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Much-Needed Bridge Repairs Ensure Safer Crossings, Improve Connectivity ^[1]

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By:

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The new Kalamazoo Street crossing. Photos by Raymond Holt.

East Lansing and Ingham County officials held a ribbon-cutting ceremony July 30 to celebrate the completion of repair work on the Hagadorn Road pedestrian bridge.

The work which, was partly funded by an Ingham County Parks Trails and Parks millage, included:

- New hand railings that are safer for bicycles;
- Improved approaches that are handicap-accessible;
- New safety railings leading up to the bridge;
- The addition of rocks underneath to the bank for erosion control.

Also, cracks in the foundation of the bridge were repaired and the bottom side was sand-blasted

and repainted.

This was the third ribbon cutting the City has held for bridge work on the Northern Tier Trail system. On July 18 a new bridge was installed at Albert A. White Memorial Park, and repair work was done at the East Lansing Soccer Complex bridge and the Harrison Meadows Park and Abbey Road bridges. Repair work was completed on the Kalamazoo Street bridge on July 23.

According to Wendy Longpre, assistant director of the East Lansing Parks and Rec Department, the next project will include pavement work for the Northern Tier Trail.

All of these projects are funded in part by a Parks and Trails millage passed by Ingham County voters in 2014. The millage generates more than \$3 million a year.



The Albert A. White Memorial Park bridge.

Community effort strengthens links

Melissa Buzzard leads the grant writing process for the Ingham County Parks Department. She attended the ribbon cutting and shared her perspective on the grant writing process and the importance of community partners.

"I am very grateful for this trails millage and all the communities that have come together to work on it," Buzzard said. "I would have loved to have this kind of connectivity where I went to school. I'm looking forward to more of these projects and the millage renewal."

East Lansing was awarded approximately \$1.5 million of the 2014 millage funds to either repair or replace six bridges and make other necessary improvements to its trail system. The county allocated \$260,900 for the work that was recently completed to the Hagadorn Road bridge.

"Thank you to the County Commission for approving these projects and for chasing these grants down," Mayor Pro Tem Erik Altmann said last week. "The money is out there but you have to

ask for it, and you have to ask for it in the right way in order to get it. They worked really hard to secure the funding. These trails and bridges are really important; we think of them as part of our parks and recreation but increasingly and appropriately they are how people get from A to B.

Longpre concurred.

"I'd like to echo some of Erik's comments," Longpre said. "You can't necessarily see all of the work that was done on it because a lot of it was structural underneath. We had to repair the footings and steel supports underneath as well as some erosion control. This was a project that needed to be done to keep the bridge functioning well, even if nobody sees those things," Longpre said.

She also emphasized how important the bridge is to connectivity in the area.

"This is a connector; it allows students from MSU to come north into East Lansing and it allows East Lansing residents to come south into MSU," she said.

East Lansing's parks and recreation millage expired in 2016 and the City Council opted to not ask voters for a millage renewal which has led to the department facing an overall reduction in its operating revenue.



An inline skater crosses the Kalamazoo Street bridge east of Clippert Street along the River Trail.

Jessy Gregg, vice chair of the Ingham County Parks Commission, and County Commissioner Carol Koenig both attended the July 30 ceremony.

"I want to emphasize how appreciative we are of East Lansing and the other communities vying for millage dollars," Gregg said. "The thing we wanted to emphasize in this grant process is connectivity, and I think this bridge is positioned great to be an on ramp to our next project that will be on the other side of this bridge."

Koenig said Ingham County's trail system is serving the community well.

"Ingham County is really pleased to have helped the citizens of East Lansing to get out and enjoy nature more," she said. "As the pieces come together, and as long as we commit to doing more, you will see a trail system in Ingham County that will rival almost any other in the state. I want to thank the voters of East Lansing for supporting the millage that paid for this project. They voted 70 percent in favour of more parks and trails."

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