

Save the Dunes Conservation Fund

Coffee Creek Watershed Conservancy



indiana dunes The Coast of Cores

INDIANA LAKE MICHIGAN COASTAL PROGRAM



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PREPARED MAY 2009

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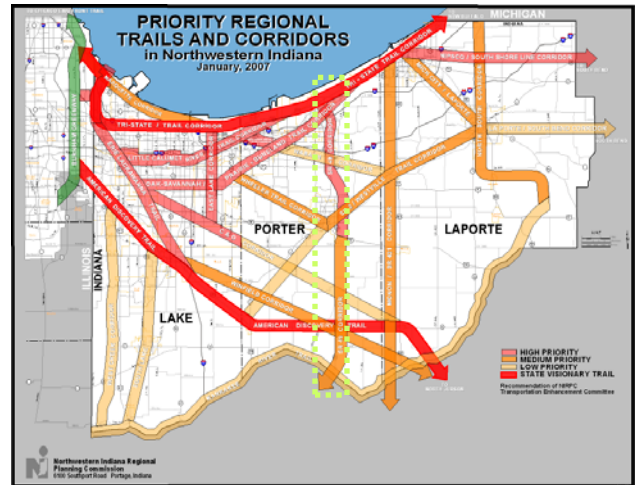
INDIANA LAKE MICHIGAN COASTAL PROGRAM



In 2006, Governor Mitch Daniels convened a “Trails Summit” as the first step toward creating a network of trails that could connect every Hoosier, so that every residence in the state of Indiana would be within 15 minutes of a network trail. The summit committees discovered what regional residents already know: Porter County trails for pedestrians and bikes are isolated. The path cut by SR 49—from the Dunes State Park straight south to SR 14, just north of Rensselaer—was labeled a major trail opportunity and potentially part of the backbone of a statewide trail system.

The lack of connectivity is glaring. Lake County has trails that connect its communities. The northern half of Porter County has trails that connect its communities to each other and to both Lake and LaPorte Counties. The Dunes have their own network of trails, and the cross-country American Discovery Trail (ADT) is slated to run through Kouts and Hebron—but there are no trails connecting the northern half of Porter County to the county seat—Valparaiso—or the southern reaches of Porter County—Kouts, Hebron, and the Kankakee River. With no vacant north-south corridors (such as a retired rail line or utility corridor) and no municipalities bordering Valparaiso on any side, the only viable option is to construct a parallel trail within the right-of-way (ROW) of a motorized thoroughfare: SR 49.

Trail systems can be classified with the same terms used for road classification. Trails and sidewalks within subdivisions are like local streets. Intermediate trails, such as Meridian Road and those found on the Valparaiso Pathways and Greenways Master Plan, which connect subdivisions to major trails would be considered collectors. The SR 49 trail (now known as the Dunes-Kankakee Trail) would be an arterial trail, a highway of the trail system and a critical component in fulfilling Governor Daniels’ vision of connecting the residents of Indiana.



Area of the Dunes Kankakee Trail

The main challenges are safety and expense. Another key concern is minimizing the impact on the environment without compromising the quality of the construction. A group of stakeholders—including the NIRPC, in conjunction with the Porter County Convention, Recreation & Visitor Commission (PCCRVC), the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the National Park Service (NPS), Porter County Government, other agencies throughout the area, and the communities of Porter, Chesterton, Valparaiso and Portage—have come together to formulate this plan to create a safe, sensible, sustainable solution and introduce the crucial missing component into the infrastructure of Porter County.

The Implementation Plan gives support from recent history of the viability of creating the Dunes-Kankakee Trail, delineates best practices for trail development and maintenance, describes the general route in its entirety with a specific detailed plan for Phase 1, and provides implementation strategies. The objective of this plan is to induce the prompt development of a route and to assist the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) in accommodating the trail.

To access the Dunes-Kankakee Trail Comprehensive Plan, see www.duneskankakeetrail.com

