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Indiana's premier off-road cycling, running, and multi-sport events

August 9, 2021: An open letter to Indiana Railroad, Brown County Commissioners, Indiana DNR, and all involved with the closure of Indian Hill Road south of IN45:

Closure of Indian Hill Road at the railroad crossing imposes obvious and severe challenges on local residents. Closure also challenges the wide range of recreational activities and user groups that depend on passage through the crossing. **Complete closure of the Tecumseh Trail at this key point effectively shuts down the potential to complete long-distance hikes and trail runs.**

DINO is one of the groups that depend upon this vital connection point along the Tecumseh Trail. We know with certainty that hikers, backpackers, cyclists, and local residents all depend upon passage through this crossing. We expect that hunters, birdwatchers, and other outdoor enthusiasts also feel the effect of the closure.

DINO and Hoosier Hikers Council founded an event in 2003 called the Tecumseh Trail Marathon. Annually, the Tecumseh Trail, DINO, and Brown and Morgan counties host runners participating in a variety of distance events, always including a Marathon distance (26.2 miles) point-to-point race from Morgan Monroe State Forest headquarters to Yellowwood Lake. **Participation in Tecumseh Trail Marathon grew to over 700 runners in 2010.** The event is a destination for runners from dozens of states, many of whom work toward a goal of running a marathon in every state.

A new partner, Indiana Trail Running, joined us in 2018, and a 50 km (31.1 miles) point-to-point race was added at that time. **The 2020 Tecumseh Trail Challenge received over 500 entries coming from at least 15 states.** The Tecumseh Trail Challenge brings hundreds of out-of-town guests that lodge, dine, and shop in Nashville, Columbus, Bloomington, and surrounding areas. The Tecumseh Trail Challenge is considered a "must-do", classic event for trail runners in Indiana and beyond.

The point-to-point route is a huge factor in attracting runners for the Tecumseh Trail Marathon. We charter school buses to shuttle runners to the start line, and they run back. This creates a highly memorable experience that is unique in the world of running races. Participants have a strong sense of accomplishment from driving for an hour through hills and valleys, and then running all the way back.

In addition to being less-desirable, the looped course (required due to closing of the Tecumseh) has additional, inherent logistical challenges compared with a linear route. With multiple distance options, preventing runners from making wrong turns is quite difficult. Runners definitely value the point-to-point experience of not repeating any step of the course - which is not the case with the alternative looped course.

If we can no longer run a point-to-point course, the event will lose a vital part of its character. I feel it will lose the ability to draw 500-700 participants to the area again. **For this year's event (October 23, 2021), we need immediate action to cross this railroad or we will be forced to revert to an inferior looped course layout.**

The Tecumseh Trail is one of precious few long-distance forested foot trails in Indiana. Closure to pedestrian traffic at this key point in the trail eliminates the possibility for DINO long-distance, point-to-point trail runs along the Tecumseh Trail, as well as eliminating long-distance through-hiking of the Tecumseh. **Please restore pedestrian access across the Indiana Railroad on Indian Hill Road.**

Sincerely,

Brian Holzhausen, DINO Director