



*If you plan for cars and traffic you get cars and traffic,  
If you plan for people and places you get people and places. Fred Kent*

## OVERVIEW

Russellville, the heart of the River Valley, is conveniently located at the crossroads of Interstate 40 and Nationally Scenic Highway 7. As of 2021, the estimated population of Russellville is 29,000 and is steadily growing. Russellville is the county seat for Pope County, and the 18th largest city in Arkansas. Three of the four census tracts are classified as Areas of Persistent Poverty and all four census tracts classified as a Historically Disadvantaged Community.

Russellville lacks equitable, accessible, and safe transportation alternatives. The Russellville Connected Trail System (RCTS) Project will improve the safety, quality of life, economic competitiveness and opportunity for micro-mobility users like pedestrians and cyclists - creating system wide connectivity and mobility improvements by removing physical barriers. The RCTS Project provides a safe multi-modal alternate form of transportation that connects homes, healthcare facilities, schools, the University, Grocery Stores, and industrial district that will generate a profound impact for the residents of our community.

The RCTS aims to break down historic barriers lacking adequate sidewalks and/or trails by providing active transportation options throughout the community. 41% of residents will be located within one-half mile of these new facilities. Project improvements include approximately 13 +/- miles of new infrastructure in the form of 10' multi-use trails and 10' side paths, nearly doubling the miles of active transportation options. The goal of this project is to connect citizens to the 11 parks, 8 educational facilities, Arkansas Tech University, 2 major retail centers, 10 neighborhood areas, and provide safe access to a major industrial park, in alignment with several planning documents. (Appendix 10)

In line with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law this first phase will, in cooperation with the City of Dardanelle, create a connection, in entirety, to Dardanelle Dam located at Lock and Dam State Park. The trail alignment proposed connects from north and east Russellville – where jobs are located all the way to Lock and Dam State Park. This will pave the way for a future connection across the Dam – providing active transportation options for citizens in both communities to access employment, shopping, and opportunity.

The routes were specifically chosen by witnessing where pedestrians move through town. 90% of the proposed routes are located in designated Areas of Persistent Poverty - benefiting low-income and underserved citizens with affordable transportation options. The City of Russellville is requesting \$24,987,758.48 to transform the Russellville Connected Trail System into a fully functioning, connected, transportation system. The RCTS addresses equity, safety, and environmental sustainability, as well as improving the quality of life for those living in historically disadvantaged areas of the community – seeking a fully thriving City of Russellville.

