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M-119 TUNNEL OF TREES SCENIC HERITAGE ROUTE COMMITTEE

DRAFT Minutes

Tuesday, September 13th, 2024

West Traverse Township Hall

8001 M-119, Harbor Springs, MI 49740

Committee Members Present

Dale Scott, Friendship Township (Chair)
Franz Neubrecht, Emmet County Lakeshore Association
Naomi Singer, Cross Village Township
Garon Gopigian, West Traverse Township
Sue Rentrop, Cross Village / Emmet County Lakeshore Association
Laurelynn Harris, Cross Village Township
Don Schaplowsky, Readmond Township
Jerry Root, Readmond Township
Joey Arbaugh, West Traverse Township
Carolyn Sandford, West Traverse Township
Jim Anderson, Friendship Township
James Fisher, Friendship Township

Partners Present

Neil Ahrens, Emmet County Commissioner, District 2 Friendship Township & West Traverse Township)
Isha Pithwa, Networks Northwest
Heidi Phaneuf, MDOT
Ethan Reld, MDOT
Tammy Doernenburg, Emmet County Planning and Zoning Director

Others Present

Linda Rosalik, Cross Village Township Committee Member

Absent

Hillary Taylor, Emmet County
Larry Wallen, Readmond Township
Joe Tomlinson, Readmond Township
Lisa Fineout, Readmond Township Supervisor
Caitlin Donnelly, Little Traverse Conservancy

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 9:31 by Chair Dale Scott. Chair led attendance by introduction/roll call to note members' presence at the meeting. With the introductions, Dale Scott read the Mission Statement of The M-119 Scenic Heritage Route.

II. Review and Adoption of Minutes from August 13th, 2024

*Motion by Sue Rentrop, supported by Jim Anderson, to approve the August meeting minutes. All in favor.
Motion passed unanimously.*

III. Agenda Review

None

IV. Partner Reports

- a. **Emmet County Planning and Zoning (ECPZ)** – Tammy updated in response to the minutes from August meeting that she shared/attached information in the packet with regards to tree cutting and right-of-way. Emmet County is working on the Master plan – requested the group to provide any comments regards to the master plan and community if they have any. Planning commission has been working on updating the zoning ordinance and the most recent work was on Accessory building units – increasing the size allowable in some zoning districts while increasing the number of units in some zoning districts. Friendship Township has opposed to that proposal given the reason that it takes out the rural character of the township. The discussion followed the review of setback rules and right-of way. Part of this section is the discussion for the New Business Item (a.)
- b. **LTBBOI** – No report or updates.
- c. **LTC** – Note from Caitlyn – needs some educational materials (brochures) for the new contacts. Building trail this fall near Woodys Woods.
- d. **MDOT** – Update from Heidi – Slope restoration project is ongoing and will be completed by the end of November. Updated about the 2026 chip seal along TOT and gravel shoulders. Updated about the North Region Active Transportation Plan – the draft and maps will be shared soon and asked the group that if they have any comments or input on future connections desired, to please share so it can be included in the plan.

Committee – Culvert and water issue by 5 Mile Rd needs work and attention to resolve. Tree trimming work needed - 1.5 south of the Cross Village Hall. Suggested to MDOT to periodically run tree checks for trimming/removal/dead tree check in case there needs some work. Heidi will request the MDOT staff for evaluating the trees for any immediate work needed and make it a periodical check and pass update to Isha.

Continuing the New Business Item (b.) – Dale updated the group about conversation with Tod Neiss. The Tree Maintenance Survey was done during the last management plan update. Hence, another tree survey is suggested sometime in 2026.

West Traverse Township hall to Forest Beach rd (West Traverse Township) discussion on the tree trimming – MDOT’s answers that any tree trimming requests within the ROW requires a permits which they would not get for that area because of the steepness of the slope. The township is going to work on the ordinance similar to the county ordinance for the Shoreline Bluff protection ordinance. And currently there will be no trimming within the ROW.

