

RIVERSIDE DRIVE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS STUDY
POTENTIAL CROSSING OPPORTUNITIES

BROWN COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
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Riverside Drive Pedestrian Access Study

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Introduction

It is currently difficult to reach the Fox River Trail, businesses, and other destinations on the west side of Riverside Drive (STH 57) in Allouez because traffic travels at high speeds, motorists do not have to stop unless they encounter a red light at the STH 172 ramp intersection, and the highway is relatively wide. Just reaching Riverside Drive using a mode other than a motorized vehicle is also very hard because St. Joseph Street, Allouez Avenue, and nearly all the other streets that connect to Riverside Drive from the east currently lack sidewalks and bicycle accommodations.

In June of 2003, a workshop was held to identify methods of creating safe pedestrian crossings along Riverside Drive. The participants included Allouez Village Board and Planning Commission members, village staff, representatives of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Brown County Planning Commission, area business owners, and others who have a stake in reducing the highway's barrier effect and the authority to implement the recommended improvements. Following the workshop, the village and Brown County Planning Commission included a recommendation for a thorough study of potential Riverside Drive crossing opportunities in the Village of Allouez Comprehensive Plan, and the plan was adopted by the village board in February of 2004.

The purpose of the Riverside Drive Pedestrian Access Study is to address the comprehensive plan's recommendation by determining if safe and relatively inexpensive pedestrian crossings can be established along Allouez's segment of the highway. The study also examines possible methods of making it easier to reach many of the recommended Riverside Drive crossing points from Webster Avenue. To complete the study, Planning Commission staff included the following information for each crossing assessment:

Recommended Treatments. Each crossing assessment includes a list of treatments that should be implemented to enhance safety and accessibility. In some cases, the assessments also address methods of creating or enhancing connections between Riverside Drive and Webster Avenue.

Necessary Actions. Each assessment includes a list of actions that Planning Commission staff believes must occur before a crossing can be established. These actions are based on information received during interviews and other research activities conducted during the development of the study.

Project Overviews. The Project Overview sections of the assessments explain the details of the recommended projects and address special circumstances that exist.

Potential Funding Sources. Each assessment includes a section that identifies and explains some of the possible methods of paying for the recommended treatments.

Proposed Implementation Schedules. The level of detail of the implementation schedules varies by project. In some cases, the treatments recommended in the study can be implemented immediately or as parts of projects that are already scheduled (such as the 2006 Allouez Avenue reconstruction project), so tentative implementation schedules can be prepared. In other cases, the ability to implement a project hinges on something possibly happening in the future (such as a railroad proposing to abandon a rail right-of-way), so the implementation schedules for these projects are much less precise.

Potential Crossing Opportunities

Potential Crossing Opportunity 1: Canadian National Railroad Trestle

Recommended Treatments

- Convert the rail line to a trail (if the line is proposed for abandonment).
- Install switchback walkways on the southwest and northeast banks of the trestle.
- Install a sidewalk along the east side of Riverside Drive between the trestle's northeast switchback and Derby Lane (within the Riverside Drive right-of-way).

Necessary Actions

- The Canadian National Railroad must propose to abandon the rail line that runs parallel to Hastings Street in Allouez.



Project Overview

The Canadian National Railroad currently uses the rail line that runs across the north portion of Allouez, but the minimal amount of traffic on the rail line suggests that the line could be proposed for abandonment in the future. If abandonment is proposed, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) will likely attempt to purchase the rail right-of-way and cooperate with a local entity (such as Brown County) to convert the right-of-way to a trail. If the right-of-way is purchased and a trail is built, the project should be accompanied by “switchback” walkways that enable people to reach the new trail from the Fox River Trail and the neighborhoods northeast of the trestle. These walkways should be at least 10 feet wide and have large level platforms at each switchback point. The slope of the walkways should also conform to the standards in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).



