

Little Rock Southwest Trail Proposal

from the Arkansas River to Interstate Park

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Purpose

This report is intended to clarify where we would like to place the Southwest Trail (hereafter SW Trail) between the Arkansas River and the Interstate Park (Picture 1). One purpose is to communicate our ideas to Brandon D. Morris and Union Pacific to determine where there are conflicts with Union Pacific active tracks and to work with Mr. Morris and Union Pacific to resolve those conflicts. Another purpose is to determine property ownership along our proposed trail route to determine with whom we will have to work to obtain easements. Yet another purpose is to consider this section of the SW Trail at a finer scale than has been previously considered so that stakeholders have a better sense of the challenges and opportunities of installing this section of trail. This report is only a tool to communicate our initial ideas with Union Pacific, property owners, and other stakeholders; we are open to discussion and revision of proposed routes in this document.

Trail Benefits

Chapter Three of ALTA Planning's Southwest Trail Corridor & Economic Impact Study (https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8EDg_G8q_U2MGhiWGxmbFNoTjg/view) discusses several benefits to creating the SW Trail, including job creation for trail construction, increased property values along corridor (and thereby increased tax revenue for the City), increased tourism revenue, consumer utility, and increased health and decreased healthcare costs. These are benefits for construction of the entire trail from Little Rock to Hot Springs, however many of them apply to this SW Trail subsection as well.

This trail would be a valuable addition to Little Rock's landscape regardless of whether or not the entire trail to Hot Springs is completed. Our proposed trail would extend the reach of the Arkansas River Trail by creating a complimentary north-south trail, providing connectivity to the State Capitol, Central High School National Historic Site, the Arkansas State Fairgrounds, and Interstate Park. This trail would provide a low-stress means for tourists on foot or on bike to travel from the Clinton Library and downtown Little Rock to these important Arkansas landmarks and increase their exposure.

The trail would also be a valuable addition to our BikePed transportation network. It would allow residents to safely walk or bike from several neighborhoods (Capital View, Stiff Station, Wright Ave., Meadowbrook, Goodwill, M.L.K., Capitol Hill, and Pine to Woodrow) to downtown Little Rock. The trail would extend into some of Little Rock's poorer neighborhoods. A bicycle and pedestrian trail in these neighborhoods could provide a means of self-sufficiency for families unable to afford a vehicle or multiple vehicles. A bicycle and pedestrian trail would also provide greater safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. The League of American Bicyclists reports that the number of bicycle crashes and fatalities in the region are much higher than is typical for a Bike Friendly Silver city (http://bikeleague.org/sites/default/files/bfareportcards/BFC_Spring_2016_ReportCard_Little_Rock_AR.pdf; Metroplan BikePed crash and fatality report <http://metroplan.org/files/53/2015Ped-BikeCrashAnalysis.pdf>).

Orientation

The pictures of the trail route in this report were created through ArcGIS at a fine scale (1:1,000) in order to communicate our ideas for the route with as much fidelity as possible. The dark purple line in the map is the trail route given to us in an ArcGIS layer by ALTA Planning. The light purple line is our proposed changes to the ALTA Planning route. When a light purple line is included on the map, it replaces the accompanying dark purple line. It is important to note that the fine map scale and our reporting the distance between the trail and active track in number of feet may encourage the reader to overestimate the accuracy of the ALTA Planning trail route. We suspect ALTA Planning's dark purple trail route may have been intended to show the route with an accuracy of within five or ten feet of an optimal route. This would be a sufficient scale to show how ALTA Planning intends the trail to get around buildings, roads, and other obstacles, but not to be diagnostic when considering minimum safe distance from active track within a few feet (see also "Proximity to Active Track" below). The green polygons are approximate property ownerships. Because both the trail route and the green property boundaries are approximations, surveys would be required to determine whether or not the trail route would cross into different properties. The roads are included to spatially orient the viewer and to inform discussions of access points to the trail. This report presents the proposed trail route and connections to city streets in a series of pictures from the Arkansas River to Interstate Park.

Proximity to Active Track

Brandon Morris's and Union Pacific's chief concern may be the proximity of the proposed trail to active track. We understand this concern and because of it this report pays particular attention to approximate how close the trail would come to active tracks at different points of its route. Also because of this concern, we have altered ALTA Planning's proposed route over portions of the trail in order to create greater distance between the active track and the trail. The closest the trail now comes to active track is approximately 33 ft., but that is when the trail is on Wolfe St. (i.e. Wolfe St. is 33 ft. from active track). With that exception, the trail rarely comes within 50 feet of active track. It is important to note that all of the distances from active track are approximated distances from the center of the active track to the center of the trail. Closest edge to closest edge would therefore be a slightly smaller distance, but more importantly, ALTA Planning's route was not plotted to a scale to diagnostically evaluate these proximities to a minimum distance criterion (see also "Orientation" above). The utility of the distance between active track and trail reported here is: 1) to give the reader some sense of scale and 2) to identify points at which the proposed trail is closest to active tracks in order to consider how we might maximize safety at these locations.

Connectivity

We intend this trail to be useful as a transportation corridor as well as a recreational trail. To maximize its utility for BikePed transportation, we have identified locations at which the trail can be accessed by bicyclists and pedestrians. Frequent access points are important to create a bicycle and pedestrian corridor that can rival the efficiency of vehicular travel for commuting. These access points are especially important when the trail intersects a route on our Master Bike Plan (Picture 2). This report will identify proposed access points and from which side of the bridge the trail could be accessed (Picture 2). Some access points would be easy and inexpensive to construct while others would take more effort (Picture 2). Not all access points would have to be constructed immediately.

