

NOTE: This letter was emailed to all members of Saugatuck City Council on April 2, 2017

Dear City Council,

I attended your meeting on March 27 and, because I am uncomfortable speaking at a podium, decided to send an email. I understand your focus on the opinions of your constituency, but, due to our unique and closely tied surrounding area, would like you to understand how your leadership and decisions effect more than your registered voters. Many Saugatuck homeowners and business owners have their permanent residence outside city limits. Residents of Saugatuck Township, Douglas, Fennville and Glenn support Saugatuck year round. Their pride, contributions and concerns for Saugatuck are just as important to the vitality of the city as those who live within the city limits.

I live year round in Glenn yet also consider Saugatuck as my community. I am a member of the Saugatuck-Douglas Garden Club, co-chair of Community Pride and volunteer at the middle school. My husband and I actively and financially support the SCA, Chamber Music Festival, shops and restaurants. Most of my Christmas shopping and personal shopping is done in Saugatuck due to the unique offerings.

I care about improving recreational opportunities and safety for residents and visitors; not just in Saugatuck, but all along the 20-mile route of the Blue Star Trail. Your support for the most recent conceptual proposal from the Friends of the Blue Star Trail for Saugatuck's 982 feet, is critical to the Friends' ability to fund the rest of the trail as connectivity is a priority with the government sources they depend on.

This non motorized trail appeals to me as much more than a bike trail, because I also love to walk, and we have no sidewalks in Glenn. I am forced to walk back and forth on side streets because the Blue Star Highway is too dangerous. I am a recreational bike rider (not very fast) and was terrified the few times I road on Blue Star to get from one side street to the next. The trail would allow me to expand the distance and destinations I can ride and walk. I love the idea of riding my bike all the way to Saugatuck to visit a friend or meet for lunch. Our son ran cross country when he was in high school and would be pleased to see our exceptional Saugatuck High School team have a safe route to their favorite practice locations. He trains for marathons and would utilize the trail for his daily running. I imagine other runners and power walkers along the trail route would appreciate a safe trail on which to train and exercise.

I am happy the Friends' conceptual proposal includes a way to avoid disturbing the iconic Saugatuck sign and understand there are still safety concerns about the trail crossing Lake Street in Saugatuck. I am confident that the final engineering plan will address all of the safety concerns including the Lake St. intersection once you support the concept and the grant application goes through. The future steps in this process (official studies and an engineered design in cooperation with MDOT) will address this. The Friend's of the Blue Star Trail understand and share your concerns. I truly don't think MDOT would allow an unsafe trail to be built. Also, it is my understanding, you will have input every step of the way.

Statements were made by some council members at the last meeting indicating that none of you are against trails and you are not trying to stop the 20-mile trail that will connect and benefit communities from South Haven through Saugatuck. Please “walk the talk” and write a letter of support for the most recent conceptual plan of the railway when you meet for your work session this Wednesday, April 5. Your letter of support will be used only for grant applications going forward and is not a commitment to build. You will be demonstrating support for the interests of your entire community. You have nothing to lose.

Sincerely,

Cathy Carmichael
Glenn, Michigan