

**M-119 Tunnel of Trees Scenic Heritage Route Committee
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 10, 2009 9:30 a.m.
Readmond Township Hall**

Members Present

Joey Arbaugh, West Traverse Township
Carolyn Sandford, West Traverse Township
Eric Rasmussen, Friendship Township
Joseph Engelhard, Readmond Township
Ron Krause, Readmond Township
Rob Deane, Cross Village Township
Dave Shear, Emmet County Lakeshore Association
Henry Singer, Cross Village Township
Naomi Singer, Cross Village Township

Partners

Dave Langhorst, Michigan Department of Transportation
Kieran Fleming, Little Traverse Conservancy

Staff Present

Patty O'Donnell, Northwest Michigan Council of Governments

I. Welcome and Introductions

Naomi Singer called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. Introductions were made around the table.

II. Review Proposed Agenda

It was suggested to add II. a. Public Comment to each agenda. Agenda accepted with change.

a. Public Comment

No public comment at this time.

III. Review and Approve Previous Meeting's Minutes (January 13, 2009)

Motion made by Rob Deane, support by Ron Krause to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2009 meeting.

IV. New Business

No new business at this time.

V. Old Business

a. Management Plan Update Approval and Distribution

Patty O'Donnell read the Management Plan Five Year Update approval letter from Pete Hanes. Discussion followed on distribution of the Plan Update: notice insert in tax bills; township newsletter; presentation to townships (hard copies for the offices); have an annual meeting or open house with township boards, planning commissions, and ECLA; mailing to the property owners. A Management Plan Update summary will be mailed to the property owners.

There was further discussion on an annual meeting or open house – Carolyn Sandford, Joey Arbaugh and Naomi will look into this idea. It could be a meeting to report out to the local governments and ECLA on such topics as the statewide heritage route conference, the signs and heritage route committee, etc.

b. Statewide Conference

Patty reported that there would not be a statewide heritage route conference in 2009 and that maybe they would be held every other year.

VII. Project Updates

a. Signs and Heritage Routes Committee

Patty stated that the three heritage routes signage committee has now expanded to all the heritage routes in Michigan by request from Pete Hanses. Rob thanked Patty for the legislation information on the Michigan Heritage Routes Act and the Tourist Oriented Directional Signs (TODS) Act. The Heritage Route Act information is a refresher on the purpose and criteria for heritage routes. Patty will send copies of the legislation to all the Committee members. The signage Committee will be working on the TODS rules and guidelines to fit with the heritage routes as one part of the signage issues. Suggestions: maintain local autonomy; look at MDOT regulations/guidelines; standardize signage for heritage routes.

b. Educational Activities

1. Guidebook Update

Patty will bring a draft update to the May meeting.

2. Good Hart Fair

The Committee will have a display table again. The Fair is usually the third weekend in July.

c. Wooden Bridge Update

Dave Langhorst reported that they are still waiting on the Lansing office for the design exceptions. The issues: non-standing shoulders; vertical curve; super elevation; road width; horizontal curve; cross/crown drainage. The need is to have the hydrological people look over the site first before the exemptions. The design phase should be completed by July 2009 and the present grant project will be completed by September 30, 2009. Dave distributed copies of the general plan structure drawings. This structure is what the Committee agreed to and those items that the community/public disagreed with have been taken out. In accordance with the Committee's wishes, it is only a bridge and the re-establishment of the springs/stream area. MDOT will work with the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians regarding the stream which is on the State's list as a trout stream. There is no funding right now for construction of the Wooden Bridge and it is not an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus package item. The cost of construction would be about \$2 million. Rob asked what would be the extent of the stream restoration beyond the MDOT right-of-way. Dave stated it would possibly go beyond the 50 foot right-of-way, but it would be up to the adjacent property owners to get permission to do any work. Dave Shear stated that ECLA is providing bridge information to the property owners up and down that stretch of road and a petition is being circulated. Why does MDOT want to do this bridge? Dave Langhorst answered that historically to present, the guard rail has bulged; a bridge would be less expensive than trying to fix it each year; what if something happened to half of the road?, MDOT would like a plan; it has been a flooding area; and conditions have occurred throughout the years to raise MDOT's awareness of these major

concerns. An application has been submitted by MDOT to the National Scenic Byways grant program for construction, but there is no guarantee that the grant will be awarded. A copy of the application will be sent to all the Committee members.

VIII. Correspondence

Patty reported that Matt Radulski responded that MDOT will look to see if the Robinson Road Tunnel of Trees sign can be relocated.

IX. Committee Member Comment

It was suggested that hard copies of the agenda and minutes for each meeting be sent to each of the townships and ECLA.

IX. Public Comment

Kieran Fleming stated that the Management Plan Update is great and thank you for doing it. This document will be utilized by the Little Traverse Conservancy and will give credibility to the Conservancy in their work in prioritizing and preserving the Tunnel of Trees. He reported that there is a land gift pending on M-119 and will probably be able to report on it at the May meeting.

X. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be **Tuesday, May 12, 2009** at West Traverse Township Hall.

XI. The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.