

# TOWER AREA TRAILS PLAN



January 2022



# Executive Summary

The Tower Area Trails Plan was developed by the City of Tower, Minnesota, and area partners in 2021. The Plan identifies priorities for trail system development in the Tower area. A few select goals from the plan document are highlighted below.

- Create an online information hub about area trails for the City of Tower website.
- Develop the Tower Depot/Tower Harbor area into a wayside rest area and multimodal trailhead.
- Maintain and complete the local Hoodoo Point-McKinley Park [paved] trail loop.
- Expand the Howard-Wagoner Ski Trail system.
- Complete the Prospector [ATV] Loop.
- Explore opportunities to secure permanent easements for non-state [snowmobile] trails.
- Designate and market a water trail with a terminus at the Tower Harbor.

Continue reading this plan for a full list of trail system development goals and actions.

This plan was made possible through support by the City of Tower, the Tower Economic Development Authority (TEDA), and the Minnesota Department of Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation (IRRR).



The development of this plan was facilitated by ARDC Planning, a division of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC).



# Contents

Introduction .....	5
Action Plan.....	7
Systemwide.....	8
Natural Surface Hiking Trails .....	10
Paved Walk/Wheel Trails.....	12
Groomed Ski Trails .....	14
Natural Surface ATV Trails.....	16
Groomed Snowmobile Trails.....	18
Other Trails .....	20
Implementation Plan.....	23
Appendices.....	25
Appendix A: Proposed Trail Development Map .....	26
Appendix B: External Trail Funding Opportunities.....	27
Appendix C: Steering Committee Meeting Summaries.....	32
Appendix D: Trail Goals from Area Organizations .....	42
Appendix E: Survey Findings Summary .....	45
Appendix F: Full Survey Results.....	47







# Introduction

In 2021, the City of Tower, Minnesota, hired ARDC Planning, a division of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC), to facilitate development of a trails plan for the City of Tower and the surrounding area. For purposes of this plan, the “Tower area” includes the area from Greenwood Town Hall in the west to Bear Head Lake State Park in the east and Lake Vermilion in the north to Kugler Town Hall in the south.

The planning process included the collection of public input, identification of trail development needs and desires, and development of this plan document. This process took place from July to December in 2021 and was guided by a steering committee with representation from numerous area trail stakeholders, as listed below:

- Bryan Anderson, Minnesota Department of Transportation District One
- Carol Booth, Lake Vermilion Trail Joint Powers Board
- Dan Broten, Prospectors ATV Club and Penguins Snowmobile Club
- Brad Dekkers, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Jim Essig, Lake Vermilion-Soudan Underground Mine State Park
- Ed Hanson, Northwoods Saddle Club
- Aaron Kania, Interested Citizen
- Orlyn Kringstad, City of Tower
- Nancy Larson, City of Tower
- Steve Lotz, Lake Vermilion Trail Joint Powers Board
- Bob Manzoline, Mesabi Trail
- Kevin Norby, City of Tower
- Ida Rukavina, Howard Wagoner Trails Club
- Michael Schultz, Tower Economic Development Authority
- Mary Shedd, Howard Wagoner Trails Club
- Dianna Sunsdahl, Breitung Township
- Jodi Summit, Vermilion Country Charter School
- Roxanne Tea, Interested Citizen
- Ryan Wahls, Ely Bike & Kicksled

This document represents the result of this group’s conversations to continue development of the trail system in the Tower area. The following pages include an action plan with goals for several types of trails. It also includes appendices that provide further information and documentation of the ideas that inspired and shaped the vision outlined in this document.





*Photo Credit: City of Tower Ski Trails*



# Action Plan

Categorized by types of trails, the following pages inventory existing trails in the Tower area and present community goals for continued development of these trail systems. The plan also identifies recommended actions to pursue these goals in the coming years.

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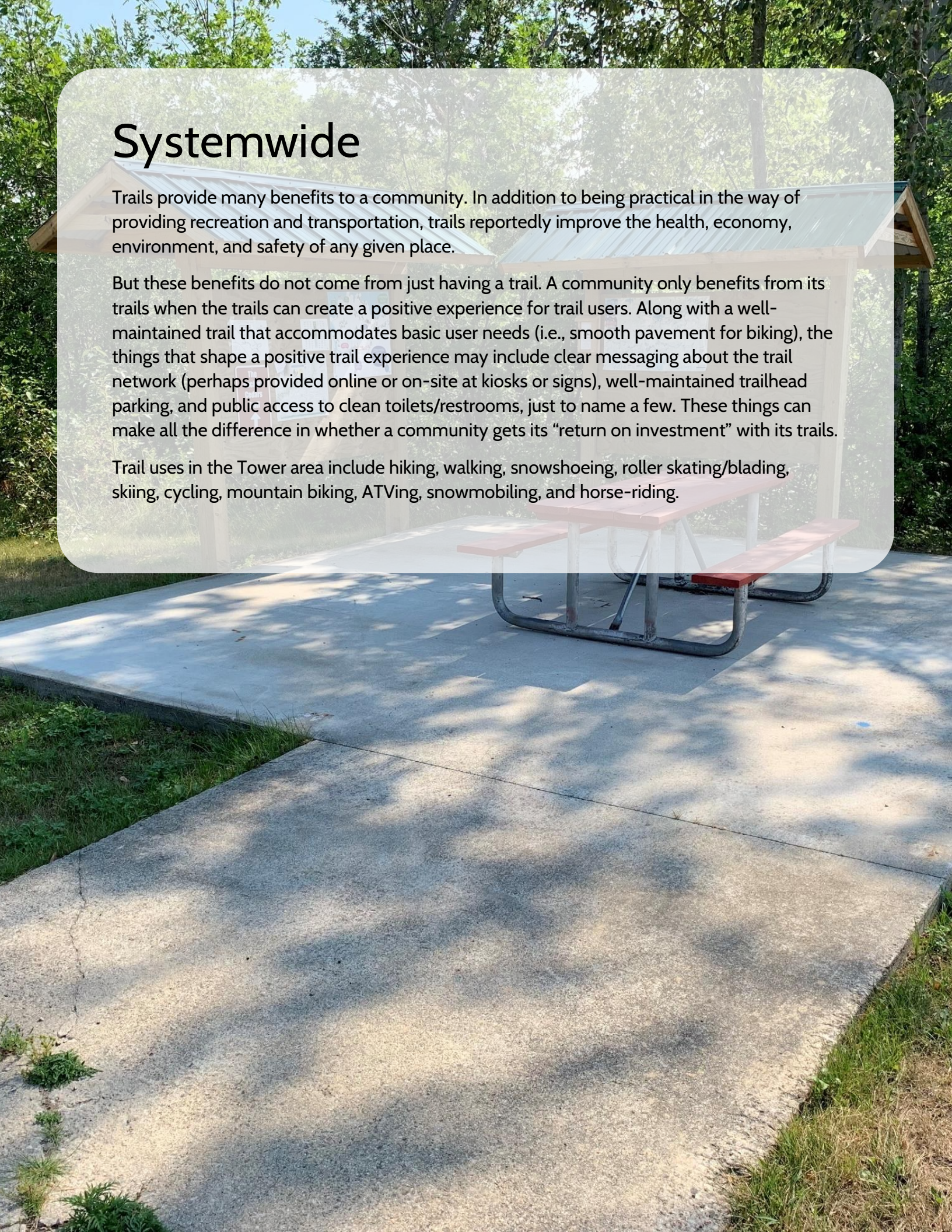


# Systemwide

Trails provide many benefits to a community. In addition to being practical in the way of providing recreation and transportation, trails reportedly improve the health, economy, environment, and safety of any given place.

But these benefits do not come from just having a trail. A community only benefits from its trails when the trails can create a positive experience for trail users. Along with a well-maintained trail that accommodates basic user needs (i.e., smooth pavement for biking), the things that shape a positive trail experience may include clear messaging about the trail network (perhaps provided online or on-site at kiosks or signs), well-maintained trailhead parking, and public access to clean toilets/restrooms, just to name a few. These things can make all the difference in whether a community gets its “return on investment” with its trails.

Trail uses in the Tower area include hiking, walking, snowshoeing, roller skating/blading, skiing, cycling, mountain biking, ATVing, snowmobiling, and horse-riding.





## Goals & Actions – Systemwide

- Develop the Tower Depot/Tower Harbor area into a wayside rest area and multimodal trailhead.
  - Hire a landscape architect or engineer to update a concept plan for the area; consider needs such as trail user parking, access to wheelchair accessible toilet rooms, and trail kiosks in the design.
  - Work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to explore and implement increased crossing safety measures at the Cedar Street intersection with Highway 1.
  - Work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to explore and implement increased crossing safety measures at the Enterprise Drive intersection with Highway 135.
  - Develop a user-friendly area trail map for both summer and winter trail use to be prominently displayed at the trailhead.
- Create an online information hub about area trails for the City of Tower website.
  - Work with area trail stakeholders to develop a trail user guide for the Tower area; consider hiring a marketing firm to develop clear and concise messaging that is tourist friendly.
  - Apply search engine optimization strategies to the webpage to help direct people using search engines to the page.
- Create a trail signage system that is easy to understand for first time trail users.
  - Be involved in conversations with the Northern Saint Louis County Trails Task Force about standardized sign design.
  - Apply best signage practices to new trails, and update signage on existing trails as needed.



# Natural Surface Hiking Trails

Hiking trails provide common access to unique natural and/or scenic areas on a recreation basis. Generally, people who hike value the quiet of the woods and may bring their dogs with them. To this end, designated hiking trails are built as tight, singletrack trails with a compacted, bare earth surface – not loose gravel.

On a local level, hiking trails tend to be built as loops on public land, and people often visit them with the express intention to hike. In turn, local hiking trails may not naturally create an interconnected system, though a regional hiking trail used by long-distance hikers may connect local loops to create a continuous network. People who hike commonly use a mode of transportation other than walking (e.g., car) to access a hiking trail, so parking facilities and trailhead kiosks can be useful to the success of any given trail system.

Map: Existing Hiking Trails in the Tower Area\*



*\*Hiking is also an allowed use of the Arrowhead State Trail and Taconite State Trail, though these trails are designed and constructed primarily for snowmobile use.*

*These trails are not included in this map.*

The Tower area includes 28 miles of trails for hiking. Existing trails open for hiking in the Tower area include Ancient Cedars Trail, Howard-Wagoner Ski Trail (summer months), Jasper Peak trail, Lake Vermilion-Soudan Underground Mine State Park trails, Bear Head Lake State Park trails, the Arrowhead State Trail, and the Taconite State Trail.

*Photo Credit: City of Tower Ski Trails*



## Goals & Actions – Natural Surface Hiking Trails

- In north Tower, develop a designated hiking trail loop that provides a nearby hiking opportunity for visitors of Hoodoo Point Campground.
  - Build off the already completed work of flagging the desired forest trail loop, and commit to construction and development of the trail.
  - Identify a route to connect campground visitors directly to the forest trail loop, and flag the route.
  - Construct the trails, and use tree markers to identify the loop (as there are user-created ATV trails in the area that may cause confusion).
  - Develop and install a map at Hoodoo Point Campground of the trail loop with instructions to follow the tree markers.
  - Continually undergo forest and timber management in the north Tower area to balance needs of the natural landscape as trail development continues.
- Cooperate with the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) to route the North Country National Scenic Trail directly through the city of Tower.
  - Continue conversations with the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) to route the trail through Lake Vermilion-Soudan Underground Mine State Park and through the city of Tower, using existing hiking trails wherever possible.
  - Identify connection needs where trails do not currently exist, and work with the NCTA to enable construction of new trail on the designated route.
  - Gain buy-in from local hiking stakeholders to help construct and “break in” the new trail segments with regular use; consider launching a local chapter of the NCTA to support the trail routing into the future.



# Paved Walk/Wheel Trails

Paved trails are a complex trail type due to their accommodation of many uses and their dual ability to serve both recreation and transportation desires. Paved trails are generally designed with as few curves or hills as possible to accommodate wheeling sports. But each paved trail may be built differently depending on intended/allowed use and context. Maintaining pavement quality is especially important to provide a safe, accessible surface for wheel uses.

Paved trails built for recreation are intended to provide common access to unique natural and/or scenic areas, much like hiking trails. Sometimes, popular recreational hiking trails are even paved to support use by all ages and abilities, including those in strollers or wheelchairs. Paved trails built for transportation are designed to provide infrastructure separated from vehicular traffic for non-drivers, particularly children and older adults. One type of paved trail that “blurs the lines” between recreation and transportation use is regional trails, which span many miles, connect two or more cities with continuous trail, and are commonly used by long-distance cyclists. Confusion about allowed uses of a paved trail is typical and may even cause some people to avoid the trail altogether. As such, it is important to make information about paved trails available in multiple formats, including online and at trailhead locations.

Map: Existing Paved Walk/Wheel Trails in the Tower Area



The Tower area includes approximately 13.5 miles of trails for walking, roller skating/blading, and cycling; this includes the accessible Class 5 trails around the Tower Harbor, though skating and blading could not take place on these trails. Existing trails open for walking and wheeling in the Tower area include the Hoodoo Point-McKinley Park trail loop, Tower Harbor Trail, Mesabi Trail, and Bois Forte Trail. An additional area trail currently in development is the Lake Vermilion Trail.



## Goals & Actions – Paved Walk/Wheel Trails

- Maintain and complete the local Hoodoo Point-McKinley Park trail loop.
  - Conduct pavement maintenance on the existing Hoodoo Point Trail.
  - Create a partnership between the City of Tower and Breitung Township to design, fund, and construct trail to fill the trail loop gap near Puncher Point.
  - Use pavement markings and signage to help users of Poirier Road, Cedar Street, and Main Street understand that these roads serve an on-street trail loop connection; partner with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to monitor needs for the road crossing at Highway 1.
  - Install benches strategically along the trail loop to support trail use by people who may need to rest periodically, like older adults and families with children.
- Develop and maintain regional trail connections through participation in the Lake Vermilion Trail Joint Powers Board and support of the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority (RRA).
  - Support efforts to reconstruct the Mesabi Trail between Tower and Soudan.
  - Participate and support efforts to seek funding and construct westward Lake Vermilion Trail connections, particularly a section from Tower to the Y-Store.
  - Support the RRA in efforts to seek funding and construct Mesabi Trail connections eastward to Ely.
  - Support the RRA in efforts to seek funding and construct Mesabi Trail connections southward to Embarrass.
- Expand trail connections to and from the Tower Harbor.
  - Construct the planned trail between the Harbor Trail (where it currently terminates under the Highway 1 bridge) and the existing Hoodoo Point Trail.
  - Construct the planned trail between the Harbor Trail to Pine Street, through the “welcome park” along the south side of Highway 1.
  - Design and construct an accessible paved trail between Harbor Trail and the Mesabi Trail through the children’s park.
  - Design and construct a trail between the Harbor Trail and the marina/boat club along the west side of East River Two.
- Communicate with paved trail owners (i.e., City of Tower, Breitung Township, RRA) to explore winter maintenance practices of the trails.
  - Explore the possibility of plowing the trails once in early spring, if not all throughout the winter, to promote snow melt on the trails and enable longer yearly access for walking and wheeling.
  - If there is not a desire to plow snow from the trails, explore the possibility of grooming the trail corridors for skate skiing.
  - Continually study trail road crossings to identify safety signage needs, including adding new signs and updating existing signs.

