

REGIONAL CONNECTIONS PLAN



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REGIONAL CONNECTIONS PLAN


The *Regional Connections Plan* identifies opportunities to connect our communities by creating a regional trail network. Multi-use paths and trails utilized for walking and biking have become increasingly popular. These facilities allow for people of all ages to have additional opportunities for recreation and transportation, leading to an improved quality of life.

The Flint Hills Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) worked with the cities, counties, community members, and stakeholders to identify an optimal trail network throughout our region. The identified trails and multi-use paths span over 72 miles.

OUR SYSTEM TODAY


Our region's trail system today primarily consists of either multi-use paths or trails within or along the periphery of our communities. As of 2020, our system consists of 17 miles of multi-use paths and 25.5 miles of trails. Many of the land or water assets we have in our region, like parks, lakes, and boat ramps, are only accessible by vehicle.

Multi-use Path



A wide sidewalk (at least 8 feet) that parallels a roadway and can accommodate bikes and pedestrians.

Trail



Similar to a multi-use path, but often following natural features such as rivers.

FIGURE 1: MULTI-USE PATH AND TRAIL CHARACTERISTICS

	Multi-use Path	Trails
Routes	Direct	Meandering
Alignment	Roads	Rivers & Roads
Use	Transportation & Recreation	Recreation & Transportation
Property	Public Right-of-Way	Private & Public Right-of-Way
Surface	Paved	Paved or Un-paved

