



**ST. CLAIR COUNTY  
METROPOLITAN  
PLANNING  
COMMISSION**

**Community  
Foundation**

Est. 1944

**-PRESS RELEASE-**

## **Metropolitan Planning & Community Foundation Kick-off Regional Trail Planning Efforts**

**Port Huron, MI – December 3, 2018 ---** The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission and the Community Foundation have kicked off an ambitious regional trail planning project which will impact state and regional trail efforts. The planning will address gaps and potential economic impact for the Bridge to Bay Trail, Great Lakes to Lake Trail along with the Wadhams to Avoca Trail.

Under the leadership and guidance of St. Clair County Parks & Recreation, the Bridge to Bay Trail concept began back in the early 1990's. Its ultimate goal is a 54 mile trail system from New Baltimore up to Lakeport State Park. The Great Lakes to Lake Trail is an ambitious state-wide trail project which began in 2009 and when complete will stretch from South Haven along the shores of Lake Michigan to Port Huron on the shores of Lake Huron.

“This is an important step for our region, including stretching into downtown Richmond,” said County Board Chair, Jeff Bohm. “Over these last several years we have seen significant new developments throughout our region, and now is the time to see if we connect these new developments and assets with a completed regional pedestrian trail system.”

According to Dave Struck, Planning Director of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, the consulting firm of SmithGroup has been hired to conduct a detailed strategy and action plan outlining specific steps and recommended sequences for completing the Bridge to Bay Trail and the Great Lakes to Lake Trail. Funding to support this work was provided from SEMCOG and the Community Foundation of St. Clair County. SmithGroup designed and planned the Blue Water River Walk among other regional projects.

Simultaneously, the Community Foundation has hired the firm of Public Sector Consultants to conduct an economic impact study which will help educate regional stakeholders on the potential economic benefits and impact of a completed regional trail system.

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“We’re seeing a lot of new investment throughout our region,” said Randy Maiers, president of the Community Foundation. “With continued financial support from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation we need to gain a better understanding of both the successes and shortcomings of other regions who have developed comprehensive trail systems.” Maiers added that the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation provided a \$100,000 grant to support this regional planning effort.

The first round of public input for the work being conducted by SmithGroup will take place December 11 with both a lunchtime focus group session at the St. Clair County Administration Building, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and an early evening focus group session at Sperry’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Dinnerhouse, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The public is invited to both sessions to provide input on the future of the countywide trail network

“Our timeframe is to have both reports done by the end of March 2019,” said Dave Struck. “Then our regional stakeholders, led by Blue Meets Green, can decide what the next appropriate steps may be.”

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