



GPTN

GREAT PLAINS TRAILS NETWORK

FALL 2024

ISSUE 156

All Aboard the Riley Bike Bus

BY DALE MINTER

What's a "Bike Bus"?

That was my first thought when it came up in conversation. Of course, I totally acted like I knew what they were talking about and quickly Googled for more information. Turns out a "Bike Bus" is like a school bus, but all the riders are kids on bikes and the "Bus Driver" is the adult(s) leading the group. It's a fun way to make friends, build community, get some exercise, get outside and boom, you're at school.

The idea is that a parent/adult on a bike (kid inspired) organizes a group of kids to ride their bikes to school as a group along a predetermined route. The group can meet and start at a designated spot and then be joined by other riders along the way to school. The bike bus follows the same route each time, but that may change if more kids join the group. The route may not be the most direct path to school, because there are always factors of convenience, safety and fun to consider.

Part of the purpose of the Bike Bus is to energize kids, get them outside and let them enjoy the benefits of biking. Besides the fun aspect, a big group of 5 to 15 kids biking down a street is much more visible



Joe Dauer (far right) leads the group of (L-R) Soren, Max, Elliott, Lorenz, Ollie and Hazely (hidden behind Joe) with adult helpers (back row) Curt and Chris to start their Bike Bus.



The wheels are rolling, the tunes are jamming and the bus rolls on!!

than one or two kids on a bike. Aside from the number of bikes, the adults make sure the group is visible and have safety rules for the bikers. Still for the adults, it's a bit like herding cats, but the rewards are so much greater for all!

When this "Bike Bus" subject was first brought to my attention by Ann Ringlein, she recommended that I contact Joe Dauer,

the leader of the Riley Elementary Bike Bus. After doing such, I was graciously invited for a "Bike Bus" ride-a-long. Not being a morning person, I had second thoughts, but I quickly dismissed them for a chance to experience the morning on a bike bus.

The bike bus trek took place in the first week of school this August on an extremely humid morning. Boy was it worth it! The kids on bikes were excited. The energy was high and there were tunes blasting from Joe's bike! The kids were talking and enjoying each other's company and we were waving at neighbors as we rode through the neighborhood. I've never seen kids so happy to be going to school in the morning. It would have been interesting

to see how happy the teachers must have been to have energized kids ready to go first thing in the morning! Of course, the kids were also excited that I was riding along and taking pictures. They kept telling others that they were going to be on the NEWS! **Not news** - newsletter I tried to explain. It's so hard when you disappoint a kid!

Bike Bus - Continued on page 4



President's Note

Hello Trail Advocates,

This last summer I had the privilege of riding bike trails in 5 different states and in British Columbia. Three of these states were in the Pacific North West and trails consisted of high trestle bridges, train tunnels, and following clear mountain rivers and vistas of pine forest and snowcap mountains. Over Labor Day weekend I rode the Blue River Trail from Beatrice to Marysville, Kansas. The views were not quite the same, but there was plenty of beauty in riding the canopy-covered trail along the Big Blue River with all the conjoining streams. Also, I enjoyed the consistent reminder of the change-of-season with cornfields and foliage starting to change color. One thing that these trails had in common were the communities that embraced the riders and trails coming through their towns.

On September 24, The MoPac Alliance and the Rails to Trails Conservancy celebrated the kick-off of the Nebraska Trail Towns program. According to Marie Gregoire, who help organized this celebration, "A trail town is a community through which a trail passes that supports trail users with services... [It] promotes the trail to its residents and embraces the trail as a resource to be protected and celebrated.. Trail Towns are built on a relationship between a town, its trail, and those who use and care for it."

I truly believe I experienced some of these attributes while traveling the Blue River Trail. Being on a self-supported trip it was great to learn that both Beatrice and Marysville had camping available in their respective city parks along the trail. Both towns had great local restaurants that we got to enjoy. A plus was to learn the Marysville City Pool was still open, so we could clean up and enjoy a refreshing swim after a day on our bikes. I also enjoyed learning the history of both towns from individuals who saw us traveling through and gave impromptu history lessons.

I also have to mention what is happening along the trail. You will notice in this newsletter (*page 7*) of a cabin that is now available for rent along this section of trail. I applaud the effort of these entrepreneurs that have notice the possibilities that exist along the trail.

