

Kent County Adjacent Businesses and Residential Landowners' Attitudes Towards and Use of the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park in Michigan



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Executive Summary

The purpose of studying adjacent businesses and residents of the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park (hereafter WPT) was to evaluate the knowledge, usage, support, influence and opinions of the rail-trail by those who live and work next to the trail on a daily basis.

All adjacent business and resident owners of the WPT in Kent County were initially mailed a questionnaire on July 11, 2006. The list of businesses and residents was obtained from the county tax assessor's office in June 2006. Businesses were mailed a three-page questionnaire and residents a seven-page questionnaire. Businesses and residents also received a letter and business reply envelope with a survey. Reminder postcards, sent two weeks after the initial mailing, and a second mailing of the survey sent on August 7, 2006 were used to encourage participation of non-respondents. Forty-eight of the 92 businesses (52.2%) and 187 of the 288 residential landowners (64.9%) completed the questionnaire.

- The most common type of business found adjacent to the WPT was consumer services or retail (48%). Businesses employed up to 130 full-time employees and 20 part-time employees. Over two-thirds of the businesses state their building/structure was adjacent or right next to the trail. Businesses were an average of 50 yards away from the rail-trail and have been at their location for an average of 18 years.
- Resident homes/structures were on average 60 yards away from the rail-trail and were predominantly residential homes. On average residents have lived in their home for 13 years and most (55%) have a full view of the trail in the summer. Three out of five residents purchased their home before the trail was built and are adjacent or right next to the trail (96%). Most households have two adults (58%) but sixty-four percent have no children while thirty-six percent have one or more children. Of the respondents who gave pre-tax income information thirty-four percent earned \$60,000 or more while thirty-one percent earned less than \$60,000, even though fifty-five percent of respondents were employed full-time and fifty-three percent had some college or a college diploma.
- Businesses reported they were less informed about the design and construction of the rail-trail compared to residents. Twenty-four percent of businesses considered themselves fully or moderately informed compared to thirty percent of residents. There was more involvement in planning meetings for the WPT by residents compared to businesses. Businesses and residents were equally involved in the planning, development and maintenance of the rail-trail, as well as being current members of the Friends of the White Pine Trail group.

- Fifty-six percent of businesses and 51% of residents were supportive of the idea of the rail-trail before it was built. Slightly more than a third of businesses and adjacent residents were supportive during planning and construction, however businesses and residents were more likely to have a neutral opinion during planning. Today with the trail in operation for a decade, 67% of adjacent businesses and 76% of adjacent residents are in support of the trail with 9% of businesses opposed to the trail and 7% of the adjacent residents.
- Fifty-four percent of businesses had one or more employees who used the WPT before, during breaks or after work for walking, biking, running, snowmobiling or general recreation. Eighty-five percent of residential respondents indicated that at least one person in their household uses the White Pine Trail. Most respondents used the trail for exercise, fun and enjoyment, and to be outside. More than half of the households adjacent to the trail had at least one person using the rail-trail daily or weekly.
- Eight in ten adjacent businesses and residents believe the WPT has a positive influence on the community and Kent County as a whole, while only 2% of businesses and 1% of residents believe the trail has a negative influence on the community and Kent County.
- Forty-seven percent of businesses believe the trail is a positive influence on their employees and two-thirds of residents feel it is a positive influence on their household. Conversely, 2% of businesses believe the trail is a negative influence on their employees and 7% of residents believe the trail is a negative influence on their household.
- Sixty-nine percent of residents rated the removal of trash from containers was good or very good. Similarly, 75% indicated lack of litter along the trail and 70% indicated that the removal of trash from litter barrels was good or very good.
- Adjacent residents were less satisfied with other attributes. Less than half (45%) rated their sense of safety and security as good or very good and 50% rated their privacy as good or very good.
- The majority of residents (72%) stated that the WPT has increased recreation opportunities, 68% health and fitness, 68% their personal enjoyment and 65% their community pride.
- Major management challenges for the WPT due to a lack of operations funding are precipitated by the lack of revenue to Michigan State Parks from non-motorized trail users and the elimination of general fund appropriations by the legislature to Michigan State Parks.

Kent County Adjacent Businesses and Residential Landowners' Attitudes Towards and Use of the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park in Michigan

Purpose of Study

This study of adjacent businesses and residential landowners to the Kent County section of the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park (hereafter the WPT) is part of a larger, multi-year study examining the usage and benefits of rail-trails in Michigan.

In Act 451 of 1994 as amended Section 324.74126 it is stated that the *Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with the committee, the commission, and the Michigan natural resources trust fund board established in section 1905, shall develop criteria for naming state parks and other state owned recreational facilities. The state owned land containing the White Pine trail, which traverses an abandoned rail corridor between Comstock Park and Cadillac, shall be known as the "Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park" and the abandoned rail corridor that runs from White Lake drive, south of the city of Whitehall, to Lake Avenue in the city of North Muskegon. This trail shall be known as the "Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail".* The trail was renamed in honor of Fred Meijer by statute in recognition of a major financial donation by Mr. Meijer to pave major portions of the trail through matching monies available in a federal transportation grant. This was done after the field research for this report was completed, thus the survey and cover letter do not reflect this name change.

The purpose of studying adjacent businesses and residents of the WPT was to evaluate the knowledge, usage, support, influence and opinions of the rail-trail by residents who had relatively easy access to the trail. This study will help authorities better manage and design trails in the future so the interests of users and adjacent residents are incorporated in better trail management.

Description of the Kent County Sections of the White Pine Trail

The Kent County section of the 92-mile White Pine Trail (WPT) begins in the city of Comstock Park and passes through the county for 18.7 miles before entering Montcalm County (Figure 1). For the first 13 miles, the trail is paved (asphalt). It is open for non-motorized, non-horse use only. From Russell Road north to the Kent County line the trail is gravel and is open for additional uses including equestrian use and winter snowmobile use. Key trail access points with parking in Kent County include the Whitecap Stadium area in Comstock Park, Rouge River County Park (Kent County) in Belmont, downtown Rockford and the DNR maintained 12 Mile Road and the Russell Road parking areas. Considerable assistance with trail operations and improvements is provided by the Friends of the White Pine Trail.

