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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **BIKE/PEDESTRIAN TRAIL FOR ALABAMA SOUTHERN AND MCHS RECEIVES \$387,205 GRANT**

**MONROEVILLE, ALABAMA-** A new Bike/Pedestrian Trail between Alabama Southern Community College and Monroe County High School will be funded by a \$387,205 grant through the Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program as detailed in a letter to Alabama Southern's President from Governor Bob Riley last week.

"The Bike/Pedestrian Trail for Alabama Southern and Monroe County High School offers an excellent opportunity to stimulate our local economy by creating jobs as a result of this project and increase the interest in higher education and technical training," said Dr. John A. Johnson, President of Alabama Southern. "The path will also provide a secure mode of transportation for the dual enrollment students and faculty from both institutions."

The property south of Agriculture Road and east of Veterans Drive offers a unique transportation enhancement solution for students, faculty and staff. This area of land, which is owned by Alabama Southern, provides the opportunity to connect the two campuses with a safe, handicapped-accessible pedestrian and bicycle. The path will not only provide for safe travel but also a scenic route totaling three quarter miles between the two campuses.

"This project has been in Alabama Southern's plans for over 15 years," said Johnson. "It is wonderful to see another dream become reality."

"This is an excellent solution to the safety issue that the high school and college students as well as the faculty/staff face on a daily basis," said Melanie Ryals, Superintendent, Monroe County Schools. "This path will provide a reliable mode of transportation between the institutions, while promoting a more environmentally-friendly way of travel. This plan also strengthens the educational bonds and continuous partnership between Alabama Southern and the Monroe County Public School System, while exposing our young adults to the importance of higher education and training."

The keys to this project are connectivity, safety, and aesthetics. The 1.3 mile, one-way, asphalt path will connect the Alabama Southern campus with the Monroe County High campus. The ten foot path width will allow ample clearance for bicyclers to safely pass walkers and runners. This is currently a wooded area so some trees will be cleared, but the project design allows for ample vegetation for shade and visual appeal. A dam will be constructed, creating a 5 acre lake which will further enhance the visual appeal. Energy efficient lighting and directional signage will assure safe and secure transport for students, faculty/ staff, and community members.

"Monroe County is facing very difficult times in an economically depressed climate. It is important for us to focus on education and training in order to be prepared for the coming positive upturn in the economy," said Greg Norris, Monroe County Probate Judge. "This project will encourage our students to continue their education and training by making the college campus more accessible. Monroe County has committed to help by constructing a dam, which will help make the path and lake a reality. The construction of this project will create jobs in our

community, now. Our youth and our community will be enhanced a safe and secure pathway between these schools.”

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