

The Oldham Era

News

Greener Pastures?: Engineers to explore an alternate route for greenway to avoid right-of-way issues

By Nathaniel Kissel

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The path of a proposed bike and walking trail through Oldham County took a turn to the south last week.

Oldham County Fiscal Court heard a report Wednesday on an environmental study done by the Kentucky Department of Highways, which calls for rerouting the Interurban Greenway. The plan presented by Kevin Dant, environmental coordinator of the Department of Highways, reroutes the trail away from the old interurban right of way -- the original planned path.

Dant said because the county's bike and walking path project -- or greenway -- uses federal funding, it required environmental review.

As a part of the study, Dant said a reasonable range of alternatives for the location of the trail were examined. He presented a preferred alternative path that uses existing right-of-ways.

Original plans for Oldham County's greenway included a path that ran through what was believed to be abandoned land from the old interurban rail line. But Dant noted a variety of concerns with running the trail through the old line -- including limited or non-existent available space and right-of-way that was purchased by CSX decades ago.

Dant presented slides showing the tight fit the trail would have to make, especially in areas of Buckner where property lines run right up to the 60-foot CSX right-of-way.

Dant's alternate plan reroutes the greenway further south, through many existing right-of-ways owned by the county or the city of La Grange. The trail, of which .6 of a mile in La Grange has already been completed, begins at the old train station on Main Street. Dant's plan routes the trail through existing right-of-ways on Kentucky Avenue, Commerce Parkway and Old La Grange Road. When the trail reaches Crestwood, it follows sidewalks to its conclusion in Pewee Valley. Dant said measures can be taken to make these existing local roads safer for pedestrian traffic, including speed bumps and angled points in the road to slow drivers.

Under the original plan, much of the funding available for the project would have been used buying the interurban right-of-way and moving utilities. Dant said the money will be better used in the new plan.

"Instead of buying property, let's spend money building something," Dant said.

The county will need to find a way to connect the trail from Old Anita Springs in La Grange to the Commerce Parkway. At Tuesday's planning and zoning commission meeting, a preliminary plan was approved for Artisan Park, a subdivision off Allen Lane that includes space for a greenway connection between the Old Anita Springs Subdivision, which is adjacent to the property. Allen Lane ends at Commerce Parkway.

The project will also meet difficulties at exit 17, where Interstate 71 will cut off its path. Andrea S. Clifford, public information officer with the Department of Transportation, said the continuation of the trail at exit 17 will depend on a future project that will widen the Ky. 146 bridge across the interstate.

Dant said the DOT could help connect the section from Commerce Parkway to Old La Grange Road with an upcoming project for Ky. 393. Clifford said there is an interagency agreement to allow the greenway path to be built with the project, but the county will have to obtain the easement for it.

Following Dant's presentation, the court voted to use funds from KIPDA to begin an engineering study, which will provide more detail about the project.

Oldham County Judge-Executive Mary Ellen Kinser said the length of greenway that will be addressed by the engineering study has yet to be determined.

The greenway has been the keystone project for Greenways for Oldham County, an organization founded in 1998 with the goal of preserving open spaces and creating a network of recreational areas in the county.

Kinser said the greenway is a county project, and though Greenways for Oldham County wrote the grant for the first section, the county is administering the funds.

Kinser said county government will see the project to completion.

Paul Culbertson, who serves on the board of directors for Greenways, said the new path has been discussed by the board but not yet voted on. However, Culbertson said it is "generally accepted and recognized" that it is where the greenway should go.

Culbertson said he expects the new path to be discussed at Greenways for Oldham County's next meeting within the next few weeks.

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