

Bicentennial Reroute - Phase Two

Final Concept Plan

07.14.2025

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*, approved in July of 2024 for phase one construction. That construction was finished in the Fall of 2024. The remainder of this concept plan is covering phase two of the Bicentennial road reroute.

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 essentially a gravel road in central Lower Hixon Forest. 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.

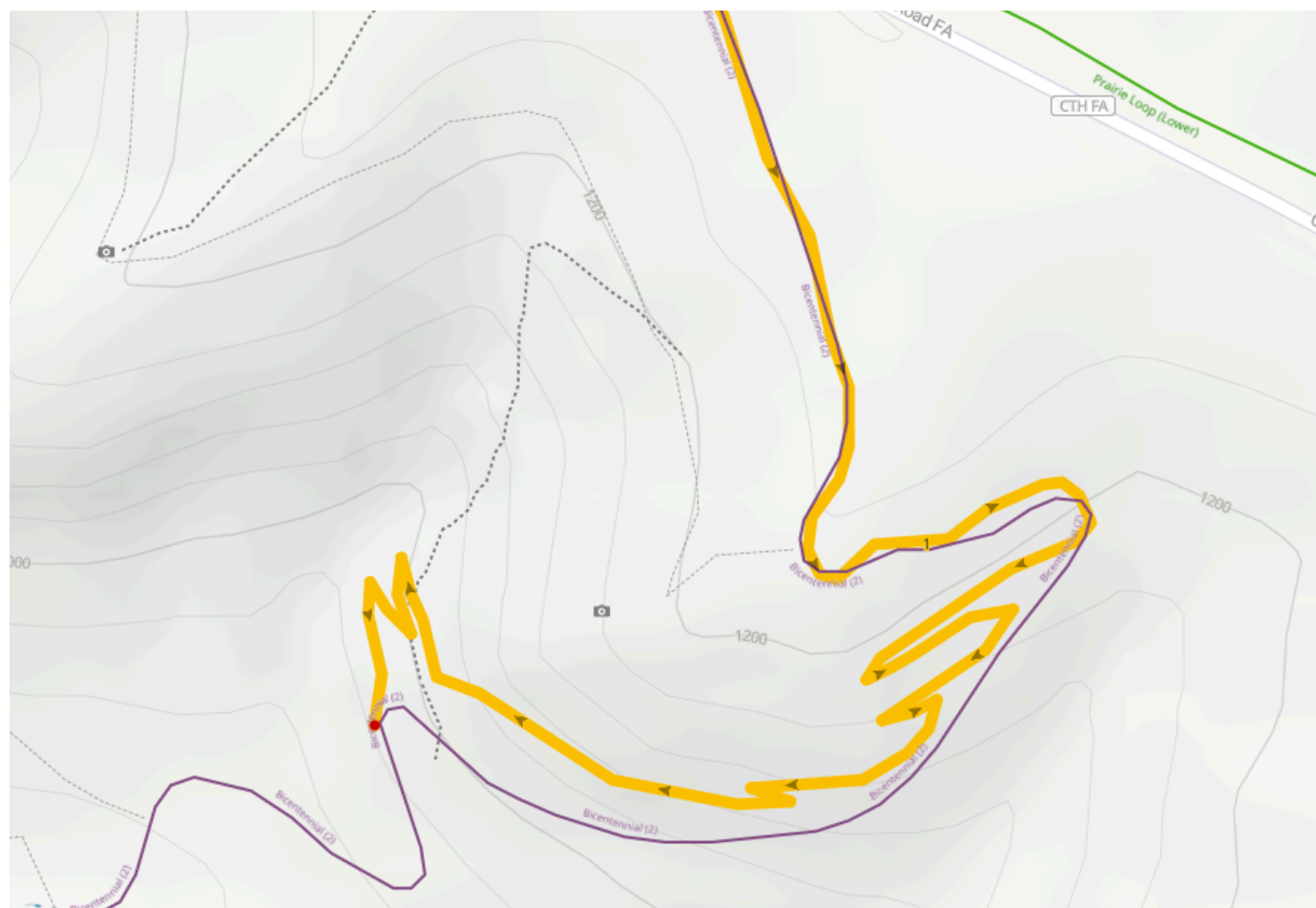
OBJECTIVES

- 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, and Phase One 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	Phase one approved
5	Finalize trail construction plan details (Pending approval)	No
6	Complete needed reroutes, repairs, and rehabilitation using a combination of volunteers, work crews, and specialized contractual work if/where needed	No

