

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered to help communities move forward with the planning, design and implementation of the NRHT. This is not meant to be an all-inclusive listing of the next series of steps that should be taken to make the NRHT a reality. In other sections of this guide are tools, which communities can utilize to move specific projects forward. (Note: specific information on these topics can be found in Section C Tools)

However, the recommendations below do provide action steps that will benefit trail communities in their effort to develop segments of the NRHT. Community recommendations include:

Recommendation — Communities and agencies should adopt the NRHT Development Guide document

- The Development Guide presents an overview of the NRHT along with general information showing that the vision for a developed cross-state trail is achievable. An important message of the Development Guide is that when the NRHT is implemented, it will offer the public many great benefits.
- The document is intended to be user friendly so that it may be a springboard for communities to make the NRHT a reality.
- The Development Guide promotes the development of other community trails and bikeways. The NRHT document is a useful tool instrumental in helping communities establish a vision for the creation of a linked trail and bikeway network.

Recommendation — NRHT communities should undertake trail demonstration projects

- Attempting to construct a multi-use trail can be a challenge for any community. It is important that the community: 1) first identify their collective vision, then 2) prioritize their goals, and 3) assess constraints and opportunities for both constructing and maintaining a trail corridor. One approach that has previously achieved success in a number of trail communities is to start by taking on a manageable trail project – one that has a scope and size consistent with the communities' available budget and resources needed to plan, construct and maintain the trail over time.
- A community can generate trail support and keep the public's attention focused by making the opening of a trail segment a public event. A media event can be created by performing a ribbon cutting at the trail opening, and conducting a public celebration.

- A demonstration project, conducted as soon as the community is ready to undertake a trail project, will help keep public interest high as well as sustain momentum for the cross-state NRHT.
- When a community conducts a demonstration project, it shows the public that government support has made a built trail possible. The demonstration also provides an opportunity to showcase the benefits a trail can provide to a community and its residents.
- Performing a demonstration project can help promote the trail's success and pave the way for future trail development.

Recommendation — NRHT communities may want to take a phased approach to trail implementation

- Communities have to determine the extent of the trail project they can successfully undertake and the amount of change they can absorb. Tasks such as preparing a Transportation Enhancement Grant application, securing property, obtaining funding and local support, undertaking construction and performing on-going trail maintenance can overly tax a community's resources and burden their ability to successfully build and maintain a trail. Performing these tasks in a methodical manner over a predetermined amount of time so that issues can be addressed and appropriately resolved may allow a community to be more successful with their trail project.

Recommendation — Develop a volunteer program for the purpose of helping trail users

- Efforts to establish and sustain a core group of volunteers that observe and monitor the trail on a regular basis will help promote the NRHT as a family-friendly and healthy environment. Volunteers can be goodwill ambassadors for a community by providing trail users with information on local attractions and history, assisting trail users with directions, offering help to those needing assistance, alerting emergency responders to situations and reporting suspicious activities to local law enforcement.
- Establishing a volunteer program can help engage the community by encouraging the public to use the trail. This may also lead to an increase in public participation that would add even more volunteers to grow the program to assist with trail maintenance and clean-up needs.

Recommendation — Personalize the NRHT for your community

- Communities can help positively reinforce public

perception of the NRHT by incorporating their unique identity and character into the trail corridor. One idea may be to display a community name/image/logo on a sign that symbolizes the character or history of the community. This approach should be integrated with the family of NRHT elements (see previous section in the Design Guidelines on Identity) and be compatible with the NRHT logo/image and Identity Program.

- Because the NRHT is proposed to connect 30 communities across Indiana, an opportunity exists for various communities to highlight the threshold or trail entrance into their community. At these locations, it is possible to incorporate landscape improvements that alerts trail users of the community's boundary as well as enhance the public image of that community.
- Incorporate landscape improvements at trailheads to: make them inviting, give them a special identity and signify the community where the trailhead is located.

