

Tofte Park and Gitchi-Gami Trail and Wayside Design Project
Meeting Summary
February 5th, 2015

Attendees

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|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. CJ Fernandez, Consultant | 8. John Nelson, Tofte |
| 2. Andy Hubley, ARDC | 9. Gary Hansen, Tofte |
| 3. Justin Otsea, ARDC | 10. David Monson, Tofte |
| 4. Maren Webb, Moving Matters | 11. Ron Ankeny, Tofte/Architect |
| 5. Patrick Knight, Moving Matters | 12. Brian Larsen, Cook Co. Harold |
| 6. Mark Rudningen, MN DNR | 13. John Wytanis, Tofte |
| 7. Barb Gervais, Tofte | 14. Dennis Rysdahl, Tofte/Bluefin Bay |

Meeting Summary

The Tofte Park and Gitchi-Gami Trail and Wayside Design Kickoff Meeting began at 5:00 p.m., February 5th, 2015 at the Tofte Town Hall. The meeting began with Justin Otsea, Planner (and project manager) of ARDC welcoming everyone, introducing herself, and having everyone introduce themselves to the room. After introductions were made with everyone, Mr. Otsea gave a brief background regarding the process that has lead up to the collaboration between the North Shore Scenic Drive Council (NSSDC) and Landscape Architect C.J. Fernandez to create design and improvement recommendations for the Tofte Park and Gitchi-Gami Trail and Trail access Wayside .

The Process

It was established that throughout the process, Mr. Otsea will be the point of contact for information and notification distribution. Landscape Architect C.J. Fernandez outlined the process of the project which includes three meetings:

Meeting #1 (Today) Preliminary kickoff/data acquisition Meeting- Discuss the background, area relationships, experiences, needs and opportunities related to the site. Visit the Town Park, Trail route, and area of trail wayside in order to discuss potential options as well as get a stronger association with the site's opportunities and needs. Create a core 'steering committee' to evaluate recommendations. Conduct project programming with attendees.

Meeting #2 (April/May) -Design Options Review Meeting- Review design options for the site after analyzing data acquired from meeting one, project programming, and other research. Design options will include both short term and long term recommendations to improve the site. The focus of the design work will address trail route options with focus on a Hwy 61 crossing and Bay crossing, a trail access wayside, and design options for the Tofte Town Park improvements and new park shelter.

The primary goal of meeting #2 will be to review the potential design options, establish priorities of improvement options, and also evaluate the feasibility of each recommendation.

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Meeting #3 (Early-Mid Summer) Final Approval / Public Open House Meeting- Present final recommendations and design improvements to both the committee and public in an open house style presentation meeting. Discussion was held on additional stakeholders to include in the planning process and/or invite to the final public meeting. Some of the identified groups included: local / adjacent property owners, Gitchi-Gami Trail Association, and others.

Mr. Fernandez also highlighted the need for an established a local champion(s) to see the improvements through from start to finish, specifically for the park improvements. While going through a planning process and gaining public support will assist in leveraging funds, a local champion to assist in seeing the improvements through until completion can prove to be invaluable for these types of projects.

At the completion of the project C.J. Fernandez will supply both digital and hard copy of final designs and recommendations in a report, which will also include meeting summaries, cost estimates, and ARDC will assist in identifying potential funding avenues and grant opportunities available in order to complete the improvements to the site.

Project Programming:

This section of the meeting was focused on creating a dialogue with the committee in order to gain information on the site. Some highlighted topics included site history, area relationships, experiences with/management of the site, observed needs, potential improvements, and a description of property boundaries and extents of the project scope. Highlighted topics from this discussion are listed below (The list has been split between Tofte Park and GGT/Wayside Dialogue)

Tofte Town Park

Site History/Existing Conditions

- 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

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- 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

Observed Needs/Issues

- Concern that the structures proximity to the water impacts usability due to cold from the wind
- Structure does feel a little run down once inside
- Proximity to parking lot forces users to carry materials long way to utilize it
- Potential deck with a new shelter
- Extend seasonal use of the park and shelter (potential for fire place) Some safety concerns with a fire facility

Additional Project Programming Comments

- Main components for Site design to include are:
 - Increasing usability / accessibility of facilities to users of all ability levels
 - Enhancing the educational aspect of the Site
 - Enhancing overall safety concerns for all users
- Examples of potential short term improvements include:
 - Improved interpretation opportunities, building off existing facilities
 - Accessibility Improvements
- Examples of potential long term improvements include:
 - Improved Parking capacity
 - New structure in park
- Desired amenities:
 - Windows
 - Indoor outdoor
 - Flexibility of use
 - Roughly the same size footprint
 - Low maintenance
 - Doors that can open to expand or close due to weather, with another deck that could be utilized space
 - Could increase proximity to the parking lot
- Seems that vault toilet is best option
- Don't want to take away the size of the park by too large of a footprint increase
- Maintaining existing programming

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- Tables /places to sit
- Similar parking
- Flexibility with vault toilet
- Deck is used for 4th of July launch pad

Gitchi-Gami Trail Route and Wayside

Site History

- 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

Observed Needs/Issues

- GGT users are already parking at the forest service area, so increase in bicycle traffic may create need for increased parking in order to maintain capacity for conflicting uses (park and dock traffic)
- MnDOT has no 61 reconstruction plan
- No matter what, there has to be a road crossing
- Limited amounts of funding
- Current trail in park is seeing fast riding causing cost concerns, and will be signing appropriately
- Difficult to see alignments that don't utilize existing right of way, getting off the road is difficult physically
- COHO deli and museum section is troublesome already

Additional Project Programming Comments

- *Examples of potential short term improvements include:*
 - Street/road Designated Bike route with paint and signage
- *Examples of potential long term improvements include:*
 - Safe connection of existing GGT segments, bookending Tofte
- Being able to control the crossing of the highway at a single point is important

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- Options for trail routing through town, and also accessing the lake from the trail access wayside will also be presented.
 - Underpass/bridge is fantastic, however would significantly raise costs
- Cutting through the Bluefin bay-Not ideal
- Associations are open to utilizing some of Lake walk and having a drop down near entry point
- Using road way to the hillside requires multiple crossings
- Open to a “walk your bike section”
- Other state funds could be available in shorter timeframe
- Potential Ideas include:
 - Utilize the park road, stripe it, sign it (Limited existing traffic)
 - Could dramatically reduce costs
 - New Crossing opportunities
 - Active road crossings to notify the biker whether or not there is traffic coming
 - Widening the current board walk, lengthen it, (high maintenance section regardless due to lake proximity)

Next Step:

Mr. Fernandez will continue to acquire/analyze data, as well as draft design and improvement recommendation options in various scales and explore multiple scoping options for the trail. A late April or May meeting was tentatively agreed upon for meeting #2 to review the draft recommendations, with continued communication with the Township and Committee members in order to establish a date that would work for steering committee members. ARDC will also establish a project website prior to the next meeting:

www.ArrowheadPlanning.org/TofteTownPark

Meeting Notes Compiled by:

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For Project Questions or Comments:

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