

Lowell Area Recreation Authority



March, 2009

2009 - 2014 RECREATION PLAN



APPENDIX H. COMMUNITY PARK, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND GREENWAY PLAN CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST



Michigan Department of Natural Resources-Grants Management

COMMUNITY PARK, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE, AND GREENWAY PLAN CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST

By Authority of Parts 19, 703 and 716 of Act 451, P.A. 1994, as amended, submission of this information is required for eligibility to apply for grants

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete, obtain certification signatures and submit this checklist with a locally adopted recreation plan.

All recreation plans are required to meet the content and local approval standards listed in this checklist and as outlined in the *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans* provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). To be eligible for grant consideration, plans must be submitted to the DNR prior to the grant application deadline **with** a completed checklist that has been signed by an authorized official(s) of the local unit of government(s) submitting the plan.

Name of Plan:		
List the community names (including school districts) covered by the plan	County	Month and year plan adopted by the community's governing body
Lowell Area Recreation Authority	Kent	March, 2009

INSTRUCTIONS: Please check each box to certify that the listed information is included in the final plan.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Roles of Commission(s) or Advisory Board(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Department, Authority and/or Staff Description and Organizational Chart
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Annual and Projected Budgets for Operations, Maintenance, Capital Improvements and Recreation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Programming
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Current Funding Sources
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Role of Volunteers
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Relationship(s) with School Districts, Other Public Agencies or Private Organizations
	Regional Authorities or Trailway Commissions Only
	Description of the Relationship between the Authority or Commission and the Recreation Departments of
N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> Participating Communities
N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> Articles of Incorporation
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. RECREATION INVENTORY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Description of Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Inventory of all Community Owned Parks and Recreation Facilities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Location Maps (site development plans recommended but not required)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Accessibility Assessment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Status Report for all Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities
N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. RESOURCE INVENTORY (OPTIONAL)
N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

- Description of the Method(s) Used to Solicit Public Input Before or During Preparation of the Plan, Including a Copy of the Survey or Meeting Agenda and a Summary of the Responses Received
- Copy of the Notice of the Availability of the Draft Plan for Public Review and Comment
 - Date of the Notice February 9, 2009
 - Type of Notice Posted Notice at Vergennes Twp., Lowell Twp., City of Lowell
 - Plan Location Vergennes Township, Lowell Township, City of Lowell, Lowell Library
 - Duration of Draft Plan Public Review Period (Must be at Least 30 Days) 30 days
- Copy of the Notice for the Public Meeting Held after the One Month Public Review Period and Before the Plan's Adoption by the Governing Body(ies)
 - Date of Notice February 25, 2009
 - Name of Newspaper Lowell Ledger
 - Date of Meeting March 11, 2009
- Copy of the Minutes from the Public Meeting

7. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

8. ACTION PROGRAM

Plans **must** be adopted by the highest level *governing body* (i.e., city council, county commission, township board). If planning is the responsibility of a Planning Commission, Park and Recreation Commission, Recreation Advisory Board or other local Board or Commission, the plan should **also** include a resolution from the Board or Commission recommending adoption of the plan by the governing body.

The local unit of government must submit the final plan to both the County and Regional Planning Agency for their information. Documentation that this was done must be submitted with the plan to the DNR.

Items 1, 3 and 4 below are **required** and must be included in the plan.

APPROVAL DOCUMENTATION: For multi-jurisdictional plans, **each** local unit of government must pass a resolution adopting the plan. Prepare and attach a separate page for each unit of government included in the plan.

- 1. Official resolution of adoption by the governing body dated: March 11, 2009
- 2. Official resolution of the N/A Commission or Board, recommending adoption of the plan by the governing body, dated: _____
- 3. Copy of letter transmitting adopted plan to County Planning Agency dated: March 18, 2009
- 4. Copy of letter transmitting adopted plan to Regional Planning Agency dated: March 18, 2009

NOTE: For multi-jurisdictional plans, Overall Certification must include the signature of each local unit of government. Prepare and attach a separate signature page for each unit of government included in the plan.

I hereby certify that the recreation plan for Lowell Area Recreation Authority includes the required content, as indicated above and as set forth by the DNR. (Local Unit of Government)

Mari Stone March 18, 2009
Authorized Official for the Local Unit of Government Date

This completed checklist must be signed and submitted with a locally adopted recreation plan to:

**GRANTS MANAGEMENT
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 30425
LANSING, MI 48909-7925**

The recreation plan is approved by the DNR and the community (ies) covered by the plan, as listed on page 1 of this checklist is/are eligible to apply for recreation grants through

By: _____ Date _____
Grants Management Date

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- A – Articles of Incorporation
- B – Recreation Plan Public Input Support Documents
- C – 2003 Lowell Area Trailway Study (Excerpts)

INTRODUCTION

The word recreation comes from the Latin word *recreatio*, meaning “restoration to health.” A modern definition of recreation is “refreshment of strength and spirits after work”. Governmental bodies, at all levels have recognized the importance of recreation to the quality of life and the physical and mental health of their citizens. This recognition has been manifested in the development of National, State and local park systems, public trails, preservation of natural areas and opening of government-owned lands to public recreation.

According to the National Recreation and Park Association¹, parks and recreation:

- Enhance the human potential through the provision of facilities, services and programs that meet human emotional, social and physical needs.
- Articulate environmental values through ecologically responsible management and environmental education programs.
- Promotes individual and community wellness to enhance the quality of life for all citizens.

Recreation planning is an exercise engaged in by local and state governments and authorities to anticipate change, promote needed change, and to control or direct recreational development in such a way as to benefit the entire community. It has the aim of harmonizing the available recreational resources and activities with the social, environmental, aesthetic, cultural, political, and economic requirements of the jurisdiction.

The purpose of this Lowell Area Recreation Authority Recreation Plan is to provide a policy and decision making guide regarding future trail development within the Lowell community. Key planning issues are identified, a clear set of goals and objectives are outlined, and specific implementation projects are identified.

Over the past ten years, there has been an increase in trailway planning and development throughout the state and within Kent County. As vehicle traffic increases, so has the awareness to provide additional means for safe, non-motorized transportation. The potential exists in the Lowell Area to connect several important community elements such as parks, schools, public facilities, and businesses with a non-motorized trailway.

¹ <http://www.nrpa.org>

LARA identified these connections as important goals in the trailway plan and realized the potential for increasing community support for the trailway plan by working cooperatively between the various communities represented by LARA. During the planning process it was also discovered that the opportunity existed to possibly connect the LARA Trailway Master Plan with adjacent communities' non-motorized trail plans, either current or proposed. This connectivity will benefit the residents of the region by providing them with the opportunity to utilize an ever-expanding trailway system.

As residential and commercial development continues, the needs for alternative means of transportation will continue to grow. This Recreation Plan will provide LARA with a valuable tool to plan for future right-of-way acquisition and to assist in securing funding for construction. The plan, when implemented, should benefit the health, safety, and general welfare of the entire Lowell area with continually improved non-motorized transportation and recreation opportunities.

The contents of this plan were developed based on guidance from the Lowell Area Recreation Authority, members of the public and an inventory of the existing resources in the area. In addition, information was utilized from the Kent County Recreation Plan, the Vergennes Township Recreation Plan, the Lowell Township Recreation Plan, the City of Lowell Recreation Plan, and the Lowell Area Trailway Study.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

LOWELL AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY

In late 1990's, the City of Lowell, Lowell Township and Vergennes Township began receiving feedback from residents indicating a strong desire for recreational trails. A November 1998 survey issued by the Vergennes Township Planning Commission asked respondents what types of recreation facilities they would like to see developed, and biking and walking paths were, by far, the highest ranked.

Shortly after the establishment in 1997 of the \$12.7 million Lowell Area Community Fund, a gift from Lowell resident Harold J. Englehardt, community meetings were held to assist the leadership in determining the kinds of projects that should be granted funding. Under the heading of Recreation, there was a very strong desire for biking and hiking trails.

Since trailways frequently cross-jurisdictional lines, it was imperative that the development of trails be a cooperative effort. An ad hoc group of community leaders from the City of Lowell, Lowell Township, Vergennes Township, the Lowell School District and the YMCA, along with committed volunteers from the area, began meeting in 2000 to discuss how a trail system could be developed that would effectively respond to the community's desire.

First, the joint committee applied for and received a \$25,000 grant from the Lowell Area Community Fund to conduct a feasibility study and develop a trailway master plan. The comprehensive study, completed in 2003, was performed by a professional design firm and resulted in a report providing a detailed plan of proposed trail routes, construction phasing and projected costs.

Secondly, a legal framework to facilitate this collaboration was required. An agreement was subsequently adopted in November of 2004 by the City of Lowell, Lowell Township, and Vergennes Township using the Urban Cooperation Act, Public Act 7 of 1967.

This legal framework created the Lowell Area Recreation Authority, (LARA), making LARA an officially recognized and empowered entity whose purpose is to establish and maintain a recreational trail system for the greater Lowell Community. The agreement specifically states that LARA was established "*for the purpose of developing, acquiring, constructing, operating and maintaining one or more trails for the use of and enjoyment of the residents of the Townships and the City*". Appendix A contains LARA's Articles of Incorporation.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

ORGANIZATION & ROLES

LARA is comprised solely of volunteers and is governed by the LARA board. The Board consists of officials and residents of the three communities that formed LARA: Vergennes Township, Lowell Township, and the City of Lowell. The LARA board consists of 7 members; two appointees from each municipality, one elected and one at large citizen. These 6 members then appoint an at large person to the Board. This multilateral cooperative effort is intended to give the majority of the concerned entities in the Lowell area an equal voice in the LARA recreation planning efforts. LARA also has worked closely with the Recreation departments of the three municipalities in the area to plan the trailway and connect it to many recreational facilities.

Meetings are held on a monthly basis and the public is invited to attend. Minutes of all meetings are posted.

PROGRAMMING

There are no current facilities in place at this time. However, the LARA Board is pursuing the development of the Phase 1 Trail project in 2010. This is a 3 mile trail that will connect the City of Lowell to Lowell Township and Vergennes Township. The trail will connect to existing and proposed non-motorized trail that will provide access to numerous recreation and natural feature opportunities.

CURRENT FUNDING SOURCES

LARA was created under the Urban Cooperation Act, PA 7 of 1967. It is a non-profit volunteer organization that was formed to research ways to improve the recreation opportunities for residents in the Lowell Area. Since LARA consists entirely of volunteers and has no paid staff, its current annual budget is about \$3,000, which is funded by equal contributions from Vergennes Township, Lowell Township and the City of Lowell. Other costs, such as those associated with trail planning, are funded through grants and donations provided by a number of community organizations, including the Lowell Area Community Fund, the Look Memorial Fund, the Lowell Rotary Club and the Flat River

Snowmobile Club. These funds are carefully managed to cover the authority's operating costs.

The LARA Master Plan, developed in 2003, proposes trail locations and alternatives that involve a number of organizations, including various local government departments, Lowell Area Public Schools, the Cooper Woodland Preserve and the Kent County Parks and Recreation department.

ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS

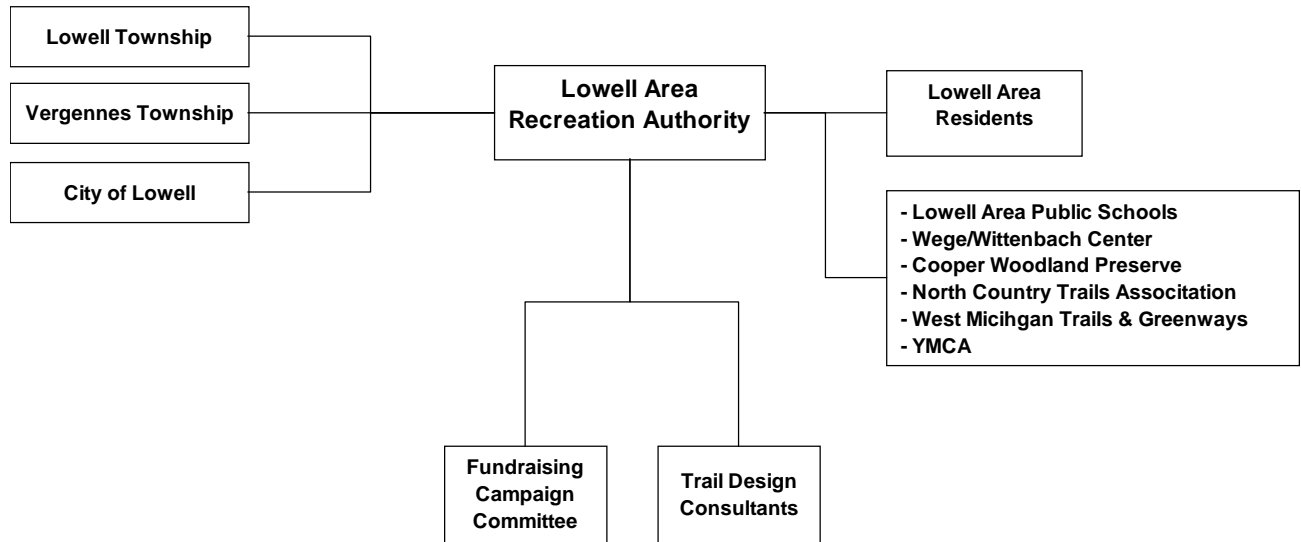
The members of the current LARA Board serve many roles related to the planning, funding and design of the proposed trail system. LARA has its own web page that is operated and maintained on a volunteer basis. Various fundraising efforts are underway, all led by Board volunteers. One of the current Board members is a licensed professional engineer and has taken the lead in developing the preliminary Masterplan as well as cost estimates and permitting requirements.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The LARA Master Plan, developed in 2003, proposes trail locations and alternatives that involve a number of organizations, including the three local government departments, Lowell Area Public Schools, the Cooper Woodland Preserve, The Lowell YMCA, the North Country Trail Association, the West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition and the Wittenbach/Wege Agri-science and Environmental Education Center. The LARA Board has maintained contact with all of these organizations during the planning stages of the proposed trail system to encourage connectivity, continuity and to seek input on overall community trail development.



LOWELL AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY ORGANIZATION



RECREATION INVENTORY

Currently, LARA does not own or operate any recreational facilities. However, its member communities, Lowell Township, Vergennes Township and the City of Lowell contain a wide variety of recreation facilities. Each of the three member communities have recently completed updates to their Recreation Plans which have been submitted to MDNR.

A summary of the recreational facilities in the area of LARA's jurisdiction is provided below. Following that summary is a description of a proposed Phase 1 Trail planned by LARA, which will provide access to many of these existing facilities.

LOWELL AREA COMMUNITY RECREATION FACILITIES

While not under the jurisdiction of LARA, the proposed trailway would provide connection to and/or impact the following park facilities, all of which are located in the Lowell Community, meeting additional recreational needs of residents. The inventory of these facilities was conducted using site visits, interviews of local municipal officials and existing documentation in Recreation Plans for Lowell Township, Vergennes Township and the City of Lowell.



Youth soccer is a popular recreational activity in the Lowell Community

Creekside Park – City of Lowell

Facilities – Soccer, softball & baseball fields, a beach volleyball court, picnic shelter, concession building, paved and lit pedestrian paths, horseshoe pits, restrooms, playground and a paved parking lot.

Richards Park – City of Lowell

Playground, a half basketball court, benches, ice-skating rink and paved pedestrian paths.

McMahon Park – City of Lowell

Two benches and a picnic table.

Stoney Lakeside Park – City of Lowell

27 acre pond that affords opportunities for swimming, fishing, boating, a beach, restrooms, playground, picnic shelter, horseshoe pit, parking lot, picnic tables, a rustic walking trail and an off-leash dog park.

Recreation Park – City of Lowell

Running track, football/soccer field with lights, softball field with lights, four t-ball fields, rustic camping, a boat launch on the Grand River and storage area for Lowell Crew team. This area is also used as the site for the annual Kent County Youth Fair.



Grand River park includes a stream that empties into the Grand River

Grand River Riverfront Park – Lowell Township

Lowell Township has one developed recreation area designed to serve the Township's residents. The acquisition and development of the 80-acre Grand River Riverfront Park is a direct result of the understanding that recreation areas are important to enhancing the overall "quality of life" within the community.

The park is handicapped accessible and offers a variety of facilities, including a playground, a play area, baseball/softball fields, 6 unlighted soccer fields, a Lacrosse field, hiking trails, benches, natural areas, Grand River frontage, a canoe/kayak launch site (non-motorized), a concession area, a fishing area/dock, picnic areas, a wetland education area, 2 pavilions and a gazebo.

Wittenbach/Wege Agri-science and Environmental Education Center – Vergennes Township

Located on Vergennes Road across from Lowell High School in Vergennes Township, this educational facility and natural area is used by the science and social studies curriculums for field trips, and provides students with hands-on experience programs. The facility is open to the public and includes over 3 miles of hiking trails, farm animals, gardens and wildlife viewing areas.

Cooper Wildlife Area – Vergennes Township

The Cooper Wildlife area was donated to the Lowell Educational Foundation in 2002. This area includes a hardwood forest that is well populated by deer, turkeys and the full range of local wildlife. Although donated for educational purposes, currently the area is underused due to lack of defined access and programs.

Lowell High School – Vergennes Township

Recreation facilities at the high school include: 8 outdoor tennis courts, one baseball diamond, one softball diamond, one soccer field and one practice soccer field, a football stadium, three practice football fields and two indoor gymnasiums.

Lowell Middle School – City of Lowell

Located on 80 acres on Foreman Street, contains six outdoor tennis courts, one baseball diamond, a practice football/baseball/soccer field and an indoor gymnasium including five basketball courts and seating for approximately 1,200.

Cherry Creek Elementary School – City of Lowell

Located on eight acres on Foreman Street, includes a playground, two outdoor basketball courts, one softball diamond, one baseball diamond, an open play area, a fitness course and a nature area. The school has four indoor basketball courts and seating for 600. Additionally, This property includes approximately 20 acres of protected wetland, and a two acre pond encircled by a foot path. The pond and wetland are used by the school for nature study and by the local residents for fishing and walking. There is an abundance of wildlife in the area including waterfowl, reptiles and amphibians.

Wege Economicology Site – Vergennes Township

In 2007, in a cooperative effort between the Lowell Public Schools, Vergennes Township, Lowell Township and the City of Lowell produced a study titled *Lowell Area Community Recreation Needs Analysis*. The impetus for this effort was the potential offer of a land donation in Vergennes

Township by Economicology, LLC and its sole shareholder, Mr. Peter M. Wege. The offer assumed a recreational use for the property and was contingent on the formation of a feasible and realistic plan for its use.

Specifically, the purpose of the study was to (1) conduct an area-wide recreation needs analysis for the community (2) assist the City and the two Townships in the required five-year update of their Recreation Plans and (3) evaluate a range of alternative uses for the possible gift from Mr. Wege. Alternatives that were considered included the construction of a new YMCA, a community center and a natural area.

In all of the options evaluated for the use of the Economicology site, a common component was the placement of a portion of the LARA trail along the



A LARA Trail will likely be located near the western edge of the Economicology site

western edge. While no decision has been made as to the ultimate use of the property, the LARA board has received word that the trail will be allowed to be placed within the property in an easement, traversing through tall grasses, wetlands and rolling hills, a distance from busy Alden Nash Road.

North Country Trail – City of Lowell, Lowell Township, Vergennes Township - The North Country Trail is part of a larger trail network which when fully completed will stretch nearly 4,600 miles from Vermont to North Dakota; 1,600 miles are already complete. The North Country Trail enters into Lowell Township in the southeast corner, and follows several County roads along with an abandoned railroad right-of-way north through the Township to the City of Lowell. From the City of Lowell the Trail extends north through the Lowell State Game Area in Vergennes Township.



Bradford White Nature Preserve – Lowell Township - The Bradford White Preserve harbors 2,000 feet of a cold water stream, steep hills and ravines covered in mature deciduous forest, and planted conifers. A diversity of native trees and shrubs provides a good variety of fruit and seeds throughout the year for wildlife. A foot path leads visitors from the parking area, through the pines, over the creek, and through the forested valley and hills.

North Washington Property – City of Lowell – This 27 acre tract of land is surrounded on the west and north sides by the Flat River at the northeast corner of the City of Lowell. The property is the current location for a local Boy Scout troop and offers wooded hiking areas as well as wildlife viewing.

PROPOSED LARA TRAILS

The trail Masterplan completed by LARA in 2003 contemplated several trail projects that would eventually connect all the Lowell communities through a system of new trails and existing sidewalks.

- **Phase 1** of the trail would be in Vergennes and Lowell Townships and the City of Lowell connecting the Wege/Wittenbach Center, Lowell High School, Cooper Woodland Preserve, Cherry Creek Elementary, Creekside Park and the proposed Lowell to Greenville Rail Trail.
- **Phase 2** would provide a connection from Main Street in Lowell to the Safe Routes to School Trail on Gee Drive.
- **Phase 3** connects to Recreation Park and the Moose and Rogers properties within the City, as well as the North Country Trail and the proposed Lowell to Ionia Rail Trail.

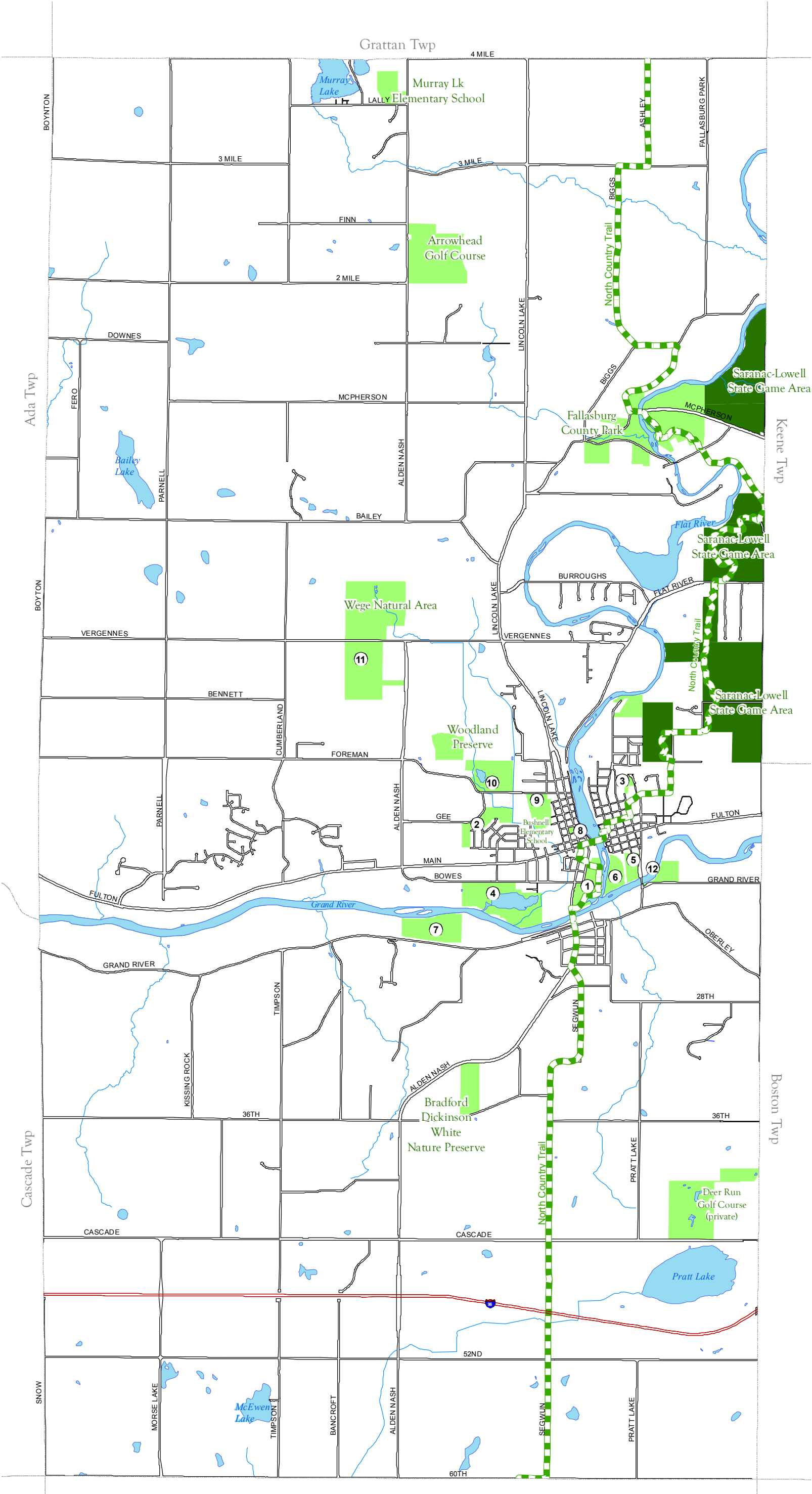
ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT FOR LARA FACILITIES

As stated earlier, the LARA does not currently own or operate any recreational facilities. The proposed LARA trails are intended to be universally accessible.

STATUS REPORT FOR GRANT ASSISTED PARKS

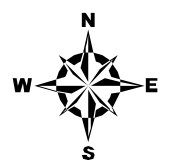
At this time. The LARA does not own or operate any parks or recreation facilities that have received grant assistance.

