

# **City of Stow**

## **City-Wide Connectivity Plan**

**2020 Connecting Communities Planning Grant**



in partnership with:



# 2020 Connecting Communities Planning Grant

## 1. Applicant/Sponsor

Community/Agency – City of Stow  
Community Project Manager – Rob Kurtz,  
Planning & Development Director  
Phone Number – 330.689.2811  
Email Address – rkurtz@stow.oh.us  
Mailing Address – 3760 Darrow Road,  
Stow, Ohio 44224

## 2. Project Co-Sponsor

While we do not have a formal project co-sponsor for this project, we anticipate strong stakeholder partnerships and participation from AMATS, ODOT D4, METRO RTA, Summit Metro Parks, and the Summit County Engineer's Office.

## 3. Planning Study Summary

### Project Title: City of Stow City-Wide Connectivity Plan

The City of Stow has been named a 2019 “Best Cities to Live in Ohio” due to the many positive quality of life factors that the City has to offer. While we are proud of this designation, we realize that we lack in offering any sort of alternative transportation network, which is a major quality of life indicator that needs to be fulfilled. Stow is ready to set the framework for this multi-modal network, and with AMATS as a partner, are seeking \$29,000 in Connecting Communities funding, committing \$20,000 in local match, to develop the City of Stow City-Wide Connectivity Plan. This network will accommodate all users, and shared-use paths and sidepaths will be the primary facility type explored for this project. Our ultimate goal is to plan, fund and construct

a trail within a 1/4 mile of every resident and business in the City over the next 20 years.

