

Letter To The Editor

Observer - 4/7/17

Community Should Support Blue Star Trail

Dear Editor,

I'm writing specifically to set the record straight regarding comments made recently in both of our local newspapers and at the March 13 meeting of the Saugatuck City Council, regarding construction of the Blue Star Trail.

1. *Construction of the Blue Star Trail is costing local taxpayers \$2 million. **NOT TRUE.*** Funding for the Blue Star Trail is coming from a combination of federal dollars, called CMAQ grants and earmarked for this type of project, combined with private matching funds from local residents and businesses.
In terms of the legacy costs of maintaining the trail, the non-profit "Friends Of The Blue Star Trail" has a demonstrated track record in raising thousands of dollars through events it sponsors throughout the year. There is no reason to believe that this source of funding for maintenance of the trail will not continue.
2. *There is no local support for the Blue Star Trail. **NOT TRUE.*** You need only consider that over \$400,000 has been raised from local residents and businesses to realize that there is indeed strong community support for the Trail.
3. *Local township and city governments are against the Trail. **NOT TRUE.*** All 7 local government townships, City of Douglas, Allegan County and the Allegan County Road Commission support the planned 20-mile trail.
4. *The Blue Star Trail is a "Trail to Nowhere." **NOT TRUE.*** When completed, the 20-mile Trail will connect with the Kal-Haven, Laketown Township and Holland trails, and become part of a broader network of trails throughout Michigan.
5. *Nobody will use the Trail. **NOT TRUE.*** To allege that none of our residents and visitors will use the Trail to walk, jog, bike or ski is simply an absurd statement.
6. *The Blue Star Trail will compromise safety. **NOT TRUE.*** Which do you think is safer...taking your small children on bicycles down Butler Street on a busy summer Saturday, or taking them on an off-road trail? Additionally, concerns about portions of the trail that traverse intersections (or the fire station) are somewhat exaggerated. I assume that if you were on a trail and approached crossing vehicular traffic, you'd do what you've been taught to do since you were five. Stop, look, listen, wait and proceed. Not really that complicated!
7. *The Blue Star Trail is taking homeowners' land. **NOT TRUE.*** The Trail is being constructed within existing right of ways which are 100% owned by the Allegan County Road Commission.

I admit, frankly, to being completely puzzled by the small minority who oppose this project.

We're not talking about a nuclear power plant, folks...we're talking about a recreational trail in a resort area whose economy relies solely on an infrastructure that enables leisure and recreational activities.

I hope you'll join me in continuing to express your support for this worthwhile project...one that will be an enduring benefit to our community.

Jeffrey Bianchi

Douglas

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