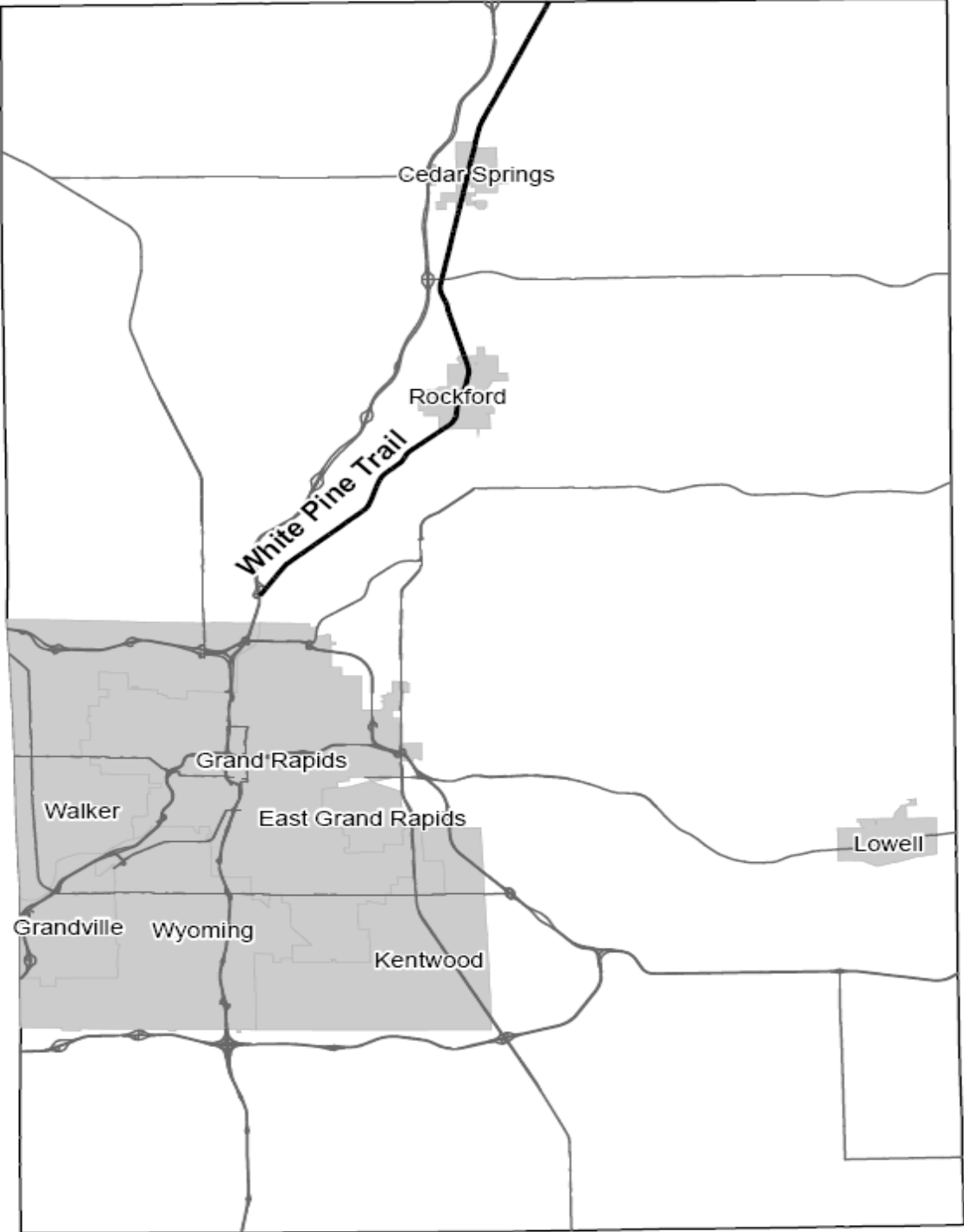


Figure 1.
Map of White Pine Trail

Procedures for Conducting the Study

Names and addresses of all adjacent ownerships were acquired by reviewing plat maps and obtaining names and addresses from the Kent County tax assessor in June 2006. Adjacent was defined as land that is touching or is bisected by the White Pine Trail. Land was considered a business or a residence based on its tax code.

Two survey instruments were developed for the samples. The adjacent business survey was three pages and the adjacent resident survey was seven pages (Appendices 1 and 2). A cover letter and postage paid envelope was mailed along with the survey instrument (Appendix 3). The first mailing was July 11, 2006. A follow-up reminder postcard was mailed on July 25, 2006. Two weeks after the postcard mailing, a second survey mailing was sent on August 11, 2006 to all those who had not yet responded. Of the 102 businesses that were mailed a survey, ten were returned as undeliverable and 47 returned a completed survey resulting in a 51% response rate (Table 1). Of the 302 resident names and addresses, 14 were returned as undeliverable and 187 (65%) returned a completed survey (Table 2).

Table 1: Response Rate for Adjacent Business Owners

Original Sample Size	Unreachable(a)	Adjusted Sample Size	Returned	Overall Response Rate
102	10	92	47	51.1%

(a) Includes bad addresses

Table 2: Response Rate for Adjacent Residents

Original Sample Size	Unreachable(a)	Adjusted Sample Size	Returned	Overall Response Rate
302	14	288	187	64.9%

(a) Includes bad addresses or deceased individuals

Results

The results are organized around six main themes. The first section is a description of business and resident respondents. The second and third sections describe their knowledge and use of the rail-trail. The fourth and fifth sections describe their support for the rail-trail and the estimated influence of the rail-trail on the community. The sixth section provides an overview of resident opinions about management and use of the rail-trail.

Description of Adjacent Businesses, Residents and their Location

Of the businesses that responded, almost half classified themselves as either consumer services or retail (Table 3). When asked as to whether they observe or serve rail-trail users, 44% reported doing so. The number of full-time employees ranged from 0-130 employees with a median of 5 employees. The number of part-time employees ranged from 0-20 employees with a median of 2 employees. For adjacent residents, over 90% classified their property as residential home site followed by undeveloped land (6.8%) (Table 4).

Table 3: Nature of Businesses along White Pine Trail

Type of Business:	Number (percent) (a)
Light industrial or warehouse	15 (32.6%)
Not-for-profit	2 (4.3)
Consumer services or retail	22 (47.8)
Other	9 (19.6)
Number of employees:	Range/Median
Full-time	Range: 0-130 Median: 5
Part-time	Range: 0-20 Median: 2

(a) Multiple answers allowed

Table 4: Adjacent Residents Self-Classification of Property Use

Type:	Percent (a)
Residential home	93.2%
Apartment or multi-family housing	2.3
Business operations	1.7
Agricultural use	4.0
Undeveloped land	6.8
Other (condo, light industrial, business, other)	3.4

(a) Multiple answers allowed

Nearly two-thirds of the businesses considered their building/structure adjacent to the trail followed by 24% that placed themselves near the trail (Table 5). Most residents (96%) considered their property as being adjacent or right next to the trail. Businesses and residents were also asked to estimate the distance from their main building or resident’s home to the rail-tail. For businesses, estimated distances ranged from 0-2,640 (or 1.5 miles) yards away with a median of 50 yards, while estimated distances for residents homes ranged from 0-1,760 (or one mile) yards with a median of 60 yards. The majority of residents (55%) have a partial view of the trail, 30% have a full view and 15% cannot see the trail from their home (Table 6). Two-thirds of residents with a full view of the trail responded that there was a loss of privacy while 51% of residents with a partial view declared that there was no change in privacy (Table 7).

Table 5: Location of Property and Distance from Main Building/House in Relation to White Pine Trail

Property is:	Businesses	Residents
Adjacent to trail	73.9%	96.0%
Trail intersects property	2.2	4.0
Near the trail	23.9	N/A
Total	100.0	100.0
Estimated distance:		
Range	0-2,640 yards	0-1,760 yards
Median	50.0 yards	60.0 yards

Table 6: Visual Presence of Trail for Adjacent Residents

Degree of trail view from house in the summer:	Percent
Full view of trail	29.7%
Partial view of trail	54.9
Can't see the trail at all	15.4
Total	100.0

Table 7: Comparison of Residents View of Trail vs. Loss of Privacy

View of Trail	Increase of Privacy	Decrease of Privacy	No Change	Not Sure
Not at all	3.8%	50.0%	46.2%	0.0%
Partial view of trail	2.3	39.1	51.7	6.9
Full view of trail	0.0	66.0	32.0	2.0

On average, adjacent businesses were at their current location for 21 years and adjacent residents for 17 years. Occupancy ranged from 1-100 years for businesses and less than one year to 75 years for residents (Table 8). For residents, 105 (60%) purchased their property before the rail-trail was built, while 70 (40%) purchased during/after the rail-trail was built (Table 9).

Of the business respondents who answered they purchased or occupied the property during or after the trail was built five (45.5%) said it had no influence, six (54.5%) said it was a positive influence and none (0.0%) said it was a negative influence. Positive influences included location awareness, more business/traffic, patients can watch, people like to live by the trail, and that it is a nature preserve. Of the residential respondents who answered that they purchased or occupied the property during or after the trail was built 35 (49%) said it had no influence and 34 (48%) said it had a positive influence and two (3%) said it was a negative influence. Positive influences included easy access, nature, good for families, community and kids, fitness/ exercise, paved and snowmobiles were not allowed.

Table 8: Years Occupied Property

	Businesses	Residents
Range	1-100 years	Less than one year-75 years
Mean	21.11	17.00
Median	18.00	13.00

Table 9: Property Purchased or Occupied Before or During/After Trail was Built

	Business Number (percent)	Resident Number (percent)
During/After	11 (25.6%)	70 (40.0%)
Before	32 (74.4)	105 (60.0)
Total	100.0	100.0

Adjacent residents were also asked to describe themselves and their household in a series of demographic questions. Slightly more men (50%) completed the survey than women (49%) (Table 10). The average age of adults in respondents household was 51.3 years old, while children under 18 years old averaged 9.9 years old. Most households included two adults (58%). Slightly less than two-thirds (64%) had no children, while 36% had one or more children (Table 11).

Table 10: Gender of Adjacent Residents

	Number (percent)
Male	91 (50.3%)
Female	90 (49.7)
Total	181 (100.0)

Table 11: Number of Adults and Children in Households of Adjacent Residents

Adults in household		Children in household (under 18)	
Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1	22.9%	0	63.6%
2	58.2	1	16.6
3	10.6	2	12.8
4 or more	8.3	3 or more	7.0
Total	100.0		100.0

Most residents were either employed full-time (55%) or retired (21%) (Table 12). Fifty-five percent of the residents had lived in Kent County for 1-40 years, while 31% lived in the county for over fifty years (Table 13). Of the 65% of respondents that provided income data, 34% earned \$60,000 or more in household income before taxes, while 31% earned less than \$60,000 in household income before taxes (Table 14). Residents were asked about the level of education they completed ranging from 8th grade to graduate school. Fifty-three percent of the respondents had at least some college or a college diploma, 29% had a high school diploma and 16% went to graduate school, while only 2% had less than a high school diploma (Table 15). In summary, adjacent residents tended to have a higher level of education and higher level of income than Kent County residents as a whole.

