# Stower Seven Lakes State Trail Master Plan

**July 21st, 2020**

# Acknowledgements

This plan was completed with the valuable input of over 2,000 Polk County stakeholders and members of the public. Community members gave input to the planning team through surveys, a community workshop, an open house, public hearings, and listening sessions.

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# Chapter 1 – Executive Summary

Polk County (population 43,500) is a rural county in Northwest Wisconsin with several small towns, including Amery, St. Croix Falls, and Balsam Lake. Polk County also has an extensive rail-trail network, including the Cattail State Trail, Gandy Dancer State Trail, Sawmill County Trail, and Stower Seven Lakes State Trail (SSLST). The SSLST Master Plan (hereafter referred to as "the Plan") charts a course forward for this 13-mile trail between Lotus Lake and Amery. The Plan was inspired by robust community input and translated into implementable alternatives by the project team (Toole Design and Polk County staff). The successful completion of the SSLST will help achieve the community's overarching vision established through Polk County's Strategic Plan adopted in 2007:

*"Improve the quality of life for all who live, work, and play in Polk County."*

## Why develop the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail Master Plan?

In the late 1990's, planning began to convert the abandoned Minneapolis St. Paul and Sault Ste. Marie railbed into the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail. The first master plan was adopted in 2004, and the trail was opened in 2009. While the trail has been predominantly limited to non-motorized uses during that time, the addition of ATV riders, snowmobilers, and equestrians has been debated throughout the trail's history. See a description of the corridor's historical background in Chapter 2 – Trail Description. To evaluate the possibilities of adding these user types, an update to the existing master plan was commissioned. Due to the requirements of the federal Transportation Alternatives Program (which funded planning and construction), ATV/UTV access is not considered as a possible additional use in the Plan.

## Who was involved?

County staff in the Environmental Services Division, in partnership with the consulting firm Toole Design in Phase 2, led the planning process. The primary focus during Plan development was to gain widespread community input on desired uses for this important community asset. Discussions led to research and analysis around what uses should be allowed on the trail, and under what design standards.

The Plan is the distillation of ideas from thousands of residents and stakeholders about how the trail can best serve their community. Residents were engaged through Phase 1 activities of Subcommittee meetings, a survey that received about 2,000 responses, a public hearing and an open house; along with Phase 2 activities of a well-attended open house, a survey which attracted 86 respondents, frequent communication with County Staff, a series of stakeholder listening sessions, use preference survey with over 5,000 responses, and public hearing.

## What did the community tell us?

Residents told the planning team that they strongly support trail-based recreation in Polk County and would like to see more facilities in the future. On the question of adding snowmobile and equestrian use, the community was fairly evenly divided. The highest-ranking concerns of non-motorized users included safety, noise, and trail surface damage. Snowmobilers and equestrians were concerned about safety, economic development, shared-use, and network connectivity. These results are detailed in Appendix A, Community Engagement Report.

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*Interested citizens participating at the Open House in Amery*

## What can we learn from past planning efforts?

In preparation for site analysis and an alternatives analysis, the project team researched related documents to gain insight from past planning efforts. This review (addressed in Appendix B) includes plans, design guidelines, and economic development reports. Lessons learned from this review include:

- A DNR-produced evaluation of recreational compatibility between trail user types found that 1) equestrians are substantively impacted by bicyclists, 2) cross country skiers and fat tire bikers are substantively impacted by snowmobilers, and 3) snowmobilers are substantively impacted by cross country skiers and fat tire bikers. "Substantive impact" means that particular user types are unlikely to participate in their activity because of the presence of other user types.
- Compared to other user groups, snowmobilers have the largest positive economic impact.
- With county park managers observing that demand is growing for rail-trail bicycling/hiking/running/walking, fat tire biking, cross-country skiing, and horseback riding in Northwest Wisconsin, these activities are ripe for expansion on the SSLST.

## What alternatives were considered?

Based on the community engagement findings and lessons learned from past planning efforts, and field review of the corridor the Plan concludes with seven alternatives, detailed in Appendix C – Alternatives Analysis:

1. **Snowmobile Alternative 1 (SA1)** – Do not allow snowmobiles on any portion of the corridor.
2. **Snowmobile Alternative 2 (SA2)** – Do not allow snowmobiles on any portion of the corridor, but widen shoulders between State Highway 46 and County Highway C.
3. **Snowmobile Alternative 3 (SA3)** – Allow snowmobiles on the entire corridor with no changes to existing trail surface width.

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4. **Snowmobile Alternative 4 (SA4)** – Allow snowmobiles on a portion of the corridor on separate and shared trails.
5. **Equestrian Alternative 1 (EA1)** – Do not allow equestrians on any portion of the corridor.
6. **Equestrian Alternative 2 (EA2)** – Allow equestrians on the entire corridor with no changes to existing trail surface width.
7. **Equestrian Alternative 3 (EA3)** – Allow equestrians on the corridor on separate trails.

Each of these seven alternatives is evaluated on factors including cost, economic development impact, safety, tree removal, wetland impacts, user group displacement, and additional maintenance needs. This evaluation is not intended to provide a preferred alternative, rather the purpose is to consider the relative difference of the alternatives under each factor.

| | **Cost to Implement** | **Economic Development Impact** | **Safety for all Trail Users** | **Tree Removal** | **Wetland Impacts** | **User Group Displacement** | **Additional Maintenance Needs** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Snowmobile Alternative 1 (SA1)** | Low | Medium | Medium | Low | Low | Snowmobilers | Low |
| **Snowmobile Alternative 2 (SA2)** | High | Low | High | Medium | Medium | Snowmobilers | Medium |
| **Snowmobile Alternative 3 (SA3)** | Low | High | Low | Low | Low | Skiers, Bicyclists | Medium |
| **Snowmobile Alternative 4 (SA4)** | High | Medium | Medium | High | Medium | None | Medium |
| **Equestrian Alternative 1 (EA1)** | Low | Low | High | Low | Low | Equestrians | Low |
| **Equestrian Alternative 2 (EA2)** | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Equestrians | High |
| **Equestrian Alternative 3 (EA3)** | High | Medium | High | High | High | None | Medium |

## Goal and Objectives

**Goal:**

Provide and preserve a multi-season and multi-use recreational trail at least 13 miles in length stretching from Dresser to Amery. The all-season trail will provide a safe, sustainable and inclusive experience.

**Objectives:**

- Provide for recreational opportunities that promotes the health and safety of the community.
- Provide opportunities for the greatest number of projected uses.
- Complement present economic benefits of trails existing in Polk County and provide opportunities for economic development not reflected in current trail usage.
- Provide recreational opportunities that complement present trail opportunities in Polk County and provide recreational opportunities that presently are underrepresented in the Polk County Trail system.
- Enhance opportunities for tourism in Polk County.

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- Cooperate with landowners and communities through which the trail passes.
- Preserve the rural character and environmental integrity of the trail.
- Anticipate the urbanization of the area through which the trail passes and provide for possible future use of the trail as an alternative transportation system between communities.

## Conclusion

The Plan brings together an organized compilation of community feedback, a summary of research, and a corridor evaluation that results in a set of user group alternatives for consideration. At their February 19, 2020 meeting, and after reviewing public input and the options evaluated during this planning process, the Environmental Services Committee (ESC) selected the snowmobile alternative SA3 and the equestrian alternative EA2 as their preferred use options for the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail, along with continuing existing uses such as walking/running, biking, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing. The ESC felt that these uses were the best choices due to enhanced economic development, providing consistent trail use options with other rail trails in the county, implementing the original intent of the trail and because of the high demand and interest of the added user groups for increased trail use opportunities. A public hearing was held in June to provide the public with the opportunity to weigh in on the draft master plan. The results of the public hearing were shared with the ESC and they reaffirmed the above use selections and recommended them and the full plan on to the full county board. On July 21st, the full county board reviewed the public input, draft plan, and use selections and voted 9-5 in favor of approving the plan and sending the plan with the above uses to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for approval.

There are a number of necessary changes and updates that will need to be completed on the trail before these additional uses are permitted. Work will begin to implement these changes upon receipt of an approved master plan from the WDNR. It is Polk County's aim to have the trail open to the new uses as soon as the updates are complete.

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# Chapter 2 – Trail Description

## History

The Stower Seven Lakes State Trail is located on a former Minneapolis St. Paul and Sault Ste. Marie Railroad right-of-way which begins two miles east of Dresser and extends into the City of Amery, Wisconsin. The 13.48 miles of trail traverses a multitude of landscapes including wetlands, northern hardwood forests, prairie, agricultural areas and residential neighborhoods as illustrated in Figure 1. The trail runs adjacent to seven different lakes and crosses six rivers or creeks. The trail intersects 15 county roads, numerous field approaches, and multiple residential driveways. Generally, the west eleven miles of the corridor run through rural land that is primarily zoned Residential-Agriculture-5 and Farmland Preservation. There are also Shoreland Protection zones surrounding all waterbodies and wetlands. The remaining 2.5 miles of corridor east of Bear Trap Lake are zoned Residential with the density of homes increasing toward the City of Amery. Within the City of Amery, the corridor width ranges from 60 feet wide to 180 feet wide, whereas in the rural branch of the corridor, the corridor width is consistently 100 feet wide. The trail corridor consists of approximately 174 acres that generally runs in a longitudinal direction.

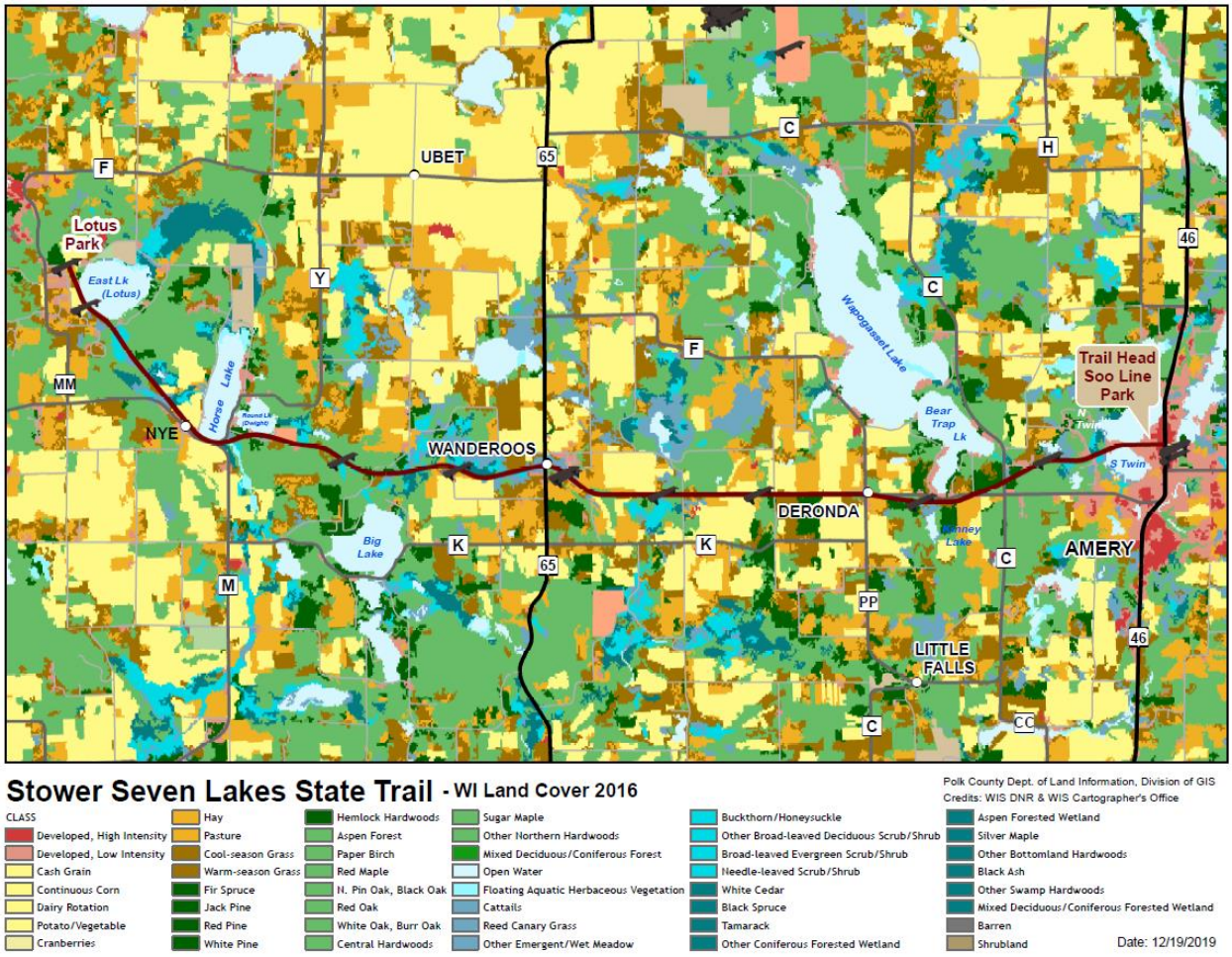


*Figure 1: Map illustrates the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail and the surrounding land cover.*

The trail right-of-way was acquired from Wisconsin Central Limited in 2003 by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) under the Stewardship Program. The WDNR paid all costs to acquire the property and will maintain ownership of the entire right-of-way. Subsequently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the WDNR and Polk County (see Appendix D). Under the terms of the MOU, the WDNR grants a trail easement to Polk County as well as designates the trail as a "State Trail" under section NR 51.73, Wis. Adm. Code. In addition, the WDNR will work with Polk County to identify funding sources for the development and repair of the trail. Development of the trail began following the signing of the 2003 MOU between the WDNR and Polk County. Under this same MOU, Polk County will be responsible for the development, operation, repair, and maintenance of the trail.

## Environmental and Cultural Analysis

The Stower Seven Lakes Trail was evaluated for environmental, cultural and historical significant areas in conjunction with the State archaeologist and the local WDNR Trail Manager in late December 2019. Results from the State Archaeologist indicate the presence of historical/cultural sites along the trail. The intent is to protect these areas while not disclosing the exact locations. The team involved with preparing the Mater plan evaluated the information provided by the WDNR in consideration to any additional uses. One of the areas identified, is already being protected by barriers. The two other locations along the trail are not being disturbed by current uses. Adding Snowmobiles and Equestrian use to the trail will not impact any archaeological features as long as the trail is not expanded.

In late December, a search was conducted in the WIDNR Natural Heritage Inventory Database (NHI). Results from the NHI database for the entire trail corridor revealed one community, one threatened and endangered species, one aquatic reptile and high potential habitat for one insect. These occurrences are not directly located in the trail corridor, however potential habitat and features do exists outside the trail corridor. Consultation with the local DNR Forest Ecologist indicate that adding snowmobiles and equestrian use will not harm the species identified in the NHI search.

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# Chapter 3 – Trail Management

## Allowed Uses

On July 21st, 2020, the Polk County Board of Supervisor chose to add snowmobiling and seasonal horseback riding to the entire trail along with maintaining the existing uses such as walking/running, biking, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing.

## Seasonal Restrictions

Snowmobiles can be allowed from December 1st to March 31st when there is six (6) inches of snow and conditions allowing. The opening and closure of the trail will be to the discretion of Polk County. Grooming activities can begin before the snowmobile trails are officially open.

Equestrian trail use will be limited to mounted riding. No carriages, buggies, or sleighs will be permitted. Equestrian trail use can be allowed from May 1st to November 10th. The opening and closure of equestrian use on the trail will be to the discretion of Polk County.

## Hunting/Wildlife

The trail passes through many ecosystems and will provide many opportunities to observe wildlife. Many of these ecosystems are home to species such as muskrat and beaver which can cause damage to the trail infrastructure. Wildlife management and mitigation of nuisance animals will be conducted in accordance with state and federal guidelines. Hunting is prohibited within the corridor but does take place on adjacent lands. Due to the limited land base, many wildlife management opportunities are precluded. Polk County will cooperate with the WDNR and other groups interested in wildlife management to keep the trail corridor available to wildlife management within the overall objectives of the master plan.

## Operation and Maintenance

Polk County has primary responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the trail. The Polk County Parks Department with an address of 100 Polk County Plaza, Suite 40, Balsam Lake, WI 54810, under the direction of the Environmental Services Committee will act as the primary agent of the County. The daily operation will be supplemented by Polk County ordinances and park directives. Daily operation is directed and performed by the Polk County Parks Department and its contractors and cooperators. Daily routine enforcement is the responsibility of Polk County. The trail will be maintained with safety as a priority. The average width of the trail is roughly 15-feet with an average shoulder widths of 3 feet. The trail will be maintained to a minimum horizontal clearance of 16-feet, including shoulders. Because the trail surface is variable in width, the maximum maintained width will not exceed 3-feet of maintained shoulder on either side of the trail. The trail will have 12-feet of vertical clearance above the 16-foot wide maintained area. Maintenance will be coordinated by the County with cooperators and volunteers.

The Friends of the Stower Seven Lakes trail have maintained the trail for biking, cross country skiing, walking, running as well as other allowed uses. The Friends Group's maintenance activities include grading, mowing, brushing, compacting, and grooming for cross skiing. Many volunteer hours and out of pocket expenses were covered by this dedicated group. It is Polk County's desire to maintain this relationship with the Friends of the Stower Seven Lakes Trail. However, additional groups will have to be utilized for the maintenance of the trail. The existing MOU with the Polk County Snowmobile and ATV Alliance will have to be revised to give the club the authority to maintain minimum widths, heights,

signage, and also to provide for grooming while the trail is open to snowmobile use. Furthermore, the County will initiate an MOU with the Northwest Equestrian Club to assist in seasonal maintenance and grooming. Potentially, Polk County has to be prepared to provide for grading and mowing during the summer months.

## Cooperators and Local Groups

The Polk County Snowmobile and ATV Alliance participated in the initial clearing of the trail. After the decision to keep the trail nonnotarized the Snowmobile and ATV Alliance remained an advocate for the trail but did not partake in maintenance actives. Along with Polk County, The Friends of the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail (FSSLST) have been the primary caretakers of the trail. The FSSLST have provided year-round maintenance and support. Activities include: grooming, vegetation management, wayfinding signage, maintaining parking lots and trailheads, and community outreach. The trail maintenance completed by the FSSLST is all volunteer and donation based. Partnerships with other local groups such as the Northwest Equestrian Club will be explored to assist with maintenance and grooming.

## Vegetative Management

The vegetation adjacent to the trail is representative of the great natural diversity that occurs in Northwestern Wisconsin. Periodic maintenance will occur to enhance the vegetation as well as protect trail users and facilities. Annually, the trail will be monitored for vegetation growth and will be mowed or sprayed to maintain the minimum horizontal and vertical clearances as required by the WDNR and indicated in Chapters 4 and 5. These clearances are outlined by trail type in the following chart.

| | Bicyclists | Cross-Country Skiers | Equestrians | Snowmobilers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trail Width Minimum | 12’ (2-way travel) | 6’ (one-way travel) | 8’ (one-way travel), 12’ (two-way travel) | 10’ (one-way travel), 14’ (two-way travel) |
| Trail Height Minimum | 10' | 10' | 12' | 12' |

Invasive species such as buckthorn and spotted Knapweed will be treated to mitigate the spread depending on staff time and volunteer availability. Hazard trees such as rotten, leaning, or trees within the minimum width of the trail, will be trimmed or cut down. The long-term goal is to promote a diversity of long-lived tree species. Timber harvests may be conducted to maintain the minimum width of the trail and reduce hazard trees. The timber is owned by the State. The timber sale prescription and paperwork will be approved by the applicable WDNR Property Manager. In addition, all proceeds from the timber sale will be collected and reimbursed to the WDNR.

Herbicide applications may be necessary to treat un-wanted vegetation on the trail surface and also within the right of way of the trail. Herbicide application must be made by a certified herbicide

applicator as required by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP). In addition, the DNR pesticide application form must be filled out by the applicator and submitted to the WDNR.

## Summer Maintenance and Grooming

The trail surface is comprised of a 4-inch substrate of class-5 trap rock and surfaced with 4-inches of crushed 3/8-minus limestone. The Stower trail has not had limestone added to the entire length of the trail since 2004. Overall, the original limestone base is in adequate condition. In order to maintain an enjoyable and workable surface, limestone should periodically be added to the trail. Grading will be done as needed to provide for a smooth surface, maintain the crown of the trail, minimize vegetation growth within the trail surface, and promote an enjoyable trail surface. At a minimum, grading of the trail will be done once in the spring and once mid-summer. Ideally the limestone will be packed with weighted rollers after grading activities. Staff routinely monitors and inspects the trails to mitigate any trail concerns.

Vegetation growth within the limestone will be controlled by a combination of grading and herbicide treatment. Herbicides may be applied by broadcast application and or spot treatments. Herbicide treatment will be limited to the trail surface and not used as a control method for trail shoulders. Ideally the future desired condition will be comprised of grassy vegetation that can be mowed on an annual basis. The shoulders of the trail will be cleared of woody debris and mowed to a maximum width of 3-feet. Mechanical treatment such as grading and raking are the preferred trail maintenance technique. Mechanical treatments will need to be carried out at a higher frequency compared to herbicide treatments. For more information on herbicides that may be used please visit: https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/foresthealth/herbicides.html

## Winter Maintenance and Grooming

Winter maintenance activities will be limited. Once the trail is groomed for winter use access to maintenance vehicles will be limited. The grooming and winter maintenance will be managed by Polk County and carried out by the Polk County Snowmobile and ATV Council. Grooming activities can begin before the snowmobile season is open. Grooming standards are set by the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC).

## User Fees – Trail Passes

User fees will not exceed those established in s. 27.01, Stats., and will be subject to written approval by the WDNR. The standard State trail pass fees will be charged and State trail passes will be honored. Trail pass fees and/or registration will be enforced according to WDNR requirements. Pedestrians are the only users who are exempt from the requirement to purchase a State trail pass. Equestrian, bicyclists, and cross-country skiers are required to purchase trail passes. The user fees are collected by the State and the County. A portion of these fees goes back to the County to supplement maintenance activities on the trail. The County works with cooperators and trail pass vendors in the community to sell and collect self-registration passes for the trail.

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## Special Events

Special Event Permits will not be granted for any activity involving a use that is not authorized for the trail.

Special event permits must be approved by the County as well as the WDNR Property Manager. Approvals will consider factors such as safety, seasonal restrictions, and use conflicts. The County maintains the right to host Special Events. A special event permit is needed when at least one of the following criteria is meet. If one of the following criteria is not met, a permit is not needed and the planned activity can proceed.

A Special Event Permit is needed when one or more of the following criteria is met:

- More than 100 people are participating
- Fees to participate are involved
- Restricts or limits the use of the property
- Placement of temporary structures or event apparatus
- Sale or offering of merchandise, food or beverages.
- Non- routine services requested from a WDNR employee or County staff
- Involves exclusive use or closure of all or part of the trail

If one of the above criteria is met a Special Event Application and Permit form (DNR form 2200-127) must be filled out. The Special Event Application can be found in Appendix E. The Environmental Services Committee, Parks staff and the WDNR need to approve the permit. Permits will be issued on a first come first serve basis with priority given to previously established annual Special Events. Applications must be submitted on an annual basis and will not be automatically renewed. Permits must be sent to the county 90 days prior to the special event date to ensure the County and WDNR has a 30 day window to review the permit. Fees for Special Events:

Up to 100 participants: $50

101 to 500 participants $100

501 to 1,000 participants $250

More than 1001 participants $500

### Other Considerations before issuing a Special Event Permit

- A Special Event cannot be held on State or Federal Holiday or holiday weekend.
- A Special Event request cannot conflict with another scheduled Special Event.
- The trail must remain open to the public allowed uses.
- Special Event organizers/sponsors are responsible for any and all damage to the trail. The Parks Department shall either estimate costs or make the necessary repairs and then bill the organization/sponsor for direct costs of repairs.
- The Special Event organizer/sponsor is required to provide Polk County with certificate of insurance for the approved event and dates. Minimum insurance coverage shall include

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$1,000,000 single limit per occurrence including coverage of $1,000,000 for bodily injury, including death and $25,000 property damage.

- The Special Event will be organized/sponsored and administered by a state recognized 501(3) C group, a local county organization, club or group of county residents. The Special Event must be organized by 3 or more people.

For more information please call the Polk Parks Department or visit: https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/rules/specialevents.html

## Handicapped Access

A permit will be allowed for handicapped access to the trail for electric wheelchairs. *WDNR Mobility Device Access Application and Permit for Department Lands, Forms Number, 2500-124.*

*https://dnr.wi.gov/files/pdf/forms/2500/2500-124.pdf*

## Emergency Action Plan

Management responses to catastrophic events are determined on a case-by-case basis. Catastrophic events are rare, but allowances must be made to provide for flexibility when such events occur. These events may include severe flooding, ice and wind storms, insect and disease infestations, wildfires or other catastrophic occurrences. The immediate management responses to these events will follow existing County and Wisconsin DNR emergency management protocols. Wildfires, tree diseases and insect infestations shall be controlled to the degree appropriate to protect the values of the Stower Seven Lakes Trail. However, emergency actions may be taken to protect public health and safety, or as directed by the Wisconsin DNR to prevent a catastrophic incident from spreading to adjacent lands. For more information on Polk County's Emergency Action Plan please visit: https://www.co.polk.wi.us/emgt

To ensure the safety of all recreational users, hazardous conditions on the trail will be monitored by County Staff, Friends Groups, and trail users. Reports of hazardous situations will be directed to County Staff and investigated as soon as possible. County contact information will be posted on the new trail-use signs that will be installed at the Trailhead and intersections, along with instructions to call 911 in case of emergency. County Staff will notify Friends Groups, clubs, municipalities, users, and the WDNR of the hazard. Hazardous conditions will be mitigated by making the essential repairs and or removing the hazard. In the event of a hazard, the trail will be posted at the Trailheads and intersections. If the hazard cannot be mitigated, barriers will be placed until the necessary maintenance or repairs occur. If necessary, segment(s) of the trail or the entire trail will be shut down until the trail is safe to resume recreational activities. The trail is inspected for hazards including an annual inspection in conjunction with the appropriate DNR trail manager.

## Trail Signage

The Stower Seven Lakes trial will require several trailhead signs to be replaced and additional signage is needed to accommodate equestrian and snowmobile users. These signs will educate trail users on regulations and etiquette. New signs will be placed according to DNR signing recommendations. The Polk County Snowmobile Council will be responsible for installation and maintenance of snowmobile safety, directional, and navigational signs and markers in accordance with the WDNR snowmobile trail

signing recommendations. In addition, 36 new signs that are located along intersections of the trail will have to be replaced with signs that are in line with the new uses. Signage will promote safety as well as following trail etiquette guidelines published by the WDNR. Speed limit signs of 10 miles per hour will need to be placed in the following locations. Please refer to figure 2 below.

Speed limits signs of 10 mph will be placed in both directions from:

- The trail head in Amery to County Road C.
- 1/4 mile east of Bear Trap Lake to County Road PP.
- 1/2 mile East of State Highway 65 to State Highway 65.
- 1/4 mile East of Round Lake to 1/2 mile West of Horse Lake.
- 1/4 mile East of Lotus Lake to Western Trailhead

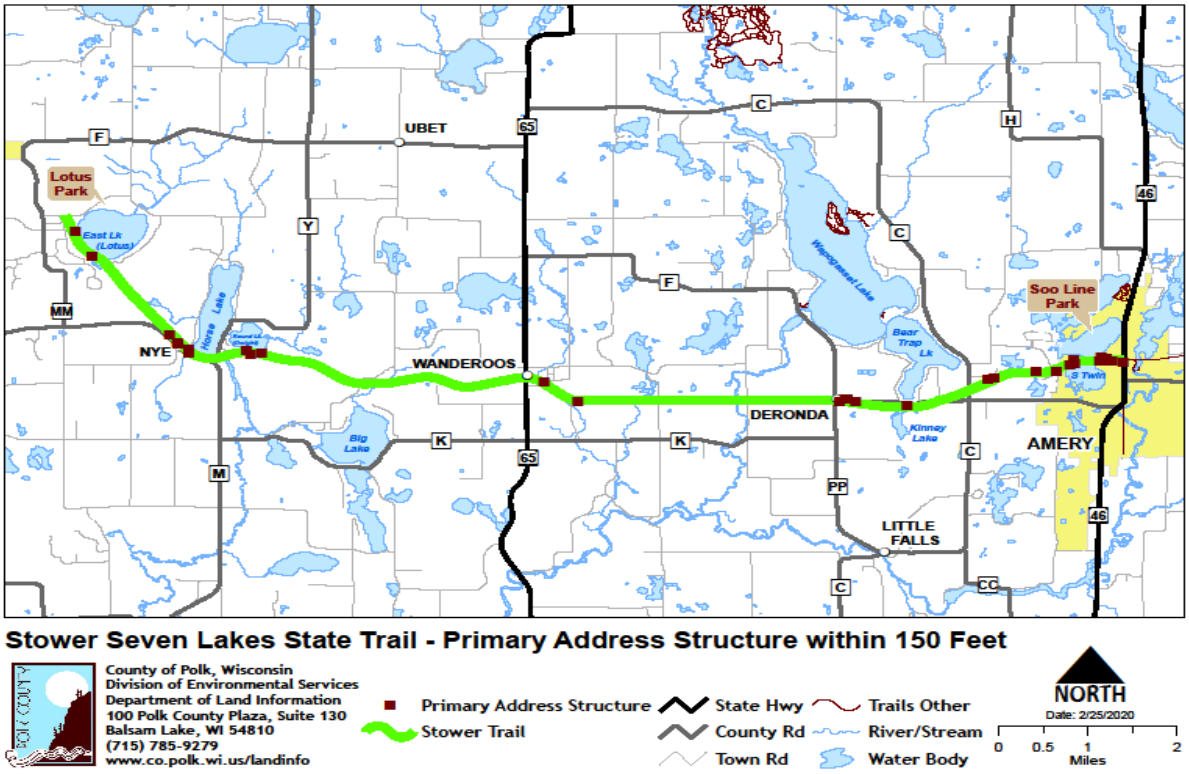


*Figure 2: Map illustrates the Primary Address Structures within 150 feet of Stower Seven Lakes State Trail.*

## Current Trail Amenities

Along its route, the trail offers amenities to support an enjoyable user experience. Features such as parking areas, bathrooms, picnic tables, shelters, benches and water stations all allow for increased enjoyment by trail users. Bathrooms and water stations may be closed seasonally due to freezing concerns. Figure 3 below shows the location of the existing amenities along the trail.

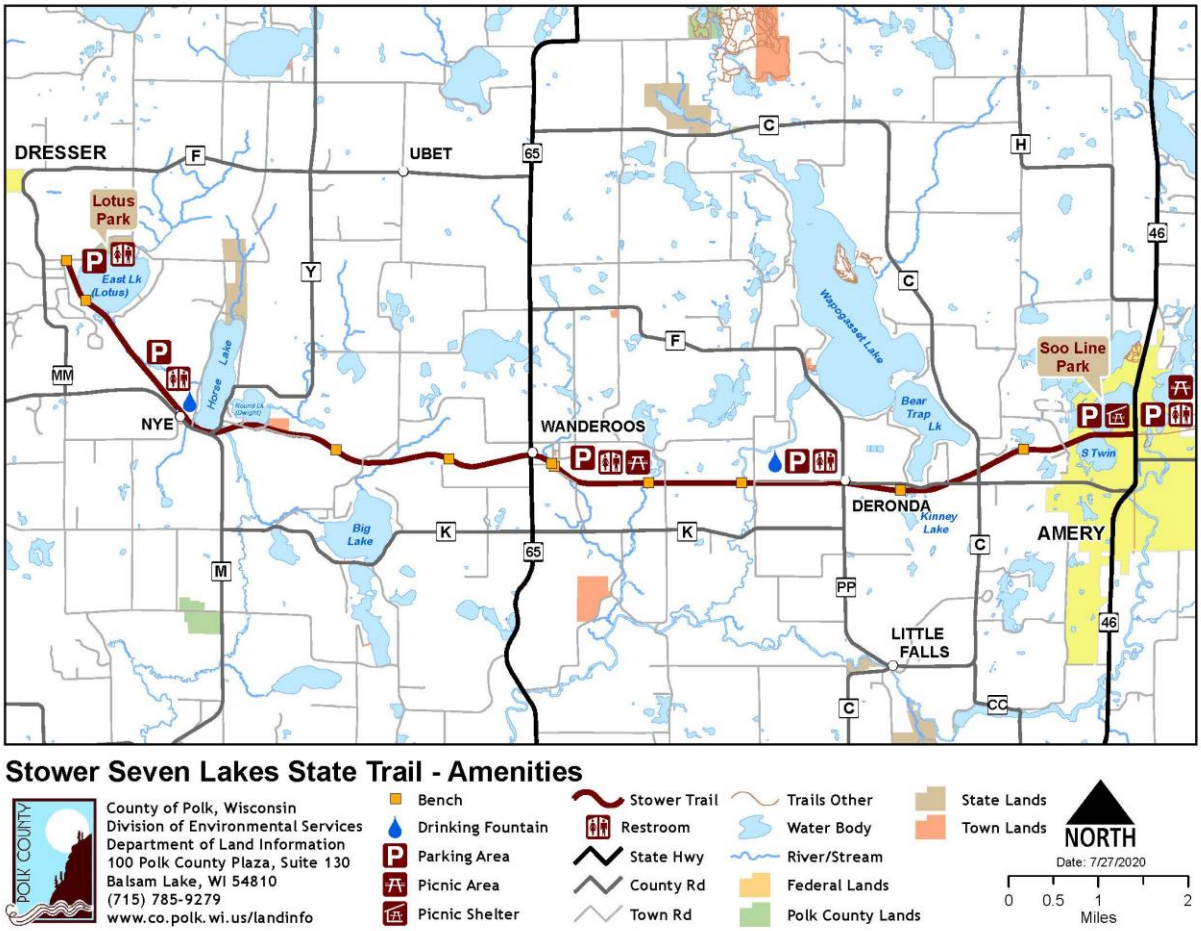


*Figure 3: Map illustrates the trail user amenities along the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail.*

## Future Improvements

As is, the trail is suitable for the addition of snowmobiles and horses. Future trail infrastructure improvements and modifications may be explored and implemented. These projects will be analyzed for their impact on user experience, safety, feasibility, and access.

