



Friends of Harbor Country Trails
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August 13, 2019

Dear Mr. Adams and Mr. Egelhaaf:

Please consider our proposal for the 2019 Regional Prosperity Microgrant Opportunity.

Project Overview

The Marquette Greenway Trail (MG) is a 58 mile long non-motorized pathway which will connect downtown New Buffalo to the East side of Chicago connecting 3 states and providing an inclusive and safe trail along the south shore of Lake Michigan. 3.8 miles of the Marquette Greenway will lie within Michigan. The trail will serve as a shared, multi-use, non-motorized trail for runners, bikers, commuters and walkers of all physical and mental ability, skill level, and age. This trail will connect communities and provide a scenic route for alternative transportation.

Grantee Overview

Friends of Harbor Country Trails (FoHCT) is a non-for-profit organization dedicated to developing and maintaining non-motorized trails that connect the communities within Harbor Country and southwest Michigan. FoHCT believes trails enrich communities, create a safe place for people to bike, hike, and walk, and connect people through an active, environmentally focused, and community oriented means of transportation.

Funding Request and Timeline

FoHCT is requesting \$10,000 that will be used to leverage state and federal grant funding. New Buffalo City and Township have applied for MDNR funding and the Berrien County Road Department (BCRD) has applied for an MDOT TAP grant totaling over \$2 million to finalize engineering (2019- 2020), construct 3.8 miles of trail from the MI/IN state line to downtown New Buffalo (2020-2021), and construct a trailhead in downtown New Buffalo (2020). Other match funding sources secured/applied for include New Buffalo City/Township (\$200,000), Pokagon Fund (\$300,000), Berrien Community Foundation (\$12,000) and local fundraising efforts (\$150,000). Indiana and Illinois have over 40 miles of its 54 miles of trail built/funded. With Indiana building to the IN/MI state line in 2020.

Project Details

Most of the Michigan portion of the trail will be a ten feet wide paved path with visible road crossings, ADA ramps, pavement markings, as well as a welcome to Michigan sign, wayfinding signs and mile markers along the trail. Within the City of New Buffalo, the trail will be integrated into the sidewalk system for pedestrians and shoulders or bike lanes for bicyclists.

Connecting large and small urban areas to the regional natural areas, the Marquette Greenway will provide safe and easy access to the Lake Michigan and Galien River Water trails, New Buffalo's city beach, the Grand Beach Marsh Preserve, and the Indiana Dunes National Park. Eventually, this trail will be able to connect residents of New Buffalo to downtown Michigan City as well as hundreds of miles of trails in Indiana and Illinois. The BCRD is also working to connect this trail to the north along Red Arrow Highway to Bridgman and St. Joseph.

To promote environmental integrity and conservation there will be native plantings, recycled content signs and fencing, recycled crushed concrete trail base and FoHCT is funding a

Threatened and Endangered Habitat Assessment in 2019. The trail is within the public road ROW and there will be minimal disturbance to the neighboring plant and animal life.

Other Plans, Partnerships, Community Support

The Marquette Greenway has been indicated as a high priority non-motorized path in both the New Buffalo City and Township recreation plans, MDOT's 2011 Michigan Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, and the Harbor Country Hike and Bike Plan. Trail partners include FoHCT, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC), Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), BCRD, MDOT, Amtrak, and local municipalities. These partners have been working together since 2015 to find the best route in MI. A Community Support Team (CST) of local citizens and business owners formed to help determine the safest and most aesthetic route for the trail and to conduct fundraising. The CST also helps with public awareness and outreach by maintaining a Facebook page. In 2018 the CST helped promote the MG to the 5,000+ participants of the Apple Cider Century. Letters from over 320 government agencies, non-profits, and community members have shown their support for the Marquette Greenway.

Project Benefits

The MG trail will allow for more diverse transportation options along the south shore of Lake Michigan and within southwest Michigan. Implementation of this trail will support economic growth as the value of homes will increase along the trails; studies indicate that homes along trails sell for 4-10% more than their counterparts. It will also encourage event and tourism spending in New Buffalo. Long term fiscal benefits can also be seen in reducing health care costs, as the trail will encourage spending time outdoors improving the health of the community.

Relation to RPI Goals/Opportunities

By completing the Michigan portion of the MG trail there will be significant benefits to the community, for both residents and business owners. The proposed project meets several of the Southwest Michigan Prosperity Region's plan goals.

- The MG trail will create a more “walkable” community for the New Buffalo City and Township and surrounding areas by “encouraging new transportation patterns that support efficient multi-modal transportation options” and “support[ing] community development that is transit oriented.” Since the trail will extend from the state line all the way into downtown New Buffalo, community members will have easy access to a recreational trail as well as options for non-motorized transportation from downtown New Buffalo eventually all the way to Chicago.
- Construction of the MG will “promote existing and support development of new trail and natural areas. . .” as it will connect with surrounding trails, parks, and nature preserves.
- With the partnership of New Buffalo Township, New Buffalo City, Berrien Road Department and MDOT, the trail will “support sustainable development” through regular and efficient maintenance as well as recycled construction materials and signage.

Sincerely,

Arnie Feinberg, President
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