

Traverse City ↔ Charlevoix Trail: Acme through Elk Rapids

Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting Notes

November 1, 2018, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Old Council Chamber, 321 Bridge Street, Elk Rapids

Present:

Stakeholder Advisory Group Members

Dorance Amos, Elk Rapids Township, Supervisor

Amanda Baker, Elk Rapids DDA, Staff

Renee Baker, Acme Business Association

Shelly Boisvert, Elk Rapids Township, Clerk

Jim Cook, Grand Traverse County Road Commission, Manager

Mathew Cooke, Antrim County Deputy Administrator

Lauren Dake, Elk Rapids Trail Team

Bill Danly, Cherry Capital Cycling Club, President

Amy Jenema, Acme Township Board of Trustees, Treasurer

Caroline Kennedy, Village of Elk Rapids, Clerk/Asst Manager

Gregory Kinser, MDNR, Northern Lower Peninsula Regional Trails Coordinator

Patty O'Donnell, MDOT North Region Planner

Joe Slonecki, Grand Traverse County Road Commission, Assistant County Highway Engineer

Steve Thomas, Elk Rapids DDA, Chair

Burt Thompson, Antrim County Road Commission, Engineer/Manager

Nels Veliquette, Agriculture rep

Melissa West, Elk Rapids Village Council

Shawn Winter, Acme Township, Planner/Zoning Administrator

Project Team Members

Chris Kushman, TART Trails Inc., Planning and Management Director

Elizabeth Calcutt, Networks Northwest, Community Planner

Engineering Consultant

Matt Levandoski, Prein & Newhof

Meeting Summary:

The first Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting was held on November 1, 2018 from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. at the Old Council Chamber in Elk Rapids. The goal of the meeting was to assess issues and opportunities that may inform trail alignment and to identify plans, projects, activities or services that may relate to the trail's alignment, use, and development. Input from the meeting will help in identifying a preferred trail alignment. Stakeholders representing local units of government (staff and/or elected officials), state government, business, agriculture, conservation, transportation, and recreation attended. The meeting included a project update from TART Trails, an assessment of the proposed alternative routes by the engineering consultant, breakout discussions, and next steps.

Breakout Group Exercise Results:

The Stakeholder Advisory Group divided into four groups with four to five stakeholders in each. With the information and maps provided by the engineering consultant, stakeholders were asked to discuss the following questions:

1. What physical, social, political, regulatory, financial, and/or environmental issues or opportunities are you aware of that may inform trail design and development?
2. Are there any plans or projects happening or planned along the corridor that may impact design and development?
3. What would a “win” for trail design & development look like from your lens?

Each group was asked to record comments from group members using the work sheets provided. Groups were asked to report out to the larger group on the question that generated the most discussion and input from group members.

Comments shared during the exercise are included below. Ideas that were addressed by more than one group have the number of times it was addressed in parenthesis. Ideas are not listed by priority or in any particular order.

What physical, social, political, regulatory, financial, and/or environmental issues or opportunities are you aware of that may inform the trail design and development?

Issues:

- Crossings, safety, active ag operatives, Shoreline Fruit semi traffic
- Shoreline Fruit and FSMA requirements
- Perceived different cultures/ways of life. Property owners vs trail users.
- Cost of crossings
- Easement acquisitions
- Environmental impact of crossings (official or user-initiated),
- Protecting existing natural/environmental assets (trees, etc.)
- M72 crossing for Bates route
- Utilities and roadway ditches could post design concerns if within County ROW
- Obtaining easements on ROW acquisition along Bates Rd. may be difficult
- Regulatory issues related to parks that connect
- Safety for all - what does safety mean?
- Community support
- Connection to existing system and acme benefitting if Bates route chosen
- Visibility and accessibility to business
- Very scenic route with beautiful views along Bates Route
- Cycling Club does 90-100 rides to Elk Rapids every year and makes use of rural roads
- Driveway crossings and how to address
- Option of N. Bayshore - highest challenge area is the center third of the road where higher age demographic, closer trees and driveways. Are these year-round residents?
- East side of US-31 has potential for more disruption to agriculture interests

