



WEST MICHIGAN
TRAILS & GREENWAYS
COALITION

West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition

Spring Update

Letter from the Executive Director

April, 2009

Greetings:

As we gear up for the 2009 trail season, we wish to thank all of our supporters for their vision, gifts, and contributions to the work of the West Michigan Trails &



Greenways Coalition. The trail network continues to grow, connecting people and places, and providing healthy lifestyle opportunities.

These pathways are great connections to nature, wildlife habitats, the beautiful environments of the lakeshore, and to communities rich in character. They serve as an outdoor classroom, educating and encouraging participation in the protection of our valuable resources. The splendor of the countryside and farmlands is readily available to anyone wanting an amazing outdoor experience that is sure to delight and fill one's senses with wonder and beauty. And all along the trails network, refreshing stops and ice-cream treats are nearby; just around the corner. It is truly a privilege to have access to such a remarkable network of trails & greenways meandering throughout our region. What a terrific place to live!

On April 5th, I was a guest on the Shelley Irwin's "Community Connections" show on WGVU-PBS, Channel 35. I had the opportunity to tell a little of "our story," as we talked about the Trails Network in West Michigan. We discussed where the trails are, types of surfaces, what trails are complete, which ones are "in progress," and others that are "on the books." We had the opportunity to name several of our funding partners, and mentioned the Meijer Foundation for their close partnership and ongoing support. Shelley asked about our need for volunteers, and how people can get involved. We also touched on safety on the trails, and "trail etiquette." We will post the show on our website (and on LinkedIn) as soon as it is available.

Speaking of which, the Coalition website has a new look and feel. Check us out at www.wmtrails.org.

We have also added 2 new board members to the coalition... Please join us in welcoming them to the trails and greenways community.



Igor Soljan

Igor is a cycling enthusiast, and the owner of igortech.com – an IT, digital media, and web-tech company. He brings his business and technical expertise to our organization.



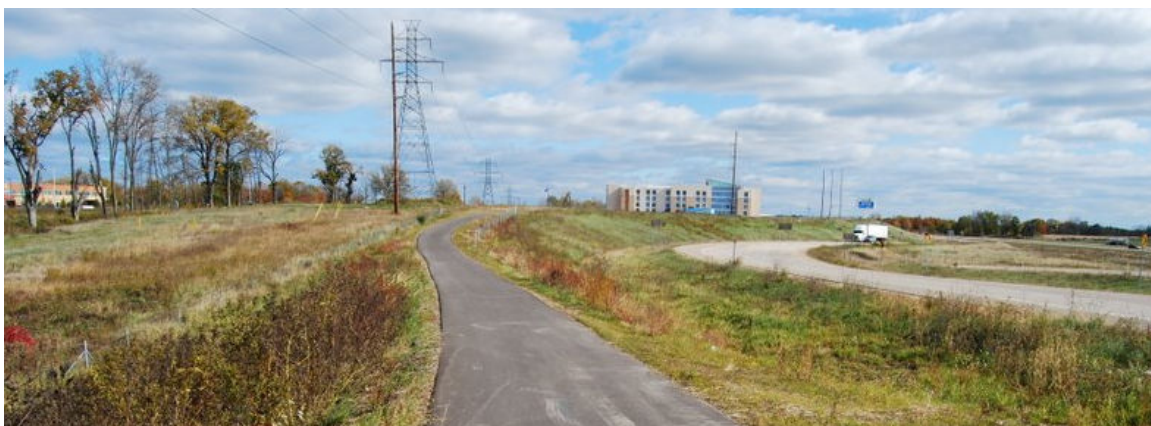
Karen Gentry

Karen is the author of Cycling Michigan: 25 of the Best Bike Routes in West Michigan. She is also a staff writer at MiBiz, a cycling enthusiast, and our trails photographer.

There are a number of exciting trail-related projects and events that are coming your way –and you can read about the new trails mapping atlas system and other “happenings” in this Newsletter.

