TRAILS AS TOURISM ATTRACTIONS:
BEST PRACTICES FROM MARQUETTE

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on behalf of the

2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan
Product Development Implementation Committee

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Preface

The Product Development Implementation Committee of the 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan is pleased to present this summary of best practices in the development of successful trail-based tourism. With the recent passage of legislation enabling the designation of Pure Michigan Trails and Trail Towns, the naming of the Iron Belle (formerly the Governor’s Showcase) Trail, and Governor Snyder’s expressed desire for Michigan to be recognized as “The Trails State,” this is an exciting time for trails in Michigan. We hope that this document and the process via which it was developed will contribute to the continued growth and increasing prominence of trails and trail use throughout the state.

The 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan
Product Development Implementation Committee

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• Mike Busley, President, Grand Traverse Pie Company and past Vice Chair, Michigan Travel Commission
• Chris MacInnes, Chief Operating Officer, Crystal Mountain Resort & Spa and past Chair, Michigan Travel Commission

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Introduction and Rationale

The vision of Michigan’s tourism industry – as identified in the 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan (MTSP) – is that Michigan be recognized as one of America’s favorite four seasons travel experiences. To help achieve that vision, the industry has set itself eight goals, each of which is associated with a series of at least two, more specific objectives. The goals relate to the eight themes identified as most critical to the industry’s continued expansion and enhancement and are as follows:

- **Collaboration, Cooperation and Partnerships**: Foster a culture of public-private collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships – across the state and beyond – to continue to unify the tourism industry and help grow Michigan’s economy.

- **Funding**: Secure adequate and stable funding for all strategic plan initiatives.

- **Product Development**: Enhance infrastructure to support the delivery of a world class Pure Michigan travel experience.

- **Promotion, Marketing and Communications**: Strengthen and grow the Pure Michigan brand through effective mediums at the regional, national and international levels to attract first-time and repeat visitors.

- **Public Policy and Government Support**: Empower the industry to encourage policy-makers at all levels to support the travel industry.

- **Research and Technical Assistance**: Establish a central, easily accessible and inclusive information system to capture and share timely, relevant and reliable industry research.

- **Resources and Environment**: Be internationally recognized for our stewardship of – and rich opportunities to experience – our natural, cultural, and heritage resources.

- **Service Excellence**: Foster a culture of service excellence that allows us to deliver on the Pure Michigan promise.
To assist with the implementation of these eight goals, a committee of industry volunteers has been established to address each topic. Within the area of Product Development, the committee has recognized the vital role of transportation and trails in the creation and provision of accessible, interconnected and seamless travel experiences, and two of the four Product Development objectives relate to these topics:

- **Objective One**: Support the improvement and increased awareness of the quality, connectivity and diversity of tourist transportation options into and throughout the state.

- **Objective Two**: Support the establishment and showcasing of Michigan as a state with a diverse, extensive and high quality network of motorized, non-motorized and water-based routes and trails.

This document combines these two objectives with a focus on the Iron Ore Heritage Trail (IOHT) in Marquette County. The IOHT is a 47-mile, multi-use, year-round trail “that connects communities and people to the region’s historic sites and human stories.” The trail is managed by the Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority, which consists of one staff member and a nine-person board. Thirty of the 47 miles (between Chocolay and Ishpeming) are surfaced with either asphalt or crushed granite or limestone. Almost all (99%) of the trail is under city, state or Recreation Authority ownership; the remainder is on private land with lease agreements for 25-50 years.
The 2014 Non-Motorized Trail Workshop

In August 2014 approximately 50 individuals from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), National Park Service (NPS), Travel Marquette (the Marquette convention and visitors bureau), the Iron Ore Heritage Trail Authority, Michigan State University and various other tourism entities participated in a two-day workshop to and in Marquette.

The objective of the workshop was to share best practices of non-motorized trail development and operations with MDOT, MDNR, tourism industry members, trail operators, and the NPS, using Marquette as a destination region and the Iron Ore Heritage Trail as a model route. Presentations were made by representatives from the MDNR, NPS and the North Country National Scenic Trail, Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority, and Travel Marquette.

Stops along the way to and from Marquette included trails and trail heads in Clare, Mackinaw City, St. Ignace, Indian River and St. John’s; a half day was also spent exploring the Iron Ore Heritage Trail with stops in Ishpeming and Negaunee and at the Iron Industry Museum and the Marquette Welcome Center.

*It should be noted that whilst the workshop and this document focus on land-based trails, water trails are of increasing popularity and importance throughout the state and many of the issues identified herein applying just as equally to them.*
Best Practices Identified

Over the course of the workshop a series of key themes emerged as most critical in Marquette’s – and more specifically the Iron Ore Heritage Trail’s – success as a regional and emerging national tourism destination.

