

T·A·R·T
TRAILS

TART TALES

Grooming with Passion and Purpose

For Northern Michiganders, the 40k of groomed cross-country ski trails on the Vasa Pathway and 15-miles of the Leelanau Trail are close enough to serve as your local winter playground. The trails also bring visitors from all over the state and country for ski training, family outings, and racing the North American Vasa.

Providing world-class ski conditions from December through March is no small feat. With more than 35 years of combined experience, members of a six-man crew led by Jim Dombrowski rotate nearly daily shifts on the Vasa while Bill Heitman heads up three volunteers that groom the Leelanau Trail for the weekends. Part science, part art, the expertise of the crew is critical for deciding when to groom and which equipment to use. The groomers have to consider the thickness of base, how well it set up, the amount and type of new snowfall (wet, dry), air temperature, future forecasts, and any trail damage. Some would say they have PhD's in Grooming.

In 2012-2013, skiers enjoyed a sensational season as the grooming crews chalked up 837 man-hours for a total of 69 groomings on the



Skiers gather to raise a glass in thanks to Groomers Jim Dombrowski, Glen Rauth, Roger Raehl, Gary Joslin, Doug Scofield, Paul Tata, Bill Heitman, Nick Wierzba and Glenn Martin.

Vasa and 16 groomings on the Leelanau Trail, nearly doubling numbers from the previous winter. The Vasa groomers typically start around 4 a.m. to finish before the morning skiers arrive, but they'll stay as long as it takes, no matter how long it takes. This past season brought several 10-hour days, and a record 17.5-hour day for the Vasa crew!

What keeps the Grooming Program going? In addition to a stipend from the DNR, the majority of funding for the \$40,000 budget came from 347 badge holders, 25 Vasa K-marker sponsors, and a new corporate sponsor, the Traverse Bay Inn.

As the season comes to an end, the crew is already planning for next winter. What trail work needs to be done to improve skiing? Is there training to attend? Any equipment repairs or new tools needed? There literally is no "off-season" for them. To sum up 13 years on the Vasa crew, Glen Rauth shares his mantra, "Groom, ski, eat, sleep, repeat." By the smile on his face, you can tell he wouldn't have winter any other way.

Thank you all for making world-class ski conditions possible!

Save the Date!

Visit www.traversetrails.org for event details.

Saturday, May 18 – Tails to Trails: A Four Paw 5k

Saturday, May 25 – Bayshore Marathon

Saturday, June 1 – Recycle-A-Bicycle Bike Swap

June 3-7 – Smart Commute Week

Sunday, July 21 – CCCC Ride Around Torch

Friday, July 26 – Tour de TART

Sunday, September 15 – Leelanau Harvest Tour

September 20 & 21 – Pearl's & Short's Bluegrass, Bourbon, Blues & Beer Festival

Saturday, October 26 – Zombie Run 5k



Doing the Math: Cycling Pays its Way — by Julie Clark

Over the past few months, transportation funding has taken center stage at the local, state and national levels. As states, counties, and cities struggle with how to pay for and prioritize transportation infrastructure, debates can get heated.

With these funding discussions underway, now is a good time to talk about a common refrain cyclists hear – that they don't pay their fair share. Unfortunately, this has become too common a talking point in the transportation discussion. The message implies that cyclists have less right to the road and transportation funding.

The line of thinking seems to be that cyclists aren't driving cars, so it goes to follow that they aren't paying their fair share. There are plenty of political, cultural, and ethical reasons why this mentality is wrong, but if we look at the math, the argument simply doesn't add up:

- Most cyclists (over 80% in surveys done across the nation) own cars and drive those cars. They're paying gas tax and vehicle registration fees like everybody else.
- Studies show that the total cost of roads (construction, maintenance, operations) adds up to about 6 cents a mile per vehicle; direct user fees contributed by drivers equals 0.7 cents per mile. The rest comes out of general funds paid for by property taxes, sales taxes, millages, etc., not user fees.



