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Keep pursuing Bluegrass Road sidewalks

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Union Township is moving ahead with its ambitious project to build sidewalks on both sides of Bluegrass Road between Mission and Isabella roads.

As part of that plan, sidewalks also will be built on a portion of Isabella Road, to serve residents of apartment complexes. Township leaders say the project is scheduled for 2013.

The previous township board was adamantly opposed to requiring sidewalks. Members of those boards saw no reason to spend money, either tax money or property owners money, on improvements that no one would use.

One look at the well-worn paths next to the right-of-way on Bluegrass clearly indicates someone's walking there. The recent tragedy when an elderly woman on a mobility scooter was seriously injured when she was struck by a taxi while riding in Bluegrass Road simply underlines the crying need for sidewalks.

It's not as easy as just pouring some concrete, however. When Bluegrass Road was widened to accommodate four or five lanes of traffic, almost the entire right-of-way was used. The same situation exists on Isabella.

That means the township has to negotiate easements with every property owner. Some have said yes. Some say they want to think about it. Some just haven't responded to township representatives.

If one's perspective on the world is only from behind the wheel of a sport-utility vehicle, sidewalks and other pedestrian- and bicyclist-friendly improvements don't seem like that big a deal. But more and more people are choosing to walk or bicycle, and they deserve to be safe.

The township must continue to pursue this project, and the affected property owners need to come to agreements on easements with the township. The development of the Bluegrass Road corridor as a major shopping and residential area has been good for everyone in mid-Michigan. Now, it's time to finish the job.

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