Sincerely,
Sharon Nunnelee

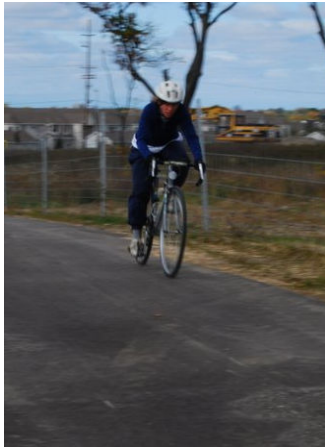
Feature: M-6 Trail



Sometimes you just need to get from point A to point B. The new \$3.3 million M-6 trail, part of the Fred Meijer network of trails, is less about aesthetics and more about

function. But bicycling commuters to employers like Metro Health or workers wanting to take a hiking break will appreciate the 7.5-mile trail in the shadows of the new South Beltline.

When I initially heard there was an M-6 Trail I envisioned riding a bike along the shoulder of the busy highway. Not to worry. The trail is mostly a separate 10-foot-wide path following the east west route.



The eastern trailhead hooks the Kent Trails west of Byron Center Avenue SW in Byron Township to 68th Street by M-6. The second phase of the trail is a 4.7-mile stretch venturing east from South Division Avenue south of M-6, crossing under M-6 at Eastern Avenue and continuing toward Wing Avenue SE. Most of the trail is fairly flat easily handled by beginners.

Currently the trail is complete from Kent Trails east of Clay Avenue and from Division Avenue east to the Thornapple Trail. Much of the trail is 10 feet wide although there are some 5-foot sidewalk sections along 68th Street From Clyde Park to Division. The trail will be functional from east to west in Spring 2009 using the sidewalk sections, although eventually it will all be a paved trail.

Kent County Parks & Recreation Director Roger Sabine, said the idea for the trail started back in the early 90's to connect the Paul Henry to the Thornapple Trails. He continued that, "Feedback on the trail has been extremely positive." The Meijer Foundation kick started trail construction with a \$300,000 lead donation.

According to Roger, it is now a fully functioning trail with a few improvements that will be planned for the future. "It's a fully functioning trail with a couple of areas of sidewalk. There's a creek, a railroad track, and Division Street that we still need to deal with."

For those of you interested in exploring the views and shopping along the trail, there is parking and restroom facilities available at the East Paris Nature Park which is just a short drive to the trail. A trailhead also



exists west of Byron Center Avenue near Kent Trails, SE of 44th Street in Kentwood. For more information, go to <http://www.kentcountyparksfoundation.org/>

Rapid Wheelmen Donate to West Michigan Trails



We are pleased to let you know we have received a check from the Rapid Wheelmen group in the amount of \$3,860. This donation will help us develop a map/atlas system of our area for all to use as they enjoy the trails and greenspaces of West Michigan.

The Rapid Wheelmen is a group of community-minded and cycling-oriented people who raise money (with their October Colorburst Ride) to help a number of recipients who are doing meaningful work throughout our region. Josh & Amy Duggan were the coordinators of the 2008 October Colorburst, and they really worked hard to make it a terrific success.

At their February meeting, they presented several organizations with donation checks to help with new and/or ongoing projects. MADD and the Worldwide Ride of Silence were just two others to benefit from this wonderful group. This year's Ride of Silence will be Wed., May 20th, at 7:00 p.m., beginning at Riverside Park. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/ayskz3> to see the route.

Check out the links below to see some of the photos and events of the February evening, and visit the websites to find out more about the Rapid Wheelmen and all they're involved in throughout our community and what they're doing around West Michigan.

For more event information, go to <http://www.lmb.org/rapidwheels/>
Or, visit these sites: <http://www.pedalgr.com/2009/02/09/giving-away-14000/>
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/fotoman311/sets/72157613545502601/>
<http://www.thunderheadalliance.org/site/index.php/site/about/C185>



Michigan Communities Get Economic Boost

Enhancement Funding

April 9, 2009

LANSING - Lieutenant Governor John D. Cherry, Jr. today announced that 67 communities in 27 Michigan counties will benefit from a total of \$47.3 million in transportation enhancement (TE) funding. This total includes 22 projects funded through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act). The funding will complete 176 miles of bike paths and paved shoulders; enhance local roadways in communities statewide with lighting, landscaping, sidewalks, crosswalks and other improvements; preserve a historic bridge and two historic rail facilities. The projects are planned for the 2009 and 2010 construction seasons and will create or retain more than 1,300 jobs.

