

# City of La Crosse TAP Application for Willow Trail Resiliency

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### 1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW:

The 0.6-mile Willow Trail (WT) is a primary off-street artery connecting the City of La Crosse's east and west communities; paved and with curb cuts at both ends, it is bike and pedestrian accessible. The WT connects the Vietnam Veteran's Trail and the Grand Crossing Trail; making it the only east/west connector for La Crosse off-street pathways. This means it is the only connecting link for the La Crosse River State Trail to Riverside Park and Downtown La Crosse. The WT is frequently subject to flooding during relatively small weather events and is now regularly impassible; under water or closed for repair. The project would include realigning and elevating the trail with a boardwalk where the Willow Trail meets the Grand Crossing Trail to ensure the long-term viability of the trail for year-round use. The project would create an all-season transportation linkage while reducing maintenance costs and habitat impacts from frequent flooding. Without these elements, a key bike/ped connection facilitating utilitarian travel in the very center of the city may become increasingly unusable or permanently lost, creating a gap in a network, and forcing riders and walkers onto busy on-street connecting highways or arterials. With this project, a reliable, year-round, direct connection can increase daily active commuting trips by removing barriers to travel.

### 2. PROJECT PLANNING, PREPARATION & LOCAL SUPPORT

The Marsh is the subject of many different plans. The most important being the "[La Crosse River Marsh Hydrology Analysis Report](#)," a restoration plan commissioned by the city and completed Jan 2022. It recommends several projects to improve the WT, noting that the sole east/west connector runs parallel south of the La Crosse Riverbank leaving it poorly drained and at risk of washout (p.17). The two project alternatives include a raised boardwalk; T1-3A would follow a similar footprint to the existing trail and T1-3C would move the trail further south away from the rivers edge.

As a sign of the WT's importance as a utilitarian bike/ped connection, many other transportation plans recommend projects to maintain it or improve its usability. These include the [Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan \(2012\)](#), and the [City Safe Routes to Schools plan \(2021\)](#). The LAPC's [Beyond Coulee Vision 2040](#) (2020) highlights the WT as a regional linkage in "an integrated travel network that

can be used for transportation.” The [2002 City of La Crosse Comprehensive Plan](#) specifies the WT as part of “an integrated network of trails.” Until 2021, the WT was used as a linkage for the interstate Mississippi River Trail (MRT). In 2021, the routing of the MRT was moved to the newly-created “Regional Route 1.” The LAPC plans to create five regional routes, and with few marsh crossings, the WT will probably help secure the future route 3 or 5.

This project has significant local support, including from the advocacy group Friends of the Marsh. The Friends made the marsh restoration plan possible through public meetings and input; the plan was created with the support from city council, neighborhood organizations, and the Parks Dept.

### **3. PROJECT UTILITY & CONNECTIVITY**

This project repairs an irreplaceable bike/ped link that fosters utilitarian travel in the middle of the city, which is at present often inundated with water, closed for repair, or seasonally impassable. According to the 2020 Census, ~69,500 people live in county tracts north of the marsh, and ~45,000 to the south; [2019 ACS](#) estimated that 80.8% of these county residents drove alone to work. Within 1 mile of the southern end of the trail is [Myrick Park](#), two higher ed campuses, [Emerson Elementary](#), a [YWCA child care center](#), and a network of current and planned neighborhood greenways. Within 1 mile of the northern end is [Red Cloud](#) and [Goose Green](#) parks, neighborhoods, the [new 144-unit 5th Ward Residences](#), a [community garden](#), three schools, a [branch library](#), the [Schuh and Mullen public housing projects](#), a [Headstart Center](#), the [Boys and Girls Club](#) and the [Hunger Task Force](#). Transportation connections to the north include the [Amtrak station](#), access to a completed neighborhood greenway, the [24-mile Great River Trail](#), and the 22-mile [La Crosse River Trail](#). Additionally, the connectivity provided by the WT aligns with the Connections 2030 goal to support multi-use trails that meet corridor bike/ped transportation needs.

