

Approved as amended, 9/17/12

Special Meeting, Casco Township Board of Trustees
Tuesday, July 31, 2012, 12 noon

Supervisor Overhiser called the properly noticed special meeting to order at 12:05 pm. Present: Overhiser, Graff, Winfrey, and Cowie. Ridley is on vacation. Also present: Larry Brown, Director of the Allegan County Road Commission; Scott Post, Engineer at Prein Newhof; and Jeanne Van Zoeren, Sunny Hill, and Julie Werkema, of the Friends group.

Overhiser provided background to the meeting, which relates to a request from the Friends of Group (led by Jeanne Van Zoeren); the agenda is to discuss and make decisions related to a bike trail/non-motorized facility along Blue Star Highway. Overhiser invited Scott Post of Prein Newhof to speak.

Scott Post reviewed an estimate he developed for a non-motorized pathway along Blue Star Highway (a separate facility). The basic quote of \$35/foot for a path is lower than he originally estimated. There are limited cuts and fills required. Asphalt prices are now higher than \$65/ton. Certain areas will need extra things. Wet areas and culverts need boardwalks. If an MDOT grant is involved, boardwalks need to be 14' wide.

The majority of storm sewer funds are focused on enclosing ditches. Easement costs depend on many factors. Surface water is the most critical issue impacting trail development.

Timber boardwalks can last 25 years. After 10 or 15 years, it's good to start replacing deck boards & railings. The loading is 7800# to allow a maintenance truck to travel the path. Proposed fencing would be vinyl coated chain link railing between timber posts.

Comparison of a separate facility with paved shoulders was explored. If you have paved shoulders, they are one-way—the direction of traffic.

The State doesn't like it when you change facilities after designing a plan and requesting funding. Scott Post has done it, but more questions get asked when you do it.

Concrete is an option for this path. The path would generally be in the road right of way.

Scott didn't estimate any costs for easements. He does not "pay" for easements (more than \$1). Scott didn't see any "must have" easements. Easements were to a) save storm sewer and b) where it wouldn't be difficult.

If you're using additional ROW, before any federal funds will be allocated, you must meet all federal regulations on purchasing ROW, which means,

- a) providing an appraisal, or having it waived (doesn't have to be done by an appraiser);
- b) must also have a signed and recorded document; and
- c) must keep residents informed with certified letters.

Scott's track record on obtaining easements has been good.

Scott was asked if he had ever put a path through a cottage district? Summer houses (second homes), have higher value real estate. This might suggest that residents will be more skeptical of a pathway.

Post was involved with a pathway development along the north side of Lake Macatawa; he tried to relate to their recreational opportunities.

Julie Werkema said lake people want to hook up to the Kal-Haven trail. Larry Brown agreed that hooking up to the Kal Haven trail is huge. Scott added that public perception of trails has changed a lot, and people have become quite favorable toward them.

As far as securing easements, no grant money could be involved. He estimated that 7 hours of engineering and 7 hours of attorney time would be required for each easement, i.e., \$1500 to \$2000 per easement (average)—administrative costs. Scott has never paid more than \$1 for an easement.

Easements proposed by Scott would make the trail “gentler” on the land. The other case for pursuing easements is to avoid a retaining wall and steep slope, and also to change the grading to make a lawn that can be mowed by a lawn mower.

Pam asked about tree removal, site grading, and utility relocation. These costs are included in Scott’s numbers.

Scott’s opinion is to make the Blue Star Trail at 10’ wide because it will get the use.

If privately paid, Boardwalks could be 11’ wide (not 14’). And the contractors wouldn’t have to be paying the prevailing wage—maybe a 20 to 25% drop in price.

These prices were based on doing 1 to 1.25 mile at a time. If you do more at a time, the costs will go down. But caution was expressed to "promise" a savings if there is a donor ready to fund the entire project--savings are not a guarantee.

The number provided by Scott doesn’t include easement acquisition.

We all understand there are unknowns and there are risks in the bid process.

Larry Brown stated that regarding CMAQ funding, shoulders could be paved as an alternative. To pave the entire shoulder, 7-8’ wide, the cost would be \$90,000/mile to pave both shoulders with a 7-8’ width.

For CMAQ, the next allocation would be \$324,000 for 2013, with \$7,500 earmarked already. Scott asked if \$324,000 would be available each year for 2014 and 2015 as well. Based on federal funding changes, CMAQ is still intact, according to the Transportation bill, but the enhancement pot of money has been reduced at least 30%, and the Governor can reallocate it to other transportation expenditures, which means it could go down two-thirds.

Scott thinks the Blue Star Bike Trail is a good project for CMAQ, especially if the County is behind it.

The Rural task force meeting is in March. If submitted as a CMAQ grant, it has to be ready before that. Comparing a paved shoulder to a separate facility, there is no difference in percentage of local match required (CMAQ requires a 20% match.) You must show air quality mitigation.

Per mile costs would be \$300,000 for a separate facility, vs \$90,000 for a paved shoulder.

Resurfacing millage is up for renewal at the County.

It's better to pursue CMAQ funding for the off shoulder trail than pursue it for paved shoulders because the only thing that would be eligible for CMAQ funding would be the shoulders, and it would be way too complicated to try to keep expenditures separate when repaving/rebuilding Blue Star Highway (i.e., non-grant-funded "road" costs vs. grant-funded shoulder costs).

There is nothing in law that says Allegan has to get the \$324,000 CMAQ--so there is no guarantee the funds would be ours.

Jeanne Van Zoeren asked about the timeline, because sixty interviews will be done to identify financial and political support for this project. Larry Brown responded that in order for the Road Commission to put this request in the TIP, Casco would have to demonstrate the ability to provide the match by December or January.

Blue Star Highway will be done in the next six years anyway, as a primary road in the 4-township district.

There is no advantage to doing the bike trail at the same time as the Blue Star repaving.

If we were to extend the Blue Star to have paved shoulders, the Township would add 8' (4' per side), which would be \$36,000 in resurfacing. The next time it's paved, we would have 8' shoulders. Can the 8' shoulders be marked as bike path? Yes.

Dan Fleming submitted a letter (attached to these minutes) which was read aloud by Supervisor Overhiser.

Overhiser stated that Casco Township has no revenue to fund a separate facility. We do have revenue to pave shoulders. Jeanne Van Zoeren also will need to address maintenance, the match for the CMAQ grant, and a sinking fund.

To sum up, the Board of Trustees is in support of the project but the financial commitment for the separate facility would need to come from the FOTBST. There is a desire to make contact with residents located more inward in the Township.

Graff said that the board still hasn't received total cost estimates. She would like this project to be treated similar to water/sewer development--at no cost to the Township ~~for the next five years.~~

Appreciation from Cowie to everyone present for the good discussion about the bike trail concept. Graff moved to adjourn at 1:48 pm, supported by Winfrey; adjourned.

Respectfully,

Julie M. Cowie, Clerk

Casco Township Board of Trustees

attachments:

7/12/2012 estimate provided by Prein & Newhof

Letter from Dan Fleming, 7/31/2012