The Right People

Developing, maintaining and marketing a trail of course require financial resources (see Appendix One for a list of funding programs and mechanisms). But just as important is a group of knowledgeable, creative, dedicated, resilient, tireless and passionate advocates, people like Carol Fulsher, the Administrator of the Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority and Candy Fletcher, Travel Marquette’s Recreation Director. People who share the vision and enthusiasm of leaders such as these should be identified to serve on any Board or Friends group associated with a trail; look especially for individuals with particularly relevant and usable skills, e.g., in accounting, event planning, fundraising, marketing, construction, etc. Cultivate these kinds of connections throughout the community, and establish a list of local people and businesses who might be willing to donate their time, expertise, financial resources and/or materials to the cause. In Ingham County, for example, the paved Hayhoe Riverwalk was donated to the City of Mason by the Richard George Hayhoe family as a memorial to the late Richard Hayhoe; Mr. Hayhoe was the founder and owner of Capital Excavating and Paving. Expect roadblocks – but remember that a core group of people with a positive attitude and a variety of skills will work together to come up with creative solutions and viable alternatives.

Good Signage and Maps

Good wayfinding signage and maps are critical to users’ satisfaction and safety, and these are hot topics among trail designers and users. Include ‘You Are Here’ indicators on map panels along the trail. Users also appreciate confidence markers at regular intervals along the trail, to confirm that they are on the right track (literally!). Though some aspects of some signs are subject to control by outside agencies, e.g., the county or state transportation authority, wherever possible consider the viewpoint of the user, e.g., trail signs are better placed at lower heights than road signs. On a related note, it is important to collaborate with agencies that determine signage standards to prevent wasted time and resources. Signage also offers opportunities for sponsorships. Add appropriate amenities and supporting services to maps, e.g., include bike repair shops, bars and restaurants that offer secure bike parking, etc., and, if ordinances allow, encourage them to place signs to their establishments at appropriate point(s) along the trail. Drawing users off the trail to a café or restaurant might in turn encourage them to spend some time – and money – exploring the community; further, it might even lead to a repeat, ideally overnight, visit. Though the number of trail apps is proliferating, many users still like to carry a hard copy, especially for trails in remote areas with little or no cell phone access, so make printable PDFs of individual trail sections available (and keep these updated).
Build Relationships and Seek/Showcase Designations

Identify and work with businesses on or near the trail that are likely to benefit from its existence and users, e.g., coffee shops, bars, restaurants and hotels. In Marquette, for example, at least three hotels sit directly adjacent to the IOHT, and another thirteen are located within two miles of the IOHT or some other part of the local trail system. Yet only one of the adjacent hotels advertises this fact on its website, and only three of the thirteen nearby properties highlight this proximity. Even if a non-local comes to a place for a reason other than its trail system, the opportunity still exists to introduce that visitor to this amenity. The Ramada Marquette, for example, notes on its website that “We’re one block away from Marquette’s bike/foot path that circles around the city and within walking distance of many local shops, restaurants and parks. Be sure to ask our helpful front desk staff for local trail maps and suggestions;” even a short statement such as this draws attention to the trail and encourages guests to find out more from hotel staff.

Identify and join relevant organization and associations – a list of US and Michigan-based trails-related entities is provided in Appendix One. These kinds of groups offer a tremendous amount and variety of resources to trail planners, managers and users, including trail facts, news, maps/finders, and advocacy information. Locally, form alliances with likeminded groups in the community, e.g., health care, youth and transportation agencies.

Just as getting the word out about your trail to like-minded organizations will broaden its audience, any special designations or recognitions will broaden its appeal as well. Marquette is home to a Bronze-level IMBA (International Mountain Bicycling Association) Ride Center™, one of only 16 Bronze Centers in the world and 10 in the US; the Marquette County Trails Network Ride Center consists of three separate clusters of trails totaling more than 50 miles of single-track. Further to the west, Copper Harbor is one of only 10 Silver Centers in the world and 7 in the US. International designations such as these are considerable sources of cachet and can put locations on the world map of the very best recreation opportunities. Marquette has also been ranked in the “10 Top Mountain Bike Towns in the USA: The sweetest singletrack destinations to get your tires dirty” (ranking originally published by TheActiveTimes.com in April 2013, republished in USA Today, October 2013). Highlighting high-quality recreational opportunities like these provides additional incentive for visitors to experience a trail and spread the word about the area.

The North Country Trail Association has established a Trail Town Program; a similar program exists in the southern part of the state and is administered by the Clinton River Watershed Council and the Huron River Watershed. The link to the Land Information Access Association’s (2013) Trail Towns Manual is provided in the reference section; according to that document:

“A Trail Town is an active, attractive, and interesting place with accessible and comfortable spaces, hosting a variety of activities and promoting social interaction and a strong sense of place. A Trail Town should meet both the
needs of the trail users and the residents of the community. A Trail Town has the physical amenities that support trail users such as wide sidewalks, drinking fountains, and benches with shade. A Trail Town also has the business amenities to support day-trip trail users such as a bike shop, kayak outfitter and ice-cream shop and overnight trail users such as a hotel, casual restaurant and laundry services. It is important for local leaders and trail planners to understand that most Trail Towns are not isolated communities; they are linked together by the trail, creating a regional destination for residents, trail users and tourists” (p. 4)

Legislation passed in June 2014 allows for the designation of **Pure Michigan Trails**, Pure Michigan Water Trails, and Pure Michigan Trails Towns by the Director of the Department of Natural Resources; criteria and application procedures will be announced in the near future. In addition, the Michigan Heritage Leadership Council (an ad hoc group of the Historical Society of Michigan, the Michigan Historical Commission, and the Michigan Historical Center) recently announced its Michigan Heritage Trails Program.