### **4. HISTORY OF SPONSOR SUCCESS –**

The Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department has existed since 1908 and manages a 1,560-acre system, 2,300 acres of public land between the marsh and bluffs. It oversees millions of dollars of capital improvement projects annually. This is the department’s second TAP application; it has no record of returning federal funds. The Willow Trail project is undoubtedly a complex project however, the TAP’s

multi-year funding commitment ensures adequate time to refine project design elements, environmental reviews, permitting, and construction. The City will execute a contract with an approved environmental consulting firm to accelerate and guide the project through any obstacles encountered ensuring compliance with local, state and federal law within the TAP parameters.

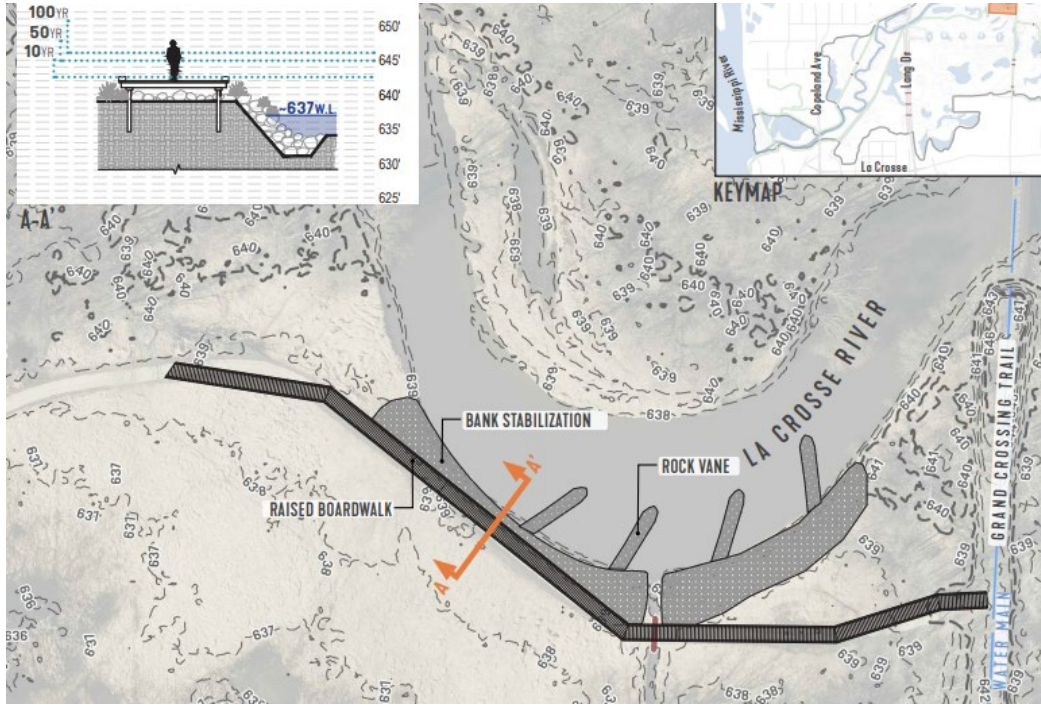
#### **5. PROJECT BENEFITS – Environmental –**

As a part of a marsh remediation plan, these projects work to restore free flow of water between cells. Hydrology and a sustainable trail are inextricably linked; the living marsh serves as a sponge for stormwater runoff but has been clogged by flood debris and dammed by road projects for decades.

