

Final Report

Bath Charter Township
Master Planning Study for
Bicycle and Non-Motorized
Pathway Development

January 21, 2010



Bath Charter Township
14480 Webster Road
Bath, MI 48808



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bath Charter Township Master Planning project was initiated by Bath Charter Township (Township) in order to investigate and develop a bicycle and non-motorized pathway system linking various points of interest and destinations within the Bath Community and throughout the region. In a continuing effort to increase alternative forms of transportation and increase pedestrian safety, the Township has created a comprehensive Final Master Plan outlining phased implementation of an extensive sidewalk and non-motorized pathway network. This Final Master Plan was developed through a highly collaborative and systematic planning process. Through this process the Township identified a list of defined goals and objectives for this project, solicited public input to develop preliminary and conceptual plans, and further refined these plans to develop a Final Master Plan for the pathway system which would establish a means for future implementation.

Currently, the only trails that exist outside the road rights-of-way in the Township are located in Rose Lake Research Area on the eastern side of the Township. Sidewalks within the Township lack connectivity and exist mainly in residential developments. These conditions create safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists and cause many cyclists and hikers to travel outside the Township to find recreation opportunities.

This project began by determining the Township's goals and objectives, identifying specific points of interest and preferred links for the trail system, verifying key project stakeholders, and preparing an action plan for completing the process. The next phase of the planning process involved initiating contact with relevant regulatory agencies and gathering all of the necessary data relative to existing conditions present in the Township to create a constraints analysis. This constraints analysis provided the information needed to determine the most suitable areas for bicycle and non-motorized pathway development. This information was then presented at the first public meeting and workshop where participants identified and discussed preferred trail locations based on their knowledge of the area.

Utilizing the information gathered from the constraints analysis and the public meeting, a Preliminary Master Plan was created to show a preliminary bicycle and non-motorized pathway network. This was again presented at a second public meeting for consent of the proposed network and to prioritize the pathway segments for future development. This, in turn, produced the Conceptual Master Plan and provided the necessary information to begin coordinating with regulatory agencies such as the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Clinton County Road Commission. The three meetings with these agencies provided key information on the feasibility of this pathway network and options on how to get pedestrians and bicyclists across I-69, which bisects the Township. Finally, all of the data were assembled to produce the Final Master Plan along with recommended phasing, facility choices and estimates of probable construction cost presented by phase and pathway segment.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND

This project began as a response to the growing need within the community to provide non-motorized transportation alternatives and to the increased concern regarding the ability of children to walk safely to and from school. The Township identified and addressed the opportunities and constraints associated with existing features, and through a systematic planning process, developed a feasible Master Plan for the construction of a comprehensive network of trails and sidewalks to provide pedestrian and non-motorized access throughout the Township and a link to surrounding communities.

The following information summarizes the conditions and features within the Township, a detailed account of the planning process, and a comprehensive, phased implementation of a Final Master Plan. All analysis maps and preliminary and final plans are presented in the appendices at the end of this report.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The primary focus of this effort was to identify and plan for bicycle and non-motorized pathway developments throughout the Township to provide regional connectivity and linkages to various points of interest and destinations within the Bath Community. The Township wished to develop a Final Master Plan for the pathway system in order to establish a rationale plan for future implementation, as well as to position the Township for future funding opportunities.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Provide universal access to the Township’s natural resources and recreational facilities, programs and services, residential neighborhoods, schools, commercial areas, as well as regional connectivity to Meridian Township and East Lansing trail systems.
- Develop a comprehensive, phased implementation plan which considers the needs and abilities of people of all ages.
- Develop creative “outside the box”, cost-effective solutions to meet the needs of multiple user groups, balanced against existing natural and/or man-made opportunities and constraints.
- Develop solutions that are environmentally compatible and sustainable and enhance the natural resources and points of interest within the Township.
- Implement planning and design through a proactive public involvement and regulatory agency coordination process.
- Prepare an action plan for implementing the project.
- Document the planning process in a Master Plan Report

CRITERIA: (items for investigation and incorporation)

- Americans with Disabilities Act Accessible Guidelines (ADAAG) universal accessibility guidelines/requirements are to be incorporated as fully as practical.

