

Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board

Recent Key Activities for Oct 19, 2016 Laurentian Vision Partners Meeting

Improvements to Highway 169:

Construction work has started on a 1.5 mile section of current 2 lane highway east and west of Taconite, Minnesota, the result of years of planning. This section of the cross-range expressway is being upgraded from 2 to 4 lanes. WMMPB is now involved in efforts to resume planning and consider possible alignment changes to the remaining 9 miles of the existing 2 lanes for upgrading to 4 lanes to complete the Cross Range Expressway.

Captive Rail:

WMMPB has been actively involved in the Regional Rail Initiative which has an objective of improving competitive freight rail options on the Mesabi Range. Current efforts have focused on West Range Connector studies.

Hill Annex Mine State Park:

Major reductions and the possibility of park shut-down by MN DNR Parks and Trails Division have resulted in accelerated WMMPB activity to counter that possibility. WMMPB members view the park as having potential to become a tourist destination site and providing important opportunities for mineral-related education while preserving accessibility to its substantial iron ore resources for future mining.

Joint Powers Agreement modifications:

A WMMPB committee is studying possible changes to the joint powers agreement that guide and coordinate WMMPB's fourteen local government unit members.

Continue mining tours:

WMMPB in September conducted another field tour, which is a periodic activity intended to educate local government officials and employees, as well as the general public, about the importance of the mining industry and other significant activities in the local economy. This includes tours of operating mines and plants, mineral exploration and development projects, and businesses and activities related to in this region even if not themselves directly involved in mining. Thanks for this year's trip are extended to tour hosts Hibbing Taconite, Hill Annex Mine State Park, Natural Resources Research Institute, and Enbridge, each of which hosted tour stops.

Comprehensive planning:

WMMPB continues its efforts to develop and coordinate comprehensive planning and zoning rules and ordinances involving and for its members.