

# PURPOSE AND NEED

## Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3)

City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Ohio  
PID 84112

Prepared by:

**Michael Baker Jr., Inc.**  
The Halle Building  
1228 Euclid Avenue, Suite 1050  
Cleveland, Ohio 44115  
(216) 664-6493

**February 2009**



## **PURPOSE AND NEED**

The purpose of the Towpath Trail Extension is to complete the Towpath Trail in Cuyahoga County by creating about six miles of trail and greenway from old Harvard Avenue to the proposed Canal Basin Park at downtown Cleveland. The Towpath Trail is one of three dedicated transportation options to explore the Ohio & Erie Canalway. It will one day stretch over 100 miles from Cleveland's Flats at Canal Basin Park to New Philadelphia, Ohio and represents the northern end of a cross-state Ohio to Erie Trail, which will connect Cincinnati, Columbus and Cleveland. As of 2004, over 70 of the 101 miles have been built, representing an investment of \$50.6 Million.

The purpose of the Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) Project is to provide connectivity between the local City of Cleveland neighborhoods to Steelyards Commons, where Stage 2 of the Towpath Trail has already been built by a private developer, and connectivity to over 100 miles of multi-use trails of the Ohio and Erie Canalway.

The Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) Project has been identified in the SAFTEA-LU Transportation Bill as a Cuyahoga County Engineer's Office High Priority Projects. The Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) project had two congressional earmarks, House Project No. 2196 and Senate Project No. 4639 as sponsored by U.S. Representative Dennis Kucinich and Senator Voinovich, respectively.

The purpose of the Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) Project is to promote economic development in the neighborhoods along the trail and provide a safe recreation area with new green space in environmental regeneration areas.

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The Towpath Trail has become a defining feature in the Cuyahoga Valley landscape. Constructed 175 years ago as part of the Ohio & Erie Canal, it began as a simple dirt path on which to lead animals pulling canal boats. Today it has become an extraordinary recreational amenity, highlighting Cleveland's industrial river valley, and serving both its surrounding neighborhoods and the region.

The canal, which was proving to be unprofitable, was finally destroyed and ceased being used after a catastrophic flood struck the area in 1913. Large remnants of the towpath survived and served as a silent witness to an earlier era until the areas rediscovery came with the establishment of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park in 1974.

One of the major projects completed by the National Park Service in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) was the conversion of approximately 20 miles of the towpath into a multi-use trail that brings visitors into close contact with nature and the remnants of the valley's history and culture. The Towpath Trail today receives more than 1.7 million users per year.

The success of this segment of the Towpath Trail has sparked a campaign to extend the trail as one of three primary transportation options that serve the 110-miles linear heritage greenway now called the Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway (Ohio & Erie Canalway). Unique public/private partnerships have coalesced to address individual segments of this expanding



## **Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) PID 84112 Purpose and Need**

Towpath Trail system in Cuyahoga, Summit, Stark, and Tuscarawas counties. In addition, the Towpath Trail acts as the northern leg of the developing Ohio-to-Erie Trail which extends from Cincinnati through Columbus and on to Cleveland.

In Cuyahoga County, Cleveland Metroparks has completed two additional segments of the Towpath Trail in its Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation, located immediately north of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, adding six miles of trail. The northern terminus of the Towpath Trail is now at old Harvard Avenue, which is where the Stage 1 Extension would begin.



Map of the Ohio to Erie Trail

In 1999, the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission (CPC) published *Linking the Corridor: A Plan for the Towpath Trail in the North Cuyahoga Valley Corridor*. This document is a guide plan for the future design and construction of the approximately six-mile long trail segment from the Metroparks Reservation at old Harvard Avenue to downtown Cleveland at the proposed Canal Basin Park, which will incorporate the original terminus of the Ohio & Erie Canal with the Cuyahoga River. The plan includes an inventory of existing conditions and resources within the study area; an examination of route alternatives, their feasibility and impacts; and implementation strategies. These are all being taken into consideration in the development of this Stage 1 Extension of the Towpath Trail.

Following the 1999 CPC plan for the Towpath Trail, the Ohio and Erie Canal Association (OECA) released a management plan for the development of the entire Ohio & Erie Canalway. The Canalway Management Plan (CMP) envisioned a linear heritage greenway from Cleveland's lakefront south to Dover/New Philadelphia, Ohio. The CMP outlined a programmatic approach that would attract reinvestment in historic settings, conservation of the natural environment, expansion of recreational facilities and opportunities, and stimulation for new business and commercial developments. The report forecasted that the Canalway would "become a focal point of visitation and a generator of economic benefits, and will be an engine for local economic development." It noted that "Investment in the corridor improvements will create jobs and economic opportunities and will ripple through the economy through local spending," citing estimates of an additional 3.3 million new residents and visitors spending an estimated \$69 million per year.

