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## News & Views

### Monon closer to winding its way through Westfield

**By Katie Robbins**  
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WESTFIELD -- The Monon Trail is one step closer to extending into Westfield and beyond, but land acquisition keeps the finish line at a distance.

The town council and township parks board voted unanimously Thursday to accept the master plan for developing the Monon Trail -- sited to begin at 146th Street, cross Indiana 32 and extend northeast toward 216th Street -- and the Midland Trace -- which would begin at Spring Mill Road, connect with the Monon south of Ind. 32 and end at Gray Road.

"We can be the 'golden stake' for where both trails meet," said town council president Teresa Otis Skelton. "This was one of the top five things I wanted to put through" when she ran for a seat on town council.

Land acquisition, Otis Skelton said, will be tricky when talking with property owners, but she's certain the council can offer the best assurances that the trails are a positive thing for the community.

"It will enhance their property and property values," she said, adding that the council wants all property owners and residents to be part of the process.

Westfield resident Carl Dankert, who frequently rides his bike on the existing Monon Trail, is concerned about vehicle traffic and whether motorists will watch for bikers and pedestrians at trail crossings.

According to the plan, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) will install traffic lights at major intersections for the safety of motorists and trail enthusiasts.

Dankert hopes motorists will obey the traffic lights.

The avid bike rider also believes that the Monon Trail will be a boon for Westfield homeowners and businesses, bringing commerce and development to the already growing town.

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INDOT awarded Westfield a \$950,000 Transportation Enhancement Grant to help build both trails. The town will match 20 percent of those funds to complete the project.

Kevin Buchheit, Westfield's development director, said there are several options for raising the 20 percent, including issuing a property-tax bond for town parks projects or using funds raised by the township parks' tax.

Property owners may also donate land for the project and receive a tax deduction for the donation.

The town is currently accepting bids from design and construction firms for the project and will make the awards as soon as possible. Buchheit hopes to have a design firm recommendation for the council at the October town council meeting.

Architecture firm Rundell, Ernstberger and Associates and engineering firm Butler, Fairman and Seufert developed the master plan. Allan Hamersley, a civil engineer from Butler, Fairman and Seufert, said once the ball starts rolling, construction could take 18 months.

Buchheit said the longest part of the project is determining property ownership and land acquisition, but the construction phase will be the quickest aspect. He hopes that two years from now, if everything goes well, the trails will be open for business.

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