

# Cass County Recreational Trails Plan 2008



Prepared by: **Southwest Iowa Planning Council**  
1501 SW 7<sup>th</sup> St. Atlantic, IA 50022

## Table of Contents

<b>Part I. County-Wide Issues</b>	1
Introduction	2
Public Participation	4
Goals	4
Recommendations	4
County Profile	6
Trails History	7
Planning Process	8
Trails Types	9
Trails Uses	10
Trails Facilities	16
Auto Tour Routes	17
County-Wide Pedestrian System	19
<b>Part II. Community Plans</b>	21
Anita	22
Cumberland	25
Griswold	28
Lewis	30
Marne	32
Massena	34
Wiota	36
Implementation	38
Trails Development Phases	39
Cost Estimates	40
<b>Appendix</b>	41
Trails Grants	42
Trails Signage	44
Helpful Websites	47

May, 2008 DRAFT COPY

**Part I.**

**County Wide Issues**

## **Introduction**

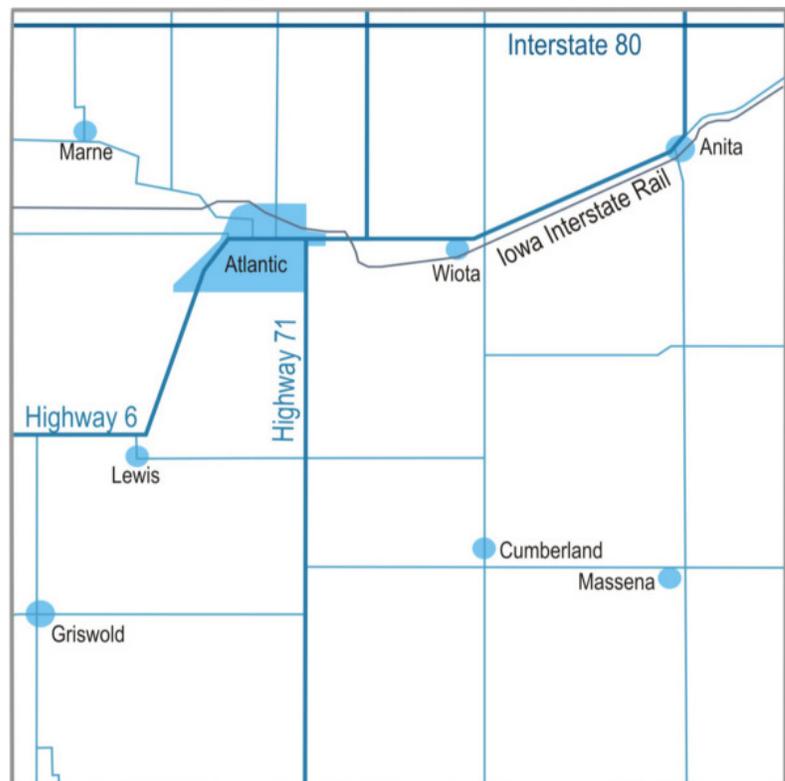
Trails have become key amenities for communities around the country. They not only attract new residents, but help to increase the quality of life for current residents as well. Cass County has many attractive features and a high quality of life, but the local trails infrastructure is very limited. This plan addresses this shortcoming and offers suggestions to improve the trails infrastructure throughout the county. Trails within cities and between cities are addressed. Trails in and around Anita, Cumberland, Griswold, Lewis, Marne, Massena, and Wiota are proposed. Atlantic, the county seat and largest city in Cass County, has developed its own trails plan and is not covered here—though this plan strongly encourages the implementation of the *Atlantic Trails Plan* and the development of trails in and around Atlantic as part of a cohesive, countywide trails system.

This plan was developed to meet the trails needs in Cass County in three focus areas;

- Safe routes for children to go to school and play.
- Areas for residents to pursue healthy physical activity to increase the overall quality of life.
- Trails as economic development tools to bring visitors into the county.

The plan outlines the many findings of the trails planning groups, the goals for the trails system, as well as the routes identified for new trail construction. Above all, this plan demonstrates that a comprehensive recreational trails system will be a major asset to the county, in terms of economic development, community health, and social well-being.

Trails have many benefits. Perhaps the most direct benefit is their positive impact on the physical and mental health of the community. Trails provide safe, accessible areas for people of all ages to enjoy



physical outdoor activity. Increased physical activity is known to:

- Decrease the risk of cardiovascular disease, colon cancer, and diabetes.
- Help maintain muscle strength and joint structure and function.
- Assist normal skeletal development during childhood.
- Help relieve depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses.
- Lower obesity levels with appropriate dietary patterns.

The United States is facing an obesity epidemic. Perhaps the most worrying statistics are the number of young people who are overweight or obese. A recent study by the American Obesity Association found that 30.3 percent of American children ages 6 to 11 were overweight, and an additional 15.3 percent were obese. Trails provide avenues for people of all ages to get out and be physically active, and can provide young people in particular with safe areas to walk or bike to school or to play.

The Centers for Disease Control recommend that individuals should participate in moderate intensity physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day, at least 5 days per week; or vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 20 minutes per day, at least 3 days per week. Moderate intensity activity can include brisk walking, bicycling, household chores, gardening, or anything else that causes a small increase in breathing and heart rate. A comprehensive trails system helps remove the barriers that prevent many people from participating in outdoor exercise, and is a real addition to the overall quality of life.

Likewise, the economic benefit of trails can be substantial. Individual spending on trail related purchases varies considerably, but some studies show as much as \$75 per user per day. A study from Minnesota, a state with extensive trails systems, estimated that trails systems provide an additional \$1 million in annual economic activity for cities with trails.

- In a 2002 survey of recent home buyers sponsored by the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Home Builders, trails ranked as the second most important community amenity out of a list of 18 choices.
- A 1998 study of property values along the Mountain Bay Trail in Brown County, Wisconsin showed that lots adjacent to the trail sold faster and for an average of 9 percent more than similar property not located next to the trail.

These health and economic benefits do have some costs associated with them. In particular, trails construction involves capital improvements similar to building a new street. The surface and grade must be appropriate for the intended use and amenities must be provided to trails users. Once these improvements are in place, they must be maintained and repaired on a regular basis. This plan identifies some of those costs, particularly the cost of installing sections of trails,

to give decision makers a point of reference when deciding what funding resources should be directed toward trails.

### **Public Participation**

Public participation has been central to the creation of this plan and public participation will be critical to the future success of the trails system. Meetings were held throughout the county to gather input for the plan. At each meeting participants were asked to talk about where they currently walk or bike and to identify existing amenities that are conducive to outdoor activity—such as existing trails and parks. Then all the participants were asked to identify goals for trails within their communities and countywide. These goals took the form of both policy initiatives and trails construction. The proposed new trails were mapped and assessed on a number of factors to judge their overall practicality. Outside of formal planning meetings many local residents participated by contacting the SWIPCO planning staff to offer their input. Others volunteered their time to walk and drive proposed routes.

### **Goals**

In each planning session a set of overall goals was remarkably consistent from city to city. These included:

- Increase the number of safe, outdoor recreational opportunities for residents.
- Make our communities as attractive as possible to new businesses and residents.
- Increase the number of tourism opportunities in the county.

Each community also identified its own particular sub-goals. These are explained in greater detail in the second half of this plan.

### **Recommendations**

Each community in Cass County was evaluated to identify potential areas for trails development and those recommendations are detailed in the following sections of this plan. There are several recommendations, however, in addition to developing those specific trails routes that Cass County and the various cities in the county should address in order to meet the overall goals. These include:

- Support statewide legislation to protect counties from liabilities related to bicycle and pedestrian accidents on county roads.

- Identify and mark routes that are safe for bicyclists and pedestrians on existing infrastructure, place warnings where bicyclists and pedestrians are not safe.
- Assess county recreational areas for new and innovative uses, such as ATV and equestrian trails and where practical, adopt policies that allow for these uses.
- Support the implementation of the *Atlantic Trails Plan* and coordinate countywide efforts to ensure maximum connectivity of trails.
- Coordinate with the Iowa Department of Transportation to implement the state trails plan, as well as work directly with neighboring counties to develop regional trails.
- Pursue regional, state, and federal funding for local trails projects.
- Work with school districts to encourage children to walk or bike to school wherever possible.

Overall, this plan not only recommends areas for new trails development in Cass County, but also encourages local governments to adopt policies that encourage trails development and use.

**County Profile**

Cass County is located in Southwest Iowa, approximately 50 miles east of the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area. The county is well connected to transportation infrastructure and is crisscrossed with major highways such as Interstate 80, US Highway 71, US Highway 6, and Iowa Highway 92. The Iowa Interstate Railroad operates a mainline through the northern part of the county.



Roughly half of the population of 14,684 lives in the county seat town of Atlantic. The rest of the population is distributed in small towns and rural residences. Anita and Griswold are the largest of these towns, both with populations around 1,000. Massena and Lewis are each approximately half that size and the other rural communities;

**Cass County by the numbers:**

<b>Population:</b>	<b>14,684</b>
<b>Median Household Income:</b>	<b>\$32,922</b>
<b>Average Household Size:</b>	<b>2.32 People</b>
<b>Median Age:</b>	<b>41.6</b>
<b>Average Summer Temperature:</b>	<b>74° F</b>
<b>Average Winter Temperature:</b>	<b>24° F</b>
<b>Average Rainfall:</b>	<b>33 Inches</b>
<b>Average Snowfall:</b>	<b>28 Inches</b>
<b>Average Travel Time to Work:</b>	<b>&lt;20 Minutes</b>
<b>Average Monthly Mortgage:</b>	<b>\$615</b>
<b>Average Monthly Rent:</b>	<b>\$268</b>

*Information from the 2000 U.S. Census and the National Weather Service*

Cumberland, Marne, and Wiota have populations between 150 and 250 people. The total population of the county declined during the 1980s and 1990s, which was typical of rural counties in Iowa. Since then the population has stabilized and is anticipated to grow slightly between 2000 and 2010. Although rural flight has slowed with improvements in the local economy, the population is aging and the median age of 41.6 is significantly higher than the national median age of 35.

Many young people leave the county to pursue higher education or job opportunities and a significant portion of them end up permanently relocating. Quite often, the young people that leave the county return once they have families of their own.

Agriculture is the driving force behind the local economy. The vast majority of the land area is devoted to crop production or the pasturing of livestock. Corn and soybeans are the dominant crops. Beef, pork, milk, and egg production is considerable. Agricultural production is becoming more consolidated with fewer producers working larger farms—in line with national trends—but family farms are still prevalent throughout the county. Although agriculture is the base for the local economy, the majority of workers are employed in manufacturing or service positions.

### **Trails History**

Trails played a major role in Cass County since the beginning of human habitation. Native Americans had a system of trails that crisscrossed the prairie landscape. Today these trails would seem to us like mere tracks, but they led the way between settlements and were the groundwork for future trails and eventually roads as European settlers came to the county in the mid-1800s. By the time the Mormon Pioneers came through the area that would become Cass County in 1846, there was already a loose assortment of settlements and a few isolated farms. The Mormons improved upon the existing trails, broke new ground where necessary, and along the way built countless bridges and fords. This rough infrastructure paved the way for successive waves of immigration. The town of Lewis is directly linked to the development of the Mormon Trail. Other towns, if you can call them as such, like Iranistan, thrived for a time due to their proximity to the pioneer routes, then faded once other modes of transportation displaced the old trails.

