



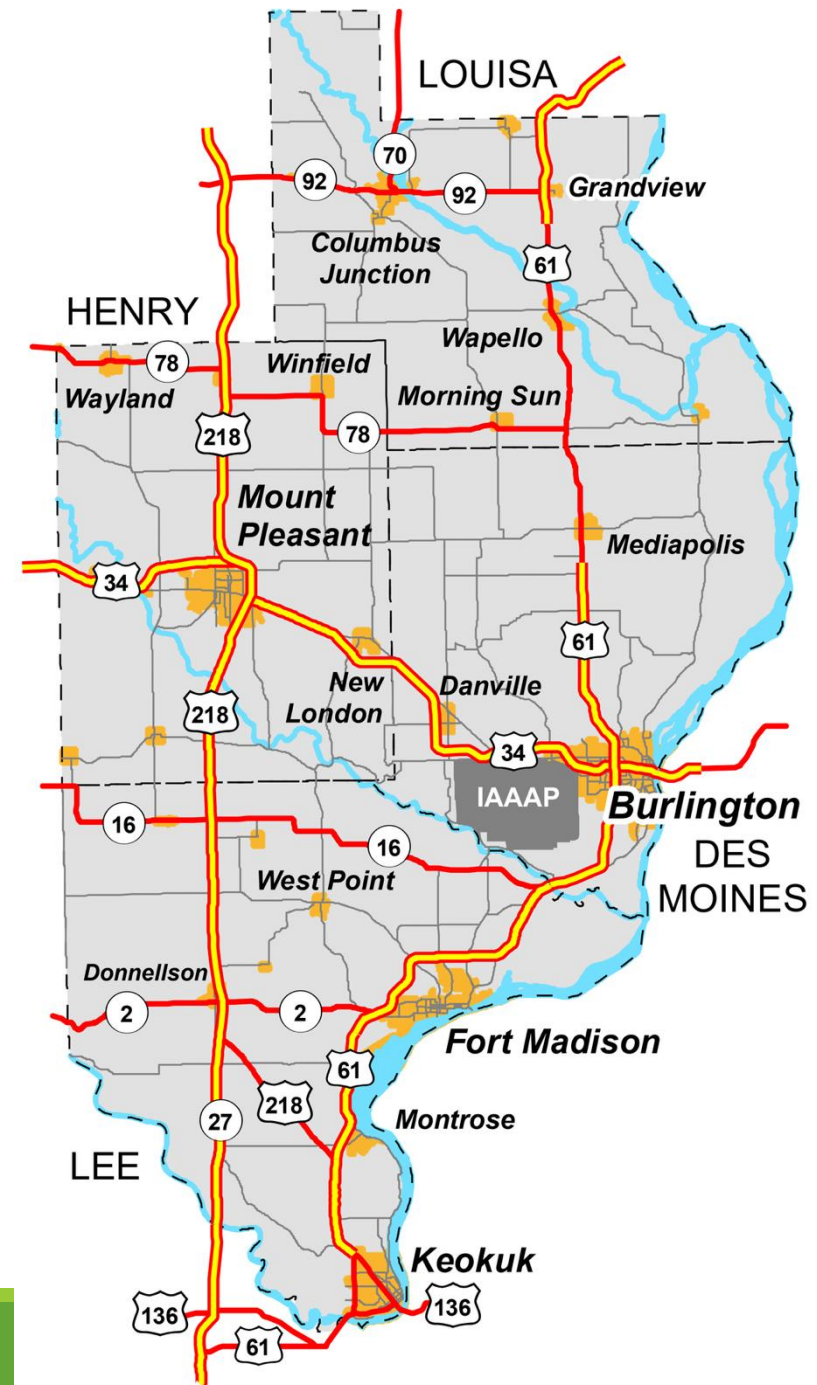
Bike and Pedestrian Planning for Rural Communities in Southeast Iowa

NADO NATIONAL REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING CONFERENCE

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLANNING SESSION

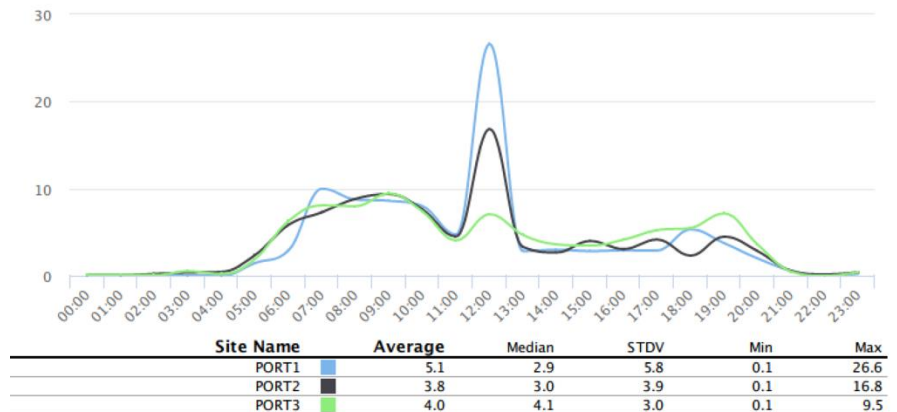
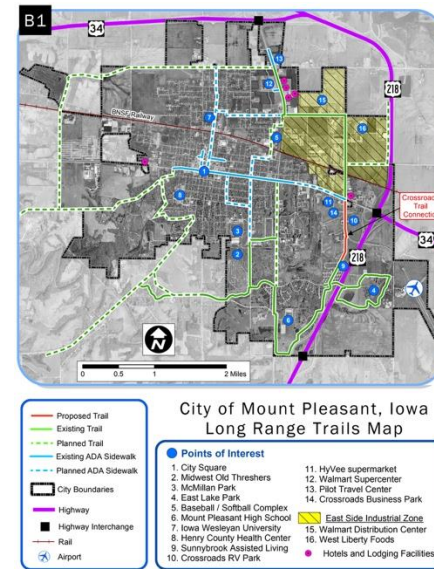
About SEIRPC / Southeast Iowa

