Bicentennial Trail Reroute

Final Concept Plan 07.18.2024

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The planning team for the Bicentennial Trail Reroute including City staff has gathered data, city staff input, partner input (FOB) and geographic information to assemble a *Concept Plan* for the City of La Crosse's Bicentennial Trail Reroute. The details of those findings along with a proposed trail concept are found throughout this *Concept Plan*.

The property in scope lies in the northeast portion of Lower Hixon Forest, connecting trail intersections at the back of the valley to Highway FA at the top of the ridge. Around 2015, work was done to mitigate trail problems on the original Bicentennial trail route where extreme erosion was occurring. The goal then was to create a trail that would also allow emergency vehicles to access that section of the forest, creating more of a road than a trail. As the trail was constructed, it was clear that it was not optimal for vehicular access, and the design/construction elements compromised the efficacy of the experience for forest users. Much work was done to mitigate the worst sections of erosion and steep slopes. The route was opened to bikes for winter use around 2018 and eventually became a year-round shared use trail about three years ago. The current trail has a very wide cut (~20') and follows steep grades, well above 20% for much of the route.

In an effort to improve user experience, reduce congestion on other trails, and improve the physical sustainability of our trail system, it is recommended to reroute sections of the existing Bicentennial Trail. There are steep banks and cliffs, deep ravines, and restored prairie and savanna found nearby. These constraints will necessitate careful planning and design to create the optimal solution. Once final design is established, construction will need to be completed with informed and mindful construction skills and techniques.