Table 12: Employment Status of Adjacent Residents

Employment status:	Percent
Employed, full-time	55.0%
Retired	21.1
Unemployed	3.3
Student	1.1
Employed, part-time	5.6
Self-employed	6.7
Homemaker	6.1
Other	1.1
Total	100.0

Table 13: Length of Residency in Kent County of Adjacent Residents

Range in years	Percent
1-10	9.3%
11-20	14.3
21-30	13.7
31-40	17.6
41-50	14.3
51-60	18.1
61-70	8.2
71-80	2.7
81-90	1.6
Total	100.0

Table 14: 2005 Pre-tax Household Income of Adjacent Residents

Income Range	Percent
Less than \$60,000	31.4%
\$60,000 or more	33.5
Choose not to answer	35.1
Total	100.0

Table 15: Highest Level of Education for Adjacent Residents

Level of Education	Percent
Less than High School diploma (8-11)	2.3%
High School diploma (12)	28.8
College diploma or some college (13-16)	52.6
Graduate school (17+)	16.3
Total	100.0

Adjacent residents were asked why they recreate outdoors to better understand how they might use and appreciate the rail-trail. The top five reasons with mean scores between moderately and very important were to enjoy nature, be outside, promote health, fun and enjoyment and to relax (Table 16). Reasons that were less important on average were to explore areas of county, train for sports and for cultural study and education.

Table 16: Reasons for Adjacent Residents to Recreate Outdoors

Members of household recreate to:	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important	Mean score (a)
Enjoy nature	2.3%	2.9%	16.7%	45.4%	32.8%	4.0
Be outside	4.0	2.3	19.7	42.2	31.8	3.9
Promote health	4.0	6.9	19.0	37.4	32.8	3.9
Fun and enjoyment	5.2	4.1	15.1	44.2	31.4	3.9
Relax	2.9	6.4	20.5	43.3	26.9	3.8
Exercise	5.7	4.6	28.2	32.2	29.3	3.7
Spend free time	7.7	10.7	24.3	41.4	16.0	3.5
Be with others	10.6	14.7	30.6	34.1	10.0	3.2
Be alone	15.8	12.3	31.6	26.9	13.5	3.1
Explore areas of county	20.5	17.0	32.2	15.2	15.2	2.9
Train for sports	38.8	17.6	21.2	14.1	8.2	2.4
Cultural study and education	36.7	25.4	24.3	8.3	5.3	2.2

(a) Rating scale where “1” equals not at all important and “5” equals extremely important
 Bolded=Most frequently selected rating for each reason

Knowledge and Involvement in the Development of the WPT

Around fifty percent of businesses and adjacent residents felt at the time of design and construction of the rail-trail they were informed (Table 17). Whereas 30% of residents indicated they were either fully or moderately informed about the design and construction of the rail-trail, 24% of the businesses indicated they were fully or moderately informed. Of the businesses that responded, six (13%) had a representative of the company attend at least one planning meeting for the WPT. Of the residents, 15 (9%) indicated they or a member of their household had attended at least one of the planning meetings (Table 18).

Both groups were asked about their involvement in the planning, development or maintenance of the rail-trail. Four (9%) businesses indicated they were actively involved, while 15 (9%) residents were involved at some point (Table 20). Respondents were also asked if they were members of the Friends of the White Pine Trail at some point since its creation. Eleven percent of businesses and 12% of residents were current members of the Friends of the White Pine Trail (Table 19).

Table 17: Informed about Design and Construction of WPT

	Businesses	Residents
Fully informed	7.1%	6.6%
Moderately informed	16.7	23.4
Minimally informed	31.0	28.7
Not at all informed	45.2	41.3
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 18: Attendance at Planning Meetings for the White Pine Trail

	Business Number (percent)	Resident Number (percent)
No	34 (73.9%)	149 (84.2%)
Yes	6 (13.0)	15 (8.5)
Not sure	3 (6.5)	3 (1.7)
Not here during that time	3 (6.5)	10 (3.3)
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 19: Membership in Friends of the White Pine Trail

Membership	Businesses	Residents
Current	11.1%	11.5%
No longer	0.0	2.3
Never	88.9	86.2
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 20: Involvement in Planning, Development or Maintenance of Trail

	Business Number (percent)	Resident Number (percent)
No	41 (91.1%)	160 (91.4%)
Yes	4 (8.9)	15 (8.6)
Total	100.0	100.0

Usage of WPT

Most (54%) businesses had one or more employees who used the trail (Table 21). Of those who used the trail, a higher proportion of businesses had employees use the trail after work (81%) than before work (27%) or during breaks (46%). Before work respondents biked and walked, during work respondents walk, bike, run and snowmobile and after work respondents bike, snowmobile, walk, rollerblade, run, walk dogs and use the trail for general recreation.

Adjacent residents were asked if they or a member of the household use the WPT. Eighty-five percent of the respondents reported that a member of their household have used the trail one or more times in the past year (Table 22). Of those households using the trail, the primary motivation was for exercise (50%), fun and enjoyment (13%) and being outside (8%). No other motivation accounted for more than 5% of trail use (Table 23).

Of those respondents who used the WPT more than half reported using the rail-trail weekly or daily (Table 24). A spouse or another adult typically used the rail-trail weekly (41%). When asked about whether they have used another rail-trail besides the WPT, 12 % of the respondents reported doing so. Other trails included: Flat River Trail, Hart Montague, Kent Trails, Lake Shore Trail, Muskatawa, Pere Marquette, Revana, Portland, Rockford, Upper Peninsula Trails and ORV Trails.

Table 21: Timing of Trail Use by Employees at Trail Using Businesses (a)

	Number (percent)
Before Work	7 (26.9%)
During Work	12 (46.2)
After Work	21 (80.7)

(a) Of the 48 respondent businesses, 26 (54.3%) had employees that used the trail

Table 22: Residential Use of the White Pine Trail

	Number (percent)
Yes	155 (84.7%)
No	28 (15.3)
Total	100.0

Table 23: Primary Motivation for White Pine Trail Use

Activity	Number (percent)
Exercise	75 (50.0%)
Fun and enjoyment	20 (13.3)
Be outside	12 (8.0)
Walk/walk dog	10 (6.7)
Bicycling	7 (4.7)
Relax	6 (4.0)
Enjoy nature	5 (3.3)
Promote health	3 (2.0)
Snowmobile	3 (2.0)
Train for sports	2 (1.3)
Be with others	1 (0.7)
Be alone	1 (0.7)
Spend free time	1 (0.7)
Easy access	1 (0.7)
Fishing access	1 (0.7)
Hiking	1 (0.7)
Ride Amigo	1 (0.7)
Total	100.0

Table 24: Annual Frequency of White Pine Trail Use by Adjacent Resident Households

	Number within household	Few times a year	Once a month	Couple times a month	Weekly	Daily	Total
Yourself	150	16.0%	4.7%	16.7%	46.0%	16.7%	100.0%
Spouse or another adult	130	22.3	6.2	20.0	40.8	10.8	100.0
Child (#1)	80	22.5	5.0	28.8	32.5	11.3	100.0
Child (#2)	50	24.0	4.0	34.0	30.0	8.0	100.0
Child (#3)	18	27.8	11.1	22.2	27.8	11.1	100.0
Child (#4)	7	28.6	14.3	14.3	42.9	0.0	100.0

Table 25: Use of other Rail-Trails by Adjacent Resident Households

	Number (percent)
No	151 (87.8)
Yes	21 (12.2)
Total	100.0

Support for the WPT

Both businesses and residents rated the rail-trail across various stages of the WPT's, from conception to current status. About half (51%) of the resident respondents and 55% of business respondents supported the idea of the trail before it was built, while about a third were neutral and 10% opposed the concept (Table 26). Both business and residential respondents were more likely to have a neutral opinion during the planning, design and construction process with around 10% in opposition and a third in favor. Support for the WPT increased when the trail was first completed with 55% of businesses and 59% of residents being in support while about 10% of the businesses and adjacent residents were opposed. Today, after a decade of operation, two-thirds of the businesses (67%) and three-quarters of the adjacent residents (76%) support the trail, while less than a quarter are neutral and still slightly less than 10% of each group oppose the trail. In summary, over the life of the trail, support has grown as those who were neutral grew into supporters while the 10% or so who opposed the trail from the start continue to oppose it.

Table 26: Support for the White Pine Trail by Adjacent Businesses and Residents

	Very opposed	Moderately opposed	Neutral	Moderately supportive	Very supportive	Mean (a)
Businesses:						
Trail today	4.4%	4.4%	24.4%	17.8%	48.9%	4.0
Idea of trail before it was built	4.4	6.7	33.3	15.6	40.0	3.8
Trail shortly after it was built	6.8	4.5	34.1	20.5	34.1	3.7
Trail planning and design process	4.5	0.0	59.1	13.6	22.7	3.5
Trail construction process	6.8	2.3	56.8	13.6	20.5	3.4
Residents:						
Trail today	4.2	3.0	16.4	20.0	56.4	4.2
Trail shortly after it was built	3.1	4.4	33.3	24.5	34.6	3.8
Idea of trail before it was built	3.7	5.5	39.6	20.1	31.1	3.7
Trail construction process	3.7	5.0	54.0	15.5	21.7	3.5
Trail planning and design process	3.1	3.7	57.4	17.3	18.5	3.4

(a) Rating scale where "1" equals very opposed and "5" equals very supportive

Perception about the Influence of the WPT

Businesses and residents considered influences of the rail-trail on several levels from one’s own life to the influence on Kent County. For businesses, 79% felt the rail-trail has a positive influence on their community and 77% on Kent County as a whole (Table 27). On all four levels, only 2% of businesses felt the trail had a negative influence. Residents rated the positive influence of the trail even greater as 82% felt the trail was positive for their community and 82% for Kent County as a whole. Residents and businesses also thought the rail-trail was a positive influence on neighborhood (69% and 81% respectively). Considering their individual and household situation, 66% of residents rated the trail as a positive influence in their own life and 66% for their household. Only 7% rated the trail as a negative influence on their life or their household.

