

NORTH DAKOTA
Recreational Trails Program Advisory Committee (RTPAC) Meeting
June 18, 2019

PRESENT:

- **RTPAC Members:**
 - *Non-Motorized:*
 - Dave Burns
 - Dave Mayer
 - Dave Bietz
 - Jeannie Schmidt
 - *Motorized:*
 - Todd Thronson
 - Keri Vammer
 - Nick Lippert
- **NDPRD:**
 - Jolene Rieck
 - Genny Giese
- **FHWA:**
 - Sandy Zimmer
 - Kraig McLeod
- **NDDOT:**
 - Pam Wenger

ABSENT:

Andy Banta and Karen Ryberg (both non-motorized)

GUESTS: Greg Morel, Bureau of Land Management; Barry Johnson, Bolton & Menk; _____, SEH Engineers & ?

Project Sponsor	Project Name	Total Project Amount	Grant Amount	Ranking	Avg
Bismarck Parks and Recreation District	General Sibley Park & Campground Hiking Trail	\$100,600.00	\$80,480.00	1.0	11.17
USDI - Bureau of Land Management	Schnell Ranch Recreation Area Trail System Expansion	\$37,500.00	\$30,000.00	2.0	10.92
Hunter Arthur JPA Park Board	Northern Cass Pass	\$124,000.00	\$99,200.00	3.0	10.33
Maah Daah Hey Trail Association (MDHTA) 501©3	Sully Restoration and surfacing 2019	\$55,300.00	\$44,240.00	5.0	9.67
The City of Rolla	Path for Prosperity	\$70,000.00	\$70,000.00	5.0	9.67
USDA Forest Service	Maah Daah Hey Trail North	\$72,049.20	\$60,041.00	5.0	9.67
Pembina Gorge Foundation	Pembina Gorge Mtn Bike Trail - Phase 2	\$258,874.00	\$200,000.00	7.0	8.92
North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department (NDPRD)	Loop D Water Crossing (Lake Matigoshe State Park)	\$43,461.00	\$34,768.80	8.0	8.83
Barnes County Soil Conservation District (BCSCD)	Barnes County SCD Riparian Park Enhancement	\$19,821.00	\$15,856.80	9.0	8.58
USDA Forest Service	Buffalo Gap Spur Trail and Trailhead	\$76,795.20	\$63,996.00	10.0	8.17
North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department (NDPRD) - M	Winter Trail Grooming Equipment	\$24,473.31	\$19,563.00	11.0	7.92
Lincoln Park District, Lincoln, ND	Lincoln Road Shared Use Path West Extension	\$305,100.00	\$200,000.00	12.0	7.58
North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department (NDPRD)	2020 Snowmobile Program Update	\$221,200.00	\$176,960.00	13.0	6.00
Bismarck Parks and Recreation District	Menards Pond Trail Renovation	\$171,851.60	\$137,481.28	14.0	5.17
City of Beach	Multi Use Trail Phase III	\$249,809.00	\$199,846.94	15.0	5.08
Bismarck Parks and Recreation District	Trailhead Sign Program Update	\$21,400.00	\$17,120.00	16.0	4.33
City of Fargo	Coulee's Crossing/Drain 53 Shared Use Path	\$200,000.00	\$160,000.00	17.0	4.00

Genny welcomed the group and commenced the meeting at 1:03pm. Committee members introduced themselves.

Genny Giese discussed current projects with the group.

Pam Wenger discussed the Cavlandic Trail project, which has received funds from both the RTP and TA grant programs. The bids came in over budget. The sponsors were unsuccessful in obtaining Outdoor Heritage Funds to fill in the budget. Genny Giese said one option for that project is that there are available funds from cost savings in other recently closed RTP projects that this committee could recommend applying to the Cavlandic Trail project. However, the RTPAC has already allocated the \$200,000 maximum award to them.

Related to that discussion and in general, Genny brought up the topic about raising the \$200,000 maximum allocation? Genny/Jolene: The FY19006 Kayak Accessibility project, sponsored by NDPRD received an increased allocation of about \$30,000 to finish the project.

