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Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan

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Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan

1 Introduction

The Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan presents a vision for a regional greenway and trail network to advance greenway preservation and reduce conflicts with other development activities. It assists implementers and funding agencies in allocating resources to projects. Proposals that relate to the plan can be more attractive to funding agencies.

This plan has two predecessors: in 1992, the northeastern Illinois region created and adopted the first Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan, developed by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) and Openlands Project with participation and input from across the region. Support for that plan was provided by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (then called the Illinois Department of Conservation), the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and The Conservation Fund.

As a testament to the value of the 1992 plan, regional greenways and trail implementers called for an update and financed the bulk of support locally, including representation of the Forest Preserve Districts of the counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, Will, and the McHenry County Conservation District. Additional support came from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. That plan was adopted in 1997. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Illinois Department of Transportation provided support for this 2009 Update.

This plan has two components: an updated map and this document, which lays out values, goals, objectives, and recommended actions. Many of the goals and objectives that were included in the first and second plans are incorporated in this document.

1.1 What Is a Greenway?

Greenways are existing or proposed corridors of natural landscape elements. They may range from narrow corridors of undeveloped landscape that run through urban and suburban development, or wide corridors that incorporate diverse natural and cultural features. A greenway can be land- or water-based. It can incorporate both public and private property, but always provides benefits for the larger community. Some are primarily recreational corridors that contain multi-use paths, while others function almost exclusively for environmental protection and are not necessarily intended for substantial human passage. Some greenways run along stream corridors, shorelines or wetlands, others follow abandoned railway tracks or other land-based features.

The plan recognizes that it is not necessary or appropriate for all greenways or areas of greenways to be served by trails. The protection of sensitive environmental and landscape

features and the creation of appropriate relationships to adjacent land use may require exclusion of trails or development of highly controlled or low-use trail and access facilities.

Sensitive natural areas, including sites on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) and county inventories are also considered as greenway features. They are identified as significant natural resources that qualify for formal protection. While they may not exist as an interconnected part of the network, the opportunity to provide buffers and wildlife migration paths between them should be considered.

Greenways may consist of both public and private property and are often mixtures of the two. It is not uncommon to establish greenways within rights-of-way in order to provide a trail or bikeway, or to provide habitat. Transportation, railroad, and utility rights of way may be used for this purpose. Trails development should be coordinated with plans, now and in the future, for other transportation uses in these corridors to avoid conflicts and maximize transportation benefits.

1.2 What is a Regional Greenways Plan Trail?

In this plan, regional trails are multi-jurisdictional facilities offering recreational opportunities and transportation uses, connecting communities and greenways throughout the region. While on-road bicycling presents many benefits, the emphasis in this plan is primarily existing and planned off-road facilities. The proposed trail alignments in the plan are conceptual and long-range. Regional trails include a variety of facility types, suitable for bicycling walking and paddling, but also offer diverse uses such as roller-blading, equestrian uses, and cross-country skiing.

This plan emphasizes connectivity between regional trails and with forest preserves and conservation areas. Many of the trails in this plan offer a “green experience” in the midst of a highly urbanized environment. This plan also emphasizes consistency with locally- and county-based trail plans, enhancing opportunities to partner in the implementation of this plan. The trail system in this plan is about 2,700 miles, or about 700 more miles than in 1997. New additions for 2009 were focused on Kendall County (not in the 1997 Plan) and on the City of Chicago. Almost 1000 miles of the trail system are completed, or about 500 miles more than in 1997.

1.3 Why Do We Need a Regional Greenways and Trails Plan?

A greenways and trails plan offers a vision of continuous greenway and trail corridors linked across jurisdictions, providing scenic beauty, natural habitat, or recreational opportunities for our communities. Many jurisdictions govern land use and landscape design in northeastern Illinois, so developing a regionally coordinated and connected vision of greenways and trails across these jurisdictions can inform local land use decisions, and hopefully inspire decisions about development that are consistent with the greenways and trails identified. In addition, greenways and trails projects, including land acquisition, can enhance our communities. Greenway projects inspired by this plan offer some combination of the following characteristics.

- Benefits large populations in multiple communities

- Bridges gaps to help complete greenways
- Creates new connections between greenways
- Provides wildlife migration paths between isolated natural areas
- Protects tributary streams to preserve water quality and ecological value in main regional waterways
- Protects residential and commercial areas threatened by flood damage
- Improves access to recreational trails where it is currently lacking
- Protects high quality natural areas threatened by development
- Protects important scenic vistas and historic areas from development
- Increases access to open space for mature and distressed communities with disadvantaged populations
- Offers a variety of recreational uses
- Provides alternative transportation routes (walking, bicycling) and improves access to public transportation systems

The following table illustrates the number of miles of trails in each county that are part of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan. Many jurisdictions have miles of bikeways and trails that are not part of this plan; those miles are not included in this table.

Greenways and Trails Plan Trail Mileage, by County:

County	Existing	Proposed	Total
Cook County	294.31	444.32	738.63
DuPage County	192.48	85.81	278.28
Grundy (Aux Sable Twp)	8.99	2.93	11.91
Kane County	146.02	244.71	390.73
Kendall County	17.34	222.18	239.52
Lake County	157.55	192.82	350.37
McHenry County	60.37	132.48	192.85
Will County	121.32	389.30	510.62
Total	998.37	1714.56	2712.93

1.4 A Changing Environment for Regional Greenway Planning

As noted earlier, the first Northeastern Illinois Greenways and Trails Plan was adopted in 1992 and updated in 1997. In addition to the increase in built and proposed trails since that time, changes in the region have had and will have an impact on the implementation of this plan. For one, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning was created to insure transportation, land use and other focus areas are addressed in concert to create a comprehensive regional plan that presents a unified vision for the region's future. That plan, *GO TO 2040*, integrates this plan, thereby strengthening recommendations and supporting implementation of proposed regional trails and greenways.

