

Chase Oaks Golf Course Trail Connection

History

A trail along Russell Creek connecting under U.S. 75 to Oak Point Park and Nature Preserve was identified on the Bicycle Transportation Plan beginning in 1985 (plan attached). In 1986 the City acquired an easement through Chase Oaks Golf Course when the course was originally developed. A portion of the trail was constructed at that time. The existing trail goes behind 16 of the 19 homes backing to the proposed route. The trail has not been used because it does not connect to anything on either end.

The 1993 and 2001 updates to the Bicycle Transportation Plan include the trail connection through Chase Oaks Golf Course. The 1993 and 2001 updates to the plan are part of the Transportation Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan (plans attached).

The trail through Hoblitzelle Park to the west edge of the course at Vineyard Drive was completed in the 1990's. The trail on Chase Oaks Boulevard to U.S. 75 was completed in 2010.

Funding for this trail construction was authorized by the voters in the 2009 Bond Referendum. The language typically seen in materials mailed to the residents reads "Funding is for recreational trail connections throughout the city linking existing trails with newly developed areas and adjacent cities." The specific trail connections and locations are not identified. All of our trail plans show an approximate location for the proposed trails. It is not uncommon for trails to move slightly from their shown location as conditions are more closely examined during the preparation of construction documents. The Bluebonnet East connection built in 2010 is an example of a trail that was relocated. The connection of the trail under U.S. 75 to Oak Point Park and Nature Preserve which will be built in 2012 has also been moved slightly from its original location.

Recent Events

In 2010 the City of Allen began preparing plans for the renovation of Chase Oaks Golf Course. In the summer of 2010 City of Plano staff began discussions with Allen staff about constructing the trail. The City of Plano hired Allen's consulting golf course architect to prepare plans for the trail. Preliminary plans for the trail were prepared and then the City of Allen elected not to proceed with renovation at that time.

In August 2011 City Plano staff members were notified that the golf course renovation would be bid soon and that the trail would be included as an alternate bid item. All of the issues associated with the trail had not been fully explored by staff or the golf course architect but we elected to include it in the golf course bid in order to provide an opportunity to have it constructed during the golf course renovation. If changes to the trail design were necessary they could be made prior to, or during construction.

Homeowner Opposition

When homeowners adjacent to the golf course learned of plans to construct the trail as part of the golf course renovation they expressed opposition to the trail. City staff sent a letter offering to meet with each individual homeowner to discuss their concerns. Staff met with eight homeowners and spoke on the phone to one additional homeowner.

Homeowners backing to the planned trail requested a meeting on October 7th, to discuss their concerns. Along with Parks and Recreation Department staff, Mayor Pro Tem Pat Miner also attended the meeting. At this meeting staff presented the purpose of the trail and how it fit into the larger trail system. Not connecting this trail would leave a gap of less than 2000 linear feet with miles of trail on either side. Homeowners were also presented with images of homes throughout the City where trails run next to homes. Concerns expressed by homeowners include loss of privacy, loss of golf course views, increased crime and vandalism behind their homes and the safety of trail users. Through discussion with the homeowners staff probed areas that might be negotiable to fully understand their concerns. At the conclusion of the meeting the homeowners were invited to attend the November 8, Parks and Recreation Planning Board meeting. Staff said that they would explore alternate routes and would make a recommendation to the Board at that time.

Trails and Golf Courses

Trails have been constructed through or adjacent to golf courses in many locations throughout the country. Care must be taken to insure that trail users are not subjected to being hit by golf balls. Golf balls do not always go where golfers intend and they can travel at high speeds. One way to protect trail users is to provide enough space between the trail and golf course or individual golf holes so that it is not likely that a golf ball could reach the trail. If space is not available then some type of barrier must be constructed between the trail and adjacent golf holes. The most common barriers used are fencing with screen fabric and/or landscaping. Through the years, technology on clubs and balls has improved making the space required for a safe zone much wider than in the past. As a result, many older golf courses do not have adequate space to meet today's recommended design standards.

While there is not one clear definition of how much space is needed for safety, it is clear that the proposed trail corridor on the Chase Oaks Golf Course is severely constricted making it a poor location and a potential safety threat. Golf course architects may design courses with a 375 foot wide fairway which would mean that the safe zone is effectively 187.5 feet from the center of the fairway. Another report stated that 200 feet from the center of the fairway is needed for safety. The proposed trail at Chase Oaks Golf Course, if built, would sit approximately 75 feet from the center of the fairway.

