

# PATHS, TRAILS & GREENWAYS

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Credit: rvcog.org

Paths, trails and greenways provide passive recreational opportunities and are key links in Medford’s transportation system – connecting people to parks, schools, downtown and other key destinations. They offer opportunities for active lifestyles and to experience community and nature. In the future, a comprehensive Medford trail system could build on the exceptional regional spine of the Bear Creek Greenway and other major path opportunities, connect to extensive existing park trail networks and integrate into the city’s non-motorized transportation system to provide seamless access throughout the community.

## NATIONAL & REGIONAL TRENDS

As was noted in the Parks & Outdoor Recreation chapter, walking and hiking continue to be the most popular recreational activities nationally and regionally, with approximately 70% participating in these activities based on statewide data. Furthermore, over the past ten years national recreation studies have consistently ranked hiking and walking as the most popular form of outdoor recreation. These studies include:

- Sports Participation Survey; National Sporting Goods Association

- Outdoor Recreation Participation Report; The Outdoor Foundation
- State of the Industry Report; Recreation Management Magazine
- Outdoor Recreation in America; The Recreation Roundtable

## LOCAL FEEDBACK

Similarly in Medford, interest in walking and cycling has grown. Medford residents value walking and biking trails and feel the City should prioritize expanding opportunities to walk and bike in the city. Nearly 81% of respondents to the community survey indicated that they have a need for citywide trails and improved connectivity. Also, 74% identified the need for providing biking facilities. Despite this interest and need, residents have a perception that their trail system needs are not being met within the City. While more than half of the City is well-served with good path and trail access, the Department may need to strengthen its promotions of trails to inform the public.

Residents view existing connectivity and the City's greenways as a community asset. Creating more connected places to walk, run, and bike were a community priority - trails connected to other facilities and neighborhoods (41%) and additional walkways and paths (32%) were popular desired improvements.

Regarding the Bear Creek Greenway, there was a significant percentage of residents who noted some dissatisfaction with the condition of the Greenway. Residents have voiced interest in the following enhancements to the Greenway, in part to address public perception issues regarding safety and desirability:

- Interest in more trail connections to the Greenway
- Desire for improved lighting (to address a perceived safety concern) - potentially by adding lights in rights-of-way or installing ground lights along paths
- Continue efforts with vegetation removal to enhance perceived sense of safety and line-of-sight

Additionally, the following comments were made by stakeholders and the public regarding their interest in additional paths and trails and enhanced connectivity:

- Generally, there is interest for developing more interior trails within existing and future parks.
- There is a strong demand for completing the trail plan at Prescott Park and for connecting Prescott Park to other nearby parks and destinations. At the present, the Department is working with Jackson County on land use issues to enable the development of parking and approximately 10 miles of trails, which is slated for development in 2017.
- The Medford School District sees a need to address the demand for local cross county trails; local high school teams are now using the Bear Creek Greenway and land near the Fairgrounds.
- There is interest in adding additional amenities to trails, such as lights and benches.

## TRAIL NETWORK WALKSHEDS

Paths and trails provide people with valuable links between neighborhoods, parks, schools and other public facilities, commercial centers and other regional non-motorized facilities.

In some cases, public paths provide alternative transportation connections between neighborhoods. The 2003 Transportation System Plan (TSP) identified the City's 20-year goals to develop its transportation system and provided strategic goals and policies related to comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle network planning including route designation, classification, funding priorities and design considerations. The TSP was prepared for the City's Planning Department, working cooperatively with the Public Works Department and the public.

To supplement the work of the pedestrian and bicycle plan, a gap analysis was conducted to examine and assess the distribution of existing recreational paths and trails. As with the parkland analysis, shared use path walksheds were defined using ¼-mile and ½-mile primary service areas and a 1-mile secondary service area with travel distances calculated along the road network starting from known and accessible access points of each existing segment. Trails within parks were also examined, and service areas were calculated with ¼-mile and ½-mile walksheds for major parks (e.g., Bear Creek Park, Prescott Park and USCCP) and ¼-mile walksheds for the remainder. Map 10 illustrates the citywide distribution of shared use paths and the relative access to these corridors within reasonable travel walksheds.

