



# The Mississippi River Trail Bicycle Route - Wisconsin





# Partners

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# What is the Mississippi River Trail (MRT)?

- Spans approximately 3,000 miles from Minnesota to Louisiana
- Spans 10 States, and 8 of the 10 include route signage and bike route designation
- Approximately 250 Miles in Wisconsin

U.S. MRT Overview



## What is our Goal?

- Formal designation of MRT through 8 Wisconsin Great River Road Counties
- Signage along MRT Route in Wisconsin

## Benefits to your Community:

- Health Benefits
- Economic Benefits (Local/County/State)
- Community Benefits
- Outdoor Recreational Opportunities

## What we need from you:

- Identify and confirm route through your municipality
- Formal resolution to support your local route and Statewide effort to sign and designate the MRT



# Perspective – United States Cycling



ADOLESCENTS WHO BIKE ARE 48% LESS LIKELY TO BE OVERWEIGHT AS ADULTS.



AMERICANS SPEND \$81 BILLION ON BIKING ANNUALLY, GENERATING 770,000 JOBS AND \$10 BILLION IN TAXES.

THE NUMBER OF U.S. BIKE TRIPS DOUBLED



OVER THE LAST DECADE, U.S. BIKE COMMUTING GREW

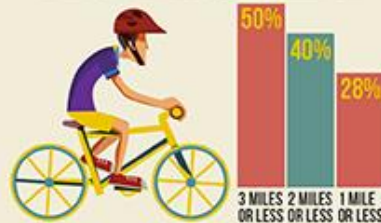


NATIONWIDE



LARGEST CITIES

TRIPS AMERICANS MAKE



NEARLY 86% OF BICYCLES SOLD IN THE U.S. ARE IMPORTED FROM CHINA.

USE OF BICYCLES FOR URBAN TRIPS



Bicycle-Guider.com

Resources: Peopleforbikes.org; www.worldometers.info



# Economic and Health Impacts

## U.S. Bicyclists:

- Spend \$83 billion on trip-related sales
- Generate \$97 billion in retail spending every year in the U.S.
- Contribute to 848,000 jobs
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis estimated the economic output of outdoor recreation to be [\\$734 billion](#) in 2018



## Wisconsin Bicyclists

- Generate \$1.9 billion in health and economic benefits annually (2010 estimates)
  - \$924 million attributed to tourism and recreation
  - \$410 million for health
  - Employment impact (full-time equivalent jobs) was 13,193

Sources: US Bureau of Economic Analysis, University of Wisconsin Nelson Institute



# Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Spending

- Bicycling is 2<sup>nd</sup> most popular outdoor activity 40% of adults in U.S. ride bicycles
- Twice as many bicycles as cars purchased in U.S.
- 47% of Americans would like more bike facilities



Sources: National Hwy. Traffic Safety Administration, Outdoor Foundation

# MRT Related Efforts

## All American Road (AAR)

- Wisconsin Great River Road received All American Road (AAR) Designation in February 2021
- All American Road (AAR) is a separate designation for the very best of the National Scenic Byways (NSB) An AAR must have Intrinsic qualities of national significance and must be a destination and reason for travel unto itself.
- Only about 1/4 of roadways in the NSB Program carry AAR designations
- AAR must have intrinsic qualities of national significance and be a destination and reason for travel unto itself



## National & State Pollinator Partnership Projects

- Migratory corridor used by Monarch Butterflies making their migrations
- Tourism: Plants that pollinators love can be used to create a “sense of place” for tourists. Repeat plantings can help orient and brand the resource.
- Scenic Easements & Right of Way (ROW) management:
  - Protects views and retains natural character
  - Pollinator-friendly species and mowing guidelines are coordinated with DOT & county highway depts





# Bicycle Tourist Characteristics

- 82% of touring cyclists have a college education \*
- 52 is the average age \*
- 58% make over \$75,000 per year \*
- 8.1% are international tourists \*
- It's about the journey
- Visit museums, historic sites, galleries...
- Often group travel
- Easy to engage
- Lodging = camping to hotels

