

Planning & Implementing Non-Motorized Pathways From State Funding to Local Delivery

Berrien County Case Studies

County Engineers Workshop

Presented by: *Berrien County Road Department and Wightman*



BERRIEN COUNTY
ROAD DEPARTMENT

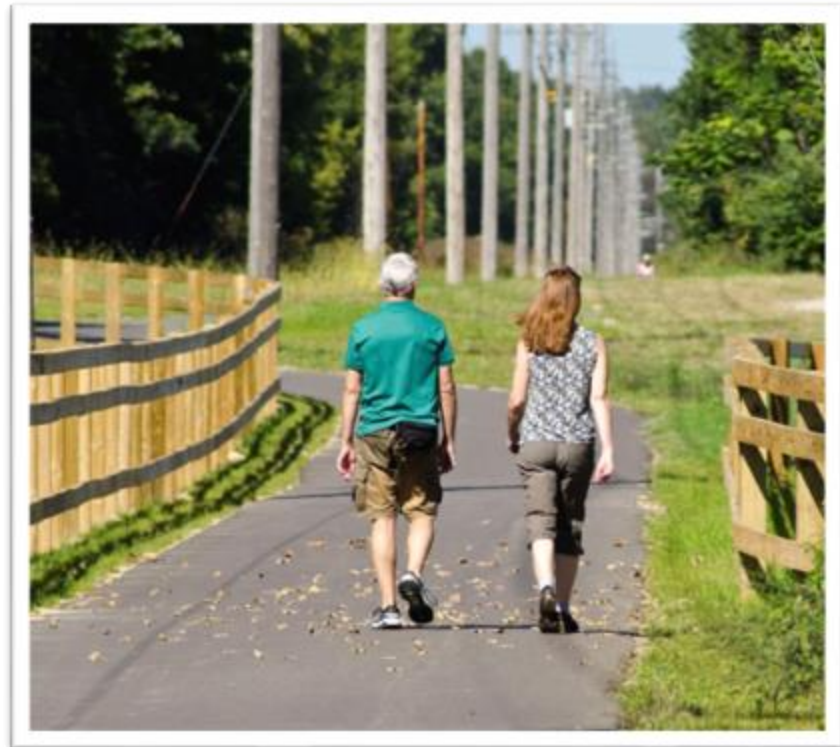
Why Non-Motorized Planning Matters

- Non-motorized facilities are **transportation infrastructure**
- Projects succeed or fail **before design begins**
- Early planning
 - Builds public support
 - Determines feasibility
 - Aligns funding sources
 - Reduces conflicts during design & construction
 - Planning for non-motorized during road/bridge improvement projects
 - Engineers increasingly play a **planning leadership role**



What Counts as a Non-Motorized Facility?

- Shared-use paths
- Side paths along roadways
- Trail corridors (rail-to-trail, river corridors)
- On-road accommodations (context-dependent)
- Focus today: **separated, multi-use paths**



Non-Motorized Funding in Michigan (High Level)

- Non-motorized projects are **eligible transportation investments**
- Typical funding sources
 - State Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
 - MDOT enhancement & safety programs
 - Local match (county, township, private partners)
 - MNRTF (Township Driven)
- Competitive process
 - Planning justification matters
 - Connectivity and regional value score higher



Funding

- MDOT – Transportation Alternative Program (TAP)
 - Eligible Agency: Any Act 51 agency
 - Goes through MDOT LAP process
 - Needs to meet regional trail design standards
 - 20% local match minimum
- MDNR – MNRTF (Trust fund)
 - Eligible agency: Townships, Cities, Villages, Recreation Authorities
 - \$400,000 cap with 25% local match minimum
 - Must have a current recreation plan
 - Eligible items include benches, landscaping, etc



