

Friends Of The Border To Border Trail

www.bordertoborder.org

Spring 2010 Newsletter

Spring Quarterly Meeting

The next quarterly meeting of the Friends will be in May in Ypsilanti, with a time, date and location to be announced on the Friends website, as well as on the Friends Google discussion group.

MTGA Membership

We would like to sincerely thank Jan Stegemann for his generous gift over the past two years of donating a membership for the Friends of the Border To Border Trail in the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance.

Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting

In February 2010, a meeting was held between the Friends of the Border To Border Trail and staff from the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission with the following items discussed...

- Increasing trail signage in Ann Arbor, EMU, St. Joes Hospital – Plans are being made for increased directional signs (the small B to B signs with arrows) this spring, with field visits to assure proper placement of the signs. A photo inventory of suggested additional trail sign locations has already been completed by the Friends of the Border to Border Trail.
- Snow removal on the trail – The Friends will work on having the B to B plowed from Ann Arbor to Ypsilanti.
- Ypsilanti B to B Bridge under Michigan Avenue – WCP&RC staff will investigate funding sources and a possible time line for constructing a B-to-B bridge under the Michigan Avenue Huron River Bridge.
- B to B crossing of I-94 on Grove Road in Ypsilanti Township – WCP&RC staff will examine possible solutions to this crossing of I-94, such as something similar to the B to B crossing of the Huron River on the west side of the Dixboro Bridge (a dedicated non-motorized path with a concrete barrier between the path and motor traffic lanes).
- Hewitt/Huron River Drive crossing signals in Ypsilanti – At the present time, the B to B crossing of Ypsilanti's Huron River Drive (at Hewitt) has a pedestrian crossing signal, but when on, motorists still will regularly still cut pedestrians/bicyclists off. The Friends of the Border To Border Trail will follow up with previous conversations held with the Washtenaw County Road Commission to have, at this intersection, "No Turn On Red" signs, along with a system where when the pedestrian crossing signal comes on, the red traffic signal stays on (meaning no legal turns by cars) for a reasonable amount of time.
- Stop signs at the Eastern Michigan University Convocation Center – There are no stop signs, or "Trail Ahead" signs for motor traffic leaving the Convocation Center, which means quite often car traffic will literally cut off users of the B to B Trail in front of the Center. WCP&RC staff will talk with EMU about this problem and to urge stop signs be installed.
- B-to-B maps – At the present time, the WCP&RC offices have plenty of the Ypsilanti section B-to-B maps, which are being distributed in Ypsilanti through the Clerks office in City Hall, and at Ypsilanti Cycle. Also discussed was formulating an Ann Arbor to Ypsilanti B to B map and one for users of the Washtenaw Community College Fitness Center.

- B to B promotion – Friends of the Border To Border will try to have a segment on WEMU's Issues On The Environment radio show, with WCP&RC staff also participating. Also discussed was having a B-to-B promotion at the Washtenaw County Earth Day celebration at Washtenaw Community College on April 25th, and a B-to-B event on National Trails Day in June.

Ypsilanti Trail Crossing Study Complete

In early 2010, an engineering study was completed indicating that it is technically possible to build a Border To Border Trail non-motorized bridge under the Michigan Avenue motorized bridge crossing the Huron River, immediately east of downtown Ypsilanti.

Such a bridge would give a critical B-to-B Trail crossing from Riverside Park in Ypsilanti, south into the Water Street area. The cost, however, of the Michigan Avenue Bridge is estimated to be around \$500,000 of which \$400,000 could possibly be paid for by federal non-motorized funds.

At the present time, the Friends of the Border To Border Trail are working with the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission to establish a timeline for going forward with the Michigan Avenue B to B Bridge.

Border To Border Routing At Dexter

In mid-February, the Huron-Clinton Metropark Authority held a public hearing at Hudson Mills Metropark on the routing of the Border To Border Trail (B to B) from Dexter north into Hudson Mills Metropark. Trail proponents at the meeting included representatives from the Friends of the Border To Border Trail, Washtenaw Bicycling and Walking Coalition and Michigan Mountain Biking Association.

Over the past few years, various routings had been contemplated for the B-to-B north out of Dexter, but at the hearing the preferred route had morphed into one that will roughly leave Warrior Park, go under the railroad bridge, and then follow the west shore of the Huron River. For a map on this routing, visit <http://westridgeassociation.org/20081208152406710.pdf>. Construction of this path is expected to begin in 2010, with completion into Hudson Mills Metropark planned for 2011.

