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# SAVANNA GREAT RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION STUDY

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September 2025



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## SAVANNA GREAT RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION STUDY

*Information contained in this document is for planning purposes and should not be used for final design of any project. All results, recommendations, concept drawings, cost opinions, and commentary contained herein are based on limited data and information and on existing conditions that are subject to change.*



Figure 1. Marquette Park and view of Savanna-Sabula Bridge

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Savanna Great River Trail Extension Study identified and reviewed alternatives for extending the Great River Trail from its current terminus in the City of Savanna approximately 4 miles north to Miller's Landing. Managed by Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Miller's Landing is a recreational boat launch on the Mississippi River. The site is located directly west of the main entrance to Mississippi Palisades State Park, which would also benefit from bicycle and pedestrian access through the trail extension project. US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) manages the 12-acre parcel immediately south of Miller's Landing.

This study was funded by a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant awarded to the City of Savanna and was led by the consultant team of Toole Design and Strand Associates. The planning processes follow and are pursuant to *Integration of planning and environmental review statute (23 U.S.C. 168)*; *Efficient environmental reviews statute (23 U.S.C. 139(f)(4)(E)(ii))*; *Planning Regulations (23 CFR 450.212 (a)-(c) & 450.318 (a)-(d))*; *Programmatic Mitigation Planning (PMP) Statute (23 U.S.C. 169)*; *Planning Regulations (23 CFR 450.214 and 320)*. This study was completed as a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study. The PEL process follows 23 USC 168 as laid out in IDOT Bureau of Design & Environment's Manual Chapter 11-7.04(a). The PEL is a collaborative approach that is designed to provide information on the benefits and impacts of a project on the community, economy, and environment. The PEL can be a very useful tool to inform the environmental process.

The 4-mile extension is part of a broader effort to connect the Great River Trail to the Galena River Trail. Many studies have explored how to close this roughly 30-mile regional trail gap; most recently, the 2022 Great River Trail Concept Plan, identified the 4-mile extension north from Savanna as one of the priority next-step projects.

The Savanna Great River Trail Extension study kicked off in late September 2024. A steering committee, including representatives from the City of Savanna, Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (BHRC), IDNR, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Carroll County was organized to guide the study process and provide feedback on draft and final deliverables. The first phase of the study included stakeholder interviews, a field review, and public engagement. The project team then used the information collected from the first phase to develop a project Purpose

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and Need and existing conditions summary. The Purpose and Need was presented to IDOT and FHWA in February 2025 and received concurrence.

The project team then identified trail route alternatives and evaluated the alternatives based on three criteria:

1. Absence of “fatal flaws” that would prevent the construction or long-term sustainability of a trail extension
2. Support of the project Purpose and Need
3. Avoidance of substantial impacts to known natural and/or cultural resources

The full set of evaluation criteria and outcomes can be found in Appendix A. Alternatives Evaluation.

One alternative, which included an elevated boardwalk within the Mississippi River, was eliminated for fatal flaws. Following the removal of this alternative, 13 unique route alternatives remained. The Purpose and Need evaluation criteria was then used to narrow the potential alternatives to five routes. Results from an Environmental Survey Request (ESR) were used to determine whether certain alternatives carried higher risks for environmental or cultural resource impacts.

The final study phase focused on presenting the five remaining alternatives and gathering feedback and preferences from stakeholders and the public. In May and June of 2025, the project team conducted a second round of stakeholder calls and public engagement and completed a second field review. Letters to Tribes were also sent out during this period with information about the project and a request for any feedback. This study concluded with five Alternatives to be Carried Forward. Three of these alternative are recommended; a clear preference for these alternatives was demonstrated by the public during the in-person engagement event and through the online survey. The other two alternatives have been identified as reasonable but are not recommended.

### Alternatives to be Carried Forward

#### *Recommended:*

- Broderick Drive/Marquette Park and IL 84
- J.B. Sullivan Drive and IL 84
- Diagonal Street, Scenic Ridge Road, and State Park Trail

#### *Reasonable but Not Recommended:*

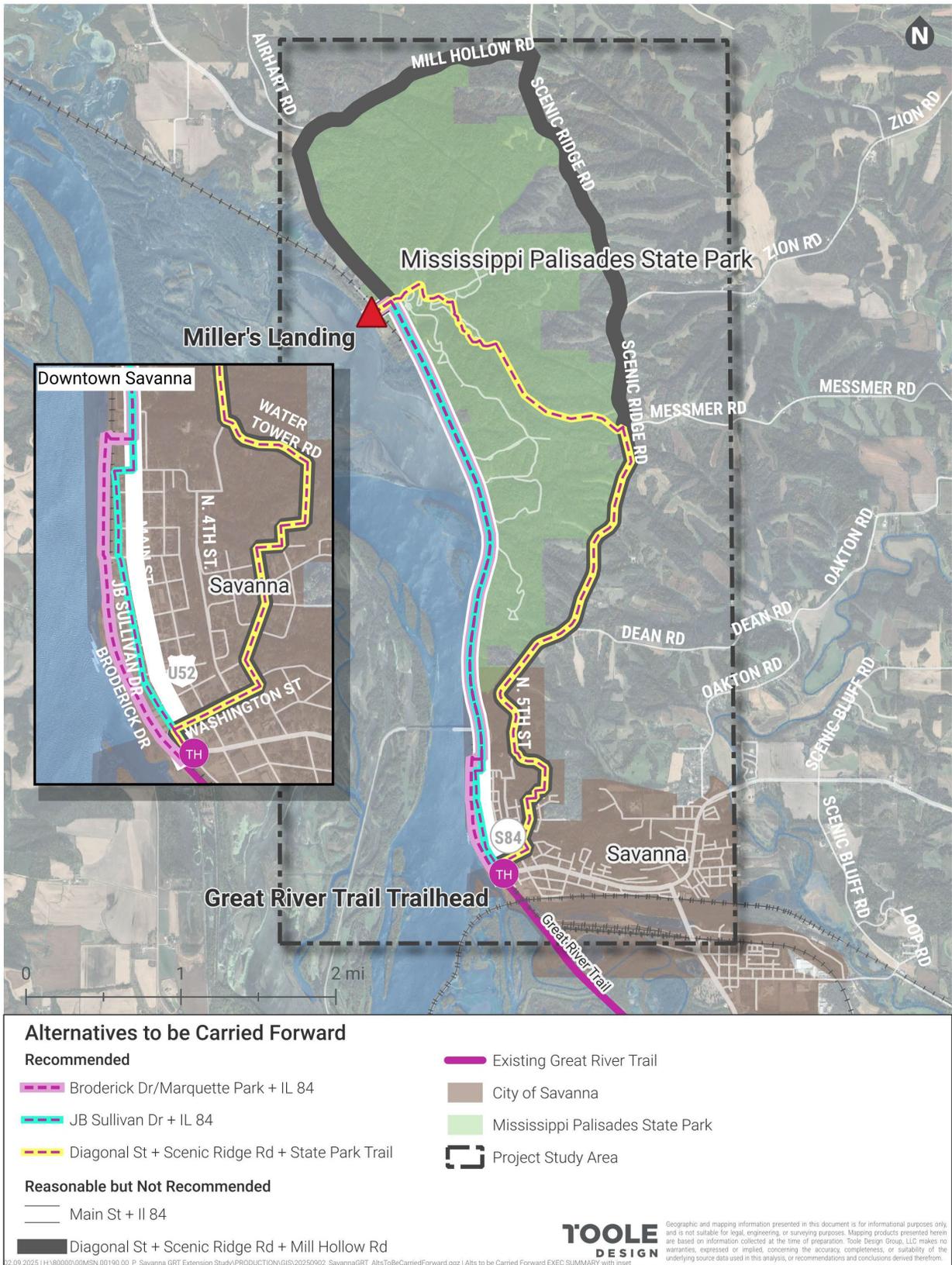
- Main Street and IL 84
- Diagonal Street, Scenic Ridge Road, and Mill Hollow Road

These five alternatives, which are shown in the map below, will be carried forward into concept design and preliminary engineering.