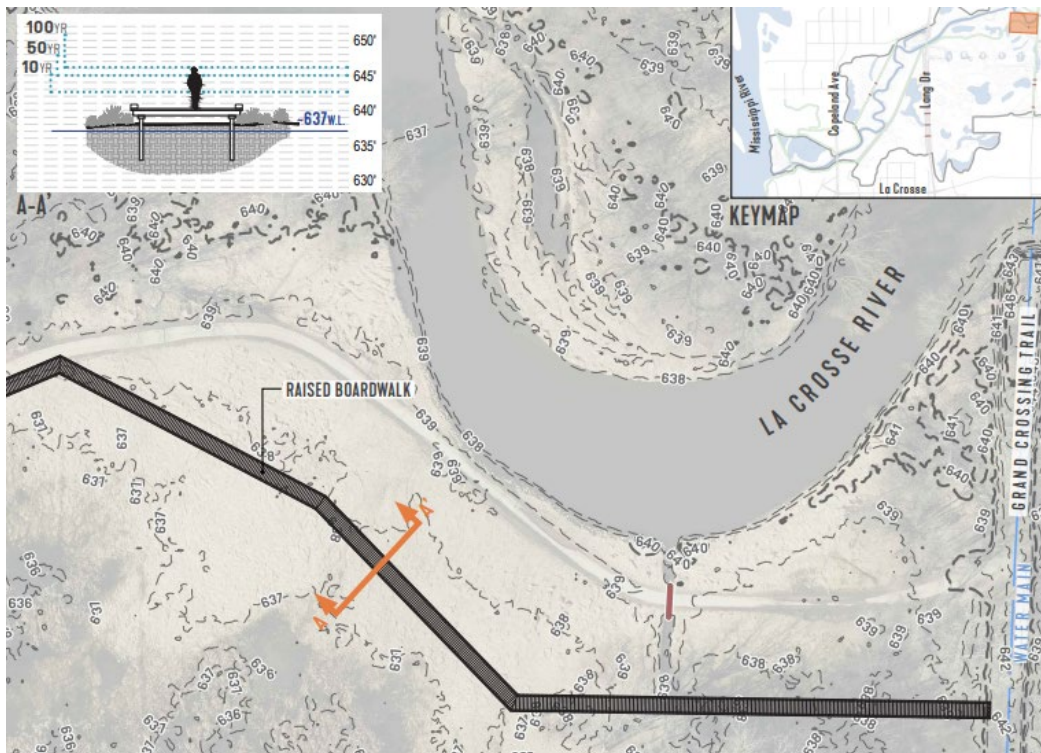
**Livability** – as green space in the center of the city, the marsh is made accessible by trails, increasing opportunities for recreation as well as transportation. **Public Health** – All-season trails offer alternatives to single occupancy vehicle trips, reducing VMT, pollution and congestion while enabling active daily lives and access to nature. **Economic Justice** – Census Tract 2, including the northern part of the WT and the half-mile radius, has been identified as home to a high concentration of minority residents in comparison to the county in a 2015 WISDOT [environmental justice report](#). The [County Planning TIP map](#) notes that part of the WT is within census tract 5, designated as having “low-income percentages greater than the planning area.” **Safety** – The WT offers a safe off-street alternative to the only three roads across the marsh. WI-16 and US-53 are [Urban Principal Arterials](#); WI-35 an Urban Minor Arterial. [TOPSLAB](#) data shows that the marsh stretches of these three have a record of bike/ped crashes. From 2010-2020, 20 bike/ped crashed occurred along the US-53 corridor between Monitor and La Crosse Street; 9 on WI-35 (Lang Dr.). **Economic Development**- The WT provides a bike/ped link connecting residents, visitors and students residing in the community to retail stores, essential services, industrial businesses, and jobs on La Crosses north and south sides.

**WILLOW TRAIL RESILIENCY**

Alternative T1-3A- Proposes leaving the trail in its current alignment, but raising access along the trail with a boardwalk, armoring the riverbank where it is most susceptible to erosion and placing rock cross vanes to pull the thalweg of the river back into the center.



