



General

This section provides the basic information about the park or trail and the organizations responsible for it.

Park/Trail ID # 15-059D	Funding Application 20-008F	Park/Trail Name Mesabi Trail
Last Update June 17, 2020		
Project Name Mesabi Trail - Tower to Soudan Trail Segment Replacement	District 1,2	Existing Acres or Miles 126

Project Description

The Mesabi Trail is a planned 155 mile long paved trail from Grand Rapids to Ely with approximately 126 miles of the trail have been completed since the trails inception in year 1996. The Mesabi Trail is owned and maintained by the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority (RRA). The trail serves as an alternate transportation and recreational corridor namely for non-motorized pedestrian, bike, ski, horses, and motorized snowmobile use where designated. This request is for the replacement of the trail segment starting in Tower and ends at the entrance of the Soudan Underground Mine State Park. This trail segment is approximately 2.5 miles and was originally built 25 years ago, which is at the end of its useful trail life. The Legacy funds will be used for the replacement of the existing trail segment. This segment of the Mesabi Trail is of prime importance to these communities and their economic focus on recreation, tourism and a healthy lifestyle. The State of Minnesota is investing millions of dollars in our newest State Park, Vermilion State Park, and \$5.8 million in the Soudan Underground Mine State Park. These unique assets are connected to the communities by the Mesabi Trail which also connects to Bearhead State Park and the recreational opportunities available at Lake Vermilion. This is one of the primary sections of the Mesabi Trail and receives much use and is valuable to the communities of Tower and Soudan. We are proud of the work of the Mesabi Trail over the last twenty five years and this segment is the start of our efforts to maintain this asset at a high level which the public has come to expect and enjoy.

Project Area Maps

Mesabi Trail existing miles

[http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/2020 Mesabi Trail Map_1d2768.pdf](http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/2020%20Mesabi%20Trail%20Map_1d2768.pdf)

Specific location

[http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/Tower to Soudan Specific location map_3176b9.pdf](http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/Tower%20to%20Soudan%20Specific%20location%20map_3176b9.pdf)

Organization St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority	Lead Contact Full Name Bill Dahl	Lead Contact Title Deputy Director
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Mailing Address
111 Station 44 Road

City
Eveleth

State
Minnesota

Zip
55734

Phone
218-744-6150

Email
bdahl@rrauth.com

Funding

Development Type
Restoration

Acres of Park Land to be Acquired
0

Funding Category:

- Linear Trail

Anticipated number of participants/users in Connecting People to the Outdoors project
0

New Trail Miles to be Acquired
0

Types
Existing Easement

New Trail Miles Developed
0

Miles of Trail Restored or Improved
2.5

Trail head facilities developed
0

Number of trail bridges/culverts to be developed/restored
1

Number of vault toilets built

Number of Shower/restrooms

Number of campsites built

Acres of prairie restored

Acres of invasive species removed

Number of Connecting People to the Outdoors Programs created/administered
0

Project Outcomes

Evaluation of Impact

This Project is part of the overall Mesabi Trail which has developed over time guiding principles for location, destinations, community involvement and public support while recognizing and avoiding landowner privacy, sensitive areas and negative environmental impacts.

This Project, in keeping with the Mesabi Trail Master Plan, is a regional trail in Northeast Minnesota extending from the Mississippi River to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness that connects communities, provides a transportation corridor, promotes healthy lifestyles and is ADA compliant. The trail traverses multiple landscapes, natural settings, state parks, state and county and federal forests, lakes and streams. The trail travels through many cultural settings that are interpreted including Native American, European settlers, logging era, former iron mining era and current iron mining operations. The trail is designated non-

motorized with the exception of certain trail segments designated for winter snowmobiling.

The impact of replacement of the Tower to Soudan segment will allow for a more safe, user friendly, comfortable and enjoyable experience for the trail user. The trail was built 25 years ago and is in need of replacement. With the replacement of the Mesabi Trail along with maintenance planning, the goal is to have the trail segment last for another 25 years.

