

PRESS & GUIDE

Gateway Trail could go to Ford Field Park

City awaiting grant approval

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By Jason Carmel Davis, Press & Guide Newspapers

DEARBORN - City of Dearborn officials are awaiting grant approval so they can begin a project to extend the Rouge River Gateway Trail, according to Department of Public Works Director Kurt Giberson.

The city wants to extend the trail, which opened in October 2005, from the Andiamo restaurant on Michigan Avenue to Ford Field Park.

"We're going to use the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) project work as a way to get matching funds for the project," Giberson said.

Grant approval would give the city \$350,000 for the project, which, Giberson said, will cost between \$850,000 and \$1 million, as the project could require some bridgework along the Rouge River and the construction of some boardwalks, Giberson said. The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund has been identified as a potential source of funding.

Giberson said extending the Gateway Trail has been in the works for years, but acquiring a matching funds grant without a project such as the CSO job had been difficult. He added that the trail extension will take place in 2009 and 2010.

"I think (extending the trail) will give us a scenic, safe route for bikers and a direct connect with the rest of the trail," Giberson said. "Once you get out near the old hotel on Brady and Michigan, there's a bike path, but it's a tight fit."

The Gateway Trail begins in West Dearborn and travels through natural areas along the banks of the Rouge River.

The trailhead for new paved path is along Michigan Avenue, between Brady and Evergreen. The meandering 2.16-mile trail crosses the Rouge River twice and runs through the campuses of the University of Michigan-Dearborn and Henry Ford Community College (HFCC).

From there, it connects with the bike path in Edward Hines Park, north of Ford Road, and goes on to Northville, for a total of 19 miles.

The Gateway Trail runs through areas along the Rouge River not easily accessible before, city officials said. Its crowning features are two bridges over the river. One is closer to the Michigan Avenue entrance of the trail, while the other is closer to the Ford Road entrance.

The Dearborn path was made possible by the city, UM-Dearborn, HFCC, Wayne County, the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Community Foundation and Giberson said residents have been very receptive to the extension idea.

"This is going to be a team effort to get the path work done," Giberson said.

The Gateway Trail is part of a Greenways Initiative to encourage non-motorized transportation, as well as preservation of natural areas. The trail complements Dearborn's efforts at improving the water quality of the Rouge River and restoring its banks.

Trail users can also enjoy the Natural Studies Area on the UM-Dearborn campus, which can be reached from the Henry Ford Estate-Fair Lane or from the university's Environmental Interpretative Center. Bicycles are not allowed in the Natural Studies Area.