

Kansas Trails News

Sunflower Rail-Trails Conservancy

6/1/2015

Andover-Augusta Rail-Trail Initiative receives Sunflower Foundation

The **Andover-Augusta Rail-Trail Initiative** received a dollar-for-dollar match of \$41,000 from the Sunflower Foundation to "build a 6.5-mile-long, eight-foot-wide crushed limestone trail on an unused railway, which will link Andover to Augusta". The trail is also known as the **Redbud Trail**.

According to David Levy, project manager, the trail will go from Meadowlark Rd. (just west of Andover Rd.) west six miles to the **Whitewater River**. Brush should be cleared by the end of summer (AmeriCorps volunteers are working on this) when screenings will be laid down. The cities of Augusta and Andover will still have to complete their

sections. It is hoped that once this section is complete that KDOT will build a bridge over US 400 and the Whitewater River.

KDOT Eliminates Bike-Pedestrian Coordinator Position

KDOT has eliminated the Bike-Pedestrian Coordinator position. Unfortunately, this will cause considerable harm to efforts to promote bicycling and walking in Kansas. In the late 1990s KDWPT under Gov. Graves eliminated the State Trails Coordinator position. This action substantially slowed efforts to build trails in Kansas.

Naismith Trail Extension in Lawrence now under construction

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Construction began in March on the Naismith Trail Extension in Lawrence. The extension will lengthen the Naismith Trail south from 29th Street to 31st Street. The current trail follows a wooded creek from 24th Street to 29th Street. The new trail segment will also be 10' wide concrete and is being paid for by Lowe's.

The company is building a new store on 31st Street just east of Home Depot. City planners requested that they build the extension because otherwise the new store would block access to 31st Street by trail users. The City also recently opened up the existing trail by cutting small trees and planting grass in their place. Although this makes the trail less natural it will give trail users more of a sense of safety.

Haskell Rail-Trail Construction Underway

Contractors in mid-May took only three days to lay down the concrete for the 0.8-mile **Haskell Rail-Trail** in Southeast Lawrence. They used a special machine that doesn't require forms. The treadway is now 10-foot-wide concrete and connects with the **Burroughs Creek Trail** at 23rd St. The project is funded by a \$190,000 federal Transportation Enhancements (Alternatives) grant administered by KDOT. The trail, originally with a crushed limestone surface, was the first official rail-trail in the Sunflower State.

Fredonia to Build Rail-trail

The City of Fredonia is planning the build the first section of the 20-mile **Western Sky Trail** which stretches between Fredonia and Chanute. The

trail section stretches six blocks from Polk Street to US 400. It is possible that once it is completed and use is high, demand will grow to continue building the trail east to Chanute.



Baldwin-Ottawa Rails WITH Trails project

According to Peach Madl, discussions are underway to build a multi-use recreational trail within the 11-mile Baldwin-Ottawa Midland Railway Line 100' right-of-way. So, this would be a **Rails WITH Trails** project. Excursion trains use the line on weekends during warm-weather months. The trail would connect with both the **Flint Hills Nature Trail** and **Prairie Spirit Trail** in Ottawa. Elkhart's **Whistle Stop Trail** is a rails-with-trails trail.

Orchestra on the Oregon Trail

The Topeka Symphony Orchestra will be holding the first-ever "Orchestra on the Oregon Trail" in **Alcove Springs Park** south of Marysville this September. Travelers on the trail camped at this spot waiting to cross the **Big Blue River**. The infamous Donner Party was stalled there waiting for the flooded river to go down and that's why they were late going through the Sierra Nevada Mts. and got caught in a snow storm. See: <https://ooot.org/>



Paradigm Shift in the Sunflower State

Sunflower Rail-Trails Conservancy had a booth at the **Kansas Sampler** in Wamego the weekend of May 2-3. Literally, hundreds of festival-goers stopped at the booth and a high percentage had heard of rail-trails and many had used rail-trails. This

indicates that a paradigm shift in Kansas has occurred. Ten years ago not many had heard of rail-trails, few had recreated on a rail-trail and many were opposed to rail-trails. The tide has turned!

Flint Hills Nature Trail Update

The engineers for the Flint Hills Nature Trail Project report the following:

Phase 1B has three parts:

Part I - Quenemo (K-68) to Pomona

Part II - Iowa Rd to Ottawa

Part III - Ottawa to Rantoul

Alternates will be determined for final plans based on funding (transportation enhancement funds that expire) and overall costs. Decisions on alternates and bid prices will determine final construction limits.

The start of construction for Phase 1B is planned

for the Fall: September - October.

The construction of Phase 1A (Pomona- Iowa Rd West of Ottawa) is going well with completion scheduled for July...weather permitting. Screenings are currently being laid down.

Editor's note: It looks like if there is good weather over the fall and winter, it's possible that by June of next year (assuming current bidding and funding levels), one will be able to ride all the way from Osawatomie to Vassar, a distance of 43 miles.

Recreational Path through Baker Wetlands

Construction should be finished this year on the new section of the **South Lawrence Trafficway Hike and Bike Path** which stretches 2.5 miles from Iowa St. to Haskell Ave. The path will be south of the highway well into the **Baker Wetlands**, a national natural landmark.

A noise barrier will help block traffic noise for trail users on part of route. It will be accessed by a path from Broken Arrow Park along Louisiana St. and possibly from the new 31st Street at Haskell Ave. Plans are to connect the **Haskell Rail-Trail** to it. It might also be possible to connect it to the path at **Mary's Lake**. The trail will connect with the existing path at Iowa St. which goes 9 miles west and north. Efforts are also being made to connect the multi-use path on new 31st Street with the Mary's Lake path (they are only 100' apart).



Kanza receives grants for Landon Nature Trail

Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy has received two grants for the Landon Nature Trail Project in Shawnee County. \$25,000 was received from the Hansjoerg Wyss, a Swiss billionaire, and \$8,000

from the Lattner Family Foundation. The project primarily involves laying down screenings from Tecumseh Road to the Wakarusa River Bridge in the **Clinton Wildlife Area**.



Mr. Wyss, who lives in Jackson, WY, has conserved thousands of acres of natural lands in the West. He has pledged to give more than half of fortune to preserve the **American West**.

Norton Trail Proposed

Trail activists in Norton are pursuing developing a trail from Norton to the **Keith Sebelius Reservoir** which has the famous **Prairie Dog Park**. The project would utilize an out-of-service spur within the city and a **rails-WITH-trails project** within the wide Kyle Railroad right-of-way. An easement would have to be acquired from the

railroad. Doug Sebelius, the city prosecutor and son of former congressman Keith Sebelius, is pushing this project.

