



## Legislation Text

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**City Council Meeting Date:** May 1, 2018

**To:** Mayor and City Council

**From:** Ben Martig, City Administrator

Consider Resolution of Support for Legislative Bills Related to Appropriating Funds for Mill Towns State Trail Funding

**Action Requested:**

The Northfield City Council approves the attached Resolution supporting legislative bills related to appropriating money for the Mill Towns State Trail

**Summary Report:**

Representatives of the Mill Towns Trail Joint Powers Board met with area legislators regarding funding for the Mill Towns State Trail. Legislative bills relating to appropriating \$1,000,000 to the DNR for acquisition, development, and rehabilitation of the Mill Towns State Trail between the cities of Faribault and Waterford have been introduced by Representatives Bly and Lillie (HF No. 2803 Attachment 2) and Senators Draheim, Jasinski and Little (SF No. 3947 Attachment 3). A bonding proposal map of the Mill Towns State Trail showing the authorized corridor, proposed new trail development, existing trail in need of rehab and DNR acquired lands is attached (Attachment 4).

The Mill Towns State Trail, once complete, will provide connections from Red Wing to Mankato. This Legislative request addresses acquisition, development and rehab of the identified trail connections between Northfield and Dundas. The language is illustrated more broadly in order to give more flexibility and to give illustration to the broader impact of future trail connections that are planned.

The proposed funding request to the Legislature, if it successfully becomes law this session, would appropriate \$1 million to the DNR for the Mill Towns State Trail. It is intended to be applied to build one new mile of trail (dashed red on Attachment 4) and rebuild the three existing trail miles (solid red on Attachment 4). This would mean the state would assume ownership and future management of the locally built trail between Dundas and Northfield (solid red on Attachment 4). Encroachment on private land on the part of the city would need to be resolved before this could happen.

The “light green” parcels on Attachment 4 are lands the DNR has recently purchased to build the “new” trail on, and to which this project would make connections through. The “solid green line,” on Attachment A (with some breaks in it), heading southwest towards Faribault will be a future trail segment the DNR plans to develop but wouldn’t be a part of this initial phase.

Regarding changes to the current route between Dundas and Northfield, especially as the existing trail travels through the Sechler Park area, there may be opportunity for a more scenic alternative route to explore. Separating vehicular traffic is always preferable and also to provide connectivity to other recreation the city offers (i.e. ballfields, picnic shelters, the river, etc.) would make for a much more enjoyable trail experience. If the funding comes through, City staff would work with the DNR on exploring these details.

The Vision of the Mill Towns State Trail is to provide a connection between public and semipublic open spaces serving three counties and six communities. It is envisioned as a recreational investment that will link these communities in a way that will ensure their continued vitality. In addition to outdoor recreation and connections to be established by the trail, there is a goal to provide access to historical sites and to establish trailheads in each community that facilitate and contribute to economic development. The segment of trail between Dundas and Northfield is an important connection for our communities locally and as part of the bigger vision of the complete trail.

The Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota has included the Mill Towns State Trail in their 2018 Legislative Priorities (Attachment 5).

**Alternative Options:**

N/A

**Financial Impacts:**

There are no financial costs to the City related to support of these bills.

The existing City trail to the Dundas City limits is the responsibility of the City of Northfield. It is in fairly poor condition and the City is doing minimal maintenance to deal with surface conditions to keep it usable. Having the state take over the trail and reconstruct would save the City on maintenance both major and minor.

**Tentative Timelines:**

The bonding request is active this session. If approved, a more detailed schedule would be explored with the DNR.