The CMP offered an implementation plan, which the project team closely followed during the development of this Stage 3 Towpath Trail Extension. Some of these recommendations which the Towpath Design Team is incorporating into the project include:

- Promoting the preservation of natural and scenic vistas for future generations
- Developing an interpretive program that combines existing resources and new initiatives to convey a coherent story of the Canal



## ***Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) PID 84112 Purpose and Need***

- Promoting the creation of a continuous multi-use trail along the entire length of the Corridor
- Encourage the creation of additional recreation and open spaces along the Corridor
- Advocate trail, roadway, and greenway linkages between the Canal Corridor and adjacent neighborhoods and park systems.

In late 2007, the Towpath Partnership, a steering committee comprised of the CPC, City of Cleveland - Planning Department, Cuyahoga County Engineer's Office (CCEO), Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio Canal Corridor, CVNP and other local community based groups, re-evaluated Stages 3, 4, and 5 of the Towpath Trail Extension to determine the optimum termini for these stages that would provide most advantageous connection to the community and neighborhoods, while promoting economic development in the neighborhoods along the trail and provide a safe recreations area with new green space in environmental regeneration areas. The Towpath Partnership determined that Stage 3 would be extended to Literary Road. Stage 4 would start at Literary Road and continue to Canal Basin Park, incorporating all of Stage 5. The Towpath Trail Extension now consists of a total of four stages, Stage 1 through 4.

Incorporating the plans from both the OECA and the CPC and working closely with members of the local community, the Towpath Design Team will plan for additional recreational and green space opportunities for both local residents and visitors coming from outside the immediately adjacent communities. The Design Team will also produce a plan that provides new connectivity between local communities to over one hundred miles of multi-use trails. Additionally, the Design Team will seek solutions that provide an economic catalyst for the surrounding neighborhoods and communities.

### **Stage 3 Overview**

The Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) project proposes to extend the multi-use Towpath Trail a distance of 1.90 miles from the recently redeveloped Steelyard Commons site, where a private developer has already completed the second stage of the Towpath Trail Extension, to Literary Road. The Stage 3 section of the trail will also connect Steelyard Commons and Clark Field with the Tremont Neighborhood.

This segment of the Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) begins at the north end of Towpath Trail Extension Stage 2 at Holmden Avenue and continues north along a wooded, natural escarpment along a hillside with a residential neighborhood above and a mix of industry below. The trail would then travel under the Clark Avenue Viaduct and enter the Clark Fields Park. After following the perimeter of the park, adjacent to I-490, the trail would become elevated to cross West 7<sup>th</sup> Street and then return to a grade near or adjacent to Quigley Road. The trail would then pass under the I-490 bridge and follow the abandoned West 4<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way to Literary Road. The abandoned West 4<sup>th</sup> Street right-of way is situated on an escarpment with industry below and a residential neighborhood above that consists of a mix of modern and older single family houses and townhomes.

The project will encompass the third stage (Stage 3) out of a four-stage process that will see the Towpath Trail extended by approximately six miles. Once all four stages are complete, the Towpath Trail will provide connectivity to 90 miles of multi-use trails, extending throughout the Cuyahoga Recreational Valley to downtown Cleveland. In downtown Cleveland, the trail will connect to the proposed Canal Basin Park, a gateway park that will orient visitors with



information on the Ohio & Erie Canalway. A system of local connector trails is planned to link Canal basin Park with Downtown Cleveland and adjacent residential neighborhoods of Ohio City, Tremont and Detroit-Shoreway.

### **Stage 3 Current Conditions**

The study area through which the current proposed Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) trail alignment runs is primarily an urban area containing a mix of residential, commercial, recreational, institutional, manufacturing, and industrial uses. The valley contains steel mills, railroad tracks, chemical plants, manufacturing facilities, and recycling facilities. The valley area between Clark Avenue and I-490 is mostly occupied by Clark Field, a City of Cleveland-owned park that consists of baseball and football fields, a running track, enclosed dog runs, a playground and a paved walkway. Cleveland neighborhoods of Clark-Metro and Tremont, lie just beyond the Industrial Valley. These neighborhoods are comprised of single-family residential structures, multi-family structures, public and religious institutions, and retail and commercial businesses. The trail and its related greenway would run primarily along an escarpment above the Cuyahoga River Valley, and serve as a buffer between the Tremont neighborhood and the industrial areas below.