Figure 2. Boat ramps at Miller's Landing

# SAVANNA GREAT RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION STUDY



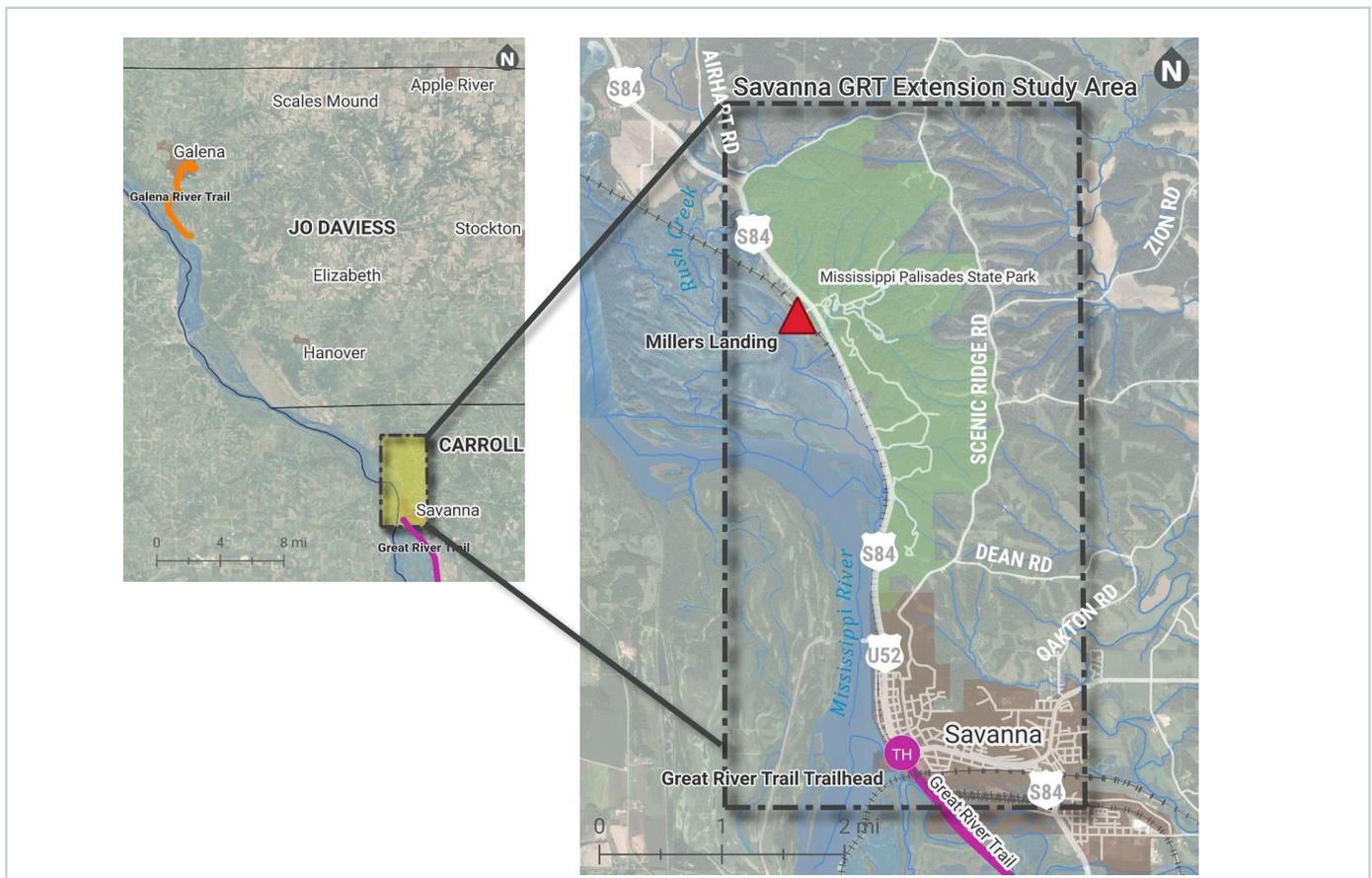
**Map 1. Alternatives to be Carried Forward**

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The City of Savanna with assistance from Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (BHRC) assessed the feasibility of extending the Great River Trail (GRT) from its current northern terminus at the Savanna Marina approximately four miles north to the Miller’s Landing boat launch, which is managed by Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). This study is made possible by a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant, which is sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and locally administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). By extending the GRT to Miller’s Landing, visitors and residents of Savanna will benefit from expanded opportunities for recreation as well as improved options for biking or walking to Miller’s Landing and Mississippi Palisades State Park, which is accessed directly across from Miller’s Landing.

This study was conducted to be compliant with a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study. PEL studies represent a collaborative and integrated approach to transportation decision-making that 1) considers environment, community, and economic goals early in the transportation planning process, and 2) uses the information, analysis, and products developed during planning to inform the environmental review process.

The Savanna GRT Extension study area is in Carroll County in northwestern Illinois where it is bordered on the west by the Mississippi River. Mill Hollow Road, at the northern border, is one mile north of the Miller’s Landing boat launch. Scenic Ridge Road parallels the study area’s eastern border. The existing GRT trailhead at the Savanna Marina is at the southern extent of the study area.



Map 2. Project Study Area

## SAVANNA GREAT RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION STUDY

The concept of the GRT coincided with the start of IDNR's initial planning efforts for the Grand Illinois Trail in the mid-1990s. The GRT was planned as a shared-use path between Rock Island and Savanna with a northern connection to Galena that would rely, at least partially, on low-volume roads. The GRT from Rock Island to Savanna is mostly built, although there are some notable gaps that rely on local roads.

### PAST STUDIES

This study has built upon and expanded on several previous studies conducted in the project area. The most relevant studies are listed below; additional studies can be found in Appendix B. Existing Conditions Summary.

#### 1. Project Development Report for Grand Illinois Trail (2005)

The engineering firm Missman, Stanley & Associates prepared a project development report associated with the extension of the Grand Illinois Trail from Riverview Road in Thomson to the intersection of IL 84 and Savanna Army Depot Road. The study excluded the existing section of the GRT within the City of Savanna. Conducted for IDOT and IDNR, the study identified three alternatives that overlap with the current Savanna Great River Trail Extension study area. The trail alignments studied would not meet ADA accessibility guidelines due to the prevailing topography of the area and the environmental impacts anticipated to meet slope requirements.

Alternatives followed a combination of existing roads and new off-road alignments. Several sections of the alternatives had grades of 8 percent or more, and one alternative (not preferred) had grades up to 18 percent. The study included coordination meetings with IDNR, IDOT, USFWS, USACE, Carroll County, Washington Township, and the City of Savanna. Alternative C, was selected for further development due to the following advantages:

- No additional right-of-way would be needed if retaining walls could be used.
- Alternative C would have the least environmental impact compared to the other two alternatives.
- The Alternative C route provides direct access for state park campers and connects to the park office.
- Grades in Alternative C are not as steep as the other two alternatives.

The project team for this study contacted current and former IDNR staff to gain a better understanding of the results of this study. Through these communications, we learned that Alternative C was not pursued further due to lack of funding and other agency priorities.

#### 2. Great River Trail Concept Plan (2022)

A concept plan for the extension of the Great River Trail in Savanna to the Galena River Trail southern terminus on Aiken Road was completed by Iowa State University's Community Design Lab with technical assistance from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program. BHRC sponsored the study. The plan identified three primary route options for the Savanna trailhead to Miller's Landing section for further consideration:

- A riverfront trail that would rely on an elevated boardwalk for sections within the Mississippi River
- A trail routed through Mississippi Palisades State Park
- A side path along the BNSF railroad / IL 84 corridor

Route options within the City of Savanna included using Main Street, Broderick Drive, and the riverfront on the west side of the BNSF railroad. The plan acknowledged the many challenges of implementing a trail along the corridor between the existing trailhead and Miller's Landing, including:

## SAVANNA GREAT RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION STUDY

- Steep grades and narrow road right-of-way from Savanna to Mississippi Palisades State Park.
- Resource concerns within the state park that may prevent construction of new paved trails.
- Limited space within the IL 84 and BNSF railroad corridor, which is further constrained by the steep bluffs to the east and river to the west.

At the time of the 2022 plan, the elevated boardwalk option was considered the most appealing alternative for further study due to its ability to create an accessible and direct route and for the potential of such a structure to serve as a unique feature of the trail that would draw tourists to the area. The 2022 plan was high-level and conceptual in nature and did not delve into the cost or environmental challenges of this option. The plan does suggest that future studies would need to look at this option more closely.

### 3. Carroll and Jo Daviess Counties Greenways and Trails Plan (2022)

The Carroll and Jo Daviess Counties Greenways and Trails Plan, which was completed in 2022, identifies Great River Trail improvements and the extension from Savanna to Galena as an initiative. This initiative includes the following recommendations that pertain to this study:

- Building on the conceptual plan developed by Iowa State University's Community Design Lab.
- Developing a "Friends of" group or coalition of government agencies to continue the trail extension effort.
- Developing a master plan.

The Greenways and Trails Plan also identifies implementing the Savanna riverfront master plan and improving the Savanna GRT depot trailhead as initiatives.

The previous plans and studies that address the GRT extension illustrate the interest and long-term commitment by the community and stakeholders in eventually making the trail extension a reality. Past references to the importance of GRT extension helped the project team clearly identify the project Purpose and Need.

### PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

As noted in the Executive Summary, this study was designed to be compliant with a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study. A foundational element of a PEL study is the project Purpose and Need. The *purpose* defines the goals or objectives the project aims to fulfill, and the *need* identifies the specific issues or conditions the project would address. The following Purpose and corresponding Need were developed by the project team with input from the steering committee and concurrence from FHWA and IDOT. Concurrence was provided on February 6, 2025, as a step in the PEL study compliance. The project's Purpose and Need were also shared with Tribes that have connections to the project area.

#### Purpose:

Improve the Great River Trail **System Linkage** between Savanna, IL and Galena, IL by identifying feasible route alternatives that are able to be constructed and maintained between the Savanna Marina and Miller's Landing Boat Launch that address existing **Safety** risks and **Transportation Facility Deficiencies**.

#### Need:

1. Reduce safety risks for non-motorized users associated with their current need to use high-speed roads with narrow shoulders and steep vertical and horizontal curves in the study area.
2. Offer a positive experience for non-motorized users and connect to local businesses and lower-income neighborhoods to meet **social demands** and improve opportunities for **economic development**.
3. Address **transportation facility deficiencies** for non-motorized users by adding accommodations to on-street routes and/or developing off-street multiuse paths. The study area is one of the more challenging links between Savanna and Galena.

