



Rail Crossing Improvement Between Golf Ave & Central Ave

Open House Q&A (May 17, 2019)

The Forest Preserves hosted a public Open House on May 17, 2019 at the Des Plaines Public Library to share initial findings for improvement options to complete the Des Plaines Trail gap between Golf and Central Avenues where Union Pacific Railroad tracks currently bisect the trail. Over 30 attendees viewed and commented on the exhibits, asked questions of the staff and consultants, and provided feedback on the trail. Most attendees supported the bridge over the railroad. [See the latest project updates.](#)

Who are the approving agencies?

The Forest Preserves of Cook County as the owner will be approving the design along with the Illinois Department of Transportation, Cook County Division of Transportation, Union Pacific Railroad, Illinois Commerce Commission and ComEd.

How will ComEd access their site with the new improvements?

There will be no change in access for ComEd. Two existing ComEd towers are located east of the proposed bridge, and access to these towers will continue from East River Road. The next towers are west of the UP Railroad, and access will continue to be from Golf Road or Central Road.

What will the temporary and permanent plantings be along the improvements?

Temporary erosion control methods will be placed during construction of the improvement. No new plantings are anticipated except for possibly a few



along where the existing trail will no longer be used because of rerouting, and in areas used for temporary construction purposes.

What will happen to old section of trail?

The existing trail aggregate surface will be removed and replaced with topsoil and seed and possible new trees where space allows.

Will equestrians be allowed on the bridge?

Because of the limitations of the site logistics and alignment, it is unlikely that equestrians will be able to be accommodated on the bridge. Horses and bikes don't mix well in tight surroundings, such as will exist on the proposed bridge, particularly due to the length of the bridge and the curves that will be required to fit in the space. The clearance between the equestrians and the ComEd clear zone does not meet the preferred 12-foot equestrian height requirement. At the Open House, participant commented that perhaps equestrians could be required to dismount and walk their horse over the bridge. Although the issue of user conflicts would still be present, that option could be considered.

What will be the impact to the residences along East River Road?

There will be at least several hundred feet between the trail and the townhomes on the south side of ComEd, and the same distance from the existing homes on the north side. The only properties that will have a significant view of the bridge are the two parcels on either side of ComEd. The south parcel is currently a yard waste site and the north parcel is vacant. In the winter, however, some residences will likely be able to see the bridge since no leaves would be on the trees.

Why was Alternate A the recommended alignment?

All of the other alignments had various associated issues that severely limited or removed their capacity: The alignment through Oakton Community College



would require approval from the UP Railroad since it would require work to be done within their right-of-way at the bridge over Golf Road. Plus, it would be a lengthy realignment from the existing trail for trail users.

The alignment through the Kloempken Prairie would also require UP Railroad approval and would impact a high-quality wetland area. Adding warning signals and gates to the existing crossing is not feasible to be approved (and has already been denied) by the UP Railroad. The option of an underpass has been rejected by the UP Railroad, is not acceptable within their design requirements, would require a pump station to mitigate flooding, and would be very costly due to the impacts to the existing tracks.

An alignment along East River Road was not recommended since approval would again be required from the UP Railroad due to required widened crossing work at the existing roadway crossing, and easements and significant tree removal would be required from almost every property owner along the west side of the road.