

VISIONING SKETCHBOOK for the

# Monon South Greenway Trail

*Տեսեհ* ջեր Indiana Trailways





**Clark** Dietz

# VISIONING: the development of a plan, goal or concept

# communities crafting the VISION



## Acknowledgements

#### **PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES**

Name | Organization

#### **PROJECT SPONSOR**

The visioning study for the Monon South Greenway Trail was made possible by Radius, Indiana.



Southern Indiana Trailways

#### **CONSULTANT TEAM**





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# Introduction

### A trail to the future

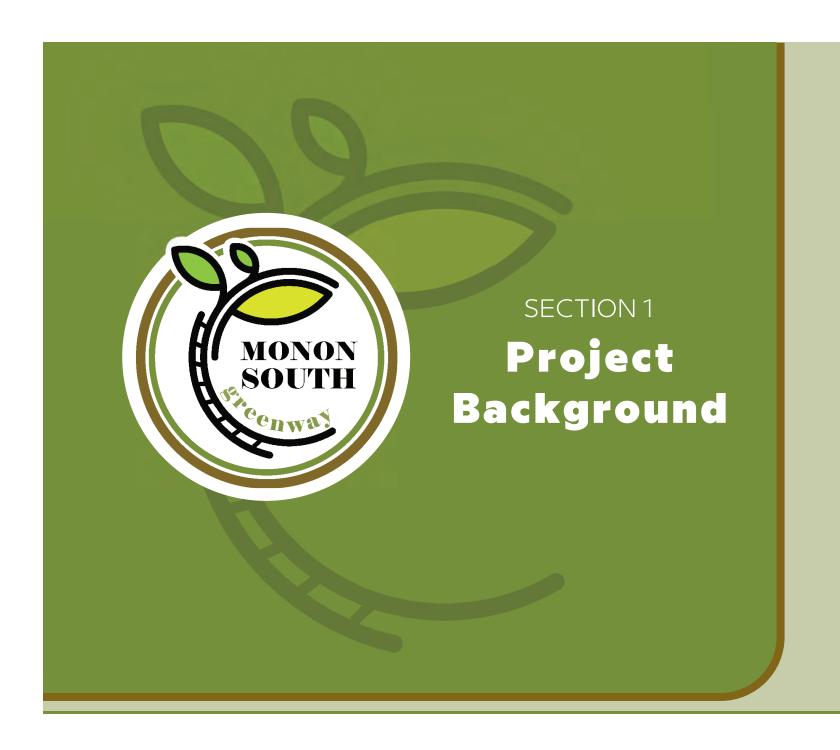
Crafting a vision for the Monon South Greenway Trail is an important initiative for our southern Indiana Uplands Region. It is a vision of transforming a vacant rail line into a vibrant, active and unique linear greenway that connects our local communities, links to other regional destinations and celebrates our Hoosier Heritage. The partnership of our local municipalities, counties and organizations to make this happen truly makes this a regional opportunity.

Beginning to articulate what this vision for the Monon South Greenway Trail could look like is what a goal of this initiative. It is important to document local community ideas and organize those concepts into an initial vision of where this trail corridor could ultimately be developed. When completed, the trail will be a fulfilling a priority that came out of the Indiana Bicentennial Visioning Project, to "link urban and rural areas" by extending and connecting trails as a strategy to retain and grow population in the State.

It is anticipated that the trail will have the following outcomes and impacts: enhance desirability for relocation and population growth throughout the southern Indiana region; bring powerful outcomes and far-reaching benefits to every community located along the approximately 44-mile corridor; connect residents and tourists alike to cultural opportunities providing economic benefits throughout south central Indiana; and provide opportunities for all people to be physically active outdoors, addressing issues related to public health and chronic disease.

This visioning process is just the beginning of collecting community thoughts, input and ideas regarding the future for this corridor. It's highlights a once-in-alifetime opportunity to create a regional destination that connects and celebrates this region in such a unique manner.





