



West Michigan Trails – Spring Trail Summit, East Area
March 21, 2024 2:00pm – 4:30 pm
Ionia Armory Community Center
439 West Main Street, Ionia, MI 48846

Attendance:

Ron Gunderson, Flat River and Grand River Valley Rail-Trail

Wayne Addis, Flat River Rail-Trail

Rick Moore, Thornapple Trail Association

Jane Hemenway, Friends of the Heartland Trail

Gary Ferguson, Dan's Bike Shop Ionia

Melanie Manion, Cascade Township

Leah Groya, Planning Consultant (via web)

Norm Cox, The Greenway Collaborative

Carolyn Prudhomme, The Greenway Collaborative

Megan Motil, Parallel Solutions

Jennifer Antel, West Michigan Trails

John Morrison, West Michigan Trails

Meeting Notes:

- **Lowell Area:** A few easements are still needed to complete the gap in Lowell. Some pavement expected to be laid this year. Planned extension to the new Kent County Fairground, connecting Montcalm to Jackson
- **Cascade Township Park:** Cascade Township is actively working on acquiring land to establish a large park. The township currently has a popular pathway network that is not connected to the regional system. The township is working with Kent County Parks on completing the regional gap and would like to connect to the township pathway network.
- **CIS Trail Extension:** Plans to extend the CIS trail all the way into Owosso.
- **Connections to Portland:** Past attempts at connections to Portland were unsuccessful. Proposed updating the map to reflect an aspirational connection between Ionia and Portland along the railroad corridor.



West Michigan Trails – Spring Trail Summit, East Area
March 21, 2024 2:00pm – 4:30 pm
Ionia Armory Community Center
439 West Main Street, Ionia, MI 48846

- **M-46 Corridor:** M-46 parallels an old railroad corridor to Howard City. Some old bridges still exist. Interest expressed in exploring the feasibility of this connection. Follow-up research indicates that this corridor has reverted to adjacent land owners, built over in many places with one small exception owned by Winfield Township.
- **Cascade Township Connection:** Desire to connect to the Paul Henry trail, with M-6 currently posing a barrier. Rumors of an existing tunnel under M-6 have circulated.
- **Paul Henry Trail:** Efforts underway to acquire easements and pave segments up to the Barry County line. All engineering work on the trail has been completed. This year they are planning on contracting to pave from Fuller Street in Nashville to M-66 and near Thornapple Manner to Thornapple Lake Drive. There are only two gaps in ownership, one between Hastings and Middleville and one between Middleville and Nashville.
- **Meeting Materials:** PowerPoint and recording to be distributed to participants.

Meeting Survey Results:

What Trail are you Most Closely Affiliated With?

- Flat and Grand River Trails
- Paul Henry Thornapple Trail
- Heartland Trail
- Grand River Greenway
- Ionia Bike Shop/CIS Trail

What Three Words Best Describe a World-Class Regional Trail?

- Connectivity (x3)
- Accessibility/Paved Surface (X2)
- Safety (x2)
- Signage/Wayfinding (2)
- Enjoyment
- E-bikes allowed



West Michigan Trails – Spring Trail Summit, East Area
March 21, 2024 2:00pm – 4:30 pm
Ionia Armory Community Center
439 West Main Street, Ionia, MI 48846

- Maintenance
- Neighborhood/Community Park
- Promoted
- Financed
- Amenities

How Would you Prioritize Spending Trail Dollars and what Barrier need to be overcome?

- Cost of \$5,200 per mile for trail seal coating.
- Need grants for maintenance and establishing wayfinding on existing trails.
- Existing grants show reluctance to fund wayfinding, making funding difficult post-trail construction. Once signs are in place, insurance covers them.

How Difficult is it to Obtain Funding?

- Difficulty utilizing sponsors on DNR trails; unable to post signs noting sponsors on these corridors.
- Relying on volunteers and donations to support amenities and signs.
- Reimbursement challenges for friends' groups to bankroll projects due to lack of cash flow.

What is Your Biggest Non-Funding Related Roadblock in Developing Trails?

- Need for a PR campaign to garner more trail support and involve younger stakeholders.
- Cascade Township's past lack of support for connecting to the regional system, despite recent community survey indicating pathways as a top priority.
- Education necessary for understanding trail regulations, especially regarding e-bikes. How are others handling e-bikes?
- Implementation of speed limits: Greenville set at 20 mph, while Paul Henry trail posted 25 mph outside of town and 15 mph within town.
- Acquiring Insurance coverage on privately owned trails, like Heartland Trail, is challenging; no coverage for bridges destroyed by arson. TART trails suggested as a resource for more information.
- Significant investment required for planning and designing trails; reimbursement no longer guaranteed, despite being a crucial step in obtaining grants.

Would you Like to Continue Sub-Region Trail Summits?

A sub-region meeting would be useful. A smaller group allows for all voices to be heard.