

Kansas Trails News

Sunflower Rail-Trails Conservancy

9/1/2015

Andover-Augusta Rail-Trail Section Now Open

After more than two years of hard work, the Andover-Augusta Rail-Trail (aka **Redbud Trail**) officially opened a section of the trail on July 16. The 2-mile segment extends from 159th St. to the 13th St. Sports Park. The whole trail is a 6.5-mile-long on an unused railway. It is hoped that once the trail is complete that KDOT will build a bridge over US 400 and the Whitewater River. According to one analysis of federal law, railbanked corridors are not to be severed by departments of transportation, but KDOT went ahead and removed the railroad bridge anyway. This is not the first time they have severed a rail-trail corridor.



Johnson County passes tax increase to fund more trails

The Johnson County Commission has passed a mill levy increase of 1.34 mills to fund recreational development of vacant parkland and to add 30 miles of streamway trails to its 23-mile network of trails by 2030. Projects include expanding the Kill Creek, Blue River and Coffee Creek trails and creating the Cedar Creek, Bull Creek trails.

Swiss Billionaire's \$25,000 donation to the Landon Nature Trail article goes on AP wire.

...

An article about the recent donation of \$25,000 by Swiss billionaire Hansjorge Wyss for the Landon Trail hit the AP wires and was picked up by Kansas Public Radio, the Wichita Eagle and the Washington Times. The donation was used to build one mile of the Landon Nature Trail in southern Shawnee County. Crushed limestone screenings were laid down and bollards and signs installed.

Wyss has promised to give one-half of his \$20 billion fortune for the preservation of the American West. Since Kansas had the Santa Fe, Chisholm and Oregon Trails plus the cattle towns of Abilene and Dodge City, it qualifies as being part of the American West. Most of Wyss' funds will be used in the Rocky Mountain region.

Haskell Rail-Trail Re-opens

The **Haskell Rail-Trail** in Southeast Lawrence re-opened in late June with its new concrete surface. A special machine rolled out the concrete without using forms in just three days. The trail connects with the **Burroughs Creek Trail** at 23rd St. The project was funded by a \$190,000 federal Transportation Enhancements (Alternatives) grant administered by KDOT. The trail, originally with a crushed limestone surface, was the first official rail-trail in Kansas.



Haskell Rail-Trail

Rock Island Trail in Missouri to feature long tunnels and bridges

The State of Missouri is planning to build the 130-mile **Rock Island Trail** which will stretch from Pleasant Hill to Beaufort. The state has already acquired the former rail line and is working on obtaining funding to develop it. This is going to be a fabulous trail with long tunnels and bridges including a one-mile bridge over the Gasconade River. It is hoped that the trail will eventually be linked with the famous **Katy Trail** thereby forming a 400-mile rail-trail loop which would be the longest in the country.



Logjam on Flint Hills Trail Removed by Volunteers

Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy directors removed a logjam up against a rebuilt trail bridge 1.5 miles east of Pomona town in late July. The state contractor who is building that section of the trail was going to charge \$20,000. So, the crew saved taxpayers that amount.

Overbrook Trail Segment

Volunteers with Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy have been working this summer to improve the **Landon Nature Trail** segment in Overbrook. Directional signs pointing out the trailhead which is set back from South Maple St. were installed plus a local man was hired to mow the trail regularly. The trail section, which has a tree canopy and

passes by a small lake and large cottonwood tree, has become popular with local residents. If funding is available and volunteers are forthcoming, an additional mile of trail may be developed this winter.



Overbrook Trailhead

Standing Bear Trail to fill in missing gap

The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska has assumed ownership of a 19-mile out-of-service rail line stretching from Beatrice to the Kansas state line. The trail, now called the **Standing Bear Trail**, will connect the **Homestead Trail** which goes to Lincoln with the **Blue River Rail Trail** in Kansas (which goes to Marysville). Construction began in early July on the trail and should be completed this fall. Then trail users will be able to travel from Marysville all the way to

Lincoln and then on to Omaha on the Missouri Pacific Trail.

Flint Hills Nature Trail Update

The engineers for the Flint Hills Nature Trail Project report the following:

Phase 1B has three parts:

Part I - Quenemo (K-68) to Pomona

Part II - Iowa Rd to Ottawa

Part III - Ottawa to Rantoul

Alternates will be determined for final plans based on funding (transportation enhancement funds that expire) and overall costs. Decisions on alternates and bid prices will determine final construction limits.

The start of construction for Phase 1B is planned for the spring of 2016.

The construction of Phase 1A (Pomona- Iowa Rd West of Ottawa) is now complete and is looking fantastic.

The segments could be completed by the end of 2016 miles which will allow trail users to ride or walk all the way from Osawatomie to US 75 at Vassar, a distance of 43 miles!

Preliminary Designs for Signature Bridges on Flint Hills Nature Trail

Four signature bridges are proposed for the **Flint Hills Nature Trail**. A signature bridge is a magnet which will attract people to the bridge and trail. It will create through ornamental artwork using symbolism and lighting a unique experience for the trail users. The experience actually starts as the trail user approaches the bridge and builds into a crescendo. Such bridges can become economic drivers for small towns. For example, the towns near the High Trestle Trail north of Des Moines

are experiencing an economic boost.

Each bridge will feature a theme. The Marais des Cygnes (marsh of the swans) River Bridge at Ottawa will feature trumpeter swan wings and possibly a swan in flight. The Council Grove bridge will feature a Santa Fe Trail wagon and possibly the Kaw Indian Council. The bridge on K-99 at Admire may feature waving big bluestem tallgrass prairie grasses.

The Sunflower Foundation has expressed an interest in seeking funding for the bridges. The preliminary designs will be posted online and a link will be on the KDWPT website. The public will be able to comment on the designs. With the signature bridges and the varied landscapes ranging from tallgrass prairie to wooded hillsides along the Marais Des Cygnes River, the **Flint Hills Trail** is likely to become one of

the Midwest's most popular rail-trails.



Signature bridge design public forum in Ottawa