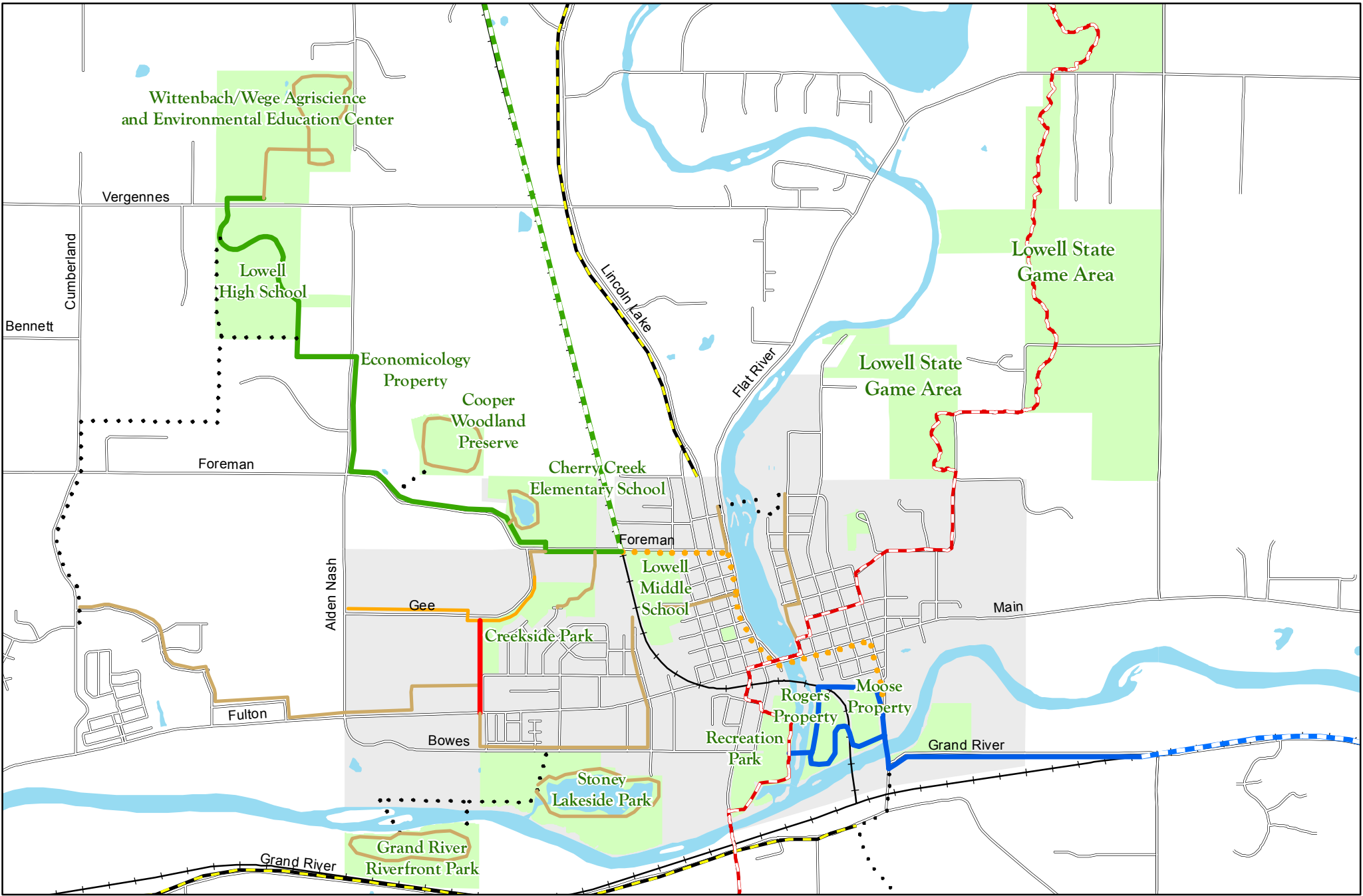
- 1** Recreation Park
 - Open play field
 - 1 Football field
 - 1 Softball field
 - 1 Track
 - Natural area
 - Water frontage
 - Boat launch
 - Bleachers
 - Horse arena
 - Exhibit building
 - Fishing
 - Camping
- 2** Creekside Park
 - Playground
 - 3 Baseball field
 - 3 Soccer fields
 - 1 Softball fields
 - 1 Volleyball court
 - Paved walkway
 - Benches
 - Picnic tables
 - Grills
 - Picnic shelter
 - Natural area
 - Bleachers
 - Concession area
- 3** McMahon Park
 - Benches
 - Picnic Area
- 4** Stoney Lakeside Park
 - Playground
 - Benches
 - Picnic tables
 - Picnic shelter
 - Natural area
 - Water frontage
 - Picnic Areas
 - Swimming
 - Fishing
 - Dog walking park
- 5** Rogers Park
 - Open space
- 6** Moose Park
 - Open space
- 7** Grand River Park
 - Playground
 - Open play area
 - 1 Baseball field
 - 1 Softball field
 - 6 Soccer fields
 - Hiking/walking trail
 - Paved walkway
 - Benches
 - Picnic tables
 - Picnic shelter
 - Grills
 - Natural area
 - Water frontage
 - Canoe/kayak launch
 - Concession Area
 - Fishing
- 8** Richards Park
 - Playground
 - 1 Basketball court (1/2 court)
 - 1 Open play area
 - Paved walkway
 - Benches
 - Picnic tables
- 9** Lowell Middle School
 - 6 Tennis courts
 - 6 Basketball courts (1/2 court)
 - Hard surface play area
 - Open play field
 - 2 Baseball field
 - Indoor gymnasium with bleachers
- 10** Cherry Creek Elementary School
 - 6 Basketball courts (1/2 court)
 - Hard surface play area
 - Playground
 - Open play field
 - Baseball field
 - Softball field
 - Fitness course
 - Picnic tables
 - Indoor gymnasium with bleachers
- 11** Lowell High School
 - 8 Tennis courts
 - Open play field
 - 1 Baseball field
 - 1 Softball field
 - 3 football/soccer practice fields
 - 1 Stadium with concessions, lighting
 - Track
 - 2 Soccer fields
 - Gymnasium
 - Weightroom
 - Walking/hiking trails
- 12** Upper Bridge Park
 - Open Space



Vergennes Township
 Lowell Township
 City of Lowell

Existing
 Recreational
 Facilities






Lowell Area Recreation Authority

Map 3. Trailway Recreation Plan


March 11, 2009


- - - North Country Trail
- LARA Trail - Phase 1
- LARA Trail - Phase 2
- LARA Trail - Phase 3
- Potential Connectors
- Existing Sidewalk / Trail
- Safe Routes 2 School (2009)
- Rail to Trail Connector Route
- - - Lowell-Greenville Rail Trail
- - - Lowell Ionia Rail Trail
- - - Existing/Proposed Kent County Trail
- Recreational Facilities



N

1 inch = 2,500 feet





TRAILWAY
LOWELL AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY

Sources: LARA, GVMC, Michigan CGI

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

As stated in the Community Description section of this plan, the genesis of the planning for a community-wide trail system was the establishment in 1997 of the \$12.7 million Lowell Area Community Fund. Community meetings were held at that time to assist the leadership in determining the kinds of projects that should be granted funding. Under the heading of Recreation, there was a very strong desire for biking and hiking trails.

Since trailways frequently cross-jurisdictional lines, it was imperative that the development of trails be a cooperative effort. An ad hoc group of community leaders from the City of Lowell, Lowell Township, Vergennes Township, the Lowell School District and the YMCA, along with committed volunteers from the area, began meeting in 2000 to discuss how a trail system could be developed that would effectively respond to the community's desire.

The joint committee applied for and received a \$25,000 grant from the Lowell Area Community Fund to conduct a feasibility study and develop a trailway master plan. The comprehensive study, completed in 2003, was performed by Landscape Architects & Planners and H&H Engineering, resulted in a report providing a detailed plan of proposed trail routes, construction phasing and projected costs. (Excerpts are provided in the appendix of this Recreation Plan).

Upon the completion of the trail masterplan, the LARA Board began to focus their attention to the development of the various phases of the trail.

In 2008, the LARA Board decided that in order to proceed, it need to develop an organized implementation plan that addressed funding and actual design one of Phase 1 of the overall plan. To that end, the Board retained the services of a funding consultant. In addition, a professional engineering firm was retained to assist the Board in the design of Phase 1 and in the development of grant applications.

In order to qualify for the submission of MDNR Trust Fund Grants, the LARA Board pursued the completion of this Recreation Plan in early 2009.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

A recreation plan must be founded on a significant amount of public involvement and participation to ensure that the plan meets the needs and desires community. Since its inception in 2004, the LARA Board has done an outstanding job of seeking public input during the planning process for the proposed trail system. These efforts include the following:

ON GOING PUBLIC AWARENESS & INPUT EFFORTS



www.lowellareatrailway.org



LOWELL RIVERWALK FESTIVAL



- A LARA Trail website provides access to the LARA Trail Master Plan, monthly meeting minutes, meeting schedules, and current news in addition to links to other trail-related web sites. The site also includes an on-line questionnaire where inquiries can be made about the proposed trail projects.
- Each spring, the LARA Board hosts an informational booth at the annual Lowell Community Expo. At this event, attended by hundreds of Lowell area residents, interested persons can ask questions and obtain information about the proposed trail projects. The LARA booth has been placed next to the booth for the North Country Trail system to demonstrate the connection of the two systems and to promote trail use.
- The LARA Board also provides display booths at other community events in the Lowell area including the summer music events in downtown Lowell, the Kent County Youth fair held on the Lowell Fairgrounds and in parades. These events are attended by hundreds of residents from the entire Lowell area, allowing the LARA Board to introduce the proposed trail system to a broad audience.
- The LARA trail system was included and discussed in each of recently updated recreation plans for the City of Lowell, Lowell Township and Vergennes Township. Public meetings were held for each of these recreation plans where public input was solicited, and members of LARA participated in each of these meetings.
- Several newspaper articles about the LARA Board and the proposed trail system have been published in the local newspaper. (see appendix)
- The LARA Board actively participates with Lowell Chamber of Commerce and their offices are housed at the Lowell Chamber of



Commerce. As a result, they are frequently visited by local residents and business owners.

- The LARA Board is an active participant with the West Michigan Trail & Greenways Coalition efforts to obtain and develop abandoned rail right of way from Lowell to Greenville and Lowell to Ionia. Through these efforts, the public has been made aware of LARA's trail efforts and their desire to connect with the rail to trail systems.
- A link to the railway website is provided on the websites of the City of Lowell, Vergennes Township and Vergennes Township.

RECREATION PLAN INPUT

- Copies of the draft Recreation Plan were placed on display on the morning of February 9, 2009 at the offices of Vergennes Township, Lowell Township, the City of Lowell, and the Lowell Public Library. Reviewers were encouraged to complete input forms, contact the web site, contact Board members and to attend a public information meeting.
- A public meeting to discuss the proposed Recreation Plan was held at 6 p.m. on March 11, 2009 at the Lowell Township offices. The meeting was advertised in the local newspaper, the Lowell Ledger on February 25, 2009 on page 13 and other articles mentioning the meeting were also published. The meeting date was also publicized at the locations where the draft plan was made available for review. The meeting was discussed at the March 2, 2009 City of Lowell Council meeting, which is televised each day on the local cable network. The meeting was also discussed and announced at the Vergennes Township meeting on March 9, 2009.

The meeting was attended by 26 persons representing Lowell Township, Vergennes Township and the City of Lowell.

- Appendix B provides the following supporting information:
 - Notice of Draft Plan Availability
 - Public Input form
 - Notice of Public Meeting
 - Newspaper articles mentioning meeting
 - Minutes of Meeting
 - Copy of meeting presentation

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This section describes the goals and objectives developed during the preparation of this Recreation Plan. In developing these goals and objectives the LARA Board took into consideration public input as well as the physical as well as demographic characteristics of the communities the trail system will serve.

PUBLIC INPUT

Following is a summary of the major common issues provided through public input:

- We need a safe way to walk outside of the City.
- Lowell has many seniors who would use this type of facility.
- Provide a way to walk/bike to the Wege/Wittenbach Center.
- Don't just widen the road; it's not safe to walk or bike.
- We need a safe way to cross the Flat River and the Grand River as pedestrians.
- Provide more opportunities for access to the Cooper Woodland; nobody knows where it is.
- If we might have a YMCA at the Wege (Economicology) property, we should have a way to safely get there.
- The roads surrounding the Lowell area are too busy for safe running and bicycle travel.
- We need a way to connect the proposed Lowell-Greenville and Lowell-Ionia rail trails.
- Trails would add value to our properties. Look at Ada Township and Rockford.
- More people are walking for exercise, but they have no place to walk outside of the City.
- There are too many bicycles on the road, and they don't mix well with traffic. They should be on a trail.
- If you are putting trails in rural areas, make sure they have minimal impact on the natural areas.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

A detailed analysis of the physical characteristics of the LARA communities was conducted in the 2003 Lowell Area Trailway Study (See Appendix C).

The physical features do not change a great deal over the short term and include such natural features as soils, water features, topography, weather patterns, vegetation and wildlife. Physical features also include the built environment and include factors such as land use, transportation and historic sites.

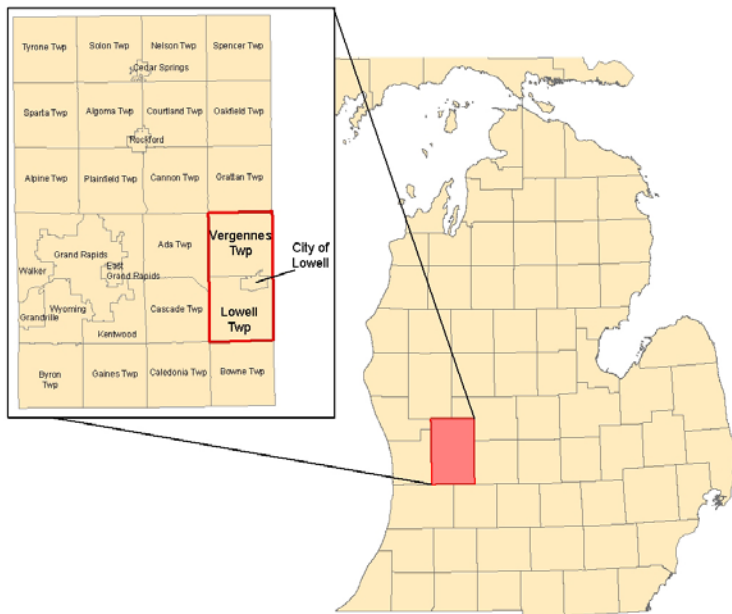
A significant portion of the Lowell community, particularly in Lowell and Vergennes Townships, are rural in nature. As a result, many Lowell area residents consider the physical resources of the area to be of paramount value. These resources include such diverse elements as large tracts of farmland, unspoiled wilderness, rich wetlands and waterways, and scenic hills.

The Lowell area that is served by LARA is located in the eastern portion of Kent County, and Kent County is located in the western portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

The community is about 20 miles east of Grand Rapids, which is one of Michigan's major metropolitan areas. Other than Grand Rapids, the metropolitan area includes several communities: Kentwood, Wyoming and East Grand Rapids. This region is about 50 miles southeast of Muskegon, 50 miles north of Kalamazoo, 50 miles west of Lansing, 140 miles west of Detroit, 190 miles northeast of Chicago, and 210 miles south of the Mackinac Bridge.

Climate has a significant influence on the type of development that occurs in the area as well as the types of recreational opportunities that can, or should, occur. Since Michigan experiences all four seasons, it is essential that the climate is factored into the decision-making process.

The terrain in the Lowell Community can be described as gently rolling. The highest land is



Map 1. Location of Vergennes Township, Lowell Township and City of Lowell

found in Lowell and Vergennes Townships, and the low-lying areas are primarily located along the Grand River. Slopes frequently exceed five percent, and slopes of 10 percent or more are not uncommon. These areas may be appropriate for sledding hills, trails and skiing areas. However, parts of the community are also relatively flat, particularly near the Grand River and Flat River floodplains and in some of the agricultural areas in Lowell and Vergennes Townships.

The overall character of the Lowell area is rural and agricultural, with the exception of the urban and built-up nature of the City of Lowell. The northern portions of Vergennes Township, as well as the southern



The Grand River runs east-to-west through the region, and provides recreational opportunities for residents

portions of Lowell Township contain fertile soils that are highly conducive to agricultural production. Forested areas become more predominant in areas near the Flat River and Grand River. These areas may be on excellent location for various passive recreational uses such as non-motorized trails and pathways.

While scattered residential uses can be found throughout the community, the majority of residential development and other non-farm activities occurring in any significant pattern are found near the City of Lowell.

The region's predominant natural corridors are the Flat River and the Grand River with their associated wetlands, backwaters, and tributaries such as Cherry Creek. Natural corridors preserve open space, provide habitat for wildlife, and are often preferred for trailway development over man-made corridors because of their natural beauty. Natural corridors often provide better pedestrian-vehicle separation and better opportunities for viewing wildlife.



Agriculture still plays an important role in Lowell and Vergennes Townships

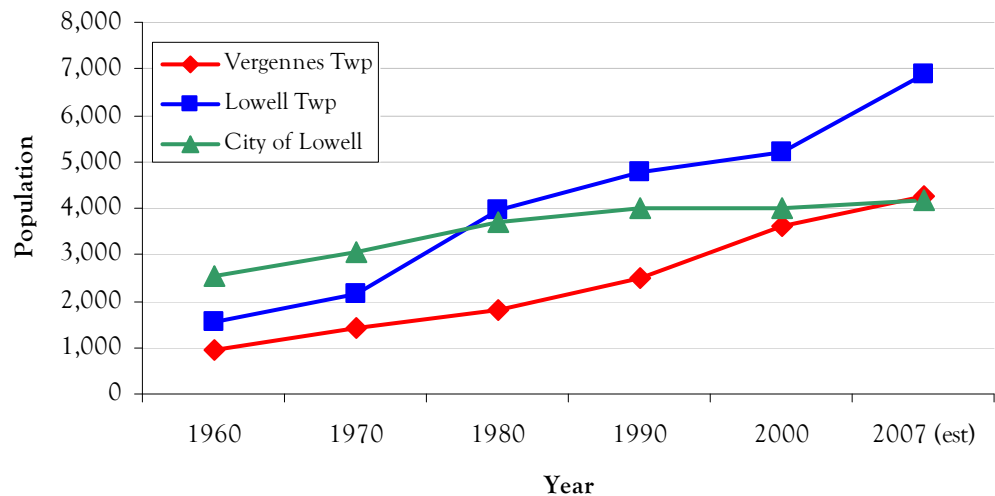
Special consideration should be given to allow viewing of wildlife along the trail sections in natural corridors while avoiding excessive disturbance to the habitats contained in them. While natural corridors are often preferred for trailways, in many cases they tend to cost more for implementation due to marginal soils and the costs of clearing the land.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Population - The Lowell community experienced steady growth in population from 1970 to 2000. Over this 40-year period, the community has experienced a 2.4% annual increase in residents from 1960 to 2007. The combined population of Vergennes Township, Lowell Township and the City of Lowell increased from 5,057 in 1960 to 12,843 persons in 2000, which is an increase of 153%.

The population has continued to grow in recent years, with the population in 2007 estimated at 15,272. This rate of growth is leading to local concern that development to accommodate the expanding population may begin to undermine the rural character and natural features that contribute to the quality of life in the community. The following graph illustrates population change in the Lowell Community from 1960-2007.

**Population Change in the Lowell Community
1960-2007**



These trends are consistent with the movement of new families with children into the community. Based on the increasing housing projects and development, this trend is likely to continue and to generate further demand for recreational facilities and services.

Other Demographic Information - The following table presents additional information from the 2000 census from the three LARA communities.

Category	2000 Census Data		
	City of Lowell	Lowell Twp	Verg Twp
Median Household Income	\$42,326	\$58,629	\$61,500
Avg Age	35	34	33
High School Degree	41.9%	33.4%	36.4%
Bachelors Degree	11.5%	15.5%	21.4%
Owner Occupied Housing	65.0%	90.7%	89.4%
Rental Housing	29.9%	6.6%	6.6%
Walk to Work	6.3%	0.4%	0%
Avg Commute to Work (mins)	21	25	26

Observations - As a whole, the Lowell area is a growing community, the current economic status of the state and country notwithstanding. Of the four directions from Grand Rapids, it is the last to see suburban growth and development, which has allowed the communities more time to better plan for the inevitable. The Vergennes Township and Lowell Township communities have been careful to preserve their rural character while allowing controlled residential and commercial growth in defined areas. The City of Lowell remains the center of the community, the location of most of the commercial and industrial development and affordable housing. Recent years has seen commercial growth in Lowell township along the M-21 corridor outside of the City and has resulted in more vehicle and pedestrians traffic fro the City to the Township.

Currently, there are no trail facilities within easy access to the Lowell Community. Paved trails exist in Ada Township to the west, Rockford to the north and Portland to the far east (30 miles), but local pedestrian pathways are limited to sidewalks in the City, which still contains many blocks without sidewalks on either side of the road.

Most of the Lowell Community is employed outside of Lowell, commuting to work by car to Grand Rapids, Ionia, Lansing and beyond. There is only limited public transportation to these areas for senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

The average age of the population in the community is 34.

Income levels in the Lowell Community are varied, with the lowest being in the City of Lowell.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A series of three goal statements has been developed to form the foundation of this Recreation Plan. The goals are intended to describe a desirable end state or the condition of recreation for the Lowell Area Recreation Authority over the life of this plan, but some goals will remain relevant beyond this timeframe. The goal statements are intentionally general but are felt to be attainable through concerted effort. The objective statements tend to be more specific and may be regarded as milestones in the journey to achieve the larger goal.

Goal 1. - Develop a non-motorized trail system that will provide safe pedestrian access to area parks, schools and natural resources for Lowell Area residents of all ages and abilities without using local tax funds.

Objectives:

1. Pursue development of the Phase 1 trail.
2. Continue current on-going planning process with a built-in procedure for receiving public input and evaluation of proposed trailway projects.
3. Actively pursue private financing and grant opportunities for trail development.
4. Develop long term maintenance plan for trail system.

Goal 2. Coordinate the development and maintenance of a regional trail with those of other agencies and groups.

Objectives:

1. Provide a trail that connects to and complements those pedestrian facilities of the City of Lowell, Kent County, the North Country Trail, Lowell Public Schools Safe Routes to School, Fred Meijer Trail systems, and others.
2. Cooperate and participate in community-wide recreation projects.
3. Seek active participation in the planning of recreation facilities and/or opportunities that affect residents of the Lowell community.

Goal 3. Protect and enhance those natural resources that have outstanding recreational value to the public.

Objectives:

1. Include and promote trailway features that complement natural areas and historic sites within the community.
2. Develop recreational trails in a manner that will not result in an adverse impact on the natural and cultural resources of the site or of the area.
3. Where feasible, cooperate with local governments in acquiring environmentally sensitive lands and culturally valuable resources to ensure their preservation and proper development.

ACTION PROGRAM

This section of the Recreation Plan details what the Lowell Area Recreation Authority plans to accomplish over the next five years. The Action Program is broken down by year and includes the action to be taken, a cost estimate and the potential funding sources for each action.