Table 27: Influence of the White Pine Trail on Respondents, Community and Kent County.

Kent County Businesses:	Very negative influence	Moderate negative influence	Neutral	Moderate positive influence	Very positive influence	Mean (a)
Community	0.0%	2.1%	19.1%	25.5%	53.2%	4.3
Kent County	0.0	2.1	21.3	25.5	51.1	4.3
Neighborhood	0.0	2.1	21.3	34.0	42.6	4.2
Employees	0.0	2.2	51.1	24.4	22.2	3.7
Kent County Residents:						
Kent County	0.0%	1.2%	17.3%	36.4%	45.1%	4.3
Community	0.0	0.6	17.9	41.6	39.9	4.2
Neighborhood	1.7	2.3	25.6	43.6	26.7	3.9
Own life	2.8	4.5	26.1	37.5	29.0	3.9
Family or other household members’ lives	1.8	4.8	30.1	37.3	25.9	3.8

(a) Rating scale where “1” equals very negative influence and “5” equals very positive influence

Residents were asked an open-ended question to express how they thought the WPT has most affected the quality of their neighborhood (Table 28). Of the 187 respondents, 121 (65%) provided a response. Of those, 36% stated the trail had increased the health of the neighborhood through opportunity for exercise, 31% cited an improvement in aesthetics, beauty and safety, 18% stated the primary impact was negative while 10% said it had not affect at all.

Table 28: Affect of White Pine Trail on Neighborhood

	Number (percent)
Health/exercise	43 (35.5%)
Aesthetic/beauty/safety/positive	37 (30.6)
Negative/nuisance/unsafe	22 (18.2)
No affect	12 (9.9)
Social/neighborhood	7 (5.8)
Total	100.0

Adjacent businesses and residents were asked to assess the rail-trail’s influence on their property values and the speed at which it would sell. While the majority of businesses (76%) believed the rail-trail would make no difference in the speed at which it would sell, 20% believed it would sell faster and only 4% believed the trail would slow a sale (Table 29). In terms of value, 87% of businesses believed the trail would make no difference in the sales price of the business, while 9% felt the business would sell for more and 4% believed it would sell for less. While a slight majority of residents (56%) believed the trail would make no difference in the speed of property sale, 40% believed it would help their property sell faster and 4% that it would slow a sale. And while 71% of residents believed there would be no difference in the selling price of their property, 24% believed the trail would increase their property value and 5% believed it would decrease it.

Table 29: Influence of White Pine Trail on the Sale Value and Speed of Sale for Adjacent Properties

	Businesses	Residents
Speed at which property would sell		
Faster	19.6%	39.5%
Slower	4.3	4.5
No difference	76.1	56.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Amount at which property would sell		
More money	8.7%	24.1%
Less money	4.3	4.6
No difference	87.0	71.3
Total	100.0	100.0

A majority (52%) of businesses and two-thirds of residents that responded to the survey felt the rail-trail was better than an abandoned railroad right-of-way, while 11% of businesses and 13% of residents felt it was worse (Table 30). When asked to explain their rationale, businesses who felt the trail was better noted that it was well used, provided a valued recreation opportunity and it was clean and well maintained. Those business respondents who felt it was worse noted concerns about trash/litter, lost property and harassment from DNR. Those businesses with neutral responses included: no interaction with the trail and items stolen from property.

Resident explanations for why it was better included that it was clean and well maintained, that it was well used, provided safety to users, had easy access and promoted positive social interactions. Explanations for why it was moderately worse or much worse included concerns about trespassing, that the trail was busy and that they suffered a lack of privacy. Neutral responses included that they had no interaction with the trail, that they do not oppose it, that horses are not allowed and that they moved to the area after the trail was completed and had no knowledge of pre-trail conditions.

Overall, the majority of businesses (68%) and residents (77%) were very satisfied with having the WPT next to their facility or neighborhood (Table 31). Conversely, few were dissatisfied with 11% of businesses and 7% of residents reporting dissatisfaction.

Table 30: Comparison of White Pine Trail to Abandoned Railroad Right-of-Way

	Much worse	Moderately worse	Neutral	Moderately better	Much better	Mean (a)
Businesses	4.3%	6.5%	37.0%	4.3%	47.8%	3.8
Residents	4.0	8.6	20.6	20.6	46.3%	3.9

(a) Rating scale where “1” equals much worse and “5” equals much better

Table 31: Satisfaction with White Pine Trail Next to Facility or in Neighborhood

	Very dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Neutral	Moderately satisfied	Very satisfied	Mean (a)
Businesses	4.3%	6.4%	21.3%	23.4%	44.7%	3.9
Residents	3.9	3.4	15.6	26.3	50.8	4.2

(a) Rating scale where “1” equals very dissatisfied and “5” equals very satisfied

Opinions about the Management and Use of the WPT

Adjacent residents were asked to rate five management attributes of the rail-trail. The most frequent evaluation was “good” across all five attributes (Table 32). Removal of trash from containers had the highest percentage rating as 70% rated the situation good or very good. Overall maintenance and absence of litter along the trail had the next highest ratings with 69% and 65% respectively rated as good or very good. Residents rated their sense of security and privacy lower with 45% providing good/very good ratings for security and 52% for privacy. In terms of negative ratings, overall maintenance had only 7% of respondents rate it as poor or very. The highest proportion of negative ratings was found for privacy of trailside residents, with 19% rating privacy as poor or very poor.

Table 32: Adjacent Residents Rating of Selected Conditions of the White Pine Trail

	Very poor	Poor	OK	Good	Very good	Mean (a)
Overall maintenance	1.2%	5.4%	24.7%	47.6%	21.1%	3.8
Presence of litter along trail	3.7	6.8	24.1	43.2	22.2	3.7
Removal of trash from containers	1.4	2.0	27.0	49.3	20.3	3.6
Sense of safety and security for trailside residents	6.0	6.6	32.3	37.1	18.0	3.5
Privacy of trailside residents	7.2	11.4	29.9	38.9	12.6	3.4

(a) Rating scale where “1” equals very poor and “5” equals very good

Adjacent residents were also asked to evaluate how the WPT has influenced a variety of positive conditions from community pride and quality of life to negative conditions such as unlawful or depreciative behaviors (Table 33). An increase in the positive conditions was more likely to be reported than an increase in negative conditions by respondents as a whole. Two-thirds or more of the respondents noted an increase in recreation opportunities, health and fitness and personal enjoyment as a result of the trail. The major negatives noted by a quarter or more of the respondents were a decrease in privacy and increases in noise, trespassing, illegal motorized use on the trail and discourteous or rude trail users.

Respondents were asked whether or not they had experienced any specific conflicts related to the rail-trail and their property (Table 34). Seven-two percent did not report any specific conflicts, while 28% did. Trespassing was the most commonly reported conflict.

Table 33: Adjacent Residents Perceptions of Selected Conditions of the White Pine Trail

Quality of Life Aspects	Increase of	Decrease of	No change	Not sure
Recreation opportunities	72.0%	2.5%	22.4%	3.1%
Health and fitness	68.1	0.0	27.4	4.3
Personal enjoyment	67.9	2.5	27.8	1.9
Community pride	65.2	1.2	23.2	10.4
Preservation of open space/natural areas	59.5	4.9	26.4	9.2
Community revitalization	57.1	1.2	29.8	11.8
Non-motorized transportation within the county	54.7	1.3	30.2	13.8
Neighborhood enhancement	50.0	4.3	34.6	11.1
Positive social interactions	46.9	2.5	44.4	6.3
Nature and cultural education	35.4	1.3	50.0	13.3
Aesthetic value	32.5	4.4	49.4	13.8
Privacy	1.8	48.2	45.7	4.3
Depreciative Behaviors or Other Problems				
Noise	47.2%	2.5%	44.7%	5.6%
Trespassing	27.4	1.8	57.3	13.4
Illegal motor vehicle use on trail	27.3	10.6	42.9	19.3
Discourteous or rude users	25.8	6.7	55.2	12.3
Illegal parking	21.3	1.9	55.6	21.3
Unleashed and roaming pets	18.0	3.7	62.7	15.5
Loitering	17.3	5.6	59.9	17.3
Vandalism	13.3	2.4	63.6	20.6
Thefts	15.4	1.9	63.0	19.8
Damage to farm crops/livestock	6.0	0.7	54.3	39.1
Drainage problems	5.6	1.9	71.3	20.6
Actual liability suits	1.9	0.0	63.3	34.8

