



## **Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments**

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### **Agenda**

#### **Clay County Heartland Trail Task Force Meeting**

**Monday, January 29, 2018**

**1:30 pm**

**Clay County Highway Building, Meeting Room**

- 1) Welcome and Introductions
- 2) Meeting minutes from the August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 meeting (**Attachment**)
- 3) Updates since the August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 meeting
- 4) Discuss proposed 2018 Heartland Trail Bonding Bill (**Attachment**)
- 5) Discuss letter to property owners (**Attachment**)
- 6) Discuss next steps
- 7) Other business / comments

# Agenda Item 2

## **Clay County Heartland Trail Task Force Meeting Minutes August 24, 2017 – 1:30 pm Clay County Highway Building**

### **Attendees**

Dan Farnsworth, Metro COG  
Sara Watson Curry, Bike MN/Moorhead City Council  
Peyton Mastera, City of Dilworth  
Grant Weyland, Clay County Commission  
Jay Leitch, Buffalo - Red River Watershed District  
Hank Ludtke, City of Frazee  
Cecil Johnson, City of Glyndon  
Jim Aasness, City of Dilworth  
Dennis Olsen, Hawley Township  
Bruce Albright, Buffalo - Red River Watershed District  
Lisa Jetvig, City of Hawley  
Tony Borman, MSUM Science Center  
Brian Winter, The Nature Conservancy  
Ben Lien, MN State Representative  
Kent Skaar, MN DNR  
Erik Anthonisen, MN DNR  
Shawn Donais, MN DNR  
Erik Hove, Clay County Highway Dept  
Patrick Hollister, PartnerSHIP 4 Health

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

### **2. Meeting Minutes from February 14<sup>th</sup> meeting**

Meeting minutes from the February 14<sup>th</sup> meeting were reviewed. K. Skaar had one correction on the meeting minutes. He noted that under item 3, not all state trails allow snowmobiles. D. Farnsworth noted he will make the changes in the minutes to address this error. A motion to move the minutes, provided the discussed changes, was made by P. Mastera and seconded by J. Aasness. The minutes were approved unanimously.

### **3. Updates since February 14<sup>th</sup> meeting**

D. Farnsworth provided the group with an update on the efforts made since the last Clay Co. Heartland Trail Task Force meeting on February 14<sup>th</sup>. These efforts include the following:

- The 2017 MN Legislative Bonding Bill did not provide funding for the Heartland Trail in Clay County. There were two competing Heartland Trail bonding bills – one provided funding for the trail between Frazee and DL + funding from Park Rapids to



Itasca while the other bill provided funding from Frazee to DL + funding from Moorhead to Hawley. The first of those two bills passed.

- In the spring of 2017 a 10-plat housing development was approved by the Clay County Commission which will be located on the south side of 12<sup>th</sup> Ave S in Hawley Township. As part of the approval process, it was agreed-upon that an easement for the Heartland Trail would be granted. D. Farnsworth exchanged emails with the developer and Clay County after the development's approval. It was discussed that the trail would be located on the north side of 12<sup>th</sup> Ave S.
- An update was given regarding previous questions about snowmobiles required on the Heartland Trail. D. Farnsworth mentioned that he followed-up with the DNR after the last meeting and the DNR noted that snowmobiles are required on the Heartland Trail per the Heartland Trail Park Rapids to Moorhead Master Plan.
- D. Farnsworth then showed the group a handout that was created to educate legislators and the public about the Clay Co. Heartland Trail and also to help promote the trail. This handout was created for the 2017 bonding bill session. Farnsworth plans to update the handout and continue using it for such purposes.

#### **4. Review and approve proposed 2018 bonding bill language for Heartland Trail**

The group then discussed the upcoming 2018 MN bonding bill session for which the group intends to have language in the bill for funding predesign / design of the Heartland Trail in Clay Co. D. Farnsworth mentioned that he has been working with Representative Lien, the Clay County Heartland Trail group, and the Becker County Heartland Trail group in developing a draft bill.

It was suggested that in an effort to bolster the proposed bonding bill, we could team up with the proponents of the spur trail from Park Rapids to Itasca. K. Skaar mentioned that the Heartland Trail bonding bill that just passed in 2017 is in the process of setting aside \$150,000 for predesign/design of the trail. With that said, the Park Rapids to Itasca trail likely won't compete with the Clay County Heartland Trail's proposed funding bill and will likely be focusing their efforts of trail design instead.

