

# TABOR TO PLATTE RAIL TO TRAIL

## Project Vision and Proposal



Prepared for *Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail, Inc.*  
By Planning & Development District III

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## **I PURPOSE**

The primary purpose of this document is to present a clear vision of a Rails to Trails project to stakeholders in the Missouri Valley region and share the development possibilities and economic benefits that a trail could provide for southeast South Dakota.

Another important purpose of the document is to provide the South Dakota Railroad Board with the information necessary to understand and support the efforts of the Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail group in developing a quality recreational asset in Southeastern South Dakota. The outcomes being sought from the South Dakota Department of Transportation are:

1. Expressed support for the proposed two-phase project concept, which will help in securing funding for a feasibility study, master trail plan, and demonstration project;
2. Authorization for the Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail group to undertake a demonstration project along a segment of the Napa-Platte Rail Line; and
3. Cooperation in developing additional segments of the rail line, should the master plan and demonstration project elements achieve expected results.

The proposed two-phase concept will reassure local officials and landowners that the trail will be designed and implemented with their concerns in mind. It will also demonstrate to the DOT that the trail will be developed and managed according to established national and state standards.

There is an opportunity to move forward on a significant regional trail network. A “window” exists for major federal funding. Support from the South Dakota Railroad Board and the South Dakota DOT is critical for the effort to have any chance for success.

This project vision and proposal was reviewed and unanimously approved by the Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail Board at a special board meeting on November 9, 2021 in Pickstown, SD.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

**The Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail group is composed of area citizens, community promoters, and recreational enthusiasts who seek to advocate for a 'rail to trail' proposal.** The Friends group was established in 2021 to begin a dialogue with regional stakeholders and develop a plan for a multi-use trail which would deliver economic benefits to the region. The region includes the "Napa to Platte" rail line which runs between Tabor in Bon Homme County, South Dakota in the east and Platte in Charles Mix County in the west

A trail on the NAPA-Platte Line corridor can connect with area communities like Springfield, Scotland, Greenwood, Marty, and Pickstown, two major South Dakota State Parks at Lewis & Clark Lake and at Lake Francis Case, Niobrara State Park in Nebraska, and to the Badlands and the Black Hills.

This project vision and concept plan has been developed with objectives for: improvements to trail access and connectivity throughout the region; encouragement of alternative transportation; enhanced recreational benefits; and promoting awareness and use of existing trails. The primary outcome of the preliminary planning process is a feasibility study and comprehensive master plan that will address route

### History of the Napa Platte Line

The 'Milwaukee Road' constructed the NAPA-Platte line in 1900 to connect new agriculture-based settlements with national markets. The line ran through Yankton Sioux heritage lands and traversed the historic Fort Randall Military Reservation. The State of South Dakota acquired the line when the 'Milwaukee Road' declared bankruptcy in 1980.



planning; trail standards; detailed costs, and the development of a phasing and priorities plan.

The Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail has mapped a system of planned trails, as well as a number of road-based routes which serve as both cycling routes and as interim connecting trails.

The work of the organization is directed by a two-phase process. The first phase focuses on organizational startup and initial project planning as well as obtaining funding for the second phase, which is primarily focused on planning and construction.

## **Phase 1 – Project Exploration and Catalyst Phase**

### **Autumn 2021 – Spring 2022**

- *Obtain South Dakota Railroad Board approval for the right to develop a recreational trail along the railbanked line.*
- *Develop a concept plan to communicate with funding agencies.*
- *Inform the public. Gather opinion. Identify benefits. Solicit participation.*
- *Be a good steward for the region. Collaborate with all parties; Landowner, Commercial, User, City, County, Tribal, State, Federal.*
- *Obtain funding for master planning, design, and construction.*

## **Phase 2 – Planning and Construction**

### **Spring 2022 – End of 2026**

- *Project kick-off Meeting, field investigations, and review of background information*
- *Public Consultation Session #1 – Stakeholder Workshop*
- *Mapping of Trails Opportunities and Potentials*
- *Preparation of Trails Feasibility Study*
- *Review Meeting with Friends’ group Board*
- *Public Consultation Session #2 - Public information session/open house*
- *Development of implementation strategy & draft master plan*
- *Master plan refinement and submission to Friends’ Board*
- *Demonstration Project, planning and design finalized and construction*
- *Ongoing operation: Trail maintenance and promotion*



## **2.0 RECREATION AND LEISURE TRENDS**

### **2.1 Regional Profile**

In trails and recreation planning, it is important to first understand the current and projected population and community profile of the region to be served, in order to predict the recreation and leisure preferences that are tied to specific demographics and age cohorts.

Situated in the lower “Missouri Valley” of South Dakota, the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail project is in Bon Homme and Charles Mix Counties. The old Napa-Platte line also included Yankton County to the east. Together, the three counties comprise the region served by the project. The region had a population of 38,995 in 2020, having grown by 1.6% since 2010.

In addition to having an impact in South Dakota, the opportunity to partner with Boyd and Knox Counties in Nebraska provides additional assets, such as the Niobrara River, Niobrara State Park, and the Cowboy Trail recreational trail which meanders across northern Nebraska.

In 2020 the median age in the region was 39.9 which is slightly older than South Dakota as a whole at 37.6. This is likely due to a 2.2% decrease in the working-age population of the region. Consequently, family households continue to be an important segment of the region’s population in planning for recreation needs.

Notwithstanding this, the percentage of region’s residents in 2019 over the age of 45 is approximately 45.10% of the overall population, up from approximately 44.73% in 2010. Along with the rest of the state, this age segment is likely to continue to grow as more people approach retirement age.

### **2.2 Demographics and Interests**

Studies have shown that age is a key factor in how people are likely to spend their income and their time. Reflective of general aging trends across the country, an increasing percentage of South Dakota’s population is the so-called ‘baby boomer’ generation, born between 1946 and 1964. With typically more leisure time on hand, and retirement anticipated or achieved, this age cohort is viewed as one that is increasingly more active and seeking to stay healthy through recreational pursuits. They are generally considered to be one of the highest users of trails.



In a survey of South Dakota residents conducted in 2018, the types of trail activities that support multi-use trails are popular among adult users and families. Different types of biking had many responses. 1,773 adults responded to the question regarding biking on roads, paved trails, and unpaved trails. 923 families responded to the same question. The table below illustrates the popularity of bike trails and their usage.

### Participation in Outdoor Recreation Activities

<i>Trail Activities</i>	Number of times participated by self or with friends/family 18 years or older	Number Responding	Number of times participated by self or With friends/family and children under 18	Number Responding
<i>Walking on paved trails</i>	9	992	5	635
<i>Walking on natural surface trails/Hiking (Day Trip)</i>	8	1,137	5	703
<i>Backpacking</i>	3	185	3	76
<i>Jogging/Running</i>	20	353	5	141
<i>Horseback Riding</i>	3	128	2	90
<i>Biking on paved road</i>	10	570	6	309
<i>Biking on paved trail</i>	10	549	5	300
<i>Biking on unpaved trail</i>	10	385	5	195
<i>Mountain biking</i>	20	269	10	119
<i>Off highway vehicle</i>	5	160	4	97
<i>All terrain vehicle</i>	5	335	4	172
<i>Utility task vehicle</i>	6	162	4	95
<i>Full size 4x4 vehicle</i>	6	373	5	159

Source: 2018 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, South Dakota Game Fish & Parks

## "South Dakota beats most surrounding states in bike friendliness."

### SD Biking Tourism Study

As well, as the population of South Dakota ages, it is anticipated that there will be a shift away from participation in more strenuous outdoor activities such as team-based sports and skiing, toward more passive pursuits. This combination of factors suggests that in the future, an aging baby boomer cohort nearing retirement will be strong supporters of environmental conservation, and of initiatives such as trails that combine nature-based recreation and stewardship activities.

## **3.0 BENEFITS OF TRAILS**

The proposed Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail project identifies a number of potential benefits to communities that can be realized through trails and trail-related activities. These include:

### **3.1 Support for Active Living**

Having access to trails encourages an active lifestyle. Health benefits are afforded to a wide range of users including the physically active as well as the elderly, children and youth, and persons with disabilities.

With many urban residents experiencing increasingly busy lives, they are more encouraged to seek fitness opportunities through access to unstructured recreation activities, such as walking, cycling and jogging, all of which are well suited to outdoor trails.

As an example, 30 minutes of brisk daily walking is all that is needed for improved fitness levels, and health benefits.

### **3.2 Social Benefits**

Trails can help build the social fabric of a neighborhood, town, county or region, physically connecting outlying communities together, and encouraging casual interactions. The Tabor to Platte trail system has been developed to date as a collaborative effort with community volunteers and local sponsors.

By linking accommodations, eating & drinking places, and parks, trails can help to structure an economically diverse region that promotes alternative transportation, and contribute to environmentally sustainable and livable communities.

Trails offer low cost, unstructured recreation that can be enjoyed in solitude, by families, and as group activities. Trails are available to all ages and the associated activities (e.g., bird watching, walking, cycling, cross- country skiing, etc.) can be relatively inexpensive in comparison to other recreation activities that have user fees and/or require expensive equipment.

With appropriate design, most trails which traverse towns can be made physically accessible to a wide range of skills and abilities. Many trails can be used in all seasons, through a variety of activities.

Trails offer leisurely opportunities to appreciate and enjoy nature, and the surrounding community. Volunteerism and collaboration, which have been the underpinnings of trails development for this project,

strengthen community bonds and foster healthy dialogue and partnerships with business and community organizations.

The region is home to the Yankton Sioux Tribe, which provides rich cultural assets. On the banks of the Missouri River, immediately downstream from Fort Randall Dam, hours can be spent peacefully watching the water flow, observing the animals and birds that frequent the area, and enjoying the breathtaking beauty of the surrounding shoreline.

