

You Ask, We Answer

Proposed Pedestrian Bridge as Part of the Old West Main Street - Upper Harbor Renewal Project

Q&A with City Staff

Q: Can you tell me more about the bike-pedestrian bridge that is proposed as part of the Old West Main Street - Upper Harbor Renewal project?

In 2021, Old West Main Street (including underground utilities) will be reconstructed. When finished, Old West Main Street between Highway 61 and Buchanan Street will have wider sidewalks, angled parking, additional off-site parking, enhanced pedestrian crosswalks, lighting, and boulevard trees. (See a video of the street design here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZ7rZbGDKtg&feature=emb_logo).

As an enhancement to the whole area, the Upper Harbor site just south of Bay Point Park has had long-term plans for a remodel. This is the place where many people park for River City Days and other big events. As you know, this particular area is currently just an open grass-and-gravel stretch of land, but in the future, it is planned to be a recreational and gathering site with potentially an event lawn and hillside seating.

To connect these two areas—the Old West Main Street business district and the future Upper Harbor recreation area near the riverfront—a new bridge for walkers and bicyclists has been designed. **See an animated video of the bridge design here:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJ-wmaofa0c&feature=youtu.be>

Q: Why connect Old West Main Street and the Upper Harbor with a bike-pedestrian bridge?

There are multiple reasons.

--Creating a safe, easy, accessible way for people of all ages and abilities to get between Bay Point Park and a major business district can pave the way for increased business and housing development, more visitors, more recreational opportunities, and additional amenities for everyone who lives and visits Red Wing.

--Currently, people on foot travel between the riverfront and Old West Main Street by walking along the narrow sidewalk on Jackson Street over the railroad tracks. In some cases, people trespass through the railroad right-of-way area, which is dangerous. The proposed project offers an accessible route that is safe for everyone, including those using wheelchairs, walkers, and strollers.

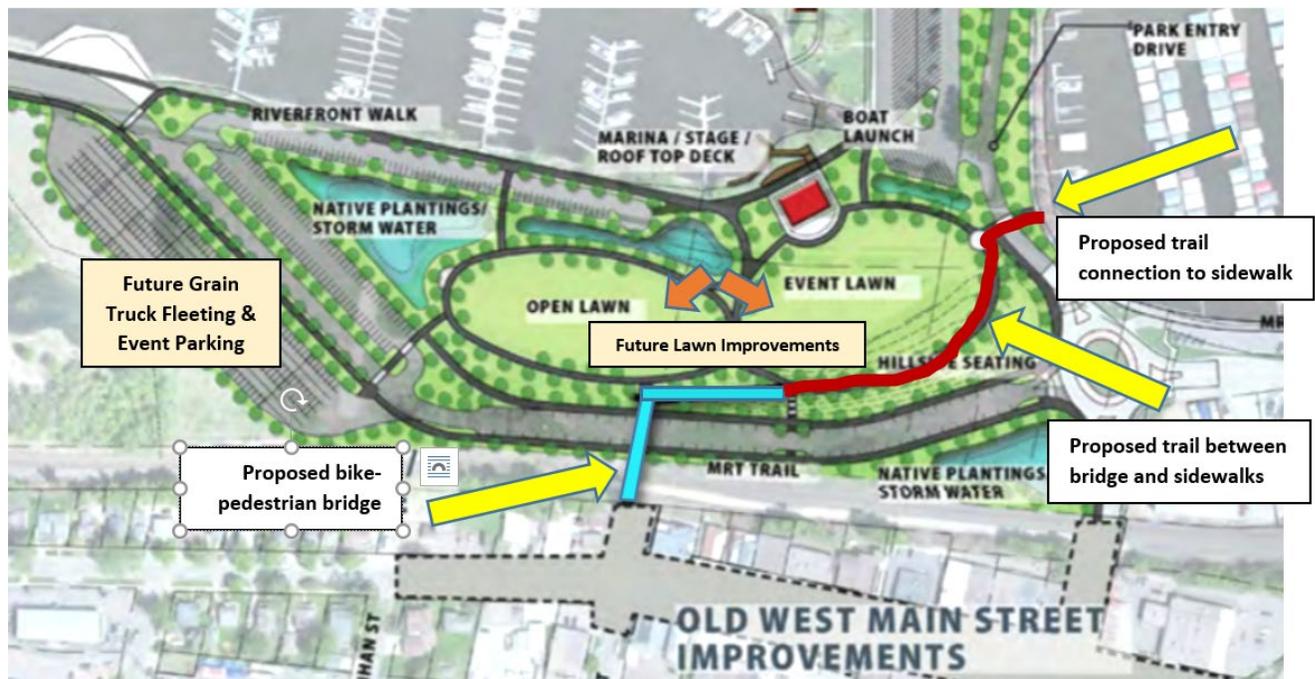
--Investments in Red Wing's parks, trails, and bluffs have had great success in improving the daily lives of local residents and also bringing visitors to town. As an example, during the current Covid-19 pandemic, our parks, trails, and bluffs have been busy with people enjoying

