

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: August 9, 2016

For the Community Development Committee meeting of August 15, 2016

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of August 24, 2016

Subject: Southwest Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment, Carver County

District(s), Member(s): MPOSC District B, Robert Moeller

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statute 473.313

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

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

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Southwest Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment to extend the eastern trail terminus by 0.75 miles as shown in Appendix A.
2. Require that Carver County submit a wayfinding signage plan for the entire Southwest Regional Trail Corridor in a forthcoming master plan amendment for the regional trail.

Background

Carver County has submitted an amendment to the Southwest Regional Trail Master Plan to extend the trail's eastern terminus. The current master plan was by approved by the Metropolitan Council in 2006.

The existing Southwest Regional Trail is a 13-mile corridor that travels through the communities of Victoria and Chaska. Currently, six segments of trail have been constructed totaling approximately seven miles. Once complete, the trail will provide a connection between the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail in Victoria and the Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail in Chanhassen, both of which are operated by Three Rivers Park District. Additionally, the trail will provide a connection to Carver Park Reserve.

Through this amendment, Carver County is proposing to extend the trail's eastern terminus by approximately 0.75 miles into Chanhassen from near the Chaska/Chanhassen city boundary to Bluff Creek Drive. A detailed view of the extension can be seen in Appendix B. The existing conditions in the amendment area include a crushed gravel multi-use trail that follows an abandoned railway. The addition of the segment to the regional trail corridor will allow Carver County to pave the existing crushed gravel trail and develop a continuous paved connection between the Lake Minnetonka LRT and Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trails.

Rationale

The Southwest Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies.

Funding

The total cost to implement the master plan amendment is estimated at \$360,000.

Approval of this master plan amendment 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 amendment may be awarded through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. Council action is required to approve specific grants to Carver County.

Known Support / Opposition

The Carver County Board approved the Southwest Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment at its June 21, 2016 meeting. Additionally, the Chanhassen City Council adopted a resolution of support at its June 13, 2016 meeting. There is no known opposition to the master plan amendment.

Analysis

Planning Strategy 1 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that master plans for linking regional trails address the nine items listed below.

Boundaries and Acquisition

Carver County is proposing to extend the Southwest Regional Trail's eastern terminus by approximately 0.75 miles into Chanhassen from near the Chaska/Chanhassen city boundary to Bluff Creek Drive. An overview of the trail corridor can be seen in Appendix A. A detailed view of the amendment area can be seen in Appendix B.

The amendment segment does not require land acquisition. The property is currently owned by the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA). A joint agreement between the County and HCRRA will grant Carver County Parks the authority to operate, maintain, and manage the trail while allowing HCRRA to retain ownership of the property. The County has obtained a letter of support from HCRRA for the proposed trail segment.

Demand Forecast

The trail extension is currently heavily used as it connects the Southwest Regional Trail to the existing Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail in Hennepin County. The first Southwest Regional Trail count was completed in 2014 with an estimated 64,200 visits on the completed sections of trail. Additionally, the Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail had 251,000 visits in 2014. Paving the amendment segment will connect the two trails and encourage increased use.

Development Concept

In its current state, the amendment area consists of an unpaved trail connecting the Southwest and Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trails. The addition of the 0.75 miles of trail to the Southwest Regional Trail Corridor will allow the existing conditions to be enhanced. The segment will be developed as a 10-foot-wide regional trail at an estimated total cost of \$360,000. Carver County plans to utilize existing funding to begin design and engineering of the trail segment in 2016, with construction in 2017. The County is planning to amend the master plan for another portion of the Southwest Regional Trail and will include a wayfinding signage plan for the entire corridor as part of the forthcoming amendment.

Conflicts

No conflicts are anticipated with the master plan amendment recommendations.

Public Services

The master plan amendment does not identify any additional public services or facilities needed to accommodate the trail.

Operations

The annual operations and maintenance budget for Carver County Parks is approximately \$780,000. There are approximately six permanent employees and twelve seasonal employees. Carver County recognizes the need to maintain its parks and trails and will budget additional resources as appropriate to operate and maintain new units of the park system. Carver County Sheriff's Department responds to emergencies and criminal complaints.

