The River Edge Parkway

2020 MASTER PLAN UPDATE

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Wausau is a city built along and surrounding the Wisconsin River. Historically the Wisconsin River has been the focus of many cultural, economic and social activities throughout Wausau. American Indians, fur traders and loggers used the river for transportation. Later, saw mills relied on the river for power as well as moving logs and finished products to markets. As the sawmills were replaced by paper mills, the transportation use diminished and the river became a source for hydroelectric power. A byproduct of commercial and residential development was the discharge of pollution to the river.

Throughout most of the river’s history, it provided sport and recreational opportunities for the people who lived along its banks. However, when pollution reached extremely high levels in the 1950’s and 1960’s, residents were repelled by dirty water and noxious odors. Few sought out the river for recreation. After the paper mills and municipalities developed pollution abatement systems in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s and water quality showed dramatic improvement, interest in the river’s recreational potential returned. Out of this interest, the City established the Wausau River Edge Commission in 1974.

The ordinance creating the Commission
identified the following purpose:

» The Commission shall study the river within the City, with particular emphasis on its immediate edge and islands. The Commission shall include in its studies present and projected future uses of the river within the City, including but not limited to industrial, mercantile, recreational and aesthetic.

» It shall, after such study, prepare and where permitted by law implement its proposals, plans and recommendations for the river.

In establishing the Commission’s duties, the Common Council made an important observation about the river which is noteworthy:

» “The Common Council finds the river to be a natural resource of great value, present and future, to the City and its citizens.”

Thus, formal groundwork for focusing more extensive municipal attention on the importance of the Wisconsin River was established in 1974.

This Plan is an update to the City’s prior River
Edge Master Plan, which was adopted in June 1995. The 1995 plan laid the foundation for future bike route and trail development within the City. The plan identified short- and long-term strategies for improving public access to the City’s most important natural resource – the Wisconsin River. Emphasis was placed on establishing trail connections to existing points of interest within the city and to adjacent communities and trail systems.

The River Edge parkway is intended to physically link the parks located along the river by improving pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the community. Most of the recommendations focus on the continued development of the River Edge Parkway along both banks of the Wisconsin River, which would be completed over the course of 20 to 30 years. The corridor includes portions of the City bordering both banks of the Wisconsin River, up to three city blocks deep in some cases, in order to provide safe and convenient connection.

Central to the parkway’s concept is a web of walkways and multi-use trails, a network that reaches from City limit to City limit through the corridor and along the river wherever physically possible, including across bridges and islands. The trail network is a conduit for alternative transportation, allowing bicycle, pedestrian, and other non-motorized modes of travel access to and from residential and commercial areas throughout the corridor. The trail also connects existing parks along the river edge.

Though the trail system is beloved and used often by many residents of the City of Wausau, other residents are not aware that the trail exists just a few blocks away from where they live. This plan seeks to provide a vision for the trail’s physical development, as well as recommendations for increasing its visual presence in the community.

“This plan seeks to provide a vision for the trail’s physical development, as well as recommendations for increasing its visual presence in the community”

Map I from the 1995 River Edge Master Plan identified parkway segments along the Wisconsin River

3.75 miles of the 7 total miles of trail have been added to the River Edge Parkway since the 1995 plan was published
The Planning Process

The City of Wausau began the process of updating the River Edge Master Plan in the Fall of 2018 with a series of site visits and stakeholder interviews alongside a consultant team. From Fall 2018-Fall 2019, the City, stakeholders, and the consultant team engaged with community members about desires and priorities, completed site investigations and engineering studies of focus areas, and researched alternatives and options for Wausau’s trail network.

Community members expressed appreciation for the trail network in Wausau, and a desire for greater regional connectivity to other trails. They also identified areas where safety on the trail was a concern, either because of lack of lighting, isolation (such as on Barker-Stewart Island) or difficult road crossings (such as on Washington Street just south of Kickbusch Plaza).

