

North Judson - Erie Trail Future Vision Phase Plan

Project Vision

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This ***Future Vision Phase Plan*** outlines a plan for future trail connectivity to the existing *North Judson - Erie Trail (NJ Erie Trail)*. The plan is divided into four (4) phases focused on increased integration with existing amenities in the Starke County area and beyond. The plan focuses on expanding linkages to existing features such as *Bailey's Discount Center*, *Bass Lake*, *Tippecanoe River State Park*, *Kankakee State Fish & Wildlife Area*, and the *Panhandle Pathway*. In a larger sense, the plan capitalizes on existing designation with the American Discovery Trail Northern Branch (ADT) and the Indiana portion of United States Bike Route #35 (USBR 35).

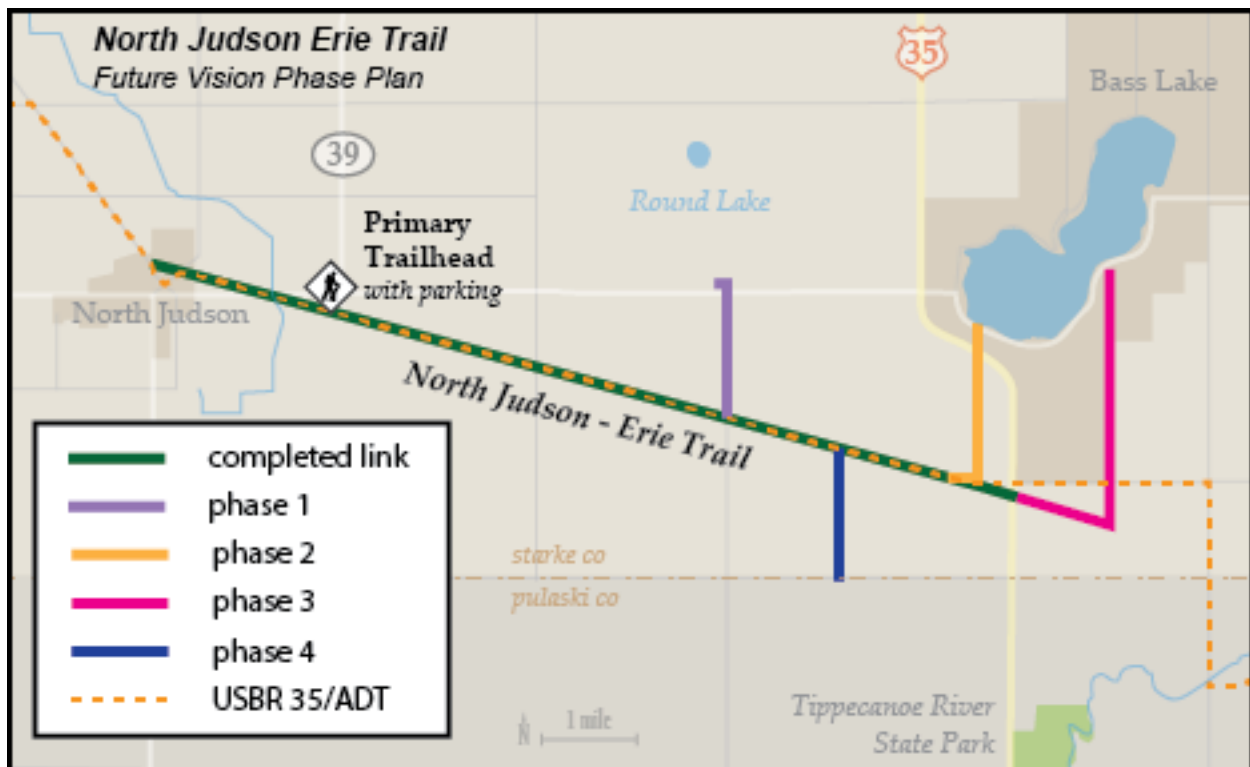
Project Goals

- 1) Encourage local and regional connectivity and future trail expansion
Promote connectivity to Bass Lake, Tippecanoe River State Park, Kankakee Fish and Wildlife Area, Round Lake Nature Preserve, ADT, USBR 35, The Panhandle Pathway (PP), Winamac, English Lake, Monterrey, and Knox.
- 2) Promote user orientation on the trail, and direct traffic on the road
Provide wayfinding information (mapping) and promote local area interests and amenities that is visible to users on the trail as well as passing motorists on Indiana State Road 10 (SR 10).
- 3) Provide an additional rest and parking area for trail users
Bailey's Discount Center is an ideal location for a trailhead/rest area. Accessibility to SR 10 is good, midway through existing dedicated trail, providing a tie-in with local commercial interests.

