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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**KENT COUNTY ACQUIRES FINAL SEGMENT OF PAUL HENRY THORNAPPLE TRAIL**

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, August 2, 2011 – In collaboration with Steelcase Inc., Kent County today announced plans to acquire the last segment of the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail. Pending approval from the Board of Commissioners, the County will acquire an easement from Steelcase that will close the final gap in Kent County of the 42-mile, multi-use trail under development from Grand Rapids to Vermontville in Eaton County.

“We are pleased to be able to complete such a critical link in the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail,” said Kent County Parks Director Roger Sabine. “The new alignment follows East Paris Ave. and provides a direct connection to existing segments of the trail at 60<sup>th</sup> and 76<sup>th</sup> streets.”

Steelcase and the County worked together to create a more direct, safe and accessible route from the trail originally secured by the National Rails to Trails Conservancy, which limited connectivity to other segments of the system and inhibited the future use of the Steelcase property. The new easement granted by Steelcase also circumvents the road and opens the trail to a greater number of users – both recreational and commuters.

“Steelcase is proud to join Kent County in this announcement today. The Paul B. Henry trail is a wonderful asset to our community and we’re happy to see the extension come to fruition. We hope this will encourage even more members of the community to make use of the trail system,” said Brian Cloyd, Steelcase vice president of corporate relations.

Constructing various segments of the Thornapple Trail has required the acquisition of easements or right-of-way following thorough evaluations and consultations with adjacent land owners. Kent County has worked in partnership with the City of Kentwood, Gaines Township, Caledonia Township and the Village of Caledonia to develop and complete the non-motorized trail.

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The trail's route passes through farmlands, woodlands and small towns, and along and over rivers and creeks, including the Thornapple River in Barry County. Designed for a variety of activities ranging from rollerblading, biking and hiking to running, walking and cross-country skiing, the network features paved 10-foot-wide trails.

Construction is expected to begin this fall for the segment from 76<sup>th</sup> to 68<sup>th</sup> streets and is slated for completion by spring of 2012.

To date, much of the work has been funded by federal and state grants provided through the Michigan Department of Transportation.

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