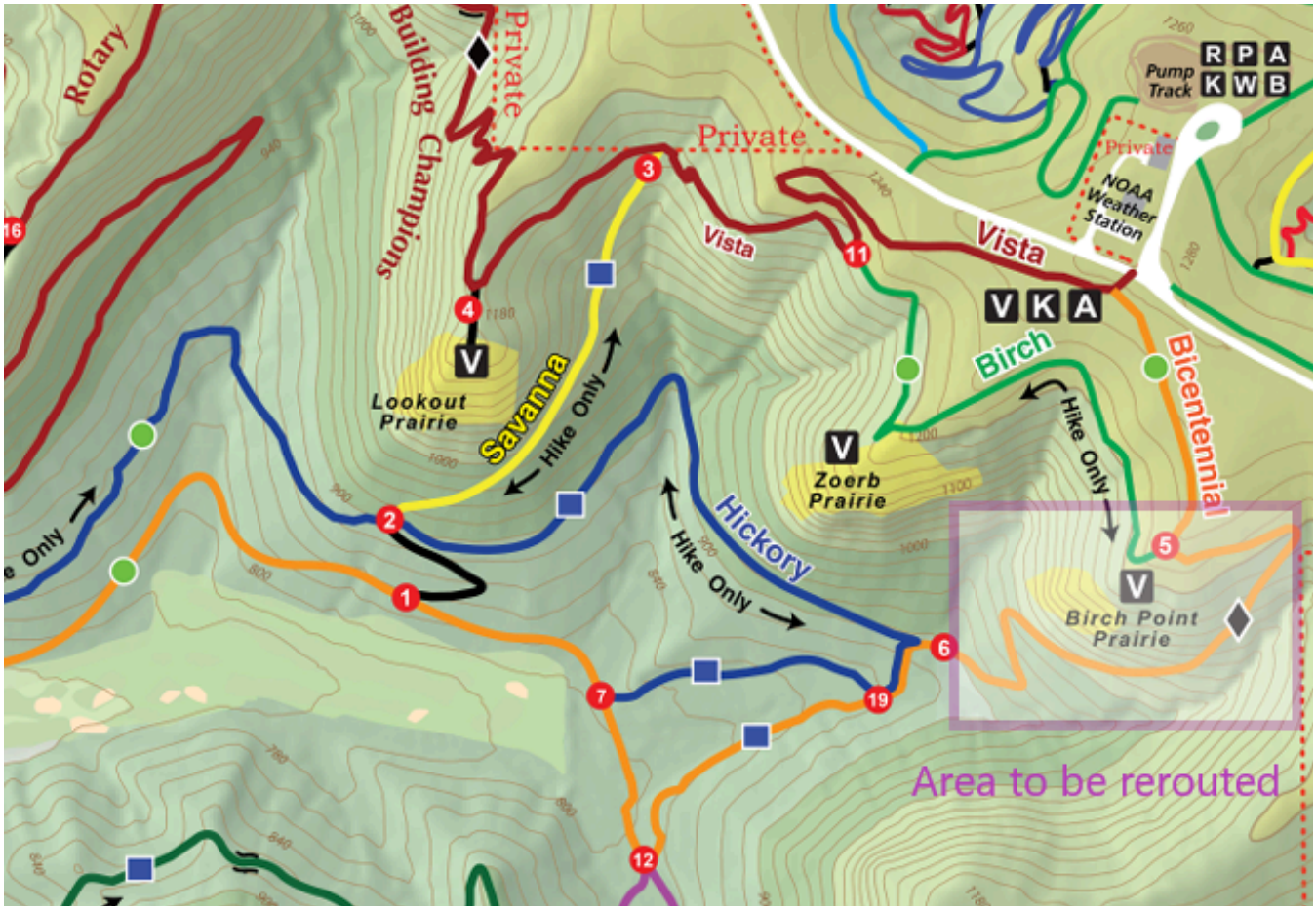
OBJECTIVES

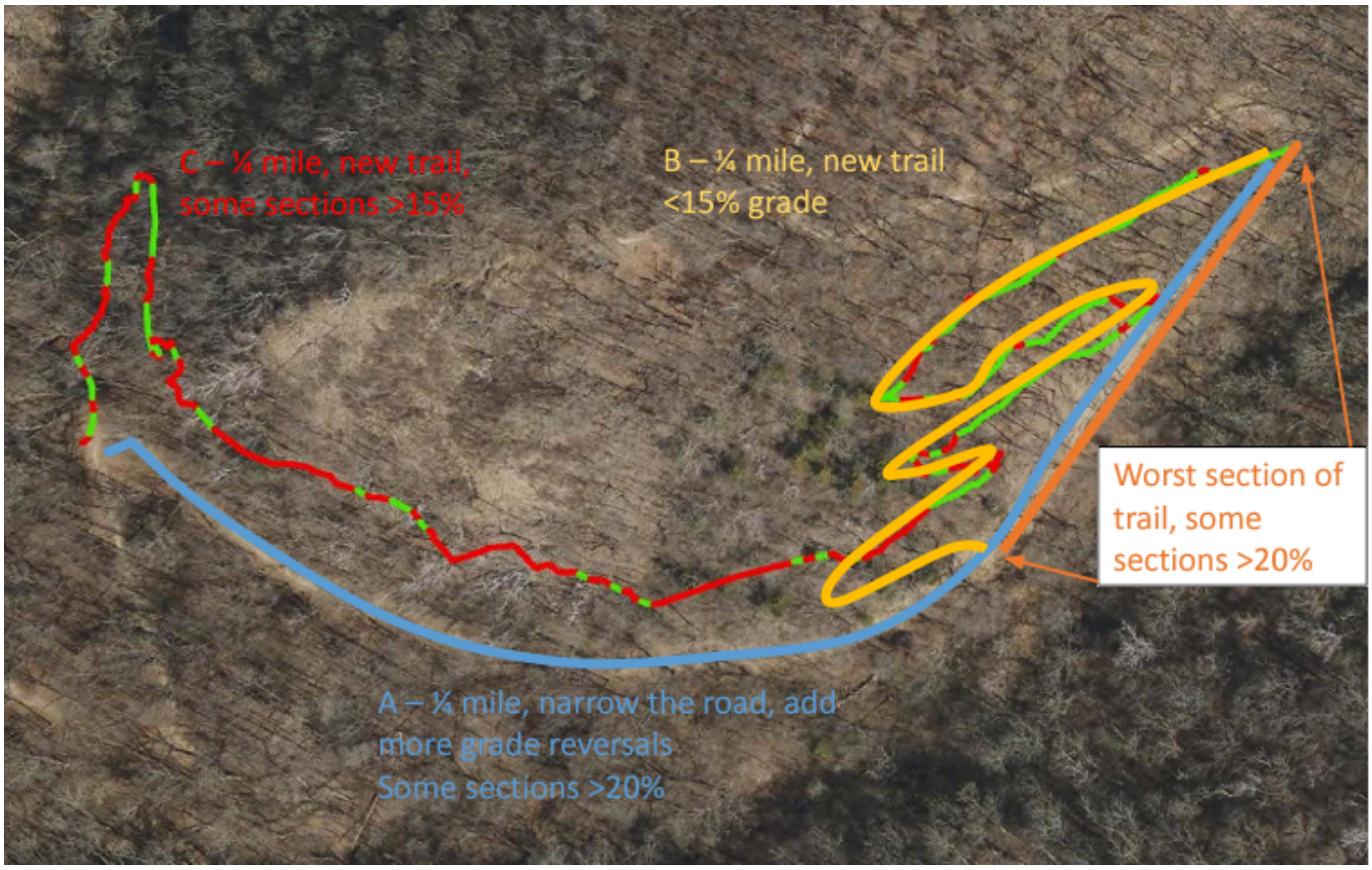
- Increase safety and user experiences on heavily used trails by dispersing use to other trails in the forest
- Improve the environmental and social impacts of the trail by establishing modern, sustainable trail construction standards for grades, side slope, and grade reversals
- Utilize the trail location to highlight the value of savanna and prairie habitats, and the work being done to preserve and promote them
- Increase user participation by increasing the usability and appeal of the trails of Hixon Forest

