ENTERPRISE

Wednesday, October 30, 2013 • Livingston, Montana • Vol. 103 No. 20 75¢

CARTER'S BRIDGE BIKE/PEDESTRIAN PATH

Enterprise photo by Shawn Raecke

Alexandra Laughlin, of Livingston, walks her dogs, Tasha and Jasper, on the Carter's Bridge Bike/Pedestrian Path along U.S. Highway 89, south of Livingston on Tuesday afternoon. Laughlin said she uses the path frequently to walk her dogs. She also rides her bike to the end of the path near Carter's Bridge.

A clear path to Yellowstone

Planned projects would provide continuous route from Livingston to YNP

By Natalie Storey
Enterprise Staff Writer

When Dale Sexton, owner of Timber Trails, rides his bike into Paradise Valley, he takes the Carter's Bridge Bike/Pedestrian Path until it dead-ends just outside of Livingston.

Then he crosses U.S. Highway 89, a dangerous road for bikers, to get to the less busy East River Road.

But if several Park County projects move forward, bikers will have a contiguous route leading to Yellowstone National Park.

"As it currently exists, it's a bit of a bike path to everywhere and, at the same time, to nowhere," Sexton said.

Park County has applied for $650,000 from the Montana Department of Transportation, or MDOT, to extend the Carter's Bridge path to Old Yellowstone Trail, said Mike Inman, Park County planning director.

The Old Yellowstone Trail is a two-lane gravel road extending from just south of Carter's Bridge to Gardiner.

The county hopes to hear in November whether MDOT has approved the project, Inman said.

In addition, the Park County Commission on Tuesday approved a project that would resurface the existing bike trail that leads from the Livingston Depot Center to mile marker 50 on U.S. Highway 89 South.

Enterprise photo by Shawn Raecke

This Wednesday photograph shows the current end of the trail near Carter's Bridge.

"Our long-term goal is to establish a linear path from our county all the way to Yellowstone Park," Inman said.

A path leading to Yellowstone could draw bikers from all over the world, said Storrs Bishop, a local biker.

"My dream would be to extend that trail from the Depot all the way down to Gardiner," Bishop said. "That would be a world-class trail. It would draw people from Europe and Asia."

The extension and resurfacing of the bike path would be a boon to Park County residents as well, local officials say. A survey conducted by the Parks and Recreation Board identified trail connectivity as a high priority for county residents, Inman said. The existing trail already gets a lot of use, Sexton said.

"For the biking community, it would be tremendous," Sexton said. "But I think the greater picture is what it would mean not just for the biking community, but for Park County and Livingston in general. To have a recreational corridor there would be outstanding."

The Carter's Bridge Bike/Pedestrian Path was built on the site of old railroad tracks about 20 years ago at a cost of $90,000, said Kristen Galbraith, of Nittany Grant Works, who helped the county secure funding for the project.

The county built the trail using money allocated by the Community Transportation Enhancement Program, an MDOT initiative that sought to fund projects "designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of Montana's intermodal transportation system."

That program will end this year. MDOT is replacing it with the Transportation Alternatives Program. Park County applied for funding for the larger $650,000 project from that program.

The bike path extension project would include putting in retaining walls and a culvert over a ditch, Inman said.

The Carter's Bridge path was originally finished with a chip seal, which isn't the best surface for bikes, Inman said.

The resurfacing, which will cost $20,724, will create a smoother path. The county commissioners on Tuesday approved a plan to use $11,000 in leftover CTEP money for the project.

The rest of the cost will be covered by donations and the county, Inman said.

The project should begin this spring.