



DUPAGE COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

9.23.2022

SURVEY #2

OVERVIEW

As part of the DuPage County Trails Plan, two surveys were designed to gather public input on topics such as trail usage, trail character, barriers, wayfinding, volunteerism, and marketing. In Fall 2021, Survey #1 helped DuPage County to learn more about trail user habits and preferences, as well as suggestions for future trail improvements. Survey #2 asked follow-up questions based on the team’s insights and explored additional topics focused on wayfinding, trail etiquette, and innovative uses of the trail right of way. The second survey was available to the public from April 28 - June 17, 2022. A total of 823 responses were gathered, totaling to 3,146 respondents between the two community surveys.

Survey #2 was primarily advertised via signage on the trail, which was strategically distributed throughout the trail system. In addition, the survey was marketed through DuPage County Communications and distributed to community partners including bike and pedestrian advocacy groups, service providers for people with disabilities, and area municipalities to share through their communications networks.

The map on the following page shows where the survey was completed by zip code with an overlay of where signs advertising the survey were placed. The zip codes with the most responses are **60137** (Glen Ellyn, 96 responses), **60148** (Lombard and Villa Park, 90 responses), **60187** (north Wheaton, 48 responses), **60181** (Villa Park and Oakbrook Terrace, 37 responses), and **60126** (Elmhurst, 33 responses). Of the survey respondents that provided a zip code (691), 63% are in DuPage County.

SURVEY RESPONSES

2,323

Survey #1 responses
(October 4 - November 9, 2021)

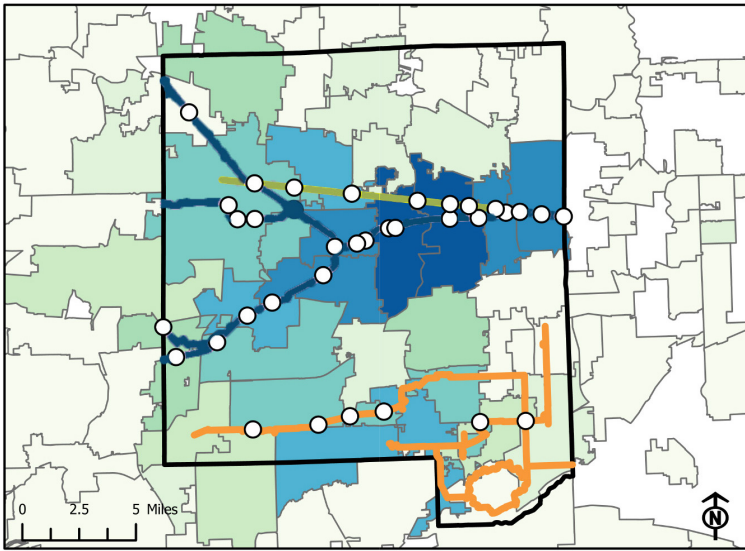
823

Survey #2 responses
(April 28 - June 17, 2022)

3,146

Total survey responses
*~2,831 unique IP addresses

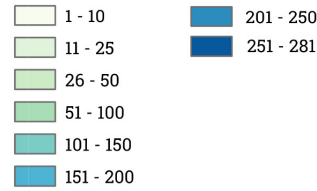
SURVEY RESPONSES BY ZIP CODE



DuPage County Trails

- Illinois Prairie Path
- Great Western Trail
- Southern DuPage County Regional Trail
- Trail User Survey Sign Locations

