

Pumpkinvine

Volume 12 No.4

December 2003

Trail Talk



2004 Annual Dinner Meeting

Who:
Friends of the Pumpkinvine

When:
April 27, 2004

Where:
Greencroft Senior Center,
Goshen



Details to follow.

Reserve this date!

Guest speaker, Ron Carter, three-term member of Carmel, Ind. city council, will speak on the economic impact of the Monon Trail in his community.

Two enhancement applications filed

Possible development of the Pumpkinvine took a giant step forward in November when two local public agencies applied for transportation enhancement funds for the six miles of the corridor between Middlebury and Shippshewana.

The Elkhart County Park Dept. submitted an application for \$557,136 to MACOG for 2.4 miles, and the Shippshewana Town Council submitted an application for \$736,000 to the Indiana Department of Transportation for 4 miles. (Because Elkhart County is part of a Metropolitan Planning Organization or MPO, its grant must first go through the local MPO—MACOG. LaGrange County does not have a local MPO.)

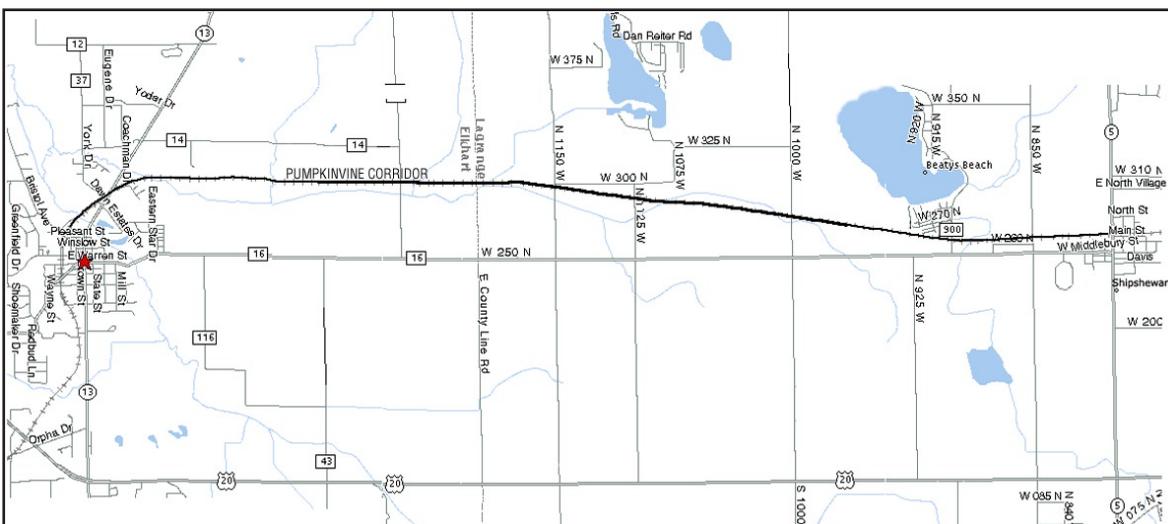
The Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. will provide the required 20 percent local match by donating the value of the Pumpkinvine corridor. The Friends also assisted with the grant writing, cost estimates for development and maintenance and pledged funds to pay for ongoing maintenance.

When completed, these sections of the trail would be 10-foot wide, paved with asphalt and include five bridges, interpretive signs and staging areas.

The two applications are in competition with dozens of other applications for Indiana's share of the enhancement funds, so there is no guarantee that either will be funded.

Transportation enhancement funds are part of the federal highway program but are set aside for bicycle and pedestrian projects that

enhance the overall transportation system. Since it was enacted in 1991, the enhancement program has provided more than \$5.97 billion to support a variety of transportation activities, including more than 8,500 bicycle and pedestrian facilities, according to the League of American Bicyclists.



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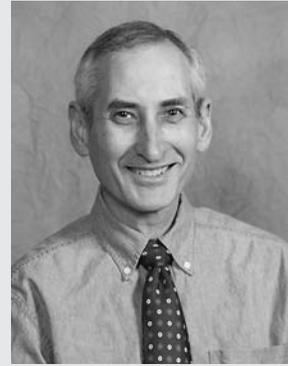
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From the president



Compromise happens

The major goal of the Friends this year was to facilitate the applications for funds to develop the Pumpkinvine corridor between Middlebury and Shippshewana. As most of you know, we achieved that goal. The process was not without a few unforeseen bumps in the road, however.

