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# **A BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRAIL PROJECT BETWEEN PLYMOUTH & WOODBURY COUNTIES**

**PlyWood Trail Executive Committee**

- |                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Jeff Stanley</b>       | <b>Scott Langel</b>    |
| <b>Mark Sturgeon</b>      | <b>Graham McGaffin</b> |
| <b>Greg Grupp</b>         | <b>Joni Kellen</b>     |
| <b>Lesley Bartholomew</b> |                        |



Floyd River Valley at sunset, Highway 75 on the left

## **PLYWOOD TRAIL - BACKGROUND**

- **Sioux City is the largest city in Iowa without a trail connection to a neighboring in-state community**
- **The PlyWood Trail will provide a long-desired 16-mile connection between the communities of Le Mars, Merrill, Hinton and Sioux City**
- **PlyWood Trail Advisory Board and Executive Committee formed in 2015 to advance the development of the Trail**
- **Trails are an essential piece of growing communities - people want access to recreational opportunities!**



RAGBRAI 2016

# PLYWOOD TRAIL - RATIONALE

## ○ Pedestrian and Bicyclist safety

- ❖ More bicycles and motor vehicles are sharing the road every year, more bicycles are sold year over year than cars in the U.S.
- ❖ Miles driven on Iowa roads increasing YOY. Up 2.6% in 2015 from prior year.
- ❖ Iowa State Trooper Vince Kurtz says, "...unfortunately bicycle and vehicle accidents become all too familiar during the summer months.."
- ❖ The pedestrian & Bicycle Information Center recorded 50,000 bicyclist injuries and 726 U.S. deaths from bicycle-motor vehicle accidents in 2014
- ❖ Iowa Bicycle fatalities stemming from bicycle-motor vehicle accidents are on the rise (SCJ 7/24/16)
- ❖ Plymouth County is not immune:
  - \* June 8, 53 year old Rudy Folkerts was bicycling County Road C16-victim of hit and run
  - \* June 26, Norman Needs killed in a hit-and-run while bicycling a county blacktop near Quimby
  - \* August 11, Jared Fenstermacher struck by a distracted, uninsured motorist on county blacktop near Hinton. Multiple injuries, may never walk again.
- ❖ Distracted driving in Iowa on the rise, 1,100 documented distracted crashes in 2015 representing a 43% increase YOY '14-'15 creating increasing risks for the bicycling and pedestrian community
- ❖ Uneducated motorists too often do not realize bicycles are legally allowed on the road
- ❖ Very little if any signage in Plymouth County cautioning and educating motorists about bicycles or designating bicycle routes
- ❖ Iowa is one of only 10 states that does not have a law re passing bicycles
- ❖ Availability of safe bicycle and pedestrian venue and infrastructure including trails and designated right of way and bicycle routes can reduce accidents as much as 50-60%.



# PLYWOOD TRAIL - RATIONALE

## ○ Workforce and economic development

- ❖ A dwindling Plymouth County workforce is of grave concern to area employers as indicated by census and demographics.
- ❖ Studies consistently report two top ranking quality of life amenities that a skilled and semi-skill workforce and their families seek when exploring places to live: **WATER & TRAILS**
- ❖ 1970 Plymouth County population: 24,331, 2010 population: 24,957 and aging
- ❖ Iowa Counties reporting good workforce and economic development and growth (Guthrie, Polk, Linn, Johnson, Blackhawk, Dallas, Dickinson...) tend to have a common thread: **TRAILS**
- ❖ The entire Siouxland business community represented by the Le Mars and Siouxland Chambers of Commerce have identified trail investment in our shared MSA a priority and necessary to attract desirable business and vibrant skilled and semi-skilled workforce
- ❖ Bicycling Iowa trails represents a \$400 million impact to our State. We believe that we can not only capture some of that benefit, but help grow it with a PlyWood Trail connecting Plymouth County with a larger NW Iowa and tri-State trail network.
- ❖ Studies indicate that property values increase as much as 6.5% when in close proximity to a trail.