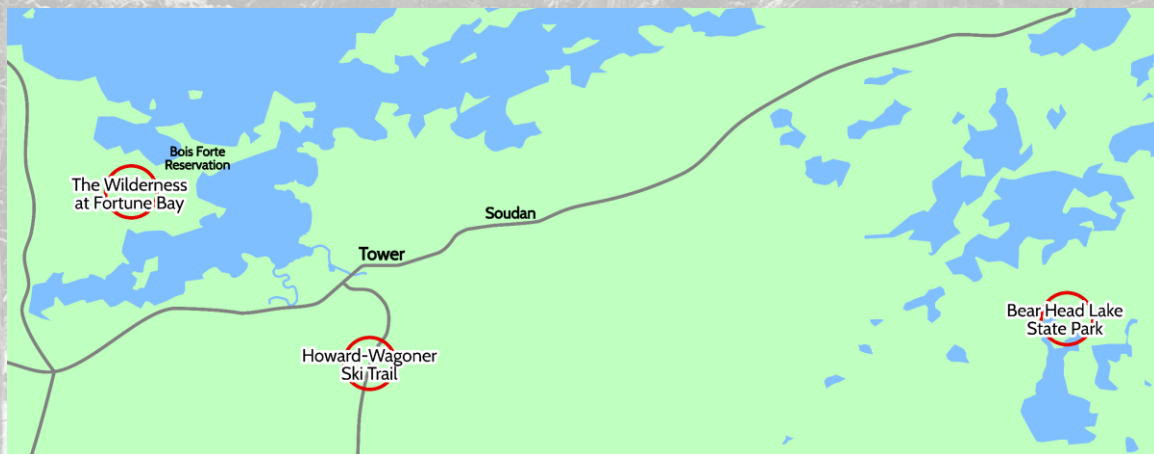


# Groomed Ski Trails

Groomed ski trails provide common access to the winter landscape on a recreation basis. There are three traditional styles of cross-country skiing: classic, skate, and backcountry. While backcountry skiing does not require a formal trail, classic style requires groomed tracks, and skate style requires a groomed pass. In addition, some people ski while tethered to an animal (i.e., dog); this sport is called skijoring.

Much like hiking trails on a local level, groomed ski trails tend to be built as systems, with loops or circuits, within defined areas. Sometimes, this area is an open landscape, like a golf course or a frozen lake. Other times, this area is a wooded landscape, like a forest trail. People commonly use a mode of transportation other than skiing (e.g., driving) to access a groomed ski trail, so parking facilities and trailhead kiosks can be useful to the success of a trail system.

Map: Existing Groomed Ski Trails in the Tower Area



The Tower area includes approximately 20.5 kilometers (12.7 miles) of existing trails for skiing. Though some in the Tower area have explored grooming for skate skiing, trails are regularly groomed only for classic skiing. Existing trails open for skiing in the Tower area include the Howard-Wagoner Ski Trail, The Wilderness (golf course) at Fortune Bay, and the Bear Head Lake State Park trails.

*Photo Credit: City of Tower Ski Trails*

## Goals & Actions – Groomed Ski Trails

- Decide allowed uses of the Howard-Wagoner Ski Trail, and enforce policies.
  - Initiate a meeting with the Prospector's ATV Trail group to identify expectations of use on shared trail corridors and needed messaging to trail users through signage.
  - Decide whether the Trail should be designated as a non-motorized system year-round.
  - Decide whether the Trail allows dogs for skijoring on its trails; consider the possibility of allowing dogs on some trails but not others.
  - Communicate about allowed trail use on signage and relevant communications about the Trail, and enforce the policies when able.
- Expand the Howard-Wagoner Ski Trail system.
  - Explore opportunities to create another trail loop, adding up to 2 kilometers of trail, on the west side of the system.
  - Explore desired type of grooming of the expanded system, considering skate grooming as an option.
  - Explore the possibility of developing a formal parking lot at the trailhead.
- Groom the Lake Vermilion-Soudan Underground Mine State Park hiking trails for classic skiing.
  - Connect with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) to explore current winter use of the trails, the demand for providing groomed trails for skiing in the park, and the logistics of grooming the existing trails.
  - If interest is recognized, identify exact trail loops and bring classic trail grooming to the park.
- Communicate with paved trail owners (i.e., City of Tower, Breitung Township, RRA) to explore the possibility of grooming paved trails for skate skiing during the winter.
  - Contact the paved trail owners to inquire about interest in the idea.
  - Depending on interest, partner with agencies that have skate grooming equipment to explore opportunities for partnership.

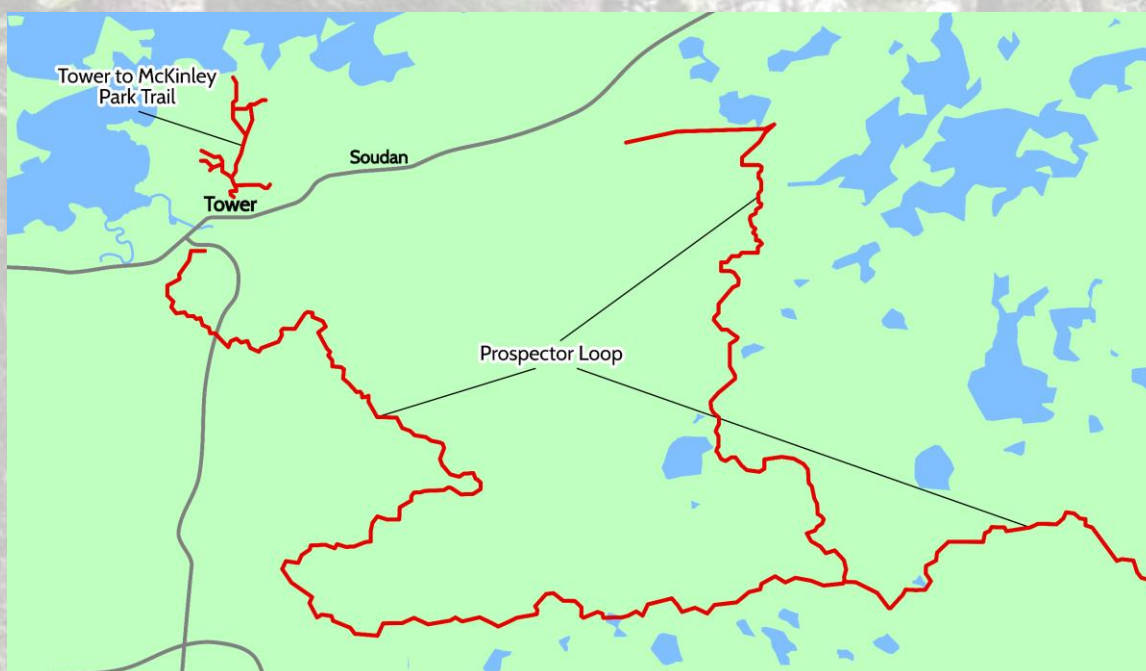


# Natural Surface ATV Trails

ATV trails are complex because, like paved trails, they serve both recreation and transportation purposes – often simultaneously. But unlike paved trails, the motorized nature of ATVs naturally causes a demand for trail systems to provide more miles for its users. Because more trail miles are preferred, it is fortunate that soil serves as the default surface of ATV trails, though crushed gravel or crushed stone may be used for trail surfacing where local soil conditions are unfavorable.

On a local level, ATV trail systems may include loops through a wooded area. But more commonly, ATV trails are built on a regional level and connect communities to each other as well as to common destinations, like scenic natural areas or restaurants and bars. Trailhead kiosks are a useful component of an ATV trail to provide information about the trail system, and parking is especially important for people who trailer their ATVs to access the trail.

Map: Existing Natural Surface ATV Trails in the Tower Area\*



*\*ATVing is an allowed use of the Arrowhead State Trail and Taconite State Trail in select sections. But those sections are not within the geographic scope of this map. Also, "informal" and private ATV trails in the Tower area are not represented here.*

The Tower area includes 36.6 miles of existing trails for ATVing. Existing trails open for ATVing in the Tower area include the Tower to McKinley Park Trail, Prospector Loop, and Taconite State Trail (select segments).

*Photo Credit: City of Tower Ski Trails*



## Goals & Actions – Natural Surface ATV Trails

- Formalize the Tower to McKinley Park ATV Trail.
  - Inspect the existing ATV trails (both formal and user-created) on the City-owned land north of Tower to identify the trails that should be encouraged for use and the trails that should be discouraged/retired.
  - Partner with the Prospector's ATV Club to identify maintenance and development needs of this local trail connection/loop; in particular, consider the connection needs among Hoodoo Point Campground, McKinley Park Campground, and Soudan.
  - Support the Prospector's ATV Club to maintain existing trails and to build desired trails in this area.
  - Continually undergo forest and timber management in the north Tower area to balance needs of the natural landscape as trail development continues.
- Complete the Prospector Loop.
  - Support the Prospector's ATV Club's work to design and partner with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) to construct the trail segment from Murray to Soudan.
  - Better communicate about allowed on-street ATV trail connections in the city of Tower and neighboring townships by posting a map of allowed use on the recreation page of the city website.
- Work toward enhancing public opinion of ATV users through conversation, policy change, and more.
  - Accept a meeting with the Howard-Wagoner Ski Trail group to identify expectations of use on the system's shared trail corridor and needed messaging to trail users through signage.
  - Consider opening streets in the city of Tower for ATV use to alleviate ATV damage to paved non-motorized trails.
  - Develop enforceable local ordinances that designate trail uses in the area, and educate area trail users about where ATV use is not allowed.
  - Install physical barriers (i.e., gate on the Iron Ore Trail bridge during non-snowmobile months) to deny ATV access to unauthorized areas.

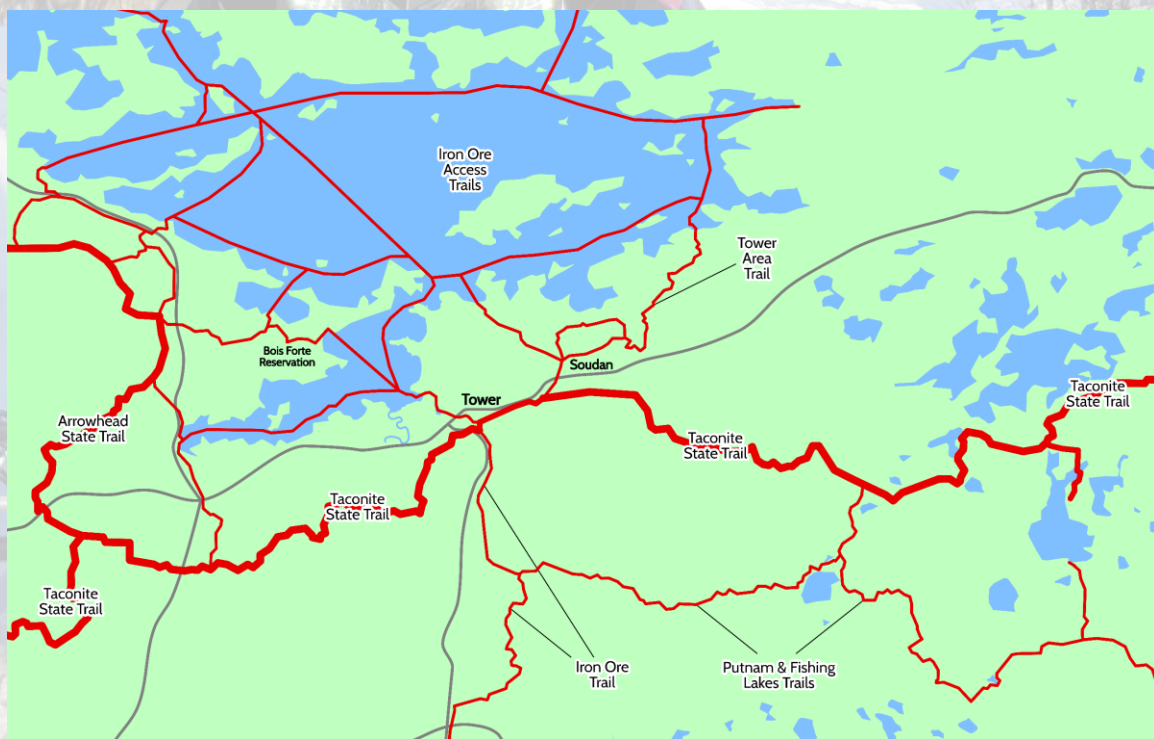


# Groomed Snowmobile Trails

Snowmobile trails are like ATV trails in many ways. Both trail types lend to both recreation and transportation needs and tend to rely heavily on trailhead facilities. Both snowmobile and ATV trails also both tend to serve regional connections and, in turn, demand a higher number of trail miles. However, winter use enables snowmobile trails a couple luxuries not afforded to ATV trails, including less issues with trail development in wetland areas and access to more trail miles on frozen lakes.

For all the similarities, people may think snowmobiles and ATVs should share trail corridors. While shared use corridors are possible in some contexts, shared use between snowmobiles and ATVs on trails should not be taken for granted for a couple reasons: 1) an ATV using a snowmobile trail may cause ruts that ruin the trail, and 2) trail permits to cross private property may be exclusive to seasonal snowmobile use.

Map: Existing Groomed Snowmobile Trails in the Tower Area



The Tower area includes 142.5 miles of existing trails for snowmobiling. Existing trails open for snowmobiling in the Tower area include the Tower Area Trail, Iron Ore Trail, Putnam & Fishing Lakes Trails, Arrowhead State Trail, and Taconite State Trail.

*Photo Credit: Lake Vermilion Resort & Tourism Association*



## Goals & Actions – Groomed Snowmobile Trails

- Communicate about allowed use of snowmobile trails to the public.
  - Communicate about allowed trail use at each trailhead.
  - Identify signage needs to allow easy trail use by a first-time trail user.
  - Apply safety signage and wayfinding signage to the trail corridor.
- Continue to maintain existing trails and trail shelters.
  - Identify maintenance and/or replacement needs for existing trail shelters.
  - Repair trail shelters in need of identified maintenance, and raze and replace trail shelters that are identified as beyond repair.
- Explore opportunities to secure permanent easements for non-state trails.
  - Review trail easements of existing non-state trails and identify segments where a permanent easement could be pursued.
  - Work with land owners to secure permanent trail easements where possible.
  - Work with State agencies to secure long form permits where trails interact with public right of way.



# Other Trails

Each trail type is unique in its own ways, but a few general rules apply to all trails: 1) the trail must exist for a specific reason, 2) intended trail users must be able to access the trail, 3) the trail must be designed and constructed to meet the unique needs of the intended use, 4) the trail must be designed and constructed to limit safety risks, and 5) the trail should provide accommodations to make users feel comfortable.

Other trail types in the Tower area include snowshoe trails, mountain bike trails, horse-riding trails, and water trails.

Map: "Other" Trails in the Tower Area



- Existing trails open for snowshoeing in the Tower area include Ancient Cedars Trail, the Arrowhead State Trail, and the Taconite State Trail. Snowshoeing is also allowed within Lake Vermilion-Soudan Underground Mine State Park and Bear Head Lake State Park.
- Existing trails open for mountain biking in the Tower area include the Arrowhead State Trail and Taconite State Trail.
- Existing trails open for horse-riding in the Tower area include the Arrowhead State Trail and Taconite State Trail.
- The Tower area does not currently have designated water trails, though it does have much opportunity for water trails with direct access to Lake Vermilion.

