

Working together to create a real legacy!

The Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail



Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

Summary of proposal and findings:

- “Along the Shore” Opportunity
- Traverse Lake Road Options

Little Traverse Lake Property Owners Association

May 21, 2012

Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail

Traverse Lake Road or something much better?

The vision:

“Create a non-motorized linear trailway system that is connected to historical, cultural, recreational, and environmental points of interest throughout the Lakeshore and surrounding communities; a Trailway that promotes health, environmental, social, and economic benefits and provides a safe alternative for walking, biking, running, and cross-country skiing; and is universally accessible wherever possible.”

The Little Traverse Lake Property Owners believe in the vision for the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail and believe that all stakeholders can work together to create “America’s Most Beautiful Trail” for recreational users to experience in its fullest.

The current plan proposed by the National Park Service is to extend the trail east from the intersection of M-22 and CR 669 down along Traverse Lake Road. There will be significant impacts to the environment, to private residents and would be very expensive. Most importantly, the options along Traverse Lake Road would also result in a substandard and marginal experience for the trail user.

There is another route option that would create one of the most beautiful trail experiences in the nation, while also avoiding negative impacts. The alternative route “along the shore” would allow trail users to experience the sights, sounds and smells of Lake Michigan – the namesake of the Lakeshore.

We believe this shore route would complement the current Dune Climb to Glen Arbor trail, which takes in the features of the Lakeshore, away from the sounds and sights of any existing roads. Diverse recreational users will be able to use this route to the fullest extent during all seasons.

Table of Comparison – Traverse Lake Road (TLR) and Along the Shore

Variable	TLR	Shore
No Wetlands		X
No Significant Creeks		X
No Mature Forest Clearing		X
Flat Topography - No Critical Dune Hills		X
No Public Safety Issues		X
No Residential Impact		X
Lower Construction Cost		X
Existing Parking & Restroom Facilities		X
More Recreational Opportunities		X
Superior User Experience		X
Wilderness Impact	-	-
Existing Roads	X	X

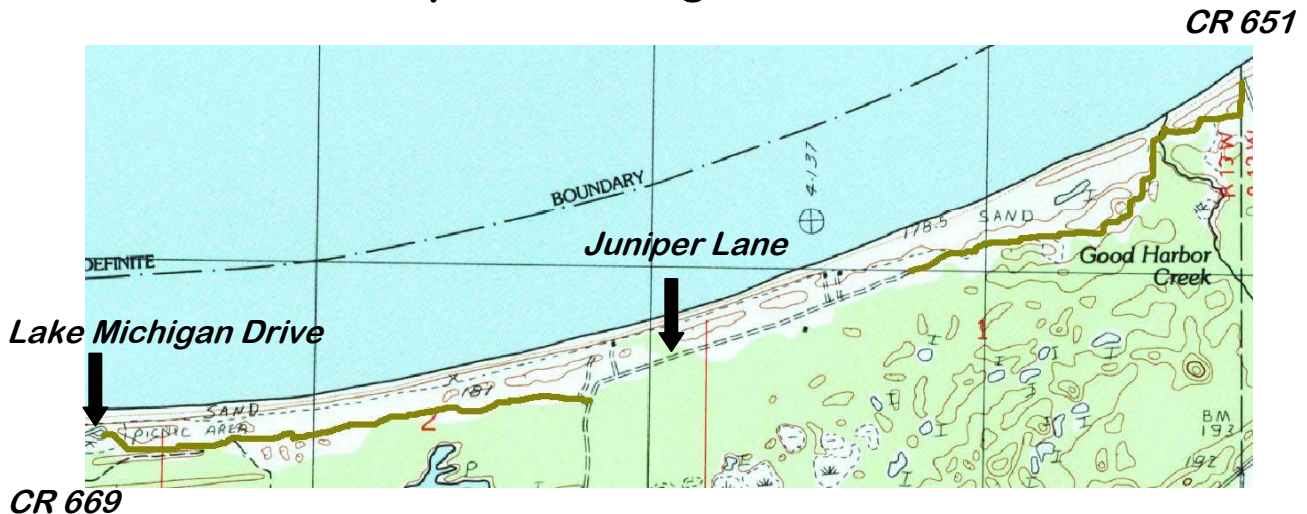
Heritage Trail – “Along the Shore” Route

Following Historical and Existing Roads

The Along the Shore Route uses existing roads and follows the historical roads as seen in this older map. The existing roads include Lake Michigan Drive as well as Juniper Lane, both parallel Lake Michigan along the same historical roadbed.



