

2020

FOX CITIES *Trail Summit*



What is this document?

This is the Fox Cities Trail Summit Report, suggested by 65 people who attended the Fox Cities Trail Summit February 25, 2020, at Bubolz Nature Preserve. They were mostly municipal professionals in parks and recreation, community development and planning from the towns, villages, cities and counties that make up the Fox Cities. They were joined by representatives of Lawrence University and a number of advocacy and community organizations. A partnership of Fox Cities Greenways, East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region invited them together to meet the following goals and objectives.

Why host a trail summit?

Just like motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians are not limited by municipal borders. Historically, planning for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure occurred within the silos of individual municipal boundaries. This hyperlocal planning led to abrupt termination of sidewalks, bike lanes and trails. Through a regional planning approach, municipalities have started collaborating for logical expansion of the multi-use trail network. The Fox Cities Trail Summit was convened to encourage and accelerate that cooperation.

The summit idea was sparked and supported by the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region (CFFVR) and accomplished through the effort and leadership of Fox Cities Greenways, Inc., (FCGI) and East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC). Aware of increasing development of trails in the region, the Community Foundation in 2019 conducted a survey of Fox Cities municipalities and their plans for trail development. Dedicated to improving the wellbeing of residents of the Fox Valley Region, the CFFVR saw the trails as an asset for current and potential residents and a statement about the active, family-oriented community the Fox Valley intended to be.

The research found that an incredible **\$19 million in trail development** was planned for 2020 to 2022 just in the Fox Cities. These were projects already funded or listed in municipal capital improvement plans, which enumerate large projects planned within the next five years.

The Trail Summit was a one-day event bringing together local municipalities, advocates and trailblazers from the region. Participants spent the morning focusing on social and economic equity in trail development, as well as learning best practices from communities within the region that had partnered to accomplish large-scale projects.

summit goals

- ◇ Foster broader dialogue across municipal boundaries, economic sectors and areas of interest and create increased collaboration in designing and building a better multi-modal transportation system.
- ◇ Make the system of trails in the Fox Cities the best it can be to meet the recreation and transportation needs of current and future residents.
- ◇ Improve health for residents of the Fox Cities.

summit objectives

- ◇ Coordinating active transportation and recreation routes will promote collaboration among municipal leaders in the counties, cities, villages and towns of the Fox Cities.
- ◇ Filling in gaps will link municipalities to each other and to state, county and local parks.
- ◇ Improving access to remote areas by trails will showcase what *Imagine Fox Cities* calls the “cultural and natural assets” we prize.
- ◇ Making trails more accessible will help overcome physical, cultural or knowledge barriers that may prevent some of our residents from experiencing trails and promote a feeling of “belonging” in an increasingly diverse community.

Setting the stage >>>

Who Collaborated?

On February 25, 2020, the Fox Cities Trail Summit convened municipal professionals and community partners from throughout the urbanized areas of Calumet, Outagamie and Winnebago counties at Bubolz Nature Preserve in the Town of Grand Chute. The invitation list included municipal partners representing 16 towns, villages, cities and counties from the region, as well as nine supporting community agencies. The summit drew 65 attendees .



<<< Trail Summit Presentations >>>

Equity

Jason Brozek, Associate Professor of Government and Environmental Studies at Lawrence University, Environmental Justice and Transportation Equity.

