


# Itasca-Heartland Connection Trail

Connecting Itasca State Park to the Heartland State Trail



 **\$1.8 million**

 **Critical connection to Itasca State Park**

Local project partner:  
 **Itasca-Heartland Connection Trail Task Force**

Management Agency:  
 **Minnesota DNR**

## Brief Description:

This project will complete the first phase to extend the Itasca State Park multi-use trail system about two miles from the park's contact station through a tunnel under Hwy 71. This segment ensures safe access to and from the park.

## Why this project is important:

The Itasca-Heartland Connection Trail will be a multi-use paved surface that will serve as a strategic connection between Itasca State Park and the Heartland State Trail just east of Park Rapids. Safe access routes to the state's most heavily visited park has long been a priority for the numerous trail users going in and out of the park each day. The trail will be located primarily in county and state-owned lands, showcasing the abundant natural and cultural resources of the region. This proposed trail would increase the outdoor opportunities for cyclists, walkers, snowmobilers, families and children, including both local residents, who are active trail users, and visitors to this region. The Itasca-Heartland Connection Trail is considered a Destination Trail in the DNR Division of Parks and Trails latest system management plan. In 2020, the legislature funded final engineering and design of the trail segment located within Itasca State Park and for the construction of the trail tunnel under Hwy 71. This project would build momentum on this and fill in the gap to complete this segment.

## This project is ready to go!

The DNR preliminary engineering plan for the project has been completed and the tunnel under Hwy 71 will be built in fall 2023. Bids have been received for phase 1 of construction, and tree clearing starts soon. The connection through the park has been approved as an amendment to the DNR state park's management plan. Rep. Knudsen and Sen. Utke have authored bills in support of the project (HF 1766 / SF 1801).

## Who supports this project:



Rep. Krista Knudsen



Sen. Paul Utke

- City of Park Rapids
- Park Rapids Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
- Itasca-Heartland Connection Trail Task Force
- Parks & Trails Council of MN