

**Tofte Park / Gitchi-Gami Trail Scoping Design Project**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015**

**Attendees**

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. CJ Fernandez, Consultant        | 10. Carol Peterson, Tofte                            |
| 2. Andy Hubley, ARDC               | 11. Mary Jane Huggins, Tofte                         |
| 3. Justin Otsea, ARDC              | 12. Bill Blank, Gitchi-Gami Trail Association (GGTA) |
| 4. Patricia Knight, Moving Matters | 13. Mark Rudningen, MN DNR                           |
| 5. Barb Gervais, Tofte             | 14. Gary Hansen, Tofte                               |
| 6. Jim King, Tofte                 | 15. Bruce Martinson, GGTA                            |
| 7. Paul James, Tofte               | 16. Brian Larsen, Cook County Herald                 |
| 8. Jerry Gervais, Tofte            | 17. Donald Fehr, Tofte                               |
| 9. Ginny Storlie, Cook County      |  |

**Meeting Summary**

The Tofte Park / Gitch-Gami Trail Scoping Design Options Review Meeting began at 6:00 p.m., May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015 at the Tofte Town Hall. The meeting began with Justin Otsea, Planner of ARDC welcoming everyone, introducing himself, and asked everyone in attendance to introduce them self. After introductions were made with everyone, Mr. Otsea gave a brief background regarding the process that has lead up to the partnership between the North Shore Scenic Drive Council (NSSDC) collaborating with Landscape Architect C.J. Fernandez to create design and improvement recommendations for the Tofte Park / GGT Scope. Funding for the project is made possible in part by a grant from MnDOT, Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program, IRRRB and others. Otsea also thanked *Moving Matters* who has partnered with ARDC for public engagement, outreach, and other efforts supporting both Tofte design projects.

Mr. Otsea continued to summarize the overall process of the project which involves three total meetings which culminates in a public open house style meeting including a formal presentation focused on a final design plans. The purpose of today's meeting (#2) is to review various design options for the site, the goals of which are to *review the potential design options, establish priorities of improvement options, and evaluate the feasibility of each recommendation.* After providing a summary of the initial kick-off meeting, Otsea handed the floor over to Landscape Architect C.J. Fernandez to present the design options he composed since the last meeting related to both the Gitchi-Gami Trail scope, and the Tofte Park design.

**Presentation**

Landscape Architect C.J. Fernandez informed the group that he had created a preliminary design, stemming from the information gathered from the initial kick-off meeting. He continued, stating that five main components drove the design concepts, which were: *addressing traffic safety and parking concerns, increasing ADA aspects of the site, improving existing uses as a community asset, and preserving and improving the experience close to the water.* The meeting was organized to discuss the GGT first, and Tofte Park second, for the organization of this document, sub headings for each project have been developed for the identified category.

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**Existing Conditions**

Mr. Fernandez led his presentation by providing a brief overview of the existing conditions and uses of trail and park users. These aspects are extremely important, as they impact the design proposals, some of which was identified at the kickoff meeting in February.

The existing conditions at the Tofte Park / GGT site can be described as the following:

*Gitchi-Gami Trail*

- 1.1 mile section (park road is approximately .4)
- Short & Mid-term solution for the Tofte is most realistic
- A lot of obstacles in the way on the North (hill) side of the highway
  - MnDOT has large ROW regarding the proposed expansions
- One or two homes for sale currently across from the bay,
- Currently, not expected to be LARGE increase in traffic until trail goes passed Schroeder
- Existing Bike usage
  - Primarily recreational and local users currently
  - Blue Fin has 70 existing rental bikes that get utilized most of the summer
- Business association open to potential routing nearby or along boardwalk

*Tofte Town Park*

- Park shelter
  - Constricts the walk way
  - Exposed to the weather, can get fairly cold
  - Township owns the structure
  - Existing Uses: A couple of weddings a month, local group uses a family reunion yearly, a couple other events, July 4th fireworks
- Vault Toilet on site
- Pump station for the fire department is down at the park
- Boat landing is controlled by both the town of Tofte and DNR has limited dealings
  - Tofte is the administrator, DNR has classified as a 'safe harbor' realistically, its' a little dangerous
  - Used to be used quite a lot prior to Taconite safe harbor, on a nice day can bring 5-6 trailers
  - Low priority for improving safety of boat access
  - A couple commercial fisherman utilize the dock facility
- Sewer and water is not available, extremely costly
- Deck platforms (near boat dock and adjacently) contain picnic tables, and interpretive panels
- Limited space when considering setbacks

