

Southern Links Trailway Management Council Master Plan

Village of Columbiaville, Village of Otter Lake,
Forest Township, Millington Township, Village of Millington,
Vassar Township, and City of Vassar

2004 – 2009

Prepared by the Southern Links Railway Management Council with information and assistance from the following:

U.S. Department of the Census
Village of Columbiaville
Village of Otter Lake
Forest Township
Millington Township
Village of Millington
Vassar Township
City of Vassar
Polly Ann Trail

PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

- To document the Southern Links Trailway circumstances and to guide development, operation and maintenance of the trail.
- To qualify for, applying for, and receiving Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Trust Fund and federal/Michigan Department of Transportation TEA-21 grants.
- To facilitate coordination of trail development with plans of the local municipalities through which the trail passes.

TRAILWAY OVERVIEW AND CORRIDOR DESCRIPTION

The Southern Links Trailway passes through portions of three counties, Genesee, Lapeer, and Tuscola. This is a linear park that will span approximately 10.2 miles long, extending from the Village of Millington, at the south end, to the Village of Columbiaville, at the west end. The trail passes through the municipalities and townships of the Village of Columbiaville, Marathon Township, Village of Otter Lake, Forest Township, Millington Township, Village of Millington, Vassar Township, and City of Vassar. The climate of the area can be classified as continental in nature with warm summers and cold winters.

There are 14 road crossings on the proposed trail between the Village of Millington and the Village of Columbiaville.

Major parks near the trail include Arthur Latham Park in Millington Township, the Otter Lake Village Park, and six parks in Columbiaville. The Arthur Latham Park offers restroom facilities, pavilions, horseshoe pits, a rustic campground, and a walking trail. The Otter Lake Village Park has complete hookups for overnight camping, showers, restroom facilities, beach area, swimming, and boating. The trail also runs thru the Village of Otter Lake mini-park and skate park. The trail is adjacent to the Murphy Lake State Game Area on Willard Road and Washburn Road.

Restroom and parking facilities along the trail can also be found at the Millington Community Center. The Community Center will have direct trail access. The Southern Links Trailway is located on an old railroad bed, which was acquired by the Kester family in 1998. The section between the Village of Millington and Otter Lake was acquired first in 1998, and the section between Otter Lake and Columbiaville was acquired in 2004.

Vegetation and Wildlife Along the Trailway

Adjoining to the railroad tracks, a site inspection by the State of Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ File No. 98-08-0857) revealed that “the wetland is a unusual conifer swamp, contiguous to an unnamed headwater creek. The wetland is dominated by Northern White Cedar, Tamarack, White Paper Birch, Speckled Alder, Sensitive Fern, Sphagnum Moss and various sedges. A few Yellow Birch and Red Osier Dogwood were also present. The soil visible through the snow is a black muck soil. Wildlife use evident during site visits included Chickadee, Brown Creeper, White Breasted Nuthatch, American Goldfinch, Hairy Woodpecker, White-Tailed Deer, Squirrel and Cottontail Rabbit. More than one hundred acres of upland habitat are present on the property adjacent to the proposed project site. The on-site inspection also revealed an undisturbed headwater stream and tributaries meandering through the project site. This stream in the project area meets the definition of a stream in accordance with Part 301, Inland lakes and Streams, of PA 451 of 1994, as amended and supported aquatic life such as Linniphilid Tricoteria Insects and Physid Snails.”

Birds known to live here and thought to nest according to the DNR are the Winter Wren and Red-Shouldered Hawk. Both of these birds are on the Threatened Species list. It is a prime habitat for at least 22 species of birds whose numbers are declining in this part of the state, such as the Canadian Warbler (whose only remaining nesting stronghold in southeast and south central Michigan is in Tuscola County). Other birds known to nest here are Pine Siskins, Red-Breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creepers and several species of woodpeckers and pheasants.

Flower species found by the DNR check included Trilliums, Cowslips, Violets, Lilies, Lady Slippers, and Indian Moccasins. The soil and habitat in the area has the potential to support the Rams-Head Lady Slipper (threatened), Round-Leaved Orchid (Michigan special concern), Small White Lady Slipper (Michigan special concern), and the Showy Orchid (Michigan special concern).

