

# Better Together



SF 2247 and HF 2629

# Who are we?



## Virginia High School

- Students 7-12: 725
- sq miles: 156.82
- Daily bus miles: 1,155
- Two cities, three townships, one unorganized township
- Net tax cap: \$5,530,845



## Mountain Iron - Buhl High School

- Students 7-12: 214
- sq miles: 138
- Daily bus miles: 898
- Three cities, 1 townships, one unorganized township
- Net tax cap: \$3,205,030



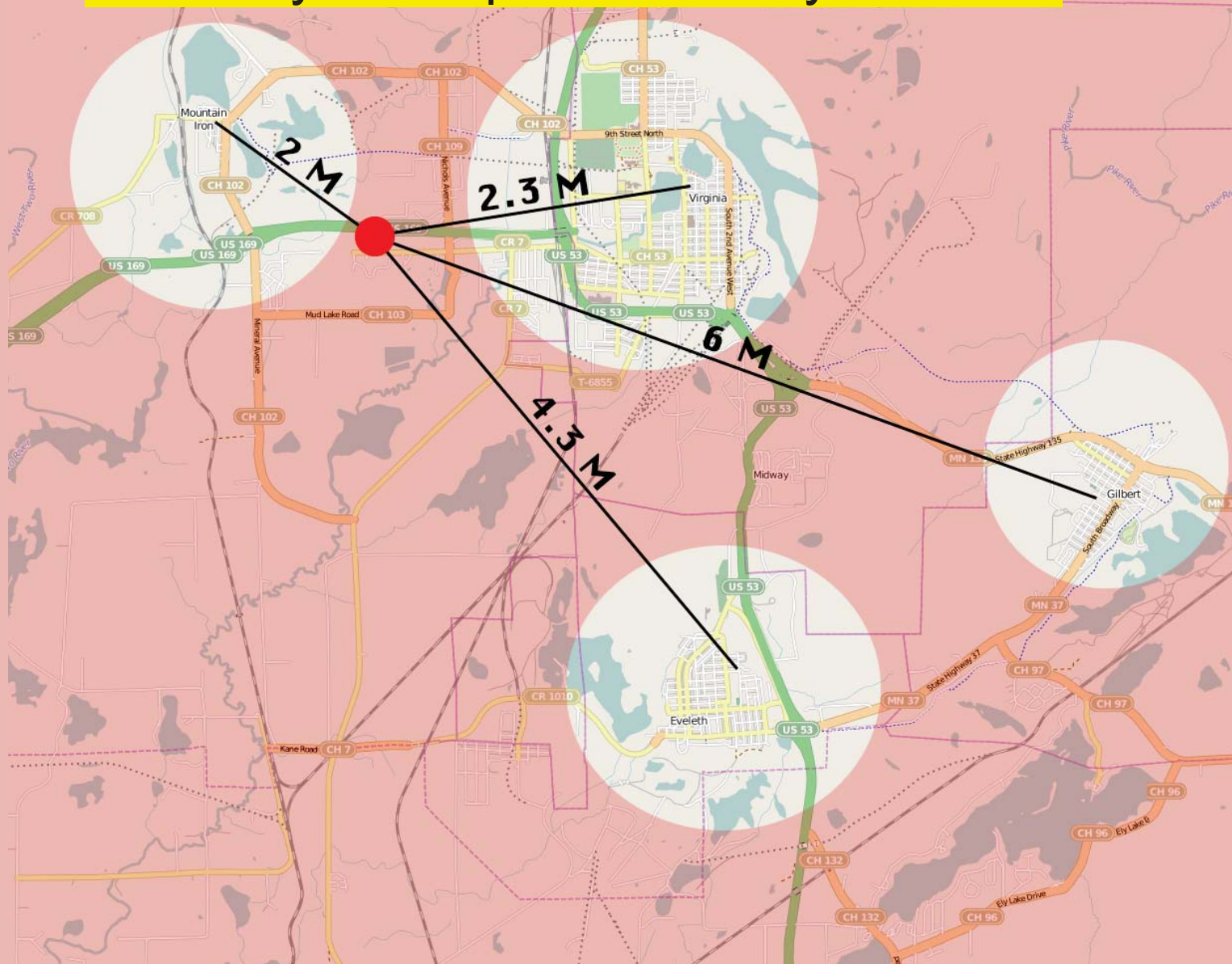
## Eveleth-Gilbert High School

- Students 7-12: 481
- sq miles: 139.3
- Daily bus miles: 844
- Four cities, two townships, two unorganized townships
- Net tax cap:\$4,671,807

