

# Interurban Roundtable

## Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail

## Beautification Development Plan



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## INTRODUCTION

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### **Purpose Statement**

The City of Charleston and the City of Mattoon (in Coles County) are in the process of working with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) through an Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) grant to make improvements to the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail that connects the 2 cities. The trail is currently a mostly crushed limestone trail, but the ITEP grant would be used to pave the trail with asphalt and will connect the Amtrak Train Station in Mattoon with Eastern Illinois University in Charleston.

As Phase 2 of this Lincoln Prairie Grass trail improvement project, the cities are formulating a “beautification development plan” for the entire trail which includes cultural, natural, historical and recreational improvements to make the trail a transportation “experience”; while still performing its multi-modal function.

## BACKGROUND

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### **Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act / Federal Program Funds (1994)**

In February 1994, the cities of Charleston and Mattoon were awarded Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act “ISTEA” funds (\$511,200) for the construction of a crushed limestone "Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail" which was completed and currently exists between the two cities.

The Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail was dedicated in 1998 by then Governor Jim Edgar. The Trail is approximately 12 miles of trail linking Charleston and Mattoon in Coles County. The trail was constructed using transportation enhancement funds (ISTEA) from the IDOT and \$61,900 from bikeway funds administered by the DNR along with local funds. The total project was estimated to cost \$639,000. The existing multi-use trail as served its purpose for nearly 20 years and has been maintained by the 2 cities over this time period as well. The crushed limestone surface has served its intended multi-use purpose, but in order to make these viable connections and in order to make the trail a feasible bicycle facility and a viable transportation alternative to motor vehicles, the cities determined that an asphalt trail is necessary.

## Bikeway Plans

Charleston (1996 Charleston Tomorrow Plan, 1999 Comp Plan & 2009 Comp Plan Update) & Mattoon (2013 Comp Plan and Bikeway Plan) both have local comprehensive plans for the purpose of creating a general framework for the future growth development of the Cities. This includes considerations for alternate modes of surface transportation which have been part of local planning efforts for years. A major part of those plans is to encourage alternative modes of travel throughout the region & improving surface transportation alternatives. This long linear trail is included in Illinois Long Range State Transportation Plan (2012) as it "may be an option for transportation purposes".

### **Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program / Federal Program Funds (2016)**

In 2016, the City of Charleston and Mattoon were awarded \$800,000 of IDOT for ITEP funds for an estimated \$1,035,000 pedestrian/bicycle facility reconstruction project. This project will extend the completed "Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail" project, originally developed in 1998, to evolve the existing multi-use recreation trail to a key transportation facility with a durable asphalt hard surface and this project will add new trail extensions (for a total of about 15.7 miles), in order to improve the existing facility, by providing needed commuter connections to regional facilities.

The primary goal is to connect the Amtrak Train Depot & Greyhound Bus Terminal in Mattoon with Eastern Illinois University in Charleston with an asphalt trail facility. The project will also have additional extensions off the main trail. These additional extensions will be at Sarah Bush Lincoln Hospital (800N to Health Center Dr), Cross County Mall (Trail via Holiday Dr), & the Lincoln/Douglas Debate Museum (Trail via E St). The project includes extending the existing trail to provide commuter connections which will evolve the existing multi-use recreation trail to a key transportation facility. This project will also connect to several bus stops throughout the County's public transportation known as "Dial-A-Ride" & EIU's "Panther Express". The opportunities created by this regional surface transportation relationship will improve efficiency, attractiveness & comfort while providing an alternative mode of transportation.

Local bikeway plans were developed as progressive, environmentally sustainable action to improve access for cyclists and pedestrians to key destinations in and around the 2 communities. In accordance with local plans, this project will improve access to vital community facilities via the trail and to encourage greater community participation in alternative modes of transportation. This project will enhance the existing transportation system by providing a viable alternative to motor vehicles to work (SBLHS), businesses, and to EIU. EIU students commuting from Chicago will be able to take the Amtrak to Mattoon and then travel only 11.7 miles to EIU, which serves a need that is missing. The project serves as a model to foster public support of the overall bikeway plans as they include: reconstructing an existing dedicated trail, converting streets to shared-use path uses, using dedicated bike lanes along a low-volume streets where feasible, and creating commuter friendly trail connections.

The majority of the trail is not accessible by vehicular traffic making the trail a safe option for pedestrian & bicycle users which will reduce auto-bicycle conflicts. At the May 17, 2016 public hearing, several people commented that safety concerns will be improved with this project. Bicyclers chose to ride on busy roads as gravel is difficult to commute on & unsafe to travel for runners; many people had near

## Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail

misses with vehicles on roads as the trail is not a good commuting option as it is. The intended users are primarily bicyclists and pedestrians. Commuters will be provided an improved transportation link to workplaces, businesses, schools, EIU & shopping in the cities and the region. Below are a few excerpts from the public comments addressing safety concerns and the full comments can be found in the public hearing minutes.

**Ruth A. Cooper, 76 W. Harrison Avenue, Apt. #13, Charleston:**

*She student-taught in Mattoon and had tried to ride her bicycle on Route #16 to Mattoon. It had a shoulder, but she realized right away that it wasn't a safe route. She had tried riding on the Old State Highway, but it wasn't bicyclist friendly. She got about a mile past the cemetery and was yelled at by motorists to get off the road. Paving the Bicycle Trail meant that it would include all cyclists as an alternative route; and the second main issue was Safety—as a cyclist on the road, the biggest safety issue she had was cars. She added that she was also a runner, and as a runner, she preferred running on paved surfaces for safety reasons.*

**Kurt Monk, 11474 N. Blackburn Road, Martinsville:**

*He was a racer, and it gave them a safe place to train. He had been chased by dogs, and was bitten last year. His wife was new to cycling, and she was nervous about the traffic. If the trail were paved, he could take his wife out there, and he could even take his little girl out there on her tricycle, so it would become really family oriented.*

**Greg (Co-Co) Voudrie, 28 Wintercress Lane, Mattoon:**

*He said he was kind of echoing the points with regard to safety. That was very important. He noted the young pedestrian who was killed on Route #16 in the prior week. In the past 4 years, he had been run off the road; it flipped him into a ditch. He had been rubbed up against by a car. He couldn't stress enough the importance of safety when out riding.*

**Dr. Timothy Camden, 3134 Oakwood:**

*He lived in Charleston but worked at the Carle Office off Lerna Road, and he would ride on the shoulder of Route #16. It was paved and relatively smooth. He rode exactly where the young woman was killed last week. If it were paved he would commute to work on it daily. He highly recommended paving the trail.*

**Beth Gillespie, 1214 Jackson Avenue, Charleston:**

*She was very excited when she learned there was a trail here. But she had to give up running on gravel—it was too rough. Her Number One concern being Safety. She said that on social media, there was at least one death a week involving a runner or bicyclist somewhere in the country.*

The ITEP program requires that the trail facility that is being proposed provides a viable transportation alternative to motor vehicles and that upkeep and maintenance are provided to the facility. According to IDOT, because certain trail surfaces meet these requirements better than others, IDOT encourages the use of a more durable surface, like asphalt or concrete, which will last longer, require less maintenance and provide a surface more suitable to all users of this trail which include (but not limited to): narrow tired bicyclists, hybrid tired bicyclists, mountain bicyclists, walkers, runners and other non-motorized modes of transportation, creating a progressive and environmentally sustainable improvement.

## Regional Trail Efforts

While the proposed 2016 ITEP project is requesting grant funding for a stand-alone project (from Amtrak Depot to EIU), this project will be part of a larger regional bicycle and pedestrian trail and transportation system plan.

In Mattoon, this project is part of the City's overall bikeway plan. The City of Mattoon has plans to connect this trail to the City's hotel network near the Interstate and to extend the trail west along Commercial Avenue to other destinations in and around the City of Mattoon.

In Charleston, the City is currently in the process of developing plans to link the EIU campus with 1.5 miles of bike lanes to connect EIU to Charleston's Sister City Park (located at 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Woodlawn Drive in Charleston) and then extending the trail system another 1.5 miles to the existing Lake Charleston Trail System. The City of Charleston is currently in the process of making this connection from Sister City Park to the Lake Charleston Trail System. When the trail reaches the Lake Charleston Trail System, it will connect to approximately 8 miles of newly developed biking and hiking trails around the Lake Charleston and the Woodyard Park area.

Additionally, there is a separate volunteer group that has been formed, which is in the planning and right of way acquisition phase of connecting Lake Charleston to the Fox Ridge State Park located south of Charleston.

## LINCOLN PRAIRIE GRASS TRAIL BEAUTIFICATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN SUMMARY

As stated earlier, local bikeway plans were developed as progressive, environmentally sustainable action to improve access for cyclists and pedestrians to key destinations in and around the 2 communities and the region. This Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail “beautification development plan” captures those actions into cultural, natural, historical and recreational improvements to make the trail a transportation “experience”; while still performing its multi-modal function.

