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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Michigan Department of Transportation Makes Conditional Commitment to Help Build “The Loop” Trail System

Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative Seeks Community Support to Raise Matching Funds

Ann Arbor, Michigan – The Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative (HWPI) and its partners, the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the 5 Healthy Towns Foundation, Legacy Land Conservancy, and the Washtenaw County Road Commission, are excited to announce a conditional commitment of \$1,799,000 from the Michigan Department of Transportation in support of the first phase of a multi-phased effort to complete “The Loop,” a 44.5 mile regional trail system that will link the Ann Arbor Area to the Waterloo and Pinckney Recreation Areas and the Lakelands Trail State Park in Stockbridge.

The conditional commitment will support the implementation of Phase 1, which includes the construction of a 4.7-mile segment trail connecting the City of Chelsea to the Waterloo and Pinckney State Recreation Areas and the Department of Natural Resources’ Green Lake Campground. The trail will also connect to the Department of Natural Resources’ new Waterloo Mountain Biking System, located west of Green Lake. The planned multi-use, non-motorized trail will be paved 10’ wide with 2’ shoulders, and will be compliant with ADA regulations. The project will improve a shared trailhead and improved M-52 crossing with the Waterloo-Pinckney hiking trail, and will also provide handicapped access to public hunting land in the Pinckney Recreation Area. Retaining walls, bioswales, and trail amenities, including benches, bike racks and trash receptacles, also will be installed.

The total project budget for Phase 1 is projected at \$2,975,000. MDOT’s conditional commitment of \$1,799,000 is being made from the Transportation Alternatives Fund, a competitive grant program that uses federal transportation funds designated by Congress for specific activities that enhance the intermodal transportation system and provide safe alternative transportation options.

MDOT's conditional commitment will be converted to a grant award when HWPI meets the additional requirements, including the certification of right-of-way and local match funding. In order to meet the funding requirements, the group needs to raise an additional \$1,176,000 in cash and pledges from non-federal grants and private donors. If the money is raised in the next five months, construction on the new trail could begin in 2017. To date, HWPI has raised \$440,000 from private sponsors including Jiffy Mix, Chelsea State Bank, the Feeney Family, Bloom Roofing and Saint Joseph Mercy Health Systems, which pledged \$125,000 and an additional \$125,000 in matching funds.

Jeff Hardcastle, HWPI Board of Directors Chair said, "We are honored and thrilled to have received this conditional commitment from the Michigan Department of Transportation. The support of many public and private partners is needed to develop and maintain trails. We are grateful for the 12 sponsors and nearly 300 donors who helped us raise over \$400,000 to date. We hope that others who are interested in the vision to build and connect "The Loop" will consider making a gift to match MDOT's conditional commitment."

To learn more about HWPI's trail development plans, including how to make a gift, visit the project website: <http://huron-waterloo-pathways.org/>

About Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative (HWPI)

The Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative (HWPI) is a non-profit volunteer organization partnering with the Legacy Land Conservancy, Washtenaw County, The Michigan DNR and the 5 Healthy Towns Foundation to develop and expand non-motorized pathways that connect into Michigan's growing trail network and encircle two of the area's most valued natural areas. By connecting and showcasing local communities, HWPI hopes to encourage healthy and active lifestyles, while also promoting economic development. HWPI volunteers are working with state and local government agencies, including the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Washtenaw County, and consultants to develop detailed proposals for non-motorized trail segments in four development zones. These individual trail segments will ultimately complete "The Loop," 44.5 miles of contiguous non-motorized, multi-use paved trails centrally located between Lansing, Ann Arbor, and Detroit, and connecting the communities of Dexter, Chelsea, Stockbridge, Pinckney, and Gregory, as well as the Waterloo and Pinckney State Recreation Areas, two HCMA Metroparks, Green Lake Campground, Waterloo Mountain Bike Trails, Waterloo-Pinckney Hiking Trail, the Border-to-Border Trail, the Lakelands Trail State Park, and the statewide Iron Belle Trail. Major sponsors to-date include St. Joseph Mercy Health Systems, Jiffy Mix, Chelsea State Bank, Bloom Roofing and the Feeney Family!