

Project manager says LO story wrong

The Commercial Record

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To the editor:

I am the Project Manager for Fleis & Vandenbrink in the ongoing review of options for the Blue Star Trail through the City of Saugatuck. I was quoted in an article in the Dec. 14 Local Observer regarding that project. Unfortunately, some of my comments were taken out of context and misconstrued, so please allow me to clarify.

I disagree with the article headline “Douglas, Township, Bike Group put path on wrong side of Blue Star: Engineers.” If we were designing a trail from scratch *just* through the tri-communities of Saugatuck, Douglas and Saugatuck Township, without considering the full 20-mile route, there may be reasons to consider a route along the east side of the highway (Old Allegan Road south to Main Street in Douglas).

However, we are *not* designing the Trail from scratch; sections have already been constructed on the west side by Saugatuck Township and Douglas. Our current assignment is to find the option (or options) for the segment through Saugatuck city that strikes the best balance between the often-conflicting goals of safety, cost and functionality.

The proposed route along the west side can meet all applicable safety standards.

We have now completed cost estimates for both the east side and west side routes, which were reviewed with the city council at its Dec. 26 meeting. (See story on Page 1).

The east side route option through Saugatuck city would be significantly *more expensive* to build and maintain than the west side option.

We estimate the west side to cost approximately \$1.2 million (including optional traffic signal at Lake Street intersection) while the east side route would be more than \$1.9 million (excluding cost of a traffic signal at Old Allegan Road to facilitate the trail crossing Blue Star Highway and relocation of private utilities along the east side of the highway, which together could add an additional \$300,000 or more taking the total cost to more than \$2.2 million).

Contrary to the article, the trail is not on the wrong side of the road. As I indicated to (LO correspondent Efrain) Sandoval during our brief conversation, it is not a simple matter of right and wrong. There are challenges for either route. The City of Saugatuck is in the process of deciding which side is preferred in the city.

Before jumping to conclusions, I would urge everyone to support the planning process underway among the Saugatuck City Council, Fleis & VandenBrink and Friends of the Blue Star Trail. All

of these sessions are open to the public; the next planned review will be at a council workshop in mid-January (date not yet finalized).

I am confident we will collectively identify the best Trail route option, balancing cost and functionality while meeting the relevant traffic and safety requirements.

Jon Moxey
Fleis & VandenBrink

Local Observer Editor Mike Gallagher announced in that paper's Dec. 21 and Dec. 28 issues the LO was going on a "hiatus" until spring while it and Perspective Media Corp. were "quietly talking/negotiating with some major companies to expand certain of our corporation's online E-publications and subsidiary (sic) businesses on a national level." This may prove interesting given Michigan Licensing and Regulatory Affairs records show Perspective Media was dissolved as a domestic corporation July 15, 2018, for a perpetual term. -Ed.