Route

The SW Trail would start at the Arkansas River (Picture 3), intersecting the Arkansas River Trail and a BikePed bridge over the Union Pacific tracks (Picture 4). The BikePed bridge has not yet been constructed, but we estimate it to be complete in Spring 2017. The details of how the SW Trail and the Arkansas River Trail would join are not yet determined. The Medical Mile (Picture 5) was built along the river and ends at a gate close to the Union Pacific tracks (Picture 6). The City is attempting to obtain funding to reinforce the banks of the river and elevate Medical Mile to meet the new BikePed bridge (see also <https://www.facebook.com/BikePedLittleRock/posts/1145039815536916>). However, even without those funds, we could open the Medical Mile and connect it to the SW Trail as shown in Picture 3. If we are eventually able to reinforce and elevate the Medical Mile, we would like to do so while keeping an at-grade trail from the Medical Mile to the SW Trail.

Without the funds to elevate the Medical Mile, the Arkansas River Trail will meet the BikePed bridge via North St. just north of LaHarpe Blvd. (Picture 7). If we are able to eventually elevate the Medical Mile, we should keep BikePed access from North St. and LaHarpe Blvd. to provide another option for connectivity, particularly for commuters coming from west of State St. (Picture 7).

After connecting with the Arkansas River Trail and the BikePed bridge, the trail would go under LaHarpe Blvd. (Picture 3) running approximately 46 ft. east of active Union Pacific tracks (Picture 8). In order to avoid conflicts with the Amtrak Station, the trail would go onto city streets (N. Victory St. and W. Markham) and go through the parking lot of the Amtrak Station (Picture 9). The trail would then run north of 2nd Street (Picture 10) and either use Wolfe St. or run immediately to the west of Wolfe St. (Picture 11). The trail is only 33 ft. from active track at its closest point in Picture 11, but that is when the trail is ON Wolfe St. This would also be an access point to the SW Trail from city streets, close to the Master Bike Plan route on 3rd St. After leaving Wolfe St., the trail will run through or immediately west of Wolfe St. (Picture 12). After the parking lot, the trail could run along the shrub line between the tracks and a grassy slope owned by the State of Arkansas (Picture 12). If instead we run the trail on the grassy slope, the grade will be challenging to recreational riders (Picture 13).

We would like to explore the possibility of running the trail under the Union Pacific bridge over Rose Creek to connect to the Rose Creek Trail on the north side of the Union Pacific tracks (Picture 14). The trail would continue approximately 81 feet from active tracks (Picture 15) and use the abandoned Union Pacific bridge over 7th St. (Picture 16). The Union Pacific bridge has stairs from 7th Street that could be used for pedestrians to access the SW Trail (Picture 17). A parking lot could be constructed to the northeast of the Union Pacific bridge over 7th Street to provide park and ride opportunities for the SW Trail and bicycle access from 7th Street without having to carry the bike (Picture 18). The State of Arkansas owns most or all of the land needed for this parking lot and bicycle access to the SW Trail (Picture 19).

The SW Trail would then pass under I-630 (Picture 20). Access points from the street to the SW Trail could be easily constructed at Maryland Ave. (Pictures 20-21) and 10th Street (Pictures 22-25). A berm separates the abandoned line from the active tracks from just south of 10th Street to just north of 15th Street (Pictures 22-30). The abandoned track runs below street level in this section, complicating creating access points to the trail from the street. However the berm also creates a safe barrier between active tracks and the proposed BikePed trail. The alteration to ALTA Planning's route (light

purple in Pictures 28-29) is to more accurately follow the abandoned line than to create additional space between active track and the proposed trail. The proposed trail would be in a safe and defined valley created by the abandoned route.

Even though the berm makes trail access challenging from 11th St. to Daisy Bates (14th St.), we must create connections between SW Trail and 12th St. and Daisy Bates because these are existing and proposed bicycle routes (Picture 2). For northbound access from 12th St., we could route BikePed users north on S. Thayer St. and west on W. 10th St. to access the trail at 10th St. with sharrows and wayfinding signs (Picture 27). For southbound access from 12th St., we could route BikePed users south on Jones St. and west on W. 15th St. to access the trail at 15th St. (Picture 27). From Daisy Bates, we could route BikePed SW Trail users south on Jones St. and west on W. 15th St. to access the trail at 15th St. regardless of whether the user intends to travel north or south on the SW Trail (Picture 30). Creating an access points at W. 15th St. (Picture 31) and 16th St. (Pictures 32-34) should be inexpensive and provide access to Daisy Bates and Central High School.

We alter ALTA Planning's proposed route to take the SW Trail onto 18th St. and Jones St. to avoid a point at which the ALTA Planning route would run the trail through a 25 ft. section between active tracks and a building (Pictures 35-37). Creating access from Wright Ave. (Picture 37) is particularly important because this street is on the Master Bike Plan to receive bike lanes (Picture 2). It may be possible to create access at Wright Ave. (Picture 38), but connectivity from Wright Ave. could also be achieved by creating connections at W. 18th St. (Picture 35 and 39) and Thayer St. (Pictures 39, and 41-42).

From here, the trail begins to intersect the Arkansas State Fairgrounds (Pictures 43-53). We move ALTA Planning's proposed route slightly east to increase the distance from the trail to active track, but we'll have to confirm that the SW Trail can pass under W. Roosevelt Ave. where we've proposed (Pictures 44 and 46). We could connect Roosevelt Ave. using existing entrances to the fairgrounds on either side of Roosevelt (i.e. Rice St.) and existing facilities in the fairgrounds as much as possible (Picture 45). We have not yet determined to what degree connectivity from the fairground to the trail within the fairgrounds complex is possible or desirable given that fairground access may need to be restricted at times (Pictures 43-53). We could add value to the Arkansas State Fairgrounds space by using it as a park and ride location when the fairgrounds are not in use.