### **Community Goals and Objectives**

There are several important community and regional goals and objectives for this project, including:

- Providing an economic stimulus to neighboring communities, through increased neighborhood connectivity, providing increased access to restaurants, shopping, and events in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Providing additional access to green space, through environmental regeneration and the development of connector trails, particularly in the parts of Cleveland that are undergoing rapid residential development
- Integrating the Towpath Trail into Cleveland's citywide bicycle plan which will provide bicycle connectivity throughout the entire metropolitan area, strengthening the connections between communities.
- Protecting waterways, wetlands, and other natural resources through environmental regeneration and the creation of additional green space in the valley.
- Promoting sound environmental practices in project design and implementation
- Communicating the story of the Canal and its industrial history to people throughout the Corridor through interpretive design.

### **Agency Mandates and Legislation**

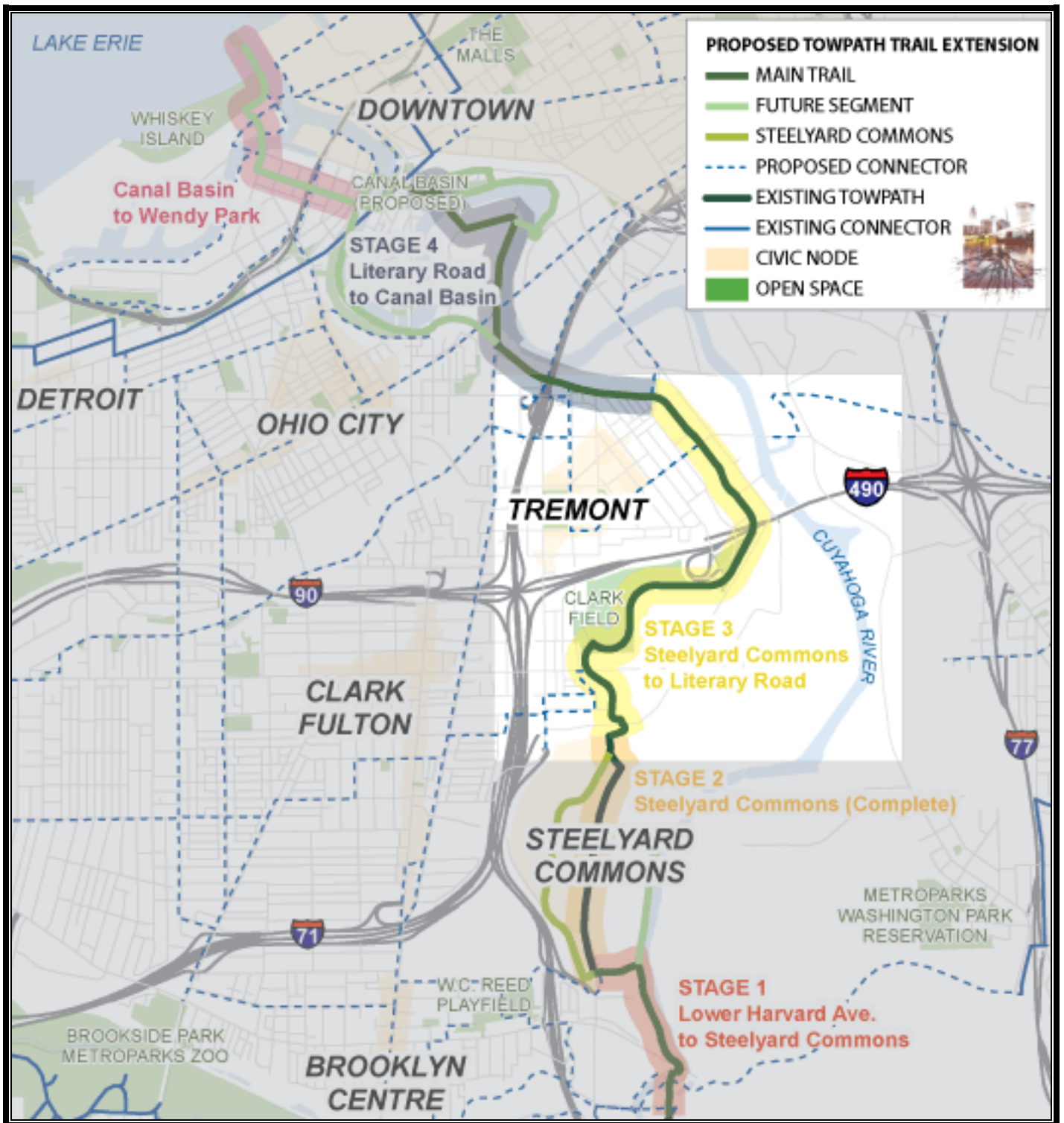
The Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) Project has been identified in the SAFTEA-LU Transportation Bill as a Cuyahoga County Engineer's Office High Priority Projects. The Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) project had two congressional earmarks, House Project No. 2196 and Senate Project No. 4639 as sponsored by U.S. Representative Dennis Kucinich and Senator Voinovich respectively.

