

**Next Generation “Strengthening Our Niche” Work-Group
Meeting Notes of September 14, 2009**

Present

Will Andresen, Annette Burchell, Melanie Fullman, Charlene Herron-Jordan, Brad Kusz, Gemma Lamb, Brock Mitchem, Susan Mitchem, Jim Rouse, Sue Rouse, Charlie Supercynski, Dick Swanson

Introduction

The group welcomed five new members to the work-group: four from Bessemer (Brock Mitchem, Susan Mitchem, Jim Rouse and Sue Rouse,) and one from Ironwood (Brad Kusz). Will Andresen presented the purpose and history of the over-all “Next Generation” initiative to the new group members and explained that the “Strengthening Our Niche” work-group is focusing on two purposes: 1) create a vision (map) for a two-county trail system to be used to begin discussion and action towards the development of the regional trail system; and 2) enhance awareness of the economic importance of strengthening the niche to local decision makers to encourage their support of project activities.

Trail Mapping Sub-Committee

Will Andresen briefly discussed what the trail mapping sub-committee has done to date. Jim Rouse explained that they had presented a proposal to the City of Bessemer for a 10-mile non-motorized trail through the city and township and that it received support. Jim stated that he is very familiar with the railroad rights-of-way in the Bessemer area. Susan Mitchem explained that they would like to pursue grants to help fund the trail project and that she has researched various grant programs as well as the economic benefits of trails.

Annette Burchell stated that the mapping sub-committee has not fully committed to the Old US-2 route and is still considering the railroad grad option.

Dick Swanson stated that he has been in contact with Roger Storm and Ron Yesney regarding the railroad rights-of-way and that the southern routes is a good possibility for DNR non-motorized funding. A grant has been received to conduct title work on the rights-of-way to determine ownership.

Brad Kusz stated that the Sparta-Elroy trail is a great example of how a community bike-path can be a great economic boost to a community, with 1,400 bikers per day and full campgrounds.

Charlie Supercynski emphasized the need to also strengthen the historic and cultural aspects of the regional trail system, stating that the number one reason people travel is for heritage tourism.

New volunteers to join the trail mapping sub-committee included Jim Rouse and Brad Kusz.

Promotion Sub-Committee

The group then discussed the work of the promotion sub-committee. Presentations have already been made to the U.S. 2 Corridor Committee, the Gogebic County EDC and the Wakefield Rotary and the City of Wakefield has passed a resolution in support of the regional trail system. Susan Mitchem also explained that the City of Bessemer is supportive of their proposed bike path. The Bessemer downtown development authority has also asked for a presentation.

The group brain-stormed additional groups that should be reached, in addition to local and county governments: Chambers of commerce, ski clubs, Grand View Hospital, physical fitness centers, SISU race committee, college, schools and service clubs.

New volunteers for the promotion sub-committee include Sue Mitchem, Charlie Supercynski and Annette Burchell. The promotion sub-committee will meet in the near-future to develop a more formal presentation to these groups.

Other Business

Current Chair Serena Mershon-Lohkamp is not able to make noon meetings anymore and requested that either we move the time of the meetings to after 4:00 or that somebody else volunteer to chair this work-group. The group decided to keep the 12:00 meeting time because it seemed to work for most people. Annette Burchell agreed to chair the work-group.

Next Meeting Date

Monday, October 5, 12:00 Noon, Board Room of the Iron County Courthouse