



2014 ANNUAL REPORT

The First 100 Miles





Running water is often seen in the Santa Cruz River bed along sections of The Loop on the northwest side of Tucson near the Town of Marana.



Jennifer Brown and Sandy Ballis ride their horses along The Loop as it runs along the Rillito River between La Cañada and La Cholla.



Spotting wildlife along all reaches of The Loop is quite common.

Everyone loves The Loop

It is a rare weekend I don't get on my bike, join a half dozen friends and tour The Loop. And I'm not alone. On a typical weekend day, I'll see thousands of walkers, joggers, cyclists, dogs and horses – not to mention dozens of bird species, a wide variety of reptiles, coyotes, javelinas, even the occasional bobcat and Gila Monster. The Loop's appeal is apparent in the faces of those who use it. In recent weeks, we took to The Loop's Facebook page and asked our friends what it was about The Loop that makes it so special to them. Their answers and much more are shared throughout this first Annual Loop Report.



In the past seven years, The Loop has grown exponentially, and so has the number of users. Connections are being made between all the major river parks. Soon you will be able to make it from the San Xavier Mission to Fort Lowell Park and beyond without leaving The Loop. There are only a few sections remaining to complete before the 131 miles of paved paths will be done and all the river parks connected.

One of our most recent successes was the completion of the Julian Wash along the southern edge of our metropolitan area. This 16-mile reach touches some of the region's most stressed neighborhoods, including those with high incidences of diabetes and other serious

health issues. And families along the Julian Wash are taking advantage of this wonderful amenity. Parents are walking their kids to school, employees are riding their bikes along the Julian to the Science and Tech Park on the far east side, and others are making their way downtown. The Safe Routes to School Program has been working with the Sunnyside School District to teach their students about safe bicycling.

It took great vision and commitment from not only the region's elected officials, but many, many citizens, public servants, engineers and contractors who worked diligently throughout the years to come to the point where the dream of a multi-use, family-friendly trail surrounding our region is nearly realized. The 2014 Loop Annual Report shares The Loop's story to date and celebrates your success in building this local treasure. Enjoy it, and if you haven't been on The Loop lately, give it a try. You might just find it becomes a regular part of your life.

Sincerely,

Chuck Huckelberry
County Administrator



Weekends on the Rillito River Park are populated with many cyclists who often visit the Heirloom Farmers Market.



The Heirloom Farmers Market every Sunday is one of the most popular attractions on The Loop.

The Nessinger Family is one of many who have discovered that families who Loop together have fun together. Tim and Carolyn hit the Rillito River Park Loop section weekly pulling 6-year-old Cheyenne in a bike trailer while 13-year-old Cassandra motors under her own pedal power.

“Exercise is the goal,” Tim said, “but it is more. It is so peaceful out there, you don’t have to worry about traffic and usually the other people on The Loop are really friendly and polite. It is beautiful to see trees and changes of scenery – you see the city then the farms back by Alvernon and Dodge. You have a visual history of how Tucson has changed.”

The Rillito River Park may be the most popular segment of The Loop. It has the most parks, the most public art and the most shaded areas. It also has the Heirloom Farmers Market each weekend, which draws hundreds of visitors to the Rillito Regional Park pavilion to buy locally grown foods. The north bank path is complete, and while the south bank has gaps at the Tucson Mall and between Country Club Road and Dodge Boulevard, it is definitely the way to go. It easily connects to the Santa Cruz River path by traveling under Interstate 10.

BY THE NUMBERS:

- 15** art installations
- 1** weekly farmers market
- 25.4** miles paved
- 0.2** miles to be paved
- 10** public parks

DID YOU KNOW?

The Loop safety campaign that was modeled after the Burma Shave signs from the 1920s through the 1960s began on this section of The Loop.

“Our favorite stretch happens to be along the Rillito west of the Tucson Mall (but)... We’re happy to know that Pima County is still working to extend it even farther and make connections that will make it possible to ride a bike across the entire community without ever having to contend with cars. It’s truly an enchanting experience.”

Best Bike Riding, 2013 Best of Tucson, Tucson Weekly

2,000 B.C.

Native people begin farming along Santa Cruz River and construct earliest known irrigation canals in North America

400-1,400 A.D.

