



Oakland County Trails Advisory Council

Oakland County Parks and Recreation Administration Office
2800 Watkins Lake Road, Waterford, Michigan 48328

Minutes

July 28, 2010

The meeting was called to order by Kristen Myers, Chair, in the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission Room at 9:05 a.m.

PRESENT:

Andrew Mutch	City of Novi
Bruce Austin	City of Rochester for Clinton River Trail
Merrie Carlock	City of Southfield
Linda Hinkley	City of Wixom
Kathy Thurman	Brandon Township
Jenny Frederick	Highland Township
Mindy Milos-Dale	Oakland Township
Sharon Greene	Highland Equestrian Conservancy
Merle Richmond	Oakland Equestrian Coalition
Donna Folland	OC Parks and Recreation Commission
Stephanie Marchbanks	OC Parks and Recreation Commission
Jim Keglovitz	OC Planning and Economic Development Services
Kristen Wiltfang	OC Planning and Economic Development Services
Heather Muzzy	Orion Township Safety Path Committee
David Moutrie	Paint Creek Trail
Kristen Myers	Paint Creek Trail
Troy Farwell	Polly Ann Trail Management Council
Judit Wittbrodt	Road Commission for Oakland County
Mel Park	Visitor - Fort Custer Horse Friends

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Corrections of the March 24, 2010 minutes from:

- Judit Wittbrodt, who requested on page 4, 5th bullet point that “Michigan” be changed to Oakland County;
- Merle Richmond who requested on page 1, to change “Oakland Equestrian Conservancy” to Oakland Equestrian Coalition; and

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- Todd Scott requested to change on page 2, under West Bloomfield Trail, sentence to read “Todd Scott indicated he met with Dan Navarre (W. Blmfld. Twp.) and Michael Reuter (American Cycle and Fitness) regarding concerns with a lack of AASHTO-approved bike facilities (e.g. bike lanes not side paths.)
- Todd Scott requested to change on page 3, under Woodward Corridor Trail, sentence in first paragraph, to read “However, the rest of the corridor is proposed for a mix of side paths.”

Approval of the amended minutes was moved by Kristen Wiltfang and supported by Bruce Austin. The motion passed on voice vote.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

No additions were added.

TRAIL NETWORK UPDATE

Paint Creek Trail—(Kristen Myers)

Labor Day Bridge Walk is planned for Sept 6, 2010 starting at Rochester Municipal Park. The walk will be a 2 mile walk and 10 K run that usually draws about 250 people each year. They are hoping with good weather to get 300 people this year.

They just launched Friends of Paint Creek Trail with official 501 (c) 3 designation and had their first meeting in July. There may also be a show about the Paint Creek Trail on the Community Media Network channel (public access TV).

The Paint Creek Trailways Commission has agreed to support the printing of the Oak Routes Trail Maps.

Polly Ann Trail—(Troy Farwell)

Troy talked about their Rural Pearl of a Ride on July 24, which turned out satisfactory although the weather may have kept many people away. Their Earth Day 5K event was quite successful and included a ‘kids’ run’ with about 30 young people turning out for it. They hope to build on that with a bike ride next year.

A lot of time is being spent cleaning/clearing the trail. Oakland County’s WWAM (Weekend and Weekday Alternative for Misdemeanors) crews cleared much of area about a year ago, but it has grown back.

Ed Brakefield has been elected as new Chairperson, upon resignation of the former Chairperson, Matt Gibb.

The Leonard Mill is a historic building located on the east end of the Village adjacent to the trail. The lack of maintenance to the building is of great concern and is in need of repair. The Village of Leonard has submitted a DNRE Trust Fund Acquisition Grant to purchase the building with the hope of restoring the Mill and one day moving the Polly Ann Trail Offices in.

Troy reported that construction of trail improvements in the Village of Leonard, by the MDNRE, is on hold at the moment due to State funding issues. The improvements are part of an equestrian trail demonstration project funded by the MDNRE.

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Clinton River Trail—(Brian Marzolf)

Bruce Austin of Rochester (standing in for Brian Marzolf of Auburn Hills) reported that at the last Clinton River Trail Alliance Meeting, Pontiac informed them that last hurdle had been resolved concerning the bridge over Telegraph. They have selected contractors and the project is proceeding.