Residents in the southeastern neighborhoods and the western neighborhoods felt disconnected from the trail network, and some residents were unaware of existing trail segments on the western river bank.

The Plan

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Residents in the southeastern neighborhoods and the western neighborhoods felt disconnected from the trail network, and some residents were unaware of existing trail segments on the western river bank.
The City of Wausau envisions a River Edge Parkway that connects people to the river, to the city, and to each other as pedestrians, cyclists, and neighbors.

Wausau has always had big dreams for the Wisconsin River Corridor. The last River Edge Master Plan document identified a detailed vision for what the corridor would look like in the next 20-30 years, including development that blends harmoniously with the natural environment along the river, and a connected trail system along the river edge and across the bridges.

Vision & Goals

Through the planning process, the River Edge Master Plan team identified the following fundamental goal statements for the future of the River Edge Parkway network in Wausau. The recommendations of the plan stem from these statements and are based on information from stakeholders and community members, helping to ensure that the trail develops in a way that most benefits Wausau’s residents.

Access to the Trail and River for All

A complete and connected trail network

Views and connection to the Wisconsin River

Safety along the trail for bicyclists & pedestrians
Existing Conditions

The seven miles of existing River Edge Parkway represents a major accomplishment for the City of Wausau. Community members enjoy walking with their family from park to park on the eastern edge of the river, connecting to downtown and to the newly developed Riverlife Park. Trail improvements south of Bridge Street on the western waterfront provide opportunities for visual connection to the river as well as accessibility to the trail for those with mobility needs.

Throughout the planning process, the project team heard time and time again from parents who love using the trail with their children, and adults who use the trail and parks for exercise and recreational purposes in addition to commuting by bike or by foot.

The trail on the western edge of the Wisconsin River corridor in Wausau weaves in and out of industrial development, and is not continuous along the river edge. Accessibility and visibility of the trail segments are also challenges along the western river edge. The gaps in the western trail segments are identified and prioritized on pages 20 & 21 in the Connecting the Gaps section of this plan.

Updated signage marks some of the access points along the River Edge Parkway, though not every access point is marked with signage.

Current trail and road conditions provide a safety concern along some sections of the trail and on-street connections. At the far left, the River Edge Parkway crosses a railroad at grade at Cherry Street. At near left, ongoing construction on 1st Ave prevents current bicycle traffic, but will eventually include a dedicated bike facility going northbound.
Some trail access points were hidden or inaccessible to the public, such as this example in the Riverside Plaza Shopping Center parking lot.

Some trail access points are visible, but not physically accessible to those in wheelchairs or to cyclists, such as this entrance at the southern end of Riverside Park.

Other trail access points are visible, but are not clearly marked as part of the River Edge system with signage, nor are they paved, such as this section of trail around the edge of the waste water treatment plant.

Some sections of the River Edge Parkway are gravel paths and packed dirt, such as the pathways on Isle of the Ferns. These areas of the trail network are well-loved by the community for their more “rustic” nature, with many residents and stakeholders referring to them as the most scenic parts of the trail. However, these sections are also prone to flooding in some seasons and are not wheelchair accessible.
Accessing the Trail

This map shows all of the access points to the River Edge Parkway trail and trail segments, based on field observations and community engagement.
Project Highlight: 
Riverlife Park

In 2017, the newest section of Wausau’s River Edge Parkway opened, called the Riverlife Park. The park was designed to complement new and future commercial and residential development along this part of the eastern riverfront, and incorporates a daylit creek (above), as well as seating areas (left) and water access points (below left). In summer 2019, the newest element of this part of the River Edge Parkway was opened - a large playground element situated just under the Bridge Street bridge.
Opportunity Areas

The map at left identifies several areas where the existing trail conditions present significant opportunities for improvement. Isolated segments of trail that don’t connect to a sidewalk or bike route, unclear trail access points, and dangerous intersections are identified, providing a summary of some of the highest-priority locations for improvements and investment.

