LITTLE CREEK TRAIL
&
PLAZA TRAILHEAD

FAULKNER COUNTY

FHWA Grant Award No. 693JJ32440102

Draft Environmental Assessment

November 2025

THE LITTLE CREEK TRAIL SEGMENT 1 - THE LITTLE CREEK TRAIL & PLAZA TRAILHEAD

FHWA Grant Award # 693JJ32440102

Environmental Assessment

Submitted pursuant to:
The National Environmental Policy Act
42 U.S.C. §4322(2)(c) and 23 C.F.R. §771

Submitted by:
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

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Acting Division Administrator,
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Federal Highway Administration

11/06/2025

Date of Approval

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, this Environmental Assessment describes the proposed project to provide multi-use, non-motorized recreational trails, primarily within the east Conway neighborhoods in Faulkner County Arkansas The analysis did not identify any significant adverse environmental impacts and identifies the Build Alternative as the Preferred Alternative.

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This Environmental Assessment is also available for review online at: https://conwayarkansas.gov/.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information

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Title VI

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Contents

Figures

Tables

Appendices

List of Acronyms

AAS	Arkansas Archeological Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADEQ	Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality
ADH	Arkansas Department of Health
ADT	Average Daily Traffic
AHPP	Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
ANHC	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
ARDOT	Arkansas Department of Transportation
ART	Arkansas River Trail
BMPs	Best Management Practices
CHSNHS	Central High School National Historic Site
CWA	Clean Water Act
EA	Environmental Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EO	Executive Order
FAP	Federal Aid Project
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FLAP	Federal Lands Access Program
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
HSNP	Hot Springs National Park
IPaC	Information, Planning, and Conservation
LUST	Leaking Underground Storage Tank
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Funds
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
OWJ	Official with Jurisdiction
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
ROW	Right-of-Way
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SWP3	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
TRI	Toxic Release Inventory
USDOT	U.S. Department of Transportation
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
USHHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

1 Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead as part of the broader Connect Conway initiative, describing its role in creating a connected bicycle and pedestrian network for Conway. It outlines the project's logical termini, the history of its development, and the context within which the project has been advanced to the environmental assessment (EA) stage.

1.1 What is Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead?

The City of Conway, in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes to construct Connect Conway, a multi-use, non-motorized recreational trail system primarily located within the neighborhoods of east Conway, Arkansas (**Figure 1**).

Conway, founded in 1875 and home to 64,134 residents, is the eighth-largest city in Arkansas and the county seat of Faulkner County. Despite significant population growth over the past five decades, residents of central and east Conway continue to face limited transportation options. The U.S. Census Bureau recorded the City of Conway as the fastest-growing city over 50,000 population in Arkansas since 2022.

The Connect Conway project seeks to close this mobility gap by creating a safe and accessible transportation network. The initiative includes approximately 11 miles of new bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and approximately 5 miles of upgrades, featuring:

- 12-foot shared-use greenway trails
- 12-foot sidepaths
- 12-foot cycle tracks
- Sidewalks

When complete, Connect Conway will link:

- 10 city parks
- 7 schools
- Major retail centers
- Universities and colleges
- 14 major employers
- 16 neighborhoods
- The 3.1-mile Kinley Trail
- The 1.9-mile Stone Dam Creek Trail

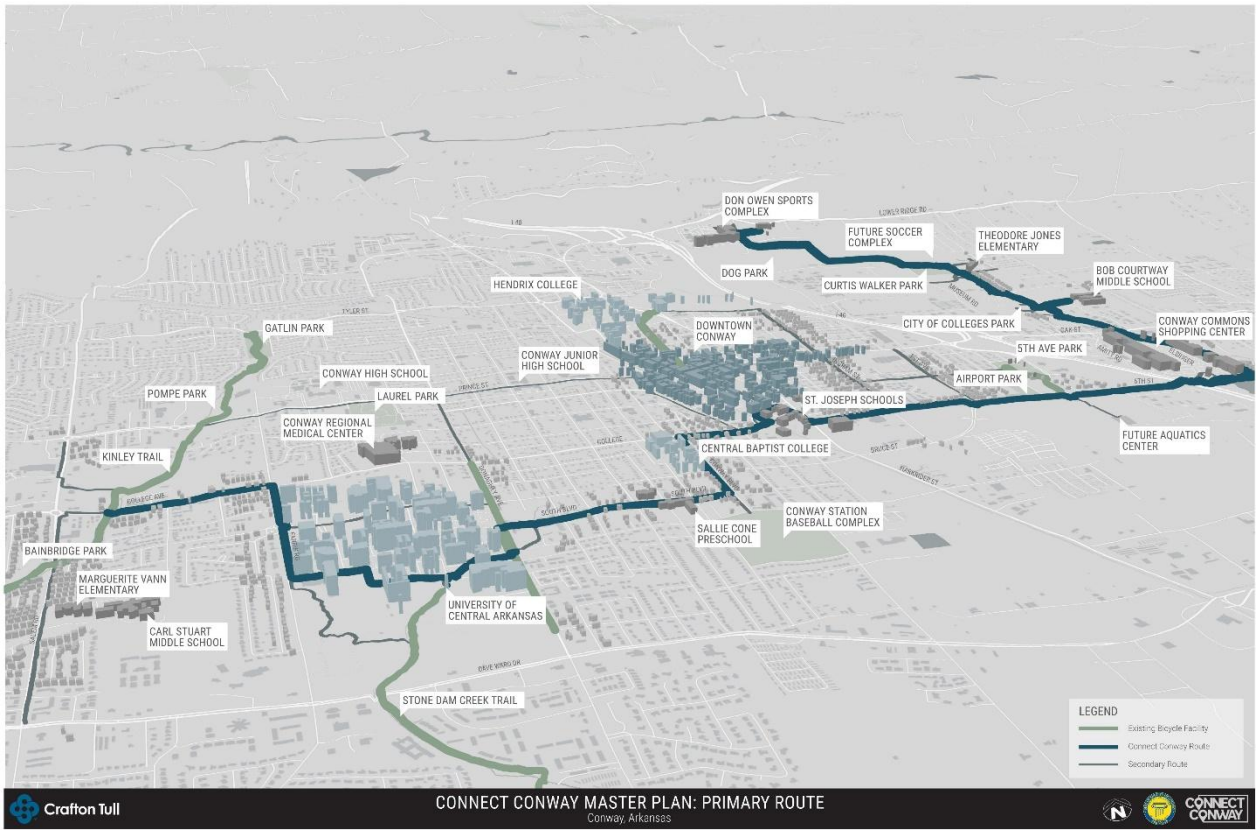

Figure 1: Connect Conway Trail Map

A central feature of this effort is the **Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead** (this project), which follows the natural corridor of Little Creek, offering a scenic off-street route that links neighborhoods, schools, parks, and commercial areas. Designed with environmental sensitivity, the trailhead will incorporate native landscaping, restrooms, seating areas, riparian buffer restoration in the vicinity of the Plaza Trailhead, and stormwater management improvements to protect the creek's ecosystem.

Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead will serve both as a recreational amenity and a functional transportation alternative, substantially enhancing connectivity and quality of life in east Conway.

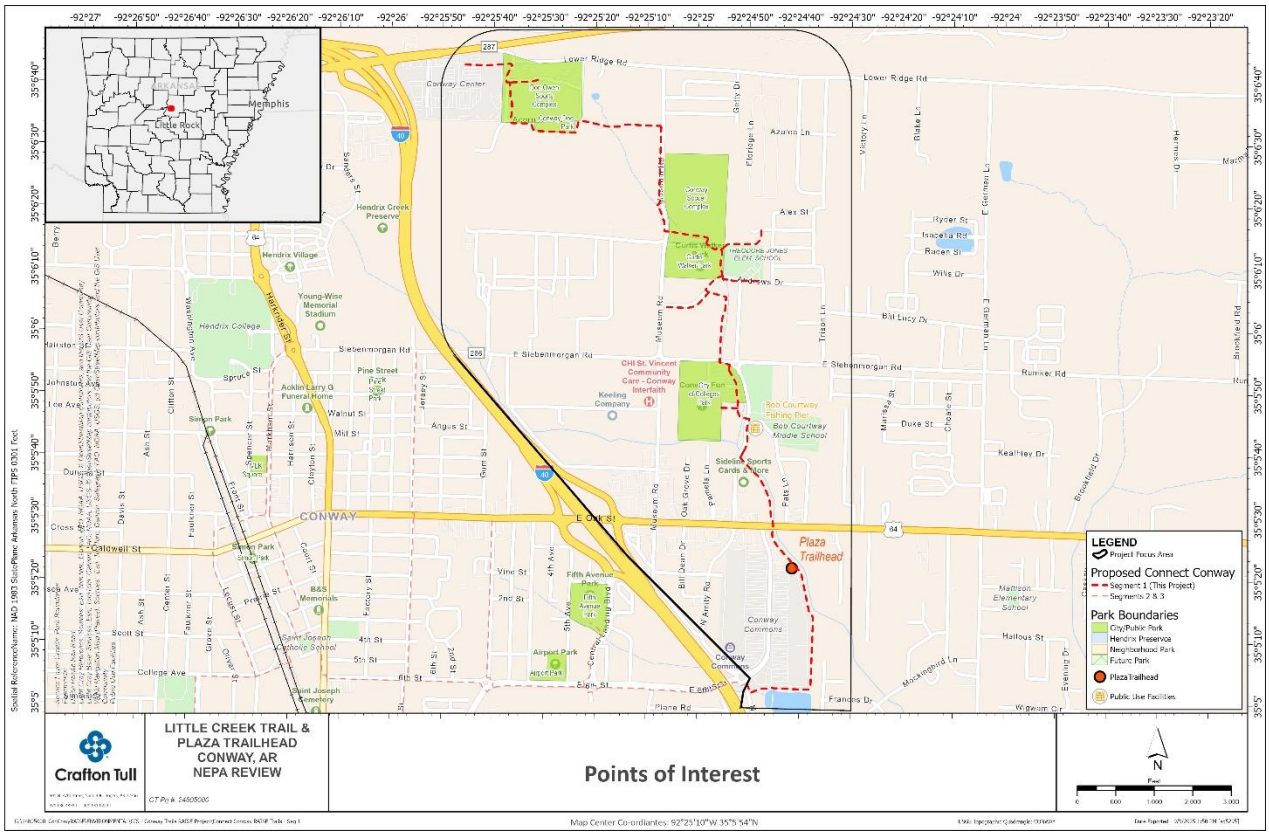

Figure 2: Little Creek Trail's Connectivity to Conway Points of Interest

Together, these improvements will bridge historic divides, promote active transportation, and provide safe access to jobs, healthcare, education, shopping, and essential services for the Conway community.

1.2 What are the Logical Termini

The ***logical termini*** for the proposed Connect Conway project were identified as **Conway Towne Centre** along Little Creek (north terminus) and the **6th Street Bridge across I-40** (south terminus) during the project concept phase. The logical termini are shown in **Figure 2**. These termini were selected to provide a continuous, connected facility that links major destinations across Conway, addressing the identified needs for safe bicycle and pedestrian access.

- **Conway Towne Centre** serves as a logical northern terminus because it is a major commercial and civic hub, providing access to shopping, employment, and public services. It also serves as a key origin and destination for residents in east Conway and integrates with existing pedestrian and transit facilities.
- The **6th Street Bridge across I-40** was selected as the logical southern terminus because it provides a direct crossing of the interstate, creating a critical connection between east Conway

neighborhoods and the broader Connect Conway trail network located west of I-40. This linkage supports the project's purpose of enhancing connectivity, mobility, and safety for non-motorized users.

The selected termini were determined to be of sufficient length to address the project's purpose and need, provide **independent utility**, and ensure that the trail does not preclude consideration of other reasonably foreseeable transportation improvements in the area. The termini also allow the project to serve multiple community amenities, including schools, parks, neighborhoods, and retail centers, ensuring the project delivers maximum public benefit while maintaining consistency with long-range transportation and land use planning.

1.3 What is the history of the project?

In August 2022, Faulkner County received a RAISE Grant to design, engineer, and construct the Little Creek Trail & Plaza trailhead in Conway, as part of the larger Connect Conway project. This grant is funding the current Environmental Assessment (EA) and the design and development of the trails and associated infrastructure. The project aims to remove physical barriers and connect west and east Conway.

Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead is the result of three key initiatives:

- ***Conway 2025***: Launched in 2009 and updated in 2021, this citizen-led visioning process created a long-term plan for the city's future.
- ***2020 Citizen Survey***: With nearly 1,600 responses, the survey highlighted deficiencies in bike and pedestrian mobility, marking them as critical issues for community livability.
- ***Five-Year Strategic Plan (2021):*** Built from insights in the 2020 survey, the plan prioritized improvements in biking and walking infrastructure.

