



Opposition/Common Concerns

First-hand Experiences

Trails provide many benefits to communities. However, initial reactions to trails are sometimes negative. It is the job of trail advocates and builders to promote the benefits of trails and greenways and [address concerns](#). This section provides first-hand experiences from former opponents to trails. These people discuss why they changed their minds and how trail advocates worked with them. These stories provide examples of how you can help make trail building a smoother process that creates advocates and not opponents.



Former Rail-Trail Opponent Has Different Views Today

Nov. 1999 - Jan 2000

Kristine Poelzer, Minnesota (TrailTalk)

About 10 years ago, Arden Hills Parks and Recreation wanted to put in an 8-foot wide blacktop trail cutting through several blocks of residential area in my neighborhood. The paved trail was to be on an NSP easement under existing power lines heading northeast from County Road D to Country Road E. It would follow the power lines between homes and not along roadways, but cutting across them instead.

I openly opposed this trail as I voiced my opinion with neighbors, the Mayor, and at the City Council Meeting. Since this trail would be next to my back yard and I had no personal use for it, I felt it was a bad thing to have. I envisioned all sorts of horrible things happening to take away from the pleasant backyard I had come to love. I was so against the building of this paved trail, I had no desire to listen to the good things proposed to result from its existence. To my good fortune, the City Council opted not to implement the voices of naysayers as they know what was in the best interest for the long term of our neighborhood. They voted to build a paved trail.

Without this trail, my son would not have learned to inline skate at such an early age, nor bicycled on his own over to his grandmother's house, who lives near the other end of the trail. Without this trail my neighbor and I wouldn't have taken up our early morning walks. Without this trail people wouldn't be able to link up as quickly or easily or safely with other trails in communities next to ours. Every day of the week and almost every hour of daylight, someone is right at the edge of my yard behind my house as they use this paved trail - walking, running, jogging, inline skating, bicycling, pulling a wagon, pushing a stroller, or walking a pet. Because of this friendly sort of 'traffic,' numerous eyes are watching my house whether we are home or not; that's old fashioned neighborhood security that money can't buy.

There's been no problem with litter, noise or window peepers, and no damage to the trail or my property. There's been plenty of smiles on my face, though, as I've watched from my kitchen window or my deck the families sharing time together on bikes and trikes, groups of kids with beach towels or

fishing poles in their wagons heading for the lake, early risers getting in their aerobic exercise, or couples catching the last rays of a sunset as they stroll along after dinner.

As I came to realize the positive effect this trail has had on our neighborhood, I recently sought the appointment from the city council to serve as a citizen representative on the master plan task force for the Ramsey County Park that includes the beach at Lake Johanna. Working with this group I've become a strong advocate for the inclusion of both paved and non-paved trails for recreational use throughout the 400-acre park.

Recreational trails give big payoffs at little or no risk and offer everyone lots of possibilities.



Adjacent Landowner Outraged

Nov. 1999 - Jan 2000

Dianne From Vonnegut, Adjacent Property Owner, Wayne Township (TrailTalk)

I am an adjacent landowner to the former B&O corridor in Wayne Township. About five years ago I heard that a not-for-profit group (and then Indy Greenways) wanted to turn the corridor into a bike path. I was outraged. I had that disease called NIMBY (not in my backyard).

I went to a meeting in 1994 where the folks of Rail Corridor Development Inc. talked about the trail. Still, I wasn't sure I wanted this trail in my back yard. I went to a public meeting in 1997 at Brownsburg and found out that there were lots of people like me... ones who didn't want a trail. But, as a result of that meeting, I was able to talk to some folks who told me to find out for myself what a trail would be like. So I walked the corridor behind my house as far as I could go and found it breathtakingly beautiful. There are actually high bluffs along that former corridor.

And then, I went to Broad Ripple and walked on the Monon Trail. There I saw people walking, riding bikes, pushing baby strollers and doing stuff that we did in the "good old days." And they were friendly and said hello and were minding their own business. What an eye opening experience. What I did not see were people who walked along and gawked into windows to see what people in those houses were up to. In most cases, I didn't even see the houses because of the dense shrubbery. I did not see trash strewn all over the place. I didn't see people riding down the corridor with stolen merchandise. I didn't have to jump into the ditch every other minute to get out of the way of a car doing 50 in a 35 mile an hour speed zone on a road with not side berms. I liked what I saw.

I then saw the same good things on the Fall Creek Trail and over the years on the Central Canal Towpath, the Pleasant Run Trail, the White River Trail, Pogues Run Trail, the Downtown Canal and the Promenade behind the Zoo. I found out for myself that I was just like those people I saw on the trails. I enjoyed going on the trails. And most of those trails were in somebody's back (or even front) yards.

I figured out for myself that having a trail in my back yard would be a big asset and I have don a total conversion on my opinions of trails. After all, someone just driving up in a car can do all of the bad things that can supposedly be done on a trail in my front yard. I am for trails and I am especially for the proposed B&O Trail.

When I attended the Master Plan Update at Thatcher Park August 23rd, I discovered that the B&O Trail is in the master plan to be developed by Indy Parks Greenways. Also presented at the meeting, the B&O corridor is on the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Plan as developed and approved by the Department of Metropolitan Development. The plan calls for it to be implemented by Indy Greenways. And, it was also recently announced that Hendricks County received a 2.36 million-dollar grant to purchase and develop the B&O Trail in Hendricks County.

Someday soon, the West Side of the metropolitan area will have a wonderful asset to the community in the form of the B&O Rail-Trail. This will make a great addition to the Indy Parks Greenways system.

I would urge other folks who have the "not in my back yard" attitude, to go and find out for themselves that the things that they imagine will happen are just that... imaginings.



Learn more about working with opposition and neighbors [on our website](#).