

# GREAT SAUK STATE TRAIL

A Cooperative Plan to Build a  
World-Class Recreation Trail





# GREAT SAUK STATE TRAIL COOPERATIVE PLAN

April 29, 2015

Sauk Prairie Segment

The Great Sauk State Trail Cooperative Plan is a project between Sauk County and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.



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# Great Sauk State Trail cooperative plan

## SAUK PRAIRIE SEGMENT

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Thanks to the many Sauk County residents, business leaders, and government staff who participated in the development of this plan through meetings, events, interviews, a community survey, and plan review. Special thanks to those that participated as Great Sauk Trail Commission members, stakeholders, advisors, and thanks to the Department of Natural Resources and Sauk County staff for coordinating the planning effort. Finally, thanks to the community and public for their outstanding interest and contributions to the planning process.

This is your **Great Sauk State Trail**.

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# 1 Executive Summary, Vision, and Goals

## Executive Summary

The Great Sauk State Trail – Sauk Prairie segment cooperative plan provides the framework for creating a recreational trail that connects Devil’s Lake State Park to the Sauk Prairie villages of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City. The trail will utilize part of a former railroad right-of-way transferred from Union Pacific to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, part of an abandoned rail corridor that was utilized in the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant and a suggested new trail in Devil’s Lake State Park. It is anticipated that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will sign a lease with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission to allow for the development and operation of a recreational trail.

The Great Sauk State Trail – Sauk Prairie segment will provide a venue for users to experience the unique geology, rich history, and the ecological importance of southeastern Sauk County all along a path stretching from the Wisconsin River through lands formerly known as the Badger Army Ammunition Plant and into Devil’s Lake State Park, one of the premier state parks in Wisconsin.

This cooperative plan is one part of a larger idea that will continue adding successive segments and eventually connect this trail to the 400 State Trail in Reedsburg and on, to the Elroy-Sparta Trail in La Valle to the north, the “Highway 12” trail extending to the City of Middleton to the east, and to a possible trail to Mazomanie to the south. It is anticipated that this may be the most used trail in the State of Wisconsin.

There has been impressive support and excitement for the development of the Great Sauk State Trail by the public, recreational user groups, local units of government, Sauk County and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and there is equally strong support to construct the trail as soon as conceivably possible.

## Vision - The Great Sauk State Trail

The Great Sauk State Trail (GST) will span roughly eight miles from Sauk City through the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area and into Devil’s Lake State Park

primarily along the unused rail line. This premier Wisconsin State Trail will eventually serve as part of a larger network connecting Middleton, WI to the 400 Trail in Reedsburg, WI. The GST will bolster the economic vitality of the area by attracting visitors and augmenting the rich environmental, cultural and historical features of the region. It will also enrich the lives of residents by providing a variety of recreational opportunities that promote healthy lifestyles and a connection with the outdoors.

## Goals – The Great Sauk State Trail

The project goals reflect and refine the project’s overall vision and provide guiding principles for selecting proper investment strategies and infrastructure.

- Provide a physical trail that connects local and regional history, geology, and ecological features of past and current landscapes.
- Connect to points of interest and to Devil’s Lake State Park as a future destination.
- Foster ‘place making’ initiatives as they relate to planning, design, and management of public spaces.
- Capitalize on community potentials and create a ‘trail space’ that promotes people’s health, happiness, and well-being.
- Provide access to all socioeconomic populations.
- Capitalize on future trail connections by building the trail to ‘connection’ points of future trail planning efforts.
- Finally, develop a **WORLD-CLASS** trail that will be the most visited and utilized trail in the State of Wisconsin and which provides an excellence standard of how recreational trails should be planned for and developed.

## Purpose of the Cooperative Plan

The cooperative plan for the Great Sauk State Trail establishes and articulates a consistent vision for how the trail will be used and what message the trail conveys relative to the area’s history, geology and ecology, in addition to providing a recreational resource. Currently, the Great Sauk State Trail is undeveloped, however, because of its proximity to Madison, Wisconsin and Devil’s Lake State Park, there

is considerable potential for this trail to become a local community asset and regional, or even national, attraction and destination.

This cooperative plan, while specific to the Great Sauk State Trail, is provided as a complement to other adopted plans with varying jurisdiction. Goals and policy direction provided in these plans, in turn, complement the overarching goal of establishing the Great Sauk Trail.

Functionally, this cooperative plan provides the framework for the trail route, users, amenities, and basic construction guidelines. The plan anticipates future connections to successive trail segments to eventually realize a connected regional trail system. Details, such as incorporating interpretive components for the trail or installation of trail features such as art sculptures and benches, are outside of the direct scope of this plan, but were considered during the planning process.

The cooperative plan also designates the Sauk Prairie Segment as a State Trail. This designation will enable the sale of State Trail passes to generate revenue for trail maintenance. The State trail designation will also place the trail in promotional materials generated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources which reaches several million people each year, enables the

the promotion of the trail at trade shows, both in Wisconsin and adjoining states, and qualifies the Friend's Group to apply for a Friends Group Grant.

### Overview of the Planning Process

The planning process was managed by Sauk County staff and lead by the Sauk County Great Sauk Trail Commission, which consisted of appointed county and local government representatives granted the authority to vote on commission decisions. Once the Commission was established, stakeholder and advisory groups were created to inform commission decision making. Additional information on stakeholder and advisory groups can be found in **Section 2 -- Project Background**.

The planning process was guided by Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 44 and is consistent with NR 44.04(13) for plans prepared jointly with other agencies. This plan was jointly prepared by Sauk County and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.



## 2 Project Background

### Introduction and Project Purpose

The Great Sauk Trail Commission, with planning support from the Sauk County Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department, technical support from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and support from communities and trail advocates in Sauk County, has developed the Great Sauk State Trail Cooperative Plan – Sauk Prairie segment. The purpose of the plan is to develop a ‘world-class’ bicycle and pedestrian trail that will link the Sauk County communities of the Villages of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City to Devil’s Lake State Park. Regionally, the Great Sauk Trail will provide future connection to communities in Dane County, including Middleton and Mazomanie, and to the cities of Baraboo and Reedsburg and beyond.

The planning team led an aggressive trail planning process involving extensive opportunities for public and community involvement and participation to develop a cooperative plan that identifies the trail route; designates point-of-access and connection to downtowns; defines primary and secondary trail users; and suggests preferred construction methods and outcomes.

The direct success of the planning process will be measured by realizing the trail vision actuated by on-the-ground trail construction both as prescribed in this plan and, once constructed, as experienced by the trail user. Long term, success will be measured by the trail’s contribution to the economic, social and environmental health of the community.

### Boundary and Context

The Great Sauk State Trail is conceptually divided into four segments: the Sauk Prairie Segment, Devil’s Lake Segment, Baraboo Segment, and Reedsburg Segment. While this plan is for the Great Sauk State Trail, it applies only to the Sauk Prairie Segment.

The Sauk Prairie Segment is located in southeastern Sauk County and partially in northeastern Dane County, the Great Sauk State Trail – Sauk Prairie

Segment spans a distance of approximately 13.6 miles, primarily along the former Union Pacific Railroad corridor. The trail connects Devil’s Lake State Park and the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area to the Sauk County Villages of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City. In Sauk City, the trail will intersect with an existing bike trail, creating a connection to Middleton to the east and will continue south to a suggested trail head in the Lower Wisconsin Riverway in Dane County.

The Sauk Prairie Segment is divided into three management units: the Badger Unit, Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit and the Dane County Unit. Section 3 of this planning document describes the geographic location of each unit and within each unit trail users, route, access and management and development prescriptions.

Overall, the Great Sauk State Trail – Sauk Prairie segment is a beginning to a larger effort of creating a regionally-connected trail that will connect multiple cities and, quite possibly, states.

### Consistency with Other Plans

The planning process for the Great Sauk State Trail considered other respective planning documents that affect lands where the trail will be located. To this end, each plan was evaluated to assure that the Great Sauk State Trail cooperative plan not only maintains consistency with other plans, but also complements the goals, objectives and policies in each of the plans.

The following plans were identified and considered (only plans that make reference to a trail are noted):

**Badger Reuse Plan** - Completed in March 2001, the Badger Reuse Plan represents the final report of the Badger Reuse Committee. The plan represents a locally-driven planning process and identifies nine key values and criteria to guide consideration of future uses at the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant. The Great Sauk State Trail, including its surfacing, identified users, and with its focus on exploring the area’s history,

geology and ecology, carries forward the larger concept of viewing lands within the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant as being conceptually interconnected.

**Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan** - Adopted in November of 2005, amended in 2012, the Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan advocates for the establishment of a riverfront recreational trail that links to a regional trail system and that provides for visual and direct access to the Wisconsin River. The plan also suggests trail-oriented development (like Main Street-oriented development) as a downtown business development opportunity.

**Sauk Prairie Recreation Area Master Plan** - To be completed in 2015, the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area master plan informs future land uses for a portion of the decommissioned 7,354-acre Badger Army Ammunition Plant. The plan represents approximately 3,400 acres, part of which is affected by the Great Sauk State Trail.

**Sauk Prairie RiverPAL** - Developed at the same time that the Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan was developed, this plan recommends enhancements and connectivity to the Wisconsin River in the Villages of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac. Specifically, the plan recognizes the interest in developing a trail along the former rail bed, but also suggests the placement of gates and education material along the trail to reduce potential conflict between human recreational use of the corridor and the river's bald eagle population.

**Sauk County Comprehensive Plan** - Adopted in 2009, the Sauk County Comprehensive Plan's mission is to 'Position Sauk County for the Future.' The plan seeks to inspire the community with bold ideas to shape and re-shape the communities we live in by promoting economic, environmental and social sustainability.

In many ways, the Great Sauk State Trail will carry out the plan's mission and will act as a catalyst toward greater community sustainability.

**Sauk County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2014-2019** - The Sauk County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan recommends exploring the possibility of linking bicycle trails from Dane County across the Wisconsin River, to the Villages of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac, north, through the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant and into Devil's Lake State Park. The proposed Great Sauk Trail will fulfill this plan's recommendation.

**Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2011-2016** - The Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan suggests the importance of connecting to surrounding communities and parks. Trails that are within or adjacent to communities and that are interconnected will likely see a higher use frequency as compared to trails that don't have this type of access. Based on a survey of Wisconsin's recreational activities in 1994 and 2006, both walking and bicycling experienced significant increases, however, a five-year projection in this plan indicates that walking and biking will experience a stable demand (not increase or decrease).

**Wisconsin Trails Network Plan 2003** - The Wisconsin Trails Network Plan identifies the existing statewide trail network and locates potential future trail connections. Segment 29, known as the Mazomanie to Devil's Lake segment, suggests a connection between Mazomanie and Devil's Lake State Park via a rail corridor through the Badger Army Ammunition Plant property. Segment 28, known as the Madison to Lake Delton segment, suggests that a trail be established along the right-of-way of US Hwy 12, from Madison to Prairie du Sac/Sauk City, and suggests that various road routes complete the connection beyond this point. The proposed Great Sauk State Trail will serve as a connection for both segments 29 and 28.