# Appendix A

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# Appendix A: Community Engagement Report:

**Key Findings, Engagement Strategies, and Detailed Responses**

*The Stower Seven Lakes State Trail west of Amery.*

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## Introduction

The purpose of this community engagement report is to summarize outreach activities and results of engaging community members around the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail Master Plan (Plan). Input revealed findings for the project team to further analyze and drive recommendations in the Plan.

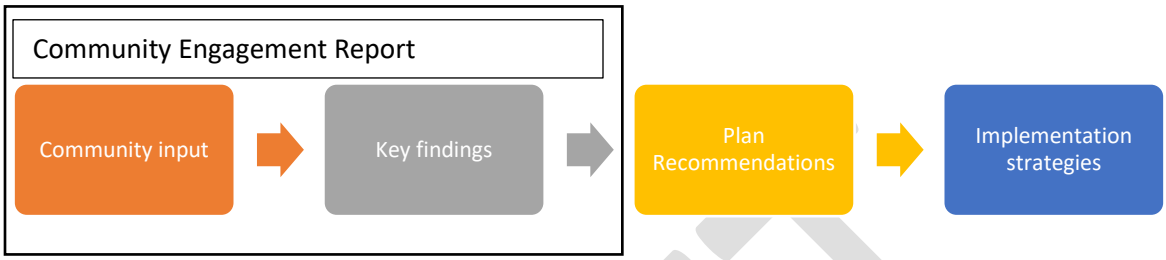


*Illustration of Plan development process: community input informs key findings which lead to recommendations and implementation strategies.*

The targeted public outreach for this project occurred in two phases, one occurring in the summer/fall of 2018 and the other in the fall/winter of 2019. Two separate phases were utilized to gather public sentiment primarily because there was a change in the considered use on the trail; from potentially allowing ATV/UTV use in the first phase, to not considering them in phase two. The main reason for eliminating ATV/UTV as a considered use is the likely payback of the federal grant that was used to resurface the trail, if they were allowed. Each phase included a variety of strategies to gather input. The results of all input strategies culminated in a set of key findings.

## Key Findings

The following key findings are a result of both phases of input and guided recommendations in the Plan.

1) **There is strong interest in trail-based recreation in Polk County**. Interest in the master planning process for the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail (SSLST) is high. For example, the public input survey that was conducted in the summer of 2018 had nearly 2,000 responses, the public hearing on July 31, 2018 had over 200 people in attendance, the October 22, 2019 open house was well attended (73 attendees), and 44 people sent emails to the planning team in a short period of time. Residents in general, and trail user groups in particular, continue to contribute a significant amount of input into the process. Local government officials and economic development staff are eager to come to a resolution and begin marketing Polk County's existing diverse array of trails.
2) **The public is roughly divided on the possibilities of adding snowmobilers and horseback riders to the SSLST.** Analysis of paper surveys shows that higher numbers of respondents are opposed to adding snowmobilers and horseback riders to the SSLST. Analysis of open-ended comments reveal that a majority of opinions expressed support for adding snowmobilers and horseback riders. Past surveys taken in 2018 reveal a similar, nearly even, divide. Local government agencies and economic development agencies have either taken positions against adding motorized uses or remained neutral. Most people agree the process has been challenging.

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3) **Non-motorized users are concerned about safety, noise, a damaged trail surface, and displacement.** There are many reasons walkers, bicyclists, and cross-country skiers are concerned about adding snowmobilers and horseback riders to the SSLST. In the paper survey, most were opposed to adding snowmobilers because of safety, noise, and damage to groomed cross-country ski paths. Opposition to horseback riding revolved around damage to the trail surface and horse manure. In the open-ended comments, non-motorized users were most concerned about discouraging their use of the trail and the limited amount of space dedicated to non-motorized users in Polk County. The Friends of the SSLST group has already invested significant volunteer resources into maintaining the trail for non-motorized users.
4) **Snowmobilers and equestrians are concerned about safety, economic development, sharing, and network connectivity.** There are also many reasons snowmobilers and equestrians want to be added to the SSLST. In the paper survey, snowmobilers expressed reasons due to safety (due to the existing, parallel snowmobile trail traversing lakes, ditches, and fields), economic development, and connectivity between other rail-trails that already allow snowmobiling. The majority of comments in support of equestrian use centered around having a trail inclusive of all user types. Over 30 equestrians emailed the planning team to express their support for inclusion. In open-ended comments and listening sessions, snowmobilers expressed concern about navigating areas immediately west of Amery and losing access to private properties along the existing snowmobile trail paralleling the SSLST. Snowmobilers are eager to devote volunteer resources to maintaining the trail for their use.

*Approximately 75 community members attended an open house at Amery Community Center on October 22, 2019*

## Phase 1:

The initial idea of Polk County was to go thru a planning process for both the SSLST and the Cattail State Trail at the same time. Both trails were in need of a master plan and since they are occupy the same old rail corridor, it made sense to plan for both at the same time. The SSLST has been the trail that has had the most interest from the public in terms of its allowed uses since its inception so specific attention was paid to it during this process versus the Cattail.

With this in mind, Polk County conducted a robust public engagement process to gauge public sentiment on the SSLST and address any concerns of the public. Phase 1 involved the creation of a Subcommittee for steering and reviewing public input, development of a public opinion survey, hosting an open house on the plan, and holding a public hearing on the draft Plan. Polk County created a public engagement plan for these activities which was reviewed at a public meeting and accepted by the ESC.

| **PHASE 1: Public Engagement Plan (2018)** | |
|---|---|
| Date | Activities To Be Completed |
| March 21st<br>ESC Meeting | 1. Environmental Services Committee (ESC) receives and reviews work plan for the trail planning process<br>2. ESC decides on the number of subcommittee members and how to select them<br>a. Number of members = 7<br>b. Selection procedures for Subcommittee<br>▪ Representation make up of Subcommittee: 1 member will be from the ESC and will chair the subcommittee; 1 member of the Friends of Stower Seven Lakes Trail; remaining 5 members will be chosen by the ESC from applications received by the county<br>▪ Application process to the county with advertisement in the paper on April 11th<br>▪ Application available online and in Parks Office<br>▪ Applications due by Friday May 11th<br>c. Role of Subcommittee:<br>▪ It is a steering committee that is advisory to ESC<br>▪ At a minimum, carry out these public input opportunities: surveys, open houses, public hearings, and open meetings<br>▪ Recommend uses on Stower Seven Lakes and Cattail Trails<br>▪ Issue identification and purposes described in NR 44.04(7)(e)<br>▪ Max number of meetings for the Subcommittee = 6, including the open house and public hearing<br>▪ Sunset date for Subcommittee = 9/15/18 |
| By 4/25 ESC Meeting | 1. ESC will receive a copy of the draft master plans of each trail, based on current uses<br>2. Draft of roles and scope of the project for subcommittee members is developed<br>3. Develop a project webpage that will be used to communicate information to the public about this project, updated by Parks Dept and contains the following project info:<br>○ Subcommittee meeting agendas and minutes<br>○ Draft plans<br>○ Maps<br>○ Survey link and results<br>○ Background info<br>○ Other project documents<br>4. Press release about the project in local papers |

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| | 5. Letters about this project sent to local units of government and stakeholder groups |
| May 23rd ESC Meeting | 1. Selections for the subcommittee will be submitted to ES Committee (ES Committee will make selections at this meeting)<br>2. Finalize process for developing Trail Plans for Stower Seven Lakes and Cattail Trails |
| From May 29th through September 15th | Subcommittee Meeting #1<br>1. Tentative Agenda:<br>○ Roles/Responsibilities/Ground rules established<br>○ Background information on the 2 trails distributed and discussed at this meeting<br>○ Issue identification<br>○ Additional information for the project is identified and gathered prior to 2nd or 3rd meeting<br>○ Begin discussion on public survey questions |
| | Subcommittee Meeting #2<br>1. Tentative Agenda:<br>○ Online public opinion survey developed and available for ~ 1 month<br>○ Background info and issues will be reviewed and discussed |
| From May 29th through September 15th | Subcommittee Meeting #3<br>1. Tentative Agenda<br>○ Subcommittee will hold a public hearing on the draft plans<br>○ Set date for reviewing of public hearing information |
| | Subcommittee meeting #4<br>1. Tentative Agenda<br>○ Review background info, survey results, and public hearing comments<br>○ Develop initial use and maintenance alternatives and recommendations for the plans |
| | Subcommittee Meeting #5<br>1. Tentative Agenda:<br>○ Subcommittee will review comments from public hearing<br>○ Subcommittee will make updates to their recommendations in the draft plans<br>○ Subcommittee will set an open house meeting to review their final recommendations<br>○ Notice for open house |
| | Subcommittee Meeting #6<br>1. Tentative Agenda:<br>○ Subcommittee holds open house to showcase their recommended plans to the public<br>○ Subcommittee makes motion to recommend adoption of their draft Trail Plans to the ESC<br>○ Additional meeting if necessary |
| At 2nd ESC meeting in September | 1. ES Committee will review recommendations from subcommittee and make a recommendation on Trail Plans<br>2. Recommended Trail Plans sent to DNR for review and updates |
| 1st ESC meeting in October | 1. Update Trail Plans with any required info from DNR<br>2. Recommend adoption of Trail Plans to County Board at October meeting |
| October County Board Meeting | 1. County Board will review the recommendations of the Subcommittee, ES Committee and DNR, and approve the Trail Plans for the Stower Seven Lakes Trail and the Cattail Trail |

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**POLK COUNTY SEEKS APPLICANTS FOR SUBCOMMITTEE**

**Stower Seven Lakes Trail & Cattail Trail Planning Project**

Trail Planning Subcommittee will work with Environmental Service Committee (ESC) to identify & suggest future goals and objectives for the Stower Seven Lakes Trail & Cattail Trail.

**For more information and the application go to:**
**Trail Planning Project on www.co.polk.wi.us/parks**

Applications are open now thru Friday, May 11, 2018.

Selection of subcommittee will be conducted by the ESC at their May 23, 2018 mtg.
Members on the subcommittee is a volunteer position.
No compensation for membership on the subcommittee shall be given.

For more information contact Debbie Peterson, Director of Polk County Parks, Forestry, Buildings, & Solid Waste Department at 715-485-9294 or email: polk.recreation@co.polk.wi.us.

## Subcommittee

The Subcommittee that was created included a total of seven members and were representative of the different identified stakeholder groups for the trails, which were: Friends of the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail, Polk County Snowmobile and ATV Council, local units of government along the trail corridors, general public, and a member of the Environmental Services Committee (ESC) who served as the Chair of the Subcommittee. The purpose of the Subcommittee was to steer the process, collect and synthesize public input, and provide recommendation to the ESC on the trail uses based on public opinion. There were 6 total meetings held by the Subcommittee all of them occurring in Balsam Lake:

Meeting #1: The Subcommittee had a conversation about uses and activities observed or participated in on the trail, what they enjoy/don't enjoy about the trail, concerns about the trail, insights about the future of the trail, and how they can work together on this planning process. Preliminary discussions took place about the survey and what should be included. Members also discussed what information should be part of their future meetings as background information for the planning process.

Meeting #2: The Subcommittee reviewed the example survey questions from staff, along with bringing their question ideas from home and selected their choices. Future meeting dates and agendas were established, including a public hearing.

Meeting #3: The Subcommittee reviewed the draft Plan and chose to have the existing uses represented as the uses for the draft plan that went to public

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hearing. Discussion took place on rules and operations for public hearing. The survey was finalized and released shortly after the public hearing.

Meeting #4: The public hearing was held at Unity School. See the "Public Hearing" section below for more details.

Meeting #5: The Subcommittee reviewed the information from the public hearing, survey, and other public input and made a recommendation for the plan.

Meeting #6: The Subcommittee held an open house to inform the public of their recommendation to the ESC regarding uses.

## Public Opinion Survey

A public opinion survey was developed, distributed, and analyzed as part of the planning process. The survey was available both in paper and online formats and open for over 30-days. Nearly 2,000 individuals responded. Following is a copy of the survey and results:

**News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
For more information contact:
Debbie Peterson
Parks, Forestry, Buildings, & Solid Waste Director
Polk County
100 Polk Plaza #10
Balsam Lake, WI 54810
715-485-9294

**Trail Planning Survey Questions**

A survey on the uses of the Stower Seven Lakes and Cattail Trail is now available online through www.co.polk.wi.us/parks website. This survey has been put together by the Polk County Trail Planning Subcommittee for the purpose of gathering public opinion on the Cattail and Stower Seven Lakes Trails so high-quality recreation opportunities can be provided. Please answer all questions. Only surveys with all questions answered will be accepted. One survey form per person. Surveys can be printed and filled out online by going to www.co.polk.wi.us/parks or individually mailed and postmarked by July 9 to Polk County Parks, 100 Polk County Plaza Suite 10, Balsam Lake, WI 54810.

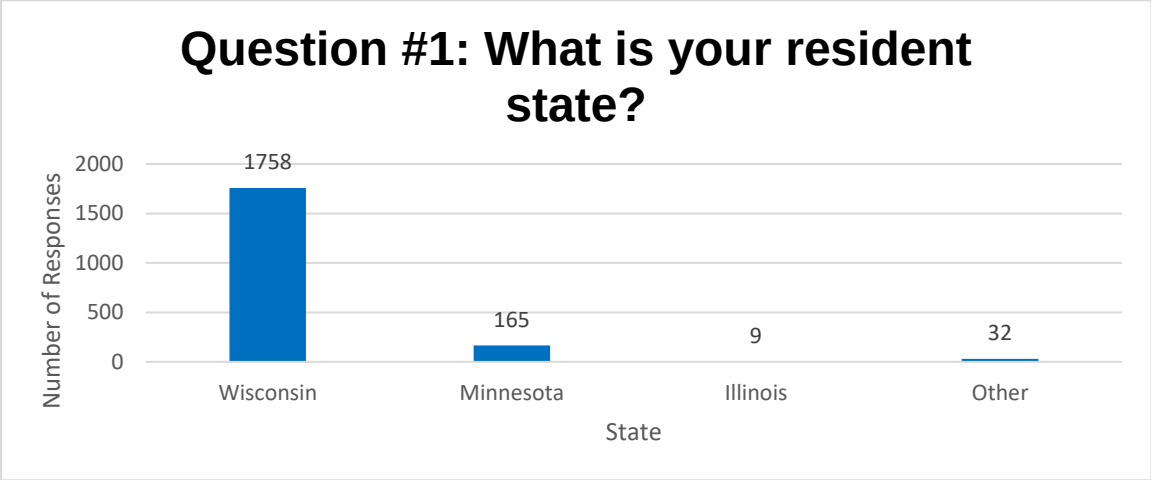
## Subcommittee Trail Planning Survey Questions

The purpose of this survey is to gather public opinion on the Cattail and Stower Seven Lakes Trails (Stower Trail) so high-quality recreation opportunities can be provided. Please answer all questions. Only surveys with all questions answered will be accepted. One survey form per person. Surveys can also be filled out online by going to www.co.polk.wi.us/parks or individually mailed and postmarked by July 9 to Polk County Parks, 100 Polk County Plaza Suite 10, Balsam Lake, WI 54810.

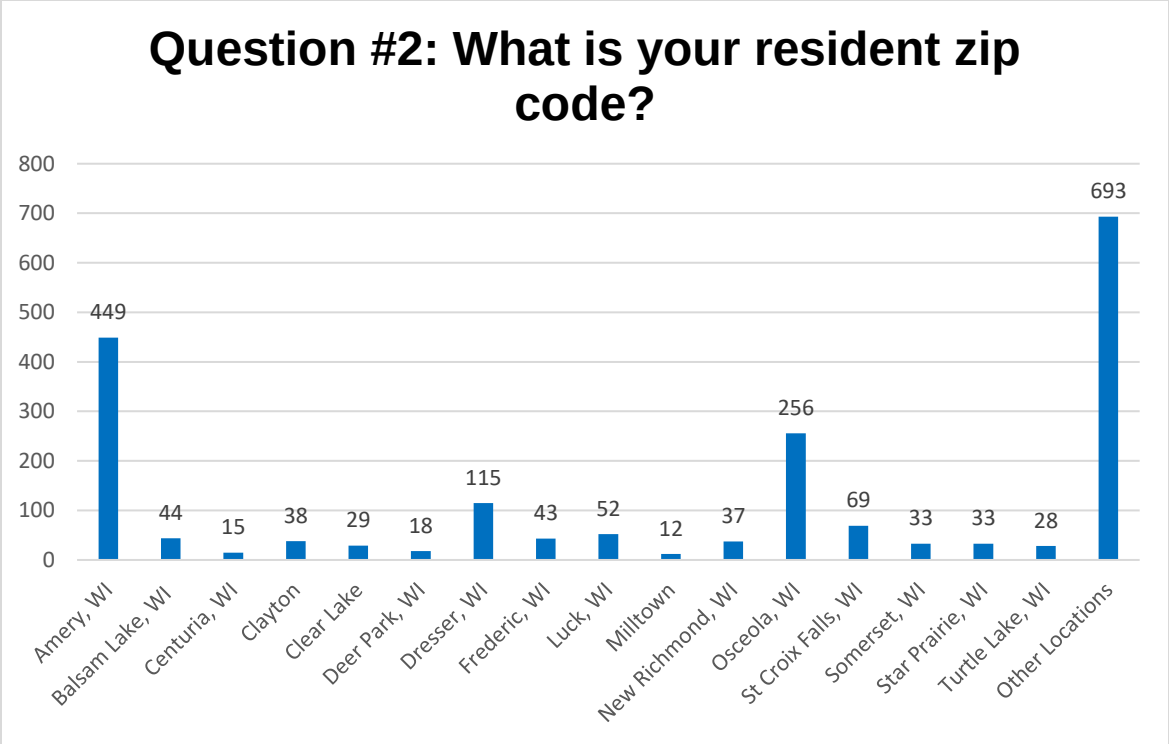
1. **What is your state of residence?** _____
2. **What is your zip code of residence?** _____
3. **Please identify your age group.** (circle one)
   15 and under  16 to 25  26 to 35  36 to 45  46 to 55  56 to 65  66 and over
4. **Please indicate why you use these trails:** (circle all that apply)
   Recreation  Health and Exercise  Commuting  Fitness Training  Other:_____
5. **How have you used the Cattail and/or Stower Trail in the past year?** (circle all that apply)
   ATV/UTV riding  Bicycling  XC Skiing  Snowshoeing  Dog sledding
   Harvesting berries/mushrooms/etc.  Hiking/walking/running  Horseback riding
   Off-highway motorcycle riding  Snowmobiling  Search and rescue training
   Wildlife/bird watching  Trail Maintenance Volunteer  Geocaching  Scenery Viewing
6. **How many times a year do you use the Cattail Trail?** (circle one)
   Have not used either trail  1-5 times  5-20 times  Over 20 times
7. **How many times a year do you use the Stower Trail?** (circle one)
   Have not used either trail  1-5 times  5-20 times  Over 20 times
8. **Would you use the Stower Trail if the uses were changed to allow ATV/UTV's?** (circle one) Yes No
9. **Would you use the Stower Trail if the seasonal usage changed to allow snowmobiles?** (circle one) Yes No
10. **Would you use the Cattail Trail if the allowed uses were changed to non-motorized?** (circle one) Yes No
11. **If you are a landowner who owns land within 1000 feet of the Stower Trail, please indicate your preference regarding the usage of the trail:** (circle one)
    a. I do not wish to have motorized uses such as ATV's, UTV's or snowmobiles on the trail
    b. I would like to use the trail with my ATV, UTV or Snowmobile
    c. No Opinion
    d. I am not a landowner within 1000ft of the trail
12. **How important is it to you to have a trail as part of an interconnected system?** (Select 1 through 5)
    Not Important  Somewhat Important  Very Important
    1  2  3  4  5
13. **How important are shared use trails to your trail experience?** (Select 1 through 5)
    Not Important  Somewhat Important  Very Important
    1  2  3  4  5
14. **Is maintenance funding important to a trail or trail system?** (circle one) Yes No
15. **Do trails have an important impact on tourism?** (circle one) Yes No
16. **Which trail type do you feel would have the greatest benefit for Polk County?** (circle one)
    Multi-use Non-motorized  Multi-use Motorized
17. **How often do you patronize local businesses (restaurants, businesses, gas stations, etc.) before or after using either trail?** (circle one) Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never
18. **Would you volunteer to help maintain the trail?** (circle one) Yes No

In terms of uses, the survey was evenly split between those in favor of keeping the trail as non-motorized and those who were in favor of adding motorized uses.

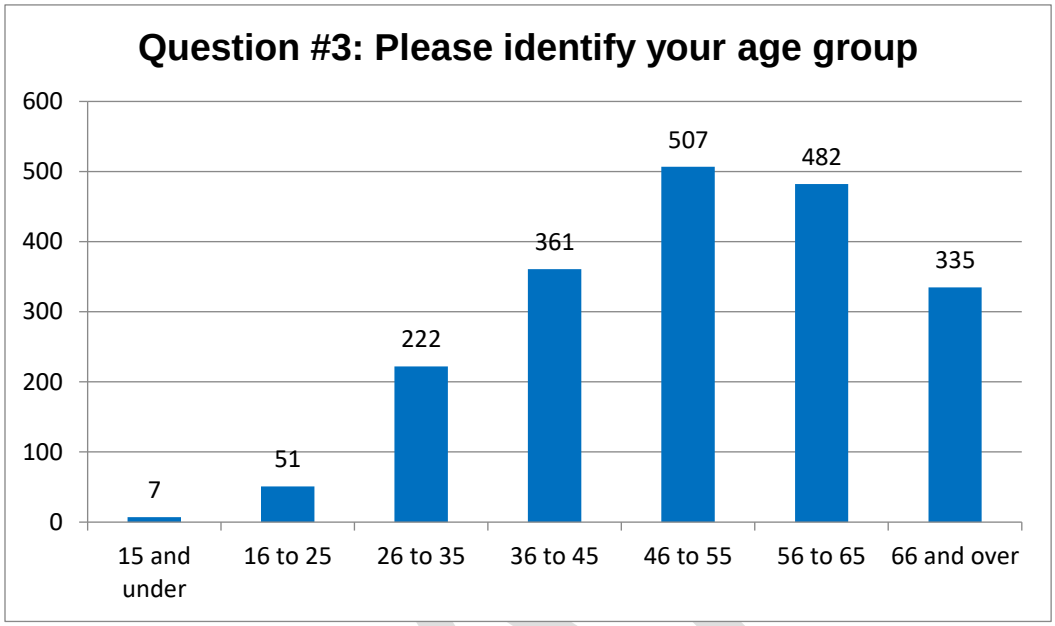
When respondents were asked in Question #1 what state they were a resident of nearly 90% replied that they were Wisconsin residents.



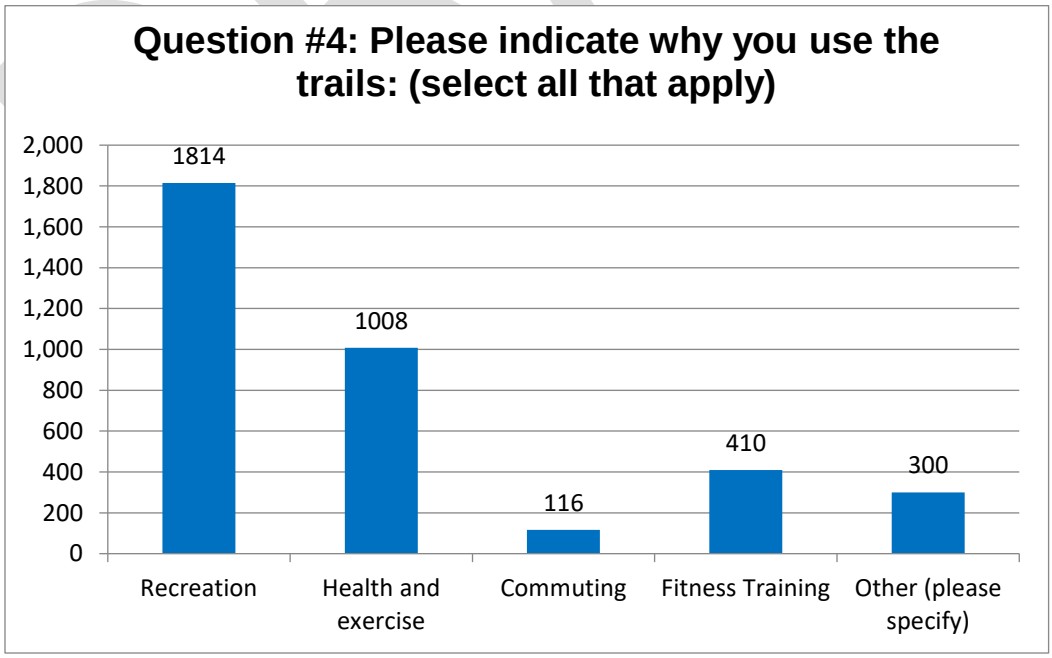

When survey participants were asked in Question #2 what their zip code was, approximately 65% of the responses were from zip codes within Polk County. Trail mangers wanted to compare users by locations within Polk County. The vast majority of users (820) live within 5 miles of the trail. In addition Polk County residents further than 5 miles of the trail are living further than 5 miles are using the trail (320). The survey also indicates that residence from St Croix County and Barron County are utilizing the trails.



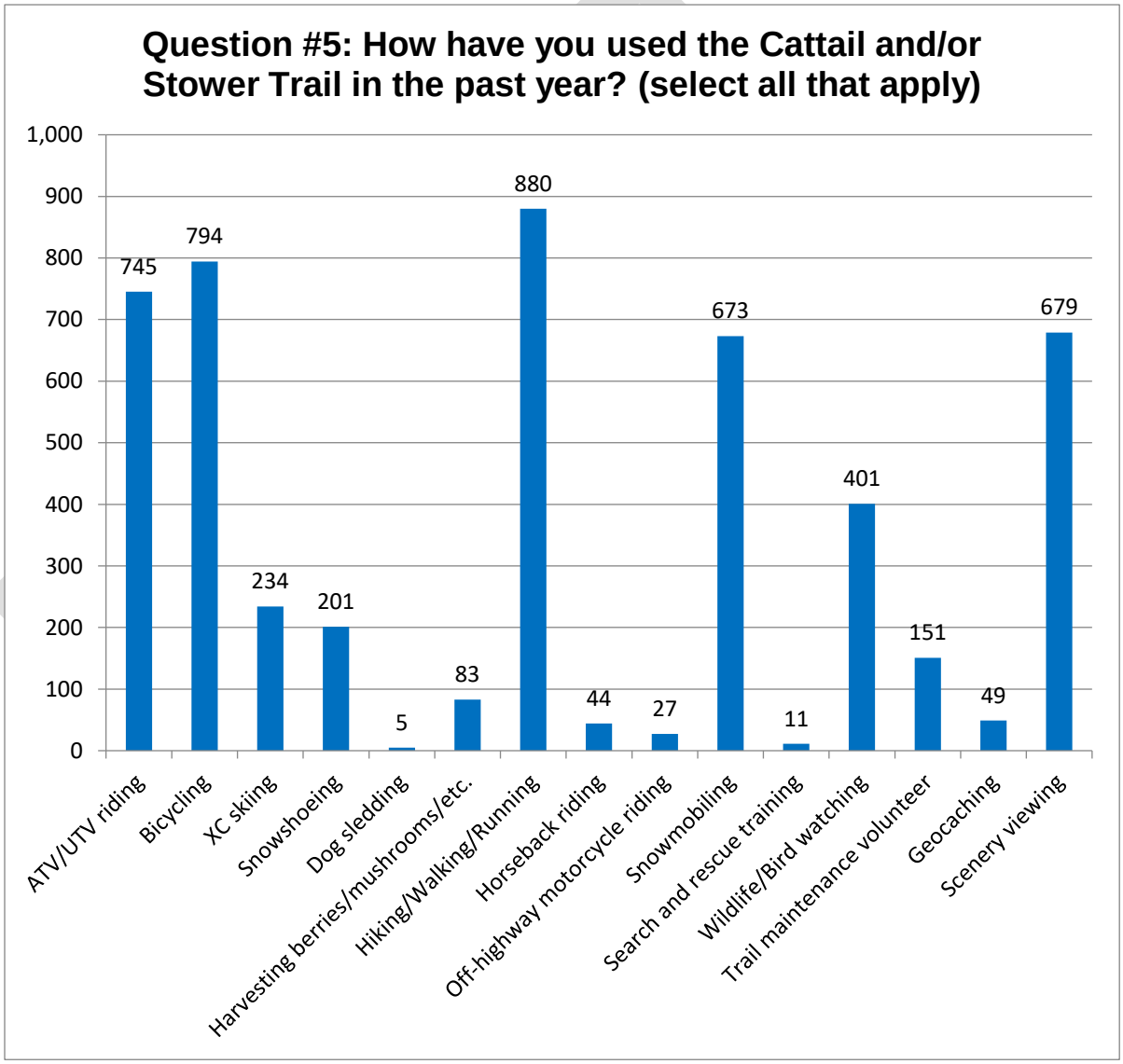
For Question #3, just over 50% of respondents of the survey were 46 to 65 years old. This is consistent with the demographics of Polk County.




When asked in Question #4 why the respondents used the trail, by far the most popular reply was for recreation purposes.

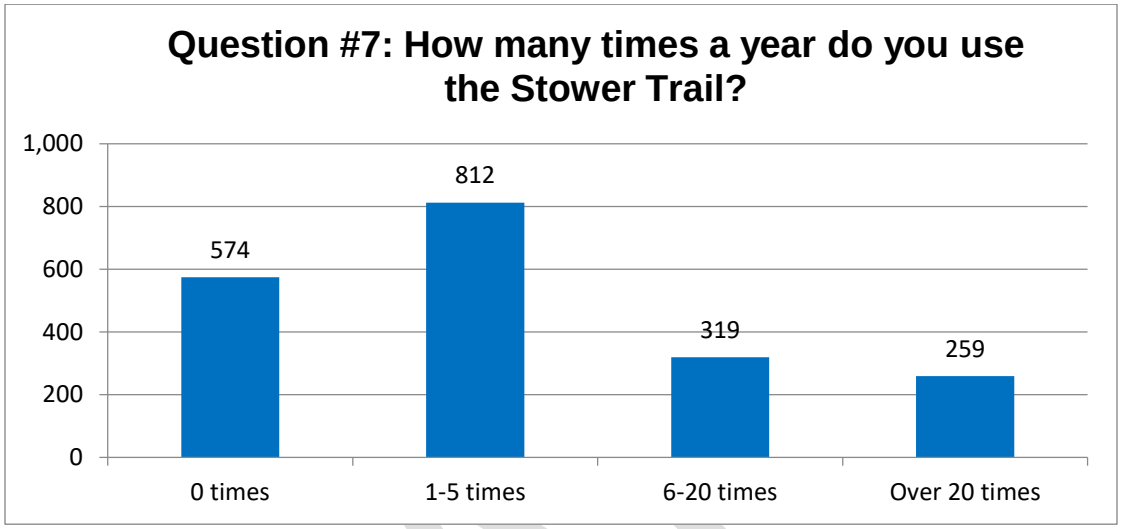


Question #5 represents the public's demand for recreational use on the Stower and Cattail Trail. The responses are also indicative of the user participating in more than one activity on the trails. The top four uses are Hiking/Walking/Running at 18%, Bicycling at 16%, ATV use at 15%, Scenery and viewing at 14%, and Snowmobiling at 14%. At a later date it was determined that ATV's would not be considered for the purposes of this master plan due to the possible pay back of a $600K grant. When ATV's were dropped from the list of uses to be analyzed for the Stower Seven Lakes Trail, Staff realized that clarity needed to be given to the comments received from the public given that Atv's would no longer be considered as a use on the Stower seven Lakes Trail. Phase 2 was developed and conducted to further analyze possible alternatives from the Subcommittee recommended uses, results from this question, and demand projections from Northwest Wisconsin Parks Managers.



