

# St. Croix Crossing Bike/Pedestrian Loop Trail *Frequently Asked Questions* St. Croix County

September 2015



**Q: Who determined the layout of the Loop Trail on the Wisconsin side, from the new St. Croix River crossing bridge to the Stillwater Lift Bridge?**

A: The layout of the bike/pedestrian Loop Trail was discussed extensively during the investigation phase of the St. Croix Crossing project. The layout is a result of the negotiations with the multiple stakeholder groups that occurred in the early to mid 2000's. The Loop Trail is an important part of the environmental mitigation package of the project, and implementation of the Loop Trail is necessary for compliance of the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS), which was signed in May 2006. The SFEIS describes the preferred trail location alternative and the impacts of the proposed action, agreed upon by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the state Departments of Transportation, both MnDOT and WisDOT.

**Q: Why can't the Loop Trail's layout be changed?**

A: The layout of the Loop Trail is part of the entire project that was approved by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). If changes occur that alter the scope or result in additional environmental impacts, WisDOT and MnDOT would have to re-evaluate the project and the environmental document will have to be re-signed by all authorizing agencies. Changing the scope or introducing additional impacts without re-evaluating the environmental document will result in the WisDOT and MnDOT being in violation of the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) process and federal roadway funding would be compromised.

**Q: Can WisDOT provide a connection from the Loop Trail to WIS 35 south toward North Hudson? Can monies be garnered now for this connection from the St. Croix Crossing project funds?**

A: WisDOT has federal approval for the layout of the Loop Trail as shown in the signed environmental document. To add an access to the Loop Trail from WIS 35 with this project or to promise this connection in the future would be a scope change that results in additional impacts to the adjacent property owner.

Garnering money from the project funds to ensure this connection in the future would tie this connection to the environmental document of the St. Croix Crossing project. This action would keep the St. Croix Crossing project open. In addition, the Wisconsin State Legislature passed a bill prior to construction that stated all money for the St. Croix Crossing project, had to come from transportation bonding sources. In order to fund this connection with St. Croix Crossing funds, the state legislature would have to approve additional bonding. WisDOT does have special programs available for bike/pedestrian facilities and these funding sources should be investigated by interested parties to fund this connection in the future.

**Q: What options do bicyclists and pedestrians have to stay off of the roundabouts?**

A: There are three roundabouts within the project limits. Each of these roundabouts has an asphalt side path or trail for both bicycles and pedestrians to travel around the outside of the circle. In addition, the two roundabouts at the WIS 35/WIS 64 interchange have a 10-ft shared use path between them. On the overpass bridge, there is a raised concrete barrier between the traffic and the shared use path. These paths will all be open in the fall of 2015.

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**Q: Can you create all the trails as separate paths instead of paved shoulders?**

A: WisDOT has been working extensively with St. Croix County, the Town of St. Joseph and the Hudson School District to ensure safety for all users of the trail. WisDOT is providing separate shared use paths in all areas of the Loop Trail except for approximately 900' that will run along Main Street in Houlton (from old County E to the trailhead parking lot area at the top of Houlton Hill).

St. Croix County has purchased land southeast of the Houlton Elementary School, which moved the shared use path off the shoulders east of the school. WisDOT also worked with Houlton Elementary School and the Town of St. Joseph to build a separate path along old County E (Houlton School Circle).

**Q: Is there a connection from the Loop Trail to County E just east of the new WIS 64?**

A: Yes. There is a shared use path that connects to the Loop Trail at the intersection of Hawk Street and Houlton School Circle (old County E). In addition to the Loop Trail, there is a shared use path that heads south near Houlton Elementary School along Hawk Street, and then continues east along new WIS 35 to the interchange. The path routes around the roundabout and continues east over the overpass bridge. On the overpass bridge, the path is separated from traffic by a concrete barrier. On the east side of the bridge, the path stays to the outside of the roundabouts, and ends at the sidewalks on both sides of the eastern County E roundabout. Any future path constructed by St. Croix County or Town of St. Joseph would tie into this location.

**Q: Can the trail be off-road on the WIS 35/Main Street portion running north/south from County E/Houlton School Circle to the trail access to Houlton Hill?**

A: WisDOT reviewed the design of the trail on WIS 35, and determined that there is not enough room for a separate, off-road trail. The on-road portions that include a paved shoulder could be marked in such a way to strongly call out the bicycle and pedestrian path.