Golf Courses in the area and around the country may have recreational trails located nearby. In evaluating the local courses with adjacent trails staff found that none had the same conditions as found at Chase Oaks Golf Course. Indeed a trail may run close to play at some courses, however, in most of the situations, the trail was behind the green or behind a tee box rather than parallel to a fairway. This is an acceptable location for a trail. It appears that the highest danger of being hit and seriously injured or killed by a golf ball is within a 180 degree arc of the tee orientation and within 200 yards or less in distance. Balls come off the tee at a high speed in these areas, often with little loft or height, essentially line drives.

Staff has discussed the liability issues with our attorney and found that we have a good defense for recreational use of a trail in this area. While we may be able to successfully defend ourselves from a lawsuit, the other issues to consider include the time and money spent defending the lawsuit, the public relations issues, and most importantly, the human capital which cannot be quantified.

Trails Adjacent to Single Family Homes

Portions of Plano's existing 70 miles of concrete recreational trails are directly behind single family residences. In some cases the homes have the typical solid wood fence between their back yards and the trail. However, in many locations homeowners have open steel or wrought iron fences identical to the homes backing to Chase Oaks Golf Course. Often the trail is only a few feet from the open fence. This situation exists on Shady Brook Trail, Chisholm Trail, Russell Creek Greenbelt and Hoblitzelle Park. In a few cases homeowners have elected not to have any fence between their home and the adjacent trail. Parks and Recreation Department staff is not aware of any significant issues associated with these trails. Feedback indicates that homeowners believe the trail reduces unwanted activity behind their homes. This is consistent with studies that have been prepared in other cities. The presence of trail users generally tends to discourage criminal activity. In general, trails appear to be considered an asset to the homeowners. There are many studies that suggest that homes adjacent to trails benefit from higher property values than homes that are not near trails or open space.

Some trails adjacent to single family homes in Plano were constructed before the homes were built. In other cases long sections of trail were constructed after the homes were built despite opposition from homeowners.

Trails Adjacent to Apartment Complexes

Portions of Plano's 70 miles of concrete recreational trails are constructed adjacent to apartment complexes. Some apartment complexes have fences between the apartment property and trail but most do not. We have not received feedback that the trail presents problems for the apartment dwellers. The trails are also usually considered an amenity by both residents and apartment management.

Trail Users

Trails are regularly identified as one of the highest priorities for our park system by Plano residents. This is consistent with information from other cities throughout the country. People use trails for many different reasons. Commuter bicyclist may use trails simply as the shortest connection between destinations. Athletes may use trails to complete long miles of training in preparation for events. Families may exercise together on park trails or take children out in wagons, strollers, bicycles or scooters. Some individuals may just go for a walk in the park or a walk with friends. In-line skating is also a popular trail activity. Trails in parks can accommodate all of these types of users if the trail is wide enough for users to pass each other safely.

Park Trails Verses Trails Adjacent to Streets

A trail through a park provides a very different experience than a trail adjacent to a six lane divided thoroughfare. Traffic speeds and volumes create a very different atmosphere than what is typically found on a park trail. Driveway crossings can also be a problem on these trails. A trail adjacent to a major thoroughfare may be perfectly acceptable to a bicycle commuter. It may not be acceptable to many other trail users.

Trail Options (See attached map)

Option A – Trail as Planned Through Chase Oaks Golf Course

The trail as originally designed at Chase Oaks Golf Course would run immediately behind 19 homes that back to the golf course. The trail would be anywhere from 5 to 10 feet from the back fences of the homes and be depressed several feet below the level of the back yards. On the golf course side, the trail will be adjacent to the tee and fairway of one hole and the tees and green of

another hole. One hole in particular presents significant problems for the trail due to its alignment and the likelihood that golfers will frequently hit high speed balls into the trail. Sufficient space is not available to completely separate the trail from the golf course.

Staff originally hoped to safely screen the trail from golf balls while at the same time maintain golf course views for adjacent homeowners. The trail is designed to be depressed in several key locations so that it is below the level of the course and the adjacent homes. However, depressing the trail alone is not sufficient to protect it from golf balls. The plan also includes berms, a screen hedge, evergreen trees and large shade trees to protect trail users from golf balls.