# Total

- ★ 8 Cities
- ★ 7 Townships
- ★ 4 Unorganized Townships
  - 1500 students
  - 434 square miles of area
  - 2,897 bus miles each day

# Proximity to Proposed Facility Location





Mountain Iron - Buhl High School  
Built 1919



Virginia High School  
Built 1910



Eveleth-Gilbert High School  
Built 1919

# Problems Being Addressed

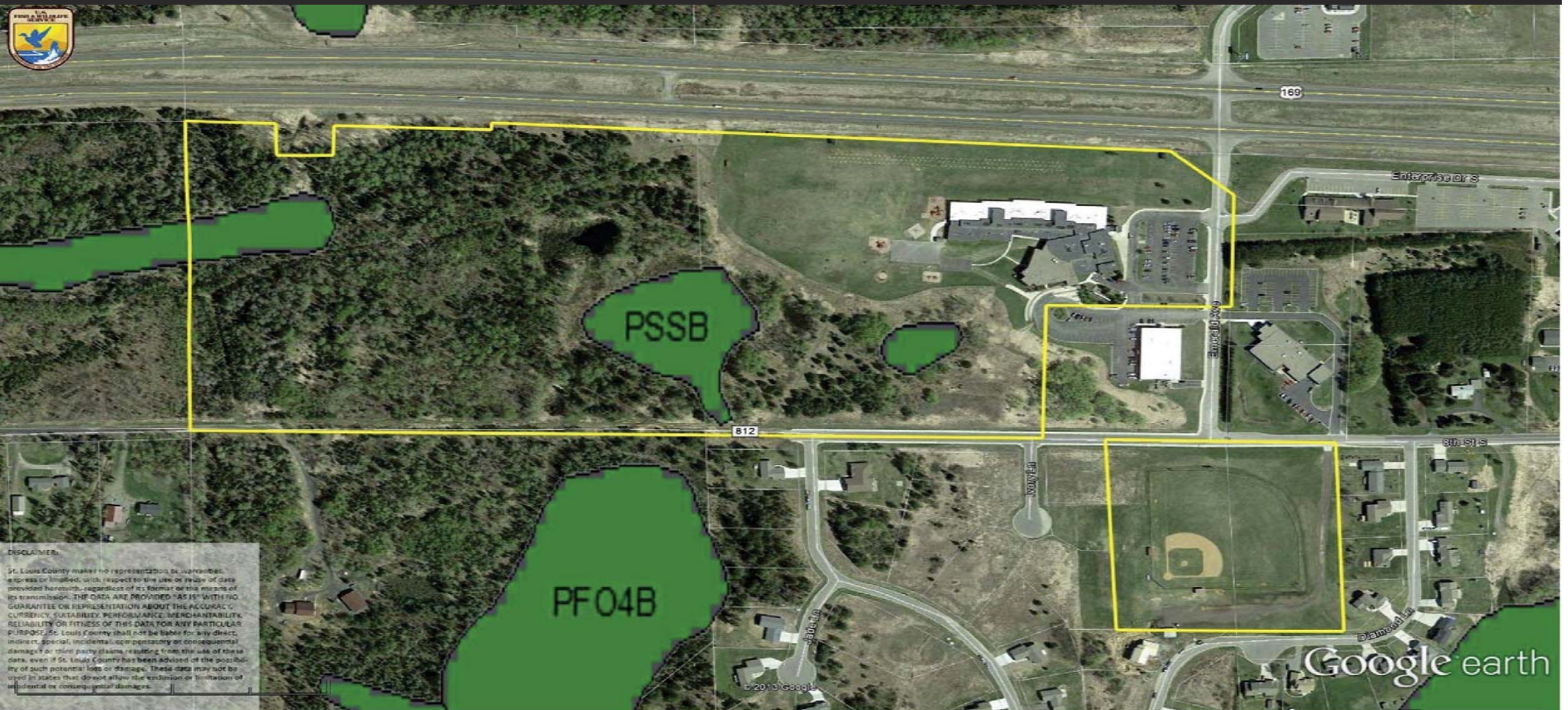
- Old inefficient buildings
- Damage by mining blasting
- Constrained existing school sites
- Too much transportation time
- Over \$63 Million in upgrades to keep present buildings
- Limited curriculum choices
- Improve access to technology



# Where are we going?

- New 7-12 School
- Co-located, Joint Powers Agreement
- Maintain Grade Schools in Communities
- Expanded Curriculum Options
- Improve technologies
- Increase MSHL options
- Current combined 7-12 enrollment: 1,420
- Estimated 2020 7-12 enrollment: 1,583

# New School Site





# Local Actions

1. The Mt. Iron Buhl District needs a new school due to deterioration of the high school due to age and the blasting effects of mining. Repairing costs \$16.5 million.
2. The Virginia District needs \$35 million of upgrades to an old high school.
3. Eveleth needs over \$12 million.
  - a. Thus, the three school boards passed resolutions to co-locate in a new building on the 52 acre Mt. Iron Buhl campus adjacent to an existing grade school.

