



**ITASCA COUNTY
REGIONAL RAILROAD AUTHORITY**

Itasca County Courthouse
123 NE 4th Street
Grand Rapids, MN 55744
(218) 327-2847



Tuesday, May 14, 2024

2:00 PM

Itasca County Boardroom

FINAL

REGULAR SESSION MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Cory Smith	District #1	Present	2:00 PM
Terry Snyder	District #2	Present	2:00 PM
John Johnson	District #3	Present	2:00 PM
Burl Ives	District #4	Present	2:00 PM
Casey Venema	District #5	Present	2:00 PM

II. ADDITIONS/CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

Motion To: Approve the agenda, as presented.

RESULT:	APPROVED (5 TO 0)
MOVER:	Commissioner Casey Venema
SECONDER:	Commissioner Cory Smith
AYES:	Cory Smith, Terry Snyder, John Johnson, Burl Ives, Casey Venema

III. APPROVE OF MINUTES

Motion To: Approve the minutes, as delineated below.

RESULT:	APPROVED (5 TO 0)
MOVER:	Commissioner Terry Snyder
SECONDER:	Commissioner Burl Ives
AYES:	Cory Smith, Terry Snyder, John Johnson, Burl Ives, Casey Venema

1. Approve the minutes of the Tuesday, January 9, 2024 Regional Railroad Authority meeting.

IV. DISCUSSION / INFORMATIONAL

1. Mesabi Trail Discussion

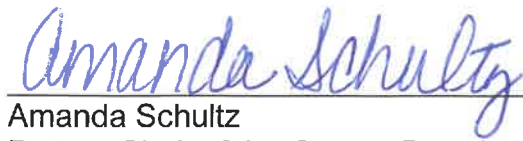
Forest Recreation Specialist Sara Thompson provided information regarding the Mesabi Trail, including a history of the trail, cooperative agreements, partners and communities involved, and land base information.

RESULT:	INFORMATIONAL - NO ACTION TAKEN
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V. ADJOURN

Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 2:24 PM.

ATTEST



Amanda Schultz
Deputy Clerk of the County Board



John Johnson
Chair, Regional Railroad Authority



**ITASCA COUNTY
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Itasca County Courthouse
123 NE 4th Street
Grand Rapids, MN 55744
(218) 327-2847



Tuesday, January 9, 2024

2:00 PM

Itasca County Boardroom

DRAFT

REGULAR SESSION MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ives called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Cory Smith	District #1	Present	2:00 PM
Terry Snyder	District #2	Present	2:00 PM
John Johnson	District #3	Present	2:00 PM
Burl Ives	District #4	Present	2:00 PM
Casey Venema	District #5	Present	2:00 PM

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chair Ives called for nominations for Chair of the Itasca County Regional Railroad Authority for the year 2024.

Commissioners Snyder and Venema nominated Commissioner John Johnson.

After calling for more nominations, Chair Ives called for the question.

Motion To: Cast a unanimous ballot for Commissioner Johnson as Chair of the Itasca County Regional Railroad Authority for the year 2024.

RESULT:	APPROVED (5 TO 0)
MOVER:	Commissioner Terry Snyder
SECONDER:	Commissioner Casey Venema
AYES:	Cory Smith, Terry Snyder, John Johnson, Burl Ives, Casey Venema

The gavel was turned over to the new 2024 Chair, Commissioner Johnson.

Chair Johnson called for nominations for Vice-Chair of the Itasca County Regional Railroad Authority for the year 2024.

Commissioners Smith and Snyder nominated Commissioner Casey Venema.

After calling for more nominations, Chair Johnson called for the question.

Motion To: Cast a unanimous ballot for Commissioner Venema as Vice-Chair of the Itasca County Regional Railroad Authority for the year 2024.

