



The Leelanau Trail bustles with activity on a warm spring day. Photo by John Robert Williams

Letter from the TART Board President

I love our trail system and being part of the TART family along with volunteers, donors, and community partners like you. It is very satisfying for me, and an honor. Without you none of our accomplishments over the years would have been possible. With your time, talents and treasure, you've helped lead the charge to plan, build and create a community connected by trails, and one that celebrates those connections to our region's fantastic natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources.

During 2013, we worked on several exciting projects—some were done in a year, others might take a decade or more to finish. Sometimes the path is not easy but it's

“The trails we help create will be here for us and future generations to enjoy.”

worth it. Just look at the twenty years of hard work on the Leelanau Trail that

resulted in a nationally recognized “crown jewel” trail in our region. The trails we help create will be here for us and future generations to enjoy. That's what keeps us moving toward the long-term vision: Happy, active people enjoying a world-class trail system.

We remain focused on trail development and maintenance, and providing programs so more people can explore and enjoy the wonderful trail network. Thank you for continuing to play a role in the future of our trails. I hope you have the chance to get out and enjoy what you have helped build and notice the smiles, they feel pretty good.

Brian Fisher, Board President ▼

TART PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS HIGHLIGHTS

- Launched Leelanau Trail wayfinding project
- BATA introduced innovative Bike-n-Ride service
- Completed preliminary design of Buffalo Ridge Trail Phase II with Garfield Township
- Tackled snow removal in partnership with City of Traverse City
- Repaired bridge on Vasa Pathway with help from the DNR
- Kicked-off fundraising for Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail Phase II
- Completed the Leelanau Trail to Dumas Road, led by the Village of Suttons Bay
- Constructed first section of Boardman River Trail
- Secured grant to develop a master plan for Traverse City to Charlevoix trail project.
- Experience 231 App was developed with leadership from Grand Traverse Conservation District
- Kicked-off Vasa Pathway Economic Impact Study

GETTING AROUND

With funding from the Edmund F. and Virginia B. Ball Foundation, TART Trails worked on a comprehensive signage plan for the Leelanau Trail to provide a more enjoyable experience for trail users, whether it's their first or 50th visit. The new signage includes road intersections, safety advisories, etiquette, maps with nearby destinations, and emergency locators. Signage will help people better navigate the trail, access amenities, and connect with the region's abundant parks, robust agriculture and wineries. The trails alone are a great experience, but you'll be amazed at what you find just off the trail. The long-term plan is to use the signage along the Leelanau Trail as a template to implement throughout the TART Trails network. We hope to tackle the TART Trail in Traverse City next.

On summer days you'll find the Leelanau Trail filled with people enjoying the sights and sounds around them. Since the paving project was finished, there's been a noticeable increase in use, bolstered by recognition in several publications as a top destination and premier trail in the state. Not everybody has the desire, endurance, or time to ride the trail both directions. What to do? Enter BATA's innovative Bike-n-Ride program. Through the summer,



After riding the Leelanau Trail, a family hops on BATA's Bike-n-Ride bus. Photo courtesy of BATA

BATA increased service and bike-carrying capacity on select buses between Traverse and Suttons Bay. BATA's nationally recognized Bike-n-Ride service allowed more people to ride one-way, enjoy time in town, and take the bus back with their bike onboard. Collectively, BATA and TART offered an awesome bus and trail user experience that is unique to the state of Michigan, and one of only a handful in the U.S. We look forward to working with BATA on this and other creative solutions to help people get around the region. ▼

New on the Ground

Civic Center Connection

Grand Traverse County Parks and Recreation and TART partnered to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the Civic Center. Civic Center Drive was converted to two-way for cyclists. Funding from Smart Commute helped cover the costs of the signage and pavement markings, including the first sharrows in town. Grand Traverse County Parks and Recreation widened and paved the trail connection, allowing for a more direct connection between the TART in Town, the Civic Center, and Northwestern Michigan College.

Boardman River Trail

The Boardman River Trail Committee, spearheaded by TART Trail Ambassador and Mudgett Award recipient Richard Naperala, formed in 2010 to explore development of a 24-mile trail that follows the Boardman River Valley from Traverse City to the North Country Trail (NCT). Most of the proposed Boardman River Trail (BRT) is in forested areas on existing dirt paths and two-tracks, making it ideal for backpacking, trail running, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, snowshoeing, and wildlife study. The BRT will be developed in three sections; the first section from



Friends enjoy riding the Leelanau Trail from Traverse City to Suttons Bay. Photo by Jody Hofstra

Scheck's Place on the NCT to Mayfield Pond was completed in 2013.

Leelanau Trail

Led by the Village of Suttons Bay, the Leelanau Trail was completed through the village north to Dumas Road. The project included identifying an in-town route along First Street and St. Mary's, crossing M-22 at Jefferson Street to Marina Park. New trail was paved through the park and north to Dumas Road where the Leelanau Trail corridor ends. The trail connects visitors and residents to parks, retail, and residential areas; offers better ways to walk and bike in the Village; and completes the vision dreamed up nearly 20 years ago. ▼

PROGRAMS THAT COUNT

TART relies on *volunteers* to help with events, administrative work, trail maintenance and special projects. Over the year, nearly 300 individuals spent over 4,000 hours helping TART fulfill our mission.