## 3 Management, Development, and Use

### Trail Units and Descriptions

This cooperative plan is for the development of the Great Sauk Trail – Sauk Prairie segment as the trail relates to focal points, primary signage, and points of crossing.

This chapter is organized into three trail units. Each unit has a single or multiple section(s) and includes a presentation of trail management techniques. Unit descriptions are as follows:

#### **BADGER UNIT (See also Badger Unit Map)**

The Badger Unit (6.75 miles) begins on the east side of the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad, just south of the railroad trestle at Halweg Road, and concludes at the southern boundary of the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant. The Badger Unit includes two suggested feature loop routes.

The Badger Unit also suggests a future trail connection into Devil's Lake State Park. While the actual trail route is not specifically described, this plan suggests that the route be located east of the active Wisconsin Southern Railroad line to connect to the south shore picnic area. The actual route of the Great Sauk Trail will be defined in an updated master plan for Devil's Lake State Park.

#### **PRAIRIE DU SAC | SAUK CITY UNIT (See also Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit Map)**

The Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit (5.17 miles) begins at the southern boundary of the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant, traverses downtown Prairie du Sac, continues through Sauk City and concludes at the Wisconsin River Rail Bridge, south of U.S. Hwy 12. This unit represents an urban section of trail that can coincide with downtown place making and economic development initiatives.

#### **DANE COUNTY UNIT (See also Dane County Unit Map)**

The Dane County Unit (1.68 miles) begins where the rail bridge crosses into Dane County and concludes approximately one mile south of County Road Y to

connect to an existing parking area located on WDNR land in the Lower Wisconsin Riverway.

### **Badger Unit Management, Development, and Use**

**Background** - Primarily located within the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant, the Badger Unit of the Great Sauk Trail plays an important role in defining the area's pre-settlement, settlement, war-time history, and post war-healing of the land. For local residents and tourist alike, the trail will provide access to the beauty of the land and offers a rare opportunity to share the area's unique history, ecology, and ongoing changes to the landscape. Within the boundary of the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant, the Badger Unit primarily traverses or is adjacent to land owned by the USDA's Dairy Forage Research Center, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

**Trail Users** - The section of trail within the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant is designated for non-motorized uses and will principally accommodate bicycling and pedestrian users in the summer with possible snow-shoeing, cross-county skiing and fat-wheeled bike riding in the winter, based on trail conditions.

The section of trail beginning at a point where the trail exists the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant to the north to a point concluding at Halweg Road is designated for snowmobile use in addition to the aforementioned non-motorized uses. This section of trail will be built to accommodate winter snowmobile use within the trail right-of-way with an unpaved (grassed) surface reserved for snowmobile use where feasible.

**Trail Route and Access** - Access may be provided by a trail head located in the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area. Ancillary access will be provided where the trail crosses roads. The trail will primarily follow the former rail corridor.

**Management and Development Prescriptions.** It is anticipated that the final as-built alignment of the trail will follow the former rail corridor. The Great Sauk Trail Commission and public input during the planning process recommends that this section of the trail be paved. Trail development within the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area will be determined by the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area master plan. The section of trail that will accommodate snowmobile uses, as described under trail users above, will be built with an unpaved surface (grassed) reserved for snowmobile use where feasible.

#### **Badger Unit Management and Safety Considerations (see also Appendix A: project sheets)**

- **Crossing field roads on USDA-DFRC land.** Install trail signage on north-and south-bound sections of the trail to notify trail users of upcoming agricultural equipment field crossings. Project sheet: Crossing at U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center Lands.
- **Improve undercrossing safety at the railroad trestle at Halweg Road.** Consider multiple crossing options, including the installation of warning signs in each direction of travel along Halweg Road informing drivers and bikers of the one-lane road crossing under the railroad trestle. Provide an at-grade crossing over the railroad tracks south of Halweg Road, or install a tunnel for trail use under the railroad tracks. Project sheet: Crossing at Halweg Road.

#### **Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit**

##### **Management, Development, and Use**

**Background** - This section of the trail will serve as a catalyst for the Village of Prairie du Sac to explore opportunities to become a “trail town” destination, particularly when the larger, regional trail connections are made. This trail section will re-orientate downtown development to incorporate a trail-side focus in addition to the current street-side focus. The primary trail user experience in this

section will be more urban-like, with associated amenities such as direct access to a public library, as well as opportunities to experience local arts, culinary finds, and other related engagements typically found in small, rural downtowns. The plan recommends periodic trail connections to the street side to encourage access between trail and downtown amenities, and one primary village ‘trailhead portal’ to serve as the main connection between the trail and street-side downtown.

In the Village of Sauk City, situated at the entrance of Sauk County, the Sauk Prairie Riverway Welcome Center serves as a portal for the Sauk Prairie Riverway community. The Welcome Center provides public parking, restrooms, WI-FI, brochures of attractions, restaurants and unique retail in Sauk Prairie area. Great Sauk State Trail passes will be sold and staff will provide trail users with bike routes to accommodate outing needs.

The welcome center is an attraction in itself, with a 1,400 gallon aquarium which showcases various species of fish in the Wisconsin River, along with a 20 foot sculpted tree that holds a life-size eagles nest. Tourists will be encouraged to make their first stop, the Sauk Prairie Riverway Welcome Center when visiting The Great Sauk Trail.

Once connected to the Great Sauk State Trail, users can travel north through the Village of Sauk City at a diagonal to connect once again to the Sauk City river trail or may choose to travel on to the Village of Prairie du Sac.

South of the US Hwy 12 | Phillips Blvd., the trail will serve as a trail connection to the Lower Wisconsin Riverway in Dane County and will provide a permanent route for snowmobiles to connect to routes east of Sauk City. This section will provide access over the Wisconsin River via a converted rail to trail bridge. This section of the trail will also serve to connect employees of businesses in the Sauk City Business Park to the Great Sauk State Trail and the Sauk City river trail system.

**Trail Users** - The section of trail beginning at State Road 78 north of the Village of Prairie du Sac to and concluding at US Hwy 12 in Sauk City is

designated for non-motorized uses and will principally accommodate bicycling and pedestrian users in the summer with possible snow-shoeing, cross-county skiing and fat-wheeled bike riding in the winter, based on trail conditions.

The section of trail beginning at a point where the trail exists the former Badger Army Ammunition Plan to the south to a point concluding at State Road 78 is designated for snowmobile use in addition to the aforementioned non-motorized uses. This section of trail will be built to accommodate winter snowmobile use within the trail right-of-way with an unpaved (grassed) surface reserved for snowmobile use where feasible.

Additionally, a section of trail located south of US Hwy 12 to the Dane County Unit is designated for snowmobile use in addition to the aforementioned non-motorized uses. This section of trail will also be built to accommodate winter snowmobile use within the trail right-of-way with an unpaved (grassed) surface reserved for snowmobile use where feasible.

**Trail Route and Access** - Multiple access points will be provided, with no single access being a primary access. Trail access points are located in the Northridge Business Park; adjacent to the Veterans Memorial Park; north of the State Rd 60 bridge; and at the intersection of State Rd 78 and Grand Ave. A major trail head located, at the municipal parking lot and adjacent to the Ruth Culver Library, will serve as the primary portal between the trail and street-side downtown Prairie du Sac.

Within the Village of Sauk City there will not be a principle access point, however, ancillary access will be provided where the trail crosses roads. It is recommended that trail connections between downtown Sauk City, the Chamber of Commerce, and local businesses be developed and connected to the Great Sauk State Trail including local restaurants and gas/convenience store connections as part of a designated snowmobile route.

**Management and Development Prescriptions** - The final as-built alignment of the trail will follow the former rail corridor. All access points and the primary downtown portal will need to be

constructed. In order to protect critical bald eagle roosting habitat during the winter, a gate and informational signage will be installed at the following access points: North of the State Rd 60 bridge; at the downtown Prairie du Sac portal; and at the intersection of State Road 78 and Grand Avenue. These gates will be controlled by the Village of Prairie du Sac based on typical annual critical relevant environmental factors.

Vegetation management along the Wisconsin River in the Village of Prairie du Sac will be minimal and prior to the removal of any large trees that may be utilized by eagles for roosting, technical data/research should be consulted.

The section of the trail from southern boundary of the Badger Unit to the Dane County Unit will be paved. The section of trail that will accommodate snowmobile uses within the trail right-of-way trail will be built with an unpaved surface (grassed) reserved for snowmobile use where feasible.

#### **Prairie du Sac/Sauk City Unit Management and Safety Considerations (See also Appendix A: project sheets)**

- **Crossing at State Road 78** - Within the trail right-of-way, construct the trail to allow for a trail crossing that is perpendicular to State Rd 78 (the current tracks run diagonal). Install pedestrian crossing signage in each direction of travel along State Rd 78 giving notification of a trail crossing. Consider pavement markings showing the location of the trail as it traverses State Rd 78. Project sheet: Crossing at State Rd 78 / County Rd Z.
- **Develop a trail head portal between the Great Sauk Trail and Downtown Prairie du Sac.**  
Project Sheet: Downtown Prairie du Sac Portal / Middle Eagle Gate.
- **Control trail usage during bald eagle roosting times.** The needs of the trail's recreational users and eagles in the Sauk Prairie area need to be balanced which, in turn, generates important ecotourism. The management of the Great Sauk State Trail also needs to be consistent with

federal regulations and NR 150, Wis. Admin. Code requiring non-encroachment of bald eagle habitat. To meet these interweaving needs three gates should be placed in the Village of Prairie du Sac to encourage alternate trail use during times when the trail area provides important eagle habitat in winter. Based on 25 years of coordinated eagle roost counts, plus a 4-year eagle tracking study, January and February are consistently the highest-use periods of the Sauk Prairie portion of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway habitat for wintering eagles. Due to environmental variability, however, high amounts of eagle use of the Sauk Prairie area can occur as early as December and as late as March, strongly suggesting the need for flexibility in closing and opening gates.

While the basic period for closing the gates and using the alternative trail should be January and February, decision should be dependent on conditions and eagle usage. The Village of Prairie du Sac shall maintain control over and make decisions about opening and closing gates. The Village should consult with the Ferry Bluff Eagle Council before making decisions to determine if other factors exist to adjust the January-February alternate trail use period. If roost counts at Sugar Loaf and Blackhawk roosts on a given day exceed 10 eagles during a count in December or March, Gates should be closed. Likewise, eagle use of the Sauk Prairie portion of the Riverway is low in January and February the gates can remain open. Generally speaking, when winter conditions force a large number of eagles to use the Sauk Prairie portion of the Riverway, the environmental conditions for human use of the Great Sauk State Trail generally is very poor due to low temperatures and/or extensive snow depth.