1.3.1 Timeline of Key Events in Conway's Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Development

Late 1990s

- The City of Conway began improving trail systems, particularly along Tucker Creek in west Conway, connecting surrounding neighborhoods.
- The project received strong community support, leading to increased trail popularity.

2009

- Conway adopted a ***Complete Streets*** program to create accessible roadways for all users.
- The Conway Area Chamber of Commerce launched a community-wide, citizen-led visioning process, surveying 1,400 residents, which resulted in ***Conway 2025***.

2011

- The League of American Bicyclists designated Conway as a bronze-level ***Bicycle Friendly Community***.

2016 & 2018

- Conway adopted ***Master Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans*** to guide infrastructure development.

2017

- Conway became the first city in Arkansas to offer a ***bike-share program***.

2020

- The City conducted a ***Citizen Survey***, receiving nearly 1,600 responses.
- Only 38% of respondents rated biking conditions as good or excellent, while 48% rated ease of walking and 45% rated sidewalk conditions similarly.

2021

- The City finalized its ***Five-Year Strategic Plan***, reflecting insights from the 2020 survey.
- ***Conway 2025*** was updated to align with changing community priorities.
- City conducted a **Virtual Public Meeting** on September 23, 2021, about Connect Conway.

Recent Years

- ***Little Creek Trail*** emerged as a result of ***Conway 2025***, the ***Citizen Survey***, and the ***Five-Year Strategic Plan***.
- An advisory committee was formed, consisting of various community members.
- The project advisory committee conducted a ***comprehensive walk audit*** to identify construction challenges, followed by a technical study that provided network and facility recommendations (**Appendix A**). Public engagement efforts were integrated throughout this process.
- Community meetings and a visual preference survey were conducted to shape the project's design.

1.3.2 Current Project Status

- Extensive groundwork has been completed, including route refinement and technical studies for network recommendations.
- A walk audit identified challenges in the Little Creek segment behind Conway Commons, which was deemed environmentally sensitive (**Appendix A**).
- Preliminary engineering and environmental reviews flagged manageable risks, with no catastrophic concerns.
- Topographic surveys are complete, and engineering is 60% complete (**Appendix B**).
- Right-of-way and easement acquisition are anticipated, with some areas using existing agreements, particularly on the Conway Public Schools properties.
- No relocations are anticipated.
- The City is prepared to use eminent domain if necessary for property acquisition under the Uniform Relocation Act.

2 Purpose and Need

Chapter 2 describes the need for providing safe and reliable access to key community destinations for central and east Conway residents and workers, while supporting economic and social vitality and reducing environmental impacts. The proposed project seeks to lessen dependence on automobiles and improve transportation choices. The chapter also explains how the project would address these needs and outlines the roles of the lead agency in advancing the effort.

2.1 Why is the Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead needed and what are the benefits?

Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead aims to address limited transportation options and the lack of safe biking and pedestrian infrastructure in East Conway. By expanding and upgrading the trail network the project connects key destinations, including parks, schools, universities, employment centers, and neighborhoods. This safe and accessible network reduces reliance on automobiles, alleviates economic burdens, and supports mobility. Additionally, it promotes development along the route's developable land, mitigates sedimentation in Lake Conway, and preserves vital natural habitats, ensuring long-term environmental and community benefits.

2.1.1 Quality of Life

Developing bike and pedestrian trails offers quality of life benefits by promoting physical activity, enhancing social connections, and providing safe recreational spaces. Studies have shown that trails serve as community amenities that encourage residents to engage in regular exercise, leading to improved health outcomes and fostering a sense of community. For instance, research indicates that trails can measurably improve a community's quality of life by providing opportunities for social connection and safe places for recreation and commuting (American Trails Staff, 2020).

Trails can enhance the city's livability by providing residents with accessible and safe spaces for recreation and transportation. These trails promote active lifestyles, leading to improved public health and fostering a sense of community. Moreover, well-designed trail systems can reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality, contributing to a more resilient urban environment.

In addition to enhancing quality of life, the development of such trails can lead to substantial reductions in healthcare costs. Increased physical activity associated with trail use has been linked to lower incidences of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular conditions. A study analyzing the cost-effectiveness of bike and pedestrian trails found that for every dollar invested in trails, there was a return of $2.94 in direct medical benefits due to increased physical activity (Wang *et*

a., 2005).

This suggests that investing in trail infrastructure not only promotes public health but also offers economic advantages by decreasing medical expenses.

A centerpiece of the project is the Little Creek Plaza. Located less than 3 miles from the mouth of Lake Conway, the Little Creek Plaza would provide a new access point and trailhead along the shared-use trail, as well as demonstration areas for water quality improvements. The trailhead would include new parking, restroom facilities, bike amenities, wayfinding signage, and access to the lower plaza. The lower plaza area runs adjacent to the trail, serving as a transition space for users moving on and off the greenway, while also offering areas for respite and reflection.

Although the floodplain is currently stable, the riparian buffer has been cleared of ecologically valuable vegetation. By reestablishing this buffer through the planting of native trees, grasses, and shrubs, the floodplain would be reinforced through root growth, and the plant material filter surface stormwater runoff from the hillside and adjacent commercial properties. Rock check dams would be installed at the pipe outflow locations, which facilitate stormwater from the parking lots on the western side of the creek. These check dams would reduce the velocity of water entering the creek while allowing sediment and other particulate matter to settle before stormwater reaches the stream. Stepping boulders would provide access from the plaza through the riparian buffer to an overlook of the stream corridor.

Through the Little Creek Plaza project, the public would gain access to a naturalized trail system illustrating a balanced site development approach, combining habitat and streambank restoration with active transportation.

2.1.2 Improved Connectivity

Transportation options in east Conway are largely limited to personal vehicles, biking, or walking. However, the area is not designed for the safe movement of cyclists and pedestrians, leading to heavy reliance on automobiles.

Little Creek Trail seeks to establish a safe, accessible, and interconnected transportation network, reducing economic and transportation barriers for residents. The primary Little Creek Trail route network (east of the Interstate 40) would connect 5 city parks, 2 schools, 2 major retail areas, 4 neighborhoods, several employment hubs, and numerous other key community services.

Key Features:

- **Trailheads:** Primary route would include four minor and one major trailhead equipped with bike repair stations, wayfinding signage, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, drinking fountains,

and restrooms (see **Appendix B**).

- **Primary Route:** Begins near the Conway Towne Center retail area and includes the Don Owen Sports Complex and Conway Soccer Complex. It integrates greenway trails and sidepaths along Museum Road and Bob Courtway Drive, linking neighborhoods, schools, parks, and Conway Commons shopping center.
- **Major Crossings:** A pedestrian underpass at U.S. Highway 64/Oak Street has been deemed feasible, enabling the route to connect to the Little Creek Plaza trailhead. This Section revitalizes an underutilized area into a community destination.
- **Interstate Connection:** The route crosses Interstate 40 via the 6th Street overpass, linking eastern Conway to its central and western areas. A 12' cycle track along an existing driveway near Amity Road further improves connectivity.

Community Benefits:

Connecting east Conway to UCA, with over 10,000 students, creates substantial opportunities by providing safe, multimodal transportation for faculty, staff, and students. Improved connectivity to the Conway Regional Health System would enhance healthcare access, while the project as a whole supports development for the community.

Table 1: Recreational Areas & Schools near the Little Creek Trail network

Name	Location
East Side – Segment 1 (Little Creek Trail)	
Conway Town Center	201 Skyline Dr.
Don Owen Sports Complex	10 Lower Ridge Rd
Conway Dog Park	Acorn Kid Loop
Conway Soccer Park	North Museum Rd
Curtis Walker Park	1700 N Museum Rd
City of Colleges Park	1025 Siebenmorgen Rd
Theodore Jones Elementary School	1800 Freyaldenhoven Ln
Bob Courtway Middle School	1200 Bob Courtway Dr.

2.1.3 Tourism and Economic Benefits

Substantial future development opportunities exist within the area, with over 345 acres of developable land within 1,000 feet of the Connect Conway primary route. It is anticipated that half, if not more, of these lands would develop in the next decade. This future growth presents an opportunity for new walkable, livable, and economically accessible development to a broader swath of current and future Conway residents.

These transportation and future development challenges create an ongoing threat to a nearby natural

resource. Lake Conway, a 6,700-acre man-made lake, was built in 1951 to provide recreational fishing opportunities for the region. The lake has become an important winter habitat and stopover for migratory birds. Sedimentation and pollution threaten the lake's existence and increase flood risk. A study commissioned by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission in 2015 estimates the northwestern bay of the lake, fed by Little Creek and Stone Dam Creek, would be filled entirely with sedimentation within 45 years (FTN, 2015). Deeper portions of the lake would be filled in 120 years at current rates.

Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead is expected to deliver substantial economic benefits to local communities in both the short and long term. Long-term economic benefit would likely result from increased out-of-state tourism. Research on existing bike trails in Northwest Arkansas indicates that bicycling contributed approximately $137 million to the regional economy in 2017, with about $86 million attributed to health benefits, including $7 million in avoided healthcare costs (BBC, 2018).

From an economic perspective, investing in trail infrastructure can yield substantial benefits. For instance, the bicycling industry in Northwest Arkansas generated $159 million in total economic impacts in 2022, encompassing job creation, tourism revenue, and tax contributions (Jebaraj, 2023).

Similarly, studies have shown that bicycle recreation supports substantial economic activity, with non-resident bicycling having the potential to increase economic activity by more than $107 million and create over 1,500 full-time equivalent jobs (American Trails Staff, 2018).

These examples suggest that Conway could experience comparable economic growth by developing its trail systems, attracting tourists, stimulating local businesses, and enhancing property values.

2.2 Are there other trails in the area?

West of Interstate 40, many resources and funds have been invested into the existing Stone Dam Creek and Kinley Trails, including current work to extend both. As shown in **Figure 3**, few existing trails are present within the project extent (east of Interstate 40), with the exception of the striped bike lanes and sharrows in the vicinity of the Conway Soccer Complex. Currently, bicyclists and pedestrians are restricted to on-street routes with limited designated routes and are not able to easily move between neighboring communities and public amenities without the use of a motorized vehicle.

These existing trails would help investments from the Little Creek Trail reach more neighborhoods, businesses, retail, park facilities, and important community institutions. Ultimately the project would reduce transportation barriers for residents to economically participate in the community. Other investments have been made or are planned along the proposed Little Creek Trail route. They are listed in **Table 1** and **Table 3**.

Figure 3: Excerpt from City of Conway Master Street & Trail Plan 2018[1]

[1] https://media.conwayarkansas.gov/media/documents/MasterStreetTrailPlan2018.pdf

2.3 What is the purpose of Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead?

The purpose of the project is to provide an important link in Little Creek Trail network. As part of a system of multi-use trails and side paths, it would provide a safe bicycle and pedestrian route from Conway Towne Center, across Oak Street (AR 64) to the 6th Street overpass at Interstate 40. Additionally, the trail would allow network access to the Conway Commons Shopping Center and develop a parklike setting adjacent to Little Creek. Conceptual plans for the trail include a trailhead with new parking spaces and an entry point plaza.

It would provide a safe space for pedestrians and bicyclists to enjoy outdoor recreation, promote healthier communities, offer a transportation alternative, and boost local and regional economies.

2.4 Who is leading this project?

The FHWA is the federal lead agency because it is funding the engineering, design, permitting and construction of the project through the RAISE Grant and has the primary responsibility for the content and accuracy of this NEPA document. The FHWA is administering the RAISE grant and is responsible for overseeing preparation of this EA. The City of Conway is leading the design and environmental efforts for this EA.

2.5 How and why was this Environmental Assessment prepared?

Due to the size of the Connect Conway project and the existence of several ***independent utilities*** and ***logical termini***, the proposed trail network has been divided into 2 segments, each with its own review.

Logical Termini: A project must begin and end at points that make functional and transportation sense on their own.

Independent Utility: A project segment must provide standalone usefulness, even if no additional segments are built.

The 2 Segments are as follows (see also attached site location maps);

Segment 1: East of I-40: Conway Towne Center to 6th Street overpass at Interstate 40 East (~4.2 miles)

Segment 2: West of I-40: 6th Street overpass at Interstate 40 West to east side of Donaghey Ave (~5.1 miles) + West of Donaghey Rd to Salem Rd (~7.4 miles)

This document constitutes the EA for Segment 1 (East side of Amity Rd to Lower Ridge Rd) prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and aims to:

- Outline the purpose and need for the proposed action.
- Detail the alternatives evaluated for implementation and the rationale for selecting the

Preferred Alternative.

