

***Leveraging Funds to Create a Bike Trail Interstate Underpass to
Connect East-West Bike Trails in Portage County, Wisconsin***
Submitted by Heartland Bike Club
Through the Community Foundation of Portage County as Fiscal Agent

A. Organizational Information

1. Summary of organization’s mission, long-term goals, history: Heartland Bike and Nordic Ski Club is a bicycle and Nordic ski advocacy organization. It was created in 2000 through a merger of two existing organizations: A Nordic ski club originated in the early 1990’s (Heartland Nordic ski club) and a biking club started in the early 1990’s (the Velo Max bike club with 22 cyclists who began riding together on Sunday mornings, founding their club to draw more cyclists to join in the long rides and social benefits). Both groups discovered that they had many common members who enjoyed biking and skiing sports during alternate seasons. The groups came together to pool resources and re-energize each other. Heartland Bike and Nordic Ski Club (HBNSC) is “dedicated to the promotion of bicycling and Nordic skiing in Central Wisconsin”. Heartland Bike and Nordic Ski Club finances its club through membership dues and bike/ski event fund-raisers. While HBNSC is not a 501(c)3 organization, it operates with a local governance structure and reports to its membership. The partnership with the Community Foundation of Portage County as fiscal agent on this grant opportunity demonstrates a typical approach of HBNSC: leveraging strengths of community resources and working efficiently to conduct the business of the organization so that most energy can be focused on connecting people to continue to build a passion for cycling and skiing. The long term goal of HBNSC is to continue to promote cycling and skiing, attract new membership to both sports, and provide valuable networking through its website (<http://www.heartlandclub.org/>). With only a few “clicks”, anyone can find a weekend group ride/ski schedule, calendar of events (some of which are hosted by HBNSC), and points of contact for more information on cycling/skiing in Central Wisconsin. Heartland Bike and Nordic Ski Club plans to continue its current efforts to maintain heightened awareness and advocacy primarily focused toward cyclists’ rights of the road in Central Wisconsin where there is unyielding road construction and development. The HBNSC plans to continue using its website to promote citizen action on issues of concern to bicyclists. Issues related to regional bike facilities and routes are highlighted on the website with invitations for members to get involved in voicing their ideas and concerns so that their perspectives can be shared with public leaders.

2. Description of successes in recent projects and programs: Through its website, HBNSC provides a constant means for people to plug into cycling and skiing—whether they are local people wanting to try something different, or people new to the area, or cyclists and skiers just passing through. For many HBNSC members, it is about “the journey” so they find much value in sharing time with others cycling and skiing. The Club has impacted the community additionally through partnerships with the Portage County Parks Department, Tomorrow River Trails, Community Foundation of Portage County, and other organizations. With approximately 250 members, HBNSC impacts the region through the volunteer support provided by its members at area cycling-related events such as the Lactic Edge Triathlon, an area mountain bike race, and some annual fund-raisers like the Tomorrow River Trail Annual Ride Event. Heartland Bike and Nordic Ski Club has provided donations and support to a variety of programs and events that promote area cycling and skiing experiences—especially among area youth (high school and college level). Donations have ranged from \$250 to \$1,000.

Since the HBNSC formed, membership has been strong and continues to grow. The Club continues to promote recreational cycling throughout Central Wisconsin and the use of bikes as a mode of local alternative transportation. With the local University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (approximately 8,000 students) and with Stevens Point as the home of the National Wellness Institute which hosts an annual conference bringing thousands from across the Nation to Portage County, health and wellness is a prominent local issue. Heartland Bike and Nordic Ski Club has a committed and supporting role in providing additional avenues to area cyclists and the promotion of the sport of cycling. The proposed interstate bike underpass can be one of these avenues (in a true physical sense) further linking our community which has had a barrier influencing our cycling, running and walking for years. More people out cycling, running and walking directly equals a healthier and more productive community.