BICENTENNIAL TRAIL MAP



SPECIFIC REROUTE LOCATION MAP



THE NEW ROUTE

- We are pursuing approval for section C 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" was completed in the Fall of 2024, and uses the current path, but narrowed a to current trail standard (4ft wide) and resurfaced with grade reversals added every ~10 yards, per current best practices
- Section "B" was completed in the Fall of 2024 and added an off-road section of shared-use, natural surface trail built to modern trail standards, much like the rest of Lower Hixon.
- Section "C" is building a new section of trail that includes switchbacks to greatly decrease the trail grade percentage and stabilize the surrounding ground. The existing road/trail will remain so users seeking the current direct route experience will still have the option, and an emergency vehicle could still use it if needed.
- The current Bicentennial route will remain intact as the access road/alternative connector footpath that it is. The new trail will be called the Bicentennial Trail.

TRAIL SPECIFICATIONS

- The new route will use existing starting and ending points of the Bicentennial Trail
- The trail will have an average of 6-8%, with grades over 10% 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 planning team prior to breaking ground
- ORA will adjust current trail signage, and add in more signage where needed after construction to ensure users have route clarity. The City will ensure the current map is updated to reflect the changes.

1.2 PROJECT INTENT AND GOALS

To provide a natural surface trail experience that is positive to all types of users by utilizing the existing Bicentennial road corridor to create 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

- 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, then 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 unless absolutely necessary, though saplings and underbrush may be cleared for safe sight lines where needed.
- 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 - PHASE 2 in July 2025

87 total responses on the Bicentennial rebuild via public input digital survey

- 1 person indicated they've never used the current Bicentennial ROAD
- 86 responders indicated they have used the current Bicentennial ROAD
- 60 listed City of La Crosse addresses, 12 listed Onalaska, 4 Holmen
- 11 listed non resident addresses including Decorah, Galesville, La Crescent, Stoddard, West Salem, Montreal WI, and Wild Rose WI
- All submitted survey responses supported the rebuild

COMMUNITY INPUT - PHASE 1 in 2024

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
- All submitted feedback were in support of the rebuild as proposed



Jillian Olson <jillian@oratrails.org>

Bicentennial Trail Reroute

2 messages

Pat Wilson <wilsonpat2222@gmail.com>

Sun, Jun 1, 2025 at 11:05 PM

To: Jillian Olson <jillian@oratrails.org>, Scott Cooper <scooper@uwlax.edu>

Cc: Jonanthan Rigden <jonathanrigden@me.com>, Patrick Caffrey <rpatrickcaffrey@gmail.com>, Mike O'Brien <ob2843@gmail.com>

Pat Caffrey, Mike O'Brien, and Pat Wilson from Friends of the Blufflands with Scott Cooper and Jillian Olson from ORA Trails conducted a site visit of the proposed second section (of Phase 1) of the Bicentennial Trail updates on May 19, 2025.

The proposed route does not negatively affect the surrounding forest land. There was concern about one short section of the trail that cut across a portion of Birch Point Prairie, near the bottom of the prairie below the rock outcrops. Scott said it would be fine to reroute that section of trail a few yards downhill to get it to the edge of the prairie. There will be a short steeper section of trail but Scott didn't think it would be a problem for bikers or hikers. The reroute provides the advantage that a portion of the trail will make a good firebreak when doing prescribed burns on the prairie.

Because the trail is a tight series of switchbacks it is more likely to be used by bikers than hikers if the existing trail remains. Given the relatively narrow area between the prairie and the existing trail, and trying to keep the slope below 10%, the switchbacks are hard to avoid.

Pat Wilson

Scott Cooper <scooper@uwlax.edu>

Mon, Jun 2, 2025 at 5:40 AM

To: Pat Wilson <wilsonpat2222@gmail.com>, Jillian Olson <jillian@oratrails.org>

Cc: Jonanthan Rigden <jonathanrigden@me.com>, Patrick Caffrey <rpatrickcaffrey@gmail.com>, Mike O'Brien <ob2843@gmail.com>

Thanks Pat.

Scott Cooper, UWL Biology Department

From: Pat Wilson <wilsonpat2222@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, June 1, 2025 11:05:45 PM

To: 'Jillian Olson' <jillian@oratrails.org>; Scott Cooper <scooper@uwlax.edu>

Cc: 'Jonanthan Rigden' <jonathanrigden@me.com>; 'Patrick Caffrey' <rpatrickcaffrey@gmail.com>; Mike O'Brien <ob2843@gmail.com>

Subject: Bicentennial Trail Reroute

Caution: *External Email: Use caution responding, opening attachments, or clicking on links.*

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