

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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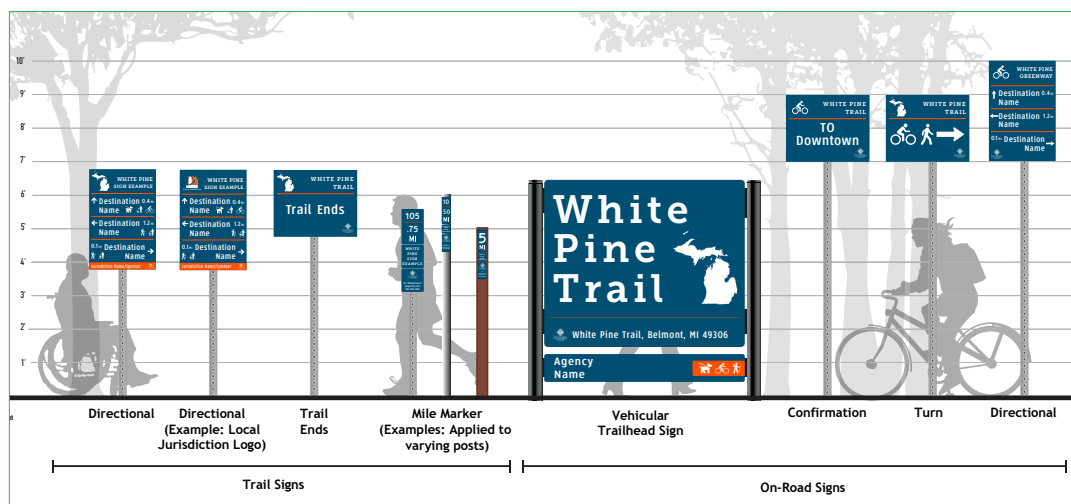


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WAYFINDING UPDATE



In the Spring and Summer of 2022, the project team completed background work, such as reviewing existing signs, completing a best practices review, meeting with operations staff, and conducting an online visual preference survey with the public. In the Summer and Fall, the project team developed three sign family concepts and

completed functional field testing of those sign concepts. This included an online survey open to the public to gain feedback. The project team then refined the three sign family concepts into a preferred sign concept. Next, all this work will be compiled into a Wayfinding Signage Plan and Implementation Guide to be wrapped up in late Spring.

CELEBRATE TRAILS DAY: APRIL 22

Follow West Michigan Trails on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/WMTGC) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/wmtrails) for updates on Celebrate Trails Day events. Currently we've confirmed events at:

- River Edges Trails @ City Built Brewing
- Hart/Montague Trail @ Big Hart Brewing
- Muskatawa Trail



GET OUT!

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

Mara Gericke

*Grand Valley Metro Council
(Transportation Planner)*

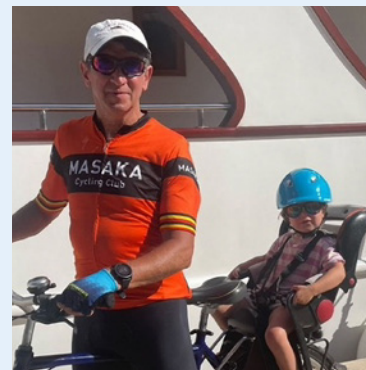
We're excited to welcome Mara to the Board. Her experience on the Metro Council's Nonmotorized Transportation Plan Steering Committee will provide WMT perspective on current nonmotorized initiatives and priorities through the region.



Kevin Cusak

*Pearl Street Investment
Management
(Investment Advisor)*

Kevin is passionate about the trail system in West Michigan. He believes that trails are an equal opportunity for everyone: runners, bikers, walkers, or anyone who wants to be outside. "There is an adventure at every turn," adds Kevin. Active in running, riding, mountain climbing, and Nordic skiing all his life, Kevin has had the opportunity to ride bikes on every continent in the world, including Antarctica (pictured). Kevin's excited to see the expansion of trails in West Michigan, hoping to help expand the network.



