



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA) - Proposed Trail Project

March 1, 2018

- **What is the purpose of this proposed project?** - For the Lowell Community, this project extends the existing LARA trail system and provides non-motorized connections to three existing park facilities, and allows for safer walking and cycling options for all types of users. This project will provide a connection of two dead-end rail trail sections that currently terminate on east and north ends of the City of Lowell. As a regional trail, this connection will complete the 125 mile Fred Meijer Mid West Michigan Trail network, allowing for uninterrupted use from Owosso to Lowell to Greenville to Alma. Lowell has been designated as Trail Hub on the 125 mile network and will be a destination location for visiting trail users to the benefit of area businesses.
- **What trails will this project connect to?** - The proposed trail segment connects to the Fred Meijer Flat River Valley Rail Trail that goes to Belding, Greenville and Alma, the Fred Meijer Grand River Valley Rail Trail that goes to Saranac, Ionia, St. Johns and Owosso, the North Country national hiking trail and the LARA Phase 1 Trail that goes from Cherry Creek Elementary to Lowell High School and connects to the Cooper Woodland hiking trails and the hiking trails at the Wittenbach-Wege Nature Center.
- **Will the trail connect to downtown?** – Yes, There is a spur proposed on the east that will connect users to existing City sidewalks and streets 2 blocks from Main Street.
- **What is the scope of the project?** - Here is a link to a map showing the proposed route. In order to connect the two rail trail end points through Lowell, we have to cross M-21 and Hudson St. as well as the Flat River and the Grand River.

#### [Proposed Trail Route 03.01.18](#)

- **How long will this new project be?** - This new trail project will start at the new Lowell Township park at Bowes and M-21 on the west end and go to the existing dead end rail trail at S. Division on the east end and will add approximately 2.8 miles to the system. The total length of existing and new trail between the two Rail Trail connection points is 4.2 miles.
- **How much will it cost ?** - The preliminary cost for all components of this project is \$4,900,000. This includes the trail, a new pedestrian bridge over the lower Flat River and a new pedestrian bridge over the Grand River at S. Division Ave.
- **How will the project be funded?** - The LARA and the City of Lowell are applying for MDNR Trust Fund and MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants that will total approximately 71% of the costs. The other 30% will be raised from smaller regional grants and private sources. Total contributions from the City and the Townships are currently requested at \$35,000 (total, not each). Otherwise, no local tax dollars are to be used.

- **Why are we building bike trails when our roads are falling apart?** – The federal and state funds available for non-motorized trails are separate from the funds available to communities for road maintenance. The MDNR Trust Funds are derived from royalties received on the sale and lease of State-owned minerals (primarily oil and gas) and are dedicated to recreational projects. The MDOT TAP grant uses federal transportation funds designated by Congress for specific activities that enhance the intermodal transportation system and provide safe alternative transportation options. These funds cannot be used for vehicular street projects.
- **When is the proposed schedule for completion?** - Grant applications are being submitted in March, 2018. The project would most likely be completed in 2020.
- **Why isn't the trail using the new Lowell Township park bridge, then continuing east on the shoulders of Grand River Avenue to the rail trail?** - This route was considered, but was not selected for several reasons. First, one of the desired goals for this trail requires the placement of a fully independent non-motorized trail that would provide the safest access to all types of users. Placing bicycle riders on a narrow road shoulder, while legal, was not considered to meet the safety goals for this trail and requires the construction of a separate walkway for non-cyclist. Second, the City of Lowell was named as one of the designated Trail Hubs by MDNR and the National Park Service in their 2012 masterplan for this 125 mile trail network. A Grand River Ave. route totally bypasses the City of Lowell and access to the businesses and amenities in the downtown area. Last, the selected route provides access to the Township's North Grand River Riverfront Park as well as the City's Stoney Lakeside Park and the natural areas east of the fairgrounds, all important features necessary to be considered for maximum scoring points with the MDNR grant programs.

