BRIDGING the Bluffs Campaign

Creating the Flyway Trail linking Minnesota & Wisconsin

Photo courtesy of Scott Reichel

fly·way /'flīwā/noun. A flight path used by large numbers of birds while migrating between their breeding grounds and over wintering quarters. The flyway of the Mississippi River Valley is the most important migratory path in the country for the widest variety of birds anywhere in the world.

9/18/19

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VISION	MISSION	IMPACT
This scenic trail will be built on one of the most beautiful stretches of the Mississippi River Trail (MRT). The trail will ultimately serve local transportation needs and attract longer distance riders, hikers, and bird watchers to enjoy the landscape and historic features not currently accessible.	*The mission is to create a low-stress trail experience, provide educational opportunities, and connect the small towns on this unique stretch of the Mississippi.*	*This type of addition to the region will spark a whole new level of awe and interest in our area, positively affect future generations and showcase the beauty that is defined by the region.*

The Flyway Trail Board of Directors, Buffalo County Supervisors and staff, and the City of Winona are grateful for the assistance of the many pre-campaign volunteers who have worked diligently to advocate for this project.

Committee members include a great mix of those who live and work on both sides of the Mississippi River, since there are mutually beneficial outcomes of this project for residents in the entire region.

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A Future Flyway Trail Family Trip

Photo courtesy of Visit Winona

Michael and Angela spent their anniversary on a small vacation with their three young children in the Driftless Region of western Wisconsin and southeast Minnesota. From a busy neighborhood in Minneapolis, Angela especially wanted a get-back-to-nature focus for their weekend escape.

Once they arrived and settled into the hotel, the family headed to lunch before stopping at a local bike shop to rent bikes and buy hiking gear.

Michael asked his opinion of the trails with a bike shop employee who suggested they ride to the newly completed Flyway Connector Bridge, stop and explore the shoreline around Latsch Island and head to Trempealeau. After picking up a bird book, they headed out.

When they got to the river, they stopped to take some pictures of the many birds and wildlife they saw. The children were amazed. They could not believe they saw deer, beaver, herons, bald eagles, and butterflies. Once they reached the Wildlife Refuge the children had more questions. Angela explained how these refuges provide protected areas for wildlife. Their daughter declared that she wanted to be a biologist when she grew up.

Michael led the way to Great River Trail, and they followed on to Trempealeau for dinner alongside the river. They sat on the patio and watched another family's puppy run up and down the bank as two children followed. Maybe they could bring their own dog one day? Later the two families met up again at an ice cream shop and became friends over sundaes.

The next day, the kids asked to go biking again, and they left soon after breakfast downtown. After a long day and a great dinner, it was time to head home. The kids all asked if they could come back next year and their parents happily agreed.

Flyway Trail Vacation	Cost
Bike rental	$200
Hotel rooms	$425
Food in Winona	$75
Hiking gear	$85
Biking gear	$50
Dinner in Trempealeau	$80
Ice Cream	$27
Gas	$42
Return Stop at Lark Toys in Wabasha, Minnesota	$35
Total	**$1,019**

Flyway Connector Executive Summary

The Time Is Now!

Bridging the Bluffs Campaign will help fund the connecting link to the proposed 50-mile destination trail along the spectacular Mississippi River called Flyway Trail. The trail will give hikers and bikers from throughout the Midwest enjoyment and exploration opportunities along the river and its bluffs, while they embrace the natural and ecological beauty of the world's largest bird flyway and support the communities and towns along the river.

Economic development stimulus from recreational projects like Flyway Trail is well-documented (see more starting on page 9) but in short, our region can expect significant return on investment (ROI), expanded business opportunities, and increased housing value with the potential for expanded tax revenue for years to come.

Phase I will cost $2.9M and will consist of:

- Initial construction of Flyway Trail utilizing the new Highway 54 Interstate Bridge and the John A. Latsch Historical Wagon Bridge and parts of the former Highway 54 road.
- Building an 842-ft. steel truss Flyway Trail connector bridge over the Burlington-Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad
- Creating one mile of crushed limestone trail from the end of the bridge to the Town of Buffalo Park in Bluff Siding, WI
- Providing bike repair stations, bike racks, benches, a donor wall and signage
- After Phase I local funding match is secured, federal funding may be applied for the next phase of the trail.

Phase II will consist of:

- Creating 2.8 miles of 10-ft. wide limestone surfaced trail between the Town of Buffalo Park and Marshland, Wisconsin, completing the connection from Winona to the Great River Trail. Estimated timeframe is 2021 to 2023.

Phase III

Phase III is still in the planning stages, although initial design work has been started. Phase III will see the trail north into Buffalo County towns of Fountain City, Cochrane, Buffalo City and Alma, with a goal of connecting to Nelson, WI and Wabasha, MN. Estimated timeframe is 2024 to 2026.

A Successful Campaign Will Unlock Millions in Federal and State Funding

The campaign is intended to help provide the final matching funds needed. Without private funds from the campaign, Buffalo County will be required to give back the funding to the State of Wisconsin and the federal government.

The project is identified in two phases due to the funding streams from the U.S. Department of Transportation, which is providing 80 percent of funds. Phase I is ready to begin with final engineering and plan preparation for construction. Only initial design work has been started for this Phase II. When complete, this trail will provide recreation for its users and spearhead economic development for Winona and western Wisconsin river towns.

The $1.2M Bridging the Bluffs Campaign will provide:

- $600,000 for the Flyway Connector bridge project private match to secure the $2.9M in state and federal funding for Phase I. (Due to DOT grant requirements, initial construction is estimated to begin Fall of 2019.)
- $300,000 for the 20 percent private match required toward Phase II for the 2.8 miles to Marshland
- $300,000 for planning, engineering and consulting costs as well as part of the 20 percent private match needed for the final Phase III to turn the trail northward to Fountain City, Cochrane, Buffalo City and Alma

In 2018 a Campaign Readiness Study completed by Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC, found a campaign goal of $1.2M is attainable to complete Phase I with the Flyway Connector Bridge and Phase II including the link to Marshland and the Great River Trail. This vital link will then allow access south to La Crosse, Madison and beyond. Four pre-campaign planning committees have been working since the spring of 2019 on *Bridging the Bluffs Campaign*, led by local and regional volunteers and managed by Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC.