More than half of the City is well-served with reasonable access to recreational trails, which include park trails and the Bear Creek Greenway; however, gaps exist in the southwest, northwest and northeast portion of the city and that on-street connections are not "family friendly" at the present.

## CURRENT TRAIL MILEAGE STANDARDS

In the 2006 Leisure Services Plan, the path and trail system is described as intending to serve a variety of users at varying skill levels. The path and trail system includes two design standards: ten foot wide asphalt multi-use paths and five foot wide gravel or native soil multi-use trails built to the International Mountain Bike Association standards. Mileage-based standards were included for paved trails (0.27 miles per 1,000 population) and unpaved trails (0.19 miles per 1,000 population).

Using this existing standard, the table below depicts the needed path and trail mileage to meet this standard for the current and projected population. At the present, the City is close to meeting the stated standard for paved paths and is currently providing 0.21 miles of paved paths per 1,000 population, but the small existing deficit will grow to 13 miles by 2026. For unpaved trails, the City has attained approximately one-third of the standard, with a current deficit of 10 miles and a future deficit of nearly 16.5 miles.

Figure 21 Medford Existing Trails Level of Service Performance

Metric	Measurement			
Existing Service Standard (Paved Paths)	0.27 miles per 1,000 residents			
Existing Service Standard (Unpaved Trails)	0.19 miles per 1,000 residents			
2015 Population	77,655 residents			
2026 Population	111,025 residents			
Bikeway Mileage	Paved Paths		Unpaved Trails	
City-owned or maintained	16.67 miles		4.64 miles	
<b>Total</b>	<b>16.67 miles</b>		<b>4.64 miles</b>	
Year	2015	2026	2015	2026
Effective Level of Service based on total mileage (miles/1,000 residents)	0.21	0.15	0.06	0.04
Net LOS to Standard (miles/1,000 residents)	(0.06)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.15)
Attainment of Standard	80%	56%	31%	22%
Mileage surplus (deficit)	(4.30)	(13.31)	(10.11)	(16.45)

