

ACTION PROGRAM

The Action Program includes three elements which, taken together, are essential to achieving the goals and objectives developed by the HARBOR Area Community and detailed in Chapter 5. The elements of the Action Program include:

1. **Plan & Program Proposals:** The plan and program proposals are both the physical plan elements (e.g., new trails) and the programmatic activities (e.g., a trail advisory committee) proposed to meet the goals developed by the community. It is anticipated that other location-specific physical plan proposals will develop in the future. The program proposals have been formulated to assist with implementation of the stated Goals and Objectives **and** to meet the needs of an evolving Recreation, Trails & Open Space Plan.
2. **Action Steps:** The action steps are those measures that need to be undertaken to begin implementation.
3. **Funding Program:** Based on the Plan & Program Proposals and the proposed Action Steps, a five year funding program will outline a proposed budget for implementation (currently not included in this plan).

PLAN & PROGRAM PROPOSALS

The Plan and Program Proposals are organized according to the HARBOR Area Community Goals & Objectives outlined in Chapter 5. The core working group and public input has resulted in significant agreement on the plan and program proposals related to Goal 1. Goals 2 and 3 have some specific recommendations, but additional Working Committee discussions should proceed prior to making additional implementation decisions. The Action Steps, outlined in the second section of this chapter, relate to all three goals combined.

Goal 1: Build and maintain an interconnected system of non-motorized trails for the purpose of recreation and transportation.

Trail Easement Preservation Program: Pursue designation of easements on existing parcels adjacent to the proposed trail locations. This includes a proactive process in advance of development, when possible, or concurrently with the development plan review process at local jurisdictions.

Essential elements:

- establishing a simple trail easement document for uniform use by the local community,
- staff assistance to meet with property owners, coordinate with public staff/consultants in the plan review process and prepare/execute easement documents, and
- Trail Advisory Committee involvement in reviewing proposals and developing priorities.

Main Route Non-Motorized Transportation System: Pursue a system of bike transportation routes, either bike lanes or separate trails, to serve main population corridors. In addition to the Trail Easement Preservation Program activities, this includes development proposals in cooperation with property owner, logging and utility companies, local jurisdictions, State of Michigan Departments, Emmet County Commission and Emmet County Road Commission to coordinate other improvement projects with trail improvement projects. See Maps 9-11 for suggested new trails included as part of a community-wide network of trails along main routes.

Essential elements:

- developing relationship with Emmet County Commission (or Transportation Committee of) and Emmet County Road Commission,
- staff assistance to develop, coordinate and pursue project proposals and funding, including maintenance,
- staff or consultant design review and recommendation of new proposals,
- Trail Advisory Committee involvement in reviewing proposals and developing priorities,
- Establish policies for trailhead development, locations and facilities and locate concurrently with new trails development

Priority new trail routes include, but are not limited to:

- An east-west trail along Robinson Road in Readmond Township linking the waterfront parks, conservancy properties and the North Country Trail
- An east-west trail along Stutsmanville Road in Friendship Township linking Pleasantview Road trail with proposed future waterfront access in/or near Friendship Township
- An east-west trail along Middle Road between State Road and M-119
- An east-west trail along Quick Road between State Road and Pleasantview
- A north-south trail along State Road
- A north-south trail along Pleasantview Road starting at the current terminus of the Little Traverse Wheelway and continuing to Stutsmansville Road
- A scenic trail continuing along the Lake Michigan, when possible, linking the City of Harbor Springs with Cross Village along the waterfront. While routes for this trail are not yet determined, it remains an overarching vision for the trail network.

Safe Routes to Schools Program: The *Safe Routes to Schools Program* is a national program developed, funded and field tested in California by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The program is comprehensive in that it integrates health, fitness, traffic relief, environmental awareness, and safety under one program. A successful Safe Routes to School Program in the HARBOR Area Community would require additional trail or walkway development, route maintenance and plowing and safety/health activities. See Map 9 for the primary program area. A Safe Routes to School Teacher/Parent Committee with staff assistance would be charged with executing this program. More information about the Safe Routes to Schools Program can be found on the program website: www.saferoutestoschools.org.

