

**Addendum: May 13, 2015**

# Request for Approval to Build Singletrack Trails in Sheehan Park



Sun Prairie Bicycle Advisory Group  
Capital Off Road Pathfinders  
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## Frequently Asked Questions

The following is a list of questions we've been asked in relation to the proposal and our responses. Some of these have led to changes in the proposal as seen recently.

Q. Does the trail have to be four miles long?

A. The trail can be any length. The reason we are consider four miles is to meet the minimum length required by [NICA](#) (National Interscholastic Cycling Association) for high school and middle school competition. Though the current proposed trail is about 3.25 mile, we won't know the exact length until trained trail designers plot a course through the park. This process won't happen until after the trail proposal has been approved.

Q. Will the trail follow the exact lines on the proposed map?

A. The current map is conceptual showing where the singletrack trail could be placed using existing areas in the park. This is not the final design. Once the trail system is approved, a professional trail designer will work with the City's Parks and Recreation Department to lay out the final course.

Q. How close are the sections of trail when they swing back around on the map?

A. The switchback sections on the map appear closer than they will be in reality. Though they appear close, no two sections will be close enough for users to touch each other as they move in opposite directions. From our understanding, there are standards for how close trails sections can be and the trail design will be created with that in mind. Also, pending the terrain in any particular section of singletrack trail, the user might not even notice or see other sections of the trail unless a user is in that other section.

Q. Will there be a significant change to the forested sections in the park or existing open spaces?

A. Our goal is to build a low-impact trail system that follows the natural terrain and requires very little, if any, removal of vegetation. With environmentally responsible trail design and scheduled trail maintenance, there should be no long term affect to the areas used by the proposed singletrack trails.

Q. Will trails in the wooded sections damage the oak trees?

A. Trail building is as much about land preservation and advocacy and stewardship as it is about the silent sport of mountain biking. From removal of invasive species to keeping the land clean, people who manage and use mountain bike trails love and respect natural resources and typically have far more active involvement in the care for these resources than the general public. For more details on how mountain biking impacts the environment, please see this article from IMBA that includes scientific review and best practices: <https://www.imba.com/resources/research/trail-science/environmental-impacts-mountain-biking-science-review-and-best-practices>

Q. How will the trails affect the wildlife in the wooded sections of the park?

A. Wildlife living in Sheehan Park have already adapted to living within a park that is surrounded by urban sprawl and studies have proven that these types of trails and their users have little impact on wildlife. Per a report from IMBA based on numerous studies, "most wildlife species readily adapt or become habituated to consistent and non-threatening recreational activities." More results from these studies can be found here: <https://www.imba.com/resources/research/trail-science/environmental-impacts-mountain-biking-science-review-and-best-practices>

Q. Will this trail system damage grassy areas of the park?

A. The proposed singletrack trails system will exist primarily in the wooded sections of the park, not over grassy areas. This trail system, including portions that cross other sections of the park, will be professionally designed and built following IMBA's best practices for progressive and sustainable trail design. Their experience will generate a trail that won't damage the park and won't require repairs that are commonly required after other events in the park. Also, this trail system will not be open during times when weather or sitting water combined with trail use could lead to damage. For more details on IMBA's Trail Solutions, see: <https://www.imba.com/trail-solutions>

Q. What other locations were considered before deciding on Sheehan Park?

A. Numerous locations in and around Sun Prairie were considered. Some areas were designated wetlands and not usable. Others were deed restricted to foot traffic only and other spaces had limited availability due to future residential and commercial expansion. Also, Dane county is currently focused on commuter specific trails so this was not an option for their support. Considering the existing multi-use parks in Sun Prairie, Sheehan Park includes wooded areas where singletrack trails could be built, is centrally located providing quick access for the high school and middle school physical education classes as well as their mountain bike teams, and provides ample parking so that trail users don't impact local residents. Sheehan Park, being an existing multi-user park, also provides ample recreational activities for family and friends of the trail users meaning that families, Scouting programs and others can use both the new singletrack trail system and the plethora of other recreational activities at the same time.

Q: Will the proposed trail's increase in users surpass Sheehan Park's Carrying Capacity?

A: As has been discovered in other similar settings in Dane County, Wisconsin and the United States, the increase in users for this type of trail system is minimal and won't adversely affect user experience. The number of users on this type of trail system is smaller than other groups that use the park. For instance, during periods of cross country training, we've been told that there could be up to eighty runners traveling as a group through the park. These are closely packed groups taking up large spaces as they travel through the park. Users on the proposed singletrack trail system will travel single file as per the design of the trail. Thus not meeting other park users in large groups.

