



**SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN PROSPERITY COMMITTEE
MICROGRANT APPLICATION
Calhoun County Trailway Alliance**

1. Project Description

The project is the completion of the Calhoun County Trailway system and maintenance of existing trail. When completed, the trail will connect with Kalamazoo County's Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (KRVT) to the west, and with Jackson's Falling Waters Trail to the east. The project will improve the quality of life of Calhoun County residents, and positively impact the people of Michigan, and tourists who are looking for long-distance trail activities.

The project relates to the two Prosperity Goals/Opportunities below:

- Infrastructure: Monetary support for the regional trailway system, including trails that tie into or expand the existing system.
- Community Development: Regional parks/recreation system (potentially including non-motorized pathways)

The Calhoun County Trailway Alliance (CCTA), a nonprofit with the Battle Creek Community Foundation serving as its fiduciary, is advocating for a non-motorized trail across Calhoun County. The CCTA partners with units of government, which includes public input, as it works to design and complete the trail system. After preliminary engineering is completed, the CCTA works with units of government to submit grants for trail construction, and to raise the matching funds required by those grants. The CCTA is the organization in the county with the experience to help units of government with trail projects. It has the background and expertise to submit grants, and to raise required local matching funds. The CCTA also raises funds for other trail related projects, such as signage, trail amenities, preliminary engineering, and maintenance.

The project will take place within Calhoun County and link existing trails within the county, i.e., the Battle Creek Linear Path; the Calhoun County Trailway; Marshall's Riverwalk; Albion's River Trail; and the Homer Bike Path. These existing trails will be linked by designation, and/or with the construction of new trails. Current gaps in the system are from Historic Bridge Park to Marshall, in the city of Marshall, Marshall to Albion, Albion to Homer, and east of Homer to the Falling Waters Trail. The KRVT, Calhoun County Trail, and Jackson Falling Waters trail are all part of state and national trail systems, i.e., the Great Lake-to-Lake Trail, the Iron Belle Trail, and the National Scenic North Country Trail. Calhoun County, which is the major hub for all these trails, has the largest gaps in these state-wide/national trail systems. The CCTA is working to eliminate the gaps so that these major trail systems will be complete within the county. The CCTA has several projects it is working on in either a major or supporting role.

There is an existing path on the north side of Dickman Rd. that was constructed years ago by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) that does not meet current American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards for non-motorized trails. The CCTA has met with MDOT, Calhoun County, City of Battle Creek, and KRVT to discuss this section of trail as it will be the connection to the KRVT. That section of trail has been cleaned up by volunteers from the North County Trail. Ideally, sections of the trail would be repaved, and if possible, brought up to AASHTO standards.

The CCTA secured half of the funding, and worked with the City of Battle Creek and the Calhoun County Road Department so that pedestrian crosswalks could be installed at the intersection of Emmett Street and Raymond Road. Adding pedestrian crosswalk signals will make the intersection safer and create a better connection between the Calhoun County Trailway and the Battle Creek Linear Path. The pedestrian crosswalk is being installed this summer. Once installed additional signage will link these two trails and create about 20 miles of uninterrupted trail, taking hikers and cyclists from Historic Bridge Park to the west end of the county.

The CCTA also partnered with Choose Health, a committee of the Regional Health Alliance, and the City of Battle Creek to replace signage on the Battle Creek Linear Path. The CCTA secured the funding for that project. The City of Battle Creek is managing the signage installation, and once completed, the signage will designate all the trail systems the Linear Path is a part of, including the state-wide and national trails.

In 2015, when Calhoun County agreed to accept state funding to construct the Calhoun County Trailway, it required the CCTA to raise money for the trail's maintenance. To date, the CCTA has put over \$140,000 into an endowment for trail maintenance. The CCTA has also secured other grant funds to pay for maintenance while it builds the endowment.

