Pumpkinvine Trail Talk
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Middlebury submits enhancement application

The Middlebury town council has voted unanimously to apply for transportation enhancement funds to develop 1.2 miles of the Pumpkinvine corridor from Wayne Street south to just beyond U.S. 20. The consent of the council, as the highest elected officials in the area where the funds will be used, was necessary for the state Department of Transportation (and the Michiana Area Council of Governments) to accept an application. The vote on the application at a town meeting Aug. 28 requests $999,489. The Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail will provide the 20 percent local match by donating the value of the Pumpkinvine corridor in that area.

No one from the community spoke against the application at the public meeting Aug. 28.

John McKee, president of the Middlebury Park Board, and park board members Lisa Holmes and Jim Colmer, and John Staut, park and recreation manager, presented the case for the greenway application to the council.

McKee emphasized that this section of the Pumpkinvine was part of a larger vision for interconnected trails in Middlebury, what the park board called The Trails of Middlebury—a trail system that would link parks, the downtown shopping area, the library, Middlebury Historical Society Museum, the schools, the Essenhaus complex, Greencroft Retirement Community, Boys and Girls Club, neighborhoods and churches. The result would be a series of interconnecting trails "that supports our nation's, state's and personal objective for increased exercise … and also provides a safe environment in which to do this," McKee said. While it won't all happen soon, "it will set Middlebury apart from other communities in northern Indiana."

Colmer noted other benefits of greenways, including being an attraction for tourists, beautifying the town, possible increase in property values for those living near the trail, non-motorized transportation, promoting healthy living and the potential use of the corridor for infrastructure like Indianapolis did with its sewer lines.

Holmes said that the park board had "contacted 100 percent of the landowners along the corridor," either in person, by phone or by letter. "There is strong support" by the majority for the project, she said. "There are a small number with concerns, and we have worked with them to address their concerns." However, "of the five property owners with the most frontage along the trail, there's 100 percent support for the project."

John McKee explains how the Pumpkinvine corridor fits into the vision for The Trails of Middlebury.

Holmes also presented letters from businesses, clubs and organizations in Middlebury supporting the application. She noted that at the August Middlebury Festival the most frequent comment heard about the project was: When is it going to be done so we can use it?"

Middlebury will hear next summer if the application is successful. Jim Smith, Friends executive director, noted that if the grant is awarded in 2007, it could take three years to complete the project, including a proposed tunnel to under U.S. 20.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Tuesday, April 24, 2007, 6:30 p.m.
2007 Friends Annual Meeting
Greencroft Senior Center, Goshen, Ind.

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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 Shipshewana, Ind.

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

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From the president

Greenways build community

When John McKee, president of the Middlebury Park Board, presented the proposal to the Middlebury Town Council to fund development of the Pumpkinvine corridor from Wayne St. to U.S. 20, he made the point that the board's proposal wasn't just to create an isolated greenway. Rather it was part of their vision for a larger trail system in Middlebury, called "The Trails of Middlebury." That vision proposes greenways and trails connecting parks, the downtown shopping area, the library, Middlebury Historical Society Museum, the elementary and high schools, the Essenhaus complex, Greencroft Retirement Community, Boys and Girls Club, neighborhoods and churches.

These connections or linkages are one of the most significant, though perhaps less quantifiable, benefits of greenways. We all know that greenways promote good health by providing close-to-home recreation (e.g., walking, jogging and cycling) and non-motorized transportation. Since some trails (like the Pumpkinvine) are lined with trees and other vegetation, they have enough small animals and birds to delight nature lovers and bird watchers.

How does the connectivity of greenways benefit a town like Middlebury?

In his 1990 book, *Greenways for America,* Charles E. Little makes the claim that greenways help create community. "What greenways can do is to multiply the utility of existing parks—ecologically, recreationally and aesthetically—by linking them together like beads on a string." Greenway advocates, he continues, "believe in the emblematic, as well as actual, importance of linkage: of recreational and cultural resources, of wildlife populations, and most of all, of neighborhoods and towns and cities and people of all colors and stations not only in the use of greenways but also in the making of them. To make a greenway . . . is to make a community" (pp. 36-38).

Our family experienced the benefits of linking trails and parks 25 years ago when we lived near the millrace path in Goshen. Even though it was an undeveloped path then, we frequently used it to ride our bikes to Shanklin Park where our daughter enjoyed the swings and slides. We used this greenway to reach the park, rather than driving there in a car. It was both healthier and more fun. Along the way we frequently met people we knew who were out walking or jogging.

That human interaction is part of what Little is talking about when he says greenways make a community. It's a type of interaction that is totally absent when people move from place to place in a glass-and-steel enclosed vehicle, with the windows up and air conditioning on in summer and the heater on in winter. Many qualities contribute to a livable community, but one is certainly opportunities for interaction with other—at the coffee shop, library or walking down the sidewalk—and now on the trail.