Creating a connection at the southern end of S. Battery St. should be inexpensive and useful given potential challenges to creating access within the fairgrounds (Picture 53). Creating an access point at the end of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. should also be inexpensive and important for the M.L.K. neighborhood (Picture 56). Continuing the trail to Interstate Park Dr. will create access from the southern side of the tracks, creating access to Brookwood, Geyer Springs, Wakefield, Sweet Home, and College Station as well as proposed BikePed trails in Fourche Creek natural area (Picture 58).

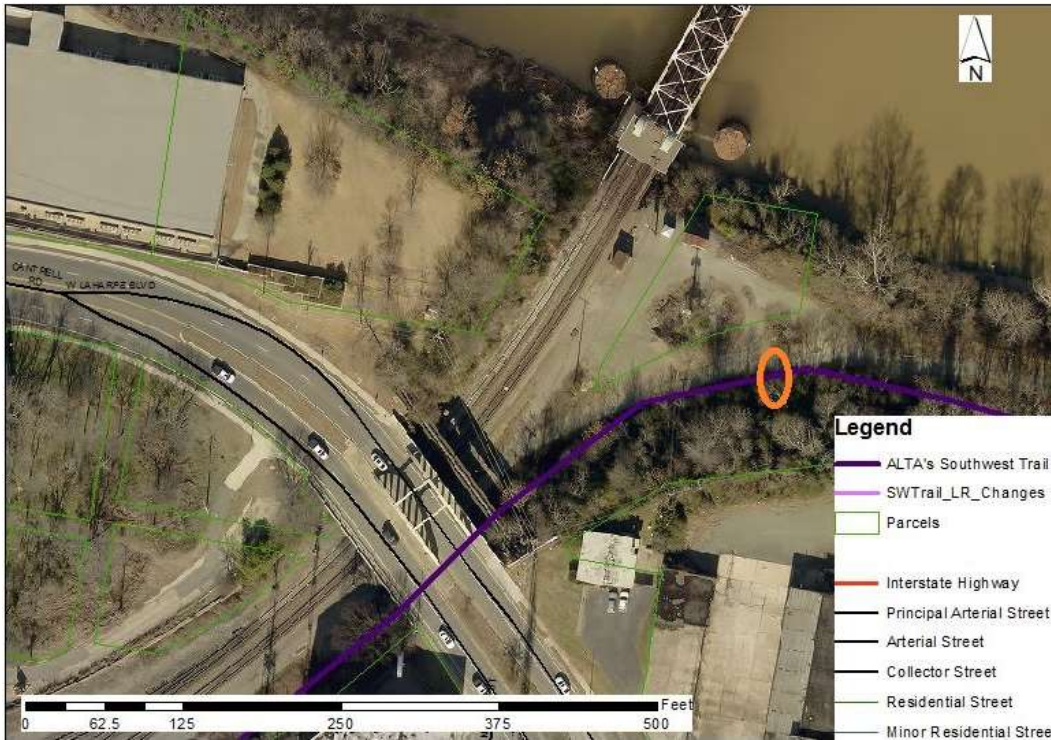


Picture 1. Overview of the SW Trail from the Arkansas River to the Interstate Park as reported in Figure 12 of ALTA Planning's Southwest Trail Corridor & Economic Impact Study



Picture 2. SW Trail (approximately the green dashed line running north-south) on Little Rock's Master Bike Plan. An "E" represents street-to-trail access from the east and a "W" represents street-to-trail access from the west. A green letter represents an access point easily created and a red letter indicates an access point that may be more difficult to create (i.e. requiring earthworks or easements).

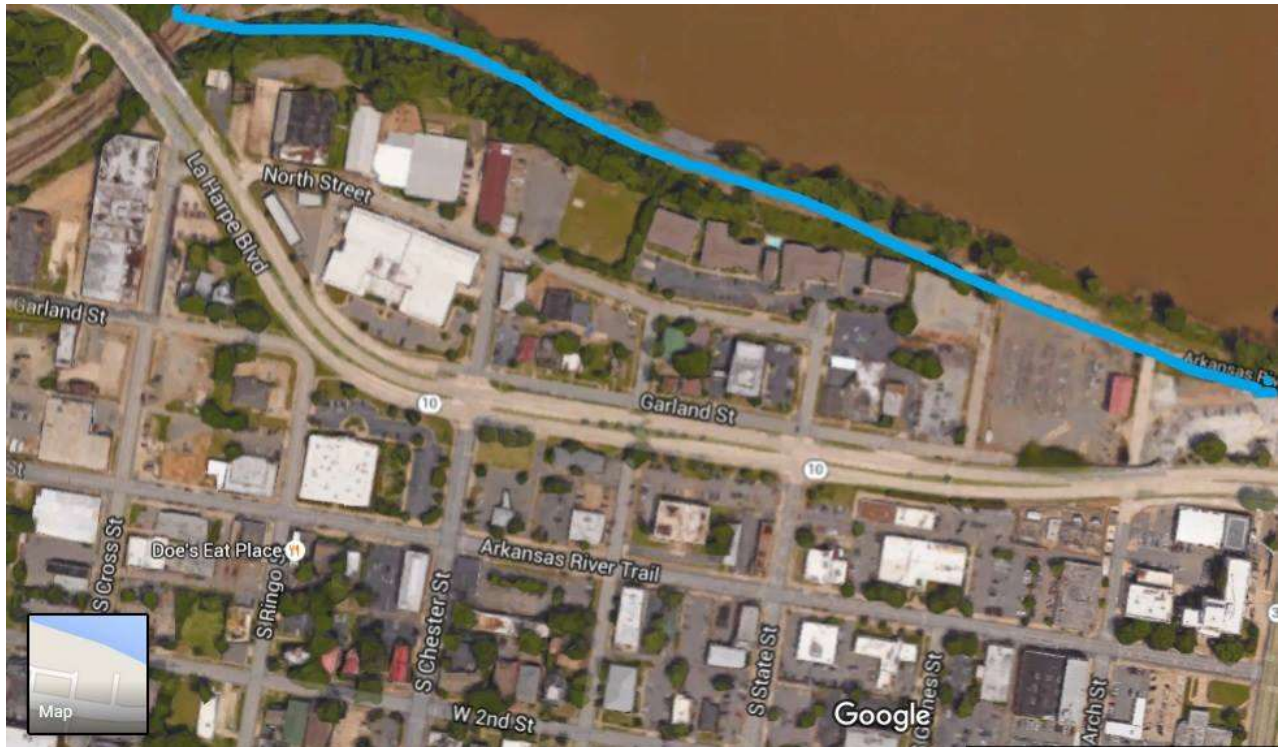
Southwest Trail from River to Fairgrounds



