

## COUNCIL ACTION FORM

**SUBJECT: REPAIR OF SQUAW CREEK SHARED USE PATH BRIDGE**

**BACKGROUND:**

On May 26, 2009, it was reported to City Council that the bridge located along the granular shared use path approximately 1,300 feet south of South 4<sup>th</sup> Street over Squaw Creek had partially collapsed due to ice damage to the piers in the north abutment section. Because it was found to be structurally deficient, this pedestrian and bicycle bridge was closed to traffic due to the unsafe conditions.

As directed by City Council, staff continues to pursue federal funding for the extension of Grand Avenue from Squaw Creek Drive to South 16<sup>th</sup> Street. At the time that Grand Avenue is extended to South 16<sup>th</sup> Street, a new bridge including a shared use path on the west side of the bridge will be constructed, thereby replacing this structure. **It is important to note that federal funding for the Grand Avenue extension is not guaranteed.** This project is currently scheduled in the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) for construction in 2012.

Staff has received several citizen calls per week asking if and when this bridge will be repaired and the path to south Ames reopened. The shared use path is currently blocked on the north edge of this bridge and at South 16<sup>th</sup> Street on the south. The only alternative for pedestrians and cyclists is to go west to use the trail along the west side of University Boulevard.

The City contracted with WHKS & Co. of Ames to conduct an emergency analysis of the structural integrity of this bridge and to prepare plans and specifications and a cost estimate for repairing the bridge. The plans and specifications have now been completed with estimated construction costs for the repairs being \$69,000. With design fees of \$11,000 and estimated construction administration fees of \$5,000, **total estimated costs for repairing the bridge are \$85,000.** Alternately, should Council choose to remove the existing bridge instead, staff has received demolition cost estimates ranging from \$30,000 to \$85,000.

With the exception of \$11,000 previously approved from Local Option funding for the engineering work, funds are not budgeted for this project. Therefore, if a decision is made to keep this trail open until the Grand Avenue Extension Project is completed, a funding source needs to be identified before moving ahead to repair the bridge.

Funding sources that were explored include the following:

- Road Use Tax funding (including windfall I-JOBS funding), which cannot be used for this purpose, since the existing shared use path is not associated with a street-related project.
- General Obligation bonds, which cannot be used since shared use paths are not a qualifying “essential corporate purpose.”
- Federal stimulus funding, which can be used. The City would need to follow federal project development guidelines, which would delay award of bid until February 2010.
- Local Option Sales Tax funding, which has an estimated available fund balance of \$1,692,744.

Should Council choose to move ahead and take bids now, it is possible that the repairs can be made during low water levels this fall and that the path can be open during the winter. If a bid is not awarded until February, construction will occur sometime during 2010, depending on contractor availability and on stream levels. This may also subject the bridge to the possibility of greater ice damage this winter.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Approve the Squaw Creek Shared Use Path Bridge Repair by establishing September 2, 2009, as the date of letting and September 8, 2009, as the date for report of bids, with the project funded from the Local Option Sales Tax fund available balance.
2. Approve the Squaw Creek Shared Use Path Bridge Repair, funded with unused federal stimulus funding, which would result in delaying the award of contract until approximately February 2010.
3. Direct staff to develop plans and specifications for demolition and removal of the structure, and identify a funding source for that demolition.
4. Direct staff to maintain the trail and bridge closure, leaving the structure as it currently exists.

**MANAGER’S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

This is a difficult decision to make, since the damaged bridge may be thrown away in approximately three years. On the other hand, it is possible that the federal government may not fund the Grand Avenue extension, which would mean that this transportation link could remain in service for many years. Meanwhile, a number of our citizens who regularly use this shared use path are unable to travel between South 16<sup>th</sup> Street and the South Lincoln Way area.

If Council desires to move forward with repair of this transportation link, the funding selected will impact timing of the repair. Federal stimulus funding provides an unexpected source of outside funding, but repairs of the bridge would be delayed until later next year. That would reduce the time frame during which a repaired bridge may be in service and may subject the bridge to the possibility of greater ice damage this winter. On the other hand, Local Option funding is available immediately, but using that source would decrease the balance available for other worthwhile projects in the future.

Because this section of the path provides a vital, non-motorized link to the southeast portion of our community, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1. This action will approve the Squaw Creek Shared Use Path Bridge Repair by establishing September 2, 2009, as the date of letting and September 8, 2009, as the date for report of bids; and will authorize use of \$74,000 from the Local Option Tax fund balance to fund this project.