During ball season there could be over 500 baseball players and fans using the park at the same time. They travel as groups from the parking lots to their cars and from field to field. Also, some of their family and friends do travel throughout the park during those games affecting traffic in other portions of the park. The proposed multi-use singletrack trail system is not designed to support hundreds of users at once limiting the number of potential users at any given time. Even if a NICA ([National Interscholastic Cycling Association](#)) event were held on these trails and every registered athlete in Wisconsin attended, that is 155 athletes and their use of the trail would be spread over a half day. Counting family, friends, coaches and staff this would be around 450 people using the park during a similar amount of time (half day) that might see 1500+ baseball participants and supporters.

Q. What will be the timing of trail? Will it be open 24 hours, during park hours, other?

A. The singletrack trails will be part of Sheehan Park and thus subject to park hours. Current hours end at 10pm.

Q. How will the use of this singletrack trail affect events when they are held in Sheehan Park?

A. The use of this singletrack trail system will be the same as the use of the current paved paths and grass areas when it comes to scheduled events. Our understanding is that the event promoters provide 'marshals' to warn other park users at critical junctures and post signs around the park. Those same efforts can be made regarding the singletrack trail.

Q. How will the use of these trails affect noise near homes?

A. The use of these singletrack trails should have little to no effect on those living near the park. The trail design includes a fifteen foot buffer between the singletrack trail and residential property, the forested sections provide natural noise suppression and we are not designing gathering places along the trail. Plus, more eyes and ears on the trail in these sections results in less places for people to hide illicit and illegal activities and thus less potential for people attempting to access nearby homes through the woods.

Q. What about liability for events at the park?

A. Use of the park is already covered under a recreational immunity act and existing events in the park, such as the Cyclocross race held in the fall, do offer waivers to provide additional liability support. There is also discussion of signage that will mention assumption of personal risk for the user as well as suggesting the use of proper safety equipment.

Q. What about potential incidents with users of other sections of the park, such as other cyclists, runners, pedestrians, etc?

A. The intent with this trail system is that it will use portions of the park that are not currently being utilized by other park users. The areas where this singletrack trail system enters open sections of the park will receive special attention to ensure safety and sustainability. This includes:

- Trail signage warning users of an oncoming traffic intersection and asking them to yield to other users.
- Designing the singletrack trail so that it parallels open areas before exiting allowing trail users to see other park users.
- Designing the singletrack trail to include extra turns that slow down users before entering open areas.
- Reducing excess vegetation to improve sight line visibility.

Q. What about trail direction? Is there concern for users headed in opposite directions?

A. We are currently proposing a unidirectional trail system which would prevent users from meeting head-on. This type of system is already in place at many of Dane County's existing trails using non-obtrusive signage.

Were this trail system to allow use in both directions, the potential of head-on collisions is still low. Due to the nature of the twisting trails, the speed of the user will be pretty low allowing them time to stop if they notice other users. In areas where the trail is straighter and speeds might be higher, visibility on the trail will allow the users to see each other in time to prevent a collision. Also, the wilderness in these sections are fairly short and/or narrow and won't hide other users like buildings might on city bike paths.

Q. How does a singletrack trail differ from the existing paved paths in Sheehan Park?

A. A singletrack trail is similar to a deer path where the animals have followed the natural terrain and vegetation to create a narrow trail through the woods. Like the deer, users of this trail will travel single file, thus the term singletrack. These natural trails utilize local dirt and sediment while typically blending into the surrounding environment. These trails also allow the user to get closer to nature without adversely affecting the vegetation or wildlife. By contrast, the existing paved paths are ideal for moving larger groups through the park or allowing quicker access to distant portions of the park.

Q: What's wrong with the existing trails? Why can't they be used for mountain biking, running and the other activities mentioned in the proposal?

A. The existing paved path system in Sheehan Park covers the needs of many, but not all users. For instance, some runners prefer dirt trails as it lessens the impact on the body when compared to pavement and blacktop. Some also prefer a changing terrain to build strength and agility while running. Geocaching participants are already in the woods trampling shrubbery in their efforts to find and set boxes. Providing them with a trail system through the woods lessens the impact they impart on the vegetation. As to cycling, mountain biking differs from traditional road riding or "path" riding allowing the cyclist to be closer to nature, away from automobile traffic and to build skills when riding through the tight, twisting singletrack trail.

Anyone can currently use the existing paths through the park; however, as more athletic residents use Sheehan Park for training, the speed at which these users flow through the park is increasing. For instance, according to the timing details on [Strava.com](https://www.strava.com), some cyclists on the existing paved paths are carrying speeds over 20mph through the park. Data from [Mapmyrun.com](https://www.mapmyrun.com) suggests numerous runners are carrying speeds over 7mph thru the park. By providing a singletrack trail system, some of this exercise could move away from heavily trafficked areas reducing speeds and the potential for impacts in the park.

