

Trails and People Coming Together in West Michigan



WEST MICHIGAN
TRAILS & GREENWAYS
COALITION

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It's a new year. Perhaps not a clean slate from 2020, but a fresh summer awaits. Most times our hours are filled with requirements, responsibilities, or routines. But not this time. For a while at least we're with family or friends; we're refreshed and reinvigorated; we're on a West Michigan trail.

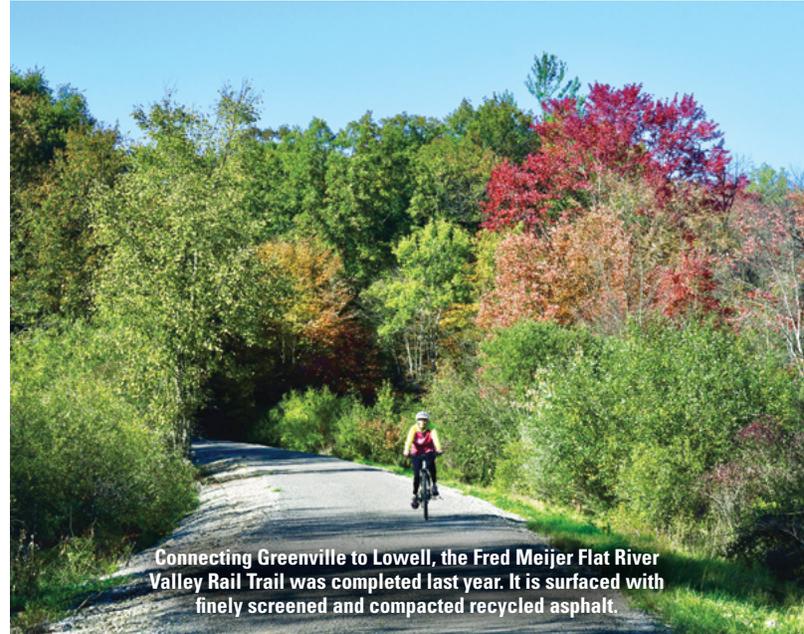
Last year reminded us how precious our trails are. Many discovered them for the first time as if brand new. Trail use was up on average more than 200 percent, and in some places more than 300 percent.

Creating a trail from initial idea to first use can easily take 10 years. In our first 15 years, we've helped develop more than 400 miles of trails in our region by bringing stakeholders together around a common plan, securing private and public funds, making sure the money is spent wisely, connecting people across boundaries and jurisdictions, and fostering cooperation. We do this so everyone has a great time on the trails.

In the midst of the pandemic there were still major accomplishments in the West Michigan trail network. The long-awaited Fred Meijer Pioneer Trail is complete and connects the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park to the Musketawa Trail. With two very small exceptions, you can now ride from Cadillac to Grand Rapids to Muskegon to Hart, all on West Michigan trails. That's more than 175 miles on non-motorized trail with less than two miles on roads.

Last year also saw the completion of the Spoonville Trail. It now connects the Idema Explorers Trail to another of last year's trail projects, the North Bank Trail. For some spectacular scenery, look for these trails east of Spring Lake and connecting in Nunica.

Other major trail accomplishments long in the works are the completion of the Fred Meijer Flat River Valley Rail Trail and the Fred Meijer Grand River Valley Rail Trail, both done with recycled asphalt. These connect Greenville to Lowell and Lowell to Saranac, respectively. More incredible scenery as well as numerous charming towns await you on these trails and the trails to which they're connected.

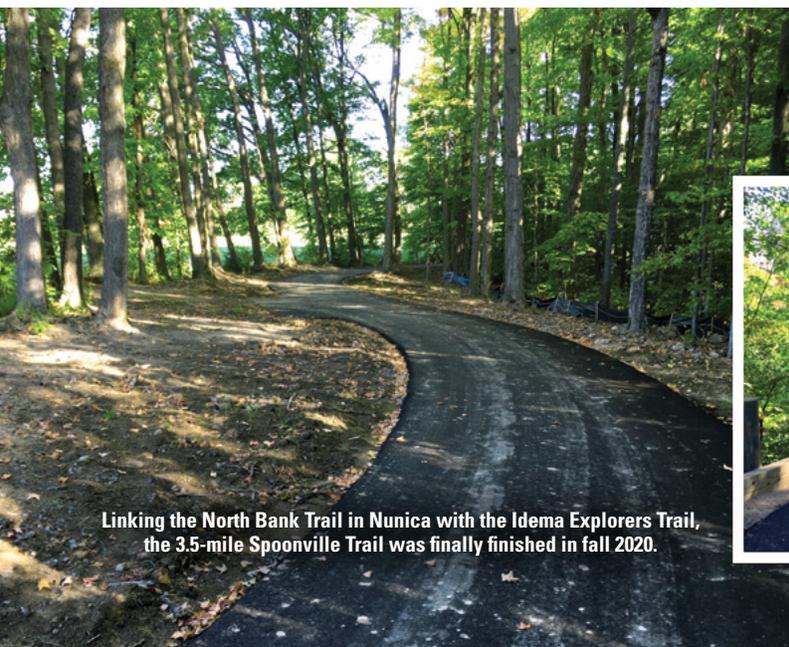


Connecting Greenville to Lowell, the Fred Meijer Flat River Valley Rail Trail was completed last year. It is surfaced with finely screened and compacted recycled asphalt.

More projects are in the works for 2021, but the work is far from finished. We need to connect more of our trails, create a comprehensive, user-friendly signage system, and maintain the 800 miles of trails we now have. To do this work, the Coalition relies on donations; we receive no government funding. We rely on people who understand that, in good times and bad, we need our trails. Trails that enrich our quality of life, local economies, and our health and well-being. Trails free of motorized vehicles, and free for everyone.

Trails bring us together, even when we're apart. Now is the time. The trails we need, now need us more than ever. Your financial support helps connect trails, connect communities, and connect people. Please, donate today, to West Michigan Trails.

Learn more about the West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition and how you can get involved and help our group realize its vision at: www.WMTrails.org. And be sure to follow us on Facebook!



Linking the North Bank Trail in Nunica with the Idema Explorers Trail, the 3.5-mile Spoonville Trail was finally finished in fall 2020.