Other species found in the area included the eastern box turtle, Small Mouth and Marble Salamanders, Black Snakes, Sandhill Cranes, Porcupine, and Wild Turkeys.

BUILDING SUPPORT FOR THE TRAIL

In September 2003, the following communities joined an interlocal agreement to form a management council to acquire the Southern Links Trailway to develop and maintain it:

Village of Columbiaville, Village of Otter Lake, Forest Township, Millington Township, Village of Millington, Vassar Township, and City of Vassar. An informational meeting was held January 29, 2004 at 7:00 p.m. at the Forest township hall. Sixty-one people attended this meeting. A presentation was given by Pollack and Design introducing those in attendance to the design worked on up to this point. They gave the approximate costs for this portion of the project to establish the trailway. All those who attended the meeting were supportive of the proposed trail. They gave their names and addresses so they can be contacted about being involved in the Friends of the Southern Links Trailway, which will be setup at the regular trailway meeting scheduled for March 16, 2004.

At the informational meeting ideas were discussed on fund-raisers as well as donation of equipment for maintenance and construction of the trailway. At least 50% of those in attendance were from equestrian organizations. This group was supportive of the acquisition of the entire right-of-way, and recognizes the need to establish a Friend's of the Southern Links Trailway group to aid in the funding of the trail.

We have received resolutions of support from all of the local governments that the trail runs through. Marathon Township, Village of Columbiaville, Village of Otter Lake, Forest Township, Millington Township, Village of Millington, Vassar Township, and City of Vassar have passed the resolution of support in 2003. The Tuscola County Board of Commissioners and the Lapeer County Board of Commissioners have also passed a resolution of support for the Southern Links Trailway. Genesee County Parks and Recreation Board passed a Resolution of Support in favor of this project. Other outside organizations that has given their resolution of support are the Ortonville Equestrian Club, Millington Community Schools, Lakeville Community Schools, the M-15 Heritage Route Committee, and the Lapeer County Board of Health.

A petition in support of the trailway was presented at a Columbiaville festival and received 234 signatures from local area residents.

ACQUISITION OF THE DISCONTINUED RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY

Two representatives from the Southern Links Management Council, Chairman, Steve Erickson, and Chairperson, Lonnie Kester, met with the DNR in Lansing to discuss acquisition of the Southern Links Trailway. Discussions were in regard to having everything in place for a DNR grant to be written and turned in by April 1, 2004. Our local DNR representatives were very helpful and supportive to help in sharing with us ways we could score high in their point system to put us in a good position for a positive outcome.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Southern Links Trailway

The Southern Links Trailway is under direct supervision of the Southern Links Trailway Management Council, and is responsible for maintenance of the trail and coordinating and managing trail development projects.

Southern Links Trailway Chairperson

The trailway chairperson serves as the public contact person for trail related matters and as liaison between local officials, landowners, residents, and Friends of the Southern Links Trailway.

Southern Links Trailway Management Council

The management council was established by the following communities to serve in an advisory capacity for review of trail matters: Village of Columbiaville, Village of Otter Lake, Forest Township, Millington Township, Village of Millington, Vassar Township, and City of Vassar. One member and one citizen from each of these local government bodies are appointed to serve on this management council. The council meets monthly as posted, and all meetings are open to the public.

SUPPORT

Friends of the Southern Links Trailway

The Friends group will be formed in March of 2004 to promote and support the acquisition of the Southern Links Trailway Right-of-Way for its conversion to a recreational trail. With the acquisition complete, its role will be to promote the trail to local residents, groups, and businesses, to raise funds to support trail development, and provide volunteer labor to help to build and maintain the trail. The Friends group will be applying for a non-profit, 501©(3) organization and donations to the Friends group will be tax-deductible.

GOALS

- Address the residents' recreational interest in cycling, walking and hiking, running, cross-country skiing, horseback riding and similar pursuits.
- To provide residents with a safe means of non-motorized access to recreational and cultural facilities and educational opportunities.