Additional Trail or Walkway Development: Many parents indicated that they would be more likely to have their children walk or bike to school if a passable system of safe routes were available. This should be a system of paved or compacted material routes (walkways and trails) within approximately one mile of the public school facilities for safe year-round travel by children.

Primary new trail routes include, but are not limited to:

- Route between Harbor Springs Elementary School and the Harbor Soccer fields
- Route along Cemetery Road that runs from Hughston to Lake or Hughston to the Southern Cemetery boundary and then east to Schools.

Trail Maintenance and Plowing: Currently, the City of Harbor Springs maintains and plows some sidewalks within the City of Harbor Springs. Working collectively, the community should extend this system into adjacent jurisdictions with either sidewalks or trail connections to all primary residential areas within walking distance of the schools. Trail development funds should be pursued through the federal funds designated for Safe Routes to School. Winter plowing should be funded in cooperation with City of Harbor Springs snow plowing program.

Safety and Health: Public input concerning trails often stressed the health and fitness value of utilizing trail, especially for children. In cooperation with the Harbor Springs Public Schools and the Harbor Springs Police Department, the Safe Routes to Schools Program should include education and encouragement in the areas of safety and health.

Safety and Health Program components include, but are not limited to:

- Encouragement: Events, contests and promotional materials to encourage children and parents to walk and bike.
- Education: Lessons to teach children the skills necessary to navigate safely to school and to persuade them to be active participants in the program.
- Enforcement: Partner with parents and law enforcement to monitor routes to school.

Goal 2: Promote safe and convenient access to high quality public waterfront, forests, view sites and open fields for all residents of the service area. Continue to evaluate, identify and pursue important key parcels and protect existing parcels.

The broader area currently has a significant amount of open space however only a very small percentage of it is permanently protected. Interior open space is currently abundant, but incrementally becoming disjointed by development. Preservation activities should focus on potential corridors and large parcels to maintain the integrity of the existing open space. At the same time, waterfront open space is rapidly disappearing. Numerous public surveys have identified waterfront access as a high priority for residents of the study area. Open Space Acquisition/Preservation should focus on the areas of green connecting corridors, large priority parcels, view sites and waterfront.

Open Space Acquisition/Preservation Program: The Recreation Working Committee that met over the last year focused on workable solutions to joint implementation (funding, maintenance) of this Recreation, Trails and Open Space Plan. The open space element of this plan is easily the most costly aspect. To develop an agreeable approach to implementation, an Open Space Working Committee should be established to evaluate the open space preservation opportunities and create a line of communication between local jurisdictions, Little Traverse Conservancy and the proposed HARBOR Area Recreation, Trails and Open Space Authority. The Open Space Working Committee would be charged with

- finalizing maps of corridors, connecting areas and views
- developing a system of evaluating preservation opportunities,
- talking with property owners throughout the area, and
- making recommendations to the funding organization.

The greatest potential for funding open space exists when multiple sources work jointly toward a preservation project. This type of joint local effort, when combined with locally generated funds (public or private), has the best opportunity to capitalize on state Trust Fund and PDR dollars. The committee should begin to identify priorities to recommend for local funding. The Little Traverse Conservancy has historically been very proactive in providing assistance once local support and local funds have been identified as match. Priority areas (discussed in greater detail below) include larger stretches of waterfront access, greenway corridors, view sites/corridors and large connecting parcels.

Waterfront Access: Waterfront access is essential to the area. Some existing waterfront access points are discussed here because of the relevance to the broader area. Others should be jointly addressed because of the need for long term solutions and cost/complexity of the issues.

- *City of Harbor Springs:* The core area of the City of Harbor Springs is almost entirely publicly accessible either through public ownership by the City or through public access to private parcels. This waterfront access and view area is essential to the broader community and must be preserved. The public access parcels primarily serve residents of the City of Harbor Springs, West Traverse Township and Little Traverse Township. Future significant population growth will continue to be realized in Little Traverse Township and West Traverse Township. Those areas have broad stretches of waterfront that are under property association ownership, but not accessible to the general population. Currently, a financial agreement exists and should be updated to continue to accommodate enhancement and use of the City waterfront by neighboring townships. The private “working waterfront” parcels are also essential to the broader community. These are primarily boating related. Close working relationships with property owners and preservation of the “working” nature of these private parcels should remain a priority.