I'm excited to see how communities will embrace this program along our state's trails, including the MoPac, Oak Creek, Homestead, and Cowboy Trails. This will be a win-win for both rural economic development and the users of these trails.

See you on the Trails.

Jordan Messerer
GPTN President



Great Plains Trails Network

Since 1988

*dedicated to the goal of developing
a network of commuter and
recreational trails within
Lincoln and Lancaster County*

2024

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Hub & Soul

Six Years and Still Rockin'

As the 2024 nonprofit partner, the Great Plains Trails Network is enjoying the Hub & Soul concert series along with the Lincoln community. For the first two concerts in June and July, Mother Nature provided us with some warm weather to listen to some cool music. The August temperature was a little more laid back, but the music was still kickin'. There were some toe-tapping breezes, along with some all out dancing twisters! Here are a few photos of the excitement. There's still one concert remaining on September 27 featuring "Hot Dealers" and "Rascal Martnez.". We'll wrap up the Hub & Soul series in our Winter newsletter.



June - Orion Walsh & The Rambling Hearts



June - The Wildwoods



August - The Midland Band



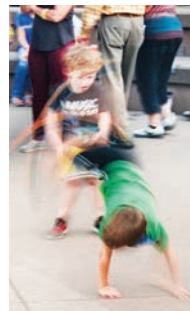
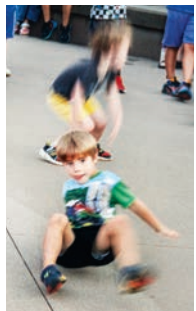
July - Das Dat



Sean gives away a Volkswagen every concert!



July - Vera Devorah



August - The break dancing broke loose!!



August - Vibe Check

WE WANT TO KEEP IN TOUCH!



GPTN

Over the years, we've noticed a decline in our membership numbers. A few years ago, in response to your feedback, we switched from mailing out membership reminders to sending them by email to save costs and go digital. We appreciate your input and want to continue communicating

this way, but we need your help to ensure everything runs smoothly.

Here's what you can do:

Update Your Email: Please make sure your email address with GPTN is current. If you receive an email from us, it's important to read it as we don't send out a lot of information. Keeping up with our emails will help you stay informed about when your

membership dues are due.

Spread the Word: Talk to friends, family, and co-workers who use the trails about becoming a GPTN member. A larger membership base is crucial for us to maintain our voice with Parks & Recreation and other city departments. It also enhances our chances of securing grants, as funding organizations look for community

support when reviewing applications.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement. Together, we can make a difference and ensure our trails and programs continue to thrive.



Scan QR code or go to: gptn.org click on "Update Your Information with Us" under "About Us" menu.

On the Bike Path

BY ANN RINGLEIN

For the past five years GPTN has held “On the Bike Path” for UNL’s Extension Clover College. This is a bicycle workshop for kids – ages 9-13 – teaching them bicycle safety, riding tips and much more!

When I volunteered to do the class this year, I knew I had to call in the experts in every one of these areas – I can facilitate but experts in bike safety, riding tips and bicycle 101 were needed!

So – Dwight, Mary and Joe to the rescue!



Mary starts with some “get to know me” games and bike instructions.

Mary was up first, and we began the cool, beautiful morning with a fun bicycle word game puzzle and a get to know each other activity. By the time that was done – everyone knew everyone’s name and one unique thing about them! She also showed everyone the proper way to wear a helmet.

Dwight was up next, and when I say “Knowledge is Power” it was never more

evident than when his “Bicycle 101” was done! We ALL learned something from Dwight and something we could take away and use on our own bikes!

He had every part marked and went over what that part did in helping the bike to move – or not move as in STOP! If one of the kids had something different on their bike than his, he explained how theirs worked and why it was different. It was enlightening and seriously empowering! I felt everyone attending left with a lot more confidence in their bikes and thus in their skills!

Then it was the “Joe Show”! Joe had marked out a couple of different sized, figure 8’s on the parking lot asphalt and away they went – one by one – carefully around the big figure 8 first, then once that was mastered – around the smaller figure 8 they went. Skills were evident!

The last and most challenging event was held.



Dwight shares his “Bicycle 101” experience.



“On the Bike Path” - Class of 2024

The “How Slow Can You Go” race. The object was to be the last one across the line, but you could never put your foot down. So upright on your bike, as slowly as you could go, the last one across the line was the winner. In heats of two, away they went! It was, at first, to the kids as they just wanted to go fast, but as they figured it out, they all wanted to do this over and over until we crowned the champion!