**Use national, state and local events to celebrate the trail.** National Trails Day occurs annually on the first Saturday of June, and the last week in September has been the annual Michigan Trails Week since Governor Rick Snyder proclaimed it as such in 2013. Also think about how to tie the trail into existing community festivals and events, whether as an alternative means of accessing these festivities or as the primary venue for events such as charity or competitive runs, bike rides, etc.

**An Appropriate and Consistent Theme**

**Identify a theme** that clearly ties together all the places along the trail and emphasize it repeatedly; this might relate to an activity or product that is associated with the region, or to a person or family of local/regional importance. The IOHT celebrates the region’s mining heritage and this theme is reflected along the entire length of the trail. Distinctive signage is used to tell the story of the area and adds unique character to the user’s experience, contributing also to the development of a sense of place among residents and visitors alike. **Encourage local businesses that border or are nearby the trail to join in on the theme**, to make it clear to trail users that they will be welcomed by these businesses. **Provide educational opportunities** to appeal to additional demographics, in the same way that the IOHT provides interpretive panels that makes it an attractive school field trip destination. In turn, awareness and use of the trail from an early age can foster attachment to it, generating a sense of ownership and commitment that may translate into donations of time or money in support of the trail in later life.
Good Communication, Marketing and Advocacy

Communication is critical! Communicate and advocate early and often.

**Share the vision** of a proposed trail with residents, business and land owners, and elected officials prior to its development. Emphasize the benefits it will bring to the local economy, the recreation opportunities and associated physical and mental health benefits it will provide to residents and visitors, and the chances it offers to repurpose otherwise abandoned land (in the case of rail-trails), protect natural resources, and physically connect communities (see *The Benefits of Trails* section later in this document). Also identify local and regional foundations that might see the trail as a good fit for their mission; think creatively – a foundation might not fund recreation facilities per se, but if its foci include physical activity/health or transportation alternatives, emphasize those benefits of the trail. Making the trail relevant to all of these different kinds of people will increase the likelihood of their support for it, e.g., some people may never use the trail for recreational or exercise purposes, but they might own a business that could benefit from its construction or simply see the existence value of such an amenity for others.

**Elicit feedback from users on a regular basis.** Use a simple survey like the one in the accompanying report (Woods and Nicholls (2015) *A Survey of Iron Ore Heritage Trail Users*; see reference list for full citation). Plan to repeat the survey every 3-5 years so that changes in use or opinion can be tracked, and widely distribute findings to local residents, business owners and elected officials; emphasize by whom and how often the trail is used, and what users most like about it. Identify the local businesses that trail users most frequently patronize and encourage them to emphasize their proximity to the trail and the accommodations they offer for trail users, e.g., secure bike parking or a patio facing the trail, in their advertisements. Ask these businesses to estimate what proportion of their trade they believe to be generated by trail users, and whether they have hired additional staff as a result of these new patrons; such numbers provide convincing evidence of the economic impact of the trail. Statistically valid and reliable market research will become increasingly essential as the number of trails selling themselves as tourism attractions grows around Michigan and across the United States; the more effective marketing strategies necessitated by rising competition are underpinned by intimate knowledge of users' characteristics, preferences, and behaviors. Appendix Two includes a list of recently conducted trail user segmentation studies. The Department of Community Sustainability (formerly Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resources Studies) at Michigan State University, in cooperation with the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, has summarized the findings of user surveys of 13 of Michigan’s trail systems (see Appendix Three), including information pertaining to user age, gender, origin, activity type, and expenditure.
Develop relationships with members of the press and share your good news and upcoming events with them on a regular basis. Similarly, work with the local Convention and Visitors Bureau and/or Chamber of Commerce to promote the trail and trail-related events. CVBs and Chambers are marketing experts, they know their visitor base and how to access it, but they are often in search of content; become a go-to source of news and information for them. Work with your CVB/Chamber to integrate your trail into walking/biking tour routes. Also consider how to pair use of the trail with popular activities to developed themed routes, e.g., Muskegon County CVB maintains a ‘Biking & Hiking in Muskegon County’ page (www.visitmuskegon.org/biking-and-hiking) that includes information about the Lakeshore, Musketawa and Hart-Montague Trails as well as a link to a ‘Biking and Breweries’ itinerary that highlights attractions and breweries along the Lakeshore Trail: www.visitmuskegon.org/files/s5MMg3K1N1gFaMj4/d5M6ELbPif6vydp/CVB_bikesNBrewsItinerary2014.pdf

Make use of social and other (inter)active media. Short videos are easy ways of showcasing your trail (items less than two minutes have been shown to be most effective); GoPro has made making these kinds of videos easy and inexpensive. As noted by Lebzelter (2014), “Many park and recreation professionals have plenty of compelling stories that illustrate the importance of the work they do in their communities, but they aren’t sure of how to best spread the word. Effective storytelling and marketing ... can help increase participation from your community, encourage better funding from your municipal budget, make your agency more competitive for grant applications and more.”
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Muskegon County
Biking and Breweries

This itinerary highlights attractions and breweries along the Lakeshore Trail, a 12-mile, paved trail with sections running on or along the road from Pere Marquette Park and Beach to the Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve, with views of Lake Muskegon, Muskegon Lake, dunes, parks and the city of Muskegon. Muskegon County is also home to three other trails, the Musketawa Trail, the Hart-Montague Trail and the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail. Bike rentals are available at the Muskegon CVB through BeanBox Bike Rental or at CityHub Cyclery.