"This is a positive step for Michigan's economy," said Cherry. "These enhancement projects will create jobs and improve communities so they are more attractive to residents, businesses and visitors."

Transportation enhancement grants enable communities to invest in streetscape improvements, recreational path development and historic structure improvements. Local communities benefit from Recovery Act funding, because no local match is required.

"We are pleased that our transportation enhancement program for 2009 has been expanded by federal recovery funds that allow us to partner with more cities, townships, villages, and road commissions to make improvements that enrich communities and create jobs" said state Transportation Director Kirk T. Steudle.

The following projects are listed by county:

Allegan County

The city of Wayland will streetscape West Superior Street from US-131 to Church Street. The proposed improvements, recommended as part of the city's 2005 Downtown Blueprint, include decorative sidewalks at the corners of several intersections and street lighting. This work is planned in conjunction with a road

project. The total budget for the project is \$355,261, including \$234,472 in federal TE funds and \$120,789 from Wayland. Construction will begin this spring.

Calhoun County

MDOT will install native plantings at the I-94/I-69 interchange along the roadside, in the interchange and next to Bear Creek, within the right of way to reduce storm water road runoff and improve water quality. This project also will be combined with a road resurfacing project. The total project budget is \$350,099, including \$280,079 in federal TE funds and \$70,020 from MDOT.

Clare County (two projects)

MDOT, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, village of Farwell, Clare County Parks and Recreation, and the Clare County Road Commission, will pave 5.41 miles of the shared-use Pere Marquette Rail-Trail from west of the city of Farwell to east of Washington Road. The budget for this Recovery Act project is \$850,000.

MDOT, in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the city of Clare, will extend the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail from US-127 through the downtown area, ending at the Clare Public Library. The project will consist of a 10-foot bike path with a bridge over a small creek. Construction is scheduled to begin in June. The total budget is \$1,205,000, including \$636,427 in federal TE funds, \$68,573 from MDOT and \$500,000 from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Eaton County

MDOT, in partnership with the city of Eaton Rapids, will streetscape M-50/M-99 (Main Street) from State Street to Canal Street. This project will be paired with a reconstruction project of Main Street. Streetscape amenities will include streetlights, benches, trash receptacles, decorative sidewalk, stamped asphalt crosswalks, concrete planters, perennial plantings, shrubs, and trees. The budget for this Recovery Act project is \$699,495.

Kalamazoo County (two projects)

The city of Portage will construct 10-foot shared-use non-motorized extensions to the Northwest Portage Bikeway to connect to both the Millenium and the Portage Creek Bicentennial trails. These extensions will also create safe off-road connections between a number of densely populated residential areas and commercial establishments. The total cost of the project is \$399,779, including \$200,000 in federal TE funds and \$199,779 from the city.

The Kalamazoo County Road Commission, in partnership with the city of Kalamazoo, will construct five miles of bike path from the Riverview Drive/Mosel Avenue intersection to the north along the Kalamazoo River and Westnedge

Avenue, ending on D Avenue 200 feet east of the Kalamazoo River. This project is the next phase of a planned continuation of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail. The total cost of this Recovery Act project is \$1,766,125.

Kent County (four projects)

The city of Grand Rapids will make streetscape improvements in the Southtown neighborhood of southeast Grand Rapids. The first phase, Hall Street from Jefferson Avenue to Madison Avenue, will be completed in 2009. A second phase, Madison Avenue from Hall Street to Adams Street, is planned for 2010. The work will be done in conjunction with two combined sewer overflow projects. In addition, the city will be replacing the water main and building new concrete curb and gutter and driveways, and a new asphalt street surface. Project elements include trees, landscaping, benches, trash receptacles, brick pavers, and ornamental street lighting. The total cost of this Recovery Act project is \$929,170.