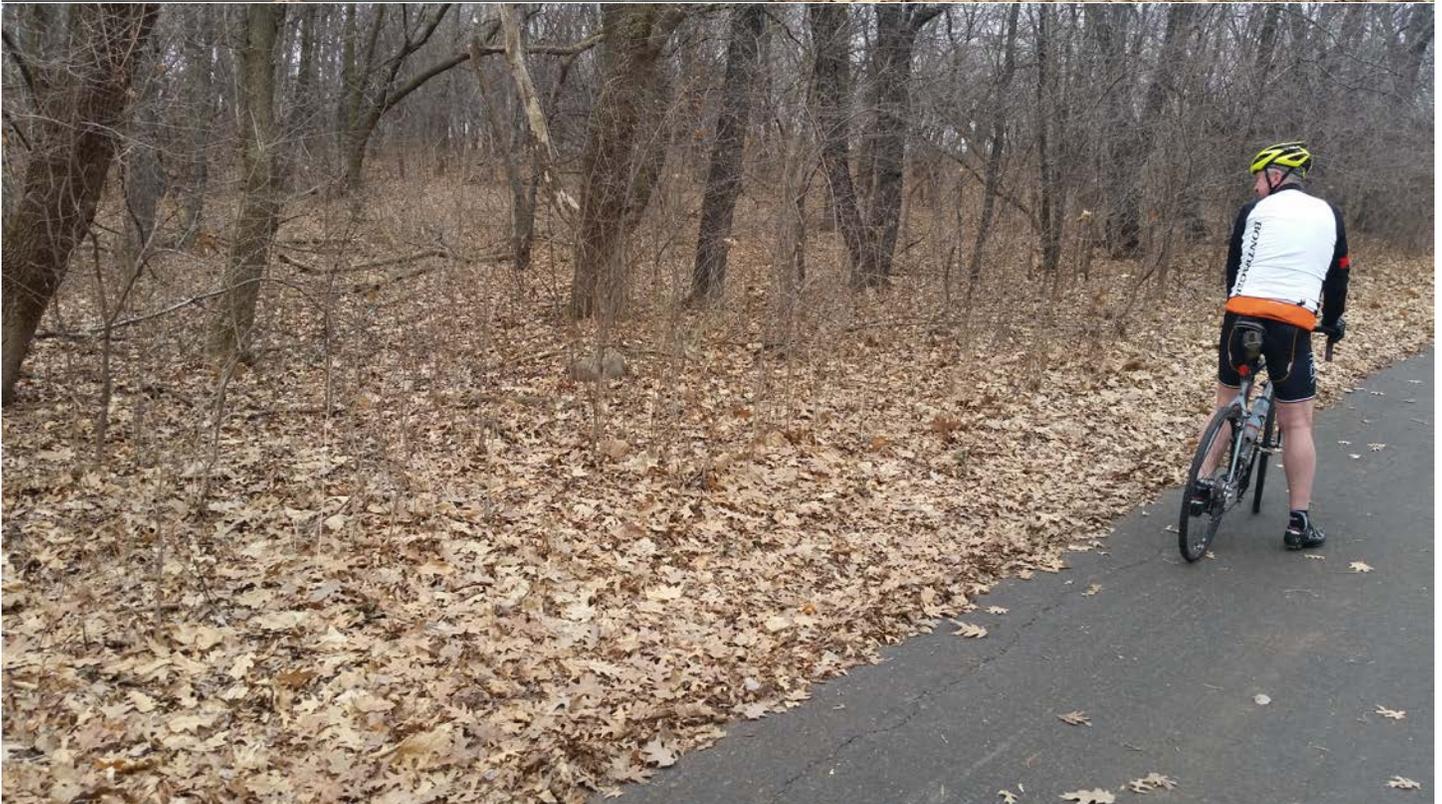
Q. What skill level will be required for these trails? How aggressive with they be?

A. Our intent is to build a trail system that is designed for beginner to intermediate level riders and other non-cycling trail users. We do not intend to include features that will require advanced skills or cause the user to leave the ground.

### **Photos of Sheehan Park**

The following are photos of Sheehan Park showing the areas where the proposal would have the singletrack trail crossing over other sections of the park.

These first two show an area between the two western sections of forest. Note the wide space to the north (left) of the paved trail and the very side space to the south (right) of the paved trail. Our plan would be for singletrack users to parallel this space before making a turn and crossing over the paved and dirt paths. Thus they would have ample time and opportunity to see other park users before making the turn.