This includes 30 *Trail Ambassadors* logging 2,955 hours to provide the best experience for the more than 200,000 trail visits each year. People from 116 Michigan cities, 33 states and 16 countries signed a guestbook on the Leelanau Trail.

Recycle-A-Bicycle delivered 153 bicycles to individuals and families, and provided over 50 free repairs to keep community neighbors mobile. These bikes provide opportunities and independence for people to get to a job interview, accept a job, or access medical care.

Smart Commute had 62 teams composed of 1,088 people competing in the weeklong challenge in June. An estimated 24,250 miles were commuted 'smartly' during the week, saving 9 tons of CO2 emissions.



Trail Ambassadors teach kids cycling safety during a bike rodeo.

Skiers enjoy freshly groomed trails provided by TART's Grooming Program.



When the snow falls, a volunteer *Trail Grooming* crew grooms 14 miles of the Leelanau Trail weekly for trail users. Under a contract with the DNR, the Vasa grooming crew regularly grooms more than 25 miles of the Vasa Pathway to provide pristine conditions for novice and competitive skiers. Combined, more than 1,000 hours

were spent grooming the trails from December through March so local and visiting skiers are able to enjoy great wintertime outdoor recreation.

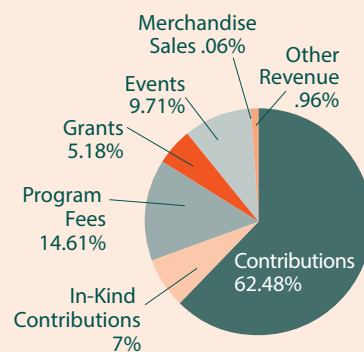
In partnership with the Risk Watch Coalition, TART's *Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Program* educated 1,500 elementary students about safe cycling. TART partnered with Cherry Capital Cycling Club's Safety & Education Committee to help nearly 200 Willow Hill Elementary children ride their bikes to school on International Bike to School Day. As a member of the Grand Traverse Parks & Recreation Network, TART hosted a bike rodeo in which 75 youth received a helmet fit and bike safety check, and participated in a fun obstacle course to test their cycling skills.

What does it take to keep the trails in town open? TART's volunteer *Snow Removal* team spent 150 hours operating the City's snow blower to clear 12 miles of trail, 192 hours of mostly hand-shoveling the Boardman Lake Trail, 50 hours clearing trailheads, and Johnson Outdoors donated services to clear the Mall Trail 26 times. The combined effort makes the trail system accessible year-round so people can stay active all winter. ▼

Financials for Oct. 1, 2012-Sept. 30, 2013

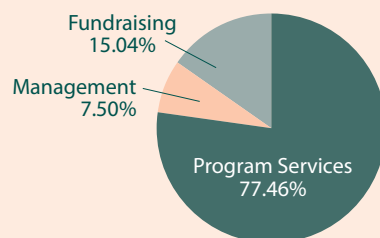
REVENUE

Contributions	322,716
In-kind contributions	36,191
Program fees	75,470
Grants	26,741
Events	50,150
Merchandise Sales	297
Other Rev (incl. interest)	4,970
	516,535



EXPENSES

Program services	439,678
Management	42,574
Fundraising	85,354
	567,606



The impact of a trail



A hiker takes in the serene beauty of the Vasa Pathway. Photo by John Heiam

The Vasa Pathway is a world-class cross-country ski destination. Photo by Joel R. Gaff, Jr.



Nestled in the Pere Marquette State Forest, the Vasa Pathway hosts major skiing, running, and biking events, and is home to nationally renowned races such as the Bell's Iceman Cometh Challenge and the North American Vasa, which draw thousands of participants and spectators who bring dollars to the region. With support from the DNR, NAV, Iceman, Traverse City Track Club and Traverse City Tourism, TART Trails commissioned the Traverse Bay Economic Development Corporation to conduct an economic impact study on the Vasa Pathway. Surveys completed by event participants and trail users will be used to identify how the pathway contributes to the local economy, and help inform future

planning, management, fundraising and marketing efforts. We look forward to sharing results to help us all better understand what an important investment the Vasa Pathway is to our community and region. ▼

TRAVERSE CITY TO CHARLEVOIX

In August 2013, TART Trails and the Top of Michigan Trails Council received a grant from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program to complete a master plan for a non-motorized trail connecting the TART Trail in Traverse City with the Little Traverse Wheelway in Charlevoix. Building off work done by Elk Rapids and Acme, the plan will work to strengthen and connect communities and recreational, natural and cultural assets along the way. The strength of this project lies in the collective experience of the partner organizations, community involvement in and support of the project, and commitment to a common goal. We'll need continued support from our volunteers, donors, and partners as we delve further into project details over the coming year. Sometimes the path may not be easy, but it will be worth it. ▼

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Trails provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy outdoor recreation. Photo by Robin Manley

Help TART Create Connections
TART Trails' success depends on continued support from donors and volunteers. To learn more about how you can help us expand and improve the trail network, visit traversetrails.org or call 231.941.4300.

You can also stay connected by subscribing to our newsletter online and liking TART Trails on Facebook.