The Towpath Trail Extension is part of The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency's (NOACA) Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), and is also included as part of the city of Cleveland's Master Bikeway plan.





**Stage 3 Study Area**



## Towpath Trail – Stage 3 – Project Components

- 1- Holmden Avenue Crossing Component**
  - a. Trail location (two general location options shown)
  - b. Bridge?
  - c. At-grade Crossing?
  - d. Underpass?
- 2- Hillside Plateau Component**
  - a. At-grade trail on former roadbed?
  - b. Cantilevered structure above or below roadbed?

2E – Environmental Regeneration Zone

  - i. Slope stability and contouring
  - ii. Vegetative cover and invasive plant species issues
  - iii. Natural spring issue
  - iv. Buffer to industrial uses
- 3- Clark Neighborhood Gateway Component**
  - a. Trail location
  - b. Creation of minor trailhead
  - c. Trail connection to minor trailhead

3E – Environmental Regeneration Zone

  - i. Slope stability and contouring
  - ii. Vegetative cover and invasive plant species issues
- 4- Clark Field**
  - a. Trail Location (two general location options shown)
  - b. Along Clark Field Drive?
  - c. Along I-490 perimeter?
- 5- Valley View Bluff**
  - a. Crossing West 7<sup>th</sup> Street ramp of I-490
    - i. Bridge?
    - ii. At-grade?
  - b. Traversing bluff (two general location options shown)
    - i. Across top of bluff
    - ii. Follow eastern shelf
  - c. Delineation of trail into trailhead (Section 6)

5E – Environmental Regeneration Zone








  - i. Greening of bluff and slopes
- 6- Quigley Ave./West Third St. Trailhead Component**
  - a. Define trailhead footprint
  - b. Provide adequate parking

6E – Environmental Regeneration Zone

  - i. Explore eco-friendly construction materials and methods
  - ii. Greening of area
- 7- West Fourth Street Component**
  - a. Trail location
  - b. Creation of minor trailhead at Literary Avenue

7E – Environmental Regeneration Zone

  - i. Slope stability and contouring
  - ii. Vegetative cover and invasive plant species issues
  - iii. Wetlands issue
  - iv. Standing water on West Third – Drainage? Spring? Water main?

