

Friends of the Jackson County Trails

The Jackson County Trails Committee was formed in the late 1990s to develop a trail system throughout Jackson County. The committee is committed to improving the way of life in Jackson County with dreams of bringing families, friends and communities together.

Our mission statement is to provide economic opportunity for our county, improve the quality of life, and provide a safer means of outdoor activity, including connecting communities in and outside of Jackson County, connecting the Jackson County Parks and the Minnesota State Parks when making plans.

The purpose of the Friends of the Jackson County Trails is to act as an advisory committee to promote an active partnership among landowners, schools, citizens and communities in planning Jackson County Trails.



Jackson Trail Committee Members

- Joann Asa: President
- Lynne Anderson: Treasurer
- Luke Ewald: Secretary
- Jeff Johnson
- Dave DeJong
- Tim Stahl
- Jeremy Bartosh
- Sam Espy
- Matt Skaret
- Phil Nasby
- Phil Markman
- Gordy Willett
- Josh Schuetz
- Mary Anne Finstad

- Craig Rubis
- Shawn Haken
- Steve Handevidt
- Heidi Turner
- Kirk Dunlavey
- Paul Meium
- Wilma Pell
- Davin Amara
- Alisha Flemming
- Rosemary Schultz
- Roger Pohlman
- Loren Matasovsky
- Jackson Chamber of Commerce
- Jackson County Central School District



We participated in the Park/Trail Council of MN 2021 Scavenger Hunt; Kilen Woods is located about 12 miles north of Jackson.



July was National Parks and Recreation Month; this was the first time we participated in this event.

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Activity Highlights.



Sayles Drive Trail, identified as a Safe Routes to School Trail. This trail was developed with the rebuilding of North Highway. It benefits seniors living at Good Samaritan Society and students going to JCC HS or Riverside Elementary.

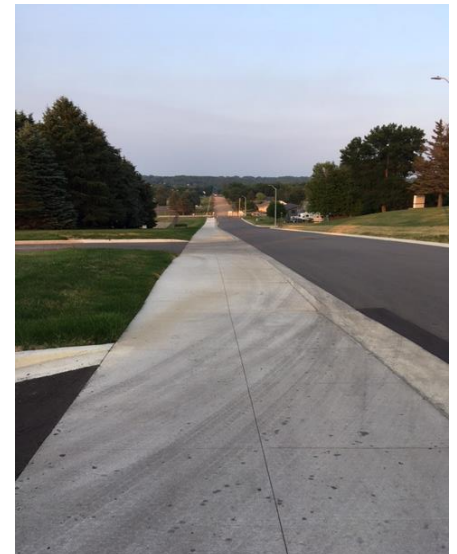


Belmont County Park Off-Road Trail/Single-Track; will be fully completed summer 2022.

Trail Projects: 2021/2022

During 2021, we completed a few trail projects, and also put our heads together to brainstorm a few ideas for the future!

- Sayles Drive Trail- completed summer 2021.
- North Highway- sidewalk leading to Riverside Elementary and JCC High School was replaced as part of the Sayles Drive Trail connection.
- Sunrise Trail Connection- we assisted Jackson County Engineering to receive [TAP Grant](#) funding to connect Nelson Creek Trail to Sunrise Estate Townhomes; this trail project will create safe passage for youth living at Sunrise Estates to get to JCC Schools.
- Belmont County Park Single-Track- this Mountain Bike Trail was funded through the [LCCMR grant](#). It will be completed in 2022.
- Thomas Hill Road-Patterson Park Connection- this is a sidewalk gap connection we are seeking Infrastructure Funding to complete.
- Leverage Funding: we assisting Jackson County with grant writing, leveraging \$430,032 for the year 2021.



North Highway Sidewalk, upgrades made to sidewalk leading to JCC Schools and completing the Sayles Drive "trail gap" that existed.

Bicycle Friendly Community Status

In 2018, the City of Jackson became a bronze-level [Bicycle Friendly Community](#) (BFC). In 2017, we started this journey by working with the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP), the City of Jackson, and several technical assistance providers including the SW Regional Development Commission, Park/Trail Council of MN, and Minn. Department of Health. In 2019 we were awarded the Bicycle Community Champion of the Year at the University of Saint Thomas in the Twin Cities.

Since 2018, many projects have taken place to help enhance our bicycle culture in Jackson. BFC applications are due every four years. We reapplied in September 2021 to provide updates on the progress we have made.