Friends of CRT continue working a toward consistent “look and feel” design for trail which is being compiled under contract with a Landscape Architects and Planners, Inc., out of Lansing, and with assistance from Michigan State University’s Community Design Initiative. Their final recommendations will be made public on September 30th.

Friends of CRT are having their annual Fall Classic Ride on September 18th, beginning & ending in Auburn Hills for lunch.

The City of Rochester is completing construction in the next few weeks for a boat take-out point (launch) on the Clinton River. It is not yet ADA Accessible. The location is off of Diversion Street, under Main Street.

West Bloomfield Trail—(Dave Burley)

Report not available from Dave Burley.

Headwaters Trail—(Dot LaLone)

Report not available from Dot LaLone.

I-275 Metro Trail—(Jeff Edwards)

Report not available from Jeff Edwards.

Woodward Corridor Trail—(Todd Scott)

Report not available from Todd Scott.

Lakes Community Trail—(Deanna Magee)

Linda Hinkley reported for Lakes Community Trail that they received a \$500 Brooksie Way Mini-Grant to hold their Bike and Hike family event on July 24. The weather was not good with a turnout of only 10 people. They will try their next 1.5 mile “Bike and Hike” starting at Wixom Habitat Park ending at Lyon Oaks County Park.

WWAM services have been utilized for trail clean up.

They are seeing a lot of bikers using trail going to and from their summer ‘concert series’ event in the City of Wixom.

The MDNRE grant application for acquisition of the Michigan Airline Trail C.O.E. railroad section was submitted; application results/awards will announced in December.

MDOT Transportation Enhancement grant funds are being applied for in 2011.

Huron Valley Trail—(Chris Doozan)

Stephanie Marchbanks had an update from Chris Doozan. Next year’s closure of the HVT at I-96 has had controversy. MDOT asked Western Oakland Trailway Management Council if an alternate route should be posted when construction of the bridge over the trail is ongoing. The alternate route would be (coming from north) to go west on Pontiac Trail and south on Milford Road, where it would link up with the east-west segment of the trail. The Trailway Management Council suggested that it should

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not be posted as it may be too hazardous, especially for riders inexperienced with bicycling on the road. Others think differently. Chris Doozan believes that it is ultimately MDOT's decision to make.

Other Trail Information Updates:

Orion Twp: Heather Muzzy reported for Orion Township Safety Paths Committee. They are looking for input for constructing a bridge on the historic rail trail, at Indian Lake Road and Lapeer Road, where it meets Oxford's portion of trail at the bridge. This at the dividing line between the two townships. Railing is needed for where there are sharp plummets in terrain away from the trail and on the bridge. They want modern day build but a historic look and are not sure where to find what they need/want. Sue Julian was recommended as contact, based on her recent experience with metal railings installed on a bridge in the Headwater Trails area. It was noted that material other than wood is suggested so that it not burned by vandals. Kristen Wiltfang also offered design assistance from OC PEDS.

Highland Equestrian Conservancy – Sharon Greene reported that Oakland County Parks and Recreation has closed on the purchase of a strip of property (4 acre linear parcel) from the Highland Equestrian Conservancy. The parcel is located in Rose Township, adjacent to Highland Oaks. This property is part of the vision to create a multipurpose trail connecting Rose Oaks and Highland Oaks.

Novi - Andrew Mutch reported that the new pathway, on the west side of M-5, between 13 and 14 Mile Rd. is pretty much completed and people are already riding it. MDOT wants to eventually extend this 10' wide asphalt path up to the old railroad crossing in Commerce Twp., and, hopefully, south to I-275 Metro Trail.

The Novi City Council has approved a contract with Norm Cox of the Greenway Collaborative, Inc., to create a Non-Motorized Transportation Management Plan using Federal Stimulus funds. The City has also contracted with Giffels-Webster Engineers, Inc. to create a separate Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Transition Plan. Andrew hopes for some finished plans by the end of the year.

Oakland County Parks - Stephanie Marchbanks reported that OCPR has closed on acquisition of 196 acres as part of Independence Oaks. The property, known as Upper Bushman (named after the lake on the property), contains the headwaters of the Clinton River. The land will be fenced and parking will be created by fall 2010. OCPR also hopes to have some public access to the property via guided programs this fall. A grand opening is planned for spring 2011.