FIGURE 2: REGIONAL ASSETS BY MODE USED TO ACCESS

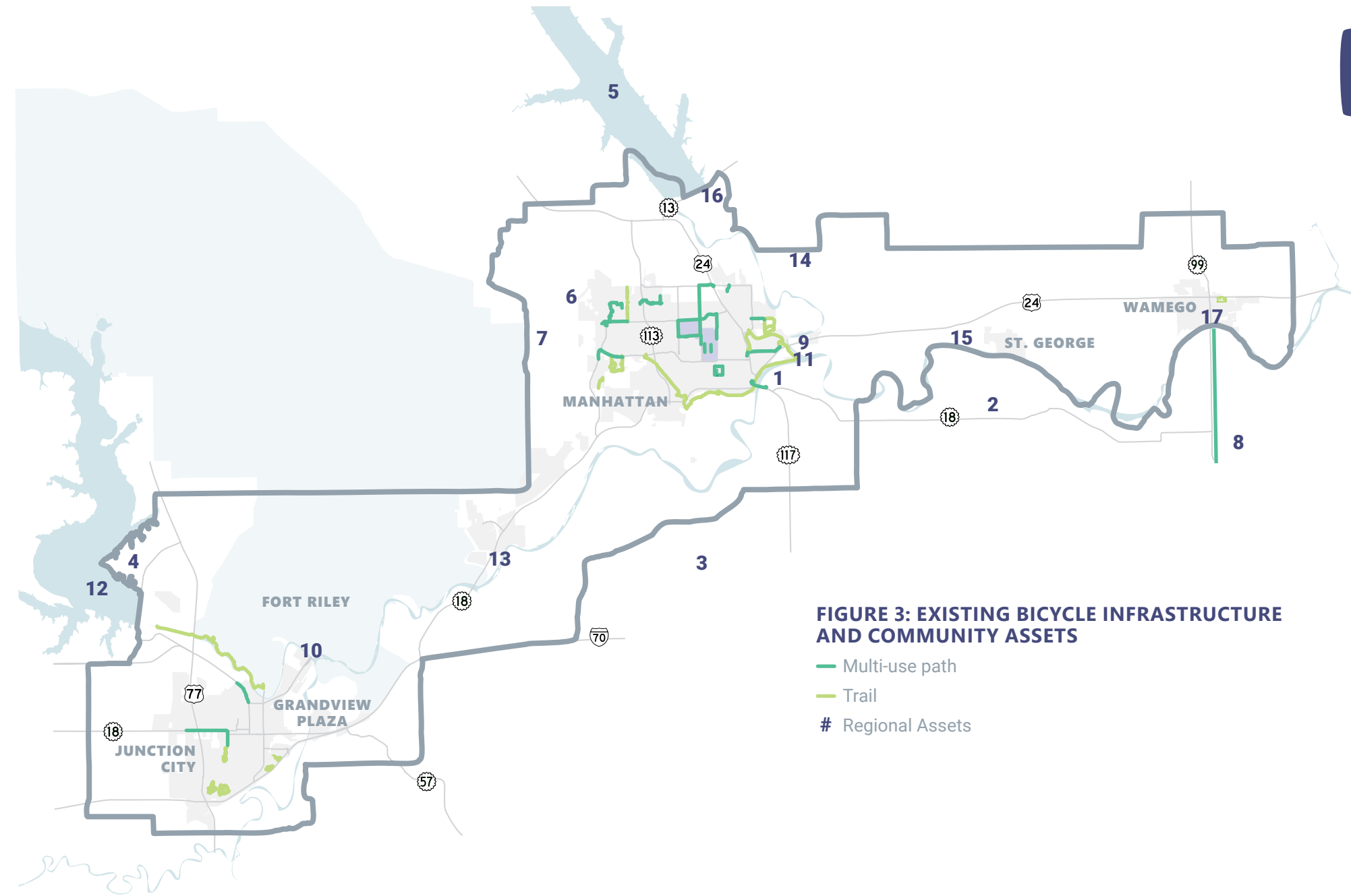
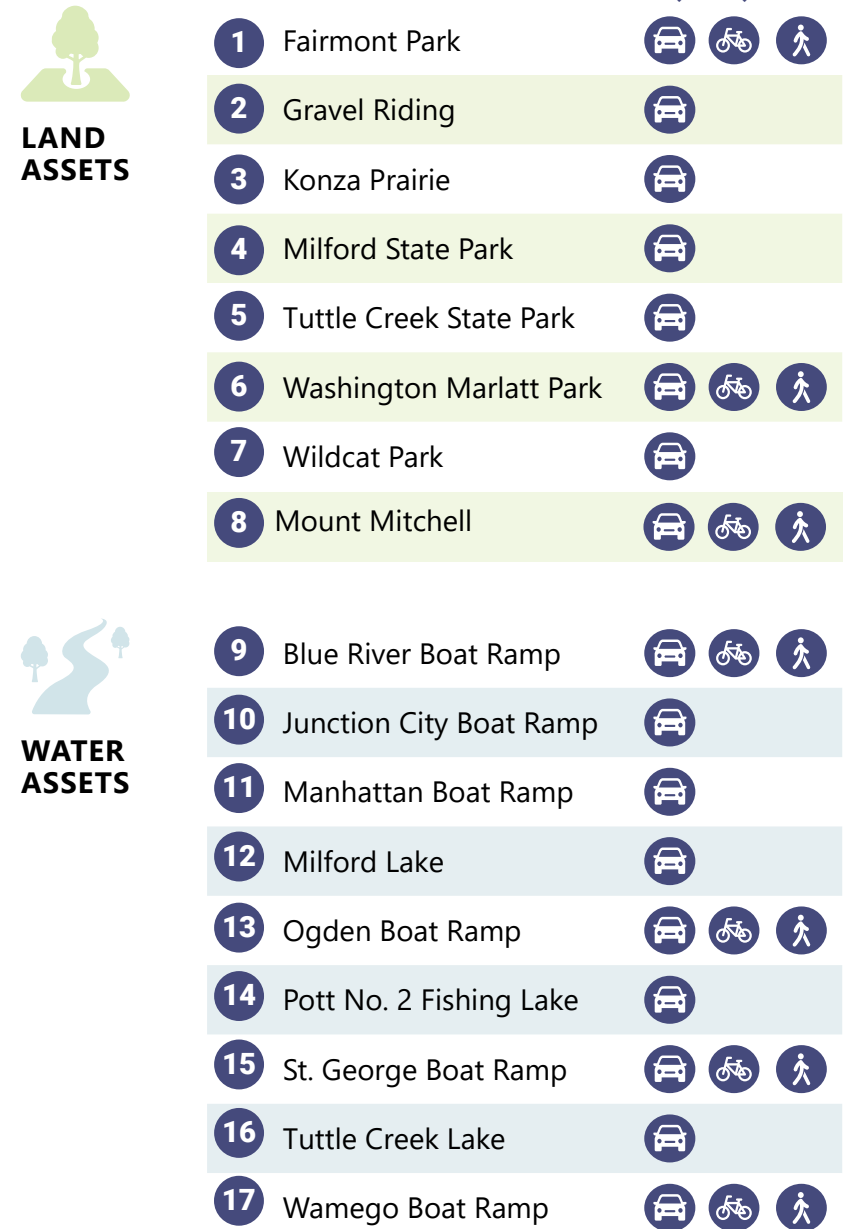


FIGURE 3: EXISTING BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY ASSETS

- Multi-use path
- Trail
- # Regional Assets

CREATING OUR OPTIMAL

Creating connections at the regional level can be achieved through either multi-use path or trails. Ideally, it would include a combination of both.