Picture 3. SW Trail Origin. The trail is approximately 49 ft. from active track at its closest point here.



Picture 4. The BikePed bridge over the Union Pacific tracks. As of now, the Arkansas River Trail route shown here (in light blue) is inaccurate on both the east and west sides of the bridge.



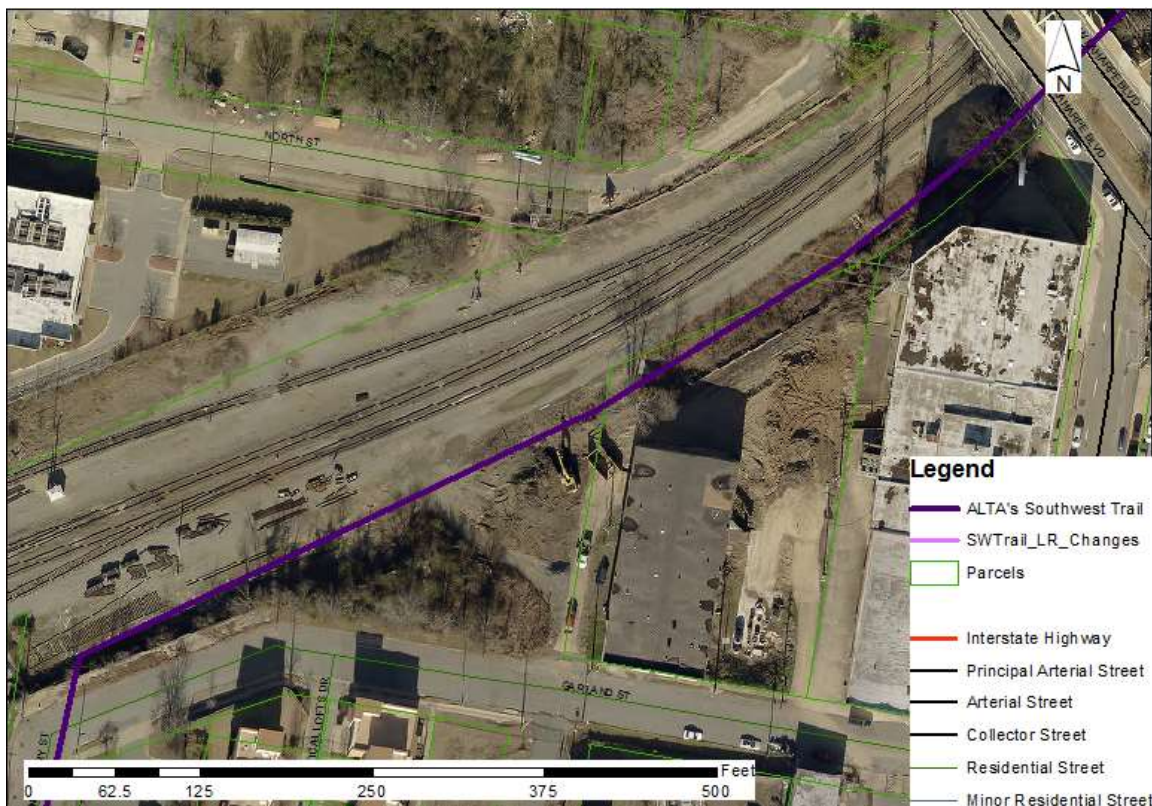
Picture 5. The western-most portion of the Medical Mile shown in this picture is seldom used because it currently has no connectivity (Picture 6). Part of the trail is also eroding into the river. According to the ALTA Planning report, this area is also considered part of the SW Trail.



Picture 6. The Medical Mile, which runs along the Arkansas River, terminates at a gate close to the Union Pacific tracks.



Picture 7. Due to a lack of funding to connect the Medical Mile to the BikePed bridge, the Arkansas River Trail will run on city streets either via the yellow or blue path here. If the Medical Mile is elevated to meet the BikePed bridge, we should keep connectivity from North St. and LaHarpe Blvd.



Picture 8. SW Trail Route from LaHarpe to the train station. The proposed trail may cross within the property of SMH LLC. The trail is approximately 46 ft. from active track at its closest point here.



Picture 9. The trail would go onto N. Victory St., W. Markham St., then take a route through the parking lot to circumvent the Amtrak train station. The route crosses into a US Depot LLC parcel. This would also be an access point to the SW Trail from city streets.



Picture 10. The trail would run north of 2nd St. crossing into a City of Little Rock parcel.