## About the Project

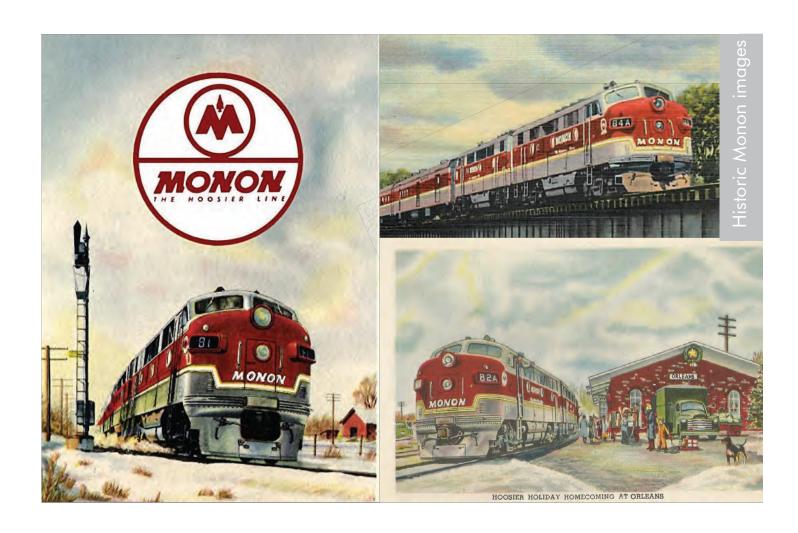
This project seeks to articulate the vision to create a multi-modal greenway connecting our southern Indiana communities along the Monon Rail Corridor. Currently, CSX owns the 40+ miles of the corridor, and is going through the process to transition ownership. They will abandon it if there are no alternatives, at which point, the land will revert to the adjoining landowners. This visioing study offers the opportunity to define some potential direction for the future of the corridor that enhances quality of life for the region and elevates the community conversation regarding the future of the corridor.

However, the City of New Albany is negotiating with CSX to purchase the corridor These negotiations had proceeded slowly for several years, and are likely to go on for many months more. CSX asking price is higher than what New Albany has available, but they are trying to find funds to negotiate a lower price. Radius has agreed to contribute \$500,000 to New Albany to help with the purchase of the corridor from CSX. The Cook Corporation has also agreed to contribute some funds to help the corridor acquisition. In addition, Radius is supporting the project in other ways through this visioning study to help all our communities tell the story of the corridor in our region.

Communities are not being asked to contribute anything to the purchase price of the corridor. Construction activities could be initiated through a potential grant as part of the Next Level Trails grant fund, which is administered by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). These grant funds are "state" dollars not "federal" dollars, which have a different set of regulations to comply with, many of which are beneficial to this project. Typically, funds from the Next Level Trails program allow for more efficient and expedited trail construction. The program does require an 80%/20% matching grant.

Funding for this match can come in several forms, including:

- READI grant funds;
- In-kind matching with local (City/ Town employees or volunteers) working on the trail;
- Radius contribution to purchase of the corridor can count as matching credit;
- ARPA funds which may be available; and
- Local funds committed to project.



#### Site Context

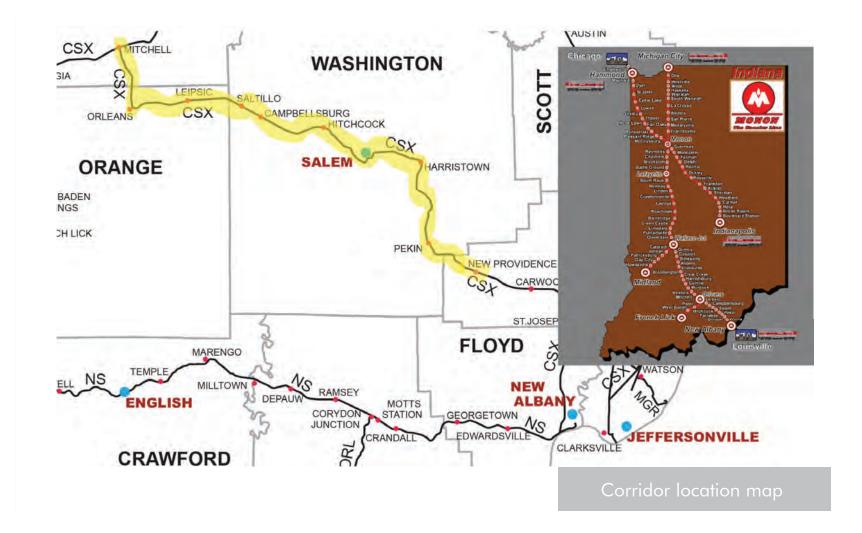
The Monon Railroad, also known as the Chicago, Indianapolis, and Louisville Railway, operated mostly in Indiana between the 1890s and 1971. In 1971, it merged with the Louisville and Nashville Railroad and today is owned by CSX. While mainly a freight line, portions of the Monon did provide passenger traffic. The rail line historically included seven sections, and the portion of the line included in this study was Section 5 which connected between Bloomington and New Albany.

