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MACOMB COUNTY TRAILWAYS MASTER PLAN WINS STATEWIDE AWARD

The Michigan Association of Planning presented an award to the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development at their annual conference last week. The award is for the county's plan to create a network of non-motorized trails. Hike/bike paths have a positive impact on individuals and communities by providing recreational opportunities and transportation options. Research proves that trails can spur economic and community development with the added benefits of conservation/restoration of green space, improved air and water quality as well as immeasurable health benefits for users.

The "Macomb County Trailways Master Plan" provides a blueprint for developing a connected system of hike/bike paths that link communities to one another and greater southeast Michigan. Stephen Cassin, Executive Director of the department says, "The project was labor intensive but the results are definitely worth the effort. To our knowledge, we are the only county in the nation to develop a master plan devoted entirely to non-motorized travel."

Funded through a grant from the Michigan Department of Transportation, the plan evolved over a two-year period. Working with Wade Trim, an engineering and planning consultant, department staff surveyed the county to identify places where hike/bike trails could be located. Each potential site was evaluated to determine if there was potential for a linkage to another planned or existing trail. With ideas and maps in hand, the department organized a series of public meetings to gauge citizen acceptance and to hear suggestions about other possible sites.

As a result, the team identified more than 300 miles of potential greenways spanning across every community in the county. Satisfied that the plan could work, department staff then began the necessary task of gaining acceptance from every local government.

A detailed map helps to illustrate how the trails are proposed to transport people to important destinations such as Lake St. Clair, Metro Beach and Stony Creek Metro Parks, local libraries, schools, shopping centers and more.

With 60 miles of existing trails throughout the county, local governments are beginning to implement the plan. Chesterfield Township has already paved one mile along Jefferson Avenue. The City of Warren is awaiting final notification from the Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan for a pre-construction grant. The proposed trail will begin at 8 Mile Road and travel north through the electrical corridor of International Transmission Company (between Hoover and Schoehnerr) to 14 Mile Road. Eventually this trail will link with the “Conner Creek Greenway,” currently under construction and poised to lead to the Detroit River.

Graphics Available.