In addition to this change, Kendall County has become part of the northeastern Illinois regional planning area, contributing an ambitious number of trail and greenway miles to this plan. Also, the clean water supply concerns in this region are beginning to be addressed through the

State and Regional Water Supply Planning initiative. The resulting plan will support many of the recommended actions in the Regional Greenways and Trails Plan.

Northeastern Illinois is also facing health concerns related to physical inactivity. More recreational opportunities and more connections to the natural environment can address these issues. Also, as awareness of environmental challenges increases, so does the recognition of the value of greenways in addressing them through natural processes such as carbon sequestering and mitigation of contaminated sites.

The one-hundredth anniversary of Burnham and Bennett's 1909 Plan of Chicago brings to the fore the historic initiatives and visionary goals for the region concerning nature, open space and green corridors, including the establishment of forest preserves, improvement of the lakefront, and efforts to develop and protect a system of connected open spaces. The public's enthusiasm about this anniversary could have a lasting impact on the realization of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan.

1.5 Planning Process

Coordination with the many units of government and advocacy organizations in the region is especially important to the success of this plan due to the roles they play in its implementation. A local government survey was distributed to request input on the map. We received information on changes to the status of trails, new trails and trail proposals, and other items. A steering committee was created that included representatives from counties, forest preserves, park and conservation districts, greenway and open space advocates, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the National Park Service. The Greenways Plan Steering Committee and the CMAP Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force met jointly twice to review drafts of the map and plan. The public review period for the plan and map began on June 12, 2009 with an email notice to a broad audience with a link to the site where the documents were located. The review period ended July 24, 2009. CMAP's Environment and Natural Resources, Transportation, Programming Coordinating, and MPO Policy Committees reviewed and approved the plan, and the CMAP Board adopted the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan – 2009 Update at their October 14, 2009 meeting.

The process to create this plan was coordinated with the planning of the GO TO 2040 Plan, which is scheduled for adoption in 2010.

2 Key Map Features

The Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan map updates existing and proposed regional greenways and trails, open space and connections among them includes the locations of Illinois Nature Preserves and sites on the Illinois and county Natural Areas Inventories. Many of these high quality areas are within designated greenways and existing open space and need to be protected. The regional trail system may, where appropriate, provide

opportunities for viewing these areas, but care must be taken to protect fragile natural area resources from adverse impacts. Unprotected natural areas sites need to be given preservation status through acquisition or other means, as appropriate.

Greenways shown as existing on the map are protected for public purposes, and the trails that are shown as existing are completed and open to the public. Most proposed trails are conceptual and final alignments would be determined by the jurisdiction through its planning and engineering processes. A more detailed map and database are available from CMAP to coordinate such planning. While some of the connecting trail proposals that are fairly close together are shown as one corridor on the map, the greenway plan facilities in the CMAP database reflect both.

The following features are identified on the map:

- Stream greenways (existing and proposed)
- Land-based greenways (existing and proposed)
- Regional multi-use trails (existing and proposed)
- County, forest preserve, and conservation district holdings
- State and national parks
- Natural Areas Inventory Sites and Illinois Nature Preserves
- Primary Regional Trail System
- Regional Water Trails Plan
- Regional off-road segments of Historic Route 66 Trail
- Grand Illinois Trail
- Local parks
- Golf courses

2.1 Stream Greenways

Streams are a vital part of this plan; they are focal points for environmental education and stewardship; they can provide valued opportunities for canoeing and kayaking; they can be rich centers of biodiversity; and they can provide important water quality, water supply and flood mitigation functions. All streams in this plan are considered existing or proposed greenways. Due to the availability of data and resolution, headwater streams may not be indicated on this map, although they are also considered by this plan to be potential or existing greenways for which the recommendations in Section 5.3 apply. Headwater streams play a critical role in water quality considerations.

2.2 Regional Greenway Plan Trails

In this plan, regional trails are multi-jurisdictional, multi-use paths offering recreational opportunities, alternative modes of transportation, and connections between communities, preserves, and conservation areas. Regional trails can be suitable for bicycling, walking, and paddling, but also may offer diverse uses such as roller-blading, equestrian uses, and cross-country skiing. It should be noted that while many communities have bike plans that include bike routes, which typically refer to signed, on-road facilities, they are not considered regional greenways plan trails unless they are very short connections that provide essential linkages to

or between the Primary Regional Trail System. One notable exception is the Grand Illinois Trail (GIT), which utilizes some on-road connections for the purposes of continuity. All segments of the GIT are identified on the regional map.

The proposed regional trail alignments in the plan are conceptual and long-range. Final alignments would be determined by the appropriate jurisdiction through its planning and engineering processes (a more detailed map and database are available from CMAP to coordinate such planning). Most of the trails come from and/or are consistent with local- and county-based trail plans. Ideally, the regional trails in this plan offer a “green” experience for most of their length. While some of the proposed trail connections that are fairly close together are shown as one corridor on the map, both trails are included in the CMAP Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan database.

2.3 The Primary Regional Trail System

The Primary Regional Trail System identified on the map is the “backbone” of the regional trail system. The map also identifies existing and proposed trails that make critical direct links that interconnect them. Existing and proposed trails that connect the regional system, forest preserves, and conservation areas are also identified as primary. Trail loops within forest preserves and conservation areas that don’t provide connections to the regional system are not generally included. Connections that follow more circuitous routes and/or those that would have to depend on development of a number of adjacent trails to eventually connect to the major trails are not included. The Primary Regional System designation does not necessarily indicate priority trails for development, however many coincide with county priorities listed in Chapter 3.

2.4 Green Corridor Trails

Trails with green corridors, i.e., trails that are shown with green buffers on the map, offer for most of their length, a “green” experience. A path with relatively large amounts of vegetation or scenic vistas would be included. Off-road paths along a highly developed corridor with very little vegetation for example, are not shown with a green buffer.

2.5 Grand Illinois Trail

The Grand Illinois Trail indicated on the map is a 475- mile loop trail for hiking and biking using existing and planned trails in northern Illinois. Major northeastern Illinois greenway plan trails are included, as well as some on-road routes essential to creating the loop.