Year	Action	Cost estimate	Potential Funding Source
2009	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete survey and preliminary design for Phase 1 Trail. 2. Submit grant applications to MDNR and MDOT for Phase 1 Trail. 3. Implement public & private fund raising efforts for Phase 1 Trail. 4. Develop preliminary maintenance plan for Phase 1 Trail. 5. Continue participation in local and regional trail groups to encourage coordination and interconnection of trail projects. 6. Update LARA Web page to reflect current trail activities. 7. Participate in Lowell Area Expo and other public events to seek input on current and planned trail activities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$ 42,000 2. \$ 5,000 3. \$ 40,000 4. \$ 1,500 5. Volunteer 6. \$ 500 7. \$ 1,500 	Grants, private contributions /donations, fund-raisers and foundations.
2010	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Design and seek bids for Phase 1 Trail 2. Complete Phase 1 Construction of Trail 3. Finalize arrangements for operation and maintenance of the Phase 1 Trail 4. Continue participation in local and regional trail groups to encourage coordination and interconnection of trail projects. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$ 24,000 2. \$ 1,400,000 3. \$ 1,000 4. \$ 0 	Grants, private contributions /donations, fund-raisers and foundations

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Update LARA Web page to reflect current trail activities. 6. Develop and implement public information events to educate area residents on trail opportunities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. \$ 500 6. \$ 1,500 	
2011	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete survey and preliminary design for Phase 2 Trail. 2. Submit grant applications for Phase 2 Trail. 3. Implement public & private fund raising efforts for Phase 2 Trail. 4. Continue participation in local and regional trail groups to encourage coordination and interconnection of trail projects. 5. Update LARA Web page to reflect current trail activities. 6. Continue with public information events to educate area residents on trail opportunities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$ 20,000 2. \$ 2,500 3. \$ 2,500 4. Volunteer 5. \$ 500 6. \$ 1,500 	Grants, private contributions /donations, fund-raisers and foundations
2012	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Design and seek bids for Phase 2 Trail 2. Complete Phase 2 Construction of Trail 3. Finalize arrangements for operation and maintenance of the Phase 2 Trail 4. Continue participation in local and regional trail groups to encourage coordination and interconnection of trail projects. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$ 5,000 2. \$ 100,000 3. \$ 1,000 4. Volunteer 	Grants, private contributions /donations, fund-raisers and foundations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Update LARA Web page to reflect current trail activities. 6. Continue with public information events to educate area residents on trail opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. \$ 500 6. \$ 1,500 	
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete survey and preliminary design for Phase 3 Trail. 2. Submit grant applications for Phase 3 Trail. 3. Implement public & private fund raising efforts for Phase 3 Trail. 4. Continue participation in local and regional trail groups to encourage coordination and interconnection of trail projects. 5. Update LARA Web page to reflect current trail activities. 6. Continue with public information events to educate area residents on trail opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$ 7,500 2. \$ 2,500 3. \$ 2,500 4. Volunteer 5. \$ 500 6. \$ 1,500 	Grants, private contributions /donations, fund-raisers and foundations
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Design and seek bids for Phase 3 Trail 2. Complete Phase 2 Construction of Trail 3. Finalize arrangements for operation and maintenance of the Phase 3 Trail 4. Continue participation in local and regional trail groups to encourage coordination and interconnection of trail projects. 5. Update LARA Web page to reflect current trail activities. 6. Continue with public information events to educate area residents on trail opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$ 5,000 2. \$ 250,000 3. \$ 1,000 4. Volunteer 5. \$ 500 6. \$ 1,500 	Grants, private contributions /donations, fund-raisers and foundations

APPENDIX A
LARA ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

LOWELL AREA TRAIL AGREEMENT

THIS AGREEMENT is made 15th day of November, 2004, by and between the Township of Vergennes, the Charter Township of Lowell and the City of Lowell, all in Kent County, Michigan (the "Constituent Units"):

WHEREAS, the City of Lowell, the Township of Vergennes and the Charter Township of Lowell desire to work cooperatively for the purpose of establishing and providing a separate legal entity to be known as the "Lowell Area Recreation Authority" for the purpose of developing, acquiring, constructing, operating and maintaining one or more trails for the use and enjoyment of the residents of the Townships and the City;

WHEREAS, the Lowell Charter Township Board, the Vergennes Township Board and the Lowell City Council have determined that it would be in the best interests of Lowell Charter Township, Vergennes Township and the City of Lowell to establish, operate and maintain a trail system or systems jointly;

WHEREAS, the Urban Cooperation Act, Act 7 of the Public Acts of Michigan of 1967, First Extra Session ("Act 7"), authorizes the city and the townships to agree to form a board constituting a separate legal entity, which board is to establish, operate and maintain such trails and a trail system; and

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the Charter Township of Lowell, the Township of Vergennes and the City of Lowell to establish a governing board which shall have the authority and responsibilities as set forth in this Agreement.

IN CONSIDERATION OF THE FOREGOING, the Charter Township of Lowell, the Township of Vergennes and the City of Lowell agree as follows:

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT

ARTICLE I ESTABLISHMENT

Pursuant to Act 7, there is hereby established a separate legal entity known as the Lowell Area Recreation Authority (hereafter, the "Authority").

The Authority shall have the authority to sue and be sued in any court of this state. It shall include all territory embraced within its Constituent Units. It shall possess, in addition to the authority expressly granted by this Agreement, all authority granted by statutes, including those authorities which are permissive, in addition to all authority necessary to carry out the purposes of this Agreement and those incident thereto. The enumeration of any authority granted herein shall not be construed as a limitation on its authority, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

ARTICLE II
CONSTITUENT UNITS

The local governmental units included in the Authority (referred to herein as the “Constituent Units”) are the City of Lowell, Kent County, Michigan, the Township of Vergennes, Kent County, Michigan, and the Charter Township of Lowell, Kent County, Michigan.

An additional local governmental unit may become a part of the Authority upon approval of the governing bodies of each of the Constituent Units and upon amendment of this Agreement to reflect the role, duties and responsibilities of the additional local governmental unit so added to the Authority.

ARTICLE III
PURPOSES

The purpose of the Authority shall be to establish, develop, operate and maintain trails and a trail system in the best interest of the City and the Townships, within the budgetary and personnel resources available to the Authority, and in a manner that provides a safe and effective trail system and recreational area for residents of the Townships and the City.

In furtherance of this purpose, the Authority may do any or all of the following:

- Contract with a governmental entity, a profit or non-profit cooperation, a partnership, a limited liability company or a private individual for goods or services necessary or incidental to the establishment, development, operation and maintenance of one or more trail projects.
- Prepare and implement policies for the use of one or more trail projects.
- Study and adopt short-term and long-range plans for trail development and trail improvement.
- Approve the proposed annual operating budget and the proposed capital expenditure budget, and authorize expenditures from the approved budgets and other expenditures approved by the Constituent Units.
- Determine compensation for employees of the Authority.
- Ensure that adequate insurance is provided to protect itself, the Constituent Units, and their officers, employees and agents from loss by way of damage to trail area property, and from claims by third parties, and provide workers compensation or similar coverage as provided by law.
- Accept gifts, grants, assistance funds, bequests or donations for trail project purposes and make appropriate agreements with such donors or grantors pertaining to conditions of use of the funds.

- Approve the sale or disposal of surplus trail project property, subject to approval of each Constituent Unit.
- Other activities not specifically authorized herein, but necessary, helpful or incidental to the authority granted herein.

ARTICLE IV TERM

This Agreement shall have an initial term of five years, subject to withdrawal and termination as provided in Article XI.

Upon the expiration of five years, the Constituents Units shall review the terms of this Agreement to evaluate and determine whether any changes are necessary or advisable and, if so, shall execute a new agreement incorporating such changes, provided that each Constituent Unit determines that it is in its best interest to continue participation in the Authority.

If no changes are incorporated after the initial five year term, the Agreement shall be automatically renewed for successive five-year periods, subject to the right of withdrawal, unless the Constituent Units agree to a different term of extension.

ARTICLE V AUTHORITY BOARD

Section A. Governing Body

The governing body of the Authority shall be known as the “Lowell Area Recreation Board” (hereafter, the “Board”), which is hereby vested with the management of the Authority’s business and affairs.

Section B. Board Members

- The Board shall consist of seven members, comprised of the following:
- A member of the Lowell Charter Township Board, appointed by majority vote of the Township Board.
- A member of the Vergennes Township Board, appointed by majority vote of the Township Board.
- A member of the Lowell City Council, appointed by majority vote of the City Council.
- One resident of Vergennes Township, appointed by majority vote of the Township Board.
- One resident of the Charter Township of Lowell, appointed by majority vote of the Township Board.

- One resident of the City of Lowell, appointed by the City Council.
- One resident of the City or the Townships, appointed jointly by the Lowell Charter Township Board, the Vergennes Township Board and the Lowell City Council.

A Constituent Unit may appoint an alternate member(s) who may sit on the Board in the absence of a regular member appointed by the Constituent Unit. Such alternate shall have all the powers and duties of a regular member while the regular member is absent.

Township Supervisors and the City Mayor and City Manager shall not serve as Board members or alternate members.

Section C. Term of Office

The term of office of the members of the Board shall be for two years; provided, however, the term of a member appointed by virtue of membership on the governing body of a Constituent Unit shall terminate if that member resigns or otherwise ceases to be a member of the governing body.

No person who has served for 4-1/2 or more consecutive years shall be eligible for appointment to the Board unless it has been at least two years since that person served on the Board. Years of service with less than a two-year interval between them shall be considered consecutive years.

The Constituent Units may agree to vary the terms of initial appointments so as to stagger the terms of the appointed resident members.

If a Township Board member or City Council member who is serving on the Board ceases to hold his or her office on the Township Board or City Council, that seat on the Board shall immediately become vacant and the governing body of the respective Constituent Unit shall appoint a replacement member at its next regular meeting, who shall serve for the un-expired remainder of the term of that seat on the Board.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, any member may be removed from office at will by the Constituent Unit that appointed the member, without cause or prior notice; provided however, as to the member jointly appointed, the affirmative vote for removal of the governing board of any of the Constituent Units shall be sufficient to cause the termination of that member, also without cause or prior notice. If a member is removed from office by a Constituent Unit, that Constituent Unit shall promptly notify the remaining Constituent Units of the removal.

Section D. Compensation

Members of the Board shall serve without compensation from the Authority and Constituent Units, but shall be entitled to reimbursement from the Board for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of his or her duties as a member of the Board.

Section E. Vacancies

A seat on the Board shall become vacant by death, disability, resignation or removal; or, if membership on the governing body of a Constituent Unit is a prerequisite for a seat, then upon termination of such membership. A vacancy shall be filled in the same manner as above for the unexpired term of the original appointment.

Section F. Bylaws

This Agreement shall be the bylaws of the Board; provided, however, that the Board may adopt additional procedural rules governing the conduct of its meetings, insofar as such procedural rules do not conflict with the terms of this Agreement. If the Board does not adopt procedural rules, the conduct of its meetings shall be governed by the most recent version of Robert's Rules of Order.

Section G. Annual Organizational Meeting

Within 30 days from the effective date of this Agreement and, thereafter, annually within 30 days after the commencement of the Authority's fiscal year, the Board shall conduct its organizational meeting at which the following officers shall be elected from the members of the Board by majority vote of the Board: Chairperson; Vice-Chairperson; Secretary; and Treasurer. The elected officers shall serve until a successor is elected. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson shall not both be persons appointed by the same Constituent Unit.

Section H. Officers

The Chairperson of the Board shall be the presiding officer thereof. In the absence or disability of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson shall perform the duties of the Chairperson. The Secretary shall be the recording officer of the Board and, subject to the approval of the Board, may employ such assistants as may be necessary. The Treasurer shall be the custodian of the funds of the Authority and, subject to the approval of the Board, may employ such assistants as may be necessary.

All monies of the Authority shall be deposited in an insured financial institution to be designated by the Board. Three members of the Board, including the Chairperson, the Treasurer and another member, shall be authorized by the Board to sign checks. All checks or other forms of withdrawal shall be signed by at least two authorized members of the Board. Each member signing checks shall be bonded in an amount to be determined by the Board. The officers of the Board shall have such additional powers and duties as may be conferred upon them, from time to time, by the Board.

Section I. Meetings

Regular meetings of the Board shall be held at least quarterly at such times as shall be prescribed by the Board.

The Chairperson or any other two members of the Board may call a special meeting of the Board by serving written notice of the time, place and purpose thereof upon each member of the Board, either in person or by providing written notice at his or her place of residence, at least 18

hours in advance of such special meeting. Special meetings of the Board at which all members are present shall be deemed valid, even through notice thereof may not have been provided in the manner described above. Any member of the Board may waive notice of any special meeting, either before or after the holding thereof.

The Board is a public body and, therefore, all meetings of the Board shall be noticed and conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Michigan Open Meetings Act, MCL 15.261, et seq.

Section J. Quorum and Voting

A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the Board members then serving; provided, however, at least one representative appointed by each Constituent Unit shall be present at the annual organizational meeting in order to transact business.

The Board shall act only by motion or resolution adopted by a majority of the members present and serving, except where a different voting composition is required by the terms of this Agreement. A roll call vote shall be taken and recorded in the minutes for all substantive matters decided by the Board.

The Board shall keep written minutes of its meetings, which shall be approved at the next regular meeting, and which shall thereafter be signed by the Secretary. Upon approval, the Secretary shall provide a copy of the minutes to each Constituent Unit.

Section K. Committees

The Board may appoint standing or ad hoc committees from time-to-time to study and make recommendations to the Board on matters involving or related to its purposes and duties.

Section L. Board Records

The records of the Board shall be available to the public in accordance with the requirements of the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, MCL 15.231, et seq. Copies of meeting minutes shall be provided to each Constituent Unit. The Constituent Unit may post or disseminate the minutes.

ARTICLE VI
PERSONAL AND REAL PROPERTY

Section A. Ownership of Real Property and Fixtures

The Authority shall be the sole fee owner of the easements and other property it may acquire for the trail system or other purposes of this Agreement during the term of this Agreement.

Any and all fixtures now present and subsequently erected on such property by the Authority, including, but not limited to, signs, fencing, in-ground benches and pavilions, shall be held and managed by the Authority in trust for the Constituent Units for the purposes of this Agreement.

Upon termination of this Agreement or upon withdrawal from this Agreement by any Constituent Unit, the Authority shall release, disburse and convey to the withdrawing Constituent Unit all of the real property interests and fixtures located within the boundaries of that Constituent Unit.

Section B. Ownership of Other Property

Any and all transient personal property placed on or used in connection with the trail system or other property owned by the Authority, including, but not limited, to moveable picnic tables, maintenance equipment, trash cans and dumpsters, shall be held and managed by the Authority in trust for the Constituent Units for the purposes of this Agreement.

Upon termination of this Agreement or upon withdrawal from this Agreement by any Constituent Unit, the Authority shall release and disburse such personal property to the Constituent Units on an equal basis. If the Constituent Units cannot agree as to the division, the personal property shall be sold at auction and the proceeds, less expenses, divided equally.

Section C. General Authority of Board

The Board may acquire in any manner permitted by law, any such personal property or fixtures as the Board deems necessary or helpful in promoting the purposes of this Agreement, and may hold, manage, control, sell, exchange or lease such property and fixtures in the name of the Board, in trust for the Constituent Units.

Section D. Storage and Inventory of Property

All personal property and fixtures in control of the Authority shall be used or housed at the discretion of the Board. The Board shall maintain, at all times, an up-to-date inventory list of all personal property and fixtures it holds or controls.

ARTICLE VII
BOARD POWERS

Section A. General Powers

The Board shall have, in addition to powers granted elsewhere in this Agreement, the following powers and authority:

(1) The power to purchase, lease, receive, acquire, sell, lease or rent to others, dispose of, divide, distribute or own all or any part of any land or any improvements thereon as may be necessary or useful for the purposes of this Agreement. Land or interests in land shall not be sold by the Authority without the prior consent of the governing body of each of the Constituent Units. All property, real or personal, owned by the Authority shall be used solely for the purposes stated in this Agreement.

(2) The Authority shall have the power to improve, build, maintain and operate public trails, access sites and appropriate structures on Authority land or easements.

(3) Contract or cooperate with other governmental units, public agencies or private parties to carry out Authority functions or fulfill Authority obligations.

(4) Hire employees or other personnel as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the Authority, each such person to serve at the pleasure of the Authority subject to applicable law.

(5) Accept funds, voluntary work, and other assistance to carry out Authority functions or obligations, from any source, public or private, including but not limited to local government funding, state or federal grants, and private donations. A complete record of all funds received shall be maintained and made a part of the annual financial report.

(6) Establish policies or rules governing use of Authority land, easements or facilities in compliance with state and local law.

(7) Recommend local ordinance provisions to Constituent Units to provide for the safety of the public utilizing Authority lands or facilities.

(8) Seek federal or state aid, payable to the individual Constituent Units or to the Authority, as may be available to carry out Authority functions.

Section B. Limitations

The Authority shall not have the power or authority to do the following:

- (1) Levy any tax in its own name or issue any bonds in its own name.
- (2) Incur any debts on behalf of a Constituent Unit, except as authorized in this Agreement.
- (3) Condemn any land for any purpose.

ARTICLE VIII INSURANCE

The Board shall obtain adequate insurance for the Authority, including, but not limited to, comprehensive public liability insurance, casualty loss insurance, no fault insurance for vehicles, and workers' disability compensation, to protect itself, the Constituent Units, and their officers, employees and agents from loss by way of damage to Authority property, and from claims by third parties. The Constituent Units shall be named as an additional insured on all policies.

ARTICLE IX BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

A. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Authority shall be from July 1 to June 30 of each year.

B. Budget Preparation

A proposed budget for each fiscal year shall be prepared for the Authority in accordance with the Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act, Public Act 2 of 1968, as amended. The Board Chairperson, the Board Treasurer and a third Board member, appointed by the Board, shall comprise the budget committee. The budget committee shall prepare a proposed budget. The proposed budget shall be as specific as possible with the respect to the items approved for expenditure during the succeeding fiscal year, in order to facilitate expenditures without the need for further Board action following approval of the budget. The proposed budget shall have two primary components.

(1) Operating Expenditures. A proposed budget shall include anticipated operating costs of the Authority, including, by way of example, utilities, insurance costs, purchase of consumable supplies, routine maintenance of buildings, apparatus and equipment, and other expenditures not involving capital expenditures.

(2) Capital Expenditures. A proposed budget shall also include capital expenditures, including, by way of example, acquisition of fixtures, real property, major renovation or expansion of buildings, equipment and apparatus purchases, and purchase of all other durable equipment with an expected useful life exceeding one year. For planning purposes, the budget may include projected expenditures for the next five years, but approval for purpose of expenditure shall be given only for that fiscal year.

C. Budget Approval

The proposed budget shall be approved by the Board each year. If a budget is not approved prior to commencement of the fiscal year, then the portion of the budget for the prior year pertaining to operating expenditures, but not capital expenditures, shall be deemed to be the approved budget, unless and until a revised budget is approved.

D. Budgeted Expenditures

(1) Expenditures less than \$1,000 from the Authority's operating expenditure portion of the budget may be made without further Board approval. Expenditures from the Authority's operating expenditure portion of the budget in excess of \$1,000 must be approved by the Board, unless such an expenditure is reasonably determined by the Chairperson to be immediately necessary.

(2) All expenditures from the capital expenditure portion of the budget must first be approved by the Board.

E. Funds

Funds of the Authority shall be held in an account or accounts, in the name of the Authority, separate from the funds of the Constituent Units, and invested in the manner provided by law and in accordance with Board approval.

F. Audits

All accounts of the Authority shall be audited as provided by law, and not less than annually. The expense of such audit shall be an Authority expense. The auditor shall be chosen by the Board, and in the event the Board is not able to select an auditor, then the auditor shall be the auditor employed by one of the Constituent Units, first selected by lot, and thereafter alternatively if the Board is not able to agree upon an auditor.

G. Financial Information

Books and records showing all income, expenditures, inventory of equipment, and all other financial transactions of the Authority shall be maintained by the Treasurer. Such books and records shall be available promptly to any Constituent Unit, upon request of its Supervisor or Mayor (or City Manager). Upon request of the Supervisor or the Mayor (or City Manager) of a Constituent Unit, the Board Chairperson shall prepare reasonable reports concerning operations of the Authority.

ARTICLE X
FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

A. Cost Sharing

Each Constituent Unit shall contribute an equal share (currently 1/3) of the Authority budget, unless otherwise provided by grants or donations. The Board shall not approve an annual budget amount that exceeds the amount of the combined O&M payments specified in Article X.F., unless the Board has received donations, grants or other income equal to or greater than the amount by which the budget exceeds the combined O&M payments or has otherwise received prior approval of the budget from each of the Constituents Units.

In the event any Constituent Unit received donations or grants for Authority purposes, the Constituent Unit shall transfer such donations or grants to the Authority, which shall be treated as a voluntarily contribution of such Constituent Unit pursuant to Article X.D.

In the event the Authority, or any Constituent Unit is held liable for any property damage or personal injury incurred as a result of Authority operations, all damages and amounts paid in settlement, and costs of defense, including attorney's fees, shall be an Authority expense.

B. Payments

Each year, each Constituent Unit shall contribute in cash an amount equal to its share of the approved budgets (as allocated in Article X.A), payable and due on July 1. If the required payment from Constituent Units is increased with approval of the Board and the governing boards of the Constituent Units, any additional required payments shall be made within 30 days after approval of such budget increase. The first payment, consisting of the O&M payment provided in Article X.F., below, shall be due July 1, 2005.

If a Constituent Unit fails to make any payment required under this Agreement and such failure continues for a period of 90 days, the voting rights of that Constituent Unit's appointed

members shall be suspended until the payment is made (and during such time the required meeting quorum shall be reduced to exclude those board members).

If a Constituent Unit fails to budget for and/or pay a required payment under this Agreement, and such failure continues for a period of 90 days, any remaining Constituent Unit who has budgeted for the required payments and is not delinquent in payments may elect to immediately withdraw from this Agreement without regard to the provisions of Article XI limiting withdrawal during the first two years and requiring not less than six months notice thereafter.

C. Source of Revenues

Each Constituent Unit shall determine, within its discretion, the method of obtaining revenue necessary to pay its share of the cost of operating the Authority by any permitted lawful means. The collection of monies, from whatever source, for the payment of its share of the costs of operating the Authority, shall be the sole responsibility of each respective Constituent Unit.

D. Voluntary Contributions

(1) A Constituent Unit may voluntarily contribute additional monies, land or equipment from that Constituent Unit's funds or from donations to that Constituent Unit, to the Authority, for specific purposes. The money, land or equipment, if accepted, shall be used for such purposes as are deemed to be in furtherance of the operation of the Authority by the Board.

(2) However, where the equipment that is proposed to be donated by a Constituent Unit is equipment which, by reason of its size or nature, will involve significant future maintenance requirements, then the Constituent Unit that is proposing to donate such equipment shall first raise the matter at a meeting of the Board, and disclose to the Board members the equipment that is proposed to be donated, the likely future maintenance requirements and other information that will serve to acquaint the Board members with possible future financial requirements as to maintenance that may be involved if the equipment is donated. The Board members shall then have a discussion concerning whether the equipment should or should not be donated, and covering other aspects of the matter that the members wish to discuss. Following such discussion, the Constituent Unit may proceed to make, or not to make, the proposed contribution; provided, however, that such equipment shall be used for Authority purposes if it is deemed by the Board to be in furtherance of the operations of the Authority.

(3) Unless approved by the Board, such voluntary contributions shall not be considered to offset any portion of that Constituent Unit's responsibility for budgeted expenditures.

(4) If a Constituent Unit has voluntarily contributed funds for purchase of identified equipment, or has furnished other monies voluntarily pursuant to this Article, all such equipment shall, upon any dissolution of the Authority, become the sole property of the Constituent Unit so furnishing it, and shall not be subject to the procedures otherwise provided for distribution of property upon dissolution or withdrawal.

E. Fees for Trail Use

The Authority may generate additional revenue for its operation from the charging of fees for the exclusive use of certain trail facilities for a limited duration, such as, but not limited to, the rental of a trail pavilion, if any, for a private party or event. The amount of the fees to be charged for such events shall be determined by the Board.

The Authority may not generate revenue through the charging of an admission fee for the trail unless the governing boards of the Constituent Units first approve the charging of an admission fee and the amount of such admission fee.

F. Annual Operation and Maintenance Contributions

In order to fund the operation and maintenance of the Authority, each Constituent Unit shall make an annual operation and maintenance contribution (the "O&M payment") of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) to the Authority. This annual O&M payment shall be paid by each Constituent Unit, commencing on July 1, 2005 and annually thereafter on July 1 of each year. The Constituent Units shall not be required to make payments in excess of the O&M payment unless the excess payments are approved by each of the Constituent Units.

O&M payments shall be in cash, rather than in-kind property, unless specifically agreed to by all Constituent Units.

ARTICLE XI
WITHDRAWAL

Commencing two years after the effective date of this Agreement, any Constituent Unit may give notice of withdrawal from the Authority, with or without cause. The notice shall be in writing, delivered to the Supervisor or Mayor of the other Constituent Units, and shall specify an effective date of withdrawal, which shall be not less than 6 months nor more than 12 months following the date of such notice.

During the first two years of this Agreement, Constituent Units shall not have a right to withdraw except for cause upon breach of this Agreement by another Constituent Unit. In the case of withdrawal for cause, an aggrieved Constituent Unit shall provide specific written notice of the breach, and allow a period of 90 days for remedy thereof, before giving notice of withdrawal. The party allegedly in default shall be conclusively deemed to be in default unless said party initiates an action for declaratory relief in the Kent County Circuit Court not later than 30 days after being served with notice of withdrawal for default. In the event such a challenge is filed, dissolution shall be suspended until resolution of the issue by the Court. Dissolution may also be effected by joint agreement of the parties at any time.

Upon dissolution, the real property, fixtures and other personal property of the Authority shall be distributed by the Authority in accordance with Article VI and Article X.D(4). Money deposited in accounts of the Authority shall first be used to pay outstanding debts of the Authority and shall then be distributed to the Constituent Units in accordance with their proportional contributions, as stated in Article X.A, unless such accounts include monies voluntarily provided to

the Authority pursuant to Article X.D, in which case said monies shall be distributed in accordance with Article X.D(4).

ARTICLE XII
DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Section A. Arbitration

Disagreements with respect to the establishment and the maintenance of the Authority that may arise between the Constituent Units, and which cannot be voluntarily resolved, may be submitted to binding arbitration in accordance with the Commercial Dispute Resolution Procedures of the American Arbitration Association, by agreement of the Constituent Units. The Constituent Units may also submit a dispute to mediation under the Community Dispute Resolution Program or a similar voluntary dispute resolution forum.

Section B. Good Faith Re-negotiation of Agreement Terms

If during the term of this Agreement a Constituent Unit desires to re-negotiate a provision or provisions hereof, such party shall give the other parties written notice of its desire, which notice shall set forth the specific provision or provisions it desires to be re-negotiated. The parties agree upon the giving of such notice they will in good faith re-negotiate such provision or provisions. In the event of the adoption of State or Federal laws materially affecting the terms and conditions of this Agreement, the parties agree to re-negotiate such terms and conditions in good faith.

