

Hammond Bicycle Master Plan



2019



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This plan also includes data and information drawn from a series of other studies and plans prepared for the City of Hammond. Those references are noted where appropriate and excerpts included in the Appendix of this plan.

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OVERVIEW

Bicycling provides a multitude of benefits, especially in older communities such as Hammond, Indiana. It presents the opportunity to provide safe passage, recreational and health benefits, an incentive for economic development, an improved environment, improved security, and serves almost every age group from the very young to senior citizens.



Mayor Thomas M. McDermott, Jr. Dedicates New Trail

Under the leadership of Mayor Thomas M. McDermott Jr., trail development has become a top priority of the City, focusing on a comprehensive approach to new trails, existing trail maintenance, safety, security, and offering programs and events that celebrate Hammond's spectacular bicycle trail system. All told, the City has invested almost \$40 million over the past 15 years on its trail system, utilizing funds from the Regional Development Authority, casino gaming, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, and the Hammond Port Authority, as it achieves its goal of providing an unparalleled experience

for bicyclists, joggers and other users.

This plan is designed to memorialize Hammond's ongoing efforts to become a premier bicycling community. With almost 32 miles of off-road paved paths, and another 6 miles of on-street bicycle lanes, Hammond has invested millions of dollars in a comprehensive trail system that serves every neighborhood and are of the city. In fact, Hammond's current trail system provides trail access within one mile of every residence within the city. Its ratio of trails to population is one mile of trail for every 2,000 citizens, and 1 mile of off-road trail for every 2,200 residents.



Elevated Path Near Wolf Lake

This document draws upon more than a decade of planning, incorporating and building upon a series of past studies undertaken by Hammond to develop its trail system. Those studies include the 2005 Trail Extension Study (SEH-Short Elliot Hendrickson), the 2009 Regional Development Authority Plan for Wolf Lake, the 2014 Wolf Lake/Robertsdale Sub Area Plan, the 2015 Hammond Lakes Framework Plan (SEH), the 2017 Wayfinding study (SEH), and the 2019 Transforming Downtown Hammond Plan (*Jeff Speck and Associates*). Each of these studies which can be found on www.gohammond.com, focus in part or in its entirety on developing bicycle paths in the City and help to document the value and impact those trails have on Hammond's ongoing revitalization and future development.

HISTORY

Hammond's bicycle trail history predates the national trend that began in the mid 1980's as abandoned rail corridors were first transformed into bicycle trails. In response to a request from student leaders who sought a measure to serve the needs of students from the



Remnants of Hammond's First Bike Path

City's North Hammond neighborhood who needed a safe route to George Rogers Clark High School in the City's Robertsdale section,

Hammond Mayor Edward J. Raskosky dedicated a hodgepodge of on-street paths and an 880 ft. extension/paving of an athletic field access path into the City's first dedicated trail. The off-road path was only 6 feet wide, while the on-street trail was nothing more than posted signage, but it was the first step towards Hammond's modern trail system.



Mayor Raskosky Approves First Bike Path (1977)

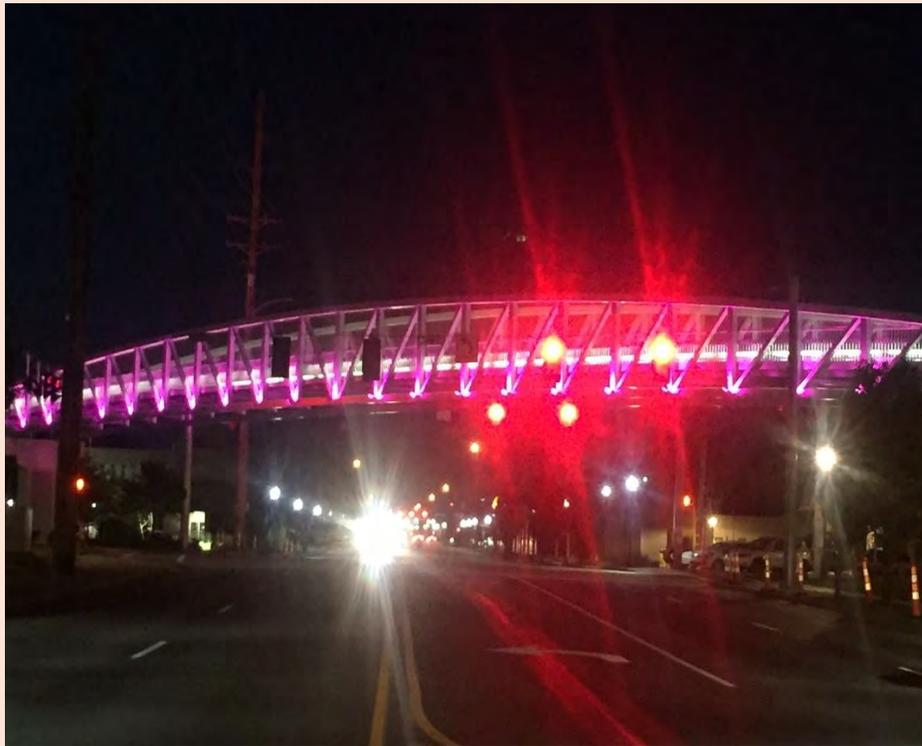
Hammond's first off-road trail was the Erie Lackawanna Trail built in the late 1980's, providing residents with an off-road, paved trail with a number of grade crossings running through the central and southern sections of the City. That trail was closely followed by the George Lake Trail in 1991 which was built on an abandoned Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad spur. Although the original intent was to run the trail to the Lake Michigan lakefront in Whiting, concerns that the path would be nothing more than a draw for "loiterers and undesirables" limited the trail to a length of just one mile. Overall, the City had a small jumble of trails that did not connect to each other, making access and usage difficult.

