BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE TRAIL PLANNING

The cross-state NRHT holds great promise for Indiana residents and visitors to the Hoosier state. If the NRHT is to be successful and adequately serve a significant portion of Indiana’s population, then careful thought and planning need to be applied to a full range of trail issues. This step helps identify challenges so that strategies can be developed to capitalize on opportunities and overcome obstacles.

The NRHT planning process goes beyond just the creation of a vision and expression for the cross-state trail’s potential. It also includes understanding benefits that may be derived from implementing the trail. It is realistic to expect the full implementation of the NRHT will be a major undertaking across Indiana – requiring a serious and dedicated commitment of time and resources. However, when the proposed NRHT is completed, it is envisioned the trail will be an important asset to the state. The trail will help enhance the quality of life for many Indiana residents and provide for their long-term recreation, exercise, and alternative transportation needs.

The following section presents various ways the public may benefit from the effective planning of the NRHT.

Tourism

One of the key reasons for developing the NRHT is the role the trail will play in Indiana’s effort to promote tourism. It is easy to understand the connection between the NRHT and tourism when looking at the facts associated with the trail. The 150-mile corridor will run from Illinois to Ohio across 8 Indiana counties, will link 30 Indiana communities, will be in proximity to a significant percentage of Indiana’s residential population, will pass through or near rural and scenic Hoosier countryside and will be in proximity to a number of sites of cultural/historic importance.

The NRHT will cater to a diverse group of people who are looking for ways to spend their personal time. These groups include distance cyclists, families on vacations, adventurists, naturalists, and other tourism-focused groups.

The NRHT will encourage visitors to the state as well as residents alike to see first-hand the culture and history of Central Indiana. In using the NRHT, visitors and tourists will spend money on food and beverages, hotel rooms, gifts and souvenirs as well as other services.

Tourists will also be able to utilize the NRHT for their transportation needs, reducing the dependence upon vehicular transportation.

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Fast Facts: Economic Benefits of Trails

**National**

- **Number of visitors annually to the 22-mile Mineral Wells to Weatherford Rail Trail near Dallas, Texas:** 300,000
- **Local revenues generated by those visits:** $2 million
- **Reported increase in local sales tax receipts following the opening of the 11-mile Mineral Belt Trail in Leadville, Colorado:** 19 percent
- **Economic impact of the Great Allegheny Passage rail trail in 1998, when the central Pennsylvania trail was only half complete:** $14 million
- **Annual visits to Little Miami Scenic Trail, which spans four Ohio counties:** 15,000
- **Average spending by each of those 15,000 visitors for food, beverages, and transportation:** $13.54
- **Estimated number of new jobs created after the mile-long Mispillion River Greenway created convenient pedestrian access to downtown Milford, Delaware:** 250
- **Rank, behind highway access, of jogging and bike trails among 18 community amenities cited as reasons for buying a home in a 2002 study of recent home buyers:** 2
- **Average difference in selling price of home lots on the Mountain Bay Trail in Brown County, Wisconsin, over similar lots not on the trail:** 9 percent
- **Amount developers added to the price of new homes because they were on a greenway in Apex, North Carolina:** $5,000

**Sources:** “Land & People” (Fall 2005), a publication of The Trust for Public Land, various sources collected in “Economic Benefits of Trails and Greenways” (2003), the Trails and Greenways Clearinghouse of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, www.trailsandgreenways.org

**Local**

- **Proximity of homes to the Monon Trail in Indianapolis has been shown to have positive, significant effects on property values**

  “In our landlocked state, the scenic views and recreational fun provided by this and other greenways make homes near or on the Monon Trail, and to a lesser extent other trail systems, hot commodities.” - Quote from article in **StarHomes**

  **Source:** StarHomes (March 7, 2004), a publication of The Indianapolis Star
Positive Economic Impact

It has been documented in various studies that trails and greenways can have a positive economic impact on their host community. One of the factors influencing economic impact is that trails are amenities offering alternative transportation choices. Trails can provide benefits by increasing property values and encouraging infill development in established areas.

