

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: April 7, 2015

For the Community Development Committee meeting of April 21, 2015

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of May 13, 2015

Subject: Carver-Baker Regional Trail Master Plan, Three Rivers Park District

District(s), Member(s): MPOSC District A, Rick Theisen and District B, Bob Moeller

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statute 473.313

Staff Prepared/Presented: Jan Youngquist, AICP, Manager (651-602-1029)

Division/Department: Community Development, Regional Parks and Natural Resources

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Baker-Carver Regional Trail Master Plan.
2. Require that prior to initiating development of the Baker-Carver Regional Trail, preliminary plans must be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager at Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the regional interceptor system.

Background

The *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* identifies a regional trail search corridor between Baker Park Reserve in Medina and Carver Park Reserve in Victoria. Three Rivers Park District has completed an extensive planning process to determine the alignment of the regional trail and has submitted a master plan for the Baker-Carver Regional Trail, which will travel through Medina, Maple Plain, Independence, Minnetrista, Victoria and Laketown Township along its 17 mile route.

The regional trail will connect several regional parks and trails, including Baker Park Reserve, Luce Line State Trail, Kingwood Park (special recreation feature), Gale Woods Farm (special recreation feature), Dakota Rail Regional Trail, Baker Park Reserve and Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail. At the north end of the corridor, the regional trail will connect to the Lake Independence Regional Trail, which travels 16 miles north to connect Baker Park Reserve to Crow Hassan Park Reserve in Rogers. At the south end of the corridor, the planned Southwest Connection Regional Trail in Carver County will travel 13 miles south to connect Carver Park Reserve to the Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail in Chaska. Therefore, the Baker-Carver Regional Trail will facilitate a 46 mile north-south trail corridor between the Crow River and the Minnesota River.

Rationale

The Baker-Carver Regional Trail Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies. The master plan requirements outlined in the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* have an effective date of July 1, 2015, so master plans submitted to the Council prior to July 1, 2015 will be reviewed subject to the requirements outlined in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

Funding

The estimated cost to implement the master plan is \$10,773,700 which includes \$473,700 for acquisition and \$10,300,000 for development.

Approval of this master plan makes the development costs eligible for regional parks funding, but does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. Future funding based on this master plan may be awarded through the Parks Acquisition Opportunity Fund, the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. Council action is required to approve specific grants to Three Rivers Park District.

Known Support / Opposition

The master plan includes resolutions of support from the Cities of Independence, Maple Plain, Minnetrista, and Victoria. There is no known opposition to the master plan.

Analysis

The effective date for the master plan requirements outlined in the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* is July 1, 2015 in acknowledgement of master plan planning processes that were already underway when the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* was adopted, on February 11, 2015. Because the Baker-Carver Regional Trail Master Plan was submitted to the Council prior to July 1, 2015, it was reviewed subject to the requirements outlined in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that regional park master plans address the items listed below.

Boundaries and Acquisition

The Baker-Carver Regional Trail will travel through Medina, Maple Plain, Independence, Minnetrista, Victoria and Laketown Township along its 17 mile route. The regional trail will connect several parks and trails, including Baker Park Reserve, Luce Line State Trail, Kingwood Park (special recreation feature), Gale Woods Farm (special recreation feature), Dakota Rail Regional Trail, Baker Park Reserve and Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail.

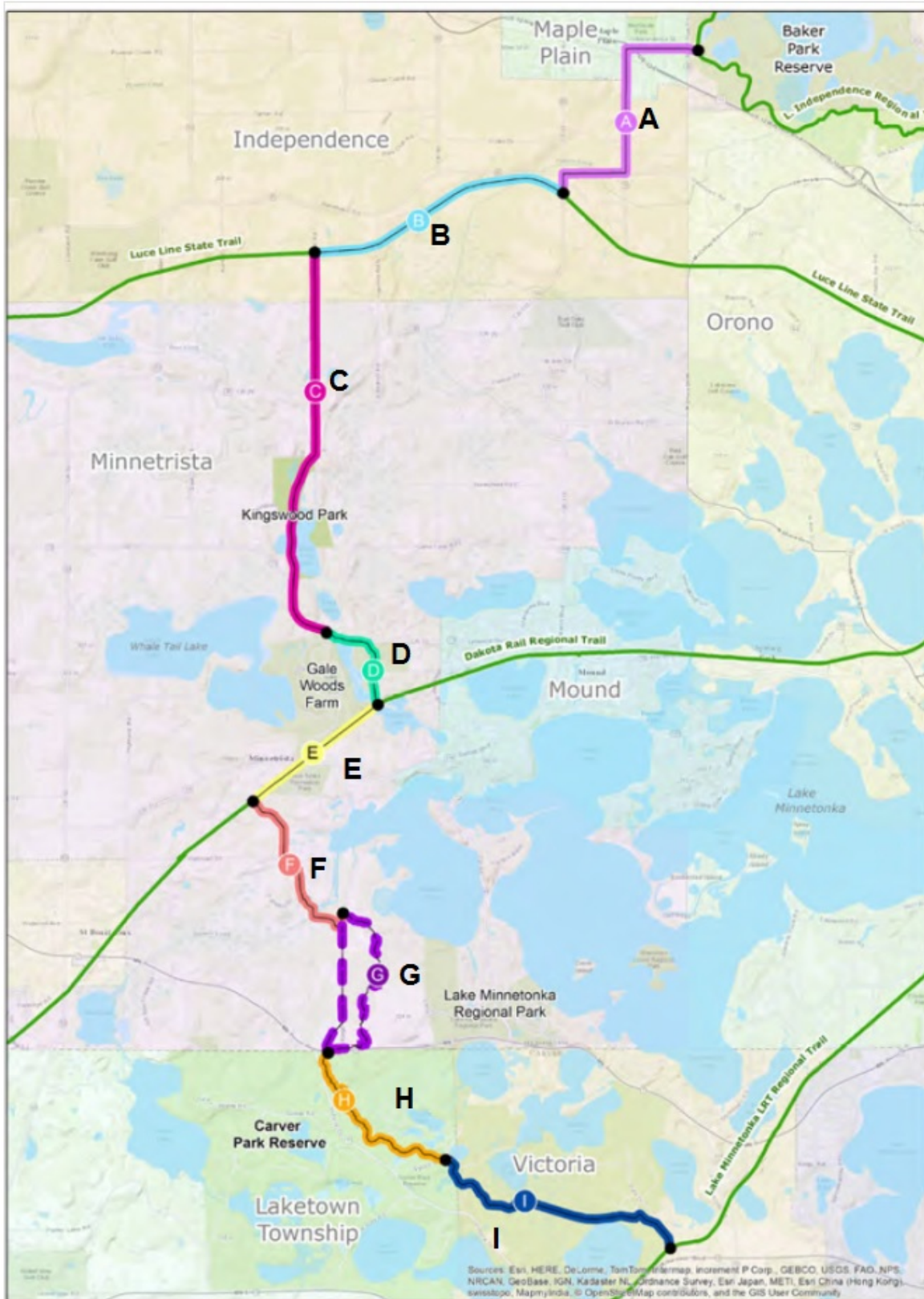
The general alignment of the preferred route of the Baker-Carver Regional Trail is shown in red on *Figure 1*. Other existing regional trails are shown in green.

Figure 1: Baker-Carver Regional Trail Route Map



For planning purposes, the regional trail has been divided into nine segments, which are depicted on Figure 2.

Figure 2: Baker-Carver Regional Trail Segment Map



Segment A: This segment begins in at the Lake Independence Regional Trail within Baker Park Reserve, travels along the north side of Main Street through downtown Maple Plain, and crosses Highway 12 at the existing **H**igh-intensity **A**ctivated cross**W**alk (**HAWK**). HAWK is a traffic signal that is used to stop road traffic and allow bicyclists and pedestrians to cross safely. From there, the trail travels south along the east side of County Road 10, then turns west along the north side of County Road 6 and finally heads south along the west side of County Road 110 to connect to the Luce Line State Trail in Independence. This segment is 2.25 miles long and is not yet constructed. This segment is envisioned to be located within available road right-of-way; however, the potential for easements may be identified along portions of Main Street in Maple Plain and County Roads 6 and 110 in Independence during the design development phases.

Segment B: This segment utilizes the existing Luce Line State Trail from County Road 110 to Game Farm Road in Independence. This segment is 2.16 miles long and is owned and operated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Segment C: This segment begins at the intersection of the Luce Line State Trail and Game Farm Road. The trail will travel south along Game Farm Road, through Kingswood Park and adjacent property owned by the Boys and Girls Club, then along County Road 15 to Gale Woods Farm. This segment is 3.26 miles long and can generally be accommodated within road right-of-way adjacent to Game Farm Road and County Road 15. An easement from the Boys and Girls Club will be needed from the southern end of Kingswood Park to County Road 15.

Segment D: This .9 mile segment is located almost entirely with Gale Woods Farm, with the exception of a 100 foot segment either located on the northern end of County Road 15, or more preferably through property owned by the Boys and Girls Club. Preliminary discussions between Three Rivers Park District and the Boys and Girls Club showed a potential interest in a land exchange arrangement. As part of the proposed arrangement, Three Rivers would convey property it owns on the north side of County Road 15 to the Boys and Girls Club. The Boys and Girls Club would convey the property it owns south of County Road 15 to Three Rivers in addition to the trail easement needed for Segment C. The details of such an arrangement have not yet been finalized.

Segment E: This segment utilizes the existing Dakota Rail Regional Trail for 1.28 miles from Gale Woods Farm to Westonka Recreational Park, a local park in Minnetrista.

Segment F: This segment travels southeast from the Dakota Rail Regional Trail, through Six Mile Marsh, and connects to the Woodland Cove development in Minnetrista. This segment is 1.53 miles long and is not yet constructed. This segment will require significant acquisition or easement coordination. An easement across one private property is needed to provide the connection from the Dakota Rail Regional Trail to Farmhill Drive. The trail will follow Farmhill Drive, with the potential for some easement acquisition that will be necessary to achieve the typical trail section (described in the Development Concept section of this staff report). The trail will cross Six Mile Marsh south of the Farmhill Drive cul-de-sac. The City of Minnetrista owns a small property for the trail at the cul-de-sac. Several parcels south of there are landlocked and may require acquisition to secure property for the regional trail corridor. In this situation, Three Rivers would likely resell the surplus property. Easements south of Six Mile Creek will also be needed.

Segment G: This 1.7 mile segment is located between Kings Point Road and the existing grade separated crossing of Trunk Highway 7 in Minnetrista. There are two alternative routes proposed for this segment. Alternative G1 travels through the new Woodland Cove residential development as well as a 40 acre parcel owned by Three Rivers Park District. This is the most likely route to be

implemented, but it is dependent on an agreement of using the planned trail system through Woodland Cove as part of the regional trail corridor. If Alternative G1 is selected, a 20 foot wide corridor through the Woodland Cove open space network is needed. The City of Minnetrista and Three Rivers Park District are seeking ways for the property rights to be transferred to Three Rivers. Alternative G2 follows Kings Point Road.

Segment H: This segment is located between the existing grade separated crossing of Trunk Highway 7 and the Lowry Nature Center—entirely within Carver Park Reserve. This 1.71 mile trail has not yet been built. There are no land acquisition needs for this segment.

Segment I: This segment is located between the Lowry Nature Center and Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail. This existing segment is entirely located within Carver Park Reserve and is open for public use. There are no land acquisition needs for this segment.

Three Rivers Park District estimates that easement acquisition costs for the Baker-Carver Regional Trail are approximately \$435,700. *Figure 3* provides a summary of the regional trail segments and the acquisition needs.

Figure 3: Baker-Carver Regional Trail Segment Summary and Acquisition Needs

Segment	Trail Length (miles)	Status	Acquisition Needs	Estimated Acquisition Cost
Segment A	2.25	Future construction	Average acquisition of 5' for portions outside of Baker Park Reserve	\$ 143,750
Segment B	2.16	Existing segment	None	\$ -
Segment C	3.26	Future construction	Average acquisition of 5' for road based portions and 20' for independent corridor portions	\$ 79,275
Segment D	.90	Future construction	Much of the segment is within Gale Woods Farm. Approximately 260' easement required, which may be resolved through a land swap.	\$ 5,200
Segment E	1.28	Existing segment	None	\$ -
Segment F	1.53	Future construction	Average acquisition of 5' for road based portions and 20' for independent corridor portions	\$ 57,475
Segment G	1.70	Future construction	20' corridor through Woodland Cove	\$ 150,000
Segment H	1.71	Existing segment	None—segment is completely within Carver Park Reserve	\$ -
Segment I	2.25	Existing segment	None—segment is completely within Carver Park Reserve	\$ -
TOTAL	17.04		Total	\$ 435,700

Stewardship Plan

Three Rivers Park District's Natural Resource Department is responsible for restoring and protecting natural resources on its property, including native plant communities, wildlife diversity and water quality. The regional trail is routed for the user to access and natural resource corridors and will be operated and maintained to highlight but not negatively affect the adjacent natural resources.

The master plan indicates that Three Rivers will use best management practices to minimize impacts on natural and cultural resources, work with adjacent property owners regarding how to protect and manage natural resources, and incorporate opportunities to enjoy and interpret the resources.

Approximately one-third of the regional trail is routed through existing regional parkland in which the natural resources are currently being managed. Three Rivers estimates that additional seasonal or contract staffing will be needed for the minimal resource management needed along the trail corridor, with an annual expense of \$5,000 (in 2014 dollars).

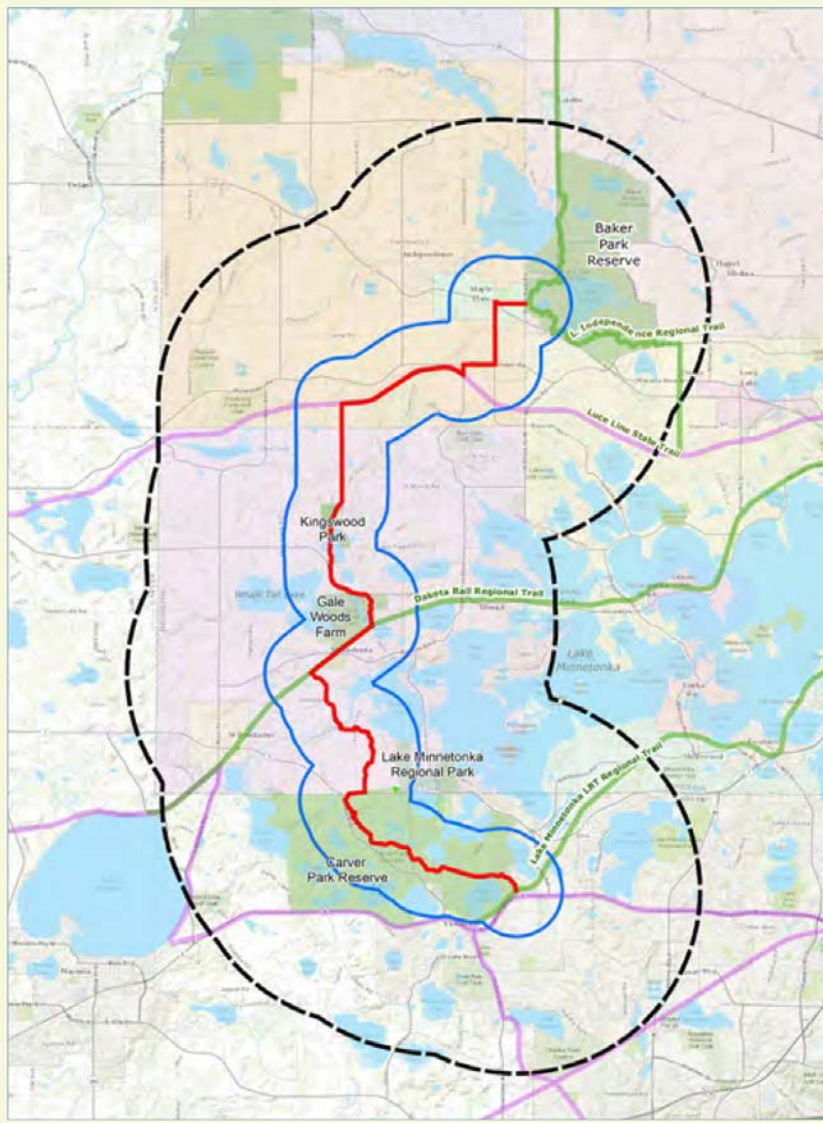
Demand Forecast

Three Rivers Park District estimates that once fully developed, the Baker-Carver Regional Trail will generate approximately 183,000 annual visits. Significant use of the trail will occur in spring, summer and fall. Winter use of the regional trail will be dependent on weather conditions and the assistance of local communities in maintaining the trail. It is anticipated that local communities will maintain the trail during the winter months as resources allow and demand warrants it.

Three Rivers Park District user data indicates that biking is the predominant activity on regional trails (76%), followed by walking (15%) and running (6%). Inline skating and other miscellaneous uses make up the balance of trail uses.

Figure 4 depicts the core and primary service areas for the regional trail. The regional trail route is shown in red, the core service area is outlined in blue, and the primary service area is shown by the dashed black line on *Figure 4*. Typically, fifty percent of trail users originate from within .75 miles of the trail (core service area) and 75 percent originate from within 3 miles of the trail (primary service area).

Figure 4: Baker-Carver Regional Trail Core and Primary Service Areas



Development Concept

The Baker-Carver Regional Trail will be designed as an off-road, 10-foot wide, non-motorized, paved multi-use trail, with the exception of the segment that utilizes the Luce Line State Trail, which has an aggregate surface and is owned and operated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Much of the trail will be an independent trail corridor separate from roadways. In areas where the trail will be located adjacent to a roadway, the trail design will seek to maximize the boulevard width to provide for sign placement, snow storage, and potential trees or other enhancements. The regional trail will be designed with a preferred maximum trail grade of 5 percent, with a 2 percent cross-slope for drainage purposes.

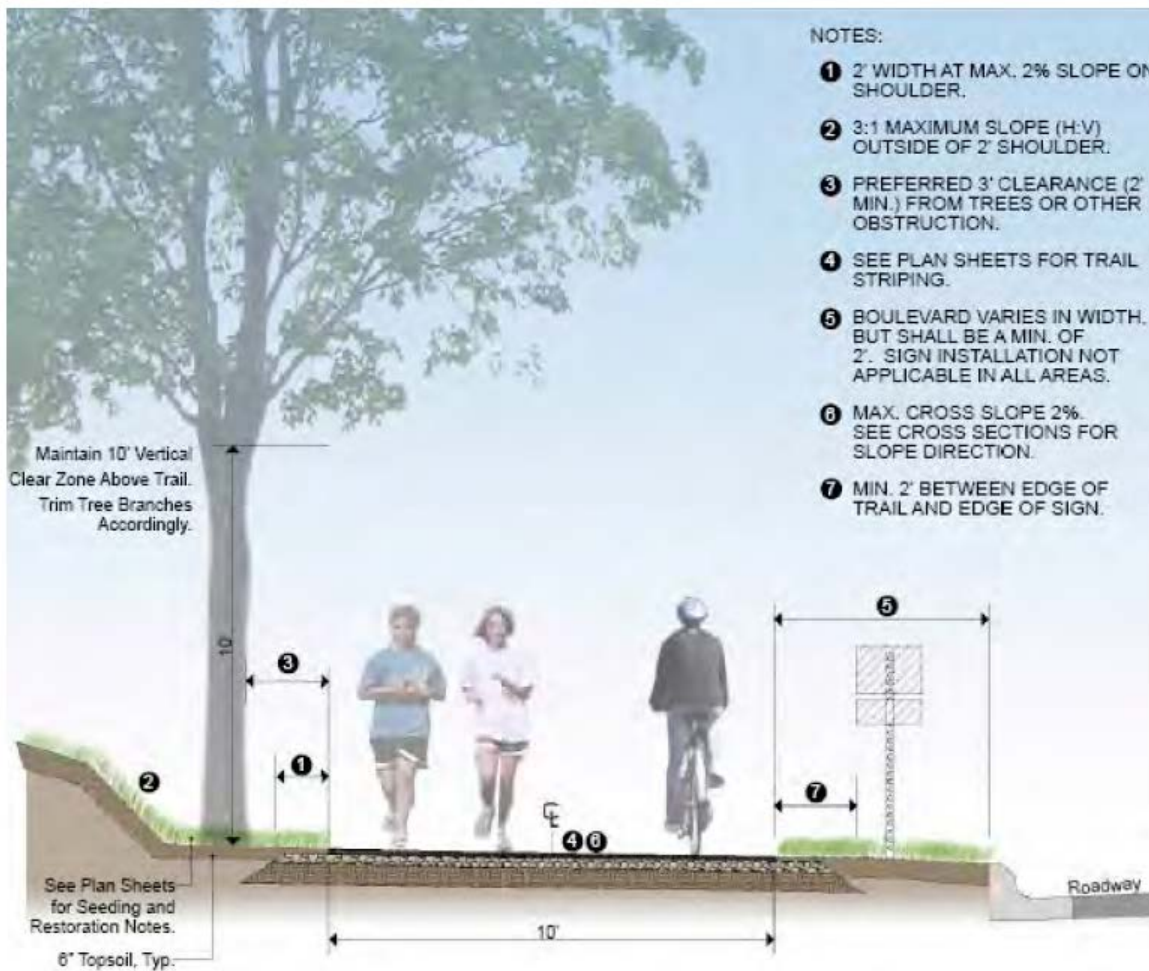
Since portions of the regional trail corridor will cross wetlands and floodplains, boardwalks and bridges are anticipated in a few isolated locations along the trail route to minimize potential impacts to natural resources and maintain a continuous trail corridor.

Additional supporting trail elements include wayfinding signage, rest stops and trailheads. The location of wayfinding signage placement will be coordinated with local communities and is often based on available public right-of-way. Rest stops will generally be provided every mile and will include amenities such as trash receptacles, benches and bike racks. Larger trailheads are not planned, since there are several large regional parks and public facilities along the trail corridor. If additional improvements are needed at these trailheads to support the regional trail, Three Rivers Park District will collaborate with the local communities. The master plan indicates that the following existing public facilities will serve as key trailheads:

- Baker Park Reserve in Medina
- Luce Line State Trail at County Road 110 (parking)
- Gale Woods Farm and Kingswood Park in Minnetrista
- Carver Park Reserve in Victoria and Laketown Township

Figure 5 depicts a preferred typical cross-section of the regional trail.

Figure 5: Baker-Carver Regional Trail Typical Cross-Section



The estimated development costs for trail construction and supporting elements is approximately \$10,300,000 as shown in *Figure 6*.

Figure 6: Baker-Carver Regional Trail Estimated Development Costs

Segment	Development Project	Anticipated Implementation	Estimated Costs	
A	Trail construction and supporting trail elements	10+ years	\$	2,021,200
B	Supporting trail elements	Existing segment. Add wayfinding signs in future.	\$	77,200
C	Trail construction and supporting trail elements	15+ years	\$	3,628,900
D	Trail construction and supporting trail elements	15+ years	\$	480,600
E	Supporting trail elements	Existing segment. Add wayfinding signs when significant contiguous segment is established	\$	40,100
F	Trail construction and supporting trail elements	10+ years	\$	1,805,700
G	Trail construction and supporting trail elements	To be built by the Woodland Cove developer. Will be upgraded to regional standards after the pavement's useful life.	\$	1,178,600
H	Trail construction and supporting trail elements	2019-2020 following construction of Woodland Cove development	\$	950,200
I	Supporting trail elements	Add wayfinding signs when significant contiguous segment is established	\$	99,300
		Total Development Costs	\$	10,281,800

Conflicts

The master plan did not identify any conflicts between the Baker-Carver Regional Trail and any existing or proposed projects or land uses. A number of local plans were consulted during the regional trail master planning process to ensure consistency and minimize duplication:

Minnetrista

- *Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan* (2005) and subsequent amendment (2011) to include planning for the Baker/Carver Regional Trail
- *2030 Comprehensive Plan* (2009)
- Woodland Cove development (2010-present)

Independence

- *Comprehensive Park, Trail and Open Space Plan* (1992)
- *Comprehensive Park, Trail and Open Space Plan Update (2001-2006, draft)*
- *2030 Comprehensive Plan Update* (2010)

Maple Plain

- *City of Maple Plain Walking and Biking Plan* (2012)
- *2030 Comprehensive Plan* (2008)
- *Redevelopment Implementation Plan* (2009)

Hennepin County

- *Hennepin County Bicycle Transportation Plan* (1997 and 2014 draft update)

Three Rivers Park District

- *Kingswood Special Recreation Feature Acquisition Master Plan* (2013)

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

- *Six Mile Creek Diagnostic Study* (2013)

The intent of the regional trail was apparent in each of the plans; however, the route of the trail identified in this master plan may be slightly different, as it was based on a detailed analysis and public engagement process.

Public Services

The master plan does not identify any non-recreational public services or facilities that are needed to accommodate the proposed trail.

Operations

The Baker-Carver Regional Trail will be operated under Three Rivers Park District ordinances which define the rules and regulations for the use of its regional parks and trails. The trail hours will be 5 am to 10 pm.

Three Rivers Park District's maintenance of the trail will include mowing, sweeping, and trash cleanup as well as specialized services such as small building construction, non-paved trail repair, and grooming. Three Rivers Park District will maintain the trail between April and November. Local municipalities may choose to operate and maintain the trail during the winter months with a winter use permit.

The maintenance plan also includes seasonal condition assessments and periodic inspections, with subsequent maintenance actions when necessary. Routine maintenance throughout the year will include sign inventory and replacement, spring cleanup, and minor bridge and underpass repair (April-May); erosion repair, fence repair and sign replacement (July-September); and bituminous patching and striping replacement (October-November), as needed. The regional trail will receive scheduled striping, sealcoating and redevelopment under the Park District's pavement management program. Three Rivers will seek opportunities to work with Hennepin County and local jurisdictions in conjunction

with roadway projects to improve trail design and surfacing. A onetime expense of \$100,000 (in 2014 dollars) is anticipated to cover the cost of additional maintenance equipment that will be needed.

Maintenance staffing will come from the Baker and Carver Work Clusters, which provide services to a number of regional parks and trails in the general area. Future development of the regional trail, Kingswood Park, and Lake Sarah Regional Park will impact the work clusters. An additional .5 FTE maintenance position will be needed to provide regional trail maintenance services.

Three Rivers Park District Police and Park Service Officers regularly patrol regional park and trail property and will enforce ordinances via citations when necessary. No additional staffing or operational costs are anticipated to provide public safety services along the trail.

Annual operating costs are primarily funded through Three Rivers Park District's general fund budget, with property taxes as the main source of funds. Revenue is also received from the State of Minnesota as part of the Operations and Maintenance Fund allocation administered by the Metropolitan Council. Some of the costs associated with trail surface maintenance also may be funded from the Three Rivers Park District Park Asset Management Program, which includes revenues from the State of Minnesota as well as Three Rivers Park District's general obligation bonds.

Citizen Participation

Planning for the Baker-Carver Regional Trail was initiated by the City of Minnetrista beginning in 2009-2010 as part of the 500-acre Woodland Cove development. Minnetrista and Three Rivers had an agreement that the City would lead the initial planning for the trail, with Three Rivers taking on the planning duties after a preferred alignment within the City was identified. Minnetrista's planning spanned two years. The City hired a consultant to manage the trail planning and conduct outreach that included community meetings, individual meetings with residents, and stakeholder engagement with Three Rivers Park District and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District.

Once Three Rivers assumed the planning responsibilities, a project website was created where the general public could receive information, maps, notices of public meetings and links for them to submit electronic comments. Three Rivers hosted display booths with information regarding the trail and opportunities for written comments at local community celebrations in Maple Plain and Independence. An open house was held to disseminate information and accept comments in October 2013. Public comments received were generally supportive of the regional trail, but a clear public choice of the route was not apparent from the polling. Three Rivers Park District provided the public comments, cost estimates, and a pro-con matrix to the elected official in Maple Plain and Independence. Joint meetings and a workshop with mayors, Three Rivers Commissioners, and staff were held in early 2014. A mutually agreed upon trail route that included a direct connection to downtown Maple Plain resulted from these discussions.

Public Awareness

Three Rivers Marketing Communications Department uses a number of outreach tools to make the public aware of its regional parks and trails, including a District-wide map, website, direct mail, press releases, brochures, ads and on-site promotion.

Accessibility

The master plan indicates that Three Rivers is committed to providing access and recreational opportunities to all people, including person with disabilities, minorities, and other special-population groups. All regional trail facilities, including the trailheads and amenities will be designed in accordance with Americans with Disabilities (ADA) standards and guidelines. Three Rivers works with special interest organizations, including the Courage Kenney Rehabilitation Institute and Wilderness Inquiry, to encourage participation in activities and use of park facilities.

Natural Resources

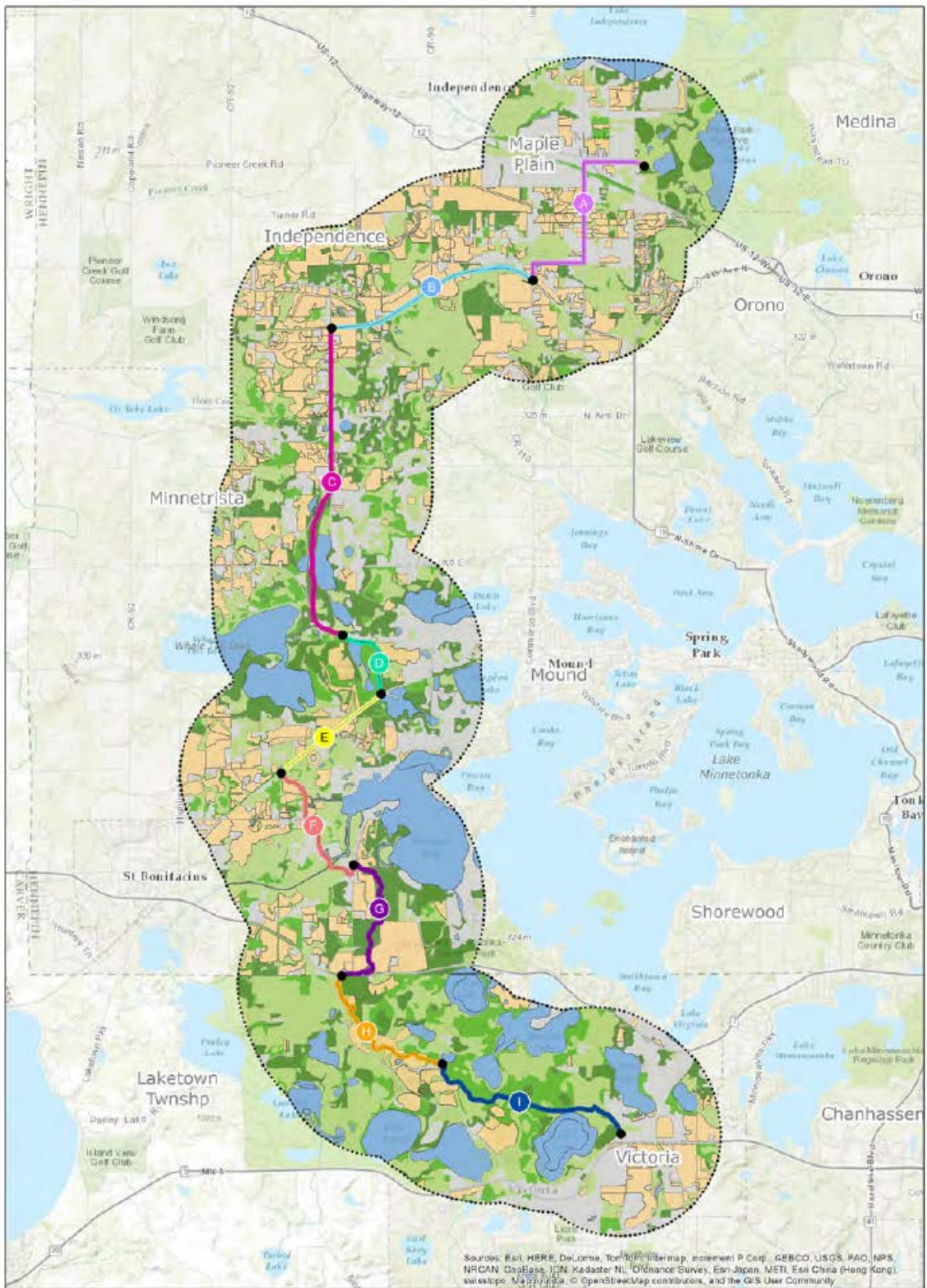
Natural resources are quite varied along the regional trail corridor, with the highest quality natural resources primarily located within the regional parks along the route.

- Baker Park Reserve includes a glacial landscape including wetlands and moderately sized forest patches of Big Woods and tamarack bogs.
- Kingswood Park includes an array of natural resources, including a maple-basswood forest covering a glacial esker, tamarack bog, and the relatively undeveloped shoreline of Little Long Lake. A conservation easement has been placed over 86 percent of the parkland, which provides further protection of the land's significant natural resources.
- Gale Woods Farm includes a conservation easement held by the Minnesota Land Trust to "preserve and protect the conservation values of the protected land" which includes forest, woodlands in addition to planted or cultivated vegetation.
- Carver Park Reserve includes a system of lakes, marshes and sloughs. Many of the wetlands are rich in biological diversity. The uplands include oak forest as well as stands of maple-basswood.

In addition to these regional parks, Three Rivers Park District owns property within the Woodland Cove development which is comprised of a high-quality maple-basswood forest that is protected by a conservation easement.

Figure 7 depicts the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System categorization of land cover along the Baker-Carver Regional Trail route.

Figure 7: Baker-Carver Regional Trail—Minnesota Land Cover Classification System Map



Baker/Carver Regional Trail
Minnesota Land Cover Classification System

- Artificial Surfaces
- Planted or Cultivated Vegetation
- Forests
- Woodland
- Shrubland
- Herbaceous
- Nonvascular Vegetation
- Sparse Vegetation
- Water



Map prepared by Three Rivers Park District Planning Department, 10/01/2014. This GIS Data is provided "as is" without warranty of any representation of accuracy, timeliness, or completeness. The user acknowledges and accepts the limitations of the Data, including the fact that the Data is dynamic and is in a constant state of maintenance, corrections, and updates.

Review by Other Council Divisions

Community Development – Environment and Surface Water Management (Jim Larsen 651-602-1159) –Trail Segment G1 is proposed to pass through a 40-acre wooded lot owned by the Park District. The 40-acre parcel is characterized in the master plan as a high-quality maple-basswood forest. Council staff encourages the Three Rivers staff to site the trail nearer to the hard edges of the parcel to minimize the impact of trail users upon ‘forest interior’ birds that might refrain from utilizing smaller wooded parcels whose habitat is more fragmented and impacted by urbanization. The natural density of the woodland should not require the trail’s placement to be sited very deep within the parcel’s hard edge for its users to experience the full effect of the parcel’s isolation from the urbanized area that will soon surround the parcel.

Three Rivers Park District response: *Three Rivers Park District worked with the Woodland Cove developer to secure the property and one of the conditions of that transaction is locating a trail through the property. Essentially the developer agreed to pay for the property on our behalf in exchange for either a trail easement to support their local trail network or for TRPD to locate a trail through the property. Our agreement with Woodland Cove and the Minnesota Land Trust’s approval of the trail project requires the developer to restore the property after trail construction. The trail route takes into consideration the location of wetlands and the property’s topography – as well as the desire to not be located immediately adjacent to the backyards of the future homes. We will continue to work with Woodland Cove to site the trail in the an ecological manner during the final design phase as the Park District is also sensitive to the concerns listed in the review comments.*

Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – This project extends 17 miles through the communities of Medina, Independence, Maple Plain, Minnetrista, Victoria, and Laketown Township. The construction of any new or updating of existing trails may have an impact on multiple Metropolitan Council Interceptors in multiple locations. To assess the potential impacts to our interceptor system, prior to initiating any proposed project, preliminary plans must be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager (651-602-4503) at Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment.

Transportation/Aviation Planning (Russ Owen 651-602-1705) – No comments.

Conclusions

1. The Baker-Carver Regional Trail Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies.
2. The estimated cost to implement the master plan is \$10,773,700 which includes \$473,700 for acquisition and \$10,300,000 for development. Approval of this master plan makes the development costs eligible for regional parks funding, but does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. Future funding based on this master plan may be awarded through the Parks Acquisition Opportunity Fund, the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. Council action is required to approve specific grants to Three Rivers Park District.