## BEYOND MILEAGE

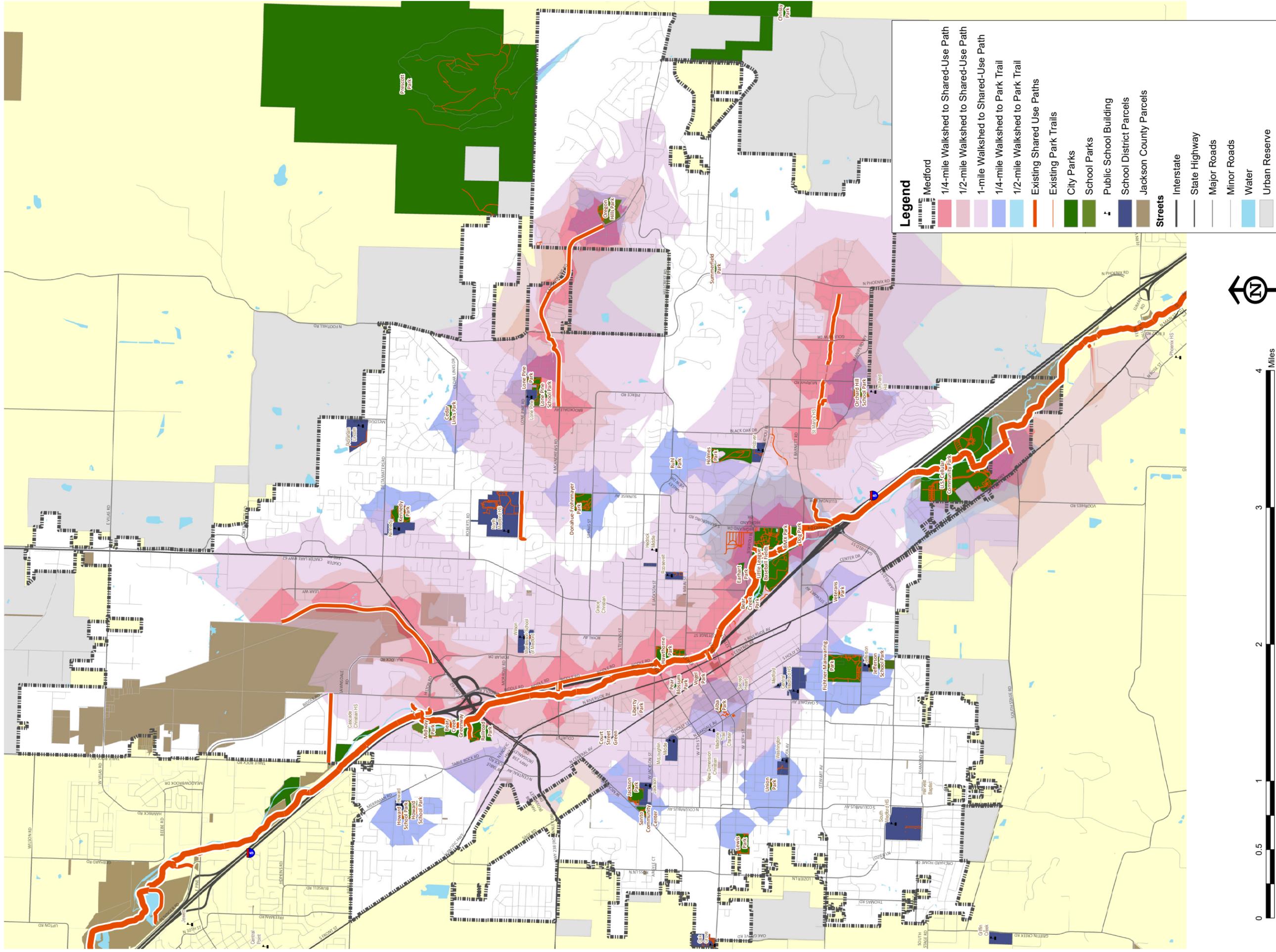
### Trails for Connectivity

As with roadway system and transportation planning, planning for recreational trails should be geared toward connectivity, rather than mileage. Considering only a mileage standard for paths within the Medford park system provides an isolated and inadequate assessment of need for the community and its plans for growth and better connectivity. This Plan recommends the elimination of the recreational trail mileage standard in favor of a connectivity goal that re-states and reinforces the desire to improve overall connections across the City and enhance off-street linkages between parks and major destinations, as feasible.

### Trails for Community Health

A welcoming and accessible City plays a significant role in encouraging and supporting physical activity that promotes healthy active lifestyles. The need to build on existing infrastructure and create interconnected systems should be the standard for establishing demand for trails. Recreational trails are essential as elements in a multi-modal alternative transportation network. The City has adopted policies that will encourage or require better mobility and connections between land uses and destinations to support physical activity as part of a daily lifestyle and that can support a full range of human activities: live, work, shop, play, learn and gather.

In the NRPA publication, *Safe Routes to Parks*, the elements of walkable, healthy community design are outlined as convenience, comfort, access and design, safety and the park itself. As further emphasis for the importance of a walkable community to



Map 10: Path & Trail Walksheds

promote public health, the U.S. Surgeon General has issued a *Call to Action* to “step it up” and promote more walking and build a more walkable world. A more connected network of trails, sidewalks and bike lanes with links to public transit enhances health and also provides economic values.

## Trails for Economic Health

In the 2009 report *Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Housing Values in US Cities* by Joe Cortright of CEOs for Cities, research cited the connection between home value and walkability. Higher WalkScore measurements (walkscore.com) where typical consumer destinations are within walking distance were directly associated with higher home values. Homes located in more walkable neighborhoods command a price premium over otherwise similar homes in less walkable areas. The National Association of Realtors reports in their *On Common Ground* publication with numerous articles citing the preference of walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods and the role of walkability in creating healthier communities. These preferences translate into higher real estate prices and housing values. Even the National Association of Homebuilders (March 2014 publication: *Walkability, why we care and you should too*) has recognized that walkability is desired by consumers, creates lower development costs and allows flexibility in design. As part of the system of walkability and bike-ability, recreational trails are real estate assets that enhance community connections and contribute to economic health.

## Bear Creek Greenway

As the backbone of the regional trail system, the Bear Creek Greenway is an important non-motorized transportation facility for both the City of Medford and the broader region. Classified as a multi-use regional path, it extends from Central Point to Ashland, for a total of approximately 20 miles. The entire length of the trail through the City of Medford is paved and is generally 10-feet wide.

