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ANALYSIS

TOPOGRAPHY & WIND

Much of Brown County is flat or rolling terrain. Most of its topographic features are associated with ancient glaciations and current water features. The mighty Glacier River Warren created a vast riparian valley along the County’s northern boundary. The current Minnesota River winds its way along the floor of this valley.

Glaciations also formed the prairie potholes that dot the county. The Cottonwood River has created a ravine from west to east that divides the County into northern and southern portions.

Strong prairie winds blow from the northwest in the winter and from the southwest in the summer.

Design Implications

- Much of the flat terrain facilitates cycling through most of the County; however, there are steep hills associated with the River Warren Valley.
- The ravine associated with the Cottonwood River is a significant amenity. Access to it is desirable.
- The trail design should include efforts to buffer trail users from the winds.
WATERSHEDS & HYDROLOGY

The presence of water in the County has changed over time. Originally prairie pothole lakes and wet prairie areas characterized the landscape; the glaciers that once moved across the landscape created these environments. Today many of these formerly wet areas have been drained by a system of drainage ditches that were dug to engineer a rich agricultural landscape.

The land is still drained by rivers and streams that move water eastward and northward. The Cottonwood River is the largest river within the County. The Little Cottonwood River flows parallel to the Cottonwood to the south, as its name indicates, is smaller. The Minnesota River flows along the County’s northern border.

Although many of the lakes and wetlands have been drained, some large prairie pothole lakes still exist; most are in the southern portion of the county.

Design Implications

Trail access to the rivers and the lakes is desired.
HISTORIC MAP OF 1874

The historic map clearly shows that Brown County’s early settlement patterns and the character of its pre-settlement landscape. Most of the county was divided into one-mile sections and six by six mile townships. Roads were located along section lines. This pattern is still reflected in the shapes and sizes of today’s farms and the location of federal, state, county, and township roads. The county’s relatively gentle topography accommodated these divisions and road configurations.

In the nineteenth century the county had more and larger lakes and wet prairie lands than it does today. The large lakes were in the southeastern portion of the county; a few smaller ones were scattered around the other parts of the county. Almost all of the county’s lakes have been drained to create rich farmland, but some of the larger lakes still exist in the county’s southeastern corner providing amenities for county residents and habitat for wildlife.

The Minnesota River meandered through the Glacier River Warren’s ancient riverbed, bending and turning as it still does today. The Cottonwood River, then as now, is the dominant natural feature of Central Brown County. The Little Cottonwood parallels it on the south today as it did in the nineteenth century.

Both the Minnesota River and the Winona and Saint Peter Railroad drove early settlement patterns. Although there were some farmsteads sprinkled out in the countryside, most were sited in close proximity to either the Minnesota River or the rail line. Springfield and Sleepy Eye were created by the railroad. Even though New Ulm originally started at the river, the railroad was very important to its development by settlers from the Eastern United States and Europe. Then, as now, the rail line passed through the entire length of the town parallel to the river. Most non-Indian settlement took place between the Indian reservation line and the south bank of the Minnesota River, even though the federal government had set aside land for the Indians in a ten-mile strip south of the river.

Design Implications

- Although much of the emphasis in historic preservation/interpretation centers on built structures, the trail can also provide an opportunity to interpret historic landscapes.
HISTORIC RAILROAD/COMMUNITY SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Communities of Brown County are communities started by the railroads. They were sited at intervals to service the engines and to provide access to the farm products produced in the area. A very busy rail line runs the whole east-west length of the County passing through the county’s largest cities: Springfield, Sleepy Eye, and New Ulm.

If the railroad’s request to increase coal traffic on this line is granted, it will be even busier. Busy rail lines create safety issues for trail users who wish to cross them.

There are many miles of abandoned rail lines in Brown County. Unlike some counties, Brown County’s abandoned railroad line right-of-ways have not been preserved for trail corridors. They have been recycled into productive agricultural fields. However, most of the old spur line from Sleepy Eye to Redwood Falls was purchased by a single landowner who wishes to sell it for a trail.

Design Implications

- The spur line is an important opportunity to site an off-road trail. It has been authorized as a part of the Minnesota River State Trail.
- Siting a trail on most of the county’s old railroad right-of-ways is not a current option.
- Crossing the active rail line should be minimized.
HISTORIC RAILROAD/COMMUNITY SETTLEMENT PATTERNS
ROADS & TRAFFIC COUNTS
Brown County’s many roads form a matrix on section lines that extends to every part of the county. They range from busy federal highways to modest, less-traveled gravel township roads. The trail committee wishes to site the trail along existing roads. Some of the roads have a wide right-of-ways and have a utility corridor along them. Challenges to trail alignments include:

- Busy roads create safety issues for cycling alongside them and are challenges to cross;
- Gravel roads create dust and are unpleasant environments to cycle for long distances; and
- Many of the roads are open to the strong prairie winds that can make cycling a challenge.

Design Implications
- The best candidates for trails along existing roads include paved roads that are not too busy.
- Short segments of gravel roads will work if they are not too heavily traveled.
- Windbreaks are desirable.
- Wide utility and road right-of-ways offer opportunities to site off-road trails that run parallel to the roads.
- If costs prevent off-road trails currently; they may become feasible in the future when roads are rebuilt, or when funding is available to connect important natural resource and cultural amenities.

