



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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THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY

By John Morrison, Executive Director WMT

In this year's quest to spend more time on our regional trails and improve my fitness, the perfect opportunity presented itself! Training for and riding in the 2023 Grand Rapids Gran Fondo – for which West Michigan Trails has the distinguished honor of being the event's sole Charity Partner. I am training for the full 80-mile ride!

It has been an intense journey with a mix of weekly rides that include sprint repeats and hill repeats (they are as grueling as they sound but also fun and incredibly beneficial!), and ever longer rides on our trails. As of this writing I have nearly 450 miles logged, many of them on trails like the White Pine, Kal-Haven, and more, with planned rides on trails like the Hart-Montague, Berry Junction, Kenowa, and Kent Trails.

The benefits to my physical health have been tremendous with increased endurance, strength, and cardio-vascular health. Cycling has long been my favorite exercise activity, but I'm to a point where I'm also looking at taking up running again. Of course, all of this has led to improved mental health and a better work/life balance. Time spent outdoors smelling the smells and hearing the sounds and seeing the wildlife, whether by myself or with friends or family, seeing and talking with other fascinating trail users – it all does a mind and body good.

As the Charity Partner for the 2023 Grand Rapids Gran Fondo, 100 percent of fundraising dollars go to support West Michigan Trails. So, while I'm working toward better health, I am also raising funds toward the important work we do – such as developing a regional trail signage system. I certainly welcome and appreciate your support at <https://runsignup.com/jmforwmt>.

In the meantime, take time this year to get out on the great trails West Michigan has to offer. I hope to see you out there and welcome a conversation if you're so inclined.



VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT: RON GUNDERSON

This summer's volunteer highlight is Ron Gunderson. Ron has served his community in many ways. We are thrilled to share some of his background and his passion. I had an opportunity to ask Ron about his experiences and here is what he shared:

I grew up between Greenville and Belding and had a great childhood wandering State land and fishing in creeks. Being outside has always been my happy place and working on our trail system in my later years has brought me full circle. I have served on many City of Belding boards over the last 18 years and served as our city's Mayor for 7-1/2 of those years. I got involved with the rail trail back in 2010 when I heard there was a Friends group in Belding that was working on getting the old railroad bed converted into a walking, running, and bicycling pathway within the City of Belding. I attended a meeting and could tell that I wanted to be part of it. We worked on project design and started writing grants, and by 2013 we were able to develop just over a 2-mile section between the M-44 Bridge and Long Lake Road to the north, and had already started working on 24 miles that were undeveloped between Belding and Greenville to the north, Belding to Foreman St. in Lowell to the south which is the Fred Meijer Flat River Valley Rail-Trail, and from Montcalm Avenue to Saranac which is the Fred Meijer Grand River Valley Rail-Trail. We were also able to secure the monies needed and completed this in 2019. These sections are all part of the Midwest Michigan Trail Network which consists of our 38 mile section of trail, the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail group which is 42 miles, and the Fred Meijer Clinton, Ionia, and Shiawassee Rail-Trail. Currently, I sit on the Board of the Friends of the Fred Meijer River Valley Rail-Trail where I'm the Chair and the Maintenance Coordinator. I also sit on the Mid-West Michigan Trail Authority as Chair, and this committee oversees the Mid-West Michigan Trail Network. I have been attending these meetings since 2010 and have sat on the Board since 2016 to present. When not working on the trail, I like to spend my trail time riding my beloved fat tire bike and snowshoeing.

I feel that trails are important in all communities because they give people a place to get out and exercise in so many ways. I have seen the schools use the trails for their classrooms and other groups meeting outside. Trails helped during our recent pandemic to maintain healthy lifestyles and continue to engage in community.

I began volunteering because I love being outside, rain or shine, hot or cold, winter or summer. I've always enjoyed working with my hands, helping others, and giving back what I have been given. It was a natural fit for me. I continue to volunteer because I believe that when you understand the importance of trails you want to give back what you have learned from seminars and other trail groups. You want to see it come full circle and give back to the people. I want to thank all the past, present and future board members of the Friends of the Fred Meijer River Valley Rail-Trail, the Mid-West Michigan Trail Authority, and all of the many volunteers who make Michigan trails some of the best!



 **Thank you, Ron, for all you have done for trails in West Michigan!**

If you'd like to join Ron & our other volunteers, let us know. <https://www.wmtrails.org/volunteer>



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ITC BEGINS WORK ON NEW SUBSTATION BENEFITTING WEST MICHIGAN

ITC, the nation's largest independent electricity transmission company, headquartered in Michigan, is proud to provide continued support of West Michigan Trails. Our company strives to support the environment in the communities we serve, as well as the organizations that promote and preserve the outdoors.