• With two new craft breweries downtown and one in Whitehall, Muskegon County is rapidly becoming a craft brewery lover’s paradise! First, try Pigeon Hill Brewing Company, located in the old Noble Building in Muskegon’s downtown historic district. They combine beer drinking and brewing with a passion for the community. The brand plays off the famed local sand dune, Pigeon Hill, which was the largest sand dune on the Lake Michigan shoreline before it was mined away. Their dream is to bring back the magic of the old Muskegon Brewing Co., which opened in 1876 on Muskegon Lake. It produced what some considered the finest beers in the Midwest until Prohibition ended the fun.
  www.pigeonhillbrew.com

• Enjoy a wonderful lunch at one of our popular eateries like the all new Smash Wine Bar & Bistro! This farm-to-table, small-plate restaurant is located on the lower level of the beautiful Frauenthal Theater. Smash offers over 40 glass pours for those still on the hunt for the wine that rocks their world. They also feature Michigan brewed beers, a full selection of cocktails, and great specialty martinis!
  www.smashwinebar.com

• Visit the new Unruly Brewing Company at the Russell Block Market. Unruly is the first brewery to brew beer in Muskegon since 1952. They offer a wide range of craft beer styles as well as an outdoor beer garden, live music and free brewery tours anytime!
  www.unrulybrewing.com

• Be sure to check out Muskegon County’s newest brewery, Fetch Brewing Company! This 6,000 sq. ft. space has a full bar, two levels of table space, and a vault which has been transformed into a seating area which owner, Dan Hain, refers to as the “Penny Lounge,” as its floor is made entirely of pennies. They feature seven beers ranging from 3.5 to 6 percent.
  www.fetchbrewing.com

• Have dinner at Dockers Fish House & Lounge! From Sweet Maine Lobster Fondue to their Signature Perch Sliders, their delicious menu is rivaled only by the breathtaking views. Dockers is located near Pere Marquette Beach, tucked into the Harbor Town Marina, overlooking Muskegon Lake. They have an indoor bar and main dining area surrounded by floor-to-ceiling windows, along with three amazing outdoor patio areas. Everybody’s favorite is the famous Tiki Bar where you can enjoy great craft beers and live, local music every Tuesday through Sunday.
  www.dockersfishhouse.com

Muskegon County Convention & Visitors Bureau 1-800-250-9283 | Muskegon, Michigan | www.visitmuskegon.org
The Benefits of Trails

The benefits of trails are many and varied. Not every trail will necessarily offer every benefit to every user or surrounding community, but every trail definitely provides some of these goods. Identify which those are and communicate them!

**Recreational Benefits:** Trails offer settings for many non-motorized recreational activities such as walking, hiking, running, bicycling, skating, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing, as well as venues for activity-based events, e.g., charity and competitive running and bike races. According to the Outdoor Foundation (2014, p.1), “In 2013, a record number of Americans – 142.6 million – participated in at least one outdoor activity and collectively, went on 12.1 billion outdoor outings. Although the number of participants rose, the percentage of participants fell slightly from 49.4 percent in 2012 to 49.2 percent in 2013, due to population increase.” Three of the top five most popular adult (25 years and older) outdoor activities (#1 running, jogging and trail running, #3 bicycling (road, mountain and BMX) and #4 hiking) and three of the most popular youth (age 6-24) activities (#1 running, jogging and trail running, #2 bicycling (road, mountain and BMX) and #5 hiking) can take place on trails. Note that the Outdoor Foundation does not include walking in its analyses, which is widely recognized as the most popular active pastime in America.

**Transportation Benefits:** In addition to promoting recreational use, trails may also serve as alternative transportation corridors, encouraging walking and biking to and from work, school, shops, restaurants, etc. Any reduction in the use of motorized vehicles contributes to lower levels of traffic and congestion, to reduced fuel consumption and pollution, and to cleaner air. The separation of pedestrians and cyclists from auto traffic increases the safety of all users. To maximize these transportation benefits, communities must strive to make local on- and off-road connections to trails in their area.