The Proposed “Along the Shore” Route



1. From the existing parking & facilities at the north end of CR 669, proceed east 4500 feet on Lake Michigan Road to the end of road. The trail can use the existing road or offset between the road and the beach which is not in the proposed wilderness area.
2. Continue trail east another 4500 feet paralleling the shoreline to connect with existing Juniper Lane (as the map above shows). The trail would be located in the stabilized transition area between the beach and forest. There would be no major tree clearing necessary and the terrain is level.
3. Proceed east using the existing portion of Juniper Lane which runs approximately 4300 feet. Juniper Lane is a gravel two track road which has been graded after work last summer. No major tree clearing is necessary and the terrain is level.
4. At the end of Juniper Lane, continue trail eastward approximately 3400 feet following the old beach road to the end of CR 651 at the beachhead. There is substantial parking at this location and improved facilities, making it an ideal staging area for trail users. Again, this portion of the trail parallels the shore and runs along the stabilized transition area north of the forest.

Starting Point: Parking and facilities at the north end of CR 669



Segment 1: Lake Michigan Drive and picnic facilities



Segment 2: Trail continues along the shore in transition areas



Segment 3: Uses existing Juniper Lane – a gravel roadbed



Segment 4: Connection to CR 651, Parking and Existing Facilities

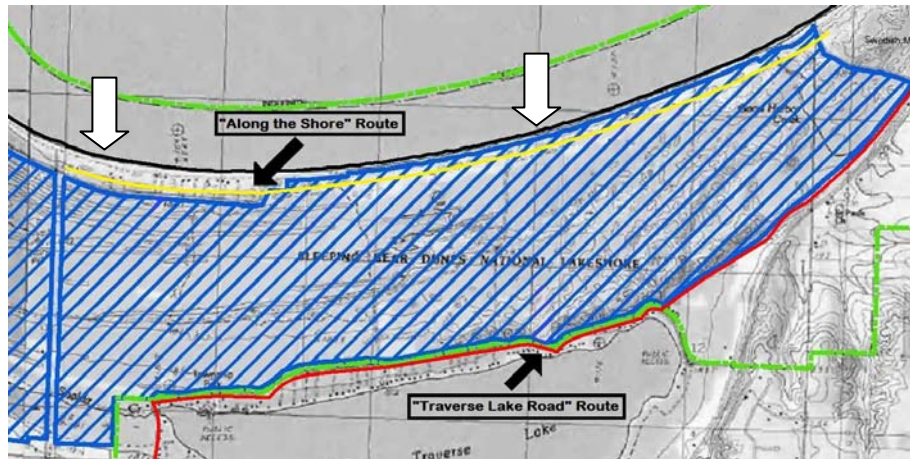


Trail construction that would be typical of “Along the Shore” route



“Proposed Wilderness Area”

Still “proposed”, Congress still to approve final map – there is a way!



Minimal Impact

- Along the Shore Route follows northern boundary of proposed wilderness area
- Core integrity of proposed wilderness area is kept intact
- Less environmental impact than Traverse Lake Road route

Solutions for Modification

1. Fine tune boundary area, moving line slightly south, as has been done elsewhere to accommodate Heritage Trail along other portions of the Lakeshore’s proposed wilderness area
2. Include wilderness exclusion for the Heritage Trail similar to the wilderness exclusion for the Cottonwood Trail

"(4) Central area of the mainland - Sleeping Bear Plateau - with a wilderness exclusion for the Cottonwood Trail to provide an opportunity for large groups to experience the namesake Sleeping Bear Dunes." (Lakeshore General Management Plan, Chapter 4 page 61)

"A wilderness exclusion for the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail to provide a unique recreational opportunity for visitors to experience the diverse, varied and protected landscapes that make up the natural beauty of Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore."