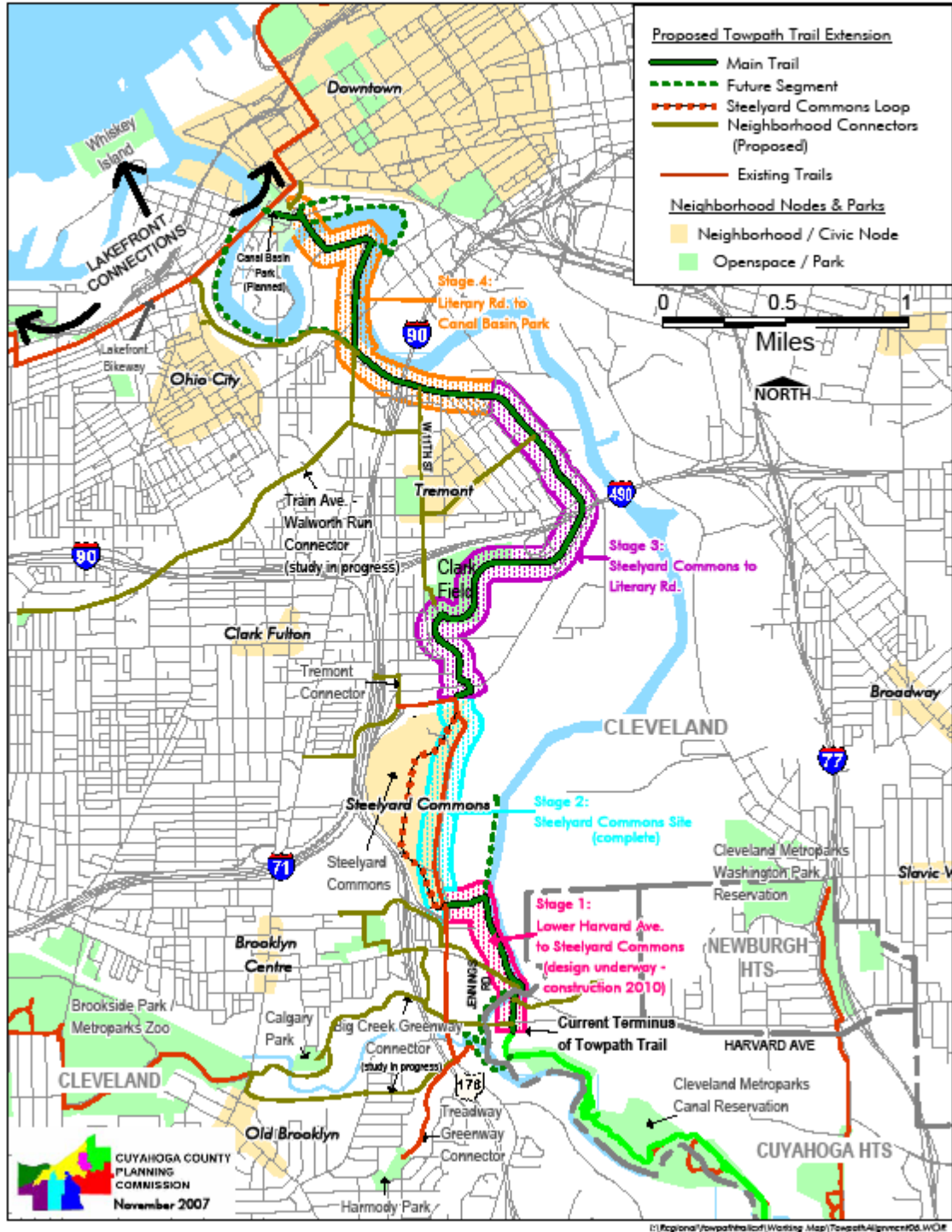
- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  Existing Towpath Trail           |  Quigley Road Connector           |
|  Proposed Towpath Trail Alignment |  Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad  |
|  Environmental Regeneration Zone  |  Potential Neighborhood Connector |
|  Trailhead Location               |  |





**Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) PID 84112  
Purpose and Need**

**Proposed Towpath Trail Alignment Update**



**Stage 3 Area – Towpath Trail Extension**





## **PROJECT PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) Project is to:

- Provide connectivity between Steelyard Commons, where Stage 2 of the Towpath Trail has already been built by a private developer northward to Literary Road, as well as provide connectivity between the local Tremont and Clark-Metro neighborhoods to the Towpath Trail's multi-use trail system that stretches over 100 miles southward to the Dover/New Philadelphia area.
- Promote economic development in the neighborhoods along the trail
- Provide a safe recreational area with new green space in environmental regeneration areas
- Meet the congressional mandates as identified in House Project No. 2196 and Senate Project No. 4639 of the SAFTEA-LU Transportation Bill.

## **PROJECT NEED**

### **Provide Connectivity to Over 100 Miles of Multi-Use Trails and to Cleveland's Citywide Bicycle Plan**

Residents of the Cleveland neighborhoods and communities which line the east and west sides of the Cuyahoga River Valley do not have direct trail access to the extensive trail system that runs throughout the city of Cleveland and throughout the Cuyahoga River Valley. Cyclists, pedestrians, and rollerblade users currently have to either use old Harvard Avenue, a busy road used mostly by large trucks, or get in their cars and drive to a trailhead to access the Towpath Trail.

Providing new connectivity is part of the Canal Management Plan's goal of promoting community and economic development by unifying and strengthening connections between communities and neighborhoods. Connections to the Lakefront Bikeway, Emerald Necklace, Big Creek Trail, West Creek Trail, Mill Creek Trail, Train Avenue Trail, Treadway Ravine and the City Loop Trail are needed to form a contiguous trail network. This existing and planned off-road trail network can also connect into Cleveland's citywide bicycle plan with its dedicated street routes that will interface with the trail network. These connections are needed to provide uninterrupted bikeway access from the neighborhoods and communities in the vicinity of the Towpath Trail to more than 100 miles of trails through the federally designated Ohio & Erie Canalway, and to serve as the northeast Ohio section of the State of Ohio's developing Ohio-to-Erie Trail, linking Cincinnati to Columbus and on to Cleveland.