It was amazing how fast these two hours went leaving us just a bit of time to ride around the parking lot and then head back over to the Extension building to have a treat and for the kids to head to their next class – most likely not nearly as much fun as the “On the Bike Path” class – but always learning!

This class was \$5.00 for the kids to attend! What a bargain and we highly recommend the UNL Extension Clover College next summer to anyone with children 9-13!

Such a great learning experience!

Photos courtesy of Ann Ringlein

Bike Bus - Continued from page 1

Each Bike Bus has its own schedule designed by the leader, parents and the participants. The Riley Bike Bus only happens once a week and only for the morning commute. Other Bike Buses may have more frequent rides. The kids on the Riley ride were definitely begging for more rides. Joe explained to me that it was more difficult to organize afterschool rides, because so many kids have other activities to attend at different times.

Watching kids’ enthusiasm while riding their bikes, sure made me want to see more Bike Buses around Lincoln. Joe informed me that Cavett and Brownell Elementary Schools

also have a Bike Bus group. There are probably others I don’t know about.

Lincoln also has bike rodeos and other classes throughout the year to help kids learn how to ride a bike. There are also people and businesses in Lincoln that work with kids and bikes. Caleb Tatum, the



PE teacher at Dawes Middle School, partners with the Lincoln Bike Kitchen to get bikes to kids that need bikes. Caleb said at least 75% of Dawes students walk or bike to school every day. That’s amazing!

The Riley Bike Bus is fortunate to be very close to the MoPac

West bike trail, so it’s very convenient for a safe ride. It would be nice if we could find more streets and trails to make a bike bus available to more kids.

Having experienced the “Bike Bus” I can see how it benefits kids and community. I hope Lincoln can continue to expand this opportunity in a positive way. If you want to see a larger size “Bike Bus” here in the U.S., just internet search “bike bus sam balto” and see the excitement for yourself.

If you are interested in starting a Bike Bus at your child’s school, feel free to contact Joe: Joseph.dauer@gmail.com

Then go jump on board a Bike Bus!



A Collaborative Spirit Drives Trail Trek



The day has arrived and riders are off.



It's no tunnel walk, but still pretty cool!



Bikes and attachments of all kind join the ride.

BY DENA NOE

Trail Trek started in 2003 as a suggestion from an editor at the Journal Star. Thanks to the vision and dedication of several key individuals, including Elaine Hammer, a trail advocate known as the "mother of the trails," Jim Carveth, a former bike store owner and bike advocate, and Don Dingman, who coordinated the initial routes to name just a few of the 110 volunteers that year. Their combined efforts led to a successful inaugural event, raising \$8,000 to benefit the Jamaica North Trail project.

Since then, Trail Trek has continued its mission of supporting trail development, with funds raised each year directed toward building and

enhancing trails. The planning process for the next year's event kicks off each October when the organizing committee reconvenes. They review feedback from the previous year, address any challenges, and brainstorm new ideas and themes for the upcoming event.

The committee is divided into specialized subcommittees to ensure thorough attention to all aspects of the event. These include:

Route Committee: Responsible for planning and mapping the event's routes as well as signage for the day of the event.

Sponsorships/Marketing Committee: Focused on securing sponsors and promoting the event.

Volunteers Committee:

Manages recruitment and coordination of volunteers.

Prize Committee: Organizes participant giveaways.

This structured approach helps maintain the event's success and continuously improves the experience for participants and supporters alike.

It truly does take a village to run Trail Trek. From the initial brainstorming and planning meetings to the day-of-event coordination, every detail relies on the collective efforts of many dedicated individuals. The collaborative spirit among committee members, volunteers, sponsors, and participants is what makes Trail Trek such a successful and impactful event year after year.

Thank you to the 2024 Trail Trek

Committee: Kent Henning, Lisa Henning, Jamie Granquist, Marynelle Greene, Roy Rivera, Dale Arp, Dena Noe, Cathy Ebers, Joy Patten, Eli Frank, Jon Taylor, Brenda Weyers and Mindy Diller.

Mark Your Calendar for 2025: Trail Trek - June 22, 2025



Dena Noe and Dale Arp settle in to solve a few day-before-event issues.



The bike version of a 5-seat mini-van!



Relaxing at the Eagle rest stop.



Nearing the end of a wonderful Trail Trek!

