



DATE: August 2, 2021

MEMO TO: Terry Wilke, Chair
Planning Committee

FROM: Randall L. Seebach
Director of Planning and Land Preservation

REQUEST: Provide policy direction regarding potential shared costs with Vernon Township (the “Township”) to provide safety and accessibility improvements to the existing Schaeffer Road trail crossing at Buffalo Creek Forest Preserve.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS SUPPORTED: Public Access and Connections; Leadership

FINANCIAL DATA: There is no financial impact at this time.

BACKGROUND: The District is committed to increasing accessibility to its preserves and facilities, consistent with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and has allocated \$100,000.00 annually in the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan to address accessibility needs. In 2019, the District produced an updated Transition Plan to increase accessibility of its facilities, consistent with federal and state accessibility standards. The largest estimated costs are related to parking and trail issues.

Within Buffalo Creek Forest Preserve, there is a primary trail that connects the east and west portions of the preserve with a crossing over Schaeffer Road. Recently, a visitor, whose son uses a manual mobility device, notified the District that the existing crossing was very difficult and potentially unsafe for use by individuals with disabilities, due to the steepness of the asphalt ramp leading from the trail up to the roadway and the common occurrence of passing vehicles exceeding the posted speed limit. District staff assessed the crossing and concluded that the trail slopes exceed accessibility standards.

The District hired the engineering firm of Hey and Associates to design a safe and accessible crossing. With a posted speed limit of 25 m.p.h., rectangular rapid flashing beacons are not required by code, but were recommended by the engineer for safety due to the typical speed of passing vehicles. District staff approached the Township, which owns the right of way at this location, with a request that the Township share in the project costs by funding the installation and long term maintenance of flashing beacon portion of the project. Other components of the project include regrading of the existing trail surface, and installation of accessible concrete aprons and tactile warning plates.

Staff is looking for permission to continue discussions and authorization to negotiate an intergovernmental agreement with the Township that would identify the District’s and Township’s relative obligations related to the design, construction, operation, maintenance, and replacement of the crossing improvements. That agreement would be presented to the Planning Committee for review and approval at a later date.

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Executive Director, Chief Operations Officer, Director of Finance, Corporate Counsel.