*Photo Credit: Lake Vermilion Resort & Tourism Association*



## Goals & Actions – Other Trails

- Coordinate with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) to better maintain the Arrowhead State Trail and Taconite State Trail for summer uses (i.e., horse-riding).
  - Work with the horse-riding community to identify the segments of the State Trails where horse-riding is desired.
  - Identify a common trail marking system (e.g., paint markers on trees) to help trail users identify State Trail routes during the summer months.
- Designate and market a water trail with a terminus at the Tower Harbor.
  - Implement plans to construct a kayak/canoe landing (with a small parking lot) on the east bank of East Two River just north of Highway 1, and install wayfinding and interpretive signage along the designated kayak trail (along East Two River, the southeast shore of Pike Bay, and the West Two River).
  - Convene a team that includes stakeholders who manage public landings along the south shore of Lake Vermilion to develop a water trail. Consider designating public landings at Tower Harbor and Cable Bay as the beginning and end points; also consider having the water trail reflect the existing on-lake snowmobile trails.
  - Develop a map to communicate locally suggested paddle destinations along the water trail, including shoreline recreation opportunities and lunch spots.
- Develop a clearer vision of mountain bike trail desires in the Tower area.
  - Document suggestions for mountain bike trail development to identify the level of demand for singletrack mountain bike trails.
  - Consider fat-biking as a possible winter use for groomed trails in the area.







# Implementation Plan

Public trails are a public good. It is the community's responsibility to continually work toward implementation of the vision laid out in this document and frequently update this document as public needs and desires for the Tower area trail system evolve.

Below are actions to direct trail stakeholders in the Tower area to implement the goals and actions outlined within this document.

## Actions

- Support each other's independent trail groups, and encourage fellow community members to get involved in efforts to develop and maintain area trail networks. (Suggested lead: All stakeholders)
- Convene a meeting of this plan's steering committee (see: Introduction) each September (and as needed) to update the status of goals and actions in this plan and to coordinate submission of applications for external funding opportunities in forthcoming grant solicitations. (Suggested lead: City of Tower)
- In 2026, reassess trail development desires by updating this trails plan document. (Suggested lead: City of Tower)





*Photo Credit: City of Tower Ski Trails*



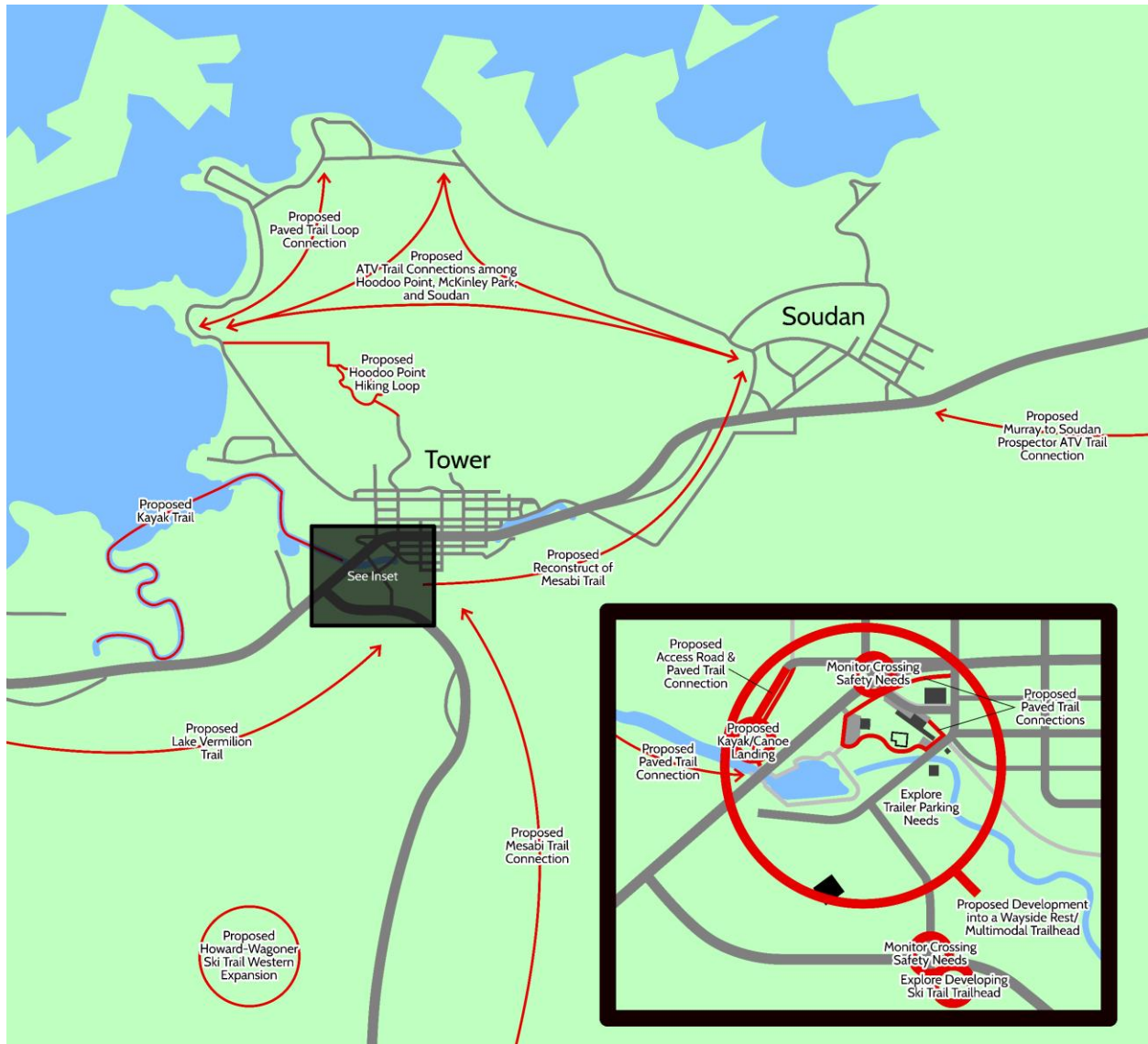
# Appendices

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# Appendix A: Proposed Trail Development Map

The map below visualizes trail development desires outlined in this plan document.



## Appendix B: External Trail Funding Opportunities

While funding trails with local funding is ideal, sometimes external funding is required to develop and maintain a trail system to its desired potential. On the next few pages is a list of trail funding opportunities, categorized by trail type.

*Please note: If you are viewing this document electronically, internet links may be deactivated as agencies update their webpages.*

### Natural Surface Hiking Trails

- [MN DNR's Off-highway vehicle damage account](#): The Off-Highway Vehicle Damage Account makes funds available to repair damage to private or public lands caused by Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) operation in unauthorized or unpermitted areas.
- [MN DNR's Federal Recreational Trail Program](#): Eligible projects include motorized and non-motorized trail projects; maintenance/restoration of existing recreational trails; development/rehabilitation of recreational trail linkages, including trail side and trail head facilities; environmental awareness and safety education programs relating to the use of recreational trails; and redesign/relocation of trails to benefit/minimize the impact to the natural environment.
- [MN DNR's Outdoor Recreation Grant Program](#): Eligible projects include park acquisition and/or development/redevelopment including, internal park trails, picnic shelters, playgrounds, athletic facilities, boat accesses, fishing piers, swimming beaches and campgrounds.
- [MN DNR's Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program](#): Trails and parks eligible for funding under this program must be designated as "regionally significant" by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC).
- [MN DNR's Regional Trail Grant Program](#): Eligible projects include acquisition and development of trail facilities outside the seven-county metropolitan area that are considered of regional or statewide significance.
- [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources \(LCCMR\)](#): The function of the LCCMR is to make funding recommendations to the legislature for special environment and natural resource projects, primarily from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF). Trail funding may be requested under the "Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation" category of this fund.
- [Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Regional Trails Grants](#): Regional Trails grants provide funding to assist with design, engineering and construction of various types of trails.



## Paved Walk/Wheel Trails

- [MN DNR's Off-highway vehicle damage account](#): The Off-Highway Vehicle Damage Account makes funds available to repair damage to private or public lands caused by Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) operation in unauthorized or unpermitted areas.
- [MN DNR's Federal Recreational Trail Program](#): Eligible projects include motorized and non-motorized trail projects; maintenance/restoration of existing recreational trails; development/rehabilitation of recreational trail linkages, including trail side and trail head facilities; environmental awareness and safety education programs relating to the use of recreational trails; and redesign/relocation of trails to benefit/minimize the impact to the natural environment.
- [MN DNR's Local Trail Connections Program](#): Eligible projects include acquisition and development of trail facilities.
- [MN DNR's Outdoor Recreation Grant Program](#): Eligible projects include park acquisition and/or development/redevelopment including, internal park trails, picnic shelters, playgrounds, athletic facilities, boat accesses, fishing piers, swimming beaches and campgrounds.
- [MN DNR's Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program](#): Trails and parks eligible for funding under this program must be designated as "regionally significant" by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC).
- [MN DNR's Regional Trail Grant Program](#): Eligible projects include acquisition and development of trail facilities outside the seven-county metropolitan area that are considered of regional or statewide significance.
- [MN DNR's State park road account program \(SPRA\)](#): Eligible projects include establishment, location, relocation, construction, reconstruction, and improvement of County State Aid Highways that provide access to state parks, state trails, state scientific and natural areas, state wilderness areas, state forests, state wildlife management areas and state water access sites. Also eligible are the reconstruction, improvement, repair and maintenance of county, township and city roads provide access to public lakes, rivers, state parks and state campgrounds.
- [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources \(LCCMR\)](#): The function of the LCCMR is to make funding recommendations to the legislature for special environment and natural resource projects, primarily from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF). Trail funding may be requested under the "Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation" category of this fund.
- [Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Regional Trails Grants](#): Regional Trails grants provide funding to assist with design, engineering and construction of various types of trails.
- [MnDOT's Transportation Alternatives \(TA\) Program](#): The Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program is a competitive federal grant program that funds projects that enhance active transportation systems, construct wayside rest areas for motorists, support

transportation-related community improvements, mitigate environmental harm in transportation rights-of-way, further Safe Routes to School programs, and develop multi-modal surface transportation corridors.

- MnDOT's Active Transportation Program: New as of 2022, the Active Transportation Program is expected to fund infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects that promote walking and wheeling (i.e., biking) activities.

#### Groomed Ski Trails

- [MN DNR's Cross country ski trail grants-in-aid \(GIA\)](#): Grants are awarded annually for cross-country ski trail maintenance and winter grooming. The program is not currently considering funding for capital improvement projects or adding new trails into the GIA program.
- [MN DNR's Off-highway vehicle damage account](#): The Off-Highway Vehicle Damage Account makes funds available to repair damage to private or public lands caused by Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) operation in unauthorized or unpermitted areas.
- [MN DNR's Federal Recreational Trail Program](#): Eligible projects include motorized and non-motorized trail projects; maintenance/restoration of existing recreational trails; development/rehabilitation of recreational trail linkages, including trail side and trail head facilities; environmental awareness and safety education programs relating to the use of recreational trails; and redesign/relocation of trails to benefit/minimize the impact to the natural environment.
- [MN DNR's Outdoor Recreation Grant Program](#): Eligible projects include park acquisition and/or development/redevelopment including, internal park trails, picnic shelters, playgrounds, athletic facilities, boat accesses, fishing piers, swimming beaches and campgrounds.
- [MN DNR's Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program](#): Trails and parks eligible for funding under this program must be designated as "regionally significant" by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC).
- [MN DNR's Regional Trail Grant Program](#): Eligible projects include acquisition and development of trail facilities outside the seven-county metropolitan area that are considered of regional or statewide significance.
- [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources \(LCCMR\)](#): The function of the LCCMR is to make funding recommendations to the legislature for special environment and natural resource projects, primarily from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF). Trail funding may be requested under the "Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation" category of this fund.
- [Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Regional Trails Grants](#): Regional Trails grants provide funding to assist with design, engineering and construction of various types of trails.



## Natural Surface ATV Trails

- [MN DNR's Off-highway vehicle grants-in-aid \(GIA\)](#): Minnesota's Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trails Assistance Program—popularly known as Grant-in-Aid (GIA) is a cost-share program that facilitates development and maintenance of trails for use by All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), Off-Highway Motorcycles (OHMs), and Off-Road Vehicles (ORVs) at the initiative of enthusiast groups or clubs, with the support and participation of local government sponsors.
- [MN DNR's Federal Recreational Trail Program](#): Eligible projects include motorized and non-motorized trail projects; maintenance/restoration of existing recreational trails; development/rehabilitation of recreational trail linkages, including trail side and trail head facilities; environmental awareness and safety education programs relating to the use of recreational trails; and redesign/relocation of trails to benefit/minimize the impact to the natural environment.
- [MN DNR's Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program](#): Trails and parks eligible for funding under this program must be designated as “regionally significant” by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC).
- [MN DNR's Regional Trail Grant Program](#): Eligible projects include acquisition and development of trail facilities outside the seven-county metropolitan area that are considered of regional or statewide significance.
- [Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Regional Trails Grants](#): Regional Trails grants provide funding to assist with design, engineering and construction of various types of trails.

## Groomed Snowmobile Trails

- [MN DNR's Minnesota Snowmobile Trails Assistance Program \(grants-in-aid \[GIA\]\)](#): While the majority of GIA funding is dedicated to maintaining the existing GIA trails throughout Minnesota, grants-in-aid for trail improvements are also available.
- [MN DNR's Off-highway vehicle damage account](#): The Off-Highway Vehicle Damage Account makes funds available to repair damage to private or public lands caused by Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) operation in unauthorized or unpermitted areas.
- [MN DNR's Federal Recreational Trail Program](#): Eligible projects include motorized and non-motorized trail projects; maintenance/restoration of existing recreational trails; development/rehabilitation of recreational trail linkages, including trail side and trail head facilities; environmental awareness and safety education programs relating to the use of recreational trails; and redesign/relocation of trails to benefit/minimize the impact to the natural environment.
- [MN DNR's Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program](#): Trails and parks eligible for funding under this program must be designated as “regionally significant” by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC).



- [MN DNR's Regional Trail Grant Program](#): Eligible projects include acquisition and development of trail facilities outside the seven-county metropolitan area that are considered of regional or statewide significance.
- [Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Regional Trails Grants](#): Regional Trails grants provide funding to assist with design, engineering and construction of various types of trails.

#### Other Trails

- [MN DNR's Public Water Access Sites - Partnership Funding](#): Acquisition, development and/or improvement of public carry-in and trailer boat access sites including parking lots, docks, launching ramps and state water trail campsites, rest areas and portages.
- [MN DNR's Clean Vessel Act Grants \(CVA\)](#): Development or improvement of sanitation facilities for boaters (including pump-out stations, dump-outs, and floating restrooms).
- [MN DNR's Federal Recreational Trail Program](#): Eligible projects include motorized and non-motorized trail projects; maintenance/restoration of existing recreational trails; development/rehabilitation of recreational trail linkages, including trail side and trail head facilities; environmental awareness and safety education programs relating to the use of recreational trails; and redesign/relocation of trails to benefit/minimize the impact to the natural environment.
- [MN DNR's Outdoor Recreation Grant Program](#): Eligible projects include park acquisition and/or development/redevelopment including, internal park trails, picnic shelters, playgrounds, athletic facilities, boat accesses, fishing piers, swimming beaches and campgrounds.
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- [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources \(LCCMR\)](#): The function of the LCCMR is to make funding recommendations to the legislature for special environment and natural resource projects, primarily from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF). Trail funding may be requested under the "Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation" category of this fund.
- [Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Regional Trails Grants](#): Regional Trails grants provide funding to assist with design, engineering and construction of various types of trails.