Southwest bank of the railroad trestle



Northeast bank of the railroad trestle

In addition to the trail and switchback walkways, the village should construct a sidewalk along the east edge of the Riverside Drive right-of-way between the switchback on the northeast side of the trestle and Derby Lane. Although the land along this side of Riverside Drive is not flat and would likely have to be slightly terraced to accommodate a sidewalk, it would enable the village to establish a link between the trails and the residential and commercial areas north of the trestle and east of Riverside Drive. However, if the village is unable or unwilling to build a sidewalk between the trail and the existing sidewalk segment north of Derby Lane, a sidewalk should be constructed between the trail and Allouez Terrace to provide a safe connection to the neighborhoods.

Potential Funding Sources

Wisconsin Stewardship Program. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources could use funds from this program to purchase the rail right-of-way for an interim trail use if the line is proposed for abandonment in the future. If federal Enhancement Program funds are used to construct a trail on this right-of-way, Stewardship funds might also be available to cover the non-federal share of building the trail (which would be a minimum of 20 percent of the project’s cost). Stewardship funds were used to purchase the land for the Fox River Trail between Green Bay and Greenleaf and to cover the non-federal cost (20 percent) of the trail development project.

Federal Enhancement Funds through Wisconsin DOT's Statewide Multimodal Improvement Program (SMIP). The project application period for the FY 2005 through 2007 SMIP cycle ended in April of 2004, but Brown County, the Village of Allouez, or another local sponsor could apply for SMIP funds to fund up to 80 percent of the cost of constructing a trail on the rail right-of-way in the future. The SMIP could also cover the majority of the cost associated with building the switchbacks and the sidewalk recommended for Riverside Drive between the trestle and Derby Lane. The next SMIP application period will probably occur in the spring of 2006, and this funding cycle will likely be for fiscal years 2007 through 2009.

State Enhancement Program Funds. The Wisconsin DOT also offers enhancement funds for transportation-related projects that are within the right-of-way of highways controlled by the state. Since Riverside Drive is a state facility, the village could apply for funds from this program (if it exists in the future) to construct the sidewalk between the trestle and Derby Lane if the project does not receive SMIP funds.

Local Funds. The trail project will probably not occur if the state is unable to purchase the rail right-of-way or a local sponsor cannot obtain SMIP funds to cover the majority of the trail's construction costs, so the local share of any project that occurs will likely be relatively small. However, local funds (from the village and/or county) might be necessary to cover the non-federal share of a SMIP project if Stewardship funds are not available. The village might also have to cover the cost of building a sidewalk along Riverside Drive if State Enhancement Program funds are not available in the future, and a small village share will likely be required even if State Enhancement Program funds can be obtained.

Proposed Implementation Schedule

It is not possible to create a reliable implementation schedule for this project because it is not known if or when the Canadian National Railroad plans to abandon the rail line. However, if the line is proposed for abandonment in the future, the village, county, and state should work together to develop the agreements and obtain the grants necessary to purchase the rail right-of-way and construct the trail and trail connections recommended in this section of the study.

