

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Report

For the Community Development Committee meeting of February 18, 2020

Subject: Rum River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment, Review File No. 50033-2

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Anoka County's Rum River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.
2. Advise the County to consider the additional suggestions regarding placement and design of the trail contained at the end of this report.

Summary of Committee Discussion/Questions

Tracey Kinney, Senior Planner, presented the staff report to the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission at its meeting on February 6, 2020. Karen Blaska from Anoka County was also in attendance and responded to questions.

Commissioner Tom Kemery requested additional information on the treatment of the alternative segment of the regional trail as it passes through undeveloped and developed land. Karen Blaska responded that the trail will be a grade separated, 10-foot wide path in the undeveloped area adjacent to the Rum River, and it will be an on-street trail within the developed area.

Commissioner Cecily Harris requested information about the easements. Karen Blaska replied that the County will take measures to reduce the cost and number of easements needed while ensuring that the trail is implemented.

The Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission voted unanimously to approve the proposed actions.

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: February 6, 2020

For the Community Development Committee meeting of February 18, 2020

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of February 26, 2020

Subject: Rum River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment, Review File No. 50033-2

MPOSC District, Member: District E, Jeremy Peichel

Council District, Member: 9 – Raymond Zeran

Policy/Legal Reference: Minnesota Statutes § 473.313; *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, Chapter 5, Planning Strategy 1

Staff Prepared/Presented: Tracey Kinney, Senior Planner, 651-602-1029

Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Anoka County's Rum River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.
2. Advise the County to consider the additional suggestions regarding placement and design of the trail contained at the end of this report.

Background

Rum River Regional Trail is located in the northern part of the Regional Parks System and in the western part of Anoka County (Figures 1 and 2). When complete the 20-mile regional trail will follow the Rum River corridor connecting the confluence of the Rum and Mississippi Rivers in the City of Anoka to the northern Isanti/Anoka County border. The trail connects the cities of Anoka, Andover, Ramsey, Oak Grove, and St. Francis to the Rum River Central Regional Park, Lake George Regional Park, three regional trails including the Sugar Hills Regional Trail, and two regional trail search corridors. The regional trail has a 2013 Council approved master plan ([Business Item 2013-206](#)).

Anoka County is requesting a master plan amendment for two changes to a portion of trail located in the City of St. Francis. The changes include:

- Replacing an existing at-grade crossing with an underpass at CSAH 14/Bridge Street to increase safety; and
- Realigning the trail to the Rum River corridor from the Rum River North County Park to the Isanti/Anoka County boarder to provide a higher quality natural resource experience.

Rationale

The Rum River Regional Trail Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* including Chapter 5, Planning Strategy 1.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The Rum River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment advances the Thrive outcome of livability by enhancing the quality of life in the region through increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation.

Funding

The total cost to implement the underpass and the realignment is estimated at \$8,000,000 including \$3,700,000 for development (\$400,000 for the underpass

and \$3,300,000 for the trail realignment) and \$4,300,000 for acquisition. Additionally, annual maintenance will cost \$20,000. Regional funding was not applied to the existing on-road crossing at CSAH 14/Bridge Street or the existing and planned portions of the trail realignment; therefore, funding requests for these projects would be eligible pending approval of this business item.

Known Support / Opposition

The Anoka County Board approved and adopted the Rum River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment at its September 10, 2019 meeting. The City of St. Francis adopted a resolution in support of the development of the Rum River Regional Trail at its August 5, 2019 meeting.