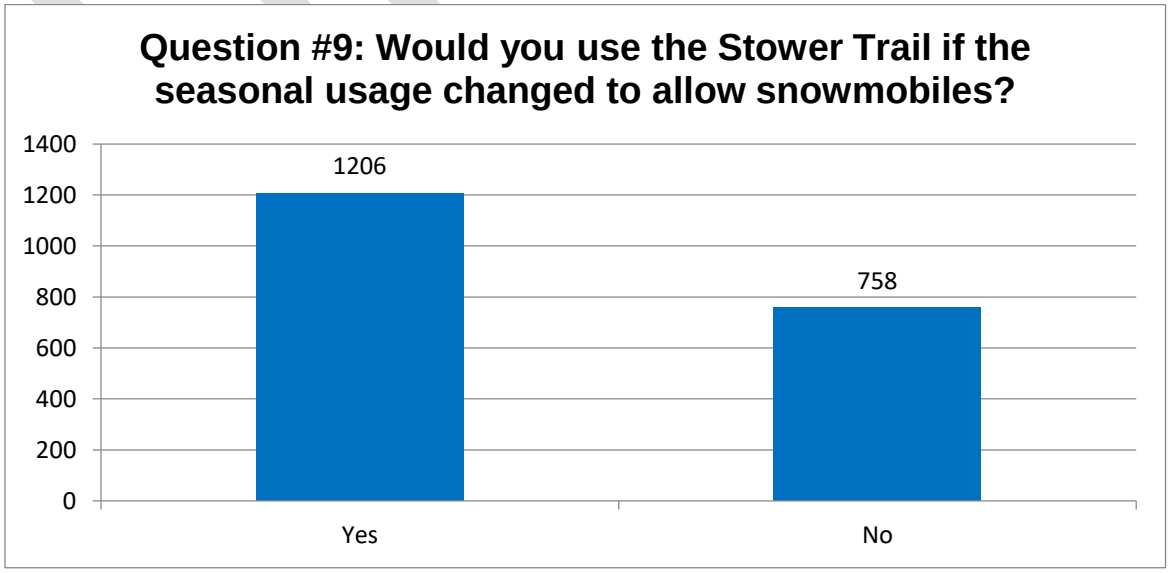
The results for Question #6 were not included in this report due to the question pertaining exclusively to the Cattail State Trail and not the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail.

For Question #7, when asked how often respondent used the Stower Trail, the most popular answer was 1-5 times per year. About 25% of survey takers indicated that they do not use the Stower Trail at all in a year.



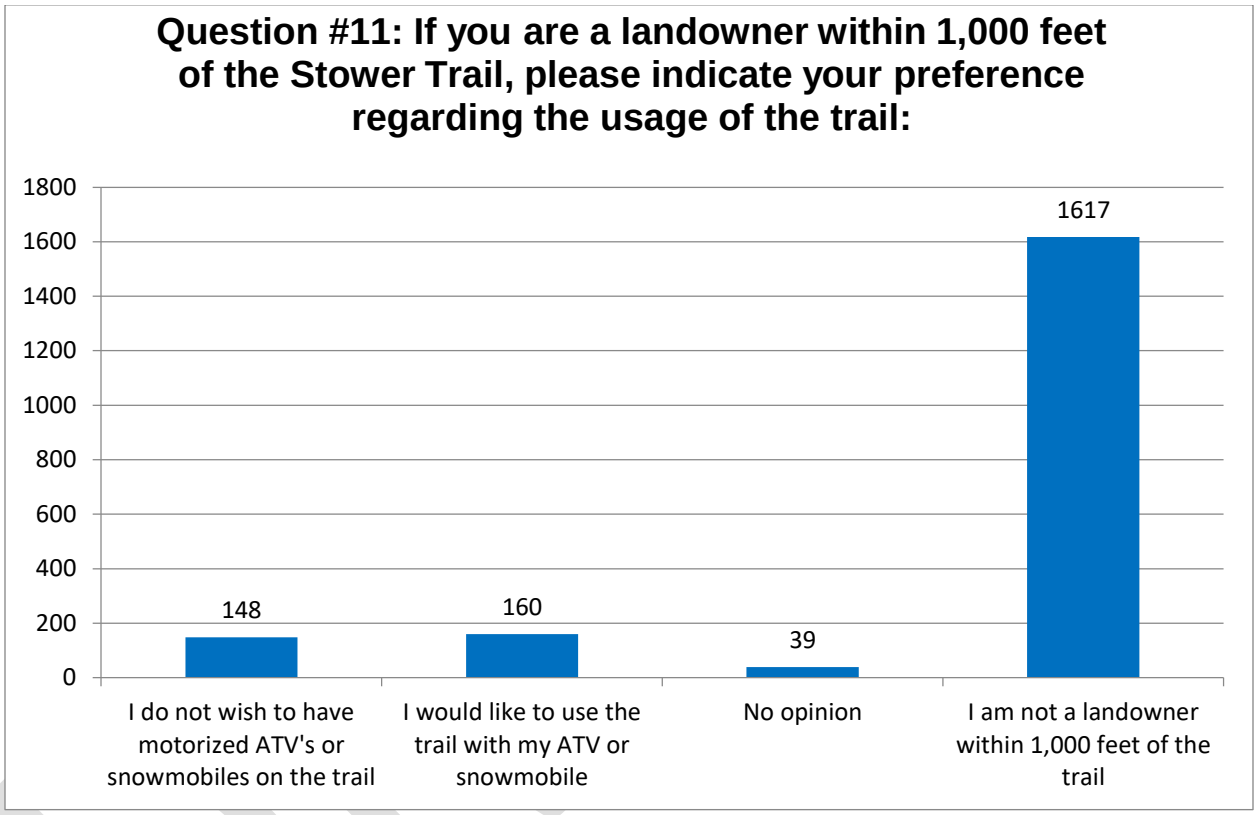

Question #8 was removed from the survey results of the SSLST Master Planning process due to the question pertaining to ATV and UTV usage, which is no longer being considered by the county for this trail.

In Question #9, 61% of the people who responded to this survey indicated that they would still use the trail if snowmobiles were added. 39% of the respondents indicated that they would no longer use the trail. Phase 2 of the public participation directly asked a question to get an idea of why people said no.

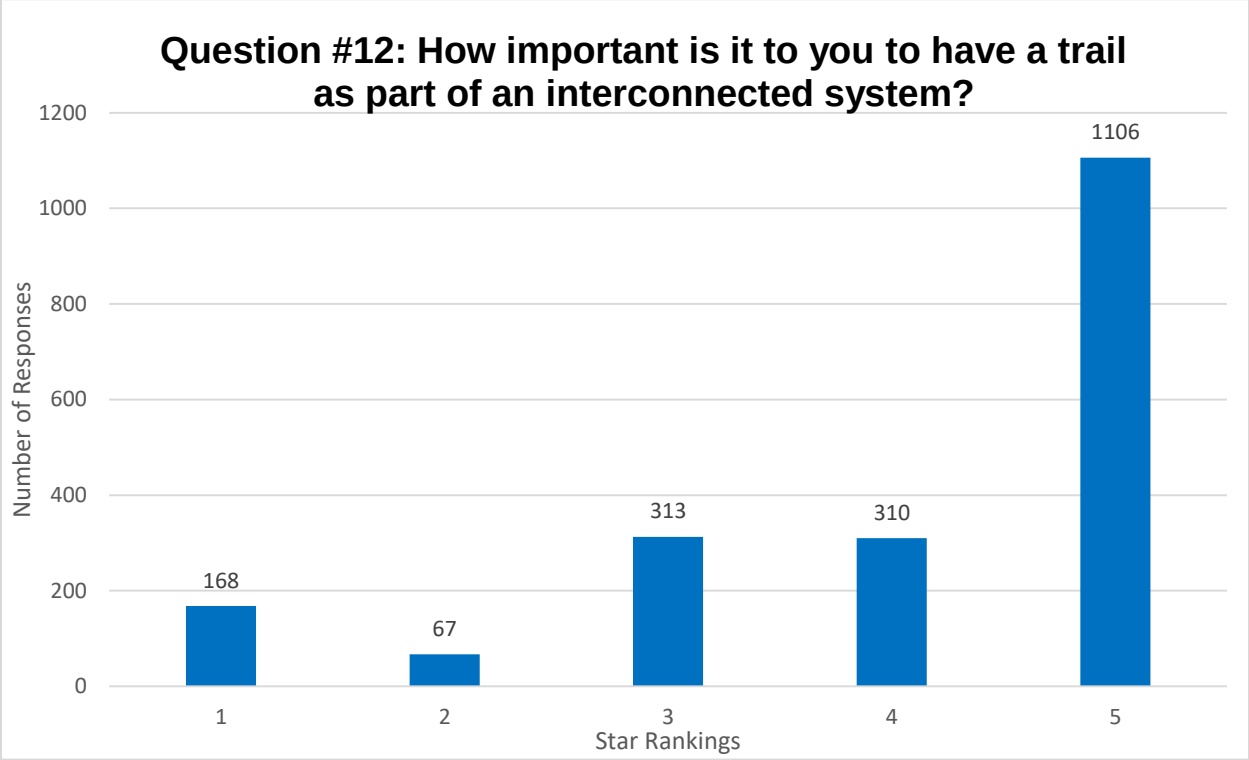


Question #10 was removed from the survey results of the SSLST Master Planning process, again due to the question pertaining to the Cattail State Trail.

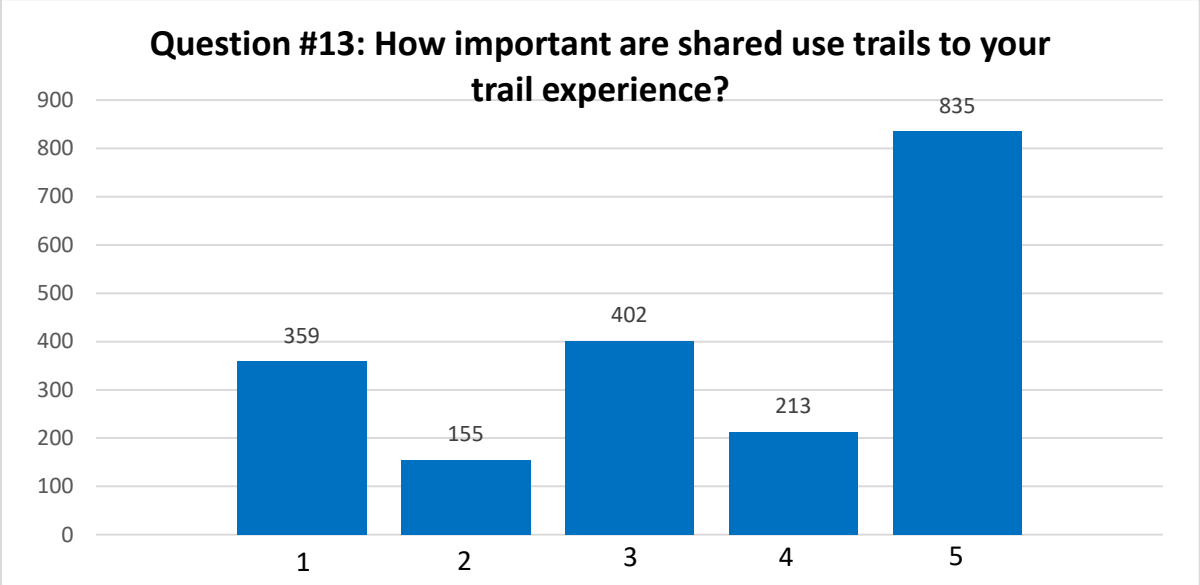
Question #11 asked landowners within 1,000 feet, what their use preference for the SSLST would be. Those that replied that they were an adjacent landowner to the trail were fairly evenly split on allowing ATV/UTV's and snowmobiles, which matches the general public view on these uses.



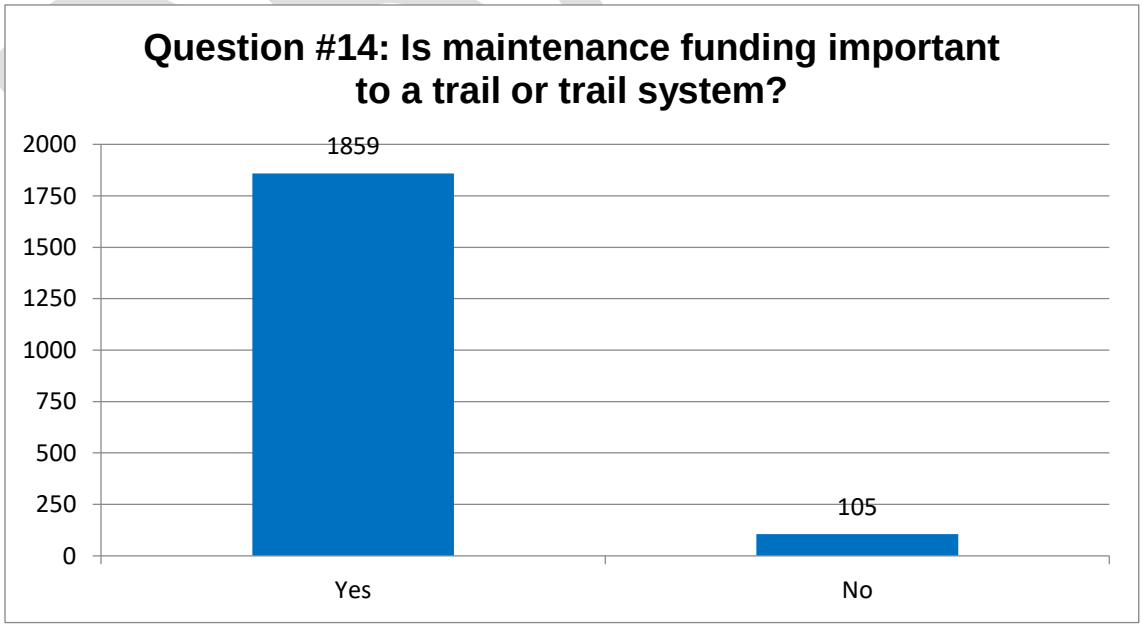
In question #12, respondents indicated that having a trail as part of an interconnected system was extremely important, with this response totaling more than the other 4 choices combined. The options given were 1 = not important, 3 = somewhat important, and 5 = extremely important. This slide highlights the fact that users are looking for systems of trails for their uses and is recognized as an objective of the master plan.



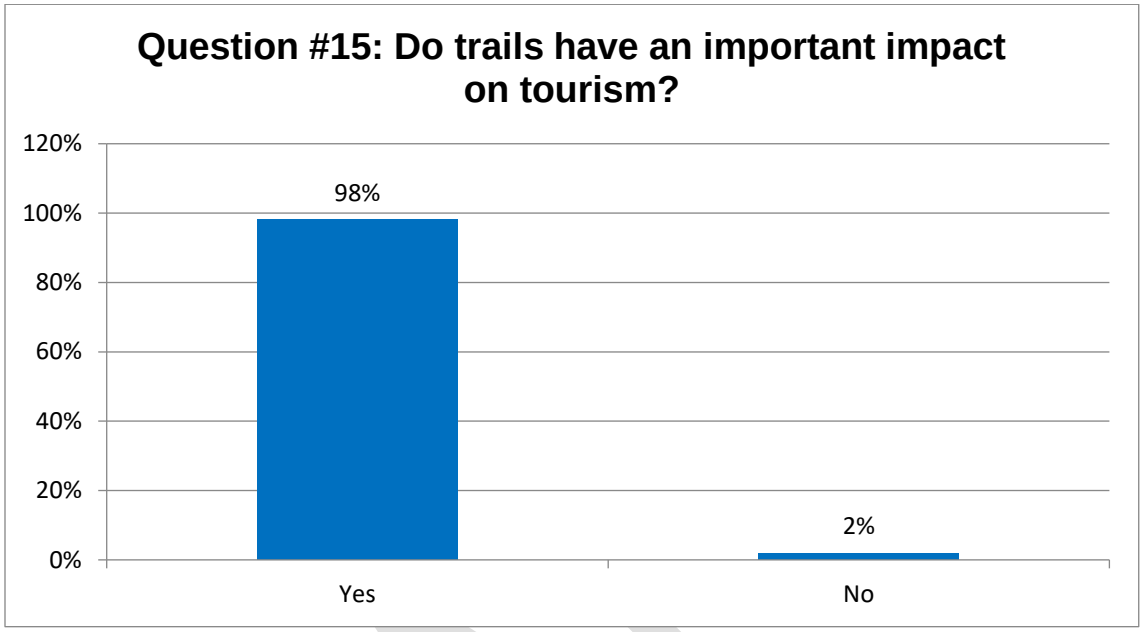
Question #13, gauged the view on shared use of trails on trail experience. The majority or about 43% stated that it was very important. The same ranking system as #12 was used here. Since the majority of responses indicated that shared trail use was important, the second phase of this process looked into how these different uses interact on shared trails and refined more what they public thinks about specifics of shared uses.



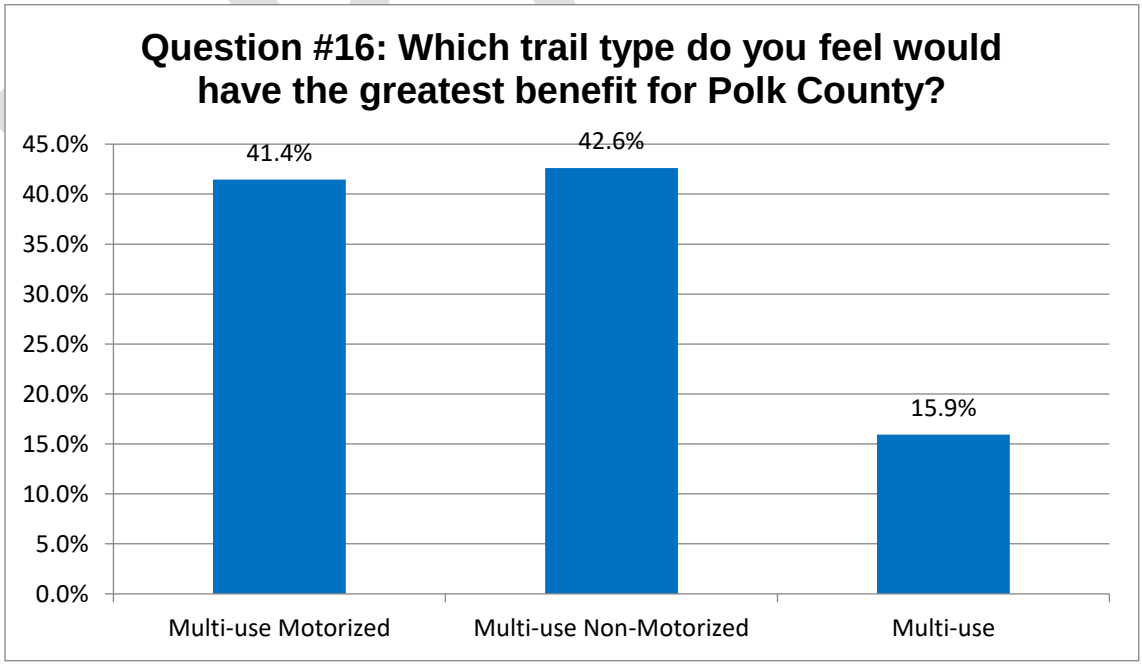

When asked if trail funding matters to a trail or trail system, the vast majority (95%) answered "Yes".



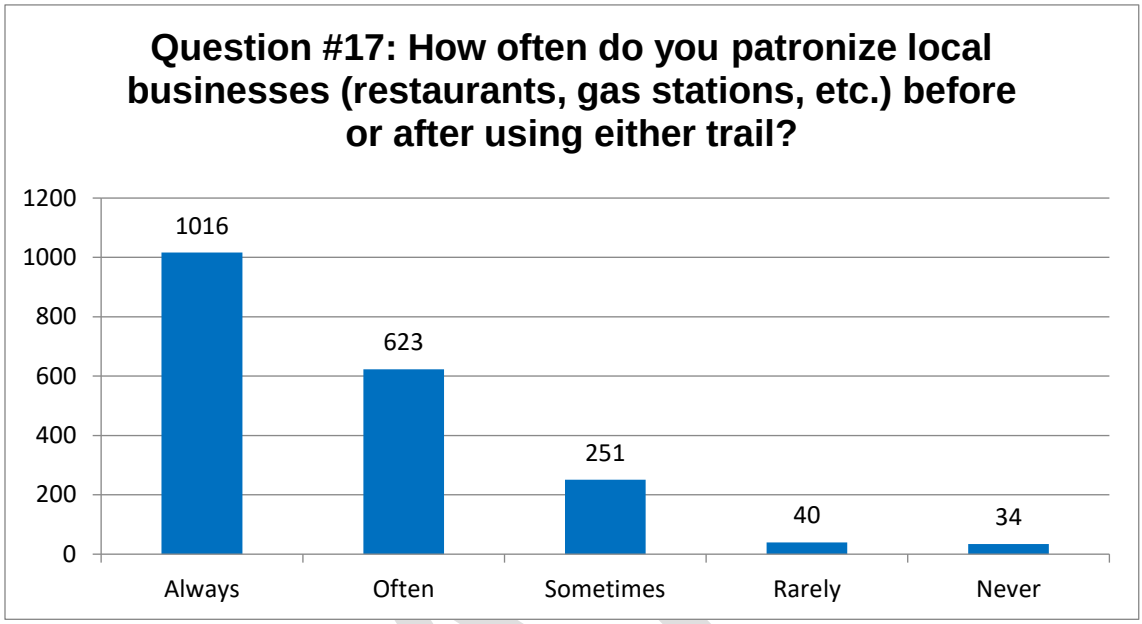
When posed the question about whether or not trails have an important impact on tourism, a whopping 98% of survey takers replied “Yes”.



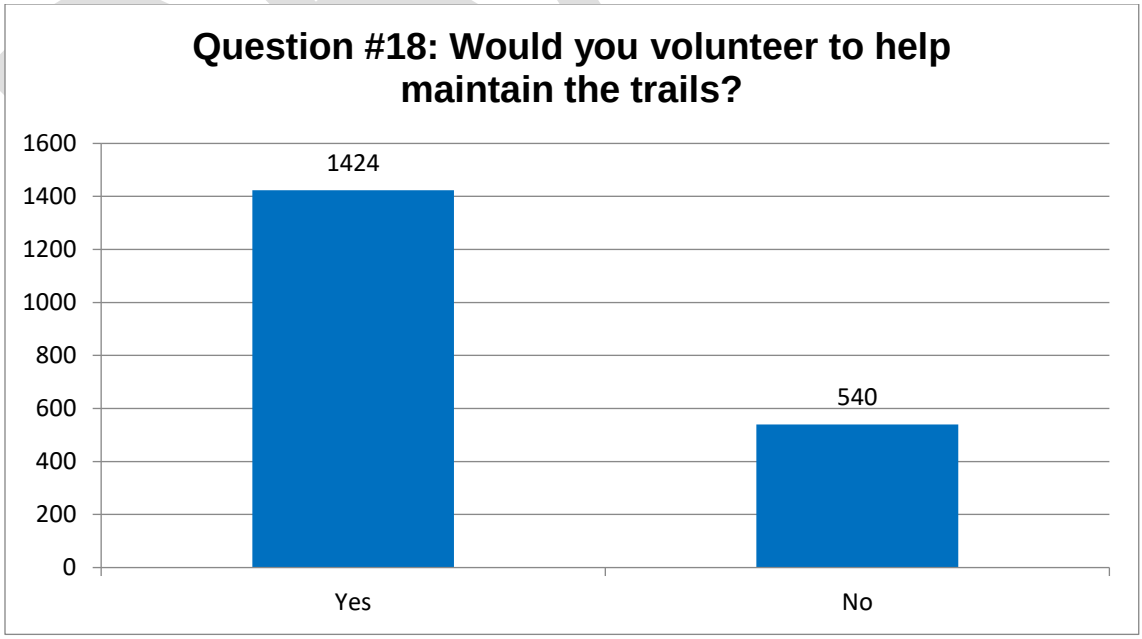

When polled to see which type of trail would be most beneficial to Polk County, roughly equal numbers replied multi-use motorized and multi-use non-motorized. Results of this slide helped review the different possible alternative use options and be able to drill down in Phase 2.



To help gauge the impact on economic development the Stower Trail has, question #17 was asked to see how often users of the trail also patronize local businesses. The most common response (about 52%) was that they always visited a local business when using the SSLST.




The final question of the survey attempted to see how much volunteer support there might be for maintaining the SSLST. An impressive 73% said that they would be willing to volunteer to help maintain the trail. These results showcase that groups such as the Friends of the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail and the Polk County ATV and Snowmobile Council provide great volunteer support for the trails in Polk County.



## Public Hearing

A public hearing was conducted on the draft Plan for the Stower Seven Lakes and Cattail Trails. The hearing occurred at the Unity High School Auditorium on July 31st, 2018 from 6-8pm. Over 200 interested people attended this hearing and 55 people provided verbal comments for the county. 36 of verbal commenters spoke in favor of keeping the Stower Trail non-motorized and 19 of verbal commenters spoke in favor of opening the Stower Trail as a multi-use motorized trail. In addition, there were written comments submitted as part of the public hearing process. In total, there were 197 comments submitted in favor of keeping the SSLST as a non-motorized trail, 31 comments in favor of opening the trail to be a multi-use motorized trail, and 2 comments in favor of adding equestrian uses. A number of concerns were also raised via written and verbal comment during the public hearing. These concerns have been addressed by this process in the Key Findings section of Appendix A: Community Engagement and in the Alternatives Analysis in Appendix C.

# Notice Public Hearing

**STOWER SEVEN LAKES TRAIL & CATTAIL TRAIL PLANNING**

**Tuesday, July 31, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.**
**Unity High School, Performing Art Center**
**Balsam Lake, WI**

Polk County Stower Seven Lakes and Cattail Trail Subcommittee public hearing is set to receive comments on the proposed trail usage changes for the Stower Seven Lakes Trail and Cattail. The purpose of the hearing is to determine the uses of the Stower Seven Lakes Trail and Cattail Trail and complete the trail masterplans required by the state.

Previous meetings and trail plan drafts are available for viewing on www.co.polk.wi.us/parks. Interested parties have a right to appear before the committee to provide comment in verbal or written form concerning the proposed ordinance. Comments are limited to 3 minutes per person. In order to give a comment before the committee or turn in written comment individuals must sign in at the entrance door between 5:45 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. In addition, interested persons may submit written documentation concerning the proposed ordinance prior to the public hearing by directing the same to the Polk County Parks Department, 100 Polk County Plaza, Suite #10, Balsam Lake, WI 54810 or by e-mail at polk.recreation@co.polk.wi.us. Documentation received before the public hearing will be presented to the Trail Subcommittee for receipt during the public hearing.

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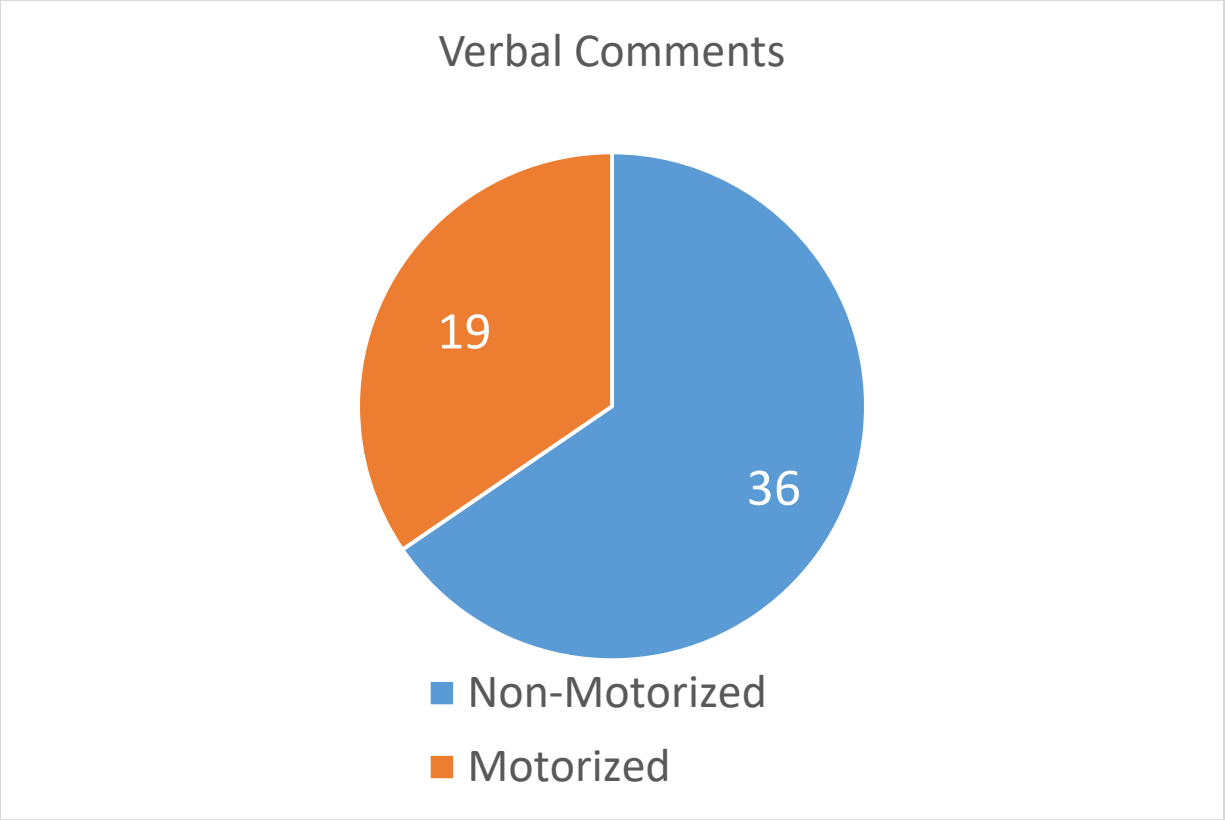
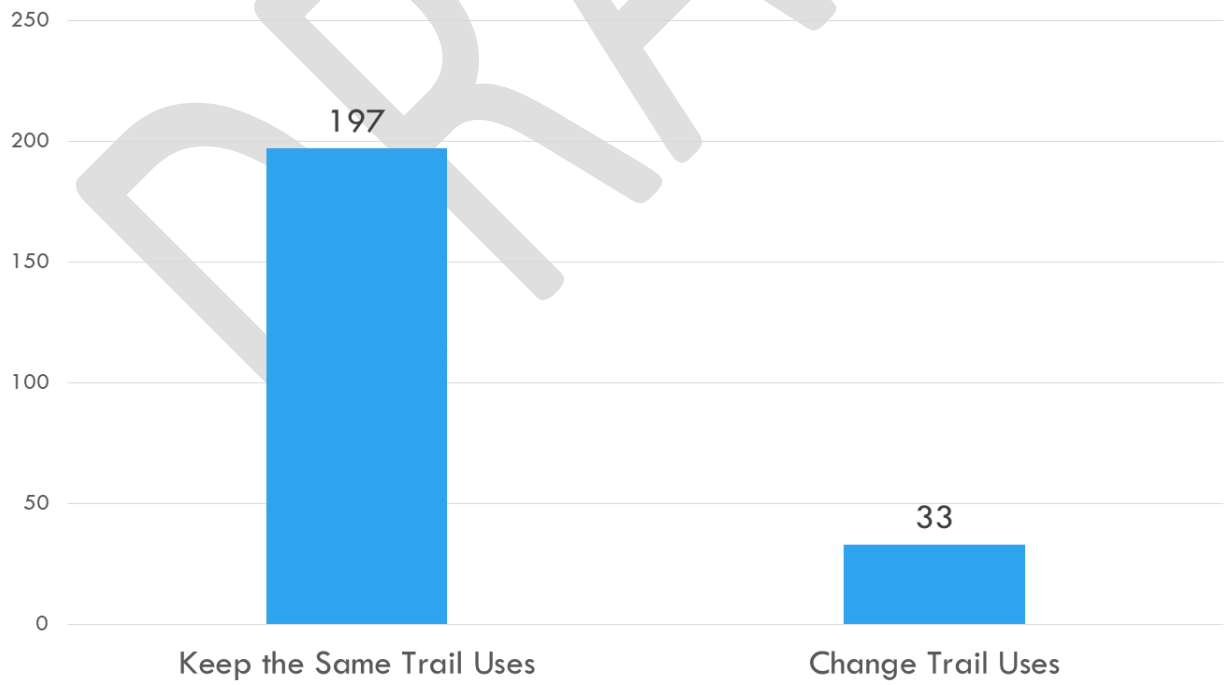

Verbal Comments
19
36
Non-Motorized
Motorized


250
200
150
100
50
0
197
33
Keep the Same Trail Uses
Change Trail Uses

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## Open House

After the draft plan went been through the public hearing process and the Subcommittee reviewed the findings, the Subcommittee made changes to the draft Plan. The updated draft Plan recommendations were presented to the public at an open house style meeting, before it went to the ESC. This meeting was informational only. Several dozen interested parties attended.

**STOWER SEVEN LAKES TRAIL & CATTAIL TRAIL PLANNING**

You are invited to attend an

***Open House***

To celebrate the determined recommendation to present to the Polk County Environmental Service Committee to move forward with the master plans for the Stower Seven Lakes Trail and the Cattail Trail.

***Tuesday, August 28, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.***
County Board Room, 100 Polk County Plaza
Polk County Government Center
Balsam Lake, WI

The voted recommendation is to leave the current uses on the Cattail Trail as is and add horseback riding as a use to the entire trail. For the Stower Seven Lakes Trail the voted recommendation is to keep the current uses and add horseback riding, and snowmobiles to the approved uses when permitted.

For more information visit www.co.polk.wi.us/parks (Stower Seven Lakes & Cattail Trail Planning Project), email polk.recreation@co.polk.wi.us, or call 715-485-9294.

## Phase 1 Next Steps

After conducting the above public engagement activities and holding meetings, the Subcommittee developed a recommendation, based on their interpretation and consideration of public input. The Subcommittee recommendation was to continue with the existing allowed uses on the Stower Trail, along with adding equestrians in the warm season and snowmobiles in the winter, when conditions allow.

This recommendation was forwarded to the Environmental Services Committee. The ESC considered the information presented to them from the Subcommittee and forwarded the same recommendation to the full Polk County Board of Supervisors for their consideration in the fall of 2018.

