



# TRAVIS TRANEL

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 49<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708-8953

## PREPARED TESTIMONY OF REPRESENTATIVE TRANEL

Before the  
Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage  
Regarding the  
Platteville Belmont Bike Trail Bill  
**Assembly Bill 809**  
Thursday, February 27, 2014

I would like to thank Chairman Ott and Vice-Chairman Kleefisch for scheduling Assembly Bill 809 for a public hearing. Also, I'd like to thank the committee members for taking the time to listen to my testimony.

I've introduced AB 809, with my colleague Rep. Marklein, in hopes of facilitating the completion of the Platteville to Belmont bike trail. This trail project has been an ongoing collaborative effort between Lafayette County, DNR, the City of Platteville, UW-Platteville, landowners along the trail corridor and other stakeholders since 2004.

After years of consultation between legislators, local government, DNR and landowners, a plan was developed to relocate a portion of the trail corridor in an effort to maintain and facilitate private agricultural development. Using the current state owned rail corridor would have resulted in farm fields being divided by the proposed trail route.

In 2011-12, all parties agreed upon a plan that allowed for a continuous trail. The plan involves exchanging part of the existing state owned rail corridor with local landowners' property closer to U.S. Highway 151.

Recent changes to laws governing DNR real estate transactions preclude the DNR from easily moving forward with the current plan. My hope is by moving AB 809 forward we will be able to direct the DNR to complete the real estate work needed to finish the trail on schedule.

Mr. Chair, I would like to submit to the record letters of support from the Platteville Community Arboretum, Platteville City Council, Platteville Main Street Program and Lafayette County Highway Commissioner/Trail Project Coordinator.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to take any questions you might have.

# Belmont – Platteville Bike Trail (Background for AB 809)

2/26/14

## Chronological Summary

- The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has owned this trail corridor between Platteville and Belmont since the mid-1970s. Prior to that the railroad operated the corridor from the late 1800's.
- Negotiations were ongoing for many years between DNR staff, DNR attorneys, and local landowners and their attorneys, County and local government officials, local legislators, UW Platteville Chancellor's office, and local friends' group members.
- With concurrence from legislators and local government, DNR eventually consented to evaluate the relocation of a portion of the trail corridor in an effort to assist a private agricultural development. This proposed approach would have included a sale or transfer of state land. At the time, local zoning laws prevented the landowner from being able to develop a proposed agricultural facility because it would be too close to the trail corridor.
  - (The landowner subsequently decided not to pursue the agricultural development. Under the new zoning regulations governing setbacks, the landowner would be able to construct his facility if he chose to do so.)
- DNR worked with landowners to propose different options to accommodate their wishes and allow for a continuous public trail while upholding other public obligations of the DNR.
- Eventually (2011-2012) all parties reached agreement on a plan that would allow for a continuous trail. The plan involves exchange of part of the existing trail corridor to the landowners (with DNR retaining certain rights consistent with rail property) for lands currently owned by those landowners in a different location (closer to Highway and on the edge of their ownership).
  - With positive indications that the trail location issues could be overcome, Lafayette County worked with DNR to apply for a grant<sup>1</sup> in 2004 from WisDOT (Wisconsin Department of Transportation) to fund design and construction of the trail. At the time, the project (i.e. all steps necessary to develop a complete trail) was estimated to cost \$975,000.
  - The application was selected for funding and funded design work that determined, specifically, where and how the trail could be rerouted to accommodate the landowners. DNR provided the \$249,000 to Lafayette County for the project.
  - The project partners (Lafayette and Grant Counties, WisDOT and DNR) have formed a working team and hired a consultant to lead design and engineering of the trail.
  - The design work was finished in 2013. Part of that work was to arrive at current cost estimates for completing the project. The most recent cost estimate for the entire project is \$1,946,607.

- The project partners (Lafayette County agreed to again serve as the project sponsor) submitted a (“pre-application”) request in November 2013 for additional funding from the TAP program to cover the funding shortfall. Notice was received on 2/26/14 that the project was selected to submit a full application; announcement by WisDOT of funded projects will occur in the summer of 2014.
- Recent changes to laws governing DNR real estate preclude the DNR from easily moving forward with this plan.
- Proposed legislation (AB 809) would facilitate the real estate work needed to complete the trail in the new location and allow for trail construction to begin.

*For more information:*

- *Brigit Brown, DNR State Trails Coordinator: 608-266-2183, [brigit.brown@wisconsin.gov](mailto:brigit.brown@wisconsin.gov)*
- *Mike Bruhn, DNR Legislative Liaison: 608-266-5375, [michael.bruhn@wisconsin.gov](mailto:michael.bruhn@wisconsin.gov)*

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<sup>1</sup> Transportation Enhancements (TE) is a grant (technically reimbursement) program of the Federal Highway Administration, administered through state Departments of Transportation. It funds non-traditional transportation-related projects, largely bicycle and pedestrian-related. This funding program has been incorporated (as of 2013) into the new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). It is still administered by WisDOT.