In conjunction with the M-21 bridge replacement over the Grand River in Ada Township, MDOT will expand the bridge deck 14 feet to accommodate a bicycle and pedestrian path on one side of the bridge. The project budget is \$1,216,126, including \$729,676 in federal TE funds and \$243,225 in matching funds from MDOT and \$243,225 from the township.

The village of Sparta will streetscape the Central Business District to promote slower traffic, generate a friendlier downtown atmosphere, and allow for safe, non-motorized travel. The project limits are Division Street from State Street to the Nash Creek Bridge and along Union Street from Division Street to the Nash Creek Bridge. Streetscape elements include decorative brick crosswalks, decorative lighting, benches, and landscaping. This work will be done in conjunction with sewer and road improvements. The project budget is \$753,000, including \$376,500 in federal TE funds and \$376,500 from the Sparta Downtown Development Authority.

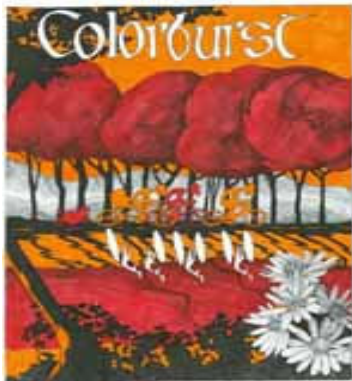
The Kent County Road Commission will partner with the cities of Grand Rapids, Walker, Grandville, Wyoming and Byron Township to reconstruct 6.2 miles of the Kent Trail network, which is currently eight feet wide. This project will increase the width to 10 feet, enabling the Kent Trails to match new trail systems currently being planned. This will accommodate increased trail use and meet safety concerns, capacity needs and maintenance standards. The project budget is \$880,652, including \$440,326 in federal TE funds and \$440,326 from Kent County. Construction is expected to begin this summer.

Van Buren and Kalamazoo Counties

The Van Buren County Road Commission, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, will resurface 18 miles of the Kal-Haven State Trail using recycled materials. The project will start at the existing 10th Street staging area and extend west to the village of Bloomingdale. The project will also include improving existing bridges to meet current standards. This project is the first

phase towards improving the entire 34-mile Kal-Haven State Trail. The budget for this Recovery Act project is \$900,000.

For more information, <http://www.michigan.gov/recovery/0,1607,7-172-52829-212442--,00.html> or Contact: Ben Kohrman 517-335-1589.



Rapid Wheelmen Announce Colorburst 2009

The Grand Rapids Rapid Wheelmen have announced the date of this year's Colorburst tour as Saturday, October 10, 2009. Colorburst was created by Craig Campbell, a member of the Rapid Wheelmen Bicycle Club, as a memorial to Donna Ryskamp who was killed August 9, 1983 by a drunk driver. She had been cycling on a Kalamazoo county road when she was hit. Donna was 28 years old and had been a member of the Rapid Wheelmen since 1974. She was also a member of the Kalamazoo Bicycling Club. This first ride was on Saturday October 15th and started from Chief Hazy Cloud Park in Ada. Seventy-five people rode in the event. A total of \$881.16 was donated to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and \$456.16 was donated to the U.S. Olympic Committee. This included a \$100 donation from the Rapid Wheelmen.

Check in?	Saturday 8:00 AM -- 9:30 AM
Where?	Fallasburg County Park 2.5 miles north of Lowell, MI (map)
Distances?	17, 30, 62, and 100 mile loops. NEW!! 30 and 62 mile dirt road loops (no SAG).
Fees?	Pre-register: \$20 individual, \$40 family; postmarked after Sep 30 and day-of-event: \$30 individual, \$60 family.
Includes!	Pancake breakfast 8:00 AM to 9:30 AM. Home-made cookies & fruit at rest stops! Hot soup for lunch until 4:30 PM or until gone!