After further discussions the golf course architect believes that additional trees and shrubs will be needed beyond what is on the current plan. Essentially a solid wall of plants is needed in some locations which will completely block golf course views for approximately 40% of the homes backing to the course.

Adding to this issue is the fact that trees and shrubs cannot be planted in a fully mature condition. It could take years before plant screens have grown to sufficient size to accomplish the desired screening. In order to fully protect the trail, a screen fence will be necessary in some locations. The fence would need to be approximately 6 feet high with an arch going partially over the trail reaching a height of approximately 8 feet above the trail. The fence would be open steel or wrought type of fence with partially transparent golf course screen fabric attached. This design will significantly alter the current golf course views from adjacent homes. It may be possible to eventually remove the screen fence if the trees and shrubs provide enough barrier to protect the trail but that is not certain at this point in time. The only true test will come when the course is back in use.

Cost - \$272,000 - Includes \$242,000 as bid plus \$30,000 for additional screen plants and approximately 100 feet of screen fence – There will also be an on-going cost to maintain the dense landscape estimated to be between \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year.

Approximate Length – approximately 1,900 Linear Feet

Pros - The route has been planned since 1986

- The route provides a direct connection between the existing trails
- The route can provide a park like experience for trail users

Cons - Trail safety adjacent to the golf course is difficult to achieve

- Dense landscaping and fencing will block golf course views for at least 40% of the homeowners backing to the trail. The homeowners have up to this time had the opportunity for a view of the golf course
- Homeowner opposition to the trail

Option B – Move the Trail to the Front Yards

Some homeowners have expressed a preference for moving the trail to their front yards as opposed to behind their homes. Our standard trail width is 10 feet. This is usually needed to provide adequate space for all of the various types of trail users to pass each other safely. In high use areas our trails are now 12 feet wide.

There is a typical 4 foot wide sidewalk located approximately 4 feet from the curb in front of the homes. Removing the 4 foot sidewalk and constructing a significantly wider trail in this location would be a major disruption to the front yards. Existing irrigation systems would be damaged and portions removed. Trees would be affected. A 10 foot wide trail would have a significant impact on the appearance of the front yards. The distance from the curb to the front wall of the homes is typically 35 to 50 feet.

To complete this route the trail would also need to be constructed in front of many homes that would not be affected by the trail planned through the golf course. These homeowners would not have any incentive to want a 10 foot wide trail in front of their homes.

Preliminary Cost Estimate - \$190,000

Approximate Length – 2,750 Linear Feet

Pros - Provides a safe alternative route

- Eliminates the need for dense landscape screening behind the homes
- Preliminary cost estimate is less than other options

Cons - Major disruption to residential front yards during construction

- Significantly alters the appearance of front yards
- Affects more homes than the 19 homes backing to the golf course
- Potential for bicyclist traveling at high speeds in front yards

Option C – Move the Trail to Alma Drive

Homeowners backing to the trail have also suggested moving the trail to Alma Drive. The existing trail in Hoblitzelle Park does have a connection to Alma Drive. The homeowners suggest that the trail run along Alma Drive from Hoblitzelle Park south past Legacy Drive to High Point Park. At High Point Park the trail could connect to the existing Bluebonnet Trail. There is sufficient space in the right of way of Alma Drive to construct a 10 foot wide trail. The trail would require retaining walls in some locations and may require relocating utilities in some locations. It may also require that some trees and landscaping be relocated. The existing 4 foot wide sidewalk would need to be removed. If a trail user is going from Hoblitzelle Park to Bluebonnet Trail this route may be

acceptable. If the trail user is going to Oak Point Park and Nature Preserve this route would add over 2 miles to their route. This may or may not be acceptable for some users.