Public Engagement and Participation

A number of amendment reviews were completed prior to the adoption by the Carver County Board. The following details the public meeting process for the amendment

- Carver County Park Commission May 11, 2016
- Chanhassen Park Commission May 24, 2016
- Chanhassen City Council June 13, 2016 – resolution adopted
- Carver County Board June 21, 2016 – final approval

Accessibility

The regional trail is aligned to accommodate a wide range of users. The reasonable grades throughout the trail provide recreational opportunities for visitors of all abilities. Under current policy, Carver County will not charge a fee for use of the trail, making it affordable to all populations.

Additional Notes

Finance Strategy 7 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* states: “Regional trail corridors that may be used for transit in the future are eligible for Regional Parks System funding if it is clear the corridor will be used as a trail for at least 10 years.”

The master plan amendment area is located on land owned by the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority (HCRRA), which is being held for potential use as a transitway in the future. The Council’s *2040 Transportation Policy Plan* (TPP) includes a Transitway System Investment Plan that depicts the planned transitway investments in the metropolitan region for the next twenty-five years. The Current Revenue Scenario Transitway Map from the TPP is shown in Appendix C and depicts the planned investments within reasonably expected revenue assumptions. The extension of the Green Line LRT is planned on HCRRA property along the abandoned railroad corridor, with a terminus in Eden Prairie. The master plan amendment area in Chanhassen is not identified as a future transitway, therefore it is clear that the corridor will be used as a trail for at least 10 years.

Review by Other Council Divisions

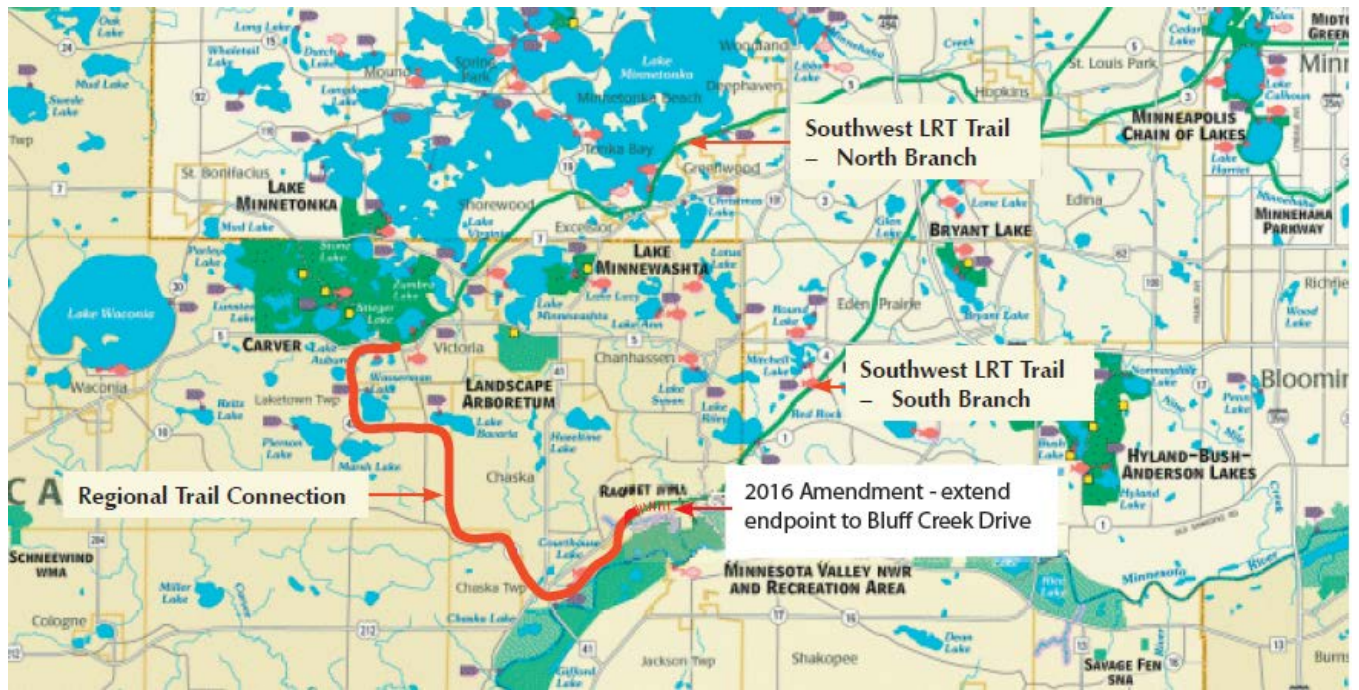
Transportation/Aviation Planning (Russ Owen 651-602-1705) – No Comments

