



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2022 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2022-005

Staff Lead: Becca Nash

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: June 14, 2022

Project Title: Mesabi Trail: Wahlsten Road (CR 26) towards Tower

Project Budget: \$1,307,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Bill Dahl

Organization: St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority

Office Telephone: (218) 744-2653

Email: bdahl@rrauth.com

Web Address:

Project Reporting

Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR: June 27, 2022

Reporting Schedule: March 1 / September 1 of each year.

Project Completion: June 30, 2025

Final Report Due Date: August 14, 2025

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2022, Chp. 94, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 09a

Appropriation Language: \$1,307,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority to acquire easements, engineer, and construct a segment of the Mesabi Trail beginning at the intersection of Wahlsten Road (CR 26) and Benson Road in Embarrass and extending to Tower.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2025

Narrative

Project Summary: The construction of an approximately 4.5 mile long segment of the Mesabi Trail beginning at the intersection of Wahlsten Road (CR 26) and Benson Road in Embarrass towards Tower.

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

Running from the Mississippi to the Boundary Waters, the Mesabi Trail is a planned 10' wide, 162 milelong paved trail that serves as an alternate transportation corridor and recreational facility for non-motorized use namely pedestrian, bike, ski, and horses and in designated areas, winter snowmobile use. The trail will connect twenty-nine (29) communities across two counties starting in Grand Rapids and ending in Ely. Approximately 132 miles of the trail has been constructed since 1996, with 16 miles are currently under construction. The Mesabi Trail is owned and maintained by the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority (RRA). The annual trail maintenance budget is \$390,000. The trail has been constructed in cooperation with local landowners, local governments and State and Federal lands with no eminent domain proceedings.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

In order to complete the planned 162 mile long trail, individual, manageable trail segments or sections are constructed. The Wahlsten Road (CR 26) to Tower Segment (hereafter known as the "Project") is a planned approximately 4.5 mile long segment, 10 feet wide bituminous paved surface with 2 foot gravel shoulders. The Project will begin at the intersection of Wahlsten Road (CR 26) and Benson Road (CR 364) and then traverse North approximately 4.5 miles towards the city of Tower. It will connect to the existing Mesabi Trail on Benson Road in Embarrass and the existing Mesabi Trail located in the City of Tower.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

The Mesabi Trail is constructed in accordance with the MN DOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual. 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 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 currently connects 29 communities with yearly users exceeding 248,000 per year of which, 34% arrive from outside of the Northeast MN region.

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): NE

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Region(s): NE

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Environmental and Permitting (Act. 1)

Activity Budget: \$205,000

Activity Description:

Environmental work needed to comply with the Federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and State of Minnesota Environmental Protection Act (MEPA).

Primary oversight and permitting agencies include the Federal Army Corps of Engineers, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Local Board of Soil and Water Conservation, MN Department of Natural Resources, and the MN State Historic Preservation Office.

The environmental work will be supported by engineering work to locate alternative trail routes, survey cultural resource locations, survey wetland boundaries, establish property lines and identify land ownership.

Geotechnical work may occur if unsuitable soils or ledge rock is encountered.

Work will be performed by a person or firm accredited by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) hereafter known as "Consultant". Consultant will perform work needed to comply with NEPA and MEPA documenting trail route alternatives, cultural resource identification, wetland delineation & mitigation, endangered species, social impacts, economic impacts, state waters impacts, land use (4f) and other. Consultant will further evaluate and assure compliance with local ordinances, planning, zoning and codes.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
1. Approvals and permits from various agencies	June 30, 2024

Activity 2: Engineering survey, design, planning and construction management (Act. 2)

Activity Budget: \$260,000

Activity Description:

Engineering will be done in accordance with the MN DOT Standards for Bicycle Trails. Engineering work begins with route(s) identification and support of environmental work and then to more specific survey work once a preferred trail route alternative is selected. The project engineer will design the trail in accordance with MN DOT and ASHTO standards while taking into account on-site conditions such as waterways, wetlands, hills, valleys and other features to determine the final trail location and design.

Engineer, working in cooperation with the environmental consultant, will perform design, provide construction plan and specifications. Engineer will also perform construction management, on-site inspections, testing oversight and other functions.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
1. Support for environmental work	June 30, 2024
2. Plans and specifications	December 31, 2024

3. Construction management	June 30, 2025
4. Final Inspection and project documentation	June 30, 2025

Activity 3: Trail construction (Act. 3)

Activity Budget: \$842,000

Activity Description:

Construct a 10' wide bituminous surfaced trail approximately 4.5 miles in length built in accordance with the engineering plan. Trail construction will include 2' wide gravel shoulders, base preparation, grading, gravel base, ditch ways, slopes, culverts, fencing, signing, landscaping, seeding, and all else necessary for a complete trail. We have included with other funds a MN State Bond grant of \$1,138,000 applied towards trail construction.

