

BETSIE VALLEY TRAILBLAZER

FALL / WINTER 2022 NEWSLETTER



*Artist conceptual drawing of what a new rail-themed park in Thompsonville might look like.
Courtesy of Thompsonville Area Revitalization Project*

Major Funding Still Needed to Pave Trail to Thompsonville

For the past year, the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail have made completing the trail from Beulah to Thompsonville our top priority. Staff and Board members have made in-person presentations to the Benzie County Board of Commissioners, the DNR Trust Fund Board, our State Representatives, and several foundations and groups seeking funding and support for this project.

Progress has been made towards securing the funds needed to complete the project, however at this time, contributions remain far short of the \$2.9 million needed to pay for the 12.3-mile paving project. Significant efforts by the Friends are ongoing, specifically focused on one large funding opportunity of state funds and another involving federal funds.

Completing the trail will make it possible for Thompsonville to become the center of a regional trail network (as it once was for rail traffic), making Benzie County the northwest Michigan hub connecting to trail systems throughout Michigan. Other groups such as the Thompsonville Area Revitalization Project, the Friends of SMARTrails Manistee, and TART Trails are working to make this a reality.

Crystal Ave Residents Urge Use of Trail vs Street

This spring, trail users along Crystal Lake were greeted by numerous signs urging them to use the trail and not the street. The Friends received many comments from trail users who found the signs off-putting, even offensive.

“The street is open to the public and we have every right to use it if we choose,” was the sentiment voiced by many. The Friends even received reports from trail

continued ↪



One of the remaining signs after a summer's long campaign by residents along Crystal Lake.

Continued ⇨ Crystal Ave Residents Urge Use of Trail vs Street

users concerning confrontations by homeowners along Crystal Ave, including an attempt to block a bicyclist in the street with their oncoming vehicle. Fortunately, these incidents have not yet escalated into something more serious.

Why don't you pave that section?

For years, this has been the question we are most often asked. The answer requires a bit of a history lesson...

At one time, the trail was the site of a rail line. When the rail system failed, and the State decided to abandon the railway, owners of adjacent property along Crystal Lake between Beulah and Mollineaux Road formed the Crystal Lake Property Rights Association ("CLPRA") and sued the state for ownership. The Friends of the Trail, joined by Benzie County, the DNR and other interested parties,

intervened in the lawsuit in order to preserve public Trail access along that portion of the lake.

Ultimately the case was settled, giving the adjacent property owners title to the former rail line subject to an easement for the trail. The Settlement Agreement with CLPRA includes restrictions on the easement, specifically stating that "This portion of the trail shall not be paved by concrete, asphalt or similar paving material."

However, the Settlement Agreement may be amended to permit paving if agreed by CLPRA, i.e. owners of property between Beulah and Mollineaux Road. A number of these property owners have indicated an interest in seeing this segment paved. Should CLPRA agree to amend the Settlement Agreement to allow paving of that section of the trail, this will become a priority project!

Storage Facility Provides Convenience to Trail Crew & Joy2Ride



The new 16x32 foot storage building is beautifully nestled in the trees.

At the time of last summer's newsletter, we reported on the ground-breaking for the new storage facility located at the River Road trailhead and parking area. The prefabricated building was delivered in August. Using some real ingenuity, they were able to fit the building into a tight spot among the trees.

"The new storage building has already shown to be a much more convenient and time-saving asset for the trail crew," commented Charlie Gregory, BVT Trail Care



Floor space will soon become a premium as the Friends add more trail care equipment and the Joy2Ride vehicles find their home in the new building.

Coordinator. "We recently traded in our old PTO blower that could only be operated by a tractor and purchased a new blower that can be towed behind any vehicle. It worked out tremendously this fall."

At the start of next season, Joy2Ride will be storing their specially designed bikes in the building. Carol Kraak, the program's director beamed, "This will make staging so much more accessible for our riders and we could not be more excited about next year's outings!"

Fix-it Stations Now in Beulah & Elberta

In September, the Cherry Capital Cycling Club granted the Friends \$1,500 to help purchase a new Fix-it Station for the Elberta Trailhead. The Friends installed the station in October. The station has a pump, and tools for adjusting brakes, derailleurs, and various sized bolts. This is the second station the CCCC has helped the Friends to purchase. The other station is at the Beulah trailhead visitor center.



Longtime volunteer, Bryce Dreeszen shows how simple bike repairs can be accomplished with the help of the fix-it stations. He's also wearing one of our new volunteer vests. Friends volunteers will now be easy to spot when on the trail!

Annual Members' Meeting

2 P.M. July 11th at the Beulah Trailhead Visitor Center

Friends Volunteers Make it All Possible!



For the second year, a number of volunteers from the Friends helped run this year's Ironman event earning a contribution from the Ironman Foundation. Along with fantastic donations from the Ann Arbor Tri Club, Cherry Capital Cycling Club and Stormcloud, we collected over \$3,000 in donations.

Join the Team!



We rely on our wonderful volunteers to keep the trail clean and safe. We have volunteers who contribute in many other ways as well. Please consider helping out – we'd love to have you on the team! Learn more here:

betsievalleytrail.org/help

Please help us achieve our Vision:

A World-class Trail
in Benzie County
Connects Healthy and
Active Communities.

We depend on your support!



betsievalleytrail.org/donate



P.O. Box 474
Beulah, MI
49617-0474

Change Service Requested

NON-PROFIT
BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BEULAH 49617
PERMIT NO 22

**Membership Renewal Form Enclosed
Please Return Today!**

Dear Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail,

Illustrated in this year's newsletter is the Thompsonville Area Restoration Project's conceptual plans for a park and visitor's center at the historic Diamond Crossing. This project's success depends on our ability to complete the trail from Beulah to Thompsonville. We've made a good start pursuing major grants and in securing the necessary matching funds, however we've found the competition for this funding to be fierce.

I expect many will be interested to learn the legal history behind the unpaved trail section along Crystal Lake and to hear our perspective on the recent signage discouraging cyclists from using the adjacent

paved road. A simple amendment to the agreement by residents along this stretch will allow us to pave that section and to move closer to our vision of a world-class trail.

I hope you'll prioritize the BVT in your year-end giving. We're fortunate to have this environmentally friendly recreation outlet that provides health and social benefits to our community at no cost to the taxpayer. Thank you for your support and Happy Holidays!



– Jed Maker, Board President
Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail



Visit:
BetsieValleyTrail.org



Follow us:
Facebook.com/betsievalleytrail



Follow us:
Instagram.com/betsie_trail

© The Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is the successful operation of the Betsie Valley Trail. Financial donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.