

Business Item 2019-51

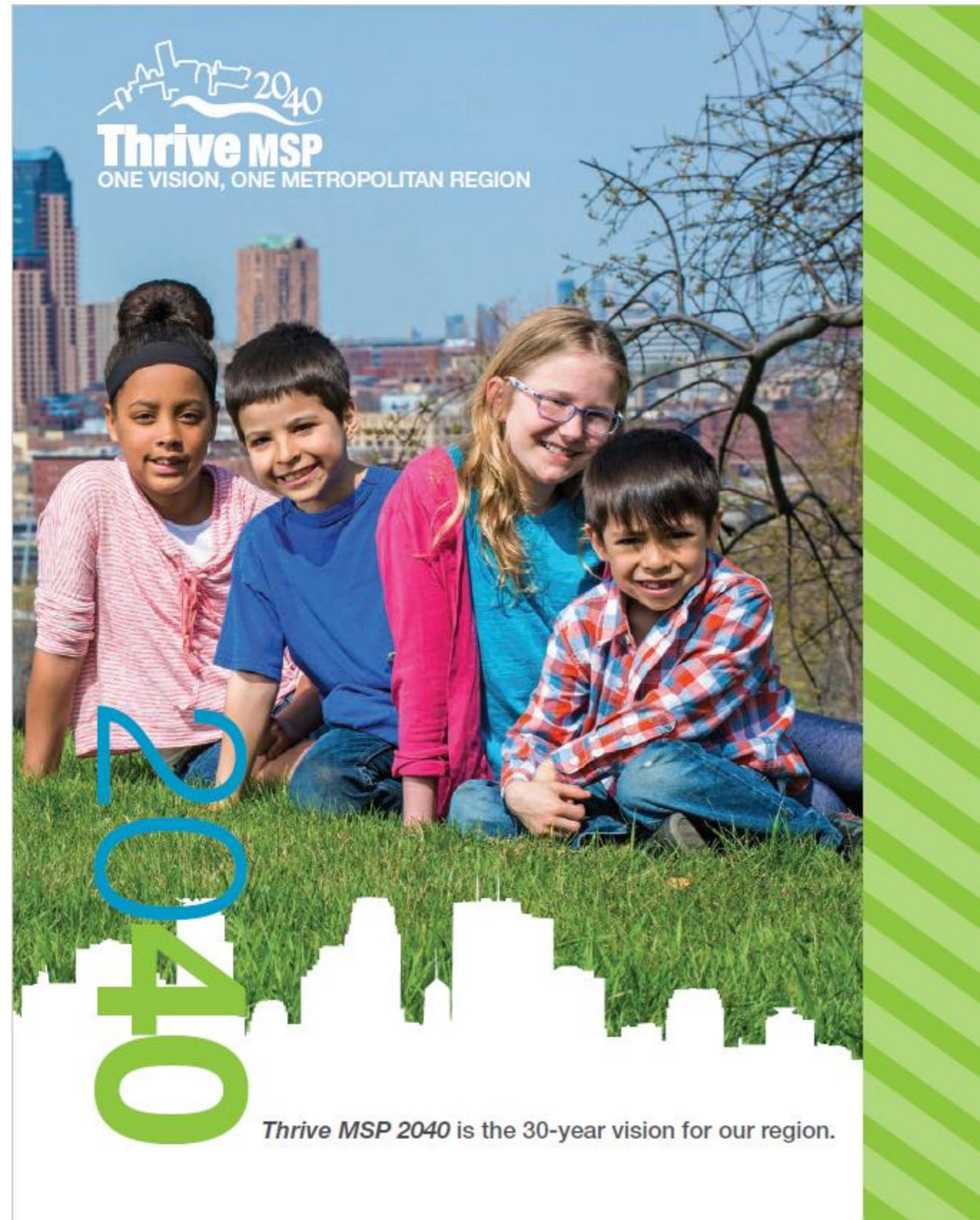
Lebanon Hills Regional Park Utility Change Dakota County

March 18, 2019

Community Development Committee



Council's Policy Framework



Thrive MSP 2040

- Overarching strategic document

System Plans

- Transportation Policy Plan
- Water Resources Policy
- **Regional Parks Policy Plan**