Traffic Counts
11B

Municipalities
Open Water

Evan
Cobden
Springfield
Comfrey
Hanska
New Ulm

258
68
14
68
4
4

ROADS & TRAFFIC COUNTS

Paved Roads
Unpaved Roads

Existing Rail Lines
Abandoned Rail Lines

150 Feet
80-100 Feet

Municipalities
Open Water

Paved Roads
Unpaved Roads
ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAYS

Two sections of US Highway 14 run alongside an active rail line. The map below shows one section with a 100 foot right-of-way while the other section only has 80 foot typical right-of-way. The railroad has 100 feet right-of-way width.

Design Implications

- These road right-of-ways provide opportunities for siting off road trails.
- Unless the railroad would allow use of part of their right-of-way, the 80 feet and 100 feet widths do not provide much room for a vegetative buffer desired for trail placement along a busy roadway.
80’ ROW Adjacent to Railroad

100’ ROW Adjacent to Railroad
ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAYS

State Highway 258 joins US Highway 14 between Springfield and Sleepy Eye. It heads south to Comfrey. It has a 150 foot right-of-way.

State Highway 4 bisects the county, passing through Sleepy Eye on its way from Watonwan County to Nicollet and Renville Counties.

State Highway 15 heads south out of New Ulm passing Searles on the way to Watonwan County. Like the other state highways, this road also has a 150 foot right-of-way.

US Highway 14 runs east/west connecting Springfield to New Ulm with a 100 foot right-of-way in the sections shown on the map below.

Design Implications

- Relatively wide right-of-ways of state and federal highways provide opportunities for siting off-road trails throughout Brown County.

- Consideration must be taken to preserve the clear zones recommended for the recovery of vehicles that run off the road and for sight lines to see animals entering the roadway on these highly traveled roadways.
ANALYSIS

TRAILS, PARKS & WATER ACCESS
The Brown County Park System has four parks: Lake Hanska, Trenl, Lost Dog & Fox Hunter’s, and Mound Creek. It also has four landings on the Cottonwood River: Juenemann, Marti, County Road 11 and Thedens.

In addition to the county landings there are number of boat access points on the lakes and several on the Minnesota River. The Department of Natural Resources has one state park, Flandrau State Park, and a boat landing at County Road 4.

Currently there are no county trails. Springfield, Sleepy Eye, and New Ulm have city trails and are planning to add more miles to their systems. The Minnesota River State Trail has been authorized but has not been funded or built yet. Flandrau State Park has some trails.

Design Implications
- There is an opportunity to connect the currently unconnected existing parks, trails, and boat launch areas with a county trail system. Since most of these amenities are located in the southern half of the county, most will be there.
- The canoe access areas offer opportunities for destinations and trailheads. They could also become mini-parks to stop, rest, and enjoy the river.
TRAILS, PARKS & WATER ACCESS
Previously the Brown County Trail Group met and worked with staff from the Department of Natural Resources Trails Division to identify places in the county to connect with a local trail system. Most of the conceptual alignments connected communities and amenities in the central and southern portions of the county. The Flandrau State Park, the Cottonwood River Corridor, and the county parks were identified as important county amenities.
Trail Work by Trail Committee

- Preferred Roads - Bituminous Surface Under 1500 ADT
- Open Water
- Roads to Avoid - Bituminous Surface Over 1500 ADT
LAND USE
The preponderance of land in Brown County is used for agriculture. Farm fields of corn, sugar beets, and soybeans dominate the landscape. The few areas of forest are associated with rivers, streams, and wetlands. Areas of grassland or shrub land are mostly found in the County's southwestern corner.
OWNERSHIP
There is very little publicly owned land in the county; most land is privately owned. Most scientific and natural areas and wildlife management areas are in the County’s southern half. Although there is CREP land throughout the county, it is concentrated in areas adjacent to the Minnesota River.

Design Implications
- Current public lands do not currently provide many opportunities for trail alignments.
- Protected lands (CREP, WMA and SNA lands) provide opportunities to interpret the landscape by siting the trail along their edges.
Municipalities

Open Water

Sleepy Eye

Evan

Cobden

Springfield

Comfrey

Hanska

New Ulm

258

15

68

14

4

4

68

OWNERSHIP

Private CRP Land

County Land

Federal Land

Proposed CapX2020 Alternative

DNR
ANALYSIS

BROWN COUNTY AMENITIES

Brown County’s variety of cultural and natural resource amenities includes rivers, parks, protected prairie landscapes, numerous historic sites, and large and small communities.