Opportunities:

- Existing ROW capacity for trail alignment
- Connections to open/natural spaces and recreation assets
- Creates a desirable place to live
- Strengthens economy
- Coexistence (residential, agriculture, recreation, transportation)
- Overcome stereotypes
- Transportation
- Village of Elk Rapids would like to see more connection to Maple Bay beach area and Elk Rapids Day Park (west side 31) and to the Village to bring more traffic/money into town
- Motorized trails as well as bike traffic
- Opportunities associated with a route on the West side of US-31:
 - No need to cross road (31) to get to water (swimmers)
 - Less interference with growers for spraying
 - More residents to be able to jump on the trail
 - Seems less controversial for landowners (compared to N. Bayshore Dr.)
 - Connects into Village on the west side, can take down South Bayshore for downtown access
 - Cross at light and move to east side of US-31
 - Birch Lake access
 - Large easement
 - People can still ride North Bayshore to [GTRLC] preserve
 - Crossing at light will benefit east side of Elk Rapids
 - Connects to Milton Township off of Williams Road

Are there any plans or projects happening or planned along the corridor that may impact design and development?

- Potential sewer line expansion, dual use (sewer, gas, trail, water, etc.)-- 5 years out
- Potential river crossing in Acme/Joint Tribal and Township
- Acme Connector Trail: extend existing TART Trail from Bunker Hill Road to Mount Hope Road, to Grand Traverse Town Center
- Shoreline Fruit: potential facility expansion (freezer)
- Increased business interest and development in Elk Rapids and Acme (2)
- New businesses opening (Townline Ciders, Planetary Coffee, Urban Diversions, Kmart redevelopment)
- Not aware of any Grand Traverse County Road Commission projects
- No DNR projects that aware of
- MDOT projects?
- Kmart site: Rd Home - large truck traffic, but good for employers
- US-31 construction already set aside property
- Conservancy development of public access to Maple Bay Farm and Natural Area Trails
- Village of Elk Rapids is doing a downtown improvement, including bike racks, etc. May want to tie in route layout with Village plans
- Greek orthodox church north of Acme
- Properties for sale on west side north of Acme (across from Shoreline Fruit)

- Property for sale near Saylor Park
- Broadband fiber to Elk Rapids could be cheaper if laid with trail construction (rural development/USDA grants could contribute to funding)
- Potential housing/subdivision development north of Yuba

What would a “win” for trail design & development look like from your lens?

- Serves both transportation and recreation purposes
- Separated facility
- Connecting residents/visitors to jobs, recreational opportunities, commercial activity, points of interest (2)
- Supports economic development opportunities along facility
- Sense of safety (2)
- Reduces trip generation
- Connect trail to local trail system and local business
- Community support/mitigate concerns (2)
- Good trail flow/limited flow interruption
- Ease of accessibility and visibility to Acme businesses, increase in traffic (pedestrian and cycling) to business
- Trail heads that create opportunity for enhanced and new amenities
- Good design is the goal
- Increased traffic from TC to Elk Rapids and consumer potential (and to Charlevoix)
- Increased recreational tourism
- Elk Rapids qualifies as Pure Michigan Trail Town
- Connects Elk Rapids Harbor to trails (only Harbor in region without this asset)
- Educate visitors re: agriculture industry (etiquette and value)
- Economically benefit farmers and agriculture industry. Partner to promote agriculture interests.
- Agritourism
- Overwhelmingly supported by 2017 Elk Rapids P&R survey (which included 40% response from area townships)
- Maximize access to natural areas (including Deepwater and GTRLC WPS properties)
- Addressing interests in bike facilities AND motorized trails
- Connections to ice cream shops
- Scenic/views (Townline and Bates = good views)