The Famous Caboose got a Shiny New Yellow Coat of Paint this Year!
Letter from the Executive Director

One of my favorite things about being on the trails is watching all the different ways they are used. You see families walking together or folks chatting as they run with friends. Dogs might be taking their owners on strolls or cyclists cruise by with saddle bags full of groceries. I love to watch kids coast down hills ahead of their parents, and I always want to stop and help out the tourists stopping to look at maps along the way. You see skateboarders, baby-strollers, and of course skiers training when the trails are covered in snow.

The best trails are built with that diversity in mind. The best trails are developed with government agencies, potential trail neighbors, advocates of all sorts, private businesses, and funders sitting at the table. Building trails is collaboration at its best — diverse groups of people working together on a shared goal. And that kind of collaboration is how TART Trails approaches every project. We believe the best trails come from working together with diverse groups interested in the same goals – bustling trails filled with lots of smiles, helping people get to where they want to go, and supporting healthy and robust environments, communities, and economies.

Thank you,

Julie Clark, Executive Director

About Julie Clark
Julie heads up the day-to-day administration, trail planning and development, maintenance, and fundraising efforts for TART. She lives in downtown Traverse City with her husband Bill and their two little girls. They use the TART Trail system for work and play! Julie welcomes your input on all things TART. She can be reached at:

julie@traversetrails.org
Special Thanks to Our Corporate Partners

These businesses contribute to healthy, active lifestyles through their year-round generosity and giving. Their support comes in many ways, including in-kind professional services and sponsorship for events, mile markers and wayfinding signs.

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Tom’s Food Markets
Townline Ciders
 Traverse Area District Library
Traverse Bay United Methodist
Traverse City Record Eagle
Traverse City Track Club
Two Lads Winery
Up North Media Turkey Trot
Up Bike
Vasa Ski Club
VI Grill
Werner Family
Workshop Brewing Company
Wunsch Farms
Yen Yoga & Fitness
Zombie Run
The Vasa Skills Building Loop is designed specifically for kids and adults new to mountain biking to hone their skills, while still hopefully staying upright. Two one-mile, single-track loops have been completed and feature elements such as jumps, table tops, berms, and rock gardens designed to help people advance their mountain biking skills. The more technical sections of the trail even provide an option to ride around them (a big perk for beginners) until the rider is ready to take on the challenge.

This exciting project kicked off this past July and the first phase is now open to riders. Additional features are on the docket for summer of 2020. Watch for updates!

It’s a perfect partnership with the Northern Michigan Mountain Bike Association and TART Trails! We’re excited to launch this initiative with support from the Grand Traverse County Parks and Recreation.

Loopty-Doop:
Vasa Skills Building Loops

Things at the Vasa Trailhead just got even better. The first phase of the Vasa Skill Building Loop is officially open.

The Vasa Skills Building Loop is designed specifically for kids and adults new to mountain biking to hone their skills, while still hopefully staying upright.

Two one-mile, single-track loops have been completed and feature elements such as jumps, table tops, berms, and rock gardens designed to help people advance their mountain biking skills. The more technical sections of the trail even provide an option to ride around them (a big perk for beginners) until the rider is ready to take on the challenge.

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Up Close along the Boardman River!

We are thrilled to have recently completed trail between the Boardman River Nature Center and Cass Road.

We thank our partners at the Grand Traverse Conservation District and Grand Traverse County along with the help of Grand Traverse Hiking Club and TART volunteers for helping complete the project.

![Photo by Gary L. Howe](image)

Trail users enjoy varying terrain on the Boardman River Trail.

Punctuated with beautiful boardwalk and small bridges, this scenic segment of trail provides a close up view of the remarkable and unique Boardman River transformations taking place. We are now focusing on completing the Boardman River Trail through Hoosier Valley to connect Beitner Road and Mayfield Pond Park.

The vision of the Boardman River Trail is to construct a trail through the Boardman River Valley that links existing trails and connects numerous points of interest. The trail showcases the natural and recreational assets along the river. From hiking to mountain biking, and backcountry skiing to snowshoeing, this trail provides trail visitors with fresh connectivity, beautiful surroundings and striking scenery.

