



**STANDING ROOM** only in the Cleveland Township Hall didn't prevent more than 100 audience members from hearing from OHM Advisors engineer Larry LaCross on preliminary plans to construct the final five miles of the planned 27-mile long Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail.

# Input taken, still sought for final leg of Lakeshore trail

By Eric Carlson  
Of The Enterprise staff

More than 100 people tried to crowd into the Cleveland Township Hall last Wednesday evening, Aug. 29, to hear about plans to construct the final five miles of the 22-mile-long Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail.

The trail begins near Empire and currently ends a stone's throw from the Township Hall, which is located on Harbor Highway (M-22) at County Road 669 (Bohemian Road).

According to township Supervisor Tim Stein, there was standing room only inside the hall and a few latecomers ended up standing outside the building to listen in.

The main event at the meeting was a presentation by a representative of OHM Advisors, an engineering firm hired to create a proposal for construction of the final phase of the trail. Those in attendance also heard from representatives of Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation (TART) Trails, Inc., the National Park Service, and other groups.

"After the presentations, there were maps of the areas on the wall and the audience was encouraged to put sticky notes on the maps providing opinions and concerns," reports Jerry Leanderson, secretary of the Little Traverse Lake Property Owners Association.

Leanderson prepared a summary of

the meeting for members of the association who could not attend the meeting. Members of the association filed a federal lawsuit seeking to block a plan to route the trail around Little Traverse Lake parallel to Traverse Lake Road where many of them own homes. The suit was dismissed earlier this year.

Plans call for the trail to be routed up M-22 to Traverse Lake Road north of Little Traverse Lake, around the lake back to M-22, and then north to Good Harbor Trail (County Road 651) where it would end within Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

Those opposed to the plan had hoped the trail would proceed up Bohemian Road to the Lake Michigan shoreline, then parallel the shoreline through a National Park Service designated Wilderness area before ending at Good Harbor Trail. However, the legal effort to re-route the trail away from Traverse Lake Road were unsuccessful.

"At this point, it's really just about figuring out some of the details of how and where this final portion of the trail will be routed along Traverse Lake Road and getting some input from those with an interest in the project," Stein explained.

The regional planning agency Networks Northwest has a website on which public input is still being accepted in connection with a preliminary design for the final phase of the trail. The website is located at [sleepingbeartrail.org](http://sleepingbeartrail.org).

Building the trail has been a multi-year, multi-million-dollar process. Much of the funding has come from federal grants and through private fundraising.

The first four-mile section was completed between the Dune Climb and Glen Arbor in 2012 for \$1.4 million. A 5.5-mile section from the Dune Climb to Empire opened in 2014 at a cost of \$3.4 million. In 2015, another 3.5-mile section between Fisher Road and the Port Oneida Rural Historic District opened, costing \$2.3 million.

The 3.6-mile section from Port Oneida to Bohemian Road where the trail currently ends was finished in 2016 at a cost of \$2.4 million. That included a boardwalk over Narada Lake.

The overall cost for the last 5.2-mile section is currently unknown and no estimates will be available until OHM finalizes a plan, according to officials.

Last month, a committee of officials working through Networks Northwest hired the Petoskey-based firm OHM for \$56,000 to prepare plans for the final phase of the trail.

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