Table 34: Specific Trail-Related Problems with Property

	Number (percent)
No	130 (71.8%)
Yes	51 (28.2)
Total	100.0
Problem	Number (percent) of those with problems
Trespassing	21 (42.0%)
Break-ins	4 (8.0)
Maintenance/construction	3 (6.0)
Dogs off leash/feces/teased	3 (6.0)
Loss of property	2 (4.0)
Motor-vehicle use of trail	2 (4.0)
Hunters on trail	2 (4.0)
Fire crackers	1 (2.0)
Stolen items	1 (2.0)
Penalty for removing brush	1 (2.0)
Parking	1 (2.0)
People not stopping/yielding	1 (2.0)
Litter	1 (2.0)
Loitering	1 (2.0)
No realistic value	1 (2.0)
Trail intersects land	1 (2.0)
Put up fence	1 (2.0)
Gawking	1 (2.0)
Yelled at by Friends group for household trash on trail	1 (2.0)
Total	100.0

Conclusions and Implications

The White Pine Trail in Kent County Michigan adjoins the property of 302 residential owners (primarily residences) and 102 businesses. Adjacent residents and businesses are important stakeholders to trails from concept and planning, through construction and development into management and maintenance. The trail, its managers and those who use it become additional neighbors. The trail also may be seen as an asset or a detriment to the adjacent owner, the community and the county.

In the case of the WPT, adjacent businesses and residents were both supportive of the trail. This support clearly grew as the trail was constructed and people were able to use and benefit from it. Support for the initial trail concept went from slightly more than half of the businesses and adjacent residents to slightly more than a third of these groups during trail planning and construction to two-thirds of businesses and three-quarters of residents today with the trail in operation for a decade. It appears that the growth in support occurred in those who were neutral about the trail during concept, planning and construction. About one in ten adjacent businesses and residents started opposed to the trail and remains opposed to the trail today after a decade of operation.

This support is influenced by most businesses and residents viewing the trail as a resource. For businesses, 47% reported that their employees used the trail in the past year. Trail use provides opportunities to increase employee fitness and health. They also believe the impact of the trail on the ability to sell their business property and the price of their business property is either benign or positive. Finally, almost eight in ten reported the trail was a positive influence on Kent County, their community and the neighborhood where their business is located.

For residents, 85% of the respondents reported that one or more people in their household used the trail at least once in the past year. Key benefits of the presence of the trail include recreation, health and fitness, personal enjoyment and community identity and pride. Residents were also generally satisfied with overall maintenance of the trail and especially the lack of litter and removal of trash from containers along the trail. They also believe the impact of the trail on the ability to sell their home and the price of their home is either benign or positive. Finally slightly more than eight in ten believe the trail is a positive influence on Kent County and their community while two-thirds note the trail is a positive influence on their life and their neighborhood.

While many residents and businesses reported benefits generated by the trail, studies like this one also illuminate issues and concerns regarding the WPT and its use and management. Key among those issues and concerns voiced by a small minority of businesses are concerns about trash and litter and larceny to their property. Key concerns for residents include a reduced sense of privacy, concerns about safety and security and increased noise.

Meeting these concerns is challenging considering the current state of management of the WPT. For the trail manager, the Michigan DNR Parks and Recreation Division, there is no dedicated revenue source for non-motorized trail operation. This is in contrast to motorized

trail recreation where snowmobilers and off-road vehicle (ORV) riders purchase annual snowmobile trail permits and ORV licenses respectively to create a strong user pay system. The permit or license is attached to the appropriate vehicle. While this type of system would be functional for bicyclers and perhaps in-line skaters, it would be less so for walkers and runners. Currently, state parks receive 89% of operations funding from user fees (primarily camping fees and motor vehicle entry permits) and the other 11% from oil and gas royalties and lease payments from state owned lands. There has been no general fund appropriation from the legislature to Michigan state parks since 2003. Conversely, there is considerable funding is available for capital improvements at both the state and federal level that includes land acquisition, paving, bridge construction and access site development. Generating revenue from daily trail fees (similar to a daily state park motor vehicle permit) is challenging as the trail has literally hundreds of access points, making revenue collection challenging. However, an annual fee for a bicycle or a pair of in-line skates to be used signed, designated Michigan Trailways would be feasible.

Another potential funding alternative is illustrated at the county level. The McNitt Act (Public Act 51 of 1951) which provides for the allocation of state gasoline sales tax dollars to county road commissions among other functions, states in section 10k that:

“(2) Of the funds allocated from the Michigan transportation fund to the state trunk line fund and to the counties, cities, and villages, a reasonable amount, but not less than 1% of those funds shall be expended for construction or improvement of non-motorized transportation services and facilities.

(3) An improvement in a road, street, or highway which facilitates non-motorized transportation by the paving of unpaved road shoulders, widening of lanes, the addition or improvement of a sidewalk in a city or village, or any other appropriate measure shall be considered to be a qualified non-motorized facility for the purposes of this section.”

Were “any other appropriate measure” to include the maintenance of non-motorized transportation systems at both the local and state level, these state gasoline sales taxes targeted toward non-motorized transportation would be a reasonable revenue source to maintain trails.

Key operational efforts need to go into vegetative management to lessen trail related noise to adjacent property owners, reduce trespassing or the perception of trespassing and enhance the sense of privacy of adjacent owners. This can also be done in such a way as to enhance the aesthetic and natural resource value of the corridor. Additional law enforcement patrol by Michigan State Park rangers to complement the active Kent County Sheriff’s volunteer safety patrol would also be valuable.

Finally, it is especially noteworthy both nearby businesses and adjacent residents recognize the trail is a county and community asset, even more than an asset for their employees or their household. This awareness of public assets that may not provide a personal benefit, demonstrates a strong sense of community in Kent County. The adjacent residents and businesses particularly see the trail as a valuable site for daily or frequent exercise and recreation. Unlike a neighborhood park, a trail allows for longer walks and bike rides which can translate into greater physical activity and well-being. Strong evidence exists that the

trail is enjoyed by many household members from young children to seniors. The social interactions the trail brings, along with the opportunity to patronize local trailside businesses, are beneficial to trail users, the economy and the community.

In summary, the White Pine Trail is a State Park Trail with hundreds of neighbors, each important. It is vital to address concerns in a way that enhances the recreational experiences of trail users, while protecting the rights of neighbors. Improved vegetative screening, better maintenance, rapid response to complaints concerning illegal activity such as motorized use and trespassing, positive education and reinforcement of appropriate trail use and trail etiquette can continue to improve neighbor support for this highly regarded trail. Disregarding these now relatively small concerns can allow them to grow into significant problems, threatening the substantial support and goodwill of neighbors. The stewardship efforts of the Friends of the White Pine Trail and Kent County Parks department enhance the quality of the trail experience from both the user and nearby residents.

Appendices

A. Mail questionnaire – adjacent businesses

**Survey of Kent County Businesses and Organizations
Located Near the White Pine Trail**

***Sponsored by Michigan State University, Michigan Agriculture
Experiment Station and Michigan Dept. of Transportation***

Instructions

Thank you for agreeing to complete this survey about your business or organization that is located near the White Pine Trail. Your responses are very important to Kent County and will also help other communities. Please read each question carefully before responding. Answer to the best of your ability and save any additional comments for the end.

The first set of questions asks about your business or organization.

1. How would you classify your business, organization, or operation that is next to the White Pine Trail?
(please all that apply)

LIGHT INDUSTRIAL OR WAREHOUSE	NOT-FOR-PROFIT
CONSUMER SERVICES OR RETAIL	SOMETHING ELSE (PLEASE DESCRIBE) _____

2. How long has your business or organization been at its current location (i.e., near the White Pine Trail)?
(fill in number of years)
 _____ NUMBER OF YEARS OCCUPIED

3. How many full-time and part-time employees are employed? (fill in a number)
 _____ FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES _____ PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

4. How would you describe the property in relation to the White Pine Trail? (please check one)

TRAIL INTERSECTS PROPERTY
ADJACENT OR RIGHT NEXT TO THE TRAIL
NEAR THE TRAIL

5. How far is the main building from the actual trail? (fill in a number in yards or miles)
 _____ YARDS OR _____ PORTION OF A MILE

6. Do you observe or service trail users at your business, organization, or operation? (please no or yes and then continue with second part)

NO, CONTINUE TO QUESTION 7	YES, how would you describe this? POSITIVE, HOW? _____ NEGATIVE, HOW? _____
----------------------------	---

7. Was the property near the trail purchased or occupied before or during/after that section of the trail was built?(please no or yes and then continue with second part)

BEFORE, CONTINUE TO QUESTION 8	DURING OR AFTER, how much did the proximity to the trail influence buying the property? (please check <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> one) NO INFLUENCE POSITIVE INFLUENCE, EXPLAIN HOW? _____ NEGATIVE INFLUENCE, EXPLAIN HOW? _____
--------------------------------	--

The next questions ask about any involvement you or employees might have had in the development or management of the White Pine Trail.