B. Purpose of the Grant

1. Situation

a. Need. Why is it necessary right now? Portage County (population 69,365) located in Central Wisconsin is dissected by a north-south interstate route creating a barrier for cyclists. The proposed bike trail will provide a crucial east-west link across the Interstate 39 (I-39) barrier that cuts north-south through the middle of the Stevens Point metropolitan area, the Portage County seat and most highly populated area of the County. There are currently no safe trails for bikes that cross I-39. The lack of convenient and safe east-west passage for cyclists prevents more people from biking more often to work, school, or for recreation in the Stevens Point area. Both of the east-west crossings (Highway 10 and County HH, approximately two miles apart) are noted by the State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) as being “high volume, undesirable” for bicycling conditions (Reference, <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/travel/bike-foot/docs/bikeportage.pdf>). Both Highway 10 and County HH have four lanes of traffic and have interstate exchanges. According to the *Bicycle Crash Analysis for Wisconsin Using a Crash Typing Tool (PBCAT) and Geographic Information System (GIS)* published by the Wisconsin DOT in June 2006, the City of Stevens Point has the highest number of bicycle-vehicle crashes based on bicycle miles traveled. Portage County has the highest county crash rate in Wisconsin based on the same measurement. (Reference: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/library/research/docs/finalreports/05-18bicycle-f.pdf>).

To address this need for safe passage across the interstate, the City of Stevens Point in partnership with Portage County, HBNSC, Canadian National Railway, businesses, and other municipal and community partners joined together to develop the concepts for a new bike trail that would pass under I-39 beside a railroad underpass. It will connect 2.3 miles of Patch Street and Brilowski Road Shared Use Bike Trails and create the first direct connection between two business parks and growing retail areas on east and west sides of I-39 in Portage County. This new central trail crossing would enable cyclists to navigate safely east and west in the most populated area of Portage County. It would literally connect the Stevens Point Business Park with the Portage County Business Park and all trail networks on the east and west side of the county would be given safe and convenient access. Those who wish to commute to work or school on bike, use bikes for business, and recreate on bikes will all greatly benefit from the I-39 bike trail underpass.

This proposed trail was identified in the *Plover and Stevens Point Metropolitan Area Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan* adopted in 1997 following a cooperative effort of the communities and a local 23-member Bicycle Pedestrian Steering Committee. The committee was organized from various community groups, including public school and university leaders, business leaders and bicycle enthusiasts from the Stevens Point and Village of Plover metropolitan area. The *Bicycle*

and Pedestrian Plan identified this trail under I-39 as one of its recommended routes for three reasons: 1) connects existing trail infrastructure; 2) splits the distance between existing, more hazardous routes; and 3) more economical than alternative routes.

The City of Stevens Point along with its partners submitted a grant to the Wisconsin DOT to help fund this \$151,000 project. It was awarded \$121,800 or 80% of the project cost and must now come up with the remaining 20% cash match or \$30,200. To date, approximately \$16,500 or 55% of the match has been raised including \$1,000 committed by HBNSC which is half of its current budget. Heartland Bike and Nordic Ski Club, working through a fiscal agent, the Community Foundation of Portage County, respectfully requests a \$10,000 *Bikes Belong* grant to assist in reaching 88% of our matching goal. The remaining 12% of matching funds will be raised by HBNSC in partnership with Portage County's Grant Writer before January 2008 when the matching funds must be secured or the Wisconsin DOT grant for trail construction will be lost. Donations from businesses and individuals along with other local grants will be solicited to raise the remaining matching funds (\$3,700), an attainable goal for the community.

b. Environment: What are the current bicycling conditions in our area?

