard-Boyum

President, Root River Trail Towns



U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration
Mr. Shailen Bhatt, Administrator
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: City of La Crescent, MN Bike-Ped Committee Letter of Support

Dear Review Teams and Administrator Bhatt:

On behalf of the City of La Crescent's Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, I am happy to offer this letter of support for the city's ATIIP Planning and Design application. Connecting the cities of La Crescent, Hokah and Houston, Minnesota to the eight other Root River State Trail towns has been a priority for the bicycling community in La Crescent for over 40 years. This active transportation spine will connect the trail networks in Minnesota to trail systems in La Crosse, Wisconsin. This connection cannot happen until a detailed planning and design study is completed. Once this important step is completed, the communities can focus on securing construction dollars and complete the spine in phases.

This crucial connection is listed in several city planning documents and is a high priority in the city's updated Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan adopted in 2017. Most importantly, the project creates a safer and more direct connection for community members to travel between communities.

We hope that the application review team looks favorably on the city's project. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee looks forward to being a part of the planning and design process.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jason Ludwigson".

Jason Ludwigson, Chair, Bike-Ped Committee

Growing from River to Ridge

CITY OF LA CRESCENT
315 Main Street
P.O. BOX 142
La Crescent, MN 55947
P: (507) 895-2595
cityoflacscent-mn.gov

TINA SMITH
MINNESOTA

SUITE SH-720
HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2310
(202) 224-5641

United States Senate

July 8, 2024

Mr. Shailen Bhatt, Administrator
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington DC, 20590

RE: City of La Crescent, MN Application for FY 2024 Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) Grant

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing to urge your support of the City of La Crescent, MN's application for the ATIIP grant application to connect the cities of La Crescent, Hokah, and Houston, Minnesota along a multi-use active transportation spine facility.

The Root River State Trail system currently connects eight communities, collectively known as the Root River Trail Towns, in Southeast Minnesota. The communities of La Crescent and Hokah are seeking to connect their communities to this trail system by constructing a trail that would meet up with the Root River Trail system in Houston. In addition to connecting these three communities, this extension would also connect this trail system to La Crosse, Wisconsin and therefore Wisconsin's State Trail network.

This grant application is a request to fund a Planning and Design Grant, which would give the three communities, Houston County and the bi-state region a definitive plan for future construction of an active transportation facility. This grant would allow for the communities and the many stakeholders to come together around design details, a feasible plan, and a specific corridor alignment.

This request serves to connect three rural communities to eight other Root River Trail Towns and to a larger metropolitan area (La Crosse-La Crescent Metropolitan Statistical Area). The request fully supports the administration's priorities and the U.S. DOT's Strategic Plan Goals including safety, climate change and sustainability, equity, economic benefits and job creation. The request fully meets the six merit criteria outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

For the reasons above, I encourage your strong consideration for this proposal. If you have any questions, please contact Jack Smyth by email at jack_smyth@smith.senate.gov.