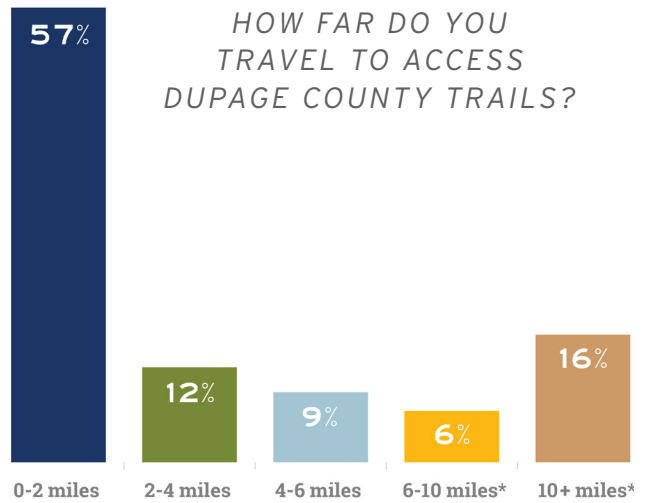
Survey Responses by Zip



TRAIL USAGE

DISTANCE TRAVELED

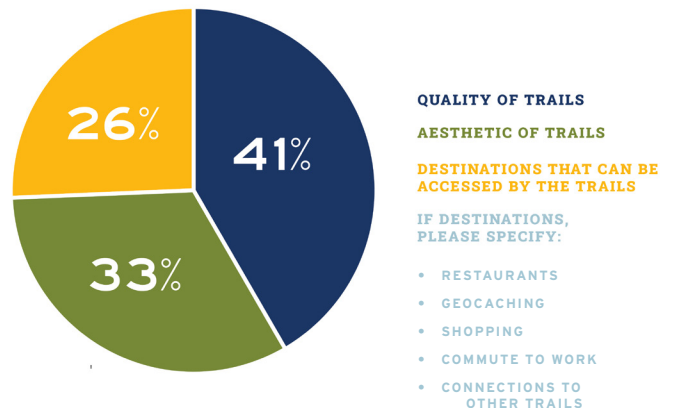
Fifty-seven percent the survey respondents (469) travel a very short distance to access DuPage County trails, **between 0-2 miles**. The next most commonly traveled distance is **over ten miles**, with 16% (131) making the trek. These responses align with the same question that was asked on the first survey.



PURPOSE

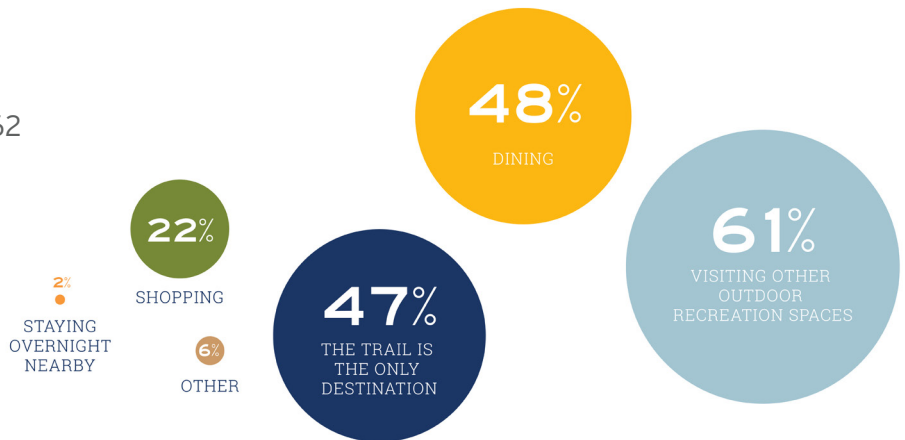
The top reason for traveling over 6 miles to access the trail system is **the quality of the trails** (41%, 112 responses). Thirty-three percent of survey respondents (88) indicated that **the aesthetics of the trails** is their largest draw to the trail system. **Destinations that can be accessed by the trail** is the last option, with 26% of responses respectively (69 responses). Forty-one respondents (41) followed up with specific destination examples—common responses include **restaurants, geocaching, and connections to other trails**.

*IF YOU TRAVELED OVER 6 MILES, WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THIS TRAIL SYSTEM?



OTHER ACTIVITIES

The top three activities that the survey respondents engage in as part of their day on the trail network includes **visiting other outdoor recreation spaces** (61%, 466 respondents), **dining** (48%, 368 respondents), and **shopping** (22%, 168). Alternatively, forty-seven percent shared that **the trail is the only destination** (362 respondents). Of the 6% of respondents who chose **"Other"**, responses include other activities such as **commuting, picnics, volunteering, socializing**, etc. The remaining survey respondents (2%, 17) said that they **stay overnight near the trail system**.



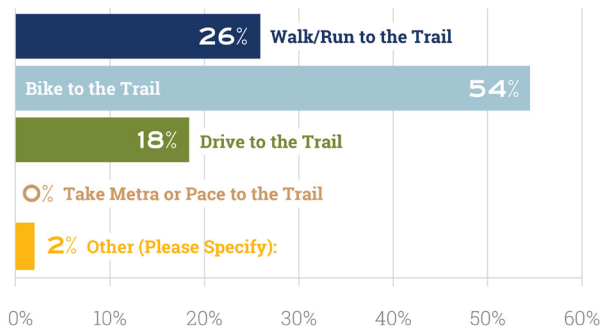
FROM A TOURISM PERSPECTIVE, WE ARE INTERESTED TO KNOW WHETHER YOU ENGAGE IN OTHER ACTIVITIES AS PART OF YOUR TRAIL USAGE.

