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MACOUPIN COUNTY BOARD SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH ITS TRAIL COMMITTEE

The Macoupin County Board and ITS Trail Committee have signed an agreement intended to facilitate development of a multi-purpose trail from Staunton to Benld along the former Illinois Traction System Railroad corridor, to connect to the existing Benld-Gillespie trail in Southern Macoupin County.

The agreement approved by the Board at its April meeting will allow for the County to act as the fiscal agent for the Committee and affirms the Board's support for the project. This agreement, according to County Board Chairman Andy Manar will allow for the County to apply for certain State and Federal grants that are available to units of local government but not available to non-for-profit entities.

"I commend the ITS Trail Committee for their accomplishments and I hope that the new partnership with the Macoupin County Board will help further facilitate this project," said Andy Manar, Chairman of the Macoupin County Board.

Manar says that he sees the development of the ITS trail as essential to the future of Macoupin County. Manar said that the county acts as the fiscal agent for other entities within its borders such as rural water districts but this is the first time to his knowledge that the Board has taken up an issue for an organization such as the ITS Trail Committee.

"We support projects that impact multiple communities and I believe the Board should be pro-active about supporting projects that improve the quality of life of the residents of Macoupin County," he said.

Last fall, the County Board provided a small grant to help the ITS Trail Committee perform feasibility study for the entire project.

"Development of this trail will enhance the quality of life for residents of Staunton, Sawyerville, Benld and surrounding areas by providing a safe, natural trail for walking, running, biking and enjoying the natural flora and fauna of the region. It will benefit people of all ages and maybe used to organize bike rides, nature walks for girl and boy

scout troops, school and church groups, etc. in the future,” said Dr. Poonam Jain, President of the ITS Trail Committee.

Madison County Transit is in the process of developing a trail from Worden to Staunton along the former ITS corridor and hopes to have it completed sometime this year. With the help of donations from Leroy Duda and other area residents, Staunton has developed a trail head at Duda Gardens which will be dedicated on June 2, 2007. The proposed trail from Staunton to Benld will use this trail head as its starting point.

Manar said the agreement was a cooperative effort that began as a discussion between the ITS Trail Committee and members of the County Board Larry Lux, Bob Vojas and Morrie Fraser, all of which represent the Staunton area.

CUTLINE:

Pictured are: (front row, l to rt.) ITS Trail Committee President Poonam Jain, Macoupin County Board Chairman Andrew Manar, Macoupin County Board Member from Staunton Bob Vojas, (back row, l to rt.) ITS Trail Committee Executive Director Jarid Ott, ITS Trail Board Member John Fritsche, ITS Trail Committee Treasurer Sandy Lane, and ITS Trail Board Member Nelson Grman.