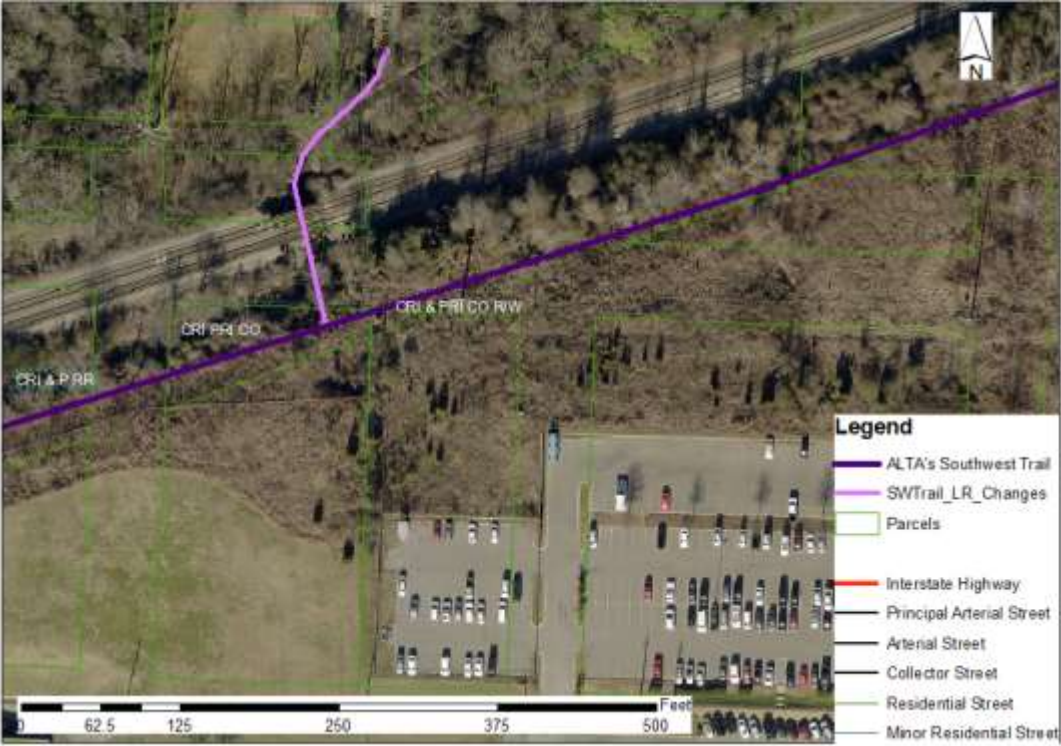
Picture 11. The trail would run on or immediately west of Wolfe St. The trail is only 33 ft. from active track at its closest point here, but that is when the trail is ON Wolfe St. This would also be an access point to the SW Trail from city streets, close to 3rd St. A wayfinding sign on 3rd St. could instruct bicyclists and pedestrians to turn onto Bishop St. to access the SW Trail.



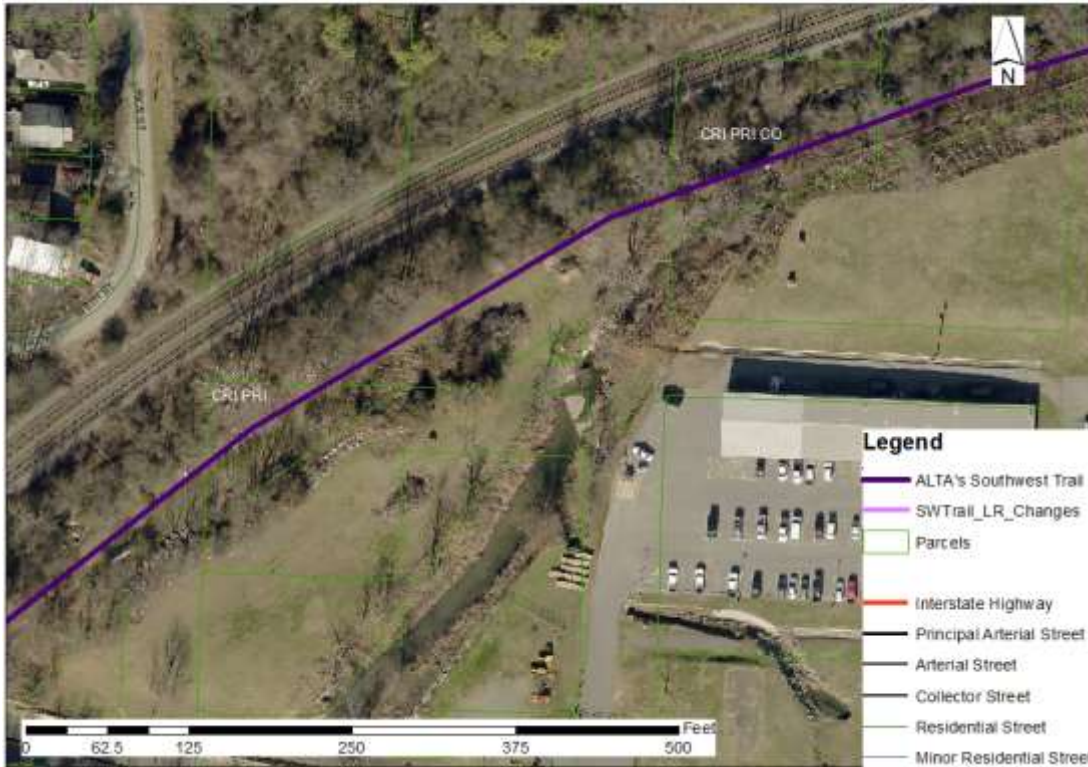
Picture 12. The trail would ideally run immediately to the west of the parking lot. All parcels that the proposed trail runs through are owned by the State of Arkansas. The trail is approximately 52 ft. from active track at its closest point here, but this is when the trail is in the parking lot. This is the edge of the State of Arkansas Capital Complex; access to the trail could be created from the Wolfe St. parking lot.



Picture 13. This is a picture of the same portion of the SW Trail route shown in the bottom left of Picture 12. Without moving earth, the SW Trail grade would get much more challenging the farther the trail is routed from the tracks. ALTA’s proposed trail through the shrub line may be a good compromise between safe distance from the tracks and minimizing a challenging trail grade for recreational users.