RESULT:	APPROVED (5 TO 0)
MOVER:	Commissioner Cory Smith
SECONDER:	Commissioner Terry Snyder
AYES:	Cory Smith, Terry Snyder, John Johnson, Burl Ives, Casey Venema

III. ADDITIONS/CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

Motion To: Add Item #5.1 (Discussion of Mesabi Trail) and approve the agenda, as amended.

RESULT:	APPROVED (5 TO 0)
MOVER:	Commissioner Terry Snyder
SECONDER:	Commissioner Cory Smith
AYES:	Cory Smith, Terry Snyder, John Johnson, Burl Ives, Casey Venema

IV. APPROVE OF MINUTES

Motion To: Approve the minutes of the Tuesday, November 14, 2023 Regional Railroad Authority meeting.

RESULT:	APPROVED (5 TO 0)
MOVER:	Commissioner Burl Ives
SECONDER:	Commissioner Cory Smith
AYES:	Cory Smith, Terry Snyder, John Johnson, Burl Ives, Casey Venema

V. DISCUSSION / INFORMATIONAL**1. Discussion of Mesabi Trail**

Discussion took place regarding the possibility of additional uses of the Mesabi Trail.

RESULT:	INFORMATIONAL - NO ACTION TAKEN
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VI. ADJOURN

Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 2:12 PM.

ATTEST

Amanda Schultz
Deputy Clerk of the County Board

John Johnson
Chair, Regional Railroad Authority



**ITASCA COUNTY
REGIONAL RAILROAD AUTHORITY**

Itasca County Courthouse
123 NE 4th Street
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Tuesday, May 14, 2024

IV.1.

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION: RBA-2024-224

DEPARTMENT: Land Department

TIME REQUESTED: < 5 Minutes

PRESENTER: Sara Thompson, Kory Cease

AGENDA ITEM:

Mesabi Trail Discussion

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

No Action; Informational

BACKGROUND:

Staff will be providing history of trail, cooperative agreements, partners and communities involved, and land base information.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION:

1. Mesabi Trail power point

RESULT:

INFORMATIONAL - NO ACTION TAKEN



TRAIL HISTORY

The concept of the Mesabi Trail was first formally studied by the MN Department of Natural Resources in 1986 as part of their desire to establish thirteen trails statewide as part of the Explore Minnesota Collection of Recreational Trails. A trail segment extending between Eveleth and Hibbing and following the alignment of the former Great Northern railway was proposed. Although the DNR report was enthusiastic about the area and proposed trail, no further commitment to the project was ever made.

Several years later, the Itasca County Trails Task Force, funded by the Blandin Foundation conducted a poll of local elected officials to determine if enough interest existed to begin the lengthy process of defining the Mesabi Trail.

Based on the support and interest generated by the DNR study and Itasca County Task Force poll, the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Rail Authority decided to be the catalyst for the project. The Regional Rail Authority, is a political subdivision of the State of Minnesota and is organized under M.S. 398A. It is composed of two county commissioners from Lake County and three from St. Louis County.

1994

Mesabi Trail Master Plan was completed by the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Rail Authority.

