

## **Pere Marquette Rail-Trail Enhancement**



### **Context, Purpose, and Description**

The purpose of the project was to create an extension of the existing Pere Marquette State Trail from the Midland/Isabella county line to Clare at the Isabella/Clare county line. The 14-foot asphalt trail was constructed on the old CSX Railroad right-of-way. The non-motorized trail provides barrier-free recreation opportunities for biking, in-line skating, walking, and jogging for residents and visitors.

### **Public Engagement**

The efforts of many groups and individuals were necessary to develop, implement, and fund the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail extension. Project support was provided by the Isabella County Road Commission, Wise Township, Midland County, the city of Clare, and the Rails to Trails Conservancy. Many local organizations contributed financial support including Isabella County, Friends of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail, Clare Area Rail-Trail Committee, Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation, Charles J. Strosacker Foundation, and the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe.

### **Context Sensitive Solutions Approach**

The trail, part of Michigan's Rails-to Trails program, ties several communities together and provides a pleasant, safe linear park for walkers, runners, bicyclists and in-line skaters. The trail includes a 5.5 mile stretch of "glasphalt" made from recycled glass collected by Midland County citizens. The benches and signs along the section are made from recycled plastic.

### **Challenges**

Initially, the development of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail met with some resistance from local residents who voiced concerns about having the trail adjacent to their back yards. Worries about safety, litter, vandalism, and lack of respect for personal property had been voiced during requests for public input. The potential problems associated with the new trail did not occur and today the trail is considered a safe, popular, and important addition to the region.

### **Outcome**

The Pere Marquette Rail-Trail is highly regarded as a community asset. The trail benefits individuals, - businesses, and communities while contributing to the quality of life of area residents and visitors. Restaurants and retail establishments have experienced economic benefits in terms of increased sales. Special events such as the Midwest Tandem Rally and the Michigander Bike Ride have also contributed to the local economy.

### **Funding**

Construction of the project was initiated on November 21, 2000 and concluded with a dedication ceremony in August of 2001. The total budget for the project was \$1,612,660 including \$637,750 in federal funds and \$974,910 from the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Department of Natural Resources, and Isabella County.