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Plan to build bike path around Lake Lowell, connect cities continues

By OLIVIA WEITZ owitz@idahopress.com Mar 3, 2017



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A cyclist rides along Lake Avenue near Lake Lowell in Nampa on Sept. 13.

CALDWELL — A plan to build a mixture of bike lanes and pedestrian pathways around Lake Lowell and routes connecting residents from the cities of Caldwell and Nampa to the lake and the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge is beginning to take shape.

Canyon Highway District engineer Timothy Richard told the Press-Tribune that the lake portion, which will eventually pave pathways and widen road shoulders around the 26-mile lake, could begin as soon as June.

“Over the years, we have received a lot of concerns from people who bike out there for a need for more facilities,” he said.

The comment period for the Lake Lowell Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Plan, a long-range plan developed under the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, ended last year with advisory members from the Idaho Transportation Department, Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, Nampa Highway District and others. In November, Canyon Highway District No. 4 adopted the plan.

The first priority on the Lake Lowell Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Plan is widening the road shoulders on Riverside Road from Orchard Avenue to Lake Shore Drive. A portion of Riverside Road crosses the Lake Lowell dam. After that, Lake Shore Drive would be widened from Riverside Road to Marsing Road.

“It’s a benefit both to the drivers having a good, paved shoulders, but also bicycles and pedestrians,” Richard said.

The \$32 million project, encompassing the pathway around the lake and the city access points, would take five to 10 years to implement. The lake portion is being funded by the federal lands access program, which is a project administered by the Federal Highway Administration, local matches from the cities and highway districts and the use of in-kind labor and equipment, according to Richard.

Richard said the next wave of the plan is to build pathways from strategic routes in Caldwell and Nampa that would connect residents in these cities to the lake. He is encouraging local agencies and municipalities to adopt the bike plan into future master improvement plans.

The city of Nampa adopted the Lake Lowell Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Access plan Feb. 6, according to a resolution provided by city spokeswoman Vickie Holbrook.

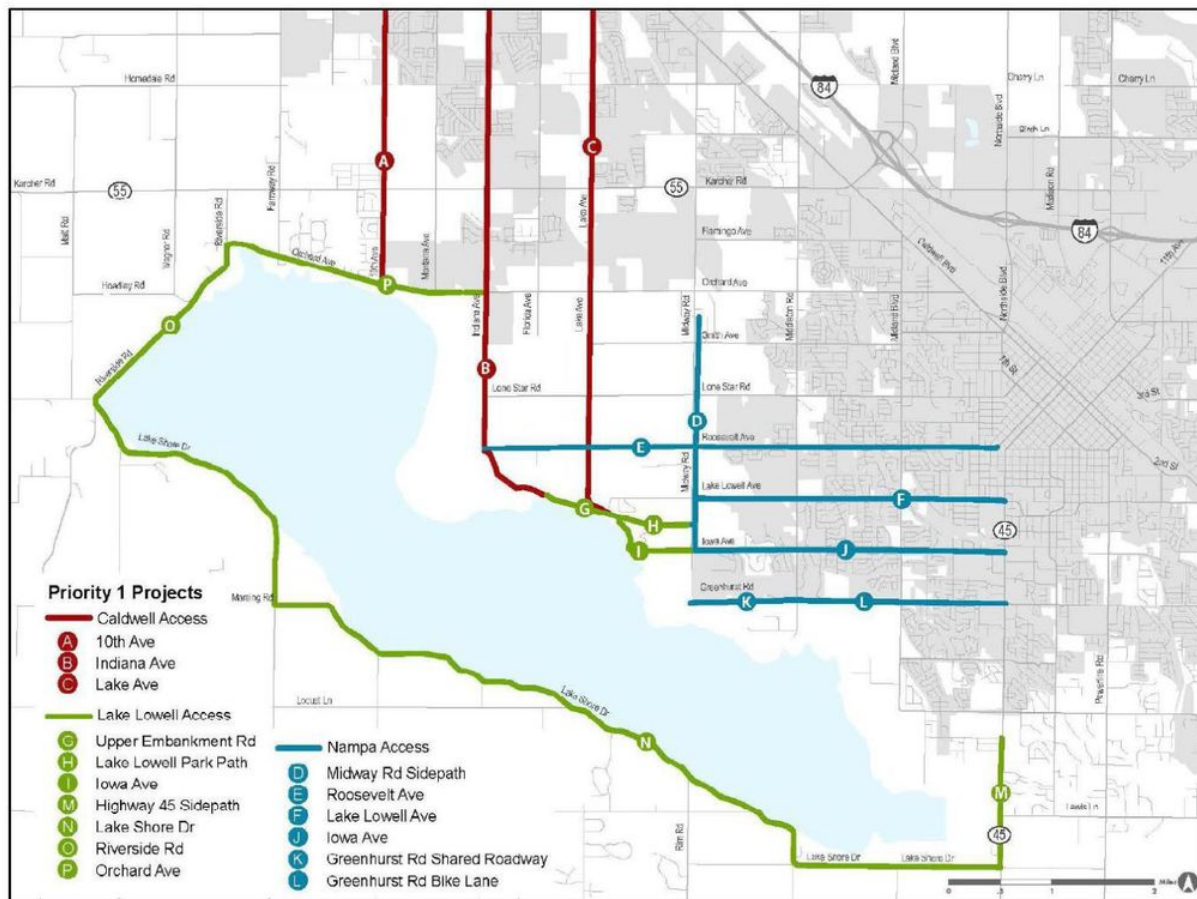
Caldwell Planning and Zoning Director Brian Billingsley said as plans for the Lake Lowell bike plan evolved, the city of Caldwell revised the routes it had planned in the Caldwell Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan to reflect the evolved routes.

A workshop to discuss the revised city of Caldwell bike plan and the Lake Lowell Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Access plan and intersections between the two is planned for 6 p.m. March 20. After that, Billingsley said the city will consider adopting the revised city bike plan and the Lake Lowell plan at a public hearing on April 3.

Billingsley said if the plan is adopted, the city will seek federal transportation dollars to fund the bulk of the project. He said the first priority is creating a paved pathway separate from the road — at least 2 feet away from the road and in some areas more — that would run on 10th Avenue between Ustick Road and Lake Lowell.

“It would be nice to connect residents to Mallard Park,” he said, referencing the park near Lake Lowell. “And to get people down to the lake.”

Olivia Weitz is the Canyon County and city of Caldwell reporter. She can be reached at 465-8107 or oweitz@idahopress.com. Follow @oliviaweitz1.



Lake Lowell map

Olivia Weitz