



LINCOLN PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT
3131 "O" Street, Suite 300, Lincoln, NE 68510-1514
402-441-7847 fax: 402-441-9249 lincoln.ne.gov

July 2, 2018

Lancaster County Commissioners
County-City Building
555 South 10th Street, Room 110
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

**RE: *Funding Request for Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch
Lancaster County Visitors Improvement Fund***

Dear Commissioners:

This letter is to request that the County Board consider allocating \$120,000 of Visitor Improvement Fund revenues to be used over a 3-year period for the recreational trail associated with the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch project (see attached map). The request relates to a cooperative effort being led by the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department to apply for a grant in August from the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) for Phase III of the project. Visitor Improvement funds would be used for development of the recreational trail component of the Prairie Corridor, which could include trail and trail corridor development, signage, and planting of native grasses and wildflowers within the trail corridor.

The Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch is a tallgrass prairie passage and trail that will build on our nationally recognized trail and greenway system and will link two of Lincoln and Lancaster County's premier environmental resource centers. The Corridor will support economic development and environmental education, and will promote the enhancement and preservation of one of Nebraska's most valuable resources--tallgrass prairie.

Lancaster County has been a strong partner in this project, having provided \$60,000 to match a 3-year NET grant awarded in 2012 and \$90,000 to match the 3-year grant from NET awarded in 2015. This funding has assisted us in completing two segments of trail in Pioneers Park and preliminary engineering on additional segments in preparation for Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant applications to fund additional construction. The next segment targeted for construction is at the Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center at the south end of the Corridor, and



there are two additional priority areas where land and easements acquired for the project will support the construction of additional sections in the near term.

We are excited about the progress made to date on the Prairie Corridor which, in addition to the completion of nearly 2 ½ miles of trail to the western edge of Pioneers Park, includes the conservation of over 800 acres through the purchase of land and easements and the re-establishment of high diversity tallgrass prairie on over 100 acres. Work also continues with the Prairie Corridor Cabinet formed in 2017 to help guide the project, and members of resource groups assisting in implementation of the Prairie Corridor vision. The project partners are continuing landowner outreach, habitat enhancement, development of the trail, and public engagement, and are working to enhance communication through social media.

Trail funding is a significant need for the project. We utilize primarily Visitor Improvement Funds and funds from GPTN to assemble a match for the RTP grants for the Prairie Corridor (RTP grants cover up to 80% of the project cost and require a minimum 20% match). RTP grants are becoming more competitive, requiring a much higher match to be successful, and the trail construction needs for the Prairie Corridor are growing as the project progresses. Thus, we have increased the grant request for Visitor Improvement funds for Phase III of the project.

Identifying Visitor's Improvement funds for the Prairie Corridor represents an opportunity to leverage significant additional funds and to enhance the public-private partnership to build on the early success of this project. Since the inception of the Prairie Corridor project, our partnership has grown to over 25 project and funding partners including cash and in-kind matching contributions totaling over \$5.4 million. One of those partners is the Village of Denton, which is interested in the economic opportunities and has supported the project with matching funds and with education and outreach activities.

We understand that in accordance with past practice, the Commission may forward this funding request to the Visitors Promotion Committee (VPC) for consideration, and we are prepared to present this request to the VPC when they meet in August. We have no doubt that the County's continued partnership and financial participation in the project will significantly strengthen our NET application, which is due on Tuesday, September 4, 2018. Thus, if the Commission is inclined to refer this request to the VPC and the VPC does recommend funding, we would respectfully request that the Commission consider that recommendation by August of 2018.

The Prairie Corridor is an opportunity to celebrate our natural heritage and to build on the unique sense of place we enjoy here in Lincoln and Lancaster County. We would welcome an

opportunity to more fully update you on the project at the Commission's convenience. I can be reached at 441-8265 or ljohnson@lincoln.ne.gov. You can also contact Nicole Fleck-Tooze at 441-8263 or ntooze@lincoln.ne.gov with any questions you may have.