Design Implications

- The experience of using the Brown County Trail System will be enriched by providing connections to these amenities.
HISTORIC SITES & MUSEUMS

Brown County has a long list of sites on the National Register of Historic Sites as well as museums and other sites of historic significance. Although some have local significance, many are of significance for the state and the nation. Many are concentrated in the New Ulm area, but others are out in the county. These include:

- Albin Township
  - Twente Farm Elevator and Granary (removed) - 1885
- Burnstown Township
  - Shady Lane Stock Farm - 1898
- Cobden
  - Cobden Jail (removed) – 1900
- Comfrey
  - Chicago North Western Section House (removed) – 1899
- Eden Township
  - Site of ancient kaolin deposits
- Hanska
  - Bjorneberg Garage – 1919
  - Liberal Union Hall – 1910
- Home Township
  - Site of ancient kaolin deposits
- Lake Hanska Township
  - Synstebyst - Precontact Period habitation site and mound groups, and site of 1863 Fort Hanska.
  - Omsrud - Torgrimson Log Cabin
- Linden Township
  - Nora Free Christian Church – 1884
  - Thormodson Barn – 1912
- Milford Township
  - Lampert Lumber Company Line Yard – 1919
  - Milford Monument
- New Ulm
  - Alwin Monument
  - August Schell Brewing Company - 1880
  - Chicago North Western Depot - 1895
  - Defenders Monument
  - Bernard Fesenmaier House - 1888
  - Boesch-Hummel-Maltzahn Block - 1890
  - Flandrau State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic Resources
  - Frederick W. Kiesling House – 1862
  - Grand Hotel – 1876
  - Hermann Monument – 1887
  - John Lind House - 1887
  - Melges Bakery – 1865
  - New Ulm Armory - 1914
  - New Ulm Commercial Historic District - 1860s-1953
  - New Ulm Oil Company Service Station – 1926
  - New Ulm Post Office – 1909
  - New Ulm Roller Mill Complex (removed) – 1910
  - Old Main, Dr. Martin Luther College – 1884
  - Otto Schell House - 1895
  - Ruemke Mercantile Store (removed) – 1895
  - South Broadway Historic District - Eight brick residences of varying scales and styles, built at turn of 20th century with locally manufactured brick.
  - South German Street Historic District - Larger-scale homes built in late 19th century in Italianate and Queen Anne variations for leaders of New Ulm’s commerce and industry.
  - St. Michael’s School and Convent – 1872
  - Tivoli Gardens (removed) – 1885
  - Turner Hall - 1873
  - Wanda Gag Childhood Home – 1898
  - Way of the Cross
- North Star Township
  - Site of ancient kaolin deposits
  - Sleepy Eye
    - Chicago North Western Depot/Sleepy Eye Depot Museum – 1902
    - Chief Sleepy Eye Monument
    - Sleepy Eye Milling Company – 1901
    - W. W. Smith House – 1901
    - Winona and St. Peter Freight Depot - 1887
- Springfield
  - Adolph C. Ochs House – 1911
  - Bendixon-Schmidt House – 1894
  - Kreitinger Garage – 1911

Design Implications

- The trail system should connect and interpret these historic resources whenever possible.
BROWN COUNTY TRAIL SYSTEM

Current trail committee work has refined the previous trail thinking as shown in the map on the opposite page. It still locates the trail system parallel to existing roads as desired by the committee, but it uses less busy paved county roads whenever possible and unpaved county or township roads when necessary.

The proposed Brown County Trail System:

- Identifies the Chief Sleepy Eye Spur of the Minnesota River State Trail as an important connector to the proposed Redwood County Trail System, the City of Redwood Falls, the proposed terminus of the Casey Jones State Trail, and the Minnesota River State Trail;
- Connects with other segment of the proposed Minnesota River State Trail at New Ulm and at County Road 4;
- Connects most of the communities in the county;
- Removes the trail from the narrow and busy Highway 14 and locates it on county roads south of the Cottonwood River;
- Concentrates most of the system in the southern portion of the county;
- Creates a trail loop around Lake Hanska;
- Creates trail loops from New Ulm, Sleepy Eye, Springfield, Comfrey, Leavenworth, and Hanska;
- Provides access to Flandrau State Park and Lake Hanska, Trembl, Lost Dog and Fox Hunters, and Mound Creek County Parks; and
- Provides access to the Cottonwood River by enhancing existing canoe launch sites to be trailheads and rest areas for trail users.

Potential Future Alignments

Trails Parallel to Roads

The bike plan as presented identifies roads as candidates for creating bike routes that connect county amenities and communities. There are opportunities for future off-road trails that parallel these roads. The Brown County Trail Committee has prioritized the opportunities for trails. These were shown on page 19B.

Railroad Right-of-Ways

Most of the historic railroad right-of-ways are still in use in Brown County. Those that have been abandoned are in private ownership preventing using the few abandoned lines as trails. The exception is the abandoned line from Sleepy Eye to Evan and beyond to Redwood Falls. There is a willing landowner who wishes to sell the alignment for a trail. The Chief Sleepy Eye Spur of the Minnesota River State Trail is presented on pages 48-49A.

The Trail and the Cottonwood River

Although the Cottonwood River is the major amenity in the heart of the county and trail committee members see it as potential trail location in the future if willing landowners were willing to sell or provide easements, private ownership along the river from Leavenworth to New Ulm prevents creating a trail that follows the river along its entire course in Brown County. Trail access to the river is provided, however:

- The trail is aligned along a paved road that follows the river from Springfield to Leavenworth, and
- The existing and publicly owned canoe access points are developed as miniparks with trail heads and amenities.
TRAILS IN ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAYS

There is currently no right-of-way map in existence for Brown County, so these pages show examples of common right-of-way widths and how trails can be placed in each instance.