- Assess the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the recommended alternative.
- Incorporate input from the public and local officials to ensure awareness of potential impacts.
- Provide the necessary evidence and analysis to determine whether a more comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is required.

Segment 2 will be evaluated under a Categorical Exclusion (CE) in accordance with the NEPA guidelines, as these segments are expected to have no significant environmental impacts. This determination follows the CE criteria outlined in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, which allow for streamlined review of projects that do not significantly affect the environment.

3 Alternative Development

Chapter 3 defines the project boundaries, outlines the development of project alternatives, describes the public engagement process, and provides an analysis of the alternatives assessed in this EA.

3.1 What are the project limits?

The project limits of Segment 1 of Connect Conway (The Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead) extend from the northeastern portion of the city connecting with the Conway Towne Center retail center, near U.S. Highway 65 (Skyline Drive), to the 6th Street overpass at Interstate 40. The trail would allow network access to the Conway Commons Shopping Center and develop a parklike setting adjacent to Little Creek.

3.2 What is the No Action Alternative?

The **No Action Alternative** would not construct Segment 1 of Little Creek Trail trails project. No additional bike/ped connection between city parks, schools, universities, major retail areas, employment hubs, neighborhoods, and numerous other key community services would be established.

The **No Action Alternative** would not connect communities and existing bike/ped trails and would avoid both positive and negative impacts on the social, economic, natural, and cultural environments. While it does not address the purpose and need of the proposed project, it has been included as a baseline for comparison against the Build Alternative.

3.3 How were trail alignments developed and what design considerations were required?

Little Creek Trail route is designed to provide a safe, accessible bicycle and pedestrian network for all ages and abilities. It features multi-use trails along creeks, easements, and natural corridors, as well as sidepaths within street rights-of-way. As Conway's primary active transportation corridor, it requires greater investment than the city's broader bicycle and pedestrian plan, which includes lower-cost options like bike lanes and boulevards.

The project emerged from concerns that Interstate 40 isolated residents east of the highway, making most trips car-dependent. The completion of 6th Street and its bridge in 2017 improved connectivity, allowing easier access to Conway Commons. The addition of 10-foot-wide sidepaths further ensured safe bicycle and pedestrian passage over the interstate, addressing a long-standing barrier.

East of I-40 (this project), the route primarily follows Little Creek, extending behind Conway Commons, passing under Highway 64, and reaching Courtway Middle School and City of Colleges Park. Easements across undeveloped fields would extend the trail to Don Owen Sports Center, further enhancing community access and mobility.

3.3.1 Design alternatives

As part of the planning process for the Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead, a range of design alternatives for bicycle and pedestrian facilities was considered to ensure the project best meets community needs, safety standards, and environmental constraints (see **Figure 4**). These included multi-use trails, sidepaths, cycle tracks, buffered bicycle lanes, and supporting trailheads. Each design type offers distinct benefits and trade-offs in terms of user experience, safety, right-of-way requirements, and cost.

The selection and integration of these design elements aimed to create a safe, continuous, and connected corridor that supports a wide range of users while minimizing environmental and community impacts.

Multi-Use Trails

Conway's level topography allows the community to build greenway trails near streams without the constraints typically imposed by steep elevation. The trail would provide a scenic and enjoyable user experience. While trails eventually interact with streets at crossings, they are the safest facility type as they are not located along streets.

Separated Sidepaths

West of Interstate 40, route alignment options are significantly constrained by the established urban fabric and higher-density development of downtown and midtown Conway. To minimize right-of-way acquisition and property impacts, the most practical strategy for achieving a continuous connection to UCA is to incorporate sidepaths within the existing street network.

On-Street Cycle Tracks

Also known as two-directional protected bike lanes, cycle tracks are constructed where ample on-street pavement is available for bicyclists to ride in the road with vertical bollards offering protection from vehicular traffic.

This alternative was considered but not used on Little Creek Trail as insufficient street pavement was available and there was sufficient off-street space to accommodate safer alternatives.

On-Street Buffered Bicycle Lanes

Whereas bike lanes are striped on wide roads with low traffic, buffered bike lanes have wide buffer areas painted on-street, sometimes with vertical bollards to protect bicyclists from motorists. Buffered bicycle lanes are proposed on streets to serve as.

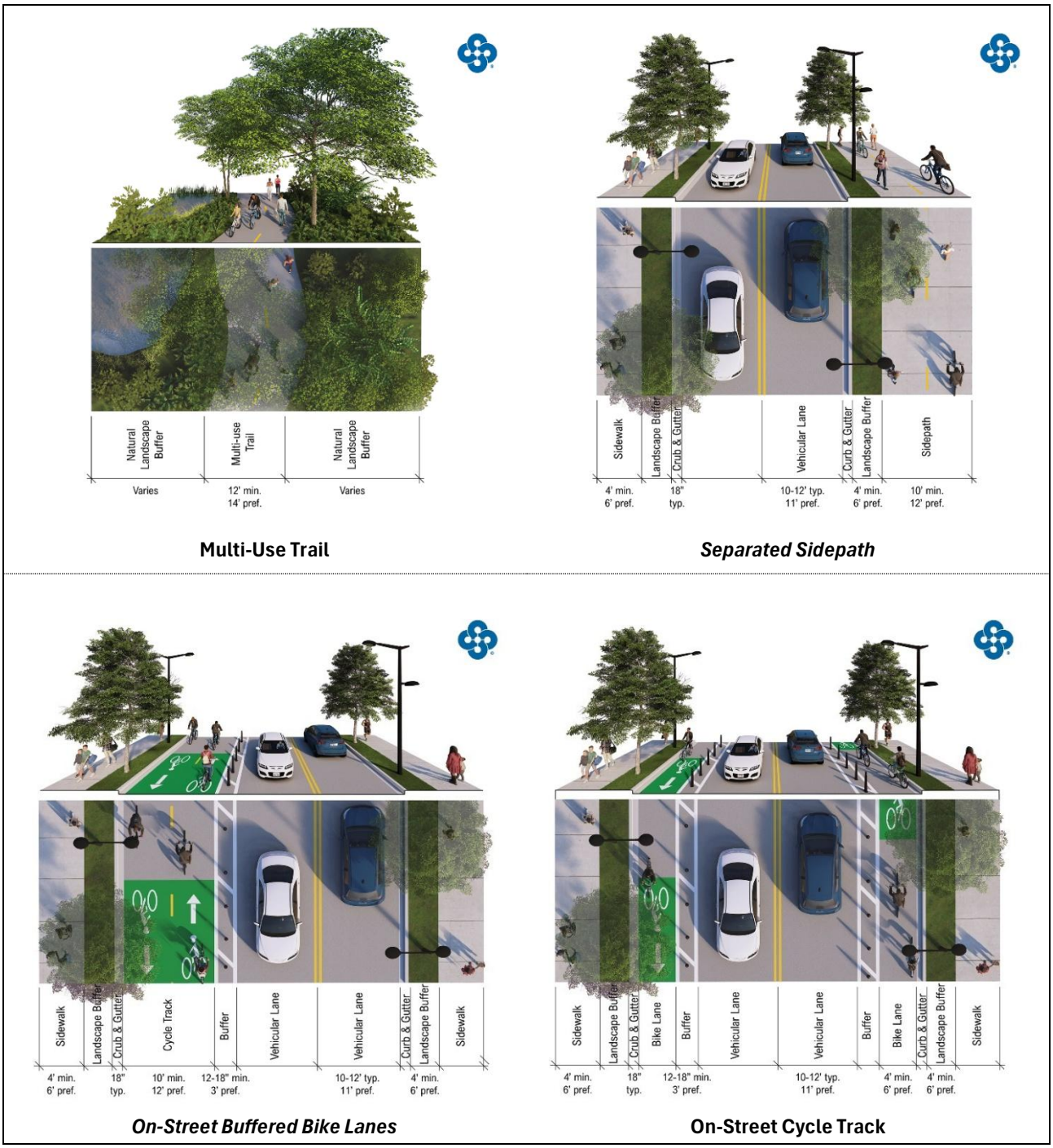

Figure 4: Typical Sections of Some Trail Typologies

This alternative was considered but not used on Little Creek Trail as sufficient off-street space was available to accommodate safer alternatives.

Trailheads

Ensuring that trails are accessible for those who may not live within walking, running, or bicycling distance is crucial to achieving broad community access. Trailheads are strategically located at parks and schools along Little Creek Trail route, with future non-public locations including the proposed Little Creek Park at Conway Commons.

Trailheads should be equipped with parking for approximately 10 to 15 vehicles and materials for basic bicycle needs, such as a fix-it station and rack for self-maintenance. Shade in the form of a pavilion or trees is important as well, as well as ADA-accessible ramps, seating, water, restrooms, and kiosks providing additional information.

3.3.2 Environmental Inventory

Federal and state agencies provided environmental data for the Connect Conway study area, which was used to identify key constraints and shape early alternative concepts. As public input was received and additional data became available, route options were refined to minimize or avoid potential environmental impacts. Further discussion of environmental considerations is included in **Chapter 4** of this EA.

3.3.3 Public and Local Officials Involvement

Public engagement has driven the project, including a walk audit of key sections of the route and preliminary environmental and design work to assess constructability challenges. Field assessment of the entire route was completed by City staff and engineers.

In September 2021, a virtual public meeting was held to discuss the trail route and proposed amenities. Community members were introduced to the project, including details about the conception of the project and how it would benefit the city. A major focus of the session was the specific location of the route, including what the major intersections with roadways were and how the project would connect areas across historic barriers, such as I-40 and railroad tracks. The meeting was archived on the City's website and is publicly available.

A visual preference survey was conducted as part of the 2022 RAISE Grant Submittal, where various design elements of the trails were distributed to members of the community. Responses indicate strong support for amenities such as water fountains, restrooms and trees (**Appendix A**).

Comprehensive information on public and local official involvement is provided in **Section 3.5.**

3.3.4 Design Considerations

Different types of trail designs were designed for Little Creek Trail to fit naturally into the surrounding neighborhoods and environments the trail would pass through. These include on-street paths, off-street greenways, and two-directional protected bike lanes, and elevated boardwalks in sensitive areas.

Examples of some of these trail designs are shown in **Figure 4**.

3.4 What alternatives were considered and carried forward for further study.

In accordance with NEPA, federal agencies are required to evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives that would meet the project's Purpose and Need.

For the Little Creek Trail & Trailhead Plaza, only one **Build Alternative** was carried forward for detailed analysis because it is the only alternative that provides continuous connectivity between the identified public amenities, consistent with the project's purpose and need. While minor alignment variations were reviewed during preliminary engineering, these represented technical refinements to avoid utilities, improve constructability, or minimize localized impacts. As these refinements would not result in substantially different environmental effects, they were not evaluated as separate alternatives. Instead, they are considered design options within the Build Alternative.

The **Build Alternative** for the Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead is composed of eight interconnected route segments that together create a continuous north–south corridor (

Table 2). Beginning near the Conway Towne Centre, the trail follows the Little Creek corridor southward, connecting neighborhoods and parks before reaching the Conway Commons area. From there, the alignment extends westward to the 6th Street Bridge crossing over Interstate 40, providing a critical connection to the remainder of the Connect Conway trail network located west of the interstate. This configuration ensures that the Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead not only serves as a standalone facility but also functions as a vital link in the larger citywide bicycle and pedestrian system, enhancing access to schools, parks, shopping areas, and employment centers across Conway.

Table 2: Little Creek Trail Route Segments

Route Segment	Route Description
Route Segment 1:	Conway Towne Center to Conway's PetSafe Dog Park
Route Segment 2:	Dog Park to Museum Rd/Conway Soccer Complex
Route Segment 3:	Museum Rd/Conway Soccer Complex to Arkansas Dermatology
Route Segment 4:	Arkansas Dermatology to City of Colleges Park
Route Segment 5:	City of Colleges Park to Bob Courtway Middle School
Route Segment 6:	Bob Courtway Middle School to Conway Commons (E Oak St)
Route Segment 7:	Conway Commons (E Oak St) to 6th Street bridge

The **No Action Alternative** is also evaluated, as required, to provide a baseline comparison. This approach is consistent with FHWA and CEQ guidance, which emphasize the analysis of reasonable alternatives that are both practicable and capable of meeting the project's Purpose and Need.

This Environmental Assessment evaluates both the **No Action Alternative** and the **Build Alternative**.

An overview of the Build Alternative, existing trails and alternatives considered in the planning stage, is provided in **Figure 5**.

