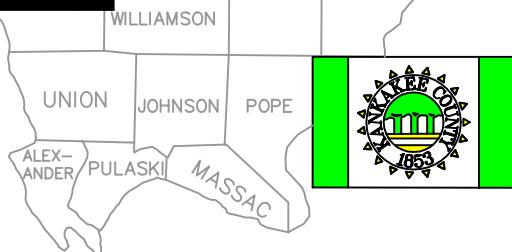


# KANKAKEE COUNTY GREENWAYS AND TRAILS PLAN



**County of Kankakee  
Regional Planning Commission**

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815-937-2940

**JUNE 8, 1999**

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## **SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION**

### **THANK YOU**

The planning process is a consensual one and an effort was made to contact every individual that would be interested or helpful in the process of creating a trail system and improving environmental and transportation connections. The staff of the Kankakee County Regional Planning Commission would like to thank all of the people that participated in the development of this plan. Without your help and continuous support this document would not be possible. We take great pride with our public involvement program and feel that we have done our best to obtain the opinions of every citizen willing to come forward. Again we thank you.



Example of an existing greenway, Briarcliff Estates, Bourbonnais, IL

## **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

In 1995, a study performed by the American Lives, Inc. for the real estate industry showed that 77.7% of all home buyers rated natural open space as either essential or very important when selecting a home site. The importance of natural open space as a preferred amenity, however, is relatively new. The same study conducted in 1980 found that home buyers preferred such amenities as tennis courts, swimming pools, and golf courses. At that time, natural open space did not even make the top ten items preferred.

The State of Illinois, in response to this change in home buyers' opinions, instituted the Metro Greenways Grant. In 1998, Kankakee County Planning Department applied and was awarded \$25,000 to produce a county-wide greenways and trail plan. Unlike golf courses, tennis courts, and swimming pools, open space can cost the taxpayers of The County nothing to implement successfully. Not only is the idea of greenways an important incentive to attract home buyers, a successfully implemented greenway plan will improve the environmental, recreational, and aesthetic aspects of the County.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

This county-wide Greenways and Trails Plan responds to current needs and opportunities and promotes a vision for the future of greenways, trails, and outdoor recreation in Kankakee County. The following is an extensive mission statement that incorporates the desires and expectations of the public.

“Greenways and recreational trails should provide the people of Kankakee County with opportunities to enjoy physical and social activities....they should provide opportunities to experience the natural, cultural and scenic amenities of the greenway and/or trails corridor....they should reflect landscapes typical of the County’s different regions.... they should be accessible to the County’s citizens....they should provide a pleasurable, non polluting alternative to automobile travel for short trips....they should be an economic asset to communities along the trail....and they should contribute to the quality of life in the County.

These greenways and trails should be developed through partnerships among, state, federal, regional, and local units of government, constituent organizations and trails users....they should link communities and their parks and extend from cities into the countryside....they should connect the County’s diverse regions with trails in neighboring county’s and states’ trails....and they should evolve into a network throughout the length and width of the County, easily accessible to all County residents for their use and enjoyment.”

## **GOAL STATEMENT**

The main goal of the Kankakee County Greenways and Trails Plan is to provide environmental, aesthetic, and recreational enhancements to the County by creating a comprehensive trail and natural corridor plan that is based on the principles of continuity and minimal public economic impact while maximizing public accessibility, efficiency, and safety through roadway enhancements and trail improvements, and new signage. This goal is accomplished by building a cooperative coalition between developers, transportation officials, planners, environmentalists, park officials, municipalities, and civic leaders. New regulations on development are formulated and recommended for all jurisdictions based upon a cooperative planning process that involves all interested and affected parties. Implementing a county-wide greenways plan will address some urban sprawl concerns by providing home owners in the area with quality recreation before the area is completely developed. The intent of this plan is to encourage and foster partnerships and intergovernmental cooperation between municipalities, developers and public and private interests.



Rock Creek multi-use bridge, Kankakee River State Park Bike Trail

## **METHODOLOGY**

A coalition of citizens, civic leaders, commissions, park boards and municipal entities have expressed interest in creating a county-wide open space and trail plan. This Plan includes the preservation of possible future transportation corridors, the preservation of natural greenways, the improvement of park facilities, emphasizes regional cooperation on recreational and environmental issues, and recommends the development of a trail system for recreational and non-vehicular transportation uses.

The time line for completion of this Plan is approximately one year with extensive public involvement process spanning the entire latter three-fourths of the process. Implementation of the adopted Plan is critical to the success of this Plan and will take several additional years. This Plan is long range in nature, looking as far ahead as 20 years into the future, and is a framework for action but is not meant to be a blueprint for actual construction. Periodically, this Plan should be updated to account for completed projects, growth, and unforeseen circumstances that arise after the adoption of this Plan.

The Plan document is divided into three phases. Phase one involves the collection and examination of current park facilities and amenities in the County. Phase two encompasses research of current corridors, the feasibility of possible new corridors, examination of the missing connections of the current trail system, examination of environmental assets, and under served populations. Phase three is an examination of regional components and connections and the tools needed to implement the Plan.

### **Plan Outline**

The Plan is divided into seven (7) main sections:

**Section I:** includes the introduction. List of contributing parties, mission statement and the main goal of the Plan.

**Section II:** is an analysis of population growth patterns in the County. This Section examines growth patterns and formulates the basis for why this planning effort is needed.

**Section III:** researches the principles of greenways, the characteristics of greenways, and cites examples of other greenway projects nationwide and their effects on their respective areas.

**Section IV:** is an inventory of the existing corridors, environmental assets and parks currently serving the County. This section also examines the condition of the existing roadways in the County for trail usage and existing municipal and County regulations on development.

**Section V:** is the “meat” of the plan. It details the proposed natural greenways, trails, roadways and roadway improvements, and park facilities. It also includes suggested changes to the County subdivision regulations and a model ordinance for municipalities.

**Section VI:** is the implementation section and details the performance criteria ranking system. This Section discusses implementation techniques, design standards for the trail, and outlines potential funding sources and the cost of construction.

**Section VII:** is the Appendix and contains a list of public meetings, a time line and an annotated bibliography.