Hohokam culture flourishes in the Tucson basin



1692

Father Eusebio Francisco Kino establishes Mission San Xavier del Bac on the west side of the Santa Cruz River

1775-1776

Juan Bautista de Anza leads expeditions of colonists along Santa Cruz River



Matt Stoner's favorite section of The Loop is a seven-mile stretch of the Santa Cruz River Park between Grant Road and El Camino del Cerro. "I love to see all the beauty of the wetlands there," he said, referring to the Sweetwater Wetlands behind Tres Rios Plant. "The pavement is great, and you can just enjoy nature." Stoner rides both the Santa Cruz and Rillito River Park sections of The Loop during his twice-weekly commute to work at the University of Arizona Medical Center. "I took up cycling three years ago and like riding The Loop because I don't have to deal with cars," he said. "This is a great community resource."

Pima County closed a gap in The Loop path along the east bank of the Santa Cruz River in January 2014, making it possible for bicyclists and pedestrians to travel between Ina Road and Silverlake Road – more than 13 miles – and cross only two streets at-grade: Congress Street and El Camino del Cerro. Underpasses on the route allow car-free travel at Silverlake Road, Starr Pass Boulevard, St. Mary's Road, Speedway Boulevard and Grant Road.

Also in January 2014, an intergovernmental agreement was reached in which the City of Tucson granted easements to Pima County and the Regional Flood Control District to provide maintenance of The Loop and flood control infrastructure on land owned or controlled by the City. This allowed path repairs, repavements and improvements along approximately 11 miles of the west bank of the Santa Cruz Loop path from Cañada del Oro Wash to Silverlake Road.

BY THE NUMBERS:

- 4** art installations
- 39.15** miles paved
- 23.4** miles to be paved
- 15** public parks
- 2** golf courses

DID YOU KNOW?

The paths along the Santa Cruz are The Loop's closest connection to downtown. They also connect to the Sweetwater Wetlands, Mike Jacob Sports Park and the Silverbell Golf Course.

"Situated in the lush Sonoran Desert and surrounded by five mountain ranges, Tucson is a favorite city for riders. Bicycle events here are plentiful, while key rides include those around The Loop, a multi-use trail developed around Tucson/Pima County."

10 Best Bike Friendly Cities, USA Today, July 2014



LATE 1800s
Arroyo development for agricultural and municipal use

1912
Arizona in 48th state admitted to the United States

1976
City of Tucson develops Santa Cruz River Park

1979
Construction on the first segment of Santa Cruz River Park begins



With nearly 15 miles of paved path, the Julian Wash is a favorite among cyclists who want a wide open ride.



The Roy Schoonover Trailhead, named for the late cycling advocate, is near the south end of the Julian Wash Greenway.

Julian Wash

Every Wednesday, John Daniel Teran bikes all of the Julian Wash Greenway while pulling his 2-year-old daughter and 8-month-old son in a bike trailer. He starts at Rita Ranch Road and then goes up to Kino Park, which is one of the four parks along the Greenway. "I started doing this when you completed the Julian Wash connection at Drexel and I-10," he explained on The Loop Facebook page.

The Julian Wash lies between the Santa Cruz River and Rita Road and connects to many outstanding cultural and community assets, including the Kino Sports Complex, the Augie Acuña Los Niños Park, the Southern Arizona Veteran Affairs Health Care System and the Julian Wash Archaeological Park. Construction on the Greenway began in 1996 and the community celebrated the completion of the final 2.7-mile segment on November 1, 2014.

The final segment was funded by the Community Healthcare Benefit Foundation of Pima County with support from the Tucson Medical Center and Carondelet Health Network, demonstrating the reach of The Loop and community efforts to improve health and fitness in our region.

BY THE NUMBERS:

3 schools use the Julian Wash Greenway as an outdoor classroom

1 art installation

16.1 miles paved

1 museum

7 public parks

DID YOU KNOW?

The giant sun-tracking panels at the University of Arizona Tech Park's Solar Zone are located on this section of The Loop.

"We get closer and closer all the time to a fully-realized path around Tucson, but even now, let's take a moment to appreciate the fact that there are miles and miles of well-maintained paths to enjoy. Recommended: the southern portion of The Loop along the Julian Wash Greenway."

Best Bike Riding, 2014 Best of Tucson, Tucson Weekly



1983
100-year flood: extensive damage along rivers, washes and creeks

1984
County voters' bonds to help fund bank protection along Santa Cruz and Rillito rivers

1986
Rillito River Park formally established

1989
Pima County Board of Supervisors adopts Trails Master Plan, calling for interconnected trails along major washes and connecting tributary washes



The Pantano Wash is popular with walkers due to its peacefulness, diverse landscape and chances to see wildlife.



