



CHAPTER 1 – Overview of the Planning Process

Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route Trailway Plan

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1.1 Introduction

The Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route Trailway Project falls under the umbrella of the Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route (LSHR) that was designated in 2001 under the Michigan Department of Transportation State Heritage Route Program and is coordinated by the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NWMCOG). The Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route Committee, which meets monthly oversees the Heritage Route Management Plan and has representatives from the twelve (12) municipalities in the Corridor, the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (Lakeshore), the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, the Leelanau Conservancy, the Leelanau County Road Commission, the Leelanau County Planning Commission, chambers of commerce, interested organizations, and citizens. The Trailway project is listed as a priority in the Heritage Route Management Plan, which was developed through an extensive two-year public planning process. Information on the Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route can be found at www.nwm.org/lshr.asp. The multi-use trail would begin at Manning Road (Leelanau County line) and extend approximately 27 miles to County Road 651 along M-22 and M-109 through the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

The Trailway Work Group was formed by the Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route Committee. The following list outlines the key stakeholders that have been integral to the trailway planning process.

- National Park Service – Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
- National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Northwest Michigan Council of Governments
- Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes
- Traverse Area Recreational and Transportation Trails, Inc. (TART, Inc.)
- Citizens

Governmental Units

- Leelanau County Planning Commission
- Leelanau County Road Commission
- Centerville Township
- Cleveland Township
- Glen Arbor Township
- Empire Township
- Village of Empire

1.2 DEFINING THE VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Trailway work group developed a vision and set of guiding principles to help direct the planning process.

Create a non-motorized linear trailway system that is connected to historical, cultural, recreational, and environmental points of interest throughout the Lakeshore and surrounding communities; a Trailway that promotes health, environmental, social, and economic benefits and provides a safe alternative for walking, biking, running, and cross-country skiing; and is universally accessible wherever possible.

The Guiding Principles:

1. Promote and encourage people to engage in healthy lifestyles benefiting from non-motorized trails.
2. Strengthen trail connections to existing trail heads, communities, and points of interest within the project boundary.
3. Enhance the recreational experience within the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (Lakeshore) and project area.
4. Incorporate universal design principles with regard to trail alignment, cross-sectional design, and trail head development.
5. Consider the impacts that could occur to the environment and existing ecosystems.
6. Consider the impacts that could occur to historic properties and archeological resources.
7. Design a trail cross-section and trail alignment that is sustainable with regard to materials.
8. Provide a safe non-motorized trail facility.

The Trailway Work Group investigated and identified preliminary trail routes and options. The conceptual route included the road right-of-way owned and managed by the Michigan Department of Transportation, and lands owned and managed by the National Park Service. It also passes through several jurisdictions, including Empire Township, Village of Empire, Glen Arbor Township, Cleveland Township, and Centerville Township.

1.3 BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

Preliminary dialogue with the National Park Service (NPS) staff had indicated the suggested concept would need further investigation, planning, and an environmental assessment, where it affected lands managed by the NPS. The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments on behalf of the Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route Committee requested proposals for an Environmental Assessment and Preliminary Engineering Report for the Trailway with funding provided by Cherry Republic, Inc. and The Americana Foundation. The Environmental Assessment and Preliminary Engineering Report addressed the following minimum design requirements:

Minimum Design Requirements for the Trailway:

1. Meet all Michigan Department of Transportation and American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) design requirements for development of a non-motorized bicycle and pedestrian trailway. Minimum capacity shall accommodate non-motorized modes of use.
2. Comply with all environmental rules and regulations.
3. Meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for pedestrian and non-motorized use when designing trailway where feasible.
4. Review safety issues and recommend proposed treatments for slopes, intersections with active traffic routes, driveways and other potential hazards along the proposed trail route.
5. Review and report on any drainage issues and any work required by the proposed project. This would include river and stream crossings, wetland crossings, etc.
6. Determine trailway width to accommodate modes of non-motorized use and concurrent use of different modes during the seasons. Trailway width (should at a minimum) meet requirements outlined by MDOT and AASHTO.
7. Determine surface material to accommodate all modes of non-motorized use including a hardened surface for bicycling on all primary routes. Also provide anticipated operation and maintenance cost data for the top two alternatives selected.

