



TART TALES

Power of the Pathway: A Snapshot of the Economic Impact of the Vasa Pathway

The results of the Vasa Economic Impact Study are in. The yearlong study found the Pathway receives more than 55,000 visits a year from cyclists, skiers, walkers, joggers, runners, bird-watchers and other non-motorized users. It is also host to numerous events including the Iceman Cometh mountain bike race and the North American Vasa Festival of Races. The results of these activities? Over \$2.6 million in direct economic impact to the local economy annually. These events are held during the off-peak season, which is a boon to local businesses. And it's not just the locals that benefit. Event participants reported spending more than \$3,700 a year on equipment, clothing, travel and other goods and services, resulting in \$23.5 million in direct spending in Michigan. TART Executive Director Julie Clark says the study provides insight into one of the values trails bring to a community. "We know from national studies that trails provide quantifiable returns including economic, social, and physical and mental health benefits. Putting a number on direct economic benefit is important to better demonstrate the contribution trails make to our state and local economies. This isn't the whole story, but it's a really important piece to share."

In addition to in-depth surveys of event participants, the study used automated counters on the trail and onsite surveys of day-use visitors. Visitors were asked about their experience on the trail and

reported high levels of satisfaction. Trail users also said they would return and that they will recommend the trail to their friends and family. Results will help inform TART Trails, the County, and the DNR about the needs and expectations of trail users and provide important information to local and state tourism officials about non-motorized trail users. One of the first of its kind for the DNR pathways, a prototype tool was also developed for the DNR to use in data collection for events on all pathways.

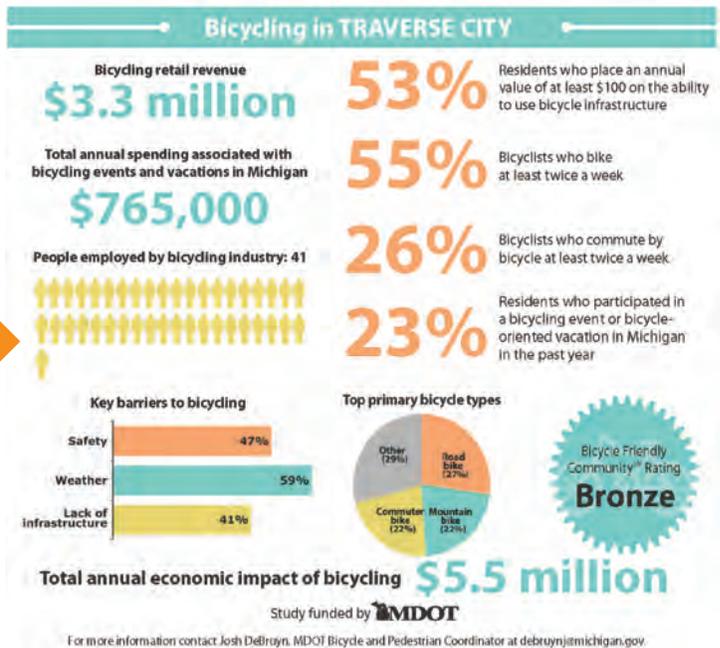
The study also found non-motorized users produce substantial economic activity in the State. Local and state

decision-makers can take greater advantage of these potential gains by improving available trails, supporting new trails and events on the Vasa Pathway and giving greater visibility to the Vasa Pathway and existing events in marketing and communication efforts.

Cooperating with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), TART Trails contracted with the Traverse Bay Economic Development Corporation (TBEDC) to complete the study. The project received generous support from Traverse City Tourism, Bell's Iceman Cometh Challenge, the North American Vasa, and the Traverse City Track Club.

Bikes equal big bucks!

The Michigan Department of Transportation recently wrapped up a study on the economic impact of cycling in the state. Traverse City was one of five case study communities.