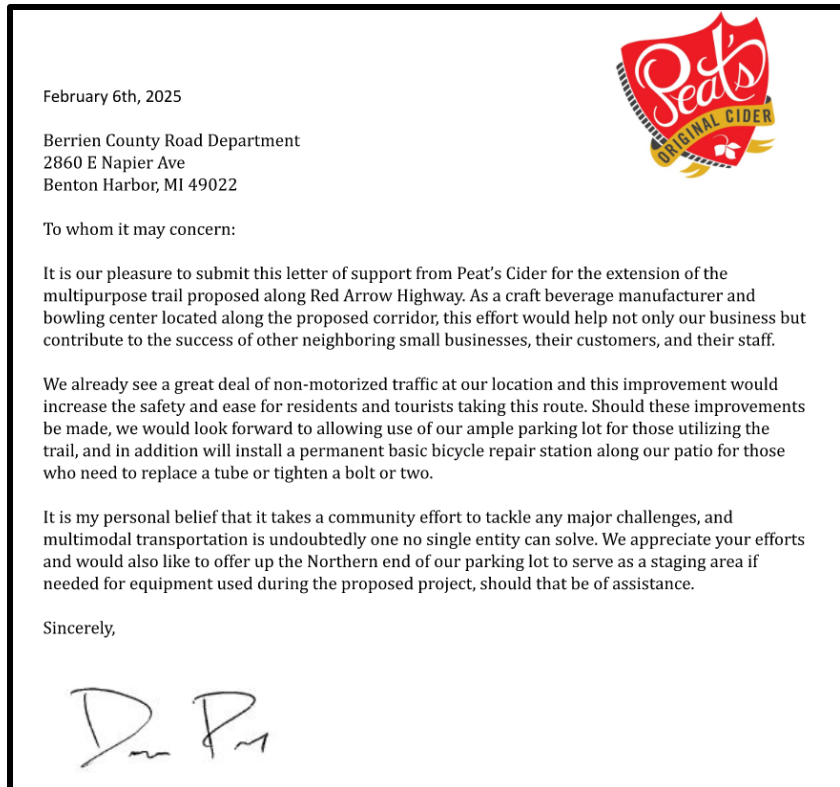
Why Planning Is Critical for Funding Success

- Conceptual Planning/Funding Application needs:
 - Clear purpose & need
 - Defined termini and logical routing
 - Right-of-way or easement needs
 - Demonstrated community support
 - Maintenance and ownership identified **up front**
 - Cost Estimates
- Integration with:
 - Road projects
 - Economic development
 - Tourism and recreation



Berrien County's Planning-First Approach

- County acts as
 - Coordinator/Champion
 - Technical advisor
 - Implementer, where appropriate
- Strong collaboration with
 - Local townships
 - Cities and villages
 - Private partners
- Emphasis on **master planning before shovel-ready projects**



Non-Motorized Master Plans

- Township-level and corridor-based plans
 - Regional, state-wide and even interstate plans
- Connecting Communities
- Key planning elements
 - Desired routes
 - Priority segments
 - Logical endpoints
 - Long-term vision
 - Major utility impacts
- Benefits
 - Creates grant-ready projects
 - Reduces political friction
 - Aligns expectations early



Determining Routes & Corridors

- Factors considered
 - Existing right-of-way
 - Former rail corridors
 - River and utility corridors
 - Roadway adjacency opportunities
- Balance between
 - Directness
 - User comfort
 - Cost
 - Environmental constraints



Maintenance & Ownership Planning

- One of the most overlooked steps
- Agreements define
 - Ownership
 - Routine maintenance
 - Snow removal (if applicable)
 - Long-term responsibility
- Written agreements **before construction**
- Builds confidence with funding agencies



Regional Connectivity Vision

- Non-motorized planning does not stop at jurisdictional boundaries
- Goal
 - Connect communities
 - Connect counties
 - Connect states
- Berrien County positioned as a **regional link**
- Utilize local stakeholders to help support and promote projects
- Friends of Trails groups
- Local business owners
- Individuals from communities



Red Arrow Highway Non-Motorized Path

- Planned as part of a **corridor vision**, not a standalone trail
- Key planning drivers:
 - Safety
 - Connectivity
 - Tourism
- Early coordination
- Adjacent communities
- Roadway operations
- Long-term corridor function



Red Arrow Hwy: Planning Challenges

- Right-of-way limitations
- Driveway and access management
- Drainage and grading impacts
- Public concerns about traffic
- Requires **clear communication of intent**



Red Arrow Hwy: Implementation Challenges



Red Arrow Hwy: Implementation Benefits



Red Arrow Hwy: Implementation Benefits



Red Arrow Highway Non-Motorized Path



Before



After

Red Arrow Highway Non-Motorized Path



Before



After

Red Arrow Highway Non-Motorized Path



Before



After

Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail

- Planned corridor from South Bend to Niles
- Strong example of **multi-jurisdictional planning**



Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail – Long History

Century Center speakers excited about 'rails-to-trails' concept

By BRUCE VON DEYLEN
Tribune Staff Writer

SOUTH BEND — Transforming an abandoned railroad right of way between South Bend and Benton Harbor into a bicycling and hiking trail has been something of an on-again, off-again proposition.

