

## **Safe Route Connection Project Committee Meeting**

### **NOTES**

27 September 2022, 6:00 PM

*Location: Meeting Rooms 1 & 2, Crow Wing County Land Services, 322 Laurel St, Brainerd, MN 56401, USA*

#### **Attendees, Committee Members:**

Lori Vosacek, Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Crew

Tim Sink, Cuyuna Iron Range Riders ATV Club Member

Chuck Carlson, Cuyuna Lakes State Trail Association

Derek Bendson, Sno Serpents Snowmobile Club

Tom Jann, Crow Wing County Snowmobile Trail Association VP

Tony Flerlage, DNR Conservation Officer

Vern Lewis, Business Owner

Joe Bednarczyk, Irondale Township

Jeff Midthun, City of Ironton

Jim Traylor, City of Crosby Council Member

Nick Huisinga, Business Owner - Cuyuna Brewery

Dave Peterson, City of Riverton

**Absent Committee Members: None**

#### **Attendees, Crow Wing County Land Services:**

Gary Griffin, Director, CWC Land Services

#### **Attendees, Minnesota DNR:**

Wade Miller, Area Supervisor - DNR Parks and Trails

**Project Facilitator: Katie Fernholz, Dovetail Partners**

**Attendees, Public (in person):**

Jacob Steen  
Rich Sergot Sr.  
Lynnette Provost  
Paul Kirkman  
Gary Drotts  
Clayton Holzmayel  
James Norwood  
Mark  
Jan Alulli  
Brian Moon  
Melissa Sink  
Andy Suchla  
Luke Lundquist  
Taylor Lundquist  
Dan Dorcette  
Tina Johnson  
Jeff Olsen  
Suzanne Bickford

Baxter Schmitt  
Kristin & Troy Patrick  
Greg & Julie Mitchell  
Joshua Rebennack  
Chris Lindeman  
Mary Maalick  
Joe Stattine  
Bryan Pike  
Krisan Gray  
Michael Lahn  
John Sandberg  
Chad & Theresa Mero  
David Hagen  
Roger Landers  
Dan Jurek  
John Hilgers  
Jeremy Whipple

**Attendees, Public (remote):**

Robert Dumas  
Brigette Mastel  
Ken Irish  
Ashley Peterson  
Sheila  
Brian  
Dan  
Chris Sasse  
gary  
Randy H.  
Jayf Gunderson  
Tim & Sue Sasse

## AGENDA

6:00 pm – Welcome and Overview of Agenda

6:10 pm – County Presentation of Additional Route Information (see included letter from Crow Wing County Engineer)

### Notes from Committee discussion:

- Valid safety and road condition concerns are presented
- Similar challenges exist with each route
- Additional trail design expertise could be engaged to solve challenges
- The opinion of the County Engineer is highly valued by the County Board

6:25 pm - Committee Review of Evaluation Summary for Route Alternatives  
Determination of Route Selection for Committee Recommendation  
(see evaluation results summary included with August meeting notes)

### Notes from Committee discussion:

- Concerns about the criteria and ranking process and lack of public notification along trail routes
- Concerns about the available information to support evaluation and public sharing of project and committee information
- Route A is the highest scoring route, but the County Engineer letter raises concern about this route
- Route A has the least public opposition and is not opposed to by the Committee
- Route A designation as an official route would expand use to allow younger riders with ATV safety certification to use the route
- For safety, it is necessary to provide a purpose-built trail not just a route in the ditch
- Routes A & D require road ROW
- To get a world class trail, the route should be the best and shortest route possible

- Route C has strong opposition for safety reasons associated with diverse user groups
- City of Ironton disputes the road ownership conclusion from the County attorney that addressed the railroad right of way; anticipate additional information will be available and that may affect Route C
- There are significant safety concerns with all of the routes
- Additional information needs for the committee include: MNDOT opinion on Route D (Oct 4th meeting planned); City of Ironton legal opinion related to Route C; Further discussion with County Engineer regarding Route A

Outcome of Discussion: No recommendation provided at this time. The Committee will return to the discussion at the October meeting.