The plan recommends the installation of three gates and education signage at each of the gates. Project sheets: Grand Avenue Access | South Eagle Gate, Downtown Prairie du Sac Portal | Middle Eagle Gate, Water St Access | North Eagle Gate.

- **Install a two-sided entrance sign at the State Rd 78 | Water St trail head portal, placed perpendicular to the highway, that states:**

#### **Great Sauk Trail Entrance**

Include DNR and Sauk County logos on the sign.

Project sheet: Downtown Prairie du Sac Portal | Middle Eagle Gate.

- **Provide a safe crossing at US Hwy 12 | Phillips Blvd.** Current conditions offer no indication of a trail crossing. Realign the trail to cross at an existing crosswalk. Install pedestrian crossing signage in each direction of travel along US Hwy 12 giving notification of a trail crossing. Project sheet: Crossing at US Hwy 12 | Phillips Blvd.

- **Provide safe angle road crossings.** The trail crosses secondary streets at a relative angle to the flow of traffic. Provide trail crossing signage as appropriate. Project sheet: Angle Street Crossings.

- **Provide safe diagonal intersection crossings.** The trail crosses secondary street intersections at a diagonal. Provide trail crossing signage as appropriate. Project sheet: Angle Intersection Crossings.

- **Provide safe perpendicular crossing at State Road 78 | Water Street.**

An important trail crossing occurs at State Road 78 | Water St at a diagonal. Convert this crossing to a crossing that runs perpendicular to Water St with a crosswalk and provide trail crossing signage as appropriate. Project sheet: State Rd 78 / Water St Crossing.

- **Designate the Sauk Prairie Riverway Welcome Center as the primary trail portal.**

This designation will provide a central point to acclimate trail users to the Sauk Prairie community, recreational opportunities, and to the Great Sauk Trail. Project sheet: Downtown Sauk City Portal | Sauk Prairie Riverway Welcome Center.

- **Provide intra trail connection between the Great Sauk State Trail and the Sauk City River Trail system in Sauk City.** See the Great Sauk State Trail – Prairie du Sac/ Sauk City Unit map.

### **Dane County Unit Management, Development, and Use**

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**Background** - This unit of the trail will serve as a trail connection to the Lower Wisconsin Riverway in Dane County and will provide a permanent route for snowmobiles to connect to routes east of Sauk City. Once this phase is completed, it is anticipated that snowmobile accessibility will no longer be needed in the Village of Prairie du Sac section. This section will provide access over the Wisconsin River via a converted rail to trail bridge.

**Trail Users** - The Dane County Unit is designated for motorized and non-motorized uses and will principally accommodate bicycling and pedestrian users in the summer with possible snow-shoeing, cross-country skiing and fat-wheeled bike riding in the winter, based on trail conditions. This Unit will also accommodate snowmobilers as a primary winter trail user.

### **Management and Development Prescriptions -**

The final as-built alignment of the trail will follow the former rail corridor. This section of the trail will consist of a crushed limestone surface. Future consideration may be given to paving this section if utilized as part of a future regional bike network. An existing railroad bridge will be upgraded to accommodate multiple users including snowmobilers as the primary winter trail user.

### **Dane County Unit Management and Safety Considerations (See also Appendix A: project sheets)**

- **Provide a safe crossing at County Rd Y.** Mark this trail crossing with a crosswalk and provide trail crossing signage as appropriate. Project sheet: Street Crossings South of US Hwy 12 and Dane County Rd Y.
- **Develop a trail head and parking area within the Lower Wisconsin Riverway.** This trailhead represents the southernmost extent of the Great Sauk State Trail located in Dane County.



## 4 Summary of the Public Involvement Process

### Introduction

The planning process for the Great Sauk State Trail extended opportunities to include stakeholders, advisors and the public in the process to develop the cooperative plan. From the beginning, efforts were made to inform the public of the planning process and opportunities to participate in a meaningful way.

Sauk County developed a 'Trail Commission Work Plan' that not only outlined the planning process but also served as a public involvement plan which was made available on the Great Sauk State Trail website. The plan outlines and defines levels of participation ranging from commission members to stakeholders and the public. It describes, in detail, anticipated planning milestones and subjects for discussion at commission meetings. It also assigns the authority to make decisions to the Great Sauk Trail Commission.

### Stakeholder Involvement

The Great Sauk State Trail's success can be measured only partly by the physical construction of the trail and subsequent capital improvements, whereas a true measure of success to any trail planning process is community engagement and idea contribution, but also stakeholder participation. The planning process defined stakeholders as, "Recognized groups whose interests are directly or indirectly impacted by the trail and who will have an enduring and lasting interest in the trail."

The planning process engaged stakeholders through one-on-one meetings with planning staff and with designated agenda time at Great Sauk Trail Commission meetings. Input provided by stakeholders informed not only who the trail users should be, but also trail surfacing, signage, loop routes, and other amenities and is fully reflected in this cooperative plan. It is important to note that the concerns of each of the stakeholders were fully addressed and goals and objectives of each of the stakeholder organizations will be fulfilled once the

trail is constructed. Stakeholders to the Great Sauk State Trail include:

Association of Sauk County Snowmobile Clubs

City of Baraboo

Ferry Bluff Eagle Council

River Arts, Inc.

Sauk Prairie Chamber of Commerce

Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance

Sauk Prairie Endurance Club

Sauk Prairie RiverPAL

Town of Sumpter

VFW Post #7694

Wisconsin Bike Federation

### Advisor Involvement

The Great Sauk Trail planning process engaged external agency/advisor input to address specific areas of potential concern relative to the location of the trail. The planning process defined advisors as, "External agencies asked to provide the Great Sauk Trail Commission with expertise regarding specific issues encountered during the planning process."

Advisors to the Great Sauk Trail include:

Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger

Dane County

Ho-Chunk Nation

Sauk Prairie Fire and Ambulance

Town of Baraboo

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources |  
Devil's Lake State Park

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission

WATCO, owners of Wisconsin Southern Railroad

### Public Contact and Involvement

In addition to engaging stakeholders and advisors, the Great Sauk State Trail planning process included meaningful ways for the public to participate in and inform the planning process.

### Communication Methods

Communication with the public included the following:

- News releases for a vision and draft review session, direct mailings to property owners along the proposed trail route, public survey, and direct e-mails with monthly planning updates.
- Great Sauk State Trail planning website which provided meeting agendas, minutes, and up to date maps and planning documents.
- An online and paper version survey and posting of all comments and survey results on the Great Sauk State Trail website.
- Personal contacts between the public and planning staff by telephone or e-mail correspondence.

### Issue Identification

Throughout the planning process, input from the public, stakeholders, and advisors served as a tool for the Great Sauk Trail Commission to make decisions about future trail users, route, construction, and cost. The final decision-making responsibility and authority rests with the Great Sauk Trail Commission. The public will have an opportunity for final comment on the draft cooperative plan before the Commission makes their decision.

The Department of Natural Resource's citizen policy-making body known as the Natural Resources Board and the Sauk County Board of Supervisors, will serve in an advisory capacity to the commission prior to the commission's acceptance of the Great Sauk Trail cooperative plan.

### Planning Documents

Working documents include the draft plan and maps that were developed throughout the planning process with input from stakeholders, advisors, and the public. Completed documents were made available on the Great Sauk State Trail website or otherwise made available upon request. The draft plan and final maps were also distributed and made available to local public offices and libraries.

### Great Sauk Trail Public Participation

On September 24, 2014, the Great Sauk Trail Commission hosted an event designed to provide information on the trail planning process and to gather input from the public. At the event participants were asked to:

- Complete a brief survey designed to gather input on specific trail issues;
- Identify and locate significant cultural, natural and historical assets located near the trail;
- Identify concerns and potential opportunities along the trail; and
- Share their vision and potential theme ideas for the future trail.

A non-scientific public input survey was available from September 15 to October 13, 2014 on the Great Sauk State Trail website and in paper form at the public participation event. The total number of completed surveys was 1,072, and the results indicated strong support for pedestrians (76%) and bicyclists (72%) as the primary trail users. Also nearly 70% of respondents preferred a crushed stone trail surface as opposed to a paved surface (31%). The survey respondents indicated that they preferred the old rail bridge over the Wisconsin River in Sauk City be rebuilt for trail users to cross the river (69%) and the rail line through the residential areas of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac also be converted to trail (65%).

## Open House

Before the Great Sauk State Trail plan was finalized there were opportunities for public input. The Great Sauk Trail Commission hosted a public open house on April 15, 2015 at the River Arts Center in Prairie du Sac, WI. The event included a presentation of the plan highlighting the route, users, funding opportunities and construction phases as well as opportunities for the public to ask questions and provide feedback on the draft plan.

A Great Sauk State Trail comment form was available at the open house and an online version of the form was posted on the Great Sauk State

Trail website from April 6, 2015 to April 17, 2015. The forms included an optional contact information section for individuals interested in receiving additional information about the trail as well as opportunities to comment on each of the three trail units: Prairie du Sac/ Sauk City Unit, Dane County Unit and the Badger Unit. Thirty three forms were collected at the open house and 410 responses were submitted through the online form. The comments from both versions of the forms were considered by the Great Sauk Trail Commission and corresponding changes were made to the final plan.



## 5 Implementation Recommendations

### Introduction

The proposed Great Sauk Trail | Sauk Prairie segment will fulfill the vision and goals of this plan and, more importantly, has the potential to affect peoples' lives in a very positive way. The Great Sauk Trail will provide a vital recreational resource connecting communities with the natural environment and recreational opportunities. It may provide intercity connectivity, as the trail is expanded in successive segments and is connected to other existing trail systems, and will likely provide local and regional economic benefits.

Constructing the Great Sauk Trail will depend primarily on available funding, however, maintaining community and local government commitment to seeing the trail through the construction phase is equally important.

This chapter highlights some considerations related to trail construction and use, suggests a construction timeframe, identifies funding sources, and responsibilities for the implementation of this plan.

### Environmental Considerations

Environmental considerations should be examined before commencing construction to minimize disturbance to significant natural resources. Often trails will traverse sensitive ecosystems such as wetlands and critical habitat. Disturbance to these systems can be minimized when considering materials for trail construction, trail users, and times of trail use. Environmental considerations may include:

- **Identify and map wetland, floodplain and surface water resources within 100 feet of the existing railroad corridor and 200 feet for non-railroad corridor trail development.** Accurately locating wetlands, floodplains, and surface waters is an appropriate element to consider prior to trail construction. Once identified, proper procedures can be undertaken to route the trail away from these

areas, or to secure permits to alter these areas as permitted by law.

