



Indiana Bicycle Trails TASK FORCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Across Indiana, communities have been developing bicycle trails for recreational and transportation purposes. These trails vary widely in terms of distance, surface material, funding source, and economic impact. One common trait of this vast network of trails is that the host community feels a deep sense of pride in their trail.

Through local government leadership, participation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), efforts of state agencies like the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), and local bicycle advocacy groups, bicycle trails reach most parts of the state. From the first meeting of the Bicycle Trails Task Force on August 15, 2017, task force members acknowledged that it was unnecessary to dictate to specific communities to develop bicycle trails. That desire is already there. The task force members resolved to use the directives created through the legislation to provide support to local communities and their existing and future bicycle trail plans. This was done with the intent to inspire Indiana communities to connect to regional and statewide projects in turn creating the premier bicycle trail network in the country.

LEGISLATIVE MANDATE

During the 2017 session of the Indiana General Assembly, Representative Wes Culver of Goshen introduced legislation to connect bicycle trails in Indiana. Twelve legislators were listed as co-authors and sponsors, including Representative Carey Hamilton. As adopted, House Enrolled Act 1174 called for the governor to appoint members of a newly created Bicycle Trails Task Force. Both Representatives Culver and Hamilton were appointed to the Task Force. The Bicycle Trails Task Force was given specific tasks and directed to report its findings by July 1, 2019. Those tasks and the findings are outlined below.

Develop Actionable Concepts to Connect Existing Bicycle Trails in Indiana

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) consistently manages an inventory of all Indiana trails that are open to the public, including bicycle trails. They gather feedback from trail stakeholders to compile and periodically update The Visionary Trails System as a part of the larger State Trails Plan. The Task Force recommends that the Visionary Trail System should be realigned and used to prioritize how funds are spent on trails.

- **PRIORITY VISIONARY TRAILS** – completed or well-planned and near completion.
- **POTENTIAL VISIONARY TRAILS** – have a lesser degree of planning and support, may become Priority trails in the future.
- **PROPOSED VISIONARY TRAILS** – corridors that close gaps and connect major destinations. These may have no, or very little, planning. Stakeholders should be encouraged to work with the DNR to assist these trails to become Secondary and Primary Visionary Trails.

As a way to prioritize trails that receive state funding and to prioritize routes to be included as Proposed Visionary Trails, stakeholders, with the assistance of the DNR, should use one or more of the following criteria:

- Corridor connects two or more counties
- Corridor connects other Visionary Trails
- Corridor connects cities and towns
- Corridor connects to parks, recreation, or cultural destinations
- Corridor follows, to the greatest extent feasible, abandoned railroad routes, utility corridors, and rivers/streams.

Estimated Cost of Each Concept

Without knowing exactly where the local communities will establish the corridor it is difficult to affix a price tag to a state-wide plan. The type of surface used, the type of terrain, water crossings, traffic signals, and a host of other factors impact the cost of a trail. The final Bike Trails Task Force report contains more information about the factors that increase or decrease the cost of a trail.



For expense projection purposes, INDOT and DNR agreed on a base cost estimate of \$600,000 per mile of bicycle trail for design and construction.

6 Innovative Funding Sources to Create New Trails and/or Provide Connections to Existing Trails

The Task Force reviewed several alternatives for a potential state trail funding sources. When possible, they looked to successful trail funding sources in other states. The Task Force also tried to use existing and/or underutilized revenue streams and connect the funding to the use of bicycles and recreation. Of the 7 suggested revenue streams, only the Real Estate Transfer Tax would be a new tax. The Task Force recommends any dedicated trail funding source could be used for both trail development and maintenance projects in order to accommodate the growth and sustainability of Indiana's trail system. It should be noted that local governments and trail advocacy groups are able and encouraged to find additional funding sources.

1. **TIPPING FEE** – Waste management fees will generate \$4.7 million in 2019.
2. **PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP** – For the Next Level Trails application local communities are providing at least a 20% match from local government, businesses, foundations, and individual philanthropy.
3. **WASTE TIRE FEE** – \$1.3 - \$2.3 million is collected each year from this existing fee.
4. **SPORTING GOODS SALES TAX** – A percentage of the existing sales tax representing the sale of bicycles, accessories and other recreation products could generate \$2.4 million per year.
5. **STATE GAS TAX** – Reallocation of a portion of this tax (representing the gas sold for snowmobile and off-road vehicle use) could generate \$800,000 - \$2 million per year.
6. **GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS** – General appropriation of funds to support a bike trail fund. One example is the \$90 million Next Level Trails grant program announced by Governor Holcomb in 2018 and adopted by the 2019 Indiana General Assembly.
7. **REAL ESTATE TRANSFER TAX** – New tax on real estate transfers that would go to quality of life amenities such as trails and parks. This type of tax generates \$8 million per year in Arkansas (a smaller state than Indiana).

Prepare a timeline that shows the phases of completion to connect existing bicycle trails throughout Indiana for each funding method

It is apparent that funding will drive the speed of the completion of a trail system. In addition, as the trail system is developed, other communities will become interested in creating or upgrading a trail system for their residents and visitors.

The Bike Trails Task Force looked at the current status of funding and future funding goals, then considered how many miles could be completed, utilizing a \$600,000 per mile estimate.

UNDER OUR CURRENT MODEL WITH NO NEW FUNDING = 20 miles per year.

AN INCREASE OF \$15 MILLION FROM NEW FUNDING SOURCES = 25 more miles per year.

NEXT LEVEL TRAILS BOOST (\$90 MILLION) = an additional 150 miles over the next three years.

IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS:

200 miles from current model.

250 miles from new funding sources

150 miles from Next Level Trails

600 miles total

Recommend Changes to Indiana Law to Improve Bicycle Safety on Trails and Roadways

- Adopt a statewide safe passing law (3 ft)—adopted by the General Assembly in spring 2019.
- Adopt a statewide complete streets policy.
- Clarify e-bike laws in state statute—adopted by the General Assembly in spring 2019.



- **Safety Program Recommendations**
- Provide bicycle safety curriculum for elementary and middle school age children.
- Provide regular tracking and updating of bicycle crash data statewide.
- Provide consistent training of local police officers and law enforcement regarding bicycle safety.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Inspirational Brand

Local communities are developing outstanding local trail systems. The Cardinal Greenway, Monon Trail, Nickle Plate Trail and Pumpkinvine Trail are just a few examples. A statewide brand that would include these popular trails could serve as an inspiration for other communities to develop their own trail system. At the same time, it would ensure a certain level of quality. In addition, a statewide trail system would serve as an asset for tourism, attracting bicycle enthusiasts from around the country to visit our trail system with confidence that they will have an excellent Hoosier experience. Many bicycle trail systems in other states have a branded trail system.

Continuing the Effort

The Bicycle Trails Task Force was given an important task and a limited time frame. Task Force members are pleased with the recommendations we are sharing, but we don't want it to stop here. An inspirational state brand needs to be developed. More ideas can be shared to help local communities create a trail system that meets the needs of residents while attracting visitors and economic development.