7:30 pm - Next Steps: Discussion of October meeting

- Timothy Bray, County Engineer, will be asked to attend the next meeting to address questions and report on Oct 4th MNDOT meeting

7:40 pm – Public Comment  
(see following pages)

8:10 pm - Adjourn

Public Comment:

John Hilgers, Black Hoof Lake

- Committee has power to make a recommendation; Support Option A; concerns about erosion and impacts to Lake and property owners/cabins from Option D; safety concerns with Options C and D.

Josh Heintzeman, MN State Rep

- Thank you for the work of the County in this process; robust conversation and in a better place than we were when we started; served the District for 8 years and involved with long discussions about need for a safe route; objective is the safest possible route for ATVs and bikes; positive conversations with lots of user groups over time and long-term plan for the area and trail connections; requires people working together and want to do everything we can to reduce and address concerns.

Jack Phillips, Karen Aarestad, Black Hoof Lake

- Read about the project in the paper and talked with neighbors about the project to understand concerns about impacts and safety factors. Not in favor of anything motorized in the recreation area; also concerned about wildlife and birds; including loons on the lake. Support Option A. Visited the area to evaluate the route. Experience with user group conflicts - opens up a can of worms. (also see enclosed written comments)

Roger Landers, Nisswa

- Mountain biker; opposed to ATV trail system in Rec Area where the development, management plan (1995), and advisory board have excluded motorized use. 5 reasons why ATVs aren't allowed in the rec area: 1) excessive noise; 2) soil erosion affecting vegetation and runoff to lakes; 3) safety and liability; 4) elimination and displacement of rec users and uses; 5) limited size of rec area because of many lakes, private property. There was also a regional analysis showing other opportunities for ATV trail growth on other lands. Rec Area Plan was revisited and upheld unchanged in 2016.

Luke Lundquist, small business owner in Ironton

- Think about decisions being made and people getting home safe. This is about safety and not other stuff. Safety should be rated higher. Would love to help the project succeed; offer my engineering expertise. Would love to see a safety expert involved; i.e., intersection evaluation and engineering.

Mike Lahn

- Some people aren't feeling empowered and encourage committee to use the power of their seats at that table; moved to area for mtn biking; stopped road biking due to safety concerns with cars; data driven decisions are important.

Krisan Gray, Crosby

- Social worker; consider the needs of people with disabilities and difficulties with loud noises. Safety impacts with being startled due to noise impacts.

Tina Johnson

- Mtn biker and paddler, concerned about sound and child's needs. Suggest Route C be removed.

Taylor Lundquist, Ironton

- Full-time firefighter; experience with car accidents and trauma; concerns about safety with these vehicles.

Andy Suchla, Cuyuna Iron Range Riders

- Concern about A being the Route; it is not safe for ATVs. Too many variables. Would like to see the Engineer explain how it could be made safe given the road crossings that would be needed and existing guard rails. Route C can be made safe for everybody. Would like to see the Committee members go out and look at the routes to see what the safety options are (speed limits, etc). Want more discussion about how to make Route C safe - it needs its due diligence. Opportunity for two mega trails in the area - worth a thought.

Josh Rebennack

- Civil engineer; worked with groups on the routes in the past. Want to address safety of Route C - potential for \$800,000 of cost for infrastructure due to mitigation requirements. The state is moving away from rigid fencing in high speed areas (corridor is considered high speed due to snowmobile use). Also need multiple gates. Route A is similar to another current project and there is an opportunity for a new pathway that is not a ditch route. Cost is not known. CSAH 77 in Gull Lake is a similar situation and a trail fits within the ROW. County ROW on Route A is prescriptive and the County could ask the DNR for rights and the DNR would be expected to grant it. The County Hwy Dept could request a wider ROW that changes the perspective of Route A. Route A would be far easier than the challenges with Route C. Cross sections can be shared with the County Highway Engineer.