CLEANING LINCOLN'S TRAILS

BY MARY TORELL

A few comments have been made about the garbage seen along the trails in Lincoln. GPTN is encouraging everyone to get involved to help clean a trail you use frequently. If the trail is close to you or where you work, it's easy to incorporate cleaning a trail into your routine. Clean a route or trail that works best for you. If you pick up trash, get your children involved so they feel a sense of pride and ownership as stewards of the trails!

If you decide to clean a specific trail, please get involved with the City's Adopt-A-Trail program. Contact Pam Hoffman with Lincoln Parks & Recreation at phoffman@lincoln.ne.gov, or call 402-441-7847. Each month clean your adopted trail, keep track of your hours, and turn that information into Pam. Parks & Recreation will keep a record of those hours and the number of people involved for grant purposes. Usually during the months of December through February, Parks & Recreation does not submit hours from the Adopt-A-Trail program.

Rachelle Hadley, GPTN board member, is organizing a group of people (including GPTN board members) on a specific Saturday each month to clean a trail. Here's how it works:

- Gather the second Saturday of the month anywhere on the designated trail at 7:30 a.m.
- The designated trail follows the Lincoln Trail-A-Thon monthly trail plan (to find the schedule: gptn.org/lincoln-trail-a-thon/monthly-trail-plan.html)
- Volunteer for just one hour, then meet for coffee at the closest coffee house (also posted at gptn.org/lincoln-trail-a-thon/monthly-trail-plan.html).
- This accomplishes two things; serving our community, and building relationships within the GPTN Board of Directors.

Please consider cleaning a trail in your area. For more information, contact Rachelle Hadley at rachelle.hadley@gmail.com.

Thank you.

LINCOLN BIKE KITCHEN

Building a Better Community One Bike at a Time

BY KERRY EAGAN



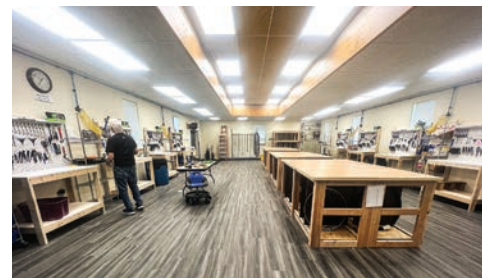
Pepe Fierro is best known as the owner of Pepe's Bistro, a vegan Mexican restaurant known for its great food, local produce, and the sense of community shared by Pepe and his patrons. However, Pepe is also known as the founder of a very different type of kitchen, the Lincoln Bike Kitchen. He saw the positive impact that bike ownership could have on the lives of people who needed a way to get from place to place. In 2006, he began to salvage discarded bicycles, repair them, and then give them away to people in need. His vision was to help build a healthy, equitable and sustainable community by providing bicycles to everyone. Soon thereafter he

merged his passion for bikes with his new restaurant, offering a free burrito to anyone who brought in a bike or bike part. More and more bikes started pouring in. On October 10, 2010 (known to Pepe as 10-10-10), he sponsored a large bike give-away at Peter Pan Park. He gave away 30 bikes that day, and the bikes continued to pour in. Word spread and bike mechanics from various bike shops started volunteering their services. This led to the establishment of the Near South Bike Kitchen, and two years later to the incorporation of a nonprofit corporation known as the Lincoln Bike Kitchen. At that point Pepe stepped away and left the operation of the LBK to a large staff of administrators and volunteers.

The LBK has come a long way since its humble beginning. In 2023, 1,328 bikes were given away, including 784 bikes for kids.

In 2024 the LBK is hoping to give away 1,500 bikes. To date this year over 900 bikes have gone out the door. Because of the large volume of bikes coming in, the Bike Kitchen's space at the location of 635 S. 1st Street in Lincoln has proven to be inadequate. After a diligent search, and lengthy negotiations with the City of Lincoln, the LBK was able to procure a long-term lease of the old City Muni Building at the location of 308 S. 21st Street. This central location is ideal; and will allow the Bike Kitchen to extend its partnership with the Lincoln Public Schools to provide bikes for kids who otherwise could not afford them.

Renovations are now complete and an open house is set for Thursday October 10 at 10 am, a date and time with great meaning for Pepe. Appropriately, catering for the open house will be provided by Pepe's Bistro. Burritos are on the menu.



