

Trails go on, even with plans here on hold

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Trails go on, even as a tri-community committee exploring completing a non-motorized north-south trail through Douglas and Saugatuck cities, plus Saugatuck Township, takes a Covid-19 hiatus.

The township and Douglas have completed stretches of a planned 20-mile Blue Star Trail linking South Haven with area, then connecting further to trails through Laketown Township and Holland north to Grand Haven.

Saugatuck city has balked at path proposals through its boundaries, citing long-term maintenance costs and safety crossing the Blue Star Bridge and near the city's Lake Street entrance.

The committee, created via resolutions passed by the three local governments in December and January, held its first and only meeting so far Feb. 26.

As the 501c3 nonprofit Friends of the Blue Star Trail group, which is helping raise funds for the project via its own efforts plus state grants, awaits further progress on the trail's north section, they have begun exploring route options for the south section in South Haven and Casco Township.

In the meantime, tourist towns north and south of Saugatuck-Douglas are stepping up their commitment to similar trails. Holland has announced a demonstration of a protected 1.75-mile cycle track on 10th Street between VanRaalte and Lincoln.

It will be open to two-way bicycle traffic and separated from motorized vehicles by paint and construction barrels, providing a safe, family-friendly route through town.

The demonstration track opened August 17 and continues through Aug. 31 with the section between Lincoln and Pine open only until Aug. 21. Users can ride downtown to the farmers market, or through the Hope College campus on a dedicated bike route. For more details, visit pedalholland.com.

To the south, South Haven, already the western terminus for the Kal-Haven Trail, has been designated one of seven Pure Michigan Trail Towns because "it has developed and promoted a vast network of trails," says the Michigan Economic Development Corp. tourism promotion agency.

This allows the city to be incorporated into the Pure Michigan campaign marketing materials, including appropriate signage.