Comments from online attendees:

Ashley Peterson

- I have a powerpoint to share with maps and info on Route D
- additionally photos of flooded ATV tracks on an area being proposed
- Would like to address the 2007 Irondale Township Ordinance against ATVS in right of ways and roads with limited exceptions. Due to Iverson Rd residences. Was that ordinance removed in 2021 during covid?
- Additionally, I have a short videos of area where there was (illegal) tree removal from non-motorized area state park by ATVS 2 weeks ago. Cutting down trees doesn't make it an ATV trail.
- I also have a national map of where there is substantial wetlands and the designated trout stream below black hoof lake where the route D is being proposed
- Additional photos of County road 128 that illustrates the flooded culverts, impassable wetland in the 10' of Right of way from the asphalt edge to treeline

Letter from Crow Wing County Engineer:

September 26, 2022

Gary Griffin, Land Services Director  
322 Laurel Street  
Brainerd, MN 56401

RE: Safe Routes Proposals

Dear Mr. Griffin,

Thank you for providing me an opportunity to comment on the three proposals compiled by the Safe Route committee. The site visit last week was helpful to understand the options and visualize the opportunities and challenges associated with each one. Since that initial visit, I also took the time to drive each of the routes on my own for a closer look. I placed my focus on the portions that involved County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 30, 34, 59, and County Road (CR) 128. I also looked at the other public roadways. Additionally, I traveled to other locations with designated ATV trails adjacent to county roadways. I wanted to develop a frame of reference of how these existing trails are performing in different situations and how they may be similar to the Safe Route proposals. My main comparisons were CSAH 8 and CASH 2 in the vicinity of Pine Center. Each has an ATV trail that transitions back and forth several times from the ditch bottom to the road shoulder to avoid sensitive or challenging topography.

In each of my visits to the proposed routes, I quickly recognized that an exclusive use of the roadway ditch would be impossible for CSAH 30, 34 and CR 128. Although some areas may be able to accommodate ATV use for a short distance, several others are characterized by steep slopes, narrow ditch bottoms, wetlands, and other sensitive areas. These would require riders to transition between the ditch to the narrow gravel shoulder, or in some cases the actual traveled lane of traffic. Each of these situations are concerning because they can create unsafe situations for ATV riders as well as other users of the roadway.

The most obvious is the direct conflict when various users are present at the same time, however, the erosion of the ditch and shoulder can create hazards that are

less apparent. ATVs traveling near the roadway surface, help to create drop-offs between the pavement surface and the gravel shoulder area. These abrupt changes can cause drivers to lose control or make it difficult to recover after veering off the paved surface. This condition is prevalent on CSAH 2 and CSAH 8 and care should be taken to avoid creating more of these situations. See Photo 1-2.

Use of ditches that are too narrow and too steep to accommodate ATVs is also concerning. One example is happening right now west of Pine Center on CSAH 2. In this area, prolonged ATV use has cut very deep wheel ruts into the ditch slope just a few feet from the driving surface. In this case the vertical drop is twelve or more inches. See photo 3-4. This poses a hazard to vehicles traveling the area even when ATVs are not present. The Safe Route options include several narrow sections where this situation could develop. Avoiding this would likely require the purchase of additional right-of-way so the ditches could be properly regraded to an appropriate width. In some cases, this may not be an option at all.

The CSAH 59 ditches appear to be more accommodating for uses that avoid most of the concerns raised above. The remainder of this option involves the use of the Trunk Highway 210 road right-of-way and will require approval from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). I already have been in contact with the local MnDOT staff and have secured a spot on their October 4th Development Review Committee agenda. This is their discipline group charged with evaluating proposed uses of MnDOT right of way. The key to this evaluation is providing a detailed map that they can discuss without someone there to explain it.

Over the last week, I have gained a deeper appreciation of how difficult the Safe Route decision will be. I fully understand that each of the route proposals involves a county roadway that may be impacted. I remain hopeful that these impacts can somehow be minimized. I believe there are a number of existing examples throughout the county that could help inform the judgement of those involved. I encourage you and others associated with the decision to visit the sites I mentioned. I would be happy to facilitate this kind of important exercise. It will provide first-hand knowledge of what impacts ATVs have on roadways so that may be considered along with the other impacts that have been discussed.



Thank you. If you or anyone else has questions or would like me to be involved in any upcoming discussions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Timothy Bray, P.E.

County Engineer

Attachments: Photos (4)





Written Comments, Jack Phillips:

JACK PHILLIPS

- Universal thumbs down response -

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Responses -

- That is too close!
- ~~• We agree!!~~
- Way too close.
- Will discourage bikers; noise; damage to trails. Adverse effect for bringing valuable economic development to the area.
- Bikers would not like to compete with ATVs.
- I'm not in favor of motorized anything in the recreational area.
- I want to add my concern on wildlife including birds on and insurrounding wetlands of our lake

Rare

Why should we have to fight for our security?