North Judson - Erie Trail Project Overview

Former railroad lines make excellent greenway trails. These long flat corridors connect communities and towns throughout the nation. Most of the rail trails in [Indiana] are paved, making them usable by the majority of Hoosiers.¹

The **North Judson Erie Trail** is located in Starke County, Indiana. It is “a multi-use path established on the railbanked right-of-way of the former JK Line Railroad. The route extends 9 miles between North Judson and US 35 near Bass Lake.”² The converted asphalt trail is designed for hiking, jogging, bicycling, skating and is wheel chair accessible. It features a soft sand surface lane for equestrian use. Mechanized vehicles are not allowed on the trail.



1 Indiana Department of Natural Resources (accessed 2014) Rail Trails in Indiana. Found online at www.in.gov/dnr/outdoor/4239

2 Prairie Trails Club Website (accessed 2014), prairietrailsclub.org

Interstate Significance

The North Judson Erie Trail is uniquely part of two major interstate trail systems. The ADT is an east-west system that begins in Delaware and ends in California. USBR 35 is a north-south Federal DOT initiative that begins at the Ontario-Michigan border and would end at the Gulf of Mexico in Mississippi or Louisiana. The Michigan portion of USBR 35 was dedicated in May of 2012. The Indiana portion was approved in September of 2015.

USBR 35 along English Lake Road and north to English Lake provides for connectivity with extensive trail infrastructure in LaPorte, Porter and Lake Counties. LaPorte County Parks has designated 20 bicycle loops comprised of dedicated and shared path connectivity. The integrated network features USBR 35.

This connection passes a public access site to English Lake at the confluence of the Yellow River and Kankakee River, the latter designated a National Water Trail in 2016. Enhancement of the NJ Erie Trail would advance the utility of the connection.

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The *Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum*, is located on the west end of the trail. The east end presently features a roundabout at US 35. Future plans call for a 7-mile extension to Monterey to link with the Monterey Erie Trail.³

Coordinating the NJ Erie Trail with nearby amenities and existing pedestrian networks, such as designated routes in LaPorte county and the USBR 35, is a priority for regional trail planning.

See the *Connectivity Vision Map* on page 6 for more information.

East of Existing NJ Erie Trail

The NJ - Erie Trail is situated in close vicinity to numerous natural and riparian amenities. Increasing connectivity to these locations can increase trail function and visitor usage. Bass Lake, Lake Maxinkuckee, the Kankakee River, and Tippecanoe River State Park are popular tourist destinations, as are several smaller public waters.

The planned 7-mile extension to Monterey would nearly double total trail length. It would allow for a linear transition, and eventual incorporation, into the existing USBR 35. Monterey presently features a 1-mile paved section near the Tippecanoe River.

The extension would also allow for a potential northern connector to Bass Lake on the existing street infrastructure. CR 600 E connects with SR 10 near Bass Lake Beach, minimizing the need for pedestrian interface with US 35. The same intersection at CR 600 East would make an efficient southern connector to the north side of Tippecanoe River State Park. Linking the NJ Erie Trail with the Tippecanoe River also creates future opportunities for connectivity with the PP in Winamac.

West of Existing NJ Erie Trail

USBR 35 was “designated in fall of 2015 by a collaboration between Indiana Department of Transportation, Hoosier Rails to Trails Council, Bicycle Indiana, City of Indianapolis, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, and many other partners.”⁴ USBR 35 runs the length of the Indiana from the northwest Michigan border at Hesston in LaPorte County (near Michigan City) to the southeast at Jeffersonville in Clark County on the Ohio border near Louisville. The route is planned to run from Sault Ste. Marie in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula to connect with U.S. Bike Route #45 on the Mississippi River in either Mississippi or Louisiana.

3 TrailLink be Rails-to-Trails Conservancy website (accessed 2014) North Judson Erie Trail found online at www.traillink.com/trail/north-judson-erie-trail.aspx

4 Adventure Cycling Association Routes and Maps found at www.adventurecycling.org/routes-and-maps/us-bicycle-route-system/national-corridor-plan/

North Judson - Erie Trail Future Vision Phase Plan Four Phase Plan Detail

Future Vision Phase 1: Bailey's Discount Center Connectivity and Trailhead

Phase 1 of the *Future Vision Phase Plan* focuses on connectivity to *Bailey's Discount Center*. Ideally, this component would feature a parking and trailhead area at or near the intersection of SR 10 and Range Road. Creating linkages between these two locations would increase usership of the trail and encourage economic development. Signage at the trail intersection with Range Road and at the intersection of SR 10 and Range Road would expand the trail's visibility and ease of access, particularly to points east of Range Road such as Bass Lake.