**Health Benefits:** The kinds of activities that trails accommodate offer substantial health and fitness benefits; exercising outdoors is good for both physical and mental health. Aerobic activities improve heart, lung, blood vessel and muscle function and strength; burn calories; relieve stress and tension; and, reduce blood pressure. These and other outcomes of activity help combat obesity; reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and colon and breast cancer; lower levels of cholesterol and triglycerides; increase bone density (or at least slow the loss of density); and, improve sleep quality. These health benefits accrue not only to the individual but also to employers and to society in general in the form of reduced health care costs.
Environmental Benefits: Trails protect land from development. They are aesthetically pleasing, provide natural migration corridors for animals and maintain plant and animal habitat. They can serve as buffers between land uses, e.g., protecting streams, rivers and lakes from run-off resulting from fertilizer and pesticide use on yards and farms. They can also serve as flood plains, absorbing excess water and mitigating damage caused by floods. Ultimately, the ecosystem services provided by ‘green infrastructure’ save communities money.

Social, Cultural and Educational Benefits: Trails connect people to each other and to other places; they provide places for people to meet and for families to play, and draw people to different towns and neighborhoods that they might not otherwise have visited. They can also connect us to our heritage by preserving historic places and by providing new ways of accessing them. These kinds of connections promote understanding and education, enhancing individual and community pride and sense of place. Trails can serve as outdoor classrooms where students of all ages can learn about an area’s natural and cultural history as well as important environmental concepts. They also tend to catalyze partnerships between agencies and individuals, and to promote volunteerism, both of which can enhance levels of community cohesion.

Economic Benefits: Trails are increasingly popular tourism attractions. Spending by out-of-town visitors generates direct economic benefits for local restaurants, accommodations providers, gas stations, and shops. In sufficient numbers, these visitors might even precipitate the opening of new establishments such as equipment and clothing vendors, repair shops, etc. All of this new economic activity contributes to the local/state tax base and has the potential to result in the creation of new employment opportunities. Thriving communities that offer a high quality of life to their residents – a critical component of which is a diversity of high-quality recreation opportunities such as trails – have been shown to attract new and relocating businesses; corporations increasingly recognize the need to offer amenities above and beyond good pay if they are to entice the most talented employees to work for them. Proximity to trails can also increase property values and the associated tax base; homes near trails also tend to sell more quickly than other residences.

References


Appendix One. Trail Organizations

In the United States

American Trails: http://www.americantrails.org

American Trails is a national, nonprofit organization working on behalf of all trail interests, including hiking, bicycling, mountain biking, horseback riding, water trails, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, trail motorcycling, ATVs, snowmobiling and four-wheeling. American Trails members want to create and protect America’s network of interconnected trails.

For over 25 years, American Trails has been a collective voice for a diverse coalition of enthusiasts, professionals, advocates, land managers, conservationists, and friends of the outdoors and livable cities. American Trails strives to enrich the quality of life for all people and the sustainable development of communities by advancing and promoting the development, preservation, and enjoyment of diverse, high quality trails and greenways. We envision a network of trails within 15 minutes of every home, school, and workplace.

We support local, regional, and long-distance trails and greenways, whether they be in backcountry, rural or urban areas. Our goal is to support America’s trails by finding common ground and promoting cooperation among all trail interests. Since our formation in 1988 we've been involved in everything from training trails advocates to increasing accessible trail opportunities for persons with disabilities.

National Park Service National Trail System: http://www.nps.gov/nts/

The National Trails System is the network of scenic, historic, and recreation trails created by the National Trails System Act of 1968. These trails provide for outdoor recreation needs, promote the enjoyment, appreciation, and preservation of open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources, and encourage public access and citizen involvement.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: http://www.railstotrails.org/

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy transforms unused rail corridors into vibrant public places—ensuring a better future for America made possible by trails and the connections they inspire.
In Michigan – Statewide

Michigan Department of Transportation – Biking in Michigan:
http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9615_11223---,00.html

MDOT is working to create a better, safer transportation network for all users by providing a variety of services and information supporting walking and bicycling, including: training for engineers and planners; educational and safety videos and publications; road and trail bicycle maps to view, order or print; information on U.S. Bicycle Routes 10, 20 and 35; state and national parks information for bicyclists; and, information on the use of ferries and major bridges.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources – Trails:
http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10365_16839---,00.html

The Michigan DNR offers hundreds of miles of trails and pathways used primarily for bicycling, hiking and cross-country skiing (some also allow horseback riding and snowmobiling). These trails provide scenic routes through the Michigan countryside, running by rivers and through forests or farm country, connecting small communities, state parks, and many state forest campgrounds.

Michigan Trails Advisory Council:
http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10366_65134_65143---,00.html

The purpose of the Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC) is to advise the Director of the DNR and the Governor on the creation, development, operation, and maintenance of motorized and nonmotorized trails in the state, including, but not limited to, snowmobile, biking, equestrian, hiking, off-road vehicle, and skiing trails.

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance:  http://www.michigantrails.org/

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance is a non-profit organization that shall foster and facilitate the creation of an interconnected statewide system of trails and greenways for recreation, health, transportation, economic development and environmental/cultural preservation purposes. The MTGA website includes a trail finder, information about the annual Michigander Bike Tour, a trails event calendar, trails-related news stories, and Michigan trail facts.
Michigan Fitness Foundation: http://www.michiganfitness.org

Our mission is to improve lives and strengthen communities by promoting healthy eating and active living. The Michigan Fitness Foundation and the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports work to bring about behavior change through programming, special projects and events that encourage citizens to build physical activity and sound nutrition into their daily lives. By empowering, facilitating and celebrating healthy choices, the Foundation works to foster prosperity for all.