Users of The Loop have frequent places to rest on all sections of the multi-use trail, including this shady spot on the Pantano Wash section.

Theresa Beaty and Brenda Simpson can't always get together during the week for walks, so the sisters each go it alone in their respective neighborhoods. But on Saturdays, they meet to walk together for an hour or more along the Pantano section of The Loop, spying coyotes, rabbits and other assorted wildlife along the way. "It's a change from walking in our neighborhood," Beaty said. "It's peaceful and you don't have to worry about car traffic. We love it!"

Ryan and Ganae Tripp are also devotees of The Loop's Pantano section. They live near the entrance to Michael Perry Park, only a couple dozen steps away from the path. They enjoy daily walks on it with their four-legged family members, Ellie and Daisy.

The Pantano is the "baby" of The Loop, with its first sections built in 2004. It is the most likely spot on The Loop that you'll see horses and their human companions, and is also popular with cyclists. Key gaps will be completed in 2015, including an underpass at Broadway Boulevard and the installation of a bridge over the 5th Street Wash. The latter project will allow users along the Pantano's east bank to cross the 5th Street Wash. Further improvements will complete connections between the Pantano and the Rillito River Park Loop sections, resulting in a continuous multi-use pathway that will provide recreation, exercise and alternative transportation for area residents wanting to travel between the Rillito River and the Pantano Wash.

BY THE NUMBERS:

- 1** riparian habitat
- 5** art installations
- 8** miles paved
- 6.9** miles to be paved
- 6** public parks

DID YOU KNOW?

Fantasy Island, a popular mountain-biking trails park, is located on this section of The Loop.

"Went to the open house last night (Pantano Wash project) and am really impressed with how county officials work so hard to look out for the best interest of park-goers, property owners, and the environment. Thanks!"

Karen Paton Frye, on The Loop Facebook page

1993

50-year flood: extensive damage along rivers and washes



1996

Construction begins on Julian Wash River Park

1997

Construction begins on Cañada del Oro River Park

1989

Construction begins on Pantano River Park



Were it not for her real estate agent,

Brenda Pearson might never have known about The Loop. “We were relocated for my husband’s job and when we were looking for homes, our agent – who knew I did triathlons – mentioned The Loop as being nearby,” Pearson said. “I like training on it because when you’re doing speed or endurance training, you don’t want to be stopped by the traffic lights on the road. You don’t want to be interrupted when you’re running!”

Brenda often runs the Cañada del Oro segment of The Loop with Maureen Perkins, another recent transplant to the area. They’re preparing for an upcoming Ironman competition and their runs range from 12 to 20 miles along the scenic route. “It’s really nice,” Maureen said, adding that they enjoy seeing snakes, bobcats and coyotes during their workouts.

The Town of Oro Valley completed a 0.6-mile segment of The Loop along the Cañada del Oro Wash from First Avenue to Steam Pump Ranch in 2014, creating a 5.4-mile paved stretch from La Cañada Drive to Tangerine Road. In 2015, the County Regional Flood Control District will connect the path along the Cañada del Oro Wash from Thornydale Road to the path along the west side of the Interstate 10 frontage road, allowing travelers along the Cañada del Oro Wash Loop section to reach all other Loop segments. Planned for 2016 is closure of The Loop gap between La Cholla Boulevard and La Cañada Drive, creating a nearly 11-mile stretch from the I-10 frontage road to Tangerine Road.

BY THE NUMBERS:

1 Community College campus

1 art installation

8.1 miles paved

4.98 miles to be paved

3 public parks

DID YOU KNOW?

The Christina-Taylor Green Memorial River Park and the Catalina State Park in the Coronado National Forest are located on this section of The Loop.

“Scan enough lists of popular biking cities and you’ll begin to notice that many of the top spots are places subject to rain and/or cold weather. Who wants to bike in that? Tucson’s year-round warm weather, combined with its 700 miles of designated bike paths make it an ideal cycling city for diehards and dalliers alike.”