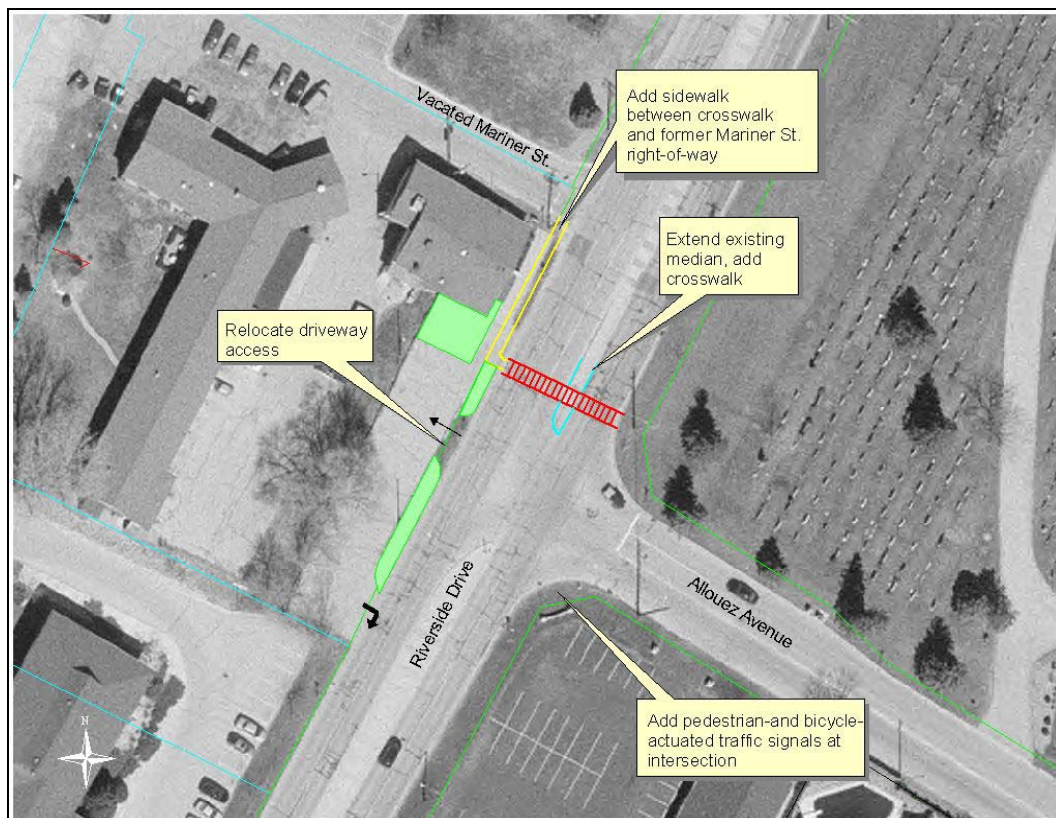
Potential Crossing Opportunity 2: Intersection of Riverside Drive and Allouez Avenue

Recommended Treatments

- Add pedestrian- and bicycle-actuated traffic signals at the intersection of Riverside Drive and Allouez Avenue when Allouez Avenue is reconstructed in 2006.
- Create a well-defined pedestrian crossing on the north side of the intersection that connects to the sidewalk that will be built on the north side of Allouez Avenue in 2006.
- Add a sidewalk along the west side of Riverside Drive between the pedestrian crossing and the vacated Mariner Street right-of-way.
- Modify Cheffetta's Restaurant's Riverside Drive access points to fit the signalized intersection.

Necessary Actions

- Riverside Drive must be converted from its current status as a state trunk highway to a state connecting highway.
- A study must be completed to estimate if the intersection will meet traffic signal warrants if a signal is installed.
- Public access to the vacated Mariner Street right-of-way must be allowed.
- The locations of Cheffetta's Restaurant's driveways along Riverside Drive should be adjusted to enable a signalized intersection to work safely and efficiently.



Project Overview

In 2006, the Brown County Highway Department plans to reconstruct Allouez Avenue between the East River and Riverside Drive as a two lane street with bicycle lanes and sidewalks. Because Allouez Avenue will be the only street in the village that provides formal bicycle and pedestrian connections to Riverside Drive, it is crucial that measures be taken to enable people to safely cross the street to reach the Fox River Trail and other destinations on the street's west side. These measures should be implemented when the street is reconstructed to minimize costs and maximize system continuity.



View of the Riverside Drive/Allouez Avenue intersection (Mariner Street is in the background)



View of the west side of Riverside Drive

Initially, Planning Commission staff believed that a roundabout at the Riverside Drive/Allouez Avenue intersection would be the best method of maximizing safety and accessibility for all modes of transportation. However, staff discovered that the existing right-of-way is too small to accommodate the kind of roundabout that would have to be built at this intersection. Planning staff also assumed that acquiring the necessary amount of right-of-way for a roundabout would be very expensive and disruptive to the nearby land uses. These right-of-way constraints led planning staff to conclude that the best available option at the intersection is the installation of a traffic signal and the creation of a well-defined crosswalk that will maximize pedestrian and bicyclist visibility. The crosswalk would be best situated on the south side of Allouez Avenue to enable it to pass through the large existing raised island in the center of Riverside Drive, but Allouez Avenue's narrow right-of-way and the proximity of existing development to the street will likely force the county highway department to place a sidewalk (and, as a result, the crosswalk) only on the street's north side. Before the intersection is modified, however, the classification of Riverside Drive must also be changed and a traffic signal warrant study must be completed.

