

## Trail-a-Thon

### January—the Bison Trail

The Bison Trail is one of Lincoln's most interesting, connecting iconic Pioneers Park to Van Dorn Park, the Salt Creek Levee Trail, and the Jamaica North Trail. Pioneers Park was built in the 1930s as part of a New Deal program. For decades it has drawn Lincolmites to the west edge of the city. The Buffalo Run, one of Lincoln's oldest road races, and cross country meets are big draws for runners. For decades, however, there was no safe way to run or bike to the park. The old Van Dorn Street was a narrow, busy two-lane road with minimal shoulders. GPTN decided to tackle this project in what turned out to be one of the most complicated undertakings ever. Easements were needed for private and public land; the railway had to give permission for the tight squeeze over their tracks; the highway department had to permit an underpass under the West Bypass (Highway 77), and the project was adjacent to Wilderness Park. Aside from getting everyone on board there was money to be raised. The trail was finally dedicated in 2002.

When the park was originally planned, the east entrance was supposed to have a vista opening to the then new state capitol but funds weren't available so for decades the park looked out to corn fields. With the Bison Trail project this plan could finally be realized—the trail stretches out toward the capitol as planners had envisioned. But the Bison Trail hasn't been trouble free. The original trail used the old Van Dorn road bridge over Haines Branch Creek, orphaned when the West Bypass was built. The massive floods which devastated Wilderness Park wiped out most of the supports for the bridge and the county engineer, fearing immediate collapse, closed the bridge to bikes and pedestrians. After 3 and ½ years a new pedestrian/bike bridge replaced the old bridge and the trail reopened. GPTN lobbied for the project and raised \$50,000 in private donations.