



Local News

Comments sought on proposed SW Mich. bike route

[Print Page](#)

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI - H-P Correspondent

Published: Sunday, September 26, 2010 1:08 PM EDT

BENTON HARBOR - Cycling enthusiasts will have an opportunity to offer suggestions on the proposed U.S. Bicycle Route (USBR) 35 project at a public hearing Wednesday.

The meeting will take place from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Michigan Works, Anchor Rooms A-B, 499 W. Main St., Benton Harbor.

The purpose is to take public comment about the project's Southwest Michigan Route, to run from South Haven to New Buffalo, said Suzann Flowers, program assistant for the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC).

SWMPC staff will host the hearing.

"The main purpose is to go over the proposal, and take comments about it. People should know this is a proposed route that can be changed," she said.

The Southwest Michigan Route is part of USBR 35, a 500-mile project meant to take advantage of existing road and trail facilities and to sketch out the ideal route for a cyclist, Flowers said. No construction will be required.

"What we want people to understand is that this is a mapped route, first and foremost," Flowers said. "It's not like they'll (cyclists) be taking those routes that go nowhere, down some little side road that takes them through a residential area."

Making bicycling safer and more attractive is one major goal behind the project, as well as promoting tourism and economic development, according to Flowers.

In Michigan, the route would run from St. Joseph to Sault Ste. Marie, a commission news release said. The local leg will connect the cities of New Buffalo, Bridgman, St. Joseph, Benton Harbor and South Haven.

The Michigan section is being developed by a Corridor Committee from the cities of Holland, Ludington, Manistee, Muskegon, Petoskey, Sault Ste. Marie, St. Joseph, South Haven and Traverse City.

One of the key people behind the effort is South Haven's project manager, Paul Vandenbosch, who's also the Corridor Committee's secretary.

"Paul has been one of the people who's really played a role in bringing this project to the forefront - in terms of pulling this committee together and getting the information out to our local officials, like the (Berrien County) Road Commission," Flowers said. "Paul will be there to speak about the route and procedures for changing this route."

Wednesday's hearing is the only local event of its kind, so anybody who's interested in the issue

should try to attend, Flowers said. Those who cannot may send written comments to the SWMPC's offices at 185 E. Main St., Suite. 701, Benton Harbor, MI 49022, or e-mail to flowerss@swmpc.org.

"The Corridor Committee will take into account any changes that can be made to the route and how they can be made," Flowers said. "Then it (the proposed route map) will go to the Berrien and Van Buren County road commissions, and they'll approve it with their own recommendations."

The document then goes to the Michigan Department of Transportation, which has the final say, and can change the route as it sees fit, she added.

The first push to name U.S. bicycle routes began in the 1970s, with U.S. Bicycle Route 1 through North Carolina and Virginia, and U.S. Bicycle Route 76 through Virginia, Kentucky and Illinois, according to an overview released by Flowers. No other routes have been designated since those two were established.

For information, call 269-925-1137, Ext. 17. To view the Corridor Committee's proposed route, visit www.swmpc.org/usbr35.asp.

Copyright © 2010 - Herald Palladium

[x] Close Window