The trail should incorporate features that can be implemented consistently throughout the entire trail while still addressing improvements at specific sites along the trail. To illustrate those features, this plan gives ideas for common improvements along with action items for specific locations.

### Features to be considered along the entire trail:

- Consistent Locations, Styles and Sizes for Signage and Mile Markers along the entire trail
- Historic and Interpretive Signage that can be illustrated seamlessly from Mattoon to Charleston
- Natural Features that are consistent along the entire trail
- Cultural Features that are consistent along the entire trail
- Recreational Features that connect and are part of the trail
- Lighting Features located in strategic locations along the entire trail
- Materials that are consistent along the entire trail where feasible
- Split Rail Fencing located in strategic locations along the entire trail

Because the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail is shared between the City of Charleston and the City of Mattoon, each city will be responsible for the work done in each city. While there is a separation of activities, keeping a consistent themes across the trail will be critical to the entire trail experience. With this in mind, the 2 cities, along with area charitable organizations, and non-profits have formed the “Interurban Roundtable Committee” to help foster trail development ideas and pool some resources toward implementation of this plan.

This document is broken into 3 main sections that include:

- Section 1: General Considerations
- Section 2: Site Specific Improvements (East of Loxa Road / City of Charleston)
- Section 3: Site Specific Improvements (West of Loxa Road / City of Mattoon) (**pending**)

## **SECTION 1: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

## Signage

- **Consistent Locations, Styles and Sizes for Signage and Mile Markers along the entire trail**

Adequate location markers and signage is important to the users experience along the trail. City markers at the Loxa Road intersection will help travelers know when they reach the jurisdictional limits of Charleston and Mattoon. These markers should be similar in nature in style and materials in order to keep consistent along the entire trail.

Mile markers should be located throughout the trail. 1.) For travelers going to Charleston, mile markers should start at the Mattoon Amtrak Station and travel east indicating the distance to BOTH the Lincoln Douglas Debate Site and also the distance to Eastern Illinois University. 2.) For travelers heading east toward Mattoon, mile markers should start at EIU and travel west indicating the distance to the Amtrak Station. To reduce clutter, mile marker signage should be shared with other Interpretative Markers located along the trail.

Interpretative Historical Markers should be located strategically along the trail. These Interpretative Markers should represent historical significance related specifically to Coles County and are explained further in the Historical Features section.

## Historical Features

- **Historic and Interpretive Signage that can be incorporated seamlessly from Mattoon to Charleston**

Interpretative Historical Markers should be located strategically along the trail that represent historical importance to Coles County.

**1.) Designate the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail as an official “Looking for Lincoln” bike trail experience related to Abraham Lincoln’s life in Coles County.**

## Background

In partnership with the National Park Service, the City of Charleston is one of 6 Illinois communities designated as a “Gateway” to the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. The “Looking for Lincoln” Heritage Coalition (LFLHC) is a consortium of Illinois communities and sites that share the legacy of Abraham Lincoln described as follows:



### *About Us*

*The Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition (LFLHC) is a consortium of Illinois communities and sites that share the legacy of Abraham Lincoln. The purpose of the coalition is to tell the stories about Lincoln unique to each site and each community. But Lincoln history alone is not enough. The Lincoln stories must be shared in a creative way. So, in order to create a real visitor experience each site in the LFLHC program must offer some level of interpretive programming. While focusing upon Lincoln, the coalition also encompasses the rich history of each participating community in order to create a broader context for Lincoln and his times.*

*The participating communities and sites are not only linked to each other, but are also tied closely to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield. The Looking for Lincoln program makes it possible to extend the reach of the Library and Museum so that the museum exhibits are just the beginning of the Lincoln adventure. We want visitors to actually go to the real places where Lincoln spent time.*

### *Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area*

*The Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area was enacted by the Congress and signed by the President on May 10, 2008. The legislation designates the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition, a nonprofit 501c3 corporation, to manage the national heritage area. Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. Both the coalition and national heritage area cover the same 42 counties of central Illinois and share a mission to preserve, interpret and promote the heritage and culture of the area, in the context of Abraham Lincoln's life in Illinois. We seek to inform and educate, develop and interpret visitor-ready sites, create living history experiences, chronicle the evolution of the area's landscape and extend these opportunities to the largest audience possible. We seek to inform and educate, develop and interpret visitor-ready sites, create living history experiences, chronicle the evolution of the area's landscape and extend these opportunities to the largest audience possible.*

*The Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area, the only heritage area named for an American President, is home to a very unique collection of American history, surrounding America's most revered President. It is most closely focused on the 30 years Lincoln lived in central Illinois, raising his family and pursuing his passion for the law and politics. During this time, we now know he was unwittingly preparing himself to become the President who would hold the Nation together during a time of unprecedented challenges, that of a Civil War, requiring enormous courage to save the Union and bind its wounds, while trying to cleanse the scourge of slavery from our national culture. He was ultimately successful in his objective but gave his "last, full measure of devotion" at Ford's Theatre in 1865. We now believe that his journey is our enduring legacy.*

### *Vision Statement*

*To be the voice for the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area.*

### *Mission Statement*

*The Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition is a not for profit organization dedicated to working collaboratively with local, state, and national partners across the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area to tell the quality stories of Abraham Lincoln's life and times to provide high quality experiences for visitors, economic opportunities for communities and to improve the quality of life for residents.*

### Looking for Lincoln Mile Markers and additional Interpretive Signage

Partner with the Lincoln for Lincoln Heritage Coalition to create an official Lincoln for Lincoln bike trail experience. Work with the LFLHC for marketing and other resources available for the creation and marketing related to this interpretive experience.

The approximately 20 mile round trip from the Amtrak Station in Mattoon to the Lincoln Douglas Debate Site in Charleston (and back) would allow for approximately 25 signs and mile markers that would detail Lincoln's life experiences as they relate to Coles County in chronological order. Signs 1-13 from Amtrak to the Lincoln Douglas Debate Site would illustrate his life from coming to Coles County to the 1858 debate. Signs 14-25 back from the Lincoln Douglas Debate site to the Amtrak station would illustrate his life related to Coles County during those years until his death. A sample of this story is as follows:

1. **(Start at Amtrak Station in Mattoon and head east toward Charleston)** March 10, 1830 (21 years old) Abraham Lincoln enters Coles County for the first time, with his family on ox-drawn wagons on the way to Lincoln Farm, Macon County.
2. May 1831 Thomas Lincoln returns to Coles County to settle at Buck Grove Farm and in July 1831 (22 years old) Abraham Lincoln visits Buck Grove Farm in Southern Coles County.
3. August 4, 1834 (24 years old) Abraham Lincoln is elected to the Illinois General Assembly (Whig Party) and serves for 4 terms (until early 1841) and begins studying law. In early 1835, Abraham Lincoln visits parents at Muddy Point Farm in Southern Coles County before the start of the legislative session in Vandalia.
4. September 9, 1836 (26 years old) Abraham Lincoln receives his law license and is admitted to the bar on March 1, 1837 and starts practicing law on the 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit in Illinois.
5. Fall 1840 (30 years old) Abraham Lincoln returns to Charleston to give a political speech at 14<sup>th</sup> Street north of the railroad.
6. 1841-1847 (31 years old) Abraham Lincoln practices law at the Coles County Courthouse in Charleston and frequently stayed in Charleston during the court sessions and visited his family in Coles County. August 3, 1846 (36 years old) Abraham Lincoln is elected to the US House of Representatives (Whig Party) until 1848.
7. October 16, 1847 (37 years old) Abraham Lincoln assisted the attorney's plaintiff at the Coles County Courthouse in Charleston in the famous case *Matson vs. Rutherford* regarding slavery issues.
8. March 31, 1849 (39 years old) Abraham Lincoln leaves politics to practice law. Lincoln's reputation as a lawyer during his time with the 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit earned him the nickname "Honest Abe". Abraham Lincoln returns to Charleston in 1849-1850 to visit his father.
9. January 17, 1851 (41 years old) Abraham Lincoln's father dies and Lincoln returns to Charleston on several occasions following his father's death for the next few years.
10. May 29, 1856 (47 years old) Abraham Lincoln assist in the formation of the new Republican party of Illinois. On August 8, 1856 Abraham Lincoln, a Republican Elector, spoke in Charleston on behalf of Republican candidates for president and governor with an estimated 1,000 people in attendance.
11. June 16, 1858 (49 years old) Abraham Lincoln is nominated as the Republican candidate from Illinois to oppose the Democrat Stephen A. Douglas for the United States Senate. September 7, 1858 Abraham Lincoln gives a speech in Mattoon during the political campaign.
12. (At Lincoln / Douglas Museum) September 17, 1858 (49 years old) Abraham Lincoln arrived in Mattoon and stayed overnight at the "Pennsylvania House" prior to the famous Lincoln/Douglas debate in Charleston. Following the parade from Mattoon to the Charleston Courthouse Square, on September 18, 1858 Lincoln arrives in Charleston for the debate. Lincoln's headquarters in Charleston were located at the "Capitol House" (Johnson Tavern) at the northwest corner of the Charleston Courthouse square (now known as the Linder Building). Douglas's headquarters in Charleston were across the street (6<sup>th</sup> Street) located at the "Union House" (Bunnell Tavern) on the Charleston Courthouse Square (known as the Charleston National Bank). The debate was located at the Coles County Fairgrounds and post-debate rallies for both candidates were held after the debate at the Charleston Square. The Illinois legislature choose Democrat Stephen A. Douglas for the U.S.