## PHASE 1: UNDERSTANDING EXISTING CONDITIONS AND PUBLIC SUPPORT

An existing conditions summary was developed in late 2024 and finalized in January of 2025. The summary documents corridor safety history, physical constraints, land use and ownership, and findings from a November 2024 field review. The most relevant sections of the existing conditions are summarized below. For further detail, see Appendix B. Existing Conditions Summary.

### CRASH DATA AND BIKE/PEDESTRIAN SAFETY CONTEXT

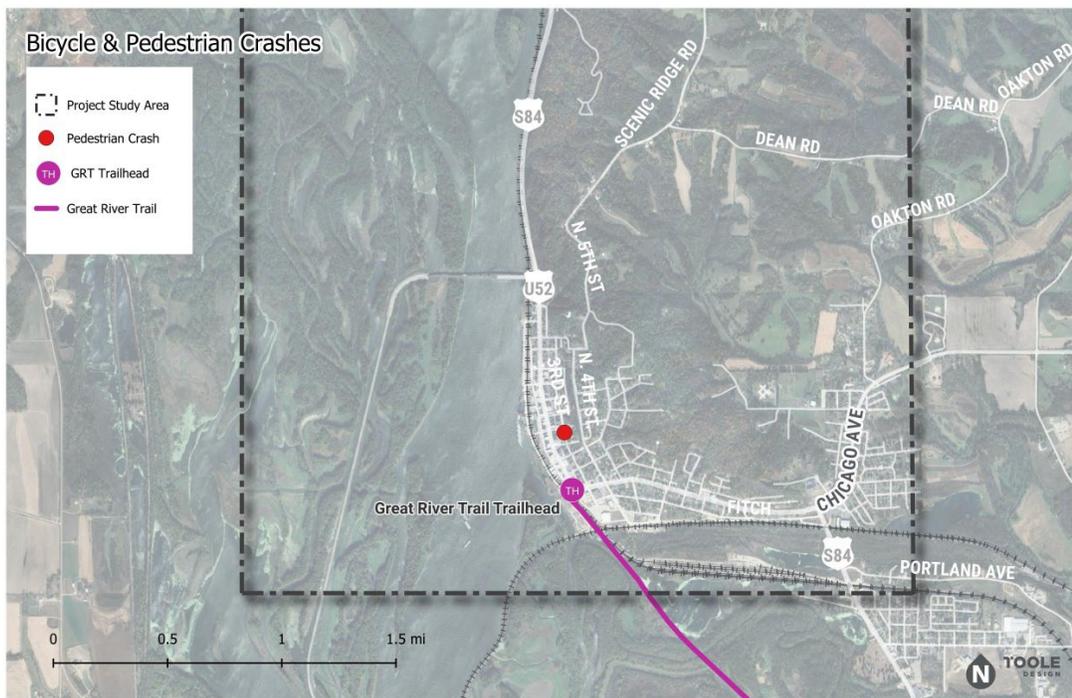
The northern terminus of the GRT is found at the southern end of the project study area. As noted from the 2017-2018 Northwest Illinois Trail Study, the total trail user count in Savanna was 11,454 for the study period. Beyond the GRT, downtown Savanna has sidewalks along Main Street and Chicago Avenue. Sidewalks are intermittent along cross-streets of Main and Chicago with decreasing frequency farther from the downtown area. Mississippi Palisades State Park has 15 miles of natural surface trails but lacks opportunities to access trailheads by foot or bike from outside the park. There are no bike lanes or signed bike routes in the study area.

Bike and pedestrian crash data was reviewed to understand crash trends and severity within the study area. Crash data is susceptible to under-reporting of non-motor vehicle crashes and near misses. For this reason, experts recommend that crash data be viewed holistically in combination with other indicators of road safety, such as the lived experiences of people bicycling and walking in the area. Absence of bike and pedestrian crashes may be a

## SAVANNA GREAT RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION STUDY

result of low numbers of bicyclists and pedestrians due to inhospitable conditions rather than an indicator of the relative level of safety.

The map below shows the location of the single pedestrian crash within the study area that was reported from 2020 through 2023. The crash involving a pedestrian occurred in 2022 on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street between Madison Street and Jefferson Street and resulted in an incapacitating injury. No bicycle crashes were reported in the study area during this time period.



**Map 3. Reported Pedestrian Crashes (2020-2023) Crash Data Source: IDOT**

## STUDY AREA ROAD NETWORK

Many of the potential corridors for the trail extension follow existing roads in the study area. The project team researched available data for relevant road characteristics that would help later determine suitable facility types for the trail. Project staff referred to the FHWA Bikeway Selection Guide,<sup>1</sup> which could also guide future design work to determine appropriate facilities (i.e. side path, separated bike lanes, shared streets, etc.) based on factors such as traffic volumes and posted speed limits.

<sup>1</sup> US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration. 2019. *Bikeway Selection Guide*. <https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2022-07/fhwasa18077.pdf>

## SAVANNA GREAT RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION STUDY

**Table 1. Relevant Roads within the Study Area**

Road Name	AADT	Heavy Commercial Volume	Posted Speed	Total Paved Width	Right-of-Way Width
Main Street (US 52/IL 84)	5,150	475	25 to 40 mph	24 to 32 ft	80 ft
IL 84 (north of Savanna-Sabula Bridge)	1,600	160	55 mph	24 ft	50 to 66 ft
4 <sup>th</sup> Street	500	0	20 mph	20 to 30 ft	66 ft
Clay Street / N 5 <sup>th</sup> Street	625	0	20 to 30 mph	20 to 25 ft	55 to 66 ft
Scenic Ridge Road	450	0	55 mph	20 to 24 ft	66 ft
Mill Hollow Road	75	0	Not Posted	20 to 24 ft (aggregate/gravel)	33 to 66 ft

Illinois Department of Transportation. 2023. *Annual Average Daily Traffic*. <https://idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/network-overview/highway-system/maps/average-annual-daily-traffic.html>

## LAND OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The land and roads along the potential trail extension are owned and managed by several different public agencies. IL 84 and US 52 are managed by IDOT outside of Savanna; within city limits, they are managed by City of Savanna. The railroad, which parallels IL 84, is owned and operated by BNSF. Mill Hollow Road is maintained by Washington Township, and Scenic Ridge Road, north of Savanna, is managed by Carroll County. All other road corridors analyzed in this study are maintained by the City of Savanna.

There are several publicly-owned and -managed sites that also play important roles in this study. At the north end of the study area, Miller’s Landing is owned and managed by IDNR. At the south end, the Great River Trail Trailhead at the Savanna Marina is owned and maintained by the City of Savanna. IDNR is responsible for the land and roads within Mississippi Palisades State Park.



**Figure 3. Miller’s Landing, also called Miller’s Hollow, is owned and managed by IDNR**

## STUDY AREA CHARACTERISTICS

As part of the trail extension study, the project team conducted an initial review of the physical and environmental features along the proposed corridor using available data. This high-level scan considered key elements such as slope, floodplains, wetlands, areas with high potential for archaeological significance, and Section 4(f) properties. Section 4(f) properties, defined in 23 CFR 774.17, include significant publicly owned parks, recreation areas, and wildlife or waterfowl refuges, or any publicly or privately owned historic site listed or eligible for listing on the

## SAVANNA GREAT RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION STUDY

National Register of Historic Places. Section 4(f) applies to projects that receive funding from or require approval by an agency of the U.S. DOT, such as the FHWA.

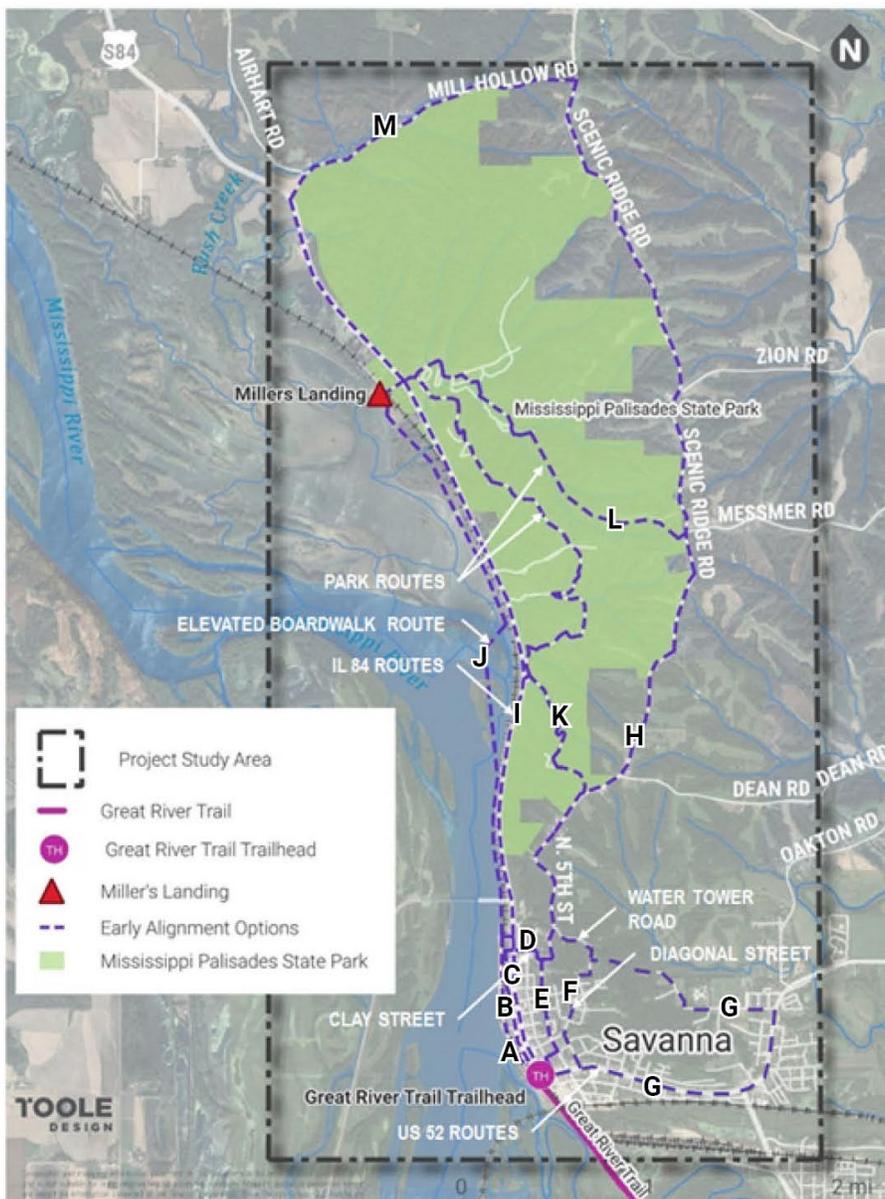
A second-level desktop review was conducted through the Environmental Survey Request (ESR) process as part of the PEL Study. The ESR was completed by resource specialists within IDOT's Bureau of Design and Environment. The associated resource reports were developed from desktop analyses of natural and cultural resources.

