

Memorandum

To: Charlevoix County Parks Committee
From: Larry Sullivan, Planning Director
Re: Trail Maintenance Costs
Date: June 9, 2010

The estimates to maintain a 14 mile detached non-motorized trail between Boyne City and US-31 are based upon experience gained through the maintenance of the portion of the Little Traverse Wheelway located in Charlevoix County. These cost estimates are based upon 2010 costs which should be adjusted for inflation over time.

The cost to maintain the proposed Boyne City to US-31 Trail is based upon 91 to 119 hours per year (\$1,400.00 to \$1,800.00) plus contracted mowing at an approximate cost of \$800.00 per mow with 3.5 mows per year resulting in a total mowing cost of \$2,800.00 per year. The mowing time is estimated to be 74 hours per year (mow 3.5 times per year). If we are able to secure volunteers to mow the trail, we estimate the annual maintenance costs for the trail to not exceed \$1800.00 per year for labor, \$100.00 in travel costs, and \$200.00 per year in materials for an annual cost of \$2,100.00 per year. If it is necessary to have park staff perform the mowing, the cost would increase by \$1,260.00 for labor and \$200.00 for fuel which would raise the overall cost on an annual basis to \$3560.00 plus an annual allocated cost for the purchase and maintenance of the mower(s).

Detailed supporting information is described below.

Conversations with Ross Maxwell from the County Parks Department and Doug Way reveal the following information concerning maintenance efforts on the Little Traverse Wheelway between Waller Road and Townline Road in Bayshore (7.5 miles in length):

Mowing of the 7.5 miles of trail takes approximately 12 man hours to mow using riding mowers. The trail is generally mowed in the spring and another two or three times during the remainder of the year depending upon weather conditions. The total mowing consumes between 36 and 48 man hours per year which is performed by the Way family at a cost of approximately \$1,200.00 per year.

Other work associated with the trail requires 48 to 64 man hours per year and is performed by County Park's staff as follows:

Sixteen to twenty four hours to "open" the trail in the spring following the end of snow fall (due to plowing of snow and sand from the highway and private driveways on the trail). This work consists of cutting and removing dead fall trees and limbs that have fallen on the trail and board walk; trimming back overgrown

branches; blowing sand and gravel off the trail and cleaning intersections; replacing broken boards from tree damage on the boardwalk; replacing sign posts broken due to snow plowing and other damage; supervising jail trustee's as they pick up paper and debris along the highway side of the trail.

Eight to sixteen hours during the year to blow sand off the trail, clean intersections, pick up paper and remove fallen limbs and/or trees.

Four hours per month during the season (May through October) to inspect the boardwalk, re-fasten loose boards, trim back tree limbs and sweep gravel from the location where the tribal boat launch drive crosses the trail for a total of 24 hours per year.

The total annual maintenance time spent on the trail is approximately 84 to 112 hours per year, which equals to a range of 11 to 15 hours per mile of trail.

Material costs for the trail have been running \$200.00 per year for screws, lag bolts, and replacement boards for the boardwalk and posts for the signs damaged by plowed snow.

Experience has shown that labor and other costs for the Wheelway have and will continue to decline for the following reasons:

1. Most of the board warping and screwhead popping have faded away as the boardwalk ages.
2. The problems with trees being knocked over or uprooted by heavy winds have decreased over time. When an opening is first made in a wooded area with wet soils, the roots tend to be shallow and the trees are susceptible to being blown down. Overtime, the weaker trees get knocked down and the remaining trees tend to develop root systems that resist the high winds.
3. The Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians have indicated they will be putting funds into their budget to pave their driveway from US-31 to the beach area near the water's edge. This will eliminate the sand and gravel being washed down onto the trail every time it rains or when the people drive into and out of that launch site.
4. Much of the litter cleanup is due to debris, which I believe is thrown from vehicle traffic as opposed to from users of the trail. Litter from motor vehicles is an MDoT responsibility, not the County's responsibility.