

■ Local

New pathway loop to sprout north of Moose

By Mike Koshmrl

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Construction is set to begin on the next phase of Grand Teton National Park's multi-use pathway network, and cyclists will soon have a new off-highway loop to ride east of Highway 26-89-191.

The third phase of the park's pathway buildout will result in a new 1.25-mile route in the sage flats between Blacktail Butte and the highway, spanning Moose and Antelope Flats Road. Construction starts in coming weeks and wraps up in fall 2015. The path is scheduled to open in spring 2016, Teton park spokeswoman Jackie Skaggs said.

"It will create a fairly significant loop to the east of Highway 89," Skaggs said.

The loop, which consists of on-road riding except along the highway, totals 20.5 miles.

Construction this fall will result in 15-minute driving delays on Highway 26-89-191 through mid-November.

The most complicated and costly part of the project is where the pathway will span the ravine at Ditch Creek, just south of Antelope Flats Road. Crews will build an earthen bed along the highway and a retaining wall.

Ditch Creek will flow through a new culvert that's being installed, Skaggs said.

The culvert will be "a large tube that will allow the passage of wildlife," she said. "That ditch creek riparian area is used by all sorts of animals, from moose to bears and wolves."

Routine maintenance taking place between Sept. 15 and Oct. 13 will also intermittently shut down the existing 6.5-mile pathway that runs from Gros Ventre Junction to Moose. The work includes a pavement sealant application and panels that will go in at road crossings to improve safety.

Similar routine work on the pathway between Dornan's and south Jenny Lake will result in intermittent closures between Sept. 29 and Oct. 27. On that 8-mile stretch, crews will remove bollards and install safety panels at road crossings.

A number of new multi-use pathways, including the Moose to Antelope Flats stretch, are prescribed in Grand Teton National Park's transportation plan.

The next phase, Skaggs said, will likely connect Gros Ventre Junction to the Jackson Hole Golf & Tennis Club.

"That would be a likely fourth phase," she said, "but we are also still looking at South Jenny Lake to North Jenny Lake as well."

The fate of a pathway along Moose-Wilson Road will be determined through a planning process now

underway.

Considerably further into the future, a long pathway is planned to run along the Teton Park Road corridor from North Jenny Lake all the way north to Colter Bay.