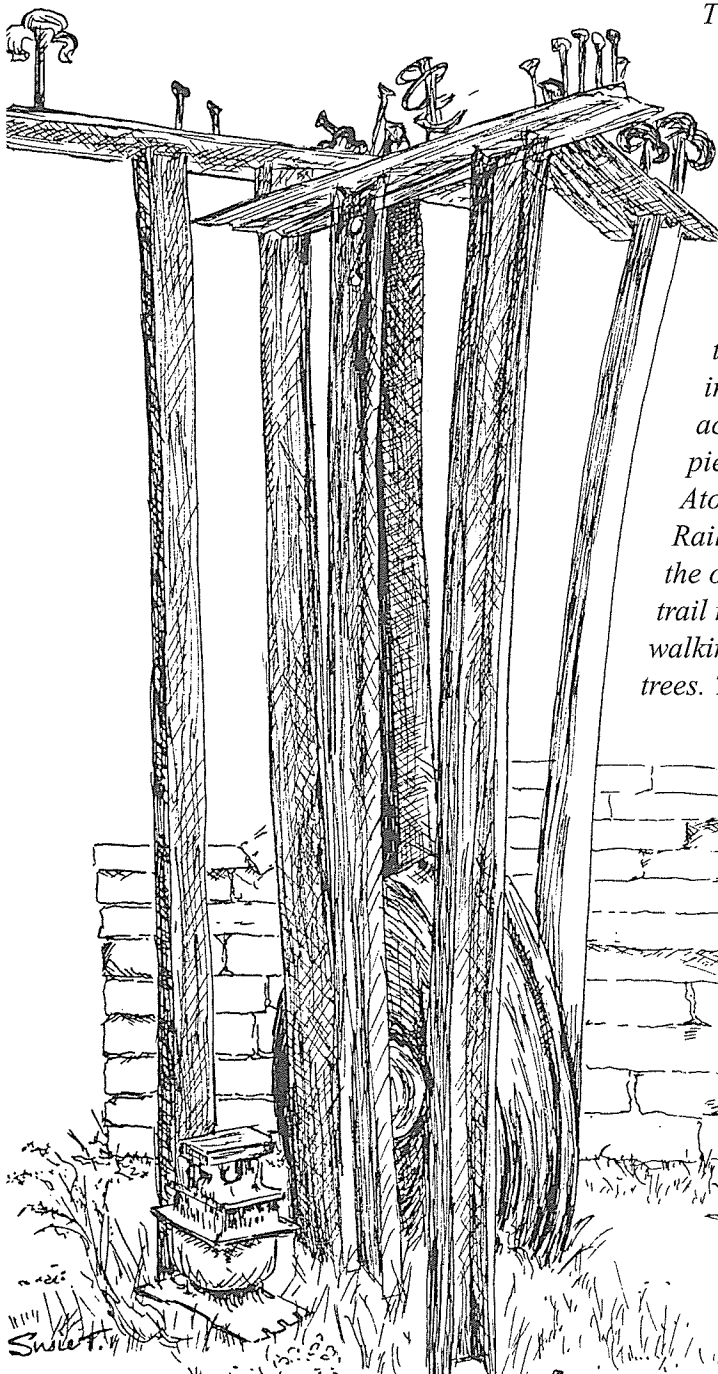


# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

Winter, 1995

## *What To Look For and Enjoy: Our Sculpture at Volunteer Park, Wheaton*



*The name is apt: Rails to Trails. The sculpture stands at the center of the old Chicago, Aurora and Elgin electric railroad where the maintenance shops used to be, now the junction of the three main branches of the Illinois Prairie Path. Designed and executed by sculptor Erika Bajuk, the work symbolizes a recreational trail built on a railroad right-of-way through the dedicated efforts of thousands of volunteers and governmental agencies at all levels.*

*Every part of the imaginative sculpture enhances the rail-trail theme. Made of artifacts mainly from the CA&E, the work incorporates rail sections salvaged from the former Wheaton Yards across the street, a rusty railroad wheel, and an original three-piece insulator assembly welded to the bottom of one of the rails. Atop the insulator is a small section of the fearsome Great Third Rail complete with electrical fittings. These components represent the old railroad. Welded to the top of the rails is a multiple-branched trail made of tie plates. Railroad spikes and bolts are the users joyfully walking, running or riding on the trail. There are even some fanciful trees. The crowning touch is the spike holes in the tie plates along*