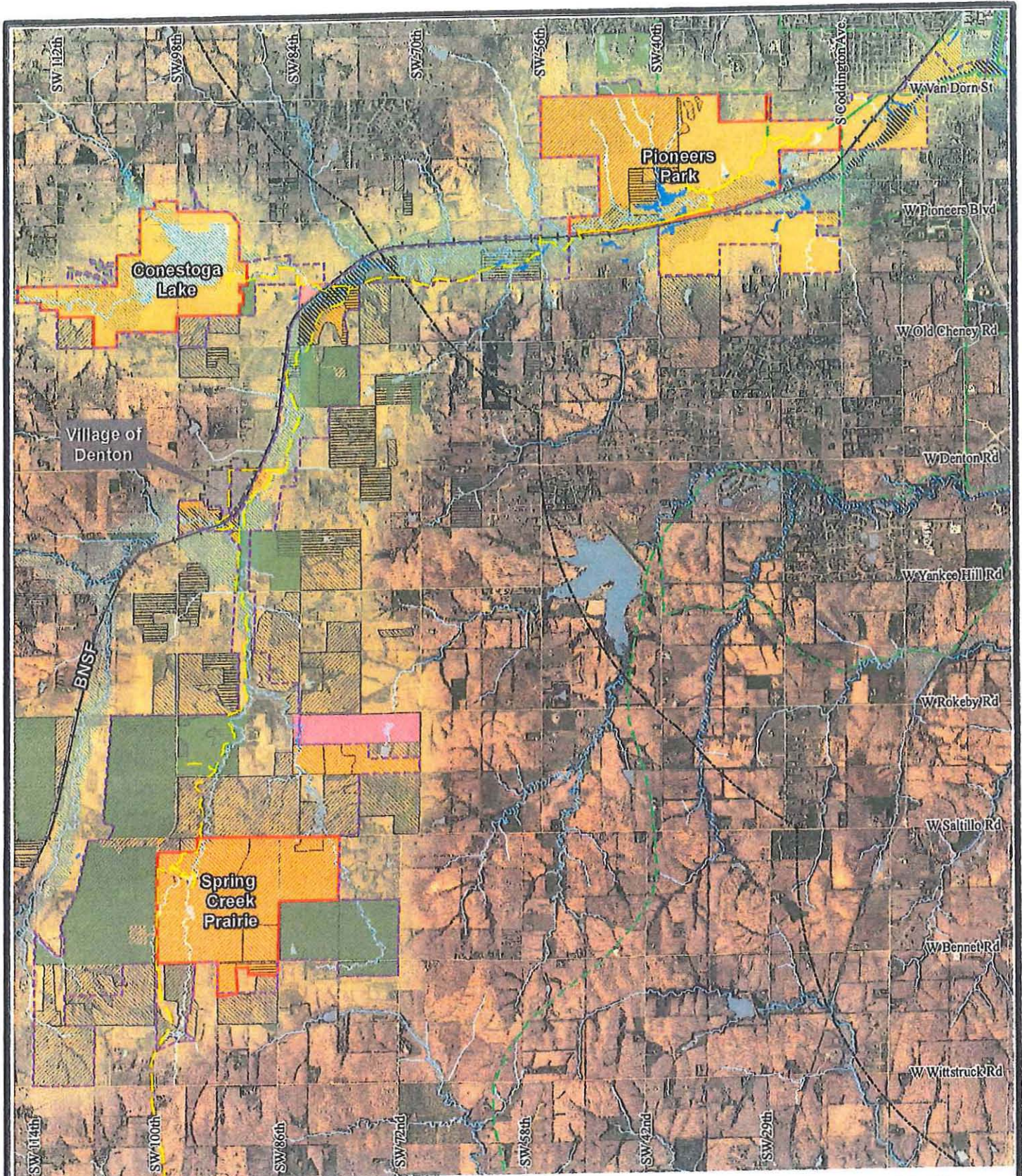
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Lynn Johnson
Lincoln Parks and Recreation Director

Cc: Jeff Maul – Executive Director, Lincoln Convention and Visitors Bureau
Denise Pearce – City of Lincoln Mayor's Office
Nicole Fleck-Tooze – Lincoln Parks and Recreation



Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch



- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Priority Area | Native Seeding | Lakes/Streams |
| Destination Areas | Pasture | BNSF RR |
| Under Contract | Virgin Prairie | Existing Trail |
| 3-mile Jurisdiction | Floodway | Existing PC Trail |
| Conservation Easements | 100 Year Floodplain | Potential PC Trail |
| Public/Conservation Ownership | Wetlands | Future Trail |

LANCASTER COUNTY VISITORS IMPROVEMENT FUND
GRANT REQUEST

Name of Organization: Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department

Contact Person: Nicole Fleck-Tooze

Address: 3131 O Street, Ste 300, Lincoln, NE 68510

Telephone 402.441.8263 **Fax** 402.441.8706 **Email** ntooze@lincoln.ne.gov

Organization Status: Non-Profit ___ Association ___ Civic Group ___ Other X
(If other, please attach explanation) City of Lincoln

Applicant Government/organization Federal ID number: 47-6006256

If tax exempt organization, designate IRS classification: ___ 501(c)3 ___ 501(c)6.

Provide a detailed description of your exhibit/attraction:

The Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch is a planned trail and tallgrass prairie passage that builds on our nationally recognized trail and greenway system and links two of Lincoln and Lancaster County's premier environmental resources and education centers. It will follow the Haines Branch of Salt Creek from the Pioneers Park Nature Center, to the Conestoga Lake State Recreation Area, extend down through the Village of Denton and on to the Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center (SCPAC).

The Prairie Corridor has the potential to become a significant attraction for the Lincoln area. It will support economic development efforts by celebrating the natural heritage of the "Prairie Capital" with a unique tallgrass prairie experience easily accessible from I-80 and a 20-mile roundtrip trail ride that will encourage visitors to stay another day in Lincoln. Approximately 400,000 people visit the Pioneers Park Nature Center each year. Over 14,000 people visit the Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center each year, and this has the potential to grow substantially once the two resources are connected and integrated into the Prairie Corridor. The project is planned to be implemented in phases. This funding request is for matching funds for Phase 3.

Number of attendees estimated: Out of town 29,240 Local 36,640

Check all that apply:

- X Expanding and improving any existing visitor attraction.
- X Planning or developing such expansion improvements, exhibits or additions.
- X Acquiring or expanding exhibits for existing visitor attractions.
- ___ Promotion and advertising costs associated with such exhibits.

Please describe project as indicated above.

Visitor Improvement Funds in the amount of \$40,000 per year over 3 years, for a total of \$120,000 from 2019-2022 are requested as matching funds to pledge in support of an application to the Nebraska Environmental Trust for \$900,000 for the same period, for Phase 3 of the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch project. The County's contribution is requested in support of the recreational trail component of the project. The trail is comprised of 9 segments, two of which have been completed and a third of which is being planned for 2019 construction. The trail will generally follow the Haines Branch of Salt Creek from Pioneers Park, to the Conestoga Lake State Recreation Area, extend down through the Village of Denton, and on to the Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

Project Start Date: 2019 **Completion Date:** 2022

Is this project part of a larger renovation project? Phase 3 of the project is part of the longer-term project to implement the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch project.