On Nov. 3, Phil Neff, president of the Elkhart County commissioners, agreed to sign the application of the Elkhart County Park Dept. for transportation enhancement funds, with the condition that the Friends or the park department agree to pay for all the fencing in the 2.4 miles between SR 13 and the LaGrange County line. Both the Friends and the park department felt that this request was unfair to others along the Pumpkinvine who had followed the Indiana fencing law that required each side of the fence to pay 50 percent of the cost.

The Indiana fencing law also prevents frivolous requests for fencing and has clear guidelines for the types of fences one can request. We were also concerned about setting a precedent for other sections of the trail and the vagueness of the request with respect to things like on-going maintenance of the fences. Finally, funding such a request could be expensive, and the Friends would receive none of the grant funds.

After that meeting, Commissioner Phil Neff asked county attorney Gordon Lord to draw up a written agreement on fencing for the Friends to consider. After discussing it with our lawyer, Jim Brotherson, and our executive committee, we agree to a greatly modified fencing proposal. The main points of the agreement are:

- It applies only to the corridor between SR 13 and the LaGrange County line.
- It links fencing to approval and receipt of the grant, i.e., there is no fencing obligation until the park department receives the grant funds.
- It specifies the type of fence that can be requested, i.e., farm-type with hi-tensile or woven wire.
- It limits any fencing to those who can demonstrate a need in this section.
- It limits the amount the Friends will pay for all fencing.

With those restrictions in place, we felt that we could sign the agreement, and as a result, Mr. Neff signed the enhancement application on Nov. 6.

The agreement is not ideal, but we felt that because this compromise could put more trail on the ground, it was worth the small cost to the Friends. Our greatest asset in promoting this project is to have completed sections that showcase the corridor's potential. If the Elkhart County Park Dept. receives this grant, we will achieve that goal and hasten the development of the rest of the corridor.

– John D. Yoder

Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. are cyclists, hikers, equestrians and naturalists who are working with area park departments to create a linear park and greenway on the former Pumpkinvine corridor between Goshen, Middlebury and Shippshewana, Ind.

Learn more about the Pumpkinvine and Rails to Trails issues, or see back issues of our newsletter at: www.pumpkinvine.org



Looking east toward the bridge over Rock Run Creek. Coming from the east, the trail crosses Rock Run Creek and turns west past a railroad siding owned by Bartow Cartage.

Goshen closes gap in Pumpkinvine at Rock Run Creek

The quarter-mile gap in the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail between Rock Run Creek and SR 4 will soon be closed. Work began in September to make the connection that has been the missing link between the Pumpkinvine and the Maple City Greenway. In October, workers prepared the trail base (seen here) and laid asphalt in November.

The work was delayed briefly in September when six headstones were unearthed on the trail route during construction. An investigation of the area's history revealed that they were not part of an old cemetery but rather were part of an old dump site.



Fill dirt donated for Middlebury trail section

Although actual construction will not begin until spring, changes are already visible on the section of the Pumpkinvine south of the Little Elkhart River just east of Krider Garden in Middlebury.

When Dana Snider learned that the Middlebury Church of the Brethren would have fill dirt left over from excavating the basement of their new church, he arranged for the church to donate the dirt to the trail. It replaces the huge amount of grade that someone removed from that area after Penn Central abandoned the Pumpkinvine.

Fill dirt south of the bridge over the Little Elkhart River.

House votes to restore Enhancements program

On September 4, the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to restore the Enhancements program and overturn a House Appropriations Committee proposal to terminate this set-aside program for the upcoming federal fiscal year. President Bush signed a five-month extension of the present law on Sept. 30.

The House approved the Petri/Oliver amendment by a whopping 327-90 margin, an action that strongly affirmed the value of and strong support for the Enhancements program, one of the key reforms of the 1991 ISTEA law. The amendment was supported by scores of national groups, ranging from architects, bicyclists and seniors to state and local officials, including the nation's cities, counties, mayors and state transportation departments.