Erin Gordon

*Perkins Coie LLP
(Associate Attorney)*

Erin joins the Board having served on our Governance Committee. As a corporate governance professional, her unique perspective will be a huge asset to the organizational side of our Board. Erin is passionate about the continued growth and success of the West Michigan trail system. She sees how trails draw people from all over and how that enhances the local economy. Erin believes that trails make a community. "Trails provide so many opportunities to exercise, meet people, and try new things. If a community has a trail, it has a way to connect people within the community and to other communities." Erin added. Her favorite trail is the Kent Trail because she grew up running and biking there. She also loves the White Pine Trail and the Lakeside Trail round Spring Lake.



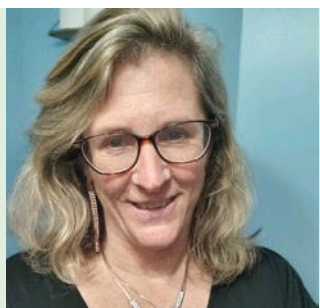
Mike McGraw

*Eastbrook Homes
(President/Partner)*

As a residential community builder, Mike brings a unique perspective to the board. He seeks to represent the thoughts and concerns of the underserved with respect to trail networks and to provide connectivity between residential and recreational areas. An outdoors advocate, Mike enjoys running, biking and walking on trails with his family and dogs. "I'm a very active person and I encourage people to just get up, get outside, and move. Activity has a positive impact on happiness, and trails provide a safe place for people to get out and have fun together."



VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT: CATHY DUTKIEWICZ



Cathy Dutkiewicz is our volunteer highlight. Cathy is a dedicated volunteer that has helped at The Fred Relays, Trail Mixer, and the 50/50 raffle ticket sales at the Whitecaps game last year. When asked why she volunteers she answered, "I am a people person and love to organize and participate in events. My love language is "acts of service and gifting". I enjoy getting groups of people together for a cause and especially take enjoyment from volunteering."

Cathy has lived in the Wayland/Yankee Springs area for the last 29 years and enjoys the expansive trail network in the area. Cathy enjoys hiking on the trails and explains that, "I feel it is so important to put down the electronics, disconnect from the rest of the world and take a walk, run, bike, or hike. We need to enjoy the world around us by going out into the world versus bringing the world in through devices."

Cathy believes the most wonderful gift you can give to another person is your time. "I encourage everyone to get involved in some organization that benefits many."



**If you'd like to join Cathy,
and our other volunteers,
sign up here:**

<https://bit.ly/WMTVolunteer>

THE PLUMBER WITH THE PLUGGED PIPE

By John Morrison

It's not uncommon for me to have big intentions to explore many of our region's trails each year. It's a nice goal and I enjoy the exercise, exploring, having conversations with new people, as well as the sights, sounds, and smells of our great outdoors. It's very therapeutic for me. During the pandemic, trail use and park visits surged, but somehow my trail miles dropped drastically. I kept telling myself I need to step up my game – I mean, for Pete's sake I work in trails!

The morning of January 16 I received a serious wake-up call to the tune of a heart attack. I'm very lucky that I recognized and didn't ignore the signs and that Jennifer Antel could give me a quick ride to the Emergency Room. It was literally minutes between "I'm having a heart attack" and teams of incredible professionals working on me. I believe it was less than 90 minutes before I had a small stent in an artery on the side of my heart. (So I'm the trail guy/plumber with a plugged artery/pipe.)

I have wanted to change some things in my life. It's kind of the New Year's thing, right? "I'm going to get into shape." "I'm going to balance my work and personal life." "I'm going to spend more time on me." I'm not ashamed to admit to experiencing depression and that since the pandemic it has been worse. Which is why it has been on my mind to get into better shape, work on a better work/life balance, and to spend more time on me. The heart attack is my wake-up call



to take these things seriously.

I work in trails because I really think they're a cool and tremendous asset to our community, and I feel great during and after a good ride. Trails are excellent places to exercise – walking, running, roller blading, or riding a bike – and are therapeutic places to calm your mind while soaking up some sun, breathing fresh air, and enjoying nature.