If yes, please describe the entire project:

The larger project is described above.

As it pertains to the grant related project, provide breakdowns of radio and television advertising, showing individual costs, call letters and cities of origin. Also give breakdowns of magazine advertising by individual publications and costs. Similarly, separate the costs for brochures, travel shows by location, billboard advertising, etc. Include target market demographics.

Funding for advertising is not requested as part of this grant application, nor are the majority of these activities anticipated for this development phase of the project. A website and brochure have been developed and is distributed at various events. A social media campaign using Facebook and Instagram is being initiated. Additional advertising for the Prairie Corridor will initially be integrated with advertising for Pioneers Park and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. Additional needs will be assessed as the Corridor is more fully established.

Do you anticipate submitting future applications for projects relating to this project? Yes. We would like to continue to ask Lancaster County to be a partner in this promising and growing project with great potential to attract visitors.

Total projected budget (attach detailed budget)*

Total Revenue \$22.5M from public-private partnership Total Expense \$22.5 M

* Attached budget is for the entire 15-year project and was developed for Phase 1 application. It is currently in the process of being updated.

How will your project impact new visitor recruitment and lodging tax revenues?

Once complete, the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch will build on Lincoln and Lancaster County's nationally recognized trail system and link two premier centers of environmental resources and education.

According to *The Annual Economic Impact of the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch Project* completed July 20, 2018 by Dr. Eric Thompson, UNL Bureau of Business research, the total annual economic impact of the Prairie Corridor is \$4.3 million. The annual labor income impact is \$1.37 million over 53 full-year equivalent jobs. The entire report detailing methodology and findings is attached. The estimates below comprise a component of these findings.

Additionally, according to the *2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services, 23.7 million Americans, age 16 and over, took trips away from home to watch, photograph or feed wildlife. Of those, 79% took trips within their own state and the remaining 21% in another state. Wildlife watchers had an average trip expenditure of \$573 per person. Multiple studies and reports, including the *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP): A Guide to An Active Nebraska 2016-2020* indicate a significant trend upward in wildlife and trail visits. The Prairie Corridor project is uniquely positioned for the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County to attract this interest to our community and county. The impact on new visitor recruitment and lodging tax revenues will be significant.

Estimated annual visitors: Local 36,640 Outside of Lincoln 29,240

Estimated Annual economic impact of your facility and/or project based on lodging tax use (Use multipliers listed below)

Is this based on annual use of the facility or for a specific event/exhibition? Annual use.

of hotel rooms utilized x 5,260 (* Multiplier – see below) \$350/night**

* National/Regional event Multiplier - \$375 per night

* State event - \$350 per night

* Local event - \$245 per night

** It is anticipated that the Prairie Corridor will be a regional attraction, but the state event multiplier was utilized for a conservative estimate.

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT BASED ON FORMULA \$1,841,000

Is this grant request in addition to other project related grant requests? Yes

If yes, then list other grant requests:

Recreational Trails Program - \$166,700 Recreational Trails Program (2018 application)

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission: \$45,000 over 3 years requested

Village of Denton: \$15,000 over 3 years anticipated request

Nebraska Environmental Trust: \$900,000 over 3 years requested

Others to be determined.

Grant amount requested from Visitors Promotion Committee

\$120,000 over 3 years: 2019-2022

Signature of Applicant

Caym Johnson, Parks & Recreation Director

Date

7/30/18

Return Application (s) to:

Lincoln Convention and Visitors Bureau

Attn: Jeff Maul, Executive Director

1135 M St. Suite 300

Lincoln, NE 68501

For more information:

(402) 434-5343

jmaul@lincoln.org

Prairie Corridor Estimated Implementation Costs for Priority Area
Updated July 9, 2018

Project Component	Cost	Totals
Conservation (land & easement acquisition, appraisals, surveys, etc.)	\$9,810,500	
Habitat Development (preserving and enhancing virgin prairie, enhancing native seeding, preserving and enhancing wetland areas, enhancing and managing wooded riparian areas along stream corridors)	\$2,662,400	
Research conducted by University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Natural Resources to expand knowledge of tallgrass prairie preservation and native pollinators	\$766,800	
Trail Development and Economic Development Mostly 8-foot wide crushed limestone trail; bridges for stream crossings; 3.1 miles of trail within Pioneers Park; 4.4 miles to the Village of Denton; 1-mile connection to Conestoga Lake; 1.2-mile loop through Denton; 5.0 miles of trail to Spring Creek Prairie	\$5,390,000	
Public Education and Outreach (website development, interpretive signs, interactive activity areas, printed education materials)	\$439,000	
2015 Costs Sub-Total Without inflation		\$19,068,700
Inflation over 12-year period	\$3,481,000	
2027 Costs With Inflation*		\$22,549,700
Less Committed Cash and In-Kind Matches	<\$5,460,000>	
TOTAL Estimated Costs for Priority Area		\$17,089,700

- Based upon an initial corridor size of approximately 7,600 acres, which may be expanded further in the future. Costs are rough estimates, which will continue to be updated as the project progresses.
- Excludes endowment costs.