Picture 14. Light purple represents a possible connection under the tracks to the Rose Creek Trail. Not counting the proposed trail under the UP tracks, the trail is approximately 73 feet from the tracks at its closest point here.



Picture 15. The trail would continue to run south of the UP tracks. The trail is about 81 feet from the UP track at its closest point here.



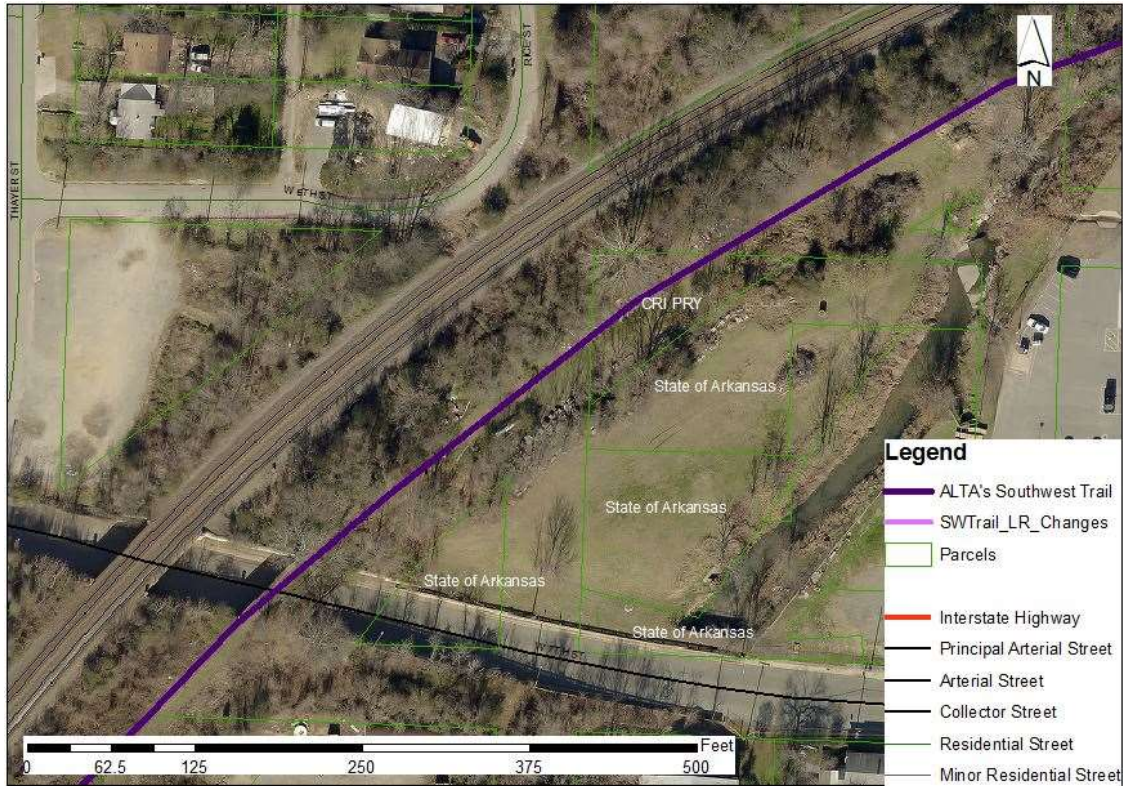
Picture 16. The trail would use the abandoned UP bridge over 7th St. The trail is 68 ft. from active track at its closest point here.



Picture 17. Stairways from 7th Street to the abandoned bridge could provide pedestrian access to the SW Trail.



Picture 18. A parking lot could be constructed to the northeast of the abandoned UP bridge providing bicycle access from 7th Street as well as park and walk/ride access. Yellow lines indicate two-way pedestrian traffic patterns and red lines indicate two-way bicycle traffic patterns.



Picture 19. The State of Arkansas owns most of the land where the 7th Street Park and Ride lot could go.



Picture 20. Continued from Picture 16. The trail is approximately 83 ft. from active track at its closest point here.



Picture 21. An access point could be created at Maryland Ave. While this area appears to be being used by Tipton & Hurst, it is owned by the City of Little Rock.



Picture 22. A berm between the active tracks and abandoned tracks starts here and ends around 15th St. The trail is approximately 82 ft. from active track at its closest point here.



Picture 23. An access point to the SW Trail could be constructed at 10th and Thayer.



Picture 24. The SW Trail would be at the same elevation as 10th and Thayer, so no earthworks would be required to create a connection here. BACA President Mason Ellis pictured here.



Picture 25. The SW Trail route between 10th and 12th Streets could be a beautiful part of the trail. Mason Ellis pictured here.



Picture 26. The trail is approximately 90 ft. from active track at its closet point here and a berm separates active and abandoned tracks. 12th St. currently has bicycle lanes.



Picture 27. While creating BikePed access would be difficult at 12th St., sharrows and wayfinding signs could direct northbound users to 10th St. trail access via the red arrow and southbound users to 15th St. trail access via the yellow arrow.



Picture 28. We've altered ALTA's proposed trail to be farther from active tracks and better follow the abandoned line. The trail is approximately 84 ft. from active track at its closest point here and a berm separates active and abandoned tracks.



Picture 29. We've altered ALTA's proposed trail to better follow the abandoned line. The trail is approximately 90 ft. from active track at its closest point here. The berm separating the active and abandoned tracks ends around 15th St. Daisy Bates is a proposed bike route on the Master Bike Plan.



Picture 30. SW Trail access from 14th St. (a proposed bike route) could be achieved by sharrows and wayfinding signs to 15th St. access for users wanting to travel north or south on the SW Trail.



