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Over \$38 million invested into community development, education, outdoor recreation, housing, public works and broadband in the Taconite Assistance Area

At today's Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation (IRRR) Board meeting, approximately \$38.8 million in projects were reviewed that are expected to modernize infrastructure and public facilities, improve PreK-12 schools and higher education offerings, expand outdoor recreation, increase the housing inventory and strengthen broadband connectivity.

Minerals Article Legislation/2024 Tax Omnibus Bill Projects: \$19,100,000

- **City of Babbitt: \$1,500,000** for renovations to the ice arena.
- **City of Biwabik: \$1,000,000** for a public safety facility.

- **Department of Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation: \$7,600,000** for the design, engineering and upgrades or replacement of chair lifts or an irrigation system, and for the design, engineering, demolition and construction of a nordic and welcome center at the Giants Ridge Recreation Area.
- **City of Hibbing: \$1,150,000** for housing development.
- **Hibbing Public Utilities: \$1,770,000** for water infrastructure projects.
- **City of Mountain Iron: \$2,000,000** for infrastructure projects including but not limited to Enterprise Drive North East infrastructure development, water main and other infrastructure in the city, waste water plant improvements to comply with new permits, supervisory control and data acquisition on lift stations and recreation projects.
- **Northland Learning Center: \$1,080,000** to construct the Alternative Learning Center on the campus in the city of Mountain Iron.
- **City of Silver Bay: \$3,000,000** to design, engineer, construct and reconstruct publicly owned infrastructure including sewers, water systems, utility extensions, street construction, wastewater treatment, stormwater management systems, sidewalks and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Iron Range Iron Range Schools and Community Development Account: \$10,000,000

- **Aitkin Independent School District 001: \$5,000,000** for infrastructure and site development related to construction of a new PreK-6 elementary school.
- **Cook County Independent School District 166: \$5,000,000** for construction of an athletic and activities complex.

Iron Range Higher Education Account: \$1,247,000

- **Iron Range Engineering (IRE): \$100,000** to support the IRE program which collaborates with private industry and allows students to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering from Minnesota State University Mankato.
- **Manufacturing Program, Minnesota North College: \$990,000** to design and implement curriculum and purchase start-up equipment and lab space for a new Manufacturing Program to help area manufacturers have a critical mass of trained employees in the region.
- **Veterinary Technician Program, Minnesota North College Vermilion Campus: \$157,000** to upgrade the equipment and technology and make facility improvements.

Giants Ridge Recreation Area Tax: \$300,000

- **Giants Ridge Recreation Area: \$300,000** to purchase biking and hiking trail maintenance equipment, construct biking and hiking trails and expand the beginners skills park to support rider progression and provide improved teaching terrain for camps, clinics and daily visits.

Regional Trails Grant: \$2,160,000

Engineering, permitting, right-of-way acquisition and various improvements for five ATV Trail Clubs:

- **Alborn Dirt Devils ATV Club: \$135,000.**
- **Prospector ATV Club: \$1,200,000.**
- **Quad Cities ATV Club: \$100,000.**
- **Ranger ATV Club: \$500,000.**
- **Voyageur Country ATV Club: \$225,000.**

Housing Grant: \$3,737,204

- **City of Ely Grant Increase: \$3,737,204** to close the funding gap on costs associated with the infrastructure and construction of a new three-story, 37-unit market rate workforce apartment building. IRRR previously approved \$850,000 for the project in March 2024.

Public Works Grants: \$1,907,290

- **City of Babbitt: \$60,000** to extend the water and sewer lines to serve an existing business, The Hideaway. The new infrastructure could serve additional residential properties as the city boundaries expand.
- **City of Biwabik: \$70,500** to replace an aging and failing sanitary sewer line that has a high risk of causing backups and impacting the entire city sanitary sewer system, residential homes and short-term rental properties.
- **City of Bovey: \$267,790** to relocate and extend public utilities to a new business development, Palmer Bus Company.
- **City of Chisholm: \$600,000** to reconstruct the infrastructure related to water, sewer, storm sewer and roadway for a portion of 5th Street Southwest, which will serve the Chisholm Public School District and 26 single family homes.
- **City of Cook: \$85,000** to upgrade the roof and HVAC and improve the interior of Cook Public Library.
- **Kelsey Township: \$70,000** to upgrade the town hall with improvements to the foundation, basement and roof.
- **Lawrence Township: \$23,000** to renovate the town hall with improvements to the foundation, flooring, windows and doors.

- **City of Virginia: \$165,000** to replace a storm sewer main to facilitate the expansion of an existing business and relocate a sanitary sewer main to ensure the continued operation of another business.
- **City of Tower Grant Increase: \$566,000** to construct permanent infrastructure that will support the development of six newly constructed sustainable homes and new development at the harbor which includes 14 townhomes, 14 condo-style apartments and 7,500 square feet of commercial space. IRRR previously approved \$482,000 for the project in February 2025.

Broadband Infrastructure Grant: \$383,000

- **Paul Bunyan Rural Telephone Cooperative Grant Amount: \$383,000** to construct fiber optics to serve 35 unserved households in unorganized township T62N-R21W in rural Saint Louis County. This is an expansion of the Paul Bunyan network north of Morcom Township.

The projects reviewed at today's board meeting support IRRR's Fiscal Year 2025 spending plan which helps to fund projects in business, community and workforce development in the Taconite Assistance Area.

Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) Budget & Spending Plan

The FY26 IRRR budget and spending plan was approved at the May 29 board meeting. The \$68 million investment strategy exemplifies IRRR's unwavering commitment to fostering a more prosperous living and working environment in the Taconite Assistance Area. Strategic priorities and funding include:

- Improve conditions for economic growth with \$30 million of resources in community and workforce development. Funds include a \$6 million program to promote the preservation, rehabilitation and investment in regional housing stock and neighborhoods with a focus on construction of new homes and/or apartment buildings.
 - Support public works infrastructure, broadband and business and industry with spending of \$19 million. Infrastructure funding assists communities in modernizing, redeveloping and replacing foundational assets in order to attract business investments and expansion.
 - Invest funds in natural and recreational assets, Giants Ridge and regional trails to generate diversification and economic impact while contributing to the quality of life in the region.
 - Produce a fiscally sound spending plan that includes reserve funds for unforeseen future needs.
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