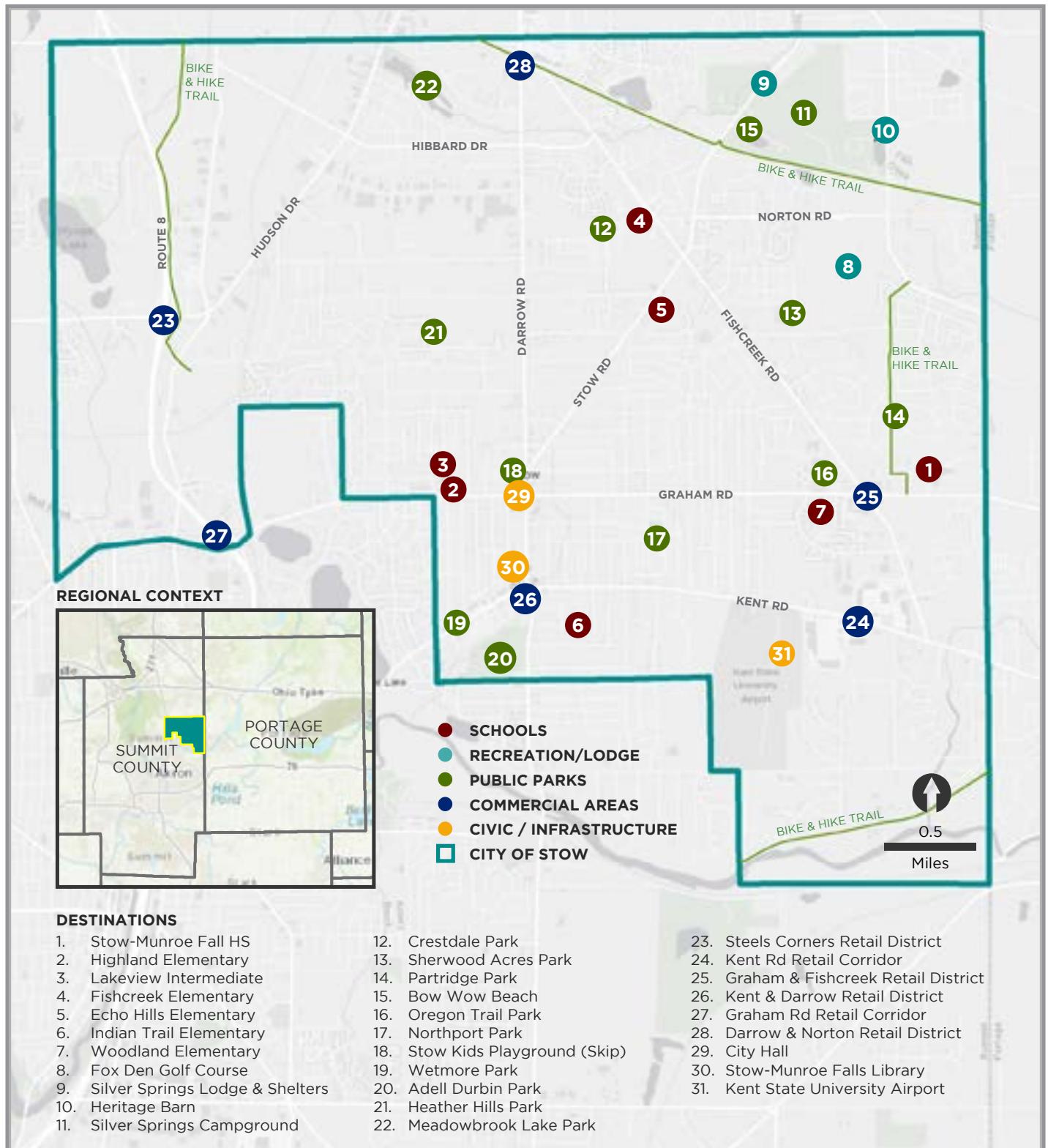
## 4. Study Area & Map

The study area for this project is the municipal boundary limits of the City of Stow (shown in teal in the map on the next page). We feel that it is important to take a comprehensive look at improving multi-modal connectivity and connecting people to places within the entire City as the scope of this project.

## 5. Purpose & Need

The City of Stow, Ohio has again been named as a 2019 “Best Cities to Live in Ohio” ([chameroftcommerce.org](http://chameroftcommerce.org)) because of our excellent employment housing stock, wonderful quality of life (based on factors such as work commute and poverty levels), fantastic public education and access to higher education, and access to world-class health care. While we are very proud of this accomplishment and these metrics, we realize that this designation and our saying of “creating community” has, to-date, not yet focused on connecting our community.

**In order to truly offer a fantastic quality of life to our residents, students, employees, business owners and visitors, we realize that as a City, we need to take a pro-active stance and plan for our city-wide multi-modal and active transportation network that not only traverses these populations through our city, but connects them to adjacent and regional destinations and multi-modal networks.**



**The City of Stow has many destinations that we would like to connect to as part of the Connecting Communities City of Stow City-Wide Connectivity Plan. Connecting people to places without the need of an automobile is a primary goal of this project.**

This means that we need to offer non single-occupancy-vehicle (SOV) alternatives within our built environment for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users that improve individuals' health, access to transit, access to nearby recreational facilities, and most importantly, connect people to places. The time has come to plan this multi-modal network and we are asking AMATS to be our regional partner in this effort.

**Stow's current walk score ([walkscore.com](https://www.walkscore.com)) is 49, which is considered car-dependent, and our bike score is 20, which labels our city as having "minimal bike infrastructure". While a walk/bike score is just one metric, we know that we need to improve these ratings in order to stay competitive as a community.**

We want AMATS as our stakeholder and funding partner in this project. The City of Stow is fully committed to this plan and process, and per the legislation passed on February 13, 2020, we are committing \$20,000 in local funding (40.8% total project budget) and requesting \$29,000 (59.2% total project budget) in Connecting Communities grant funding for this project.

This project will improve the community by reducing bicyclist and pedestrian injuries and fatalities (safety), ensuring the system accommodates users of all ages, abilities and income (equity), promoting comfortable and continuous bicycle and pedestrian facilities that connect people to destinations (network connectivity), increasing walking and biking usage (network utilization), and improving the quality of life for residents, students, employees, transit users and visitors (livability) (*Walk.Bike.Ohio.*).

We have had a few small multi-modal projects and success stories in the City. Call's Farm subdivision, Pebblehurst Drive,

Lake Breeze Landing, Preakness Drive, and Silver Springs Drive (and their associated subdivisions) have all built trail connections that tie directly into the Bike and Hike Trail. The City has also constructed a trail connection to Bow Wow Beach and Silver Springs Park from the Bike and Hike Trail. The problem is, we have not focused on creating bicycle and pedestrian connections outside of most of the aforementioned neighborhoods or park, so unless the Bike and Hike Trail is your ultimate destination, and you live in one of these subdivisions, our current connections do not get people to places.

The City of Stow is also about to begin an AMATS TASA-funded grant to eliminate a portion of on-road bicycle network and construct an off-road trail along the METRO RTA right-of-way from Silver Lake, across Graham Road to Springdale. We are also in the right-of-way acquisition stage to build a new sidewalk along SR 91 from the City Center to Fishcreek Road.

