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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 18, 2017

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Union Point approved for \$100,000 grant for Firefly Trail

With the approval of Union Point's application for a \$100,000 grant to partially fund the Firefly Trail from the city to Union Point Steam Academy, a third "model mile" of the planned 39-mile pedestrian and bicycle path comes closer to fruition.

Union Point will receive the maximum amount available through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Recreational Trails Program, which is funded by the Federal Recreational Trails Program. The city has pledged to provide \$50,000 in matching local funds, and Firefly Trail, Inc., has pledged to raise an additional \$30,000.

The funds will build a paved path, 10- to 12-feet wide, from downtown Union Point to the Union Point STEAM Academy elementary school, located about 0.6 miles north of the city on Ga. 77. The school's front lawn is bisected by the abandoned corridor of the Georgia Railroad Athens Branch, which the trail will utilize wherever possible. Currently, the only access to the school is via the highway, so the trail will create the first and only safe route to school for families in Union Point.

"I am grateful that the Georgia Department of Natural Resources is investing in this critical trail project," said Rep. Trey Rhodes, R-Greensboro, in announcing the grant. "The proposed Firefly Trail will be a great addition to Union Point, as it is sure to drive economic development and enhance the quality of life for our citizens. This Recreational Trails Program grant is a tremendous win for Union Point and will play a major role in helping to further develop the Firefly Trail in our community."

The grant comes as Firefly Trail, Inc., a 501(c)3 organization established to promote creation of the trail, approaches the final weeks of its campaign to raise matching funds for "Model Miles" in Union Point, Maxeys and Athens-Clarke County. Like Union Point, Maxeys received a \$100,000 DNR Recreational Trails Grant in 2016, and is working to build its Model Mile later this year. Athens-Clarke is currently building a 0.8-mile segment, using Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax dollars, that includes two major bridges.

"We have set an ambitious goal of raising \$30,000 for Union Point and \$25,000 for Maxeys, plus \$5,000 to help Athens-Clarke promote completion of all eight miles of the Firefly Trail there," said FTI President Mark Ralston. "We are more than halfway to our goal and will soon announce a major matching opportunity that will allow donors to double their impact."

People who would like to support the trail-building effort can donate at www.ioby.org/project/firefly.

“The campaign is scheduled to end on May 22, so we are urging people to give now and give generously,” Ralston said. “This is the moment for people who want to see a safe, level path for walking, running, biking and skating to step up. All proceeds will be used to extend the model miles in Maxeys and Union Point as far as possible and promote extending the trail in Athens-Clarke through Winterville to Oglethorpe County.”

The full text of the announcement from Rep. Rhodes follows:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Wednesday, April 12, 2017

Rep. Rhodes Announces Funding for City of Union Point Firefly Trail

ATLANTA – State Representative Trey Rhodes (R-Greensboro) today announced that the City of Union Point Firefly Trail will receive a \$100,000 Recreational Trails Program grant from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources through the Federal Recreational Trails Program.

“I am grateful that the Georgia Department of Natural Resources is investing in this critical trail project,” said Rep. Rhodes. “The proposed Firefly Trail will be a great addition to Union Point, as it is sure to drive economic development and enhance the quality of life for our citizens. This Recreational Trails Program grant is a tremendous win for Union Point and will play a major role in helping to further develop the Firefly Trail in our community.”

The Federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a highly competitive grant program that provides funding for trail construction, trail maintenance and trail education. The Georgia RTP, which is funded through the Federal Highway Administration and administered at the state level, develops and maintains recreational trails and trail-related facilities consistent with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

The City of Union Point Firefly Trail is one of only 14 trail projects in Georgia to receive a new DNR grant, totaling \$2.3 million for trail development and upkeep statewide.

The Firefly Trail is a planned 39-mile rail-trail from Athens to Union Point in Northeast Georgia. The historic rail line, known as the Athens Branch of the Georgia Railroad, branched off the still-active Augusta-to-Atlanta line in Union Point and passed through the towns of Woodville, Maxeys, Stephens, Crawford, Arnoldsville and Winterville on its way to Athens.

For more information on the Firefly Trail, please visit www.fireflytrail.com.

Representative Trey Rhodes represents the citizens of District 120, which includes Greene, Oglethorpe and Taliaferro counties, and portions of Putnam and Wilkes counties. He was elected into the House of Representatives in 2015, and currently serves on the Banks & Banking,

Economic Development & Tourism, Ways & Means, Game, Fish & Parks, and Special Rules committees.

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