Senate defeating Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln won the popular in Coles County (1495 Lincoln vs. 1467 Douglas) and in Illinois, but lost in the Illinois legislature. Winning the popular vote in Illinois helped pave the way for his Presidential victory in 1860.

#### **Enter Lincoln / Douglas Museum**

13. **(Continue after Lincoln / Douglas Debate Museum and head west toward Mattoon)** April 21, 1860 (50 years old) Republicans of Coles County selected Abraham Lincoln as their choice as for President of the United States.
14. May 18, 1860 (51 years old) Abraham Lincoln is nominated to be the Republican Candidate for President of the United States.
15. November 6, 1860 (51 years old) Abraham Lincoln is elected as the 16<sup>th</sup> President.
16. December 20, 1860 (51 years old) South Carolina secedes from the Union and Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas.
17. January 30, 1861 (51 years old) 2 weeks before leaving for Washington D.C., President-Elect Abraham Lincoln leaves Springfield to return to Coles County for the last time. Lincoln returned to Coles County and stayed in Mattoon on January 30, 1861 (Essex / Marshall House – crossing of 2 railroads) and stayed in Charleston on January 31, 1861 (Chapman House at the 400 Block of Jackson Avenue). Lincoln visits his father's grave site at Shilo Cemetery in Coles County. This was his last visit to Coles County.
18. February 11, 1861 (51 years old) Abraham Lincoln leaves for Washington D.C.
19. March 4, 1861 (52 years old) President Lincoln delivers his first Inaugural Address.
20. April 12, 1861 (52 year old) the Civil War begins with the attack on Fort Sumter, South Carolina. Confederates under General Pierre Beauregard open fire in the fort.
21. May 1861 Illinois recruitment and training officer Captain Ulysses S Grant in Mattoon begins mustering Illinois infantry regiments for the Civil War.

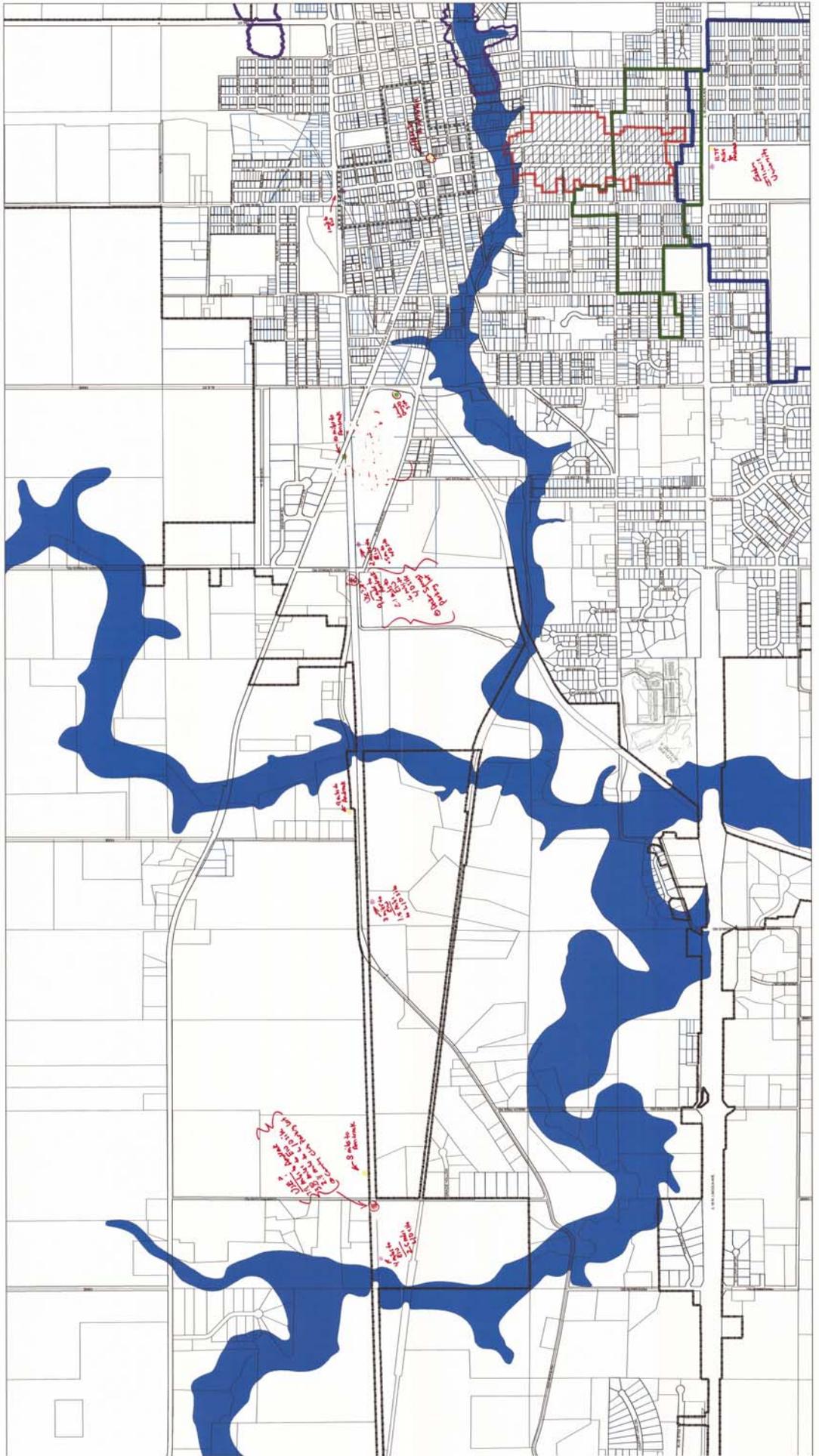
#### **Enter Mattoon Civil War Memorial Ellipse Site in Mattoon (Civil War-era Camp Grant) / Illinois State Historical Society Marker**

22. March 28, 1864 the Charleston Riots erupt on the Courthouse Square involving the Illinois. Charleston had been deeply divided between unionists and copperheads since the beginning of the war, and resentment of the military rose steadily after the imposition of the draft in 1863. The tension finally boiled over when an armed band of copperheads gathered at the courthouse on the morning of the 28th, intent on exacting vengeance on soldiers and "abolitionists" alike, and when a soldier of the 54th Illinois Infantry accosted a copperhead, and shots were exchanged, the spark was lit.