The reservation is the homeland of the Ihanktonwan or Yankton and the Ihanktowanna or Yanktonai who refer to themselves as Nakota. The reservation covers approximately 262,300 acres. It is the second-largest Indian reservation in the United States that is located entirely within one county.

### **3.3 Environmental Benefits**

Trails support both urban and rural recreational lifestyles and can support broader environmental and ecological objectives through the protection of greenspace corridors.

By rationalizing and re-routing random and informal paths, trails can serve to keep users away from sensitive environmental areas.

The use of trail maps and interpretive signage can help to enhance appreciation and awareness of ecology and promote stewardship.

### **3.4 Economic /Tourism Benefits**

Over the past year, pandemic-related shutdowns inspired Americans to head outdoors to find open, safe places to relax and exercise in record numbers.

### **Struck By The Ree**

Folklore has it that while Lewis and Clark convened with the Yanktons in 1804 on Calumet Bluff, a male child was born. Learning of this fact, Captain Lewis sent for the child and wrapped him in an American flag. Lewis proceeded with a speech in which he prophesied that the boy would live to become eminent among his people and would be a great friend of the white men. *Struck By The Ree* (1804-1888) grew up to become Chief of the Yankton Tribe. As a leader, he befriended the whites, yet remained dedicated and loyal to his people.

In 2020, 7.1 million more people headed outdoors, and overall participation in outdoor recreation surpassed 52% for the first time on record, according to the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA). Among the most popular activities was fishing, which drew higher numbers of participants across multiple age, race, and gender groups.

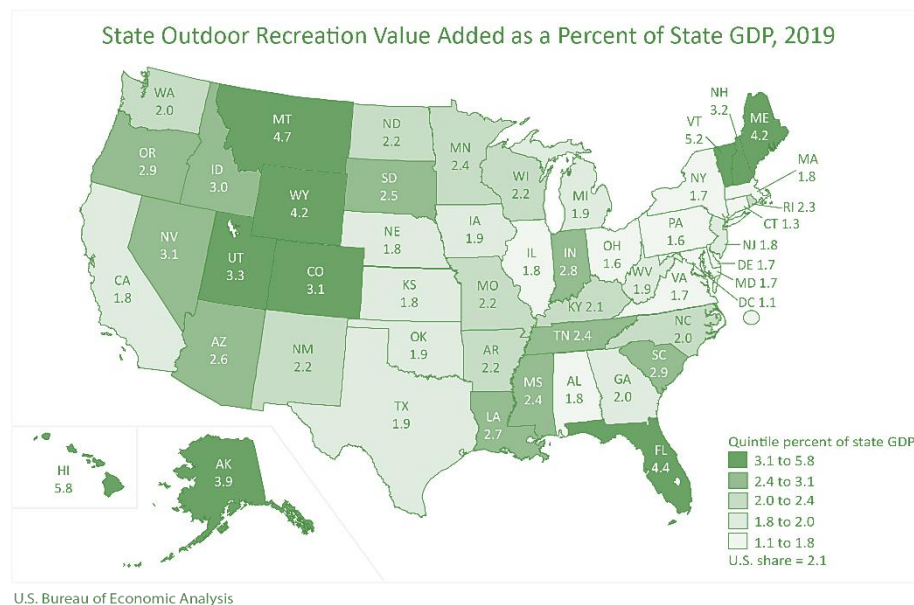
The surge in outdoor participation undoubtedly provided a boost to the outdoor recreation industry that was already booming before the pandemic hit. In 2012, the industry contributed about \$350 billion to the U.S. economy. Heading into 2020, that contribution jumped to more than \$450 billion. And with consumers heading outside in record numbers over the past year, the industry’s contribution to the economy is likely to grow.<sup>1</sup>

As one of the most highly requested recreational amenities, trails promote a high quality of life for communities and indicate a desirable place to live, operate a business, and attract visitors.

Trails can be used to connect key destinations such as state parks and wildlife areas, cultural heritage features, or other community amenities and in doing so can encourage visitation by both local residents and tourists.

Trails can create both direct jobs through construction as well as indirect jobs, relating to tourism and visitation. This might include restaurants, lodging, food and beverage (F&B), and other expenses.

Many trail users purchase local goods to support their trail activities, e.g., mountain bikes, jogging gear, hiking shoes, etc. These purchases



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.outdoorsy.com/blog/state-economies-dependent-outdoor-recreation>

contribute to the local economy through jobs and taxes.

Research has indicated that proximity to trails contributes to real estate values, and properties close to or adjacent to trails are often highly marketable.

The U.S Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) releases data on outdoor recreation and its impact on county economies through its Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account (ORSA). Through the ORSA, the BEA measures the economic activity as well as the sales or receipts generated by outdoor recreational activities, such as fishing and RVing.

These statistics also measure each industry's production of outdoor goods and services and its contribution to U.S. GDP. Industry breakdowns of outdoor employment and compensation are also included. The map at the above shows the value added to each state's economy by outdoor recreation as a percentage of state gross domestic product (GDP).

For a state economy that depends heavily on agriculture, outdoor recreation adds value which accounts for 2.5% of state GDP. The state's share of outdoor recreation as a percentage of state GDP is in the upper quintile in the nation compared to other states. According to "Outdoorsy," South Dakota is the 15<sup>th</sup> most recreation-dependent state using ORSA data. The following are the metrics which developed South Dakota's status:

- *Outdoor recreation dependency index: 69.6 (Hawaii, 100.0)*
- *Outdoor recreation share of GDP: 2.5%*
- *Outdoor recreation share of employment: 3.3%*
- *Outdoor recreation share of total compensation: 2.5%*
- *Largest economic impact activity: RVing<sup>2</sup>*

The contribution that outdoor recreation makes to South Dakota's economy (as a percentage of the total) in terms of value added, employment, and compensation is greater than the same metrics at the national level.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.outdoorsy.com/blog/state-economies-dependent-outdoor-recreation>

## Value Added by Select OSRA Activity (\$000's), South Dakota

	Value Added (GDP)		Employment		Compensation	
	OSRA Total	Share of State	OSRA Total	Share of State	OSRA Total	Share of State
<b>South Dakota</b>	\$1.3 Billion	2.5%	20,252 Jobs	3.3%	\$0.6 Billion	2.5%
<b>United States</b>	\$460 Billion	2.1%	5,168,514 Jobs	2.5%	\$226 Billion	2.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

In South Dakota, there are three outdoor activities which contribute heavily to South Dakota's economy; equestrian, RVing, and boating/fishing. The table below lists the various outdoor recreation activities and the value added to the state's economy between 2017 and 2019. Hunting and motorcycling represent a "second tier" of valuable activities in South Dakota. While it is not a significant amount for each year, the value added by bicycling grew by 5.8% in that period (\$4.9 million in 2017 to \$5.2 million in 2019). The economic figures show that there are opportunities for growth in the bicycling/rural tourism sector.

## Value Added by Select OSRA Activity (\$000's), South Dakota

Activity	2017	2018	2019
<b>Equestrian</b>	93,011	100,086	103,452
<b>RVing</b>	70,187	71,876	74,843
<b>Boating/Fishing</b>	57,164	57,496	63,014
<b>Hunting/Shooting/Trapping</b>	41,964	40,287	44,048
<b>Motorcycling/ATVing</b>	38,072	35,492	37,831
<b>Snow Activities</b>	13,103	13,679	14,237
<b>Climbing/Hiking/Tent Camping</b>	13,002	13,766	14,103
<b>Bicycling</b>	4,936	4,516	5,223
<b>Recreational Flying</b>	3,374	3,312	3,513

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

The counties in the project area, Bon Homme, Charles Mix, and Yankton experienced positive growth in visitor spending between 2018 and 2019. All of the counties had growth rates in visitor spending which were greater than the state's rate. The following table illustrates the amount of visitor spending by industry subsector in 2019.

## Visitor Spending in 2019 (millions of dollars)

County	Lodging	F&B	Recreation	Retail	Transport	Total	Growth Rate
<b>Bon Homme County</b>	\$0.39	\$1.91	\$0.40	\$0.41	\$2.43	\$5.54	6.8%
<b>Charles Mix County</b>	\$7.88	\$3.99	\$3.38	\$3.85	\$6.22	\$25.32	4.2%
<b>Yankton County</b>	\$10.24	\$22.51	\$10.42	\$16.78	\$15.33	\$75.28	2.7%
<b>State Total</b>	\$739.59	\$885.07	\$597.63	\$837.66	\$921.66	\$3,981.61	2.5%

Source: 2019 Economic Impact Report, County Analysis, Tourism Economics

The visitor industry contributes to each county’s employment and income in addition to generating sales tax revenue. The following table shows the number of direct jobs and their share of each county’s total employment as well as the income created by those jobs.

### Economic Impacts of the Visitor Industry

County	Employment		Share of Region	Share of State	Share of County	Labor Income (millions)	
	Direct	Total				Direct	Total
<i>Bon Homme County</i>	67	108	0.5%	0.2%	3.3%	\$1.11	\$2.53
<i>Charles Mix County</i>	273	390	9.3%	0.7%	6.9%	\$4.93	\$9.07
<i>Yankton County</i>	835	1,259	5.5%	2.3%	7.3%	\$16.18	\$33.74
<b>State Total</b>	37,871	55,157			9.0%	\$877.63	\$1,655.38

Source: 2019 Economic Impact Report, County Analysis, Tourism Economics



## 4.0 TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIALS

### 4.1 Trail Planning Principles

#### 4.1.1 Bon Homme, Charles Mix, and Yankton Counties

To guide future trails planning for the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail project, it is important to have a series of principles.