"Our transmission lines often traverse through areas of woodlands, fields, trails, and other environments where nature thrives," said Nora Balgoyen, ITC Senior Area Manager, Michigan. "We are proud of our ITC vegetation management programs, where we ensure ecosystems are protected and preserved, allowing native plant species and animals to co-exist with our transmission lines."

New substation to be built: ITC through its Michigan Electric Transmission Company, LLC subsidiary, is upgrading electricity transmission infrastructure in west Michigan. The existing high voltage electrical equipment in the outdated Four Mile electric substation, in Walker, has been in-service for decades with aging equipment and limited reliability.

The new Northridge substation will also be built in Walker, approximately 2.5 miles to the west of the existing station.



This modernized station will secure electric reliability to the region, allow for future load growth, provide operational flexibility and allow needed maintenance to be performed efficiently and safely. Included in this project are upgrades to several existing transmission lines which will feed into the new station.

Construction is tentatively scheduled to begin this summer and will take approximately one year to complete.

DON'T RUN WITH PAIN

Peak trail season is here! If you're like us here at Ivy Rehab, you may be running more lately and you may even have some new or recurring aches and pains. Most running related injuries are in the knee, lower leg, foot and ankle and the conditions you may be familiar with are patellofemoral syndrome, IT band syndrome, Achilles tendinopathy, and plantar heel pain. It's not uncommon to have discomfort associated with running but that doesn't mean you have to ignore it!

Why do these running related injuries happen? They may occur from increasing your running mileage too quickly, your overall nutrition and hydration, poor sleep, increasing your speed, or a change in shoes or running surfaces. If you've ever been on a run and a physical therapist has been around, chances are they have been watching how you run. We are the best trained professional to analyze running form and can help problem solve any pain that may be linked to your running mechanical errors.

Let's say we found a few errors in your running analysis, and you have pain - now what do we do? We can help you



differentiate between hurt vs harm, decide when it is time to rest, and help you develop a better training program. Some common changes we may make are increasing cadence, altering strike pattern, changing step width, modifying trunk lean and much more. We use biofeedback and strengthening exercises to improve muscle activation. We may recommend temporary orthotics and work on your foot strength or flexibility to train your foot to support itself without orthotics.

If you are struggling to get out on the trail this summer because of pain, don't hesitate to give us a call or visit any of our 20 locations across West Michigan.

Courtney Earles, DPT, CSCS
Physical Therapist, Clini Director

FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR, AARON BODBYL-MAST

How the State of Michigan helps make ped/bike facilities a viable transportation option?

Over the last few years, I've written several letters about shifting mindsets so that people view biking/pedestrian facilities as a viable transportation option. Part of this is changing hearts and minds and shifting perspectives, especially at the local level.

However, the State of Michigan also can play a major role in helping to foster a vibrant, equitable pedestrian and biking culture and to help lead the way in encouraging biking as a part of the effort to reach climate change goals (transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States according to the Congressional Budget Office).

I wanted to highlight one example of how the State can help in this article and a second example in a future article.

Right now, the legislature is preparing the Fiscal Year 2024 State Budget. One of the challenging issues is road funding. It's a difficult challenge given that gasoline taxes are the primary source of revenue but with more fuel-efficient cars and the rise of electric vehicles this revenue is dwindling. However, this does not mean that the State Legislature shouldn't consider giving non-motorized facilities (and transit) a larger share of this pie (or share of the future funding formula). About 80% of Michigan residents live in urban areas, meaning that high quality bicycle infrastructure could make biking an attractive transportation alternative for many people and reduce vehicle miles traveled. This type of infrastructure can move a lot of people more efficiently and for less cost than car-only infrastructure while also potentially reducing vehicle traffic congestion.

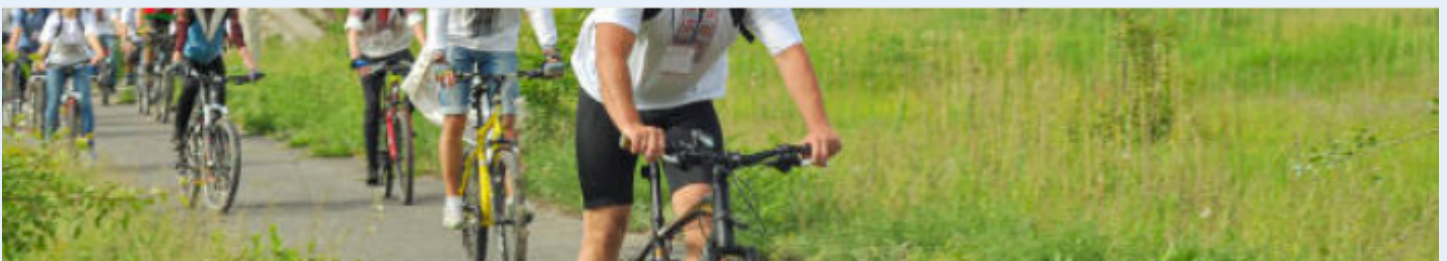
The issue currently is that there isn't a dedicated state funding source for non-motorized facilities, which makes it especially difficult to construct these facilities. One state, the State of Washington, is leading the way by making major investments in bike infrastructure. In March 2022, the Washington State legislature passed