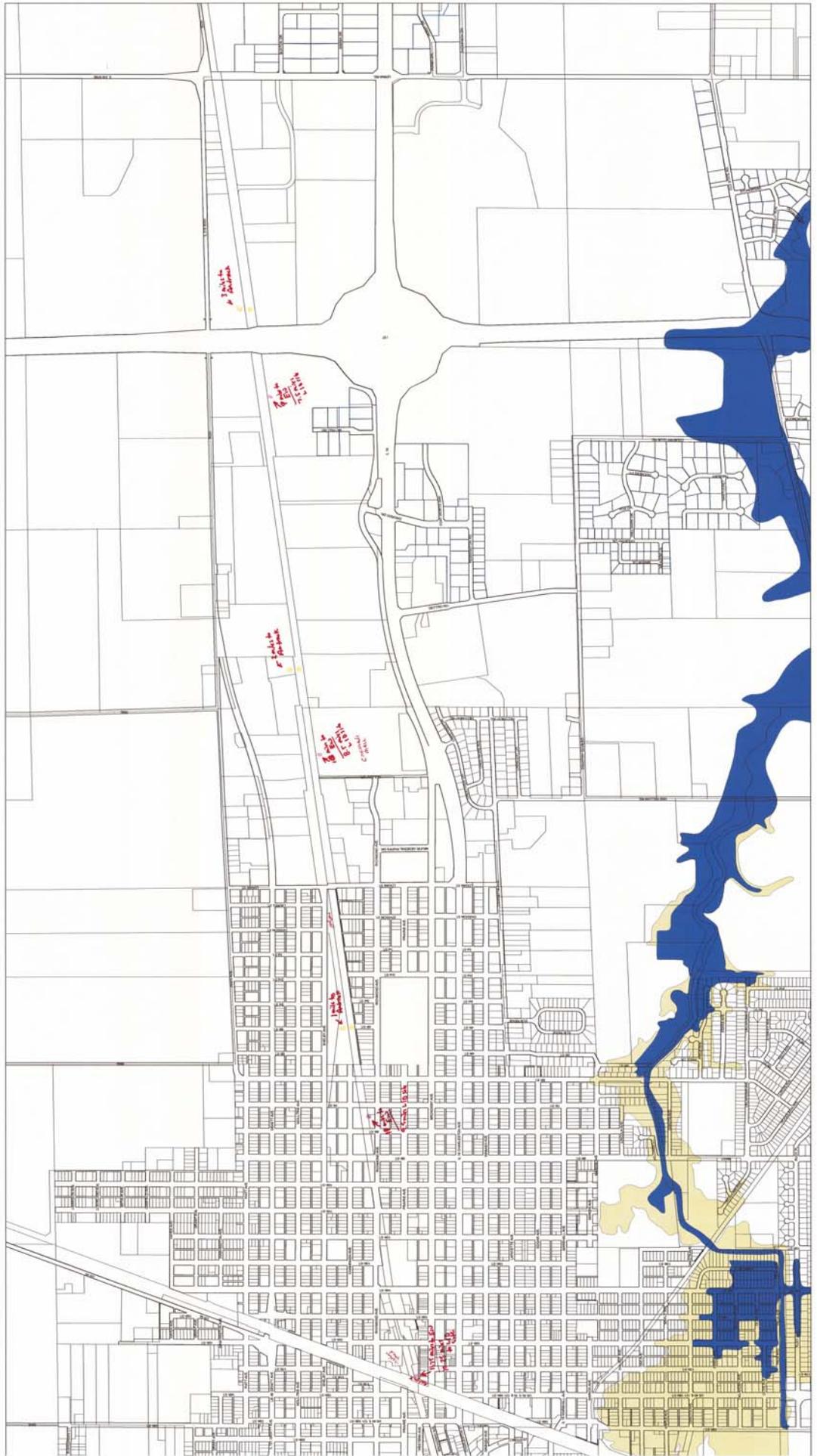
For two hours, soldiers of the 54th Illinois Infantry, supplemented by local Republican civilians, struggled violently throughout the city with marauding copperheads, trading gunfire and beatings. The arrival of reinforcements from Mattoon and the capture of several copperheads quelled the riot by about five o' clock, by which time six soldiers, two copperheads and a Republican civilian had been killed, and several more on both sides were injured. For several tense days after the riot, the army was occupied in seeking out and arresting the assailants in the riot, and during the first week of April, an inquest was held to determine culpability. Manuscripts Division William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan; Finding aid for Charleston (Ill.) Riot Records, 1864 (James S. Schoff Civil War Collection). November 4, 1864 (55 years old) Abraham Lincoln orders the release of 15 Charleston Riot prisoners held at Fort Delaware.

23. November 8, 1864 (55 years old) President Abraham Lincoln is elected to his second term as President. On April 9, 1865 General Robert E. Lee surrenders his Confederate Army to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. On June 2, 1865, the American Civil War ends. April 14, 1865 (56 years old) President Lincoln is shot at Ford's Theater and dies on April 15, 1865. On May 4, 1865 Abraham Lincoln is buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery near Springfield, Illinois.
24. April 10, 1869 Abraham Lincoln's stepmother, Mrs. Thomas Lincoln (Sarah Bush) dies at Goosenest Prairie Farm in Coles County and is buried at Shilo Cemetery with Abraham Lincoln's father, Thomas Lincoln.

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### **2.) Install Interpretative Historical Markers illustrating points related to the Former Interurban Train Route.**

The Cities of Charleston and Mattoon were developed originally as railroad communities. One of those important railroad routes was known as the Interurban Electrical Streetcar rail line that paralleled the Big Four Railroad (now the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail) for several miles. Construction on the streetcar line began in 1903 and the first car ran between Mattoon the Charleston Square in 1904. 1,000 people rode the line that first day which took about 30 minutes for a one-way trip. In 1910 the company was renamed to the Central Illinois Public Service Company (CIPS) and operated utility companies and 5 electrical railway systems. 25 years later, in 1928, the streetcar service between Mattoon and Charleston ended.

Points of interest along the Interurban Electrical Streetcar rail line include: stations in Mattoon and Charleston; land marker by Loxa Road; old pilings at the Charleston Country Club showing location of the Interurban Park and train station; and the crash near the Coles County Fairgrounds of August 30, 1907 that left 18 dead and 60 injured.

### **3.) Install Interpretative Historical Markers illustrating Historically Significant Points of Interest**

Several additional historical points of interest can be found along the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail Route from the Amtrak Station in Mattoon to Eastern Illinois University in Charleston. Interpretative Markers should incorporate signage including “QR Code Scanner” readers to attach mobile device applications in order to digitally describe the sites. These Interpretative Markers should be consider throughout this route as follows:

- Interpretative Markers around the Courthouse Square and Downtown Mattoon illustrating Abraham Lincoln’s time in Charleston and Mattoon.
- National Register of Historic Places
  - Coles County Courthouse (Charleston)
  - EIU Old Main, Pemberton Hall and Gymnasium, Health Education Building (Charleston)
  - Illinois Central Railroad Depot (Mattoon)
  - McFarland House a/k/a Dudley House (Charleston)
  - 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Street Stone Arch Bridges (Charleston)
  - US Post Office Building (Charleston)
- Charleston Historic District (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Street)
- Stone Arch Bridges at Cassel Creek and Riley Creek (Big Four Railroad Bridges)

### **Natural Features**

- Natural Features that are consistent along the entire trail

Adding designated natural areas throughout the trail will be an important addition to the trail system. These area could incorporate native prairie grass areas, native plantings and native wildflower areas. Working with IDNR and local organizations to plant and maintaining these native grass and flower areas will be critical to its success. Adding these features should increase the number of native wildlife and bird encounters throughout the trail. Interpretative Markers should incorporate signage including “QR Code Scanner” readers to attach mobile device applications to describe the native areas and the wildlife that can be seen in these locations. Using local resource groups and websites like EBird.Org will allow users to get a real time information about these native areas.

## Cultural Features

- Features that are consistent along the entire trail

Adding cultural components to the trail will add to the users overall experience along the route. Adding outdoor sculptures would be a great start to contribute to these cultural aspects. Using Eastern Illinois University and local artists will create the momentum toward a larger sculpture walk in the future which will be a great addition to the entire trail system. After initial and permanent outdoor sculptures are developed, a future “Sculpture Walk” should be considered at specific spots along the trail. These outdoor sculpture areas should be a focal point for gathering areas and should be well lit, protected and located at road intersections. This will allow both users of the trails to enjoy the sculpture in addition to capturing the attention of local motorists who see the sculptures from the road.

## Recreational Features

- Recreational Features that connect and are part of the trail

Both cities enjoy a solid recreational activity event base and making the trail a part of those events will be a great addition. Users need to be able to bike from one field complex to the next and should be able to travel between the two cities as several baseball, softball and football fields connect along the trail. This will allow even more regional athletic events between Charleston and Mattoon. In addition, considering adding outdoor circuit stations in strategic locations will allow users to travel from station to station along the trail, while providing a new exercise component to their travels.

## Lighting Features

- Lighting Features located in strategic locations along the entire trail

Lighting adds aspects to the trail that are needed for users to provide additional comfort and safety. At a minimum, lighting should be strategically located at parking lots in addition to seating and gathering areas. If possible, lighting should be considered along the entire trail utilizing the Ameren poles that are already constructed along the trail. Alternating solar panel light arms from these poles would light the entire path from Charleston to Mattoon.

## Materials

- Materials that are consistent along the entire trail where feasible

Materials and colors used throughout the trail should be consistent in order to maintain a seamless route from Mattoon to Charleston. The look of these materials and colors should capitalize on features and materials already used at major points of the trail. This would include replicating the stone of the Coles County Courthouse, Eastern Illinois University and the stone arch bridges, which can be done using materials such as colored split faced block where practical. Signage and markers throughout the trail should be of the same size, style, font, color and shape. Using a consistent split rail fence will also capitalize of the historical nature of the trail as detailed in the next section. Developing an asphalt paved trail for the entire route will lay the foundation for a seamless trail experience from Charleston to Mattoon.

### Spilt Rail Fence

- Split Rail Fencing located in strategic locations along the entire trail

To keep with the historic experience along the trail, spilt rail fencing should be added in strategic locations throughout the trail. This will give users the feeling of trail boundaries along with tying the historic nature of the trail as might have been represented during Abraham Lincoln's time in Coles County. These sections of split rail fence should be located near road intersections along the trail.

