The Mid-Michigan Program for Greater Sustainability

Nancy Knapiarz, MTGA Director

For the past year and a half, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance has been delighted to be one of the partners in the Mid-Michigan Program for Greater Sustainability, the result of a $3.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The HUD grantee, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission along with 11 sub-grantees, has embarked upon 3 years of planning for the region, with major activities focused around the Michigan/Grand River corridor “main street” corridor from the State Capitol to Webberville. The grant is multi-faceted, including a focus on: improving the affordability, variety and quality of housing options in the area, engaging the traditionally underserved populations in decision-making across all jurisdictions in the region, conducting a regional energy audit, facilitating urban service management areas, increasing the level of regional activities and local policies aimed at green infrastructure, creating a portfolio for incremental redesign of the Michigan/Grand River Corridor, creating a digital conversation portal for citizens to share and discuss ideas about the region, and improving consideration and awareness of nonmotorized transportation routes and policies in the region. Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance’s work is focused on the last goal regarding nonmotorized transportation, and has been fortunate to have the Tri-County Bicycle Association as an active partner in most of the projects.

MTGA’s nonmotorized transportation aspects of the grant have rolled out in several different projects. One has been to create a bicycle-friendly business program, in which business districts agree to receive and install bicycle racks and further encourage customers and employees to bike through the area with the use of discounts, events, and other incentives. The program was adapted from successful initiatives in Long Beach, CA, Portland, OR, Memphis, Tennessee and other areas of the country. With the development of a “Business Likes Bikes” logo, program fact sheets and an application process with TCBA, several districts in Lansing have shown interest. While none of the bicycle-friendly business districts have been finalized yet, discussions continue towards this goal.

Another component of MTGA’s work is to hold regular forums on nonmotorized transportation issues in the region. The 4 forums thus far have each focused on entirely different aspects of nonmotorized transportation. The first one provided discussion on improving the quality and frequency of media related to biking and walking. Here, several ideas emanated from our conversation with media experts who gave tips on this topic. One in particular, to hold events that would generate media coverage, was put into practice with a bike parade to celebrate the new buffered bike lanes on M-43. The event did indeed prompt some positive media attention, and other ideas generated at the forum remain for the future.

(Continued on page 4)
The Detroit RiverFront Continues to Revitalize the Motor City

Tom Sleva, Michigan Fitness Foundation Intern

The riverfront is no longer Detroit’s best kept secret. Over the past 10 years, the nonprofit Detroit RiverFront Conservancy has brought public access to the Detroit Riverfront and served as a catalyst for economic development. To date, the Conservancy has raised $121 million towards a $140 million goal to ensure that all components of the Detroit waterfront transformation project are funded, including the establishment of an adequate endowment to ensure the perpetual sustainability of the riverfront. Amenities along the riverfront includes parks, plazas, pavilions, fountains, a carousel, a café, a bike shop, butterfly gardens and more. Because of their efforts, Detroiters are able to live, work and play along a vibrant international riverfront.

The ultimate vision of the project is to develop five and a half miles of riverfront from the Ambassador Bridge to just east of the MacArthur (Belle Isle) Bridge, and includes the ongoing construction of a continuous RiverWalk. Approximately three million visitors enjoy the beautifully landscaped, well-maintained, secure and active space annually. In 2012, more than 100 events were held along the riverfront, ranging from small weekly gatherings, such as yoga and tai chi to large annual events, such as the River Days festival.

In 2013, 150,000 people attended GM River Days. The festival featured live national and local bands, a Detroit River ArtScape competition, a Kids Zone, outdoor activities with the Michigan DNR, more than 25 rides and games along the midway, a Taste of Detroit food court, and several water-related activities, including popular tours on the U.S. Coast Guard cutter, the Appledore IV, river boat tours and live jet ski demonstrations.

Another popular program on the riverfront, Reading & Rhythm on the Riverfront (R3), is an interactive early literacy program for children, presented by the GM Foundation and hosted by the Conservancy. R3 stretches six weeks throughout the summer, and along with readings and free books, boasts live family entertainment, healthy treats, and free rides on the Cullen Family Carousel. In this third year of the program, 3,600 children and their families enjoyed R3 and more than 3,800 free books were distributed to children from across southeastern Michigan. In addition to the books distributed, the program also featured a special family lending library with more than 200 selections that children and their families can check out and read along the riverfront during their visit.

Progress on the Riverfront

The Conservancy was launched by three key partners: the City of Detroit, which provided valuable land and significant infrastructure improvements, including the relocation and demolition of the cement silos; General Motors, which invested significant financial resources into its waterfront renovations at the Renaissance Center and the first half mile of the RiverWalk, which it donated to the Conservancy along with cash and in-kind support; and the Kresge Foundation, which provided its largest grant ever to a single project—a $50 million challenge grant that served as the economic catalyst to launch the Conservancy’s efforts.