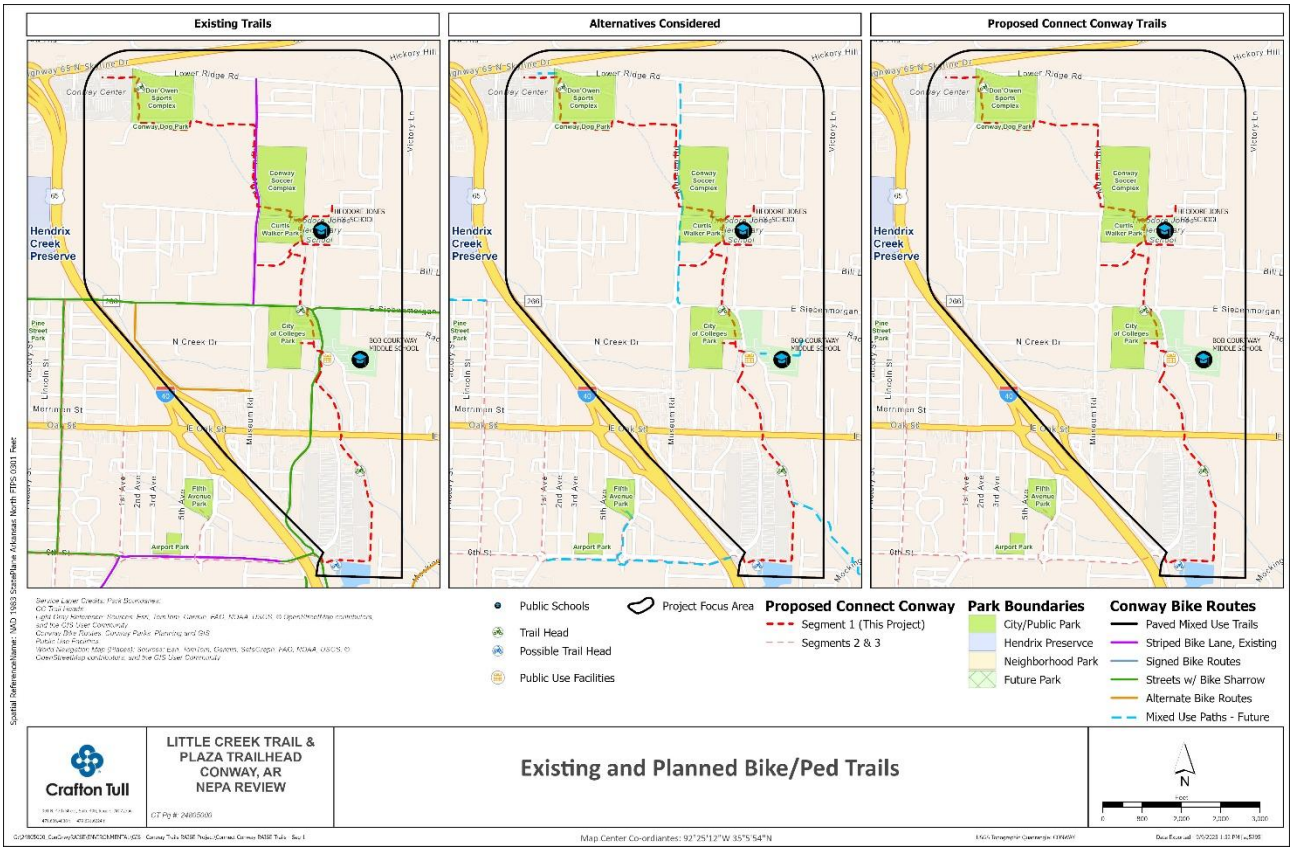

Figure 5: Existing and Proposed Bike/Ped Trails in Vicinity of the Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead

3.5 How has the public been involved?

Connect Conway has received strong support and commitment from both public and private partners, including elected officials at the federal and state levels.

During the inception of the project, a Project Advisory Committee was established, and stakeholder groups were interviewed to gain an understanding of potential project impacts.

The Steering Committee comprised;

- The three colleges in Conway
- Conway Corporation
- The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board (BPAB)
- Conway Chamber of Commerce
- Conway Schools
- City staff
- Community members at large

Members of stakeholder groups involved included;

- Homeless Advocates
- The BPAB
- Pine/Markham St Community
- Conway Schools

An open-forum public involvement meeting for the proposed project was held on April 29, 2025, from 4:30 PM until 6:30 PM at The Don Owen Sports Center, 10 Lower Ridge Rd., Conway, AR 72034. A public involvement meeting synopsis is attached. The content, materials and information shared during the meetings are provided in **Appendix A**.

A total of 10 people attended the public meeting, and 107 responses to an online questionnaire were received either during the meetings or within the four-week comment period that followed (May 1-31, 2025). A summary of the meetings and the feedback received is included in **Appendix A**.

Beyond the public meetings, additional outreach efforts included:

- **Project StoryMap:** Launched on April 25, 2025, which provided study information and updates. It featured a project overview, background, purpose and need, project history, public involvement material used in the April 2025 public meeting, Interactive Public Involvement Comment Map, and project contact details.

- **Ongoing Public Communication:** The City of Conway made several Facebook posts during the public comment period to encourage participation and garner feedback. Posts can be found on the City's Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/cityofconway).

3.6 How have government agencies been involved?

Throughout the planning process for Connect Conway, local, state, and federal agencies have been actively engaged to ensure regulatory compliance, resource protection, and alignment with community planning objectives. Early coordination included outreach to FHWA, the ARDOT, and the City of Conway to review the project's purpose, need, and preliminary alignments. Resource agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC) were consulted to identify potential impacts to wetlands, waterways, protected species, and sensitive habitats. Additional coordination during the Short Term Activity Authorization (STAA) and any other required permitting will take place with the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) for water quality and stormwater permitting, and with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and tribal governments to address cultural resources. These agencies provided data, technical input, and regulatory guidance during the development of alternatives, enabling adjustments to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. Their continued involvement through review of the EA ensures the project meets applicable federal and state environmental requirements and reflects best practices for trail development. During March and April 2025, local, state, and federal agencies were invited to participate in early coordination for the proposed Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead. Agencies were requested to review the project study area and share relevant information or express any concerns related to resources within their jurisdiction or area of expertise. All agency correspondence and responses are compiled in **Appendix C**.

3.7 How have tribal governments been involved?

Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act* mandates that federal agencies consult with tribes when projects may impact areas of historical or cultural significance. In compliance with this requirement, the FHWA initiated consultation with tribes that have an active cultural affiliation with the project area. Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) were invited to review and comment on the proposed undertaking. Although no substantive responses were received during the consultation period, the final Cultural Resources Report will be made available to any tribe that requests a copy. All correspondence and documentation of tribal coordination efforts are included in **Appendix C**.

4 Environmental Impacts & Mitigation

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the potential impacts of the project on both people and the environment.

Potential impacts are changes or effects that could occur as a result of a proposed action. The impacts may be social, cultural, economic, or ecological, and may also be beneficial or adverse. The terms "impact" and "effect" can be used interchangeably.

4.1 How were potential impacts evaluated?

Environmental studies were conducted to assess the project's potential impacts on natural and social environments. Findings for each specific impact type are provided, with additional analyses either incorporated by reference or included in the EA appendices. Resources determined to be unaffected by the project are not discussed in detail.

What are significant impacts?

NEPA regulations do not provide specific thresholds to determine if project impacts are considered significant, but they do discuss the process that should be used to evaluate impacts.

Consideration is given both to context of the setting, and intensity, which is the severity of the impacts.

The analysis evaluated both the intensity and duration of effects, categorizing them as short-term (e.g., temporary construction impacts) or long-term (persisting post-construction). Unless otherwise noted, the impacts discussed in this chapter are assumed to be long-term and generally characterized as beneficial or adverse. Where quantitative data was unavailable, best professional judgment was applied in accordance with **NEPA guidelines**.

The study area was primarily defined as a 50-foot-wide corridor along all alignments unless otherwise specified, such as the **Area of Potential Effect (APE)** for historic resources which is 20-foot, as required under the **National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106**. Additional off-site areas, including those for borrow material, or construction staging, would be evaluated once identified during the construction phase.

4.2 Would the project have any socio-economic impacts?

Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead project is anticipated to have wide-ranging socio-economic impacts, both positive and negative, affecting quality of life, community development, and the local and regional economy. These impacts are assessed for the **No Action Alternative** and the **Build Alternative** in accordance with FHWA guidance.

4.2.1 No Action Alternative

Under the **No Action Alternative**, the multi-use trail and trailhead would not be constructed. Existing gaps in pedestrian and bicycle connectivity would remain, along with missed opportunities for

enhanced public health, community access, local business growth, job creation, and tourism. No additional socio-economic benefits would be realized, and long-term regional development opportunities tied to trail connectivity would remain unrealized.

4.2.2 Build Alternative

Positive Impacts

Quality of Life and Public Health

- Expanded connectivity for cyclists and pedestrians encourages active transportation and outdoor recreation, reducing chronic disease risks and improving wellness.
- The trail provides a safe, accessible facility for walking, biking, and running, benefiting users across age and ability groups.

Community Access and Connectivity

- The project provides non-motorized access to schools, jobs, healthcare, and amenities, particularly benefiting communities in east Conway.
- Reduced transportation costs and improved access and mobility for residents without reliable access to personal vehicles.

Trailhead Amenities and Community Value

- Planned amenities at the Little Creek Plaza Trailhead - including restrooms, seating, ADA access from parking down to the creek, a bicycle service station, and a drinking fountain - enhance functionality and accessibility, making the facility more inclusive for families, older adults, and mobility-limited users.
- The trailhead is expected to strengthen the social value of the corridor by serving as a community gathering place.

Environmental Awareness and Stream Rehabilitation

- Riparian restoration and native planting along Little Creek will stabilize streambanks, improve hydrology, and enhance habitat, while also creating opportunities for environmental education.
- These ecological improvements will increase community awareness of environmental resources and stewardship.

Economic Development, Property Values, and Business Growth

- Trail construction generates direct, indirect, and induced jobs, with an estimated 9.6 jobs per $1 million in investment (UMass, 2011).
- Proximity to trails has been shown to increase residential property values by 3–15% (NAR, 2009; Crompton & Nicholls, 2019), boosting the local tax base.
- Local businesses, particularly in east Conway, are expected to benefit from increased trail user traffic and improved neighborhood accessibility.

Additional details regarding the economic goals of the Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead can be found in ***Section 2 (Purpose and Need)****.*

Tourism and Regional Attraction

- Integrated into the Connect Conway greenway network, the trail has the potential to attract regional and out-of-town visitors, with parallels to trail-driven tourism seen in Bentonville, AR.
- According to the 2023 Arkansas Outdoor Recreation Impact Report, the state's outdoor recreation economy—when including direct, indirect, and induced impacts - contributed $7.3 billion to Arkansas's GDP, supported approximately 68,431 jobs, and generated nearly $2 billion in tax revenue. Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead could further enhance this sector by attracting trail-based tourism and hosting outdoor events (Heartland Forward, 2025).
- Health Cost Savings and Productivity
- By increasing rates of physical activity, the trail is expected to lower long-term healthcare costs. Studies estimate that every $1 invested in trails yields $3 in avoided healthcare costs (Wang et al., 2005).
- A healthier population supports improved productivity and reduced absenteeism in the local workforce.

Negative and Temporary Impacts

- **Community Displacement:** Limited land acquisition could affect residential, commercial, or community spaces.
- **Construction Effects:** Temporary disruptions including noise, dust, traffic interruptions, and short-term access restrictions may affect nearby residents and businesses.
- **Noise and Property Values:** Construction, when considered with other regional projects, may result in localized noise and reduced property values. Mitigation includes restricting construction hours, using quieter equipment, and temporary noise barriers.

Reasonably Foreseeable Effects

- **Land Use and Gentrification Pressures**: Improved accessibility may increase property values and development pressure in adjacent neighborhoods. Coordination with the City of Conway's Comprehensive Plan and zoning tools will be critical to protect affordability and avoid displacement.
- **Accessibility**: The project is expected to deliver lasting benefits, but continued coordination with local stakeholders will be necessary to ensure those benefits are effectively realized across the community.
- **Environmental and Health Co-Benefits**: By reducing motor vehicle dependency, the trail is expected to contribute to reduced emissions, improved air quality, and additional health gains.

The **Build Alternative** is expected to generate **net positive socio-economic outcomes**, including improved quality of life, job creation, increased property values, and expanded local business and tourism opportunities. Negative impacts are expected to be **minor and temporary**, limited to localized land acquisition and construction effects. With mitigation measures such as community engagement, noise/dust controls, and growth planning, the project will advance long-term social and economic resilience in Conway.