Picture 31. Creating access from 15th Street appears to be straightforward. No earthworks or easements would be required. Considering the required change in elevation and the development close to the street on both sides of the street, access at Daisy Bates would be challenging.



Picture 32. The active tracks split here. The trail is approximately 102 ft. from active tracks at the closest point here.



Picture 33. 16th St. terminates at the Union Pacific tracks (see also Picture 31). We could create an access point from 16th Street without earthworks. Pictured is Mayor Mark Stodola.



Picture 34. Another beautiful stretch between 16th and 18th Streets. Note the old railroad ties in the foreground. Pictured Mayor Mark Stodola.



Picture 35. We change ALTA's plan to go onto 18th St. and then Jones St. because their plan comes too close to active tracks in the next picture. The trail is approximately 52 ft. from active tracks at its closest point here. 18th St. would be an access point.



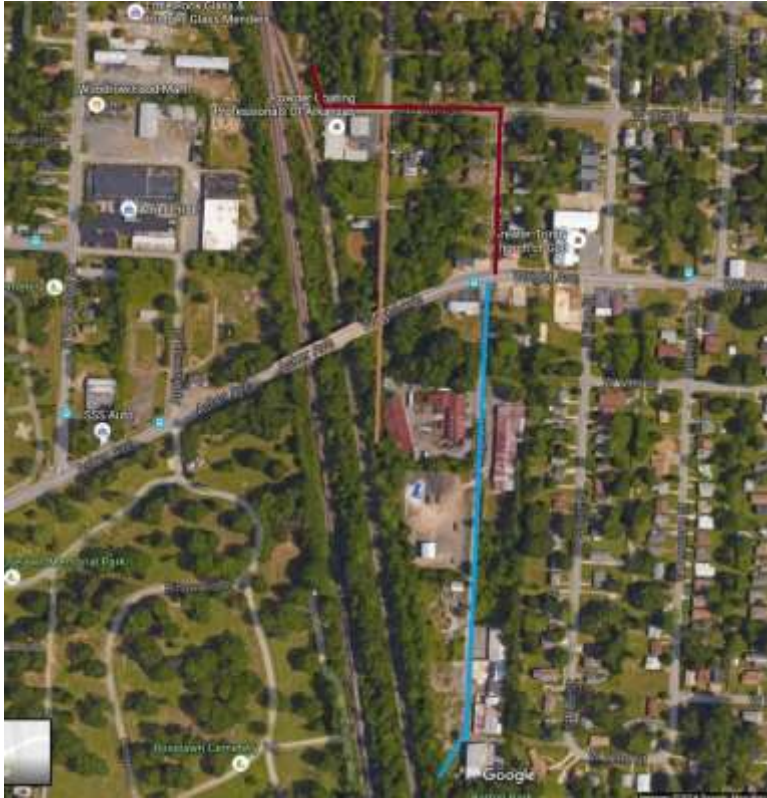
Picture 36. We take the trail onto 18th St. and Jones St. because the corner of the building comes within 25 ft. of active tracks, leaving little room for a BikePed trail between them.



Picture 37. Our altered trail goes under the bridge at the end of Jones St. and intersects with ALTA's proposed route. The intersected parcel is owned by the City. The trail is approximately 73 ft. from active track at its closest point. Jones St. would be an access point.



Picture 38. Wright Ave. is a proposed bicycle route (Picture 2); it is especially important to create access from it to the SW Trail. However, an access point at Wright Ave. may be challenging. Easements from Samaritan Hill Baptist Church and possibly Greater Trinity Church of God may be required and earthworks may be necessary.



Picture 39. Access from Wright Ave. could be established by wayfinding signs instructing users to turn north onto Thayer St. for northbound SW Trail (red route) and south onto Thayer St. for southbound SW Trail (blue route). If a connection from the south end of Thayer to the SW Trail was impossible (Picture 41), users could turn south onto Jones St. for southbound access (brown route), but that route would be indirect and therefore inconvenient for commuters.



Picture 40. The trail intersects with a parcel owned by Johnson Freddie L. The trail is approximately 78 ft. from active track at its closest point.



Picture 41. The trail intersects with a parcel owned by Welles LLC. The trail is approximately 96 ft. from active track at its closest point.



Picture 42. This is a street view of the southern end of Thayer St. (Pictures 39 and 41). We would like to create a connection from here to the SW Trail, but easements may be required.



Picture 43. Continued from Picture 41. The trail intersects with a parcel owned by the Arkansas Livestock Show Association. The trail is approximately 82 ft. from active track at its closest point.



Picture 44. We altered ALTA's proposed trail because it got too close to active tracks. Groundproofing will be required to see if the trail can move to the east, as we've proposed, and still move under W. Roosevelt Rd. The trail intersects with a parcel owned by the State of Arkansas. The trail is approximately 78 ft. from active track at its closest point.



Picture 45. Access from Roosevelt could be achieved by using existing facilities as much as possible. Users traveling west on Roosevelt Rd. could follow the red route and users traveling east on Roosevelt Rd. could follow the blue route. This would prevent needing to make a left turn on Roosevelt Rd. More study of the planned and existing facilities in this area would be required.



Picture 46. The trail intersects with another parcel owned by the State of Arkansas. The trail is approximately 78 ft. from active track at its closest point.



Picture 47. The trail is approximately 67 ft. from active track at its closest point.



