

Transportation Improvement Program FY 2014-2017

Public Comment and Response Form – MACOG

**Date of Comment:** April 28, 2013

**Name of Person:** Glenda G. Lamont, President, Bike the Bend, Inc.

**Comment:**

The LaSalle Trail is a vital link to a new highway being built in our area. So vital a link that, without the LaSalle Trail, the highway will not exist.

The highway we are referring to is the Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail, a 34 mile multi-use highway that will connect Southwestern Michigan to Indiana. Almost 27 miles of this highway has already been completed and 4 miles is scheduled for construction and completion in 2014. That leaves a little more than 3 miles needed for the highway to be complete, including the 2 miles that make up the LaSalle Trail. Priority needs to be given to the construction of this vital link.

The trail will provide valued alternative transportation for residents and visitors alike between universities and schools, neighborhoods, parks and YMCAs, and employers, downtowns and commercial areas. Three of our area's largest employers, University of Notre Dame, Indiana University, and Memorial Hospital are either adjacent to or within blocks of this highway. Memorial Hospital has just been award Bicycle Friendly Business status by a national accreditation organization and the 2 universities are actively seeking similar accreditation. These employers and their employees obviously see the importance of the highway in employee recruitment and retention as well as a vital form of alternative transportation and recreation. They are not alone. It was in late 2008 that the seed of the Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail was first planted. Five short years later, it is almost complete. This is testament to the widespread financial and community support for the highway.

Bike the Bend, Inc. organizes an annual community bike ride with the express purpose of showcasing the community to residents and visitors alike. In 3 short years, this bike ride has grown to over 2,000 participants. Again, further testament to how the community values bicycling. The growth of Bike the Bend also shows that we live in a beautiful community we can all take pride in. The LaSalle Trail and the Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail will add to the beauty of the community and will encourage residents and visitors to get out and experience it.

The momentum for the Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail needs to continue. The LaSalle Trail needs to be constructed in the next program cycle to maximize the attention our area will receive due to the extraordinary accomplishment of the federal government, 2 state governments and countless local governmental agencies in getting this 34 mile multi-use highway completed in less than 10 years. MACOG is a vital member of this effort. We respectfully request that the LaSalle Trail project be added to the 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program.

**Response:**