Construction will be performed by a licensed and bonded contractor. Project bidding, contractor selection and contracts will be performed in accordance with the St. Louis County Public Project Procurement Process administered by the St. Louis County Purchasing Department.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
1. Construct approximately a 4.5 mile long bituminous surface trail	June 30, 2025

Dissemination

Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.

The Mesabi 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
- amperes radio

Parks & Trails, Home & Away, other private magazines this is a stand-alone project not needing additional work.

- Over 250,000 trail users per year
- Great River Energy/Mesabi Trail annual tour
- Named by the Star Tribune as “Best of Minnesota” in year 2013
- Named by Bicycle Magazine as” top 10 in the country”
- Information distributed at over 70 locations including Chambers of Commerce, visitor centers, businesses
- MN DOT/Pedal MN bikeways map
- “Second best trail in Midwest USA” Dubuque Iowa, 2017

The Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund is acknowledged as a funder for the Mesabi Trail with recognition posted in each kiosk along the trail.

The Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) will be acknowledged through use of the trust fund logo or attribution language on project print and electronic media, publications, signage, and other communications per the ENRTF Acknowledgement Guidelines.

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?

Long term strategy for the Mesabi Trail has not changed since 1995 which is to construct a trail from Grand Rapids to Ely connecting 29 communities along the way. Seeking eligible grants to complete the trail is an on-going process. A key component is to maintain the trail to last for a period of 20 years. The Regional Railroad Authority has committed to maintain the trail and currently employs 1 full-time and 4 part-time employees to maintain the trail with an annual budget of \$390,000.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Mesabi Trail Development - Soudan to Ely Segment	M.L. 2014, Chp. 226, Sec. 2, Subd. 07c	\$1,000,000
Mesabi Trail Development Soudan to Ely - Phase II	M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09i	\$1,000,000
Mesabi Trail Segment from Highway 135 to Town of Embarrass	M.L. 2016, Chp. 186, Sec. 2, Subd. 09e	\$1,200,000

Mesabi Trail Development	M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 09g	\$2,269,000
Develop Mesabi Trail Segment From County Road 88 to Ely	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 09b	\$600,000
Mesabi Trail Extensions	M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09g	\$3,000,000
Historic Bruce Mine Park and Mesabi Trailhead	M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09q	\$1,000,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Contract with firms TBD for environmental work and permitting				5.4		\$205,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Engineering for trail				2.88		\$260,000
							Sub Total	\$465,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
		Construct bituminous surface trail	For completion of the Mesabi Trail					\$842,000
							Sub Total	\$842,000
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								

							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$1,307,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount
State				
Cash	State Bond, M.L. 2018, Art. 1, Sec. 7, Subd. 18	Used for trail construction	Secured	\$1,138,000
			State Sub Total	\$1,138,000
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	\$1,138,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [aabb1949-a40.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Mesabi Trail: segment map of Wahlsten Road (CR 26) to Tower...

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board Resolution	3f7d066b-32d.pdf

Optional Attachments

Support Letter or Other

Title	File
Overall Project Map: Mesabi Trail_Wahlsten Road (CR 26) to Tower	31c4706e-6e2.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Removed the Land Acquisition Activity from this project as all Land Acquisition costs will be paid for by the SLLC Regional Railroad Authority. Updated the Activities accordingly. Revised the budget to the approved total project funding from \$1,980,000 to \$1,307,000 and each activity budget. Because of this change in funding, reduced the total trail miles constructed from the originally proposed 6.5 miles to 4.5 miles. We are looking into additional funding to complete the remaining 2 miles with MN Legacy and IRRR grants.

Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?

Yes

Do you agree travel expenses must follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

N/A

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, or sale of products and assets?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No



County Land Explorer

St. Louis County, Minnesota



Wahlsten Road (CR 26) to Tower

default author

Map created using County Land Explorer
www.stlouiscountymn.gov/explorer



St. Louis County www.stlouiscountymn.gov/explorer Minnesota

Disclaimer
This is a compilation of records as they appear in the Saint Louis County Office affecting the area shown. This listing is to be used only for reference purposes and the County is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein.

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