Preliminary Cost Estimate - \$370,000

Approximate Length – 5,700 Linear Feet

Pros - Does not require dense landscaping and/or screen fencing behind existing homes

- Provides a more direct route to Bluebonnet Trail
- Has potential to create a long trail loop in the area that may be useful to some trail users

Con - Does not provide a good route for connecting to Oak Point Park and Nature Preserve

- Traffic volumes and speeds make this route unattractive for many trail uses
- Requires constructing significantly more trail than the golf course route
- Cost more than the currently proposed route
- Requires trail users to cross Legacy Drive

Option D – Alternate Golf Course Route to Legacy Drive

Staff and the golf course architect explored any other possible routes through the golf course that could accomplish the desired trail connection. One other possible route was identified. One golf hole on the west side of the course runs adjacent to Avalon at Chase Oaks Apartments. The golf course property in this location runs all the way to Legacy Drive. It would be possible to connect to the trail in Hoblitzelle Park and run along the west side of the course to Legacy Drive. The trail in this location would have the exact same issues in terms of trail safety as the currently planned route. However, this route would be located adjacent to an apartment complex with units that are generally further away from the proposed trail location. The trail would need to be protected from the golf course with a 6 to 8 foot high fence with screen net for almost its entire length. Some landscaping would be added to soften the view of the fence from the golf course and from the adjacent apartments.

This route requires crossing a creek in two locations. In one location an existing golf cart bridge could be shared with golf carts. A second location will require an elevated trail or a bridge over the creek. This adds significant cost to the trail. This creek crossing may also require an easement from the adjacent apartment complex. This may or may not be possible to acquire.

Ultimately this route would need to continue in the right of way of Legacy Drive until it meets the existing trail on Chase Oaks Boulevard. The right of way

adjacent to Legacy Drive in this location is wider than the right of way of Alma Drive. There is ample space to construct a 10 wide trail and have room to meander it through existing landscaping in some locations. Only minor utility relocations would be required. This route provides a reasonable connection to both Bluebonnet Trail and Oak Point Park and Nature Preserve.

Preliminary Cost Estimate - \$610,000

Approximate Length – 5,000 Linear Feet

Pros - This route is similar in length to the original route when you include Oak Ridge Drive in the length of the original route

Cons - Cost through the golf course is high and still leads to a trail adjacent to a major thoroughfare

- Traffic speeds and volumes on Legacy Drive
- Impacts views from existing apartments

Options E – Hoblitzelle Trail Connection to Alma Drive and Then to Legacy Drive

It would be possible to connect the trail in Hoblitzelle Park to Alma Drive as the homeowners suggest but then connect in the right of way of Legacy Drive directly over to the trail on Chase Oaks Drive. This would provide a more direct route to Oak Point Park and Nature Preserve.

Preliminary Cost Estimate - \$375,000

Approximate Length – 5,750 Linear Feet

Pros - Provides a more direct route from Hoblitzelle Park to Oak Point Park and Nature Preserve than Option C

- Has the potential to create a trail loop in the area that may be useful to some trail users

Cons - Traffic speeds and volume on Legacy Drive

Option F – Hoblitzelle Trail Connection to Legacy Drive

A small portion of Hoblitzelle Park (west of Alma Drive) touches Legacy Drive. It would be possible to connect the trail in Hoblitzelle Park to Legacy Drive and then follow Legacy Drive all the way to the trail on Chase Oaks Boulevard. This route requires crossing Alma Drive at the major intersection of Legacy Drive and Alma Drive.

Preliminary Cost Estimate - \$500,000

Approximate Length – 7,900 Linear Feet

Pros - Could become part of a trail loop in the area that could be useful for some trail users

Cons - Duplicates trail already in place in the park
- Traffic speeds and volumes on Legacy Drive
- Cost is high
- Requires trail users to cross Alma Drive

Staff Recommended Alternative

If the trail through Chase Oaks Golf Course was a typical trail through a public park that is adjacent to existing residences then staff would recommend proceeding with the trail as planned. However, having the trail in a golf course creates some unique challenges for keeping the trail safe. The available solutions for protecting the trail from golf balls alter the existing conditions for golf course and surrounding property owners.

If the golf course trail route connected directly to another existing park trail, it might warrant the cost to the City and impact to homeowners and golf course that it would create. But in this case the golf course trail connects to trails in the street rights-of-way of Oak Ridge Drive and Chase Oaks Boulevard. The experience of being on a park trail will end at Oak Ridge Drive.

Staff recommends that the trail through Chase Oaks Golf Course not be constructed at this time. Dense landscaping and screen fencing would significantly alter conditions behind the existing homes. Trails in other parts of the City do not require this type of barrier directly behind the homes. The golf course creates a unique situation.