It was asked if Representative Lien has any comments or suggestions about the proposed Heartland Trail bonding bill. He stated that legislators might look at the \$500,000 price tag and have some questions/concerns, but as long as the group is able to portray that trail alignments have already been identified, then that should help. Lien also mentioned that the fact that the proposed bill is including the trail all the way across Clay and Becker Counties, that this should also help out the efforts. D. Farnsworth mentioned that it was decided to propose \$500,000 because there is a chance that the original price might be cut.

There was the discussion about how the group would proceed if/when the bill was passed and money was available. It was explained that the predesign would be used to determine where exactly along the proposed corridor the trail would be placed. It was asked if it would be beneficial to include language about land acquisition in the bill since a trail can't

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be built without any land secured. After discussion, it was decided that it would be best to leave the bill's language as originally proposed. It would be necessary to get a commitment from landowners before pursuing design but the purpose of the predesign would be to determine how much land may be necessary in order to give land owners accurate land acquisition and cost estimates.

It was stated that working with landowners is key in the success of this trail. With road right-of-way only being 66 feet wide in many places, working with landowners will be inevitable. K. Skaar noted that we have legally fulfilled our public meeting requirements during the process of the Heartland Trail Master Plan, however additional public engagement can be beneficial at times.

After discussion about the proposed bonding bill language a motion to approve the bonding bill's language as proposed was made by P. Hollister and seconded by L. Jetvig. The motion was passed unanimously.

## **5. Discuss Next Steps**

In conclusion the following next steps were discussed:

- Metro COG will work with local jurisdictions and local entities in asking for letters of support to help bring support to the proposed bonding bill.
- We should talk to Senate and House Committee members to help drum up support for the Bill.
- We should plan to make a presentation in front of the Environmental & Natural Resources Policy & Finance Committee as well as the Bonding Committee when the time arises (beginning of 2018 bonding session).

## **6. Other business / comments**

P. Hollister handed out a flyer and encourage the members to attend a public open house for the Battle Lake to Ashby Regional Trail Master Plan. The open house will take place on August 28<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm at the Ashby Public School.

Meeting adjourned.

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# Agenda Item 4

1.1 A bill for an act  
1.2 relating to capital investment; appropriating money for a segment of the Heartland  
1.3 State Trail; authorizing the sale and issuance of state bonds.

1.4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.5 Section 1. **HEARTLAND TRAIL.**

1.6 Subdivision 1. **Appropriation.** \$500,000 is appropriated from the bond proceeds fund  
1.7 to the commissioner of natural resources to establish, develop, and maintain state trails  
1.8 under Minnesota Statutes, section 85.015. This appropriation is for predesign and design  
1.9 of the Heartland Trail between Moorhead and the boundary between Clay and Becker  
1.10 Counties, with any remaining funds from this appropriation for predesign and design of the  
1.11 Heartland Trail in Becker County.

1.12 Subd. 2. **Bond sale.** To provide the money appropriated in this section from the bond  
1.13 proceeds fund, the commissioner of management and budget shall sell and issue bonds of  
1.14 the state in an amount up to \$500,000 in the manner, upon the terms, and with the effect  
1.15 prescribed by Minnesota Statutes, sections 16A.631 to 16A.675, and by the Minnesota  
1.16 Constitution, article XI, sections 4 to 7.

1.17 **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This section is effective the day following final enactment.

## Clay County Heartland Trail

*Task Force*



January XX, 2018

Dear Property Owner,

As you may know, there have been ongoing efforts of extending the Heartland State Trail from Park Rapids to Moorhead. In 2015 two public input meetings were held to get feedback from the public and landowners regarding the Clay County Heartland Trail. We appreciate the comments of all.

**You are receiving this letter because we'd like to keep you in the loop about the status of the trail planning efforts, and because your property is in the vicinity of the proposed trail.**

At this point the Clay County Heartland Trail Task Force (Task Force) has identified a preferred route for the trail between Buffalo River State Park and Hawley. You can see this route on the back of the enclosed flyer. The route would follow many county roads, however the side of the road feasible for the trail has not been determined yet. Also, due to the limited road right-of-way, there is a chance that a trail easement might be sought from adjacent property owners. We would like to stress that any potential easements or acquisition of land would be on a volunteer basis. There will be no condemnation of land for the purposes of this trail.