- Coordination with government and local agencies such as the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Historical Center, Michigan Department of Transportation, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Clinton County Road Commission, Clinton County Drain Commission, Meridian Township Parks, City of East Lansing Parks, Recreation and Arts, DeWitt Township/DARA, State of Michigan Historian, and Bath Community Schools.
- Utilize the Township's 2008-2012 Master Recreation Plan as a reference during design.
- Public information meetings/workshops will be implemented at the discretion of the Township to solicit coordination between the Township, pertinent agencies, special interest groups, potential user groups, and the public.
- Community consensus
- Existing infrastructure and proposed land use
- Maintenance issues

TRAIL CHARACTERISTICS AND OPTIONS

In order to meet the growing demand for non-motorized transportation routes within the township, many different facility types must be considered in order to provide the most effective solution. Many opportunities exist which could be applied in the Township to improve the safety and efficiency of non-motorized travel. Selection of the most appropriate non-motorized transportation facility is dependent upon multiple factors including corridor conditions, available space, universal accessibility, and cost of the proposed infrastructure. Below are examples of the most viable non-motorized facilities for implementation within the Township.

Shared Use Path

Generally, these facilities are constructed to ADA standards outside of the road right-of-way and accommodate all forms of non-motorized travel. If the path must run parallel to a roadway or within the right-of-way, federal guidelines (AASHTO) recommend at least 5' between the path and road or a barrier to protect path users from automobile traffic. The most general users of the shared used path include bicyclists, pedestrians, joggers, dog walkers, inline skaters, skateboarders, and wheelchair users. The width of the pathway varies and can be anywhere from 6' in width on up. The width is usually controlled by the governing funding source such as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), which requires a width of 6' or greater; MDOT, which requires a width of at least 12'; or federal standards (AASHTO) which recommend a width of at least 10'. The allure of shared used paths is that they offer transportation and recreation opportunities not provided by the road system. These paths are most commonly implemented along rivers, lakes, railroad rights-of-way, utility corridors, within or between parks, and through natural areas.

- There are two types of shared used paths that exist:

Improved- These facilities are usually constructed from a concrete or asphalt surface with opportunities for boardwalks in sensitive areas. Maintenance requirements for this alternative



include periodic inspection for pavement wear and/or deterioration, crack sealing, patching, and seal coating. The expected life cycle of asphalt surfaces is approximately 10 to 15 years and 20 to 25 years for concrete surfaces. Seasonal maintenance, including snow removal may be necessary depending on the path way locating and linkage.

Unimproved- These paths must be constructed from a crushed stone base or another highly compactable surface to maintain ADA accessibility. However, they can also include dirt paths, wood chip paths and other unimproved paths for more experienced bicyclists and hikers. Unimproved shared use paths work best in natural areas or in areas of very infrequent use. Periodic maintenance includes monitoring for the surface for washouts, rutting, thinning of the material, and clearing of natural debris, which could be a detriment to mobility.



Sidewalk

Sidewalks are usually a minimum of 5’ wide for ADA accessibility and constructed of concrete. They generally occur adjacent to roadways within the existing right-of-way. These facilities are most commonly reserved for pedestrian travel, including walkers, joggers, inline skaters, wheelchairs users, and dog



walkers. Sidewalks are generally not designed for width and speeds required for bicycle use especially in residential areas. Therefore, it is not recommended that bicycles be allowed on sidewalks due to the safety conflicts that occur with pedestrians, unless the walk has been appropriately designed. The only exception would be low speed, residential bicyclists, such as children. Sidewalk maintenance can include snow removal in the winter months, crack sealing, patching, and periodic inspection for uneven concrete due to settling, frost damage or tree roots.

Bicycle Lane

Dedicated bicycle lanes are established through pavement markings and signage within the road corridor. It is most common for this facility to appear on roads with curb and gutter. In the absence of curb and gutter, the implementation of a paved shoulder is just as effective. The addition of bicycle lanes when there is already existing infrastructure can be accomplished through narrowing vehicular lanes, removing on-street parking or most commonly, by converting a four lane road to a three lane road.



These lanes provide many advantages for both bicyclists and motorists:

- Provide adequate and delineated space for bicycle

travel

- Increase safety by serving as a constant reminder to motorists of the possible presence of bicyclists
- Provide space for bicyclists when there is not enough space on the road for comfortable travel
- Help to reduce driver speeds and calm traffic

There are also disadvantages to using bicycle lanes. Mainly, these lanes will require constant upkeep to provide an adequate travel surface for bicyclists. Bicycles cannot handle debris and pot holes the way automobiles can; therefore, debris removal and surface repair are very important maintenance concerns.