(Infrastructure, programs, allies, and resistance): Portage County has some of the best bicycling trails and networks in the State of Wisconsin but the trails on the west side of I-39 are not linked safely with the trails on the east side of I-39. Trails include: 1) Ice Age bicycle route highlighting glacial terrain, 48 miles of road trail (east side); 2) Green Circle Trail, well-known and heavily used, encircles the City of Stevens Point and adjacent municipalities, 30 miles of off-road trail (mostly west side of I-39); 3) Tomorrow River Trail, 18 miles of off-road access on an abandoned railroad bed that connects the Stevens Point area with outlying townships and villages (east side); 4) Standing Rocks County Park, 12 miles of single track and 10 miles of double track mountain bike trails (east side); and 5) New 1.8-mile Patch Street Shared Use Trail (connects with other biking networks and Green Circle Trail) within the metropolitan area scheduled for completion in 2007 (west side of I-39). There are many allies for bicycling in Portage County—businesses, parks and trail leadership (Green Circle Trail Committee, Community Foundation of Portage County, Stevens Point Parks Department, Portage County Parks Department), especially with a university of over 8,000 students in Stevens Point. Over the past 5 years, the City of Stevens Point has added paved shoulders to several key connection routes on west and east sides of I-39. The City plans to designate and sign many miles of new bicycle routes in 2007. The City acquired the necessary right of way along U.S. Highway 10 as part of the Wisconsin DOT project at Brilowski Road (north-south) to make sidewalks possible for the Highway 10 East commercial district allowing bike use. The Stevens Point Transit System buses have bike racks mounted to their front bumpers to assist bike riders. The Stevens Point Police Department has “Police on Bikes” that patrol the numerous trails throughout the City. This is an effective way for officers to interact with citizens and promote our bike-friendly community. The Police Department works with CAP Services of Portage County to give bicycles to families in need from the hundreds of bikes that are found, but never claimed. The Hostel Shoppe of Stevens Point, *Bikes Belong* member (see Letter of Support), one of our Nation's largest recumbent bicycle manufacturers and dealers, hosts an annual Recumbent Rally in the Portage County Business Park (350 attendees in 2006). Stevens Point maintains numerous bicycle parking facilities strategically located downtown. Though there have been many improvements over the past several years, there is still the need for vigilance on cyclists' issues. There are no sources of *resistance* in Portage County so much as the need for HBNSC to continue to stay organized to voice concerns to political leaders

and planners as issues relevant to cyclists' rights arise, as plans are made, and to ensure that we are ready for a unified response when necessary on an issue.

2. Specific Activities

a. Goals: The goal of this project is to obtain matching funds from *Bikes Belong* to complement a Wisconsin DOT grant awarded in 2006 to build a crucial east-west bike trail link in 2008 that would allow bicyclists to overcome the north-south I-39 barrier that currently divides the west side and east side of Portage County. The connector trail would provide safe passage in the most densely populated area of Portage County halfway between the other two existing east-west passages which are very dangerous due to high traffic volumes and interstate interchanges. We plan to construct a ten foot wide, 0.4-mile blacktop trail in 2008 that would begin at the eastern terminus of Joerns Drive on the west side of I-39, parallel the tracks of the Canadian National Railway as they pass under I-39, and once past the bridge structure, immediately leave the railroad right of way and enter the Portage County Business Park on the east side of I-39 in a 12-foot easement provided by Portage County to their beautifully landscaped stormwater retention facility. This project has been coordinated through the Wisconsin Central Ltd division of the Canadian National Railway and the Wisconsin DOT North Central Region. The trail will travel east beyond the underpass and terminate at Business Park Drive, a wide paved drive with a posted speed of 25 mph. From this point, trail users could travel south on Business Park Drive to access the Business Park and the retail development of Crossroads Commons in the Village of Plover or north and east along Business Park Drive to its connection with the Brilowski Road Shared Use Trail. The bicycle facility under the highway structure would require installation of a modular block retaining wall to hold back the embankment. A six foot fence would also be constructed to separate the trail from the railroad tracks. (See enclosed maps and architect's renderings.)

