

Public response is receptive to Madison County Transit bike trail connection to Bethalto

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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BETHALTO - The public was invited to view the plans for a projected multi-use path in **Bethalto** this week - and they have been very receptive.

Bethalto Mayor Alan Winslow said, since the plan's conception approximately two months ago, the public has been very open to the idea of a multi-use trail. The proposed trail would connect Bethalto to the rest of the Madison County Transit trail system, which is mostly located in the southern regions of the county. This proposed trail would allow for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, as well as cars in some locations. It would connect Bethalto to the Watershed Trail in Edwardsville near Wanda, by way of Moreland Road.

The plans were presented to around a dozen people at the Bethalto Village Council meeting on Monday, June 6, by Winslow and **Bethalto Public Works Director Rob Cheatham**.

All of those in attendance were supportive of the plan. Winslow said the main obstacle to beginning construction is funding. He said 80-90 percent of the estimated \$1.2 million to begin phase one of the trail would need to come from grants.

"We put together a survey for the public to take about the trails," he said. "We already had several comments from the public regarding the multi-use trail. The survey is a great way to gather public information, and prove support when we apply for grants."

That survey can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BethaltoBikeSurvey>.

Winslow said nearly 200 people had taken the survey on its first day posted. It will be available for public input until June 10.

Three Madison County Board members' districts will be affected by the trail system changes, Winslow said, so there is a fairly wide county interest in the project.

"It would be a multi-use trail for runners, walkers and bikers and ultimately the goal is to connect the Madison County trail head in Wanda to Bethalto to 180 miles of trail," Winslow said. "The Wanda/Moreland Road section is probably two miles away and we are going to looking at extending this east and west of town to make sure this is accessible to everybody up here."

Winslow said when public hearings were held to determine a comprehensive plan and park master plan, bicycle trails was one of the biggest things people had a desire to have in the village.

"We have some federal funding and some other funding sources we have access to for this project," Winslow said. "We have also had a commitment of some private monies. This is probably one of the best projects we could provide residents as far as public use."

In the future, Winslow said he would like to see the proposed Bethalto trail connect to Kutter Park in Wood River, and possibly even Gordon Moore in Alton.

"I haven't spoke to anyone in Alton regarding that yet," he said. "But the Wood River officials seem interested in connecting our trail to Kutter Park. It wouldn't take too much from there to connect it to Gordon Moore."

Construction on the proposed trail would not begin until late 2017 at the absolute earliest, Winslow said. Phase one would start at Old Bethalto Road to Erwin Plegge to Ashbrook.

This plan was presented to the public last Monday after Winslow spoke to several agencies regarding its difficulties and possibilities, including Madison County Transit, the St. Louis Regional Airport and the Metro East Parks and Rec Department.

[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)