8. Have you or employees attended any planning or management meetings regarding the White Pine Trail?
(please ✓ one)
 NO YES NOT SURE NOT HERE DURING THAT TIME

9. How informed about the trail were you at the time of its design and construction? *(please ✓ one)*
Not informed at all Minimally informed Moderately informed Fully informed

10. Have you or any of your employees been involved in the planning, development or maintenance of the trail? *(please describe)*
 NO, CONTINUE TO QUESTION 11 YES, PLEASE DESCRIBE

11. Are you a member of the Friends of the White Pine Trail? *(please ✓ one)*
 NEVER NO LONGER YES, CURRENTLY A MEMBER

12. Do you or any of your employees use the White Pine Trail before work? During breaks? Or after work?
(check ✓ one for each time and then explain usage)

	No	Yes	If yes, what is the trail used for?
BEFORE WORK			_____
DURING BREAKS			_____
AFTER WORK			_____

13. How would you rate your level of support of the following items related to the White Pine Trail? *(please circle a response for each statement)*

	Very opposed	Moderately opposed	Neutral	Moderately supportive	Very supportive
<i>IDEA OF TRAIL BEFORE IT WAS BUILT</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>TRAIL PLANNING AND DESIGN PROCESS</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>TRAIL CONSTRUCTION PROCESS</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>TRAIL SHORTLY AFTER IT WAS BUILT</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>TRAIL TODAY</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

The next questions ask about how the White Pine Trail might influence property values, the neighborhood and the community.

14. *If you were to sell your property and facility in the near future, what influence do you think the trail would have? (please ✓ one for each statement)*

SPEED AT WHICH PROPERTY WOULD SELL	SLOWER	FASTER	NO DIFFERENCE
AMOUNT AT WHICH PROPERTY WOULD SELL	LESS MONEY	MORE MONEY	NO DIFFERENCE

15. *How would you rate the influence of the White Pine Trail on the following? (please circle a response for each statement)*

	Very negative influence	Moderate negative influence	Neutral	Moderate positive influence	Very positive influence
YOUR EMPLOYEES	1	2	3	4	5
NEIGHBORHOOD	1	2	3	4	5
COMMUNITY	1	2	3	4	5
KENT COUNTY	1	2	3	4	5

16. *Overall, would you say having a facility near the White Pine Trail is worse or better than being near the abandoned railroad right-of-way before it was converted into a trail? (please circle one response)*

Much worse	Moderately worse	Neutral	Moderately better	Much better
1	2	3	4	5

17. *Could you please explain why you selected your response?* _____
-

18. *Overall, how satisfied are you with having the White Pine Trail next to your facility? (please circle one response)*

Very dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Neutral	Moderately satisfied	Very satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it in the postage paid envelope or to C. Vogt, Michigan State Univ., 131 Natural Resources Bldg., East Lansing, MI. 48824-1222. If there is anything else to add, please include it on an additional sheet.

Thank you.

B. Mail questionnaire – adjacent residents

**Survey of Kent County Residents Living Next to the
White Pine Trail**

*Sponsored by Michigan State University and the Michigan Dept. of
Transportation*

The next questions ask about any involvement you or members of your household might have had in the development of the White Pine Trail.

7. Did you or members of your household attend any of the planning meetings for the White Pine Trail?
(please ✓ one)

NO YES NOT SURE NOT HERE DURING THAT TIME

8. How informed would you say you and your household were at the time of design and construction of the rail-trail? (please circle one)

Not informed at all	Minimally informed	Moderately informed	Fully informed
1	2	3	4

9. Have you or a household member been involved in the planning, development or maintenance of the trail?
(please ✓ one and describe if your answer is "yes")

NO, CONTINUE TO QUESTION 10 YES, PLEASE DESCRIBE

10. Are you a member of the Friends of the White Pine Trail? (please ✓ one)

NEVER NO LONGER YES, CURRENTLY A MEMBER

11. How would you rate your level of support of the following items related to the White Pine Trail? (please circle a response for each statement)

	Very opposed 1	Mode- rately opposed 2	Neu- tral 3	Mode- rately suppor t-ive 4	Very support -ive 5
IDEA OF TRAIL BEFORE IT WAS BUILT	1	2	3	4	5
TRAIL PLANNING AND DESIGN PROCESS	1	2	3	4	5
TRAIL CONSTRUCTION PROCESS	1	2	3	4	5
TRAIL SHORTLY AFTER IT WAS BUILT	1	2	3	4	5
TRAIL TODAY	1	2	3	4	5

The next questions ask about how the White Pine Trail might influence your property value, neighborhood and community.

12. If you were to sell your property in the near future, what influence do you think the trail would have?
(please ✓ one for each statement)

SPEED AT WHICH PROPERTY WOULD SELL	SLOWER	FASTER	NO DIFFERENCE
AMOUNT AT WHICH PROPERTY WOULD SELL	LESS MONEY	MORE MONEY	NO DIFFERENCE

13. How would you rate the influence of the White Pine Trail on the following? (please circle a response for each statement)

	Very negative influence	Moderate negative influence	Neutral	Moderate positive influence	Very positive influence
OWN PERSONAL LIFE	1	2	3	4	5
OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS' LIVES	1	2	3	4	5
YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD	1	2	3	4	5
YOUR COMMUNITY	1	2	3	4	5
KENT COUNTY	1	2	3	4	5

14. Overall, would you say living near the White Pine Trail is worse or better than living near the abandoned railroad right-of-way before it was converted into a rail-trail? (circle one response)

Much worse	Moderately worse	Neutral	Moderately better	Much better
1	2	3	4	5

Could you please explain why you selected your response? _____

15. Overall, how satisfied are you with having the White Pine Trail in your neighborhood?
(please circle one response)

Very dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Neutral	Moderately satisfied	Very satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

16. Please describe in your own words how the White Pine Trail has affected the quality of your neighborhood?

The next set of questions are about your involvement in outdoor recreation and usage of the White Pine Trail.

17. People recreate outdoors for many reasons and in many different ways. How important are the following reasons for outdoor recreation to you and your household? (*please circle a response for each statement*)

<u>We recreate to:</u>	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
EXERCISE	1	2	3	4	5
BE OUTSIDE	1	2	3	4	5
ENJOY NATURE	1	2	3	4	5
PROMOTE HEALTH	1	2	3	4	5
RELAX	1	2	3	4	5
BE WITH OTHERS	1	2	3	4	5
BE ALONE	1	2	3	4	5
SPEND FREE TIME	1	2	3	4	5
TRAIN FOR SPORTS	1	2	3	4	5
CULTURAL STUDY AND EDUCATION	1	2	3	4	5
FUN AND ENJOYMENT	1	2	3	4	5
EXPLORE AREAS OF COUNTY	1	2	3	4	5

18. Do you or members of your family use the White Pine Trail? (*✓ one*)

NO, SKIP TO QUESTION 20

YES, WHAT ONE REASON IN THE LIST ABOVE BEST DESCRIBES WHY YOU USE THE TRAIL? _____
CONTINUE TO QUESTION 19

19. How often do you and members of your household use the White Pine Trail? (✓ one for each person in household)

	Few times a year	Once a month	Couple times a month	Weekly	Daily
YOURSELF					
SPOUSE OR ANOTHER ADULT					
CHILDREN (#1)					
CHILDREN (#2)					
CHILDREN (#3)					
CHILDREN (#4)					

20. Do you or members of your household recreate on any other rail-trails? (please ✓ one)

NO YES, WHICH ONES? _____

The next set of questions asks about your opinions about the use and maintenance of the White Pine Trail.

21. How would you rate the following conditions of the White Pine Trail? (please circle a response for each statement)

	Very poor	Poor	OK	Good	Very Good
REMOVAL OF TRASH FROM CONTAINERS	1	2	3	4	5
PRESENCE OF LITTER ALONG TRAIL	1	2	3	4	5
OVERALL MAINTENANCE OF THE TRAIL	1	2	3	4	5
SENSE OF SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR TRAILSIDE RESIDENTS	1	2	3	4	5
PRIVACY OF TRAILSIDE RESIDENTS	1	2	3	4	5

22. How has the White Pine Trail influenced your household on the following items? *(please ✓ a response for each statement)*

<u>The White Pine Trail has caused an:</u>	Increase of.....	Decrease of.....	No change	Not sure
VANDALISM				
AESTHETIC VALUE				
PRIVACY				
HEALTH AND FITNESS				
THEFTS				
DAMAGE TO FARM CROPS/LIVESTOCK				
PERSONAL ENJOYMENT				
TRESPASSING				
POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS				
ACTUAL LIABILITY SUITS				
ILLEGAL PARKING				
RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES				
ILLEGAL MOTOR VEHICLE USE ON TRAIL				
NOISE				
NATURE AND CULTURAL EDUCATION				
UNLEASHED AND ROAMING PETS				
DISCOURTEOUS OR RUDE USERS				
LOITERING				
DRAINAGE PROBLEMS				
NEIGHBORHOOD ENHANCEMENT				
NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION WITHIN THE COUNTY				
COMMUNITY PRIDE				
PRESERVATION OF OPEN SPACE/ NATURAL AREAS				
COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION				

23. Have you had any specific trail-related problems with your property? *(please describe)*
- NO, YES, PLEASE DESCRIBE _____
- CONTINUE TO _____
- QUESTION 24 _____

This final section of the survey asks for descriptive information on your household. This information will be kept in the strictest confidence and used for statistical purposes only.