*the sides of the path; these "thousand points of light" honor the volunteers who conceived and first built the trail and are best viewed by looking up at the bright sky shining through them.*

*The national rails-to-trails movement started right here in DuPage County more than thirty years ago, and today brings pleasure to millions of people*

*throughout the country. Great things can happen when government and citizens work together.*

# RAILBANKING THREATENED IN CONGRESS

The National Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is alerting trail users and friends to a bill just approved by Congress, the Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act of 1995 or as it is commonly known, "The ICC Sunset Bill". This bill originally contained an amendment abolishing the famous railbanking statute, Section 8 (d) of the National Trails Act. The ill-considered amendment has been, at least temporarily, removed from the bill for a full hearing promised for next spring by Congressman Bud Shuster, (R-Pennsylvania), Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Shuster states in his press release, "Given the complexity of the rails-to-trails issue and interplay of other statutes, specifically the Intermodal Surface Transportation Act of 1991 (also known as ISTEA) and the National Trails System Act of 1968, I've decided to defer the matter until next spring when the Committee can have hearings and a full airing of the issues."

The trails community needs to keep a wary eye on the railbanking amendment because, if passed, it would devastate the rail-trail movement nationwide. For the current status of the legislation call the National Rails-to-Trails Conservancy in Washington, either President David Burwell or Marianne Fowler, RTC's government affairs manager, at (202)797-5400. For background information we reprint the following article from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy newsletter of July-September, 1995:

*Railbanking—a cornerstone of the rail-trail movement—is under attack in the 104th Congress.*

*Proposed federal legislation will not only jeopardize the security of currently railbanked corridors (including those already developed as rail-trails)\*, but will also prevent the acquisition of recently abandoned corridors and those that will be abandoned in the future.*

*"Some of the most extraordinary rail-trails in the country are railbanked corridors," said Marianne Fowler. "The Katy Trail in Missouri, the Minuteman Bikeway outside Boston, and the Capital Crescent Trail in Washington, D.C.—it's almost impossible to comprehend the loss of these fantastic trails."*

*In 1983, Congress recognized that railroad abandonments were causing the loss of a valuable national asset—railroad corridors. To head off these losses, Congress passed legislation to keep the corridors open for future transportation use while allowing them to be used as public trails in the interim. This law, Section 8 (d) of the National Trails Act, is known as the railbanking statute.*

*Since the law's implementation, a small group of disgruntled landowners has tried to stop railbanking and, therefore, rail-trails. These individuals believe the unused corridors should revert to private ownership, closing the door forever to continued public use...*

*[The amendment under consideration] would effectively redefine railbanking as a "taking" of private property and would require that adjacent landowners be compensated before a corridor could be railbanked and converted to a trail.*

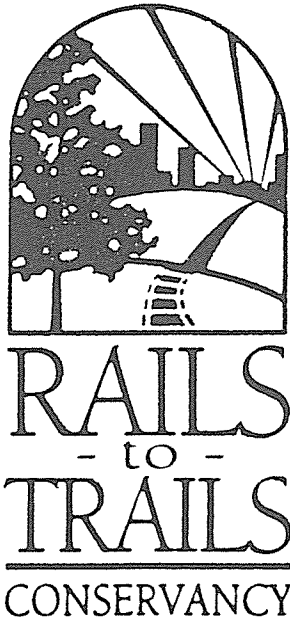
*"Nothing is being taken from anyone when a rail corridor is railbanked, yet this proposed legislation will cripple railbanking," said Hal Hiemstra, RTC's vice president for national policy....*

*"RTC is dedicated to keeping the railbanking statute intact. In recent*

*weeks, RTC has encouraged hundreds of affected citizens across the country to contact their Senators and Representatives."*

*"We need the help of all RTC members [and all trail users]" said Fowler. "The best thing you can do is pick up the phone and call your Congressional Representative. The general number for the House of Representatives is (202) 224-3121." Fowler suggests telling your Representative that you strongly oppose any weakening of the railbanking statute and explaining how railbanking and/or the rail-trail movement have enhanced your community.*