- To promote the connection of the Southern Links Trailway all the way north to Reese.
- The trail will be handicapped accessible.
- The trail network will create an effective transportation network for a variety of non-motorized users.
- Will eventually provide links from the trail to community centers, parks, schools, and other points-of-interest.
- Preserve the right-of-way of the D. & B., Detroit and Bay City Railroad, (Southern Links) as a transportation right-of-way, honoring local railroad heritage and potential future transportation use.
- Promote the connection of the Southern Links Trailway in Tuscola County to the Polly Ann Trail in Lapeer County.
- Address several public safety concerns in the local area near schools and communities.
- Help address local non-motorized transportation needs as identified in local plans, surveys, and programs.
- Become a travel attraction that will create economic benefits beyond the boundaries of the trail corridor.
- To afford users the opportunity to enjoy the rural landscapes of farmlands, the renowned Horse Country, woods / streams / wetlands with prime wildlife habitat and scenic views of the rolling hills.
- To connect with the M-15 Heritage Route.

PLANNING PROCESS

It was decided that this trail master plan should be incorporated as an appendix to all local county and park recreation plans. It is currently in the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Plans, Arbela/Millington Park and Recreation Plan, and Vassar City and Township Parks and Recreation Plan. This will avoid duplication of such components as the Community Description and Recreation Inventory of the counties. Several Master Plans from other existing trails in Michigan were used to aid in anticipating the management and maintenance needs as the Southern Links Trailway is developed and experiences increasing use.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The four areas for development include the following: Trails, Road Crossings, Bridges, and Staging Areas.

Trails

The railroad ROW is between 66' and 100' wide. The original surface from which the tracks were removed is an excellent base for a surfaced trail. Typically, it is recommended that the trail be 12' wide, allowing for safe passage of bicycles, wheel chairs, and several walkers abreast. A 3' shoulder is proposed on both sides, which is mowed to provide a natural appearance. Woody vegetation will be removed regularly from this zone so there will not be obstacles for trail users. Since both maintenance and patrol vehicles will be occasionally on the trail, the base and surfacing will be constructed to support these vehicles. The trail will be graded to level and crowned for drainage before surfacing with 3" of compacted limestone, and then covered with bituminous.

In many sections of the trail there are drainage ditches within the ROW. Since the railroad ceased maintenance these have, in places been overgrown with vegetation or filled with silt. Reestablishment of positive drainage away from the trail surface is needed.

Where site conditions permit, an equestrian trail will be located in the ROW separate from the main trail. Connector trails from the Southern Links Trailway to nearby points of interest are expected, with detailed plans to be developed later. Connector trails width and surfacing are likely to vary depending on the use and site conditions. Where new residential subdivisions are planned adjacent to the Southern Links Trailway, it is desirable to work with the developer to provide connecting paths to the trail. Construction plans for trails will observe trail standards established by the Michigan Departments of Natural Resources and Transportation.

Road Crossings

Road crossings have the greatest potential for safety problems. Improvements will address both trail user safety and prevention of access by unauthorized motor vehicles. All appropriate efforts will be made to deter motor vehicle access. For the driver on a road, Uniform Traffic Code signage for Pedestrian Crossing and limited speed will be posted. For paved roads, pavement striping will be painted. For the trail users, stop signs will be installed on each side of the road. Appropriate obstacles to restrict entry by motor vehicles will be constructed. Slide out bollards will be installed to permit access by maintenance and emergency vehicles.

Private driveways crossing the trail will be signed to warn trail users and warn motorists crossing that they must stop and yield to trail users. The driveway must be maintained in such a manner the trail surface is not disturbed. Permits for additional crossings will be minimized and generally viewed as an infringement on the public park. However, in some cases there may be an advantage to having regularly spaced crossings to facilitate maintenance, surveillance, and emergency purposes.

Bridges

There are 4 bridges on the trail, 2 bridges to be constructed, 1 in Millington Township and 1 in Forest Township, and 2 existing, 1 in Columbiaville and 1 in Marathon Township. Two bridges require planking and railings, while two need to be reconstructed. These required planking and railings will be constructed on the two bridges. There remain several culverts in need of repair/replacement and erosion control.