- RPA region includes 4 counties at the southeast corner of Iowa, with a population just over 100,000
- 'Great River Region' – Mississippi River forms the eastern border, and it includes the confluences of the Cedar, Iowa, Skunk and Des Moines Rivers
- Largest city is Burlington (24,000), followed by Fort Madison and Keokuk (each 10,000), and Mount Pleasant (8,000)
- SEIRPC formed in 1973 – provides various forms of planning and technical assistance for local governments, including transportation planning, housing and community development; also provides regional transit service (SEIBUS)



Bike/Pedestrian Planning

- SEIRPC regularly assists in planning efforts for bike and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Help communities apply for grants – SRT, FRT, TAP, REAP, private foundations, etc.
- Provide trail-counting technologies to gauge current public usage
- Assessment of existing infrastructure and future priorities, as part of developing local comprehensive plans and regional planning documents like the LRTP
- Participation with local trails advocacy groups, such as Bike Burlington, the Louisa County Trails Council, and PORT of Fort Madison



Bike/Pedestrian Planning

- SEIRPC has also been involved in some 'standalone' trails planning efforts, outside the context of a Comprehensive Plan.
- These typically involve the creation of a steering committee/focus group, and multiple public engagement events to gather feedback on community priorities.
- A prominent example is the Greater Burlington Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan – first developed in 2013 and then updated in 2020.

GREATER BURLINGTON BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PLAN 2020