In Michigan – Regional

Copper Harbor Trails Club: http://copperharbortrails.org/
Friends Of The White Pine Trail: http://www.whitepinetrail.com
Great Lakes Bay Regional Trail Alliance: http://www.greatlakesbaytrails.com/
Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority: http://ironoreheritage.com/
Kalamazoo River Valley Trail: http://www.parksfoundationkalamazoo.com
North Country Trail Association: https://northcountrytrail.org
Thornapple Trail Association: http://www.thornappletrail.com
Top of Michigan Trails Council: http://www.trailscouncil.org
Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation (TART) Trails: http://traversetrails.org
Up North Trails Project: http://www.upnorthtrails.org
West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition: http://www.wmtrails.org

Trail Funding Sources and Mechanisms

American Trails/National Trails Training Partnership Resources and Library: Federal Funding Programs – includes information about the Federal Highway Administration’s Recreational Trails Program (RTP), the Safe Routes to School program, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF): http://www.americantrails.org/resources/fedfund/

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Financing and Funding – describes and provides links to a variety of federal, state and local government funding mechanisms, as well as grants, partnerships and other creative funding methods: http://www.railstotrails.org/build-trails/trail-building-toolbox/acquisition/financing-and-funding/

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grants – includes information about DNR-administered grants for recreation acquisition and development, and trails management: http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225--,00.html

Michigan Department of Transportation Grant Programs – includes information about the Safe Routes to School program and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP): http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9621_17216--,00.html
Appendix Two. Trail Resources – Reports and Articles

General Trail Items


Trail Marketing


TRAILS AS TOURISM ATTRACTIONS: BEST PRACTICES FROM MARQUETTE

Trail Conflict


Trail Access Issues (vis-à-vis Americans with Disabilities Act)

Appendix Three. Summary of Multi-Use Surveys Conducted by MSU
Since 2000 researchers from Michigan State University’s Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies have studied several Michigan rail-trails to ascertain a variety of usage characteristics. For the most part, communities wanted to know who is using their trails, for what purpose, how often, how would they like to see them improved, and how much revenue is associated with trail use. The initial research was funded by the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Michigan Agriculture Experiment Station and MSU Extension. There were also in-kind contributions of volunteer labor for the T.A.R.T., Leelanau, Lansing River Trail, and Border-to-Border studies and some grant assistance from the DALMAC (Dick Allen Lansing to Mackinac bicycle tour) Fund for the Lansing River Trail study and Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation for the Border-to-Border Trail study. The following trails were included in the studies:

- Pere Marquette Trail (Midland and Isabella Counties): urban/rural – 30 miles
- Leelanau Trail (Leelanau County): rural – 15 miles
- T.A.R.T. Trail (Grand Traverse County): urban – 10 miles
- Lansing River Trail (Ingham County): urban – 8 miles
- Paint Creek Trail (Oakland County): suburban – 11 miles
- White Pine Trail (Kent County): suburban – 92 miles
- Border to Border (Washtenaw County): urban – 16 miles
- Little Traverse Wheel Way Trail (Emmet County)-23.4 Miles
- Northwest State Trail (Emmet County)-7.5 Miles
- North Central State Trail (Cheboygan County) - 61.9 Miles
- Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (Kalamazoo County)-35 Miles
- Kal-Haven Trail State Park (Kalamazoo County)-33 Miles
- Battle Creek Linear Park (Kalamazoo County)-17 Miles

While the studies were customized towards what each community wanted to know about the usage of their trail, many of the questions in each of them were identical. The following is a comparison of the findings of the seven trail studies where queries were identical.

**Total Number of Uses**

The total number of uses varied with the type of landscape the trail traverses, with the most uses recorded in an urban setting and the least amount of uses recorded in a rural setting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Total # of Uses</th>
<th>Survey Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pere Marquette</td>
<td>178,000</td>
<td>April – September, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.A.R.T.</td>
<td>154,803</td>
<td>May – September, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leelanau</td>
<td>29,318</td>
<td>May – September, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lansing River Trail</td>
<td>72,040</td>
<td>May – September, 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paint Creek  66,420  May – September, 2004
White Pine  54,096  July – September, 2005
Border-to-Border  114,405  Fall (Sept to Nov, 2008)
   Spring (March, April, May 2009)
Little Traverse Wheel way  59,625  May 24-September 1st 2014
Northwest State Trail  9,307  May 24-September 1st 2014
North Central State Trail  17,085  May 24-September 1st 2014
Kalamazoo River Valley  246,402  2010-2012
Kal-Haven Trail  96,191  2010-2012
Battle Creek Linear  78,564  2010-2012

Age Profile

At least two-thirds of all trail uses were by adults. The studies did not show whether the uses by children were in accompaniment with an adult or by themselves.

