

CLEVELAND METROPARKS

established 1917

clevelandmetroparks.com

Administrative Offices | 4101 Fulton Parkway | Cleveland, OH | 44144
Phone 216-635-3200 | Fax 216-635-3286

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Dan T. Moore, President
Debra K. Berry, Vice President
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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Brian M. Zimmerman



February 12, 2018

Dear Members of the Senate of the State of Ohio:

Cleveland Metroparks supports the Senate of the State of Ohio's designation of 2018 as "Ohio's Year of the Trails".

Cleveland Metroparks, now in its second century of land stewardship and conservation, offers more than 300 miles of publically-accessible trails to the residents and visitors of Cuyahoga County. As stated in the resolution, trails are important community assets and provide opportunities for both recreation and transportation. Cleveland Metroparks maintains different types of trails for all members of the public and for a variety of user groups, including paved all-purpose trails, natural surface hiking and bridle trails, and mountain bike trails.

Cleveland Metroparks is fully committed to connecting people with greenspace and since 2010, has completed more than \$20 million of trail construction and improvement projects funded by both the Park District and outside funding sources. The Park District's goal is for all residents throughout Cuyahoga County to be within 15 minutes of a Cleveland Metroparks trail or reservation and is actively working towards this goal. The second phase of the Valley Parkway Trail is underway, which is a ±6-mile all-purpose trail that will link Brecksville and Mill Stream Run Reservations through the communities of North Royalton, Broadview Heights, and Brecksville. The Red Line Greenway, Whiskey Island Connector, and Wendy Park Bridge are in design, which are all located in the City of Cleveland and will provide access to Lake Erie for a significant portion of the population of the westside of the city. Additionally, Cleveland Metroparks has completed improvements to a number of interior hiking trails, such as those in A.B. Williams Memorial Woods in North Chagrin Reservation, to reintroduce hikers to the beautiful landscape of northeast Ohio.

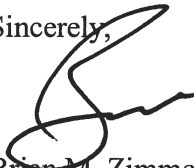
Cleveland Metroparks fully agrees with the statements outlined in the resolution. Trails do connect people with communities and with the natural world and simultaneously, trails are drivers of economic and community development. The Park District is a key partner in the Ohio and Erie Canalway Towpath Trail and has seen firsthand how the construction of this iconic trail is part of the resurgence of areas in the City of Cleveland such as Tremont and Scranton Flats.

In 2013, the Trust for Public Land released a study titled the *Economic Benefits of Cleveland Metroparks*. According to this publication, tourism is one of the largest industries in Cuyahoga County and trails are key components of this industry. The study also documented that the market value of homes within 500 feet of a trail increase by at least 2% due to their proximity to a trail. Additionally, the use of trails and parks by adults in Cuyahoga County yields an annual health care savings of \$59.5 million.

Cleveland Metroparks mission is rooted in conservation, education, and recreation and the construction and management of trail systems is an integral piece to all three pillars of the mission. *Connections*, including trail systems, is one of Cleveland Metroparks five organizational goals that drives planning, fundraising, and public programs throughout the Park District. Furthermore, approximately 70% of park visitors have indicated that trails are the primary reason they visit one of Cleveland Metroparks reservations.

On behalf of the Board of Park Commissioners, I would like to affirm that Cleveland Metroparks supports 2018 as “Ohio’s Year of the Trails” and urge your vote of support for the associated resolution. I look forward to sharing our trails and trail events with your constituents and I do hope to see you on one of the numerous trails throughout northeast Ohio.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian M. Zimmerman', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Brian M. Zimmerman
Chief Executive Officer