

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: March 1, 2016

For the Community Development Committee meeting of March 21, 2016

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of April 13, 2016

Subject: Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail Master Plan, Saint Paul

District(s), Member(s): District G, Rachel Gillespie

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statute 473.313

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

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

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail Master Plan.
2. Require that prior to initiating development of the 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 Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail will travel almost 4 miles as it connects Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park in Saint Paul to the River to River Greenway and Mississippi River Regional Trails which are within Kaposia Landing Park in South St. Paul. The regional trail is located within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, which is a national park encompassing 72 miles of the Mississippi River basin within the metropolitan area. Additionally, the Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail will likely serve as a portion of the Mississippi River Trail, which is a multistate transportation and recreation trail that begins at the headwaters of the Mississippi and travels through ten states along its 3,000 route to the Gulf of Mexico.

The regional trail will complete an important gap in the system and make connections to existing and planned trails leading to downtown Saint Paul, Hastings along the Mississippi River, and Burnsville along the Minnesota River.

Rationale

The Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies. This includes Siting and Acquisition – Strategy 3: New regional trails must serve a regional audience and provide connections between regional parks, park reserves, and regional trails without duplicating an existing trail.

Funding

The estimated cost to implement the master plan is \$5.41 million for acquisition and development.

Approval of this master plan allows the acquisition and development costs to be 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 Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund, the Regional Parks

Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. Council action is required to approve the CIP, the Parks and Trails Fund project list, and specific grants to a regional park implementing agency.

Known Support / Opposition

The master plan includes resolutions of support from Dakota County and the City of South St. Paul as well as letters of support from the Metropolitan Airports Commission, Minnesota Department of Transportation, and Saint Paul Port Authority. There is no known opposition to the master plan.

