

# False, rude letters disserve all

To the editor,

Needlessly rude and inaccurate recent letters regarding the Blue Star Trail (June 7 “Interim’ Bike Trail? No Thanks” and June 21 “Douglas, Common Sense Different Things”) prompt some clarifying facts.

The writer of those letters opposes the trail. OK, no beef with that. But his implication that local taxpayers will be stuck with the bill misses the fact that nearly all of the funds will come from taxpayers who live in places like Detroit, Traverse City — even Bad Axe.

State taxes fund the DNR grants that support construction of trails aimed at improving air quality in West Michigan. Further, federal programs intended to reduce traffic congestion (in clogged summer resort towns like ours) award grants to local communities savvy enough to go after the money from taxpayers in, say, California, New York — even Illinois.

These are matching grants. For every dollar such a smart community might raise, two additional dollars of *other taxpayers’ money* are funneled to it. Who argues against free money?

Local communities need more than critics to be smart. The Friends of the Blue Star Trail are our friends, and neighbors, too. They continue to do the work — collaborating with our elected officials to solve problems and raising money to keep those matching grants flowing.

According to their website (fobst.org) they have raised nearly \$600,000 of those dollars — right here, locally — the hard way. Their June annual benefit added more than \$40,000 to the coffers, suggesting broader support than the critics acknowledge or admit. It seems to me we ought to be applauding this effort, not undermining it with misinformation and insults.

Finally, despite critics’ claims of a “Trail to Nowhere” (or worse), the Blue Star Trail promises to link up with Gov. Snyder’s vision of a statewide network of five major non-motorized trails, many segments completed or underway.

The westernmost trail will connect Saugatuck with Chicago and the U.P. along the Blue Star Highway right-of-way. It will take us to all sorts of places: east to Grand Rapids all the way to Lake Huron; south to South Haven and K’zoo and onto Ann Arbor.

If we’re smart enough to allow it, the Trail will bring families and their dollars from those places here while our kids and grandkids — everyone — will have a safe place to run, walk, cycle and ski.

It would be a shame if rude criticism and misinformation caused the Friends to give up and that statewide system to stop right at Saugatuck’s front door. What kind of welcome would that be for a “progressive” resort town?

We can respectfully disagree on the merits of the Trail, but it’s beneath us to read of our friends and neighbors vilified as some kind of invasive species of weed needing to be stamped out.

I’ll bet that the Friends, hearing that, will become even more like crabgrass — tough, able to thrive in adverse conditions, and unwilling to go away just because a few vocal critics are rude.

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