## Appendix C: Steering Committee Meeting Summaries

DRAFT



Tower Area Trails Plan  
Steering Committee Meeting #1  
July 27, 2021, 5:00 p.m.  
Breitung Township Community Center

SUMMARY

Introductions

Russell Habermann, Senior Planner at ARDC Planning, welcomed everyone and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

*Attendees:* Brad Dekkers (DNR Parks & Trails), Jim Essig (Lake Vermilion Soudan Mine State Park), Aaron Kania (on behalf of self and Roxanne Tea), Nancy Larson (City of Tower), Steve Lotz (Lake Vermilion Trail Joint Powers Board), Bob Manzoline (St. Louis and Lake Rail Authority), Kevin Norby (Tower City Council), Ida Rukavina (Howard Wagoner Tower Ski Trail), Mike Schultz (Tower Economic Development Authority), Jodi Summit (Vermilion Country Charter School), Dianna Sunsdahl (Breitung Township)

Process Overview

Nancy Larson, Grants Manager at the City of Tower, shared that the planning project is being funded by the City of Tower, the Tower Economic Development Authority, and the IRRR Trails Grant Program. Larson explained that the project came about when the City of Tower wanted to apply for trail construction funding this past year and realized an application would benefit from additional planning work. Then, further exploration of Tower trails identified that the entire Tower trails system would benefit from a plan to identify needed connections.

Habermann outlined the planning process, highlighting three phases: 1) collecting public input about existing trails and desired destinations, 2) conceptualizing trail connections based on public input and geographic data, and 3) creating a plan document that outlines desires for future trail development. This process will include three meetings of the steering committee, one for each phase of the process. The public will be asked to submit public input during Phase 1 and to provide feedback on the plan during Phase 3. The project is expected to be complete by December 2021.

In defining the scope of the project, Habermann asked the steering committee about the desired geographic area of the plan and the type of trails the steering committee hopes the plan will address. After conversation, the steering committee decided to let results of public input (through desired trail destinations identified by the public) guide the geographic scope of the plan; this may include considering how trails in Tower fit within the context of a regional inter-community network of trails. As for trail types, the steering committee identified the following trail types they expect to address within the plan:

- Paved non-motorized trails
- Hiking trails
- Ski trails (different styles of skiing will be taken into consideration)
- Mountain bike trails
- Kayak/water trails
- Horse riding trails
- Snowshoe trails
- ATV/OHV trails
- Snowmobile trails (roles of grant-in-aid trails versus state trails will be considered)

Also brought forward during this conversation was the multiple mode uses of some trails (and sometimes, for motorized trails, through seasonal leases), the different designs of trails based on context (i.e. loop trails versus travel trails), trails amenities (i.e. parking, rest areas, washrooms, signage), and the decision to treat street facilities (i.e. ATV lanes, bike lanes, sidewalks) within this plan not as “trails” but as “trail connections”.

#### Review Trails Inventory

Habermann asked the steering committee to refer to a print-out trail map of the Tower area and asked for revisions that need to be made to make sure it includes all existing trails. The following revisions were brought forward:

- Ask Bois Forte if we could add the groomed ski trails on the Fortune Bay golf course
- Add the Tower Harbor trails
- Add the Prospector’s ATV Loop
- Add the Ancient Cedars Trail
- Add the hiking trails north of Tower
- Explore Soudan trails (seems like something is missing) and add trails as discovered
- Add Jasper Peak hiking trail
- Add other Mesabi Trail connections between Tower and Ely
- Add additional trails from the DNR and State Park (i.e. Arrowhead Trail, Putnam/Fishing Lakes Trails, State Park hiking trails)
- Consider adding ski trails at Bear Head Lake State Park (pending identification of plan’s geographic scope)
- Consider adding dashed lines of planned but not completed trails to map (i.e. Lake Vermilion Trail, Mesabi Trail segments)

Habermann will send a revised map to the steering committee for further review during the month of August.

#### Discuss Public Input Strategies

Habermann said the next step in the process is to collect information from the public about perception of existing trails and information about desired destinations. He brought forward



a few ideas of collecting this information (i.e. community survey, engagement boards at local businesses) and asked the steering committee what they think might work or has worked for collecting data from Tower area residents in the past. The steering committee provided the following ideas:

- Offer both paper and online options for a survey
- Consider a direct mail option for residents of Tower and Soudan
- Utilize social media to spread the word (i.e. tag area organization Facebook pages in posts promoting the survey or ask those pages to post about the survey)
- Engage with area organizations (i.e. Lake Vermilion Resort & Tourism Association, Lake Vermilion Chamber of Commerce, Friends of the Lake Vermilion Trail, Club Mesabi) to help spread the word about the survey
- Interview area organizations (i.e. Lake Vermilion Resort & Tourism Association, Lake Vermilion Chamber of Commerce, Friends of the Lake Vermilion Trail, Club Mesabi) about trail development desires
- Hang flyers or provide paper surveys at area businesses/destinations (i.e. Ely Bike Shop, Sulu's, Post Office)
- Survey existing trail users
- Hold an open house or host a booth at an event (ATVAM Conference on September 17-19)

Using these ideas, Habermann will put together a public input proposal for the steering committee to review and provide feedback on virtually. Habermann noted that it would be good to have any opportunity for public input posted by mid-August and then be open for one full month.

#### Next Steps

- ARDC Planning will prepare meeting notes and distribute them to the steering committee.
- ARDC Planning will develop a public input proposal and send it to the steering committee for review before starting data collection.
- Brad Dekkers and Jim Essig will send ARDC Planning additional DNR trail shapefiles.
- ARDC Planning will revise the existing trails map and send an updated version to the steering committee for further review.

The meeting adjourned at 6:12 pm.

Tower Area Trails Plan  
Steering Committee Meeting #2  
October 4, 2021, 4:00 p.m.  
Breitung Township Community Center

Goal of Meeting: Review survey results, identify conceptual trail connections,  
and identify biggest barriers to maintenance of existing trails.

SUMMARY

Welcome and Introductions

Russell Habermann, Senior Planner at ARDC Planner, welcomed attendees and asked them to introduce themselves.

*Attendees:* Dan Broten (Penguins Snowmobile Club & Prospectors ATV Club), Brad Dekkers (DNR Trails), Aaron Kania (Citizen), Steve Lotz (Lake Vermilion Trail JPB), Bob Manzoline (Mesabi Trail), Kevin Norby (Tower City Council), Michael Schultz (TEDA), Mary Shedd (Howard Wagoner Ski Trail), Dianna Sunsdahl (Breitung Township), Roxanne Tea (Citizen)

Survey Results Review

Habermann summarized results of the Tower Area Trails Survey, which was administered from August 16 to September 15. When asked for their reaction to the results, attendees noted the following:

- Maintenance needs of the Mesabi Trail were mentioned by respondents, and there is upcoming work planned for the trail
- The feedback provided was not surprising, and it was good to see that everything desired was realistic/doable
- There wasn't a lot of input about motorized trails
- There seemed to be confusion about what trails are available in the area, which demonstrates a need for better communication about trails and a reason to develop a single information point for Tower area trails
- The results provide a good "snapshot" of what we have versus what is desired – it will be a good basis for our trails planning work

As a side comment about ATVs, attendees noted that Tower has not opened all roads up to ATV use; but there are designated alleys where ATVs are allowed to make connections.

Exercise: Conceptual Trail Connections

Habermann set up posters that identified existing trails, identified issues, and draft goals for each trail use activity in the area. He asked attendees to spend some time reading through the posters and making comments/additions/corrections on them. Habermann also provided maps of existing trails with desired trail destinations for reference.



Information on each of the posters (including notes from attendees in parentheses) is identified below.

☐ Hiking

- Ancient Cedars
- Howard Wagoner – Summer
- Jasper Peak
- LVSP/SUMSP
- Bear Head Lead SP
- Arrowhead State Trail (A lot of wetlands)
- Taconite State Trail (A lot of wetlands)
- Hiking trails north of Tower (Separate from ATV Trails, Quiet Rec, Connect to Hoodoo)
- Around the Horn

ID'd Issues

- (Maintenance)
- Washroom access
- Lack of rest areas
- (Restrooms)
- (Parking)
- (Connect networks)

Draft Goals

- ID washroom needs
- ID rest area needs
- Develop trail info hub
- North Country Trail routing (Campsites, back country/backpacking)
- Master all-trails maps

☐ Walking/Wheeling

- Hoodoo-McKinley Trail Loop
- Harbor Trail (Sidewalk from marina to town sidewalks)
- Mesabi Trail (Maintenance)
- Bois Forte Trail
- (Mountain bike north of Tower)

ID'd Issues

- Pavement Quality – Hoodoo Trail & Mesabi (\*)
- Trail bridge west of Junction Road
- Trailside vegetation management
- Winter trail maintenance – Plowing (\*, Groom for skate ski)

- Poor communication about trail/allowed use
- Road crossing signage
- Washroom/rest areas (\*, Signs and timed locks)

#### Draft Goals

- Complete Mesabi Trail – to Ely and Embarrass
- Reconstruct Mesabi between Tower and Soudan
- Construct Lake Vermilion Trail from Tower to Y-Store (Pike Bay Drive)
- Complete Hoodoo-McKinley trail loop
- Connect Harbor Trail to Marina and Mesabi – through playground park
- Develop trail information hub (\*)
- Road crossing signage needs
- ID washroom and rest area needs

#### □ Skiing

- Howard Wagoner (Track ski, Classic style)
- Fortune Bay
- Bear Head Lake SP
- (Mesabi Trail Skate Ski – LVSP to Ely)

#### ID'd Issues

- No trails in LVSP (Loops, conflict with snowmobile)
- No lights along trails (Cost)
- Washroom access/rest areas
- Dogs allowed?
- (Maintenance)
- (Sled dog trails?)
- (Snowshoeing)

#### Draft Goals

- Groom LVSP hiking trails for skiing
- ID washroom/rest area needs
- Communicate about allowing dogs/skijoring (Decision needed, Designate dog/skijoring trails – Extension?)
- (Master all-trails map)
- (Skate ski extension to Wagoner)
- (Other extension on west side – another 2-3K possible)
- (Designation as year-round non-motorized – then it can be enforced)

#### □ ATVing

- Tower to McKinley Park Trail (Northside loop?)
- Prospector Loop



- Taconite State Trail – Select segments

#### ID'd Issues

- (Need designated routes only)
- Taconite Trail quality
- Connections – Hoodoo to Soudan, Soudan to Prospector (Being designed/constructed – Murray to Soudan)
- Access to overnight accommodations
- Washroom access/rest areas?
- Side-by-side trail use? (Allowed almost everywhere ATV Class I are allowed)
- (Resource damage)
- (Priorities on dual use trails [ski])

#### Draft Goals

- Maintenance of Tower to McKinley Park Trail (Part of Prospector grant-in-aid)
- Construct trails that parallel paved trail system
- ID UTV demand in northern St. Louis County
- (Master all-trails map)

#### ☐ Snowmobiling

- Tower Area Trail
- Iron Ore Trail
- Putnam & Fishing Lakes (Can't get to)
- Arrowhead State Trail
- Taconite State Trail

#### ID'd Needs

- Washroom/rest areas
- (Clear signage through town)
- (What is not open in summer?)

#### Draft Goals

- ID washroom/rest area needs (Existing trail shelters need maintenance/replacement)
- (Parking vs. rest area? – Focused on communities)
- (Permanent easements/ROW for non-state trails)
- (Master all-trails map)

#### ☐ Water Trails

- ???
- (Lake Vermilion kayak trail)
- (Connections/portages to Burntside/Bear Island, Bear Head)
- (From Harbor out to Pike Bay)

- (Also to Swedetown Bay lunch spot)
- Other (Snowshoeing, MTBing, Horse Riding)
  - Snowshoe: Ancient Cedars, LVSP, SUMNSP, Bear Head Lake SP, Arrowhead State Trail, Taconite State Trail
  - MTB: Arrowhead State Trail (?), Taconite State Trail (?) (Not good MTB trails), (Lookout/Laurentian Divide)
  - Horse: Arrowhead State Trail, Taconite State Trail (Mow?)

#### ID'd Issues

- Maintenance of state trails for summer use
- Poor communication
- Washroom/rest areas (Trail heads, parking lots)

#### Draft Goals

- Develop maps – summer and winter
- Develop trail information hub
- ID MTB interest for local area
- ID washroom/rest area needs (Parking)
- (Markers)
- (Master all-trails map)
- (Maintenance)

After the exercise, Habermann asked the group to reflect on their thoughts during the exercise. Attendees expressed the following:

- Developing trails is a big task that requires lots of money
- Something that the Mesabi Trail and snowmobile trails have encountered in recent years is securing easements and renewing those easements when they time out; often, losing an easement happens when a property changes ownership
- When an easement is lost, rerouting a trail can be difficult or impossible; getting a perpetual/permanent easement is becoming an even more important part of sustainable trail management
- There seems to be public confusion and a need of clarity about the purpose of each existing and future trail; intended use dictates design, and intended/designated use is often tied to grant funding
- Long term maintenance is almost a bigger concern than development because it takes a sustained effort (and people) to keep things in shape; for example, it was an intentional choice not to include washroom facilities along the state trails – it would just be too difficult to maintain these buildings in the long-term



During this discussion, attendees also brought forward the Culture & Tourism Grant opportunity from IRRR and the Northern St. Louis County Trails Task Force, which is a forum for trail development topics in the larger area.

Discussion: What barriers exist to maintaining Tower area trails?

Habermann asked what barriers exist to maintaining Tower trails and invited the attendees to spend a few minutes offering up their thoughts.

The attendees brought forward the following barriers to trail maintenance:

- Money (both for initial construction and ongoing maintenance)
- Capacity/people (volunteers or staff)
- Information (sharing knowledge about trail systems and continually pushing the info out)
- Online presence (trail information needs to be up to date and current on agency webpages and social media)
- Making sound trail investments (trail use counting is becoming a more common metric when agencies apply for trail grant funding – we don't want to put public money into unused trails)
- Access to maintenance equipment (can equipment be shared between agencies?)
- Confusion about roles in trail ownership and maintenance (e.g., government's role in trail development and management – many governments are not bought in, though trails are a public good and governments benefit from an attractive trail system)

It was also noted during this conversation that trail kiosks are a useful tool for informing the public about trails. It was expressed that having one physical location in the area that was a well-known source of comprehensive trail information would be beneficial.

#### Next Steps

- ARDC Planning will develop and distribute a meeting summary.
- ARDC Planning will take the information provided at the meeting and create a draft plan.
- ARDC Planning will distribute the draft plan document to the steering committee and ask for suggested revisions to prepare the document for public review; ARDC Planning will also hold "office hour" sessions so that the steering committee can join and talk through issues as needed.
- ARDC Planning will provide a final draft document and administer a public review period.
- ARDC Planning will set up a final steering committee meeting to review public feedback and finalize the plan document.

The meeting adjourned at 5:09 pm.

