Section II

THE PLAN

Up to this point, the planning effort has been on gathering inventory and analyzing it. The inventory and analysis phases are of vital importance to the Master Plan because this data is the basis for our design. As we begin to identify these design opportunities, we must also keep in mind the design constraints identified earlier as railbanking, route, length, and finances.

The design concept for development of the Cowboy Trail is to:

1. Retain and emphasize the linear quality of the 247 mile trail,

2. Provide educational opportunities along the trail, and

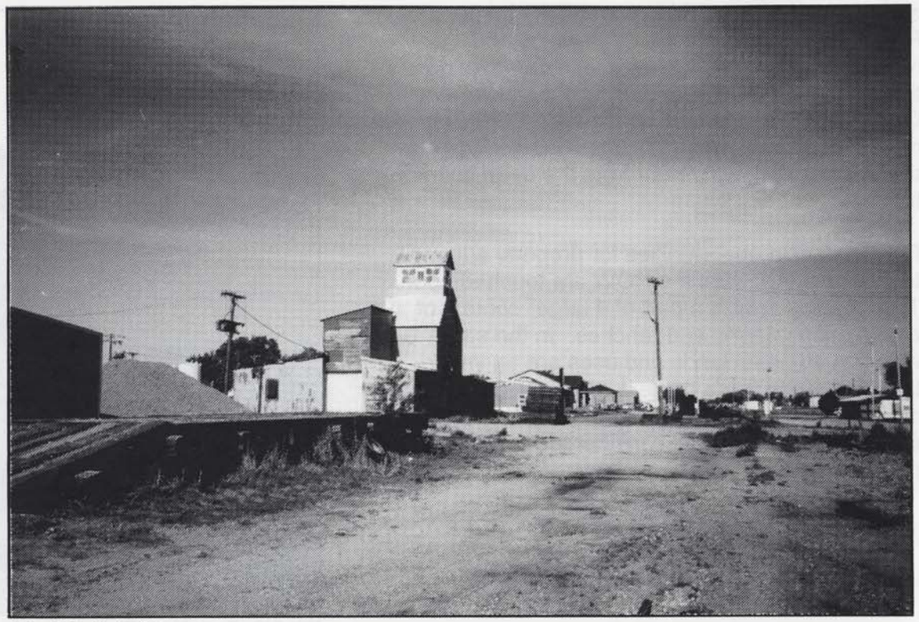
3. Capitalize on the communities to provide amenities, diversity and partnerships.

The trail will encounter several distinctive visual environments. However, the linear elevated railroad bed will give the trail dominance within the surrounding environment and will emphasize the length.

The trail corridor is full of educational lessons on nature, wildlife, agriculture, etc. as well as scenic views. Activity areas or nodes will be created at communities and locations along the trail to emphasize specific areas and educate trail users. These areas are called points of interest.

The communities, conveniently spaced, will provide amenities for the trail user. The basic amenities that each community should have include water, rest rooms, and camping facilities. Other convenience amenities such as restaurants, motels, laundry facilities, etc. are naturally provided in the larger communities and will be welcome to the trail user. The diversity, local ambience, entertainment and special events available in each community will be an added experience for the trail user.

Trail-focused partnerships are successful across the country because there are many individuals, organizations and companies to help develop and maintain the trail. These groups contribute to the vision and labor required for a successful trail project.



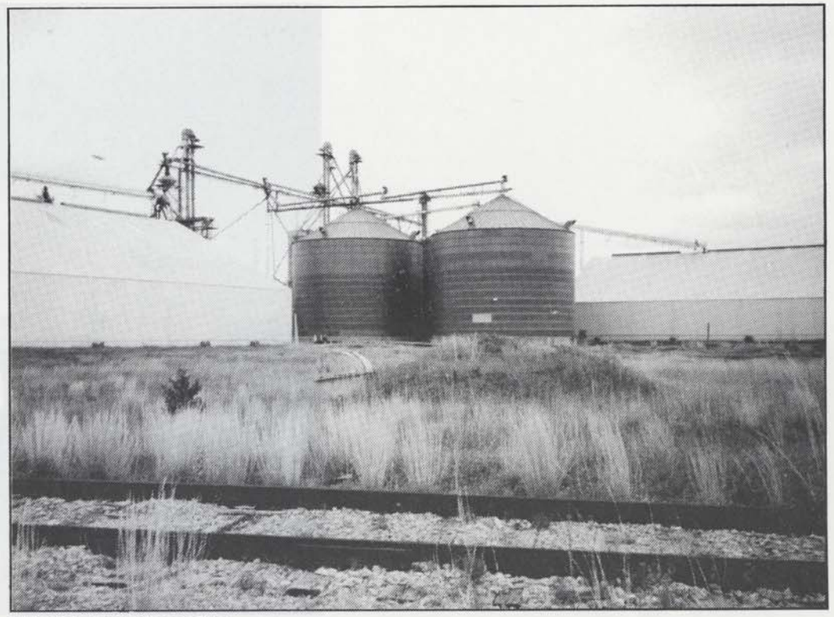
Mile 269 - Valentine

The unique length of the Cowboy Trail corridor provides challenges for both the planner and the developer. For this section, the ideas generated during inventory and analysis were weighed and measured against recommendations for high quality trails. Solutions to development issues and concerns were studied in light of their workability and feasibility.

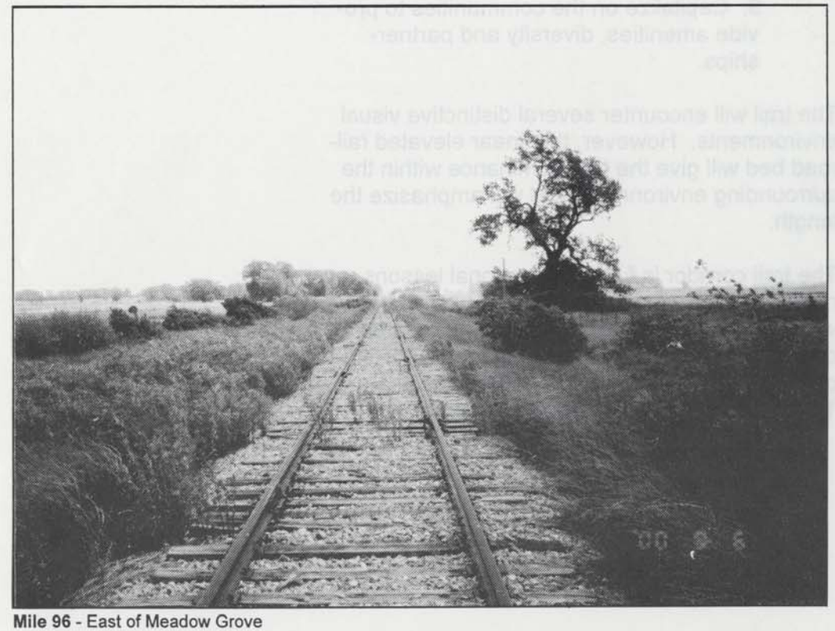
The Concept Development Phase views the trail from three perspectives. First, development concepts are considered for the trail corridor as it passes through open countryside. Recommendations are presented for trail design, surfacing, signs and markers, support facilities, amenities, and vegetation.

Second, concepts are considered for the trail corridor as it moves within community borders. Proximity of the trail to the businesses and residential areas will play a role in determining the type and extent of appropriate development. Optional approaches will be viewed. Surfacing needs, signs and markers, amenities and vegetation will be slightly different from the open country trail.

Finally, design opportunities for property adjacent to, but not directly on the ROW are touched upon. The Cowboy Trail is a part of a larger context of communities, farms and ranches. In the same way, the adjacent lands and uses are an important part of the trail's context. Any design and development activity either in the ROW or alongside the corridor should consider the contextual relationships.



Mile 212 - East of Long Pine



Mile 96 - East of Meadow Grove

Trail Corridor through Countryside

As the trail corridor passes through the countryside, it is frequently and pleasantly interrupted by towns, rivers, roads, creeks and scenic outlooks. It is along these countryside stretches where the 'wholeness' of the trail is experienced.

Outside the communities, the ROW is generally 100 feet wide. The user tread runs down the middle of the old rail bed with native vegetation extending along both sides of the tread to the adjacent property line. The ROW provides growing places for plants ranging from prairie grasses and forbs on the western end to the addition of shrubs and trees on the eastern end. The vegetation is also essential to various species of wildlife for nesting, loafing, feeding, protective covering and as escape routes.

Users in the Countryside

It is anticipated that the primary users on the trail will be pedestrians and cyclists. Secondary users will be equestrians and those using the trail to get to a specific location, such as anglers, canoeists, or bird watchers.

It is also expected that local residents and neighbors will use the trail for exercise by walking or jogging to a location outside of the community boundaries and back again.

Points of interest have been identified and located approximately 3½ miles from the communities. This distance from the community was chosen to primarily benefit the residents using the trail. It will also benefit the long distance hiker/cyclist. Points of interest will be adjacent to the trail and will identify an educational element or a scenic view. A resting place with shade will also be provided.

The equestrian path should be separated from the hiker/cyclist path except for crossing each other at specific locations. If a path is made for the equestrian, it should be located within the corridor, preferably away from the highway side of the hiker/cyclist trail. Crossovers may occur at stream crossings, wetlands, wildlife habitat areas, etc. If no specific path is made for the equestrian, and horses are to be allowed in the ROW, crossovers will still be necessary and required to eliminate the hoof print disruption on the trail.

Trail Design Recommendations

1 Tread Width

The Cowboy Trail is a two-way, multi-use corridor for pedestrians, equestrians and bicyclists alike. While hikers and cyclists can co-exist quite well on a single trail, it is recommended that equestrians have a separate trail where sufficient land is available.

A desirable width for a rural, two-directional, multi-use trail is between eight and 12 feet, depending upon rail bed width, length and trail user counts. A five foot width is the minimum for a separate equestrian trail.

In most instances, the existing rail bed will support installation of the wider trail tread. However, since traffic volumes over the majority of the trail distance are anticipated to be less than congestive, the eight-foot tread width is acceptable for much of the Cowboy Trail.

2 Bridges

Decking of all bridges is essential and installation should be a priority. The Game and Parks Commission has already set this as a priority and has received ISTEA dollars to deck the bridges. Therefore, the bridge decking and handrail design has met the standards set by the Nebraska Department of Roads.

It must be noted that if more bridges are decked and handrails are installed, that an alternate design be reviewed. A new handrail design could incorporate a 2" x 2" or smaller wire mesh between the top rail and the bottom toe space. The wire mesh accomplishes two objectives: 1) a more open feeling and view from the bridge and 2) it discourages the youngest trail user from climbing the handrail.

Bridge approaches are extremely important, especially where there is a steep or an environmentally sensitive embankment and where the anticipated number of users is high. Bridge railings should be extended a minimum of 15 feet beyond the bridge proper. In addition, the trail approach should flare out to give users a place to stop and/or dismount without causing congestion. This will be especially important at the Valentine and Long Pine Bridges where heavy traffic is almost guaranteed. It will also be important on other bridges that offer scenic overlooks or fishing and for bridges located near population centers.

Alternate equestrian paths are important at the bridges. A route through the river bed will serve as the water crossing for horses less familiar with trail riding. Concrete rip-rap is necessary in the stream bed to provide a sound base for the horses to cross on. Horses more familiar with trail riding will have the option of crossing the streams on the bridges. The highest bridges, however, may pose some difficulty for even the most experienced equestrians. At the Valentine Bridge, an alternate bridge nearby is proposed for the equestrian crossing over the Niobrara River. The existing Highway 20 "Bryan Bridge" will be des-ignated as the equestrian route upon completion of the highway realignment project that is underway near Valentine.

This route will also serve as a loop walk for trail users from Valentine to experience both bridges and then return back to Valentine. See Map 5.

3 Road/Trail Crossings & Intersections

Same-grade crossings of the trail at highways and heavily traveled roadways cause the most conflict and concern. At these rural locations, the following design components must be consistently implemented:

1. All rural intersecting US, state and county highways and roadways must be signed and marked to warn vehicles from both directions of the approaching trail crossing. A "Trail Crossing" sign should be placed 750 feet before the crossing.

2. The trail also must be signed from both directions 30 feet in advance of the intersection. At highways or roads with high traffic volumes, use a 'Stop' sign alongside the trail to warn trail users of the approaching crossing at the intersection. See Figure 13.

3. Safety sight triangles for vehicles and trail users are very important. Topography and vegetation within these sight triangles must be maintained at a height not to exceed 30 inches. Clear views for both vehicles and trail users must be maintained.

4. The trail crossing must be marked across hard-surfaced highways with painted crosswalk markings

County and local road crossings may present less severe conflicts than highways due to lower speeds and reduced volume of vehicular traffic. A 'Yield' sign is appropriate at these locations. The same safety sight triangle requirements on vegetation height must be maintained, and the trail must also be signed from both directions to warn the user of the approaching road. See Figure 13.

In all cases, public vehicular roadways should be designated as being the dominant traffic with the right-of-way. All trail traffic must yield to the public road traffic. Private driveways should be indicated on the trail to the trail user, and caution signs should be posted for vehicles on private drives that cross the trail. Trail traffic has the right-of-way across private crossings.

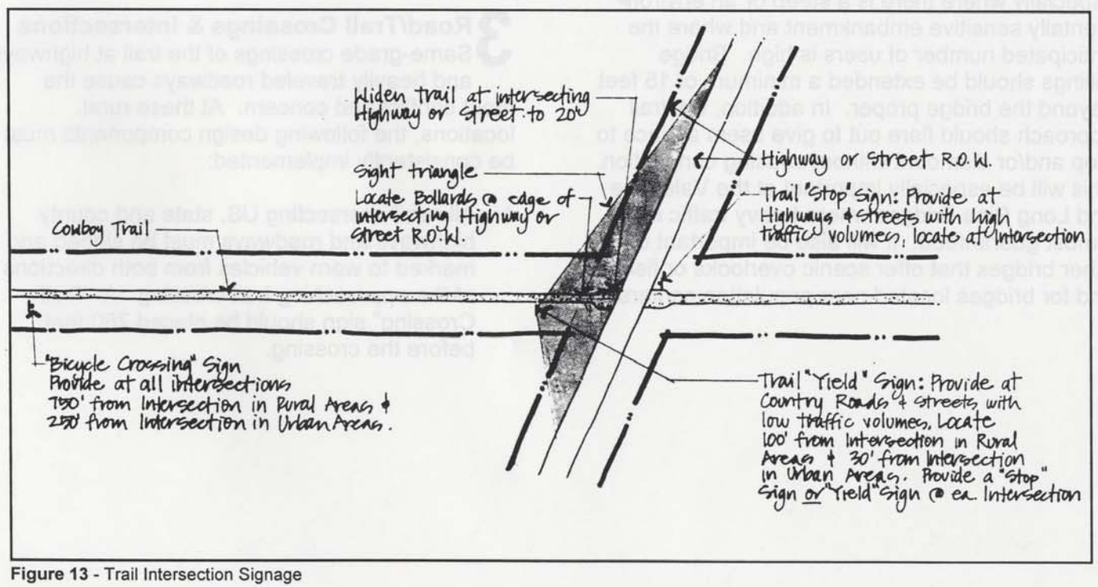


Figure 13 - Trail Intersection Signage

The hiker/cyclist trail and the equestrian trail shall converge at all intersections to cross the roadway. The equestrian will follow the same crossing principles as the hiker/cyclist trail user.

4 Bollards

Two bollards will be required at each location where the trail crosses a roadway. The primary reason for installing bollards at intersections is to keep unauthorized vehicles off the trail. A center bollard is typically seen but is not recommended. A single centered bollard can cause a trail user to focus away from the real danger, oncoming traffic at the intersection.

All bollards to be installed should be set in pairs to a height of 36 inches and a minimum of 36 inches apart centered in the trail. This will make the trail accessible to wheelchair users. Bollards should be positioned on the ROW line of the roadway. See Figure 13.

5 Trail Surface

The selected trail surface must be suitable for all trail users' needs and at the same time, fit within a limited budget. It is recommended that the hiker/cyclists trail surfaces outside of the communities be a crushed aggregate surface, three to four inches deep and compacted. There are several advantages to using this surface.

The first and foremost consideration is the tie with the surrounding environment. The trail must be compatible and blend in with the natural landscape. The texture and color of a crushed aggregate surface will be most compatible with the surroundings and also identify with the old railroad bed. When compared to hard surfaces, such as concrete or asphalt, it also causes fewer drainage problems.

Crushed aggregate is economical when compared to a hard surface. Several types of aggregate are available but in order to be most cost effective, the type chosen should be readily available in the area of the trail where it is to be placed. This means, of course, that the exact surface materials may vary from region to region.

The crushed aggregate surface is a softer surface and is preferred by walkers and joggers. It also tends to be less slippery than a hard surface. On the other hand, a crushed aggregate surface may not be preferred by the wheelchair user or the cyclist, especially the touring bicyclist. The more narrow the wheels, the slower the rate of travel if the surface is at all loosened or soft. Dust from the surface can also be attracted to sensitive parts of the bicycle.

The proposed crushed aggregate is not a surface to be shared with equestrians. Because the crushed aggregate surface is soft, it can be easily damaged by equestrian traffic. A hoof print will cause a depression that with time and the wind will become a hazard to the bicyclist and to a lesser degree to the hiker.

An equestrian path, separate from the hiker/cyclist path, is proposed within the Cowboy Trail corridor. The type of surface treatment will be best determined by the soil type of each region.

There are basically two types of soil along the Cowboy Trail, loamy and sandy. The equestrian trail surface in the loamy soil, the eastern one-third, should be a soft material such as mowed grass which turns to a soil surface as the vegetation is trampled and dies. A crushed aggregate surface or wood chips are also an acceptable soft surface. The western two-thirds of the trail contains a sandy soil. The concentration of a horse path in this soil type would be detrimental to the vegetation. The vegetation holds the soil and if it is lost from concentrated hoof traffic, the sand becomes loose and may cause blow-outs. Therefore, except for the hiker/cyclist tread, it is recommended the equestrian be allowed to use the entire corridor ROW. By dispersing the horse traffic over a larger area, a marginal impact from hooves is anticipated. The short, sparse vegetation in the sandy soil will allow equestrians to see any grade change as they ride. The NGPC management plan should include monitoring the corridor for negative impacts and, if necessary, introducing controls or developing a dedicated equestrian trail.

Special surfaced crossings over the trail should be located a minimum of one mile apart to allow the equestrian easy access to the entire corridor. These crossovers should be at locations where it is necessary to avoid sensitive areas, wildlife habitats and at creeks, for example. The surface of the crossovers should be a hard surface material, compatible with both equestrian and hiker/cyclist traffic.

There are a number of places where portions of old Highway 20 run immediately adjacent to the ROW. The new highway has been rerouted away from the rail corridor. In some cases, notations on railroad section maps indicate real estate transactions such as title transfers or easements took place between the railroad and the Department of Roads on those segments. It is recommended that these stretches be explored for possible dedicated or shared use as equestrian trails.

6 Signs

Four categories of signs will be seen on the Cowboy Trail in rural settings between communities: interpretive, directional, safety and historic railroad.

Interpretive structure panels will identify and educate the trail user concerning important elements about the region, historic places and events, natural features, etc. These will occur within the corridor at points of interest. See Figure 14. The interpretive panels also serve to provide shade and a bench for the trail user. The points of interest where the interpretive structures are to be placed are on the maps in the section, Elements of Design. Standards for the interpretive structure are shown in Figures 20-23.

Directional structure panels will notify the trail user of side trips available from the Cowboy Trail. The panels will indicate the distance to this destination and the significance of the place. The structure design will be similar to the interpretive structure and will provide shade to the trail user. The standards for the directional structure are shown in Figures 20-23. This type of sign should be placed at the point of turnoff.

Where the off-trail destination requires the traveler to share the route with vehicular traffic, it is strongly recommended that the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) designate, sign and mark those connecting roads as "Bicycle Routes." Where wide, hard surfaced shoulders are available, these could be marked as the bicycle lanes.

Four specific areas of interest have been identified to the trail user on the interpretive and directional structures. Cultural identities, historic attractions, recreational opportunities and scenic attractions will be quickly identified by separate colors on the panels and on the directional arrows incorporated into the structure.

