

Big Walnut Trail

Little Turtle to Alum Creek Trail
Comments Responses



THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS
RECREATION AND PARKS



Big Walnut Trail—Little Turtle to Alum Creek Trail ODOT Project ID 116785

1: I support the trail because it will provide a greater connection to other trails and parks.

City Response: Providing infrastructure that links the northern two sections of Big Walnut Trail to each other and to the nearby Alum Creek Trail near Parkridge Park will provide walkers, cyclists and all trail users access to the greater regional trail system. It also advances the larger vision of a regional park system for the greater Columbus area.

2: I support the trail because it will reduce barriers (such as I-270, SR 161, Sunbury Road) to access the trail.

City Response: There are currently substantial barriers to walking and biking in the study area. While sidewalks exist in neighborhoods and along some streets, State Route 161, Interstate 270 and Sunbury Road cut through the area, making nearby destinations unsafe to walk or ride to. For example, Blendon Woods Metro Park, Hamilton Quarter, the Alum Creek Trail, and Easton are surrounded by thousands of residents, yet are accessed primarily by a car. The trail would remove these barriers by providing safe connections around these large, high-speed roadways.

3: I support the trail because it improves neighborhood access to the trails and to each other.

City Response: Currently connections between neighborhoods and parks in this area can only be made by using surface streets. Most of these streets lack adequate pedestrian accommodations and are noted to be unsafe for walking, cycling, including all-ages access. The trail will provide connections for all levels and capabilities of trail users – from those who use the existing trail network to new trail users in surrounding neighborhoods.

4: I like that the trail is removed from the roadway (safer).

City Response: Currently connections between neighborhoods and parks in this area can only be made by using surface streets. Some of these streets lack adequate pedestrian accommodations and are noted to be unsafe for average cyclists. An off-road trail will provide connections for all levels of cyclists – from those who use the existing trail to new trail users in surrounding neighborhoods.

5: The trail location is great and will provide users with scenic views and opportunities to experience nature and be active.

City Response: The location of the trail will provide users a way to experience Big Walnut Creek, recognized as one of the most scenic, high-quality streams in central Ohio.

6: I'm concerned that trail users will enter my property/trespass. The trail should be farther away from properties' backyards.

City Response: The conceptual trail alignment is located along Big Walnut Creek to provide a dedicated path that is separate from vehicular traffic. The location of the trail along Big Walnut Creek also provides users a connection to what is recognized as one of the most scenic, high-quality streams in central Ohio and other unique natural landscapes. This alignment is not located near backyards, as it will travel along the stream corridor, which is well-separated from residences. Although numerous studies have not found a connection between trails and increased crime/trespassing on surrounding properties, appropriate safety measures will be determined and implemented as the project progresses into detailed design. There will be local path connectors designed to help neighborhoods gain access to the regional path that will be carefully designed to minimize visibility or site distance issues. The trail will also be patrolled by Metro Parks bike rangers.

7: A connection to Easton should be discouraged since Easton has crime.

City Response: The trail alignment does not have a direct connection to Easton; however, the Easton area would be less than 15-minute by bike from the northern end of this project. The proposed trail would provide users with an alternate mode of transportation to get to Easton.

8: How would the proposed trail impact safety and traffic in the connected neighborhoods?

City Response: The proposed trail is not expected to impact traffic in the connected neighborhoods. By providing an alternate mode of transportation to residents, traffic volumes may decrease since some may choose to bike instead of drive to an intended destination. The proposed trail is expected to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety by providing a dedicated trail away from vehicular traffic. Other appropriate safety measures may be determined and implemented as the project progresses into detailed design.

9: I wish the trail did not have a portion along Sunbury Road (it is unsafe).

City Response: One of the goals of this project is to provide a dedicated path that is safe for all users by separating trail users from vehicle traffic. In order to provide a connection to the neighborhoods south of Interstate 270, the trail will need to have a short section along Sunbury Road. In this section, the trail is planned to be separated from vehicular traffic. Enhanced crosswalks are also expected to be implemented and will be determined during detailed design.

10: Please follow Ohio Multi-Modal Design Guidance for the stretch of the trail along Sunbury Road: Stoplights, high visibility crosswalks, street lighting.

City Response: The trail along Sunbury Road will follow all required design guidelines for multi-use trails.

11: I would prefer the trail on the west side of Sunbury Road.

City Response: It is recommended in the feasibility study that the trail be located on the west side of Sunbury Road.

12: There should be a connection to Cherry Bottom Park via Appian Way, via the bridge across Big Walnut Creek, via Cherrybottom Road.

City Response: The next phase of the trail will be exploring alignments from Hildebrand Road, through Cherrybottom Park, to Morse Road, where the trail enters Gahanna.