4.3 Would there be any relocations or right of way acquisition required by the project?

Little Creek Trail & Trailhead Plaza traverse a variety of land uses, including dense urban neighborhoods, light residential areas, and segments of undeveloped rural land. A key objective in planning and design was to avoid displacement of homes, businesses, or community structures, helping to ensure the project is both community-supported and context-sensitive.

To minimize the need for right-of-way (ROW) acquisition, the trail was strategically aligned within or adjacent to existing roadways, public parks, utility corridors, and properties already under public ownership. This approach reduced impacts to private property and helped preserve the character of the neighborhoods the trail connects, while also promoting efficient use of public land and infrastructure.

4.3.1 No Action Alternative

The **No Action Alternative** would not require any ROW acquisition or relocations.

4.3.2 Build Alternative

Little Creek Trail & Trailhead Plaza would require new ROW in several locations along the corridor. Preliminary estimates suggest that approximately 6 acres of ROW (excluding utility and park

easements), 3 acres of Temporary Construction Easement (TCE) would be needed; however, this should be confirmed and updated once final design plans are available. Most of the required ROW is located adjacent to existing transportation corridors, such as roads, minimizing impacts to private property.

Approximately 3 acres of publicly owned land will be disturbed during the construction of the proposed trail. As this property is owned by the City of Conway, no additional ROW or easements will be required.

No relocations are anticipated.

Table 3 reflects the most current detail on all easements and disturbance along the Little Creek Trail and associated Plaza Trailhead. Based on the current layout, the Build Alternative would not necessitate the relocation of any structures. Ongoing updates to ROW estimates during engineering will help ensure consistency across environmental review and permitting documentation.

Table 3: Right of Way Required for the Build Alternative

Route Segment	PTE*	TCE**	ROW	AOD***	Total
			(acres)		
1: Conway Towne Center to Conway's PetSafe Dog Park	1.59	1.21	0.39	-	**3.19**
2: Dog Park to Museum Rd/Conway Soccer Complex	0.60	0.30	0.14	-	**1.05**
3: Museum Rd/Conway Soccer Complex to Arkansas Dermatology	0.59	0.32	0.19	-	**1.09**
4: Arkansas Dermatology to City of Colleges Park	0.59	0.33	0.62	-	**1.54**
5: City of Colleges Park to Bob Courtway Middle School	-	-	0.06	1.39	**1.45**
6: Bob Courtway Middle School to Conway Commons (E Oak St)	0.59	0.36	0.33	0.16	**1.44**
7: Conway Commons (E Oak St) to 6th Street bridge	0.00	0.01	-	1.53	**1.54**
Total required Permanent ROW	**3.95**		**1.74**		**5.69**
Total required Temporary Construction Easement		**2.53**			**2.53**
Total Area of Disturbance to Public Land				**3.08**	**3.08**

** Permanent Trail Easement*

*** Temporary Construction Easement*

**** Area of Disturbance within publicly owned land*

4.4 How would the project affect views?

The viewshed along the Little Creek Trail corridor is highly varied**,** encompassing a mix of urban, residential, and natural environments. The trail passes through existing neighborhoods in east Conway, transitions alongside commercial corridors, and weaves through open green spaces, riparian zones, and city parks. These diverse settings provide a unique visual experience for trail users - ranging from street-facing infrastructure to scenic natural areas like Little Creek and its associated riparian fringes. The project has been designed to complement and enhance the character of each surrounding landscape it traverses. Impacts to viewsheds in the vicinity of the project have been summarized in **Table 4**.

4.4.1 No Action Alternative

The **No Action Alternative** would maintain the existing visual character of the project area without any changes.

4.4.2 Build Alternative

Little Creek Trail would offer a mix of natural and urban scenery, creating a diverse visual experience for users. Expected views along the trails include:

A **viewshed** refers to the geographic area that is visible from a specific vantage point. E.g. a pedestrian or cyclist **looking out** from the trail,

Or the **views toward** the trail from nearby observers.

These observers might include park visitors, drivers on adjacent roadways, or residents and property owners located near the trail corridor.

Definition adapted from U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, "Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects" (FHWA, 2015).

- Riparian Corridor & Creekside Views (Little Creek, Near Conway Commons & Highway 64 Underpass)
- Urban & Commercial Contrast (Behind Conway Commons Shopping Center)
- Highway Infrastructure & Enclosed Passages (Highway 64 Underpass & 6th Street Bridge)
- Open Recreational & Educational Landscapes (Courtway Middle School & City of Colleges Park)
- Expansive Parkland & Horizon Views (Don Owen Sports Park)

Table 4: Viewshed Impact Summary

Scenery Type	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts	Mitigation
Riparian Corridor & Creekside Views	Natural banks, tree canopy, wetland vegetation; wildlife and seasonal creek views.	Erosion, bare soil from flooding or heavy use.	Flooding may deposit sediment/debris; increased use may wear vegetation.	Riparian restoration with native grasses and replanting; routine maintenance.
Urban & Commercial Contrast	Green space juxtaposed with urban backdrop, showing balance of built/natural settings.	Debris/litter accumulation after storm events.	Ongoing development may increase visible infrastructure.	Regular cleanup; stormwater filtration features; adopt-a-trail program.
Highway Infrastructure & Enclosed Passages	Tunnel-like, shaded light/shadow contrasts under bridges.	Dark/unwelcoming spaces; graffiti potential.	Long-term risk of recurring graffiti and degradation.	Lighting improvements; murals/public art; anti-graffiti coatings.
Recreational & Educational Landscapes	Expansive views of sports fields, playgrounds, and school facilities; tree stands provide shade.	Overhead lines, drainage structures, and nearby highway overpasses.	Continued development may increase visual intrusions.	Vegetative screening (native trees/shrubs); landscape maintenance.
Expansive Parkland & Horizon Views	Wide open fields and horizon lines; attractive sunrise/sunset views.	Compacted soil, worn grass, and litter from heavy use.	Long-term popularity may cause increased wear.	Routine maintenance; waste bins; designated restoration zones.
Overall Findings	Trail provides diverse scenic experiences, improves community access to natural and recreational landscapes, and enhances visual quality through restoration and design.	Negative effects are minor and localized.	Foreseeable effects are limited and manageable with proper planning.	With mitigation, adverse impacts are avoided or minimized; net long-term outcome is positive for visual resources.

Positive Impacts

- **Riparian Corridor and Creekside Views**: Users will experience scenic creekside settings with natural banks, tree canopies, wetland vegetation, and seasonal changes in flow, complemented by wildlife such as herons, turtles, and fish.
- **Urban and Commercial Contrast**: The trail will offer a dynamic juxtaposition of natural green space with urban backdrops near Conway Commons, illustrating the balance of natural and built environments.
- **Highway Infrastructure and Enclosed Passages**: Underpasses and bridges will create a shaded, tunnel-like experience with contrasting light and shadow, adding variety to the visual journey.
- **Recreational and Educational Landscapes**: Views across Courtway Middle School and City of Colleges Park provide open sightlines of sports fields, play areas, and school facilities, showcasing community life.
- **Expansive Parkland and Horizon Views**: Don Owen Sports Park offers broad fields and distant tree lines, ideal for sunrise and sunset vistas, enhancing the trail's visual quality.
- **Overall Design Enhancements**: Incorporation of context-sensitive landscaping, native vegetation, and aesthetic design features will enhance visual appeal, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.

Negative Impacts

- **Trailside Erosion and Bare Soil**: Heavy trail use, flooding, or construction activities could expose bare soil and create unsightly erosion scars along Little Creek.
- **Debris Accumulation**: Floodplain areas behind Conway Commons may collect storm debris and litter, detracting from visual quality.
- **Unwelcoming Underpasses**: Shaded, enclosed areas under bridges could appear dark or attract graffiti, reducing perceived safety and attractiveness.
- **Infrastructure Intrusion**: Overhead power lines, drainage structures, and nearby overpasses may disrupt the natural viewshed in recreational and educational areas.
- **Construction Staging**: Temporary staging areas for equipment and materials could create visual scars during implementation.

Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts

- **Increased User Traffic**: Higher trail usage may lead to worn grass, compacted soil, and litter accumulation in popular park areas.

- **Cumulative Aesthetic Pressures**: As regional trail and development projects expand, incremental changes to the viewshed could include more visible infrastructure and altered landscapes along the corridor.
- **Flooding Effects**: Seasonal flooding may increase visible sediment deposits, erosion scars, and debris in riparian zones.

Mitigation

- **Riparian Restoration**: Stabilize eroded banks with native grasses, erosion-control mats, and strategic replanting.
- **Routine Maintenance**: Provide regular debris removal, mowing, and litter pickup, including adopt-a-trail programs for community involvement.
- **Visual Enhancements in Underpasses**: Install lighting, murals, or public art, along with anti-graffiti coatings, to improve safety and appearance.
- **Vegetative Screening**: Use native trees and shrubs to soften views of power lines, drainage structures, and nearby commercial or transportation infrastructure.
- **Post-Construction Restoration**: Reseed and restore staging areas and scarred soils once construction is complete.
- **Environmental Stewardship**: Waste bins, restoration zones, and long-term landscape management will help sustain visual quality over time.

Little Creek Trail & Trailhead Plaza is **not anticipated** to result in **adverse impacts** to the **visual** character of the surrounding area. Rather, the project is expected to provide **incremental long-term enhancements** to visual quality through the incorporation of context-sensitive landscaping, visually compatible materials, and aesthetic design elements; particularly as experienced by non-motorized users such as pedestrians and cyclists.

4.5 How would the project affect land use and zoning?

Land use patterns within the study area were evaluated using municipal and county zoning maps, supplemented by field verification. The existing land use is characterized by a heterogeneous mix of urban and suburban development, including residential, institutional, commercial, and industrial uses, as well as designated parkland, natural open space, and areas of active or passive agricultural use.

4.5.1 No Action Alternative

The **No Action Alternative** of trails would not directly impact current or future land uses.

4.5.2 Build Alternative

Positive Impacts:

- **Promotion of Active Transportation:** The project encourages pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly developments near the trail.
- **Increased Property Values:** Proximity to recreational infrastructure tends to raise property values, benefiting homeowners and local governments.

Negative Impacts:

- **Changes to Land Use:** Land around the trail may undergo zoning changes, potentially affecting existing businesses or residences.
- **Potential Conflicts with Existing Land Uses:** The trail could conflict with nearby land uses, requiring adjustments.

Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts on Land Use and Urban Development:

- **Potential Impacts:** Increased residential and commercial development may follow the trail's development.
- **Reasonably Foreseeable Effects:** Future urban expansion could lead to more impervious surfaces, reduced green spaces, and increased runoff. Gentrification may also displace residents.
- **Mitigation:** Zoning regulations, affordable housing initiatives, and resilient urban designs can address these concerns.

Overall, the proposed project would result in only minor changes to existing land use within the study area.

4.6 How would the project affect parks and recreational areas?

The proposed Little Creek Trail & Trailhead Plaza, as part of the broader Connect Conway network, traverses or is adjacent to several publicly owned parks and recreational areas that are subject to protection under Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966. Some parks may also be protected under Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act if LWCF funds were used for their development or improvement.

The trail is designed to enhance access to and between existing recreational facilities and public amenities, rather than detract from their current use. In most cases, the trail would be constructed

within existing right-of-way or along the periphery of recreational areas, thereby avoiding direct adverse use of these resources.

Section 4(f) applies to publicly owned parks, recreation areas, and school properties open to the public. Based on a preliminary inventory, the following parks and recreational facilities are subject to Section 4(f) evaluation:

- Don Owen Sports Complex
- Curtis Walker Park
- City of Colleges Park
- Conway Dog Park
- Conway Soccer Complex
- Conway Public Schools District (Bob Courtway Middle School & Theodore Jones Elementary)

Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Resources
Section 4(f) resources include public parks, wildlife refuges, and important historic sites. A project can only use these lands if there's no other way to meet its goals, steps are taken to reduce harm, and a plan exists to offset any impacts.

Section 6(f) resources are lands bought or developed with Land and Water Conservation Fund grants. These lands must stay for public outdoor recreation unless the National Park Service approves a change, and any converted land must be replaced with land of equal value and usefulness.

In accordance with 23 CFR §774.3(b), the proposed trail alignment will result in only minor use of publicly owned parks and schools as shown in Figure 6. The trail is consistent with the existing recreational and educational functions of these resources, will not require conversion of land to non-recreational use, and will not adversely affect their features, attributes, or activities. The project has been coordinated with the officials having jurisdiction over the resources, and their concurrence has been obtained that the impacts are minor. Accordingly, the proposed action qualifies for a ***de minimis*** finding under Section 4(f).