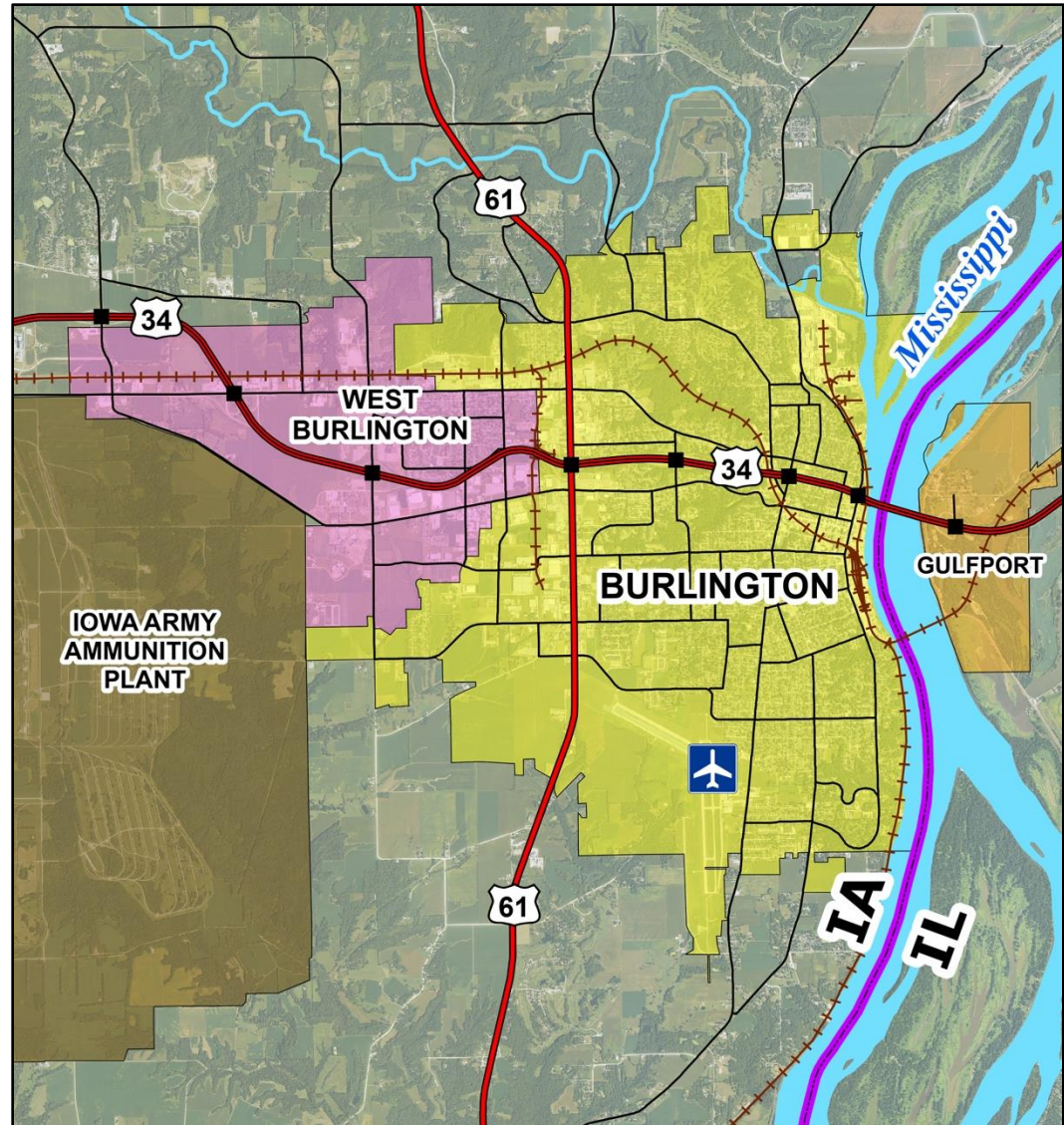


Prepared by the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC) for the City of Burlington, the City of West Burlington, and Des Moines County Conservation.



About Greater Burlington

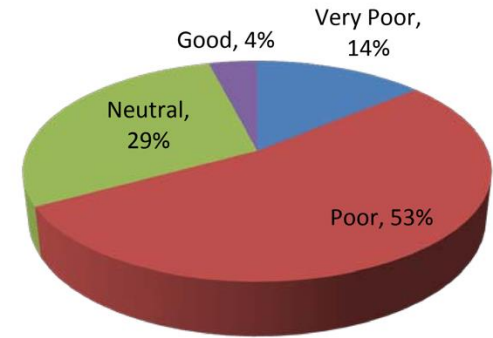
- Includes two separate cities – Burlington and West Burlington
- Around 30,000 residents – 24,000 in Burlington and 3,000 in West Burlington, plus a few thousand more in surrounding unincorporated areas.
- West Burlington is home to several important regional institutions – shopping mall, community college, hospital and business park.
- Therefore, planning for bike/pedestrian infrastructure requires proactive, multi-jurisdictional cooperation.



Greater Burlington Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan (2013)

- The development of this plan involved a partnership between the Cities of Burlington and West Burlington.
- The Steering Committee included representation from Bike Burlington and two local cycling and fitness businesses.
- Public input centered around a survey, which was used to assess public opinion on existing conditions, and identify priorities for future improvements.
- After many of the priority projects from the original 2013 plan had been completed (or at least secured funding), local leaders engaged with SEIRPC to initiate an update to the plan in 2020, in order to sustain the momentum.

How would you rank the Greater Burlington Area's current bicycle and pedestrian facilities (trails, sidewalks, bike routes)?



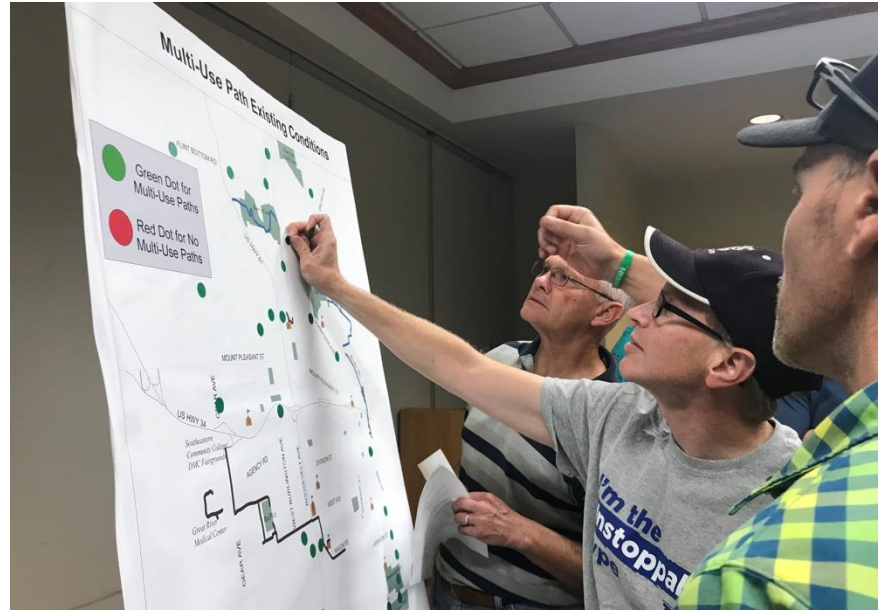
* A fifth category of "excellent" received no responses.

Vision Statement

"By 2025, the Greater Burlington bicycle and pedestrian system will be easily accessible and well connected. The system will allow residents and visitors to walk, run, and bike safely to key destinations in the area."

Greater Burlington Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan (2020)

- For the 2020 update, Des Moines County Conservation participated along with the two cities, after substantial progress had been made in completing the Flint River Trail between Burlington and the Big Hollow Recreation Area.
- The planning process was similar this time, but also included several public workshops/visioning sessions.
- Thankfully, the public input phase had wrapped up just before the start of the pandemic!
- The final plan was adopted through formal resolutions from the Cities of Burlington and West Burlington, plus Des Moines County.