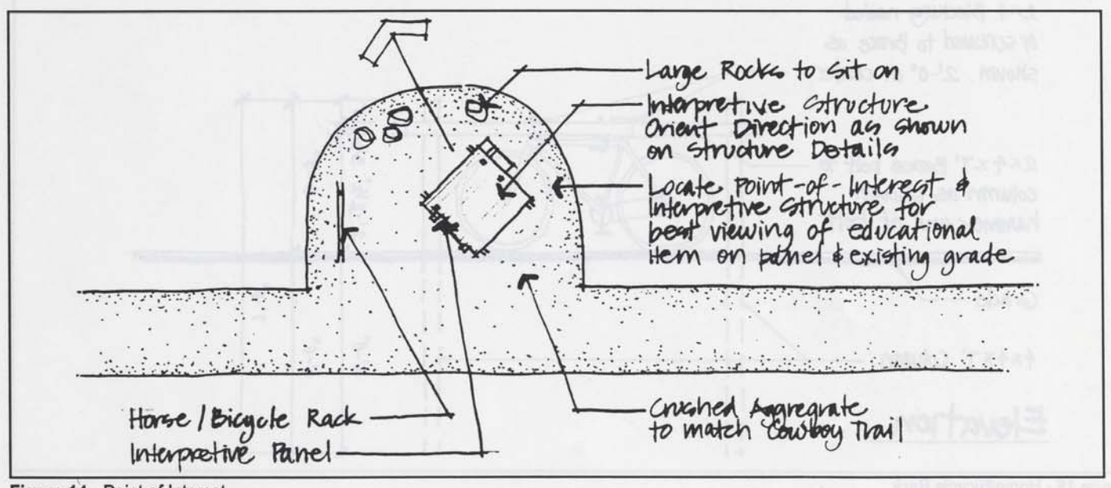


Figure 14 - Point of Interest

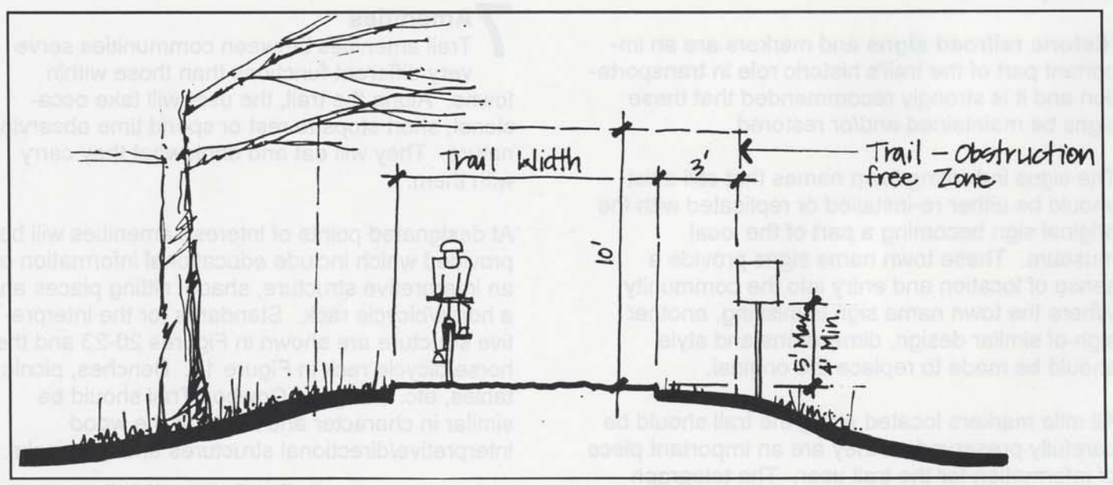


Figure 15 - Trail Obstruction Free Zone

Safety signs and regulation signs will be placed on the Cowboy Trail to inform the user of the rules of the trail, as well as the usual cautionary messages — stop, yield, danger, etc. The standards for the safety signs are found in the "Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices" (MUTCD) available from the Federal Highway Administration.

Typically these signs would be placed three feet from the trail edge at a minimum height of four feet to the bottom of the sign. See Figure 15.

The size, type and location of safety signs along the highway should be in accord with NDOR and/or other jurisdictional standards.

Equestrian trail signs will occur to mark the route and identify crossings with the hiker/cyclist trails, bridge and stream crossings and highway and road crossings. The equestrian trail must be clearly and identifiably marked. A clearly marked path will keep the equestrians on their path and avoid conflicts and maintenance of the hiker/cyclist trail.

Historic railroad signs and markers are an important part of the trail's historic role in transportation and it is strongly recommended that these signs be maintained and/or restored.

The signs indicating town names that still exist should be either re-installed or replicated with the original sign becoming a part of the local museum. These town name signs provide a sense of location and entry into the community. Where the town name sign is missing, another sign of similar design, dimensions and style should be made to replace the original.

All mile markers located along the trail should be carefully preserved as they are an important piece of information for the trail user. The telegraph poles with quarter mile markings, one band for each 1/4-mile segment, should also be preserved. These markings will aid trail users in tracking their progress and location.

Survey markers, while not visible, are important in defining the property boundaries. The boundary was originally determined from the center of the railroad tracks. With the tracks removed, the mile marker poles now locate these survey markers at the center line of the corridor.

Where possible, the crossbuck or X-shaped railroad crossing signs should be preserved. These should remain at the crossing, warning motorists of the trail. A sign should be attached to the post to indicate the inactive status of the rail line.

The "W" whistle signs should also be preserved. These pieces of history can serve trail users, as they did train engineers, to tell them of an upcoming vehicular crossing.

7 Amenities

Trail amenities between communities serve very different functions than those within towns. Along the trail, the user will take occasional, short stops to rest or spend time observing nature. They will eat and drink what they carry with them.

At designated points of interest, amenities will be provided which include educational information on an interpretive structure, shade, sitting places and a horse/bicycle rack. Standards for the interpretive structure are shown in Figures 20-23 and the horse/bicycle rack in Figure 16. Benches, picnic tables, etc. along the Cowboy Trail should be similar in character and relate to the wood interpretive/directional structures and the kiosks. Typical examples and vendors are available in the Appendix.

A sun dial clearing, Figure 17, can also be constructed near a point of interest. This would be an educational experience for the trail user – an orientation to the directions and to the time. The trail user casts the shadow to reveal the time of day. The clearing is an optional element that could be built by a volunteer group at three or four locations along the trail.

As usage increases, decks should be added to wetland points of interest. This type of scenic overlook will allow for an observation space that is slightly removed from the trail traffic to allow the trail user a quiet watching area. See Figures 18 and 19 for a plan and details.

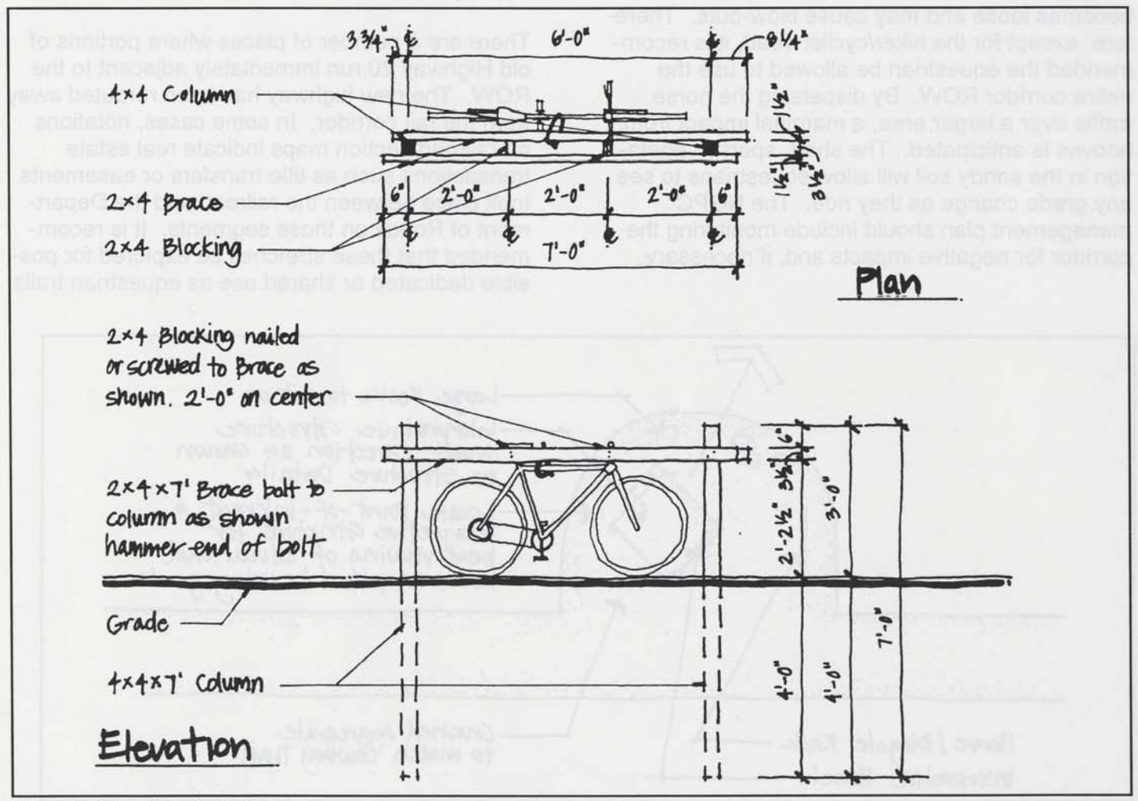


Figure 16 - Horse/Bicycle Rack

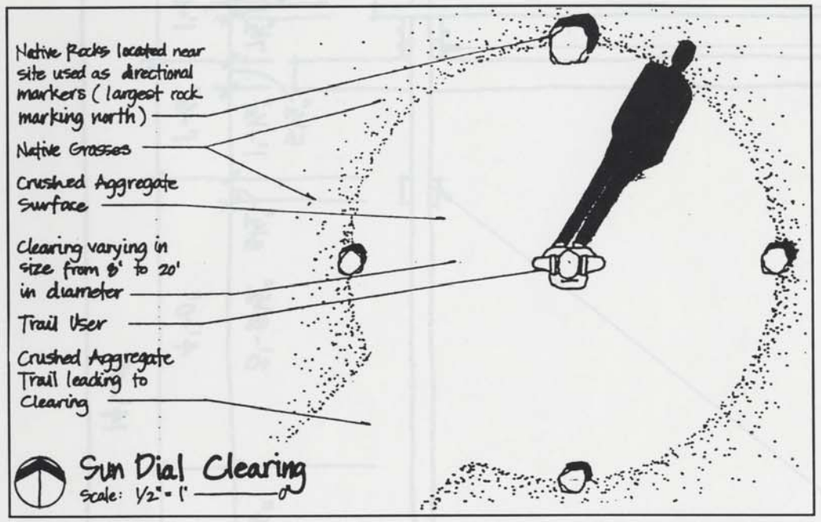


Figure 17 - Sun Dial

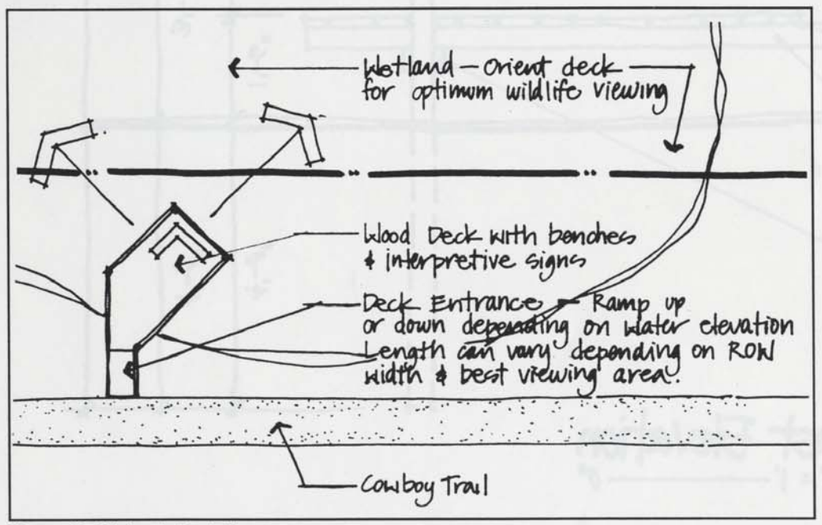


Figure 18 - Wetlands Deck Plan

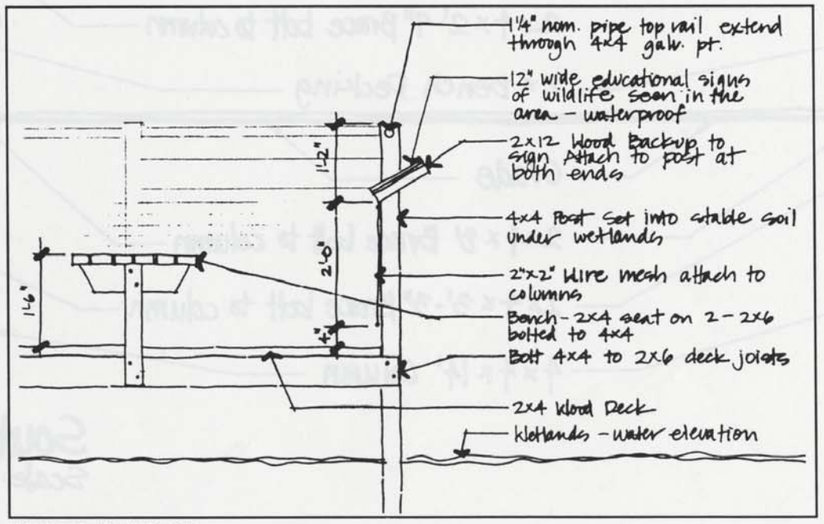


Figure 19 - Deck Details

Wetlands Deck Notes:

Orientation
Orient deck to best view majority of wetlands.

Footing
Set column in 2' diameter concrete footing x 4' deep in stable soil.

Decking
Space 2x decking width of 16d nail.

Materials and Connections
All materials are cedar. All connections to be nailed (16d galvanized) or screwed (2-1/2" galvanized) unless otherwise noted. Bolt connections to be 3/8" galvanized hex head bolt.

8 Vegetation

Plant materials native to the area — grasses, forbs or wildflowers, shrubs and trees — naturally exist within the corridor outside of the communities. Every effort should be made to leave this native habitat of plant materials in an undisturbed state.

A regular program of control for noxious weeds is essential and should be included in the trail management plan. Where hay contracting is allowed in the ROW, harvesting should be consistent with sound agricultural and habitat principles.

Where salvage operations and clean-up sites caused disruption, a program of revegetation should be undertaken with native plants similar to the adjacent species. This native vegetation has already adapted to the climate of the region and therefore, will require little maintenance. It also provides another educational component to the trail.

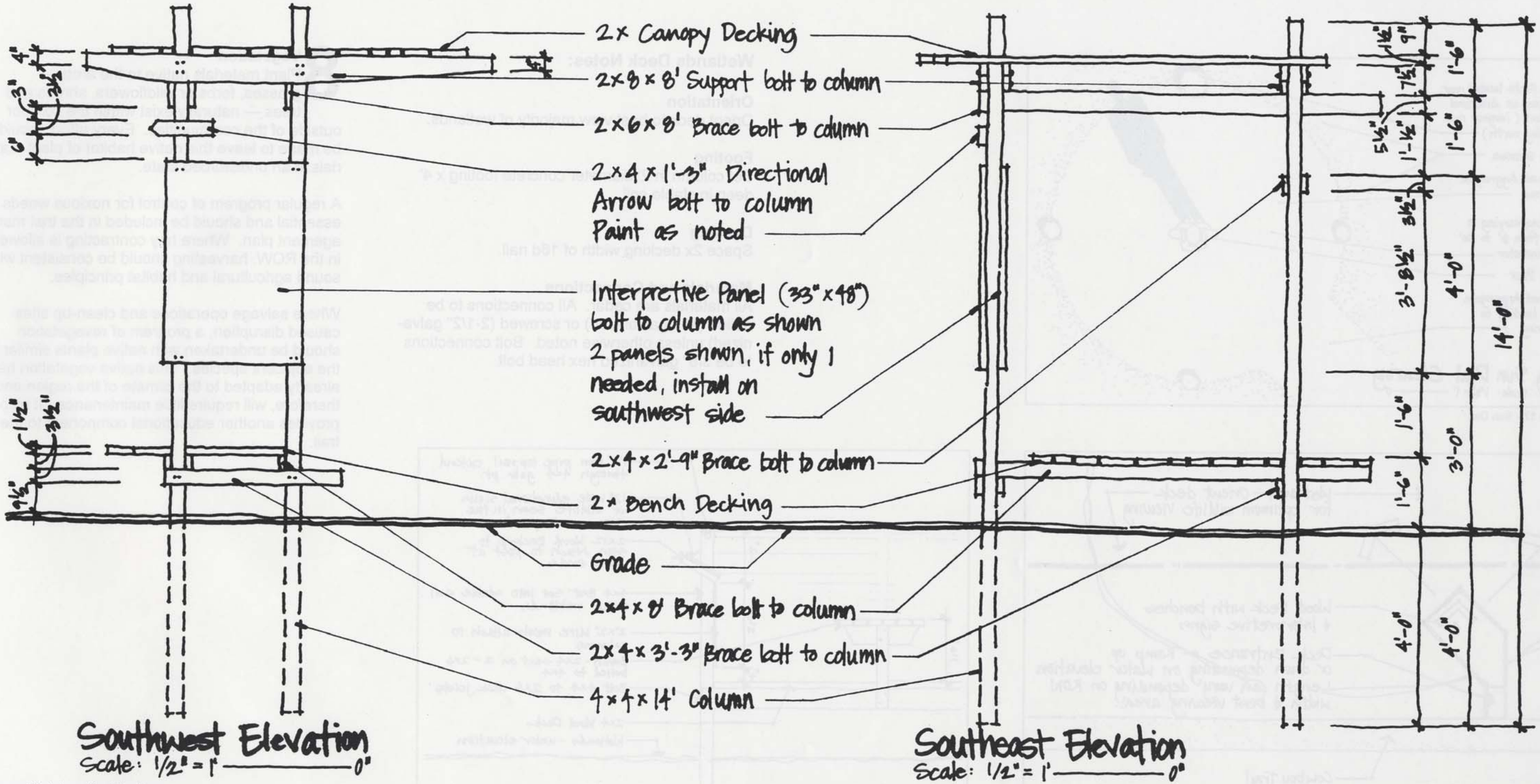


Figure 20 - Interpretive Structure

Interpretive Structure Notes:

Orientation
Orient interpretive shelter as north arrow indicated on bench plan in all locations. Locate north of trail unless site does not permit.

Footing
Set column by excavating holes, fill, and tamp to compact soil. Contractor's option: 2' diameter concrete footing x 4' deep.

Decking
Space 2x decking width of 16d nail.

Materials and Connections
All materials are cedar. All connections to be nailed (16d galvanized) or screwed (2½" galvanized) unless otherwise noted. Bolt connections are 3/8" galvanized hex head bolt and arranged as shown on drawings.

Directional Arrow
If more than one (1) arrow is needed, bolt additional arrow(s) to southwest column below arrow shown on drawings. Cut arrowhead to 45 degrees. Paint arrow to match coinciding descriptive area of interpretive panel.

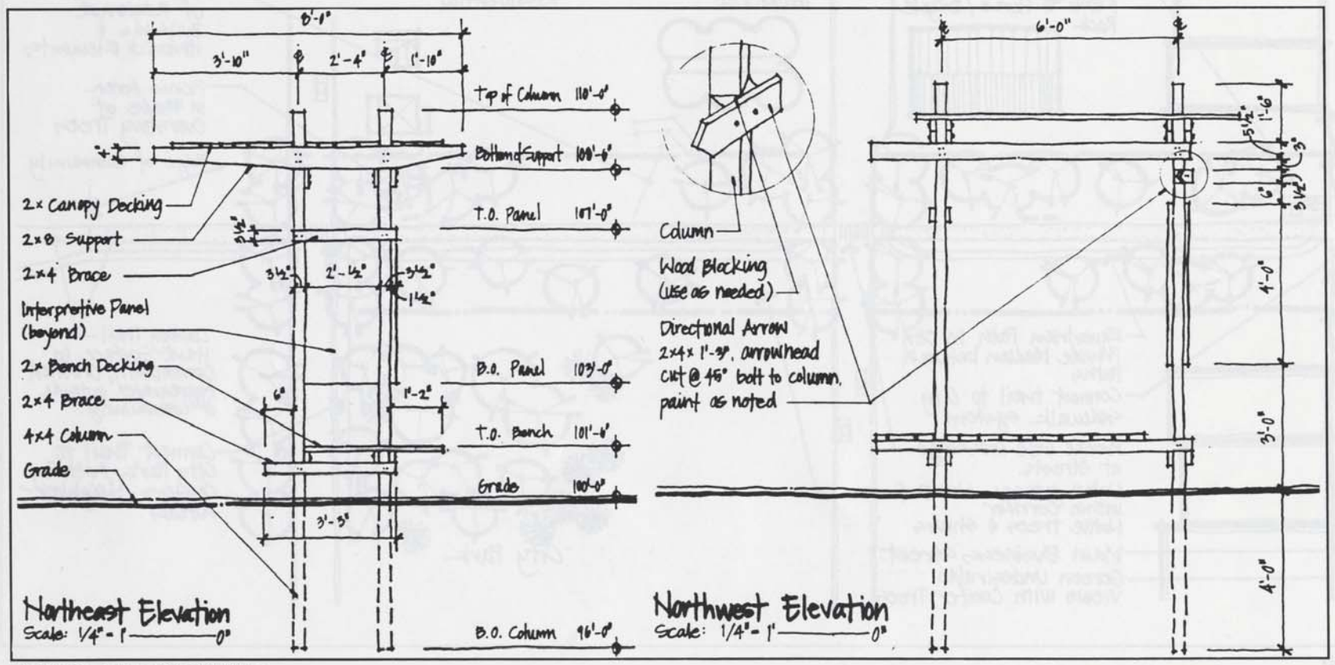


Figure 21 - Interpretive Structure

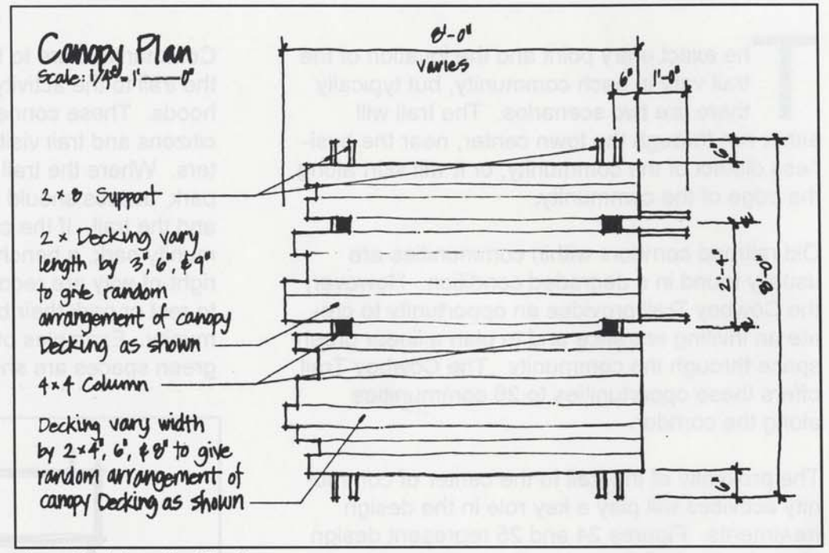


Figure 22 - Interpretive Structure

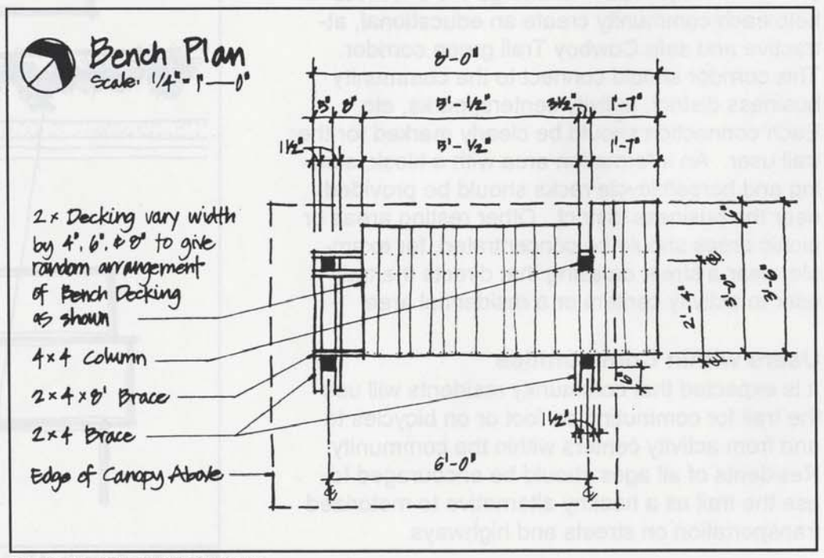


Figure 23 - Interpretive Structure

The exact entry point and the location of the trail vary in each community, but typically there are two scenarios. The trail will either run through the town center, near the business district of the community, or it will skirt along the edge of the community.