The next two photos are taken near the center of the park showing a space to the south (right) of the paved path and a very large space to the north (left) of the paved path.



This last image shows where park users are already creating trails in the forest. This trail example enters the southern forested section from the center of the park. We found other 'non-sanctioned' trails in the northwest forest and entering from the east side of the southern forest. Signs of hiking were also found along the creek and in the northeast section of forest. We feel that providing a sanctioned and approved singletrack trail system will provide these users with a place to hike rather than creating their own trails.

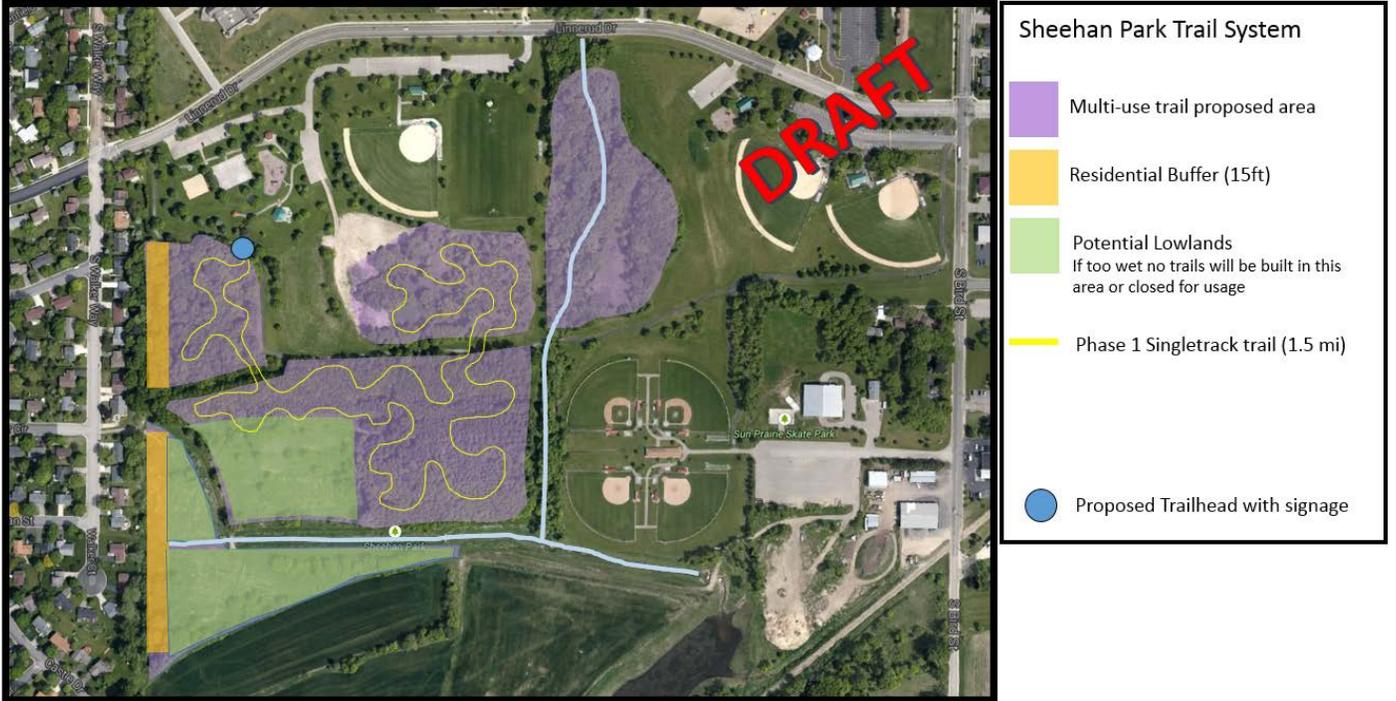


### Reminder of Three (3) Phase Plan

Work on the proposed trail system has been divided into three phases allowing CORP and their volunteers to work with the Parks and Recreation Department in Sun Prairie who have maintenance scheduled for portions of Sheehan Park. Those phases are shown in the following conceptual maps.