Genny and Jolene will be working on changes and improvements to the grant application process. Many state agencies are transitioning to an online platform called WebGrants. NDPRD has asked to be included in the WebGrants software platform.

Genny: Total dollar amount from past funds is \$154,000 that can be allocated above this year's funding allocation. Genny: 17 projects were submitted in this grant cycle. The funding allocation for FY20 has not been finalized this year, but it is around \$1m.

Order of how projects ranked

Project #1: Genny – Highest score, Bismarck Parks and Recreation District: General Sibley Park

- Dave B: I picked that as my number one, it's always used, that campground is always full. Feel like your invading spots, glad there's an official trail. I know it's going to get used a lot.
- A few people talking about a priority, if it was or not.
- Nick: High up for him but questioned the width of this.
- Jolene: it is presented as a hiking trail.

Project #2: Bureau of Land Management, Schnell Ranch Recreation Area

- Greg: The BLM in Dickinson has few recreation opportunities, less developed recreation. More recreation is between Bismarck and Dickinson.
- Sandy: The budget is small, what kind of pedestrian bridge would you get? Greg indicated that they would be USFS footbridge design.
- Dave: How much use does this area get?

Project #3: Hunter/ Arthur: Northern Cass Pass – Final Phase

- Barry Johnson from Bolton & Menk engineering did an overview of the project and all of the past phases. Mentioned that the trail closes in the winter. In the future, they may apply for an RTP grant for equipment to do snow removal to keep the trail open all year.

Project #4: Maah Dah Hey Trail Association, Sully Restoration & Surfacing

- Dave B: The gravel material doesn't hold together, turns to powder – can't ride it. The mixture has to be right. Resurfacing it is a good idea.
- Nick: How do we manage the spec on that? Greg Morel was in the room and discussed different ways to manage the specs.

Project #5: City of Rolla, Path for Prosperity

- Keri: Liked the name of the project and commented that they are already underway to market the project and attract users.
- Nick: I didn't seem much as far as spec. Seek future funding? Will this be a multiphase project?
- Pam W recalled that the application indicated that it had the hope to connect to St. John someday. The committee agreed that there is a possibility this will be a multi-phased project, that may request RTP funds again in the future.
- There was discussion that the application was stated to have a total project cost of \$70,000 and they applied for \$70,000. Nick looked at the budget detail and pointed out that there is \$70,000 of RTP expenses listed and \$14,000 of match. There is a possibility that the grant writer misunderstood the application process.
- **Keri – motioned to approve the Rolla project, “Path for Prosperity” at 80% of the total project costs, as long as the project is still able to go forward should that 80% come in less than the expected \$70,000.**
- **Dave B: A second the motion**
- **No one opposed. Motion carried.**
- Genny will follow up with the City of Rolla to clarify the project costs and requested RTP funds.

Project #6: USDA Forest Service, Maah Daah Hey Trail North

- Dave: As a mountain biker, I like this one, it does need some restoration.

Project #7: Pembina Gorge Foundation, Pembina Gorge Mountain Bike Trail, Phase 2

- Nick: Any alternative money? Requesting the cap of \$200,000 which is 77.3% of the project.
- Genny: Discussed whether the cap should be raised or remain the same
- Keri: Only two projects requested the maximum amount. Most of the applications are under the maximum amount, so there does not seem to be a need to increase it.
- Sandy: The cap has changed over the years, the conversation in the past is spreading the funds out as far as you can.

Project #8: NDRPD, Loop D Water Crossing at Lake Metigoshe

- Sandy: Is there any experience with a floating bridge in ND?
- Dave B: Kind of a floating bridge at Harmon Lake.
- Dave B: There's one connecting cities of Moorhead and Fargo.
- The committee liked the idea of a floating bridge, a different feature to ND trails that isn't heavily used.

Project #9: Barnes County Soil Conservation District, Riparian Park Enhancements

- Genny: Health and safety type issue, putting a bathroom in could provide longer recreation for people.
- Dave B: Some camping there, you need a bathroom.
- Sandy: How close is the trail was to the proposed site. Jolene responded saying this is near the launch site for the water trail and North Country Trail.

