

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (3-30-16)

THE INGHAM COUNTY TRAILS AND PARKS MILLAGE GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

In November 2014, Ingham County voters approved a new millage to support the development of a county-wide regional trails and parks system. The .5 mill, six-year levy raises an estimated \$3.5 million per year through 2020. In July 2015, the Ingham County Board of Commissioners hired the consulting team of The Mannik & Smith Group along with Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance to assist the Ingham County Trails and Parks Task Force in assembling a plan for the expenditure of trails and parks millage dollars. Per its agreed-upon contract with Ingham County, Mannik-Smith delivered its draft report to the Task Force six months later. The Task Force reviewed the report and took action on recommendations in February and March 2016.

Q: What kinds of expenses are reimbursable?

Round 1:

Asphalt Trail Project Requirements: Applications will be accepted beginning April 1, 2016 and are due April 29, 2016. Eligible trails must be identified as one of 84 existing asphalt trails named in the Ingham County Trails and Parks Comprehensive Report (Table 3). \$1,000,000 has been approved by the Ingham County Board of Commissioners (BOC) for resurfacing of asphalt trails. Approved in BOC resolution 16-104.

Bridge Project Requirements: Applications will be accepted beginning April 1, 2016 and are due by June 1, 2016. Qualified bridges are identified in the Ingham County Trails and Parks Comprehensive Report, with priority given to bridges identified as total replacement (Table 7). \$4,500,000 has been approved by the Ingham County Board of Commissioners for bridge replacement. Approved in BOC resolution 16-105.

Second Round - October 1, 2016: A second round of applications will be accepted beginning October 1, 2016. These applications will address new construction identified as a regional priority corridor in figure 24 (page 27) of the Ingham County Trails and Parks Comprehensive Report, and special projects (including blue ways) as well as repairs, rehabilitation, and long-term maintenance projects. Approved in BOC resolution 16-106.

Q: Who is eligible to apply for Trails and Parks Millage Funds?

Ingham County municipalities, from which millage dollars are drawn, are eligible to apply for the Ingham County Trails and Parks program.

Q. Why is the process limited to municipalities and does not include other entities, such as nonprofit civic groups?

A nonprofit can apply essentially through a municipality. The municipality is the applicant and the nonprofit is a partner with the municipality.

Q: What types of categories will be considered in the millage application process in future rounds?

The Ingham County Trails and Parks Task Force has determined and defined broad project categories that are eligible for millage fund expenditures. They include and are defined as follows:

1. **New Construction** – This would involve the construction of new trails and trail gaps where none currently exist.
2. **Repairs, Rehabilitation, Long-Term Maintenance** – This would involve the repair, replacement or re-construction of an existing trail infrastructure to bring it up to acceptable safety or design standards. Long-term maintenance is also included in this category and defined as that which extends the life of a trail “preserving a trail to optimal standards while excluding activities such as snow and trash removal, and grass mowing.” (Task Force Meeting of December 10, 2015). Routine maintenance or the everyday upkeep of a trail which would include tasks such as mowing, trash

pick-up, leaf/debris blowing, dead limb removal, herbicide spraying or restroom cleaning are activities that are intentionally excluded from millage expenditures.

3. **County Parks** – This would involve funding for Ingham County Parks facility repairs, upgrades and improvements that have been deferred due to previous years' lack of funding.
4. **Special Projects** – This would involve awarding planning grants to rural and/or smaller municipalities or small contributions to help local units of government fund projects. It could also include supporting region-wide projects such as wayfinding, trail user studies, trail town initiatives, adopt-a-trail programs, etc.

Q: What does the grant application process look like? How is funding distributed?

Acting in an advisory capacity to the County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of County Parks staff, the County Parks and Recreation Commission would review and evaluate the submitted applications and make a final recommendation to the County Board of Commissioners for millage fund appropriations within a prescribed timeframe. The evaluation process includes the following steps:

1. A completed application packet including a local municipality resolution approving the application and any local share (A conditional application can be submitted without the resolution by the deadline; the resolution will be required prior to a contract and agreement between the municipality and the County. The County can accept applications conditional upon approval by the governing board of the applicant unit. If approval is not provided, the application will be considered withdrawn);
2. A review by the County Parks and Recreation Commission of applications using the County's recommended scoring criteria;
3. Next, the County Parks staff tallies and calculates the project final scores;
4. The Parks and Recreation Commission then meets and discusses a final score, with a review of budgetary considerations for a final recommendation;
5. Following that, recommendations are presented to County Board of Commissioners for review and final approval;
6. Recipients are announced and municipalities enter into a legal contract with Ingham County;
7. Municipalities report physical and financial completion to County. The County reimburses costs upon successful completion of work and only after successful review by Ingham County. Individual projects will be reimbursed based on actual expenses, in phases, to be defined in each individual contract.