As more and more settlers came to Iowa and Cass County, the Native Americans were driven from their land and the landscape began to change dramatically. Today Iowa is the most environmentally altered state in the union, with less than 1% of the current land area in the same type of habitat that existed prior to European settlement. Where mud tracks had once guided settlers, railroads began to drive settlement. Most of the current cities in Cass County, with the exception of Lewis, owe their location to the routes laid out by railroad surveyors. As infrastructure was developed, the county was divided into a grid pattern and a highly efficient system of farm to market roads was developed that allowed the county to support a large population of rural farm families that had ready access to markets via the railroad. By 1900, virtually the entire county had been plowed under to make way for farm fields, even rivers and streams were straightened to create more uniformly shaped fields. This altered landscape includes very little public land, which has made public trails development more difficult than in some parts of the country.

## **Planning Process**

This plan was developed in four phases. The first phase involved gathering background information on the area, such as demographic information on the communities as well as information on existing trails assets. The second phase involved public meetings in the various communities to gather information on their specific trails needs. The third phase involved developing the draft plan and submitting it to the local governments for their review, comment, and revision. The fourth phase included plan adoption and implementation.

Public interest in the plan was fairly strong from the beginning, and many people took the opportunity to attend one or more of the trails meetings to voice their opinions about potential trail routes. Others who could not attend the scheduled meetings called SWIPCO with their suggestions or came into the SWIPCO office to offer their feedback. Numerous volunteers walked and drove routes in the county to evaluate their suitability for recreational trails.

Five planning sessions were held, one each in Anita, Cumberland, Griswold, Lewis, and Massena. Attendance at these meetings varied greatly, from one to twenty participants. At each meeting SWIPCO staff delivered a presentation on the benefits and types of recreational trails. Assets in the communities, such as public restrooms and existing trails were inventoried. Participants were asked to use maps of the communities to mark out potential trails routes, both on existing infrastructure, such as streets and sidewalks, and new infrastructure trails. The suggestions developed in these planning meetings were then edited by SWIPCO staff and incorporated into the draft plan.

### Planning Timeline

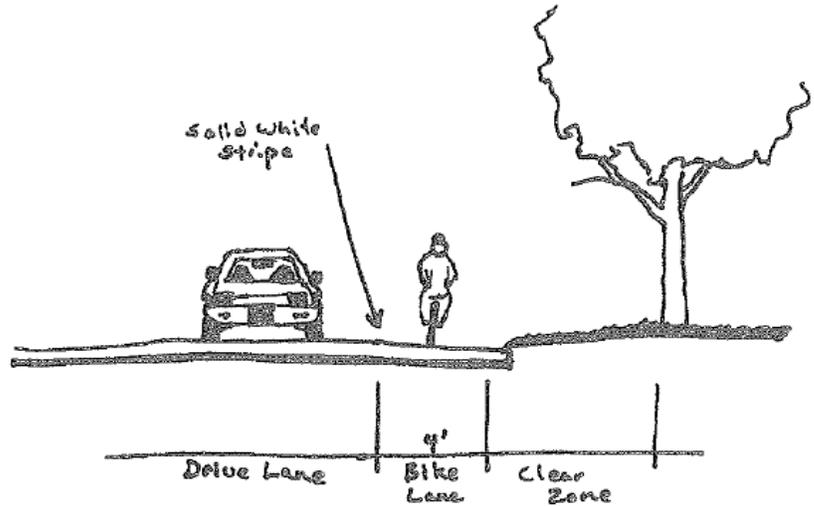
August 2007:	Planned Public Participation Process Identified Stakeholders Gained Support of County Supervisors Publicized Planning Process Gathered Background Information
September-October 2007:	Held Planning Meetings in Various Communities Drove and Walked Proposed Routes
November-December 2007:	Developed Plan Draft
January-April 2008:	Draft Reviewed by Local Governments and Adopted
April 2008:	Plan Implementation and Grant Writing Commenced

## Trail Types

The trails routes identified by the planning process can be grouped into two main categories, and these in turn can be divided into further groups based on their types of use. The two primary groups of trails include existing infrastructure routes and new infrastructure routes.

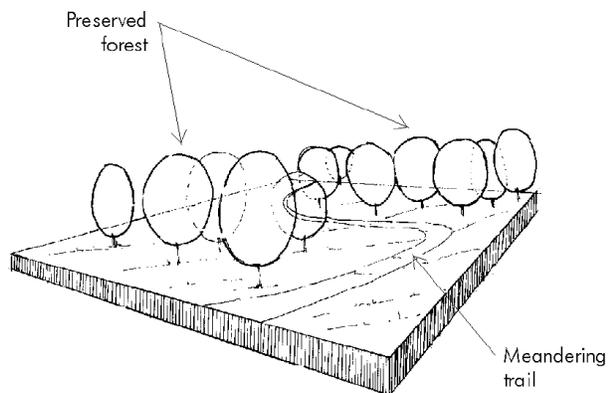
### Existing Infrastructure Routes:

These routes are predominantly internal routes within the cities themselves and take advantage of existing paths, sidewalks, and streets. For the most part these routes will require investments in new signage and street marking. In some areas parking patterns may need to be changed by ordinance to open up room for pedestrians and bicyclists. Relatively little new pavement or grading will be required to bring these trails on line and existing facilities, such as city parks and schools can serve as trail heads. The primary purpose of these trails is to move pedestrians and bicyclists between home, work, and school safely.



### New Infrastructure Routes:

New infrastructure routes are areas that will require considerable site preparation and construction. In many instances land may need to be acquired, while in other places existing state, county and city right of way can be utilized. The cost of these trails will vary greatly based on the amount of site preparation necessary, as well as the type of surface used. In early phases crushed stone may be used, but eventually a hard surface such as asphalt or concrete may be preferred.

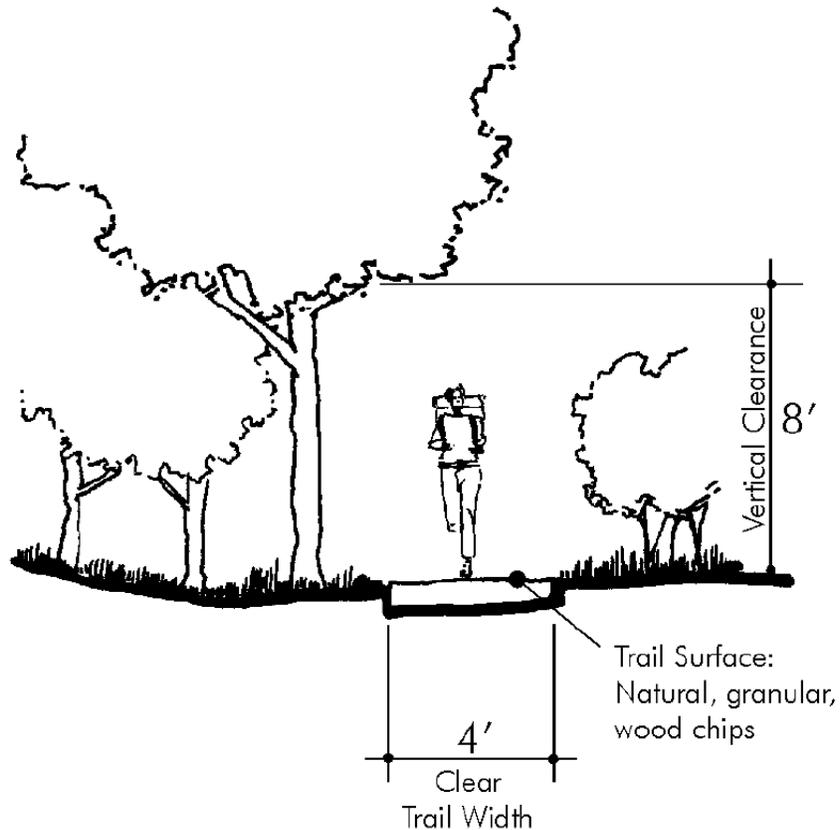


## Trail Uses

### Walking:



Walking (including hiking) is the number one activity on trails systems, according to the non-profit trails organization *America's Trails*. Walking is the most accessible form of exercise; it requires no special equipment and can be done virtually everywhere. Walking trails must take into consideration that person's with a wide range of abilities will be using them, and therefore must include areas for users to stop and rest at appropriate intervals.



### Biking:

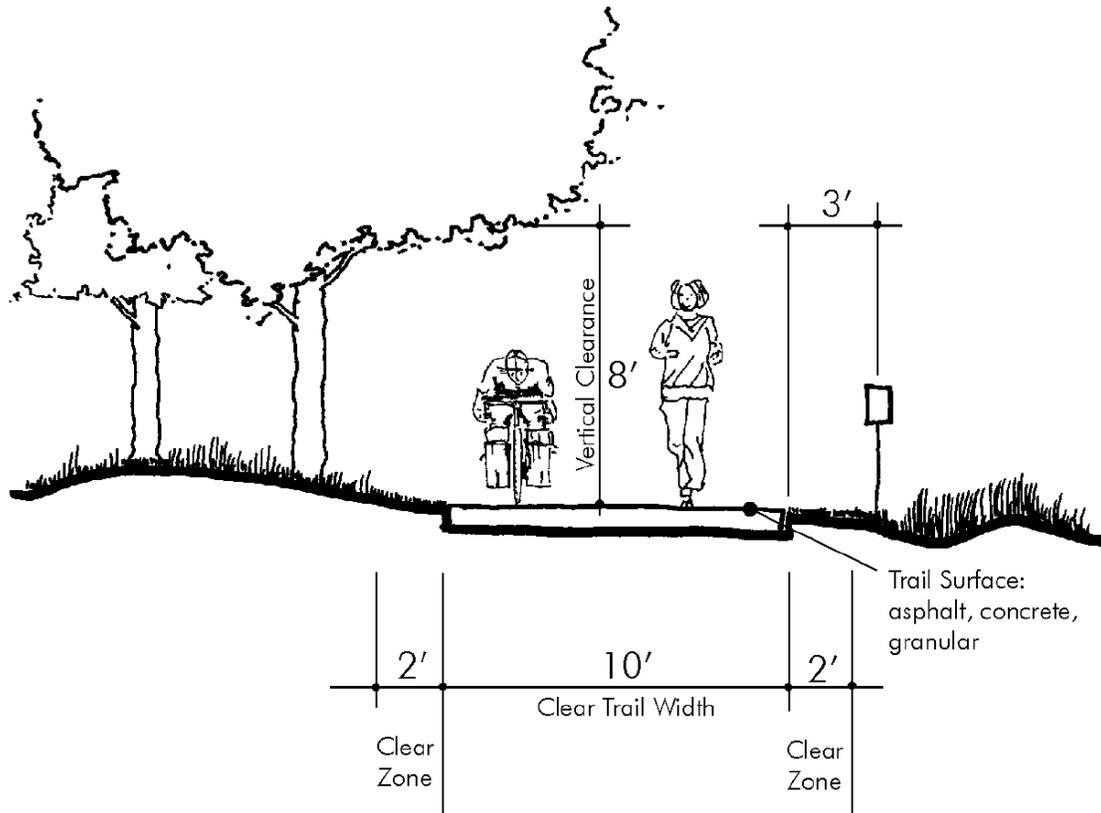
Biking comes in second in national surveys in terms of the number of people who participate. However, bicyclists tend to travel farther distances while using trails. National studies also show that bicyclists tend to spend more per year on equipment or trails related travel than other types of trails users. Bike trails have several special requirements because of the higher speeds involved in biking. The tightness of turns and the grade of the trail surface is an important factor, greater so than in walking trails. Bike trails also require areas for safely storing bikes—such as bike racks—if users are to be encouraged to leave the trail and visit stores or other amenities.