the outdoors more than ever. Continued investment in our natural areas can continue to help people's economic, mental, and physical well-being.

Q: Where exactly will the entry points be located?

The Old West Main Street bridge entrance would be built in a soon-to-be vacant spot between Kelly's and Bayside Tap House. The small, vacant building currently located on this site is owned by the City and would be taken down to build the bridge entrance area you see in the video. The bridge would travel over the railroad tracks toward the river, turn east and travel along the new berm. From the other side, people would access the bridge via a new sidewalk that connects to the current sidewalk/trail system at Bay Point Park and Levee Road.

Diagram of the Overall Plan



Q: Why build the bridge now and not later?

Excellent question. Some have asked why Old West Main Street and the Upper Harbor areas do not get renovated first and then build the bridge to connect two completed areas. This is why: Red Wing consistently submits grant requests to different federal, state, and regional entities to help pay for different parts of an upcoming project. The process takes time and it's often several years between the initial planning and actual construction. In this particular case, our federal and state governments approved money first for this specific part of the project—the bike-pedestrian bridge. That amount equaled more than \$1.4 million dollars that is available right now, which would need to be returned at the end of 2020 if the bridge is not approved. Funding proposals will continue to go out to assist in renovating the Upper Harbor

area, and Red Wing hopes to secure those funds in the near future, but the bridge segment of the project is the part that received outside funding first.

Q: Why do you say the project is at a “promising time” right now?

In addition to receiving the 1.4 million dollars in state and federal funding, construction bids in November came in far lower than our engineering estimates, so the dollar shortfall has grown significantly smaller. Finally, Red Wing just obtained additional, unexpected funding (\$425,661) from the Minnesota Department of Transportation if our bike-pedestrian bridge can be finalized by the end of the year. With this opportunity of outside funding and good construction bids, a small window is open to complete this part of the overall project.

Q: Federal and State funding is still our tax dollars. Can we say no to this project and get that money back?

No. Federal and state funding would not go back in your pocket. Those tax dollars would instead go to other communities and pay for their own bike and pedestrian trail projects. By putting the state and federal funds to work on this project in our town, it means your dollars are staying in Red Wing—and additional federal dollars are coming to Red Wing—not going to other towns and paying for their trail improvements.

Q: How much would the bike-pedestrian bridge cost and how much is still needed?

- The entire project of bridge, berm, and trail connection will cost \$2,354,000.
- Federal funding will pay for 80% of construction costs, which is the maximum allowed.
- When federal and state funding is added together, it equals 61% of the entire project cost.
- City general funds (your local tax dollars) would pay for roughly 21.5% of the project (\$507,230). A good portion of these dollars has already been used for things like project design and purchase of the property on Old West Main Street where the entrance area is planned.
- The shortfall now is \$414,000.
- The City is currently in communication with our local philanthropic foundations to discuss possible interest and see if some of the shortfall could come from these partnerships.
- See graph below for details:

Current financials:

Old West Main-Upper Harbor Ped-Bike Bridge	
<u>USES AND COSTS</u>	
Bridge as bid	\$1,424,218
Berm and Trail connection as bid	\$179,380
Construction bid Total	\$1,603,598
Contingency 10%	\$160,359
Construction Total	\$1,763,957
Design Engineering	\$264,019
Construction Engineering	\$176,013
Land Acquisition	\$110,000
Permits and Misc. Costs	\$40,000
TOTAL	\$2,353,989
<u>FUNDING SOURCES</u>	
Federal Highway – MnDOT TAP (Original Allocation 2018)	\$857,218
Additional Federal Highway – MnDOT TAP (Sept. 2020)	\$340,000
Current City General Funds CIP 2017-2020	\$507,230
DNR Local Trail Connections	\$150,000
Additional Federal Highway – MnDOT (Nov. 2020)	\$85,661
TOTAL	\$1,940,109

Current shortfall is \$413,880.

How long has this project been in the works?

Planning for the Old West Main-Upper Harbor Renewal project, including the bike-pedestrian bridge, started 14 years ago.

- 2006: Project planning began with a group of community members, staff, and current and former City Council members.
- 2007: The Upper Harbor Master Plan was adopted.
- 2011: The Bike and Pedestrian Plan was approved.
- 2014: City Council adopted the Renewing Old West Main Master Plan.
- 2017: A public advisory committee made up of area businesses and interested residents formed to advise on specific topics and help with the design planning process.
- 2018: City Council unanimously approved the 2040 Plan with the Old West Main-Upper Harbor Renewal project and bike-pedestrian bridge included.
- 2020: Final design of the bike-pedestrian bridge was completed.

Q: How has the City listened to and shared information with the public?

--2018: The City hosted two outdoor open houses at A.P. Anderson Park and Jefferson School, and hosted three full days of listening to residents during River City Days. These events allowed roughly 550 residents to view the plans and make comments (as part of the 2040 planning process). The majority of attendees who responded supported the plan. Some who did not support the bridge said they did not want the bridge to land in a “parking lot.” Those who supported it wanted family-friendly amenities and added their own ideas for further enhancements such as additional views and plantings.

--2018: An online survey of the Old West Main Street Renewal project resulted in 652 respondents. The third highest priority chosen by respondents was creating a better connection between Old West Main Street and the riverfront.

--2019: A second online City survey yielded 110 respondents. Of this number, 39% supported the bridge, 57% opposed it, and 4% were unsure. Of those who opposed, the largest reason was the expense. Of those who supported the project, the largest reason was the bridge would make the area a more vibrant destination for residents and visitors.

--2019: A varied group of 34 local organizations wrote letters of support to the Minnesota state legislature for potential bonding projects that included three facets of the Riverfront Renewal projects, which included the bike-pedestrian bridge. These organizations included businesses and hotels, nonprofits, philanthropic foundations, and educational, arts, and government entities from across the Red Wing area.

--2018 through 2020: Multiple articles and Q&A segments about the project were published in the Republican Eagle, City Beat, Facebook, and Channel 6.

Q: How will the project be evaluated?

The City of Red Wing will undertake multiple bike and pedestrian counts at various times of year to evaluate usage. In addition, the City plans to do one-on-one surveys on site at each entry point of the bridge. Surveys and documented discussions will happen with the Old West Main Street businesses, Downtown Main Street, and the Chamber of Commerce to evaluate how the bridge has affected businesses and economic activity. Reports will be available when complete. In addition, Red Wing would look for grant opportunities to install a permanent pedestrian counter like the one now installed on the new Riverfront Trail segment that connects Bay Point Park with Levee Park.

Q: What is the exact timing?

City Council members will be making their final decision at the Council meeting on December 14, 2020 at 6 p.m. You can contact your City Council members at citycouncil@ci.red-wing.mn.us.

Where can I get additional information?

You can direct any questions to City Engineer/Engineering Director Jay Owens: jay.owens@ci.red-wing.mn.us / 651-385-3625.