PROJECT ACCESS YORK FAQs

Updated August 19, 2024

What changes have been made to the project as a result of the public involvement process?

The project team reviewed all comments received from the public meeting on May 28th, 2024. The project team met and discussed the suggestions made within the comments and determined that the following changes, additions or revisions to the project could be incorporated into the project while still meeting the purpose and need of the project.

- Two additional pedestrian crossings to access the trail along the east side of Maine Avenue would be incorporated at the intersections of Eastridge Avenue as well as E 6th Street. Pedestrian crossings are already included within the project at the intersections of Nobes Road, Clearview Blvd., Raell Drive, E 4th Street, and E 8th Street.
- Pedestrian crossing signage for the trail crossings at S 21st Street and S Grant Avenue would be improved.
- To maintain on-street parking on one side of Nebraska Avenue several changes have been made to the proposed on-street bike facilities along Nebraska Avenue. The proposed project improvements to Nebraska Avenue are listed below.
    - From Beaver Creek Park to E 1st Street: The proposed off-street 8-foot-wide trail along the east side of Nebraska Avenue would remain as part of the project improvements. On-street parking would be maintained as it currently exists today.
    - From E 1st Street to E 4th Street: The proposed two-way cycle track on the west side Nebraska Avenue would be removed from the project and converted to an off-street 8-foot-wide trail along the east side of Nebraska Avenue. On-street parking would be maintained as it currently exists today.
    - From E 4th Street to E 14th Street: The proposed two-way cycle track on the west side of Nebraska Avenue would remain as part of the project improvements. Parallel parking along the west side of Nebraska Avenue would be removed with the proposed improvements. Parallel parking along the east side of Nebraska Avenue would be maintained as it currently exists today.
    - From E 14th Street to the Fairgrounds: The proposed bike lanes on Nebraska Avenue would be removed from the project and converted to shared lanes. On-street parking would be maintained as it currently exists today.

How is the trail going to be kept safe?

- This project has been designed from a safety standpoint to reduce the number of conflict points with vehicles. Conflicts with vehicle is the most significant safety issue for trail users.
- The project has been reviewed by a senior active transportation industry expert trained in CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design). Increasing sightlines and sight distance specifically along the old railroad ROW corridor is another key safety design measure.
- Trees, fencing and steep backslopes would function as natural and manmade buffers to deter trespassing onto private property along the old railroad ROW corridor.
- Emergency vehicles have multiple points of access for all portions of the trail. The trail's topography is such that emergency vehicles can traverse the trail if necessary. York first responders already have protocols and training in place to access trails away from streets for the Beaver Creek trail.

How may the trail affect my property?

To construct and maintain the trail, the proposed project would require permanent or temporary property rights in the form of ROW, permanent easements or temporary easements. ROW and easement acquisition would be managed by The Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT). Their general process is to perform an appraisal of the area of land that is to be acquired, contact the landowner for negotiations and process the acquisition of ROW or easements resulting in a payment to the property owner.

Will the trail have lighting?

Current cost estimates anticipate that lighting would only initially be included on the pedestrian bridge. As solar lighting technology improves, the cost and feasibility of including more lighting would be considered.

Will fencing be constructed along the trail?

Fencing may be included along certain segments of the trail. Properties that currently have fencing would be compensated through the ROW process for the removal and relocation of their fence to the new edge of their property line.

Who will maintain the trail and be liable for accidents on the trail?

The City of York (the City) would be responsible for trail maintenance (i.e., mowing, repairing, and removing snow) to ensure trail accessibility and to make the trail visually appealing. Liability for users who have accidents on the trail would be the responsibility of the City and in the City's overall liability insurance policy.

How is cost being considered?

The current costs are estimates based on recent construction bid information and anticipated inflation with contingency cushions. The City would continue to work with the project team as design progresses to control costs.

Future maintenance, lighting, amenity or law enforcement costs are not included within the project estimate and would be the responsibility of various City departments depending on the future needs of the trail.

What is NDOT's involvement in this project?

NDOT supports the proposed *Project Access York* project through many different roles, project coordination, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews, permitting and procuring, and it is committed to working in partnership with the City to ensure the project adheres to regulations and requirements throughout the many different phases of the project lifecycle.

NDOT congratulates the City on its work to apply for and be awarded the $15 million in federal RAISE Grant funding for this project.

How was the bridge location chosen?

Multiple locations for the proposed pedestrian bridge over US-81 were evaluated early on in the design process. Four options were presented to the public in March of 2023 at the public open house between Noami/McGowan and 35th Street. Consensus from the public open house preferred a bridge location south of David Drive rather than north near 35th Street. Constructability, cost, and ramp locations were evaluated for locations south of David Drive. The location selected near Noami Road & McGowan Street provided the most technically feasible and cost-effective solution while placing access points to the bridge near high-pedestrian traffic areas. The ramps on either end of the bridge would be constructed to be ADA (American Disability Act) compliant. Stairs and/or elevators would not be included with the construction of the bridge.

What alternative routes have been explored for the southern portion of the trail and why weren't alignments closer to Hwy 81 or Grant Avenue selected?

In March of 2023, the project team, in coordination with multiple community stakeholders, held a community day of planning called a design charrette. This design charrette was a day-long effort to build a preferred route for the proposed *Project Access York* project. During the design charrette, the project team reviewed the original alignment proposed under the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant with the group and discussed the purpose and need of the project for each segment of the trail. Multiple breakout groups collaborated on each section of the proposed alignment and presented their agreed upon route to the overall group. The entire group discussed, debated, and agreed on the alignment that would be carried forward into design, the preferred route. At the end of the day, each segment of the trail with the original and revised alignments were presented at a public information open house meeting.

