



WEST MICHIGAN TRAIL LINK

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is the newsletter of West Michigan Trails, published 3-4 times annually. Established in 2005, West Michigan Trails is committed to developing a non-motorized trail system connecting our communities and rural areas and providing alternative transportation and recreation options to West Michigan residents and visitors.

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CONNECTING THROUGH SIGNS

 **Tell Us What You Think. Participate in Our Survey!**

West Michigan has more than 850 miles of nonmotorized, multi-use trails – with more being constructed every year. The more trails get built and connected into a regional network; the more people will use them. While communities are working to build and connect their trails and bikeways, West Michigan Trails is working on another kind of trail connection: a consistent trail signage system that brings trails and other biking infrastructure together with unified directional, confidence, placemaking, and mileage signs.

A connected, visually consistent, and attractive wayfinding and regulatory signage framework across the region will provide many benefits:

- Welcome new trail users by clearly explaining the allowed trail uses
- Encourage users to bicycle/walk by highlighting how easy travel is via trail
- Guide bikers through complicated or confusing transitions between dedicated trails and on-street routes

- Create awareness of the larger trail network
- Give trail users the confidence to explore farther than they ordinarily would
- Promote key destinations that may be slightly off the trail
- Give first responders and trail users the tools to identify a location in case of an emergency

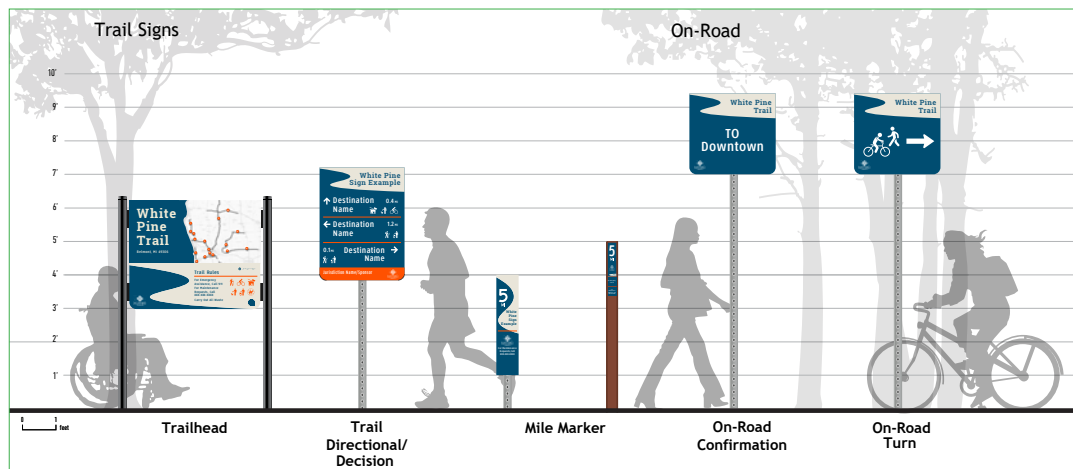
After much work and public outreach, we are currently in the sign concept stage. With three different sign concepts we are seeking additional public feedback online and through a functional field test with example signs installed at numerous locations throughout our trail network.

See the design concepts and take the survey here:

<https://bit.ly/WMTSigns>



We look forward to hearing from you!



*Nature has been for me,
For as long as I remember,
A source of solace, inspiration,
Adventure, and delight; a home,
A teacher, a companion.*

– Lorraine Anderson

WE'VE MADE GREAT STRIDES ON A MUTUAL PATH, BUT OUR WORK IS NOT FINISHED.

In the next year, with your help, we will continue to connect urban and rural communities, finalize the regional trail signage plan, and help lay the foundation for NEW regional trails. Your support helps us to continue to transform West Michigan into a world class trail system. **We have a generous donor who is matching \$25,000 in gifts received by December 31st!** We all need trails and trails need YOU! **Your gift today will benefit generations to come.** <https://bit.ly/WMTTrails2022>

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VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT: TRACEY VANDERWEIDE



West Michigan Trails' volunteer highlight is Tracey VanDerWeide. Tracey has been a faithful volunteer giving her time at The Fred Relays, National Trails Day, the Whitecaps 50/50 ticket sales, and she ran on a team to raise money for WMT in the Riverbank Run.

An avid runner and hiker, Tracey loves the trails. When asked her favorite, she had a hard time choosing. "There are so many good ones! Hall Lake in Yankee Springs is a great go-to trail. It has varied terrain and nice views of the lake. Plus, it connects to North Country Trail." She and her running pals also enjoy training on the Kent Trails from Byron Center north, or the White Pine trail.