## Appendix D: Trail Goals from Area Organizations

The Mesabi Trail has the following trail development goals:

1. Constructing a new trail segment between Tower and Embarrass thus connecting the City of Tower to the City of Grand Rapids with a continuous trail
2. Constructing two new trail segments between Tower and Ely thus connecting the communities with a continuous trail.
3. Reconstructing the trail between Tower and Soudan

The Lake Vermilion Trail Joint Powers Board has the following trail development goal:

1. Coordinate so that the Mesabi Trail and the Lake Vermilion Trail to enter Tower on the same route going to the Tower Civic Center and ending at the existing Mesabi Trail kiosk. Both trails have the same specifications. At this point, the Lake Vermilion Trail is planned as far as the winter trails kiosk on the west side of highway 135. Application for legacy funds for segment 7 of the Lake Vermilion Trail is planned for 2022. Therefore, resolving the final portion of route into Tower would be very helpful to know during the application process.

The Tower Economic Development Authority (TEDA) has the following trail development goals:

1. Tower to Cook - follow Hwy 169 to the Y-Store than follow along the highway to Cook
2. Lee Mine & Overlook trail better maintained and possibly expanded or connected to other trails (some of this work has already been done - kiosks, signage, trail work - maps ready to post by spring)
3. Harbor to Marina on the west side of the river
4. Hoodoo Point through airport property to reach the north side trails - possible bog walk/boardwalk
5. Connector trail from trail around Harbor on the back side between Benchwarmers building and river's edge - trail would run along the river's edge through the children's park and connect to the Mesabi Trail at Pine Street.
6. ADA compliant walking trails within the children's park and to an ADA accessibility ramp over the train tracks to a double Green Flush restroom in the proposed Welcome Park on the civic center campus
7. The trail from the children's park to Soudan which passes by the new Cedar Trails could be better maintained.



More specifics on the above TEDA goals are documented below as well:

- Lake Vermillion /Tower to Cook that would run along the Mesabi trail head towards the Y-Store and then along the highway to Cook.
- I would like to see the “Lee Mine & Overlook” trails maintained. There is direct access at two other city locations as well – Birch Street and right up the hill from your home. Signage (although old) is already there, the trails are rough but probably fixable easier than building new, and there is a trail “spur” that goes north from the Lee Mine viewing area but dead ends after about a quarter mile. With the many rough trails in the area, I suspect that it would be a short distance to connect with another trail. These could be great trails for XC skiing as well.
- We do need a connecting trail from the harbor to the marina, on the west side of the river. This would entail getting an easement from the Mesojedecs. The north side trails, which would encompass the Lee Mine and the overlooks accessible from Birch Street are actually in the works. We have the kiosks already built and we’re going to finish trail work this fall and should have maps ready to post by next spring.  
The other trail we should have is a connector trail from the Hoodoo Point area through the airpark property to reach the north side trails. Some of this could go through the bog area on that property, which would be ideal for a boardwalk. Orr shouldn’t be the only place up here with a bog walk.  
That trail would be very popular.
- We need a connector trail from the new existing trail around the Harbor on the back side between Benchwarmers building and the river’s edge. That is city property. Trail should run along the river’s edge through the children’s park and connect to the Mesabi Trail at Pine Street. The trail to connect the marina along the river which Marshall suggested would connect to this trail via the Harbor trail.

ADA-compliant Walking trails should be constructed within the children’s park and to an ADA accessibility ramp over the train tracks to a double Green Flush restroom in the proposed Welcome Park on the civic center campus.

Bikers and walkers need a restroom. The city opens the civic center Memorial Day through Labor Day. The city needs a year-round restroom with all the recreational traffic we currently have and it’s growing.

A DNR Outdoor Recreational Grant program and IRRR’s regional trail program could be major funders for a comprehensive project which will require development of a site plan for the overall project.

A member of the steering committee has also been collecting additional information from the community about trails. Their findings from conversations are outlined below:

- Sources of funding - Community development block grants, Tower Economic Development Authority, IRRRB, Grants in Aid, LCCMR, others - critical to understand what the requirements and purpose of these funding sources are.
- Diversity and designation of trail systems - It is very important to recognize the needs of each type of use and separate those uses as much as practicable. Quiet recreation needs to have space from motorized recreation. The type of trail tread can be different – i.e., snowmobile trails vs skate ski vs tracked ski vs snowshoe. Or ATV trails vs mountain bike single track vs hiking trails. Deconflicting uses greatly improves the quality of the experience. By designating trail systems and classifying them, we can better seek funding and design toward a desired experience. We are fortunate that we have a large landscape with many acres of public lands to work within. We also have two distinct seasons in which we can use the same trail corridor in different ways.
- Loops and Hubs - Users generally want a loop or a scenic destination (or purpose ie lunch) if going on an out and back. There is a need for parking lots to access trails. These lots can have multiple trails leaving from them. This would require some work with MNDOT. Restrooms could be included at these sites.
- ATV destination - I've been thinking and talking with folks about the ATV trail systems. There can be a lot of discussion around this. Tower/Soudan/Breiting may want to aggressively seek to be an ATV hub for the region. It is centrally located and from Tower people can get to Crane Lake, Aurora, Babbitt, Embarrass and Ely. There is a new ATV campground being designed at the state park. Ely has aggressively marketed the Canoe Capital and is more focused on quite recreation.
- Camping - Along the Mesabi Trail and North Country trail users could utilize some of the camping that is available but may also need additional backcountry tent camping sites.
- Maps - we need a winter map and a summer map. There is too much info for one map.
- North Country Trail - I've been working on a map and hike exercise to figure out a route for the North Country Trail from Burntside Lake through Vermilion State Park and through Tower. I will need to sit down with the State Park. This is one of the large blocks where the trail uses the Mesabi trail instead of natural tread. By finding a path through the forest on mostly existing trails it will greatly improve the north country trail experience. The USFS is working on the segment between Snowbank Lake and Burntside Lake.



# Appendix E: Survey Findings Summary

ARDC Planning administered a public survey about Tower Area trails from August 16 to September 15, 2021. The survey asked respondents to provide demographic information, feelings about existing trails, and any additional thoughts about the trails in Tower. Summary findings are outlined below.

## Demographics

201 respondents participated in the survey. Most respondents were from the 55790 (Tower, MN) ZIP code, used existing trails at least once per month throughout the year, and used trails for walking/hiking.

When asked about destinations people wish to reach via a trail, respondents identified the following as top destinations (number of “votes” are listed in parentheses):

1. Lake Vermilion (38)
2. Lake Vermilion State Park (30)
3. Ely (27)
4. Hoodoo Point (24)
5. Restaurant/Bar (24)
6. Tower (20)
7. Soudan (19)
8. Y Store (19)
9. Cook (18)
10. Trails (13)
11. Fortune Bay Casino (12)
12. McKinley Park (12)
13. Babbitt (10)
14. Ski Trails (10)

## Questions About Trails

When asked about the maintenance of existing trails, 27% of respondents felt maintenance of trails was “poor” or “very poor”, and 42% of respondents felt it was “good” or “very good”. When asked about the connections of existing trails, 31% of respondents felt trail connections were “poor” or “very poor”, and 35% of respondents felt they were “good” or “very good”.

When asked about issues users face when on the trails, respondents expressed the following:

- 1) trail maintenance (e.g., pavement quality of walk/bike trails to Hoodoo Point, Mesabi Trail between Tower and Soudan, Taconite Trail surface, trail bridge just west of Junction Road,

lack of mowing “all season” snowmobile trails and along the edge of paved trails during summer, lack of plowing paved trails for walking and biking during winter),

2) trail connections (e.g., lack of designated ATV connections [Hoodoo Point to Soudan, direct access to Prospector from Soudan], uncompleted paved trail connections [Hoodoo Point loop, connection from Tower Harbor to trailhead, westward and southward intercity connections], lacking connections to scenic views, desire to longer trails [2-4 miles] and trails that loop back to town [instead of requiring users to backtrack on the same route]),

3) unclear communication about trail use (i.e., permitted use of each trail not communicated well, difficult to access information or maps, lacking roadway signage at trail crossings), and

4) trail user accommodations (e.g., lack of lighting on ski trails, lack of direct trail connection to overnight accommodations, lack of access to washrooms, lack of trash cans and benches).

Other responses expressed praise for the presence of trails in the community, desire for a trail system that was more intuitive for people to use, and concern that ATV use on trails not designated for their use worsen the trail experience for intended users.

When asked about trail activities desired but not currently available in the area, respondents mentioned (in no order):

- Rollerblading, skate skiing, inline skating – Pavement of existing trails is not maintained well enough, some trails are built with too sharp of curves.
- Mountain biking/winter fat biking – Existing trails restrictions are unclear about ability for bikes to use them, and trails in the area are not built specifically for this use.
- Skijouring – Area ski trails do not seem to welcome animals.
- UTVing – Existing trails don't allow for side-by-sides.
- Skiing – Specifically in Lake Vermilion State Park
- Bogwalking (boardwalk trail)



## Appendix F: Full Survey Results

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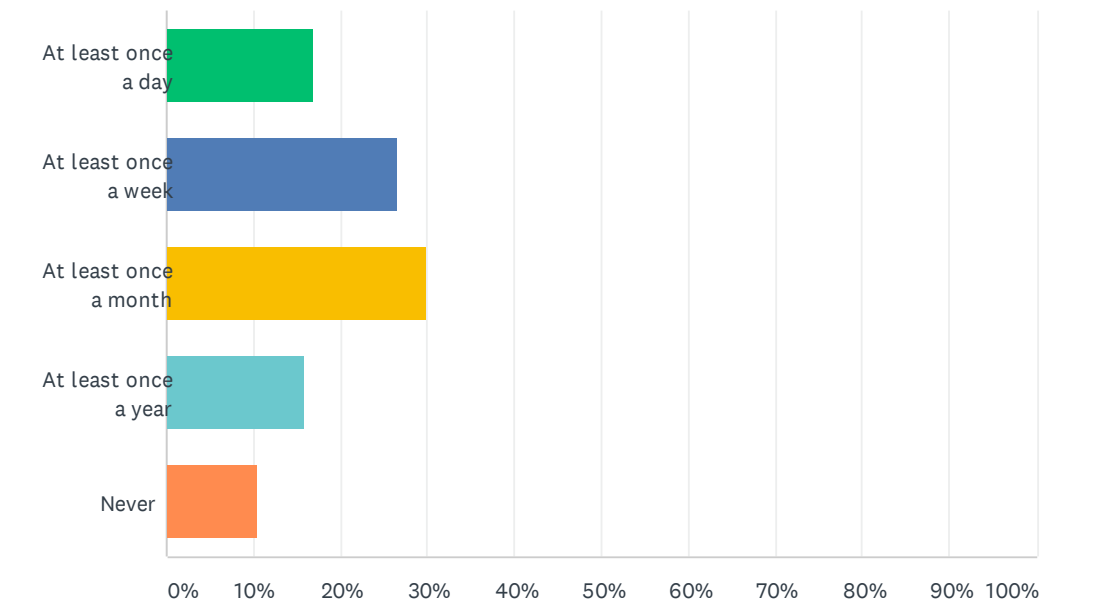
## Q1 What is your ZIP code of residence?

Answered: 195    Skipped: 5

#	RESPONSES	FREQUENCY
1	55790	70
2	55782	18
3	55723	14
4	55731	8
5	55732	7
6	55792	6
7	55811	4
8	55044	3
9	55423	3
10	55442	3
11	55746	3
12	55347	2
13	55369	2
14	55734	2
15	55758	2
16	34113, 51012, 51334, 53711, 54002, 54830, 54853, 55016, 55025, 55042, 55060, 55068, 55079, 55082, 55092, 55104, 55107, 55112, 55115, 55304, 55330, 55337, 55386, 55406, 55409, 55411, 55419, 55703, 55706, 55708, 55709, 55710, 55720, 55721, 55722, 55768, 55807, 56011, 56081, 56285, 56301, 56320, 56373, 56401, 58047, 80908, 55063	1 Each

Q2 How often do you generally use existing trails in the Tower area during summer months?

Answered: 200    Skipped: 0

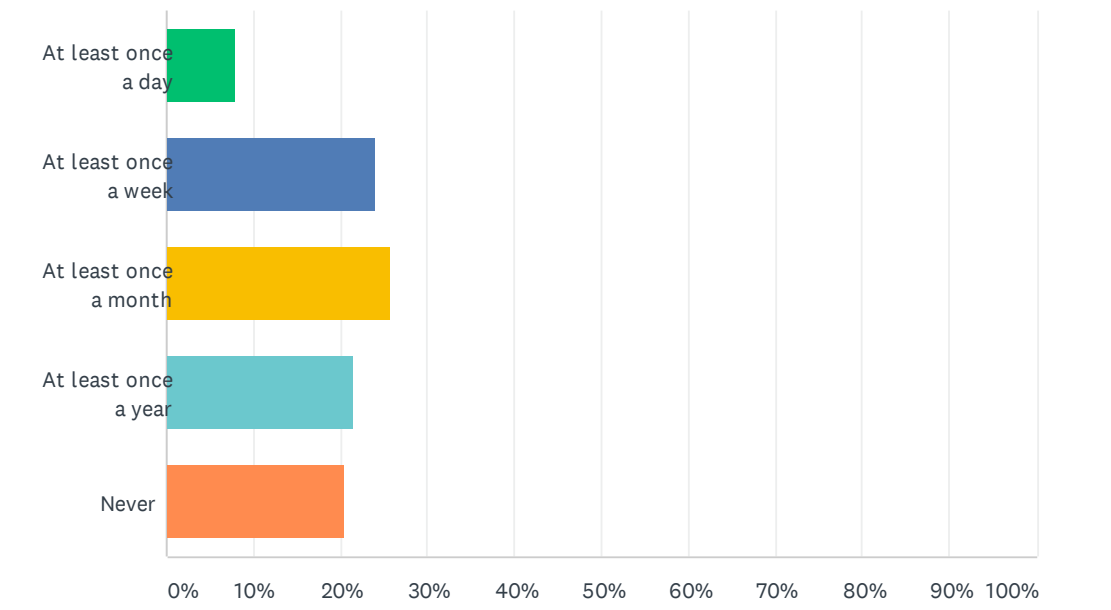


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
At least once a day	17.00%	34
At least once a week	26.50%	53
At least once a month	30.00%	60
At least once a year	16.00%	32
Never	10.50%	21
TOTAL		200



Q3 How often do you generally use existing trails in the Tower area during winter months?