### 2024 FIELD REVIEW AND EARLY ALTERNATIVES

Project team members completed a field review of the study area on November 20, 2024. In this review, team members observed and took descriptive notes on alternative corridors that the GRT could potentially use for the extension. The early corridor alternatives, shown in the map below, would allow for the GRT to extend via numerous routes, each with their own opportunities and constraints. Alternatives were identified based on previous studies and steering committee input. The early alternatives include the following segments:

The early alternatives include the following segments:

- A. Broderick Drive/Marquette Park
- B. J.B. Sullivan Drive
- C. Main Street
- D. Clay Street/N 5<sup>th</sup> Street
- E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street
- F. Diagonal Street
- G. US 52 / Longmoor Avenue
- H. Scenic Ridge Road
- I. IL 84
- J. Elevated boardwalk within Mississippi River
- K. Mississippi Palisades State Park existing road network
- L. New trail and campground roads within Mississippi State Park
- M. Mill Hollow Road



Map 4. Early Corridor Alternatives

## SAVANNA GREAT RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION STUDY

The project team took photographs and notes on existing conditions of the study area to inform identification and refinement of the alternative trail routes. Notes were made on opportunities and challenges corresponding to each of the early alternatives. For instance, routing the trail along Main Street would provide a unique experience for trail users and connect them directly with downtown Savanna. Figure 4 shows storefronts and wide streets that could be narrowed to accommodate buffered bike lanes. Steep slopes along N 5<sup>th</sup> Street in Savanna (Figure 5) would be challenging for many trail users. Figure 6 illustrates the steep terrain that users would face if the route were to use existing roads within the southern end of Mississippi Palisades State Park. Figure 7 shows the alleyway west of Main Street that could potentially support a shared street facility. For the full set of field review notes, see Appendix B. Existing Conditions Summary.



Figure 4. Main Street



Figure 5. Steep section of N 5th Street

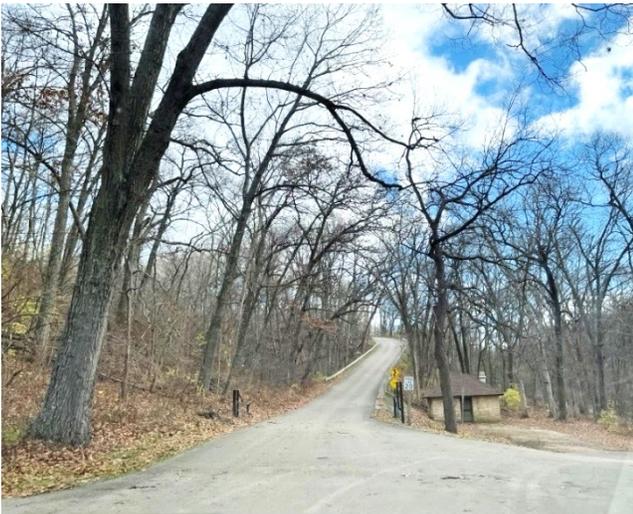


Figure 6. Roads within the southern end of the State Park



Figure 7. J.B. Sullivan Drive runs parallel to Main Street

## PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: LISTENING PHASE

The purpose of the first phase of engagement was to listen to members of the public to learn about trail preferences and to inform them about the study. This phase of engagement also aimed to gather information from agency representatives about past, current, and future projects within the study area. Findings from this round of engagement were used to inform selection of trail route alternatives for further analysis and recommendations. Engagement activities during this first round included an online survey, pop-up event, and calls with stakeholders. Collectively, the pop-up event and online survey had 159 participants.

Some clear themes surfaced from the feedback and responses received. Overall support for a trail extension was apparent through all conversations and activities conducted. Paired with that support was an acknowledgement of challenges this trail project will face. The stakeholders and public highlighted the significant barriers in the natural and built environment that the trail project would need to overcome. The public, as well as many of the stakeholder groups, also highlighted the important role that safety and user experience will need to play, particularly due to the necessity of routing at least parts of the trail along the right-of-way of roads that see higher speeds and traffic volumes. For a full summary of the public and stakeholder engagement process, see Appendix C.



**Figure 8. Public engagement at the Savanna Festival of Trees decoration judging event**

### Environmental Survey Request

The project team submitted an ESR to IDOT to identify potential environmental impacts of the alternatives studied. The ESR submission included a project description and GIS map of the study area boundaries and alternative corridors, each with a 120-foot buffer. Typical cross sections of trail facility types that were identified as potential options for the alternative corridors were also submitted with the ESR (see Figures 10 through 13). The project first went through a prescreening exercise, which is done to determine whether a full ESR needed to be sent to the IDOT Central Office. As expected, the project failed the prescreening due to its complex nature, and an ESR was submitted. The ESR specifically requested that natural and cultural resources specialists conduct a desktop-only review (no field work was conducted), due to the early phase of the project and number and length of alternative routes. The results of the ESR were used to inform the Environmental and Cultural Resources screening.

## TRAIL TYPOLOGIES

Four typical cross sections were developed to illustrate potential facility types that could be used for the trail extension. Additionally, nearly all alternatives would make use of some section of shared streets. Shared streets are appropriate for streets with low traffic volumes and speed limits. These streets include pavement markings and signage to indicate that the roadway is shared among vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Examples of alternative trail sections that may be suitable for a shared street treatment include J.B. Sullivan Drive and residential streets within Savanna, including Diagonal Street. Note that Illinois Vehicle Code currently only allows 30 mph as the statutory low except near schools. As of mid-2025, development of potential legislation that would change speed limit minimums is underway.



Figure 9. Shared Street along a low-speed residential roadway (Source: Lisa Caballero/BikePortland)

### 1. Independent Trail Corridor

A shared use path that has its own unique corridor (not using road right-of-way or a utility easement) is often the first typology that comes to mind when thinking of trails. This typology is often limited to parks or publicly-owned lands but can benefit from more flexibility in design. The alternative that routes through Mississippi Palisades State Park would be an example of an independent trail corridor.

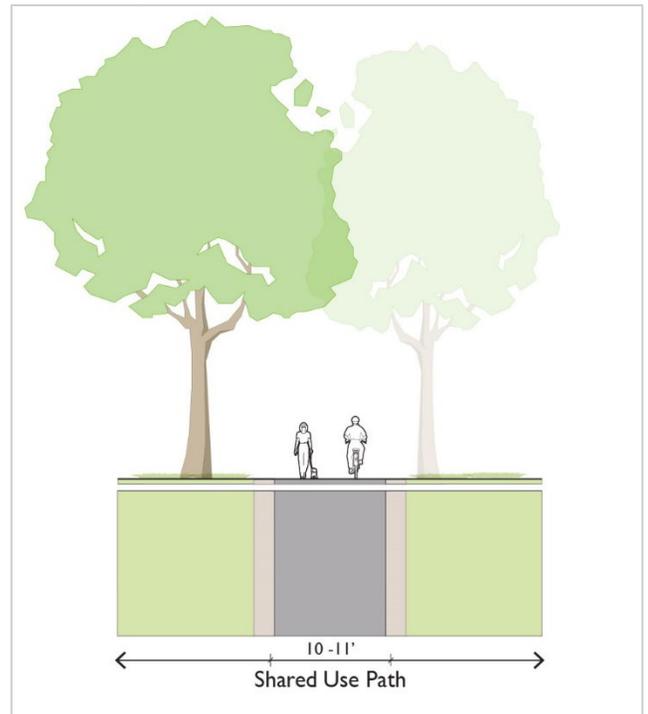


Figure 10. Independent Trail Corridor

## 2. Side Path (Unconstrained)

A side path is a shared use path that runs parallel to a roadway within the road right-of-way. When side paths are unconstrained, they can be designed with the full preferred buffer between the road and the path (typically 5 feet), and the preferred trail width based on anticipated trail user volumes. Sections of Scenic Ridge Road would be examples of areas suitable for unconstrained side paths.