Paved Shoulder

When using paved shoulders, they should run in both directions to allow bicycles to travel with the flow of traffic. AASHTO recommends that a paved shoulder should be a minimum of four feet in width. However, if it is not possible to pave four feet, any additional width is better than having none at all. AASHTO also recommends that when vehicle speeds exceed 50 miles per hour, a wider shoulder should be used. As with bicycle lanes, maintenance includes periodic inspection of the pavement surface is necessary, in order to maintain a smooth rideable surface free of debris and hazards.

Shared Roadway

The least costly of all the options is simply through the use of a shared roadway. In the state of Michigan, it is legal for bicyclists to use all streets with the exception of roads where cycling is specifically prohibited. As it stands today, most roads in the Township are currently used for travel without any additional accommodations. However, it is also possible to increase driver awareness of potential cyclists by providing a signed bicycle route.

Signed Bicycle Route- When signing a designated bicycle route, it lets the bicyclist know that there is a specific reason why this route may be preferred over alternative routes. Some of the reasons to sign a route include:

- Provide continuity to other bicycle facilities
- Designate a preferred route through high demand corridors
- Direct bicyclists to the most suitable routes
- Alert traffic to the presence of bicycles
- Route leads to common attractions or points of interest for bicyclists (parks, commercial areas, schools, restrooms, etc.)

Signed bicycle routes usually occur along roads with low traffic volumes and include roads that limit vehicular conflicts such as stop signs and multiple driveways. However, major intersections are safer than stop signs, because bicyclists are more likely to obey the rules of the road in these instances and therefore, can be safer than routes with lower traffic volumes. It is also advantageous along bicycle routes to include directional signage to common bicyclist destinations.



Safety Concerns

Due to the predominantly rural nature of the Township, safety can be a major concern, especially for pedestrians and cyclists traveling along the roadway. According the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning, there has been an average of roughly 238 automobile accidents per year between the years of 2004 and 2007 within the Township (Appendix A shows the locations of all accidents within the Township in 2007). Over the 4 year period, 2 accidents have involved bicyclist along Clark Road and Chandler Road, and 6 have involved pedestrians along Clark Road, Webster Road, I-69, and Old M-78. When used effectively, these facility types can help direct non-motorized traffic away from roads prone to accidents and greatly increase the safety of both pedestrians and bicyclists.

CHAPTER 2
EXISTING CONDITIONS

The initial step in any study process is to first gather relevant existing site information. This site information is then used as a basis for comparison to any alternative action for the given site. The Township, along with Tri-County Regional Planning and C2AE provided the necessary GIS files for developing the base plans demonstrating existing conditions needed for the development of the Master Plans. C2AE also performed a cursory site analysis, which included the identification and documentation, in written form, of the opportunities and constraints associated with the site. The site analysis consisted of visual observations and photo documentation, as well as physical verification of various elements. The following information was noted:

Location

Bath Charter Township is located in Township 5 North, Range 1 West in the southeast corner of Clinton County and is bounded by Shiawassee County to the East, Ingham County to the South, Chandler Road to the West and a line running through Cutler Road to the North. The Township is 23,351 acres in total area and is located approximately 15 miles northeast of the city of Lansing and 10 miles north of East Lansing and Michigan State University.

Topography and Drainage

The topography of the Township is characterized primarily by lowlands, and the elevations range from roughly 800 feet above sea level to about 920 feet above sea level. The northern half of the Township contains the lowest areas in the Township and is dominated by wetlands, lakes and streams. The southern half also possesses its share of lakes and wetlands, but resides at higher elevations. All but the southernmost areas of Bath Charter Township are drained into the Looking Glass River. A tiny portion in the south drains into the Red Cedar River. Lakes dot the area around the I-69 corridor, the largest of which being Park Lake. The Looking Glass River runs just to the north of the Township, Vermillion Creek runs along the east edge and Mud Creek through the central portion of the Township. There are also many drains that run through the Township including a few county drains. It appears as though the majority of the northern quarter of the Township is included in the floodplain for the Looking Glass River; however, no FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map for the Township was available.