MAYOR CHRIS BEUTLER

555 South 10th Street - Suite 301 Lincoln, NE 68508

402.441.7511 fax: 402.441.7120

lincoln.ne.gov

July 27, 2018

Lincoln Convention & Visitors Bureau
Attn: Jeff Maul, Executive Director
1128 Lincoln Mall, Ste 100
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Mr. Maul,

As Mayor of the City of Lincoln, I fully support the Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department's (LPRD) request for Visitor Improvement Project Funds. The City requests \$40,000 per year for three years to help fund the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch. We will utilize this as match to a larger Nebraska Environmental Trust request of \$900,000. Funds will be used to acquire conservation easements or property ownership from willing sellers, to conduct research in partnership with the University of Nebraska on land management practices that support endangered pollinator health, and to construct an interpretative trail from Pioneers Park Nature Center to the Village of Denton to Spring Creek Audubon Prairie Center. The trail provides visitors and residents the opportunity to explore rare tallgrass prairie and learn about its value.

I consider the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch project to be a legacy project, benefitting all of Lincoln, our state, and nation. According to the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project, 2005, "Early explorers described the tallgrass region as a sea of grass with open horizons and abundant wildflowers rooted in rich soils. The tallgrass prairie once extended from eastern Nebraska to Indiana and from Texas to southern Canada. In Nebraska, the Tallgrass Prairie Ecoregion covers the eastern fourth of the state. Today less than one percent of tallgrass prairie remains in the continental United States. Approximately two percent of Nebraska's tallgrass prairie remains mostly as remnants less than eighty acres in size." Lincoln has an opportunity to save some of the remaining acres of tallgrass prairie abutting our city.

In closing, I appreciate the Lincoln Visitor & Convention Bureau's and the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners' support of new attractions to Lincoln. The Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch will prove to be one our most precious legacies to future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Beutler", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Chris Beutler
Mayor of Lincoln



LINCOLN PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT
3130 "O" Street, Suite 300, Lincoln, NE 68510-1514
402-441-7847 fax: 402-441-9249 lincoln.ne.gov

July 30, 2018

Lincoln Convention & Visitors Bureau
Attn: Jeff Maul, Executive Director
1128 Lincoln Mall, Ste 100
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Jeff,

The City of Lincoln, Nebraska, and its Parks and Recreation Department (LPRD) are requesting the Visitor Promotion Advisory Committee's support for our application for Visitor Improvement Funds. The vision of the Prairie Corridor is to manage and enhance tallgrass prairie, riparian habitat and wetland areas by linking two premier environmental education centers, Pioneers Park Nature Center and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, with a 10-mile trail traversing the length of the corridor, with an additional 1.5-mile trail segment connecting to Conestoga Lake State Recreation Area. Urban and rural residents and visitors to Lincoln and Lancaster County will be able to experience and learn from the Prairie Corridor, exploring a diversity of habitats and species.

Phase 1 and 2 included the construction of the first two segments of the planned trail using Visitor Improvement Funds as part of the match for a Recreational Trails Program grant. They also included preservation of over 800 acres through the purchase of land and easement from willing landowners, bringing the total number of acres preserved to over 5,300. Over 100 acres of virgin tallgrass prairie were preserved, and an addition 100 plus acres of cropland have been restored using local ecotype, high diversity seed. The University of Nebraska, School of Natural Resources began long term research in the Prairie Corridor in 2016, helping to answer important questions of restoration and management techniques and their impact on diversity and pollinator resources.

During Phase 3, additional trail segments will be designed and funding sought for their construction. LPRD and partners will continue to expand the number of protected acres of tallgrass prairie, build on our partnership with UNL to improve land management and increase our understanding of the importance of prairie to endangered pollinators, and accompanying public education on the value of tallgrass prairie. To enhance this effort, the Lincoln Parks Foundation has helped us develop a Prairie Corridor Steering Committee comprised of community leaders who will assist in raising funds and developing an endowment to sustain the Prairie Corridor for generations to come.

As evidence of the City of Lincoln's support, the City has committed \$240,000 in Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds toward the Prairie Corridor for Phases 1 and 2, and plans to continue to provide approximately \$40,000 per year for the next three years. Additionally, Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department is committing substantial staff resources toward the project. We are committed to leading project partners, convening the Prairie Corridor Technical Committee on a regular basis, providing project administration and oversight, pursuing additional funding and partners, all to further



The request to the Visitor Improvement Fund is to provide \$40,000 per year for three years for a total of \$120,000 for trail expansion efforts. I and my staff are available to provide additional information about the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch to the VPC and County Board.

In closing, the City of Lincoln is committed to the successful realization of the Prairie Corridor project. LPRD will continue to make every effort to bring the Prairie Corridor to full implementation.

Sincerely,



Lynn Johnson
Director



LINCOLN PARKS FOUNDATION

We love our parks.

3131 O Street, Suite 301

Lincoln, NE 68510

(402) 441-8258

www.lincolnparks.org

July 26, 2018

Lincoln Convention & Visitors Bureau
Attn: Jeff Maul, Executive Director
1128 Lincoln Mall, Suite 100
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Mr. Maul,

On behalf of the Lincoln Parks Foundation Board of Directors, we strongly support the Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department's application for Lancaster County Visitor Improvement Funds.