The Polk County Board of Supervisors reviewed the materials from the process and made amendments to the Plan at their October 18, 2018 meeting. This amended plan was then sent to the DNR for their review and approval. The DNR made comments on the identified deficiencies in the Plan which Polk County needed to address before they would approve it. In order to adequately address the concerns of the DNR, the county chose to add a new process which included hiring of a professional firm, Toole Design, and lead to phase 2 of the process.

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## Phase 2:

Phase 2 involved several changes to the scope of the trail planning project. First was to develop the master plan for the SSLST separately from the Cattail State Trail. Secondly, removing the consideration of ATV's on the Stower, mostly due to a federal grant used to resurface the trail that prohibits motorized uses on the trail. If ATV's were allowed, the $600,000 grant would be subject to a payback to the federal government. Based on this reconsideration, it was decided to solicit input from county residents and interested parties again to see if this change in potential allowed uses would affected public opinion at all. Thirdly, the planning team heard from the public the desire to hold additional input opportunities, especially at the trail head City of Amery, and to obtain more detailed information on how the public felt about the issues with the SSLST. As a result, an open house event was held in Amery on October 22nd. The input stations and survey used at this open house were developed to address specific topics that needed additional feedback. In addition, listening sessions with stakeholder groups were held at the Polk County Government Center in Balsam Lake, also on October 22nd. There were approximately 143 participant interactions for these two events that resulted in recorded input. This included 14 attendees at four listening sessions, 86 paper surveys filled out at the open house, and 37 comments received via email.

### Open House Survey

To build consensus around the Plan, the project team hosted an open house to share information and gather input in an informal atmosphere. This approach was designed to allow everyone to give input, regardless of their inclination to speak in front of a large group. Participants were given a paper survey asking their opinions about key issues and were asked to share demographic information. They were also given the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions. Participants could take additional paper surveys home so that family and friends who could not attend the open house could complete the survey. With 73 attendees and 86 paper surveys received, 13 additional surveys were returned. Following is a copy of the survey that was utilized.

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Polk County Wisconsin

# STOWER SEVEN LAKES STATE TRAIL MASTER PLAN OPEN HOUSE

TOOLE DESIGN

STATION 1: **Master Plan Timeline**

Learn about what has happened on the project to date and what is next. Please leave comments or questions on post-it notes.

STATION 2: **Community Input Received**

Learn about the key findings of the 2018 community engagement process. Leave comments or questions on post-it notes.

STATION 3: **Trail Funding Requirements and Opportunities**

Understand the requirements of federal funding. Leave comments or questions on post-it notes.

STATION 4: **Mapping**

Provide feedback about alignment and connectivity opportunities and challenges. Use an orange highlighter to describe challenges, and a green highlighter to describe opportunities.

## Survey Questions

### Snowmobiling

Would you like the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail to allow snowmobiling?
Circle one:

Yes No Maybe

Why?

### Horseback riding

Would you like the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail to allow horseback riding?
Circle one:

Yes No Maybe

Why?

### Visioning

Write three words to describe what you hope the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail will look and feel like in 2040.

1.

2.

3.

# About You

We want to hear from a wide variety of Polk County residents, so that we can build and manage the trail to serve your interests. Your answers will help us reach out to people who didn't fill out the survey. All questions are optional.

**What is your ZIP Code?**

**What is your age? (circle one)**

Under 18 | 18 - 24 | 25 - 34 | 35 - 44 | 45 - 54 | 55 - 64 | 65 - 74 | 75+ | Prefer no to answer

**How often do you do each of the following outdoor activities (choose one option in each row)?**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ATV Riding | At least once a day | A few times a week | A few times a month or less | Never |
| Bicycling | At least once a day | A few times a week | A few times a month or less | Never |
| Cross Country Skiing (during snow cover) | At least once a day | A few times a week | A few times a month or less | Never |
| Horseback Riding | At least once a day | A few times a week | A few times a month or less | Never |
| Snowmobiling (during snow cover) | At least once a day | A few times a week | A few times a month or less | Never |
| Walking | At least once a day | A few times a week | A few times a month or less | Never |

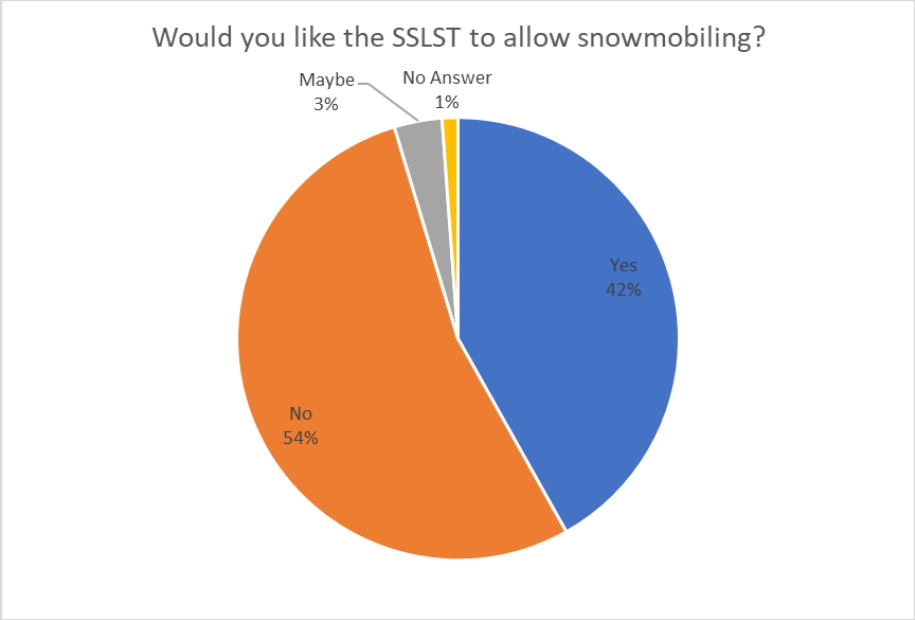
**Please leave your email address if you would like to receive updates about the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail Master Plan. (Optional)**

**If you have any ideas or concerns about the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail, you can share them here.**

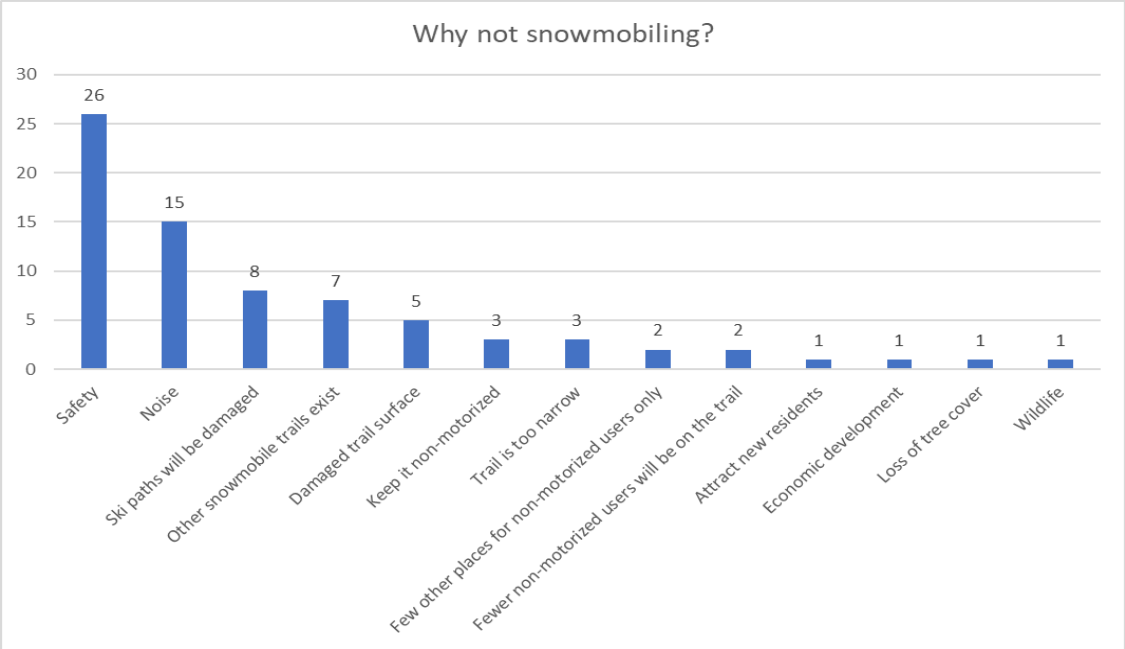
## Open House Survey Results

### Snowmobiling

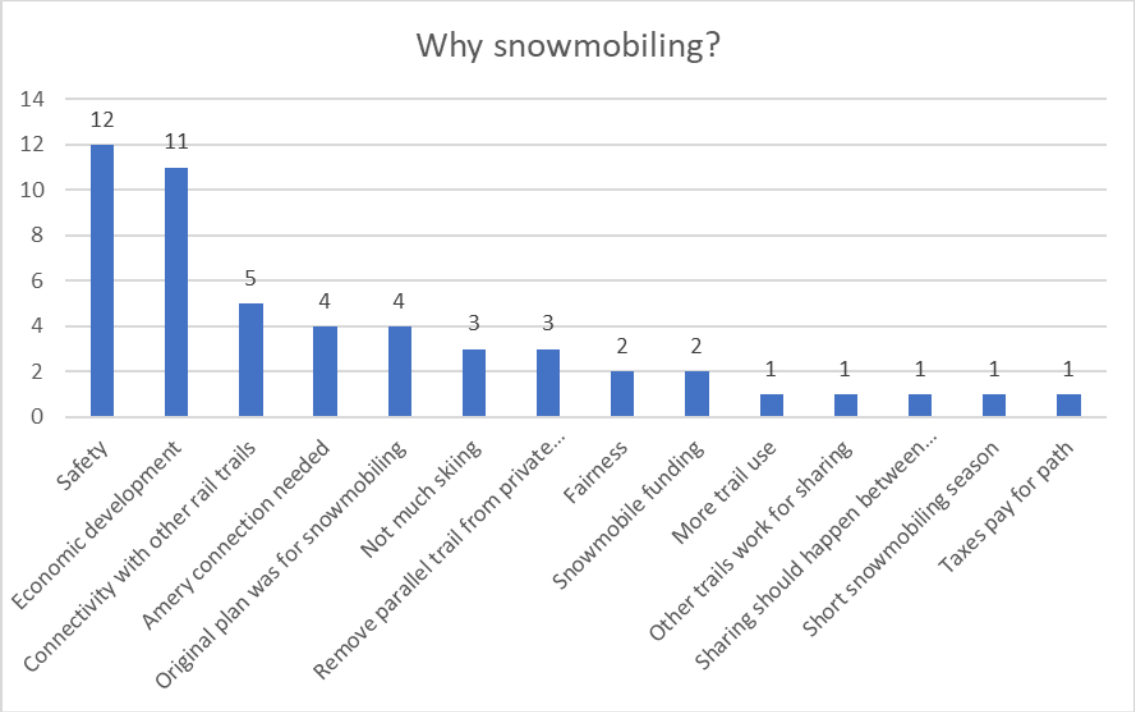
Participants were asked if snowmobiling should be allowed on the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail (SSLST). Just over half (54%) of survey respondents replied no, with 42% responding yes.




When asked why not, the top three reasons given were safety, noise, and damage to groomed ski paths.



For those who replied yes, the top three reasons given were safety, economic development, and connectivity with nearby rail trails that already allow snowmobiling.

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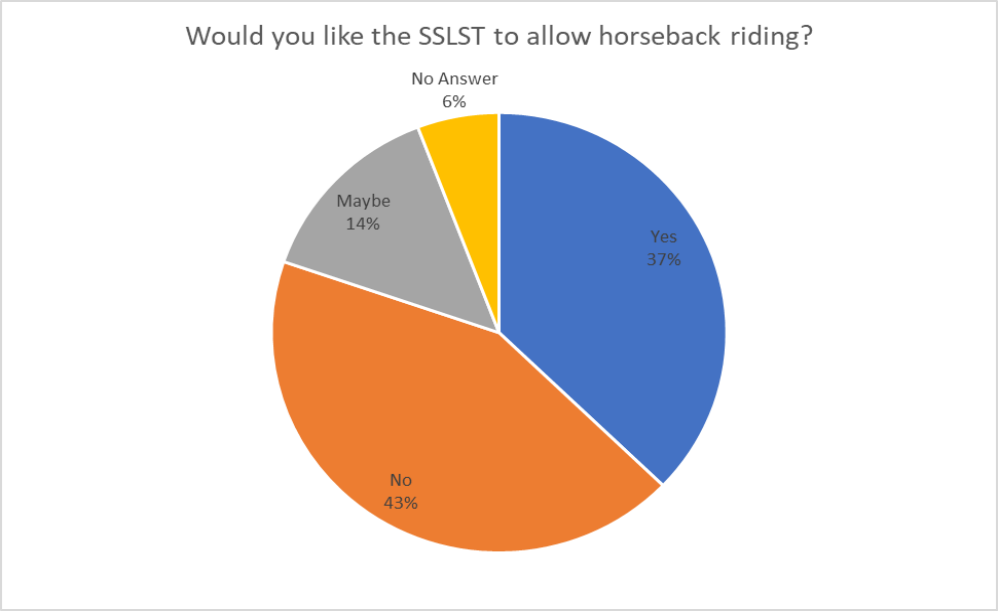
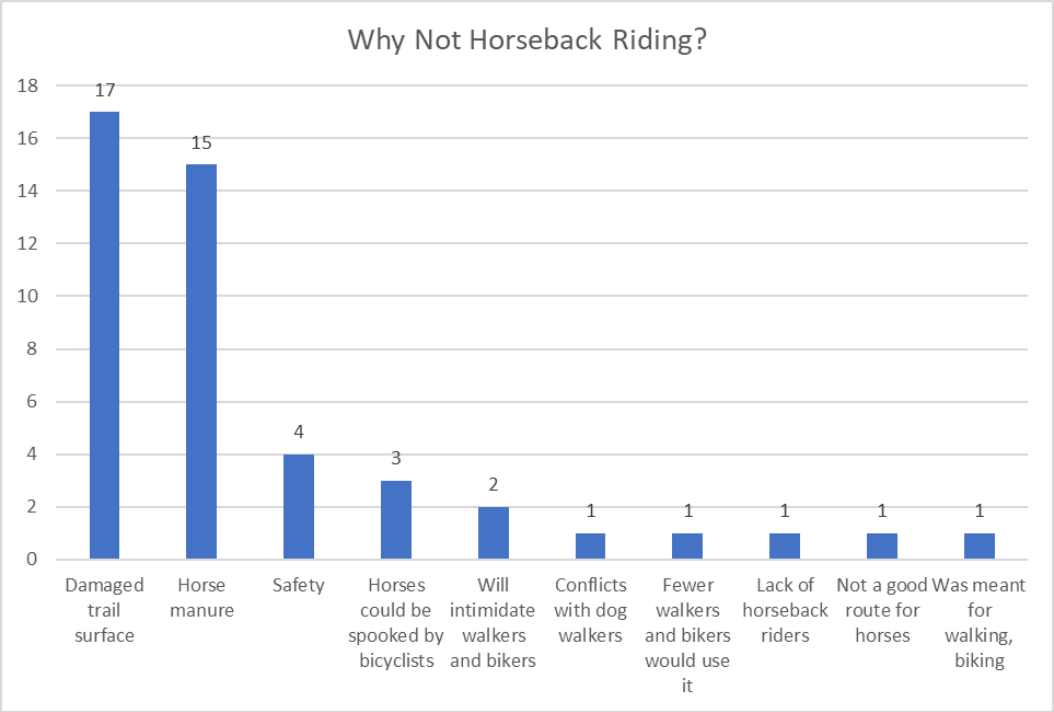
## Horseback Riding

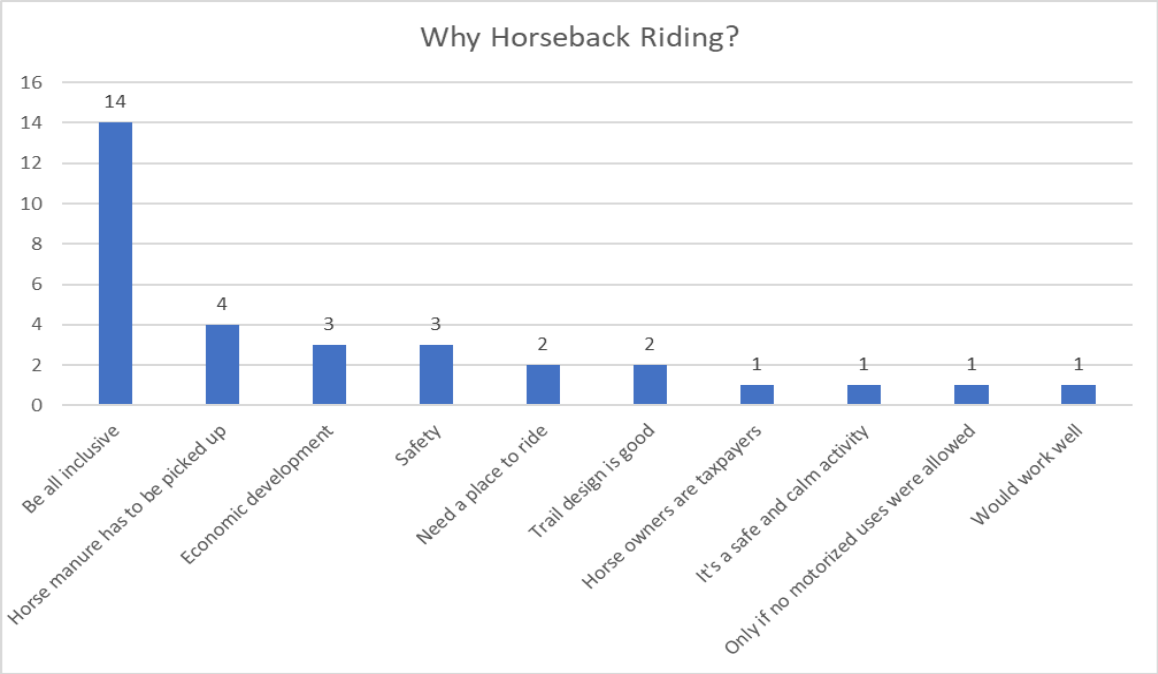
Participants were asked if horseback riding should be allowed on the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail (SSLST). 43% of respondents said no, 37% said yes, and 20% replied maybe or left the question blank.




When asked why they did not want horseback riding, the top three reasons given were damaged trail surface, horse manure, and safety.



For those who replied yes, the top three reasons given were to be inclusive of all user types, horse manure has to be picked up, and economic development/safety (tied for third place).




## Visioning

Respondents were asked to provide three words to describe what they hope the SSLST will look and feel like in 2040. Below is a graph showing the most common visionary words chosen by the individuals. Respondents most commonly said they saw the SSLST as being quiet, beautiful, and natural.

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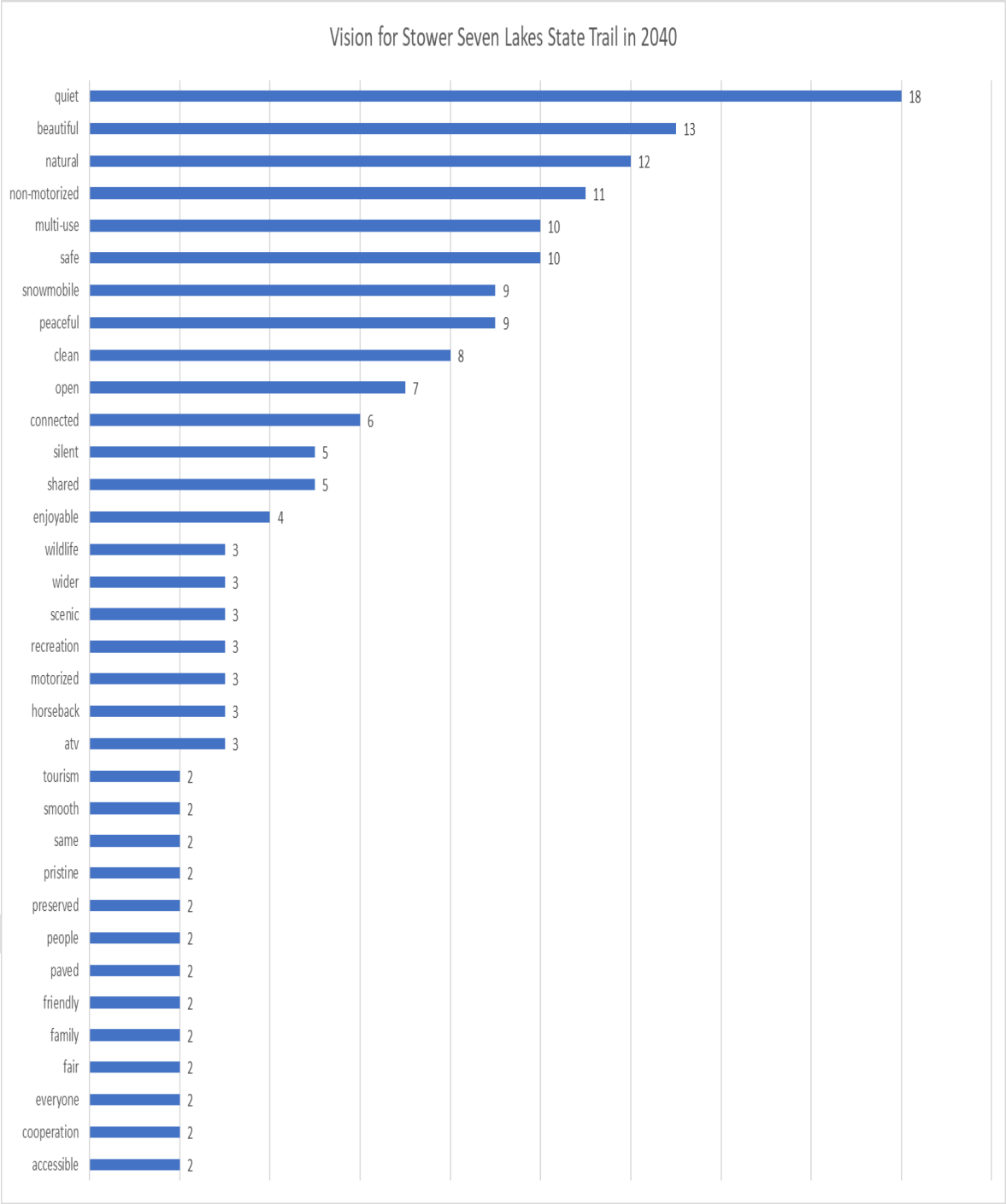
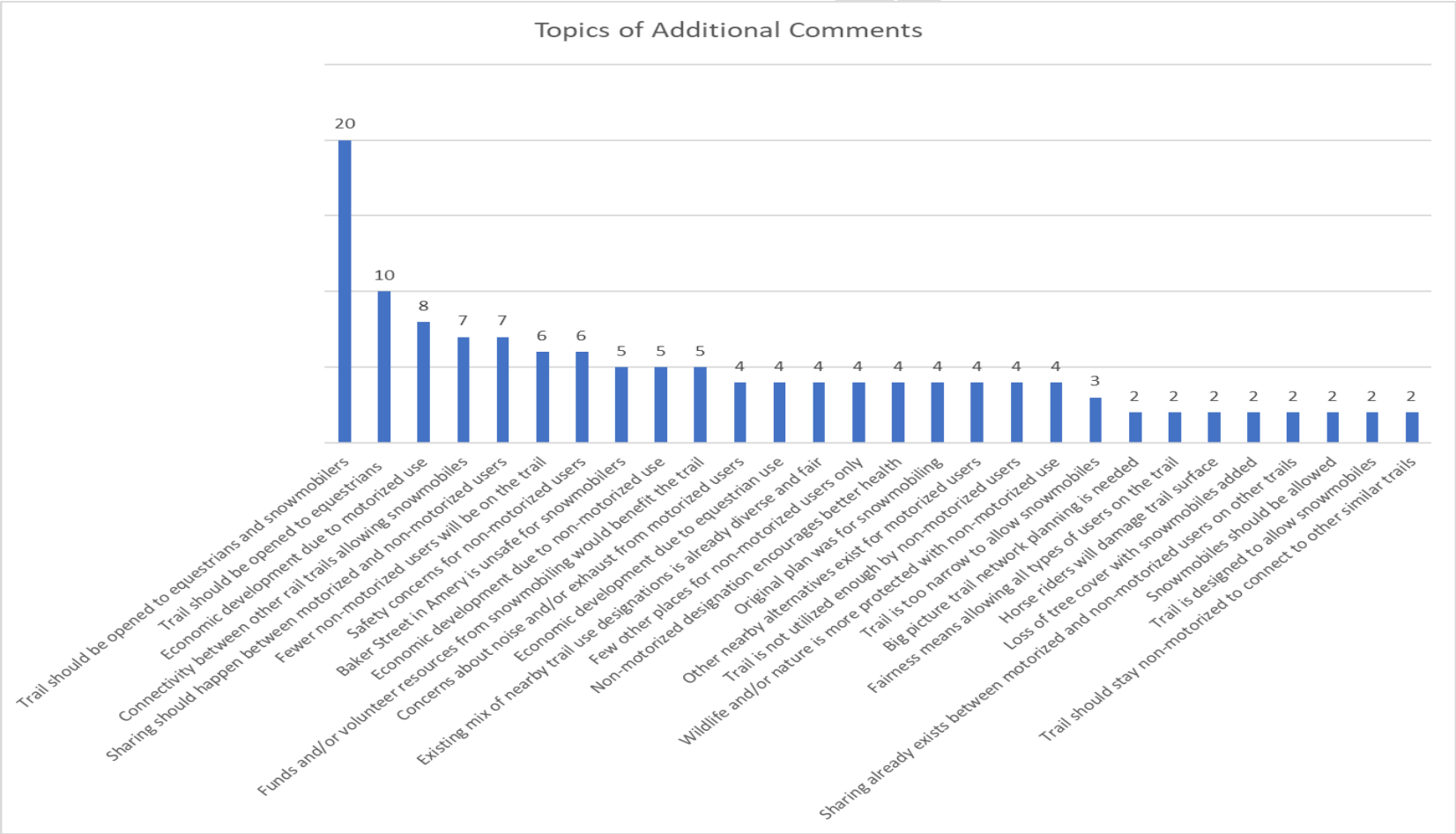

Vision for Stower Seven Lakes State Trail in 2040
quiet 18
beautiful 13
natural 12
non-motorized 11
multi-use 10
safe 10
snowmobile 9
peaceful 9
clean 8
open 7
connected 6
silent 5
shared 5
enjoyable 4
wildlife 3
wider 3
scenic 3
recreation 3
motorized 3
horseback 3
atv 3
tourism 2
smooth 2
same 2
pristine 2
preserved 2
people 2
paved 2
friendly 2
family 2
fair 2
everyone 2
cooperation 2
accessible 2

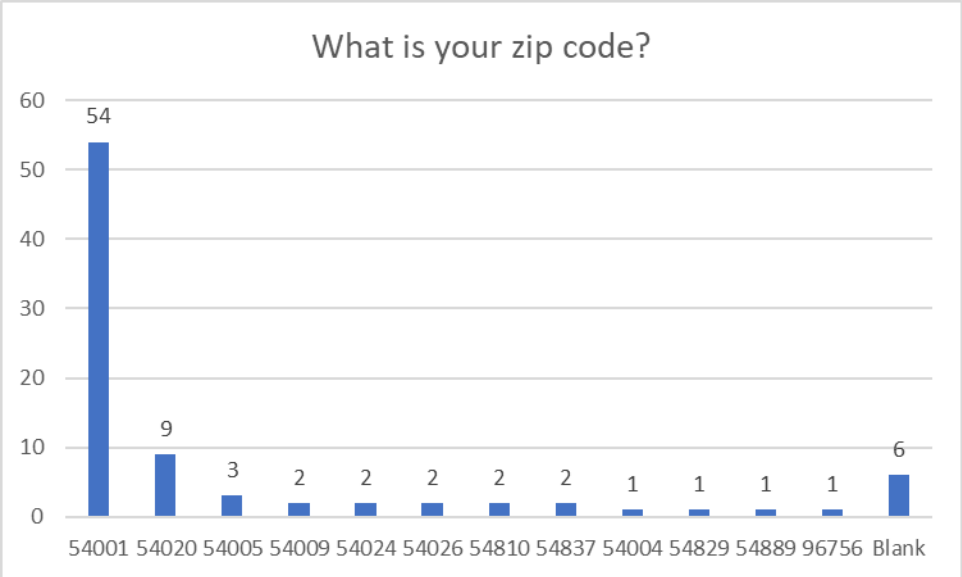
## Additional Open House Survey Comments

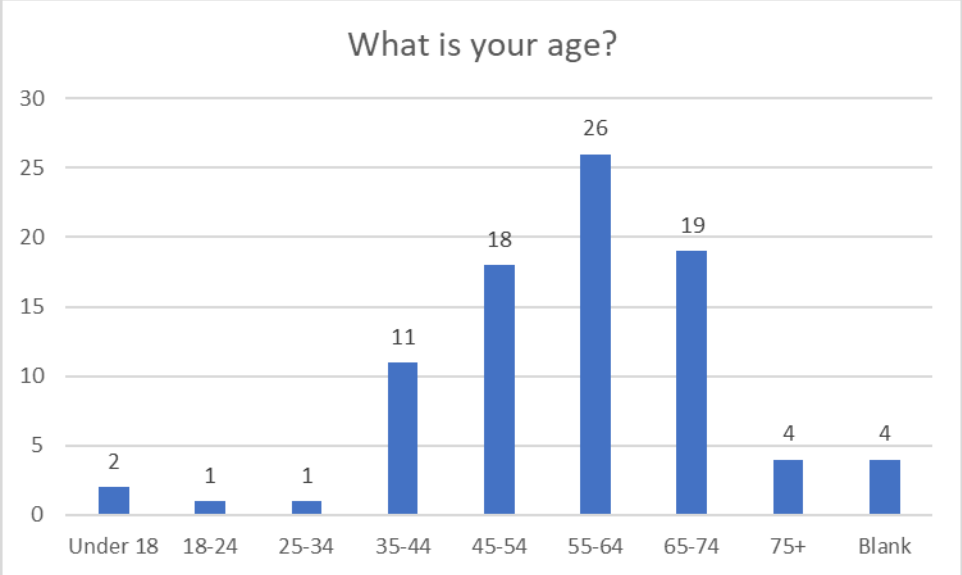
56 respondents filling out paper surveys left open-ended comments, and 44 additional people emailed open-ended comments to the project team. Each open-ended comment was analyzed for up to two topics each. Comments were placed into similar groupings based on content. The most popular topics were that the trail should be opened to equestrians and snowmobiles, the trail should be opened to equestrians, and economic development would improve due to adding motorized uses.



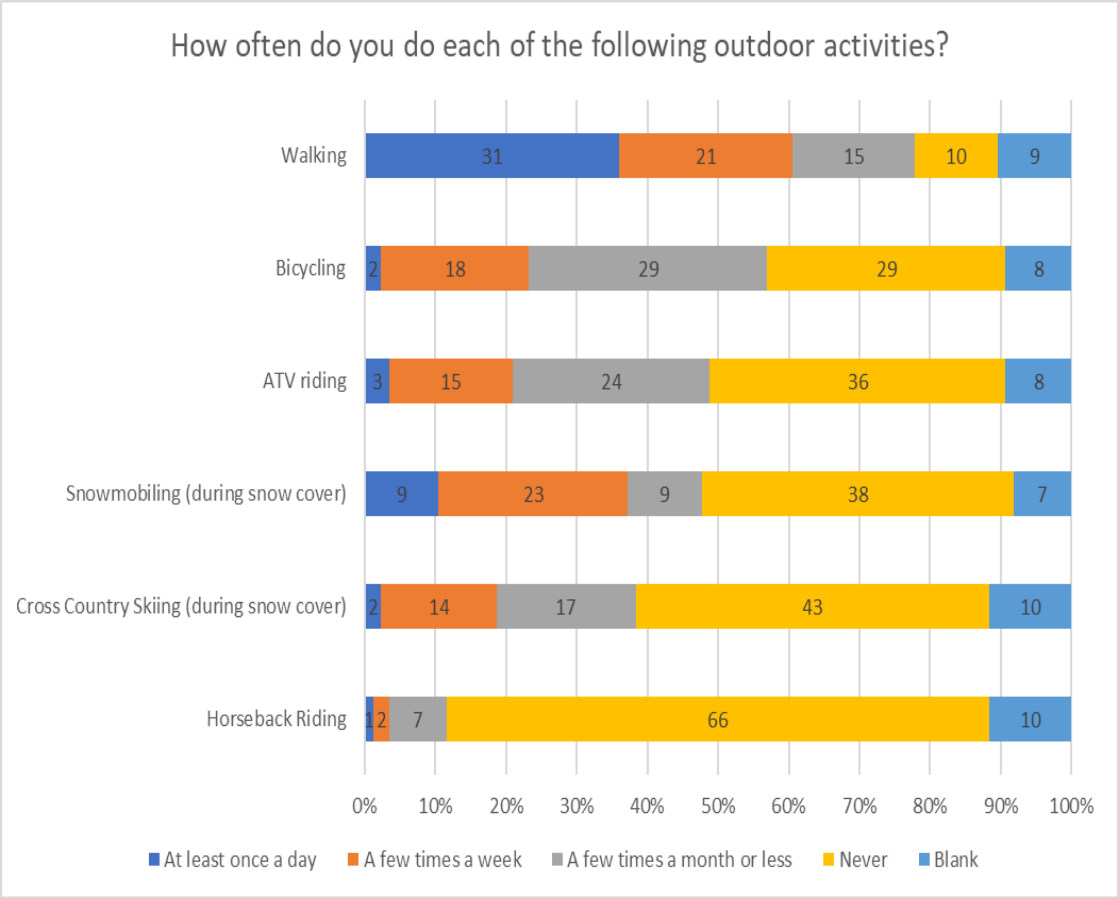
## Open House Participant Demographics

The following section describes demographic characteristics of people who responded to the paper survey. The vast majority of respondents were from the 54001 (Amery) zip code, and the most common age group was 55-64.



