



July 5, 2023

RE: Next Level Trail Grant Request

To Whom It May Concern:

The LaGrange County Convention & Visitors Bureau is in full support of the Town of Bristol request for a Next Level Trail Grant. LaGrange County is a friendly neighbor to Bristol and Elkhart County. We believe in regional tourism and that visitors do not see or determine experiences based upon county lines. LaGrange County fully supports the enhancement and development of expanded outdoor experiences not only for visitors but for our residents too. Many residents of Elkhart County work and play in LaGrange County. Likewise, many LaGrange County residents, many who are Amish, work and play in Elkhart County. We understand the benefits of collaboration with our region and partners to increase visitor traffic and enhance economic impact. We can't think of a better project to support than the Town of Bristol's request for a Next Level Trail Grant.

It is our understanding this project is for a new pedestrian bridge across the St Joe in Bristol which will eventually be the crossing point for the popular Quaker Trace project connecting to the popular Pumpkinvine Trail. Shippshewana is proud and happy to be a trailhead on the Pumpkinvine and has seen significant daily usage and traffic flow in our community from this trail. In 2022, the Friends of the Pumpkinvine provided the 2022 Shippshewana site usage volume to include 79,203 annual users (pedestrian and cycle combined) with an average daily usage of 260 people per day. This makes the Shippshewana trailhead the third most visited trailhead (after Middlebury and Millrace) and the second most used trail daily (after Middlebury) among all locations. We can only expect that with the expansion of the Quaker Trace, with the needed bridge improvement in Bristol, for visitation to further increase and in fact without that bridge, the connectivity is missing. The Town of Bristol has done their preliminary work and we are advocating for your agreement to assist them in this much needed regional trail development project. Your grant, if awarded to Bristol, will play a unique role as an economic development venture that ensures that this placemaking and regenerative approach to regionalism is possible for visitors and residents alike.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sonya L. Nash
Sonya L. Nash, CDME
Executive Director