2.6 Historic Route 66 Trail (off-road segments only) is a plan to give trail users opportunities to



explore sights, cities, towns, and rural areas of Route 66. The vision consists of off-road paths and comfortable roads for bicycles, equestrians, hikers. In cases where the route coincides with primary greenway trails, it is identified on the map. On-road segments are not included on this map.

2.7 Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Trail Plan

Also identified on the map is the Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Trail Plan, a regional system of existing and proposed trails for non-motorized boating. It provides a framework for trail development on 475 miles of streams and lakes on 10 major waterways including Lake Michigan, Fox River, Chicago River, Des Plaines River, Salt Creek, Du Page River, Nippersink Creek, Kishwaukee River, Calumet Area Waterways, and the Kankakee River. One hundred and sixty-six accesses and portage sites are proposed to connect the system, of which 110 have been established. <http://openlands.org/index.php/Greenways/Projects/northeastern-illinois-water-trails.html>.



2.8 Illinois Natural Areas Inventory Sites (INAI)

INAI sites are also identified on the map. The Illinois Natural Heritage Division of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources maintains a list of significant natural resources or features remaining in Illinois. These sites contain one or more of the following: high quality natural communities, specific suitable habitat for state-listed species, state dedicated Nature Preserves, outstanding geological features, species reintroductions and translocations, unusual concentrations of flora or fauna, and/or high quality streams. McHenry County Conservation District conducted a natural areas inventory that identified additional sites. They included, in addition to the state's list of significant natural resources and features listed above, areas undergoing extensive natural community restoration and relic stands of mature oaks.

3 County and State Priorities

During the process of developing this plan, the seven counties in this region and the state of Illinois identified regional trails and/or trail segments that they place in high priority for acquisition, development, or improvements. It is possible that in some cases, a new opportunity or obstacle may arise causing an agency to shift priorities. For example, if an unexpected opportunity arises for a local government to partner with adjacent communities to acquire a corridor that would provide a new link or connection to the regional network, they may focus resources on that project instead of one of those listed here.

These priorities were identified by the counties, state, and forest preserve and conservation districts. The basis for priorities depends on the agency; some focused on completing particular segments of a larger trail, and others identified the entire length of a trail as a priority. The trails and greenways included in this chapter are not identified separately as priorities on the map.

3.1 Cook County Trail Priorities

Cook County identified first and second regional trail priorities as shown below:

First Priority

- The combined and continuous trail made up by the Greenbay, North Shore, Lakefront and Burnham Trails.

Second Priority

- Cal-Sag Trail
- Skokie Valley Trail
- Route 66 Trail along the Centennial to the Sanitary and Ship Canal, South Branch of the Chicago River, and the City of St. Charles
- Lakefront Trail to Illinois Prairie Path via the Bloomingdale Trail
- Des Plaines River Trail
- Northwest Cook County forest preserve connections

3.2 DuPage County Trail Priorities

DuPage County's highest priorities include the regional trails in the county's 2008 adopted regional bikeway plan, which includes:

- Illinois Prairie Path
- Great Western Trail
- Salt Creek Greenway Trail
- West Branch DuPage River Trail
- East Branch DuPage River Greenway Trail
- Southern DuPage County Regional Trail
- North Central DuPage Regional Trail
- Centennial Trail
- Virgil Gilman Trail
- Veterans Memorial Trail
- Hinsdale Bikeway
- Itasca-Addison Trail
- DuPage Technology Corridor Trail
- Aurora – Naperville Trail
- Arboretum – Forest Preserves Trail Connector
- Carol Stream – Bloomingdale Trail
- O'Hare Connector
- I-88 Central DuPage Bikeway
- 55th Street Bikeway
- Addison Connection
- Dunham Road Bikeway
- Elmhurst-Northlake Connector
- Gary Avenue Trail
- North Aurora Sidepath
- St. James Farm Trail
- Stearns Road Trail

- Struckman-Grainger Connection
- Woodridge-75th Street Trail

3.3 Kane County Trail Priorities

Kane County identified the following two trails as priorities:

- East-West Connections to the Fox River Trail
- Mid-county Trail

3.4 Kendall County Trail Priorities

Kendall County identified the following trails as priorities:

- Wikaduke Trail
- Fox River Trail
- Prairie Parkway Trail
- Waubensee Trail
- Aux Sable Trails
- Blackberry Creek Trail
- Fox River to Saw Wee Kee Trail

3.5 Lake County Trail Priorities

In addition to the trail segments noted below, Lake County supports the continuance of rail lines for freight and commuter transportation, but if those uses cease, the priority use would be for regional trails.

- Complete last section of Des Plaines River Trail and on-going operation and maintenance
- Complete North Shore Bike Path through the Village of Mundelein's business district
- Complete the Grand Illinois Trail from Singing Hills Forest Preserve east of Moraine Hills State Park
- Robert McClory Trail (gap through downtown Highland Park)
- Prairie Crossing Bike Path
- Complete the Fort Hill Trail from Millennium Trail in Village of Wauconda to Prairie Crossing in the Village of Grayslake
- Complete the Millennium Trail from Singing Hills in the Village of Volo to the Des Plaines River Trail
- Deerfield Road Bike Path
- Waukegan/North Chicago Lakefront Bike Path

3.6 McHenry County Trail Priorities

McHenry County identified the following trails as top priorities:

- Completion of the Stone Mill Trail Extension
- Completion of the current phase of the Crystal Lake to Woodstock Trail Project
- Hebron to Harvard Trail Concept
- Kishwaukee River Trail Concept
- McHenry County College to Route 47 Trail Concept
- Rakow Road to Prairie Trail Connector Concept

3.7 Will County Trail Priorities

Will County identified the following trails as priorities:

- DuPage County Connector (along Keepataw Forest Preserve)
- Wauponsee Glacial Trail to Kankakee River State Park Trail
- Vincennes Trail
- DuPage River Greenway
- Veteran's Memorial Trail (I-355 Corridor)
- Spring Creek Greenway

3.8 State of Illinois Trail Priorities

The Illinois Department of Transportation identified the following trails as priority:

- Grand Illinois Trail
- Route 66 Trail (Regional segments are included and identified on the map)
- Calumet Sag Trail

4 Values of Greenways

4.1 Habitat Protection and Preservation of the Region's Biodiversity

One important benefit of greenways is their contribution to ecological integrity. Preserving green space, forests, and river corridors maintains the biodiversity that enables the earth to function by creating oxygen and filtering carbon dioxide and other pollutants. The green corridors provide plant and animal migration paths between isolated natural areas. Without these corridors, many species are forced to travel across the built environment for their habitat needs. They become isolated, which reduces their ability to react to natural geographic and climatic changes and maintain genetic diversity, a condition that eventually leads to extinction.

