

Lombard

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Local news that's close to home

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Trail users say safety an issue at busy intersection

By Deanna C. White
Staff writer

Members of the local trail advocacy group "The Friends of the Great Western Trail" say they are pleased to hear the village of Lombard is planning some road improvements that should correct the snarl of traffic at the busy intersection of St. Charles Road and Grace Street.

But trail friend Don Kirchenberg says until there are improved markings and painted crosswalks to alert motorists that a busy bike trail bisects the intersection as well, that intersection will continue to pose a hazard to the thousands of bicyclists, joggers and walkers who use the trail on a daily basis.

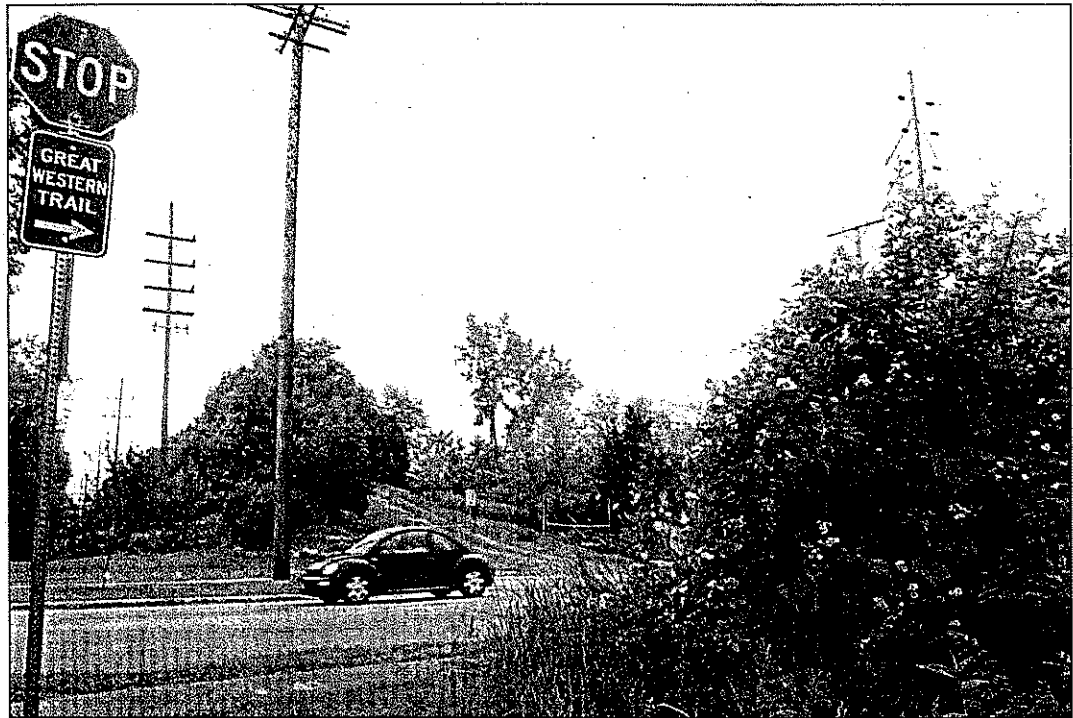
"We're concerned that on a nice warm day there are over 8,000 people on the trail, in addition to the people coming to the park and the water park near that intersection," Kirchenberg said. "We're asking for painted crosswalks and improved markings to alert everyone to watch for the crossing and to direct trail users to where the safest crossing is."

Kirchenberg said the intersection is particularly dangerous because trail users have to make a detour, bobbing in and out of traffic, to reconnect with the trail two blocks later.

High traffic volume further complicates the situation.

"There are 12,000 cars a day on St. Charles Road, 6,000 cars a day on Grace Street and 100 trains a day that go through that intersection," Kirchenberg said.

Kirchenberg said the all-volunteer group of trail users has asked Lombard officials to paint the crosswalks. They are also appealing to state legislators to construct a pedestrian bridge, similar to the one built near Finley Road and the



TRAIL USERS
A sign warns motorists of the crossing for the Great Western Trail at St. Charles Road and Grace Street in Lombard. Trail advocates are pressing for better signage and a pedestrian bridge to improve safety at the busy intersection.

Staff photo by Erica Benson

Prairie Path, to improve safety at the intersection.

He urges trail users, or anyone concerned about safety at the intersection, to contact Lombard officials and state legislators to lobby for improvements.

"They all have a hand in the funding and governing of the trail," Kirchenberg said. "We need to get priority and funds allocated to solve this problem."

Kirchenberg says the trail friends are dovetailing on earlier efforts to improve safety at the trail crossing.

In 1996, Ed Barsotti, now executive director of the League of Illinois Bicyclists, was one of the volunteers who lobbied for, and received, better signage at the intersection.

The 12-mile trail, which used to be the bed of the Great Western Railroad,

runs from Villa Park to Elgin.

Because it is a relatively continuous trail, Kirchenberg said, it is heavily used by both recreators and commuters, who prefer taking a non-motorized route to work.

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The Friends of the Great Western Trail is an *all-volunteer group* of trail users including walkers, joggers, bicyclists and equestrians organized to improve the safety on the GWT and on the roads leading to the trail. We are asking all trail users to contact the Village President of Lombard, urging Lombard to make improving safety at the trail crossing at Grace St, St Charles Rd and the Union Pacific Train Tracks a top priority. Send letters to the Village of Lombard, Village President Bill Mueller at 255 E. Wilson, Lombard, IL 60148. We are also asking them to consider alternatives to crossing these busy streets and train tracks by adding a bridge like the one built over Finley Rd in Lombard on the IL Prairie Path. Also contact the DuPage County Board Members and State Legislators asking them to make a top priority improving the safety on the Great Western Trail and the roads (like North Ave and St Charles Rd.) leading to it, safe for trail users.

To get the names, addresses and phone numbers of your County Board members and State Legislators call the DuPage County Board of Elections 630-682-7440 or the IL Board of Elections from any county, 312-814-6440. For more information, write to us c/o Don Kirchenberg, Voluntary Chairperson at 247 E Lincoln Ave, Glendale Heights, IL 60139 or send us an email at FrndsGrWstnTrl@AOL.com