



## **GITCHI-GAMI TRAIL ASSOCIATION**

1130 Eleventh Street · Two Harbors, MN 55616

March 01, 2021

Representative Rob Ecklund  
409 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Tom Bakk  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
Capitol, Room 328  
St. Paul MN 55155

**RE:** House File 469 Gitchi-Gami State Trail capital investment  
Senate File 480 Gitchi-Gami State Trail capital investment

### **Dear Representative Ecklund and Senator Bakk,**

For more than 20 years, the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association has worked cooperatively with the Minnesota DNR, the Minnesota DOT, local governmental agencies, and supportive community partners to plan and develop a paved trail for non-motorized recreational and transportation uses along the Minnesota Highway 61 corridor from Two Harbors to Grand Marais. At present, one third of the planned 90-mile Gitchi-Gami State Trail has been completed, with an additional 3+ miles opening later this season. Ultimately, this trail will link the communities of Two Harbors, Castle Danger, Beaver Bay, Silver Bay, Schroeder, Tofte, Lutsen, and Grand Marais—including within that span the existing public recreational facilities at Flood Bay State Wayside, Stewart Creek Wayside, Silver Cliff Wayside, Gooseberry Falls State Park, Twin Points/Iona's Beach SNA and Wayside/Safe Harbor, Beaver Bay City Wayside, Silver Bay Recreation Center and Trailhead, Palisade Head Wayside, Tettegouche State Park, Caribou Falls State Wayside, Sugarloaf Cove Nature Center and SNA, Schroeder/Cross River Wayside, Taconite Harbor Wayside/Safe Harbor, Temperance River State Park, Ray Berglund State Wayside, Lutsen/Poplar River Wayside, Cascade River State Park, Butterwort Cliffs SNA, Cut Face Creek Wayside, and Grand Marais Municipal Campground and Marina, Harbor Park, and Artist's Point.

The completed portions of the trail are documented to be well utilized by bicycle and pedestrian visitors, including many portions accessible by disabled persons, through three seasons and with some parts maintained for winter uses. Helping connect North Shore visitors to our state parks and nearby commercial areas, the trail is actively used by local citizens and seasonal workers, and enjoys strong support of residents and businesses. It provides a safe, off-road scenic route for the newly designated US Bike Route #41 (The North Star Route) and a safe transportation alternative for all users along the completed segments.

**WWW.GGTA.ORG**

[www.facebook.com/GitchiGamiTrailAssociation](http://www.facebook.com/GitchiGamiTrailAssociation)

Following community meeting input and with DNR planning support, the Board of the GGTA requests funding for study, engineering and/or development of four priority trail segments: planning the trail connection from the Ski Hill Road through the Lutsen commercial area, closing the one-mile gap in the trail in the Tofte town center, preparing an engineering study for the prospective trail segment from the Silver Bay Recreation Center into Tettegouche State Park, and connecting the City of Two Harbors to Flood Bay State Wayside. In cooperation with the DNR and with existing funding from multiple sources—including Federal Transportation Alternatives grants, LCCMR grants, and past state bonds—the advancement of these four trail segments will greatly contribute to the ultimate goal of connecting all North Shore communities and scenic tourist amenities.

We look forward to working with you to further these goals. We are most grateful for your past support, and for your authorship of legislation in the current session incorporating these visionary projects.

Sincerely,



Bruce Martinson, Schroeder  
President, Gitchi-Gami Trail Association

**Additional supporters:**

**Gitchi-Gami Trail Association Board Members**

Bill Blank, Lutsen  
Dan Cruikshank, Two Harbors  
Rod Garver, Duluth  
Anne McKinsey, Minneapolis  
Tom Peterson, Two Harbors  
Chad Pierson, Duluth  
Mark Sandbo, Apple Valley

**Additional Individuals**

Jill Bm, Silver Bay  
Lon Church, Two Harbors  
David Drown, Silver Bay Economic Development  
Chris Homyak, Lutsen  
Jeff Latz, Lutsen  
Joe Nicklay, Principal, William-Kelley School, Silver Bay  
Ginny Storlie, Cook Co. Commissioner, Lutsen  
Cindy Tackett, Silver Bay

**Organizations and Businesses**

AmericInn, Tofte  
Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota  
Bluefin Family of Resorts, Tofte  
Castle Danger Brewery, Two Harbors  
Cedar Coffee Company, Two Harbors  
Cedaero, Two Harbors  
Clearview General Store, Lutsen  
Cook County Chamber of Commerce  
Cook County/Grand Marais EDA  
Downtown Lutsen Business Group  
Lutsen Mountains Ski & Summer Resort  
Lutsen Township Board  
North Shore Adventure Park, Silver Bay  
Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota  
Spokengear Cyclery & Outdoor, Two Harbors  
Visit Cook County

# GITCHI-GAMI STATE TRAIL

A GREAT TRAIL ON A GREAT LAKE



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES, DESTINATIONS, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION ALONG MINNESOTA'S NORTH SHORE OF LAKE SUPERIOR



COMPLETED TRAIL (2017)\*  
FUTURE TRAIL

\*noted segment lengths in miles

GRAND MARAIS

1.9\*

CASCADE RIVER STATE PARK

LUTSEN

SKI HILL ROAD

7.3\*

TOFTE

TEMPERANCE RIVER STATE PARK

2.9\*

SCHROEDER

GEORGE H. CROSBY-MANITOU STATE PARK

LITTLE MARAIS

\$500,000

TETTEGOUCHE STATE PARK

SILVER BAY

\$500,000

BEAVER BAY

17.2\*

SPLIT ROCK LIGHTHOUSE STATE PARK

GOOSEBERRY FALLS STATE PARK

CASTLE DANGER

SILVER CREEK CLIFF WAYSIDE

0.6\*

TWO HARBORS

# PROPOSED GGST PROJECTS IN COOK & LAKE COUNTIES

HF468/SF480

The Gitchi-Gami Trail Association seeks support for four crucial Gitchi-Gami State Trail projects.