Gear Avenue Trail Extension – West Burlington

- When the plan update was underway, West Burlington was preparing to start work on a trail extension along Gear Avenue, between Division Street and the US 34 freeway.
- This new trail segment provided direct access to Southeastern Community College and the Great River Medical Center.
- It also fed into an existing trail that extends through the Burlington Regional RecPlex and the Flint Ridge Business Park.
- But the biggest obstacle lay just ahead – the Gear Avenue overpass of US 34!

Proposed Priorities: Overall



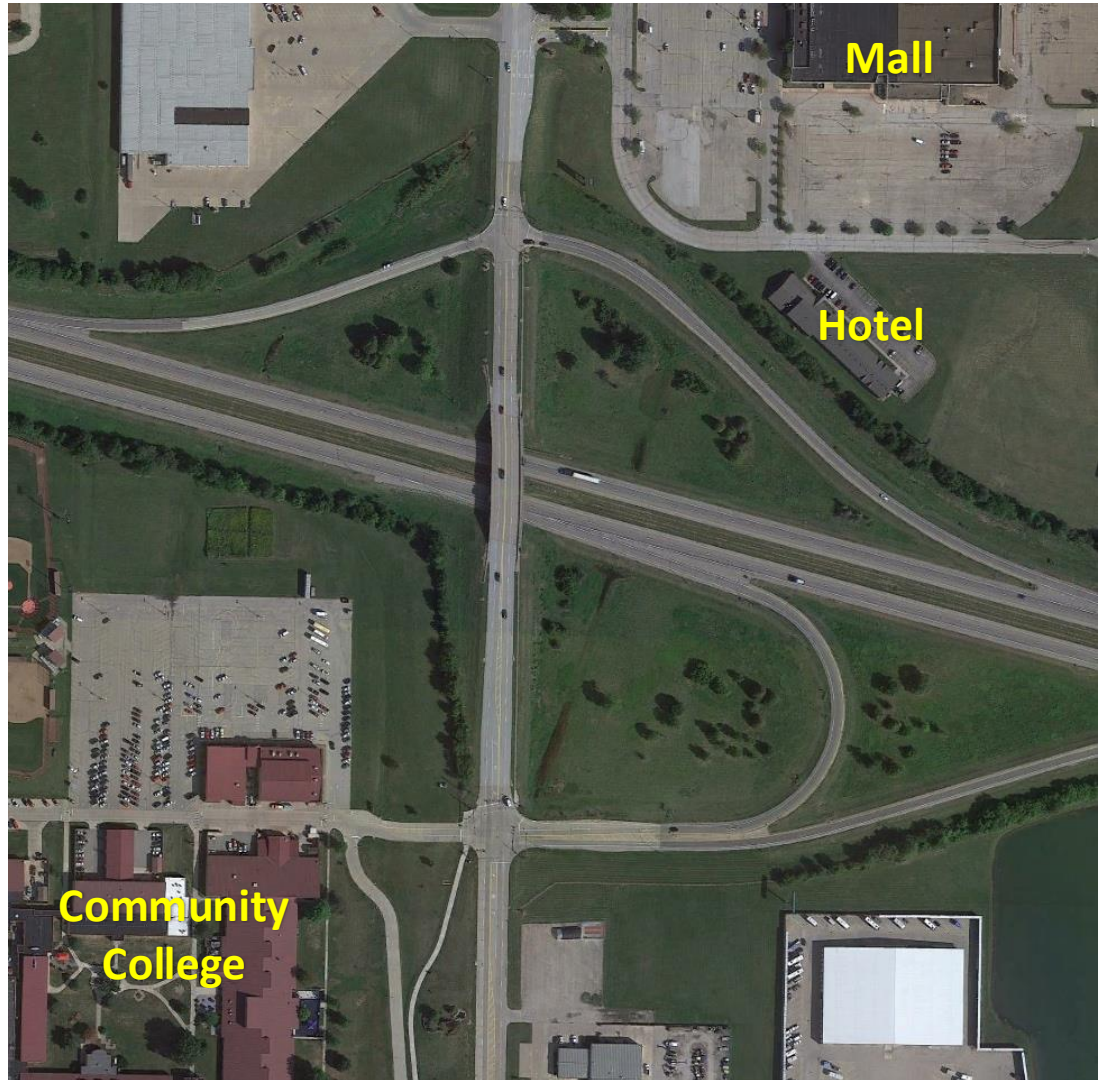
Gear Avenue Trail Extension – West Burlington

- Gear Avenue is a 4-lane roadway that crosses the US 34 freeway at a full interchange on the southwest side of West Burlington. The AADT is 9,700.
- The community hospital and college are on the south side of the bridge, while Westland Mall and most of the city's residential areas are on the north side.
- When first constructed in the 1970s, the bridge included a sidewalk on the east side, but it was built at only 4 feet wide, and terminated immediately after crossing the exit ramps on either side.