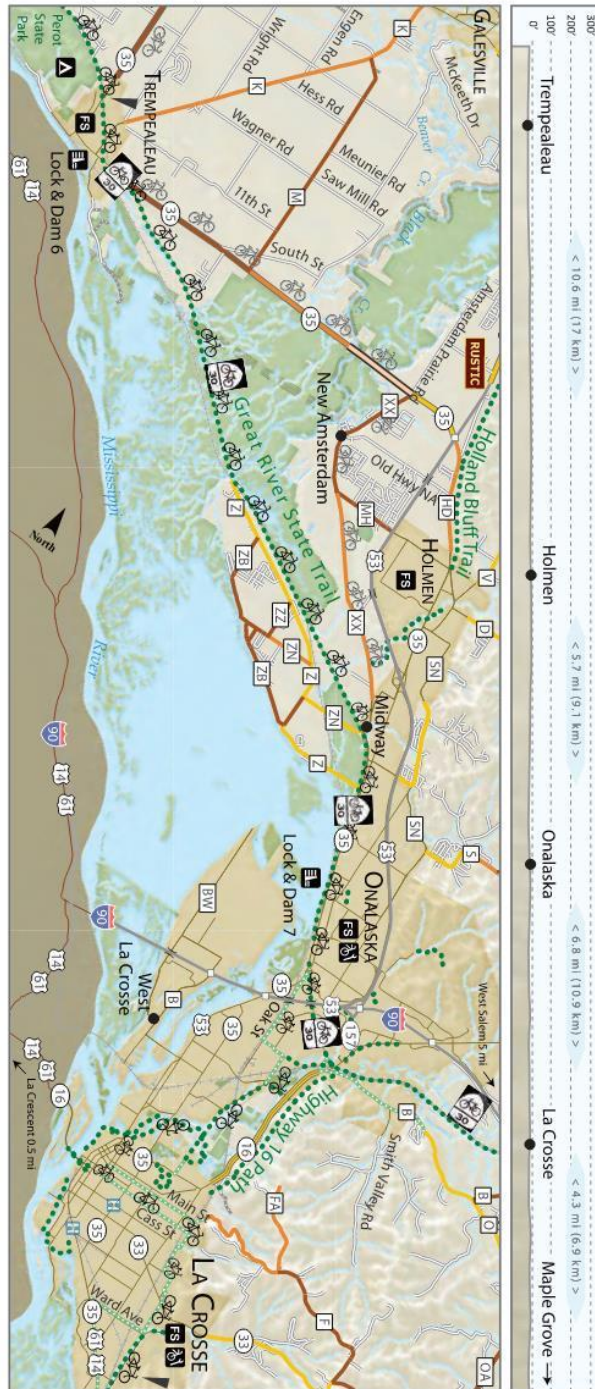


# Route Designation Process

1. Identify existing conditions
2. Discuss MRT Bicycle Routes with local officials
3. Identify optimal local routing based on set criteria and local knowledge
4. Local resolution stating support for route designation
5. State-sponsored route designation and signage
6. Outreach with local businesses and organizations
7. Continued promotion and participation



# Existing Conditions



## Section 5 La Crosse



**Distance:** 23 miles from Trempealeau to La Crosse.

**Difficulty:** The terrain for this entire length of the route on the panel is flat.

**Route Travel Conditions:** The Great River State Trail is surfaced with crushed limestone and is suitable for most skinny tires. The alternative route (WIS 35 and County XX) is rated as having best and moderate conditions for bicycling. WIS 35 has fairly high traffic volumes east of Trempealeau, but with wider paved shoulders. Several bridges have no shoulders in this stretch. There will be a mixture of trails, higher volume streets, and lower volume residential streets in La Crosse and Onalaska. The preferred route through La Crosse has cyclists on local roads rather than higher volume highways.

An additional [inset map](#) is available for the La Crosse area.