Old railroad corridors within communities are usually found in a degraded condition. However, the Cowboy Trail provides an opportunity to create an inviting entrance and to plan a linear green space through the community. The Cowboy Trail offers these opportunities to 26 communities along the corridor.

The proximity of the trail to the center of community activities will play a key role in the design treatments. Figures 24 and 25 represent design ideas for the trail, based on the trail's location in the community. These drawings are shown to help each community create an educational, attractive and safe Cowboy Trail green corridor. This corridor should connect to the community business district, activity centers, parks, etc. Each connection should be clearly marked for the trail user. An information area with a kiosk, seating and horse/bicycle racks should be provided near the business district. Other resting areas or picnic areas should be concentrated, for example, near a street crossing that directs the trail user to activity centers or a residential area.

Users within Communities

It is expected that community residents will use the trail for commuting on foot or on bicycles to and from activity centers within the community. Residents of all ages should be encouraged to use the trail as a healthy alternative to motorized transportation on streets and highways.

Communities are to be encouraged to connect the trail to the activity centers and neighborhoods. These connections will make it easy for citizens and trail visitors to use the activity centers. Where the trail is adjacent to a community park, access should be planned between the park and the trail. If the corridor is not next to a community park, a bench and a bicycle rack on the right-of-way are recommended to allow trail users to rest or park their bicycle and explore the community. Examples of these two typical linear green spaces are shown in Figures 24 and 25.

It is also expected that the trail will be used for exercise. Joggers, walkers or cyclists will use the trail to head to a location outside of the community boundaries.

To accommodate and encourage local residents to use the trail for leisure and exercise outside of their community, points of interest have been identified within a comfortable walking radius of approximately three and a half miles around each community. An example of a point of interest is shown in Figure 14.

Equestrians will also be able to use the Cowboy Trail corridor within the communities. A separate path that is parallel to the hiker/cyclist trail is required. A median between the trails should be a minimum of five foot wide planted with grasses and/or trees and shrubs.

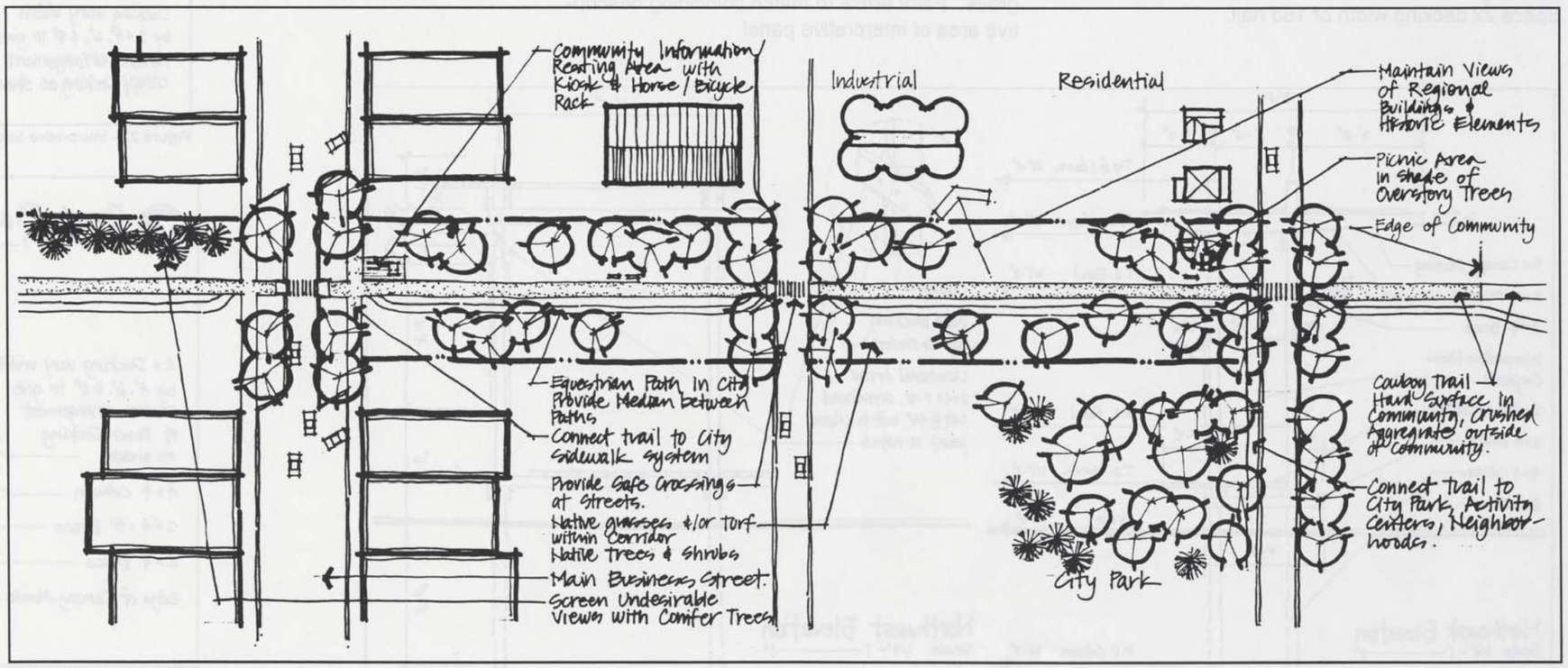


Figure 24 - Example of Trail Intersecting Community

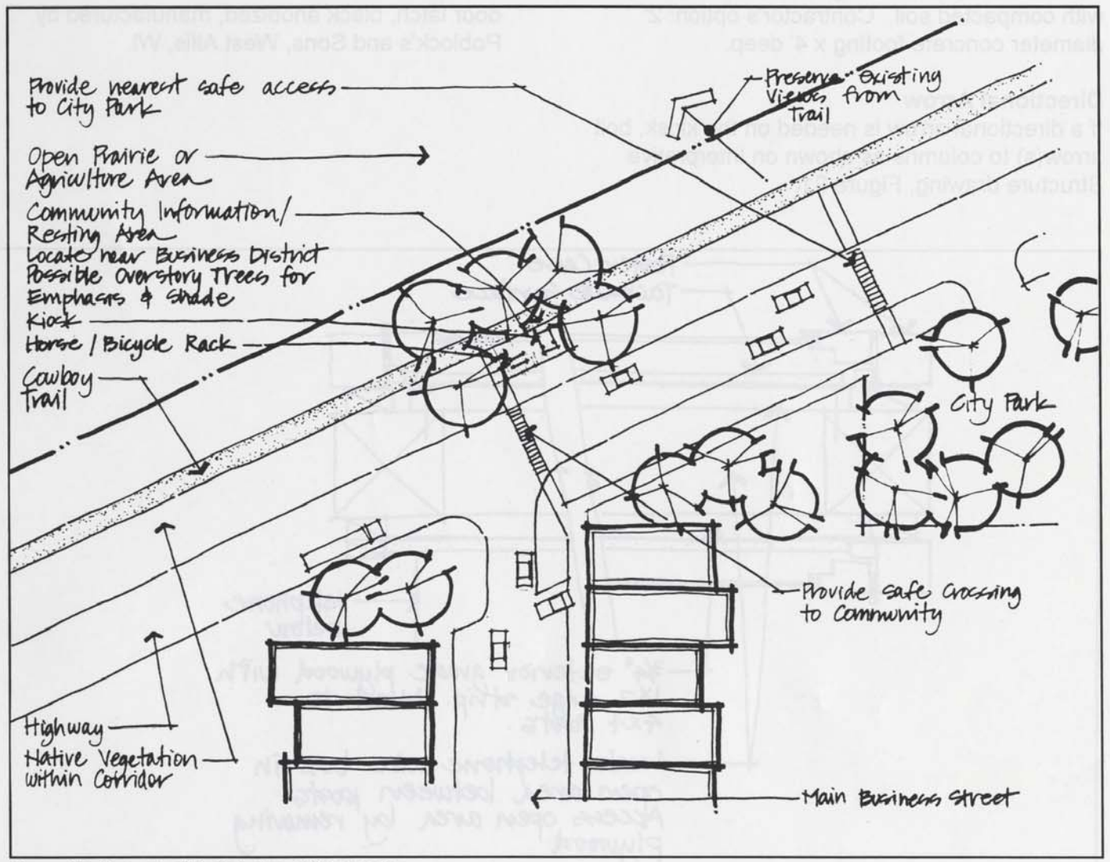


Figure 25 - Example of Trail at edge of Community

Trail Design Recommendations

1 Tread Width

In general the recommended width for a two-directional multi-use trail is between eight and 12 feet depending on rail bed width and trail user counts. Any separated side path should be a minimum of five feet in width. A separate equestrian path should be a minimum of five feet wide.

In most instances, the existing rail bed will support installation of wider trail treads within communities. As the volume of users and the variety of uses for the trail increase, wider treads will become more desirable. Consider the anticipated needs and methods of use as described in the Activity Analysis section.

2 Street/Trail Crossings & Intersections

Crossings that occur within communities present challenges. Although the vehicular speed limit is comparatively lower within communities than on county roads, traffic volume may be higher. Therefore, a safety sight triangle should be maintained 30' back from the intersection. See Figure 13. It is further recommended that the trail crossing be painted as a crosswalk on the streets.

To warn the trail user of the intersection, the appearance of the trail surface may change near the intersection. For example, a five foot wide brick or rough concrete surface installed 30 feet before the intersection to the curb line and across the entire street could assist the trail user in seeing the potential conflict. However, any dramatic change in actual surface texture could present problems for in-line skaters or wheelchairs.

3 Bollards

Many trails are eliminating the use of bollards within communities, especially where street curbs are present. Where bollards are necessary, the same guidelines apply as for a country-side installation — two bollards set in a pair, a minimum of 36 inches apart centered on the trail, 36 inches in height.

4 Trail Surface

Inside the communities, especially the larger ones, a hard trail surface is recommended to encourage a wide range of users. For example, in-line skaters and wheelchairs would be able to better use the trail. Strollers, commuters and local exercisers are more likely to use a hard surface trail all year long. Hard surface trails will require less maintenance in areas of heavy trail use and where heavy motor vehicles frequently cross the trail tread.

The surface of the separate equestrian trail should be a softer material, such as crushed aggregate or wood chip, within the community.

If a meandering/walking side path is provided near the Cowboy Trail, a crushed aggregate or wood chip surface would be appropriate. These side paths would be for a community that has a wide ROW and has an educational story to tell.

5 Signs

Information is important when trail users are making decisions to stop in a community or to simply travel on through. It will be more pleasing to the trail user and to the community if information signs and picnic/bench areas are consolidated and concentrated in a single location whenever possible.

A Community Kiosk should become information central for the trail user in each community. Each community shall have a kiosk located near the main business street. Larger communities will also have a kiosk at each trail entry point, two locations, into the community. The information on the kiosk will direct trail users to amenities and activities within the community. The kiosk will include such things as a Cowboy Trail map with mile numbers noted, a city map with the local park location and what amenities are provided there, information about the community, an area for advertisements, etc. A phone, if possible, and a message board on the kiosk will also be helpful to the trail user.

The other side of the kiosk is open for interpretive information about the community or overflow of local business advertisements. If more area is required for interpretive information, an interpretive structure should be constructed.

The pavement under the kiosk is recommended to be a surface reminiscent of the depot loading platforms. This surface could be brick, railroad ties, or concrete with closely spaced control joints. The kiosk standards are shown in Figures 26 and 27.

Interpretative structure panels, as described earlier, may also be included within the linear corridor space in each community. These panels will identify and educate the trail user about significant historic events, people, or activities that occurred in the community. The standards for interpretive panels are described in the section on trail corridors through the countryside and are as shown in Figures 20-23.

Directional panels to indicate turn-off points for possible side trips can either be incorporated into the kiosk or as a stand alone structure where additional clarification is needed. Recommendations for usage and installation are similar to those described in the section on Trail Corridor through Countryside and as shown in Figures 20-23.

Safety signs and regulation signs are essential within communities as nearly all trail users will begin their travels at these points, and the volume of traffic, both motorized and non-motorized, is much greater than on the rural portions of the trail. The trail must be signed to warn the user about an approaching street. Safety signs should be installed alongside the trail. Trail traffic should yield to street traffic.

In addition, streets must be signed from both directions to warn vehicles of the approaching trail crossing.

The size, type and location of all safety signs along the streets, at intersections and on the trail should be in accord with the prevailing jurisdictional standards, including AASHTO and MUTCD.

Kiosk Notes:

Orientation
Orient kiosk with telephone side toward trail and if possible, facing south. If telephone is not possible, provide poster case full size, both sides.

Footing
Set column by excavating holes, fill, and tamp with compacted soil. Contractor's option: 2' diameter concrete footing x 4' deep.

Directional Arrow
If a directional arrow is needed on the kiosk, bolt arrow(s) to columns as shown on Interpretive Structure drawing, Figure 21.

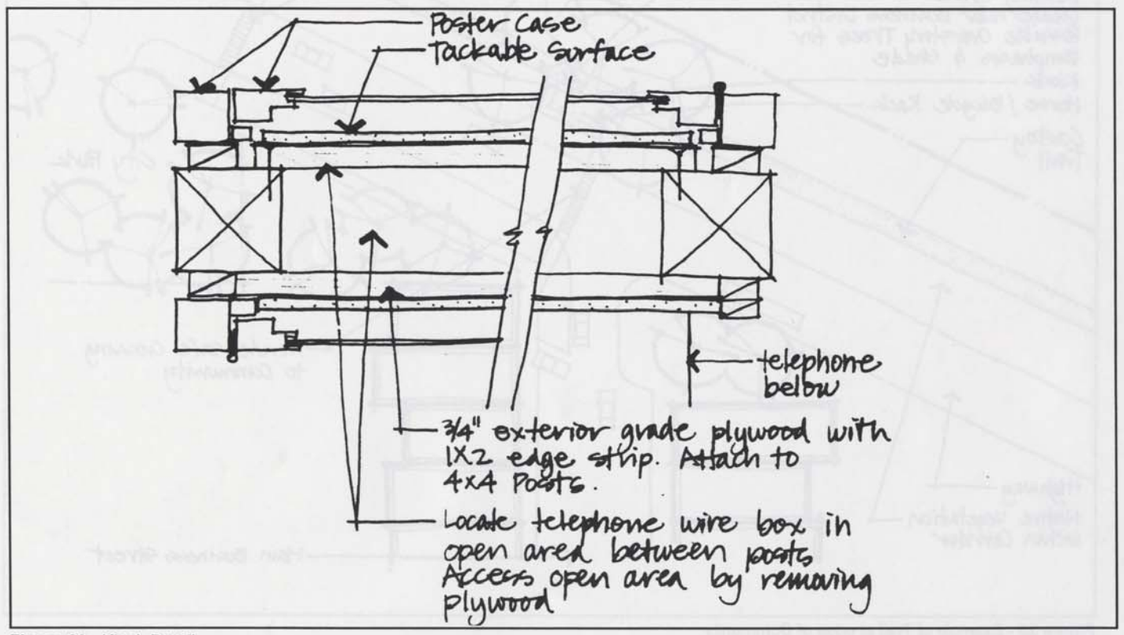


Figure 26 - Kiosk Detail

Materials and Connections
All wood to be cedar. All connections to be nailed (16d galvanized) or screwed (2½" galvanized) unless otherwise noted. Bolt connections to be 3/8" galvanized hex head bolt, to be arranged as shown on the drawings. Tackable surface to be 3/8" thick Tuf-tile, black with white flecks, manufactured by Kiefer, Zion, IL. Poster case to be aluminum with Door Model H. Provide door latch, black anodized, manufactured by Poblock's and Sons, West Allis, WI.

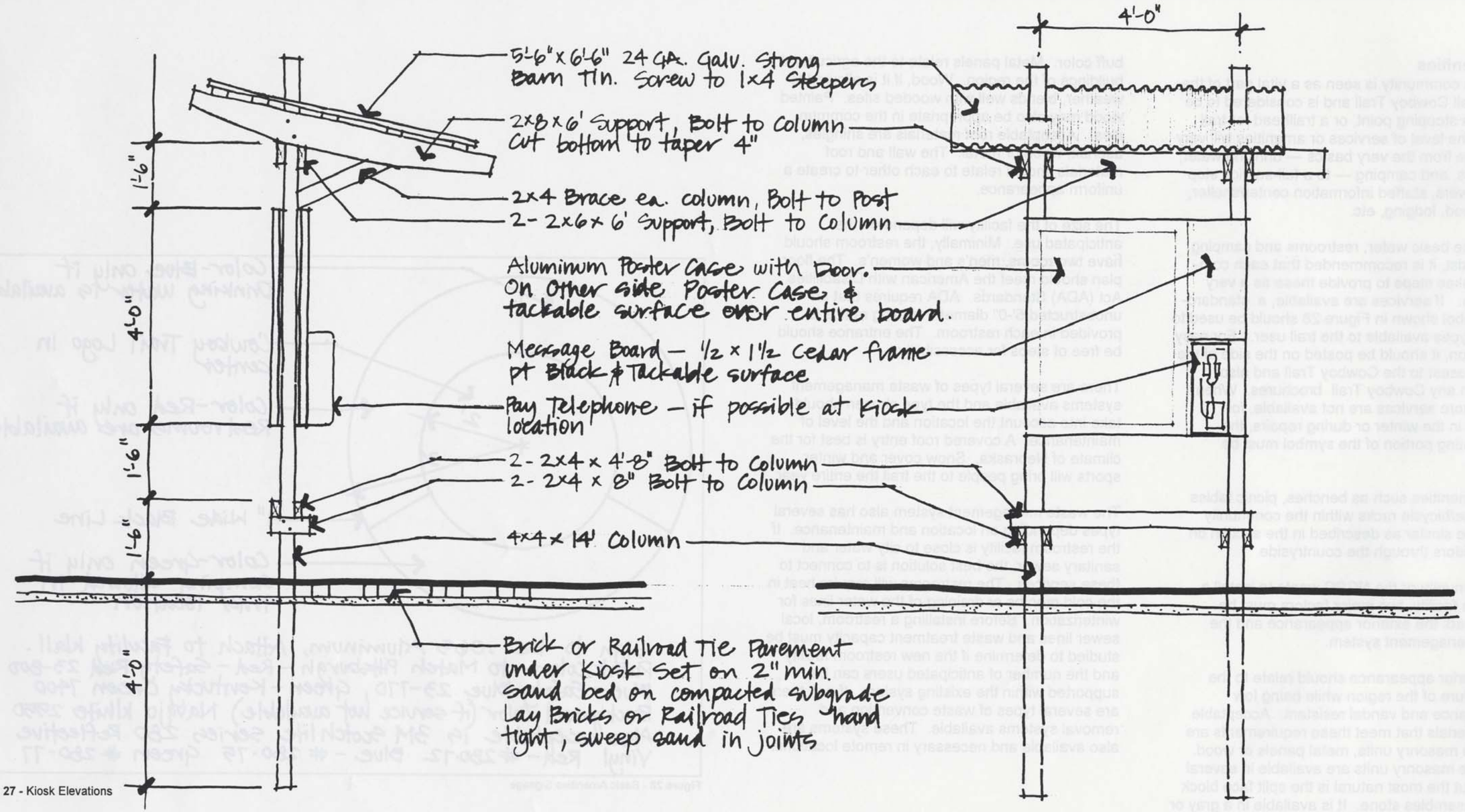


Figure 27 - Kiosk Elevations

6 Amenities

Each community is seen as a vital part of the overall Cowboy Trail and is considered to be a node, a stopping point, or a trailhead for trail users. The level of services or amenities will vary and range from the very basics — drinking water, restrooms, and camping — to a full-service stop with showers, staffed information center/shelter, shops, food, lodging, etc.

Where the basic water, restrooms and camping do not exist, it is recommended that each community takes steps to provide these as a very minimum. If services are available, a standardized symbol shown in Figure 28 should be used to identify types available to the trail user. For easy recognition, it should be posted on the side of the facility closest to the Cowboy Trail and also appear in any Cowboy Trail brochures. When one or more services are not available, for example in the winter or during repairs, the representing portion of the symbol must be covered.