## PROJECT HISTORY

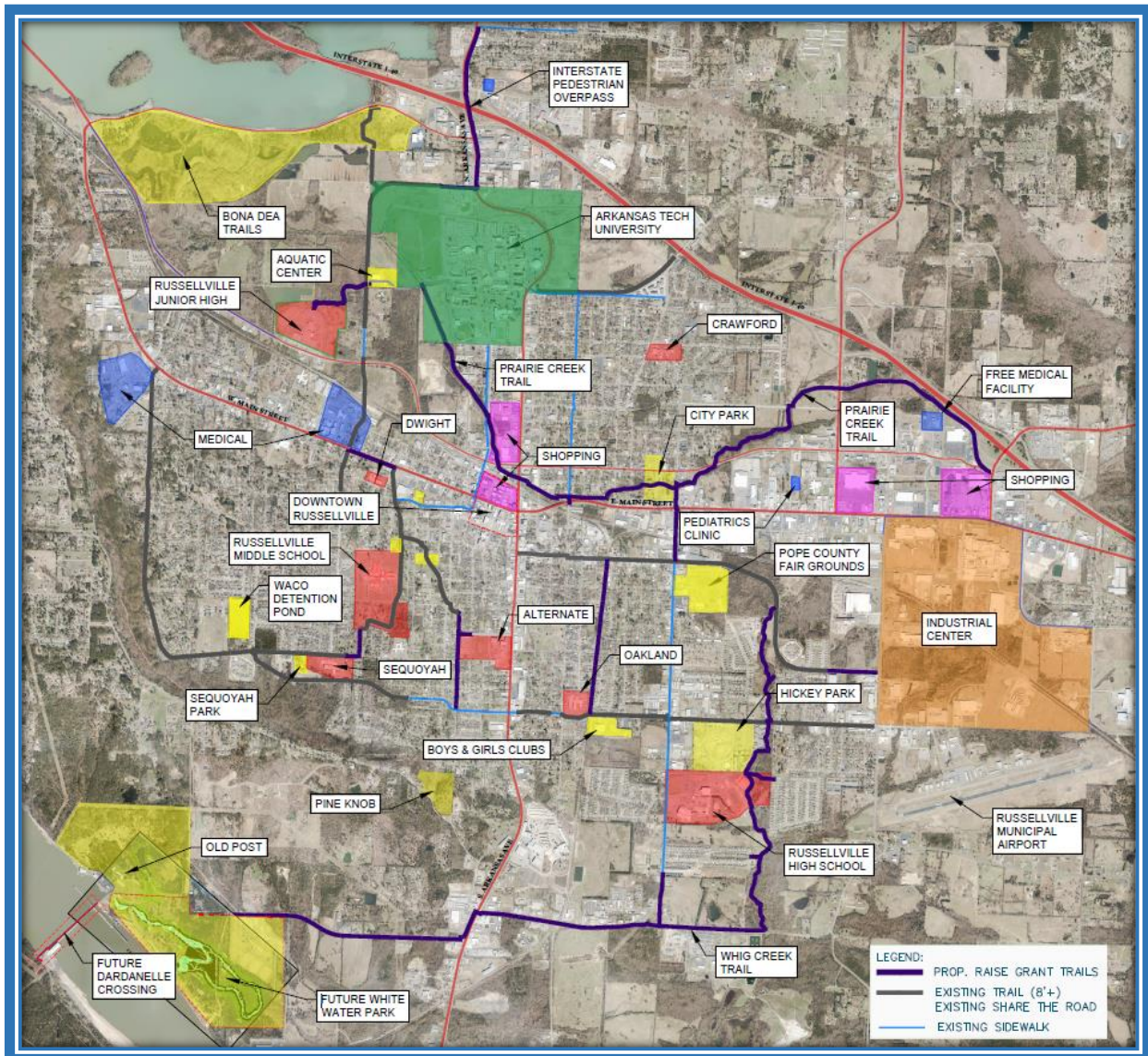


# Russellville Connected Trail System Project Description



The idea of a multi-use trail system for Russellville began in the late 1990s, with trails being a goal in the Parks System Master Plan. A sub-committee was formed in 2009 to create a new master plan for the trail system, resulting in the completion of the "Russellville Connected" plan in 2010. By 2015, 3.5 miles of trail had been added to the original 2.9 miles. In 2018, a new Trails Committee was formed, consisting of key stakeholders in the community, along with City staff, making great strides in the trail planning process. This committee worked diligently to apply for ARDOT funding to extend the trail system. As of this application, there are 14.3 miles of multi-use trails within the community, with additional routes planned. The application includes a pedestrian overpass across Interstate 40, connecting lower-income areas to town.

In 2019 a new Parks Master Plan was completed with a high emphasis on a multi-use trail system. During that process a citizen survey was conducted revealing that 45 percent of those surveyed rated trails as "very important" to their needs. Since 2019, additional trail alignments have been constructed or are in construction presently. The proposed RCTS project nearly doubles the multi-use facilities to over 27 miles.





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The trail's alignment passes through City Park, which recently added a new 5,800 square foot splash pad and a 7,200 square foot all-inclusive playground. Citizens expressed in the amenity survey – the desire to expand City Park. Various options being considered are, adding a new amphitheater or alternate play equipment to make City Park a celebrated and more accessible destination. Another proposal is to construct covered tennis/pickleball courts with a solar-powered fan that regulates temperature and air flow during the hottest parts of the summer, encouraging better use of the courts. Additionally, there will be a public contest to rename City Park, and all Russellville citizens will have the opportunity to vote for their preferred name.