Jason explored why people with lower incomes and ethnic and racial minorities are less likely to use trails. The answers relate to not feeling they belong and not being invited into the conversation in an effective way. His presentation generated these reactions:

- ◇ An equity lens could be used in determining funding sources for future regional projects as well as the public planning process.
- ◇ We need to shift the mindset from recreational cyclists vs. using bicycles for transportation to destinations such as employment centers and grocers.
- ◇ Working across municipal boundaries is key in building a better bicycle and pedestrian network.
- ◇ Use creativity offered by rails-to-trails programs, creative partnerships and strategies that are mutually beneficial to all partnering organizations.
- ◇ Factors such as poverty levels and population need to be part of future planning.
- ◇ Creating an inclusive culture will make all comfortable in joining the conversation.
- ◇ Planning for vehicular traffic and bicycle networks needs to be done in tandem.
- ◇ Collaboration is needed on services like language translation between municipalities and supporting community agencies to increase equity in public planning.
- ◇ Planners need to note the lack of diversity represented in the planning process.
- ◇ Increasing bike lanes and pedestrian facilities everywhere will allow for reduction in healthcare costs reducing economic gaps.



Collaboration

Representatives from local projects built on collaboration— **Loop the Little Lake** (Neenah, Menasha, Future Neenah) and **Loop the Locks** (Kaukauna, Little Chute) presented on best practices, challenges and successes in partnerships. Participant feedback included:

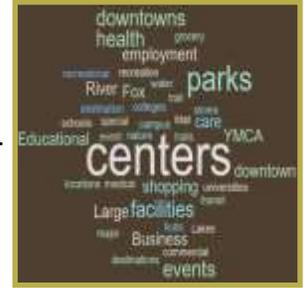
- ◇ These projects create inspiration because they show how municipalities really can work together to build a regional asset.
- ◇ The Fox River connects us all and is a symbol of our communities.
- ◇ Neighboring municipalities to the “Loop” projects are excited to connect to these loops and further expand the network!
- ◇ Many participants agree that Loop the Little Lake has set a precedent for what should be built in future infrastructure for the Fox Cities.
- ◇ Future projects to open the waterfront to more people are an asset to this region and will build momentum to increase bike/pedestrian infrastructure including communities without river access like Grand Chute into the Fox River network of trails.