Staff recommends that the City maintain ownership of the easement through the golf course. The status of the golf course could change at some point in the future. Conditions in the neighborhood could also change. The City should maintain the right to construct the trail.

Staff also recommends that the grading and drainage for the trail be completed with renovation of the golf course. This can be done at a relatively low cost at this time. It may be 20 to 30 years before the course undergoes significant renovation again. This is our best opportunity to insure that the trail can be constructed in the future if surrounding conditions change.

Staff has walked and driven all of the various routes identified above. Traffic noise on Legacy Drive is oppressive for pedestrians. Alma Drive may be a little better but both of these streets have high traffic volumes with vehicles traveling

at high speeds. This is a very different experience than the trail adjacent to Oak Ridge Drive and Chase Oaks Boulevard. Trail adjacent to a 6 lane thoroughfare may be acceptable for some users but it will not be acceptable for many other trail users. Many users would likely choose not to continue on a trail adjacent to these major thoroughfares. Trails adjacent to these streets could be constructed at anytime if they become necessary or desirable in the future. They are not tied to the schedule of the golf course construction.

After walking the various alternative routes, staff found that continuing on the sidewalk through the neighborhood was the best alternative experience to the trail in the golf course. The neighborhood atmosphere is significantly more appealing than the atmosphere of a 6 lane divided thoroughfare. Pedestrians can use the existing sidewalk. Bicyclist can use the existing residential street. Having bicyclist use the existing residential street eliminates the need for a 10 foot wide trail in the front yards. The key to making this route work will be to insure that bicyclist and pedestrians can easily find the route through the neighborhood. The street can be signed as a bike route with pavement markings to make the route clear. Signs can also be added that are easily viewed from the sidewalk. A sign with map can be provided at each end of the route through the neighborhood. Similar maps may also be useful on the trails on Oak Ridge Drive and Chase Oaks Boulevard to help trail users navigate to Oak Point Park and Nature Preserve or Bluebonnet Trail.

In the future if the existing sidewalks in the neighborhood need to be replaced they could be replaced at 6 feet wide verses 4 feet wide. Ten foot wide trail is not necessary with the bicyclist using the adjacent street but a wider sidewalk for side by side pedestrians may be desirable.

Using the existing streets and sidewalks through the neighborhood provides a safe, inexpensive route for pedestrians and bicyclist. Maintaining ownership of the easement will insure the opportunity to construct a trail in the future if surrounding conditions change. Staff believes this is the best alternative at this time.

Preliminary Cost Estimate – \$69,000 including \$4,000 for signs and pavement markings on neighborhood streets and \$65,000 for grading and drainage improvements on the golf course

Approximate Length – 2,750 Linear Feet

- Pros** - Comparatively inexpensive and cost effective solution
- Does not impact residents front yards with the construction of a trail
 - Golf course safety is not an issue on the streets and sidewalks in the neighborhood
 - Does not impact golf course views from adjacent homes and back yards

- Does not eliminate the possibility of a trail in the golf course in the future if conditions change

Cons - This route may not be obvious for most trail users. Clear signs and pavement markings will be essential if the route is going to function as a connection to Oak Ridge Drive, Chase Oaks Boulevard and ultimately to Oak Point Park and Nature Preserve.

*All costs estimates are preliminary and could change when more detailed plans are developed.

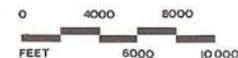
At the November 8, Parks and Recreation Planning Board meeting, the Board was presented with all of the information above including the staff recommendation. The Board listened to representatives from the Chase Oaks HOA and the bicycling community which was followed by discussion by the Board members. Having a full understanding of the issues reveals that there is no perfect solution to this problem. All of the route options have their own pros and cons associated with them and best available option, while not ideal, was selected by staff and supported by the Parks and Recreation Planning Board.