A March, 2004 report titled, “Property Values, Recreation Values, and Urban Greenways” authored by IUPUI professor, Dr. Greg Lindsey showed that some greenway trails have a positive effect on property values and that their recreation benefits exceed their costs.

A prime example where economic impact has been positive is along the Monon Trail in Indianapolis. This trail is part of the Indy Greenways system and has been very popular with the public since its development in the mid-1990’s. A study showed homes within a half-mile of the Monon Trail command a sales premium of $13,059. If this premium is applied to all 8,862 homes within this distance of the trail, then the total increase in property values in Marion County is $115.7 million. Source: Indiana Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, Indiana University-Purdue University, 2003 (www.urbancenter.iupui.edu)

The public also tends to spend money when using the trails. Establishments next to trails such as restaurants and cafés, coffee shops, ice cream shops, places offering bike and skate rentals, groceries and pharmacies along with other commercial establishments benefit when trail users make purchases.

The public will spend money at other times to purchase items that they will use on the trail. These items include running shoes and running apparel, bicycles, roller blades, skates and fitness/leisure attire.

A significant economic force in Indiana is the equestrian industry. It has been estimated to be a billion dollar industry in the state alone. Equestrian riders make significant purchases of equipment and supplies to support their leisure activities. Establishments in NRHT communities that can help meet the needs of the equestrian rider may help to provide a strong boost for the local economy.

Improved Quality of Life

Those using the NRHT can realize an improved quality of life. The NRHT will provide the opportunity for the public to recreate and participate in self-directed activities that are beneficial to one’s health. Much public attention has recently been directed on sedentary lifestyles and the negative impact that can have on one’s health. The prevalence of this condition in society has generated cause for public health concern and calls for lifestyle changes. Trails can provide an important role for combating
IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE

A 2000 study entitled “Why Trails Should be Developed in Indiana” looked at six trail communities in Indiana and concluded:

1. Trail neighbors are frequent trail users, using the trail an average of 2.6 days per week
2. Neighboring property owners believe the trail has no negative or a positive impact on property values
3. Trails are viewed as safe and users view the local area more favorably because the trail exists
4. Trail neighbors view the trail as having improved neighborhood quality and as a better neighbor than they expected
5. Trail users are on the trail approximately 3 days per week for between 30 and 67 minutes each
6. A large percentage of trail users are willing to pay a fee. Those willing to pay a fee would pay $5 to $10 annually
7. Trails will be used by all ages of the community
8. Trail use is often tied in with other activities or errands
9. Trails will be used by residents, neighbors and visitors. Most use will occur during evenings on weekdays and during the day on weekends
10. Trails will be used predominantly for walking and bicycling with running, skating and other activities also occurring

Source: Steve Wolter, ‘Why Trails Should be Developed in Indiana’, Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands, Indiana University of Bloomington

obesity and other diseases by offering a platform for outdoor recreation. The NRHT will be important because of its proximity to a significant number of Indiana residents who can use the trail for exercise and recreation.

Other quality of life benefits that the NRHT can promote include:

- More people using the NRHT for short trips means less reliance on cars, thereby reducing auto emissions and improving air quality
- The NRHT can become a gathering spot for families and friends
- The proposed NRHT can provide a safe and efficient corridor for kids to travel to and from school
- The proposed NRHT may unite adjacent communities, encouraging them to share public events
- Trailheads can function as pleasant public gathering spaces in addition to providing safe and convenient access to the trail
- The trail can be an outdoor exhibit area for public art

The Chambers of Commerce for the various trail communities should consider promoting the positive aspects of the NRHT. As shown, the NRHT will have positive impacts on economic development and individual’s quality of life.

Linked Public Spaces

The proposed NRHT alignment will intersect with other trails and greenways, which will expand Indiana’s current trail systems. This is significant as the NRHT will be in close proximity to a substantial percentage (+20%) of Indiana’s 6.2 million population. Fully, one out of every five Hoosiers will be able to use the NRHT to access a number of public places of interest.