***The counties in the project area will sustain and indeed enhance its strong economic, community, cultural and environmental well-being by focusing on the following key areas of importance:***

- *Maintenance and enhancement of the region's overall quality of life and small town appeal*
- *Protection of the region's heritage, cultural and natural environments*
- *An approach to growth management that balances opportunities for residential and employment growth while maintaining the area's natural and historical character*
- *Providing an economic development strategy that supports the retention and expansion of local businesses, and seeks new opportunities*
- *Development of an equitable, efficient and accountable public service delivery system, that allows for regular public consultation.*

#### 4.1.2 Vision, Values, and Goals

The Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail Strategy identifies a Vision, Values, and Goals for the future of a trails network, as follows:

##### ***Vision***

***A world class system of diversified trails, planned and used in an environmentally responsible manner, that enhances the health and prosperity of all residents.***

##### **Values**

**A world class system:** The trails community will work together effectively.

**Diversified trails across the Region:** Trails in all parts of the project area will meet the needs of varied users.

**Environmentally responsible:** Trails will be planned and used in a manner that preserves and appreciates the environment.

**Enhanced Quality of life:** Trail use will help improve the health and prosperity of all residents of the area.

**Goals of the Tabor to Platte Trails System:**

- **Planned:** Trails will be considered an integral component of all community planning and development.
- **Connected:** Trails will serve to connect the communities of Bon Homme, Charles Mix, and Yankton Counties as well as Yankton Sioux Tribal Lands and will link key destinations.
- **Diverse:** The trail system will be designed to appeal to a wide range of users and interests.
- **Inspiring:** Trails will promote and encourage use and enjoyment of the Town's natural, cultural and recreational features.
- **Accessible:** The trail system will provide opportunities for four-season use and will include a core network of trails that are accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- **Safe and Inviting:** Safety, security, and user comfort will be considered in the design and management of the trail system.
- **Sustainable:** The trail system will be developed and managed in a manner that preserves the environment, is financially responsible, and encourages opportunities for partnership and stewardship.

**4.2 Existing Trails and Recreation Inventory**

The Tabor to Platte Rail to Trails project can be viewed as a central spine along the old Napa Platte Rail Line, with key roads and towns extending from it to the north and south. In these areas the proposed trail system provides a network of open space, which together with bike-friendly roads, afford opportunities for the development of on-road trails. Although not yet signed as such, local roads and sidewalks comprise interim or connecting trails for cycling and walking between the greenway trails.

The greater park and trail system in the project area is comprised of the following areas:

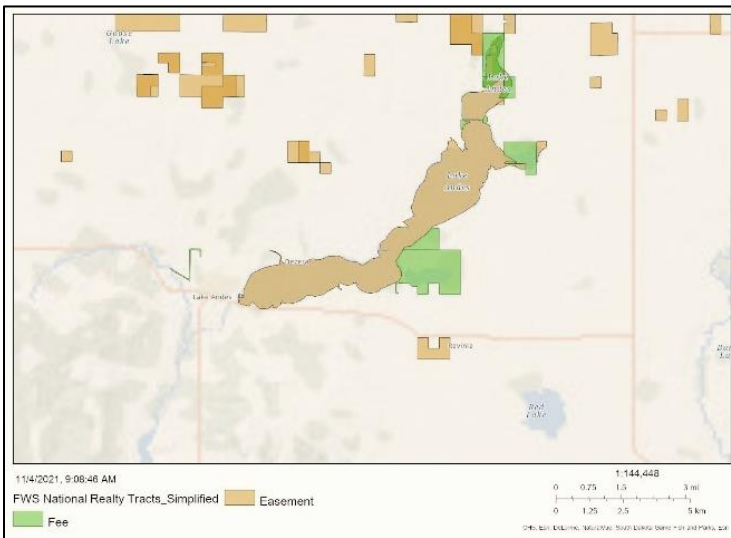
## Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)

Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge is a place of wetlands, grasslands, and riverside forests. During spring and fall migrations, clouds of waterfowl and shorebirds darken the sky.

This was a lake the Sioux Indians knew well, for they frequently made camp here during their pursuit of migrating herds of buffalo and flocks of waterfowl. Around the turn of the century, as settlements were becoming firmly established, the lake became well-known as a fine

place to fish. Several resorts were built near the lake to accommodate visitors who arrived by train.

A diversity of habitat types exists on Lake Andes NWR. As a result of the habitat diversity, a variety of wildlife can be seen throughout the Refuge. The tall vegetation of the

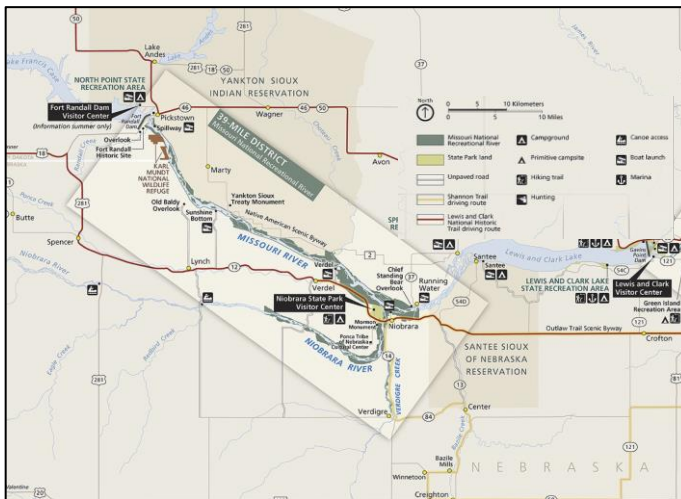


uplands provide opportunities to see grassland bird species such as meadowlarks, eastern kingbirds, bobolinks, red-winged blackbirds, and yellow-headed blackbirds. The rich food resources supplied by Lake Andes, Owens Bay, and the prairie ponds support large numbers of waterfowl, especially during migration. Ring-necked pheasants and white-tailed deer are often seen scurrying through the cottonwoods and other tall vegetation of Lake Andes NWR.



## Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR)

The **Missouri National Recreational River** is a National Recreational River located on the border between Nebraska and South Dakota. The designation was first applied in 1978 to a 59-mile section of the Missouri River between Gavins Point Dam and Ponca State Park. In 1991, an additional 39-mile section between Fort Randall Dam and Niobrara, Nebraska, was added to the designation. These two stretches of the Missouri River are the only parts of the river between Montana and the mouth of the Missouri that remain undammed or unchannelized. The last 20 miles of the Niobrara River and 6 miles of Verdigre Creek were also added in 1991.

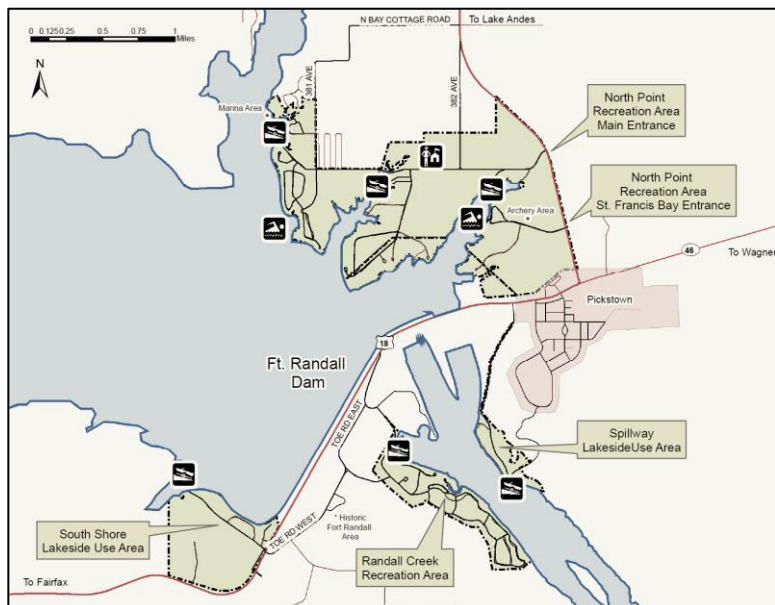


The Missouri National Recreational River is managed by the National Park Service, with headquarters located in Yankton. Visitor centers are located at Ponca State Park, Niobrara State Park and the Lewis and Clark Visitor Center at Gavins Point Dam, overlooking Lewis and Clark Lake. It

lies in parts of Boyd, Cedar, Dixon, and Knox counties in Nebraska, and Bon Homme, Charles Mix, Clay, Union, and Yankton counties in South Dakota.

## Fort Randall Dam and Recreation Areas

Located on the shores of the Missouri River just above Fort Randall Dam, North Point Recreation Area provides a spectacular river view. Lewis and Clark came up the river in late-August, early-



September in 1804. In this area, they saw their first prairie dogs, which they called "barking squirrels." They were also told to watch for an infrequent phenomenon called "burning bluffs," where the shale ignites and smokes.

### Pease Creek and North Wheeler Recreation Areas

With almost 600 acres to explore and easy access to the Missouri River's Lake Francis Case for great fishing, Pease Creek is a popular day use and camping park. The wooded terrain provides shaded campsites and hiking opportunities on the bluffs above Lake Francis Case.

North Wheeler is a small, quiet park is a great get-away for those seeking to relax. And, if your idea of relaxation involves a fishing pole, North Wheeler aims to please. With lake access between Pease Creek and Platte Creek, visitors can spend their days on the water and their night relaxing in the campground.

### Lewis and Clark Recreation Area

Lewis and Clark Lake, near Yankton, is one of the state park system's most popular resort parks. Three separate campgrounds comprise this modern recreation area, attracting visitors from throughout the Midwest. Modern resort facilities - from marinas to camping cabins to sandy beaches - attract water lovers to Lewis and Clark.



A scenic trail winds from the Pierson Ranch Recreation Area and throughout the Lewis & Clark Recreation Area. The north side of the trail winds through forested areas, while the south side follows along Lewis & Clark Lake. Beaches, boat docks, playgrounds, campgrounds, and picnic shelters line the trail. Resting areas with benches offer beautiful views of the lake and water fountains can be found at many points along the trail.





To the west, primitive trail welcomes equestrian riders, hikers and mountain bikers. Beginners to the more experienced trail users can choose from three different loops with varying degrees of difficulty. The trail goes up and down the sloping bluffs overlooking Lewis & Clark Lake at the west edge of the state Recreation Area.