Stronger together

Assets and Destinations in the Fox Valley Region

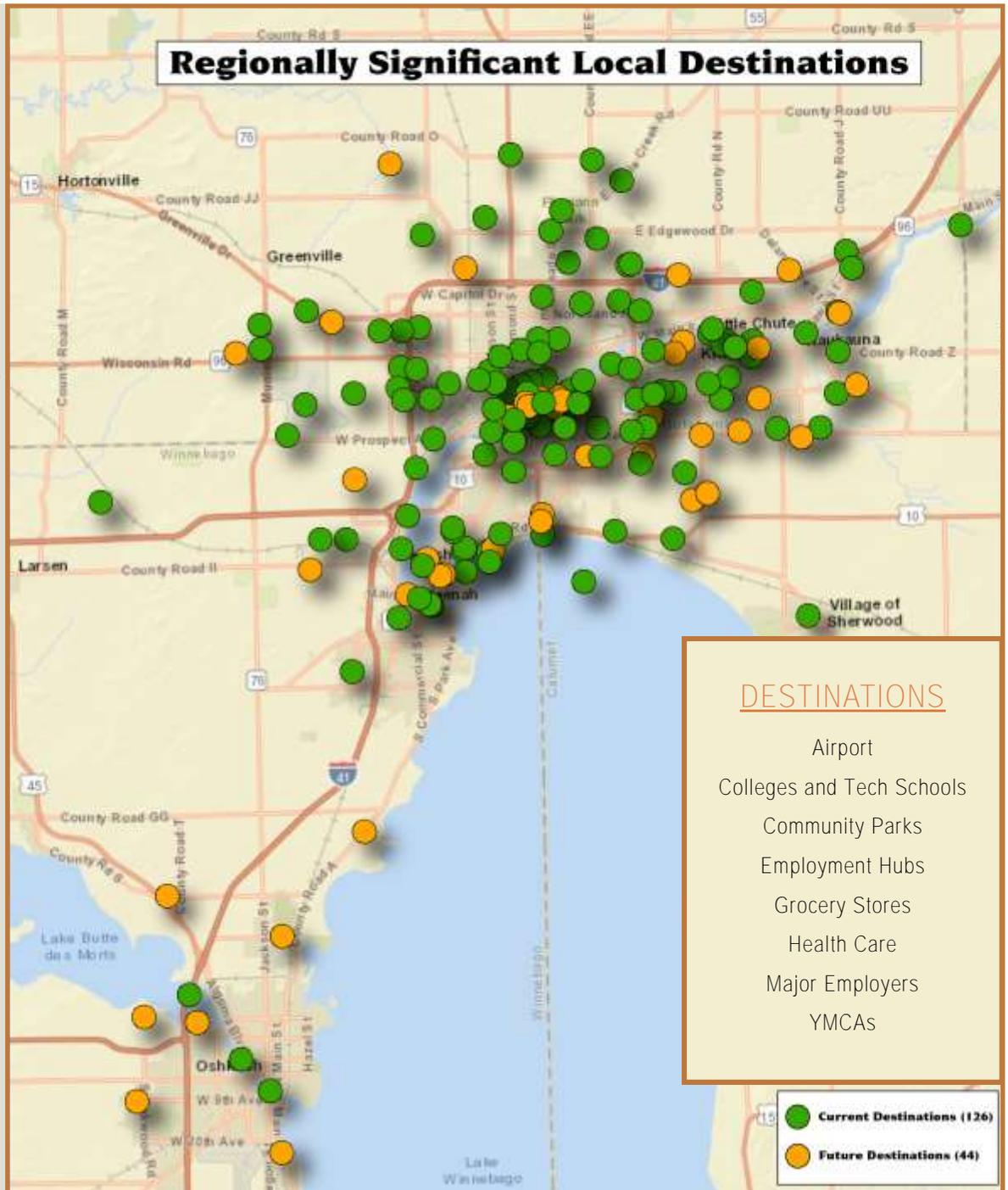
Summit participants were asked to select regional assets and destinations. We divided our group of park and planning professionals, advocates and interested parties into six tables and assigned recorder to each table to get down comments and reactions. Each table included representation from partners Fox Cities Greenways, East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, as well as Lawrence University. To achieve a truly regional approach to planning, participants from different municipalities were grouped together, but the tables concentrated on these six regions:

- ◇ The greater Neenah-Menasha region with communities of Oshkosh, Neenah, Menasha, Fox Crossing, Winnebago County and Outagamie County along with the environmental group PopEarth.
- ◇ County partnerships with Outagamie and Winnebago counties, Pacesetters and Neighborhood Planners.
- ◇ Fox West with Greenville, Appleton, Grand Chute and Little Chute.
- ◇ Fox South communities of Buchanan, Harrison, Calumet County and Outagamie County.
- ◇ Heart of the Valley communities of Kaukauna, Kimberly, Combined Locks and Appleton.
- ◇ A second Fox West group with Outagamie County, Greenville and Grand Chute.



Themes

Throughout the region, a commonality resounded among participants concerning the places considered as destination points in the Fox Cities. Hubs of commerce and shopping from retail to grocery stores were identified. Major healthcare providers, to include, large clinics and hospitals were listed as destinations. Business centers and employment hubs such as business parks and major regional employers were mapped. Community parks, recreation facilities, such as, the local YMCAs, and large greenspaces that attract tourism, events and large community gatherings were added to the list. Education centers such as high schools, colleges, universities, as well as elementary and middle schools were considered destinations. Regional connections from Fond du Lac to Green Bay were also brought up at this time.