Ideally trails along roads would have a buffer of trees, shrubs, and/or prairie grasses that creates separation between the trail and roadway. This buffer would also protect from the strong winds and provide some relief from the blazing summer sun. Trees larger than small ornamental trees will have to be located opposite power lines. Some separation must be left between the edge of the drive lane and the beginning of the vegetative buffer. This provides sight lines so vehicles can see animals entering the roadway and also allows room in case a vehicle runs off-the-road. Beyond making a trail experience more enjoyable, a dense vegetative buffer could help prevent snow drifts in winter.

Design

- Commonly 30 to 35 foot right-of-way roads are gravel. There is little room to place an 8 feet wide trail within the right-of-way so it is shown paralleling the road on private land. Ideally there would be some separation between road and trail because of the dust produced by vehicles on an unpaved road. Locating trails on the north side of roads could help reduce some dust blowing towards the trail.

- In a 40 foot or narrower right-of-way, the trail will have to be located next to the drive lane or outside of the right-of-way. Road shoulders are typically 10 feet or narrower and cannot facilitate a drainage ditch plus 8 foot trail.

- A 50 foot right-of-way may allow a separated trail if the ditches are not deep. Adding retaining walls would greatly increase the cost but may be necessary in some areas. The section shown only has about a 3 foot vegetative grass buffer. This is less than ideal because plants will have a harder time establishing themselves in a narrow strip of land.

- 60 to 66 foot and 75 foot right-of-ways will more easily allow for trails within the typical 18 to 25.5 foot shoulder area. Grasses, shrubs, and trees should be placed along the trails in these right-of-ways.
TRAILS IN ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAYS

In Brown County, only one section of road included in the proposed county trail system has a known right-of-way width. This is State Highway 4 which connects Sleepy Eye to the Fort Ridgely State Park. The 100 foot and 120 foot right-of-way sections are examples of other common right-of-way widths that may be found in the county. The high average daily traffic count of roads of this size necessitates following the rules of a “clear zone.” Rules of a clear zone include:

- A 1:4 or flatter inslope and 1:3 or flatter backslope;
- No vegetation taller than 12 inches within the clear zone; and
- The accommodation of two passes of the mower from the edge of the shoulder.

Source: Mn/DOT Road Design Manual, Section 4.

Design

- Right-of-way widths 100 feet or wider provide ample room for trail plus a thin green buffer.
- The 150 foot right-of-way section shows multiple vegetation options if the trail passes under above-ground utilities.
- Trails on both sides of the road create the possibility of multiple trail uses: horses on one side and cyclists and walkers on the other.
- Clear zones and clear sight lines are provided where the trail crosses roads.
FLANDRAU STATE PARK

The Flandrau State Park Trailhead provides both an opportunity for cyclists to leave the park to explore the Brown County Trail System and for those using the County System to access the many amenities available in the park. The Park’s amenities make it a major destination for the County System:

- The recreational facilities include hiking trails, a swimming pool, a picnic area, a carry-in boat access, a large enclosed picnic shelter for 70 people, a playground, and volleyball and horseshoe courts;
- Sanitary facilities include water, showers at three locations, flush and vault toilets, and a dump station; and
- The 92 campsites in three camp grounds include 34 electric sites, walk-in sites, and a group center with a large dining hall and kitchen and bunkhouses that accommodate up to 110 people.

Design

- There is an opportunity to connect the county trail system to the Park’s trails and other amenities.
- A trailhead should be located in or adjacent to the Park.
MOUND CREEK COUNTY PARK

As described on the Brown County Park website:

Brown County’s newest park, Mound Creek County Park, is located at the site of the Wellner-Hageman Flood Control Dam in the southwestern corner of the county. The park was dedicated on August 15, 1993. The flood control dam, permanent pool, sediment basins, and park include 316 acres.

Mound Creek County Park is a “day-use” park, open from 8:00 AM until sunset from April 15 - October 15. It offers a 9 hole disk golf course, 2 picnic shelters, beach, boat launch, fishing, sand volleyball, open play areas and hiking. The park features a waterfall in the picnic area.

The Wellner-Hageman Dam creates a 70 acre reservoir which partially fills narrow valleys that now provide excellent canoeing opportunities.

Mound Creek County Park is adjacent to Cottonwood County’s Red Rock County Park, and is two miles from the Jeffers Petroglyphs historic site. (Brown County Park System, 2010)
TREML COUNTY PARK & LOST DOG & FOX HUNTERS COUNTY PARK

As described on the Brown County Park website:

Treml County Park covers 18.2 acres in Section 32 of Leavenworth Township in Brown County. The park is on the eastern shore of Altermatt Lake and includes over 4,000 feet of shoreline.

In November 1987, the land was donated to Brown County by the Church of the Japanese Martyrs of Leavenworth for use as a day use park for picnicking and hiking.

This is a day-use park offering a picnic shelter, shore fishing, open play areas and hiking trails in a quiet, rural setting. It was dedicated on Sunday June 6, 1993. (Brown County Park System 2010)

Located approximately 5 miles south of New Ulm, Lost Dog and Fox Hunter’s County Park offers a quiet, shaded setting on the edge of Clear Lake. The park is named for the Lost Dog and Fox Hunter’s Club. The Club donated the land and provided funds to develop the park area.

