



May 2, 2011

Director Sue Black
Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture
9480 Watertown Plank Road
Wauwatosa, WI 53226

Dear Director Black,

The Hank Aaron State Trail is in the process of increasing its length and making additional connections to Milwaukee County Park properties. One of these connections is at the Oak Leaf Trail segment adjacent to Underwood Creek just south of Bluemound Road. The other is at Mitchell Park.

To facilitate these additions, the Department of Natural Resources is working with Milwaukee County and a number of partners including the Department of Transportation, City of Milwaukee, Menomonee Valley Partners, and Urban Ecology Center. Each entity is taking on specific responsibilities in order to make the comprehensive project a success. We have briefed Milwaukee County Parks staff, County Board members, and yourself throughout the process. We are now ready to move forward and need to make sure we have the proper permission from Milwaukee County.

There are many exciting elements that come along with these additions. To name a few, we are working with the Urban Ecology Center to bring their third branch to the edge of the Menomonee Valley with a location at 3700 W. Pierce Street; we are making connections to various high interest entertainment venues along the route, such as Miller Park, Summerfest, the Pettit National Ice Center and State Fair Park; and we are making connections to the neighborhoods and riding public by creating a trail segment that is within a 15-minute bike ride of over 415,000 people.


The Hank Aaron State Trail on its western end is being constructed on the former Milwaukee Road right-of-way. The connection with the Oak Leaf Trail at Underwood Creek Parkway will come off of this corridor on to Milwaukee County Parks land just south of the playground equipment and cross the grass as a 10' wide asphalt connection with the Oak Leaf Trail. The construction costs will be covered by a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Grant with a match from the Department of Natural Resources. We are interested in donating the soon to be constructed connection on County land to Milwaukee County Parks to be maintained as part of the Oak Leaf Trail.

On the opposite side of the Hank Aaron State Trail, a new segment of trail is being constructed between the newly opened Valley Passage at 37th and Pierce (future location of the Urban Ecology Center) and Mitchell Park. This segment, along with a 20-acre restoration project will be constructed with Federal and DOT grants, State Stewardship Funds, and private donations. A bridge will connect the project to the north end of Mitchell Park directly behind the Domes. The project requires an easement from the County for the bridge's crossing and construction of its south end on Milwaukee County Parks property. A sidewalk would then be constructed from the bridge landing to a connection with the 27th Street Viaduct. A small plaza would mark the trailhead immediately north of the parking lot just west of the Domes. We are looking to construct all elements as part of our project, but would like to donate the sidewalk and small plaza to the County to be maintained as part of Mitchell Park, since it is on Park land.

We understand that the construction of both segments on County property requires permits and we will be pursuing those when construction start times are known. We have shared our plans and met with Jim Keegan, Guy Smith, Dave Burch, and Kevin Haley. Guy Smith has indicated an interest in accepting the donations and maintaining the new additions that are on County Parks land. We understand that the County Board needs to authorize the required easements and formally accept these donations. We ask that the process to do so moves forward as quickly as possible, as we will be moving to final plans very soon. Our desire is to present these requests to the Parks, Energy and Environment Committee of the County Board at their meeting on May 17th. Documents showing the specific locations of the above mentioned connections have been provided to Landscape Architect Kevin Haley. Please let us know what other information needs to be provided and if we are able to proceed with the final request to the Board in the May cycle.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please contact me at 414-263-8559 if you would like to discuss further or have specific questions.

Sincerely,



Melissa A. Cook
Hank Aaron State Trail Manager