

Traverse City-Charlevoix Trail: Acme through Elk Rapids Landowner Listening Session Follow-up

Thank you for attending the Landowner Listening Sessions this August. We appreciate everyone taking the time out of their busy summer schedules to attend and provide comments on the proposed Traverse City to Charlevoix Trail between Acme and Elk Rapids. The listening sessions were an important first step in the preliminary design process, which kicked off this summer with the hiring of the engineering firm, Prein & Newhof. The goal of preliminary design is to identify a preferred trail alignment and the costs associated with its construction and maintenance. The process for identifying this preferred alignment involves assessing routes based on factors related to community and stakeholder input, environmental conditions, user experience, and costs.

Below is a summary of the meetings and the input received, followed by an update on the design process. Comments collected at the listening sessions, as well as through follow-up communications, have been shared with TART Trails and the engineering firm for consideration in the assessment and design process.

Listening Sessions Summary

Over 600 listening session invitations were mailed to property owners adjacent to the proposed trail routes between Acme and Elk Rapids in July 2018. Four listening sessions were held over the course of two days in August 2018. The first two sessions were held at the Williamsburg Event Center in Acme on Wednesday, August 8, 2018, from 10:00 – 11:30 AM and 7:00 – 8:30 PM. The other two sessions were held at the Lighthouse Community Center in Elk Rapids on Thursday, August 9, 2018, from 10:00 – 11:30 AM and 7:00 – 8:30 PM. In total, sixty (60) people attended the sessions. Each meeting included a presentation on the history and current status of the proposed Traverse City – Charlevoix Trail project, and an introduction to the trail route alternatives identified between Acme and Elk Rapids. Attendees were asked to share their input on the trail using the provided comment cards and large maps. The intent was to identify the concerns and preferences of adjacent landowners specific to trail alignment and design.

Fifty-one (51) comment cards were collected at the listening sessions. There were two multiple choice questions. For **primary land use**, the most common use among attending land owners was *residential* (84% of responses), followed by *agriculture* (23%), and *commercial or retail* (7%). For **desired use of the proposed trail**, results indicate that 67% of attendees want to use the proposed trail for recreation, 11% want to use the trail for transportation purposes, and 26% do not plan to use the trail.

The **features of trail design** most frequently listed as important were safety (over half of comment card responses) and separated trail. Additional features identified as important by attendees included signage (wayfinding and rules), clear pavement markings, scenic, accessible, access to/from residential areas and US-31, non-disruptive, quickest route for transportation purposes, hard surfaced, widened road, minimal exposure to harsh winds, emergency kiosks, design that keeps food safety in mind, features that provide privacy, features that keep trail users off private property, and features that keep trail users out of and away from heavy traffic and road crossings.

The open-ended responses and comments received at the listening sessions are organized below by *concerns and solutions* related to three key issue areas – safety, private property, and agriculture.

Safety Concerns: Concerns related to the proposed routes along US-31 addressed the high speed of traffic; crossing of a busy highway; sight lines for vehicles turning off the highway; number of driveways (which large trucks and equipment regularly turn into); and distracted highway driving. Safety concerns expressed in response to the proposed shared use of Deepwater Road, Dock Road, and N. Bayshore Drive focused on conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, narrow road width, density of driveways (some blind/hidden), curves in the road, distracted driving, biker etiquette, and speed of vehicle traffic. Additional concern was expressed about these issues being exacerbated by the increased congestion of motorized and non-motorized traffic; potential drinking by trail users; and the availability/response time of emergency services.

Proposed Solutions:

- Separated trail
- No shared roadway
- Widen roads
- Delineate bike lane from traffic lane/pavement markings
- Signage/clearly marked routes

- Route trail where there are fewer points of access
- Route trail along US-31 (and not along N. Bayshore Road)
- Route trail along US-31 (and not along Deepwater and Dock Roads)
- Route trail along Bates Rd (and not along Deepwater and Dock Roads)
- Potential turn lane along US-31 (section between Townline Rd and the Village)
- Reduce/control speed limit on Deepwater and Dock Roads
- Reduce speed limit on N. Bayshore Road

Private Property Concerns: Concerns related to private property included trespassing; encroachment onto property (also too close to property or loss of property); removal of trees; loss of privacy; and decreased property value.

Proposed Solutions:

- Shared roadway
- Fencing
- Signage/clearly marked routes
- Place away from homes
- Do not route the trail along N. Bayshore Dr
- Do not route the trail along Deepwater and Dock Roads
- Route the trail along US-31 (instead of N. Bayshore Dr)
- Route the trail along US-31 (instead of Deepwater Rd)
- Route the trail on Bates Rd
- No trail

Agriculture Concerns: Concerns related to agricultural property and operations included trespassing; loss of land and rows of fruit trees near the road; stealing of produce; the unknown of future regulations and how those will impact farm operations and workers; spraying; bike traffic interrupting farm operations/use of driveway being impaired; drinking/partying/bad behavior; loss of business; liability; and issues with sanitation.

Proposed Solutions:

- Fencing barrier between trail and farmland
- Signage (such as “No Trespassing”)
- Potential turn lane along US-31 (section between Townline Rd and the Village)
- No trail

Preliminary Design Update

The goal of this process is to address concerns with accurate information and to integrate solutions into the design of the trail. The landowner listening sessions were a first step in the preliminary design process. Based on feedback from the listening sessions, the Study Area Map has been expanded to include alternative routes along the east side of US-31 between Deepwater and Dock Roads, and along the east and west side of US-31 between N. Bayshore Drive and Williams Road. These routes were included on the maps provided for the public input period, which opened August 22, 2018 with a Public Open House in Elk Rapids, and continued online with a public comment form.

An assessment of all the proposed alternative routes is currently being completed by the engineering firm. The assessment will identify the physical challenges and opportunities associated with each alternative route. This information will then be combined with community input to produce different trail route scenarios for consideration by stakeholders and the public. These will be made available for review and comment this fall.

To stay up-to-date on input opportunities and project activities, please visit www.traversecitytocharlevoixtrail.org, and join the e-newsletter for emailed updates specific to the Traverse City – Charlevoix Trail project. If you have any questions or comments, please contact TART Trails at 231-941-4300 or info@traversecitytocharlevoixtrail.org.

We look forward to your continued engagement in this process.