



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2022 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2022-005

Proposal Title: Mesabi Trail: Wahlsten Road (CR 26) to Tower

Project Manager Information

Name: Robert Manzoline

Organization: St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority

Office Telephone: (218) 744-2653

Email: bmanzoline@rrauth.com

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: The construction of an approximately 6.5 mile long segment of the Mesabi Trail beginning at the intersection of Wahlsten Road (CR 26) and Benson Road in Embarrass to Tower.

Funds Requested: \$1,980,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30 2025

LCCMR Funding Category: Land Acquisition, Habitat, and Recreation (G)

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

Narrative

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? i.e. What are you seeking funding to do? You will be asked to expand on this in Activities and 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 6.5 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 6.5 miles to 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.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Right-of-Way Acquisition (Act. 1)

Activity Budget: \$20,000

Activity Description:

Acquire right-of-way in sufficient width for trail construction by way of permits, easements, leases or purchase. The minimum right-of-way width is forty feet. Lands needed for construction will be acquired by the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority. No LCCMR funds will be used for land acquisition. Right-of-way work includes land surveys, legal descriptions, title searches and recording. Majority of this work will be performed by a registered land surveyor, Attorneys and Minnesota Department of Transportation. It is understood attorney and appraisal fees are not eligible for grant reimbursement.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
1. Acquire necessary easements and permits	June 30 2023

Activity 2: Environmental and Permitting (Act. 2)

Activity Budget: \$300,000

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

Activity 3: Engineering survey, design, planning and construction management (Act. 3)

Activity Budget: \$160,000

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	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 4: Trail construction (Act. 4)

Activity Budget: \$1,500,000

Activity Description:

Construct a 10' wide bituminous surfaced trail approximately 6.5 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.

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	Completion Date
1. Construct approximately a 6.5 mile long bituminous surface trail	June 30 2025

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 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

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Robert Manzoline

Job Title: Executive Director

Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.

Robert Manzoline is the Executive Director of the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority.

Organization: St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority

Organization Description:

The St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority is a local government unit of Minnesota organizes and operating under MN Laws M.S. 398A.

The Regional Railroad Authority has been working on the development of the Mesabi Trail since year 1995 and has constructed 132 miles and 16 miles currently under construction thus far.

The 2022 proposal includes a new approximate 6.5 mile segment of the Mesabi Trail similar to most other trail segments constructed to date. The Regional Railroad Authority is experienced with all aspects of this project including public involvement, agency contacts, environmental, engineering, construction, budgets and funding.

The Regional Railroad Authority has worked with many granting agencies over the years including LCCMR, MN State Bond, MN Legacy, MN DEED, MN IRRRB and Federal Enhancement, TAP and Recreational Trails grants.

The Regional Railroad Authority has hired a full-time employee to track, report and maintain grant records and the St. Louis County Auditors Office for grant accounting purposes.

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		\$300,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Right of way acquisition				0.12		\$20,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Engineering for trail				3.84		\$160,000
							Sub Total	\$480,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
		Construct bituminous surface trail	For completion of the Mesabi Trail					\$1,500,000
							Sub Total	\$1,500,000
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
	Other Acquisition	Acres: 0 Parcels: 0 Miles: 5.2						-

	Trail Easement Acquisition	Parcels: 5 Miles: 1.3						-
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$1,980,000

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

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
1. State of MN	St. Louis	forest	Easement - Other	1	0.2	-	Public	St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority	Has not begun
2. St. Louis County	St. Louis	forest	Easement - Other	0.9	0.2	-	Public	St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority	Has not begun
3. State of MN	St. Louis	forest	Easement - Other	0.1	0.1	-	Public	St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority	Has not begun
4. State of MN	St. Louis	forest	Easement - Other	1.5	0.8	-	Public	St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority	Has not begun
5. Kugler Township	St. Louis	forest	Easement - Other	0.05	0.01	-	Public	St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority	Has not begun
Hwy 135 Right-of-Way Limited Use Permit from the MN Dept. of Transportation	St. Louis	forest - Hwy 135 right-of-way	Easement - Other	-	5.19	-	Public		Has not begun
Totals				3.55	6.5	-			

Easement (Other) Acquisition

1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including an explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.

The original intent was to acquire and utilize the former DMIR railroad grade for this project. Several landowners, that currently own parts of the railroad grade, will not allow easements through their properties. To complete this segment, it was determined that the majority of the trail will be constructed along the existing Highway 135 right-of-way, which will require a Limited Use Permit from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. We will need five easements from public landowners.

