

Rail trail becoming state park



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By COURTNEY SERVAES, Herald Staff Writer

An area trail soon will be a state park.

The Prairie Spirit Rail Trail, which stretches from Ottawa to Iola, will become the 25th Kansas state park, according to a media release from Sen. Derek Schmidt.

The bill won final approval in the House of Representatives earlier this month with a vote of 112-11. Now, the bill must go to the governor for his signature.

“Designating the trail as a state park will give it improved status in the overall priorities of the Department of Wildlife and Parks,” Schmidt, who represents a portion of Franklin County, said. “The designation should help with the long-term financial stability of this project.”

The trail is state-operated, but being a state park would mean it would receive additional signage and be included in state park guides and maps.

In addition, the Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy, a nonprofit organization that is developing two long-distance rail-trails, received a \$25,000 grant from the Tawani Foundation of Chicago.

The funds will support the development of the Ottawa-Pomona section of the 117-mile Flint Hills Nature Trail, according to a media release.

The trails stretch between Osawatomie and Herington, connecting with the 51-mile Prairie Spirit Rail Trail in Ottawa and the 38-mile Landon Nature Trail near Pomona.

“Kanza is working to create a remarkable recreational trail, which will provide a safe place for families to walk or bicycle away from traffic,” Owen Harbison, Marais des Cygnes Division Superintendent of the Conservancy, said. “We appreciate the Tawani Foundation’s participation in this exciting venture.”