

# SHELBY TOWNSHIP PRESS RELEASE

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## Shelby Township Board allocates funds to connect trail with City of Utica

The Shelby Township Board of Trustees voted unanimously at its Feb. 3 meeting to authorize \$251,718 to connect a 1.28-mile trail to link the existing trail in River Bends Park to a system of trails from the City of Utica to Lake St. Clair Metropark.

The project will largely be funded by the Macomb County Department of Roads, which has \$1,774,000 secured from Federal High Priority Project funding and an additional \$338,000 from a Michigan Transportation Alternative Project Grant.

“This is an important initiative for our Township for a number of reasons,” Township Supervisor Rick Stathakis said. “It serves as a connector to Lake St. Clair and trails throughout Macomb County. And it provides a place for Shelby Township on the proposed statewide ‘Iron-Belle’ bike trail from Detroit to Wisconsin.”

Per the MCDR, there are additional costs of \$533,866 to be the responsibility of Shelby Township and the City of Utica. Because construction costs are more expensive in Utica, the county has estimated Utica’s cost share to be 59 percent, while Shelby Township’s is 41 percent.

The county’s cost-share estimate for Shelby Township was \$218,885, but that did not include possible construction overages. To accommodate possible overages, Fazal Khan and Associates, the township engineer, advised the Board to approve an additional \$32,833.

Trustee Paula Filar concurred with the recommendation of Parks, Recreation, and Maintenance Director Joe Youngblood and the township engineer to participate in the construction of the trail.

“Residents and business owners alike are paying for the amount of benefit they receive, not necessarily based on where the work is done,” said Filar. “I think that to be given a grant that’s worth over \$2 million and to only pay \$250,000 is a real benefit to the resident of Shelby, and I’m going to be supportive.”

“The trustees make excellent points, but \$2 million for a mile of trail does seem ridiculous,” said Shelby Township Treasurer Michael Flynn. “What I think is most offensive to the taxpayers of Shelby in this situation is what would on its surface appear to be inequitable treatment in terms of the dollar amount allocation and what the City of Utica is getting in terms of quality bike paths versus what Shelby is going to end up with.”

“However, it would not be a benefit to the citizens of Shelby Township to walk away from this money and to get this trail done. But, that’s another reason why elections matter because I think Utica got the longer end of the stick.”

In 2010, the MCDR estimated the total cost of the project to be \$780,000, with the township’s portion of costs being \$65,520. That cost rose as the project had to accommodate with increases for an underground railroad crossing and stabilization as the trail in Utica hugs the Clinton River.

“These costs were prepared before any engineering took place,” said engineer Carol Thurber of the early \$780,000 estimate. “Now, we are also unable to interfere with railroad tracks and must go under, and construction costs have risen significantly.”

“We are committed to finishing our bike trails in Shelby Township,” said Stathakis. “I agree with my fellow Board Members that there is just too much value here and that we do have to go forward and take this deal. I’m very happy that this will be one of the final steps to completing this trail system here in Shelby Township.”

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