

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*

W+ **WIGHTMAN**



BERRIEN COUNTY
ROAD DEPARTMENT

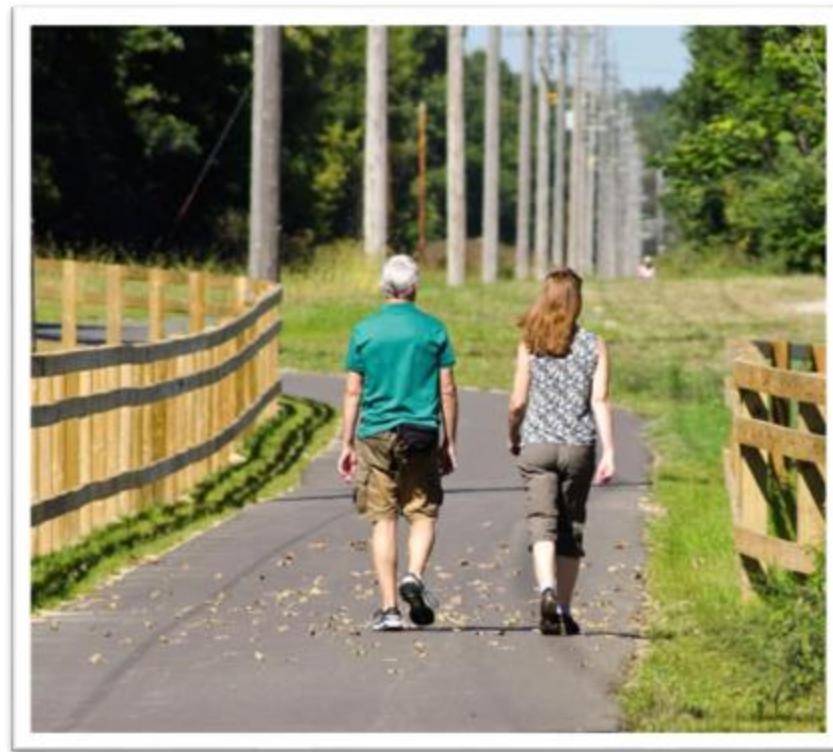
Why Non-Motorized Planning Matters

- 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**

February 6th, 2025

Berrien County Road Department
2860 E Napier Ave
Benton Harbor, MI 49022



To whom it may concern:

It is our pleasure to submit this letter of support from Peat's Cider for the extension of the multipurpose trail proposed along Red Arrow Highway. As a craft beverage manufacturer and bowling center located along the proposed corridor, this effort would help not only our business but contribute to the success of other neighboring small businesses, their customers, and their staff.

We already see a great deal of non-motorized traffic at our location and this improvement would increase the safety and ease for residents and tourists taking this route. Should these improvements be made, we would look forward to allowing use of our ample parking lot for those utilizing the trail, and in addition will install a permanent basic bicycle repair station along our patio for those who need to replace a tube or tighten a bolt or two.

It is my personal belief that it takes a community effort to tackle any major challenges, and multimodal transportation is undoubtedly one no single entity can solve. We appreciate your efforts and would also like to offer up the Northern end of our parking lot to serve as a staging area if needed for equipment used during the proposed project, should that be of assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Peat'.



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

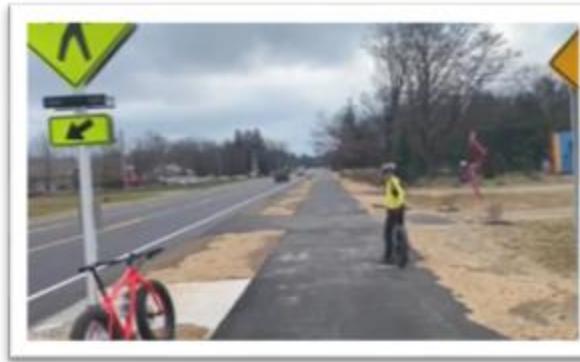
- Non-motorized planning does not stop at jurisdictional boundaries
- Goal
 - Connect communities
 - Connect counties
 - Connect states
- Berrien County positioned as a **regional link**
- Utilize local stakeholders to help support and promote projects
- Friends of Trails groups
- Local business owners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