- **Review applicable environmental studies to assure protection of critical resources.** Studies such as the *'Environmental Assessment for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area'* should be consulted to assure that critical resources are protected as reasonably possible from disturbance during trail construction; determining timing of construction; and with final trail use.
- **Consult with local stakeholders identified in this plan to implement the best practical methods for critical habitat protection.** Local stakeholders, such as the Ferry Bluff Eagle Council and Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance, can offer ongoing strategies to planners and trail management staff for the protection of critical resources before, during, and after construction of the trail. As referenced in this plan, one example of stakeholder input includes the installation of gates to close parts of the trail during times of bald eagle use of habitat on the Wisconsin River. Local stakeholders and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources should conduct ongoing studies to see that use of the trail does not disturb eagles utilizing habitat areas. As defined by Federal Regulations, *disturb* means "to agitate or bother a bald or golden eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, injury to an eagle, decrease in productivity, or nest abandonment."
- **Initiate best practices to mitigate possible existing contamination within the rail corridor only.** Anthropogenic pollutants and contamination affect biophysical environments, biodiversity, and other resources, and are always found in the human-made environment. While complete removal of anthropogenic pollutants is not typically possible, best mitigation practices can be implemented when such methods are practical, cost effective, and/or feasible.

The Great Sauk State Trail will primarily traverse a former railroad bed that may contain various levels of contamination. While this contamination may be marginal, best practices should be implemented when removing rail components, or if appropriate, contaminants may be maintained in place as much as possible. It is not the intent of this trail project to remove contaminants along the rail bed beyond which is required by state or federal law. Contaminants beyond the trail corridor as they relate to incorporated areas, agricultural fields, and the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant are not to be considered as part of this trail plan.

### Trail-Roadway Crossings

The Great Sauk Trail is part rural and part urban and in the urban areas there are a number of at-grade crossings that create potential conflicts between trail users and motorists. Upgrading and maintaining crossings will likely be the responsibility of the local unit of government or highway jurisdiction and well-designed crossings provide an un-intimidating way for trail users to cross existing streets and roads. Trail crossings can be properly designed at-grade with a reasonable degree of safety and meet existing traffic and safety standards.

Evaluating trail crossings involves an analysis of anticipated trail user patterns as these patterns relate to traffic levels, line of sight, unconventional crossing (such as diagonal), and the trail user profile (age, intended destination, time to reach destination). This plan identifies the most appropriate and cost effective crossing based on the aforementioned analysis. The plan presents a suggested treatment for each road crossing under Appendix A Project Sheets. Identification and construction of each crossing should comply with the Association of American State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide and should be verified and/or refined through actual engineering, construction plans, or by the local highway authority.

### Recommended Strategies

In order to create the Great Sauk Trail and achieve its full potential, the following details should be considered:

- The Great Sauk Trail must be consistent with the proposed Sauk Prairie Recreation Area Plan Master Plan, Lower Wisconsin Riverway Master Plan and an updated Devil's Lake Master Plan.** The Great Sauk Trail will likely traverse three state properties: the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area, Lower Wisconsin Riverway, and Devil's Lake State Park. Concurrent with the development of these plans, the planning team for the aforementioned respective plans should work together to assure plan consistency.
- Consider Burma Road as a future alternate route.** The planning process for the Great Sauk State Trail did consider Burma Road as the primary trail route into Devil's Lake and to the City of Baraboo. After further discussion, the selected route on the east side of Devil's Lake has been suggested based on the desire to link centrally to Devil's Lake State Park and to provide future connectivity of the Great Sauk Trail to the City of Baraboo's already established Riverwalk Trail, which begins on the city's east side.

Burma Road may be considered as a future alternate route if connectivity cannot be made to the City of Baraboo as anticipated, or there is a desire for direct trail access between the City of Baraboo and the Sauk Prairie area while bypassing Devil's Lake State Park.
- Trail routing at the 'wye' in the Town of Merrimac.** There are two ways to make a trail connection to Devil's Lake State Park. One option is to run the trail under an existing railroad trestle to share the road right-of-way with Halweg Road. The underpass at the trestle consists of a one-lane town road on a curve which, according to town officials and local residents, may present an unsafe crossing.

An option to this crossing involves running the trail due east along the ‘wye’ thereby establishing a trail crossing over the active rail line south of the railroad trestle. From this point the trail can run north on land that is part of Devil’s Lake State Park.

A final option includes the installation of a new trail tunnel in the vicinity of the current trestle.

Recognizing the potential for a large volume of trail users, this plan recommends the installation of a tunnel as the most practical and safest option.

- **Trail routing in Dane County.** In order to create a complete trail experience and provide adequate access for snowmobiles traveling between Sauk and Dane counties, and conversely, to improve snowmobile safety by removing snowmobiles from the section of trail in the Village of Prairie du Sac, it is imperative that the Great Sauk State Trail complete an extension to a proposed trail head and existing parking area within the Lower Wisconsin Riverway.
- **Trail loop routes and connections.** As expressed by public and stakeholder input, consideration should be given to establishing loop routes in the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area. Additionally, connections between the Great Sauk Trail and current riverfront trail in Sauk City should be made.

**Selection Criteria**

Selection criteria were developed to assist implementing agencies with the goal of directing funding to the highest priority trail construction projects. The criteria used in the rankings are:

**Anticipated Use:** To what degree will a particular section of trail be used based on population, connectivity, and access to recreational features?

**Local Economic Impact:** Anticipated impact on local economic development and contribution to place making planning efforts.

**Connectivity:** To what degree does a newly constructed part of the trail connect to previously constructed or potential trail segments?

**Ease of Implementation:** How easy will it be to construct a section of trail considering environmental, topographical, political, and other constraints?

**Project Priorities and Phasing**

Using the selection criteria as a guide, the Great Sauk Trail has been divided into construction projects based on information from the Great Sauk Trail Commission and the public. Each construction project has been divided into Tier 1, Tier2, and Tier 3 priorities.

Tier 1 construction projects are to be implemented immediately upon available funding.

Tier 2 and 3 construction projects are recommended for implementation by 2020.

This aggressive construction schedule suggests that the entire Great Sauk Trail – Sauk Prairie segment will be completed within a 5-year time frame. However, this schedule, both in terms of tiers and completed trail construction, may change according to available funds, changing priorities, or unforeseen delays. It should be noted that the purpose of including a construction schedule in the plan is to demonstrate relative priority, but to also assure that the momentum built during the planning process carries forward into plan implementation.

<b>Tier 1</b>
Southern boundary of the former BAAP to the Sauk City Rail Bridge
<b>Tier 2</b>
Including the Sauk City Rail Bridge and trail into Dane County
<b>Tier 3</b>
Southern boundary of the former BAAP up to Devil’s Lake State Park

## Estimated Cost

Based on the tiers for project priorities and phasing and applying estimated costs, the following table demonstrates estimated cost per tier:

<b>Tier 1</b>
Southern boundary of the former BAAP to the Sauk City Rail Bridge Estimated total cost: 1.2 million
<b>Tier 2</b>
Including the Sauk City Rail Bridge trail into Dane County estimated cost of rail bridge upgrade 1.5 million estimated cost of trail construction \$460,000 Estimated total cost 2.0 million
<b>Tier 3</b>
Southern boundary of the former BAAP up to Devil's Lake State Park Estimated total cost 1.3 million

## Trail Construction Funding

Identifying appropriate funding sources to construct the Great Sauk State Trail will require examining a number of traditional, municipal, and private programs and activities.

Potential traditional sources include federal and state funding programs (grants) that can be used to construct the actual trail or augment the trail with ancillary support facilities or installations. Most grant sources of funding will require documentation and demonstration of need, costs, benefits, and community support.

Municipal funding includes county, village, and town allocation from a specific department and within the unit of government's budget.

Private programs typically include donations by individuals or businesses or through foundation grants.

### Federal Funding Sources

**Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).** Authorized by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21), the TAP provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-

road pedestrian and bicycle facilities. This program incorporates three Wisconsin Department of Transportation improvement programs: Safe Routes to School, Transportation Enhancements, and The Bicycle and Pedestrian Program. To be initially eligible, the Federal Highway Administration must confirm that the Great Sauk Trail project falls within one or more of the following categories:

- Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized forms of transportation.
- Conversion of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other non-motorized transportation users.
- The recreational trails program.

TAP is a reimbursement program. Local governments incur authorized costs and are reimbursed upon project completion. TAP projects are funded 80% federally, with a 20% local match. The minimum project cost is \$300,000 for infrastructure projects. TAP projects must be completed within six years. Eligible sponsors include local entities with taxing authority that can guarantee matching funds. Private entities may apply for funds through an eligible sponsor.

**Recreational Trails Program (RTP)** - Administered by the Governor's Wisconsin State Trails Council under the WDNR, the RTP provides funds to states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. The RTP is an assistance program of the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration. The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21) authorizes the RTP as a set-aside from the TAP funds.

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).** The Community Development Block Grant Program can provide grants for streetscape revitalization projects. The funds may also be used to enhance accessibility to trail infrastructure meeting Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

## **State Funding Sources**

**Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Programs (Stewardship Fund).** This is an umbrella grant program that provides funding related to conservation and expanding outdoor recreation opportunities. A key component of the Stewardship Fund is cooperation and partnership between the Wisconsin DNR and the agency applying for funds. Three subprograms of funding under the stewardship program may be applied to the construction of the Great Sauk State Trail:

**Acquisition and Development of Local Parks (ADLP).** Acquisition and Development of Local Parks funding may be used for both land acquisition and development of projects for nature-based recreation, including outdoor recreation trails.

**Recreational Trails Program (RTP).** Recreational Trails Program projects include development and rehabilitation of trail and trail linkages. Eligible projects can receive a grant of up to 50% of the total project cost, with a project sponsor dollar, material or in-kind match. This is the same RTP identified under TAP, however, the application process occurs under the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Programs process.

**Urban Rivers (UR).** The Urban Rivers Program provides for economic restoration through the restoration or preservation of urban river fronts, increasing access to rivers, and preserving natural areas along the river.

**Community Development Investment.** The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) offers competitive grant opportunities to counties and municipalities to support shovel-ready redevelopment efforts with an emphasis on downtown community driven efforts. This grant opportunity is available through two different competitions: high-impact projects and planning or marketing development.

## **Sauk County Funding Sources**

**Sauk County Capital Improvement Budget Allocation.** The Sauk County 2015 budget allocates \$520,000 for construction of the Great

Sauk Trail to be utilized as a cost-match for regional trail development. If grants are not obtained for the 2015 construction year, consideration should be given to carrying this allocation forward.

**Sauk County Highway Department.** The Sauk County Highway Department can be utilized to provide at-cost construction services at rates typically charged to local municipalities, thereby reducing construction costs.

**Gaming Compact, Ho-Chunk Nation | State of Wisconsin.** Authorized pursuant to the gaming compact between the Ho-Chunk Nation (HCN) and the State of Wisconsin and an intergovernmental agreement between Sauk County and the HCN, the Nation provides \$1000 for every acre of land the Nation holds in trust. This agreement specifies that use of the funds should relate to the Ho-Chunk Nation and cannot diminish the Nation's governmental jurisdiction or have an adverse financial impact on the Nation. Annual distribution of funds is approved by the Sauk County Board of Supervisors.