### Running:

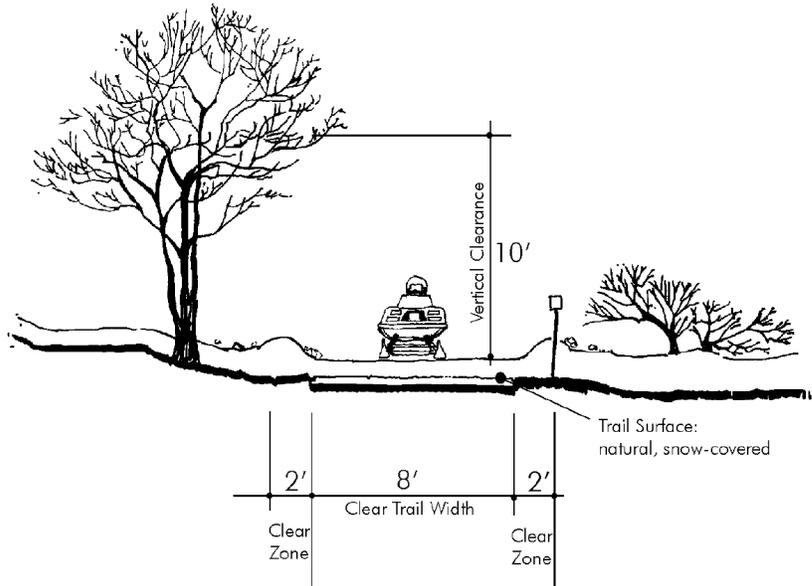
Trails designed for walking will in most cases be able to accommodate runners as well. One special accommodation to consider for runners is that runners often exercise either early in the morning or later in the evening in order to avoid higher temperatures during the day. Areas of lighted trail would therefore be more attractive to runners. Emergency call stations and other safety precautions

would also encourage trails use and make the trails more convenient to users who can only access the trails in the early morning or in the evening.



Winter Use:

Winters in Iowa can be inconsistent, to say the least. Some years the state is blanketed with snow and in other years, winter is a brown muddy mess. Most winter sports enthusiasts in Iowa recognize that if the conditions are right for their winter sport, then they should take advantage of the opportunity, and many people do. Cross



country skiing and snow shoeing are popular winter activities and several survey participants indicated that they like to do them when conditions are suitable. Trails are often overlooked in winter time, but with some minor upkeep, such as clearing parking lots, can be ideal for winter sports.



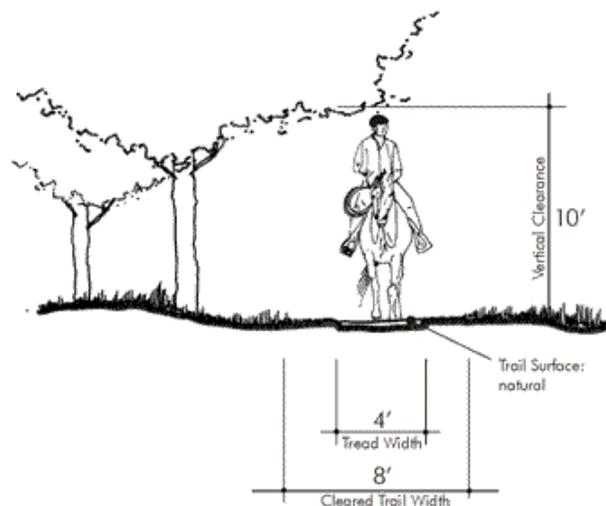
### Water Trails:

Cass County has a few water resources that can be utilized for recreational boating, such as kayaking and canoeing. Lake Anita and Cold Springs State Park allow boating at no-wake speeds. The Nishnabotna River is the primary navigable stream and a canoe ramp is located in Atlantic. The river depth can be inconsistent and the boating season can be short, but ample opportunities exist to capitalize on this resource. Easy access to the

river is key for water trails and the existing boat ramp could be augmented by further ramps downriver, particularly at Lewis and near Griswold. Water trail users tend to make longer trips than can be accommodated by the short stretch of the river that runs through Cass County, so coordination with other political jurisdictions as well as local rental and portage services are essential to capitalizing on Cass County's water trail resources.

### Equestrian Trails:

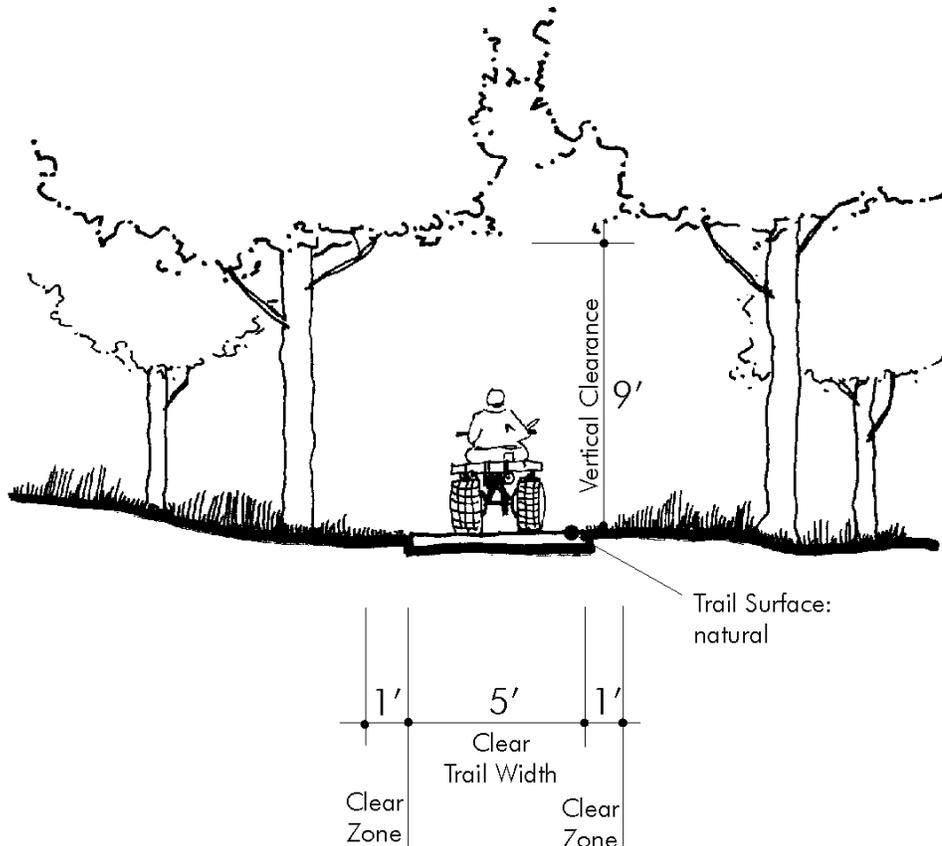
As soon as work on this plan was publicized, horse enthusiasts contacted SWIPCO and requested that horse trails be made a part of any county plans. Equestrian trails have some unique requirements compared to hiking and biking paths. In many cases, pedestrians wish to be separated from horses for safety reasons. Hard paved trails are not necessarily the best surfaces for horses to walk.



## Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV)

Off-Highway Vehicles, OHVs, or also commonly referred to as All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), are very popular in Cass County and the state as a whole. The Iowa Department of Transportation, in its *Iowa Trails 2000*, identified OHV use as one of the fastest growing outdoor activities. OHV riding also happens to be one of the least supported types of trails use in terms of the number of areas open to OHVs and the miles of trails available. OHVs use is often not compatible with other types of trails use because of the higher speeds at which OHVs operate and the noise and the dust often associated with their use. However, although OHV use may be incompatible with other types of trails use, that does not mean that OHV use should be ignored when designing trails systems. On the contrary, a properly designed OHV trail will attract users from much farther away than comparable walking trails and OHV trail users also tend to spend more money in the communities that they visit than do other trails users.

The *Iowa Trails 2000* plan divided the state into ten areas, each approximately 100 miles wide, and indicated that there was the potential within each area to support at least one major OHV park. Existing OHV parks were also mapped. Cass County lies in the middle of the southwest Iowa OHV park area, and no OHV park currently exists in this area. This is a prime opportunity for the county to capture a market that is currently underserved.



**Legend**

- Existing OHV Sites
- Potential OHV Sites

**Note:**  
 This map is an inventory of existing OHV (Off-Highway Vehicle) sites and potential OHV areas. The information is based on information provided by the Iowa OHV Association and Tom Crimmins (OHV consultant). Each potential area is defined by an approximate 50-mile radius.