(with a pretty much illegible map by design??) It

- First the gun range (paper)
- and then now this (paper)
- we live on a minimally developed lot for a reason!  
comes out in newspaper 3 days by 4 m ty?
- What if we had been gone, even though we're yr-round residents?
- What about the seasonal residents or those who don't get paper?
- Seems low...

How do we know such matters affecting us are occurring? For future reference?

It's a little too late if bikers and ~~happier~~ <sup>(the very people this community are driven away. I interact with enuf C-I people who are so happy to see community bustling again)</sup> are driven away. I interact with enuf C-I people who are so happy to see community bustling again.

In our ever more complex world there is an increasing demand for people to be able to come to a quiet serene place in nature, away from sounds of that world - including motors.

## Safe Route Connection Project Timeline & Milestones

Date	Activities	Milestone
March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Project Approval from County Board</li> <li>● Invitations to Safe Route Committee Members</li> </ul>	Project Launch
April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Safe Route Committee Formed</li> </ul>	Committee Established
May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● News Release (May 4)</li> <li>● <b>1st Committee Meeting: May 23<sup>rd</sup> (Mon)</b></li> <li>● Up to 5 additional Project Meetings Scheduled</li> <li>● Committee Expectations Established</li> <li>● Identification of any additional information needs</li> </ul>	Project Schedule Established
June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Committee Meeting: June 28<sup>th</sup> (Tues)</b></li> <li>● Identification of Route Alternatives</li> <li>● Agreement on Evaluation Criteria</li> </ul>	Route Alternatives and Evaluation Criteria Developed
July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>3<sup>rd</sup> Committee Meeting: July 25<sup>th</sup> (Mon)</b></li> <li>● Evaluation of Route Alternatives</li> </ul>	
August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>4<sup>th</sup> Committee Meeting: Aug 30<sup>th</sup> (Tues)</b></li> <li>● Evaluation of Route Alternatives</li> <li>● Consideration of Public Comments Received to Date</li> </ul>	
September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>5<sup>th</sup> Committee Meeting: Sept 27<sup>th</sup> (Tues)</b></li> <li>● Route Refinement &amp; Selection</li> </ul>	Route Refinement based upon results of evaluation process
October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>6<sup>th</sup> Committee Meeting: Oct 24<sup>th</sup> (Mon)</b></li> <li>● Discussion with County Highway Engineer</li> </ul>	
November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Determination of Next Steps</li> </ul>	
December 2022		Project Conclusion

### Safe Route Connection Project Committee Members

Lori Vosacek, Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Crew  
Tim Sink, Cuyuna Iron Range Riders ATV Club Member  
Chuck Carlson, Cuyuna Lakes State Trail Association  
Derek Bendson, Sno Serpents Snowmobile Club  
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Jim Traylor, City of Crosby Council Member  
Jeff Midthun, City of Ironton  
Dave Peterson, City of Riverton

### Crow Wing County Land Services

Gary Griffin Director - CWC Land Services

### Minnesota DNR

Wade Miller Area Supervisor - DNR Parks and Trails

### Project Facilitator

Katie Fernholz, Dovetail Partners

## Safe Route Connection Project Committee Commitment, Roles & Responsibilities

### **The Safe Route Connection Project goals are to:**

- Identify route alternatives for a possible connection between the Miller Black Bear ATV Trail and nearby cities within the county,
- Comprehensively evaluate the potential routes with agreed upon evaluation criteria,
- Invite and consider stakeholder and public input,
- Refine and select a possible route, and
- Prepare a final Committee Recommendation.

### **The Safe Route Connection Project Committee Roles & Responsibilities are to:**

- Participate in project related committee meetings,
- Contribute knowledge and information to support identification of route alternatives,
- Support the application of evaluation criteria in considering the alternative routes,
- Consider the results of the public consultation, and
- Assist in the preparation of the final Committee Recommendation.

### **Committee members share the commitment to:**

- Plan for recreation trail opportunities that serve a full range of motorized and non-motorized uses,
- Plan for recreation trails that are environmentally responsible, economically-beneficially, and community-supported, and
- Provide the public with opportunities to participate in the project and contribute to the identification and evaluation of alternative routes.