Recommendation — Adjacent trail communities should look for opportunities to collaborate

- For adjacent communities that may be looking to develop segments of the NRHT, it may be beneficial to team together to address issues that may be relevant to both communities. This may include preparation of applications for Transportation Enhancement funding, performing environmental review/compliance, conducting construction activities, identifying maintenance roles and responsibilities, etc.
- A collaborative trail effort between communities demonstrates the importance of the trail to funding agencies, which may help increase the chance of those communities receiving trail funding.
- The NRHT can also offer space to host events co-sponsored by adjacent communities. As an example: fairs, celebrations and festivals could take place on the NRHT corridor as a result of collaboration between communities.
- Partnerships should be developed between user groups such as equestrian, cycling and hiking groups, and endorsed by NRHT communities.

Recommendation — The time to act is now

- Communities should capitalize upon the momentum the NRHT Development Guide is expected to generate among various state agencies, soon after its release and

adoption. The interest of state agencies may help facilitate greater chances for local communities to obtain NRHT funding from the state.

- Communities can take positive steps to make the cross-state NRHT a reality after the release of the Development Guide. These steps will have long lasting benefits, including helping to lay the groundwork for future segments of the NRHT and extensions into neighboring states.
- As communities develop their initial trail project, it is important for that community to document and record lessons learned in the process. Having a record of the experience will provide a better understanding of how to get a trail in place, which will help that community in its efforts to develop future trail projects.
- Plan for the long-range trail implementation that will allow the entire 150-miles of the cross-state NRHT to be complete and in place by 2016, so it may coincide with Indiana's bicentennial celebration.

Recommendation — Use the NRHT as an effective planning tool

- The NRHT is an important organizing element for land use and development issues. The trail may help protect open space that is adjacent to the corridor as well as preserve natural and cultural resources in proximity to the trail.

Recommendation — Build support for the NRHT at the local, county, regional and state level.

- Contact representatives, elected officials and organizations to let them know of local community efforts to implement the NRHT – especially if their endorsement and support may help the project's success.

Recommendation — Communities should be persistent in their efforts to develop NRHT segments.

- Trail development can be a challenge for a community, especially when issues arise related to land acquisition, environmental review/compliance, funding, construction and maintenance, etc. The important approach is for communities to be consistent and persistent in their efforts as challenges begin to emerge that may impact the development of the trail.

Recommendation — Involve the public throughout the trail planning and design process

- Create a dialogue with the public about the trail including community need, anticipated costs, health benefits,

construction schedules, maintenance, etc.

- Public dialogue will build consensus and a wide base of support for the NRHT.

Recommendation — Bring new partners to the process

- Invite the private sector to participate as trail partners with the community, as businesses will benefit if their employees use the trail for transportation and recreation/health purposes.
- Related businesses such as bike shops, bike and skate rental, food vendors, health stores, tack shops, feed stores, etc. may see opportunities to locate along the trail, which should be encouraged.
- Obtain NRHT endorsements from organizations and non-profit groups.

Recommendation — Partner with the Chamber of Commerce

- Communities should encourage their local Chamber to recognize the NRHT and incorporate its benefits into promotional literature to encourage tourism and promote quality of life.
- Promotional materials may highlight the trail as an economic generator and tool for attracting and keeping business.

Recommendation — Encourage public events to take place on the NRHT corridor

- The NRHT may provide a platform as well as public space for outdoor events such as races, fund-raisers, charitable events, health fairs/expo's, etc.

Recommendation — Collaborate with the neighboring states of Illinois and Ohio to make connections from the Indiana NRHT to their trail systems.

- Discuss potential opportunities with representatives from adjacent states to create a large and connected trail network, going beyond individual communities, but with adjacent states.
- Urge the INDOT greenway and bicycle coordinator to lead this effort in partnership with the NRHT.
- Publicly promote the multi-state trail network

Recommendation — Conduct on-going public relations

- Conduct periodic surveys with trail users to assess their views and opinions about the NRHT.
- Establish a baseline for determination of trail impacts by conducting trail user surveys to determine their demographic profile, and reasons for using the trail.



NRHT DEVELOPMENT GUIDE CONCLUSIONS

The following are general statements about the NRHT. Criteria and background documentation that support the statements can be found in the Development Guide.