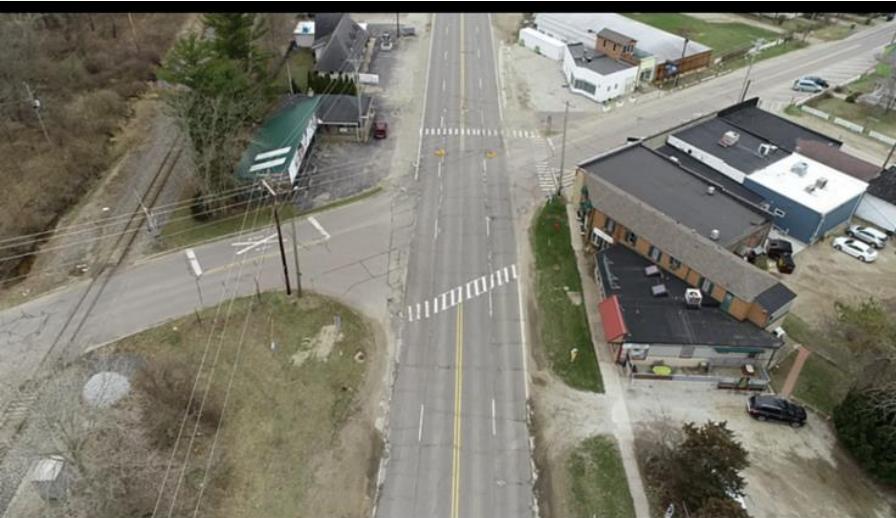
Red Arrow Hwy: Implementation Benefits



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



W+

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 state-

wide 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 1986. 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 Hoosier

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,



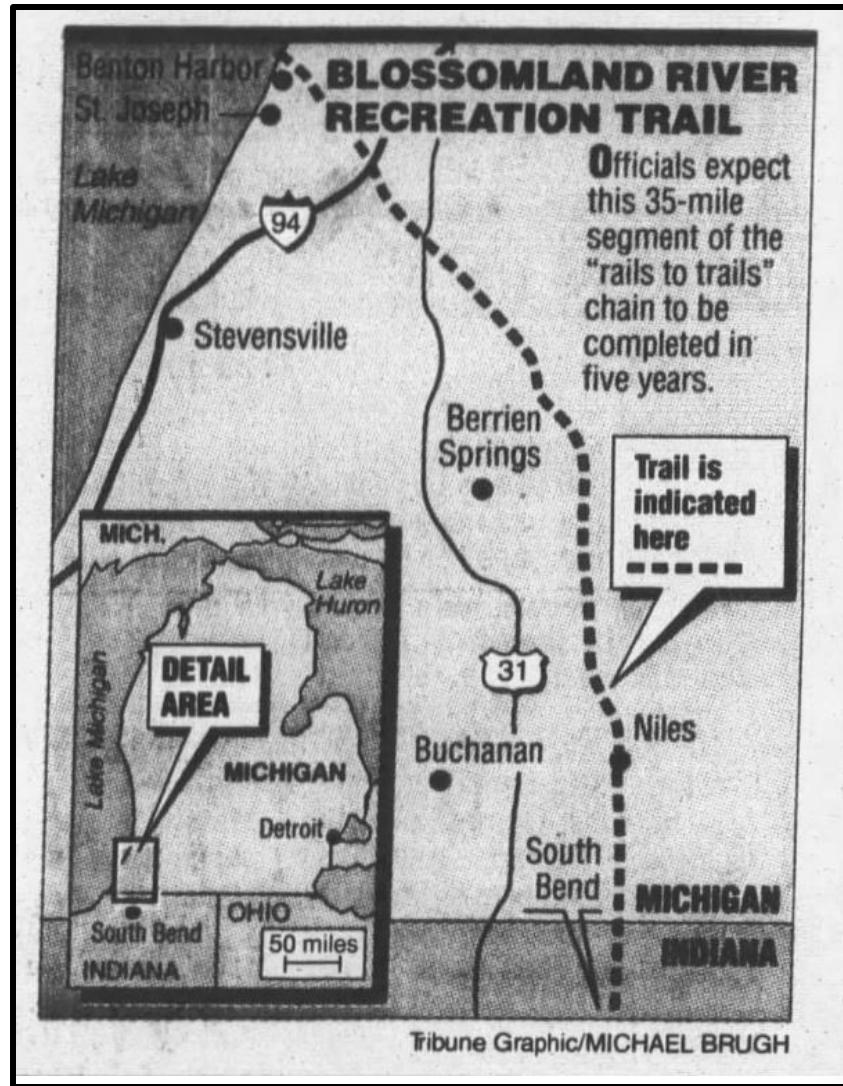
Carey said, established trails already have brought many economic benefits in terms of increased property values and jobs.