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

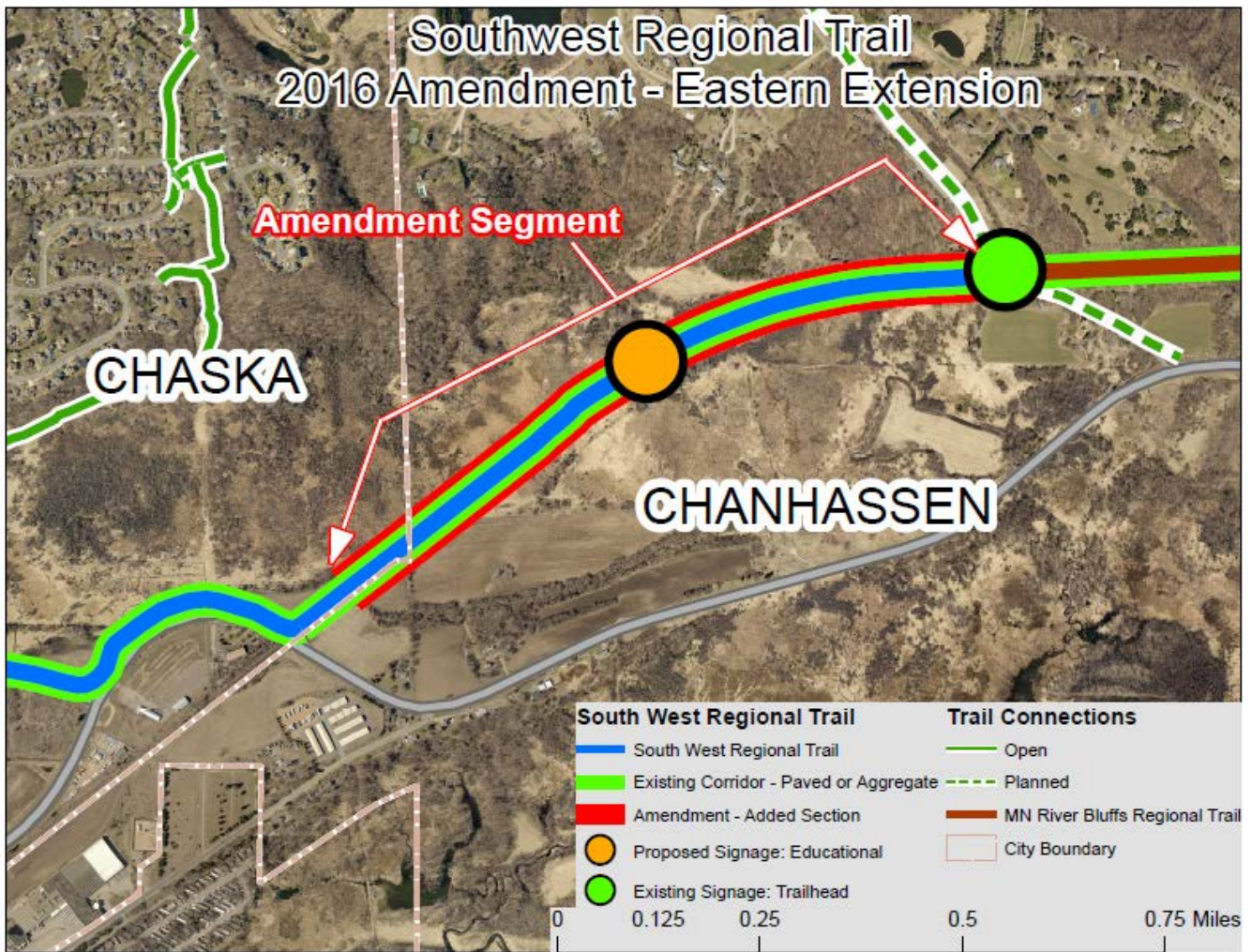
Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – No Comments