The proposed NRHT alignment will also be positioned to facilitate links with existing and future Illinois and Ohio trail systems. The connection between these state trail systems will greatly expand the ability of the public to have access to more communities and points of interest.

The NRHT is proposed to link 30 separate communities. By linking communities and districts, the NRHT will create a stage for public activities. Residents of NRHT communities will have recreation and transportation opportunities because of the proximity of the trail to their homes. The NRHT will link bicycle, pedestrian and horseback riding trails with other forms of recreation such as parks, recreation centers, aquatic centers, and canoeing.

The proposed NRHT will provide communities with links to rural Indiana countryside. These connections will allow trail users to experience Indiana’s scenic urban and rural countryside.
Increased Alternative Transportation Options

The benefits of alternative transportation are numerous. Alternative transportation serves as a critical link throughout the overall transportation network, providing pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian access to home, work, education, commerce, transit, and recreation. Because alternative transportation systems provide such fundamental services to the public, the NRHT should be designed to meet the needs of the maximum number of potential users.

People with disabilities who live in areas without accessible pedestrian networks and do not have access to automobiles face a greater risk of becoming isolated from the community and unnecessarily dependent upon others to perform routine activities such as grocery shopping. An all-inclusive approach to a NRHT alternative transportation design will ensure that the needs of all potential users are addressed, including people with disabilities.

Alternative transportation systems can enrich the livability of a community; they provide opportunity for a population that does not have, or chooses not to have, access to a vehicle. In today’s world of rising fuel costs, low-cost or no-cost alternative transportation is becoming increasingly significant.

Commercial districts along the NRHT will have a larger customer base because of the available alternative transportation. In addition, all people will be able to participate more easily in the community if a system is available because they can reach their desired destinations more easily. Neighborhoods that embrace the NRHT and develop an extended alternative transportation system which encourage walking or biking, become safer because there are more people outdoors paying attention to what is going on in the area. A broader range of consumer, social, and recreational opportunities will be available in areas that are available to non-motorized users.

The NRHT may also provide an opportunity for the public to expand their transportation options if connections with multi-modal transportation can be made in communities where multi-modal opportunities exist. The proposed NRHT may provide opportunities for public transit providers to locate transit stops and bus shelters near the trail. In urban and developed areas where transit service is provided, the proposed NRHT will, on occasion, cross streets and roads that are designated transit routes. In those instances, there may be an opportunity to place bus shelters adjacent to the trail, near the location of street crossings.

The proposed NRHT may link with future rail transit stops, if they should ever develop. Future rail transit lines may run parallel to, be in close proximity with, or actually cross the NRHT corridor which would provide opportunities for

The NRHT will be a multi-use trail that accommodates a variety of recreation uses.
Trails can reduce numbers of vehicles on the streets by providing the public with alternative forms of transportation for short trips. As pedestrian connectivity is increased, users combine recreation for other purposes. Former sentence removed from here—delete this.

Recreation
As previously described, trails can help contribute to a healthy lifestyle and improved quality of life. Trail corridors provide safe outdoor environments where the public can participate in self-directed recreation. The NRHT will be an important recreation resource for Indiana because of its 150-mile length and the opportunities it will provide for walking, biking and horseback riding. The NRHT corridor may also provide recreation opportunities if it is utilized as a place for community recreation activities such as walks, running events and bicycle races.

While many trails in Indiana have been developed specifically for pedestrian/bicycle use, the NRHT will also integrate horseback riding into the corridor. The NRHT will join the Cardinal Greenway in eastern Indiana as a trail that accommodates equestrian, bicycling and hiking activity. The entire 150-mile length of the NRHT will allow for bike/pedestrian use. Much of the 150-mile corridor (over 40%) could also incorporate adjacent equestrian.