24. What is your gender? MALE FEMALE
25. What are the ages of adults and children in your household? *(fill in age for each person)*
- ADULT AGES: _____
- CHILDREN AGES: _____
26. How many years have you lived in Kent County? _____ YEARS IN LIFETIME
27. What is your present employment status? *(please ✓ one)*
- EMPLOYED, FULL-TIME RETIRED UNEMPLOYED STUDENT
- EMPLOYED, PART-TIME SELF-EMPLOYED HOMEMAKER OTHER
28. What was the highest grade or number of years you completed in school or college? *(please circle a number)*

8 9 10 11 12	13 14 15 16	17 18 19 20 21 22 23
Thru High School	College/Tech. School	Graduate School

29. Which statement best describes your total 2005 annual household income (from all sources and before taxes)? *(please ✓ one)*
- LESS THAN \$60,000 \$60,000 OR MORE CHOOSE NOT TO ANSWER

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it in the envelope or to C. Vogt, Michigan State Univ., 131 Natural Resources Bldg., East Lansing, MI. 48824-1222. If there is anything else to add, please include it on an additional sheet. Thank you.

C. Business and residents accompanied cover letters – first and second mailings

**MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY**

July 5, 2006

Dear Trailside Property Owner:

Michigan State University and Michigan Department of Transportation are cooperating to study the use and value of rail-trails. We are interested in learning about your experiences with and opinions about the White Pine Trail State Park.

We are surveying adjacent landowners to the designated trail area. We acquired your name and address from current property tax records. If these records are incorrect or not current, please let us know. Please return the completed survey by August 1, 2006.

The enclosed questionnaire asks about your experiences with the White Pine Trail State Park in Kent County. Your responses are completely confidential and your name will not be associated with any of the results.

Your response is critical in developing a better understanding of how rail-trails impact local communities. The results will be shared with trail managers and those who fund trail development and management, including the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Please take the 15 or so minutes necessary to complete the questionnaire. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this survey. However, if you choose not to complete all or part of the questions, you will not suffer any penalty. Your responses will be kept confidential and your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please mail it back to us in the postage paid envelope provided. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact project assistant Kristen Steger at 517-432-0297 or e-mail at vogtc@msu.edu. If you need to contact someone at Michigan State University other than the researchers about this survey, Chairperson Dr. Peter Vasilenko, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, can be reached at 517-355-2180 or by e-mail at ucrihs@msu.edu. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Christine Vogt
Associate Professor
vogtc@msu.edu

Enc.

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MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

July 5, 2006

Dear Trailside Business Owner:

Michigan State University and Michigan Department of Transportation are cooperating to study the use and value of rail-trails. We are interested in learning about your experiences with and opinions about the White Pine Trail State Park.

We are surveying businesses located near designated trail area. We acquired your name and address from current property tax records. If these records are incorrect or not current, please let us know. We ask that either an owner or manager complete this survey. Please return the completed survey by August 1, 2006.

The enclosed questionnaire asks about your experiences with the White Pine Trail State Park in Kent County. Your responses are completely confidential and your name will not be associated with any of the results.

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MICHIGAN STATE
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August 7, 2006

Dear Trailside Property Owner:

About three weeks ago we wrote to you asking about your thoughts and opinions about the White Pine Trail State Park. As of today, we have not yet received your completed questionnaire. If you have already returned your questionnaire, please accept our sincere thanks.

I am writing to you again because of the importance each questionnaire has for getting an accurate picture of the opinions held by residents along the state trail. The response has been encouraging so far. However, the accuracy of the final results depends upon you and others in our study who have not yet responded.

Michigan State University and Michigan Department of Transportation are cooperating to study the use and value of rail-trails. We are interested in learning about your experiences with and opinions about the White Pine Trail State Park. We are surveying adjacent landowners to the designated trail area. We acquired your name and address from current property tax records. If these records are incorrect or not current, please let us know.

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The enclosed questionnaire asks about your experiences with the White Pine Trail State Park in Kent County. Your responses are completely confidential and your name will not be associated with any of the results.

Your response is critical in developing a better understanding of how rail-trails impact local communities. The results will be shared with trail managers and those who fund trail development and management, including the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Please take the 15 or so minutes necessary to complete the questionnaire. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this survey. However, if you choose not to complete all or part of the questions, you will not suffer any penalty. Your responses will be kept confidential and your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

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D. Open-ended Comments from Residents on Quality of Life

- A lot of traffic, never remember having a choice
- Beautifies
- Biking/rollerblading/walking rather than driving makes it a neighborhood-community more friendly
- Break-ins have been on the rise in rural areas (by chance?)
- Bring people I know to town and easy access to downtown
- Brings neighborhood out to walk and experience each other
- Brings snowmobiles, walkers and bikers to our town
- Brought more business into Rockford, good except mopeds
- Can not ride the horses on the trail any more
- Created a great sense of ownership
- Created dangerous driving situations, increase home invasions
- Don't know
- Easy egress for kids/people who broke into neighbors house
- Easy to get exercise with out auto traffic
- Enjoy and participate in trail activities: cycling, walking, jogging
- Enriched sense of community-see neighbor and friends
- Fosters exercise, relaxations and brings families together
- Friendlier, great for walking, skating, biking, grandchildren
- Friendly access to common known trail
- Get a lot of traffic, break-ins
- Gets people exercising
- Gets people to exercise more
- Give everyone a change to get more exercise
- Give families a place to walk, ride bikes and snowmobile with each other
- Give me people to watch
- Give people a place to go and be active
- Gives everyone an opportunity to walk/bike/rollerblade in your backyard
- Gives my family a safe place to bike ride and walk
- Gives people opportunity to walk, run, ride bikes and other activities with out the vehicle traffic
- Gives us safe place to ride bikes with out worry of traffic
- Good access to bike/walk/run but winter is dangerous with snowmobiles
- Good for families
- Good recreation opportunity, snowmobiles are loud, smelly and don't slow down
- Great for biking, walking see neighbors
- Great to have so close
- Has made no difference
- Hasn't affected me-nice to have trail to bike/walk
- Haven't talked to neighbors for input
- Health benefits
- Healthier neighbors, use for biking, rollerblading, jogging
- Here are few people in my neighborhood out walking and enjoying nature
- Huge improvement
- I live on SW side of 49139. the only exit is N to Muskegon street

- I love it for walking with other neighbors, walking my dogs, etc
- Impact unclear but convenient to have fast walkable access
- Important recreation resource
- Improved-I like anything that is a public park
- Increase of people in neighborhood and trespassing
- Increase opportunity for recreation
- Increase physical fitness of neighborhood
- It has been positive for the neighborhood and its nice to see people using it
- It has not been negative in anyway that I can tell
- It hasn't affected my life yet
- Its a wonderful safe place for the families of the neighborhood to get out and exercise
- Its convenient for me to run on
- Its fun to use, keeps people safer, nice to walk dogs, makes easier to get places with out driving, gets people out and about
- Its nice to walk or ride but we still liked it better unpaved
- Keep kids off the road, wish joggers could be made to use it and stay off Summit or 13 mile
- Keeps kids off the roads, safe place to walk, run, rollerblade, ride bike
- Kids can ride the trail anytime-its safe and an easy ride for them
- Kids love it
- Kids trespassing where there are no fences, in groups
- Like anything it has its pros and cons-biggest concern is safety of users, bikes do not stop at stops signs
- Little change in quality, can't reach trail from property, some noise
- Little effect, better enforcement of no motorized vehicles
- Lots of people and noise
- Makes handy place to walk
- Many of us lead healthier life styles-more bike riding and walking
- Many people from surrounding areas come to use it, generates more interest in town
- Many people use but hasn't affect the quality at all
- More enjoyable
- More opportunities to exercise
- More options for things to do
- More people are getting exercise
- More people exercise on the trail
- More recreation activities for everyone
- More trespass, noise, vandalism, litter
- More trespass, nosier, some vandalism, littering
- Mostly for the better-meet neighbors-walking dogs and riding bikes
- Much more safe on the trail instead of walking/riding on streets
- Natural management for exercise
- Neighborhood continues to thrive
- Neighborhood was more rural-positive in the way that we have a safe place to walk that feels "rural" even with the increase of traffic and housing
- Nice but lots of snowmobiles
- Nice to have trail near to use for recreation activities