No Section 6(f) properties have been identified within the project area. Therefore, no conversion of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)-assisted lands is anticipated.

Coordination with Officials with Jurisdiction (OWJs), including the City of Conway, school boards, and ADPHT, is be included in **Appendix D** of this EA.

4.6.1 No Action Alternative

The **No Action Alternative** would not result in any direct impacts to parks or recreational areas. The parks and recreational areas identified in **Figure 6** would continue to lack enhanced connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians.

4.6.2 Build Alternative

Potential Impacts:

- The development of Little Creek Trail would improve access to nearby parks and recreational areas by providing a safe, non-motorized transportation route. It may enhance the overall recreational experience for pedestrians and cyclists, encouraging more people to visit and utilize these spaces.
- The trail's presence could increase foot traffic to local parks, boosting community engagement in outdoor activities.
- In some cases, construction may temporarily disrupt access to certain park areas or recreational spaces due to trail construction activities, detours, or restrictions.

Reasonably Foreseeable Effects:

- The trail may increase recreational usage, contributing to the demand for park amenities and facilities. This could positively impact parks that are already popular but may also lead to crowding or strain on resources.
- Increased usage of parks could also encourage future improvements or expansions, contributing to better infrastructure and more amenities for park-goers.
- If additional recreational infrastructure projects are being developed in the area, the combined effects could result in a more active and well-connected recreational network, enhancing overall community health and quality of life.

Mitigation:

- The project would include thoughtful planning to minimize disruption during construction and ensure the trail integrates smoothly with existing park facilities.
- Coordination with local parks and recreational agencies would help ensure adequate support for increased demand, such as providing additional amenities, managing visitor flow, and enhancing park safety.

Long-term planning may include expanding park infrastructure or amenities to accommodate increased activity from the trail.

The proposed alignment would connect to all of the parks and public schools shown in **Figure 6**. Trail use would be compatible with the recreational purpose of these parks and would not detract from facilities such as sports fields. In addition, the alignment would enhance safe, non-motorized access to nearby schools, supporting active transportation options for students and the surrounding community.

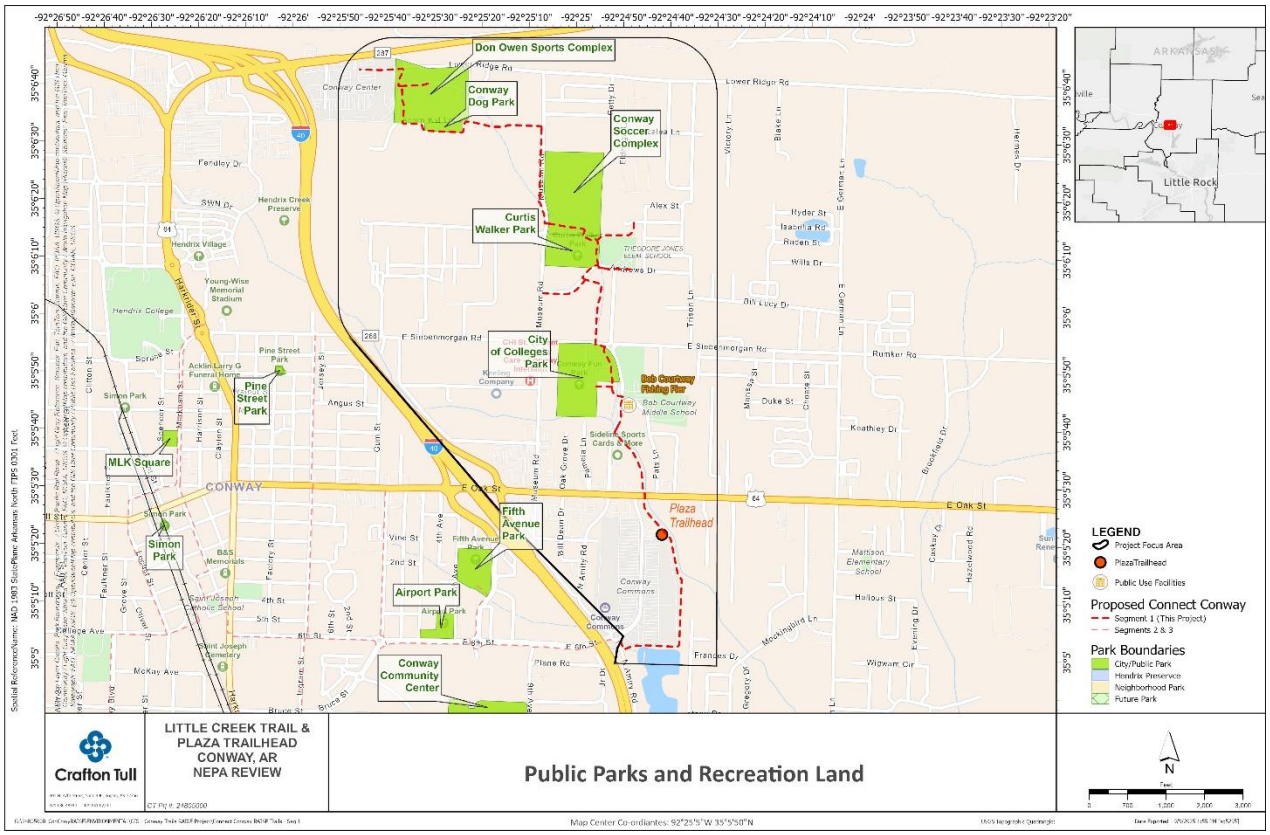

Figure 6: Parks and Recreational Areas Connected to the Build Alternative

4.7 Would any historic or archeological resources be affected?

Section 106 of the NHPA mandates that federal agencies evaluate the potential impacts of their actions on historic properties. In adherence to Section 106, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) engaged in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) representing Native American Nations with cultural ties to the project area.

Historic properties are defined as cultural resources that are listed in, or determined eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), consistent with 36 CFR §800.16(l).

Consultation with the SHPO and THPOs confirmed no anticipated adverse effects. In the event of inadvertent discovery during construction, work would be halted, and applicable state and federal procedures followed (see THPO correspondence in **Appendix C**).

As part of the cultural resource identification process, records were examined to identify any previously documented cultural resources within the project boundaries. This review included archaeological site records maintained by the Arkansas Archeological Survey (ARAS) and historic property information from the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (AHPP) (see Cultural Resources Report in **Appendix E**).

In accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA, the project is recommended for a finding of ***No Historic Properties Affected*** under 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1).

4.7.1 No Action Alternative

The **No Action Alternative** would not impact any historic properties or districts.

4.7.2 Build Alternative

A pedestrian cultural resources survey was conducted for the entire Connect Conway project area, including 1,482 shovel test locations distributed across 29 transects. Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead portion comprised transects 18 through 29. None of these transects yielded cultural materials. Ninety-seven shovel test locations were not excavated due to obstructions such as pavement, gravel, or buried utilities. Excavated tests measured at least 30 cm in diameter and extended 20 cm into culturally sterile subsoil unless restricted by site conditions. All soils were screened for artifacts, and soil characteristics were recorded using standardized methods.

Previous cultural resource investigations conducted between 1987 and 2021 within or near the APE similarly identified no new cultural materials or sites. Based on the survey results, a finding of No Historic Properties Affected is recommended in accordance with 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1).

Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead project supports community connectivity and improves public access to the historic environment, aligning with the NHPA's objective of preserving the nation's historical and cultural heritage as an active part of community life. In the event of inadvertent discoveries of human remains or cultural materials during construction, all work would be halted, and applicable state and federal procedures would be followed until clearance is obtained.

4.8 How would the project affect public water supplies?

Little Creek Trail corridor lies within the local watershed but does not directly cross or disturb any municipal water supply intakes or public water wells. The primary potential risk to public water supply during the project would occur through **reasonably foreseeable environmental pathways**, such as short-term increases in sediment or pollutant runoff into Little Creek during construction. If unmanaged, this runoff could enter downstream surface water bodies that form part of the municipal water source.

4.8.1 No Action Alternative

The **No Action Alternative** would not impact any public water supplies.

4.8.2 Build Alternative

To avoid any impacts, the project would implement measures consistent with the Arkansas Department of Health's *Rules Pertaining to Public Water Systems* and the Clean Water Act's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program.

Positive Impacts:

- The **water fountain at the Plaza Trailhead** would provide a public hydration source, reducing plastic bottle waste.
- The project may encourage **stormwater management improvements**, preventing contamination of groundwater and reservoirs.
- **Rehabilitation efforts at Little Creek** may enhance natural filtration and groundwater recharge.

Negative Impacts:

- **Construction activities** could introduce sediment, oils, and chemicals into groundwater supplies.
- Increased human traffic may lead to **accidental spills** or improper disposal of waste near water sources.

Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts:

- As Conway develops, increased demand for clean water may strain municipal supplies.
- Multiple projects affecting water sources could lead to long-term contamination risks.

Mitigation:

- Install **stormwater filtration systems** and permeable paving at the trailhead to reduce runoff pollution.
- Implement a **waste management plan** to prevent contamination from visitor activity.
- Installing erosion and **sediment controls** (silt fencing, sediment basins, inlet protection) before ground disturbance.
- Maintaining vegetated buffers along Little Creek to intercept runoff.
- Prohibiting fueling or maintenance of equipment within designated buffer zones.
- Rapidly stabilizing disturbed soils with seed or mulch to prevent sediment migration.

As the trail's footprint is narrow and largely follows existing disturbed corridors, and no construction would occur in direct proximity to public water supply facilities, the project is **not anticipated to result in significant adverse impacts** to public water supply systems. Compliance with ADEQ stormwater

permitting and ongoing inspection during construction would ensure continued protection of drinking water resources.

4.9 How would streams be affected by the project?

Major water bodies in the project area include Little Creek and various unnamed ephemeral and intermittent tributaries to Little Creek. Little Creek is not listed as an ecologically sensitive waterbody according to ADEQ's 2024 303(d) Impaired Waterbodies List. A review of publicly accessible ADEQ databases, 303(d) listings, and watershed management plans indicates that no Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) have been adopted or proposed for Little Creek or its tributaries within the project area.

Construction activities disturbing more than one acre of land must obtain coverage under the NPDES general permit for construction. This permit requires the development of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), which outlines a set of Best Management Practices (BMPs) designed to minimize or prevent the release of pollutants into nearby water bodies during construction. BMPs are proven strategies and measures implemented to protect water quality and prevent environmental degradation associated with construction activities.

The Clean Water Act is a federal law that protects the nation's rivers, lakes, and streams. It sets rules for:

Section 404: Dumping materials into water.

Section 402: Releasing pollutants into water.

Section 401: Letting states control discharges that could affect water quality.

4.9.1 No Action Alternative

The **No Action Alternative** would not impact any water resources.

4.9.2 Build Alternative

In total, one perennial, one ephemeral, and two intermittent streams are within the limits of project disturbance (see **Table 5** for overview). Details regarding specific streams can be found in **Appendix F**, the Wetlands and Waters Delineation Report.

Positive Impacts:

- **Stream rehabilitation at Little Creek** would stabilize banks, reduce erosion, and improve water quality and natural hydrologic function.
- Vegetation planting along the creek would **enhance habitat** for aquatic life and improve natural filtration.
- Trail design may encourage **environmental stewardship** by providing educational signage about stream protection.

Negative Impacts:

- **Construction near Little Creek** may cause short-term sedimentation, affecting water clarity and aquatic habitats.
- Increased **trail use and foot traffic** could lead to soil compaction and erosion.
- **Wetland and Stream Crossings**: Portions of the trail will require limited dredge/fill (accumulatively <0.01 acre) at crossings of potentially jurisdictional streams. Each crossing is separate/complete (note that no mitigation unless one of these crossings exceeds 0.03 acres under the Clean Water Act).

Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts:

- If not properly managed, increased impervious surfaces from other developments could **exacerbate runoff and flooding** in Little Creek.
- Increased impervious surface from trail paving may affect hydrology and runoff. However, design incorporates low-impact development (LID) practices including bioswales, vegetated buffers, permeable pavement, and rock check dams. Long-term monitoring and stormwater maintenance will minimize reasonably foreseeable environmental effects associated with stormwater runoff and watershed interactions.

Mitigation:

- Use **erosion control measures** like silt fences and buffer zones during construction.
- Incorporate **permeable materials** and rain gardens at the trailhead to manage runoff.
- Design all stream crossings so that bridges or boardwalks span the streams entirely, with no piers, abutments, or other infrastructure placed within the active stream channel, thereby avoiding direct impacts to aquatic habitats, and maintaining natural flow regimes.