There are 360 feet of lake frontage with a dock for easy shore fishing. This day-use park also offers two picnic shelters, sand volleyball, playground equipment, and open play areas. (Brown County Park System 2010)
TREML COUNTY PARK & LOST DOG & FOX HUNTERS COUNTY PARK

Treml County Park

Lost Dog & Fox Hunters County Park

To Leavenworth

To New Ulm & Hanska

- Park Roads
- Park Entrance
- Picnic Shelter
- Restroom
- Proposed Trailhead
- Proposed County Trail Along Unpaved Roads

- Park Roads
- Park Entrance
- Fishing Pier
- Sand Volleyball
- Proposed Trailhead
- Proposed County Trail Along Unpaved Roads
- Boat Launch
- Picnic Shelter
- DNR Land

ALTERMATT LAKE

CLEAR LAKE
LAKE HANSKA COUNTY PARK

As described on the Brown County Park website:

Historic Lake Hanska County Park offers a quiet rural park close to a wide variety of activities. Shaded, level campsites with electric hookups are part of this Brown County Park located 17 miles southwest of New Ulm. The campground also includes a large tent camping area, clean restrooms with showers, sanitary dump and firewood for sale.

Lake Hanska County Park has a variety of historic highlights including a log cabin built in the 1850’s, an old fort site, and interpretive signage. There is also a DNR public lake access and fishing pier, playground, hiking and cross country skiing trails, sand swimming beach and a variety of picnic areas. Three picnic shelters can be reserved, at a nominal fee, for family or large group gatherings. The park is located a short driving distance from a variety of regional celebrations.

Archaeologists have determined from their excavations that pre-historic hunting people occupied this place from about 500 B.C. to 1000 A.D.. Agricultural tribes occupied the area from this time until the first contact with Europeans.

In the late 1850’s, after the Dakota (or Sioux) Indians had been moved to reservations, Norwegian immigrants moved to the area. After the Sioux Uprising in 1862, the highest hill in the park proved to be an ideal place for a fort to help protect settlers. Soldiers of the Ninth Minnesota Regiment were stationed here for many months.

Ole Synstebuy purchased land here in 1879. He planted many of the unusual trees which still grow in the park. The land stayed in the Synstebuy family until it formed the nucleus of the park. In 1900, Synstebuy opened the Fort Hanska Amusement Park, which was a popular recreational park for 25 years. The present park was dedicated on June 25, 1978.

A lake restoration project was completed in 2000 to improve fish and wildlife habitat, and recreational use of Lake Hanska. The lake dredging project removed 4,816,375 cubic yards of lake sediment from the lake area southwest and immediately northwest of the park, deepening most of this area to an average 12’ water depth.

A channel constructed in 1988 connecting Lake Hanska and the basin adjacent to the campground allows boat access to the camping area. A variable crest dam was installed at the Lake Hanska outlet to allow controlled partial drawdowns of the lake level to promote emergent vegetation along the shoreline in the upper 1500 acres of the lake, which improves waterfowl habitat and water clarity.

The Omsrud-Torgrimson log cabin was the first log cabin built in this area. The cabin was built around 1857 by the Omsrud/Thordson and Torgrimson families, immigrants from Valdres, Norway. The Thordson’s occupied it until 1953. In 1986, Omsrud (Thordson) -Torgrimson descendants moved the cabin to this site. The cabin stands as a memorial to all Norwegian pioneers who were the first Europeans to permanently settle this part of Brown County.

Several kiosks throughout the park provide additional historic and present day information for park visitors. (Brown County Park System, 2010)
COTTONWOOD RIVER TRAILHEADS

The trail committee identified the Cottonwood River as an important amenity to be accessed by the County Trail System. Because currently most of the land contiguous to the Cottonwood River is privately owned and not readily accessible to trail users, the canoe accesses have been identified as special places along the trail to enjoy and access the river. The existing canoe accesses have been retained, improved, and transformed to become multiuse facilities that include trailheads that can be used as places to start or finish using the trail system or places to stop along the route to rest or enjoy the site’s amenities.
JUENEMANN LANDING
The small site at Juenenann Landing provides a place to stop, rest, eat, and access the river southwest of Springfield. The site is improved to provide amenities that include:

- A turnaround and parking for cars, an information kiosk, shelter, picnic table, and bicycle racks, and
- A permeable paved river access for canoes.
STATE HIGHWAY 4 DNR SITE
Small sites along the river provide places of rest, information, and access. Located west of the County Road 4 and north of the river, the County 4 Trailhead’s amenities include:

- A picnic shelter, bicycle racks, an information kiosk, a canoe access, and car parking, and

- A row of signature linden trees that shield the trailhead from the road and identify the site as a trailhead for the Brown County Trail System.
Signature Trees
Turf Canoe Access
COTTONWOOD RIVER
STATE HIGHWAY 4
Information Kiosk
Parking
Shelter
Bicycle Parking
Picnic Table
THEDENS LANDING TRAILHEAD

The size of Thedens Landing, the curve of the Cottonwood River, and the river’s islands all provide opportunities to develop the site to accommodate stopping, resting, eating, enjoying the river, and camping overnight south of Sleepy Eye. A short trail spur of along 260th Avenue connects the park entrance to Iberia and the rest of the county trail system. The park’s features include:

- A focal area with a picnic shelter, an information kiosk, bike racks, a canoe access, and car parking are located at the end of the existing access road along the river, and

- A walking trail among the trees connects environmental/historical interpretive sites to four canoe camping sites that are located along the river across from two islands.
THEDENS LANDING TRAILHEAD

- Primitive Camp Sites
- Canoe Camping Trail
- Environmental Education Information Nodes
- Existing Access Road
- Parking
- Bicycle Parking
- Information Kiosk
- Shelter
- 260TH AVENUE
- COTTONWOOD RIVER
The trail crossing the Cottonwood River at Marti Landing provides an opportunity to stop, rest, eat, and enjoy the river just east of Sleepy Eye. Features of the small trail head and park at Marti Landing include:

- A bicycle trail spur just off the bridge’s bike lane brings the cyclist down to the Landing,
- The existing car access road is extended to create a new arrival space that is closer to the river,
- A row of linden trees define the edge of this road as it descends to the arrival point,
- Parking for cars is provided off the arrival circle away from the river,
- A gathering/resting space with a picnic shelter, an information kiosk, and a bicycle rack is sited just north of the river, nestled between existing oak trees,
- A future wood chip and/or bark walking trail with several sites for environmental/historical interpretation panels winds through the woods, and
- A canoe access point is located on a panel of turf at the river’s edge just east of the bridge.
Existing Turnaround
Access Road Extension
Signature Trees
Environmental Education Information Nodes
Parking
Turnaround
Information Kiosk
Bicycle Parking
Preserve Existing Oaks
Turf Canoe Access
Bicycle Lane
COUNTY ROAD 10 Proposed County Trail
COTTONWOOD RIVER
COUNTY ROAD 11 LANDING

Located west of County Road 11 and north of the Cottonwood River, this small rest area has:

- A trailhead with rest facilities and parking for four cars,
- An information kiosk, a shelter, multi-use tables, and
- A future environmental education trail, and a future canoe access trail to the Cottonwood River.
COBDEN & EVAN

Both Cobden and Evan were founded as railroad towns. Cobden is sited midway between Springfield and Sleepy Eye; Evan is one of several former stops along a now abandoned rail spur between Sleepy Eye and Redwood Falls. Danish immigrants originally settled Evan. As transportation has improved these towns have lost their former importance as places to service locomotives. Although very small in size, both retain grain elevators and very small commercial establishments.

Design Implications

- Trailheads in both Cobden and Evan could be stops along the trail or places to start a short trip on the county system.
SLEEPY EYE

Sleep Eye is located near the center of Brown County on the shores of Lake Sleepy Eye. Fifteen years after the Winona and Saint Peter railroad first reached its site in 1872, it was platted following the grid pattern used for prairie railroad towns. The community was once the home of a very large milling company.

The City is named for Ish Tak Ha Ba, Chief Sleepy Eye a Dakota Indian leader and important historic figure. He was a member of the delegation that traveled to Washington to meet with President James Monroe in 1824. He was the most important chief at signing of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux in 1851 that ceded Indian lands to the United States. He played a role in the siting of the trading post that preceded the establishment of the City of Mankato. Although he moved seasonally, he lived on the shores of Lake Sleepy Eye. His remains have been reburied beneath a monument dedicated to him. He was named for his drooping eyelids.

Located beside the Chief Sleepy Eye monument is the Sleepy Eye Depot Museum run by the Sleepy Eye Area Historical Society. Historic objects and information about the history of the city, its four historic sites, and the surrounding area are found within the museum.

Sportsman’s Park located on Lake Sleepy Eye has a swimming area, fishing docks, a boat launch, a playground, a large picnic shelter, toilets, and camping sites with electrical hook-ups.

A city trail circles the lake and the Chief Sleepy Eye Spur sited along the abandoned rail line via Evan will link Sleepy Eye to Redwood Falls and the main Minnesota River State Trail and the Casey Jones State Trail in the future.

Design Implications

- The trail system should connect to the city trail, New Ulm, and the future state trails.
- Both the historic museum and Sportsman Park are sites for trailheads.
SLEEPY EYE: HISTORIC WELCOME PLACE TRAILHEAD
The Welcome Place Trailhead, the Depot Museum, Monument, and the Ish Tak Ha Ba site sculpture are integrated into a trailhead precinct that is linked to downtown:

- Parking is provided east of 1st Avenue North,
- A future park shelter enhances the area,
- Trail information kiosk and bicycle parking is provided by the entry to the Depot Museum, and
- The area is defined by plantings and is linked to Main Street by densely planted street trees.
SLEEPY EYE: HISTORIC WELCOME PLACE TRAILHEAD
NEW ULM

When the Minnesota River State Trail is built, it will go through New Ulm parallel to the Minnesota River and will have a trailhead in the community.

New Ulm continues to extend its existing trails to create a trail system that connects the community and links to the proposed alignments of the future Minnesota River State Trail.