MULTI-USE PATHS

If a network were to capitalize on building multi-use paths along existing roadways, the network would look something like Figure 4. Multi-use paths typically work best in urban or suburban environments and serve as a direct connection between housing, employment, and community services.

FIGURE 4: JUNCTION CITY FUTURE NETWORK



TRAILS

Figure 5 shows trail opportunities. Trails work best where natural features provide enjoyable and low-stress routes. These are more meandering routes primarily serving as recreation facilities and connect fewer people to services.

FIGURE 5: JUNCTION CITY FUTURE NETWORK



URBAN CONNECTIONS

The urban connections play a role in achieving the regional trail network by safely moving people through our communities. The pathways and trails enter communities and merge with existing city infrastructure, creating a seamless network across the region. These existing urban networks can be seen in Figures 6, 7, & 8. For a closer look at the future urban bicycle and pedestrian system, reference the *Junction City Active Transportation Plan*, *Manhattan's Bicycle and Pedestrian Systems Plan*, and the *Wamego Sidewalk Master Plan*.

FIGURE 6: JUNCTION CITY FUTURE NETWORK

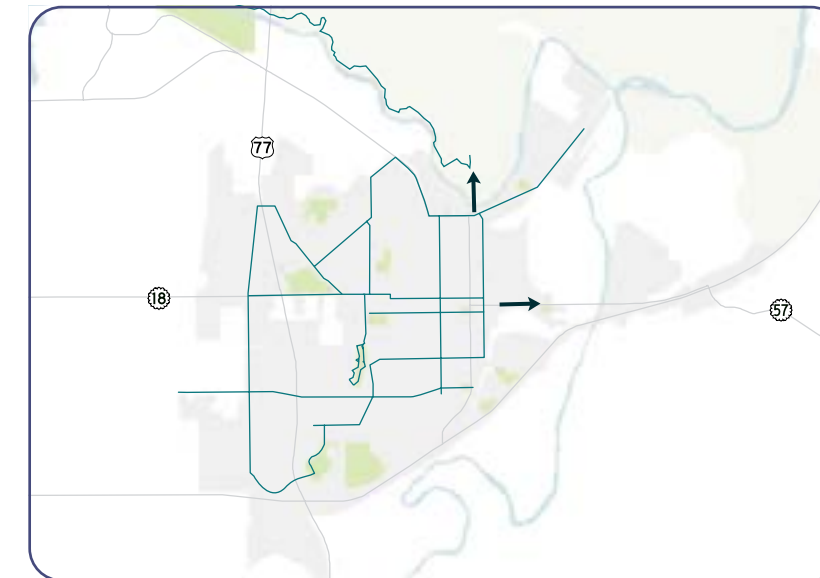


FIGURE 7: MANHATTAN FUTURE NETWORK

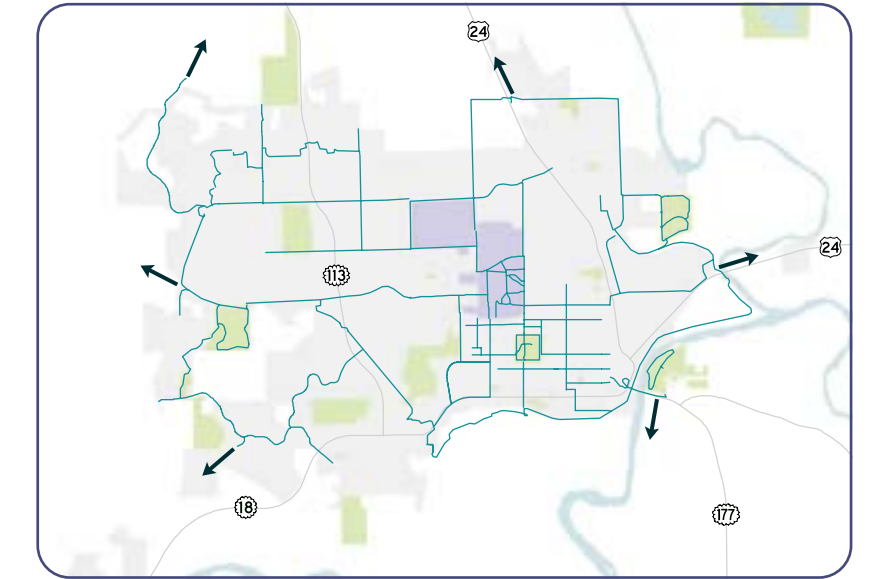
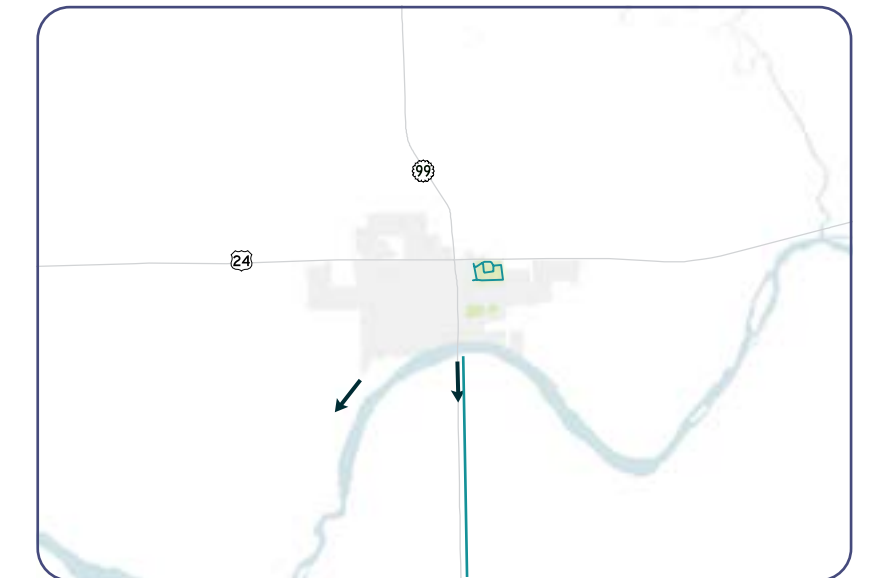