The new Lincoln Bike Kitchen at 308 S. 21st Street is opening soon with a larger workshop area.



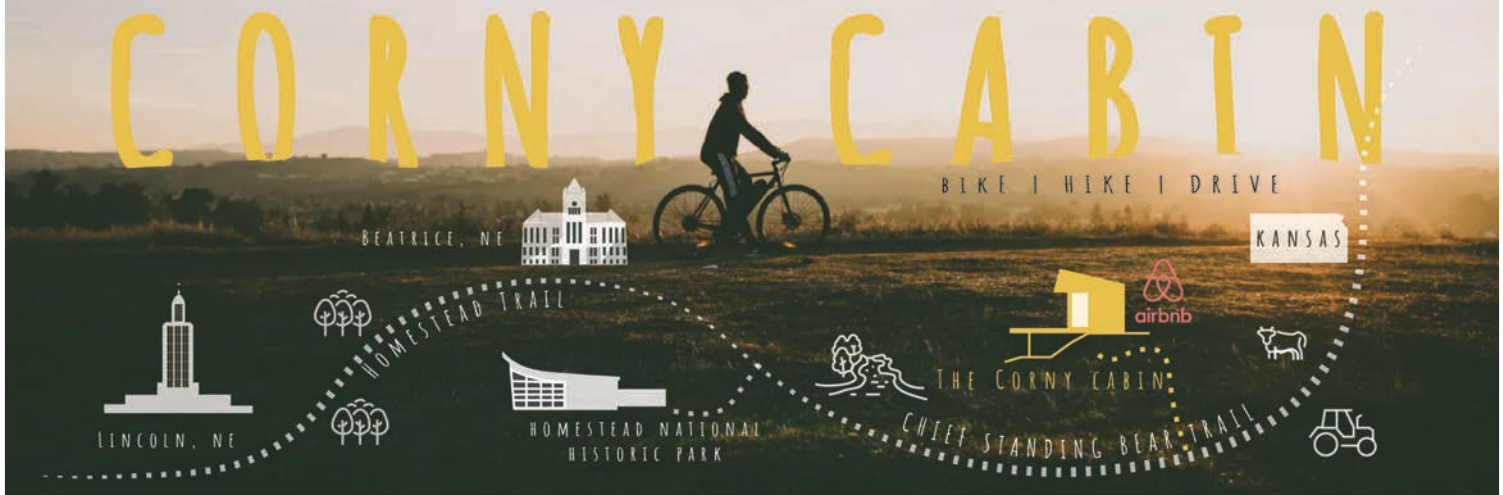
Check the LTC Website for the 2024 Calendar and other information.

www.lincolnrun.org

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Run 4 the Pines Helps Make the Connection

BY ANN RINGLEIN



On a beautiful July evening 106 runners and walkers took off on a jaunt that did

as much for their mind as it did for their body! The beauty of it is, there were many more youth and cross country runners participating this year! The kids get it!

Run 4 the Pines is a 2 in 1 deal – part cross country – part trail race, as runners and walkers traversed the landscape at Prairie Pines Nature Center – heading through tall grass prairies, an old Christmas Tree Farm, forests and mowed grass trails. There were uphill and downhill, but the important thing is it was out in NATURE!

It is one thing to run or walk a race through Lincoln – it's a different level to run or walk a race through nature. Folks are figuring this out and appreciating what being in nature does for them.

The mood is so chill and out on the course people are together – conversing, thanking

the volunteers, and remarking to each other the beauty that surrounds them. Visiting with everyone after the run it is clear they realize Nature=Nurture.

Prairie Pines is a gem and people are figuring this out. We would love more people to figure it out and one way to do that is to make it accessible from the Murdoch Trail – that is what this run is about!

Raising money and awareness for Prairie Pines! At the moment it is open on Saturdays only. We can change that by connecting Prairie Pines to the Murdoch Trail – but that takes money – and awareness!

This year the Run 4 the Pines raised \$2,500 towards that connection. Without the support of our sponsors, this run would not have the wonderful atmosphere it has!

Thank you to the sponsors – Lincoln Track Club, Lincoln Running Co, PPP, Pittinger & Anderson Investments, Piedmontese, Eagle Printing, Ink Alley, UBT, Code Beer,

Saro Cider, & U-Stop! These businesses supporting this run is what makes it "Run"!

Think about taking part in Run 4 the Pines next year and give yourself a little Nurturing in Nature.