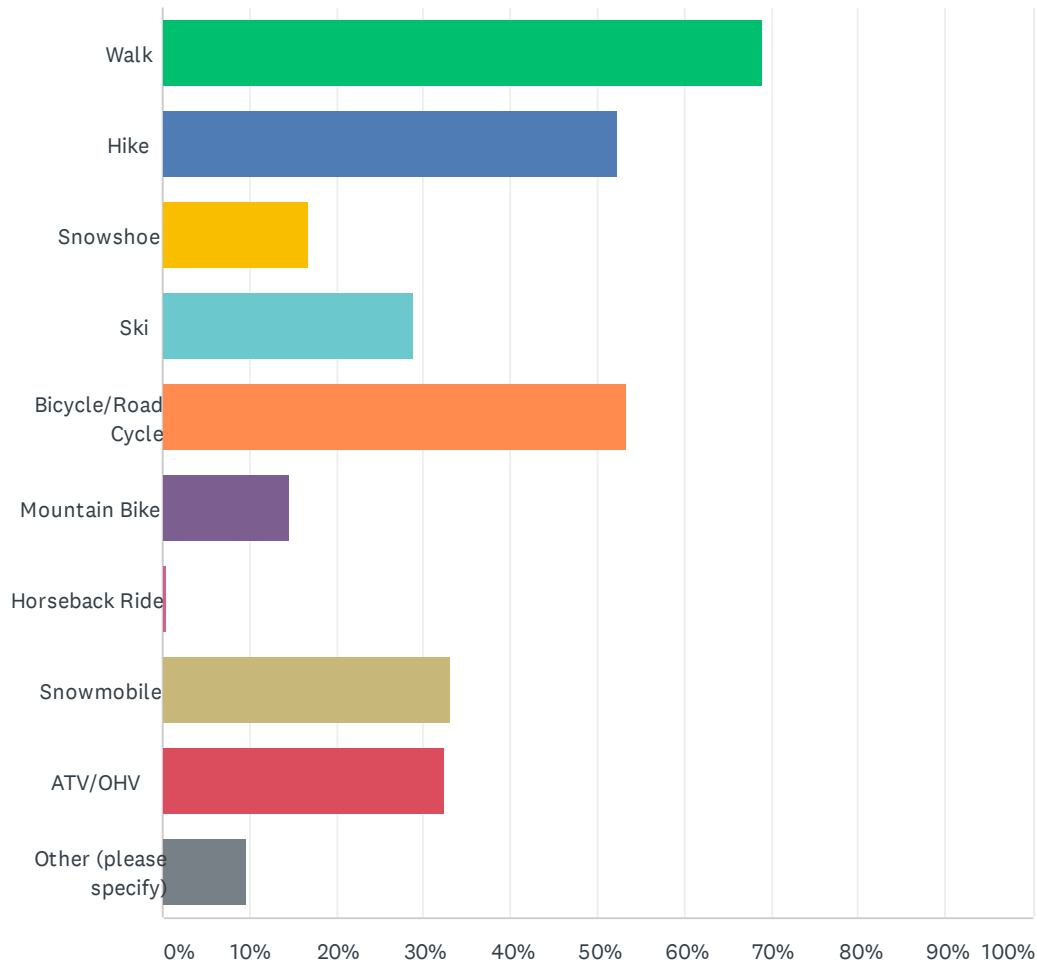
Answered: 199    Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
At least once a day	8.04%	16
At least once a week	24.12%	48
At least once a month	25.63%	51
At least once a year	21.61%	43
Never	20.60%	41
TOTAL		199

## Q4 What do you currently use trails in the Tower area to do?

Answered: 197   Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Walk	69.04%	136
Hike	52.28%	103
Snowshoe	16.75%	33
Ski	28.93%	57
Bicycle/Road Cycle	53.30%	105
Mountain Bike	14.72%	29
Horseback Ride	0.51%	1
Snowmobile	32.99%	65
ATV/OHV	32.49%	64
Other (please specify)	9.64%	19
Total Respondents: 197		

## Tower Area Trails Survey

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Hunt grouse!	9/11/2021 11:33 AM
2	Run	8/30/2021 9:11 PM
3	Run	8/30/2021 7:49 PM
4	run	8/30/2021 7:15 PM
5	Run	8/30/2021 12:19 PM
6	Jog	8/30/2021 9:17 AM
7	Inlike skate	8/28/2021 6:59 PM
8	Hunting access	8/27/2021 7:58 AM
9	nature observation: birds, flowers, insects	8/26/2021 5:29 PM
10	Run and run/walk with strollers	8/25/2021 3:37 PM
11	none	8/25/2021 3:08 PM
12	Don't feel they are safe	8/22/2021 8:07 PM
13	don't	8/19/2021 5:18 PM
14	I don't waste of money	8/18/2021 3:17 PM
15	Child in wheelchair	8/17/2021 7:29 AM
16	Mushing (bikejoring, skijoring, & dogsled)	8/16/2021 11:48 PM
17	Side-by-side	8/16/2021 3:19 PM
18	Take dog for walk	8/12/2021 3:23 PM
19	Take dog for walk	8/12/2021 3:21 PM



## Q5 What are the top three destinations you want to get to in the Tower area? (Note: A desired destination does not need to be within city limits.)

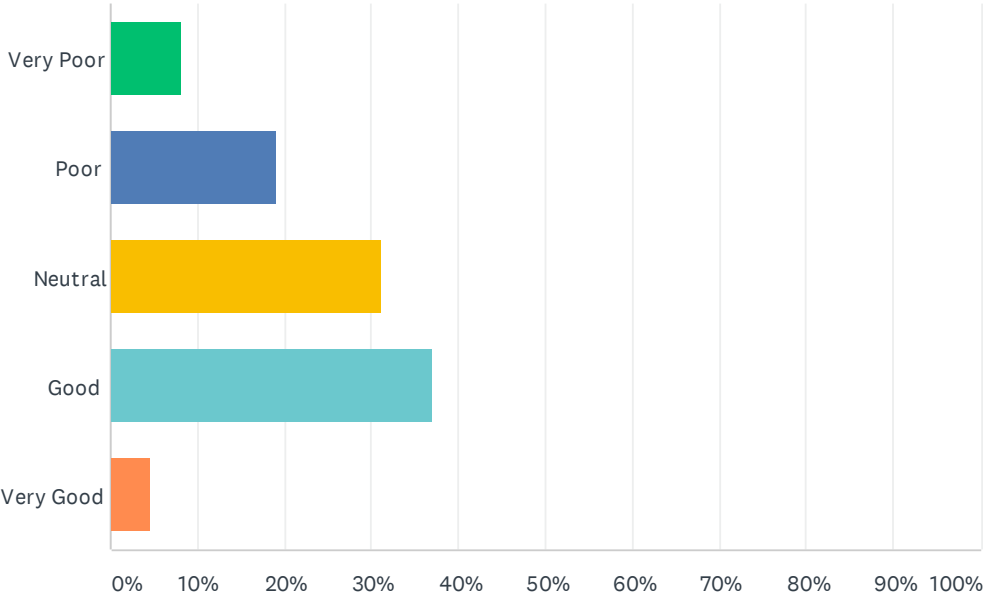
Answered: 161    Skipped: 39

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Destination 1	100.00%	161
Destination 2	85.09%	137
Destination 3	67.70%	109

#	DESTINATION	FREQUENCY
1	Lake Vermilion	38
2	Lake Vermilion State Park	30
3	Ely	27
4	Hoodoo Point	24
5	Restaurant/Bar	24
6	Tower	20
7	Soudan	19
8	Y Store	19
9	Cook	18
10	Trails	13
11	Fortune Bay Casino	12
12	McKinley Park	12
13	Babbitt	10
14	Ski Trails	10
15	Ancient Cedars Trail	9
16	Gas Station	9
17	Embarrass	6
18	Grocery Store	6
19	Mesabi Trail	6
20	North Hill	6
21	Vermilion Club	6
22	Bear Head Lake State Park, Train Depot	5 Each
23	Overnight Accommodations, Swimming Beach	4 Each
24	Eagle's Nest, Greenwood Town Hall, Jasper Peak, Marina, Soudan Mine	3 Each
25	Dam, East Two River, Giants Ridge, Kugler Ridge, Soudan Ice Rink, Stuntz Bay	2 Each
26	Aurora, Fectos Point Area, Fraser Bay, Harbor, Historical Sites, Iron Mountain, Iron Ore Trail, Lake Superior, Lake Vermilion Trail, Lee Mine Site, Mini Golf, Moccasin Point, Prospector Trail, Sewage Ponds, Taconite Trail, Tennis Courts, Tower Park, Trygg Road, Virginia	1 Each

Q6 How would you describe the general quality of trail maintenance in the Tower area?

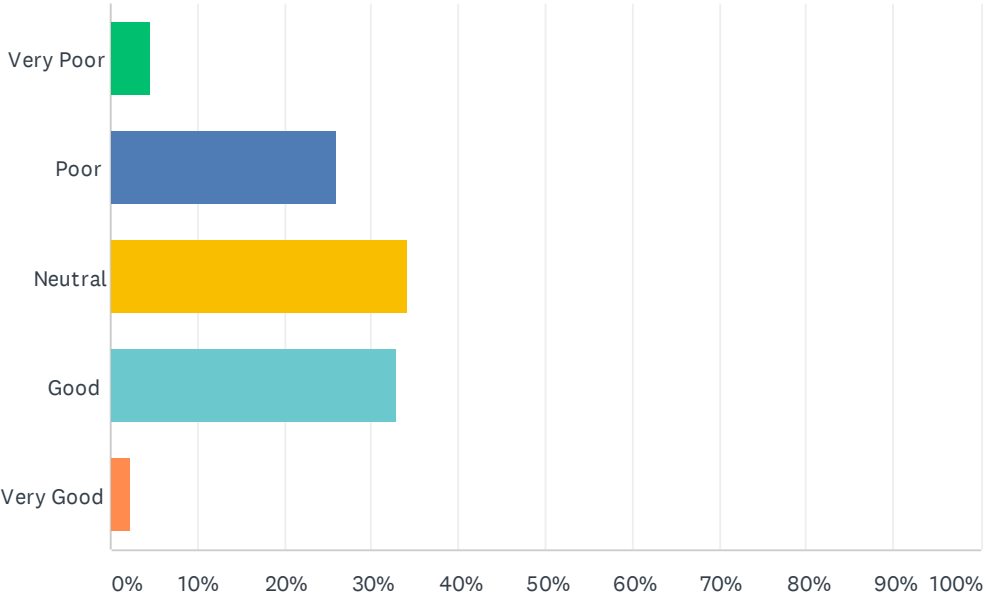
Answered: 173    Skipped: 27



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Poor	8.09%	14
Poor	19.08%	33
Neutral	31.21%	54
Good	36.99%	64
Very Good	4.62%	8
TOTAL		173

# Q7 How would you describe the general quality of trail connections in the Tower area?

Answered: 173    Skipped: 27



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Poor	4.62%	8
Poor	26.01%	45
Neutral	34.10%	59
Good	32.95%	57
Very Good	2.31%	4
TOTAL		173



## Q8 What issues are there on existing trails in the Tower area? Be specific about the trail or location of the issue in your answer, if possible.

Answered: 121    Skipped: 79

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	It would be nice to have the trail connect between the end near Puncher Point and the trail to town at Hoodoo Point near the airport runway	9/15/2021 5:11 PM
2	Badly worn	9/14/2021 8:44 AM
3	None.	9/11/2021 11:34 AM
4	Direct access to prospector trail from soudan, going east to Murray forest and Ely without having to go to Tower	9/10/2021 10:56 PM
5	better maps	9/9/2021 8:07 PM
6	No connection from hoodoo point to the Soudan trail from the airport east	9/6/2021 10:26 PM
7	They do not facilitate travel smoothly around town. For people with kids or animals they can be concerning with motorized vehicles rate of speed. Potholes and poor drainage, slope of trail to drain excess water away from trail and mitigate erosion near trail shoulders. Lack of information/advertisement of trail use and destination, marked parking and general information to tourists who might use the trails as alternative access to area destinations, possible scooter/bike rentals similar to other lake area tourist destinations.	9/2/2021 9:05 PM
8	Want more walking trails around Lake Vermilion, especially Greenwood Township and Birch Point Road	9/1/2021 1:08 PM
9	Aging asphalt with cracks and bumps (from tree roots)	8/31/2021 10:29 PM
10	Bike path behind tower, and from McKinney to Soudan	8/31/2021 8:05 PM
11	trail from tower to soudan very poor condition. trails to and thru state park are good. would be nice to extend paved trails to the west or virginia	8/31/2021 9:51 AM
12	Na	8/31/2021 9:05 AM
13	Bike trail from mckinley park to hoodoo point requires walking on the road, want full connection with trails	8/31/2021 7:50 AM
14	Uneven asphalt and cracks	8/31/2021 5:26 AM
15	Cracks, tree roots, tar repair is sticky	8/30/2021 9:14 PM
16	McKinley Park and Hoodoo Point trails need to connect	8/30/2021 8:23 PM
17	Not easy to navigate to restaurants or stores in the winter. There are also no trails along 169 making walking into town from the Y store (77) very dangerous. If there was a trail along 169 going into Tower, it would be highly used!!	8/30/2021 7:58 PM
18	The trails from the sos store to eagles nest are great. The trails around the hoodoo point/airport/McKinley park need attention. No smooth, lots of break in pavement	8/30/2021 7:53 PM
19	very rough pavement...	8/30/2021 7:17 PM
20	Nothing from Greenwood into tower for walk, bike, ATV	8/30/2021 6:11 PM
21	Trails south of town a little rough	8/30/2021 6:08 PM
22	Not knowing where they are	8/30/2021 6:02 PM
23	Rocky	8/30/2021 4:49 PM
24	Horrible pavement on bike trials.	8/30/2021 4:14 PM

## Tower Area Trails Survey

25	Pot holes and many don't connect.	8/30/2021 3:58 PM
26	south side of towers "mesabi trail" pavement is poorly paved. Also a way to get to the same spots as the mesabi trail on a four wheeler would be nice. Its perfect spot for atv drivers to get from one side of town to the other without having to drive through town and disturb the it with loud noise and traffic. Thank you :)	8/30/2021 3:36 PM
27	Hoo doo point does not fully connect all around. Bike trail from tower to Sudan is poor condition. ATV trails need expansion	8/30/2021 2:06 PM
28	Lack of connectivity to other rail systems; some sections of the Mesabi Trail are in very poor condition; gaps in sections of the trails, forcing you to use area roadways	8/30/2021 2:05 PM
29	Mesabi Trail from Tower to Soudan is in terrible shape.	8/30/2021 1:30 PM
30	The bridges is un cross able is in serious disrepair. I would t even let both of my children cross the thing at the same time. The trail has not been maintained in twenty years the ground hea ing from the winter frost has destroyed many portions of it.	8/30/2021 1:30 PM
31	Grooming of ski trails could improve.	8/30/2021 12:20 PM
32	The bike/walk trail between Tower and Soudan on the south side of Tower needs to be repaired. Would be nice to see the trail connected with a path from the airport to the start of the trail further up the road by mckinley for safety purposes and keep people off the shoulder of the road.	8/30/2021 12:01 PM
33	lots of potholes and ruts	8/30/2021 11:54 AM
34	I do not know much about them honestly	8/30/2021 11:36 AM
35	ATV encroachments on the Tower Ski Trails	8/30/2021 11:36 AM
36	large cracks in pavement, settling, tree/root growth causing... All of these causing tripping hazards or difficulty riding a bike	8/30/2021 11:19 AM
37	The Mesabi Trail isn't completely connected.	8/30/2021 11:14 AM
38	They are in good condition currently	8/30/2021 10:55 AM
39	Bike trail is extremely rough, hard to find way thru town.	8/30/2021 10:43 AM
40	On the Taconite trail (I think that's the one that goes by Hoodoo Point and continues around by Soudan?), there are a lot of roots breaking up the path. Not so bad when I run or walk, but makes it harder to bike on. Also, it would be awesome if this trail was finished by the airport. I Like the trail that goes to the boat harbor but it would be nice if it connected with something else. I really think the amount of trails in Tower are wonderful, but trail maintenance in general could be improved and there is a ton of potential to make some great trail connections. I'm not a snowmobiler or ATVer so running, walking, biking, and skiing are my biggest uses.	8/30/2021 9:24 AM
41	more signage	8/29/2021 7:38 PM
42	I'm not informed of locations. Are there trail maps? Where?	8/29/2021 11:16 AM
43	The Mesabi Trail behind town is in horrible condition, as is the paved trial going to Hoodoo Point. Also, ATV use is getting to be a problem on the Mesabi Bike Trail again	8/28/2021 7:01 PM
44	Bike/walk trail behind Tower towards Soudan is in rough shape. Disappointing to have seen the number of ATVs using it. Difficult to know of trails around the area for hiking; no "one place to go" for information	8/28/2021 4:39 PM
45	lack of trail signs, connections to segments of existing trails. No trail to tower from the west on 169 corridor	8/28/2021 9:35 AM
46	Trail leaving the Tower train depot is in dangerous condition for bikers. Better signage and a Tower website of trails. We accidentally discovered a hiking trail off the paved trail which leads from Soudan to Vermilion State park.	8/27/2021 8:36 PM
47	Trail from the Tower train depot/park to the small creek bridge (about 3/4 of a mile) is absolutely terrible. Difficult for running and very uncomfortable for biking, and downright dangerous for biking with a trailer with little ones. The rest of the trail around HooDoo Point is ok, but still plenty of bumps, roots pushing up through the trail, etc. and is still bumpy enough	8/27/2021 9:42 AM

## Tower Area Trails Survey

that it's very difficult to do with a bike trailer with young kids. I also wish the trail would connect rather than needing to use the road between McKinley Park and Hoodoo Point (maybe a mile to a mile and a half).