Great visionaries can create greater legacies for future generations!

Heritage Trail Route - Traverse Lake Road

Existing Conditions



Significant Wetlands and Creek



Protected Critical Dune Hills



Scenic Natural Beauty Road



Residential Homes-Front Yards

Proposed Trail – 10+ feet from Traverse Lake Road



Removal of Significant Trees

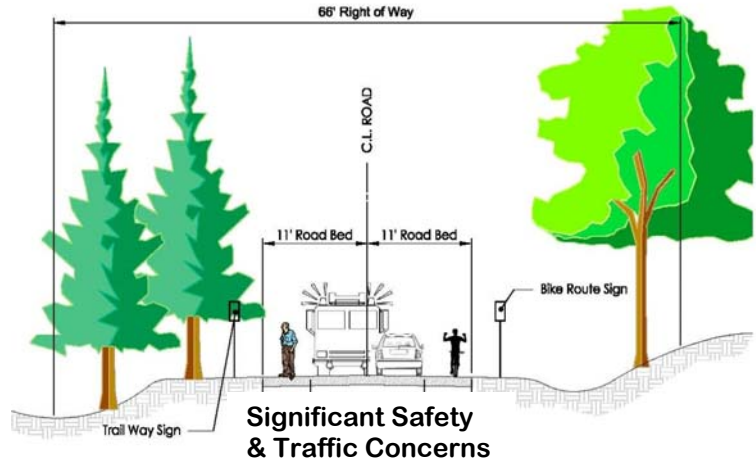


Grade Excavation of 60' Dunes

Traverse Lake Road: Proposed Trail Options & Problems

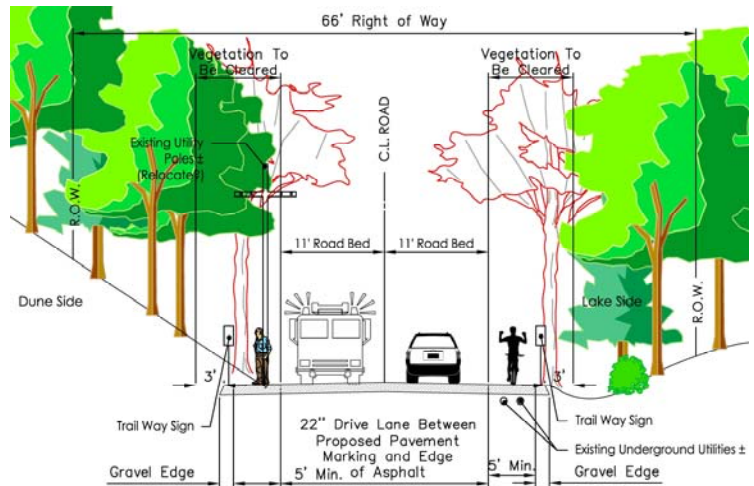
1. Route trail traffic onto Traverse Lake Road

- Limited recreational options - trail proposed as diverse opportunities but difficult for wheelchairs, rollerblading, cross country skiing
- Substandard trail experience for user with using county road with traffic
- Considerable public safety concerns with trail users mixing with vehicles on winding road
- Huge volume impact on local residents with projected 350,000 to 400,000 trail users
- Overburden of township park facilities with no maintenance plan or support