The trail section along N. Highland Ave between Highway 14/68 and 7th N. Street has recently been built; future additions to the city system include:

- Plans to add a trail section that follows N. Highland north from Highway 68/14 in the near future; eventually this trail section will be connected to the existing trail on the north side of the railroad tracks, but the alignment has not been determined yet.

- A trail loop that connects through Flandrau State Park is desired, but no alignment has been determined for this connection because of concerns raised by the DNR.

- The pedestrian underpass on the northwest corner of town under Highway 14/68 provides a future opportunity to connect the community’s trail system to Birchwood Drive and Westridge Road.

Design Implications

- Brown County Trail connections to the future Minnesota State Trail and the existing and planned New Ulm Trail System segments are highly desired.
Proposed County Trail
Local Trail
Proposed Trailhead

To Hanska
To Sleepy Eye

Future Minnesota River State Trail Options

Proposed Local Trail
Planned Corridor for Local Trail

N Garden Street
Summit Avenue
Harman Park
Riverside Park
Nehis Park
Center Street
Johnson Field
S German Park
NEW ULM: MINNESOTA RIVER STATE TRAIL

Since the railroad tracks and the river industry are currently barriers between the historic downtown and the river, improvements are suggested to create a more defined connection between the two. The streets are redesigned as boulevards, making them more bicycle and pedestrian friendly and elevating their civic importance. On-street bike lanes and boulevard trees define the pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile spaces and define the street as an important civic armature.
NEW ULM: MINNESOTA RIVER STATE TRAIL - RIVERSIDE PARK TRAILHEAD

The design of a trailhead within Riverside Park creates a strong tie to the Minnesota River. The existing historic school building and water access ramp add to its potential as a major community–river site along the trail. Currently the park is very informally structured. Users park vehicles and set up tents anywhere. The new design includes more uses for more users. The bike trail is sited along the river and has two connections to the historic downtown. Bike racks and trail information are provided. The existing boat launch is retained, but the playground and basketball court are removed to accommodate a new parking lot and gardens. In order to prevent pollutants from entering the river, a small rainwater garden is created to catch and treat most of the water from the parking lot. A picnic pavilion is added.

This trailhead option utilizes the historic Franklin School building that is a river research and interpretive center that rents canoes. This facility also has the potential for bike rentals. Because there is only one single toilet in this building, a new restroom building is placed near the new parking lot. A deck and patio are added to the riverside of the Franklin School building to provide good views of the park and the river. The deck can also serve as a stage with the building as a backdrop for riverfront concerts. River interpretive exhibits will be displayed on the first floor while the fishing and boating rentals will be in the walkout basement level. Additional canoe and kayak storage racks are below the deck on this level. Riverside Park is largely located within the floodplain, so most of the space is left undeveloped for environmental and maintenance reasons. Dense planting near the water’s edge stabilizes the shoreline. The short plants do not obstruct views of the river from the interpretive center. A canoe and kayak water access point is added to provide safer entry for non-power boaters. A large expanse of grass creates The Great Lawn, a civic space for river festivals and other events. No-mow turf is proposed in this area to reduce maintenance costs.
NEW ULM: MINNESOTA RIVER STATE TRAIL - RIVERSIDE PARK TRAILHEAD
IBERIA & SEARLES

Iberia is a very small settlement on the proposed trail system south of Sleepy Eye and the Cottonwood River between Leavenworth and Searles. Named for its post office, it once had a two stores, four school buildings, an agricultural agency, two blacksmith shops, a shoe shop, a cabinet shop, a steam sawmill, water-powered grist mill, and one saloon.

Searles is located on the proposed county system between Hanska and New Ulm.

Design Implications

- Searles could have a modest trailhead marked by signs.
- Trailhead shown for Iberia is at Thedens Landing shown on page 51.
Iberia

- Proposed County Trail
- Proposed County Trail Along Unpaved Road
- Proposed Trailhead

Searles

- Proposed County Trail
- Proposed Trailhead
- Future State Trail

- To New Ulm
- To Blue Earth County
- To Hanska & Iberia
- To Sleepy Eye
- To Leavenworth
- To Searles

Proposed Trailhead
SPRINGFIELD

Springfield is located in western Brown County on the Cottonwood River and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Highway. Originally settled after the Civil War, a spring in the town gives it its name. A prairie railroad town, the original station stop established in 1873 was incorporated and platted in 1877. A grain facilities and brick factories have been important parts of Springfield’s economy.

The city has a number of amenities. These include city trails, historic buildings, a large riverside park with a swimming pool, a kiddie pool, a plunge pool, a bath house, a picnic shelter, playground equipment, a canoe landing, a disc golf course, a go-cart race track, and a volleyball court. The city’s community center is located across the river from the park. A private campground with 38 sites is by the park along the river.

Design Implications

- The county trail should connect with the city trails, the historic buildings, and the facilities along the Cottonwood River.
- A trail by the river is desirable.
SPRINGFIELD: COMMUNITY PLACE TRAILHEAD

The proposed trailhead enhances the community center site by creating an amphitheater and an outdoor space that can be used for community events using the Cottonwood River as a backdrop. Its features include:

- Flowering trees and shrubs that define its edge and separate it from the parking lot that it shares with the Community Center,
- A plaza paved with locally made bricks,
- A trail shelter and kiosk that provide Springfield information and the history of the brick works,
- A bicycle parking area,
- A panel of grass for an event tent, and
- An amphitheater.

