

A cyclist cruises down the nonmotorized trail



People enjoy the nonmotorized trail and outdoor seating last weekend



Trailhead, parking lot in Union Pier offers resting spot for walkers, runners and cyclists

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Runners, walkers, and cyclists now have a spot to rest and refresh themselves for the journey ahead at the newly completed trailhead facility, which includes restrooms, off-street parking, and benches, on Townline Avenue in Union Pier.

New Buffalo Township Supervisor Michelle Heit said that it's been open since shortly after the July Fourth weekend.

"We'd gotten our occupancy permit and it's been open ever since," she said.

Heit said the gravel parking lot located next to the building is a work in progress, as it's been decided that it'll be unpaved for now.

"There's still landscaping, a little thank you water feature garden (for The Pokagon Fund) going in soon – a few things are still going to happen there but everything's up and usable now," she said.

Burkholder Excavating did the parking lot. The trailhead was paid for through a grant from The Pokagon Fund (New Buffalo Township wrote for the grant).

"The Pokagon Fund actually paid for the property too – they gave us the grant to purchase the property and part of the grant agreement was to put the parking lot in," Heit said.

Heit said the trailhead has been busy the times she's stopped by to put

supplies in there.

"People are in and out using it so much already and the picnic tables in the front – it's nice," she said.

Also getting plenty of use is the nearby 10-foot non-motorized path, which was a part of the Red Arrow Highway/Union Pier Corridor Improvement Project.

A ribbon-cutting was held in downtown Union Pier for the project on Memorial Day weekend, and Heit said the path has been busy ever since.

"From the minute it was done, I've seen so many people, especially families...For kids who need to be able

to get out and use bikes, there's not really a sidewalk in that area, so they can safely get out and walk or ride bikes or roller skate. It's been nice to see families be able to get out and move around and bike," she said.

Heit said that she hopes the path will someday continue to Bridgman. It's hoped that the trail will be part of a future linear park, which will stretch from the Galien River County Park in New Buffalo Township to Bridgman.

"We put in the first portion of that," she said.

Heit said that a block party celebrating the newly finished corridor project is tentatively scheduled to take place sometime after Labor Day.



The parking lot behind the trailhead was full of cars Sunday, Aug. 1



The trailhead on Townline Road, with public restrooms and benches