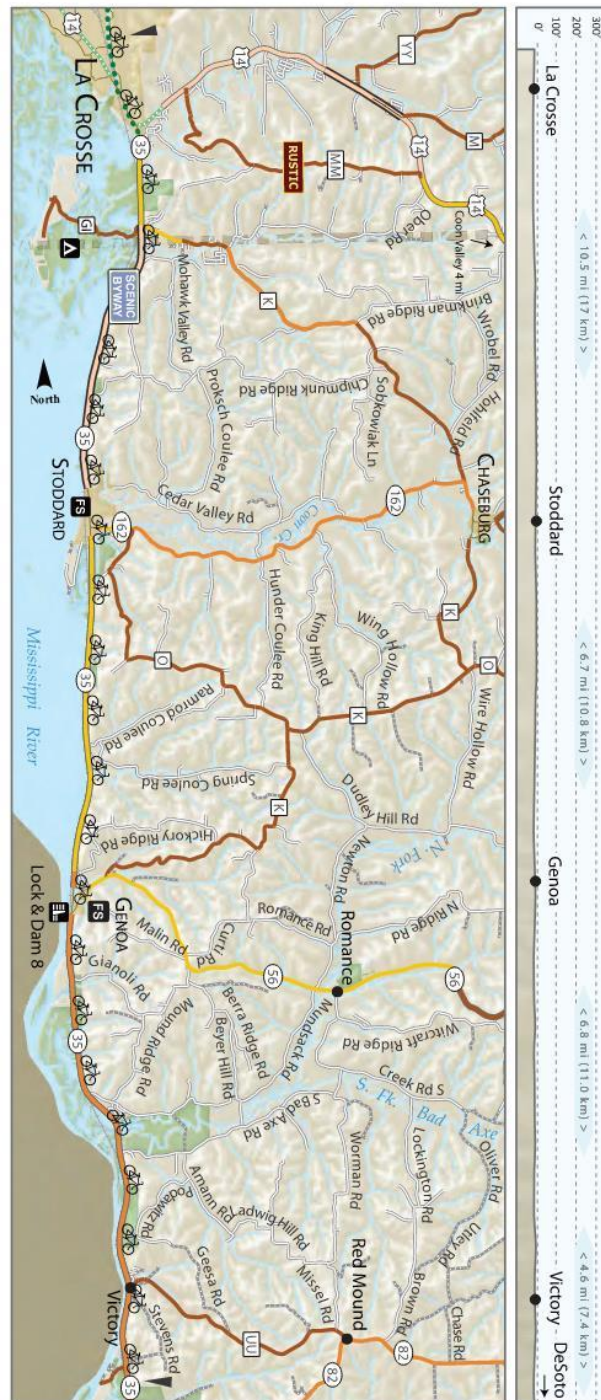
**Directions:** Southbound: From Trempealeau to Onalaska on the Great River State Trail. Connect to Oak Ave. via Oak Forest Dr. Turn right (south) on Oak. Left on Cunningham St. to Larson/Palace St. Then right on River Valley for about 1 mile to River-Marsh Trail. Take trail to East Ave. or to downtown La Crosse. From downtown La Crosse take Cass St. east to signed on-street bike route including 29th/28th/31st/32nd/33rd streets. 33rd Street connects to Pammel Creek Trail. Take this trail under WIS 35 to begin southbound travel on this highway. Northbound: 33rd St. to Pammel Cr. Trail to signed on-street bike route including 33rd/32nd/31st/28th/29th streets. Left on Cass St. to downtown La Crosse. Take River-Marsh Trail that begins on US 53 just north of the intersection of La Crosse St. in downtown. turn right of east on trail to River Valley Dr. North on River Valley to Palace. Left on Palace. Right on Oak St. Left on Oak Forest Dr. to beginning of Great River State Trail. From Onalaska to Trempealeau take the Great River State Trail.

**Alternate Highway Route:** Southbound From Trempealeau travel on WIS 35 for 6 miles. Turn right or south on County XX for 5 miles to Midway. Intersect with the Great River State Trail (off-road) near intersection of County OT and County ZN in Midway. For on-road option at this point head south or stay right from County XX to County OT. County OT for 1 mile to County ZM. Right on County ZM for 1 mile to County Z and nearby WIS 35. Northbound For on-road option from WIS 35 turn left (west) on County Z to County Z M. Right on County ZM to County OT. Stay left or straight to County OT for 1 mile to County XX. Stay left for County XX. County XX for 5 miles and left on WIS 35. From Great River State Trail in Midway, head north on County OT for 1/2 mile to County XX. Stay left for County XX. County XX for 5 miles. Turn left or west on WIS 35 to Trempealeau.

