

# City wants trail stakeholders' meeting

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BY JIM HAYDEN - CORRESPONDENT

Saugatuck city is putting together a meeting of government agencies involved in the 20-mile long Blue Star Trail despite a protest from the trail's supporter.

"This is premature," Friends of the Blue Star Trail president John Adams told city council at the latter's Monday meeting. The focus, he said, needs to be on completing the 0.4-mile stretch of the trail in the city that would connect Douglas and Saugatuck Township sections.

"Let's solve the task at hand," Adams said. Saugatuck City has held back support over safety concerns and long-term infrastructure maintenance costs.

Saugatuck City and the Friends group have been studying for several years how to get trail users safely across the Blue Star Highway Bridge over the Kalamazoo River and through town. The Friends group has proposed two options, both requiring traffic signals at Lake Street.

"Given the complex nature of this project overall, the Saugatuck City Council may want to take a proactive approach and organize a regional stakeholders meeting in order to bring the collective government units (owner of the proposed trail) together to discuss various components of this multifaceted project," City Manager Kirk Harrier wrote in a memo to council members.

"I'm interested in all the stakeholders getting together to see how this works," said Councilman Barry Johnson.

The city needs to "know what our neighbors are doing," added Councilman Bill Hess.

The city plans to invite one elected representative and one staff member from the following groups: Allegan County Board of Commissioners, Allegan County Road Commission, City of Douglas, City of Saugatuck, Saugatuck, Casco and Ganges townships as well as the Friends group. No time or date has been set for the meeting.

The meeting will not be open to the public.

Saugatuck city officials raised safety concerns in August 2016 when the City of Douglas submitted a grant application to make changes to the traffic flow on the bridge to accommodate the Blue Star Trail. The city eventually rejected those plans.

The path's Douglas portion on the west side of Blue Star Highway remains controversial in part because it narrowed the road through the city to Center Street making it difficult for emergency vehicles to maneuver in heavy traffic. Others have complained about aesthetics and bicyclist behavior on the Douglas portion.