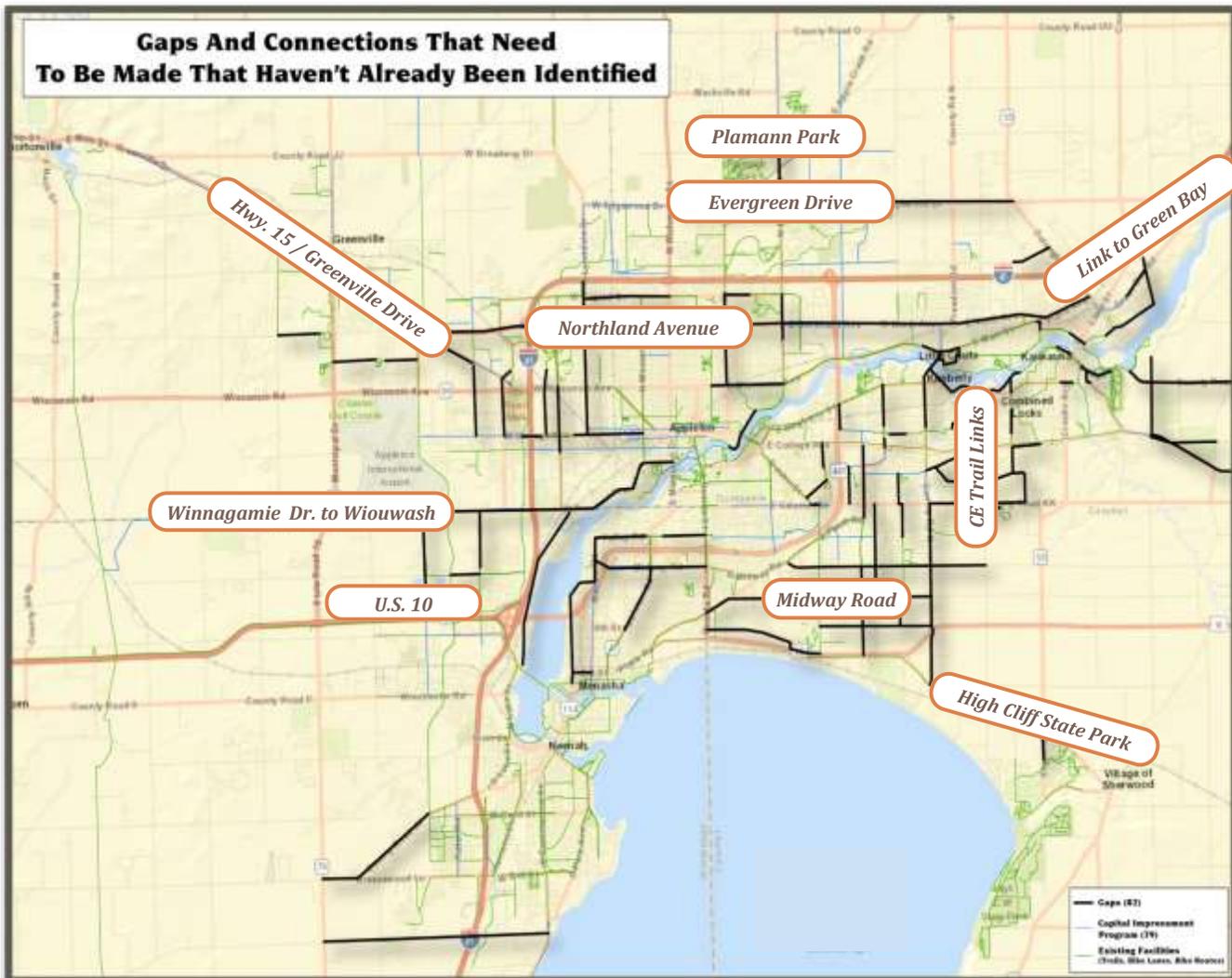


Barriers & gaps

How can we better access the assets in our communities?