Photos by Ann Ringlein

Event CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

27 Hub & Soul 6 - 9 pm

OCTOBER

6 Bike Walk Nebraska –
Learn-to-Ride: Adults &
Teens 3 - 5 pm (info page 10)



Photo by Ann Ringlein

Mother Nature's
answer to the age
old question,

*"Should I ride
my bike in a
thunderstorm?"*

Rock Island Bridge over Salt Creek



An aerial photograph of the Rock Island Bridge over Salt Creek prior to construction.



The former railroad bridge, cleared of vegetation debris.



Unsealed concrete castings for the concrete bridge deck.



Color samples for sealants for the new bridge deck.
Photos courtesy of Lincoln Parks and Recreation

BY ALLISON SPEICHER

Saavy trail users may have noticed that a new trail extension is underway within Wilderness Park. Within the year, the Rock Island Trail will extend across Salt Creek and into Wilderness Park. The existing Rock Island Trail, which currently terminates west of Densmore Park at its connection to the Jamaica North Trail, will cross Salt Creek using a former railroad bridge that is currently being retrofitted for pedestrian use. The new trail extension will include approximately 0.25 miles of 8-foot wide crushed rock surface trail along the former rail corridor and terminate at the western edge of Wilderness Park connecting to existing soft surface trails. The timber decking on the existing bridge will be removed and replaced with durable concrete panels and pedestrian railings will be added to facilitate safe access between the east and west sides of Salt Creek.

Grading started this June to make a widened platform for the new trail. Signs of the corridor's prior life as a railway were immediately discovered, requiring the project team to get creative. During the design phase, environmental sampling was performed to inspect the area for signs of coal or other regulated wastes that would have been residuals from the Rock Island Line. Limited amounts of coal were identified in these early samples; however, construction grading revealed a more substantial presence than anticipated. Working with the contractor and the Department of Environment and Energy, the team identified options to safely manage this waste including a combination of proper disposal and on-site capping. The addition of a crushed rock trail surface served to enhance the durability of the

trail, protect against future erosion, and to serve as an added barrier from the remnant coal.

Currently, the contractor is working to cast the 169 concrete panels that will make up the new bridge deck which will be imprinted with a woodgrain texture to mimic the removed timber rail ties. The casting, stamping, and color sealing process has taken a high degree of care to ensure a durable and visually appealing finished product. All project elements are scheduled to be complete and open to the public by the end of the year. This project is being funded through a Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant with support from the City of Lincoln, the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District, the Great Plains Trail Network, and with proceeds from the Run for the Bridges event in Wilderness Park.

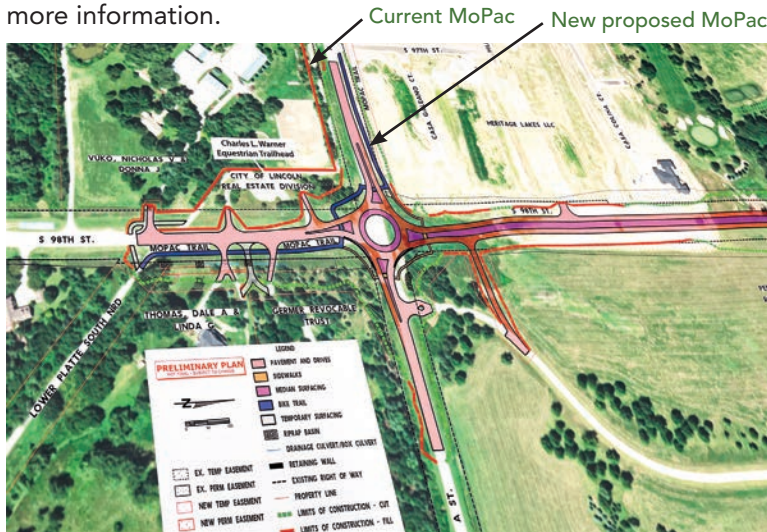


Photo by Dale Minter

Trail under construction at the point it will connect with the Rock Island Trail west of Densmore Park.

'A' Street – So. 98th Street Round-A-Bout Proposal

A preliminary public meeting was held August 27 at East High School to unveil the So. 98th St. - 'A' St. - 'O' St. road construction proposal. This proposed project includes building a round-a-bout at So. 98th and 'A' Streets which involves repositioning the MoPac trail at that intersection. Several GPTN board members attended the open house to gather more details on the proposal. If you would like more details on the project you can search the internet for **LCLC-5275(2)** to find websites with more information.