Currently, the east riverfront portion of the Detroit RiverWalk encompasses 3.5 miles, of which 80% is complete with the remaining 20% under construction, extending from Joe Louis Arena to Gabriel Richard Park. Meanwhile, the Conservancy is also working on expanding westward with the 20 acres of land it purchased in December 2007. Development here will transform a former newspaper printing facility property at 1801 W. Jefferson into a green oasis, featuring three new pathways linking the riverfront to West Jefferson Avenue, benches, trash receptacles and plenty of lush green space for a variety of outdoor activities. The Conservancy is expanding the width of the popular RiverWalk along this parcel to 30 feet to better accommodate adequate space for walking, running, biking and fishing. Safety and security...
improvements will include railings, lighting, security cameras and call boxes.

A connector to the RiverWalk, also operated by the Conservancy, the Dequindre Cut Greenway, officially opened to the public in May of 2009. It is a 1.50-mile pedestrian link between the riverfront, Eastern Market and many of the residential neighborhoods in between. Formerly a Grand Trunk Railroad line, the Dequindre Cut is a predominantly below-street level greenway that runs parallel to St. Aubin Street, between Gratiot Avenue and Atwater Street, just north of the riverfront. Well-known for its examples of urban artwork and graffiti, the greenway features a 20-foot-wide paved pathway, which includes separate lanes for pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Currently, the Dequindre Cut is undergoing an expansion that will extend it a half-mile to Mack Avenue.

**Impact of the Riverfront Project and Future Developments**

The Detroit riverfront has generated a lot of buzz from its developments and its continual growth will attract more visitors, businesses and events. This in turn will play a huge role in improving Detroit and Michigan’s economies. And it has! The project has spurred private developments on land adjacent to the riverfront including the Math and Science High School, Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority, Presbyterian Villages’ Rivertown Neighborhood, as well as restaurants and major tenants relocating to existing buildings, such as Blue Cross/Blue Shield and the US Patent Office. Additionally, several facilities along the riverfront have undergone significant improvements, including Cobo Center and Roberts Riverwalk Hotel. This has generated economic return as well as the annual spending by visitors, residents, employees and other operations along the riverfront that is estimated at $43.7 million.

There are a variety of potential future projects that once completed, would further the transformation of the riverfront area into a vibrant environment. These include development of the 40 acre-Uniroyal site and various east riverfront residential projects. Given the number and size of available parcels, the value of potential future development could range between $700 million and $950 million. The mutual passion of both the public and private sectors and coordination between the two has truly made the project what it is today. Without the financial aid of the Kresge Foundation and GM and execution of the project by the Conservancy, along with the support of the City of Detroit and the State of Michigan, the riverfront couldn’t continue blossoming. MTGA couldn’t be more excited to be partners with the Conservancy and to help support Detroit’s revival through work with the Detroit Greenways Coalition. To find out more information on the project and to stay tuned on future details on the trail and events along it, visit the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy’s website at www.detroitriverfront.org. Volunteer opportunities, ways to make donations and other ways to help are listed as well.
Another forum focused on specific solutions for the Lansing and Lansing Township-based Frandor shopping district, an area long known for being inaccessible to pedestrians and cyclists due to the sheer volume and speed of traffic and auto-centric roads and parking lots. The convening included neighborhood residents, transportation officials, and nonmotorized advocates in articulating the specific obstacles to bicycling and walking in the area and solutions to address them. Getting a handle on where citizens desire nonmotorized access in and out of the area and then an idea from transportation officials on what could be done allowed for the development of a template for future transportation and land use decisions for the Frandor area.

A third forum was entitled “Complete Streets – What’s Next”. This session brought together local jurisdictions who had adopted local complete streets policies together with a few municipalities who were just beginning to work on theirs. All gave an update on what implementation had happened from policies that had passed and answers to questions about complete streets were fielded from those who are working on developing policies. The City of Lansing, having passed the first local Complete Streets ordinance, had much to share with the other local jurisdictions, on the best tips for successful implementation. Attendees were amazed at the abundance of complete streets focus in the region and came away hopeful that more positive changes to the infrastructure would happen as policies get implemented.

The fourth and most recent forum was the “Tri-County Trails Summit” in which officials from twelve local governments presented updates to each other and to the general public on trails implementation in each of their areas. Each presenter displayed their mapped routes and discussed the obstacles and issues associated with each project. This summit was followed by two specific trail workshops, one each in Eaton and Ingham Counties. The next activity to emanate from this forum will be to pull together a Tri-County regional trails brochure which will update citizens on where to access existing trails and when and where to expect progress on trails implementation in their community. A new partnership has begun with the Capital Area Health Alliance (CAHA) for the development and widespread distribution of this brochure. CAHA is a regional association of health agencies and professionals who have a united focus on a healthy physically active population, and getting a new updated trails brochure into their distribution channels will inform and inspire their collective audience towards using the trails as a component of a healthy, active lifestyle. MTGA will continue to provide technical assistance on trails to communities where needed in order to help realize these trail connections.

The time spent on the HUD grant project has been a great exploration into a variety of nonmotorized issues in the Greater Lansing area, allowing in-depth consideration of trails and how they relate to the bigger picture of nonmotorized accessibility within the whole region. The planning work happening now will help shape a more sustainable region as incremental changes take place.