Legacy Pillars:

- Connect People and the Outdoors
- Take Care of What We Have
- Coordinate Among Providers

Connection to Pillars

Connecting People to the Outdoors:

The Mesabi Trail physically connects state forests, national forests, county forests, city forests, recreational facilities, parks, beaches and many more points across Northeast MN, further described within the Mesabi Trail Master Plan - Environmental Section. To name a few destinations that the trail has connected too include: Forest History Center, Hill Annex State Park, Greyhound Bus Museum, Ironworld Discovery Center, Minnesota Museum of Mining, US Hockey Hall of Fame, Scenic By-Ways 38 & 11, Giants Ridge Recreation Area, Embarrass Pioneer Farms, Soudan Underground Mine, Lake Vermilion State Park, Bearhead State Park, American Bear Center, US Parks Service the International Wolf Center.

The Mesabi Trail physically connects 29 communities providing an alternative transportation and recreation corridor for pedestrians, bicyclists and others. This trail is used by over 220,000 persons per year with many annual events taking place such as the American Heart Association Heart Walks, Muscular Dystrophy Bike Ride, Cancer Walk, Habitat for Humanity Bike Ride, Great River Energy Bike Event and others. Locally organized users such as Scouts Biking for Merit Badges (Scouts), reunions, group travel, school phy-ed, Junior Olympics training, Rotarian's and others add to healthy activities while promoting community causes adding to the regional quality of life.

Each community has a welcome area with parking, kiosk, local and trail-wide information. Local communities and business provide support with food, water, restrooms and necessary services at intervals of no-longer than eight miles along the trail.

The trail is designed and built in accordance with the MN Dot Bicycle Trail Design Manual and standards set forth by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). We are proud to say that the trail, parking, access and other facilities are approximately 96% ADA compliant and working towards 100% accessibility. Electric assist bicycles and wheelchairs are used on the trail making access available to people of all abilities.

The estimated trail users count for non-motorized users for the Tower to Soudan segment of the Mesabi Trail are 8,600 in 2019; 16,243 through September 9, 2020 YTD.

Take Care of What We Have:

The St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority (RRA) maintains the Mesabi Trail. The RRA performs day to day maintenance involving mowing, crack filling, tree removal and many other activities at a cost of approximately \$390,000 per year with a full-time trail manager and a summer crew of 5 persons. Trail volunteers are involved daily with debris removal, sweeping and reporting. We believe the Mesabi Trail is one of the best maintained trails in the State (as stated with pride by summer college intern workers).

The RRA has also established a dedicated long-term maintenance fund to rehabilitate the trail when needed.

The fund will be used for the grant match.

This 2.5 mile segment is 25 years old and has exceeded its useful life.

RRA believes in "taking care of what we have" and has provided for the long- term care of the Mesabi Trail and whereby all trail segments will be in use for at minimum their desired 20 year useful life.

Coordinate Among Partners :

The Mesabi Trail is partnered with and advocated by all cities and communities in the region and marketed by the Itasca, Iron Range, Lake Vermilion and Ely tourism bureaus.

Trail news and updates are provided through a variety of media, marketing and publications. Web site is: Mesabitrail.com. The following are some of the groups & organizations that disseminate Mesabi Trail information and typically include updates of newly completed trail segments and activities:

Club Mesabi (10,000 maps & web site)

Iron Range Tourism (30,000 brochures & web site)

MN Office of Tourism

ampers radio

Parks & Trails, Home & Away, other private magazines

220,000 trail users per year

Mesabi Trail Tour 700 registered riders

Named by the Star Tribune as Best of Minnesota in year 2013 and Dubuque Iowa's rating of 2nd best trail in the Midwest

Named by Bicycle Magazine as top 10 in the country

The RRA is involved with many other regional and statewide groups promoting, partnering and advocating for outdoor activities including:

Development of the MN Parks and Trails Legacy Plan

Greater MN Parks and Trails Commission and Advisory Committee

MN DNR comprehensive planning for Lake Vermilion State Park, Gilbert OHV Park

Arrowhead Regional Development Commission

MN Dot Area Transportation Partnership

Regional Transportation Partnership

Itasca, St. Louis and Lake Counties Trails Task Force

Connection to a Regionally Substantial Component of the Master Plan

This project is part of the Master Plan described under the trail segment from Tower to Soudan. This segment of trail was built 25 years ago and is in need of replacement. For this reason, the costs of continuously maintaining this segment of the trail far outweigh the annual maintenance budget. Replacement would allow for a more safe, comfortable and enjoyable experience for the trail user.

