

Boyne City to US 31 Non-motorized Trail Forum Summary of input received as of February 10, 2010¹

Question 1: What do you like most about the possibility of a Boyne City to US 31 non-motorized trail?

Why do you think that?

- Recreational opportunities for residents and visitors
 - health outdoor activity
 - bicycle, rollerblade, roller ski, foot and winter cross-country skiing
 - for whole family
 - new generations of travelers, kids learning to ride bikes
 - recreation close to home
 - opportunity for groups to use, i.e. Scouts
 - brings people together
 - enjoy Charlevoix County scenery
- Safety
 - past accident occurrences on roadways
 - prevention of non-motorized user/vehicle accidents
 - bikes on the road in its current condition is dangerous
 - traffic speeds will go up when BC/Charlevoix Road is rebuilt
- Promote economic development
 - attract tourists during slack seasons
 - tourism dollars
 - combination with Wheelway and local mountain bike trails creates destination for bicyclists from throughout the state
 - enhance events
 - bring business to cities and Horton Bay
 - outdoor image of area
 - showcase area
- More environmentally friendly method of transportation
 - reduced automobile use
- Connection to Wheelway
- Increased property values
- Fits with county land use plan
- Low cost for users
- Relief of traffic congestion in summer months
- Makes area nicer for young people

¹ Summary developed by Dean Solomon, MSU Extension, February 10, 2010, and reviewed by the Charlevoix County Recreation Committee. Approximately 145 individuals either participated in the December 10 forum or submitted their responses on a form or through the county web site. It is likely that some individuals both attended the forum and completed the survey.

- Increased use by organized activities
- Peace and quiet
 - no ORVs
- Can be done almost entirely with grant funding
- Links communities
- Nothing

Question 2: What concerns you the most about the possibility of a Boyne City to US 31 non-motorized trail? Why do you think that?

- Concerns about the process
 - that it may not be accepted by governmental agencies and landowners along the route
 - that a minority of people may block project
 - that it will be held up by property rights concerns
 - that the trail is not needed, there is no demand
 - lack of support by county board of commissioners
 - time required to complete project
 - Length of process
 - need for input by all parties
 - project may divide citizens so that compromise is not possible
 - need to look at other trails and learn from their successes and short comings
 - that eminent domain will be used to take property for trail
- Concerns about impacts on property (private and public land)
 - alterations to property
 - intrusive on property owners along route
 - infringing on private property rights
 - taking of property
 - loss of privacy
 - property owner liability
 - future marketability of property
 - reduce property values
 - cutting of trees along route
 - increased road noise due to tree removal
 - viewshed impacts
 - natural drainage impacts
 - proximity to residences
 - homes close to road
- Concerns about trail construction
 - that it may be built only along shoulder of road
 - need to repair BC/Charlevoix road
 - access points
 - destruction of green space/wildlife habitat/wetlands

- better routes available
 - via ferry road
- Concerns about trail maintenance
 - how maintenance will occur
 - long term commitment to maintenance
 - need for preventative maintenance
- Concerns about user behavior
 - litter/trash
 - use by snowmobiles in winter
 - 24 hour use
 - poor language by users
 - defecating on private property
 - no restroom facilities along route
 - trespassing
 - meeting spots on private property
 - noise
- Concerns about safety
 - crime
 - pedophiles and rapists
 - impacts on youth
 - protecting youth at youth camps along route
 - bike/car accidents
 - associated with wide shoulder option
 - if trail is not built
 - bicycles not stopping at stop signs
- Concerns about costs
 - overall cost of project
 - increased cost to build separated trail
 - use of tax dollars for project
 - other needs
 - tough economic times
 - not appropriate use of tax dollars
 - will not benefit low or moderate income taxpayers
 - trail maintenance costs
 - cost of potential litigation over easements
 - costs of waiting to build - future cost increases, availability of funding
- Concerns about economic benefits
 - trail benefits small number of people
 - all pay through taxes
 - limited economic benefit

Question 3: What questions do you have about the trail? What other information do you think needs to be gathered?

- Legal right of way questions
 - What are the legal facts concerning the appropriateness of placing a detached non-motorized trail within the existing road right-of-way? Need authoritative legal opinion.
 - What is the definition of a highway?
 - Where is the road relative to the right of way?
 - Does the trail have to be constructed exclusively in the road right of way?
 - Why were homes allowed to be constructed so close to the highway and are they in the right-of-way?
 - Does the county have the right to exercise eminent domain for this project?