Wednesday night the topic was back on the front burner with a panel discussion at Century Center.

Sponsored by Michiana Watershed Inc. and the Michigan Bicycle Association, the discussion featured speakers from a variety of local or state private and governmental organizations.

Proposed is establishment of a walking and cycling trail extending from downtown South Bend to Benton Harbor's Lake Michigan waterfront.

Long-range plans would tie the trail into a network of existing trails in Michigan as well as some that are still on the drawing board.

South Bend, with completion of the East Bank trail, put itself in a unique position by being among the first cities in Indiana to utilize

'Michiana Watershed is exploring ways to establish a 35-mile trail on abandoned railroad right of way from South Bend to Lake Michigan.'

Rick Carey
Discussion moderator

abandoned railroad beds for this purpose, said Tom Kidd, of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

Kidd said similar projects have been completed in Indianapolis and Bloomington. He added there is a long list of communities considering the "rails-to-trails" concept.

South Bend's two-mile trail project starts near the East Race and ends on Angela Boulevard west of North Michigan Street. There is considerable interest in extending that trail north into Michigan, said Rick Carey, moderator of the discussion and a past president of Mi-

chiana Watershed.

"Michiana Watershed is exploring ways to establish a 35-mile trail on abandoned railroad right-of-way from South Bend to Lake Michigan," said Carey. He explained a goal of the group is to make the trail accessible to bicyclists, people in wheelchairs, walkers, runners, cross-country skiers and equestrians.

In other words, Carey said the trail should be used and enjoyed by everyone.

While Kidd admitted Indiana has lagged behind other states in embarking on the rails-to-trails concept, other speakers noted considerable progress in nearby states.

Roger Storm, of the Michigan Rails to Trails Conservancy, noted his state has embarked on a statewide system of trails known collectively as the Discover Michigan Trail system.

Though the concept dates from the middle 1970s, Storm said the pace of development has picked up considerably since 1988. He cited the 38-mile Kal-Haven Trail linking

Kalamazoo and South Haven as one example of what has been done.

How to pay for these projects has been a big reason why local governments have sometimes been less than enthusiastic about the issue.

Carey said Ohio and Illinois, two states that have completed extensive rail-to-trail systems, have used a portion of auto license fees to fund their projects.

Storm said Michigan has established a fund derived from oil and gas royalties that provided \$3 million last year for development of trails.

In Indiana, the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, which provides grants administered by the state and the Build Indiana Fund, which channels lottery profits into local projects, were two sources suggested by Kidd.

Several of the speakers added that some projects are funded through private grants, donations and use of volunteer labor.

Richard Vonnegut, of the Hoo-

sier Rails to Trails Conservancy, attempted to contrast between rail lines that have simply been abandoned and become "a no-man's land" and the sorts of trails Wednesday's panel discussion sought to promote.

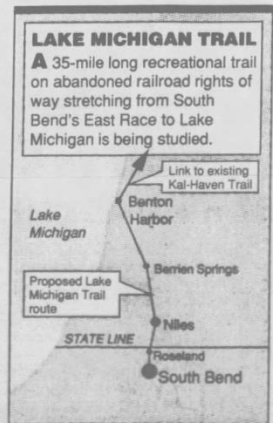
Using the East Bank trail as an example, Vonnegut said the trails, if properly planned and designed, can become an asset to the communities they serve. He suggested little details such as paving, benches and directional signs can go a long way to making the trails very "user friendly."

Storm added that Michigan's experience has been that those using the trails have shown they can police themselves and help discourage abuse of the pathways.

Aside from exercise for those using the trails, Carey said they also offer economic and historic benefits for the areas through which the paths run.

He said they preserve the links between communities established by the railroads.

