

Bicentennial Trail Reroute

Concept Plan

04.11.2024

The Narrative

The planning team for the Bicentennial Trail Reroute has gathered data, city staff input, partner input (FOB) and geographic information to assemble a *Design 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 *Design Concept Plan*.

The property in scope lies in the northeast portion of 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 was to create a trail that would also allow emergency vehicles to access that section of the 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 very steep grades (~30%).

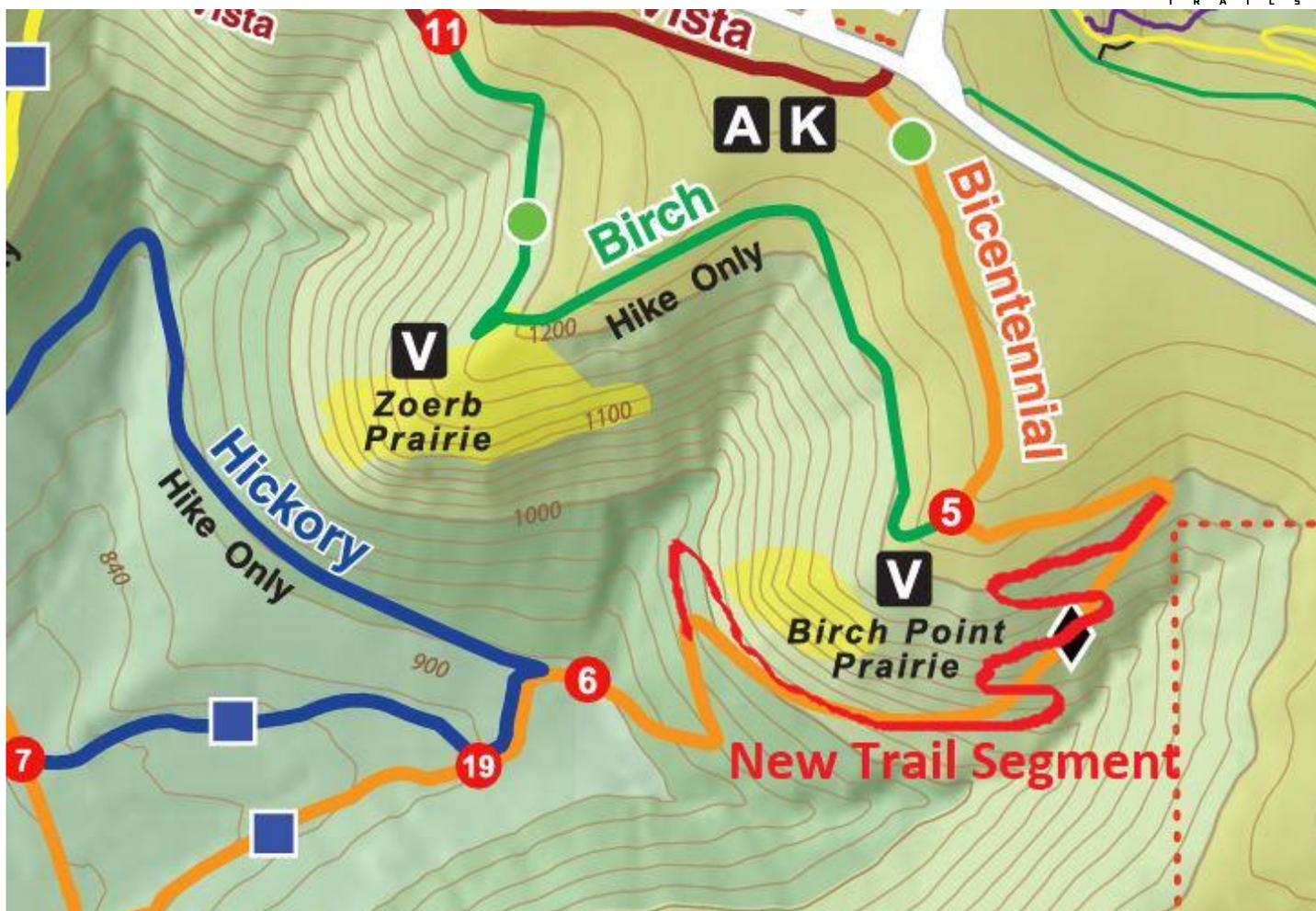
In an effort to improve user experience, reduce congestion on other trails, and improve the physical sustainability of our trail system, it is recommended to reroute sections of the existing Bicentennial Trail. There are steep banks and cliffs, deep ravines, and restored prairie and savanna all nearby. 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.

The Objectives

- Increase safety and user experiences on heavily used trails by dispersing uses to other trails in the forest
- Improve the environmental and social impacts of the trail by establishing sustainable trail construction standards for grades, side slope, and grade reversals
- Utilize the trail siting and 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

- Coordinate with city staff to identify needs and potential solutions
- Develop Concept Plan
- Park Board approval of general concept and permission to move forward
- Input and engagement with users and partner organizations to review and refine the concept
- Finalize trail construction plan details and final approvals
- Complete needed reroutes, repairs, and rehabilitation using a combination of volunteers, work crews, and specialized contractual work if/where needed



The Route

- The new route will use existing starting and ending points of the Bicentennial Trail
- The new route will add about ½ mile of trail to the length, allowing the trail to undulate on the hillside and achieve more sustainable grades
- The trail will have an average of 8-10% and will have grades over 15% for minimal distances.
- There will be minimal disruption to trail naming and signage as the starting and ending points will remain.

The Trail Specifications

- The new route will use existing starting and ending points of the Bicentennial Trail
- The new route will add about ½ mile of trail to the length, allowing the trail to undulate on the hillside and achieve more sustainable grades
- The trail will have an average of 8-10% and will have grades over 15% for minimal distances.
- 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.