*“The vision of building a trail through the Bear Creek Valley was grand and the task seemingly insurmountable yet, remarkably, the communities of Central Point, Medford, Phoenix, Talent and Ashland are now connected by the trail system.”*

- excerpt from the Bear Creek Greenway Foundation website



## A COMPREHENSIVE TRAIL NETWORK

Recreational path and trail connections, improvements and relationships to streets, sidewalks and bike lanes have been cited in numerous Medford plans. The Transportation System Plan identifies future needs in the multi-modal, non-motorized transportation system for the community.

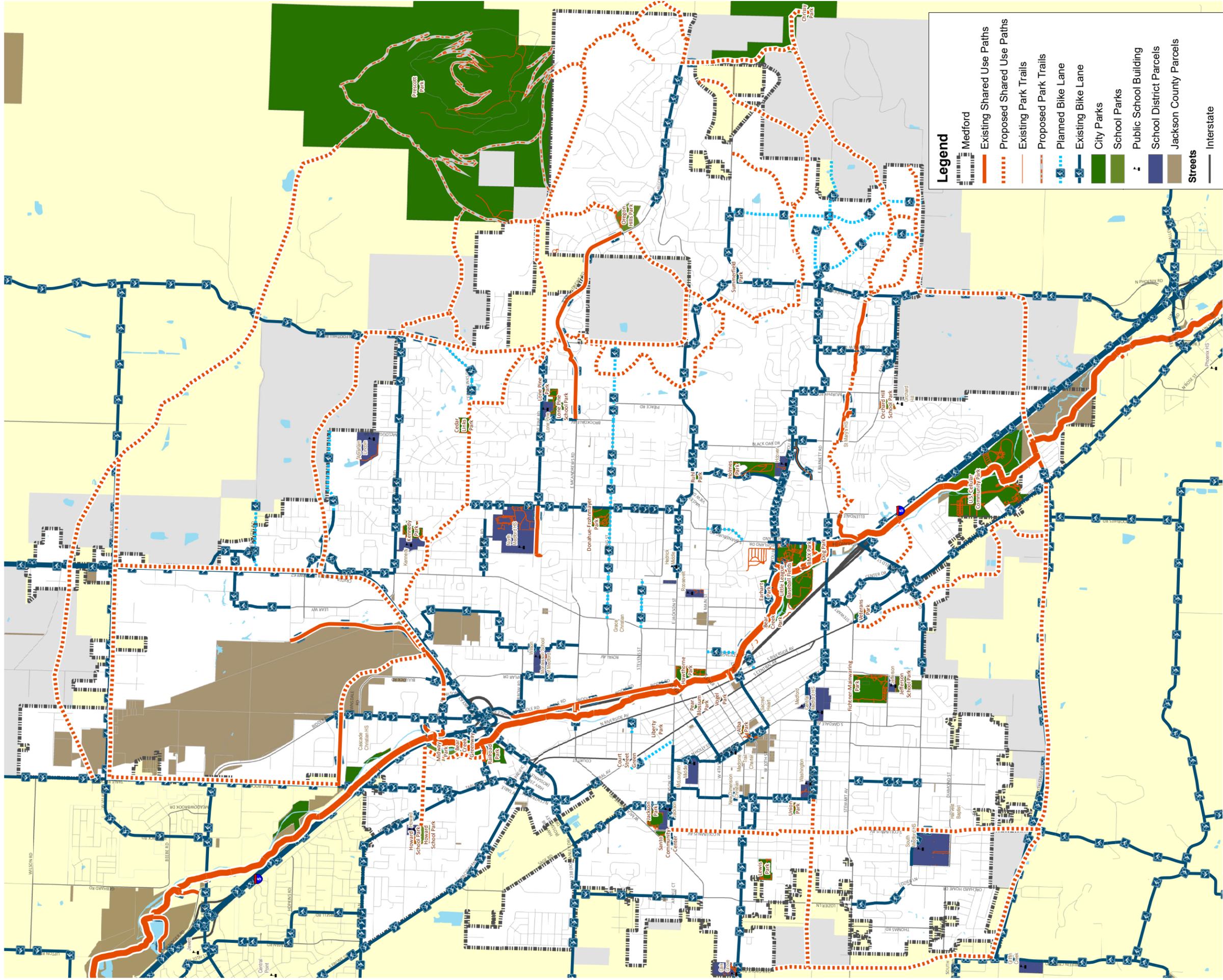
The proposed path and trail network plan is illustrated on the next page, and it includes the following proposed segments:

- Prescott Park trails
- Alignments along the Middle and South Forks of Larson Creek
- Alignments along Lone Pine Creek, Lazy Creek and sections of the irrigation canal
- Lateral connections from U.S. Cellular Community Park to Larson Creek
- Alignment connecting Prescott Park to the Lone Pine Creek corridor along PP&L property
- Alignments along the Upton Slough and portions of the Hopkins Canal

In addition to the proposed recreational path and trail alignments noted in this Plan, Medford may want to consider a stand-alone trail plan to identify and reinforce the need for off-street, recreational trail improvements to improve community connectivity.

Cooperation with Jackson County in conducting a unified regional trail plan for both the City and the greater Medford region could further planning efforts as the community grows and may provide valuable implementation strategies for a better connected path and trail system, while improving project eligibility for both transportation and recreation grant funding.

Also, such a plan could explore and consider alignment options to connect to lands held by the Bureau of Land Management. For example, regional connections to the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) could enable better PCT access and better options for PCT hikers to stop for services or choose section hiking waypoints. Additionally, a regional planning effort could also support the vision to extend the Bear Creek Greenway farther north and south and to further enhance the significance of the pathway.

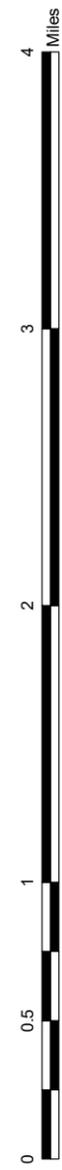


**Legend**

- Medford
- Existing Shared Use Paths
- Proposed Shared Use Paths
- Existing Park Trails
- Proposed Park Trails
- Planned Bike Lane
- Existing Bike Lane
- City Parks
- School Parks
- Public School Building
- School District Parcels
- Jackson County Parcels

**Streets**

- Interstate
- State Highway
- Major Roads
- Minor Roads
- Water
- Urban Reserve



Map 11: Proposed Path & Trail Network

# GREENWAYS, LINEAR PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Medford is fortunate to have retained several significant natural areas across the City. This greenway network includes wildlife habitat, creek corridors and vistas which create unique connections as habitat for birds and other wildlife, as well as areas for rare, unique and/or endangered plant species to thrive. While some of the City-managed sites do not currently accommodate formal, public access, many of these properties will serve as the backbone for future path and trail corridors.

The City of Medford owns approximately 2,060 acres of greenway lands and natural open space, mostly located at Prescott Park, Chrissy Park, the Larson Creek Greenway and along the Bear Creek Greenway. Other natural area sites are scattered throughout the community and are generally less than ten acres in size.

Figure 22 Current Inventory of City-owned Linear Parks, Natural Areas & Greenways

Park Name	Classification	Acres (Total)	Acres (Developed)
Bear Creek Greenway (BCG)	Linear Park	22.10	
BCG: Hawthorne to USCCP	Greenway	9.40	
BCG: W McA - Hawthorne	Greenway	0.00	
Bear Creek Park	Greenway	37.40	
Biddle Road	Linear Park	7.10	
Chrissy Park	Greenway	136.10	
E. McAndrews	Linear Park	5.34	
Larson Creek Greenway	Linear Park	3.66	7.24
Larson Creek Greenway	Greenway	7.18	
Lazy Creek Greenway	Linear Park	1.08	
Lazy Creek Greenway	Greenway	2.07	
Lewis Park	Greenway	0.90	
Lone Pine Creek	Linear Park	1.66	
Lone Pine Creek Greenway	Greenway	1.23	
Midway Park	Greenway	8.70	
Oregon Hills	Greenway	11.91	
Prescott Park	Greenway	1,725.00	
Railroad Park	Greenway	24.20	
U.S. Cellular Park	Greenway	53.50	
<b>Total Greenway &amp; Linear Park Acreage</b>		<b>2,058.53</b>	<b>7.24</b>

In addition to protecting habitat and maintaining ecologic benefits (e.g., stormwater management and air quality), the greenway system provides educational and stewardship opportunities and is the primary framework for off-street recreational trails. The greenway network provides access to nature for passive recreation (including opportunities for viewpoints and wildlife viewing areas) and relaxation. The network also serves as both the centerpiece and ultimate destinations within a future trail network. The installation and integration of interpretive signage that reflects Medford’s unique history, natural assets, and wildlife populations may enable programmed or self-guided outdoor learning.