# Existing Conditions



# Existing Conditions



## Section 6 Genoa



**Distance:** 11 miles from La Crosse to Stoddard. 7 miles from Stoddard to Genoa. 22 miles from map matchline to map matchline.

**Difficulty:** The terrain for the entire length of the route on this panel is flat.

**Route Travel Conditions:** Most of WIS 35 from La Crosse to Stoddard is rated as “higher volume, wider paved shoulders”. From Stoddard to Genoa, because of narrow paved shoulders and high traffic volume, this section is rated as undesirable. From Genoa to Victory wider paved shoulders are present making conditions moderately good for cycling.

**Directions:** Southbound: Left or south from 33rd Street in La Crosse onto WIS 35/US 14. US 14 splits off 1 mile from this point. Remain on WIS 35 south to the panel’s matchline. Northbound: From panel’s matchline (near Victory) north on WIS 35 to 33rd Street in La Crosse. Turn right or east on 33rd Street. 33rd Street is about 2/3rds of a mile north of where US 14 adjoins WIS 35. See the [La Crosse inset map](#).

# Optimal Local Routes



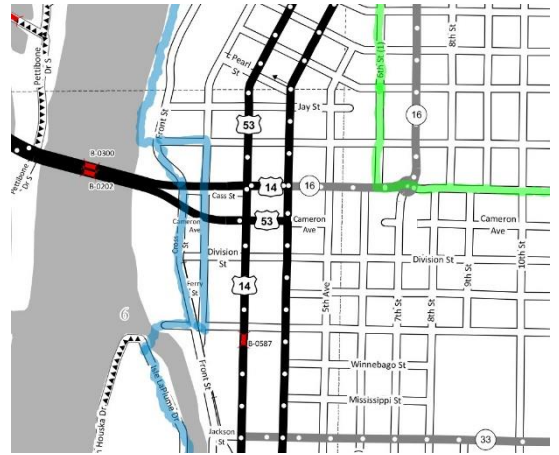
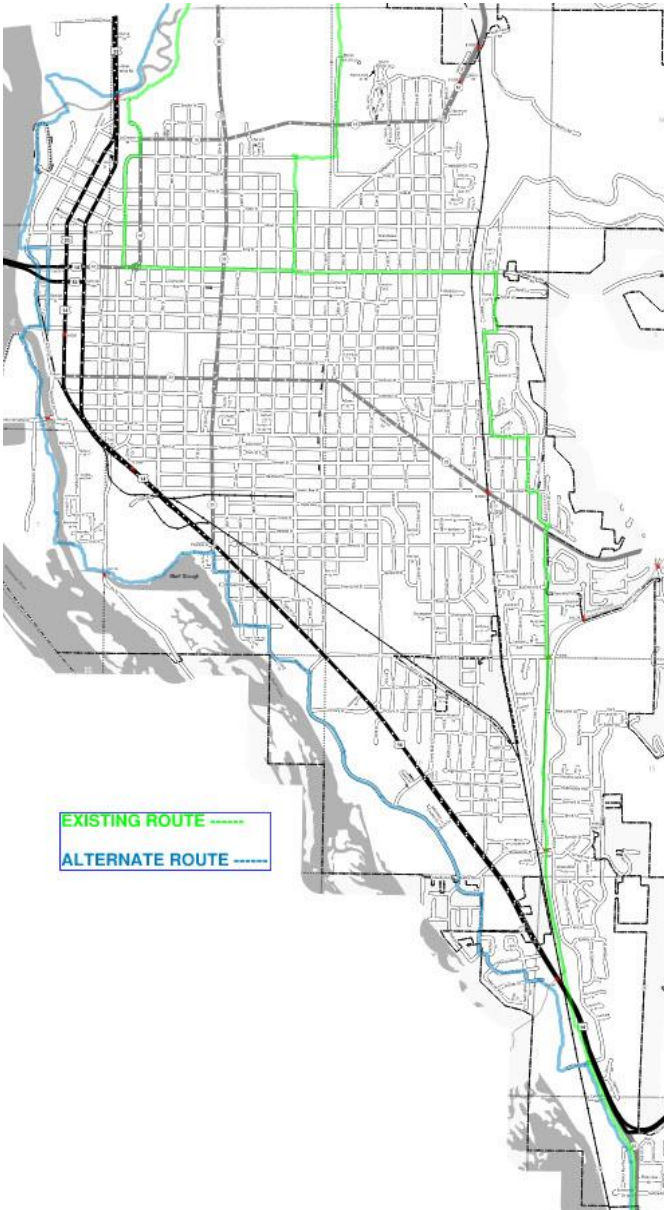
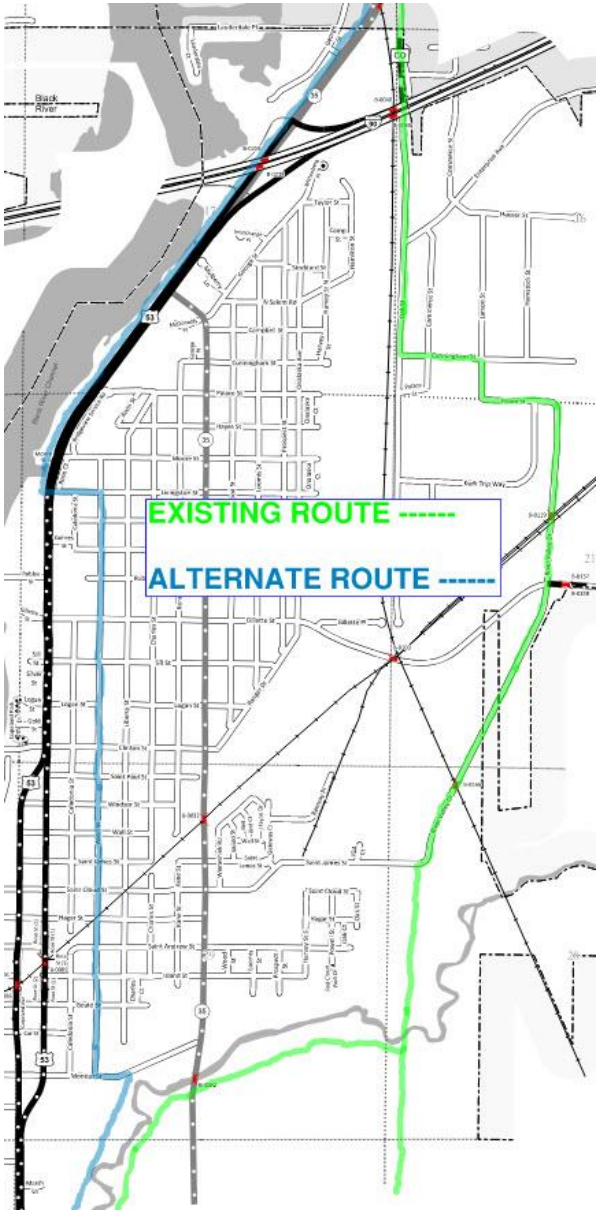
- Proximity to river
- Access to destinations
- Minimal vehicle volumes
- Vehicle speeds
- Complementary Bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Distance off direct route (detriment)
- Route surface (gravel or paved)
- County Bicycle Conditions Maps

Link to full brochure/map at:

<https://wisconsin.gov/Documents/travel/bike/bike-maps/grr/map.pdf>



# Alternate Route Discussion

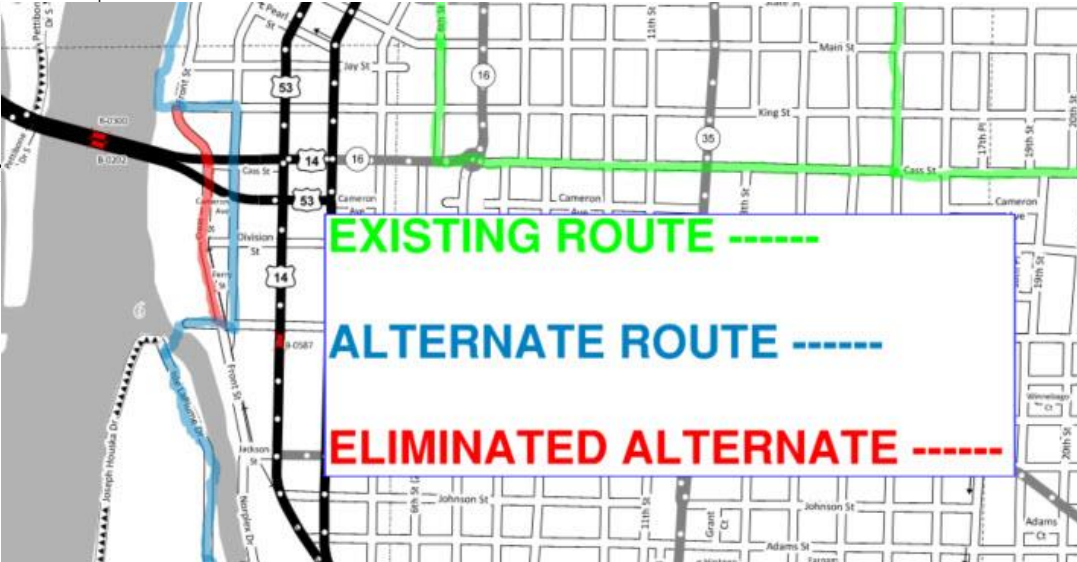
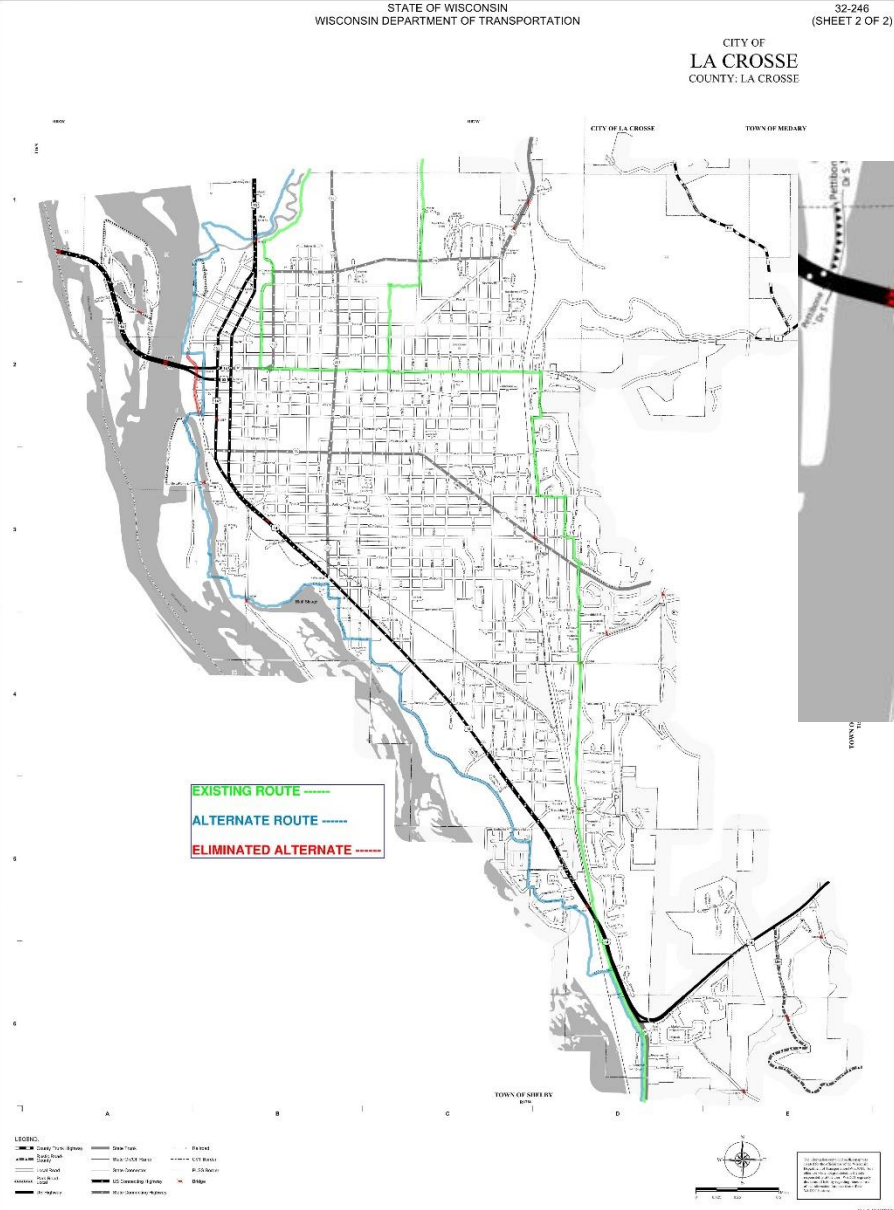