Reclassification of Riverside Drive and Traffic Signal Warrant Study

Before a signalized intersection and crosswalk are built at the intersection, the village must contact the WisDOT District 3 Office to discuss changing Riverside Drive's classification from a state trunk highway to a state connecting highway. Since Riverside Drive is a state trunk highway, Allouez has no direct control over access, signalization, speed limits, or any other aspect of the street, and WisDOT District 3 representatives have stated in the past that the district will not support the installation of signals at Riverside Drive intersections that do not meet traffic volume warrants. But reclassifying

Riverside Drive as a state connecting highway will allow the village to make its own decisions about access and speed limits along the street, and the reclassification (coupled with a traffic signal warrant study) will likely be necessary for the state to consider placing a signal at the Allouez Avenue intersection. The state connecting highway classification will also entitle the village to annual payments from the state to cover the costs of routine maintenance, snow plowing, and other work, and the state will pay a significant portion of the costs associated with reconstructing the street. Basically, it appears that Allouez's willingness to assume some financial and administrative responsibility for Riverside Drive will result in a greater amount of authority over the street's characteristics throughout the entire village. It also appears that reclassification and a traffic signal warrant study must occur to enable the village and/or county to add signals at the Riverside Drive/Allouez Avenue intersection.

Other Issues

In addition to reclassifying Riverside Drive and completing a traffic signal warrant study, the village should cooperate with the owners of the Cheffetta's Restaurant and Schenk Business Solutions properties to create a formal Fox River Trail access easement through the vacated Mariner Street right-of-way. The state, village, and county should also study the location of Cheffetta's Restaurant's driveways to determine if one of the driveways should serve as the west leg of the Allouez Avenue intersection.

Potential Funding Sources

State Enhancement Program Funds. If this program exists in the future, the village or county should ask the state to set aside funds from the State Enhancement Program to cover the cost of adding patterned and/or colored concrete, a pedestrian refuge, and other features to the crosswalk on the intersection's north side when Allouez Avenue is reconstructed in 2006. The short sidewalk segment recommended for the west side of Riverside Drive would also be eligible for funds from this program if it is built within the highway's right-of-way.

Hazard Elimination and Safety Program Funds. It is possible that federal Hazard Elimination and Safety (HES) Program funds could be obtained to modify the intersection and add the recommended signals if the intersection is determined to be hazardous enough to warrant these funds in the future. If HES Program funds are approved for the intersection, the program will cover 90 percent of the project's cost.

Local Funds. If State Enhancement Program funds are not available for this project, the village and county should incorporate the costs of enhancing the intersection into the overall cost of the Allouez Avenue reconstruction project.

Proposed Implementation Schedule

The tentative implementation schedule for these recommendations is summarized below:

- The Village of Allouez and Wisconsin DOT should agree to reclassify the village's portion of Riverside Drive as a state connecting highway before the summer of 2005. This will allow the treatments recommended for the Riverside Drive/Allouez Avenue

intersection to be included in the Allouez Avenue reconstruction project's final design.

- The Brown County Planning Commission should complete a traffic signal warrant study before the summer of 2005 for the Allouez Avenue intersection to estimate the impact of placing a signal at the intersection.
- The recommended intersection treatments should be implemented when Allouez Avenue is reconstructed in 2006.