Cycling is a common mode of transportation for patrons of many local shops & eateries.

- A 2011 study from Wisconsin estimates that between 41 and 55 percent of funding from roads is outside of user fees like gas taxes and vehicle registrations. This funding is coming from general taxes we pay regardless of how we travel. This means the less you drive, the more you're actually subsidizing those who drive more.
- The negative impacts from automobile use are paid collectively by all of us. What economists refer to as negative externalities include air and water pollution, healthcare, and crashes, just to name a few, and are estimated to cost \$184 billion/year.
- When we choose to walk or bike, we impose lower costs. Cyclists and pedestrians put less wear and tear on the streets, reduce congestion, reduce

pollution and lower crash risks among other savings.

This isn't an argument about whether cars are better or worse than bikes. We all want choices on how we move around the region. This is about dollars and about how we spend those dollars in the most efficient manner possible with the greatest return on investment for the entire community.

It makes good fiscal sense to promote walking and cycling. The research is clear that communities designed with diverse mobility choices see increased economic and social returns. At TART we'll continue to help promote, provide, and advocate for non-motorized infrastructure to make our region a better place to live, work and play. We all contribute; we all deserve choices.

TART TALES

Pedaling to Health — by Audrey Summers Smith

In February 2012, at the age of 20, I had to have two heart valves replaced due to a condition I had when I was born. While recovering in the hospital, I started thinking that exercise would have to be a lifelong commitment for me to stay healthy.

So, when the weather warmed up I set a goal riding the entire Leelanau Trail. My dad sometimes rode the Leelanau Trail, and he told me that I would like it since the trail is mostly flat terrain and scenic with beautiful farm fields and woods.

I bought a bike at Brick Wheels and started out riding short trips on the trail with my mom, dad and brother; first 3 miles, then 6 miles, then 10 miles. By August I felt ready to try riding from Suttons Bay to Traverse City.

When I finished the 17 miles, I was really tired, but also felt great for achieving my goal. I remember how surprising it was that the 17 miles seemed to go by quickly. We stopped to rest and drink water a few times along the way, but I was shocked that I finished the whole distance because I didn't think I would be able to do it.

A couple weeks later, I told my mom and dad that I wanted to ride all the way from Suttons Bay to Traverse City and back, which is about 35 miles. We rode into Traverse, had lunch at the Dish, and then headed back to Suttons Bay. This was a favorite day of my life; proving that I could be that strong after my surgery, and feeling confident about what I could do in the future.



Audrey Smith rides the Leelanau Trail to gain strength and maintain her health after surgery.

If you are thinking about getting into bike riding, I encourage you to try the beautiful Leelanau Trail. Just start out slow and take it easy, but stick with it. If I can do it, you can too!

Miles of Smiles

Last fall, Board members Brian Fisher and Wayne Olsen called on their colleagues in the dental community to help fund a dollar-for-dollar match for new donor contributions. Thanks to support from 24 dental friends and 37 new donors, the Miles of Smiles Challenge raised \$10,805 to help sustain TART's work in building, managing and advocating for our existing and future trails.

We thank the following members of the dental community for funding the match and supporting our vision of happy, active people enjoying a world-class trail system:

Royce and Margie Beers
James Campbell
Ronald Chao
Brooke and Andrew Chapman
Brian and Vera Fisher
Craig and Amber Fountain
John Hall
David and Sandra Howard
Kerry and Donna Kaysserian
Charles Kehr
John and Connie Kerns
Bill Lee
Bruce Lee
Debra Lewis and Kevin Nagy

Ronald Lints
Vincent Mack
Carl and Diane Madion
Daniel and Kara Madion
Jan Manning
Steven Niergarth
Wayne and Ann Olsen
Wes and Janie Schulz
Kris Stegmann
David Swan



Teamwork Tackles Snow Removal

This winter a spirited handful of dedicated TART Trail volunteers, donors and partners made the region friendlier for those on foot and bike. Whether walking the dog or commuting to work, the trails in town were consistently kept clear of snow, providing residents and visitors alike an accessible and usable year-round trail system. A creative partnership with the Road Commission, County and City helped make the second year of snow removal a success.