Education
An opportunity exists for the public to use the NRHT as an outdoor education classroom. A number of benefits can be provided by the NRHT for the public to learn about historical events and people that shaped Indiana. The NRHT will pass through 30 communities, offering opportunities for stories about those communities to be told on the trail. The railroads which once ran along the corridors used by the NRHT also had an impact on the history of the state and nation. The Historic National Road — “The Road that Built the Nation” is often in close proximity to the NRHT providing context for an understanding of an important chapter of Hoosier history.

The benefits of using the NRHT as a platform to present Indiana’s history is something that will be enjoyed by school kids, residents and visitors to Indiana.

Preservation
The NRHT will help promote and enhance the integrity of the natural environment. As an example, the former Pennsylvania Railroad corridor in Henry County has seen an increased return of native plants. Wind-born seeds from “Big Bluestem” are being carried along the corridor and establishing stands of the native grass. In rural areas, small trees are growing along the
edges of the former railroad corridor. These areas provide shelter for wildlife and help contribute as a food source.

Cultural
As described, many sections of the NRHT will often be in close proximity with the Historic National Road. Sometimes the two corridors run side-by-side for a number of miles. This close adjacency will help influence and strengthen the NRHT’s identity and image. The public will benefit from using the NRHT to access Historic National Road communities and experience the culture that they have to offer.

Another benefit is that the NRHT will provide a location for public art, music, community events, gatherings and celebrations. Trail communities will benefit by having the public visit to experience their culture. In turn the NRHT will provide communities with a sense of place.

The majority of the proposed trail corridor will be located in rural areas. It is in these settings that trail users may be treated to scenic views of farmsteads and agricultural fields—experiencing the culture of Indiana’s agricultural heritage. In western Indiana the scenery along the proposed route will offer other views where wooded areas combined with gently rolling topography provide a different context. Trail users will also have opportunities to view river and stream corridors and the skylines of Indiana’s urban centers at Indianapolis, Richmond and Terre Haute. It is in these locations that trail users can experience the culture of towns and developed areas.

HOW TO’S OF TRAIL PLANNING
Planning Process
Local communities and agencies will play an important role in the development of the cross-state NRHT. The types of tasks local communities and agencies can either be expected to perform or be responsible for overseeing can be extensive. These tasks may include acquiring property, conducting environmental research and preparing follow-up documentation, performing feasibility studies, preparing long-range plans, preparing and submitting grant applications, preparing/reviewing and approving trail design drawings, bidding and selecting trail construction contractors, overseeing construction activities, performing trail user surveys, managing and maintaining the trail. While the local community or agency may not actively perform all of these tasks, they may be responsible for selecting and overseeing a consultant who will perform any one of these duties.

The following is an overview of tasks that local communities and agencies may undertake for the NRHT.

Property Acquisition
Property ownership within and along the former railroad corridor
varies across the eight Indiana NRHT counties. This condition has important implications for the NRHT, as much of the trail alignment is proposed to be located within the corridor.

In some cases, competing uses currently on the corridor need to first be investigated and subsequent discussions made with property owners to determine an appropriate approach for the location of the trail. Also, property next to the trail may need to be obtained for the location and placement of a trailhead.

There are a number of methods available for local communities and public agencies to obtain property rights to develop the NRHT. Techniques for obtaining property rights require legal procedures and may include property leases, property donations, easements, and property purchases. The recommended approach local communities and agencies should take is to make a fee-simple purchase of the property. This will allow the owner to have full control and development rights.

Communities and agencies are encouraged to begin taking steps to secure property for the placement of the trail. This is an important first step. Property can be land banked until the local community is ready to undertake the following series of steps for the trail implementation. Securing property for the public domain can also help efforts to reduce vandalism on what the public may perceive as vacant property.