Future Vision Phase 2: Connectivity to Bass Lake on Existing Infrastructure

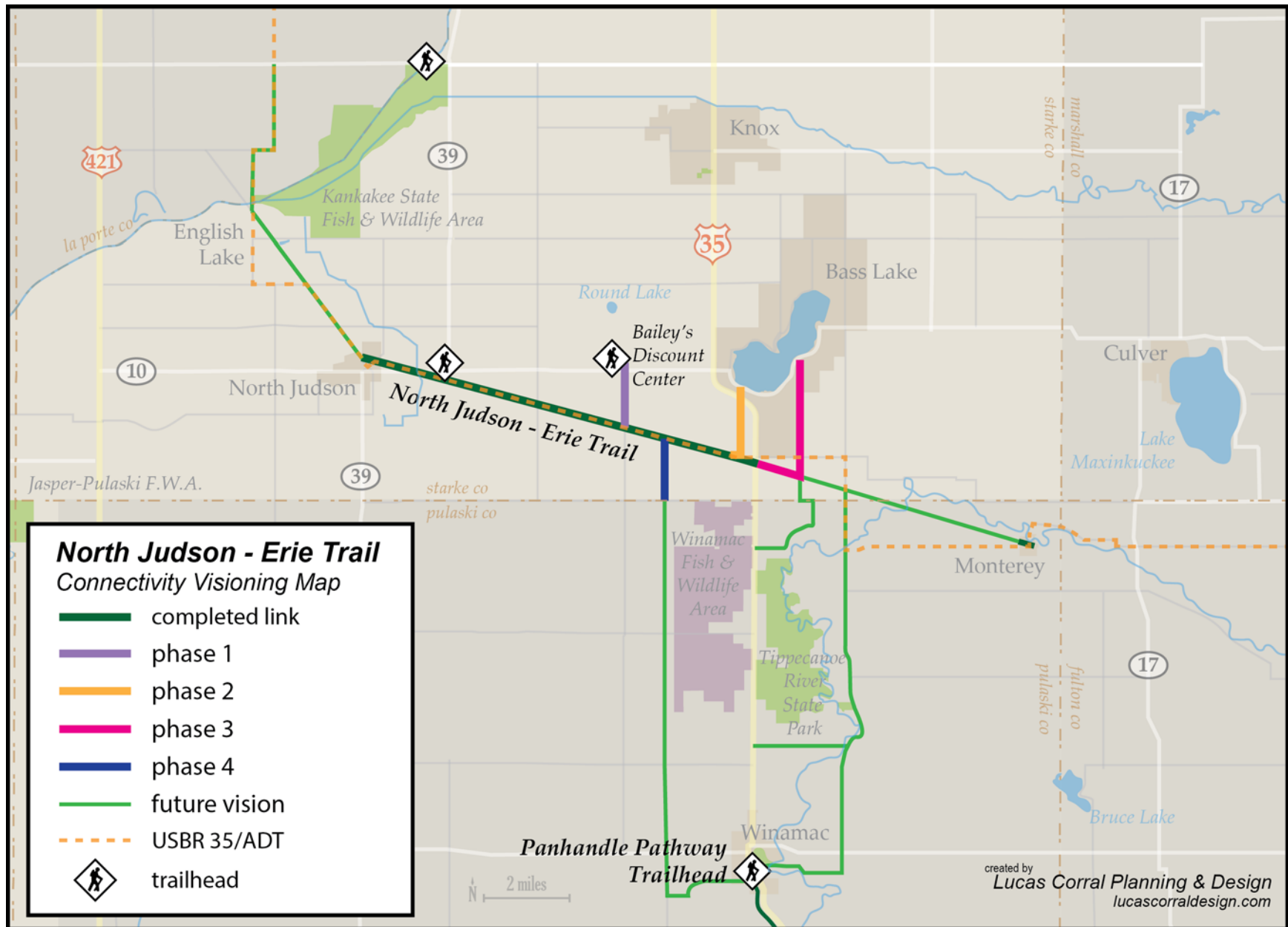
Phase 2 of the *Future Vision Phase Plan* focuses on ***connectivity to Bass Lake and Knox***. The plan connects via CR 800 South to CR 450 East. These existing roads provide a safe connection to Bass Lake while minimizing interface with US 35. A trail crossing at the intersection of US 35 and CR 450 E is ideal as vision at that location is good in both directions, with clear shoulders on each side of US 35. CR 450 East continues up to CR 210, and provides an ideal link to the west side of Bass Lake, and ultimately, connectivity to Knox to the north.