The Monon South Line, for purposes of this study, begins at Mitchell in Lawrence County and runs southeast to Borden in Clark County. The approximately 44 mile corridor passes through Lawrence, Orange, Washington and Clark Counties. While much of the route passes through rural farm lands, it does connect to several varying-sized communities along its route. Some of the larger communities include Mitchell, Orleans, and Salem. Smaller communities include Leipsic, Saltillo, Campbellsburg, New Pekin and Borden.

Several significant local and state recreational properties are within close proximately to the rail line, including the Hoosier National Forest, Spring Mill State Park, Cane River Valley Natural Area, Twin Creek Valley Nature Conservancy, Jackson-Washington State Forest and Clark State Forest.

While portions of the overall Monon route have been permanently removed, much of the railroad infrastructure is still in place for this section. This includes the tracks and subgrade, switching mechanisms, signal towers and other mechanical equipment necessary for operation of the railroad.

Future regional planning includes potentially linking this corridor to the New Albany Freedom Trail, currently being visioned to extend the corridor to the New Albany and the Ohio River.



## Visioning Process

An inclusive visioning process was developed for this study in order to engage the local communities along the route and to ensure that the resulting plan direction was consistent with local desires and local planning for the future trail route. In the summer of 2021, a virtual meeting with a Project Stakeholder Team comprised of representatives from each community was facilitated. The meeting included a discussion of the background of the initiative and "best practice examples" from areas around the state. Then participants were broken into community groups to discuss ideas for their specific community.

At the conclusion, a list of ideas and connections were develop for each community along the corridor. From this list, representative plans, illustrations, cross sections, maps, and other graphic elements were developed to illustrate potential design of the corridor. These ideas were then presented back to the group at an open house on September 15, 2021 in Salem. At this open house, participants provided feedback and review that was then incorporated into the final conceptual design illustrated into this booklet. In the end, this document represents the collective thinking of those involved in the process.



# What we heard

#### **Economic Connectivity** Access **Benefit** Provide broader access to **Create regional** Increase visibility of community linkages development sites regional destinations near trail Promote access to fitness and healthy **Promote infill Provide transportation** development lifestyle alternatives for region, opportunities including potential **Provide access to** bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian facilities local neighborhoods **Promote** redevelopment and renovation Tie into existing Link to other regional **opportunities** community fabric by destinations, including providing access to local natural recreation areas, landmarks, destinations state parks and other trail **Promote regional** and cultural facilities tourism growth systems





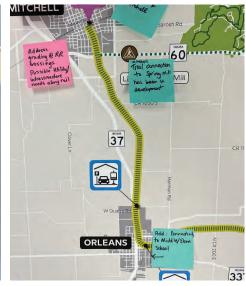


















## **Existing Conditions**

### About the Corridor

The historic Monon Rail line left its imprint on Southern Indiana. Through the corridor area, remnants of the rail line and its importance to the local communities are still evident. The rail line cut a swath across the rural agricultural landscape. While much of the region is relatively flat, there are large expanses of the line that were built elevated above grade. Much of the historic railroad infrastructure remains intact along the route---tracks, base, signal towers, switching stations, and in some places, even ancillary structures that supported the line.

In most of the communities along the line, the tracks ran directly through the town allowing access for passengers or freight. Many communities also had spurs that came off of the main line. While many of the local depots are gone or re-purposed, there is an obvious relationship between the rail line and the communities it once served. The distinct nature of the rural farmland and the inescapable character remnants of the railroad provide an opportunity for this project to celebrate this unique relationship as it relates to this portion of southern Indiana.





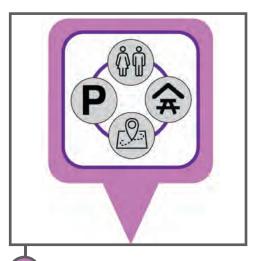
# **Trail Typology**

## Methodology

For the purposes of this visioning study, a series of prototypical graphics were prepared to higlight the various opporunities along the Monon South Greenway Trail. In order to provide a hierarchy to the various trail access and landmark nodes, a series of four trailhead concepts were developed. This typology provides a fundamental basis of design for the proposed amenities and services at each proposed location. Ideally, these nodes are evenly dispersed along the trail route, providing accommodations, access and rest areas to users at frequent intervals. In addition, they serve as key catalysts for the local communities in providing new development or redevelopment opportunities adjacent to the corridor. The amenities included as part of the four major nodes are highlighted at the right, and include:

- Regional Trailhead
- Community Trailhead
- Local Trailhead
- Trail Rest Area

The maps on the following pages highlight the proposed locations for these development activities. In addition, a series of prototypical site plans and renderings provide additional interpretation regarding how these spaces can be developed or utilized. Example cross-sections as well as an initial concept for a trail signage system are also included to illustrate how the overall character of the corridor can be branded and further unified as part of a regional linear greenway park system.



