



Paving the Trail

“PartnerSHIP4 Health has been keeping our gears engaged. They provide us with the correct resources to make change happen. Without them, we idle and life is too short for that.”

Mayor Hank Ludtke
Frazee, Minn.



“PS4H has helped put the puzzle pieces together. National trails combined with state trails, safe routes to school and complete streets are all related. It’s my job to keep the ball rolling and help make the connections.”

Patrick Hollister,
PS4H Active Living Planner

Active Transportation: A Key to a Healthy Community

Engaging in a Complete Streets policy, facilitating a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plan, extending the North Country Trail, and extending of the Heartland Trail will result in increased opportunities for physical activity in the Frazee area. Hank Ludtke, Mayor of Frazee, has a passion for physical activity and its benefits. Ludtke states, “I rode bike 10 miles a day back and forth to the University while in college. I rode bike all year round.” Now disabled, Ludtke continues to be physically active. This is why Ludtke has been so involved in working with various boards, organizations and groups on efforts to combine bike trails with Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School (SRTS). In 2012, PartnerSHIP 4 Health (PS4H) partnered with Ludtke in order to provide additional support and resources to promote active living opportunities in Frazee.

Complete Streets means that streets and roadways are designed and operated to be safe and accessible for pedestrians, transit riders, bicyclists, and drivers -- all users, regardless of age or ability. Similarly, SRTS makes walking and bicycling a more appealing transportation option for school aged children, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age. “We are all working together to connect the neighborhoods, parks and school. We hope to keep our communities active and promote healthy living,” says Ludtke. A Complete Streets policy also serves a critical role in linking trails. PS4H has encouraged all communities to adopt Complete Streets policies. Frazee is one of many cities in the PS4H region (Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin counties) that have implemented a Complete Streets policy. Others include: Breckenridge, Battle Lake, Dilworth, Fergus Falls, Otter Tail, Parkers Prairie, FM Metro Cog, along with Clay, Otter Tail & Wilkin counties.

Ludtke, Patrick Hollister, PS4H Active Living Planner, and many other partners are working with the North Country Trail Association in order to extend the trail through the PS4H region. The North Country Trail currently wanders 4600 miles through America’s rugged northern heartlands and is the longest National Scenic Trail stretching across seven states from New York to North Dakota. The association is in conversation with trail designers in order that the trail can pass through Frazee.

The Heartland Trail currently runs from Cass Lake to Park Rapids. “The plan that we have for the trail is to loop it through the PS4H region,” says Hollister. The trail would go through the PS4H partner communities of Frazee, Hawley, Glyndon, Dilworth and Moorhead. Ludtke has been working on the plan for 6 years. PS4H has been instrumental in helping with the trail indirectly. For example, Guy Fischer, Economic Development Coordinator (Becker County) and Patrick Hollister discovered MNDOT will be working on Highway 34 between Detroit lakes and Park Rapids in 2018. “Guy Fischer and I encouraged the Heartland Trail Association to ask MNDOT to include the trail extension in their 2018 project from Park Rapids to Osage extending through Frazee” says Hollister. By collaborating with MNDOT in a master plan for the region, it is cost-effective. “It’s a huge cost savings if we can encourage MNDOT to do it while working on Highway 34,” added Hollister. “With the support of our City Administrator Jonathan Smith, Police Chief Mike Johnson, and PS4H, we are working collectively towards the goal of extending the Heartland Trail,” said Ludtke. This means more opportunities for walking and biking for everyone, which leads to a healthier Frazee.

