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Minnesota Senate's bonding bill includes \$3.3M for Heartland State Trail Extension

ST. PAUL—The Heartland State Trail got a boost today when the Minnesota Senate introduced a capital investment bill that includes \$3.3 million for a trail extension between the cities of Detroit Lakes and Frazee.

The push to include the Heartland Trail connection in the Senate's capital investment bill, or "bonding bill," was led by local senators Rod Skoe (DFL-Clearbrook) and Kent Eken (DFL-Twin Valley), as well as Capital Investment Committee Chair Sen. LeRoy Stumpf (DFL-Plummer).

"I want to thank Sen. Eken, Sen. Skoe and Sen. Stumpf for supporting the Heartland Trail extension," said Frazee Mayor Hank Ludtke. "The cities of Frazee and Detroit Lakes have been working on this project for a long time and we are looking forward when it will finally be done. The Senate's decision to include our project in their bonding bill gets us another step closer."

In 2014, the Minnesota Legislature invested \$2.7 million in the Heartland Trail project connection. However, the project faced a setback when unexpected costs arose that required additional funding before construction could be completed. Once the connection is finalized, the entire trail will stretch from Park Rapids to Moorhead.

While the Senate's bonding bill includes the cities' full \$3.3 million bonding request, the House has yet to release its version of the bonding bill. Governor Dayton's bonding proposal was released in January and does not include funding for the Heartland Trail; however, the unexpected costs did not arise until it was too late to be included in his bill. The Heartland Trail was one of the Governor's top parks and trails priorities back in 2014.

"Trails are extremely popular with our visitors – we're always fielding questions about what trails are available in our area," said Cleone Stewart from the Detroit Lakes Regional Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau. "A multi-use, year-round trail like the Heartland Trail will play a huge role in drawing tourists, athletes, outdoors enthusiasts and other visitors to our community. Everyone is excited for the trail connection to come into fruition."

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