Soils

A wide range of soils exists within Bath Charter Township according to the USDA Soil Survey for Clinton County. The largest areas of muck soils occur in the southwestern and northeastern corners of the Township. They also exist in small areas scattered throughout the Township in lesser concentrations, especially where lakes and wetlands exist. Sandy loams occur in areas of upland; however, large contiguous areas of soils suitable for building are hard to come by.

Vegetation

With the exception of lands south of the I-69 corridor and the western middle third of the Township just north of I-69, the Township is predominantly rural lands consisting of agricultural fields, wooded areas and wetlands.

Existing Points of Interest

In order to create a usable network of sidewalks and pathways throughout the Township, points of interest and other destinations were identified that would create the most use along the routes. These points of interest included not only destinations for the user, but also areas that would be starting points as well as regional attractions outside of the Township that could be destinations for non-motorized travel. All of the major points of special interest which exist within the Township have been identified graphically in Appendix F.

Parks and Natural Areas

- Park Lake
- Robson Fletcher Park
- Soccer Park
- Wiswasser Park
- Rose Lake Research Area
- Bengal Wildlife Center

Housing Developments

- Somerset Park
- Hunters Crossing
- The Pines
- Hawk Hollow
- The Meadows
- Park Lake Developments
- Nelson's Subdivision
- Whitehills

Other

- Bath Community School
- Hawk Hollow Golf Course
- Timber Ridge Golf Club

-
- Bath Business District

Regional Attractions

- Granger Meadows
- Sleepy Hollow State Park
- East Lansing Trail System (Northern Tier Trail)
- Meridian Township Trail System
- Peacock Road Tree Farms
- Lake Lansing
- Abbott Road Park

CHAPTER 3
PROCESS AND FINDINGS

MASTER PLAN PROCESS

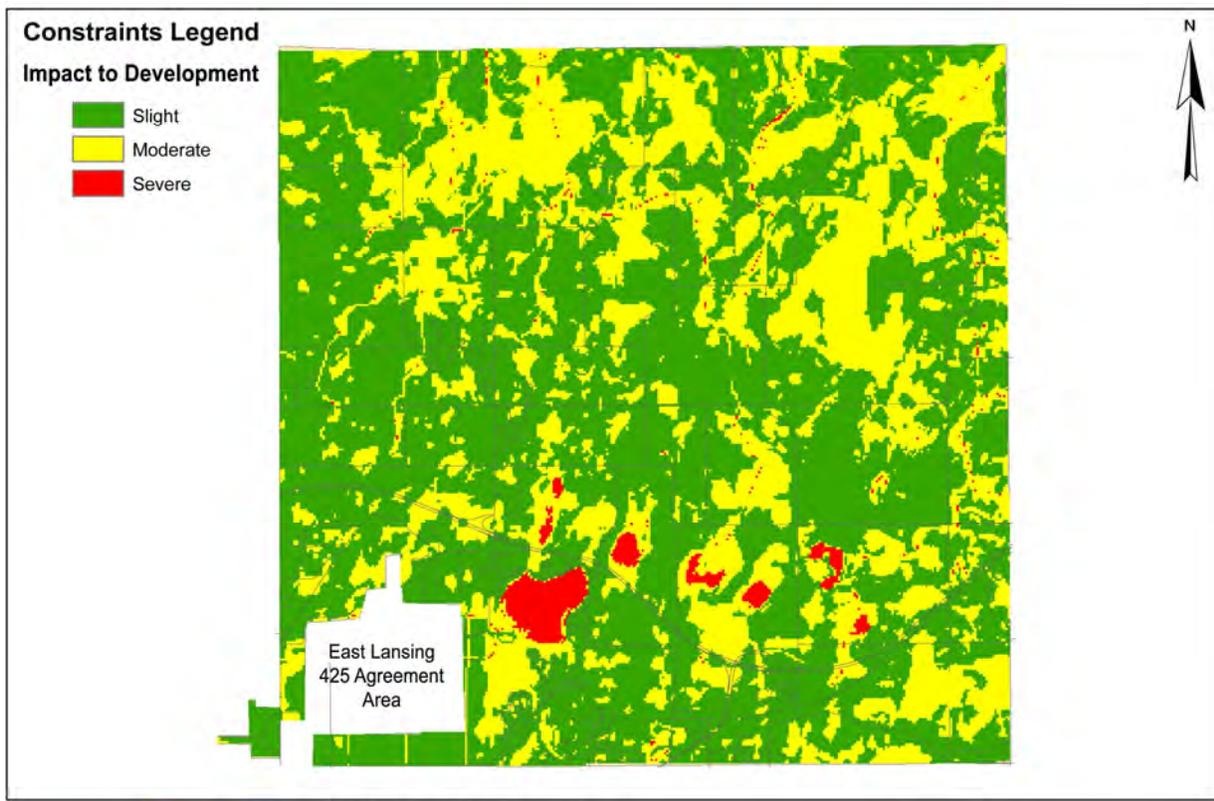
- Identify specific points of interest and preferred links for the trail system
- Conduct site analysis including site visits
- Develop constraints analysis
- Hold public workshop for public input
- Develop Conceptual Master Plan
- Refine Conceptual Master Plan
- Develop Preliminary Master Plan
- Refine Preliminary Master Plan through public input
- Develop and summarize Final Master Plan and Final Report