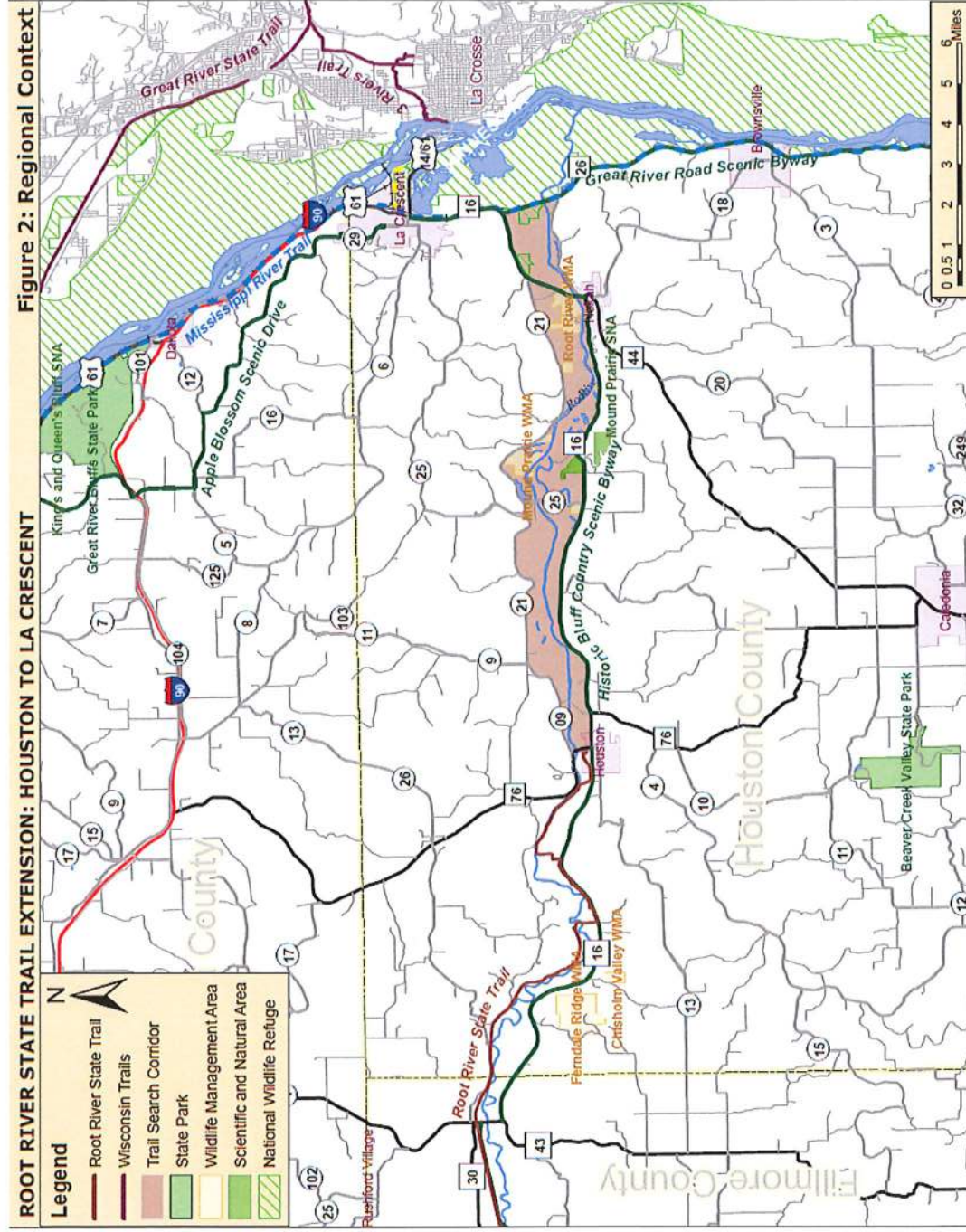
Sincerely,



Tina Smith

United States Senator

Appendix V – Location Map



Appendix VI - Draft Planning and Design Study Report - Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

- 1) Introduction/Background/Project History
- 2) Existing Conditions
- 3) 2011 RRT Extension Master Plan (starting point)
- 4) 2024 Trail Plan - Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate
- 5) Planning and Design Goals
- 6) Environmental Framework
- 7) Federal, State, County, City Coordination
- 8) Human Framework - Equitable Development, Disadvantaged Persons, USDOT goals and priorities analysis
- 9) Route Alignment Analysis/Alternatives/Recommended Alignment
- 10) Summary of Findings/proposed impacts/phasing options/cost opinion

Appendices

- I. Public Engagement Summary
- II. Maps
- III. Environmental Scan

Appendix VII – Draft Scope and Cost Estimate for consultant contract

Planning and Design Study Report Scope and Cost Estimate (cost estimates are for two-year contract)				
Scope Task	Hours	Hourly Rate	Cost Estimate	TOTAL
Project Orientation/Planning	40	165, 150, 185+210	6,600+6,000+7,400+8,400	28,400
Project Administration	100	200	20,000	20,000
Team Meetings	30	185, 165, 185,195	5,550+4,950+5,550+5,850	21,800
Agency Meetings	20	185, 165, 185	3,700+3,300+3,700	10,700
Landowner Meetings	75	165, 150	12,375+11,250	23,625
Public Engagement	120	150, 165	18,000+19,800	37,800
Environmental Documentation	80	185	14,800	14,800
Route alignment analysis/conceptual engineering	300	185, 185, 195, 165	55,000+55,000+58,500+49,500	217,500
Equitable Development Disadvantaged Persons	75	165	12,375	12,375
USDOT goals and priorities analysis	60	165	9,900	9,900
Report Chapters	200	185, 165	37,000+33,000	70,000
Final Report Preparation	30	\$165	4,950	4,950
SUBTOTAL	1,130			471,490 (\$475,000)
Budget contingency 10 percent				47,500
TOTAL				522,500 (\$525,000)