This year I'm going to explore those trails, and I'm going to share them with you. And West Michigan Trails is going to share with you how trails can benefit your physical and mental health. I look forward to seeing you out there!

TRAIL RUNNING: THE PERFECT ACTIVITY?

By Courtney Earles & Diana Painter

If you're reading this article, you likely know that exercise is critical for our health and wellness. If you're new to exercise, recovering from an injury or illness, or returning to exercise after a hiatus, you may not have found an appropriate mode of exercise for your fitness level that targets many areas and is something that you enjoy. As physical therapists at Ivy Rehab, and runners, we want to share why trail running may be the perfect activity for you. You can simultaneously improve strength, balance, stability and endurance while also enjoying the benefits of being outdoors and saving yourself money on expensive equipment or gym memberships.

Trail running can be considered one of the most all-encompassing workouts. The softer ground reduces the pounding force your body needs to absorb. The challenging terrain and uneven surfaces activate your stabilizing muscles from your ankles all the way up through your core more than traditional road running does. The inclines and declines of hills require more eccentric control throughout muscle groups that may be more inactive on flat terrain. Lastly (and for some, more importantly), being immersed in natural trails can be a great escape from daily stress and demands of our work, family, and social lives.



No matter where you are on your fitness or healing journey, walking or running provides you with healthy benefits; however, you should introduce a new routine safely. Gradual progression of mileage is key to avoiding an overuse injury. Increasing mileage week to week by 10-20% is a good range to aim for. In addition to gradual mileage increases, hiking sticks, Nordic walking poles or shoe spikes are excellent options while returning to the trails or when weather conditions aren't ideal.

There are many more factors including nutrition, hydration, sleep and cross training to consider when it comes to returning to a walking or running program. Always consult with a physician prior to beginning a new exercise regimen. We also suggest connecting with a local physical therapist at any of our 20+ Ivy Rehab clinics across West Michigan for a proper return to running program, gait analysis, or to address a nagging injury that's affecting your performance.

FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR, AARON BODBYL-MAST

Sometimes, it can feel like the deck is stacked against fitting pedestrian, biking, and mobility facilities into our existing infrastructure. It's an uphill battle against the built environment; local, state, and federal laws; funding formulas; and engineering standards to shift the dial to better accommodate these facilities.

While every widened, new, or renovated road with poor ped/bike facilities can seem to lock our world into an unfriendly environment for other mobility options, reviewing the history of cities can help free your mind.

The landscape of our places feels set in stone, but most mature cities have had underground, radical shifts in relatively short periods of time. Looking at how places have evolved can lead to possibilities and optimism.

Infrastructure is a choice. It is a policy choice: policies that can be changed, and it doesn't necessarily require a large majority to buy-in and make necessary changes that have a lasting impact.

That's one of the lessons of a book I recommend, "Building the Cycling City" by Melissa and Chris Brunlett (please follow their Facebook page – it has great content about mobility infrastructure on a global basis). The book focuses on how cities in the Netherlands created their mobility friendly environments (but not only the Netherlands, the forward includes essential information and data about the infrastructure transformation in New York City).

It is profound that many of these cities were very similar to American cities in the 1970s. The difference today is that motivated advocates, stakeholders, and elected officials are pushing for change to vastly improve the ped/bike infrastructure. Without these individuals pressing forward, in the face of significant opposition, these places would be like American cities today.

West Michigan Trails advocates for these types of changes, and we have resources to assist you to push for that type of change in your communities. Together,



we can impact and improve our built environment. If it can be done in other places, it can be done here.

As a closer to this letter, I would like to mention that there is a growing international movement advocating for more balanced and mobility friendly communities. There are great resources on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (seriously) that I would recommend checking out as well as podcasts. Here are a few:

- **Strong Towns:** They have several good podcasts as well as web and video resources. Follow them on Facebook and Twitter too.
- **Not Just Bikes:** This is one of the best YouTube channels, with great videos, that highlights examples of good and bad mobility infrastructure (the episode on city noise was eye-opening)
- **Active Towns podcast:** this also has a good YouTube channel.
- **The War on Cars podcast:** The name is intentionally provocative (but tongue in cheek), but this is how I found the book Melissa & Chris Brunlett.
- **ModeShift podcast:** This is a high-quality, limited series podcast.