the "Move Ahead Washington" transportation bill, which includes \$1.3 billion in funding for "protected bike and pedestrian infrastructure, multi-use trails, a new statewide public school bike education program, and the Safe Routes to Schools program, which encourages children to walk and bicycle to school" (from a March 11, 2022 story on Bicycle Retailer and Industry News article). One key is that the bill specifies \$313 million for "on-street bike networks, sidewalks, and trails projects to connect and fill gaps in active transportation networks," which is a high priority for making biking attractive for more people. (It is also notable that this bill includes \$1.45 billion in public transportation funding)

Even a fraction of this funding in Michigan would be transformative. West Michigan Trails has been supporting an effort by the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance to advocate for a major investment by the State in the current budget cycle. Ideally, a long-term dedicated funding source is needed. Other states are showing this can be done.

Editors note: You can help by contacting your elected officials and encouraging them to support funding for non-motorized transportation. Find your legislators here: <https://www.house.mi.gov/> or <https://senate.michigan.gov/FindYourSenator/>



50/50 RAFFLE TICKET NIGHT @ WEST MICHIGAN WHITECAPS vs FORT WAYNE TINCAPS

- **July 27 game at 6:35 pm**
- Thrifty Thursday - \$3 beers and \$3 hotdogs and/or soda when you show your active college or military ID.
- Come out to enjoy the game and support WMT by purchasing a 50/50 raffle ticket!



GR GRAN FONDO – JUNE 24

Gran Fondo is a premier event featuring fun road cycling courses for riders of all ability levels. Choose the 80-mile route that follows the picturesque Grand River valley through farms and small villages before reaching scenic Lake Michigan and then turning around and following a new route back to the City. Or, choose the family ride that offers an enjoyable, safe, yet challenging route that riders of practically any age, level of fitness, or skill level will enjoy. After leaving the heart of the city, riders will soon discover the beautiful and scenic trails of Millennium Park. There are also 40 and 25-mile rides. All events start and finish in beautiful downtown Grand Rapids for the epic, finish-line festival! WMT is thrilled to be the Charity Partner for GR Gran Fondo. Now more than ever, people are looking for more trails to ride on. As the charity beneficiary for the 2023 event, 100% of the funds raised will go to West Michigan Trails for connecting trails and advancing our regional trails movement. **Register to join the ride:** <https://www.wmtrails.org/gr-gran-fondo> **or support John in his adventure:** <https://runsignup.com/jmforwmt>



CABOOSE OPEN HOUSE DAYS ON THE MUSKETAWA TRAIL

Attendees will get a chance to go inside the Ravenna Caboose and the replica depot building at the Ravenna Trail Head. There are open houses scheduled for **July 8th and August 5th**. Open house times are 9am – 1pm. The self-guided tour is FREE and no reservation is needed.



TOAST TO THE BLUE STAR TRAIL – JUNE 26

A fundraiser for the Blue Star Trail held at Inisfree Estate in Pullman. This event is honoring long-time supporters Sunny Hill and Maury DeCoster. For more information contact Kevinm@klmcreative.com.





WEST MICHIGAN
trails

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**We appreciate Salvador's
monthly support!**

If you would like to join him as a
monthly donor, you can donate here:

<https://bit.ly/WMTGive>

DONOR HIGHLIGHT: **SALVADOR LOPEZ**

Our donor highlight this summer is Salvador Lopez. Salvador is from a Mexican family and grew up in Salinas, California. His family moved to Grand Rapids when he was in high school, and he now lives on the northeast side of Grand Rapids near Riverside Park (and his favorite trail, The White Pine) with his wife and three children. Salvador is currently the President of KConnect, a nonprofit organization that looks to close disparity gaps for children and families in Kent County. He is also proud to be an elected Trustee of GRCC.

When asked why he feels trails are important, Salvador responded, "Trails are incredibly important for many reasons. They provide a safe way of transportation for both humans and wildlife. They connect cities and give individuals and families a healthy way to enjoy the outdoors. On a personal level, trails allow me to spend high-quality time with my family. We walk, hike, run, and bike on our local trails. Trails also provide an opportunity for self-care after a long day or week of work and life stressors."

Salvador supports West Michigan Trails because we connect people while supporting the environment and the health of our community. Salvado explains, "I can't imagine not supporting their mission. Many of us have struggled with the divide between rural and urban communities for decades. West Michigan Trails plans to change that by continuing to develop or build upon accessible trails that bridge gaps that have divided us for decades."