

February 7, 2010

Update on the Israel Bike Trail – February 2010

Dear Friends,

It has been quite a while since we updated you on what has been happening with the Israel Bike Trail. The economic crisis has cast a pall over the past year. Funding for planning has been delayed and we have been trying to advance the project with the means at our disposal. After we published report number 1, http://www.ibt.org.il/shlav_a.pdf, which includes a survey of the important issues involved in the area of planning of bike trails and has served as the guide for our continued detailed planning, we focused on moving ahead with detailed planning in a number of segments:

1. **The Golan Heights** – The military authorities adamantly refused to allow us permission to route the trail along the edges of firing zones. We have explored many alternatives that conform to the standard of the trail and its basic definition – **that it be open all week and not only on weekends.**

We are currently working jointly with the Golan Regional Council to check another route, which would be shared by the Israel Bike Trail and the Golan Trail – the latter is now being made suitable for cycling. As noted, the combination of cultivated fields and fenced-off firing zones makes off-road passage through the Golan a very difficult task.

2. **Annunciation Trail** – This segment would complete the trail from Mount Hermon to Bet Keshet. We have located a suitable alternative and we are now waiting for funding so we can prepare plans for implementation. Gil Atzmon, regional director for Keren Kayemeth Leisrael-Jewish National Fund, is involved in the planning of this segment. We are also working in cooperation with the people involved in the Kinneret Trail and the Kinneret View Trail.

3. **Jerusalem** – We are holding talks with the Jerusalem municipality in an attempt to advance a detailed route through the city. We prepared a master plan that has been presented to the municipality, and we hope a way will be found to move ahead on the detailed planning of the route.

4. **Tsofar-Shaharut** – We have moved ahead on detailed planning for this segment. The segment would create a continuous trail from Shaharut to Eilat, thus completing 200 km of the trail. We are trying to organize funding to implement this segment.

5. **Implementation of the segment from Shaharut to Eilat** – For technical reasons the implementation of the Shaharut-Eilat segment was delayed this year. It has been divided into two separate tenders. The first of the tenders was published for the first time last week for construction of the trail between Shaharut and Ma'aleh Sayarim, with completion planned by April 2010. The tender for the trail signs is to be issued shortly by the Israel Government Tourist Corporation.

We hope that in 2010 we will have funding at our disposal to move ahead with the entire trail.

The Internet site for the Israel Bike Trail, www.ibt.org.il, has been updated with the help of Dafna Gimon, and contains a great deal of professional material. Please use it to follow the progress of the project and to view the presentations and download relevant files.

Anyone who has additional professional material to post on the site is welcome to send it to me.

Sincerely,

Hillel Sussman
Director, Israel Bike Trail

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