- Construction questions
 - What are the available options for the trail?
 - If grants are not secured, who will pay for construction?
 - Will taxes increase to pay for trail construction and maintenance?
 - Why should the path be built along BC/Charlevoix Road and not another route? Are other routes being considered?
 - Where will the actual location of the trail be?
 - How can the trail be best designed to minimize the loss of property?
 - What road makes most sense for ease of use and safety?
 - Is the trail going to be widened shoulders or unattached or a combination of both?
 - Can one township be allowed to widen the shoulder and the adjacent township be denied that option?
 - What will be the roadbed material? Asphalt? Gravel?
 - What are the environmental impacts/costs of constructing the trail?
 - Can the trail be added to the shoulder after the road is built?
 - What will happen to the trail at the US 31 Intersection?
 - Is the old Boyne City Road going to be used in the path?
 - How will natural habitats be protected?
 - How many trees will be removed?
 - Will the trail include curbs?
 - Will there be parking areas and restrooms along the trail?
 - Will the trail be connected to a loop?
 - What are the safety measures in areas where the road and trail have to meet?
 - Can snowmobile trails be used for non-motorized travel in summer?
 - Why doesn't each city have separate bike paths – circular path around each city, then connect the cities on a main path?
 - Will there be camping along the trail?

- How will construction interfere with traffic flow?
- What is the projected usage?
- When will construction start?
- Who will provide/pay for bike racks or places for people to place their bikes?
- Given the average age and seasonal nature of our population, would a trail be used enough to justify its construction?
- Maintenance questions
 - What are the costs of ongoing maintenance?
 - What entity will be responsible for maintenance of the trail?
 - Who will pay for ongoing maintenance?
 - Will funds be set aside to address maintenance issues?
 - Will maintenance costs be part of a grant or part of our taxes?
 - How will trash disposal along the route be handled?
 - How will the trail be monitored for safety and illegal use by motorized vehicles?
 - Could the trail be converted to motorized travel in the future?
 - Will there be user fees?
 - Will there be parking fees?
 - How can private property be protected from vandalism from trail users?
 - Will there be maps of the trail?
- Process questions
 - How many people are opposed to a separate trail?
 - How much contact has been made with property owners along the proposed route?
 - What is the status of the grants that were submitted?
 - Why can't we get the trail built soon?
 - Who are the stakeholders?
 - Who received information?
 - Who determines the final route?
 - What is the role of special interest groups?
 - Why did the opportunity to use grant funds go to waste?
 - What research has been done to give tax breaks to property owners who give up land?
 - What research has been done that shows increased safety with a trail?
- Legal questions
 - What is landowner liability if accidents occur on the path or adjacent property?
 - Can property owners block the process?
 - Can private property owners sue the county for damages?
 - Can private property rights be taken without authorization?
 - Can property owner's decision to not have a bike path across their property be overridden?
 - Can grant funds be used to compensate landowners?
 - Can tax breaks be extended to property owners who give up land?

- Can speed limits on BC/Charlevoix road be lowered and enforced, with heavy trucks barred?

Additional information needed

- A public vote by residents of the county
- Poll county residents for meaningful information on acceptance of costs
- Ask property owners along the route to give permission for easement
- A review of assessed property values in areas where bike paths have been added... before and after.
- The exact location of the trail
- Legal rights of every property owner along the route
- Property owners need to be informed.
- Location of "real" right of way
- information about injuries, death or harassment resulting from riding along current road
- cost differences between wide shoulder and detached trail options

Question 4: Who isn't part of this discussion but needs to be?

- Individuals
 - property owners along the route
 - bicyclists who ride on Ferry Road between Advance and Ironton Ferry
 - other users - joggers, inline skaters, walkers, moms with strollers, cross country ski clubs, dog walkers
 - designers of other trails that are successful
 - experts from other communities that are successful
 - tourists
 - summer residents
 - poor and moderate income individuals
 - individuals capable/trained in grant writing for construction and maintenance
 - Hikers
 - People who are in support of family values and family activities
 - Children
 - People involved with the Harbor Springs Trail (Harbor Inn)
 - Area residents
 - lawyers
 - State Representative
- Groups/organizations
 - Local bike clubs
 - Rails-to-trails or other trail organizations
 - Snowmobile clubs
 - Groups representing people with handicaps who may use trail
 - Foundations

- Land conservancies
- State agencies
 - DNR
 - DEQ
 - MDOT
 - State park personnel
- Local/county government
 - Members of township boards
 - County road commission
 - County MTA chapter
 - Law enforcement
 - County planner
 - Medical emergency staff
- Other
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Convention and Visitors Bureaus
 - Backpacking stores
 - Pure Michigan Tourism
 - Downstate newspapers