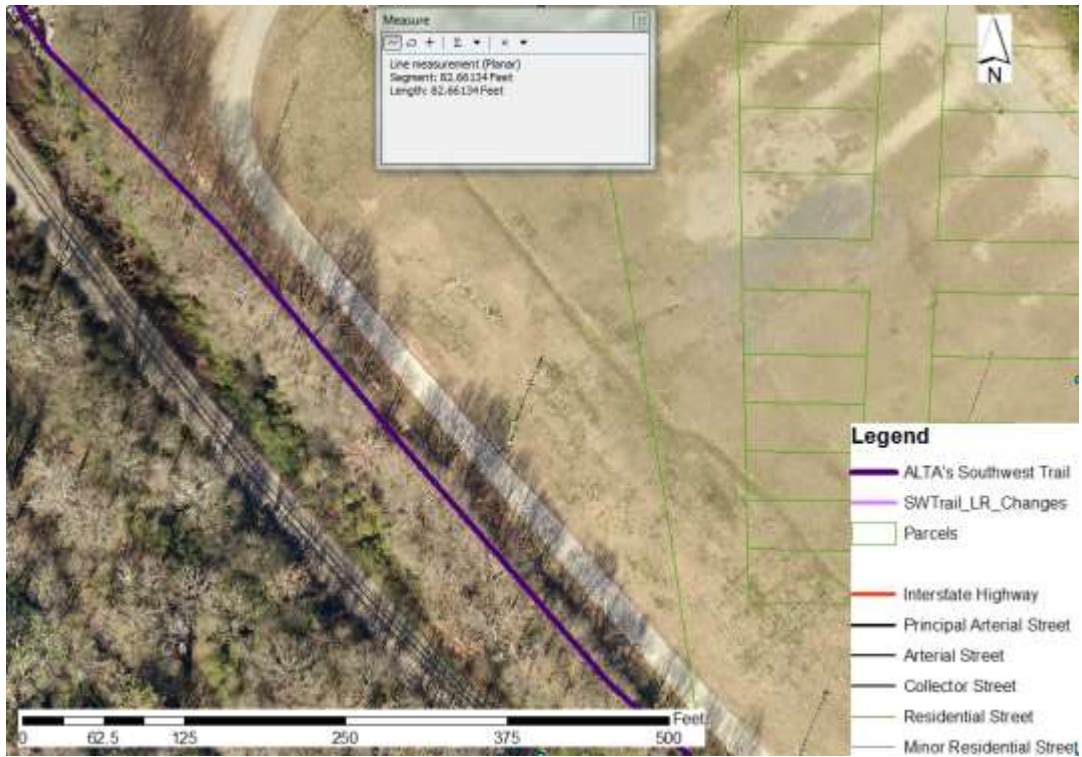
Picture 48. The trail is approximately 69 ft. from active track at its closest point.



Picture 49. The trail is approximately 59 ft. from active track at its closest point.



Picture 50. The trail is 63 ft. from active track at its closest point here (going around the building).



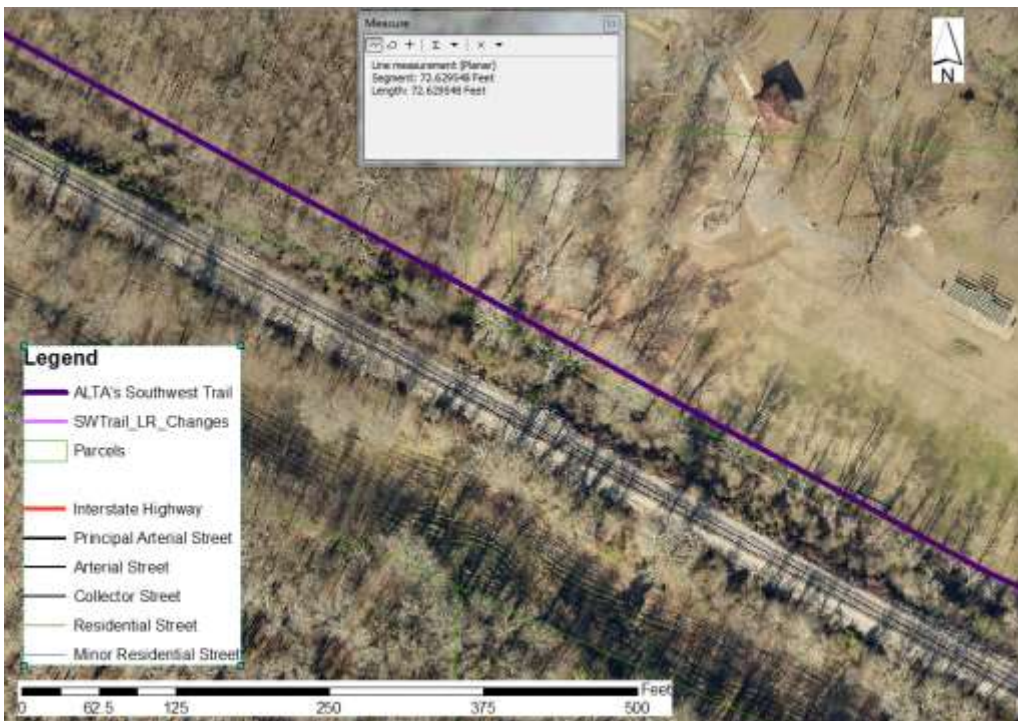
Picture 51. The trail is approximately 82 ft. at its closest point here.



Picture 52. The trail is approximately 81 ft. at its closest point here.



Picture 53. Creating an access point at the end of S. Battery St. would be especially important for when access to the Arkansas State Fairgrounds is restricted.



Picture 54. The trail is approximately 72 ft. from active track at its closest point here.



Picture 55. The trail is approximately 74 feet from active track at its closest point here.



Picture 56. Creating an access point at Dr. MLK Jr. Dr. would require little investment.



Picture 57. The trail is approximately 50 ft. from active track at the closest point here.



Picture 58. This is where we propose to end this portion of the SW Trail project. Ending the SW Trail here would provide access to users on the south side of the Union Pacific tracks. The trail is approximately 53 ft. from active track at its closest point here (until it turns to cross the tracks).