The Paul Bunyan State Trail is a 123 mile long multi-use trail between Crow Wing State Park and Lake Bemidji State Park, including 8 miles shared with the Heartland State Trail. Primarily located on a former Burlington Northern Railroad grade, the trail is generally level and is wheelchair accessible with the exception of the 9 mile segment through the Chippewa National Forest. This segment may be challenging to some users as there are many rolling hills and curves with grades reaching 8%.

The Paul Bunyan State Trail runs through a region rich in history. There are thirteen recorded prehistoric sites near the trail. Before European explorers arrived, the area was homeland to Dakota and Ojibwe people. The Dakota lived on these lands until the 1700s, when the Ojibwe migrated east from the Great Lakes. Minnesota is home to Indigenous Peoples to this day.

Towns along the trails have a rich railroad, logging and cultural history and now they are popular vacation destinations that provide trail access points, rest areas and other services.

Main summer uses of Paul Bunyan State Trail include hiking, bicycling, and in-line skating.

Snowmobiling is the primary winter use along the trail. Studded tracks are allowed on the Paul Bunyan State Trail. The trail provides connections to many miles of groomed snowmobile trails in the Hubbard County Grant-in-Aid trail system.

At Lake Bemidji State Park, the Paul Bunyan State Trail connects to the Blue Ox Trail, and together these trails form one of the longest rail-to-trail conversions in North America for a total distance of 213 miles. The Blue Ox Trail is primarily an unpaved motorized trail for snowmobiling and off-highway vehicle riding and extends northeast to International Falls.

Heartland State Trail

The Heartland State Trail was one of the first rail-to-trail projects in the country. It is a 49 mile paved multi-use trail between Park Rapids and Cass Lake. The trail is located entirely on a level abandoned railroad grade, except for a four mile segment north of Walker which is on sharply rolling terrain for snowmobilers. Bicyclists can follow level road shoulders along Steambot Loop NW and Cove Lane as marked.

The 30 mile segment between Park Rapids and Walker has a second, natural surface roadway for horseback riding, mountain biking and hiking.

The Heartland State Trail also provides connections to many miles of groomed snowmobile trails in the Hubbard County Grant-in-Aid trail system.

For additional copies of this map or other state trail maps, contact the DNR Information Center.

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You can also check out our website at: mndnr.gov/state_trails

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