## ○ Health and well-being

## ○ Quality of Life / Recreation



# PLYWOOD TRAIL - MOMENTUM

- Communities are supportive of PlyWood Trail, with both participation and finances
- The business community is supportive and engaged with the PlyWood Trail through advocacy and financial support
- Wells, Sioux City, Le Mars, Siouxland Trails Foundation, Plymouth Co Cyclists, Siouxland Cyclists, Sergeant Bluff, Hinton & private individuals—paid for engineering studies



**Wells Enterprises**  
 1000 S. 1st St., Le Mars, IA 51099  
 Phone: 712.324.1111 | Fax: 712.324.1111 | www.wells.com

July 1, 2016  
 PlyWood Trail, Inc.  
 PO Box 22  
 Le Mars, IA 51099

Dear PlyWood Trail Board:

On behalf of Wells Enterprises and our 2,700 employees and their families who live and work in the Siouxland area, please accept this correspondence as a sign of our enthusiastic support for the successful construction of the PlyWood Trail connecting the communities of LeMars, Merrill, Hinton and Sioux City.

We realize that you are in the early stages of your trail development, and will be able to take advantage of many community groups, as well as other trail users, who will be able to provide you with the information you need to ensure the quality of the trail, health, and well-being of the community. All of these elements are critical to the success and sustainability of the trail. As you develop your trail, we believe that the trail will be a valuable asset to the community, and we are committed to supporting you in this endeavor. We are committed to supporting you in this endeavor, and we are committed to supporting you in this endeavor.

Moreover, the PlyWood Trail will be a critical component linking Sioux City, Hinton, Merrill and Le Mars with a large regional outdoor recreation park network. Again, this is a critical component of the trail network.

My family and I personally enjoy and will look forward to using the Trail. I hope that you have developed a trail that is safe, and will continue to be a valuable asset to the community. I hope that you will see the trail as a valuable asset to the community, and we are committed to supporting you in this endeavor.

Sincerely,  
  
 Melissa C. Wells  
 President and Chief Executive Officer

**SIoux CITY**  
 1000 S. 1st St., Le Mars, IA 51099  
 Phone: 712.324.1111 | Fax: 712.324.1111 | www.siouxlandtrails.org

July 1, 2016  
 PlyWood Trail, Inc.  
 PO Box 22  
 Le Mars, IA 51099-0022

Re: PlyWood Trail

Dear Mr. Leaders:

Siouxland Trails Foundation is a 501(c)(3) totally not-for-profit founded in 2003 to promote recreational trails in the greater Sioux City area.

We are writing to endorse the grant application to the National Park Service by the PlyWood Trail group to build a trail connecting the communities of LeMars, Merrill, Hinton and Sioux City, Iowa. The planned trail will connect to the existing trail system that connects to the Le Mars and Clark trail which runs along the Missouri River. Our trail is part of a greater regional trail network by connecting to Le Mars, Iowa, Sergeant Bluff, Iowa, and Hinton, Iowa, Nebraska.

Trails have a huge impact on health, well-being, and quality of life. All of these factors have a direct correlation to personal growth and workforce development for the community. As a member of the PlyWood Advisory Board, I am proud to be involved with this project. The cooperation and partnerships being developed by the trail that will benefit from this project are very good to see. The City of Sioux City is committed to assisting in the effort to make this a dream become a reality. We appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this effort.

Sincerely,  
  
 Marc Salvatore  
 Parks and Recreation Director  
 City of Sioux City

**SIouxland Trails Foundation**  
 PO Box 22  
 Sioux City, Iowa 51102-0022  
 www.siouxlandtrails.org

June 28, 2016

Brian J. Leaders  
 National Park Service  
 601 Main Street Drive  
 Omaha NE 68102

RE - PlyWood Trail

Dear Mr. Leaders:

Siouxland Trails Foundation is a 501(c)(3) totally not-for-profit founded in 2003 to promote recreational trails in the greater Sioux City area.