We have supported the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch project for more than seven years through annual cash matches, fund raising technical assistance, and management of donated funds. The project will allow Lincoln to showcase its role as the "Prairie Capital" and provide visitors and residents the opportunity to explore rare tallgrass prairie. The planned trail and tallgrass prairie passage builds on our nationally recognized trail and greenway system and links two of Lincoln and Lancaster County's premier environmental resources and education centers. This unique attraction will be easily accessible from I-80 and will provide an opportunity for visitors to ride from downtown Lincoln out into the surrounding countryside and back in time to an age when pioneers described the region as a "sea of grass".

We will continue our role as a provider of needed cash match to leverage grants both within and outside our state, provide technical assistance to the Prairie Corridor Endowment Steering Committee, and manage the endowment once established.

The Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch will be a significant draw for visitors and residents, improving the number of overnight stays in Lincoln, as well as dollars spent during visitor stays. We encourage the VIP Committee and the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners to seriously consider this funding application.

Sincerely,

Maggie J. Stuckey
Executive Director



July 30, 2018

Lincoln Convention & Visitors Bureau
Attn: Jeff Maul, Executive Director
1128 Lincoln Mall, Ste 100
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Mr. Maul:

The Prairie Corridor Steering Committee enthusiastically supports the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department's request for Lancaster County Visitor Improvement Funds. The Prairie Corridor trail will extend from Pioneers Park Nature Center to the Village of Denton and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center with a connection to Conestoga State Recreation Area. The project has completed Phase 1 and is nearing completion of Phase 2. To date, nearly 2 ½ miles of trail have been completed along the Corridor out to the western edge of Pioneers Park and more than 800 acres along the corridor have been conserved for prairie preservation and re-establishment.

Much of the trail remains to be constructed and will be a focus in Phase 3. We believe this unique prairie passage and trail will be a natural amenity that will draw visitors and new residents – active people who love to run, hike and bike and who are environmentally conscious. These are the people who are coming to Lincoln to help our businesses continue to grow and allow our community to thrive.

In Phase 2, the project secured a long-term Interlocal Agreement between the City of Lincoln and the Lower Platte South Natural Resource District and a long-term Memorandum of Understanding with Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Society to ensure the ongoing cooperation between these major partners. In addition, there are more than 20 other public and private partners enthusiastically behind the project.

Our steering committee is developing a campaign to raise funds for the project and for an endowment for long-term care to ensure the sustainability of the Prairie Corridor for many generations to come. Members of our committee include: Gerry Dimon, Glenn Johnson, Dan Klaus, Cathy Rustermier, and Scott Stuckey. A Visitor Improvement Fund grant provides essential support for the Prairie Corridor trail and will assist our committee in leveraging private funds.

In closing, we encourage the VIP Committee and the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners to favorably review this grant request.

Sincerely,


Doug Ganz, Co-Chair


Eric Gerrard, Co-Chair



A Bureau of Business Research Memo
From the University of Nebraska—Lincoln

Draft Economic Impact Memo

The Annual Economic Impact of the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch Project

Prepared for the Prairie Corridor Partnership

July 27, 2018
Bureau of Business Research
Department of Economics
College of Business
University of Nebraska—Lincoln
Dr. Eric Thompson, Director

Abstract: This memo examines the potential economic impact on Lancaster County from the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch project. The economic impact stems from visitors attracted to Lancaster County, or retained within the county, to utilize biking, hiking and ecotourism opportunities in the Corridor. The estimated annual economic impact of the Prairie Corridor project is \$4.30 million in business activity, including an annual labor income impact of \$1.37 million spread over an estimated 53 full-year equivalent jobs.

I. Introduction

Natural amenities benefit a local economy by attracting and retaining visitors and improving quality of life. Visitors bring new spending at lodging facilities, restaurants, retail stores and other local business. An improved quality of life attracts and retains residents and raises property values.

This economic impact memo from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Bureau of Business Research assesses the impact of the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch project which is under development in the Lincoln, Nebraska area. The project features a continuous trail and property from Pioneers Park in Lincoln, Nebraska to the Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center which lies to the south of Denton, Nebraska. The project creates a significant recreation attraction of benefit to the citizens of Lancaster County and also would attract and retain visitors to the area. This study assesses the annual economic impact of the tourism activity from visitors attracted to or retained in Lancaster County. Retained visitors are people from Lincoln who would otherwise travel outside of the area to pursue nature and trail-based tourism if the option of using the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch were not available. An assessment of the local quality-of-life benefits from the Prairie Corridor Project is left for future research.

The methodological approach is to utilize data on annual visits to similar attractions in other parts of the Midwest to develop an estimate of annual visits, both by local residents and non-residents, to the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch. Estimates of annual visits and average daily spending data are used, along with the IMPLAN model, to estimate the annual economic impact of the Prairie Corridor project.

The development of the Prairie Corridor project is occurring in a favorable environment for nature and trail-based tourism. Use of trails and outdoor wildlife activity is on the rise. According to the *2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services, 23.7 million Americans age 16 and over took trips away from home to watch, photograph or

feed wildlife.¹ Of those 23.7 million, 79 percent took trips within their own state and the remaining 21 percent in another state. Wildlife watchers had an average trip expenditure of \$573 per person. Interest is also growing with the number of wildlife watchers rising by 20 percent between 2011 (the previous national survey) and 2016. Trail-based recreation is also on the rise. According to the *Outdoor Recreation Participation Top Line Report 2017*, from the Outdoor Foundation, 8.6 million Americans age 6 and older participate in bicycling on non-paved surfaces while a similar number participate in trail running.² The number of bikers on non-paved surfaces rose 26 percent between 2011 and 2016 while the number of trail runners increased by 53 percent.

