

Regional Trail Development Coordination

Wingspread Regional Accord

Draft Work Plan (v3)

For Consideration by Quad-State Directors

May, 2009

I. Introduction

A. Coordinating Multi-Use Trail Planning among Our Regions

This work plan tells how the regional planning agencies on the southern shores of Lake Michigan will begin to coordinate multi-use trail development. Such coordination will facilitate a seamless trail system extending to parts of four states.

Several of our regions are developing extensive networks of multi-use trails for transportation and recreation purposes. With coordination between regions, these trails will not end at our borders, but connect our regions' communities and activities. Many citizens, governments, and our respective states understand the importance of such planning for connections, and are excited about the prospect of them.

B. Quad-State Directors Discussion

At the Quad-State Directors meeting held on December 15, 2008, trail plan coordination was identified as a priority for all of the agencies. There was an interest in connecting agency staff members to identify possible linkages and gaps in current planning efforts. The Directors recommended a working committee led by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) staff with representatives from:

- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
- Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC)
- Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC)

In addition to regional planning agency staff, it was recommended that OpenLands be included in any discussion.

C. Multi-Step Approach with Interim Review by Quad-State Directors

Executive buy-in is required for policy initiatives requiring further endorsement. This buy-in, in turn, requires more information than was available at the commencement of the project. Thus, this work plan is conceived as a two-phase process.

In the first phase, technical work will be undertaken that will produce a brief summary report identifying a four-state trail system or system alternatives, and will identify existing gaps. The technical work will include the following:

- Obtain regional geographic databases and maps.
- Create multi-state map using existing geodatabases.
- Determine whether there is a feasible spine/spur system.
- Identify missing links and likely alternatives for completing those links.

This first product would not be adopted or endorsed, but would serve as an informational resource to be considered in further regional, county, and local trail planning, particularly in border counties and communities. It would provide a potential framework for a four-state trail system, that could be refined and detailed in subsequent planning—as part of normal planning work of each of the four regional agencies, or in county- or locally-sponsored trail planning efforts. Such local planning would involve concerned stakeholders and user groups as well as any affected communities. Thus, the first phase would produce information, but not a plan.

After the completion of the first phase, the Quad-State Directors would collectively consider whether to proceed with the second phase, based at least in part on the short report from phase-1. The second phase would consist of work with stakeholders at the state, regional, and local levels to develop and refine the spine and spur interstate trail system. With sufficient public involvement and stakeholder review, a document would be prepared for adoption or endorsement by the four regional agencies. With such formal endorsement, promotion of the system and public priority for such a system can be established. The agencies may then foster initiatives at the local and county levels to complete the system.

The thinking behind phase-2 is that public support and stakeholder buy-in would be required for the allocation of resources to a multi-state trail. Support for projects is more likely to gel when there is a vision for a complete system.

II. Goals and Objectives

A. Goal (Phase-1): Identify a Seamless, Land-Based Trail System Linking Communities in Four States

Objectives:

- Identify one or two multi-state land-based trail system spines, at least one of which will be near the Lake Michigan shore.
- Identify substantial spurs to the main spines, linking area communities.
- Identify further linkages to state-wide and national trail systems where applicable, e.g., AASHTO's US Bike Routes project.

B. Goal (Phase-2): Effective Deployment of Trail System Resources

Objectives:

- Identify missing links in proposed spines.
- Foster and support initiatives to fill in missing segments.
- Assure consistency of spine and spurs with regional plans now adopted or in development.

C. Goal (Phase-2): Trail-User and Community Support

Objectives:

- Secure endorsement of multi-state spine and spurs by regional agencies.
- Solicit and encourage active participation of user groups in the process.
- Involve local communities in the process.
- Determine whether and how to use the multi-state trail system as a regional economic and community development tool through, for example, the promotion of bicycle touring in the region.

III. Resources and Constraints

A. Resources

- Staff of regional agencies identified at December 15 meeting of the Quad-State Directors
- Staff of agencies participating in February committee teleconference at the invitation of Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission, including National Park Service, Active Transportation Alliance, and OpenLands
- Extensive geographic databases and maps showing regional and state-wide trail systems.
- Robust computing resources at many participating agencies.
- Historic support for trail development in several regional agencies, including regional trail system plans.
- Extensive existing trail system in several regions.
- Substantial support in many communities for trail system development.
- Substantial organization and support among user groups.

B. Constraints

- Expense of trail system development, particularly for remaining gaps.
- Opposition to trail system development in some communities with remaining gaps.
- Varying levels of trail support among the four states.
- Inability to secure a regular, reliable fund source for general-purpose trail system development in some areas.
- Long-term nature of the trail development process.
- Substantial trail interest is local.

IV. Strategies and Actions

A. Strategy: Use regional information systems to identify proposed spine and spurs.

Actions (Phase-1):

- Obtain regional geographic databases and maps.
- Create multi-state map using existing geodatabases.
- Identify one or two interstate spine trails.
- Identify substantial spurs to the main spines, linking area communities.
- Identify further linkages to state-wide trail systems, where applicable.
- Prepare a short report for Quad-State Directors sketching out an interstate trail spine and spurs.
- Quad-State Directors' decision whether to proceed to Phase-2.

B. Strategy: Leverage Resources and Support

Actions (Phase-2):

- If a system is feasible, work with stakeholders at the state, regional, and local levels to develop and refine the spine and spur interstate trail system.
- Identify missing links and likely alternatives for completing the links.
- Any endorsed interstate trail system will be integrated back into regional and state trail system geodatabases and maps.
- Identify and engage partners in this process.
- Solicit ideas and feedback from identified partners.
- Work with partners to estimate likely costs for missing links.
- Determine whether to pursue promotion of community and economic development benefits.
- Solicit feedback through agencies' planning and programming processes.

- Prepare document for endorsement.
- Promote endorsed plan in subsequent planning and programming processes.
- Identify non-traditional funding sources.
- Determine applicability of endorsed routes as US Bike Routes.
- Develop and prepare user information, e.g. cue sheets.

V. Schedule

March – June: Initial Map Development and Review (Under Way)

June – July: Identification of interstate spine and spur routes.

July – August: Preparation of brief report for Quad-State Directors.

September : Decision by Quad-State Directors to determine feasibility and desirability of moving ahead with Phase-2.

Phase-2, if applicable:

September-November: Refine Spine and Spur proposals

October – November: Stakeholder Outreach

October – November: Prepare Documents for Endorsement

December 2010 Endorsement by Regional Agencies

2010: Promotion of Endorsed Plan

2010: Foster and support initiatives to complete and develop identified spine and spur elements.