Bridges are places where people will stop and congregate. Where possible, a larger area on land will be provided beside the bridge as stopping places so passage by trail users will not be impeded. These are good locations for benches and bike racks. People also desire access to water for play, nature observation, and fishing. Structures can be provided at water level and on the trailside slope to accommodate the water access and control erosion.

Staging Areas

Staging areas are places where a number of people can assemble for trail use. At a minimum there would be parking for cars and perhaps horse trailers. Information should be placed here to orient users to the trail and rest facilities. Staging areas 3 miles apart may be appropriate (about a one-hour walk for a typical day hiker). Facilities often included in a staging area are:

- Parking
- A trailhead sign with information about points of interest, distances, trail rules & adjacent services.
- Toilet facilities
- Drinking water

- Public phone
- Benches and picnic tables
- Trash receptacles

A primary staging area is proposed off of the Kester 8-acre lake. This would have room to accommodate horse trailers. Parking lots will vary in size from one area to another. Efforts will be made to partner with local governments, schools, and businesses so that parking areas and facilities may serve a dual use by trail users and other activities.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Trail Coordinator

Plans to employ a part-time trail coordinator are being worked on. Employment of the Southern Links Coordinator is anticipated with duties expanding as need arises. Friends of the Southern Links Trailway will provide most of the labor and materials costs in the initial construction. The contributions of volunteers are expected to continue.

Rules Governing Use of the Trail

Rules for the Southern Links Trailway will address the following:

- Disposal of trash
- Mutilation of signs
- Damage or removal of vegetation
- Obstructing public access
- Signs, advertising and any commercial activity without written permission
- Non-Motorized use only

Additional rules will be considered from time to time as needed.

Enforcement

The state and local police can enforce trail rules. Police can respond to complaints about on-trail offenses, for example trespassing on private property. Volunteer or paid patrols may be organized. If there are chronic trespassers, property owners may consult with a trail coordinator to agree on appropriate measures.

Addressing Needs of Adjacent Landowners

When concerns are brought to the attention of the Coordinator, there will be an attempt to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement on a solution, such as screening or fencing where necessary.

Where adjacent owners wish to construct access to the trail from their property, plans for any construction intruding into the ROW must obtain approval to ensure no safety concerns for trailway users.

Access for Fire Control, Police, Emergency Response and Maintenance

Public safety agencies will be informed of points of access and means of entry through any barriers for motor vehicles. Lapeer, Genesee, and Tuscola County employees, public utility workers, and persons authorized by written permits may be on the trail with motor vehicles.

Permits for Alteration or Construction

Applications are made to Southern Links Management Council, and a written permit may be issued. Activities include any alteration of or construction on the trail property, as well as the need for easements for trail crossings.

Character of the Trail

To the extent feasible, the natural appearance of the trail will be maintained. Use of crushed stone for surfacing in some non-trail areas (viewing stands, fishing areas, historical sites, etc.), rather than pavement, will provide a less “developed” look. Design and location of signs can minimize their intrusiveness. Acquisition of appropriate side parcels for the protection and enjoyment of natural resources or as rest stops can enhance the trail.

Screening and Use of Native Plants

Trees and shrubs may be planted in places where screening of abutting buildings will enhance the trail experience or the privacy of adjacent landowners can be protected. Motor vehicle barrier islands at road crossings can incorporate plantings. It will be policy to use only native plant materials. Removal of undesirable non-native species in the ROW may also be undertaken.

Signage

Signs with the Southern Links Trailway Management Council Rules (No Hunting, No Motor Vehicles, and No Snowmobiles) will be posted at trail entrances on both sides of road crossings.

- Additional rules and information will be posted on signs at staging areas.
- The Southern Links Trailway will post “Pedestrian Crossing” signs in both directions on roads to alert motorists of the trail.
- Large trail information signs will be placed at trailheads with key information about the trail.
- Mile markers will be installed to indicate distances along the trail.
- At some points it will be appropriate to have small signs on the trail directing trail users to nearby places of interest such as bike shops or restaurants.
- Eventually interpretive signs can be placed to inform trail users about places of natural or historical interest such as a museum or train depot.
- A signage plan will be developed to specify messages, placement, and design of signs. It is desired that there be necessary but minimum signs in keeping with maintaining the rural/natural character of the trail.
- Any roads or streets crossing the trail will be identified with a name crossing sign.