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**2013 Year End Appeal**

It is that time of year for Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance’s annual appeal campaign. It is often not easy to decide, but we hope that MTGA is one of those on your list. This year it is a targeted appeal to help raise matching dollars for our work on the Great Lake to Lake Trail project. So if you have given “Thank You!” and if not please give what you can. You can donate online at www.michigantrails.org or simply send us your contribution in the form of a check made payable to Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance.

**Mail to:**
MTGA  
PO Box 27187  
Lansing MI 48909

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**Membership**

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**Membership Total**

**Donation**

**Grand Total (U. S. Dollars)**

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Or Mastercard. Visa, or Discover  
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Trails Score Big in Eighteen Michigan Counties

Nancy Krupiarz, MIGCA Director

'Tis the season for grant announcements from some of the public grant programs that fund multi-use trails, particularly the Natural Resources Trust Fund, but also two smaller grant programs within the Department of Natural Resources, the Recreation Passport and the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and one more major grant announcement came from the Transportation Alternatives Program within the Michigan Department of Transportation. Altogether trail communities are having a happy holiday season with over $13 million announced for projects across the state this month. The following are the details. Trail projects garnered 29 percent of the Natural Resources Trust Fund (NRTF) with $4.13 million going to development and $3.8 million going to trail acquisition. Also, there was $86,200, or 11.3 percent of the Recreation Passport (RP) grants and $161,300, or 23 percent of the Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) awarded to trail development projects. Further, the Michigan Department of Transportation’s Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) awarded $619,514 for trail development (TAP grants are awarded individually on a shovel-ready basis). The following are the awarded trail projects.

| UPPER PENINSULA: | Marquette County | Hawley St. Pathway Extension | City of Marquette | $90,000 | LWCF |
| NORTHERN LOWER PENINSULA: | Alpena County | Northeast State Trail Regional Trailhead | (City of Alpena) | $245,000 | NRTF |
| | Charlevoix County | Boyne City to Charlevoix County Trail | (City of Alpena) | $300,000 | NRTF |
| | Cheboygan County | Burt Lake Trailhead Development | | $11,200 | RP |
| | Emmett County | Northwestern State Trail Development | (Alanson to Mackinaw County) | $282,000 | NRTF |
| MID-MICHIGAN: | Bay County | Bay County Riverwalk Rail Trail Improvements | | $71,300 | LWCF |
| | Hillsdale County | Jonesville Rail Trail Construction | | $296,000 | NRTF |
| | Ingham County | Hayhoe Riverwalk – Pedestrian Bridge/Signage | City of Mason | | RP |
| | Ionia County | CIS Trail Spur and Pedestrian Bridge | Village of Muir | | NRTF |
| | Kent County | Seward Avenue Bikeway Development* | City of Grand Rapids | $619,514 | TAP |
| | Livingston County | Lakelands Rail Trailhead Development | Unadilla Township | | NRTF |
| | Livingston County | Lakelands Trail Access Improvements | Hamburg Township | | NRTF |
| | Midland County | Pere Marquette RT Improvements/Trailhead | | $300,000 | NRTF |
| | Muskegon County | Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail Development | | $300,000 | NRTF |
| | Oceana County | Hart Montague Trail Reconstruction | | $600,000 | NRTF |
| | Saginaw County | Great Lakes Bay Regional Trail Development | | $280,000 | NRTF |
| SOUTHERN MICHIGAN: | Barry County | Paul Henry Thornapple Trail Extension | | $300,000 | NRTF |
| | Oakland County | Clinton River Trail Spur Acquisition | City of Pontiac | $370,000 | NRTF |
| | Wayne County | Inner Circle Greenway Acquisition | City of Detroit | $3,431,300 | NRTF |
| | Wayne County | Elizabeth Park Greenway and Shoreline | | $300,000 | NRTF |

In addition, the multi-jurisdictional White Pine Trail and the Governor’s Showcase Trail each received $300,000 respectively for trail development. Congratulations to all the grant awardees!
Trailblazing in Michigan

Winter 2014

IN THIS ISSUE

The Mid-Michigan Program for Greater Sustainability

Trails Score Big in Eighteen Counties

The Detroit River-Front Continues to Revitalize the Motor City

Michigander 2014

2014 Michigander Bicycle Tour

Barry Cuihlm, Michigander Coordinator

We are getting many calls wondering when and where Michigander will be in 2014. Plans are underway, and the 23rd Annual Michigander Bicycle Tour will take place from July 12-18, 2014.

The route will be announced and registration will begin the week of January 20, 2014. The route will be in Northwest Michigan with some of our “tried and true” overnight stops and trails as well as some brand new ones. You will absolutely love the scenery along the route this year.

Year after year, the Michigander has proven to be a favorite among bicycle enthusiasts, regardless of age or ability level. Many families use the two-day (weekend) and week-long rides as their vacation time with their family and friends, to see the beautiful scenery along the trails as well as promote the development of an interconnected trail system in our state. Many families say it brings them closer together and creates stories and memories that will last a lifetime.

Be sure to follow our website (www.michigantrails.org), blog (www.michigantrails.wordpress.com), Facebook (www.facebook.com/michigantrails), and Twitter (@michtrails) as we will continue to update you with the exciting details about this tour and also notify you of any changes that may occur.