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT YOU HAVE DONE AS PART OF A DAY ON THE TRAIL NETWORK.

MODE

The vast majority of survey respondents are either **biking** (54%, 423 respondents) or **walking/running** (26%, 201 respondents) to reach the trail from their original location. Eighteen percent of survey respondents (143) **drive to access** the trail system. Of the 2% of respondents who chose **"Other"**, the majority report that they **ride the trails on horseback** or that they **drive and bike**.

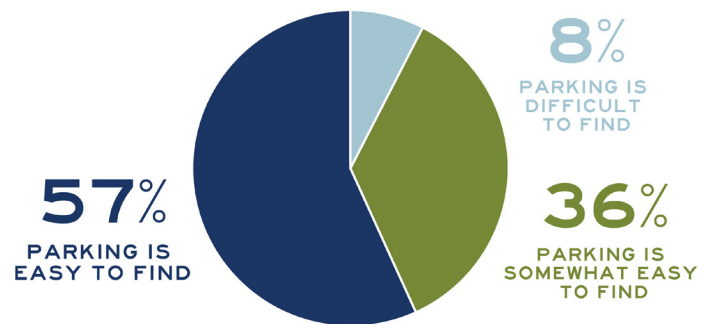
HOW DO YOU USUALLY GET TO THE TRAIL?



PARKING

A large majority of the survey respondents (57%, 263) believe **parking is easy to find** when driving to the trail system. Thirty-six percent find **parking somewhat easy to find** (165 respondents), while the remainder find **parking difficult to find** (8%, 35 respondents).

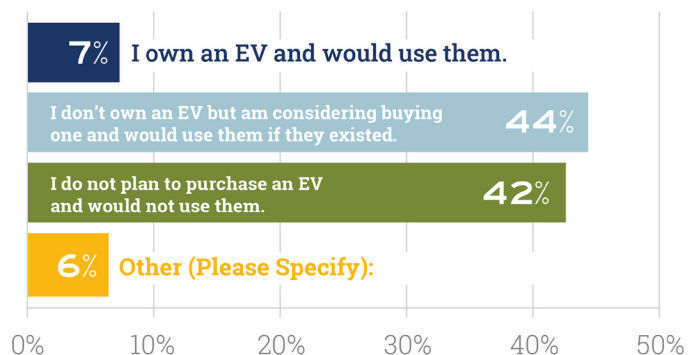
IF YOU DRIVE TO THE TRAIL, IS FINDING PARKING AROUND THE TRAIL AN ISSUE?



CHARGING STATIONS

More than half of survey respondents (51% or 355) would use electric vehicle charging stations if they were located near a county path or trail. Of that fifty-one percent, seven percent own an EV (50 respondents) and forty-four percent are considering buying an EV (305 respondents). Forty-two percent stated that they do not plan to purchase an EV and would not use the charging stations (293 respondents). The remaining survey respondents (6%, 44) provided alternative responses, such as charging an EV at their residence.

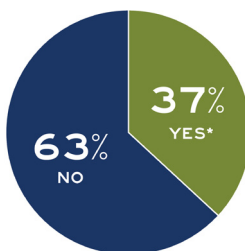
IF ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS WERE LOCATED NEAR A COUNTY PATH OR TRAIL, WOULD YOU USE THEM?



BIKE RACKS

Most of the survey respondents (63%, 491) have not used a bike rack near or on the trail.

HAVE YOU USED A BIKE RACK NEAR / ON THE TRAIL?



*IF YES, PLEASE IDENTIFY A TRAIL SEGMENT AND ITS NEAREST CROSS-STREET OR LANDMARK/BUSINESS WHERE YOU WANTED TO PARK YOUR BIKE ON / NEAR THE TRAIL BUT COULD NOT FIND A BIKE RACK:

- ST. JAMES FARM FOREST PRESERVE
- PRAIRIE PATH IN DOWNTOWN WHEATON
- SPRING BROOK PRAIRIE AT THE MODAFF ENTRANCE
- DOWNTOWN VILLA PARK AREA
- COUNTY FARM AND ST. CHARLES ROAD

TRAIL ETIQUETTE

The top three trail etiquette reminders that the survey respondents believe should be prioritized include: (#1) speed limits for bikes, (#2) acknowledging stop signs at trail-roadway crossings, and (#3) trail cleanliness rules. The following information reminders were voted as a lesser priority for the trail system: (#4) animal management, (#5) yielding hierarchy, and (#6) how to pass others safely.

