

Shoreline Trails and Greenways Focus Group Meeting #2

Thank You for Your Input!



When & Where: On Wednesday, March 26, 2025, the Muskegon Shoreline Trails and Greenways (STAG) project held its second focus group meeting at the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission office from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM. This session brought together nearly 20 attendees, including members of the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership and affiliated stakeholders. The atmosphere was focused and engaged, with passionate individuals contributing thoughtful perspectives on trail and shoreline development.

Why: This focus group continued the West Michigan STAG project's commitment to gathering community feedback and co-creating a shared vision for the future of trail and greenway development along the shoreline. The goal was to surface opportunities, challenges, and key needs related to safety, access, and community connection—especially from those with a deep investment in environmental stewardship and watershed health.



What We Did: In the interest of gaining various perspectives from different stakeholders, the same interactive stations from the first focus group were used again to invite creative and thoughtful engagement:

- **Survey Station:** Attendees completed more than a dozen paper surveys, with others opting for the digital version.
- **Vision Drawing Station:** Participants illustrated their hopes for trails and greenways in five years, highlighting desired features and amenities.
- **SWOC Activity:** Stakeholders shared input on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of the existing trail system through written and verbal contributions.
- **Board Game Activity:** Once again, participants used a tactile game to express priorities and preferences for the trail network.

What We Learned: From earnest group conversations to thoughtful drawings and completed surveys, this session surfaced rich community feedback that adds depth to our understanding of the community's vision:



What's Working Well:

- Strong policies like Complete Streets and active coalitions are actively supporting trail progress.
- Over 65 miles of trails connect neighborhoods, nearby counties, and key destinations today.
- Trails offer a safe and enjoyable experience with access to culture, shopping, and nature.
- Tools like the SeeClickFix app make it easy for residents to report maintenance needs.

Opportunities for the Future:

- Brand Muskegon as a "Trail Town" with public art, rest stops, and educational signage.
- Expand trail access through better wayfinding, more trailheads, and digital tools.
- Connect underserved areas and promote trails as everyday transportation options for work and play.
- Partner with schools, MDOT, and local foundations to support trail development and outreach.

What Needs Improvement:

- Incomplete connections, especially to Muskegon Heights and commercial areas like Meijer/Walmart.
- Inconsistent signage and wayfinding reduce accessibility and usability.
- Safety concerns at key crossings and a lack of public amenities like restrooms.
- Infrastructure challenges from erosion, weather, and general wear and tear.

Challenges to Consider:

- Funding and long-term maintenance remain pressing concerns.
- Gaps in education around trail use, etiquette, and safety.
- Limited trail access in some neighborhoods and parks.
- Ensuring integration with transit and broader transportation networks.

What's Next: This second focus group deepened the project's understanding of environmental concerns, built-environment possibilities, watershed-related needs, and regional trail connections in Muskegon. Four more focus group meetings will take place in the coming months, along with several pop-up engagement events. These conversations will help refine the trail and greenway design to reflect the priorities of the people who use them. For up to date information on project progress, contact the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission or the Muskegon County Visitors Bureau.