- No change
- No difference
- No longer quiet/private, people wander to see house/yard, kids congregate, don't feel safe anymore
- Not helped and not helped the neighborhood
- Our neighbor hates it
- Place to safely ski, walk, bike
- Positive-nice for all to enjoy; negative-the have strangers close to house
- Positive influence in our home
- Positive influence on our family, times and health
- Positive interactions between neighbors and nice people from elsewhere
- People are still weary of what kind are on it, more traffic if paved
- People can walk and exercise there
- People enjoying evening walks and are more active
- People I get out more exercise
- People keep properties nice because people can see from trail
- Provides a beauty and physical function for the community
- Provides a safe place for recreation, since we have no sidewalks but also brings people from outside neighborhood, there was a police chase on the trail
- Really not affected that
- Safe to ride bikes & access to northern trail
- See people enjoying daily
- See people on trail going into town to get ice-cream 2 miles away
- See the neighbors more
- Several use for exercise
- Several families use the trail. one neighbor fenced in his yard for security reasons
- Small private housing assoc.
- Snowmobiles at 3AM, people are loud, cars driving on it, motor bikes
- Snowmobiles keep me up at night got off trail and ride across my lawn
- Social use, safe place to walk and ride
- Sure neighborhood loves it-but not adjacent to noise and disruption
- The trail helps foster both a sense of community and contributes to the overall health of community members
- Think neighborhood thinks its great for everyone
- Too much traffic
- Trespassers from trail use private road and property, has reduced the amount of wildlife
- Two kids under two, great for walks
- Use frequently for biking and walking
- Very busy gets used a lot
- Very little
- Very positive
- Walk trail 4 times per week, lost 15lbs, feel great, love it
- Wonderful to use trail with out the fear of cars

E. Open-ended Comments from Residents on Proximity to Trail vs. Railroad Line

- Able to use trail daily
- As long as no trespassing I do not oppose trail
- Because I can hear people using the path and enjoying themselves
- Because it is a trail it has purpose and useful
- Because it is maintained
- Because land was supposed to return to owners
- Because of trespassing
- Bad health, wish could use electric cart on trail
- Because there is no ties or rails to trip or fall on
- Before paving we hiked and biked but so did snowmobiles
- Better for walking and biking, snowmobiles are rude
- Better now because it is taken care of
- Better than abandoned railroad
- Better up keep
- Bike and walk down trail
- Bikers not yielding to private roadways, public accessing on private roads, increase home invasions
- Bring community together in a way
- Can ride bikes on it now
- Can use trail for recreation easier
- Cleaner
- Close access to recreation value to community
- Does not effect us
- Doesn't bother me at all
- Don't mine except for privacy and noise at night
- Easier to walk on trail
- Easy access and safe
- Enjoy trail but do not use it
- Events are increasing near or on trail
- Existed before moved in
- Family enjoys walking, bikes and it's safe
- General trespass-not enough policing
- Gets much more use now, more uses
- Great entertainment & no one can build house behind
- Had to run or ride on rails
- Had to myself before paved
- Have a horse and used to use the trail but now can't
- Have had good and bad experience on trail
- Have not yet dealt w/crime due to trail, but waiting
- Heavy use, increase noise, no privacy, we accept the negative
- Horses used to come down the trail
- House shook w/ trains-was overgrown
- I bike to work 22 miles one way approximately 3 times a week
- I didn't like the train tracks
- I think the trail is a great asset to the county but I recently relocated back to

- Milford so I haven't use
- I use the trail to run
- If our land was right on the trail I would be negative but our property sits higher then the trail
- Increase of trespassing and theft
- Inviting family friendly activities
- It is kept clear, used to be out and exercise
- It is nice to walk on
- It is now maintained - nice for walking
- It is ran like a dictator, don't touch our trail, owners should be able to put drives over to regain
- It provides a community benefit now-exercise safety, etc
- Its nice to see people using the trail
- Its prettier, kept up, gives everyone an opportunity to get out and be active
- Kids have always enjoyed the area, adults enjoy more frequently now
- Lack of wildlife
- Land gets used not wasted
- Less noise, less pollution, less danger
- Lot of looky-loos and some trespass
- Lots of nice people use the trail
- Love trail for walking/biking
- Love using it to get to other communities
- More control on what goes on
- More exercise opportunities
- More people and park on our private road
- More people around my house
- More people walking/biking/running
- More private before
- More trespassers, put up barriers
- More utilized
- Much better use
- Much nicer to use
- Nice paved trail for many to enjoy
- Nice to have but noisy and trash
- No
- No difference to me
- No isolated-snowmobiles, dirt bikes a problem
- No more dirt bikes and other quads stirring dust up
- Noise from users, people on trail upset dog
- Nothing there was also very nice
- Now multiuse
- Now used and safe to get exercise
- Our house doesn't shake everyday
- Patrolled by volunteers and very nice to walk or rollerblade
- Paved and make it easier to walk/bike
- Positive influence to keep people busy and healthy
- Positive life experience
- Provides a safe place for families to exercise

- Replacing the railway to a natural trail was an excellent use of the land
- Safe, alternative place to exercise and mental relaxation
- Safer all around
- Safer, great for exercise, families together
- Sense of community and influences fitness
- Snowmobile trespass-late night noise
- Snowmobile trespass, late night noise
- So many people enjoy the exercise
- The abandoned rails were a beautiful part of our natural surroundings-as is the trail
- The rail trail is a lot more user friendly
- There was less foot traffic, I could see wildlife
- Too many users on weekends-very crowded
- Too much traffic
- Traffic limited to non-motorized uses
- Trail a good place for exercise
- Trail is a great thing, not in my backyard
- Trail is kept abandoned rail bed probably would not be
- Trail is nice to walk and ride bikes on
- Trail serves a purpose & a railroad would decay
- Trail well maintained for those who use it
- Train noise and negative view
- Trespassers and noise
- Trespassing, too busy, bikes/rollerblades do not stop for cars
- Use at least once a week, to town
- Use trail because street has no sidewalks and is dangerous
- Use trail every day
- Use trail often
- Used to use it to ride my horse, now I walk or ride my bike
- Used to use the trail before paved now too many people
- Was already here
- Was not unhappy with railroad
- Was quieter but now has more advantages
- Was there when moved in
- Wasn't here before trail so I don't know
- We bought because of privacy, now no privacy and more noise
- We use it
- When trail was not paved had more privacy and animals enjoyed it
- Who wants to leave near an abounded property
- Wonderful that everyone is using it
- Would still walk/run on trails

F. Open-ended Comments from Residents on Trail Conflicts

- 2 break-ins, trespassing
- A few years ago I had a few trespassers-angry
- Attempted break-ins, trespassers, loss of peace and quiet
- Broken into twice
- Construction of access ramp to trail across from property
- DNR owns land between house and trail wish they would take care of it
- Dogs off leash and dog feces
- Excellent approach for thieves and vandals
- Firecrackers, cars parking, partying, naked men
- Friend of white pine yelled because I had trash behind my house (I didn't), neighbor was drunk and yelled at me for being on his "property"
- Had lawn decorations located next to trail stolen
- Had to put a fence
- House broken into, used parking (make out) lane
- I cannot clean any bush or trees with out penalty
- Loss of trees (privacy) more noise (cars breaking to avoid hitting trail users at stop signs), cars parking too near the trails, hindering vision for both
- Men going by and staring at me
- Minor occasional trespassing-late night activity
- Motorized vehicles
- Noisy people at all hours, parking in yard, walking on property, loose dogs, naked bicyclists, snowmobiles on property, breaking and entering, dropped off animals
- Once in awhile people exit trail through property
- Parking problems, do not stop at signs
- Possible to create small dirt trails along paved for runners?
- People coming into our yard
- People do not stop at crossroads very scary when driving over trail
- People do not stop at stop signs-dog can see people on trail and it drives her nuts
- People need to pick up dog feces, bikes too fast not watching bikers
- People teasing my dogs
- People trespass to get to trail
- People trespassing
- People trespassing and putting trash in yard, but most people are pigs
- Problems before with hunters shooting off track and trespassing
- Snowmobile noise at 2am, theft
- Snowmobiles, pedestrians invasive pedestrian bicyclers
- Some litter
- Some loitering, graffiti
- This trail cut a 100 mile swath that can not access highway. How much utility has biker vs. possible commercial tax payer isn't fair
- Trail intersects my land and must cross to use my land and the state doesn't want me too
- Trespass, snowmobiles don't slow down
- Trespassing-put up barriers

- Trespassing-taunting dog
- Trespassing
- Trespassing to access trail
- Trespassing, illegal parking, picnicking/littering, noise
- Trespassing, kids loitering
- Yes the rail trail road when it was built made my property a wet land