- ***The NRHT is proposed to become Indiana's first cross-state trail***

The distinction of being the state's first such trail is expected to generate interest for the continuing development and use of the NRHT.

- ***The NRHT will benefit Indiana's residents and visitors***

Indiana's efforts for economic development can be assisted with the development of the NRHT.

The Indiana Office of Tourism sees the NRHT as an important tool to help promote tourism for the state.

The NRHT will provide transportation alternatives for the public beyond the use of motorized vehicles.

The public will be provided with additional opportunities for self-directed recreation with the development of the NRHT.

- ***The NRHT will offer Hoosiers and visitors to Indiana with more opportunities to see and experience the state***

Trail users will have transportation alternatives for accessing areas by walking, biking and horseback riding.

The trail will provide the public with transportation alternatives for accessing Historic National Road communities.

The trail will provide opportunities to see agricultural areas, cities, businesses and industries that are important to Indiana's economy.

Trail users will be able to view some of Indiana's natural resources including scenic rivers and streams, wooded areas and wildlife.

- ***The NRHT can be an important economic tool***

The trail can be an amenity that helps communities in their efforts to attract new business and residents.

Businesses can profit by having a healthy workforce that will use the NRHT for recreation, exercise, and possible commuting.

Other communities have experienced increased land values along their trail corridors.

There are examples of communities witnessing an increased interest for development along their trails.

It may be possible for these conditions to also be experienced in NRHT communities.

- ***The NRHT is proposed to cross many political jurisdictions, so cooperation among communities and agencies is critical for the trail's success***

Not only is cooperation important for the trail's design and implementation, but also it's maintenance, connections to other trails and promotion of the NRHT as a community asset.

There should be partnerships between equestrian, bicycling and hiking communities to develop, promote and maintain the trail.

- ***The NRHT will help promote public attention of the Historic National Road in Indiana***

The NRHT corridor may contain signs to inform the public about the history of the Historic National Road and the impact it had on the development of Indiana and communities located along the route.

- ***The NRHT can help Hoosiers learn about the history of the railroads and the impact they had on Indiana's growth***

The NRHT is proposed to utilize former railroad corridors for most of its cross-state journey. That chapter in Indiana history can be shared with the trail user.

- ***The NRHT can help to build a more extensive network of trails in Indiana by connecting with existing and future trails***

The NRHT is proposed to connect with trails in the City of Terre Haute's system, Greencastle/Putnam County's People Pathways system, Plainfield's trail network, Indy Greenways and Richmond's Cardinal Greenway.

- ***The NRHT may link with trails in neighboring states***

The extension of the NRHT west into Illinois is currently being discussed.

If a short connection can be made between Indiana's eastern

terminus of the NRHT and the trail system in Ohio, it will extend the reach of the NRHT, and the user will be able to access a wide network of existing trails.

- ***The challenge for fully implementing the NRHT will be great. Growth and development for the cross-state trail will require attention in addressing issues such as:***

- Community support
- Property acquisition
- Environmental compliance
- Obtaining funding
- Maintaining the trail

- ***Interest in a cross-state trail is gaining momentum in Indiana.***

The development of the NRHT can bring positive attention to Indiana.

The NRHT will help encourage visitors to come to the Hoosier State.

The NRHT will be another important feature in a long-line of positive amenities the state has to offer.

The NRHT will help promote Indiana as a state committed to the health, well-being and quality of life for its residents.

- ***This is an important time for trails in Indiana***

Neighboring states Ohio, Illinois and Michigan have had success with their rails-to-trails efforts and the development of cross-state trails. Indiana can also realize the same benefits these states have had with increased tourism, additional recreation opportunities, connecting with other trails and communities and transportation alternatives.

Opportunities for rail-to-trail development in Indiana may be challenging if former railroad corridors continue to become fragmented and have their property sold, built upon, or developed.

The NRHT vision is capturing the attention of state and local governments and important state and local organizations. For many Indiana residents who are currently trail users, interest in the NRHT is growing.

It may be years before another cross-state trail can realistically be developed. The State of Indiana has been taking action to have more involvement in the development of trails. The time for action is now.

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