- *Additional Waterfront Access:* The trend of property association ownership and other private ownership of key waterfront parcels is evident in Little Traverse and West Traverse Townships. More recently, it has started to occur in Friendship Township (as evidenced by the Surfwood Development). Additionally, other than the shared public waterfront at Middle Village Park (located in Readmond Township), there are currently no public waterfront properties in Friendship Township. From the Thorn Swift Nature Preserve in West Traverse Township it is approximately 8 miles to Middle Village Park. This distance along the shoreline represents the largest “gap” in the distribution of waterfront in the HARBOR Area Community (See Map 13). Another substantial gap exists between Readmond Township Park and Cross Village Township Park. Filling these gaps will help relieve future, inevitable, pressure on the core Harbor Springs area waterfront. Additionally, public waterfront access located at the terminus of an east/west trail could serve Pleasantview Township and further relieve the pressure on the Harbor Springs waterfront.
- *Cross Village Township Access:* The Cross Village Township waterfront access site has long been in dispute over appropriate implementation of development / preservation proposals. The site has important opportunities for development and preservation, yet agreement has not yet been reached to accommodate both on this important site.

Greenway Corridors: Mapping of potential greenway corridors should be completed for use in discussions with property owners. This might include streams, corridors along property lines of large parcels, and roadway corridors (including the Tunnel of Trees and other relatively undeveloped roadways). Connecting corridors should be preserved primarily through private open space designated within development plans or development rights easements. These corridors should be high priority to maintain the integrity of the existing open space network.

Views Sites/Corridors: The area has several key view areas. Parcels that lie in direct line of the view points should be preserved through private open space designation. Some public access to view sites might be appropriate.

Large Parcels: Large remaining parcels that have key connecting opportunities with existing broad open space areas should be preserved through open space designations or development right easements.

Goal 3: Consider establishing an umbrella organization, system or instrument to assist with management/administration/maintenance for the benefit of the broader community and to guide future development/acquisition so that facilities are located within close proximity to the population served.

Umbrella Coordination System: The recreation working group that met over the last year focused on workable solutions to joint implementation of this Recreation, Trails and Open Space Plan. One solution discussed and often mentioned during public meetings

was the idea of an umbrella organization to coordinate plan implementation. A workable umbrella system would need to be simple, yet flexible enough to provide support to a variety of local groups while allowing them to maintain their autonomy.

Properly structured and implemented, an umbrella system could address many of the weaknesses identified during public meetings as part of this planning process. It could:

1. provide the means for identifying community wide recreation needs and providing coordination of the activities designed to meet those needs
2. provide a common marketing and communications strategy for addressing Recreation, Trails and Open Space in the HARBOR Area Community.
3. provide a means to jointly address the funding and location of facilities that serve the broader community. A properly implemented umbrella system has the opportunity to more efficiently and effectively secure long term access to, provide maintenance for and potentially upgrade facilities that are jointly used by the broader community. Facilities primarily serving the broader community include, but are not limited to:
 - Future Trails
 - Important Trail Head Facilities (access to restrooms, drinking fountain, etc.)
 - Kiwanis Park/Sk8 Park: for youth access to appropriate supervised activities outside of school.
 - City Ball Diamonds: for coordination/maintenance of facilities/activities and year round access as a trail head facilities.
 - Blackbird Tennis Courts: for coordination/maintenance of facilities and activities
 - Hoover Field: for coordination/maintenance of facilities and activities
 - Football Field: for coordination/maintenance of facilities and activities
 - Soccer Field: for maintenance and long term use of site.
 - Swimming Pool: to secure long term use.

ACTION STEPS

ACTION: For the purpose of funding and executing the Plan Proposals and Programs, local jurisdictions should consider forming the HARBOR Area Recreation, Trails & Open Space Authority under Act 321 of 2000, the Recreation Authorities Act.