Site ammenities such as benches, picnic tables and horse/bicycle racks within the community should be similar as described in the section on trail corridors through the countryside.

If a community or the NGPC wants to install a restroom facility, two major factors must be considered: the exterior appearance and the waste management system.

The exterior appearance should relate to the architecture of the region while being low maintenance and vandal resistant. Acceptable wall materials that meet these requirements are concrete masonry units, metal panels or wood. Concrete masonry units are available in several types, but the most natural is the split face block which resembles stone. It is available in a gray or buff color. Metal panels relate to the agricultural buildings of the region. Wood, if it is allowed to weather, blends well with wooded sites. Painted wood may also be appropriate in the communities. Acceptable roof materials are shingles, asphalt, wood or metal. The wall and roof materials should relate to each other to create a uniform appearance.

The size of the facility will depend on the anticipated use. Minimally, the restroom should have two rooms, men's and women's. The floor plan should meet the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards. ADA requires that an unobstructed 5'-0" diameter turning radius is provided in each restroom. The entrance should be free of steps for accessibility.

There are several types of waste management systems available and the type chosen should take into account the location and the level of maintenance. A covered roof entry is best for the climate of Nebraska. Snow cover and winter sports will bring people to the trail the entire year.

The waste management system also has several types depending on location and maintenance. If the restroom facility is close to city water and sanitary sewer, the best solution is to connect to these services. The restrooms will require heat in the cold months or draining of the water lines for winterization. Before installing a restroom, local sewer lines and waste treatment capacity must be studied to determine if the new restroom facility and the number of anticipated users can be supported within the existing system. If not, there are several types of waste conversion and removal systems available. These systems are also available and necessary in remote locations.

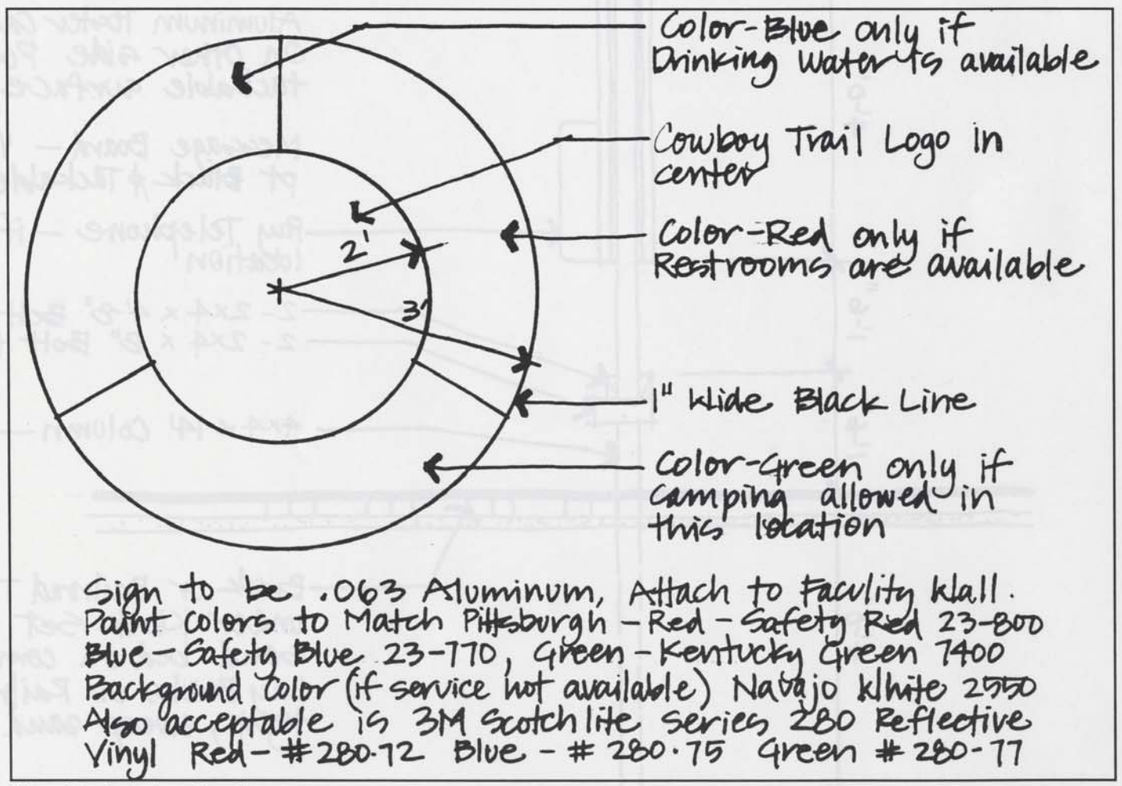


Figure 28 - Basic Amenities Signage

Vault toilets have been the most common remote type. They do not require water or electricity and can be used year round. Vault toilets are also low maintenance. However, new regulations and the cost of pumping out the vault and disposal can be variable and must be explored in each region before this system is installed. Two types of vaults are available: concrete and polyethylene. Concrete requires construction of poured-in-place, buried concrete walls. Polyethylene vaults are light and are delivered to the site ready to install. These are best used where ready-mix concrete is not conveniently available.

Composting and a new waste reduction system are also available as an alternative to the vault toilets. These systems are an environmentally sound solution to waste management. The final product is an organic compost that is low in pathogens and organically stable. It is suitable for use as a natural fertilizer in forest land or agricultural fields not used for growing crops for human consumption. This should be away from areas frequented by people and grazing animals.

These two systems are for remote locations. They require a 'basement' be built or located at a site with a ravine for the composting unit. A small fan is necessary for air movement. If electricity is not available at the site, a solar unit can be installed on the roof to run the fan.

The composting system requires some ongoing maintenance. Adding materials, such as sawdust, turning the compost pile, as well as removing the finished compost are required tasks. The waste reduction system has fewer required activities because of its newer technology. This system evaporates the water and therefore has very little waste accumulation. It requires a fresh water tank that needs to be filled every 18-21 days. It also requires regular maintenance to level the waste and the addition of wood shavings on a daily basis or depending on the use. Removal of the composted product is only required once a year.

All of these waste management systems have pre-fabricated buildings available, as well as the foundations for a complete unit that the company will install for a set price. Several different styles and designs are available. A thorough study of composting toilet systems, siting installation and maintenance must be accomplished when selecting a waste management system. The United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service has detailed publications available on composting toilets, maintenance, etc. General information on vault and composting toilets is available in the Appendix.

7 Vegetation

A typical linear green space within a community would include plant materials such as turf or native grasses, vegetation for screening and color, and trees for shade. Native vegetation is encouraged because it is adapted to the area and it serves to highlight the region's natural resources.

Historically, railroad companies acquired more land than was required for a single set of tracks. In some places, extra width was needed to allow trains to meet and pass one another. In some cases, the need was to switch train engines and cars, turn the engine for a return trip, or move the engine to a siding for repairs or servicing. Traces of more than one set of tracks can still be seen along the corridor.

The railroad was also involved in establishing towns to be of service and to be served by the rail company. C&NW's subsidiary firm, the Pioneer Town Site Company, filled that role. There are several towns along the Cowboy Trail that can trace their beginnings to the Pioneer Company.

The railroad retained title to the right-of-way adjacent to and under the tracks, the depot and other structures, but much of the adjacent townsite property was platted, subdivided and sold for private homes and businesses.

On average, the width of the railroad right-of-way is 100 feet, 50 feet on either side of the center of the corridor. However, there may be a great variance in the actual width. Railroad section maps are of some help in determining the historic widths. A combination of survey markers, set on the center line of the corridor, and railroad mile markers, are still used to define and set property boundaries.

Corridor stretches with extra wide right-of-way are primarily located within town boundaries and will create additional, unique opportunities for the community and NGPC to work together to simultaneously enhance the community and develop the trail.

Three communities stand out as having especially good opportunities available within the ROW.

Valentine is a community with evidence of multiple tracks through town. While there are no rail company buildings standing within the ROW, the agricultural structures on the adjoining properties, especially where the trail crosses the main street, could become an architectural theme for the trailhead located on the ROW. Figure 29 provides a suggested trailhead design with features that could easily be incorporated onto the ROW property at Valentine.

The trailhead location, in the heart of downtown, can also serve as a community identity/gathering area. An open air shelter to provide shade for the trail user, as well as community members, is the focus at the trailhead. The structure design should relate to the architecture of the area and in this case, to the adjacent agricultural buildings. A free standing wall taking the same form could represent the history of the area done in brick, native stone or a sand finished concrete. This is located on the west side of the shelter to provide some wind protection. A parking area is necessary in Valentine because it has been identified as a full service trailhead. A separate parking area is recommended. It will reduce conflict with traffic when unloading and loading bicycles. It will also give trail users the sense of security and willingness to leave their car there for an extended period of time.

A native grass and wildflower demonstration area could also be incorporated into this trailhead. A perennial planting bed of native plants with the plants labeled could be individually planted and numbered to create a manicured bed or seeded for a more natural approach. This would serve to help trail users identify plants outside of the community as they experience the countryside.

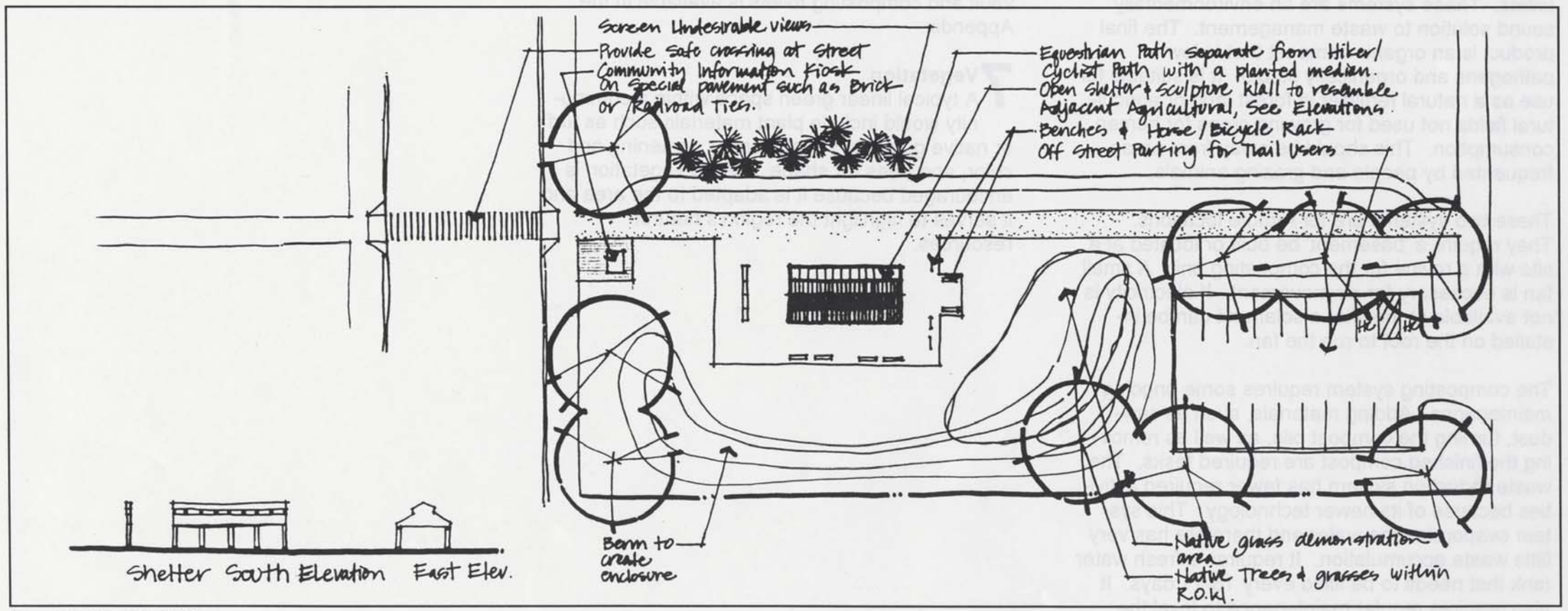


Figure 29 - Valentine ROW

Long Pine has great ROW width and two existing railroad structures; a depot and crew quarters (or bunk house) that remain on the ROW. Both buildings are ideal for trail related functions but are in need of repair and a permanent use. Another structure, a round house, once stood in the ROW at Long Pine, but today only portions of the foundation remain. A freight depot also once stood within the ROW near the existing depot. See Figure 30.

All four of these buildings, the large number of tracks that once occupied the ROW and the extensive railroad history in Long Pine, are important elements to interpret to the trail user.

The site of the round house with the edges defined will interpret the shape and size of this unique facility. The area once shaded by the round house should be a different grass or ground cover than the surrounding landscape to demonstrate the size. The circular center of the round house could be built up by a deck, to represent a floor, and be the viewing platform with additional photos.

The large number of "tracks" that occupied the ROW is also important to display. This could be accomplished by a photo, drawing or actually laying ballast and ties where they once were in the area of the round house. An interpretative structure would provide photos of both the round house and the surrounding area along with descriptions of the history.

The extra ROW width can be used for educational gardens. A butterfly garden and a native grass and wildflower garden could be planted with seating areas within them. The plants should be labeled to help the trail user and community members identify plants along the Cowboy Trail or for creating their own residential gardens. See Figure 30.

The equestrian path within Long Pine can be located away from the main hiker/cyclist trail because of the extra wide ROW. The path should be defined and surfaced with a minimum distance of 100' away from residential areas. A separate street crossing could be provided for the equestrian if the path is at least 200' from the hiker/cyclist trail crossing.

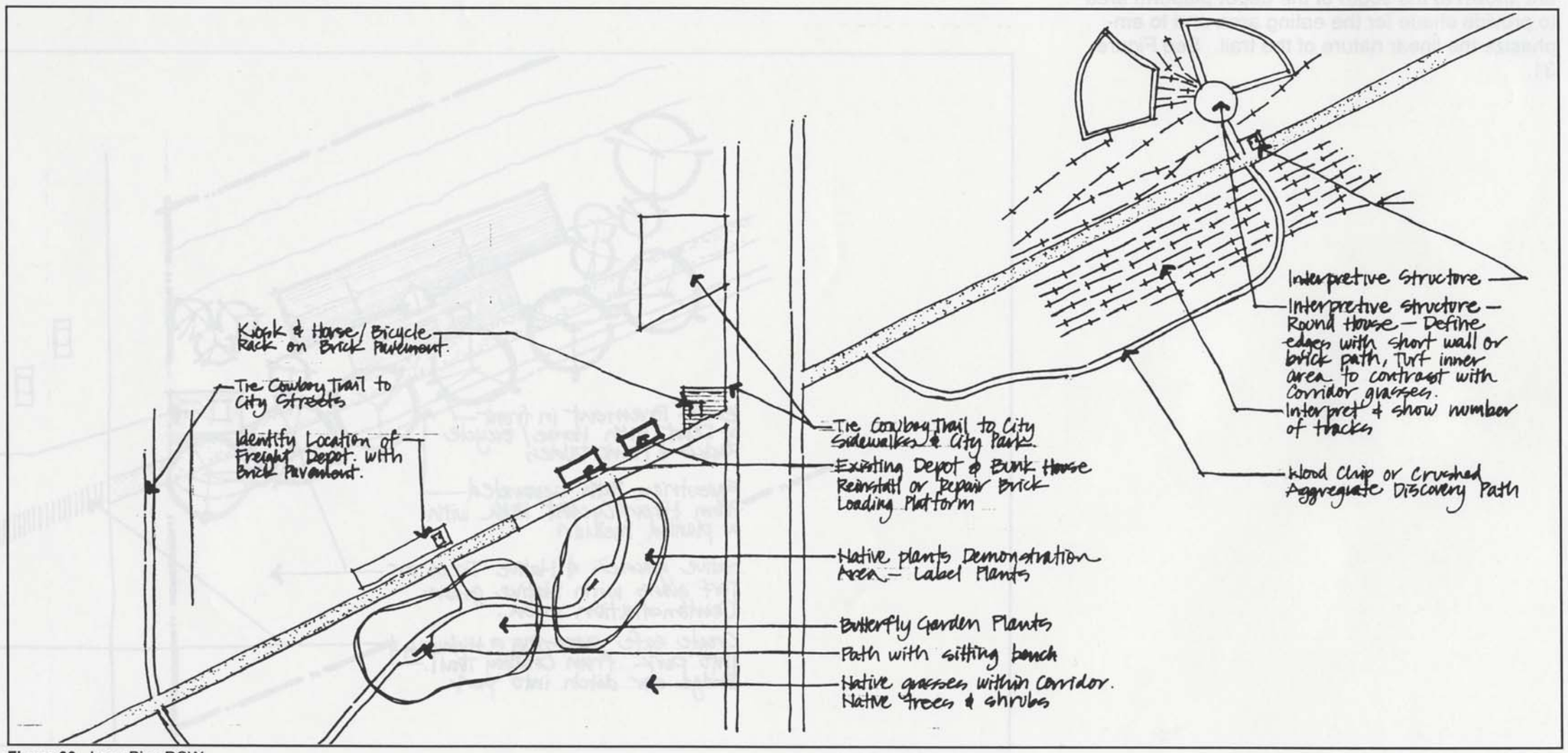


Figure 30 - Long Pine ROW

O'Neill has the only remaining Cowboy Line depot with historic landmark status. In addition to the extra width of the ROW, the City of O'Neill has acquired the property facing the depot for future possible trail-related uses. The depot is being renovated to serve a community and trail user function. The area next to the building's main entries should be surfaced with brick or a similar material to represent the loading platform. This area could then be used for outdoor eating and a gathering area. Overstory trees are shown to the south of the depot platform area to provide shade for the eating area and to emphasize the linear nature of the trail. See Figure 31.

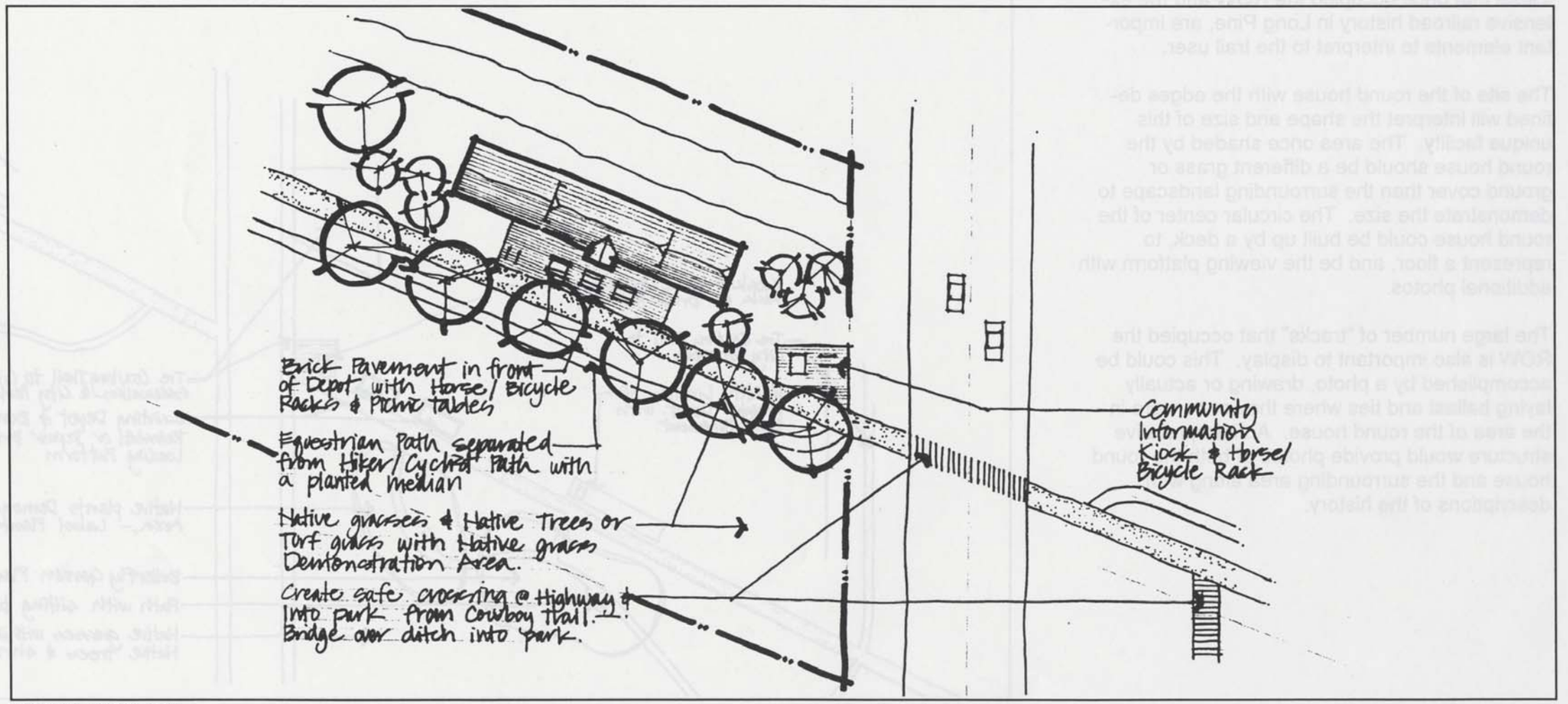


Figure 31 - O'Neill ROW

Other communities also have extra ROW width. In these communities, if the basic amenities mentioned earlier are not available, these basic amenities — drinking water, restrooms and camping, as well as parking — can be provided within the wide ROW. Figure 32 shows how this may be accomplished. As the trail progresses and becomes more widely known, additional services and amenities may be needed. These wide ROW parcels could provide additional amenities and trailhead sites for the communities.