2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified for the acquisition purposes you propose. Include the URL to the plan if one is available.

None

3. For any parcels acquired in fee title, a restoration and management plan must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.

No parcels will be acquired in fee title.

4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.

We will not be purchasing parcels for this trail segment.

5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.

N/A

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

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

Alternate Text for Map

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

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Easement (Other) Acquisition,

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

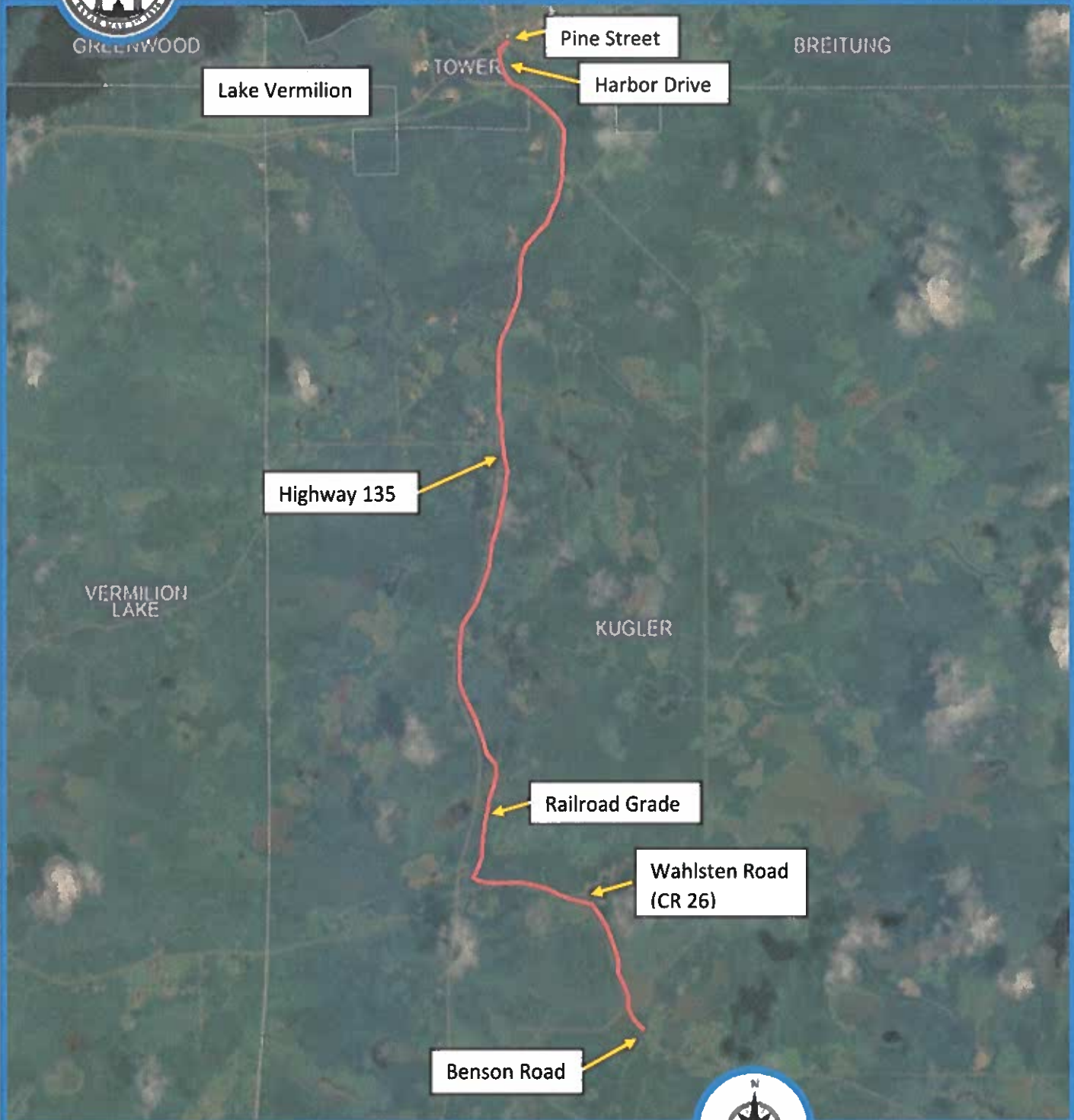
Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

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



County Land Explorer

St. Louis County

www.stlouiscountymn.gov/explorer

Minnesota

Disclaimer

This is a compilation of records as they appear in the St. 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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