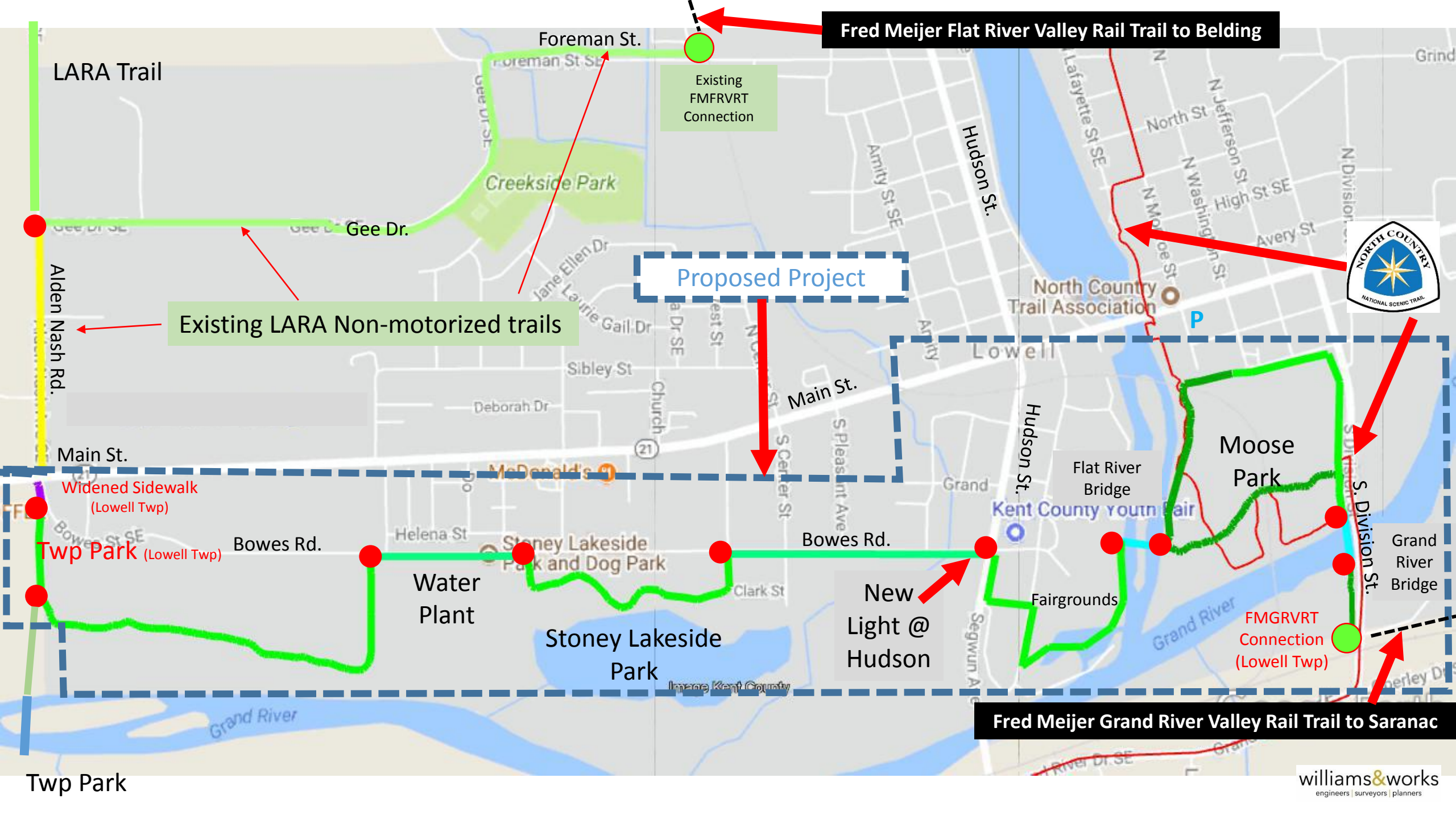
The new Lowell Township bridge does provide an opportunity to someday allow for a trail connection to the Ada trail system to the west as well as being a nice stopping point for all trail users.

- **Ok, so why was the south side of Bowes Rd. selected instead of the north side?** - Again, when selecting an ideal trail route, we look for several features including, but not limited to, safety, accessibility, interest, access to recreation and natural resource opportunities, and usability (how user friendly is the trail?). Starting on the west end, the first goal is to provide access to the new Lowell Township North Grand River Riverfront Park with its walking paths, restroom, playground, disc golf course, pickle ball courts and educational center. Next, this route contains a nice meandering 3,900 foot section that will get away from street edge for a while on private property that will have a view of the river. After a short segment on City right of way, the trail will go through Stoney Lakeside Park, again providing access to the beach, playground, restrooms and parking for local trail users. The last section will be back next to the street until it reaches Hudson, where a new pedestrian friendly traffic light being installed as a part of a street project this year will provide a safe crossing of this busy street.

