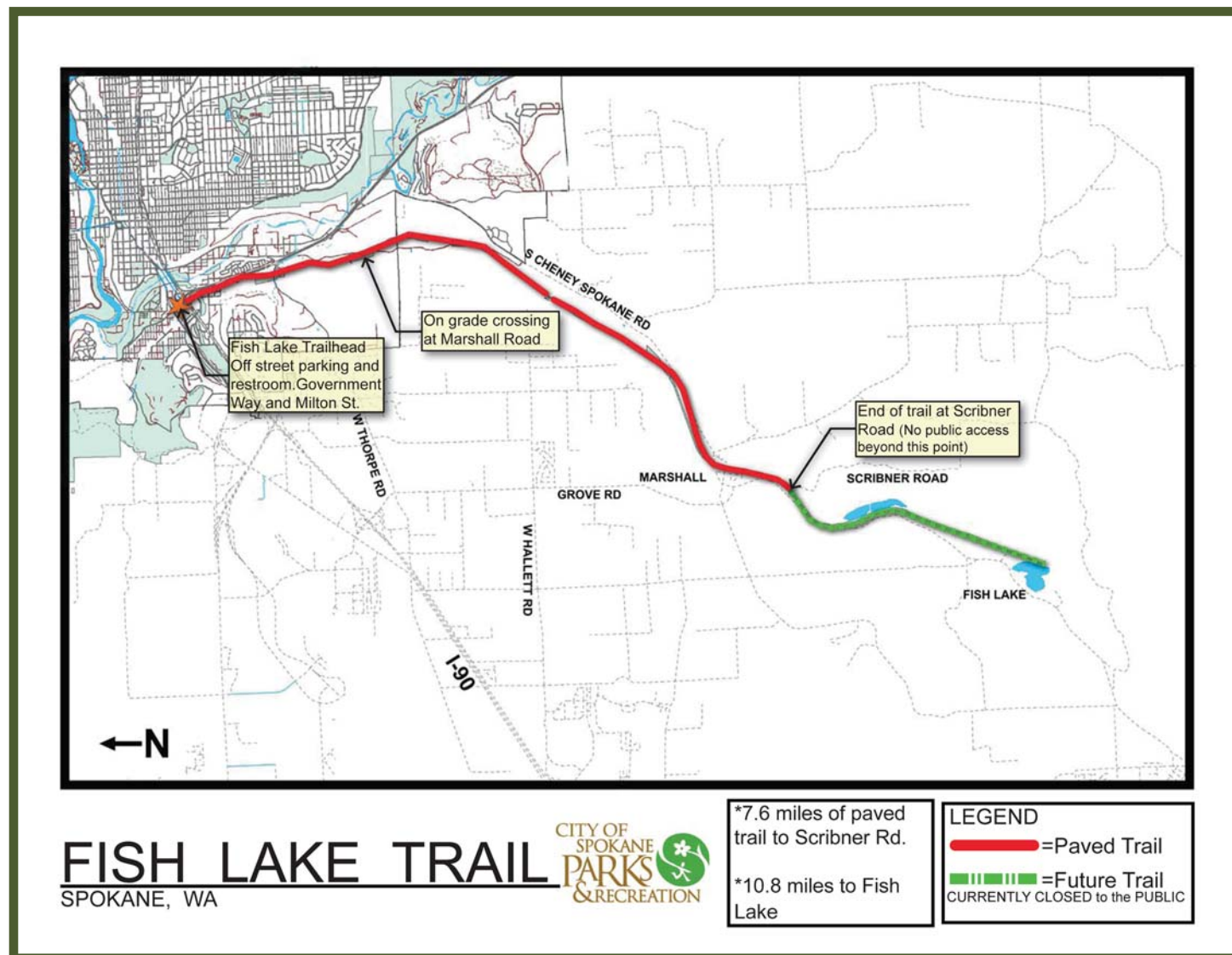


FUTURE CONNECTIONS

“The really cool part of this is the City of Spokane hopes to connect the Fish Lake Trail to Riverfront Park and the Centennial Trail within the next ten years, if not sooner,” said Bressler. Additionally, the City is looking at ways to connect the trail to High Bridge Park. While the City maintains and operates Fish Lake Trail now, it may be part of the State Park system in the future.

For a trail that was acquired out of chance, years of dedicated long term planning, coordination and advocacy have created a real treasure for our community. The route of the trail may change to accommodate an arterial adjacent to US 195, and it could take some time to come up with money to build the final phase, but with local advocates behind it, it’s sure to be one area amenity that not only your kids will be using, but also their kids many years into the future.



This piece was produced in cooperation with the Spokane Regional Transportation Council, the City of Spokane, and the Washington State Department of Transportation. A special thanks to Dan Schaffer for his contributions to this folio.

FISH LAKE TRAIL

“The Spokane area’s newest regional trail, the Fish Lake Trail, was born out of serendipity rather than planning,” City of Spokane Park Manager Taylor Bressler says. But twenty years later, a considerable amount of planning, deal-making, advocacy and plain good luck have gone into completing almost 80 percent of this scenic 10.2-mile trail from the City of Spokane to Cheney.



The story begins in 1990, when the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) approached the City of Spokane with a plan to sell a 50-foot wide abandoned rail line through Latah Valley.