ARTICLE XIII
GENERAL TERMS

A. Notices. Except as otherwise provided, all notices, certificates or other communications hereunder shall be sufficiently given and shall be deemed to be given when dispatched by regular, registered or certified mail, postage prepaid, personal delivery or by telegram confirmed the same day by regular, registered or certified mail, postage prepaid, addressed as follows:

If to Vergennes Township:

P.O. Box 203
Lowell, Michigan 49331-0208

If to Lowell Charter Township:

2910 Alden Nash Ave., S.E.
Lowell, Michigan 49331

If to the City of Lowell:

301 E. Main Street
Lowell, Michigan 49331-1798

The Constituent Units may, by notice given hereunder, designate a further or different address to which subsequent notices, certificates or other communications may be sent.

B. Governing Law. This Agreement shall be construed in all respects in accordance with the laws of the State of Michigan.

C. Severability. In the event any provision of this Agreement shall be held invalid or unenforceable by any court of competent jurisdiction, such holding shall not invalidate or render unenforceable any other provision hereof.

D. Binding Effect. The covenants contained herein shall bind, and the benefits and advantages shall inure to, the respective successors and assigns of the parties hereto.

E. Counterparts. This Agreement may be simultaneously executed in several counterparts, each of which shall be an original and all of which shall constitute one and the same instrument.

F. Captions. The captions or headings in this Agreement are for convenience only and in no way define, limit or describe the scope or intent of any provisions or sections of this Agreement.

G. Entire Agreement. This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the parties, and there are no representations, warranties, promises, guarantees or agreements, oral or written, express or implied, between the parties hereto with respect to this Agreement. All previous agreements are superseded, as of the effective date of this Agreement.

H. Amendments. This Agreement may not be amended, changed, modified, altered, or assigned except in a writing approved by all Constituent Units.

I. Assignment. This Agreement and all rights and obligations hereunder shall not be assignable unless all Constituent Units agree in writing to such assignment.

J. Waiver. The waiver by any Constituent Unit of a breach or violation of any provision of this Agreement shall not be a waiver of any subsequent breach of the same or any other provision of this Agreement.

K. Parties. This Agreement shall be enforceable only as to the parties hereto and their successors in interest by virtue of an assignment which is not prohibited under the terms of this Agreement and no other person shall have the right to enforce any provisions contained herein.

L. Filing. An executed copy of this Agreement, along with certified copies of resolutions adopted by the governing bodies of each Constituent Unit authorizing its execution, shall be promptly filed with the Kent County Clerk and the Michigan Secretary of State. The Constituent Unit last adopting a resolution approving this Agreement shall be responsible for filing the Agreement and all approving resolutions with the County Clerk and Secretary of State. Amendments to this Agreement shall be filed in the same manner.

ARTICLE XIV
APPROVAL

This Agreement shall be approved by resolution of the governing board of each Constituent Unit, and signed by the Township Supervisor and Clerk, as to the Townships and by the City Mayor and Clerk, as to the City.

ARTICLE XV
EFFECTIVE DATE

This Agreement shall become effective upon its approval in accordance with Article XIV and upon its filing with the Kent County Clerk and the Michigan Secretary of State as set forth in Article XIII.L.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Constituent Units have caused these presents to be signed by their respective duly authorized officers as of the day and year first written above.

VERGENNES TOWNSHIP

By 
Its: Supervisor

and by Mari C. Stone
Its: Clerk

LOWELL CHARTER TOWNSHIP

By John R. Simpson Supr.
Its: Supervisor

and by Linda Regan
Its: Clerk

CITY OF LOWELL

By C. Jeanne Shores
Its: Mayor

and by Betty R. Moorlock
Its: Clerk

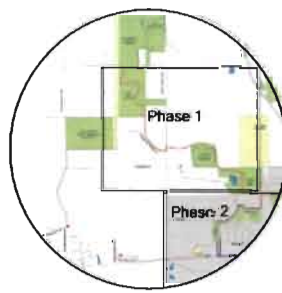
APPENDIX B
SUPPORTING INFORMATION



SEEKING PUBLIC INPUT ON OUR TRAILWAY RECREATION PLAN

The Lowell Area Recreation Authority is seeking input for its Recreation Plan. A Recreation Plan outlines a vision for the implementation of the trail system and is required to be eligible for funding grants from the State of Michigan.

We hope you join us and provide your input for this important planning process.



A Draft Copy is available for your review at the following locations

Vergennes Township Hall

Lowell City Hall

Lowell Charter Township Hall

Lowell Library

You can provide your input in several ways:

1. Submit comments on our form and mail or drop them off at the locations listed above.
2. Email comments to info@lowellareatrailway.org
3. Contact us at:

Vergennes Township (616) 897-5671

The City of Lowell (616) 897-8457

Lowell Charter Township (616) 897-7600

THANK YOU!



**LOWELL AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY
TRAILWAY RECREATION PLAN**

PUBLIC INPUT FORM

The **Lowell Area Recreation Authority** is soliciting public input to its draft Trailway Recreation Plan, before March 11, 2009 at which time they will consider it for approval.

A copy of the draft plan is available to review at the offices of the City of Lowell, Lowell Township, Vergennes Township and the Engelhardt Public Library.

You may provide your input on this form and submit as follows:

- by Mail to** - Lowell Area Recreation Authority,
113 Riverwalk Plaza, Lowell, MI 49331
- drop off at offices of** – City of Lowell, Lowell Township, Vergennes Township,
Lowell (Englehardt) Public Library.
- You may also email your input to** – info@lowellareatrailway.org

Optional

Name _____	Address _____
Phone _____	email _____

Red Arrow SPORTS

District success behind it; Lowell wrestlers now eye regional

Craus
ent seven wrestlers
individual district
ship on Saturday.
those Red Arrow
left with titles.

reflections on
afternoon's district
ships at Northview
aced before they
owell High School
evening by what
on Wednesday.

Arrows will get
d final chance at
Lowell lost its
by three and were
in the conference
half point. That
orgotten if Lowell
up a win over the
Division II state
from Greenville
regional final on

are ready to get
ay," said Lowell
ach Dave Dean.
ay to Wednesday.
dividual district
owell were Dan

Fleet (130), Andrew Morse
(135), Jackson Morse (152),
Ryan Olep (171) and Connor
Kruse (285).

"Connor is getting his
confidence and is becoming
the real deal," Dean
explained. "He's had a lot
of guys to fight. He now
knows what he's doing and
add to that, Connor is a good
athlete."

Gabe Morse (125) was the
only Lowell wrestler to win
his consolation match.

The other five wrestlers
advancing are Tyler Jack
(119), Ryan Dean (140),
Rocky Pabon (145), Tim
Gingerich (160) and Gabe
Dean (171).

Division 2

Individual Districts

Championship:

130: Dan Fleet d. Dillon
Churchard (Northview) 4-2
135: Andrew Morse d.
Collin Fuller (Greenville)
4-2

140: Jake Connell (Reeths-
Puffer) d. Ryan Dean 6-0

145: Jordan Thomas
(Greenville) md. Rocky
Pabon 14-5

152: Jackson Morse md.
Ryan Dugan (Forest Hills
Eastern) 17-8

160: Adam Miller (Sparta)
d. Tim Gingerich 6-0

171: Ryan Olep inj.
def. over Jake Brown
(Coopersville)

285: Connor Kruse md.
Jake Daling (Coopersville)
12-4

Consolation:

119: Nick Trimble (Sparta)
d. Tyler Jack 10-4

125: Gabe Dean d. Joe
Preston (Northview) 10-3

171: Richard Clinkscale
(Northview) d. Gabe Dean
8-6

Team District:

The Red Arrows hosted
and won their team district
on Wednesday, defeating



Andrew Morse (140) pinned FHE's Rance Carpenter in 27 seconds of the first period.

Forest Hills Eastern in
the finals 57-17. Lowell
advanced to the finals with
a 67-9 win over Ionia. The
Hawks advanced with a 38-
36 win over Forest Hills
Northern.

"Nobody got hurt and we
came out of the district real
well," said Lowell wrestling
coach Dave Dean.

Lowell won 11-of-14
matches.

"We wrestled better against
Lowell this year than we did
last year. Our program is
making strides," said Forest
Hills Eastern coach Kevin
Sankey. "It's always great to
beat the other Forest Hills

school."
FHE finishes its team
portion of the season at 12-
19. The Hawks were fifth in
the O-K Gold.

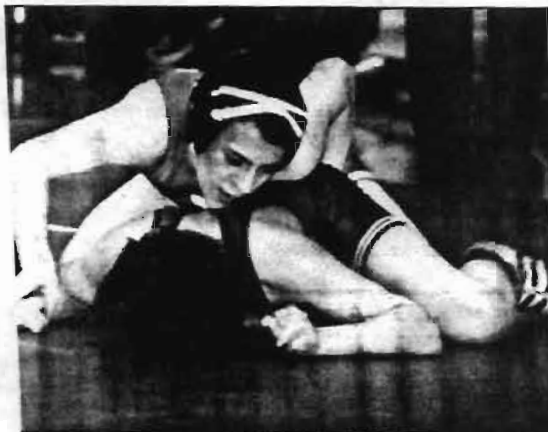
Winning via the pin for
Lowell were Andrew Morse
(140), Rocky Pabon (145),
Jackson Morse (152), Gabe
Dean (171) and Tom Fleet
(285).

Earning decisions were
Gabe Morse (125), Dan
Fleet (135), Tim Gingerich

(160), and Aaron Nowak
(103). FHE voided matches
at 189 and 215.

"By and large I like the
way we competed tonight,"
said Dean. "Matches like
this are not balanced. Not
all the wrestlers go out to
the mat in the same boat."

Forest Hills Eastern
received wins by Jeff Carrel
(130) p.; Tim Lambert (112)
dec.; and Colin Sullivan
(119) p.



Aaron Nowak, 103
pounds, earned a 6-4
decision over Forest
Hills Eastern's Trey
Corey.



celebrated its fourth consecutive district championship with Dave Dean at the helm.

LOWELL AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The Lowell Area Recreation Authority will
conduct a public meeting on Wednesday,
March 11, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. at the Lowell
Charter Township offices, 2910 Alden Nash
Road, Lowell, Michigan for the purpose of
receiving input and comments from the
public on the following:

Proposed Lowell Area Recreation Authority
Trailway 5 year Recreation Plan

Proposed application to the Michigan
Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund
for Phase 1 of the Lowell Area Recreation
Authority Trail.

Copies of the proposed Recreation Plan are
available for viewing at the City of Lowell,
Lowell Township, Vergennes Township and
the Lowell (Englehardt) Public Library.

Interested persons may offer comments at
the meeting or submit them prior to the
meeting directly to the City of Lowell, Lowell
Township or Vergennes Township or you may
email them to info@lowellareatrailway.org.

Mari Stone
Secretary

Viewpoint



Sharing The Vision

With Gregory Pratt
LHS Superintendent

WE'VE GOT SUNSHINE ON A CLOUDY DAY

As we wade through the daily headlines and dire news stories about the country's recession, and the details of Michigan's budget from Governor Granholm, it is a natural, human response to feel disheartened. Just like many homeowners, business owners, and members of our society, the Lowell Area School District is facing significant financial challenges. Truthfully, I have endured some sleepless nights when I give thought to the hardships being imposed upon education, our students, and students across the country. After processing the initial disappointments and anxieties regarding these challenges, I became reflective. I thought about the extraordinary qualities that exist within our community which drew me to accept the responsibility of being your superintendent and choosing to raise our family in the Lowell area. Among those qualities are resilience, and a very evident spirit of a hard working community. I believe that those qualities will sustain us as we move forward and persevere.

I'm sure you have heard the 1964 Temptations' lyric, "I've got sunshine on a cloudy day." That rings true for the Lowell Area Schools! There is good news and bright spots in an otherwise gloomy state of affairs:

We have seen the initial dividends of our efforts in the area of instruction and interventions. Last fall, our students in grades three through nine took the MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program) in reading, math, science, and social studies. I am pleased to report that as a district our scores went up and the results are very favorable. I am

encouraged because the increased scores are evidence that the focused adaptations in our practices are of benefit to our students.

This is also the time of year that excitement builds about the prospect of new families joining the Lowell Area Schools. We will soon begin enrollment for the 2009/10 school year. Each year, it is rewarding to know that our district will have the honor of educating a new generation of students. We welcome kindergartners, families who are new to the Lowell community, and new students who enroll under the Kent County Collaborative Schools of Choice Program.

We are continuing to make advances in technology. Lowell teachers are infusing technology into the classroom every day. Technology touches almost every part of our lives, even the Lowell Meijer has incorporated a computerized check-out system for those of us who pick up those last minute items. Technology is ubiquitous and it opens a whole new world of possibilities for our students. Its use provides our classrooms with more current, interesting, meaningful instruction. Technology also changes the way our teachers teach by introducing new avenues for instruction to reach different types of learners. And, outside of the classroom, the district is in the initial stages of developing an improved website with a fresh look. It is my goal to feature a website that will represent the Lowell Area School District and all it has to offer. The new site will be an awesome communication tool, with an easy to read format that is current and reliable.

And of course, there is our sunshine - our students. Each time I visit a school, attend an athletic event or an activity, I come away with a new-found appreciation for the emerging generation. One can't help but to feel privileged to have an opportunity to build potential in our youth.

In January, many of us witnessed a moment in history when President Obama was inaugurated as the 44th President of the United States. He declared that "We have chosen hope over fear." Be assured that the Lowell Area Schools chooses hope as well, and will continue to thrive!



By Shelly MacNaughton

125 YEARS AGO THE LOWELL JOURNAL FEBRUARY 27, 1884

Simon Valentine of Stanton was sent up for 30 days for disturbing a religious meeting.

It didn't look like dull times in Lowell Saturday afternoon when at one time there were over 100 teams on our principal business street.

Frank L. Wright, of Lowell, died Saturday, of consumption. Funeral Yesterday.

100 YEARS AGO THE LOWELL LEDGER FEBRUARY 25, 1909

The Lowell Orchestra played for the dance at Moseley Monday night.

A citizen caucus for the nomination of village officers is called for this (Thursday) evening at 7:30 in the Village building. A president, clerk, treasurer, three trustees and assessor are to be nominated.

75 YEARS AGO THE LOWELL LEDGER AND ALTO SOLO MARCH 1, 1934

Mrs. Helena White, Vergennes township's only nonagenarian, passed away at her home in Alton Tuesday morning, February 27, at the age of 95 years, 1 month, and 27 days. Mrs. White's health had been good up to last Saturday morning when in a spell of dizziness, she fell, sustaining a fractured hip.

50 YEARS AGO THE LOWELL LEDGER FEBRUARY 26, 1959

Headline: 300 Out of School as Virus Influenza Strike Lowell Area

Great increases have developed in Lowell this week in the number ill with a virus infection that creates high fever and makes the sufferers very uncomfortable for several days.

Lowell schools reported that Wednesday one-half of the junior high students were out and that about one-fourth of the students in high school and elementary rooms.

25 YEARS AGO THE GRAND VALLEY LEDGER FEBRUARY 29, 1984

Superior Furniture Co., a landmark business here for about 80 years is planning a major expansion of their facility at 318 East Main Street. William J. Lee, an officer and shareholder in the company told members of the Lowell Planning Commission that he is planning construction of an 80' x 120' addition on the east side of the existing structure.

Outdoors

By
Dave Stegehuis



BEAGLES

There were 170 breeds and varieties of dogs paraded around the ring at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show this year. You and I may never see a live specimen of the majority of these dogs unless we attend a show of that size.

It seems that the popularity of a particular breed of dog changes over time. In the 1940's, my dad owned a Springer Spaniel which was the go-to bird dog at the time. Today, the German Shorthair and Brittany share that distinction. The Cocker Spaniel was the popular family pet back then. Now, labs regularly show-up in suburban backyards. The Labrador Retriever has held a special place in the hearts of waterfowl hunters for generations. There are a number of other breeds which make excellent hunters and great family pets.

When it comes to choosing a dog to hunt rabbits, the beagle is in a class by itself. Other dogs will hunt rabbits,

and some do it well, but the dog of choice for hard-core rabbit hunters is the Beagle.

The Beagle is small enough to get in and out of tight cover yet large enough to plow through snow and jump over obstacles. They use their extraordinary sensitive nose to sort out and tenaciously follow even the coldest trail. Some trail slow, some fast, but they never quit.

The plan for hunting bunnies with Beagles is to hang around the area where the rabbit first jumped and wait for the dog to chase the rabbit back around because rabbits tend to return to their home base. All the time, the hound will yip, bellow, and howl as it feverishly wags its tail while keeping its nose to the ground.

Hunting with a bird dog is a team effort between dog and hunter. The two are always in direct communication. I don't think Beagles care if you are even there. They just do their own thing.

Hopefully, there will be some sunny days with a dusting of fresh snow on the ground. It will be a good opportunity to get out with the hounds a few more times before the end of rabbit season which is March 31.

The dog that won Best in Show at Westminster last year was a Beagle named Uno. I wonder if he moonlights as a rabbit dog.

Are trails coming to Lowell?

by Jodie Seese

Did you ever hear that rumor that trails are coming to Lowell? It's been going around for many years, and now we are learning more about how that may happen.

In the fall of 2007 LARA commissioned a feasibility study to find out if the Lowell community was still interested in trails and if area residents and business leaders would financially support such a project.

LARA stands for the Lowell

Area Recreational Authority and it was originally formed to explore the concept of a community pool. When that millage was soundly defeated, the group was tasked with responding to the next community desire, which was safe, accessible walking trails. From the beginning however, it was clear that residents did not support using taxes to fund the trails.

The LARA Board of Directors consists of seven

community volunteers with representatives from the City of Lowell, Lowell Township and Vergennes Township, as well as residents from each municipality, with one member at large. You may have attended a community meeting to get input on trails or you may have stopped by the LARA booth at EXPO over the years.

Now, fast forward to the feasibility study. Even though the idea of trails has been around for over

a decade, the study still showed strong support. Over twenty local community leaders and business owners were interviewed. Each confirmed trails would be good for Lowell and said they would lend financial support. Next, local and regional foundations were asked if they would contribute to the cause and all agreed trails improve

Trails in Lowell, so no 4, pg. 7

Everyone is talking about the Ledger!
Get your subscription today! 897-9261



Trails in Lowell, continued ... From Page 5

the health and recreational value of a community and they too would support this effort.

Armed with this information, the LARA Board approved the formation of a Cabinet to start working on the capital campaign. This group has been working quietly since February of 2008. Since that time, several other communities around Lowell have completed or extended trails that continue to see more and more use. Whether it's dog walkers, nature lovers, bikers or runners - Ada, Cascade and Rockford residents have enjoyed the health and recreational benefits of trails. You'll see parents with strollers, grandparents biking with grandkids and students with science projects in hand - and of course, dogs.

Dan Edwards is a board

member of LARA. He moved to Lowell in 1997. "We like biking as a family. We live on Vergennes Road, but the narrow shoulder and traffic load make it unsafe. On the weekends we load up the bikes and drive to Rockford or Portland. It's fun and great exercise." Edwards adds, "But we have such a beautiful area right here in Lowell - trails would give everyone access to recreation right here in our own backyard."

There is an opportunity for public input on trails. As part of the process to obtain DNR grant funding there is a meeting taking place at the Lowell Township offices on Wednesday, March 11 at 6 p.m. Updates will appear on the trails in the Ledger. Anyone needing more information may call Jodie Seese at 616-446-7058.



Isabelle Magnanti stands next to the boxes to be shipped to her dad and fellow company in Iraq.

Students at Bushnell support the troops

Kindergarten children at Bushnell Elementary have been participating in a service learning project to support our armed forces serving overseas. A Lowell Area School service learning grant covered the cost of postage to send boxes of items to our service men and women in Iraq. Kindergarten student Isabelle Magnanti's father is serving overseas.

His company is in Iraq, so the class decided to send letters, pictures and packages filled with goodies. A tremendous amount of caring was demonstrated as students collected items to send to our troops. The writing portion of the project continues as students hear back from Sgt. Luigi Magnanti's company.

Happy Birthday

- FEBRUARY 25:** Susan Miesal, Mike Nearing.
FEBRUARY 26: Jeremy Goff, Barry Vezino, Bob Ford, Nancy Porter, Leslie Rash.
FEBRUARY 27: Joshua Soyka, Justin Soyka.
FEBRUARY 28: Mark V. Ritzema, Connie Roth, Scott Denton, Claresa
- MARCH 1:** Barak Brown, Jill Callihan, Laura Christiansen.
MARCH 2: Mary Vezino, Roger MacNaughton, Anna Kline, Lisa Schoen.
MARCH 3: Sarah Newell.
- Guastavino, Skylar Brown, Sarah Hoag.

Heroism award



Wesley McDannold is pictured with his Scout leader Leon Lamoreux after receiving the Boy Scout Heroism award. In March of last year, McDannold was credited with saving the life of his cousin Gary Shults. When Shults walked out onto the thin ice on Stony Lake he fell through. "He was too far out for my reach at first but, I reached my hand out and told him to swim as much as he could," said McDannold. After getting him out of the water he ran to a nearby apartment and phoned for help. He is the son of Michael and Melanie McDannold.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JILLI Sweet 16 MARCH 1st
 - Love, Mom & Dad Katie & Kelsey

JOHN RAYMOR
 202 Shiawassee • Fenton, MI 48430
 formerly of Lowell
Celebrated his 94th Birthday on Sunday, February 15

Lowell Community Date Night
 Presented by IGNITE
February 27, 2009
6:00pm - 11:00pm

Free Childcare for Toddlers and Activities for "Tweens" while parents go out for a night on the town.

Sponsored by the following local businesses providing food and entertainment specials for the night:

Flat River Grill
Mynt Fusion
B.C. Pizza
Arby's
Ada/Lowell Five Theatre
YMCA
Lowell Lanes

Childcare and Tween activities will be held at IMPACT, located at 1070 N. Hudson. Please register and check out the local specials being offered at www.IgniteLowell.com/DateNight.

DRAFT SYNOPSIS OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE LOWELL CITY COUNCIL TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2009

Motion to approve the agenda as submitted.

Motion to approve the Regular Minutes of the February 2, 2009 meeting as corrected and the accounts payable were approved.

Motion to award contract to All American Water Solutions for \$17,206.00 for the Filter Media Replacement at the Water Treatment Plant.

It was the consensus of the City Council to have the Lowell Area Historical Museum pay the City operating expenses not exceeding \$200 per month for usage of the municipally owned building located at 323-325 West Main.


Motion to set a public hearing for Monday, March 2, 2009 to consider a Bow and Arrow Hunting Ordinance.

YEA: 4. (Councilmember Altoft, LaPonsie, Pfaller and Mayor Hodges)
 NAY: 1. (Councilmember Ellison)
 Motion carried.

By consensus, the City Council appointed Councilmember Maryalene LaPonsie for a two year term on the Fire and Emergency Services Authority Board.

Motion to adjourn at 8:18 p.m. The next regular scheduled meeting will be Monday, March 2, 2009.

Complete minutes will be available after approved on March 2, 2009 on the City's web page at www.ci.lowell.mi.us or at City Hall.

 Betty R. Morlock
 City Clerk

Viewpoint

To The Editor

Dear Editor,

A statement made in an article in the Feb. 25 Lowell Ledger questioned the approval of a curb cut for Walgreens and whether the city should have a PA 425 revenue sharing agreement and also why we let another business build on the fringe of town when businesses are paying high taxes in town. My question to that statement is - Has Lowell, with its shortcomings, taxed itself into a nowhere-to-go scenario? Lowell continues to see projected projects that are wants and not needs that probably will add more expense to the

community. You have to ask yourself, what is best for the community? I'm convinced I know what is not good for the community and that is more fruitless spending. Lowell needs to stop spending and hopefully add to its tax base. Now that the School of Missionary Aviation Training has left the Lowell Airport for greener pastures, and flights in and out are about null, it is time to reconsider the use of this prime piece of property. This property could be used as an Industrial Park where both Lowell and Vergennes Township would benefit. If our neighbor to the north, Greenville, can bring new businesses to their community, then there is no reason why Lowell can't do the same. It is time for a program that will help sustain our community for years to come.

Jim Howard



By Shelly MacNaughton



Exploring Nature

With Meggan Johnson,
Director of the Wittenbach/Wege Center

SPRING IS NEAR, TIME TO START THINKING ABOUT GARDENING!

Since its birth, the Wittenbach/Wege Agriscience and Environmental Education Center's Community Garden has been sowing friendships, growing community involvement and raising an appreciation for the land. It's become a place for those without sunny backyards or balconies to still enjoy the benefits of gardening.

The WWC's Community Garden provides gardeners...

- the opportunity to grow fresh produce for family and friends
- the ability to lower grocery bills
- the opportunity to learn about gardening

- the chance to network with other gardeners and meet new friends
- the opportunity to work the land and harvest the fruits of their labor
- the chance to relax from the day's stresses, get exercise and enjoy being out-of-doors
- the opportunity to grow traditional foods not available in supermarkets.

The WWC is pleased to be able to provide members of the Lowell Community the opportunity to rent a Community Garden plot. Plots are available in two sizes. Half plots are 10 feet by 12 feet (120 square feet) and are available for \$20. Full plots are 10 feet by 25 feet (250 square feet) and are available for \$35.