48	Mesabi trail south of town is in need of resurfacing, terrible on a bike. Atv trails north of town are maintained well.	8/27/2021 8:00 AM
49	bike trails are all in poor condition between tower and soudan also poor between soudan and McKinley park	8/26/2021 7:46 PM
50	trails could be better mowed in summer to avoid morning dew at hip level	8/26/2021 5:31 PM
51	No issues	8/26/2021 4:14 PM
52	Xc ski trail not easily used/allowed/accessible for mtn biking. Plus have to ride on hwy to get to the trails from outside of town.	8/26/2021 12:44 PM
53	Between Tower and Soudan the trail is so bumpy and in repair. Makes bike riding very hard. Also from The SOS in Soudan down to Mckinley Park is terrible	8/26/2021 10:46 AM
54	Mesabi Trail between Tower depot and Soudan store needs immediate replacement/repair...very poor conditions make it dangerous for bicycles	8/25/2021 9:52 PM
55	No issues. The current trails are usually maintained.	8/25/2021 9:12 PM
56	Taconite Trail needs resurfacing and Ancient Cedars Trail is too narrow.	8/25/2021 7:18 PM
57	ATV traffic on walking trails	8/25/2021 4:53 PM
58	Not enough trails with scenic views. Not enough trails with varying terrain and varying elevation. Need to get usage up so existing trails don't get overgrown. Need trails that lead to ideal lunch spots with a view.	8/25/2021 3:39 PM
59	Non connection from Tower Hoodoo Pt to McKinley park trail. Trails in Tower tar buckling ripped up due to ATVs	8/25/2021 3:17 PM
60	The trail to Soudan is in very poor condition	8/25/2021 2:26 PM
61	The Tower to Soudan Trail is becoming very poor for walking and bicycling.	8/25/2021 2:20 PM
62	1) The Wagoner/City of Tower ski trail system has great potential to be snow-free season hiking or mt biking, but it would need some mowing and short reroutes around a couple wet areas. 2) Mesabi Trail from depot to Soudan is in terrible shape for bikers, but I believe it will be reconstructed next year. 3) Atv use on the Mesabi, Wagoner trails is a growing problem now that the Prospectors ATV trail has come through. The ski trails - other than the one collaborative share-the-trails leg from Tower to the Skala Rd - should be RE-dedicated to non-motorized (emphasis on hiking, biking, hunter-hiker trail). It was established as such some 40 years ago when grants and volunteers helped build the trails. But now, given use over the decades, most believe it to be open - or at least freely use it. Again, with Propsectors bringing so many more people to town, the trails should be codified as non-moto. 4) lack of publicity for hiking trails or other hiking opportunities in the Soudan-Tower area. We have fantastic trails, but they are little known. As the Ancient Cedars has become popular one can see the demand and the need for the new northside trails. Then there should be a map that shows the hiking "ecosystem". 5) adequate volunteers - presuming that the City cant take on trail maintenance.	8/25/2021 2:19 PM
63	Mesabi Trail between Tower and Soudan is in terrible condition, has no trail head or restrooms in Soudan. That trail needs better signage at the iron ore bridge location. The current sign is faded. The trail parking lot by the civic center needs a restroom facility (more than just the civic center on certain days and hours). Signage needs to be improved coming into Tower as to the location for the Mesabi Trail and city trails. A crosswalk imprinted on the highway 169 so that bikers coming from the north side to the civic center driveway can cross safely. The Hoodoo Point Road needs signs in several areas to alert drivers of a vehicle that there is a trail crossing as currently there are none. The Harbor Trail needs a connection to the Mesabi Trail through the city playground along the river.	8/25/2021 1:35 PM
64	Trails do not connect - in the McKinley Park area, in the harbor area, access to the ski trails.	8/25/2021 9:23 AM
65	Snowmobile trails are good, don't spoil them with ATV traffic.	8/24/2021 9:43 AM
66	Between Tower and Soudan Store - the trail is actually dangerous with ruts, tree roots, pot	8/22/2021 8:08 PM



## Tower Area Trails Survey

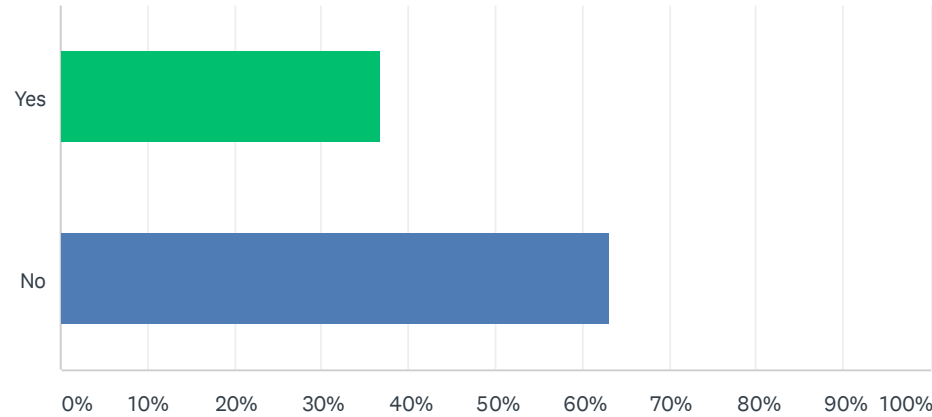
	holes, etc.	
67	No access with side by sides, ATV	8/21/2021 12:53 PM
68	Mesabi Trail South of 169 broken up and heaved pavement. Mesabi Trail near the sewage lagoons has a couple significant bumps.	8/21/2021 8:23 AM
69	There are miles of existing trails in the new state park, it would be nice if they were mowed/maintained several times a summer so that all could enjoy hiking/biking throughout these trails. The main trail is maintained nicely in Soudan, but there are many other trails that are unusable due to no maintenance in the summer.	8/21/2021 7:47 AM
70	They need to be kept up. They do not allow for handicapped access. Would like to use a small motorized scooter but was told it was against the law.	8/20/2021 7:34 AM
71	to many using private property and trespassing	8/19/2021 5:21 PM
72	ATV's on paved bike trail is creating ruts	8/19/2021 1:26 PM
73	None known off hand	8/19/2021 9:33 AM
74	Trail behind tower has more holes than road	8/18/2021 11:26 AM
75	Need to go around Lake Vermilion to Cook	8/17/2021 10:53 PM
76	Mowing arrowhead trail Signage improvements	8/17/2021 9:20 PM
77	Very poor upkeep	8/17/2021 4:04 PM
78	Need a repave job along the south end to Hwy 169 by Soudan. Tower is too cheap to do that. Can't even fix the streets in town.	8/17/2021 3:47 PM
79	The walking/bike trail is a joke! I love going rollerblading but cannot do that with the condition of the trail by the train park. Also to have a connection with the four wheeler trail to ely or greenwood township would be nice.	8/17/2021 1:41 PM
80	Some parts of the loop biking trail needs improving. I'm looking forward to finishing the, Mesabi bike trails to Ely and giants Ridge.	8/17/2021 11:47 AM
81	Shares use with snowmobiles have greatly degraded the trails around Tower.	8/17/2021 10:49 AM
82	Not well marked	8/17/2021 10:44 AM
83	Connection of trail off of Sunset Road	8/17/2021 10:27 AM
84	Not really any trails nearby our cabin location in daisy bay to use for walking/running	8/17/2021 10:25 AM
85	Snowmobile connections and maintenance are great. Bike trail connections to west of Tower are non-existent.	8/17/2021 10:01 AM
86	Maintenance	8/17/2021 10:00 AM
87	Connecting to other trails	8/17/2021 9:04 AM
88	The trail is very rough, pavement has some bad frost heaves and is breaking up between Tower & Soudan Also the McKinley Park trail.	8/17/2021 8:59 AM
89	overgrown, cracks, potholes, etc.	8/17/2021 7:53 AM
90	Mesabi trail is getting rough in spots. Lake Vermilion trail needs to be built.	8/17/2021 7:27 AM
91	Rough	8/17/2021 7:23 AM
92	Not enough information out there for visitors!	8/17/2021 6:44 AM
93	Want mckinley and hoodoo connected with no walking/riding on the dangerous. Curved, no shoulder road. Trail by trains is in very poor condition and running from soudan to tower.	8/17/2021 6:13 AM
94	None encountered	8/17/2021 2:17 AM
95	Summer maintenance/condition of trails primarily marketed for snowmobiling can be iffy in terms of mowing and wetness.	8/16/2021 11:50 PM
96	The trail from train to soudan is old and needs to be replaced	8/16/2021 11:23 PM

## Tower Area Trails Survey

97	The trail between tower and Soudan is awful, can't ride a bike on there, it's too rough. Also there should be a trail all the way around the horn so you don't have to ride on the road.	8/16/2021 8:20 PM
98	It's broken up and heaved, very uneven makes it tough to run or rollerblade on	8/16/2021 7:52 PM
99	None	8/16/2021 7:01 PM
100	Bike trail needs work, four wheeler trails need more routes	8/16/2021 5:25 PM
101	The paved bike/snowmobile trail starting by the train is in poor shape and is unpleasant to ride.	8/16/2021 4:44 PM
102	A few branches on the trail between tower and hoo doo point	8/16/2021 4:07 PM
103	Pavement is horrible between Tower and the Junction Rd	8/16/2021 4:01 PM
104	Would be great to get the Mesabi trail fully connected in the area	8/16/2021 3:20 PM
105	More signage and provisions for pets	8/16/2021 2:31 PM
106	The condition of the Mesabi Trail in Tower is poor.	8/16/2021 1:36 PM
107	David Dill Trail needs maintenance	8/16/2021 1:22 PM
108	Mesabi Trail in poor condition- but scheduled to repair in 2022 also, hoping to see the trails on the hillside north of Tower mapped and signed for greater public access	8/16/2021 1:10 PM
109	Not enough trails	8/16/2021 12:32 PM
110	longer trails would be nice for bike rides. I think people can, or will soon be able to ride toward Ely. We need to be able to ride west also. A substantial trail network is essential to attract tourism.	8/16/2021 12:22 PM
111	Trails not.fully.connected with other trail systems	8/16/2021 12:16 PM
112	None	8/16/2021 12:08 PM
113	Pooling water	8/16/2021 11:37 AM
114	Water drainage seems to be an issue in several places.	8/16/2021 11:37 AM
115	All the paved parts are crumbling (between train park and soudan) or, the terrain is pretty rough (up the hill behind the school has huge rocks that could damage atv's right in the path all the way up) *don't get me wrong, I love the paths and trails, they're just falling apart, and you asked so... ☹	8/16/2021 11:19 AM
116	Connect with Bois Forte	8/16/2021 11:13 AM
117	Paved trail on the Taconite Trail between Tower and Soudan needs to be resurfaced. Need better ATV trail connection going west from Town. Also need a more direct ATV connection to the east connecting to existing trail system at the Murray Forest Road.	8/16/2021 10:58 AM
118	Not enough trails to get around on atv	8/16/2021 10:54 AM
119	Trails near Tower are run down, makes it difficult to bike or rollerblade or walk with a stroller.	8/13/2021 8:20 AM
120	Signage or lack of directional signs	8/13/2021 7:50 AM
121	I only know about one or two of the trails near Tower. I'd love to learn more information about other ones.	8/12/2021 3:24 PM

Q9 Is there a trail activity you would like to do (but do not currently do) in the Tower area?

Answered: 168    Skipped: 32



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	36.90%	62
No	63.10%	106
TOTAL		168



**Q10 If you answered YES to Question 9, please share your desired trail activity and the barrier that prevents you from that activity below. If you answered NO to Question 9, skip this question.**

Answered: 61    Skipped: 139

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Exercise events along the trail.	9/14/2021 9:31 AM
2	Rentals	9/2/2021 9:05 PM
3	Walking. Want more walking trails around Lake Vermilion, especially Greenwood Township and Birch Point Road	9/1/2021 1:08 PM
4	Nordic ski trails	8/31/2021 10:29 PM
5	Biking	8/31/2021 8:48 PM
6	picnic	8/31/2021 7:10 AM
7	Cross country ski	8/30/2021 9:14 PM
8	Walk or bike into Tower from 77 (Y Store). Too dangerous along the shoulder. We would enter Tower more if it was safer.	8/30/2021 7:58 PM
9	would roller blade if not so rough...	8/30/2021 7:17 PM
10	ATV	8/30/2021 6:11 PM
11	To finish the trail from Tower to Ely	8/30/2021 6:02 PM
12	More mountain biking close to Tower. The new trails around the old Iron World in Chisolm is such a great model.	8/30/2021 12:26 PM
13	Bike connection from Tower to Ely	8/30/2021 11:36 AM
14	Cross country skiing. I didn't know there were trails. I like variety that isn't always available where I live. I don't mind traveling for good trails. I also prefer skijouring with my dog and not a lot of trails allow dogs.	8/30/2021 11:14 AM
15	atv	8/30/2021 10:34 AM
16	4-wheel from Greenwood to Tower	8/29/2021 7:38 PM
17	As stated previously, I don't know how to access trails	8/29/2021 11:16 AM
18	Skate skiing, inline skating (the current trails are too rough, or the hills/curves too severe.	8/28/2021 7:01 PM
19	Ride ATV's from Pike bay area on 169 to ELY or Babbit	8/28/2021 9:35 AM
20	Possibly an ATV/UTV trail.	8/27/2021 8:36 PM
21	I would like to be able to bike with my kids in the bike trailer from the Tower Park all the way around the HooDoo Point loop, but the lower section of the trail, mentioned above, is just too bumpy and not safe for my youngest in the trailer.	8/27/2021 9:42 AM
22	a more extensive boardwalk through bogs in the area	8/26/2021 5:31 PM
23	Mountain biking	8/26/2021 12:44 PM
24	4-wheeling. Not many trails accessible from my home. I have to trailer 4-wheeler	8/26/2021 10:46 AM
25	see above	8/25/2021 9:52 PM
26	We have heard there are trails on the hill above Tower. Would love to see some trails there.	8/25/2021 9:12 PM