#### -REGIONAL TRAILHEAD

- Vehicular Parking
- Equestrian Trailer
- Parking
- Shelter with Seating
- Restroom Facilities
- Trailhead Monument Sign
- Directory Kiosk Sign
- Benches
- Bicycle Racks
- Water Fountains
- Waste Receptacles









#### -COMMUNITY TRAILHEAD

- Vehicular Parking
- Shelter with Seating
- Directory Kiosk Signage
- Benches
- Bicycle Racks
- Waste Receptacles

#### -LOCAL TRAILHEAD

- Vehicular Parking
- Directional Signage
- Benches
- Waste Receptacles

#### TRAIL REST AREA

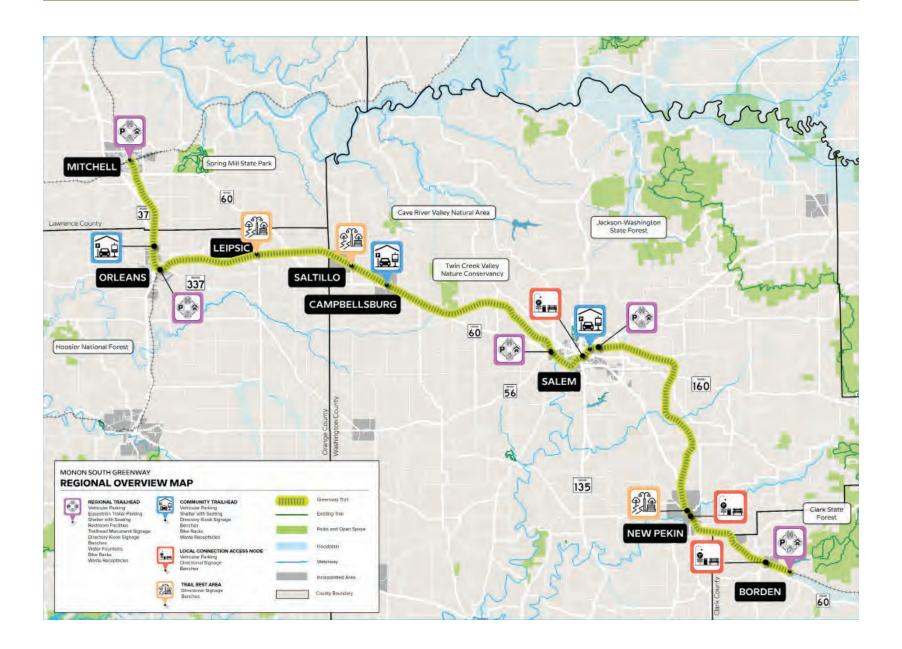
- Directional Signage
- Benches
- Waste Receptacles