Q: Will the application require resolutions or agreements with local entities?

Yes, in addition to the application form, the Ingham County Parks Millage Fund application packet must include a cover letter, a resolution from all parties involved in the application demonstrating any matching contributions, plans and drawings showing the design of the project, a project location map, and property boundaries. A conditional application can be submitted without the resolution by the deadline. The resolution will be required prior to a contract and agreement between the municipality and the County. The County can accept applications conditional upon approval by the governing board of the applicant unit. If approval is not provided, the application will be considered withdrawn).

Q: Can more than one project be submitted on one application?

For round one, we would encourage multiple trail segment sections that are contiguous from the same entity to be on one application. Bridge projects we would prefer each to be their own application.

Q: What must be demonstrated in the application?

- Projects must demonstrate a direct benefit to Ingham County residents;

- Projects must be in line with the broad categories established by the Trails and Parks Task Force of (1) new construction; (2) repairs, rehabilitation and long-term maintenance; or is a (3) special project;
- Projects cannot be allocated for administrative, operational or other similar uses;
- Projects must include a plan for future and/or ongoing funding to maintain the project; and
- Once complete, must display a recognition plaque on site provided by the County

Q: Specifically, what information is requested in a grant application?

A simple and short application form, which would require applicants to provide:

- The applicant’s contact information (name, contact, address, etc.),
- A brief paragraph description of the project (location, ownership, proposed improvement, etc.)
- An overview of the project addressing the criteria and other aspects of the project,
- The detail physical scope of the project,
- The design, engineering and construction information,
- We highly recommend the applicant hire a Michigan licensed professional engineering and that construction will be according to the current MDOT standard specifications for construction,
- Meets or exceeds the minimum accessibility requirements of the ADA,
- Meets AASHTO standards for alignment, grade, width, vertical clearance, intersection and crossing design (deviation from AASHTO standards need to be stated and explained),
- Itemization of the project costs and funding, including amounts requested,
- Future requirements of the project such as maintenance, and
- The applicant’s signature.

Q: Could the millage pay for prime professional and engineering costs?

Potentially, if a community needs to apply for these funds to engage in the process because they do not have professional staff to perform these functions then it would be considered fundable. The cost of these services could be part of a larger application or requested separately under the special projects category.

Q: To apply, does our community need matching dollars?

The local community may use its own funds, or in-kind services, or funds obtained from other sources, i.e., state, federal or other allocations.

Q: When are grant applications accepted each year?

After Round One, it is anticipated that future round of applications in subsequent years will be available on October 1st each year to align with state and federal grant funding cycles.

Q: What recommendations for spending allocations were made by the Trails & Parks Task Force and in the Comprehensive Report?

It is recognized that trail and funding needs vary among local communities and will change over time. It is clear that, at this time, the older existing trails located in the cities of Lansing and East Lansing require repairs and rehabilitation while the adjacent suburban and rural communities are mostly in need of new trail development and connections. As new trails are built and older existing trails are brought to acceptable standards, the focus will shift to long-term maintenance of the regional trail system. For this reason and because the County cannot predict which projects will be submitted, setting allocation percentages between these categories or maximum funding requests may be arbitrary and unnecessary.

The Task Force also expressed the desire that priorities for millage expenditures go for repair, reconstruction and new construction, which will likely capture the most expensive projects. In conclusion, the Task Force recommended accepting the first option for funding allocations as outlined in the Mannik-Smith Comprehensive Report. Mannik-Smith also indicated its strong preference for the first option:

1. **Not allocating specific percentages to the allocation categories and use, instead, the criteria to evaluate and select projects and ensure a fair distribution of the millage funds**

Q: Will the results of the application review be made public?

Yes the entire process is public.

Q: Explain how the Criteria and Project Evaluation process works?