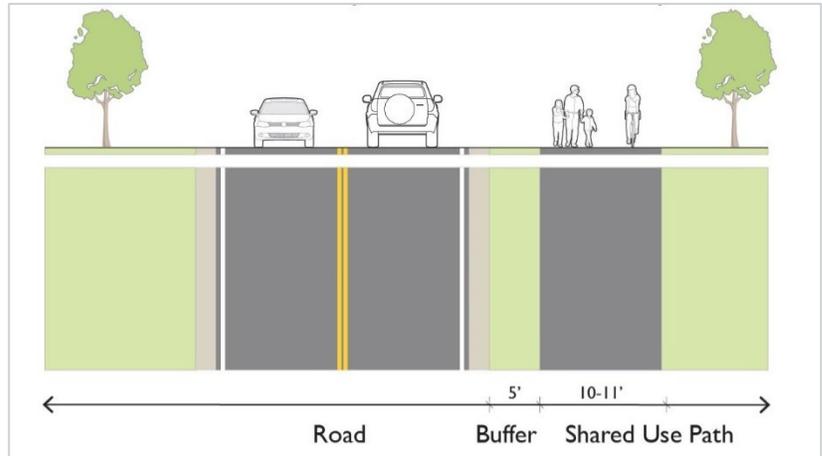


Figure 11. Side Path (Unconstrained)

## 3. Side Path (Constrained)

A constrained side path is used in instances where the preferred path or buffer width is unfeasible. In these cases, barriers may be used to provide separation between road and trail users. The trail width may need to be narrower than otherwise preferred for short distances to accommodate the constraint. The section of IL 84 just north of the Savanna-Sabula Bridge is an example of an area that would require a constrained side path design.

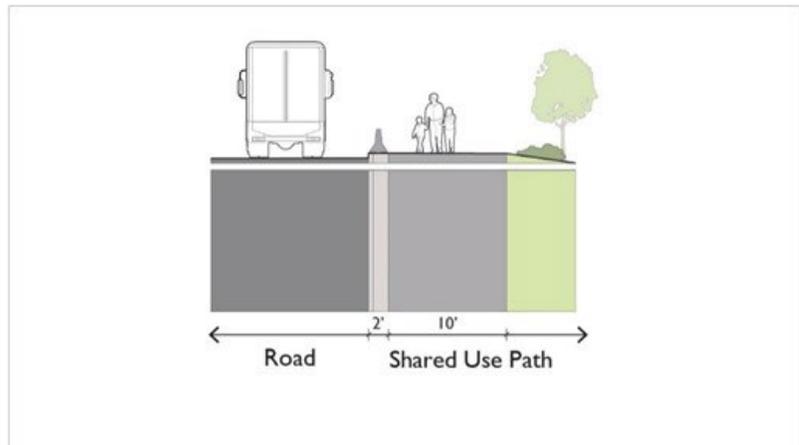


Figure 12. Side Path (Constrained)

## 4. On-Street Bike Facilities

In some situations, due to constrained space or desired streetscape layout, on-street bike facilities paired with sidewalks are used for trail connections. Bike lanes can be unprotected (pavement stripe only), buffered, or protected. Main Street is an example of an alternative trail section that would be most suited for on-street bike facilities.

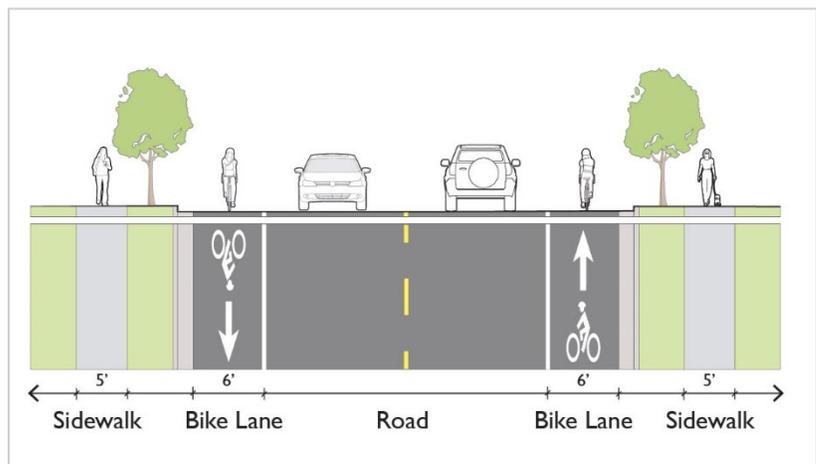


Figure 13. On-Street Bike Facilities

## PHASE 2: ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION

The alternatives identified and reviewed during the November 2024 field visit (see Map 4) along with a “No Build” alternative were organized for a series of screening exercises to begin the process of identifying alternatives to be carried forward into preliminary engineering. These four levels of evaluation were shared with FHWA and IDOT as a part of the PEL study process. The evaluation levels included the following:

1. “Fatal Flaws” Evaluation
2. Purpose and Need Evaluation
3. Environmental and Cultural Resources Evaluation
4. Public and Stakeholder Input

For full documentation of the alternatives screening criteria and results, see Appendix A. Alternatives Evaluation.

### ALTERNATIVES SCREENING

#### Level 1. “Fatal Flaws” Evaluation

A screening for any “fatal flaws” was conducted as the first stage of the alternatives screening process. “Fatal flaws” are any conditions that would render an alternative unfeasible to construct or maintain. Conditions that are considered “fatal flaws” include:

- The incompatibility of trail facility construction and designations on underlying land, such as the designation of the Mississippi Palisades as a National Natural Landmark.
- The inability of the prospective managing agency to maintain the trail.
- The inability to construct a trail facility that could withstand environmental conditions or weather events known to occur along the corridor.
- The inability to construct a trail facility that meets minimum design standards.

The team eliminated the elevated boardwalk route alternative that would have included portions of complex and expensive elevated sections within the Mississippi River and bridges to islands. This route alternative would likely not be able to be maintained by USFWS and also had the highest construction costs and likely the highest environmental impacts.

The team also eliminated route alternatives that relied exclusively on existing roadways within Mississippi Palisades State Park. A desktop-level ESR was submitted to IDOT. Based on the ESR, routes through the park have higher potential for occurrences of archaeological and cultural resources. They also travel through multiple Illinois Natural Inventory sites and adjacent to the Sentinel Nature Preserve. Additionally, these existing park roads traverse steep terrain, and there are multiple occurrences where there is insufficient space to share the road with vehicles or to construct a side path. Following Level 1 screening, 13 viable route alternatives remained.

## SAVANNA GREAT RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION STUDY

### Level 2. Purpose and Need Evaluation

The alternatives without “fatal flaws” were evaluated against the purpose and needs identified for the study. Evaluation criteria for each of the project’s purpose and need statements is shown in the table below.

**Table 2. Level 2 Alternatives Screening Criteria: Purpose and Need**

Project Purpose	Evaluation Criteria
Improve the Great River Trail <b>System Linkage</b> between Savanna, IL and Galena, IL by identifying feasible route alternatives that are able to be constructed and maintained between the Savanna Marina and Miller’s Landing Boat Launch that address existing <b>Safety</b> risks and <b>Transportation Facility Deficiencies</b> .	Continuous route that would connect the existing trail Great River Trail from the Quad Cities to Savanna with Miller’s Landing
	Compatible with future extensions to eventually connect with the Galena River Trail
	Offers a route that deviates minimally from the north/south corridor of the Mississippi River
Project Need	Evaluation Criteria
Reduce <b>safety</b> risks for non-motorized users associated with their current need to use high-speed roads with narrow shoulders and steep vertical and horizontal curves in the study area.	Is compatible with safe and feasible crossing designs for roadways and railroads
	Can accommodate separation and/or protection from vehicle traffic to improve perceived safety for all ages and abilities
Offer a positive experience for non-motorized users and connect to local businesses and lower-income neighborhoods to meet <b>social demands</b> and improve opportunities for <b>economic development</b> .	Conveniently accessible by transportation disadvantaged neighborhoods in the study area
	Connects to businesses in Savanna that would benefit economically from trail access
	Provides a scenic experience characteristic of the Mississippi River corridor and Driftless Area
Address <b>transportation facility deficiencies</b> for non-motorized users by adding accommodations to on-street routes and/or developing off-street multiuse paths. The study area is one of the more challenging links between Savanna and Galena.	Grades meet ADA accessibility standards possible to the maximum extent feasible given the steep terrain of the area and minimize the number and/or length of locations that do not meet ADA standards
	Supports a shared-use facility or can accommodate separate facilities for both bicyclists and pedestrians

Each of the 13 remaining route alternatives and the “No Build” alternative was assigned a score from 1 (does not meet criteria) to 5 (meets criteria fully) based on how well it met the project Purpose and each of the three Needs. To further differentiate between the route alternatives, each was also ranked within each purpose and need category and summed to result in a collective ranking. The “No Build” alternative scored the lowest, not meeting the Purpose and Need of the project. The next two lowest-scoring alternatives were those that used US 52. These were

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eliminated from further consideration. The next four lowest-scoring alternatives were those that used Clay Street between downtown Savannah and North 5th Street/Scenic Ridge Road. These were also eliminated from further consideration.

