



# opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## GOVERNOR BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES \$600,000 IN *OPPORTUNITY RETURNS* GRANTS FOR SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS BIKE TRAILS

### *Funds will Enhance Safety and Functionality of Trails in Madison and St. Clair Counties*

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced **\$600,000** in construction grants to Madison County, St. Clair County and the City of Madison through his innovative *Opportunity Returns* program. These three grants from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources will support construction of regional bike trails, which will benefit local residents and increase tourism opportunities.

“The Southwest region already offers some of the best bike trails in the country,” said Governor Blagojevich. “These new construction projects are an outstanding investment because they maximize the benefit of existing trails, and give the region a resource that will attract visitors and spur economic growth for years to come.”

Madison County will receive a **\$200,000** *Opportunity Returns* grant. It will support construction of the “Schoolhouse Connector” trail, which will join six Madison County bike trails together to form one united trail that will provide safe, world-class biking all across Madison County.

The City of Madison will receive a **\$200,000** grant to construct two miles of trail connecting Illinois Route 3 to the Confluence Bikeway and to the Chain of Rocks Bridge that crosses the Mississippi River and connects to the Riverfront Trail in Missouri.

The Village of Swansea, in St. Clair County, will also receive a **\$200,000** *Opportunity Returns* grant to construct more than one and a half miles of trail connecting with four miles of existing MetroLink bike trail and the City of Belleville’s two mile Richland Creek Greenway.

“The Governor’s *Opportunity Returns* plan is innovative because it finds creative ways to make our community more marketable using the assets that we already have. This expansion will make a real difference both for Southwestern Illinois’ economy and our quality of life,” said State Senator James Clayborne.

“These *Opportunity Returns* grants will make a real difference for the Southwest region by making a great resource even better. Not only are we expanding our bike trails, we are also making them safer and more accessible for riders of all ages,” State Rep. Jay Hoffman said.

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The grant program reimburses local governments up to \$200,000 for half the cost to develop a trail.

“Funding new trail construction in the Southwest region will make a great asset for residents and tourists even better. The Governor’s *Opportunity Returns* plan is all about finding creative ways to improve quality of life, bringing visitors and revenue into Southwestern Illinois, and growing the economy,” Illinois Department of Natural Resources Director Joel Brunsvold said.

Governor Blagojevich’s *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois’ history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn’t work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort for the Southwest region is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. The more than 50 specific projects that the Governor announced in December for Southwestern Illinois are designed to be flexible and effective. This plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

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