2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan

Roles

- 10 Implementing Agencies own and operate the Regional Parks System
- Metropolitan Council guides and funds

Regional Park System

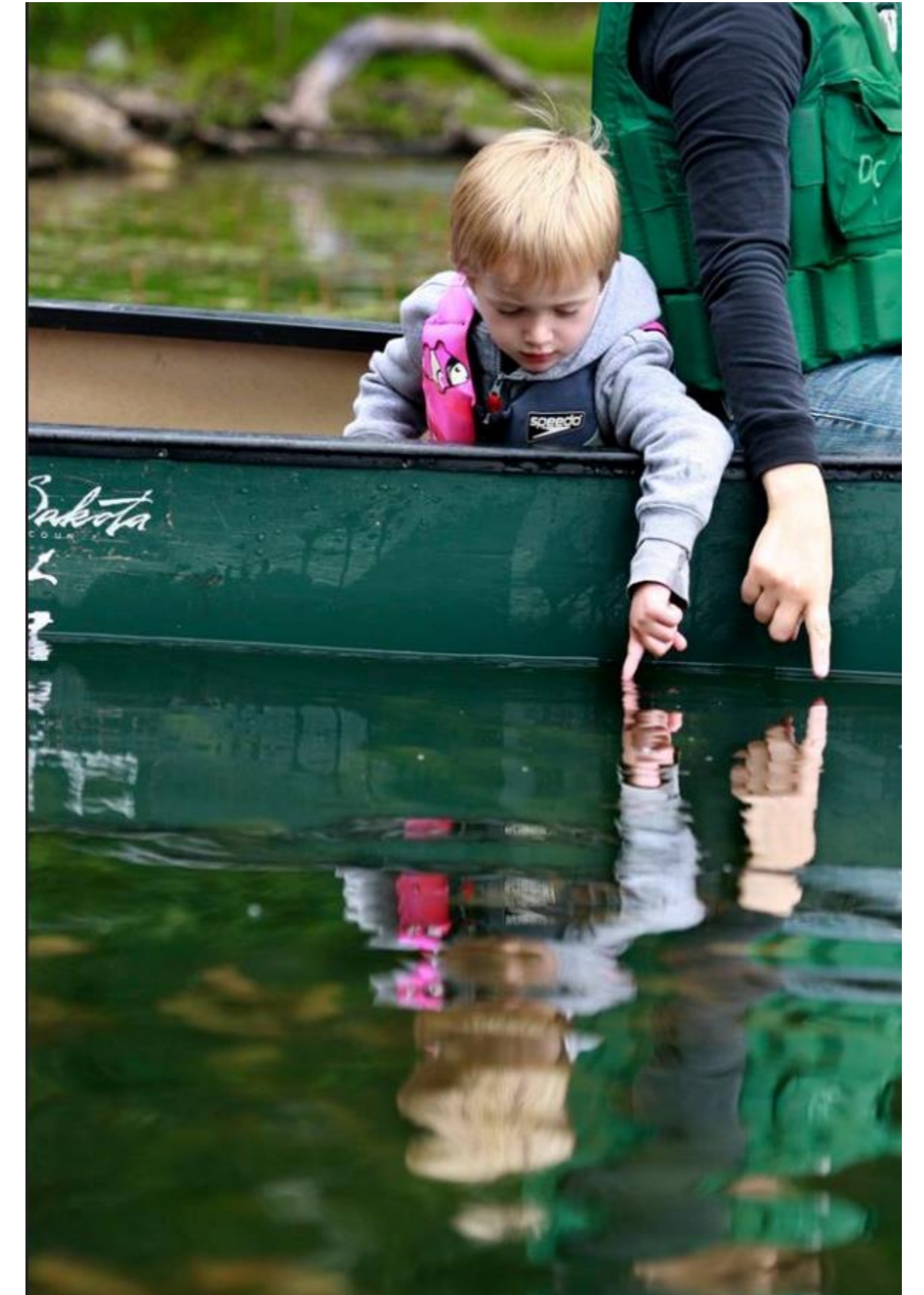
- 113 Total Units
- 44 Regional Parks
- 12 Park Reserves
- 8 Special Recreation Features
- 49 Regional Trails
 - 389 Trail Miles



