
Executive Summary

Urban and Regional Planning Practicum students at Michigan State University have compiled this report to assist with a development plan for the future North Spur of the Clinton River Trail, a recreational trail that will run through Pontiac, Michigan. The primary objectives of this report are to provide information on what must be done in order to transform the current right-of-way into a legal and functioning trail, give recommendations on what amenities and features could be added in order to give the trail its own unique identity, and to present information on possible funding opportunities.

A recreational, non-motorized trail would be a very positive addition to the city of Pontiac. The path would give the city something to brand itself with, and since part of it would connect to the portion of the Clinton River Trail that runs through Auburn Hills, Rochester Hills, and Rochester, MI, it would provide opportunities for inhabitants of these nearby cities to visit Pontiac and experience its comparatively denser urban center. This in turn would stimulate the economy with an inflow of new capital. In addition, the potential future trail would help to promote a healthier lifestyle in Pontiac, as the path would be a great place for Pontiac citizens to get outside and exercise.

The major components of this report are as follows:

1. A socioeconomic profile with data on Pontiac, Oakland County, and the State of Michigan
2. A trail user profile with data on Clinton River Trail users as well as general Michigan trail users
3. An assessment criteria and current conditions section that describes fundamental trail regulatory standards as well as the current conditions of the trail right-of-way in Pontiac
4. A contemporary practices section that exhibits features and amenities from other trails located around the country and globe
5. Trail development guidelines that give information on what must be done in order to make the current right-of-way into a legal, enjoyable recreational trail for non-motorized use
6. An overview of funding alternatives for recreational trail projects with suggestions of options relevant to the North Spur

In order to form a better understanding of the characteristics of people in and around the city of Pontiac, the area's demographics were analyzed. The City of Pontiac has decreased in population from 2000 to 2010, and the median age also went up during this 10 year period. Based on the study of Pontiac's age distribution, the population aged 60 to 64 has experienced the quickest increase rate among other age groups during that time span. The median household income in Pontiac has also decreased since 2000, however, many studies have shown that the trail could bring economic benefits to the community. The development of the North Spur of the Clinton River Trail has a great potential to become the economic booster for the city of Pontiac.

The CRT user survey and the general Michigan trail user report were both looked at in order to get an idea of who will use Pontiac's trail, as well as how and for how long they will use it. Both the CRT user study and Michigan trail user study found that most trail users are above the age of 35, and that they

spend between 30 minutes and two hours per visit on trails. Additionally, the Michigan trail user report asserted that whether they walk or drive (most people walk), most Michigan trail users live less than 15 minutes away from the trail they frequent. The CRT user survey found that Clinton River Trail users tend to use the trail to travel a distance of 10 miles or less, and that crushed limestone is the preferred surface material.

The trail assessment criteria and current conditions section defines trail terminology that is used as the basic criteria for developing recommendations to convert the current North Spur right-of-way into a future legal trail. Additionally, this chapter assesses the current conditions of the North Spur by trail section. Before each study section is described in the conditions section, a map showing the land uses in that section has been provided.

The contemporary practices section gives examples of trail features and amenities from trails around the country, and even across the globe. This section of the report is divided into four parts: examples of trail features from the Auburn Hills portion of the Clinton River Trail, an example of handicap accessibility on trails, public art on trails, and an example of a bridge from a trail in Wuppertal, Germany.

The trail development recommendation section focuses primarily on minor enhancements. Premium trail features and amenities are mentioned but are not the central focus. This section of the report is split into two parts: one on general recommendations, and another on recommendations by segment of the trail. The general recommendations puts forward features and amenities that apply to the development of the entire trail, such as trailhead amenity improvements, surface width and material, curb ramp and detectable warnings, signage, bridges and the areas on either side of them, vegetation, emergency access, and wheelchair accessibility. The recommendations by trail segment section focuses on recommendations specific to each trail segment.

In order to fund projects like the North Spur, both public and private sources of financial support can be sought. Changes in land value of the project site as well as adjacent properties can make it an attractive investment for a large variety of organizations and agencies. Because the value added is shared by the community, there are opportunities for cooperation and partnership that can magnify the potential benefits and create additional community building leverage. Findings in this section include a listing of possible sources of financial assistance.

It is hoped that this report will serve as a resource for future stakeholder involvement in the planning and construction of Pontiac's North Spur of the Clinton River Trail.