The current alignment best meets the transportation criteria of safety, cost-effectiveness and benefit to the community expected to use the trails. **The most important safety principle for trail design is reducing conflict points with traffic.** The majority of crashes between bicyclists and vehicles occur at intersections and driveways (*1*). **The route along the railroad right of way corridor provides long stretches of trail with no driveways or intersections. Any other route compromises safety by adding multiple additional driveways and/or intersections.**

The current proposed route along the old railroad ROW corridor is preferred for additional reasons including:

- It impacts the fewest property owners of the explored alternatives.
- It is the most economic option.
- It does not impact any utilities.
- The old railroad line includes a platform for placing the trail similar to what has been done across Nebraska as well as nationwide. See examples at https://www.railstotrails.org/

The sections below outline the other routes explored along with additional the reasons why they were removed from consideration.

The original route proposed under the RAISE Grant along the east side of US-81/Lincoln Avenue between S 21st Street and Nobes Road was evaluated and removed from consideration for the following reasons:

- NDOT prefers to keep trails out of the state highway right of way (ROW) to maintain the safety of the highway corridor.
- Maintaining a safe separation between trail users and vehicular traffic on Lincoln Avenue would result in filling in the Regulatory Floodway at the bottom of the embankment which is not permitted by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).
    - To prevent this, the trail would have to be built into the roadway embankment with retaining walls or would have to utilize excessively steep slopes with safety railings, which would contribute to significant cost increases.
- Eight (8) additional driveway or intersection crossings would be introduced by constructing the trail along US-81/Lincoln Avenue and Nobes Road over to Beaver Creek Park. Many of these driveway and intersection crossings are high-volume and each additional crossing poses a safety risk for trail users.
- Driveway reconstruction along with retaining walls, safety railings and drainage improvements would be needed to avoid or mitigate existing drainage patterns, parking, and circulation for the properties adjacent to Lincoln Avenue and Nobes Road. Additional utilities above and below ground would be impacted along this route as well.
- This route would be approximately 0.2 miles longer than the preferred route.
- The total estimated construction cost for realigning the trail to this path is approximately $730,000 more than the preferred route not including additional design, utility, or ROW costs.

Alternative routes along the east and west sides of Grant Avenue up to Nobes Road and over to Beaver Creek Park, as shown within the original RAISE Grant, were evaluated and removed from consideration for the following reasons:

- Eight (8) to 12 additional properties would be impacted by either of these routes, in addition to impacts already anticipated by the preferred route. Impacts to properties are anticipated, due to the inability to construct the trail within existing ROW south of the Beaver Creek crossing due to the narrow ROW corridor, existing drainage swales and overhead power poles. North of the Beaver Creek crossing, potential impacts to buildings, commercial parking and property circulation would require the trail to be located within existing ROW which would lead to additional roadway drainage improvements involving curb and gutter construction, storm sewer improvements, and relocations.
- Nineteen (19) to 20 additional driveway or intersection crossings would be introduced by constructing the trail along either the east or west side of Grant Avenue up to Nobes Road over to Beaver Creek Park. Many of these driveway and intersection crossings are high-volume and each additional crossing poses a safety risk for trail users.
- Driveway reconstruction, box culvert extension, channel regrading, curb and gutter construction, storm sewer improvements, guardrail and utility relocations would be needed to construct the trail along either of these routes.
- The total estimated construction cost for realigning the trail to either of these routes is approximately $440,000 more than the preferred route not including additional design, utility, or ROW costs.

A route along S 21st Street to Blackburn Avenue was additionally evaluated and removed from consideration for the following reasons:

- Six (6) additional driveway or intersection crossings would be introduced by constructing the trail along S 21st Street and Blackburn Avenue to Beaver Creek Park. Each additional crossing poses a safety risk for trail users.
- Because of the minimal existing ROW width along S 21st Street and Blackburn Avenue, the trail would potentially impact existing overhead power lines as well as two different center pivot irrigation systems.
- This route would be approximately 0.2 miles longer than the preferred route.

A revised alternative alignment which diverts from the current proposed trail route just south of the church on the old railroad ROW and proceeds east to ultimately head north along the west side of Grant Avenue up to the currently proposed trail crossing of Grant Avenue near the Beaver Creek tributary was additionally evaluated and removed from consideration for the following reasons:

- Two (2) additional properties would be impacted by this route, in addition to impacts already anticipated by the preferred route. Impacts to properties are anticipated, due to the inability to construct the trail within existing ROW south of the Beaver Creek crossing due to the narrow ROW corridor, existing drainage swales and overhead power poles.
- Nine (9) additional driveway crossings would be introduced by constructing the trail along this segment. 1 of these driveway crossings is a higher-volume and each additional crossing poses a safety risk for trail users.
- The total estimated construction cost for realigning the trail to this route is approximately $100,000 more than the preferred route not including additional design, utility, or ROW costs.

What about questions not listed here?

Not all feedback can be incorporated into the design of the project while still maintaining the purpose of the project and the key values of safety, cost effectiveness, and benefit to the community expected to use the trails. Connecting all parts of the city is the heart of the project and rationale for receiving the $15 million grant. As discussed in this FAQ, the railroad right of way corridor remains the best alignment based on the core values of safety, cost effectiveness and benefit to the community expected to use the trail. Each person who submitted a question or comment would receive an individual response to their question if they provided their contact information.

References

1. Hunter, W.W., J.C. Stutts, W.E. Pein, and C.L. Cox. *Pedestrian and Bicycle Crash Types of the Early 1990's.* FHWA-RD-95-163. Federal Highway Administration, Washington, DC, 1996.