Most of these opportunity areas are further explored in the Focus Area pages beginning on page 20. Other recommendations that address each of the opportunity areas are found on the following pages.

A

Current trail access point crosses railroad tracks at Cherry Street, creating a safety issue

B

Trail dead-ends south of Pick n’ Save with no connection

C

Trail connection in the Riverside Plaza Shopping Center parking lot is unmarked and difficult to find

D

Challenging intersection at Stewart Avenue and S. 1st Avenue limits north/south connectivity

E

Trail crosses Washington Street Bridge on the eastern river edge across three lanes of traffic in an uncontrolled crossing

F

Grand Avenue is a desirable bike connection for the southern neighborhood, but has physical constraints and high automobile traffic
Existing River's Edge Trail
Potential trail extension
Existing bike facilities
Potential enhanced bike facilities
Park

LEGEND

- Existing River's Edge Trail
- Potential trail extension
- Existing bike facilities
- Potential enhanced bike facilities
- Park

- Planned trail extension (2019)
- Issue/Opportunity area
- Potential river crossing on bridge
- Potential new bike/ped bridge

A
B
C
D
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I
J
K
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R
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V
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X
Y
Z

Issue/Opportunity area
Potential river crossing on bridge
Potential new bike/ped bridge

1/2 mile

1 mile

1/4 mile

1/8 mile

10 miles

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Connecting the Gaps

This diagram shows the current gaps in the River Edge Parkway trail system and how the trail might be connected along the banks of the Wisconsin River. Suggestions are given for how those gaps might be connected to the existing trail to form a loop in downtown Wausau.

Through the planning process, the team identified four focus areas in terms of trail extension within the planned network. These focus areas represent near-term priority projects for trail expansion, allowing the City of Wausau to make the trail network more accessible to more residents. As with all of the identified priority connections, focus area projects could be accomplished in a variety of ways. Potential options and recommended alternatives are identified on the following pages.

A O indicates a focus area project on the map and key below. See more about focus areas on page 24.

A Extend bike route north of Scholfield Park
B Extend bike route north along the east side of the river from Winton Street to Gilbert Park
C Connect the trail north from Bridge Street past Graphic Packaging
D Connect the trail segments past MBX Packaging
E Develop an on-street two-way bike connection along 1st Ave in the long-term, in the short term use 3rd Ave as a south-bound route
F Complete River Edge segment south of Thomas Street to the Waste Water Treatment trail
G Extend the trail along the river from Sturgeon Eddy Road to Thomas Street & Oak Island Park
H Formalize the Prospect Avenue bicycle boulevard route with enhanced bicycle facilities as a short-term connection to downtown for the southern neighborhoods
I Create a segment to the south around the Eastbay Sports Complex (connecting with the City of Scholfield)
J Connect the west side trail to DC Everest Park
K Connect the trail around the airport to the south
The gap in the trail network between Stewart Avenue and Riverside Park on the western river edge is an especially difficult one to address given the existing physical constraints in that section of the trail.

In the short term, the City of Wausau should focus on incorporating 1st Avenue and 3rd Avenue into the official River Edge Parkway bike route. 1st Avenue is a one-way northbound road that is currently under redevelopment, and the new on-street bicycle facility that is being added there will also be one-way northbound. South 3rd Street will have to be incorporated into the River Edge Parkway network as a short-term south-bound bike connection between Stewart Avenue and Riverside Park. Two-way pedestrian connection is available along the sidewalk on the western edge of 1st Avenue.

In the longer-term, the City of Wausau should explore the possibility of retrofitting a two-way bicycle facility along 1st Avenue as the official River Edge Parkway connection for this gap in the network. This will be challenging due to the constrained roadway size in some locations, but a path alongside the street at the top of the river bluff here may be possible.

