

DAO Tour June 2011



History of Iron Horse Trail



First section abandoned in 1980; in 1993 County of St Paul buys gravel pit and 32 km of rail bed

Rail line focus on recreation

The future of the abandoned rail line between Elk Point and Heinsburg will focus on recreational use by horse and ATV enthusiasts, cross-country skiers, snowmobilers, cyclists and hikers, combined with summer pasture usage for adjacent livestock owners.

Close to 50 area landowners and other interested individuals attended a meeting at Elk Point Seniors Recreation Centre last Tuesday, and voted overwhelmingly in favor of joint recreational and pasture use for the line, although a few landowners wanted it kept strictly for pasture.

The County of St. Paul No. 19 purchased the line and an adjacent gravel pit from Canadian National Railways last year. The gravel pit is estimated to contain 1.5 million cubic yards of gravel, which with a purchase price of \$125,000, comes out to just over 8 cents per yard. The gravel pit was "the main purpose of the purchase," according to Division II Councillor Ray Danyluk. With their gravel supply needs taken care of, the County is looking for input from interest groups regarding the use of the rail

line which came with the pit.

One of these interest groups is the Heinsburg Community Club, which according to Division I Councillor Bob Smith, "has been trying to get the right of way for years" in order to continue the development they have started at that end of the line. "We kept getting put off, and we couldn't get grant funding because we didn't have the title." The Club was unable to purchase a portion of the trackage "because CN wanted to get rid of it all at once." The Community Club and Heinsburg Seniors have developed the trackage in Heinsburg near the historic water tower "until it's like a lawn," with lots of dollars and work put in by the clubs and community residents.

A few of the landowners present had hoped to see the rail line used exclusively for pasture, but Danyluk said that as County property, it must benefit all residents. Nor will the County sell portions of the line to adjacent landowners. "We did not buy it for that purpose, and we will keep it intact."

Several concerns with recreational use were noted, including the risk of cattle rustling, disturbance of wildlife habitat, the possibility of fires, and trespassing on adjacent land. It was agreed that fires will only be permitted if and where areas are designated, and that vehicle access and hunting will be prohibited. Landowners may post 'no trespassing' signs and lock their gates. Access to the trail will not be permitted for cars and trucks.

Three waterways cross the line, in Lindbergh townsite, beside the Salt Plant and at Middle Creek, and ways to deal with these were discussed. The County plans to make these crossings fordable for horses and off-road vehicles such as ATVs, as well as grading the roadbed and cutting grass and brush. This work will be done this spring as soon as conditions permit. Gates to allow trail users access to the portions of the trail used for pasture were also discussed, and a standardized design for a steel gate with reflective paint for high visibility was suggested.


1999 CN abandons all of Coranado line; Riverland and North East MuniCorr formed



2001 election campaign



VOTE



YES

***CONTINUE TO
KEEP OUR SMALL
TOWNS ALIVE***

Public Trail Supporter
Ph. 656-4243, 656-4129
826-3141
or email:
publictrails@hotmail.com

Fall 2001

ON OCT. 15

Mobilizing Community

A photograph of a wooden sign posted in a field of tall grass. The sign is white with black and red text. It reads "VOTE NO" in large letters, with a red "X" in a square box to the right of "NO". Below this, it says "to PUBLIC TRAILS through farmland". The sign is supported by two wooden posts.

Fall 2001

2003 Iron Horse Trail opens



It is connector to many activities



Spring Trek 2002



Bike Relay 2005



TCT Centennial Relay 2005
near Ashmont



Users involved

- 5 Trans Canada Trail activities – Snowmobile, equestrian, hiking, xc skiing, cycling
- ATVs join with formation of user groups
- Municipalities there from the beginning; councillors often attend our meetings
- Common bylaw; enforcement similarities; common signage
- Separate grooming foundation



Funding

- Mostly trail based funding (matching TCT funds – about \$400,000) until recent Federal infrastructure money available (about \$600,000)
- Tourism development grant from National Tourism Commission
- Some small donations
- Main expenses are capital although maintenance more of an issue



Volunteerism will dry up some day;



**Work crews
get it done**

Current administration

- Meeting with NE MuniCorr once a month; their administrator, Marianne Price, also works for us
- Our 20 year lease spells out some conditions for both sides; signage, mowing, blading.
- Monthly director meeting; AGM; 2 trail clean up days per year



Construction, maintenance and trail stewards are coordinated by one person who connects with municipal public works departments



Current use

- Major users are ATV and equestrian wagon trains
- In towns where conditions good lots of daytime users – St Paul
- Working to add more cyclists



Winter use, when snow permits – grooming foundation



Opening Snowmobile Trail Cold Lake

Current services provided (by who? by what standard? accountable to who?)

- Often we have been setting standards by consensus
- We actively participate in provincial committees such as Alberta Trailnet and the Alberta Trail Planning groups
- We are accountable to NE Municorr and our user groups

Success/Challenges

- Operational funding – we need about \$20,000 per year
- Small memberships, volunteer trail pass to start
- Communications costs, website,
- Insurance and vandalism
- Deal with many communities and communities within communities

How might a delegated organization relate to the activities/functions at the site

- Funding
- Working to mitigate user conflicts
- Enforcement training and common messaging
- Lobbying for changes to regulations and operationally difficult issues
- Communication systems that help get word out; ie - seasonal start-up messaging
- Volunteer recognition systems