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Paying the way for pathways

• Whitney Benefits commits \$290,000 to build foot bridge over Big Goose Creek

By Ed Merriman

Staff reporter

A \$560,000 section of Sheridan's pathway system connecting Whitney Commons to Kendrick Park would be completed with a combination of donations and proceeds from a \$250,000 federal/state grant application authorized Monday by the Sheridan City Council.

Ross Besson, city engineering project manager, said the Whitney Foundation has agreed to pay \$290,000 to construct an 8-foot-wide foot bridge across Big Goose Creek.

That bridge project and contributions from the Sheridan Rotary Club toward the trail are being used to meet the matching funds

requirement to qualify for federal funds disbursed through the state Transportation Enhancement Activities Local, or TEAL grant.

Besson said the project, tentatively scheduled for completion in 2006, has a good chance of being approved for the TEAL grant due partly to safety improvements created by the project, as well as the matching contributions of \$290,000 by the Whitney Foundation and between \$20,000 and \$30,000 from the Rotary Club.

Besides providing a pathway where people can walk or ride bicycles away from traffic, Besson said the project includes other safety enhancements such as lamppost lighting and security cameras.

He said the section of pathway included in the TEAL grant application is part of a three-phase effort to complete pathways from the ice rink to the new junior high school.

Phase One is the section from Whitney

Phase One is the section from Whitney Commons to Kendrick Park.

The second phase involves building a handicap-accessible pathway up the hill from Kendrick Park to the new junior high school, Besson said.

The third phase would complete the section of pathway from the ice rink to Whitney Commons, Besson said.

The goal is to complete those sections of the Sheridan pathway system by 2008, with completion of the overall pathway system — laid out in a 1997 pathway system master plan — within 10 years, Besson said.

Mayor Dave Kinskey said he and the City Council earmarked \$200,000 from optional 1 cent sales tax revenues in the 2005-2006 budget formally adopted Tuesday night for work on pathways this year.

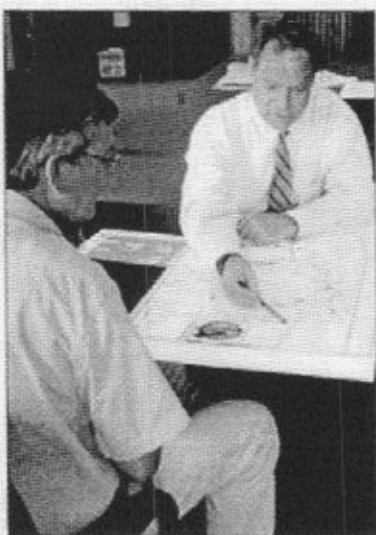
He said the pathway project stalled due to lack of resources, and the \$200,000 is intended to provide matching money for grants needed to get the ball rolling again.

"You can't build for free. You can't build without matching grants," Kinskey said.

Kinskey and Besson reviewed the 1997 pathways master plan Tuesday to identify areas where sections of trail could be connected, and where pathway signs and striping on streets could possibly be completed this year.

Kinskey said he has received many questions about why the pathways have to be paved, which drives up the cost.

"If we want to get grants, we must be ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant. We have to pave it to be compliant with the ADA," Kinskey said.



Sheridan Mayor Dave Kinskey (right) and Ross Besson, city engineering project manager, look at a map of the 1997 Sheridan Pathways master plan to review dead ends and identify a section of pathway connecting Whitney Commons to Kendrick Park included in a grant application approved by the City Council.

The Sheridan Press/Ed Merriman