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## Open up riverfronts for trail use in the Kansas City area

### *Issue*

Opening up the Missouri and Kaw Rivers to allow citizens to enjoy the river as a historic, scenic, natural, and recreational attraction has been a goal of city leaders and citizens for many years.

The simplest and most inexpensive way to accomplish this is to open up the levee areas for trail use.

### *Background*

The seven key levees in the Kansas City area are controlled by independent levee districts. The governing body of each district is elected by property owners in the area protected by the district.

For economic and practical reasons, levee districts have been reluctant to allow trails to be built on, near, or across levees. This effectively closes riverfront areas from trail use.

Financial and engineering challenges to allowing trails on and near levees have been overcome in many other areas of the country, including Council Bluffs, IA/Omaha, NE, St. Louis, MO, Salina, KS, and Louisville, KY.

Needed upgrades to the Kansas City-area levees will require billions of dollars in local, state, and federal funds.

Levee trails help solve these problems in two ways:

- Trail funding can be used to strengthen levees and protect against erosion where trails are installed.
- Spending large amounts of federal money to strengthen levees may be controversial or lack public support. Public use of the riverfront areas will build public support for the federal initiatives to improve the levees and protect vulnerable riverfront areas.
- Levee trails help make levee areas more attractive to economic development, strengthening the local economic base and the ability of local communities to pay for and maintain levees.

### *Current law*

Chapter 246 (Provisions Relating to All Drainage and Levee Districts), Section 283 RSMo:

Any district formed pursuant to the laws of this state shall have authority to cooperate with other entities, public and private, in the development of bikeways and bike trails . . .

### *For More Information*

To learn more, contact Missouri Bicycle Federation Executive Director Brent Hugh, 816-695-6736 or [director@mobikefed.org](mailto:director@mobikefed.org)