



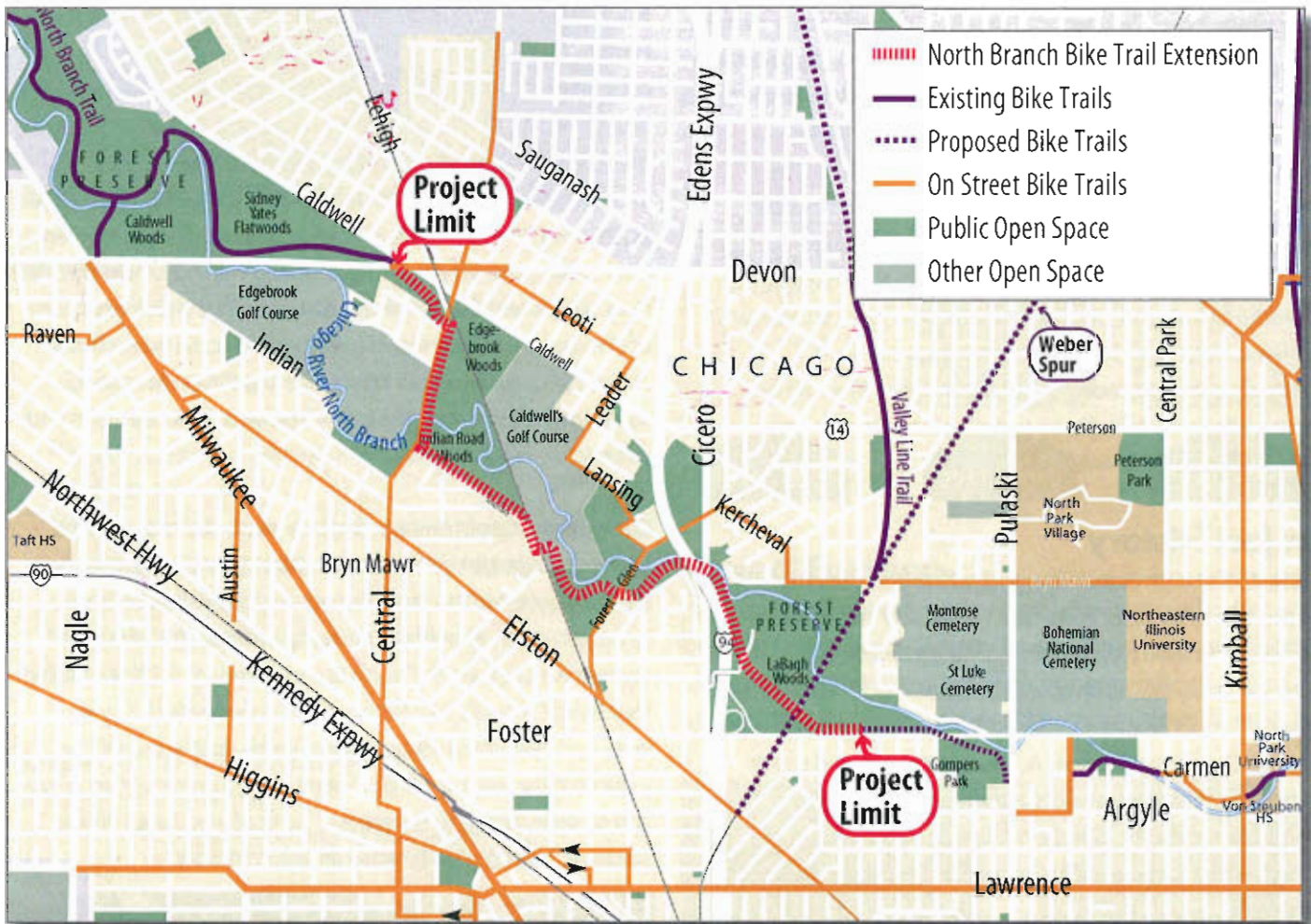
North Branch Bike Trail Extension

OPEN HOUSE PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Tuesday, August 10, 2010 (5:00 pm – 7:00 pm)

Mathew Bieszczat Volunteer Resource Center

6100 North Central Avenue; Chicago, Illinois 60644



Project Location

The trail will be located primarily on Forest Preserve property and will meander through Edgebrook Woods, Indian Road Woods, Forest Glen Woods, and La Bagh Woods between Devon Avenue and Foster Avenue beginning at Caldwell Avenue and ending on the east side of the Edens Expressway in the City of Chicago, Cook County.

North Branch Bike Trail Extension

Project Overview

The proposed North Branch Trail extension will connect to the existing North Branch Trail located on the north side of the Devon/Caldwell Avenue intersection and continue southeast to connect to the future trail (Weber Spur) proposed by the City of Chicago to be located on the north side of Foster Avenue east of the Edens Expressway/Foster Avenue interchange.