Trails play a big role in many aspects of Tracey's life. "Trails have always been a great reason to be active. Going for a walk around the neighborhood is nice, but exploring a new trail is a bit more exciting. Sometimes that excitement is just what you need to motivate you to get moving. Even a familiar trail in a different season can feel new. In the past decade or so, trails have also been a great vacation. We now have favorite trails in the Upper Peninsula, Northern Michigan, Arizona, Vermont, the Smokey Mountains, and along the Pacific Crest Trail."

Tracey started volunteering for WMT in 2020. "During COVID, we found ourselves walking the dog 2-3 times a day, just to get out of the house. Trails provided exercise and time in nature – two things that always improve my mood, which required more attentiveness during the pandemic. Fortunately, I am familiar with a wonderful, local trail system. WMT has a commitment to connect communities and care for our trails. I love having the opportunity to share all that our trails have to offer so others can experience the mental and physical benefits. Plus, the staff and other volunteers I have worked with are wonderful. I always have fun volunteering with WMT."

Tracey and her husband, Dan, live in West Michigan, have raised three children, and are now enjoying being grandparents. Tracey works as an Administrative Assistant in Grand Rapids and spends her free time outdoors kayaking, running, and hiking.



WMT is thankful for Tracey sharing her time and talents with us!

If you would like to volunteer, visit our website at

<https://www.wmtrails.org/volunteer>

*We love ♥ OUR ♥
Volunteers*

FRIENDS OF KAL-HAVEN TRAIL HONOR FIVE EXEMPLARY WEST MICHIGANDERS

The Friends of the Kal-Haven Trail honored five West Michiganders at their annual meeting on Monday, October 3rd, 2022, naming them their first "Friends of the Trail". Each of those named have shown exemplary care and dedication for the Kal-Haven Trail and deserve to be recognized by the Friends and the greater community, tourists and area residents who have benefited from their efforts.



Pictured left to right: Dick Godfrey - Van Buren County Legislator, Bloomingdale; Dan Spiegel - Michigan History Center Heritage Trails Program Manager, Lansing; Scott Reinert - Former Visit South Haven Executive Director, South Haven; Gerhard Wynbelt KRVF - The Friends of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail, Kalamazoo. Not Pictured: Martin Sell - Kal-Haven / Van Buren Park DNR seasonal employee, South Haven

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

RIVER EDGES TOURS

Our Executive Director, John Morrison, is offering tours of the River Edges project. Contact us at info@wmtrails.org to schedule a tour.



GRAND FONDO: JUNE 24, 2023



Gran Fondo is an Italian Term which, loosely translated, means "Big Ride". The GR Grand Fondo is an event for all riders, ranging from professional to recreational. Individuals sign up for many different reasons: camaraderie, scenic views, personal achievement, or the chance to win prizes. Think of a Gran Fondo as a group ride, race, and tour, all in one. West Michigan Trails is thrilled to be the charity partner for this amazing event. There are four route options for cyclists of any skill level! The start and finish are downtown Grand Rapids with an unparalleled finish line festival with music, craft beer, gourmet food, and vendor booths. Think of the ride as a big rolling party! Find updates and notification when registration opens: <https://www.wmtrails.org/gr-gran-fondo>

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS



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GREATER GRID**

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Our Platinum Sponsor, ITC is investing in a 21st century power grid to improve reliability, expand access to markets, lower the overall cost of delivered energy and allow new generating resources to interconnect to our transmission systems. In the course of our daily work, ITC integrates a sustainable approach to the environment, enabling us to contribute to the well-being of the communities we serve. Since our transmission systems cross all types of urban, suburban and rural environments, it's important that we co-exist with these surroundings as good stewards of the land, water and air which is why we are pleased to support West Michigan Trails.



FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR, AARON BODBYL-MAST

Often, great ideas are discovered. That is the case with the growing Grand River Greenway concept. At West Michigan Trails, we are working to make the West Michigan trail system work from a regional perspective. So, when I can, I try to apply this perspective to my day-job as a Park Planner at Ottawa County Parks.

One of my primary responsibilities over the last several years has been assisting in the project management of the development of the 36.5-mile long Idema Explorers Trail, which will become a focal feature along the Grand River Greenway in Ottawa County. Greenway, in this case, is a series of protected recreational lands related to a central natural corridor. One of the principles of a greenway is that they extend beyond political boundaries.

Over the past few decades, Ottawa County Parks has worked to protect thousands of acres of land along the Grand River in Ottawa County. Now we are working to connect these greenway parks along the south side of the Grand River with the Idema Explorers Trail. The Grand River is a key ecological feature throughout West Michigan. Beyond Ottawa County, other agencies have also worked to protect key natural lands and expand recreational opportunities along the Grand River. The massive effort by the City of Grand Rapids to address long-term issues, including the former combined sewage overflow system, has unlocked great potential for the Grand River. Improving river access and amenities for the larger community has become a driving force with the Grand Rapids Whitewater and River for All projects. Additionally, from Ionia County to Ottawa County, several regional non-motorized pathways interface with the River.

