



Legislation Text

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City Council Meeting Date: April 16, 2019

To: Mayor and City Council
City Administrator

From: David E. Bennett, Public Works Director/City Engineer

Consider Resolution Designating Mill Towns State Trail Location in Northfield

Action Requested:

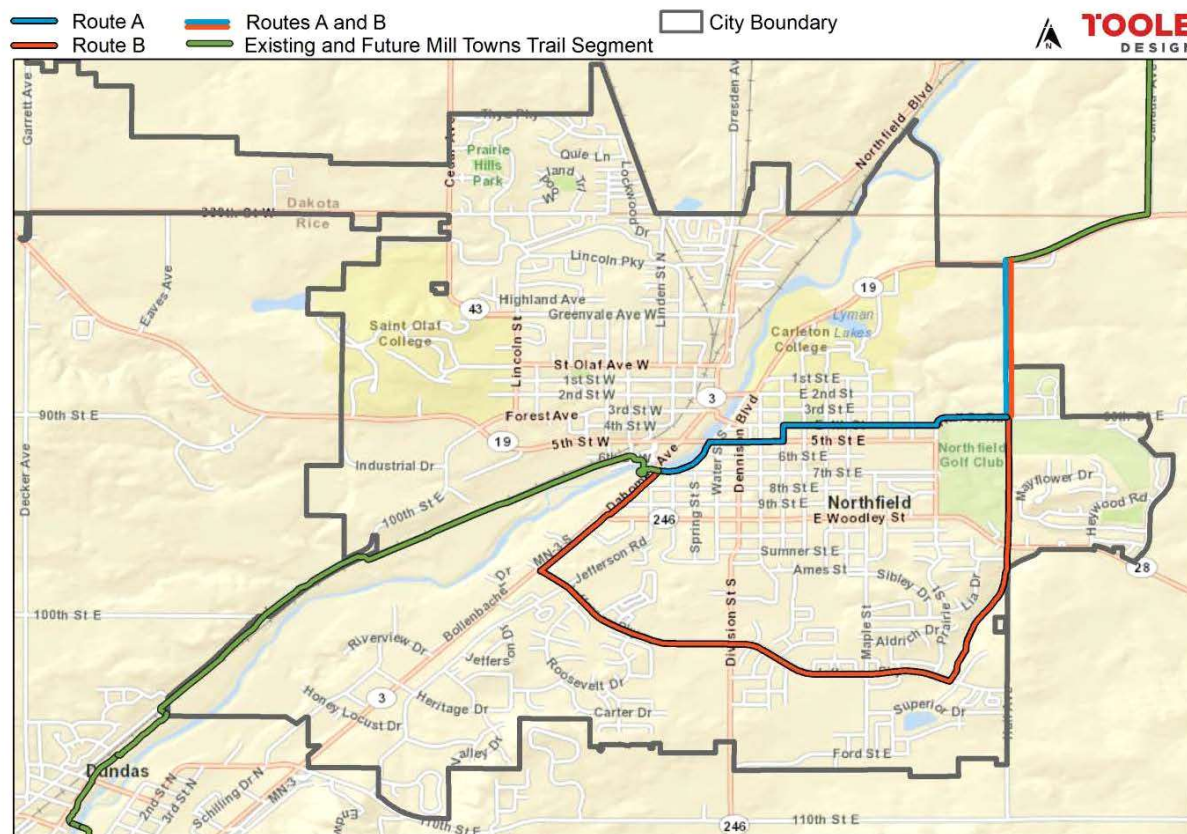
The Northfield City Council approves the attached Resolution designating the Mill Towns State Trail Location in the City of Northfield.

Summary Report:

In 2004, the City Council designated bike routes on Fourth Street, Fifth Street, and Union Street as part of Mill Towns State Trail. These bike routes currently exist, however this route does not meet the MN DNR State Trail Guidelines. To become designated as a state trail, the trail needs to be off the street or a protected bike lane.

As part of the City's Strategic Plan, a Pedestrian, Bike, and Trail System Plan update was completed. A focus area of the plan was to identify the location of Mill Towns State Trail in Northfield. Two options were presented to the public to receive feedback, Route A through downtown on Fifth Street, Union Street, and Fourth Street and Route B along TH 3 frontage road, Jefferson Parkway, and Spring Creek Road.

Figure 1: Possible routes for the Mill Towns State Trail through Northfield.



Respondents provided the reasons below for why they selected an option.

Participants that chose Route A stated the following reasons:

- It is the most direct
- It would serve the most people and the most businesses
- It would connect important cultural centers in the city (such as Carleton College)