## Future Preservation

The City's future greenway corridor and easement acquisition efforts should be focused toward locations that support the expansion of the path and trail network. In coordination with the Public Works and Planning departments, the inclusion of future, protected open space areas will strengthen and expand the broader greenway system. The priority for open space land acquisitions or the acceptance of open space dedications from developers should be focused toward those lands that expand ownership of adjacent City-owned greenways or to ensure sufficient property is available to accommodate public access and future trail connections.

In other locations, the City should encourage the holding of greenways as private development common areas or tracts, whenever possible, and include public access easements or rights over those tracts to minimize maintenance demands while allowing future development for public use. In areas where the private open space tracts overlap with mapped sensitive areas, the City should request additional lands within these set-asides to accommodate path and trail connections that do not encroach upon the sensitive areas. When possible, preservation should be in partnership with homeowner associations, other government agencies and/or community organizations.

## Restoration & Enhancement

Medford's natural areas and greenspaces add to the quality of its neighborhoods, provide wildlife habitat, function as green oases within the urban landscape and increase local property values. The City has demonstrated a commitment to preserving, protecting and enhancing its natural areas. However, the quality and function of some natural areas are threatened by development, impacts from neighboring uses, pollution and non-native invasive species. Through proper management of natural areas and greenspaces through cooperation between Public Works and the Parks and Recreation Department, the City and its partners can maintain and enhance these areas and the critical ecosystem and community benefits they provide.

# GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE & CONSERVATION

The City's natural areas and open spaces play key roles in supporting healthy, well-functioning ecosystems. These many benefits include maintaining air and water quality within the city and region, mitigating impacts of climate change, and providing healthy, recreational, scenic and spiritual values.

## Ecosystem Services

Medford's natural resources are a critical component of the City's green infrastructure, which provides important ecosystem services functions. The City's urban forest, creeks, wetlands and vegetated natural areas help manage stormwater, protect air and water quality and prevent erosion. Connection, protection and enhancement will improve their ability to provide these important services. This, in turn, can reduce the City's need for built infrastructure, such as stormwater conveyance and detention capacity, reduce risks from natural hazards and protect the quality of local waterways for generations to come.

## Urban Forestry

The Medford's Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP) was developed in 1998 to provide an assessment of the City's existing tree resources, along with key policies and strategies for the City's future management and investment in its urban forest. The plan's primary objective was to add to the City's understanding of its public trees in order to support better management and maximize the benefits of trees to the community.

An inventory of street and park trees was conducted that documented the location, species, size and condition of approximately 5,000 trees. An analysis of the tree population found a number of significant features in the City's urban forest. The total number of species represented was 109, and while this is a substantial range of species, only nine species comprise the dominant part of the tree population – indicating the need to address species diversity going forward. The overall condition rating was good, and the assessment also provided discussion about tree diameter distribution with species-specific recommendations about age classes and the need for succession planting. The overall appraised value of Medford's park and street tree urban forest was over \$8 million (1998 dollars).

The City's UFMP identifies the need to update citywide tree inventories, coordinate tree preservation and protection into the development code and engage the community in tree-related activities and projects. Park properties play a role in improving the overall health and diversity of the urban forest and provide areas for additional tree plantings, tree health monitoring and tree education programs.

Going beyond the current UFMP, other actions may be considered to further strengthen the City's urban forestry efforts, including the following.