Each plot will be tilled at the beginning of the year when weather permits and has access to water. Gardeners are encouraged to provide their own tools, but tools will be available during open garden hours.

Plots are limited. For more information, or to reserve your plot, please contact Meggan Johnson, WWC Director and Community Garden Coordinator, at 987-1002 or mjohanson@lowellschools.com.

How would trails benefit Lowell?

by Jodie Seese

When embarking on a project like a trail system, it's important to consider the impact for the entire community. In preparing for a possible trail in the Lowell area, land use studies were reviewed to see if Lowell would benefit from a trail system that connects the downtown with some of the outlying areas. Here are some of the findings.

Walking is beneficial to people's health, to community vitality, and for the environment. According to a report prepared by the Maine Development Foundation, "Walking improves community interaction as people are more likely to talk with neighbors and shop in local stores when they are walking through a community. It also provides easy, inexpensive and low-impact exercise that can improve the overall health of community residents. Walking instead of driving also protects environmental quality. Reducing vehicular emissions benefits plants, watersheds, and the health of wildlife and people alike."

Looking at local economic conditions, any time you increase access and foot traffic to a business district, the retail and restaurants sectors benefit. Liz Baker, Executive Director of the Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce saw first hand how trails benefit a business district on a recent mayor exchange with the city of Portland Michigan. "They gave us our tour of the city on golf carts using their trail system. It was great." Portland began working on its trails in 1992 by connecting schools, sports parks and churches on the west side of the river with its downtown area on the east bank of the river. Now trails connect several schools with a bike/walking trail that connects to a converted railroad trail, which leads to Main Street. (On a historic side note, the bridge used for the Portland trail came from Lowell. It was the Burrough's Road bridge.)

After seeing the advantages for Portland's business district, Baker added, "These two communities are very similar in their layout and close proximity to rivers. Lowell incorporates this natural beauty with the Riverwalk for entertainment and family venues. We would definitely benefit from this type of community interaction."

Trails increase safety for all pedestrians, but specifically for students. One example could be the sports teams that use

Alden Nash for running activities. A trail would move these athletes off the shoulder of the road away from traffic. There's also a state grant funded sidewalk improvement project that's been approved along Gee Drive that would feed into the proposed trail.

The health benefits of a paved nonmotorized path are also well documented. Trails allow residents of all ages and abilities easy access to the outdoors for exercise activities of their choice. The American Journal of Public Health uses the term 'walkability' to describe how well a community or neighborhood encourages residents to walk to schools, work, parks and shopping by providing sidewalks or other safe, paved surfaces such as trails.

In studies, residents who live in communities with high walkability, meaning easy access to sidewalks and trails, were generally healthier with lower average body mass indexes and better cardiovascular profiles. The authors of one study theorized this was likely due to lifestyle change, but quickly noted the trail was needed in order for that healthier lifestyle to be adopted.

Dr Paul Gauthier of Lowell Family Medical Center was not surprised to hear this. "Any time you can help people get more exercise, you get a healthier community. That's why our practice has given financial support to the trails. Walking is easy; it's a cost-effective way to get people moving. With trails you can run, bike, and push a stroller. Get out there with your kids. Be a role model for good health."

A study by the Urban Land Institute found housing values are higher where it's 'walkable.' Here, the term refers to how easily neighbors can walk to common destinations or gain easy access for recreation and exercise. This 2006 study revealed that home buyers were willing to pay more for homes in walkable areas compared to similar homes in surrounding areas. This was particularly true when trails were located near schools or recreational parks.

You are invited to learn more about what trails could do for Lowell at a Public Meeting held on Wednesday, March 11 at 6 p.m. This meeting will be held at the Lowell Township Hall in order to obtain input for a proposed DNR grant. Residents with questions can also call Jodie Seese at 616-446-7058.

125 YEARS AGO THE LOWELL JOURNAL MARCH 5, 1884

The flouring mills are again running. Township elections begin to get ripe. This has been the best winter's sleighing we have had in several years.

Spikes are being driven for the new post office building which will be of brick and we hope a two-story structure.

The coming season will see more building improvements in Lowell.

100 YEARS AGO THE LOWELL LEDGER MARCH 4, 1909

About 2 o'clock Saturday morning fire was discovered in the rear of the second story of the old Pullen barn at the corner of Bridge and Monroe streets.

Three horses, a cow, a fat steer and several vehicles were removed in safety.

Mr. Pullen and Corydon Barber were quite severely burned in saving the livestock, etc.

Mr. Pullen had no insurance on the barn and contents but he has a good corner lot left and the Village Council thinks a new public building would look well there.

75 YEARS AGO THE LOWELL LEDGER AND ALTO SOLO MARCH 8, 1934

Mrs. Sherman Neil is very ill at her home in South Boston.

Mr. and Mrs. Loren Rusco of Grand Rapids spent Sunday with Mrs. Gladys Hartley.

Mr. Fred Rogers, aged Civil War veteran, is confined to his bed as the result of a fall on the icy sidewalk last Friday.

50 YEARS AGO THE LOWELL LEDGER MARCH 5, 1959 HEADLINE: MARTHA WITTENBACH FIRST HONOR TEN

Martha Mary Wittenbach, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur C. Wittenbach of Lowell, is among the highest students in the senior class. Martha has been an honor student for four years in addition to being very active in extra-curricular projects.

25 YEARS AGO THE GRAND VALLEY LEDGER MARCH 7, 1984

Without a doubt, one of the most familiar faces around Lowell retired last Friday. Mac Fonger, 62, known to most Lowellites as the man at the window of the Post Office, hung up his uniform after nearly fourteen years of postal service.

Always visible around town, Mac was once the manager of the Kroger grocery store here and operated a grocery store of his own in the sixties where Lippert Pharmacy is now located.



THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

Lowell recreation panel seeks comments on proposed trail

Thursday, March 05, 2009

By Morgan Jarema

The Grand Rapids Press

LOWELL -- A group that hopes to construct a trail system through the city and Vergennes and Lowell townships is looking for input from residents, as well as funds.

The Lowell Area Recreation Authority is preparing to apply for a \$750,000 state Department of Natural Resources matching grant for the first phase of the project, which would span an estimated 2.25 miles from Creekside Park in the city to the Wittenbach-Wege Center in Vergennes.

A capital campaign kicks off March 28 at the Community Expo at Lowell High School, when LARA members plan to announce the amount that has been raised so far.

The group has met for almost three years with school district and community leaders and residents to talk about locations and safety concerns.

The 10-foot-wide, paved trail would span 18 miles in the city and townships, connecting with other existing or planned trails.

LARA members want comments from residents at a meeting at 6 p.m. March 11 at Lowell Township Hall, 2910 Alden Nash Road SE.

LARA member Mari Stone said the meeting seeks comments on the proposed path and the way it would get people from town to the high school area.

"We're hoping to get people to give us their personal experiences and preferences for utilizing this section of trail and any concerns people might have," she said. "We need to get a well-rounded view of the effect this will have on the community."

Information about the proposed trail can be found at www.lowellareatrailway.org.

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The Lowell Ledger

Volume 38 Issue 15

Serving Lowell Area Readers Since 1893

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Lowell pins down third state wrestling title



Following title win, the Lowell wrestling team holds the trophy for its faithful following.

by Thad Kraus

For the third time in eight years Lowell claimed a state wrestling championship.

The most recent one came Saturday at the Kellogg Arena in Battle Creek as the Red Arrows overpowered Oxford 35-20 in the Division 2 state final.

"The boys stuck with it. This is their reward for all their effort and hard work," said Lowell wrestling coach Dave Dean. "I am proud of them."

There were plenty of challenges along the way. Arguably the most formidable was a regional final match-up against Greenville.

That victory slid Lowell into a number one seed and heaped some pressure on the Red Arrows as well.

"I felt a change right after we beat Greenville. There seemed to be a different state of mind. We didn't seem the same. We felt a lot more pressure," Dean said. "Knew we were in number one seed and didn't want to let that down."

Lowell got out of the gate a little slow against Oxford, losing two of the opening three matches, but there was no let down.

From there, the Red Arrows ripped off eight straight matches to take a 35-11 lead.

Ryan Olep's 7-1 decision at 189 pounds sealed the state title for Lowell with three matches still to wrestle.

"We just tried to stay focused and to get done what we needed to get done," Olep explained. "The first match today was little tough, but we were ready to go for the finals."

State title winners, cont'd., pg. 13

City will act as agent for LARA trail grant application

by Emma Palova

The city of Lowell will act as an agent on behalf of the Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA) for grant application for phase 1 of the trail project.

Phase 1 will connect Cherry Creek Elementary School with the high school and Wittenbach Agri-Science and Environmental Center.

The estimated cost of the 2.5 mile trail, partly paved and partly wooden boardwalk, is approximately \$1.3 to \$1.5 million.

The LARA group has been seeking funding through a combination of grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources trust fund, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)

Enhancement monies and private donations.

"No local taxpayers' money will expended," assured Dave Austin of Williams and Works.

The firm had been hired in December to assist LARA with design of the trail and the grant application.

LARA grant, cont'd., pg. 2



Recycling of cell phones will prevent toxins from entering landfills and soils

by Emma Palova

For Hayley Jones and Ashley Middleitch, recycling is an important way of preserving our planet.

Jones and Middleitch are members of the Lowell High School Environmental Club that carries out the message of preservation of the earth for the future generations.

"Recycling helps keep

our planet clean," said Jones.

The club has partnered with Planet Green, a printer cartridge and cell phone manufacturing and recycling company out of California, to start a new recycling program in Lowell.

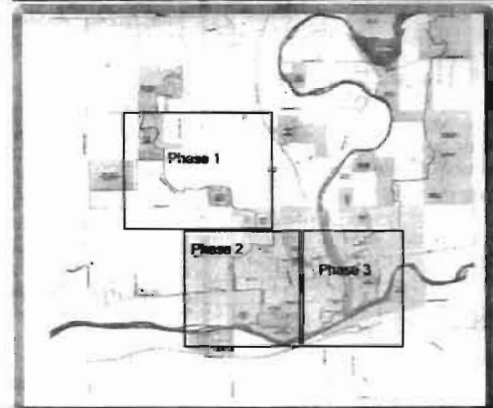
Collection boxes for old used cell phones and ink cartridges have now been placed at the Wege Wittenbach Center (WWC), at all the Lowell Area

Schools buildings and at the Englehardt Library.

The program will also help raise funds for other activities sponsored by the environmental club and WWC such as Earth Day activities.

"Not only is this project for a good cause, but the funds will go to other projects that are environmentally friendly," said Middleitch.

Recycling, cont'd., pg. 4



Aerials and maps showing phases 1&2 of the Lowell Area Recreation Authority trail system.

LARA grant, continued ... From Page 1



LYON

Chaplain Juliann Ellen Lyon, age 62, died suddenly yet peacefully at home on Thursday, March 5, 2009. She was born July 1, 1946 in Grand Rapids, the daughter of Jules and Sarah Erler. Survivors include her husband, Bart Lyon; her son, Daniel; grand-daughter Anna; and two sisters, Shirley Tap and Beulah Doyle. Funeral Services at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church are currently pending. Arrangements are being completed by the Nie Family Funeral Homes.

SCHUFF

Michael Jacob Schuff III, Age 61, of Athens, passed away Wednesday, March 4, 2009 at his residence. A native of Mansfield, OH and resident of McMiin County since 1994, he was a son of the late Michael Schuff II and Emma Erndt Schuff and was a member of Mayflower Church in Mansfield, OH. He was a former employee of Lowe's in Athens and former Amway and reserve police officer while in Lowell. He was preceded

in death by an infant sister, Michael Emma Schuff. Survivors include his wife of 42 years, Janice Sue Boggs Schuff of Athens; one daughter and son-in-law, Michelle and Scott Barber of Ionia; one son and daughter-in-law, Michael John and Cheryl Schuff of Athens; four grandchildren, Torrey Gessler and wife, Adrianna, Samantha Ann Gessler, Michael John Schuff Jr., and J.J. Gessler; one great granddaughter, Alison Shirlene Gessler; three sisters and two brothers-in-law, Barbara and Lewis Rhoades of Boise, ID, Toni and Robert Taylor of Sandusky, OH, Pam Perry of Columbus, OH; two brothers and sisters-in-law, John and Audrey Schuff of Dunnellon, FL, Fred and Jeanine Schuff of St. Louis, MO; several brothers and sisters-in-laws, nieces and nephews. There will be no formal visitation or service. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials be made to Hospice of Chattanooga, 4355 Hwy 58, Suite 100, Chattanooga, TN, 37416.

However, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Enhancement grant requires that the applicant is an Act 51 agency. The city is the only Act 51 agency from the municipalities comprising LARA.

Thus the group needed a nod from the city that it will act as an Act 51 agent.

Following last week's approval, the city clerk Betty Morlock said it will not cost the city any money.

All state and federal

requirements are the responsibility of the grant applicant and cannot be delegated on to the sponsoring agency.

"It is ultimately for LARA to be the responsible party for grant application, the trail and its maintenance," said Austin.

However, the city may enter into a separate agreement with LARA to set up project guidelines and responsibilities.

In a similar case

scenario, the city of Belding acted as an applicant for the MDOT Enhancement grant for the Flat River Trail from Lowell to Greenville.

The MDOT application deadline of May 4 piggybacks on the MDNR deadline of April 1.

"The project is moving along well, due to the tremendous amount of work by LARA volunteers," said Austin.

The project progress will be presented on Wednesday, March 11 at the Lowell Township Hall at 6 p.m.

The LARA trail project will also be showcased at the March Expo on March 28 along with the other trail projects in the area including the proposed Flat River Trail and the North Country Trail Association.

Lowell grad competing in Michigan Junior Miss program

Andrea Coffey, of Lowell, is among contestants participating in the Michigan's Junior Miss State Scholarship Program. The program is coming to Saline High School on Saturday, March 14. The event will begin at 6 p.m. and is open to the public. Fourteen high school senior young women from all over the state of Michigan will be competing for \$13,000 in college scholarship money at this event.

The Junior Miss contestants will spend a week in the Ann Arbor area performing community service projects at local elementary schools, local Girl Scout Troops, Motts Children's Hospital, and senior citizen's facilities. They will also be rehearsing for their opening number, physical fitness routine, and their talent segment.

The winner of Michigan's Junior Miss will go on to compete at America's



Andrea Coffey

Junior Miss in June, in Mobile, Alabama for more than \$50,000 in college scholarship money.

Tickets for the Michigan's Junior Miss Scholarship Program will be available at Saline High School the night of the program or online by emailing mjmjmiss@yahoo.com. Saline High School is located at 1300 Campus Parkway in Saline, Michigan. All proceeds go toward the Michigan's Junior Miss Scholarship Program.

Coffey is the daughter of Bob and Tammy Coffey, of Lowell.

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CITY OF LOWELL

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Lowell City Planning Commission-Citizen Advisory Committee will conduct a public hearing on Monday, March 23, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. at the Lowell City Hall Council Chambers, Second Floor, 301 East Main Street, Lowell for the purpose of receiving comments from the public on the following:

To consider a Special Use Permit request from Impact Church, who wishes to establish a church-community center called Ignite at 2173 West Main Street (the Family Dollar store in Ridgeview Plaza). This property is zoned C-3 General Business District. Under Section 12.03 H. Special land uses, theaters, concert halls or similar places of public assembly, determined by the zoning enforcement officer are considered under Planning Commission review and approval. Thus, a Special Use Permit is required.

Interested persons may submit written comments or appear in person at City Hall, 301 East Main Street, Lowell, MI 49331.

 Betty R. Morlock
 City Clerk

BOWNE TOWNSHIP

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED 2009-2010 BUDGET

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on March 16, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. the Bowne Township Board will hold a public hearing on the 2009-2010 Township proposed budget. The public hearing will be held at the Historic Township Hall, 8240 Alden Nash SE, Ato, MI 49302.

The property tax millage rate of 2.6738 proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of this hearing.

A copy of the proposed 2009-2010 budget is available for public inspection during normal business hours at the new township office, 8240 Alden Nash SE Wednesday & Thursday 9-noon, 1-5; Friday 9-noon.

Sandra L. Kowalczyk
 Bowne Township Clerk


CITY OF LOWELL

PUBLIC NOTICE

ATTENTION CITY OF LOWELL AND TOWNSHIP WATER CUSTOMERS

The City of Lowell's Water Treatment Filtration Plant is now softening and fluoridating the water.

Thank you for your patience during this maintenance repair.

 Betty R. Morlock
 City Clerk

The Lowell Ledger

(USPS 453-830)

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LARA moves forward with recreation plan and grant application

By Emma Palova

The Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA) adopted a recreation plan and grant application Wednesday at the Lowell Township Hall.

If funding is awarded from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the construction of phase 1 would start next year. Phase 1, spanning 2.5 miles, will connect Cherry Creek Elementary to Wege Wittenbach Center.

The \$1.5 million project will be funded through a combination of grants, fundraising and private donations. The MDNR grant is up to \$500,000 with local matches. An MDOT grant can be used as a match to MDNR or vice versa.

"The main goal is to develop a non motorized trail system without local tax funds," said engineering consultant Dave Austin with Williams & Works.

The trail, partially paved and partially boardwalk, will run mostly along the road right-of-ways and through a few easements.

The environmentally friendly trail will involve all the existing facilities along its way, and perhaps historical facilities in the future.

"It's a community project primarily for pedestrian use," said Austin. "It will provide a connection between recreational facilities."

LARA is well positioned for the grant, according to Austin, since three different

trail systems all connect at one single point.

"We're in a neat situation," said Austin. "We've flipped a lot of switches."

And Lowell could become a hub of the distinct three trail systems.

"This puts Lowell on the map," said board member Perry Beachum.

The LARA Trailway, Safe Routes 2 School and Lowell Greenville Rail Trail all connect by Cherry Creek Elementary School.

"This is a benefit for grant funds," said Austin.

The LARA five-year plan which runs through 2014 includes the completion of survey and preliminary design, grant application and the development of a maintenance plan.

Some of the trailway concerns include parking lots and crossings. However, busy crossings like between the high school and the Wege Wittenbach Center, will have flashers and striping.

Signage directing to points of interest, topography and nature features will embellish the trail.

Some of these

interesting features along the trail include the Cooper Woodland Preserve, Wege Economicology, existing school facilities, ponds and wetlands.

"It's amazing what you can see in 2.5 miles," said Austin.

Resident Dave Thompson said one of the real assets of the program

is getting the kids off the roadway up Foreman to Alden Nash.

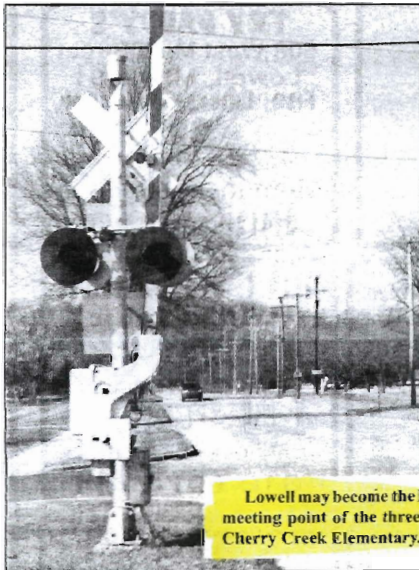
"It's a great program," he said.

Beauchum said one of the many objectives of the project is to provide an alternate route for kids to school.

"We have a competitive project," said Austin.



LARA board has been working on the trailway project since the late 1990s.



Lowell may become the hub of trails with its unique meeting point of the three distinct trails systems by Cherry Creek Elementary.

Rails to trails, continued ... From Page 1

agreement that has been extended to April 2010.

"We're going to go ahead and leave intact what we've done so far," said Kane. "We'll acquire the corridor and then we can go forward. We'll try to iron out these issues. We're not trying to shut Greenville out."

According to Annamaria Bauer of Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the acquisition happens in phases.

"You move as it happens," she said. "We may

not have a connection now, but ultimately there may be a better one in the future. You move what's in process. It's a dynamic process."

The group also discussed potential names for the project. The Ionia Lowell portion may be called The Grand River

Valley Rail Trail due to a big regional picture. The Lowell to Greenville portion may be called The Flat River Rail Trail. Communities along the trails will possibly get involved in naming the rail trails.

The survey conducted by Williams and Works is

almost complete. Closing on the Lowell to Ionia portion is expected by July. This portion will connect into the Clinton Ionia Shiawassee trail (CIS).

The trail progress will be highlighted at the Lowell Community Expo on March 28.

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from
**Dr. Reagan
and Staff**

Pictured: Dr. Reagan, Carrie, Gail,
Lorie, Sue, and Cara.
Missing - Jean, Julie and Becky

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LARA – Brief History

- Late 1990's – interest in Trails
- Research in trails starts – 2001
- Grant for Masterplan – 2002
- Masterplan Completed – 2003
- LARA is formed – 2004
- 501(3)c Non-profit status – 2007
- Funding & Engineering Consultants – 2008
- Grant Applications 2009



Happy trails to you

- Rails to Trail Projects
- Safe Routes 2 School – Gee Drive
- LARA Trailway Projects

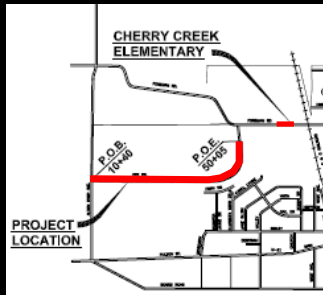
Happy trails to you

- Rails to Trail Projects



Happy trails to you

- Safe Routes 2 School – Gee Drive



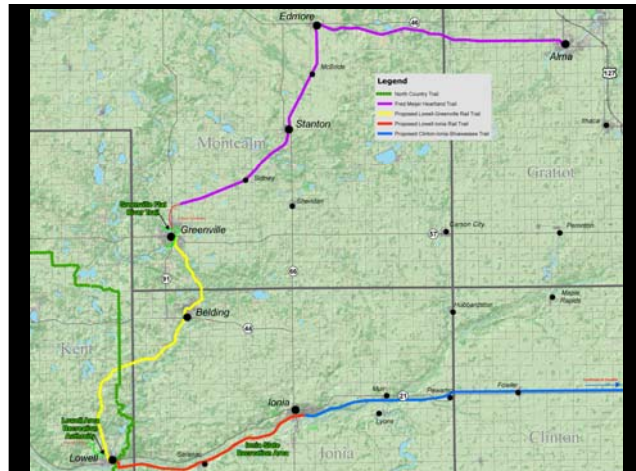
Happy trails to you



- LARA Trailway Projects

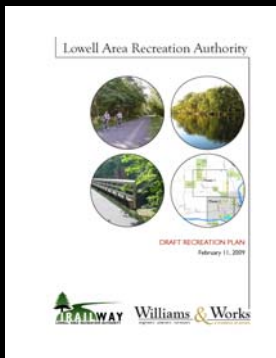
Happy trails to you

- Rails to Trail Projects
- Safe Routes 2 School – Gee Drive
- LARA Trailway Projects

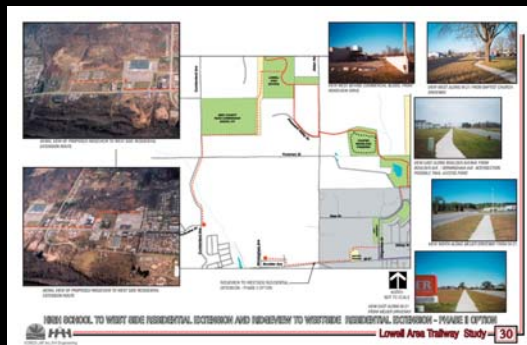


LARA RECREATION PLAN

- 5 Year Recreation Plan
- Required by MDNR for grants
- Includes trails only



LARA - MASTER PLAN (long term plan)



LARA - Recreation Plan (5 year plan)



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Goal 1

Develop a non-motorized trail system that will provide safe pedestrian access to area parks, schools and natural resources for Lowell Area residents of all ages and abilities without using local tax funds.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. Pursue development of the Phase 1 trail.
2. Continue current on-going planning process with a built-in procedure for receiving public input and evaluation of proposed trailway projects.
3. Actively pursue private financing and grant opportunities for trail development.
4. Develop long term maintenance plan for trail system.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Goal 2

Coordinate the development and maintenance of a regional trail with those of other agencies and groups.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. Provide a trail that connects to and complements those pedestrian facilities of the City of Lowell, Kent County, the North Country Trail, Lowell Public Schools Safe Routes to School, Fred Meijer Trail systems, and others.
2. Cooperate and participate in community-wide recreation projects.
3. Seek active participation in the planning of recreation facilities and/or opportunities that affect residents of the Lowell community.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