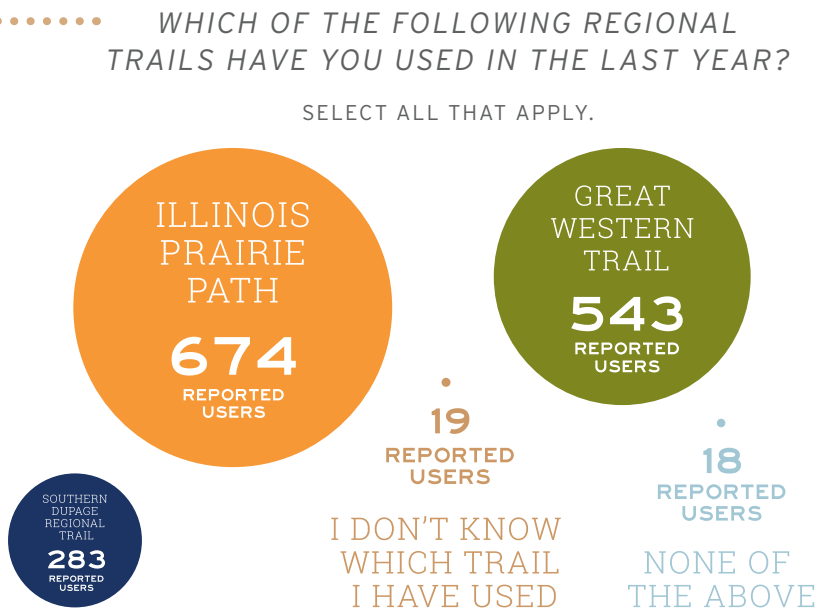
WE HAVE HEARD THAT TRAIL ETIQUETTE REMINDERS ARE NEEDED ON THE TRAILS. WHAT INFORMATION WOULD YOU PRIORITIZE?

PLEASE RANK FROM MOST EFFECTIVE (1) TO LEAST EFFECTIVE (6).

- #1 Speed limits for bikes (2.72)
- #2 Acknowledging stop signs at trail-roadway crossings (2.99)
- #3 Trail cleanliness rules (3.16)
- #4 Animal management (3.17)
- #5 Yielding hierarchy (4.17)
- #6 How to pass others safely (4.84)

COMMON ROUTES

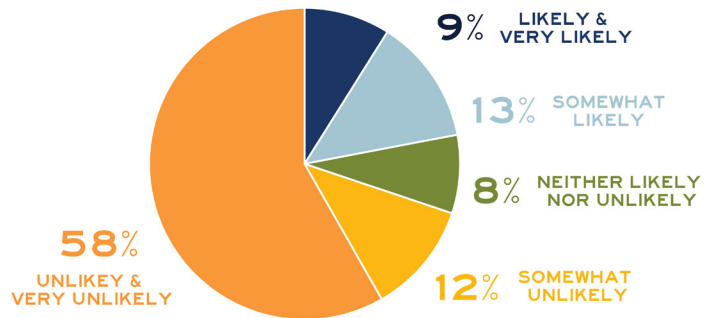
Of the DuPage County trails, the most commonly used trail among survey respondents was the **Illinois Prairie Path (IPP)**, with 674 reporting that they have used the trail within the last year. The next most used trail was the **Great Western Trail (GWT)** with 543 reported users, followed by the **Southern DuPage Regional Trail (SDRT)** with 283 reported users. Though somewhat uncommon, 19 people report that they **didn't know which of the trails they had used**. These align with the findings from Survey 1, which showed similar results.



BIKE SHARES

More than half of survey respondents (58% or 437) are **unlikely or very unlikely to utilize shared bikes** located along the trail system. Alternatively, 9% stated that they **either likely or very likely to use a bike share as a resource** (67 respondents). The remaining 33% of respondents (246) fall somewhere in between.

IF SHARED BIKES WERE LOCATED ALONG THE TRAIL, HOW LIKELY WOULD YOU BE TO USE THEM?