Greenways in urban areas are especially important to biodiversity and humanity. They offer places for people to relate to natural ecological processes, which in turn fosters stewardship. Also, greenways and open space can help reduce urban heat island effects. Urban heat island effects occur because built environments, which do not take in solar energy like natural ecosystems, reflect most energy away from the earth causing the temperatures in the urban area to increase. Plants, through photosynthesis, take in the sun's energy which balances the heating and cooling of the landscape. Small climatic changes can have massive impacts on weather cycles and on the ability of plants and animals to survive.

Proper greenway management preserves and enhances habitat, reduces the effects of fragmentation, and maintains the region's diversity of species. Volunteer habitat restoration projects are helping to address this issue in northeastern Illinois.

4.2 Water, Soil, and Air Quality Improvement

Greenways along waterways have proved effective as filter strips that trap sediment and pollutants that damage water quality. Pollutants carried by surface and groundwater are intercepted by vegetation and root systems in greenways before they can reach streams, lakes and wetlands.

The vegetation in greenways also helps remove pollutants from the air and moderates summer heat and winds. As a result, the daily living environment can be made healthier and more pleasant. The vegetation can also mitigate the accumulation of greenhouse gases by capturing and storing carbons released in the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels. Other pollutants, such as contaminated soil, can also be mitigated through vegetation's natural processes.

4.3 Flood and Stormwater Management

Greenways can provide space for streams and wetlands to function naturally to accommodate both normal and flood flows. By protecting floodplains from development, greenways protect people and property from flood damage. The preservation of greenways can therefore be an important aspect of flood and stormwater management programs for watersheds.

4.4 Cultural and Historic Resources

Important archaeological and historic sites and structures lie within the proposed greenway system. Many of the greenways are along historic routes, following trails used by Native Americans and early pioneers; streams that were used for commerce; and roads and rail lines rich in history.

All parts of the region, including rural areas, have historical landscapes that should be considered for incorporation within greenways, wherever possible. Some portions of greenways in the region have been designed by world famous, landscape architects, planners, and architects such as Daniel Burnham, Jens Jensen, and Frederick Law Olmsted. This legacy should be protected.

4.5 Environmental Awareness

Greenways provide places to teach children and adults the natural sciences and the principles of environmental management. They can learn about the environmental impacts that result from their own decisions and the actions of government and property owners. They can also learn how to participate directly in improving their immediate environment. This educational process is easier to undertake because greenways are accessible to people and close to home, work, and school. The Chicago Wilderness consortium is a leader in this region in undertaking initiatives, such as Leave No Child Inside, to address this issue.

4.6 Recreational Opportunities

Greenways provide a mechanism for satisfying the region's trail and water-related recreation needs. The active and passive recreational activities accommodated by greenways are a significant benefit to the physical and mental health of people of the region.

Greenways in northeastern Illinois can provide connections to existing and proposed greenways and trails in other counties and states, as well as contribute to the development of state and national trail systems.

The fact that greenways are often capable of simultaneously providing multiple functions means that they can be a very cost-effective strategy for the use of public and private resources.

Greenways can also be cost-effective through their ability to avoid future public and private costs, such as the costs of flood damage.

Greenways can provide:

- Opportunities for walking, running, cross-country skiing, bicycling, fishing, canoeing, horseback riding and other activities popular with a wide range of people.
- Convenient recreation, that is inexpensive and close to home. A regional network can expand opportunities by increasing access to other locations within the system.
- Recreation for special populations such as the elderly and the disabled. Special facilities and design features can enhance this aspect and increase access.
- Recreation and open space for areas inadequately served with greenway-related recreation facilities, especially in lower income areas.
- Health benefits
- Facilities for non-motorized recreation separate from motorized recreational vehicles.
- Aesthetics

Greenways provide green space in the environment and visual relief from intensive urban development. Greenways help preserve existing community aesthetics and can separate and reduce conflicts between land uses. The northeastern Illinois region lacks dramatic topography but greenways can provide visual quality and diversity within the relatively flat landscape.

4.7 Transportation Opportunities

Where walking and bicycling in greenway corridors takes the place of motorized vehicle travel, there can be positive benefit of reducing traffic as well as improving air quality and public health. Given newer federal clean air requirements and priorities for reducing traffic congestion, greenways, along with other bicycle and pedestrian facilities need to be viewed as part of the solution to traffic mitigation and improved air quality.

4.8 Regional Identity and Awareness

By diminishing the importance of human-made boundaries, greenways help people understand the inter-relatedness of parts of the region. Such awareness builds a sense of place, identity, and responsibility. For example, if a person starts to use a greenway close to home, he or she may begin to learn about and be interested in the segments connected to it, and through that, become interested and involved in the whole system and the locations connected by it.

4.9 Economic Development

Greenways provide positive economic benefits to neighborhoods and communities and can function positively to help achieve community development and economic development objectives.

Greenways can enhance property values and are often used in the marketing of properties. In addition, people will pay a higher price and higher property tax bills for a home near these areas. Local governments benefit directly from the increased property tax income, bringing a direct return on their investment in greenways.