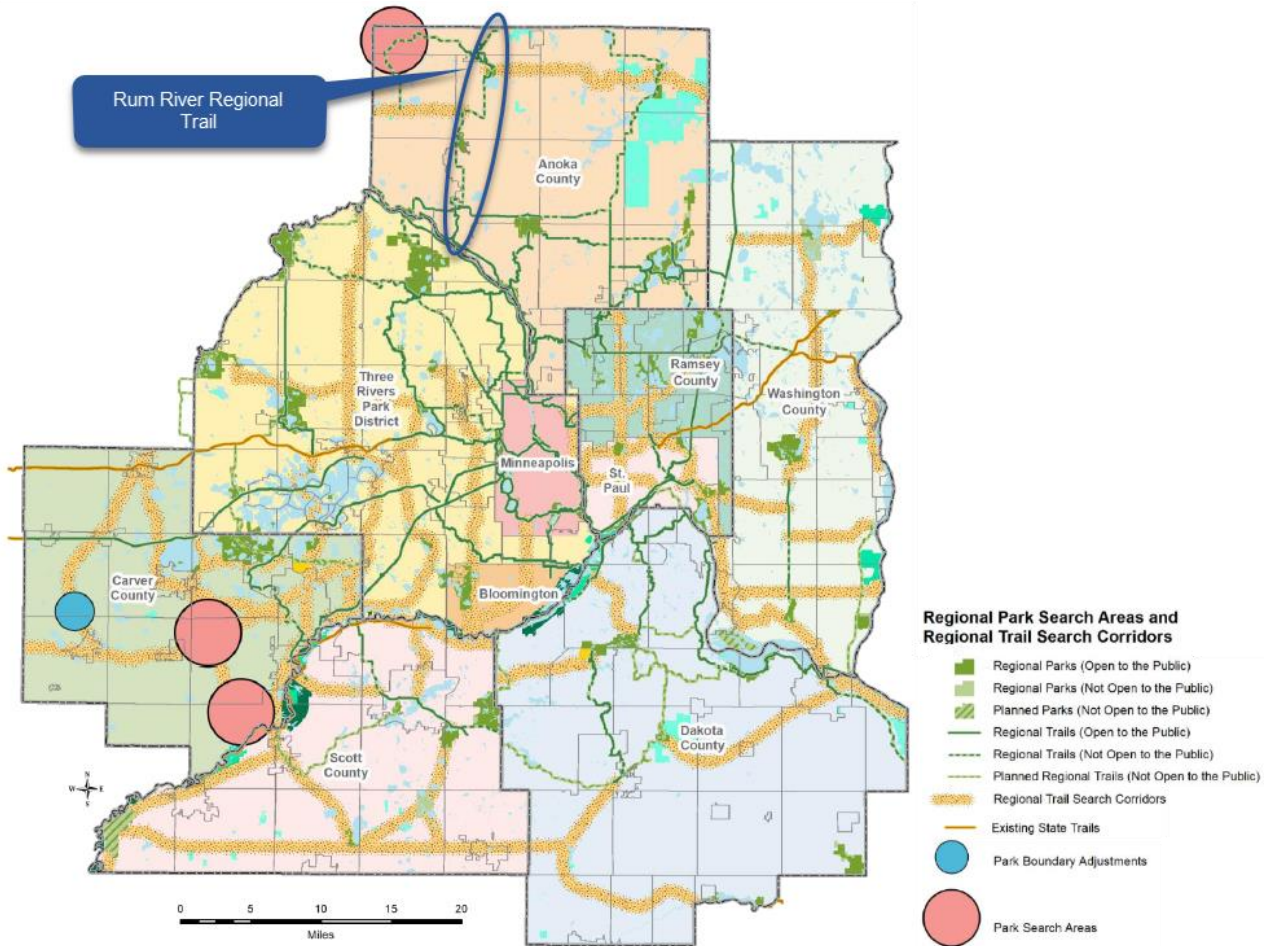
Analysis

Planning Strategy 1 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that master plans for linking trails address 12 items: boundaries and acquisition costs, demand forecast, development concept, conflicts, public services, operations, partner engagement, public engagement and participation, equity analysis, public awareness, accessibility, and Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area. The following analyzes the master plan against those requirements.

Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

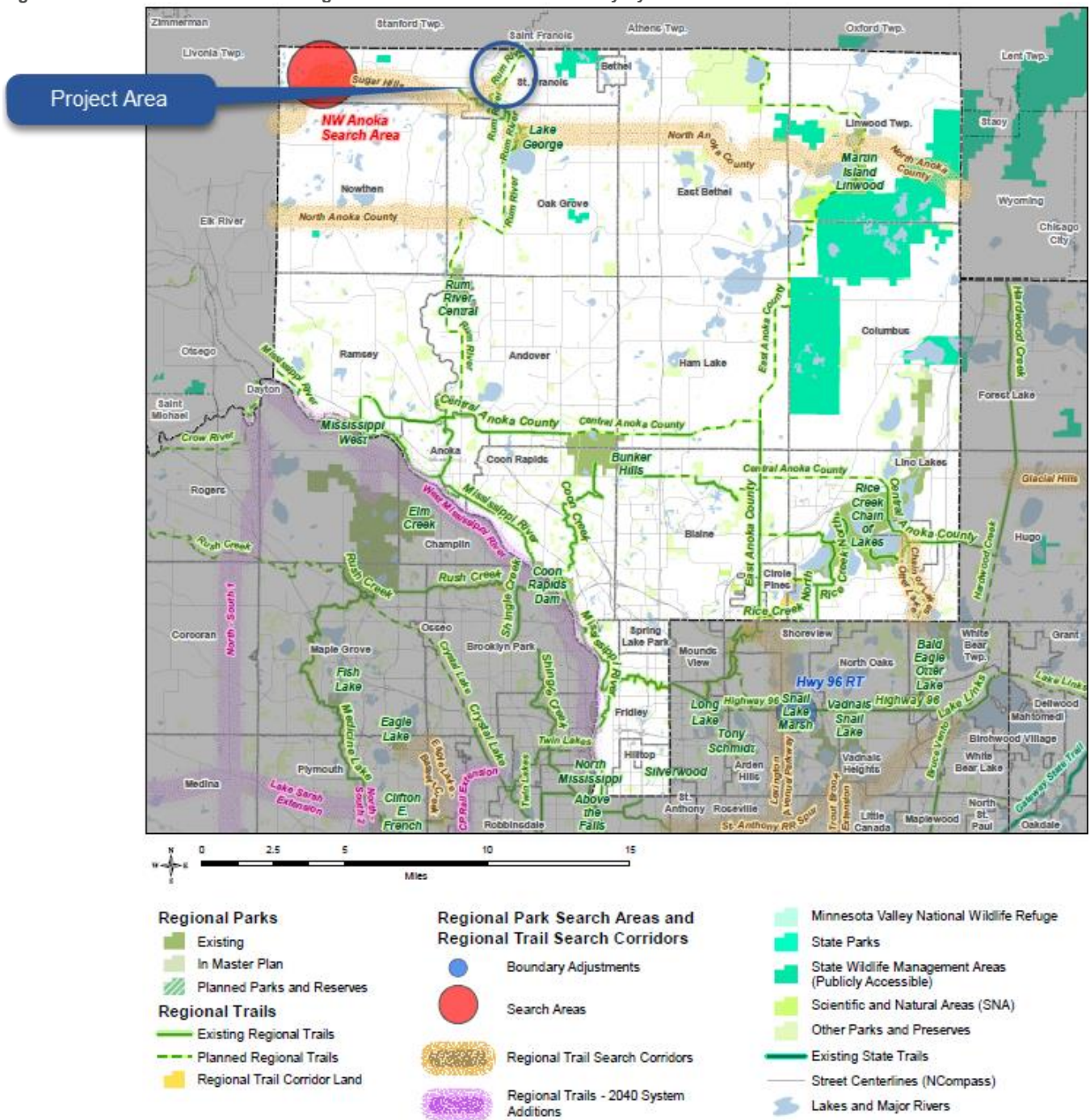
Rum River Regional Trail is located in the northern part of the Regional Parks System and in the western part of Anoka County (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1: Location of the Rum River Regional Trail within the Regional Parks System



When complete, the 20-mile Rum River Regional Trail will follow the Rum River corridor connecting the confluence of the Rum and Mississippi Rivers in the City of Anoka to the northern Isanti/Anoka County border. Today 9-miles of existing trail are open to the public and 11-miles of trail are planned. The trail connects the Cities of Anoka, Andover, Ramsey, Oak Grove, and St. Francis to the Rum River Central Regional Park, Lake George Regional Park, three regional trails including the Sugar Hills Regional Trail, and two regional trail search corridors. (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Location of the Rum River Regional Trail within the Anoka County System



Anoka County is requesting a master plan amendment for two changes to a trail segment located in the City of St. Francis. The changes will increase safety by replacing an existing at-grade crossing with an underpass at CSAH 14/Bridge Street and provide a higher quality natural resource experience by realigning the trail to the Rum River corridor from the Rum River North County Park to the Isanti/Anoka County boarder (Figure 3).