13: How is the trail connecting to Blendon Woods?

City Response: There is currently a connection to Blendon Woods Metro Park through the Magnolia Trace development. A new crosswalk and beacon have been installed at Cherrybottom Road leading into the metro park. Metro Parks is currently in the design phase of a project to connect into the park.

14: There should be a connection to Academy Park.

City Response: The project will connect to Academy Park when the next linkage between Hildebrand Road and Morse Road ties into the existing Big Walnut Trail in Gahanna.

15: I'm unsure how the trail will connect further north (to Hoover, etc.)

City Response: Currently, there is not a connection from the proposed Big Walnut Trail alignment to Hoover Reservoir. However, this connection has been outlined and prioritized in Columbus Recreation and Parks Department's five-year plan and would be part of an extension of the Big Walnut Trail alignment.

16: There should be a connection to the Inniswood Metro Gardens' connector path.

City Response: Currently, there is no connection from the proposed Big Walnut Trail alignment to any Inniswood Metro Gardens' paths. This connection would be planned by the City of Westerville.

17: There is no access for Sunbury Woods.

City Response: We are currently working with the City of Westerville on a possible connection between Sunbury Road and the trail.

18: There is no access for the Village of Westbury.

City Response: We are currently working with the City of Westerville on a possible connection from Sunbury Road to the trail.

19: The trail should connect further east into New Albany.

City Response: Currently, there is no connection from the proposed Big Walnut Trail alignment east into New Albany. However, this connection is being jointly planned by the City of New Albany and the City of Columbus.

20: When is the rest of the Big Walnut Trail going to connect from there to Reynoldsburg?

City Response: A connection to Reynoldsburg for the Big Walnut Trail has not been studied yet.

21: I thought I saw in a previous draft there would also be access to Morse Road. Perhaps this is in a future phase?

City Response: The next phase of the trail will be exploring alignments from Hildebrand Road to Morse Road, where the trail enters Gahanna.

22: Continue working on connections to Gahanna. Utilize city-owned property at 4392 Stygler Road.

City Response: This has been noted by the project team. This connection has been outlined and prioritized in Columbus Recreation and Parks Department's five-year plan and would be part of the Rocky Fork Trail alignment.

23: The trail should try to connect to the multi-use path being constructed in Little Turtle (Cambria-Turtle Station-Blue Jacket circuit).

City Response: This has been noted by the project team and will be considered as the project moves into detailed design.

24: The trail should extend further into Little Turtle (around Burntwood Way).

City Response: This has been noted by the project team and will be considered as the project moves into detailed design.

25: Will parking be included as part of the plan?

City Response: During this next phase of project development (detailed design), the project will be looking at trailhead options for parking and access.

26: If parking is provided, it should be within a park to minimize impacts.

City Response: This has been noted by the project team and will be considered as the project moves into detailed design.

27: What is the study and project timeline?

City Response: The study is expected to be finalized at the end of 2023. The study will then move into the environmental engineering phase, which will include design plan development, detailed environmental studies and additional public engagement. Construction is expected to begin in fall 2025 and last approximately 15 months.

28: Has the property for the project been acquired yet?

City Response: No property has been acquired for the project, as the project is still in the study phase.

29: Please continue to keep residents in-the-loop (provide status updates on the cities website and social media).

City Response: We will continue to make sure residents are up to date with project information and details. Public involvement and opportunities to comment will continue into detailed design of the project. Follow the department's social media channels and visit bit.ly/3WRqV2D to learn more.

30: I'm concerned about the impacts to the creek and surrounding riparian area.

City Response: The City understands there is a delicate balance of providing nature-based experiences while minimizing environmental impacts. During the next phase of project development, detailed environmental studies will be completed. The City intends to avoid and minimize impacts to environmental resources as much as possible.

31: I'm concerned that the odor from the recycling plant will impact trail users.

City Response: This has been noted by the project team.

32: I'm concerned about the impacts to existing mature trees. Will there be an inventory taken of trees removed? How are these impacts mitigated?

City Response: The conceptual alignment was designed to keep the project footprint and tree impacts to a minimum. Currently, exact impacts to trees are unknown. During the next phases of project development, detailed environmental studies will be completed. The City of Columbus Executive Order 2015-01 provides required mitigation for trees removed. If trees must be removed, the trees must be replaced, or an equivalent amount of money must be paid to the Recreation and Parks Tree Fund to be planted in the City. Coordination with the department's Forestry section will also occur to determine species of tree.

33: I'm concerned that the bridge crossing (as proposed) will cause increased flooding. This area floods often.