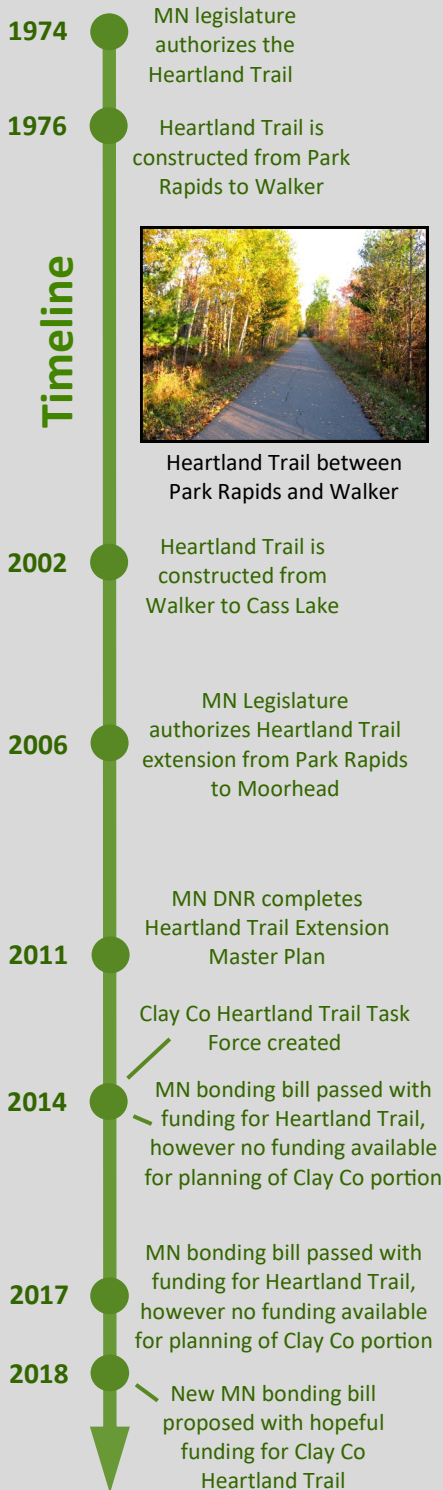
Without funding, not much is going to happen on the trail. The Task Force is working with local Legislators on a bill for funding this Legislative session. The funding would be used to continue preliminary design and surveying for the noted trail segment.

We invite you to take a look at the enclosed flyer. We plan to keep you posted as trail planning efforts continue. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact Dan Farnsworth, Metro COG Transportation Planner, at [farnsworth@fmmetrocog.org](mailto:farnsworth@fmmetrocog.org) or 701-232-3242 ex 35.

Sincerely,

Clay County Heartland Trail Task Force

# The story of the Clay County Heartland Trail



## Heartland Trail Overview

The current Heartland Trail is a 49-mile paved shared use path that extends from Park Rapids to Cass Lake. The trail was constructed in 1976 with the Walker to Cass Lake portion constructed in 2002. In 2006 the MN Legislature authorized the extension of the Heartland Trail from Park Rapids to Moorhead.

## Need for Trail Extension

As seen in the adjacent map, northwest Minnesota does not have the opportunities of nearby state trails as does the rest of the state. Today residents of Clay County are missing out on the benefits and quality of life that such a trail would have to offer.

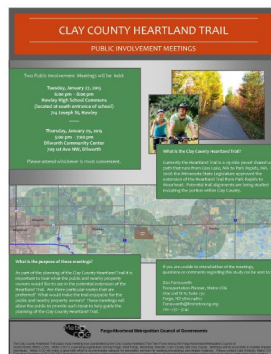
This trail would provide a designated route for those seeking a variety of recreational opportunities in Clay County. The trail would link cities, towns, and parks along the route and would also provide residents of rural Clay County with a safe and scenic recreational corridor.



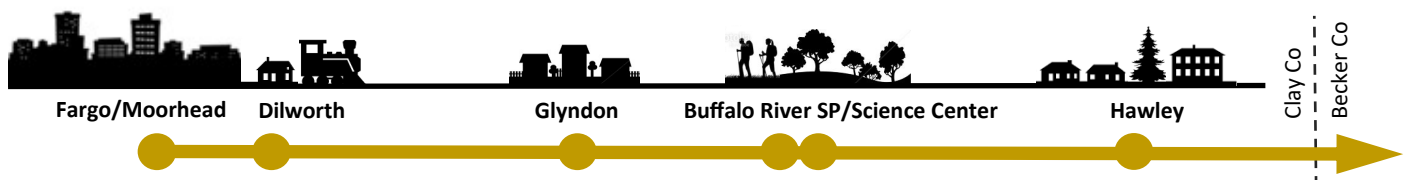
## Heartland Trail Extension Efforts

Efforts to implement the Heartland Trail within Clay County have been in the works for almost a decade. The City of Hawley was the first to champion Heartland Trail extension efforts. In 2008 advocates from Hawley began meeting with the regional Heartland Trail group. As momentum grew, other jurisdictions joined the effort and a Clay County Committee was created in 2010.

