

Thank you for allowing me to speak on House File 2404. This proposed bill is for \$14 million for property and easements, predesign, and design of a bike trail from the city of Harmony to the city of Caledonia. This would connect the communities of Canton, Mabel, Spring Grove, and Caledonia to the existing Root River State Trail and Harmony-Preston State bike trail systems, which would further fulfill the original design to connect the Root River Trail Towns. Over the years, there have been plans, fundraising, and other efforts toward this endeavor, but ultimately, it has not proven successful because of the sheer size and scale of the project without the support of state funding.

Constructing this trail extension would have a significant impact on our small, rural communities. Not only would it benefit current businesses, such as: gas stations, restaurants, short term rentals, campgrounds, and more, but it would lead to economic growth through the opportunity for new businesses and employment opportunities. In a 2016, joint study done by the MN Department of Transportation and University of Minnesota Extension, the "bicycling industry supported an estimated \$777.9 million of economic activity in the state in 2014." In addition, it generated "\$208.8 MILLION in wages, salaries and benefits."

These communities are smaller, aging communities, and if provided this opportunity for growth, in turn, it could attract young families and more people to move to the area. One last thing to consider - running through these towns are US Hwy 52 and State Hwy 44. If you have traveled these roads, you undoubtedly have encountered bikers, walkers, and runners using these busy thoroughfares for recreation and exercise purposes. Not only is this a safety risk for the runners and pedestrians, but for drivers as well. A trail system provides a safe option for biking, walking, and other forms of exercise.

Thanks,

Adam Wilder

Mayor for the City of Mabel