### Marketing and Tourism

Providing a multi-modal trail and user experience is vitally important to the residents of the 2 cities and the region. In addition, bringing new users to the area to experience this trail will be a critical component to the trail's use and success. Using Charleston and Mattoon's Tourism resources to market and illustrate the trail will be a top priority before and after the development efforts. Partnering with other local, state, regional and national agencies will add a new layer of marketing and tourism opportunities to the region. This trail will be an important feature for all ages, and for all walks of life, whether you are a day-to-day traveler to and from work; or if you are historian, or an enthusiast of cultural, natural and recreational activities, we hope this trail can offer an experience that can be identified by any and all users.

### Resources

- City of Charleston (Public Works, Planning and Development, Tourism, Parks and Recreation)
- City of Mattoon (Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Tourism, Arts Council)
- Charleston Charitable Foundation, Lumpkin Foundation, Mattoon Charitable Foundation
- Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center
- Local Businesses and Local Volunteers
- Charleston Square Merchants Association
- Charleston and Mattoon Chamber of Commerce
- Charleston Historic Preservation Commission
- Coles County Historic Preservation Advisory Council (Steve Thompson)
- Cultural Sub Committee Jim Johnson, Jeffrey Lynch, Jeff Boshart
- EIU Tarble Arts , GIS Programs
- Green Thumb Groups (square park maintenance)
- State of Illinois Agencies IDOT, IDNR
- Looking for Lincoln
- Charleston Tree Commission
- Ameren Illinois (easements)

### Publications

- Images of Rail Mattoon and Charleston Area Railroads (Craig Sanders 2008)
- Abraham Lincoln and Coles County Illinois (Charles H. Coleman 1955)
- Abraham Lincoln Timeline (Datesandevents.org)
- Fourth Debate: Charleston, Illinois (National Park Service)

## **SECTION 2: SITE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS**

### **(East of Loxa Road / City of Charleston)**

## Parking and Gathering Improvements at Loxa Road Intersection

- 6,600 SFT parking lot with new entrance and curbs and new striping
- 20' x 20' area for an outdoor shelter with sitting bench
- Concrete trail entry path to the east and south to connect the parking lot with the trail
- 30' x 30' area for future bathroom and drinking facility
- 150' of split rail fence on north side of trail
- 200' of buffer trees (40 short evergreen trees or arborvitae for example)
- 150' of native wildflower plantings
- Charleston gateway signage
- Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail signage with EIU mile location marker
- Lighting
- Interurban interpretative signage
- 10' x 10' hard surface pad for outdoor sculpture with lighting
- Bike tire repair station

### Background

The existing parking area at Loxa Road is in need of improvement both for parking and for gathering activities. The parking area is currently gravel and has many potholes that hold water during a large part of the year. The parking has limited designated parking spaces using only sporadic parking blocks.



## Recommendations

This location should incorporate native natural features, historical features and cultural features as it is a gateway to the Charleston leg of the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail. Improvements, including resurfacing the parking lot to a hard surface (asphalt or concrete) are needed. This will allow for improved parking and maneuvering designations including an improved accessible parking space. The area should also incorporate a shelter with bench seating.



To incorporate cultural aspects to the trail, an outdoor sculpture should be added in this high traffic location. Lighting should be added to the existing Ameren poles and a bathroom and drinking facility should be considered in the future. A row of screened trees including arborvitae and other evergreen trees should be added on the north side of the trail in this location to buffer the residents to the north in Loxa. A native wildflower planting area should be developed to the south of the trail in this location with a split rail fence on the north side of the trail.



## Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail



Signage will be important at this location which should include: 1.) a "Charleston" sign; 2.) a Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail sign (with a mile location to Eastern Illinois University); and 3.) signage illustrating the former Interurban rail line should also be added in this area.





## Walking Path to the Riley Creek Stone Arch Bridge and Parking and Gathering Improvements at the Country Club Road Intersection

- Acquire 150' x 125' (18,750 SFT) of land south of the stone arch bridge from the Charleston Country Club
- 250' walking path (with bench) to the Riley Creek stone arch bridge
- 3 benches along the trail as follows: 1 north side of the trail overlooking Riley Creek, 1 on the south side of the trail overlooking Riley Creek and 1 on the south side of the trail overlooking hole 10 at the Charleston Country Club
- Bike Rack on the south side of the trail at the walking path entrance
- Lighting on the pole near Riley Creek
- 48' x 42' of permeable parking area (2,016 SFT parking lot) with new entrance
- 20' x 20' area for an outdoor shelter with sitting bench with outdoor sculpture with lighting
- 150' of split rail fence on south side of trail by new parking area
- Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail signage with EIU mile location marker
- Interurban Park and Train Station Interpretative Signage (Interurban Rail)

### Background

The Riley Creek natural area and the “Big Four Railroad over Riley Creek” stone arch bridge (1863) are wonderful features along the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail and we should find a way to showcase these features to travelers along the trail. We can capitalize on highlighting both historic and natural features in this location. People have used the grassy intersection at the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail and the Country Club Road as make-shift parking which is not the best alternative for adequate parking at this location.



**Recommendations**

This location should incorporate native natural features, historical features and cultural features as another entrance option onto the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail. Improvements, including adding a new hard surface 4 car parking lot (asphalt or concrete) at the intersection of the trail and the Country Club Road is needed. This will allow for new designated parking options, including a new accessible parking space. The parking area should also incorporate a shelter with bench seating and an outdoor sculpture location. To incorporate cultural aspects to the trail, an outdoor sculpture should be added in this location with lighting and a split rail fence on the south side of the trail.



Highlighting the natural beauty around the Riley Creek stone arch bridge will be an important feature to the overall trail experience. Bench seating around Riley Creek and the Charleston Country Club will give travelers an opportunity to relax and observe the scenery. Acquiring land south of the stone arch bridge (currently owned by the Charleston Country Club) and developing a walking path down to Riley Creek, will allow users to get off their bikes and walk down to see and appreciate the stone arch bridge up close. Signage at this location which should include: 1.) a Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail sign at the Country Club Road intersection (with a mile location to Eastern Illinois University); and 2.) signage the former Interurban rail line and Interurban Park Station should also be added in this area. An interpretive trail marker for the Interurban Park Station and Park will allow people to see where an Interurban Train Station once stood as a popular recreational amenity in the County. This park location featured swimming, boating, amusement rides, baseball, balloon rides, a zoo, concerts, dances and July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks.



**Former Bridge Pilings (and Interurban Park Station)**

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## Sitting and Gathering Improvements at Old State Road Intersection

- 20' x 20' area for an outdoor shelter with sitting bench with outdoor sculpture with lighting
- 150' of split rail fence on south side of trail
- 150' of native wildflower plantings on north side of the trail

### Background

The intersection at Old State Road is a highly visible traffic intersection along the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail. This area can be used for promote cultural and natural improvements along the trail.

### Recommendations

This location should incorporate native natural features and new cultural features as a high traffic intersection. The area should also incorporate a shelter with bench seating. To incorporate cultural aspects to the trail, an outdoor sculpture should be added in this high traffic location. A native wildflower planting area should be developed to the north of the trail in this location with a split rail fence on the south side of the trail.





## Scenic Trail Extension at the Cassel Creek Stone Arch Bridge

- 4,500' hard surface (concrete or asphalt) trail (with bench by the bridge channel) to the Cassel Creek stone arch bridge and around natural landscape
- 1 bench along the trail as follows: 1 on the south side of the trail overlooking Cassel Creek
- 1 bench by the base of the bridge
- Lighting on the pole near Cassel Creek
- Interurban Crash Marker Signage

### **Background**

The Cassel Creek natural area and the “Big Four Railroad over Cassel Creek” stone arch bridge (1894) are wonderful features along the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail and we should find a way to showcase these features to travelers along the trail. We can capitalize on highlighting both historic and natural features in this location.



## Recommendations

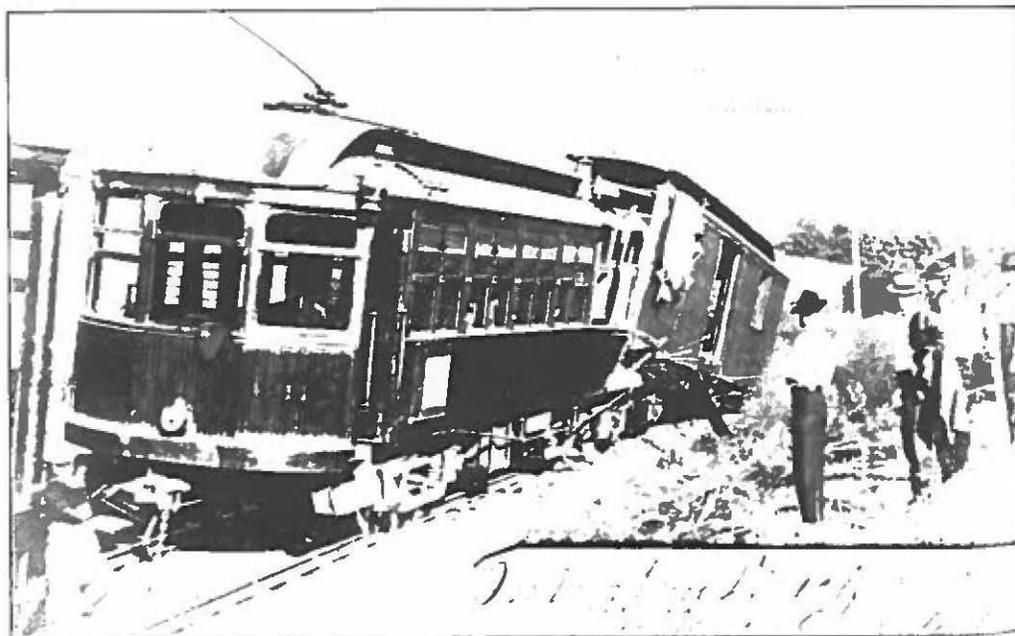
This location should incorporate native natural features and historical features on the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail. Highlighting the natural beauty around the Cassel Creek stone arch bridge will be an important feature to the overall trail experience. Bench seating around Cassel Creek will give travelers an opportunity to relax and observe the scenery. Developing a hard-surface scenic by-pass trail down to and around Cassel Creek, will allow users to experience the area by bike or walking and will allow users to see and appreciate the stone arch bridge up close. Adding this nearly 1 mile hard surfaced trail will be a tremendous addition to the City's overall trail system plan.