From a tourism point of view,



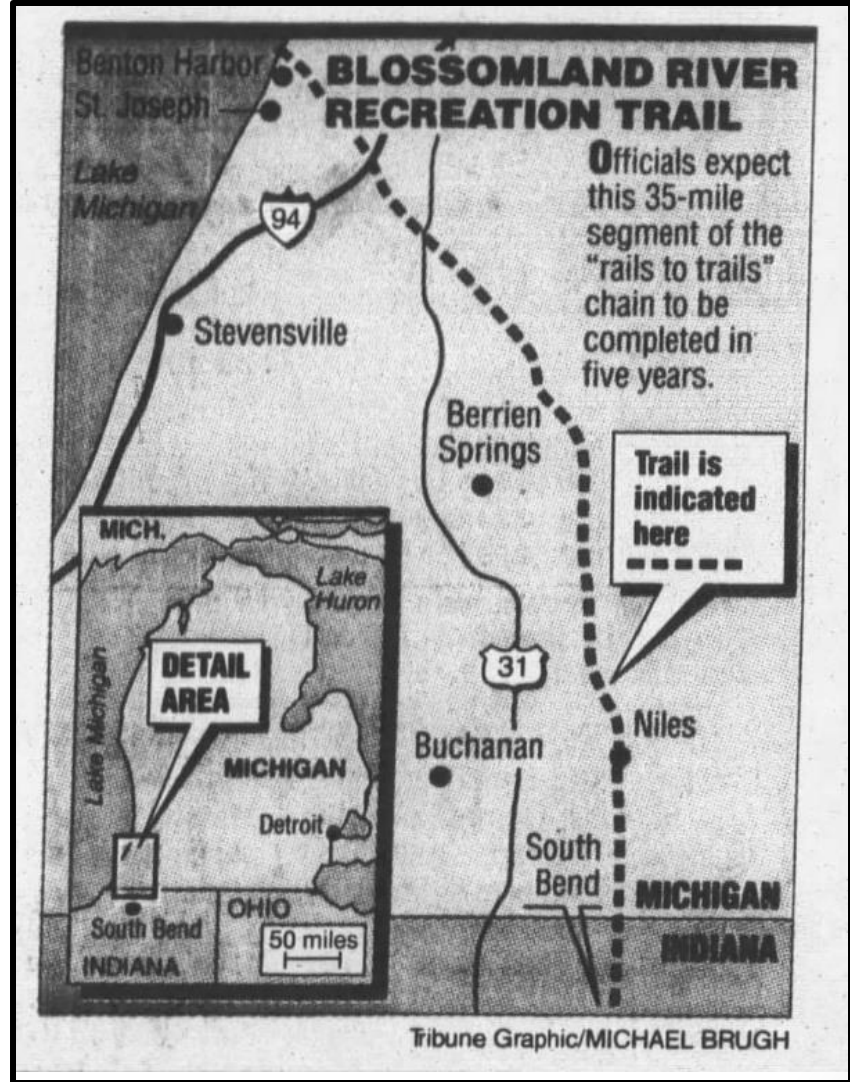
Source/ Tribune Graphic

Carey said, established trails already have brought many economic benefits in terms of increased property values and jobs.

