

Kansas Trails News

Sunflower Rail-Trails Conservancy

12/1/2014

The Future of Rail-Trails in America

With the leadership of Congress changing in January, questions about the future of rail-trails have arisen. It is very possible that Transportation Alternatives funding will be severely reduced for trail development. TA (previously called Transportation Enhancement) monies in the past have funded scores of recreational paths in the Sunflower State including the Prairie Spirit Trail and over \$5 million will be used to develop the **Flint Hills Nature Trail**. Another possibility is that the 1983 amendment to the National Trails Act allowing railbanking

“In 2015, our nation has a choice to make about the future of trails. Will we invest in rail-trails—expanding biking and walking to create thriving rail-trails we love at risk? Next year, Congress will consider that very choice, as the current transportation bill called MAP21, is set to expire in May. First enacted in June, 2012, MAP21 was already a setback for rail-trails, reducing federal funding for trails by 30% ...The new transportation bill could expand these drastic cuts, endangering the rail-trails we so treasure.”

---Keith Laughlin, President, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

may be repealed. This would be very unfortunate for both railroads and trail advocates. Already dozens of railbanked corridors that served as trails in the interim have been converted back to rail use. Of course, in states such as Kansas, railbanking is essential for the establishment of rail-trails. A final prospect is that Congress will pass a law requiring that trail managers pay adjacent landowners for land along railbanked corridors. This would make it cost-prohibitive for trail managers to establish new rail-trails.

Green Team to build covered bridge over Wakarusa River

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Westar's Green Team and a retired Green Team member are planning to build a roof over the **Landon Nature Trail's** 238-foot **Wakarusa River** railroad bridge.



This will likely be the longest covered bridge in the Sunflower State. The old railroad bridge lies in within the Clinton Wildlife Area located southeast of Topeka and west of Lawrence.

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Flint Hills Trail construction to begin in spring

Dan Holloway with CFS Engineers reported at Kanza's annual meeting that construction for Phase 1A for the **Flint Hills Nature Trail Project** is now slated to begin in spring. However, clearing of brush within the trail corridor may occur this winter. Phase IA stretches from just south of Pomona town east six miles to E. Iowa Rd.

APAC-Kansas, Inc., Shears Division, submitted the low bid of \$1.19 million for the project. This means it is costing \$200,000/mile which is on the high side. This is partly due to federal funds being involved, federal and state engineering specifications, plus the trail project is being engineered to the highest level to reduce maintenance costs. Also, the segment includes a major road crossing, Hwy 68, with 4 traffic lanes and a 30 degree angle crossing the highway.

The surface will be composed of 3/8"-limestone screenings containing fines (dust). Instead of bollards there will be swivel $\frac{1}{2}$ gates plus bridge decks will be concreted and railings will be steel to reduce maintenance.

Holloway said, trail users will be able experience the trail section by section. Each section will have a theme such as the **Santa Fe Trail, Tallgrass Prairie, Railroads, Marais Des Cygnes**, and Frontier's Freedom. Icons of each theme will be on signs in that section and there will be kiosks explaining each theme. A signature bridge may be established west of Ottawa using a beautiful railroad bridge.

Osawatome spur railbanking now complete

According to Doug Walker, Kanza's Osawatome Division Superintendent, the Union Pacific Railroad finally completed the railbanking of an eastern extension of the **Flint Hills Nature**

Trail from John Brown Highway into the city of Osawatome proper. Railbanking custodianship will be transferred to Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy for development. The spur ends just short of a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile city right-of-way which will be used to extend the trail past a school to a sports complex.



Lawrence receives grant for new trail

The City of Lawrence has received a \$320,000 federal grant that will fund construction of a new $\frac{3}{4}$ mile recreational

trail that will follow scenic **Baldwin Creek** from the new **Rock Chalk Park** to Queens Rd. in Northwest Lawrence. Five trail bridges will cross the creek which goes through rugged hills covered with oak-hickory forest. The trail will connect with asphalt millings trails at **Rock Chalk Park**.



connects with the **Burroughs Creek Trail** at E. 23rd Street and stretches to 29th Street. Eventually it will be extended to connect with the new **South Lawrence Trafficway Path** now under construction in the **Baker Wetlands National Natural Landmark**.



Haskell Rail-Trail construction update

Construction will begin this winter on paving the one-mile **Haskell Rail-Trail** in Southeast Lawrence with completion to be in the spring.

Sunflower Paving submitted the low bid of \$190,000. Improvements to the trail will primarily consist of making the narrow limestone trail into a 10 foot-wide concrete shared use path. The trail