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Sheboygan County Shines in Eyes of Non-Motorized Pilot Communities

SHEBOYGAN, Wisconsin – Once a year, as part of the Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program, the four fortunate pilot communities as well as the Federal agencies involved, convene to strategize, discuss opportunities, share successes and failures, and present to one another what projects are being attempted in each community. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the organization which lobbied hard to bring this opportunity to each community, coordinates and organizes these meetings.

This past week Sheboygan County hosted individuals from Marin County, CA, Minneapolis, MN, Columbia, MO, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Federal Highway Department (FHWA), the Volpe Center (US Dot's research branch), Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and Congressman Tom Petri.

We learned each community has a different process and each has had its own struggles. All have struggled working through the development of a pilot program making sure the all the I's are dotted and T's are crossed at each governmental level. Each community has projects where installation/construction will happen very soon. In those regards all communities are at about the same level of progress.

Where we can say Sheboygan County is positively unique from the others is that we have definitely maintained a much larger level of public involvement. While other community's advisory committees have seen less or in some cases no further participation, our committee, the Citizens Advisory & Technical Committee, remains quite active and involved. Also, the public participation from not only the CATC members, but from those folks out there who regularly attend meetings, call or visit with suggestions, and/or write articles are greatly appreciated. At the end of the day, we feel all this public involvement and awareness will produce positive and hopefully strong results.

According to Joint Resources & Transportation Committee Chairman Keith Ablner who attended a few of the meeting sessions, "Each community has been presented with an outstanding opportunity to be not only a domestic, but an international model in how biking and walking can be a large percentage of the transportation load. Movement away from the automobile is growing worldwide. Not only is this type of transportation cheaper to build and maintain, it will help provide an overall healthier community in reduced air pollution and increased physical activity; all benefits to the taxpayer in the

long run. This can only happen with public support and involvement and we have seen a marvelous amount that thus far. I really hope it continues.”

On a different note, to say the least, the citizens of Sheboygan County deserve a big pat on the back. Our visitors had absolutely nothing but good to say about our community. Blue Harbor provided excellent accommodations, food and service throughout their stay. The Seabird Restaurant at Blue Harbor even accommodated the request of our visitors for a Brat Fry, something not normally on their menu. Steve Schmitt, a CATC member, hosted and provided, at no charge, the welcome dinner at the Highland House. Bike ‘N Ski, at no charge, provided bicycles for the group bicycle tour of our community. And, the MT Wine Glass & Groto provided a wonderful dinner.

The entire occasion went off without a hitch. Again, many thanks are warranted!

Hopefully the facilities and programs we implement through our program make Sheboygan County an even better place to live and more impressive in the eyes of our visitors.

Lastly, if nothing else was learned throughout the week, which is not the case, our fine friends from Marin County, CA made us aware that at AT&T Park, home of the San Francisco Giants, they serve something called a “Sheboygan Dog.” They even do it the proper justice of serving it on a true brat bun. Maybe eating a few of those each day is what caused Barry Bonds to bulk up!

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