History of Flyway Trail

1998 - A meeting convened including representatives from both Minnesota and Wisconsin to discuss moving forward on the interstate trail connection. Agencies and groups represented included Wisconsin and Minnesota DNRs, MinnDOT, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Minnesota legislature, City of Winona and private interest groups. A strategy was agreed upon to renovate one of the critical components, the “Old Wagon Bridge” in Winona, Minnesota, made possible by a $1M anonymous gift and many other donors which saved the historic bridge. This successful fundraising effort, culminated with the dedication of the John A. Latsch Historical Wagon Bridge

in 2005, and made the rest of the Minnesota portion of the project possible. This includes clearing Old Highway 54 of overgrowth and signing the trail.

2004 - DNR approved stewardship dollars to match an anticipated WisDOT TE grant. An attempt to secure Transportation Enhancement (TE) grant funding in 2005 failed.

2006 - A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in early 2006 by DNR and Buffalo County to commemorate the county's sponsorship for trail development. The County's sponsorship enabled a more straight-forward way to administer the project through the TE grant. WisDOT is coordinating design of the project because of their TE grant awarded for this trail's development. The design consultant, Short Elliot Hendrickson, Inc., is under WisDOT contract for this project. Once design is complete, project construction will be let locally by Buffalo County.

2007 - TE grant funding was later awarded after a second attempt in 2007. DNR added supplement Stewardship funding to bring it to the level it is at today.

2014 - Trail planning began in earnest when Buffalo County Land & Trails Trust was formed as an independent organization with volunteer 501(c)(3) status, now called Flyway Trail. In March a meeting was held of representatives from area municipalities that would be affected by the proposed multi-use trail. Support for the project was unanimous, and Flyway Trail was born.

2015 - The Board raised the initial $80,000 in funds needed to hire the premiere trail design company, Alta, to perform a feasibility study including resource inventory, site analysis, design guidelines, and recommendations. Trails utilizing federal funding are required to complete an extensive feasibility study process.

2016 - Work continued to gain traction on land acquisition. The $2.1M Department of Transportation (DOT) allocation was granted to fund the Flyway Connector portion of the project. The requirement of the allocation was to secure 20 percent in matching funds.

2017 – Land along a section of the proposed trail was agreed upon by Dairyland Power.

2018 - Project plans finalized, permits obtained, and land rights secured. The Board hired Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC, to conduct a study to determine how much funds would be available from private donations in the region to secure the 20 percent DOT required local match. A $1.2M estimate was reported after the study.

2019 - The City of Winona and County of Buffalo agreed to easements that would allow the Flyway Trail to officially enter City property. A $535,000 LAWCON grant was secured in April from the DNR to provide a portion of the matching requirement. This grant represented more than 10 years of work to secure the funding. The Campaign to secure funding for ***Bridging the Bluffs Campaign*** begins under the guidance of approximately 50 area residents, the Flyway Trail Board, and Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC

MILE MARKER ONE: Project Background

The Mississippi River corridor has a huge economic and environmental impact on our country as the largest river in the United States.

While covering just 50 miles, the Flyway Trail has the potential to link into the nationally significant trail experience for visitors from across the country. Recreational opportunities with the close vicinity of bluffs and river will make this one of the premier multi-use trails in the nation.

Flyway Trail will become a vital link in the Great River Trails Program. The proposed project area sits at the intersection of the wide gorge of the Mississippi River and the rolling hills of Wisconsin's Driftless Area. The region is an ecological gem that is rare to the area and the country.

The project area stretches for roughly 50 miles along the Mississippi from the Chippewa River to the Trempealeau River, enveloping Highway 35 and numerous communities at the base of the bluff line along the river. The county's upland farms and prairies, forested hillsides, and towering bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River provide an idyllic landscape for bicycling, hiking, bird watching, and other recreation activities. Visitors will be able to hike, bike, paddle, and climb all in one day in the beautiful rural bluff country. Trail planning began in 1998 and surged forward in 2014 when Buffalo County Land & Trails Trust—now known as Flyway Trail—was formed as a volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency which commissioned a detailed study of potential routes, conducted by Alta Planning and Design.

Photo courtesy of Buffalo County

Planners realized an off-highway route from Buffalo County into Winona would be necessary for Flyway Trail's success. This is because the roads and bridges through the area cannot be expanded to include bike lanes due to the narrow width of land between the bluffs and the river.

The John A. Latsch Bridge will serve as the foundation for the multi-use trail with the project also constructing a new steel truss bridge to provide safe access over the Burlington-Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad line and marsh. This Phase I portion of the design then continues the trail for a short way along the old railroad bed near Highway 35, into the scenic Town of Buffalo Park. Phase II links south through Marshland to the Great River Trail. The trail will proceed north for Phase III into the additional Buffalo County towns of Fountain City, Cochrane, Buffalo City and Alma with a future goal of connecting to Nelson, Wisconsin and Wabasha, Minnesota.

"I've felt blessed my whole life to reside in an area with incredible natural beauty. To share it with others has always been rewarding. Although the main streets of today have dramatically changed, many small businesses are finding success by offering great experiences. Flyway Trail offers an opportunity to showcase the splendor of our area while creating opportunity for small businesses to expand on their success.

It has been incredible to see the support of local government and local people who are hardworking and forward thinking. Their generosity, combined with state and federal support, shows the growth and success that can be achieved when we show our support locally."

Najib Schlosstein, President, Alliance Bank, Case Statement Committee Co-chair

$1.9M Granted through Wisconsin State and Federal Funds for Phase I Additional Funding Available for Phase II in Near Term

The Flyway Trail Connector project picked up momentum in 2016 when Buffalo County was awarded an 80 percent grant with DOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) in the amount of $2.1M. This restored and expanded the federal source of money for the project.

Another major gain occurred in 2019, after the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Buffalo County entered into an agreement to work cooperatively to develop the trail. The DNR awarded a grant in the amount of $535,000 in April 2019.

This brought the total funding to $2.6M. After completion of the bidding process in the spring of 2019, the lowest bid came in at $2.9M. A grant will cover the additional $300,000 needed. (Please see the chart on page 16 for an overview of project costs.)

The 20 percent private match for the $2.1M DOT grant is required by the spring of 2020, and the construction start date is estimated to begin in the Fall of 2019 in order to secure the granted funding amount.