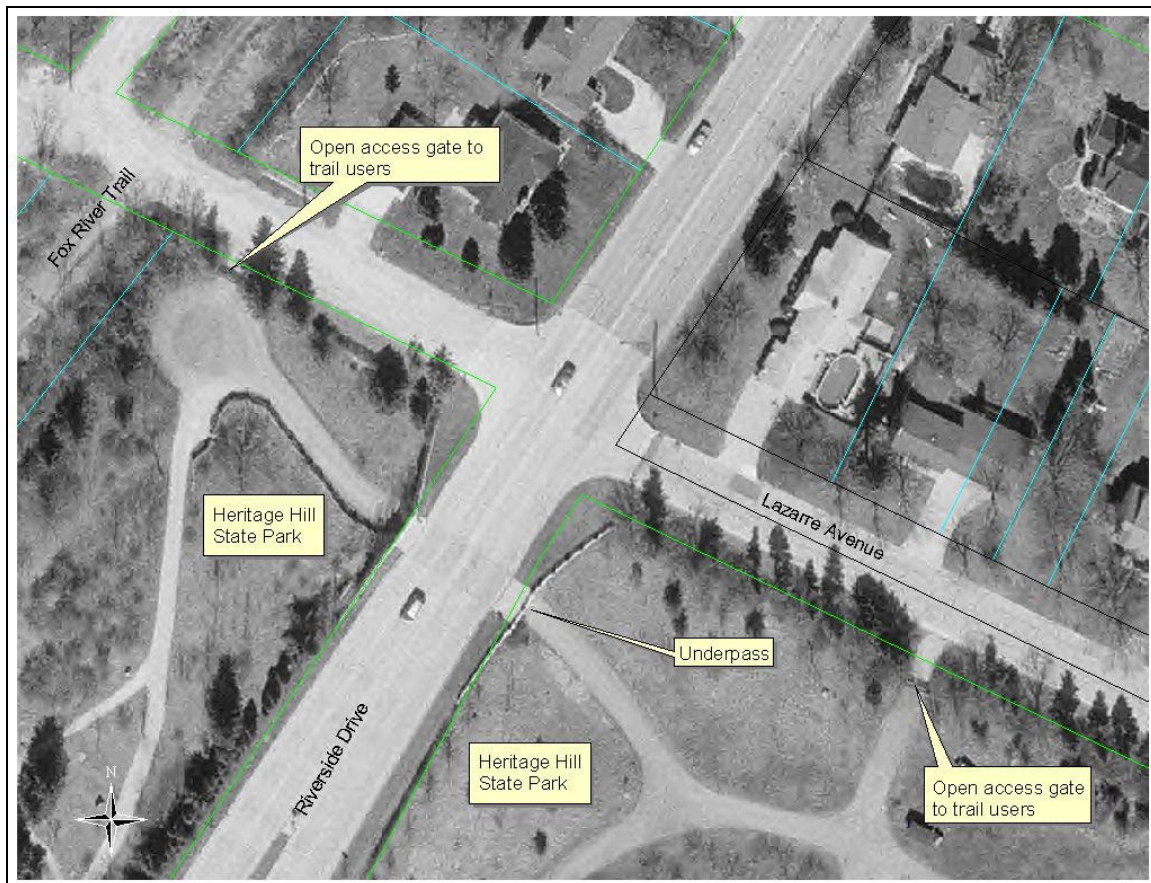
Potential Crossing Opportunity 3: Heritage Hill State Park

Recommended Treatments

- Open Heritage Hill State Park's existing Lazarre Avenue access gates to the public to allow trail users to cross Riverside Drive by using the underpass.
- Create a path between the east end of Lazarre Avenue and the village's water tower property by adding a parallel fence inside Heritage Hill's existing northeast fence line.

Necessary Actions

- Public access to Heritage Hill State Park's Riverside Drive underpass must be allowed by the Heritage Hill Corporation.
- An easement must be created along the park's northeast boundary to connect Lazarre Avenue to the village's water tower property.
- Public access through the water tower property from Webster Avenue must be allowed by the Village of Allouez.



Project Overview

Heritage Hill Underpass

Heritage Hill State Park is one of the many attractions along the Fox River Trail, but many people do not realize they are passing through the park property when they use the trail because the developed portion of the park is obstructed by a large brush-covered fence. In addition to being a significant attraction in Allouez, the park contains the only grade-separated Riverside Drive pedestrian crossing in the village. This crossing represents a cost-free opportunity to connect the Fox River Trail to the park by allowing trail users to enter and exit the park through the existing Lazzarre Avenue access points on the east and west sides of Riverside Drive and to cross the street using the park's pedestrian underpass.



