Rails-to-trails: a recreational trail system in southern Indiana

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Abstract:
As society continues to become more urbanized, our land resources are being lost. Agriculture land is being converted to urban uses at the rate of approximately one million acres per year. With the population growth rate of 1% each year, this trend is most likely to continue. Because of this, there is a growing need to preserve our open space. One way we can do this is by creating greenways that link open spaces together. Greenways are important to the future land preservation because they provide economic benefit, conservation, recreational opportunities, and interconnection. One successful method of creating greenways is converting abandoned railroads into trail systems. By doing this, we are conserving the land and allowing it to continue to be an asset to the public. The Monon corridor provides an existing link needed to connect Bloomington, Indiana to Lake Monroe. Southern Indiana's recreational opportunities are plentiful in this area but lack the connection to allow visitors to interact within the system of open spaces without the need for vehicular transportation. Without the creation of a trail system using the abandoned Monon rail corridor, the former land mark of the Monon corridor could be lost forever.

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