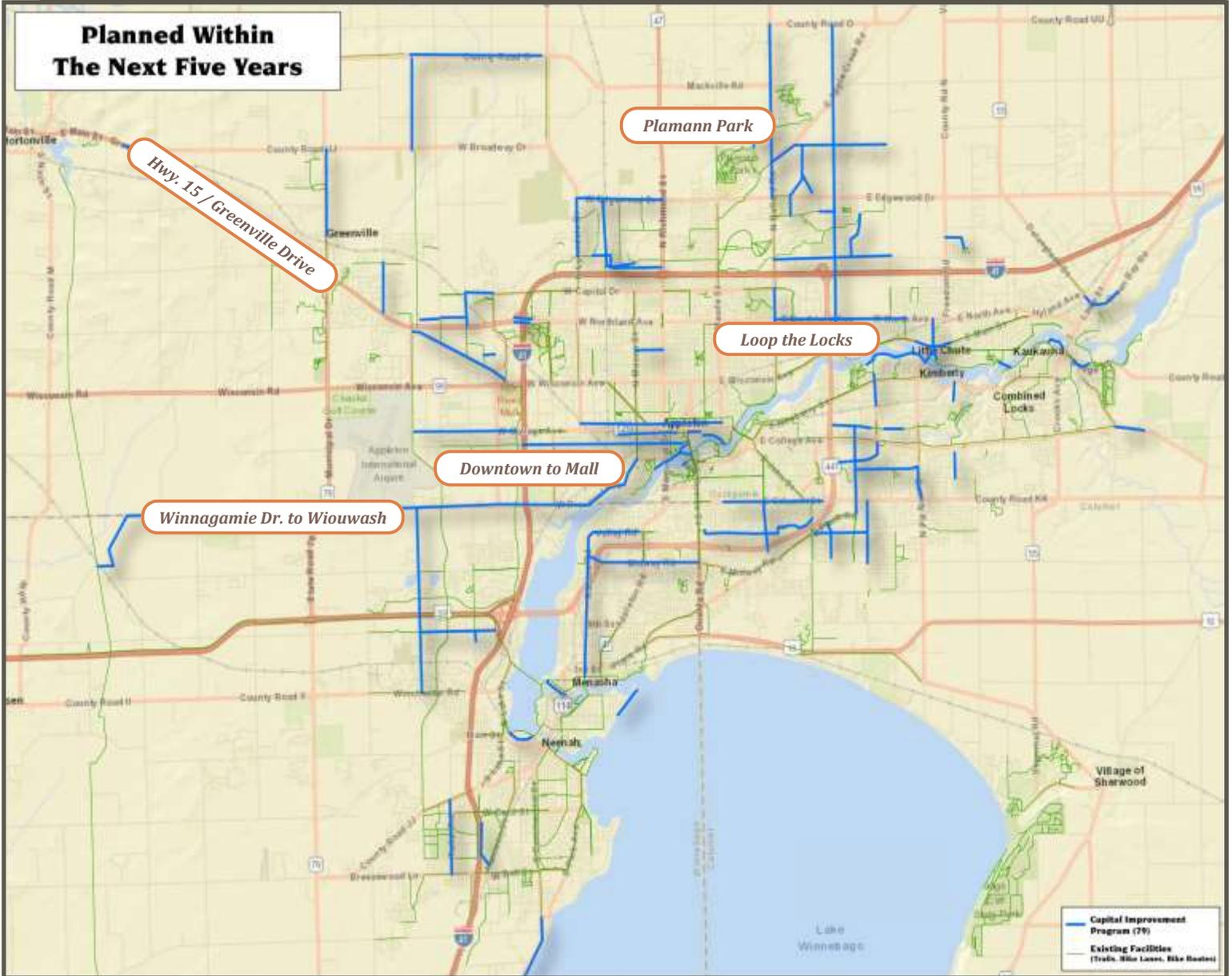
Having identified the destinations people want to visit in their communities, summit attendees put their heads together with officials from neighboring municipalities to find the trail gaps and barriers to people getting there. These they said most need to be addressed.