SITE AND CONSTRAINTS ANALYSES

Through the use of existing GIS data acquired through the Township and Tri-County Regional Planning, a base map was created for use during the development of the conceptual plans and the Final Master Plan. GIS data, along with aerials and information acquired through site visits were compiled and analyzed to create a complete constraints analysis to establish the effects of existing conditions, both man-made and natural, on possible bicycle and non-motorized pathway locations. The existing conditions examined most in depth included:

- Wetlands, Lakes and Rivers
- Soils
- Slope
- Housing Developments
- Existing Parks and Schools
- Existing Roadway Networks
- Outstanding Natural Features
- Existing Non-Motorized Trail and Sidewalk Networks
- Traffic Volumes and Accident Data
- Points of Visual Interest and Destinations

This information was assembled in GIS and ranked based on the level of impact each constraint would pose on future bicycle and non-motorized pathway development. After each constraint was ranked and mapped separately (refer to Appendix A), GIS software was used to create a composite constraints analysis showing the areas where the sum of the existing constraints would result in severe, moderate or slight impact on the development of future sidewalk and pathway improvements.



Bath Charter Township

Bicycle & Non-Motorized
Pathway Development
Bath, MI

Constraints Map
Final Suitability

10.01.2008
Not to Scale

1.800.454.3923
LANSING OFFICE
725 Prudden Street, Lansing, MI 48906
GAYLORD OFFICE
123 West Main Street, Ste. 200, Gaylord, MI 49734
GRAND RAPIDS OFFICE
648 Monroe Ave. NW, Ste. 210, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

PUBLIC MEETING #1

After the constraints analysis was complete, a public meeting and workshop was held at the township hall on October 28, 2008 in two sessions. These sessions informed the public on how the planning process would progress, what the goals and objectives were for this project, and introduced the information that had been gathered through the constraints analysis. These two sessions were conducted in an “open house forum” with no set agenda which allowed township residents and local agency representatives to discuss preferred locations for both non-motorized pathways and sidewalks through the Township for implementation in the near future and for long term consideration.

CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

The exceptional productivity of the public meeting produced a wealth of valuable information necessary for the creation of a comprehensive network of pathways. This information was then sorted through and added to the base map to create an initial concept plan. The resulting map included all of the existing sidewalks and non-motorized pathway networks along with a refined proposed trail network.

PUBLIC MEETING #2

After the creation of the Conceptual Master Plan, it was formally presented to the public on February 19, 2009 for review and input regarding the proposed locations of the routes, corridors that were of the highest priority and areas of special interest. During the presentation, each of the non-motorized facility alternatives were presented and discussed in detail for recommendations of each application throughout the proposed network. The general consensus of the group was to proceed with the identified primary corridors and to further evaluate the Park Lake area to identify additional non-motorized opportunities based on the existing constraints around the lake.

PRELIMINARY MASTER PLAN

The corridors were prioritized based on the feedback received at public meeting #2 to create the Preliminary Master Plan. This plan grouped the corridors into three groups based on whether the corridor was an immediate priority, a secondary priority or a corridor that would be developed sometime in the future. No adjustments to the routes were made based on the comments received. However, the Park Lake area was investigated in depth to provide possible pathway alternatives.