PRESENTATION: Planning for Road and Trail Crossings – Kristen Wiltfang, OCPEDS

The Planning Dept. was approached by the Road Commission for Oakland County last fall about trails that were built coming right up to and stopping at the roadway right-of-way in hopes to work with them & MDOT to start planning for improvements. It is difficult and costly for the Road Commission to improve intersections between trails and roads. She pointed out how important it is to plan for trail and road intersections, especially at heavily traveled roadways. Many intersections do not have a traffic light or the light is timed too short for equestrians/pedestrians to cross.

Kristen showed several examples for the need to improve pedestrian crossings including a picture of a man crossing mid-block, not at traffic light, and also in a construction zone. The picture was taken on city road, not a county road.

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While planning for intersections, we must look at different user types such as wheelchairs, cross country skiers, bikes, equestrians, and strollers. We must also plan for site lines; for example, someone on horseback may see from 8 feet in the air as opposed to a child's site line. This also impacts the ability to reach buttons to activate crossing signals. One of the pictures shown was of 2 sets of pedestrian push button signals for a traffic light: one for people & one for people on horses.

Roundabouts are becoming popular and must be taken into account also.

Suggested trail design near intersections include split rail fence and/or different surface treatments to help alert users that something different is going on at the upcoming intersection.

There are guidelines already created that can be used as references including AASHTO, MUTCD, FHA's Equestrian Design Guidebook, as well as the OTAC Master Plan. Kristen stressed to think through alternatives and options to best solve any problems now as well as in the future. Start planning now to incorporate your designs into grant applications in the future.

It was brought to group's attention that with current ADA guidelines, some signals had to be removed because they were not designed to be compliant.

Proposed planning tools include:

- Checklist for trail development at road crossings
- Maps
- GIS information
- Crash statistics
- Document from established credentials such as the Master Plan (or in some cases, may need to amend the Master Plan first).

Right now it is problematic to collect GIS information on pedestrian signals and crossings - there is not a database of where all push button signals for traffic lights are located. Kristen is hoping to get more information this fall.

Road agencies aren't always knowledgeable that trails are coming to and/or through their roads. Additional work will be done to continue lines of communication between agencies.

Kristen pointed out that we need to find more statistics about pedestrian/traffic crashes to assist in our planning for the future. SEMGOG has put together crash statistics at various intersections data includes 2005 – 2009. Police reports included different conditions, whether pedestrian or vehicle, etc.

The Oakland County Planning Dept met with equestrians in the winter 2010 to find out where the difficult road crossings are, where they currently ride, where they want to ride, etc. Oakland County has the highest per capita number of horses in the State of Michigan!

Kristen has begun putting together information in the format to match the Oakland County Trails Master Plan so that better preparation can be done especially when applying for grants. Work with local communities, local groups, Road Commission for Oakland County, and MDOT will continue. Information must be included in a Master Plan to be funded by grants.

It was noted that many schools have cut their transportation funding expecting children to find their own ways to school. In some cases, there are few or no pathways for children to take to walk to schools, especially in the winter, which results in more private vehicles transporting the children. In many instances, this has created new road congestion and pedestrian safety issues in areas around schools.

Commuting to work, recreating, walking to school – all need to be considered in our plans.

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PRESENTATION: TIGER II Grant Application for Oakland Township Parks and Rec.

Mindy Milos-Dale, Parks and Trails Planner for Oakland Township, is applying for a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant. Mindy distributed an 11"x17" map, 2 letters, an aerial map, and a map from the Oakland County Trails Master Plan. At the end of April, the Federal Government announced \$600,000,000 to go to capital transportation improvements. One quarter of that amount is being devoted to rural areas. Approximately two thirds of Oakland Township is designated as a rural area. The Federal government is looking at livability, sustainability and incorporating bicycle and pedestrian modes of transportation into their projects. They will be trying to make sure that every mode of transportation is considered.

Several groups were discouraged by first the TIGER Grant but they have been diligently working for this Tiger II Grant.

The City of Novi has developed a wonderful criteria system that helps them select and prioritize their pathways. Oakland Township Parks used this system to help them do the same.