FIGURE 8: WAMEGO FUTURE NETWORK



OPTIMAL NETWORK

The optimal future network includes a combination of multi-use paths and trails, depending on where the facility is located and its main purpose. For example, a multi-use path along US-24 between Green Valley Road and Manhattan would serve both transportation and recreational needs. However, a trail between Manhattan and Wamego would likely be used for recreational purposes and be a less direct route. An optimal network would include both types of facilities, as seen in Figure 10.

FIGURE 9: RESIDENTS' PREFERRED CONNECTION TYPE

Data from MPO surveys at open houses and meetings

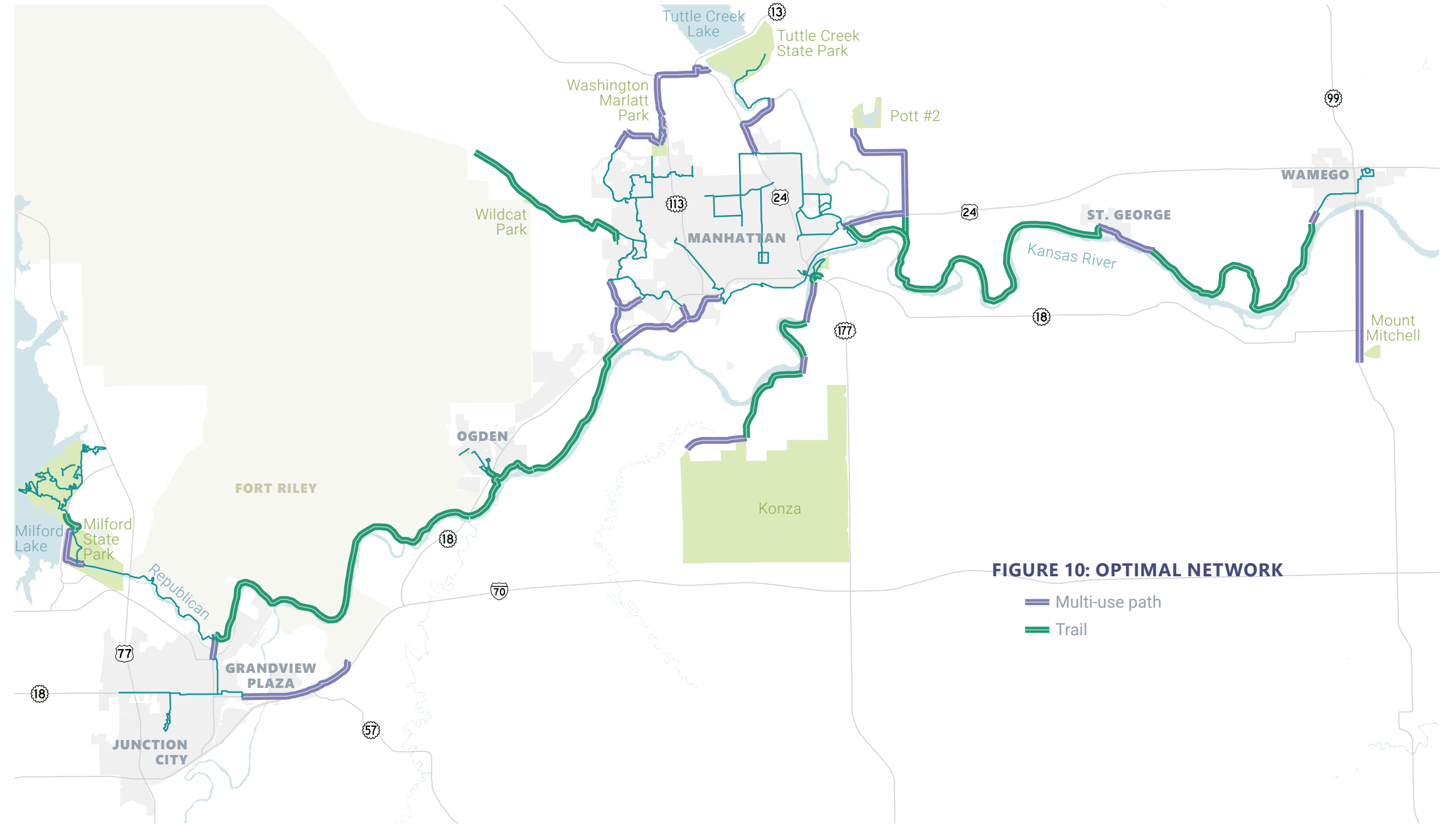
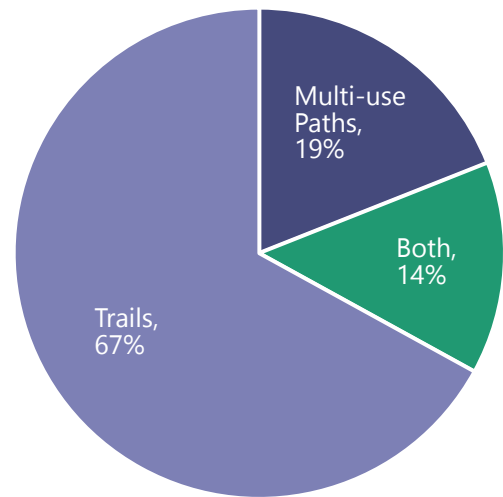


FIGURE 10: OPTIMAL NETWORK

— Multi-use path
— Trail

BRIDGE CONNECTIONS

While paralleling many segments of our region's rivers, regional paths will have to cross these rivers at certain locations. Of the six crossings identified in the Optimal Network, three have acceptable bridges. The three remaining crossings have no current options, and are detailed here.

BIG BLUE RIVER AT US-24

In the Spring of 2019, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) provided the Flint Hills MPO with requested guidance on crossing options over the Big Blue River. KDOT analyzed the three options highlighted in Figure X. Option 3, a separate facility, was found to be the most feasible and least expensive.

BIG BLUE RIVER AT BARNES ROAD

The existing bridge crossing the Big Blue River at Barnes Road cannot accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians due to the narrowness of the deck. As this bridge is in good condition and not likely to be replaced in the near future, a separate non-vehicular bridge located to the west of Barnes Road is the best option.

KANSAS RIVER AT K-18

The crossing of the Kansas River at K-18 is required due to the river flowing through Fort Riley's restricted zone. Analysis has not been performed by KDOT for this crossing. However, given the increased width of the river and high traffic speeds and volumes, a separate bike and walking bridge is likely the solution.

FIGURE 15: BIG BLUE RIVER AT US-24 CROSSING OPTIONS



	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	Opt. 3
Design	 Path on shoulder of existing bridge	 Path on new bridge extension	 Separate bike/ped only bridge
Issues	Unsafe: traffic speeds & volumes	Uncomfortable: vibration & traffic	
Cost	N/A	\$5.8 - \$6.7 million	\$3.8 million

BUILDING THE TRAIL NETWORK

The region trail network identified within this document includes a substantial amount of infrastructure, which will take many years to create and a large investment. The purpose of this document is to align our regional efforts and understand where and how we can one day build these connections. For example, when an opportunity arises to replace a bridge, if it is identified as a key crossing for the region trail network, the new bridge should take that into consideration, regardless of if the rest of the trail is built yet.

The *Regional Connection Plan* is a long-range document intended to help guide our decision today for a better a tomorrow.