- Discussions regarding the trail system start in early 1990s

Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail – Long History

- South Bend Tribune,
June 27, 1993

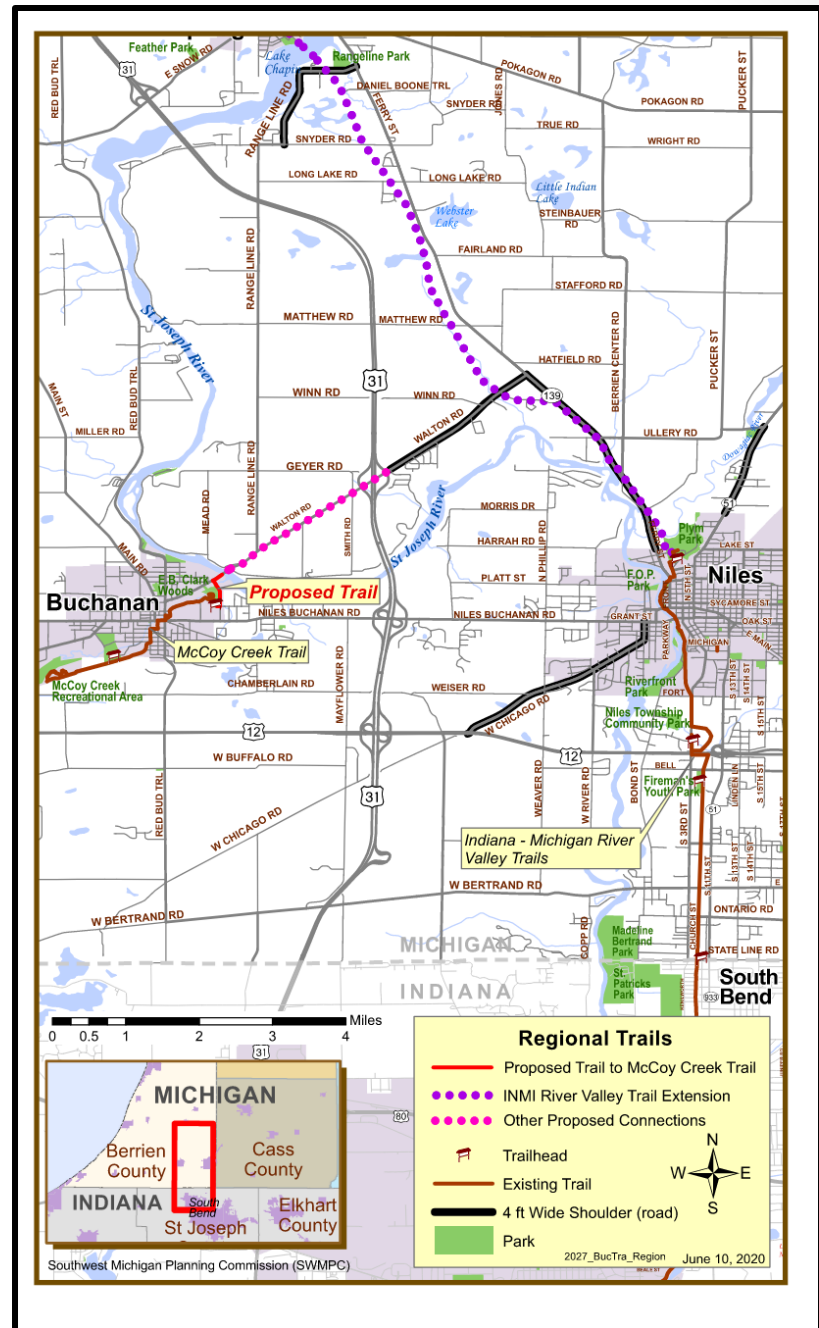


Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail - Vision

- Long-term vision to extend north to Berrien Springs
- Multiple phases with different lead agencies



Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail

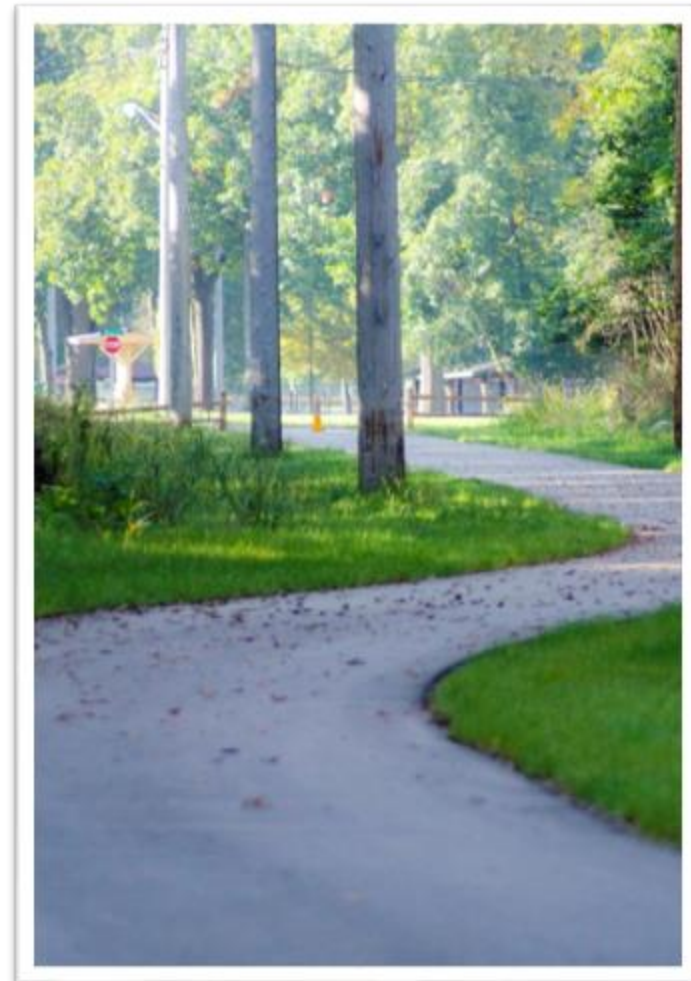


Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail – Phase I

- 3.3 miles from State Line Road to US-12
- Property Types
 - Old rail alignments (now IN-MI Power)
 - County and MDOT ROW
 - DNR Property



Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail – Phase I



Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail – Phase II

- 1.1 miles from US-12 to Fort Street
- Property Types
 - County ROW and Township Property
 - DNR Property

NILES — A missing mile of the Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail is scheduled to be filled in this year, giving walkers, runners and cyclists a continuous 17-mile path from Niles to Mishawaka.