METROPOLITAN
COUNCIL

Policy Plan Guidance

- The Council guides and funds Implementing Agencies through Council-approved master plans.
- Dakota County has a 2015 Council-approved master plan for Lebanon Hills Regional Park.
- The County is requesting the Council's consent to an easement to upgrade an existing electric transmission infrastructure from a permit to an easement in the park.
- In exchange another existing easement will be released and restored allowing for increased natural resources and recreational opportunities in the park.



Policy Plan Guidance



The Council considers conversion of regional park land to other uses only if the conversion will not harm the Regional Parks System.

Chapter 6, System Protection of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* guides through the following policy strategies:

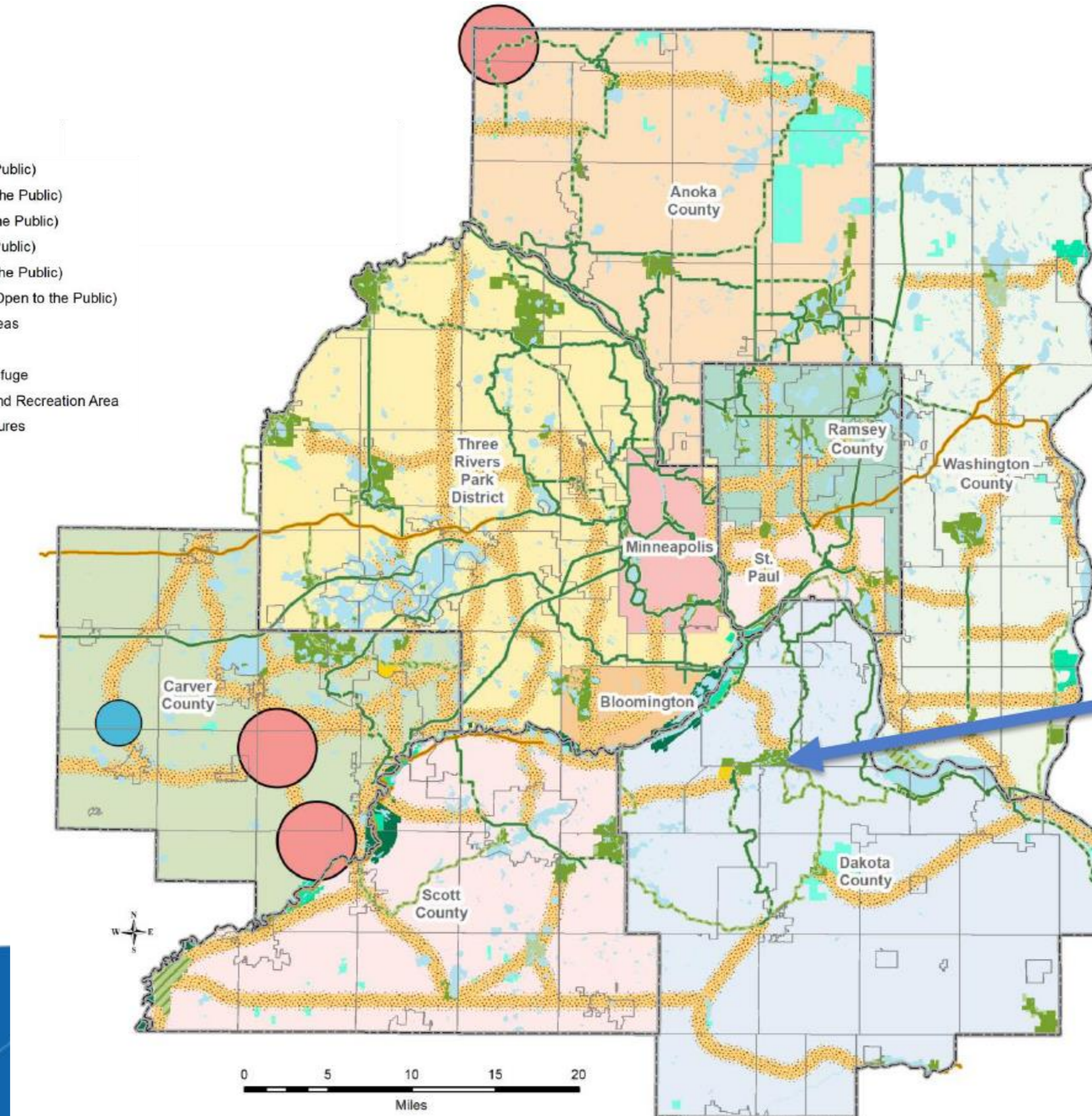
- Strategy 6, Utility Placement
- Strategy 2, Conversion of Regional Parks System Lands to Other Uses