INNOVATIVE USES

INNOVATIVE USE IDEAS

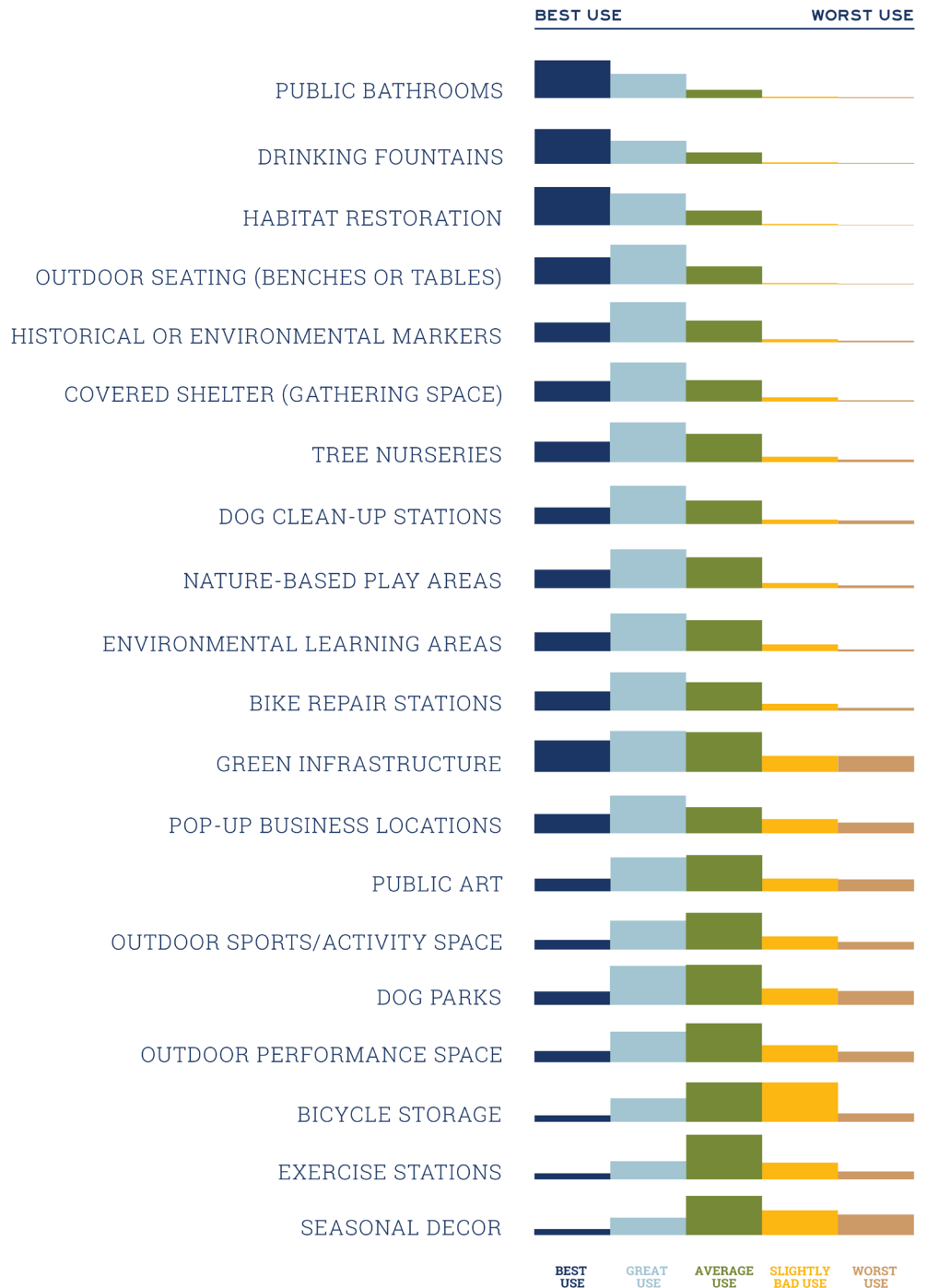
Generally, DuPage County owns and maintains a trail corridor that is between 20 and 100 feet wide, inclusive of the trail. The County is interested in innovative uses that can fit within this space. Survey respondents were asked to rank each preliminary idea individually from best use to worst use. Highlights include:

-  **HABITAT RESTORATION**
-  **COVERED SHELTERS (GATHERING SPACE)**
-  **DOG CLEAN-UP STATIONS**
-  **PUBLIC BATHROOMS**
-  **HISTORICAL/ ENVIRONMENTAL MARKERS**

Many of the other ideas presented were seen as a great or average use. Other ideas that respondents submitted include: **seasonal pop-ups, community gardens, outdoor working space, bird houses, First-aid stations, community-based games, etc.**

WE ARE LOOKING FOR INNOVATIVE WAYS THE AREAS ADJACENT TO THE TRAIL CAN BE USED AT KEY LOCATIONS.