## 6. Outcomes

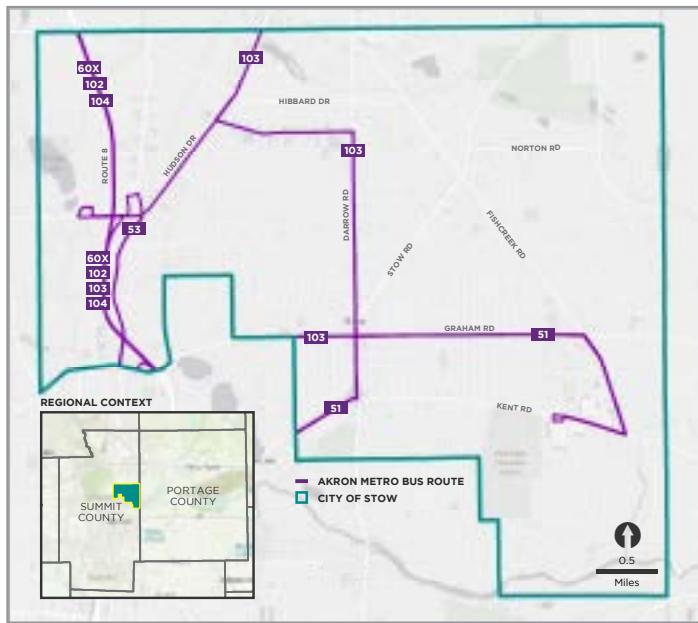
This plan will serve as the guiding document for implementation, including

**The expected outcome of the City of Stow City-Wide Connectivity Plan is to have an implementable master plan document that has a:**

- **Primary focus on creating a city-wide trail network and detailed cost opinions for all Phase I recommendations within the plan document**
- **Secondary focus on a widened sidewalk network with a typical per-linear foot cost association**
- **Tertiary focus on filling the gaps in our sidewalk network, with a potential for designated bicycle facility connectors also with a per-linear-foot cost association**

future grant funding, not just from AMATS, but other sources such as ODNR, ODOT Active Transportation Funds, ODOT Safe Routes to Schools Program, ODOT Highway Safety Funding Program, etc.

Our ultimate goal and definition of success for this project is to create a city-wide trail network that connects all residents and businesses within a 1/4 mile of the trail network. This will also get users within a 1/4 mile of the METRO RTA transit routes within the City. The 1/4 mile connections need to be made via widened sidewalks and sidewalks and designated bicycle facilities, not via an automobile.



**METRO RTA** currently has 5 bus routes that are within the Stow city limits. PARTA also has a transit route that stops at the Stow Target Shopping Center.

A goal of this project is to get all transit riders within a 1/4 mile of a trail at any bus stop within the City.

This planning process will need to determine where a trail and/or widened sidewalk is not appropriate, so as part of this planning project, we do want to update our sidewalk and crosswalk inventory database. We understand that AMATS typically does not fund the construction of 5' sidewalks that are not part of a larger roadway improvement project, so as part of this plan, we would like to set a separate prioritization plan that is locally funded, or leverages other outside funding, to begin

constructing the missing gaps in our overall sidewalk network.

## 7. Connecting Communities Principles

The City of Stow City-Wide Connectivity plan inherently increases alternative transportation options to connect people to places, promotes complete streets principles to create vibrant and safe places for all users, and we fully intend to leverage transportation projects and funding that support alternative transportation and complete streets through land use and design moving forward. The built trail network that results from this plan will improve overall physical health, mental health and multi-modal connectivity for transportation and recreation purposes.

The median resident age in the City is 41.5 (*ESRI*), which is slightly higher than the region's median age, and our population growth in the region and the City is stagnant. When selecting where to live, we know that young families and professionals are very focused on physical health and are looking for active transportation options that improve their quality of life, while also getting them from "Point A to Point B" in a safe, easy and convenient manner. We also know that millennials and Baby Boomers look to active transportation options as a major quality of life indicator when selecting a place to live.