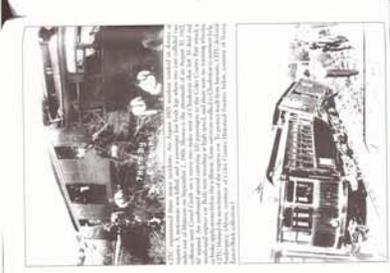
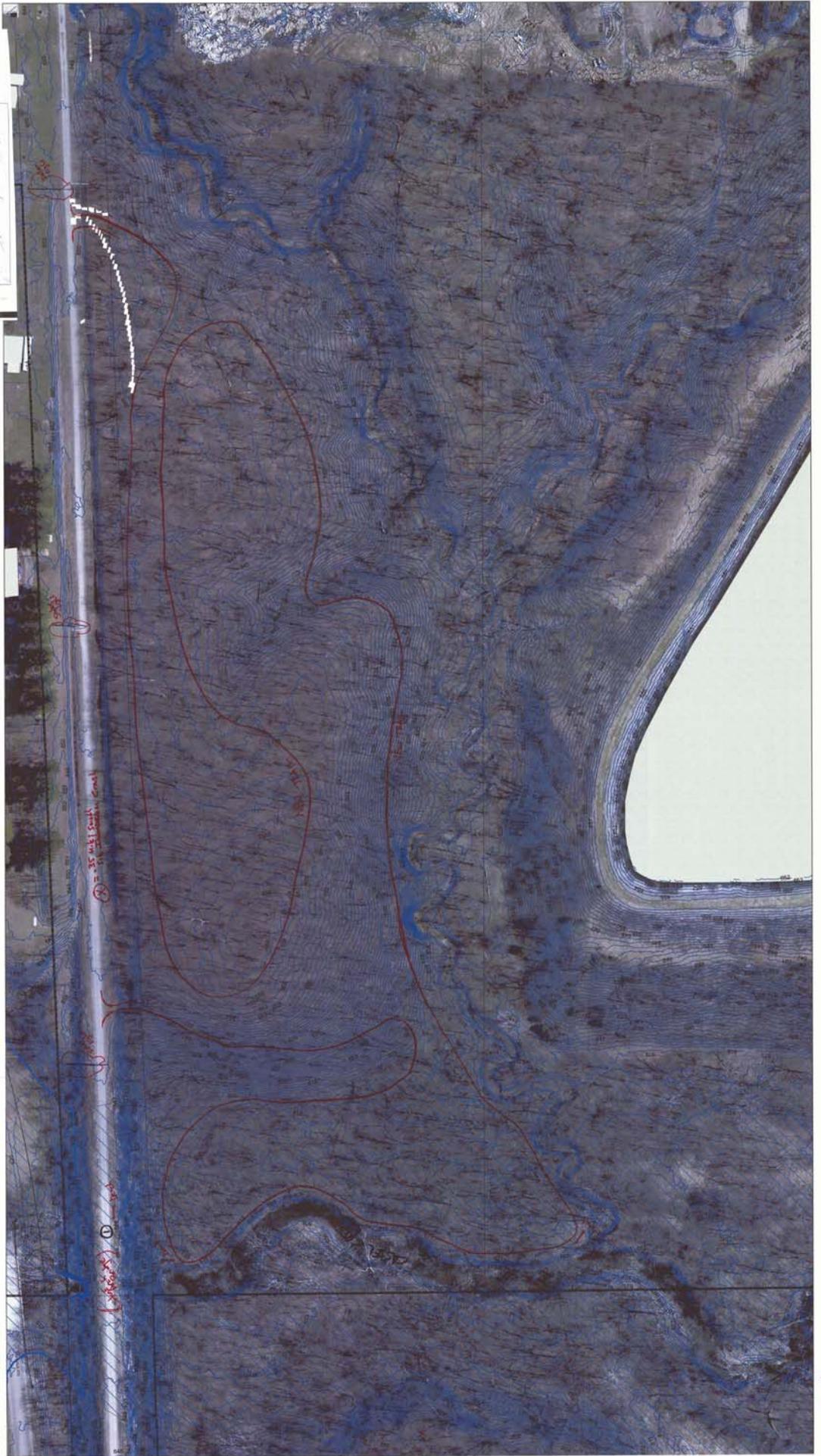


An interpretative marker should be located about 450' east of Cassel Creek highlighting the Interurban crash of August 30, 1907 that occurred about .35 miles south of the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail. 18 residents were killed and 60 were injured as they were traveling to and from the Coles County Fair were killed in the collision, making it the worst electric train car disaster at the time.



CITC experienced three major accidents. An August 1905 accident resulted in dozens of injuries. A motorman was killed, and a passenger lost both legs when two cars collided two miles east of Mattoon on September 2, 1906. Shown is the aftermath of an August 30, 1907, collision near Cossel Creek on a curve two miles west of Charleston that left 18 dead and 60 injured. An eastbound special carrying 100 passengers to the Coles County Fair struck a westbound express car. Both were traveling at high speed, and there were no warning whistles or brake applications before the collision. Some survivors walked to Charleston to summon help. CITC blamed the motorman of the express car. To protect itself from lawsuits, CITC declared bankruptcy. (Above, courtesy of Coles County Historical Society; below, courtesy of Nancy Easter-Shick collection.)





## Parking and Gathering Improvements at Decker Springs Road Intersection

- 120' x 75' of parking area (9,000 SFT parking lot) with new entrance and curbs and new striping
- 20' x 20' area for an outdoor shelter with sitting bench / 50' connection to trail
- Remove 2 entrances and improve the 3<sup>rd</sup> entrance to hard surface
- 150' of split rail fence on south side of trail
- 100' of split rail fence on north side of trail
- 300' of buffer trees (50 short evergreen trees or arborvitaes for example)
- 150' of native wildflower plantings west of parking area
- 100' of native wildflower plantings west of parking area
- Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail signage with EIU mile location marker
- Lighting
- 10' x 10' hard surface pad for outdoor sculpture with lighting
- Bike tire repair station

### Background

The existing parking area at Decker Springs Road is in need of improvement both for parking and for gathering activities. The parking area is currently gravel and has many potholes that hold water during a large part of the year. The parking has limited designated parking spaces using only sporadic parking blocks.