Future Vision Phase 3: Connectivity to Bass Lake on Dedicated Trail Extension

Phase 3 of the *Future Vision Phase Plan* focuses on connectivity to Bass Lake by ***extending the existing NJ Erie Trail to CR 600 East on the east side of US 35***. The extension would allow for efficient access to the southeastern side of Bass Lake to the North and to *Tippecanoe River State Park* to the south. Efforts are currently underway to connect to the existing PP in Winamac to the south. Connecting the NJ Erie Trail (9 miles) to the PP (21 miles) would link 30 miles of dedicated pedestrian and bicycle trail.

Future Vision Phase 4: Connectivity to Winamac and the Panhandle Pathway

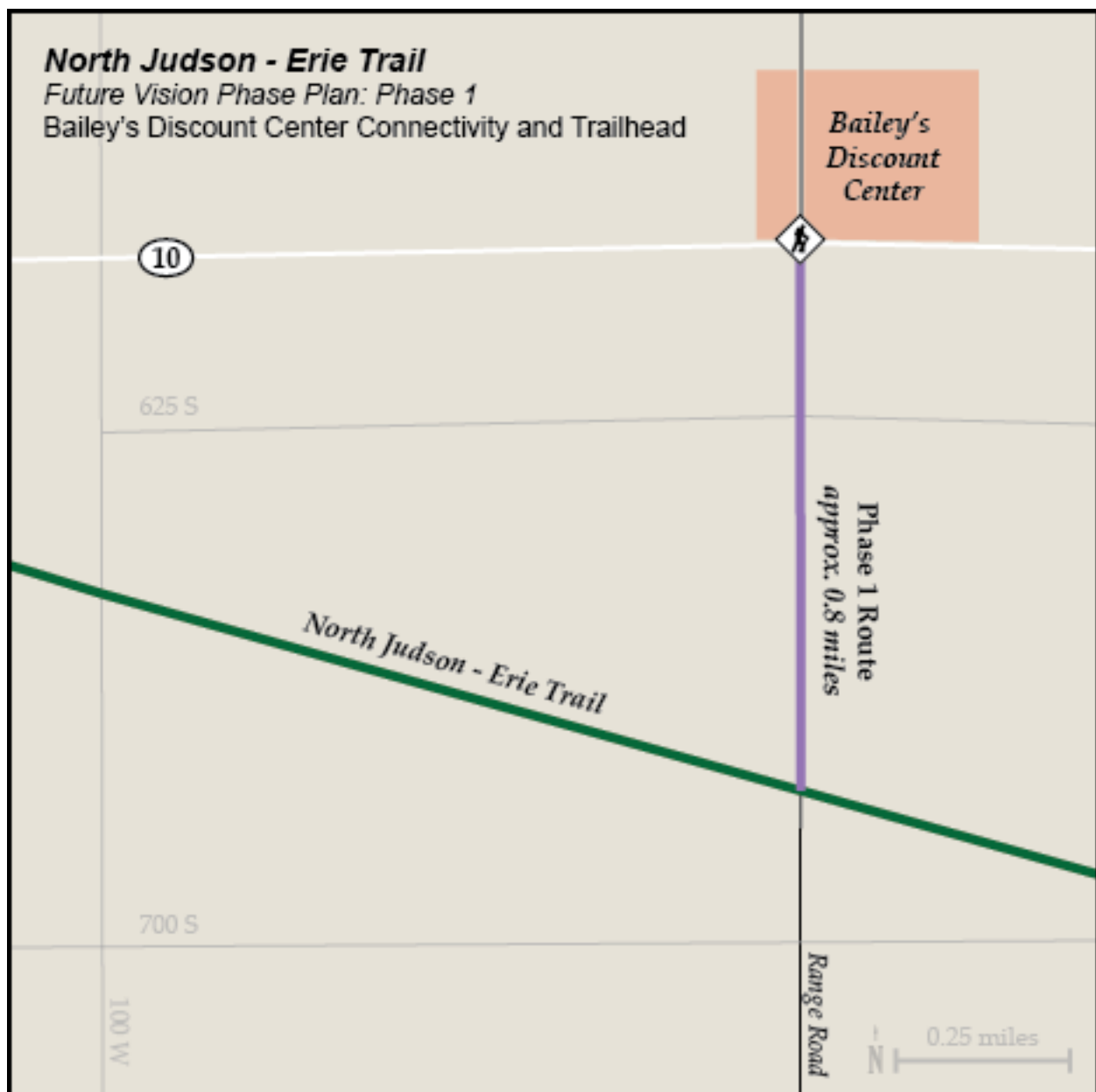
Phase 4 of the *Future Vision Phase Plan* focuses on connectivity to Winamac by ***creating a link between the NJ Erie Trail and the PP***. The extension would create a critical connection between two major dedicated pedestrian and bicycle trails. The link would also function efficiently as a connector to the Phase 1 Route to the Bailey's Discount Center Trailhead.