1.4 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANNING PROJECTS

Michigan Department of Transportation's M-22 widening project

The Michigan Department of Transportation has developed an M-22 Non-motorized Corridor Improvement Plan for Benzie and Leelanau Counties that identifies and targets shoulder widening and pavement improvement projects in the M-22 and M-109 right-of-way. (Please see Appendix - Map Exhibit A).

Lakeshore General Management Plan / Wilderness Study / Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

The National Park Service completed a Record of Decision for the General Management Plan for the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore that was signed on January 6, 2009. The Trailway project is addressed in this document.

Port Oneida Rural Historic District Plans

It is evident that any alternative will likely pass through the Port Oneida Rural Historic District due to its location along M-22 (please see Appendix – Map Exhibit B and C). A Port Oneida Environmental Assessment was prepared and completed with the signing of the Finding of No Significant Impact on June 30, 2008.

Glen Haven Village Rehabilitation Plan

The NPS completed a report in October of 2006 for the Historic Glen Haven Village. The report, Glen Haven Village – Stabilize and Rehabilitate Buildings in the Glen Haven Village Historic District, identified schematic design alternatives for the possibility of constructing additional car and bus parking, installing new sidewalks, upgrades to the Cannery Building, dune stabilization, installation of an historic outhouse, making general improvements to provide barrier-free accessibility, changes to existing overhead

utilities, improving picnic facilities near the Cannery Building, and stabilizing historical structures in the Village (see Appendix – map Exhibit D). The visible relationships to the Trailway Plan include parking and possible trailhead considerations, sidewalk improvements, signage and other wayfinding structures, and picnic facilities.

Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route Management Plan Update 2006

Prepared in March 2000 and updated in 2006, this document focuses on transportation-related issues including the need for bike lanes along the scenic corridor. The Plan goals include:

- Preserve and enhance the natural, historic and cultural resources along the route
- Preserve the scenic qualities of the corridor and encourage development that will not detract from these qualities
- Encourage community involvement in monitoring of the route
- Encourage interpretive programs that describe the natural, historical, and cultural features along the corridor
- Promote the maintenance of the unique and rural feel of the villages and countryside along the Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route

Leelanau General Plan

The Leelanau General Management Plan included several transportation-related issues that include:

- The need to address a long-term road development and multi-modal transportation plan;
- The need to construct paved shoulders on all new roads;
- The need to move people and goods along key corridors and meet mass transit needs;
- The need to review the current county road funding sources;
- The need to secure the land necessary to construct future roads;
- The need to protect the scenic quality of key corridors; and
- To review the transportation modes used within the peninsula and reduce transportation costs.

Benzie County 2020 Comprehensive Plan

The County 2020 Plan is not directly related to this Trailway Plan given that this plan does not extend beyond Leelanau County; however, it is important to mention that the 2020 Plan points out the need for providing interconnected open space for recreation activities such as walking, biking, and cross-country skiing on trails.

Department of Interior / Federal Highway Administration Transportation Needs Study (3039 Study)

The Department of Interior performed a study directly related to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and transportation related issues. The major issues in the document that are directly related to the Trailway Plan are as follows:

- The need to address vehicular traffic needs throughout the park; and
- The need to provide bicycle lanes along M-22.

Transportation Study – Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

Completed in 2001, the Transportation Study was conducted as part of the General Management Planning process. The study identified the lack of adequate opportunities for bicyclists, especially off-road opportunities. Specific non-motorized trail development recommendations included the development of a coordinated bicycle route network within the Lakeshore that connects the Port Oneida area with the Platte River area of the park without having to travel on M-22, except in a few relatively short sections. The linear trail would increase visitor access, provide an alternative to vehicular transportation, and connect the various points of interest in the park.

Northwest Michigan Greenways Report

The Greenways Report was prepared in 1998 and included significant information with regard to identifying areas around the park that could be designated as “greenways.” The report identified the following areas as possible and/or existing “greenways”:

- The Betsie Valley Trail
- The Shore to Shore Trail
- The Leelanau Trail

Miscellaneous Planning / Design / Regulatory Considerations

- A. National Park Service – Director’s Order #12 (DO-12), Design Standards
- B. Michigan Department of Transportation design standards
- C. American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials Standards
- D. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990