If we believe interaction is a basic social need, then it is no exaggeration to say we that trails make a community a better place to live.

Behind the scenes

The application the Middlebury Town Council submitted to the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) built on the prior work of Mark Salee, former park board president. He was instrumental in securing the grant that led to the development of .65 miles of the Pumpkinvine in Middlebury two years ago. That section demonstrated the viability of greenways. John McKee, current park board president, said that that portion of the Pumpkinvine was "the most used park of our system today" because of its consistent use by people of all ages. "As soon as the asphalt was dry we had people on it." Nothing sells like success.

– John D. Yoder

Lehman resigns from board

Merritt Lehman, who has been on the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail board since 1997, has resigned. Lehman has been board treasurer since 2002.

He was attracted to the possibility of recycling the Pumpkinvine into a greenway and trail after observing trails in other states.

"When I first read in the *Elkhart Truth* of the Friends organizing to purchase rights to the old Pumpkinvine Railroad bed, it immediately seemed to me that this was a great idea," he said. "I attended a meeting quite early on when the Friends were raising funds to make the purchase and felt this was something I wanted to support."

His greatest source of satisfaction as a board member was having his good friend, Danny Graber, agree to provide leadership for organizing the Pumpkinvine bike ride and to see him develop that ride into a growing, quality event for the Friends. Another was "being involved with an organization with the objective of providing a long-term legacy by providing a recreational resource to the community for future generations."

Lehman will continue to be involved in the community as a volunteer. He is on the board and treasurer of Assets Elkhart County, Inc., and has been the volunteer host for this fall's classes. Assets is an organization that trains entrepreneurs in how to start a successful business. He also was recently appointed to the board of the Center for Community Justice.

"The Friends will greatly miss Merritt's council and the wisdom he brought to the board," said John Yoder, Friends' president. "It's easy to understand why other non-profits are eager for him to be on their boards."

Trail work reaches a milestone

By Bob Carrico

Acquisition of land in Middlebury last year and completion of negotiations with neighbors allowed Friends to take possession of additional sections of the Pumpkinvine corridor in 2006. These accomplishments meant that brush and trees need to be removed from parts of the corridor.

Volunteers cleared fence rows and installed new fences along the corridor between C.R. 35 and C.R. 37. Now livestock is excluded from our property, and it is not interrupted by cross fences. Trees and brush were also removed between C.R. 26 and C.R. 33. This section is the last one needing removal of large amounts of trees and brush. Completion of this work is a major milestone considering that the Friends started clearing their property in 1994.

We want to thank the volunteers who helped with trail work in 2006: Bob Mayerick, Jeff Kessler, Gesa Csapo, David Kauffman, Buddy Dyck and Elvie Bontrager.

The Friends now have about 10 miles of corridor to maintain. The following volunteers provided their labor and equipment to mow the corridor during the summer of 2006: Quinn Holdeman, Jr., Mike Baxley, Dana Snider, Dale Eash and Clarence Yoder.

DATE TO REMEMBER

8th Annual Pumpkinvine Bike Ride
Sat., Jun 16, 2007

Trail development update

The town of Shipshewana is responsible for developing the Pumpkinvine corridor from the Elkhart County line to Shipshewana in LaGrange County. The town council approved a contract with the construction firm, DLZ, on November 20 to build the trail. It was then sent to the INDOT in Fort Wayne for their review and approve. The contract will be executed as soon INDOT approves it. DLZ has begun to implement some of the preliminary engineering work on the faith that the contract will be approved by INDOT. Actual construction could begin in 2008.

Elkhart County Park Department has hired DLZ for professional engineering services on the Elkhart County section of the trail between Middlebury and the LaGrange County line. They have hired Lehman & Lehman, a design firm, to design the refurbishing of the two wooden trestle bridges in their section. Volunteers will be needed to redeck and add handrails to these bridges. The park board is still working out details of the project with INDOT so DLZ can begin the preliminary engineering.

You may become a member of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. or renew your membership by completing the form below. Your tax-deductible donation will be used to complete the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail and toward paying the day-to-day expenses of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. No officers receive remuneration.

By showing your membership card, you will be eligible for discounts on specified purchases at the following area bicycle shops: Elkhart Bicycle and Fitness, Elkhart; Family Bicycle, Elkhart; Lincoln Avenue Cycling and Fitness, Goshen; and House of Bicycles, Osceola.

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 $30 ☐ Family $40 ☐ Sustaining $60 ☐ Contributing $100 ☐ Patron $250

☐ Benefactor $500 ☐ Benefactor Bronze $1,000 ☐ Benefactor Silver $2,500 ☐ Benefactor Gold $5,000 ☐ Benefactor Platinum >$5,000

Send your membership payment to:

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