A two-way bicycle formation on-street or at the top of the river bluff is preferable to a connection closer down towards the river in this area because the Wausau Hydro plant severely limits the possibility of a trail connection along the water’s edge south of Stewart Avenue.

**Trail Typologies: Along the River Edge**

Several different relationships between rivers and trails are possible and can be seen throughout the system. A few of these can be seen in the River Edge Parkway system. All of these options were explored as part of this planning process.
Many community members who are avid bicyclists live in the southern neighborhood in Wausau, and the City has become aware of the severe constraints to bike and pedestrian connectivity to downtown from these neighborhoods. These constraints and possible priority solutions and recommendations for both short and long-term time frames are outlined in a focus-area section on page 24.

However, Wausau residents have also expressed interest in establishing recreational bicycle connections from the southern neighborhoods on the eastern side of the river to the south, as represented in letters K and I on the preceding diagram, including a loop around the airport and around the Eastbay Sports Complex.

**Bike Typologies:** On-street connections

- Conventional Bike Lanes
- Buffered Bike Lanes
- Separated Bike Lanes
- Shared Lane Marking
- Bicycle Boulevard
- Shared-Use Path

*Images source: NACTO, Grand Junction Greenway, Cambridge, MA*
Focus Area: Trail extension from Winton Street to Gilbert Park on the northeastern river edge

The segment connecting Winton Street to Gilbert Park on the northeastern edge of the Wisconsin River was identified as a priority gap to fill, given that the trail currently ends at Winton Street. Furthermore, this trail gap is less complex than some other missing segments, and is also a connection that will be utilized to access Gilbert Park as well as the neighborhoods in this segment of the city.

Most of this potential segment is relatively flat ground, where the trail can be built close to the river to maintain the river trail experience for trail users. Views can be maintained for users, given the smaller amount of vegetation along the route. One unique facet of this trail is the crossing of Canadian National (CN) railroad tracks on the northern extent of the trail, to then reach Gilbert Park. This will require close coordination with CN to design the crossing, and for some construction efforts. The right-of-way (ROW) of the railroad tracks is 100 feet wide. The current design concept accommodates this ROW. CN prefers the utilization of a “maze” crossing, which enables trail users to look down both ends of the track before safely crossing. The trail forms a zig-zag and would be designed with fencing to facilitate safe crossings.

Consideration could be given in discussions with Canadian National to consider a 30 foot ROW which is more typical of a railroad crossing. This would allow for a smaller crossing and fewer landscape and adjacent property impacts. If an at-grade crossing is not allowable by CN, a prefabricated truss pedestrian bridge could be considered. This option would require run-up ramps on both sides of the ROW to get to grade, and would need to reach a 23 foot vertical clearance. This option would have fairly significant cost impacts and therefore an at-grade design is preferred.

NEXT STEPS

» Survey the site to begin preliminary & final engineering
» Begin discussions with Canadian National Railway to identify options and timing for implementation
» Advocate for an at-grade railroad crossing with a maze crossing.
» Discuss a 30 foot ROW in place of the current 100 foot ROW, or at least a reduction in order to minimize site and property impacts
» Pursue an easement for the trail route
» Integrate wayfinding into the segment, to direct users to Gilbert Park effectively
Focus Area: Trail extension from Bridge Street north along the western river edge past Graphic Packaging

One priority that surfaced from the planning process for this Plan was to address the segment gap north of Bridge Street on the western edge of the Wisconsin River. The current alignment assessed (right) that was reviewed as part of the engineering feasibility assessment follows the edge of the existing parking areas, keeping the trail on-grade above the slope as much as possible north of the parking lot, given the steep slopes in this area of the river.

Once the trail route reaches the north end of the Graphic Packaging site, the trail is proposed near the existing garage structure on the southeast edge of the MBX north site. At this point, the trail moves from being on-grade, to a partially cantilevered boardwalk structure. The proposed boardwalk would be approximately 800 feet in length, and would be built high along the slope, rather than down near the river. This elevated boardwalk/trail section would be supported by timber piles, with wood posts, cable rails, and aluminum rails.