The CCTA has worked extensively within the City of Albion and secured construction and matching funds for trail construction within the city. Next summer, the last section of trail within Albion will be constructed. Albion will be the first city in the county to have a trail completed within its geographic jurisdiction.

Within the Village of Homer, the CCTA secured most of the funding to bring a section of the trail in Homer up to AASHTO standards. The remaining funds will be applied for in the Spring of 2020. Homer needed to update its Parks and Recreation Plan before it would be eligible to receive a construction grant. It has done that and the CCTA will assist it with the next grant application.

Through grant funding, the CCTA completed preliminary engineering for most of Calhoun County. The preliminary engineering report is divided into segments, e.g., Historic Bridge Park to 11-Mile and Michigan Ave.; Michigan Ave., to Marshall, etc. Each section of the plan has a preliminary budget. Two segments have not been finalized; between Albion and Homer, and east of Homer to Jackson. Community input sessions were held in those areas without a final decision being made on the routes. The CCTA plans to work in segments eastward from Historic Bridge Park to complete the trail. There is approximately 20 miles of trail yet to construct.

2. Organizational Description

The CCTA is a nonprofit corporation registered in the state of Michigan. The Battle Creek Community Foundation is its fiduciary. The CCTA advocates for and raises money to construct and maintain trails within Calhoun County. It works with units of government, numerous partners, and interested citizens to complete trail projects within the county.

The CCTA has a 15-member board made up of elected officials, parks and recreation department staff, community leaders, visitor and convention bureau staff, and interested citizens. To date the CCTA has raised over \$600,000 in unrestricted donations, secured over \$6M for trail construction (for local units of government), over \$300,000 in restricted grant funding, and just over \$140,000 for its endowment for trail maintenance.

While working to advocate for trails prior to incorporating, once incorporated, the CCTA has been involved in construction of over 9 miles of trail, secured funding for other important trail projects such as preliminary engineering, crosswalks, and signage. The CCTA will continue its work until the trail is completed across Calhoun County. Its next focus area is from Historic Bridge Park to 11-mile Road and Michigan Ave. Depending on how I-94 is crossed, that project could cost up to \$3.8M based on preliminary engineering and preliminary cost opinions.

3. Partners

The CCTA works with units of government where trail construction is expected to take place. The major partners are Calhoun County, City of Battle Creek, City of Marshall, Marshall Township, Albion, Albion Township, the Village of Homer, etc. Each unit of government owns the trail within their jurisdiction. The CCTA helps them with grant writing, matching funds, community input sessions, etc.

In addition to units of government, the CCTA works with other trail groups including the KRVT, Jackson Falling Waters, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, and MDOT. The CCTA also works with community partners for trail programming, such as VOCES and Cereal City Athletics.

The partners it works with depend on the project. For instance, regarding signage on the Linear Path, the CCTA worked with Choose Health, a committee working to improve the health of the community through physical activity. Different projects may involve different groups. The CCTA always reaches out to as many constituents and partners as possible.

4. Project Timeline

The preliminary engineering route plan and cost opinion was conducted by PEA Inc., a Southeast Michigan engineering firm. The CCTA plans to submit construction applications to the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, along with raising the required matching funds for each segment of trail that is constructed. There are 6 segments to construct, with a total preliminary cost opinion of \$15.6M for the completion of the trail across Calhoun County. TAP construction grants, once approved, are put in a queue with construction starting two to three years after approval. TAP construction grants require a minimum of a 20% match, but TAP prefers a 35% match. Based on this, the required match to complete the trail across Calhoun County ranges between \$3.1M and \$5.5 million.

The application for TAP funding for Historic Bridge Park to 11-Mile Rd. and Michigan Ave. is planned for the Spring of 2020. If approved, construction would likely be initiated by 2023. Once a new segment is constructed, the CCTA will focus on the next segment and continue the cycle until the trail is complete.

5. Budget

The CCTA is requesting \$10,000. The funding will be used by the CCTA, through board approval, to maintain existing trails and as matching funds to complete trail construction projects within Calhoun County.