FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Greater Yellowstone Trail Concept Plan Wins
International Trails Award

The Greater Yellowstone Trail Concept Plan has been selected as the winner of the American Trails “Trail Planning & Design” (greater than $500,000) Award

Wilson, WY, May 9, 2017 - Today, at the American Trails International Trails Symposium, the Greater Yellowstone Trail Concept Plan was selected as the winner of the American Trails “Trail Planning & Design” (greater than $500,000) Award. The Greater Yellowstone Trail Concept Plan was prepared in 2015 by Alta Planning + Design for Wyoming Pathways and the City of Victor, Idaho, as part of a larger HUD Sustainable Communities Planning Grant. The HUD grant’s mission to foster locally-led collaborative efforts to enhance economic development opportunities and improve livability was a perfect match with the concept of the Greater Yellowstone Trail.

The concept of the Greater Yellowstone Trail seeks to provide residents and visitors with a sustainable, healthy, and authentic way to experience this region’s unique landscapes and history. By linking together a collection of existing and proposed trails, the project will provide a 180-mile world-class trail system linking Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park, two state parks, many local parks and gateway communities over three states.

The Concept Plan identified and highlighted many of the diverse assets inherent in the trail corridor and communities it links to build support for the project and assist in future grant pursuits. The corridors primary and most obvious asset is the spectacular views of the Tetons and wildlife viewing opportunities seemingly present around every corner. However, the corridor also offers a thorough experiential history lesson of the region, presenting opportunities for interpretation of stories from a variety of periods including early Native American history, development of the world’s first National Park, 19th and 20th century railroad development, and early 20th century agriculture.

In addition, the Greater Yellowstone Trail also connects to an extensive network of local, regional, and national trail systems. Cross-continent routes such as the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, the Nez Perce National Historic Trail, and multiple cross-country Adventure Cycling routes intersect or follow large segments of the trail. The study highlighted the economic potential that these long-distance hikers and touring cyclists could bring to communities along the corridor.

The Concept Plan brought attention to the abundant tourism and economic potential inherent in the Greater Yellowstone Trail. Tourism already serves as a major economic driver in nearly all of the communities along the Greater Yellowstone Trail corridor. The realization of the Greater Yellowstone Trail would bring additional diversity (both seasonally and
demographically) to the region’s tourism portfolio while offering a sustainable tourism experience.

**Cultivating the Idea**

The planning team undertook an aggressive two-phase stakeholder engagement process that involved a variety of stakeholders throughout the 180-mile corridor. To kick off the project, the planning team conducted an intensive two-day site visit to tour existing and proposed segments of the trail corridor and meet with stakeholders from all of the local communities. The planning team later presented preliminary trail alignments and gathered additional information regarding opportunities, constraints, and potential management issues. In total, 23 different agency and stakeholder groups participated in the planning process, clearly demonstrating broad and enthusiastic support for the vision.

**Realizing the Vision**

Although development of a 180-mile off-road trail system is an ambitious endeavor, there are many ways the Concept Plan has positioned the project to succeed. The sixteen projects identified by the Concept Plan give the project’s stakeholders a clear and manageable guide to implementation. Projects ranged from major renovations on existing trail segments to new trail construction. Project information included cost estimates, identification of special environmental challenges, potential stakeholders, and compatible funding programs. Success to date includes $2.2 million in federal lands funding for priority sections on Teton Pass connecting Wilson Wyoming and Victor Idaho communities. Construction on phase one is set for 2018.

Wyoming Pathways was the project leader for the City of Victor, and assisted Alta Planning + Design in developing the Concept Plan. “This is an incredible opportunity to create thriving communities and enhance access to enjoy the remarkable public lands in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem,” said Tim Young, Executive Director of Wyoming Pathways. “The Alta prepared Concept Plan is a critical element in the measurable progress being made.”

In addition to physical trail construction projects, the Concept Plan also included a variety of programmatic and policy recommendations. These recommendations sought to build local support for the trail, improve the user experience, quantify trail benefits, and promote the many miles of existing trail already publicly accessible. Recommendations included media campaigns, creation of comprehensive wayfinding and branding for the corridor, development of trail user counting best practices, event programming, and development of websites or mobile applications for prospective trail users.

**A Trail Experience Befitting of the American West**

The Greater Yellowstone Trail presents an amazing opportunity to enhance quality of life, improve access to recreation and public lands, and generate economic opportunities for residents of eastern Idaho, southwestern Montana and western Wyoming. Local communities throughout the corridor have already demonstrated a willingness to support, leverage, and invest in trail development. The Greater Yellowstone Trail seeks to build upon these past
successes and focus future efforts on developing a world-class long-distance trail that will deliver an authentic and sustainable tourism experience while benefiting local communities.

About Alta Planning + Design

Alta Planning + Design, Inc. is an international consulting firm with a mission to create active, healthy, and people-focused communities. We plan, design, and implement infrastructure and programs that improve health, safety, mobility, and livability.

CONTACT: Natalie Lozano, Vice President of Development, (503) 230-9862, communications@altaplanning.com, www.altaplanning.com

About Wyoming Pathways

Wyoming Pathways helps develop, advocate, and secure favorable policies, facilities, and investments in public trails, pathways and complete streets for people in all Wyoming communities, and supports non-motorized recreation and transportation advances through public outreach, legislative efforts, partnerships, education, encouragement, and trail support programs.

CONTACT: Tim Young, Executive Director (307) 413-8464, www.wyopath.org

###