Phasing of this segment could be considered based on cost or if the property owner would like more time before implementation. Phasing presents some potential challenges, however. If phasing is required, Cherry Street could be utilized as a designated trail route until the segment is completed. This would entail cooperation with the railroad, given that railroad crossings would be required if this alternative route were to be considered in the short-term.

NEXT STEPS

- Survey the site to begin preliminary & final engineering
- Begin conversations with Graphic Packaging and MBX ownership to establish easements and/or property acquisition costs for the trail to be designed and constructed
- Work with property owners and the railroad on phasing if necessary
Focus Area: Extend the trail from Sturgeon Eddy Road to Thomas Street along the southeastern river edge

One of the biggest priorities of many bicycle advocates in Wausau is to connect the bike-friendly southern neighborhoods to downtown Wausau with a safe bicycle connection. As part of this planning process, three alternatives were investigated to provide this connection.

1. A trail connection along the eastern bank of the river was weighed.
2. The possibility of a bike/ped bridge across the river to the developing trails on the other side of the river.
3. Enhancements to Grand Avenue to create a multi-use trail on the west side of the street.

After discussion with community members, stakeholders, and design experts, a trail extension along the eastern bank was deemed the better option of the three from a connectivity and access perspective. The enhanced Grand Avenue connection was ruled out due to physical spatial constraints to accommodate the trail on either side of the street and with limitations within the roadway.

The trail extension from Sturgeon Eddy Road to Thomas street was determined the highest priority, given the opportunity for a direct and scenic riverside connection to extend the River Edge Parkway.

A. Trail extension from Sturgeon Eddy Road north to Thomas Street
B. Enhanced bicycle boulevard connection along Prospect Avenue
This segment scenario was investigated by the engineering team to determine feasibility and recommended next steps.

While the trail along the river bank is seen as a leading possibility, there are some embedded challenges. These challenges do not seem insurmountable so far in the initial assessment however, particularly as the connection has been determined as a high priority, with potential for eventual implementation.

The current scenario shows switchbacks to get back up to grade (this area has an approximate 50 foot drop). Another potential alternative to review with more detailed surveying could be a more gradual ramping down to the river bank, however the trail user would have less time directly on the river in this scenario. In the current scenario, a 10 foot wide asphalt trail is shown, with switch backs and retaining walls and railings that run the full length of each switchback. The trail is shown above the 100 year floodplain. Erosion control would need be considered, likely with the use of a reinforcing mat that would be stapled into the surface to allow the vegetation to grow and hold the slope in the future. Overlooks and fishing areas can be considered once the design process is further along for this segment.

Although the trail would fall within private property, this area is unusable to the properties, and would not impact their use given that they are currently unable to reach this area.

In the shorter term, while Prospect Avenue is currently a designated bike route, further enhancements could be made to this route, with some additional wayfinding signage to improve the connection for residents of the southeast quadrant of the city.

**NEXT STEPS**
- Survey the site to begin preliminary engineering
- Begin discussions with property owners along the river bank about easements and potential acquisition
- Identify funding resources to assist with the planning, engineering, and construction of this trail segment
**Focus Area**: Connect the trail segments on the western river edge adjacent to MBX Packaging

One of the missing links in the River Edge Parkway on the western river bank is a connection between the trail segment that dead-ends just south of Pick n’ Save (Cedar and Spruce Streets) and the trail segment to the south that picks up in the Riverside Plaza Shopping Center. This trail segment could be challenging to complete due to the constrained space between the existing building at the top of the river bluff and the railroad bridge that is situated just to the south of the trail gap.

The City of Wausau has been in close communication with the property owner at the MBX Packaging facility, and previously completed engineering drawings for the trail extension through this site. As collaboration with the property owner continues, the City will be able to work to address the site’s challenges and move towards construction of a new trail segment.