## **Local Municipal Funding Sources**

**Capital Improvement.** Local municipalities that may benefit from the construction of the GST may want to consider a capital improvement budget allocation to contribute to the initial trail construction costs for parts of the trail within the municipality. This allocation should be used as a match for other funding sources whenever possible.

**Public Works Assistance.** Local municipalities may consider leveraging trail construction assistance from their public works department to provide at-cost or in-kind services.

**General Obligation Bonds.** General obligation bonds can provide local municipalities an opportunity to raise funds for projects that benefit the entire community.

## **Private Funding Sources**

**Donations and Grants.** Donations can consist of small monetary or otherwise donations by community organizations, or major support provided by area businesses and company grants.

Many company foundations also provide grants for projects that benefit communities.

### **Other Funding Sources**

**Trail User Fees.** All bikers will be required to obtain a state trail pass prior to using the trail pursuant to Wis. Stat. Ch. 27. Funds from trail pass fees can be utilized for ongoing trail maintenance. Pedestrians (including snowshoers) are not required to obtain a trail pass.

### **Trail Construction, Management and Operation**

Sauk County will be the primary agency overseeing the construction of the Great Sauk State Trail, including administration and coordination of grants, letting projects, and overseeing project implementation based on the construction timeline presented in this plan. The county will also coordinate with affected units of government regarding trail construction and when major maintenance is required. Should there be any degree of maintenance needed, it must be made clear that Sauk County should be the contact, except for that portion of the trail that lies within the Lower Wisconsin Riverway, Sauk Prairie Recreation Area, or Devil's Lake State Park, for which the WDNR will be the primary contact. A Memorandum of Understanding should be developed between Sauk County and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources regarding the development, operation, repair, and maintenance of the Great Sauk State Trail, and parts of the trail thereof.

### **Plan Implementation / Trail Construction/ Maintenance**

Sauk County will designate key staff people who represent the major tasks of plan implementation/trail construction and trail maintenance.

- Coordinate trail construction of each tier.
- Organize, develop and administer a trail operations and maintenance plan and maintain related funding.
- Manage contracts for trail construction and maintenance.

- Determine and implement trail amenities such as trail lighting and benches.

### **Trail Management**

Sauk County and the WDNR will designate personnel to manage the trail once constructed.

- Monitor security and safety on the trail system.
- Establish and enforce trail user rules and guidelines.
- Coordinate law enforcement needs along the trail.
- Develop an emergency response plan with local fire and police departments.

### **Vegetation Management**

Vegetation will be managed to maintain safe passage and visibility for all user groups. Generally the vegetation directly adjacent to any paved trail surface will be maintained in a mowed state. Additional forms of vegetation management prescribed for each unit are as follows:

#### **Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit**

Once the trail is built, removal of vegetation in this unit will be minimal and prior to the removal of any large trees, that may be utilized by eagles for roosting, technical data/research should be consulted. Parts of the trail in this unit traverse stands of Black Locust which, if not controlled by continued herbicide treatment, may cause damage to the trail surface by root suckering. It is recommended that all Black Locust be removed within the rail right-of-way and that herbicides be applied regularly to control regrowth. In areas where a grassed trail for snowmobile uses will coexist with a paved trail within the former railroad right-of-way, the grassed areas will be maintained to be free of woody vegetation.

#### **Badger Unit**

It is anticipated that vegetation adjacent to that part of the trail that traverses the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area will be restored to native prairie. Vegetation management practices will be consistent with those utilized to maintain prairie. That part of the trail adjacent to lands under the jurisdiction of

the USDA Dairy Forage Research Center will either be mowed on an as needed basis or may be transitioned to prairie.

#### Dane County Unit

Vegetation in this unit will be mowed as needed to eliminate woody vegetation as is generally prescribed for all units.

### Great Sauk Trail Commission

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The Great Sauk Trail Commission was created by the Sauk County Board of Supervisors under Resolution 17-2014. Along with Sauk County, the Villages of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac, and the Towns of Prairie du Sac and Merrimac have joined the trail commission as local partners in an effort to assist with the creation of the Great Sauk State Trail Cooperative Plan. An intergovernmental agreement and bylaws of the Great Sauk Trail Commission govern the objectives of the commission and its operations. The bylaws state that the duration of the commission is indefinite unless terminated by unanimous consent of all governing bodies of the county and local municipalities. The Town of Sumpter was invited to participate as a member of the commission, but declined.

The cooperative plan represents a first step to the larger process of developing a recreational trail and related facilities. While the cooperative plan

can determine the trail route, users, construction, and cost to a certain degree, conditions can change over time requiring further discussion and evaluation.

The bylaws state the commission’s duties are to conduct public meetings for planning, however, once the planning stage is complete, the commission is responsible for the establishment, management, and improvement of the trail project in accordance with Chapter NR 44, Wis. Adm. Code to the extent practicable. Sauk County has designated the Sauk County Parks Director to assist the commission with plan implementation.

Once the cooperative plan is adopted by the commission, the commission should meet on an as-needed basis, but not less than quarterly to assure implementation of the cooperative plan. Once the Great Sauk Trail | Sauk Prairie segment is fully constructed, the commission’s role will have been fulfilled, and the commission may choose to terminate at that time.

### Friends Group

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Sauk Prairie and surrounding communities have participated in the planning process with great interest and have expressed an interminable desire to see the trail established as soon as possible. There is no doubt that the community will take pride in the trail and a “friends” group would create a venue to channel community energy and pride into furthering the trail effort.



## 6 Trail Segment Expansion, Recommendation, and Strategy

### Trail Expansion

The Great Sauk State Trail – Sauk Prairie segment is one part of a larger effort to create a regionally connected trail. Discussions should continue to create eventual connections to the City of Middleton via the US Hwy. 12 trail and to Mazomanie through the Lower Wisconsin Riverway. Additionally, the public participation component of the Great Sauk State Trail planning process revealed a strong public desire to develop loop routes within the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area, particularly with respect to gaining access to a lookout at the northern end of the recreation property and for the creation a loop access route to U.S. Highway 12.

Northward, the trail should continue into Devil’s Lake State Park and connect to the existing Riverwalk trail in the City of Baraboo. From Baraboo, a route will need to be identified to connect the trail to the 400 trail in the City of Reedsburg.

### Recommendation and Strategy

The Great Sauk State Trail will serve as a backbone that connects trail users to local trails, recreation opportunities and other amenities. Once developed, this backbone trail may become part of a trail network that traverses not only Sauk County, but multiple counties in the State of Wisconsin. While this plan sets forth basic recommendations for establishing the Great Sauk State Trail|Sauk Prairie segment, successive planning processes should be considered to establish successive segments. These include:

- Great Sauk State Trail - Devil’s Lake Segment
- Great Sauk Trail – Baraboo Segment
- Great Sauk Trail – Reedsburg Segment

Planning for the Devil’s Lake segment should take place at such time the master plan for Devil’s Lake State Park is updated. The planning boundary for the Devil’s Lake segment will be within the current park boundaries.

Planning for the Baraboo and Reedsburg segment will likely be similar to the planning process for the Sauk Prairie segment and should be a coordinated effort between Sauk County and affected municipalities. The boundaries of these successive segments should be established before the planning process begins.

It is anticipated that the master planning process for Devil’s Lake State Park will begin in the next 2 to 3 years. While there is no set timeframe for the planning of the Baraboo and Reedsburg segments, this plan suggests that planning for the Baraboo segment will commence at the conclusion of the planning process for the Sauk Prairie segment. Planning for the Reedsburg segment would therefore commence at the conclusion of the planning process for the Baraboo segment.

Actual implementation, land and easement acquisition, and trail construction for each segment will vary, however, if trail connectivity is to be realized as put forth in this plan, planning is a critical first step to achieving this goal.

### Plan Review and Revision

It is recommended that the Great Sauk State Trail Plan be reviewed at 5-year intervals from the date that the plan was adopted by the Great Sauk trail Commission. At each review stakeholders and advisors that participated in the original planning process should be notified to give feedback regarding possible plan amendments or implementation efforts. Review of the plan at intervals less than 5 years is recommended to assure plan consistency with the master plans for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area, Devils Lake State Park, land being managed by the Ho-Chunk Nation, and any relevant local municipal plans.

## Appendix A Project Sheets

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### Sauk City Section Project Sheets

Street Crossings South of U.S. Hwy 12 and Dane County Road Y

Crossing at U.S. Hwy 12/ Phillips Blvd.

Angle Intersection Crossings

Angle Street Crossings

State Road 78/Water Street Crossing

Downtown Sauk City Portal | Sauk Prairie Riverway Welcome Center

### Prairie du Sac Section Project Sheets

Grand Avenue Access/South Eagle Gate

Downtown Prairie du Sac Portal/Middle Eagle Gate

Water Street Access/North Eagle Gate

Crossing at River Street

Crossing at Dam Heights Road

Crossing at State Road 78 / County Road Z

Crossings at U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center Lands

### Badger Section Project Sheets

Crossing at Goette Rd

Crossing at Halweg Rd / Railroad Trestle

## Appendix B Maps

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The Great Sauk Trail – Prairie du Sac/Sauk City Unit – Tier 1