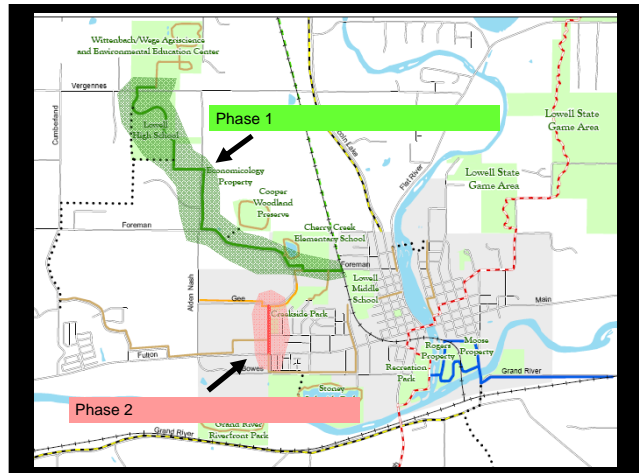
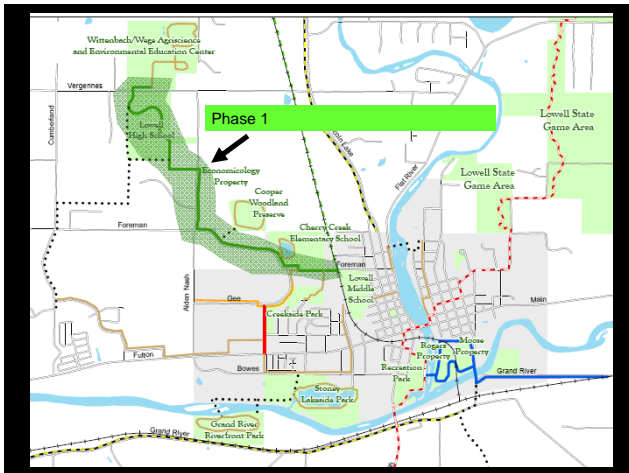
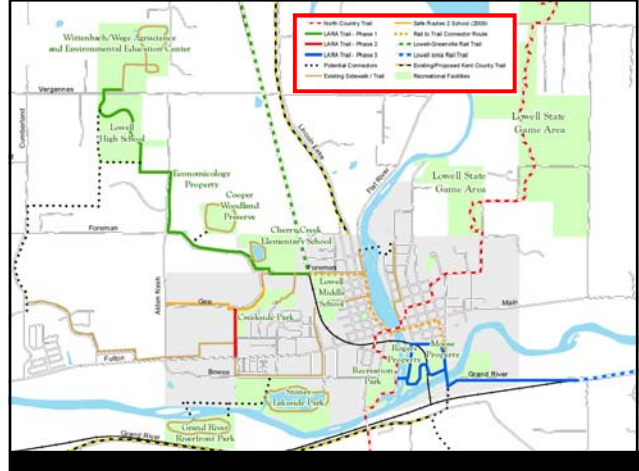
Goal 3

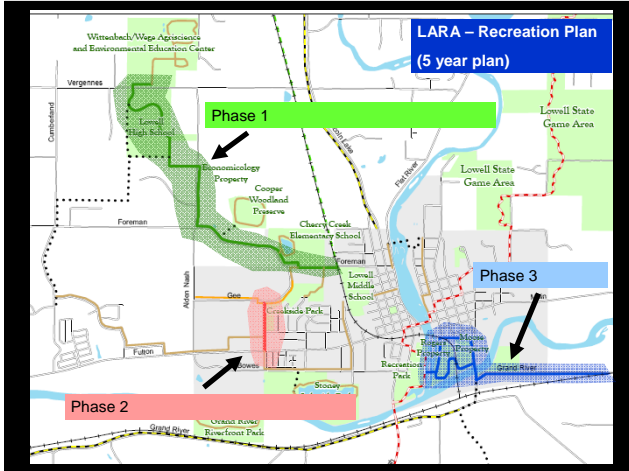
Protect and enhance those natural resources that have outstanding recreational value to the public.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

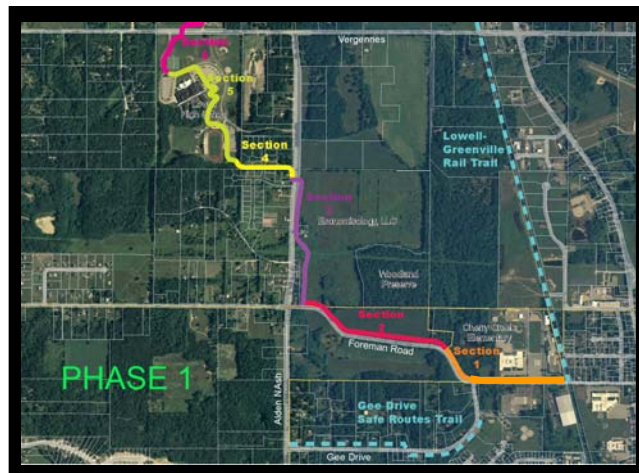
1. Include and promote trailway features that complement natural areas and historic sites within the community.
2. Develop recreational trails in a manner that will not result in an adverse impact on the natural and cultural resources of the site or of the area.
3. Where feasible, cooperate with local governments in acquiring environmentally sensitive lands and culturally valuable resources to ensure their preservation and proper development.





LARA 5 YEAR TRAILWAY ACTION PLAN						
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Complete survey and preliminary design	1	2	3			
Submit grant applications to MDNR and MDOT	1	2	3			
Implement public & private fund raising efforts	1	2	3			
Develop preliminary maintenance plan	1	2	3			
Complete Design and seek bids		1	2	3		
Complete Construction of Trail		1	2	3		
Finalize arrangements for operation and maintenance		1	2	3		
Continue participation in local and regional trail groups to encourage coordination and interconnection of trail projects.						
Update LARA Web page to reflect current trail activities.						
Participate in Lowell Area Expo and other public events to seek input on current and planned trail activities.						

PUBLIC COMMENT





**Public Information Session and Board Meeting
March 11, 2009 @ 6:00 pm
Lowell Township Hall**

Present:

LARA Board Members: Al Halbeisen, Mari Stone, Perry Beachum, Jim Pfaller, Dan Edwards, Betsy Davidson and Linda Regan.

Guests: Dave Austin; Williams & Works, and 25 members of the Lowell Community.

Dave Austin began the meeting by explaining that the proposed 5 year Recreation Plan and Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant application have been developed by the LARA Board and that it is the community's turn to offer comments and suggest any revisions before they are submitted.

Regarding the Recreation Plan, Austin explained the three different trail projects being developed in the Lowell Community, and showed how all three intersect on Foreman Road. He outlined the goals and objectives, and explained the 5 year plan and what it involves. The floor was then opened for public comment.

Janet Edwards, a Vergennes Township resident, spoke from her perspective as a Recreational Therapist. She has been involved as a volunteer for LARA, and has presented to several community groups, including Laurels of Kent, a physical rehabilitation/elder care facility in Lowell. The director there told Edwards that they would definitely use the trail for outings. They currently transport patients to the community trail in Rockford, about 20 miles away, and would experience decreased costs and more frequent trail visits when the Lowell Trailway is available.

Edwards also reported that the Director of Special Education for Lowell Area Schools is also looking forward the availability of this trail for their students. Cherry Creek Elementary has a community based program for autistic children and the principal there is excited to be adjacent to the trail for these students. She went on to say that no one she has spoken to had any concerns beyond street crossings and parking lots for shuttle busses and wheelchair access. She said that these concerns have been addressed in the planned route of Phase I. "Many people, including myself, will recreate through anything, but not everyone can. Some folks NEED a trail in order to recreate, and I am here to advocate for them".

Gary Goff, a Lowell Township resident and retired Lowell Area Schools teacher, asked about the pond adjacent to Cherry Creek Elementary. This pond is on school district property, but is difficult for the public to access for fishing and nature walks. He would like it very much to be accessed by the trail in some way. Board member Perry Beachum responded that there are plans to develop a nature trail off of the paved trail for this purpose, and that there will be signage there, as well as at several other public sites that

this phase will pass by or connect. These include the 34 acre Cooper Woodland Preserve, and the 60 acre Wege Natural Area/Wittenbach Agri-science Center.

Leo Pfaller, President of Lowell Area Senior Housing, spoke about the many active residents who bike for recreation. Several regularly load up their bikes and drive to the White Pine Trail to bike safely. Many residents take the shuttle bus they offer to the local malls in order to walk “off road”, and would use the trail in good weather instead. When asked about any special needs of Seniors in Lowell, Pfaller noted access to the nearby Stoney Creek Park and nature trail. This need would be fulfilled in Phase II.

The Board discussed the plan, and made several minor additions and corrections. Beachum motioned to adopt the 2009-2014 Recreation Plan for the Lowell Area Recreation Authority, and Jim Pfaller seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

Austin went on to explain the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant application. He noted that LARA is currently conducting a Capitol Campaign to raise the local matches required for these kinds of funds. He invited community comment.

Leo Pfaller stated he is supportive of the trail, but wondered about using the existing sewer easement to the High School. The board replied concerning several issues; visibility, safety, topography, and secondary easement problems.

Jan Thompson, Vergennes Township, asked about potential changes to the plan after submission. Austin responded that LARA will be working closely with the DNR, and that part of the process involves a site visit. We will follow their lead with any necessary changes.

Dave Thompson, also of Vergennes, stated his support for the project. He commented that as a former High School coach in an urban area, he was astounded when he moved to rural Lowell to see our student athletes training along the road ways. He sees this situation as a safety issue, and urged the community to build the trail ASAP.

Gary Goff asked regarding the proximity of the road to the trail pavement. The response was that a substantial separation is required and planned. Discussion on pedestrian and vehicular uses on the High School property was held – the district administration has been consulted and noted that the public already uses the site heavily. There will be coordinated pedestrian markings and signage for trail users on the property, and every effort will be made to keep vehicle and pedestrian traffic separate.

Jeff Eckstrom of the City of Lowell commented that he has used these kinds of trails in other communities and he is enthusiastic about the funding plans.

Perry Beachum spoke of the advantages offered to the entire community by this project. From the Chamber of Commerce to the Health Care Community there has been tremendous support, and he is excited to see Lowell becoming a “hub” for regional trails.

Dan Edwards read the grant application and resolution of support and commitment for local match to the gathered community members. He motioned to adopt the resolution, Mari Stone seconded, and a roll call vote was taken. The motion carried unanimously. Austin noted that application will be made to MDOT for funding as well, and that it is common to see these funds leverage each other. The Governor is encouraging trail networks across the state, and in conversations with MDOT, Austin is hearing positive feedback about the potential for regional connections in Lowell.

At this point, the Board continued with regular business.

Meeting Minutes - Minutes of the February meeting were approved.

LARA Treasurers Report

Betsy Davidson presented the new format for the Treasurers Report. There is much more detail, and ability to follow individual granted projects. Discussion was held regarding maximum expenditures without prior board approval. The policy will be reviewed in April. Invoices were approved, and the Treasurers Report was approved.

Old Business

Expo Planning – Coming up on March 28th. There will be a presentation by the Capitol Campaign Committee at 11 am, with a quick history of the LARA efforts. Several dignitaries will be there. Local officials will be formally invited.

New Business – none

Standing Committee Reports –

Wege property easement is complete on our end – there has been an appraisal made as to the value of the easement, we are waiting to hear from them to sign off. An offer of compensation will be made, as required by MDOT funding.

The Elmdale rail easement is moving through the courts, and Davidson will keep us informed of this progress.

It was suggested that business cards be created with contact information for the Board. It was agreed that the Chair should serve as official spokesperson in public communications of importance, and that board members should direct the media and citizens with major questions to the Chair.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

The foregoing constitutes my understanding of matters discussed and conclusions reached. Please review and share your additions or corrections at our joint Public Meeting and Board Meeting on **Wednesday April 8, 2009 at 6 pm, Vergennes Township Hall.**

Respectfully submitted,
Mari Stone, Secretary



For more information refer to the website www.lowellareatrailway.org



LOWELL AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY
MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES
TRUST FUND GRANT APPLICATION
FOR PHASE 1 TRAILWAY DEVELOPMENT
RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT FOR LOCAL MATCH

WHEREAS the Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA) was formed in 2004 by Vergennes Township, Lowell Township and the City of Lowell for the purpose of developing, acquiring, constructing, operating and maintaining one or more trails for the use and enjoyment of the residents of the Townships and the City and

WHEREAS the LARA adopted the "Lowell Area Recreation Authority 2009 – 2014 Recreation Plan" on March 11, 2009 and

WHEREAS the development of the Phase 1 Trailway was listed as an Action Item for 2009 and 2010 in the "Lowell Area Recreation Authority Recreation Plan 2009 - 2014" and

WHEREAS potential grant funding for this type of project is available from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, a program administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and

WHEREAS the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant requires applicants to commit to a local match of funds and

WHEREAS the LARA intends to provide the local match from private contributions and additional funds from other grant programs,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the LARA Board hereby supports the submittal of an application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to receive up to \$500,000 in grant funds for this project and further commits to providing up to \$500,000 in matching funds towards this project.

Yeas: 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

I, Mari Stone, Secretary, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and original copy of a resolution adopted by the Lowell Area Recreation Authority at a Regular Meeting held on the 11th day of March, 2009.

Mari Stone, Secretary
Lowell Area Recreation Authority



March 18, 2009

Mr. Dave Bee, Director
West Michigan Regional Planning Commission
820 Monroe, N.W.
Suite 214
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

RE: Adopted Recreation Plan Submittal

Dear Mr. Bee:

We are pleased to submit for your information, a copy of the 5 year Recreation Plan for the Lowell Area Recreation Authority as adopted on March 11, 2009. This plan is being submitted as the foundation for our upcoming application to the Natural Resources Trust Fund grant program for Phase 1 of our Lowell Area Trailway system.

The entire Lowell community is excited about the progress our organization has made and they are looking forward to the implementation of the trails, which as you will see, have been in the planning mode for over 10 years now.

Please feel free to contact me at Vergennes Township (616-897-5671) or our engineering consultant, Dave Austin at Williams & Works (616-988-3507), should you have any questions about this Recreation Plan submittal.

Sincerely,

Lowell Area Recreation Authority

Mari Stone, Secretary



March 18, 2009

Mr. Andy Bowman, Planning Director
Grand Valley Metro Council
40 Pearl St NW, Suite 410
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

RE: Adopted Recreation Plan Submittal

Dear Mr. Bowman:

We are pleased to submit for your information, a copy of the 5 year Recreation Plan for the Lowell Area Recreation Authority as adopted on March 11, 2009. This plan is being submitted as the foundation for our upcoming application to the Natural Resources Trust Fund grant program for Phase 1 of our Lowell Area Trailway system.

The entire Lowell community is excited about the progress our organization has made and they are looking forward to the implementation of the trails, which as you will see, have been in the planning mode for over 10 years now.

Please feel free to contact me at Vergennes Township (616-897-5671) or our engineering consultant, Dave Austin at Williams & Works (616-988-3507), should you have any questions about this Recreation Plan submittal.

Sincerely,

Lowell Area Recreation Authority

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mari Stone". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Mari Stone, Secretary

APPENDIX C
2003 LOWELL AREA TRAILWAY STUDY (EXCERPTS)

Greenways / Trailways

Greenways are private/public lands that are assembled through easements or right-of-ways to form corridors of permanent open space. These corridors are often used to provide access for multi-use, non-motorized trailways for the general public. Greenways include natural and man-made corridors that attempt to link nature preserves, recreation areas, schools, and cultural /community features to populated areas. Natural corridors can include rivers, streams, and their tributaries; while man-made corridors include road rights-of-way, utility easements, abandoned railroad beds, and active railroad rights-of-way. Greenways provide urban/suburban residents access to open space through the use of trailways, increasing recreational and educational experiences that might otherwise not be available to them.

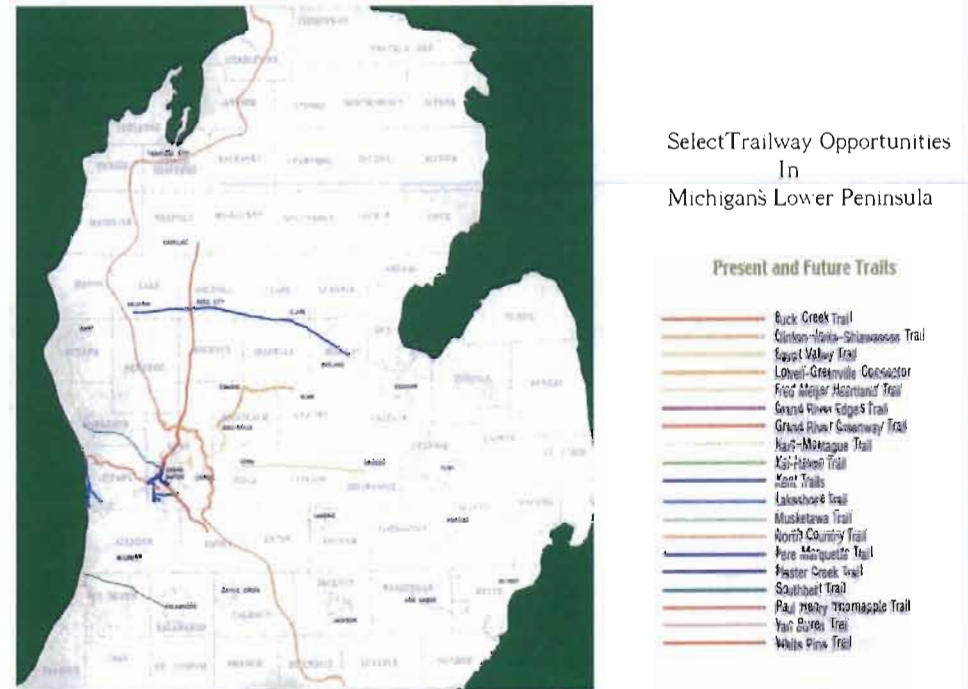
Consequently, greenways/trailways are developing all over the United States as a way to promote healthier, safer communities and to provide for corridors of public open space for future generations. Greenways/trailways improve quality of life by providing valuable outdoor recreation facilities and alternative modes of transportation that reduce vehicular traffic and retain wildlife habitat. As greenways/trailways continue to develop, they give testimony to the value that they bring to a community. The LARA will explore these opportunities for the Lowell area through the development of a community guided trailway master plan.

Background

The Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA) is a volunteer group that was formed to investigate ways to better the recreation opportunities for residents of the Lowell area. The LARA consists of representatives from Lowell Township, the City of Lowell, Vergennes Township, Lowell YMCA, and Lowell Area Schools. This multilateral cooperative effort is intended to give the majority of the concerned entities in the Lowell area an equal voice in the LARA recreation planning efforts. The LARA also welcomes the general public to attend their meetings and participate in any way possible. Through meetings conducted by the Lowell Area Community Fund of the Grand Rapids Foundation, it became apparent of the Lowell area public's desire for a non-motorized trailway(s) that would provide connectivity between the City of Lowell, Vergennes Township, and Lowell Township. The LARA deemed this desire a worthwhile planning endeavor that fit their mission. Beyond the obvious recreational aspect of this endeavor, the LARA especially liked the opportunity this effort presented for them to foster a better relationship between the various communities served by the LARA. The LARA started to hold regular trailway visioning meetings to start the development of the non-motorized trailway. As this planning effort progressed, the LARA, through a grant provided by the Lowell Area Community Fund of the Grand Rapids Foundation, proceeded by hiring the Lansing-based firm of Landscape Architects & Planners, Inc. (LAP) to help guide the LARA in the development of an area-wide trailway master plan. Assisting LAP, as part of the planning and design team, was HH Engineering's Alan Halbeisen, PE., a Lowell Township resident. Al not only provided engineering principles to the proposed routes, with special emphasis on bridges, but valuable insight and local perspective from a future trailway user's/resident's point of view.

Over the past ten years, there has been an increase in trailway planning and development throughout the state and within Kent County (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). As vehicle traffic increases, so has the awareness to provide additional means for safe, non-motorized transportation. The potential exists in the Lowell Area to connect several important community elements such as parks, schools, public facilities, and businesses with a non-motorized trailway. The LARA identified these connections as important goals in the trailway plan and realized the potential for increasing community support for the trailway plan by working cooperatively between the various communities represented within the LARA. During the planning process it was also discovered that the opportunity existed to possibly connect the LARA trailway master plan with adjacent communities' non-motorized trail plans, either current or proposed. This connectivity will benefit the user of the Lowell Area Trailway(s) by providing them with the opportunity to utilize an ever-expanding trailway system. As residential and commercial development continues, the needs for alternative means of transportation will continue to grow. This trailway master plan will provide the LARA with a valuable tool to plan for future right-of-way acquisition and to assist in securing funding for construction. The plan, when implemented, should benefit the health, safety, and general welfare of the entire Lowell area with continually improved non-motorized transportation and recreation opportunities.

The process of developing the LARA Trailway Master Plan was achieved by the sharing of information between LARA, the general public, and the Consultant (LAP) at several meetings throughout 2001-2002. Through the planning process, preliminary plans were generated, presented, and modified throughout this time frame. After thorough debate and modification the LARA Trailway Master Plan was then presented to the LARA for final comment.



Note: Portions of the North Country Trail Route through the Lowell area, as depicted on this map, is a proposed route subject to revision.

Figure 1. Statewide Present and Future Trails Map. Map courtesy of Kent County Parks Department.

INTRODUCTION

Lowell Area Trailway Study



Figure 2. Kent County Present and Future Trails Map. Map courtesy of Kent County Parks Department

Study Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives were developed for the railway master plan study based on information gleaned from the Lowell Area Recreation Authority's initial meetings and discussions with the LAP planning team. These goals and objectives served as a guide for the planning process throughout the study development.

- Provide direction, which will guide the planning and development efforts of the involved communities for years to come.
- Provide a basis for the railway development by researching the general land ownership and land use patterns. Deliberate the pros and cons of the potential route(s) for the railway and from that provide a rational basis for the best trail route(s).
- Work collaboratively with the communities involved coordinating the development of the plan.
- Generally identify and provide technical data for railway routes to connect natural, cultural, and scenic features (including ecological habitat, historical landmarks, and aesthetic elements).
- Propose the best railway routes incorporating; roadways, public lands, river routes, and bridge crossing for maximum safety.
- Plan for access points, trail heads, restrooms, parking lots, and other railway support facilities.
- Determine general costs and recommend phasing for implementation of the railway master plan.
- Identify general costs and recommend maintenance systems for the implemented railway.
- Recommend the development of standards for the railway.
- Work collaboratively with the LARA, local interest groups, planning officials, and the general public in the development of the railway master plan to provide a rational basis for the best railway route(s).

Methodology & Planning Process

The Lowell Area Railway Study was completed through the combined efforts of the LAP planning team and the LARA, with contributions from various other individuals through a series of meetings held throughout the years of 2001 and 2002. At the initial meetings, discussion was held to clarify the project scope, project schedule, expected meetings, background data available, and contact persons. Also, throughout this early process, pertinent maps, reports, existing plans, and parcel information, along with other data, was gathered from the LARA members. In addition to these items, the LARA and contributing guests provided the LAP planning team with keen insight regarding certain elements to be researched about the railway. One of the most valuable of these elements was which land areas and other features the LARA considered the most important to be connected with the railway. These meetings provided valuable information to the planning team and helped clarify the client's expectations of the study.

After the initial meetings, the LAP planning team began collecting additional data relevant to the railway planning process. The following data sets were collected and utilized: USGS maps, recreation plans, county-wide pedestrian plans, plat books/ records, comprehensive master plans, FHWA reports, utilities plans, school property information/ boundaries, adjacent communities trail maps, soils maps, floodplain information, and area road maps. This information, along with the previously-mentioned information provided by LARA members and participants, was utilized in the development of the railway concept and master plans. The railway plans were eventually recorded over a base map that was generated with the Michigan Geographic Framework (MGF), which was created and provided by the Michigan Center for Geographic Information. This data set contains features including roads, rivers, lakes, streams, railroads, political jurisdiction boundaries, power lines, pipelines, and school district boundaries. These features were based on the MDNR's MIRIS files, among other previous data sets, and have been streamlined to better serve Geographic Information System (GIS) users.

Utilizing this base map as a guide, the LAP planning team walked and drove the entire project area taking a written and photographic inventory. From these inventory sessions, analysis was formed. Special attention was paid to the inclusion of the area's present and future schools, parks, natural areas, historical features, utility corridors, public spaces, quasi-public spaces, adjacent community railway opportunities, and other "activity generators". These, and other elements, all played important roles in analyzing the routing of the railway. From this inventory and analysis, conceptual railway routing plans were developed and shared with the LARA, through a series of meetings held to discuss findings and adjust routes. These meetings acted as a tool to generate opinions concerning the likes and dislikes of particular trail routes and river crossings, thus providing the LAP planning team with valuable information on which to base the final master plan.

INTRODUCTION

Methodology & Planning Process (cont.)

From these meetings, it became apparent that the railway study needed to focus on providing the LARA with a concise, viable, and attainable railway master plan that would service all the political entities involved. This was achieved by scaling down the broad-scale planning approach to the study area and focusing on planning for phased development that could act as a good base for future railway expansion to the broader reaches of the study area. Important elements within the extended reaches of the study area were identified as areas the LARA should attempt to include in their railway after the initial phases are complete. Draft versions of the overall master plan and the phased master plan were presented to the LARA on October 2, 2002. From the preliminary phased master plan, general cost estimates for the phase one option railways were developed and also presented at this meeting. These costs were based upon past recreational developments of similar or same-type construction.

After review of the preliminary master plans and cost estimates, a draft report, entitled Lowell Area Trailway Study, was completed and presented to the LARA along with the final master plans of the trailway routes. Included in this report were trailway plans, photographs, graphics, typical details, a river crossings study, and written descriptions of trailway routings. Upon LARA review of the draft study report, revisions were made by the LAP planning team to produce the final Lowell Area Trailway Study Report. Cost estimates for trailway phases one/ two and river crossings are included in an appendix to the Lowell Area Trailway Study Report. This finalized report and the final trailway master plans were combined to form the Lowell Area Trailway Study. The finalized plans and report were completed and issued in March of 2003.