PLEASE RANK EACH PRELIMINARY IDEA INDIVIDUALLY FROM BEST INNOVATIVE USE TO WORST INNOVATIVE USE.



INNOVATIVE USE LOCATIONS

Over 200 survey respondents submitted their ideas regarding potential locations for innovative uses along the trail corridors throughout DuPage County. Some of the most commonly sited locations include:

IPP Elgin Branch + GWT Intersect	Near Downtown Glen Ellyn
IPP between Wheaton & Lombard	355 Bridge in Lombard

WHAT SPECIFIC LOCATIONS ARE YOUR PREFERRED INNOVATIVE USES MOST NEEDED?

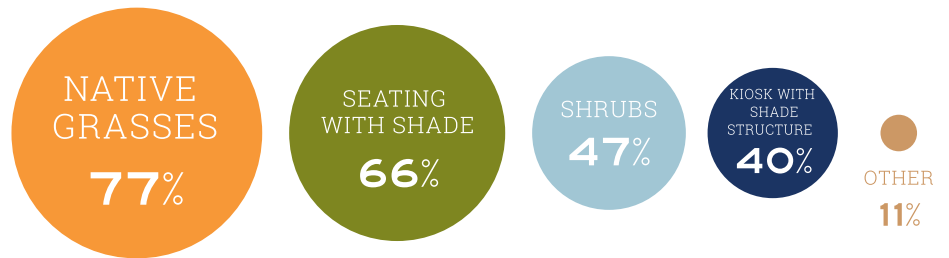
PLEASE LET US KNOW OF A SPECIFIC LOCATION ALONG A TRAIL TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY.

VEGETATION

When asked what types of vegetations would make areas without trees more comfortable, **native grasses** were the most desired (535 votes). **Seating with shade** was also popular with 461 votes, followed by **shrubs and kiosks with shade structures**. Of the respondents who chose **"Other"**, responses include: **wildflowers, rain gardens/wetlands,** and **butterfly garden/pollinators**.

MANY OF THE DUPAGE COUNTY TRAILS ARE ALONG A COMED CORRIDOR, WHICH MEANS THEY MUST BE FREE OF TALL TREES THAT MIGHT INTERFERE WITH UTILITY LINES. KNOWING THESE LIMITATIONS, WHAT OTHER TYPES OF VEGETATION WOULD MAKE THE EXPERIENCE IN THESE AREAS MORE COMFORTABLE?

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

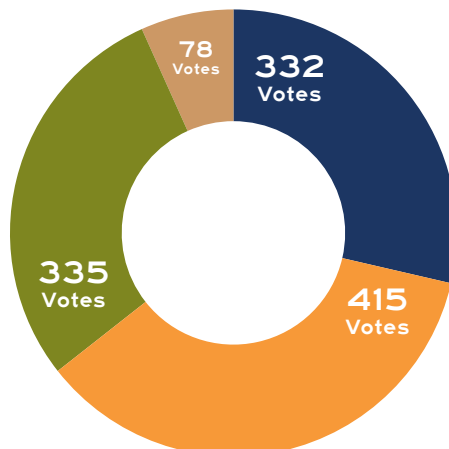


HABITAT RESTORATION

Fifty-nine percent of the survey respondents would be interested in seeing **posted signs or kiosks where habitat restoration efforts are underway** (415 respondents). Other ways people would like to see this information is through the **DuPage Trails App or website** and **occasional newsletters and notices** about habitat restoration/preservation.

WHAT INFORMATION WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN RECEIVING REGARDING HABITAT RESTORATION ALONG THE TRAILS?