A nature trail winds through native woods, across meadows and past scenic overlooks, this trail adds interest and enjoyment to a visit to Lewis & Clark Lake visit. Through the wetlands of Gavins Bay, beaver and waterfowl, deer, turkeys, rabbits and squirrels may be seen on the way to the top of Gavins Point. A scenic overlook at the top of the trail offers a beautiful view of the lake and the chalk rock bluffs. A shelter and interpretive panel are available for your enjoyment at the top of Gavins Point. This trail is located at the west edge of the state Recreation Area.

### Platte Creek Recreation Area

Fishing and water recreation draws a quieter crowd to Platte Creek Recreation Area to enjoy Lake Francis Case on the Missouri River. Visitors to Platte Creek enjoy natural features similar to those at Snake Creek, but from a quieter campground with similar amenities.



The earliest maps refer to this stream as Fish Creek. After the 1880s, the creek was renamed to honor Bernard Pratte, who operated a fur post near the mouth of the creek. A spelling error forever changed the name to Platte Creek. It was in this area, also, that Lewis and Clark were told to watch for the "burning bluffs."

### Niobrara State Park, Nebraska

Situated at the confluence of the Niobrara and Missouri rivers on Nebraska's northeastern border, Niobrara State Park offers visitors a wide array of outdoor experiences. This scenic, tranquil park offers cabins, both primitive and RV camping,



picnicking, swimming, boat ramps, horseback trails, hiking, fishing and wildlife watching opportunities.

### 4.3 Public Input

The Friends of Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail hosted two public meetings in October 2021. The sites for the meetings were selected in towns along the rail-banked line. The first meeting was in Platte, the “western end” of the rail corridor, with 84 people in attendance. The next meeting was in Lake Andes with 44 people in attendance.

The audiences were allowed to speak on their support or concerns about the proposed Rail to Trail project. Then the meeting was opened for questions.



The following are sample comments from the public meetings.

#### Participant from Platte

- *Help the communities*
- *Have a positive attitude - sharing and caring*
- *Fitness trail*
- *Work together*
- *HoHo program - help others-help others*

#### Participant from Pickstown

- *Progressive communities have a bike path*
- *Lacking bike and hike areas in this area*
- *Support trail and attract out of state tourists*
- *Cross country coach-safe place to run/roads are unsafe*
- *Know there are problems but can be worked out*

#### Participant from Avon

- *Land more rolling*
- *Farm land concerns need to contact an attorney to get easements because equipment to remove rail, ties, etc would need huge equipment and go on private property.*

#### Participants from Geddes

- *Support the trail as a safer place to walk and run*
- *Cowboy trail in Nebraska has been successful*



- *A lot of people walk and run on the country roads*
- *Danger and health concerns - need a safe walking path*
- *Concerns can be worked out*

Participant from Geddes

- *Oppose because lose of privacy, safety and security disregard for ag producers*
- *Unlimited access to backside of private property*
- *Motorized vehicles - Mickelson Trail does not allow*
- *4 wheelers, side by sides, and motorcycles*
- *Livestock producers do not want these by their stock*
- *Winter wheat - fire - fire works*

From the speakers and letters of concern, there are 6 major issues that need to be considered in studying the feasibility and developing the master plan for the project address. They are as follows:

- **1 .Liability**
  - *A. The Friends of Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail are currently looking into a quote for liability insurance to cover the general liability of the trail. This would include at least a \$1,000,000 coverage per incident and an umbrella or commercial excess liability of \$10,000,000.*
- **2. Safety**
  - *A. Friends will be working with the local EMS, fire departments and police departments showing them the map of the trail and access points. The trails will be marked with mile markers for location.*
  - *B. There will be signage for the biking/hiking routes at each trail head.*
  - *C. Side rails per guidelines will be placed on all trestles.*
  - *D. At all points of access there will signage placed according to the trail design.*
  - *E. There will be no camping on the trail. The trail will open 1/2 hours before sunrise and close 1/2 hour after sunset. The cities on the trail will decide what serves such as camping, restrooms and parking they wish to provide.*

- *F. The trail will not be open in the winter months when snow is on the path.*
- *G. All State highway, county road and township road rules will be followed.*
- *H. There will be no hunting or trapping on the trail or trail right away. This is the current policy same on the rail line.*
- *I. The State will remove the ties, rails, spikes and plates and remove the trees on the rail bed. They will leave the trestles and culverts in place.*
- **3. Give land back to the farmers**
  - *A. The Friends of Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail does not have the authority to cede the rail banked land back to the farmers. The rail banked land has been kept for specific rail purposes. The rail to trail is an eligible use of the rail bank. The Friends' group will also need to address tribal concerns regarding legacy treaty land rights.*
- **4. Gates, Fencing and Livestock**
  - *A. Friends will work with the farmers on placing fences and gates for livestock access. To be good stewards of the rail corridor, the cost of the fencing will be covered by the Friends of Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail.*
  - *B. The walk gates will be weighted shelf closing.*
  - *C. Vehicle access gates or cattle crossings will be placed on the trail per engineered design.*
- **5. Motorized Vehicles**
  - *A. There will be no motorized vehicles on the trail except for maintenance and emergency vehicles.*
- **6. Maintenance**
  - *A. The Friends of Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail will follow the directions recommended by the engineered design. It will be Friends' responsibility for maintenance on the trail.*

The Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail has been planning the proposed project since early in 2021. The Friends group is organized around three committees: 1. Finance, 2. Promotion, and 3. Design. The public input meetings were useful in providing vital information and feedback to the Friends group and their committees in planning the project.

The **Finance Committee** has been busy communicating with potential donors to the project. The Committee has begun a dialogue with state and federal agencies to determine potential sources of grant funding to help make the project a reality.

The **Design Committee** has worked on plans for improving the rail corridor to make it suitable for trail users. The Committee also began working on trailhead design standards and potential locations for trailhead facilities.

The **Promotion Committee** has developed a marketing and outreach plan to raise awareness of the project and encourage investment in along the rail corridor. The following is an outline of the Committee's plan:

- **Promotion Tools:**

- Web Site: <https://www.tabortoplatteailtotrail.com/>
- Facebook Page: *Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail*
- Media Contacts
- Formal Public Meetings
- Group Presentations

- **Promotion Efforts:**

- Update as needed 'objections and responses' on the web site and on the Facebook Page
- Use for 'letter to editor' content

- **Trail Concept Plan:**

- Present to the SD Railroad Board
- Post on web site and Facebook Page
- Share with media
- Share with special interest groups
- Present at public events and local government boards



Through meetings of the Friends' Board and feedback from the public meetings held in October, there is concurrence that all of the concerns and issues are important to consider in the Trail's feasibility and master plan.

## 5.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE TRAIL SYSTEM

### 5.1 The Overall Trail System

The Friends group proposes a two-part approach to developing a recreation trail on railbanked sections of the Napa – Platte Line:

- **Part One.** *Secure funds for a feasibility study and master plan for a Rail to Trail project for the Tyndall to Platte segment. The feasibility study and master plan will also include consideration for on-road trail loops adjacent to the rail corridor. The master plan will deliver a clear description of the Friends' vision and a scope of the work to be done as well as detailed cost estimates for trail improvements and supporting facilities.*
- **Part Two.** *Construct a demonstration rail to trail project on the segment between Ravinia and Lake Andes. This section is currently railbanked by the South Dakota Department of Transportation, Railroad Division. This segment includes rail line for conversion to trail, trestles, trailheads and a significant road crossing on US 281, Hwy 18, and Hwy 50 just north of Ravinia. The demonstration project represents design elements and issues that will be encountered for the entire Tyndall to Platte corridor.*

The Friends group will collaborate with communities, bicycling groups, tourism/economic development organizations, and South Dakota Department of Transportation to identify highway routes from the rail to trail core that offer unique routes for cyclers that promote recreation experiences in both in South Dakota and in Nebraska.

Through the initial planning process, several opportunities were identified for the creation of trail segments in both existing and developing areas of the region. Rather than lose sight of these opportunities, the **General Concept** is presented in Section 5.2.1. The timeline to implement the overall concept is considered to be a **10 to 20 year Plan** for trails development in the region.

Currently, the Ravinia to Platte segment is railbanked. A strong possibility exists of adding rail-bank-designation to the Tyndall to Ravinia portion of the Napa line.

The Tabor to Platte Trail will comprise a hierarchy of trail types that are selected to be suited to types of use, location, and environmental considerations. As a long-term objective, and as funding permits, a ten-foot-wide gravel trail will comprise the rail corridor between Tabor and Platte. Loops which flank the central rail corridor will be on-road trails developed on bike-friendly roads first. Trails which go through towns will follow existing streets and trails.

## **5.2 The Primary Trail System**

The Napa to Platte line runs 83 miles from Yankton County through Bon Homme and Charles Mix counties, heritage lands of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, to Platte. Currently, only 8 miles of the rail line (between Napa Junction and Tabor) is in active rail service. About 75 miles of track can potentially be converted from 'rail to trail' between Tabor, through 8 communities, and Platte.

The main features of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail System are described in the following sections.

### **5.2.1 Rail-to-Trail Along the Napa-Platte Railway Land**

The Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail has a unique situation and opportunity for trail development along the railbanked corridor of the Napa-Platte rail line. There are about 29 miles of the rail corridor that is railbanked between Platte and Ravinia, the western segment of the line. This section presents the best opportunity to begin trail development in the region. A short stretch of the corridor between a Yankton Sioux housing community and the City of Lake Andes is already in use and provides an alternative to vehicular travel. The Friends group believes that a small, five-mile segment between Lake Andes and Ravinia could be used as a demonstration trail in order to build momentum for further trail development.