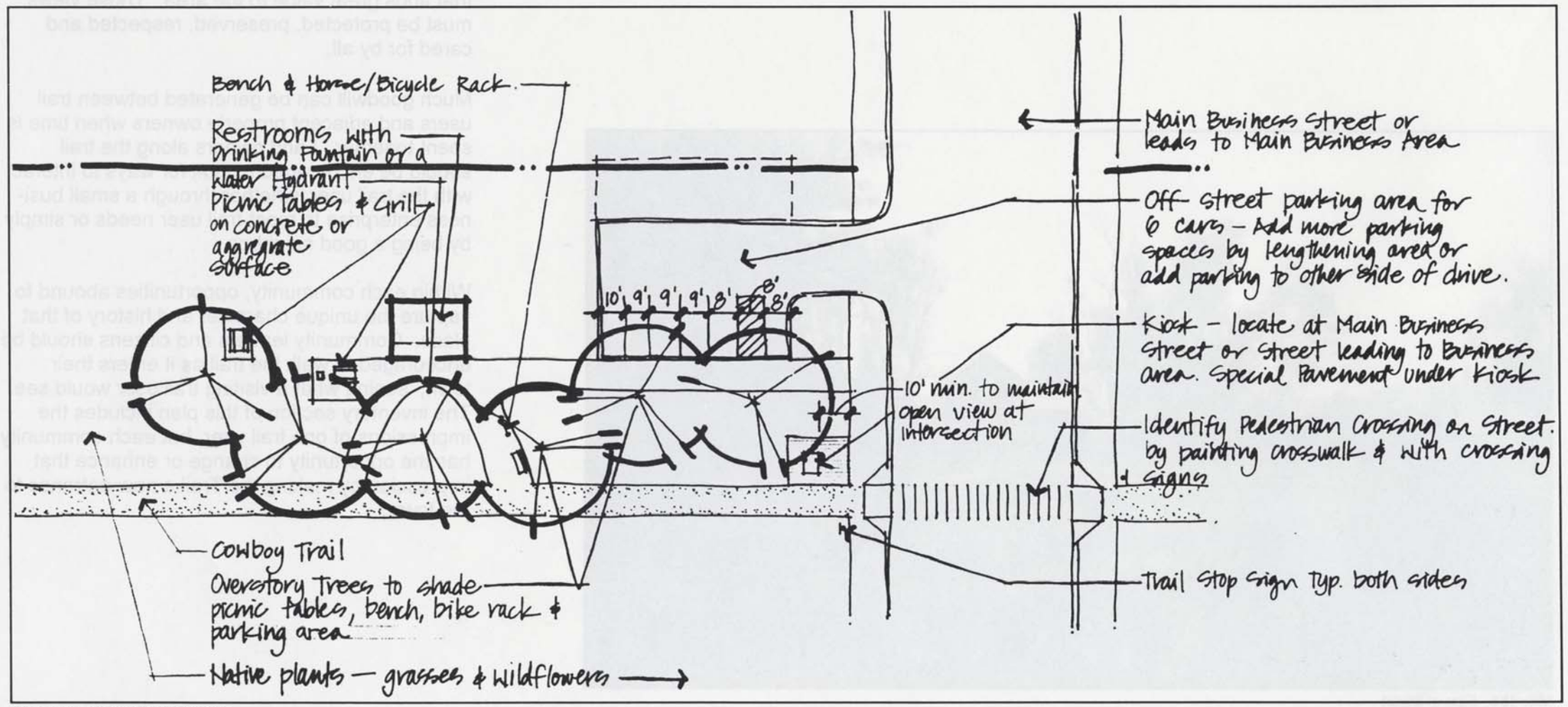


Figure 32 - Wide Right of Ways

The Cowboy Trail, first and foremost, adjoins private property. The trail's neighbors own and live on, work and maintain the surrounding ranches and farm lands. For them, this is home. It is their livelihood. Their way of life.

The existence of this corridor is nothing new to the neighborhood. As the CowboyTrail is used, however, new activities and unknown people will be passing through their neighborhood. Mutual respect is essential.

People who will be using the trail as it goes through the countryside will be most interested in experiencing the unique characteristics of the trail — its length, its changing terrain, its scenic points.

It is expected that a number of trail users will be unfamiliar with Nebraska's ranching and farming enterprises. Proper trail etiquette, especially where unusual circumstances may present themselves, should be clearly posted and included in all trail literature for trail users.

Mile 183 - East of Stuart

For the trail user, the views seen from the trail are an integral part of the total experience of north central Nebraska, but leaving the trail's right-of-way to 'get a closer look' is trespassing on private property and a serious violation of trail etiquette. Trail users should be reminded frequently that it is the *trail*, not the adjacent private property, they have come to ride or walk, see and hear, learn from and about.

For both the local land owner and the traveling trail user, it is the view of the adjoining property that adds great value to the area. Those views must be protected, preserved, respected and cared for by all.

Much goodwill can be generated between trail users and adjacent property owners when time is spent together. Land owners along the trail should be encouraged to look for ways to interact with the trail user, whether through a small business enterprise to meet trail user needs or simply by being a good neighbor.

Within each community, opportunities abound to capture the unique character and history of that place. Community leaders and citizens should be encouraged to walk the trail as it enters their town, seeing what a visiting trail user would see. The inventory section of this plan includes the impressions of one trail user, but each community has the opportunity to change or enhance that impression by making the Trail a new entrance to the town.

Trail-focused businesses are a welcome sight to a trail user. Paint and plantings can diminish otherwise unattractive areas next to the corridor. A community pride and clean up day can be both fun and productive. Trail users should also be invited. Make it easy to find a place to eat or sleep or to find a drink of water. Clean restrooms and campgrounds are a sure sign of a caring community.

Many of the towns have features that may seem common and ordinary because they have always been there. But these are the very features that nonresidents will find attractive. The grain storage bins, the hay office, the windmills, the cattle pens and loading docks — each could provide a community theme.

Communities all along the trail should be encouraged and challenged to become involved with the trail and the trail users.

Issues of liability are best anticipated and planned for while still in the design and development stages of a trail project. As the managing agency, NGPC should begin immediately to write a management plan that will minimize the risk potential for the state, the trail users, and the adjacent property owners, all of whom have unique and separate concerns.

There are generally four areas of potential liability of a trail manager to the users of the trail: 1) user injuries caused by conditions of the trail itself, 2) user injuries caused by the conditions of the property adjacent to the trail but within the ROW, 3) user injuries caused by multiple types of uses on a single corridor, and 4) user injuries caused by crime against the trail user.

It is important that NGPC determine a program of maintenance and management for both the trail and the wider ROW in order to lessen the risks caused by deteriorating trail conditions. Regular and routine checks of the trail tread, bridge decking and handrails, crossings, signs, and vegetation must be implemented. Storms, floods and high winds often cause damage that will need to be attended to for the safety of users and the preservation of the trail. Policy, criteria and procedures should be established for either posting of unsafe conditions or of closing the trail should it become necessary. Much of the basic maintenance, clean-up and patrol of the trail can be incorporated into an adopt-a-trail program in partnership with businesses, groups and communities along the trail. A system to report dangerous conditions along the trail should be designed and made readily available to trail users.

Multiple use trails require clearly stated 'rules of the road' or trail etiquette (see below). These should be posted at each trailhead and printed on all literature. Methods of enforcement and consequences for violations should be determined by the managing agency in conjunction with citizen input.

Cowboy Trail Etiquette

1 Cyclists yield to walkers, wheelchairs and horses.
2 Walkers yield to horses.
3 Keep dogs on a leash and under control.
4 Clean up after your dog and/or horse.
5 No open fires.
6 No firearms on and no hunting from trail.
7 Respect trail neighbors, their livestock and their property. No trespassing on adjacent property.
8 Camp only in designated areas.
9 Pick up and pack out all litter.
10 Leave plant life undisturbed. Do not pick flowers or grasses. Do not injure trees or shrubs.
11 Do not chase, tease or injure wild or domesticated animals.
12 Emergency assistance: 911. Use nearest mile post number as locator.
13 Trail open only in daylight hours.

Examples of Trail Etiquette

Crimes committed against trail users on trails are not frequent but they are possible. Trail users should be informed about emergency numbers for such incidents. Local sheriff and police departments should be trained in responding to such instances on the trail. They will need to have available the trail maps with the mile markers indicated as well as intersecting cross roads and driveways. Keeping brush and tall grasses cleared from trail edges will also lessen the surprise element used in crime.

The managing agency has the responsibility to develop and maintain a safe environment along the trail for both the trail user and the adjacent property owners. Control of noxious weeds and mowing (when not under a haying lease) within the ROW is the responsibility of NGPC or its hired agent. Efforts should be taken to instill a good neighbor approach to dealing with concerns and problems along the ROW. NGPC should execute an immediate response policy to any damage to fences and property caused by trail users and/or the managing agency or its agent. Adjacent property owners should be encouraged to report incidents immediately to a designated authority.

Communications with adjacent property owners should include copies of the recreational use statutes (see Appendixes), interpretation of those statutes, contact numbers and procedures for reporting hazardous conditions or violations of trespassing. Their active awareness of trail etiquette, responsibilities and enforcement mechanisms can become an important part of the trail's risk management.

Trail users who leave the trail's ROW are trespassing. This violation of private property should be clearly posted at regular intervals, included on information panels and printed in trail literature. Volunteer patrol groups, working in conjunction with the local law and NGPC officials, should be trained and authorized to enforce violations.

Liability can also be managed by encouraging trail users to take personal responsibility. Safety programs for bicyclists and equestrians, helmet laws, speed limits, and basic first aid information should be made easily available. Contracts with special event users should include release or waiver agreements to transfer liability from NGPC to the sponsoring group.

Critical to a sound program of risk management and the reduction of liability include establishing and attaining:

1. quality design and construction standards;

2. well developed and implemented procedures for maintenance, repairs and corrections;

3. a program of education and neighborly relations with adjacent property owners;

4. the encouragement of personal responsibility through education, assistance, and partnerships in maintenance, safety and enforcement of sound trail etiquette.

This section places amenities, attractions, points of interest, signs and intersections at the appropriate mile markers along the trail. Items found during the inventory and determined to be of interest to trail users are included. Also listed are important elements that will need to be added for trail users. Each element is marked with a distinctive symbol in the list and on the corresponding map found on the complementing page.

Symbols and Definitions:

Amenities

The items and services needed by trail users. Basic amenities are water, restrooms and camping. More extensive amenities would include RV camping, hotels, motels, restaurants, grocery stores, shops, showers, etc.

Kiosk

A structure located on the trail within each community. Trail users will find information about the community, the available services, a trail map and a message board. Pay phones would be installed here. A common design will be used in each community but will have a place for a distinctive community look. All community kiosks will be at the point where the trail is closest to the main business street. Larger communities may need additional kiosks at major entry points to the community.

Intersection

Points where major highways and roads cross the trail.

Point of Interest

Places to stop and rest along the trail. These are determined to be of particular beauty and near a community.

Connections

Other routes or trails linking out from the Cowboy Trail to provide a trail user with access to off-trail experiences and to connect to recreational, scenic and historic sites.

C Cultural Identities

A distinctive characteristic, theme, or image that defines or establishes a community's identity or recognition.

H Historic Attractions

Designated as having some historic significance. This may be a building and/or a site of an event.

R Recreational Opportunities

Off-trail sites for play, includes playgrounds for children, ball fields, tennis courts, golf courses, swimming, hiking, canoeing, boating, rafting, etc.

S Scenic Attractions

Spectacular views and areas of secluded, natural beauty set aside for viewing wild life, native flowers, trees, shrubs and plants. Often will include educational panels describing the view or the vegetation.

Connections and Points of Interest will be identified as to specific areas of interest listed above. These will be indicated with a specific color on the interpretive panel and on the directional arrow.

The following maps display these areas by a colored square, while the description is shown with a letter in a square: Cultural Identities C; Historic Attractions H, purple; Recreational Opportunities R, brown; Scenic Attractions S, yellow.

Mile 332 to Mile 276

Mile 330
Point of Interest

Mile 331
Recreation

Mile 332
Merriman
Intersection with Highway
Historic Site

Mile 321
Eli
Intersection with Highway

Mile 318
Point of Interest

Mile 314
Historic Site

Mile 308-307
Cody
Intersection with Highway
Recreation

Mile 300
Henzel
Intersection with Highway
Scenic Attraction

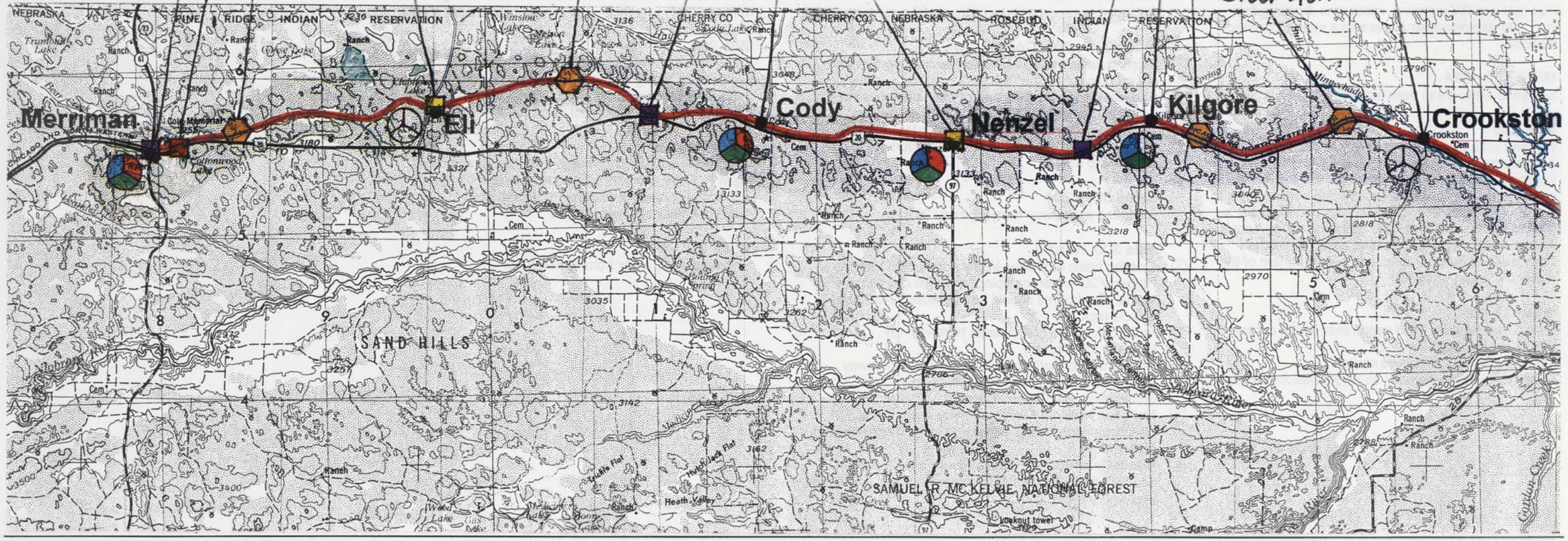
Mile 295
Historic Site

Mile 292
Kilgore

Mile 290
Point of Interest

Mile 284
Point of Interest

Mile 281
Crookston



Mile 332 Merriman

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms, tent and RV camping at the local park. Add horse/bicycle racks. As the current beginning or end point for the trail, it will attract many users.

Add kiosk where trail crosses main business street.

Highway 61 (north and south).

H Historic Arthur Bowring Ranch State Park; 1½ miles north on Highway 61. Add directional structure or panel on kiosk and mark a designated connector route.

Potential for future connector trail to South Dakota.

Mile 331

R Cottonwood Lake State Recreation Area, 1 mile SE. Has tent and RV camping, restrooms, boating, fishing. Add directional structure and a marked connector route.

Miles 330 - 314

Secluded area, away from highway.

Mile 330

Wetland area that provides excellent wildlife viewing. Add interpretive structure to describe and depict wildlife possibilities and identify the next point of interest near Eli. Since this site is expected to be used by bird and wildlife observers, add a 2-3 car parking area, a path to the viewing area, and sitting bench with arms. Add horse/bicycle rack at sitting area. As usage increases, add a deck to extend over a portion of the wetlands. See Figure 18.

Mile 321 Eli

No basic amenities. Add water, restrooms, camping. Include horse/bicycle rack.

Add kiosk at main business street.

Local road, <10 miles north to South Dakota border.

Mile 318

Abundant wildlife viewing will be attractive to bird watchers traveling to this area by car as well as trail users. Add parking area for 2-3 cars at the roadside, footpaths for access to the viewing areas, and benches with arms at the viewing sites. Add horse/bicycle rack at viewing site. As usage increases, add a deck to extend over a portion of the wetlands. See Figures 20-23.

Mile 314 Roxby

H Early railroad stop listed on 1895 maps. Add interpretive structure and town sign.

Miles 311 - 309

Secluded area, away from Highway 20.

Miles 308 - 307 Cody

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms, tent and RV camping.

Add kiosk near city park and/or main business street. Add horse/bicycle rack.

Local road north to South Dakota border.

R Local park with ball fields and tennis court adjacent to trail.

Miles 304 - 301

Secluded area away from Highway 20.

Mile 300 Nenzel

Existing basic amenities in city park located across Highway 20: water, camping, primitive out-house style toilets. Restrooms should be upgraded. Add horse/bicycle rack.

Add kiosk where trail crosses Highway 16F.

Highway 16F (south).

Add connector path to city park. Include highway safety markers indicating trail crossing and stop sign on connector path for trail user.

S McKelvie National Forest, 10 miles south. Add directional structure or panel on kiosk. Designate and sign a route.

S Merritt Reservoir and Snake River Falls, 25 miles south. Add to directional structure or panel. Designate and sign a route.

Mile 295 Georgia

H Early railroad stop listed on 1895 maps. Add interpretive structure and town sign.

Mile 292 Kilgore

Existing basic amenities: drinking water and tent camping in city park. Add restrooms, horse/bicycle racks.

Add kiosk where trail crosses main business street.

H Log cabins. Add directional structure or panel on kiosk.

Mile 290 (approximately)

Cross the Mountain Standard/Central Standard Time Line – from west to east, lose an hour. Add a sign or marker.

Mile 284

A quiet area for resting and enjoying the scenery. Add two or three sitting rocks for users to enjoy this view and a horse/bicycle rack. Add an interpretive structure that describes the ecology of the sandhills.

Mile 281 Crookston

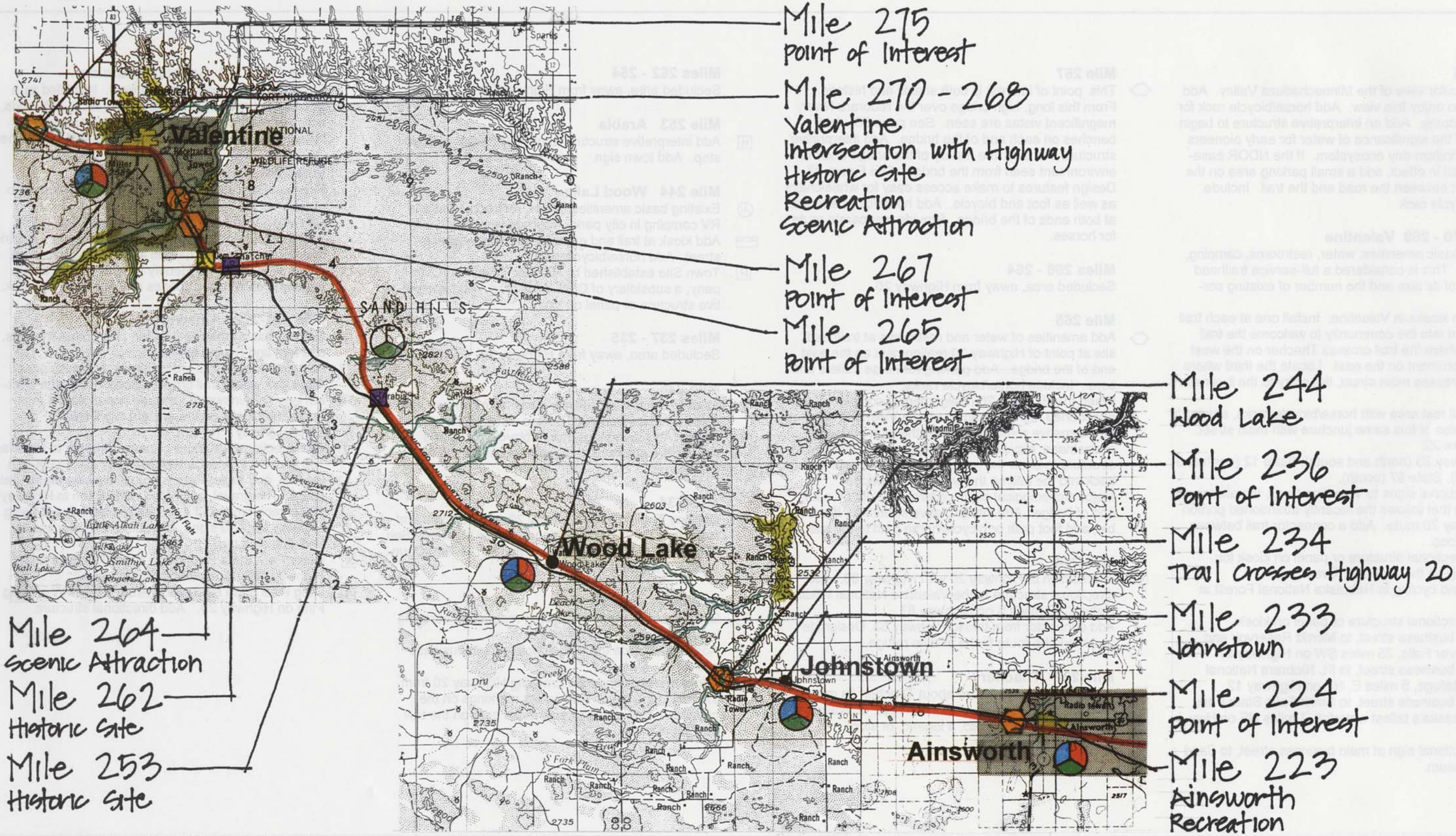
No basic amenities. Add water, restrooms, and camping in ROW or city park. Could also be combined with highway rest area. Add horse/bicycle rack.