Table 5: Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead Linear Feet (LF) of Identified Streams Crossings

Streams	Type	Length (LF)	Likely Jurisdictional*?
Little Creek (S1)	Perennial	187	Yes
Stream S2	Intermittent	140	Yes
Stream S3	Intermittent	40	Yes
Stream S4	Ephemeral	157	No
Total for Build Alternative	N/A	524 LF	
Total Likely Jurisdictional Length	N/A	367 LF	

**Jurisdictional status is subject to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approval.*

This project would follow all requirements of the Clean Water Act (CWA) as administered through the USACE Section 404 permitting program, the ADEQ Water Quality Certification (Section 401), and the NPDES (Section 402). BMPs, along with avoidance and minimization measures, would be implemented to limit or eliminate impacts to aquatic resources within the project area.

Wetlands are areas that are frequently inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater for sufficient periods to support vegetation specifically adapted to wet soil conditions. Protected under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), wetlands play an important role in natural flood control, improving water quality, and providing essential habitat for wildlife.

4.10 How would wetlands be affected by the project?

Under Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), federal agencies must consider potential wetland impacts whenever a federal nexus is present. For the Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead, all wetlands, streams, ponds, and other aquatic features within the project corridor were delineated and evaluated through the appropriate federal and state regulatory processes.

Coordination with the USFWS is required to determine whether these features provide habitat for federally listed threatened or endangered species, while the USACE evaluates whether a feature is considered “jurisdictional” under Section 404 of the CWA. This regulatory framework ensures that aquatic resources are accurately identified, protected where possible, and assigned appropriate mitigation when impacts are unavoidable.

Wetlands were classified using the Cowardin classification system (Cowardin et al., 1979), the standard adopted by USFWS and USACE. Within the project corridor, a freshwater emergent wetland was identified. Detailed mapping and descriptions of all aquatic resources are provided in **Appendix F**.

4.10.1 No Action Alternative

The **No Action Alternative** would have no effect on wetlands.

4.10.2 Build Alternative

A single wetland was identified in the vicinity of the project area, with one emergent wetland adjacent to the project corridor near Theodore Jones Elementary School along Andrews Avenue (**Table 6**). This feature measures approximately 0.04 acre; however, will be excluded from the project’s area of impact entirely. While future adjustments to the trail alignment could potentially intersect wetlands outside the surveyed area, wetland presence within the project limits is generally limited due to the urbanized character of the ROW and the predominantly upland conditions of the surrounding landscape.

Positive Impacts:

- Stream rehabilitation may **restore wetland functions**, improving biodiversity and water retention.
- The project could enhance **public awareness of wetland ecosystems** through interpretive signage.
- Trail will provide **access** to aquatic resources and communities.

Negative Impacts:

- **Trailhead infrastructure (deck, ablutions, bicycle station)** may encroach on sensitive wetland areas.
- Increased visitor presence could **disturb wetland species** or introduce pollutants.

Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts:

- Continued urban expansion may contribute to **wetland loss and degradation**.

Mitigation:

- Implement **buffer zones** to protect wetland integrity.
- Design trail features (e.g., **boardwalks over sensitive areas**) to minimize impacts.

Table 6: Acres of Impacted Wetlands by Build Alternative

Build Alternative	Wetlands adjoining project area	Total Wetland Impacts
Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead	0.04 acre	0 acre

4.11 What floodplain impacts are anticipated and how would they be mitigated?

The project was evaluated to assess whether either alternative would encroach on special flood hazard areas, such as 100-year floodplains, as identified on FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps.

Floodplains are low-lying areas adjacent to rivers, streams, or other water bodies that are subject to inundation during flood events. A 100-year floodplain refers to the area that would be inundated during a flood event with a 1% annual chance of occurrence (also called the base flood). This designation is commonly used for regulatory, planning, and flood insurance purposes.

4.11.1 No Action Alternative

The **No Action Alternative** would not affect any floodplains**.**

4.11.2 Build Alternative

Hydrologic and hydraulic modeling conducted for the Little Creek Trail indicates that current grading and bridge design produce a slight rise in water surface elevation at a few cross sections during the 100-year flood event. These localized effects are being corrected during the final design process to ensure compliance with FEMA "no-rise" standards and Executive Order 11988 on Floodplain Management. Overall, the modeling shows a minor reduction in the extent of the 100-year floodplain within the project area, with approximately 0.53 acres removed from inundation (**Table 7**). Therefore, with appropriate design refinements, the project is not anticipated to result in adverse impacts to regulatory floodplains.

Table 7: Floodplain Impacts by Build Alternative

Route Segment		Floodplain Impacts – water surface area *(acres)*
Route Segment 1:	Conway Towne Center to Conway's PetSafe Dog Park	0
Route Segment 2:	Dog Park to Museum Rd/Conway Soccer Complex	-0.87
Route Segment 3:	Museum Rd/Conway Soccer Complex to Arkansas Dermatology	-0.66
Route Segment 4:	Arkansas Dermatology to City of Colleges Park	-0.12
Route Segment 5:	City of Colleges Park to Bob Courtway Middle School	0.51
Route Segment 6:	Bob Courtway Middle School to Conway Commons (E Oak St)	0.29
Route Segment 7:	Conway Commons (E Oak St) to 6th Street bridge	0.32
	Total Floodplain Impacts	**-0.53***

** data as at 08/22/2025*

Positive Impacts:

- **Stream rehabilitation** can improve floodplain resilience and reduce flood risks.
- The use of **permeable paving** in trailhead areas would aid in water absorption.

Negative Impacts:

- The addition of **trailhead structures** may alter **natural drainage patterns**.
- Increased human activity could lead to **soil compaction**, reducing floodplain absorption.

Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts:

- Increased urbanization could **amplify flood risks** in the area.

Mitigation:

- Design infrastructure to withstand **flood events** (e.g., elevated deck and span bridges).
- Preserve floodplain functions by **maintaining natural vegetation**.
- Design to maintain "**no net rise**" in base flood elevations, consistent with FEMA and City of Conway floodplain ordinances.

4.12 Are impacts to wildlife or their habitat expected from the project?

Wildlife Habitat

An **endangered species** is a plant or animal at risk of extinction across all, or a substantial portion, of its natural range. These species receive the highest level of legal protection under federal law.

A **threatened species** is one that is not currently endangered but is likely to become so in the foreseeable future without protective measures.

The project corridor spans multiple habitat types yet maintains relatively consistent vegetation diversity and density throughout its length. The entire corridor lies within the Level IV ecoregion "Arkansas Valley Plains (37d)," part of the broader Level III Arkansas Valley ecoregion. Additional details on vegetation communities and habitats are provided in **Appendix G**. Overall, the ecological communities along the trail alignment are largely similar and include freshwater streams, upland improved grass pastures, forested riparian corridors, and early successional wetlands. A comparable range of plant and animal species is anticipated to inhabit these communities throughout the project extent.

Federally Listed Species

In compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, federally listed threatened and endangered species potentially occurring in the project area were identified using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's IPaC (Information, Planning, and Conservation) online tool (USFWS, 2019). These species may be present in or migrate through Faulkner County. The ANHC was also consulted regarding the presence of state-listed species or other species of concern within the proposed action area.

Use IPaC Determination Key tool indicated that the proposed project ***may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect***, the Indiana Bat and the Tricolored Bat. This determination reflects that suitable habitat may be present within the project area; however, with the application of seasonal tree clearing restrictions and other standard conservation measures, the species are not anticipated to be placed in jeopardy. This effect determination will be submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for review and concurrence.

A list of identified species and USFWS correspondence is provided in **Table 8**. Habitat assessments and

effects determinations are included in **Appendix G**.

4.12.1 No Action Alternative

Under the **No Action Alternative**, there would be no direct or indirect effects on wildlife, including federally listed species, or their habitats.

4.12.2 Build Alternative

Approximately 80% of the Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead ROW intersects medium to highly developed areas, the remaining 20% intersects pasture or hay type landcover (18%) and deciduous forest (2%). These land use types provide habitat for urban fauna and invasive vegetation along the riparian corridors, which would not likely experience substantial habitat impacts by the development of a non-motorized, narrow pedestrian path. Wildlife occupying these habitats would not likely have their mobility impeded by the trail or be exposed to harm due to pedestrian/vehicle collisions.

Seven (7) threatened, endangered, or candidate species were reported by USFWS as being potentially present within the project area. These species are listed in **Table 8** and include 2 bats, 3 birds, one reptile, and one insect. Site visits have concluded that habitat is present for only three of the seven species. Habitat is marginal for listed bat species such as Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and Tricolored Bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*). The ROW generally avoids trees that Tricolored Bat and Indiana Bat would likely use to roost.

Listed bird species such as, Piping Plover, Eastern Black Rail, and Rufa Red Knot, require shoreline habitat or wetlands. While wetlands exist in the vicinity of the project area, the 0.04 acre of freshwater emergent wetland is likely too small to support populations of the Eastern Black Rail. Additionally, Eastern Black Rail is not likely to occur in the area, with the unlikely exception of a possible transient individual during migration. Alligator Snapping Turtle prefer large aquatic resources, i.e., large rivers and lakes, that are absent within the project area, therefore habitat to support this species is lacking. Habitat is marginal for Monarch Butterfly, although it likely occurs as a transient, especially during migration.

Suitable nesting habitat for migratory birds exists within the proposed action area. To avoid disturbance during the nesting season, construction activities that could impact migratory birds should be scheduled between August 15 and March 31. If work is conducted within this non-nesting window, no adverse effects to migratory birds are anticipated.

Table 8: Preliminary USFW Species Conclusion Table

Name	Critical habitat in project area?	Listing Status	USFWS Determination	Potentially Affected
Indiana Bat *Myotis sodalis*	No	Endangered	May affect, NLAA	Unlikely
Tricolored Bat *Perimyotis subflavus*	No critical habitat has been designated for this species.	Proposed Endangered	May affect, NLAA	Unlikely
Eastern Black Rail *Laterallus jamaicensis ssp. jamaicensis*	No critical habitat has been designated for this species.	Threatened	No effect	No
Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus*	No	Threatened	No effect	No
Rufa Red Knot *Calidris canutus rufa*	No	Threatened	No effect	No
Alligator Snapping Turtle *Macrochelys temminckii*	No critical habitat has been designated for this species.	Proposed Threatened	No effect	No
Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus*	No	Proposed Threatened	No effect	Unlikely

Eight (8) species of state conservation concern were reported by ANHC to potentially inhabit the greater project area (Conway city limits). The species are listed in **Table 9** . Of these 8 species, none were reported to be within the trail ROW, although one species was reported to be in close proximity to the trail ROW (Osage burrowing crayfish *Procambarus liberorum)*. No indications of crayfish burrows were identified within the portion of the project ROW that was nearest to the known discovery site of Osage burrowing crayfish.

Table 9: ANHC Species of State Conservation Concern

Name	Critical habitat in project area?	Critical habitat close to project area?	Potentially Affected
Savannah milkweed *Asclepias obovata*	No	No	No
Alligator gar *Atractosteus spatula*	No	No	No
Opaque prairie sedge *Carex opaca*	No	No	No
Nuttall's pleat-leaf *Nemastylis nuttallii*	No	No	No
Osage burrowing crayfish *Procambarus liberorum*	No	Yes	Unlikely
Great coneflower *Rudbeckia maxima*	No	No	No
Fragrant ladies'-tresses *Spiranthes odorata*	No	No	No
Arkansas twistflower *Streptanthus maculatus spp.*	No	No	No

There are no critical habitats within your project area under this office's jurisdiction.

Positive Impacts:

- **Rehabilitation of Little Creek** would create healthier habitats for fish, amphibians, and birds.
- The project encourages **eco-friendly transportation**, reducing vehicle-related wildlife disturbances.

Negative Impacts:

- **Trailhead development** may lead to habitat fragmentation.
- Increased **human activity and noise** could disturb sensitive species.
- **Construction** may temporarily disturb wildlife in riparian zones and forested corridors, including potential habitat for protected species such as bats.

Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts:

- Ongoing development in the region could **compound habitat loss** over time.
- Habitat fragmentation and tree clearing may have long-term effects on roosting and foraging habitat for Indiana and Tricolored Bats. Seasonal clearing restrictions, preservation of mature stands, and native revegetation will reduce impacts. Coordination with USFWS will ensure compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

Mitigation:

- Maintain **wildlife corridors** to allow movement between habitats.
- Use **low-impact lighting** to reduce light pollution impacts on nocturnal species.
- Seasonal restrictions on tree clearing, avoidance of sensitive roosting and nesting areas, and post-construction monitoring.