Tuesday, February 25, 2014



Wisconsin State Legislature  
Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage  
Attn: Alvin Ott  
Room 323 North  
PO Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Committee:

RE: Assembly Bill #809

I am writing this letter in support of the proposed trail project improvements. The Platteville Main Street Program has been a strong partner with other citizen groups in the City of Platteville in promoting the use of the existing trails to our residents, students at UW-Platteville, and, of course, tourists .

Our hope is to provide safe, user-friendly miles of biking and hiking trails in and around Platteville. We plan on becoming the western launch city for families who want to spend a weekend enjoying the beauty along the trails of southwest Wisconsin.

It helps our cause that a large segment of the student body at UW-Platteville ride bikes and that we have, in our Main Street District, one of the premiere bike shops in the State, Momentum Bikes.

I thank you for your time to read my letter and hope you can help us achieve our goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Luedtke". The signature is written in a cursive style.

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Jack Luedtke  
Executive Director  
Platteville Main Street Program



February 25, 2014

Representative Travis Tranel  
Room 308 North  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Tranel,

I am writing on behalf of the Platteville Community Arboretum in support of AB 809. The Platteville Community Arboretum and many others in Platteville and Southwest Wisconsin have been working to make the Platteville to Belmont trail a reality for over a decade.

We strongly support the passage of AB 809 to facilitate completion of the trail between Platteville and Belmont. When completed, the Platteville Belmont trail will connect Platteville to additional state trails allowing users to travel on to Darlington, Monroe, Mineral Point and Madison, Wisconsin and Freeport, Illinois. The Platteville Belmont trail will also connect with the Rountree Branch Recreational Trail and from there to trails on the University of Wisconsin-Platteville campus as well as other city trails that connect to two city parks and the high school.

The completion of the Platteville to Belmont trail will provide an economic development, tourism, and quality of life boost to the Platteville region. Thank you for introducing the legislation.

Sincerely,

  
Robin Fatzinger, President  
Platteville Community Arboretum

*connecting community and nature!*

P.O. Box 302 • Platteville, WI 53878 • (608) 348-8888



February 26, 2014

Representative Travis Tranel  
Room 308 North  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Tranel:

RE: AB809

As president of the Platteville City Council, I am reiterating our support for the completion of the bicycle trail that would connect Platteville and Belmont. Over the many years that this project has been discussed, our support has never wavered. We look forward to the completion of the project that will provide economic development and alternative transportation options for our region.

Please continue your work to make this trail a reality as you work with the various issues involved including the land swap required to locate and complete the trail.

Most sincerely,



Eileen Nickels  
President  
Platteville City Council

February 25, 2014

Representative Travis Tranel  
Room 308 North  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Tranel,

I am writing to introduce myself to you and to offer support of AB 809. I've been the Highway Commissioner in Lafayette County since January of 2005 and inherited this project then. As you are well aware, Lafayette County has been working with Grant County, Wisconsin DNR, City of Platteville, landowners along the trail corridor, and other local stakeholders to complete the Platteville to Belmont trail since 2004. One of the major hurdles that we have faced has been the land acquisition to make this project acceptable to both the DNR and the adjacent landowners.

We strongly support the passage of AB 809 to facilitate completion of the trail between Platteville and Belmont.

The Platteville to Belmont Trail will increase tourism in the area, aid economic development efforts, and improve the general quality of life and health of residents. Thank you for your support of this project and for introducing the AB 809.

Sincerely,

Tom Jean, Highway Commissioner/ Trail Project Coordinator  
Lafayette County

# GRANT COUNTY HIGHWAY COMMISSION

1011 N. ADAMS STREET • P.O. Box 150  
LANCASTER, WISCONSIN 53813-0150

OFFICE 608-723-2595

FAX 608-723-4308

SHOP 608-723-2537

February 25, 2014

Representative Travis Tranel  
Room 308 North  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Tranel,

I am writing on behalf of Grant County in support of AB 809. Grant County has been working with Lafayette County, Wisconsin DNR, City of Platteville, landowners along the trail corridor, and other local stakeholders to complete the Platteville to Belmont trail since 2004.

We strongly support the passage of AB 809 to facilitate completion of the trail between Platteville and Belmont.

The Platteville to Belmont Trail will increase tourism in the area, aid economic development efforts, and improve the general quality of life and health of residents. Thank you for your support of this project and for introducing the AB 809.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Lambert", with a stylized flourish at the end.