\$1.5 M

**Lutsen Segment Extension**

\$1 M

**Design/Engineering and Construction of Tofte Segment Extensions**

**Two Harbors to Flood Bay State Wayside Segment Design/Engineering**

**Design/Engineering for Silver Bay to Tettegouche State Park Segment**

**Total: \$3.5 Million**

# PROPOSED GGST PROJECTS IN COOK & LAKE COUNTIES

## **PROJECT: LUTSEN SEGMENT EXTENSION**

**\$1.5M**

Additional funds are sought to support a 1.55-mile segment of the GGST from Ski Hill Road (Co Rd 5) into the commercial center of Lutsen. At present, funding from two sources has been awarded: a \$600,000 federal Transportation Alternatives grant and \$500,000 in LCCMR funds. Construction on this segment is anticipated in FY 2022, and the Transportation Alternatives dollars will be lost if the project cannot be delivered. In 2019, stakeholders held a series of visioning meetings with the Lutsen community to consider design elements of the trail. The community advocates extension of the trail alignment to the intersection with the Caribou Trail (Co Rd 4). This corridor involves some stream crossings and engineering challenges with storm water mitigation. The trail extension will provide much needed safe walking and biking routes for residents and visitors (since the only way to access all of the commercial enterprises in Lutsen by foot or bike is on Hwy 61). It will also serve a large guest workforce and will tie into new workforce housing units in the town center. Significantly, the trail extension would connect the townships of Lutsen, Tofte, and Schroeder, and would provide an extension into town for guests biking or hiking from the Lutsen Mountains and Lutsen Lodge resort areas.

## **PROJECT: TOFTE SEGMENT**

**\$1M**

A one-mile "gap" in the trail exists in a complicated corridor in the town of Tofte. The DNR has been working closely with MnDOT and the Tofte community to determine the best alignment for this urban segment of trail. The first phase will extend the trail on the inland side of Hwy 61 from its current SW terminus near the Tofte Ranger Station to the Sawtooth Outfitters location. The DNR and MnDOT are working to develop a safe at-grade crossing of Highway 61 at that juncture. Although the DNR plans to continue work on this segment in the 2021 construction season, funds previously appropriated through state bonds and other sources like LCCMR are insufficient to complete construction. Closing the Tofte gap is a high priority in development of the GGST. The trail will serve residents of and visitors to Tofte, safely connecting people to lodging, places of employment, commercial establishments, parks, and amenities. The bonding request includes funds to complete the first phase of construction, requiring significant drainage accommodations. The request also includes design and engineering funds for the second phase of trail development in Tofte, connecting the trail on the inland side of the highway to the current northeast terminus near the Commercial Fishing Museum on the lake side. Closure of the Tofte gap will complete the continuous trail segment from Schroeder to Lutsen, an extraordinarily popular area of the North Shore.

## **PROJECT: TWO HARBORS TO FLOOD BAY STATE WAYSIDE**

**\$500,000**

Funds requested would assist the DNR in design, engineering, acquisition of right-of-way, and wetland mitigation for a 1.5-mile segment of trail connecting the city of Two Harbors near the RJ Houle Visitors Center to the popular Flood Bay State Wayside. The DNR submitted an application for a federal Transportation Alternatives grant, which was partially funded with an award of \$300,000. An appropriation from the state will assist with leveraging federal funds, and support for design and engineering will enable the DNR to make accurate cost estimates for construction. This proposed segment of trail has significant support from the City of Two Harbors, Lake County, Silver Creek Township, Superior Shores resort, and many area businesses. Completion of this segment of the GGST was a high ranking recommendation in several Two Harbors planning documents.

## **PROJECT: SILVER BAY TO TETTEGOUCHE STATE PARK**

**\$500,000**

Funding is requested to conduct design and engineering for a 7-mile segment of trail connecting the city of Silver Bay to Tettegouche State Park. With engineering completed, and firm cost estimates in hand, the DNR and GGTA will then be able to apply for grants for this important segment of the GGST. This proposed segment would extend the longest section of the GGST to 25 miles, connecting three of Minnesota's most visited state parks, popular visitor centers, and waysides (Gooseberry Falls, Split Rock Lighthouse, Beaver Bay Trailhead, and Tettegouche), tourist businesses, and population centers in Beaver Bay and Silver Bay.

The Gitchi-Gami Trail Association (GGTA) is a nonprofit organization formed to work with the Minnesota Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources, the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission, North Shore communities, and other stakeholders, in the planning, development, construction, maintenance, and promotion of the GGST and trail events, including a supported Annual Ride.

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