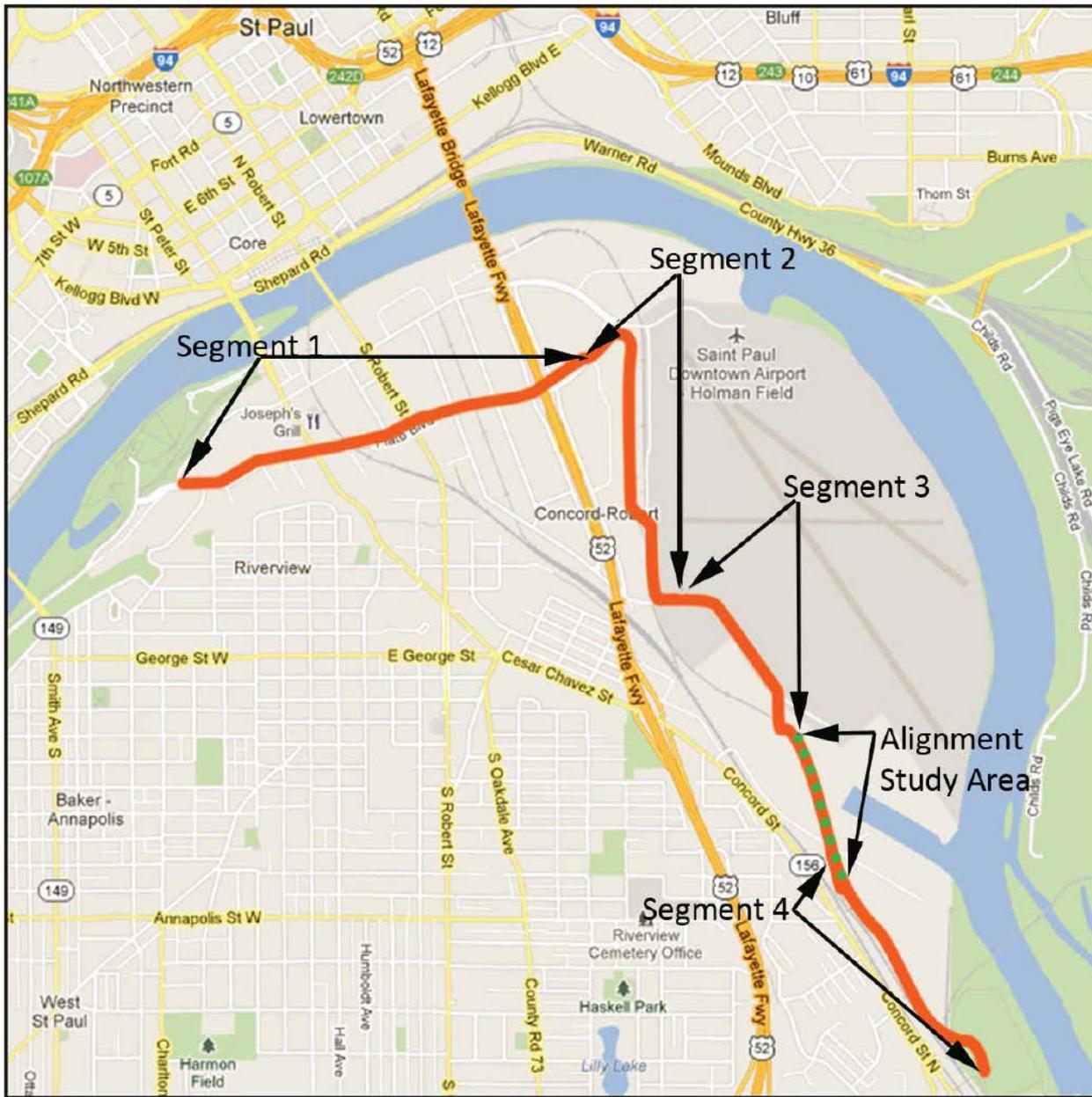
ANALYSIS

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

Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

The Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail will travel 3.7 miles between Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park in Saint Paul and Kaposia Landing, a local park in South St. Paul. Within Kaposia Landing Park, connections will be made to the River to River Greenway Regional Trail (formerly known as the North Urban Regional Trail) and Mississippi River Regional Trail, which are operated by Dakota County. For planning purposes, the trail has been divided into four segments. *Figure 1* shows the alignment of the regional trail in red, with the four segments labeled.

Figure 1: Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail Map—trail route in red



Segment 1: Segment 1 of the regional trail travels from existing trails within Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park and heads east along Plato Boulevard to Chester Street, for a distance of approximately 1.25 miles. There are no anticipated land acquisition costs for this trail section, since the trail can be accommodated using existing right-of-way.

Segment 2: After crossing Plato Boulevard at Chester Street, the trail will head south and utilize the top of the flood control levee that runs adjacent to Airport Road. The elevation of the levee will provide opportunities for scenic views of downtown and the river. This property is owned by the City of Saint Paul and is operated by the Public Works Division, therefore there are no anticipated land acquisition costs for this segment. Segment 2 is approximately .9 miles long.

Segment 3: Segment 3 will cross to the east side of Airport Road, on the opposite side of the street from the Saint Paul Holman Field Airport, and will require an easement to cross a single track section of rail line that runs parallel to the levee. From this point, the trail will continue south along Airport Road and will utilize an easement from the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC). The trail will continue toward Eaton Street, where it will use an at-grade road and rail crossing. From there, the trail continues east along Eaton Street using an easement on MAC property. No acquisition costs are anticipated for the easements from the MAC. Discussions between Saint Paul and MAC staff were favorable toward the easement, with the stipulation that trail development meet all airport security requirements.

The remaining property utilized by Segment 3 is owned by the Saint Paul Port Authority (Port Authority). The Port Authority has agreed to either transfer ownership of the property or easement rights to the Saint Paul Parks Department, most likely at no charge to the City. Segment 3 is approximately one mile in length.

Segment 4: Segment 4 is approximately .5 mile long and is located in the City of South St. Paul. The trail will parallel existing railroad right-of-way and will require the crossing of several railroad tracks as it enters into Kaposia Landing Park. A bicycle/pedestrian bridge over the tracks will be necessary for safe crossing, which will require an easement from Midwestern Railroad Properties/Union Pacific Railroad.