“The partnership succeeded beyond our expectations. The marriage of City equipment with TART manpower resulted in a desired service being provided to the community. Innovative partnerships such as this will become increasingly important as governmental and non-governmental organizations seek to provide services in an era of tight budgets.”

– Robert Cole, Public Services
Director of the City of Traverse City

This year’s Smart Commute Snow Removal Initiative was made possible thanks to creative partnerships and tireless teamwork. Faced with cuts to public works staff that left them unable to get to the trails in a timely manner, the City of Traverse City ventured into a partnership with TART Trails to help keep the trails clear. TART recruited and coordinated volunteers to operate the City’s snow blower and the City provided training for TART volunteers to clear ten miles of



Snow Removal Crew Coordinator Brian Buysse helped keep bike commuting up and operational on the TART Trail.

the TART Trail. The volunteer crew went out more than 18 times and logged over 120 hours clearing the trail.

Although the City’s snow blower was ideal for handling significant amounts of snow, it was limited physically on where it could operate along the trail. For those tough to access portions of the trail, volunteers with shovels stepped up to keep the system connected. One of those volunteers was eight-year old Carter Schmidt, of Carter’s Compost, who uses the trail to get to school and for his composting business. Carter and his family adopted the Murchie Bridge underpass. Other dedicated volunteers shoveled the northern section of the Boardman Lake Trail and pedestrian bridge.

This year’s effort also found a friend in Joe Johnson, owner of Johnson Outdoors who generously offered in-kind snow removal services for the Mall Trail. The Mall Trail parallels US-37 and provides critical non-motorized access for employees and customers to Meijer and many other businesses including The Grand Traverse Mall.

Also new to the team this year was the introduction of bicycle plows. Thanks to a volunteer group of inventors, engineers, fabricators, and a generous investor, who like to ride bicycles and groove on green power, TART launched bicycle plow R&D and produced two bicycle plow prototypes. Bicycle plows are designed to be more nimble than machinery and fueled by people power so clearing the trail is more economically and environmentally friendly. Testing and tweaking will continue this year with the hopes of having a future fleet out on the trails.



Carter of Carter’s Compost and his brother Jameson shovel to keep the trail clear at Murchie Bridge.

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A Trail for All Seasons

Phase I of the Pathways to Sleeping Bear capital campaign is a wrap! Funding for the next four-mile stretch of the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail from the Dune Climb to the Village of Empire is secured with design and engineering almost finished. Construction is anticipated to begin in the fall with completion in Spring 2014. The development of the SBHT is a partnership between the Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route Committee, the Michigan Department of Transportation, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes, and TART Trails.



A young skier enjoys a homemade cookie at the Glen Haven open house in March.

This past winter at a trail open house the youngest skier was 4 years old and the oldest was 90! Quite an impressive age span that illustrates the trail is safe and enjoyable for people to get out and experience the National Lakeshore year-round. Fundraising efforts have shifted to Phase II of the capital campaign to add an additional eight miles of trail from Glen Arbor through Port Oneida to Bohemian Road.

Want to help make more trail happen? Learn more online at sleepingbeartrail.org or by calling Pam Darling, Development Director of TART Trails, at 231.941.4300.

Birding Along the Leelanau Trail — by Dave Barrons

Only as I began to regularly use the Leelanau Trail did I realize what a great bird watching resource it is. There are a few places in particular that are great for listening to and looking for birds:

- The trail from Suttons Bay to past the wastewater treatment ponds has clear viewing lanes and angles to see our common birds or the more unusual visitor. The trail sits above much of the terrain to the immediate west, making for good sight lanes westward with the morning sun at your back. The pond area features water fowl, with the sky above wide open for viewing overhead.
- At the southern end of the Leelanau Trail is Fulton Park, which is Traverse City-owned parkland. It is a postage

stamp parcel by any measure, but it is a great area for birding. The entrance to Fulton Park is near the trail at the Carter Road crossing. Look for signage and the little plank bridge on the west side. Bicycle parking is provided so you can walk the loop trail in the park. The park trail is wide and level, making it easy to walk while you look up.