Trail                  Adults 18+  Child 0-17
Pere Marquette        76%        24%
T.A.R.T.              79%        21%
Leelanau              76%        24%
Lansing River Trail   86%        14%
Paint Creek           86%        14%
White Pine            81%        19%
Border-to-Border      91%        9%
Little Traverse Wheel Way  80%    20%
North West State Trail 76%    24%
North Central State Trail 64%    36%
Kalamazoo River Valley** 87%    13%
Kal-Haven Trail**     86%        13%
Battle Creek Linear** 79%        20%

**Percentages produced are calculated averages over the three year annual collections.

Gender Profile (all ages)

Trail use was split almost evenly between male and female use, with the male usage slightly higher.

Trail  Male  Female
Pere Marquette*  59%  41%
T.A.R.T.  55%  45%
Leelanau  57%  43%
Paint Creek  53%  47%
White Pine  
Border-to-Border  
Little Traverse Wheel way  
North West State Trail  
North Central State Trail  
Kalamazoo River Valley**  
Kal-Haven Trail**  
Battle Creek Linear**

*The Pere Marquette Trail study accounted separately for gender usage at each survey station. Overall, the same gender percentage trend held true for all survey stations, except for the segment including the Tridge, where surveys registered 38.9% male use and 61.1% female use. It should be noted that the Tridge section of the trail is adjacent to the trailhead in the municipal parking lot, which suggests perhaps an increased sense of security.

**Percentages produced are calculated averages over the three year annual collections.

**Types of Trail Use by Adults**

The majority of use was split between bicycle use and walking/running. Where the surface does not permit smooth in-line skating, there was a more pronounced use of bicycles. Use of the trail by the disabled was consistently between 3-5%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Bicycle</th>
<th>In-Line Skating</th>
<th>Run/Walk</th>
<th>Disabled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pere Marquette</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.A.R.T.</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leelanau</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lansing River Trail</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint Creek</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>gravel</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Pine</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border-to-Border</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>24%/40%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Traverse</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West State</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>N/O</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalamazoo River**</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kal-Haven**</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>N/O</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>N/O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle Creek Linear**</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Percentages produced are calculated averages over the three year annual collections.

**Where do Trail Users Live**

The majority of trail use was by residents of the area in which the trail was located. The exception was the Lansing River Trail which receives a lot of use in off-work hours by downtown workers. It should also be noted that in the Traverse City area, seasonal residents were counted in with the full-time residents, thus discounting some of the “tourism” use of the T.A.R.T. and Leelanau trails. Overall, the findings suggest that trails are used most often by those who find it easier to get there.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Resident</th>
<th>Live in Nearby Town</th>
<th>Live Elsewhere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pere Marquette</td>
<td>77% (Midland Cty residents)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.A.R.T.</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leelanau</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lansing River Trail</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>15% (E. Lansing)</td>
<td>29% (not Lansing or E. Lansing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint Creek</td>
<td>90% (Oakland County residents)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Pine</td>
<td>78% (Kent County residents)</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border-to-Border</td>
<td>57% Ann Arbor; 35% Ypsi. 3% other</td>
<td>5 %Elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Traverse Wheelway</td>
<td>32% (Emmet)</td>
<td>15% Charlevoix</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West State Trail</td>
<td>38% (Emmet)</td>
<td>12% Charlevoix</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central State Trail</td>
<td>65% (Cheboygan)</td>
<td>1% Emmet</td>
<td>34% Elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalamazoo River Valley**</td>
<td>87% (Kalamazoo)</td>
<td>1%(Calhoun)</td>
<td>9% Elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kal-Haven Trail**</td>
<td>78%(Kalamazoo)</td>
<td>4%(Van Buren)</td>
<td>18% Elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle Creek Linear**</td>
<td>9%(Kalamazoo)</td>
<td>85%(Calhoun)</td>
<td>6% Elsewhere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Percentages produced are calculated averages over the three year annual collections.

**How Did Trail Users Get to the Trail**

With the exception of the White Pine Trail, at least half of all trail users accessed the trail by means other than driving to it, which reinforces the above hypothesis that trails are used most often by those who find it easier to get there.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Did Not Drive to Trail</th>
<th>Live How Far Away</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pere Marquette*</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>&gt;50% traveled ≤ 1 mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.A.R.T.</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>45% traveled ≤ 1 mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leelanau</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>60% traveled ≤ 3 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lansing River Trail</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>48% traveled ≤ 2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint Creek Trail</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>58% traveled ≤ 5 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Pine</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>87% traveled ≤ 5 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border-to-Border</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Traverse Wheelway</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West State Trail</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central State Trail</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>78% traveled &lt; 5 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalamazoo River Trail**</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>57% traveled &lt; 5 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kal-Haven Trail**</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>80% traveled &lt; 5 miles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Pere Marquette Trail study worded this question differently. Their findings were that 54% of visits involved use of a trailhead parking area and the rest of the visits involved accessing the trail from surface streets, sidewalks, or adjacent property.**

**Percentages produced are calculated averages over the three year annual collections.**
Primary Reason for Using the Trail

The majority of uses on the trails were focused on exercise, with the exception of the Lansing River Trail where more usage was targeted at general recreation. The T.A.R.T. Trail, which links up many residential areas with businesses along Bus. 131 and the downtown core, experienced more use for transportation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Recreation</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Race Training</th>
<th>Transportation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pere Marquette</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.A.R.T.</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leelanau</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lansing River Trail</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint Creek</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Pine</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border-to-Border</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Traverse</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West State</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central State</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalamazoo River**</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kal-Haven**</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle Creek Linear**</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The training category was not included in surveys for these trails.
**Percentages produced are calculated averages over the three year annual collections.