Conducting Environmental Research and Preparing Documentation
The process that local communities and agencies must undertake when applying for Transportation Enhancement (TE) grant funds requires that environmental documentation first be performed. The results and supporting documentation is submitted along with the grant applications. (For more information on topics requiring documentation, refer to Environmental Documentation in this section of the Development Guide)

Performing Feasibility Studies
The development of the NRHT may first require that study and investigation be performed for a number of trail related issues. These can include studies which investigate the suitability of existing or proposed bridges, the need for land acquisition, type of appropriate road crossings based upon traffic patterns, etc. The extent of the trail approach and conditions that must be addressed, along with requirements of funding agencies will determine the necessity of performing feasibility studies for the NRHT.

Preparing Long-Range Plans
Communities have responsibilities for their local planning needs including reviewing and approving new development, determining land-use, regulating zoning, etc. The alternative
transportation impacts and land development patterns associated with the NRHT should be included in any agency's planning efforts. Planning documents should be updated to show the location of the NRHT.

**Preparing and Submitting Grant Applications**
Local costs associated with the design, construction and maintenance of trails can be offset by a number of grants that are being offered. There are several sources of state and federal dollars for greenway and trail projects. These sources have varying deadlines, criteria and requirements. (For more information on available programs, see **Funding Sources** in this section of the Development Guide)

**Preparing/Reviewing and Approving Trail Design**
Local communities should seek the input of those knowledgeable in trail design to prepare plans, drawings, specifications and documents for the NRHT. When the local agency does not have appropriate in-house capabilities, or the complexity of the project requires specialized expertise, then the agency should look to consultants to help with their trail design needs. Landscape Architects and Engineers that have experience with trail design, construction and preparing cost estimates can be great resources for communities in their efforts to develop trails. Communities and agencies can select and hire consultants to prepare the trail design and associated documents and in-turn review and approve the drawings.

There are procedures that local public agencies need to follow when selecting consultants on contracts involving federal participation. Local agencies will prepare and send out a request for proposals, which will require consultants to submit their qualifications for performing trail design activities. The local agency will decide which firm is the most suitable for employment and make its selection based upon state and federal requirements.

**Bidding and Selecting a Trail Construction Contractor**
Drawings, plans, and specifications that have been prepared for the trail design should be prepared to a level of detail so that the local agency can conduct a public bid to select an appropriate and qualified contractor to perform the trail construction.

**Overseeing Construction Activities**
The local agency may either perform the overseeing of the trail construction and implementation, or secure the services of an appropriate group to conduct those activities. The purpose is to make sure the trail is constructed as designed and specified on the drawings.

**Conducting Trail User Surveys**
An important task that could be performed to gauge trail user's perceptions and attitudes toward the NRHT is to conduct
surveys. These could be performed on a periodic basis by the local community or agency to assess how to make the trail users experience more enjoyable.

**Managing and Maintaining the Trail**

An important task and one that should be addressed early in the planning process is how will the various NRHT segments be managed and maintained. Consideration should be given to who will be responsible for the long-range operation of the trail, the level of maintenance that will be appropriate for the trail and ways that maintenance activities will be funded.

**Funding Resources**

The following list includes potential funding sources to assist in the development, construction, maintenance, and management of the National Road Heritage Trail.

- **Transportation Enhancements (TE) program.** A program of the Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), TE is an ideal, although competitive, source of funds for transportation projects. This program provides funding for a variety of non-traditional transportation projects that enhance the “cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of the Nation's intermodal transportation system.” The development of the National Road Heritage Trail is an eligible activity under the “non-traditional” heading. Source: Indiana Department of Transportation (www.in.gov/dot)

- **Recreational Trails Program (RTP).** A program of the Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), RTP provides assistance by making funds available to states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail use. Funds represent a portion of the motor fuel excise tax collected from non-highway recreational fuel use (e.g. snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, etc.). Each state administers its own program. In fiscal years 2005-2006, Indiana received more than $2.2 million in funding for RTP. Source: Federal Highway Administration (http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/)