Work to complete the last link of the trail in Niles Township could possibly begin this spring and finish up by fall, a township official said.

The township board Thursday night approved accepting the low bid of \$1.2 million from Anlaan Construction, of Grand Haven, Mich., the low bidder that the Michigan Department of Transportation had also approved.

The township is partnering with the state on the project to build about a mile of winding, paved trail through Brandywine Creek Park and a small bridge to take the trail over the creek. The park, located at the corner of South Third Street and U.S. 12, is mostly owned by the state but managed by the township.

MDOT is paying the lion's share of the cost — over \$627,000. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is kicking in \$300,000. The township is paying more than \$284,000.

"It's still a lot of money, but you're getting over \$1.2 million of trail in return," township treasurer Jim Ringler said. "And it is the connecting trail. It's the last part."

Ringler said the township has more than \$200,000 in its trail fund, as well as \$30,000 in donations to put toward the project.

Getting the small stretch of trail done has been a goal for a few years. In 2017, the township parks board unveiled trail plans drafted by Wightman & Associates, Benton Harbor, and money for the project started falling into place. That winter, too, the township paid to cut down trees to make way for the proposed path. But a procedural problem last year caused the state to reject bids for the project.

Jill DeLucia, of the township parks board, last week called the prospect of finally getting the trail done "good news, for sure."

MISSING LINK

Plans are on track this year to complete a missing 1.2-mile section of the Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail in Niles Charter Township for \$1.2 million.



Source: Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Tribune Graphic/ALLISON DALE