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**Design Concepts of Draft Proposal**

*Gitchi-Gami Trail (Of note, during the discussion of the meeting a focus would be placed on the lake side route option was decided upon. The following design descriptions are specific to that option the following dialogue section will reflect rationale behind the decision. Additional details and graphics can be found at project website.)*

- Proposed as painted green trail in order to raise awareness, may not have ever been done on a Trunk highway before, so it would be precedent setting, expected to be understanding, but still be may be problematic.
- Koho Passing area:
  - Removing the parking in front, and expanding on the side by building of a retaining wall, replacing all of the existing stalls, potentially 1 or 2 more.
  - Good separation for the road, community space in front of the buildings.
  - Some additional planters and striping along the road to create driver awareness.
- Maintain grade separation from road, formalizes a turn lane and places 3 parallel parking spots that have some conflicts but very minimal – MnDOT’s standpoint is probably marginal at best, probably no parking along the road at all.
- Removal of parking in front of the check-in was encouraged by Blue Fin, seems to understand it’s a non-compliant use to have people parking in and out, new check in building has been highlighted, and parking would be moved.
- Kiosk, bench, bike racks, and fix-it station available near existing check in building as a great stopping spot for the state trail.
  - Kiosk can have info on local business, wayfinding, local park, interpretation, etc.
- Boardwalk across the bay – Out of 4 different options, none are easy, and all are quite cost prohibitive
  - Engineering/surveying required in addition to storm water management studies to decide true feasibility of improvement.
- Tofte Park Road widths makes public funding difficult, as funding requires larger lanes.
- Road doesn’t necessarily need to be a ‘state designated trail’ the Town could designate and sign / paint the lane as a shared space.
- Additional exploration into 61 ROW on lake side of 61 was identified as potential routing option. This design would allow for Tofte park road and trail to exist as a loop.

*Tofte Town Park*

- Redesign the parking lot in order to make a much more useful area, full drive in park and back out area with 6 stalls and one ADA stall with loading zone, lost are the fences, plantings create a buffer and definition of the parking.
- New trail is all ADA compliant
- Shelter – Pass through establishes an outdoor open air component in addition to enclosed component , completely ADA accessible and tied in to trail system in park,
  - Proposed board form concrete paving with low 18 in seat walls around the base , 20x40 footprint was identified as a use, approximately the size of a rented tent , brings facility closer to parking , enhances the parking, gives more usable space around the shelter, increasing its flexibility as a space.
  - Cut into the hillside and nestle thee shelter into it

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- Also connects back to the trail, enhancing overall connectivity of site.
- A fire can be utilized by both the inside and outside – splitting the space allows for more usage; two combined separate parties can use and not interact.
- Scissors truss allows for the 4 doors on both sides of the building can create an open space facility, the scissors goes up into the pitch in the roof and doesn't become a closed in 'ceiling'.
- 4 tables in both outdoor and indoor space (room for more if needed)
- Lakeside window on the front of the structure which can be open and closed.
- Approximately the same size as existing shelter, maybe a few feet wider (8 ish)
- Fire capacity seemed like the best opportunity for heating compared to electric unit, can cause maintenance issue, but seemed to be logical and wanted to be kept in.
- Roof is currently designed as a metal, maintenance and longevity was reasoning for metal, even though they are more expensive.
- The building is insulated so it can be utilized late in the season.
- Concrete floor -24 ft x 20 ft 400 sq ft / Small deck on the rear side to sit on
- No overhang can be very good for maintenance to reduce bugs, birds, bats, dirt, etc.
- Enclosure would bring a lot more family events, and usage from locals as well
- Maintenance and operation is something to discuss
- Continue to utilize the existing toilet facility, but improvements to accessibility.
- Expectations that the community has little desire for MANY LARGE events, but the town can manage what they rent out to for ideal party sizes, and restrictions, etc.
  - The size of the building brings down the ability for bigger events.

For more pictures of existing conditions and design options, please see the scanned design layouts posted on the project's website: [www.becausemovingmatters.org/TofteTrail](http://www.becausemovingmatters.org/TofteTrail) or contact ARDC staff (information listed below).