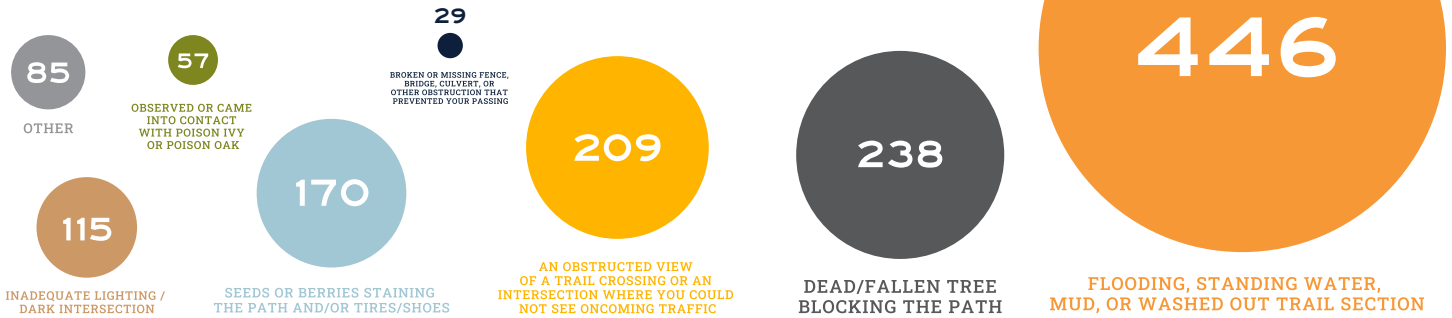
SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.



- Occasional newsletters / Notices about habitat restoration / Preservation
- Posted signs or kiosks where habitat restoration efforts are underway
- Information posted on the DuPage Trails App or website
- Not interested in this information

TRAIL HAZARDS

Of the trails hazards outlined, the most common issues that the respondents experience are rain related: **flooding, standing water, mud, or washed out trail section** (446 votes). The next most experienced hazard is **dead/fallen tree blocking the path** with 238 votes, followed by **an obstructed view** with 209 votes. Of the 85 "Other" votes, responses included: **heavy tire ruts, snow/ice, parked vehicles, soft gravel/limestone, and bathroom closures.**



DESPITE OCCASIONAL HABITAT RESTORATION OR PRESERVATION EFFORTS, TRAIL HAZARDS STILL ARISE. IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ISSUES HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ON A VISIT TO DUPAGE COUNTY TRAILS?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

EVENT ORGANIZATION

The vast majority of survey respondents (91% or 653 respondents) have **never tried to organize an event within the trail system.**

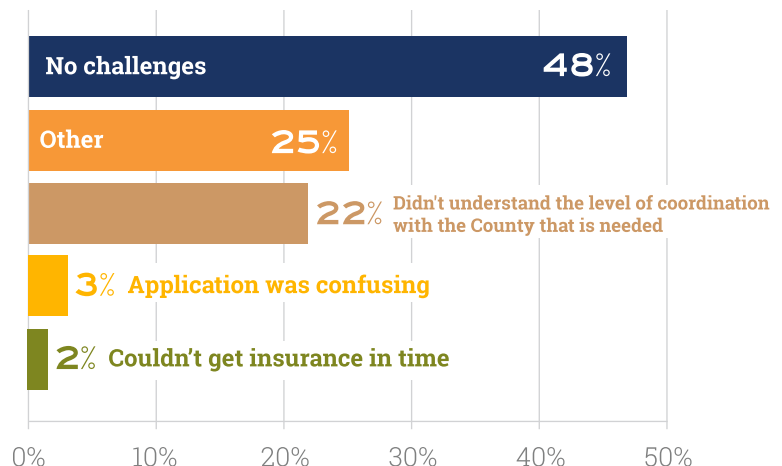
HAVE YOU EVER TRIED TO ORGANIZE AN EVENT ON THE TRAIL?



SPECIAL EVENTS PERMIT

Of those that have tried to organize an event on the trail system, most (48% or 30) **experience no challenges when applying for a Special Events permit** with DuPage County. The top two challenges that are encountered include **not understanding the level of coordination that is needed** (22% or 14) or **Other** (25% or 16). Of the "Other" responses, comments included: **event was too small to require permitting, expensive, application process and length, and lack of proof of insurance.**

IN ORGANIZING AN EVENT ON THE TRAIL, WHAT CHALLENGES, IF ANY, DID YOU ENCOUNTER IN GETTING A SPECIAL EVENTS PERMIT?