Hammond's trail system saw little additional growth until the election of Thomas M. McDermott, Jr. as its charismatic mayor in 2003. An avid runner and bicyclist, Mayor McDermott had a vision that has guided the City's efforts since- to invest in bicycle trails to connect the City. He saw the value that bicycle paths provide- safe recreational facilities that extend almost directly to the doors to the City's residents and the safe passage for riding enthusiasts and students. Under his leadership, a comprehensive trail system has



Mayor Thomas M. McDermott, Jr.

been developed that serves the entire city; a system that provides 1 mile of trail for every 2,000 residents, with the majority of that trail off-road. The system allows for continuous riding as trails now connect to each other. Hammond has invested millions of dollars into unique features such as seven bike bridges- five crossing seven major streets and thoroughfares and two crossing water, articulated stoplights, regular patrols and a comprehensive maintenance program.



South Calumet Avenue Bridge

In the past 16 years, Hammond’s trail system has grown to almost 40 miles, with plans to extend the trails system to more than 50 miles of off-road paved trails and on-road dedicated bike lanes. As a result, Hammond has become a destination for bicyclists and joggers, featuring a system that is unparalleled by any other community in Northwest Indiana, and a system of trails that connects to other adjoining communities, including Chicago’s iconic trail system.

BENEFITS

The Hammond Bicycle Trail System is designed to address and resolve community issues that affect the current and future environmental and economic health of Hammond and the surrounding area. Trails throughout the United States provide recreation and alternative transportation. In Hammond, trails serve as linear parks, providing open space that is convenient because it is adjacent to so many residences. Serving as connectors to the city's many neighborhoods, local parks, schools and shopping areas, trails safely allow users to access areas as conveniently as motorists utilizing city streets. Trails also help to improve accessibility for residents who have physical impairments to gain access to local parks and park amenities.

Trail systems increase the value of adjacent private properties as an amenity to residential and commercial developments, and Hammond's recent Downtown Master Plan was developed with making the Downtown area attractive for residential development and to attract new business through the placement and development of new trails and bicycling amenities.

TRANSPORTATION BENEFITS

American communities have grown in a sprawling, suburban form as a result of dependence upon the automobile as the sole means of transportation. As automobile use

has increased, traditional forms of transportation (such as buses) have become less available and communities have been slow to offer alternatives. In order to provide relief from automobile congestion on the streets and highways in metro areas, future transportation planning and development must be concentrated on providing residents with choices in modes of travel. These choices should be appealing and should offer the same benefits currently provided by the automobile: efficiency, safety, comfort, reliability and flexibility. Hammond's Trail System is being



Wolf Lake Bridge Over Calumet Avenue

designed to provide the same connectivity of the City's street grid, offering realistic and viable connections between origins and destinations such as work, schools, libraries, parks, shopping areas, historical and cultural sites and tourist attractions. In some cases, Hammond's trails have become the most effective for certain travel distances.

National surveys by the Federal Highway Administration have shown that Americans are willing to walk as far as two miles to a destination and bike as far as five miles.

Destinations have been linked throughout Hammond through a combination of off-road trails and on-road bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Hammond's Trail System offers numerous economic benefits, including higher real estate property values, increased tourism and recreation-related opportunities. Trails have been shown to raise the value of adjacent properties by as much as five to 20 percent. For example, in a residential development in Raleigh, North Carolina, new lots situated on a greenway were priced \$5,000 higher than comparable lots off the greenway. That impact is already evident in neighborhoods such as Robertsdale where 8,800 residents are served by more than 10 miles of off-road trails, and property values continue to rise.