It's a great event, so get more information or sign up today at:
<http://www.lmb.org/rapidwheels/Colorburst/colorburst.htm>

KATS Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study

The Metropolitan Planning Organization for Kalamazoo County

We are pleased to announce the 2009 Michigan Transportation Planning Association Conference, July 14 – 17, 2009 downtown Kalamazoo. This year's conference "Planning for Tomorrow's Transportation Needs" is being held in conjunction with the Michigan Association of Regions and covers a wide variety of topics, ranging from freight planning to healthy communities to transit planning for metropolitan areas. Early registration ends June. You can download all conference materials by going to <http://www.katsmpo.org/>

The "Planning for Tomorrow's Transportation Needs" conference is also for those people interested in non-motorized transportation planning. We are excited to have Mark Fenton, a dynamic speaker and former PBS Television Host, on Thursday, July 16th to discuss the health impacts of walking and how to create a walkable community. He will also lead us in a discussion on working with the media, as well as a walking excursion in downtown Kalamazoo, highlighting the importance of Walkable communities. Thursday also highlights the Office of Highway Safety Planning eCrash program as well as rural traffic safety innovations.

Please forward this announcement on to your staff, Technical Committee and Policy Committee representatives, as well as others who may find interest in the program.

If you have questions about the materials or need hard copies of the conference registration materials, please feel free to contact Kathy Schultz at the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study or Nickolas Musson at the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission.

We look forward to seeing you in July!

Kathy J. Schultz, Office Administrator
Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
3801 East Kilgore Road
Kalamazoo, MI 49001

National Trails Day – June 6



National Trails Day® is a celebration of trails that evolved from the report of President Ronald Reagan's President's Commission on Americans Outdoors. In 1987, the report recommended that all

Americans be able to go out their front doors and within fifteen minutes, be on trails that wind through their cities or towns and bring them back without retracing steps. The recommendation, dubbed Trails for All Americans, became the impetus behind several public and private parties joining American Hiking Society in launching National Trails Day® in 1993.

Trails do not just appear for our enjoyment, it takes many hours of planning, labor, and negotiating to develop them. National Trails Day®, the only nationwide celebration of trails, brings awareness to trails and thanks many people and partners for their support and hard work, including volunteers, land agencies, and outdoor minded businesses. It is also a day to introduce people to the many joys and benefits of trails.

Why Celebrate?

America's 200,000 miles of trails allow us access to the natural world for recreation, education, exploration, solitude, inspiration, and much more. Trails take us to good physical and mental health by providing us with a chance to breathe fresh air, get our hearts pumping, and escape from our stresses.

Since 1993, National Trails Day® has grown to inspire many thousands of people to enjoy trails on the same day nationwide. All 50 states have had events, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Canada, Guam and the Virgin Islands. National Trails Day® is now a permanent fixture on the calendars of trail clubs, businesses, and government agencies. With more than 1,100 registered events in 2007, greater awareness of trails was brought to thousands of people through dedications, hikes, bike and horse rides, paddle trips, trail maintenance, and many other activities. Who can you contact for more information? go to <http://www.americanhiking.org/NTDGeneralInfoFaq.aspx>



WEST MICHIGAN
TRAILS & GREENWAYS
COALITION

Special Event An Invitation to Celebrate

***Please join us for our 2009
Annual Meeting & National Trails Day Celebration!***

When: Thursday, June 18, 2009 – 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Where: Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

Dress: Casual – Be comfortable & ready to enjoy the evening.

In June, West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition will host an annual meeting, and celebrate National Trails Day – at the Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, located at 1000 East Beltline Ave., NE, Grand Rapids, Michigan. It's just North of I-96, at M-37.

This is an opportunity for us to say, Thank You, to give you an annual report presentation of our work to date, and provide an update of current and proposed projects for the Fred Meijer Trails Network and the Trails Network of West Michigan. It is also a chance for you; to network with other trails partners and learn from each other's experiences in developing and building trails.

We want to acknowledge the members, volunteers, and organizations that support the work of the West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition in helping to establish and expand the trails & greenways network in West Michigan. This is also an occasion for us to introduce our Board of Directors and other individuals who have worked so hard and helped us so much.

The Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park is a beautiful and appropriate setting to host a trails-related event, as it is a stunning and natural backdrop, and the wetlands exhibit ties in so beautifully with the importance of preserving natural green spaces throughout our region. The front gardens (the DeVos & Van Andel Piazza) will be the entry point to the event, and we will gather in the Victorian Garden Parlor, the Grace Jarecki Seasonal Greenhouse, on the Outdoor Terraces, and in the Hauenstein & Pfeiffer Rooms.

Drink refreshments will be available, and hors d'oeuvres will be served, for an evening of fun, celebration, and networking in this beautiful setting. Please mark your calendars ...

Your reservation at this event is only \$10.00/per person, a tax-deductible donation. Your donation *is* your reservation, and includes a tram tour of the Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park. The tram will run three times during this event, and you are welcome to enjoy any of the tours.

To make a reservation, simply mail your name, address, contact information, and your \$10.00/per person donation to: WMTGC, P.O. Box 325, Comstock Park, Michigan. We will mail your tickets, and we look forward to being with you on June 18th. **Be sure to indicate that this is for the Annual Meeting/National Trails Day Celebration event.**

For questions, and/or further information, please contact us at:
director@wmtrails.org – or -- call us (WMTGC) at 616-647-9599.

Trails & Maps-Update Atlas Project

Here is some exciting news: West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition (WMTGC) has begun a partnership project to update our current maps, and develop a trails map atlas system. This is a collaborative effort of WMTGC, the Annis Water Resources Institute, and the West Michigan Strategic Alliance. WMTGC wishes to thank the following organizations for their generous support: the Rapid Wheelmen Cycling Club; an anonymous corporate donor; and the Meijer Foundation. These organizations' gifts have made this project possible.

This is a 3-“Task” project to develop a regional trails support system based on geographic information technology (GIS) that will be used by (WMTGC), our supporting trail groups, affiliated organizations, and local governmental partners. The system will provide a regional data framework to improve the coordination of efforts to plan & develop important connections & links to the region's non-motorized trail system. The project focuses on the Fred Meijer West Michigan Trail Network (16 counties).

Task #1 is to update & expand the existing and proposed trail network database & maps that currently exist. Task #2 will be to create a Trail Facility/Asset Inventory, identifying trail characteristics such as width, surface, slope, etc., and locate trail infrastructure (signs, bridges, benches, parking, trailheads, and points of interest). Task #3 creates a Fred Meijer West Michigan Trail System Planning Atlas, and a separate fold-out map of the region.

To Donate & Get More Information

We also invite you to help keep the work of building trails & greenways moving forward and thriving. We need volunteers, sponsors, and, yes, we also need your tax-deductible contribution. Here are some ways you can help:

1. Send a tax-deductible donation to: West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition (WMTGC), P.O. Box 325, Comstock Park, MI 49321.
2. Go to our website: <http://www.wmtrails.org>, and click on the “Give Online” icon in the “Donate” section.
3. Go directly to www.networkforgood.org. The Coalition has teamed up with the Network for Good to help make your online donation quick and simple. Here's how...
 - a. Enter key words: West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition
 - b. Select “Michigan” -- Locate our Coalition -- Use the “Donate Now” button.

4. Volunteer with us, Sponsor an event or project, Donate your time and expertise for specific assignments, such as grant writing, news articles, etc.

However you choose to be our partner, please know that you are doing the environment & everyone who uses the trails a very good thing by helping promote healthy lifestyle options, providing safer & “cleaner” travel alternatives, and protecting the delicate wetlands, dunes, & wildlife habitats throughout West Michigan.

We wish you a year full of wonderful & “Happy Trails” experiences!

West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization, located at 4658 West River Drive, Comstock Park, MI 49321
Mail can be sent to: P.O. Box 325, Comstock Park, MI 49321

Mission: To facilitate and coordinate a regional trails & greenways infrastructure to connect communities, natural areas, parks cultural venues, and civic destinations, while helping to preserve the greenspaces in our region.