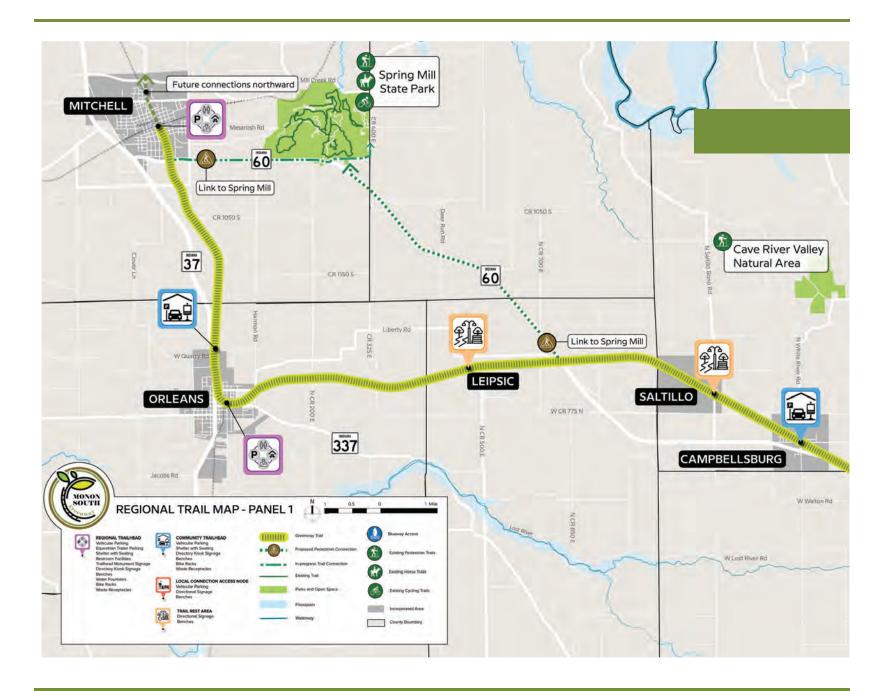


## Overall Corridor Map

The South Monon Trail is a proposed 44-mile greenway between Mitchell and Borden that connects eight local communities in the Lawrence, Orange, Washington and Clark Counties uplands region of southern Indiana. Eventually connecting to the City of New Albany, the greenway trail offers dramatic vistas of the Indiana farmland and linkages to several regional natural destinations, including nearby state park and recreation facilities. Building on the unique qualities of the region, the proposed trail amenities highlight several local community destinations, and connections to other regional attractions.

# Regional Trail Overview





# Regional Trail Overview

## Mitchell to Campbellsburg



Much of the greenway trail through Mitchell is more urban in nature, featuring several local road crossings and surrounding commercial / neighborhood land uses. As the trail exists Mitchell on the south side, it crosses US 60, approximately 3 miles west of Spring Mill State Park. Between Mitchell and Orleans, the trail runs parallel, but not directly adjacent to, US 37 for approximately 5.5 miles. Once in Orleans, the trail corrior makes a strong eastward turn in downtown Orleans. For the next 10.5 miles, the trail corridor traverses through primarily agricultural land, with some minor crossings at local county roads. The greenway trail connects the small communities of Leipsic and Saltillo before entering Campbellsburg.





# Regional Trail Overview

## Campbellsburg to Salem



The 11-mile stretch of the greenway trail between Campbellsburg and Salem parallels US 60 before following a more rural path through agricultural land. It runs nearby the Twin Creek Valley Nature Conservancy and just east of Campbellsburg before heading into the southwest side of Salem. At that point, the trail corridor is depressed in a valley or "gultch" and is grade-separated from both US 60 and US 56. The trail corridor circles around the southern side of Salem, with several at-grade crossings, including on a Main Street in downtown. Heading east from downtown, the trail runs on the northern boundary of the Washington County Fairgrounds before crossing the West Fork Blue River and going under the Salem Bypass.





# Regional Trail Overview

## Salem to Borden



As the trail leaves the east side of Salem, it runs for several miles through rural agricultural land. There are some minor county roads the cross the corridor, but for the majority of the approximately 11-mile length between Salem and New Pekin, the corridor is uninterrupted. The greenway trail does cross two water bodies, the Middle Fork Blue River and South Fork Blue River at New Pekin. As the trail nears New Pekin, it runs parallel to US 60 all the way to Borden. Through Borden, it is unique in that it runs directly through their downtown area, offering unique connections to local municipal facilities before terminating with a proposed Regional Trailhead near the Brden Community Park at the proposed Muddy Fork Reservoir.











#### **Design Highlights**

The Mitchell Monon Landing is a Regional Trailhead offering a variety of amenities and connections to existing commercial and neighborhood areas in the community. As a terminus to the Main Street commercial corridor, this trailhead will also serve as a key community park facility, with the opportunity to include play areas, a dog park and linkages to local cultural destinations. This new hub will also connect to the existing Bluejacket Trail and nearby Visitors Center.

Also highlighted in the Mitchell area is a prototypical street crossing of the greenway trail. This type of condition will happen throughout the corridor, and it is envisioned that at these street crossings, the trail route be clearly marked through branding and identification signage, regulatory surface markings and pedestrian crossing signals where appropriate.