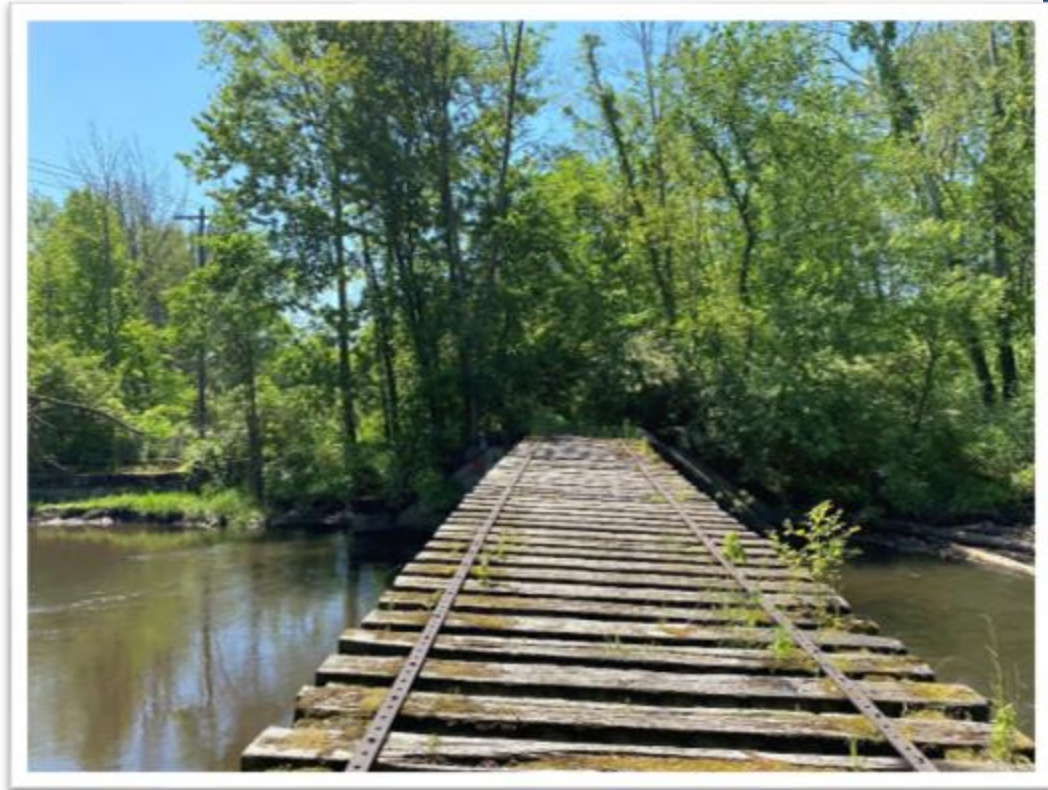


Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail – Phase II



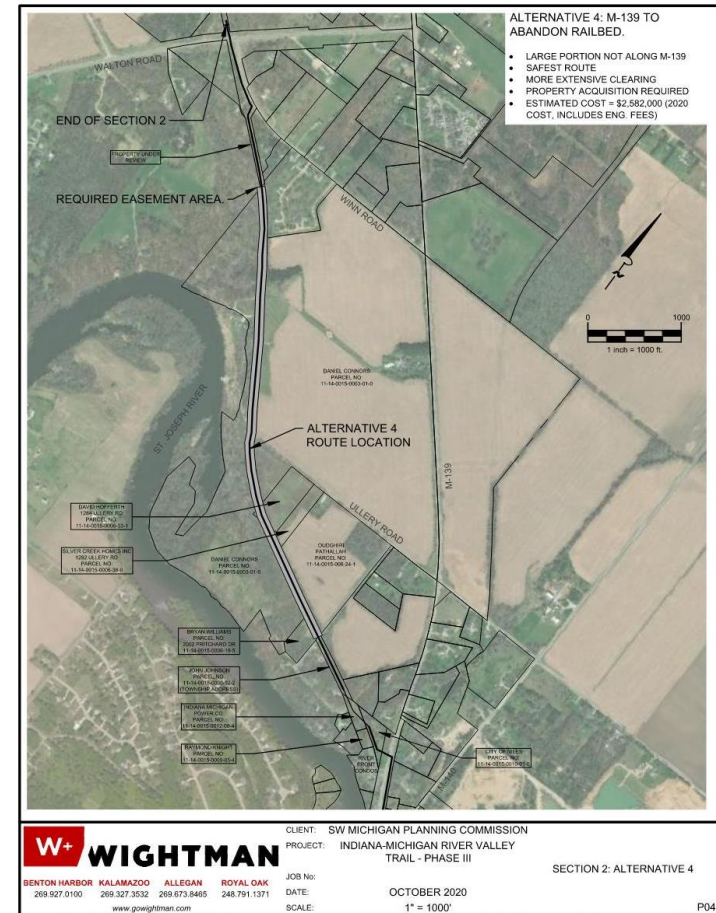
Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail – Phase III

- 0.9 miles from Plym Park to Pucker Street
- Currently under design, anticipated 2027 Construction
- Property Type -City Property (old rail bed)
- HUD Funding



Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail – Phase IIIB

- IIIB connects north to Walton Rd
- Conceptual Phase

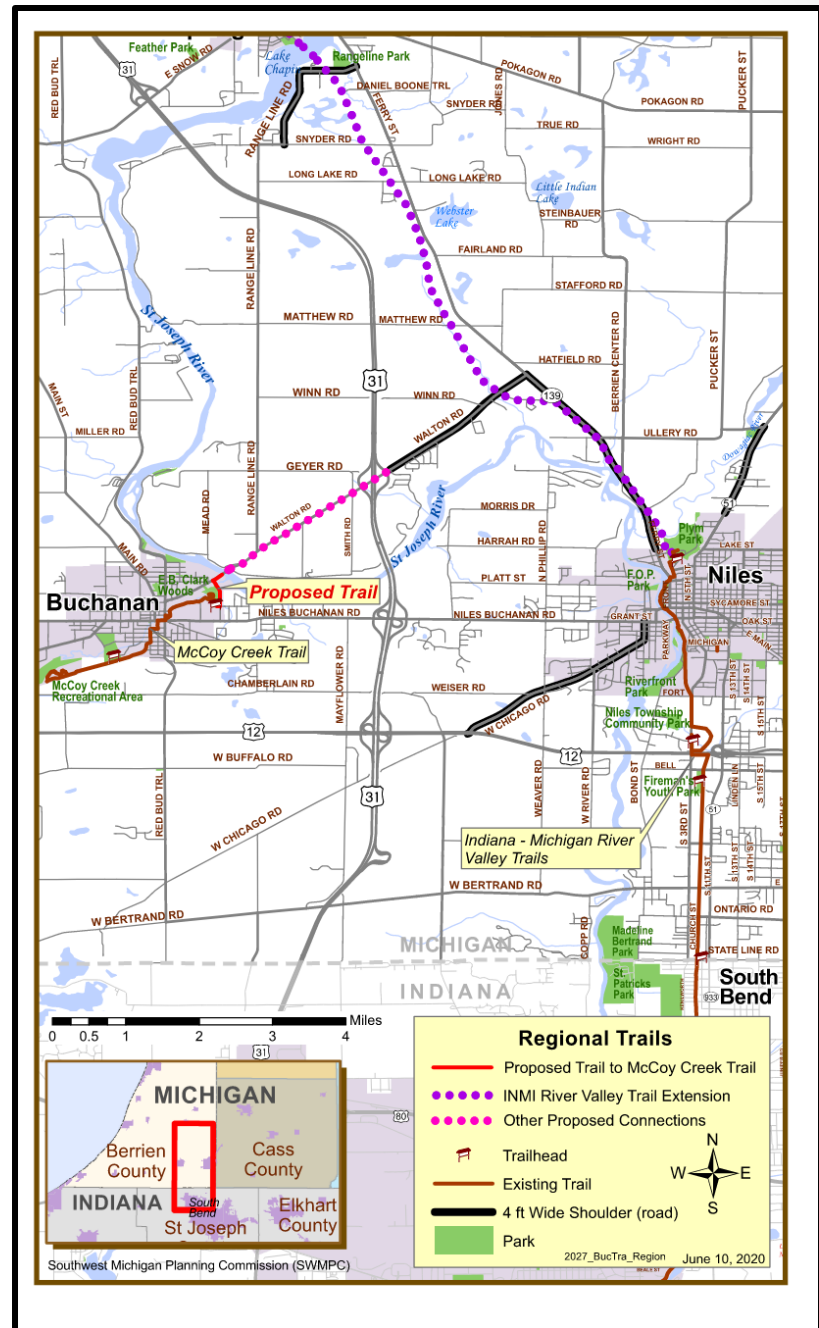


Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail – Phase IIIC

- IIIC connects McCoy's Creek Trail (2025) to Walton Rd
- Connection of 2 regional trail systems



Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail



Original Bridge: St. Joseph River Crossing

- Proposed crossing on former interurban rail alignment
- Planning considerations
 - Historic corridor reuse
 - Environmental permitting
 - Visual impact
 - Long-term regional connectivity
- Example of planning well ahead of design and construction funding



Conceptual Bridge: St. Joseph River Crossing

- Planning considerations
 - Historic corridor reuse
 - Environmental permitting
 - Visual impact
 - Long-term regional connectivity
- Example of planning well ahead of design and construction funding



Lakeshore Trail

- Located in St. Joseph, Michigan
- Unique funding partnership - Privately funded by Whirlpool
- Planning success factors:
 - Clear community benefit
 - Waterfront enhancement
- Public-private collaboration



Public-Private Partnerships in Planning

- Private partners can
 - Accelerate timelines
 - Reduce public financial burden
 - Contribute Easements (private land)
- Still requires
 - Public planning framework
 - Long-term maintenance clarity
 - Public access protections



Transitioning from Planning to Design

- Planning answers:
 - **Where**
 - **Why**
 - **Who maintains**
- Design answers:
 - **How**
 - **What materials**
 - **Construction limits**
- Strong planning simplifies design decisions



Lessons Learned

- Start with a plan—even a simple one
- Define maintenance early
- Think regionally, act locally
- Align trails with roadway projects where possible
- Engineers are key translators between planning and reality



What Other Counties Can Take Away

- You don't need full funding to start planning
- Master plans unlock grants
- Written agreements prevent future conflict
- Trails and road projects should not compete—they should complement



Questions & Discussion

- How are you planning non-motorized routes in your county?
- What has been your biggest planning hurdle?
- Where do engineers fit into your planning process?



BCRD Contact Information



Road Department Website

www.bcroad.org



Service Request Phone Line

(269) 925-1196 ext 1



Facebook

@BerrienCountyRoadDepartment



LinkedIn

@Berrien County Road Department



X (formerly Twitter)

@BerrienRoad



Instagram

@BerrienRoad



Youtube

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Thank you!

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