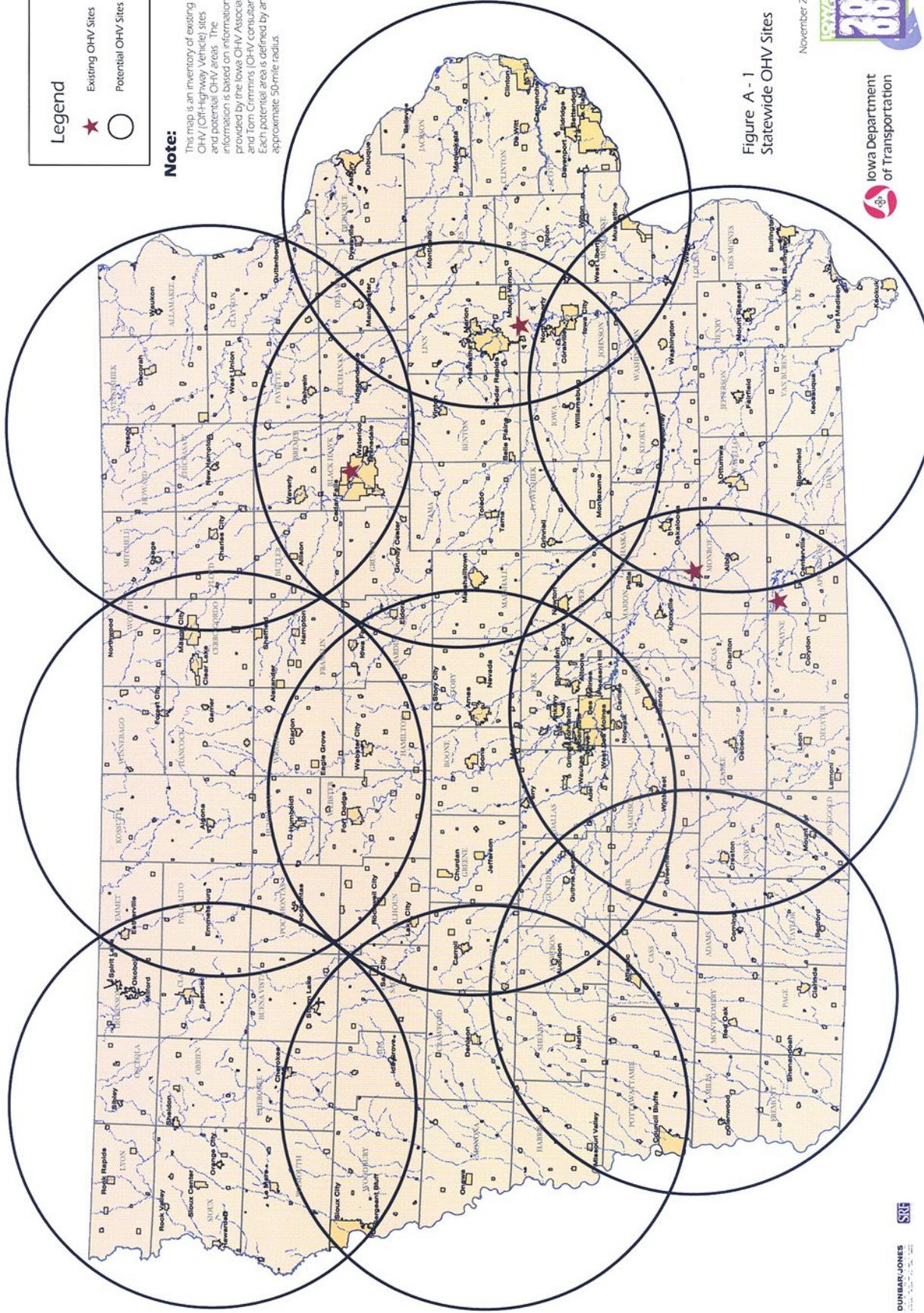


Figure A - 1  
 Statewide OHV Sites



### **Trails Facilities:**

Trails facilities, such as parking areas, benches, and restrooms are as important to the success of a trails system as the trails themselves. Trails facilities make the trail safer, more comfortable, and more accessible to a wider variety of trails users.

Even though the proposed trail systems make every effort to come within a reasonable distance of residents' homes, it is anticipated that the majority of trails users will drive to a trail head prior to using the trail. Parking at trail heads is therefore a very important amenity and will have a direct impact on the number of trails users. Likewise, trail heads also need to introduce



users to the trail system through the use of maps and interpretive signs. Information can also be posted regarding emergency procedures, the location of storm shelters, and local festivals and businesses. Where practical, trail heads should be located in areas where parking already exists and ideally, close to public rest rooms and water. There are a number of trail head sites identified in the proposed trails map later in this plan. Existing parking and restrooms will not be available in all areas so some new facilities may need to be constructed. Temporary portable restrooms may also be an option in some locations, particularly during peak usage months.



There will also need to be areas to rest at regular intervals along the trail. These can be as simple as a bench or can be further developed to include butterfly gardens, picnic shelters, and other amenities. Dog walking is often a popular activity for trail users. Trash cans and "doggy toilet" stations, with plastic bags, should also be

considered in any area that will experience high levels of dog traffic to cut down on the amount of waste on or near the trail. Trail lighting may also be desirable in some areas, though the input of adjacent land owners, as well as careful

estimations of the cost of maintaining the lights, should be taken into consideration prior to any installation.



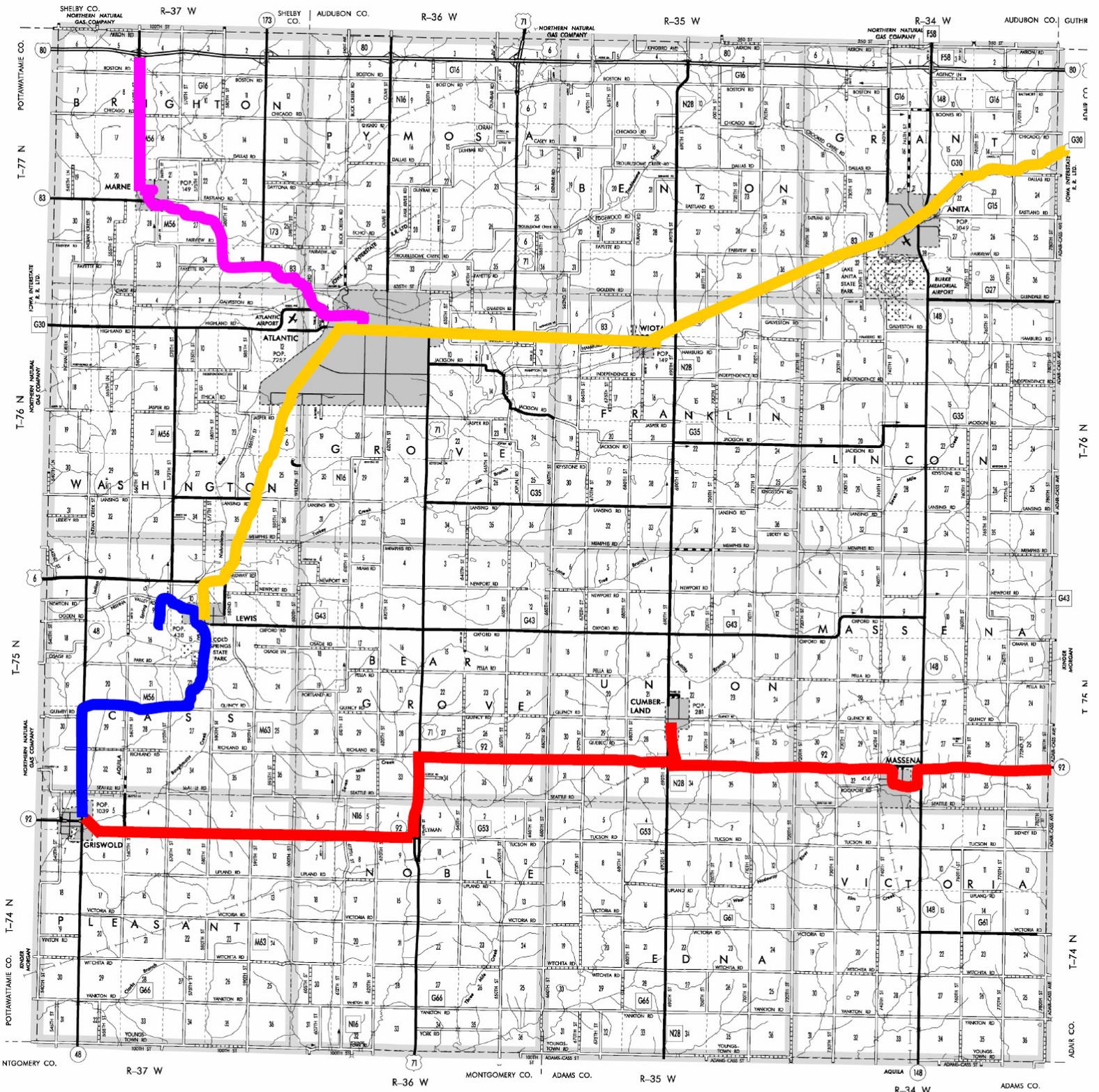
Every attempt should also be made to ensure that trail facilities, as well as the trails themselves, are accessible to persons with disabilities. Parking areas should accommodate vehicles with wheelchair lifts and access to the trail and facilities should be barrier free.

### **Auto Tour Routes**

There is something very American about the great family road trip. In recent years, the high cost of gasoline has kept many motorists close to home, but studies have shown that although Americans are not driving as far on vacation, they are taking more frequent, smaller trips. This bodes well for Cass County as travelers from Omaha, Des Moines, and Kansas City look for interesting attractions closer to home.

The map on the following page identifies four different auto tour routes through the county. They include:

- Gateway Route: Links the county with Interstate 80 and is a connection between the tourist sites of Cass County and the nearby Danish Villages of Elk Horn and Kimbalton and Walnut, Iowa's *Antique Capital*.
- White Pole Road: The historic US Highway 6 route that was once the primary East/West route across the state.
- Freedom Route: Follows the Nishnabotna River to the historic trail town of Lewis and the Underground Railroad site at the Hitchcock House.
- Mormon Pioneer Trail: Parallels the Mormon Trail as it bisects the county.