Recent Investments			
Project Name	Project Type	Funding	Cost
4 <sup>th</sup> St & Cleveland Ave	Drainage/Sidewalk	City	\$ 670,267.20
North Detroit Ave	Sidewalk Maintenance	City	\$ 72,934.00
10 <sup>th</sup> St & Denver Ave	Drainage & Improvements /Trail	City	\$ 363,608.66
H & Parker	Sidewalk/Drainage/Pedestrian Lights	City	\$ 3,846,758.32
RCTS Signage	Signage	City	\$ 150,000.00
O Street	Sidewalk/Drainage	City	\$ 2,294,557.20
N El Paso	Sidewalk/Drainage/Pedestrian Lights	City	\$ 2,385,591.32
Schoolhouse Trail I	Multipurpose Trail	ARDOT / City	\$ 506,758.90
S Inglewood Ave	Drainage/Sidewalk/Trail	City	\$ 4,843,267.83
City Park	Splash Pad	City	\$ 489,595.11
<b>Total Investment</b>			<b>\$ 15,623,338.54</b>
Current (In process) Investments			
Project Name	Project Type	Funding	Cost
Schoolhouse Trail 2	Multipurpose Trail	ARDOT / City	\$ 1,000,000.00
Schoolhouse Trail 3	Multipurpose Trail	City	\$ 936,710.66
S Knoxville Ave	Sidewalk	City	\$ 5,600,000.00
City Park	All Inclusive Playground	City	\$364,475.01
<b>Total Investment</b>			<b>\$ 7,901,185.67</b>

Table 1: Recent and Current Investments

### CHALLENGE

The challenge is to provide safe, accessible, and equitable active transportation options without furthering the dependence on vehicles or environmental degradation. Transportation options have been limited to those who have personal vehicles or those willing to walk or bike along street corridors not designed to safely accommodate them. The disparity created by these barriers results in a lack of opportunity. Significant improvements have been made in recent years to provide a more connected trail and sidewalk system. One example is the addition of the Schoolhouse Trail system in west Russellville. Because community-wide projects focus on roadways for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists are utilizing poorly connected systems to traverse across town and, in some cases, are within the travel lanes of the roadway. This increases the burden on families with lower incomes in historically disadvantaged and racially diverse segments of the population.

Significant future development opportunities exist with proposed developments under consideration north of the interstate along Weir Road. This area contains over 700 acres of



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developable land within 5,000 feet of the Russellville Connected Trail System's primary east-to-west route. In the next five years, development is projected to begin for nearly 150 of those acres with additional development to follow. This future growth presents an opportunity for new walkable, livable, and economically accessible development to a broader swath of current and future residents.

These transportation and future development challenges threaten natural resources. Wetlands identified along both Prairie Creek and Whig Creek may be impacted when development occurs along the streambanks. Wetlands are disappearing at an alarming rate, three times faster than forests, and are a vital ecosystem that offers protection from flooding, improves water quality, and plays a crucial role in combating climate change.

### SOLUTION

The proposed trail alignment will provide new safe, equitable transportation and recreation options to existing and future residents. Integrating active transportation options and improvements will fully connect the community north to south and east to west. The route includes over 12 miles of new pedestrian and bike infrastructure connecting citizens to 11 parks, 8 educational facilities, 2 major retail centers, 10 neighborhood areas, a major industrial park, and provides safe access to Arkansas Tech University.

The alignment along portions of both Whig and Prairie Creek will help protect and preserve environmentally sensitive areas. This includes trail alignments that foster both community connectivity, habitat protection, and potential restoration. Partnering with the Russellville School District Science Programs, students will have an opportunity to engage with the natural environment, learn about the interconnectedness of ecosystems, and partner on environmental restoration projects having profound positive impacts for the students and our local community.