In the short term, option A in the diagram at left may be pursued to provide increased connectivity in this section of the trail before an on-river connection is possible. In this on-road option, a new connection from the trail segment at Pick n’ Save would extend to North 1st Avenue, providing connection south to Riverside Plaza along 1st Avenue. Major limitations of this option include the necessity of a railroad crossing, and the fact that 1st Avenue is a one-way road going northbound, with a shoulder that can be used for biking, but does not formally meet bike lane standards, which is five feet.

**NEXT STEPS**

- Continue discussions and collaboration with the land owner at MBX Packaging with the goal of constructing a trail in this segment as soon as possible
- In the short term, consider ways for the MBX property to be circumnavigated using 1st Ave
- Work with the railroad operator to coordinate the necessary crossings of the line to ensure safe connection in this area
- Enhance the trail segment along the shopping center parking lot to more clearly delineate the trail
Crossing the River

The diagram at left shows the possible options for an enhanced or new designated pedestrian and bike connection across the Wisconsin River. Current river crossing points are few and constrained, limiting bicycle and pedestrian movement throughout the downtown loop of the River Edge Parkway. One of the top priorities for the future of the trail is to develop a safe river crossing that will allow greater movement throughout the trail network, especially for commuters heading to downtown Wausau for work.

High Priority Crossing
The crossing at Scott Street and Stewart Avenue (the Falls and Slough bridges) have been identified as the highest priority crossing. These bridges both have three lanes for traffic, and given the volume of current annual average daily traffic, there is potential for the other travel lane of both bridges to be utilized for bicycle traffic only. These two lanes would accommodate a buffered or separated bike lane.

- A New northern pedestrian bridge connection to Scholfield Park
- B Safe connection across the Bridge Street bridge
- C Conversion of existing railroad bridge to a bicycle/pedestrian bridge from Barker-Stewart Island (long-term possibility)
- D Safe connection across Falls & Washington Street Bridge at Stewart Avenue
- E Two-way bike and pedestrian connection across the Thomas Street Bridge
- F New southern pedestrian bridge connection from the south end of the waste water treatment plant portion of the trail to Memorial Park
The pursuit of this option will require coordination with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), as the State has jurisdiction over these two bridges. If approved, the City should consider the implementation of a fully separated bike lane. If cost is a factor, the City could consider creating a buffered bike lane with paint and delineator posts, raised lane separators, or even concrete jersey barriers in the short-term and in the medium-term enhance the lane to be fully separated from the traffic lanes. These bike lanes would extend the existing lanes on Scott and Stewart on the west side of the river, and could be further assessed on the east side of the river for continuity and increased safety of bicyclists.

Beyond the lanes on the bridges, consideration must then be given to the east side of the river, where connections to and crossings of 1st Street, Washington Street, and River Drive, must be considered, given the high levels of traffic and complexity of the street pattern. Community members have expressed having difficulty safely crossing Washington street. A traffic study could be helpful to determine the best options for multi-modal traffic integration and optimal safety. Traffic controls on Stewart Avenue will certainly need to be a consideration on the west side of the railroad tracks on the east end of the bridge. This will aid bicyclists and other trail users to use the trail segments running north-south.

Medium Priority Crossings
The Thomas Street bridge is a common crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists. The bridge does not have a dedicated bike lane. There is a sidewalk on the north side of the bridge that is used by pedestrians, and often bicyclists. More advanced bicyclists often ride on the shoulder of the bridge travel lanes. The bridge was widened and re-decked in 2006. While the opportunity to widen the bridge is at least 10-15 years away, wayfinding signage and shared use arrows “sharrows” could be integrated into the travel lanes to increase safety of bicyclists using the travel lanes.