In 2014 the Fargo-Moorhead Metro Council of Governments (Metro COG) became involved and designated the Committee as the Clay County Heartland Trail Task Force. The Task Force is comprised of representatives from local jurisdictions, MN Dept. of Natural Resources, MN Dept. of Transportation, and other trail planning partners.

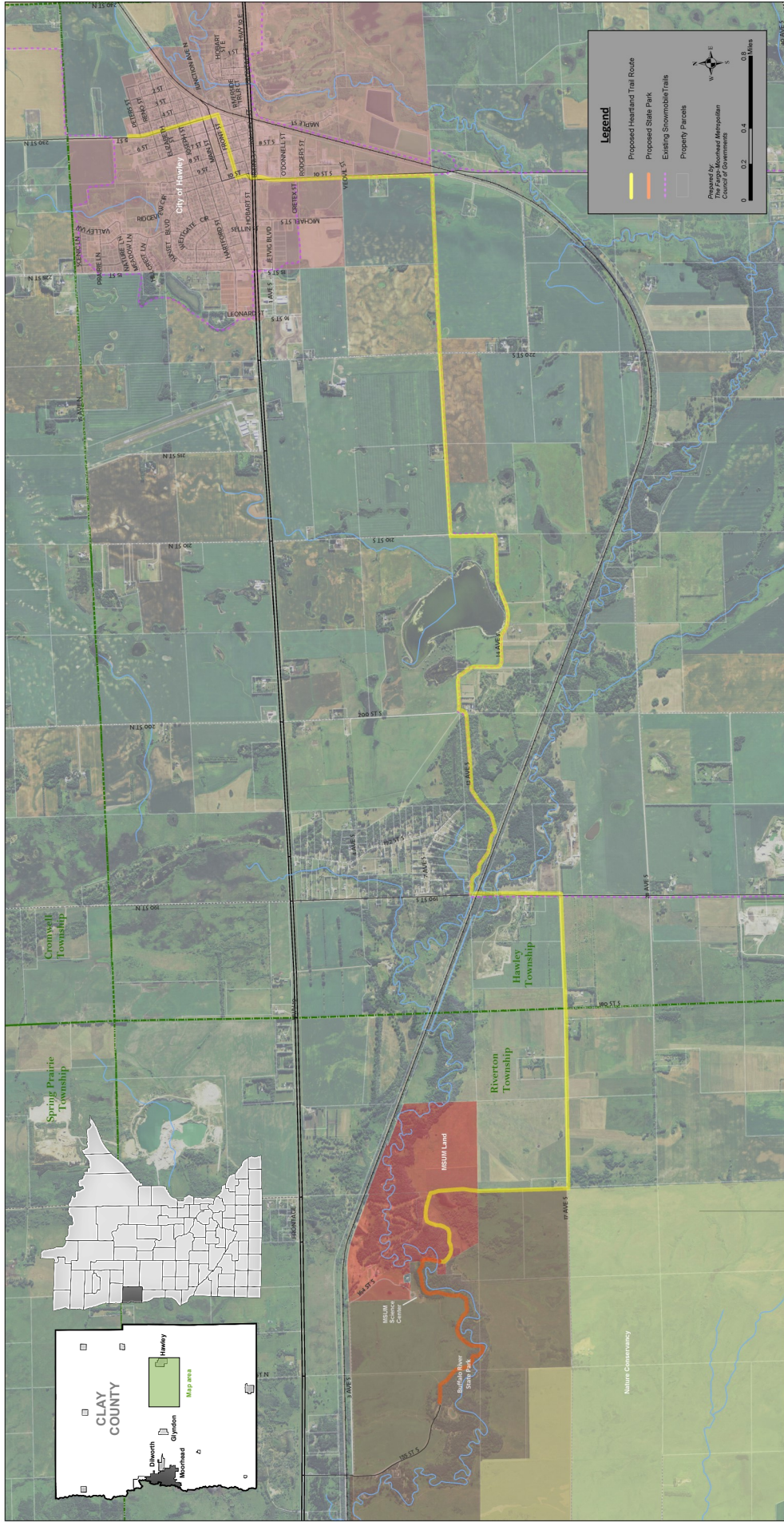


Public involvement has been an important part of the Clay County Heartland Trail planning effort. In 2015 two public open houses were held to enlighten the public on the trail planning efforts and to receive their input. It is recognized that public input, especially landowner input and relations, is crucial to a successful trail. The Task Force believes that both landowners and the public can mutually enjoy the benefits that such a trail can offer.





# Proposed Clay County Heartland Trail MSUM Science Center to Hawley



## Contact Information

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**Trail alignment is preliminary**