b. Action Plan (including individuals/groups assigned tasks and due dates): The project has already been coordinated with and approved by the City of Stevens Point (Engineering Department and Mayor), Canadian National Railway, Wisconsin DOT, Portage County Sheriff's Department/Traffic Safety Commission, and the Portage County Board of Supervisors. The City of Stevens Point along with its partners submitted a grant to the Wisconsin DOT to help fund this \$151,000 project. It was awarded \$121,800 or 80% of the project cost and must now come up with the remaining 20% cash match or \$30,200. To date, approximately \$16,500 or 55% of the match has been raised. Heartland Bike and Nordic Ski Club, working through a fiscal agent, the Community Foundation of Portage County, respectfully requests a \$10,000 *Bikes Belong* grant to assist in reaching 88% of our matching goal. The remaining 12% of matching funds will be raised by HBNSC (Mike McGibbon, President and Rolf Garthus, Bicycle Manufacturer, member of HBNSC and *Bikes Belong*) in partnership with the City of Stevens Point and Portage County's Grant Writer before January 2008 when the matching funds must be secured or the Wisconsin DOT grant will be lost. Donations from businesses and individuals along with other local grants will be solicited to raise the remaining matching funds (\$3,700), an attainable goal for the community. The City of Stevens Point will administer the State grant and matching funds, let the appropriate contracts (January 2008), and oversee construction of the bike trail underpass (construction to begin May 2008, completed in Fall 2008). The grand opening of the trail will be coordinated by the City of Stevens Point in cooperation with partners including HBNSC and Portage County in September or October 2008.

3. Impact of Our Work

a. Deliverables/Measurable Outcomes: Deliverable #1: New bike trail underpass opened to the public by November 2008 and constructed to the specifications noted in #2a. above

that allows cyclists to safely overcome the interstate barrier in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.
Deliverable #2: All matching funds (\$30,200) for Wisconsin DOT grant raised before January 2008.

b. Ridership: First, we want to offer a context for our conservative calculations of the impact of this new biking “connector” trail: 1) Studies show that as many as 5% of commuters in Wisconsin bicycle to work during peak months (Wisconsin DOT)—approximately 1,256 in the City of Stevens Point (population 25,125) if we apply the Wisconsin formula. 2) According to the Stevens Point Parks and Recreation Department counts, 75-150 cyclists per hour enter and leave the Green Circle Trail at Iverson Park (northwest of proposed trail) during a peak season. (Starting in 2007, bike rentals are available in this park to add even more bicyclists.) 3) Most of Portage County’s population resides west of I-39. Based on the new trail’s location, we anticipate that the proposed bike underpass will be used most frequently by local people who will bike to work or for recreation. 4) Based on an informal email survey of businesses/employees conducted in the Portage County Business Park by the Portage County Business Council and Portage County Grant Writer in January 2007, 10 businesses with a total of 714 employees returned surveys estimating that an additional 45 employees will commute to work on bicycle using the proposed new bike trail underpass. Interestingly, this is 6.3% or just slightly over the expected bicycle commuter average in Wisconsin. 5) In addition, some businesses in the Portage County Business Park propose that their customers living or working on the west side of the interstate will also use the new trail to access the new deli, the new fitness center and kids fitness programs, blood center, medical clinic, and bicycle retail businesses located in the Business Park. We will estimate 10 customers per week during non-snowy months or conservatively 360 individuals will use the new trail each year to conduct business in the Park. One business wrote: “There is currently no real safe way to get to the business park by bike.” 6) Furthermore, the 10 businesses in the Portage County Business Park returning the survey said that they believe that more than a 100 individual bicyclists (again, mostly local individuals) will use the new trail for recreational purposes each year. **The above calculations count individual riders, not repeat uses of the trail.** We estimate that the new trail will encourage strong ridership growth with over 500 “regular” users during any given year, many of whom would have never commuted to work on bicycle before. This figure does not count repeated uses of the new bike trail by single riders. It also excludes those who will use the new bike trail underpass when they attend special events including the Recumbent Bike Rally in the Portage County Business Park hosted by the Hostel Shoppe bike manufacturer and retailer (see letter of support). This event draws people from across the Nation to try out the recumbent cycling experience and promotes recumbent cycling ridership to the general public.