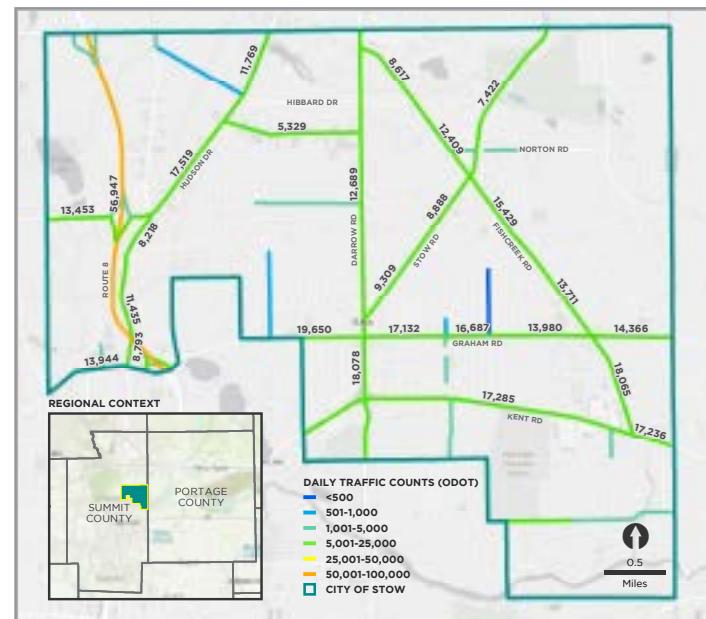
**This plan will be the first step to making Stow, and ultimately the region, an active transportation community.**

**ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION** is human-powered transportation that engages people in healthy physical activity while they travel from place to place, especially as it occurs in the public realm.

While our number one focus for the city-wide connectivity plan is the planning, and ultimately the implementation, of a shared-use path and sidepath (i.e. trail) network that accommodates all users, we understand that we need to be open to the idea of widened sidewalks and the combination of on-road bicycle and sidewalk networks to realistically reach all land uses, destinations and neighborhoods within the City. We see much of this occurring adjacent to roadways, which offers safe, easy and convenient multi-modal options to all users, i.e. following complete streets principles.

We are fortunate to have the 'Bike and Hike Trail' cross through the northwestern corner, northeastern corner and southernmost sections of our City, which connects us directly into the Cuyahoga Valley National Park to the northwest of the City. We want to utilize this connectivity plan to create a city-wide off-road trail network that creates both north/south and east/west connections throughout the City. Currently, crossing SR 8 is a major barrier for non-motorized vehicles and most of our major commercial arterial right-of-way does not provide dedicated facilities to pedestrians or bicyclists.

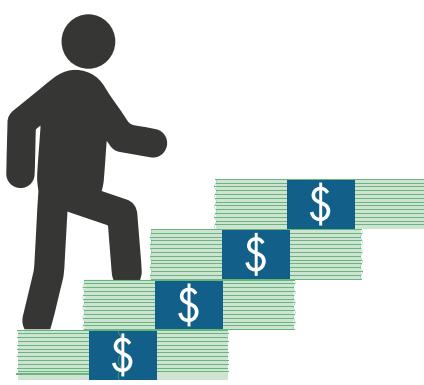
We know that pedestrians and bicyclists are the most vulnerable populations within



***Stow has significant AADT volumes not only along SR 8, but also along our arterial and collector roadways. A typical passenger vehicle emits about 4.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year and the average passenger vehicle emits ~404 grams of CO<sub>2</sub> per mile (USEPA).***

***By offering a multi-modal transportation trail network throughout the City and reducing just 1% of vehicles on the road traveling per day, the project will eliminate 782 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year (based on 17,000 AADT).***

our transportation system. Improving safety through increased alternative transportation options will be a major focus of this project. According to City of Stow police records, between 2016 and 2019, there were 32 crashes that involved pedestrians, bicyclists and/or pedestrian skaters. Unfortunately, 2 of the crashes (6.25%) involved fatalities (1 pedestrian



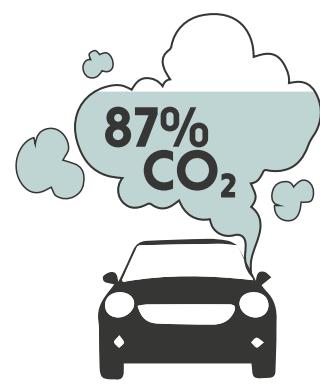
## FINANCE

Research shows that 1 point of Walk Score is worth a \$2,500 increase in property value.



## HEALTH

Residents of walkable neighborhoods weigh 6-10 lbs less.