Description

Regional characteristics provide important insight for planning future land uses. They often determine where development and recreation are likely to occur. In addition, these characteristics can dictate what types of recreational opportunities can occur in an area.

For example, Michigan's geological characteristics provide the state with valuable agriculture, forestry, aggregate mining, development, and recreation opportunities. The state's unique topography was created by glaciers that rolled through the region thousands of years ago. These glaciers are responsible for the contrasting land forms of flat grounds and rolling hills, the intricate network of rivers, streams, abundant lakes, and wetlands that enhance recreational opportunities. In addition, these glaciers produced large areas of sandy, gravelly soils that are mixed with a variety of clays to produce the common soils of Michigan. Many of these soils also contain important nutrients and properties important for agricultural practices. There are also important products such as aggregate (sand and gravel) that can be extracted from these soils for use in the construction of homes, schools, businesses, roads, and trailways.

Furthermore, Michigan provides its residents with ample open space relative to its population. This is partially due to the fact that, with the exception of a few metropolitan areas that are steadily expanding outward, a substantial part of the state continues to reflect a rural character. The state's open space inventory is also enhanced by an estimated 260,000 acres of state parks and 142 state forest campgrounds throughout the upper and lower peninsulas. In addition, there are over 296 county and local parks that add to the inventory of dedicated open space. These lands provide guaranteed open space for 9,938,444 people according to Michigan's 2000 population count, provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Michigan also experiences a large variety of climatic conditions. Its northern climate provides residents with seasonal changes that vary from the northern to the southern and from the eastern to the western portions of the state. These variations are largely due to the lake effects produced by the Great Lakes. The variation in climate throughout the state provides optimal conditions for a variety of agricultural crops. These climatic changes also elicit a need for recreational opportunities for a variety of weather conditions.

In summary, land use opportunities that are determined by Michigan's unique regional characteristics have the potential to adapt or conflict with each other. Thus, with the foresight to pre-plan for the opportunities these characteristics provide, there is higher a likelihood that conflicting land uses may successfully coexist.

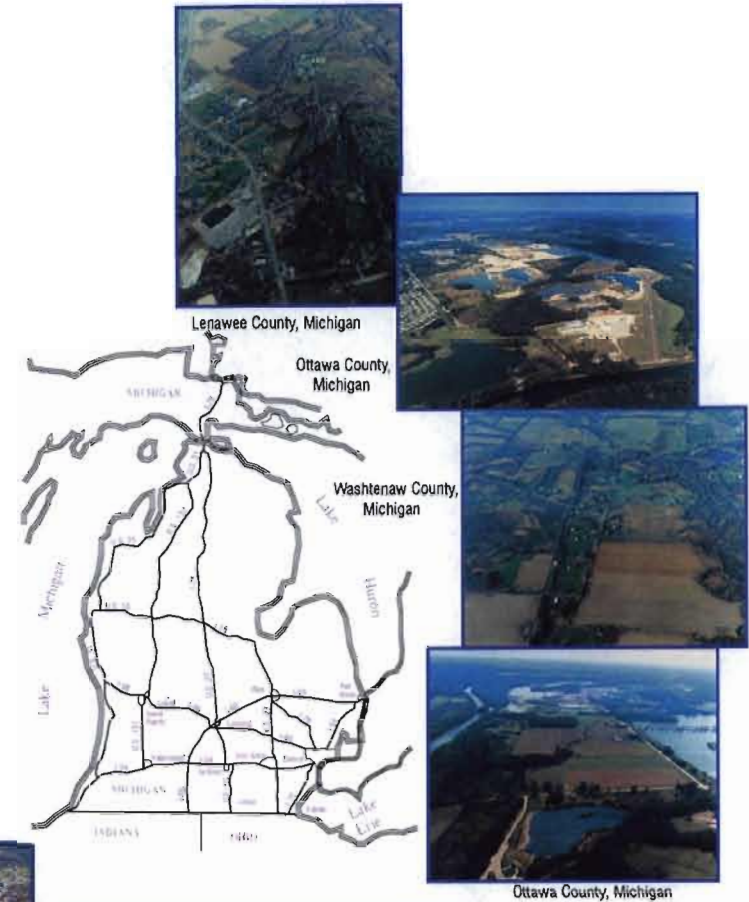


Figure 3. Regional Location Map and Photographs.
Aerial photographs characteristic of southwest and south-east Michigan.

Project Location

The Lowell Area Trailway Study area consists of Lowell Township, Vergennes Township, and the City of Lowell. The study area borders Ionia County on the East and various Townships within Kent county on all the other sides. See Figures 4 & 5.

Physical Characteristics

The physical characteristics of the study area are reflective of those in the region. Typical of Kent County, the topography in the study area varies from flat lands to rolling hills. The study area is blessed with many land cover types such as deciduous forests, marshes, fallow farmlands, active farmlands, and urbanized areas. The study area is part of one of the state's largest watersheds, the Grand River Watershed, which encompasses 98% of Kent County. Along with the Grand River, the Flat River flows through the study area and eventually joins the Grand River within the City of Lowell at the fairgrounds. This watershed contributes to several lakes, ponds, streams and wetlands within the study area providing a wealth of natural habitats for wildlife and plants.

Land Use

The study area is rural in character with a noticeable cash crop, dairy and livestock industry, dominating the study area outside of the City of Lowell. The City of Lowell is the only urbanized area in the study area. Some industrial and residential subdivision development is also located throughout the study area. The Lowell State Game Area and Fallasburg County Park occupy a large portion of the eastern part of the study area and, for the most part, remain undeveloped. There are also some gravel pits and aggregate industries located within the study area.

Environmental Concerns

Reflective of the rest of the state over the past 100 years, considerable environmental damage has occurred to the ecology of the study area's rivers, streams, and wetlands. Most of this environmental damage has been associated with past and current agricultural and industrial practices within the river/steam corridors. Awareness of the causes of the area's environmental problems have never been more heightened, and civil groups, non-profit agencies, local governments, local businesses, and private individuals are all taking steps to develop solutions to these issues. The designation of the Flat River as a Natural River, the donation of the Cooper Woodland preserve, and the comprehensive planning of open-space and natural area preservation by Vergennes Township officials are just a few of the steps being taken to improve the environment within the study area.

Area Attractions

Lowell Township, Vergennes Township, and the City of Lowell offer many educational, cultural, recreational, and entertainment opportunities.

The City of Lowell, the third oldest settlement in Kent County, contains one of the most recognizable entertainment venues in the area, the Lowell Showboat.

The Showboat, officially named the Robert E. Lee, began operation in 1932, acting as a backdrop for musical and comedy acts. Today the Showboat resides along the Riverwalk Plaza, a recently refurbished bank of the Flat River, and hosts the "Showboat Summer Concert Series". Lowell is also home to the Englehardt Public Library (a branch of the Kent County Library System), several annual festivities, and a historic downtown shopping district with the state's largest antique mall. Cultural opportunities can be had at the Lowell Area Arts Council, featuring art exhibitions, performances, and art classes. The Lowell Historical Association Museum resides in the historic Graham Building downtown for educational and historical activities.

The study area is also home to several township, city, and county parks and natural areas. The 800-acre Lowell State Game Area offers excellent hunting and hiking opportunities on the Eastern border of the study area. Stoney Lakeside Park offers hiking opportunities, a swimming beach, and will soon house the new Lowell YMCA. The Kent County Youth 4-H Fair has been held for over 50 years at the Lowell Fairgrounds, located at the confluence of the Grand and Flat Rivers. A portion of the North Country Trail, a national scenic trail that will run through seven northern states from New York to North Dakota, runs through the study area. This trailway study will attempt to compliment the existing routes through the study area with some overlapping segments. The North Country Trail's National Headquarter's Office is located in historic downtown Lowell.

Kent County

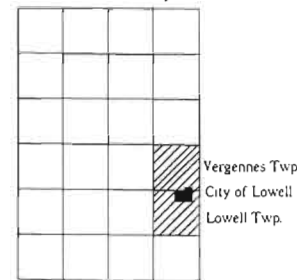


Figure 5. Study Area Location Map.

Figure 4. Kent County Location Map.



PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION

Lowell Area Trailway Study

5



Area Attractions (cont.)

The recently completed sports fields and walking trails in Lowell Township's Riverfront Park also add to the area's recreation opportunities. The Kent County Parks and Recreation Department is also purchasing a parcel of property in Lowell Township near the intersection of Alden Nash Avenue and Cascade Road for a future Regional County Park. Boating and fishing opportunities can be found throughout the study area in the Flat and Grand Rivers, Pratt and Murray Lakes, and in the area's several ponds and streams.

Vergennes Township is also home to many unique recreational, cultural, and educational opportunities. Located along the banks of the Flat River in Vergennes Township is the historic village of Fallasburg with the Fallasburg Covered Bridge, built in 1871. The bridge has been featured in television commercials and has been the subject of many photographs and paintings. Placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999, this bridge acts as a gateway to the historic village of Fallasburg.

Adjacent to the historic village of Fallasburg is the 530-acre Fallasburg County Park, a Kent County Park. Hiking, picnicking, sporting activities, and fishing are just a few of the activities that can be enjoyed at this beautiful venue. Every September, up to 30,000 visitors attend the Fallasburg Fall Festival in the park. Hosted by the Lowell Area Arts Council, this annual event features arts and crafts, music, and food.

The Lowell Area School's Education Foundation recently received a gift of 34.7 acres of woodland, the Cooper Woodland Preserve, from Richard and Shirley Cooper. The environmental education and hiking trails available in this preserve will serve the area residents for many years to come.

Also adding to Vergennes Township's educational and recreational opportunities are the Wege Foundation Natural Area for the Study of Ecology and the Wittenbach Agri-science Center. These neighboring entities are utilized by local students and local citizens alike for educational projects, hiking, and wildlife viewing. The Wege Foundation Natural Area protects 61 acres of woodland and contains a creek section, a pine plantation, wetlands, a pond, and a hand built cabin.

These are a few of the great educational, cultural, recreational, and entertainment opportunities available in the Lowell Area Trailway Study Area. The proposed trailway routings suggested in this report attempt to take advantage of the opportunities presented by these and other points of interest within the study area.

Introduction

Throughout the trailway planning process, data is collected pertinent to existing conditions found within the study area. This information is called the site inventory. The inventory deemed relevant to trailway planning is then analyzed to help with the determination of the best routing for the trailway and location of support facilities. This process is referred to as site analysis. Together, the site inventory and analysis provides the foundation for the Lowell Area Trailway Study, and will serve as a guide to each trail option within the study area. Due to the relatively large scale of the study area, the inventory and analysis is rather general in nature. As sections of the trailway are developed, another detailed site inventory and analysis of each specific area should be conducted, especially pertaining to wetlands.

Soils

The soils map, page 8, indicates that our study area contains soils typically found throughout Kent County. The predominate soils in the study area are Plainfield Sands, Spinks Loamy Sands, and Houghton Mucks. The Plainfield and Spinks are fairly well-drained, composed of moderate to gentle slopes. The Houghtons are less well-drained and are generally associated with the wooded river corridors.

Soil characteristics are important to consider because they will often be a determining factor in what type of construction method is employed in the trailway development. When constructing the trailway, detailed soil borings are not always necessary, but when soil characteristics are not eminently clear, detailed soil borings can help minimize unexpected changes during the construction process. For instance, special attention should be paid to the soils near river corridors because organic soils tend to predominate in these areas creating the need for special consideration in the detailing of the trailways construction. Soil borings assist trail designers in the proper detailing of the trailway to maximize the trailways life span.

Wetlands

The general wetlands maps, page 9, indicates areas within the study area that the National Wetland Inventory of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have identified as possible wetland areas. The NWI classification most commonly found in the study area are forested and emergent wetlands. It should be stated that the NWI mapping system is extremely general in nature and should not be relied on as a sole source for wetland determination. Trailway sections that run through a wetland, as determined by the general wetland map should have a wetland assessment done by a professional assessor prior to the final routing of the trailway in the field. A permit from the MDEQ will be needed in order to construct a trailway through a wetland. The trailway may require special detailing, such as boardwalk sections, through areas deemed to traverse a wetland.

Natural Corridors

Natural corridors include rivers, streams, natural drains, county drains, floodplains, and wetlands associated in conjunction with these elements. This study area's predominant natural corridors are the Flat River and the Grand River with their associated wetlands, backwaters, and tributaries such as Cherry Creek.

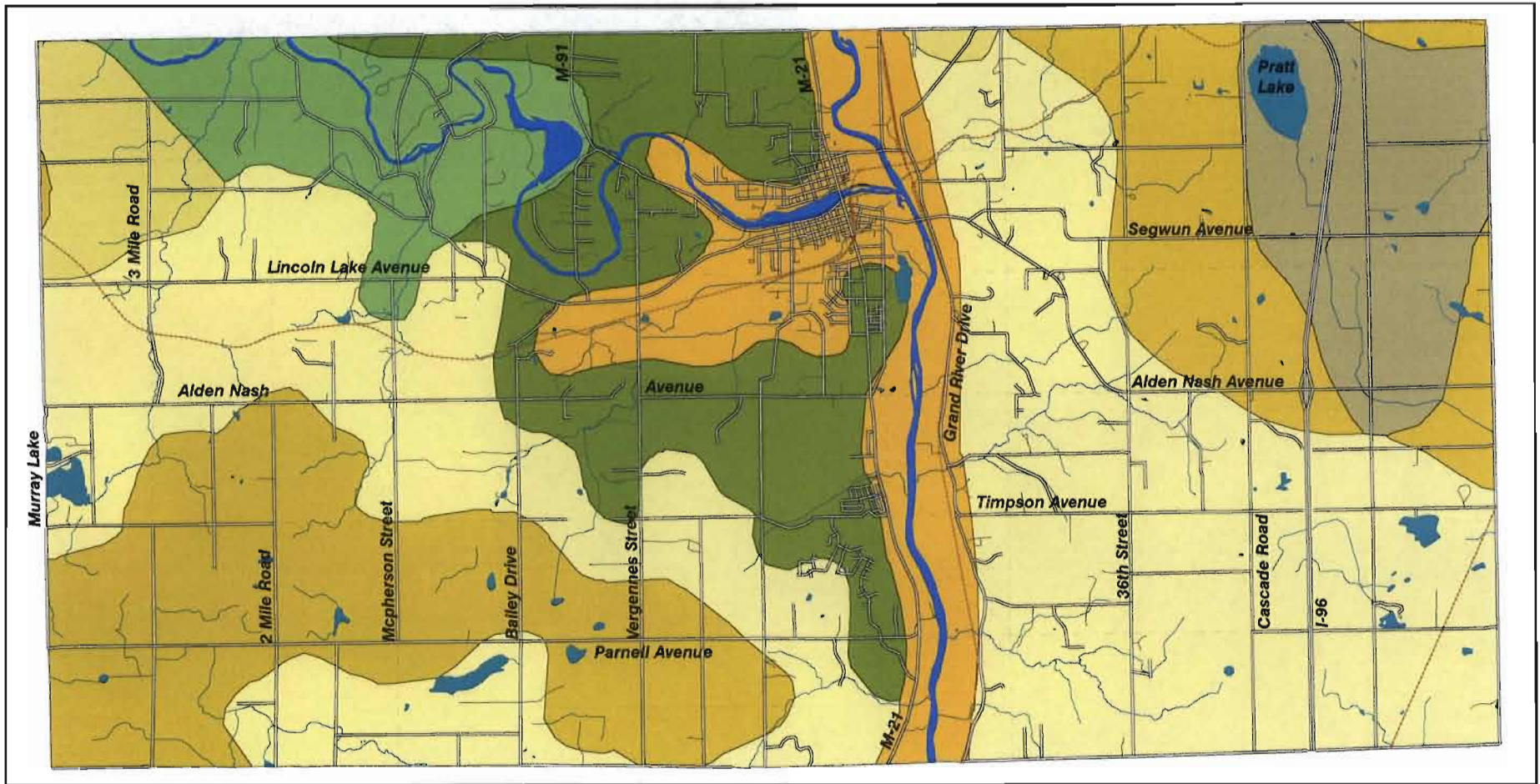
Natural corridors preserve open space, provide habitat for wildlife, and are often preferred for trailway development over man-made corridors because of their natural beauty. Natural corridors often provide better pedestrian-vehicle separation and better opportunities for viewing wildlife (See Natural and Man-made Corridors Inventory and Analysis, page 10). Special consideration should be given to allow viewing of wildlife along the trail sections in natural corridors while avoiding excessive disturbance to the habitats contained in them. While natural corridors are often preferred for trailways they do tend to cost more for implementation due to marginal soils and clearing.

Man-made Corridors

Man-made corridors are areas such as road right-of-ways, active railroad right-of-ways, abandoned railroads, and utility easements. These corridors are useful in trailway development because the costs associated with trailway development in these locations are generally lower in comparison to trailway development in natural corridors.

The most common man-made corridors are road right-of-ways. While roads vary in width, the most common right-of-way width is 33 feet from the center line or 66 feet total. State highway right-of-ways, such as M-21, through our study area, also vary from 33 feet from center in the downtown to 50 feet from center west of West Avenue.

The study area also contains railroad right-of-ways, one of which is abandoned. We are suggesting that the LARA utilize the North Country Trailway limestone path proposed to be developed on this abandoned rail bed from Lowell down to Pratt Lake. Putting a trailway on an abandoned rail bed is the most inexpensive way to implement a trailway.



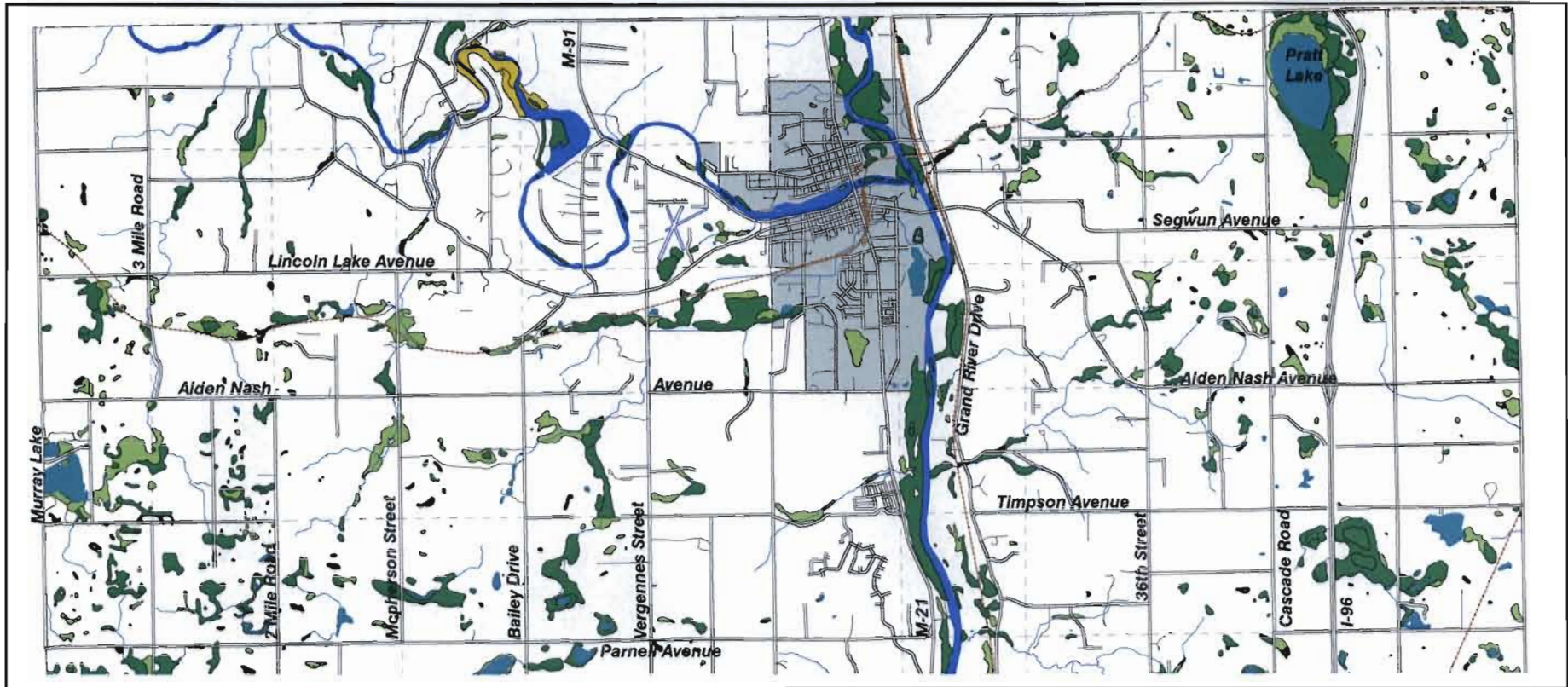
Soil Information Provided By: State Soil Geographic Database (STATSGO), State General Soil Maps made by generalizing the detailed soil survey. The level of mapping is designed to be used for broad planning and management uses covering state, regional, and multi-state areas.

LEGEND

- BOYER-FOX-WASEPI (MI018)
- HOUGHTON-CARLISLE-ADRIAN (MI022)
- MARLETTE-CAPAC-PARKHILL (MI035)
- MARLETTE-CAPAC-SPINKS (MI036)
- PARKHILL-CAPAC-LONDO (MI061)
- PLAINFIELD-SPINKS-METEA (MI037)
- TEKENINK-SPINKS-ARKPORT (MI038)



INVENTORY & ANALYSIS: SOILS
Lowell Area Trailway Study



This map is compiled from National Wetland Inventory (NWI) data sets. NWI digital data files are records of wetlands location and classification as defined by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. This dataset is one of a series available in county coverages containing ground planimetric coordinates of wetlands point, line, and area features and wetlands attributes. The digital data as well as the hardcopy maps that were used as the source for the digital data are produced and distributed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's National Inventory project. The data provide consultants, planners, and resource managers with information on wetland location and type. The purpose of this survey was not to map all wetlands and deepwater habitats, but rather, to use aerial photointerpretation techniques to produce thematic maps that show, in most cases, the larger types that can be identified by such techniques. The objective was to provide better geospatial information on wetlands than found on the USGS topoquads.

LEGEND

- LOWELL CITY LIMITS
- LAKE
- DRAIN
- RIVER
- RIVER

WETLAND CLASSIFICATION LEGEND

- AQUATIC BED
- EMERGENT
- FORESTED
- SCRUB-SHRUB
- UNCONSOLIDATED SHORE

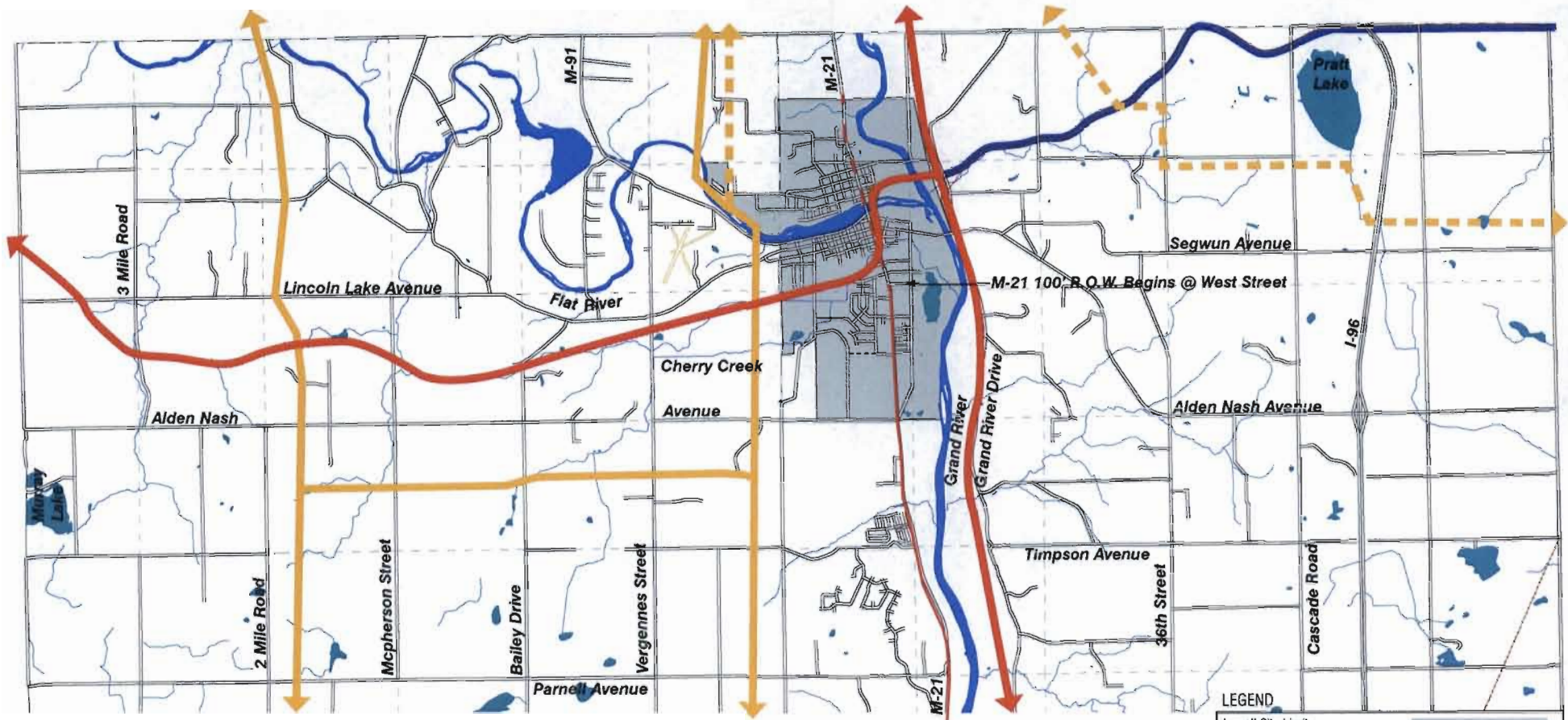


NORTH
NOT TO SCALE

INVENTORY & ANALYSIS: WETLANDS

Lowell Area Trailway Study





LEGEND

- Lowell City Limit
- Active Railroad R.O.W.
- Consumer's Energy Easement
- Wolverine Power Easement
- Abandoned Railroad R.O.W.
- Rivers/Streams/Drains
- M-21 100' R.O.W.
- M-21 66' R.O.W.
- Utility Corridor
- Existing Multi-use Pathway


 NORTH
 NOT TO SCALE

*All Locations Approximated

INVENTORY & ANALYSIS: CORRIDORS

Phase One Trailway Options

Wittenbach Center to Creekside Park/ Middle School - Phase I Option - 3.2 Miles

This phase one trailway option serves the northern portion of the study area and the City of Lowell. This trailway would consist primarily of a multi-use bituminous trailway. In some sections, the trailway might have to be constructed of boardwalk to bridge some wet areas, particularly, in the area between the Cooper Woodland Preserve and Cherry Creek Elementary. This phase one trailway will utilize the existing paved parking area at the Wittenbach Agri-science Center as a trailhead. The addition of some public restroom facilities should be considered at this location. Also, special consideration will need to be given to ensure that bicyclists utilizing the paved trailway will not attempt to utilize the naturalized paths in the adjacent Wege Foundation Natural Area. Extensive signage prohibiting bicycles from the Agri-Science Center and Natural Area trails, will need to be posted at the trailhead.