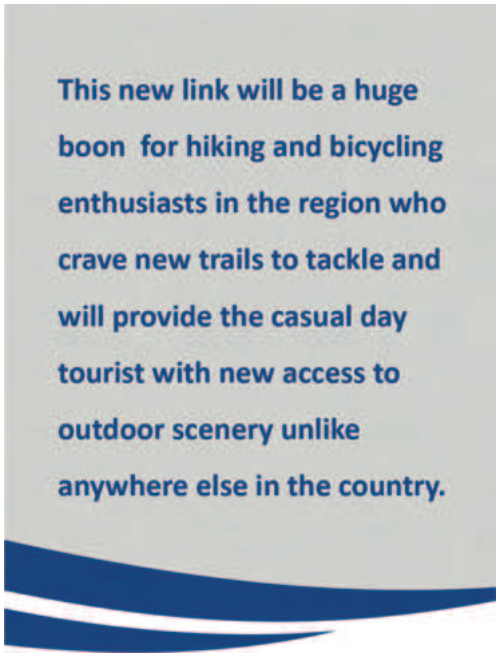
Bridging the Bluffs Campaign funds will be used as this private match to help complete the section of the trail from the Flyway Connector through Marshland, where the trail will connect to the Great River Trail (GRT) in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

Buffalo County pledged up to $150,000 to be used as a catalyst gift for the *Bridging the Bluffs Campaign*, a notably significant amount for a county with a population of only 13,000.

Flyway Trail will bring increased community wellness benefits to area residents and a tourist-based economic stimulus. This project is a critical step toward the vision for the long-term goal which will offer outdoor recreational opportunities for all in our beautiful corner of the world.

Photo courtesy of Visit Winona

MILE MARKER TWO: Regional Context



The region around the proposed trail has much to offer. This area has the potential to serve as a world-class hub for outdoor recreation. Hiking, biking, paddle-boarding, rock-climbing and other outdoor recreational activities are growing as national pastimes as more and more people seek to disconnect from our technology-driven lifestyles and escape to the great outdoors. Buffalo County and Winona see this project as an opportunity to tap into the economic potential of this large number of outdoor enthusiasts.

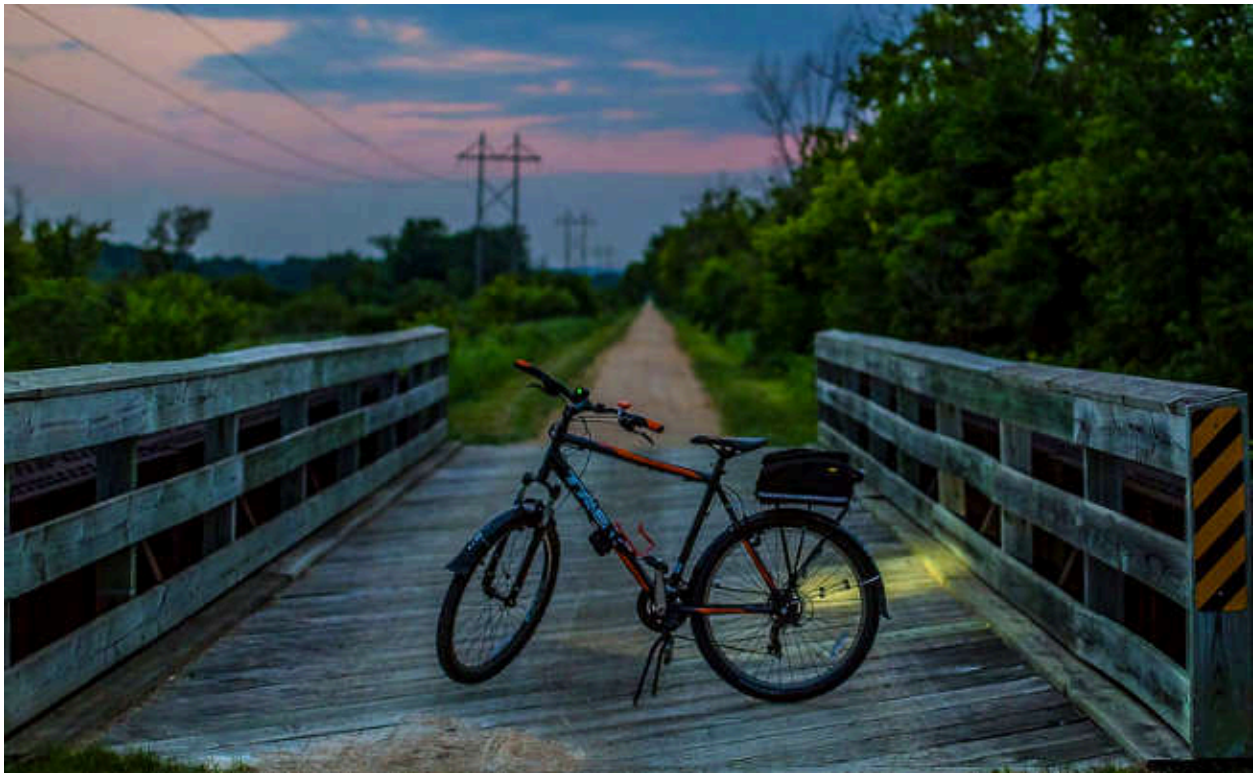
To understand the significance of this trail linkage, we must first look at the wider regional context of trails in the area. The Mississippi River Trail (MRT) provides a 3,000-plus-mile ride through America's heartland. For those cyclists looking for an enjoyable multi-day tour — by crossing the river on one of the many biker friendly bridges or via a ferry ride — there are many options for extended multi-day loop tours.

Although the Mississippi River Trail Project was first developed in 1996, it wasn't until 2008 that a designated bike route along the entire length of the Mississippi River had been established. The early miles of the MRT follow rural roads, crisscrossing the river through Minnesota as cyclists tour the state's lake resort region. As the route continues south to Hastings, bikers, hikers, and walkers have the option of crossing the river into Wisconsin's MRT. In Wisconsin the trail hugs the Highway 35 corridor, which runs along the proposed Flyway Trail, as a segment of the Mississippi River Trail (MRT). The trail provides visitors an intimate connection to the cultural, historic, and natural assets that line the river.

While the MRT travels along off-street trails in many areas, including Trempealeau County, it is located entirely on-street/highway in Buffalo County. Bikers must hug bluffs on the shoulder of the busy Highway 35.

