

## **1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION & OVERVIEW**

The 20<sup>th</sup> Street Power Line and Beerline Trail will be off-street paved non-motorized trails on Milwaukee's near north side. This project will connect residents in the surrounding densely populated neighborhoods to Milwaukee County and City parks, the regional trail system, and many other nearby community assets via a safe path separated from motor vehicle traffic.

This project will design and construct a 12-foot shared use trail on a WE Energies power line corridor parallel to N. 20<sup>th</sup> St. between W. Olive St. and W. Villard Ave. and on the former Beerline rail corridor between N. 24<sup>th</sup> Pl. and N. 20<sup>th</sup> St. The City owns the section of the former Beerline rail corridor and has received verbal approval from WE Energies that it can obtain a trail license for the power line corridor section. The power line corridor is 1.3 miles and the former rail corridor is 0.35 mile for a total of 1.65 miles. The proposed trail crosses six streets and will include enhanced crossing treatments at these locations. Crossing treatments may include high visibility crosswalks, curb extensions, raised crosswalks, median refuges, or other features. This project will also include wayfinding signs along the trail.

The WE Energies corridor section of the proposed trail begins and ends in parks: Milwaukee County's Meaux Park to the north and the recently renovated William Gore Park and Ervin Killiebrew basketball courts, both owned by the City, to the south. Meaux Park provides connections to the Oak Leaf Trail. To the southeast of this project area, 2.5 miles of trail have been built on the former Beerline rail corridor. There are plans to connect these sections of the Beerline together and to other existing and proposed trails.

Milwaukee County Parks (MCP) has submitted a TAP application for the Lincoln Creek and Northwest Side Trail Connectivity Plan, which would directly connect to this proposed project. If both are funded, there is great opportunity for the City and MCP to collaborate on outreach and engagement.

## **2. PROJECT PLANNING & PREPARATION & LOCAL SUPPORT**

The planning for this project to date has been conceptual. The N. 20<sup>th</sup> St. corridor appears in the 2010 City of Milwaukee Bicycle Plan as a proposed bike lane. It also appears as a potential trail corridor on the

## 20<sup>th</sup> Street Power Line and Beerline Trail

City of Milwaukee

TAP 2020 – 2024

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Milwaukee County Trails Network Plan and as a recommended trail in SEWRPC's Vision 2050 regional land use and transportation plan.<sup>1</sup> The comprehensive plan for the area, the Near North Area Plan, directs the City to, "promote increased access to the greenway corridor that consists of the Lincoln Creek Parkway, Lincoln Park, Milwaukee River, and Meaux Park. Consider walking and recreational paths where feasible for greater connectivity."<sup>2</sup> This project will directly achieve this goal. An amendment to the Near North Area Plan is currently underway. This amendment, titled Connecting the Corridor (CTC), will include a list of current and recommended projects, including this project.<sup>3</sup> This trail is also part of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's (RTC) Route of the Badger (ROTB) initiative, a 700-mile connected regional trail system that spans seven counties in southeastern Wisconsin.<sup>4</sup>

This project has great community support. Community outreach related to CTC has shown high demand for safe access to existing trails and parks; residents currently drive to reach these amenities. During conversations for the recently renovated William Gore Park and Ervin Killiebrew basketball courts, residents expressed a desire for a trail to connect the two and to extend further north so people living nearby would have safe, convenient access to these new facilities.

The ROTB initiative has helped community members see the bigger picture when it comes to trails connections throughout the region. RTC holds quarterly meetings that local government staff, biking and walking advocates, and other residents attend to discuss and learn about how the trail connections of ROTB are being achieved.