Riverside Drive underpass



Park access point west of Riverside Drive

As simple as providing access to the underpass might seem, opening the Lazzarre Avenue gates to trail users might result in trail users and others wandering through the park and visiting its attractions without paying an admission fee. If this occurs, the park could consider working with the Friends of the Fox River Trail and other volunteers to construct a split rail fence or other barrier that is consistent with the park's theme to channel people between the two Lazzarre Avenue access points. Since the park and trail are both state facilities that are overseen by the Wisconsin DNR, it might even be possible to avoid having to keep many trail users out of the park by offering daily and annual park/trail passes that allow unlimited visits to state parks and state trails. However it is accomplished, it is extremely important to take advantage of this opportunity to enable trail users to safely cross Riverside Drive and create a physical connection between the park and trail.

To make providing trail access through the park as easy on the park staff as possible, it is recommended that the Lazzarre Avenue gates initially be open between Memorial Day and Labor Day during the park's hours of operation. Allowing people to use the underpass between these dates will enable park staff to informally monitor the Lazzarre gates while allowing children and others to cross Riverside Drive safely during the trail's most heavily used season.

Webster/Lazarre Connection

Enabling people to safely cross Riverside Drive is the focus of this study, but a potential opportunity to connect people to the Fox River Trail from neighborhoods east of Heritage Hill State Park also exists at the village's Webster Avenue water tower property north of the park's main entrance. If a fence is installed inside the existing fence at the northeast corner of the park, an easement can be created through the park that will enable people to reach Lazarre Avenue from Webster Avenue via the path that leads to the water tower. After passing through the park easement, people could walk along lightly-traveled Lazarre Avenue to reach the park's underpass during the summer and the Riverside Drive/Lazarre Avenue intersection throughout the year.



In addition to providing a convenient connection to the trail for people who live east of Webster Avenue and north of STH 172, this easement would be another opportunity for the park to advertise its attractions to pedestrians, bicyclists, and other trail users who might miss them if their only other option is to speed by on the surrounding county and state highways. The park might also expand its parking lot to the north in the future, and the new parking area could serve as a trailhead if the proposed easement is in place.



Path leading to water tower from Webster Avenue



Heritage Hill's northeast boundary. The water tower is immediately east of the fence line.

Although creating the easement would require some tree trimming, brush removal, and fence installation, the easement would be relatively short (approximately 230 feet) and would affect an unused section of the park. Before the easement is created, however, it will be necessary for the village to allow people to use the path leading to the water tower to reach it. The project should also be discussed with the residents of the home immediately north of the water tower before it begins, and archeological clearance will likely be necessary if a paved trail is installed within the easement.

Potential Funding Sources

One of the most appealing aspects of these opportunities is that they can be implemented at very little or no cost. For instance, access to the Riverside Drive underpass can be established by merely opening the existing Lazarre Avenue gates on the east and west sides of Riverside Drive. The parallel fence recommended for the northeast portion of the park and devices that might be necessary to keep underpass users from wandering through the park will not be free, but their costs will likely be relatively low. Some possible methods of funding these items include:

Community Assistance Program. The Community Assistance Program is offered by the Wisconsin DNR through the state budget for projects like this one, but the opportunity to obtain funds through this program is infrequent (the current budget is being prepared for fiscal years 2005-2007) and is subject to legislative scrutiny.

Wisconsin Stewardship Program. It is possible that funds from the Wisconsin Stewardship program could be set aside for this project.

Local funds. Funds from the Village of Allouez and possibly Brown County are another potential source of funding for the easement fence and other costs associated with the project.

Private donations. The Heritage Hill Corporation, Friends of the Fox River Trail, and other groups and individuals could donate money and labor for the project.

Proposed Implementation Schedule

The tentative implementation schedule for these recommendations is summarized below:

- Heritage Hill's underpass should be opened to the public after May 31, 2004 (Memorial Day observed).
- Allouez and Brown County Planning Commission staff should meet with representatives of the Wisconsin DNR and Heritage Hill State Park in the summer of 2004 to discuss obtaining funds to create the Webster Avenue connection through the northeast corner of the park. The connection should then be created as soon as funds are available for the project.