Metro Transit (Steve Mahowald 612-349-7775) – No Comments

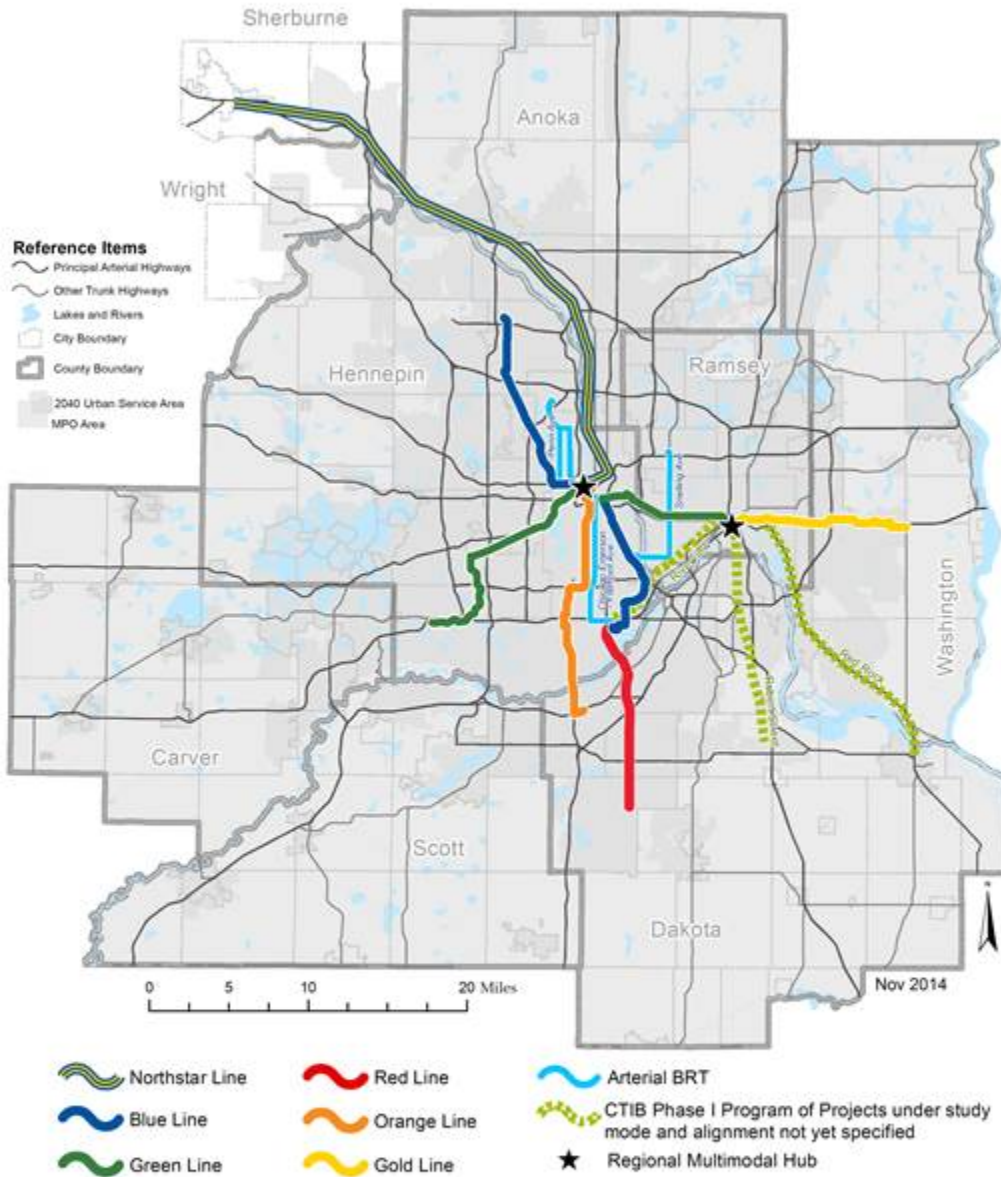
Appendix A: Overview of the Southwest Regional Trail including the amendment segment.



Appendix B: Detailed view of the amendment segment.



**Current Revenue Scenario Transitways
and CTIB Phase I Program of Projects**



2040 TRANSPORTATION POLICY PLAN | METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
Figure 6-8

