

Wood River Township Report - Mike Babcock, Supervisor

2018 has been a very productive year for Wood River Township and the residents we serve. One notable accomplishment is the successful completion of the first “rails to trails bike path” in northern Madison County. The bike path is the largest single project we have completed during my nearly 10 year tenure as Township Supervisor. I want to personally thank the Township board members as well as county board members, Tom McRae, James Futrell and Chrissy Dutton for their



support as well as Bethalto Mayor Alan Winslow and Madison County Transit Director, Jerry Kane, for all of their assistance in completing the project which was first envisioned nearly 10 years ago.



Due to the densely populated neighborhoods near the trail we anticipate extensive use of it by residents of Rosewood Heights, Bethalto, East Alton and Cottage Hills etc. Beyond the use of the trail in its present state there is also the distinct possibility that it can be expanded to connect to trails that may eventually be built connecting Kutter Park to Spencer T Olin park in Alton as well as parks in Bethalto etc.

Funding for the trail was a challenge unto itself. The Village of Bethalto was generous in donating the abandoned railroad right of way they owned which is a 1.2 mile stretch from Bethalto to East Alton. Additional funding came from four different sources and we are **grateful** to all of them for their input. A special thank you to Melissa Erker and Phillips 66 refinery that donated \$100,000 to get the project started. We were able to leverage the refinery’s donation to seek additional funding from Madison County, Metro East Parks District, and the township to fund the rest.

The bike path not only serves as a welcome recreational addition for our residents, it also made dramatic improvements to the surrounding neighborhood. The initial cleanup of right of way, which had been neglected and overgrown for more than 50 years, was impressive. The completed project truly turned a lemon into lemonade by dramatically improving the general appearance of Center Street and the neighborhood along every mile of the once neglected trail. In short it has become a bike trail and beautification project that significantly improves drainage and, very likely, property values in the area as well.

The crew of Keller Construction did a great job and we want to extend our sincere thanks for completing the job on time and under budget. They did an excellent job.

After nearly ten years the trail is open for walking or bike riding and we encourage everyone in Wood River Township to use it as much as possible. I want to thank the tax payers for their patience and for allowing us to put this project before you and complete it with your enjoyment in mind.