- ◇ Oshkosh/Winnebago County from Snell Road to CTH Y
- ◇ Nature's Way trail connections to the Appleton system
- ◇ CTH A from Neenah to Oshkosh
- ◇ Prospect Avenue/CTH BB connecting the Appleton system with Loop the Little Lake system
- ◇ Trail access from the Fox Cities to High Cliff State Park
- ◇ College Avenue from downtown Appleton to the Fox River Mall
- ◇ Connecting Little Chute to the Apple Creek area of Appleton
- ◇ Creating safe crossings at busy intersections regionally
- ◇ Connecting Strobe Island to Prospect Avenue
- ◇ State Highway 96 from Wrightstown to Kaukauna
- ◇ CTH ZZ from Kaukauna to Green Bay
- ◇ Prospect Street in Combined Locks to CTH N
- ◇ Apple Creek YMCA to Plamann Park
- ◇ CTH HH to CTH K to allow safe access to the CTH CE Underpass
- ◇ Funding, maintenance, large scale political buy-in, negative reaction to "that trail in my backyard" privacy concerns, and urbanized roadway all presented barriers in all group discussions.



GIS Maps

With special thanks to the ECWRPC GIS staff for their on site technical support and mapping development



BIG IDEAS

What would creative connections look like?

Extending the
Wiouwash Trail.

North-south
arteries through
the cities.

Increased bicycle
safety regionally.

IMAGINE
FOX
CITIES



Summit participants were given the opportunity to imagine a trail network that promoted connectivity, increased trail use for transportation, and solved key regional gap concerns. Today's trail network boasts projects like Loop the Little Lake and state trails such as the Wiouwash and Newton Blackmour. Regional planners are no strangers to using creativity and connections to increase the Fox Cities trail network. One difference though is that in this exercise, participants didn't have to consider barriers such as non-urbanized roadways, budget constraints, partnerships between municipalities—they could just draw trails "where they made sense."

Asking people to "imagine" was inspired by a community initiative in which CFFVR has participated. "Imagine Fox Cities" seeks to discover what the community loves about the Fox Cities, our shared values and also to find out areas where improvement is needed to increase well-being throughout the area.

Participants identified:

- ◇ Connections along the Fox River from the Fox Cities up to Green Bay.
- ◇ Extending the network in several points from the Fox Cities to High Cliff State Park.
- ◇ Key connections into the Wiouwash State Trail along Hwy 15 and Hwy 76.
- ◇ North-south arteries through the cities as well as a few east-west arteries.
- ◇ Increases to regional safety with updated bike/ped facilities at river crossings, such as between Kimberly, Combined Locks and increasing the network of Loop the Locks.

The Fox Cities connected to Green Bay.

Looped trails between riverfront parks.

More connections to Loop the Locks.

A link from the Fox Cities to High Cliff



TRAIL SUMMIT *Steering Committee*

Holly Femal, FCGI President/Village of Kimberly

Kim Biedermann, FCGI Secretary/ECWRPC

Adam Breest, FCGI Vice President/Village of Little Chute

Bob Jakel, FCGI Treasurer/City of Kaukauna

Dave Horst, CFFVR Environmental Grants Manager

Cheryl Zadrazil, FCGI Alum & Advocate

Jeff Hahn, Facilitator, Real World Strategies, LLC.

Melissa Kraemer Badtke, ECWRPC Interim Executive Director

Mike Zuege, ECWRPC GIS Manager

FOX CITIES
TRAIL
SUMMIT **2020**



Presented
By



Fox Cities
GREENWAYS



East Central Wisconsin
Regional Planning Commission
ECWRPC

Sparked and sponsored by the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region



<<< Final Summit Q & A >>>

At the conclusion of the February summit event, participants were asked to share their thoughts on what is needed to spur construction, continue positive development momentum and planning, and make the trails identified in the mapping exercises a reality. Participant feedback included:

- ◇ The importance of sharing the summit results with community leaders for future local planning and implementation.
- ◇ Anticipation for the Fall 2020 release of the ECWRPC Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan update to be used for future planning and supporting documentation for funding applications.
- ◇ Regional economic impact study statistics would be extremely beneficial for planners to share with elected officials bolstering local return on investment as well as beneficial data to be added into the ECWRPC bike/pedestrian plan.
- ◇ Assurances that the summit was not a “one and done” event, but instead will be used to spark continuous momentum in trail design and implementation throughout the region.
- ◇ Concern that the maps need to remain updated now that they have all been captured using GIS technology.



