

INTER-CITY TRAIL PROJECT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following outline is intended to answer some of the most frequently asked questions related to the proposed recreational trail that connect the communities of Rockville, Cold Spring and Richmond. Because the trail would connect these three communities, it is commonly referred to as the “ROCORI Trail”, which represents the first two letters of each community.

1. **How did this project begin?**

The need to establish recreational trails within and between the three cities ranked very high during community visioning processes conducted in Cold Spring, Rockville and Richmond in 2003 and 2004. From there, interested citizens began meeting with representatives of area cities and townships, Stearns County, the DNR, National Park Service, and others in an effort to get the inter-city project underway.

2. **What will the trail look like?**

The most lucrative grant sources have stipulations on the design of the trail; therefore, it is likely that certain characteristics of the trail are known. Firstly, that the trail must be a separate surface from roadways. The use of road shoulders for instance, would likely disqualify the project for most grants. Secondly, that the trail must have a ten-foot wide paved surface with two-foot shoulders on either side. Thirdly, that it must be handicapped accessible; which limits the maximum slope to 10% among other factors.

The total length of the trail as it is currently proposed would be 12.2 miles. The trail will not be lit, and snow will likely not be cleared during winter months.

3. **Where will the trail be located?**

Although there are two alternative routes that have been suggested, this decision has not been finalized, so your feedback is welcome. The preferred route, referred to as Alternative I would have the trail located on the right-of-way for the railway that connects the three communities, this design is referred to as the “Rails with Trails” concept. Railroad property is generally fifty feet on either side of the centerline of the tracks, so the trail would likely be located at the outer edge of that width. Stearns County Parks officials are in discussions with the railroad owners and operators working to secure permission to locate the trail on the railway, but nothing has been agreed to yet. Rails with Trails has proven successful throughout the country, including Minnesota. Although many such regional trails utilize abandoned track beds, one of the major objectives of this project is to not disrupt rail service to the area.

Alternative II would utilize mostly public right-of-ways. Under this scenario, the trail would likely be located at the edge of the right-of-way in the road ditches.

4. **What will the trail cost?**

A separate sheet entitled *Trail Costs and Financing* provides a detailed explanation of probable costs and the sources of the money required to fund the project, but the latest estimate of the cost for Phase I is \$784,957 and for Phase II is \$1,021,925. These estimates include construction, engineering, legal, fiscal and administrative expenses, as well as a contingency of 10%. If you have not seen this information, but would like to, please be sure to contact one of the project representatives listed at the end of this sheet.

5. **How will the cost of building the trail be paid?**

Undertaking the project is entirely dependent upon securing a substantial amount of grant commitments. There are two likely sources of funding; the federal government’s TEA-21 funding and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Regardless of how successful grant efforts are, there is a certain portion of the project cost that

will need to be paid by the local governments. The intent is to have the portion paid locally to be as little as \$30,000 per community. It is hoped that fundraising within the communities will reduce the cost to local governments even further.

6. Who will maintain the trail?

In many cases the DNR will maintain regional trail systems such as this one, provided that it meets various requirements. The DNR has had a representative at the early meetings on this project, and there is strong interest in incorporating this trail into the Glacial Lakes Trail system. If the DNR would not maintain the trail, the only likely alternative is that it would need to be maintained by local governments.

7. When will the trail be built?

In order to increase the opportunity for securing grants for the project, it became necessary to divide the project into two phases. Phase I would provide for the construction of the trail from east of Richmond into the western end of Cold Spring. Phase II would bring the trail through Cold Spring to about Stearns County Road 6 in Rockville. The phases were set in this order because the cost and challenges associated with Phase I are less than with Phase II. The earliest that construction of Phase I would begin is 2008, with Phase II to begin in 2009.

8. Will motorized vehicles be allowed on the trail?

ATVs and dirt bikes will be prohibited from the trail. Whether snowmobiles will be permitted has yet to be determined. The position of the committee working on the project has been that each of the three communities has designated snowmobile trails, but is lacking pedestrian trails. Accordingly, to this point the effort is to develop this trail as entirely non-motorized. The reality is that certain funding sources require that snowmobilers (even though other motorized users are prohibited) must be admitted as trail users in order to fund construction or maintenance costs; therefore, the decision on whether snowmobiles are permitted is one that cannot be made at this time.

9. Which uses will be permitted on the trail?

The trail is intended for a variety of users, many of whom commonly use such a trail harmoniously at the same time. Walkers, bikers, in-line skaters and wheel chairs are common summer users. Winter users would likely consist predominately of cross-country skiers. Horses would likely be prohibited from using the trail. According to the Stearns County Parks Department, studies of Lake Wobegon Trail usage indicate that about 70% are bikers, 20% walkers and 10% are in-line skaters. Stearns County has various means of monitoring traffic on the Lake Wobegon Trail; the period between April and October sees 60,000 users.

10. Will the trail connect to the Glacial Lakes State Trail?

The Glacial Lakes State Trail, which has been in existence for some time, is owned and operated by the DNR. The trail is paved from Willmar through New London for a distance of about 12, followed by a six mile crushed granite surface to Hawick, the remaining 22 miles to the east side of Richmond (terminates at 278th Avenue) is undeveloped and has the original railroad stones as a surface. Some railroad bridges have been removed. Connecting these two trails would be beneficial for residents seeking to have exclusions outside our communities, and would bring tourism to our region.

11. Will the trail connect to other communities?

That is the plan. Even as far back as 1992, the DNR's master plan for the Glacial Lakes State Trail recognized the significance of bringing the system into St. Cloud and connecting to Quarry Park. Additionally, there has been interest in connecting the Rocori Trail to the Lake Wobegon Trail in St. Joseph. Although these projects are likely many years away, every regional trail throughout Minnesota began with the same type of lofty vision.

12. What points of interest would be accessed by the trail?

Other regional trail projects have shown that these amenities can provide a tremendous economic benefit to host communities. Trail users heavily patronize restaurants, hotels and shops while recreating. The Rocori trail would

provide immediate access to downtowns in Rockville, Cold Spring and Richmond. The trail would also provide access either directly or indirectly with short off-chutes to area parks, historic sites and specific points of interest such as River Lakes Arena and the Quarry Cinema.

13. What can I do to help make this dream become a reality?

This trail project began as a citizen-led effort and will only succeed if citizens get and stay involved. To get started, contact the people listed below.

14. Who should I contact if I have questions or comments regarding this project?

Officials from all three cities have regularly attended meetings on this project. The City Administrators from the three communities have agreed to serve as contact points for the exchange of information.

Rockville: Martin M. Bode, 320-251-5836

Richmond: Tesa Tomaschett, 320-597-2075

Cold Spring: Brigid Murphy, 320-685-3653