



metrogreen

two states.
seven counties.
one regional greenway system.

mid-america regional council

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proposal

Legislation to enable counties in the Kansas City metropolitan area to establish a regional park and recreation district to support the development, operations and maintenance of a public system of interconnecting trails and parks is being proposed. This enabling legislation would extend the authority to establish a Kansas City regional district similar to the one in the St. Louis metro area. The enabling legislation would require a public vote for any county to participate in the district.

need

The Kansas City metropolitan area has been working toward a regional greenway trail system for over a decade. Interest and support for such a system continues to increase among area residents, community leaders and local government officials. The greenway trail system is part of a community-wide effort to preserve important natural areas along stream and river corridors and provide greater recreational opportunities to residents for health and active living. Local communities are challenged in responding to growing interest from their residents to provide additional park and recreational opportunities, as land prices continue to rise and local city and county budgets are strained to support daily operations. Local economic development specialists encourage communities to offer more park and recreational amenities to attract both companies and talented people to the region.

economic benefit

Surveys of Kansas City area residents reveal strong interest and support for more multi-use trails. Residents see the value of open space preservation to protect water quality and native habitat and to provide opportunities for recreation. Local and national studies document the economic value of green space to adjacent properties, particularly properties along green stream corridors or trails. Green corridors serve an important purpose in reducing stormwater runoff and reducing risks and costs associated with flooding.

st. louis model – great rivers greenway district

Local leaders from the St. Louis metropolitan area gained support in the Missouri General Assembly through SB405 in May 1999 to establish a Metropolitan Park District with voter consent. Voters in the city of St. Louis, St. Louis County and St. Charles County approved Proposition C, “Clean Water, Safe Parks and Community Trails,” to establish the district in November 2000 with approval by 65 percent of the voters. Two Illinois counties approved an Illinois District. The Great Rivers Greenway District (www.greatrivers.info) began collecting a modest 1/10 cent sales tax in 2001 in the city of St. Louis and the two adjoining Missouri counties. Half of the funds are invested in regional projects to complete 14 major greenways and half of the funds support local parks and trails projects identified by city and county officials. In 2006, the district supported over 50 projects in the 14 greenway corridors valued at \$14.8 million, using the district sales tax, government grants, and program income.





The enabling law for the Great Rivers Greenway District in St. Louis (Section 67.1700 through 67.1769 of the Revised Missouri Statutes) is limited to a metropolitan area with a first class county having a charter form of government and a population of at least 900,000. This definition does not allow the Kansas City area's counties to make use of this state law.

Local officials from the Kansas City area in Missouri would like to pursue similar legislation to allow area counties to seek voter approval to form a Regional Park and Recreation District and levy a small retail sales tax to support further development of a regional greenway trail system and enhance local and regional park systems.

Kansas City area officials have worked with St. Louis area officials to ensure that progress made on behalf of the Kansas City area will not adversely impact the successful district program developed in St. Louis. For that reason, the Kansas City area officials working on this proposal do **not** recommend amending the current statute, but provide for a separate statute.

The funding allocation would provide 45 percent of the sales tax funds for regional trails projects with oversight by a district board made up of representatives from participating counties. Five percent of the 45 percent could be provided to communities or nonprofit organizations as grants to further support the objective of expanding parks and trails opportunities for residents in participating counties. The remaining 55 percent of the sales tax proceeds would go back to the local cities and county for local parks and trails projects. Of the 55 percent, 15 percent would go to the county, and 40 percent would be distributed back to cities on the basis of their relative sales tax contributions.

The proposal provides for a modest proportion of the funds (no more than 15 percent of the regional district allocation) to be available for project management, planning, fiscal accounting and administrative activities. Local park directors in the Kansas City region have suggested that the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), the area's association of local governments and metropolitan planning organization, could serve as staff support to the Metropolitan Park and Recreation District.

The enabling authority would allow one or more counties in Missouri to:

- Establish a regional park and recreation district with majority voter approval
- Levy a modest retail sales tax (up to 1/10 of one cent)
- Form a board composed of local officials to oversee the district operations and finances
- Purchase property or otherwise secure ground for use as public parks, trails, and recreational facilities
- Develop or contract with public agencies to develop parks and trails facilities on public land or on land for which easements have been granted to the district or a public agency for such purposes
- Provide a portion of the collected sales tax back to local counties and cities for local parks, recreation and trails projects

The regional park and recreation district formed under this proposal would NOT:

- Take any responsibility away from local parks and recreation agencies
- Regulate water quality, watershed management or land-use issues
- Have any power of eminent domain