Add kiosk near business district.

Miles 278 - 276

Secluded area, away from Highway 20.

Mile 276 to Mile 221



Mile 275

A spectacular view of the Minnechaduza Valley. Add a bench to enjoy this view. Add horse/bicycle rack for those stopping. Add an interpretive structure to begin a story of the significance of water for early pioneers and the modern day ecosystem. If the NDOR easement is still in effect, add a small parking area on the easement between the road and the trail. Include horse/bicycle rack.

Miles 270 - 268 Valentine

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms, camping, showers. This is considered a full-service trailhead because of its size and the number of existing services.

Add three kiosks in Valentine. Install one at each trail entry point into the community to welcome the trail user — where the trail crosses Thacher on the west and Government on the east. Locate the third where the trail crosses main street, the entry to the business district.

Add a trail rest area with horse/bicycle racks, shade, picnic tables at this same juncture with main street. See Figure 29.

US Highway 83 (north and south), State 12 (north and then east), State 97 (south).

Add directional signs to Valentine Loop, the alternative route that follows the recently abandoned portion of Highway 20 route. Add a connector trail between trail and loop.

R Add a directional structure or panel on kiosk for:
canoeing on the Niobrara River.
hiking and cycling in Nebraska National Forest at Halsey.

S Add a directional structure or panel on kiosk:
at main business street, to Merritt Reservoir and Snake River Falls, 25 miles SW on Highway 97.
at main business street, to Ft. Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge, 5 miles E, NE on Highway 12
at main business street, to Smith Falls State Park with Nebraska's tallest waterfall, 7 miles NE on Hwy 12.

H Add directional sign at main business street, to Sand Hills Museum.

Mile 267

This point of interest is both scenic and historic. From this long, high bridge over the Niobrara River, magnificent vistas are seen. See page 68. Add benches on each end of the bridge. Add interpretive structure that tells the history of the bridge and the environment seen from the bridge. See Figure 33. Design features to make access easy for wheelchairs as well as foot and bicycle. Add horse/bicycle racks at both ends of the bridge. Provide a separate route for horses.

Miles 266 - 264

Secluded area, away from Highway 20.

Mile 265

Add amenities of water and restrooms at trailhead site at point of Highway 20 realignment on the east end of the bridge. Add parking for horse trailers and cars . Include horse/bicycle racks.

When the Highway 20 realignment is completed, the abandoned highway can provide a Valentine Loop as an alternative route to crossing the high bridge for equestrians, bicyclists and walkers. Add interpretive structure to show the route, distance and connection back into the trail on the west side of bridge.

Major archeological dig in progress at foot of east end of bridge. Add interpretative structure. If possible, add foot path or bicycle/horse path to the site.

Mile 264

S Intersection of Highway 20 with Highway 83. Add directional structure to the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, 17 miles S on Highway 83.

Add connector from trail to Highway 83. Designate and mark the route to the wildlife refuge.

Mile 262 Thacher

H Add interpretive structure about Thacher, its role and relationship to railroad. Add town sign. If available, include an historic photo, a legend, or story.

Miles 262 - 254

Secluded area, away from Highway 20

Mile 253 Arabia

H Add interpretive structure about this former railroad stop. Add town sign.

Mile 244 Wood Lake

Existing basic amenities: water, restroom, tent and RV camping in city park. Upgrade restrooms.

Add kiosk at trail and entrance to main business street. Add horse/bicycle rack.

H Town Site established by Pioneer Town Site Company, a subsidiary of C&NW Railroad. Add interpretive structure or panel on kiosk.

Miles 237 - 235

Secluded area, away from Highway 20.

Mile 236

Plum Creek trail crossing is away from highway, elevated and provides good scenic views of the creek valley. Add sitting logs, horse/bicycle racks and interpretive structure on changes occurring in the ecosystem.

Mile 234

Cowboy Trail crosses Highway 20. Add caution and stop signs on trail and caution signs for highway. See 'Signs' under Concept Development, Trail Thru Countryside (Section II – The Plan).

Mile 233 Johnstown

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms, camping in city park across Highway 20.

Add kiosk beside the trail, opposite main business street.

Add a marked connector crossing Highway 20 from the trail to the town. Add safety markings on the highway. Add horse/bicycle racks both on the trail and in the town.

Miles 224 - 211 Scenic Excursion

Secluded area, away from highway. Identified as a Scenic Excursion with points of interest at both ends, active interaction with two creeks, and passes through the communities of Ainsworth and Long Pine.

Mile 224

Morrison Park, currently undeveloped. Currently, no basic amenities

Ainsworth Morrison Park is the western end of the Scenic Excursion. Bone Creek runs through the park and creates a scenic natural area. Add interpretive structure with map to identify the route. Add small parking area with 4-5 spaces and horse/bicycle rack.

Mile 223-222 Ainsworth

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms, showers, and tent and RV camping.

Add kiosk where trail crosses main business street. Add kiosk where trail crosses Bone Creek, the western edge of Ainsworth. Include horse/bicycle rack. Add a third kiosk on the eastern city limits.

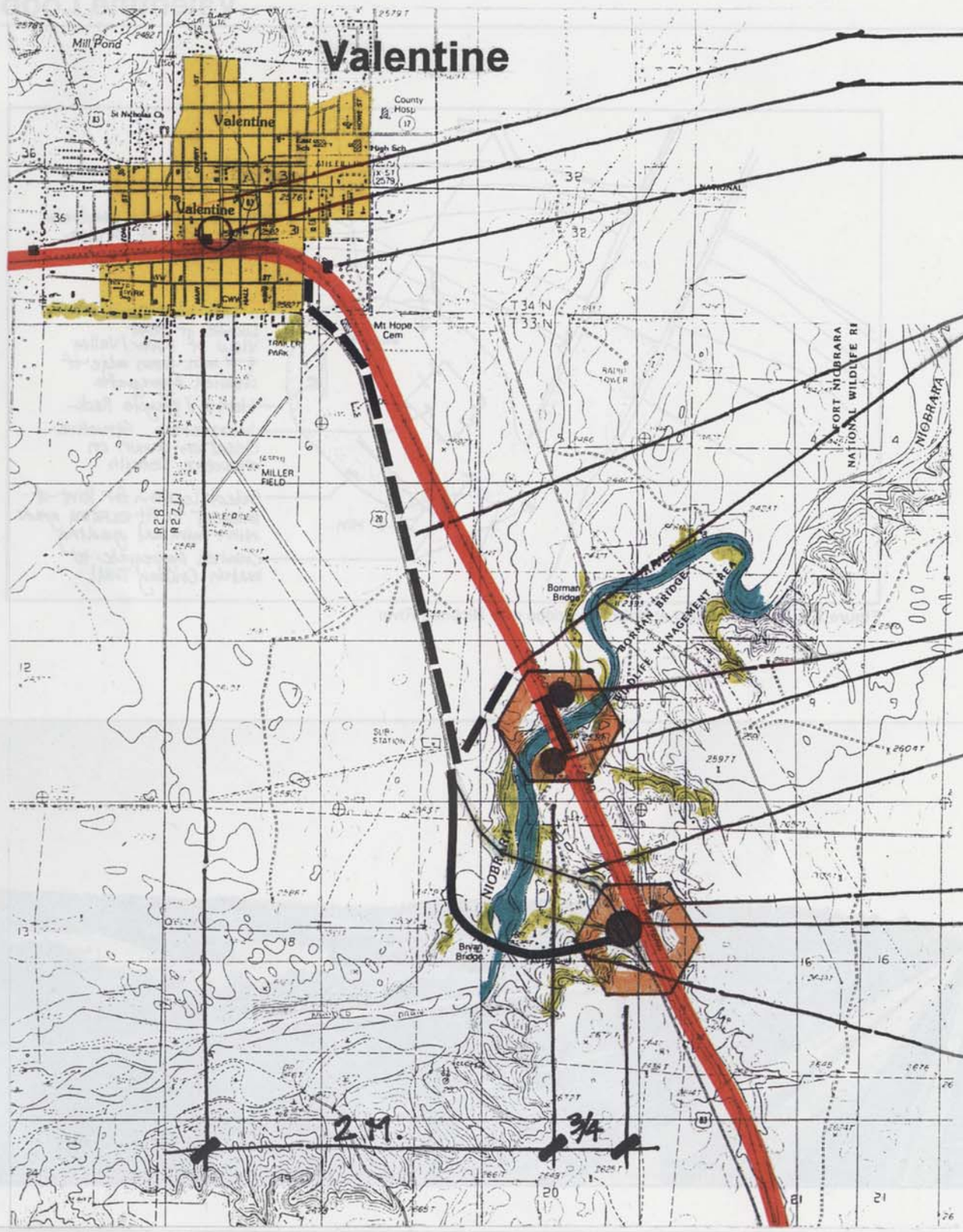
State Highway 7 (south).

Add directional structure or panel on kiosk to Highway 183, since it intersects with Highway 20 but not with the trail, and Keller Park is a possible side trip for trail users. The gravel, back road connection to Highway 183 is recommended as an ideal alternative to using Highway 20, add signs. It would allow for a scenic and safe side trip.

R Keller Park State Recreation Area, 7½ miles N on Highway 183. Add directional structure.

R Long Pine State Recreation Area, 2 miles W of Long Pine on Highway 20. Add directional structure.

Valentine Loop Mile 269 to Mile 265



Kiosk

Wide ROW for Basic Amenities & Kiosk

Kiosk

Connecting Loop to Valentine Trail within ROW of Highway or connection to Cowboy Trail through acquisition or easement of private property

Mile 267

Point of Interest

Interpretive Panel & Sitting Area

Highway 20

Mile 265

Point of Interest

Interpretive Panel

Parking

Old Highway 20 Trail & Local Traffic Use

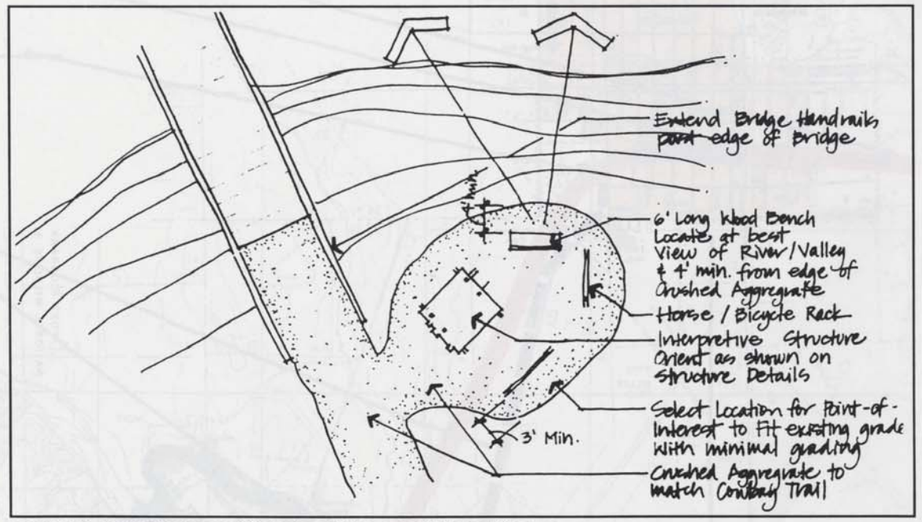
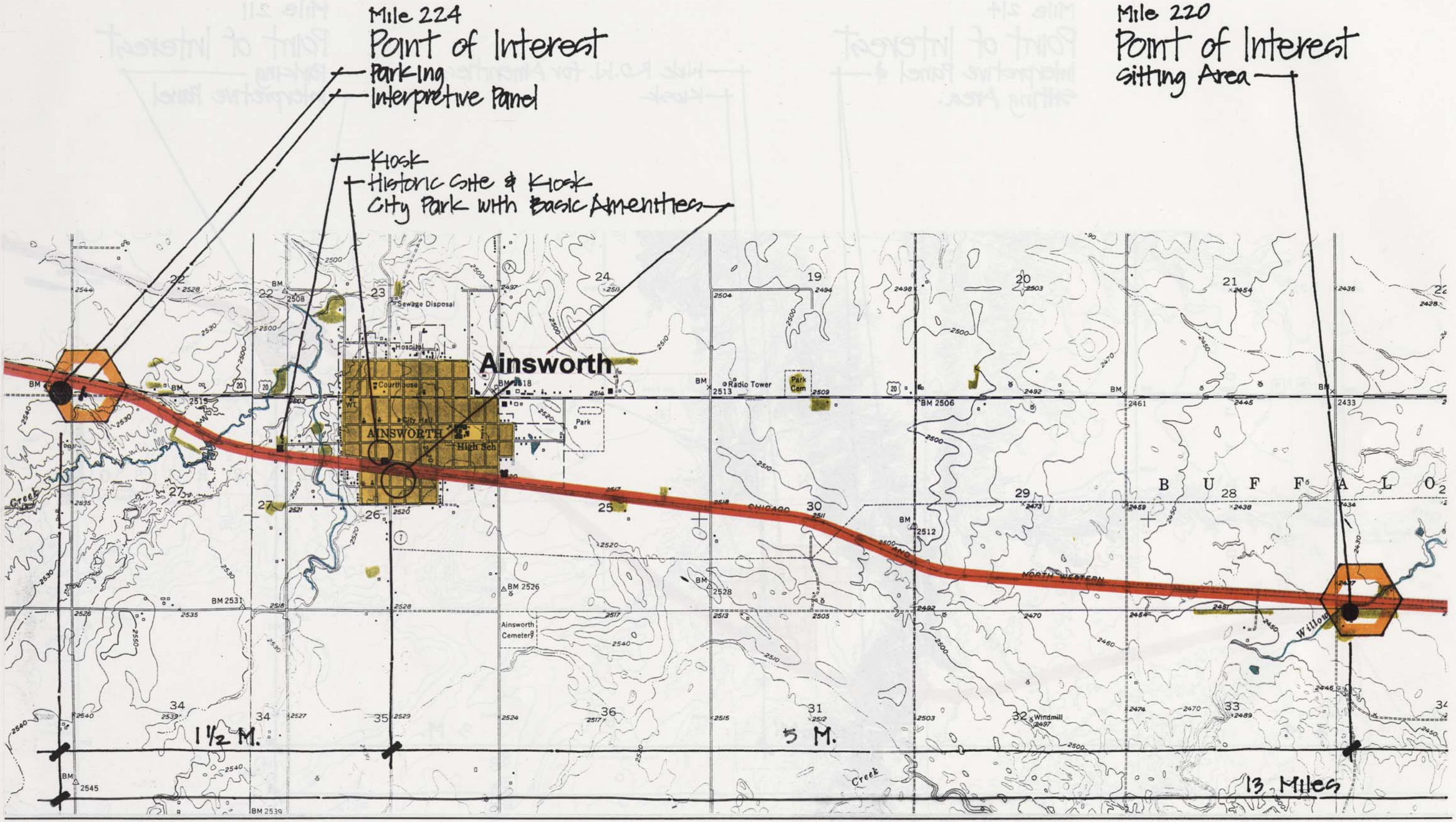


Figure 33 - Point of Interest at Valentine Bridge over Niobrara River

Mile 267 - Bridge over Niobrara River, East of Valentine

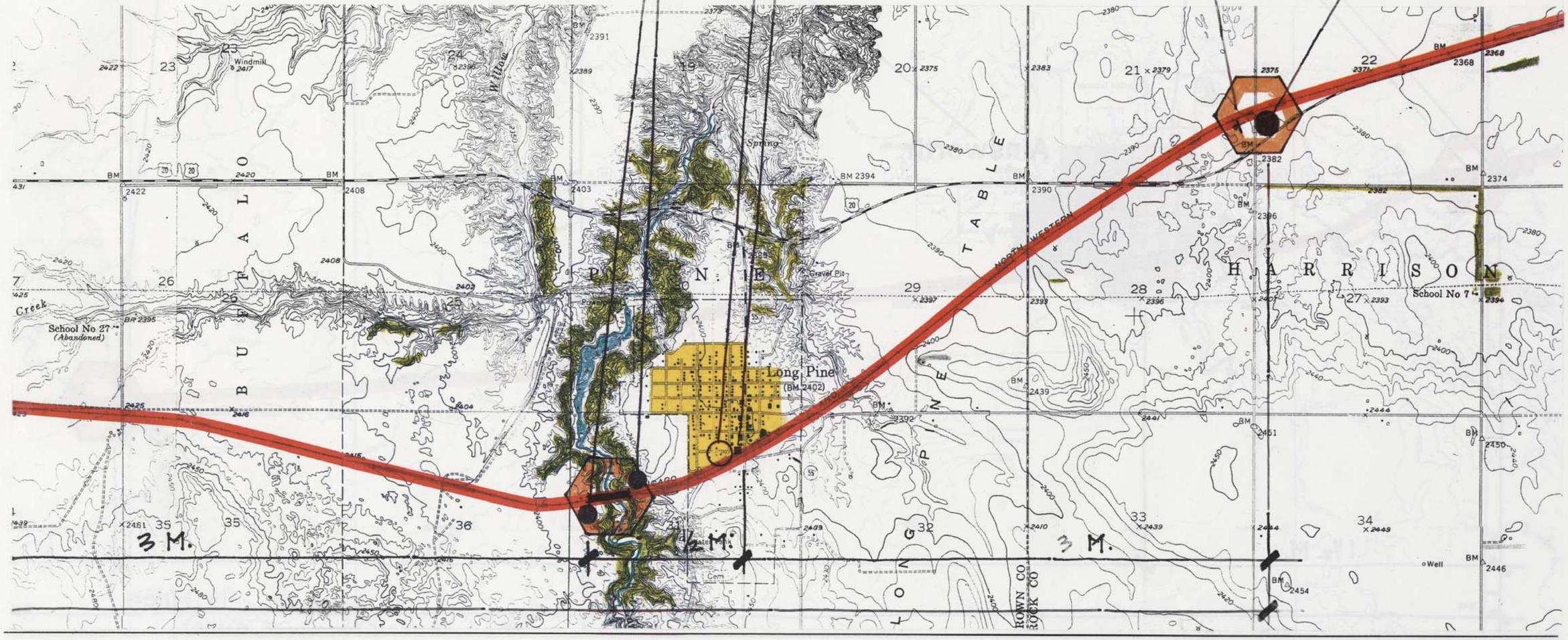
Scenic Excursion Mile 224 to Mile 211



Mile 214
Point of Interest
Interpretive Panel &
Sitting Area.

Wide R.O.W. for Amenities
Kiosk

Mile 211
Point of Interest
Parking
Interpretive Panel



Mile 221 to Mile 169

Mile 214 - 213
Long Pine
Historic Site

Mile 214
Point of Interest
Recreation

Mile 220
Point of Interest

Mile 211
Point of Interest

Mile 204
Bassett
Intersection with Highway

Mile 202
Point of Interest

Mile 198
Point of Interest

Mile 194
Point of Interest
Recreation

Mile 193
Newport
Intersection with Highway

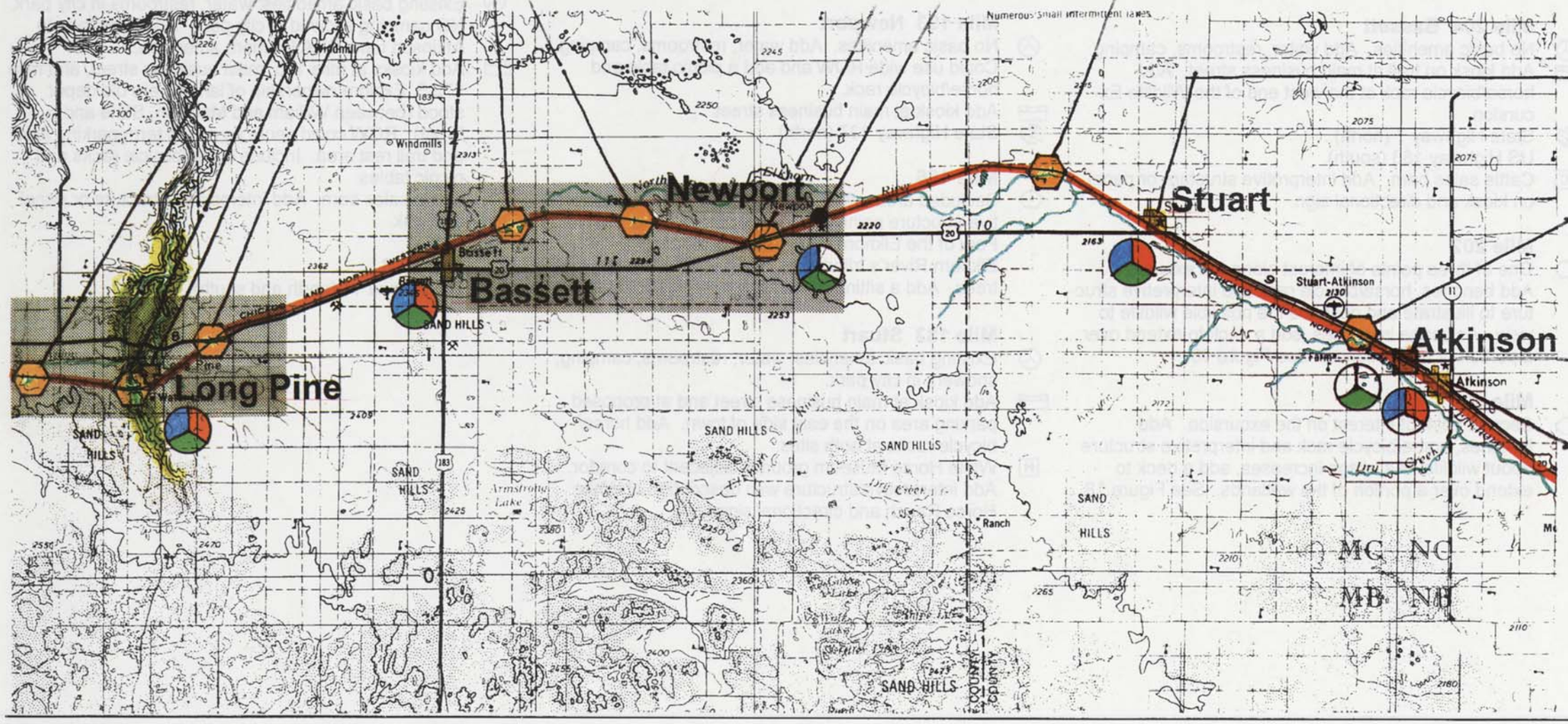
Mile 186
Point of Interest

Mile 183
Stuart
Trail crosses Highway 20

Mile 178
Point of Interest

Mile 176
Recreation

Mile 175 - 173
Atkinson
Intersection with Highway



Mile 220

Add sitting rock or log where the trail crosses Willow Creek. Add horse/bicycle rack.