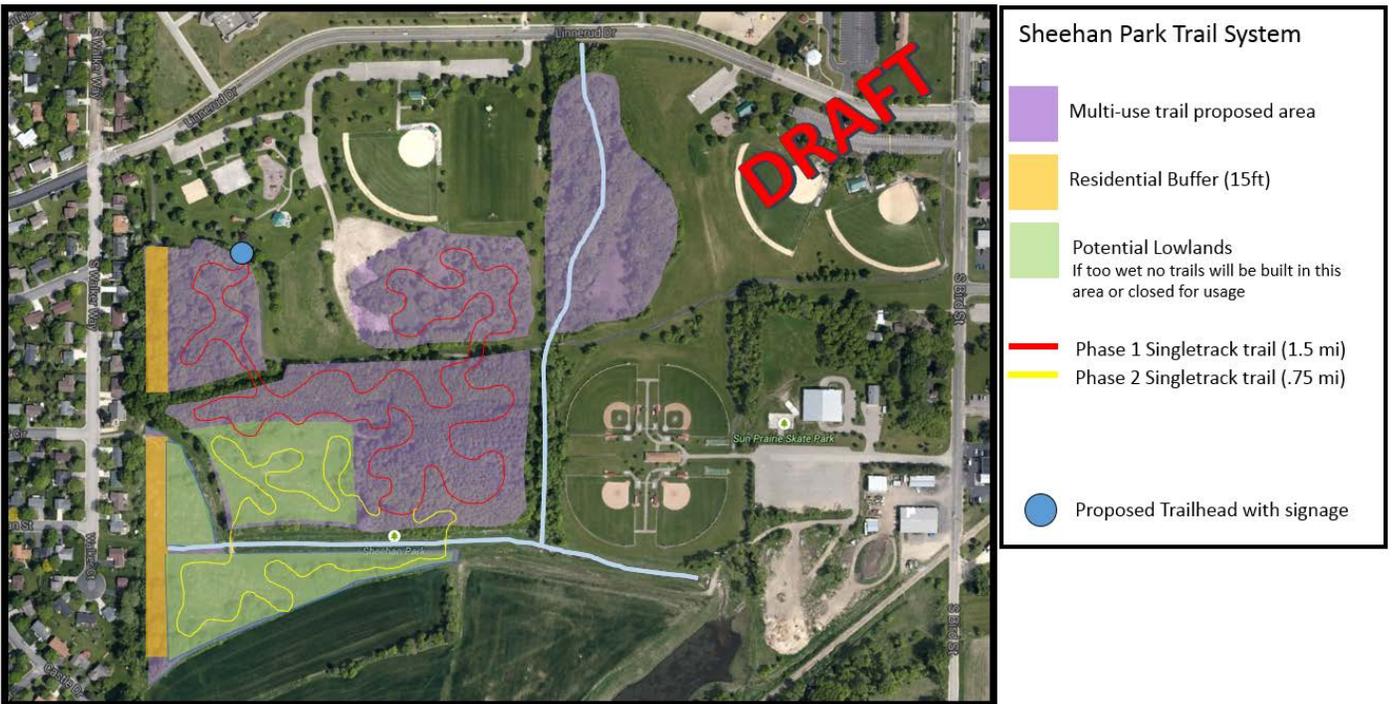
#### Phase One:

Primarily focused on the larger wooded sections on the west side of the park.



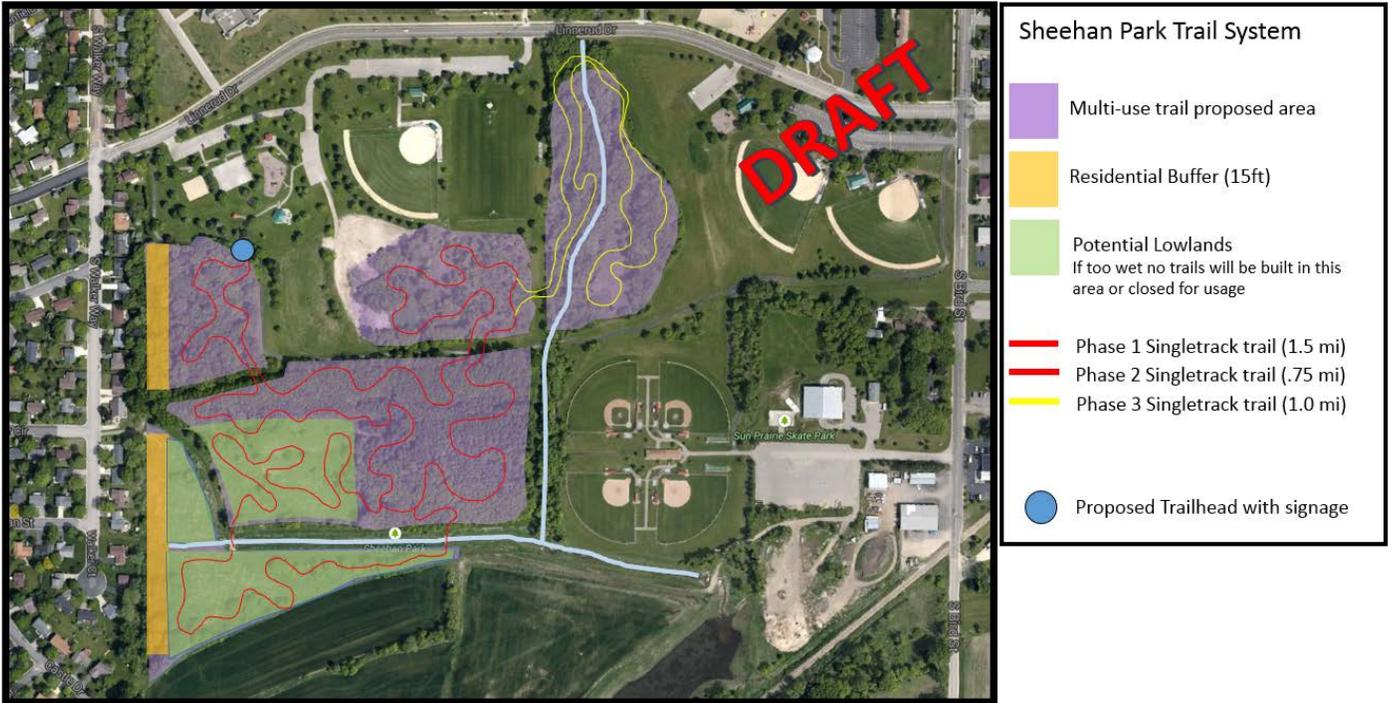
#### Phase Two:

This includes the lowlands on the south side of the park. As mentioned on the map, this area is pending review of wetlands.



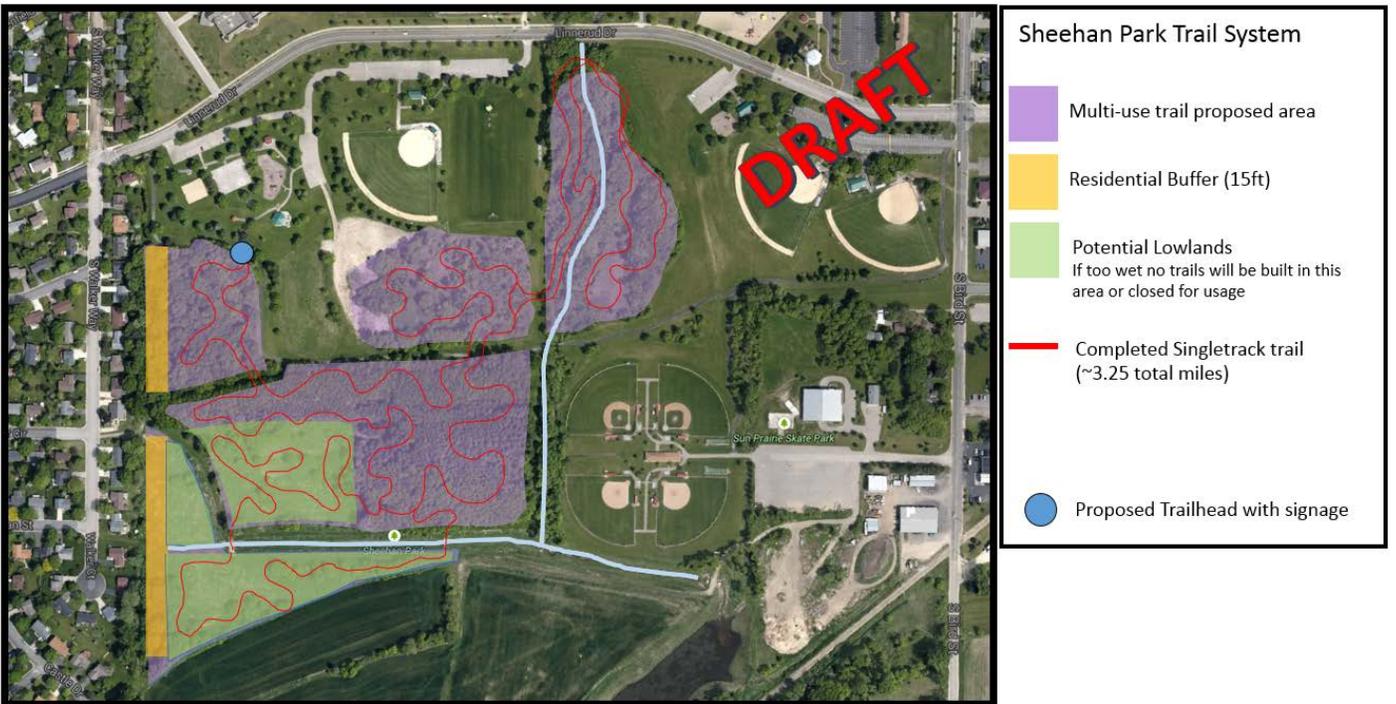
### Phase Three:

The timing of this portion would likely occur after the work being done in the creek bed.



