

FUNDING STILL IN THE WORKS

The Mason Corridor Project will cost about \$68 million. The city of Fort Collins plans to apply this year for a grant for 80 percent (\$54.4 million) of the funds from the Federal Transit Administration's Small Starts Program.

The city would be required to supply the remaining 20 percent (\$13.6 million). It already has \$8.5 million in transportation funds from the state that can be applied to the project.

Of the remaining \$5.1 million, \$3.5 million is left to be raised by the end of the year, when the city applies for the federal grant.

Felix Wong

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By Felix Wong
For NEXtnc

I was biking on one of Fort Collins' newest bicycle/pedestrian paths — the Mason Trail — when I had somewhat of a revelation.

"This is a lot more pleasant than driving on College Ave.," I thought, noting how I had yet to see, hear or mingle with any motorized vehicles for the last 10 minutes, despite the city's busiest thoroughfare being no more than 1,000 feet away at almost all times.

Indeed, while coasting along this smooth ribbon of concrete adjacent to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway and (at times) a creek, I could listen to the birds sing while enjoying an occasional glimpse of the Front Range running parallel to the west.

The trail — which runs north-south and links the Spring Creek and Fossil Creek trails — is 3.5 miles long. It provides a viable means for residents of Fort Collins' popular southern neighborhoods to commute to work within the core of the city, and a direct route for students to make a quick run to, say, Target.

Colorado State University students and faculty can even use the

Mason's promise

Path that links Spring Creek and Fossil Creek trails just first part of planned 'corridor'

trail to get within a mile of the main campus, where the Mason Trail abruptly ends at the Spring Creek Trail. At that point, one can continue west on the Spring Creek Trail to Centre Avenue, or east to Remington Street, to get to his or her destination.

Of course, both of those streets require mixing it up with traffic again, not to mention encountering a stop sign or traffic signal on virtually every block. Featuring wide shoulders or a bike lane, they provide the safest passage to CSU or Old Town from the Spring Creek Trail. For now, at least.

In the works is the extension of the current Mason Trail through campus all the way to Laurel Street. This project is in the design phase and, if the city can secure funds for it, construction could begin within a couple of years.

In the future, as part of the long-proposed Mason Transportation Corridor project, the Mason Trail could even be extended through Old Town

and link up with the Poudre River Trail in the north. Again, that is if the city can come up with enough dollars for it.

Those looking for a quick and safe means to get to the Whole Foods shopping center from the Mason Trail will have something to cheer about a bit sooner. Currently, cyclists and pedestrians must use the Spring Creek Trail underpass or — less safely but more directly — duck through a rather crude hole in a fence along the Mason Creek Trail to cross the Burlington Northern Santa Fe tracks. By 2008, however, there will be an underpass in this location, as construction has been funded and is set to commence this year.

All of these projects should be music to the ears of anyone who would like to avoid cycling along busy College Avenue and bike in peace instead.

Felix Wong is an avid bicyclist who lives in Fort Collins. His blog can be read at www.nextnc.com.

MA
CORRIDOR

phase 2 —
to be
completed

Spring Creek
Trail

Mason
Corridor
and Trail

Source: City of
Fort Collins
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