1995

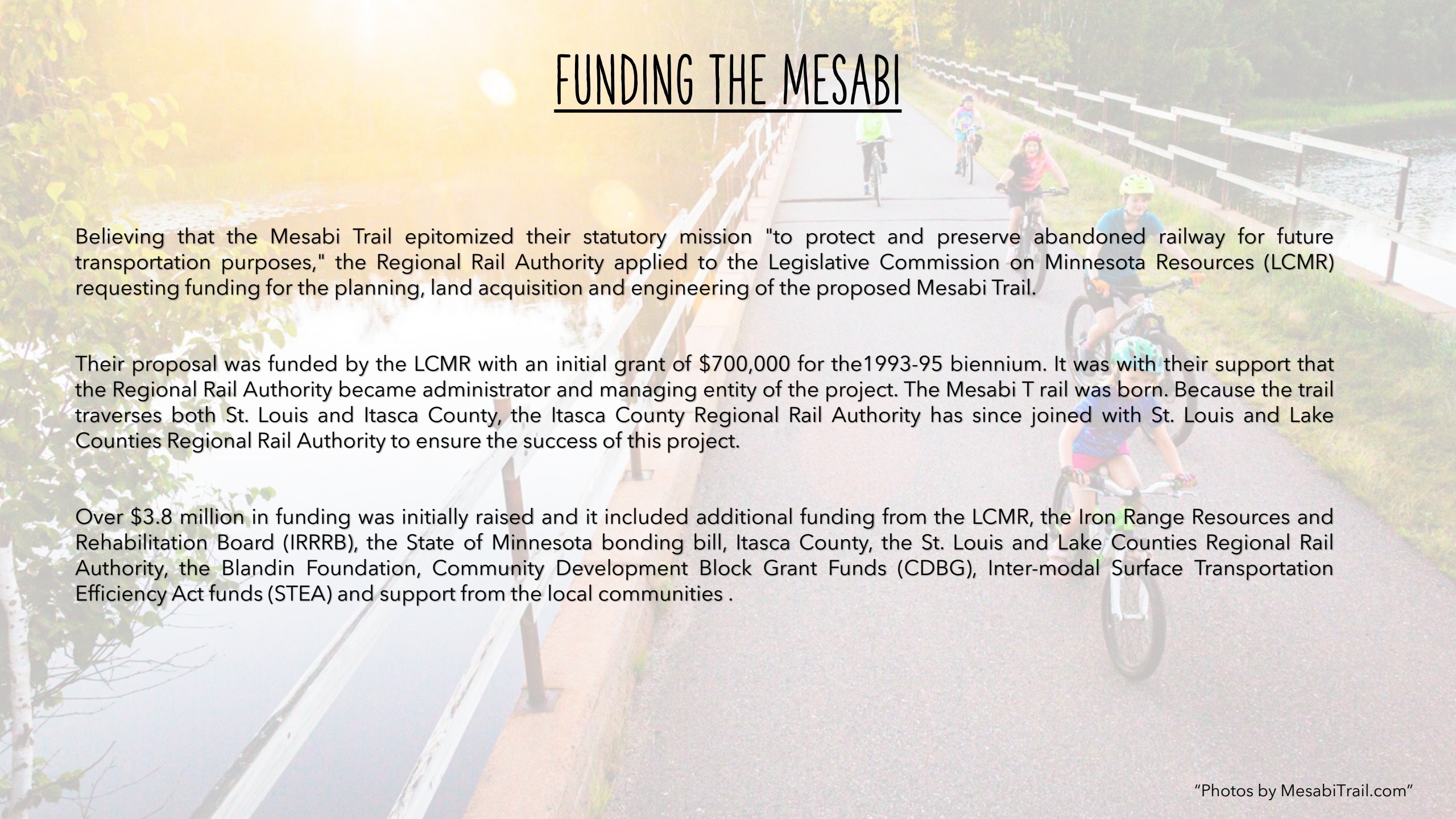
Memorandum of Understanding between Itasca County Regional Rail Authority and St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Rail Authority.

1999

Joint Resolution for Construction and Operation of the Mesabi Trail was signed.