The Bridge Street bridge, while not of highest priority, has been determined as an important crossing. The bridge is not likely to be re-decked for at least another 10 years. Consideration in the short-term could be given to lane widths, and whether there is the possibility to widen the existing sidewalks to create a multi-use path to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle traffic (10 feet in width). When the bridge is being planned for re-decking, the City and WisDOT can consider opportunities to widen the bridge to accommodate fully integrated bike lanes.

Additional Potential Crossings
While lower priority, there was interest in considering the following three crossings in the medium- and long-term:

A. A prefabricated pedestrian bridge could be installed to connect the east side of Wausau directly to Scholfield Park on the west side of the Wisconsin River. For regular bike community and traffic patterns, that was not determined to be a priority crossing project.

B. The potential future conversion of the existing railroad bridge that connects on the west side of Wausau at Maple Street could eventually be considered to connect the west side of Wausau directly to Barker-Stewart Island. This connection will require coordination with the railroad.

C. Early in discussions, the potential for a pedestrian bridge on the south of the city was considered, to connect the eventual trail that is developing in and around the treatment plan from Thomas Street to DC Everest County Park, and as a potential connection for residents in the southeast quadrant of the city to downtown (back over the river at Stewart Avenue). This has been determined a very low priority crossing, given the expressed interest in creating the connection on the east side of Wausau from Thomas Street to Sturgeon Eddy Road.
The River Edge Experience

Benches & Lighting

The benches are consistent throughout the River Edge Parkway trail system. The memorial benches are constructed of wood on metal frames. As segments are further developed, these memorial benches will continue to be integrated into the system. Whenever possible, educational or wayfinding signage should be incorporated into the vistas and other rest stop areas with memorial benches.

Lighting throughout the trail system consists of decorative pole lighting with globe lamp covers. The Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department is currently in the process of updating the existing lights to LED to be more energy efficient.

In general, it is a goal system-wide to improve lighting where necessary to increase the feeling of safety. While lighting should be installed system-wide, there are some more natural areas of the parkway where lighting should be more closely considered.

Some recent community feedback focused on the heavily wooded sections of the parkway – such as the Whitewater Park-Oak Island Park and Barker-Stewart Island sections of the trail. In these sections, there is some desire for improved lighting to increase the visibility and sense of safety. Concurrently, there are some concerns about lighting negatively impacting the wildlife in these natural sections.

In these sections, consideration should be given to the more heavily wooded sections, which remain dark, even with light pollution and moonlight. Given the curves, elevation changes, and the current spacing of lighting, options should be assessed for lighting with more recent technologies that can be more focused on the trail or lighted bollards, to supplement the existing decorative lights and improve the lighting and safety, while keeping wildlife impacts to a minimum in these natural areas. A photometric analysis should be conducted to determine the appropriate types of lighting that can accomplish both important goals of increasing safety while respecting natural habitats. Lighting with total cut off luminaires that zeros out at the wooded areas should be considered, and could be on shorter light poles, or be lower bollard-style lights.
Signage & Wayfinding

The River Edge Parkway currently has signage that identifies the trail, with the occasional educational and larger system wayfinding signage.

As the system is further enhanced, there is a desire by community members to strengthen the system signage, both on-trail, but also throughout the city to strengthen the identity and knowledge of the trail system. During community feedback sessions, many community members expressed that they were not aware of the trail system as a whole, or were unaware of particular segments that they were excited to learn about. From this feedback, it is clear that strengthening the general wayfinding signage throughout the trail and bike route systems would be a great benefit to the Wausau community.

Additional feedback included mile markers that designate the user’s location on the trail in case of emergency to call for help, as well as wayfinding signage that includes distances to other prominent amenities or destinations. For safety purposes, consideration could be given to call boxes throughout the trail system.

An updated River Edge Parkway map should be created and installed at prominent trail head locations of the trail. Using trail user counting technology could assist with identifying highly trafficked areas that could benefit from additional signage, wayfinding, and furnishing amenities.