

MEMORANDUM

TO: Park Advisory Commission

FROM: Colin Smith, Parks & Recreation Services Manager

DATE: May 11, 2018

SUBJECT: Letter of Intent - Collaboration to Update the Bandemer-Barton Pedestrian Tunnel 2005 Feasibility Study and improve the Border-to-Border Trail through Barton Nature Area

Attached for your review and recommendation is a resolution outlining a partnership between the City of Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Services, the Washtenaw County Park and Recreation Commission (County), and the Huron Waterloo Pathways initiative (HWPI) to collaborate on an update to the 2005 feasibility study for the Bandemer-Barton Pedestrian Tunnel. This collaboration is captured with the attached Letter of Intent.

The pedestrian tunnel being studied would extend beneath the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) railroad tracks between Barton Nature Area and Bandemer Park, and would provide a highly desired non-motorized connection.

This tunnel is a critical gap on the Border-to-Border Trail (B2B), as well as the statewide Iron Belle trail, and is one of the final hurdles to overcome connecting the City with the parks and along the Huron River. It will also improve non-motorized traffic around the North Main Street & M-14 corridor by providing a safe pedestrian and bicycle gateway to the City.

Currently, there is no safe connection for pedestrians and bicyclists between the B2B trail in Bandemer Park and Barton Nature Area, and many pedestrians and bicyclists choose to illegally cross the railroad tracks at this location showing that it is a highly desired route.

This connection has been desired for more than two decades, but due to insufficient funding and the difficulty of obtaining approvals from the railroad, progress on the tunnel has been delayed.

Since the 2005 study, the railroad has changed from private ownership to being publicly owned by MDOT. Additionally, funding opportunities have become available through our partners at the County and HWPI, and the Iron Belle Trail has become a priority for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources grants. The availability of funding combined with changes in railroad ownership, national

standards for trails, and construction costs have led the desire to update the tunnel feasibility study.

The goal of this study is to determine the preferred type of tunnel structure and provide an order of magnitude cost estimate to allow the collaborators to evaluate the feasibility of construction. Depending on the outcome of the feasibility study, this partnership will extend to the design and construction of the tunnel as well as an improvement to the B2B trail through Barton Nature Area. The B2B pathway through Barton Nature Area may be paved, while a non-paved trail is retained.

A Letter of Intent (LOI) attached herein describes this understanding and shall be non-binding except for the funding of the tunnel feasibility study. This partnership enables the City, County, and HWPI to combine resources towards the goal of creating this highly desired non-motorized connection that can ultimately serve residents of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, and the surrounding region as part of the statewide Iron Belle trail.

The LOI states the desire of the collaborators to work together to achieve the following goals:

- (1) Close the gap in the B2B between Dexter and the north end of Bandemer Park;
- (2) Improve universal accessibility to nature areas identified in Exhibit A; and
- (3) Create a safe, non-motorized connection to Huron River Drive and the surrounding natural areas, without the need to traverse North Main Street or illegally cross the MDOT-owned railroad.

Prepared by: Hillary Hanzel, Landscape Architect IV
Reviewed by: Colin Smith, Parks & Recreation Services Manager

RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND SIGNING A LETTER OF INTENT BETWEEN
THE CITY OF ANN ARBOR PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES, THE
WASHTENAW COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION, AND THE
HURON WATERLOO PATHWAYS INITIATIVE TO PARTNER ON FEASIBILITY
STUDY FOR THE BARTON-BANDEMER TUNNEL

Whereas, in 2005, the City of Ann Arbor commissioned and received a feasibility study for the Bandemer-Barton Pedestrian Tunnel;

Whereas, this non-motorized connection has been desired for more than two decades, but due to insufficient funding and the difficulty of obtaining approvals from the railroad, progress on the tunnel has been delayed;

Whereas, since the 2005 study, the railroad has changed from private ownership to being publicly owned by MDOT;

Whereas, funding has become available through Washtenaw County and HWPI, and the Iron Belle Trail has become a priority for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources grants;

Whereas, changes in railroad ownership, national standards for trails, and construction costs have led the desire to update the tunnel feasibility study;

Whereas, this tunnel is a critical gap on the Border-to-Border Trail (B2B), as well as the statewide Iron Belle trail, and is one of the final hurdles to overcome connecting the City with the parks and along the Huron River;

Whereas, this tunnel will improve non-motorized safety around the North Main Street & M-14 corridor by providing a safe pedestrian and bicycle gateway to the City;

Whereas, this study will determine the preferred type of tunnel structure and provide an order of magnitude cost estimate to allow the collaborators to evaluate the feasibility of construction;

Whereas, depending on the outcome of the feasibility study, this partnership will extend to the design and construction of the tunnel as well as an extension of the B2B trail through Barton Nature Area;

Whereas, the City of Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Services, the Washtenaw County Park and Recreation Commission (County), and the Huron Waterloo Pathways initiative (HWPI) wish to collaborate on an update to the tunnel feasibility study per the attached Letter of Intent;

Whereas, the City of Ann Arbor portion of funding the feasibility study shall not exceed \$12,500;

RESOLVED, that the Parks Advisory Commission recommend signing a letter of intent between the City of Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Services, the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Huron Waterloo Pathways initiative to partner on a feasibility study for the Baton – Bandemer connection, along with potential improvements to the B2B trail in Barton Nature Area.