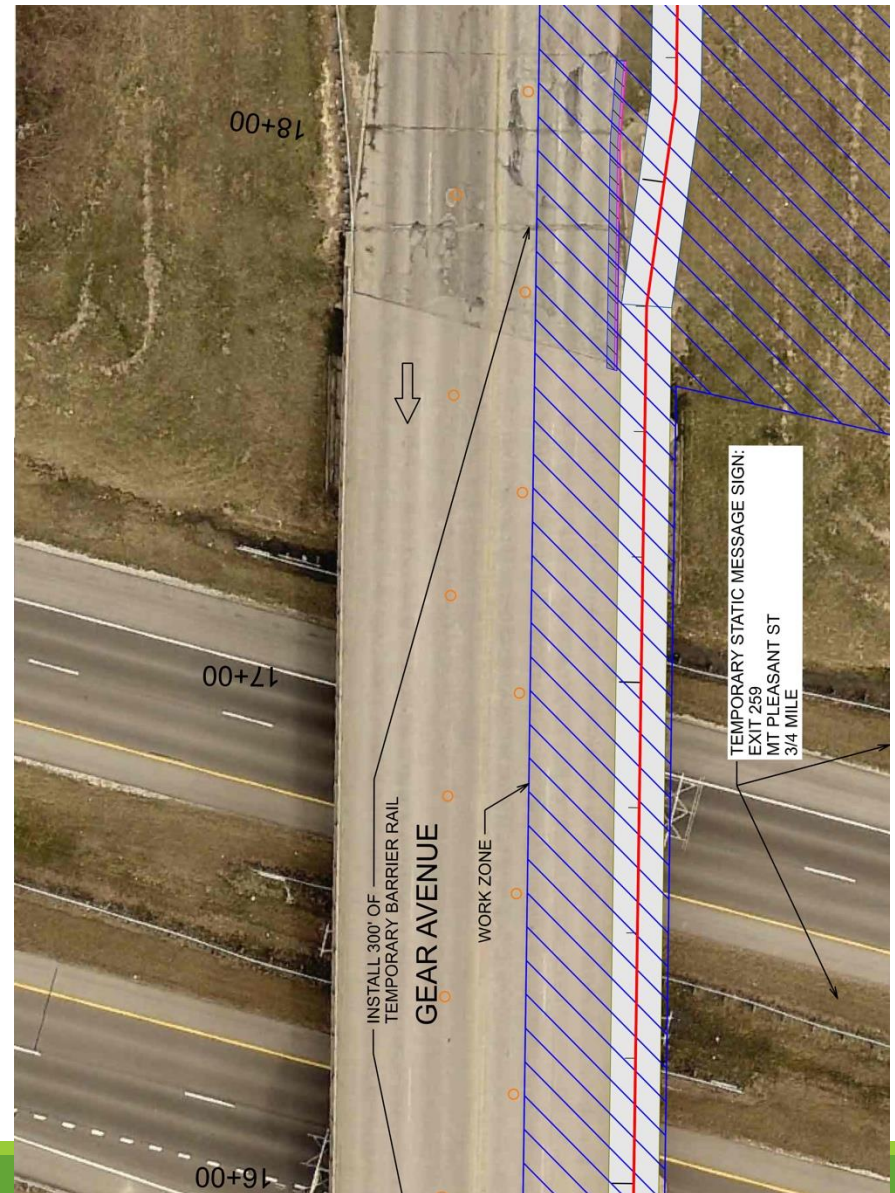
Gear Avenue Trail Extension – West Burlington

- The City of West Burlington recognized how important this bridge crossing is for safe bike/pedestrian connectivity in their community, and public feedback from the plan update confirmed this.
- But the bridge crossing presented serious logistical challenges.
- While Gear Avenue is a city street, the bridge over US 34 is owned by the DOT.