Bikeway Classifications:

- Class I** —
Bike Path
- Class III** —
Bike Route *
- Bike Route / Sign Only

(See Reverse for classification descriptions)

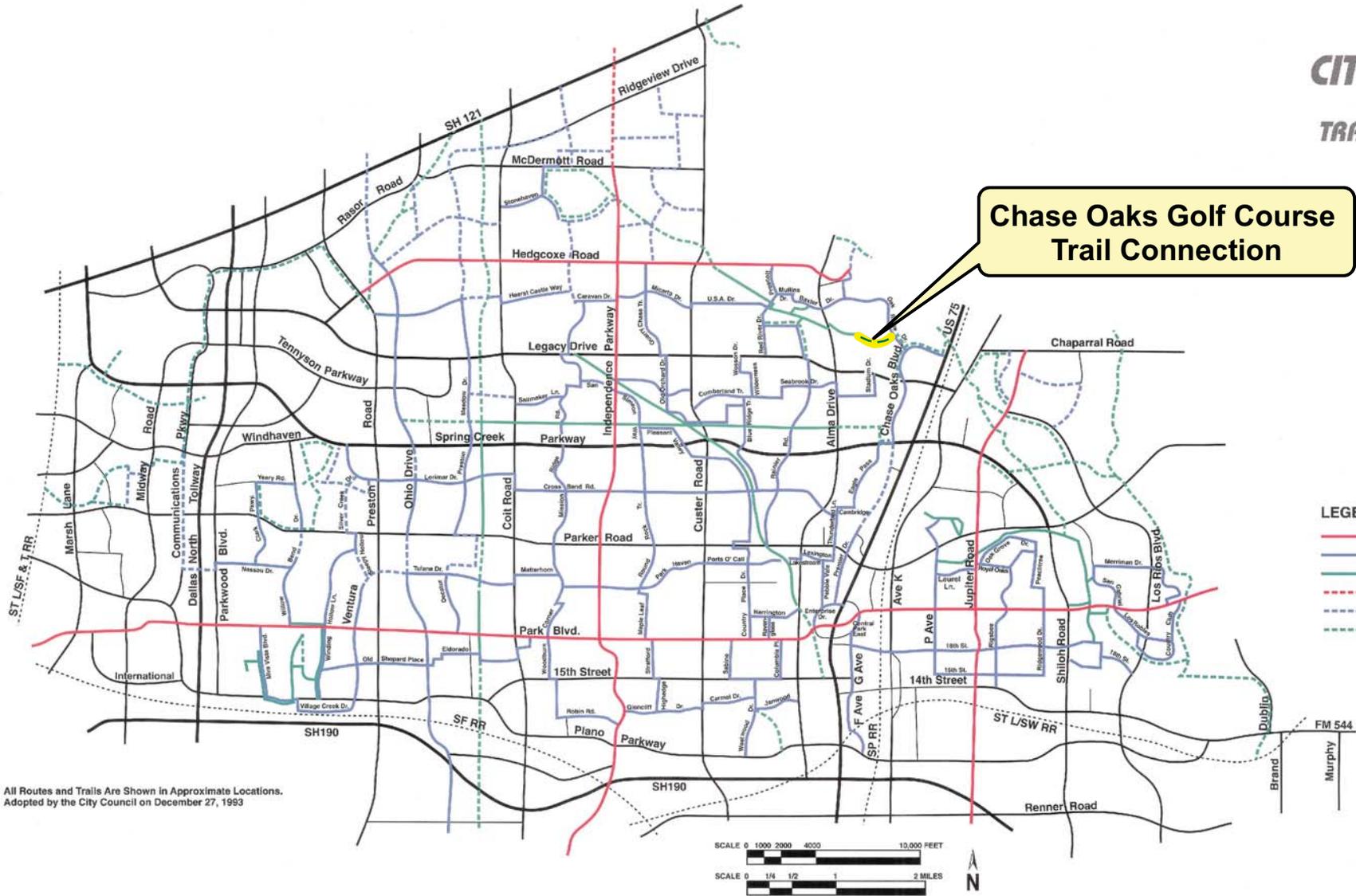


Master Plan

March 19, 1985

CITY OF PLANO BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

**Chase Oaks Golf Course
Trail Connection**