This provides merely adequate conditions for some more experienced cyclists. Most importantly it restricts recreational opportunities for area residents in terms of walking, hiking, cycling and jogging and even becomes hazardous with increased heavy traffic. The lack of outlets to towns and sights limits potential economic development and recreation-oriented tourism in the area.

Many natural resources, scenic overlooks, cultural resources and recreational attractions act as opportunities for the Flyway Trail and to support its development. Existing infrastructure along the Highway 35 corridor provides opportunities to route the proposed trail, including areas with wide right-of-way and sections of Old Highway 35 (currently inactive) parallel to the existing highway. The cities along the highway corridor provide numerous alternate routes on side streets.



Great River Trail, Courtesy of Bob Good Photography Studios

The Great River Trail in Wisconsin traces the old Chicago and North Western Railway line, which opened a route between the Twin Cities and Chicago in the 1870s. It became disused in the 1970s and was acquired for use as a trail in 1984. A 100-mile length of that former rail route is preserved by Bike 4 Trails, a combination of four state rail-trails—Great River, La Crosse River, Elroy-Sparta, and 400—that roll from the Mississippi River and across the rugged Driftless Area.

It is here that the Flyway Trail context becomes clear. There is currently no connection from the MRT on the Minnesota side in the southern part of the state to the Great River Trail and into other Wisconsin trails. By connecting from Winona through to Marshland, Wisconsin, the trail bridges the MRT (in Minnesota) with the GRT (in Wisconsin), opening up a hundred miles of trail and linking into trails that span the state, allowing access from Winona to Madison.

As funding is secured, Buffalo County and the Flyway Trail Board will then be able to apply for the next phase of funding. This will open up the trail planning into Phase III north into Buffalo County and connect into the county towns of Fountain City, six miles north, and then Cochrane, Buffalo City with a goal of connecting with Nelson and Wabasha, MN. This portion of Flyway Trail will eventually connect with future trails planned for Prescott and north along the river.

"Flyway Trail will give residents and visitors to Buffalo County the opportunity to enjoy our greatest asset, the natural beauty of our region."

David Danzinger, Buffalo County Board, Area Business Owner, Campaign Member

MILE MARKER THREE: Understanding the Project

Flyway Trail will provide a critical link from Winona into the towns of the Wisconsin side of the river, leading to another group of bike trail enthusiasts working their way down from Prescott, Wisconsin and still another group pushing forward from Red Wing and Hastings, Minnesota, into the Twin Cities area.

Flyway Connector Trail route and bridges. Part of Phase I

This trail affords the opportunity for Winona and the small towns of Bluff Siding, Fountain City, Cochrane, Buffalo City, Alma, Nelson and more—to be linked to potential riders and hikers from the Red Wing and Twin Cities areas. Investors, entrepreneurs and business owners stand to benefit from such trail connections.

Highway MN 43/WI 54 Bridge

The Alta Feasibility Study and Trail Design recommended Flyway Trail connect to the newly built bike lanes on the Highway 54 bridge over the north channel of the Mississippi River to Latsch Island and continuing to the John A. Latsch Historical Wagon Bridge.

The Flyway Connector Bridge, now funded through the 2016-2020 TAP Grant Awards, is a critical piece of the project. The award funds the construction of a new steel truss bridge over the Burlington-Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) tracks and the marshlands along the backwaters of the river, continuing on with a one-mile crushed rock trail south to Buffalo Town Park.

Connecting to the Great River State Trail

In Phase II, the trail would then lead from Bluff Siding to Marshland, with 2.8 miles of 10-ft. wide limestone surfaced trail linking to the Great River Trail. This interstate connection would fall on U.S. Bike Route 30 as identified on the National Corridor Plan and be a component of the Mississippi River Trail.

The potential design for the new bridge.

Project Costs Explanation

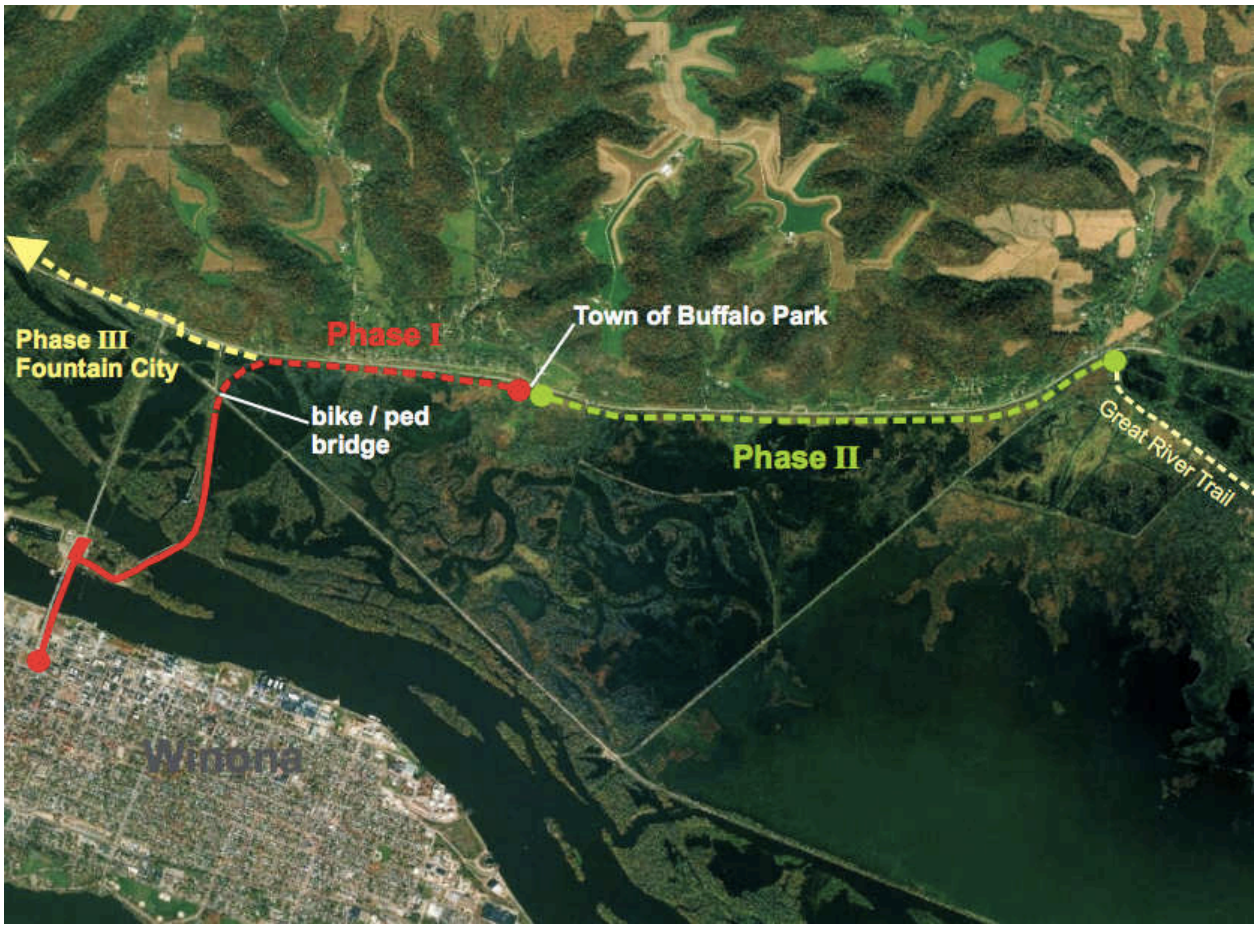
The significant cost for the first portion of the trail is due to the complexities of a project that spans a major waterway, crosses multiple terrains, and has no abandoned railroad bed—as many multi-use trails do—with which to easily lay a paved trail. Designed by Alta (the leading national bike trail company) the plan addresses multiple trail typologies and construction needs.

