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# Shelby makes progress on next Iron Belle Trail connection

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**SHELBY TOWNSHIP** — On March 15, the Shelby Township Board of Trustees unanimously approved a resolution of support

required to apply for a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant for the next phase of Shelby's Iron Belle Trail connection.

The plan is to obtain the \$300,000 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant and a

\$300,000 Transportation Alternatives Plan grant and use them to match each other, so the next phase of trail can be constructed at no cost to Shelby Township.

The phase in question is 0.6 miles in length and will run

through River Bends Park along an easement created for the Oakland-Macomb Interceptor Drain project. Crews clear-cut paths through 3 miles of wooded areas in River Bends and Holland

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# Trail

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Ponds parks late last winter to access sewer manholes.

Township Engineer Carol Thurber said the trail will run north and west from the 1.28-mile portion of trail constructed last spring and summer that connects River Bends Park in Shelby Township to downtown Utica.

Another 4,000-foot phase to connect the Macomb Orchard Trail to Gene Shepherd Park is set to conclude by the end of this summer at no cost to the township due to matching grants.

“That one will go along Dequindre, cross 23 Mile and come along 23 Mile along the north end of Gene Shepherd Park,” Thurber said. “We were going to extend

the Yates trail, but two factors prevented that: limits on slopes by national standards that we couldn’t exceed — we would have to build a very large bridge that would cost \$1 million — and the Yates trail is deteriorating so badly.”

Thurber said the trails are crucial to Michigan’s Iron Belle Trail project, which includes a proposed 1,259-mile hiking route and a 744-mile biking route connecting Ironwood, Michigan, in the Upper Peninsula to Belle Isle Park in Detroit.

“We provide about 4 and a half miles of the trail,” Thurber said. “This is a very important initiative for the state and, because of that, they are encouraging Shelby Township to apply for grants.”

She said the township received a \$20,000 grant from the state last year to plan and design the most feasible and cost-effective

routes for the trails.

Thurber estimated that Shelby Township would finish its Iron Belle Trail connection in approximately three or four more phases.

Supervisor Rick Stathakis said he is proud that Shelby Township has a place on the state’s planned Iron Belle Trail and praised the local team working to facilitate the initiative.

“We know that Shelby Township has the finest parks and trails in all of southeast Michigan, and it’s very gratifying to see that the state of Michigan agrees and has invested in our existing trails,” he said. “Hopefully, that facilitates more positive responses from the state and other agencies that may help us expand these trails through grants.”

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