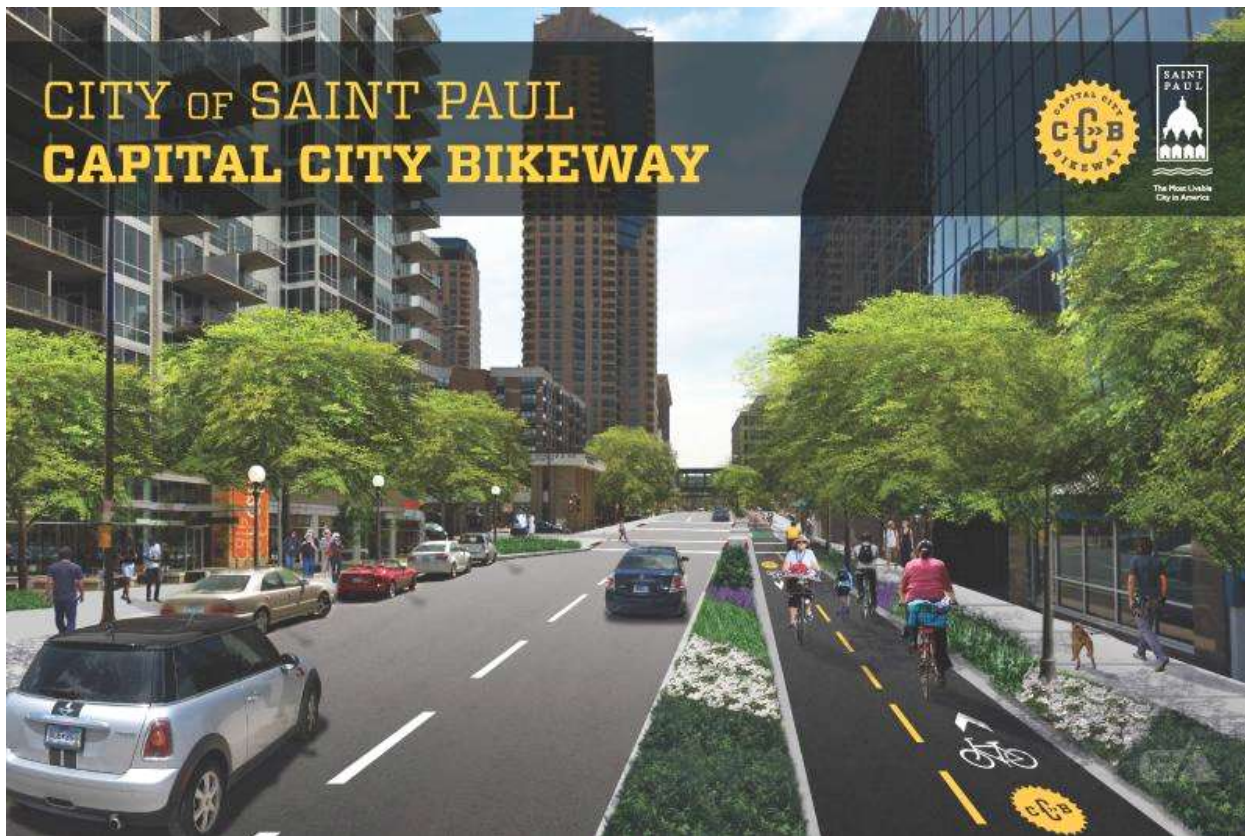
Participants that chose Option B stated the following reasons:

- It has fewer negative impacts on Downtown Northfield
- If Route A were selected, people anticipate a loss of business in the central core during construction and a permanent decrease in the number of parking spaces
- Serves more recreational uses
- Connects to more parks and schools
- Construction impact would be less disruptive
- Provides a far safer bicycling option on Jefferson Parkway
- Allows the existing on-street bicycle lanes to be maintained on Fourth Street and Fifth Street

A majority of the respondents (44 of 61) favored Option B, while a minority (17 of 61) favored Option A.

If Option A was designated as the State Trail, below are some images of what to expect for a design of a 2-way protected bike lane throughout the corridor. The lane on 5th street would likely be on the south side of the street

whereas on 4th street it would be on the north side of the road. There would be loss of on street parking stalls on at least the side that the 2-way protected trail would be located. See attached hyperlink attachments for more examples and information on protected trails.





Even if this route were not selected as the Mill Towns State Trail route, it would be a primary bike trail corridor linking the downtown to the Mill Towns State Trail. The City would have more design flexibility on determining how the bike trail would be designed. For example, it could still be designed to have a 2-way protected trail like the images below but it also could be an on-street bike trail like it is now, a combination of protected and non-protected or other possible solutions.

The proposed alignment as recommended from the public feedback is Option B as shown in the Recommended Exhibit 1. Most of the trail segment would be off street trail. This will follow State Trail Guidelines when constructed, and therefore can officially become a state trail.

The consultant Toole Design is recommending approval of the attached resolution designating Option B as the trail routing alignment. Under this option the Option A route would be a local connecting trail route.

There have been some discussions related to potential trailhead, kiosk and wayfinding options for one or both routes. These were not included in the scope of services. However, staff did identify a few potential city owned trailhead locations for the trails as well as primary kiosk areas to draw attention to the downtown. There would be further planning and implementation in the future to explore how to best provide easy access points to the trail for visitors as well as simple navigation to the trails and areas of interest.

Alternative Options:

The Option A alternative is explained in the memo above. Under this option, the Option B route would be a local connecting trail route.

Financial Impacts:

The designation of the route will allow the City to collaborate with the MN DNR to pursue funding for the development of the trail. As a State trail, dependent on availability of funds the State of Minnesota would pay up to 100% of designing and constructing trails. The investment of State dollars into the local community to improve infrastructure for either route options is a significant community benefit. There may be cases on cost sharing or local responsibility depending on local interest of accelerating State plans for the trail development.

At this phase, staff is not pursuing a cost estimate of conceptual design as there are far too many variables and was not a scope of this project. The Option A has more street impacts that would require significant reconstruction costs. Option B would primarily be an off street trail but is longer and may pose numerous intersection challenges that could impact cost.

Tentative Timelines:

Staff will begin working on agreements with the MN DNR to develop the trail. The DNR has \$500,000 available in funding for preliminary and final design of the trail.