Six New Regions Address Nonmotorized Travel

Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA Director

It has been seven years since the creation of a nonmotorized advisory committee within Southeast Michigan’s Metro Region, a division of Michigan Department of Transportation which covers Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, Livingston, and St. Clair Counties. The committee arose from the recurring need for both public and private stakeholders at the state and local levels to discuss bicycle-related issues and concerns within the congested, “auto-focused” region. Nonmotorized topics have ranged from roads and bridges to pathways and public transit, and it has proven itself useful to get all the issues out and everyone on the same page.

Brainstorming, consensus-building, education, and problem-solving have all been part of the mix of this committee’s success, and MDOT has decided it is time to spread it to the rest of the state. MDOT’s Chief Operations Officer, Gregory Johnson, says “The success of early collaboration between MDOT and other road agencies with nonmotorized users and advocates has been demonstrated time and again via the first regional nonmotorized advisory committee in the MDOT Metro Region. Implementing this valuable tool in every region will help facilitate discussions of needs, priorities, maintenance, and safety of non-motorized facilities throughout Michigan.”

Participation in the Metro Region’s Nonmotorized Advisory Committee has included statewide, regional, and local MDOT staff, county road commissions, county planners and parks and rec officials, friends of the trail groups, statewide nonprofits, such as MTGA and the League of Michigan Bicyclists, potential funders and several others. Sometimes items on the agenda need a thorough discussion to get everyone’s input on the table, and other times, an educational presentation brings everyone up to speed on the facts about new nonmotorized initiatives. “It is a valuable opportunity for all to ask questions, voice concerns, and bounce ideas off each other,” said Nancy Krupiarz, Executive Director, MTGA, “and because so many different perspectives are heard, it often encourages the go-ahead on many nonmotorized initiatives.” She credits the
Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance Board Candidates

Running for Re-Election

**Diane Bancroft - Canton, MI**
- Current President of the Friends of I-275 Metro Trail
- Retired from Chrysler Corp., Process and Timing Analytics in Progress Management

*I will add my energy and knowledge to help the board expand MTGA’s influence in southeast Michigan. I have an analytical approach to problem solving that can be beneficial in decision making.*

**Jim Dickie - Chesaning, MI**
- Retired from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Past President of the Michigan Snowmobile Association

*"I would like to continue serving on the board to help with “Connecting Michigan” with trails, and to encourage that trails be available for many different uses."*

**Julie Clark - Traverse City, MI**
- Development Director, Mecklenburg County North Carolina’s Greenway
- Executive Director, TART Trails, Inc.

*"I hope to help MTGA continue to educate and advocate for the benefits of non-motorized trail networks to communities on local, regional and statewide levels. I would like to help MTGA use the Complete Streets legislation recently passed to better position trails as an important piece of the transportation network."

**Neal Billetdeaux - Ann Arbor, MI**
- Principal / Senior Landscape Architect - JIR
- Landscape Architect - 23 years
- B.S., Botany/Ecology - U of M
- M.L.A., U of M

*I intend to advance the planning and implementation of greenways and trails in the Great Lakes region by acting as a resource and proponent. I will use my skills to assist local communities with advancing their trail concepts and facilitate networking with potential funding sources. I also plan to use this experience to stay current with trends in greenway planning and design.*

**Patrick Baughan - Holt, MI**
- Retired owner of Holt Prospects Direct, Inc. a direct marketing firm in Lansing
- Helped start the Michiganer bicycle tour, working and riding all 22 years

*My goal is to help steer the organization to be the go to group for trail users and developers to use for information. My involvement in the Michiganer Bicycle Tour as a volunteer over the last 22 years has helped keep the dollars flowing for this great cause. I plan to continue.*
This year’s Michigander Tour was full of beautiful Northern Michigan sights, sounds, and trails. Over 700 cyclists rode some combination of 300 miles over the course of seven days along some of Michigan’s long-distance scenic trails, the Little Traverse Wheelway and the North Central State Trail. Starting in Charlevoix and traveling to Harbor Springs on Saturday, July 13, weekend riders rode twenty-eight miles down the Little Traverse Wheelway, stopping along the way for an Easter egg hunt at the first themed SAG stop and riding along the shoreline of Lake Michigan and the Grand Traverse Bay. They finished their ride Sunday afternoon back in Charlevoix with perfect weather: sunshine and blue skies.

Week-long riders took a hillier route traveling to Bellaire Sunday evening. The following morning they had a choice between a roadway or a trail and headed west to Gaylord where the annual Alpine Fest was getting under way. From Gaylord, riders traveled up the North Central State Trail to Indian River when the weather became hot and muggy; many cyclists appreciated the opportunity to cool off by tubing down the Sturgeon River or taking a dip in nearby Burt Lake. Continuing their tour north, riders took the trail to Cheboygan, stopping along the way for some Hawaiian Luau fun at another Michigander themed SAG stop, and finishing in Mackinaw City, where they would stay for two days. On their day off, riders chose to ride a road and trail loop around the larger Mackinaw City region or venture to Mackinac Island, with its 8-mile non-motorized loop around the perimeter; it was perfect for riding or simply relaxing and taking in the view. From Mackinaw City, Michiganders finished their tour back in Harbor Springs with a well-deserved celebration, complete with checkered flags, refreshments, and photos.

The weather was beautiful, but hot at times, (one or two days reached over ninety degrees!) and the trails managed to stay dry until Thursday morning when it poured over Mackinaw City. Clouds rolled in Friday morning, as well, and drenched riders as they pedaled to Harbor Springs. Despite this, many riders said this was the best Michigander yet and they loved the trails and roads traveled by day and towns visited by night.