When asked how often people take part in common outdoor activities, the most common was walking, followed by bicycling, ATV riding, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and horseback riding respectively.




## Stakeholder Groups

On October 22nd, Toole Design held listening sessions with 14 people in four stakeholder groups. These input sessions focused on how people view the SSLST master planning process and what ideas they have for managing and improving the corridor. The following sections summarize the participant groups and key topics from the conversations. Topics have not been researched for factual accuracy, rather they reflect viewpoints expressed during each listening session.

### *Local Government Agency Staff*

Five staff from local government agencies attended, including representatives from the City of Amery, Town of Alden, and Town of Osceola. Key discussion points from the conversation included:

- The planning process for the trail has been contentious.
- The City of Amery and Town of Osceola took positions supporting silent sports only on the trail, and the Town of Alden did not take a position.
- Some thought the process was fair at the subcommittee level before it reached the County Board level. Others thought the subcommittee make-up was tilted toward motorized uses.

- There was disagreement about which trail uses (motorized vs. non-motorized) would generate more economic development.
- Some see a lot of use on the SSLST, such as from the high school track team, dog walkers, fat tire bikers, cross country skiers, and bicyclists and pedestrians, particularly in the warmer months. Skiers are more prevalent at the east end, but they are also seen on western segments of the trail.
- Bike pass fees are collected by several entities along the trail, with the DNR and County receiving the funds.
- Over the past 10 years, the snowmobile season has averaged four weeks annually.
- Skiers don't need as much snow as snowmobilers (two inches for the former, four inches for the latter).
- Snowmobiling is more popular later in the day versus earlier.
- Horseback riders may dig up the trail if the surface is wet, and the horses leave manure. There is already a 30-mile network of equestrian trails in the northwest part of the county, and they prefer to ride in loops.
- There is a need for more big picture trail planning across the county.

### *Friends of Stower Seven Lakes State Trail*

Four members of the Friends of Stower Seven Lakes State Trail attended. Key discussion points from the conversation included:

- The previous planning process did not go well. There were several elements of NR44 (the DNR's Administrative Code regarding Master Planning for Department Properties) that were not followed. There was a lawsuit regarding a violation of Wisconsin's open meeting law.
- There is a desire for an improved partnership with Polk County government. Until recently, there was a lack of communication for 10 years.
- The Friends group wants the trail to remain non-motorized throughout the year.
- The Friends group carries out trail surface maintenance, including raking and compacting in the spring. The trail has been graded with a crown in the middle. Bill Zager owns and operates the equipment. The Friends group pays the County for limestone at the County quarry.
- The Friends group gathers fees collected from trail users and gives that money to the County.
- The County maintains restrooms along the trail at Deronda, Nye, and Wanderoos, and carries out herbicide spraying.
- The City of Amery is in support of paving portions of the trail to provide routes for children biking and walking to school. They will be partnering with WisDOT to add bike lanes through a road diet along Highway 46, at the trailhead.
- There is a desire to extend the trail from its western terminus to St. Croix Falls and Osceola.
- The trailhead in Amery could be a good place for art and trailhead amenities, such as shower facilities and an electric bicycle and wheelchair charging station.
- There is a need for a vegetative management plan that addresses diseased, hazardous, and invasive trees, as well as long term tree management. The Friends group has been carrying out vegetation management.
- Wayfinding signage to the trail is adequate from state highways but is nonexistent on County and town roads.

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- The Friends group has historically plowed parking lots in the winter, but Polk County did this past winter. Parking lots are not adequate for the size of snowmobile trailers.
- The Friends group grooms the trail for classic cross-country skiing in the winter. There are two straight tracks along each edge of the trail. The 8' section in the middle is reserved for walking, fat tire biking, and snowshoeing.
- The concern about snowmobiling is related to safety for pedestrians, due to the large speed differential. Snowmobilers kick up snow reducing visibility. Speed limits for snowmobiles are unlimited during the day, 55mph at night, and 10mph within 100' of a person not on a snowmobile.
- There is a concern that non-motorized use would drop if snowmobiles were allowed on the SSLST.
- West of Big Lake Drive has higher trail use than the Big Lake Drive to Wanderoos segment.
- Fat tire biking has become more popular in recent years.
- There is an appreciation for holding an open house about the trail in Amery, since this didn't happen in the past.

*Polk County Snowmobile and ATV Council*

Two members of the Polk County Snowmobile and ATV Council attended. Key discussion points from the conversation included:

- The Council has been working since 1998 to add snowmobiles to the SSLST, as an extension of the Cattail State Trail.
- The 2001 Wisconsin State Trails Network Plan identified the Amery to Dresser segment as a trail to be added to the state trail network.
- The 2004 SSLST master plan allowed snowmobiles.
- There was a lawsuit in the mid-2000's related to motorized use on the SSLST. The judgment prohibited motorized uses. The DNR did not appeal the decision, because they didn't want it to apply to all state trails. In 2015, the state legislature changed the related statute (upon which the lawsuit and judgment were based) to make it less ambiguous.
- The Council was involved in vegetative trail maintenance on the SSLST in 2003 (before the lawsuit) and in December 2018. There was a 24-hour window when the County opened the trail to snowmobiles in 2018, until the DNR overrode the decision.
- Snowmobilers need the SSLST for safety reasons. The existing parallel path goes across ditches, fields, roads, and lakes using private property.
- Private property ownership changes, which leads to the need to reroute the parallel trail on an annual basis. Several property owners have pulled out since the recent controversy over the SSLST began.
- Snowmobilers are courteous to skiers, hikers, and bikers when they are encountered. They slow down and respect their safety.
- There are only three state trails that don't allow snowmobiling: the Capital City State Trail in Madison, the Hank Aaron State Trail in Milwaukee, and the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail.
- Villages are allowed to post snowmobile trail speed limits.
- Parking lots would not be used much by snowmobilers. The Deronda lot is adequate in size, and the Nye parking lot is big.

- Horseback riders don't use the Cattail Trail in the winter, so they likely wouldn't use the SSLST at the same time as snowmobilers.
- Amery is currently difficult to navigate while snowmobiling. Baker Street and North Twin Lake are the only options. Snowmobilers often get lost.

### *Economic Development Representatives*

Three members of the economic development community attended, including representatives from the Amery Economic Development Corporation (EDC), Polk County Economic Development Corporation, and Polk County Tourism. Key discussion points from the conversation included:

- The Amery EDC supports keeping the SSLST non-motorized. Having both motorized (Cattail State Trail) and non-motorized (SSLST) trails in Amery puts the community in a good position for attracting people from diverse backgrounds.
- Young people want to have non-motorized trail options.
- Mixed use motorized/non-motorized trails will often have unofficial warnings that it is not safe to ride a bicycle because of motorized use.
- Safety and trail dimensions should factor into the recommendation to allow or not allow snowmobiles.
- It's unusual to have a trail with such a long stretch of flat surface for skiing. It's good for learning to ski and recovering from strenuous ski outings.
- Balsam Branch, which has groomed trails for skiing, has a lot of vehicles with Minnesota plates in the parking lot in the winter.
- Fat tire biking is one of the fastest growing winter sports, while snowmobiling is flat in growth. Skiing has decreased in popularity.
- If there are facilities in place for biking and skiing, word of mouth makes it a hot spot for out-of-town visitors.
- The SSLST is rare in that it is a rural state trail that is non-motorized only. If it's marketed as such, people will be attracted in greater numbers.
- People deciding where to move are looking for a variety of outdoor activities, and economic vitality comes from attracting all trail user types. There should be opportunities for everyone.
- Amery could be marketing winter use of trails more.
- The Cattail and Stower Seven Lakes State Trails have very different aesthetics. The Cattail is wide with trees set back. The SSLST is more like a tunnel, with trees growing overhead.
- Instead of fighting about how the trails should be used, Polk County should be marketing all of its great trails. The focus should be on how many miles the network is for each mode.
- The new Stillwater Bridge is bringing biking and walking into the region. There is a desire to bring some of that traffic up to Polk County, instead of having it concentrated in St. Croix County.

## Use Alternatives Survey

In February 2020, Polk County conducted an online survey to gauge the public's sentiment on which uses they would prefer from the 7 alternatives that were being considered during the planning process. The results of the survey are shown on the following pages.

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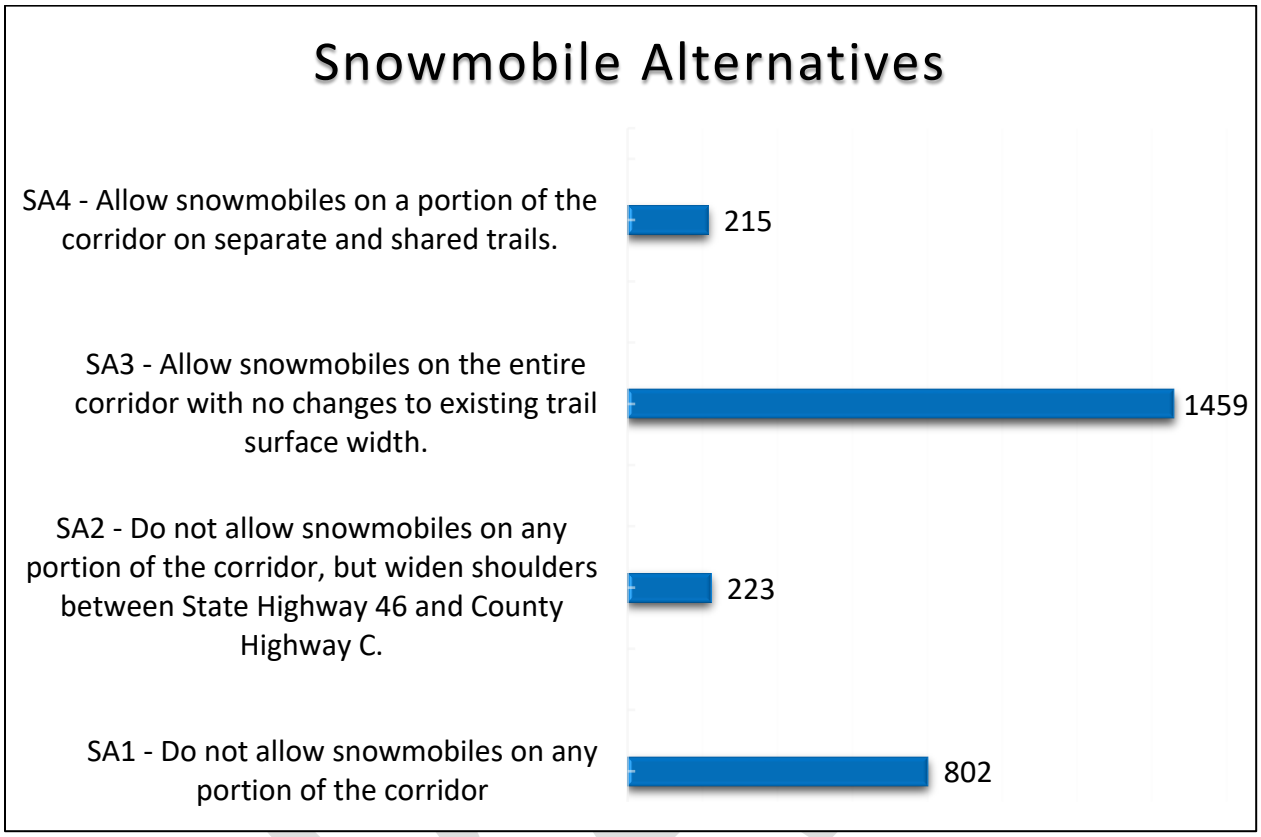
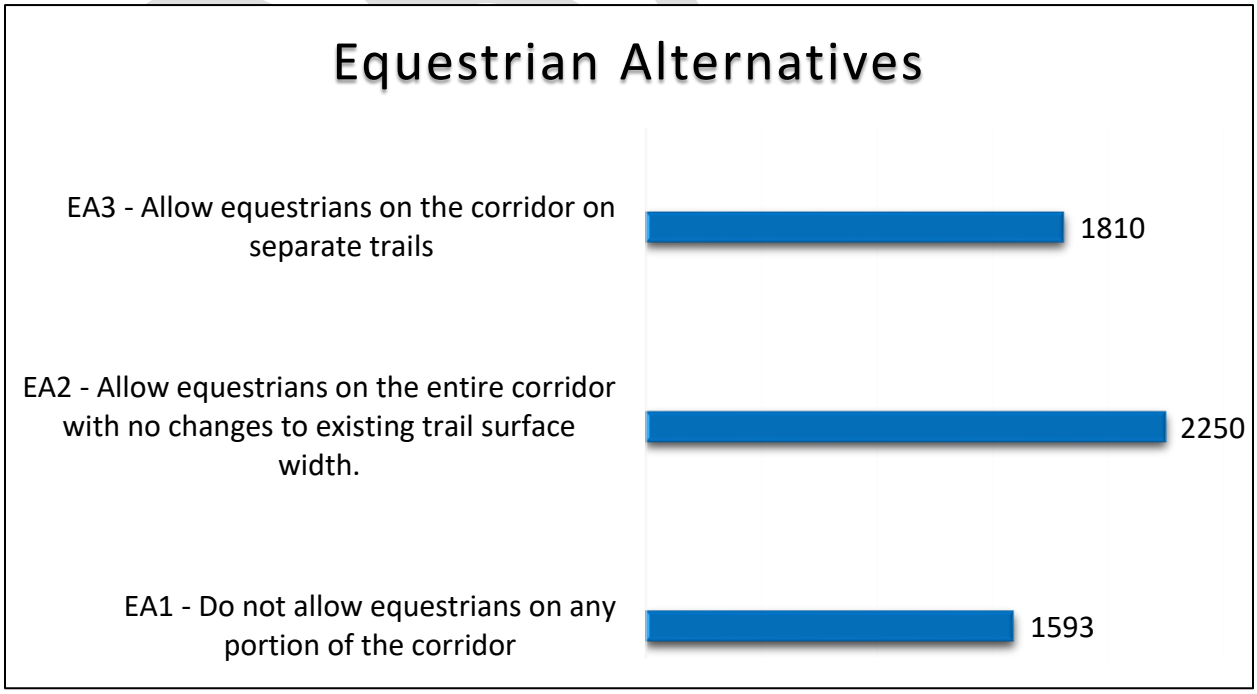
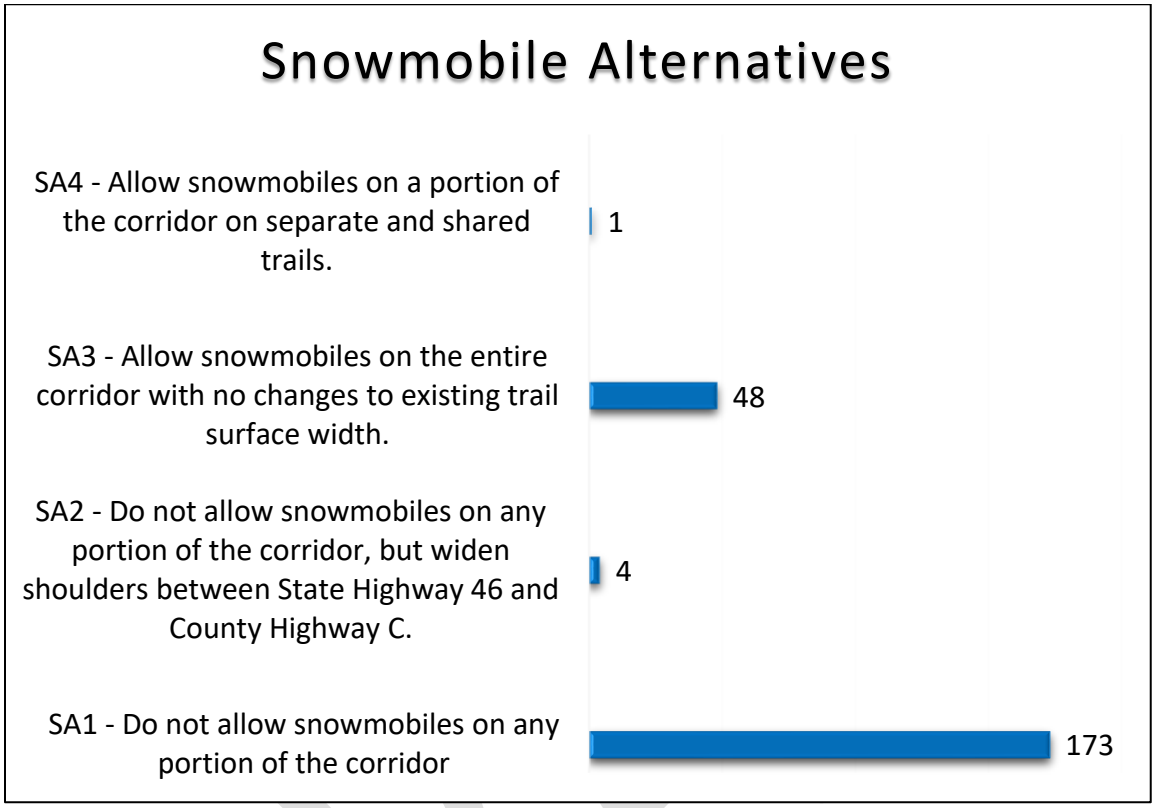
When asked in the online survey in February which alternative the public preferred, snowmobile alternative #3 was the most popular choice



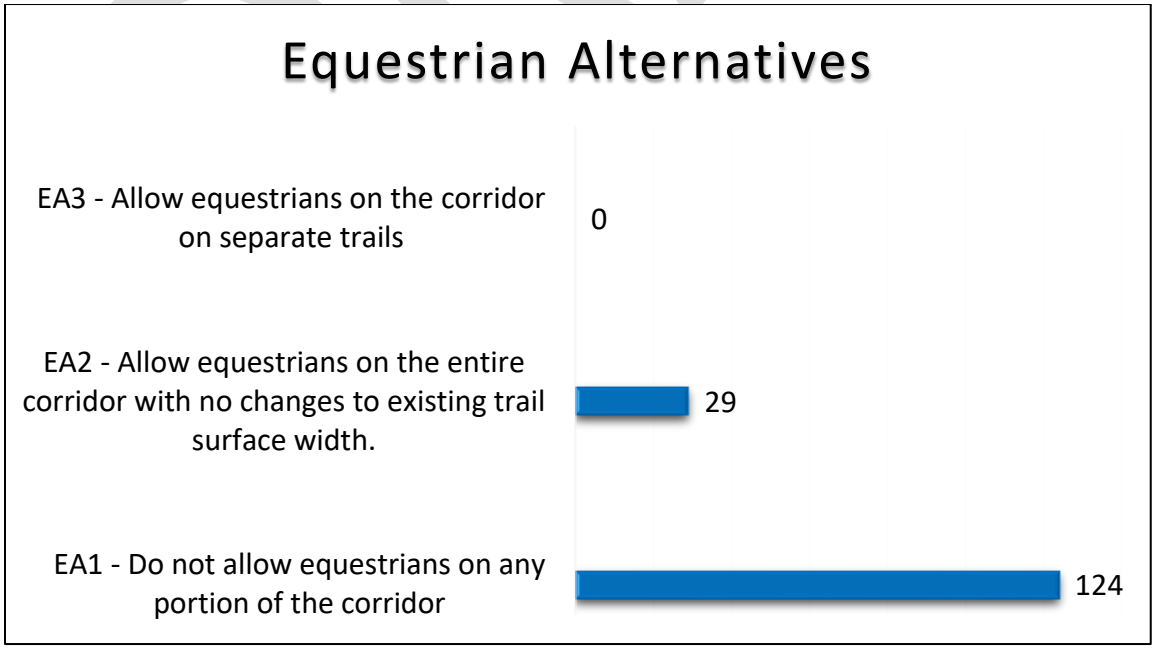

When asked in the online survey in February which alternative the public preferred, equestrian alternative #2 was the most popular choice.



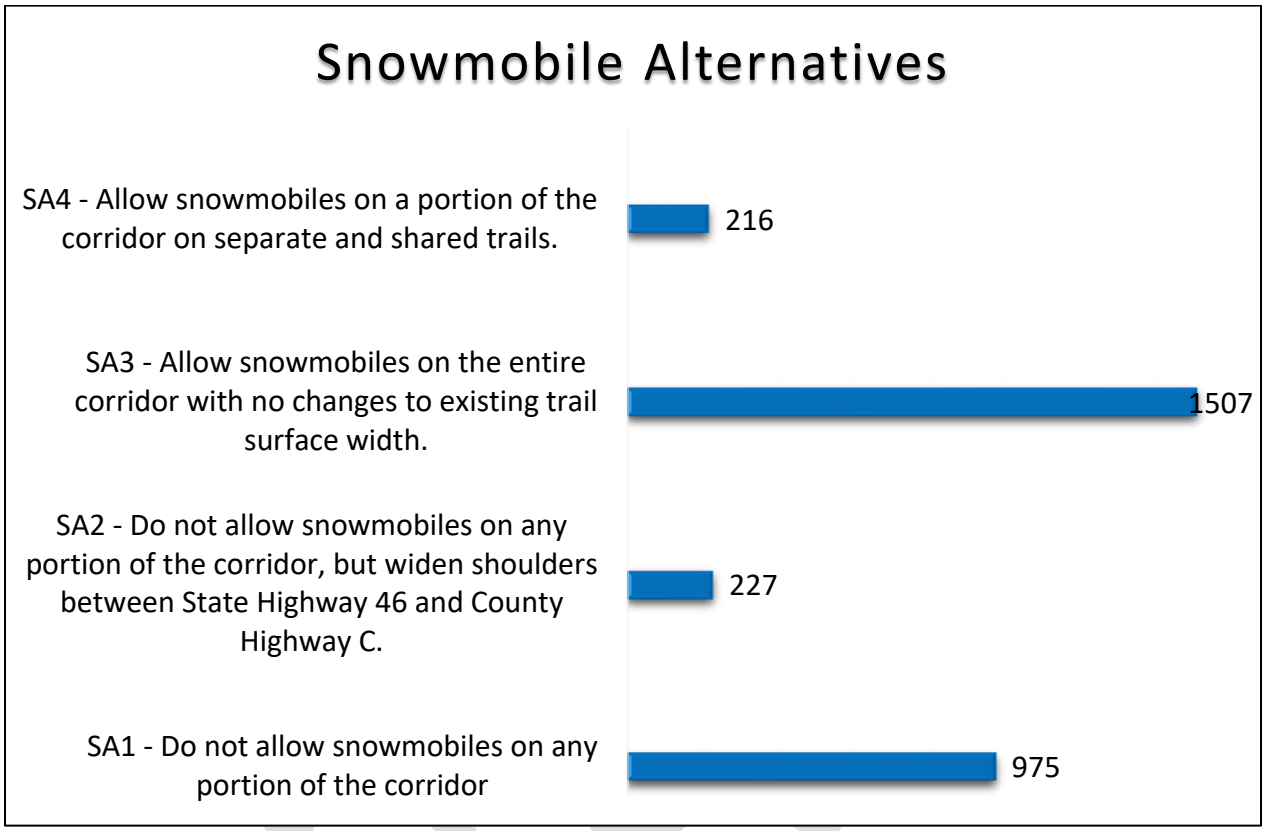
In addition to the online survey being available, interested parties were also given the opportunity to indicate their preference on alternatives by submitting written comments. When asked about which snowmobile alternative was preferred, SA1 was the most common option selected.



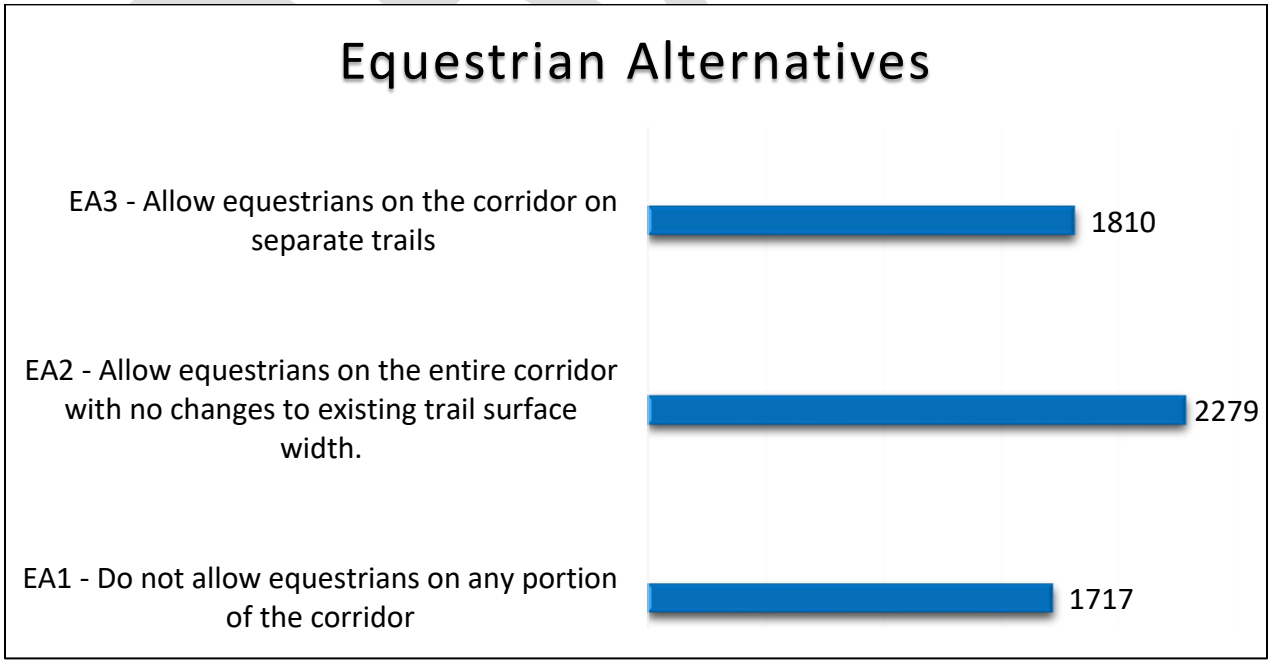

When asked about which equestrian alternative was preferred, EA1 was the most common option selected.



When the total responses, both written and online, are tallied for alternative preference, this is how the choices for snowmobile use break down. SA 3 is still the most popular selection.

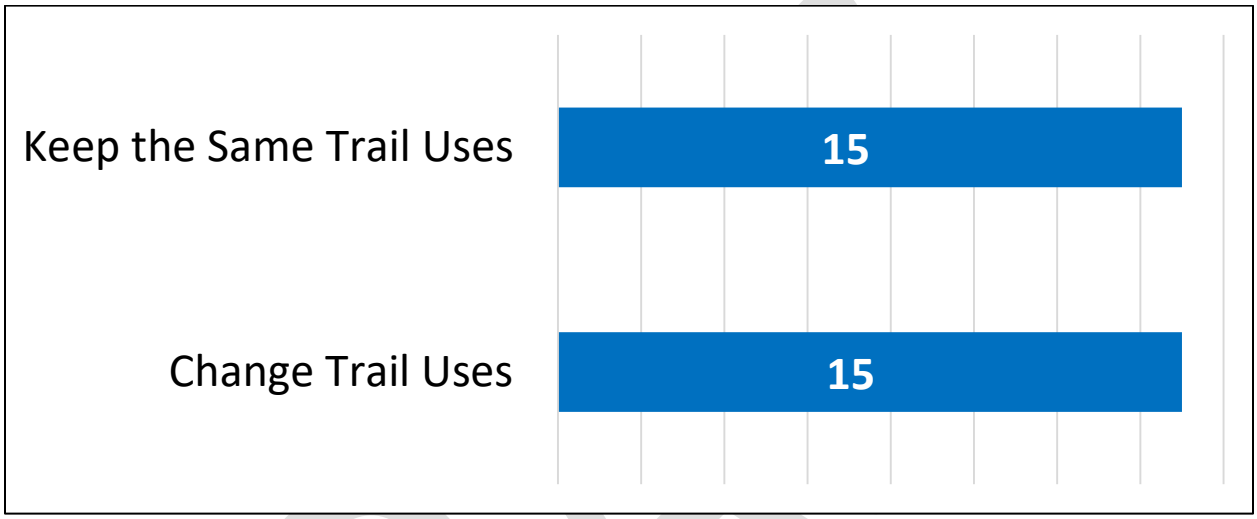



When the total responses, both written and online, are tallied for alternative preference, this is how the choices for equestrian use break down. EA 2 is still the most popular selection.

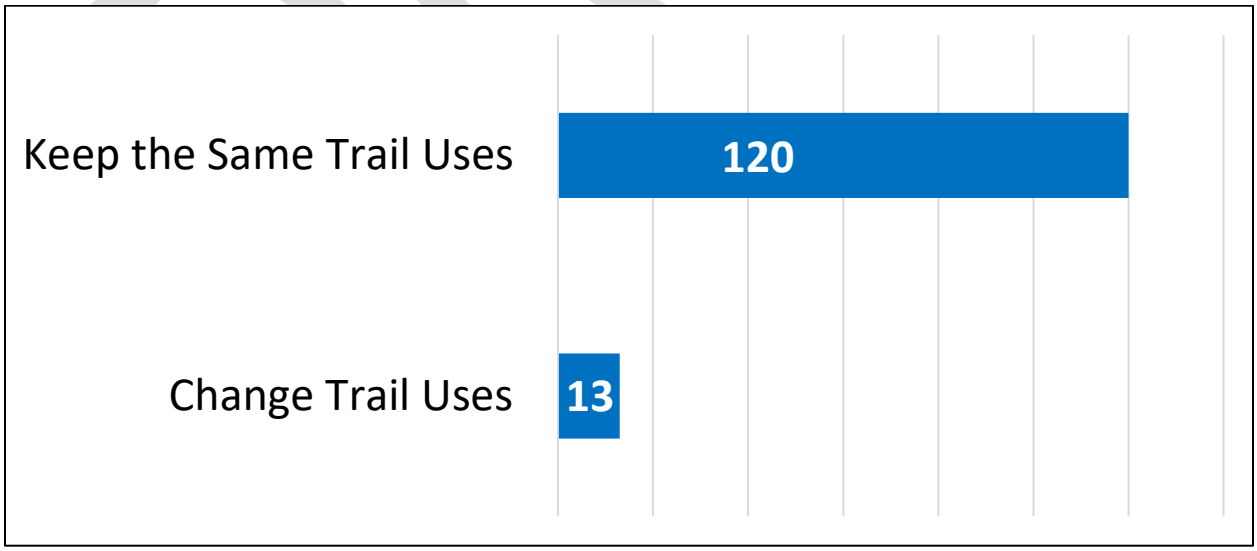


## Public Hearing

In June, following the ESC decision to go to public hearing after selecting SA3 and EA2 as their preferred alternatives, the county conducted a public hearing on the draft master plan. The public was given three opportunities to provide feedback on the plan. The first was to come in and record video comments to convey their opinions to the ESC and County Board. Video recorded comments were taken over the course of 2 days, Tuesday, June 2nd, from 9am-3pm and Wednesday, June 3rd, from 4-8pm. A total of 30 comments were recorded over those two dates. The results of those comments were evenly split between those in favor of keep the allowed trail uses the same and those in favor of changing the allowed trail uses, as shown in the figure below.




The second opportunity to provide feedback as part of the hearing, was the public could send in written comments on the draft plan for the ESC and County Board to review as part of their decision making process. The written comments received were mostly in favor of keeping the existing uses as is, as shown in the figure below.




The final opportunity was to provide feedback in person at the hearing at the ESC meeting on June 10th.

# Notice of Public Hearing

The Polk County Environmental Services Committee
will hold a **Public Hearing** on the
**Stower Seven Lakes State Trail Master Plan**
**Wednesday, June 10th, 2020 at 9:15am**
**Polk County Government Center, County Board Room,**
**100 Polk County Plaza**
**Balsam Lake, WI 54810**

Due to COVID-19 and to protect the health of residents and employees,
This hearing will be held virtually via WebEx
To join this meeting, please use the links, phone number and password below:

**Meeting Link: https://polkwi.webex.com**
**Meeting #: 968 663 581**
**Password: ESmeeting1**
**Join by Phone: 1-408-418-9388**

Given the COVID-19 precautions above, Polk County will provide meaningful opportunities for input, by giving interested parties the ability to record video comments to the Environmental Services Committee (ESC) concerning the proposed master plan. Video comments are limited to 3 minutes per person. The opportunity to record video comments to the ESC will be provided at the following location and time:

**Polk County Government Center, County Board Room**
**100 Polk County Plaza, Balsam Lake, WI 54810**
**Tuesday, June 2nd from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. or**
**Wednesday, June 3rd from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.**

Please note that previously submitted written comments for the postponed March public hearing will also be submitted to the ESC as part of the record for the hearing. If you have submitted a written comment for the March hearing, please do not send in duplicate comments, as they will not be counted. Comments received and recorded videos regarding this master plan will be reviewed by the ESC at the **June 10th, 2020 meeting at 9:15 a.m.** Those wishing to attend this meeting may join remotely using the WebEx meeting information at the top of this notice.