Looking Down the Trail

The past year has been a busy one here at TART. We've celebrated more trails on the ground, worked on trail improvements, survived and thrived in the winter that wouldn't end, hosted great events that celebrated time on the trail, and tackled maintenance on the trails with a great group of volunteers. This was also a year that we wrapped up some big projects we've been working on – rolling out the results of the Vasa Economic Impact Study, finishing the last leg of the Leelanau Trail, and closing out our fundraising campaign for the next leg of the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail. We've also updated our strategic plan. We looked back at our vision, values and mission and confirmed that we felt strongly about their relevance. We took a look at how we worked as a staff and Board. We asked what you thought – what was important to you? How were we doing? What we heard is that you want more – trails, maintenance, and advocacy. You want us to keep focused on projects that we've started, expand the system and make sure what goes on the ground is

maintained. We looked at how we deliver services and how we can be more efficient and effective – working closer with partners and volunteers, updating our technology and evaluating the impacts of our programs and efforts. After working with the Board, listening to donors, volunteers and partners, we developed five outcomes we'll focus on over the next five years:

1. Increase the miles of trail.
2. Ensure sustainable, comprehensive maintenance for the entire trail system.
3. Ensure sustained support of mission and vision.
4. Improve infrastructure and safe access for non-motorized users.
5. Contribute to the social, economic, environmental and community health of the region.

We've developed a work plan for the next year that moves forward each of these outcomes. It's an exciting time for TART Trails and we're thrilled to continue our work

with your support. Trails, and a strong non-motorized facility network, are important to a vibrant community and region. Communities that invest in non-motorized infrastructure reap the benefits in terms of lowered health care costs, avoided environmental costs, increased property values and improved talent attraction. Your investment in TART Trails and the network we support helps make our region stronger, and our communities healthier, and happier. With your support, we look forward to another great year!



Julie Clark
John Robert Williams Photography

Dr. Tom Auer Honored with Mudgett Award *by Bob Wick*



L-R: Doug Scofield, Dr. Tom Auer and Brian Fisher. Bill Lancaster Photography

In the late nineties, Dr. Jim Mudgett persuaded his friend, Dr. Tom Auer to become involved with TART Trails.

Since then, Tom has become the heart and soul of the organization as the longest serving board member and community advocate for healthy living.

Early on Tom grasped the importance of securing resources to carry out the mission and has selflessly set about that task. TART's Board President, Brian Fisher shares "Dr. Auer's stamina for fundraising and advocacy seems to have no limits. He is everywhere that

matters all the time speaking on behalf of the trails and their safe use."

Tom rarely misses an event or work bee. He has organized and led work groups, chopped weeds, planted flowers, picked up trash and shoveled snow. Tom has passionately advocated improving trail and pedestrian infrastructure. It is such a pleasure that the time has come to honor and thank Tom Auer as this year's Jim Mudgett Trail Pioneer Award recipient.

TART TALES

Trail Updates

2014 was a banner year for trail development; both getting new trails on the ground and trail improvements. Friday, June 20th, TART Trails and the Village of Suttons Bay celebrated the construction of a 2 mile extension of the Leelanau Trail through the village to Dumas Road. This project completes construction of the Leelanau Trail. Maybe in the not-too distant future, a trail can make its way to Northport and connect the Leelanau Trail to the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail. In the meantime, cyclists can make the connection today using the newly signed US Bicycle Route 35, connecting Glen Arbor to Suttons Bay and to Traverse City and Acme by way of the Leelanau and TART trails.

As well as additional mileage, this year new signage was installed along the Leelanau Trail. The new signs provide uniform direction and messaging to trail users on where they are going, points of interest along and adjacent to the trail and how to safely use the trail for the benefit and enjoyment of everyone. The new signage runs from Dumas Road north of Suttons Bay to Carter Road south of the Cherry Bend trailhead. Working in partnership with the City and County, TART Trails plans to extend the signage system along the TART Trail to Bates Road and along the Boardman Lake Trail in 2015.