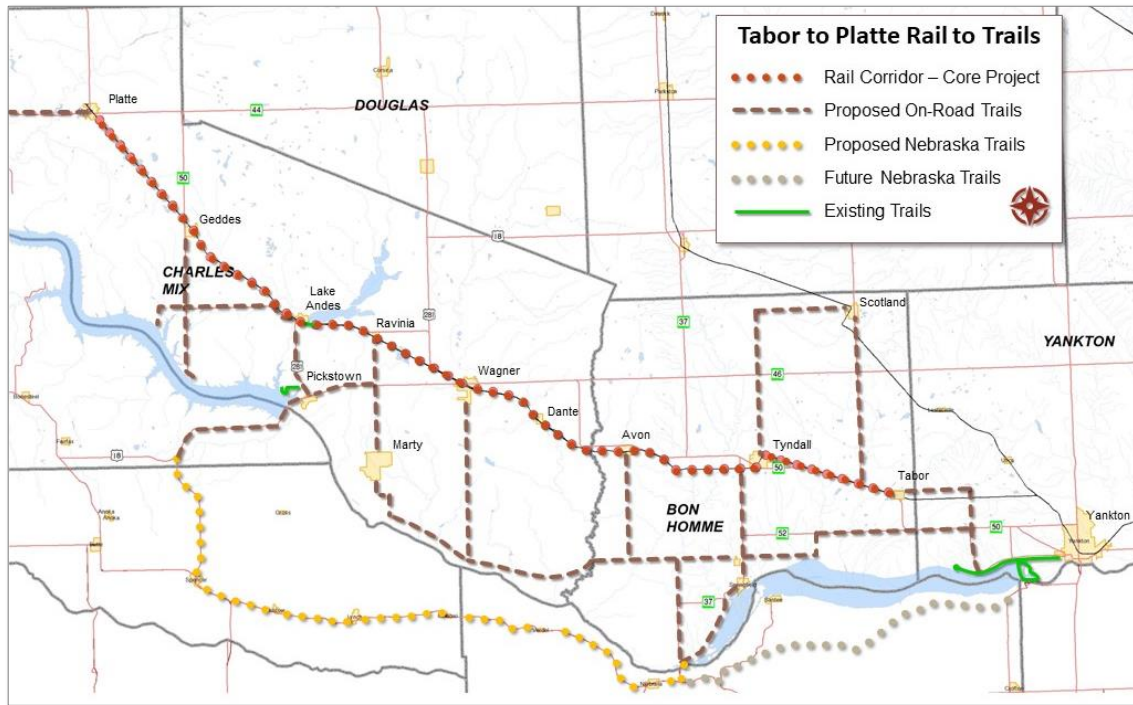
The South Dakota Railroad Board is currently deliberating railbanking the 33 mile stretch of the Napa-Platte line between Ravinia and Tyndall. This segment would connect two of the largest communities along the rail corridor; Tyndall and Wagner. The towns of Avon and Dante are also located along this line and are positioned to be supportive rail towns.

As the rail corridor is complicated by watercourses and wetlands in places, a detailed assessment is required to confirm the most feasible routing and design of the trail, in consultation with the rail operators.

In summary the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail will be comprised of the following key segments. Specific locations for the rail-trail, relative to the rail line will need further investigation (mileage is approximate):

- *Tabor to Tyndall:* 10 miles
- *Tyndall to Ravinia :* 30 miles
- *Ravinia to Lake Andes* 5 miles (*demonstration link*)
- *Lake Andes to Platte:* 23 miles

### Concept Plan



### 5.2.2 Demonstration Segment, Lake Andes to Ravinia

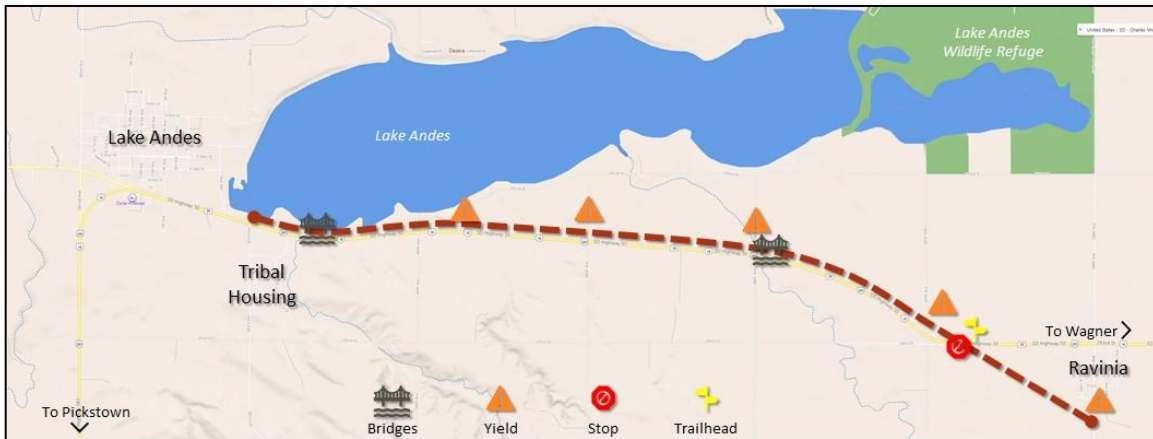
The first segment of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail that will be constructed is located between Lake Andes and Ravinia, South Dakota. The segment is just over 5 miles in length. The portion of the railbed that has been railbanked is relatively flat. The following elevation profile shows the trail gaining feet in elevation from 1439', which is at the western end to a maximum elevation of 1,510' in Ravinia. The trail's slope averages 0.85%, with a maximum slope of 4.6%.





Approximately 5,400 feet of existing asphalt trail on the trail bed connects Lake Andes to housing on the southeast side of town. One bridge was damaged during flooding several years ago. Highway 18/281 was raised approximately 6 feet in this area due to the flooding. The Friends group will determine whether they invest in the bridge's repair.

### Lake Andes to Ravinia



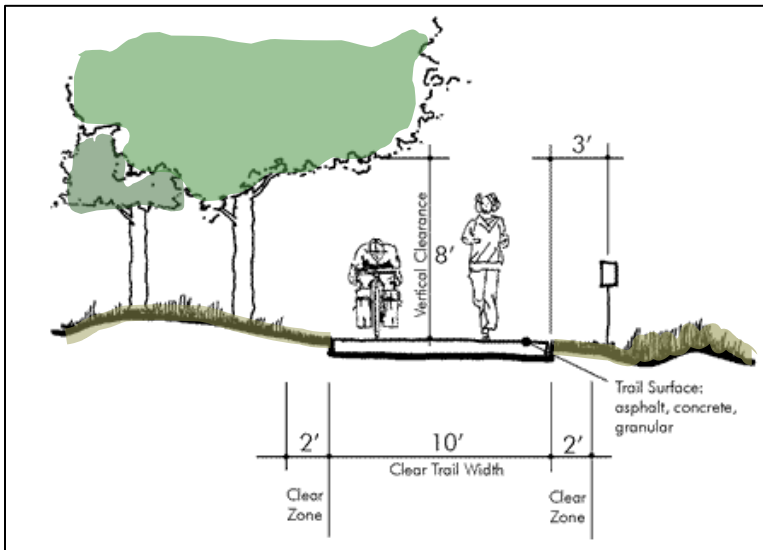
Heading east out of Lake Andes, there is 3,460 feet of trail with one bridge that appears to be in good shape. The intersection with Lakeshore Dr. (the first road east of Lake Andes) will need culverts installed 18" CMP with flared ends approximately 30 feet long on each side of the road. The intersection will need approximately 333 yards of fill material.



Further east along the corridor, there is one bridge that appears to be in good condition. The railbed crosses U.S. Highway 281/18 next to Ravinia, which would make a good location for trailhead signage. Traffic control signage will be needed at this intersection as well.



The gravel trail shall have a width of 10 feet where possible and a minimum width of 8 feet elsewhere. Thickness of the trail shall be 8 inches.



The cross section of the trail shall be sloped at a maximum of 2%, the maximum grade for all trail sections shall not exceed 5%.

Estimated gravel amounts of 35 tons per 100 feet of trail.

Gravel base course shall conform to Section 882 of the SD

Standard Specifications. All gravel shall come from certified gravel sources, the aggregate for the base course shall conform to the gradation requirements for the Standard Specifications.

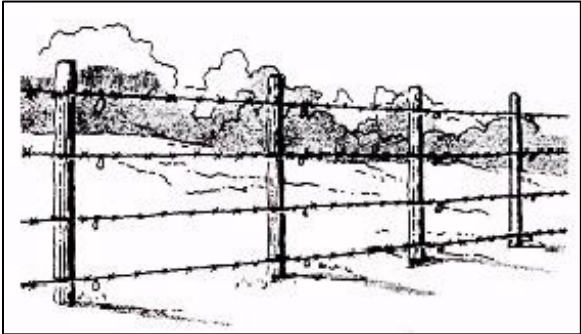
All bridges will have a wood trail base added with railing that are 54 inches high. Bridge decks will be the same material and standards as the bridges on the Mickelson Trail in the Black Hills. All bridges will be inspected by a licensed engineer prior to adding the deck and rails.



Each intersection with gravel or paved roads the trail will be signed so the vehicle traffic on the road will have the right of way. Low traffic gravel roads will have a yield sign. High traffic gravel road and all paved roads will have a stop sign. In addition, all paved roads will have a warning sign indicating vehicles are approaching a bike

crossing. No trespassing signs would be installed at the adjoining landowner's request.

The Friends group would talk with each adjoining landowner to come to an agreement for fencing along the trail. Options would include; 1) No fence, or 2) 4 strand barbed wire fence. The group would also work with adjoining landowners to establish gates or cattle guards where necessary. Each gate will have a "Close Gate Sign" text that is readable from



both directions.