Information about the plan development process and the draft plan are available for viewing at: https://www.co.polk.wi.us/fpt_ssltmp. If you anyone has questions about this hearing, please contact the Polk County Parks Department at (715)485-9170 or polk.recreation@co.polk.wi.us

# Appendix B

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# Appendix B – Review of Related Documents

The following review of related documents provides context and perspective for the alternatives analysis section (Chapter 5) of the Plan. These documents reveal plans, design guidelines, economic development reports, and educational materials that relate to the management and development of the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail.

## Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan[1]

This 2019 – 2023 plan provides an analysis of outdoor recreation supply and demand for the state. Over 20,000 residents were surveyed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in May and June of 2016 to prioritize investments. Annual participation in grouped nature-based recreation activities included hiking (68%), nature observation (65%), dog-related activities (38%), bicycling (35%), and motorized trail-based activities (25%). When activities were ungrouped, participation rates were the following:

| **Activity** | **Statewide participation rate** |
|---|---|
| Hiking/walking/running on trails | 68% |
| Bird/wildlife watching away from home | 39% |
| Bicycle on rail trails/developed trails | 34% |
| Walking/running dog on trails | 32% |
| Gathering berries, mushrooms, etc. | 31% |
| Snowmobiling | 15% |
| Cross-country skiing | 13% |
| Snowshoeing | 13% |
| Horseback riding on trails | 7% |
| Fat tire biking/snow biking | 4% |

Survey respondents were also asked which outdoor recreation opportunities were needed in their home county:

| **Activity** | **Statewide** | **Great Northwest Region (9-county area including Polk)** |
|---|---|---|
| Hiking/walking/running trails | 30% | 30% |
| Bicycling trails | 25% | 25% |
| Trails for motorized recreation | 12% | 19% |
| Equestrian trails | 6% | 6% |

[1] https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/scorp/

In August and September of 2017, the DNR hosted three public open houses and an online public survey to gather public input on recreation needs in the Great Northwest Region (a 9-county area including Polk), with nearly 1,400 people participating. The stats for state and national trails in this region currently include 14 miles of groomed cross-country skiing trails, 60 miles of surfaced biking trails, and 255 miles of snowmobile trails. The top 10 most frequently identified recreation needs in this region were:

| **Rank** | **Needed Recreation Opportunity** | **Number of Responses** |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | More hiking/walking/running trails | 637 |
| 2 | More paved bicycling trails | 503 |
| 3 | More natural surface (dirt) bicycling trails | 496 |
| 4 | More rustic/quiet campgrounds | 355 |
| 5 | More public shore access to lakes and streams | 225 |
| 6 | More local parks and playgrounds | 197 |
| 7 | More developed campgrounds | 167 |
| 8 | More wildlife watching decks or platforms | 154 |
| 9 | More trails for motorized recreation | 151 |
| 10 | More horseback trails | 134 |

Managers of county park properties in the Great Northwest Region were surveyed about trends in outdoor recreation activities on county park properties between 2013 and 2018. The survey found that fat tire and rail trail biking have increased moderately; cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and hiking/walking/running on trails have increased slightly; and dog walking on trails, snowmobiling, and snowshoeing have stayed about constant.

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The plan provides an evaluation of recreation compatibility, to identify potential opportunities to combine recreation activities, or conversely, separate activities to ensure satisfying experiences for all users, which is particularly instructive for the Stower Seven Lakes Trail:

- People who hike/walk/run/bike are affected by equestrians to a degree that is noticeable or distracting but does not prevent the participant from being able to engage in the activity.
- Equestrians are affected by bicyclists to a degree that it substantively alters the participant's ability to successfully engage in the activity.
- People who cross country ski/snowshoe/fat tire bike are affected by snowmobilers to a degree that substantively alters the participant's ability to successfully engage in the activity.
- The same is true for snowmobilers: they are affected substantively by people who cross country ski/snowshoe/fat tire bike, to the degree that it hinders their ability to engage in the activity.

The plan also provides descriptions of recreation activities to create a common understanding about what it means to provide conditions for a satisfying experience:

*Bird Watching*

- Need uncrowded, quiet conditions to minimally disturb birds.
- Occurs throughout the year.

*Cross-Country Skiing*

- Experience is enhanced with a mix of hilly and flat topography.
- Trailhead shelter facility/warming huts are common.
- Likely to complain about exhaust from nearby combustion engines, due to this highly aerobic activity.

*Dog Walking*

- Highest around population centers.
- Participation is highest in spring and summer, moderate in fall, and low in winter.
- Can present a safety hazard for bicyclists.

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### *Fat Tire Biking*

- Prefer groomed (packed, untracked) trails during snowy conditions.
- Participants prefer a mix of terrain and will travel about an hour for a good experience.
- There is a potential for trespass by fat bikes onto snowmobile trails.
- Trailhead shelter facility/warming huts and bathrooms are highly desirable.

### *Horseback Riding*

- Long distance multiday trips are typical, as opposed to single-day outings.
- Access to campgrounds is important.
- Truck and horse trailers need larger parking accommodations and loading areas.
- Drinking water, tie posts/rails, and manure disposal areas are key components.
- Varied forested terrain is most desirable.
- Cleared height of 12 feet is necessary.
- Most common in spring and fall when temperatures are cooler.
- Problems arise when hiking and biking is on an equestrian trail – horses can startle with fast, quiet bikes and hikers who move off the trail and hide. This can be mitigated with trail etiquette information.

### *Rail-Trail Bicycling*

- Length of trip can range from a few hours to a few weeks.
- Participants look for drinking water and camping.
- Participation is lowest in the winter.

### *Snowmobiling*

- Some prefer short distance riding, others prefer long distance riding, covering hundreds of miles in a day.
- Speed, noise, and exhaust fumes are most common issues cited by adjacent landowners.
- Interconnection between routes is key. Topography, habitats, and location are variable.
- Trails need to be 12' wide minimum.

## Wisconsin State Trails Facts[2]

The Wisconsin DNR maintains a detailed chart about the 43 trails (over 2,000 miles) on the Wisconsin State Trail system. Most are rail trails (39), with 28 managed solely by counties and 13 by the DNR. Trail fees are required just over half (24). Completely non-motorized rail trails include:

- The 10-mile Great Sauk State Trail in Sauk Prairie with walking and bicycling allowed.
- The 12-mile Hank Aaron State Trail in Milwaukee, with walking and bicycling allowed.
- The 7-mile Mound View State Trail between Belmont and Platteville, with walking and bicycling allowed.
- The 14-mile Stower Seven Lakes State Trail between Amery and Dresser, with walking, bicycling, and cross-country skiing allowed. Ski trails are groomed.

[2] https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/trails/pdfs/state_trail_system_facts.pdf



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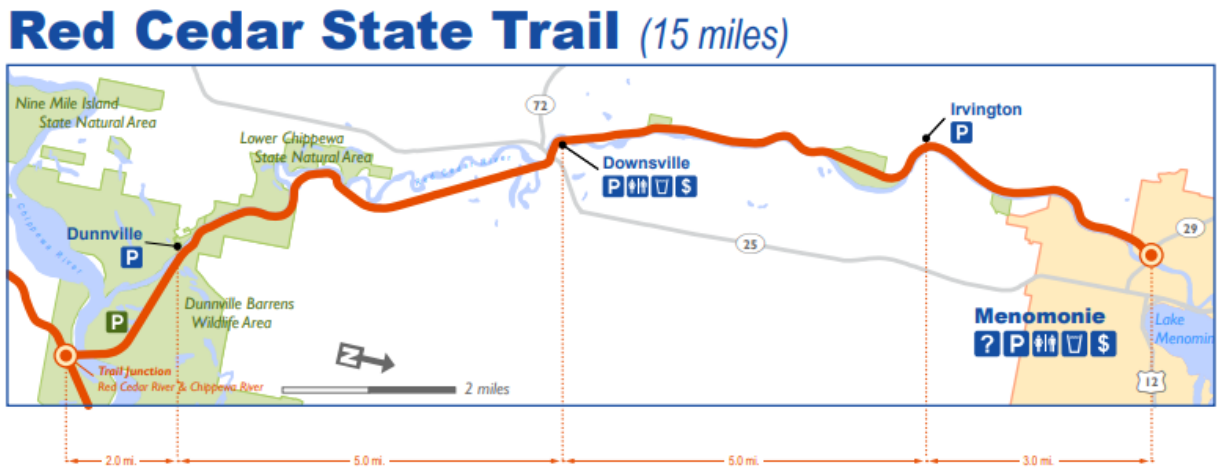
The 15-mile Red Cedar State Trail[3] in Menominee allows walking, bicycling, and cross-country skiing. Seven miles of one end of the trail are groomed for skiing (walking and bicycling are prohibited on this section during ski season), and snowmobiles are allowed on two miles at the other end of the trail. The middle 6-mile segment allows only walking and bicycling, with skiing allowed on ungroomed trails.




## Wisconsin DNR Design Standards Handbook

Chapter 30 of this handbook provides guidance for planning and design of various new trail types.

**Bicycle trails** are two-way with a minimum width of 8' and a preferable width of 10'. Vegetation is cleared to a minimum height of 10', and 2' on either side of the trail tread. Limestone aggregate size is 3/8 inch or smaller, with a four to six-inch compacted thickness. Development features may include bike racks, rest areas, drinking water, picnic facilities, camp areas, informational boards, toilets, mileage markers, bicycle rental, and bicycle rental and repair.

**Cross-country ski trails** should be designed with loops. Minimum width for vegetative removal is 6' for a single track. Clearing height should be a minimum of 10'. Non-skiers and pets are not permitted on trails when snow covered. A minimum of five to eight parking spaces should be provided per mile of trail. Amenities may include shelter, water, and toilets. **Snowmobile trails** have a minimum graded width of 10' and groomed width of 8'. One-way trails have a minimum graded width of 6' and groomed width of 4'. Vegetation should be cleared 12' in height and 2' on either edge of the groomed width. Support facilities may include drinking water, informational boards, toilets, mile markers, and warming shelters.

**Horse trails** are a minimum of 4' for one-way travel and 8' for two-way travel. Vegetation should be cleared to a minimum height of 12' and on 2' of either side of the trail tread. Linear trails are acceptable on converted rail corridors. Minimum trail length is 3 miles. Water facilities should be sited at all parking lots and at 10-mile intervals. Other features may include hitching posts, mowed grassy areas, shade trees, tree trunk protectors, manure disposal area/cleaning equipment, toilets, picnic facilities, and informational boards.

[3] https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/redcedar/

Chapter 90 provides guidance on parking lots. The standard parking stall should be 10' wide and 20' deep. Stalls for use by people with disabilities should be 11' wide and 20' deep, with a 5' walk. Larger parking stalls for vehicles with trailers should be 10' wide and 40' deep. The number of large stalls should be based on anticipated use.

## Minnesota DNR Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines[4]

This widely used guide is a comprehensive handbook for motorized and nonmotorized uses on rural trails. The guidebook covers profiles of various user types, including bicyclists, cross-country skiers, equestrians, pedestrians, and snowmobilers, as shown in the chart below.

| | Bicyclists | Cross-Country Skiers | Equestrians | Pedestrians | Snowmobilers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average Speed | 6 – 25 mph | 2 – 12 mph | 3 – 9 mph | 1 – 7 mph | 20 – 50 mph |
| Average Distance | 5 – 60 miles | 2 – 30 miles | 7 – 15 miles | 2 – 15 miles | 100 – 180 miles |
| Looped Configurations | Preferred (recreational type only) | Preferred | Preferred | Preferred (hiker type only) | Preferred |
| Trail Width Minimum | 8' (2-way travel) | 8' (two-track set, two-way travel), 6' (one-track set, one- or two-way travel) | Unspecified | 1.5' (hikers) – 4' (wheelchair users) | 10' (two-way trail), 8' (one-way trail) |

Regarding the mixing or separation of motorized and nonmotorized users, the guidebook advises, "With the exception of local access trails, motorized and nonmotorized uses are typically kept separate in most Minnesota applications."

## Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads, and Campgrounds[5]

This US Forest Service guidebook provides a thorough overview of trail design for equestrians. The section on shared use trails covers single tread and multiple tread trails (an example is shown on the next page in Figure 3-15). The guide explains an example from Gilbert, AZ, where the town requires a buffer of six feet between horse treads and shared-use treads. Some communities combine user types in a single tread and may post educational information for how the uses can successfully co-exist. The guidebook also covers trailhead amenities, as shown in Table 7-1, and contains a detailed section on parking area design, shown in Figure 8-9.

[4] https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/trails_waterways/index.html
[5] https://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/pubs/htmlpubs/htm07232816/toc.htm

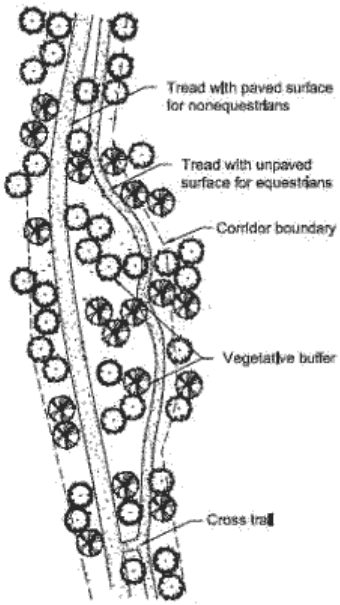



Figure 3-15--A shared-use trail with multiple treads--an unpaved tread for riders with animals and a paved tread for other users.

**Table 7-1-Suggested recreation facilities at equestrian trailheads and campgrounds.**

| Facility | Basic | Often provided | Optional |
|---|---|---|---|
| Trail access | X | | |
| Water sources* | | X | |
| Toilet building | X | | |
| Shower building (campground only) | | | X |
| Wash rack | | | X |
| Mounting ramp** | | | X |
| Loading ramp | | | X |
| Mounting block | | X | |
| Manure disposal*** | | X | |
| Highline or corral | | X | |
| Hitch rail | X | | |
| Arena or round pen | | | X |

* In some areas, recreationists bring their own water.

** Mounting ramps must be accessible, if they are provided.

*** Manure disposal is not required in all areas of the country.

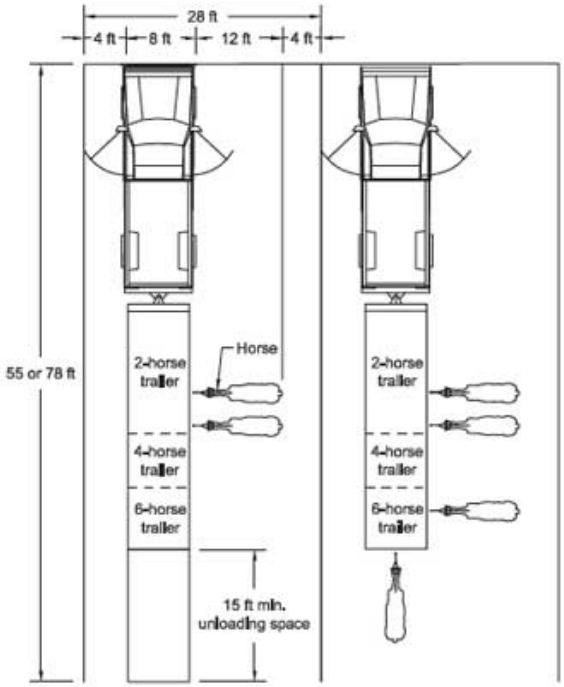


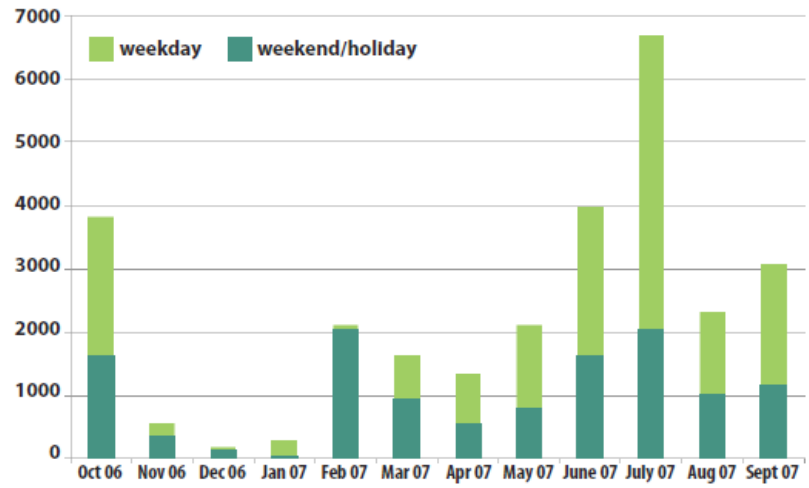

**Figure 8–9—Optimum parking and staging dimensions for vehicles towing horse trailers.**

## Trails and Their Gateway Communities: A Case Study of Recreational Use Compatibility and Economic Impacts[6]

This 2009 study surveyed 490 users of the Gandy Dancer State Trail in Polk and Burnett Counties, and conducted six focus group interviews. This trail, which allows hiking, bicycling, cross-country skiing (ungroomed) and snowmobiling, had an estimated 46,000 users between October 2006 and September 2007.

The study describes the differing viewpoints of motorized and nonmotorized users, with motorized users believing different uses are compatible, and nonmotorized users believing the opposite. Recreational trail managers ". . . appeared to prefer segregating uses. They specifically preferred to segregate uses by season." Spending by the average trail user was $146 on items related to the trip, with $118 being spent in Polk or Burnett Counties. Approximately 110 jobs per year are related to ". . . economic activity stimulated by users of the Gandy Dancer Trail."

**Figure 3. Gandy Dancer Trail usage (number of parties) during study period.**




## Economic Impacts of the Wisconsin State Park System[7]

This 2013 report estimates the economic activity of various user types in the Wisconsin state park and trail system. Daily expenditures include $196 for snowmobilers, $85 for bicyclists, $54 for cross-country skiers, $35 for horseback riders, $31 for birders, $29 for hikers/walkers, and $19 for runners/joggers. People who visit state trails were estimated to spend $90/day compared to $51/day for state park visitors.

## Wisconsin Trail Etiquette & Safety Guidelines

The Wisconsin DNR published a 16-page Trail Etiquette and Safety Guidelines brochure to establish norms for different types of trail users (both motorized and non-motorized). The guidelines give specific advice for how each user group on Wisconsin state trails can make safe choices for themselves and slower users.

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[6] https://ghtrails.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Gandy-Dancer-study.pdf
[7] https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/documents/EconImpact2013.pdf

- Bicyclists are encouraged to go slow when passing other users, giving an audible signal. They are also directed to obey traffic signs and signals.
- Cross country skiers are told to yield the trail to skiers overtaking from behind, and to not obstruct intersections.
- Equestrians are directed to obey posted speed limits, announce intentions to pass, and remove manure from trails.
- Hikers are directed to stop when a horse is approaching and stay off groomed cross-country ski tracks.
- Snowmobilers are encouraged to ride quietly around houses and non-riders. They are also instructed to not exceed 10 mph when traveling within 100' of a non-motorized user. Around equestrians, snowmobilers are encouraged to stop when approaching and slow when passing.

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## Lessons Learned

This review of related documents shows there is more current use and future demand for bicycling and walking than snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and fat tire biking (i.e. more people participate annually in bicycling and walking than other activities). An evaluation of recreational compatibility between trail user types reveals that 1) equestrians are negatively impacted by bicyclists, 2) cross country skiers and fat tire bikers are negatively impacted by snowmobilers, and 3) snowmobilers are negatively impacted by cross country skiers and fat tire bikers.

In addition, with county park managers observing that demand is growing for rail-trail bicycling/hiking/running/walking, fat tire biking, cross-country skiing, and horseback riding in Northwest Wisconsin, these activities are ripe for expansion on the SSLST. Wisconsin DNR guidelines provide the framework for how infrastructure should be designed, by activity. There are opportunities to increase use with campsites, looped trail configurations, warming huts, and equestrian accommodations. With snowmobilers having an outsized impact on economic development (compared to other user types), it will be important to ensure the SSLST accommodates their use in locations with poor connectivity, while at the same time keeping wintertime uses separate. The overarching goal is to offer as many recreational opportunities as possible while maintaining each participant's ability to successfully engage in their activity.

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# Appendix C

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# Appendix C - Alternatives Analysis

The following alternatives analysis evaluates the possibilities of adding snowmobilers and equestrians to the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail (SSLST). In accordance with master planning requirements for Department of Natural Resources (DNR) properties, the planning team (Toole Design and Polk County staff) began with a public involvement process, summarized in the Chapter 3 and Appendix A. The team also reviewed related plans, design guidelines, and economic development reports, summarized in Chapter 4, to establish a baseline for existing and projected demand for trail user types and their design needs. The team evaluated alternatives by completing a field and desktop review of the corridor, using the following datasets:

- Archaeological sites
- Connections to nearby trails
- Locations of water features
- Parcel boundaries
- Topographical features
- Trail widths (shown in Figure 1)
- Tree locations

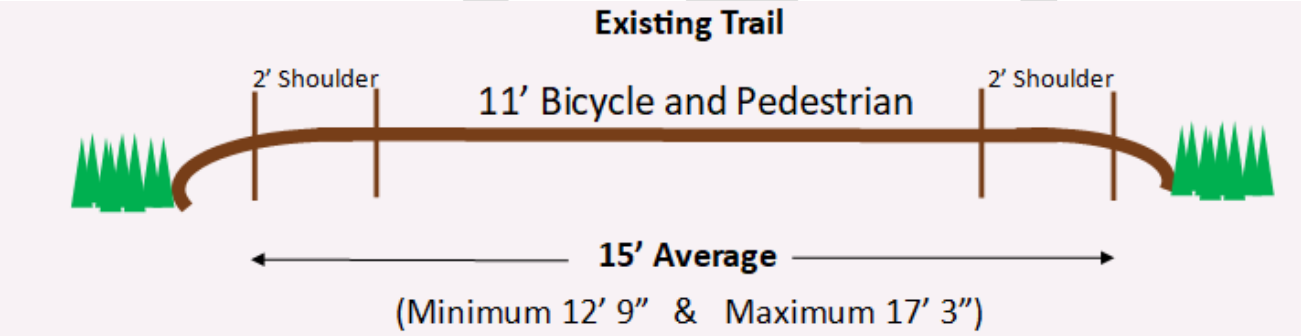


*Figure 1. The typical width of the SSLST is 15', as measured between the outside of each shoulder. Minimum and maximum widths were determined by taking samples every mile, as shown in Figure 16.*

As a result of the previous public outreach and planning work, a set of seven alternatives were developed by Toole Design and approved by County staff, ranging from no access to full access for snowmobiling and equestrians on the SSLST:

8. **Snowmobile Alternative 1 (SA1)** – Do not allow snowmobiles on any portion of the corridor.
9. **Snowmobile Alternative 2 (SA2)** – Do not allow snowmobiles on any portion of the corridor, but widen shoulders between State Highway 46 and County Highway C.
10. **Snowmobile Alternative 3 (SA3)** – Allow snowmobiles on the entire corridor with no changes to existing trail surface width.
11. **Snowmobile Alternative 4 (SA4)** – Allow snowmobiles on a portion of the corridor on separate and shared trails.
12. **Equestrian Alternative 1 (EA1)** – Do not allow equestrians on any portion of the corridor.
13. **Equestrian Alternative 2 (EA2)** – Allow equestrians on the entire corridor with no changes to existing trail surface width.
14. **Equestrian Alternative 3 (EA3)** – Allow equestrians on the corridor on separate trails.

Beyond the federal funding restriction regarding ATV use, building an additional parallel trail within the entire corridor was not an alternative under consideration due to archaeological and wetland site challenges. Each of the seven alternatives was evaluated on factors including cost, economic development impact, safety, tree removal, wetland impacts, user group displacement, and maintenance needs, as shown in Table 1. This evaluation is not intended to provide a preferred alternative; instead the purpose is to consider the relative difference of each alternative compared to the others. Supporting information for this evaluation can be found throughout Chapters 4 and 5.

*Table 1 Seven alternatives for snowmobiling and equestrians are evaluated using seven factors. Cells highlighted in green are the most desirable outcome under each factor.*

| | **Cost to Implement** | **Economic Development Impact** | **Safety for all Trail Users** | **Tree Removal** | **Wetland Impacts** | **User Group Displacement** | **Additional Maintenance Needs** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Snowmobile Alternative 1 (SA1)** | Low | Medium[8] | Medium | Low | Low | Snowmobilers | Low |
| **Snowmobile Alternative 2 (SA2)** | High | Low | High | Medium | Medium | Snowmobilers | Medium |
| **Snowmobile Alternative 3 (SA3)** | Low | High | Low | Low | Low | Skiers, Bicyclists | Medium |
| **Snowmobile Alternative 4 (SA4)** | High | Medium | Medium | High | Medium | None | Medium |
| **Equestrian Alternative 1 (EA1)** | Low | Low | High | Low | Low | Equestrians | Low |
| **Equestrian Alternative 2 (EA2)** | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low | Equestrians[9] | High |
| **Equestrian Alternative 3 (EA3)** | High | Medium | High | High | High | None | Medium |

If and when non-status quo alternatives are recommended, additional resources for engineering, construction, and/or maintenance will need to be identified before implementation occurs.

[8] Trail amenities may be added to the SSLST to increase economic development, such as walk-in campsites for long distance bicyclists and warming huts for cross-country skiers.

[9] Even though equestrians would be allowed to use the SSLST under EA2, the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) indicates equestrians are deterred from horseback riding on trails that allow bicycling.

## Snowmobile Alternatives

There are four snowmobile Alternatives:

1. **Snowmobile Alternative 1 (SA1)** – Do not allow snowmobiles on any portion of the corridor.
2. **Snowmobile Alternative 2 (SA2)** – Do not allow snowmobiles on any portion of the corridor, but widen shoulders on a series of roads between State Highway 46 and County Highway C.
3. **Snowmobile Alternative 3 (SA3)** – Allow snowmobiles on the entire corridor with no changes to existing trail surface width.
4. **Snowmobile Alternative 4 (SA4)** – Allow snowmobiles on a portion of the corridor.

**Alternative SA1** is the status quo option, with continued displacement of snowmobilers. SA1 is a low-cost option that results in low tree removal and wetland impacts. This option allows skiing, biking, and walking to continue during the snowmobiling season, and keeps the trail quiet throughout the year. This option is safest for non-motorized users, but presents safety concerns for snowmobilers riding on streets and becoming lost, particularly in the eastern 2.5-mile segment between State Highway 46 and County Highway C.

**Alternative SA2** was prepared by the planning team to present a potential solution for snowmobile safety and connectivity issues, as explained under Alternative SA4. Cost, tree removal, and wetland impacts occur where the on-street route would be widened, but safety concerns under Alternative SA1 would be addressed.

**Alternative SA3** displaces cross-country skiers using groomed classic ski tracks, with a smaller percentage of skate skiers remaining. A substantial percentage of people walking and bicycling will also be displaced. Noise from snowmobiling will also be a concern to many property owners along the corridor.

During the community engagement process, non-motorized users primarily expressed concerns about safety. While the planning team did not find data on crashes between snowmobilers and non-motorized users, these uses are incompatible as documented by Wisconsin's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan[10](SCORP). The plan finds that non-motorized uses are generally non-compatible with snowmobiling, "substantively altering their ability to successfully engage in the activity." The same is true for snowmobiling. Non-motorized uses substantively alter the ability of snowmobilers to successfully engage in their activity. Additionally, design guidance from the Wisconsin DNR and Minnesota DNR[11] does not generally support the idea of shared use between motorized and non-motorized modes in winter.

Out of Polk County's four rail-trails, three offer groomed snowmobile tracks in the winter: Cattail State Trail[12], Gandy Dancer State Trail[13], and Sawmill County Trail[14]. While none of these rail-trails prohibit cross-country skiing, they also don't offer groomed cross-country ski tracks. While occasional skiers, bicyclists, and pedestrians may be seen, they are likely to be uncommon where snowmobiling takes place. As indicated in the SCORP, added snowmobile use on the SSLST will likely substantially reduce

[10] https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/scorp/
[11] https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/trails_waterways/index.html
[12] https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/cattail/
[13] https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/gandydancer/
[14] https://www.co.polk.wi.us/landinfotrailmaps

non-motorized use due to safety and noise concerns. Groomed snowmobile tracks are also not compatible with groomed classic style cross-country ski tracks.

On the other hand, the SSLST is a potential network connection for snowmobiling between the Cattail State Trail (State Snowmobile Corridor 12) and Gandy Dancer State Trail (State Snowmobile Corridor 43)[15]. The community engagement process revealed that snowmobilers' strong desire for access to the SSLST is due to reasons of safety, network connectivity, and economic development.

Many of the safety and network connectivity issues were related to a series of streets and roads west of the Cattail State Trailhead in Amery, including Baker Street, Baker Avenue, and County Highway C. According to the feedback, it is common for snowmobilers to get lost between State Highway 46 and County Highway C because of the circuitous, existing on-street route. Snowmobilers are currently riding on the road surfaces in narrow rights-of-way, leading to potential conflicts with motorists. For the snowmobile community, access to the SSLST has long been viewed as a potential solution to this safety issue, as demonstrated by the many requests for sharing the SSLST corridor.

The benefit of economic development due to snowmobiling has been verified through a 2013 DNR report, Economic Impacts of the Wisconsin State Park System[16]. Snowmobilers spend twice as much as bicyclists and four times more than cross-country skiers per trip (see Figure 2). However, it is also important to note the average length of season for snowmobiling in Polk County has been four weeks during the past 10 years. To take economic advantage of this short season, it is important to provide a clear, seamless network connection for snowmobilers to make trips through the western side of Amery.

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[15] https://www.co.polk.wi.us/vertical/Sites/%7BA1D2EAAA-7A29-46D6-BF1A-12B71F23A6E1%7D/uploads/ParksDeptSnowmobileATVTrailsMap2015.pdf
[16] https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/documents/EconImpact2013.pdf

| Table 2. Average Trip-Related Expenditure Pattern by State Park and Trail Activity (Meta-analysis equalized to 2013 USD individual daily expenditure by sector) | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spending Category | | | | | | | | | |
| Activity | Overnight Accommodation | Restaurants & Bars | Gasoline & Auto | Groceries & Liquor | Entertainment | Misc. Retail | Admissions/ Fees /Licenses | Equipment Rental & Repair | Equipment Purchase | Total |
| Running, Jogging | $8.32 | $3.74 | $1.92 | $2.43 | $0.45 | $1.59 | $0.62 | na | $0.25 | $19.31 |
| Hiking, Walking, Geocaching | $13.05 | $4.99 | $3.01 | $3.01 | $0.91 | $2.10 | $1.04 | na | $0.65 | $28.75 |
| Birding, Naturalist PGM, Siteseeing | $5.27 | $7.54 | $7.04 | $0.10 | na | na | $0.31 | $0.39 | $10.78 | $31.42 |
| Horseback Riding | $4.26 | $4.89 | $11.51 | $6.93 | $1.75 | $4.04 | $1.11 | $0.11 | $0.09 | $34.70 |
| Camping, Picnicking, Swimming | $3.08 | $5.91 | $9.64 | $12.59 | $1.80 | $3.25 | $3.83 | na | $1.08 | $41.19 |
| Cross-Country Skiing | $29.17 | $9.55 | $4.73 | $4.31 | $0.63 | $2.27 | $1.97 | $0.57 | $1.02 | $54.21 |
| Scenic Auto Touring | $2.15 | $16.84 | $15.17 | $7.96 | $10.57 | $4.92 | $1.64 | na | na | $59.25 |
| Fishing | $9.72 | $10.21 | $15.44 | $9.97 | $2.12 | $4.12 | $2.13 | $3.36 | $4.94 | $62.03 |
| Hunting | $5.61 | $12.08 | $24.15 | $11.18 | $1.32 | na | $3.48 | $0.61 | $18.52 | $76.97 |
| Bicycling | $9.92 | $13.96 | $10.35 | $11.02 | $2.92 | $4.07 | $0.47 | $0.08 | $32.43 | $85.22 |
| Boating, Canoeing | $7.47 | $14.38 | $26.98 | $13.33 | $2.74 | $2.53 | $4.02 | $4.63 | $9.52 | $85.60 |
| Downhill Skiing | $26.94 | $24.81 | $15.64 | $6.60 | $12.77 | $5.11 | $6.04 | $0.74 | $3.96 | $112.62 |
| Snowmobiling | $46.76 | $59.22 | $38.25 | $13.97 | $1.02 | $22.50 | na | $14.26 | na | $195.97 |
| ATV Riding | $44.44 | $47.70 | $46.93 | $16.12 | $18.68 | $18.35 | na | $6.89 | na | $199.11 |
| Wildlife Watching | $38.17 | $21.95 | $69.21 | $2.96 | na | na | $2.56 | $33.39 | $99.63 | $267.87 |

*Figure 2. Snowmobiling is one of the activities with the highest expenditures per trip in Wisconsin's State Park and Trail system.*

**Alternative SA4** is a compromise solution that addresses multiple issues raised during the community engagement process and displaces no user group within the eastern 2.5-mile segment of the SSLST.

In response to the specific safety problem west of Amery, and the potential added economic benefits for the community, the planning team created Alternative SA4 (and SA2) to address how the existing snowmobile trail between State Highway 46 and County Highway C could be improved. Three snowmobile facility types were examined: 1) Snowmobile shoulder trail, 2) Separated snowmobile and cross-country ski trail, and 3) Shared snowmobile and cross-country ski trail. Three segments were evaluated: A) State Highway 46 to Harriman Avenue S, B) Harriman Avenue S to Baker Terrace, and C) Baker Terrace to County Highway C.