- Gateway Route
- White Pole Road
- Mormon Pioneer Trail
- Freedom Route

## Cass County, Iowa Auto Tour Route Map 2008

↑  
N

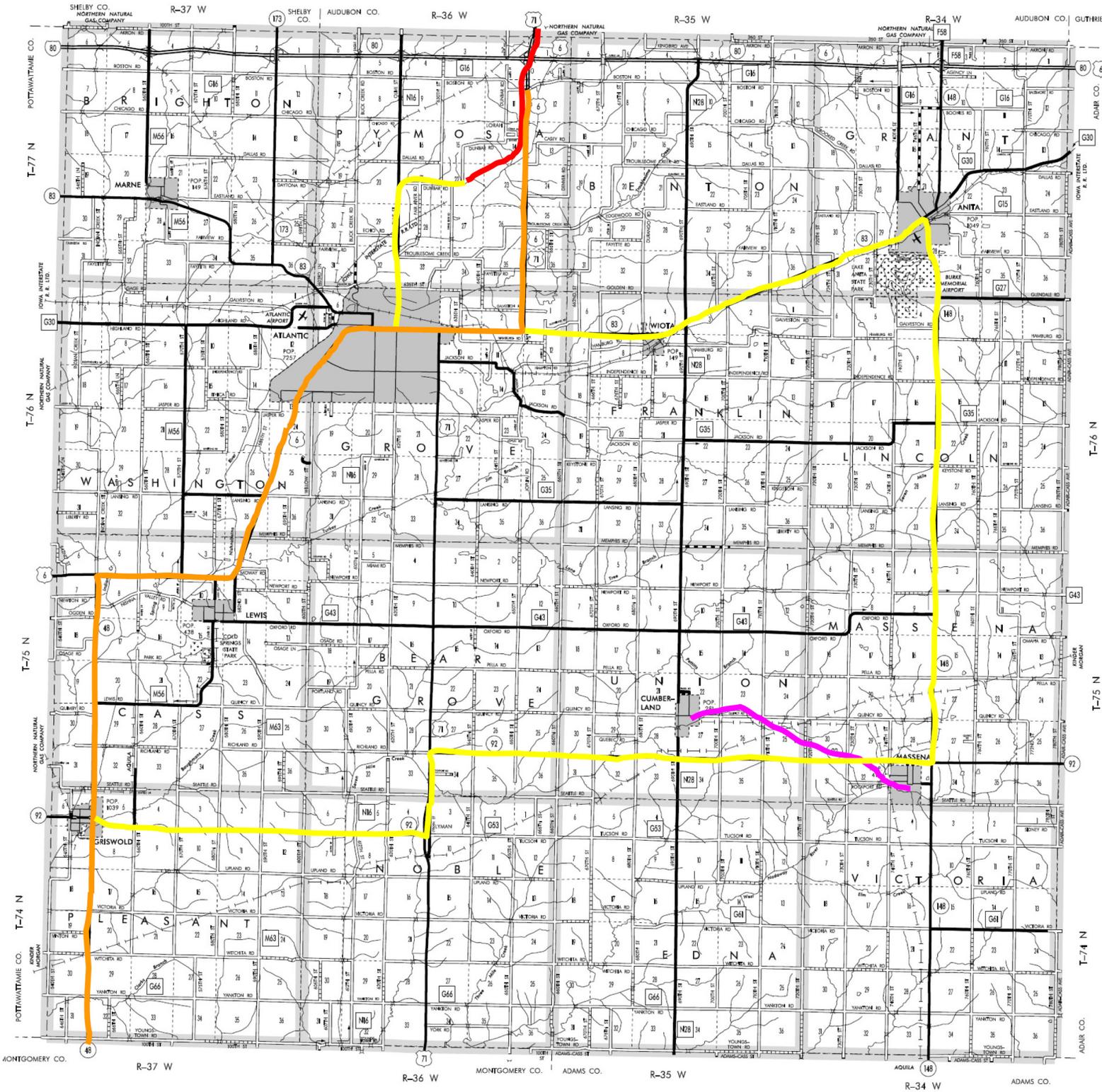
## **County-Wide Pedestrian System**

Cass County has little public land available for trails construction. The public land that is available is often in small tracts and does not lend itself to long distance trails. The majority of the potential trails identified in the next section are shorter and would be developed within the city limits of a community and take advantage of public right of way. However, some opportunities do exist for a larger trail system county wide, especially if road right of way is utilized.

Cass County is currently connected to two long distance pedestrian/bicycle trails. These include the American Discovery Trail and the T-Bone Trail. The American Discovery Trail is the only non-motorized trail that traverses the entire lower 48 states from east to west. In Cass County the trail follows the T-Bone Trail, then continues on Highway 71 south from Interstate 80, then turns west on the White Pole Road until linking up with Iowa Highway 48 south to Red Oak. The trail is considered a non-motorized trail because portions of the system are closed to motor-vehicular traffic, however, the majority of the trail in Cass County follows public roads. The T-Bone Trail is a rails to trails trail and goes from Hamlin in Audubon County to a trailhead approximately 1 mile southwest of the Interstate 80/US Highway 71 interchange. The T-Bone Trail is a true pedestrian and bicycle trail with a smooth, level asphalt surface and is closed to motorized traffic.

Both the County and the City of Atlantic have indicated that they would like to see the T-Bone Trail extended into Atlantic. However, some of the old railroad right of way from the current trailhead into Atlantic has been lost to private farm development, and a section of the rail line is also still in use. This plan recommends that negotiations take place to purchase back the lost right of way, or if that is unsuccessful or would prove too costly, to make improvements to the county roads between the T-Bone Trail and Atlantic to allow for safer travel by pedestrians to and from the trail.

Both of these trails are great assets to the County. However, the American Discovery Trail's trans-continental scope and the T-Bone Trail's dead end north of Atlantic can be discouraging to County residents who wish to get out and hit the trails. A more connected trails system is needed in the County to act as not only a tourist draw, but as a way for local residents to have the health benefits and added variety of long distance trails. Since the County lacks extensive public areas, an on road system that links each city's local trail system is probably the least expensive and quickest option for county-wide trails development. The map on the following page identifies a circular trails route utilizing paved roads with wider shoulders, to best accommodate pedestrian/bike and motorized traffic. This system would also connect with the T-Bone Trail, the American Discovery Trail, and the trail proposed between Cumberland and Massena in the community trails section of this plan.



- T-Bone Trail
- American Discovery Trail
- Proposed Rocket Trail (Cumberland to Massena)
- Proposed Connecting On-Road Trails

**Cass County, Iowa  
Hike/Bike Trails Map  
2008**

**Part II.**  
**Community Plans**

## Anita



Anita is one of the Cass County communities most ready for trails development. Anita has the benefit of an existing trails system running from Lake Anita State Park south of the city into town. In addition to Lake Anita State Park, which has numerous recreational opportunities as well as full service camping facilities, Anita also has an 18-hole golf course, a grocery store, restaurants, a convenience store, an excellent

library, art gallery, and many other amenities to entice trails users.

Anita's biggest trail issue at this time is connecting the trail system on the south end of town with the city's schools and new recreational center, which are both located on a campus on the north end of the city. After meeting with various members of the public, the recommendation of this plan is to develop two corridors from the south end of the city to the north. Both corridors would utilize Main Street as a backbone, thereby taking advantage of the large number of services and amenities available there. The eastern corridor would make extensive use of city sidewalks—and improving those as necessary—in order to create a safe route through town and up to the school and recreational complex. The western corridor would be more scenic and would involve acquiring right of way to build a meandering trail running north to south.

### Anita Facts

Population: 1,049

Median Age: 43.8 years

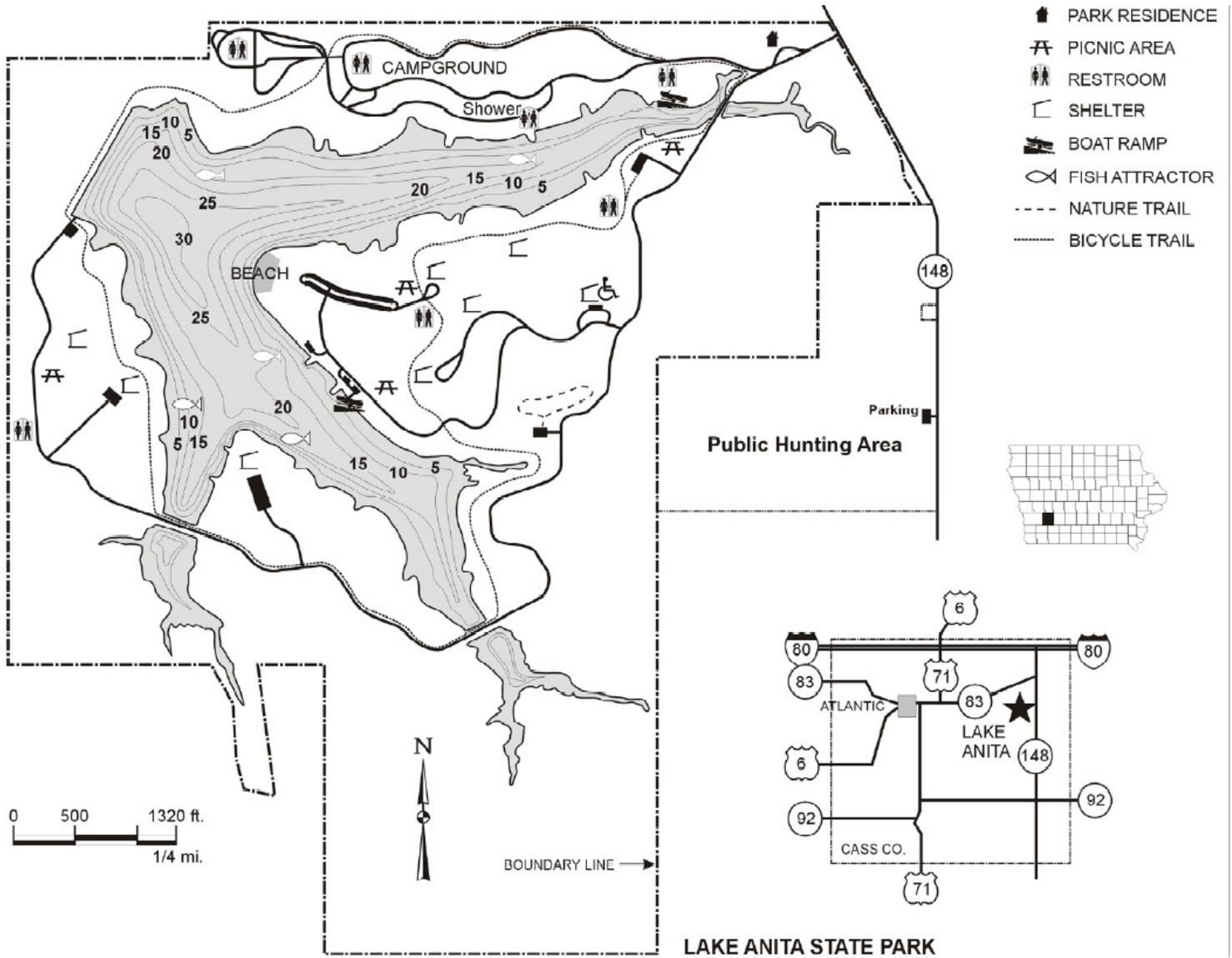
Median Household Income: \$28,984

City website: [www.anitaiowa.com](http://www.anitaiowa.com)

Lake Anita website:

[http://www.iowadnr.com/parks/state\\_park\\_list/lake\\_anita.html](http://www.iowadnr.com/parks/state_park_list/lake_anita.html)