MEETINGS WITH CLINTON COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION AND MDOT

In lieu of a final public meeting, it was decided that it would be more beneficial to discuss the Master Plan directly with regulatory agencies. Three meetings were held, two with the Clinton County Road Commission and one with MDOT to determine the feasibility of the Master Plan and possible options for construction. Both MDOT and the Road Commission concurred that the plan appeared to be feasible and requested that they be kept informed on the construction priorities of the pathway network. Some of the major concerns addressed in these meetings included the conditions surrounding Park Lake, getting pedestrians and bicyclists across I-69, and options for the immediate construction of the Webster Road corridor. The Clinton County Road Commission was able to help develop an implementation plan for the first phase of the Webster Road Corridor from Park Lake Road to Somerset Drive, and MDOT was able to provide information regarding the current condition of all the traffic bridges crossing I-69 within the Township and the available space on each for non-motorized lanes. MDOT will most likely only be involved when an actual structure will need to be placed on one of their bridges.

CHAPTER 4
FINAL MASTER PLAN

SUMMARY OF FINAL MASTER PLAN

Following discussions with the Road Commission and MDOT, each proposed pathway segment was then evaluated based on availability of space for improvements, potential for use, destinations, safety, and cost. The resulting information was compiled into the Final Master Plan. This plan was broken into three separate plans by phasing, all shown in Appendix C, to illustrate which facility would be implemented in each phase. The type of facility used may differ from what was recommended based on more detailed site analysis through surveying and preliminary engineering. A few select corridors were analyzed in further detail to provide a mix of various alternatives based on site constraints and possible funding limitations.

Webster Road

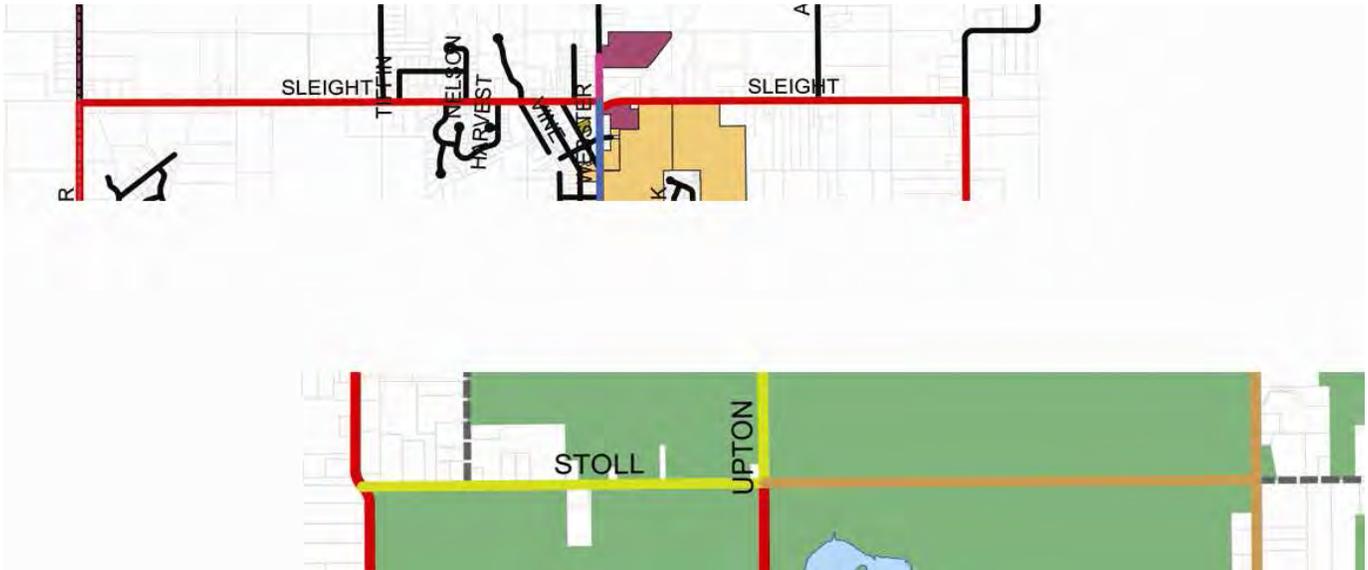
Webster Road provides the most direct north/south access to the downtown area. Based on the high potential for shared use through this corridor, many non-motorized facilities were used to accommodate users. Starting at the southern end of the road, a shared roadway was implemented. This area will not have a high potential for use and therefore, will not receive improvements. Where Webster Road connects to Township owned property along Park Lake, this would be a great opportunity to add an improved shared use path. This path could connect to additional shared used paths through this property and to Park Lake. It also provides an excellent location for a future trail head, providing access to the north and south around the lake, and also the potential for access to the west if State Road is extended.

