

**PROPOSAL TITLE: ALLEN CREEK RAILWAY BERM OPENING TRAIL DEVELOPMENT**

**ADDRESS OF SITE: 912 N MAIN STREET / 201 DEPOT STREET?**

**PARK NAME: BORDER-TO-BORDER (B2B)/IRON BELLE TRAIL ALLEN CREEK GREENWAY**

**COUNTY, RANGE AND SECTION, LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE: WASHTENAW**

**PROJECT JUSTIFICATION AND SUPPORT (3,000 CHARACTERS)**

The Allen Creek Railway Opening Trail project leverages a significant FEMA Grant, possible county and city parks funds as well as other city alternative transportation funds. The benefits of the project are consistent with the five goals of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) program on resource protection, water access, community recreation, urban recreation, and economic development. The proposed flood relief feature and pedestrian/bicycle access in the project will protect the water quality of the Huron River from the Allen Creek Drain contamination, eliminate stormwater-related damage, and provide an access for the public to the outdoor recreation opportunities along the Huron River and by linking downtown Ann Arbor to the Border-to-Border (B2B)/Iron Belle Trail. The City's Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan (PROS Plan) from 2016 to 2020 also mentioned the significance of the connection between the North Main Street corridor and the B2B/Iron Belle trail (PROS Plan 117)..

To address the public need for pedestrian access, this project will create a new ADA accessible link connecting pedestrians and bicyclists from Downtown Ann Arbor and its immediate neighborhoods to the B2B/Iron Belle trail. Accounting for the population and the areas to be connected into account, this project displays great value for the regional and statewide non-motorized network. The project's Allen Creek Greenway (ACG) trail connection is in the 2016-2020 PROS Plan. The PROS Plan also describes City Council funded the preparation a master plan for the ACG.

The City's 2007 Flood Mitigation Plan, recommendations related to Allen Creek are designed to mitigate floodwater in the area. According to the City's NTP, the Allen Creek Greenway is a priority on the list of Near-term Opportunities. The greenway is one of very few encouraged uses for the space because federal floodplain regulations severely limit new growth along the floodway and even encourage the reduction of buildings, which may impede floodwater flow.

During the feasibility phase of Allen Creek Railroad Berm Opening Trail project, the City received significant support from the public, MDOT (owners of the railroad corridor), DTE Gas (one of the properties involved in the project), and adjacent property owners. MODT indicated they support a pedestrian alternative contingent on safety fencing, and maintenance agreements with the City.

The non-motorized and stormwater railroad culverts represent a creative design adapted to the safety concerns of floodwaters while creating a safe, legal crossing of the railroad corridor near downtown Ann Arbor. Constructing two separate culverts to reduce flood levels and accommodate a pedestrian crossing under the railroad is a relatively new idea. Prior options to convey both the desired flood flows and non-motorized users under the existing railroad berm included either a bridge with a culvert or a large bridge structure. Railroad

bridges require much larger elements than vehicular bridge making the bridge option not as feasible or desirable as the two-culvert approach.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION (3,000 CHARACTERS MAX)**

The Allen Creek Berm Opening Trail project creates a paved/concrete ADA and AASHTO compliant pedestrian trail linking downtown Ann Arbor and its neighborhoods with the Border-to-Border (B2B)/Iron Belle Trail through the berm near the Allen Creek. This project includes a stormwater feature that will lower the floodplain through the lower reach of Allen Creek near Depot Street and North 4th Avenue.

The project includes two 60-foot-long culverts. A lower culvert (20' span x 6' rise) will convey floodwater to the north side of the railroad tracks, and a higher culvert (14' span x 8' rise) would be accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. A preliminary feasibility study assumed both culverts would be three (3)-sided concrete sections set on pile-supported footings. The pathway is protected against inundation by a flood protection wall constructed along the pathway to be set to 1 foot above the storm headwater.

The project's pedestrian access will serve as the first phase of the Allen Creek Greenway (ACG). The ACG is a recommendation in the City of Ann Arbor's Non-motorized Transportation (NTP) and PROS plans. City staff is developing a master plan element for the ACG to be incorporated in the City's master plan. The Project completes a non-motorized transportation network in a larger region by connecting downtown Ann Arbor and its neighborhoods, to the B2B. The B2B/Iron Belle Trail extends from the county border with Livingston County to the border with Wayne County including over 24 miles of paved, shared-use paths. The proposed trail responds to the strong public appeal for pedestrian access in this area. The project introduces improved Non-motorized access for people unable or unwilling to drive, and that enhances personal health, pedestrian safety, economic viability and air quality.

The project does not affect any endangered species and wildlife. However, it will affect some vegetation. The area north of the railroad and the Huron River bank do contain some low quality scrub brush and small trees. The maximum area of potential vegetation removal measures about 2 acres in size. The exact disturbance area and affected vegetation will be determined during the design phase.