- There is also good birding along the trail between Fulton Park and DeYoung Natural Area. From late April through June birding-by-ear, which is identifying birds by their songs and calls, is exceptionally good along this stretch. The pond and fishing pier at DeYoung offer a change in habitat and birds. Kingfishers often hunt around both areas.

The Leelanau Trail with neighboring parks and natural areas is great for biking and for birding. For more information on birding opportunities in the region, I encourage you to check out the Leelanau Peninsula Birding Festival website at www.mibirdfest.com.

Dave Barrons is a Michigan native and has lived in Traverse City for more than 30 years. He worked as a TV reporter, and then Chief Meteorologist before retiring 4 years ago. Now Dave enjoys spending time on birding projects, including the Leelanau Peninsula Birding Festival; and, he co-produces a local web and public access TV broadcast on community resilience.



Plan for the Ultimate Gift

Some donors love the trails and the lifestyle that they support so much that they make the ultimate gift by designating TART in their estate planning. George Bearup reflects,

“My wife Pat and I have named TART in our estate planning documents because we strongly believe TART Trails directly

contributes to the quality of life and is an economic driver in our community. The TART Trail system has a positive impact on the health of our community by providing a safe and secure place for everyone to recreate on a year-round basis. Visitors come to our area to use the trails, further contributing to the local economy.”

TART is grateful to the Bearups for their foresight and generosity. Would you like to join them? Please consult with your financial professional or legal counsel. If TART is a part of your estate plans, please let us know so that we can thank you in your lifetime.

Pam Darling, Development Director
231.941.4300 | pam@traversetrails.org

I support TART's Long-Term Vision: Happy, active people enjoying a world-class trail system.



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Thank You!

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TART TALES

Special Thanks to...

The **Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation** through the **Land Use Conservation and Planning Endowment** for a \$5,000 grant to support the Up North Trails Collaborative. The Collaborative is an initiative to digitally document and promote trails and supporting resources in Northern Michigan.

The **Oleson Foundation** for \$10,000 to support the development of Phase 2 of the Buffalo Ridge Trail.

Pearl's New Orleans Kitchen and **Short's Brewery** for the 2nd annual Bluegrass, Bourbon, Blues and Beer Fest to support trail expansion toward Elk Rapids.

Bob and Laura Otwell for sharing their cycling odyssey, **Victoria and Matt Sutherland** for hosting at **The Box**, **The Filling Station** for gift certificates, **Dave Monstrey** for providing chairs, and the 50 attendees of the Across the Country and Across Town event, which raised over \$1,200 to help complete TART in Town bicycle route signage.

ACE Hardware at Bunker Hill, **Grand Traverse County Road Commission**, **Ryan Hannon of Goodwill Streets Outreach**, **Officer Dunklow of Traverse City Police Department**, **Grand Traverse County Sherriff's Department**, **Oryana**, **Robin Manley**, **Jim Dombrowski**, **Cilla Payne**, **BJ Ingwersen**, **Peggy Carmody**, **John and Carla Olds**, **Ann Clark and Family**, and **Emily Newhouse** for hosting Treats Along the Trail in November to promote personal safety along the trails.

The **Downtown Merchants** and shoppers that helped TART Trails raise \$1,419 on Shop Your Community Day.

Up North Media for organizing the 2012 Traverse City Turkey Trot for Charities. TART Trails was grateful to receive \$1,250 from the event. Thanks to the volunteers and participants for making the Trot a huge success.

Traverse Bay Inn for supporting grooming for world-class ski conditions that attract visitors from across the country.

