Pontiac North Spur Trail Development Plan

Background

The North Spur was once a railway bypass loop used by trains on a route passing through the City of Pontiac known as the Beltline Extension. Although it was created to reduce delays caused by congestion from heavy rail traffic, freight transportation has come to a halt and the tracks have been removed. The empty space now needs to be repurposed. With links of the Clinton River Trail to both the east and west, the North Spur’s integration into the CRT is on the horizon. The purpose of this practicum project was to complete an assessment and feasibility study for the North Spur as a link of the Clinton River Trail as well as provide insight to the City of Pontiac as they envisage developing the former rail right of way.

Research & Methods

Socio-Economic Profile

In order to have a better understanding of the characteristics of people in and around the City of Pontiac, the area’s demographics were analyzed. The data was collected from the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census. As can be seen from the table above, the median age in Pontiac, Oakland County, and the state of Michigan has increased slightly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Median Age - 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pontiac</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakland county</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trail Neccessities

These elements are addressed as general recommendations within our report. Trail surfacing, signage and accessibility are included to bring success from the beginning of the project development.

Parks Amenities

On our first site visit, we recognized the local demand of the sporting venues. Updating the amenities at the parks will attract more local visitors.

Opdyke Road Crossing

We value public safety, so a continental crosswalk and refuge island could alert drivers to operate with caution. Paired with curb ramps and audible crosswalk-accessories, the Opdyke Road crossing would enhance the accessibility of the trail.

Trail Development Recommendations

Section 1:

Jaycee Park provides parking and other recreational facilities along with fundamental amenities. Our recommendations focus on practices that will enhance visitor satisfaction. These recommendations were developed with the intent to provide a high quality experience for the user.

1. A path should be constructed that connects the North Spur Trail and Jayce park.
2. Informational kiosks that include route guidance and trail rules should be installed where the park meets the trail.
3. Warnings signs indicating curves, steep slopes and the distance to the closest trailhead should be installed.

Section 2:

The current amenities and parking availability at Galloway Park gives the area great potential. However, the renewal of the amenities would be necessary in order for the park’s potential to be fully realized.

1. An accessible path that connects the North Spur Trail to the park should be constructed.
2. Informational kiosks and trail rules and etiquette signs should be installed at Galloway park where the park meets the trail.
3. Once the community center is updated, it could be used to host educational or community events to attract visitors from other cities.

Section 3:

The trail passes underneath a bridge, and is it vertically below the adjacent properties. The slopes on both sides of the trail require vegetation enhancements to satisfy future trail users’ safety.

1. Emergency phone stations could be installed in the area located beneath the bridge.
2. Due to the lower elevation, deep rooting vegetation should be considered to enhance the soil firmness on the trail’s adjacent slopes.
3. Bike racks, benches, and trash cans could be considered in future developments of the trail.

Section 4:

The trail in this section includes the Silverdome, which is currently vacant. The establishment of future access points is dependent on the redevelopment of the Silverdome.

1. Signs that explain the history of the Silverdome could be included.
2. Creating a ‘wall of green’ could separate trail users from the unwanted scenery.
3. The bridge over M-59 in this section poses a threat to the passing vehicles below. The bridge should be renovated to include high fences and a different surface material.

Section 5:

Creating a "wall of green" could separate trail users from the unwanted scenery.

Section 6:

Section 6 is the southern trailhead that connects with Opdyke Road and the Clinton River Trail in Auburn Hills. Design standards in this section should be consistent with the CRT’s look and feel. Recommendations for this section highly prioritize the connection between the two trails as well as the trail user’s safety at the crossing.

1. Introducing a Continental Crosswalk equipped with audible accessories
2. Refuge Island and other signs should be established on the motor way to enhance visibility and safety

Design Standards, Regulations, and Conditional Assessment

We performed a comprehensive trail design standards and regulatory review that allowed us to produce a set of assessment criteria. Additionally, our conditional assessment benefited our team in generating trail development recommendations, which focused mainly on the following:

1. Trail Width
2. Trail Accessibility Improvements
3. Trail and Bridges Safety Improvements
4. Vegetation Cover

Funding Options

Anticipated improvements to the North Spur prompted the practicum team to explore possible sources of funding. After combing through databases made available at the Michigan State University Law Library and the National Center for Charitable Statistics, a list of options emerged including both statewide and local alternatives.

Section 1:

The recommendations on the development of Section 5 emphasize the old wooden bridge stretching across the Clinton River.

1. The bridge will need to be renovated for safety reasons. However, we suggest that the bridge’s architectural style is kept due to its character and relation to the trail’s history.
2. Structure renewal - either the current materials will need to be reinforced, or the bridge will need to be rebuilt.

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