Programs Using the Trail

Cooperation with other groups proposing activities and events on the trail is expected. Activities and Events may include the cross-state Michigander Bicycle Ride, sponsored by Michigan Chapter of Rails-to-Trails, charity events (Hike-a-Thons, and Bike-a-Thons), naturalist guided walks, scouting programs, use by community schools (cross country practice and accessing natural areas for study), etc.

Partnerships with Adjacent Public Property Owners or Businesses

Partnership agreements for joint use and construction of facilities for mutually beneficial purposes are under discussion with Southern Links Trailway Management Council. Other prospects will be explored as the trail develops.

MAINTENANCE PLAN

Levels of use of the trail will ultimately determine the maintenance requirements on a weekly, monthly, seasonally and multi-year basis. After staging areas are established and well-used at least weekly, if not daily maintenance may include cleaning and supplying bathrooms, trash collection from containers and litter pickup. Monthly (and later more often) inspections of the entire trail will be conducted; a checklist for reports will be developed. It is proposed that the Friends organize an 'Adopt-a-Mile' program in which one person/group assumes responsibility for the monthly inspection reports and litter pickup along the trail. Experience shows that this can be an easy job for anyone regularly using the trail for their own enjoyment. User reports to the Trail Coordinator of any problems that they discover such as tree falls blocking the trail will invoke additional responses between the inspections.

Seasonally, and depending on weather/plant growth conditions, but at least every spring and perhaps a second time in the year, there will be mowing of the shoulders and pruning of over-hanging vegetation. More frequent mowing will be needed at staging areas and any mini-parks along the trail. Investigations and correction of any encroachments will be conducted as needed. Signage will be replaced or repaired as needed. Vandalism will be repaired.

Maintenance on a multi-year basis will include:

- Biannual brush hogging of the trail (18') and drainage ditches
- Spot attentions to trail places that are wet or eroded
- Grade gravel parking lots
- Paint structures
- Re-surfacing of trail every 10 - 20 years
- Remove fallen trees
- Pruning of branches along side of horse trail to keep trail accessible

Initial annual maintenance costs are estimated to be \$1,000 per mile. The agencies responsible for routine maintenance are the Southern Links Trailway Management Council and Friends of the Southern Links Trailway.

PUBLIC INPUT TO GUIDE TRAIL DEVELOPMENT, MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Opportunities afforded in the course of developing this first Southern Links Trailway Master Plan include:

- Presentations at meetings of the Friends of the Southern Links Trailway, held monthly.
- Notices of the Southern Links Trailway meetings provided for posting in all local government offices.
- Provision of plan copies to all municipalities for review and comment.
- A public meeting prior to adoption of the plan by the Southern Links Trailway Management Council.

Attendance at any of the open meetings of the Southern Links Trailway Management Council were welcomed. A survey of county residents and trail users will be conducted in the future for further input on preferences. Every five years the Master Plan will be updated in order to maintain eligibility for state/federal funding. There will be a public hearing on the plan update.

Genesee, Lapeer, and Tuscola Counties Land Use Survey 2000

The rural landscape along the Southern Links Trailway is a major attraction. There are current efforts in Lapeer and Tuscola County focused on preservation of farmlands. These efforts facilitated a "Lapeer County Land Use and Farmland Survey" in 2000. County residents expressed a strong concern for loss of farmlands and natural areas and purchasing land for nature preserves. Trailways can play an important role as greenways providing wildlife habitats and a corridor for wildlife movement. The expressed desires of Lapeer residents provide a basis for growing interest in use of the Southern Links Trailway and extension of other trails throughout the county. Conservation easements may be pursued for significant wetlands abutting the trail.

