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# Township urges bike path cooperation

BY SCOTT SULLIVAN EDITOR

The Saugatuck Township board weighed a resolution Wednesday calling for Tri-Community Master Plan partners Saugatuck and Douglas cities to support non-motorized trail ways development on their shared Blue Star Highway corridor.

The board's July 6 monthly meeting took place after this week's print deadline.

The township last week put finishing touches on a stretch of the proposed 20-mile Blue Star Trail, which supporters hope to build piece-by-piece 20 miles from South Haven north to Laketown Township's non-motorized path, on the highway's west side from Old Allegan Road to North Street.

Saugatuck Township — again using federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality grant money — built an 0.7-mile stretch from 64th Street to North Street in 2007, and plans also to extend the trail south of Douglas to its southern border with Ganges Township in the near future.

Douglas has also been on board, having two years ago built a path west of Blue Star from Wiley Road to Center Street. With a \$427,000 CMAQ grant the city proposed extending that path north across Blue Star Bridge, whose jurisdiction it shares with the City to Saugatuck, to Lake Street, but Saugatuck city rejected that plan claiming safety and future maintenance (“legacy”) costs needed further study.

Trail supporters say future maintenance is a small cost compared to health, recreational and business benefits communities can expect to receive from such trails, whose initial construction costs are fully funded between federal and/or state grants plus nonprofit Friends of the Blue Star Trail donation matches.

Critics claim such trails, used by a minority, will be funded by all taxpayers for future maintenance, create their own safety concerns and have dubious benefit.

Douglas plans July 12 to start work on another non-motorized path — this completing the westernmost half-mile of its two-mile Beach to Bayou Trail from downtown Wade's Bayou to Lakeshore Drive and Lake Michigan.

The \$297,147.05 major streets fund-budgeted project north of West Center Street from Wilderness Ridge to the lake, will not be to state and federal requirements — i.e. separate from the main road, 10 feet wide with another two feet of buffer/shoulder on both sides. Most of its downtown east-west portion consists of sidewalks.

Still, it's intended as part of a larger network that might also someday include a Saugatuck city stretch from Park Street alongside narrow and winding Perryman Road west to Oval Beach.

Saugatuck Township's proposed five-page resolution boasts 28 “Whereas,” including Master Plan Chapter 7 “Recreation and Open Space” passages referring to non-motorized trails and bike paths. It resolves:

1) The Tri-Community Master Plan as adopted in 2016 and Saugatuck Douglas Area 5-Year Parks & Recreation updated and adopted in 2014 “strongly support and affirm non-motorized trail development throughout the Blue Star Highway corridor.”

2) Trail development in the township is a planned goal of the entire Tri-Community as resolved by its member governments, and acquiring financial assistance needed to implement achieving it will be encouraged among all partners.

3) Township parks development is a vital aspect of life for landowners, business owners, residents and visitors. The township shall try to satisfy recreation needs of all ages of the public and furnish them “opportunity to enjoy the enjoy the fantastic natural resources and recreational opportunities” of Saugatuck Township.”

4) Parks development in the township shall continue to be planned professionally and with Tri-Community partners,” the resolution says.