Implementation Plan Highlights

Community and Historical Support

- 1990's** Plans for the American Discovery Trail were established to form the first coast-to-coast non-motorized trail in American history. The planned trail runs through Kouts and Hebron, a section that would be constructed as part of Phase 3 of the SR 49 trail.
- 1993** DNR was awarded a Federal Transportation Enhancement grant toward a non-motorized trail from the Dunes State Park entrance to the Dune Park South Shore station, approximately one mile of trail along SR 49—expected completion date is 2010.
- 2004** Chesterton introduced plans to develop trails within the town including paths that would cross SR 49.
- 2005** Porter began the development of the Porter Brickyard Trail.
- 2005** Valparaiso's Pathways & Greenways Master Plan bolstered non-motorized trails within the city, many of which would intersect with an SR 49 trail.
- 2005** Marquette Greenway plan was created and has since grown to incorporate more than 50 miles of potential trails running from Chicago to New Buffalo, Michigan. The route includes the Calumet Trail and would intersect with the Dunes-Kankakee Trail providing enhanced connectivity to destinations beyond the region and the communities along the way.
- 2006** Construction of the Dorothy Buell Memorial Visitor Center created an excellent destination for travelers visiting the Dunes—the PCCRVC desires to incorporate a trail running from its grounds along SR 49 north to the Dunes State Park as a valuable option for visitors and residents alike.
- 2008** Town of Porter designed and planned the Orchard Pedestrian Way trail along Waverly Road from East Oak Hill Road to US 20 using nearly \$1 million in federal dollars.
- 2008** INDOT proposed inclusion of a bike lane on reconstructed bridges on SR 49 crossing over US 12, US 20, and the South Shore Railroad.

Best Practices for Trail Development and Maintenance

Trail Benefits—the trail itself is considered a best practice for community health, economic development, and environmental sustainability.

Trail Design—the Implementation Plan outlines the keys to successful trail design as evidenced in existing trails of a similar nature throughout the country.

Trail Maintenance—the Plan gives full consideration to the budgeting needs for an effective maintenance plan that keeps the trail looking new and operable.

Environmental Concepts—the plan includes environmental recommendations, including conservation design, low impact landscaping, integrated plant management, wildlife crossings, and infiltration/filtration practices.

General Route Description

Phase 1—Indiana Dunes State Park entrance south to the Porter County Expo Center, south of US 30

Phase 2—Porter County Expo Center south to Kouts at SR 8

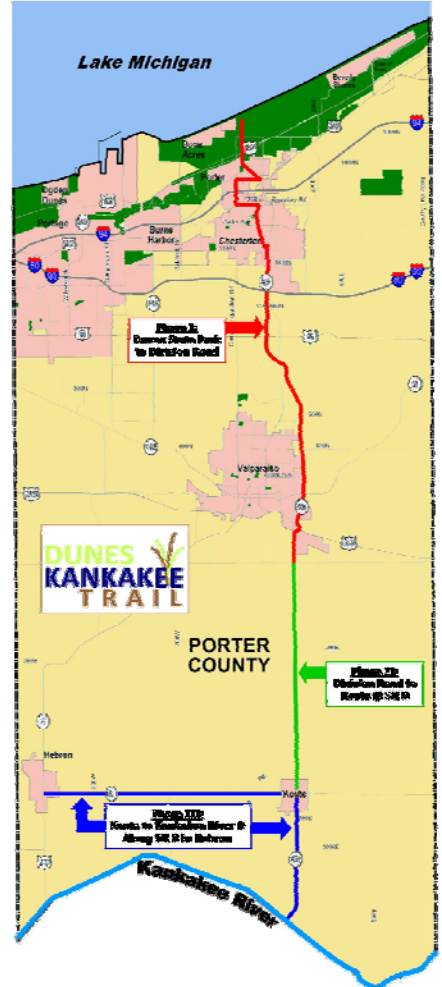
Phase 3—SR 8 to Kankakee River and segment of American Discovery Trail from Hebron to Kouts

Implementation Strategies—the key to the success of this project is interlocal cooperation. The trail stands to benefit the individuals of each of our communities and the region as a whole. By working together we can reap the great rewards of an interlocal non-motorized trail while also surmounting the considerable expense. Through grants and other federal and state resources, this long-overdue benefit can be added with minimal local expense—only if the municipalities and supporting organizations work together.

To access the Dunes-Kankakee Trail Comprehensive Plan, see www.dunskankakeetrail.com



Jurisdiction	Trail Miles	Estimated Cost	Type
Indiana Dunes State Park (DNR)	0.7	\$315,000	Trail along SR 49
Dunes National Lakeshore (NPS)	0.2	\$80,000	Trail along SR 49
Town of Porter	1.6	\$720,000	Trail along SR 49
Town of Chesterton	3.0	\$1,200,000	Trail along local roads
Town of Chesterton	1.1	\$440,000	Trail along SR 49
Porter County (Unincorporated)	5.6	\$2,250,000	Trail along SR 49
City of Valparaiso	1.2	\$480,000	Trail along SR 49
City of Valparaiso	3.6	\$1,440,000	Trail along local roads/US30
Approximate Built Distance	17 miles	\$6,925,000	



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