The City of Traverse City kicked off construction of the Boardman Lake Trail from 10th street to 14th Street in August. An asphalt trail to the west provides



New Leelanau Trail signage

cyclists and commuters with a direct north/south route while a concrete section of trail meanders along the lake serving as a promenade ideal for walkers and runners enjoying the trail's scenic natural surroundings. The City included a boat launch and gazebo along the lakeshore for folks to soak up the scenery or enjoy the lake. We look forward to working to move forward design and construction of the trail from 14th Street to South Airport Road in the near future.

TART's newest trail, the Boardman River Trail, will connect the TART Trail network from the southern end of the Boardman Lake Trail with a 42 mile loop southeast of Traverse City. The trail will ultimately

connect Traverse City to Mayfield and to the North Country Trail and back to Traverse City via the Vasa Pathway and TART Trail. The Boardman River Trail is comprised of a series of scenic new and existing single track and two-track trails that can be used for mountain biking, hiking and snowshoeing. This season, volunteers completed construction on 7 new miles of trail connecting Mayfield Pond Park to the North Country Trail at the Muncie Lakes Trailhead. TART Trails and trail partners including Paradise Township and the Grand Traverse Conservation District celebrated the opening of Section I of the Boardman River Trail on October 8th at Mayfield Pond Park.

From water to woods and everywhere in between, this year's trail development projects are improving visitors and residents experiences, access to outdoor recreation and non-motorized transportation opportunities.



Trail Ambassadors (L to R) Dick Naperala, Becky Beach and Deena Barshney install signage along the Boardman River Trail Section 1



Riders from Near and Far Enjoy Tour de TART

Tour de TART on Friday, July 25th included local riders as well as out of state and even international ones. This year's ride, sponsored by **Blue Care Network**, had over 600 participants and was successful thanks to the efforts of 70 volunteers. **The Village of Suttons Bay, City Bike Shop, Brick Wheels, McLain Cycle and Fitness, Einstein Cycles** and **Suttons Bay Bikes** also helped with the event. A delicious dinner was provided by **VI Grill** that everyone enjoyed in Suttons Bay's beautiful Marina Park.

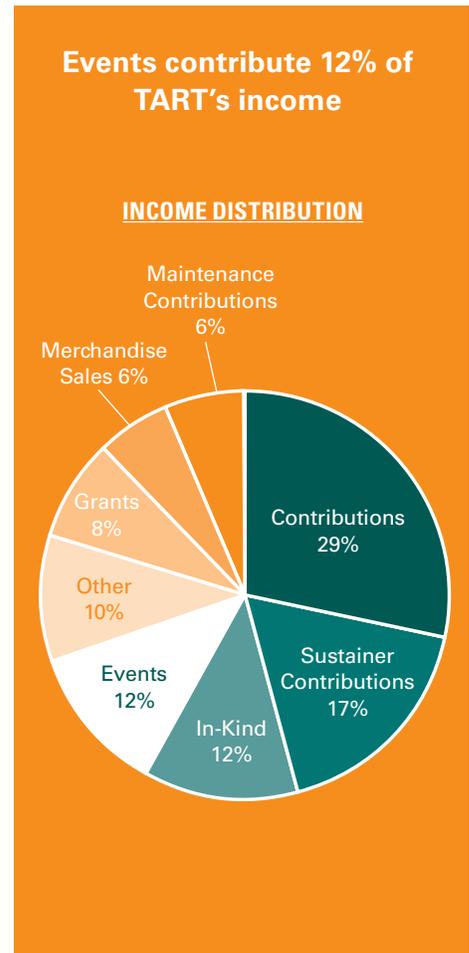
Norbert and Silke Schmidt from Germany traveled the furthest. They take their folding-bikes on vacation. This year they planned to visit Chicago and some beach towns around Lake Michigan, including a trip on the SS Badger. After reading about Tour de TART on the internet, they decided to visit Traverse City. They appreciated the friendly participants and volunteers and even met some German speakers. They were delighted to ride in a genuine American school bus on the return trip to Traverse City. You can view a short