Additional economic benefits are as follows:

- Greenways increase spending by local residents on local recreation activities.
- Greenways support commercial uses such as bicycle rental, concessions, and special events.
- Greenways attract visitors and support tourism.
- Agencies that are responsible for managing greenways are spending dollars locally on salaries, supplies, and equipment.
- Greenways can influence corporate location decisions where quality of life is a factor in the site selection process.
- Greenways can reduce costs of storm and floodwater management and pollution abatement because they require much less construction and maintenance activity than other approaches.
- Landscape maintenance costs can be significantly reduced by the use of native plant materials in greenways as compared to turf maintenance.
- Greenways can reduce the expense of dredging, by trapping sediments before reaching waterways.

5 Greenway Objectives and Recommended Actions

In the course of developing the plan, participants developed a list of actions that would contribute to implementation of the plan. These action recommendations are not site specific, but may indicate general priority areas for action and the types of actions needed. This section includes major objectives and actions recommended to work towards achieving them.

5.1 Objective: Preserve Additional Greenway Open Space

The updated plan significantly expands the previously recommended system of greenways and trails. New opportunities for preservation are continually occurring, such as through rail corridor abandonments, the planning for new public infrastructure and comprehensive watershed planning. At the same time, the region is continuing to experience extensive new development which can occur in a manner that can either threaten or preserve greenway corridors. Properly planned and designed greenways and trails are a community asset and foster reinvestment and community stability. Therefore, coordination with county and local land use planning is essential. The greenway planning process can promote greenway preservation by identifying needs and opportunities, and by monitoring the progress of the region. It can help develop public support for trails and greenways, and work with funding agencies to assure that critical greenway linkages are not lost.

Action Recommendations:

- 5.1.1 Coordinate regional greenway and trail planning and local land use planning in order to encourage the preservation of greenways and the continuity of trails.
- 5.1.2 Widely distribute the updated Regional Greenways and Trails Plan and work with key audiences to gain support for plan implementation.
- 5.1.3 Encourage county-wide stormwater planning agencies, ecosystem partnerships, and other water management entities to acquire and preserve stream and wetland-based greenways where applicable to improve water quality, flood control, and recreation objectives.
- 5.1.4 Preserve greenway and trail opportunities by encouraging inclusion of greenway and trail designations in local plans and site plans.
- 5.1.5 Foster support from citizen and trail/greenway user groups that will advocate the preservation of specific greenway parcels in support of the Regional Greenways and Trails Plan.

5.2 Objective: Preserve and Improve the Quality and Biodiversity of Existing Open Space, including Greenways

The rare prairie, savanna, woodland, and wetland natural communities of the region, as well as the Lake Michigan lakefront parks and the major Chicago parks and boulevards are considered

natural and cultural resources of global importance. Many of these areas are located within greenways, or constitute greenways, and they must be protected and properly managed.

These resources are often under a great deal of stress due to intensive use and the aging of infrastructure, expansions of highly aggressive and damaging species, poor watershed management and increased imperviousness of watershed areas, and lack of financial resources for management programs. Preservation, management, and restoration of our existing set aside for open space are major priorities for the region.

Action Recommendations:

- 5.2.1 Support Chicago Wilderness and its efforts to preserve and enhance regional biodiversity.
- 5.2.2 Encourage ecological restoration and the use of natural landscaping within greenways, especially stream corridors, and along trails.
- 5.2.3 Support planning, land acquisition, and effective resource management in resource-rich areas, such as those in the Green Infrastructure Vision (described later in this document) in order to preserve and enhance biodiversity and encourage enjoyment and appreciation of biodiversity by people.
- 5.2.4 Coordinate planning and management for resource-rich areas with land use, infrastructure, and watershed planning in these areas. Resource rich areas within the region that have been recognized under the programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources include the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie/Prairie Parklands, Kishwaukee River, Kankakee/Grand Marsh, Upper Des Plaines River, and the Upper Fox River/Chain-O-Lakes areas.
- 5.2.5 Give high priority to the protection and appropriate management of sites on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory, especially those sites that are threatened.
- 5.2.6 Identify and work with citizen groups that are interested in becoming stewards of specific greenways and sites identified in the Regional Greenways and Trails Plan.
- 5.3 Objective: Expand the Region's Efforts to Protect, Restore and Utilize Water-Based Greenways.

Water quality in some northeastern Illinois streams has improved greatly in the last 30 years. This has enhanced the appeal and safety of the region's waters for recreational use and for streambank and shoreline development. At the same time, urbanization in developing watersheds threatens to degrade streams and stream corridors and impact drinking water supplies. Therefore, there is much more work to be done. Among the problems are stream channelization, increased development of impervious surfaces, physical encroachments into stream corridors, water supply contamination, variable (and often poor) water quality, habitat

degradation, poor access for recreational purposes, and legal constraints. There are a number of very high quality streams and lakes which should be protected through comprehensive programs dealing with the stream corridors and the stream watersheds. Other streams of moderate quality need to be improved if recreational and biodiversity objectives are to be achieved.

Water management agencies such as the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, county stormwater agencies, the Fox Waterway Agency, as well as state and federal jurisdictions, all have critical roles to play in water supply planning, maintaining high quality water resources, and providing access to those resources where appropriate. Concerns for storm and flood water management, water supply and quality, navigation, and recreational access and use are all closely interrelated and need to be addressed together in a comprehensive manner.

Action Recommendations:

- 5.3.1 Protect stream corridors and floodplains from development and maintain them, wherever possible, in a natural state. Municipalities should adopt and enforce local floodplain and stream protection ordinances and also work with developers and property owners to preserve and restore streams, and to use the best management practices. Restore altered floodplains and channelized streams to a more natural condition wherever possible.
- 5.3.2 Encourage local, regional, and/or state agencies to create a biological stream rating system for headwater streams.
- 5.3.3 Encourage local and subregional agencies and technical assistance providers to conduct localized stream quality surveys in order to identify and protect high quality stream segments that are not included in state-wide studies.
- 5.3.4 Protect and enhance high quality streams and stream segments of northeastern Illinois through comprehensive stream and watershed protection programs.
- 5.3.5 Pursue comprehensive stream corridor and watershed programs in order to improve moderate and severely degraded streams to ensure their attainment of recreational, biological, land use, and community revitalization objectives, as well as commerce and transportation. Techniques that may be used include riparian buffer preservation, instream habitat enhancement, re-meandering, and bioengineering streambank stabilization.
- 5.3.6 Preserve the quality of Lake Michigan as a recreational and open space resource. Maintain and improve the Lake Michigan shoreline for appropriate greenway and trail uses.
- 5.3.7 Encourage open space jurisdictions and water management agencies to undertake comprehensive initiatives for targeted high priority streams and waterways that provide

for: (1) short-term acquisition of key parcels needed for environmental protection, linkages, and access; (2) long-range acquisition of additional sites as they become available; (3) acquisition of easements and fee simple land donations; (4) enforcement of progressive floodplain, stormwater, and stream preservation ordinances and regulations; (5) adoption of policies and site planning criteria to preserve trail corridors along waterways; (6) improvement of shorelines and habitat areas; and (7) development of recreational access facilities.

- 5.3.8 Continue to implement the Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Trails Plan and encourage the development of access opportunities for water recreation.
- 5.3.9 Encourage, where appropriate, environmentally sensitive multi-use trails along water-based greenways to increase public access, enjoyment, and stewardship of these resources.
- 5.3.10 Support ongoing stream, watershed, and water supply planning initiatives.
- 5.3.11 Work with county stormwater management committees, as well as forest preserve, park, and municipal jurisdictions, to ensure coordination between stormwater management programs and the implementation of greenway and trail plans. In particular, encourage the creation of open space through the relocation or acquisition of flood-damaged structures in the floodplain, use of environmentally sensitive methods of channel maintenance, and the application of soil bioengineering techniques for stream stabilization.
- 5.3.12 Train local engineering and planning officials in site planning, development review, and ordinance adoption and enforcement relative to stormwater management, floodplain protection, and stream and wetland protection.
- 5.3.13 Evaluate existing drainage facilities for their potential to be enhanced and redesigned to provide improved water management, habitat, and recreation benefits. Many drainage facilities are channelized streams that may offer potential for restoration in order to restore natural stream functions, provide recreational benefits, and visual improvement.
- 5.3.14 Work with landowners to protect and restore stream greenways that are in private ownership, through such measures as the use of conservation easements, vegetation restoration, soil bioengineering, stream maintenance, and control of debris dumping. Various organizations such as CMAP, the US Department of Agriculture/Natural Resource Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Openlands, The Conservation Foundation, Sierra Club, local land trusts, and ecological consultants can provide technical assistance on these subjects.

- 5.3.15 Encourage local and subregional agencies and technical assistance providers to identify dimensions and scales that constitute effective greenways for habitat, stormwater quantity and quality management, and other functions.

5.4 Objective: Improve the Effectiveness and Use of Trails

There are new and expanding markets for trails and trail programs. The popularity of newer trail and bikeway activities requires trail providers to consider an expanding clientele for their facilities. The diversity of users, which includes equestrians, snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, mountain bikers, and others suggest the need for a regional system which accommodates many different types of users who have differing trail needs. The intense trail usage in some locations also suggests that an awareness of alternative opportunities might help spread the demand. Many existing trails increasingly require maintenance and improvement to respond to user needs. Very high weekend usage in some locations will require improvements to these trails. Improved directional and access information, comfort facilities along the way, and other amenities are needed in order to improve the quality of trail experiences for a wide range of activities.

Action Recommendations:

- 5.4.1 Maintain and improve existing trails to assure predictable, safe, and enjoyable trail conditions throughout the system.
- 5.4.2 Design trail systems and facilities that provide opportunities for a diversity of trail activities and that minimize conflicts among trail uses. Trail providers should periodically update their plans to respond to evolving trail needs and to preserve opportunities that could be lost as a result of land development.
- 5.4.3 Develop and maintain up-to-date regional trail guides.
- 5.4.4 Continue to improve signage for regional greenways and trails in order to improve way finding, emergency response, and recognition of the region-wide system.
- 5.4.5 Develop a program with funding to improve regional trail amenities including comfort facilities, bike rental and repair services, drinking fountains, improved signage, hitching posts for equestrians, telephone access, etc.
- 5.4.6 Sponsor special events that highlight trail and greenway benefits. Increase participation in and observance of National Trails Day sponsored by the American Hiking Society.
- 5.4.7 Encourage the formation of trail and greenway "friends" organizations to assist with the management of existing trails and greenways, and to advocate for the trail improvements recommended in the Plan. Consider the use of volunteer trail courtesy patrols, especially on heavily used trails to assist and advise trail users.

5.4.8 Complete a region-wide evaluation of trails to ensure that a variety of trail experiences are provided throughout the region for people who are disadvantaged or have disabilities.

5.5 Objective: Expand the Existing Regional Trail System and Create Linkages

While much has been accomplished in implementing a regional trail system, much development remains to be done to complete critical linkages within the region, create trails in under-served areas, and link with state and national trails. Transportation and utility corridors need to be examined for their potential to accommodate trail uses.

Action Recommendations:

- 5.5.1 Support the Grand Illinois Trail and work to complete critical missing segments in northeastern Illinois.
- 5.5.2 Encourage implementation of county and inter-municipal bikeway plans and Chicago's bikeway plan.
- 5.5.3 Identify congestion and conflict areas on existing multi-use trails and make improvements to reduce conflicts.
- 5.5.4 Work with utilities, and transportation companies and agencies to develop standards and protocols for the use of rights-of-way for trail purposes.
- 5.5.5 Provide for trail continuity and improved access in the design of transportation facilities. Identify obstructions to planned trails and bikeways, including the lack of bridges and inadequate viaducts, and develop strategies for eliminating or circumventing them.
- 5.5.6 Monitor rail abandonments and assemble partnerships to preserve those abandoned rights-of-way that are desirable for trail purposes.
- 5.5.7 Work with local governments and local government associations to ensure that local plans reflect regional trails and greenways. Encourage such plans to include local trails and greenways that connect to the regional system.
- 5.5.8 Encourage local and subregional agencies to identify 10 to 15 mile primary trail loops to increase local access to the regional trail network.
- 5.5.9 Develop a mechanism for providing technical assistance to smaller communities that do not have staff to plan or develop trails and greenways. Provide local units of government, developers, and site planners with information on trail and greenway design, funding, and additional sources of assistance.