Robbins Creek Bridge Project

By Mike Shaeffer

Over the course of four workdays in the Fall of 2018, we assembled the Robbins Creek Bridge on the Boardman River Trail. The hardworking volunteer crew cut lumber to size, hauled materials to the site and stood in the middle of the creek to drill and bolt rail posts in place. Each stringer that spanned the river weighed 100 pounds and measured 24 feet in length. Carrying those long stringers down to the bridge site with all the bends in the trail was interesting! We were happy with the results of this section of the Boardman River Trail and loved the challenge of it.

Mike Shaeffer is a retired civil engineer, a Traverse City native and an amazing TART Trails volunteer.

_traversetrails.org_
Momentum continues to build thanks to the incredible community support, the hard work of community-led trail teams and support from state and private partners. Once completed, this trail will make transformative community connections and help create a 325+ mile multi-use trail network across northern lower Michigan.

To tackle this ambitious project, TART Trails, Top of Michigan Trails Council and Networks Northwest have teamed up. It’s been a busy summer! In May, we celebrated the first leg of the Traverse City – Charlevoix Trail with the grand opening of Bayside Park in Acme. Acme Township continues to be a trailblazer, with work underway to create a non-motorized connection between M72, the Grand Traverse Town Center and the TART Trail at Bunker Hill. The Township applied for a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant in April and TART Trails has helped secure over $500,000 in matching funds. In June, the Village of Elk Rapids unanimously approved a preferred trail alignment along the west side of US 31 and is now working on how the trail will route through the Village. And late this summer, thanks to funding from the Michigan Department of Transportation, the project team engaged the services of C2AE, a design and engineering firm out of Gaylord, to propel all 46+ miles of the project forward. C2AE will accelerate the planning process, often one of the most challenging pieces of a project of this scale and magnitude, and focus on getting schematic design completed in Fisherman’s Island State Park and design finalized between Acme and Elk Rapids.

This bold and visionary project is in its infancy, but thanks to strong and growing community support at the local, regional and state level, we’re excited about the future that lies ahead!
Have you been to Leo Creek?

The Leo Creek Preserve is a gem along the Leelanau Trail just a mile south of Suttons Bay right off the trail.

This seven acre preserve, funded and operated by former TART Trails Board Member Kate Thornhill, is open to the public. It showcases a permaculture landscape adjacent to a cedar stand where the coldwater stream, Leo Creek, flows through on its way to Suttons Bay. The gardens, art and natural features are a joy to behold any time of year! The preserve plays host to school groups, artists, elder care groups and folks who simply take advantage of a special trailside resting place. It is yet another example of how trails can foster a sense of community and bring people together.

A special thank you to Kate and her crew of volunteers for providing such a special space for everyone to enjoy. And if you haven’t yet been, put Leo Creek on your list of places to visit your next time out on the Leelanau Trail.

Kate Thornhill welcomes all to Leo Creek.
Sustainer’s Circle of Donors

TART Trails Sustainer’s Circle of Donors are a group of individuals, businesses and organizations who contribute $1,000 or more annually to support happy, active communities connected by trails. These generous donors provide crucial funding to the maintenance and advancement of trails across the nearly 100-mile network. Last year, TART Trails welcomed 42 new Sustainers!

Each year, Sustainer’s Circle Donors gather to attend special events that celebrate the trails. These fun and informal events give us a chance to get out on the trails together and provide a chance for Sustainers to learn more about the network they are helping to support. This year was no exception!

Sustainers enjoyed a snowshoe hike with the trail groomers on the Vasa Pathway. Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore Superintendents guided us on a ski-and-shoe tour of the Heritage Trail, followed by an afternoon at Cherry Republic Public House. In addition, we enjoyed an evening centered on planned giving, with TART’s Trail Blazer Society at Hotel Indigo, as well as a Toast to Trails at MAWBY Vineyards in the summer sunshine. And not to forget, we had the ever-popular Bike and Boat, a cycling-meets-sailing partnership event with our friends at Inland Seas.

