



PRESS RELEASE

- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -

DATE: April 29, 2021
FROM: Jonathan Myers, Managing Director
SUBJECT: Smiths Crossing Bridge Rehabilitation Connecting to Statewide Trails

The Midland County Road Commission (MCRC) was recently approved for a \$1.9 million dollar Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grant for the 2023 rehabilitation of the historic Smiths Crossing Bridge over the Tittabawassee River!

At the turn of the 20th century a ferry service provided a crucial southern link from Midland to Saginaw. Known as 'Smiths Crossing', it was named after the man who owned and operated the ferry. In 1907, a multi-span 'Pratt Through-Truss' bridge was erected at the site and appropriately became known as the 'Smiths Crossing Bridge'. The 15-foot-wide structure was the primary crossing until a newer 4-lane bridge was built 1/2 mile upstream in 1976. Now at 114 years old, it is only 1 of 6 surviving examples of this bridge type in Michigan. The bridge was closed to all forms of traffic in 1989 and has fallen into disrepair after being closed for the past 32 years.

In 2018, MCRC began to work with a consortium of entities with the goal of resurrecting this historic bridge so that it can once again provide connectivity for Midland. However, this time it will serve as an essential river crossing for a non-motorized trail linking Midland and the Pere-Marquette Rail Trail to the Great Lakes Bay Regional Trail. This new trail will serve as a 'key connector' to and become part of the Iron Belle Trail (IBT). Extending from Ironwood in Michigan's Upper Peninsula to Belle Isle State Park in Detroit, the IBT has separate hiking and biking routes that together span over 2,000 miles.

This project would not be possible if not for the diligence and dedication of many entities, including:

- Midland Area Community Foundation
- Spicer Group
- Great Lakes Bay Regional Trail Alliance
- Iron Belle Trail Foundation
- MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program
- Ingersoll Township
- Midland County Parks and Recreation
- Midland County Road Commission

On April 23, 2021, MCRC was presented with a CRA IMPRESS Collaboration Award. The County Road Association of Michigan (CRA) recognized the perseverance of the group and the positive impact that this unique project will have for the community.

With an estimated total project cost of \$4.6 million dollars, fundraising efforts to raise the required matching funds will begin soon and run through 2022 – Stay tuned of more information!

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Midland County Road Commission



Bringing Midland to the Iron Belle Trail

In 2018, Midland County Road Commission, along with several partners such as the Midland Area Community Foundation and the Great Lakes Bay Regional Trail Alliance, worked on resurrecting the historic “Smiths Crossing” Bridge and bringing a UP-to-Detroit non-motorized trail one step closer. The bridge was originally built in 1907 and has been closed to all forms of traffic since 1989. MCRC worked with its partners to plan a link from the Iron Belle Trail directly to Midland. The restored bridge will serve as an essential river crossing for non-motorized trail traffic. Once completed, the trail will connect with separate hiking and biking routes that span over 2,000 miles running from Ironwood in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula to Belle Isle in Detroit.

