

# The Pumpkinvine Nature Trail

## Who we are

Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail are a group of local citizens who support by education and fundraising the city and county park departments in their effort to create a linear park on the former Penn Central right of way.

## Steering Committee

John D. Yoder	Galen Kauffmann
Norm Kauffmann	Sharol Raber
Joe Lehman	Linda Clark
Chet Peachy	Karen Ferguson
William Hostetler	Lowell Miller
Larry Beachy	Quinn Holdeman, Jr.

## Please join us

Cost of a Friends of the Pumpkinvine membership and newsletter subscription is \$15 for an individual and \$25 for a family. Please make your tax-deductible check payable to The Elkhart County Park Foundation and mail to:

Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail  
P.O. Box 392  
Goshen, IN 46526-0392

## What about funding?

Receipt of the Hometown Indiana grant has been delayed by the Budget Committee of the Indiana State Legislature. All appropriations must be approved by them before being spent. This year there has been a shortfall of all state revenue, including lottery funds. Therefore all capital projects are being approved on a priority basis. Those projects not approved for the 1991-1992 biennium may be carried over to 1993-1994 biennium. No new appropriation needs to be made but the funds already approved may not be released until then.

This grant was approved for the Elkhart County Park Department and Goshen Parks and Recreation in June, 1991 and was for \$198,000. It is administered by the Department of Natural Resources and calls for local matching funds of \$198,000. This amount does not have to be in cash, but can include donations of goods and services. Right now, the date for receiving the funds and the deadline for meeting the matching fund requirement is indefinite.

It has become clear to us that the grant matching funds will have to come from the private sector. Friends of the Pumpkinvine are applying for other grants from foundations and enroll corporate sponsors. Right now we need funds for operating and fundraising expenses. Our biggest expense is going to be a two real estate appraisals of the entire 16 mile PKV line, estimated to cost \$5,000 each. These are required by the DNR. Right now our treasury balance is less than \$5,000. We know the support is out there, but as you can see, each individual member's work and contribution can really make a difference. So, sign up for a fundraising project, dig deep in your pocket, and invite a friend to join!

## Key dates in efforts to make the Pumpkinvine into a linear park

- 1981 - rail service on the Pumpkinvine line ceased
- 1982 - rail and tie removal begun
- 1987 - Elkhart County and Goshen Park Department master plans included Pumpkinvine as a possible linear park
- 1989 - ad hoc committee began meeting to discuss promoting a linear park on the Pumpkinvine right-of-way. The committee included John Yoder, John Kolb, Ervin Beck, Norm Kauffmann and Chet Peachey.
- 1990 & 1991 - title searches, tax record investigation and legal research supported the conclusion that Penn Central has fee-simple ownership of much of the line
- 1990 - contacts were made with the park boards of Elkhart County, Goshen, Middlebury, and LaGrange Counties
- 1990 - public meetings were held to satisfy Hometown-Indiana grant requirements
- May 1990 - Elkhart County and Goshen park boards applied for Hometown Indiana grants
- 1991 - Penn Central expressed interest in selling the line
- June 1991 - Hometown Indiana passed the state legislature. Elkhart County and Goshen park boards received \$198,000. It is unclear when the funds will be released.
- August 1991 - negotiations with Penn Central were begun
- November 1991 - The Pumpkinvine Nature Trail become an official project of the Elkhart County Park Foundation, with 501 (c) (3) nonprofit status

## What we've been doing

The Steering Committee of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail has been working hard, gathering information and recruiting members. We are now preparing to go "public" with our proposal, in order to enlist support for a first-class linear park.

