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Indiana Greenways Maintenance Fund

On March 27, 2014, Governor Mike Pence signed Public Law 219 (IC 14-19-10.3) establishing a Recreational Trail Maintenance Fund. Although established, no sources were identified for the Fund, which the Agriculture and Natural Resources Interim Study Committee has been charged to issue a report on before the 2015 session.

As a background, this Maintenance Fund needed to be established at a state level to be able to build and maintain the growing number of off-road, multiple use trails in Indiana. Public funds need to be assembled to assist in maintaining Greenways. Currently the demand for funding maintenance far exceeds the supply available for Greenways, and the demand is likely to increase.

In 2006, Governor Mitch Daniels released the *Indiana State Trails Plan* which proposed a goal of putting Hoosier residents within 7.5 miles, or 15 minutes of a trail facility. The Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources reported that this goal is approximately 97% complete. Trails are being promoted as opportunities to improve one's health and wellness, and provide a viable alternative transportation option in light of higher energy costs.

The burgeoning interest in trail development is clear, but perpetual maintenance of our trail network in Indiana remains inconsistent. Currently a patchwork of municipalities, trail advocacy organizations and volunteers help maintain the vast majority of greenways in Indiana. Costs to maintain one mile of trail average between \$3,500 and \$6,500 annually. This represents a substantial and necessary investment to maintain trails for long-term use and enjoyment.

Major elements of trail maintenance include, but are not limited to the following:

- *Upkeep of trail signs & pavement markings*
- *Patching, grading and sealing of trail surfaces*
- *Cleaning and sweeping of trail of leaves, storm debris, ice and snow*
- *Litter and trash pick-up*
- *Mowing of trail shoulders*
- *Repair and replacement of trail amenities (lights, benches, etc.)*

To aid with the growing demand to maintain our valued trail networks, the Greenways Foundation of Indiana has been involved in proposing the establishment of a Maintenance Fund at the state level. We are pleased that the Fund has been established. We recommend the fund be made available to trail management agencies, public and not-for-profit, to provide financial aid in maintaining off-road non-motorized vehicle trails.

LEGAL COUNSEL
Barnes & Thornburg, LLP

COMMUNICATION & DESIGN
Hirons & Company, LLC
mediumFUSION, LLC

Greenways Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 80091
Indianapolis, Indiana 46280-0091

Phone: 317-407-8219
E-mail: info@greenwaysfoundation.org

greenwaysfoundation.org

The Greenways Foundation is asking the Indiana State Legislature to identify a perpetual funding source for the Recreational Trail Maintenance Fund. Our chief recommendations include the following:

1. Indiana legislators are considering the adoption of a bottle bill. The Greenways Foundation recommends including a portion of the unredeemed deposit funds as a part of building the State Trails Maintenance Fund.
2. Distribution of funding needs to be set forth allowing maintenance of greenways to be quick, efficient and utilizing best practices. The Greenways Foundation would like to work closely with legislators to identify the best policies and procedures regarding use of the funds.
3. The Greenways Foundation recommends the funds not be limited to governmental agencies. Trail advocacy groups, volunteers and non-profits should be accounted for when considering how the funds should be distributed.

To date, a number of states employ similar mechanisms, of which include the following examples:

- *Minnesota Parks and Trails Fund* is a state-established fund receiving 14.25 percent of the sales tax revenue resulting from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment. Those funds may only be spent to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance. In 2009, the Legislature appropriated \$65.1 million from the Parks and Trails Fund for projects beginning during the next two fiscal years (July 1, 2009 - July 1, 2011). www.legacy.leg.mn/funds/parks-trails-fund
- The *Illinois Bicycle Path Grant Program* provides up to a maximum of 50% funding assistance on land acquisition, development and rehabilitation of trails. Funding for the program is derived from revenue generated from fees collected pursuant to Section 3-821(f) of the Illinois Vehicle Code. dnr.state.il.us/ocd/newbike2.htm
- *Michigan Recreation Improvement Fund Grants* fund the operation, maintenance and development of trails; the restoration of land damaged by off-road vehicles; and inland lake cleanup. The source is a 2% distribution of all state-imposed taxes collected on the sale of gasoline after deducting collection costs and refunds. Authority: Part 711, PA 451 of 1994, as amended. www.michigan.gov/dnr
- *Iowa State Recreational Trails Program* funds the acquisition, construction, or improvement of trails open for public use. Appropriation is from the Iowa Legislature. tinyurl.com/lq22sah
- The *Wisconsin State Trail Pass* is required for all people age 16 or older biking, in-line skating, horseback riding, cross-country skiing or off-highway motorcycling on certain trails. The pass is not required for walking or hiking. The State Trail Pass is issued to the person, not the bike, horse, motorcycle, etc. It is non-transferable, meaning the pass cannot be passed from person to person or shared with others. A vehicle admission sticker is required on all motor vehicles stopping in state parks and recreation areas. Some state forest and trail parking areas also require a vehicle admission sticker. In 2013, Wisconsin collected a total of \$1.26 million in State Trail Pass fees that went directly to maintaining the state trail system. A similar pass system could be employed in Indiana – but for all major recreational trails (over three miles). dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/trailpass.html
- The *Michigan Beverage Container Act* offers a system for reclamation of beer, soft drinks, carbonated/mineral water and wine coolers in any airtight metal, glass, paper or plastic container (also any combination of these materials under 1 gallon) in retail stores. These beverages require a \$0.10 deposit and any unredeemed deposits are used as follows: 25% to the retailers

and 75% to the state for environmental programs which include the building and maintaining of Greenways. More details and other states examples can be found at www.bottlebill.org.

The Greenways Foundation looks forward to working with members of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Interim Study Committee. The funding of the Trails Maintenance Fund and the governance of how it is distributed is imperative to the success of Indiana's burgeoning greenway network. This legislation will create a legacy of Indiana greenways for future generations to enjoy.

Karen Bohn, President · (317) 407-8219 · kbohn@indy.rr.com

The Greenways Foundation is a charitable trust working to promote the growth, enhancement and use of Indiana greenways. To accomplish that, we solicit donations and make grants in support of greenway development, enhancement and operation. The Board of Directors meets monthly and has a total of nine Directors located statewide in Indiana.

Our primary activities include:

- Assisting in forming effective local trails organizations
- Building initial community support for trails
- Providing startup grants to help local trails organizations build capacity and local support
- Acting as a source of trails information and consultation to local Indiana governments
- Promoting best practices in the planning, marketing, design, development, and management of linear parks

We have made it our practice to work closely with both citizen and governmental entities to establish linear parks in a way that maximizes the resources of donors, whether foundations, individuals or taxpayers.



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