Project Description

The project consists of constructing a sidepath, for use by both pedestrians and bicyclists, along the north side of Oakton Street between Des Plaines River Road and the Des Plaines River Trail. In addition, a refuge median is to be added to improve the safety of the existing Des Plaines River Trail crossing of Oakton Street.

Project Background
In 2010, the City partnered with the Forest Preserve District on the improvement of three miles of the regional Des Plaines River Trail through Des Plaines. This project was very well-received and was one of the rare construction projects where the construction engineer was greeted with little but excitement by constituents throughout the duration of the construction.

While the condition of the trail has now been greatly improved, the lack of safe connections to the trail from surrounding neighborhoods and local bike networks remains a major issue. Under current conditions, there are no safe pedestrian/bicycle connections to the trail for the several mile length of the City south of US Route 14. Anecdotes of residents packing up their car and driving ½ mile to be able to use the trail are common.

The Des Plaines River Trail Corridor Plan, completed in 2014 through a partnership with the Northwest Municipal Conference and CMAP, highlighted this issue, with dozens of residents responding to the study survey to request safe trail connections (see attached excerpts).

Project Location
Oakton Street is considered the first choice for a facility due to the limited number of obstacles, the evidenced and expressed demand, and its central location, meaning it can benefit the greatest number of users.

The project is largely located within unincorporated Cook County, adjacent to Cook County Forest Preserve, between the municipalities of Des Plaines and Park Ridge. The historical lack of any pedestrian/bicycle facilities along this stretch of arterial, as well as adjacent arterials, has been attributed to this “in-between” location.

Project Benefits
The proposed sidepath will provide a singular, safe connection between the existing local bike networks, neighborhoods and commercial areas with the regional Des Plaines River Trail. As a sidepath, the connection will serve all ages and experience levels, and will be suitable for both commuters and recreational users. And the safety improvements at the existing Oakton Street trail crossing will benefit all users of the regional trail and encourage even greater use of the trail.

A more detailed description of how this project advances the priorities of the Connecting Cook County plan is provided as attachment. Along with exhibits illustrating the plans supporting the proposed Oakton Street project.
The thick brown line represents the municipal boundaries, Des Plaines at the west and Park Ridge at the east, with unincorporated area between.
Reduction in the 16’ wide painted median and realignment of lanes to allow creation of a 10’ wide protected path over the bridge.

New refuge median and rectangular rapid flashing beacons to improve safety of the existing trail crossing.

10’ wide asphalt sideway
Images begin at the west end of the proposed project and proceed eastward. All images are looking eastward unless otherwise indicated.

Looking east at the Oakton St/Des Plaines River Rd intersection being reconstructed as part of the greater River Rd reconstruction.

The intersection will be fully pedestrian accessible when completed.

Approaching the bridge over the Des Plaines River. There is an existing ~5’ wide raised concrete sidewalk on both the north and south sides of the bridge.

The lane closures are related to the current River Road reconstruction project to the east.
Guardrail area east of the bridge.

Area beyond the guardrail bridge approach.
Approaching the existing Des Plaines River Trail crossing of Oakton Street.

There are existing incandescent bulb flashing beacons located at approximately 300’ on each side of the crossing. This outdated technology has proven ineffective at drawing driver attention.

During rush hour, crossing Oakton Street can be difficult at this location.
Existing trail crossing at Oakton Street, looking north.

Approaching the existing Des Plaines River Trail crossing of Oakton Street.

Existing incandescent flashing beacon.

Well-defined “goat trail” at the south side, indicating demand for the trail connection.

The south side is currently easier for people to walk due to less brush growth when everything leafs out. However, it has less right-of-way available, and has significant slopes making it more difficult for build-out of a formal sidepath meeting recommended standards.

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