### Completed Trail System:

This is how the whole multi-use singletrack trail system would look were all three phases put into place.



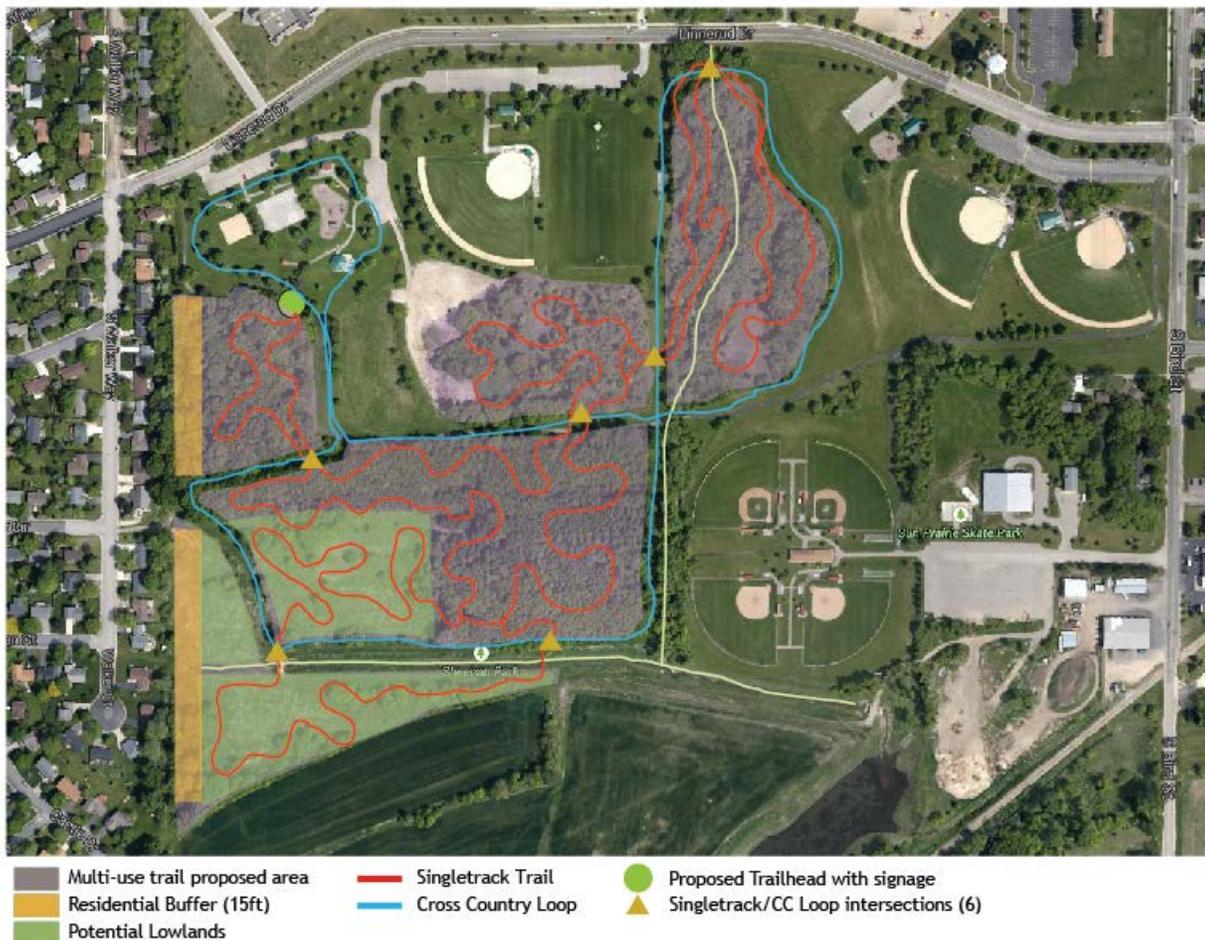
## Potential Park User Interactions

Taking careful consideration of the concerns of other park users, we've reduced the number of places where this singletrack trail system will meet with and cross other sections of the park. By bringing the entrance and exit to most sections together, we've reduced the number of these crossings from ten to six. Please note that on the map, some of these crossings look far apart. Our goal is to have them beside each other as long as vegetation allows.

