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# HAMILTON COUNTY

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## HAMILTON COUNTY

### Trail envisioned as vital link

Plans show span intersecting Monon

By Phil Dunlap  
Star correspondent  
October 28, 2004

An abandoned rail line that runs through Westfield and Noblesville may be revived -- not to carry trains, but as a recreational trail.

Council members representing both municipalities gathered this week to hear a preliminary plan for Midland Trace Trail -- a five-mile stretch from Ditch Road east to Gray Road, which borders Noblesville.

Patterned after the Monon Trail, the path would follow the abandoned Midland Rail route that runs east-west through both communities. It would intersect the Monon, which also runs along a former rail line.

Kevin Buchheit, Westfield Community Development director, said Westfield wants to establish itself as a trail destination, with the future Midland trail and the Monon Trail forming a hub crossing south of Ind. 32 and west of U.S. 31.

He said several developers already have agreed to either donate or help develop parcels that pass through their properties. The town also is counting on grant money.

Westfield Town Manager Jerry Rosenberger said the project would be completed in phases.

"Our next project is actually (starting) the Monon. We got a \$960,000 grant last year (for that section) from 146th Street to 161st Street. We're selecting a firm (in November) that will follow through (on) everything from contacting the homeowners, buying the land, constructing the trail -- the complete package deal."

Rosenberger said the cost of such a project is about \$1 million per mile.

He added that a section of the Midland Trace Trail west of town that goes through Maple Knoll, between Spring Mill Road and Ditch Road, also will be a priority.

"We want to get that piece working so (the residents) can ride their

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bikes over to our Quaker Park," said Rosenberger. "We're going to put in a splash park, basketball courts and a pavilion in the spring.

"The next piece will be very simple. Custom Concrete is willing to give us the land on the other side of Oak Ridge. We think we'll be able to get that (nearly) finished in two years. That will get us to where the Midland (will) tie into the Monon."

However, crossing U.S. 31 will have to wait for the four to six years it will take to complete planned improvements to the highway, Rosenberger said. The town also plans eventually to extend the Monon to 216th Street.

Noblesville officials laud the proposal.

Mayor John Ditslear said Wednesday that Noblesville will extend the trail from Gray Road east to Hazel Dell Elementary School on Ind. 32 within a year.

Each community will work independently on their projects, but Kevin Heber, a member of the Hoosier Rails to Trails Council, said he hoped to keep regular lines of communication open between the two communities.

He volunteered his organization to clear some sections of the Midland trail between Carey Road and Cool Creek, offering also to help seek grant money to assist with the project.

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