Enhancing Bicycling, Walking, and Accessibility at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

1  LETRA connection trail

Approximately 1.7 million annual visitors engage in wildlife-dependent recreation and later to conserve the Texas Longhorn – culturally significant in western U.S. Established in 1901, WMWR became a testing ground to preserve the American bison and conserves the largest remnant of undisturbed mixed-grass prairie in the world. Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge (WMWR) encompasses nearly 60,000 acres and to a NEPA-ready state through the Transportation Scholar’s efforts.

Three high-priority trail projects are now being advanced through non-motorized means. Speeding Animal-vehicle collisions
Parking congestion
Habitat degradation
Pollution
Limited pullouts for wildlife viewing
Blind curves
Large carbon footprint
High road maintenance costs

Project Problems

No regional transportation coordination
Auto-dependent development patterns
Poor statewide health
Inadequately funded public, especially youth
Few accessible facilities
Diverse wildlife area
Littering

Project Goals

Increase and improve non-motorized travel options
Redeem visitors to biking and walking opportunities
Increase quantity and quality of accessible trail experiences
Encourage visitors to connect with nature through active modes
Encourage biking and walking among target audiences

Visitation

Approximately 1.7 million annual visitors engage in wildlife-dependent recreation and enjoy the scenic views. Ninety percent of these visitors arrive in private automobiles.

Project Partners

Fort Sill-Amy Beas and the Moore, Walker, and Recreation Division
Medicine Park Museum of Natural Science
City of Lawton Parks and Recreation Department
Fit Kids of Southwest Oklahoma
Fort Sill Public Schools

Target Audiences

Families with children
Youth
People using wheelchairs or other mobility aids
Active seniors/retirees
Casual recreationalists

Community Outreach

Since the beginning of the project, the Refuge’s education program has provided opportunity for the public, community leaders, teachers, and youth to engage the trails planning process. Over 215 people shared their preferences for safe and accessible trail facilities.

The Refuge began work in 2009 to address some of the above problems and to provide visitors on foot and on bike to access a variety of diverse flora and fauna.

The LETRA connection trail’s purpose is to provide non-motorized travel options for visitors to access the Refuge, Fort Sill, and Medicine Park.

Project partners include landowners with property adjacent to the Refuge and organizations that support the Refuge with volunteers, awareness and promotion, environmental education, and access to target visitor markets.

The Jed Johnson Tower trail’s purpose is to provide accessible, non-motorized travel options for families with children, groups, and individual visitors.

What is the Transportation Scholars Program?
The Public Lands Transportation Scholars programs provide parks and public lands with transportation professionals for six to 12 months who assist in transportation planning and implementation to help users and public lands reduce traffic, congestion and pollution while improving visitor experiences. These programs are designed to place individuals with substantial knowledge and expertise in transportation planning and related areas. See list of sponsors.

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