

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
CONTACT: Richard Vonnegut
Hoosier Rails to Trails Council
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Trail Group Suggests Rail-with-Trail on the Nickel Plate Corridor

The Hoosier Rails to Trails Council has contacted Hamilton County mayors, commissioners, and council members to offer assistance developing a rail-with-trail along the Nickel Plate corridor.

MARION COUNTY, IN 3.6.18 - The Hoosier Rails to Trails Council (“HRTC”) sent letters to representatives of the city and county owners (“Owners”) of the Nickel Plate Railroad, Fishers, Noblesville, and Hamilton County, offering the organization’s assistance in developing the Nickel Plate Trail project into a rail-with-trail, instead of a trail-only. The letter invites the Owners to schedule a meeting with HRTC to discuss the proposal in more detail.

Citing their involvement as the original advocates and initiators of the Monon Trail - which is often used as an example of a highly successful rail-trail - HRTC believes that their involvement with the project will allow the Owners to “capitalize on thirty-one years of relevant, local experience to ensure long-term success of the project...” and to “create a world-class amenity above and beyond that of the Monon Trail.”

Since the announcement of the Nickel Plate Trail on February 28, 2017, the local communities have been tied up in contentious debate over the future of the Nickel Plate. While local officials have suggested that the proposed trail-only is the sole feasible option for the corridor between Fishers and Noblesville, opponents of the plan have stated from early on that rails-with-trails would be a more inclusive compromise to allow the railroad corridor to remain in-tact and operational.

Until today, there has been no public discussion among trail organizations as to the possibility of a rail-with-trail development that would preserve the railroad between Fishers and Noblesville. HRTC’s letter marks the first assertion by an official trails group that rails-with-trails would be a better option for the proposed Nickel Plate Trail. By offering their assistance, HRTC is offering their expertise, network, and resources to ensure that a Nickel Plate Rail-with-Trail project would be successful and would best serve the local community.

For more information, contact:
Richard Vonnegut of Hoosier Rails to Trails Council
- END -



HOOSIER RAILS TO TRAILS COUNCIL
PO BOX 1688
INDIANAPOLIS IN 46206-1688
317-237-9348

2018 March 5

Mayor Scott Fadness
City of Fishers
1 Municipal Drive
Fishers, IN 46038

The Honorable Scott Fadness:

The Hoosier Rails to Trails Council (“HRTC”) stands ready to assist Fishers, Noblesville, and Hamilton County in developing a rail-with-trail amenity along the Nickel Plate corridor.

Beginning in 1987 with our petition to the City of Indianapolis for the Monon Trail, our organization has successfully advocated for rail-trails all throughout the State of Indiana. We believe that partnering with HRTC will allow the Nickel Plate Trail to capitalize on thirty-one years of relevant, local experience to ensure long-term success of the project.

HRTC can attest to the numerous social and economic benefits provided by “rail with trail” projects all around the United States. Communities which have chosen to develop trails alongside their railroad corridors reap all of the usual benefits of a trail, but with the added advantages of additional transportation options, increased land development value, expanded tourism activity, and deeper community engagement.

A “rail with trail” project on the Nickel Plate would not only allow Fishers and other adjacent communities to experience the type of community-oriented growth they desire, but it would create a world-class amenity above and beyond that of the Monon Trail. We’ve assessed the Nickel Plate corridor and believe it to be quite suitable for a rail-with-trail development.

The cable cars in the urban landscape of San Francisco have brought world renown economic development in a dense cityscape. With care, Fishers has every opportunity to develop itself into the same fame.

Locally, Kokomo has diligently preserved portions of their unused railroad network by creating the Industrial Heritage Trail. By preserving the rails through a combined trail solution, their community stands to benefit from future reactivation of the rails, spurring economic and cultural development. Some “rails with trails” are specifically planned to affect safer pedestrian use, than without such trails.

Some key findings by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (“RTC”):

- At the time of publication (2013), RTC located 161 rails-with-trails in 41 states, a 260 percent increase since 2000. Rails-with-trails represent almost 10 percent of all rail-trails in America. Another 60 rail-with-trail projects across the country are currently in various stages of development.
- Out of the tens of thousands of fatalities on railroad corridors in recent decades, only one involved a trail user on a rail-with-trail. This suggests that a well-designed pathway provides a safe travel alternative and reduces the incentive to trespass or use the tracks as a shortcut.
- Class I railroads continue to express formal opposition to the concept of trail development within or adjacent to their corridors. However, smaller private railroad companies and public rail authorities have reached agreements with trail managers on rail-with-trail development that have satisfactorily addressed any concerns about risk and liability.
- There is a growing trend of rail-with-trail development alongside local and regional transit corridors. Fifteen percent of the active rails-with-trails identified in this study are located adjacent to mass transit corridors.
- The vast majority of the rails-with-trails interviewed for this report are insured by an existing local umbrella policy, similar to most rail-trails and greenways.

HRTC offers its help, having thirty-one years of experience with trails, “rail with trails”, and the expansive role of transportation diversity within dense urban populations.

The extensive growth coming from a broad vision is amazing. HRTC would be pleased to help Fishers, Noblesville, and Hamilton County grow from a narrow vision of trail-only, into an expanding vision of community, urbanism, and transportation through rails and trails.

The HRTC invites the City of Fishers to schedule a meeting with our leadership in order to discuss how we can offer our ever growing experience to appreciative Hoosiers in your community. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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Richard Vonnegut, Vice Chair
317-440-9069

CC: Fishers City Council



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PO BOX 1688
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317-237-9348

2018 March 5

Mayor John Ditslear
City of Noblesville
16 S 10th St
Noblesville, IN 46060

The Honorable John Ditslear:

The Hoosier Rails to Trails Council (“HRTC”) stands ready to assist Fishers, Noblesville, and Hamilton County in developing a rail-with-trail amenity along the Nickel Plate corridor.

Beginning in 1987 with our petition to the City of Indianapolis for the Monon Trail, our organization has successfully advocated for rail-trails all throughout the State of Indiana. We believe that partnering with HRTC will allow the Nickel Plate Trail to capitalize on thirty-one years of relevant, local experience to ensure long-term success of the project.

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A “rail with trail” project on the Nickel Plate would not only allow Noblesville and other adjacent communities to experience the type of community-oriented growth they desire, but it would create a world-class amenity above and beyond that of the Monon Trail. We’ve assessed the Nickel Plate corridor and believe it to be quite suitable for a rail-with-trail development.

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The HRTC invites the City of Noblesville to schedule a meeting with our leadership in order to discuss how we can offer our ever growing experience to appreciative Hoosiers in your community. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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Richard Vonnegut, Vice Chair
317-440-9069

CC: Noblesville Common Council



HOOSIER RAILS TO TRAILS COUNCIL
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INDIANAPOLIS IN 46206-1688
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2018 March 5

Commissioners
Hamilton County Indiana
1 N 8th St # 157
Noblesville, IN 46060

Honorable Commissioners:

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Richard Vonnegut, Vice Chair
317-440-9069

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