We are writing to endorse the grant application to the National Park Service by the PlyWood Trail group to build a trail connecting the communities of LeMars, Merrill, Hinton and Sioux City, Iowa. The planned trail will connect to the existing trail system that connects to the Le Mars and Clark trail which runs along the Missouri River. Our trail is part of a greater regional trail network by connecting to Le Mars, Iowa, Sergeant Bluff, Iowa, and Hinton, Iowa, Nebraska.

The PlyWood Trail will be a very important connection. Sioux City is by far the hardest community in Iowa without a trail connection to a neighboring community using rail lines and river frontage that go outside of the urban area.

Siouxland Trails Foundation has supported the PlyWood Trail directly with two members of our organization serving on the PlyWood planning team and with a \$1,000 donation to help the organization with early stage costs.

We hope that the National Park Service will look favorably at the PlyWood Trail Application.

Sincerely,  
  
 Robert J. Desjardis  
 President  
 Siouxland Trails Foundation  
 501.588.0000  
 712.323.2010

**CITY OF LE MARS, IOWA**  
 1000 S. 1st St., Le Mars, IA 51099  
 Phone: 712.324.1111 | Fax: 712.324.1111 | www.lemars.org

June 30, 2016

PlyWood Trail, Inc.  
 PO Box 22  
 LeMars, IA 51099

Dear PlyWood Trail Board:

On behalf of the City of Le Mars, please accept this correspondence as a sign of our enthusiastic support for the creation and construction of the PlyWood Trail connecting the communities of LeMars, Merrill, Hinton and Sioux City.

We realize that you are in the early stages of your trail development, and have been able to gain significant support from many community groups, as well as from the municipalities proposed to be connected by the Trail. We are pleased to add our voice to this effort. We believe that the PlyWood Trail will be a valuable asset to the community, and we are committed to supporting you in this endeavor. All of these elements are critical to the success and sustainability of the trail. As you develop your trail, we believe that the trail will be a valuable asset to the community, and we are committed to supporting you in this endeavor. An expanding and vibrant population is dependent upon multiple outdoor recreation offerings, and an integrated trail system connecting our four communities will be critical to attract and retain our residents as they contemplate where to live, work and play.

Moreover, the PlyWood Trail will be a critical component linking Sioux City, Hinton, Merrill and Le Mars with a large regional outdoor recreation park network. Again, this is a critical component of the trail network.

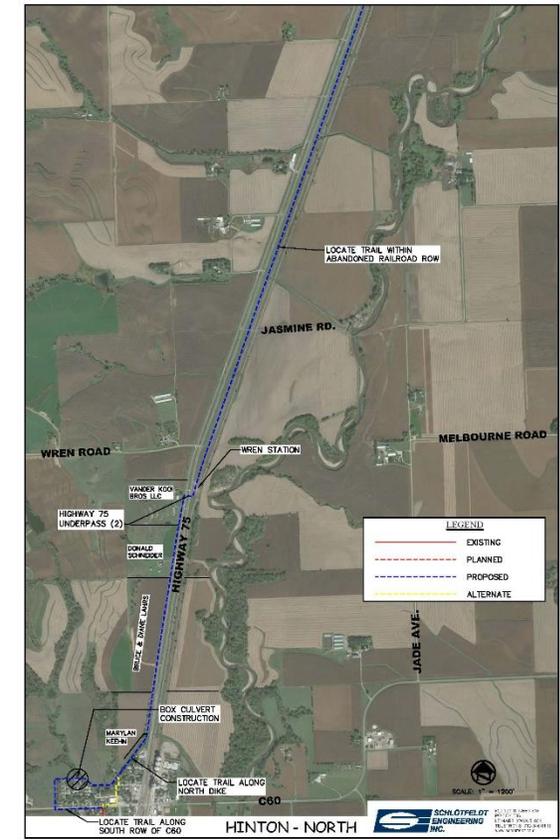
The City of Le Mars and our various civic and business leaders wholeheartedly endorse the PlyWood Trail project with the hope that you will see some major milestones for a regional trail network reality.