Some have asked why the project has taken so long:

- Burlington-Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad is a very busy rail line. In recent years, more strict crossing policies have caused railroad coordination to become more complicated until last year when an agreement was reached.

- Obtaining sub-soil information has been challenging because of access to the location. The original design contract did not account for this expense. Many years were spent negotiating a contract amendment for this necessary service.

- Working through the Department of Transportation-administered process has proven time-consuming. Changes in Federal Highway Administration guidance have resulted in more specific detail requirements on the project each year.



Flyway Trail Phase Map

Flyway Trail Phases, Funding and Timing Chart

Flyway Trail Phases	Federal & State Funding	Local Funding	Private Funding Bridging the Bluffs Campaign	Total Project Costs
Pre-Phase I Winona Connector Highway 43 Bridge Old Wagon Bridge	MN DOT	City of Winona invests in trail connections to bridges and Latsch Island Local donors renovate Wagon Bridge	*Private match amount* *Each trail section listed per phase, below:*	*Completed*
Phase I *2019-2020* Winona to Town of Buffalo Park Former Hwy 54, new bridge over BNSF railroad and one-mile crushed limestone to Town of Buffalo Park	LAWCON Grant $535,000 2019-2020 *(50% local donor match required)* Recreation Trails Program Grant $45,000 in 2018 DOT Grant $2.1M in 2016 *(20% local donor match required)*	Buffalo County's $175,000 plus engineering and staffing $50,000 allocated deed review and property agreements $150,000 campaign pledge	$600,000 Private match needed Winona/Flyway Connector	Total estimate $2.6M Low Bid $2.9M LAWCON (Grant) covers additional $300,000 higher bid than estimate
Phase II *2021-23* Crushed rock trail to Marshland connecting Great River Trail 2.8 miles	Federal govt. requested Buffalo County apply for funding after Phase I construction underway	Buffalo County provides staff/ resources to manage and secure grant funding	$300,000 Private match needed Connects with Great River Trail	Current estimate $900,000 - $1M
*Phase III** *Estimated 2024-2026* 20 miles of trail from Alma to Winona	Federal & State Trail Funds will be applied to connect additional trail systems north	Buffalo County provides staff/resources to manage and secure grant funding	$300,000 Engineering/ planning for Flyway Trail North from the Winona/Flyway Connector*	Current estimate $24M (not including another DOT matching grant and other grants)
	Matches must be funded prior to applying for next phase		*Campaign Goal: $1.2M for Winona/Flyway Connector*	Remaining funds move to next phases

* A future approximately $3M private campaign will complete Flyway Trail to Alma, Wisconsin (Phase III) including future federal, state and local grants.

Flyway Trail Maintenance Plan

Buffalo County will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the trail, with the City of Winona taking responsibility for the Minnesota portion.

These entities will work together with involvement of Flyway Trail Board. DNR grants are available for infrastructure and maintenance.

Following trail completion, the maintenance costs will be offset by fundraising and volunteer efforts coordinated by the Flyway Trail Board with assistance from area service organizations. The initial cost is estimated at a few thousand dollars annually and will be comprised of mowing and general upkeep. As the trail becomes fully developed, these costs will increase as needed.

Example of general routine and remedial maintenance responsibilities for trails:

Sample Trail Maintenance	Frequency
Sweeping	2 times per year
Trash Removal	6 times per year
Tree and Shrub Trimming	Spring and fall, to maintain 10' vertical clearance and 12-14' horizontal clearance
Mowing	30 times per year
Edging	1-2 times per year
Invasive Species Control	Once a year and as needed in problem areas

Partnership between the City of Winona and Buffalo County

With a pledge of $150,000 to the campaign, countless hours invested, and more than $50,000 already expended, Buffalo County is eager to see this project to fruition. Thousands of acres of state and federal lands across the County will be opened up and made more accessible through the project to encourage the conservation of the area's many natural resources and habitats including: The Upper Mississippi National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, Nelson-Trevino State Natural Area, Merrick State Park and Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge.

In Winona, the Flyway Trail will connect to Aghaming Park and Latsch Island, eventually landing in downtown Winona via the newly renovated Highway 43 bridge and Levee Park. This central location will provide visitors easy access to the multitude of amenities Winona has to offer, from arts and music venues and businesses downtown to the abundant outdoor recreation that this beautiful landscape provides.

Winona is home to thousands of acres of park land and miles of shared-use paths, several miles of hiking, mountain biking, and paddle trails from the bluffs to the backwaters, making Winona an outdoor recreation destination. To build on this vision the City recently completed a master plan for its Bluffs Traverse — a plan aimed at connecting Winona's bluff land parks via a continuous trail network of roughly 25 miles, including roughly nine miles of hiking and shared use trails and 16 miles of purpose-built mountain bike trails.

The committed partnership between Winona's City Planners and Council members and the Buffalo County Board, forged in the coming together for this campaign, shows the level of vested interest toward community wellness and economic growth potential of this project.