The time is right: we have a commitment for state funding, the railroad is willing to sell and public interest is at an all-time peak for conservation efforts. The only thing we need is your support. We have an extensive list of things that need to be done, but the list is growing daily. We need your active involvement to ensure success. Your attendance at the upcoming membership meeting will tell us that you are interested in preserving the Pumpkinvine for recreational use! It is scheduled for January 30. If you need more information, call Linda Clark at 534-3479 days or 534-3304 evenings

## Getting organized

On December 5 the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Steering Committee met and approved a constitution and bylaws. A copy of these will be available at membership meetings or by calling Chet Peachy at 533-3418 evenings. The purpose of these documents is to get organized before starting a public education and fundraising effort, and to be able to turn the organization over to you, the membership.

## Who owns the Pumpkinvine?

This question is frequently asked. A railroad can have an easement to build a rail line or it can own the underlying land ("fee simple"). When a line is abandoned an easement reverts to the person who actually owns the land. However if the railroad has fee simple ownership, it can then sell the line to whomever it wishes. A preliminary title search has been done by Friends of the Pumpkinvine. At this time the Elkhart County Park Department attorney is also doing research to determine how much of the land Penn Central has in fee simple ownership.

On other similar trails, the effort to create a linear park has been successful by creating a demonstration section that showed the community what the park would be like. We can do the same thing here. It is also possible to find alternate routes around contested portions of the Pumpkinvine Line. So it is not necessary for Penn Central to own it all in order for it to be a feasible project.

At the September 1991 state rails-to-trails conference in Indianapolis, Mike Cloud has said that Penn Central is interested in getting out of the railroad business. He is a real estate specialist who has worked for Penn Central in other parts of the country. There are about a dozen old lines in Indiana that are currently available for sale by Penn Central. Mike Cloud had just concluded the sale of a line in Peoria, Illinois to the Illinois State Department of Transportation.

Penn Central is currently having an appraisal of the Pumpkinvine Line done, in order to determine an asking price.

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources is asking the Friends of the Pumpkinvine to provide two appraisals. According to Otto Jose, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Outdoor Recreation, state law requires a local government agency to use a licensed real estate appraiser for determining a purchase price in acquisition of any property of greater value than \$25,000 (IC 36-1-10.5, IC 8-13-18.5-11). That person must do an appraisal that is substantially in compliance with federal guidelines. Although no federal monies are involved the state has adopted similar guidelines. In addition the state has specified that for Hometown Indiana grants, two appraisals must be done. Basically, the appraiser should have experience with city or county governments in acquisition of land for such programs as HUD.

## The Pumpkinvine was a major route

The original Pumpkinvine Line ran from Goshen to Bay City, Michigan. It was opened by the Canada and St. Louis Railroad Company in 1889. It was owned at various times by the Lakeshore and Michigan Southern Railroad, New York Central, Penn Central, Conrail and the state of Indiana. Passenger service was abandoned in 1931. All service ceased in 1981 and in 1982 the rails were pulled up. The right of way is 80 feet wide and is about 16 miles long. Its path starts on the north side of Goshen, near the future Abshire Park. It runs northeast roughly parallel to county road 22 and crosses the south fork of Pine Creek. At Middlebury it crosses the Little Elkhart River. It then turns east and runs roughly parallel to county road 16 to Shipshewana.

## State meeting was a success

An Indiana Rails-to-Trails Conference was held September 28 in Indianapolis for all groups in the state working on rails to trails projects. The conference was sponsored by the Moriah Foundation, a private group that sponsors conservation efforts. Five people from Elkhart County attended and John Yoder was one of the featured speakers. Featured speakers also included representatives from Penn Central, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Farm Bureau, State of Indiana Attorney General's Office and leaders from both established and in-progress rails-to-trails projects throughout the state.

## Get more information at a members meeting

Friends of the Pumpkinvine will be holding a membership meeting Thursday, January 30 at the Goshen Public Library at 7 p.m. All interested persons are invited. The guest speaker will be Roger Storm, the coordinator of the Michigan office of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. He will address the following topics:

- where are other railtrails and who uses them
- problems and opportunities for starting rail trail groups
- national trends affecting the rails to trails movement
- services provided for local efforts by the Rails to Trails Conservancy

Friends of

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