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Future Vision Phase 1: Bailey's Discount Center Connectivity and Trailhead

Phase 1 of the *Future Vision Phase Plan* focuses on creating a trailhead link and signage for the *NJ Erie Trail* on or near *Bailey's Discount Center*. Signage identifying the link should be placed on or near the NJ Erie Trail and the intersection of Range Road and SR 10.



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Future Vision Phase 1: Bailey's Discount Center Connectivity and Trailhead

Phase 1 Reasoning

Why a trailhead at Bailey's Discount Center?

A trailhead at Bailey's Discount Center serves a number of functions;

- Promote Starke County commercial interests by providing a place for trail users to purchase food, drink, and other retail items.
- Support convenience as location is near the geographic midway point between the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum at the western edge of the trail and US 35 at the eastern edge of trail.
- Provide parking, rest and shade options for trail users, which can boost trail usership.
- Provide signage directing visitors to the trail, which would improve visibility, particularly for passing motorists on SR 10 and Range Road.

Phase 1 Specifics

The *Phase 1 Route* is approximately 0.8 miles, crossing at SR 10. Visibility for passing motorists is good at this location. In addition to traffic moving more slowly in front of Bailey's Discount Center, the intersection of SR 10 and Range Road is at a right angle (unlike the intersection with SR 10 at the Primary NJ Erie Trailhead).

Signage directing visitors to the trail near the intersection of SR 10 and Range Road has the potential to boost usership as well as warn drivers of a pedestrian crossing. Signage should also be placed on the *NJ Erie Trail* directing users to the trailhead and rest area and commercial opportunities of the Phase 1 Route.

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Future Vision Phase 2: Connectivity to Bass Lake on Existing Infrastructure

Phase 2 of the *Future Vision Phase Plan* focuses on creating a link to Bass Lake using existing road infrastructure. The route follows CR 800 S at the intersection of the NJ Erie Trail then turns north at CR 450 E towards Bass Lake. CR 450 E intersects US 35 at an ideal angle and location. Vision in both directions is very good, with ample right-of-way at all four corners of the intersection.



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Future Vision Phase 2: Connectivity to Bass Lake on Existing Infrastructure

Phase 2 Reasoning

Why create a link to Bass Lake?

A connection to Bass Lake on existing infrastructure serves a number of functions;

- Allows for efficient connectivity with Bass Lake. Residents of the area have requested more obvious access to the NJ Erie Trail.
- Provides ideal crossing of US 35 at CR 450 E as vision is good in all directions. The area also has significant shoulder space on each side of US 35.
- Route would continue to function as a connector to the south side of Bass Lake even after potential expansion of the existing NJ Erie Trail (*Phase 3 Route*)
- Route connects with CR 210, a popular bicycle and pedestrian friendly road.
- Route would serve as a future connector to Knox.

Phase 2 Specifics

The *Phase 2 Route* is approximately 1.85 miles, crossing at US 35 and linking with CR 210.

The route intersects with the NJ Erie Trail at **CR 800 S** and runs approximately 0.2 miles east and west. CR 800 S is a well paved road with ample shoulder space.