- Discussions regarding the trail system start in early 1990s



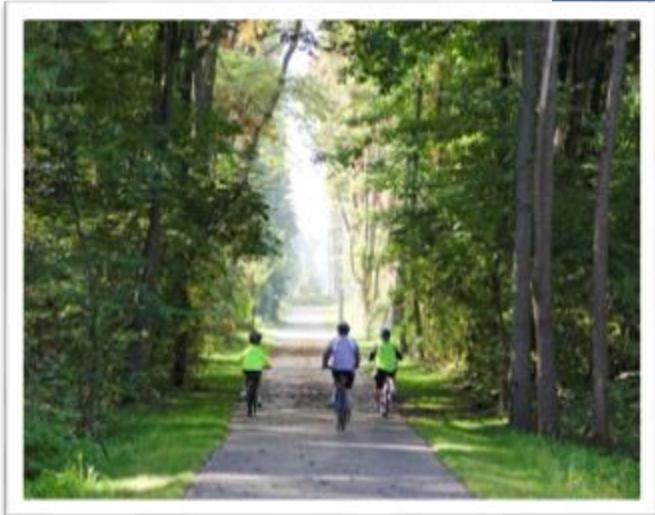
Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail - Long History

- South Bend Tribune,
June 27, 1993

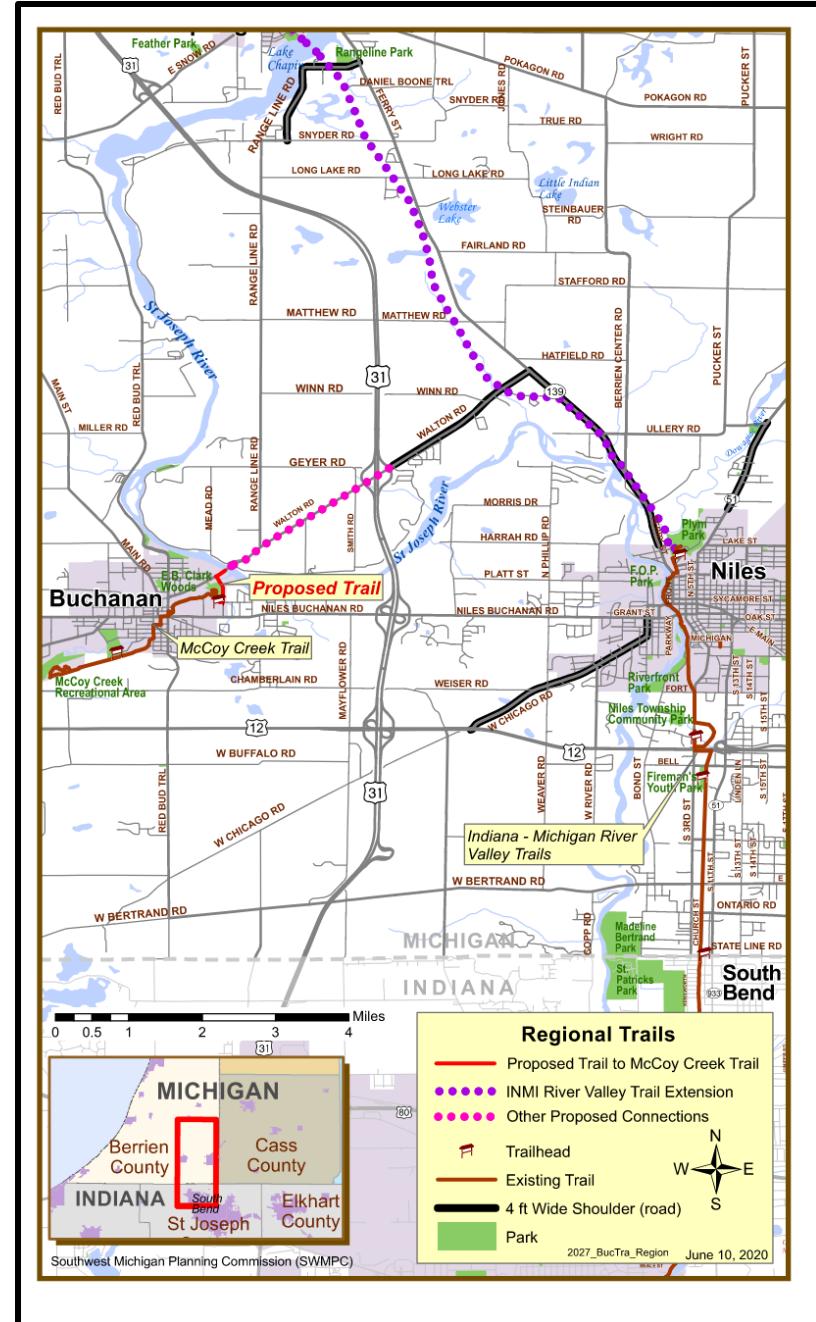


Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail - Vision

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



Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail

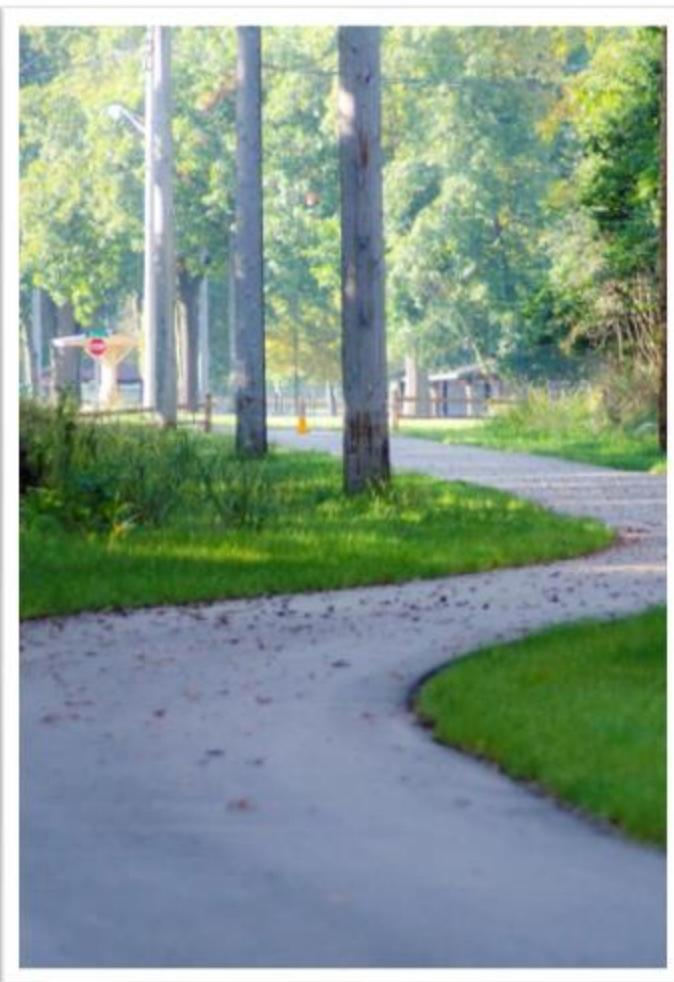


Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail – Phase I

- 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.

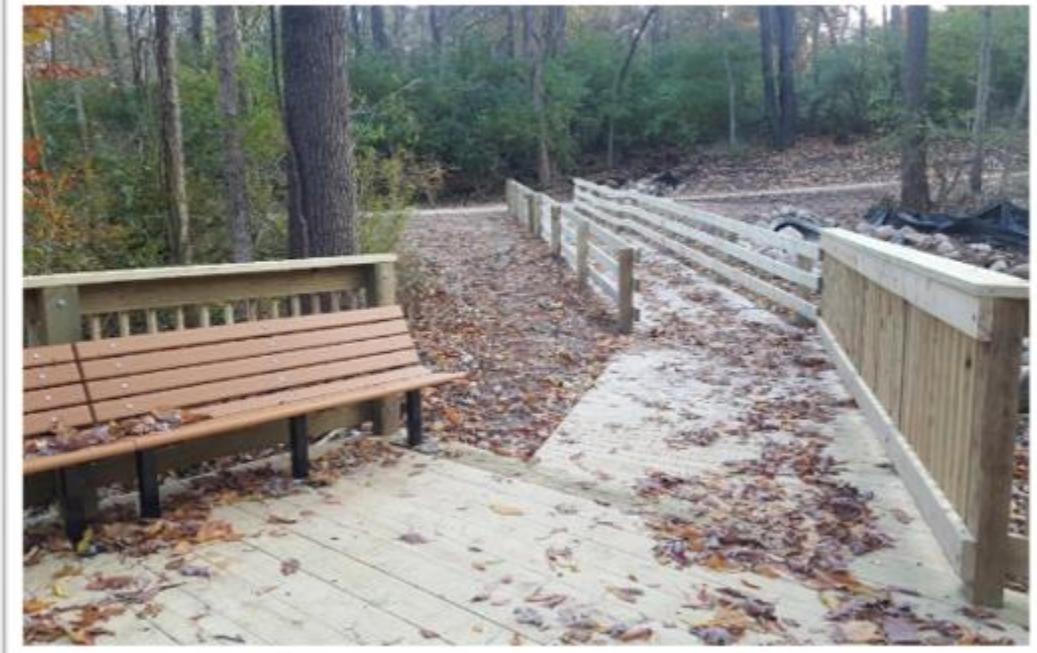


Source: Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Tribune Graphic/ALLISON DALE