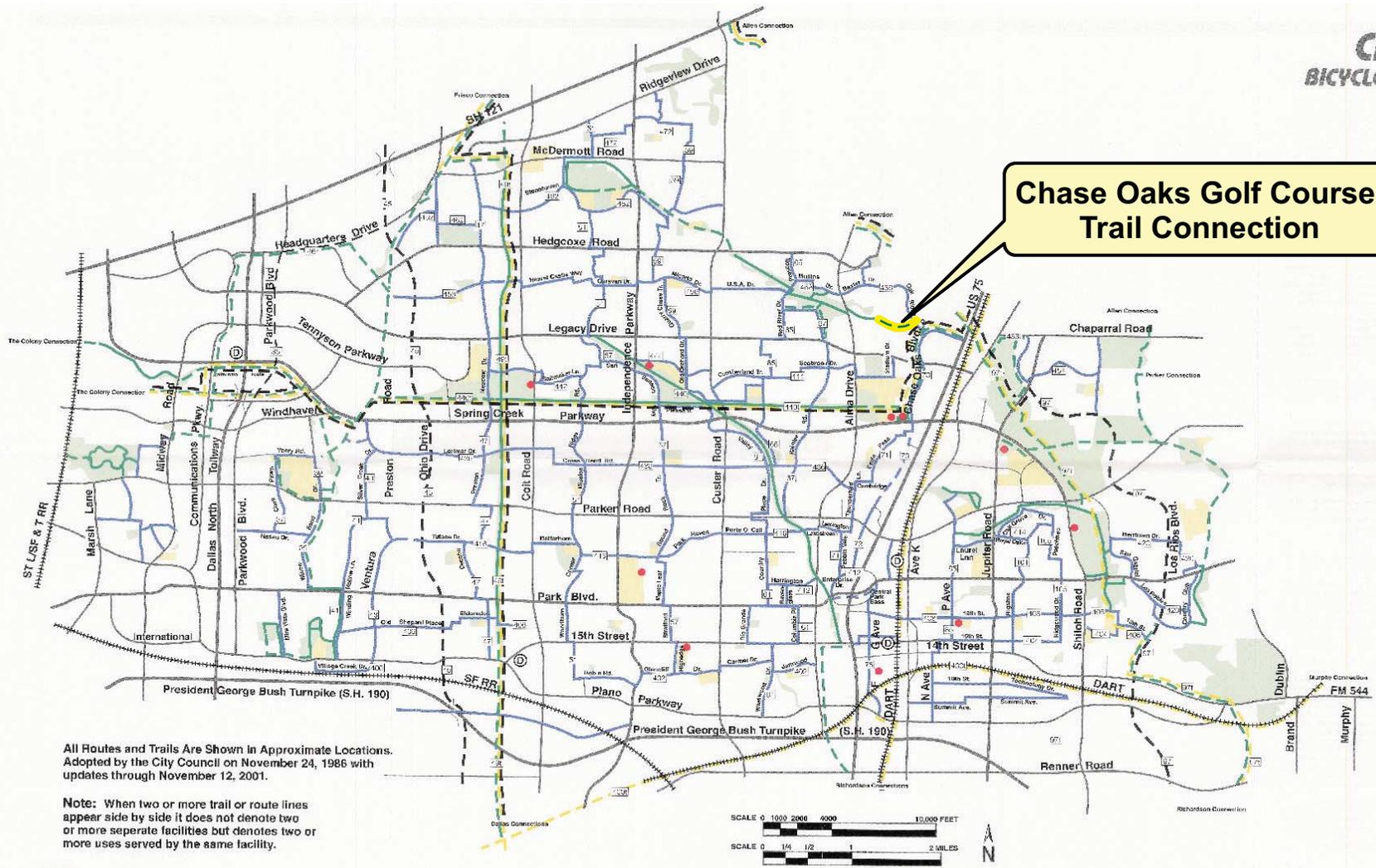


- LEGEND**
- Major Routes
 - Collector Routes
 - Recreational Trails
 - - - Proposed Major Routes
 - - - Proposed Collector Routes
 - - - Proposed Recreational Trails

All Routes and Trails Are Shown in Approximate Locations.
Adopted by the City Council on December 27, 1993