"Flyway Trail Connector will be an exciting addition to the growing outdoor recreation attractions available to tourists, cyclists, and adventurers traveling to the area. Arts and culture venues, already thriving, will only add to the options available to adventure tourists, by filling seats in theaters and restaurants, and occupying rooms in area hotels and vacation rentals."

Paul Schollmeier, City of Winona, Council Member At-Large
Case Statement Committee Member

"This is the spark needed to ignite the opportunities awaiting in our river communities. The Flyway Trail Connector provides a safe trail for outdoor enthusiasts to expand their adventures into both Wisconsin and Minnesota and in turn bringing our local cities and towns tourism dollars for new and existing businesses to thrive and grow."

Gwen Katula, City Council, Fountain City, WI, Communications Committee Member

Programming and Promotion

The Flyway Trail Board, in cooperation with contacts from area Chambers of Commerce, Winona Main Street Program and Visit Winona will work together to identify events and activities which will be marketed throughout the region to encourage participation, maximize usage and capitalize on economic impact. Such events will expand as the trail is completed over time.

Ecological Preservation

The Mississippi River Valley provides some of the best birdwatching in the world, especially during spring and fall migrations.[1] Flyway Trail will increase access to parks and refuges up and down the river to expand these opportunities. Attracting visitors with this increased access will help to bring awareness to the incredible ecological landscape from around the region, and even the nation, which will in turn help with building educational opportunities, a preservation mindset in the area, and a value for this wildlife treasure in our backyards.

MILE MARKER FOUR: Benefits of Flyway Trail

Improves Safety

Even with all these amazing resources right in our backyard, there is currently no safe link to the Wildlife Refuge, the Great River Trail or any far extending trails leading out of Winona. This leaves areas so close to Winona—the beautiful Aghaming Park, Latsch Island and Wildlife Refuge for example—under-utilized by the public, due to the inability to safely and legally cross the Burlington-Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad line. Past this, the Highway 35 roadway—nestled between the bluff and the river with a narrow shoulder in many portions—has become unsafe for recreational biking. Highway 35 is generally considered quite unsafe due to increased traffic, construction, large vehicles, and maintenance needs of the roadway.

[1] https://experiencemississippiriver.com/activities-recreation/birding/

Safe access to these natural resources for birders, cyclists, walkers, and hikers of all ages and abilities is a huge regional priority. By providing dedicated trails, the project would: minimize these safety concerns, allow a new segment of the population access to this recreational opportunity, and open up a new and safe outdoor experience for bikers, hikers, and nature and recreational enthusiasts from all around the Midwest.

Increases Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

Education, manufacturing, farming, transportation, energy and health care dominate the economies of Buffalo County and the Winona area. Currently, trail-related activities such as walking, hiking, and bicycling are popular with residents in the region. However, the lack of trail facilities and connections to businesses and scenic opportunities lead many visitors and tourists to other counties where established trail systems offer these experiences.

To drive home the economic need, Buffalo County was ranked with one of the lowest markers for economic growth in the state of Wisconsin in 2017. Winona has also had its challenges, particularly in maintaining younger workers and families. Outdoor recreation and the tourism it brings could be a huge boost for the region given the amazing ecosystems, scenery, and heritage of the region. Yet, there is currently no trail to provide this access—a missed opportunity for economic development and growth. As residents look to an evolution from old lumber towns and quiet farming communities to tourist destinations that benefit all residents, projects like Flyway Trail take on a new meaning; from a simple bike path for health enthusiasts, to part of a holistic plan to revitalize small town American life for these communities. [2]

"Surprisingly, 64 percent of Winona's workforce commutes from other cities and towns, choosing to live in areas with more recreational opportunities such as trails. Connecting to trails and building the Flyway Trail takes advantage of the Mississippi's recreation possibilities and will help attract more employees to make Winona home. The Flyway Trail will enhance quality of life, attract more families for the area and schools, and provide alternative transportation options both to and from Winona, Buffalo, and Trempealeau counties."*

Will Gibson, Whetstone Machine, Case Statement Committee Member

[2] *https://www.exploreminnesota.com/pedal-mn/articles/thought-minnesota-was-flat/*
https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA_RecEconomy_FINAL_Single.pdf
*https://www.cityofwinona.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Housing-Study-Winona-MN-2016.pdf

Improves Workforce Attraction and Retention

Another economic potential from this trail could be with workforce attraction and retention. A recent Housing Needs Assessment Study in Winona identified that 64 percent of the workforce commutes into Winona. Providing recreational opportunities would go far to support the retention and attraction of employees. This is because the trail itself would allow commuters from just across the bridge in Wisconsin a simple way into the city, cutting traffic and providing the health benefit of exercise.

Trails are quickly emerging as a way for towns and municipalities to spur economic development, boost recreational based tourism, and provide quality of life attractions to new generations of families moving to the area. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, access to quality places is not only critical to our businesses, it is fundamental to recruiting employers and at the heart of healthy and productive communities.

Photo courtesy of Visit Winona.

The Elroy-Sparta State Trail was the first Rails-to-Trails effort in the United States. Today the trail's impact on the town is huge; Sparta welcomes 15,500 visiting bicyclists each year. The Wisconsin DNR reports that 100,000 people use the trail annually.

Since 1967, when Wisconsin built the Elroy-Sparta Trail, the state has spent approximately $240M. On that relatively small total investment, Wisconsin now reaps an annual return of more than $1.5B.[3]

[3] https://wisconsinbikefed.org/advocacy/economic-impact/

The businesses of Sparta, the self-proclaimed "Bicycling Capital of America," support their town's identity with hotels and campgrounds that offer free trail passes, restaurants that serve healthy food to bicyclists, tour packages with lodging, bike rental and shuttles, and a variety of stores that serve bicycling needs. One Chamber of Commerce member says, "The towns around here were dying until the trail came through and breathed life back into the area."

The Root River Trail, leading from Fountain, Minnesota to Houston, Minnesota, is a 60-mile trail that has resulted in economic impact for the region. During the summer of 2009, according to the most recent report from the DNR, the path generated about $2.3M from those who used it and is cited as one of the key attractions to the area[4].

When Mrs. B's Historic Lanesboro Inn opened in Lanesboro, Minnesota, soon before the Root River State trail opened, it was the area's first bed and breakfast. There are now 10. Fifty to 60 percent of Mrs. B's guests are trail users. According to Mrs. B's management, a critical mass of lodging, restaurants and activities are necessary to create a tourist economy around a trail.