Miles 216 - 214

When the railroad was rerouted at Long Pine, the route was shortened by one mile, but the mile markers were never corrected. Mile markers at Long Pine go from number 216 to number 214, and the trail user gets two miles for the price of one. Add to interpretive structure. Add interpretive structure about this historic bridge, the 'hidden paradise', and the surrounding environment. Add benches at each end of the bridge. Include a place for a wheelchair to stop and enjoy the view. Add horse/bicycle rack. Designate an alternative route for equestrian use.
The Creek is known for fine trout fishing.

Miles 214 - 213 Long Pine

Existing basic amenities: water, camping in city park. If depot is not restored, restrooms should be added near the camp site.
Long Pine should be considered a full-service trailhead because of location, historic railroad significance, and existing structures on a wide ROW. Seek out partnership with private business or individual to restore railroad crew quarters to create overnight sleeping accommodations. Rehabilitation would also include water, showers, and restrooms. Repair and convert the existing depot to include restrooms and showers for tent campers and trail users. Add horse/bicycle racks. Add parking for long-term trail users.

Add kiosk where trail crosses main business street, near the depot.

[H] Add an interpretive structure to explain the operation of the round house and the significance of the railroad to Long Pine. See Figure 30.
In the extra wide ROW, create living prairie gardens of native species and use signs to identify plants.

[H] Add to interpretive structure or panel on kiosk with the description of a Division Point in railroad history. Long Pine was such a terminus and mile marker 213 was the point of division.

Mile 211

The eastern end of the scenic excursion trail is located where the highway and the trail cross, this time through a trail underpass. Add interpretive structure to map the route of the excursion to include plants, animals, birds, towns and scenic vistas along the way. Add parking area of 4-5 spaces on the wide ROW where trail users may leave their vehicles while on the trail. Add horse/bicycle racks.

Miles 204 - 194 Wildlife Excursion

Secluded 9-mile segment, away from highway. This Wildlife Excursion is abundant with wetlands and wildlife.

Mile 204 Bassett

No basic amenities. Add water, restrooms, camping.
Add kiosk on trail at main business street. Add horse/bicycle rack at the west end of the Wildlife Excursion.
State Highway 7 (north).
US Highway 183 (south).

[C] Cattle sales barn. Add interpretive structure or panel on kiosk and directional sign.

Mile 202

One of three points of interest along the excursion. Add benches, horse/bicycle rack and interpretive structure to illustrate and describe the possible wildlife to view. As usage increases, add a deck to extend over a portion of the wetlands. See Figure 18.

Mile 198

Second point of interest on the excursion. Add benches, horse/bicycle rack and interpretive structure about wildlife. As usage increases, add a deck to extend over a portion of the wetlands. See Figure 18.

Mile 194

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms, camping located ¾ mile to east on Highway 20. Add crosswalk markings on highway and caution signs on trail side. Add horse/bicycle racks at both trail side and rest area. Playgrounds, picnic area, historic marker and parking at the rest stop.

[H] East end of the Wildlife Excursion. Add interpretive structure alongside the trail with map of excursion and possible wildlife sightings. Also, add interpretive structure within Nebraska's oldest roadside rest stop, ¾ mile east of Cowboy Trail adjacent to Highway 20. The structure shall tell the history of the stop, its founders and current ownership.

Mile 193 Newport

No basic amenities. Add water, restrooms, camping. Could use wide ROW and add a picnic table and horse/bicycle rack.
Add kiosk at main business street.
State Highway 137 (north)

Mile 186

Secluded area, away from Highway 20. Add interpretive structure pointing out the distant view of the North Fork of the Elkhorn River, the significance of the Elkhorn River's tributaries, and the far off cottonwood trees. Add a sitting rock or log, horse/bicycle rack.

Mile 183 Stuart

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms, camping, showers in city park.
Add kiosk at main business street and at proposed parking area on the east side of town. Add horse/bicycle racks at both sites.

[H] White Horse Museum grounds adjacent to corridor. Add interpretive structure with description of White Horse Ranch and directional signs.

Mile 178

Gravel mining sites and distant views of the tree masses along the Elkhorn River.
Add interpretive structure to describe history and significance of gravel industry. Old gravel pit, opened in 1885, recognized as a depression at mile 176 and newer, active pit seen in the distance at mile 178.

Mile 176

[R] Add directional structure to Atkinson Lake SRA where camping and basic amenities are available. Designate and mark a route.

Miles 175 - 173 Atkinson

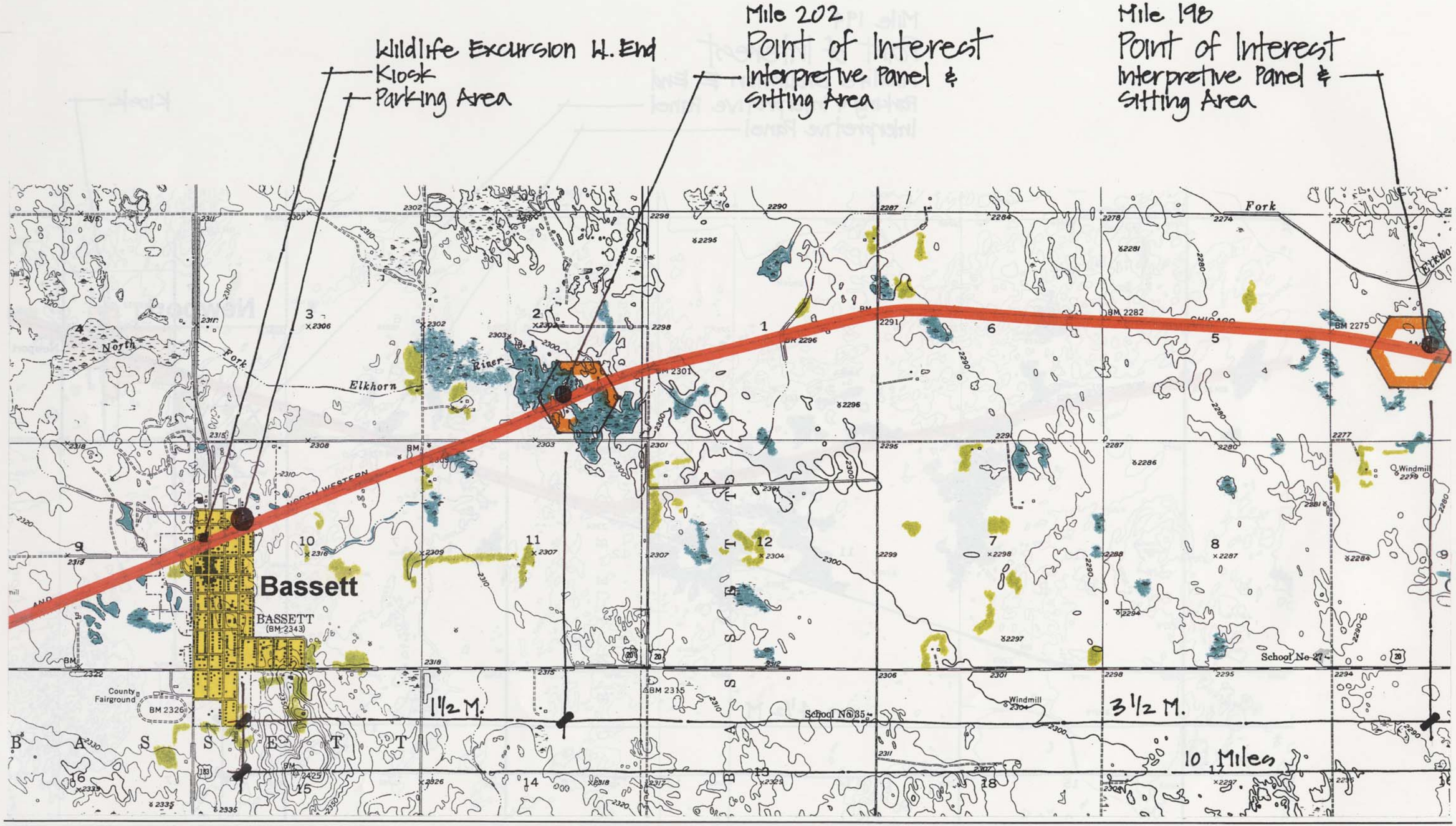
Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms in city park. NO camping allowed in city park. Add directions to Atkinson Lake SRA for more amenities.
Add kiosks at mile 175, main business street, and mile 173.5. Explore ownership of land where old depot stood (between William and Madison, State and Front). ROW could serve as a long term parking area and trail rest area. Include horse/bicycle racks and picnic tables.

[C] Cattle sales barn. Add interpretive structure or panel on kiosk.

Mile 173

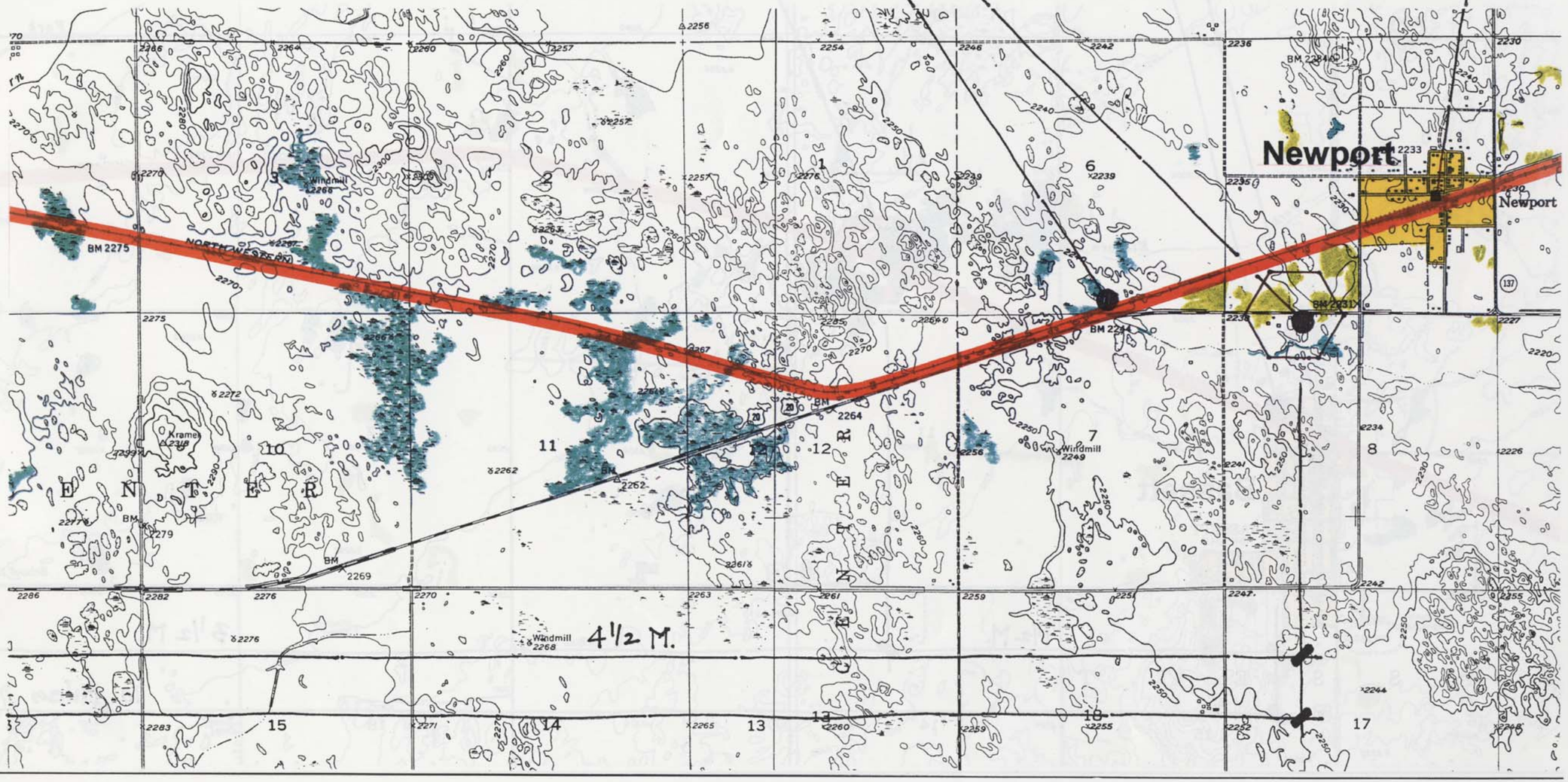
State Road 11 (north and south).

Wildlife Excursion Mile 204 to Mile 194

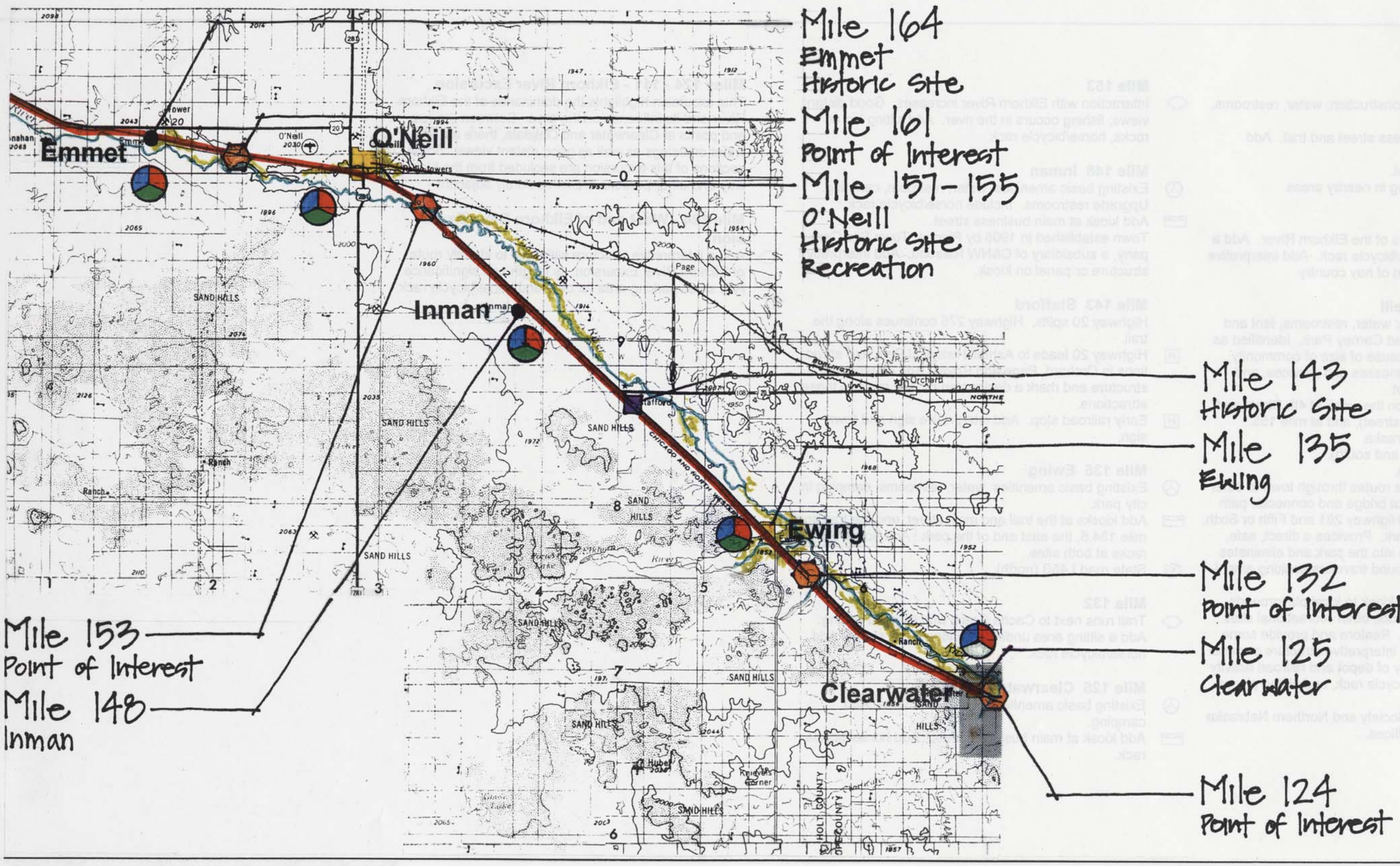


Mile 194
Point of Interest
Wildlife Excursion E. End
Parking & Interpretive Panel
Interpretive Panel

Kiosk



Mile 169 to Mile 124



Mile 164 Emmet

Basic amenities under construction: water, restrooms, showers, camping.

Add kiosk at main business street and trail. Add horse/bicycle rack.

[H] Hay office on main street.

[R] Fishing and bird watching in nearby areas.

Mile 161

Exceptional distant views of the Elkhorn River. Add a sitting rock or log, horse/bicycle rack. Add interpretive structure with description of hay country.

Miles 157 - 155 O'Neill

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms, tent and RV camping in city owned Carney Park. Identified as full service trailhead because of size of community, already established businesses and services, and potential in historic depot.

Add kiosks at mile 157 on the west, at 4th Street and the trail (main business street), and at mile 155.

[C] The Irish Capital of Nebraska.

US Highway 281 (north and south).
State Highway 59 (east).

Add and mark connector routes through town to other activity centers. Add foot bridge and connector path east of depot, between Highway 281 and Fifth or Sixth, from trail into Carney Park. Provides a direct, safe, non-motorized entrance into the park and eliminates backtracking for west bound travelers seeking amenities.

[R] Add directional signs on kiosk to local playgrounds, golf course, swimming pool, other recreational sites.

[H] Historic Railroad Depot. Restore and provide some trail user services. Add interpretive structure or panel on kiosk detailing history of depot and railroad activity in O'Neill. Add horse/bicycle rack, and sitting places. See Figure 31.

[H] Holt County Historical Society and Northern Nebraska Genealogical Society offices.

Mile 153

Interaction with Elkhorn River increases. Good distant views; fishing occurs in the river. Add sitting log or rocks, horse/bicycle rack.

Mile 148 Inman

Existing basic amenities: water, restroom, camping. Upgrade restrooms. Include horse/bicycle rack.

Add kiosk at main business street.
Town established in 1905 by Pioneer Town Site Company, a subsidiary of C&NW Railroad. Add interpretive structure or panel on kiosk.

Mile 143 Stafford

Highway 20 splits. Highway 275 continues along the trail.

[H] Highway 20 leads to Ashfall Historical Park and attractions in Orchard, Page and Royal. Add directional structure and mark a designated bicycle route to these attractions.

[H] Early railroad stop. Add interpretive sign and town sign.

Mile 135 Ewing

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms, camping in city park.

Add kiosks at the trail and main street, and the trail and mile 134.5, the east end of the park. Add horse/bicycle racks at both sites.

State road L45B (north).

Mile 132

Trail runs next to Cache Creek with its good fishing. Add a sitting area under the bridge, in its shade. Add horse/bicycle rack.

Mile 125 Clearwater

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms. Add camping.

Add kiosk at main business street. Add horse/bicycle rack.