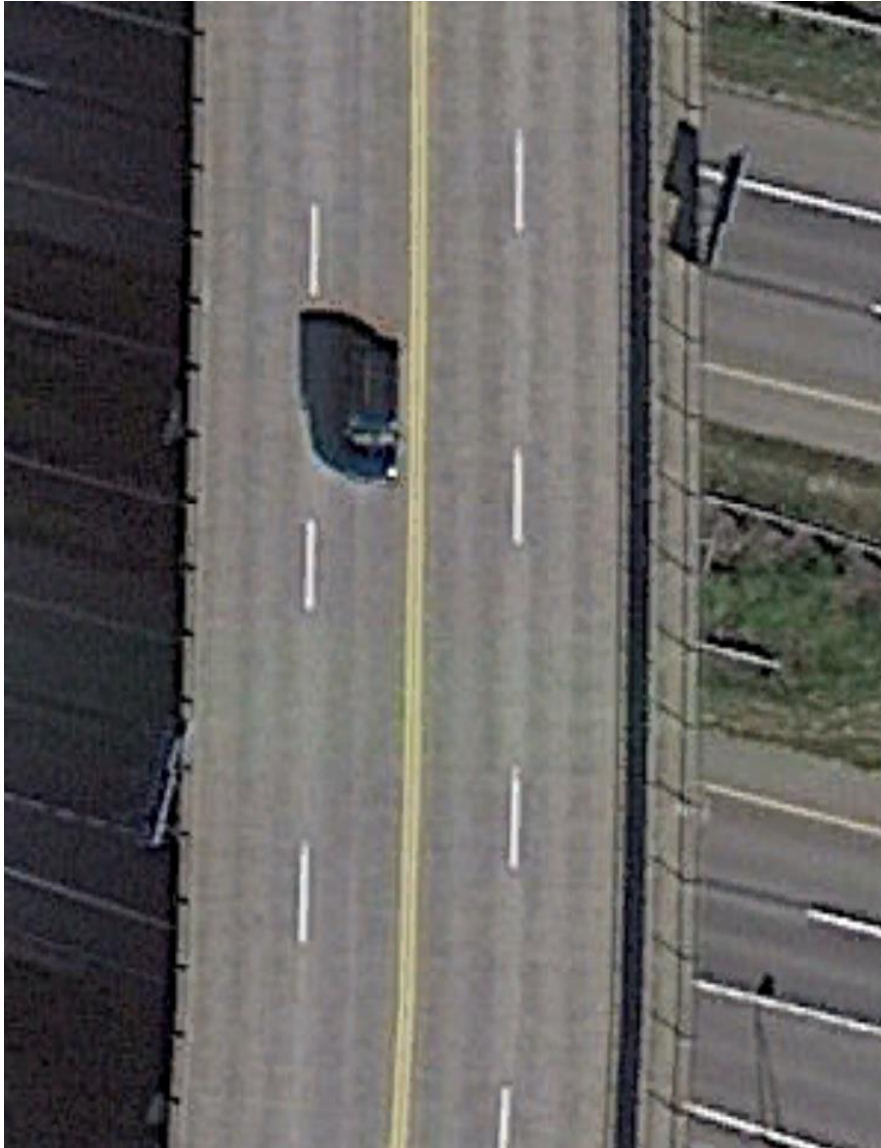


Gear Avenue Trail Extension – West Burlington

- SEIRPC facilitated meetings between City staff, their engineering consultant, and the DOT District Planner to discuss the issue.
- Following the initial meeting, the DOT and consultant coordinated to assess the feasibility of adding a trail to the existing bridge, without either
 - a) building a separate pedestrian bridge, or
 - b) completely rebuilding the existing roadway bridge
- It was determined to be feasible, as the existing travel surface was wider than necessary for a 4-lane road, and each lane could be narrowed by about 1 foot

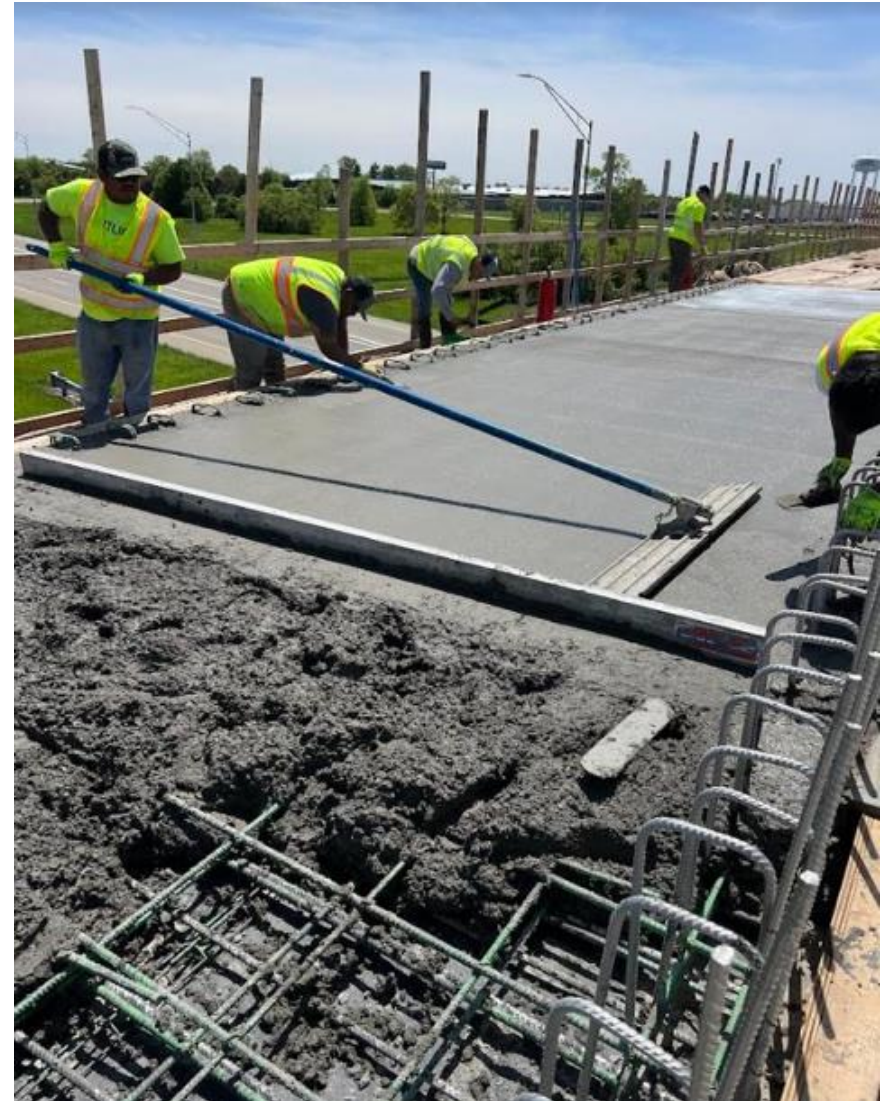


Arrow points to original centerline stripe



Gear Avenue Trail Extension – West Burlington

- The City and DOT coordinated to develop a tentative cost estimate for the bridge retrofit, and extension of the trail northward to Westland Mall.
- The City of West Burlington applied for a regional TAP grant in 2020, and was awarded \$548,000 in TAP funds.
- SEIRPC also helped the City secure two additional grants – \$345,000 from the State Recreational Trails Program and \$100,000 from the Wellmark Foundation.
- Combined, this allowed the City to proceed to construction of the \$1 million project.