"Flyway Trail is important to my business, because it will connect active people to my business that provides food and beverage. It is a place for people to stop after a long day of biking and unwind in the central part of Winona amongst our beautiful buildings and bluffs.

It also connects me as a business owner with like-minded people, as I am an avid biker. This connection to the community and our visitors is important. It creates a friendly and welcoming atmosphere for our visitors and brings us new customers helping sustain our business."

Amy Jo Marks, Owner, Blooming Grounds Coffee House, Winona, Minnesota

[4] https://www.minnpost.com/greater-minnesota/2014/08/how-has-root-river-trail-system-affected-hamlets-along-its-path/

More Examples of Successful Trails

The outdoor recreation economy can continue to be a growing generator of jobs and an economic powerhouse if we manage and invest in it. Winona and western Wisconsin could easily follow the national trend to capitalize on their natural assets toward tremendous benefit, as witnessed by other communities around the country.[5]

- It took only one season after the opening of the 35-mile Missouri River State Trail for the trail to positively impact local communities. After one season, 61 businesses along the trail found the trail positively impacted their businesses. Eleven reported the trail strongly influenced their decision on where to locate and 17 increased their business size since the trail opened.

- The Washington State Trails Plan estimated that trail users in Washington state spent more than $3.4B on equipment, which generated tax revenues of $13.8 to $27.6M.

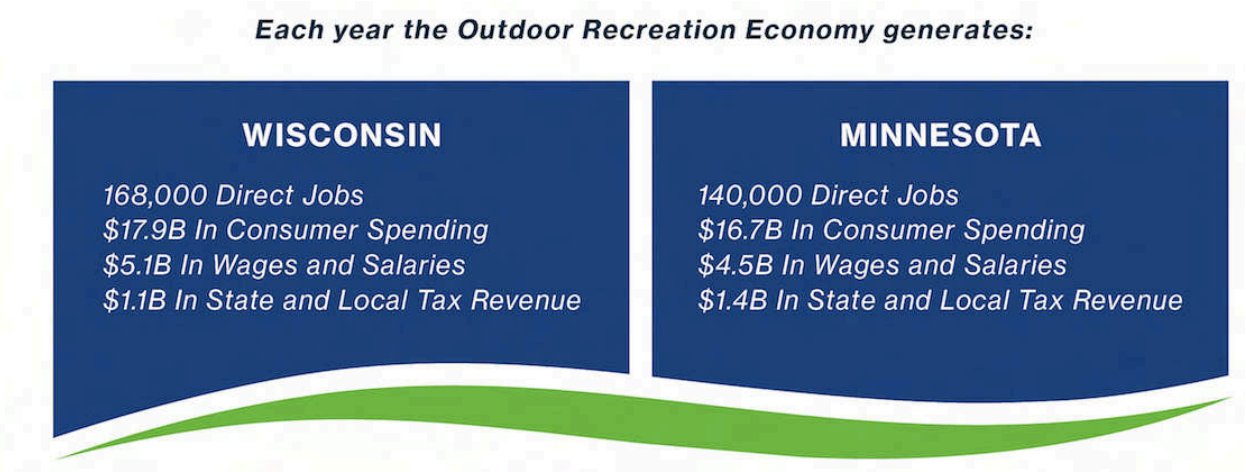
- Since the park opened in 2011, Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Trail has been revitalizing the Iron Range to the tune of $2M annually, estimates economist Andrew Hook. And once the master vision of trails is finished, Hook estimates an annual impact of $21M.

Outdoor Recreation Impact in Minnesota and Wisconsin

Midwesterners value the opportunity for outdoor recreation. More than 49 percent of Wisconsin residents engage in bicycling for recreation.[6] Seventy-six percent of Minnesotans report hiking or walking in nature daily, weekly or monthly. And according to the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota nearly half of Minnesotans bike each year for vacations, errands, recreation, commuting, fitness, and fun. All those rides add up to about 90 million trips and 180 million miles. From 1993 to 2008, Wisconsin invested nearly $40M of state and local funds in bicycle projects, with an additional $156M contributed by the federal government (WI DOT, 2008). Similarly, in Minnesota infrastructure investments have led the state to embrace outdoor recreation even more.

[5] https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA_RecEconomy_FINAL_Single.pdf
[6] According to the 2005-2010 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (WI DNR, 2006)

One study[7] estimates the economic impact of bicycle recreation and tourism in Wisconsin to be $924M and the total potential value of health benefits from reducing short car trips and increasing bicycle trips to total $409M. The results of this study demonstrate that bicycling has the potential to contribute substantially to the health and economic well-being of Wisconsin citizens.



[7] This study was commissioned by Wisconsin Representative Spencer Black, chair of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee. The assessment was completed as a capstone project for a National Science Foundation IGERT2 interdisciplinary graduate certificate program on humans and the global environment (CHANGE) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Lindsay and Scott Sherman, campaign committee members, ride local trails during all seasons.

Flyway Trail and similar investment projects have the potential to assist in the continued attraction of entrepreneurs to ignite new business development, draw in more young professionals and families into the region, and to retain the next generation of residents to stay and help strengthen their towns and cities. Communities across Minnesota and Wisconsin recognize that outdoor recreation contributes to a high quality of life and attracts and sustains employers and families, ensuring those regions thrive economically and socially.

Increased Health and Quality of Life Benefits

The places in which we live, work and play can affect both our mental and physical well-being. According to a quality of life study conducted by the City of Winona, our "built environment" offers both opportunities for and barriers to improving public health and increasing active living.

Communities designed in a way that supports physical activity—wide sidewalks, safe bike lanes, accessible recreation areas—encourage residents to make healthy choices and live healthy lives. In turn, healthy places create economic value by attracting both younger and older workers and also appealing to a skilled workforce. Most people who live in neighborhoods and cities with parks and trails are twice as healthy as people who live in areas without such facilities. And yet, in rural areas these resources are often lacking.

MILE MARKER FIVE: We Can Make It Happen!

Photo courtesy of Visit Winona

The *Bridging the Bluffs Campaign* makes a strong statement about what is important to the region, our values and our goals. It supports family activity, safety, improved quality of life, recreational infrastructure, community wellness, economic development and ecological preservation.