Paul Maurer, **Mike Scharpf** and **Tom Phillips** for plowing the Cherry Bend, Fouch, and Fourth Street trailheads.

The **Village of Suttons Bay**, **City of Traverse City**, **TC-TALUS**, **Air Way Automation**, **Johnson Outdoors**, **Tom's Food Markets**, **Fox Motors**, the **Werner Family** and **Grand Traverse County** for sponsoring the Smart Commute Snow Removal program.

Brian Buysse, **Dick Kelley**, **Dave Fisher**, **Bob Otwell**, **Don Cunkle**, **Glen Ruczynski**, **Bill Clark** and **Carter's Compost** for keeping the TART Trail clear of snow this winter.

The **Traverse City Track Club** for awarding a \$30,000 challenge match for the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail to help fund the four-mile segment from the Dune Climb to Empire.

Home Depot for sponsoring materials for five bicycle racks for our Recycle-A-Bicycle Program.

The **Cherry Capital Cycling Club** for granting \$3,000 to Recycle-A-Bicycle and \$3,500 to TART Trails for support of Smart Commute Week and Youth Bicycle Safety & Education.

Ross and Wendy Clement of Laser Printer Technologies for donating a fabulous printer/scanner/copier to TART. We'll all miss arm-wrestling with the old printer, but it sure is nice to have a functioning machine.

Signs Now for donating a portion of the proceeds from their 2012 Sign and Graphic Recycling Program to TART Trails.

Suttons Bay Chamber of Commerce, **Suttons Bay Schools**, **participants** and **volunteers** for the inaugural Yetifest. It was a spectacular day in Suttons Bay with lots of smiling faces.

Endurance Evolution and the great volunteers for planning the inaugural Traverse City Trail Running Festival. More than 160 runners had a great time traversing the snow, slush, and mud!

Lou Colombo, **Luc Serriere** and **Gloria Veltman** for helping out with mailings and data entry in the office.

Kevin Pryor for three years of service on the TART Trails Board and enthusiasm for the trails.

Flight Path Creative and **Village Press** for producing our newsletter.



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Slow Down and Enjoy the Ride — by Cody Sovis

In the world of trail riding, there are a number of things you should keep in mind when you buckle on your brain bucket and roll onto the TART trails. **Walkers, runners, cyclists, wheelchair users, kids, adults and pets all have a place.** So take a few moments to consider these simple tips for how you can make the trails more enjoyable for everyone!

Be considerate of other folks on the trail. Use extra caution around kids and four-legged friends as they can be unpredictable.

Obey the normal rules of the road. Keep your speed under control, watch for all private drives or agricultural crossings, come to a complete stop at every road crossing and ride/skate/run/walk on the right side of the trail. When passing, slow down and call out, “On your left!” in advance. Feel free to

experiment with foreign accents, too. They add a sense of mystery!

Wear your helmet and be sure your bike is in proper working order, get lights, wear reflective clothing and if you’ve got mirrors and bells, those are pretty great, too.

Everyone should stay on the trail and respect plants, wildlife and private property. If you want to take a break, look for the benches along the path, or patronize one of the many bike shops, restaurants and establishments just off the trails.

If you bring along your four-legged friend, keep Fido on a leash. Also, if your pet leaves behind a memento, be sure to stop and pick it up. Nothing ruins a wonderful day of rollerblading like rolling through, well, you know.

Please, don’t smoke. It bugs people trying to enjoy the sights, sounds and scents of the great outdoors.

Even if you follow these tips to the letter, there is the chance that something un-fun could happen. In the event of an emergency, please dial 9-1-1 immediately. Know your location to the best of your ability and use your best judgment.

Aside from good trail behavior, slowing down to share a smile and wave can really make someone’s day. Thanks for helping make the trails more fun this summer!

Cody is a Traverse City native. He works at Einstein Cycles, races for Hagerty Cycling, writes a blog named kolotc.com, is an avid trail user, and an advocate for being friendly on the trails.