# How are we getting there?

## Our Legislation:

- Modify Joint Powers to allow a co-located grades 7-12 school.
- Embrace the new Facilities Study:
  - Increase transition aid to encourage consolidation/co-location.
  - Modify equalization
- Create Iron Range School Construction and Improvement Trust Fund.
- Allow citizens in the three independent districts to vote on the plan.
- Demonstrate that the plan provides enhanced learning opportunities and broader curriculum offerings.
- Require MDE approval of the plan.
- Complete planning and community involvement process in 2014 and schedule a vote.

# Details

- Build an approximately 325,000 square feet building, down from 800,000 square feet of existing high school buildings footprint.
- Building cost: About \$110 million. Demolition, grade school updates additional.
- Utilize existing Hockey, Football, Track/Field, Tennis, and Baseball facilities.
- Demolish or repurpose existing high schools.
- Upgrade elementary facilities.
- Reduce Administrative and upkeep costs.

# Iron Range School Fund

- ★ \$10.6 million annually available for school debt service
  - Consolidation or cooperation
  - Referendum desired
- ★ School fund from:
  - 5 cents per ton from the county taconite tax fund
  - 5 cents per ton from the Taconite Economic Development Fund
  - 6 cents per ton from the Occupation Tax--general fund revenue
  - $\frac{2}{3}$  of the escalator from the production tax for three years annually contributing to the school fund
- ★ Local school bond issue would be paid by this new School Fund and state equalization aid available to a co-located school
- ★ Bond issue payment from the new School Fund backed up by the Iron Range Fiscal Disparities Fund.



# Tomassoni/Metsa Bill

- ❖ Provides for a local referendum in all three school districts so the people can decide.
- ❖ Allows the districts to co-locate. Consolidation an option.
- ❖ Increases transitional aid to \$450,000 per year for five years for a new school to help with operations and classroom expenses--from the general revenue of the state.
- ❖ Increases state general revenue equalization aid for debt service from about \$1.8 - \$2.6 million to about \$3.8 - \$4.4 million (determined by annual net tax capacity to be determined by MN Dept. of Revenue later in the year).
- ❖ Provides for worker and teacher protections.
- ❖ Should be in the Omnibus k-12 Education Finance bill.

# Curriculum Challenges in Small Schools

- Small schools create scheduling difficulties with many one section classes.
- Difficult to recruit part-time teachers--low enrollment will not support a full time teacher.
- MIB's enrollment is too small to accommodate grade level courses. 10, 11, & 12 grades are together in classes offered once every three years.
- Limited number of electives.
- Students are unable to take three years of a foreign language.
- Eveleth-Gilbert does not have industrial tech facilities on their campus. Student time is spent transporting rather than learning.
- Special Education teachers have caseloads of students with a variety of disabilities. Unable to focus on specific disability according to expertise.
- Two of the three districts have limited vocal music and fine arts programs
- Two of the three districts offer a very basic instrumental music program.
- Two of the three districts have limited technology support.
- Exploratory programs have been eliminated because of limited enrollment: Industrial Technology, FACS, exploratory language, art, etc.
- Students have limited opportunities to discover their strengths and areas of interest.

# Enhanced Curriculum

- 7th and 8th grades could be configured following a middle school model.
- Student travel time to shared vocational classes would be eliminated yielding more instructional time.
- Creates more collaboration among teachers with more than one teacher in a discipline. Teachers benefit from collaboration and peer mentoring.
- Creation of specific programs to address the needs of at-risk students.
- Enhanced Curriculum:
  - Pre-engineering
  - Robotics
  - Career exploration and readiness
  - internships
  - STEM program
- More electives.
- Increased foreign languages, and four years rather than two.
- Increase opportunities in the Fine Arts with a combined program--group ensembles, theatre, public speaking.
- Combined counseling department with student guidance expertise for college bound and workforce issues.
- Focused special education opportunities on specific disabilities.
- More challenge courses, advanced, honors, AP, and concurrent enrollment classes.
- More efficient use of teacher expertise and time.

# Summary

## Legislation:

- ❑ Modifies equalization aid
- ❑ Increases transition aid
- ❑ Creates Iron Range School Construction and Improvement Trust Fund
- ❑ Through a Joint Powers Agreement, allows schools to co-locate