The 10 Best Cities in the U.S. for People Who Love To Ride, Bustle.com, June 2014

2006

Major storms create flooding; minimal damage due to river bank improvements



2009

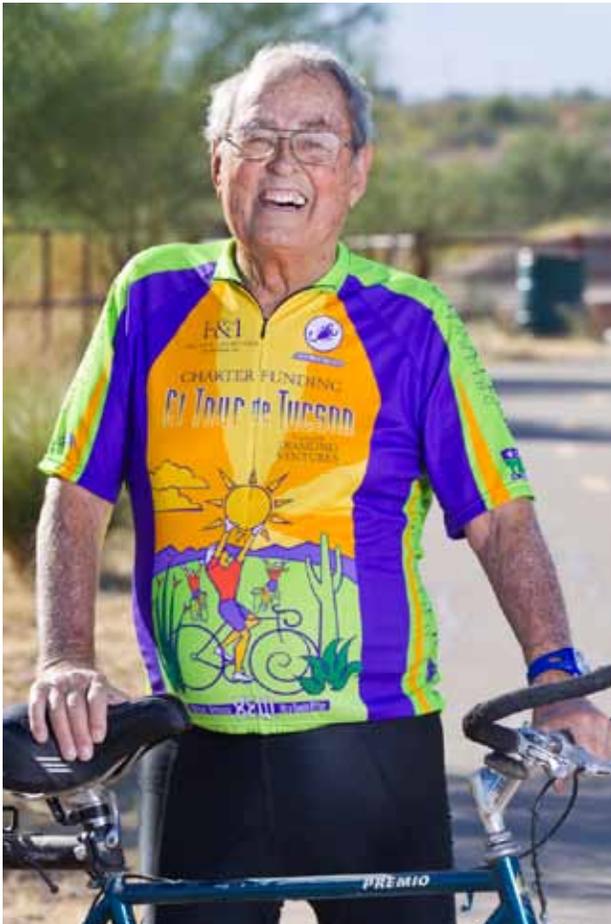
Loop “champions” meet with Chuck Huckelberry, get commitment for connecting all River Parks and tributaries in a single multi-use path around Tucson

2010

Major connections between existing River Parks completed

2014

Completion of 100th mile of The Loop



The late Roy Schoonover was a tireless advocate for a multi-use trail around Tucson.



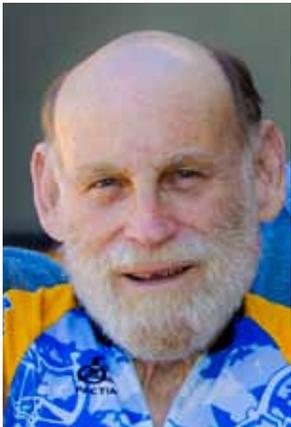
Employees from across County departments come together monthly to plan for events on The Loop and make sure construction projects stay on task.



Sue Clark



Steve Anderson



Norm Land



Bill Adamson



It takes a large maintenance crew to keep up with maintaining The Loop's landscaping.

The Loop Champions – Getting the River Parks Connected

The Tucson region's long history of flooding drove the creation of our River Park system, which became the backbone of The Loop. The worst of the floods was in 1983, when between 6 ½ to 7 ½ inches of rain fell across the Tucson basin over five days. Four people died in flood-related incidents from the 1983 event, and public infrastructure damage was estimated at \$64 million. After this natural disaster, Pima County spent millions stabilizing the banks of the Rillito, Pantano and Santa Cruz rivers to protect our community.

While nature was the driving force behind the bank stabilization that led to the River Parks, people were the driving force behind what eventually became The Loop. It took vision, tenacity, and a lot of people working hard together to bring this Southern Arizona treasure to where it is today. From planning and design to construction and maintenance, thousands have contributed to the development of this 100+ mile linear park.

Visionaries like Pima County trails expert Steve Anderson and Sue Clark of the Pima Trails Association saw the potential of an urban loop around the metropolitan area and painted the picture for the rest of us. Avid cyclists Roy Schoonover, Norm Land and Bill Adamson carried the torch of that vision to elected officials and other regional leaders, including County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry. They garnered unanimous support from these individuals, the region's Bicycle Advisory Committee and many others.

And the work of The Loop continues today. Hundreds of dedicated county employees, volunteers from groups like the Bike Ambassadors and El Grupo, and even individuals who simply love The Loop attend meetings, make phone calls, clean bathrooms, sweep sand off the path, and hand out bike bells and helmets to the youngest of Loop users. Construction workers, landscapers, school children, retirees, bicyclists, walkers, equestrians and bird watchers are the unsung heroes of The Loop. These folks do the dirty work to make it one of Pima County's most special places. They are our champions.



On Saturdays, riders of the Cañada del Oro section of The Loop visit a farmers market in Oro Valley, demonstrating how The Loop is where Pima County residents live, work, shop, learn and play.