The four route alternatives scoring in the middle of the range were two that use Fourth Street and two that use Diagonal Street/Water Tower Road to ultimately connect to Scenic Ridge Road. During the Steering Committee meeting on May 12, 2025, the group agreed that among these, the two routes using Fourth Street were less desirable due to challenges with sight distance and grades at the intersection of Fourth Street and Webster Street. The two Fourth Street route alternatives were eliminated from further consideration while the two Diagonal Street/Water Tower Road route alternatives were carried forward. The highest scoring route alternatives were the three that use IL 84 either via Main Street, J.B. Sullivan Drive, Broderick Drive/ Marquette Park Road. Following the Level 2 screening, five viable route alternatives remained.

### Level 3. Environmental and Cultural Resources Evaluation

All early alternatives were screened in the Level 3 Environmental and Cultural Resource Evaluation. The project team submitted an ESR through IDOT to obtain the evaluation of the following criteria and measures by applicable agencies. The environmental and cultural resources' desktop evaluation was conducted to identify alternatives that may have higher impacts to sensitive environmental or cultural resources.

This evaluation used existing data reviewed during the existing conditions phase of the study along with the results of the Environmental Survey Request (ESR) for natural and cultural resources. Alternatives received a 'High', 'Low', or 'Unknown' in each category noted in the table below. 'Low' indicates that the alternative had lower impact or likelihood of impact. 'High' indicates greater or more likely impact. 'Unknown' was indicated for factors that have not yet been investigated, which include public/private well locations and funding sources related to Section 6(f)<sup>2</sup>.

**Table 3. Environmental and Cultural Resources Screening**

	A1 Broderick Dr, Wayne King Dr, IL 84	B1 J.B. Sullivan Dr, IL 84	C1 Main St, IL 84	E2a Diagonal St, Scenic Ridge Rd, State Park Trail	E2b Diagonal St, Scenic Ridge Rd, Mill Hollow Rd
Agricultural	L	L	L	L	L
Cultural Resources	H	H	H	L	L
Social & Economic	L	L	L	L	L
Section 4(f)	L	L	L	H	L
Section 6(f)	U	U	U	U	U
Natural Resources	L	L	L	H	L
Surface Waters	H	H	H	L	L
Groundwater	U	U	U	U	U
Floodplains	H	H	L	L	L
Floodway	L	L	L	L	L
Regulated Substances	L	L	L	L	L

<sup>2</sup> Section 6(f) refers to part of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965 that addresses the protection of recreation lands and facilities that have been acquired or developed using LWCF funds.

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Due to the high-level nature of this evaluation and lack of strong differentiation between the alternatives, none of the alternatives were eliminated after the Level 3 screening.

### Level 4. Public and Stakeholder Input: Feedback on Alternatives

The second phase of engagement presented the five alternatives under consideration and collected feedback and information about preferences between the alternatives. This phase of engagement occurred towards the end of the alternatives analysis, after the project team screened alternatives for fatal flaws and meeting the project Purpose and Need. This allowed the project team to present a smaller subset of alternatives to the public. The public had opportunities to provide input via an online public survey and an in-person pop-up activity at the Savanna Farmer's Market. The project team also sent letters introducing the project to relevant Tribes and conducted calls and field reviews with stakeholders. These engagement activities occurred over May and June 2025 and provided the project team with feedback on support and opposition towards the remaining alternatives.



**Figure 14. A family offers input on the trail route alternatives at the Savanna Farmer's Market pop-up engagement event**

In total, 114 people participated in the pop-up engagement activity and the online survey. Results from the in-person voting activity and survey were similar and showcased strong patterns in support and opposition to the remaining five alternatives.

The public expressed more support for alternatives along the river that used IL 84, but within those three alternatives, the two options that avoided Main Street were clearly favored. Comments about Main Street centered on concerns about comfortable bicycling due to the traffic on the street regardless of the buffered bike lane option that was suggested as a potential facility type. People also commented that they liked the closer proximity to and views of the Mississippi River that the other two options provided. For these reasons, the alternative that uses Main Street is not recommended.

Although less popular than the routes along the river, the alternative that would rely on a new trail through Mississippi Palisades State Park was clearly favored over the alternative that uses Mill Hollow Road. Participants expressed interest in routing through the park and expressed concern about the course gravel pavement on Mill Hollow Road. There was also concern about whether Washington Township would have the capacity or funding to pave the road. Concerns about steep sections of Mill Hollow were also noted as was the disappointment in the indirect route that the alternative provided. The alternative that uses Mill Hollow Road is not recommended, leaving three recommended alternatives at the conclusion of Level 4 screening. For a full summary of the public and stakeholder engagement process, see Appendix C.

## ALTERNATIVES TO BE CARRIED FORWARD

The five Alternatives to be Carried Forward are depicted in the map below. Three alternatives are recommended, and two alternatives are deemed reasonable but not recommended.

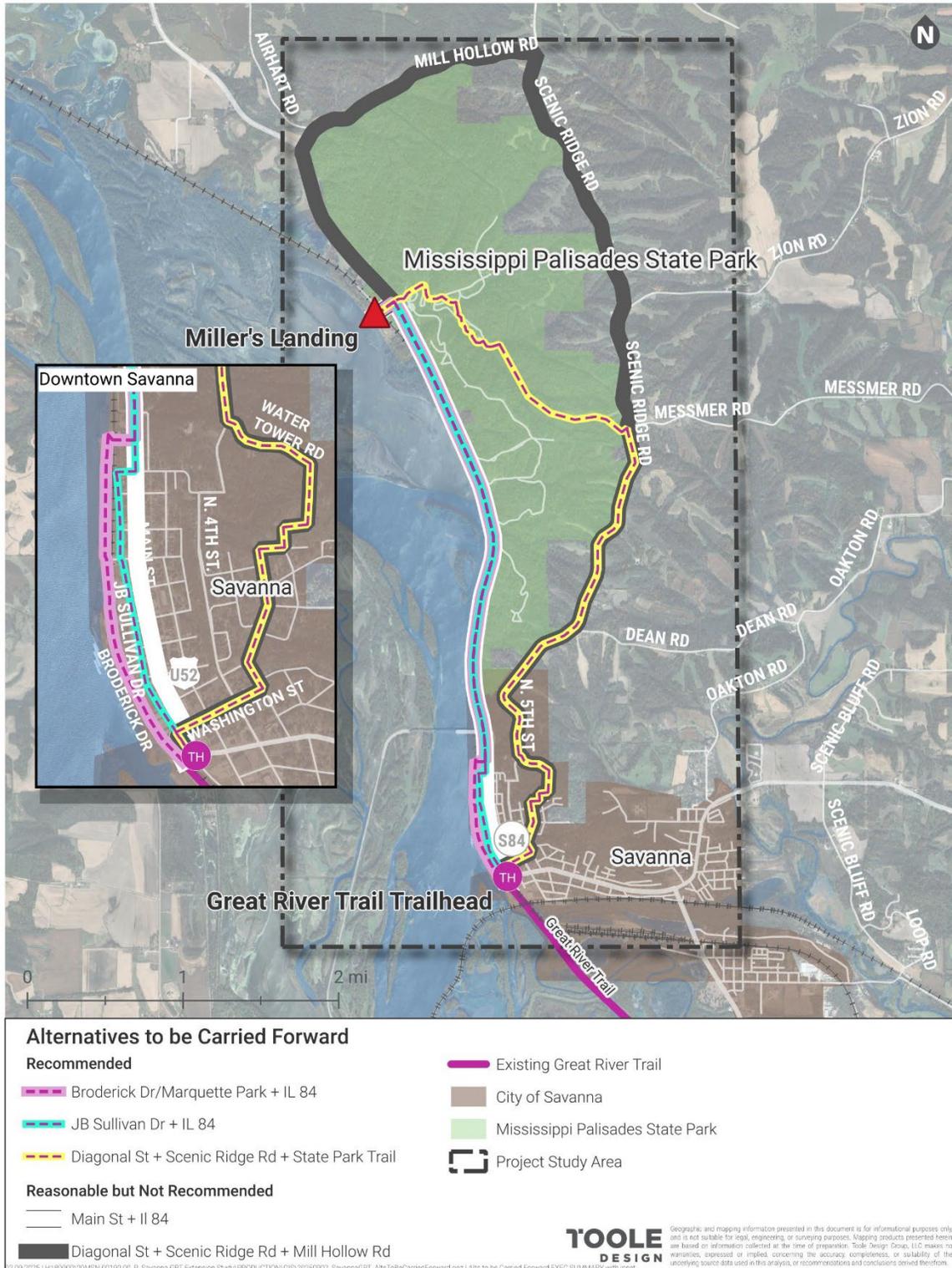
Recommended alternatives:

- Broderick Drive/Marquette Park and IL 84
- J.B. Sullivan Drive and IL 84
- Diagonal Street, Scenic Ridge Road, and a new trail connecting through the state park

Reasonable, but not recommended alternatives:

- Main Street and IL 84
- Diagonal Street, Scenic Ridge Road, and Mill Hollow Road

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**Map 5. Alternatives to be Carried Forward**

## PHASE 3: ALTERNATIVES TO BE CARRIED FORWARD

The alternatives described and depicted below should be carried forward into preliminary engineering. A preferred alternative will be selected in the next phase of this project in conjunction with environmental compliance steps.

### RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVES

The following alternatives are recommended and received clear preference by the public during the engagement process.

#### Broderick Drive/Marquette Park and IL 84

This alternative would use Broderick Drive and Wayne King Drive to route through Savanna along the Mississippi River and through Marquette Park. At the northern end of the Marquette Park, the trail would use the existing crossing of the BNSF railroad to route east on Randolph Street to Main Street. These low-volume, low-speed roads would likely be suitable for a shared street facility or may be wide enough to support a side path. See Trail Typologies for more information about shared streets and side paths.



Figure 15. Existing conditions along Wayne King Drive at Marquette Park



Figure 16. Side path facility along Wayne King Drive at Marquette Park

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### Opportunities

- Direct connection to Marquette Park
- Connection to possible future riverfront developments
- Typically low traffic volumes and slow speeds on Broderick Drive and Wayne King Drive
- Views of the Mississippi River from Savanna

### Challenges

- Seasonally heavy truck traffic associated with the grain elevator
- Industrial character towards the south end of Broderick Drive
- Separated from downtown Savanna by the BNSF railroad
- Collaboration with BNSF would be needed to improve the crossing at Randolph Street for trail use
- Prone to flooding during extreme weather events

At Main Street, the trail would route north and continue on IL 84 on the bluff-side of the highway until Marina Road where it would route west to reach Miller's Landing. A review of the IDOT IL 84 reconstruction plans was done to determine that a trail would be feasible within the road right-of-way. A side path with some constrained sections would be the most suitable facility type along IL 84. Constrained areas, such as the section just north of the Savanna-Sabula Bridge, may need travel lane width reductions paired with a reduced speed limit to make a trail within the road right-of-way possible. Key challenges and opportunities associated with this alternative are listed below. This alternative shares the IL 84 section with the following J.B. Sullivan Drive alternative. For that reason, opportunities and constraints associated with IL 84 are listed separately and apply to both alternatives.



Figure 17. Existing conditions along IL 84 in the project area



Figure 18. Side path within the IL 84 right-of-way separated by a concrete barrier

#### *Opportunities (IL 84)*

- Flat topography; useable by all ages and abilities
- Views of the Mississippi River
- Most direct route between the existing trailhead and Miller's Landing
- Potential to connect to the southern entrance of the state park as well as the main northern entrance
- Could be incorporated into the on-going IDOT project to reconstruct this section of IL 84, potential efficiencies and cost savings

#### *Challenges (IL 84)*

- Very constrained sections of road between the bluff and the BNSF railroad
- Would require close coordination with IDOT to successfully incorporate into the IL 84 reconstruction project
- Construction activities may need to take place within the BNSF railroad right-of-way. Negotiations and coordination with BNSF would be needed
- Noise and proximity to vehicle and train traffic may be uncomfortable for some trail users
- Rock fall from the Mississippi Palisades onto the IL 84 corridor has occurred in the past. Signage along IL 84 currently notes this hazard for vehicles, and would extend to trails users along this section
- Would require careful design around the newly constructed retaining wall near the Savanna-Sabula bridge

### J.B. Sullivan Drive and IL 84

This alternative would use J.B. Sullivan Drive, the alleyway just west of Main Street, to route north to Clay Street. Routing east on Clay Street would connect this alternative to Main Street and IL 84, where it would match the Broderick Drive/Marquette Park and IL 84 alternative described above. Like Broderick Drive and Wayne King Drive, J.B. Sullivan Drive sees low traffic volumes and speeds and would likely be suitable for a shared street design. Opportunities and challenges specific to J.B. Sullivan Drive are noted below.

#### Opportunities

- Low traffic volumes and speeds along J.B. Sullivan Drive
- Close proximity to Main Street businesses
- Potential for activating the space behind Main Street buildings for outdoor dining, public art, etc.
- Connects trail to existing parking area at the Savanna Train Car Museum

#### Challenges

- Interfaces with parking lots and loading zones for Main Street buildings
- Alleyway is currently used for back of house operations, trash and recycling pickup, etc.
- Separated from the river by the BNSF railroad
- Prone to flooding during extreme weather events



Figure 19. Savanna Train Car Museum



Figure 20. Existing conditions along J.B. Sullivan Drive

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Figure 21. Shared street facility along J.B. Sullivan Drive

### Diagonal Street, Scenic Ridge Road, and State Park Trail

Although identified by its use of Diagonal Street, this alternative would use several streets through Savanna to climb up the bluff to reach Scenic Ridge Road. Starting at the Savanna Train Car Museum, this alternative would use a short section of J.B. Sullivan Drive to route north to the intersection of Main Street and Washington Street. Staying west of Main Street would allow the trail to avoid crossing in front of the Savanna Fire Department. Traveling east on Washington Street, the trail would then route north on 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Diagonal Street to reach Summit Avenue. Summit Avenue, Hill Street, and Vine Street would be used to continue north and connect to Water Tower Road. The trail would route west on Water Tower Road to reach 5<sup>th</sup> Street. These in-town streets see low traffic volumes and speeds and would likely be appropriate for a shared street facility with appropriate pavement markings and signage. If this alternative is pursued further, some of the intersections should be examined to determine whether they warrant STOP signs.

At 5<sup>th</sup> Street, the trail would transition to a side path along the west side of the road and would continue north into Carroll County, where the road becomes Scenic Ridge Road. Once the trail reaches lot 6 (a small pull-out on the west side of Scenic Ridge Road), it would enter Mississippi Palisades State Park. This section through the state park would follow a route identified as the preferred alternative in the 2005 Project Development Report for Grand Illinois Trail. This route was designed to limit grades to no greater than 6 percent and would require two bridges over an intermittent stream. The trail would connect to the existing state park road network through the campground and would then cross IL 84 to reach Marina Road and Miller's Landing. Although this alternative has more complexities in its route and has sections of steep slopes, it avoids the constrained corridor and challenges associated with IL 84.

### Opportunities

- Direct connection to Savanna residents east of Main Street
- City-owned property along Water Tower Road may be suitable for a small parking lot to allow trail users to bypass steep sections up the bluff
- Connects through Mississippi Palisades State Park
- Trail section through state park has been reviewed by IDNR in the past and would likely only require a renewal of approvals versus a full review process
- Trail users could benefit from state park amenities; existing campground showers could be made available through a payment portal (QR code scan) or similar system

### Challenges

- Indirect route would require strong wayfinding signage
- Veers away from the Mississippi River
- Steep sections along streets in Savanna would not be useable for all ages and abilities
- Narrow streets, compounded by on-street parking, may create challenges for shared-street sections of trail within Savanna
- Water Tower Road is unpaved, which may be challenging for some trail users
- Trail section through state park traverses an area managed for hunting. Seasonal closures of this section of trail would be needed, similar to sections of the Galena River Trail
- Emergency response planning would require more coordination for sections of trail through the park that do not have direct access from roads
- Many of the campground roads are one-way and would require additional wayfinding signage to help trail users navigate to the main entrance

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- Improvements and design of crossings at Main Street and Scenic Ridge Road would be necessary to ensure safety of trail users

### ALTERNATIVES NOT RECOMMENDED

The following alternatives have been identified as reasonable and will be carried forward into the next stages of planning, however, they are not recommended due to clear public preference for other alternatives.

#### Main Street and IL 84

This alternative would use a short piece of J.B. Sullivan Drive to route behind the Savanna Fire Department and then connect to Main Street across from Washington Street. The trail would follow Main Street north until it transitions into IL 84 and would continue north to Marina Road to reach Miller's Landing. Along Main Street, facilities that could support the trail include separated or buffered bike lanes paired with sidewalks. North of Main Street, the trail would use a protected side path as described in all other alternatives using IL 84. The public expressed concern about using Main Street for the trail route due to the street's current layout and truck traffic.

#### *Opportunities*

- Direct connection to businesses along Main Street in Downtown Savanna
- Possibility for pairing the trail project with other downtown revitalization projects
- Less risk of flooding compared to Broderick Drive or J.B. Sullivan Drive routes

#### *Challenges*

- Most suitable facility types (bike lanes paired with sidewalks) stray from the shared use path or shared street facilities of most other sections of the GRT
- Would require changing the travel lane widths on Main Street
- Public expressed concern about bicycling near truck traffic that uses IL 84/Main St

#### Diagonal Street, Scenic Ridge Road, and Mill Hollow Road

Similar to the Diagonal Street, Scenic Ridge Road, and State Park Trail route, this alternative would use streets within Savanna to climb the bluff and reach Scenic Ridge Road. Instead of routing through Mississippi Palisades State Park, this alternative would use Mill Hollow Road to travel east and connect back to IL 84 and Marina Road. The route is somewhat less direct than other alternatives, overshooting the terminus of Miller's Landing and requiring routing south along IL 84 for approximately 1.2 miles. The public also expressed concerns about using Mill Hollow Road for the trail route due to hills and lack of paving.

#### *Opportunities*

- Avoids complexities of adding new trail through Mississippi Palisades State Park

#### *Challenges*

- Indirect route longer than all other Alternatives to be Carried Forward
- Public expressed concern about bicycling on gravel road along Mill Hollow Road
- Hill on the east end of Mill Hollow would be challenging for some trail users

## PROJECT FUNDING

Regardless of the alternative selected, the trail extension will require a significant commitment of funding. The project team completed an exercise of comparing the Alternatives to be Carried Forward by anticipated cost. Funding opportunities were also identified to help with future financing strategies.

