

News

SHELBY TOWNSHIP: Township awarded \$272,333 for hike and bike trail expansion, park connection

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By SEAN DELANEY
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A plan to unite Shelby Township's Stony Creek Metropark with Chief Gene Shepherd Park, in addition to Oakland County's Clinton River and Paint Creek trails, got a boost June 19 from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

According to Shelby Township officials, the \$272,333 pledged by the SEMCOG Regional Clearinghouse Review Committee from its Transportation Alternatives Program for fiscal year 2015 is the latest installment of what will be a total investment of \$730,973 in new trail and trail safety upgrades for the Macomb Orchard Trail on Dequindre Road to Chief Gene Shepherd Park on 23 Mile Road.

"This brings together two of our community's top recreation assets, and to do so while finding even more grant money than we had originally budgeted is amazing," said Shelby Township Supervisor Richard Stathakis. "This is real dollar-and-cents proof of our employees' commitment to Shelby Township, and it's not often that we can attach a dollar amount on the hard work our employees do."

In addition to the SEMCOG grant, the project is also funded by \$108,543 from a Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund grant and \$173,000 from a Michigan Department of Transportation grant, as well as tri-party funding, which includes Rochester, Oakland County and the Road Commission for Oakland County, for a new pedestrian crossing on Dequindre Road.

"Our residents are getting more than \$730,000 in trail construction and enhancement, and the township is only putting \$177,000 into the project," Stathakis said. "And that sum is made up of other projects and funds that were already budgeted, so this is not new money being spent on this project."

According to Stathakis, the \$380,876 in grant money obtained by Shelby Township officials for the project is ahead of the original amount of \$300,000 that the township had hoped to realize from the MDNR Trust Fund grant alone.

"This is why I'm so grateful we have staff in place that understands the nature of grants and how to find the right resources for the right projects," Stathakis said.

According to Parks, Recreation and Maintenance Director Joe Youngblood, the original \$300,000 grant from the MDNR Trust Fund was contingent on \$500,000 in matching funds from a \$1.9 million 2010 federal line item to connect existing trails in the city of Utica to Stony Creek by way of River Bends, Holland Ponds, Chief Gene Shepherd Parks and the Macomb Orchard Trail, but it was tabled after bids for that projected exceeded cost estimates by more than 10 percent.

"Working with (Parks, Recreation and Maintenance Business Manager) Cindy Martel and (Deputy Supervisor) Brad

Bates, we were able to look through all the projects the township had in place and give that information over to (township engineer) Carol Thurber," Youngblood said. "Carol then used her contacts with the MDOT and SEMCOG to find the TAP grant that fit out project. It was a great team effort."

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