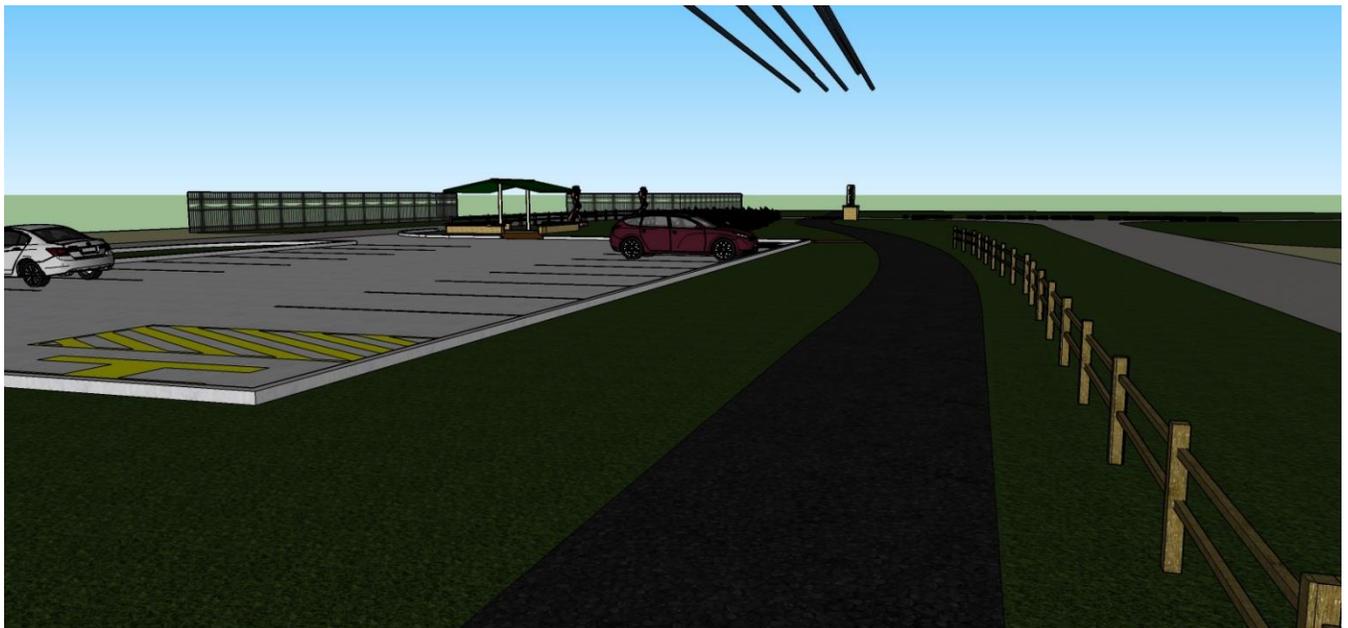


## Recommendations

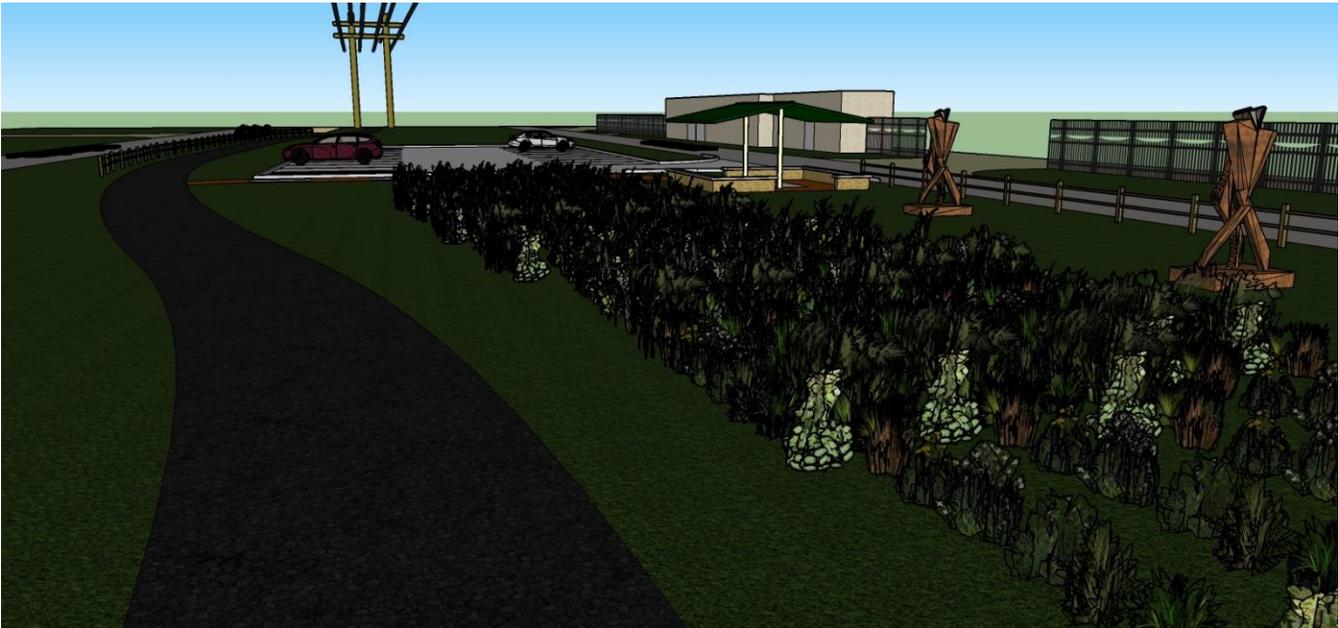
This location should incorporate native natural features and cultural features as it is a gateway to the Charleston leg of the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail.



Improvements, including resurfacing the parking lot to a hard surface (asphalt or concrete) are needed. This will allow for improved parking and maneuvering designations including an improved accessible parking space. The area should also incorporate a shelter with bench seating. To incorporate cultural aspects to the trail, an outdoor sculpture should be added in this high traffic location.



Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail



Lighting should be added to the existing Ameren poles. A row of screened trees including arborvitae and other evergreen trees should be added on the north side of the trail in this location to buffer the residents to the north and west of the parking area. A native wildflower planting area should be developed on both sides of the parking area to the north of the trail. Add a split rail fence on the north side of the trail (east of the parking area) and on the south side of the trail (west of the parking area). Signage will be important at this location which should include a Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail sign (with a mile location to Eastern Illinois University).





1-90



## Drainage Improvements and Set-Aside for Native Plants and Grasses from Decker Springs Road to E Street Intersections

- 1,850 lineal feet x 25 lineal feet (46,250 square feet / 1.06 acres)

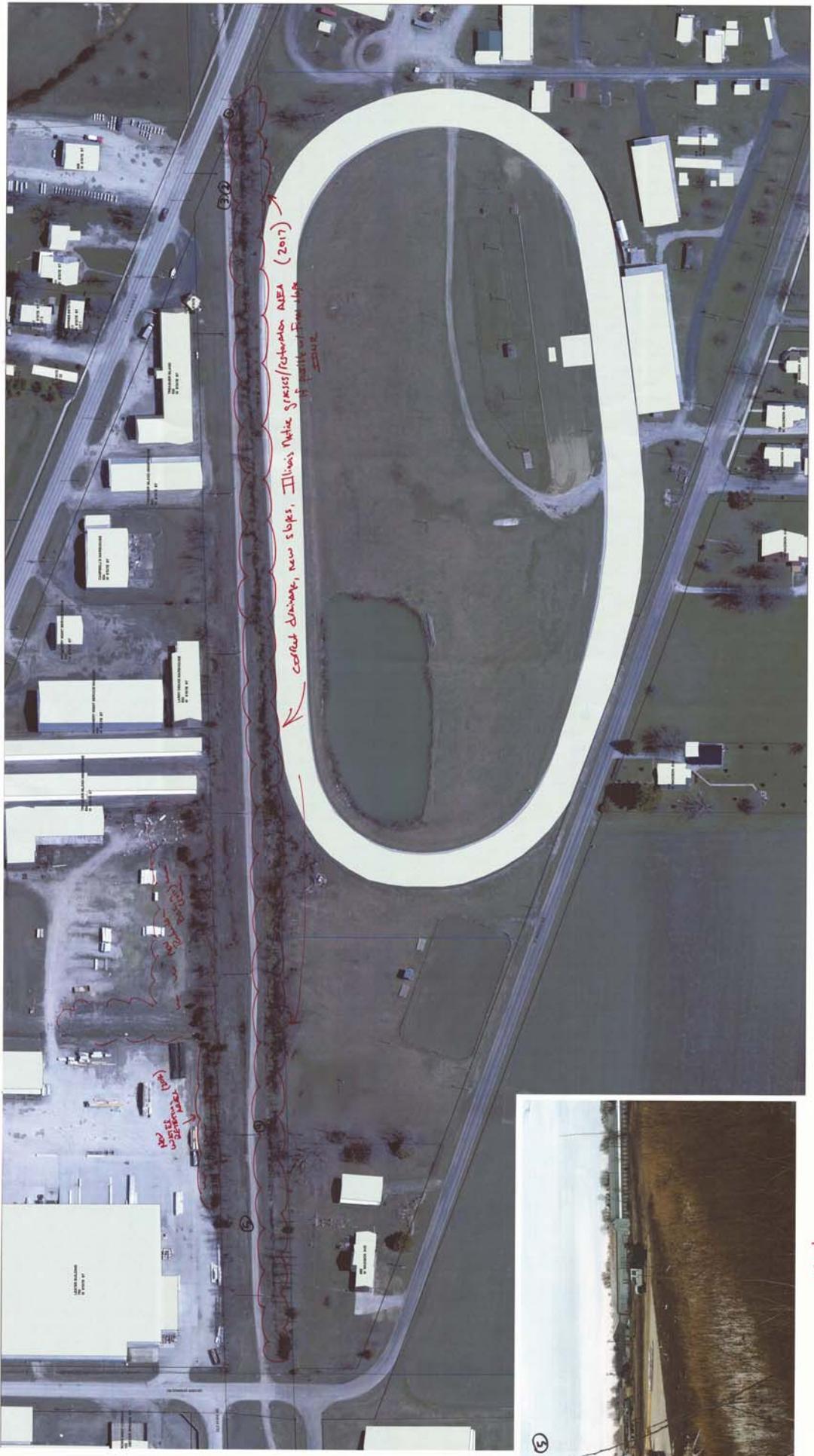
### Background

The south side of the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail from Decker Springs Road to E Street is in need of drainage improvements and nature friendly improvements. The ditch holds water year round, and is a breeding ground to mosquitos and other insects. The ditch also contains invasive plants and woody growth that cause conflicts with the travel along the trail.



