

Forest Preserve to allow new bike trail Trail

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The LaGrange Park District has received permission from the Forest Preserve District to build a bike trail through the forest preserve to connect with an existing bike trail.

The district issued a preliminary license for the work, and a copy of the license was sent on to the Department of Conservation as required for the application the district has submitted for a matching fund grant to build the trail, according to park director John Hecker.

With this important step complete, the waiting begins to see if the grant application is approved. Initially, Department of Conservation officials said the decision would be made by June, but now they

have pushed the date back to September.

Hecker thinks a large volume of grant applications is responsible for the delay, which may reduce the chances of LaGrange Park's grant being approved. "It all gets down to who we're competing against," he said.

A preliminary estimate sets the project's cost at \$206,000. The grant would provide 50 percent of that: \$103,000. The Department of Conservation-sponsored bike trail grant program requires the requesting agency (in this case the Park District) to come up with the entire amount which will be later reimbursed at 50 percent. "I believe [the grant] program I is financed by motor fuel tax," said Hecker.

The language of the FPD license is

fairly specific; as long as the project stays within guidelines, it would be approved by the Forest Preserve.

"They're concerned with the environment, as they should be," said Hecker. The license requires a limited environmental impact; the path will probably have to go around any oaks. The license also regulates the width of the trail and thickness of the black top.

The largest portion of the project is the construction of a bridge across Salt Creek. The bridge must be 120 feet long and preceded on the west side of the creek by a 100-foot ramp.

The reason for the long length, Hecker said, is that the east side of the creek is substantially higher than the west side
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and the bridge must maintain a 5 percent grade on the west side.

This is to preserve a gradual slope which would be manageable by all users, including young children on bicycles and wheelchair users.

The bridge must also clear an area called the 100-year flood plain. The park board has taken no position on what will happen to the project if the grant is not received.

Hecker said they are investigating the possibility of obtaining community support or corporate donations. "There are different ways it can be done, but we haven't decided on anything," he said.