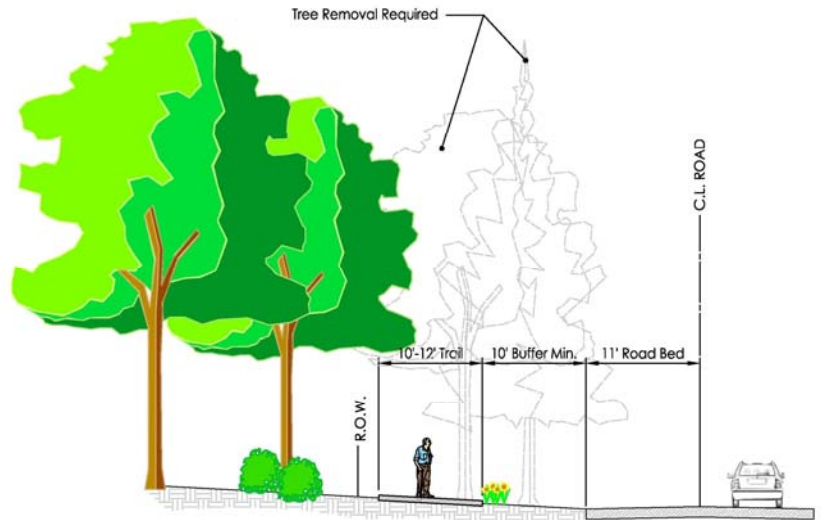
2. Construct trail on extended shoulders of road

- AASHTO standards – vehicular separation recommended for two-way trail traffic only on one side (minimum 10'ft wide shoulder path) or a 5' ft wide shoulder path on both shoulders of road
- Limited recreational activities- trail proposed as diverse opportunities but difficult for wheelchairs, rollerblading, cross country skiing
- Substandard experience for trail users using county road with traffic
- Public safety concerns with trail users mixing with vehicles on winding road
- Road shoulder would conflict with existing connections to underground utilities and mailboxes
- Removal of mature trees that provide scenic canopy
- Impact on critical dune hills which end at road's edge
- Shoulders cannot be expanded alongside wetlands and over creek
- Destruction of natural character – 22' scenic road now becomes 32' paved highway
- Huge volume impact on local residents with projected 350,000 to 400,000 trail users



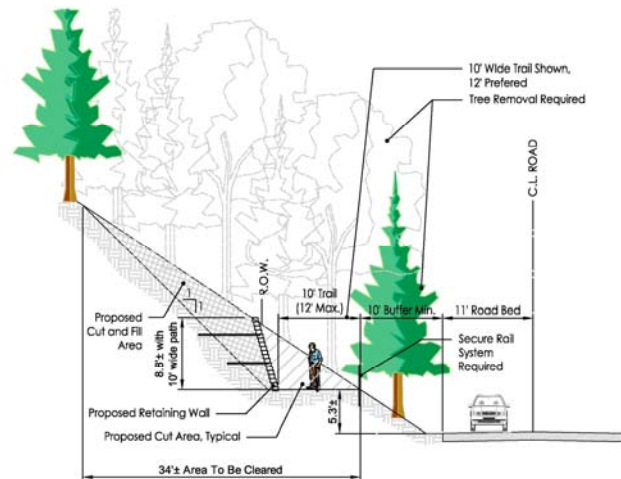
3. Construct trail in ROW, offset 10' from road's edge

- Boardwalk construction over lengthy wetland required
- Extensive bridging over Shalda Creek required
- Significant cutting of trees along road will be required, impacting tree canopy
- Significant excavation of critical dune hills will be required
- Substandard trail experience with exposure and close proximity to road traffic
- Costs increase greatly (Park's estimated cost only \$18,225 for trail along Traverse Lake Road)
- Impact on private residences with trail across front yards and impact on scenic beauty road



4. Construct trail within 100' from road's centerline

- Wetland boardwalking required along private property in ROW – unstable soils
- Extensive bridging over Shalda Creek required
- Major clearing through mature forest within view sight of Traverse Lake Road
- Removal of critical dune hills to meet grade requirements
- Construction costs very significant
- Impact on private residences with trail running across front yards



Traverse Lake Road options are not desirable!

Significant impact to forests, wetlands, protected critical dunes and residents

We can do better! We can create something better for the user!