A more preferred option on the Dexter "north" trail would have been to go though the West Ridge subdivision, but some residents thought that a non-motorized trail would bring crime and parking problems to their neighborhood. As it stands, the alternative picked will be much more costly, requiring a quarter mile of boardwalk through a wetland and is not optimal for reasons of cost, function, environmental impact, and maintainability. The tone of the meeting, however, was generally very positive with several West Ridge residents voicing their support for the trail and stating that the planned trail was one of the reasons that they purchased in the subdivision.

On another Dexter trail note, when the B-to-B leaves the village going east, the planned route is to follow the south shore of the Huron River and then cross over to the north shore at Dexter-Huron Metropark. Years ago, the main County agency behind the B to B, the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, obtained a State of Michigan environmental permit to build a B to B bridge at Dexter-Huron Metropark. Then, for not-so-clear reasons, the State revoked the permit. Diligently, the Parks Commission kept trying to have the original permit upheld, even threatening a lawsuit. Happily, the State of Michigan recently gave up its objections to the Dexter-Hudson Metropark B to B bridge, and plans are again forward to take the B-to-B east from Dexter.

Temporary Ypsilanti Water Street Trail

Planning work is still progressing for the planned April/May opening of a temporary, wood-chip based "temporary" trail along the north shore of the Huron River through the Water Street development area. This temporary trail would be in place until a permanent hard surface B-to-B

Trail was constructed in the same area. A temporary Water Street area trail would allow people to walk in a very scenic and peaceful area in the heart of the Ypsilanti area.

The temporary water street trail is very much a volunteer effort. If you would like to become involved contact Andy Clock at waterstreetparkypsi@gmail.com. Also, visit the "Ypsilanti Water Street Project" link on the Friends of the Border To Border Trail website (<http://www.bordertoborder.org/>) for more information on the Water Street trail project.

Snow Removal

A big goal of the Friends of the Border To Border Trail is to try and keep the path open at least between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, thus proving non-motorized access year round to such facilities as the University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University, Washtenaw Community College and St. Joseph's Hospital.

So far over the winter of 2009/2010, the following has been observed on the B to B between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti...

- City of Ann Arbor – The City will usually plow the Gallup Park segment to the Dixboro Bridge fairly quick after a major snow.
- Dixboro Bridge – Never plowed after a snow. The Friends of the Border To Border Trail is currently communicating with the Washtenaw County Road Commission, who is responsible for the bridge maintenance, on snow removal, as apparently there is a federal directive stating that if a highway project is built with federal funds, the non-motorized segments of this project must be maintained, including snow removal.
- Heartland Health Care Nursing Home – This entity owns the property the B-to-B goes across from the Dixboro Bridge east to the Washtenaw Community College Fitness Center. Not only do they never plow, but when they clear their driveway, they completely cover up an AATA bus waiting area. At the same time, Ann Arbor Township, which is where this property is, has no snow removal ordinance, meaning Heartland is under no legal obligation to clear the B to B. Still, the Friends of the B to B are attempting to contact Heartland to see if they at least could not obstruct a bus stop, and see if they could be a good corporate citizen and plow the B to B.
- Washtenaw Community College (and their Fitness Center) – It seems like the College will plow immediately in front of the Fitness Center, but not the B to B segment from the Fitness Center west to Heartland Health Care. Also, the B-to-B spur trail in back of the Fitness Center is never plowed. However, the College does plow the non-motorized path on the south side of Huron River Drive from in front of the College down to the threshold of the Dixboro Bridge.
- St. Josephs Hospital – Generally does a good job on clearing the B-to-B trail on their property, with the exception of the northeast section of the Huron River Drive/Hewitt intersection. The Friends is attempting to correct this problem through calls to St. Joes.
- Eastern Michigan University – Also, does a pretty good job of plowing after a snowfall. The only problems are that in the past have dumped loads of salt on the Trail (which is very corrosive to bicycles and shortens asphalt pavement life), and have not plowed the southeast section of the Huron River Drive/Hewitt intersection. The Friends is attempting to correct this problem through calls to EMU.

Join The Friends of the Border To Border Trail Discussion Group

If you want to sign up for the Friends of the Border To Border Trail email discussion group, visit <http://groups.google.com/group/border-to-border>.

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