There are also favorable conditions here in Nebraska according to survey results presented in the Nebraska Game and Park Commission report *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP): A Guide to An Active Nebraska 2016-2020*.³ The survey found that in 2014 79 percent of Nebraskans visited a public recreation site in the state such as a park or trail, including 83 percent of residents of “metropolitan” Nebraska, which includes the Lincoln and Omaha areas. Sixty-nine percent of Nebraskans participate in nature, wildlife and other outdoor recreation. Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, Pioneers Park and the Prairie Corridor which will connect them offer many such opportunities. Forty-four percent of Nebraskans participate in hiking opportunities and 43 percent participate in biking.⁴ Such opportunities also will be facilitated by trail development in the Prairie Corridor project. Finally, 36 percent of Nebraskans, including 34 percent of metropolitan Nebraska residents, surveyed as part of the SCORP study indicated that they felt there were not enough outdoor recreation activities in Nebraska.

Taken together, these results show that hiking, bike-riding and sightseeing opportunities are important to residents of the Lincoln area, and there is an interest in expanding recreation capacity. The Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch project will expand hiking, biking and nature-based tourism opportunities in the Lincoln area, complementing existing opportunities at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center and Pioneers Park. Further, survey results reported in the SCORP study reveal interest in nature and trail-

¹ Available at https://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/subpages/nationalsurvey/nat_survey2016.pdf. Tables 37 and 39.

² Available at https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/2017-Topline-Report_FINAL.pdf

³ Available at https://www.recpro.org/assets/Library/SCORPs/ne_scorp_2016.pdf

⁴ Persons who jog or run spend an average of 19.84 days per year in that activity while bikers spend an average of 12.72 days.

based tourism throughout Nebraska, supporting the potential for non-local visitors to the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch.

Impact findings, and a brief description of the research methodology, are provided below in Section II. Information about the UNL Bureau of Business Research and Principal Investigator Eric Thompson is provided in the Appendix.

II. Methodology and Findings

The annual economic impact of the Prairie Corridor projects flows from visitors attracted to or retained in the local area, defined as Lancaster County, Nebraska, due to the recreation opportunities in the Corridor. The number of attracted and retained visitors, multiplied by average visitor spending, yields the total new money attracted or retained in the local economy, which is the basis for the economic impact.

In this economic impact analysis, the number of annual visitors to the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch is estimated by gathering data on the attendance at other, similar attractions around the country. Data on annual resident (local) and non-resident visitors to trails at several similar facilities in the Midwest is available from a report by Caudill and Henderson (2005).⁵ While about 15 years old, this report provides the types of information needed to estimate annual visitors utilizing the trails at the Prairie Corridor. In particular, annual visits is provided for residents (who live within 30 miles) and non-residents (who live more than 30 miles away). This information can be used to develop visitation rates. In particular, the number of resident visitors is divided by the population for zip codes located within 30 miles of each similar attraction. Population data for zip codes within 30 to 100 miles are used to calculate a visitor rate for non-resident visitors.

Estimates of annual visitation are based in part on the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge (Iowa) and Necedah National Wildlife Refuge (Wisconsin) included in the Caudill and Henderson (2005) report. These are tall grass wildlife refuges in Midwestern states. The Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch project

⁵ Caudill, James and Erin Henderson, 2005. *Banking on Nature 2004: The Economic Benefits to Local Communities of National Wildlife Refuge Visitation*, Division of Economics, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (September).

would enhance hiking and nature-based tourism in the route along the trail, and by fostering connectivity to the Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center.

However, these two wildlife refuges did not have dedicated bike trails in 2004. As a result, data also was gathered for three bike trails which run through Midwest farming areas; 1) the Rockbridge section of Katy Trail State Park in central Missouri, 2) the Badger State Trail in southcentral Wisconsin and 3) the Root River and Harmony State Trail in southeast Minnesota. Visitor information was maintained for these trails which are part of state trail systems and two of the three trails are located just outside of a city housing a major state University (Columbia, MO), or both a state capital and a major state university (Madison, WI).

Visitor information from the 5 sites were combined to estimate an annual visitation rate of 11.2% for residents and 2.2% for non-residents. As in Table 1, this information is applied to estimates of the population within 30 miles of the Prairie Corridor project, and 30 to 100 miles of the project. The result is an estimate of the potential annual visitors to the Prairie Corridor. There are an estimated 7,130 retained visits by local residents, based on the finding that 19.44% of local residents (2.2%/11.2%) would travel out of the local area to attend such an attraction each year. The estimate is that there would be 29,240 new non-local visitors and a total of 36,370 new or retained visitors each year.

Table 1
Estimate of Annual Visits Attracted to or Retained in Lancaster County Due to Prairie Corridor Project

Distance	Annual Visitation Rate	Population Prairie Corridor Region	Estimated Visitors	Share Attracted or Retained	Annual Attracted or Retained Visitors
Within 30 miles	11.2%	326,990	36,640	19.44%	7,130
30 to 100 miles	2.2%	1,341,936	29,240	100%	29,240
Total					36,370