The trail will provide the residents of Indian Road Woods, Old Edgebrook, Albany Park, Sauganash, and Forest Glen direct access to the existing North Branch Bicycle Trail. This project will serve as an important segment of the connection between the North Branch Trail and the City of Chicago Lakefront Trail. Consideration will be given to addressing all modes of transportation and striving to preserve scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources while maintaining and enhancing safety and mobility. The trail will also provide safety benefits by replacing the existing narrow and sub-standard sidewalks.

Project History

The District's North Branch Bike Trail is 20 miles in length; it is the District's longest linear trail system, and one of the District's most used bicycle trails receiving over 250,000 visitors annually (based on counts conducted in 1990 by Forest Preserve District and the U.S. Forest Service). The existing trail begins at Devon and Caldwell Avenues in Chicago and travels north through 10 communities including Chicago, Niles, Morton Grove, Skokie, Golf Glenview, Wilmette, Northfield, Winnetka and terminating in Glencoe at the Chicago Botanic Gardens.

Federal funding was requested for this project to fund phase I engineering, phase II engineering and construction of 4.2 miles of paved bicycle trail to extend the District's North Branch Trail south from Devon and Caldwell Avenues to the District's Irene Hernandez Picnic Grove at Foster and Kostner Avenues. From this point, cyclists would have access to the City of Chicago's designated bike routes. The project also includes two new bridges and one new signalized at-grade railroad crossing.

Connecting the District's trail to the City's trail has been part of both agencies long range plans to bring together two of the region's best used trails. The proposed trail is included in the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Implementation Program.

Extension of the North Branch Trail would create a wide range of linkages between residential areas, employment and shopping centers, Metra stations and PACE routes. There are two (2) Metra commuter railroad stations (Edgebrook and Forest Glen) in the project vicinity. The Edgebrook train station is located adjacent to the trail, at the intersection of Caldwell & Central Avenues. At this location, Metra's Milwaukee District North Line, PACE routes 225 & 226 and CTA routes 84 & 85A are accessible. The Forest Glen train station, also serving Metra is located within 2 blocks of Forest Glen Woods and Elston Avenue. Elston Avenue is part of the City of Chicago's Bike System; commuter cyclists could access Elston Avenue and head north to Milwaukee and Devon Avenues or south to Kinzie Avenue. The trail will provide direct access to both stations.

Currently, the City of Chicago provides an on-street designated bike route to guide cyclists from the District's trail system to the City's trail system. The proposed 4.2 mile trail extension is sure to provide safety benefits by providing cyclists an off-street trail connection between the North Branch Bicycle Trail (20 miles) and the City of Chicago's Bike Network (230 mile network of trails, lanes and designated routes). Auto-bicycle conflicts would be reduced since the trail will be located along a preserved greenway and provides access to hundreds of acres of woodland, prairie, wetlands, and floodplain within an urban corridor.





Benefits

- Provide safety to bicyclists and pedestrians by reducing conflicts between bicycle and vehicular traffic
- Connect the existing North Branch Bicycle Trail to the City of Chicago Lakefront Trail
- Provide access to preserved greenway for nature appreciation
- Provide access to many residential and business areas by providing an alternative to vehicular transportation.
- Provide safety benefit by replacing existing narrow sidewalks adjacent to high speed roads with a trail set back from the road.

Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Inform citizens about an exciting new bicycle trail opportunity
- Obtain input from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders and interested persons an opportunity to provide comments to the project team.

The Role of Stakeholders

A stakeholder is anyone who is affected by the project and has interest in its outcome. Their role is to provide suggestions to the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) on issues related to the design throughout the entire study process and to help identify elements of the project purpose and need. All input from all participants in the process is valued and will be

IDOT Project Phases

Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) projects progress through three phases. The current phase, Phase I, is also referred to as the Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Studies. Through analyses of existing site conditions: floodplain, wetland, topography, vegetation, street, river and railroad crossings, alternatives were developed and evaluated, and a preferred alternative was selected. In Phase II, or detailed design, plans are developed. After Phase II is complete, Phase III, the actual construction of the project begins.



Project Funding

Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Study and Final Design for this project is federally funded at an 80/20 split. Eight percent (8%) of the project funding is being provided through a grant from CMAQ – Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Program.



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QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND INFORMATION

To become part of the official public informational meeting record, written comments and opinions may be submitted during the public informational meeting or can be mailed to the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and received no later than August 24, 2010.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Attn: Pam Sielski, Project Manager
Department of Planning and Development
536 N. Harlem Avenue, River Forest, Illinois 60305



Additional Resources

- Chicago Department of Transportation, (312) 742-BIKE (2453)
- Chicago Park District, (312) 742-4244
- Active Transportation Alliance, (312) 427-3325
- League of Illinois Bicyclists, (630) 978-0583