The Great Sauk Trail – Dane County Unit – Tier 2

The Great Sauk Trail – Badger Unit – Tier 3

## Appendix C Plan Changes from Public Input

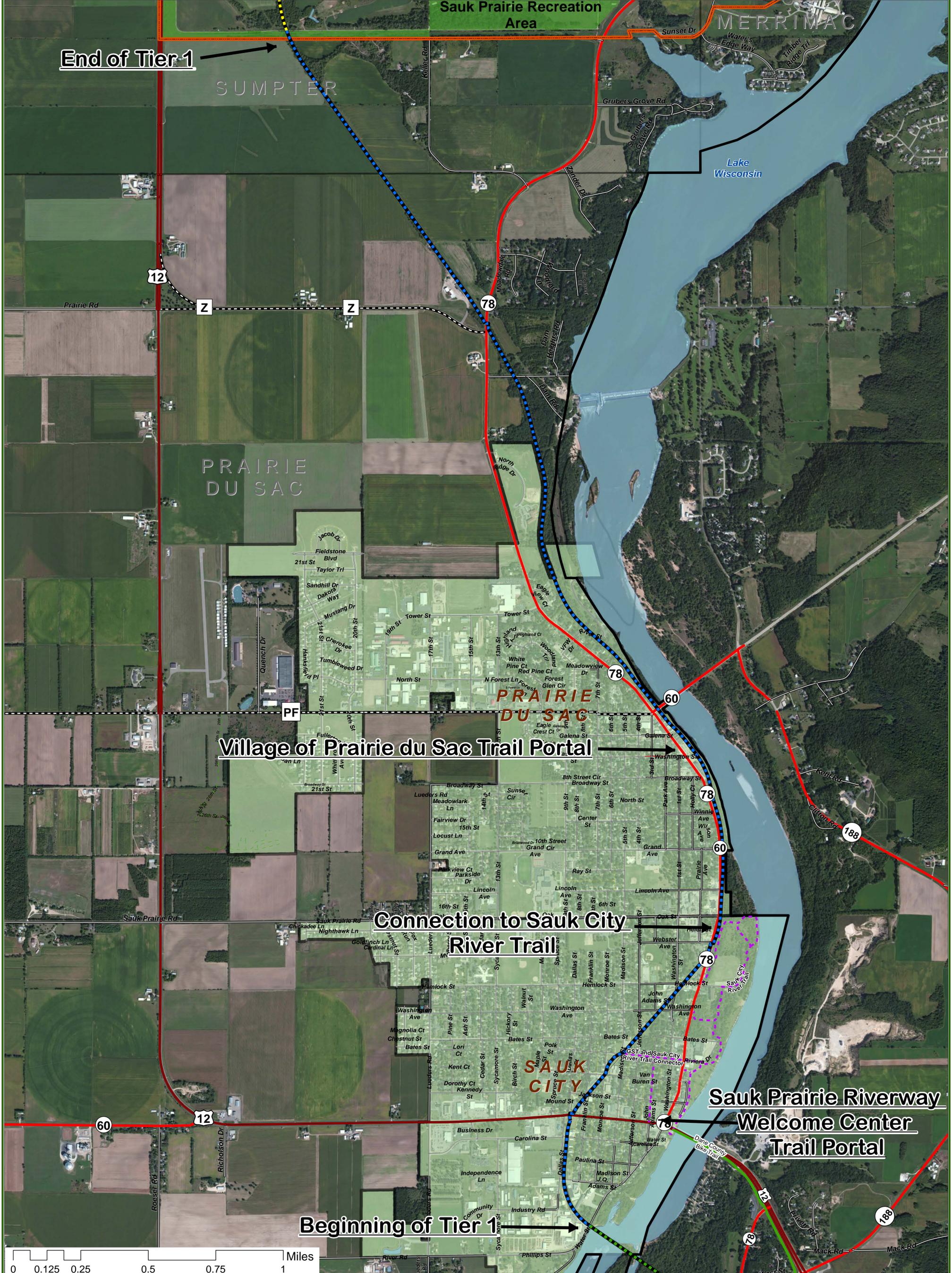
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Summary of Plan Changes

## Appendix D Sauk County Board Adoption Resolution

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The Great Sauk Trail - Prairie du Sac/Sauk City Unit - Tier 1

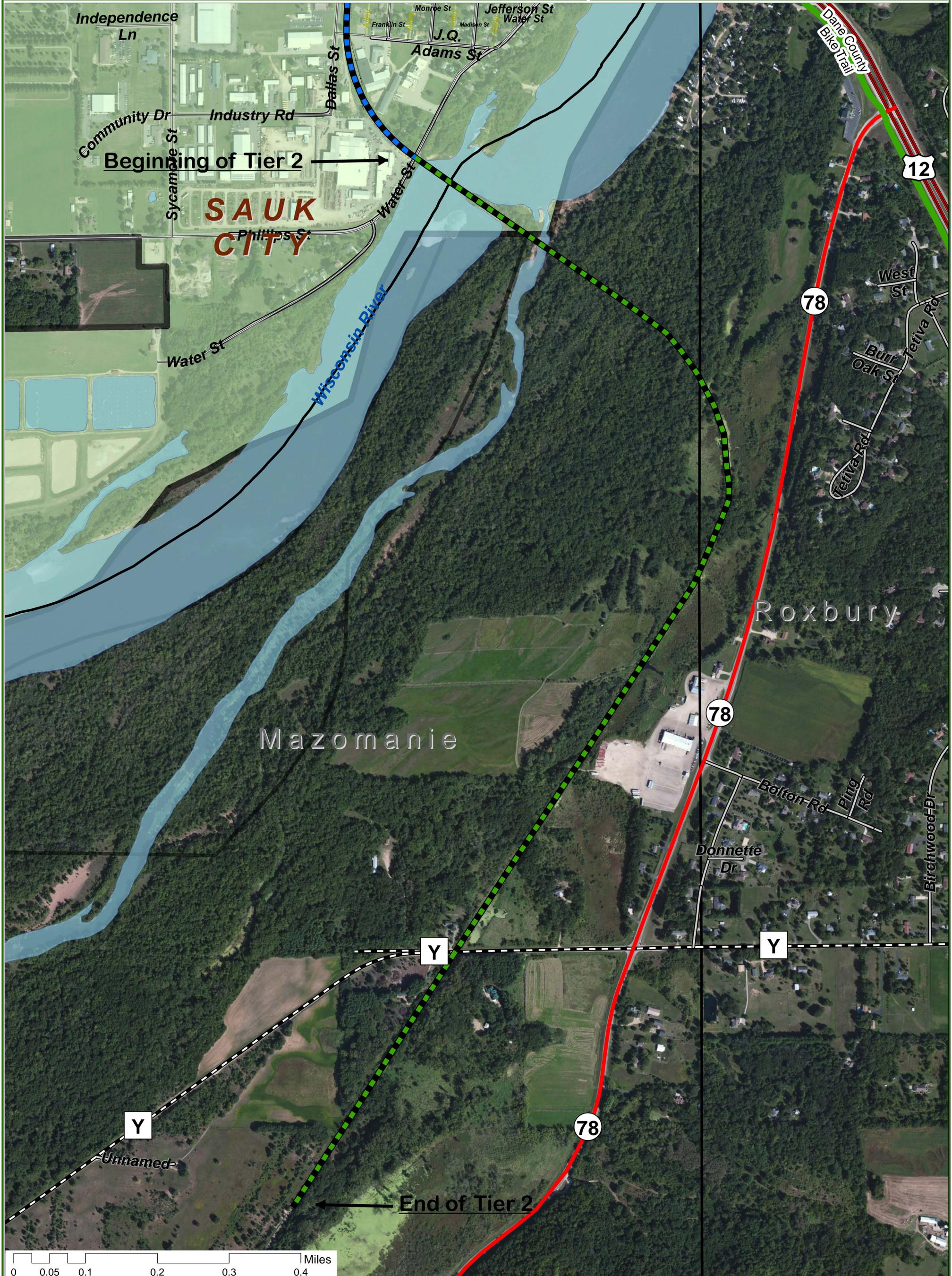


Great Sauk Trail		Road Centerline		Waterbodies		Public Lands		Minor Civil Division	
	Prairie du Sac/Sauk City Unit - Tier 1		Interstate		Stream or River		County		City
	Dane County Unit - Tier 2		Federal		Lake or Pond		Fishery Area		Town
	Badger Unit - Tier 3		State				State		Village
	BAAP Boundary		County				State Natural Area		
	Railroad		Town				Wildlife Area		
			Private-Named						
			Private						
			Ramp						

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 of the data contained herein and makes no  
 warranty with respect to its correctness or validity.  
 Data contained in this map is limited by the method  
 and accuracy of its collection.

**Sauk County**  
 Conservation, Planning & Zoning

The Great Sauk Trail - Dane County Unit - Tier 2



Great Sauk Trail		Road Centerline		Waterbodies		Public Lands		Minor Civil Division	
	Prairie du Sac/Sauk City Unit - Tier 1		Interstate		Stream or River		County		City
	Dane County Unit - Tier 2		Federal		Lake or Pond		Fishery Area		Town
	Badger Unit - Tier 3		State				State		Village
	Railroad		County				State Natural Area		
			Town				Wildlife Area		
			Alley						
			Private-Named						
			Private						
			Ramp						

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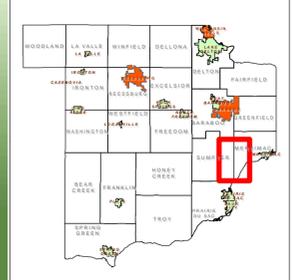
**Sauk County**  
Conservation, Planning & Zoning

# Sauk County Conservation, Planning and Zoning Department

## The Great Sauk State Trail - Badger Unit - Tier 3



Legend		Road Centerline		Waterbodies		Public Lands		Minor Civil Division	
	Proposed Great Sauk State Trail		Interstate		Stream or River		County		City
	Sauk Prairie Recreation Area Project Boundary		Federal		Lake or Pond		Fishery Area		Town
	Railroad		State				State Natural Area		Village
			County				Wildlife Area		
			Town						
			Muni						
			Alley						
			Private-Named						
			Private						
			Ramp						



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**Sauk County**  
 Conservation, Planning & Zoning

## Description

South of US Hwy 12, the Great Sauk State Trail crosses Carolina, JQ Adams, and Water Streets in the Village of Sauk City and County Rd Y in Dane County. The following safety improvements for these crossings are recommended.

- **Stop Signs**  
Install stop signs for trail users.
- **Install Trail Crossing Signs**  
Install trail crossing signs in each direction of vehicular travel (W11-15 and W11-5p).



## Project Sheet: Street Crossings South of US Hwy 12 and Dane County Rd Y

Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit and Dane County Unit

## Description

The Great Sauk State Trail crossing with US Hwy 12 | Phillips Blvd. provides a connection to bike lanes along US Hwy 12 that connect to the trail to Middleton and provides a connection to the trail southbound into Dane County. The crossing is at an angle and is currently unmarked. Conditions and solutions to improve the crossing are presented and should be constructed as appropriate.

- **Re-align trail off of the rail corridor**  
Realign the trail to the west of the existing railroad corridor to utilize an existing marked/signed crossing.
- **Directional Informational Sign**  
Install (green) directional information signs to guide trail users to a an existing marked/signed crossing.
- **Install Trail Crossing Signs**  
Relace existing cross walk signs (W11-2) and replace with trail crossing signs (W11-15 and W11-5p).



## Project Sheet: Crossing at US Hwy 12 | Phillips Blvd.

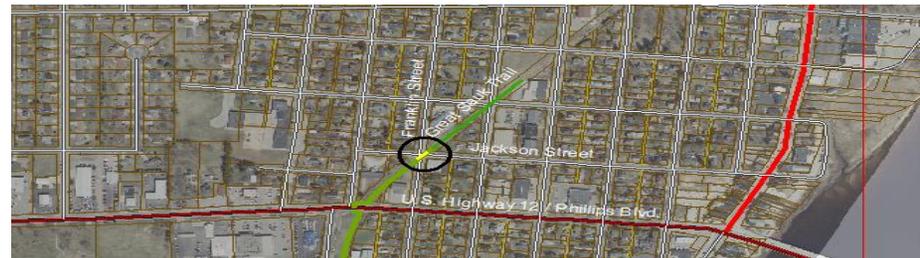
Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit

## Description

The Great Sauk State Trail crosses a number of intersections in the Village of Sauk City at an angle. These intersections include Jackson | Franklin, Van Buren | Monroe, and Polk | Madison Streets. Each of these intersections experiences a low traffic volume and traffic speeds of not more than 25 m.p.h. The example on this project sheet applies to all three intersections. To improve safety at these intersections, the following crossing upgrades should be constructed as appropriate.