Initially, and in keeping with public priorities, this organization should be incorporated to very specifically implement those Plan and Program Proposals that correspond with Goal 1 (trail plans and proposals), while remaining flexible enough to address Goals 2 and 3 in the future.

Geographic Area: The act says that, “two or more municipalities” (defined as a city, county, village or township) or “districts” (defined as a portion of a municipality having boundaries coterminous with those of a precinct used of general elections) can organize

by resolution to form a recreation authority. This can include the City of Harbor Springs and Little Traverse, West Traverse, Pleasantview, Friendship, Readmond and Cross Village Townships or any portion coterminous with the Harbor Springs Public Schools.

Focus Area: According to the statute, “the purpose for which the authority is established shall be the acquisition, construction, operation, maintenance, or improvement of one or more of the following,” including “public park,” defined as “an area of land or water, or both, dedicated to one or more of the following uses” including “recreational purposes,” “open or scenic space” and “environmental, conservation, nature, or wildlife areas.” Specific to the HARBOR Area Community, this could include those areas that are the focus of this plan:

1. development and maintenance of trails that cross through multiple jurisdictions, are located along multiple private parcels or public roadways and serve transportation and recreation purposes;
2. acquisition and development of public open space, including waterfront, wooded areas, environmentally sensitive areas or open fields as well as the preservation of private open space that is essential to the broader system of open space; and
3. coordinate and assist with the maintenance, improvement and staffing of existing facilities that serve the broader community

However, as stated above, the organization would initially be formed to address Trails.

Funding: The newly formed HARBOR Area Recreation, Trails and Open Space Authority will be charged with developing a funding program. The law states that the authority may:

- “Apply for and accept grants or contributions from:”
 - ✓ “individuals”
 - ✓ “the federal government or any of its agencies,”
 - ✓ “this state,”
 - ✓ “a municipality,” or
 - ✓ “other public or private agencies”
- “Assess and collect fees for services”
- “Receive revenue” from “state or participating municipality,” or
- Receive funds from a “tax upon the approval of a majority of the electors in each of the participating municipalities of the authority.”

ACTION: Develop Advisory Committee System to review, prioritize, and make recommendation on the Plan Proposals and Programs. This should include, but is not limited to:

- Trail Advisory Committee
- Safe Routes to Schools Teacher/Parent Committee
- Open Space Working Committee
- Umbrella System Working Committee

- Joint Facility Advisory Committee (for the purpose of recommending improvement, maintenance, or new location of facilities that serve the broader community).

ACTION: Pursue Funding

As expressed at several junctures during this planning process, citizens and public officials agree that cooperative funding initiatives are needed to support the Plan Proposals and Programs and to execute the Multi-jurisdictional Focus. The following list provides a brief description of funding sources that would be available:

Donations

Businesses, corporations, private clubs, community organizations and individuals may contribute to recreation and other improvement programs to benefit the communities in which they are located. Private sector contributions may be in the form of monetary contributions, the donation of land, the provision of volunteer services, or the contribution of equipment and/or facilities.

General Fund

As demonstrated by some ongoing agreements between townships and the City of Harbor Springs, some funding of these activities can be provided by general fund appropriations from each of the participating jurisdictions.

Millage

A HARBOR Area Community property tax millage may be used to finance recreation, trail and open space development, operation and maintenance. The Recreational Authority Act 321 of 2000 authorizes a Recreational Authority to levy a tax of not more than 1 mill for a period of not more than 20 years on all of the taxable property within the territory of the authority upon the approval of a majority of the electors in each of the participating municipalities of the authority. The tables below detail the potential revenue raised by a tax and the costs to a homeowner.