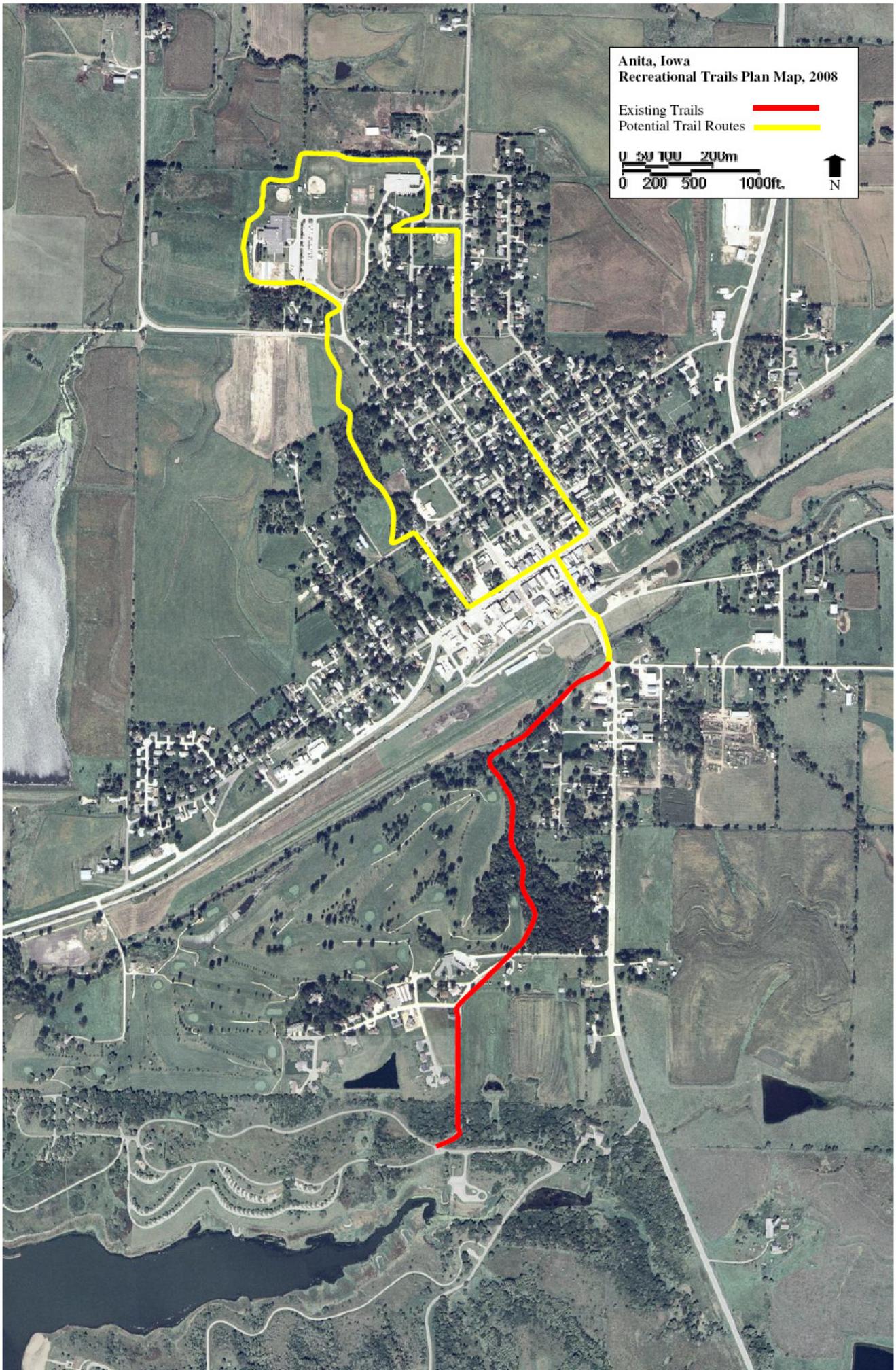
# Lake Anita State Park



Anita, Iowa  
Recreational Trails Plan Map, 2008

Existing Trails —  
Potential Trail Routes —

0 50 100 200m  
0 200 500 1000ft.



## Cumberland



Cumberland is a community that is undergoing multiple transformations. The city is preparing to celebrate its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary and many active young families have helped to energize civic life. At the same time, the realities of rural population decline are not on the city's side and the elementary

school, a major hub of the community, is scheduled to close and classes will move to Massena. The city has all of the normal amenities that you would expect in a small town—a city park, ball fields, library, restaurant, gas station, bank, etc., but at this time has few attractions that draw visitors in from other communities on a regular basis.

Trails draw visitors into communities and increase the value of real estate near them. In the 1980s the rail line from Cumberland to Massena was abandoned and its right-of-way was sold to adjacent property owners. There was talk at the time about developing a trail along the rail right of way, but that did not materialize. Today, there is much more information available on the benefits of trails in a community and every year funding is available for trails development. Now may be the perfect time to readdress developing the abandoned rail line between Cumberland and Massena as a recreational trail.

### Cumberland Facts

Population: 281

Median Age: 43.7 years

Median Household Income: \$28,750

City Website: [www.cumberland-iowa.com](http://www.cumberland-iowa.com)

This potential trail—some potential names include the *Rocket Trail* for the former Cumberland-Massena school mascot and the *Rose Trail*, for the name of the train that used to travel the route—traverses a distance of approximately 5 ½ miles. For approximately half of that distance the railroad bed is still visible, though overgrown. The other half of the length of the trail has been farmed over and in places is difficult to discern. These sections would be the hardest to re-acquire and in some circumstances alternate routes to the original rail line may be more easily developed.





**Proposed Trail Between Cumberland and Massena,  
Cass County, Iowa 2008**

- Right-of-Way Farmed Over
- Right-of-Way Exists (overgrown)



Scale: 1 Mile

## Griswold



Griswold is large enough to offer a wide range of services for residents and visitors, while at the same time is a small, close-knit community. Griswold recently completed a downtown streetscape project and has an outstanding community center and park facilities. The downtown area houses an extensive mix of services that would be helpful to trails users, including a convenience store, a grocery, repair shops, restaurants, a library, a doctor's

office, and other amenities.

Griswold is also close to the Nishnabotna River, which lies West of the city along Highway 92. A canoe access near the highway bridge could be linked to the city by a trail running parallel to Highway 92 in the extra wide highway right-of-way, which would tie the city to this water resource.

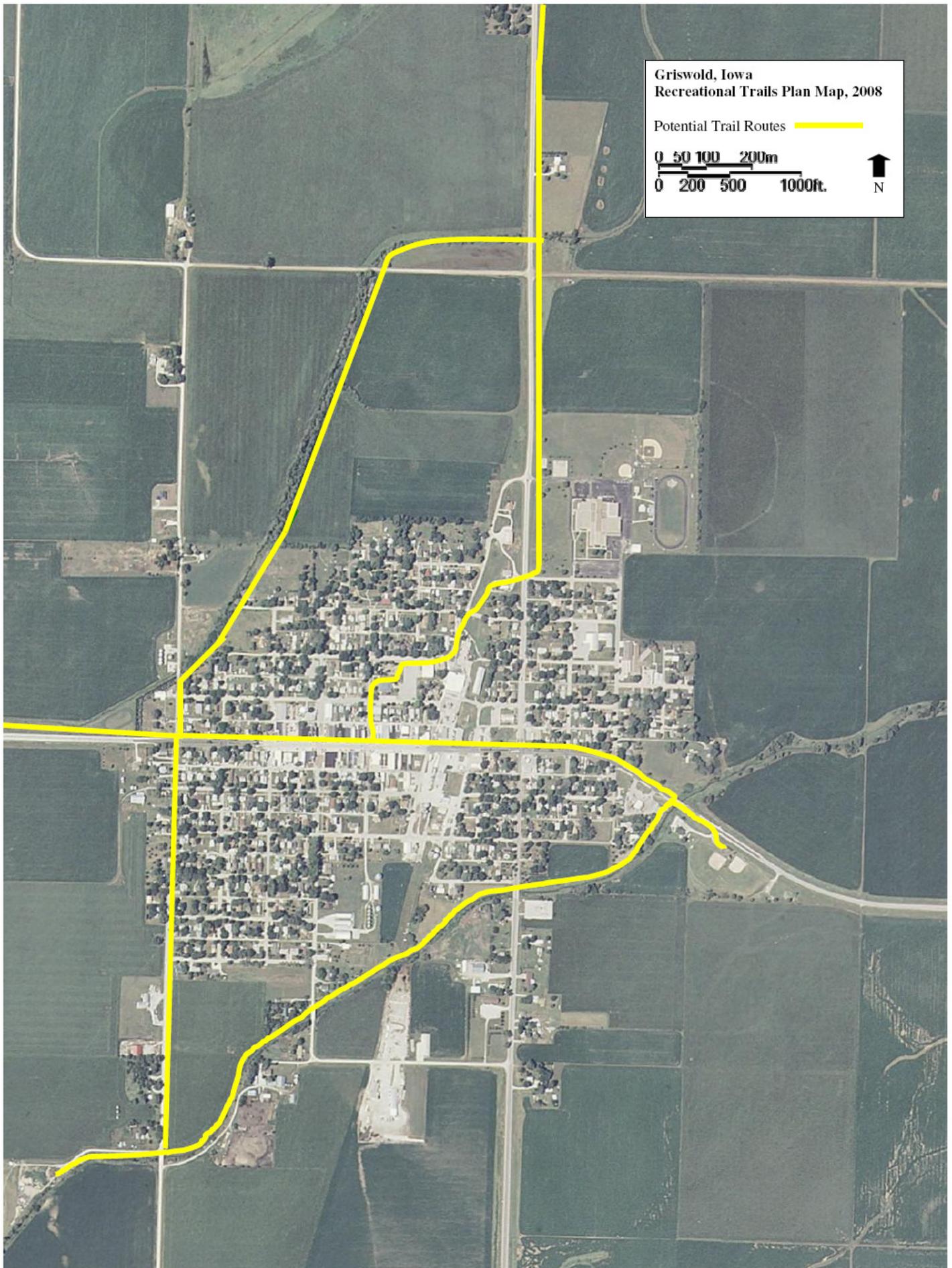
### Griswold Facts

Population: 1,039  
Median Age: 44.6 years  
Median Household Income: \$31,538

City Website: [www.griswoldia.com](http://www.griswoldia.com)

To the north of Griswold lies Conklin's Fish Farm, a county park with a small lake and camping facilities. A trail running north of the city could lead past the Griswold Junior/Senior High School and connect to the county park. Two creeks run north and south of Griswold. Several community flood control

projects are in the initial planning stages for Griswold at this time, and any new earthwork along these streams would be an excellent opportunity to open up right-of-way for trails.



Griswold, Iowa  
Recreational Trails Plan Map, 2008

Potential Trail Routes 

0 50 100 200m  
0 200 500 1000ft.

  
N

## Lewis



Lewis owes its existence to trails. The town was the site of an early ferry across the Nishnabotna River that was key to the movement of early pioneers. West of Lewis is also the site of the Hitchcock House, a documented stopping point for fugitive slaves seeking freedom on the Underground Railroad.

Lewis is also home to one of the oldest recreational areas in the county, Cold Springs State Park. The park was built at a bend in the Nishnabotna River and in its earlier days boasted a pavilion, beer garden, and large slide into the lake. Today the park still caters to swimmers and anglers, and also has camping and picnicking facilities. A short nature trail leads back from the lake to the Nishnabotna River, in an area known as The Rock Cut. The Rock Cut was formed when the Army Corps of Engineers used dynamite to blast a new channel for the Nishnabotna River in an effort to straighten it.

Lewis residents have been proactive in trails development and have already had the foresight to develop a community plan that includes a number of trails features. Together with Iowa's Living Roadways and the Iowa State University Extension, Lewis has identified several corridors within the community for beautification and trails development. Also, a trail linking the city with the Hitchcock House and Cold Springs State Park is proposed.

These trails are detailed on the following page. Of special interest in Lewis is the fact that a bridge will need to be built to complete the trails system as proposed in the community visioning plan. This bridge, once completed, would span the Nishnabotna River and greatly enlarge the area accessible to trails users who currently must stay on one side or the other of the river.