Further to the north along Webster Road, a signed bicycle route is proposed up to Park Lake Road. Once Webster Road intersects Park Lake Road, there is a much higher potential for pedestrians to use this corridor and so a sidewalk is proposed on the east side of the road. A major concern with Webster Road is getting pedestrians and cyclists across the expressway. In order to accommodate this, the wide shoulders along the Webster Road bridge will be striped for shared use before returning to a sidewalk on the east side of the road until Clark Road. Once Webster crosses into the downtown area, sidewalks will be implemented along both sides of the road from Clark to Sleight. A small piece of sidewalk will also be added on the east side of Webster Road to connect with Township owned property for future development.



Sleight Road/Stoll Road

Based on the high traffic speeds and frequency of accidents along Clark Road, Sleight Road and Stoll Road were chosen as a safer option for an east to west connection across the Township. The facilities used along these roads vary based on projected use. Sleight Road will be used more heavily due to its proximity to the downtown area and therefore, will be upgraded to paved shoulders and a signed bicycle route. Stoll Road will primarily be used by cyclists between Upton Road and Center Road.



Legend

Proposed Bath Twp Pathways

- Paved Shoulders
- Paved Shoulders/Signed Bicycle Route
- Shared Roadway
- Shared Use Path - 12' HMA
- Shared Use Path - 6' HMA
- Shared Use Pavement Markings
- Sidewalk - 1 Side
- Sidewalk - 2 Sides
- Signed Bicycle Route

This section will become a signed bicycle route. Stoll Road from Upton Road to Peacock Road will remain a shared roadway with no improvements due to the lower amount of traffic and the potential for use mostly by more experienced cyclists.

State Road (East Lansing Connection)

The connection to East Lansing's Northern Tier Trail will require a joint effort between Bath and DeWitt Townships. Currently, the Northern Tier Trail intersects and old railroad right-of-way that can become an improved shared used up to Chandler Road and then across to connect with Hawk Hollow and the possible future extension of State Road. This railroad right-of-way also extends to the southwest into DeWitt Township as one of the only ways to cross under US-127.



Center Road/Marsh Road (Meridian Township Connection)

To connect with the existing sidewalk along Marsh Road in Meridian Township, the walk on the east side of Marsh Road will be extended to Saginaw Highway. It is likely that pedestrians will not be walking much farther north of Saginaw Highway; therefore, Center Road will utilize paved shoulders and a signed bicycle route all the way to Sleight.



Park Lake

The Park Lake area provides many challenges for pedestrians and cyclists alike. Limited space along the roadside, tight curves and vehicles traveling at high speeds pose significant safety concerns. To address the issue of limited space, it would be best to encourage pedestrians and cyclists to travel along the north, west and, south sides of the lake. The north side of the lake has many issues with the amount of available space for improvements. Clinton



County Road Commission maintains that there is a 66' right-of-way along this road; however, a sidewalk may need

to be provided on one side of the road only with a few crossings from one side to the other to traverse this stretch of

the road. There is also the option of using a possible improved shared used path near the center of the lake in a possible abandoned right-of-way. Due to the space constraints, an alternative to navigating the north side of the lake may be to provide an improved shared use path along the back side of the right-of-way for I-69.

Along the south side of the lake, Township owned property can provide space necessary for the majority of the proposed improved shared use path. The remainder of the connection back to Park Lake Road, however, would be along private property and would require an easement.

CONCLUSION

The completion of this Master Plan establishes a basis to move forward in a phased approach to implement a network of non-motorized pathways throughout the Township and to link Bath Charter Township regionally. This document will provide the necessary information to proceed with funding opportunities and regulatory agency coordination. The next steps of the process include creating detailed refinement of primary routes for construction through preliminary engineering and applying for the funding necessary for construction.