# Alternate Route Discussion

STATE OF WISCONSIN  
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

32-246  
(SHEET 2 OF 2)

CITY OF  
**LA CROSSE**  
COUNTY: LA CROSSE





# Resolution

## A RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE DESIGNATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL WITHIN THE LIMITS OF (CITY/VILLAGE/TOWN/COUNTY)

WHEREAS bicycle tourism is a growing industry in North America, contributing \$47 billion a year to the economies of communities that provide facilities for such tourists; and

WHEREAS the Mississippi River Trail is a national bicycle route, along the length of the Mississippi River, through ten states, from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS the Mississippi River Trail was designated as one of only 16 National Millennium Trails which honor the past and imagine the future by preserving and commemorating major events and aspects of America's history and culture; and

WHEREAS the Mississippi River Trail provides access to and promotes the scenic, historic, archaeological, cultural, recreational and natural qualities of the Mississippi River and its amenities; and

WHEREAS the Mississippi River Trail in Wisconsin is located primarily on the Great River Road (WIS 35) between Prescott and Illinois State Line, but also routed on other state and county highways, local roads or alternative routes for bicycling; and

WHEREAS the Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission and (CITY/VILLAGE/TOWN/COUNTY), with the cooperation of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and other stakeholders, have proposed a specific route to be designated as Mississippi River Trail; and

WHEREAS the Mississippi River Trail implements Wisconsin Statutes Chapters 1.11, 84.01(35), 84.60, and 85.02, 349.23 and Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter Trans 400 which required that "due consideration to establishing bikeways and pedestrian ways in all new highway construction and reconstruction projects"; and

WHEREAS the Mississippi River Trail adds value to existing roads and trails; and

WHEREAS the Mississippi River Trail is largely ready to sign and market, and many suggested improvements are already planned; and

WHEREAS the Mississippi River Trail will contribute to sustainable economic development in 33 Wisconsin Mississippi River communities; and

WHEREAS the proposed route for the Mississippi River Trail comes through (CITY/VILLAGE/TOWN/COUNTY) and can therefore provide a benefit to our residents and businesses; and

WHEREAS the Mississippi River Trail will provide increased recreational and transportation choices for individuals to enjoy the outdoors as well as provide health, economic, and quality of life benefits; and

WHEREAS the Mississippi River Trail continues Wisconsin's tradition of honoring and enhancing the Mississippi River by offering multiple bicycling experiences, each in a unique river landscape; and

WHEREAS we have investigated the proposed route and found it to be a suitable route, and desire that the route be designated so that it can be mapped and signed, thereby promoting bicycle tourism in our area; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that (CITY/VILLAGE/TOWN/COUNTY) in order to receive full benefit of the Mississippi River Trail, hereby expresses its approval and support for the development of the Mississippi River Trail, and requests that the appropriate officials see to it that the route is officially designated along the following segments within the limits of the (CITY/VILLAGE/TOWN/COUNTY):

(describe route here)