### **5.2.3 On-Road Trail Loops and Connections Along the Corridor**

The Concept Plan includes a number of road-based routes identified as connecting trails that could serve to connect cyclists and pedestrians to the core railbed trail and create a looped trail system through areas where no greenway opportunities exist. Most roads in the project area are bicycle friendly. However, some direction as to safer routes is advised for recreational cyclists. It is anticipated that such routes will also be needed for the long term as permanent bicycle routes that accommodate and encourage more cycling around the region.

Potential cycling routes were reviewed through the study process. The on-road routes identified were confirmed as potential connecting links to rail - trail segments and between community destinations, within the Overall Trail System.

To be an effective part of the recreational trail system, on-road bicycle routes should be signed to direct users to the core trail system along the rail line. A trails brochure/map identifying these routes would also be of assistance to cyclists.

Bicycle friendly routes have paved shoulders greater than 3 feet with 3 feet minimum clear of rumble strips. Not Friendly routes have available shoulder width less than 3 feet, may be unpaved and may or may not contain rumble strips.

The following sections describe the trail loops and connections that are proposed to complete the network.

### Tabor Loop and Lewis and Clark Lake Connection

This area starts with an on-road trail which begins at the Gavins Point Entrance at Lewis and Clark Recreation Area in Yankton. The route goes north along SD Highway 52/432<sup>nd</sup> Ave. for about 6.5 miles to 306<sup>th</sup> St. It follows 306<sup>th</sup> Street 6 miles west to Tabor. Where 432<sup>nd</sup> Ave. intersects SD Highway 50, an on-road trail heads west for 5 miles along SD Highway 50 and catches SD Highway 52 toward Springfield. The on-road trail winds along SD Highway 52 west and Apple Tree Road for 15 miles until reaching the north side of Springfield.



The 12.5 mile connection between Lewis and Clark Lake and Tabor has a minimum elevation of 1333 feet and a maximum elevation of 1601 feet. Slopes average 2.3% with a maximum slope of 17.9% near the Gavin’s Point entrance to Lewis and Clark Recreation Area.

The leg between SD Highway 50 and 432<sup>nd</sup> Ave and Kramer Road near Springfield is less steep than the Tabor connection. The average

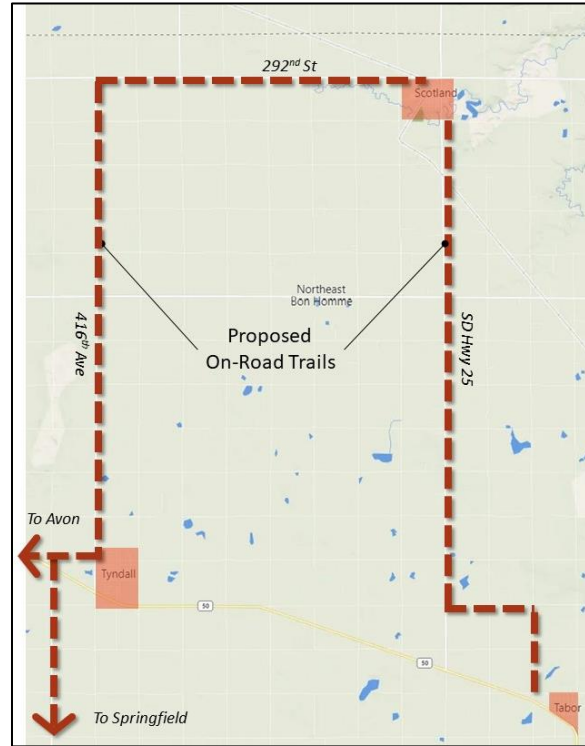


elevation of the route is 1437 feet with an average slope of 1.2% and a maximum slope of 6.1%.

## Scotland Loop

The on-road trail heads north and west from Tabor on 426<sup>th</sup> Ave and 305<sup>th</sup> St. for two miles. It then turns north and follows SD Highway 25 for 11 miles, crossing SD Highway 46, until reaching Scotland. The trail follows 292<sup>nd</sup> St west out of Scotland for 8 miles before turning south on 416<sup>th</sup> Ave for 11 until it reaches Tyndall.

The 15 mile stretch between Tabor and Scotland is relatively flat. Elevations range from 1309 feet to 1415 feet. Slopes average 0.8% with a maximum of 6.6% near Scotland. The 19 mile connection between Scotland and Tyndall has a wider range of elevations from 1339 feet near Scotland to 1526 feet just north of Tyndall. Average slope is 0.6% with a maximum 6.0%.



## Springfield-Avon Loops

These loops bring trail users back closer to the Missouri River between Tyndall, Springfield, and Running Water. The on-road trail picks up on the west side of Tyndall and follows Highway 37 21 miles to Running Water. This is one of the more challenging legs of the trail system featuring a lot of undulation near Springfield, Emmanuel Creek, and down the bluff at Running Water. Elevations range from 1232 feet to 1493 feet. Slopes average 1.7%, but the road near





Springfield, Emmanuel Creek, and in to Running Water have 12.9 to 14.2% slopes. The "Bottom Road Loop" between Running Water and Springfield is, for the most part, level. But when users approach the bluffs near Springfield, the elevation rises more than 100 feet in a short

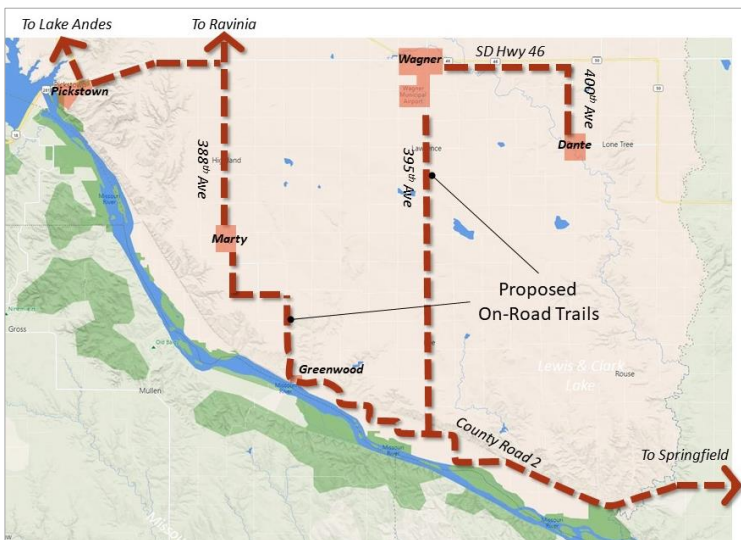


distance. The connection between Springfield and Avon follows SD Highway 37 out of Springfield west to 407<sup>th</sup> Ave where it turns north and finishes at the mouth of Main Street in Avon. The route is just over 17 miles and, with the exception of the Emmanuel Creek crossing, is gently sloping. Average slope is 1.3% with a maximum slope of 9.8% near Emmanuel Creek. While this area may give casual cyclists a challenge, it gives all of the users wonderful views of the Missouri River bluffs in South Dakota and Nebraska.



### Greenwood-Marty Loops

The 19-mile on-road trail in this area begins at 332<sup>nd</sup> St. and 407<sup>th</sup> Ave. in Bon Homme County and follows Charles Mix County Highway 2 along the river bottom for about 20 miles until it reaches Springfield. The eastern segment of the trail is on top of the bluffs but drops to bottom land in Charles Mix County. The bottom road of County Road 2 is virtually flat, but slopes approach 12% at the bluffs. The western portion of County Road 2 near Greenwood has gentle undulations. The on-road trail climbs nearly 200 feet out of



bluffs but drops to bottom land in Charles Mix County. The bottom road of County Road 2 is virtually flat, but slopes approach 12% at the bluffs. The western portion of County Road 2 near Greenwood has gentle undulations. The on-road trail climbs nearly 200 feet out of



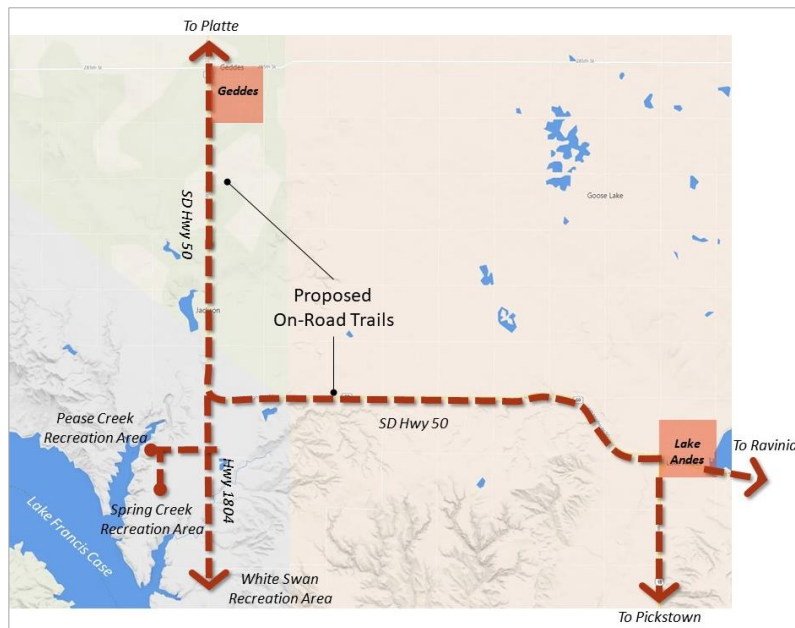
Greenwood and up the bluff as it follows 390<sup>th</sup> Ave and 388<sup>th</sup> Ave. into Marty. The loop finishes at the intersection of 388<sup>th</sup> Ave. and SD Highway 46. The segment has over 500 feet of elevation change over its course, but overall its slope is gradual. Slopes average 1.5% with a maximum slope of 7.1%. The 13-mile connection between County Road 2 and the railbed in Wagner is nearly as dramatic as the Marty segment, with an overall elevation change of 400

feet. Topography is more undulating with the overall slope averaging 2.3% and a maximum slope of 10.4%. A connection to Dante follows SD Highway 46 for five miles and 400<sup>th</sup> Ave. for 3 miles.