## ENVIRONMENT

87% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions come from burning fossil fuels. Fewer cars on the road means less smog and less traffic.

and 1 bicyclist), 50% of the crashes had reported injuries, 6.25% were listed as “suspected serious injury”, 9.375% were listed as “possible injuries” and 3.125% were listed as “suspected minor injury”. These crash numbers are significant, and due to the number of fatalities and injuries, the severity index is high. Due to these factors, we intend run an ECATS analysis as part of this project and leverage ODOT Highway Safety Funding Program money to implement appropriate segments of the final plan recommendations.

## 8. Level of Use

The City of Stow City-Wide Connectivity Plan will develop a trail network framework that is creative, pragmatic, and most importantly, fundable and constructible.

Given that we do not have any sort of connected multi-modal network to speak of currently, we do not have existing pedestrian or bicycle counts for the City. We now realize that our pedestrian and bicycle crash counts and severity indices are high, including 2 fatalities in the past year, and this plan will work to directly address our safety issue.

The City of Stow currently has a population of 35,470 people (*2019 ESRI/US Census Bureau*), a population density of 2,038.4 inhabitants per square mile, 1,123 businesses (*ESRI*), and 14,399 employees (*ESRI*) within the City. By reaching our goal of having a trail network within a 1/4 mile of all residents and businesses, we will be serving 50,000+ people on a daily basis with this project.



**For 2 years in a row, the City of Stow has been named one of Ohio's "Best Cities to Live". We are seeking \$29,000 from AMATS in Connecting Communities funding for the City of Stow City-Wide Connectivity Plan to continue to improve the quality of life not only in our City, but our region.**

**We hope that our Council-approved \$20,000 in local matching funds shows our commitment to working with AMATS on this catalytic project for our City and our region. If you have any questions about this application or the overall project, please do not hesitate to contact Rob Kurtz, 330.689.2811 / rkurtz@stow.oh.us, or Mayor John Pribonic, 330.689.2800.**

# Legislation

2020 Connecting Communities **Planning Grant**



in partnership with:



RESOLUTION NO. 2020-25

REQUESTED BY PLANNING DIRECTOR  
APPROVED BY ROADS & SAFETY  
INTRODUCED BY MCINTIRE

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A CITY OF STOW APPLICATION TO THE AKRON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (AMATS) FOR THE 2020 CONNECTING COMMUNITIES PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

WHEREAS, the City of Stow ("City") desires to apply to AMATS for a 2020 Connecting Communities Planning Grant; and

WHEREAS, the deadline for such application is February 28, 2020 and to meet that deadline this Resolution must go into immediate effect;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF STOW, COUNTY OF SUMMIT AND STATE OF OHIO:

SECTION 1. That the Mayor is authorized to apply for a 2020 Connecting Communities Planning Grant and if awarded, accept such grant; and enter into a contract on behalf of the City to implement the grant program in accordance with its guidelines and funding level.

SECTION 2. That if the City is awarded the grant, the Finance Director be, and hereby is, authorized to utilize the appropriate fund or such other fund as he may designate, for the purpose of receiving and distributing said grant funds.

SECTION 3. That if the city is awarded the grant, the Council of the City does agree to obligate funds required to satisfactorily complete the proposed project and thus become eligible for 2020 Connecting Communities Planning Grant funds.

SECTION 4. That Council finds and determines that all formal actions of this Council concerning and relating to the passage of this Resolution were taken in an open meeting of this Council and that all deliberations of this Council and committees and subcommittees that resulted in those formal actions were in meetings open to the public in compliance with the law.

SECTION 5. That this Resolution was adopted pursuant to Section 4.11 of the Charter of the City of Stow, Ohio (hereinafter "Charter"), and is hereby declared to be an emergency measure necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health and safety for the reason that the City must meet a deadline in applying for the grant, and, pursuant to Section 4.13 of the Charter, shall take effect upon its adoption by Council and approval by the Mayor, otherwise at the earliest period allowed by law.

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL 2-13-20

ATTEST Lorree Villers  
Lorree Villers  
CLERK OF COUNCIL

FILED WITH MAYOR 2-14-20

FILED WITH CLERK 2-18-20

APPROVED AS TO FORM

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jaime Syx  
LAW DIRECTOR

Sindi M. Harrison

Sindi Harrison  
PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL

APPROVED

John Probonic  
John Probonic  
MAYOR

EFFECTIVE DATE \_\_\_\_\_

I, Lorree Villers, Clerk  
of Council, do hereby certify that  
copies of the foregoing were  
posted in accordance with  
Section 10.13 C.O.S.  
Lorree Villers