Potential Crossing Opportunity 4: Intersection of Riverside Drive and the STH 172 eastbound exit ramp

Recommended Treatments

- Construct a sidewalk between Webster Avenue and Riverside Drive along the south side of the STH 172 eastbound access road. This sidewalk should be situated along the outside edge of the existing ramp right-of-way.
- Create a well-defined pedestrian crossing on the south side of the Riverside Drive/STH 172 access road intersection between the new sidewalk and the Heritage Hill property on the west side of Riverside Drive. The crossing should pass through the existing median to enable the median to serve as a pedestrian refuge.
- Move the northbound stop line to a point behind the new crosswalk.
- Construct a trail between the new Riverside Drive crossing and the Fox River Trail.
- Ask the Wisconsin DOT to consider moving the eastbound access road's ramp connection to a point west of the existing connection point.

Necessary Actions

- A sidewalk must be installed between Riverside Drive and Webster Avenue along the south side of the STH 172 eastbound access road for this project to be justified.
- An easement agreement must be signed by Brown County, Heritage Hill State Park, Wisconsin DNR, and possibly the Village of Allouez before a trail can be built through the park property.
- The construction of a new trail between Riverside Drive and the Fox River Trail must be approved by the Heritage Hill Corporation.

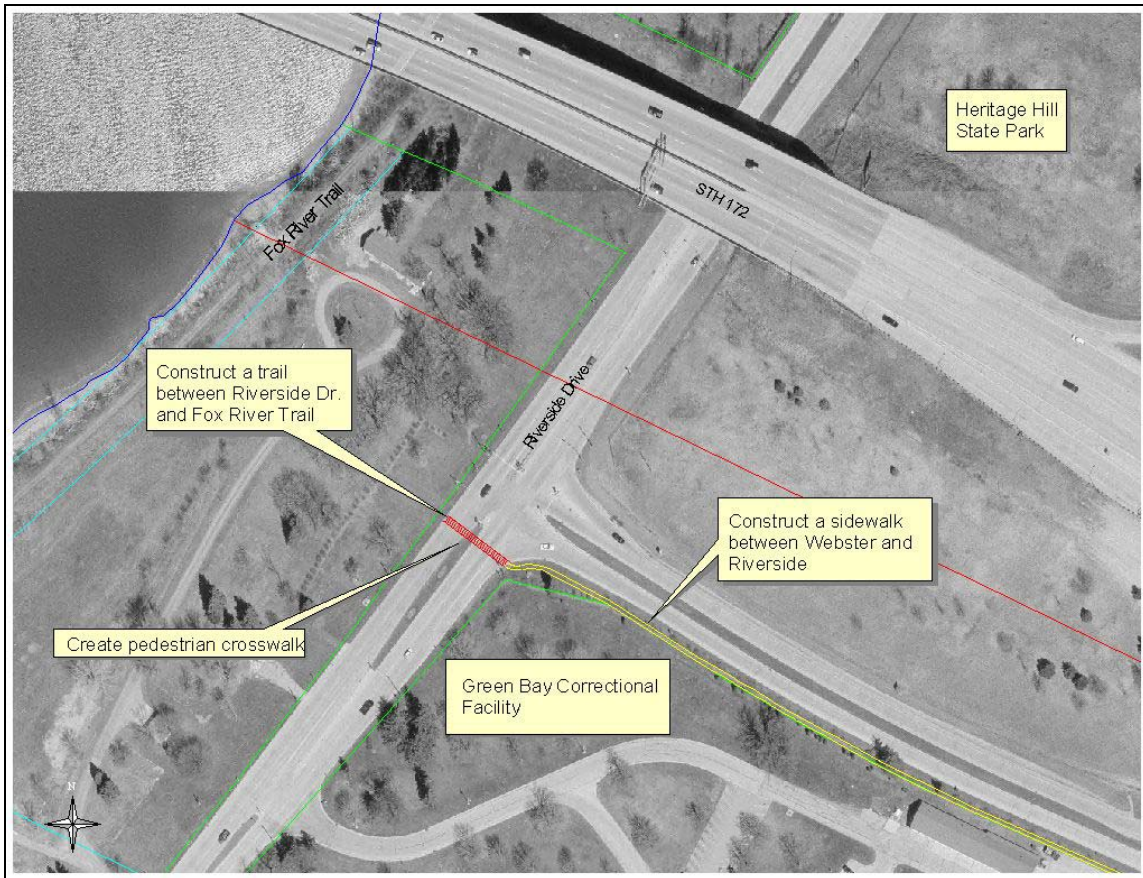
Project Overview

The primary purpose of this project is to provide a safer and more convenient route to the Fox River Trail for people who live south of STH 172 and east of Webster Avenue. The key to implementing this project is the construction of a sidewalk along the south side of the STH 172 eastbound access road that connects the signalized Webster Avenue intersection to the signalized Riverside Drive intersection. When this sidewalk is built, the next steps will be to establish well-defined crosswalks at the intersections of Webster Avenue and Riverside Drive and to construct a trail that extends from the Riverside Drive intersection to the Fox River Trail.

Sidewalk Between Webster Avenue and Riverside Drive

The most difficult aspect of this project will likely be the construction of a sidewalk along the access road's south side. The access road's existing right-of-way width should be sufficient to accommodate a sidewalk between Webster and Riverside, but the right-of-way might be a little narrow near Webster. A possible wetland area west of Webster might also make it difficult to fit a sidewalk in the right-of-way, but moving the access road's connection point to the west (to create a new yield-controlled intersection with the exit ramp) would create additional space for the sidewalk. Although WisDOT is not currently planning to realign the access road, it would be one way to create more space

for a sidewalk, and it might address the uncomfortable merge point west of Webster Avenue. In addition to these issues, the shrubs that line the Allouez Correctional Institution's fence along the access road might have to be trimmed or removed to enable the sidewalk to fit next to the road.