There is a known trespassing hazard near the project. The lack of a convenient and reasonable pedestrian access linking the downtown area to the B2B/Iron Belle Trail leads to the dangerous trespassing behavior. The project will provide a safe access to the B2B/Iron Belle trail from the population center in the urban area and eliminate this hazard.

Additionally, the project will reduce the flooding of transportation facilities and private properties in the adjacent area. Several key transportation facilities including the Wolverine Rail line, Depot St, 4th Ave and N. Main Street will benefit from reducing the floodplain elevation upstream (south) of the railroad.

Minimizing flooding improves water quality by reducing contamination of the Huron River. During flooding event, in the upper reaches of Allen Creek floodplain, rainwater collects on Depot and adjoining streets picking up contaminants during the flood stages. Automobile related, heavy metals, oils and other chemicals as well as debris are washed into the Huron

River as rainwater rush from the flooded streets and parking areas into the Huron River. Construction of the stormwater opening will drop the flood level approximately 6 feet during the 1% storm event, thereby improving water quality.

### **NATURAL RESOURCE ACCESS AND PROTECTION (3,000 CHARACTERS MAX)**

One of the most important natural resources connected to the Allen Creek Railway Opening Trail project is the Huron River. The river is an important central natural feature of the City, running diagonally from the northwest to the southeast as well as serving as a segment of a designated Natural River according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The tributaries that feed into the Huron River include Allen Creek, Mallets Creek, Honey Creek, Traver Creek, Millers Creek, Fleming Creek, and Swift Run. In some parts of the City, streams have “disappeared” into storm sewer pipes beneath the surface. The Allen Creek is one such example, whereby the stream was buried during the 1920’s through much of the west and south branches (PROS Plan 2016, Pg.7).

Pedestrian and visual access to the Huron River is limited due in part to the railroad corridor blocking access and industrial development that was a part of the history of the river. As a result, illegal trespassing behavior occurs along the railway adjacent to the project site as area resident attempt to access the Huron River and the B2B/Iron Belle trail. To prevent the dangerous trespassing behaviors, the project team used technical analysis including public and stakeholder input to select the two-culvert. This design includes the flood relief tunnel and a non-motorized access connecting the North Main Street corridor and the Huron River area at the North.

The stormwater tunnel will protect the natural features on and downstream of, the project site as it will reduce the flooding of transportation facilities and private properties in the adjacent area and improve water quality by reducing the pollution potential from the floodwater to the River. During flooding event, in the upper reaches of Allen Creek floodplain, rainwater collects west of the 201 Depot and adjoining street and picks up contaminants during the flood stages. Automobile related, heavy metals, oils and other chemicals as well as debris are washed into the Huron River as torrents of rainwater rush from the flooded streets and parking areas, and into the Huron River. Construction of the stormwater opening will drop the flood level approximately 6 feet during the 1% storm event, thereby improving water quality (2013 Allen Creek Berm Feasibility Report, Pg. 2).

The non-motorized tunnel creates pedestrian access under the railroad to the multiple recreational uses along the Huron River. In addition to the B2B trail, the Argo Canoe Livery at the Argo Cascades, one of the most popular active use natural recreational features in Michigan is proximate to the project. Safe non-motorized access will be provided for the residents with this improvement.

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### **OTHER INFORMATION (2,000 CHARACTERS MAX)**

Safety considerations and crime prevention will be addressed through application of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design techniques (CPTED) Fencing along the railroad corridor installed as a part of this project and the new pedestrian linkage will greatly enhance safety by eliminating the trespassing hazard. Appropriate lighting will illuminate the trail during the evening and nighttime hours and allow nearby “eyes” to observe the area. The CPTED

design process will assure maximum visibility for the Project. Use of telephonic security communications device, emergency call boxes, are to be considered as part of the project design and installed if deemed necessary.

Public engagement was key during the Project Feasibility determination stage of effort. The Project emerged from a communitywide planning processes including Parks, Transportation and Storm water management areas. We will continue our robust and active public engagement with public meetings to solicit input during the project. Public outreach and awareness techniques include; ribbon cutting/dedication with elected officials; circulation of informational booklets/brochures; development and maintenance of a project Web site on the City's Webpage and providing information updates via the city's social media; use of the CTN for television coverage; provide media releases at key milestone to all local newspapers and magazines; make presentations to schools, organizations, club and other groups; and include materials about the project at the Mayor's Green Fair, Huron River Day and other events.

The City Parks Advisory Commission (PAC) was established by Council Resolution in 1981. It meets on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 4PM. The purpose is to recommend policies, advise on park development and provides a formal opportunity for public involvement. Current PAC Members, who will assist in the project, can be found at the City's website.