
General

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

Last Update

17 Apr 2017 07:27:16

Park or Trail Name

Mesabi Trail

District

1

Location Description

Located between Grand Rapids and Ely making connection to 28 communities.

Park/Trail Address

City

Park/Trail State

Zip

Latitude

0

Longitude

0

Map of Park/Trail

Description:

[2018 Mesabi Trail Map \(2-15-18\) _9dfd00.pdf](#)

Facility Website

Organization

St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority

Lead Contact Person

Bob Manzoline

Title

Mailing Address

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City

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State

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55734

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Joint Applicants**Joint Applicant #1****Joint Applicant #2****Joint Applicant #3****Joint Applicant #4****Other project supporters**

Description

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

Regional Significance Statement

Classification

Regional Trail (Motorized and Non-motorized)

Overview/Description of Park or Trail

The Mesabi Trail, located in northeastern Minnesota between the cities of Grand Rapids and Ely, is a premier bicycle trail winding through some of the state's prettiest regions. When completed, the trail will traverse approximately 145 miles connecting 28 communities. The trail is governed, administered and maintained by the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority (RRA) in cooperation with the Itasca County Railroad Authority. The RRA is a local unit of government created by State Statute with taxing authority. The trail is also supported by the non-profit group Club Mesabi who organizes trail volunteers, events, marketing and promotional efforts.

Currently approximately 110 miles of trail are complete offering convenient accessibility at numerous entry points. The longest continuous paved section connects Grand Rapids to McKinley (about 75 miles); then continuing on from Biwabik to Hwy 135 past Giants Ridge Golf & Ski Resort (another 15 miles); trail segments and spurs are located within the communities of Grand Rapids, Chisholm, Eveleth, Aurora, Tower, Soudan and Ely. The trail passes through or makes connection to two national forests, three state forests, four state parks, twenty four city parks & facilities, thirteen local attractions, thirty eight lakes & waterways. The attached map gives specific trail location, access, mileage and trail information. The attached Mesabi Trail Master Plan provides further description of the trail setting, opportunities, use and connections. For more information visit the trail web site at Mesbitrail.com.

The RRA, Club Mesabi and trail volunteers take great pride in the trail's ADA accessibility, mapping, way-points, maintenance and welcoming trail users to this area. The trail is also supported and promoted by the local tourism bureaus of Grand Rapids (west trail), Iron Trail (central trail) and Ely (east trail). The Mesabi Trail is included and featured within many state and national publications such as MN Office of Tourism, Rails to Trails, Home & Away.

Trail users will find a 10 foot wide bituminous surface (asphalt paved) trail that hosts many summer activities such as biking, inline skating, walking, swimming, horticulture, berry picking, mushroom gathering, geocaching, rock hounding and organized activities such as cancer walks, heart walks, reunions and scouting badges. Winter activities are more limited to cross-country skiing, snowshoeing. 26 miles of trail are

designated for snowmobile use.

Wheeled trail users eighteen (18) years of age and older are required to purchase a Wheel Pass.

Information gathered from Wheel Pass sales indicates trail users have arrived from thirty six (36) US states and thirteen (13) countries. Trail counters have been placed along the trail count users traveling between destinations and to avoid local users such as daily walkers, bikers and commuters. Trail counter numbers FY 2014 exceeded 180,000. A trail User Survey was conducted in year 2014 by the University of Minnesota to gather specific trail user data. The results of the User Survey have not been officially released, however; preliminary numbers will be discussed under Section 5, Criteria 2 of this application.

Total Acreage or Mileage

Acquisition and Development Status

ongoing

83%

Development status

Facility Listing

This section provides an overview of existing and proposed site facilities and general site characteristics .

Existing Facilities

Proposed Facilities

General Site Characteristics

Site characteristics upload

Description: Photo of trail riders stopping along an old railroad bridge that the trail has been built on to take in the view

[IMG_9251_0e2831.JPG](#)

Site characteristics upload

Description: Photo of one of the Mesabi Trailheads - branding that can be found throughout communities along the trail corridor

[IMG_9193-001_aeabc5.JPG](#)

Site characteristics upload

Description: Photo of the Prairie River Bridge - a beautiful stretch of paved trail highlighting the Iron Range's red soil and historic landscape

[IMG_8504-001_2b8b75.JPG](#)

Site characteristics upload

Description: Photo of trail users stopping along the trail to take in the beautiful view of mining operations past

[IMG_8725-001_eeb150.JPG](#)

Master Plan

Additional Supportive Information:

Classification Details

Regional Trail (Motorized and Non-Motorized) Classification

Provides a High-Quality "Destination" Trail Experience

The existing 120 mile long Mesabi Trail and planned 35 mile long new trail segments provide a multitude of trail experiences and as seen in Criteria 2 below, the trail is an established destination attraction for local and non-local trail users. The Mesabi Trail Master Plan provides in great detail the trails scenic setting, natural landscapes, cultural and historic features. The trail connects communities, provides a transportation corridor, promotes healthy lifestyles and is ADA compliant. The trail traverses multiple landscapes, natural settings, state parks, state, 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 uses many former travel corridors that are interpreted by way of signs along the existing trail most notably the Vermillion Trail Portages, Swan River Logging Company, Duluth, Mesaba & Northern Railroad, Great Northern Railroad, Duluth, Mesabi & Iron Range Railroad. The Mesabi Trail provides users with a unique experience traveling from the Mississippi River to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area making connection with most destination aspects related to Northeast Minnesota excepting for Lake Superior. This Criteria is limited to 300 words which is not adequate to detail the trail setting and refer the reader to the Mesabi Trail website, attached Master Plan, map and other trail information for a better understanding of the quality experiences the Mesabi Trail has to offer.

Well-located (i.e., Convenience of Access/Adequate Length) to Serve Regional Population and/or Tourist Destination

Northeast MN is also described as Minnesota's "Arrowhead" comprised of St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Itasca and Koochiching counties basically bordered by the Mississippi River on the west, Lake Superior on the east & south and Voyageurs National Park, BWCA & Canada on the north. The Arrowhead is what we consider the region served by the Mesabi Trail. The

Mesabi Trail is located approximately in the north-south center of the Arrowhead and extending from the Mississippi River to the BWCA for a distance of approximately 140 miles. As seen on the map attachment, approximately 110 miles of the trail is complete with the majority extending from Grand Rapids to about Biwabik. It is our intention to complete the remaining trail segments between Biwabik and Ely or approximately 35 miles of new trail. In year 2014 the University of Minnesota conducted a "User Survey" of Mesabi Trail users. The User Survey report will be released in July 2015. Preliminary User Survey data indicates the number of non-local visits (non-local meaning more than one days travel time to the trail) is 31,061 per year and the number of local visits is 186,365 per year. The User Survey data is based on trail counters located a minimum of 4-6 miles between trail destination points, meaning the local trail or community users traveling less than 8 miles per day are not included in the survey. The Mesabi Trail is so located to connect a ribbon of communities located across the MN Iron Range. Each of the 28 communities will be connected to the trail providing trail users convenient access and the communities providing support services to the trail users. As shown on the map attached, access points are well signed and provide users with parking, information, direction to services, water, restrooms, food.

Enhances Connectivity to Regional Destinations

There are two regional trails in Northeast MN being the Mesabi Trail and the State Taconite Snowmobile Trail. The Taconite Trail is located between Grand Rapids and Ely following a tract many miles north of the Mesabi Trail. The State Gitchi Gammi trail, located along the shore of Lake Superior, is progressing and will hopefully one day reach adequate length to become regionally significant.

The Mesabi Trail Master Plan and Development and Construction placed a high priority on making direct connection to existing trails, parks, campgrounds, historic sites and so forth. The success of this work is seen on the Mesabi Trail website and map attachment. Mesabi Trail has connected to 4 state parks, 24 city parks & facilities, 13 local attractions, 9 campgrounds, 12 beaches. The Mesabi Trail has made many more lessor connections that may go unnoticed but are important to local communities such as providing a trail to the Coleraine swimming beach or the Soudan soccer field. Mesabi Trail has made connections with many local paved trails varying in length from 1 to 6 miles as follows:

Grand Rapids Gunn Park Trail - 3 mile in length
Nashwauk La Rue Pit Trail - 2 miles in length
Hibbing Carey Lake Trail - 4 miles in length
Iron World Trail - 2 miles in length
Chisholm Lakes Trails - 4 miles in length
Virginia Lakes Trails - 3 miles in length
Aurora Trail - 3 miles in length
Embarrass Campground Trail - 2 miles in length
Tower McKinley Park Trail - 6 miles in length
Ely Trezona Trail - 3 miles in length

The Mesabi Trail has also designated certain sections of the trail for winter snowmobile use in order for the communities of Coleraine, Hibbing, Chisholm, Buhl and Fayal to make connection to the State Taconite Snowmobile Trail.

Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within a Region

Minnesota's Arrowhead Region has historically and continues to be a place where Minnesotans and visitors from the Central United States and Canada come to recreate and tour. The Arrowhead provides literally thousands of recreational opportunities such a resorting, boating, fishing, skiing, snowmobiling camping, touring, hiking, hunting and the list goes on.

There is only one significant paved trail within the Arrowhead with a length greater than 20 miles and that is the Mesabi Trail.