### Recommendations

Improvements, including adding new storm sewer mains and re-grading work to the south ditch should be made to allow the water to drain appropriately and plants native to Central Illinois should be re-introduced in this area. After drainage improvements are completed, the Illinois Department of Natural Resource should be consulted to develop a plan for appropriate plants and grasses along this section and the area could be set-aside as a natural observation stops along the trail.



12-1

## Natural and Cultural Improvements at E Street Intersection and New Trail to Lincoln Douglas Debate Museum

- 1,100' of new trail designation from the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail to the Lincoln Douglas Debate Museum
- 150' of split rail fence on north side of trail, east of E Street
- 300' of buffer trees on south side of trail, to screen commercial and industrial uses west of E Street (50 short evergreen trees or arborvitaes for example)
- 150' of native wildflower plantings east of E Street
- 10' x 10' hard surface pad for outdoor sculpture with lighting east of E Street
- Remove benches and trash can from this location and relocate to the east side of the intersection.

### Background

The open area on the south side of the trail and east of E Street is an open grass right of way. The area on the south side of the trail and west of E Street has some natural screening of the road and properties south of the trail. The E Street sidewalk connects to the city's junior football league fields and softball fields and is widely used by pedestrian traffic. Currently, the only way to access the Lincoln Douglas Debate Museum is to cross State Street at two locations.



**Recommendations**

This location should incorporate native natural features and cultural features. This area should incorporate bench seating. To incorporate cultural aspects to the trail, an outdoor sculpture should be added in this high traffic location. Lighting should be added to the existing Ameren poles. A row of screened trees including arborvitae and other evergreen trees should be added on the south side of the trail (west of E Street) to buffer State Street; and commercial and industrial properties to the south of the trail. A native wildflower planting area should be developed on the east side of E Street and on the south side of the trail as a seating and rest area. Add a split rail fence on the north side of the trail (east of E Street). Improvements, including adding a new designated trail route from the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail south and southeast to the Lincoln Douglas Debate Museum should be added if feasible. This will allow for improved access to the Debate Museum.



Proposed New Trail Connection in Fairgrounds



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Cas and Fitzgerald construction

11-16

## Natural and Cultural Improvements between the E Street Intersection and the Division Street Intersection

- 300' of buffer trees on south side of trail, to screen commercial and industrial uses west of E Street (50 short evergreen trees or arborvitae for example)
- Remove bench and trash can from this location and relocate

### Background

The grass area on the south side of the trail is an open grass right-of-way and the right-of-way on the north side of the trail is an open ditch. There are some residential and commercial buildings in the area along the trail; and an older manufacturing property adjacent to the trail on the south. The manufacturing building is known as the former Brown Shoe Factory (a 3 story brick building) which is on the south side of the trail.



## **Recommendations**

This location should incorporate native natural features. This area should incorporate bench seating. A row of screened trees including arborvitae and other evergreen trees should be added on the south side of the trail to buffer the commercial properties to the south.



A future improvement related to the cultural aspects of the trail system could include a large wall painted mural on the north face of the Brown Shoe Factory.

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## Natural, Historical and Cultural Improvements between the Division Street and the 5<sup>th</sup> Street Intersection

- 75' of new trail designation from the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail to the Seaton Field Parking Lot
- 10' x 10' hard surface pad for outdoor sculpture with lighting east of Division Street
- Seaton Field dumpster screening
- 100' of native wildflower plantings east of Division Street
- 150' of split rail fence on south side of trail, east of Division Street
- 3 benches on north side of trail
- 1 bike rack on north side of trail
- Improve the open area between the cell tower and Seaton Field for creation of tiered "hillside seating"
- 250' of buffer trees between the cell tower and Seaton Field to screen the cell tower and industrial uses to the south (25 Colorado Spruce or White Pines or similar evergreen trees)
- 250' of buffer trees between the cell tower and the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail to screen the cell tower (50 arborvitae for example)
- 150' of buffer trees to the south of the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail to screen commercial and industrial uses and Railroad Avenue (50 arborvitae for example)
- Remove the gravel entrance (west entrance) to the grain bins and replace with 100' x 100' (10,000 SFT) concrete entrance and approach
- 150' of buffer trees to the south of the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail (between the grain bin entrances) to screen commercial and industrial uses and Railroad Avenue (50 arborvitae for example)
- Remove the gravel entrance (east entrance) to the grain bins
- 150' of buffer trees to the north of the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail west of the 5<sup>th</sup> Street entrance to screen commercial and industrial uses (50 arborvitae for example)
- 100' of native wildflower plantings west of 5<sup>th</sup> Street
- 100' of split rail fence on north side of trail, west of 5<sup>th</sup> Street
- Charleston Train Depot Interpretive marker

### Background

This section of the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail is in need of much improvement. This section of the trail runs through both residential, recreational and industrial land uses. The Seaton Baseball Field is to the north of the trail in this location and industrial uses are found west of 5<sup>th</sup> Street.



**Recommendations**



This location should focus on incorporating natural improvements in order to make this section of the trail more appealing to the user. Beginning at the Division Street intersection and traveling west to the 5<sup>th</sup> Street intersection, natural screening and plantings should be the focus of these improvements. A native wildflower planting area should be developed on the east side of Division Street and on the north side of the trail with a split rail fence on the south side of the trail. An outdoor sculpture should be added at this intersection.

This intersection should capitalize on the Seaton Baseball Field as a destination and stop along the trail. A new path should connect the trail with the Seaton Field parking lot in order to make the facility’s bathroom and water fountain an option to users of the trail. Incorporating bench seating and a bike rack will allow users to stop along the trail to enjoy baseball games being played at Seaton. Adding a new hillside seating feature with rows of evergreen screening and buffering should help separate the recreational elements from the existing commercial and industrial uses in the vicinity.



Improving the entrance to the west of the grain bins to a hard surface approach and drive; and removing the eastern gravel entrance will help improve this area as well.

Finally, to the west of the 5<sup>th</sup> Street intersection, adding another row of screening elements to the north side of the trail using evergreens to the north side of the trail with a split rail fence; and another wildflower plating area to the south will help beautify this section of the route.

An interpretative marker should be placed on the south side of the trail illustrating the former Charleston train depot (Big Four Depot) would add another historic element to the trail. The Big Four Railroad and Clover Leaf Route crossed at this location. The original depot opened in 1904 but was destroyed in 1917 because of the deadly tornado that struck the area (50 dead and 150 injured in Charleston). Work to rebuild the depot began soon after the original station was destroyed.



The Big Four Railroad began construction of a new Charleston passenger station in October 1903. Some homes were moved or demolished in 1902 to make room for the facility. Built on the site of the original depot, the new frame station cost \$10,000 and featured a general waiting room, women's waiting room, and smoking room. The station opened in 1904. (Courtesy of Nancy Easter-Schick collection.)



A devastating tornado struck Mattoon and Charleston on May 26, 1917, leaving 64 dead and 467 injured in Mattoon, and 50 dead and 150 injured in Charleston. The storm traveled nearly 300 miles through Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana, making it one of the longest-traveled tornadoes on record. The tornado destroyed the Big Four Railroad station in Charleston, as seen in this photograph. (Courtesy of Coles County Historical Society.)



1" = 40'

## Natural and Cultural Improvements East of the 5<sup>th</sup> Street Intersection

- 100' of new trail link from the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail to 6<sup>th</sup> Street
- 10' x 10' hard surface pad for outdoor sculpture with lighting east of E Street
- Signage showing distance to EIU
- 20' x 20' sitting wall
- 100' of native wildflower plantings east of 5<sup>th</sup> Street
- 100' of split rail fence on south side of trail, east of 5<sup>th</sup> Street and west of the railroad

### Background

There are two grass areas east of the 5<sup>th</sup> Street Intersection along the trail. The trail crosses the Eastern Illinois Railroad at this location and there is not a good connection to 6<sup>th</sup> Street from the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail. This section of trail is about 1 mile to Eastern Illinois University.



### Recommendations

This location should incorporate native natural features and cultural elements along with outdoor seating areas. A new trail connection should be made at this location to connect users to 6<sup>th</sup> Street from the Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail in order to direct the users through downtown Charleston to Eastern Illinois University. Adding a split rail fence to the west of the railroad; a wildflower planted area on the east of the sitting area; and adding an outdoor sculpture will bring new positive features to this area of trail.



150' 500'