



TRAILS GRANT AWARDED TO KENNER

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For Immediate Release

KENNER TO INSTALL BIKE PATH ALONG JOE YENNI BLVD. AND WILLIAMS BLVD. USING RECREATIONAL TRAILS GRANT AWARD

The City of Kenner Department of Parks & Recreation will soon be installing a bike path along the median of Joe Yenni Blvd. in North Kenner from Williams Blvd. to Alabama Ave. The path will connect to the sidewalks on Williams Blvd., which will be altered to allow bike access south to W. Esplanade Ave. Kenner was awarded a 2011-12 Recreational Trails Grant, which is a federal program that is administered in Louisiana by the La. Office of State Parks.

The new paths will make transportation by bike and on foot along both major arteries easier and safer. They will connect the Driftwood neighborhood and the neighborhoods along the lake, providing them all access to the lake and Kenner's Laketown Park, the Treasure Chest Casino, the Pontchartrain Center, as well as the string of commercial businesses along Williams Blvd. These trails will also connect five of the city's playgrounds, from the Alabama Tennis Courts to the Galatas Playground and Gym complex.

Laketown is unique because it abuts the levee, which runs for miles through various parishes east and west. Laketown itself is one of Kenner's largest, most popular parks with shelters available for rent, playground equipment, a walking track, a boat launch, and two fishing piers. Laketown is now the new home to Coconut Beach as well. By providing easier access to Lake Pontchartrain, these trails will encourage families and fitness enthusiasts to bike or walk more often to the lake to enjoy all its amenities. Lake Pontchartrain is certainly a large part of what makes New Orleans and Kenner what it is – a fishing and boating destination, a scenic waterfront area, and a place for families to picnic, play and relax.

"We hope that this bike path makes travel easier for residents who do not have easy access to a car in Kenner, especially since there is so much to offer in this area," says Ken Marroccoli, Director of the Parks & Recreation Department who is planning the project. Planning for these bike trails began when the city received the final report from S.W. Leader, Inc., a planning firm in New Orleans, which conducted a Williams Blvd. Pedestrian Study in 2010 on the number of people who use Kenner's sidewalks as their main form of transportation. Faculty and students at the University of New Orleans helped put the data together for the study. The number of walkers in Kenner turned out to be surprisingly high, at least higher than hypothesized. This study prompted the city to improve its sidewalks and add bike paths starting in North Kenner.

The trails will also improve the economic strength of the area by providing access to a greater number of people – those who beforehand did not have access by car – and they will provide easier access to the various stores and businesses along the route. It has been shown nationwide that when a bike path is installed, residents who previously had to get into a vehicle to drive to the store, even for just a few items, are more willing to quickly walk or ride to the corner store for those few items once the path is installed. Since most of the smaller businesses on Williams Blvd. are locally-owned and operated, this change will keep more of Kenner's dollars in Kenner, giving a much-needed boost to the local economy.

“Given the economic hardships the city and the nation as a whole are facing right now, this is one benefit of the bike trails we are especially excited about,” says Mayor Yenni.

There are also environmental benefits. The trail project will reduce the number of cars on the road and the amount of air pollution released in Kenner. By redesigning the sidewalks to accommodate bikes – in essence by making it easier to walk and bike through the city – the goal is to encourage residents to use these alternative methods of transportation instead of cars.

In order to make sure these changes do not affect the safety of travelers, signs will be added showing that pedestrians have the right of way, that bikes are allowed and to watch out for traffic as well. Crosswalks along Williams Blvd. and Joe Yenni Blvd. will be improved for the safety of all.

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