1999

The Mesabi Trail Ordinance was passed

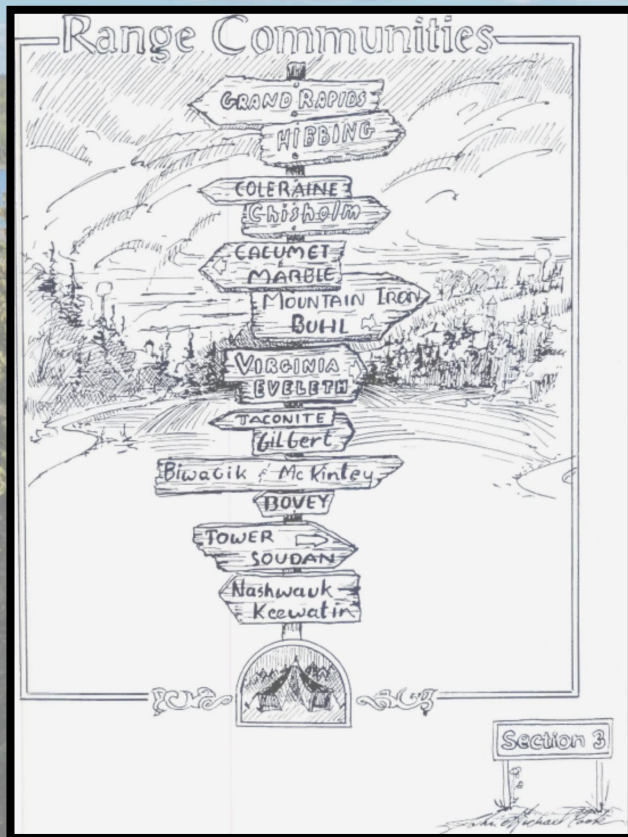


FUNDING THE MESABI

Believing that the Mesabi Trail epitomized their statutory mission "to protect and preserve abandoned railway for future transportation purposes," the Regional Rail Authority applied to the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR) requesting funding for the planning, land acquisition and engineering of the proposed Mesabi Trail.

Their proposal was funded by the LCMR with an initial grant of \$700,000 for the 1993-95 biennium. It was with their support that the Regional Rail Authority became administrator and managing entity of the project. The Mesabi Trail was born. Because the trail traverses both St. Louis and Itasca County, the Itasca County Regional Rail Authority has since joined with St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Rail Authority to ensure the success of this project.

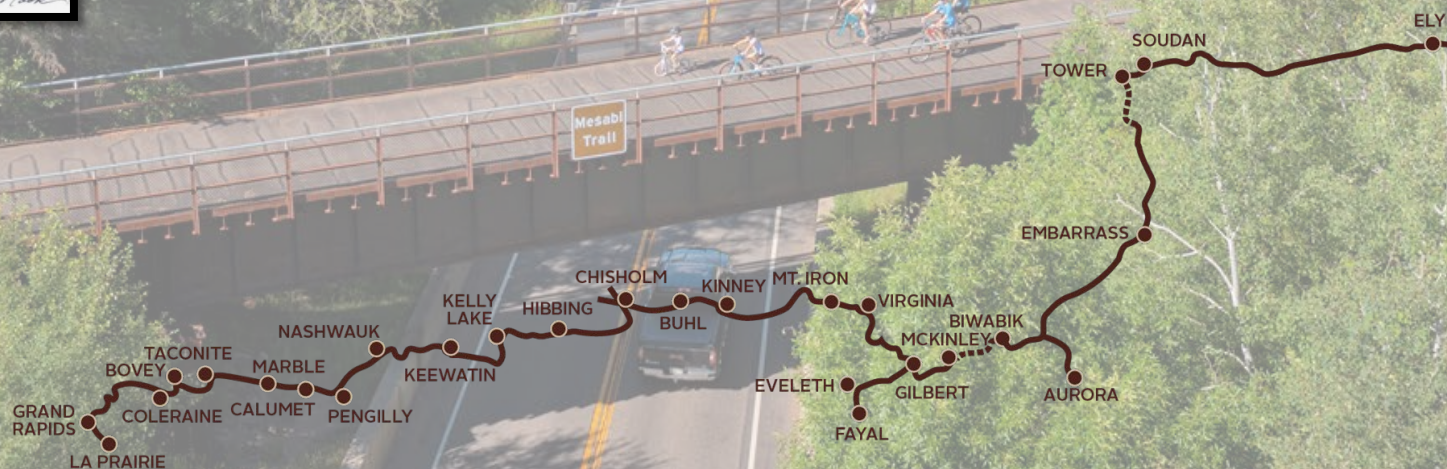
Over \$3.8 million in funding was initially raised and it included additional funding from the LCMR, the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB), the State of Minnesota bonding bill, Itasca County, the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Rail Authority, the Blandin Foundation, Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG), Inter-modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act funds (STEA) and support from the local communities .