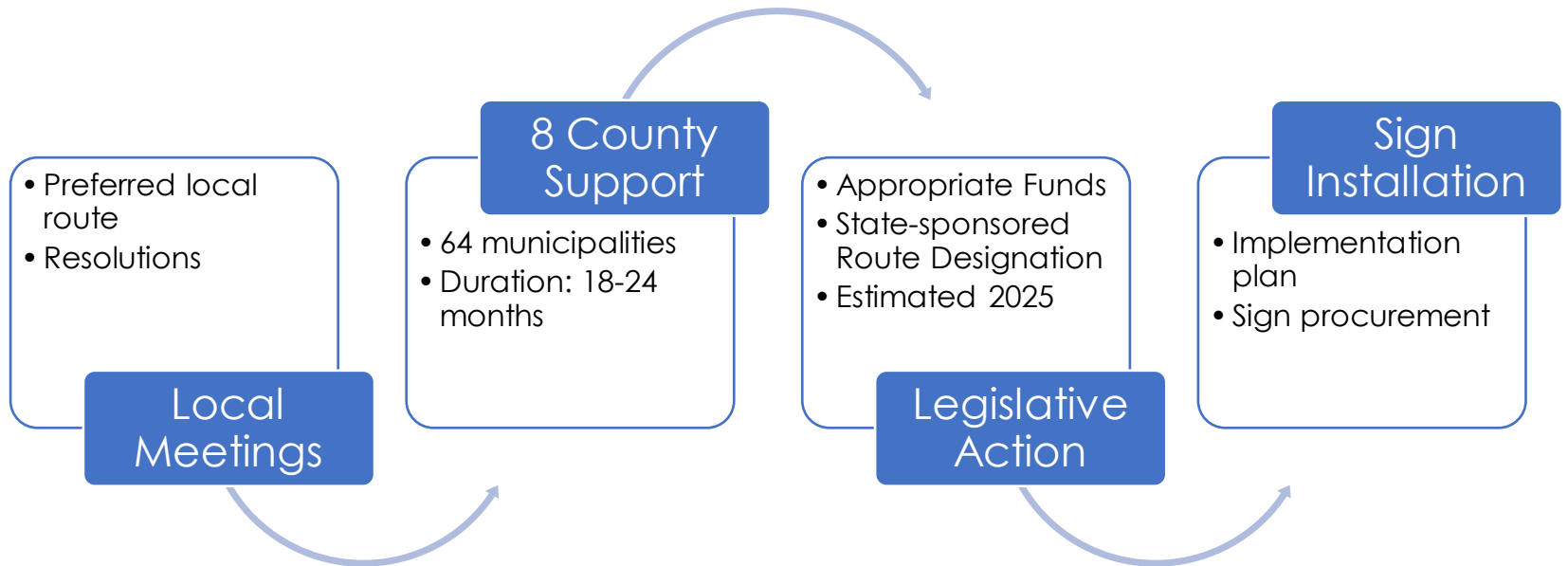
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Next Steps and Timeline



# Route Signage

- **Designated Route Signage**
- Guidance to clearly mark the primary and secondary MRT and GRR routes through local communities



# Local Marketing Signage

- **Local Marketing and Wayfinding Signage**
- Signage to direct cyclists to and from GRR/MRT to local services, such as food, supplies, and local attractions
- Where do I go “off the route” – how do I get there?



# FAQ's

- Why do we request a resolution vs. a letter of support?
  - State & US Route designation guidance requests resolutions from each community that a route passes through.
- Signage installation and maintenance costs and responsibilities?
  - It is the intent of the WiMRPC and their legislative members to fully fund the initial purchase and installation of the route signs.
  - Maintenance would fall to the local jurisdiction of the roadway, trail or facility that the MRT is designated along.
- How much does signage cost and what is the life expectancy on signage?
  - Route signage ranges from \$250-\$350 per sign installed.
  - Signs (if not damaged) are expected to last 10-15 years.



# Contact Information

Sherry Quamme:

Phone: 920.210.4560 | Email: [squamme43@gmail.com](mailto:squamme43@gmail.com)

Jean Galasinski:

Phone: 608.386.2783 | Email: [mrswrenyhouse@trivest.net](mailto:mrswrenyhouse@trivest.net)

Ken Harwood:

Phone: 608.334.2174 | Email: [ken@mrrpc.com](mailto:ken@mrrpc.com)

Roz Schnick:

Phone: 608.769.3365 | Email: [rozschnick478@gmail.com](mailto:rozschnick478@gmail.com)

John Rosenow:

Phone: 608.626.2571 | Email: [jrosenow@mwt.net](mailto:jrosenow@mwt.net)

Francis Schelfhout:

Phone: 608.785.9947 | Email: [francis.schelfhout@dot.wi.gov](mailto:francis.schelfhout@dot.wi.gov)

WisDOT MRT Website: <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/travel/bike/bike-maps/grr.aspx>

