Park County lands grant for bike trail

By Natalie Storey
Enterprise Staff Writer

Park County has received more than $650,000 in state grant funds to extend the bike path south of town, according to the county planner.

Mike Inman said county officials learned last week the county was awarded $652,894 in Montana Transportation Alternative funds to extend the 2-mile bike path. The Montana Department of Transportation grant program provides money for projects defined as transportation alternatives, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, increased access to public transportation, trail programs and other projects, according to the MDOT website. Park County received one of the largest grants in the state.

The money will be used to create a mile and a half extension to the current trail, which begins at Merrill Lane and ends near the East River road junction. It will connect the bike path to Old Yellowstone Trail North near mile maker 49, according to information provided by Kristen Galbraith of Nittany Grantworks, which helped the county secure funding for the project. The project falls within MDOT right of way, Galbraith said.

Although the extension will only connect the existing trail to Old Yellowstone Trail, Inman said it "opens the door" for future plans to create a bike trail to Yellowstone National Park along U.S. Highway 89.

"Now we can have options we can start to explore to see if we can make that connection," Inman said.

The extended path will cross the Livingston ditch by a corrugated metal arch that must be constructed. Guardrails, drainage grading and rock fall protection will also be installed, according to a county press release.

The county is also applying for additional grant money through a Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks grant program that would improve the existing trail, Galbraith said. It would include resurfacing the trail, adding benches, garbage cans and signs.

"We want to really revitalize that existing trail to make it more of a destination," Inman said.

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