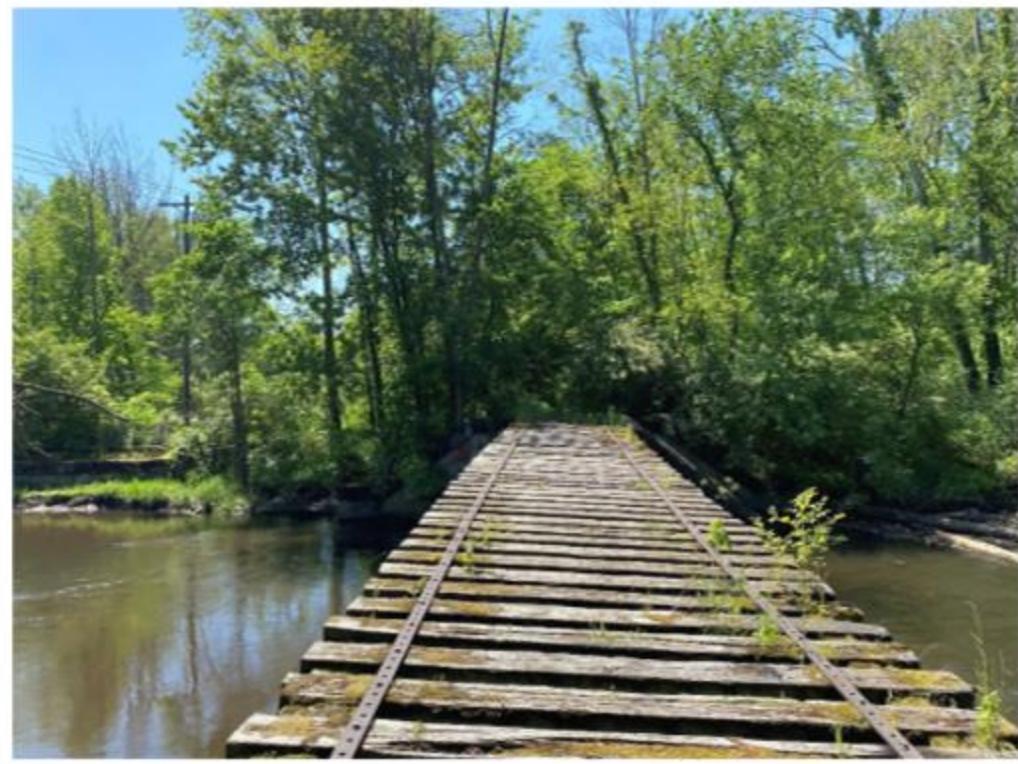


Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail - Phase II



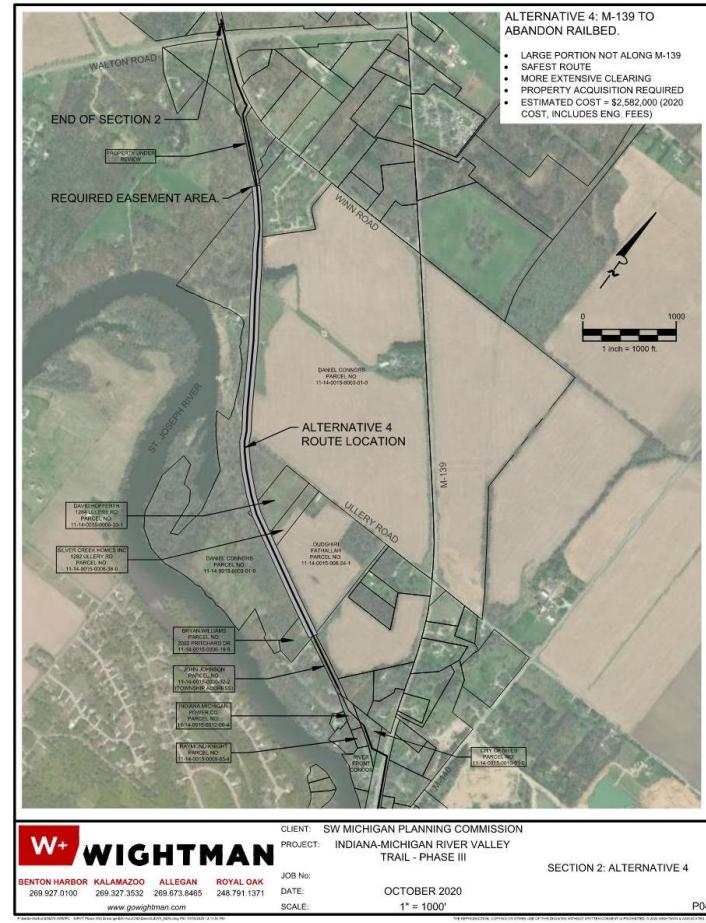
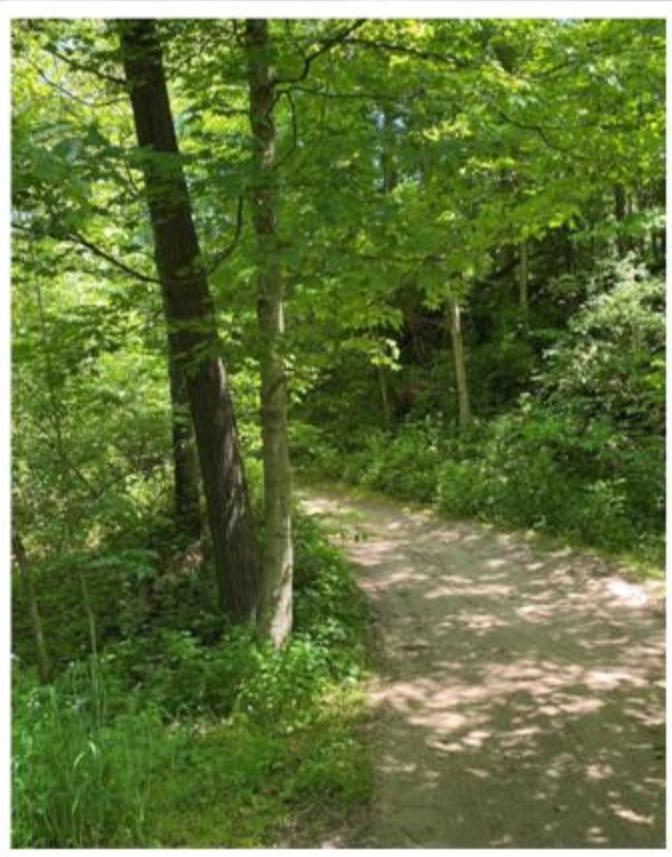
Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail – Phase III