Alternative T1-3C developed for this location tested moving where the Willow Trail meets the Grand Crossing Trail south away from the river's bank. As in the previous alternatives, the new trail would be replaced with as a boardwalk. This alternative pulls the trail alignment from the bank and away from the erosion at the meander bend but does not pull the trail out of the path or above flood events.



## Attachment C - Preliminary Cost Estimates

<b>Cost Estimate Overview</b>			
<b>Willow Trail Resiliency 2027 - 2028</b>			
<b>Willow Trail Resiliency - estimate of design and construction</b>	<b>Unit Cost</b>	<b>Estimated Quantity</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Activity</b>			
Permitting	\$50,000.00	1	\$50,000.00
Construction	\$775,000.00	1	\$775,000.00
Construction Engineering	\$90,750.00	1	\$90,750.00
Design & misc. consulting costs	\$120,000.00	1	\$120,000.00
State Review for Construction	\$5,000.00	1	\$5,000.00
State Review for Design	\$7,320.00	1	\$7,320.00
Sub-Total =			\$1,048,070.00
12% Contingencies =		1	\$125,768.40
<b>Project Total</b>			<b>\$1,173,838.40</b>
<b>Total Construction Cost Estimate with Construction Engineering and State Review 2028</b>			
<b>Type of Activity</b>	<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>Federal Funding</b>	<b>Local Funding</b>
Construction Costs	\$825,000.00	\$660,000.00	\$165,000.00
Construction Engineering Costs	\$90,750.00	\$72,600.00	\$18,150.00
State Review for Construction	\$5,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$1,000.00
<b>Total Construction Cost Estimate with Construction Engineering &amp; State Review</b>	<b>\$920,750.00</b>	<b>\$664,000.00</b>	<b>\$166,000.00</b>
<b>Total Design Cost Estimate and State Review 2027</b>			
	<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>Federal Funding</b>	<b>Local Funding</b>
Design Plan	\$ 120,000.00	\$ -	\$ 120,000.00
State Review for Design	\$ 7,320.00	\$ -	\$ 7,320.00
<b>Total Design Cost Estimate and State Review</b>	<b>\$ 127,320.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 127,320.00</b>

Resolution committing to and accepting the Wisconsin Department of Transportation - Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grant funding for the King Street Greenway, Avon Street Greenway, St. Cloud/St. James Cycle Track, and Willow Trail Resiliency.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the City of La Crosse Planning, Development and Assessment Department and the Parks and Recreation Department will be submitting four (4) projects for the 2024-2028 Transportation Alternatives Program Grant Cycle; and

WHEREAS the above projects have been identified by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Planning, Development and Assessment Department, and Parks and Recreation Department as priority projects to seek funding for; and

WHEREAS the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) requires a local resolution of support should they be awarded the proposed project(s), executed by a governing body that has the authority to make financial commitment on behalf of the project sponsor; and

WHEREAS WisDOT requires the City fund 100% of project costs upfront and WisDOT will reimburse up to 80% of the approved and eligible project costs once the project is complete and the City will be responsible for at least 20% of project costs; and

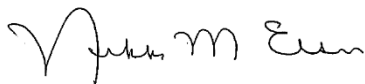
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Common Council of the City of La Crosse, that if the City of La Crosse is awarded funding by WisDOT for the 2024-2028 TAP award cycle, the City of La Crosse supports the project(s) and will commit to funding the proposed project(s) up-front through the Capital Budget understanding that upon completion, up to 80% of eligible costs will be reimbursed back to the City.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that upon confirmation of the grant award the project(s) will be set to begin in 2025 or 2026.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Director of Engineering and Public Works, Director of Planning, Development and Assessment, Director of Finance, and Director of Parks and Recreation are hereby authorized and directed to take all necessary steps to implement this resolution.

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*I, Nikki M. Elsen, certify that this resolution was duly and officially adopted by the Common Council of the City of La Crosse on November 9, 2023.*



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*Nikki M. Elsen, WCMC, City Clerk  
City of La Crosse, Wisconsin*