MICHIGAN TRAILWAY NETWORK

Michigan has a vision - to create a statewide network of multi-purpose trailways. These trailways will be operated by various agencies - local, state, even federal and

private - but will carry the common designation of "Michigan Trailway". Each will meet certain standards, carry the Michigan Trailway logo and signage, and be included in publications on the Michigan Trailway system. The DNR's Recreation Division is spearheading the effort to create the Michigan Trailway system with support from many other agencies, groups and individuals.

Benefits of a Michigan Trailway System

- Encouraging the development of an interconnected network of trailways
- Allowing for consistent identification of trails that cross jurisdictional boundaries
- Assuring that the segments of the statewide system are developed to consistent standards and helping to standardize rules for trailway use
- Facilitating clear understanding of the network concept in the minds of the public
- Giving agencies and local units an incentive to develop high-quality trailways, i.e., those that meet Michigan Trailway standards
- Providing a mechanism for trailway funding

ACTION PLAN

Once the trail property is publicly owned by the Southern Links Trailway Management Council and the trail has been constructed, it will be open for use to the public. It has been agreed that initial trail improvements will occur through the Villages of Columbiaville, Otter Lake, and Millington.

Accomplishments in To Date

- Vassar Rail Trail first opened Phase I in 1999. Phase II was approved in 2004, and Phase III is scheduled for 2005. This trail has a total length of 5 miles.
- Interlocal Government Agreement established on May 19, 2003, and has been signed by all interlocal government bodies as of February 25, 2004.
- Received Grant from Saginaw Bay RC&D Area Inc. in the amount of \$500.00.
- Received Grant from Rails-to-Trails Conservancy in the amount of \$3000.00.
- Hired Pollack Design Associates to begin engineering work during October 2003, and began the grant writing process for the acquisition of the trail.
- Pollack Design Associates began to review existing plans, reports, and resource materials.
- Pollack Design Associates visited the site of the Southern Links Trailway.
- Pollack Design Associates began the preliminary design studies.
- During the January 2004 meeting, Pollack Design gave a presentation of the cost and maintenance along with the preliminary design studies that were conducted to the Management Council.
- Pollack Design Associates continuing to revise plans and design studies with cost studies.
- Meeting with Representative from the DNR to discuss extensively the plans for the Southern Links Trailway, to discuss the grant requirement, and what is needed to write the grant.
- An informational meeting was held in Forest Township with 61 people attending on January 29, 2004, asking for ways in which they could help raise money to aid in the construction and development of the trail.
- Set up Friends of the Southern Links Trailway Committee.
- In the process of working on environmental study.

Trail Improvements 2004

The final grant will be submitted DNR by April 1, 2004. The acquisition of the trail will take place as soon as the funding is available.

Trail Improvements for 2005

PHASE I – Village of Millington to Water Street, Columbiaville

Village of Millington to Sister Lake Road (7.42 miles)

Site Preparation \$51,700.00

Trail Construction \$1,122,874.00

(Includes Connector Path to School Site and New Bridge)

Trail Amenities \$473,550.00

(Includes Trailhead and Interpretative Signs)

Restoration \$35,154.00

Subtotal

\$1,683,2

Sister Lake Road to Columbiaville – End at Water Street (2.69 miles)

Site Preparation \$33,550.00

Trail Construction \$590,832.00

(Includes Restoration of Two Bridges)

Trail Amenities \$94,050.00

(Includes Trailhead and Interpretative Signs)

Restoration \$12,490.00

Subtotal

\$730,92

Community Center Connector – Secondary Trail Access

Site Preparation \$5,280.00

Trail Construction \$36,910.00

Trail Amenities \$5,390.00

Restoration \$1,390.00

Subtotal

\$48,970.

Total Improvements for 2005 \$2,463,170.00

Trail Improvements for 2006

PHASE II – Millington to Vassar

Trail Improvement for 2007

PHASE III – Vassar to Reese

Note: The Action Plan activities are ordered from soonest to later. The cost figures are estimates based on the preliminary construction cost opinion by Pollack Design Associates.