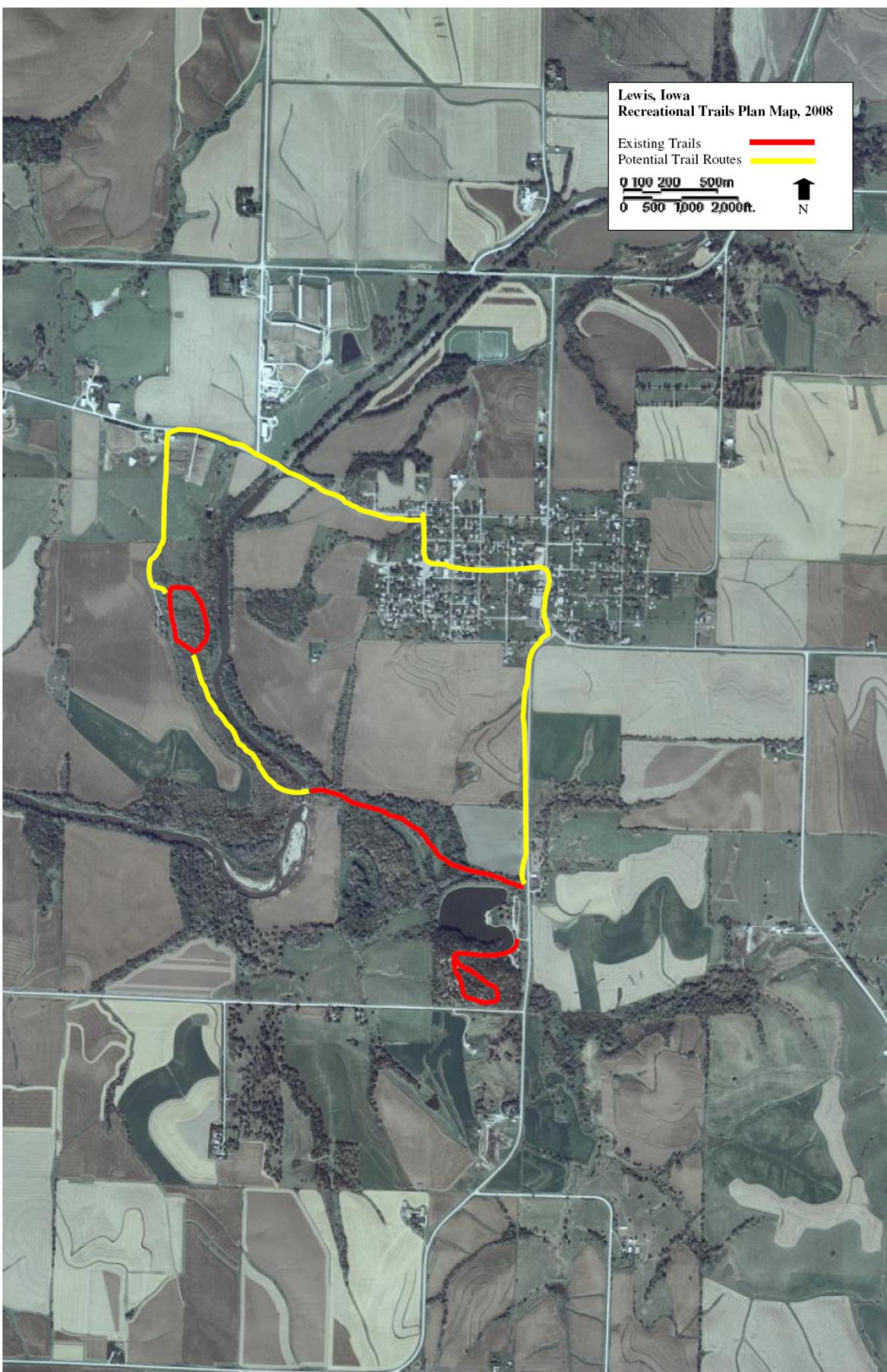
### Lewis Facts

Population: 438  
Median Age: 42.3 years  
Median Household Income: \$30,114  
  
City Website: [www.lewisiowa.com](http://www.lewisiowa.com)

Lewis, Iowa  
Recreational Trails Plan Map, 2008

Existing Trails   
Potential Trail Routes 

## Marne



Marne is a very active community and its civic minded population continually works to improve the city. Marne gained national attention when it offered residential lots for free to anyone willing build a home in the community and live there.

A number of years ago the rail line

from Marne to Atlantic was abandoned. Unfortunately, a golden opportunity was lost at that time because the right-of-way was purchased and little of it exists today. In some areas homes have been built along the right-of-way, making it next to impossible to use that route for trails.

What Marne does have that is very unique from a trails perspective is an internationally renowned motorcycle shop, Baxter Cycle. Baxter Cycle specializes in British motorcycles and has built up an excellent reputation for their selection and service. Motorcycle enthusiasts regularly travel to Marne to go to Baxter Cycle, and a number of rides are held in Marne each year. With the ever growing popularity of motorcycle touring, Marne should continue to market itself as a hub for motorcycle tourists. The proposed auto-tour routes could be an excellent starting point for motorcycle events. The proposed in-town trail for Marne is targeted toward the residents of Marne and is designed to be a comfortable exercise route.

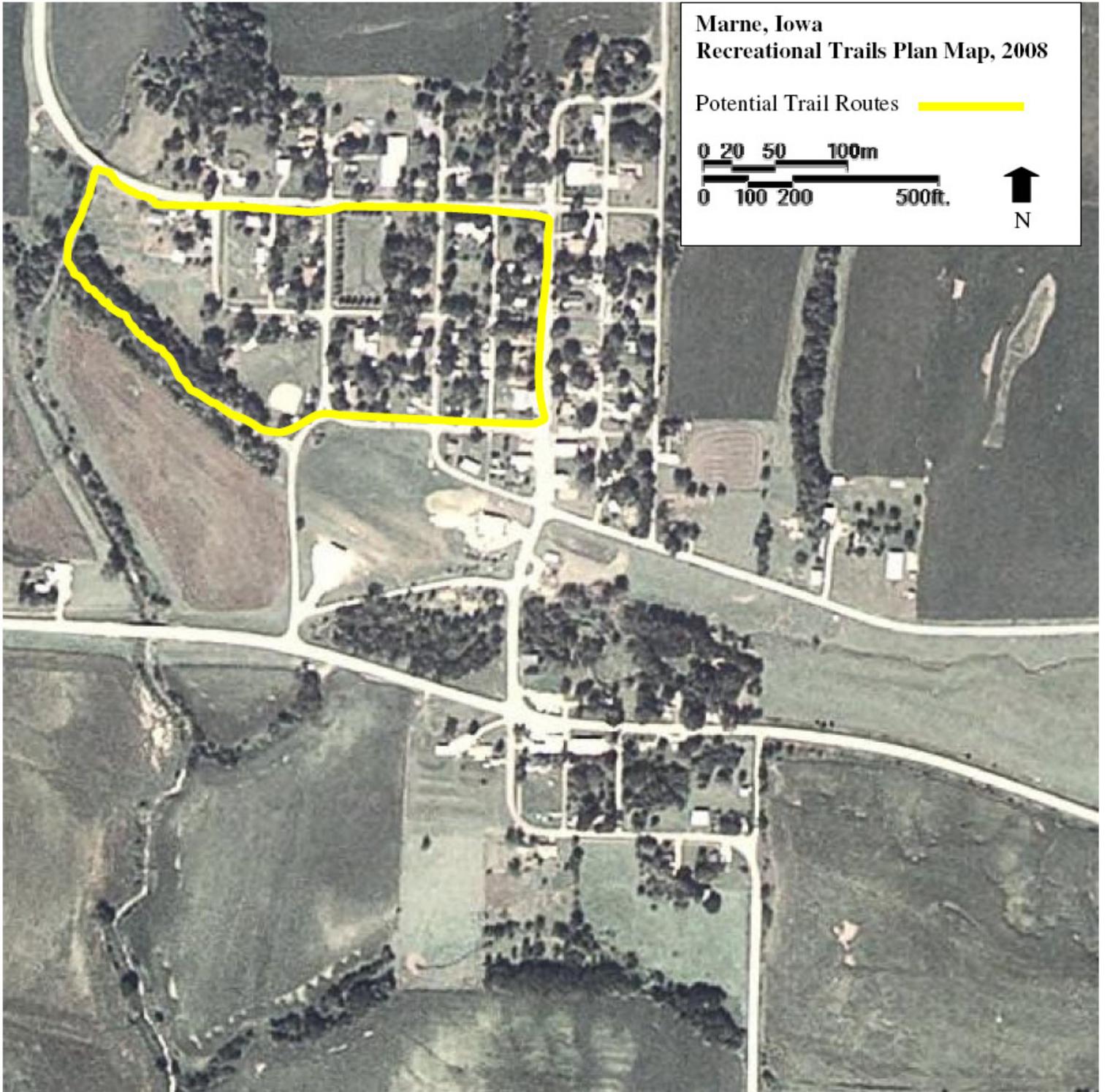
### Marne Facts

Population: 149

Median Age: 37.1 years

Median Household Income: \$31,875

City Website: [www.marneiowa.com](http://www.marneiowa.com)



## Massena



Massena's slogan is that it is the "Home of Friendly People," and the community has many things to make potential trails users feel welcome. A well maintained city park, convenience store, grocery, restaurant, library, and other amenities make Massena a convenient hub for exploring the more rugged and less populated

part of the county. Massena is on the eastern edge of the abandoned rail line that originates in Cumberland and would be a natural trailhead and jumping off point for a new trail.

Massena is also currently working on a number of community improvement projects, including a downtown streetscape improvement project, a proposed community center, and improvements to the community ballfields. The Cumberland and Massena school district's elementary school will relocate from Cumberland to Massena, and this change will bring additional improvements to the city park.

Massena has a number of walking routes along city streets that are already in use by area residents. The city also possesses several areas of right of way, including platted streets that were not developed and abandoned rail right of way, that all could be put together to create one of the more comprehensive trails systems proposed for the county.

### Massena Facts

Population: 414  
Median Age: 41.0 years  
Median Household Income: \$30,625

City Website: [www.massenaiaowa.com](http://www.massenaiaowa.com)



## Wiota



Wiota is conveniently located between Atlantic and Anita on Highway 83. The community is small, and as such has few amenities that can be utilized by travelers. However, the town does see significant traffic through the city and could potentially take advantage of those numbers if a trail existed to draw people off of the highway.

Unlike many towns in Cass County, the rail line through Wiota is very active, meaning that there is no

abandoned right of way to utilize for potential trails projects. The route that was identified in Wiota takes advantage of the existing street infrastructure and is primarily an exercise route for residents. This route can be measured out and marked to help users keep track of the distance they have traveled and rest areas can be established along the way, particularly for the elderly residents of the community. In the future other amenities could be placed along the trail, such as flower gardens and sculpture areas.

### Wiota Facts

Population: 149

Median Age: 38.8

Median Household Income: \$29,167

City Website: [www.wiotaiowa.com](http://www.wiotaiowa.com)



**Implementation:**

The implementation of the trails plan involves a number of steps. These include:

- **Adoption:** The first step toward completing the plan is its official adoption by the respective City Councils and the Board of Supervisors.
- **Lead Group(s) Formation:** Each community should create a group to take the lead on trails development, and work with city and county public officials. Non-profit organizations will be important assets to help advise the cities and county on trails issues, raise awareness in the public about trails, and help raise funds, construct, and maintain the trails.
- **Fundraising:** A wide range of fundraising activities is necessary to raise the money necessary to complete the plan. This includes government revenue, local fundraising, and grants. Of these, local fundraising and grants will make up the bulk of the trails funding.
- **Engineering:** The identified routes were developed with careful consideration to the topography of the land and each route's overall suitability for trails construction. However, detailed engineering work is necessary in most instances. The services of a licensed engineer will ensure that the trails system is soundly constructed and lasts for many years to come—as well as maximize the benefit and enjoyment of trails users. Plans and specifications developed by a licensed engineer are also a prerequisite for many grant programs.
- **Right-of-Way Acquisition/Construction:** In some instances, land will be acquired to construct the trails. Also, each segment of the trails system has its own unique construction challenges. Some routes require relatively little construction. Other routes require more extensive work.
- **Maintenance:** Each segment requires its own special maintenance. The majority of this work should be carried out by a non-profit trails organization or similar group, with assistance, as necessary, from the cities and county. Likewise, the trails plan needs to be periodically maintained. As circumstances change, modification to the plan is necessary.