During debate on the House floor, Representative Thomas E. Petri (R-WI) said, "the enhancements program – created in 1991 and continued and improved in TEA 21 – is a treasured part of a balanced, progressive transportation program." Both Chris Chocola and Mark Souder voted with the majority to restore mandatory enhancements.

In a statement on the House vote, STPP President Anne Canby praised these sponsors and others for their support of the program, adding that "the



Chocola represents Indiana's 2nd Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives



Souder represents Indiana's 3rd Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives

House vote to preserve the Transportation Enhancements program re-affirms that Congress got it right in 1991 with "ISTEA" and again in 1998, through its successor legislation "TEA-21" when it decided that the federal transportation program should be about providing safer and more convenient transportation options."

—Adapted from Transfer, the electronic newsletter of the Surface Transportation Policy Project.



Equestrians take fall ride on the Pumpkinvine

The long-range plan for the Pumpkinvine corridor includes a parallel equestrian trail beside the trail for cyclists, and two Friends board members are equestrians—Larry Hahn and Quinn Holderman, Jr.

So while the trail is still undeveloped, it makes a great riding path for horses. On October 12, Quinn lead a group of 12 horse riders along Pumpkinvine from Middlebury to Shiphewana (approximately seven miles). The colorful leaves made for a pretty fall day and an enjoyable ride. They also met some young Amish children walking on the trail.

Riders include Carla Chester, Quinn and Kathie Holdeman, Helen Kallimani, Carrey Keller, Kay Kintig, Lamar and Wanda Null, Ron and Ann Regier and Dawn White.

Two editorials support Pumpkinvine

Elkhart County's two largest newspapers have endorsed the application for transportation enhancement funds to develop the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail.

The *Goshen News* ran an editorial Oct. 21, 2003, titled, "Commissioners should OK federal trail grant," after the Elkhart County commissioners tabled approval of the enhancement application by the Elkhart County Park Dept. The editorial said that while there are valid concerns about ongoing maintenance costs, "linear trails do not require extensive maintenance when compared to ball diamonds and playgrounds."

The editorial also noted that the trail between Middlebury and Shipshewana would be used by the "many Amish residents" who ride bicycles along the roads. The editorial concluded: "In November, the commissioners should give their blessing to the grant application to allow officials to pursue construction of the trail."

The *Elkhart Truth* ran an editorial about the Pumpkinvine on Nov. 7, just after the commissioners voted to support the grant application. Titled "Investing in livability," it noted that the persistence of trail supporters is paying off in greater public acceptance of the trail. It also noted that the project would bring federal dollars to Elkhart County. "Until now, Elkhart County hasn't claimed its due share" of those federal funds.

Converting old railroad lines to linear parks "has been well received throughout the country," the *Truth* said, because such parks enhance the quality of life, which is one factor in retaining the best-educated young people in the area.

The trail would make for safer cycling and allow residents and visitors to enjoy the rural landscape that is rapidly being developed. "Completing the Pumpkinvine Trail can give Elkhart County a distinctive asset that will be as valuable to those who live here as to visitors who would be attracted by it," the *Truth* said.

The editorial concluded: "The Pumpkinvine Trail should be seen as a long-term investment in a livable community."



2004 Pumpkinvine Bike Ride

Mark your calendar now for the **fifth annual Pumpkinvine Bike Ride** to be held **June 19, 2004**. The ride will include routes of 22, 40, 65 and 100 miles.

The ride is famous for its excellent sag stops and homemade pie and ice cream served at the end of the ride. Plan to join 500 other riders to explore Elkhart and LaGrange counties with your family.

All funds go toward paying the day-to-day expenses of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. No officers receive remuneration.

Don't forget your membership dues!

If the date on the label of this newsletter has passed, it's time to renew your membership in the **Friends**. Membership levels are:

___ Individual \$20 ___ Family \$30 ___ Sustaining \$50
___ Contributing \$100 ___ Patron \$250 ___ Benefactor \$500

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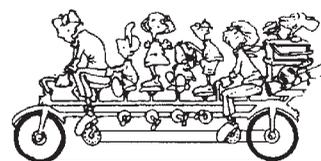
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