- [League Cycling Instructor \(LCI\) Training](#) in October 2018.
- [MN Cycling Association](#) Coaching Certification during winter 2019.
- Updated Jackson County Central Schools [Safe Routes to School Plan](#).
- Updated Jackson's Active Living Plan.
- Expanded community bicycle education by creating [active living videos](#) the center on bicycling.
- Developed a [bicycling and pedestrian count program](#) by using the MnDOT Manual Counting form and Infrared Eco-Counter.
- Expanding the Jackson trail network with additional trail and bicycle infrastructure.
- Participating in community events offering free [bicycle helmets](#) and Dairy Queen coupons to youth caught wearing helmets.
- Exploring Rails to Trails project connecting railroad embankment from Jackson to Sherburn, MN.
- Building relationships with businesses and MnWest Technical College to work on Bicycle Friendly Business and University applications.
- Volunteering at Jackson's annual [Tri-For Health](#) sponsored by Sanford Health.
- Riding tandems in the Jackson Holiday Fest Parade.

On 12/1/2021, the City of Jackson was notified they were awarded a [Silver Bicycle Friendly Community](#) by League of American Bicyclists. Jackson is the first community in SW MN to be awarded this status. Many thanks to Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services- Public Health unit, the City of Jackson, Jackson County Engineering, Jackson County Sheriff Office & Lakefield Police Department, JCC Schools, SRDC, BikeMN, and other partners who worked with us in some way-shape-or-form to work with us to make our projects happen.



Youth bicycle rides in partnership with United Community Action Partners have been popular with youth.



Bicycles were provided by BikeMN for community workshops and audits; the benefit with doing a "Mobile Bike Audit" gives an idea on what non-infrastructure and infrastructure is missing in Jackson.



Jackson rolled out a free bike share; to check out a bicycle, riders use the Movatic App on their Smartphone.



Community Trail Art has become more popular over the past few years; this art was sketched on Nelson Creek Trail.

Annual Trail Committee Activities

We participated in several activities in Jackson County over the year.

Bikeable Community Workshop (BCW):

- In June 2021, Jackson was one of three cities to host this workshop hosted by BikeMN. Several [goals](#) were developed to work on over the next few years.

Trail Walking Signs:

- We created new walking route signs that specify how far it is from one location to the next; our approach was themed after "[Walk Your City](#)"

Future Trail Signs:

- We are in the process of developing trail route signs that will include history when the trail was built, how many miles each trail segment is, etc., etc. to be completed by spring 2022.

Bike Events:

- [Bike to Work Day](#)- hosted event at the REST Stop in downtown Jackson. .
- Jackson National Days- served root beer floats, provided trail resources.
- Trunk O' Treat- 400 youth attended.

Park/Trail Council State Park Scavenger Month:

- Our featured State Park was [Kilen Woods](#).

Trail Moments:

- Check out the [Trail Moments](#) Survey [responses](#).

National Parks/Recreation Month:

- COVID19 has brought millions of Americans outdoors; in July 2021, the City of Jackson proclaimed July 2021 as [Park and Recreation Month](#).

Bicycle Incentive Program:

- In partnership with the City of Jackson, we will be carrying out adopting a [Bicycle Benefits program](#) for businesses in Jackson; this will begin 12/2021 and end 1/2023..

Annual Trail Counting Data

Local public health and Jackson County Parks/Recreation assist with conducting trail counting. Our trail counting consists of Manual Trail Counting and Infrared Trail Counting. Each form of counting has its benefits. For example, the Manual Counting allows us to determine type of activity (i.e. walking, biking, running, walking a dog, etc.) and Infrared Counting allows us not worry about relying on using volunteers as the counter picks up movement 24/7.

We complete counts primarily along the Jackson trail network, however we also have completed counts in County Parks.

Manual Counts:

- Bicyclists: 208
- Pedestrians: 870
- Total: 1,078

Infrared Counts:

- Sunset Loop Trail: 468 (5/29-6/10/2021).
- Loon Lake Trail/Campground: 424 (5/13-5/27/2021).
- Des Moines River Trail/Ashley Park: 366 (10/9-10/27/2021).
- Total: 1,258



MnDOT Infrared Trail Counter along the Sunset Loop Trail in Jackson, MN.



MnDOT Infrared Trail Counter along the Loon Lake Trail in Jackson County, MN.



Trunk O' Treat event hosted by Jackson Women of Today.



Bicycle Community Workshop (BCW) event hosted by BikeMN.

Want to join the Friends of the Jackson County Trails Committee? Contact Luke Ewald, Trail Committee Secretary at luke.ewald@dvhhs.org or 612-597-0433

Donations are welcomed to help continue expanding the trail system, maintenance, and other active living amenities in Jackson County! Please contact Lynne Anderson at 507-330-1315

Trail Committee Meetings:

Meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month online and at Jackson City Hall or Jackson County Public Works.

All meetings are open to the public.

Time: 8am-9am



Check Us Out Online!

Visit us on Facebook! "[Friends of the Jackson County Trails](#)"

Visit our Website! "[Friends of the Jackson County Trails](#)"

Our Technical Assistant Providers:

[DVHHS-Nobles County Statewide Health Improvement Partnership \(SHIP\) Team](#)

[BikeMN](#)

[Parks and Trails Council of MN](#)

[MnSRTS Team](#)