City Response: Currently, exact floodplain impacts are not known. The study evaluated different alternatives to better understand potential avoidance, minimization or mitigation measures for floodplain impacts. During design, a full hydraulic analysis of the river upstream and downstream of the project area will be completed. Public involvement and opportunities to comment on the project and environmental impacts will continue into detailed design of the project. Appropriate coordination with the local floodplain administrator will also occur during the design phases of the project.

34: I'm concerned about the impact of the trail through the Little Turtle Lowlands.

City Response: Currently, exact environmental impacts are not known. During the next phase of project development, detailed environmental studies will be completed to understand any impacts to ecological resources. The city intends to avoid and minimize impacts to environmental resources as much as possible. This will include looking at alternative boardwalk structures to elevate the path above any wetland areas. Public involvement and opportunities to comment on the project and environmental impacts will continue into detailed design of the project.

35: Could the increased foot traffic negatively impact the natural life along the Big Walnut Trail?

City Response: Currently, exact environmental impacts are not known. During the next phase of project development, detailed environmental studies will be completed to understand any impacts to ecological resources. Public involvement and opportunities to comment on the project and environmental impacts will continue into detailed design of the project.

36: The forest area on the banks of the river is infested with invasive honeysuckle, does the City plan to do anything about this?

City Response: Honeysuckle removal is not a main goal for this project; however, it will occur if it is needed for construction of the trail. For many years, Columbus Recreation and Parks has been targeting efforts to remove bush honeysuckle, one of the most common invasives to affect City parkland.

37: What's being done with the homeless camps that are within and around Big Walnut Creek?

City Response: The city has a protocol to deal with homeless encampments in public parks and will evaluate any existing situations as needed.

38: What is the maximum footage width of allowable ROW corridor for cutting/blazing swath to prep these greenways?

City Response: There are no federal or state regulations for maximum clearing widths. However, there are thresholds for impacted habitat that require different mitigation measures. Columbus Recreation and Parks Department utilizes the least possible width for any clearing.

39: What will the impact be to streams and wetlands in the study area?

City Response: Currently, exact environmental impacts are not known. During the next phase of project development, detailed environmental studies will be completed to understand any impacts to ecological resources, such as streams and wetlands. The city intends to avoid and minimize impacts to environmental resources. We anticipate impacts to streams and wetlands, and the project will need to follow all local and federal guidelines, mitigation measures and necessary permitting. Public involvement and opportunities to comment on the project and environmental impacts will continue into detailed design of the project.

40: I'm concerned about erosion near the waterway due to construction.

City Response: Best management practices, which protect water quality and promote soil conservation, will be implemented during construction.

41: How would construction equipment be able to get to that lower area? It is a steep slope from Walnut View Boulevard down to the creek, passing through people's backyards.

City Response: Since the project is still in the study phase, construction techniques and access have not been determined. Public involvement and opportunities to comment on the project and potential construction methods will continue into detailed design of the project.

42: Will any amenities be provided? If so, what are they? Proposed Amenities: Dog waste station, lighting, emergency security posts.

City Response: Currently, trail amenities have not been finalized. Public involvement and opportunities to comment on the project and potential amenities will continue into detailed design of the project.

43: Will the City be adding any boat access spots to the river?

City Response: Yes, as plans develop Columbus Recreation and Parks Department intends to provide boating access where feasible.

44: I would prefer that the trail be built on the right (west) bank of the river.

City Response: The trail crosses Big Walnut Creek from the west side to the east side before Shady Blossom Lane to minimize property impacts.

45: Will the bridge crossing over Big Walnut Creek be high enough for canoes/kayaks/floats to go underneath?

City Response: The project will ensure that the bridge is high enough to continue to allow access for recreational watercrafts to pass below.

46: Path should be extended along Sunbury Road southwest to Hidden Ridge Drive (provide access from Stelzer Road).

City Response: The project team will be coordinating with City departments for possible shared use path connections beyond the project limits.

47: Why is a third trail being proposed that will very closely parallel two "existing" mapped in red on the east side of creek?

City Response: The two "red" trails were constructed as part of the Magnolia Trace apartments. The project team is investigating utilizing the existing trail that is closest to the river. The second path to Cherrybottom Road will serve as a connector to Blendon Woods Metro Park.

48: Who will be responsible for maintaining the trail?

City Response: Columbus Recreation and Parks Department and Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks will be responsible for maintaining the trail.

49: Ensure sufficient signage/wayfinding.

City Response: The trail will follow all specified signage guidelines to ensure the facility is adequately marked. Your comment has been noted by the project team and will be considered as the project moves into detailed design.

50: Make sure to plan money for maintenance.

City Response: Columbus Recreation and Parks Department and Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks have a coordinated trails maintenance program for central Ohio regional greenways.