This trailway connects the Wittenbach Center and Wege Foundation Natural Area with Lowell High School. The high school parking lots could also serve as additional trailheads or access points for this trailway. This trailway would continue South and West to link the afore-mentioned features with the Cooper Woodland Preserve, Cherry Creek Elementary, and Creekside Park. The existing parking lots, restroom facilities, and central location at Creekside Park make it a natural choice for a trailhead. This route will require some easements from private property owners to become a reality. This trailway joins many important civic elements in the area and will provide many students a safe pedestrian passage to several school facilities.

Riverfront Park to Creekside Park - Phase I Option - 1.9 Miles

This phase one trailway option serves to connect a very active element, Riverfront Park, in Lowell Township with the City of Lowell. This trailway is intended to primarily consist of a bituminous, multi-use trailway. This trailway will also contain a pedestrian bridge to traverse the Grand River into Lowell's Riverfront Park (see pages 14-15). The trailway will continue on to connect Stoney Lakeside Park, with the future YMCA facility, to the City of Lowell's Creekside Park. The section of trailway between Stoney Lakeside Park and the bridge over the Grand River may have to contain some boardwalk sections and/or culverts because of varying topography and wet areas. Sections of this trailway located within road right-of-ways within Lowell's city limits, might also need to be constructed of concrete. This could add significantly to the cost of these sections.

The existing parking areas and restrooms at Lowell Township's Riverfront Park will serve as an important trailhead for this end of the trailway. This trailway option provides users with access to three parks, all of which contain existing trailways and both active and passive park elements. All three of these parks contain restrooms and parking areas, making them excellent trailheads.

This trailway option relies heavily on the utilization of existing road right-of-ways, one of which, M-21, is a state trunk line. Permission from the various governing agencies will need to be attained to make this trail a reality. If acceptable to the City of Lowell, the existing concrete sidewalk along M-21 could be expanded to a 10' width to serve as the trailway in this area. Special attention will need to be paid to effectively mark the trail crossing/ driveway intersections with pavement markings and signage, in this section of trail.

Main Street / City Property Loop to Fairgrounds - Phase I Option - 1.6 Miles

This phase one trailway option serves to connect another popular destination, the City of Lowell's Recreation Park and the Lowell Fairgrounds, to Lowell's historic downtown. This trailway is also intended to consist primarily of a bituminous, multi-use trailway. This phase-one trailway will also contain a pedestrian bridge that will traverse the Flat River, into Lowell's Recreation Park (see pages 14-15). This bridge and trailway will give users access to three beautiful pieces of undeveloped riverfront property owned by the City of Lowell. It will also tie into the current North Country Trail routing and, although paved, could give North Country Trail users an alternative route around the busy industrial district that the current route enters. It will also provide a highly visible entrance to the trailway by connecting to Main Street, the Veteran's Memorial, and the existing Riverwalk Plaza in the heart of downtown Lowell. A mid-block crosswalk is proposed at Main Street to connect trail users to the Riverwalk Plaza. This trailway entrance at Main Street would provide a unique opportunity to highlight Lowell's rich manufacturing heritage with a possible trailhead and interpretative element at the original location of King Milling, in the area of the Veteran's memorial and parking lot. Permission to utilize this property would need to be granted from King Milling. Other permissions would need to be attained to cross the railroad right-of-ways, Division Street Bridge, and to utilize some existing road right-of-ways.

This trailway option will highlight three currently under-utilized city owned properties and provide a nice link to the downtown. Additional investigations will need to be made into the soil conditions under this trailway and a thorough wetland assessment will need to be performed prior to its construction. With its existing bathrooms and parking areas, Recreation Park could act as a trailhead for this phase one option, along with the possible construction of a full-service trailhead with restrooms and parking lot at the end of the trailway near the corner of Division Street and Grand River Avenue.

Phase Two Trailway Options - Connectors

City Property Loop to Pratt Lake Connector - Phase II Option - 4.0-6.0 Miles

This phase two trailway connector would, for the most part, be contained within the old Mid-Michigan Railroad rail bed. Currently, the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) is assisting Lowell Township in their efforts to acquire this railroad right-of-way within the township and beyond. Once acquired, the NCTA would like to incorporate this right-of-way into their trailway system and assist in its development and maintenance as a limestone chips and fines trailway. This allows for its recognition by the National Park Service as a certified section of the North Country Trail, and makes it eligible for future funding sources. As depicted, this connector would join the phase one trailway at the Division Street bridge over the Grand River and follow the road right-of-ways of Division Street and Grand River Drive with a multi-use bituminous trailway until it intersects the abandoned rail bed and the current proposed North Country Trail route. This trailway would tie nicely into Kent County's current bike lane routing planned to be developed along Grand River Drive, giving those users access to the LARA phase one trailway at the Division St. bridge. This option also contains a possible trailhead at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources access point and parking area on Pratt Lake. A boardwalk section will probably need to be considered between the NCTA path and the proposed trailhead within the state owned property on Pratt Lake due to the excessively wet soils in this area. In considering costs for this connector, this report will simply focus on the development of the boardwalk section and road right-of-way sections as shown on the master plan with the assumption of utilizing the NCTA limestone path along the rail bed. The NCTA has expressed a willingness to share the right-of-way with cyclists on this future section of their path, to assist the LARA in its goals of reaching future destinations in the study area's southern region. This connector would provide a very scenic route with access to trailheads and other phase one trailways while only excluding in-line skaters and thin-tired cyclists. It is possible, that this trailway could ultimately connect the City of Lowell to Bowne Township, as the NCTA's negotiations for right-of-way continue.

Stoney Lakeside Park to Fairgrounds Connector - Phase II Option - 1.1 Miles

This phase two trailway option would connect Stoney Lakeside Park, and its phase one trailway, to the Fairground, and its phase one trailway bridge over the Flat River. This route follows the Grand River and would complete the southern loop of the phased trail system. This trailway is considered to be a multi-use, bituminous trailway and would need to pass through one private property owner's land. Permission will need to be granted from this property owner for this option to become a reality. This trailway is proposed to cross under Hudson Street at the bridge over the Grand River and will share the North Country Trail route within the Fairgrounds until it reaches the phase one bridge over the Flat River. This trailway will also share the southern naturalized path route within Stoney Lakeside Park for a brief distance before connecting with the phase one trailway within the park. This trailway option has the potential to be a very scenic route. River overlooks should also be considered along this trailway.

Middle School to Main Street Connector - Phase II Option - 1.0 Miles

This connector would essentially connect the phase one trailway at the middle school with the current North Country Trail and City Loop phase one trailway. This trailway will rely heavily on the utilization of existing city street right-of-ways and could possibly have to be merely, widened concrete

sidewalks in these areas. In areas where the trailway routing relies on the use of city sidewalks and the size of the sidewalks cannot be widened to at least 8 feet, it is recommended that signage be posted restricting the use of bicycles on these sidewalk portions of the trailway. In the non-city right-of-way areas, the trailway is being proposed as a multi-use, bituminous trailway. This routing connects three schools and a city park, Richards Park, and will see extensive student traffic. Along the Flat River, the trailway is proposed to run in the back of the buildings in this area to connect to the Main Street bridge over the Flat River. Further study will need to be conducted to determine if this option is feasible, both structurally and fiscally. If deemed not desirable, the use of the existing city sidewalks in this area could suffice for the routing of this connection.

An alternative route for this trailway connector is shown as another option to consider for the Middle School to Main Street Connector. This option essentially runs North along the Flat River and Riverside Drive until just south of the city limits. At this point, the alternate trailway crosses the Flat River with a pedestrian bridge to the Atwood Property. The trailway would then connect to Main Street via the Atwood Property, Monroe Street right-of-way, library property and the Riverfront Plaza. This option would probably rely on utilizing the existing sidewalk on Monroe Street, and would also need the bicycle restrictions that were discussed earlier. Permission from Atwood and possibly some private land owners on Riverside Drive would need to be attained prior to constructing this trailway option. Additional fencing would also need to be considered at the Atwood property for security purposes. If constructed, this alternative route would afford a very scenic route along the Flat River and provide a very direct access to the trail for the Lowell residents living in the Northeast quadrant of the city. An alternative river crossing from Spring St. to the Showboat Plaza is also considered as part of this alternate route (see sheets 14-15).

High School to Westside Residential Extension - Phase II Option - 2.0 Miles

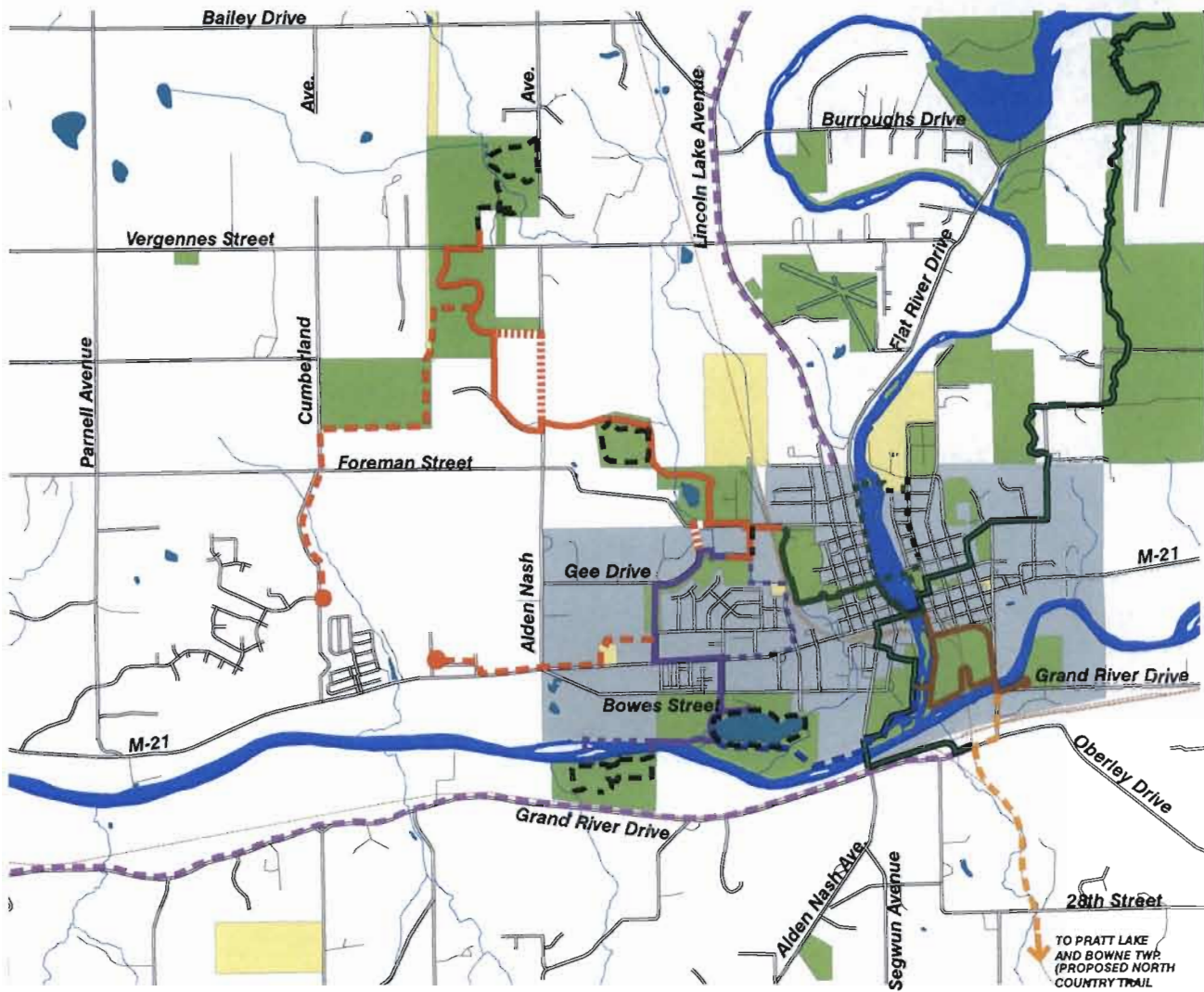
This option proposes to connect the High School, with its phase one trailway, with the increasing residential populations to the west of the City of Lowell. This trailway is proposed as a multi-use bituminous facility and will rely on some private property owner's permission and some road right-of-way construction. This trailway is proposed to follow a Consumer's Energy easement from the high school through the Kent County Road Commission Gravel Pit, and eventually terminate at the Woodbushe Drive/ Cumberland Avenue intersection. This is near an entrance to a highly populated subdivision and the proposed entrance to the Whispering Hills subdivision, currently under construction. These entrances are excellent locations for trailhead access points. This trailway option may require the acquisition of additional right-of-way from private property owners along Cumberland Avenue to provide for ample vehicle-pedestrian separation.

Ridgeview to Westside Residential Extension - Phase II Option - 1.1 Miles

This trailway option is attempting to connect the future and existing residents of the Stone Ridge Apartments and Whispering Hills subdivision with the phase one trailway planned at Ridgeview Drive. This trailway option will rely on some private property owner permission and road right-of-way construction, with some along M-21, a state trunkline. If acceptable to the City of Lowell and Lowell Township, the existing sidewalk along this portion of M-21 could be widened to 10 feet to become the trailway in this area. Ample right-of-way does exist in this area however, to build a separate trail adjacent to the existing sidewalk if so desired by the governing agencies. Once again, special signage and pavement markings will need to be considered in these areas due to a large number of drive openings. A trail access point is proposed near the corner of Birmingham and Boulder Avenues to serve the adjacent apartment and subdivision residents, and with Meijer's permission, a trailhead could be established at the Meijer store parking lot for this trail option.

TRAILWAY MASTER PLAN SUMMARY - PHASE ONE AND TWO

Lowell Area Trailway Study



LEGEND

- MAIN ST./CITY PROPERTY LOOP TO FAIRGROUNDS - PHASE I OPTION
- RIVERFRONT PARK TO CREEKSIDE PARK - PHASE I OPTION
- RIVERFRONT PARK TO CREEKSIDE PARK - ALTERNATE PHASE I ROUTE
- WITTENBACH CENTER TO CREEKSIDE PARK/MIDDLE SCHOOL - PHASE I OPTION
- WITTENBACH CENTER TO CREEKSIDE PARK/MIDDLE SCHOOL - ALTERNATE PHASE I ROUTE
- CITY PROPERTY LOOP TO PRATT LAKE CONNECTOR - PHASE II OPTION
- STONEY LAKESIDE PARK TO FAIRGROUNDS CONNECTOR - PHASE II OPTION
- MIDDLE SCHOOL TO MAIN STREET CONNECTOR - PHASE II OPTION
- MIDDLE SCHOOL TO MAIN ST. - ALTERNATE PHASE II ROUTE
- HIGH SCHOOL TO WEST SIDE RESIDENTIAL EXTENSION AND RIDGEVIEW TO WEST SIDE RESIDENTIAL EXTENSION - PHASE II OPTIONS
- CURRENT NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ROUTING
- KENT COUNTY EXISTING/PROPOSED BIKE LANES
- EXISTING OR CURRENTLY PROPOSED TRAILWAY
- UTILITY EASEMENTS, INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL, OR QUASI-PUBLIC PROPERTIES
- PUBLICLY OWNED OR SCHOOL OWNED PROPERTIES
- LOWELL CITY LIMITS



Note: See Sheets 16-30 for a detailed description of individual routes.

TO PRATT LAKE AND BOWNE TWP (PROPOSED NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ROUTING).

TRAILWAY MASTER PLAN: PHASING PLAN
Lowell Area Trailway Study

Scope

The Lowell Area Recreational Authority is interested in developing a network of trails to serve the City of Lowell, and the townships of Lowell and Vergennes. A study of potential trails is being undertaken with funding through the Lowell Area Community Fund (Engelhardt Fund). Included in this study are potential crossings of the Grand and Flat Rivers. Already located in the community is a portion of the North Country Trail, a national scenic trail that will run through seven northern states, from New York to North Dakota. The National Headquarter's office for the North Country Trail Association is located on Main Street in the City of Lowell.

The purpose of this report is to review alternatives for the river crossings. Factors to be considered are the technical and economic feasibility of constructing new bridges and/or salvaging historic bridges from other locations and rehabilitating them for use at these locations. The technical feasibility includes the need to obtain Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) approval for the proposed structures. The economic feasibility includes consideration of potential funding sources for the design, construction and maintenance of these structures.

Discussion of River Crossing Locations

Three potential river crossings have been identified. The first location would be a crossing of the Grand River from the trail extending down through the City property at Stoney Lakeside Park to the Lowell Township Grand River Riverfront Park, located north of Grand River Drive. The second location would be a crossing of the Flat River from the Fairgrounds, which are part of the city's Recreation Park, to the city property east of the river that is surrounded by the Mid-Michigan Railroad tracks and the Grand River. This trail would also accommodate the North Country Trail, replacing segments that run through or around the King Milling area. The third location would be a crossing of the Flat River north of M-21. The following three options for this crossing have been considered; one from the Lowell Showboat stage area, one from the Atwood property and one from City property north of Atwood. Each of these would cross to property along Riverside Drive or to Flat River Drive on the west side of the river.

Since each of the crossings is a new structure that would be built within the flood plain, a permit to construct from the MDEQ Geological and Land Management Division would be required. In addition, sections of the Flat River north of the City of Lowell are designated Natural Rivers and are subject to stricter requirements for building. The crossing locations are within the limits of floodplain studies that have been performed for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to establish water levels for various flood events. Although it would be desirable to build the structures above the water surface of the estimated 100-year flood event it is sometimes impractical to do so. In cases where the structures are built below the 100 year flood event an analysis of the impacts on upstream flood levels is required. Copies of the flood studies and topographic maps of the Lowell Township Park and Wastewater Treatment Plant site were obtained to identify existing conditions. Based on the available information and site visits to measure river widths, potential crossing locations and elevations have been identified.

Piers in the river are less desirable since they can trap debris floating in the river, impede boat and canoe traffic and cause the flood levels upstream of the bridge to increase. However, the selection of a Grand River crossing location should include a comparison of costs that also includes the cost of approach trails. A bridge at the east end of the park could tie into the recently completed trails within Lowell Township Park and would avoid the need to build trails along the north side of the river to the islands. This option may require excavation of the north shoreline to compensate for the hydraulic impact of building piers in the river.

The Flat River downstream of M-21, before it converges with the Grand River, also has islands separating the river flow. The narrowest bank-to-bank width of the Flat River is approximately 300 feet. A crossing of the river that would line up near the south end zone of Burch field would allow a two span crossing of the river with a pier on one of the islands. The crossing would create a connection between the fairgrounds and city property that could be used for camping during the fair or other events. The connection would also provide a more suitable route for the North Country Trail, passing through a scenic area of the river and leading to the location of the headquarters in downtown Lowell. Currently, the trail winds around the potentially dangerous areas of the King Milling Company and Michigan Wire Company.

The Flat River upstream of the dam at M-21 is very wide and would require structures of multiple spans, totaling 600 to 800 feet long. Piers would be located in the floodplain, but due to the effects of the dam on the river flow there would be less hydraulic impact than piers in a free flowing river.

The alternative crossing locations for the Flat River north of the city would need approval of the MDNR for building bridges in the designated Natural River floodplain. There is a preference for any new structure in the Natural River limits is to be located near an existing structure. This conflicts with the goal of the trail to provide new access and connections. Although the MDNR can allow new structures, they would have more stringent criteria regarding set backs from the rivers edge, and they would have concerns about the type of structure, preferring natural materials such as timber over concrete or steel. In the case of the Burroughs Road Bridge over the Flat River, the MDNR accepted the single span historic truss bridge to be relocated from Wayne County to replace the double span truss bridge for two reasons. First, it allowed a clear span of the river, and secondly, they considered the truss a natural feature since it replaced another truss. For a new bridge, it is likely the MDNR would want to look at a timber structure but would consider a new truss bridge.

Bridge Types

Steel truss bridges provide the longest span structures with the least impact on the floodplain below because the majority of the structure is above the deck level. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, steel or iron trusses were the preferred bridges because of their length and low weight. But they were also narrow structures with limited weight capacity. As traffic volumes, weight and size of vehicles increased, these structures became less desirable on vehicle routes and have been replaced by modern bridges with precast concrete or steel beams. Some of the steel trusses still remain in locations throughout Michigan. Some are on low volume roads and still serve traffic. Others are on roads that were abandoned due to the expense of maintaining or replacing the bridges. Ionia County has two steel truss bridges that are on abandoned roads that cross the Grand River. Since the roads have been closed for many years, the bridges have not been subjected to the deteriorating effect of chlorides and traffic use that has forced the removal of many of these bridges. Although they are abandoned, the bridges are on the state's register of historic bridges and are therefore eligible for restoration using MDOT enhancement funds. The Turner Road Bridge is a single Parker truss, with a span of 208 feet. The Goodwin Road Bridge is a double span Pratt truss, with spans of 150 feet for a total length of 300 feet.

New prefabricated steel truss bridges are commonly used for pedestrian bridges. They can be furnished in spans from 20 feet to 200 feet. These bridges can be furnished in a variety of styles and dimensions to match the desired use. Since they are not historic, they have less funding options.

Modern timber bridges are either deck panels of relatively short spans or girders consisting of laminated boards for longer spans. Due to the lower strength of timber, the size of timber beams is proportionately deeper than the size of concrete or steel for the same spans.

The historic bridges could be combined to cross the Grand River island location or the Turner bridge could be used in combination with new truss bridges to cross the Grand River at the east end location and the Goodwin Road Bridge could be used at the Flat River fairgrounds location. Because of the length of the structures required we would propose new steel truss bridges for any of the locations considered north of M-21 within the City limits. North of the city, new truss or timber bridge options would need to be considered and would be subject to approval by the Natural River Program coordinator.

Bridge Profile

At the Grand River crossing location, the 100-year flood elevation is approximately 634 feet. The top of banks at the preferred crossing location near the east end of the park is at elevation 627 +/- . The flood level at this location will be influenced by a new structure and would likely require some compensating excavation within the floodplain so that there would be no effect on the flood elevations upstream of the bridge. We would propose a top of deck of the main span at elevation 635 feet.

At the Flat River/North of M-21 location, the 100-year flood elevation is approximately 635+ feet. The flood level at this location is controlled by the dam at M-21. The flood level at this location will be influenced by a new structure and would likely require some compensating excavation within the floodplain so that there would be no effect on the flood elevations with the bridge. The top of banks at the preferred crossing location is at elevation 630 +/- feet. We would propose a top of deck of the new structures at elevation 635 to 650+ feet.

Recommendation

We recommend that each of these crossings be included in the master plan for the trails, recognizing that the construction of the entire system will take some time to accomplish. Priorities should be established to determine when each crossing could be constructed based on the benefits to the overall trail systems and the prospects for funding and agency approvals. Option B, a crossing of the Flat River at the Fairgrounds would be the least expensive crossing to construct, would provide a vital link in the Lowell Area and North Country Trail systems, and would have the best chance of obtaining MDEQ approvals.