Project #10: USDA Forest Service, Buffalo Gap Spur Trail and Trailhead

- Jolene: Is this an OHV or non-motorized location?
- Nick and Greg: Described the connections between the two use types.

Project #11: NDRPD, Winter Trail Grooming Equipment

- Genny: Winter grooming opens up more opportunities for recreation.
- Keri: Met the specific use.

- Jolene: Fort Stevenson has many users interested in fat tire biking and there is a lot of momentum for that recreational activity right now and it is expected to increase.

Project #12: Lincoln Park District, Lincoln Shared Use Path

- The purpose of the project is to further connectivity on an existing network.
- The guest from SEH Engineers spoke about the project. School age children are riding bikes and walking on busy roads with high speed limits. This is a safety issue. The current trail they do have doesn't connect to anything, so people end up walking/riding back and forth on current trail. Would be nice to connect that trail and make it longer, more usable and provide a safe area for people to recreate.

Project #13: NDPRD, Snowmobile Program Update

- NDPRD purchases the groomers and has a use agreement with Snowmobile ND.

Jolene stated that after funding the first 13 projects, it is expected that we will have used our estimated authorized funds. The remaining projects would not be funded due to funding.

Genny wanted to discuss the remaining projects to hear the groups thoughts.

Project #14: Business Parks and Recreation District, Mendards Trail Pond

Dave M: The asphalt is deteriorating on this highly trafficked area.

Dave B: He uses this trail often and sees many high school students using the trails. Dave B liked the project.

Project #15: City of Beach, Multi-use Trail Project

Dave M: He felt this project was applying for RTP funds for a sidewalk, which is an ineligible project. Felt this project would be a better fit for the Transportation Alternative grant through DOT. The committee agreed that this is not within the scope of work that RTP is intended to fund.

Keri: NDPRD should reach out to Beach and work with them to educate them on the RTP grant and which sources of funding they would be eligible to apply in the future.

Project #16: Bismarck Parks and Recreation District, Trailhead Sign Program

Dave B.: He feels this is needed as many recreationalist will ask him for directions. But the project simply didn't score high as the committee would prefer to fund trails.

Project #17: City of Fargo, Coulee's Crossing/Drain 53 Shared Use Path

The committee overall felt that the project costs were too high for the short length of trail.

Nick made a motion to fund the two USDA forest service projects at 80%, although the applications requested 83.3%.

Second by Dave Mayer.

Motion carried.

Federal Highways Update:

Sandy: Federal Highway's Fast Act will be ending on September 30, 2020. Only guaranteed funding is 2020 and 2021, after that there may be a delay in the grant cycle as we wait to hear if congress passes a new transportation bill.

Genny: Grant cycle schedule could change as the department reevaluates its practices and procedures.

Kraig McLeod introduction – new employee at FHWA. New RTP Manager.

ND DOT Update

Pam Wegner – The Transportation Alternatives (TA) program had about \$1.5m in funding. They selected 15 projects. Programming for a two year cycle 2020 and 2021. Slight change from the past. Looking forward to more partnership in the future with NDPRD.

MDHT – Greg Morel: 3 seasonal hires doing the maintenance. Trail head maps on all the campgrounds.

NCT – Greg – mostly maintenance projects

SND – Todd – late season – but a good season.

Title VI Compliance– Genny discussed Title VI with the committee. All sponsors are required to be Title VI compliant from this point forward. NDPRD will be offering a Title VI training at the State Trails Conference Aug 13-14 in Minot. Sponsors are encouraged to attend. NDPRD will also plan to host Title VI trainings in the NDPRD office and have the option for people to join the meeting remotely, as NDPRD just updated their conference room to a smart room.

RTP Grant Administration Training – Genny announced that RTP grant administration training will also be held at the State Trails Conference in August. All sponsors will be required to attend the training. Grant sponsors will be required to attend – either in person or remotely.

Jolene added that the Department hopes to streamline the grant reimbursement process by educating grant sponsors on what they need for documentation and project timelines.

NDPRD and NDRPA are hosting the State Trails Conference in Minot on August 13-14. Registration will be opening soon.