Hourly Rate Project Manager \$210

Hourly Rate Project Planner \$165

Hourly Rate Public Engagement Facilitator \$150

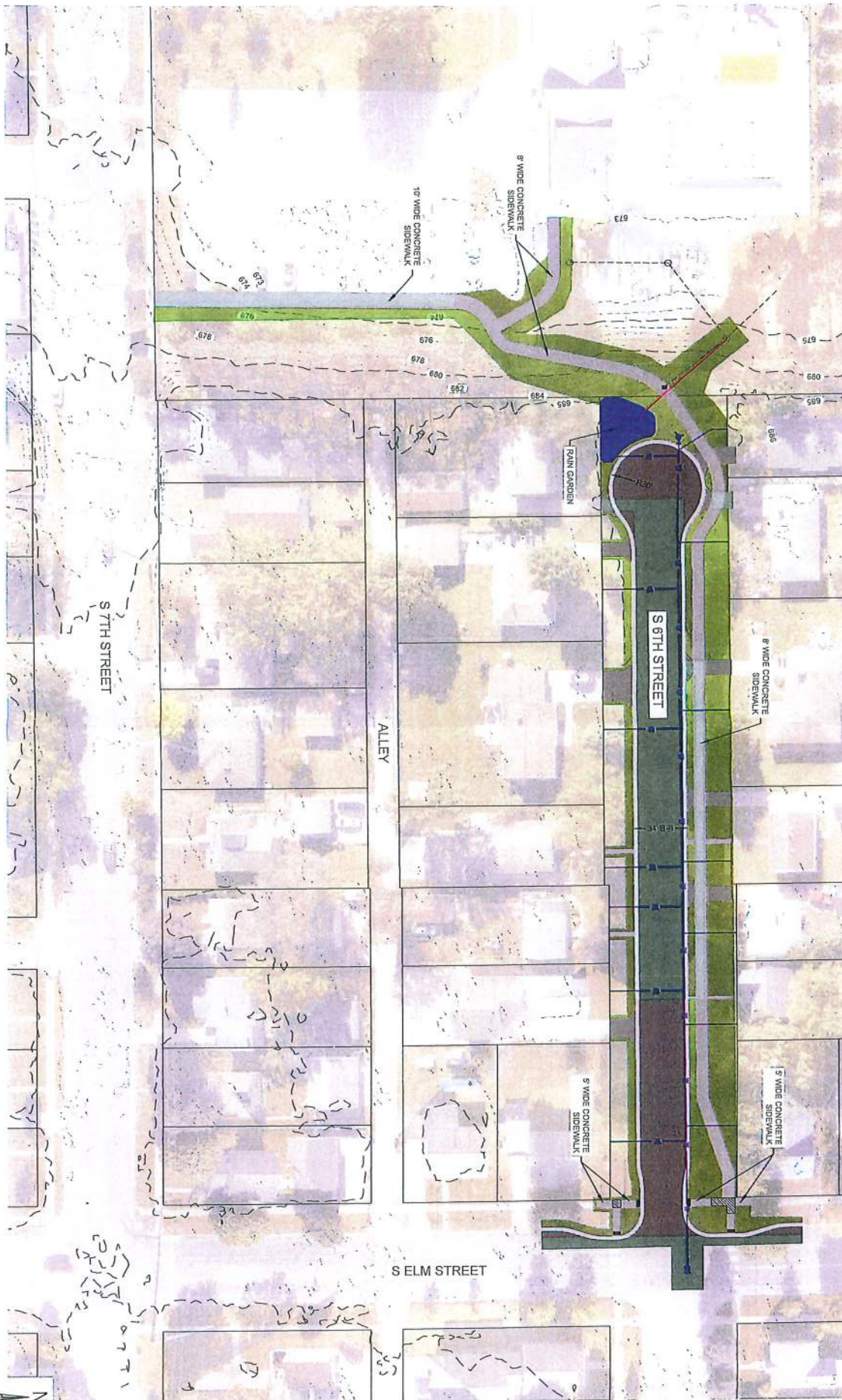
Hourly Rate – Landscape Architect \$185

Hourly Rate – Environmental scientist \$185

Hourly Rate – Professional Engineer \$195

Hourly Rate – Administrative Support Specialist - \$125

#2e.