- 5.5.10 Work with the private sector, including large employers, industry associations, and not-for-profit citizen groups, to foster support of trail development, as well as promote the recreational and transportation use of trails and bikeways.
- 5.5.11 Provide regular opportunities for trail providers to update one another on trail development activities, coordination opportunities and needs, and operational issues.

5.6 Objective: Improve the Transportation Benefits of Trails

The regional trail network, complemented by the hundreds of miles of local bikeways, serves an important transportation function. Many regional trails are emerging as, and being funded as, significant providers of alternative non-polluting transportation. Many communities have planned local bikeway systems which will be of even greater benefit if they can connect with the regional trail system. High priority should be given to using trails and bikeways as connections to transit stations and other transportation destination points.

Action Recommendations

- 5.6.1 Encourage the RTA, Metra, Pace, and the CTA to increase access to trails via public transportation. Identify key locations where the regional public transportation system presents opportunities for access to trails and greenways and develop cooperative programs for enhancing access at these locations.
- 5.6.2 Encourage the construction of local and regional trail connections to transit stations and the provision of related services and amenities.
- 5.6.3 Identify potential scenic drives and roadways in northeastern Illinois and consider the appropriateness of scenic roads to serve as greenways and locations for trail and bikeway facilities. Support the designation and appropriate development of scenic drives and roadways, including provisions for amenities for roadside recreation.
- 5.6.4 Collaborate with owners of rail right-of-way and with highway agencies to encourage the planning and development of trails within or adjacent to existing and future right-of-way, including the accommodation of trail and bikeway lanes on new and renovated bridge structures.
- 5.6.5 Preserve and create trail linkages through the coordination of transportation planning with greenway and trail planning.
- 5.6.6 Continue to utilize the expertise of bicycle and trail user groups in encouraging the transportation effectiveness of bikeways and trails.

5.7 Objective: Sustain and Strengthen the Funding Base for Trails and Greenways

State and Federal agencies have been extremely important to promoting open space preservation in northeastern Illinois. Federal transportation funds have been valuable for trail

and bikeway development. Initiatives to sustain this resource need to be supported. In addition, federal agencies such as the National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Forest Service, and Army Corps of Engineers all contribute substantially to the provision or improvement of open space in the region.

Action Recommendations:

- 5.7.1 Encourage continued State of Illinois support of trail and greenway preservation and development through the existing and new programs within the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.
- 5.7.2 Provide improved region-wide documentation of trail usage.
- 5.7.3 Support federal open space programs and initiatives through the Departments of Interior, Transportation, and Agriculture (U.S. Forest Service).
- 5.7.4 Work with the Army Corps of Engineers to protect the integrity of the Lake Michigan shoreline, maintain navigability and quality of rivers and canals, improve public access to waters, and implement environmentally sound flood control programs.
- 5.7.5 Continue federal funding for the development of the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.
- 5.7.6 Develop incentives for private landowners to supplement public sector greenway and trail programs by donating land (or cash in lieu of land) and easements for protecting stream corridors and developing trails.
- 5.8 Objective: Continue the Tradition of Innovative Trail and Greenway Planning in Northeastern Illinois

Northeastern Illinois has an excellent reputation for visionary open space preservation and planning for greenways and trails. It will be a challenge, given the scarcity of public dollars, to maintain that tradition of planning and action. A continuing program will require support for the planning function as well as an ability to monitor progress and report on achievements.

Action Recommendations:

- 5.8.1 Publish a regional trails newsletter for trail users and property owners in order to provide regular communication on planning, trail development, events, etc.
- 5.8.2 Sponsor periodic discussions among trail and greenway planners, users, and property owners in order to stimulate creative approaches to improving the regional trail and greenway systems.

- 5.8.3 Strengthen partnerships and develop collaborations among planners, implementing agencies, and advocacy and user groups in order to strengthen greenway and trail planning and plan implementation in the region.
- 5.8.4 Provide technical assistance to private property owners and homeowner's associations that own many greenway segments through-out the region.
- 5.8.5 Continue to promote and plan for the natural resource and recreational benefits of greenways. Provide education on resource-sensitive methods of trail development in order to promote appropriate trail development as well as generate support for the protection of the natural functions of greenways.
- 5.8.6 Develop awards and recognition programs to highlight significant greenway and trail plans and projects.

6 Green Planning in the Chicago Metropolitan Region

The residents of northeastern Illinois are fortunate to have many individuals, public and private groups, and agencies working to achieve a region rich in protected, preserved, and restored green areas. Many of these regional organizations and agencies have produced maps, visions, and plans that relate to and complement the regional greenways plan. This section describes three of these innovative products that represent opportunities for regional collaborations and that support and reinforce mutual goals, objectives, and recommendations.

In this section, two unique projects with components related to the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan are discussed: the Green Infrastructure Vision produced by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission for Chicago Wilderness and "Natural Connections: Green Infrastructure in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana" produced by Openlands and the Center for Neighborhood Technology.

For the purposes of comparison, the following chart provides some basic information about each.

