

# MCT Opens New Monarch Valley Trail

by Ellie Carrow

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**EDWARDSVILLE** - The already extensive Madison County Transit (MCT) Trails system added another trail to its scenic network of Class One bikeways last week, with the opening of the new MCT Monarch Valley Trail in Edwardsville. Last Thursday morning, MCT Board members, staff, and local officials attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the completion of the new trail, which also serves as a “pollinator pathway,” a corridor of native plants that provide nutrition and habitat for pollinating insects and birds. The new Monarch Valley Trail is a 0.7-mile trail that stretches from Emerson Avenue to Irma Street on the former rail alignment of the Illinois Traction System’s Edwardsville Belt Railway. In addition to eight native pollinator beds, the trail

also features two MCT interpretive panels: one includes information about the pollinator pathway, and the other a brief history of the Edwardsville Belt Railway. Winding through the historic Leclaire neighborhood of Edwardsville, the MCT Monarch Valley Trail connects hundreds of residents to Leclaire Elementary School and nearby Leclaire Lake Park.

“The Monarch Valley Trail is a beautiful addition to the MCT Trails network,” said MCT Managing Director SJ Morrison. “We’ve planted hundreds of native pollinator plants and dozens of trees to encourage this scenic valley to be a haven for butterflies and other pollinators. The hope is that this trail will someday connect to the MCT Nickel Plate Trail and the rest of the MCT Trails system.”

An MCT Trails kiosk map and the interpretive panels can be found at the intersection of Franklin and Madison Avenue. The trail was funded in part by a Metro East Parks and Recreation District (MEPRD) grant. Juneau Associates Inc. served as the design engineer and Stutz Excavating was the contractor.

“This trail wouldn’t have been possible without the hard work of our staff and contractors as well as the support and assistance of the City of Edwardsville, the Edwardsville School District, Ameren Illinois, and the adjacent property owners,” said Morrison.