CITY of PLANO BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

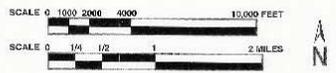


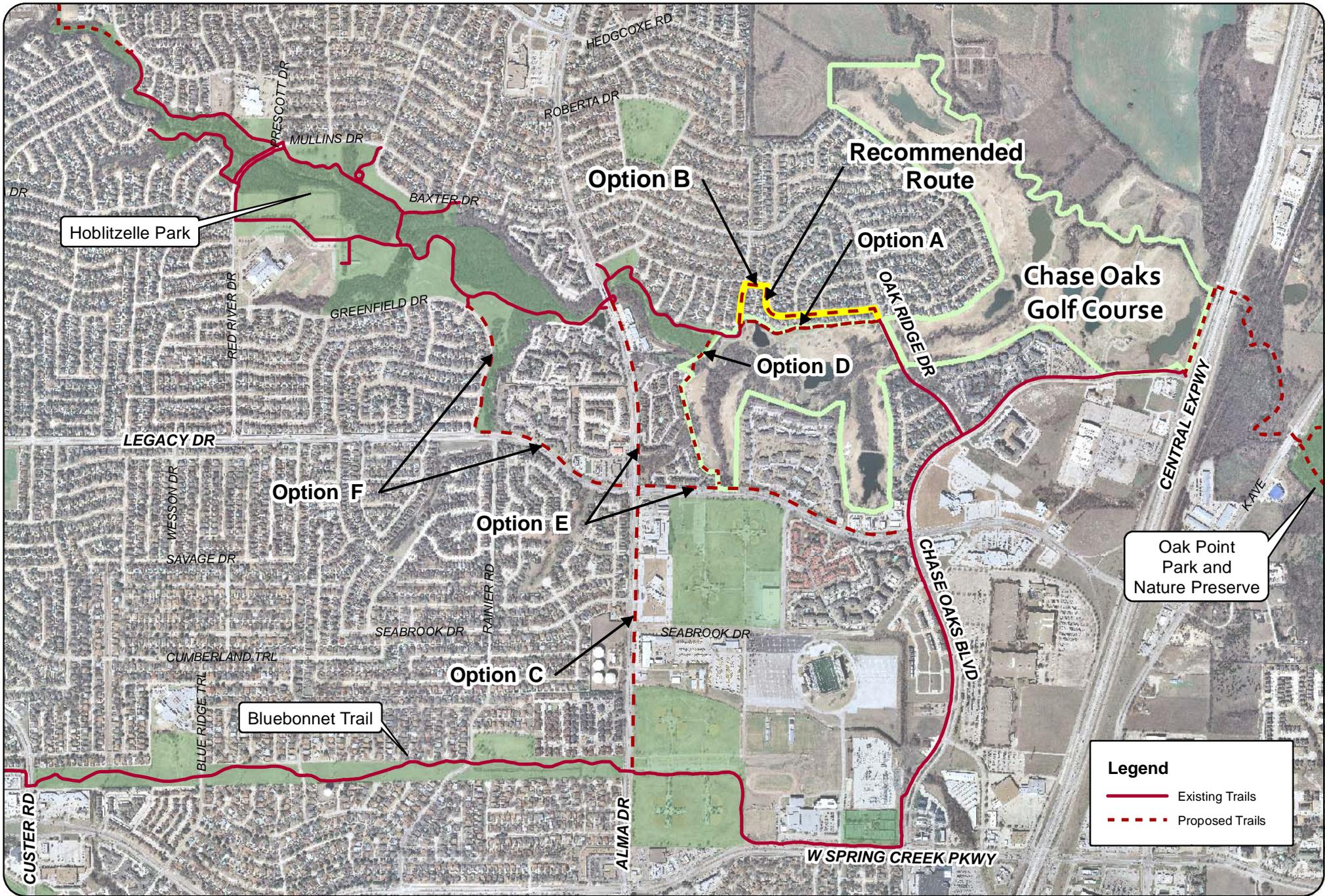
**Chase Oaks Golf Course
Trail Connection**

- LEGEND**
- Secondary Routes
 - Recreational Trails
 - - - Proposed Major Routes
 - - - Proposed Secondary Routes
 - - - Proposed Recreational Trails
 - - - Proposed Regional Veloweb
 - Trail and Bike Route Numbers
 - Recreation Facilities
 - DART Station
 - Schools
 - Parks

All Routes and Trails Are Shown in Approximate Locations. Adopted by the City Council on November 24, 1986 with updates through November 12, 2001.

Note: When two or more trail or route lines appear side by side it does not denote two or more separate facilities but denotes two or more uses served by the same facility.





Chase Oaks Trail Connection Options