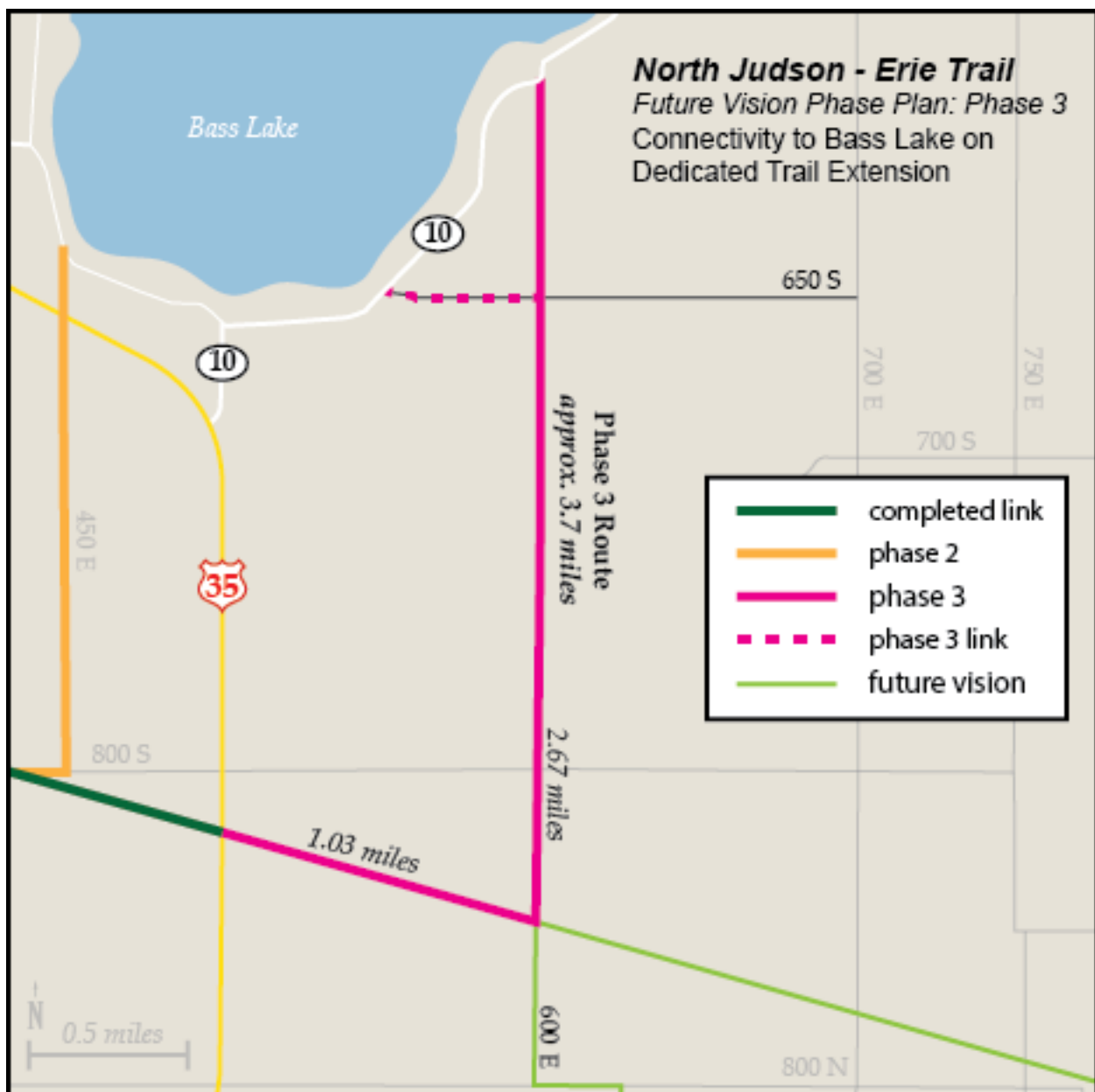
The route then connects with north and south running **CR 450 E** for approximately 1.65 miles. CR 450 E is partly unpaved but functions well as a bicycle and pedestrian route with user caution. Future vision for the *Phase 2 Route* could include improving the unpaved section of CR 450 E (between CR 800 S and US 35).

Signage directing visitors to the trail near the intersection of US 35 and CR 450 E has the potential to boost usership as well as warn drivers the upcoming pedestrian crossing. Signage should also be placed on the NJ Erie Trail directing users to the *Phase 2 Route* connection to Bass Lake.

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Future Vision Phase 3: Connectivity to Bass Lake on Dedicated Trail Extension

Phase 3 of the *Future Vision Phase Plan* focuses on expanding the existing *NJ Erie Trail* to the intersection with CR 600 E on the east side of US 35. The route would connect to SR 10 at Bass Lake to the north. The extension would also serve the ADT and USBR 35. The route would also allow for an efficient link westbound at CR 650 S (*phase 3 link*, on map below).



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Future Vision Phase 3: Connectivity to Bass Lake on Dedicated Trail Extension

Phase 3 Reasoning

An extension of the NJ Erie Trail southeast of US 35 for approximately 1.2 miles to CR 600 E would serve multiple functions:

- The extension would be referenced as the Bass Lake Erie Trail (the BL Erie Trail) to reflect the community of primary use and support.
- The extension would facilitate the development of a critical north linkage from the proposed BL Erie Trail to the east side of Bass Lake, including proximity to Bass Lake Beach, using CR 600 E.
- The extension could facilitate a critical south linkage to Tippecanoe River State Park and the Panhandle Pathway using CR 600 E. The Panhandle Pathway is a 21-mile dedicated trail that extends southeast from Winamac.
- The extension would offer improved feasibility for connection to Culver and to Rochester through Monterey.

