

# BRainerd DISPATCH

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Dakota SINCE 1881



## Early season ice fishing

Steve Kohls / Brainerd Dispatch

Pat Neelan of Staples scans the Crow Wing River for anglers Monday after spending time spearing in his dark house for northern pike. The ice is uneven, with about 4 inches at the location where Neelan was fishing. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources warned people last week to remain cautious as ice forms, noting, "Where there is ice, its thickness this time of year is highly variable and subject to the whims of Mother Nature."

## Harrison up next for Safe Routes Project

proposed to increase walkability

By Theresa Bourke  
Brainerd Dispatch

Harrison Elementary is the next Brainerd school on the docket to receive infrastructure updates to the surrounding area as part of the Safe Routes to School program.

The goal of the federal Safe Routes to School program is to identify improvements around schools that could be done to develop safer routes for students to walk and bike to schools. This project would help further that initiative near Harrison Elementary School. The city has already completed projects near Lowell and Garfield schools.

The Brainerd School Board gave its support Nov. 22 for a project at Harrison that would see a median on Oak Street between Southeast 15th and 16th streets, along with bump outs on the corners of those inter-

sections. The city has submitted a grant application for \$500,000 to the Minnesota Department of Transportation for the project. The next step is engineering and design.

"Essentially, it's sidewalk improvements, it's crossing improvements, it's adding a median — some sort of a median design to Oak Street," Reid Thiesse, school district building and grounds director, told the board Nov. 22, noting a median would create a narrower drive lane, which tends to slow down traffic and provides safe refuge for pedestrians crossing the street.

"We know — at least I feel this way — when you drive down Oak Street you see those old yellow, slow blinking lights that people get numb to those and they just breeze right on through. So there's some significant engineering improvements that we've talked about," Thiesse said.

The city will head up the project, which will have no out-of-pocket cost to the school district.

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## Biden to push infrastructure in visit

President will be in Twin Cities on Tuesday

By Dana Ferguson  
Brainerd Dispatch

ST. PAUL — President Joe Biden on Tuesday, Nov. 30, is set to stump for the recently approved \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package during a visit to a Twin Cities suburb.

The president is scheduled to discuss the legislation and its expected \$6.8 billion impact on Minnesota during a stop at Dakota County Technical College in Rosemount on Tuesday afternoon. It's Biden's most recent stop to tout the plan and his first trip to Minnesota since winning the presidency.

In a news release Monday, the White House said Biden would speak about how the package will create jobs and reduce prices on goods since the vast slate of projects could facilitate a smoother flow of supply chains around the country. The release said Dakota County Technical College "has programs to train the next generation of workers to build, operate, and maintain infrastructure" included in the package.

The federal boost is set to fund more than \$4 billion in improvements to Minnesota highways, \$818 million for public transportation investments and \$302 million to help repair and replace bridges, according to the White House. The plan will also fund broadband expansion, port and



Kevin Lamarque / Reuters

President Joe Biden announces the nomination of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell for a second four-year term, and Federal Reserve board member Lael Brainard to serve as vice chair, as Powell stands by Nov. 22 in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building's South Court Auditorium at the White House in Washington.

airport improvements, water quality projects and electric car charging stations in the state.

State transportation officials have said the funds could allow Minnesota to move forward with projects earlier than they'd planned. More than 661 bridges and 4,986 miles of highway in Minnesota are considered to be in poor condition by the White House.

Biden in 2020 won Minnesota with a 7-percentage point

advantage over then-President Donald Trump. But the president's approval rating has sunk as a result of Americans' frustrations about ballooning costs of gas and food, as well as his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

U.S. Rep. Angie Craig, a Democrat who represents the state's 2nd Congressional District, has announced that she'll join the president for the event.

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## Expected county costs for proposed Crosslake roundabout increase

By Chelsey Perkins  
Brainerd Dispatch

Crow Wing County's expected share in the cost of a potential roundabout project in Crosslake increased by two-thirds upon new information learned about a federal grant program.

County Engineer Tim Bray told the county board Nov. 23 a discussion with the Minnesota Department of Transportation revealed money from the Federal Land Access Program — which issues dollars

for projects improving access to federal property — was not eligible to be used for engineering or right of way acquisitions. Instead, the funds can only be used for construction costs in the state of Minnesota.

In response, Bray adjusted the grant application to ask for \$800,000 instead of \$960,000, while increasing the county's expected contribution from \$240,000 to \$400,000.

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## Saving the world while seeing the world

Traveling nurses in high demand during pandemic

By Michael Achterling  
Detroit Lakes Tribune

DETROIT LAKES — With hospital staffs across Minnesota and the country stretched thin due to the ongoing pandemic, many health care providers have been augmenting their staffs with traveling nurses filling temporary positions to help reduce the strain.

These nurses are hired through travel nursing employment agencies and secure contracts for up to six months, with a health care provider



Contributed photo

Erica Wagner, center, smiles through her mask with New York firefighters during evening honors in New York City for frontline health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

that can pay them more in a week than many permanent staff nurses

earn in a month. "What a lot of nurses are really going after ...

is the crisis pay," said Erica Wagner, a travel nurse based in Rochester, Minnesota. "The contracts that are about 48 hours per week, in a crisis level environment, where the hospital is overwhelmed with COVID patients and you are brought in to help, and you could be taking on more patients than you typically do, so it's a little harder work, those contracts I've seen anywhere from, gross pay, \$5,000 to \$10,000 per week, depending on the state."

She also said, for some contracts, she had to provide her own health benefits, which

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## Boys Hockey

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A new era of Warriors boys hockey starts



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