Map of the repositioned MoPac Trail displayed at the August 27 open house.

4 Alternative Routes have been Identified.



Fast Facts about the 4 alternatives

1. All are within existing, public road right of way.
2. If needed, all can be constructed and maintained without acquiring additional right of way.
3. A recommended route has **not been identified** yet. No alternative route is preferred over another.
4. **Public input and cost analysis** are needed before a preliminary route recommendation can be made.
5. The **preliminary recommended route** may be one of the four alternatives. It could also include segments of multiple route alternatives or even corridors not identified at this time.
6. The preliminary route recommendation will be **presented to the public** for feedback later this fall.

LEARN MORE

Explore our website!
bit.ly/ConnectMoPac

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Join our email list!
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To keep informed about the progress of the MoPac Connect project use these contact sources.

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Sunday, October 6, 2024

3:00 – 5:00 pm

1875 North 42nd Street, Lincoln

Adult Learn-to-Ride Classes



Learn or re-learn how to ride a bicycle.



The class is a 2-hour bike session designed to teach the skills to confidently ride a bicycle.

Adults & Teens 15+

Free to attend.

All gear is provided.



BICYCLING COLN™

BicycLincoln is a community group that supports and promotes bicycling in the city of Lincoln. Our mission is to provide information and a unified voice for bicycle advocacy in an effort to make cycling in Lincoln more friendly, safe, easy, accepted, and “so that more people bike and bike more often”.

Check them out at bicyclincoln.org/

Ride. Share.

That's what the Great Plains Bike Club is all about. We actively promote bicycling with rides for all levels of riders in and around Southeastern Nebraska.

Weekly rides with a leader | Show 'n go rides
Ice cream & coffee shop rides | Moon-lit rides
Hammering training rides | Trail rides

We sponsor the Spring Fling ride in April and Heatstroke 100 in August. We also promote bicycling safety through community-sponsored events. For more information and an on-line application to join the club, go to greatplainsbikeclub.org.



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Trail Patron \$100

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Help us grow our membership!

If you know others that enjoy running, walking or riding on Lincoln's trails, please encourage them to become GPTN members. GPTN is a non-profit focused on funding the growth and maintenance of our trails network. By becoming a GPTN member, you help support the tremendous trails network that adds so much to our community!



**Great Plains
Trails Network**



Go to: gptn.org click on **"Memberships"** and join the **GPTN team!**



Great Plains Trails Network

P.O. Box 82902 • Lincoln, NE 68501-2902

Return Service Requested

The GPTN Newsletter is published quarterly and is distributed to GPTN members and other interested parties.

For more information:

www.gptn.org

Ask a Trail Buddy to Join GPTN!

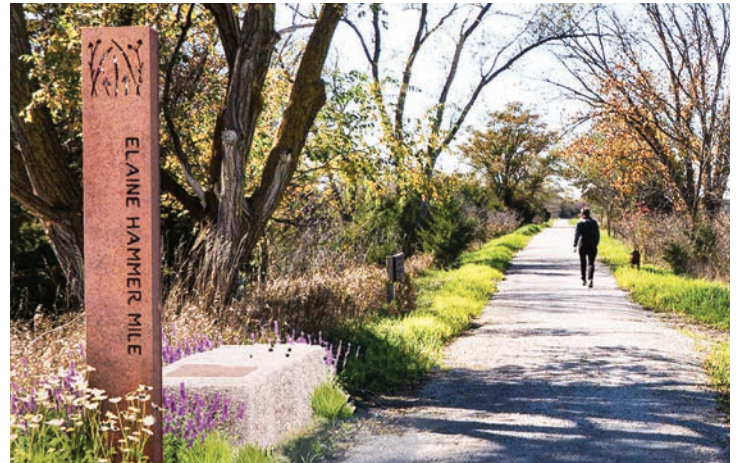


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We Need Your Support!

Prairie Corridor Trail

The Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch is a tallgrass prairie passage and trail that will build on our nationally recognized trails system, linking Pioneers Park Nature Center and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. Please consider donating to this exciting project. The approximately 10-mile greenway is a once in a lifetime project. Please consider donating. *Thanks!*



Make contributions payable to:

Great Plains Trails Network

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Designated Project: _____

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GPTN

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