### Lake Andes Area Loops

The 15-mile ride between Lake Andes and Geddes along SD Highway 50 offers scenic views of the bluffs near Lake Francis Case. The terrain is gently rolling with an average slope of 1.5% and a maximum slope of 6.9%. An on-road trail can connect from the bend in Highway 50 to the Pease Creek and Spring Creek Recreation Areas. It can also connect to the White Swan Recreation Area further south.



## Platte Area Loops

SD Highway 44 west of Platte offers wonderful views of Lake Francis Case and the surrounding recreation areas. An on-road trail between Platte and Snake Creek Recreation Area is nearly 14 miles. The road is fairly hilly with a descent of nearly 300 from the top of the bluff to the Lake. A 10-



mile link between SD Highway 44 and Platte Creek Recreation area along Highway 1804 gives users a pleasant view of the countryside and the bluffs. There is a dramatic change of

300 feet in elevation as 1804 winds its way around the Platte Creek inlet. The slope in this area is a challenging 19%.



### 5.2.4 External Trail Connections

Although enhancement of the proposed trail system is a clear priority for the workshop participants, opportunities for connections to regional trails in other states were noted and discussed. A link across the Missouri River at Running Water, SD will connect to Niobrara, Nebraska and Niobrara State Recreation Area. The trail would also connect to the Cowboy Trail in north-central Nebraska.



### **5.3 Recommendations for Implementing the Trail System Plan**

In addition to the physical trail development and improvement initiatives described above, the following are key recommendations for facilitating the implementation of the Tabor to Platte Trail System.

#### **5.3.1 Trails Planning & Design**

Notwithstanding priorities that may be established for the trails development capital budget, the Friends group will continue ongoing dialogue/investigation of all potential trail initiatives in association with new development areas.

To ensure that trails planning is effective and consistent with regional objectives and the intent of the Master Plan, the Friends' Board will seek early and ongoing input from the committees and the public on trails planning at the earliest stages of site plan approvals.

All development projects will need to be preceded by feasibility and technical design, including the potential for Environmental Impact Studies for lands with environmental constraints.

Within the suggested trail hierarchy, trails should be designed to a consistent set of standards and initial budgets and fundraising for development should consider needed amenities and appurtenances including signage, rest areas, and trailheads.

#### **5.3.2 Maintenance / Monitoring**

Trails development should be accompanied by a corresponding increase in funds for annual maintenance. In addition to routine maintenance such as garbage removal, surface repair, and replacement of signage and lights (where applicable, it will be important to undertake periodic assessment of trail conditions to identify and rectify potential safety hazards and to monitor potential environmental impacts from trail usage).

Where appropriate, trails adjacent to creek systems should have signs warning of the potential for flooding or washouts.

#### **5.3.3 Establishing Priorities**

Over the long term when establishing priorities for new trail construction or improvements there are a number of factors that should be considered, including (in no order of priority):

- *Visibility and profile of the trail segment; status of approvals and ease of construction; public and political support;*
- *Contribution to existing route connectivity;*
- *Available capital budgets;*
- *External partnerships and funding opportunities, such as grant programs; and, timing of new development or road improvements.*

### **5.3.4 Funding**

Not for profit community organizations have access to other sources such as government or foundation grants or corporate funds that are not available directly to municipalities, and the continued involvement of local trail organizations and enthusiasts in trails development should be encouraged.

Most available programs require some co-payment from the applicant or a local unit of government, and grants typically serve to boost, rather than replace municipal contributions. As this is a long range plan and grant opportunities change on a frequent basis, The Finance Committee, working with regional planning staff could assist in reviewing potential government and foundation grants programs and developing a strategic approach to accessing external funds and engaging potential sponsors.

See descriptions on current programs under the section **Potential Funding Sources** .

### **5.3.5 Marketing and Promotion**

Develop a **trails map/brochure** and web materials for marketing of the existing trail system, with periodic updates as major trails initiatives are accomplished;

Implement a 'Buy a Foot' or 'Buy-a-Mile' Trail Campaign brochure/donation form to promote new trail building projects;

**Develop/implement activities** to promote use and awareness of trails, or as fundraisers for special projects, e.g.:

- *Seasonal or regular guided bird watching / nature hikes;*
- *Cultural/historical walks;*
- *Fitness events / marathons / triathlons, cross country meets;*
- *Carnivals / children's fairs;*

- *Bicycle safety rodeos;*
- *Trail / creek clean-ups;*
- *Cross-marketing with other trail providers such as local development corporations & chambers of commerce, or health/recreation related businesses.*

## 6.0 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

### 6.1 Priorities and Phasing

The Overall Concept Plan is proposed as a **10 to 20 year plan** with phased implementation of the following key elements.

The focus of capital funds for trails development initiatives, in the proposed order of priority, are the following initiatives:

- **Securing usage and development agreements with the South Dakota Railroad Board** for the railbanked portion of the railroad right of way between Platte and Ravinia.
- **Retain a design professional to conduct a feasibility study and develop a formal master plan** which lays out the conceptual plan in great detail. A master plan will also include current, accurate cost estimates for all components of the trail system.
- Developing a **new multi-use trail along the Napa-Platte railroad** right of way between Lake Andes and Ravinia;
- **Work with county governments and the South Dakota Department of Transportation to develop on-road trail loops and connections along bike-friendly roads as described in the Section 5.2.** The development of some of these trails are expected to proceed in tandem with new development and, therefore, may occur out of sequence with identified priorities;
- **Advocate for the rail banking of the remaining sections of the Napa-Platte line.** The Friends group should be leading the charge to rail bank the Napa-Platte line as well as acquiring usage rights along the line in order to develop the remaining rail corridor.

Other initiatives identified within the 10-year plan, and which may be funded from sources other than the trails development capital budget include:

- *Identification and signing of cycling /walking routes that complete trail loops and connections.*
- *Developing a trails map/brochure for marketing of the existing trail system, with periodic updates as major trails initiatives are accomplished;*

- *Development of trailheads along the rail corridor at strategic locations for maximum visibility.*
- *Plan for trail and trailhead maintenance.*

Specific initiatives and timing for specific projects are identified in the **Preliminary Capital Investment Plan** under categories of Trails Planning & Design, Trails Development, Trails Improvements, and Marketing and Promotion.

## **6.2 Project Costs**

### **6.2.1 Capital Projects**

**The Preliminary Capital Investment Plan** also identifies a target period and estimated project costs to assist the Friends group in its planning and budgeting, as well as for use in seeking alternative funding sources. The costs identified are high-level and provided for budgetary purposes and will need to be confirmed through a detailed planning and design process. It is assumed that all trail development will be accompanied by standard design and construction implementation activities and the costs include an estimated 10% for design/engineering fees.

Notwithstanding the identified priorities and projected timelines, it is understood that the allocation of funds for trails development will need to be carefully balanced with other capital projects and expenditures. The Friends group should also continue to act on all opportunities for trails development as they arise, including negotiation of easements, implementation through development agreements, or utilizing volunteerism or partnership. Consequently, some projects may be advanced ahead of others.

### **6.2.2 Operational Costs**

Research into other multi-use trails suggests that the average maintenance costs for non-asphalt surfaced trail segments are about \$1,700 per mile per year. The costs include mowing, surface maintenance, litter control, and the maintenance of amenities, which may be located along the trail.

There is frequent discussion over whether granular-surfaced trails require higher or lower maintenance efforts than asphalt trails, when deciding to what standard to build trails. Investigations by other trail-builders indicate that the routine maintenance costs are comparable

for both types of surfacing. However, in areas where trails may be particularly vulnerable to flooding or washouts from nearby creeks, the cost of repairing granular-surfaced trails suggests that asphalt may be less costly when averaged over the long-term.

### Preliminary Capital Investment Plan\*

INITIATIVE	ITEM	ESTIMATED COST
<b>Years 1-5 (2022-2026)</b>		
<b>Planning &amp; Design</b>	Feasibility Study and Master Plan	\$ 70,000
	Legal and administrative costs	\$ 10,000
<b>Trails Development</b>	Demonstration trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lake Andes to Ravinia</i></li> <li>• <i>5.25 miles @ 103,000 per mile**</i></li> </ul>	\$545,000
	<b>Trails Improvements</b>	Directional signage
	Trail amenities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Benches, trash cans, etc.</i></li> </ul>	\$110,000
<b>Marketing &amp; Promotion</b>	Develop trails map / brochure and web-based information on the trails system for the Friends' web site	\$ 5,000
	Develop / Implement seasonal trails activities to promote use and involvement in trails building	Volunteers
<b>Maintenance</b>	Demonstration trail operation and maintenance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>\$1,700 per mile per year for 2 years</i></li> </ul>	\$ 9,500
	<b>SUBTOTAL FOR 2022-2026</b>	
<b>Years 6-10 (2027-2031)</b>		
<b>Planning &amp; Design</b>	Master Plan for future segments	\$10,000
	Legal and administrative costs	\$10,000
<b>Trails Development</b>	Rail to Trail construction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ravinia&gt;Wagner&gt;Dante</i></li> <li>• <i>14.25 miles @ \$140,000 per mile**</i></li> </ul>	\$2,120,000
		Develop bike lanes on bike friendly roads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>20 miles @ \$5,500 per mile</i></li> </ul>
<b>Trails Improvements</b>	Directional signage	\$15,000
	Basic trailhead development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Parking, picnic shelter, trash cans, benches, portable restrooms</i></li> </ul>	\$80,000
<b>Marketing &amp; Promotion</b>	Update trails map / brochure and web-based information on the trails system for the Friends' web site	\$5,000
	Continue seasonal trails activities to promote use and involvement in trails building	Volunteers
<b>Maintenance</b>	5 miles @ \$1,700 per mile per year for 4 years	\$73,000
	20 miles @ \$1,700 per mile per for 1 year	
<b>SUBTOTAL FOR 2027-2031</b>		<b>\$2,423,000</b>

\* Subject to review and revision

\*\* Cost includes 10% contingency and 15% engineering



## **6.3 Potential Funding Sources**

It is expected that trails development in the region will need to draw on any, and all, of the following possibilities. They are discussed in the following sections.