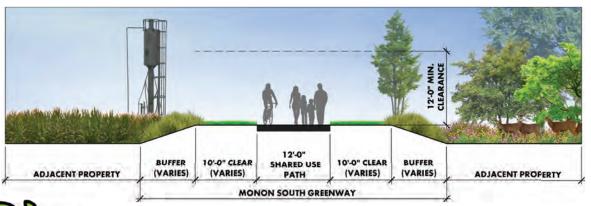


#### Design Highlights

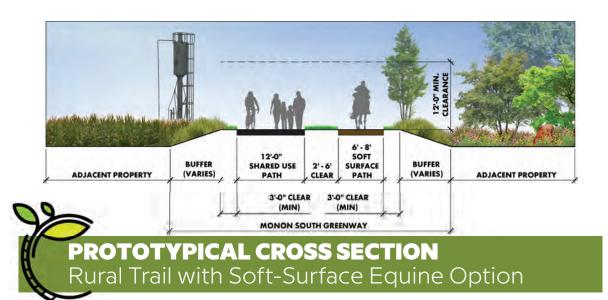
Celebrating the history of the Monon Railroad is one of the many opportunities this greenway trail corridor provides througout this region. In Orleans, the creation of the Orleans Depot Square is a Regional Trailhead at the former Orleans Monon Depot site. Located adjacent to nearby restaurants and a two-block connection to the historic Town Square, the Depot Square trailhead also provides the opportunity for additional new development opportunities that could include small retail or commercial establishments supporting the greenway users.

An additional Community Trailhead at the Freemans Corner provides another interpretive opportunity and unique access point to the corridor.





## PROTOTYPICAL CROSS SECTION Rural Trail



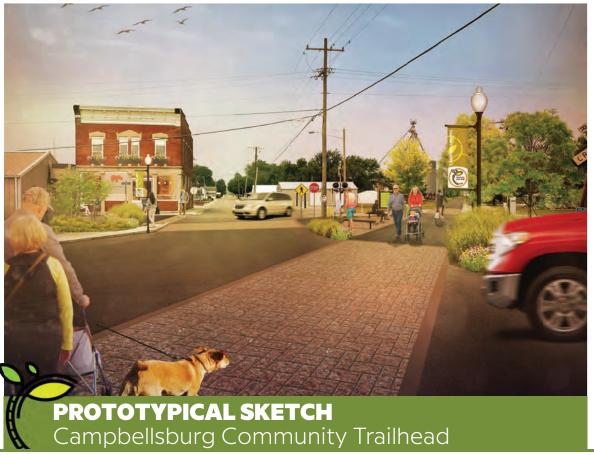
#### Design Highlights

Much of the greenway trail corridor traverses rural areas, and small community nodes. Where possible, highlighting linkages to regional and local destinations, such as the Spring Mill State Park or a small community center in Leipsic, is suggested.

The prototypical design of the greenway trail will feature some standard conditions. These include a recommendation of keeping the slightly elevated existing railroad bed as well as highlighting some of the historic trail architectural elements/lighting/features as art along the corridor. Finally, it would be recommended that the standard width of the trail be a 10'-12' paved shared-use accessible path that accommodates a variety of modes of transportation (pedestrian, bicyclists, wheelchairs, roller bladers, strollers, etc.). Due to the regional interest of including a equine trail, there is also a possibility of adding a adjacent 6'-8' soft surface trail to accommodate the equine users and connect to that unique regional tourism industry.





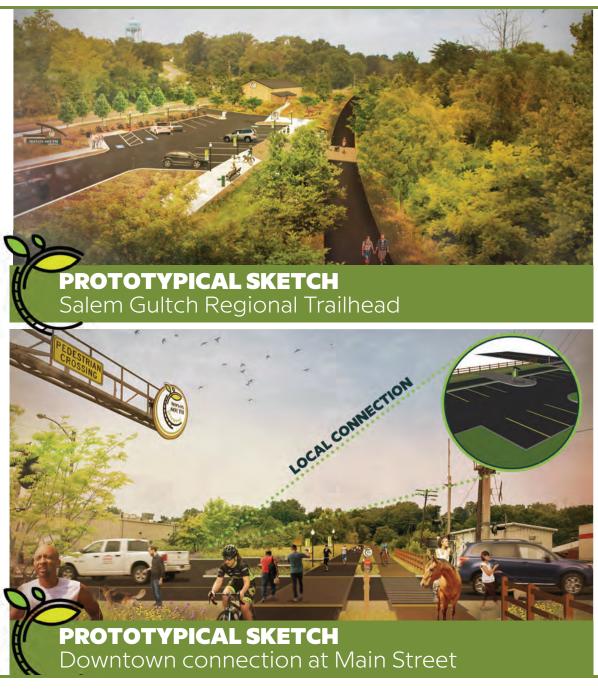


#### Design Highlights

While each local community will have the opportunity to add local art and interpretive storytelling at their trailheads and access points, it is recommended that there be a consistent signage and branding standard for the corridor. A concept for a "signage package" is illustrated to begin to describe the type of wayfinding and signage anticipated and how they can be applied in various applications.