Expansion of the existing 2.5 miles of the Beerline Trail is supported by the Beerline Trail Neighborhood Development Project (BTNDP), a collaboration of public, private, nonprofit, and community partners, that works to activate the Beerline Trail to promote the health, well-being, and prosperity of area residents. Trail

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPC/VISION\\_2050/2050RegLandUseTranspPlan.htm](https://www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPC/VISION_2050/2050RegLandUseTranspPlan.htm)

<sup>2</sup> <https://city.milwaukee.gov/AreaPlans/NearNorth.htm#.Xii7rzJKiUk>

<sup>3</sup> <https://city.milwaukee.gov/AreaPlans/NearNorth/Connecting-the-Corridor.htm#.XhyUSv5KiUl>

<sup>4</sup> [http://gis.railstotrails.org/ROTB\\_Partners/](http://gis.railstotrails.org/ROTB_Partners/)

connections and further expansion will assist this group in achieving its goals and will create a more useful trail for residents.

The Northwest Side Community Development Corporation (NWS CDC), an economic and community development organization that serves the project area, has rallied residents around safe streets for walking and biking. NWS CDC has hosted two Promise Zone Rides, family-friendly rides that showcase completed or in-progress projects on the near north side. These rides have been held annually since 2017, with another planned for 2020. About 200 people have participated in the rides, showing demand for safe biking infrastructure in their neighborhood.

### **3. HISTORY OF SPONSOR SUCCESS, DELIVERABILITY AND COMMITMENT TO MULTIMODAL**

DPW staff has built two trail projects with federal funds – the Kinnickinnic River Trail and the Beerline Trail Extension – along with managing several other federally funded multimodal projects. City staff is confident that it will have the necessary resources to successfully implement the project on time and within budget.

One obstacle is achieving representative public involvement in lower income communities. Many areas within the affected neighborhoods tend to have low attendance at public meetings, and the residents who do attend may have higher average incomes or otherwise be unrepresentative of the community as a whole. The best way to address this issue will be to reach out to the community organizations and neighborhood associations that already have strong, ongoing relationships with local residents and can help solicit representative and meaningful public feedback. The City has fostered such relationships and is confident that the partnerships will ensure successful project delivery and support from the community.

In 2017, the City instituted a new multimodal unit within DPW. This multimodal unit consists of five full-time staff and four part-time interns. By committing more staff to multimodal initiatives, capacity has greatly increased to develop processes for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of its various programs and projects. The City has a history of including bike and pedestrian accommodations in street repaving and reconstruction projects. In October 2018, the City formalized this commitment by passing a Complete Streets

policy, which directs staff to reimagine streets as places for people of all ages and abilities using all modes of transportation. Policy implementation is overseen by the Complete Streets Committee. The City’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force also provides a community voice in pedestrian and bicycle projects.

#### **4. PROJECT UTILITY & CONNECTIVITY**

The proposed trail is surrounded by dense residential neighborhoods, with 10,600 people living in the three Census tracts adjacent to the project area.<sup>5</sup> This project has great potential for these residents to make utilitarian trips. Research shows that 60% of people are “interested but concerned” when it comes to bicycling for transportation. These individuals are worried about safety and may begin bicycling if they have a separated facility, such as a trail, on which to do so.<sup>6</sup> About 725 people are employed in the ¼-mile area surrounding the proposed trail, many in jobs along the former Beerline rail corridor.<sup>7</sup> The trail will provide a safe, comfortable way for people to bike or walk to these jobs. Through other trail connections, people can also conveniently travel to job centers in downtown and the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee.

The proposed trail will create safe, off-street connections to several community amenities. The north-south portion of the trail begins and ends in Meaux Park to the north and William Gore Park and Ervin Killibrew Basketball Courts to the south. MCP’s Oak Leaf Trail (OLT) also connects Meaux Park to Lincoln Park. Two elementary schools, one 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade school, and one high school are within ¼-mile of the trail. The trail will also provide direct connections to transit, including Milwaukee County Transit Service lines along W. Villard Ave., W. Hampton Ave., N. Green Bay Ave., and N. Teutonia Ave. The trail will also be a short distance from the line along W. Atkinson Ave. and the high frequency route on W. Capitol Dr. Trail users will be able to access two library branches, Atkinson and Villard, within a ½-mile of the trail. The trail intersects with W. Hampton Ave., providing access to retail and other businesses. People can also reach businesses along W. Capitol Dr. and W. Villard Ave. within a short distance of the project.

