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Wheeling works to be more bike- and pedestrian-friendly

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The planned Dundee Road Sidepath, which would run from the Des Plaines River and I-294 overpass in Wheeling, is one of several projects Wheeling has on tap to make the community more bike and pedestrian friendly.

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By Melissa Silverberg

A new bike and pedestrian plan may be coming to Wheeling as early as next year after village trustees this month hired the Active Transportation Alliance to help draft it.

The village agreed to pay the Chicago-based Alliance \$73,554 for the work, which will be funded through an \$80,000 grant from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. A final draft of the plan is expected to be submitted to the village board by August or September 2012.

The proposed plan will aim to "improve traffic safety, promote economic development and enable residents to lead a healthier lifestyle," in addition to promoting bike and pedestrian travel.

The proposal also calls for the creation of a community bike ride event to help educate the public about the plan and get residents involved.

Although Active Transportation Alliance's bid was about \$1,825 higher than the lowest of the four submitted, village staff recommended the group based on

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its experience completing a similar plan in Mount Prospect. The Alliance also recently worked on the regional bike

route plan for the Northwest Municipal Conference.

Officials said the agency understands the issues in Wheeling, noting that Alliance officials have attended bike and pedestrian committee meetings in the village over the past two years.

Public engagement is a large part of the Alliance's proposal. The group indicates it will hold a community open house later in the planning stages to get residents' input. They also will use bilingual strategies to reach the diverse population in Wheeling.

Planning and research for the project will start immediately, with the community open house by May, officials said.

The work comes as the village prepares to build a paved bike and pedestrian path along Dundee Road, from the Des Plaines River east to the I-294 overpass. Construction of the path, which will link with other bicycle paths in the area, is scheduled to start in spring 2012 and wrap up in the fall. The project will cost about \$1.2 million, according to village officials. About 80 percent of the cost will be paid for with a grant from the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program.