- 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 IIIIB

- IIIIB connects north to Walton Rd
- Conceptual Phase

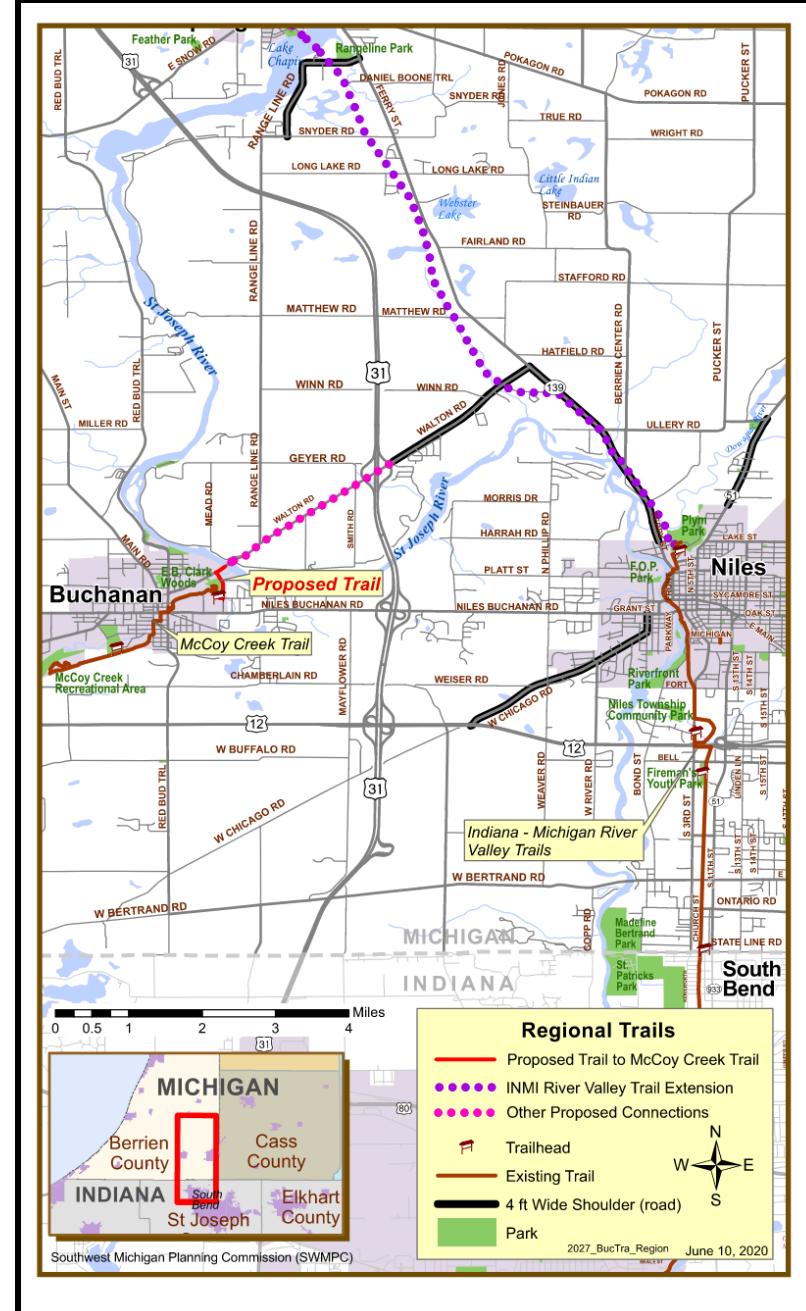


Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail – Phase IIIC

- 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



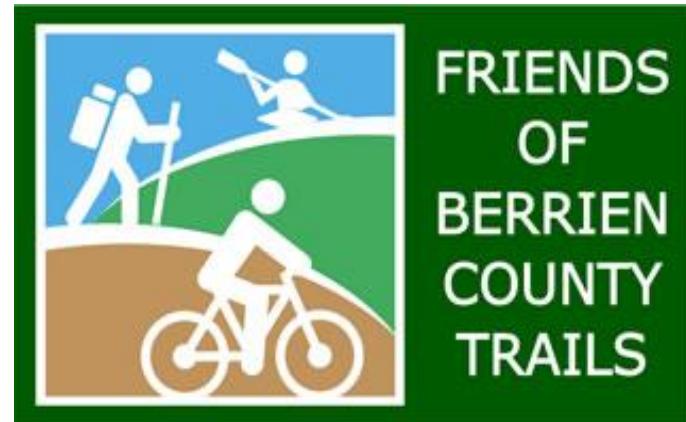
Lakeshore Trail

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



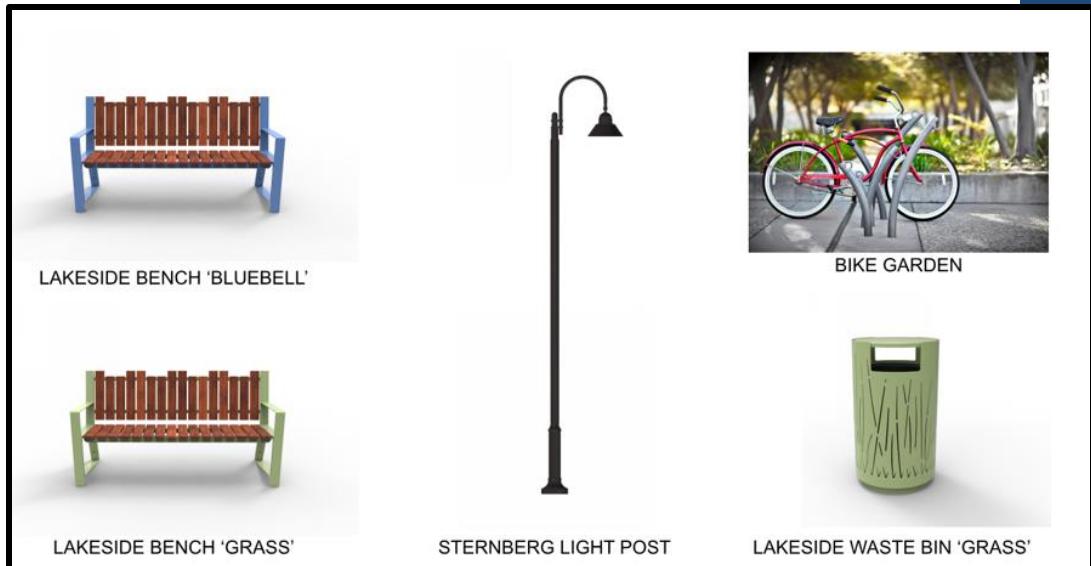
Public-Private Partnerships in Planning

- 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

A6 — TUESDAY, January 15, 2008

OPINION

The Herald-Palladium
Editorial Board

DAVID HOLGATE
Publishing

DAVE BROWN
Managing Editor

DALE BREWER
Local News Editor

GUIDE COLUMN

Road diets good for health and safety

By ERIC MALLENN

Running the stretch of Red Arrow Highway between New Buffalo and Bridgeman from four to three lanes, leaving a shoulder for bike and pedestrian traffic, is a good idea to accommodate the construction of a pedestrian/bike path a good idea.

A road diet is the conversion of a four-lane undivided road to a three-lane divided road, made up of 2 through lanes and a dedicated center two-way left turn lane.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA-SA-17-066) says that road diets, including diets being a 1947 percent reduction of road-and-left-turn-lane capacity, have been a dedicated left-turn lane. On a traditional four-lane road, the left-turn lane is the shoulder, or the "fast" lane. It design flow becomes apparent when a vehicle makes a left turn, causing it to make a left hand turn-around or crossroad a passenger. Faster vehicles are forced to slow down to a stop, step into the slower right lane, or wait for the left-turning car to leave the left-turn vehicle.