## Tower Area Trails Survey

27	Bike on Taconite Trail.	8/25/2021 7:18 PM
28	Need more trails with scenic views. Need more trail options that are 2 to 4 miles long. Need more trails with ideal spots for lunch breaks with a view.	8/25/2021 3:39 PM
29	Be able to walk and bike safely	8/22/2021 8:08 PM
30	No trail access	8/21/2021 12:53 PM
31	Avoid backtracking	8/20/2021 2:20 PM
32	Ride around tower to Soudan	8/18/2021 11:26 AM
33	Ride to Cook	8/17/2021 10:53 PM
34	Mountain biking	8/17/2021 9:20 PM
35	Mountain Bike trails would be awesome! Also getting places from town easily would be great without riding roads. A connection to Vermilion and Cook would be great.	8/17/2021 4:13 PM
36	There is limited ATV access in the Tower area	8/17/2021 4:04 PM
37	Rollerblading. Cannot currently do due to conditions of trail	8/17/2021 1:41 PM
38	I wish the bike trail to hoodoo point was plowed in the winter for walking	8/17/2021 11:47 AM
39	Would love to see a connection from cook to tower to Ely	8/17/2021 10:49 AM
40	Run, walk, bike	8/17/2021 10:25 AM
41	Biking in the area between Cook and Tower	8/17/2021 10:01 AM
42	More biking	8/17/2021 10:00 AM
43	Single track mountain bike trails	8/17/2021 7:27 AM
44	ATV, connecting to other trails	8/17/2021 7:06 AM
45	No road riding from mckinley to hoo doo. I ride 3- 6 miles around so as not to be on the road	8/17/2021 6:13 AM
46	Fat bike in winter	8/16/2021 11:23 PM
47	I currently work on snowmobile, atv,ski, and hiking trails and would like to see more volunteers	8/16/2021 5:25 PM
48	I would love to be able to ride the Mesabi trail to Ely or Virginia starting in Tower! The highway shoulders are too dangerous.	8/16/2021 4:44 PM
49	More atv access Time.	8/16/2021 4:07 PM
50	Allowing Side-by-side/Commanders on the trails.	8/16/2021 3:20 PM
51	I would like to be able to connect to more trails and also have additional trails created like the future Lake Vermilion Trail	8/16/2021 3:11 PM
52	Night time skis, need a lit trail	8/16/2021 2:31 PM
53	Mountain bike	8/16/2021 2:21 PM
54	mountain biking	8/16/2021 1:10 PM
55	More four wheeling trails	8/16/2021 12:32 PM
56	Long bike rides	8/16/2021 12:22 PM
57	CC ski	8/16/2021 12:08 PM
58	Reservation Connection	8/16/2021 11:13 AM
59	Have access to camper cabin type facilities from, or on, the ATV trail system. Currently can't legally access the motel in town from an ATV.	8/16/2021 10:58 AM
60	Rollerblade - trails need resurfacing ATV - lack of trails connecting outside the city	8/13/2021 8:20 AM
61	Go from Hoodoo Pt to McKinley Park via trail.	8/12/2021 3:20 PM

## Q11 Please share additional comments you have about trails in the Tower area below.

Answered: 78   Skipped: 122

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	There are always rocks thrown on the blacktop path at the top of the hill going up from McKinley Park Campground due to ATV/UTV. Extend the blacktop where they cut the corner to eliminate / reduce the amount of rocks that end up on the walk/bike path.	9/15/2021 5:14 PM
2	I find just having trails a benefit that I don't get in the winter place that I live.	9/14/2021 9:32 AM
3	I miss the condition it used to be in. Somewhat treacherous	9/14/2021 8:45 AM
4	I absolutely love the Tower Ski Trails for hiking and hunting grouse in the fall and for XC skiing in the winter months.	9/11/2021 11:35 AM
5	Would love ATV trail from tower to Soudan so we don't have to drive on hoodoo pt road	9/6/2021 10:28 PM
6	Thank you to the snowmobile clubs who do a good job of maintaining snowmobile trails.	9/1/2021 1:09 PM
7	happy to have them	8/31/2021 8:55 PM
8	Nice they are building more trails, but there needs to be a plan to keep them smooth and maintained.	8/31/2021 8:07 PM
9	Need better policing of ATV traffic on walking paths especially from mckinkey park to soudan snd nearby dumpster. They dont drive carefully on the bike trail where they dont belong, dont use ATV trail provided	8/31/2021 7:52 AM
10	Trail to Cook from tower.	8/30/2021 9:15 PM
11	Love the trails for running in particular!! So glad they exist! Thank you	8/30/2021 8:35 PM
12	We love Tower and think it would grow if boating options, and docking and snowmobile and walking trails were more user friendly along 169 or other major areas.	8/30/2021 7:59 PM
13	I am very appreciative of the trails in the area. They are a great asset and I would like to see them expanded and improved upon. Not all communities have this type of resource and we should be appreciative of it	8/30/2021 7:55 PM
14	This seems to be a controversial subject, especially for some wealthy land owners. They don't want their hunting interfered with apparently.	8/30/2021 7:04 PM
15	Trail fully along 697 from boat access to trails to McKinley park would be nice	8/30/2021 6:09 PM
16	More trails approved for UTVs	8/30/2021 4:00 PM
17	the trails are very beautiful and scenic. more trails near bodies of water (without disturbing them of course) would be amazing	8/30/2021 3:37 PM
18	Would to see the Tower trails connected to the Mesabi trail system and to a trail system that connects to the Cook end of the lake, including Greenwood township area.	8/30/2021 2:06 PM
19	Looking forward to the day when the Mesabi Trail is complete to Ely...	8/30/2021 1:30 PM
20	Just fix the darn thing already.	8/30/2021 1:30 PM
21	Separate bike trails instead of sharing road with vehicles would be great	8/30/2021 1:18 PM
22	I would love, love, love, love if there were bike trails that would go from the Y-Store or the casino, all the way to Tower. It would making biking and waking into town amazing. And also make such a huge biking, walking connection all the way to Ely when complete.	8/30/2021 12:27 PM
23	It is wonderful to have the trails! Thank you!	8/30/2021 11:55 AM



## Tower Area Trails Survey

24	I have a cabin on Lake Vermilion. I would like to see Tower offer more things to do while we are up there	8/30/2021 11:37 AM
25	thank you for looking into this and completing the work	8/30/2021 11:19 AM
26	Connecting the hiking trail from Lake vermilion state park to the soudan mile section. See it on map but haven't been able to follow it.	8/30/2021 10:45 AM
27	I encourage Tower to focus on keeping and expanding ATV/ORV and Snowmobile trails in the future. These bring in a lot more \$ than non-motorized use.	8/30/2021 10:37 AM
28	See previous comments	8/30/2021 9:25 AM
29	We stay on an island so I need the exercise	8/29/2021 11:18 AM
30	Short ATV loops that are not connected will not draw riders. I would prefer to trailer the ATV'S and ride the longer routes elsewhere. Snowmobile trails are very good in the Tower area.	8/28/2021 9:41 AM
31	More signage, advertising and trails could make Tower a destination rather than a pass-through to Ely.	8/27/2021 8:38 PM
32	I do love that there ARE trails and I use them many times per week and throughout the year for both short and distance runs. I appreciate how nice/new the trail is from Soudan to/through Vermilion State Park; this is the route I take for long runs. I do wish trails could be plowed in the fall and spring when there is just a small amount of snow - it would extend the usable trail time by a month or so - but I understand why this would be difficult to maintain.	8/27/2021 9:44 AM
33	More atv and snowmobile. We don't need more bike or ski trails in tower. Need to maintain what we have.	8/27/2021 8:02 AM
34	instead of building new bike trails fix the ones we currently use	8/26/2021 7:47 PM
35	Would love to have xc ski trails at the new state park.	8/26/2021 12:45 PM
36	Signage as to where you are and where the trail takes you	8/26/2021 10:46 AM
37	I am just becoming familiar with the walking and hiking trail system in Tower and looking forward to learning more.	8/26/2021 7:15 AM
38	We would, of course, love to see the bike trail from Tower to Ely completed. We see some progress and that is great.	8/25/2021 9:13 PM
39	Maintenance on the older part of the trail would be a good thing. Completion of a trail between Hoodoo Point campground and McKinley Park would also be good. The road is subpar to walk on the small existing shoulder. The Ancient Cedars Trail is very nice and beautiful to walk.	8/25/2021 5:00 PM
40	Need to get usage up so existing trails don't get overgrown. Really need more trails with scenic views of the lake if at all possible. Need more trails that have great spots for lunches with a view.	8/25/2021 3:39 PM
41	Trails need updates & schedled maintenance.	8/25/2021 3:18 PM
42	I really enjoy the Ancient Cedar Trail. We also enjoy the Soudan State Park trails	8/25/2021 2:28 PM
43	I share the vision of my friends who help with Ski trail and Ancient Cedars and Prospectors that we can be a destination all-trails-lead to Tower-Soudan hiking, biking and motorized rec vehicles place. We need to put out kiosks with newly designed area maps that show all the opportunities. (Kiosks - like ones at Mesabi-Taconite & ancient Cedars trailhead - needed in harbor, out at Hoodoo Pt and Mckinnley campgrounds, perhaps in a pocket park in center of Tower next to Fire Hall or Civic Center in Soudan.	8/25/2021 2:23 PM
44	Amenities and signage to support all current trails and future trails and connections is important.	8/25/2021 1:36 PM
45	I question the viability and potential usage of a non motorized trail between the DNR bldg and the Y Store. The terrain is too difficult. It would get little use. I am a bike rider also, the trails from Tower, through Soudan and toward Ely are very good.	8/24/2021 9:47 AM
46	It is challenging to know what trails are open for walking, biking, e-biking, snowmobiling, 4-wheeling ... Could a master map be created? Using color-coding, it would make it so much easier to know where the trails are and what they can be used for.	8/22/2021 8:09 PM

## Tower Area Trails Survey

47	Trails around town have never been well maintained. Although some connections and additional trails would be good more effort should be put into maintaining what is currently available. Many of the good hiking trails that used to be near town have either been made into ATV trails, paved, or are gone altogether.	8/21/2021 1:35 PM
48	Would like a through access for ATV, side by side	8/21/2021 12:54 PM
49	I am anxious for the Mesabi Trail completion.	8/21/2021 8:24 AM
50	Again, the already existing trails would be a huge attraction for people to use throughout the new state park. You could hike them or use a mountain bike on them. There are miles of trails that could be promoted and used. They are usable in the winter for snowshoeing, but really can't use them any other time of year due to the long grass.	8/21/2021 7:49 AM
51	With the continuing development of Vermilion State Park and extensive snowmobile trails and ATV trails the area has the opportunity to become a world class destination.	8/20/2021 2:23 PM
52	It is confusing with the number and different types of trails. For example - snowmobile only, skiing, walking. Can't the same trail be used in the summer for one activity and something else in the winter? Also, then you have the Mesabi trail, Prospector's trail, etc. So many trail names. So many trail restrictions - it is confusing. Why not create a map and naming system much like a subway system (red line, blue line, etc..)	8/20/2021 7:37 AM
53	Loop to Soudan from McKinley park needs replaced	8/18/2021 11:27 AM
54	Anxious to see construction begin on Lake Vermilion Trail so it can soon connect with the Mesabi Trail	8/18/2021 9:49 AM
55	Connect to Cook	8/17/2021 10:53 PM
56	Tower could really be a trail hub destination. There is a large diversity of trail types	8/17/2021 9:22 PM
57	The cross country ski trails are great! I would also like to know more about the other trails. I don't know what is already there and it is hard to find info.	8/17/2021 4:14 PM
58	Would like to see more trails of all types in the Tower-Ely-Cook areas	8/17/2021 4:07 PM
59	The short two-mile trail from Tower to Soudan is in such poor condition that it is nearly impossible to walk without tripping or bike without falling. With little ones, it used to be the perfect path for just that.	8/17/2021 7:54 AM
60	Keep up the good work with the mesabi trail and grooming sled trails	8/17/2021 7:29 AM
61	Please do not pave the snowmobile trails for bicycles. New bike trails are being built everywhere, not so much for snowmobile trails. Snowmobiles in general, and snowmobile registration is expensive, bikes not so much. With the money spent to be able to use the snowmobile trails we deserve to keep the existing trails and have new ones built.	8/17/2021 7:04 AM
62	As a somewhat limited user, the trails in the Tower area have been adequate for my needs and interests in the short time I've lived here. Would very much like to see future development of more options for hike/bike trails to access areas along Lake Vermilion to the west.	8/17/2021 2:21 AM
63	Not easy to find camping spots or in the winter decent hotels non-casino based	8/16/2021 9:39 PM
64	DON'T TAKE THE SNOWMOBILE TRAIL AWAY OR REOUTE IT TO MAKE A BIKE TRAIL.	8/16/2021 7:05 PM
65	I really enjoy the trails that exist. The Howard Wagoner ski trails are fantastic and the paved bike trail starting in Soudan and going towards Ely is as well. Thank you for working to expand the trails!	8/16/2021 4:46 PM
66	We would like to see more trails and easier access	8/16/2021 4:08 PM
67	The trail opportunities are excellent but more could be done to promote them. More connecting trails on the northside hill would be an improvement. So would a connecting trail between the harbor and the marina.	8/16/2021 1:38 PM
68	Our trails are getting more and more use. As a regular trail user, I have seen more people out on our trails this year than EVERY BEFORE. Also, want to make sure we keep ATV users on ATV trails, and not on walking/biking trails, this is not a huge problem now, but will be with greater ATV use in the area	8/16/2021 1:11 PM

## Tower Area Trails Survey

69	This survey was worded in a confusing way. I am not sure what is possible for trails in Tower so it would be helpful to share any specific ideas or possibilities and ask for feedback on those, too	8/16/2021 12:34 PM
70	Connection to Cook is very important	8/16/2021 12:23 PM
71	Trash cans or benches might be nice	8/16/2021 11:37 AM
72	Trash cans or benches could help encourage people to get out more	8/16/2021 11:37 AM
73	That bridge by junction road is a scary shambles I hate taking my kids near.	8/16/2021 11:20 AM
74	ATV trails can be shared with hiking, mt. bike and equestrian use but everyone must know and understand it is shared use in the same season. Maintenance is an issue with all trail use so shared use does make sense.	8/16/2021 11:03 AM
75	As the coordinator for Lake Vermilion Resort & Tourism Association. Our visitors to the area are always inquiring about local trails. The more the trails connect to local businesses and attraction, the more interested the visitors are. Rest stops and restrooms are also a bonus to the trail system.	8/16/2021 10:57 AM
76	I would love to see better maintained trails as well as expanding existing trails, especially for walking/hiking and ATV.	8/13/2021 8:21 AM
77	Tower has some very scenic areas that are fun to hike to. I like seeing informational signs on the trails.	8/12/2021 3:24 PM
78	A link from harbor to other side of Main Street	8/12/2021 3:20 PM



**Q12 If you want to receive email updates about the Tower Area Trails Plan project, please provide your email address below. (Optional)**

Answered: 57   Skipped: 143