*\*Editor's Note: The Illinois Prairie Path was acquired long before the railbanking statute was enacted. However, many other rail-trails in Illinois, now in use or proposed, could be endangered. When you contact your Congressperson, describe the ways a beautiful rail-trail like the IPP enhances your life.*



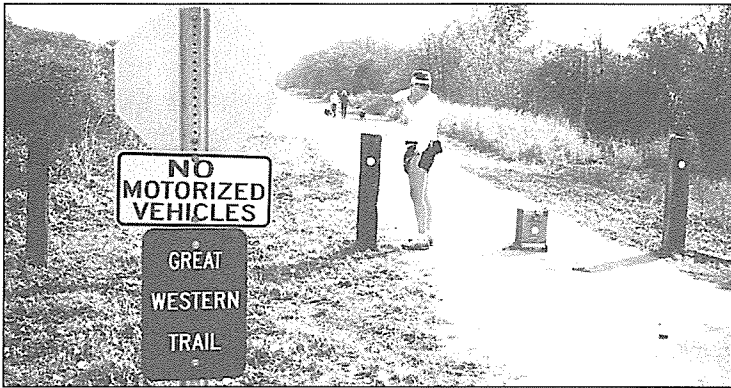
— Jean C. Mooring, Editor —

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## NEW SIGNS ON GREAT WESTERN TRAIL



*Great Western Trail sign east of Prince Crossing.*

Early this year Jean and Paul Mooring reported to DuPage County DOT officials that many trail users, some village staff members, and a few newspaper feature writers were confusing the Great Western Trail and the Illinois Prairie Path. Even JULIE (Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators) sometimes didn't know exactly which railroad right-of-way it was granting permits to dig on. This confusion was understandable because the two corridors run roughly parallel and the identifying signage on the Great Western was inadequate to nonexistent. Responding to the need, this summer the DuPage County DOT made and installed brown-and-white signs at each street crossing along the Great Western Trail. Now each trail is clearly marked and the problem has been solved.

## OUR NEW LIAISON AT DPCDOT

Chuck Tokarski, former Chief of Traffic Plans and Programs and liaison for the trails community at the DuPage County Division of Transportation, has won a well-deserved promotion to County Engineer. We thank Chuck for the conscientious and effective job he has done for trails over the years and wish him great success in his new position.

Assisting Chuck as the new trails liaison is Ruth Krupensky, a principal planner who has been with DOT for eight years. She is a bicyclist although she hasn't done much

bicycling lately because she now lives too far from the Prairie Path. When she lived in Pinellas County, Florida, she did the Pinellas Trail preliminary study and also the bike plan for Pinellas County. She remains a fan of the IPP and can be reached at 665-1155 for trail information.



*Trails liaison Ruth Krupensky at her desk at DPCDOT, 130 N. County Farm Road, Wheaton.*

## DUPAGE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION BUDGET: LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES FOR IPP?

There are many competing demands for DuPage County transportation funds: construction of new highways, operation and maintenance of the existing highway system, and construction, operation and maintenance of the county-owned trails, the Illinois Prairie Path and the Great Western Trail. The DuPage County Division of Transportation has produced a comprehensive ten-year development plan, which includes an estimated \$320 million for new construction; additional funding will also be necessary for reconstruction and maintenance of existing roadways. Sources of funding include the motor fuel tax collected statewide; the gas tax collected only in the collar counties of DuPage, Lake and Kane; a portion of the real estate property tax; and the transportation impact fee, paid by developers. This impact fee eases the burden on taxpayers in paying for road improvements made necessary by increased traffic resulting from new developments; it generates approximately \$2.2 million per year, none of it from ordinary taxpayers.

The carefully considered transportation plan depends on all four sources for funding. If the transportation impact fee is eliminated, as has been proposed, plus a significant portion of the property tax money, as has also been proposed, the motor fuel tax, gas tax and diminished property tax will not cover the costs of the ten-year plan. In the long run something will have to give and it might be trails, unless the county board thinks ahead and provides adequate funding for ALL county transportation needs.