Lebanon Hills Regional Park - Location

Regional Park Search Areas and Regional Trail Search Corridors

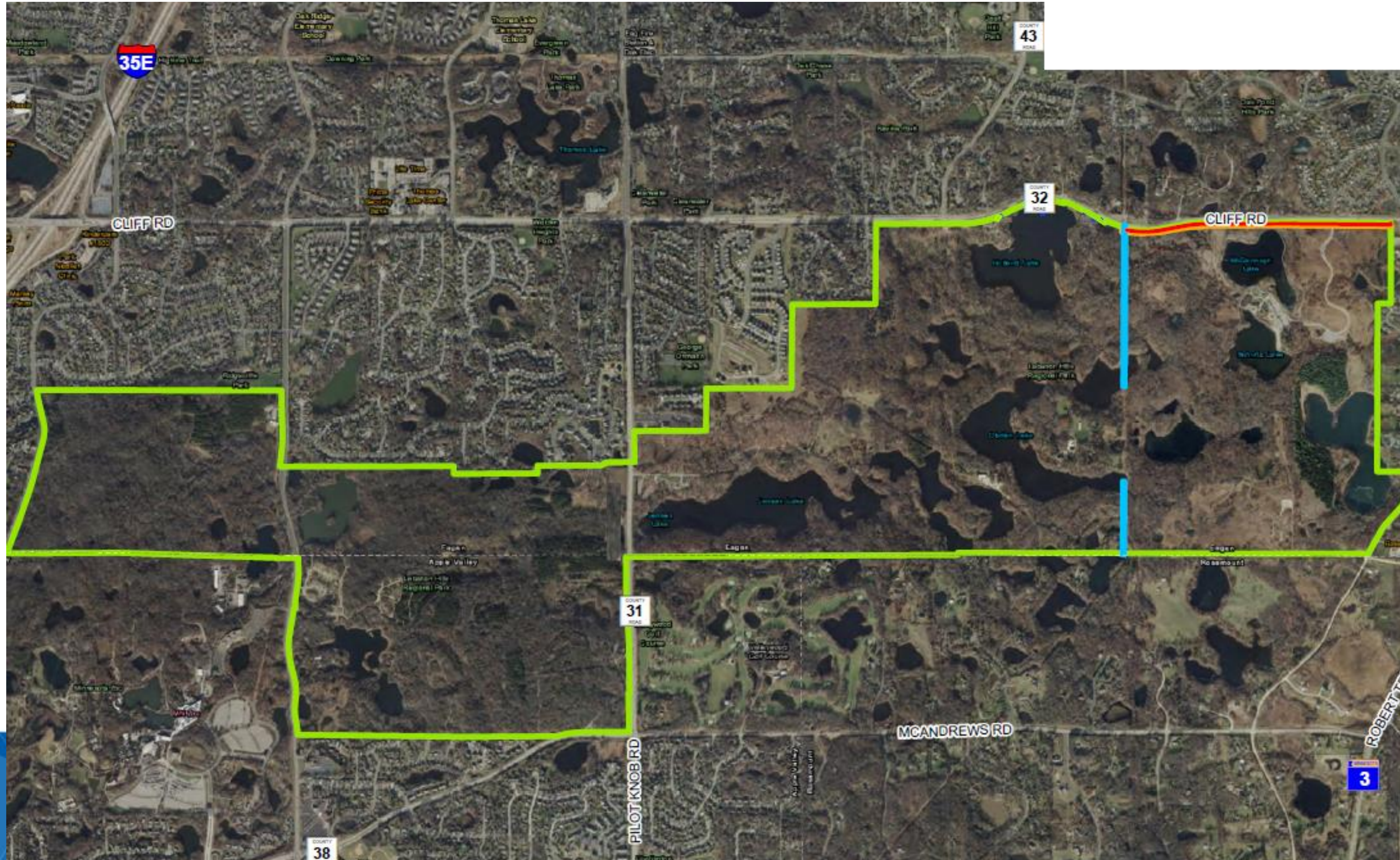
-  Park Boundary Adjustments
-  Park Search Areas
-  Regional Trail Search Corridors
-  Existing State Trails