Sincerely,  
  
 Rick Lindahl  
 Mayor  
 City of Le Mars

Letters of support for the PlyWood Trail: Wells Enterprises, City of Sioux City, Siouxland Trails Foundation, City of Le Mars

# PLYWOOD TRAIL – WHAT’S THE STATUS?

- Engineering study and report of proposed trail route, completed summer 2016
- 13 obstacles identified that will need to be addressed before building
- \$10M investment required
- Three segments:
  - Le Mars to Merrill
  - Merrill to Hinton
  - Hinton to Sioux City
- PlyWood Trail Advisory Board approved the proposed route...but it’s not without challenges
- We need to be efficient, we need to collaborate with all key stakeholders



Individual “tiles” from Schlotfeldt Engineering report, identifying proposed route along abandoned railroad ROW between Merrill and Hinton

## PLYWOOD TRAIL - CHALLENGES

- Crossing railroads near Merrill
- Securing private easements between Le Mars & Merrill
- Identifying alternative route around James
- Long-term maintenance and ownership of trail



Floyd River Valley, looking toward Hinton



# LONG-TERM OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE PLYMOUTH COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

- *Unlike roadways, trails are linear parks most typically owned and maintained by municipalities and county conservation boards in the State of Iowa*
- the bulk of the PlyWood trail is **outside of municipal jurisdiction**
- government entities are **protected from liability of claims** arising from recreational activities on government controlled land
- government jurisdiction provides for **enforceable rules and regulations** governing the use of the trail
- government ownership provides for **FEMA and other federal aid mitigating capital damages** from natural disaster that otherwise would not be available to private or non-profit enterprise
- conservation board ownership **provides consistency of management** for the entire length of the PlyWood trail, although the PCCB may enter into maintenance agreements with the linked municipalities



# CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

- \$10 Million estimate to plan and develop the Trail
- Funded with private equity and municipality contribution, as well as grants restricted for trail development.
- Concrete pavement estimated life is 25 years or longer
- Annual cost to maintain Trail estimated at \$1,500 per mile/per year (\$24,000 annually) based on information from other mature trails
- Operating and maintenance costs to be funded by an endowment
- Minimum maintenance should be required based upon proposed Trail mapping (away from river)



## PLYWOOD TRAIL - OPPORTUNITIES

- Abandoned ROW between Merrill & Hinton—could kick start the PlyWood Trail
- Connecting with existing and planned trails in Le Mars, Hinton & Sioux City
- The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa's largest private non-profit partner in trail development, is eager to lend its expertise the to PlyWood Trail
- Fundraising—support from private and public interests, for construction & endowment
- National Park Service support—Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance Program



Floyd River Valley sunset



## PLYWOOD TRAIL – ASSISTANCE NEEDED

- Actively collaborate with the Trail Board regarding the on-going efforts to design, construct and maintain the Trail
- Lend support to the Plymouth County Conservation Board to negotiate ownership, control and maintenance of the PlyWood Trail as is commonplace throughout our State
- Support the design and build of a pedestrian tunnel under H-75 on north side of Hinton and north side of Merrill
- Explore H-75 right of way opportunities north of Merrill and south of Hinton
- Assist with landowners to procure right-of-ways, easements....along Highway-75
- Design assistance for safe RR crossing at Merrill
- Help identifying alternative route around the James Township





## **CONTACT INFO**

Email:

[plywoodtrail@gmail.com](mailto:plywoodtrail@gmail.com)

Website:

[www.plywoodtrail.org](http://www.plywoodtrail.org)

**QUESTIONS?**

Floyd River Valley at sunset, Highway 75 on the left