

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: SHARED USE PATH SYSTEM EXPANSION (FROM CHRISTOPHER GARTNER PARK TO AMES MIDDLE SCHOOL)

BACKGROUND:

On September 12, 2006, City Council approved the preliminary plat for The Estates of Nature's Crossing Subdivision. As part of the plat, a shared use path was shown to be constructed within a pre-existing Greenbelt Conservation Easement along the north side of College Creek. Several houses have been or are now being constructed on the south side of Cochrane Parkway (north side of College Creek).

A land surveyor and ISU researchers have analyzed the condition of College Creek in the area. It has been determined that over the past three years, the stream banks have eroded at least 5 feet to the north. This is also consistent with the erosion occurring along College Creek on the west side of South Dakota Avenue. This new information regarding the erosion patterns of College Creek, combined with the close proximity this creates to the homes by moving the path farther to the north, makes constructing the path on the currently designated alignment impractical.

Previous discussions were held with Willow Creek Estates (property owner on south side of College Creek) and it was found that they were not receptive to having a shared use path constructed on their property. Taking this into consideration, staff has explored alternate alignments with the developer of The Estates of Nature's Crossing Subdivision. The preferred alternative alignment is to connect the new path with the existing path in Christopher Gartner Park, then south along the existing path easement through Christopher Gartner Park to Cochrane Parkway, through The Estates of Nature's Crossing and South Fork Subdivisions, linking to the Ames Middle School path (shown on Exhibit A). It should be noted that a portion of this proposal will involve a route along the sidewalk, instead of a separated path along the creek.

The developer has offered to install or pay for all costs except that he has asked that the City pay for one-third of the segment through South Fork Subdivision (approximately \$14,000). This would equally split the costs of that segment between the City, the Nature's Crossing developer and the South Fork owner, which will enable the construction of this eastern segment to occur prior to the development of South Fork. The path would be constructed in accordance with Iowa bid laws, targeting completion for prior to the start of school in fall 2010.

Staff has received feedback from several citizens in Ames regarding safe travel of their children to the Middle School. Completing this section of shared use path would enable

a safer travel route to the Middle School next fall, rather than waiting until the entire area develops, which is estimated to be at least five years.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. a. Approve an alternate shared use path alignment from Christopher Gartner Park through the Estates of Nature's Crossing and South Fork subdivisions to the Ames Middle School.
- b. Direct staff to draft an agreement with the Estates of Nature's Crossing Subdivision developer and the owner of South Fork Subdivision that details the work to be performed and the shared funding arrangements.
2. Maintain the shared use path alignment as shown on the Preliminary Plat.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