-  Regional Parks (Open to the Public)
-  Regional Parks (Not Open to the Public)
-  Planned Parks (Not Open to the Public)
-  Regional Trails (Open to the Public)
-  Regional Trails (Not Open to the Public)
-  Planned Regional Trails (Not Open to the Public)
-  State Wildlife Management Areas
-  State Parks
-  MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge
-  Minnesota Valley State Trail and Recreation Area
-  Special State Recreation Features



Lebanon Hills Regional Park

Utility Change Location



Overview

- GRE Easement (4.04 ac.)
- Xcel Easement (4.28 ac)
- Existing Park Boundary

Added and Released Easement Locations



Restoring the Xcel easement area will allow for increased lateral ecological and human movement in the park.

Policy Plan Guidance

The *2040 Regional Park Policy Plan* guides for utility changes through

System Protection Strategy 6, Placement of utilities

- When appropriate, this strategy encourages implementing agencies to collaborate with utility providers to minimize impacts on the Regional Parks System unit's natural resources and on recreation facilities, while providing reasonable access.
- The utility provider may have to pay for the easement or permit based on the benefit the utility provides to the Regional Parks System unit.

Dakota County's utility change is permanently changing the use from regional recreation open space to utility use; therefore, is also guided through *Chapter 6, System Protection, Strategy 2, Conversion of Regional Parks System Lands to Other Uses*

Policy Plan Guidance

The Council considers conversion of regional park land to other uses only if the conversion will not harm the Regional Parks System.

Chapter 6, System Protection, Strategy 2, Conversion of Regional Parks System Lands to Other Uses includes relevant criteria.

“Equally valuable land” is defined as land that:

- Is contiguous to the Regional Parks System unit containing the land proposed to be exchanged (within the same park/trail unit)
- Has comparable or better natural resource characteristics, and
- Could provide comparable or better recreation opportunities than the land being released from the covenant

Policy Plan Guidance

Issues with respect to the existing park system, criteria 2:

Whether the park system unit will continue to function as originally planned?

Lebanon Hills Regional Park will continue to function as planned in the 2015 Council-approved master plan. Within the 4.04-acre easement area, the master plan identifies 11-acres of rare woods (north of McDonough Lake), Connector Trail (internal trail), and invasive species management. Dakota County has addressed each in the following ways:

- A tree inventory was conducted for the easement area resulting in a removal/pruning plan is attached to the easement side agreement. While some tree removals will take place to accommodate the easement, none of the removals will impair the rare woods.*
- Invasive species management will continue (ongoing) following the utility upgrade project.*
- The Connector Trail (internal trail) does not yet exist. The County will undertake a feasibility study in 2021 to help determine the alignment.*

Proposed Findings

The proposed master plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*:

- Chapter 6, System Protection Strategy 6, Placement of utilities
- Chapter 6, System Protection, Strategy 2, Conversion of Regional Parks System Lands to Other Uses
- Chapter 4, Siting and Acquisition Policy, Regional Parks: General Criteria
- Other Council policies

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Consent to an easement to allow Dakota County to issue a 4.04-acre utility easement to Great River Energy to upgrade the existing 69-kV transmission line to a double circuit 115-kV transmission line.
2. Advise Dakota County that Minnesota Management and Budget must consent to Dakota County's easement described in recorded Declaration #3235301.