Attachments

| Doc Name | Description | Url |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Location Map | Year 2015 Mesabi Trail Map | 1433869797675-2015 Mesabi Trail Map.pdf |
| Master Plan | Mesabi Trail Master Plan and Development & Construction | 1434386971522-Mesabi Trail Master Plan & Construction, Development 6.15.pdf |
| Resolution | Resolution supporting Mesabi Trail application | 1434461205716-GMRP&T Resolution 6.15.pdf |
| Development Feature Upload | | U4_WMAtoEmbarrass_7dfc36.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U11_CR88toEly_d1f09d.png |
| Acquisition Plan Overview Upload | This map indicates the locations of the future development projects for the Mesabi Trail | Funding map_7f6a97.pdf |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Development Feature Upload | | U8_CR128 toEaglesNestTownHall_8a52f7.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U5_EmbarrassToCR26_505738.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U6_CR26toTower_fe9366.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U7_Hwy169Relocation_dbfffd.png |
| Site Characteristics Upload | Photo of trail riders stopping along an old railroad bridge that the trail has been built on to take in the view | IMG_9251_0e2831.JPG |
| Site Characteristics Upload | Photo of one of the Mesabi Trailheads - branding that can be found throughout communities along the trail corridor | IMG_9193-001_aeabc5.JPG |
| Development Acquisition Plan Upload | This map indicates the locations of the existing and planned segments of the Mesabi trail as a whole | MT_ExtentIndicators_aaa5cc.pdf |
| Development Feature Upload | | E1_GrandRapidsToMcKinley_c5cbb6.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | E2_BiwabikToHwy135_6000b7.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | E3_TowerToEastOfSoudan_d44bae.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | E4_EaglesNestToWolfCreek_9370cd.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | E5_CityOfEly_86b13e.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U1_MckinleyToBiwabik_3e8ade.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U9_WolfCreekToHwy169Underpass_487804.png |
| Site Characteristics Upload | Photo of the Prairie River Bridge - a beautiful stretch of paved trail highlighting the Iron Range's red soil and historic landscape | IMG_8504-001_2b8b75.JPG |
| Site Characteristics Upload | Photo of trail users stopping along the trail to take in the beautiful view of mining operations past | IMG_8725-001_eeb150.JPG |
| Park Trail Map | | 2018 Mesabi Trail Map (2-15-18)_9dfd00.pdf |
| Regional Map Uploads | This map highlights existing recreational facilities including surrounding trails, and state parks | MT_RegionalContext_473440.pdf |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Master Plan | Master Plan | 1471532769403-1434386971522-Mesabi Trail Master Plan & Construction, Development 6.15.pdf |
| Master Plan | Appendix 2 | 1471532916103-Appendix 2.pdf |
| Master Plan | Appendix 1 | 1471532935621-Master Plan Appendix 108052016.pdf |
| Master Plan | Amendment | 1471532959166-Amendment to Master Plan08052016.pdf |
| Master Plan | Appendix 1 | 1471532935621-Master Plan Appendix 108052016.pdf |
| Location Map | Year 2015 Mesabi Trail Map | 1433869797675-2015 Mesabi Trail Map.pdf |
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| Master Plan | Master Plan | 1471532769403-1434386971522-Mesabi Trail Master Plan & Construction, Development 6.15.pdf |
| Master Plan | Appendix 2 | 1471532916103-Appendix 2.pdf |
| Development Feature Upload | | U2_135toWMA_af64ad.png |
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| Development Feature Upload | | U10_Hwy169UnderpassToCR88_4c6bb0.png |
| AcqDev Cost Projections Upload | | MT_CostProjections_d5d499.xlsx |
| AcqDev Cost Projections Upload | | Funding map_352fcb.pdf |
| Ad Phasing Plan Upload | | Funding map_61947c.pdf |
| AcqDev Cost Projections Upload | | MT_DevelopmentCostsToDate_e7ee57.xlsx |
| Ad Phasing Plan Upload | | MT_CostProjections_c18ece.xlsx |
| Ecological Land ResPlan Upload | | MT_EnvironmentalPlan_dad059.pdf |
| Maintenance Operations Plan Upload | | Mesabi Trail Ordinances_062447.pdf |
| User Metrics Research Plan Upload | | Mesabi Trail Visitor Profile Final (002)_bdd3b6.pdf |

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|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| User Metrics Research Plan Upload | | Mesabi Trail Visitor Profile Pictochart (final) 09b1f4.pdf |
| Development Feature Upload | | E2_BiwabikToHwy135_dfff8b.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | E3_TowerToEastOfSoudan_792518.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | E4_EaglesNestToWolfCreek_6f3073.png |
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| Development Feature Upload | | U2_Hwy135toWMA_999717.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U3_ThroughWMA_77f719.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U4_WMAtoEmbarrass_d21939.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U5_EmbarrassToCR26_b0a5bd.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U6_CR26toTower_8932ce.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U7_Hwy169Relocation_27925d.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U8_CR128_toEaglesNestTownHall_ecc88d.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U9_WolfCreekToHwy169Underpass_b3a98f.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U10_Hwy169UnderpassToCR88_ca3e85.png |
| Development Feature Upload | | U11_CR88toEly_87f622.png |
| Additional Attachment | Print version of the Master Plan | MesabiTrailMasterPlanUpdate_0bc19c.pdf |