## **Trails Development Phases**

Developing trails in Cass County will be a multi-organizational, multi-year effort. It will take time to fully develop the public support, technical knowledge, and funding necessary to implement the trails plan. With that in mind the implementation of this plan is divided into short, medium, and long term trail improvements. Each grouping is a rough estimate of how long it may take to work on each step and may change as circumstances change, but overall should act as a guide to the sequence of trails work. Some communities may take a more aggressive approach to trails development while others may be more conservative and need more time. The three phases are spread out over a fifteen year period, which represents an ambitious timeline for trails development. Full completion of the trails system may take a longer period of time, depending on the continued level of public support.

### **Phase 1: Immediate to Short Term (0-2 Years)**

- Adopt the trails plan.
- Organize trails volunteers to assist the cities and county with trails development, maintenance, and fund-raising.
- Develop a trail system brand and logo to use on all marketing documents, signs, etc.
- Map trail routes on existing paths, sidewalks, and streets.
- Prepare marketing materials, such as brochures, that introduce users to the trails system.
- Mark trails that can utilize existing infrastructure, such as bike lanes or pedestrian crossings on streets.
- Develop fund raising plans and proposals based on the trails plan.
- Adopt and enforce city and county ordinances conducive to trails, such as mandatory side walks or green space in new developments.

### **Phase 2: Medium Range (2-5 Years)**

- Construct infrastructure at vital points necessary to connect existing trails.
- Move trail routes off of existing streets as much as possible to reduce safety hazards to pedestrians.
- Re-map and re-sign trails routes as necessary.
- Begin construction of trails systems in new residential developments when these areas are developed.
- Conduct a survey of trails usage and public meetings to determine any new trails needs and modify the plan accordingly.
- Add infrastructure to trails heads, such as map boards, parking, bike racks, water, and restrooms.

### **Phase 3: Long Range (5-15 Years)**

- Construct new trails to complete the trails system.
- Conduct a survey of trails usage and public meetings to determine new trail needs and modify the plan accordingly.

Cass County Trails  
Cost Estimates

	Overall Length (Miles)	6' Asphalt	8' Asphalt	10' Asphalt	8' Concrete	10' Concrete
Anita	3.2	\$289,327	\$315,409	\$359,947	\$538,098	\$638,308
Cumberland	0.9	\$81,373	\$88,709	\$101,235	\$151,340	\$179,524
Griswold	5.1	\$461,115	\$502,683	\$573,665	\$857,594	\$1,017,304
Lewis	3.0	\$271,244	\$295,696	\$337,450	\$504,467	\$598,414
Marne	0.7	\$63,290	\$68,996	\$78,738	\$117,709	\$139,630
Massena	3.0	\$271,244	\$295,696	\$337,450	\$504,467	\$598,414
Wiota	0.7	\$63,290	\$68,996	\$78,738	\$117,709	\$139,630
C & M Trail	5.2	\$470,157	\$512,540	\$584,914	\$874,410	\$1,037,251
Totals	21.8	\$1,971,043	\$2,148,724	\$2,452,138	\$3,665,794	\$4,348,476

**Bridge**  
\$132/sq.ft.

Nishnabotna (75'x10')	\$99,000.00
-----------------------	-------------

IDOT  
Estimates 2010 Dollars

6' Asphalt	\$90,414.80	per mile
8' Asphalt	\$98,565.31	per mile
10' Asphalt	\$112,483.39	per mile
8' Concrete	\$168,155.71	per mile
10' Concrete	\$199,471.39	per mile

## **Appendix**

## **Trails Grants**

### **Federal Recreational Trails Program**

#### **Program Intent**

To provide and maintain motorized and non-motorized recreational trails and trail-related projects (trailheads, kiosks, lighting, etc.).

#### **Eligible Applicants**

Public agencies, non-profit organizations and private organizations (and/or individuals) are eligible to sponsor. Private sponsorship will require a public agency co-sponsor.

#### **Funding Qualifications**

Minimum 20 percent match is required. Trails resulting from successful

#### **Program's Annual Funding Level**

Approximately \$1,000,000.

#### **Application Deadline**

October 1.

### **State Recreational Trails Program**

#### **Program Intent**

To fund public recreational trails.

#### **Eligible Applicants**

State agencies, counties or cities and non-profit organizations may sponsor applications.

#### **Funding Qualifications**

Minimum 25 percent local match is required. Volunteer services and other state grants are not eligible as matching funds. Proposed projects must be a part of a local, area-wide, regional or statewide trail plan. Trails resulting from successful applications must be maintained as a public facility for a minimum of 20 years.

#### **Program's Annual Funding Level**

\$1 million.

#### **Application Deadline**

January

## **Federal Transportation Enhancement Program**

### **Program Intent**

To fund enhancement or preservation activities of transportation related projects. Activities fall into the following categories:

- trails and bikeways;
- historic and archaeological; or
- scenic and environmental.

### **Eligible Applicants**

Public agencies and private non-profit organizations (and/or individuals) are eligible to sponsor. Private sponsorship will require a public agency co-sponsor.

### **Funding Qualifications**

Minimum 30 percent local match is required for statewide enhancements; 20 percent or more local match is required for regional enhancement projects as determined by RPA or MPO policies. Enhancements must have a direct relationship to the existing or planned surface transportation facilities.

### **Program's Annual Funding Level**

Approximately \$5.25 million for statewide projects. Approximately \$5.25 million for regional projects.

### **Application Deadline:**

October 1 for statewide project applications. RPAs and MPOs may have different deadlines for regional/metropolitan applications.

## Trails Signage

One of the most important aspects of any trails system is the method by which the trail is marked. Without a clearly marked trail, users may not recognize the full extent of the trail system or they may lose confidence in the system if they have doubt about where to go.

Signage along a trail is the most common method for marking trails and is used in most trails systems in urban areas. In some wilderness areas, trails are marked by more primitive methods, such as piles of rock or dots of paint on rocks or trees. In areas such as Cass County where multiple trails types are proposed, from highly improved paved trails to water trails, a wide variety of signage types will be needed.

One of the simplest and most cost effective methods for marking a trail is to attach a sign to an existing feature, such as a street sign, or in the case of the sign pictured to the right, a tree. Since most of the trails identified in the first phase of this plan are on existing streets and sidewalks, the first set of signage will in most cases be affixed to existing sign posts, buildings, or natural features.



Stand alone signage, such as that shown to the left, will be necessary in areas where there are no other options available for affixing a sign. Most new sections of trail, or those in areas with few trees or buildings near the trail, will need to have stand alone signage. Stand alone signage is more costly to install than those affixed to an existing structure because posts are required. Therefore, stand alone signage should be durable in order to reduce the amount of replacement signs necessary.

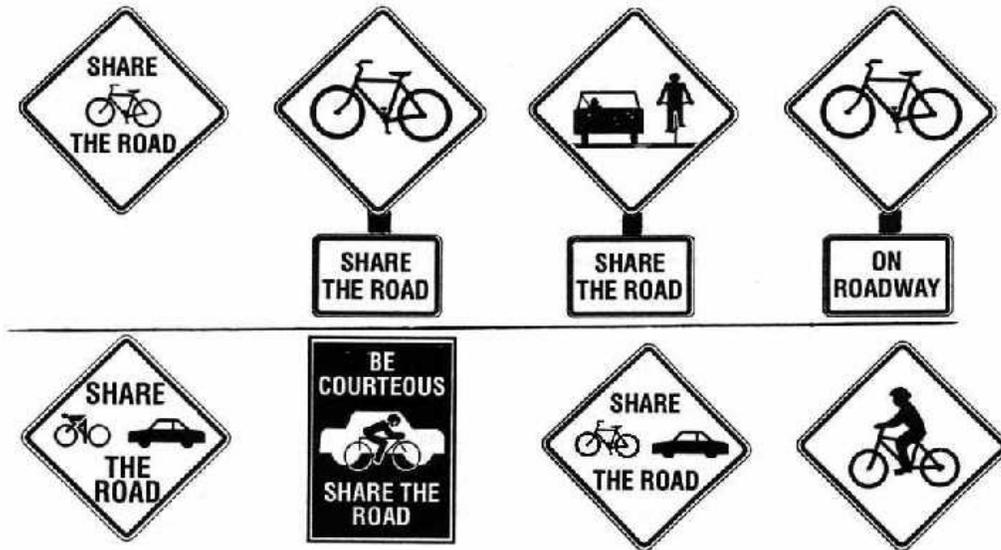


Map kiosks/interpretive panels are important elements at major trail heads or at points of interest along the trails. Owing to their size and the large amount of information that they display, most trails will only have a few of these structures. Map kiosks and interpretive panels offer an introduction to the trail system and should therefore not only tell the route of the trail, but should give the visitor background information on the trail's development and the surrounding area.

Signage can be one of the most expensive elements of a trails system after the trail surface itself. There are alternatives, however, to the traditional metal sign on a post. One example of a cost effective alternative is a painted line that identifies the trail route. Such lines are particularly suited to trails that follow existing sidewalks, such as historic home tour routes or routes through a business district.



Many of the trail routes identified in this plan, particularly in the early phases, will take place along existing sidewalks and existing streets. In order to accommodate pedestrians, these routes must be clearly marked with recognizable safety signs, such as pedestrian crossing signs and bike lanes. Controlled pedestrian crossing areas, such as pedestrian activated electronic signals, may be cost prohibitive to install, but additional signage and speed bumps can be an effective alternative to reduce the speed of motorists in areas frequented by trails users and draw motorists' attention to trails users.



Although the main emphasis of this plan is on land based, non-motorized trails, Cass County does have an important water trail asset in the Nishnabotna River, which runs along the western edge of the county. Water trails require special signage considerations. Water trail signage must be able to withstand occasional inundation during flood events. Also, water trails signage must be visible from a distance, since most signs must be placed away from the water's edge to avoid damage.



### **Helpful Websites**

American Discovery Trail Society

<http://www.discoverytrail.org/>

American Trails and the National Trails Training Partnership

<http://www.americantrails.org/>

*Iowa 2005 State Bicycle Map*

<http://www.iowadotmaps.com/msp/pdf/bikemap.pdf.html>

Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Trails Information

<http://www.iowadnr.com/trails/index.html>

Iowa Department of Transportation

[www.dot.state.ia.us](http://www.dot.state.ia.us)

Iowa Rails to Trails

<http://www.trailsfromrails.com/iowa.htm>

Iowa Safe Routes to School

[www.dot.state.ia.us/saferoutes/](http://www.dot.state.ia.us/saferoutes/)

*Iowa Trails 2000* Comprehensive Statewide Trails Plan

<http://www.iowabikes.com/trails/>

Wabash Trace Trail

<http://wabashtrace.connections.net/>