

State of Wisconsin
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
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December 9, 2011

City of Milwaukee Public Works Committee
Ald. Robert Bauman, Chair
200 East Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Public Works Committee,

I am writing to request your support for the collaborative effort to transform RACM's Airline Yards parcel into a 24-acre natural area and construct two pedestrian bridges, which will become part of the Hank Aaron State Trail. This project has been in development since the 2002 Master Plan for the Milwaukee Road Shops site in the Menomonee Valley, and has moved forward through the strength of the partnerships between the DNR, DOT, City, RACM and Menomonee Valley Partners. I seek the committee's support in seeing through this last piece of this incredibly successful redevelopment.

As you are aware, the Hank Aaron State Trail is a DNR facility running across the City of Milwaukee. Today, the Trail extends from Lakeshore State Park to approximately 124th Street, at the Milwaukee / Waukesha County line. Southeast Wisconsin's largest tourist attractions are along the route of the Trail, including the Milwaukee County Zoo, State Fair Park, Miller Park, the Harley Davidson Museum, the Milwaukee Art Museum and Discovery World. With this project, the Trail would also connect to the Mitchell Park Domes, aligning State and County amenities for the enjoyment of the public.

Perhaps more importantly, the Trail is a route to jobs for many Milwaukee residents and an amenity for those living in the city without easy access to the lakefront and other natural areas. Every day of the year, the Trail is used by bike commuters and walkers to access jobs. More than 400,000 people live within a 3-mile bike ride of the Hank Aaron State Trail, and of those, more than 100,000 are under the age of 18. The Trail provides a healthy and safe recreation opportunity for all residents in our community.

The project before you, the Airline Yards and bridge project, extends the Hank Aaron State Trail to the Mitchell Park Domes and creates a natural area along the banks of the Menomonee River, along what is currently a vacant railyard stockpiled with fill from the Marquette Interchange project. This development will take this vacant land along an inaccessible stretch of the Menomonee River and create a unique amenity for the region. The addition of the programming provided by Urban Ecology Center will make this a heavily-used, well-programmed facility, as well as a learning laboratory for school children from the southside neighborhoods.

As the manager of the Hank Aaron State Trail, I recognize and appreciate the leadership the City has shown and the commitment they have made to this project over the years. I look forward to continued partnership as we complete the vision to revitalize the Menomonee Valley and create access to jobs and recreational amenities for the enjoyment of the entire Milwaukee community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads 'Melissa Cook'.

Melissa Cook
Hank Aaron State Trail Manager