The north side of Bowes Road provides no recreation, natural resource or amenity features. It also requires the crossing of 3 city street intersections (as opposed to 1 on the south side), and would restrict parking for a few homes that are close to the right of way.

- **Won't the trail get flooded in the fairgrounds area and east of the fairgrounds?** Yes, the trail in those areas will be impacted and unusable when the Grand River reaches flood stage. These are temporary situations and are unavoidable within the influence of the Grand River as demonstrated in our recent experience (February, 2018) that also impacted our other trail neighbors along the Grand River, including Ionia. This will require maintenance of the trail to remove debris and repair any impact to the trail.
- **Can't you just use the existing streets and sidewalks?** The study that looked at options for this trail connection did consider directing cyclist to use existing City streets and walkers to use existing sidewalks as opposed to installing a new, separate 10 ft. trail. While this is an available and legal option for short portions of the trail, the desire to provide the safest alternative for non-motorized users required that a separate trail be proposed as opposed to using Main St .(M-21) or Bowes Rd. for example.

- **Why does the trail have to be 10 ft. wide?** - The MDOT TAP grant identified earlier, uses federal funds and as such, must meet federal standards. For a non-motorized trail, that means a 10 ft. wide path with a 2 foot shoulder on both sides. In addition, both the MDOT and MDNR funding require the trail to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (A.D.A.)
- **How are you going to cross Hudson Street?** - A new pedestrian friendly traffic light is being installed this year at the Bowes Rd. and Hudson St. intersection as a part of a City project making improvements to south Broadway Street.
- **Why can't you use the existing S. Division vehicle bridge?** The existing bridge is not wide enough to accommodate non-motorized lanes separated with barriers which are desired for safety.
- **Who will maintain the trail and who's paying for that?** - Maintenance for the trail will be the responsibility of the LARA in cooperation with the City of Lowell. As members of the LARA, the City and both Vergennes and Lowell Townships contribute financially to the maintenance costs of the trail. As a part of the Fred Meijer Mid-Michigan Regional Trail Authority, this trail is also eligible to receive funds from the maintenance endowment established by the Meijer Foundation for this 125 mile trail network.
- **If it goes by my property, do I have to shovel it and patch it in the future?** - All maintenance will be performed at no expense to property owners. If you are in the City, you will not be required to remove snow from the trail; it will be done by LARA.
- **Does the trail need to be asphalt?** - The trail is planned to be a 10 ft. wide paved path with 2.5 inches of asphalt. In areas where the path crosses an existing concrete driveway, the concrete will be left in place or replaced with new concrete if it needs to be upgraded at no cost to the property owners. In areas where an easement may be necessary, a property owner granting the easement may require that the path be concrete the entire width of their property if desired.
- **Will the trail be located on public property or will you need to get easements from property owners?** The majority of the trail will be located on property owned by the City of Lowell, Lowell Township and in City street right-of-way. There are portions of the proposed location (along Bowes Road in particular) where the width of the trail can't physically fit in the available right-of-way between the road edge and the property lines. In those areas permission to place a portion of the trail on private property will be requested with those adjacent property owners and if allowed, just compensation would be provided. This includes replacement of trees, landscaping, etc. The LARA Board will be in contact with these property owners in the coming weeks.
- **If I live by the trail, will my taxes go up?** - Property taxes are based on the value of your home. There will be no separate tax assignment or assessment to adjacent properties. No taxes are being used to fund this trail.
- **How can I provide my input to this project?** - There are several ways to provide input to the proposed trail project:
  - March 5, 2018 @ 7 p.m. - Public Input will be heard at the Lowell City Council Meeting
  - March 14, 2018 @ 6 p.m. - Lowell Area Recreation Authority meeting @ City Hall
  - March 19, 2018 @ 7 p.m. - Lowell City Council Meeting
  - Email - [info@lowellareatrailway.org](mailto:info@lowellareatrailway.org)
  - On-line Trail Input Form - [Trail Input Form](https://goo.gl/forms/9QS7YHL5O7MzUytA2) <https://goo.gl/forms/9QS7YHL5O7MzUytA2>



Fred Meijer Flat River Valley Rail Trail to Belding

Proposed Project

Existing LARA Non-motorized trails



Fred Meijer Grand River Valley Rail Trail to Saranac