- **Install Pavement Markings**  
Pavement markings should be installed to provide a clear path for trail users.
- **Stop Signs**  
Establish a four-way stop controlled intersection for vehicular traffic and install stop signs for trail users.
- **Install Trail Crossing Signs**  
Install trail crossing signs in each direction of vehicular travel (W11-15 and W11-5p).



## Project Sheet: Angle Intersection Crossings

Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit

## Description

The Great Sauk State Trail crosses a number of streets in the Village of Sauk City at an angle. These streets include Water, Washington, Hemlock, Jefferson and Washington. Each of these street crossings experiences a low traffic volume and traffic speeds of not more than 25 m.p.h. The example on this project sheet applies to all referenced crossings. To improve safety at these intersections, the following crossing upgrades should be constructed as appropriate.

- **Install Pavement Markings**  
Pavement markings should be installed to provide a clear path for trail users.
- **Stop Signs**  
Install stop signs for trail users.
- **Install Trail Crossing Signs**  
Install trail crossing signs in each direction of vehicular travel (W11-15 and W11-5p).



## Project Sheet: Angle Street Crossings

Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit

## Description

The current railroad corridor crosses Water St | State Rd 78 at a significant long angle running nearly parallel to traffic, creating a safety hazard for trail users. It is recommended that the trail be constructed alongside the eastern side of the Water St crossing at a point where the railroad corridor intersects with the western edge of Water St. To improve safety at this new crossing, the following crossing upgrades should be constructed as appropriate.

- **Install Pavement Markings**  
Pavement markings should be installed to provide a clear path for trail users.
- **Stop Signs**  
Install stop signs for trail users.
- **Install Trail Crossing Signs**  
Install trail crossing signs in each direction of vehicular travel (W11-15 and W11-5p).



## Project Sheet: State Road 78 | Water St Crossing

Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit

## Description

In the Village of Sauk City, situated at the entrance of Sauk County, the Sauk Prairie Riverway Welcome Center will serve as a portal for the Sauk Prairie community. The Welcome Center will provide the following:

- **Great Sauk State Trail connection**  
Provide maps and direction to assist trail users with finding the Great Sauk State Trail, located six blocks west of the Riverway Welcome Center.
- **Sauk City River Trail connection**  
Provide maps and direction to assist trail users with finding the Sauk City River Trail, located two blocks east of the Riverway Welcome Center.
- **Central point of accliamtion**  
Utilize the Welcome Center as a primary starting point to acclimate trail users to the Sauk Prairie area, activities, venues and provide for trail pass sales.



## Project Sheet: Downtown Sauk City Portal | Sauk Prairie Riverway Welcome Center

Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit

## Description

The Great Sauk State Trail deviates from its official route along the river in the Village of Prairie du Sac during critical bald eagle roosting times. Roosting times vary each year based on weather conditions. The Ferry Bluff Eagle Council will monitor bald eagle activity and will be responsible for closing the south eagle gate. Closing the gate will discourage trail use and unofficially divert trail users to Water St.

- **Water Street Connection**  
Construct a trail access connection between the Great Sauk State Trail and Water St.
- **Gate Installation**  
Install a gate directly north of the trail access.
- **Educational Signage**  
Install educational signage informing trail users about bald eagle activities and an explanation as to why the trail may be closed at certain times of the year.



## Project Sheet: Grand Avenue Access | South Eagle Gate

Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit

## Description

Primary access between the Great Sauk State Trail and downtown Prairie du Sac will be provided by a 'trail head portal.' This access is also located adjacent to a municipal parking lot and as the project sheet suggests, signage should direct visitors and tourists to the parking area and trail access. The Great Sauk Trail in this area will be subject to unofficial closure during critical bald eagle roosting times.

- **Access Upgrade**  
Upgrade the existing access with architectural features and art installations and assure trail access provisions that meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
- **Water Street Signage**  
Provide directional signage along Water Street informing the public on parking and trail access.
- **Gate Installation**  
Install a gate in the vicinity of the parking area.
- **Educational Signage**  
Install educational signage informing trail users about bald eagle activities and an explanation as to why the trail may be closed at certain times of the year.



## Project Sheet: Downtown Prairie du Sac Portal | Middle Eagle Gate

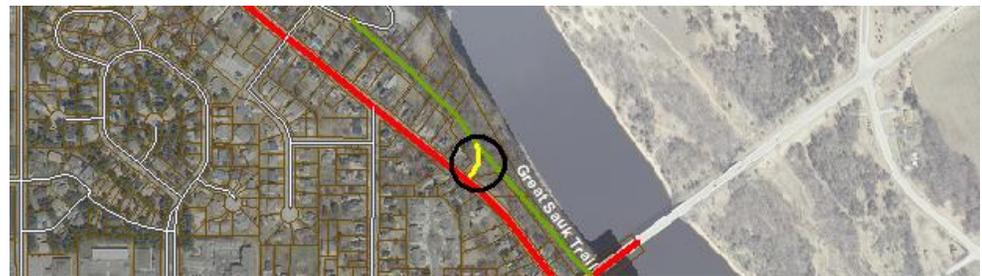
Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit

## Description

The Great Sauk State Trail deviates from its official route along the river in the Village of Prairie du Sac during critical bald eagle roosting times. Roosting times vary each year based on weather conditions. The Ferry Bluff Eagle Council will monitor bald eagle activity and will be responsible for closing the north eagle gate. Closing the gate will discourage trail use and unofficially divert trail users to Water Street.

- **Water Street Connection**  
Construct a trail access connection between the Great Sauk Trail and Water Street.
- **Gate Installation**  
Install a gate directly south of the trail access.
- **Educational Signage**  
Install educational signage informing trail users about bald eagle activities and an explanation as to why the trail may be closed at certain times of the year.



## Project Sheet: Water Street Access | North Eagle Gate

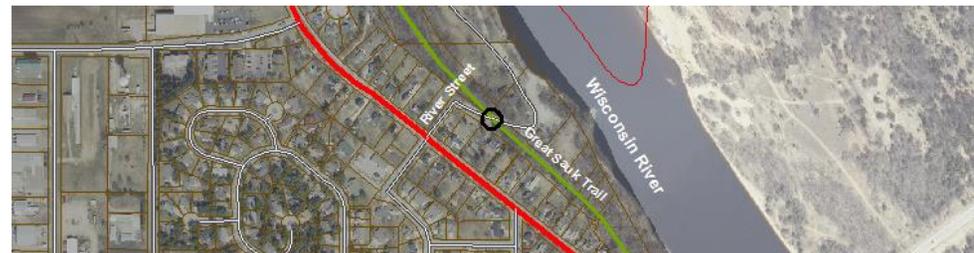
Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit

## Description

The trail crossing with River St presents a number of challenges for motorists relative to limited visibility at the trail crossing due to vegetation and slope. In addition to trail and road signage, consideration should be given to maximizing vegetation clearances.

- **Install Pavement Markings**  
Pavement markings should be installed to provide a clear path for trail users and to clearly mark to motorists where the trail crossing occurs.
- **Stop Signs**  
Install stop signs for trail users.
- **Install Trail Crossing Signs**  
Install trail crossing signs in each direction of vehicular travel (W11-15 and W11-5p).



## Project Sheet: Crossing at River St

Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit

## Description

The Great Sauk State Trail crossing at Dam Heights Rd is a nearly perpendicular crossing that does not warrant any safety improvement except standard signage.

- **Stop Signs**  
Install stop signs for trail users.
- **Install Trail Crossing Signs**  
Install trail crossing signs in each direction of vehicular travel (W11-15 and W11-5p).



## Project Sheet: Crossing at Dam Heights Rd

Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit

## Description

The Great Sauk Trail Crosses State Road 78 at an angle, which presents a challenge when considering the speed of vehicular traffic. Suggested improvements include signage and pavement marking as well as establishing a marked crossing that is perpendicular to oncoming vehicular traffic.

- **Install Pavement Markings**

Pavement markings should be installed to provide a clear path for trail users and to clearly mark for motorists where the trail crossing occurs. Trail marking should be perpendicular to the line of sight for vehicular traffic.

- **Stop Signs**

Install stop signs for trail users.

- **Install Trail Crossing Signs**

Install trail crossing signs in each direction of vehicular travel (W11-15 and W11-5p).



## Project Sheet: Crossing at State Rd 78 | County Rd Z

Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit

## Description

The Great Sauk State Trail traverses land owned by the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center (DFRC). The trail will intersect with three primary roads utilized by agricultural equipment to access fields. The DFRC requested that safety improvements be implemented to inform trail users of upcoming crossings.

- **Install Trail Crossing Signs**  
Install notification signage of upcoming farm crossings for users of the trail (W11-5).



## Project Sheet: Crossings at U. S. Dairy Forage Research Center Lands

Sauk County

Great Sauk State Trail Plan – Badger Unit

## Description

The Great Sauk State Trail crossing at Goette Rd is a nearly perpendicular crossing that does not warrant any safety improvement except standard signage.

- **Stop Signs**  
Install stop signs for trail users.
- **Install Trail Crossing Signs**  
Install trail crossing signs in each direction of vehicular travel (W11-15 and W11-5p).



## Project Sheet: Crossing at Goette Rd

Sauk County

Great Sauk Trail Plan – Badger Unit

## Description

The Great Sauk State Trail crossing at Halweg Rd and the active Reedsburg to Madison rail line presents a number of options to transition the trail from the west side of the rail line to the east side. As part of the construction phase, each option should be explored in terms of safety and available funding. The following three options should be explored:

- **Install Trail Crossing Signs and Stop Signs**  
Install trail crossing signs in each direction of vehicular travel before entering the tunnel (W11-15 and W11-5p) and trail stop signs. Consider installation of beacon lights.
- **Construct an At-Grade Crossing**  
Construct an at-grade crossing where the wye track connects with the active rail line
- **Install a Trail Tunnel**  
Install a new trail tunnel in the vicinity of the existing underpass utilized by vehicular traffic.



## Project Sheet: Crossing at Halweg Rd Railroad Trestle

Sauk County

Great Sauk Trail Plan – Badger Unit

# Changes to the Great Sauk State Trail Plan based on public input on the open house draft.

## Changes approved by the Great Sauk Trail Commission on April 22, 2015

### 1 Executive Summary, Vision, and Goals

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#### **Purpose of the Cooperative Plan**

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The cooperative plan for the Great Sauk State Trail establishes and articulates a consistent vision for how the trail will be used and what message the trail conveys relative to the area's history, geology and ecology, in addition to providing a recreational resource. Currently, the Great Sauk State Trail is undeveloped, however, because of its proximity to Madison, Wisconsin and Devil's Lake State Park, there is considerable potential for this trail to become a local community asset and regional, or even national, attraction and destination.

This cooperative plan, while specific to the Great Sauk State Trail, is provided as a complement to other adopted plans with varying jurisdiction. Goals and policy direction provided in these plans, in turn, complement the overarching goal of establishing the Great Sauk Trail.