COMMUNITY CONNECTION

The Mesabi Trail is a paved multi-use trail, primarily non-motorized, running from Grand Rapids to Ely, Minnesota. The Trail is planned to stretch 155 miles between the Mississippi River and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness connecting 28 communities, making it one of the longest paved trails in the United States.

The trail provides convenient access to support services including food lodging, shopping, golfing, swimming, canoeing, and fishing. Trailhead access points can be found at 23 different locations along the Trail corridor providing interpretive information, maps, and other resources for trail users. It provides regional connections to 8 campgrounds, 4 bike shops/bike rental businesses, 8 museums/interpretive centers, over 20 hotels/lodging accommodations, multiple restaurants, shopping centers, etc.



CLUB MESABI



WHO ARE THEY?

Club Mesabi is a 501c3 Corporation - the "Friends of the Mesabi Trail". The mission of Club Mesabi is to promote & support the Mesabi Trail and educate & advocate for use of the trail as part of healthy lifestyle. Although separate and autonomous from the Rail Authority, Club Mesabi is under contract with the Regional Rail Authority to achieve their mission. They host of the annual Great River Energy Mesabi Trail Tour. Helped draft the Mesabi Trail Master Plan in 1996.

WHAT DO THEY DO?

The Club and their Executive Director is responsible for managing, trail marketing, trail map production & distribution, trail website, trail social media, the Great River Energy Mesabi Trail Tour, wheel pass & trail merchandise sales, sponsor ad sales, kiosk materials, managing shuttle & Lodge to Lodge programs.

Everything the Club does is to promote the Trail & the communities along the Mesabi Trail. Revenues come primarily from sponsorship & registrations from the annual bike tour, wheel pass sales, sponsor ad sales, Club Mesabi memberships and merchandise sales.

HOW CAN THEY HELP?

They are not part of the Rail Authority and wouldn't be tied to specific county lines. Funding obtained separately through grants could help support maintenance opportunities in Itasca County. Wheel passes are not taxpayer money therefore funding can be used on any part of the trail.



Mesabi Trail Use Policies

The Mesabi Trail is a non-motorized trail, except in winter, when snowmobiles are allowed within the Trail corridor only where designated. ATVs are not allowed within the trail corridor at any time - except crossing the Tom Rukavina Memorial Bridge in Virginia.

Electric assist (E-bikes) are allowed on the Trail.

Operate bicycles, inline skates, skateboards, strollers, wheelchairs, motorized carts on the right-hand side of bikeways and roadways. Non-motorized vehicles and motorized wheelchairs shall not exceed 36 inches in width.

Winter usage of the trail will be determined segment by segment with local communities having the supreme authority over usage. Within some segments of the trail snowmobile usage will be allowed. However, other segments will limit winter usage to skiing, sled dogging or other non-motorized activities.

MESABI TRAIL PRIORITIES AND FUNDING

IDENTIFIED AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT AND RE-BUILD

- ❖ New culvert for Canisteo water level control project
- ❖ Section by County Road 61 – areas of washing and repaving
- ❖ Trail bridge between Taconite and Scenic Hwy 7
- ❖ Sections between Taconite and Marble for regrading and resurfacing
- ❖ Section from County Road 87 to O'Brien Reservoir improvements
- ❖ Updating signage and kiosks around communities
- ❖ Updating information and kiosks at the Trailhead Building for the Mesabi Bike Trail and Taconite Trail

EXPLORE MINNESOTA 2024

ONE MINNESOTA AWARD



Recognizing collaborative efforts of three or more organizations or entities, this award will be presented to an outstanding tourism project, initiative or campaign which was designed to advance tourism for a community, area or business district.



"Video by MesabiTrail.com"