Changes to the grant application process

Keri suggested having each project submit a cover letter to introduce project. Reading the grants can be difficult due to the layout of the grant and information.

Genny said that once NDPRD gets WebGrants, the application and scoring process will change slightly, so the information will be organized differently.

Genny discussed the current scoring rubric. It has its merits at times. Nick said that with the group scoring, projects to rise up to the top and the board tends to agree on the projects selected. Genny commented that there is a conflict of interest present on the board. She doesn't think individuals should be scoring their own grants. But with the current rubric, the math doesn't work out to pull a sponsor's grant from the individual scoring. The only way to really avoid the conflict of interest in scoring, is to change the rubric and score each grant individually and average out the scores. That way, a board member will not score their own grant and the average for that grant will be out of less people, so scores are arbitrarily elevated or lowered. Genny commented that she has looked at scoring rubrics of other states. Some categorize the grants so motorized compete against motorized. Or similar dollar amount thresholds compete. Nick wasn't enthralled with the category idea. Genny said she will create a new rubric and send it to the committee later this fall to approve prior to the next round. Keri said the current scoring has its merits – but also downfalls.

Continued discussion on Cavlandic Trail – Is it the desire of the committee to recommend obligating more funds to the project or keep funding where it is at. If they don't receive more funding, they can only fund half the project. The grant sponsor requested a 15 day extension on holding the bids, which is over this Monday. They have the option to tell the contractor that they cannot go forward. Pam informed the committee on the cost overruns in the bid. Pam expressed she wanted the project to go through. Pam said DOT has committed additional funds for the warning panels, since they

were originally put in wrong. The Cavlandic Trail association is trying really hard to get the project to go forward. Keri expressed that if we gave them the extra \$154k, could they even complete the project? Dave Burns commented that the mobilization bid line item was so high. So breaking the project phases can get expensive, just due to mobilization costs.

Dave Meyer asked about funding a 2019 project that wasn't funded last year – with the \$154k?

Nick Lippert expressed that funding of \$200 should be the cap, and the grant sponsor can apply for additional phases, similar to the Northern Cass Pass project.

Pam explained that the bids came in higher than originally applying. Pam said she can't increase funding from the TA program above the \$200k already committed.

Nick asked if the Cavlandic Trail would proceed without additional funding. Pam said they could re-bid to see if the bids come in lower.

Jolene confirmed with the group that the conversation was leaning towards not funding the Cavlandic Trail with additional funds and the committee agreed. Dave Burns said the \$70k mobilization per phase is hard to swallow. Pam said there would be an additional 10-15% per phase would be incurred. Dave Meyer said it will be interesting to see if the project goes forward with the \$200k or if it wouldn't. D. Meyer explained that the bids are going to most likely be higher since the local contractor wouldn't be in the area. The committee decided to keep the Cavlandic Trail at the funding level it was awarded last year, and encourage them to come in for additional funding/phases in the future.

Reobligated Funds of \$154k

Keri moved to approve to use the \$154k in funding to continue down the FY20 list and fund the next highest scoring project.

Todd second the motion – motion carried.

The committee decided it would then fund the BPRD Menards Pond trail project. Should there be remaining funds after that, the BPRD Trail Signage project would be funded. The Beach project will be skipped as it is ineligible due to the scope of the work, installing sidewalks.

Jolene asked the board to give NDPRD authority to re-obligate funds as see fit.

D. Mayer motioned to approve,

D. Burns second.

Nick asked if there was a threshold. Keri said no threshold. But Nick and Keri both agreed that an email notification should be sent to the committee should any funds be moved.

Motion carried.

Keri asked for an update every 6 months about what is happening with RTP – send an email to the group.

We also discussed that Dave Burns, Karen Ryberg and Todd Thronson's terms are all expiring in December. Jolene said that we will open up the application process this fall for replacements.

Pam wanted to promote another program – a special road fund – historic and restoration areas. "Recreational Tourist and Historical areas." Solicitations starts now and ends September 30. NDPRD and Game and Fish serve on that committee.

Meeting adjourned at 4:38 pm.