All of this fun culminated with Oktoberfest, the harvest time celebration held to thank Sustainers for their generous commitment to supporting TART Trails! An evening at the beautiful Brengman Brothers Winery, with a delicious dinner catered by The Boathouse cast a glow on another wonderful year and had us looking ahead to more fun down the trail…

we hope you’ll join us along the way.

For more information about our Sustainer’s Circle and how you can join, please visit us online at: www.traversetrails.org/sustainers-circle

Pictured left and top right: Sustainers enjoy the Bike & Boat Adventure. Pictured bottom: Sustainers at Shady Lane Cellars off of the Leelanau Trail.
A Twist in the Trail: Update on the Boardman Lake Loop

Sometimes things just don’t go the way you planned, no matter how prepared you were. This summer was one of those times, when bids for a leg of the Boardman Lake Loop came in much higher than expected.

While certainly disappointed, we were not discouraged. We regrouped with our City, County and Garfield Township partners and got to work. Thanks to overwhelming community support, the City, County and Township have made finishing the Loop a top priority.

To contain costs, we are pursuing design tweaks and working to get the project out to bid this winter when the bidding climate should be better. And to ensure the project continues to reflect our community values — accessible, scenic and cost effective — TART Trails has committed to raising additional funds to help close the gap and get this project completed.

As we finalize the revised design and update the cost estimates, we’ll know the fundraising gap we need to close. We hope to again rally all you passionate trail lovers to close the Loop around Boardman Lake. Trails take perseverance, patience and passion, and with the Loop, it’s clear we’ve got those ingredients in abundance. So we’ll keep pushing through the winter with the goal of celebrating the Loop around the Lake in 2020!

New Trail Art!

Next time you are out for a stroll on the Boardman Lake Trail, you might want to look around a bit more. There are four contemporary sculptures by Detroit artist Robert Sestok along the trail.

In a partnership with the Traverse City Arts Commission and the Michigan Legacy Art Park, the trail plays host to the new exhibit on loan for the next two years.

The Art on the TART program has plans for more trailside art that use sculpture to tell the story of our region’s rich history, varied ecology and local economy.
Trailblazer Society: Understanding Your Options for Planned Giving

If you share the belief that communities are made better when connected by trails and want to have a lasting impact on our community, our planned giving program — the Trailblazer Society — is for you.

The Trailblazer Society is comprised of passionate TART Trails’ supporters who want to ensure the trail network thrives now and forever through planned giving.

A planned gift is a charitable contribution that is part of your long-term financial or estate plans. Planned gifts can include wills, trusts, beneficiary designations, charitable trusts, gifts in lieu of flowers, and charitable gift annuities.

Trailblazer Society members are invited to special events and are recognized in TART Trails’ materials and website if they choose to be. If you have included TART Trails in your legacy plans, we hope you will let us know so we can thank you and be sure we better understand your goals.

“I chose to allocate TART in my legacy plans so that my passion and energy for TART can live on past the time I get to spend on the trails. I am hopeful as to the future of TART to continue well beyond my lifetime to provide, safe, accessible trails in our communities. I want to do what I can to help ensure others get to continue to enjoy the amazing gift of TART Trails.”

– Sara Harding, Trailblazer

If you would like more information, please contact Casey Ressl: casey@traversetrails.org or 231.941.4300
A Multi-Modal Oneupweb

By Andy Olds and Tessa Lighty

Oneupweb was one of the many local businesses that participated in the Smart Commute Challenge held this past June. Andy Olds, Oneupweb’s PPC Project Manager, walks, bikes or skis to work regularly and was their team captain for Smart Commute Week. Tessa Lighty, Oneupweb’s Social Media Coordinator, helped Andy rally the team.

We had 19 people commit to smart commute for the week; each person averaged a distance of 10 miles. That’s 190 miles per day that Oneupweb employees commuted via alternative travel methods. For our workweek, that equaled 950 miles. With an average of 20 miles per gallon, we saved 47 gallons of fuel (just over a barrel of oil!). How much money did we save? We estimated that our team saved about $133 dollars at $2.80 per gallon. That would be more than $300 per person, per year, if we did this all year round!