video of their Tour de TART experience on YouTube <http://youtu.be/YnRaaFdVRFA>

The youngest participants were 2 years old and the oldest was 85. Tour de TART is truly an event for the entire family. Jack and Karilyn Tevebaugh live in Stillwater, Oklahoma. This year's trip to Traverse City to visit their daughter Tara and her family coincided with Tour de TART. Tara encouraged her dad to participate although he had not been on a bicycle in 40 years! Jack was motivated by the possibility of riding with his grandkids and trained for a month before the event. He had a great time despite the downpour at the beginning.

James and Peggy Holland from Sylvania, Ohio participated in their second tour and plan on making it a tradition since it is around the time of their wedding anniversary. They believe the area's trails, wine and water make for a great trip.

Save the date Friday, July 24th for Tour de TART 2015 to continue or start a new tradition with your family.



Silke Schmidt from Germany



Jack Tevebaugh and family



James & Peggy Holland from Ohio

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Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail Connects to Empire

The 4.5 mile segment connecting the Dune Climb to Empire was completed in early June bringing the total length of trail to nearly 10 miles. Trail supporters celebrated on July 2nd with an official ribbon cutting. Michigan Department of Transportation Director Kirk Steudle attended the celebration and helped cut the ribbon to officially open the newest segment of the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail. MDOT is responsible for the design and engineering of the trail as well as overseeing construction.

Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes conducts annual trail user counts and surveys the last weekend in August. This year trail

usage was up 25% over the previous year with an estimated 62,500 annual trail visits. The Friends will be grooming the trail again this winter for cross-country skiing. Keep informed about grooming by liking the trail's Facebook page.

The donor plaza was installed at the Dune Climb recognizing donors of \$1,000 and more. The donor panels will be updated annually until fundraising is finished and the entire trail is complete.

Want to be a part of this legacy project? Learn more at sleepingbeartrail.org or contact Pam Darling at 231.941.4300.



SBHT Donor Plaza

The next segment of trail from Glen Arbor to Port Oneida is slated to be open early summer 2015. This will add over 3 miles of trail and connect users to the many attractions within Port Oneida Rural Historic District.

To stay informed about trail development sign up to receive e-newsletters at the website: sleepingbeartrail.org

Consensus Building between the Community & City Hall

by Mike Coco & Bob Otwell

Last spring, a few Boardman neighbors got together and talked about a neighborhood bully – 8th Street. We had grown weary of the four-lane section of 8th Street on our border. This section of street is not comfortable or efficient to drive through with the fast, swerving traffic. It is also uncomfortable to walk along, unsafe to cross as a pedestrian and scary to bike along. We drafted a letter to the City Commission expressing our concerns, and took it around the neighborhood to solicit co-signers. Hoping for a dozen signatures, we collected 92.

The letter asked the City Commission to try low-cost solutions on this street, on a temporary basis, so that we may all judge if there may be a better configuration for vehicles, businesses, pedestrians, cyclists and residents. Trialing new solutions in advance of major financial investments scheduled a few years out will help identify the best possible design.

One option that has been discussed over the past 15 years is a simple re-striping to three auto lanes and two bike lanes. The recent 8th Street corridor study recommends a similar cross section. Studies have shown that streets that convert from four auto lanes to three auto lanes move the same volume of traffic with more efficiency at a safer speed. Studies have also shown a conversion from four auto lanes to three auto lanes can increase economic development and private investment. Our city has in fact tried this configuration on the eastern end of 8th Street, first as a trial several years ago, and now permanently. The eastern section of 8th Street now performs as a well-mannered street that carries significant auto traffic volume, moves trucks, is comfortable for biking, and is nicer to walk along because the bike lanes move the cars farther from the curb.