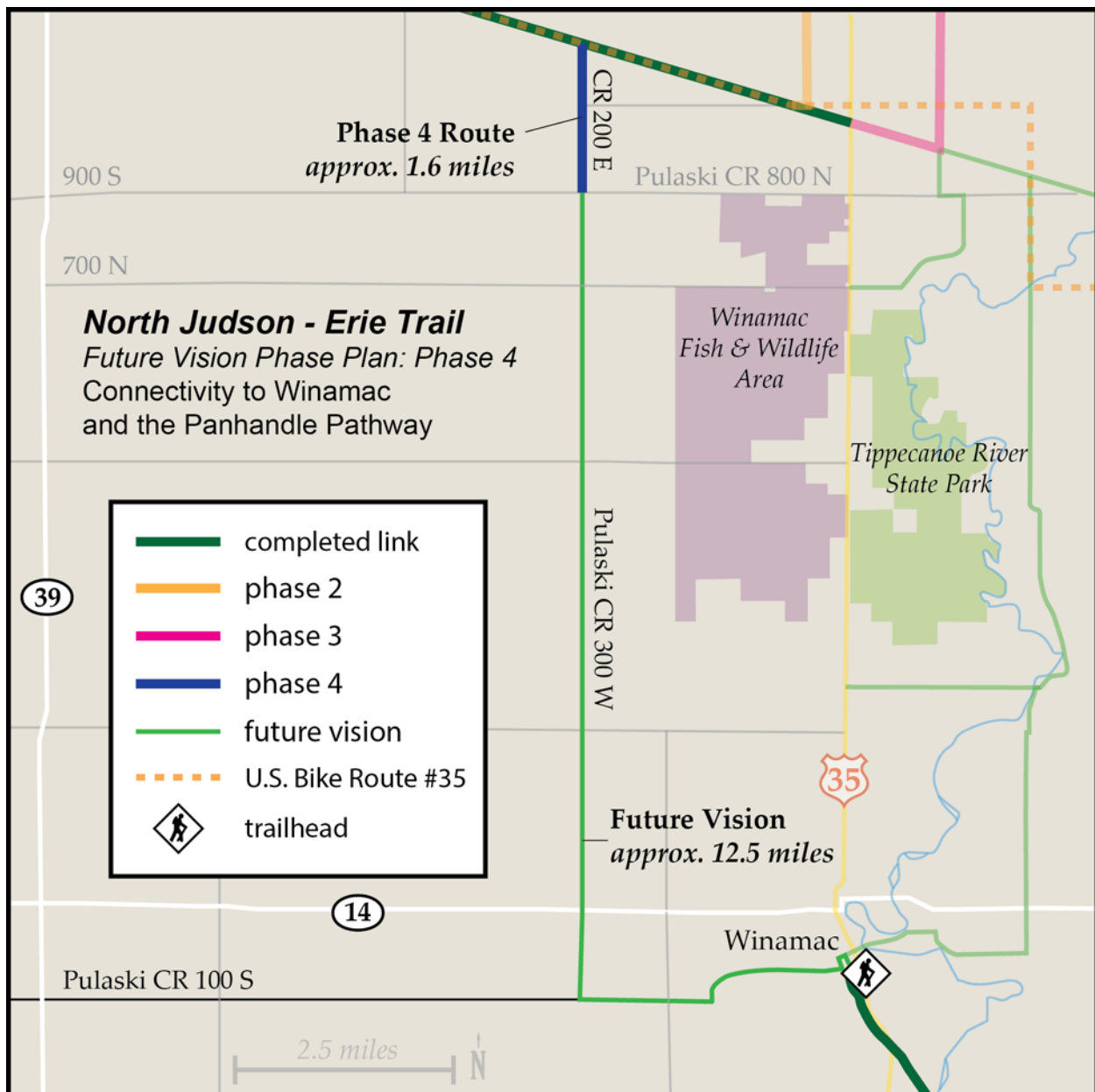
Phase 3 Specifics

With the cooperation of the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum, the Phase 3 Vision would extend non-motorized trail usage approximately 1.2 miles to CR 600 E using compacted limestone or asphalt. A surface of compacted limestone is the less costly option. An estimate suggests a cost of approximately \$60,000 for compacted limestone. Much of CR 600 E is believed to be wider than most Starke County roads and seems relatively safe for roadway sharing between motorized vehicles and bicycles. CR 600 E north of the proposed BL Erie Trail would need directional signage and may offer an opportunity for a modest trailhead at its junction with SR 10. The distance from the proposed BL Erie Trail to SR 10 is approximately 2.7 miles. CR 600 E south of the proposed BL Erie Trail offers the potential for improved connectivity to the Tippecanoe River State Park, Winamac, and the Panhandle Pathway. This potential would be optimized by a favorable understanding with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources concerning usage of an existing north-south bicycle route within Tippecanoe River State Park. Directional signage would be needed at all major intersections of BL Erie Trail and roadways and for portions of CR 600 E used as a bicycle route.

