

The wait is over

Construction to begin on Boyne-City Charlevoix non-motorized trail

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After multiple lengthy delays, construction on a recreational non-motorized trail between Boyne City and Charlevoix will begin in a little less than a month.

Boyne City city manager Michael Cain said the start date of the first phase of the project is Thursday, March 3. "We received an approved schedule from MDOT (Michigan Department of Transportation)," Cain said. "This portion will take it from Boyne City to Young State Park."

The much-discussed 15-mile-long trail ran into a series of delays in recent years as officials worked through financial, legal and environmental factors that complicated the process.

The first delays occurred as the project waited for federal grant money to come through and to get approval to build through part of Young State Park. Then in April of last year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared the northern long-eared bat, a species that has been decimated by a fungal disease, as threatened. Construction was restricted because it could disrupt the species during pup-rearing season. Again construction was put on hold while state officials waited to see the amounts of money distributed by the federal government as Congress continued to debate a transportation funding plan.

The second of five phases to be constructed will run 3.3 miles, originating from the Little Traverse Wheelway in Charlevoix. The third phase will be in Horton Bay and will be 2.9 miles long.

"Early February is when they (department of transportation) submitted the proposed schedule," Cain said. "Elmer's is going to be the contractor on the project."

Everything has been accepted and the funding is there, said Charlevoix County Parks and Recreation director Ross Maxwell. He added the first phase should be done at the end of July.

Maxwell is excited to see the trail's construction finally begin.

"I've been working for almost five years and they've worked on a five years before me," he said.

Cain said he's proud of the work Maxwell has put toward the project.

"Even after all the hiccups he stuck with it," Cain said. "Everybody stayed focused to make it happen. We're looking forward to it."

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