Source: UNL Bureau of Business Research Estimate

These visitor estimates are combined with estimates of visitor spending to estimate the annual spending impact due to the Prairie Corridor project. However, finding spending estimates is challenging. There is uncertainty about the daily spending of potential visitors and it is not feasible to survey visitors as the Prairie Corridor project is not yet complete. The economic impact study therefore utilizes the daily spending figures typically utilized by the Lincoln Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). The Lincoln CVB

estimates \$350/day in visitor expenditure for each room night of lodging (including the cost of lodging). The Caudill and Henderson (2005) found that in a region of Midwest States⁶ the average non-resident spending on lodging was \$10.10 day (2004 dollars) by non-consumptive visitors, such as visitors who utilize trails. This figure is an average based on some visitors who purchase lodging and a large number of non-resident visitors who did not require lodging, perhaps because they made a day-trip or were staying with relatives. The 2004 spending figure is updated to a 2018 value of \$14.47 using the producer price index for accommodation services. Assuming an average Lincoln hotel room cost of \$100/night, average spending of \$14.47 per day implies that approximately 14.5% of trail visits result in a lodging night. Multiplying this percentage by 36,370 visitors yields an estimate of 5,260 lodging nights.

Multiplying the lodging nights estimate by \$350/night yields an estimate of \$1.84 million in annual spending by overnight visitors, as seen in Table 2. Spending is allocated among categories according to the Randall Travel Marketing Study (2004).⁷ That study found that 30% of spending was for lodging, 25% for retail, 17% for meals, 17% for fuel and transportation and 11% for other amusements and attractions. The remaining 31,110 new and retained visitors would be day rather than overnight visitors. The average spending in the Midwest States reported by Caudill and Henderson (2004) on all items except lodging, when updated to a 2018 value, is \$58.24. This is similar to the average non-lodging spending by out of area visitors to the Nebraska crane migration of \$60.94.⁸ Applying the average of these two figures to 31,110 day visitors yields an estimate of \$1.85 million in annual spending by day visitors. That spending is 24% for retail, 37% for meals, 25% for fuel and 15% for other amusements and attractions. The combined annual spending of overnight and day-trip visitors is \$3.70 million.

Table 2
Estimated Annual Spending by Day-Trip and Overnight Visitors

Type of Visitor	Annual Visitors	Average Spending (\$)	Annual Spending (Millions \$)
Overnight	5,260	\$350	\$1.84
Day-Trip	31,110	\$59.59	\$1.85
All Visitors			\$3.70

Source: UNL Bureau of Business Research Estimate.

Note: Values may not sum to totals due to rounding.

⁶ Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.

⁷ Randall Travel Marketing (2004). *Lincoln/Lancaster County Convention and Visitors Bureau Study Executive Summary*.

⁸ Dority, Bree, Eric Thompson, Shawn Kaskie and Lisa Tschauner, 2017. *The Economic Impact of the Annual Crane Migration on Central Nebraska 2017*. UNK College of Business & Technology and UNL Bureau of Business Research.

Much of this \$3.70 million in annual spending represents a direct economic impact on the Lancaster County economy. Some, however, does not; in particular, a portion of retail and gasoline spending does not represent a direct local economic impact since these goods are manufactured around the nation and the world. Only the “mark-up” portion of retail spending generates a direct economic impact on the local economy. After this adjustment the annual direct economic impact is \$2.49 million, as reported in Table 3 below. The direct annual economic impact also is presented in terms of value-added, labor income (wages, salaries, benefits, proprietors’ income) and employment. *Value-added* is analogous to gross domestic product and reflects the increase in labor income, proprietor profits, business taxes paid and capital consumption in the economy. Value-added is a component of output and labor income is a component of value-added. These other direct impacts are estimated based on hospitality industry average ratios of value-added per dollar of sales, or jobs per \$1 million in sales in Lancaster County. These ratios are estimated using the IMPLAN model.

Table 3
Direct and Total Annual Economic Impact

Measure	Direct impact	Multiplier Impact	Total Impact
Output (Sales) (Millions \$)	\$2.49	\$1.81	\$4.30
Value-Added (Millions \$)	\$1.32	\$1.04	\$2.36
Labor Income (Millions \$)	\$0.83	\$0.54	\$1.37
Employment	40	13	53

Source: UNL Bureau of Business Research Estimate

In addition to the direct economic impact, there is also a multiplier impact in Table 3. The multiplier impact occurs as the money attracted to Lancaster County due to the direct impact circulates further within the local economy. For example, businesses which provide hospitality services to Prairie Corridor visitors must themselves purchase supplies or professional services from other local businesses. Employees of hospitality businesses also spend their paychecks at a variety of local businesses including grocery stores, retail stores, rent or mortgage payments, insurance agencies, health care providers and the like. The multiplier impact therefore leads to significant sales and employment at local businesses throughout the Lancaster County economy. The multiplier impact is added to the direct impact to yield the total annual economic impact of the Prairie Corridor project.

Multiplier and total economic impacts are reported in Table 3. Multiplier impacts are typically 33% to 75% as large as the direct economic impact. The total annual economic impact of the Prairie Corridor project is \$4.30 million, including \$2.36 million in value-added. The annual labor income impact is \$1.37 million spread over 53 full-year equivalent jobs.