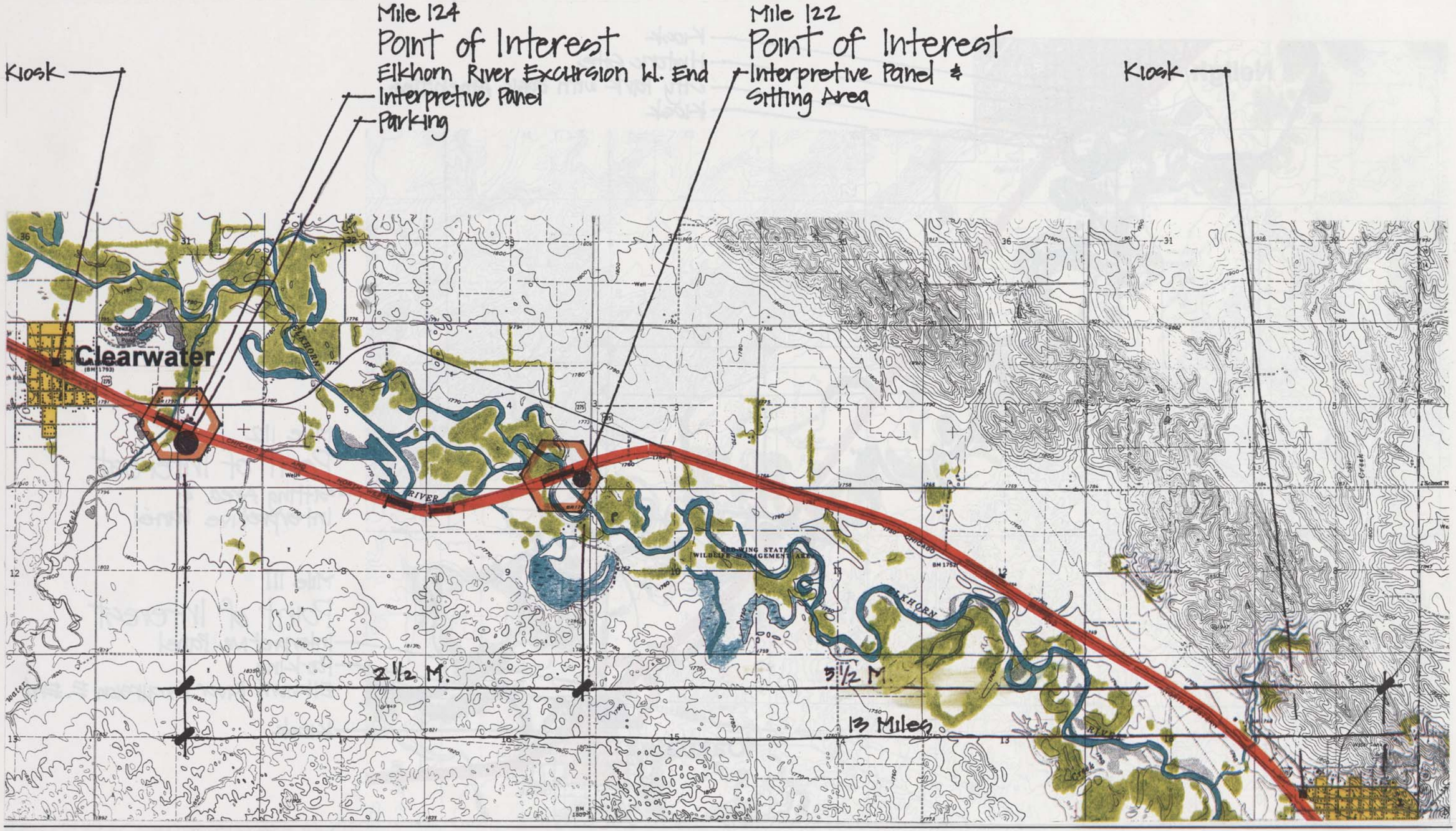
Miles 124 - 111 - Elkhorn River Excursion

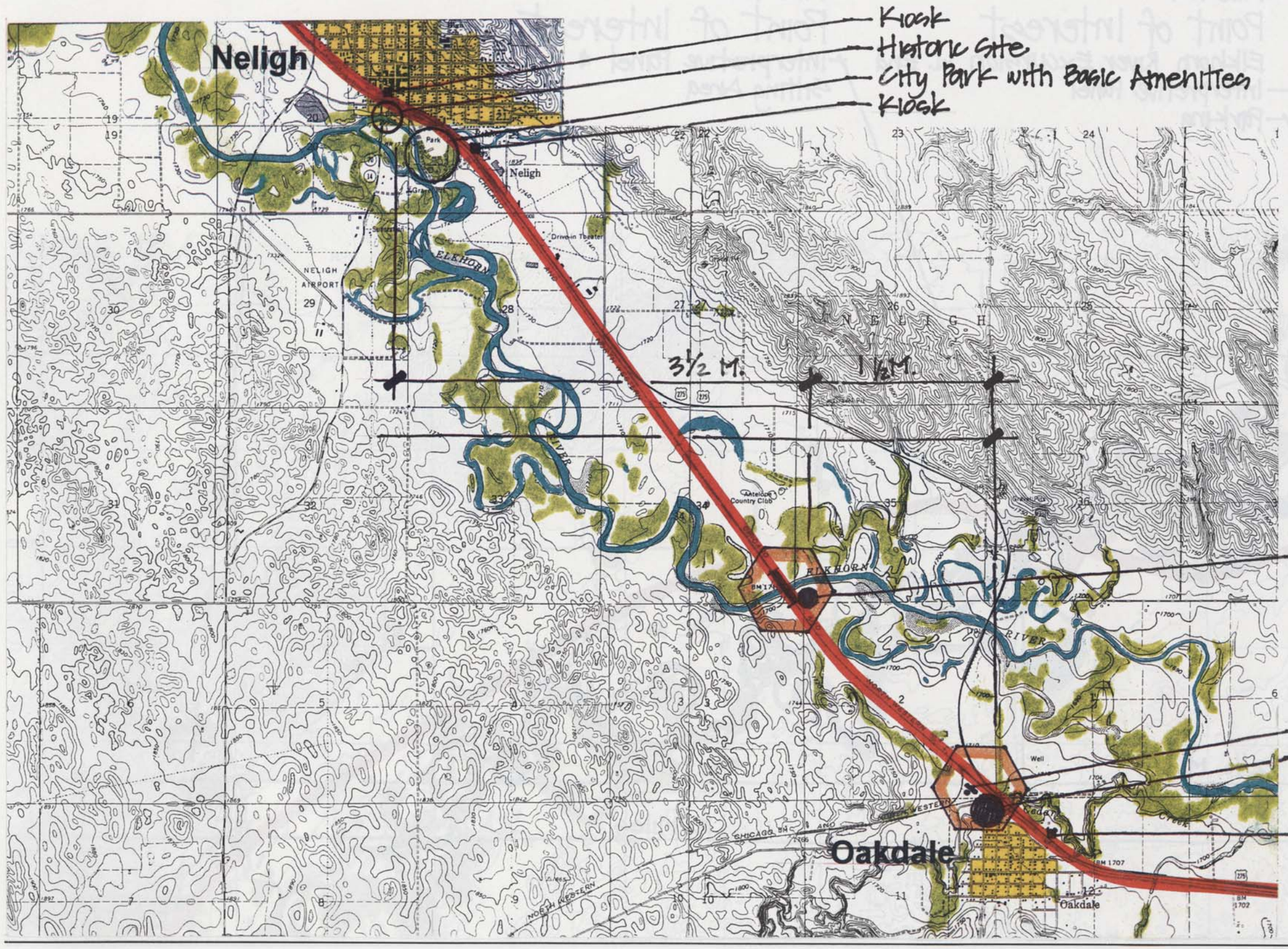
This excursion highlights the dominance of the Elkhorn River and its influence on the area. Between the two end points at Clearwater and Oakdale, there are 29 water crossings as well as good distant views. Some sections of this excursion are secluded from the highway and other portions are immediately adjacent.

Mile 124 - West end of Elkhorn River Excursion

Add a interpretive structure with map to identify route of Elkhorn River Excursion, its length and significance. Add small parking area for cars and horse/bicycle rack.

Elkhorn River Excursion Mile 124 to Mile 111




Neligh
Park
Neligh
Driv-in Theater
NELIGH AIRPORT
ELKHORN
RIVER
3½ M.
1½M.
NEBRASKA
Ateloca Country Club
ELKHORN
RIVER
CHICAGO
NORTH WESTERN
Oakdale
Oakdale
Kiosk
Historic Site
City Park with Basic Amenities
Kiosk
Mile 112
Point of Interest
Sitting Area &
Interpretive Panel
Mile 111
Point of Interest
Interpretive Panel
Parking
Elkhorn River Excursion E. End
Kiosk

Mile 124 to Mile 83.3

Mile 117-115
Heligh
Intersection with Highway
Recreation
Historic Site

Mile 122
Point of Interest

Mile 112
Point of Interest

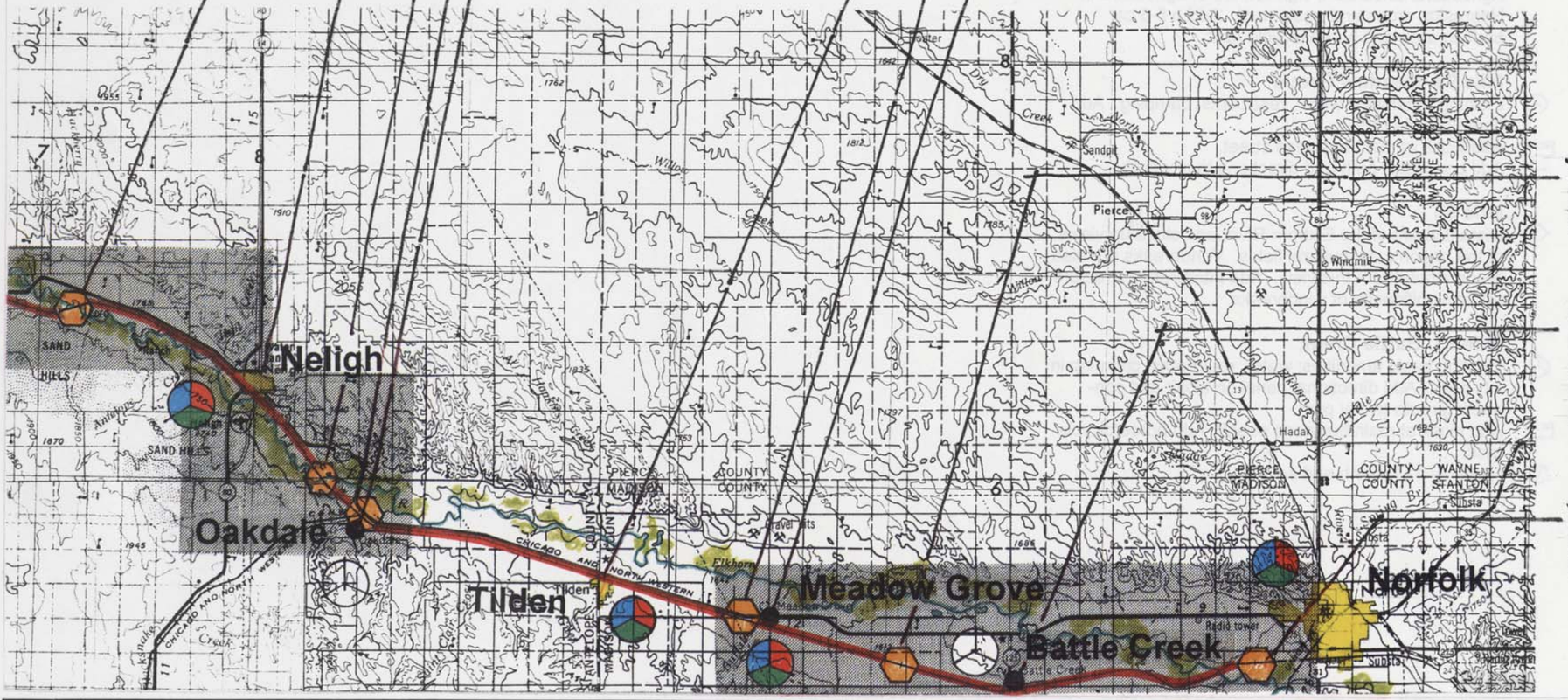
Mile 111
Point of Interest

Mile 111
Oakdale

Mile 104
Tilden

Mile 100
Point of Interest

Mile 98
Meadow Grove



Mile 95
Point of Interest

Mile 91
Battle Creek
Intersection with Highway

Mile 83.3
Point of Interest.

Mile 122

Add interpretive structure about the water domain, ecology and history. Add a sitting log for resting or for fishing. Add horse/bicycle rack. Use name markers to identify trees and shrubs growing in abundance around sitting area.

Miles 117 - 115 Neligh

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms, showers, RV hookups available, camping in city park and at nearby lake.

Add three kiosks: Mile 117 on the west, at main business street, and east edge of Riverside Park.

Highway 14 (north and south)

H Ashfall State Historical Park, Royal, Brunswick and Niobrara State Park, north on Highway 14. Add directional structure and designated bicycle routes.

Add and mark connector routes to local activity centers and services.

R Riverside Park with play equipment, athletic fields, picnic tables is adjacent to trail.

H Neligh Flour Mill, original home of Gold Medal Flour, is fully preserved. Adjacent to trail and on bank of Elkhorn River. Add interpretive structure.

Miles 114 - 111

Secluded area, away from highway.

Mile 112

Trail crossing of the Elkhorn River. Add a sitting log for enjoying the views and for fishing. Add horse/bicycle rack.

Mile 111 Oakdale

No basic amenities. Add water, restrooms, camping. Add horse/bicycle rack.

Add kiosk at main business district.

The east end of Elkhorn River Excursion. Add map on interpretive structure with information regarding the excursion for those beginning at this point.

Mile 104 Tilden

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms, showers, camping in city park.

Add kiosk at main business street. Add horse/bicycle rack.

State Highway 45 (south).

Miles 100 - 84 Agriculture Excursion

Secluded area, away from highway. Beginning of 15-mile Agricultural Excursion through scenic rural farmsteads.

Mile 100

Add interpretive structure with map to identify route of Agricultural Excursion, significance of agriculture in Nebraska, crops and equipment. Add a 5-6 car parking area and horse/bicycle rack.

Mile 98 Meadow Grove

Existing amenities: water, restrooms, camping. Add horse/bicycle rack.

Add kiosk at main business street.

Add connector path and directions to city park.

Mile 95

Distant views of the Elkhorn River and close up views of the region's agricultural fields. Windbreaks are also predominate from this view. Add interpretive structure about significance of windbreaks.

Mile 91 Battle Creek

Existing basic amenities: water, restrooms, camping in city park. Add directional panel on kiosk and connecting route to city park.

Add kiosk at main business street. Add horse/bicycle rack.

Highway 121 (north and south)

Mile 84

East end of Agricultural Excursion. Add interpretive structure with map of excursion for those starting the excursion here. Parking and horse/bicycle racks should be installed on a temporary basis. At the time the trail extends into Norfolk, a full service trailhead to replace this temporary area should be added at Norfolk.

Mile 83.3

The end of the Cowboy Trail, 1 mile outside of Norfolk. Add a sign indicating 'the end,' information on plans for connections, and a map to show a route into Norfolk.

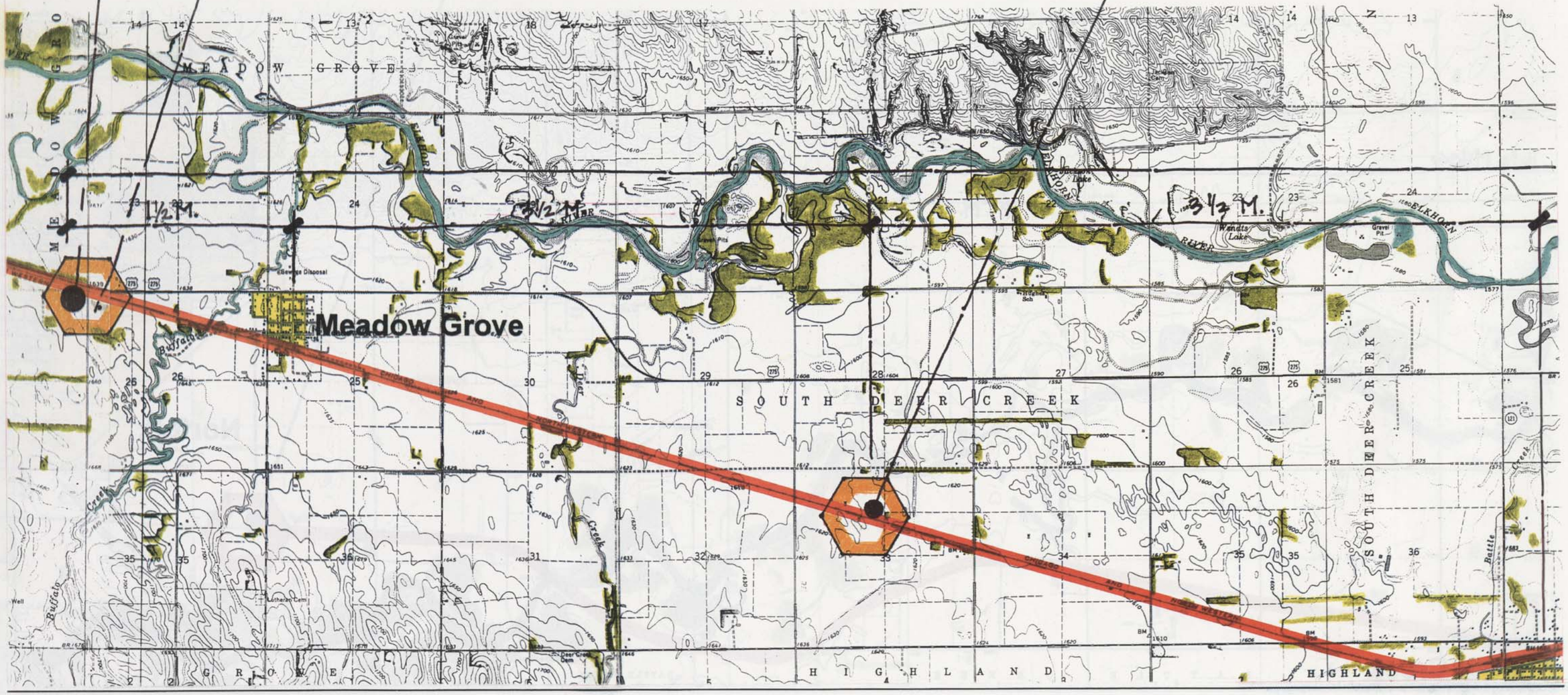
Currently, the Cowboy Trail ends just short of entering Norfolk, but efforts should continue to make the connection to this, the most populated community along the trail.

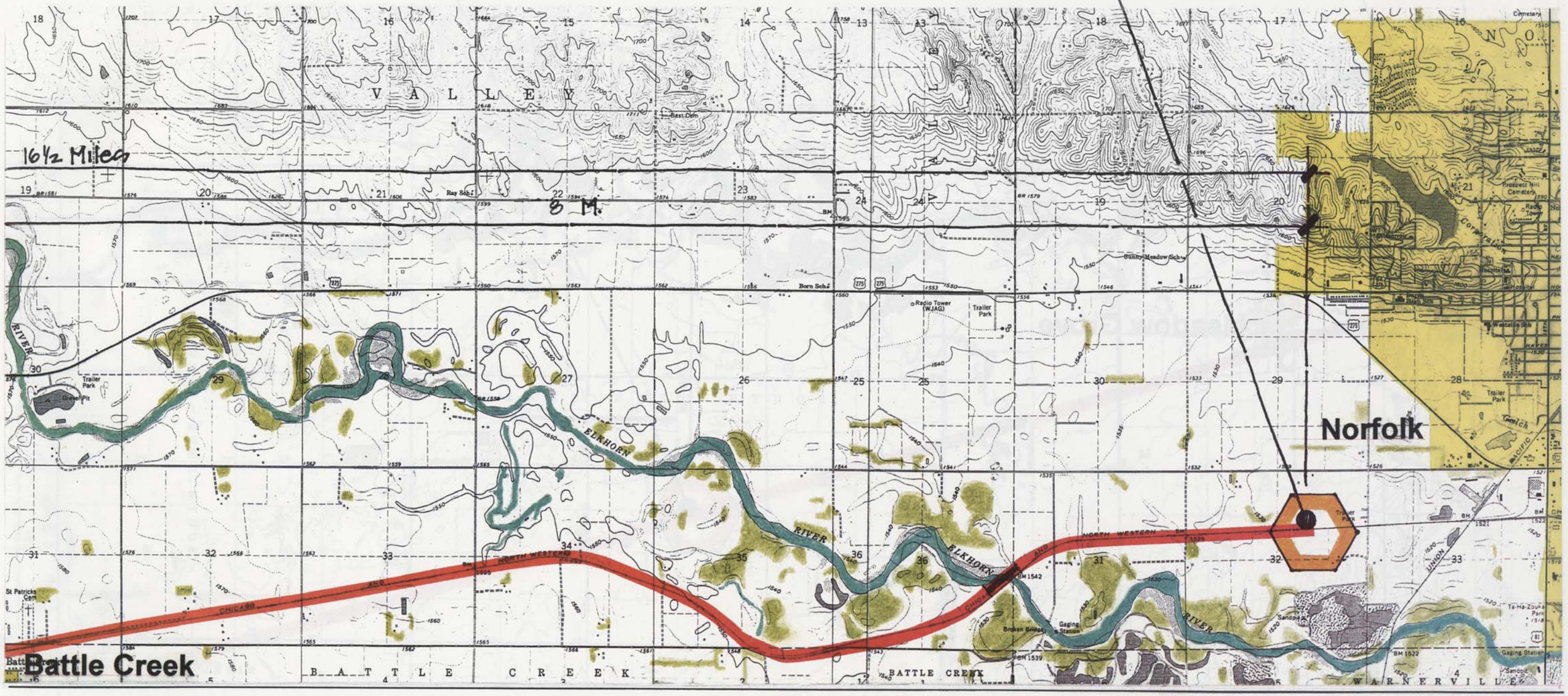
Once the link to Norfolk is ready, the kiosks of the same design as in other communities on the trail should be installed and a full-service trailhead added. It is anticipated that this portion of the trail will be most heavily used by the widest variety of users. Provide parking for a minimum of 10 cars.

Agricultural Excursion Mile 100 to Mile 83.3

Mile 100
Point of Interest
Parking + Interpretive Panel

Mile 95
Point of Interest
Sitting Area & Interpretive Panel




Mile 83.3
Point of Interest
Interpretive Panel
16½ Miles
Norfolk
Battle Creek
V A L L E Y
B A T T L E C R E E K
ELKHORN RIVER
CHICAGO AND NORTH WESTERN
Trailer Park
Gravel Pit
Radio Tower (WJAG)
Sunny Meadow Schl
Prospect Hill Cemetery
Broken Bridge
Gaging Station
St Patricks Cem
Sandpit
Ta-Ha-Zouka Park
Westside Sch
Cemetery
BM 1542
BM 1539
BM 1522