Note: This area can be located further to the east if the site as shown is needed to be reserved for the future expansion of the Community Center.
SPRINGFIELD: COMMUNITY PLACE TRAILHEAD

Fountain Place
Bicycle Parking
Multipurpose Tables
Trail Shelter
Brick Works History Information Kiosk
Tent Site Turf Area for Events
Permeable Paving
Flowering Trees with Shrubs Below
Brick Memorial Multipurpose Community Amphitheater for Events

COMMUNITY CENTER
COTTONWOOD RIVER
Existing Trail
COMFREY

Comfrey is a small community located east of the Jeffers Petroglyphs and Mound Creek Park on the County’s southern boundary. It suffered severe damage from the tornado of 1998, so many of the buildings in its small downtown area have been recently rebuilt. Its park has four campsites.

Design Implications

Comfrey should have:

- A sign in downtown interpreting the tornado and the petroglyphs,
- The trail should pass through the downtown, and
- A trailhead should be located in the park.
LEAVENWORTH & GODAHL

Both Leavenworth and Godahl could be the location of modest trailheads that are marked by signs that tell about each community.
Leavenworth

To Springfield
To Iberia
To Treml County Park

Godahl

To Comfrey
To Hanska
To Lake Hanska County Park

Proposed County Trail
Proposed Trailhead
Proposed County Trail
Proposed Trailhead
HANSKA

A farming community located area that has several lakes, Hanska was founded in 1901. Haska is a Dakota name for long and narrow, a description of Lake Hanska west of the town. A center for farmer’s coops, the Lake Hanska and Lindon co-op and store preceded the rail line by eight years. A community that celebrates its Scandinavian heritage, it hosts an annual lutefisk dinner, and Syttende Mai, the Norwegian independence day May 17th.

The trail enters Hanska on County Road 20, passes the historic sites, and leaves to go north on County Road 13/20.
HANSKA: SCANDINAVIAN PLACE TRAILHEAD

Hanska’s trailhead is located in the city park in the corner of the park by First Street West and Broadway. Features of the trailhead include:

- A sculpture that celebrates the community’s Scandinavian heritage,
- Bicycle racks,
- An information kiosk,
- A picnic shelter,
- Multi-use tables, and
- Permeable paving.
Bicycle Parking
Scandinavian Sculpture
Information Kiosk
Permeable Paving
Shelter
Multi-Use Tables
SIGNATURE ELEMENTS

Trail Logo
The Brown County Trail Logo depicts the most prominent natural resource features in the county. It can be used on:
- Trail signs,
- Trail maps,
- Kiosks,
- Tee shirts, etc.

Trail Marking Signs
The Brown County Trail sign is a simple square sign depicting the trail logo. The sign can be attached to a wooden 4 by 4 post to mark the route or combined with other standard signs on a steel post to direct trail users to special places along the trail such as picnic areas, historic sites, etc.

Trail Interpretation Signs
Large signs that interpret areas along the trail are made from panel attached to 6 by 6 wooden posts.
SIGNATURE ELEMENTS

Trail Kiosks
Trail kiosks will be placed at trailheads and at significant locations along the trail. The kiosk is made of brick from the historic brick factories located in the county. Information presented on the kiosk panels include:

- A trail map depicting trail features,
- A community drawing/map showing community features with a “You are here” locator icon,
- Community pictures,
- The landscape’s natural and cultural features,
- Historical and other cultural information: settlement, historic photos, town histories, etc.,
- Challenges to early settlers: grasshoppers of 1873-6, prairie fires, blizzards,
- Northwest Ordinance 1785 & 1862 Homestead Act,
- Land divisions: Jeffersonian grid: 6 mile square townships, sections, 160 acre quarter sections,
- County’s gridded pattern: townships, roads, drainage ditches, field drain tiles,
- Geology,
- Land cover & vegetation: prairie plants, etc.,
- Rivers & watersheds,
- Hydrology,
- Wind: summer & winter patterns,
- Native Americans,
- Railroads, and
- Farms: area economy, history, changes, etc.

The signature plazas used in the larger trailheads are made of brick pavers made in Brown County. The five-foot by five-foot brick pattern is set in sand on an aggregate base. They do not contribute to storm water runoff because their construction permits water to infiltrate.

Plaza Pavement Modules
6” KASOTA STONE CAP ROCK FACE
6”x6”x7” BROWN TREATED TIMBER
COUNTY LOGO
72”X36” PANEL/TRAIL SIGN
2’x2’x8’ BRICK MASONRY PIER
3 1/2 KASOTA STONE BASE VENEER
24”x24”x4’ CONCRETE SONNO TUBE
SIGNATURE ELEMENTS
Picnic Shelter & Rest Stops
The picnic shelter’s design references the vocabulary of the County’s historic buildings. Its paving pattern uses local brick. Rest stops can be located in parks and other public areas along the trail. The design drawings show two conditions for rest stops. One is for a flat terrain, another for a sloping site. The rest stop features:

- A windbreak of conifers and deciduous trees and shrubs,
- Bike racks made of native fieldstone,
- An information kiosk, and
- A resting bench shaded by willows.