PLANNING

“The City of Spokane’s purchase created a desire to develop an uninterrupted trail for all types of recreational uses,” says Leroy Eadie, City of Spokane Parks Director. The City of Spokane’s Parks Department initiated planning of the Fish Lake Trail. Early in the process a major hurdle arose; the City didn’t have enough money to purchase the UPRR right-of-way, even with a grant. Enter the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT):

- WSDOT was studying residential growth through the Latah Valley and on the US 195 corridor at the same time the City was attempting to acquire the abandoned UPRR rail line.
- Without other roadway options through the area, traffic volumes and safety issues increased on US 195.
- In 1991 a Route Development Plan for US 195 conducted by WSDOT showed the potential for a city arterial on the former UPRR right-of-way from I-90 to Thorpe Road; the same right-of-way that the City was looking at for a trail.

“SRTC saw an opportunity to coordinate a deal that would assure the community got a trail and balanced multi-modal corridor,” said Glenn Miles, Transportation Manager for SRTC.

DEAL MAKING

With WSDOT's need to alleviate safety issues on US 195 and the City's interest in building a trail, the City proposed sharing the UPRR alignment. In 1991 an agreement between WSDOT and the City of Spokane was signed. It specified that a 1.22-mile portion of the former railroad corridor be used for a separated recreational trail, as well as a city arterial. With the deal signed, the next step was to figure out how to fund construction of the trail. Enter local trail advocates.

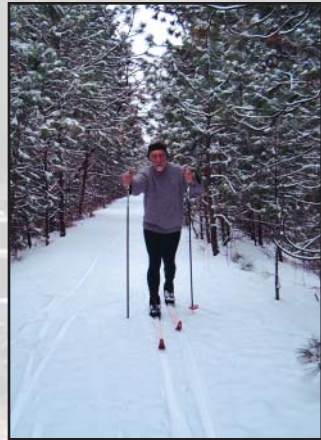
ADVOCATES



Dan Schaffer is a Spokane doctor who advocates for bicycling and trails. Schaffer has been involved with the Fish Lake Trail since the beginning. The first time he rode the trail, it was a mess of broken ground left over from the railroad days.

"It was so rough that I rode a mile or two and gave up," Schaffer says. He didn't give up on the trail altogether though, and began his own development efforts. When

a giant boulder blocked the trail in the early days, Schaffer asked a bulldozer driver working nearby to move it.



"I got the City Parks and Recreation Department to pay the bulldozer operator \$100 to do it," he says. And when another trail section was covered with ballast, Schaffer used his land cruiser with a plow on the front to clear the rubble. Soon Schaffer started organizing group trail cleanups and joined retailer REI on work parties each spring.

Schaffer and fellow advocates helped raise awareness of the trail to local, state, and federal lawmakers. In 1997, \$350,000 in State Transportation Program Enhancement funds were awarded to pave the first section from Scribner Road to View Acres Lane.

Before that though, in 1995, the City of Cheney began discussions with Washington State Parks to pave a trail from Cheney Spangle Road to Fish Lake. State Parks and SRTC teamed up to receive Federal Transportation Enhancement funds that provided a funding package that paved a 3.5 mile trail, connecting the Columbia Plateau Trail from Fish Lake Park to Cheney Spangle Road.

Today the trail is heavily used. It provides beautiful scenery with an essence of history. This move expanded the potential length of the trail system and will eventually connect the Columbia Plateau Trail to the Fish Lake Trail.

Twelve years passed. Then more good fortune entered the scene.

GOOD FORTUNE

In 2009, as part of President Obama's Stimulus Plan, money was allocated to SRTC that was required to be spent on non-motorized transportation projects. Using \$778,000 in stimulus money and almost \$1 million in state money, the City paved a 4.4 mile portion of trail, including the part within the WSDOT agreement area.



"The new trail is getting popular. Neighbors tell me trail use has tripled since paving. There are some growing pains and education we need to do so trail users respect the surrounding private properties," said Park Manager Bressler.

The Fish Lake Trail now starts at Government Way near I-90 and ends at Scribner Road.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Railroad Bridges

- The remaining 2.5 miles of the trail will cross active railroad tracks and connect to Fish Lake Park and Cheney's trail. A safe way to get people across the tracks is needed. Most likely bridges will be the safest solution, although expensive at a cost of approximately \$6 million.
- Discussion between the railroads and the City is underway regarding railroad bridges, but didn't appear to be moving as fast as design engineers would like.

A New Road

- As agreed to by the City of Spokane and WSDOT in 1991, and re-confirmed in 2009, a new city arterial will be built west of US 195 from Cheney Spokane Road to Lindeke Road in the future.
- The new roadway will require a 1+ mile portion of the Fish Lake Trail to be relocated adjacent to the new arterial near the northern trailhead between Lindeke Road and Marshall Road.
- The new arterial is intended to improve safety by accommodating local traffic, implementing access control, and improving city street connectivity. WSDOT also has additional plans to construct interchanges throughout the US 195 corridor to improve access on and off the highway.
- This means the look, feel, and operation of the trail in that area will change. That portion of trail will become a separated pathway adjacent to the roadway and bicycle lanes will be striped on the new arterial for bike commuters.
- WSDOT has requested Surface Transportation Program funds from SRTC to conduct preliminary engineering and design efforts. These funds will be used to address issues that will arise as plans are more fully developed.