1 OF 1

SCALE:
AS SHOWN
WORK PROJECT NO.
731922
DRAWN BY:
TAM
CHECKED BY:
TAM
SHEET

CONCEPT PLAN
S 6TH STREET RECONSTRUCTION
LA CRESCENT, MINNESOTA
2023

REVISIONS		
NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION



#2f.

USA CYCLING GRAVEL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The third annual USA Cycling Gravel National Championship will take place the third weekend of September 2025 in La Crescent, MN.

There will be a press conference held on Tuesday, August 6th, 2024 at 12:00pm by the Wagon Wheel Bicycle-Pedestrian Bridge in La Crescent, MN for more information regarding this event.

LA CRESCENT, MN. – The Apple Capital of Minnesota, La Crescent, along with the entire La Crosse, Wisconsin region, is set to become a premier cycling destination, as it will proudly host the USA Cycling Gravel National Championships for the next two years, starting with the first event slated for the third weekend of September 2025, which coincides with their annual Apple Festival.

"We are excited to bring our Gravel National Championships to La Crescent/La Crosse for 2025-2026. The region's diverse landscape offers multiple options for developing unique courses with challenging climbs, creating a new and different experience for riders out on the course. Combining our event with their renowned annual Apple Festival offers another unique experience that our riders and their families can enjoy off the course," said Kyle Knott, USA Cycling's Director of National Events.

Athletes will compete for gold on the challenging terrain and unique topography of La Crescent/La Crosse and surrounding areas, providing an unparalleled racing experience through coulees and river valleys while showcasing the picturesque beauty of the region.

"To say we are excited to host the USA Cycling Gravel National Championships is an understatement. If you have not visited us in the past, get ready for something truly inspiring, as there's something special about the place where Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa meet. We call it the Driftless Region, where the Ice Age glaciers failed to grind down a corrugated, primal landscape. This untouched playground of bluffs, ridges, coulees, and valleys on both sides of the Mississippi River is crisscrossed by two networks: smooth, low-traffic county byways and rolling gravel backroads is a cyclist's dream. There is no doubt, that this event will pull a well-deserved spotlight on La Crescent, Houston, southeastern Minnesota, and the entire greater La Crosse region as a premier bicycling, specifically gravel, destination in our country," said A.J. Frels, Explore La Crosse's Executive Director.

Gravel Nationals will continue to feature both Amateur and Elite races, aiming to attract cyclists and enthusiasts of all skill levels, while providing a competitive opportunity for all participants.

The remaining 2025 National Championship calendar will be announced in the coming weeks. Visit USACycling.org for more information on the athletes, events, and membership programs. To opt in to their newsletter for the latest updates, [click here](#).

Thank you to the hosting partners: City of La Crescent, La Crescent Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, City of Houston, Houston Chamber of Commerce, USA Cycling, Driftless Cycling, Explore La Crosse, and La Crescent Applefest.

ABOUT EXPLORE LA CROSSE (explorelacrosse.com)

The La Crosse County Convention and Visitors Bureau builds awareness of the Upper Mississippi Valley region as a global tourism destination. Increasing revenue and stimulating economic development, enhancing visitor spending and overnight stays, will be realized by promoting leisure travel, conventions, sports, and events while highlighting our region's natural beauty and showcasing the talents of our residents for all communities. For more information, go to explorelacrosse.com.

ABOUT USA CYCLING (usacycling.org)

USA Cycling is the national governing body for the sport of cycling and oversees the disciplines of road, track, mountain bike, cyclocross, gravel, BMX, and esports. USA Cycling's mission is to grow participation and engagement with the sport of bicycle racing and achieve sustained international success across all cycling disciplines. USA Cycling supports cyclists of all levels and abilities, from those just beginning in the sport to international caliber athletes. The organization identifies, develops, and selects cyclists to represent the United States in international competition through the support of youth and interscholastic programs, amateur and grassroots bike racing events, athlete development programs, and operational support for cycling clubs, racing teams, and event organizers. USA Cycling has a membership of 80,000, sanctions over 2,500 events annually, and is a member of the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) and United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC).

For More Information Please Contact:

Jeremiah Burish
Director of Sports Sales
Explore La Crosse

Phone: (608) 782 - 2250 ext. 230
Email: burish@explorelacrosse.com

Kyle Knott
National Events Director
USA Cycling

Phone: (719) 920 - 7563
Email: kknott@usacycling.org

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