- **National Scenic Byways Program.** FHWA’s National Scenic Byways Program promotes the recognition and enjoyment of the country’s memorable roads. Grant funding is available for projects that benefit the traveler’s experience. Source: National Scenic Byways Program (http://www.bywaysonline.org/grants/)

- **Urban Forest Conservation (UFC) Grant.** UFC grants are intended to help communities develop long-term programs to manage their urban forests. Grantees may conduct any project that helps to improve and protect trees and other associated natural resources in urban areas. Community projects that target program development, planning, and education are emphasized.
Previously funded projects include activities such as conducting tree inventories, developing tree maintenance and planting plans, writing tree ordinances, conducting programs to train municipal employees and the public, purchase or development of publications, books and videos, hiring consultants or city foresters, etc. Certified Tree Cities may spend up to 20% of the grant funds on demonstration tree planting projects. Local municipalities, not-for-profit organizations and state agencies are eligible to apply for $2,000 to $20,000. Source: Indiana Department of Natural Resources (http://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/index.html)

- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program. The CMAQ program is a $6 billion program providing funding for surface transportation and other related projects that contribute to air quality improvements and reduce congestion. This program is intended to adjust the focus of transportation planning toward a more inclusive, environmentally-sensitive, and multi-modal approach to addressing transportation problems. Source: Federal Highway Administration (http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/cmaqpgs/)

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The CDBG program provides annual grants to entitled cities, urban counties, and states for community development activities directed toward revitalizing neighborhoods, economic development, and providing improved community facilities and services. Entitlement cities, those with a population of at least 50,000, develop their own programs and funding priorities and receive CDBG funds directly from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Non-entitlement cities/towns, those with a population of less than 50,000, compete for state CDBG funds. Eligible activities include: acquisition of real property; relocation and demolition; rehabilitation of residential and non-residential structures; construction of public facilities and improvements, such as water and sewer facilities, streets, neighborhood centers, and the conversion of school buildings for eligible purposes; public services, within certain limits; activities relating to energy conservation and renewable energy resources; and provision of assistance to profit-motivated businesses to carry out economic development and job creation/retention activities. Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development (http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/index.cfm)

- Historic preservation fund grants. The National Trust for Historic Preservation offers grant and loan opportunities for initiatives that preserve the country’s heritage. Source: National Trust for Historic Preservation (http://www.nationaltrust.org/help/grants.html)

- INDOT will receive more than $2 million annually over the
next five years to fund the Safe Routes to School (SR2S) program. In instances where the National Road Heritage Trail passes through urbanized areas, several schools are located within a short distance. This initiative could be eligible for SR2S funding for infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects.

- User fees could help offset some of the costs of development, maintenance, or management through the requirement of registration before use of some facilities or a tax on bike sales or rentals in individual counties.
- Private investment is a source of funding for project implementation. This investment could include financial contributions from individuals or corporations, an “adopt a trail” sponsorship program, volunteer maintenance and patrolling groups, and others.

**Environmental Documentation**

Government funding of trail projects requires due diligence be performed early in the design process to determine conditions and impacts of the trail. A very common funding approach that many communities pursue for trail projects is with Transportation Enhancement (TE) grant funds administered by INDOT. Environmental documentation is not required before application for TE grants. The process that agencies must undertake when using TE grant funds requires thorough environmental documentation.

A sample list of issues that environmental documentation must address includes but is not limited to:

- Alternative Concepts
- Mitigation Measures
- Land Use
- Farmland Conversion Impacts
- Acquisitions
- Relocations
- Topography and Geology
- Soil Classifications
- Water Resources
- Water Quality
- Wetlands
- Water Table Impact
- Floodplain Impact
- Ecologically Sensitive Areas
- Flora and Fauna
- Endangered Species
- Noise Analysis
- Air Quality
- Historical Sites
There are a number of agencies that will be involved with reviewing or coordinating environmental documentation including but not limited to:

- Local and County Agencies
- Indiana State Historic Preservation Office (Indiana SHPO)
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)
- Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM)
- Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)
- U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)