Resources *Planning for the future in capital documents and various levels of grant funding*

County and Local Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs)

As roadways are scheduled for reconstruction or resurfacing, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure accommodations should be considered, as it is much more cost-effective to include these facilities as part of the project. These costs can be included in the CIP as part of the overall roadway project's cost.

Surface Transportation Block Grant Set-Aside Program (STBG)

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act replaced the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) with a set-aside of funds under the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (also known by the Federal Highway Administration as the TA Set-Aside; still referred to as TAP though the Wisconsin DOT). The funding is authorized for the construction of on- and off-road bicycle and pedestrian facilities. It should be noted these funds are a cost share, with up to 80% of the project being covered by the federal funds. (<https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/aid/tap.aspx>)

Surface Transportation Block Grant Program – Rural (STBG-Rural) The Surface Transportation Block Grant Program – Rural allocates federal funds to complete a variety of improvements to rural highways (primarily county highways) that are located outside of the urban areas. Communities are eligible for these funds on roadways classified as major collector or higher.

Surface Transportation Block Grant – Urban (STBG-Urban) The objective of the STBG-U program is to improve federal-aid-eligible highways within urban areas. Projects must meet federal and state requirements. Funding on roads functionally classified as collector or higher.

Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB)

The CVB has a Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Wayfinding Signage Grant Program. Municipalities that have affiliated with the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau may apply. This funding opportunity offers matching funds to assist communities in the Fox Cities to establish consistent wayfinding signage across the bicycle and pedestrian network; attracting visitors and residents to the region and supporting community members.

Recreational Trails Aid Program (RTA) *

The Recreation Trails Program provides funds to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. This grant covers up to 50% of the project's costs. (<https://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/RTP.html>)

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Funds *

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Funds help fund land acquisition and recreational facility development. This grant covers up to 50% of the project's costs. (<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stewardship/>)

Land and Water Conservation Fund *

This federal program, administered by the state, encourages creation and interpretation of high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities. This grant covers up to 50% of the project's costs. (<https://dnr.wi.gov/aid/lwcf.html>)

State Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)

The CDBG program provides eligible metropolitan cities and urban counties (called "entitlement communities") with annual direction grants that they can use to revitalize neighborhoods, expands affordable housing and economic opportunities, and/or improve communities' facilities and services, typically to benefit underserved communities. Under the State CDBG Program, states award grants to smaller units of general local government that develop and preserve decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable in our communities, and to create and retain jobs. Annually, each state develops funding priorities and criteria for selecting projects. (<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg-state/>)

East Central WI Regional Planning Commission's Technical Assistance Program

The Technical Assistance Program is available to member counties and local municipalities within the East Central Region. This application-based program provides local municipalities and counties with staff resources and support for a variety of small-scale, non-infrastructure projects. (www.ecwrpc.org)

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation seeks to improve the health and health care of all Americans. One of the primary goals is to "promote healthy communities and lifestyles." Specifically, the Foundation has ongoing "Active Living by Design" grant programs that promote the principals of active living including non-motorized transportation. Other related calls for grant proposals are issued as developed, and multiple communities nationwide have received grants related to the promotion of trails and other non-motorized facilities. (<https://www.rwjf.org/en/how-we-work/grants-explorer.html>)

Local Hospitals and Healthcare Organizations

A majority of hospitals and health care organizations within the United States currently operate as nonprofit organizations and are exempt from most federal, state, and local taxes as a result of this status. To maintain this status, hospitals and health care organizations need to complete a number of requirements, including developing a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and support community initiatives that are consistent with their CHNA.