Acquisitions

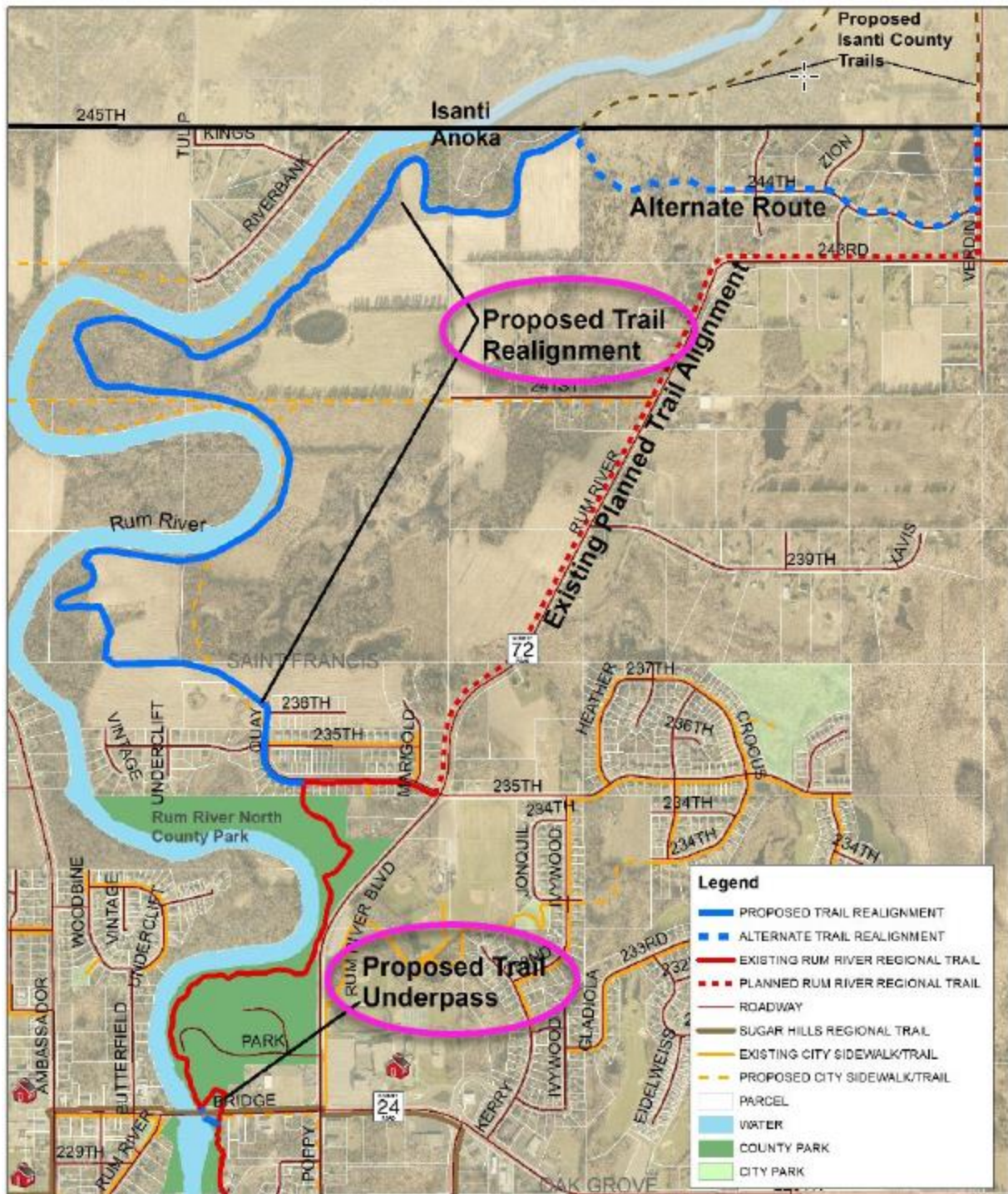
The trail underpass and realignment have two different acquisition needs.

- Bridge underpass: No acquisitions are required for the trail underpass since the County already owns the land; therefore, no acquisition costs are included.
- Trail realignment: The trail realignment requires five 20-foot trail easements with an estimated cost of \$4,300,000 for acquisition. The parcel identification numbers for the easements include 283-424210001, 323-424210033, 283-424220001, 293-424140002, and 293-424340004.

In addition, the two projects are anticipated to be implemented on separate timelines as follows:

- Bridge underpass: The underpass is scheduled to be completed in the next 3-5 years, depending on available funding.
- Trail realignment: There is no identified schedule for completion as this time. It is anticipated that the trail will be constructed as development occurs over the next 10-20 years.

Figure 3. Rum River Regional Trail – Proposed Underpass and Trail Realignment



Demand Forecast

The Rum River Regional Trail was the sixth most visited trail in the Anoka County Parks System with 142,876 visitors in 2018 according to the Metropolitan Council’s 2018 Parks Use Estimates (Table 1). The 2018 estimates included the 9-miles of built trail located in downtown Anoka, Lake George Regional Park, and City of Oak Grove. When fully constructed, the visitors to the Rum River Regional Trail could be higher due to population increases in Anoka County and the City of St. Francis, according to the Census Bureau’s 2010 Census and the 2016 American Community Survey.

Table 1: Estimated Annual Regional Visits, Metropolitan Council (2018)

Regional Trail Unit	Est. Visits, 2018
Rice Creek West Regional Trail	336,031
Rice Creek North Regional Trail	235,177
Mississippi River Regional Trail	229,762
Coon Creek Regional Trail	207,643
Bunker Hills Regional Trail	196,977
Rum River Regional Trail	142,876
East Anoka County Regional Trail	131,835
Central Anoka County Regional Trail	82,402

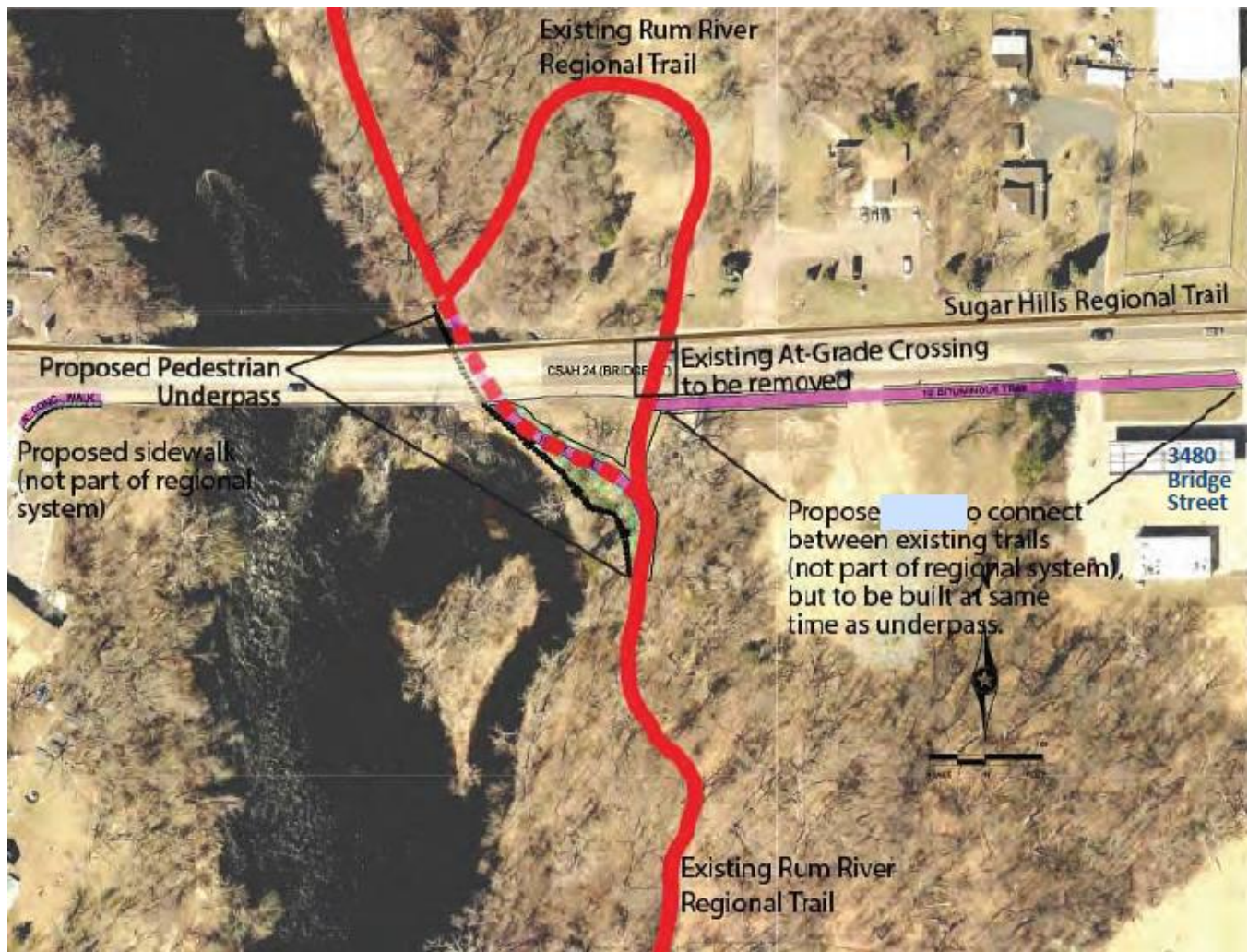
Development Concept

This master plan amendment requests the addition of an underpass at CSAH 14/Bridge Street to replace an existing at-grade crossing and realign the trail to the Rum River corridor from Rum River North County Park to the Isanti/Anoka County border.

Underpass

The proposed trail underpass will address safety concerns related to the current at-grade crossing of Bridge Street, which is a two-lane, 40-mile per hour roadway. The proposed project will remove the existing at-grade crossing and reroute the regional trail from the roadway to under the vehicular bridge at CSAH 14/Bridge Street (Figure 4). This project includes a retaining wall to stabilize the slope and allow the 10-foot wide paved trail to meet ADA requirements. Additionally, the project will include measures to protect the river floodplain. Once under the bridge the trail will connect to the existing regional trail within Rum River North County Park. The remaining trail leading up to CSAH 14/Bridge Street will continue to connect to the existing north-west Sugar Hills Regional Trail that is located on the north side of the street.

Figure 4. Proposed Underpass Project



Trail Realignment

The proposed trail realignment has two segments and an alternative:

- Segment 1: 235 Avenue to Quay Street
- Segment 2: Quay Street to the Isanti/Anoka County boarder and an alternative route along 244th Street (Figure 3).

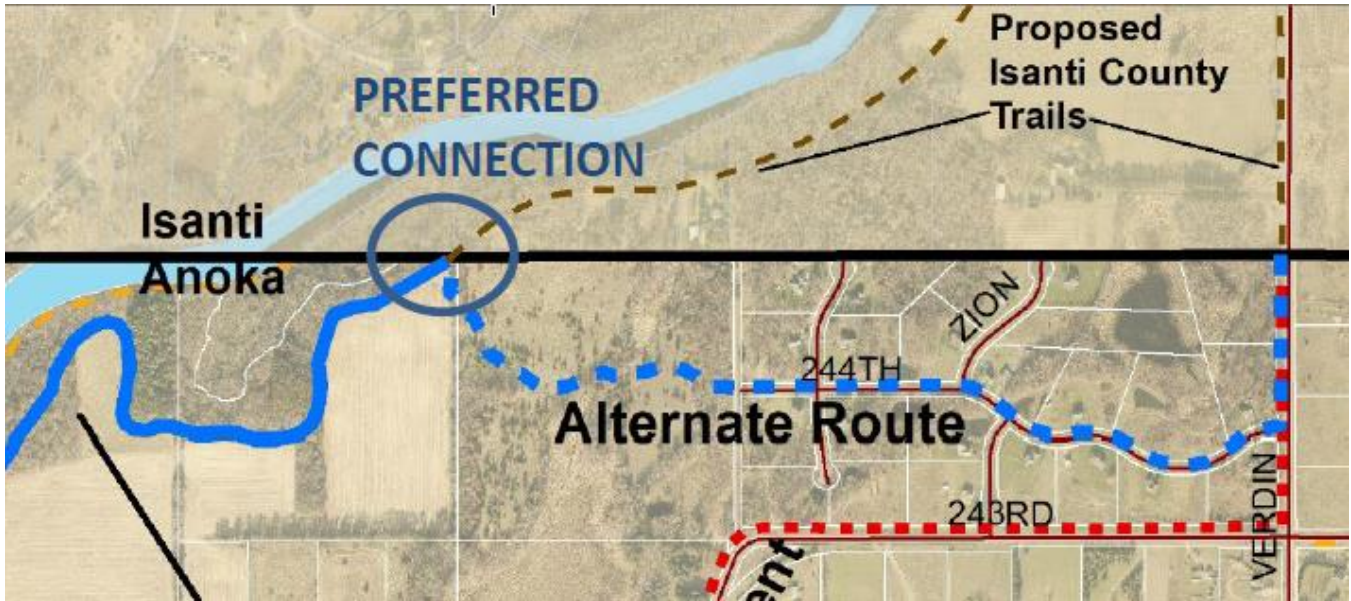
Segment 1: 235 Avenue to Quay Street: Segment 1 is a 0.2 mile existing 8-foot wide separated city trail. The trail will be widened to 10-feet within the existing road right-of-way requiring no acquisitions.

Segment 2: Quay Street to the Isanti/Anoka County boarder: Segment 2 is a proposed undeveloped 3-mile 10-foot wide trail adjacent to the Rum River. This segment increases the overall trail mileage by 1-mile. The Rum River is a designated Minnesota Wild & Scenic River, of which this part of the river has requirements associated with scenic criteria (Minn. Stat. §§ 103F.301 – 103F.35). The master plan amendment reflects the state criteria requirements by locating the trail 75 to 100 feet away from the river to prevent visual and bluff impacts. The master plan amendment includes a minimum of two proposed scenic overlooks and rest stops along this segment of trail.

Alternative Route along 244th Street: Anoka County, in partnership with Isanti County, is proposing an alternate route if Isanti County is unable to obtain necessary easements to connect to the preferred alignment near the river. The 1.0-mile alternate will orient the trail to the east through a residential

development at the Isanti/Anoka County boarder. Input from residents determined that the trail through the development will be a signed on-street bike route east to Verdin Street. At Verdin Street, the trail travels north to an Isanti County trail on a proposed 10-foot wide grade-separated trail. This segment will increase the overall trail mileage by 2-miles (Figure 6).

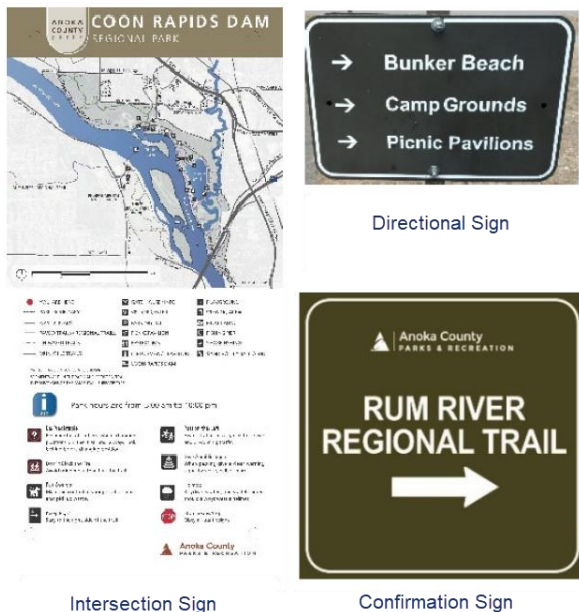
Figure 6. Alternate Route



Wayfinding

The wayfinding signage plan for the trail will provide users with orientation and location information to access amenities and services along the trail route. Trail wayfinding includes the following: intersection signs, confirmation signs, and directional signs. Intersection signs are maps located at intersections. Directional and confirmation signs provide guidance on place locations.

Figure 6. Example of trail signage



Conflicts

The RPPP requires the identification of conflicts with other existing or proposed projects or land uses affecting the trail unit, including steps necessary for their resolution.

Anticipated conflicts include at-grade trail crossings, underpass floodplain conditions, and State Wild and Scenic River requirements. The Plan proposes to address these conflicts as described below:

- *At-grade trail crossings:* crossings at intersections and street crossings will be designed using Minnesota Uniform Traffic Control Device standards.
- *Floodplain conditions:* The trail underpass resides in the 100-year floodplain. Design of the trail will include mitigation for floodplain impacts with the expectation that net impacts to the floodplain are zero.
- *State Wild and Scenic River requirements:* The Rum River is a state designated Wild and Scenic River; therefore, trail development will be setback 75-feet from the River and blend into the landscape.

Public Services

There are no non-recreational public services or facilities required to accommodate the proposed trail. Public services, such as parking, restroom facilities, and drinking fountains are located within Rum River North County Park.

Operations

Annual maintenance costs for the existing and proposed trail once completed are estimated to be approximately \$20,000. This includes funding for sign replacements, minor bituminous repair, and crack-sealing.

Partner Engagement

Anoka County engaged government partners through a relationship building approach for the development of the master plan amendment. The partners included Isanti County, Athens Township (Isanti County), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Army Corps of Engineers, Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization, and the City of St. Francis. The development concept of this master plan amendment addresses the Minnesota Wild & Scenic requirements, floodplain impact and public waters permitting.

Public Engagement and Participation

Anoka County conducted an engagement process that included underserved populations and the community at-large. Identified underserved populations include stakeholders over the age of 60, low income populations, transit reliant youth, and minorities by race, ethnicity, and cultural origin. Engagement strategies included building relationships using a variety of engagement methods.

Anoka County's "Go to People" strategy engaged more than 400 people through:

- Participating in the Spring Gathering of Families, an American Indian Education Program
- Hosting pop-up events at a local library, grocery store, and a fixed income senior housing development to engage with seniors, children in the area, and lower income populations.
- Outreach to several bike clubs in the metro area, including Birchwood, Twin Cities Spoke, Major Taylor, Ramsey, Spoke-n-Folks.
- Attending local community events and a festival

Additional engagement methods included using [Anoka County's Plan Your Parks webpage](#) for project updates, survey, and to solicit input. The social media posts about the two projects reached 17,750 people with 77 people providing direct feedback.

At the Spring Gathering of Families, an American Indian Education Program, Anoka County shared the proposed projects and received feedback. An estimated 30 attendees including seniors, adults, teens

and children attended. The advice from this event helped to determine that the preferred connection to Isanti County should be adjacent to the Rum River and the alternate route should be along 235th Street.

Overall public engagement advice themes include:

- *Proposed Underpass*: Support for the proposed underpass and safety concerns for the existing on-street crossing (seniors, adults and parents/adults with children).
- *Trail Realignment*: Support for the trail realignment. Some concerns were raised for the trail going through private property and support for the alternate trail. To address this concern, an on-street bike route is proposed through this section, which will only be implemented if Isanti County is unable to make the county-to-county connection close to the river.

Public Awareness

Anoka County provides information maps, websites, social media postings, publications and brochures in cooperation with Commute Solutions, the County's Transportation Management Organization (TMO). Previous partnerships with the local cities and the County TMO resulted in a free bike/walk map for the entire County that is updated regularly. Additionally, the County partners with the Metropolitan Council on their region-wide awareness program, their Parks Ambassador program.

Accessibility

Anoka County continually strives to provide equal access to all residents of Anoka County and the region. Accessibility measures include:

- The projects will conform to or exceed the standards mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Trail use is free of charge.
- The County provides the Anoka County Traveler Transit Link and Metro Transit's Mobility Link for a minimal fee. All of the vehicles are equipped with bike racks so passengers wishing to bike on the trail could use Transit Link to preschedule a drop-off and return trip.
- The County offers programs related to or using the regional trails within a regional park.
- Transit options for the St. Francis includes Anoka County Traveler Transit Link and Metro Transit's Mobility Link.

Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area

The Rum River Regional Trail is not located within the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area; therefore, the master plan amendment does not address these requirements.

Review by Other Council Divisions & State Agencies

Community Development – Environment and Surface Water Management (Jim Larsen 651-602-1159) – No additional comments.

Community Development – Forecasts (Todd Graham 651-602-1322) – No additional comments.

Environmental Services – Sewer (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – No additional comments.

Metro Transit (Steve Mahowald 612-349-7775) – No additional comments.

Transportation Planning (Steve Elmer 651-602-1756) – No additional comments

Local Planning Assistance – Land Use (Eric Wojchik 651-602-1330) –The proposed underpass at Bridge Street is discussed in the Master Plan Amendment on pages 5 and 13. The document states that this revised portion of the route falls within the 100-year functional floodplain, with the intent that construction of the trail will have no impact on the floodplain. To account for future maintenance and asset management, special consideration should be given to design of this portion of the trail in light of changing riverine flooding conditions. The trail should be engineered to allow for some degree of

flooding to account for changing climatic conditions that might affect the flooding frequency along the Rum River.

Exhibit A shows a draft version (February 2019) of the 2040 Future Land Use for the City of St. Francis. The land uses in the Rum River Wild and Scenic District have since been revised from Medium Density Residential to Urban Reserve land use in the current version of the City's 2040 Plan. When considering construction of this portion of the trail, the implementing agency and other stakeholders should be aware of this land use revision.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - Shoreland and River Related Programs (Dan Petrik 651-259-5697) - Overall, the proposal to reroute the trail closer to the river than that shown in the previous plan makes sense. The Rum River is a high-quality resource and it's worthwhile to make it more available to the public. The proposed reroute along the river is entirely within the Rural District. In this district structure setbacks from the river are 150 feet and bluff setbacks are 30 feet. While the plan amendment is conceptual, physical planning should place the trail at least 30 feet from bluffs.

In general, trails should be setback from the river at least 50% of the structure setback, or 75 feet in this case. The plan narrative indicates that trail will be setback from 75 to 100 feet which is consistent with this guidance. The plan also calls for two scenic overlooks along the trail. These provisions and the plan's stated intent to not intrude on the scenic visual quality of the river are positive measures to guide the trail's physical development consistent with the Rum River's scenic designation.

One additional comment is that during the physical design process, efforts should be made to design trail placement to minimize tree and vegetation removal within the entire river setback area, particularly within the 75 feet closest to the river.