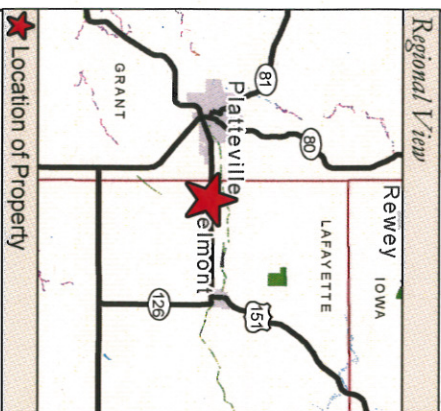
Dave Lambert, Highway Commissioner  
Grant County



# Pecatonica State Trail

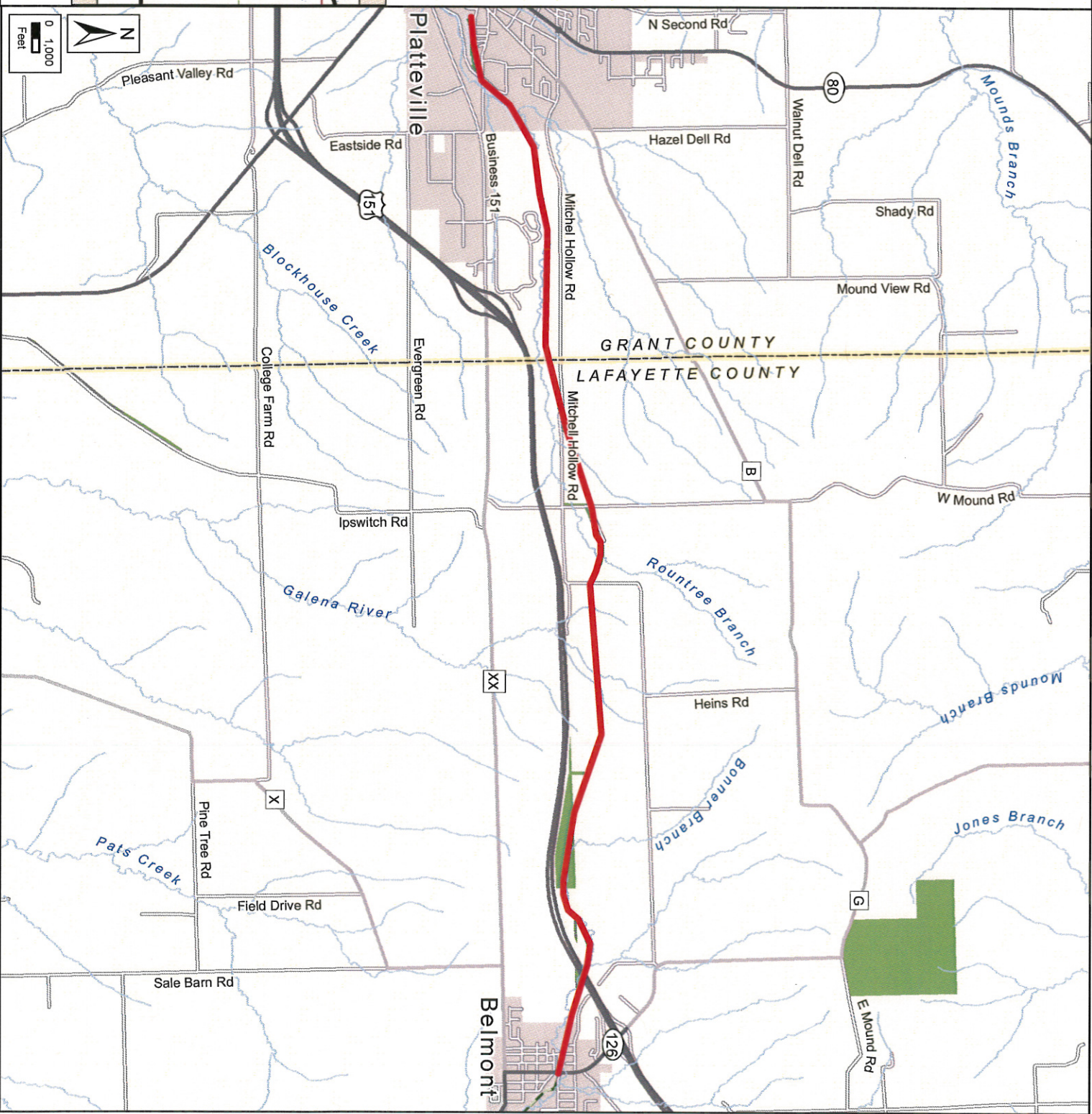
**Subject**  
 DNR Fee Title

Recreation  
 Trail



**Location of Property**

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
 Bureau of Facilities of Lands  
 Map Created: Feb 27, 2014 kmh



0 1,000 Feet

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