A dedicated left turn lane can be a good idea, but it is better to use the two inner lanes on a four-lane road, allowing the left-turning vehicle to merge into the flow of traffic reducing rear-

end crashes. Also, fewer lanes to turn across leads to better sight lines and fewer sudden stops and stops to avoid rear-end crashes. Other benefits include fewer lanes for pedestrians to cross, and a dedicated center two-way path for other uses, in this case a separate 10-foot-wide pedestrian path.

During the 1950s and '60s, the focus of roadway projects was to increase the road-and-left-turn-lane capacity leading to the expansion from two-lane to four-lane roads. In 1960, the Federal Highway Administrator in Denver during the period considered a three-lane alternative. Consequently, the three-lane road is the norm. Despite this, the new three-lane design has been adopted by many communities over the couple of decades in many communities to help balance the needs of drivers and pedestrians.

The Federal Highway Administration recommends that a road diet be considered for roads with 20,000 vehicles per day or more. The Kalamazoo County Road Department available on its website.

On the Red Arrow Highway from New Buffalo to Bridgeman village, the road diet would consist of three lanes, though the shoulder is available for the left-turning vehicle. The Red Arrow Highway road diet argue

that the road is an emergency route where traffic needs to be rerouted from I-94 due to flooding or other emergency situations, such as a bridge back-ups. Though traffic these events are rare. In my opinion, the road diet is a good idea. Michigan Department of Transportation spokesperson, Brianne Gandy, says the Michigan State

Engineering and Research Center in Colorado, the estimated number of events resulting in a road closure on the section of Red Arrow Highway is four to two-hour events per year. The number of events in 2007 was 0 to 0.9 percent of the time.

They also stated that I-94 is a major route for emergency vehicles and adequate redundancy to take one out of service and keep traffic moving on the alternate route. They have improved their procedures and work with the Kalamazoo County Road Department and the Berrien County Road Department to handle emergency situations during events.

During the early to mid-1990s, the Kalamazoo County Road Department (Road 94) from Caledonia Road in Stevensville north to St. Joseph was converted from four to three lanes. The shoulder is available for the left-turning vehicle. The road diet is a good idea to accommodate the construction of a pedestrian/bike path a good idea.

to Union Avenue in Fairplain is a good idea for a road diet to allow for bike lanes and pedestrian crossing, bike and pedestrian safety.

The Federal Highway Administration has conducted many case studies (FHWA-SA-15-052) of communities that have converted two-lane roads into three-lane roads. Many of the studies indicate that community members and drivers were later pleased with the final result.

A road diet of Red Arrow Highway between New Buffalo and Bridgeman that would accommodate a three-lane divided road would be a boon to the businesses and residents of the area. It would be a good idea. The opportunity to safely visit a restaurant, park or commercial establishment would be one of the many benefits of reducing vehicle congestion, improve health, reduce the cost of fuel and air emissions. The benefits far out-weigh the occasional inconvenience of a temporary one-lane Red Arrow Highway from New Buffalo to Bridgeman village. It would be a missed opportunity if the pedestrian/bike path could not be approved for lack of a road diet.

Eric Mallen is a member of the editorial committee of the FHWA-National Research Center's "Road Diet Guide for Complete Streets Design for Multi-Modal Transportation."

COLOR PALETTE

LAYOUT

FURNITURE & PLANTING

STYLE CONCEPT

UNION PIER STREETScape

The Antero Group  uplandDesign ltd.
A Creative Design Studio for Landscaping, Architecture, and Interior Design
1000 University Street, Suite 1000, Seattle, WA 98101 | 206.467.1000 | uplanddesign.com

Page 10

10



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?



W+

BCRD Contact Information



Road Department Website

www.bcroad.org



Service Request Phone Line

(269) 925-1196 ext 1



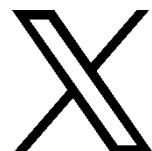
Facebook

@BerrienCountyRoadDepartment



LinkedIn

@Berrien County Road Department



X (formerly Twitter)

@BerrienRoad



Instagram

@BerrienRoad



Youtube

@berriencountyroaddepartment4183

Thank you!

Presented By:

Kevin Stack, PE

Berrien County Road Department

- Email: kstack@bcroad.org
- Phone: 269-925-1196 ext 4421



BERRIEN COUNTY
ROAD DEPARTMENT

Melanie Stanage, PE

Wightman

- Email: mstanage@gowightman.com
- 269-655-6404

