



Fri, Jul 29, 2005



[Home](#) > 2 Grants to Bluffton Nearly \$1.5 Million

JULY 28, 2005 [EMAIL THIS STORY](#)

## 2 Grants to Bluffton Nearly \$1.5 Million

By JIM BARBIERI

A double-header bonanza for Bluffton!

Announced by the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) has been the award to Bluffton of full requests in both of the city's "T-21" (Transportation Enhancement) grant applications.

They total \$1.495 million.

They include:

-- \$1 million for the city's proposed Inter Urban Trail -- the North Main Street safety walk-way to the north city limits.

-- \$495,000 for obtaining and moving the long-idle former Vera Cruz Bridge -- enabling another pedestrian bridge across the Wabash, probably in the vicinity of the White Bridge and other trail connections.

The two large grants provide Bluffton with a stunning clean sweep for the ambitious goals announced by Mayor Ellis in his State of the City address early this year.

Recently in the spring Bluffton won a grant of about \$85,000 to help fund property acquisitions for the Rivergreenway Trail -- the property of the late Ruth Frank as just obtained at 205 East Wabash Street at the west end of the Rivergreenway Trail, and the 32-acre property of the Tonner brothers across the Wabash on the north bank next to the city "farm" and wetland. The city already had about \$117,000 left over from a Wabash River Heritage Corridor grant a few years ago toward those property aims and related costs.

However, the largest piece in the city's vision was that acquisition and moving of the ex-Vera Cruz Bridge -- enabling a connection to foot trails on the north bank of the Wabash and extending into Ouabache State Park.

The hopes for a grant of close to a half-million dollars for

that estimated \$654,000 project were recognized as visionary but now have come true with the \$495,000 grant on that project.

The larger grant of \$1 million is for a project on which the city unsuccessfully has sought grant funding for close to five years.

What made its success this time could have been the large associated strides relative to city walkways and the river areas including the mostly-private funded Wells County Arts, Commerce & Visitors Centre with its \$2 million private donation campaign success also enhancing the Wabash River south bank with a fortifying wall against erosion and flood damages.

That, plus the state's own separate action in providing at state expense the new and first-ever permanent pedestrian bridge across the Wabash here, just west of the just-rehabilitated Crosbie Main Street Bridge -- a \$1.3 million state-federal funded program, mostly for the main bridge's re-fortifying after 70 years of service.

Originally, the city had hoped state T-21 (transportation enhancement) grant funds might to obtained to provide the pedestrian bridge, but this cost was avoided in the city fiscal aims because the state included it in its own bridge program.

But still not satisfied -- until the \$1 million grant being announced now -- was the funding for taking the Rivergreenway Trail across Ind. 1 (beneath it) and northward along along North Main Street, enabling many more linkages on foot and on bicycle.

Over five years ago the city had a rough hope of a \$250,000 project in a "Wal-Mart to Scott" walk-way but had found this type of project to be vastly more costly when looking at actual needs.

The \$1 million grant being announced in this account is for the state grant's 80 percent share of a total now-estimated \$1,364,150 project.

Included in that program are estimated construction funds of \$892,150 plus the related costs -- \$10,000 for planning, \$15,000 for project development and environmental studies, \$90,000 for engineering and final plans preparation, \$250,000 for right-of-way acquisition and \$107,000 in construction engineering and inspection activities.

Specifically, this project -- labeled the Inter Urban Pedestrian Trail because it will follow the historic course of the former Interurban system northward along Ind. 1 in Bluffton -- will be inaugurated by taking the current Rivergreenway Trail westward UNDER North Main Street. (Ind. 1) alongside the understructure of the Crosbie Main Street Bridge and linking in it into the south end of the

new pedestrian bridge.

The trail route then will go northward across the Wabash on the pedestrian bridge and connecting with Kehoe Park.

From there, the trail will become the sidewalk (actually 10-foot-wide asphalt trail) frontage on state right-of-way property northward along North Main Street for two-thirds of a mile on the west side of Ind. 1.

The Inter Urban Trail then would cross Main Street to the east and continue northward on the east side of North Main Street -- linking the system with the East Dustman Road program -- the \$1.963 million 80 percent federal-funded project just getting started eastward to the city limits there.

The Inter Urban Trail would go northward all the way to the Lancaster Elementary School Road to link that school into a network that has connections at the south end with the Bluffton-Harrison Schools campus.

Also linked on the trail route would be the big shopping complex in the Lowe's-Wal-Mart area and residential development eastward.

Both pedestrian safety and traffic safety features are being emphasized in the design.

Mayor Ellis, in hailing today's good news, also stated:

"We will be concentrating on the Inter Urban Trail first and letting the Whipple Truss (ex-Vera Cruz Bridge and the only double whipple truss bridge remaining in Indiana) wait for awhile."

The Inter Urban Trail project will link Ouabache State Park with Bluffton's entire north end as well as the city's downtown.

Currently, the south end of Bluffton and its shopping area are linked into the Rivergreenway Trail on the Stogdill Road route that includes the school complex and Harrison Street to Bi-County and the shopping complex.

The new just-announced state batch of ISTEA-21 awards totalled \$17.5 million state-wide in 29 projects.

For Bluffton to have two of those projects and nearly \$1.5 million out of the \$17.5 million state-wide was recognized readily as a super achievement here.

Also the pieces of the puzzle were fitting together as the city application had conveyed -- the Arts-Commerce project, the pedestrian bridge, the Crosbie Bridge rehabilitation, the East Dustman project and all the other

- Home
- Subscribe to Print Edition
- House & Home Real Estate
- Local Classifieds
- Ft. Wayne Area Classifieds
- Weather
  
- Local News
- Opinions
- Obituaries
- School News
- Sports
- Auctions
  
- Dining Guide
- Special Sections
  
- E-Newsletter
  
- Submit Your News
- Favorite Links
- Local Photo Reprints
- About Us
- Contact Us
- FAQ's
- Wells Co Facts & Info

developments, private and public.

Some right of way will need to be obtained in the Inter-Urban construction, but the mayor's notation was that the two property owners in a key location have expressed support of the project.

Indicated was that the acquisitions of right- of way will start promptly now that the grant award has been achieved.

Wells County Revitalization and the city of Bluffton will provide the local funding with non-property tax special funds set out as public sources for leveraging the large state grant funds.

The Bluffton Parks & Recreation Department will do maintenance as it does for all parks and trails of the city and swimming pool, and the Bluffton Police Department will include the trail in its coverages for safety and security.

A key factor in the whole program is to enable the healthful values of walking, jogging and bicycle riding to be included along with available accesses for safe foot and cycle linkages to many resources.

The Ouabache added accesses were noted along with a report showing that park to have 362,000 visitors a year.

More is in separate accounts today.

Site Designed by:  
[Tyler Jones of Out Loud Creative, Inc.](#)  
 Copyright © 2005 News Banner Publications, Inc.

[More Local News Stories](#)



[Wells County Genealogy](#)

Google Search

www  News-Banner.com