The Michigander is known for being a great family-friendly ride; many families used the weekend and week-long rides as their vacation time with their family. They used it as a chance to travel to some of Michigan’s most popular northern resort towns, as well as to get their family biking and exercising outside. Families look forward to the Michigander each year because it is a time during the year when they can relax and bike at their leisure. Many families said it brought them closer together.
ongoing rehabilitation and improvement of one of Michigan’s oldest trails, the I-75 Metro Trail, to the continued encouragement and input from members of the Metro Region’s Nonmotorized Advisory Committee.

The plan is to focus on developing nonmotorized advisory committees in 3-4 regions in 2013 with the balance to be formed in 2014. The first tasks for each region will be to establish the invitee list and develop some goals and objectives to support MDOT’s Context Sensitive Solutions and Complete Streets policies. All in all, the committees are sure to be a valuable forum to focus on the unique needs of the individual MDOT region and the bicycling community within that region. Stay tuned to our website for news of meetings in your region as these new nonmotorized advisory committees get underway.

(Michigander continued from page 3)

When asked their favorite memory from this year’s ride, many riders said it was that their family was with them or some family members were completing the Michigander for the first time.

“I rode this year with my son who had recently graduated from college,” one participant said. “It was his last summer home before moving to the East Coast, so it was very nice to have him ride with me for the week.”

The themed SAG stops were deemed a hit as well, and many riders said it made riding each day all the more entertaining.

“The Halloween SAG stop was really fun,” one rider commented.

“Also, the Easter egg hunt and Nancy’s [Krupiarz] ears!”

Without sponsors such as Meijer and Clif Bar, the Michigander would not have been as successful. Riders loved the complimentary Clif “Builder” Bars at the SAG stops, as well as the goodies and treats provided by Meijer.

With one more Michigander successfully completed, riders have more stories and memories they can share upon returning home. For some, it was their first time riding and we hope to see them return next year; for others, they are Michigander regulars and they will show up next year ready for another trail ride, an exploration of Michigan’s beloved countryside and small towns, and create memories that will last a lifetime. You can start planning for next year’s Michigander by marking the dates down now: July 12-18. We hope to see you on the trails as we continue to create greener paths throughout Michigan.

Michigander 2014: July 12-18
Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance was pleased to accept a recent invitation to the Product Development Committee, an implementation group for the 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Industry Strategic Plan. This is one of 8 committees that are charged with leading the implementation of the overall plan. While trails may not seem like a typical tourism “product” like a restaurant offering or a roller coaster ride at an amusement park, they are because 1) they are often a destination for vacationers in search of active pursuits, such as hiking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, equestrian use, snowmobiling and off-road vehicle riding; and 2) they are also a “driver” for use of nearby tourism products, such as restaurants, hotels, shops, and other tourism attractions, and in many cases, help to extend visitor stays. The overarching vision from the plan that relates to this committee is that “an adequate, accessible and interconnected supply of tourism products and services, including accommodations, public/private transportation, and attractions and events is an essential characteristic of a successful tourism destination.” It is “supply chain management” for the tourism industry. The other 7 committees that are working on implementation of the plan include Collaboration, Cooperation and Partnerships, Public Policy and Governmental Support, Research and Technical Assistance, Resources and Environment, Service Excellence, Funding, and Promotion, Marketing and Communications. There will be significant interplay between all the implementation committees, but especially Funding and Promotion, Marketing, and Communications because these two are critical to all other themes.

The overall vision that was established for the 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Industry Strategic Plan, “Michigan is one of America’s favorite four seasons travel experiences” represents a shared picture of how Michigan’s tourism industry would like to look and feel by 2017. The process included an industry-wide on-line survey, twelve facilitated industry stakeholder sessions, work sessions held in conjunction with the 2012 Governor’s Tourism Conference, and refinement of the plan throughout the process by the Strategic Plan Advisory Council and the Michigan Travel Commission. Throughout this process there were many suggestions regarding trails. For example, recurring trail-related themes in the twelve facilitated stakeholder sessions included: Further connect and help to plan and fund trail connections to destinations; bring compatible industry groups together to develop and promote packages; strengthen and collaborate on directional signage to trails along state highways; encourage all levels of lodging facilities in close proximity to trails; Increase awareness of connected cross system transportation (i.e., public transit, roads, and trails); and develop an integrated website by interest, that includes all the supporting businesses of that interest. In summary, many stakeholder-
MTGA Annual Meeting
Set for October 10, 2013

Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA Director

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance will hold its annual membership meeting on Thursday, October 10, 2013 from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. at Hannah Center, 819 Abbot, E. Lansing, Michigan. This year’s meeting will feature a guest presentation from Dr. Sarah Nicholls, Associate Professor from MSU’s Department of Geography, who facilitated stakeholder and public input for the development of the 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Industry Strategic Plan and is now leading its implementation through 8 committees. Dr. Nicholls will highlight features of the new plan, what it has to say about trails and how they will most certainly play a crucial role in future Michigan tourism initiatives.

At this meeting, there will also be a presentation from Nancy Krupiarz, Executive Director on MTGA’s initiatives over the past year. Also on the agenda is a vote of all those present confirming board election results as well as a vote on a minor amendment to our organization’s Articles of Incorporation (see the amendment insert in this newsletter). So that we may provide enough seating and refreshments, please be sure to RSVP on the ballot slip or email Nancy at nancy@michigantrails.org if you plan to attend.