THE PROCESS

Bicentennial Reroute		Complete?
1	Coordinate with city staff to identify needs and potential solutions	Yes
2	Develop Concept Plan (this document)	Yes
3	Input and engagement with users and partner organizations to review and refine the concept	Yes
4	Park Board approval of general concept and permission to move forward	Pending
5	Finalize trail construction plan details and final approvals	No
6	Complete needed reroutes, repairs, and rehabilitation using a combination of volunteers, work crews, and specialized contractual work if/where needed	No

LOWER HIXON TRAIL MAP





THE NEW ROUTE

- We are pursuing approval for both section A & B of the final concept design. The new route will add ~1/4 mile of trail to the total length, allowing the trail to undulate on the hillside and achieve more sustainable grades
- Section "A" uses the current path, but narrowed a to current trail standards (4ft wide) and resurfaced with grade reversals added every ~10 yards, per current best practices
- Section "B" is building a new section of trail that includes switchbacks to greatly decrease the trail grade % and stabilize the surrounding ground. The existing road/trail will remain so users seeking the current direct route experience will still have the option
- Section "C" will not be included in the build, as there is no current sustainable solution to rebuilding this section

TRAIL SPECIFICATIONS

- The new route will use existing starting and ending points of the Bicentennial Trail
- The trail will have an average of 8-10%, with grades over 15% for minimal distances where there is no other option. Current grades reach upwards of 20% in spots
- There will be minimal disruption to trail naming and signage as the starting and ending points will remain
- The final flag line should be reviewed with the contractor prior to breaking ground

1.2 PROJECT INTENT AND GOALS

To provide a natural surface trail experience that is positive to all types of users by improving the existing Bicentennial route to a well-constructed trail that meets modern trail building best practices as closely as possible. The finished trail work should not only provide for a high-quality user experience, but also ensure natural resource protection through stabilized spoils and positive drainage. The trail is intended for shared use, allowing bikes and foot traffic. Construction will begin immediately following Park Board approval, and is intended to be completed by Fall (start date dependent).

1.3 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION BEST PRACTICES

A. EROSION & SEDIMENT - To satisfy Erosion and Sediment Control requirements, the trail will be finished and mechanically compacted, and all disturbed areas be stabilized as the project moves forward. All grading will be compacted and stabilized within five (5) days, or before precipitation. Finishing includes all stabilization of loose soil by mulching and compacting the tread surface. Disturbed ground on either side of the trail will be stabilized and re-seeded with a seed mixture suitable for long-term stabilization and approved by the land owner prior to planting. Salvaging a re-planting of existing foliage is practiced whenever possible. No trees with a diameter over 6" will be removed, though saplings and underbrush may be cleared for safe sight lines where needed.

B. SPOILS STABILIZATION - All excavated materials not used in the trail tread or other trail structures will be stabilized. Spoils will not be placed in drainages, swales, ephemeral streams, wetlands, or any area known to convey water during wet weather events. When possible, spoils will be mulched with native materials to discourage erosion while native seed stocks reestablish. In areas without adequate native mulch, seed and straw may substitute. Seed and straw will be a variety similar to a WI DNR mix, and approved by the land owner prior to installation. In certain circumstances, installation of formal erosion control measures may be required.

1.4 COMMUNITY INPUT

56 total responses on the Bicentennial rebuild

- 55 provided in-person, and 1 provided via 311/email
- 36 listed City of La Crosse addresses
- 17 listed non resident addresses. Feedback from non residents included Holmen, La Crescent, West Salem, Stoddard, and Onalaska
- The remainder were submitted via email, or did not provide an address/zip code