**Q: Can the trail be continued north on WIS 35/Main Street to eventually tie into Andersen Scout Camp Road?**

A: As part of the rerouting of the highways, WisDOT has assigned old Hwy 35/64 to the Town of St. Joseph. Once roadway ownership is transferred to the Town of St. Joseph, the entity can pursue installing any additional trails.

**Q: How do emergency vehicles access the Loop Trail?**

A: The trail and pedestrian underpass are both built to accommodate emergency vehicles. Additionally, the Town of St. Joseph Emergency Medical Services has purchased an all-terrain rescue vehicle for Loop Trail emergency needs. WisDOT continues to work with St. Croix County for gates and/or bollards that will be collapsible in the event an emergency vehicle needs to access the trail.

**Q: Can a bicycle aid station be added as part of the design?**

A: The bicycle aid stations could be added to the project if fundraising efforts purchased the equipment while coordinating with St. Croix County. WisDOT and St. Croix County have a signed agreement in place that outlines amenities that will be provided as part of St. Croix Crossing project. St. Croix County can fund any additional desired amenities.

**Q: Will there be access to Kolliner Park for the Houlton Elementary School students?**

A: WisDOT, St. Croix County, and the City of Stillwater are aware of the students' use of the park. While there will be a gate at the park similar to what currently exists, there will also be a pedestrian opening in the gate for single-file, seasonal pedestrian access. There will not be vehicular access to the park. While St. Croix County will own the pedestrian and bicycle trail, the City of Stillwater will remain the owner of Kolliner Park. .

**Q: Can WisDOT provide an inter-connected bike trail system in Houlton?**

A: Under the St. Croix Crossing project, WisDOT will provide trails in locations as identified in the environmental impact statement.

**Q: Can WisDOT provide a trail that heads east on County E to Town Hall Park and Perch Lake Park?**

A: WisDOT is unable to construct these connections within the scope of the St. Croix Crossing project. However, this connection could be added to the St. Croix County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and built by St. Croix County in the future.

**Q: What safety elements are included for the shared use path crossings with the roundabout on the STH 35/County E interchange with STH 64?**

A: WisDOT recognizes that any crossing of pedestrians and bicyclists with vehicles is a conflict. WisDOT followed state and federal guidelines when developing the crosswalk locations, signing, and markings. Signs and crosswalk markings are used to direct pedestrian and bicycle traffic and to warn drivers of the crossings. Due to the one-way traffic on the interchange ramps, pedestrians and bicyclists only need to look in one direction, for one lane of vehicles, to make a safe crossing.

**Q: Can WisDOT construct a connection from the east roundabout on County E to Thelen Farm Trail?**

A: This connection could be added to the St. Croix County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and constructed by the County in the future. WisDOT has added paved shoulders to this portion of County E. A separate trail would require additional right of way and extensive grading.

**Q: Can my organization install an Art Bench, as part of the St. Croix Valley Art Bench Trail?**

A: As part of the Loop Trail construction, WisDOT and St. Croix County agreed upon a list of amenities that WisDOT is providing. Any organization wishing to add amenities to the trailhead area should be in contact with St. Croix County.

**Q: How can my group or organization be more involved in the Loop Trail development, to contribute to our local community?**

A: We encourage you to work with St. Croix County to develop and share ideas for community involvement along the Loop Trail.

**Q: How can I as an individual or my group or organization be more involved in the interpretive panel idea gathering and decision process?**

A: We encourage you to work with St. Croix County to develop and share ideas for the interpretive panels along the Loop Trail. The interpretive panel selection process will be starting in early 2016. As ideas are received, we will be forwarding them on to the County for incorporation into the formal selection process.

**Q: How will the delay in the bridge construction affect the design and construction of the Loop Trail?**

A: MnDOT and WisDOT will continue to work with the prime contractor for the St. Croix River Bridge, Lunda Ames Joint Venture (LAJV). MnDOT is expected to release the anticipated bridge opening date by the end of 2015. The delay in the bridge opening will delay the completion of the Loop Trail. Transformation of Houlton Hill cannot begin until the vehicular traffic is using the new 4-lane roadway (WIS 64). While the construction is currently scheduled to begin in 2017, WisDOT will re-evaluate the project schedule based on the updated St. Croix River Bridge schedule.