

# The City of Saugatuck should let the **Blue Star Trail** proceed!

## **Background:**

**The Blue Star Trail** will be a 20-mile paved, non-motorized trail connecting our communities from Saugatuck to South Haven, and connecting on each end to existing trails. The planning and approval process has been underway for a number of years, with the cooperation of the local communities and county (a requirement to qualify for state/federal matching trails grants to fund trail construction) and state funding agencies. However, beginning in 2017 the Saugatuck City Council withdrew support and raised several concerns (many of them valid).

In response to these concerns, the Friends of the Blue Star Trail retained Fleis & VandenBrink, the City's engineers, to conduct a study to address Council concerns. During 2018 & 2019, multiple workshops were held. Over 30 design considerations were incorporated into several viable route options but construction of the Trail remains stalled because City Council continues to withhold its approval of a route.

## **Top Reasons for the City of Saugatuck to formally approve a Trail route:**

1. **The Blue Star Trail requires no upfront investment by the City**– The Friends will provide funds to cover engineering costs and the local match required to obtain state/federal grants designated to construct trails. The City will own its ½-mile section of trail.
2. **Without approval by the City of an ASSHTO compliant route along the Blue Star Highway, the Friends grant applications to build trail in the tri-community area will not be competitive.**
3. **The Trail is a legacy investment** – It benefits not only us, but future generations as well.
4. **The Trail:**
  - a. Provides a **safe path** for pedestrians, runners, and bicyclers
  - b. **Connects us** and our communities

- c. Improves our **health and wellness** through outdoor physical activity
  - d. **Benefits our local economy** – encourages more visitors and enhances property values
  - e. Improves our **environment by** providing emission-free recreation
  - f. Provides safe, clean alternative **transportation** for families, school children, workers, and more.
5. **We are entitled to our fair share of state/federal funds that have been earmarked for trails** – without City support for the Trail, we will lose out to other communities that are competing for these limited funds.
6. **Our residents want more trails.** Based upon a survey of City, Douglas, and TWP residents which indicated trails are a high priority, the 2016 Tri-Community Master Plan strongly endorsed improving the system of local trails.
7. **The other communities along the Trail, our donors and volunteers relied on the City's good faith.** The City Council expressed its support for the Trail in resolutions, letters, and meetings from 2008-2017. While the City never committed to a specific route for the Trail, everyone had a right to expect that the Council would work with the other stakeholders in good faith to design a Trail through the City.