

Region trails attract outdoor enthusiasts

BY MELANIE BOLTHOUSE
Summer Guide editor

For nature lovers who are seeking ways to get in shape in the great outdoors, north-west Michigan offers a variety of trails for hikers,

cyclists, runners, skaters and walkers of all skill levels.

The most widely known trails are located in Traverse City. The TART Trail, the Leelanau Trail

and the Vasa Pathway make up the Traverse Area Recreational and Transportation (TART) Trails system.

The TART Trail, which runs from M-72 east to Acme, is the most famous of the trails. It is fully paved for 10 miles and accommodates all types of non-motorized vehicles from inline skates to bicycles. The trail is fairly flat and can be easily navigated by people of all skill levels.

The TART Trail is not only used for recreational purposes; it is also a way for people to navigate around town.

"It's a wonderful artery for travel for people staying at the (Traverse City) State Park or in hotels around the Miracle Mile," said Tim Brick, owner of Brick Wheels on Eighth Street.

Most people ride to the trail from their homes or vacation spots, but for those who drive, the downtown public lots offer close-range parking.

A quarter mile from where the TART Trail ends at M-72, another trail picks up.



Record-Eagle/Lara Neel

Linda Comai, Doug Gee, Sarah Comai and Barbara Gee of Novi ride along the TART Trail near Woodmere Avenue. The trail runs through Traverse City to Acme.

The 15-mile Leelanau Trail runs from Carter Road in Greilickville to Suttons Bay. There are three trailheads along the route with parking areas at Cherry Bend Road, Fouch Road and Fourth Street in Suttons Bay.

The trail is divided into two parts, with the first five miles paved and the remainder packed gravel running north.

"The southern section is multi-purpose for Rollerblades or strollers or bicycles," said Bob Otwell,

executive director of TART Trails, Inc. "The northern section is more for mountain bikes or walking."

Currently, trail users have to ride along the shoulder of M-22 to get from the TART Trail to the Leelanau Trail, but plans for a connector are in the works, said Otwell.

"The half-mile connection has all been designed and is now up for bid," he said. "Hopefully construction will be soon to tie those two together so that will give us 16 miles of paved trail, all connected from Elwood Township in Leelanau County to Acme Township in Grand Traverse."

For cyclists and walkers who are looking for more hilly terrain, the Vasa Pathway on Bartlett Road offers 25 miles of trails.

Vasa has four loops: a 25K loop, a 10K loop, a 5K loop and a 3K loop. The smaller loops are less hilly, for beginning cyclists. The trails are wide as they serve as both classic and skating cross country trails in the winter.

For more technically oriented cyclists, the Vasa Single Track is a more advanced trail.

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