Functionally, this cooperative plan provides the framework for the trail route, users, amenities, and basic construction guidelines. The plan anticipates future connections to successive trail segments to eventually realize a connected regional trail system. Details, such as incorporating interpretive components for the trail or installation of trail features such as art sculptures and benches, are outside of the direct scope of this plan, but were considered during the planning process.

The cooperative plan also designates the Sauk Prairie Segment as a State Trail. This designation will enable the sale of State Trail passes to generate revenue for trail maintenance. The State trail designation will also place the trail in promotional materials generated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources which reaches several million people each year, enables the promotion of the trail at trade shows, both in Wisconsin and adjoining states, and qualifies the Friend's Group to apply for a Friends Group Grant.

### 2 Project Background

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#### **Boundary and Context**

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The Great Sauk State Trail is conceptually divided into four segments: the Sauk Prairie Segment, Devil's Lake Segment, Baraboo Segment, and Reedsburg Segment. While this plan is for the Great Sauk State Trail, it applies only to the Sauk Prairie Segment.

The Sauk Prairie Segment is located in southeastern Sauk County and partially in northeastern Dane County, the Great Sauk State Trail – Sauk Prairie Segment spans a distance of approximately 13.6 miles, primarily along the former Union Pacific Railroad corridor. The trail connects Devil's Lake State Park and the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area to the Sauk County Villages of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City. In Sauk City, the trail will intersect with an existing bike trail, creating a connection to Middleton to the east and will continue south to a suggested trail head in the Lower Wisconsin Riverway in Dane County.

The Sauk Prairie Segment is divided into three management units: the Badger Unit, Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit and the Dane County Unit. Section 3 of this planning document describes the

geographic location of each unit and within each unit trail users, route, access and management and development prescriptions.

The planning process suggested two 'feature loop' routes for day use hiking and biking opportunities that are close to a suggested trailhead in the vicinity of US Hwy 12 and a trail portal access point between downtown Prairie du Sac and the trail which runs along the Wisconsin River and a second trail portal located at the Sauk Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center on Phillips Blvd.

Overall, the Great Sauk State Trail – Sauk Prairie segment is a beginning to a larger effort of creating a regionally-connected trail that will connect multiple cities and, quite possibly, states.

The Great Sauk State Trail – Sauk Prairie segment is divided into units, each with their unique set of development and management considerations and trail users. **Section 3 – Development, Management and Use** describes the geographic location of each unit and defines more detailed criteria within.

## 3 Management, Development, and Use

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### Badger Unit Management, Development, and Use

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**Background** - Primarily located within the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant, the Badger Unit of the Great Sauk Trail plays an important role in defining the area's pre-settlement, settlement, war-time history, and post war-healing of the land. For local residents and tourist alike, the trail will provide access to the beauty of the land and offers a rare opportunity to share the area's unique history, ecology, and ongoing changes to the landscape. Within the boundary of the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant, the Badger Unit primarily traverses or is adjacent to land owned by the USDA's Dairy Forage Research Center, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

**Trail Users** – It is anticipated that the Badger unit be primarily designated for non-motorized uses and will accommodate bicycling and pedestrian users based on trail conditions. The trail will not be maintained for winter users. A section of the trail at a point where it exits the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant to the north is reserved for possible future snowmobile use.

**Trail Users** – It is recommended that the section of trail within the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant be designated for non-motorized uses and will principally accommodate bicycling and pedestrian users in the summer with possible snow-shoeing, cross-county skiing and fat-wheeled bike riding in the winter, based on trail conditions. Snowmobile uses may be accommodated on the Great Sauk State Trail corridor within the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area.

The section of trail beginning at a point where the trail exits the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant to the north to a point concluding at Halweg Road is designated for snowmobile use in addition to the aforementioned non-motorized uses. This section of trail will be built to accommodate winter snowmobile use within the trail right-of-way with an unpaved (grassed) surface reserved for snowmobile use where feasible.

**Trail Route and Access** - Access may be provided by a trail head located in the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area. Ancillary access will be provided where the trail crosses roads. The trail will primarily follow the former rail corridor.

**Management and Development Prescriptions.** It is anticipated that the final as-built alignment of the trail will follow the former rail corridor. The Great Sauk Trail Commission and public input during the planning process recommends that this section of the trail be paved. Trail development within the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area will be determined by the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area master plan. The section of trail that will accommodate snowmobile uses, as described under trail users above, will be built with an unpaved surface (grassed) reserved for snowmobile use where feasible.

## Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit

### Management, Development, and Use

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**Background** - This section of the trail will serve as a catalyst for the Village of Prairie du Sac to explore opportunities to become a “trail town” destination, particularly when the larger, regional trail connections are made. This trail section will re-orientate downtown development to incorporate a trail-side focus in addition to the current street-side focus. The primary trail user experience in this section will be more urban-like, with associated amenities such as direct access to a public library, as well as opportunities to experience local arts, culinary finds, and other related engagements typically found in small, rural downtowns. The plan recommends periodic trail connections to the street side to encourage access between trail and downtown amenities, and one primary village ‘trailhead portal’ to serve as the main connection between the trail and street-side downtown.

In the Village of Sauk City, situated at the entrance of Sauk County, the Sauk Prairie Riverway Welcome Center serves as a portal for the Sauk Prairie Riverway community. The Welcome Center provides public parking, restrooms, WI-FI, brochures of attractions, restaurants and unique retail in Sauk Prairie area. Great Sauk State Trail passes will be sold and staff will provide trail users with bike routes to accommodate outing needs.

The welcome center is an attraction in itself, with a 1,400 gallon aquarium which showcases various species of fish in the Wisconsin River, along with a 20 foot sculpted tree that holds a life-size eagles nest. Tourists will be encouraged to make their first stop, the Sauk Prairie Riverway Welcome Center when visiting The Great Sauk Trail.

Once connected to the Great Sauk State Trail, users can travel north through the Village of Sauk City at a diagonal to connect once again to the Sauk City river trail or may choose to travel on to the Village of Prairie du Sac.

South of the US Hwy 12 | Phillips Blvd., the trail will serve as a trail connection to the Lower Wisconsin Riverway in Dane County and will provide a permanent route for snowmobiles to connect to routes east of Sauk City. This section will provide access over the Wisconsin River via a converted rail to trail bridge. This section of the trail will also serve to connect employees of businesses in the Sauk City Business Park to the Great Sauk State Trail and the Sauk City river trail system.

~~**Trail Users** - The Prairie du Sac | Sauk City Unit will accommodate a mix of bicycling and pedestrian users.~~

**Trail Users** - The section of trail beginning at State Road 78 north of the Village of Prairie du Sac to and concluding at US Hwy 12 in Sauk City is designated for non-motorized uses and will principally accommodate bicycling and pedestrian users in the summer with possible snow-shoeing, cross-country skiing and fat-wheeled bike riding in the winter, based on trail conditions.

The section of trail beginning at a point where the trail exists the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant to the south to a point concluding at State Road 78 is designated for snowmobile use in addition to the aforementioned non-motorized uses. This section of trail will be built to accommodate winter snowmobile use within the trail right-of-way with an unpaved (grassed) surface reserved for snowmobile use where feasible.

Additionally, a section of trail located south of US Hwy 12 to the Dane County Unit is designated for snowmobile use in addition to the aforementioned non-motorized uses. This section of trail will also be built to accommodate winter snowmobile use within the trail right-of-way with an unpaved (grassed) surface reserved for snowmobile use where feasible.

**Trail Route and Access** - Multiple access points will be provided, with no single access being a primary access. Trail access points are located in the Northridge Business Park; adjacent to the Veterans Memorial Park; north of the State Rd 60 bridge; and at the intersection of State Rd 78 and Grand Ave. A major trail head located, at the municipal parking lot and adjacent to the Ruth Culver Library, will serve as the primary portal between the trail and street-side downtown Prairie du Sac.

Within the Village of Sauk City there will not be a principle access point, however, ancillary access will be provided where the trail crosses roads. It is recommended that trail connections between downtown Sauk City, the Chamber of Commerce, and local businesses be developed and connected to the Great Sauk State Trail including local restaurants and gas/convenience store connections as part of a designated snowmobile route.

**Management and Development Prescriptions** - The final as-built alignment of the trail will follow the former rail corridor. All access points and the primary downtown portal will need to be constructed. In order to protect critical bald eagle roosting habitat during the winter, a gate and informational signage will be installed at the following access points: North of the State Rd 60 bridge; at the downtown Prairie du Sac portal; and at the intersection of State Road 78 and Grand Avenue. These gates will be controlled by the Village of Prairie du Sac based on typical annual critical relevant environmental factors.

Vegetation management along the Wisconsin River in the Village of Prairie du Sac will be minimal and prior to the removal of any large trees that may be utilized by eagles for roosting, technical data/research should be consulted.

The section of the trail from southern boundary of the Badger Unit to ~~US Hwy 12~~ the Dane County Unit will be paved. ~~The section of the trail from US Hwy 12 | Phillips Blvd. to the Sauk City rail bridge will be surfaced with crushed limestone to accommodate snowmobile use.~~ The section of trail that will accommodate snowmobile uses within the trail right-of-way and the trail will be built with an unpaved surface (grassed) reserved for snowmobile use where feasible.

#### **Dane County Unit Management, Development, and Use**

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**Background** - This unit of the trail will serve as a trail connection to the Lower Wisconsin Riverway in Dane County and will provide a permanent route for snowmobiles to connect to routes east of Sauk City. Once this phase is completed, it is anticipated that snowmobile accessibility will no longer be needed in the Village of Prairie du Sac section. This section will provide access over the Wisconsin River via a converted rail to trail bridge.

~~**Trail Users** - The trail in this section will be designed to accommodate snowmobiles as the primary user, with bikers/pedestrians utilizing the trail in summer.~~

**Trail Users** - The Dane County Unit is designated for motorized and non-motorized uses and will principally accommodate bicycling and pedestrian users in the summer with possible snow-shoeing, cross-country skiing and fat-wheeled bike riding in the winter, based on trail conditions. This Unit will also accommodate snowmobilers as a primary winter trail user.

**Management and Development Prescriptions** - The final as-built alignment of the trail will follow the former rail corridor. This section of the trail will consist of a crushed limestone surface. Future consideration may be given to paving this section if utilized as part of a future regional bike network. An existing railroad bridge will be upgraded to accommodate multiple users including snowmobilers as the primary winter trail user.

## 5 Implementation Recommendations

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### Estimated Cost

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Based on the tiers for project priorities and phasing and applying estimated costs, the following table demonstrates estimated cost per tier:

<b>Tier 1</b>
Southern boundary of the former BAAP to the Sauk City Rail Bridge Estimated total cost: 1.2 million
<b>Tier 2</b>
Including the Sauk City Rail Bridge trail into Dane County estimated cost of rail bridge upgrade 1.5 million estimated cost of trail construction \$460,000 Estimated total cost 2.0 million
<b>Tier 3</b>
Southern boundary of the former BAAP up to Devil's Lake State Park Estimated total cost 1.3 million