In Campbellesburg, the trail corridor passes near the Town Hall and community center. Adjacent to the trail is existing vacant commercial buildings that could be reinvested with trail-supporting uses or destinations.





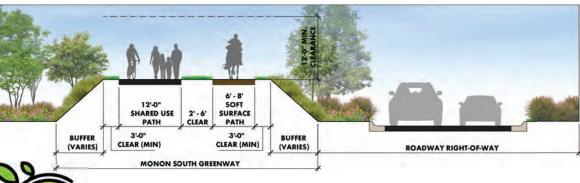
#### Design Highlights

As the greenway trail traverses through Salem, there are numerous community landmarks, destinations and cultural facilities nearby or adjacent to the corridor, which the trail will serve to strengthen those linkages and connections. On the west side of Salem, a Regional Trailhead is proposed at the Gulch. This area offers natural vistas along the sweeping corridor and will include a variety of amenities associated with a regional trailhead.

As the trail enters downtown, there is a proposed Local Community Connection at Main Street, providing connections to the downtown, the Depot Railroad Museum, John Hay Center and historic Courthouse Square a few blocks to the north, Local access is provided near the County Fairgrounds and neighborhood park. A second Regional Trailhead in Salem is proposed on the east side of the community, at Cobblestone Drive. This facility will provide access for the east side as well as visitors coming into the community via I-65 on US 6o.







Trail with soft-surface option adjacent to roadway

PROTOTYPICAL CROSS SECTION

area, this is an example of such a scenario, where the trail could remain elevated

In some sections of the corridor, the trail will run

adjacent to an existing

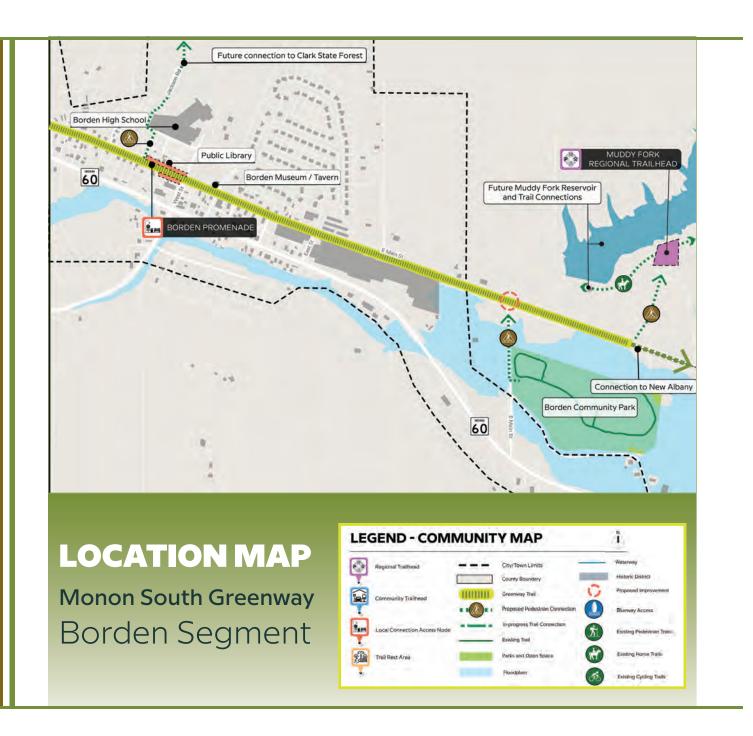
roadway. In the New Pekin

and buffered from the roadway (US 6o) as they

Park.

travel parallel to each other.