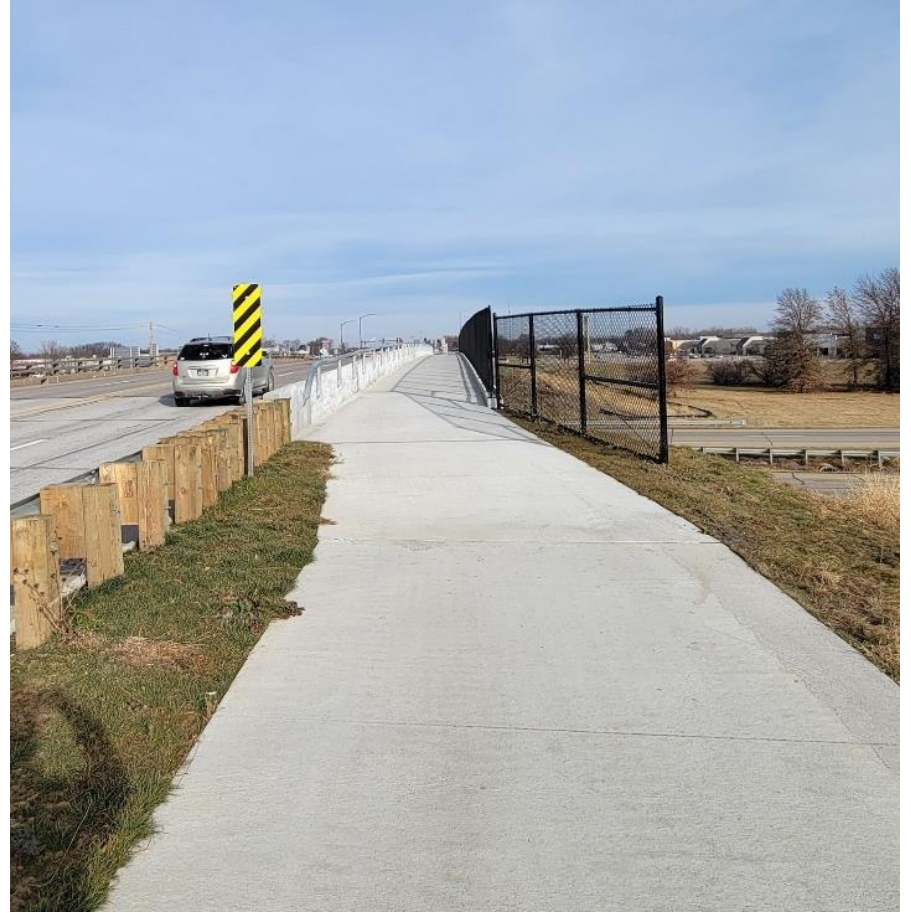


Gear Avenue Trail Extension – West Burlington

Before



After



Gear Avenue Trail Extension – West Burlington

Before

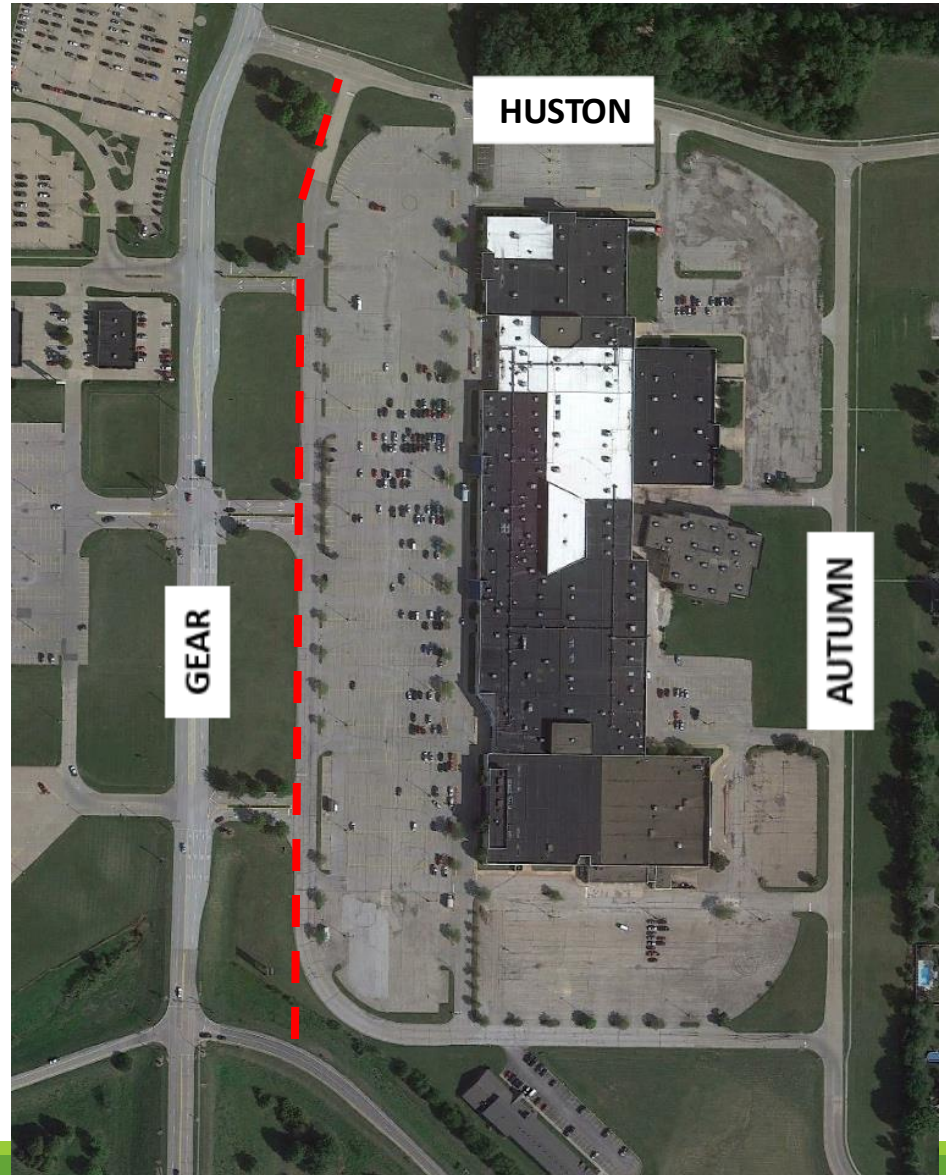


After



Gear Avenue Trail Extension – West Burlington

- Another challenge remained once the trail crossed the highway bridge.
- The Gear Avenue right-of-way isn't wide enough to add a 10-foot trail alongside.
- Several years earlier, the as-yet undeveloped outlots in front of the Westland Mall ring road were sold separately from the mall itself.
- While the mall's owners were receptive to the idea of a trail in front of the mall, the outlot owner would not grant an easement to build the trail directly beside Gear.
- City staff then coordinated with the mall owner to craft an alternative.



Gear Avenue Trail Extension – West Burlington

- The mall sold the City a 33-foot strip of land that follows along the inside of the mall ring road, from just north of the highway bridge to Huston Street.
- The trail was surfaced with asphalt, with a strip of raised concrete and planters on each side, to separate it from the ring road and parking lot.



Gear Avenue Trail Extension – West Burlington

Before



After



Gear Avenue Trail Extension – West Burlington

- The City purchased the southernmost outlot, which allowed for the trail to connect from the bridge to the mall ring road.
- Required a new culvert to preserve an existing drainageway.
- This City is planning to use this small lot for establishing a formal trailhead, for the entire 6-mile trail arc around the southwest side of Greater Burlington.



Gear Avenue Trail Extension – West Burlington

Before



After



Final Design Trailhead Park West Burlington, Iowa

Farnaz Fatahi
Jovana Kolasinac



Concept Designs



Designed to enhance the trail system, the park provides facilities for walkers, cyclists, and those arriving by car. Convenient parking, natural beauty, and several rest stops along the way make it a welcoming spot to stop and connect with nature