Supporting Flyway Trail will put Buffalo County and Winona on the map as a destination for outdoor recreation and as an attraction for families, retirees, and others looking for thriving communities to call home. Trails help raise the tax base of the region and the overall economic growth, providing healthier outdoor opportunities for all, and expanding the biking, hiking, and birding universes with exciting new destination trails.

The decision to undertake this ambitious trail project has been considered very carefully and backed by years of extensive planning. The strong commitment seen throughout the planning process, the dedication of the Flyway Board, Winona City Council, regional leaders, Buffalo County Board of Supervisors, and community volunteers offers the assurance that this fundraising campaign will be successful. When major projects are undertaken in the area, people step forward to make it happen. The region is

generous, particularly regarding programs and services to increase economic vitality and improved quality of life.

Contributions Make a Difference

We all can make an impact whether our gift is large or small. Every amount counts and is valued. Prospective contributors will be asked to consider a pledge as an investment in the future of the region. In some cases, individuals may want to give more than an approximate range that may be suggested by a solicitor.

The campaign will work to secure funding from a variety of sources. Funds will be solicited from individuals, organizations, groups, large corporations, small businesses and private foundations that support the goals and mission of this effort. Contributions are tax deductible.

Campaign Timeline & Goals

The pre-campaign will be held throughout 2019. The campaign will officially launch in February 2020 and will last about 28 weeks. Everyone in the Winona and western Wisconsin areas will be given the opportunity to contribute to this important regional asset. Volunteers will call on prospective donors in-person in the early stages of the pre-campaign and by other methods toward the end of the campaign.

Your Help and Support Is Needed!

When a campaign volunteer contacts you to ask you to become involved as a volunteer in the ***Bridging the Bluffs Campaign***, or to schedule an appointment to discuss your potential investment, remember how this project will help improve the region economically, socially and recreationally for generations.

Flyway Trail will connect with the Great River Trail leading to Lock and Dam No. 6 in Trempealeau.

"A trail would encompass many domains such as economic development, health and most importantly...community vitality. It would be physically and mentally healthy to get out and walk or bike through this beautiful region and each of us might get to slow down a bit and talk to our friends and neighbors. Working together to bring something unique to the area would foster pride and increase the flourishing of the region we all love."

Nettie Rosenow, Flyway Trail Board of Directors and Buffalo County Supervisor

Ways to Give

We hope you will consider making a gift which is personally meaningful and satisfying to you.

Pledge Commitments

Can be fulfilled by cash, check, commodities or appreciated property. Donors are advised to consult with their financial advisor if making gifts without using cash or check. Please ask if your employer has an employee-giving matching program.

A Pledged Gift – A pledged gift allows donors to give at their highest capacity. A pledge can be fulfilled over a period of three years based on the schedule options and type of payment that works best for the donor. Campaign managers will send payment reminders. Donors will receive tax-deductible gift receipts for each payment made.

An Outright Gift - An outright gift of cash is the simplest and most common way of giving. Outright gifts also include IRA Charitable Rollovers, appreciated securities, bonds, personal assets; real property assigned ownership or beneficiary status in paid life insurance with cash value - in any single form or in combination.

Gifts of Stock - Many of these kinds of gifts hold specific capital gains tax advantages and deductibility for the donor.

Bridging the Bluffs Campaign Donor Recognition Plan

All contributions of any amount to the *Bridging the Bluffs Campaign* for Flyway Trail are greatly appreciated and will be acknowledged throughout the course of the campaign on literature, informational trail brochures and the Flyway Trail website. Gifts of $1,000 or more will be permanently recognized on a donor recognition wall at a location near the trailhead, as determined by the Flyway Trail Board following approval from Buffalo County and the City of Winona. Donors may choose to make their gifts in honor or in memory of a loved one or in recognition of specific events or accomplishments. All gifts and pledges are confidential. Donor also may choose to remain anonymous.

Giving Society Names

Gift Clubs	Contribution Amount
TUNDRA SWAN Giving Society	$100,000 and above
GREAT WHITE PELICAN Giving Society	$50,000-$99,999
GREAT BLUE HERRON Giving Society	$25,000-$49,999
SNOWY OWL Giving Society	$15,000-$24,999
KINGFISHER Giving Society	$10,000-$14,999
WOOD DUCK Giving Society	$5,000-$9,999
MALLARD Giving Society	$1,000-$4,999

Trail Signage and Sponsorship Plan

To enhance the user's experience on Flyway Trail, it is desirable to provide amenities and provide wayfinding guidance. Financial support and donor recognition for specific trail elements may be available for area businesses, organizations or individuals to consider. See the supplemental document "Donor Recognition and Naming Opportunities" for more information

Trails funded with federal grants must meet federal standards for signage on the trail. The Flyway Trail Board has prepared a policy with guidance from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration. It is intended to provide trail jurisdiction with specific and consistent ideas to promote trail sponsorships and provide useful directional information to trail users. All regulatory signage along the trail is provided by federal grants.

Bridging the Bluffs Campaign represents area residents' interest in sparking a new level of awe that will enhance future generations' experience with the outdoors, health and wellness, showcase the unique landscapes of our region and bring strong economic development opportunities to Winona, Buffalo County and Trempealeau.

When you are asked to give, please join us with a gift to *Bridging the Bluffs Campaign*.

If you have questions or need more information on *Bridging the Bluffs Campaign,* please contact:

Bridging the Bluffs Campaign is administered by:
Sonya Hansen, Buffalo County Administrator
P.O. Box 494
Alma, WI
608-685-6235
Sonya.hansen@co.buffalo.wi.us

www.flywaytrail.com

Appendix

Please note, *Bridging the Bluffs Campaign* provides funding for Phase I, Phase II and part of Phase III to Alma. Remaining funds to reach Nelson will be included in a future campaign in the next 4-6 years.

LEGEND
Shared Use Path
Existing Shared Use Path
Paved Shoulder
Bike Lane
Signed Route
WISCONSIN
MINNESOTA
Tiffany Wildlife Area
Nelson
Nelson-Trevino Bottoms
Wabasha
Alma
Cochrane
Buffalo City
Kellogg
Whitman Dam Wildlife Area
Merrick State Park
Fountain City
Winona
Goodview
Trempealeau River Meadow
Great River Trail
Mississippi River
Chippewa River
Buffalo River
Trempealeau River
Waumandee Creek
Eagle Creek
Zumbro River
0 2.5 5 10 Miles
THE FLYWAY TRAIL