Green Infrastructure
Vision

Natural Connections: Green
Infrastructure in Wisconsin, Illinois
and Indiana

Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways
and Trails Plan

Products	Map, Final Report with Recommendations	Map, Summary of Recommendations, 150 layer data archive and on-line interactive mapping tool	Map/Executive Summary, Plan document and Action Recommendations
Date	2004	2004 (on-going updates)	2009
Project Leaders	Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission	Center for Neighborhood Technology, Openlands Project	Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Funding	Chicago Wilderness (CW)	Joyce Foundation	Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Department of Transportation
Geographic Scope	CW area (extended northeastern Illinois, partial WI and IN)	Roughly 19 counties across parts of Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana (follows sub-watershed boundaries)	Seven counties of northeastern Illinois region
Scale, Detail	Conceptual, broad brush vision, map shows generalized areas	Detailed data layers	Varies from specific (some natural resources, existing greenways, and trails), to more conceptual proposed corridors
Map Elements	Map of existing public open space and recommended resource protection areas	Map of natural resources and publicly protected land, and summary and recommendations for 12 selected resource areas	Natural resource features, existing and proposed stream and land-based green corridors, open space, and trails
Target Audience	CW members and others	Natural Resource, Open Space, and Land Use Planners, Funding Agencies and Organizations	Environmental, Open Space, Land Use, Bike, Trail, and Transportation Planners, Funding Agencies and Organizations, and Trail Users
Goal	Protect, preserve, and restore critical resource areas at a macro scale	Support natural resource protection and land preservation efforts and encourage cooperative multi-jurisdictional efforts to restore, and, preserve natural resources	Protect green corridors for multiple benefits, such as natural resource and habitat protection, flood control, phyto-remediation, and multi-use trails for recreation and transportation, and offer opportunities to adopt healthy lifestyles
Objectives	Provide map that illustrates biodiversity needs and opportunities in CW region	Provide map and information about the extent, nature, and health of the region's green infrastructure extending beyond Chicago area into IN and WI, and a database consisting of layers of features that can be overlaid in various combinations	Provide a map of proposed and existing protected stream and regional trail greenway corridors as a tool for agencies and organizations to work towards completing an interconnected network of greenways and trails

6.1 Natural Connections: Green Infrastructure in Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana

The multi-faceted green mapping project, Natural Connections: Green Infrastructure in Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana, was developed in partnership between Center for Neighborhood Technology and Openlands in 2004. The objective of the project is to support natural resource protection efforts across the 19-county region, which includes parts of Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana (the Chicago Wilderness area).

Map image
<http://www.greenmapping.org/maps/>

The project includes a comprehensive database (150 layers of natural resource information) and an interactive mapping tool which enables users to create customized maps of the region's green infrastructure. The data archive allows users to download most of the data collected (some data is protected by confidentiality agreements) and obtain information on how to use green infrastructure to improve their communities.

Also resulting from the project is a two-sided poster-size map, displaying existing green infrastructure in the region and identifying opportunities for bi-state cooperation, highlighting important resources that lie along the Wisconsin-Illinois and the Indiana-Illinois borders. The map calls attention to the amount of natural resource land that is not protected, and at the same time reveals opportunities available to achieve greater benefits through extending and connecting the areas already protected. The reverse side of the map highlights specific areas of opportunity for acquisition, restoration, and management along the state borders. The underlying data from the maps are available to view and download at www.greenmapping.org.

6.2 Green Infrastructure Vision

The Green Infrastructure Vision was created in 2004 for Chicago Wilderness by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission. It consists of a broad-brush vision map of recommended resource protection areas, and a final report of the input gathered from workshops that were held throughout the region.

Map image
<http://www.nipc.org/environment/sustainable/biodiversity/greeninfrastructure/Tri%20State%20Resource%20Rich%20Protection%20Areas%20Map.pdf>

The map depicts a CW region of the future with a green infrastructure network that supports biodiversity and provides habitat for diverse communities of native flora and fauna at the regional scale. The map's Recommended Resource Protection Areas represent the fulfillment of the Biodiversity Recovery Plan's call for protection of large complexes of remnant woodlands, savannas, prairies, wetlands, lakes, stream corridors, and the related natural communities that are identified in the plan. The Resource Protection Areas also include land adjacent to and connecting the remnant natural communities that provide both buffers and opportunities for ecosystem restoration.

The Green Infrastructure Vision will be one of the underlying features in the long-range plan for the future of the region. The recommendations of the Green Infrastructure Vision play a role in guiding the plan's approach to open space, conservation design, and other environmental

issues. For a full description the *GO TO 2040* Plan, please visit www.goto2040.org. The map and text of the Green Infrastructure Vision can be found on the web at: <http://www.nipc.org/environment/sustainable/biodiversity/greeninfrastructure/>.

7 Implementation

7.1 Collaboration

Implementation of the regional greenways and trails system portrayed on the map will depend upon the concerted efforts of numerous agencies, organizations, and individuals.

An important function of the Regional Greenways and Trails Plan is to support the programs of open space jurisdictions working to preserve and manage greenway corridors. Much of the on-the-ground implementation will occur through the initiative of the forest preserve and conservation districts, park districts and municipalities, and state and federal agencies, including the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Department of Transportation. The open space, outdoor recreation, and natural resource advocacy organizations of the region play an invaluable role in plan implementation. The responsibilities for implementation fall on many shoulders.

Given the size and complexity of the task and the scarcity of financial resources, much of the implementation activity must be collaborative in nature. The ability of the region's interests to collaborate on planning and complete complex greenway and trail projects is a major strength in the northeastern Illinois region.

7.2 Measuring Progress

As noted previously, the Regional Greenways and Trails Plan is an integral part of the *GO TO 2040* Plan. The 2040 Plan will include indicators that allow measurement, over time, of the region's progress toward plan goals and objectives, including those of the Regional Greenways and Trails Plan. While the implementation of the proposed greenways and trails can be directly measured through GIS tracking, some recommendations in this plan also lend themselves to quantitative measurement of progress. An example is the recommendation to include greenway and trail designations in local plans. A CMAP survey will identify the number of local plans that include these designations, which will be used as a baseline to measure progress.

7.3 Resources and Contacts

There are a multitude of resources and contacts in this region related to trails planning and implementation. For a list of these, please go to: <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/bikeped/resources.aspx>. For a list of funding opportunities, go to <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/bikepedfunding.aspx>.

There are also resources available for protection and restoration of stream greenways through public and private initiatives. For information about these resources, go to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources website at: <http://dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/index.htm>, and the Illinois Department of Agriculture website at:

<http://www.agr.state.il.us/Environment/conserv/index.html>. In addition to their own programs, both of these sites will direct you to other agencies, organizations, and programs that provide assistance. For natural resource related grants, go to:

<http://dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/default.asp>.

If you have any questions about the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan – 2009 Update, please contact:

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