WAYFINDING

INTENSITY

Signs on the trail system can be installed and maintained by the Division of Transportation, local municipalities, or other partner organizations, and they can vary in style and design based on who manages them. Wayfinding should prioritize maintaining the natural aesthetic of the trail, without the crowding of signage, benches, kiosks, etc., except for at key trailhead locations. Fifty percent of the survey respondents prefer the image displaying a **low intensity of signs/monuments** (295 respondents), followed by thirty-nine percent preferring the **medium intensity image** (230 respondents). The image with the **highest intensity of signs/monuments** received the least amount of votes (11% or 68 respondents).

PLEASE INDICATE WHICH INTENSITY OF SIGNS/MONUMENTS YOU FIND MOST APPEALING.



50%

LOW INTENSITY



39%

MEDIUM INTENSITY



11%

HIGH INTENSITY

VISUAL CONSISTENCY

Visual consistency can be enhanced by the use of color, how information is organized on signs, and the use and recognition of trail logos and municipal logos. More than three-quarters of the survey respondents (83% or 508) believe that **visual consistency of signage throughout the trails system to be very important or somewhat important**. The remaining 16% of respondents find **visual consistency of signage to be somewhat or very unimportant** for the trail system.

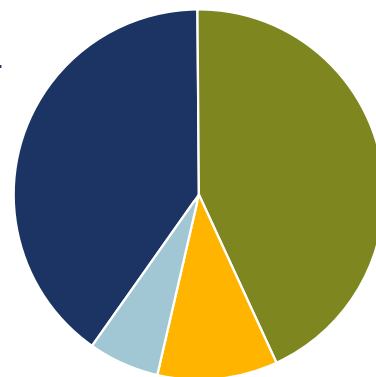
HOW IMPORTANT TO YOU IS TRAIL SIGNAGE THAT IS VISUALLY CONSISTENT AND RECOGNIZABLE THROUGHOUT THE TRAIL NETWORK?

40%
VERY
IMPORTANT

43%
SOMEWHAT
IMPORTANT

6%
VERY
UNIMPORTANT

10%
SOMEWHAT
UNIMPORTANT



SIGNAGE LOCATION

Of the locations included in the survey, the most desired locations for wayfinding signage are **trail-trail crossings** (535 responses) and **roadway-trail crossings** (431 responses). The next most desired locations are **to/through downtowns or near Metra stations**, followed by **at the border between two towns, cities, or counties**.

FUNCTIONAL AND USEFUL SIGNAGE, ESPECIALLY WAYFINDING SIGNAGE, IS IMPORTANT, BUT WHERE DO YOU FIND YOU NEED IT MOST?

SELECT YOUR TOP LOCATIONS.



#1: At other trails

#2: At major roads

#3: To/Through Downtowns or near Metra Stations

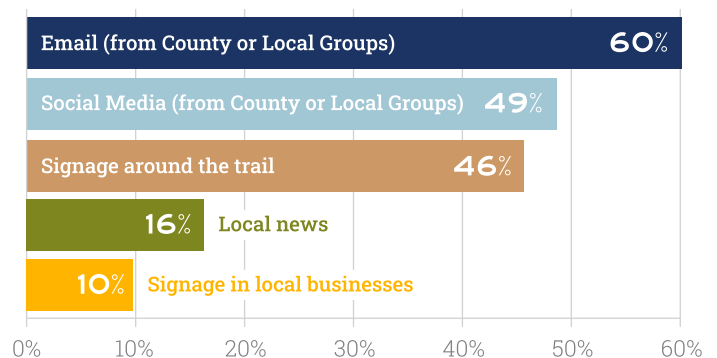
VOLUNTEERISM & MARKETING

OUTREACH PLATFORM

Survey respondents were asked to share the most common ways they hear about and engage with events and volunteer opportunities. The top three outreach platforms include: **email from local county or local groups** (60% or 418 votes), **social media from local county or local groups** (49% or 338 votes), and **signage around the trail** (46% or 317 votes).

HOW ARE YOU MOST LIKELY TO HEAR ABOUT AND ENGAGE WITH EVENTS OR VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES ALONG THE TRAIL?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.



VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

A majority of survey respondents are **interested in periodic trail cleanup events** (65% or 444 votes). The next three activities received similar interest and include: **periodic vegetation maintenance and seasonal planting events** (29% or 199 votes), **one-time larger habitat restoration events** (28% or 195 votes), and **regular trail stewardship and reporting** (27% or 188 votes). Twenty-two percent of respondents are **not interested in volunteer activities** (148 votes).

WHAT SORTS OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