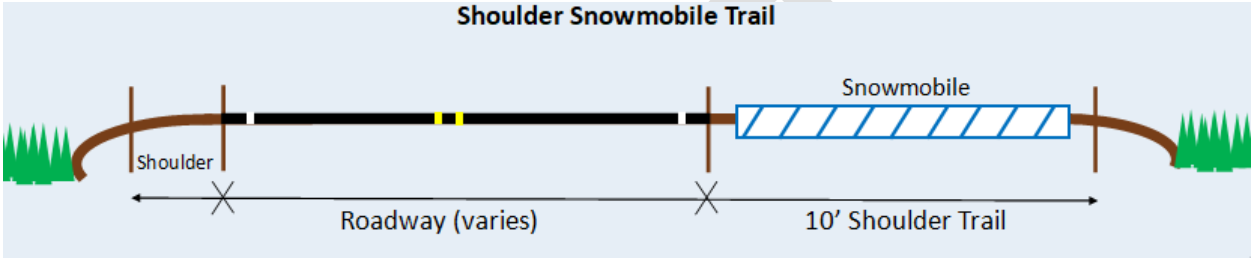
The interplay between facility types, segments, and alternatives explained in the following section is summarized in Table 2 on page 40.

## Snowmobile Facility Types

The three types of snowmobile trails considered between State Highway 46 and County Highway C were based on the following criteria:

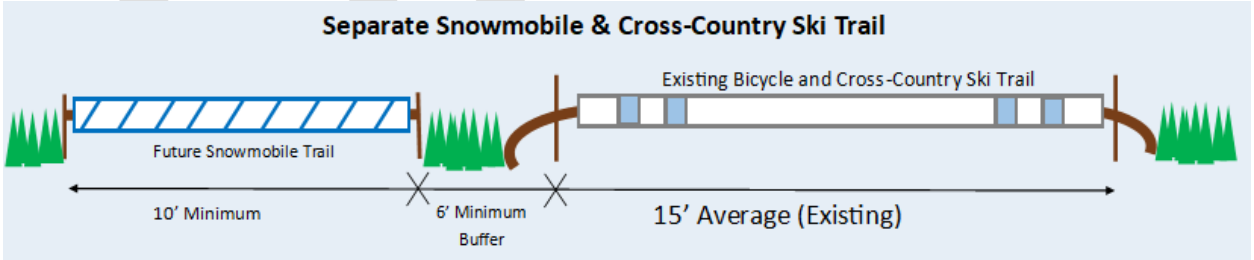
- Keep snowmobilers separate from motorists for safety.
- Connect snowmobilers using a trail that has qualities like other snowmobile trails (groomed surface separate from other uses).
- Maintain 2-way travel were possible, so that snowmobilers may safely pass one another.
- Follow Wisconsin DNR trail design standards.

### *Trail Type 1- Shoulder Snowmobile Trail*




- The trail would be a shoulder extension of the road.
- The minimum graded trail width would be 10' and the groomed width would be 8' for two-way travel.
- Vegetation would need to be cleared height of 12' and 2' beyond the trail width on the vegetative (non-road) side of the trail.
- Wetland mitigation, alteration to drainage structures, overhead power line relocations, and altered road plowing practices may be required.

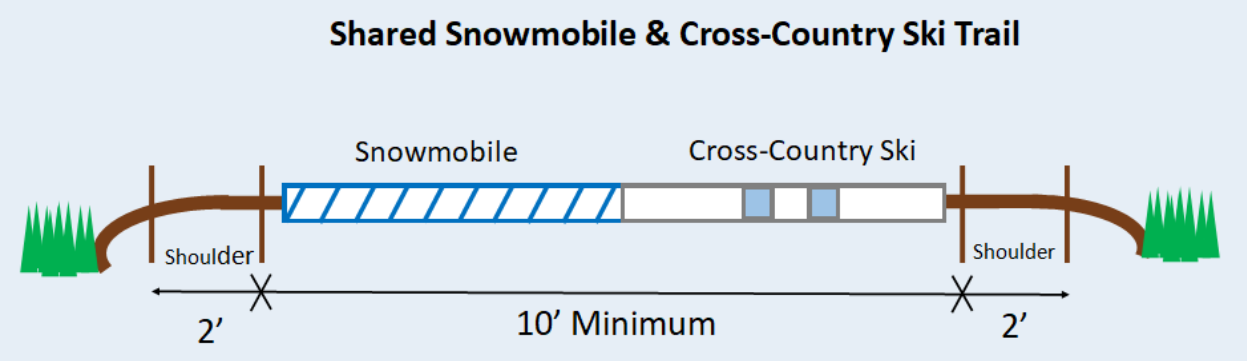
### *Trail Type 2- Separated Snowmobile and Cross-Country Ski Trails*




- A minimum graded snowmobile trail width of 10', with a groomed width of 8' would be added within the SSLST corridor.
- The cross-country/bicycle/pedestrian trail would remain in its current location (average width of 15').
- Vegetation would need to be cleared to a height of 12' and 2' clear zones on snowmobile trail. On the cross-country ski/bicycle/pedestrian trail, the cleared height of 10' and 2' clear zones would remain.

- A physical buffer with a varied width (minimum of 6’) between snowmobile trail and cross-country ski trail would exist. A physical buffer is horizontal or vertical, and may include vegetation, trees, fencing, and/or drainage and may widen or narrow based on topographical or environmental features.
- Pedestrians, bicyclists, people who snowshoe, and cross-country skiers would be prohibited (through signs) from using the snowmobile trail during snowmobile season but would be allowed use at other times of the year.

*Trail Type 3- Shared Snowmobile and Cross-Country Ski Trail*




- The existing trail would be maintained or widened to a minimum graded trail width of 14’ (10’ trail + 2’ shoulders), with one groomed track for cross-country skiers on one side and one groomed track for snowmobilers on the other.
- Two-way travel for each user type would require informal yielding.
- Vegetation would be cleared to a height of 12’ above the snowmobile side of the trail, 10’ above cross-country ski side of the trail, and 2’ wide on either side of entire trail.
- Signs and regulations (i.e. low snowmobile speed limits, yielding to oncoming traffic) signs would be needed to educate trail users.
- Pedestrians, fat tire bikers, and people who snowshoe would be directed through signs to use the snowmobile side of trail, to preserve the groomed classic cross-country ski track.

## Snowmobile Trail Segments

As shown in Figure 3, three segments were considered for snowmobile use: Segment A – State Highway 46 to Harriman Ave S, Segment B – Harriman Ave S to Baker Terrace, and Segment C – Baker Terrace to County Highway C.

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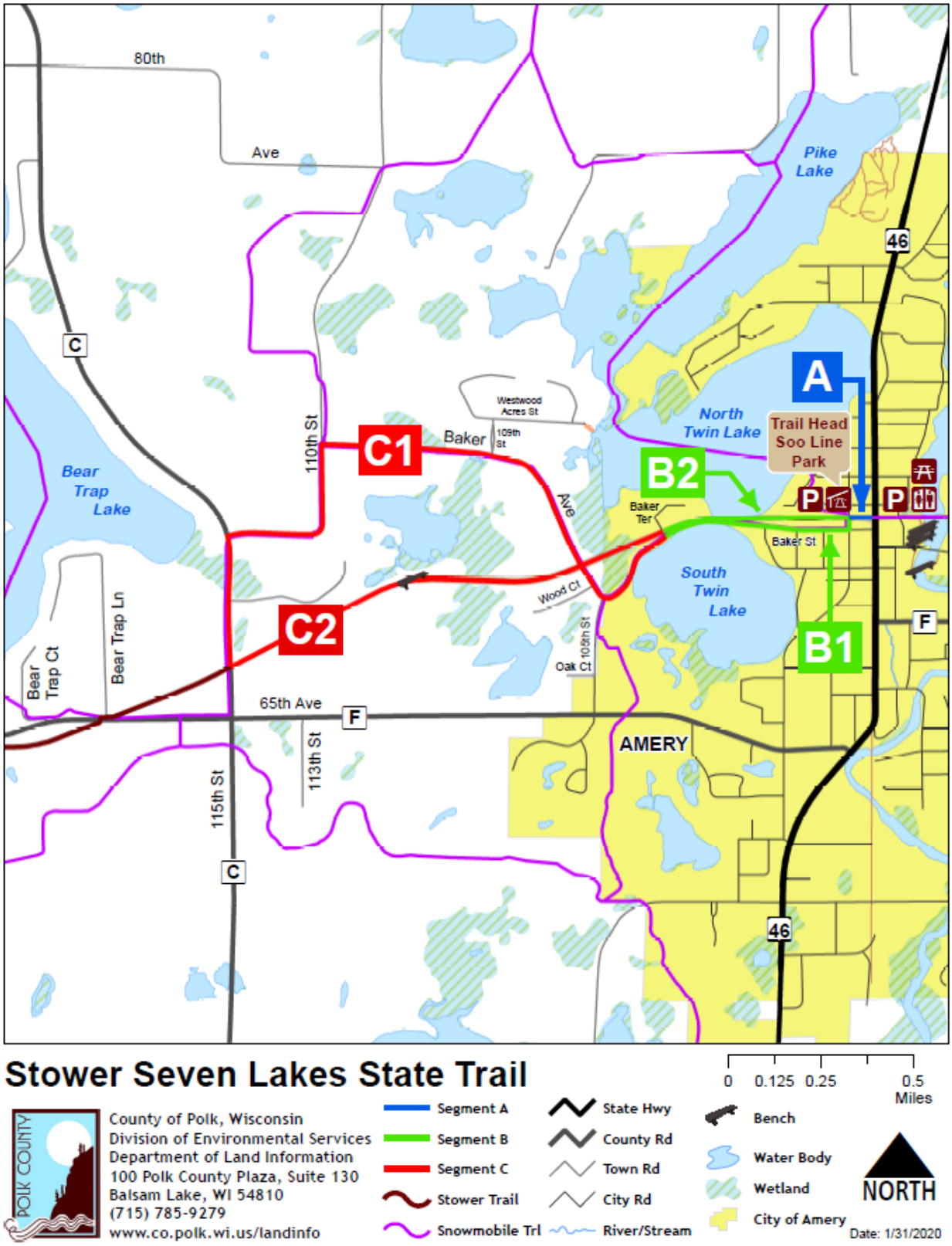


*Figure 3. Three snowmobile facility types were examined between State Highway 46 and County Highway C in three segments: A, B1/B2, and C1/C2.*

### *Segment A: Highway 46 to Harriman Ave S*

Segment A between State Highway 46 and Harriman Avenue S is a one-block segment marking the current eastern end of the SSLST, as shown in Figure 4. With adequate right-of-way along with flat topography and no trees, Alternative SA4 includes separated snowmobile and cross-country ski trails (Trail Type 2) in this segment, as shown in Figure 5.

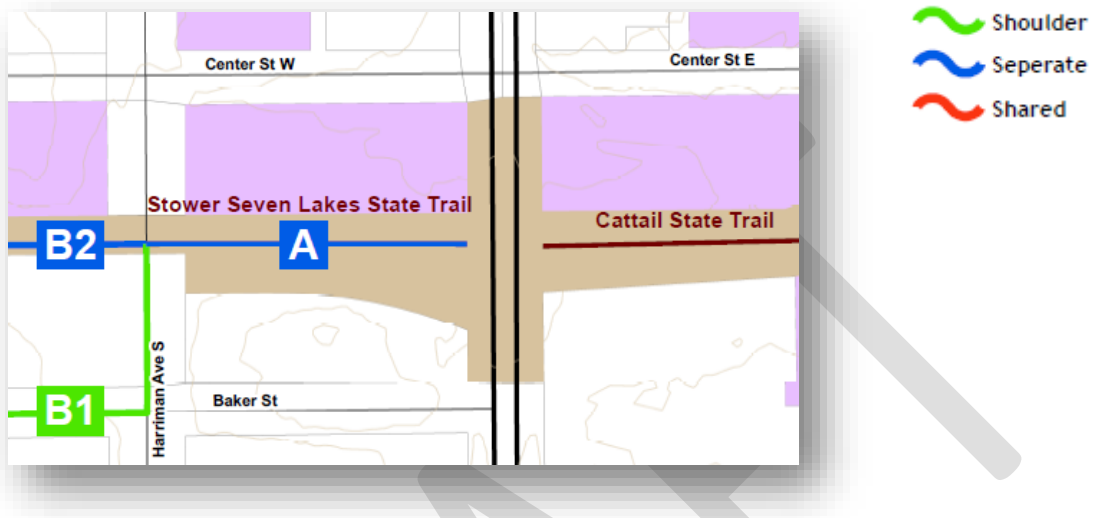


*Figure 4. Segment A is a 1-block stretch of the eastern end of the SSLST, with a separate snowmobile trail.*

<u>Potential impacts</u>

- None anticipated.
- Projected cost is low.

*Figure 5. Adequate space exists for separated snowmobile trail south of the existing limestone, cross-country ski trail, between Highway 46 and Harriman Avenue S (Trail Type 2).*

### *Segment B: Harriman Avenue S to Baker Terrace*

Segment B between Harriman Avenue S and Baker Terrace is a 0.5-mile segment. Two options were examined in this segment, as shown in Figures 6, 7, and 8.

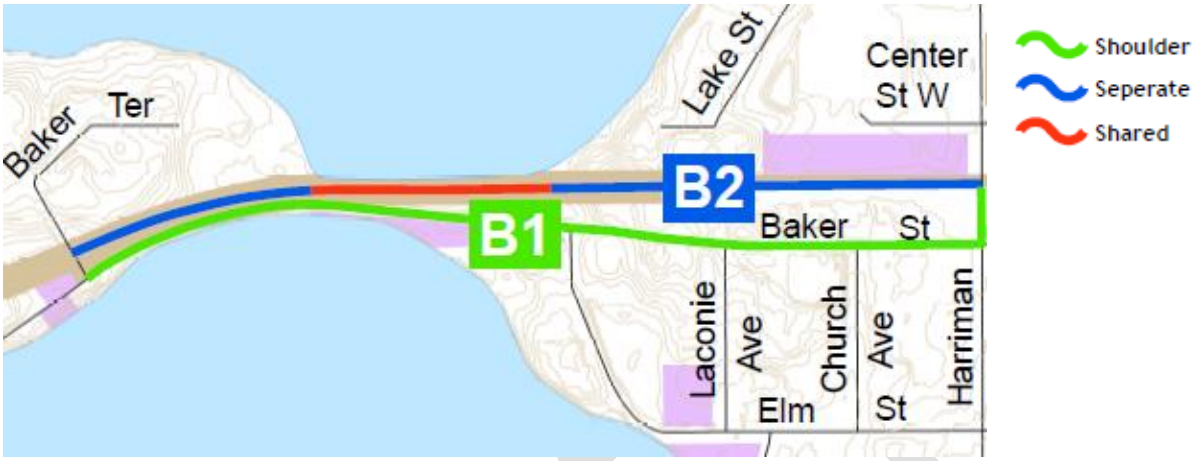


*Figure 6. Two options were examined in Segment B between Harriman Avenue S and Baker Terrace. Option B1 runs along Baker Street, and Option B2 runs along the SSLST.*

### Option B1 (developed for Alternative SA2)

Option B1 runs along the shoulder of Baker Street, between Harriman Avenue S and Baker Terrace. The right-of-way varies from 40' at Harriman Avenue S to 100' at Baker Terrace. There is light tree coverage, existing overhead power lines, and an existing ditch on the north side. A snowmobile shoulder trail (Trail Type 1) is possible on the north side of Baker Street.

<u>Potential impacts</u>

- Moderate site grading to accommodate shoulder snowmobile trail.
- Light to moderate vegetation removal to accommodate shoulder snowmobile trail.
- Power line and street light relocations may be necessary.
- Alignment is adjacent to three residential parcels on the north side, with possible driveway culvert and mailbox relocations.
- Plows will likely need to push snow exclusively to the opposite side of the street to preserve groomed snowmobile trail. To maintain the highest quality trail possible, meet with representative of the City of Amery snow plow crew during the design phase if Alternative SA2 is pursued.
- The projected cost is high.

### Option B2 (developed for Alternative SA4)

Option B2 runs within the SSLST corridor between Harriman Avenue S and Baker Terrace. The right-of-way is 100', with moderate tree coverage and drop-offs on either side of the trail. Separated snowmobile and cross-country ski trails (Trail Type 2) are possible for most of the segment. An approximate 500' section of shared snowmobile and cross-country ski trails (Trail Type 3) may be necessary in the middle due to steep drop-offs between North and South Twin Lakes. (see Figure 6).

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Potential impacts

- Moderate site grading to accommodate separate snowmobile trail.
- Moderate vegetation removal to accommodate separate snowmobile trail within a 1,000' segment. The tree cover is typical of the upland Northern Hardwood type including ash, oak, birch, aspen, and maple. Approximately 100 trees per acre exist.
- Constrained segment between North Twin Lake and South Twin Lake may require trail widening and vegetative removal. Fencing may be needed for safety reasons.
- The projected cost is medium.

*Figure 7. Option B1 (on the left) includes an expanded north side shoulder along Baker Street (Trail Type 1), for use by snowmobilers. Option B2 (on the right) includes a shared snowmobile and cross-country ski trail (Trail Type 3)*

*Figure 8. Option B2 would require moderate vegetative removal and grading to construct Trail Type 2 (Separated Snowmobile and Cross-Country Ski Trails).*

### *Segment C: Baker Terrace to County Highway C (115th St)*

Segment C between Baker Terrace and County Highway C is a 1-mile segment. Two options were examined in this segment, as shown in Figure 9.

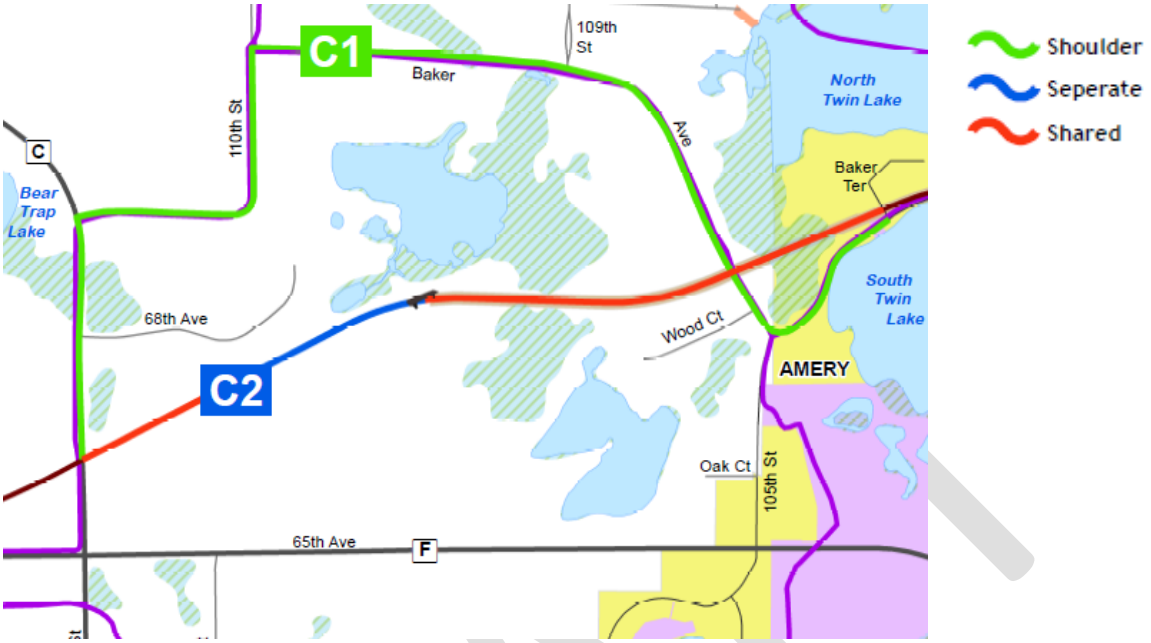


*Figure 9. Two options were examined in Segment C between Baker Terrace and County Highway C. Option C1 runs along Baker Street, Baker Avenue, 110th Street, 70th Avenue, and County Highway C. Option C2 runs along the SSLST.*

### Option C1 (developed for Alternative SA2)

Option C1 runs along the existing snowmobile route, including Baker Street, Baker Avenue, 110th Street, 70th Avenue, and County Highway C. There are moderate elevation changes along this route and light to moderate amounts of vegetation. There are existing overhead power lines, one house embankment, signs, and mailboxes. A snowmobile shoulder trail (Trail Type 1) may be possible on the north side of Baker Street. The existing route is circuitous.

<u>Potential impacts</u>

- Moderate site grading to accommodate shoulder snowmobile trail.
- Moderate vegetation removal to accommodate shoulder snowmobile trail.
- Delineated wetlands adjacent to right-of-way (north and south sides along Baker Avenue near intersection with 109th Street).
- Sign relocations likely necessary.
- Alternative is adjacent to several residential parcels, with possible driveway culvert and mailbox relocations.
- Plows will likely need to push snow exclusively to the opposite side of the roads to preserve groomed snowmobile trail. To maintain the highest quality trail possible, meet with representatives of the City of Amery, Town of Lincoln, and Polk County snow plow crews during the design phase if Alternative SA2 is pursued.
- The projected cost is medium.

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### Option C2 (developed for Alternative SA4)

Option C2 runs within the SSLST corridor between Baker Terrace and County Highway C. The right-of-way is 100', with heavy tree coverage and drop-offs on either side of the trail. Separated snowmobile and cross-country ski trails (Trail Type 2) are possible in the middle portion of the segment. Sections of shared snowmobile and cross-country ski trails (Trail Type 3) are likely necessary on either end of the segment due to steep drop-offs between existing wetlands. (see Figure 10).

<u>Potential impacts</u>

- Moderate site grading to accommodate separate snowmobile trail.
- Moderate vegetation removal to accommodate separate snowmobile trail.
- Delineated wetlands exist adjacent to right-of-way (north and south sides).
- Constrained segment may require trail widening and vegetative removal. Existing fences may need to be moved and/or expanded for improved safety.
- The projected cost is medium.

*Figure 10. This constrained area along Option C2 has been identified as a potential Trail Type 3 (Shared Snowmobile and Cross-County Ski Trail).*

*Table 2. Summary of snowmobile options under Alternatives SA2 and SA4, between State Highway 46 and County Highway C*

| Segment | Option | Facility Type | Alternative |
|---|---|---|---|
| A (State Highway 46 to Harriman Avenue) | n/a | Separated snowmobile and cross-country ski trails (Trail Type 2) | Alternative SA4 (allow snowmobiles on a portion of the corridor) |
| B (Harriman Avenue to Baker Terrace) | B1 | Shoulder snowmobile trail (Trail Type 1) | Alternative SA2 (do not allow snowmobiles on any portion of the corridor, but widen shoulders) |
| | B2 | Separated snowmobile and cross-country ski trails (Trail Type 2); Shared snowmobile and cross-country ski trail (Trail Type 3) | Alternative SA4 (allow snowmobiles on a portion of the corridor) |
| C (Baker Terrace to County Highway C) | C1 | Shoulder snowmobile trail (Trail Type 1) | Alternative SA2 (do not allow snowmobiles on any portion of the corridor, but widen shoulders) |
| | C2 | Separated snowmobile and cross-country ski trails (Trail Type 2); Shared snowmobile and cross-country ski trail (Trail Type 3) | Alternative SA4 (allow snowmobiles on a portion of the corridor) |

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## Equestrian Alternatives

There are three primary equestrian Alternatives:

1. **Equestrian Alternative 1 (EA1)** – Do not allow equestrians on any portion of the corridor.
2. **Equestrian Alternative 2 (EA2)** – Allow equestrians on the entire corridor with no changes to existing trail width.
3. **Equestrian Alternative 3 (EA3)** – Allow equestrians on the corridor on separate or side-by-side trails.

During the community engagement process, non-motorized users were primarily concerned about the negative effects of use due to a damaged trail surface and horse manure, which could be mitigated by building a parallel trail for equestrians. Maintenance of the trail would require additional resources due to trail surface damage by horse hooves. While the planning team did not find data on crashes between equestrians and non-motorized users, these uses are incompatible as documented by Wisconsin's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan[17](SCORP). The plan finds that equestrians are generally non-compatible with bicyclists, "substantively altering (equestrians) ability to successfully engage in the activity." This finding supports alternatives EA1 and EA3. Alternative EA2 is likely to pose significant safety challenges for equestrians due to the quiet and fast nature of bicyclists.

The US Forest Service's Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trail, Trailheads, and Campgrounds[18] contains guidance on creating separate trails within a corridor to address non-compatibility between equestrians and bicyclists (see Figure 11).

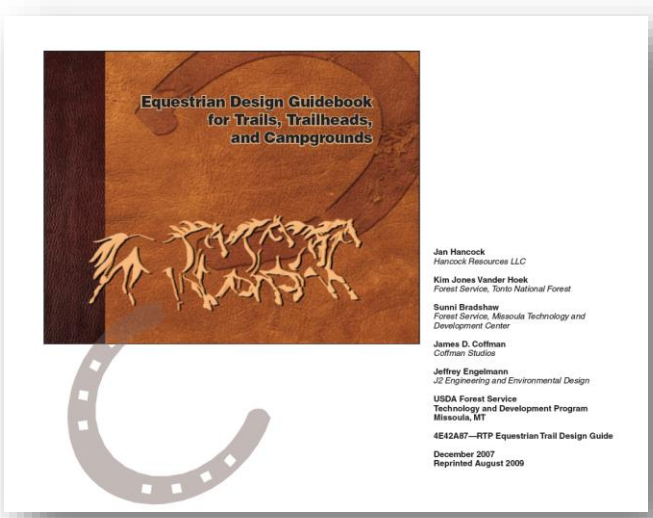



*Figure 11. The US Forest Service's Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads, and Campgrounds was used as a reference for examination of equestrian alternatives.*

[17] https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/scorp/
[18] https://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/pubs/htmlpubs/htm07232816/toc.htm

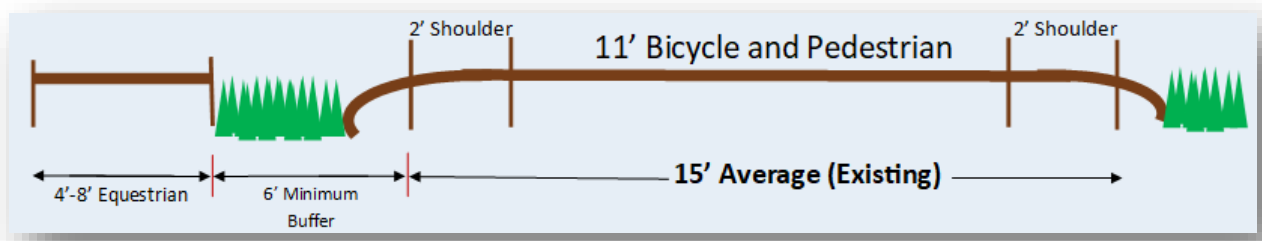
## Equestrian Trail Types

Two types of equestrian trail types were considered:

- Separated equestrian and bicycle/pedestrian
- Side-by-side equestrian and bicycle/pedestrian.

Separated trails contain a minimum 6' physical buffer between user types, while side-by-side trails contain a minimum 2' physical buffer.

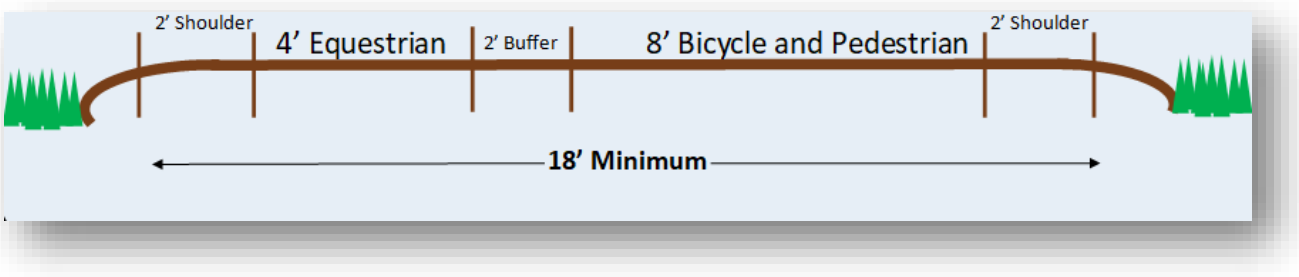
### *Trail Type 4- Separate Equestrian and Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails*




- The existing bicycle/pedestrian/cross-country ski trail would be maintained for exclusive use.
- A separate horseback riding trail would be constructed with width of 8' for two-way travel or 4' for one-way travel (two-way informal yield condition).
- Vegetation would be removed to a cleared height of 12' and 2' wide on either side of horse trail
- A minimum 6' physical buffer (i.e. existing vegetation) would be provided between the horseback riding trail and bicycle/pedestrian/cross-country ski trail. The equestrian trail may meander based on existing topographical, vegetative, and water features (see image above and Figure 12).
- Signs would be needed to direct horseback riders to their trail.

*Figure 12. Example of Trail Type 4, featuring separate equestrian (orange arrow) and bicycle/pedestrian (green arrow) trails on the Luce Line Trail, near Orono, MN*

*Trail Type 5- Side-by-Side Equestrian and Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails*




- Except in short, constrained segments, maintain/construct 18' trail width with 8' for bicyclists/pedestrians/cross-country skiers, 4' for equestrians (two-way informal yield condition), and minimum 2' buffer in between uses. 2' shoulders are also needed. (see image above and Figure 13).
- Signs would be needed to direct users to designated trails, as well as educate bicyclists on the need to slow down when approaching equestrians and announce their presence.
- Remove vegetation to a cleared height of 12' on equestrian side of trail, 10' on bicyclist/pedestrian/cross-country skier side of trail, and 2' wide on outside edges.

*Figure 13. Example of Trail Type 5, featuring side-by-side equestrian (orange arrow) and bicycle/pedestrian (green arrow) trails on the Luce Line Trail near Mayer, MN*

## Existing Trail Dimensions

The existing dimensions of the SSLST are shown in Figures 14 and 16. The trail averages 15’ in width, when measured between the outside edges of each shoulder. The range is between 13’ and 17’. In locations where the SSLST is constrained by wetland or archaeological sites, Trail Type 4 (separated equestrian and bicycle/pedestrian trails) will likely not be a possibility, making Trail Type 5 (side-by-side equestrian and bicycle/pedestrian trails) the preferred type. With 18’ being the minimum width for Trail Type 5, trail widening will be necessary in most locations under Alternative EA3, leading to a higher degree of cost, tree removal, and wetland impacts. Figure 17 illustrates areas constrained by wetlands within the SSLST corridor, totaling four out of 13 miles.

In addition to wetland constraints, much of the SSLST corridor includes steep slopes. While it may be possible to construct Trail Type 4 in segments not impacted by wetlands (see Figure 15), slopes of 20% or greater may be another limiting factor, as illustrated in Figure 18.