Visitors to the Southern Arizona Veteran's Affairs Health Care building can get to appointments by riding The Loop.



Loop users frequently purchase shopping baskets such as these in which to carry their wares home.

With nearly 750,000 visitors a year, The Loop is one of the most used parks in Arizona.

On a typical weekday, more than 2,000 people use the Loop to travel to and from work and school, to recreate, and to enjoy the beautiful Sonoran Desert. On weekends, more than 5,000 people use it. In 2013, Pima County completed The Loop Economic, Environmental, Community and Health Impact Study. In the nearly two years since the report was completed, more than 20 miles of new asphalt paths have been added to this shared-use path, bringing its total paved area to just more than 100 miles. Eventually, The Loop will reach 131 miles around metropolitan Pima County, providing a linear park system unequaled in the Southwestern United States.

Not only has The Loop grown, but so has the body of knowledge related to the economic, environmental, community and health impacts covered in the 2013 report. And the research clearly supports and expands the basis for investing in this type of infrastructure.

Transportation was once the heart of a city's prosperity. Sitting on the right freeway exit ramp or rail line was enough to guarantee generations of successful businesses. Globalization has ended that guarantee. Now, the natural resources that keep cities competitive are residents with know-how. Cities and businesses prosper by attracting and retaining people with talent and skills that fit the specialized niches the global economy needs. And this talent pool wants more than a fast freeway.

In fact, for a rising generation of workers who've grown up amid urban rebounds such as what we're experiencing here in Southern Arizona, traffic jams and office complexes are the last places they want to spend time. That's why companies that rely on young talent are increasingly seeking to locate in regions with good biking and walking facilities. These appealing transportation options give workers the commutes they prefer.

However, the advantages of bicycling and walking reach beyond transportation. Savings in fuel costs, a smaller carbon footprint and a practical way to achieve recommended levels of physical activity are among the benefits that make The Loop an irresistible all-in-one package. Additionally, businesses that locate along cycling and walking paths become go-to places for a growing population interested in doing their shopping via foot or bicycle.

Providing pedestrian and cycling infrastructure for the purposes of commuting, recreation, fitness and family outings is arguably more important than ever before. Continued expansion of The Loop is creating jobs for engineers, construction workers, designers and workers who produce construction materials. For every dollar invested in The Loop, the community receives more than \$9 in benefits.

The Loop is a regional asset, like our weather and beautiful vistas. It helps attract and retain high-wage employers, improves the value of adjacent lands, enhances the quality of life and health for our community, generates revenue and improves the tax base, providing a growing source of income for the entire region. And it brings us all together, connecting residents of Pima County to the places where we live, work, shop, learn and play.



Expanding The Loop is a top priority for Pima County. Here workers construct gabions near the Paseo de las Iglesias, which is the newest section of The Loop.



Construction workers level ground before the paved path is laid on the Paseo de las Iglesias section of The Loop.



The Loop uses underpasses to help cyclists and pedestrians cross under major streets safely.

Looking ahead...

The Loop hit a major milestone by completing its 100th mile in 2014. But we're not finished counting miles yet. In 2015, The Loop will be extended more than 12 miles with various improvements offering Loop users an amazing outdoor experience.

The Pantano River Park will be completed from Tanque Verde Road to Fort Lowell Park and with two projects from Speedway Boulevard south to Kenyon Drive. These developments will complete the nine-mile Pantano River Park. Be sure to see the Batty Biker sculpture north of the new Broadway underpass!