### **Rejuvenate Local Neighborhoods**

The Canal Management Plan lists community and economic development as one of its major goals, and lists the addition of multi-modal access into the local neighborhoods as a key element to meeting this goal.

Multi-modal access which will introduce new visitors to the neighborhoods which surround the trail in a way that meets the goals mentioned in the Canalway Management Plan is needed. Instead of having to drive to local neighborhoods, Towpath Trail users will be able to walk, rollerblade, or ride their bikes. A new influx of people that might not have otherwise visited these distinct historical neighborhoods will provide a prime opportunity for economic growth in these communities, repositioning the very core of Cleveland's settlement to attract a new marketplace of city dwellers. These alternative



mode choices, such as walking, biking, or rollerblading, will alleviate the negative impacts that come with driving, such as noise and air pollution, as well as traffic congestion and limited parking.

**Provide a Safe Recreational Area with New Green Space in Environmental Regeneration Areas**

Another goal of the Canal Management Plan is to enhance the recreation and visitor experience by creating a safe visitor experience in the recreational and open spaces along the corridor. With the development of planned residential properties in nearby Tremont, Cleveland's downtown area, and other local neighborhoods and communities, access to additional green space becomes vitally important.

Residential communities in downtown areas want to be able to enjoy the same type of access to recreational activities and natural areas that are frequently provided to suburban communities. Greenways such as multi-use recreational trails encourage interaction among their users, provide opportunities to explore the outdoors, create re-vegetation efforts that decrease air pollution, and promote exercise.

Over the generations of urban development and industrial use, the natural systems of the valley have been overlooked in favor of the needs of manufacturing and transportation of materials. The development of a trail and greenway through this landscape provides the opportunity to refocus attention on improving and correcting the natural systems of the river valley allowing for the natural systems and industrial uses to co-exist and work in partnership.

Creating additional green space through the development of the greenway associated with the Towpath Trail itself and through the environmental regeneration of the surrounding landscape is also needed. Some areas along the trail are ripe for ecological restoration while others will provide opportunities for picnic areas and rest-stops where interpretive stories will be shared.

Due to the industrial history of area, environmental regeneration is needed in the project area. Opportunities may exist where restoration of natural areas can be incorporated where trail users can access the valley's scenic vistas. These areas will serve as buffer zones from industrial activity by providing for green space between the immediate trail and the industrial activities in the area. These areas may also augment localized storm water run-off with natural features that improve or enhance natural wetlands.

**SAFTEA-LU Federal Legislation**

The Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) Project has been identified in the SAFTEA-LU Transportation Bill as a Cuyahoga County Engineer's Office High Priority Projects. The Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) project had two congressional earmarks, House Project No. 2196 and Senate Project No. 4639 as sponsored by U.S. Representative Dennis Kucinich and Senator Voinovich respectively.

**CONCLUSION**

The Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3), identified in the SAFTEA-LU Transportation Bill, is needed to link the local Tremont neighborhoods to the 20 miles of the Towpath Trail



## ***Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) PID 84112 Purpose and Need***

and provide connectivity to over 100 miles of multi-use trails of the Ohio and Erie Canalway. The 1.7 million annual visitors that utilize the adjacent 20 miles of the Towpath Trail, indicates the potential benefits of extending the Towpath Trail. By providing a safe trail connection, the Stage 3 Extension will be a catalyst for economic revitalization, environmental regeneration / green space, and neighborhood connectivity. The Stage 3 Towpath Trail Extension will greatly benefit the entire city of Cleveland by enhancing residential development, attracting new businesses, and adding value to the neighboring communities.

### **LOGICAL TERMINI**

The logical termini for the Towpath Trail Extension (Stage 3) were established based on the scope of the identified needs in the various studies cited above. These termini include only the portion of the Towpath Trail Extension that will require construction based on the studies completed to date. The southern terminus of the project is Steelyard Commons, where Stage 2 of the Towpath Trail has already been built by a private developer. The northern terminus of the project is Literary Road, the last road directly connecting to the local Tremont neighborhood from the Cuyahoga River Valley. This segment of the Towpath Trail Extension will link the local Tremont neighborhood to the 20 miles of the Towpath Trail and provide connectivity to over 90 miles of multi-use trails of the Ohio and Erie Canalway.