also provides a link to another community resource, Pekin





CONCEPT SITE PLAN

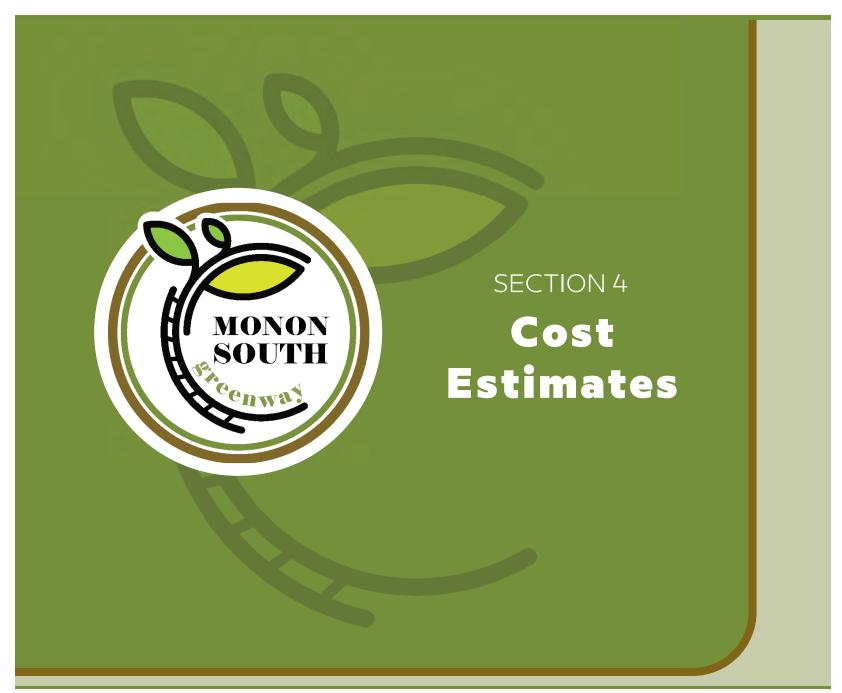
Borden Regional Trailhead

Design Highlights

The Borden segment of the Monon Greenway Trail is highlighted by a unique "downtown" promenade experience, connecting local municipal facilities, the public library and the high school.

The Regional Trailhead is conceptually planned to be integrated with the proposed Muddy Fork Reservoir. This regional trailhead will offer a variety of amenities, including equine access to the nearby Clark State Forest as well as blueway access on the reservoir. Connections to the adjacent Borden Community Park will also be provided.





#### Cost Estimate Overview

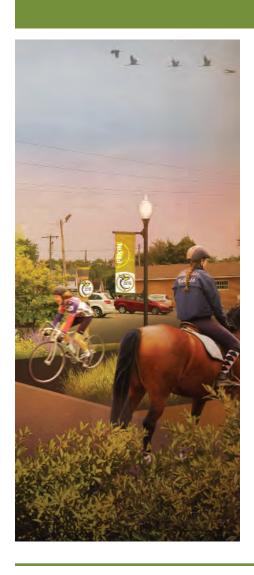
The purpose of this study is to given vision to the ideas and potential solutions that could result from converting the abandoned Monon South line into a regional multi-use trail facility. The renderings and illustrations bring form to the ideas generated by the communities during the visioning process, and begin to give real-world form to those ideas. While it should be noted that all of the renderings in this booklet are conceptual, the illustrations represent how these facilities could be constructed and how that construction would look in the real world---they give the ideas life.

The illustrations also allow us to begin to identify what some of the materials might be, how facilities would be constructed, and begins to identify potential costs for implementation. Like the renderings, the cost opinions included in this booklet are conceptual, high-level preliminary estimates based upon the conceptual illustrations. Any project such as this would require a more detailed design process to sort through the specific materials and costs of construction. But these illustrations allow a basic high-level cost estimate that can be used to establish potential planning budgets based upon the ideas they represent.



### Preliminary Cost Estimate

Monon South Greenway Trail



TO BE UPDATED

TO BE UPDATED

# Segment Cost Estimate Monon South Greenway Trail



### Potential Project Phasing/Schedule

of the corridor. Construction activities could be initiated through a potential grant as part of the Next Level Trails grant fund, which is administered by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). These grant funds are "state" dollars not "federal" dollars, which have a different set of regulations to comply with, many of which are beneficial to this project. Typically, funds from the Next Level Trails program allow for more efficient and expedited trail construction. The program does require an 80%/20% matching gr

## Closing thoughts & looking forward

In preparation for the eventual development of the greenway trail corridor, Radius has established the Southern Indiana Trailways (SIT), a 501(c)3 non-profit entity to partner in the development and maintenance of the Monon South Greenway Corridor. This newly incorporated nonprofit entity has been established by Radius Indiana to serve as the owner of the South Monon Trail and will work with local and state governments, volunteer groups, and outside parties to design the trail and establish standards for signage and upkeep, as well as serve as the funding source for ongoing maintenance of the trail. Local governments will act in partnership with Southern Indiana Trailways to be responsible for funding the maintenance of The South Monon Trail.

Funding could be derived from public funds and from partnerships with private entities and foundations. Once the Southern Indiana Trailways is active and the organization starts commencing activity, local representation shall be added to the governing board.

As an initial project of the Southern Indiana Trailways, a website is being built for Monon South. This site will provide facts and updated messaging regarding the project and host some of the visual graphics prepared as part of this visioning study.