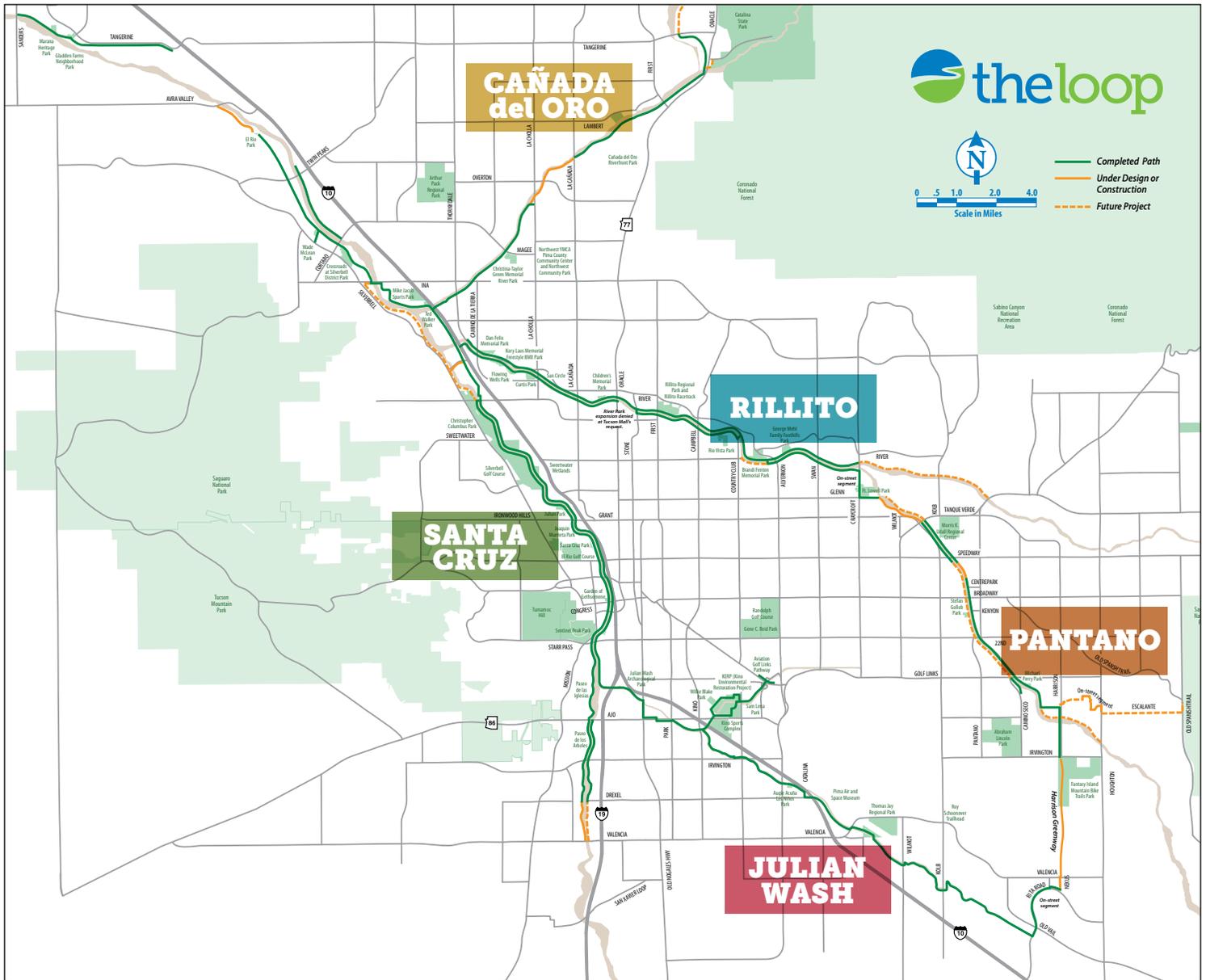
The Harrison Greenway, which connects the Pantano River Park to the Julian Wash Greenway, will also be completed in 2015, adding seven miles to The Loop. This section will also enable off-street access for mountain bikers to reach Fantasy Island trails from almost anywhere in the metropolitan area.

The region's earliest Loop section, the Santa Cruz River Park, will have two additions. The first is a one-mile segment from Irvington Road south to Valencia Road, connecting The Loop from just north of the Mission San Xavier del Bac to downtown Tucson. Walkers, skaters, bicyclists and equestrians on this segment can enjoy the new Paseo de las Iglesias Park this summer. This connection between the Julian Wash Greenway and the Santa Cruz River Park is part of a 198-acre environmental restoration project. Users can spend time immersed in Tucson's natural and cultural heritage.

The second addition to the Santa Cruz River Park is a connection to Cañada del Oro (CDO) River Park. There will be a paved path along the CDO Wash south bank from I-10 to Thornydale Road, including underpasses at I-10 and the Union Pacific Railroad and a multi-use bridge over the Carmack Wash. Once complete, this nearly one-mile section will enable the CDO path users to reach all other Loop segments.

Pavement preservation will continue on the Santa Cruz River Park with additional landscaping adjacent to the Sweetwater Wetlands. These improvements will provide additional amenities for birders and other environmental enthusiasts in the Wetlands area.

Expect to see more merchants linking to customers along The Loop, and more vendors on The Loop. A lot will be happening on The Loop in 2015, so to stay 'in the loop' on The Loop, check out our Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/ridetheloop.



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