Trail is Primary Reason for Visiting the Area

A new question was added in the two latest trail studies, the Lansing River Trail and the Paint Creek Trail, about whether the trail was the primary reason for visiting the area. The Lansing River Trail was the primary reason for the visit in 7% of those surveyed and for 6% of those surveyed for the Paint Creek Trail. For the Pere Marquette Trail, the majority of those who had placed inquiries about the trail with the Midland Convention and Visitors Bureau, were visiting the Midland area due to the trail.

Frequency of Use

While it was found each trail has a group of regular users, such as the Pere Marquette, whose most frequent use it more than 100 days per year, the average use ranged between 10-15 times per year on all the trails.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Number of Uses per Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pere Marquette</td>
<td>Average 15/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.A.R.T.</td>
<td>94% ≤ 10/year, 6% ≥ 10/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leelanau</td>
<td>93% ≤ 10/year, 7% ≥ 10/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lansing River Trail</td>
<td>Average 10/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint Creek</td>
<td>Average 11/year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
White Pine  Average 5/year
Border-to-Border Average 10/year

Tourism Expenditures

For all of the trail studies except the Pere Marquette study, those who described themselves as being from outside the area were given a postcard questionnaire to complete and mail back in. Tourists on the White Pine trail spent an average of $85.00 while visiting the trail. The Pere Marquette study used postcard questionnaires from intercepted tourists using the trail and travel inquirers, those who asked for information from the Midland Convention and Visitors Bureau. The following purchases were evidenced by those returning the postcards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Lodging</th>
<th>Restaurant/Bar</th>
<th>Groceries</th>
<th>Vehicular Expense</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pere Marquette</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>*1</td>
<td>*1</td>
<td>*1</td>
<td>*1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.A.R.T.</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>*2</td>
<td>*2</td>
<td>*2</td>
<td>*2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leelanau</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>*3</td>
<td>*3</td>
<td>*3</td>
<td>*3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lansing River</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint Creek</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Pine</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1 Respondents to the Pere Marquette Trail Study’s special tourist study showed that 8 out of 10 “travel inquirers” and 2/3 of “intercepted tourists” visited businesses along its length. Those most visited were restaurants and convenience stores.

*2 The T.A.R.T. trail study asked for actual dollar amounts spent, not percentages. Tourists spent an average $437 per party per trip on lodging, $165 on restaurant/bar meals and drinks/trip, $72.00 on grocery and convenience store goods, $151 on motor vehicle expenses, $74.00 on recreation and entertainment, and $50 per trip on other goods, such as souvenirs and clothes.

*3 The Leelanau trail study asked for actual dollar amounts spent, not percentages. Tourists spent an average $671 per party per trip on lodging, $234 on restaurant/bar meals and drinks/trip, $145 on grocery and convenience store goods, $98 on motor vehicle expenses, $70 on recreation and entertainment, and $51 on other goods, such as souvenirs and clothes.

Relevant Observations***

The above Observations are general studies which apply to all 13 of our trails and have been pulled from different scholarly research projects. However, through our efforts to compile the most applicable trail research we have come across numerous observations that were either too distinct in their findings (applies to only a certain number of trails) or carried multiple facets to their observation making primary observations uncertain. We find it important to list these observations and reference their origin in order for readers to gather a full understanding of the benefits of our Michigan trail system.

The list/observations are as follows; Note (there will be observations listed below that have already been listed above, please still follow reference to observe their more uniquely multi-faceted research)

- Origin of Use
- Lodging Night Prior to Use
- Purpose of Use
- Activities During Trail Use
• Spending During Trail Use
• Accessing the Trail
• Characteristics of On-Trail Experience
• Characteristics of Distinct Trail Users
• Initially Learn about Trail
• Use of Trail During Past 12 months
• Most Important Trail Improvement Needed
• Sense of Security on Trail
• Use of other Area Trails over past 12 months
• Ownership of Trail Related Equipment
• Demographics of Distinct Trail Users
• Trail Segments Used
• Proportion of Use by Season
• Percent of Participants with Impairment
• User Race and Ethnicity

The Reports carrying such Observations are:
• Use And Users Of Kalamazoo River Valley Trail, Kal-Haven State Park Trail And Battle Creek Linear Trail

• Use And Users On The Little Traverse Wheel Way, The Northwest State Trail And The North Central State Trails.

The more trails that are studied in Michigan, the more that is learned about their importance to the quality of life in communities, both economic and the health and enjoyment of its citizens. Through studies such as this we can learn a lot about how to develop them and what extensions may be needed to fully realize the potential of a trail network.

For more information on these trail studies, contact:

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517-432-2296 (fax)

This report was co-written with Nancy Krupiartz, Michigan Trails and Greenways