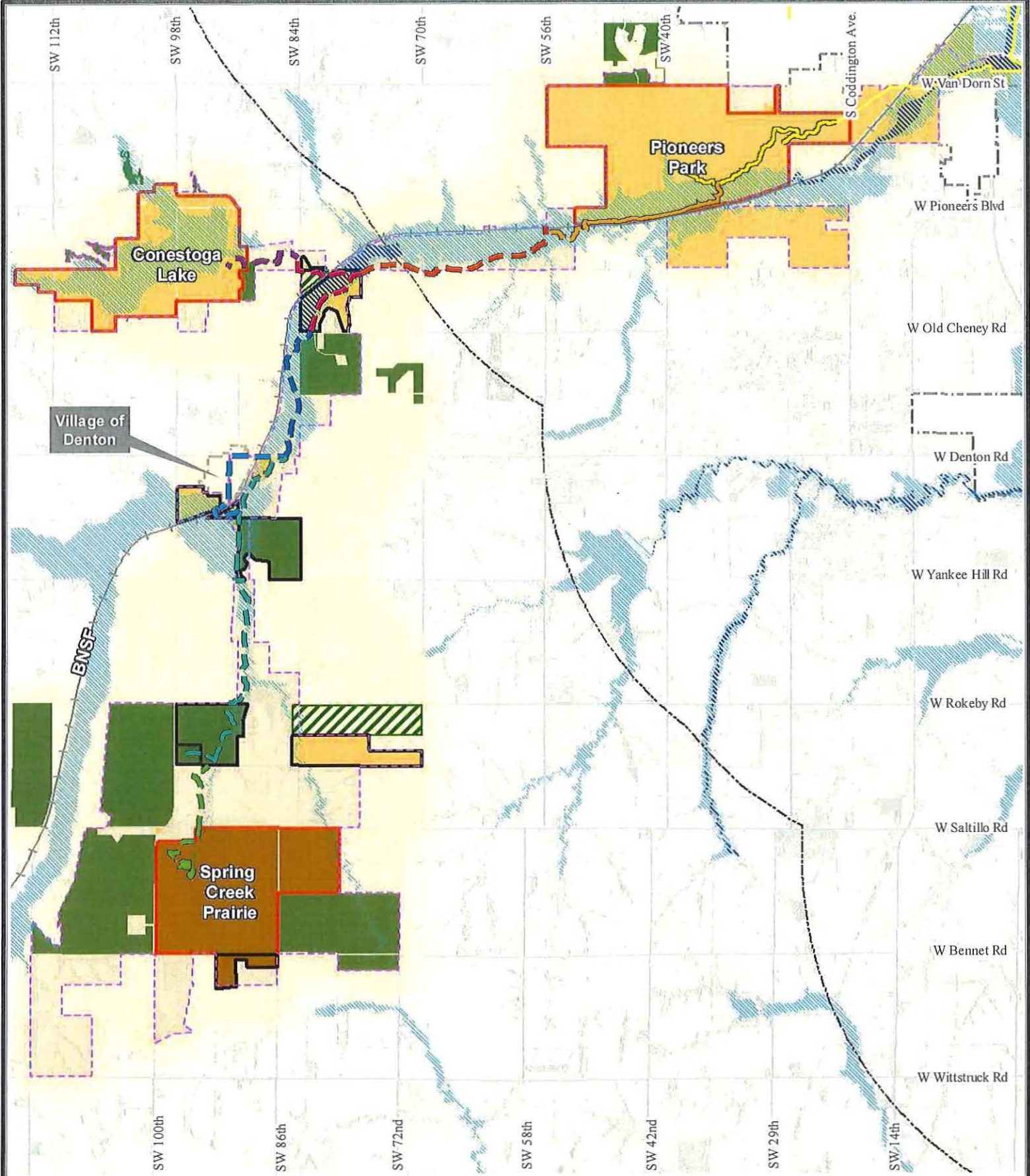
Appendix: About the Bureau of Business and Principal Investigator

The Bureau of Business Research

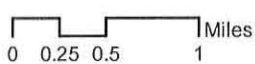
The UNL Bureau of Business Research is a leading source for analysis and information on the Nebraska economy. The Bureau conducts both contract and sponsored research on the economy of Nebraska and its communities including: 1) economic and fiscal benefit analysis; 2) models of the structure and comparative advantage of the current economy; 3) economic, fiscal, and demographic outlooks, and 4) assessments of how economic policy affects industry, labor markets, infrastructure, and the standard of living. The Bureau also competes for research funding from federal government agencies and private foundations from around the nation and contributes to the academic mission of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln through scholarly publication and the education of students.

Dr. Eric Thompson – Principal Investigator

Dr. Eric Thompson will be the principal investigator on this project. Dr. Thompson is the Director of the Bureau of Business Research and an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Dr. Thompson produces a twice-annual long-term economic outlook for the State of Nebraska as well as a monthly leading economic indicator report. He has conducted a variety of economic impact studies for Nebraska industries such as the agriculture, insurance, heritage tourism and horseracing and Nebraska attractions and events such as the Sandhill Cranes migration, the Omaha Zoo, Omaha Performing Arts, the Omaha Symphony and the Lincoln Children's Zoo. He also has conducted numerous studies for the Lincoln, Omaha, and State Chambers of Commerce as well as the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the Nebraska Department of Labor. Dr. Thompson's research has received support from the National Science Foundation, the U. S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. In his previous employment, Thompson served as the Director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Thompson received his Ph.D. in agricultural economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1992. His research fields include regional economics, economic forecasting, and state and local economic development. His research has been published in *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, the *Journal of Regional Science*, and the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*.



Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch



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|-------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| City Limits | Conservation Easement | Public Land (Addition) | 100 Year Floodplain |
| Priority Area | Public Land | Spring Creek Prairie (Addition) | Existing Trails |
| Destination Areas | Spring Creek Prairie | Under Contract | Future Trails |
| BNSF ROW | Conservation Easement (Addition) | Floodway | 3-Mile Jurisdiction |