Tax Revenue Raised by different millage amounts

| Table 9. Potential Tax Revenue - 2005 data | | | |
|---|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Jurisdiction | Taxable Value | Millage | |
| | | .25 mills | .50 mills |
| City of Harbor Springs | \$ 187,663,406 | 46,916 | 93,832 |
| Cross Village Township | \$ 44,990,864 | 11,248 | 22,495 |
| Friendship Township | \$ 85,399,738 | 21,350 | 42,700 |
| Little Traverse Township | \$ 226,034,440 | 56,509 | 113,017 |
| Pleasantview Township | \$ 116,666,570 | 29,167 | 58,333 |
| Readmond Township | \$ 64,499,575 | 16,125 | 32,250 |
| West Traverse Township | \$ 272,004,503 | 68,001 | 136,002 |
| Totals | | 249,315 | 498,630 |

Costs to property owner for different millage amounts

| Table 10. Annual Cost to Property Owner - 2005 data | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|------------|-------------|----------|
| Taxable Value | Millage Amount | | | |
| | 0.25 | 0.5 | 0.75 | 1 |
| 100,000 | 25 | 50 | 75 | 100 |
| 300,000 | 75 | 150 | 225 | 300 |

Lease and Fee-For-Service Arrangements

The HARBOR Area Community may negotiate a lease for the use of parkland facilities by groups and organizations. A common method is to initiate lease agreements with local youth/parent sports organizations for use of parkland facilities. Concessions at these facilities may also generate small amounts of funding. Another method may be to lease underutilized park land for other uses such as cell towers.

Bonds

The HARBOR Area Community could borrow funds to finance the development of trails and open space. General Obligation bonds can be issued for specific community projects but require repayment with interest by the issuing Authority. Repayment usually requires some form of tax such as a millage. A public vote of approval is required before issuing a General Obligation Bond. Revenue Bonds can also be issued to raise funds for construction of public projects. However, these bonds are tied to a revenue source created by the project such as concessions, lease agreements, and fees.

Private and Community Foundations

A foundation is a special form of non-profit corporation established as a federally approved mechanism through which land, cash and securities may be accumulated and “gifted” for specified non-profit activities. Therefore, foundation support could help with improving parks and recreation services.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grants

The Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) provides funding assistance for state and local outdoor recreation needs, including land acquisition and development of recreation facilities and trails. This assistance is directed at creating and improving outdoor recreational opportunities and providing protection to valuable natural resources. Grants amounts range from \$15,000 to \$500,000, with a required minimum local match of 25%.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provide grants to local units of government to acquire and develop land for outdoor recreation. At least 50 percent match on either acquisition or development projects is required from local government applicants. The DNR makes recommendations to the National Park Service (NPS) which grants final approval.

According to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans*, a

Regional Recreation Authority or Trailways Commission is eligible for MNRTF and LWCF funding upon the approval of a recreation plan by the DNR Grants Section.

In addition, the DNR provides several grant opportunities for outdoor and recreation subjects such as wildlife, fisheries, boating, forestry, trails, and law enforcement.

Michigan Trail-way Fund

In 1993, the State of Michigan enacted “trailways” legislation calling for a statewide system of smooth-surfaced trails passing through Michigan natural areas and communities. The legislation allows communities to formally designate existing trails as a “Michigan Trailway” through the DNR Natural Resources Commission. Trails under development can be considered for trailway designation and receive financial assistance from the Michigan Trailways Fund, if a master plan or other documentation that provides a basis for evaluation is presented for review.

Transportation Enhancement Act

In 1992, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) established the *Transportation Enhancement Program* to improve the quality of life for Michigan citizens by providing funding and other assistance, creating and responding to opportunities to enhance Michigan’s transportation system. The program was the result of the *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991*. In 1998, the program was reauthorized in the *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)*. The program was reauthorized again in 2005 with the passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)

Under past programs, activities eligible for funding included the provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles including new or reconstructed sidewalks, walkways, wide paved shoulders and off-road trails, acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites, landscaping and other scenic beautification improvements including trails and waterfronts, and the preservation of abandoned railway corridors to acquire railroad rights-of-way, construct multi-use trails, and develop rail-with-trail projects. Federal law requires the applicant to provide a minimum match of 20% of the project cost.

Eligible agencies include the MDOT, county road commissions, cities and villages, Native American Tribes, federal agencies, other state departments, metropolitan planning organizations and transit agencies. MDOT encourages organizations and agencies that are not eligible to apply for *Transportation Enhancement* funding to collaborate with an appropriate eligible applicant agency as partners in planning financing, developing, and implementing transportation enhancement projects.