

Wabash River Trail Plan



Greater Wabash Regional
Planning Commission

June 2003

Introduction to the Wabash River Trail Plan

The goal of this plan is to create some ideas and concepts of pathways, and the feasibility of trails in the Southeastern Illinois counties of Edwards, Wabash and White, all near the communities of Grayville and Mt. Carmel, along the Wabash River. Two former rail corridors bisect this area in an X form, crossing in Grayville. The north-south segment in Illinois is about eleven miles long and is preserved via "railbanking." A federal law sustained by the Supreme Court, which preserves the federal authority and public transportation policy over the line, while allowing the railroad to remove its rail and economic interest in the corridor. The northeast to southwest segment from Bealle Woods State Park at Keensburg to Grayville is about eight miles long, and is abandoned-removing both federal authority and rails from the swath.

Together or separately these corridors can create singular trail routes, or the spine of a trail system, which can connect both geographically and economically hiking-bicycling-horseback riding ventures in the larger area of Mt. Carmel to Albion to Carmi and nearby communities and counties. For example, a geographic series of bike routes from Carmi to Mt. Carmel could be used for an annual fund-raiser bike ride by a not-for-profit in the area. In addition, such a route could be marketed for tourism trade and economic development from spring to fall. Noteworthy is that the east-west American Discovery (hiking) Trail runs from Evansville into Southern Illinois. It can be easily directed to Grayville once the Posey Trail is opened over the Wabash River into Grayville. The ADT itself uses a variety of on-road and off-road routes.

Usually no one trail is opened all at one time, let alone a whole trail system. Rather, a trail will open a couple of miles at a time. Thus, a trail may take several phases to open and span several years. Such would be the case for the Posey Corridor, from Poseyville, Indiana to the Wabash River to Grayville. A portion of the Wabash River Trail has been opened to walkers only at this point.

In general, routes may be off-road, a rail-trail, a river levee, an old road, etc. Or on-road, preferable lessor used country or township roads, but perhaps a state route for a short while. In either case, planning will take time. If routes are on-road, the designations and route markings will take time. For off-road routes land will have to be acquired or permitted. This alone will take quite some time, even before design and detail work begins.