Project Readiness

Project Lead

The St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority, has for the past 25 years, developed 126 miles of the Mesabi Trail that are very similar to this proposed project. We do not foresee any unique difficulties accomplishing this project, as minimal environmental permits will be needed and right-of-way is already in place.

Implementation Timeline

We are ready to begin the environmental and cultural resource reviews that will be started soon after the contract award in 2022. Survey and engineering design work would then be conducted in the later half of

2022 and prepare for construction in the spring 2023.

Availability for Public Use

The Mesabi Trail is open for public use during daylight hours 365 each year in accordance with the Mesabi Trail Ordinance adopted by Itasca County and St. Louis County.

The trail and all trail facilities are compliant with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

A user fee is charged for those 18 years and older using a wheeled device such as a bicycle. The user fee is \$5.00 for a three day pass and \$15.00 for a one-year pass. User fee revenues are use for trail maintenance.

Design Standards

The Mesabi Trail is designed and constructed in accordance with MN Department of Transportation, Bicycle Trail Design Manual. The trail is 100% compliant with the federal American with Disabilities Act. The trail is designed by a professional engineer whom oversees construction and signs off on the project.

Project Cost Breakdown

Project administration and legal work will be provided by the Regional Railroad Authority without grant assistance.

Environmental work is estimated at 1% of the project cost or \$6,000 for permits, namely MPCA construction permitting.

Engineering work is estimated at 15% of the project cost or \$90,000 for survey, design, bidding and construction management.

Construction work is estimated at 84% of the project cost or \$504,000 for building the project, which includes the trail and bridge construction. Please see the attached Budget Sheet, Benchmark Engineering, Inc. Preliminary Cost Sheet 6/12/20 and Minnesota DNR Bridge Inspection Report 7/9/20 for cost estimates.

Any and all costs listed above that are non-grant eligible will be paid for by the Regional Railroad Authority.

Funding Request Breakdown

Grant Funding Request

\$300,000

Local Match #1

\$300,000

Funder #1

0

Local Match #2

0

Funder #2

0

Local Match #3

0

Funder #3

0

Local Match #4

0

Funder #4

0

Local Match #4

0

Funder #5

0

Non-Eligible Local Match

10000

Non-Eligible Item Description

Project administration and legal work will be funded by the Regional Railroad Authority.

Total Funding

\$600,000

Percentage of local match

0.50

Completion Timeframe

2023

Funder #1

St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority

Funder #1 Resolutions

Resolution

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/Signed Resolution Legacy grant app Tower to Soudan Recon 7.1.20_8a5666.pdf

Funder #2

n/a

Funder #3

n/a

Funder #4

n/a

Funder #5

n/a

Budget Worksheet

Project Budget Sheet

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/Legacy Project Tower to Soudan replacement Budget 9.9.20_2c6430.xlsx

Attachments

Doc Name	Description	Url
Project Area Map	Mesabi Trail existing miles	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/2020 Mesabi Trail Map_1d2768.pdf
Project Area Map	Specific location	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/Tower to Soudan Specific location map_3176b9.pdf
Funder Resolution One	Resolution	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/Signed Resolution Legacy grant app Tower to Soudan Recon

		7.1.20_8a5666.pdf
Additional Attachment	Preliminary Cost Estimate Sheet	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/Benchmark Engineering Preliminary Estimate 6.12.20_700990.pdf
Additional Attachment	Signed Memorandum Agreement	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/GMPT signed Memorandum Agreement 8.20_2df8a3.pdf
Additional Attachment	Signed Resolution for Memorandum Agreement	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/Resolution for GMPT Memorandum Agreement 8.20_86a3b9.pdf
Budget Worksheet	Project Budget Sheet	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/Legacy Project Tower to Soudan replacement Budget 9.9.20_2c6430.xlsx
Additional Attachment	Bridge Replace Inspection and Cost	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/20-008F/MN DNR Bidge Inspect and Replace Estimate 7.9.20_a5035e.pdf