Stepping back and looking at these separate projects, from a regional perspective, an idea emerges. It should be a priority to connect the various regional trails along the Grand River and expand the concept of the Grand River Greenway, creating one integrated recreational system. With all the existing and planned trails underway, this is not a giant leap to accomplish.



Under this concept, the Grand River Greenway Trail Network will extend nearly 100 miles from Lyons/Muir to Grand Haven, connecting communities (from east to west) such as Ionia, Lowell, Ada, Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Walker, Grandville, Jenison, Allendale, Spring Lake, and Grand Haven. Additionally, there is an opportunity to have connected loops on the north and south sides of the river from the Lakeshore to Grand Rapids.

This concept gained significant momentum with the state's appropriation of \$55 million in funding for Grand River Greenway amenities in Grand Rapids and Kent County. Partners are now actively working to consider how this integrated trail system can be developed.

West Michigan Trails is helping to lead the way in developing this network by raising funds for the River Edges Trail to connect downtown Grand Rapids to Riverside Park as part of its Building Connections, Building Communities Campaign.

Additionally, we are assisting with many other projects in the Greenway corridor, including the North Bank Trail. With your support, we can continue to help make these big ideas come to life!

**Support West Michigan Trails.
Donate Today.**



NEW BIKE FIXIT STATION INSTALLED ON THE BERRY JUNCTION TRAIL

A Bike Fixit Station has been installed adjacent to the trail where it passes in front of the First Lutheran Church 1206 Whitehall Rd. The Fixit includes all the tools necessary to perform basic bike repairs and maintenance, from changing a flat to adjusting brakes and derailleurs. The tools are securely attached to the stand with stainless steel cables and tamper-proof fasteners. Hanging the bike from the hanger arms allows the pedals and wheels to spin freely while making adjustments.

Tools included:

- Philips and flat head screwdrivers
- 2.5, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8mm Allen wrenches
- Headset wrench
- Pedal wrench
- 8, 9, 10, 11mm box wrenches
- Tire levers (2)
- Air kit featuring a heavy duty cast aluminum pump head with various valve adapters



CANNON TRAIL

The new section of the Cannon Trail will connect two existing segments. It connects the current end of the Cannon Trail (Myers Lake Avenue and Cannon Farms Drive) and around the new development to Hickory Drive leading out to Luton Park at Kies Street.



Provided by Prein&Newhof

WHITE PINE TRAIL

As promised, the White Pine Trail is being paved from Sand Lake to Howard City and beyond. Although trail users are inconvenienced this year with some temporary trail closures, the paving project makes the trail more accessible for all users. In 2023 the remaining miles will be paved giving trail lovers a nearly 100-mile, continuously paved trail from Grand Rapids to Cadillac!



BOARDMAN LAKE TRAIL

In the heart of Traverse City, this shared-use path is the final connection to close the loop around Boardman Lake.






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Sign up for our e-Newsletter!

<https://www.wmtrails.org/newsletter>



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by supporting
WM Trails!**


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DONOR HIGHLIGHT: **BONNIE LITTS**

Bonnie Litts is our fall donor highlight. Although Bonnie has enjoyed riding the south end of White Pine Trail for over 20 years, her favorites are the Berry Junction Trail and the Hart Montague Trail. She also enjoys the north end of the White Pine Trail and the Kal-Haven Trail. Thanks to the West Michigan Trails Challenge in 2020, Bonnie found/tried over 20 new trails that she would not have known about if not for WMT.

Although Bonnie enjoys the Kal-Haven Trail, she wishes it was paved because she now enjoys riding on a recumbent trike. Bonnie explains, "A few years ago a friend talked me into trying a recumbent trike. I fell in love with it! I have since ridden more than ever before and even more miles than I ever thought I could, at my age."

Bonnie shared with us, "I have been donating to WMT for several years. I figure if I'm enjoying using the trails, I should be willing to 'pay' for the privilege. I want to see our trails well maintained and improved. Also, it's fun to see and ride new trails. I also like the information I receive about the trails. The magazine is terrific. Trails make it so nice to ride and not have to be concerned as much about cars. They let me get out and really enjoy nature."

Bonnie grew up in the little village of Bedford near Battle Creek, MI. About 4 years after college she moved to Shawnee, KS for 5 years. Then she moved back to Michigan and ended up in Grand Rapids. She spent most of her working years working with computers, either as an operator or a programmer. After she retired almost 12 years ago, she spent much of her time volunteering for ministries both here in Grand Rapids and Orlando, FL. Yes, she's become a snowbird which allows her to ride year-round. Her hobbies include biking/recumbent triking, quilting, machine embroidery, and traveling.