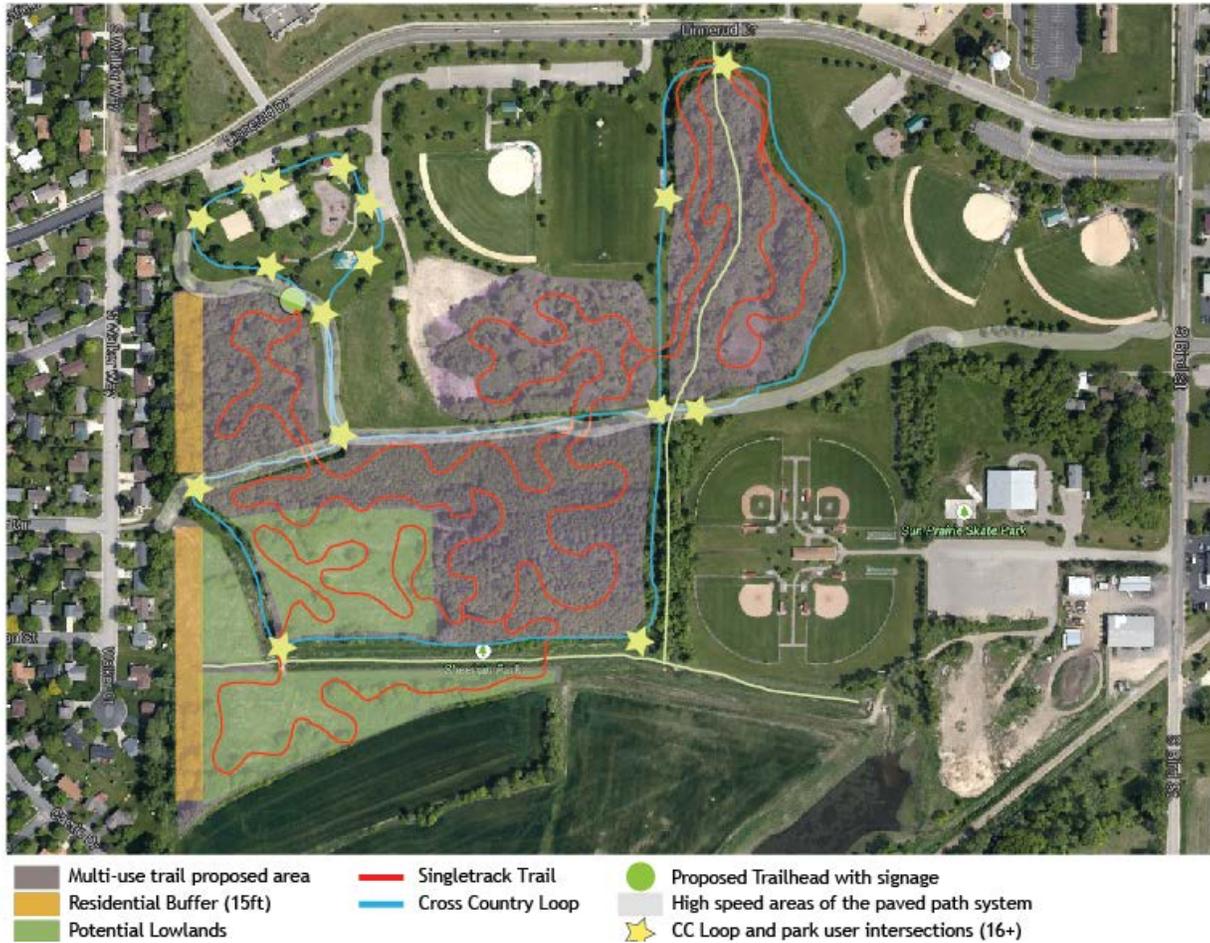
As noted in the proposal and the previous FAQs, we plan to implement numerous steps to reduce the speed of the singletrack users as well as make them aware of the other park users before they reach these crossing points.

One group in particular has been very vocal regarding their concern for interactions between singletrack other park users, especially runners at these crossing points. For reference, the following two maps show where the proposed singletrack trail crosses the cross country running loop and where the cross country running loop crosses and meets with other users of the park.

The following map includes triangles which are locations where the proposed multi-user singletrack trail system will cross the existing high school cross country running loop.



The following map includes stars where the high school cross country running loop crosses the existing paved path and meets with other users in the park.



There are more areas where the runners can be affected by other users in the park including people walking to and from the parking lots and restrooms, loose basketballs and soccer balls, kids near the playgrounds, people using the gazebos and other runners and hikers. Also, there is a sizable length of the existing paved path that they share with high speed cyclists and families with strollers and loose children. With that in mind, we have more concern for the runners' safety based on potentially harmful interaction with other park users than with the users of the proposed singletrack trail.