

## **Burt Lake Trail Update - June 2016**

### **Phase One - Finances**

Phase one of the Burt Lake Trail (5.1 miles) from Maple Bay Road to Hogsback Road was opened in August 2013 with closing of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) grant in 2015. Total price of allowed expenses was \$933,000. Of this the MNRTF paid \$361,000 and MDOT Transportation Enhancement (MDOT TE) grant paid \$473,000. Local matching funds of \$99,000 paid the balance. To date funds raised for the Burt Lake Trail total approximately \$172,000. Major contributors, to name a few, include the Burt Lake Preservation Association (BLPA), Harbor-Petoskey Community Foundation, Hospitalists of Northern Michigan, the DALMAC fund, Citizens National Bank, Indian River Bike/Kayak Biathlon, and Straits Area Community Foundation. In addition numerous area residents have made significant cash and easement contributions. The Burt Lake Trail fund has been used to pay for preliminary engineering, surveys, easement acquisition and other expenses not paid for by MNRTF or MDOT-TE. These funds have also paid for the MDOT grant proposal for Brutus Road from Maple Bay Rd to US 31N and the Phase two work currently being done by Northwest Design Group in preliminary design, easement acquisition and grant submittal for the route across the University of Michigan Biological Station that will allow us to connect the East to the West side of Burt Township and eventually into Topinabee and Indian River.

The current trail fund balance held at Citizens National Bank in Cheboygan is \$44,353.40 plus the Top of Michigan Trails Council account balance of \$11,482 for a total of \$55,353.50 in donated funds to the Burt Lake Trail. The present Northwest Design contract is for \$18,000 with a balance of \$2275 still available which may not be enough to cover the remaining work they have to do to get the grants ready.

Bookkeeping for the first phase of the Burt Lake Trail was done by Bill Kanine, CPA on behalf of the Top of Michigan Trails Council. He was indispensable for his assistance in submitting reimbursement requests to the MNRTF. In addition bookkeeping was done by MDOT-TE, the MNRTF, and the Cheboygan County Road Commission (CCRC). Burt Township funds are audited by the township auditors Nieland and Kosanke. Trail related expenses have been presented, reviewed and discussed at Trail Committee and Burt Township board meetings.

Ribbon Cutting for the Trail Opening was in August, 2013. Major improvements to the trail since then included culverts and grading at Hardwood Road paid for by MNRTF funds. Closeout of our grant from MNRTF occurred in late 2015. Other improvements include paving of three sections to eliminate frequent washouts due to water runoff from adjacent roads. This was done at a cost of \$25,800 in 2015 and in 2016 \$8,200 was spent on asphalt for the remaining trouble area. Thus \$34,000 was requested and used out of the budgeted recreation fund of Burt Township in the years 2015 and 2016. These improvements were done after consultation with C2AE, Reith-Riley, the CCRC and Emily Meyerson. While frequent reshaping of these areas after heavy rain was adequate a decision to do a more permanent repair seemed the best option. Trail

improvements such as culverts, drainage work and paving done specifically for the trail has also benefitted these roads in Burt Township. Considering an additional \$500,000 estimate for asphaltting the initial 5.1 miles of trail a crushed limestone surface was selected.

### **Phase Two - West Burt Lake Road to East Burt Lake Road at Birchwood**

Since original design of the Burt Lake Trail in 2008, a means to connect the west to the east side of Burt Township crossing the University of Michigan property that divides our township has been worked on. The original plan of using Hogsback Road as an unimproved connection was not approved by the major funding sources of MDOT and MNRTF. In 2015, after reviewing all options, a plan was developed with the University of Michigan to give a very valuable easement across their property. Two of the 3.1 miles along W. Burt, Riggsville and E. Burt to Birchwood is in Munro Township. This route not only connects the east to the west side of Burt Township it also gives township residents access to the beautiful and unique "Gorge" trails and parking area.

Northwest Design Group (NDG) has been hired to do preliminary design, grant application and easement acquisition of this section as a paved, separated trail. Projected cost is \$1,100,000. This would be paid for with grants of \$300,000 from the MNRTF, \$735,000 from MDOT TAP (formerly TE now called Transportation Alternatives Program) and \$75,000 in local match funds. These grants are highly competitive and awards won't be announced until December, 2016. If grants are awarded to Burt Township and \$75,000 is raised for the match, then trail construction of Phase two could start in 2018.

