

**Be Healthy Berrien's Response to
Southwest Michigan Prosperity Committee's Microgrant Application
*Developing Non-Motorized, Recreation Opportunities Through Trail Expansion in Berrien County***

Project Description

Be Healthy Berrien, along with our project partners, proposes to implement the *Developing Non-Motorized, Recreation Opportunities Through Trail Expansion in Berrien County* project. This project will continue the implementation process of a portion of the Indiana-Michigan River Valley trail "Future Plan" (<https://www.swmpc.org/downloads/futureplanninginmirvt.pdf>). This project focuses on developing a 9-mile expansion from the current terminus of the Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail in the City of Niles up to the Village of Berrien Springs via the Interurban Rail Line corridor. (https://www.swmpc.org/downloads/future_connection_to_the_indiana_michigan_river_valley_trail.pdf)

The Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail is a 34-mile non-motorized trail connecting Niles, MI to Mishawaka, IN. The trail is used by commuters, students, families and tourists. This trail connects people to: 4 universities and several schools, 4 downtowns (Niles, Roseland, South Bend and Mishawaka), 16 parks and 2 YMCAs, 5 hospitals or major medical facilities, several historical and cultural attractions, and business offering eating, lodging and shopping. The 9-mile expansion to Berrien Springs will lead to connections to 1 additional university (Andrews University), 1 downtown, 1 park, and several historical attractions.

The proposed project will continue trail extension planning efforts including

- boundary and topographical surveying
- conducting environmental reviews including wetland delineation, three-season endangered/threatened plant survey, and State Historic Preservation Office review
- planning level cost estimates for MDNR/MDOT TAP applications

Although the cost of these activities is anticipated to be greater than \$10,000, we are seeking other funding and in-kind contributions in addition to this microgrant opportunity.

The early stages of this project were completed in 2018-2019 with a Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) 4x4 Health and Wellness Grant. Activities already completed include the development of a Stakeholder Group, researching and mapping parcel/property ownership data, alternative route research and mapping, and conducting public engagement activities to gather community input on the project. The latest research indicates four main sections of ownership along the proposed route. Owners of these sections include the City of Niles, Indiana-Michigan Power Company, and one section of privately-owned parcels. A fourth section is under review by the Berrien County Treasurer, potentially owned by Niles Charter Township.

This project intends to alleviate the lack of non-motorized infrastructure for safe transportation and recreation in Berrien County. We believe creating this infrastructure will help address the inequities in physical activity and obesity seen in this county as well. We also believe that this project will be a significant benefit to those experiencing transportation barriers. Building this non-motorized trail will allow more individuals to access safe, alternative forms of transportation for work, school, services, and more.

The proposed project will positively impact the communities and residents of Niles, Michigan, the Village of Berrien Springs, and the townships and other municipalities adjoined to the trail. We believe the whole of Berrien County will be positively impacted as well. This trail extension is the first step in

fulfilling the vision of creating an interconnected, non-motorized trail network in Berrien County. Fulfillment of this vision would create connectivity between communities, and help Southwest Michigan become an even more attractive recreational area.

This proposal addresses the following established Prosperity Plan goals and opportunities within the Community Development priority area.

1. Create a more diversified transportation system through new transportation patters that could result from the development of a new 9-mile non-motorized trail.
2. Encourage development of additional recreation opportunities and amenities through development of a new 9-mile non-motorized trail.
3. Advance the effective and efficient transportation of people with non-motorized transportation options that will be made available with a new 9-mile non-motorized trail.

The proposed project will take place in Berrien County, Michigan.

Organizational Description

Be Healthy Berrien is a community initiative created in 2010 address the high rate of obesity in Berrien County. Be Healthy Berrien Steering Committee partner organizations include Andrews University, Berrien County Health Department, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, Spectrum Health-Lakeland, United Way of Southwest Michigan, and YMCA of Southwest Michigan. Our mission states: ‘Be Healthy Berrien is a union of organizations working to reduce and prevent obesity in Berrien County through Policy, System, and Environmental changes.’ United Way of Southwest Michigan serves at the backbone support agency and fiduciary for the Be Healthy Berrien initiative and is the fiscal agent for the proposed project.

Be Healthy Berrien has worked on non-motorized transportation projects for many years, including coordinating the initial planning stages of the effort to extend the Indiana-Michigan River Valley trail. We have installed wayfinding signage and trail amenities on local trails, served as a partner on the Napier Avenue corridor study, and advocated for trail projects across Southwest Michigan.

The Be Healthy Berrien Director has the necessary skills and capacity to successfully implement the proposed project. The Be Healthy Berrien Steering committee has the necessary knowledge to provide guidance and support for the proposed project. United Way of Southwest Michigan has the accounting infrastructure and financial oversight provided by a finance committee to ensure the appropriate use monitoring of financial assets. Our project partners have the necessary subject-matter expertise to advise and guide project action items as needed.

Partners

Partner	Role
Be Healthy Berrien	The Be Healthy Berrien director will act as the project manager and be responsible for monitoring all project activities, reporting, evaluation, and coordinating Stakeholder Group meetings.

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission staff will act as subject-matter experts and facilitate planning, surveying, and review processes, including development of RFPs, contractor selection, engagement, and tracking.
United Way of Southwest Michigan	United Way of Southwest Michigan will be the fiscal agent for this project.
Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail Expansion Stakeholder Group (Key leaders from Berrien County Parks, Indiana-Michigan Power, Berrien Township, Niles Charter Township, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, Oronoko Township, Bike Michiana Coalition, Michigan Department of Transportation, Village of Berrien Springs, Berrien County Road Department, City of Niles and Berrien County Health Department.	The role of the Stakeholder group is to advise and guide project planning efforts, review project deliverables, assist with community outreach and engagement efforts, and provide community expertise and insight on issues and priorities throughout the process.

Project timeline

The timeline for the proposed project is as follows: (1) upon notice of Award – Coordinate with Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and establish a formal partnership agreement for project implementation (2) Autumn/Winter 2019-Spring 2020 as allowed by weather - Boundary and Topographical Surveying (3) Spring/Summer 2020-Autumn 2020 – Environmental Reviews (4) Summer 2020-Winter 2021-Planning level cost estimates for MDNR/MDOT TAP applications.

Budget

\$10,000 is requested for the proposed project. Although the cost of these activities is anticipated to be greater than \$10,000, we are seeking other funding and in-kind contributions in addition to this microgrant opportunity, including from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

The following table lists the anticipated expenses and associated costs:

Activity	Cost
Partner stipends for project materials, research, facilitation, organizational engagement, and planning	\$3,000
Boundary and Topographical surveying	\$3,000 (may need to be matched through other sources)
Conducting environmental reviews including wetland delineation, three-season endangered/threatened plant survey, and State Historic Preservation Office review.	\$4,000 (may need to be matched through other sources)