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Towns work to connect trails' futures

Officials say county's pedestrian network progressing

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With eight miles of trail in Grant County, plus additional land in Sweetser and some planned for Converse, the county is looking for ways to emphasize its options for pedestrians and exercise enthusiasts.

At Monday night's annual meeting of the Cardinal Greenway, Tanya Ford, executive director of the county's Area Plan Department, said the next version of the county's master plan - a document that lays out preferences for quality-of-life issues such as park space, transportation and bridges - will include pedestrian travel.

It will be the first time since 1969, when the initial master and recreation plans were adopted, that pedestrians will be addressed in the plan.

"It's important to acknowledge that there is pedestrian travel, and more importantly that that pedestrian travel does interact on a daily basis



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BRIDGED - Jerry Hermann crosses over Washington Street while walking Monday on the Cardinal Greenway. The greenway now runs from Miller Avenue to 10th Street in Jonesboro, but plans are under way to place much of the county's trail system.

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with vehicular traffic." Ford said. "We can't allow Americans' obsession with their automobile ... to interfere with the idea and the concept that there

must be options for pedestrian travel."

Ford told a group gathered Monday night at Old National Bank, 100 S. Washington St., that the greenway is a prized possession of Grant County.

"This is an amenity that we need sell to the community, so they realize that we can sell this to prospective businesses," she said, adding that when employers look to locate in a county, they look at what that area has to offer beyond the financial incentives.

"Employees want something do on their spare time," Ford said.

The Area Plan Department is going to have open sessions during the spring to discuss what the community wants in the plan.

Each Grant County resident has their own value system, Ford said, adding that the community needs to gather to discuss and examine their values.

"If they know the document has public input, the public had the opportunity to be involved and utilized the opportunity, then our community officials are going to utilize a comprehensive plan when making decisions," Ford said.

Sweetser and Converse have been working to connect trails in their communities to the Cardinal Greenway, which runs from Miller Avenue in Marion to 10th Street in Jonesboro in Grant County.

The eight miles of the Cardinal Greenway eventually will connect north to the Sweetser Switch Trail, which is three miles from Grant County Road 400 West, to Grant County Road 700 West.

Rob King, a former president of Sweetser Park Board, said there is about a three-mile gap between the Cardinal Greenway and the Sweetser Switch Trail, which is paid for by municipal dollars. He said Sweetser officials currently are working to buy the land to close the cap.

Converse Town Council President Joe Lenon updated the group on the

progress of the Converse Junction.

"It's going a little slower than what we have hoped," Lenon said. "If you look at the big picture, we are moving forward."

Similar to Sweetser, the town of Converse is responsible for its trail.

Converse previously received an Indiana Department Transportation grant that requires a 20 percent match, Lenon said. Converse has been raising funds through the private sector, he said.

Last year, the town had an environmental study completed, meaning Converse can move forward into the final stages of fundraising and land acquisition, Lenon said. He said the council hopes to break ground in the spring of 2007.

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