### ORDER OF MAGNITUDE COST COMPARISON

A cost comparison exercise was completed to provide a broad sense of anticipated differences in cost between the three Alternatives to be Carried Forward. The cost comparisons below assume some cost savings with the IL 84 reconstruction project for alternatives that use IL 84 right-of-way. As the trail project progresses, cost opinions and estimates will need to be developed to provide a dollar amount associated with the project and any phasing. The table below provides the cost comparison through dollar sign symbols (1 to 5) and associated notes and cost drivers.

**Table 4. Order of Magnitude Costs for Alternatives to be Carried Forward**

<i>Alternative</i>	<i>Cost (\$ to \$\$\$\$\$)</i>	<i>Cost Drivers and Notes</i>
<b>Recommended Alternatives</b>		
<i>Broderick Drive/Marquette Park and IL 84</i>	\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some costs could be incorporated into the existing IL 84 reconstruction project, but it is unclear to what extent. Drainage structures, grading, and railroad flagging would be elements that could be shared with the road reconstruction.</li> <li>Costs associated with the shared road segment along Broderick Drive would be relatively minor: signage, wayfinding, and pavement markings.</li> <li>Additional costs associated with trail amenities and placemaking should be considered if this alternative proceeds.</li> </ul>
<i>J.B. Sullivan Drive and IL 84</i>	\$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alternative would have the same baseline cost considerations as Broderick Dr/Marquette Park and IL 84.</li> <li>Additional cost drivers include delineation and/or barriers between parking, alleyway, and trail; modification of angle parking towards the south end of J.B. Sullivan Drive to 90 degree parking for trail user safety.</li> </ul>
<i>Diagonal Street, Scenic Ridge Road and State Park Trail</i>	\$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Substantial costs associated with stand-alone project (not connected to IL 84 reconstruction) in mobilization, grading, drainage, utility work, etc.</li> <li>Crosswalk improvements at Main Street.</li> <li>Signage and pavement markings along shared roadway sections in town.</li> <li>Possible intersection controls (i.e. stop signs) at uncontrolled intersections along route.</li> <li>2 trail bridges along section through Mississippi Palisades State Park.</li> <li>Wayfinding signage.</li> <li>Paving of Water Tower Road.</li> <li>Potential small parking lot along Water Tower Road at the top of the bluff.</li> </ul>

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<i>Alternative</i>	<i>Cost</i> <i>(\$ to \$\$\$\$\$)</i>	<i>Cost Drivers and Notes</i>
<b>Alternatives Not Recommended</b>		
<i>Main Street and IL 84</i>	\$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative would have the same baseline cost considerations as Broderick Dr/Marquette Park and IL 84.</li> <li>• Curb separation for bikeway along Main Street would be needed.</li> </ul>
<i>Diagonal Street, Scenic Ridge Road, and Mill Hollow Road</i>	\$\$\$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative would have the same baseline cost considerations as Diagonal Street, Scenic Ridge Road, and State Park Trail.</li> <li>• Longest trail alternative, requiring additional trail construction along Scenic Ridge Road and IL 84 to route back to Miller’s Landing.</li> <li>• Mill Hollow Road would require surfacing improvements to be suitable for bicyclists.</li> </ul>

## PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING

The next phase of the Great River Trail Extension project would be preliminary engineering. The NEPA and preliminary engineering are both part of the Phase I process. Preliminary engineering does have the ability to inform the NEPA process. This next phase in the GRT extension should include:

- Determination of appropriate NEPA class of action (categorical exclusion, environmental assessment, or environmental impact statement)
- Concept design development
- **Alternatives analysis and selection of a preferred alternative**
- Cost estimate development
- Determination of right-of-way acquisition needs
- Continued coordination with relevant stakeholders (IDOT, IDNR, USFWS, BNSF, Carroll County, and City of Savanna)
- Public engagement on impacts and design
- Initiation of permitting and approvals process
- 30% design of the preferred alternative

Identifying funding sources for preliminary engineering will be the key next step to moving the project towards implementation.

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### FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The following funding opportunities would be appropriate for preliminary engineering. Other funding sources and financing options are available for subsequent phases of design and construction and should be identified during preliminary engineering.

**Table 5. Preliminary Engineering Funding Opportunities**

Funding Source	Administering Agency	Notice of Funding Opportunity	Amount	Match Requirement	Notes
<a href="#">Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) – Planning and Demonstration Grant</a>	USDOT	<i>Previous deadline: June 2025</i>	\$100K- \$5M	20%	SS4A Action Plan for the region is under development and is a prerequisite for this grant
<a href="#">Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) – Implementation Grant</a>	USDOT	<i>Previous deadline: June 2025</i>	\$2.5M- \$25M	20%	SS4A Action Plan for the region is under development and is a prerequisite for this grant
<a href="#">Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)</a>	IDOT	Next cycle begins August 2026	Up to \$3M	20%	
<a href="#">Illinois Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)</a>	IDOT	<i>Previous deadline: June 2025</i>	Not specified; \$30M available statewide per year	10%	
<a href="#">Recreational Trails Program (RTP)</a>	IDNR	<i>Previous deadline: March 2025</i>	Up to \$200K	20%	
<a href="#">Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program</a>	USDOT	<i>Previous deadline: January 2025</i>	Up to \$25M; no minimum for planning projects	20%	Grants are available for capital and planning projects

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROJECT PHASES

Key design elements and improvements to existing facilities will be necessary to realize the full potential of the trail extension. The following elements should be incorporated into future phases of design.

### Improvements to Existing Trailhead at the Savanna Marina

As noted in previous studies, including the Northwest Illinois Trail Studies and the 2022 Great River Trail Concept Plan: Galena to Savanna, the existing trailhead at the Savanna Marina is in need of improvements. Future design work associated with the trail extension should include a trailhead design that addresses:

- Wayfinding
- Amenities, such as seating, shade, and bike repair station
- Improvements to railroad crossing in coordination with BNSF
- Additional greenspace/plantings

### Flood Mitigation along Broderick Drive/Wayne King Drive and J.B. Sullivan Drive

Trail projects through Savanna along Broderick Drive/Wayne King Drive or J.B. Sullivan Drive can be paired with improvements for flood mitigation. Pairing flood mitigation projects with trail development would lessen the extent and severity of impacts that Mississippi River flooding can have on Savanna's downtown.

### Improvements to Miller's Landing

Comments about the state of Miller's Landing were received in both rounds of public engagement. Recreational boating and fishing are affected by the sedimentation occurring in the river at this site. The site is also in need of updates and additions to its amenities and would benefit from a site redesign. The US Army Corps of Engineers is planning a Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project (HREP) for Savanna Bay, which includes the area off Miller's Landing. This project plans to dredge to create winter fish habitat and would improve conditions for boating and fishing at the site. Pairing this project with improvements at Miller's Landing in conjunction with IDNR would make the site more of a regional destination. Fiscal year 2025 funding has been put on hold for the Savanna Bay project and all HREPs, making the future of this site uncertain.



Figure 22. Miller's Landing, November 2024

### Crossing at Miller's Landing/Mississippi Palisades State Park

All Alternatives to be Carried Forward will require a crossing of IL 84 at Marina Road to reach Miller's Landing and connect to the main entrance of the state park. This site will require a crossing study in future phases of design to determine appropriate treatments, such as a high-visibility crosswalk with a pedestrian hybrid beacon.



Figure 23. Intersection of IL 84 and Marina Rd

### Connections to Riverfront and Downtown Savanna

The trail extension will need to make clear and direct connections to the riverfront and downtown Savanna for benefits to the local economy and access to amenities for trail users. For this reason, it is recommended that the Scenic Ridge Road and Mississippi Palisades State Park trail alternative include a spur through the heart of Savanna, using either Broderick Drive/Wayne King Drive or J.B. Sullivan Drive.



Figure 24. Pavillion at Marquette Park along Wayne King Dr

## CONCLUSION

The extension of the Great River Trail from Savanna to Miller's Landing received overwhelming support from the public and stakeholders in both rounds of engagement during this study. There is a strong understanding of the challenges associated with the trail extension, but the enthusiasm and energy behind identifying viable alternatives suggests that the community values active transportation, public health, recreation, and economic development opportunities that trails provide rural places. Moving the trail extension project forward into preliminary engineering will capitalize on the momentum built by this study and serve as a significant step forward towards implementation.



Figure 25. Mississippi Palisades State Park

## ABBREVIATIONS

**BHRC-** Blackhawk Hills Regional Council

**BNSF-** Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway

**ESR-** Environmental Survey Request, conducted as part of the PEL study process

**FHWA-** Federal Highway Administration

**GIT-** Grand Illinois Trail

**GRT-** Great River Trail

**IDNR-** Illinois Department of Natural Resources

**IDOT-** Illinois Department of Transportation

**PEL-** Planning and Environmental Linkages

**RTCA-** Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance; a community technical assistance program run by the National Park Service

**USACE-** US Army Corps of Engineers

## APPENDICES

Appendix A. Alternatives Evaluation

Appendix B. Existing Conditions Summary

Appendix C. Public and Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Appendix D. PEL Questionnaire