### **East Burt Lake Road at Birchwood to Hoppies**

Paved shoulders are planned for this future section of the Burt Lake Trail. Although many residents favor a separated trail it was decided after public comment that paved shoulders are the best option. This will be done when funds become available for East Burt Lake Rd resurfacing. Putting widened shoulders on our roads not only gives township residents and trail users a safer way to walk/bike but also prolongs the life of the road.

### **Mullet-Burt Road at Hoppies to Topinabee Mail Route**

Scheduled for resurfacing by the CCRC in 2017. Plans for paved shoulders are being done by the CCCRC engineer/manager Brent Shank. Design and costs have not yet been determined.

### **Topinabee Mail Route to Pipeline Road and Mullet Township**

Mullet Township has given a Resolution of Support for the Burt Lake Trail and has been involved in discussion and planning since the inception of the Trail. Dennis Dombroski, Mullet Township representative, has participated in many trail committee meetings. While a final route has not yet been developed Mullet Township will plan and maintain the trail from Burt Township into Topinabee. Eagles Nest Road in Tuscorara Township is being resurfaced with three foot wide shoulders making a connection into Indian River.

### **Brutus Road at Maple Bay Road to US 31N**

A grant for MDOT TAP funds to put four foot wide shoulders on Brutus Road when it is resurfaced has been submitted and favorably reviewed by our local MDOT grant coordinator. This grant was submitted as a joint request by the Cheboygan and Emmet County Road Commissions.

### **The Burt Lake Trail**

The Burt Lake Trail is ranked high priority in the Northeast Michigan Non-Motorized Transportation plan for Cheboygan County. Grant funding sources consider the Burt Lake Trail an important East-West connector trail between the two major rail trails, the North Central State Trail and the Northwest State Trail. This looped trail is recognized as an important asset to the Northern Michigan Trail system.

### **Trail Maintenance**

Since the feasibility study was presented in September 2008 by Mary Campbell and Emily Meyerson, long term maintenance costs have been discussed. Estimated long term costs from local DNR trails coordinator Emily Meyerson continue to be \$500 to \$1,000 per mile per year. Several large studies like the 2015 Rails to Trails study, Purdue University School of Engineering, and the University of Illinois study are available for review and comparison and give a factual basis for estimating long term maintenance costs of trails like ours. The Burt Lake Trail was built on a foundation of stable base soil on top of which is 12 inch minimal thickness of subbase, chip and geotextile, stabilization fabric, or existing proof-rolled sand subgrade. On top of this is a 6 inch minimal thickness of crushed limestone aggregate compacted in place. This base is similar to most roads minus the asphalt. We believe with the improvements to the original design the long term maintenance costs will be in the \$500-\$1000/mile/year originally quoted.

Since MNRTF closeout in 2015, about \$2000 has been spent on weed spraying, additional stone, and leaf blower rental. Replacement signs/posts may also need to be purchased. An organized volunteer group helps with leaf and debris cleanup. In 2015 \$25,800 was spent to pave the three hills and \$8,200 in 2016 to complete the recommended improvements. This \$36,000 was taken out of the township recreation fund in 2015 & 2016. The township recreation fund is budgeted at \$25,000 per year out of a proposed \$442,800 (2016) budget. Other area township's recreation budgets includes a proposed budget of \$60,500 (2016-2017) for Mullet Township and \$182,401 (2015-2016) for Tuscarora Township.

Our agreement with the MNRTF is that Burt Township will maintain the trail for the life of the project which is expected to be about twenty years. After that stone may need to be replaced or asphalt redone but the infrastructure is in place and grants can be applied again to redo the trail if desired by township residents at that time. We are not responsible in perpetuity. Regarding paved shoulders, per Cheboygan County Policy

#53 for non-motorized facilities on Cheboygan County roads, maintenance of paved shoulders is the responsibility of the Cheboygan County Road Commission.

A separate account to fund long term maintenance of the Burt Lake Trail was submitted to and approved by the Burt Township Board.

**How you can help**

Participate in the planning and design of the remainder of the trail. If unable to attend and participate in trail committee meetings send your ideas to trail committee co-chairs Art Pillen and/or Gene Hodulik. Donate to Top of Michigan Trails Council, Burt Lake Trail (website [www.trailscouncil.org](http://www.trailscouncil.org)). Money is needed for matching grants, preliminary design of next trail phases and various items not covered by the grants. We continue to seek the most cost effective way to provide safer walking and biking for Burt Township residents and trail users.

Respectfully submitted 6-27-16

Burt Lake Trail Committee