Public Private Partnerships

As federal and state funds become more competitive for local communities, it is recommended that local municipalities work with the private sector to help secure funds for various types of bicycle and pedestrian projects. The private sector could help to provide the 20% local match for state and federal grant program, making the local grant application more competitive for funding. Additionally, local businesses have a vested interest in bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, as healthy active employees help reduce the business' health insurance costs and the employees are also more productive. Local health insurance companies are interested in having healthy employees, as it reduces their health insurance claims related to chronic diseases. Private and public partnerships should be explored by local municipalities as the built environment as a direct correlation with the health of the local community members.

Fox Cities Greenways, Inc.

Offers two funding opportunities for trails-related projects: The Seeds of Growth grant for local units of government which funds up to \$15,000 for early stage planning and design of greenways. The Ad-Hoc grant which funds up to \$10,000 for non-profits and local units of government and supports projects that align with the FCGI mission statement of Fostering the Preservation and Development of Greenways in the Greater Fox Cities Region.

* These three DNR grants fall under one application. The DNR determines the best funding sources based on the request.

WHERE TO GO *From Here?*

As partners in trail development and bike/pedestrian infrastructure, ECWRPC, FCGI and CFFVR will continue to support this initiative through the following methods:

ECWRPC will be using the data gathered at the summit to strengthen planning efforts for its 2020 update to its urbanized area bike and pedestrian planning document. This plan will outline the current network and gaps as identified in the summit, as well as highlighting additional benefits of lowering healthcare costs, increasing transportation equity throughout the region, and benefitting the local economy.

CFFVR will continue to spark conversations and refer interested funders to assist with leveraging the projects that are on the horizon.

FCGI will partner with ECWRPC to ensure the maps are updated in a timely manner by all the municipal partners as trails are constructed and new plans develop. This nonprofit group will work as a unifier of partnership projects in the region and supplement key connections with its various grant programs.



Planning continues >>>

Reveal event coming in 2020!



Keeping the conversation going

Local trail advocates, planners and officials will be attending a “Walking Audit” with Mark Fenton, an author and national consultant on public health, planning and transportation. He will provide an evaluation on the urban design of the Fox Cities. He will share his feedback at an evening gathering at the Fox Cities Exposition Center in a presentation that is sure to be full of energy and information about advocacy for trails and fitness. This evaluation will be used to further strengthen the planning document authored by ECWRPC.



Why a bicycle & pedestrian plan?

Through these local and regional efforts, urbanized areas of Calumet, Outagamie and Winnebago counties have more than 340 miles of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, with an additional 1,294 miles of sidewalks. This network is featured in the Fox Cities Trails Map and the Winnebago County Trails Map. Fox Cities Greenways has been promoting regional and local trails and routes through a series of maps rolled out on annually.

Through a grant provided by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation in 2012, ECWRPC put together a committee of stakeholders to recreate and revise its out-of-date and difficult-to-implement bicycle and pedestrian plan. This steering committee involved law enforcement, public health professionals, local cycling organizations, parks and recreation professionals, planners, businesses, school staff and highway department

staff from the 30 urbanized communities of Calumet, Outagamie and Winnebago counties. After two years of planning, community surveys, stakeholder involvement and public input, the *Appleton (Fox Cities) Transportation Management Area and Oshkosh Metropolitan Planning Organization Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (The Plan)* was formally adopted in 2014.

With ECWRPC, communities and organizations implementing the plan, the region has seen the culture and infrastructure improve for bicycling and walking for active transportation and recreation. The Plan has helped achieve regionwide and MPO-level Complete Streets policies, creation of a regionwide bicycle and pedestrian wayfinding guidebook, an established bicycle and pedestrian counting program, and cross-community collaboration to expand the bicycle and pedestrian network.