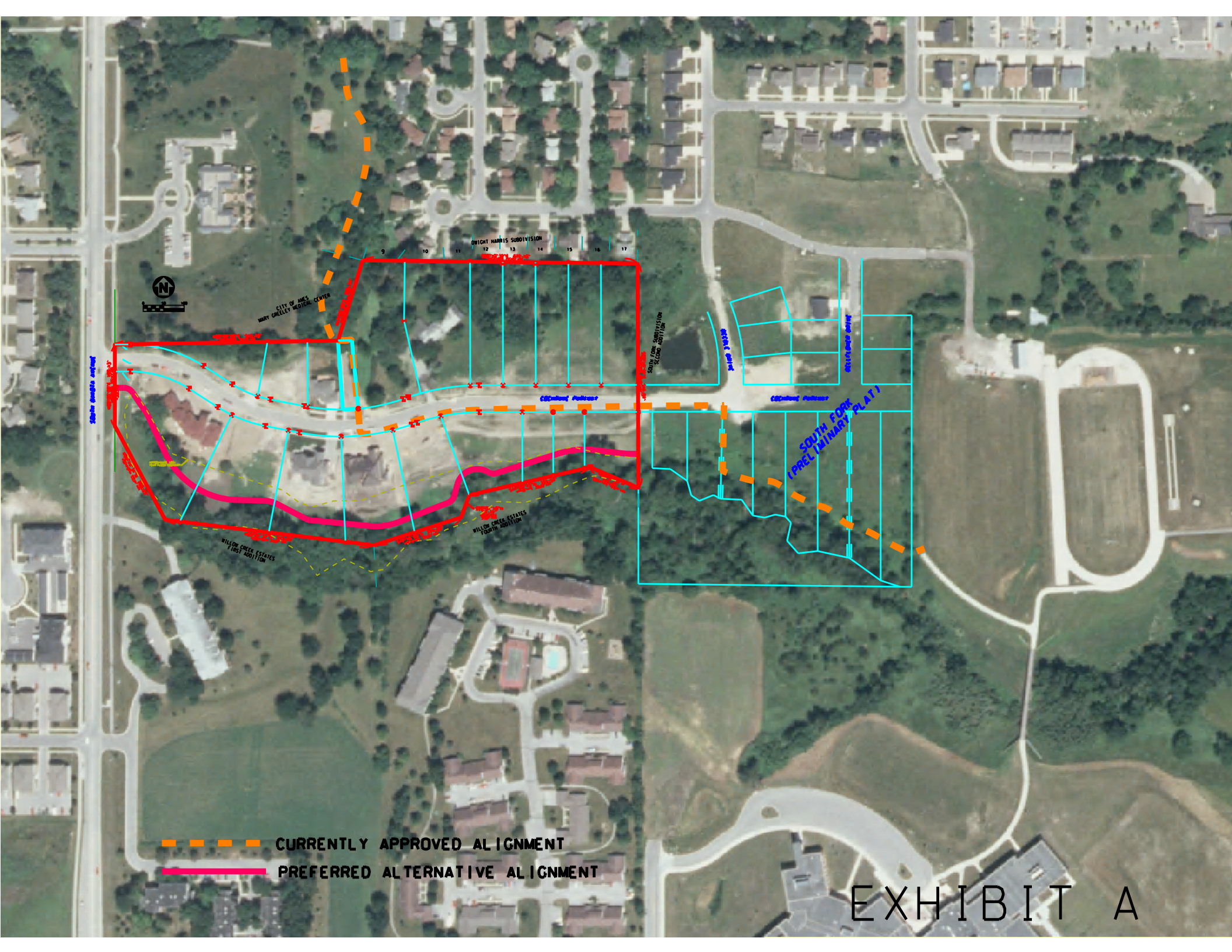
Constructing the Skunk River Trail with Stimulus II funds will create savings in the Shared Use Path Expansion program of approximately \$200,000 in Local Option Sales Tax funding. This could be used to fund the City portion of approximately \$14,000 for this path. It should be emphasized, however, that the Stimulus II legislation has not yet been passed. It is anticipated that the legislation will pass in early March, 2010. Should this not materialize, the \$14,000 will need to come from the Local Option Sales Tax balance.

Moving ahead with this new alignment will facilitate the 2010 completion of the path connection between South Dakota Avenue and the Ames Middle School. This will finish the final link in this trail between Daley Park and State Avenue. This also allows for children walking or bicycling to school to avoid crossing the busy accesses to the Middle School along Mortensen Avenue.

Normally, the staff would not advocate financing a project that has not been prioritized with other worthwhile projects during the budget process. However, this offer by the developer affords the City a unique opportunity to accomplish two of the high priorities of the Council, to increase availability of alternative forms of transportation and to strengthen and protect our neighborhoods.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, thereby approving an alternate shared use path alignment from Christopher Gartner Park through the Estates of Nature's Crossing and South Fork subdivisions to the Ames Middle School and supporting a nominal contribution to accelerate the project.

If this action is approved, staff will finalize an agreement with the developers that details the work to be performed and the shared funding arrangements. This agreement will then be brought back before the Council for approval.



- CURRENTLY APPROVED ALIGNMENT
- PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE ALIGNMENT

EXHIBIT A