Hammond hopes to revitalize its Downtown area by developing the area for residential and professional office use with direct access to Hammond's trails (*See excerpts Transforming Downtown Hammond in the Appendix of this document*).

HEALTH AND RECREATION BENEFITS

Studies show that as little as 30 minutes a day of moderate-intensity exercise (such as bicycling, walking, in-line skating or cross-country skiing) can significantly improve mental and physical health and prevent certain diseases. Trails contribute to public health by encouraging more people to walk or bike to short-distance destinations. Providing



Figure 1 Race to the Rescue

opportunities for participation in these outdoor activities, close to where people live, and work is an important component of promoting healthy lifestyles. Hammond's trails not only provide for a healthy lifestyle and pastime but connect residents with the City's parks and recreational facilities.

Hammond's Trail System allows the City to host events that draw hundreds of

participants for bicycle and bicycle related activities, including: the WHAM Late Ride, Ride and Rail Tour, Race to the Rescue, Region Riot Criterium Bike Ride and Leon's Triathlon. These are events that draw participants from throughout the Chicago/ Northwest Indiana metropolitan area, and the Midwest.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Hammond was founded in large part because of the many rail lines that bisect the City. As railroads consolidate, the reuse of abandoned rail beds allows Hammond to reposition industrial use to open space, and in doing so, spur redevelopment of



Wolf Lake Boardwalk

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adjacent brownfields and industrial sites. Hammond's trails also provide for public access to natural areas that would otherwise be inaccessible, areas such as the wetlands of Lost Marsh and George Lake, parts of Hammond's Lake Michigan shoreline, the south end of Wolf Lake and Oxbow Park.

SECURITY AND SAFETY BENEFITS

Most Americans are concerned about crime. Safe neighborhoods are of prime concern and priority to metro area residents. Some of the most successful deterrents to criminal activity involve increasing neighborhood awareness by citizens and participation in community watch programs. Trails have proven to be an effective tool to encourage local residents to participate in neighborhood programs. Some trails have been developed as part of efforts



Hammond Trail System

to deter criminal activity in a neighborhood. Crime statistics and reports from law enforcement officials have shown that parks, trails, and greenways are typically land uses with the lowest incidence of reported criminal activity. As a recreation resource, alternative transportation corridor or area where fitness activities take place, most trails provide a safer and much more user-friendly resource than other linear corridors, such as

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local roads. Trails typically attract local residents who use the facilities frequently, creating an environment that is virtually self-policing.

Hammond's trail system is patrolled by Hammond Police Officers and Port Authority security personnel. Since those trails run through residential neighborhoods throughout the City, it creates an additional presence.

WATER QUALITY AND WATER QUANTITY BENEFITS

Trails provide tree canopies and plants that absorb flood waters and filter pollutants from storm water. Hammond's trails also serve to replace abandoned rail lines that contained creosote laden rail ties, diesel fuel, and other contaminants from decades of rail use.

AIR QUALITY BENEFITS

Trails serve as alternative transportation corridors, reducing traffic congestion, thus helping to improve air quality. Since the majority of automobile trips are less than two miles in length, offering alternative transportation choices through greenways would encourage residents to bicycle or walk these short distances more often, thereby reducing traffic congestion and automobile emissions. The Hammond Trail System is located within 1 mile of the City's approximately 80,000 residents, giving them easy access to alternative transportation.

DESIGN STANDARDS

Hammond's trails are designed to both state and federal standards.

Off-Road Trails

The vast majority of trail miles in Hammond are off-road. These trails are paved with a minimum of 4 inches of asphalt pavement (1.5 inches of surface and 2.5 inches of binder) over a minimum of 6 inches of compacted gravel base. Trails are at least 10 feet in width, and edges are striped annually. Some paths in areas with high water have been built with a 12-inch ribbon curb to reduce sloughing and improve maintenance due to the impact that those areas pose.

On-Road Paths

The City currently has almost 6 miles of on-road bike lanes, but that number is expected to rise in the next 3-5 years as trails are added in the Hessville Business District and Downtown Hammond. Design standards include a 5-foot wide trail with appropriate striping and markings.