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Thank
you

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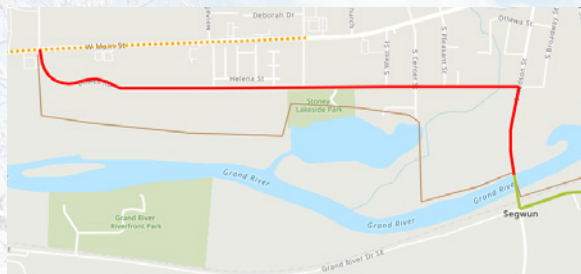
RIVER VALLY RAIL TRAIL CONNECTION

Agency: Lowell

From: Existing shared-Use Path at M-21 (Fulton/Main Street) and Bowes Road

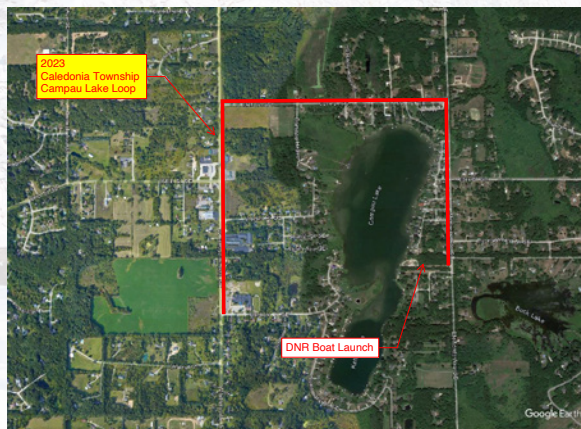
To: South Hudson Street and Bowes Road

Description: Construction of a 10-foot-wide asphalt shared-use pathway



CALEDONIA TOWNSHIP

Whitneyville Avenue, 66th Street and McCords Avenue – The northern half of the Campau lake Loop (Township Funded)



PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP

Jericho Pathway from Rockford high School at Kroes Street to the White Pine Trail (Township Funded)



LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP

Extension of the Blue Star Trail on Blue Star Highway from the MDOT Park and Ride to Shangrai La Mobile Home Park (MDOT LAP Project)



OTTAWA COUNTY PARKS

Idema Explorers Trails, Stears Bayou Section (MDOT LAP Project)





WEST MICHIGAN
trails

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DONOR HIGHLIGHT: TOM ANDERSON

Born and raised in Muskegon, Tom Anderson never left the community he loves. He is definitely one of those “one in a million” donor/volunteers. Tom is arguably the main catalyst in the development of the expansion of trails in the greater Muskegon area.

Tom has dedicated a large part of his life to trails. He owned and operated the Bicycle Rack from May 1976 to April 2022 during which time he also served his community on the Planning Commission and Council, including Mayor Pro-Tem for North Muskegon.

When asked, Tom said he supports trails because, “In today’s world, when you are on a trail, you get the pressures of life off your mind. Trails are good for both your physical and your mental health”. Tom goes on to say that when he was asked, in 1982, to help get a bicycle path built in Muskegon, he thought it was a pipe dream. But, with determination and a lot of hard work, Tom saw that pipe dream become a reality with a ribbon cutting for the Laketon Trail and then the Berry Junction Trail in 2016.

Tom also served as a charter member for West Michigan Trails & Greenways and served until he stepped down in 2019. Tom says the secret is that you can’t see problems – you have to see solutions. As an advocate for over 30 years, he explains that he donates to West Michigan Trails because, “when I donate to trails, I’m donating to my own community. The improvements don’t just benefit me – they benefit my whole community.”



**WMT thanks Tom for
all he’s done for trails!**

**If you want to be like Tom,
you can donate here:**

<https://bit.ly/23SpringNews>