



## ***Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission***

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September 8, 2011

City Council  
City Ann Arbor  
100 N. Fifth Avenue  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

### **Connecting Communities Initiative**

Dear City Council:

In order to promote the development of a County-wide trails network, in 2009 the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission (WCPARC) established the *Connecting Communities Initiative*. Through this program WCPARC is partnering with local communities to build trails that connect to our Border to Border Trail (B2B) and/or link County residents to community resources (parks, historic sites, places of employment, schools, shopping areas, etc.) and to each other. Our first two years of the program (2010 & 2011) were a huge success as we were able to award a total of \$1,200,000 to seven exciting trail projects around the County.

Enclosed with this letter is a description of the program, selection criteria, and an application form for potential 2012 projects. WCPARC intends to provide another \$600,000 in 2012 and two subsequent years (\$3 million total over five years) to assist communities to construct non-motorized trails in Washtenaw County. Applications for 2012 projects must be received no later than December 31, 2011. WCPARC staff and the Greenway Advisory Committee will review applications received and make recommendations to the Commission. The Commission intends to make final decisions regarding project approval and funding at its February 2012 meeting.

If you have any questions please contact Coy Vaughn, Superintendent of Park Planning at (734) 971.6337 x320 or [vaughnc@ewashtenaw.org](mailto:vaughnc@ewashtenaw.org)

We look forward to working with you to build a more comprehensive trail network in Washtenaw County. Thanks for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Tetens, Director  
Enclosures



## Connecting Communities Program Description

The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission is committed to the continued development of non-motorized trails throughout the County. The Commission has made significant investments in non-motorized trails during the last 10 years. Continuing that commitment, at the May 14, 2009 meeting the Commission authorized the **Connecting Communities Initiative**. Through this new program, WCPARC has pledged to make available up to \$600,000 each year during the 2010 – 2014 period (\$3 million in total) toward the cost of eligible trail projects.

The Connecting Communities Initiative will allow WCPARC to maximize its resources and assist communities with local trail projects that are consistent with the county-wide vision and aligned with WCPARC goals. The intent of the initiative is to work in partnership with local communities and other organizations, providing funds to supplement those provided or obtained by the partner organization. Funding will be available only for construction, not for planning or design development. Eligible projects will be those that accomplish the Commission's primary objective of providing valuable, non-motorized connections between communities and activity centers – offering a healthy alternative for recreation, transportation, fitness and energy conservation.

Application Process and Timing – Applications for Connecting Communities funding will be reviewed once per year. Project applications will be due by December 31st each year with funding decisions made at the WCPARC meeting in February of the next year (approximately 6 weeks later). The awarded funds will not be made available to the applicant until a contract for project construction has been executed.

Staff will review the application forms and present the projects to the Greenways Advisory Committee (GAC). With input from GAC, staff will prioritize the applications and make recommendations to WCPARC for final approval.

Project Eligibility – Funding will be authorized only for projects that meet the following specific eligibility requirements. Projects generally considered eligible for Connecting Communities funding:

- important links between communities, parks, or other points of interest.
- highway, river, railroad and other barrier crossings (grade separation structures)
- trail development within utility corridors
- trails adjacent to waterways
- park trails that connect with the county system
- abandoned railroad corridor preservation and development
- on-road bike lanes and shoulder improvements providing important links
- key property acquisitions (easement or title)
- major multi-jurisdictional project
- locally cost prohibitive project of regional or county wide significance

Projects generally **not** considered eligible for county assistance:

- trails solely within existing local parks
- replacement or restriping of existing trails/trail facilities
- limited use hiking or nature trails (non hard surfaced)
- trails related to building structures and parking lots
- planning, preliminary engineering, and land surveys
- streetscape improvements or sidewalks
- site furnishings (lighting, benches, bike racks, etc.)
- street crossing improvements
- utility relocations
- fencing, buffers and barriers
- trails maintenance equipment
- surveys and public participation programs
- local signage or traffic controls
- publications and marketing

Review Criteria – Applicants must document a compelling need for the project and its value to county residents. WCPARC has greatest interest in supporting projects with *County-wide Significance*. In reviewing project applications, the following review criteria will be applied to select projects that:

- are components of the existing or planned county greenway network (as shown on an existing county planning or parks map).
- link or have high potential to connect significant destinations or existing trails. Highest priority will be given to projects that connect to a WCPARC park or facility.
- directly relate to the county's important natural features, i.e., Huron River, River Raisin, Saline River, etc. NOTE: The Huron River Corridor has been identified as WCPARC's highest priority.
- involve partnerships of two or more adjacent communities or other entity (such as schools or Washtenaw County Road Commission)
- have a high use potential
- provide a wide range of functions (recreation, transportation, education/interpretation, conservation, water quality, tourism/economic)

Secondary rating criteria (applied to high ranking projects)

1. project quality
2. site suitability
3. land availability or encumbrances
4. probability of funding from outside groups or agencies
5. special considerations (community need, visibility, geographical balance, development intensity, safety, etc.)

WCPARC reserves the right to modify these criteria whenever it feels the interest of the County will be so served.



## Connecting Communities Application Form

Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission (WCPARC) wants to help communities expand the trail network in the County. In 2009 WCPARC made available \$600,000 per year, for five years (2010-2014), for the construction of non-motorized trails and accessory improvements. These funds must be matched by the local community with their own funds, or in-kind services, or funds obtained from other sources, i.e., state or federal allocations. Applications for Connecting Communities funding must also include a **resolution of support** for the project from the executive body of the community where the trail is proposed.

*Project applications must be received by **December 31st** of each year for funding consideration the following year. Projects deemed worthy of funding will be approved at the following March Commission meeting. The following information will be used by WCPARC in determining which projects it will fund. Please answer the following questions (limit response to 1,000 words total):*

1. What are the benefits of this project?

2. What efforts will be made to reduce the environmental impact of this project?

3. If constructed, how will the trail be maintained?

4. What community facilities are connected by this project?

5. What planning documents show the location of this trail? Provide page reference.

6. What natural and cultural features can be seen from the trail?

7. How many users are expected to use the trail annually?

8. What are likely objections to this project? How will these be addressed?

9. What background work has already been completed for the project?

10. What background work needs to be completed for the project?

## Project Summary Sheet

<b>APPLICANT</b>	
Date submitted	
Address	
Contact person	
Telephone	
Email	
Project Title	
Project Description (50 words)	
Length of proposed trail	
Starting Point	
Ending Point	
Trails connected to	
Estimated Construction Costs and Amount Being Requested	
Other Confirmed Project Funders	
Other Potential Project Funders	
Project Map & Photos	Attach an 11"x17" map of the trail location and send up to 10 photos by email to <a href="mailto:vaughnc@ewashtenaw.org">vaughnc@ewashtenaw.org</a>
Applicant signature	
<hr style="width: 80%; margin-left: 0;"/> Print name	<hr style="width: 80%; margin-left: 0;"/> signature <span style="margin-left: 150px;"> <hr style="width: 80%; margin-left: 0;"/>             date           </span>