A welcoming area where cyclists can safely park their bicycles, use a maintenance station, and take a break. The space is designed for easy access and visibility, promoting relaxation and active living in the park.



A vibrant and secure playground area for imaginative play and physical exercise. The colored, padded ground is secure, and a variety of play equipment invites children of different ages to join in.



Covered picnic tables provide shaded spaces for family gatherings, outdoor meals, and social events. This feature enhances the usability of the park throughout different seasons and weather conditions.



Placed at the entrance of the park, a distinctive sculpture of art welcomes visitors and creates a strong visual identity for the park. Surrounded by colorful landscaping, it also serves as a landmark and a photo opportunity.



Comfortable swing benches create a peaceful environment for visitors of all ages. Placed on the main path, this seating area invites residents to pause, enjoy the view, interact with others, and appreciate the beauty of the nearby prairie landscape.



A natural meeting spot for rest and conversation is created by the covered circular seating structure. Additional shade is provided by integrated trees, which further demonstrates the park's dedication to sustainability and comfort.



Strategically located chess tables offer scope for mental exercise and friendly competition. This feature promotes intergenerational interaction and gives people a reason to stay longer in the park.

Lessons Learned

- Collaboration is crucial – everyone needs to be on the same page, and know what their shared priorities are.
 - City staff, elected officials, DOT/County contacts, non-profit advocacy groups, private sector/landowners
- Sometimes, you need to think ‘outside the box’ to come up with feasible, effective solutions.
- Be prepared for unexpected obstacles, and have a contingency plan in place for when they do (when, not *if*).
- Need to have patience – the best solutions often take time to fully implement.

Questions?

Jarred Lassiter

Senior Planner

SEIRPC

319-753-4321

jlassiter@seirpc.com