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<sup>5</sup> American Community Survey 2017, 5-year estimates

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/44597?a=237507>

<sup>7</sup> <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

This project will provide residents with connections to the regional multi-modal network. The trail will directly connect to the Milwaukee River Line of the OLT, a 130-mile trail system that runs throughout Milwaukee County. Trail users can take the Milwaukee River Line 1.5 miles from this connection to the Zip Line of the OLT. The Zip Line runs north to the Ozaukee County line and is directly connected to the Ozaukee County Interurban Trail, a 30-mile paved trail that spans the length of the county. Both the Zip Line and the Milwaukee River Line run south and connect trail users to the lakefront, downtown Milwaukee, and Lakeshore State Park. Once downtown, trail users can use on-street routes to reach the Hank Aaron State Trail, a 14-mile paved trail that runs west to the Waukesha County line.

#### **5. PROJECT BENEFIT – ENVIRONMENTAL, LIVABILITY, ECONOMIC JUSTICE, PUBLIC HEALTH, HISTORICAL PRESERVATION, & SAFETY**

This project will have many benefits. It will likely result in a mode shift from driving to walking or biking. This project is located in neighborhoods with high residential density paired with a concentration of jobs, businesses, schools, and other destinations – ideal conditions for biking and walking. Residents in this area state that they often drive to reach trails where they can safely bike and walk; this project will allow them to walk or bike in their own neighborhood. The trail will also connect people to nearby natural features, including many parks and the Milwaukee River.

The proposed trail will also have a great impact on public health. Residents in the adjacent Census tracts currently exhibit poor health behaviors, with 34.8% reporting no leisure-time physical activity, compared with 28.5% citywide.<sup>8</sup> These Census tracts also show that residents have higher rates of obesity than the rest of the City, with an average of 44.8% obesity compared to 38.2% citywide.<sup>9</sup> Integrating activity like biking and walking into daily life is one of the best ways for residents to improve health. This trail will allow nearby residents to be more active both for exercise and as a form of transportation to daily activities.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/500cities/index.htm>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/500cities/index.htm>

The project will also have great economic justice impacts. The northern terminus of the proposed trail is directly across N. 20<sup>th</sup> St. from Northlawn, an affordable housing development run by the Housing Authority of Milwaukee. The Census tracts surrounding the trail have higher concentrations of “communities of concern” than are found citywide, including 14.7% adults aged 65 and older (compared to 9.8% citywide), 31.6% residents below the federal poverty level (28.7% citywide), 14.5% residents with a disability (13.7% citywide), and 82.1% non-white residents (55.1% citywide).<sup>10</sup> In addition, 23.5% of nearby households have no access to a vehicle.<sup>11</sup> With the nearby amenities and many direct trail connections, this trail will provide access to jobs, education opportunities, and other services.

This project will address safety by providing a separated biking and walking facility. It will also include enhanced crossing treatments where the trail crosses streets. One crossing will be across W. Hampton Ave., a street identified in the 2019 Milwaukee Pedestrian Plan as one of the most dangerous streets in the City for people walking.<sup>12</sup> Safety improvements here will not only benefit trail users, but also people walking along or across W. Hampton Ave.

## **6. PROJECT CAPITALIZES ON, SUPPLEMENTS OR AUGMENTS AN EXISTING ROAD PROJECT**

This project is not part of an existing road project.

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<sup>10</sup> American Community Survey 2017, 5-year estimates

<sup>11</sup> American Community Survey 2017, 5-year estimates

<sup>12</sup> <https://city.milwaukee.gov/mpw/infrastructure/Walk-Milwaukee/Milwaukee-Pedestrian-Plan1.htm#.XijGejKiUk>