Establishing evaluation criteria for trail project development will assist the County and its partners in encouraging and implementing the development of a Countywide interconnected regional trails network. The Ingham County Board of Commissioners, the Ingham County Trails and Parks Task Force, the County Parks Commission and the County Parks Department staff may use criteria to evaluate and select trail projects for development and assist in balancing the needs of the region.

The following criteria are recommended to evaluate and select projects in Ingham County:

1. **Improves Regional Connectivity:** Projects that improve regional connectivity and access throughout Ingham County should be given a high priority. To determine whether a project improves regional connectivity or access, the project should address the following:
 - Provides, supports and relates to the Ingham County regional priority corridors as depicted on Figure 24 either as existing trail reconstruction, new regional trail gap construction or new local trail access to the regional network (including enabling water trail access);
 - Improves access to Ingham County Parks;
 - Improves access to major regional destinations such as commercial and employment centers as well as community facilities, schools, colleges and universities;
 - Expands transportation options as well as provide for recreation; and
 - Increases access to sites of natural, scenic or historic interest.
2. **Responds to Public Demand and Shows Support:** Projects that have significant support and meet the needs of the region should be scored and ranked positively. Projects strengthening new or existing partnerships and including the support of volunteers should receive a high priority. To determine whether a project has support, the project should address the following:
 - Is based on public demand;
 - Has been prioritized in adopted plans;
 - Has volunteer and/or partner organization support;
 - Is a community interest project that support partnerships, shared resources or coincides with other planning and development activities; and
 - Has the support of multiple jurisdictions and/or stakeholders.
3. **Meets or Exceeds Design Standards and Is the Best Design Solution:** Projects should be able to meet minimum design standards and all other design alternatives should be considered. To determine whether a project meets minimum design standards and is the best option, a project should address the following:
 - Is physically separated from streets and roadways where possible;
 - Provides a variety of experiences that can be enjoyed by a diversity of users, including people of all ages and abilities. Such projects must meet or exceed the minimum accessibility requirements of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA);
 - Design alternatives to the project have been examined to minimize impact on the environment
 - Meets minimum standards for grade, width, vertical clearance, intersection and crossing design; and

- Considers low impact development techniques that protect and enhance significant natural features.
- 4. **Is Feasible and Ready for Development:** Projects that are feasible and ready to implement should receive high priority. To determine whether a project is ready and feasible, the project should address the following:
 - Is under public ownership or is currently accessible for public use;
 - Does not require complex or lengthy acquisition process;
 - Does not require a complex or lengthy permitting process;
 - Is within an existing corridor such as a transmission lines and railroad corridor where it may be feasible to negotiate public access without needing to acquire land;
 - There is an imminent threat to lose the project opportunity;
 - Demonstrates cost efficiency, is appropriate and in line with available funds; and
- 5. **Supports Equitable Opportunities:** Projects that improve equity should be given a high priority. A project that demonstrates equity should address the following:
 - Increases access and provides low-cost transportation and recreation options for low income populations;
 - Is located in a high-use area;
 - Is located in an underserved area; and
 - Contributes to an equitable geographical distribution of the millage funds.
- 6. **Has Potentially Available Funds:** Projects that have the potential to be funded through state or federal grants, donations, partner contributions or other funding sources should receive higher priority than projects without other identified funding opportunities. To determine whether a project has leveraged potential available funds, a project should address the following:
 - Has funding available through grants or partner contributions;
 - Has funding available through donations or in-kind services; and
 - Has funding available through local community match.
- 7. **Includes a Maintenance Commitment:** Projects that include a high degree of commitment to maintaining the work once completed should be given a high-priority ranking. A project that demonstrates this should address the following:
 - Includes a detailed operation and maintenance plan describing season length, hours of operation, limitations on use, enforcement provisions, and scheduling;
 - Provides a budget to support the maintenance plan with a letter of commitment, or
 - Uses adopt-a-trail programs or other innovative measures for trail maintenance.
- 8. **Other Considerations:** Other project information not mentioned above may be provided for consideration.

Additional Questions:

Q: Ingham County residents voted to approve this millage in 2014. Why did it take so long to put an application process in place to enable communities to begin work on repairs, projects and improvements?
Desiring a plan in place before releasing millage funds, the Board of Commissioners solicited bids for a consultant to help make recommendations for a plan starting in March/April of 2015. The Board of Commissioners Task Force re-affirmed this action . The County signed a contract with Mannik-Smith in late

July 2015. Mannik and Smith was tasked with developing a comprehensive report for the Board of Commissioners that included a detailed inventory of all existing non-motorized trails in Ingham County, an inventory of Ingham County park facilities, a public input process, and a model to be used by the County to evaluate and select projects. The Mannik-Smith work required eight months to complete the tasks and assemble the final report. They delivered their report to the Task Force within the allotted time frame.

Q: Who is primarily responsible for building and maintaining trails?

As it stands today, it is up to each local municipality to build and maintain trails in their jurisdictions. Trail maintenance is a multi-faceted and costly responsibility. As such, the responsibilities for it can be tackled through a few different systems to ensure the ongoing optimal standards are met for safety, enjoyment, and preservation of the asset. *Examples of maintenance options will be provided in the Appendix of the final report from Mannik-Smith.*

The County Task Force recommended that only long-term trail maintenance and trail rehabilitation would be eligible for millage funding. Further, it was decided that routine maintenance will be the responsibility of the trail owner. Therefore, evidence of handling routine maintenance will be a prerequisite to obtaining millage money to help with long-term maintenance so the trail meets optimal standards.

Q: Who owns the trails in Ingham County?

The local municipalities.

Q: Why are the Ingham County Parks receiving funding from this millage?

The 2014 millage language supports improvements to parks. Therefore, the Trails and Parks Task Force decided to set aside and reserve eight percent of the millage funds to Ingham County Parks for years 2015 and 2016 to fund park grant applications, facility repairs and upgrades that have been deferred. A portion of the funding from years 2015 and 2016 will be used for a grant match for 1.5-miles of trail resurfacing at Hawk Island County Park and a blueways project with a launch at Burchfield Park along the Grand River.

Q: I'm hoping a trail will be built close to where I live. Where could I find out if that is being planned?

You can find the draft plan on the Ingham County Parks' website or the Trails & Parks project website, both accessed by going to www.inghamcountyparks.org.

The regional network represents a long-term vision and is intended to serve as a guide for future funding and implementation. It proposes several routes for the establishment of non-motorized facilities. The proposed corridors and routes include land trails along water ways, roadways, and in parks as well as water trails along the Grand River, Red Cedar River and a portion of the Sycamore River. They connect the County's communities as well as the regional parks and destinations. The regional priority corridors for Ingham County are listed below in geographic order from the northeast corner of Ingham County to the northwest, then southwest, southeast and back to the northeast.