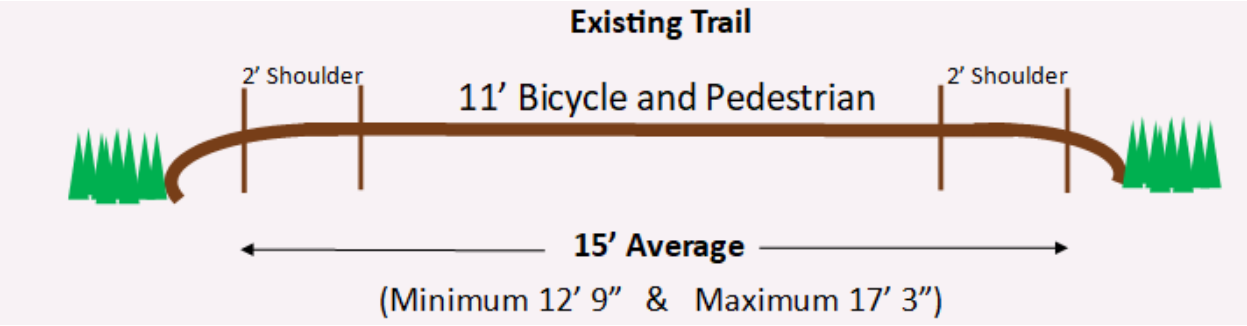



*Figure 14. The typical width of the SSLST is 15', measured between the outside of each shoulder.*

*Figure 15. An example of a segment of the SSLST (looking east from 68th Avenue in Wanderoos) that does not contain wetlands or steep slopes. In this scenario, Trail Type 4 is a likely possibility.*

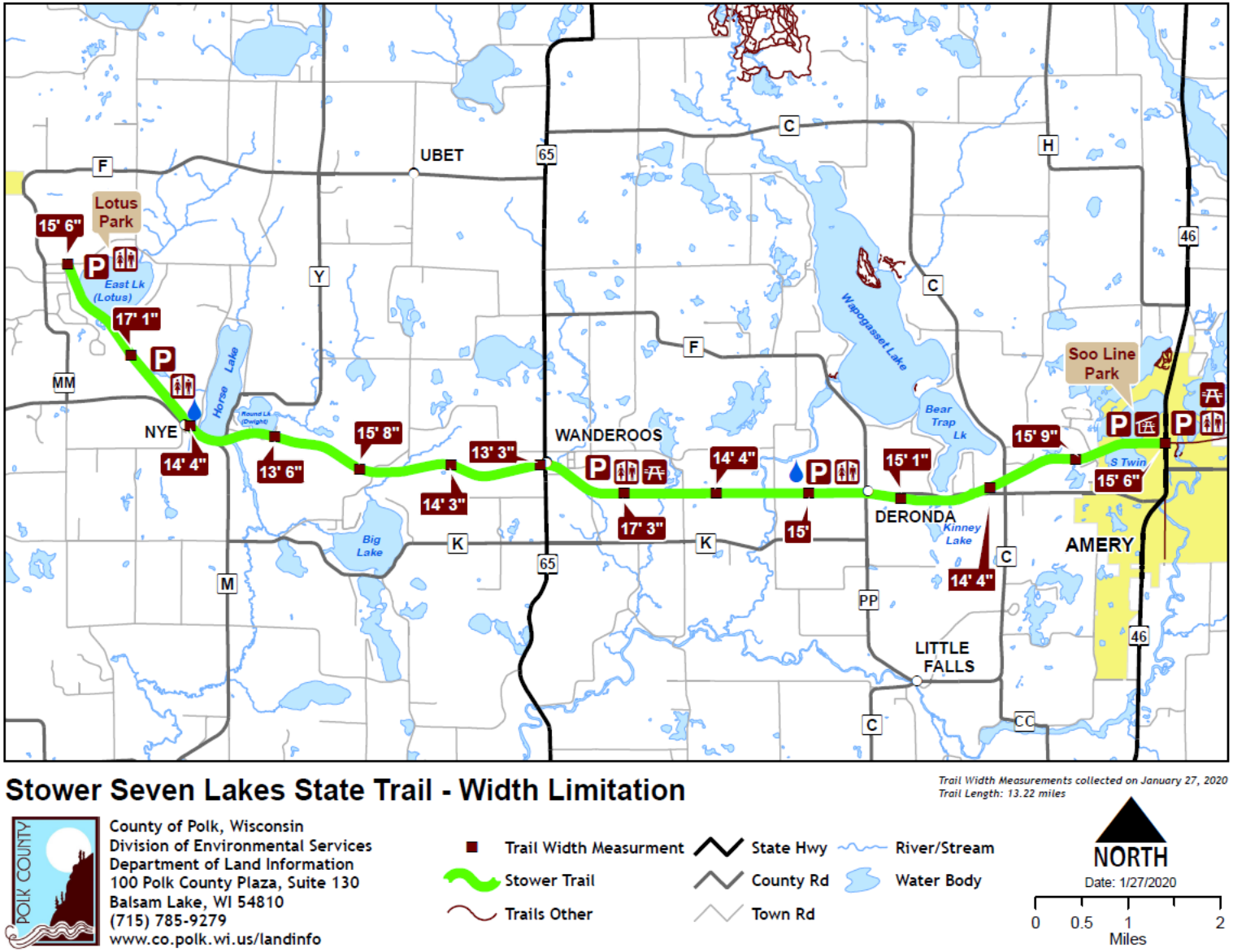



*Figure 16. Sample trail widths along the SSLST, taken at approximate 1-mile intervals.*

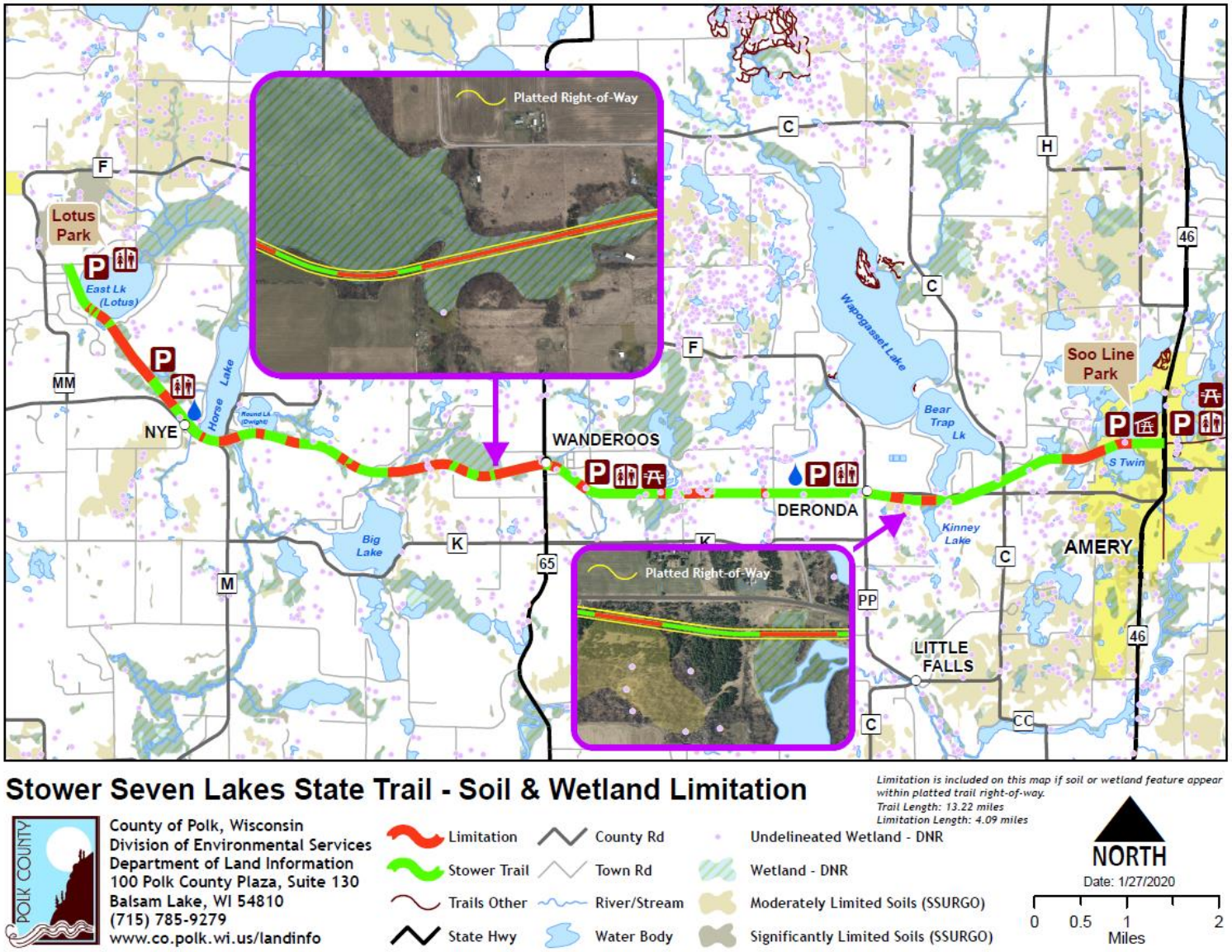
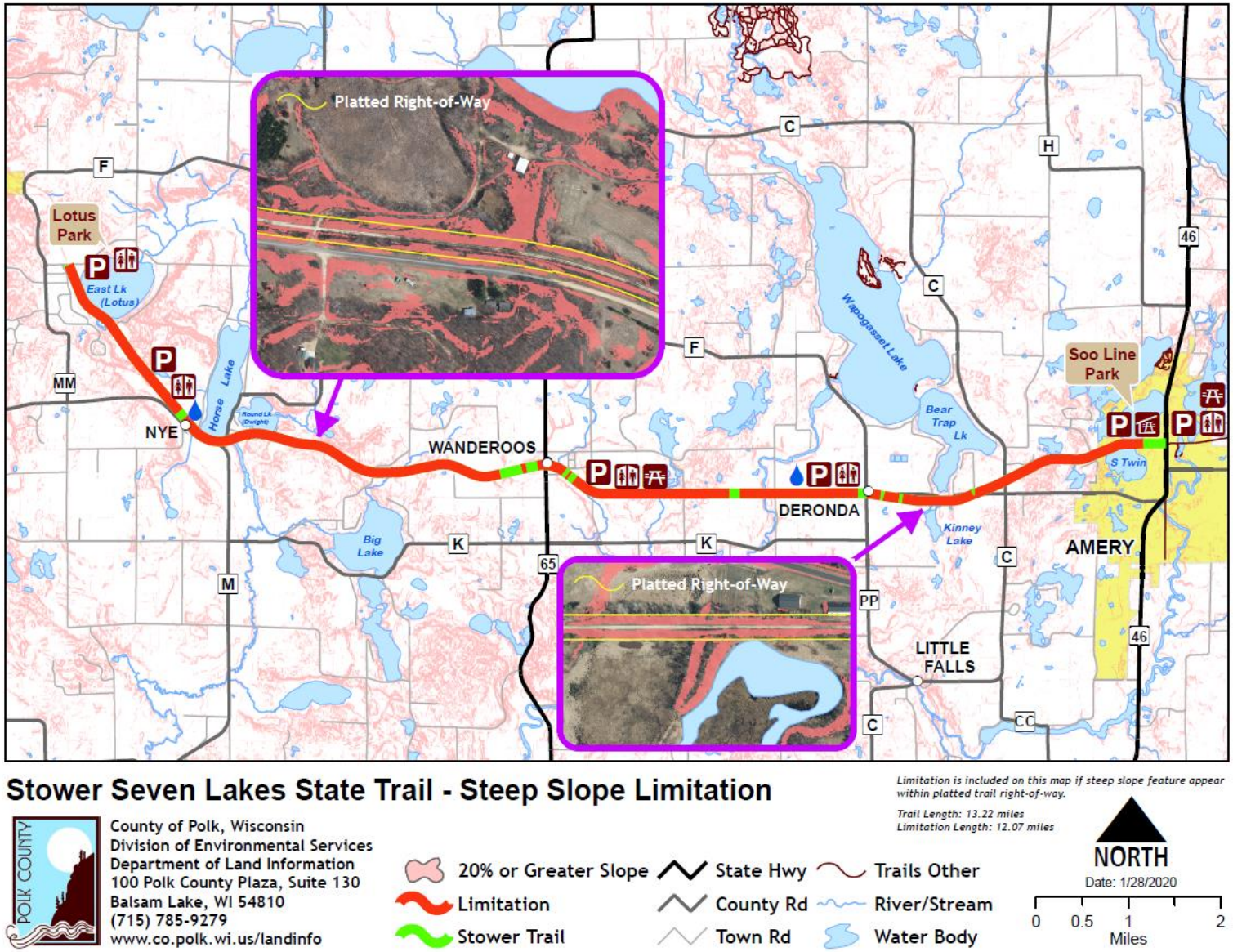



*Figure 17. Sections of the SSLST that are constrained by wetlands and other wet-type soils.*




## Stower Seven Lakes State Trail - Steep Slope Limitation

Limitation is included on this map if steep slope feature appear within platted trail right-of-way.

Trail Length: 13.22 miles
Limitation Length: 12.07 miles

County of Polk, Wisconsin
Division of Environmental Services
Department of Land Information
100 Polk County Plaza, Suite 130
Balsam Lake, WI 54810
(715) 785-9279
www.co.polk.wi.us/landinfo

20% or Greater Slope
Limitation
Stower Trail
State Hwy
County Rd
Town Rd
Trails Other
River/Stream
Water Body

NORTH
Date: 1/28/2020
0 0.5 1 2
Miles

*Figure 18. Slopes of 20% or more may pose another limitation toward establishing equestrian trails within the SSLST corridor*

# Appendix D

# MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
# BETWEEN POLK COUNTY AND
# THE STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## I. Introduction

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to set forth the agreements and understandings which have been reached between Polk County (County) and the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Department) regarding the development and operation of approximately 13.48 miles of former rail corridor located in Polk County formerly known as the Amery to Dresser State Trail and now known as the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail (Trail). The property on which the Trail is located (Property) is presently owned by the Department.

The Department is interested in preserving former rail corridors for trail purposes and in creating trails for public use. The County has developed the Trail through earlier agreements with the Department, and is interested in continuing to maintain and operate the Trail as a public recreational trail. The County and the Department agree to work together to achieve their mutual goals as set forth below, and they agree that this MOU and the trail easement it references shall replace and supersede all earlier agreements between the Department and the County that pertain to the Trail.

## II. Description of the Property

The property subject to this MOU is described generally as the grade from Amery to a point just southeast of Dresser, Wisconsin (Property). An exact legal description of the property is attached to this document as Exhibit A and a map of the Property attached hereto as Exhibit B. The trail easement referred to in this MOU, when executed, shall include and incorporate this MOU and all of its exhibits.

## III. Consideration

The Department has acquired the grade from Amery to Dresser from the corridor owner. The Department will execute a trail easement with the County for the purposes contained in this document. The County will develop, operate, repair, and maintain the Trail.

## IV. Obligations of the Department

1. The Department will convey by easement to the County the right to develop and to continue to operate, repair, and maintain the Trail as a component of the State Trail System. The County accepts the property "as is" on the date of conveyance.

2. The Department represents that it has made reasonable inquiry and has no reason to believe that hazardous waste, noxious waste, or any other condition of the land subject to this MOU exists that would inhibit the ability of the County to possess and improve the property as contemplated by this MOU. If, however, such prohibitive conditions are discovered, either the Department shall take all steps reasonably

necessary to remove such conditions or the intent of this MOU being frustrated, the MOU shall terminate.

3. The Department will work with the County to identify funding sources for the development and repair of the Trail.

4. The Department will continue to designate the Trail as a "State Trail" under section NR 51.73, Wis. Adm. Code. The Trail will be included in any appropriate list of State Trails.

5. The Department will continue to make its Adopt-A-Trail program available to the County. The Department has an application process for groups interested in adopting a section of State Trail. This program is similar to the Department of Transportation's Adopt-A-Highway program.

6. The Department and the Natural Resources Board, with input from the County, will determine the allowable hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities on the Property pursuant to section 29.089, Wis. Stats.

## V. Obligations of the County

1. The County, with the assistance of the Department, will coordinate and prepare a plan for the Trail that describes trail management and development within two years of the conveyance of the easement. Specific recreational uses will be determined through the planning process. Per section NR 44.04 (13), Wis. Adm. Code, this plan is not required to comply with Chapter NR 44, Wis. Adm. Code; however, the plan shall be consistent with Chapter NR 44, Wis. Adm. Code to the extent practicable. The County shall review its Trail plan every 15 years to determine if the plan should be amended, revised or extended for another 15-year period. The County shall take measures to reasonably notify interested persons of said review, and then shall use an appropriate public involvement process to determine or examine issues related to management and use of the property and the need for plan revision. The plan shall contain a provision providing that it remains in effect until the County takes action to modify it.

2. The plan must include, at a minimum:

   a. A public notification and participation process allowing for public comments on the draft plan.
   b. A list of allowed trail uses, including where and when they are allowed (e.g. winter bicycling is allowed from Hwy Y to the Main Street trailhead, only when snow cover is 6" or greater). Year-round bicycling is encouraged and may be allowed in conjunction with snowmobile use (if allowed) Walking must be allowed on the Property at all times (section NR 1.61, Wis. Adm. Code).
   c. A list of hunting, fishing, and trapping activities and areas as determined by the Department and Natural Resources Board pursuant to section 29.089, Wis. Stats. (shown on a map).

d. A list of existing and anticipated support facilities (e.g. restrooms, parking lots).
e. A map showing locations of existing and anticipated support facilities and use zones.
f. Projected development costs.
g. Plans to address any identified environmentally sensitive or culturally or historically significant areas.
h. A set of management alternatives for the Trail, with a preferred alternative (the alternative that will be used) identified.
i. An estimated number of users per year.
j. The name and address of the office that will be managing the Trail.
k. An emergency action plan to include protocols and procedures for responding to reports of potentially hazardous conditions on the Trail.
l. The identification of desired vegetation types along the Trail.

3. The County will participate in or conduct public meetings, which are necessary for the establishment and development, management, and improvements of the Trail project, including for any major changes to the trail plan, such as eliminating or adding allowed trail uses or authorizing special events not addressed by the trail plan. The County should make its best efforts to comply with the intent of Chapter NR 44, Wis. Adm. Code, as it relates to public participation.

4. The County shall provide a copy of the completed plan, with all of its exhibits, to the Department.

5. The County shall develop, maintain, repair, and operate the Trail located within the County for recreational purposes, as funding becomes available.

6. The County agrees that the development, construction, maintenance, and repair of the Trail will meet or exceed Department trail standards and any applicable standards mandated by state or federal law. The County further agrees that in operating the Trail, the County will comply with all applicable state and federal laws.

7. The County shall comply with statutory inspection requirements in accordance with section 23.115(2), Wis. Stats., further described in Department Manual Code 2527.20, and shall provide the Department with copies of all inspection reports.

8. Vegetative management.

   a. Trees.
      1. Forest cover. Trees on the Property remain the property of the Department. Any proposed commercial timber sale must be reviewed by the Department. Although cooperative state trails are specifically excluded from forest certification, sustainable forestry practices are encouraged to maintain desired forest cover types. Depending on the desired cover type, different commercial or non-commercial practices may be used. When active management is proposed, the County shall

coordinate review of the proposed management activity with appropriate Department staff.

2. Hazard tree management. Hazard trees should be identified during the biannual property inspections (further described in Section V. 8. herein). If the volume of hazard trees is too large for County staff to handle, it agrees to consider contracting a commercial sale or other approach. Such work shall be coordinated with the Department.

b. Non-tree vegetation including saplings, shrubs, and herbaceous vegetation.

1. Management for routine trail maintenance. A minimum maintained (clear) shoulder of at least 2 feet on either side of the trail tread (the traveled portion of the trail) is recommended. Acceptable maintenance techniques can include mowing, brushing, chainsaw work, and or pesticide application.
2. Habitat conversion or establishment. If there is an opportunity to develop or enhance native habitat types, as established in the trail plan, the County will consult with the Department in the development of habitat projects. Such projects may include developing a prairie on a larger block of land within the trail right-of-way or along the trail corridor. Projects will be considered for approval by the Department if they are not adverse to existing laws or Department policy, and if they do not negatively impact an existing use.

c. Pesticide application. Any pesticide application should be in accordance with Department Manual Code 4230.1 concerning DATCP (Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection) certification and Department policy. The Department shall be notified of any proposed pesticide application in early fall of the year preceding the proposed application, to ensure that the required process can be followed for pesticide use on Department lands (Department Manual Code 4230.1).

9. The County shall secure and comply with all federal, state and local permits and licenses required for the construction, installation, operation, maintenance, repair, and/or reinstallation of the Trail including, without limitation, zoning, building, health, environmental permits or licenses. The County shall indemnify the Department against payment of the costs therefor and against any fines or penalties that may be levied for the County's failure to procure or to comply with such permits or licenses, and the County shall pay any remedial costs to cure violations of federal, state or local laws. The Department agrees to cooperate with the County in securing any such permits or licenses by providing information and data upon request.

10. The County agrees that any signage or display material relating to the Trail shall clearly identify the property is a State Trail owned by the Department and under the management and control of the County. No commercial advertising shall be allowed on the Property, unless the signage and its placement are in accordance with Department policy. The County may allow signs providing directional information about Trail-related services. No specific business names, commercial logos or fonts,

trademarks, or other advertising shall appear in signage within the Trail corridor. The Department reserves the right to remove non-compliant signage located on the Property. In the event that the Department's signage policy is modified, the above section on signage shall automatically reflect the modification.

11. The County, in connection with this MOU, shall open Trail-related facilities to the general public subject to reasonable rules and regulations, fees, and charges, as outlined below, for the management and operation of the Trail.

    A. Rules and regulations.
    Pursuant to section NR 45.02, Wis. Adm. Code, the Department retains management, supervision, and control over the Property for the purpose of enforcing Chapter NR 45, Wis. Adm. Code, when needed to protect the public or the Property. Daily routine enforcement remains the responsibility of the County. The County and other local units of government may adopt Chapter NR 45, Wis. Adm. Code provisions by ordinance.

    B. Admission Fees.
    The County must use the Department's trail pass fee program if it charges a fee for use of the Trail. If admission fees are charged, the State Trail Pass (both annual and daily), the conservation patron license, and senior citizen recreation card issued by the Department shall be honored without additional admission charges. The County shall agree to waive all admission fees on State Parks Open House Day, whose date is determined by the Department, and on National Trails Day. National Trails Day is the first Saturday in June.

    If the County uses the Department's trail pass fee program, the County may retain a commission that must be used for Trail operations and maintenance as provided for in section 27.01 (8m), Wis. Stats. A separate Trail Pass Sales Agreement between the County and the Department will be executed, detailing the sales and remittance procedures. The County may use sub-vendors to sell the passes.

    If section 27.01(8) or (8m), Wis. Stats., is modified, this section on admission fees shall automatically reflect the modification.

12. In the exercise of its rights herein, including but not limited to the operation of the Property as a Trail, the County shall not discriminate against any member of the public on the basis of age, race, creed, color, handicap, sex, marital status, arrest or conviction records, ancestry, sexual orientation, or membership in the National Guard, state defense force or any other reserve successors or designees.

13. The County may enter into an agreement with a Friends Group which meets the criteria in section NR 1.71, Wis. Adm. Code, and Department policy . In recognition of the status of this Trail as a State Trail, the County agrees that the Department shall also be a co-signer of any Friends agreement.

14. The County may enroll volunteers in the Department's Adopt-A-Trail program, in accordance with Department policies and procedures.

15. The County will indemnify and hold harmless the Department and its employees against all claims, damages, costs, and expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, arising from the performance of this MOU by the County, its agents, contractors, servants, licensees, permittees, or employees. In case any action or proceeding is brought against the Department or its employees by reason of any such claim, the County, upon notice from the Department, will defend such action or proceeding.

16. Any contract between the County and a third party to perform duties authorized by this MOU must bind the third party to the County's obligations under this MOU.

## VI. General

1. This MOU is subject to all applicable laws and regulations.

2. This MOU may be revised or amended by mutual written agreement of the Department and the County.

3. The Department must approve, and has sole discretion over, all land transactions, crossings, and easements for the Property, but the County will be the first point of contact for inquiries from the public and/or private entities on these matters. Guidelines relating to easements for driveway and road crossings will be provided to the County. If a request conforms to the guidelines, it will be referred to the Department. If a request does not conform to Department guidelines, the County will deny the request. The Department retains the right to issue other non-conflicting easements, leases, or permits, but shall make every effort to refrain from entering into agreements that would physically alter the Trail or limit its use. The Department shall retain all proceeds from these transactions.

4. An annual meeting between the County and Department will take place to review development and acquisition progress, operational problems and maintenance standards needing attention and to exchange ideas and information for the good of the Trail project.

5. This MOU shall not be construed as creating a public debt on the part of the Department in contravention of Article VIII, Wisconsin Constitution and all payments or obligations hereunder are subject to the availability of future appropriations.

6. The County assumes complete responsibility for the development, operation, maintenance, and repair of the Trail. The Department has no obligation to develop, operate, maintain, or repair the Trail at any time.

7. This MOU does not create an employment or agency relationship between the Department and the County, any employees or agents of the County, or any third parties.

## VII. Termination

1. County. The County may terminate this MOU by providing to Department ninety (90) days written notice of said termination. In the event the County terminates this MOU or the easement from the Department, the County will retain compliance responsibility for any state or federal grant obtained for Trail development and support purposes.

2. Department. The Department may terminate this MOU or the easement with the County in the event that:

   A. The County breached any term or condition in the MOU or the easement and said breach remains uncorrected for a period of sixty (60) days from the receipt of the Department's written notification of said breach by the County. In the event the County breached any term or condition of this MOU or the easement from the Department, the County will retain compliance responsibility for any state or federal grant assisted areas.

   B. The Department determines that the continued use of the premises as a Trail would be inconsistent with the management needs or objectives of the Department or the State of Wisconsin. In exercising its termination rights under this provision the Department shall give the County 180 days' notice of termination and reimburse the County for developed improvements, subject to consideration of any state or federal grant funds used in the development of the improvements and the availability of future appropriations. The Department will assume compliance responsibility for any federal grant obtained for Trail development purposes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, Department and the County have caused this instrument to be executed in their respective names by their respective duly authorized representatives.

POLK COUNTY

By _____ 12/27/17
~~Dean Johansen~~, County Board Chair Date
Jay Luke

By _____ 12-27-17
Sharon E. Jorgenson, County Board Clerk Date

STATE OF WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

By Ed Eble 2-28-18

for Daniel L. Meyer, Secretary Date

*12/04/17*

# Appendix E

**Note:** In order to fill and save this form electronically, it must be opened using Adobe Reader or Acrobat software. Save a copy of the file, open Adobe Reader, select File > Open and browse for the file you saved.

State of Wisconsin
Department of Natural Resources
dnr.wi.gov

# Special Event Application and Permit

Form 2200-127 (R 9/17)



**Notice:** To apply for a permit to use state-owned land for special events, as defined by NR 45.03(21d), applicants are required to provide information requested on this form. Submittal of this form constitutes an agreement with the Department of Natural Resources (department) under ss. 23.09(2)(h) and 27.01(2)(d-f), Wis. Stats. The department will be unable to process your agreement unless you provide all information requested. Personally identifiable information collected will be used for administrative and enforcement purposes and may also be provided to requesters as required under Wisconsin open records law [ss. 19.31 - 19.39, Wis. Stats.].

**Instructions:** The requesting organization should complete this form with the property manager and obtain documentation of insurance 90 days prior to the event.

## Permittee Information

| Organization | Contact Person | Daytime Phone Number | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Street or Route | City | State | ZIP Code |

## Event Information

| Property Name | Type of Event |
|---|---|

Describe Applicable Area (include trail name/distance, picnic area, shelters, parking lots and similar facilities–Attach a map of the area to the permit)

Describe Event Activities

| Will a Concession Be Set Up? ◯ Yes ◯ No | Type of Concession | Items Sold at Concession |
|---|---|---|

| How Will Event Be Advertised? | Type of Advertising Allowed On Site | On-Site Product Vendors (e.g., running shoes) |
|---|---|---|

Describe Items or Structures to be Erected or Placed on State-Owned Lands

| Event Dates | | Alternate Event Dates | | Permit Fee | Fee Due Date | # of Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Start | End | Start | End | | | |

## Terms and Conditions

This permit is subject to the following conditions and requirements:

1. The department may terminate or modify the conditions of this permit by giving verbal notice to the permittee at any time.
2. Unless specifically authorized by this permit, all applicable laws and administrative rules must be followed by the permittee and participants of the special event.
3. Neither this permit nor any right or duty in whole or in part by the permittee under this permit may be assigned, delegated or subcontracted without the written consent of the department.
4. Only items listed above and agreed to by the department may be placed in the use area.
5. If the planned event cannot be held on the event dates listed above, this permit and conditions will govern the alternate dates listed above.
7. The department agrees that the permittee shall have sole control of the method, hours worked, and time and manner of any performance under this permit other than as specifically provided herein. The department takes no responsibility for supervision or direction of the performance of the permittee to be performed by the permittee or the permittee's employees or agents. The department further agrees that it will exercise no control over the selection and dismissal or of the permittee's employees or agents.

## Terms and Conditions (continued)

8. All waste and debris resulting from this event shall be disposed of by the permittee as directed by the department. The area shall be maintained in a clean, neat condition for the duration of the event.
9. No cutting or trimming of trees shall be done without the department's approval.
10. The permittee shall inspect the area described by this permit before the event and shall remove, eliminate or correct any unsafe or dangerous conditions or hazard. The permittee shall maintain the area in safe condition for the duration of the event.
11. The permittee shall indemnify the department and its employees against all claims, damages, costs, and expenses including reasonable attorney's fees arising either from the management of the event or from any breach or default on the part of the permittee in the performance of the permit agreement, or from any negligence of the permittee in the event. The permittee shall purchase liability insurance to be effective the dates of the event and naming both the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and its employees and the permittee as insureds in the amount of $1,000,000.00 single limit per occurrence including coverage of $1,000,000.00 for bodily injury, including death, and $25,000.00 property damage so the department and its employees will be protected from any liability arising out of conducting the event by the permittee. If the permittee is a state approved friends group, the permittee shall purchase liability insurance to be effective the dates of the event and naming both the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and its employees and the permittee as insureds in the amount of $500,000.00 single limit per occurrence including coverage of $300,000.00 for bodily injury, including death, and $25,000.00 property damage so the department and its employees will be protected from any liability arising out of conducting the event by the permittee.
12. The permittee shall furnish the department with a copy of the insurance policy or certificate of insurance thirty days prior to the event. This permit is conditioned upon the department's approval of the insurance policy. The permittee will immediately notify the department both verbally and in writing of any action by the insurer to cancel the insurance policy.
13. No fire(s) shall be started without department approval except in department-provided grills and fire-rings.
14. The permittee shall take reasonable actions under a plan approved by the property manager to direct and supervise the parking of participants' and spectators' motor vehicles in order to prevent traffic problems. The permittee shall post observers at all points where the event crosses a road. Only authorized individuals may direct traffic, in accordance with s. 340.01(70) and 349.02, Wis. Stats.
15. The permittee shall not discriminate against any employee, participant, or applicant for employment in the event because of age, race, color, sex, religion, handicap, physical condition, developmental disability as defined in s. 51.01(5), Wis. Stats., sexual orientation or national origin.
16. The permittee shall furnish the department with financial statements and such other operating reports concerning the event in such detail as the department may require. These reports and statements from this event shall be submitted to the department within 30 days of the department's request for the information.
17. This permit, together with the requirements herein and referenced parts and attachments, shall constitute the entire permit and previous communications or permit pertaining to this permit are hereby superseded. Any contractual revisions including cost adjustments and time extensions must be made by an amendment to this permit or other written documentation, signed by both parties at least 30 days prior to the ending date of this permit.
18. Additional conditions specifically concerning this event shall be in effect if numbered and listed on a separate sheet(s) of paper. Each such condition will be initialed by the permittee and the department representative.
    Check here if additional requirements apply ☐
19. "Concession" for the purposes of this permit shall include the selling or giving away of goods or services.

Department of Natural Resources
For the Secretary

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ◯ Approved ◯ Denied | Signature of Property Superintendent | Date Signed |
| ◯ Approved ◯ Denied | Additional Required Signature (as needed) | Date Signed |

The undersigned representatives of the permittee represent individually and as officers of the permittee that they have been duly authorized to sign this permit and bind their organization.

| | |
|---|---|
| Signature of Permittee/Title and Organization | Date Signed |
| Signature of Permittee/Title and Organization | Date Signed |

# Appendix F

| ROLL CALL Board Members | Aye | Nay | Exc. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Olson | X | | |
| Route | X | | |
| Warhdahl | | X | |
| Nelson (Chairperson) | X | | |
| LaBlanc | X | | |
| Masters | X | | |
| Prichard | | | X |
| Kelly | X | | |
| O'Connell | X | | |
| Middleton | | X | |
| Luke (2nd Vice Chair) | | X | |
| Duncanson | | X | |
| Arcand | | X | |
| Bonneprise (Vice Chair) | X | | |
| Demulling | X | | |

**BOARD ACTION**

Vote Required: Majority Vote of a Quorum

Motion to Approve — Adopted [X]

1st Demulling — Defeated [ ]

2nd Olson

Yes: 9 No: 5 Exc: ____

Reviewed by: Malik F. Malone, Corp. Counsel

Reviewed by: [signature], Administrator

Reviewed by: [signature], Finance

**FISCAL & LEGAL IMPACT:**

NO FISCAL IMPACT

**Certification:**

I, Lisa Ross, Clerk of Polk County, hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a resolution that was adopted on the 21st day of July, 2020 by the Polk County Board of Supervisors.

Lisa Ross
County Clerk, Polk County

# Resolution No. 20-20

## RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE STOWER SEVEN LAKES STATE TRAIL MASTER PLAN AND AUTHORIZING THE SUBMISSION OF THE PLAN TO THE WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

**TO THE POLK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

**WHEREAS,** in coordination with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (hereinafter "WDNR"), Polk County manages and operates the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail; and

**WHEREAS,** Polk County and the WDNR entered into a Memorandum of Understanding that, in part, requires Polk County to conduct a planning process that substantially conforms to the requirements of NR 44.04; and

**WHEREAS,** Polk County passed Resolution 28-18, a Resolution Providing for Comprehensive Planning Process for Stower Seven Lakes State Trail Plan and Cattail Trail (Polk County Segment) Plan, that delegated authority to the Environmental Services Committee to engage in and conduct a comprehensive trail plan development process for the Trails; and

**WHEREAS,** Polk County passed Resolution 25-19, a Resolution Authorizing the Continuation of the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail and the Cattail Trail (Polk County Segment) Master Planning Process; and

**WHEREAS,** Polk County utilized staff and hired a professional trail planning consultant, Toole Design, to develop and conduct a robust planning process that involved the substantial public input through stakeholder meetings, open houses, input surveys, and public hearings; and

**WHEREAS,** the Environmental Services Committee (hereinafter "ESC") received trail use alternative options provided by Toole Design for their consideration; and

**WHEREAS,** the ESC reviewed the public input and trail use alternative options. After review, the ESC recommended that the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail Master Plan include additional trail uses of snowmobiles and equestrian users as described in option SA3 and EA2 in the plan. These options were recommended as the best choice due to enhanced economic development, to provide consistent trail use options with the other rail trails in the county, to implement the original intent of this trail, and because of the high demand and interest of the added user groups for increased trail use opportunities; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** the Polk County Board of Supervisors receives the proposed "Master Plan for the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail (attached herein as Exhibit 1)

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** the Polk County Board of Supervisors adopts the "Master Plan for the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail" and authorizes the Polk County Parks Department to submit the plan to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for final approval.

**SUBMITTED BY:**

7/8 passed by Environmental Services Committee unanimously