### STATEMENT OF WORK

Significant preliminary analysis and effort have gone into the Russellville Connected Trail System. The Trails Committee defined several key routes within the community, connecting all areas of town with the trail system. The route for this application has been significantly refined as a result of conversations with ARDOT, site investigations by staff, and comments from citizens. The original layout included 13.8 miles of new trail system, however, after identification of construction challenges for the pedestrian overpass by ARDOT, site investigations by the project committee, and comments received from the Citizen Advisory Committee and the City Council, routes were refined which ultimately translated to 12.96 miles of new trails. Appendix 11 – Preliminary RCTS Alignment Analysis geographically details the route and supplements the location file.

The RAISE Grant will fund the development of the RCTS, consisting of approximately 13 miles of 10' ADA accessible multi-use trails or 10' sidepaths, which include pedestrian lighting, subsequently doubling the mileage of multi-use trails in Russellville. The proposed trail will safely cross current barriers including a pedestrian interstate overpass; two pedestrian 5 lane highway underpasses, and Union Pacific Railroad with a new signalized crossing. The route goes



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from Gum Street north of I-40 to Lock and Dam Park in south Russellville. In addition from the Junior High in the west to Valley Park Center in the east. A detailed narrative of the route is outlined in Appendix 11.

An audit of portions of the trail, conducted by the project committee, identified key areas to conserve and protect. Subsequently, these routes were adjusted as a result of those identifications and site-specific construction challenges. The area on trail #3, north of the high school, has been identified as a key location for a potential “outdoor classroom”. Partnering with the science department is an exciting opportunity for students once the trail has been constructed. Appendix 12, preliminary environmental review does not indicate any critical habitat.

The first leg of the route is the pedestrian bridge over the interstate, presenting the biggest obstacle for a connected trail system accessible to all. The overpass will be a safe alternative to the present dangers currently in place. Both trail alignments that cross state highways are designed to break down barriers by either crossing at signalized intersections or utilizing pedestrian underpasses. As part of this project, pedestrian underpasses will be constructed near the historic downtown entrance and premier trailhead and along Prairie Creek, where the highway is particularly dangerous for pedestrians. These modifications will provide safe and accessible routes to work, school, shopping, and homes.

The proposed trail alignment in front of the Latimore Tourist Home, the only remaining "Green Book" listed home between Little Rock and Fort Smith, has generated excitement among other active community organizations in the City. The trail will not only connects people with nature but also with the history of our community and those who fought against barriers and inequities.

Preliminary engineering for the project is at approximately 10% plans (Appendix 13). Detailed survey work will be required to determine the required right-of-way and easements anticipated along the route. Existing right-of-way will be primarily utilized for portions of the route where sidepaths are proposed. The City has considerable experience acquiring property consistent with the Uniform Relocation Act through our interactions with the United States Army Corp of Engineers and is willing to use eminent domain, as necessary.

Trailheads will be integrated into the RCTS at key locations. Typical trailheads will consist of parking, bike repair stations, bike racks, benches, trash receptacles, and drinking fountains where practicable. The trailhead along Prairie Creek will be located at the entrance to the Historic Downtown. The trailhead at City Park will also include artistic entrances. The Aquatic Center and other park facilities along the trail will also have facilities available.

90% of the proposed trail alignment is in Areas of Persistent Poverty with 100% of the alignment being located within Historically Disadvantaged Areas. Census Tract information is outlined in the Census Tract Data Table below, with Environmental Justice Screen Reports and Maps are included in Appendix 14.

Census Tract Data				
Russellville Census Tracts	9513	9514	9515	9516
Median Household Income	\$41,797	\$26,678	\$55,520	\$35,761
Unemployment Rate	7.7%	14.9%	3.7%	6.2%
% of Vacant Housing Units	15.0%	10.5%	11.4%	11.9%
% Below Poverty Level	18.9%	26.8%	12.3%	22.9%
Area of Persistent Poverty	✓	✓	✗	✓
Historically Disadvantaged Community	✓	✓	✓	✓
Project Cost Per Tract	\$11,610,457	\$4,036,576	\$2,668,302	\$6,672,424
% of Total Project Per Tract	46%	16%	11%	27%