Trail Between Riverside Drive and the Fox River Trail

After speaking to the manager of Heritage Hill State Park and examining the park property between the Riverside Drive intersection and the Fox River Trail, planning staff found that it would be physically possible to create a nearly direct connection between the intersection and trail. In addition to serving as a means of reaching the Fox River Trail from Riverside Drive, this connection would likely be retained if the park expands to the south in the future.



Signalized intersection at Webster Avenue and the STH 172 eastbound exit ramp



Signalized intersection at Riverside Drive and the STH 172 eastbound access road

Potential Funding Sources

Federal Enhancement Funds through Wisconsin DOT's Statewide Multimodal Improvement Program (SMIP). The Village of Allouez or another local sponsor could apply for SMIP funds to fund up to 80 percent of the cost of constructing the sidewalk recommended for the south side of the access road, the pedestrian crossing at Riverside Drive, and the trail between the Riverside Drive crosswalk and Fox River Trail. As mentioned earlier, the next SMIP application period will probably occur in the spring of 2006, and this funding cycle will likely be for fiscal years 2007 through 2009.

State Enhancement Program Funds. Allouez or another local sponsor could apply for State Enhancement Program funds (if the program exists in the future) to construct the sidewalk between Webster Avenue and Riverside Drive and the crosswalk recommended at Riverside Drive if the project does not receive SMIP funds.

Wisconsin Stewardship Program. Wisconsin Stewardship Program funds might be available to cover a portion of the costs associated with constructing the trail between the crosswalk and Fox River Trail.

Wisconsin DNR Community Assistance Program. It is possible that the trail recommended between Riverside Drive and the Fox River Trail could be a provision in Wisconsin's biennial budget because it would be located within an area owned by the state.

Local Funds. If grant funds are not available for this project, Allouez should still consider funding the construction of the sidewalk between Webster Avenue and Riverside Drive. If the village plans to build the sidewalk, it should encourage Heritage Hill State Park to construct the trail between Riverside Drive and the Fox River Trail. The village should also be prepared to pay the local share of the cost of building the recommended facilities if grant funds are available.

Proposed Implementation Schedule

If Allouez wants to complete the sidewalk segment between Webster Avenue and Riverside Drive, most of the project can be completed as soon as the village is able to build the sidewalk. The trail between Riverside Drive and the Fox River Trail might take

more time to complete because it will require the development of an easement agreement between Brown County, Heritage Hill State Park, Wisconsin DNR, and possibly the Village of Allouez before it can be built.

Msw: Riverside Drive Pedestrian Access Study (final final) – November 2004