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Thursday, Jul 14, 2005

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Editorial

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Posted on Wed, Jul. 06, 2005

New Haven trails

The newly opened greenway trail the New Haven-Adams Township Parks and Recreation Department built should set the standard for trail construction in the future. Not only is the new stretch one of the most scenic sections in Allen County, but the wide paths and clear signage also make it one of the best for those who walk, bike, skate or jog on it.

The New Haven path links onto the east end of the county-managed Maumee Rivergreenway at North River Road and, at least for now, runs to the south side of the Landin Road bridge. This fall, the park department will extend it a half mile on Landin Road so that it links with the trail in Moser Park and sidewalks leading to Havenhurst Park and downtown New Haven.

New Haven paid \$300,000 for the \$1.7 million project. The rest of the money came from a federal transportation enhancement grant. New Haven's ability to garner one of the highly competitive Department of Transportation grants is proof of the project's merit.

The park board began planning the project more than 10 years ago. "We took our time and did it right the first time," Park Superintendent Ken Wilkinson said.



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Dean Musser Jr./The Journal Gazette

Bicyclists ride on the New Haven Rivergreenway along North River Road.

The greenway follows the Maumee River and Trier Ditch. But careful design of the trail means that New Haven's section of the greenway should avoid problems with flooding and erosion that have damaged portions of the greenway near the river maintained by the county and the city of Fort Wayne.

"We addressed a lot of those problems in the design phase," Wilkinson says. "We learned from other people's problems." Wilkinson looked at not only Fort Wayne and Allen County's greenway but trail systems across the nation.

One of the design features that will help avert problems is flood gates that can be closed when water is high. The gates will keep people off the trail when there is danger. Park employees can then ensure the trail is clear of debris before the trail is reopened.

Wilkinson knows that New Haven will face some problems with the trail – already some reprobate has stolen a yield sign. But his philosophy is to continually monitor the greenway and address problems as soon as they occur. To meet this goal, the park department has about \$15,000 budgeted annually for trail maintenance.

Construction of greenway trails is only half the battle. Keeping the trails safe and well maintained is equally important. It appears that New Haven parks officials have both fronts well covered.

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