## **Dialogue**

This section of the meeting was focused on creating a dialogue with the committee in order to gain feedback on each of the proposed improvement designs. While this segment of the meeting was lengthy, a list of the topics from this discussion which will be utilized or need further exploration for the final design(s) are listed below:

### *Gitchi-Gami Trail*

- Hill Side commercial traffic (gas station, Americinn, etc.) negatively impacts the experience, Managing the storm water could be very problematic and costly.
- Further review on existing ROW ownership also needs to be done for hill side route.
- Many echoed how the parking in front of Koho is problematic, solution seems to make a lot of sense , only hang up is the large retaining wall (approximately 7 ft high)
- Boardwalk across the bay – Out of 4 different options, none are easy, and all are quite cost prohibitive
- Plantings, benches, etc. who would maintain (Using public land can open up additional funding sources for implementation).

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- Landscaping could be up to the owners for maintenance and operation, as it's close to existing buildings, adjacent property owner would need to agree to it before hand, otherwise you would have to just keep it as only pavement = there are opportunities to have business owners sign agreements to continue maintenance and improvements moving forward if needed.
- Idea of widening the Tofte park road was brought up as being more cost prohibitive the building on the North side of the road –initial reaction was that cost can be very significant as the road would have to be reconstructed, not just extended, - the proximity to the costs difference would significantly rely on the storm water investments required.
- Utility survey would be very valuable as pole moving can be difficult and costly, there could be other options then only relocating, not easy solutions, and with addressing storm water and filling ditches, expenses already growing.
- Both routes are fairly close when it comes to overall costs.
- Thoughts that even if you have the trail on the North side, you would probably still have many bikers crossing the highway to get to the lake, as it draws people regardless.
- At existing crossing on west side, visibility is difficult, building up grade in order to create an area for lake side bikers to stop and see , the two different roads coming out at the end, could be argued that a proper intersection should be recreated.
- Many people agreed that widening the road isn't very necessary, existing works very well to self-enforce, painting existing road is extremely cheaper than construction.
- Concerns regarding the parking availability-Currently, little designated GGT parking, scattered throughout the community. It was mentioned that designating Birch Grove as a specific parking 'trailhead' has been explored as some existing facilities are available.
- CJ explained need for further discussions with MNDNR and MnDOT in order to shape the full picture of vision and available resources prior to a final design.

*Tofte Town Park*

- Concrete can be polished or left very simple, depends on desire
- Discussion on coloration, could be utilized as weathered wood (stain and treat), new and interesting take on the twin boat house idea was the reasoning behind the red.
- Cost of relocation of existing shelter was raised, seemed very costly for minimal improvement.
- Questioning on the chimney, regarding water that can get into the concrete, CJ discussed an example that he can showcase that addressed a similar issue. A certain mixture of concrete was utilized, now standing for 7 years, so far has had no issues so far.
- Maintenance & uses are significant issues, that will need to be addressed moving forward
- Can this space generate revenue? Weddings, workshops, education, multiple different uses especially when enclosed can be utilized, up to the desire of the Town.
- Designing a pad where portojohns could go could be brought into the design in order to service LARGER events may be something to incorporate into final design.
- As of now, water availability is little to none, may be tying into Bluefin system soon, three-season may be a possibility into the future, but water is a big question mark.
- 20 amps of electricity is available, sounds like there's limited capacity to increase it, runs out of the fire house, drawing more out of there could infringe on the Fire Dept. service.

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- Could draw a line from the City hall to increase capacity, sending a new line down to the new site would probably be the best option, 50 amps of service is usually the demand. It was thought the powerline is fairly close, so probably wouldn't be too difficult.
- Emphasized that finding a vision that generates community buy in is the greatest outcome from this process that can service leveraging these dollars.
- Town and County would have to be utilized in order to be a fiscal agent: Beaver Bay was discussed as a similar example.

**Next Steps**

Discussion was held on when the next meeting, a late summer/early fall meeting was tentatively agreed upon, with continued communication in order to establish a date that would work for a majority of stakeholders/committee members. Tentative plans also set the meeting location, once again, to be the Tofte Town Hall.

***Meeting Notes Compiled by:***

Justin Otsea, ARDC (With assistance from C.J. Fernandez)

***For Project Questions or Comments:***

Justin Otsea, ARDC / (218) 529-7526 / [jotsea@ardc.org](mailto:jotsea@ardc.org)

***For additional information about the planning process, please visit:***

[www.becausemovingmatters.org/TofteTrail](http://www.becausemovingmatters.org/TofteTrail)