### **6.3.1 Capital Budgets**

There are a range of trail initiatives that have been identified for the Tabor to Platte Rails to Trails which are of interest to the region, and which will compete for available trails development monies. Potential local sources of funds are:

- *County and municipal capital budget, e.g. for new trails development, including signs, trailheads, rest areas and other amenities along the trail;*
- *Maintenance & operations budgets, e.g., for signage replacement / improvements; Economic development / marketing funds, e.g. for trail brochure;*
- *Road improvements programs, e.g. for in-pavement cycling facilities and related infrastructure.*

### **6.3.2 Partnerships with Other Agencies**

There is currently a significant interest and momentum in trails development in the surrounding region, and the Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rails to Trails Group is positioned to benefit from this.

#### **Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D)**

The RC&D program is a federally authorized program that has been in existence since 1964. Currently federal funding has been cut since April of 2011, however most local RC&D Councils are still providing many benefits and helping to accomplish many projects through the help of local volunteers.

The objective of the Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D) is to make available the resources of the USDA and other public and private partnerships, including units of local government and local nonprofit organizations, to the local RC&D Councils. RC&D is a unique program that helps people care for and protect their natural resources in a way that will improve the area's economy. The RC&D Program also aims to build relationships, create financial leverage, and increase the ability of communities to meet their resource conservation and development needs.

There are currently three active RC&D Areas in South Dakota. Technical assistance is available for RC&D sponsors and the local people to identify local community and resource needs, to develop and implement area and annual plans to address these needs, and to coordinate the federal, state and local resources needed to accomplish the individual projects in these plans. The plans address a balance of land conservation, water management, community development and land management elements.

### **6.3.3 Foundation Grants**

**American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)** The AARP Community Challenge grant program is part of the nationwide AARP Livable Communities initiative that helps communities become great places to live for residents of all ages. The program is intended to help communities make immediate improvements and jump-start long-term progress in support of residents of all ages.

#### **Wellmark Community Small and Large Match Grants**

Match grants support promising projects that can help individuals, families and communities achieve better health. This can be done by creating safe and healthy environments that encourage physical activity and access to and consumption of nutritious foods. Small Match grants have a maximum award of \$25,000 while Large Match grants award up to \$100,000 per project.

Examples of funded projects include, but are not limited to:

- Improving access to locally sourced foods.
- Supporting connections between local food systems and health.
- Providing readily available and accessible opportunities for all residents to engage in physical activity.

#### **South Dakota Community Foundation (SDCF)**

The South Dakota Community Foundation (SDCF) makes grant awards from its unrestricted fund in the areas of economic development, human services, health, education, and cultural programs. Grant applications are accepted anytime, and awards are made within a 45–60-day time period after Letter of Inquiry approval.

## **6.4 Funding Programs (2021)**

The following is a summary of funding programs and other initiatives that are related to trails development and trail promotion. Most of the programs require community organization involvement as the lead applicant and manager of the project and funds, with municipal support as a requirement. The provincial infrastructure funds are directed to municipalities and while not trail-focused, offer some opportunities for active transportation or other trails supportive initiatives. In some instances, municipalities have been successful in receiving grants for trails building projects.

### **6.4.1 SD Department of Transportation (DOT)**

#### **Transportation Alternatives Program (TA)**

Transportation Alternatives (TA) is authorized by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) and is a set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program funding. TA includes the Safe Routes to School, Scenic Byways and Recreation Trails Programs. These project types should all be submitted under this TA call for Letters of Intent. These set-aside funds include all projects and activities that were previously eligible under the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), encompassing a variety of smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects, community improvements such as historical preservation and vegetation management, and environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity.

#### **Statewide Transportation Improvements Program (STIP)**

The STIP is a four-year program listing projects developed through the coordinated efforts of the Department of Transportation, Transportation Commission, state and federal agencies, local and tribal governments, metropolitan planning organizations, public agencies, transportation providers, citizens and other interested parties. The program identifies highway and intermodal improvements to preserve, renovate, and enhance South Dakota's transportation system.

## **6.4.2 SD Department of Game, Fish & Parks (GF&P)**

### **Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant- LWCF**

The Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a federal aid assistance program to help states provide outdoor recreation facilities. The program provides up to 50% reimbursement funds for acquisition and development of outdoor recreation projects. Eligible applicants include city, county, township and tribal governments. Examples include picnic shelters, playgrounds, park land acquisitions, pool renovations, and other recreational facilities.

### **Recreational Trails Program**

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a federal aid assistance program to help states provide and maintain recreational trails for both motorized and non-motorized trail use. The program provides up to 80% reimbursement funds for motorized and non-motorized trail projects. Eligible applicants include municipalities, counties, state parks, federal land management agencies or tribal governments

## **6.4.3 SD Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources**

### **Comprehensive Challenge Grant**

The Resource Conservation & Forestry Division created the Comprehensive Challenge Grant to distribute a portion of the Urban and Community Forestry Program funds from the US Forest Service to communities within South Dakota. Through this program, communities are awarded grants to help with a specific forestry problem, along with promoting community forests and their importance. The grant must be matched by the community or organization that receives the award. Communities in South Dakota are challenged to increase their commitment to community trees and achieve a higher effort in conservation.

### **Watershed Protection Section 319**

The Clean Water Act was amended in 1987 by Congress to add Section 319, which is now the primary focus of state nonpoint source programs. The Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program provides the means for states, tribes and territories to receive federal funds to address nonpoint source pollution. 319-funded projects are the primary channel for reducing nonpoint source pollution in South Dakota.

Co-Chairs Bentz and Wagner opened the Special Board Meeting at 7:05pm on Tuesday, November 9 at the Lucas home, 609 James Ave, Pickstown, SD with 16 attending:

Ron Wagner, Tyndall	Janet Wagner, Tyndall	Amanda Bechen, Wagner
Larry Lucas, Pickstown	Deb Lucas, Pickstown	Mary Kraayenbrink, Platte
Marcus King, Platte	Judy Parker, Geddes	Bob Foley, Tyndall
Michelle Juffer, Wagner	Dan Hunhoff, Tabor	Jerad Hutchins, Platte
Jerome Bentz, Platte	Roger Huizenga, Platte	Mike Renner, Springfield

Eric Ambrosion, Planning & Development District III, Yankton

**Old Business.** Ron recapped revisions to our approach to the recreation trail proposal discussed at the Special Board Meeting held Mon Oct 25 meeting in Platte.

**New Business.** Ron introduced Eric Ambrosion of Planning and Development District III, Yankton. Eric prepared a formal document that describes our revised approach to creating the regional recreation trail and for our EDA grant application.

Bob Foley stated the purpose of this meeting was to review, modify if necessary, and approve the document for submission to the state Rail Board tomorrow, Wed Nov 10, which is the document deadline for the Wed Nov 17 Rail Board meeting where our group is scheduled to present. Our intention is to ask the Rail Board to evaluate our proposal and act on it by the Wed Dec 15 meeting, which allows time for us to meet the January 2022 EDA grant application deadline, should Rail Board approval be obtained.

Larry Lucas asked about a construction schedule. Eric referred to Section 6.2.2, the Preliminary Capital Investment Plan that presents two phases, Years 1-5 and Years 6-10, as a working model or starting point that will be updated as knowledge about the project improves from the study and from the demonstration trail.

Dan Hunhoff asked about maintenance. Eric replied he used “best available” estimates, but when the demonstration trail is completed, specific maintenance program costs will emerge.

Eric returned to the purpose of this document; to identify for the Rail Board specific actions we request they take. Our request limits risk and provides for periodic review, so progress on the trail project can be monitored in steps that allow for modification and improvement.

Outcomes sought from the Rail board in a formal resolution are:

1. Expressed support for the proposed two-phase project concept, which will help in securing funding for a feasibility study, master trail plan, and demonstration project;

2. **Authorization for the Friends of the Tabor to Platte Rail to Trail group to undertake a demonstration project along a segment of the Napa-Platte Rail Line; and**
3. **Cooperation in developing additional segments of the rail line, should the master plan and demonstration project elements achieve expected results.**

Ron described current and expected railbank segments of the NAPA line. Discussion ensued about how the regional trail network can be developed from even a short demonstration trail.

Larry and Mike recommended we actively solicit feedback from trail users, especially from the demonstration trail, and forward that to the Rail Board. Larry suggested promoting the demonstration trail among area state park users and bicycling groups. Eric highlighted the proximity of the demonstration trail to state parks and recreation areas. Discussion ensued with active participation from all attendees.

Ron called for a motion to accept the formal document, with suggested modifications, and present it to the state Rail Board tomorrow, Nov 10, for the Nov 17 meeting. Marcus King so moved with a second from Dan Hunhoff. Motion passed unanimously with no one abstaining.

Janet presented two bills for payment: \$190.00 for annual web site hosting and \$79.75 for public meeting advertising in the Platte newspaper. Dan moved, with a second from Michelle. Motion to approve passed unanimously.

Foley stated the Rail Board meetings typically offer a time for Public Comments. Anyone who wants to make comments about our plan at the Nov 17 meeting can contact Bob for the call-in number. Foley also recommended anyone who knows an area state legislator or local elected official consider informing them of our formal proposal and the Nov 17 Rail Board meeting, so they are aware and prepared to answer question from constituents.

Ron and Jerome thanked all for their participation. The next meeting will be set after the Wed Nov 17 Rail Board meeting, when we should have tasks or issues that need addressed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:21pm.

Submitted by Robert Foley, Secretary

Please let me know of any corrections or clarifications: [rfoley9147@gmail.com](mailto:rfoley9147@gmail.com)