The temporary new configurations of 8th was painted in mid-September, with traffic flow data taken before and during the trial to help assess the new configuration. In addition, residents, businesses, Grand Traverse County and the city have joined together to spruce up the corridor, plant some flowers, put up some banners and organize a party to help celebrate this street. Those of us in support of this trial are hopeful that this new street will be a much nicer neighbor than the old 8th Street.

Part of the success of this approach was providing key decision makers (city staff and elected officials) with consensus from the community. We will learn from the test and continue to work to improve these city blocks.



Special Thanks to...

Tails to Trails participants, volunteers and sponsors: **D.O.G. Bakery, Northwood Animal Hospital, Pets and Peeps Photography, Cherry Republic, Copy Central, Grandview Catering, Great Lakes Pet Memorial, Oliver Specialties, Pet Sitters Network North, and Platinum Sound.**

Smart Commute program partners and sponsors: **TC Talus, BATA, Cherry Capital Cycling Club, Hagerty, Einstein Cycles, MI Blood, Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, Oryana, TC Downtown Development Authority, Lake Effect, Werner Family, Blue Care Network, Ella's Fashion & Furnishings, Bay Area Recycling for Charities, Garan Lucow Miller P.C., City Bike Shop, Munson Medical Center, Munson Community Health Center, Tom's Food Market, Platinum Sound, Norte Youth Cycling, The Kitchen, Disability Network, Northwestern Michigan College, Elixir Café, League of Michigan Bicyclists, Brick Wheels, Pangea's Pizza Pub, Creekside Clinic, Left Foot Charley, Michigan Land Use Institute, Bike-In T.C., Jay Zelenock Law Firm, and Yen Yoga & Fitness.**

Tour de TART participants, volunteers and sponsors: **Blue Care Network, VI Grill, Gordon Food Service, Short's Brewing Co, Blackstar Farms, Platinum Sound, Northwoods Soda, Pure Water Works, Cherry Cone, Brick Wheels, City Bike Shop, Einstein Cycles, McLain Cycle & Fitness, Suttons Bay Bikes, Monstrey MacDonald, Morse Moving, GT Packaging, Steve Brown, Joey DiFranco, Village of Suttons Bay, Leelanau County Sheriff's Dept., Northflight EMS, and Bay Area Recycling for Charities.**

Matt and Jennifer Ross for planning the 6th annual Zombie Run to benefit TART Trails, and the 3rd annual Dune Dash to benefit the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail.

Pure Water Works for keeping us hydrated at all of our events.

The **Cherry Capital Cycling Club** and **Ray Landfair** for organizing the 31st annual Leelanau Harvest Tour, **Kim White** and **Diana Raddatz** for coordinating food stops, the **volunteers**, and the food stop donors including **Naturally Nutty**,

Food for Thought, Pure Water Works, Pedaling Beans, Oryana, Cherry Republic, Pleasanton Bakery and Meijer.

Sustainer's Circle donors for their continued support, and also to these individuals and businesses that contributed to our annual Oktoberfest celebration: **Frank Noverr, Toni Tonda and the Noverr Family** for hosting and underwriting. **Catering by Kelly's, Lancaster Photography, Lilies of the Alley, Monstrey MacDonald, Grand Traverse Pie Company, Moomer's and Joey DiFranco.**

United Way Day of Caring groups **Hagerty Insurance, Disability Determination Services, Kay Walker's Family and Friends.**

TART Trails board member **Chris DeGood, Kreft Engineering** and **Paul Maurer General Contracting Inc.** for in-kind professional services, **FIM Group** and **Oleson Foundation** for funding, TART Trail Ambassadors **Dick Kelley, Jim Pecott, Dave Fisher** and **Dave Monstrey** for their efforts.

Hattie Christie, TART Trails intern for 5 years and interim Marketing & Outreach Director. Hattie has been an invaluable asset and stepped in seamlessly to fill a vacancy. We wish her well in all future endeavors.

Data entry volunteer, **Gloria Wolf** and volunteer extraordinaire **Chris Deyo**, who helps out daily in the office.