We truly appreciate the leadership of TART Trails in organizing Smart Commute Week and we are thankful to live in an area where multi-modal transportation options are available.

“Since Smart Commute Week, I’ve made it my mission to walk to work as much as humanly possible. It’s almost 4 miles and takes me an hour but it’s worth it.” – Nicole Emenhiser

“This was the first year I didn’t need my car for work and could participate in Smart Commute Week. It gave me a huge boost of confidence (yes, I can ride my bike to work!) and it’s my goal moving forward to bike once per week.” – Tessa Lighty

“It inspired me to buy better shoes. I think it was pretty inspiring to see how far people commuted and it encouraged me to bike on trails more.” – Stephanie Miller

The 2019 Smart Commute Week Challenge was held the first week of June. As part of an annual celebration of cycling, walking, skateboarding, swimming, paddling, skipping, taking the bus, carpooling – anything other than getting to work in a single occupancy vehicle – TART Trails organized a challenge to see which business could add up the most points by “smart commuting” each day.

Incentives included free daily breakfasts, evening gatherings, and discounts at participating businesses. To cap it all off at the end of the challenge week, Oryana hosted a street party on Friday morning and TART Trails handed out prizes and recognition to the top performing teams.
Bring on More Ways to Love Winter in Leelanau!

Get your fatbike ready! New this year, we will be improving a special groomed fatbike path next to the Leelanau Trail, further expanding winter trail opportunities for all.

Trail users can also look forward to continued snow removal from the Cherry Bend Trailhead to the DeYoung Natural Area. This popular 1.5 mile section of trail for walkers and runners was celebrated last winter when it was cleared of snow for the first time! The feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Cross-country skiers can look forward to 14 miles of groomed ski trail between the DeYoung Natural Area and Fourth Street in Suttons Bay. Thank you to the hard work of a dedicated team of volunteers who make this possible!

Each year, we strive to continue the upward trend of more winter trail use. As is always the case, we are looking forward to another winter of getting more people active on all the trails by foot, ski or bike!

Photo by Gary L. Howe
A Lifelong Passion & Family Focus

Bob Otwell is the 2019 Recipient of the Jim Mudgett Trail Pioneer Award from TART Trails.

Bob played an important role in TART history. As Executive Director of TART Trails early on, his actions and acumen helped set the foundation for what TART Trails stands for today.

Highlights of Bob’s decade of leadership include opening TART Trails’ first office downtown on Front Street, starting TART Trails’ Vasa grooming program and launching TART Trails’ Sustainer’s Circle of Donors. Bob helped connect the TART Trail in Traverse City to the Leelanau Trail on Carter Road at the Caboose. He worked to extend paving of the Leelanau Trail from Fouch Road to Lakeview Hills Road. He gave his time and expertise to constructing East Boardman Lake Trail and the Boardman Lake pedestrian bridge.

Bob and his wife Laura were also integral in launching Smart Commute Week in Traverse City, which encourages people from all walks of life to use multi-modal transportation options as a healthier and happier way to get around.

Bob brought a steady hand to the new TART Trails when it was most needed. The commitment that he, his wife Laura and their three girls, Julia, Annie and Claire, have made over the years (including hosting the first office out of their home for a while) set a tone and a mindset of what it takes to fulfill the mission and vision of happy, active people enjoying a world-class trail system.

Bob’s passion runs beyond just trails. He has long advocated for safer bike and pedestrian infrastructure in our communities. It is a big reason why TART Trails adopted, as part of our strategic plan, the goal of improving infrastructure and safe access for all non-motorized forms of transportation.

We thank Bob and his family for all the energy, enthusiasm and joy they have brought to help create a culture of biking and walking that thrives in Traverse City.
Thank You to Our 2018-2019 TART Trails Volunteers

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Meg Ackerman
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Martha Ahluwalia
Frances Alfs
Jessica Alpers
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Enriching the Traverse region by providing a network of trails, bikeways, and pedestrian ways; and encouraging their use.