- Continue to develop an annual work plan for the maintenance of publicly-owned and managed trees based on the reports generated by the tree inventory.
- Generate a measurement of the public tree canopy cover by using the i-Tree software. Establish a canopy goal for the City and commit to measure changes over time.
- Prepare a tree canopy management plan to assure that park and right-of-way trees continue to contribute to the community forest.
- Continue to engage the community through the Neighborhood Street Tree Partnership, Heritage Tree Program, Arbor Day events and community partnerships to include neighborhood planting, annual work plan discussions, information on best management practices, and the general promotion of the benefits of the urban forest.
- Consider the development of an interdepartmental "Tree Team" and enable them to review policy, regulation and best management practices, and coordinate project-based urban forestry. This could include working with Planning Department to implement standard practices for landscaping and maintenance in developments, as well as working with Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement on ensuring installation of new and replacement trees as required.
- Strive to have more than one staff person (ideally one in each department – Parks, Public Works, Planning) acquire Arborist certification to provide interdepartmental support, and provide necessary training to ensure qualified staff for the management of the urban forest.
- Update and revise the UFMP as appropriate to re-evaluate program and policy directions and remain current with industry best practices.
- Continue proactive urban forest management for current and emerging threats, including emerald ash borer, Asian longhorn beetle and sudden oak death.
- Consider expanding the scope of Medford's managed urban forest to include all public rights-of-way.

## Conservation Partnerships

### Oregon Stewardship

Oregon Stewardship works students on hands-on watershed projects in a five county area of Southwest Oregon. The group collaborates with the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and schools, among others. Oregon Stewardship has partnered with the City of Medford and other local organizations to restore the Bear Creek riparian area, which has included the removal of non-native blackberries, invasive plants and dead vegetation. Cleared areas have been replanted with native plants and trees and watered and weeded as necessary. The Department's continued coordination with this group demonstrates the strength of partnering and for the expanded capacity to manage the greenway corridor of Bear Creek.

## **Rogue Valley Council of Governments**

The Bear Creek Riparian Restoration Project (noted above) has also been heavily supported by the RVCOG. Additionally, the RVCOG led the effort to prepare the Bear Creek and Rogue Basin Riparian Planting Plan, which was intended to serve as a “how to” guide for riparian planting projects within the Rogue Basin, including the Bear Creek Watershed. The Department should continue to work with and coordinate with the RVCOG for enhancement and management efforts along Bear Creek, and it should explore options to expand enhancement efforts into the Lone Pine, Crooked, Elk, Gore, Larson and Lazy Creek basins.

## **Coyote Trails School of Nature**

The Coyote Trails School of Nature is a local non-profit organization and is the contracted steward of 10 acres of creek frontage at the Coyote Trails’ Nature Center in the U.S. Cellular Community Park. The organization teaches traditional living skills, which includes a variety of day classes, day camps and week-long summer camps on site. The organization has also made several improvements to the nature center that include the installation of a pollinator garden, bird and bat houses, trails, solar pavilion and picnic tables. The continued arrangement with the Coyote Trails School of Nature will not only solidify the presence of the Nature Center at the U.S. Cellular Community Park, but it will enable on-going access to outdoor-oriented classes, programs and restoration activities that benefit the Bear Creek Greenway and the greater Medford region.

## **Rogue Valley Audubon Society**

The Rogue Valley Audubon Society, which serves the greater Rogue Valley including the City of Medford, is a conservation organization focused on advocacy and restoration of native habitat for birds and wildlife. A potential partnership with Audubon could provide opportunities for additional community restoration activities, wildlife monitoring and environmental education.

## **City-School Partnership**

In addition, several of Medford’s schools have creeks or waterways nearby. A potential partnership with Medford School District and local conservation education organizations could present an opportunity for school-based monitoring and environmental education programs. Such a program could help youth learn about their local ecosystems and watersheds, native wildlife and the impacts of pollution. The curriculum could also include an opportunity for students to conduct monitoring tasks and work with City staff on a school-based “adopt-a-waterway” initiative. Schools with nearby waterways include Jefferson Elementary School, Lone Pine Elementary School, Hoover Elementary School, Lincoln Elementary School, Kennedy Elementary School, St Mary’s School, North and South Medford High Schools, Cascade Christian School and Logos Public Charter School. While the Department does not currently have the staffing resources to initiate or facilitate such a program, the City should consider hiring a full-time volunteer coordinator to enable this and other outreach efforts for the Department.