C. Evaluation

1. What are our strategies/plans for determining success? Success is defined for this project as the completion of the bike facility underpass in 2008 and daily use of the new bike facility by people biking to work, using their bike to conduct personal business, and enhancing recreational opportunities for cyclists in Portage County as we open up bicycling horizons on both the east and the west sides of I-39. An informal survey of Portage County Business Park businesses will be conducted by the Portage County Grant Writer again in the year after the new trail is constructed to gather general estimates about the trail usage by employees, customers, and recreational cyclists. Recumbent Bike Rally participants will use the trail and we will also tally those figures. **There is absolutely no doubt that this project will put more people on bikes more often!**

2. How can our project serve as a model? This project is truly a story of cooperation and partnerships—all sectors will have been involved in the project: Local municipal government, county government, state government, local non-profit/community foundation, local grassroots advocacy bicycling group, businesses including bicycling industry, individual donors/volunteers, and, with a *Bikes Belong* grant, we would add a national partner to the mix. Other organizations can learn from us about how we worked with our government and community partners to leverage our resources and expertise to make this dream a reality. We know that more and more bicyclists are encountering barriers due to growing traffic volumes and highways/interstate developments. Our project design working with an existing railroad corridor that is still actively used by trains may offer other communities some ideas about how to use these existing corridors in partnership with railroad organizations to assist bicyclists in safely overcoming highway barriers.

D. Project Budget

1. Total:

QTY	PRICE/ QTY	ITEM	TOTAL/ITEM
391 L.F.	\$12.00	CHAIN LINK FENCE, 6 FT.	\$4,692.00
300 SQ.FT.	\$5.00 6"	CONCRETE PAVEMENT (10'x15')	\$1,500.00
452 TON	\$38.00 3"	BITUMINOUS CONCRETE - 2-1.5" LIFTS	\$17,176.00
2,597 SQ.YD.	\$6.50 6"	CRUSHED AGGREGATE BASE COURSE	\$16,880.50
36 SQ.FT.	\$40.00	DETECTABLE WARNING CURB RAMP	\$1,440.00
2,105 SQ.YD.	\$5.00	4" TOPSOIL, SEEDING, & FERTILIZER	\$10,525.00
15 L.F.	\$4.00	SAWCUT	\$60.00
2,293 SQ.FT.	\$33.00	MODULAR BLOCK GRAVITY WALL	\$75,669.00
1 LUMP	\$4,000.00	GRADING	\$4,000.00
1 LUMP	\$7,500.00	CLEARING, GRUBBING AND SITE PREP.	\$7,500.00
10,345 SQ.FT.	\$1.00	CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY PROPERTY FOR EASEMENT	\$10,345.00
15 L.F.	\$15.00 30"	CURB AND GUTTER	\$225.00
			TOTAL \$150,012.50

The *Bikes Belong* grant will be spent exclusively on trail construction (not property easement from Railway). The City of Stevens Point will provide \$25,000-\$30,000 of in-kind services in addition to the project budget noted above (see Mayor’s letter attached for details).

2. Other Sources:

- a) Portage County: \$15,000 (resolution passed by Board of Supervisors already);
- b) HBNSC: \$1,000;
- c) Hostel Bike Shoppe (bike industry/retailer), \$500. **Total matched to date: \$16,500.** Remaining need for matching funds in order to receive Wisconsin DOT grant (federal funds passed through state) is \$13,700 and will be solicited from individuals, businesses, and local foundations.

E. Attachments in addition to required HBNSC Letter of Introduction

1. Financials: a) Financial Statements enclosed in form of 2006 Annual Report of Community Foundation of Portage County, See page 8; b) 2007 Organizational Budget for Community Foundation of Portage County.

2. Other Support Materials: a) Letters from Rolf Garthus, Owner Hostel Shoppe (Bike manufacturer/retailer who is member of *Bikes Belong*) and from Carl Kneuse (Owner Campus Cycle and Sport Shop, bike retailer); b) List of Board members/affiliations of Portage County Community Foundation; c) Map and architect’s renderings plans of project; d) Letter from Mayor Gary Wescott, City of Stevens Point; e) Letter from Mark Maslowski, Portage County Executive.