The Township decided they will apply for segment P4-02, an approximate ¾ mile segment on the west side of Adams Rd., between Gunn Road & Paint Creek Trail. It is a much desired area in their community with many subdivisions but without any non-motorized transportation infrastructure to get to the nearby Paint Creek Trail, a shopping plaza, a school, or to the Rochester Hills area.

The safety path along Waldon Road is done (Orion Twp.). The Bald Mountain Recreation Area has a path that goes to Gunn & Kern Road so if they complete the piece along Adams Road it will be a complete connection to the Polly Ann Trail. It is a challenging and costly project but they feel it is necessary to finish since many people already use the sides of the road.

Request for approval of a letter of support from OTAC for Oakland Twp. was motioned by Bruce Austin and seconded by Kristen Wiltfang. The motion passed on voice vote. Stephanie Marchbanks read comments by Todd Scott, indicating his reasons for not supporting the request because this project does not meet AASHTO design guidelines for bicycles. According to Todd's written comments, he feels "the correct AASHTO bicycle facility would be either wide paved shoulder or bike lanes, especially given the low levels of traffic on Adams." He also indicated that he reviewed the township's pedestrian and bicycle crash reports from 2004 to 2009, and found "zero on this stretch of road." Mindy Milos-Dale indicated that the crash data she has from SEMCOG indicates differently, and would support her reasoning for her grant application.

OTHER BUSINESS

Trail Summit – Stephanie Marchbanks announced that the Trail Summit is planned for October 7th at Addison Oaks. The theme is "Linking Destinations, Defining Experiences." The "Save the Date" email was distributed on July 22. Keynote speakers from Addison Twp, Oakland Twp, and the Village of Leonard will discuss historic preservation and how it relates to trails and parks. Sessions will include health & wellness benefits of water and equestrian programs, creative funding, CRT look and feel project, and urban trail development. Tours will be in the afternoon and will include Oakland Twp, Addison Twp, and Addison Oaks' trails.

Kristen Wiltfang, Jim Keglovitz (OC PEDS), Mindy Milos-Dale, Donna Folland, and Stephanie Marchbanks are on the Trail Summit Planning Committee.

Oak Routes Maps - support for printing of the maps is being solicited. \$2900 currently has been committed. Melissa Prowse with OCP is assisting in fundraising. Please let Stephanie know if you or your group is interested in being a sponsor. Request for commitment no later than mid-August 2010.

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There are three levels of support: Trailblazer = \$1000 and up; Pathfinder \$500 – \$1000; Trekker \$100-\$499.

A question was asked on how to become designated as an “Oak Route”. Milford DDA is a potential sponsor and would like to have the Milford Trail be included on map. They do not have a designated trail group; the trail is managed individually by HCMA, Milford Twp. and the Village of Milford. All members of OTAC are currently represented on the back panels of the Oak Routes Map. General consensus of the group was to indicate all major trails, especially connectors, on the map.

All areas represented on the Oak Route Maps should review their area to ensure accuracy with all updates and/or corrections to Kristen as soon as possible.

Kristen suggested that our definitions of the trails/pathways on the map reflect AASHTO definitions. General consensus of the group was to mirror AASHTO and to replace “safety paths” with “side paths”.

OCPR Website – <http://www.destinationoakland.com/parksandtrails/trailsoakroutes> has been updated by Stephanie Marchbanks. OTAC bylaws, meeting dates, meeting agendas as well as member contact info. are now available. Let Stephanie know if you have calendar events that can be added to the website – for hiking/running, biking, paddling, horseback riding, and volunteer work days.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Sharon Greene, member of Citizens for Oakland County Parks, announced a reminder to vote “yes” for the upcoming OCPR millage renewal on August 3.
- Kathy Thurman, Brandon Twp. Supervisor, indicated they are interested in trails but have no funding. They are looking for information to get organized and get people involved. They would like to work to get a path along M15 from Davison to Goodrich and eventually to Clarkston. It was noted that the OTAC Master Plan is a good start with great information. Stephanie to provide Kathy with a copy.

The meeting adjourned at 10:43 a.m., motioned by Kristen Wiltfang and supported by Troy Farwell.

Minutes taken by Nancy vonKoehnen, Administrative Services, Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission.