

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: September 8, 2015

For the Community Development Committee meeting of September 21, 2015

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of October 14, 2015

Subject: East Anoka County Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment, Anoka County

District(s), Member(s): MPOSC District E, Michael Kopp

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statute 473.313

Staff Prepared/Presented: Michael Peterka, Intern (651-602-1361)

Jan Youngquist, AICP, Planning Analyst (651-602-1029)

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

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve the East Anoka County Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.

Background

Anoka County has submitted an amendment to the master plan for the East Anoka County Regional Trail. Once completed, the trail will be 27 miles in length. It will traverse Anoka County through the cities of Circle Pines, Lino Lakes, Blaine, Ham Lake, Columbus, East Bethel, and Linwood Township, generally paralleling CSAH 17/Lexington Avenue. Along its route, the trail will provide connections to several regional and local parks and trails. Seven miles of trail from County Road J in Circle Pines through Lino Lakes and Blaine to CSAH 14/Main Street in Ham Lake have already been constructed following approval of the 2004 East Anoka County Regional Trail Corridor Master Plan. This amendment covers 20 miles of proposed trail from CSAH 14/Main Street in Ham Lake through Columbus, Linwood Township, and East Bethel to the Isanti County border.

Rationale

The East Anoka County Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment 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 \$12,919,500, which includes \$1,200,000 for right of way and easement acquisition and \$11,719,500 for development.

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

Known Support / Opposition

Anoka County and the Cities of East Bethel, Ham Lake, Columbus and Linwood Township have passed resolutions of support for the trail. 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 East Anoka County 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 master plans for linking regional trails address the items listed below.

Boundaries and Acquisition

The East Anoka County Regional Trail will travel 27 miles through the Cities of Circle Pines, Lino Lakes, Blaine, Ham Lake, Columbus, East Bethel, and Linwood Township, providing a connection between Anoka, Ramsey, and Isanti Counties. The proposed route can be seen in *Figure 1*.

The regional trail will generally parallel CSAH 17/Lexington Avenue. The trail will also connect several parks and trails along its route. These include Martin Island Linwood Lakes Regional Park, Rice Creek North Regional Trail, the Ramsey Country Regional Park and Trail System, and the proposed Central Anoka County, Bunker Hills/Chain of Lakes Regional Trail, and North Anoka County Regional Trails. Other non-regional connections include Coon Lake County Park, Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area, Boot Lake Scientific and Natural Area, Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve, the Isanti County Trail System, and several local park and trail systems.

Seven miles of trail along the west side of CSAH 17/Lexington Avenue from County Road J in Circle Pines through Lino Lakes and Blaine to CSAH 14/ Main Street in Ham Lake have already been constructed after the Metropolitan Council approval of the 2004 East Anoka County Regional Trail Corridor Master Plan. A detailed view of this section can be seen in *Figure 2*. This amendment covers the remaining 20 miles of the proposed trail corridor.

As seen in *Figures 3 and 4*, the trail will continue along the west side of CSAH 17/Lexington Avenue from CSAH 14/Main Street in Ham Lake to Coon Lake County Park. After passing through the park, the trail crosses CSAH 17/Lexington Avenue and follows the east side of Jodrell Street to Martin Island Linwood Lakes Regional Park in Linwood Township.

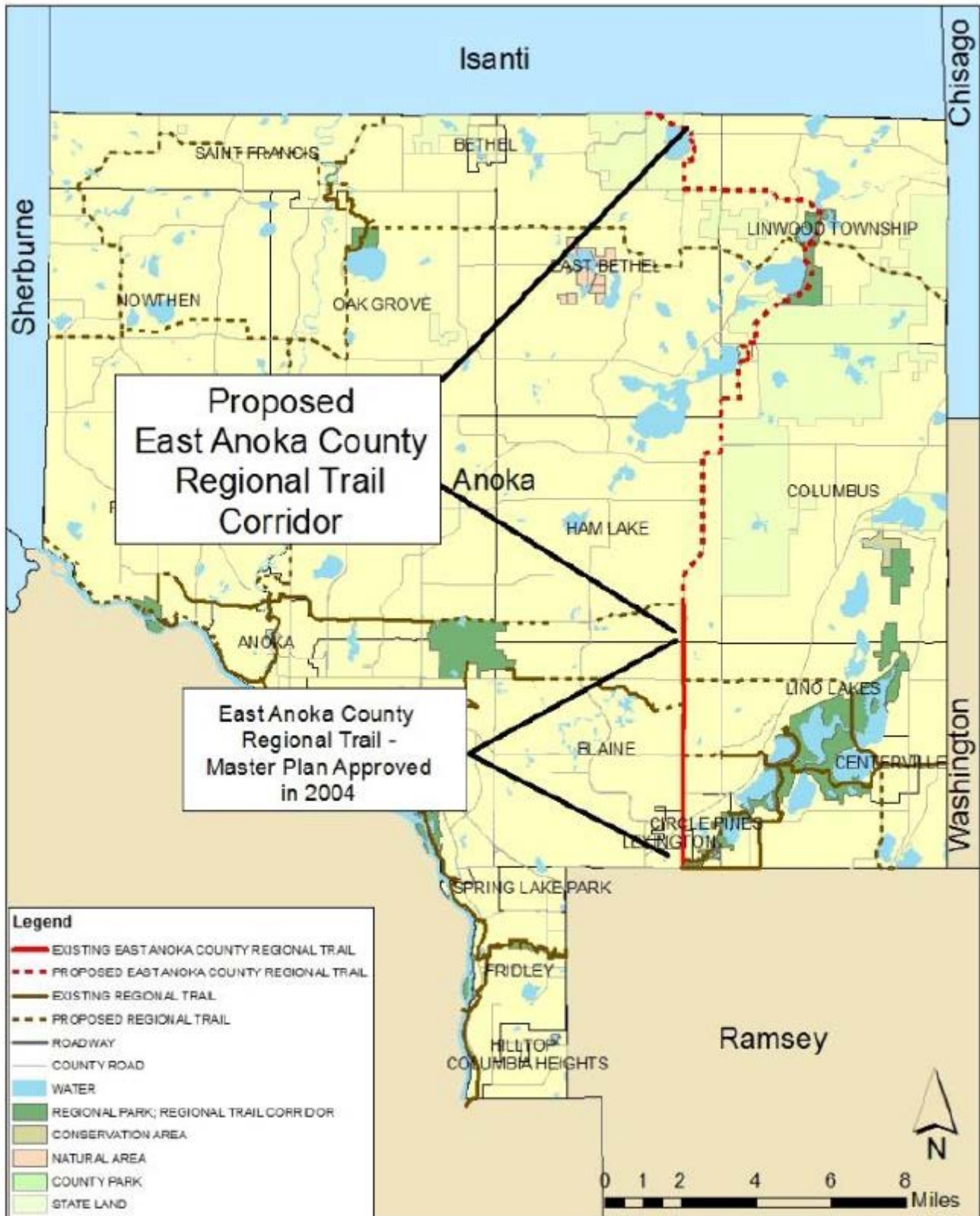
After passing through Martin Island Linwood Lakes Regional Park, the trail will travel west through Linwood Township along Martin Lake Road, CSAH 26/227th Avenue, and 229th Avenue. The trail will then travel to the north and west through the Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve, terminating in East Bethel at the Isanti County border. This proposed section of trail is displayed in *Figure 5*.

Anoka County anticipates the remainder of the trail will be constructed when existing county roads are reconstructed and expanded, as it is the most economical way to construct the trail. Some trail sections are located adjacent to city or township roads. In these instances, the County will work with cities and townships to ensure the trail is included when the roads are upgraded.

If trail construction is not able to be done concurrently with road construction, right of way acquisition may affect 180 parcels, totaling approximately 34 acres. Based on the most recent assessed values, right of way acquisition is estimated to be \$1,200,000. It is not anticipated that there will be issues with

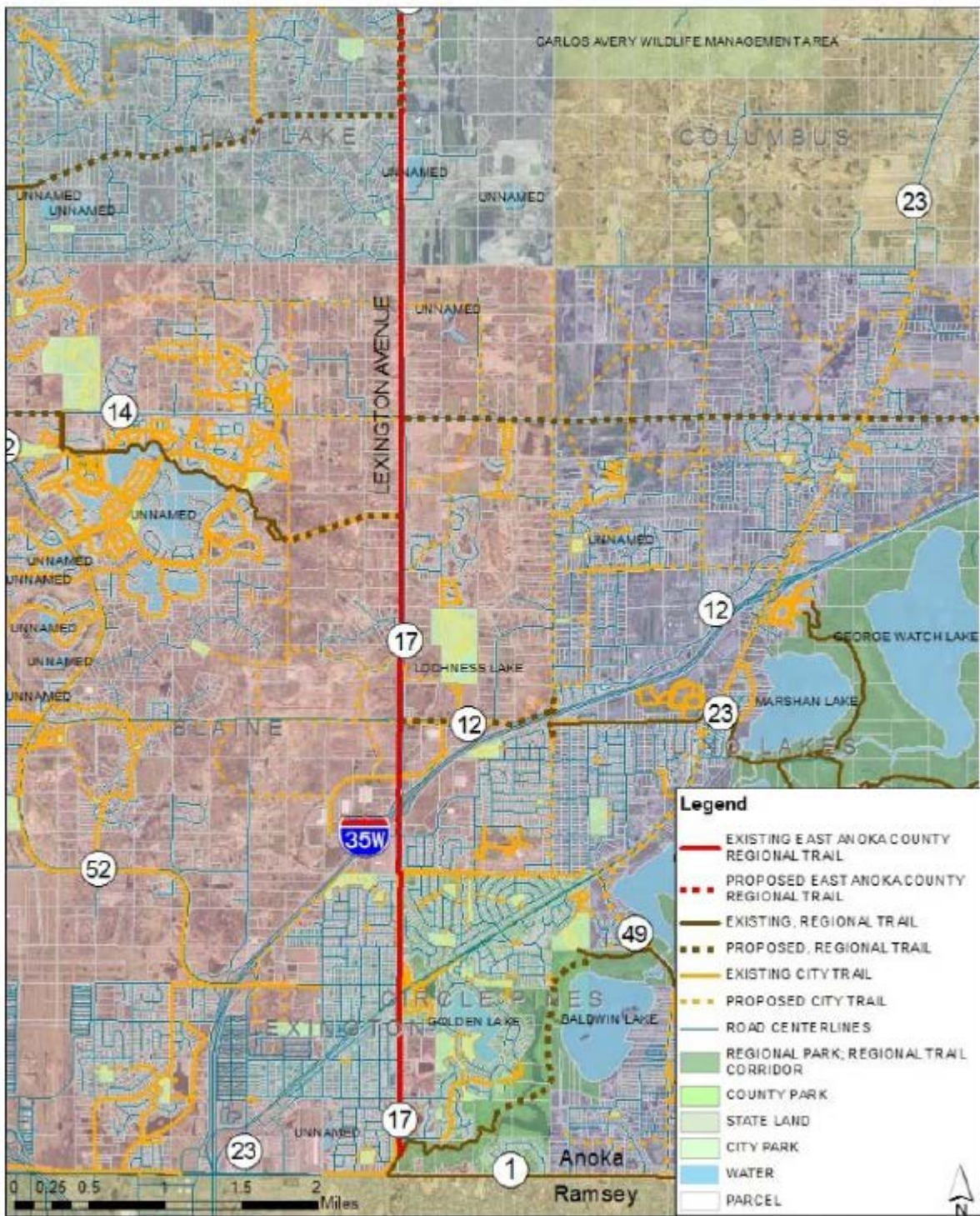
right of way or easement acquisitions. However, if the County is not able to acquire the small amounts of right of way, the County would purchase the entire impacted parcel, designate the needed right of way, and sell the remainder of the parcel at market value.

Figure 1: East Anoka County Regional Trail



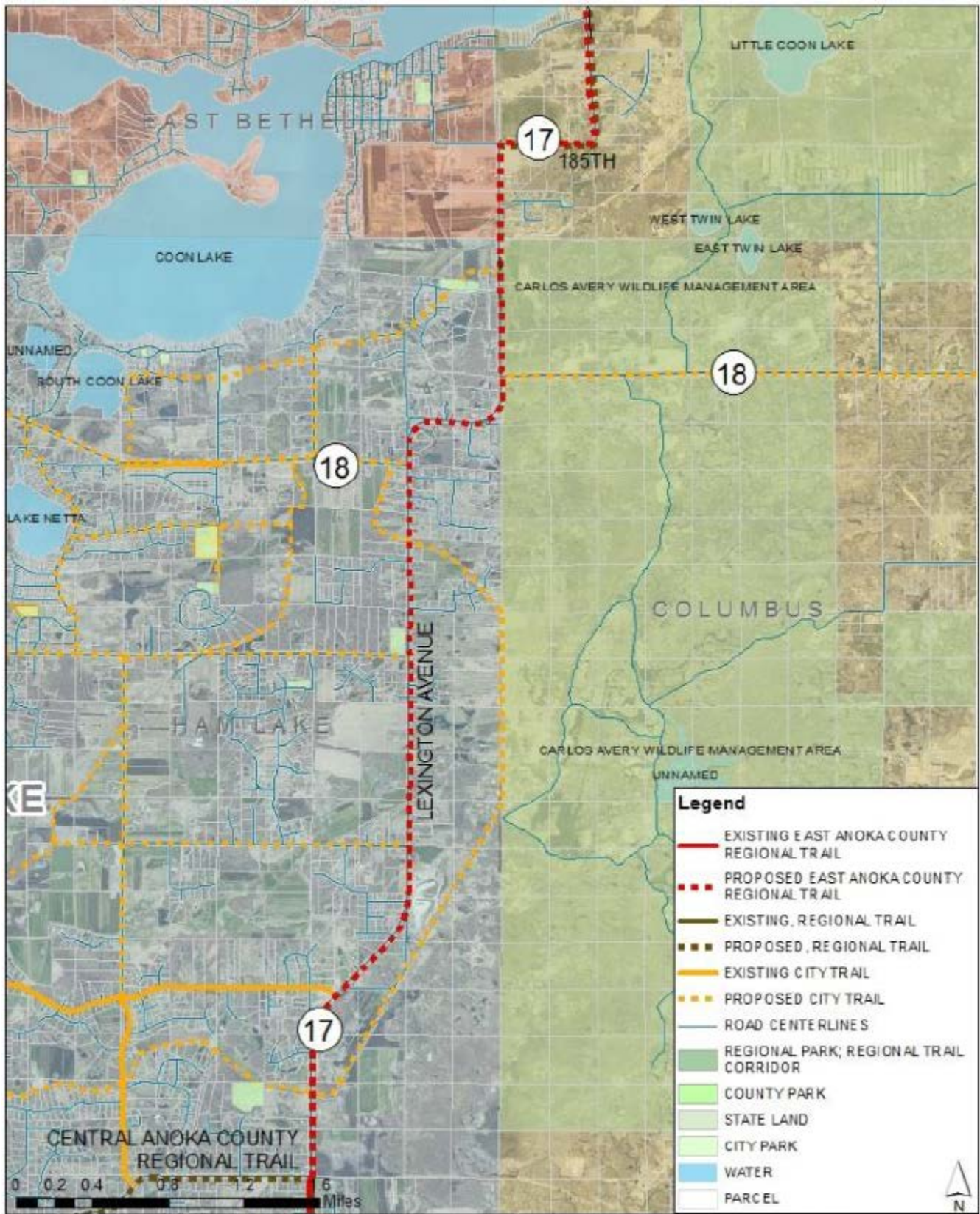
PROPOSED EAST ANOKA COUNTY REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDOR

Figure 2: East Anoka County Trail Existing South Section



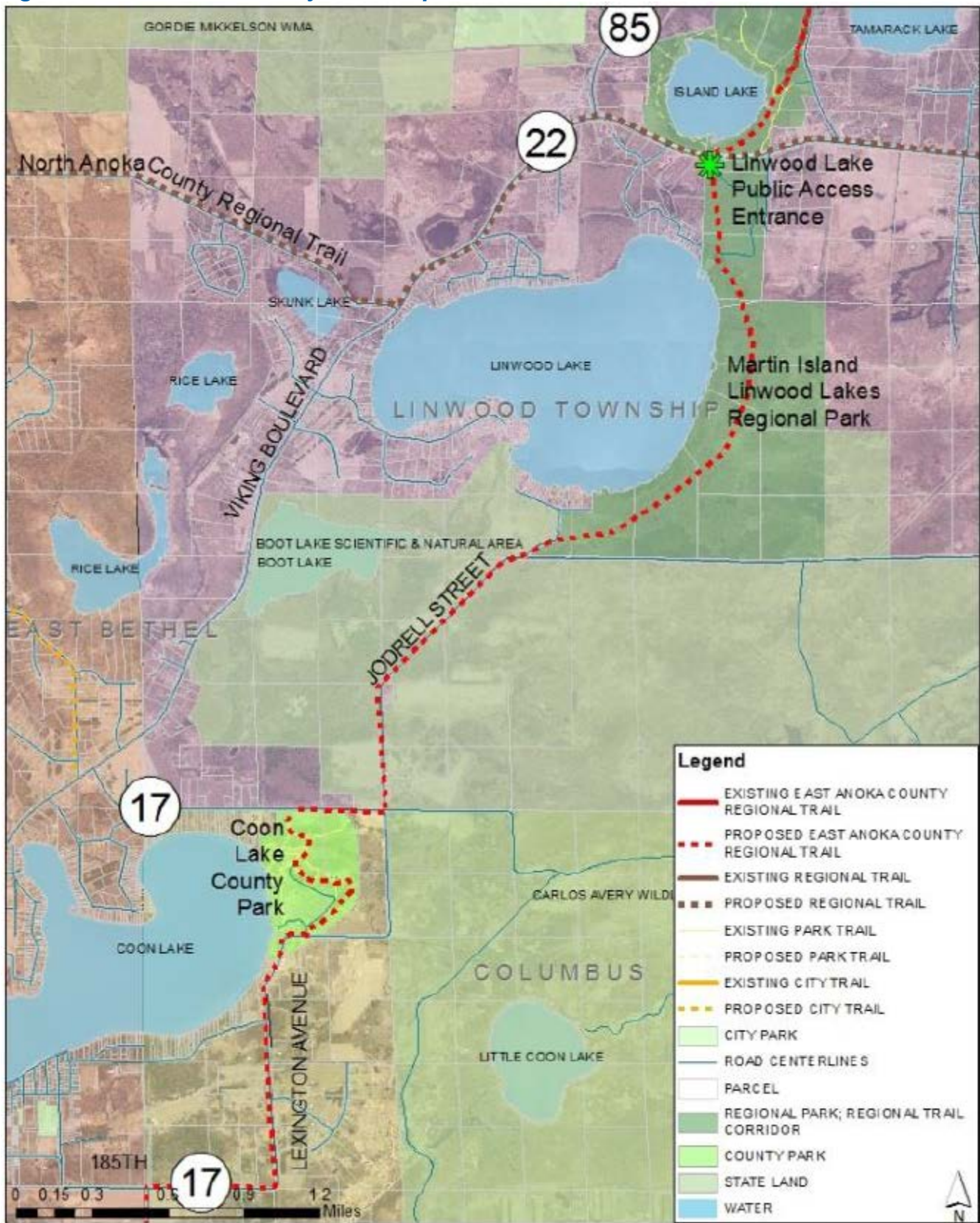
**EAST ANOKA COUNTY REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDOR
EXISTING ALIGNMENT - SOUTH SECTION**

Figure 3: East Anoka County Trail Proposed Central Section



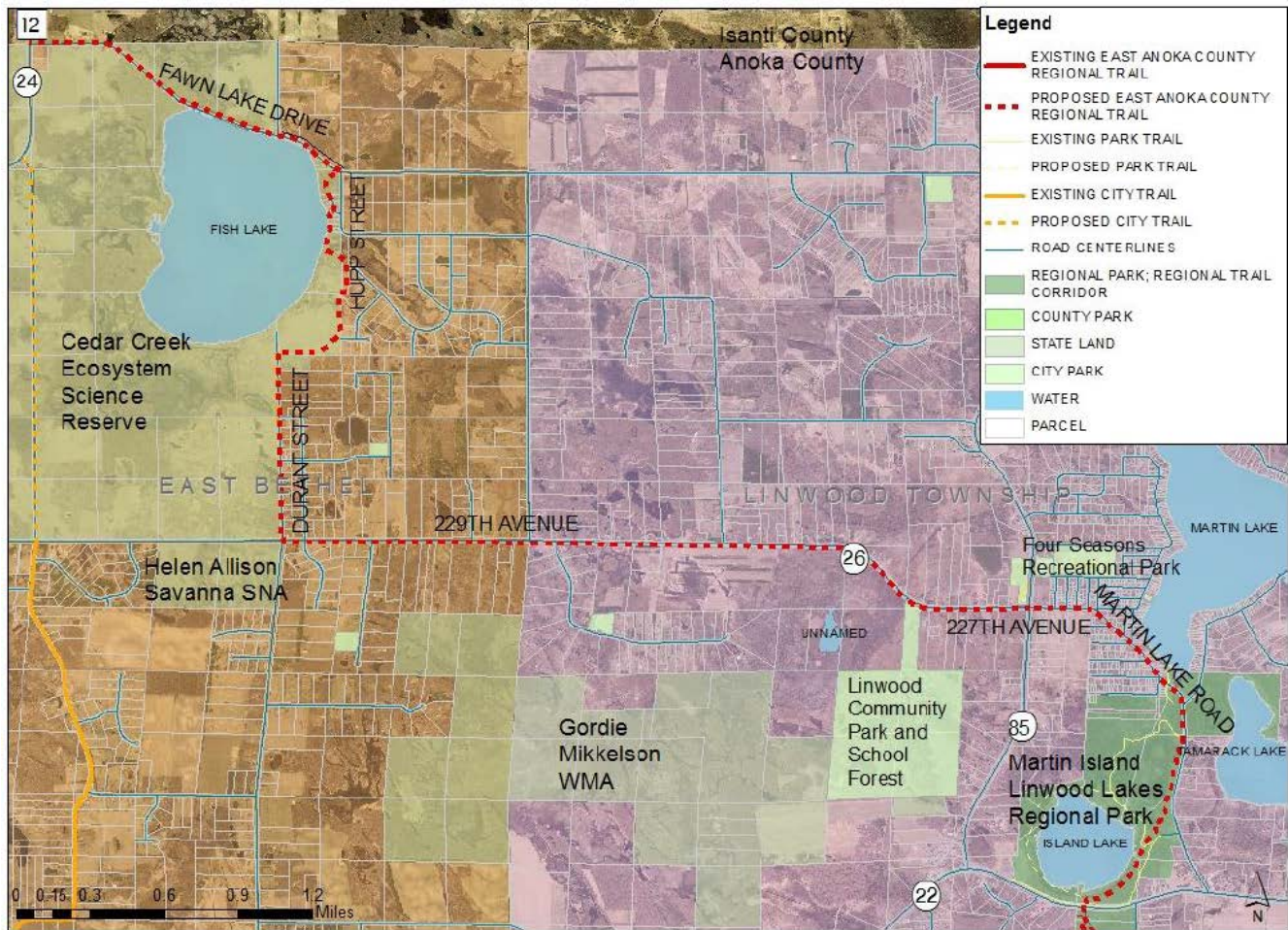
**EAST ANOKA COUNTY REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDOR
PROPOSED ALIGNMENT - CENTRAL SECTION**

Figure 4: East Anoka County Trail Proposed Coon Lake to Island Lake Section



**EAST ANOKA COUNTY REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDOR
PROPOSED ALIGNMENT - COON LAKE TO ISLAND LAKE**

Figure 5: East Anoka County Trail Proposed Northern Section



**EAST ANOKA COUNTY REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDOR
PROPOSED ALIGNMENT TO CEDAR CREEK ECOSYSTEM SCIENCE RESERVE**

Demand Forecast

Outdoor recreation patterns in the region have been growing steadily. These patterns have also been seen in Anoka County. Recreational visits to Anoka County Regional Parks and Trails have increased from 504,000 in 2008 to 958,000 in 2013.

Regional parks and trails have been increasing in popularity along with increases in population. As the population in the region continues to grow, recreation resources and amenities should also increase. As seen in Figure 6, populations of communities along the trail corridor are anticipated to grow steadily.

Figure 6: Projected Population of Communities near the Regional Trail

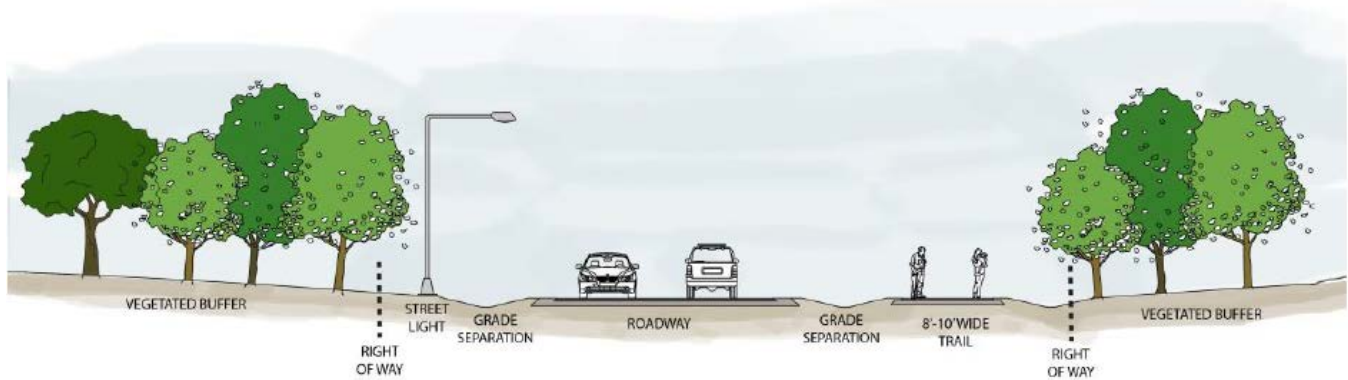
Year	Blaine	Columbus	East Bethel	Ham Lake	Lino Lakes	Linwood Township	Anoka County
2010	57,186	3,914	11,626	15,296	20,216	5,213	330,844
2040	86,000	5,300	18,200	17,300	29,000	4,700	426,080
Increase	50%	35%	57%	13%	43%	-10%	29%

The historical increase in recreational visits to regional parks and trails, coupled with the projected population growth of Anoka County and its communities indicate an increase in future demand for recreational facilities. This justifies the need for the development of the East Anoka County Regional Trail.

Development Concept

For the trail sections still to be constructed, the development concept may be similar to the cross-section displayed in *Figure 7*. This consists of a grade separated, paved trail that has a width of 10 feet. Trail construction is anticipated to take place as roads are reconstructed and widened. It is anticipated that two types of road sections will be built; rural and urban. In rural sections, the paved trail will be separated from the road by a minimum of 10 feet. In urban sections, where space can be limited, the trail may be located closer to the road, depending on its designed speed. However, the trail will still be separated from the road with a curb.

Figure 7: Typical Cross-Section for Future Sections of East Anoka County Regional Trail



Stormwater management will be the responsibility of Anoka County and will follow the requirements of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Coon Creek Watershed District, the Sunrise River Watershed Management Organization, and the Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization. Additionally, the County is proposing boardwalks and small bridges in locations where the trail travels near wetlands and ditches to reduce environmental impacts.

Trailhead facilities currently exist at Rice Creek North Regional Trail, Coon Lake County Park, and Martin Island Linwood Lakes Regional Park. It is not anticipated that additional facilities will be needed along the corridor. Trailhead signs are proposed at major trail intersection, and smaller trail identification signs will also be installed to help users navigate the trail.

The estimated development costs for trail construction and supporting elements are approximately \$11,719,500 as shown in *Figure 8*. At this time, there is no schedule for trail construction. It will be dependent on right of way acquisition, roadway reconstruction, and funding availability.

Figure 8: East Anoka County Regional Trail Estimated Development Costs

Description	Estimate
Design/Engineering	\$1,200,000
Archaeological Survey	\$300,000
Wetland Delineation/Mitigation	\$300,000
Topographic Survey/Construction Staking	\$500,000
Geotechnical Survey	\$250,000
Clearing and Grubbing	\$250,000
Utility Relocations (if required)	\$300,000
Bituminous Trail Construction	\$3,950,000
Boardwalk Construction	\$2,120,000
Pedestrian Bridge Construction	\$750,000
Lighting	\$250,000
Landscaping and Restoration	\$200,000
Signage and Striping	\$100,000
Site Furnishings	\$75,000
Sub-Total	\$10,545,000
Contingency (10%)	\$1,174,500
Total	\$11,719,500

Conflicts

Some nearby residents have expressed concerns regarding perceived safety and privacy along the trail corridor. However, due to the County’s work with Park Rangers, local police, and the County Sheriff, no major conflicts are anticipated. Pedestrian and vehicle conflicts will also be kept to a minimum by working with the County Highway Department and the local cities to ensure safe crossings and proper signage in potential conflict areas.

Boot Lake Scientific Natural Area and Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area are both sites of high biodiversity, regionally significant ecological areas, and contain vulnerable native plant communities. In order to prevent the disruption of these areas during construction, the County will take measures to avoid disturbing natural areas and native species, while working to reduce the introduction of invasive species. Signage will also be used to advise trail users to ride with caution and be aware of potential wildlife on the trail.

Due to the trail’s proposed boardwalk and bridges, Anoka County will work with local watershed districts and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to ensure compliance with the Wetland

Conservation Act and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' public waters permit requirements.

The trail corridor parallels two existing snowmobile trails for a short distance. Both the Kiwi Snowmobile ATV Club and the Rice Creek Trail Association have provided comments on the alignment. The County plans to coordinate with the snowmobile clubs when the trail is to be constructed in order to minimize potential conflict.

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 Anoka County Ordinance, dated January 24th, 2012, regulates parks and trails under the jurisdiction of Anoka County. Education and enforcement are provided by Anoka County Park Rangers, local police departments, and the Anoka County Sheriff's Department.

Anoka County partners with local communities to maintain its regional trails. The County typically enters into a Joint Powers Agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding with the affected Cities. These partnership agreements describe the roles and responsibilities of each agency with regard to maintenance and capital improvements along the trail corridor. Anoka County will provide routine maintenance for portions of the regional trail that travel within county or regional parks. Maintenance activities will include mowing, sweeping, plowing, clearing, and debris removal. Local cities will provide general routine maintenance for the portions of the regional trail that are not within these parks. Anoka County will inspect the trail annually and provide any necessary capital improvements or long term maintenance.

Annual maintenance costs for the East Anoka County Regional Trail are estimated to be approximately \$30,000, which also includes money for sign replacement, minor bituminous repair, and crack-sealing. Annual operating costs are funded through the Anoka County Parks and Recreation Department's annual operations and maintenance budget, which receives its funding from picnic shelter rentals, room rentals, programs, park entrance fees, and the County's general fund. Supplemental funding is received through the Regional Park Operations and Maintenance Grant Program.

Citizen Participation

Anoka County worked with a number of regulatory agencies and units of local government in the master planning process. Additionally, an open house was held to receive public comments on the Master Plan. A notice advertising the open house and the 30-day public comment period were published in the local weekly newspaper and on the County website. Postcards were also sent to the adjacent residents and local city and county officials. Comments received have been incorporated into the master plan amendment.

All cities in the proposed trail corridor have passed resolutions of support for the trail. These cities include Columbus, East Bethel, Ham Lake, and Linwood Township.

Public Awareness

Anoka County uses a number of outreach tools to make the public aware of its regional parks and trails. These include public information maps, websites, social media, publications, and brochures.

Accessibility

The facilities will meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. There will not be a fee for use of the regional trail, which helps to eliminate economic barriers for trail users. Metro Transit Routes 250 and 262 provide service to a small portion of the trail corridor in Circle Pines and Blaine. These routes allow access from the St. Joseph's Church and 95th Avenue Northeast park and ride lots. Both park and ride lots are located within 1.5 miles of the trail. Additionally, the Anoka County Traveler Transit Link and Met Transit's Mobility Link provide transportation services for a minimal fee.

Review by Other Council Divisions

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

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

Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – No Comment

Metro Transit (Kyle Burrows 612-349-7749) – No Comment

Conclusions

1. The East Anoka County 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 \$12,919,500 which includes \$1,200,000 for right of way and easement acquisition and \$11,719,500 for development.
3. 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 Anoka County.