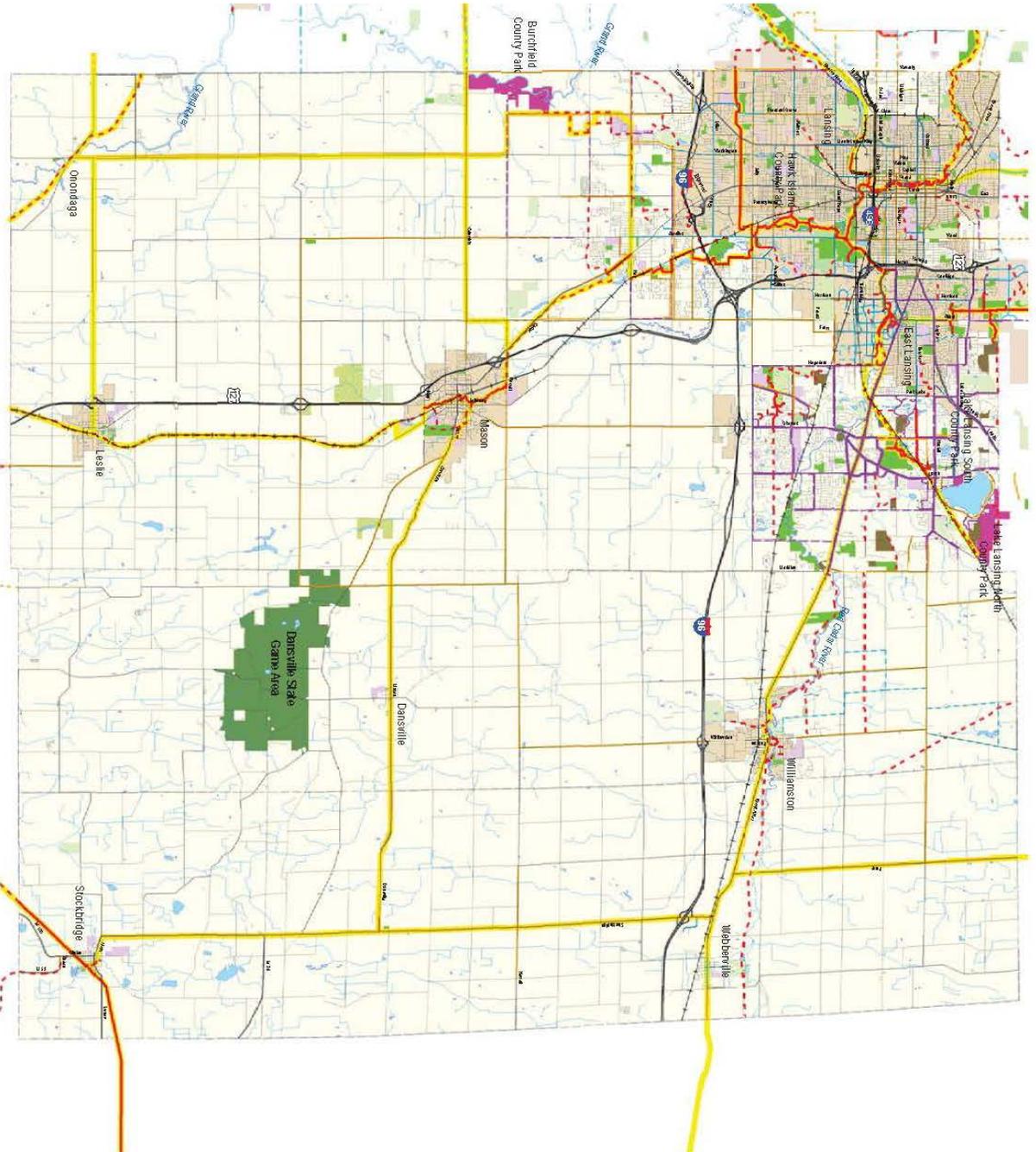
- Webberville west to Meridian Township and west to Livingston County through Grand River Avenue;
- The Red Cedar Water Trail;
- MSU to Lake Lansing County Parks;
- The River Trail in East Lansing, Lansing, and Delhi Township (including the Sycamore trail and the connection through Hawk Island County Park);
- The River Trail to the Northern Tier Trail;
- The River Trail to Clinton County;
- The River Trail northwest extension;
- The River Trail southwest extension;
- The south Lansing Trail;

- Delhi Township RAM Trail extension east;
- Delhi Township RAM Trail to Burchfield County Park;
- The Grand River Water Trail;
- Delhi Township to Mason's Hayhoe Trail;
- Hayhoe Trail to Vevay Township Hall and south to Leslie and Jackson County;
- North-South corridor connection along Onondaga Road;
- Southwest connector to Eaton and Jackson counties through the Thornapple Trail;
- Leslie to Onondaga and Eaton County connection through the Bellevue Road corridor;
- Mason west to Eaton County through the Columbia Road corridor;
- Mason East to M-52 along the Dansville Road corridor;
- Stockbridge to Webberville through the M-52 Road corridor; and
- Webberville to Shiawassee County through the M-52 Road corridor.

In addition, there is great recognition for the need to develop and build multi-use trails within each of the County Parks in order for trail users to get to and use the County Parks. This is particular true for Burchfield County Park and Lake Lansing North where multi-use trail loops are planned to be developed within the parks.

Establishing a countywide network of trails throughout Ingham County is key to the success of the County Trails and Parks millage. Figure 24, on the next page, depicts the conceptual regional non-motorized network and connections for Ingham County. The regional network includes the corridors identified in the recent MDOT University Region Non-Motorized planning effort as well as those identified in previous studies and initiatives such as the Heart of Michigan Trail and Greening Mid-Michigan.

FIGURE 24



- Existing Shared Use Path
- Existing Side Path
- Existing Bike Lane
- Existing Paved Shoulder Greater Than 4 Feet
- Proposed Shared Use Path
- Proposed Side Path
- Proposed Bike Lane
- Proposed Paved Shoulders Greater Than 4 Feet
- Regional Corridors
- County Parks
- Protected Farmland & Open Spaces
- State Parks & Recreation Areas
- Local Parks
- Cemeteries
- Golf Courses
- Private Parks
- Schools

Figure 24
Ingham County
Regional Trails & Parks Network



Map Data Source: MGDL & MDOT
 Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance & The Marrik and Smith Group