4.13 Are there any hazardous materials in the project area?

A visual assessment and a review of federal and state environmental databases identified multiple facilities in proximity to the Little Creek Trail and Plaza Trailhead project area that are associated with hazardous materials generation, storage, or past releases. These include:

Hazardous materials are substances that, if encountered, could pose a potential health risk to people.

- **Hazardous Waste Generators** – Several large, small, and very small quantity generators within 0.25 miles, including retail, automotive, and light industrial facilities, handling wastes such as ignitable and corrosive liquids, petroleum products, solvents, and certain toxic chemicals.
- **Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (LUST)** – Multiple confirmed petroleum releases within

0.5 miles, with documented impacts to soil and groundwater from gasoline, kerosene, or oil.
- **Underground Storage Tanks (UST)** – Several active and inactive tanks within 0.25 miles.
- **Illegal Dump Sites** – Four reported solid waste disposal sites within 0.5 miles.

4.13.1 No Action Alternative

The **No Action Alternative** would not result in any impacts to hazardous materials or waste sites.

4.13.2 Build Alternative

No hazardous waste sites are located directly within the proposed trail alignment. However, given the number and proximity of potential contamination sources, there is some potential for the project corridor to intersect areas of impacted soils or groundwater during construction.

Potential Concerns

- Legacy industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities in the vicinity may have resulted in localized soil or groundwater contamination.
- Historic and ongoing application of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers on adjacent lands could present chemical exposure risks.
- Proximity to hazardous waste generators, leaking underground storage tanks, and known release sites increases the potential for encountering contamination during construction.

Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts

- Continued urbanization in the project area could increase the potential for hazardous runoff and mobilization of existing contaminants into Little Creek and its tributaries.

Mitigation

- Prior to construction, review available records and inspect the alignment for indications of contamination.
- In the event contamination is encountered during construction, suspend work in the affected area and coordinate with the appropriate regulatory agencies.
- Implement BMPs to prevent contaminant migration, contain affected soils, and protect nearby surface waters.

If evidence of contamination (e.g., stained soils, petroleum odors, discolored water, or buried waste) is observed during construction, work in the affected area would be halted, and the material would be evaluated by qualified personnel. Any necessary cleanup or disposal would be performed in

accordance with the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), and applicable Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment (ADEE), EPA, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations.

Detailed results of the environmental database review are provided in **Appendix I**.

4.14 Does the project have any reasonably foreseeable effects?

The assessment of reasonably foreseeable effects for the Little Creek Trail & Plaza Trailhead considers potential environmental, social, and economic outcomes that may extend beyond the immediate construction footprint. Consistent with guidance, the analysis focuses on effects that are reasonably foreseeable, scientifically credible, and of sufficient likelihood to warrant consideration. The analysis also draws upon the five-step framework outlined in the AASHTO Practitioner's Handbook 12 and the is included in the **Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts Analysis** (see **Appendix H**).

Study Area and Time Frame

- **Study Area:** The project corridor, adjacent neighborhoods, and community assets likely to be influenced by the trail.
- **Time Frame:** Both near-term construction impacts and long-term effects (20+ years) based on growth trends, transportation planning, and land use projections.

Reasonably foreseeable effects are those environmental, social, or economic consequences of a proposed federal action that are sufficiently likely to occur. These effects may occur directly as a result of the project or indirectly through predictable interactions with other activities, but they must be supported by credible scientific evidence, not speculation (CEQ, 2025 Memo on Implementation of NEPA).

4.14.1 No Action Alternative

Under the **No Action Alternative**, **no reasonably foreseeable effects** are anticipated because no construction or new facilities would occur.

4.14.2 Build Alternative

The **Build Alternative** is expected to generate long-term community benefits through enhanced mobility, improved public health, support for regional planning and improvement initiatives. While some reasonably foreseeable effects are likely, mitigation and design strategies are expected to avoid or minimize adverse outcomes.

4.14.3 Resource-Specific Findings

Overall, the project's effects are expected to be minor, localized, and manageable with planned mitigation. Portions of the trail cross FEMA-designated floodplains; however, the project does not

introduce fill or enclosed structures that would diminish flood capacity. Compliance with local ordinances and federal regulations will ensure no net rise in base flood elevations.

The narrow trail footprint, combined with resource-sensitive design and mitigation measures, supports the conclusion that no significant reasonably foreseeable effects are anticipated. Instead, the trail is expected to improve quality of life, advance public health, and enhance environmental conditions in line with Conway's long-term planning goals.

Table 10 summarizes the reasonably foreseeable effects, magnitude, duration, extent, and mitigation strategies for key resource areas. These findings demonstrate that effects are generally moderate, localized, and manageable with proposed measures.

Table 10: Effects, Impacts, and Mitigation Strategies

Resource	Effects of Proposed Action	Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Mitigation Strategies
Land Use & Development	Encourages denser, mixed-use growth in east Conway; could increase property values.	Higher connectivity may accelerate development pressure; displacement concerns.	Moderate–High	Long-term	East Conway	Implement affordable housing policies; coordinate with city planning.
Socioeconomic Conditions	Improves access to jobs, healthcare, and education.	Long-term economic uplift but potential for displacement.	Moderate–High	Long-term	City-wide	Community outreach; ensure benefits are accessible to current residents and businesses.
Water Resources (Little Creek & Wetlands)	Construction may cause erosion/runoff; stormwater measures included.	Increased impervious surfaces could worsen runoff if unmanaged.	Moderate	Short- & Long-term	Localized (Little Creek/wetlands)	Use green infrastructure (bioswales, permeable surfaces); streambank restoration.
Biological Resources (Wildlife & Vegetation)	Tree removal may affect Indiana Bat & Tricolored Bat habitats.	Habitat fragmentation risk unless conservation applied.	Low–Moderate	Long-term	Riparian corridors	Follow USFWS guidelines; seasonal clearing restrictions; native plantings.
Air Quality	Expected reduction in vehicle emissions from increased walking/biking.	Net air quality improvement as active transport adoption grows.	Low–Moderate	Long-term	City-wide	Promote bike-sharing; incentives for car-free commuting.
Traffic & Transportation	Improves mobility and safety; may require crossings.	Increased pedestrian/bike volumes may need further safety improvements.	Moderate	Long-term	City-wide intersections	Enhanced crossings, signage, traffic calming at high-traffic areas.

4.15 What resources are either not present or not affected?

In accordance with guidance, certain environmental resources were considered during the desktop review and interagency coordination but determined either to be absent from the project area or unaffected by the proposed action. These resources require no further analysis. The following subsections summarize these findings.

4.15.1 Air Quality

The project area meets all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The **Build Alternative** may temporarily affect local air quality from construction equipment, but impacts are negligible. Trail use could reduce vehicle emissions over the long term. **No adverse effects** are expected under either alternative.

4.15.2 Noise

Construction would cause temporary, localized noise above ambient levels, but no sensitive receptors would be affected. The project is not a Type I project under FHWA noise policy (23 CFR §772); therefore, no noise analysis is required.

There is no noise impact associated with the **No Action Alternative**.

4.15.3 Energy

The No Action and Build Alternatives are not expected to have any impact on energy resources.

4.15.4 Landforms and Geology

Neither the **No Action** nor the **Build Alternative** would affect the area's landforms or geological resources.

4.15.5 Wild and Scenic Rivers

No designated **wild and scenic rivers** in the project area.

4.15.6 Cultural and Historic Resources

A Phase I cultural resources survey was completed for the project (see Section 4.10.2). No cultural materials or historic properties were identified within the Area of Potential Effects. Based on these results, the project will have **No Historic Properties Affected** under 36 CFR §800.4(d)(1). Therefore, cultural and historic resources are not anticipated to be impacted by the No Action or Build

Alternatives.

4.15.7 Would any prime farmland be impacted by the project?

Little Creek Trail and associated Connect Conway segments are entirely within the incorporated limits of the City of Conway. Projects inside city limits are exempt from the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) (7 U.S.C. 4201 et seq.), which applies only to farmland converted outside urbanized areas. In line with NRCS guidance, no FPPA review or completion of Form AD-1006 is required. Therefore, no prime, unique, or statewide important farmland will be converted.

Please see **Appendix C** for the NRCS correspondence and Farmland Conversion Rating Form.

4.15.8 Hazardous Materials

No known hazardous materials, underground storage tanks, or contaminated sites are present within the project footprint. Construction activities will adhere to standard specifications to prevent spills or releases (see detailed EDR Area/Corridor Report in **Appendix I**).

5 Results and Recommendations

Chapter 5 summarizes environmental analysis results and outlines commitments and the path forward.

5.1 What are the results of this EA?

Based on the environmental analysis, it has been determined that the proposed project would not result in significant impacts to the natural or human environment under either Alternative.

Table 11 provides a comparison of the environmental impacts associated with the **No Action Alternative** and **Build Alternatives**.

Table 11: Impacts Associated with the No Action and Preferred Alternative

Resource Categories	No Action Alternative	Build Alternative
Alternative Length	0	4.2
Right of Way Required (acres)	0	5.7
Temporary Construction Easement (acres)	0	2.5
Park & School Connections	0	7
Construction Cost*	$ 0	$ 21 million
ROW Acquisition Cost*	$ 0	$ 2 million
Engineering Design and Inspection*	$ 0	$ 2 million
Total Cost*	$ 0	**$ 25 million**
Annual Economic Benefit**	$ 0	$ 2.8 million
Relocations Required	0	0
Jurisdictional Stream Impacts (linear feet/acres)	0	30/<0.01
Jurisdictional Wetland Impacts (acres)	0	0
Suitable T&E Species Habitat Impact***	0	3
Floodplain Impacts (acres)	0	-0.53
Visual Impacts to Trail Users	No Change	Fair - Good
Known NRHP Sites Impacted	0	0
Hazardous Materials Sites Impacted/Remediated	0	0
Farmland Impacts (acres)	0	0

** Connect Conway Project - RAISE Grant Application (2022)*
*** Quantified Annual Benefits - Health, Safety, Economic & Environmental (BBC, 2022)*
**** Acres of tree clearing required*

5.2 What is the Preferred Alternative?

The **Preferred Alternative** is the **Build Alternative** that most effectively satisfies the project's purpose and need while minimizing adverse environmental and social impacts.

It was identified as the **Preferred Alternative** because, compared to the **No Build Alternative**, it provides the required community connectivity and safety improvements while avoiding or minimizing impacts to sensitive environmental resources and community features.

5.3 What commitments have been made?

The following commitments have been made for the proposed project:

- The project would comply with all applicable **CWA** regulations, including obtaining **Section 401 Water Quality Certification**, a **Section 402 NPDES** permit, and a **Section 404 permit** to minimize environmental impacts to waters and wetlands.
- Coordination with the **USACE** and the **USFWS** regarding aquatic and biological resources, including Little Creek, would continue throughout project development.
- **Tree Clearing Restrictions**: Tree removal would be limited to seasons outside the roosting period for listed bat species (typically **between October 1 and March 31**). This avoids impacts to maternity roosting colonies of species such as the Indiana Bat. Any mature trees with suitable roosting characteristics would be surveyed and addressed accordingly.
- **Construction activities that could impact migratory birds** should be scheduled **between August 15 and March 31**. If work is conducted within this non-nesting window, no adverse effects to migratory birds are anticipated
- If any areas not previously included in the cultural resources survey are required for the **Preferred Alternative**, an amended survey will be conducted and submitted to the Arkansas **SHPO**. Any newly identified sites will be evaluated for eligibility for listing in the **NRHP**, and tribal consultation will be initiated if prehistoric or culturally sensitive resources are discovered.
- The project would comply with federal floodplain regulations, including certification that it results in "**no net rise**" within regulated floodplains or floodways.
- If hazardous materials, illegal dumps, or USTs are encountered during construction, they would be evaluated in accordance with **FHWA** procedures, and appropriate remediation would be coordinated with the **ADEE**.
- A **Water Pollution Control Special Provision** would be incorporated into the construction contract to reduce sedimentation and prevent water quality degradation.
- Protective measures would be implemented for any identified private drinking water wells that could be impacted by construction activities.

- A **native wildflower seed mix** would be used in permanent seeding areas to support ecological restoration and improve pollinator habitat.

5.4 Is the NEPA process finished?

Upon approval of the EA, the project will advance to a Public Hearing (PH) to present the findings. Following the hearing, comments received from the public, elected officials, and relevant agencies would be reviewed and considered. Based on this input, a **Finding of No Significant Impact** (FONSI) would be prepared and submitted to the FHWA, unless significant, unmitigable impacts are identified, at which point the project may be recommended for evaluation through an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

If FHWA issues a Finding of FONSI, it will document the **Selected Alternative** and formally conclude the NEPA process. Then the project moves into final design, permitting & construction, subject to compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local requirements.

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