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Future Vision Phase 4: Connectivity to Winamac and the Panhandle Pathway

Phase 4 of the *Future Vision Phase Plan* focuses on connecting the NJ Erie Trail (a 9-mile dedicated pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian trail) to the *Panhandle Pathway* (a dedicated 21-mile pedestrian and bicycle trail). The route would identify an important link between these existing dedicated trails on existing infrastructure.



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Future Vision Phase 4: Connectivity to Winamac and the Panhandle Pathway

Phase 4 Reasoning

Why create a southern link at S 200 E?

A connection to Winamac on S 200 E serves a number of functions;

- Through signage identify a bicycle friendly route from the NJ Erie Trail at CR 200E to Winamac and the Panhandle Pathway.
- Enhance the posture of the NJ Erie Trail as the main stem connections for bicyclists using the ADT, USBR 35 and potentially the Dunes-Kankakee Trail to the Panhandle Pathway.
- Provide the connection to Winamac Fish and Wildlife Area that does not require the use of US 35.
- Establish a route that can be connected to Tippecanoe River State Park.
- Improve the connectivity for bicyclists using trails and roadway between Starke County and Pulaski County.

Phase 4 Specifics

The *Phase 4 Route* is approximately 15.5 miles connecting the existing NJ Erie Trail to Winamac and a Panhandle Pathway Trailhead.

The route intersects the NJ Erie Trail at CR 200 E. The first 3 miles of the Phase 4 Route heading south from the NJ Erie Trail are in Starke County. At CR 900 S (also known as Pulaski CR 800 N) CR 200 E becomes Pulaski CR 300 W. One option would be to follow Pulaski CR 300 W for 9 miles, then Pulaski CR 100 S for 0.5 miles, Pulaski CR 60 S for 1.2 miles and South Street for 0.5 miles. The route would use Winamac streets to access the Panhandle Pathway trailhead. Officials in Pulaski County are developing a comprehensive trails and bicycle system, and other options may be implemented. Signage promoting the Phase 4 Route should be placed at the intersection of the NJ Erie Trail and CR 200 E as well as the Panhandle Pathway trailhead.

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Future Vision Phase Plan: Extended Geography

This section considers vision extending from Starke County to neighboring (1) LaPorte County and (2) Pulaski County. For (1) USBR 35 extends west from the western trailhead of the NJ Erie Trail through North Judson and then onto English Lake Road. The ADT follows the same route as USBR 35 northwest of North Judson. These two routes diverge as USBR 35 turns north and crosses the Yellow River and Kankakee River on CR 650W in English Lake. The ADT crosses the Kankakee River farther west on US 421. Developers of USBR 35 and the ADT might be encouraged to combine limited resources and support a single crossing site on the Kankakee River. Whether these routes use public roads or unused railroad rights-of-way, signage is needed.

USBR 35 passes through downtown North Judson. Including the designation of NJ Erie Trail through the town and for a portion of English Lake Road to a new trailhead would provide opportunities for informational signage. A secondary benefit would be to cause the NJ Erie Trail to exceed 10 miles long. Some reporting services have used 10 miles as the minimum length for trail recognition. A bicycle route might also be designated on Toto Road east from USBR 35 to the offices of the Kankakee Fish and Wildlife Area.

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Future Vision Phase Plan: Future Vision

The map below focuses on the future vision for the western limit of the NJ Erie Trail. This section would connect with English Lake along USBR 35.



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Future Vision Phase Plan: Future Vision

The map below focuses on the future vision for the eastern limit of the propose BL Erie Trail. This section would link with the Panhandle Pathway in Winamac to the south. Phase 2 and Phase 3 of this plan focus on connectivity with Bass Lake to the north. According to Google Maps, Pulaski CR 200 E provides a bicycle-friendly corridor south to Winamac. Pulaski CR 200 E, which intersects with an extended BL Erie Trail, serves as an ideal link on existing infrastructure that can continue east and west along Pulaski CR 100 S (another bicycle friendly road, *Google Maps*).