Cross-section of Planned Hessville On-Road Bicycling Lane

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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives of the City of Hammond in relation to its bicycle trail system are:

1. Provide Safe Passage for Riders
 - a. Continue to build bridges over major thoroughfares to provide safe and uninterrupted passage.
 - b. Install HAWK beacon (High-Intensity Activated crossWalk) stoplight systems
 - c. Continue to connect the trail system to local schools ensuring safe routes
2. Create A Trail System That Is Continuous and Which Connects Hammond Trails Throughout the City, As Well As with Trails of Other Surrounding Communities
 - a. Add additional off-road and on road trails
 - b. Extend Hammond's trail system to link up with East Chicago's trails.
3. Continue to Make Hammond's Trail System Safe and Enjoyable for Users
 - a. Continue efforts to add wayfinding to the trail system
 - b. Continue police and Port Authority security patrols and emergency call boxes installation
4. Educate the Public on The Value, Impact and Opportunity to Residents and Visitors
 - a. Continue to sponsor events that bicycle-centric, are fun and entertaining, resulting in increased use and knowledge of Hammond's Trail System.
 - b. Provide bicycle safety training and other amenities that benefit users.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The City of Hammond plans a continued aggressive strategy to expand and maintain its trail system. Its planned actions in support of achieving its goals and objectives include:

Provide Safe Passage for Riders

Hammond plans to construct 2 additional bicycle bridges; one across South Calumet Avenue just north of the City Limits to connect the Little Calumet River Trail;



HAWK Stoplight Along Erie Lackawanna Trail Near Maywood Elementary School

and the Hessville Governors Parkway Bridge near Parrish Avenue, which will directly serve students from Morton High School. In addition, the City will install 2 additional HAWK traffic lights in the next 3 years. The City's Complete Streets Plan includes a focus to either connect or enhance existing connections to Hammond's trails with public and private schools.

Create A Trail System That Is Continuous and Which Connects Hammond Trails Throughout the City, As Well As with Trails of Other Surrounding Communities

Over the next 3-5 years, Hammond will add approximately 10 miles of additional trails. It will complete shortly, for example, a connector, extending trails from North Hammond to the downtown area. Planned for 2020 is construction of a trail near the Grand Calumet River which connects trails from the 2 and 3rd Districts with Monon and Erie Lackawanna Trails as well as the aforementioned North Hammond connector. Hammond is working to implement a “road diet” in the Hessville Business District, reducing motorist lanes from 4 to 3, in order to add on-street cycling lanes. Hammond will also connect its trails with East Chicago, near Kosciusko Park and 150th Street, and another connection near Kennedy Avenue. These connections are in addition to the connections Hammond already maintains with Munster, Highland, Whiting and Chicago, giving riders hundreds of additional miles of riding opportunity.

Continue to Make Hammond’s Trail System Safe and Enjoyable for Users

The City is currently working with the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) to upgrade wayfinding signage on the Erie Lackawanna Trail, and is considering other sources of funding to



New Wayfinding Signage Along the Erie Lackawanna Trail

extend the wayfinding program already in place along the Wolf Lake Trail to the City's entire off-road trail system.



Hammond Police Trail ATV

Hammond will continue to provide police and security patrols along its trails. During the past year, the Hammond Police Department purchased 3 ATV's to increase the frequency of path patrols. A similar vehicle was also acquired by the Hammond Fire Department to allow

it to respond to emergency calls.

Hammond is also installing emergency call boxes in certain more isolated areas of its trail system to make riders, joggers and other users feel secure and safe. These boxes immediately connect the user with 911 including by voice and video.



Emergency Call Box

The first of several DERO bike repair stations was installed along Wolf Lake in late 2019, and another is planned for 2020, providing riders the ability to make needed repairs and adjustments.

The City's Law Department is conducting a comprehensive review of the City's ordinances and regulations to assure that such laws support bicycling and properly protect bicyclists, especially when sharing public roadways.

Educate the Public on The Value, Impact and Opportunity to Residents and Visitors

Hammond will continue to promote its spectacular trail system through a series of popular bicycling events:

- *WHAM Late Ride which draws almost 1,000 riders annually and has become one of the premier night rides in the Chicago metropolitan area.*
- *Region Riot Criterium Ride which offers a challenging closed racecourse for racing enthusiasts from throughout the Midwest.*



WHAM Ride

- *Ride and Rail Tour* which promotes the relationship between bicycling and public transit, allowing participants to ride to Downtown Chicago and then use the South Shore Railroad for return.
- *Race to the Rescue* offering a series of challenges for police, fire and emergency responders from throughout Northwest Indiana, including bicycling and running segments.
- *Leon's Triathlon* is one of the oldest and largest triathlons in the Midwest, drawing thousands of participants, utilizing part of Hammond's trail system for the bicycle and running portions of this very well-known challenge.

In addition to these efforts, Hammond is working to update its training for students and adults alike, with plans underway to develop a safety video featuring the Mayor that will be played for Middle school students as well as being available on-line. In addition, Hammond is actively pursuing projects like those already described in the Hessville Business District and Downtown Hammond, which will unite bicycling with economic development efforts in those locales.



Mayor McDermott Conducting Bicycle Safety Training

MAP OF HAMMOND TRAIL SYSTEM