Rick Korndorfer, the Korndorfer Group, for making our move back to Front St. possible.

The **Downtown Merchants** and shoppers that supported TART on Shop Your Community Day.

Max's Service for outfitting our office with new appliances.

Thank you to **Steve Brown** with **Iceman** and **Timber Ridge Resort** for donating a Kubota tractor for year round maintenance of the trails.

Village Press for printing the newsletter and **Flight Path Creative** for help with layout.

Save the Date!

Visit www.traversetrails.org for event details.

Saturday, January 10 – Winter Trails Day

June 1–5 – Smart Commute Week

Saturday, February 14 – North American Vasa; vasa.org

Sunday, July 19 – Ride Around Torch
cherrycapitalcyclingclub.org

Saturday, April 25 – Trail Workbee

Saturday, May 16 – Tails to Trails

Friday, July 24 – Tour de TART

Saturday, May 30 – Recycle-A-Bicycle Bike Swap

Support TART Trail's Long-Term Vision:

Happy, active people enjoying a world-class trail system.



Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____

Email _____ Phone _____ Township _____

Please send me/us email updates I/we would like to volunteer

Show Your Support with Your Tax-Deductible Contribution

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$500

Sustainer's Circle \$1000 \$5000

Grooming Badges \$100 / Adult \$50 / 18 and under

Check Enclosed Recurring donation \$ _____ /month

Please charge my/my partner's VISA MC American Express Discover
_____ CVC _____

Expiration date: _____ Signature: _____

My/my partner's company will match my gift. I'll send the forms.

Contact me/us about making a planned gift or gift of stock

Please do not publish my/our name(s) as a donor.

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Thank You!

Mail form to: TART Trails, PO Box 252, Traverse City, MI 49685
TART Trails is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization.

Support TART online at:
TraverseTrails.org

231 · 941 · 4300

TART TALES

TRAVERSETRAILS.ORG

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper ♻️

A Tribute to a Trail Pioneer



Ted & Shirley Okerstrom at the Boardman Lake Trail Ribbon Cutting, 2005

The sun was shining making Boardman Lake sparkle. Sailboats slipped through the water filled with eager children shouting and laughing as they practiced their skills. A light wind blew across Hull Park, cooling off those who had gathered on a beautiful Friday morning in August to celebrate the life of Ted Okerstrom. The backdrop was the perfect setting for a man who loved the water, woods and trails.

Ted passed away in February, on the eve of the annual Vasa race. The race is an enduring part of Ted's legacy to get people outside and active. He saw the potential of our region's natural resources to attract people all year round and Traverse City winters, not as something to escape, but something to embrace. For Ted, there was no off-season. Keeping in line with his Swedish heritage, Ted founded a local cross-country ski race modeled after the European races so familiar to him. In 1976 Traverse City experienced its first Vasa ski race. This year marked the 38th Vasa race.

Trails were an important part of Ted's vision for a vibrant Traverse City. A founding board member of TART Trails, he was passionate about the role trails could play in making Traverse City a healthier community and a year-round tourist destination. Ted served on the original planning committee for the Boardman Lake Trail. He worked with a broad range of trail supporters, property

owners, and governmental officials to help get the east side of Boardman Lake Trail built. He remained an enthusiastic supporter of finishing the trail around the lake and heading south into Boardman River Valley. In recognition of his efforts to build trail and encourage healthy, active lifestyles, Ted received the Jim Mudgett Trail Pioneer Award in 2005, fittingly, the same year the east side of the Boardman Lake Trail was completed.

This year, on a beautiful morning in August, memories were shared, along with tears, smiles and laughter. Stories of Ted's work, adventures, and life echoed the joy and passion he brought to TART Trails. Tim Brick, in a letter of recommendation for Ted's Mudgett award, remarked, "I have worked with Ted... and the one thing that stands out about [him] is his love for Traverse City. He will definitely leave Traverse City a better place." And he did. Ted is missed, but we are all lucky to enjoy the legacy he left behind.