FUNDING SOURCES

Initial Trailway Funding

Initial trailway funding has been provided to the Southern Links Trailway by the Saginaw Bay RC&D Area Inc. in the amount of \$500.00. A grant has also been received from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy in the amount of \$3000.00. The budgets for current operations exist from funding by the current grants received and voluntary private donations to the Friends of the Southern Links Trailway.

Future Trail Funding

Future public funds for development of the trail are anticipated from the principal state and federal grant programs, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Federal Transportation Enhancement Act for the 21st century (TEA -21). Each program requires a local match of at least 20%.

Private funding may include applications to Foundations whose goals are community improvements and natural resources preservation.

A program of local funding of operations will be developed. Local businesses and industries will be asked to donate funds. Individual contributions will be solicited. County and local government appropriations will be sought as needed.

State Funding Sources

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF): This fund provides grants to the DNR and local governments for public outdoor recreation including land acquisition and facility development. The Recreation Trust Fund Act of 1976 established the fund to accrue monies from sale of oil, gas, and mineral leases and royalties from extractions on state owned lands for public purchase of recreation lands. In 1984, Michigan voters approved a constitutional amendment and the legislature enacted the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Act, which governs the program. This grant program is administered by MDNR jointly with the federal Land and Water Conservation funding with a common application. The MNRTF Board provides oversight and final funding recommendations for the legislature's approval. A 25% local match is required (50% for LWCF grants). Currently there is a primary application deadline of April 1 and a secondary deadline of August 1. Grant agreements are for costs reimbursement. A community recreation plan updated every 5 years and approved by MDNR is a requirement for grant eligibility.

TEA-21

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) established a fund for transportation enhancement activities. The Transportation Enhancement Act for the 21st century (TEA-21) continues this program through the year 2003. The 12 eligible activities include: "Preservation of abandoned railroad corridors (including the conversion and use of it for pedestrian or bicycle trails)" and "provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles" such as paved shoulders, bike lanes, multi-use paths, etc. This federal grant program is administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation as the Michigan Transportation Enhancement Program. Eligible applicants include the County Road Commission, city or village road agency, MDNR or MDOT. Townships or non-government organizations applying for a grant must work with one of the eligible transportation agencies. Annual booklets with Instructions for applicants are available from MDOT. MDOT and the county road commission, which must support the project, make Grant decisions. Grants with successive phases of a Master Plan are preferred.

Other State Grants

Historic Preservation: The State of Michigan Preservation Office receives federal funds from the National Park Service. Educational institutions, local units of government and historical groups may apply.

Non-game Wildlife Program provides small grants for stewardship of non-game wildlife to local governments, non-profit organizations and others as does the Inland Fisheries grant program for enhancing inland fisheries. (MDNR)

Tree Planting grants are available under the Cooperative Resource Management Initiative (MDNR). Utility companies and the Natural Resources Conservation Districts are other sources of tree planting assistance.

In recent past, the Recreation Grant programs included the Clean Michigan Initiative (CMI) - Recreation Bond, which included local grants for a limited time (MDEQ).

Recreation Trails programs fund DNR projects that will contribute to the state trails network and may include local government partners.

Federal Funding Sources

Most of the federal funds for trails are passed through state agencies. The funding available and application requirements may vary from year to year and must be confirmed before application is made.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF): Historically this program established in 1965, has served the major source of funding for state and local parks. While the program was not funded from 1995 - 2000, a small amount of funds was appropriated for 2001 and continued funding is anticipated. Monies go to the states and may be used for state projects or passed through to local governments. The program is administered by MDNR jointly with the Michigan Land Trust Fund grants (see above). A 50% match is required. Final grant decisions are made by the National Park Service. In 2001, funds are limited to outdoor recreation facility development.

National Parks Service Rivers, Trails Conservation Assistance (RTCA): Grants are available to local agencies and citizen groups for Projects to protect or enhances rivers and trails.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - North American Wetlands Conservation Act provides matching grants to private or public organizations or to individuals who have developed partnerships to carry out wetlands conservation projects.

Other sources might possibly include the USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) for habitat protection and restoration or the Southeast Michigan Greenways Initiative, if linked to Oakland County.