e. **Networks Northwest (NN)** – Isha provided an update on the FY2024 budget concerning sign improvements. The group had previously discussed the sign improvements, after which Isha had a follow-up conversation with Clayton. While there is an option to submit another budget change request for FY2024, completing the necessary tasks within the remaining time frame presents challenges. These tasks include identifying which signs to improve, locations, obtaining cost estimates, contracting, signs work, invoicing, and reimbursement—all within three weeks before the September 30th deadline. Additionally, we would need to submit a budget change request to MDOT before starting the work, which is unlikely to be feasible within the given timeline. The suggestion is to use the remaining FY2024 funds, totaling \$522.30, for additional print materials. Meanwhile, we can utilize current meeting time and the October meeting time to discuss and develop the FY2025 budget in detail. If the group is interested in pursuing sign improvements, we can create a cost estimate by the October meeting and establish a detailed plan for each element. This plan would be attached to the FY2025 budget, and we would submit a budget change request to MDOT accordingly for FY25. By preparing a solid action plan, we can avoid multiple budget change requests each month and prevent the time crunch experienced in FY2024. The discussion on this topic continues in Item V.

f. **Committee Members Comment –**

- Laurelynn Harris - conveyed the issue with GFL trash on their inconsistent trash collection times while the issue seemed inconsistent with the TOT byways works and along the Adopt-the highway program.

V. **Ongoing and Unfinished Business**

- a. **Adopt-A-Highway Program** – Carolyn updated the group about the next pickup – September 21-29. Encouraged to help with the pickup – if the weather is bad you can still pick up the bags will be collected sooner or later.
- b. **Review Fiscal Year 2024 Budget and Expenditure (Sign cleanup)** – Continued discussion from item IV (e.). Suggested to use the remaining funds for the year 2024 in doing additional prints. The committee discussed and decided that printing both brochures i.e., Share the Road and the M119 Management Plan brochure to print as many that could be printed within the remaining budget.

Motion by James Fisher, supported by Naomi Signer, to spend the remaining balance of \$522.30 of the budget (FY2024) on printing the two trifold brochures i.e., Share the Road and M-119 management plan brochure. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

c. **Review Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Work Plan Budget & work on plans for accomplishing goals–**

The FY2025 has three items – website (\$500), printing (\$1000) and tree assessment (\$250). The group discussed on the action items and budget amount assigned. The discussed continued on having action items and a plan for each item before submitting another change request for budget for FY2025. The discussion lead to not keeping the printing for \$1000 while planning for sign improvements between current meeting and October to prepare for a sign improvements plan document with estimates and then submit the budget change request to MDOT with a solid plan. Proposed a sign improvements need study and cost estimate document preparation to decide for the \$ amount and budget distribution.

Tree assessment can be done via MDOT – Heidi will clarify if there needs to be some amount for

MDOT/ anyone that does the Tree Assessment. Decided to keep tree assessment line item as is for the time. Discussion ended with waiting for a cost estimate on Sign improvements to decide on other action items and their \$ amount.

- d. **Presentation to Emmet County Commissioners 9/19/24**– Dale will do a presentation to Emmet County Commissioners to present and take a few handouts as well on the 19th September. Asked the group if they wanted to join.
- e. **MDOT Byways Workshop in Gaylord 11/4/24 – Possible attendance?** Isha sent out information on the meeting and shared the flyer and asked the group to sign up for it. More details will be sent out soon as they become available.

VI. New Business

- a. **Review of setback rules for the TOT – information attached to the Sept meeting packet from Emmet County**
- b. **Review of Tree Maintenance Survey Status – information attached to the Sept meeting packet**
- c. **Review of Right-of-way maps - information attached to the Sept meeting packet**

Items a., b., and c. were discussed during partner reports and on-going and unfinished business.

Other Clarification –

Tree Maintenance survey: periodical check from MDOT for tree trimming or any work necessary. This check/study pertains to leaning trees, tree trimming needs assessment, dead tree removal etc.

Tree Disease assessment: assessment/survey/study that is done during the management plan update and the study pertains to identifying diseases.

VII. Comments from the public and the board.

- Linda updated the group about the Cross Village Master Plan (10year) – The ordinance has been approved and advertised. The 1st meeting will be Oct 1st (Tuesday) at 5:30 at the Cross Village Community Center and all are welcome. The meeting will discuss the bylaws, committee, roles and responsibilities.
- Contacting bicycle groups for information and keeping update with the group to inform about their upcoming ride or events.
- M26 – signs of lodging and other advertisement along the parking and scenic byway informing that it takes away from the character of the scenic route
- RFC Fire Department has Barn Dance and Potluck announcement – 28th Sept at the Bliss Barn.

VIII. Adjourn

Next meeting on October 8th, 2024 Readmond Township - 6034 Wormwood Ln, Harbor Springs, MI 49740 at 9:30 AM.

*Motion by Dale Scott to adjourn the meeting at 10:51 AM. Supported by Joey Arbaugh Fisher.
Motion passes.*