Acquisition costs are anticipated to be minimal for the Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail, since the majority of the route utilizes publicly owned land. The estimated acquisition costs are approximately \$58,000 for railroad easements, as shown in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2: Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail Estimated Acquisition Costs

Summary of Anticipated Acquisition/Easement Costs					
				Acqjuisition	Project Cost
Property Owner	Length of Trail	Width	SF	Cost	Cost
City of St. Paul (ROW)	8,000	15	120,000	0	\$ -
St. Paul Flood Control Levee (ROW)	2,800	15	42,000	0	\$ -
Metropolitan Airports Commission (1)	4,950	15	74,250	891,000	\$ -
St. Paul Port Authority (2)	1,400	15	21,000	252,000	\$ -
Midwestern Railroad Properties (3)	160	15	2,400	28,800	\$ 28,000
Real Estate Administration *					\$ 10,000
Appraisal Services, Title Work, Closing Costs					\$ 20,000
Total Easement costs.					\$ 58,000
<i>1 Verbal agreement with MAC for allowing trail development along road with no acquisition required</i>					
<i>2 Agreement with St. Paul Port Authority for trail alignment within their property in the vicinity of</i>					
<i>3 Acquisition cost shown but more likely to be an easement or license.</i>					
<i>* Assumes some fee for document preparation even if there is no cost for easement.</i>					

Demand Forecast

To demonstrate demand for the regional trail, the master plan cites the Metropolitan Council's 2008 Regional Parks and Trails Survey, which indicates that walking/hiking and bicycling are rated as the top activities for regional parks system visitors. Also noted is information from the Minnesota Department of Transportation that in 2000, more than 10,000 people biked to work in the Twin Cities. The

completion of key trail connections, including the Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail, will provide additional opportunities for these activities.

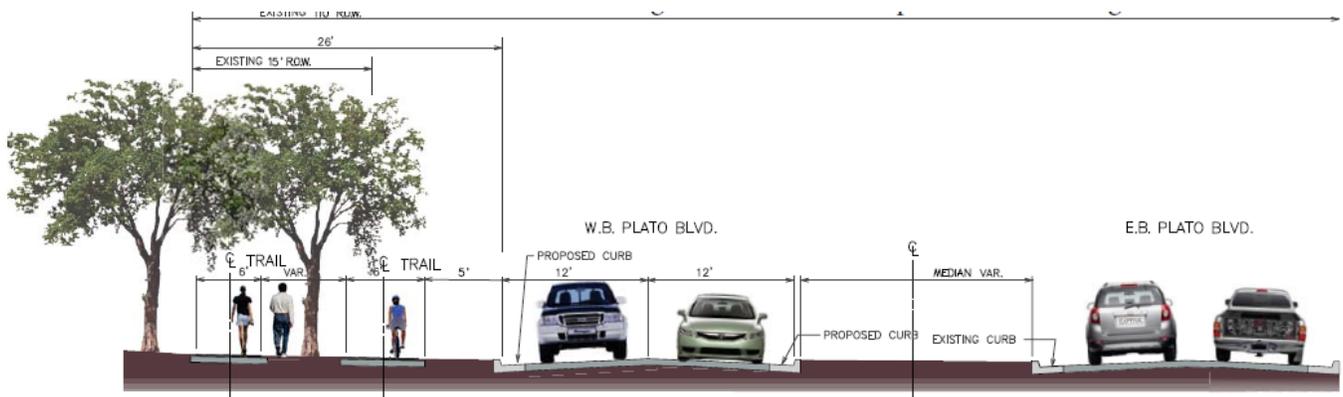
The regional trail will facilitate connections to several popular regional parks and trails in Saint Paul and Dakota County and will become an important part of the overall trail network. The north end of the regional trail will connect to Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park, which had over 1.1 million visits in 2014. From existing trails in Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park, connections can be made to the Samuel Morgan Regional Trail in Saint Paul (442,900 visits in 2014) and to the Big Rivers Regional Trail in Dakota County (136,500 visits in 2014). At the south end of the regional trail, users can connect to the River to River Greenway Regional Trail (formerly known as the North Urban Regional Trail) and to the Mississippi River Regional Trail in Dakota County, with 19,000 and 87,000 visits in 2014, respectively. With these key regional connections, use of the Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail is anticipated to be strong.

Development Concept

As described in the Boundaries and Acquisition Costs section, the trail has been divided into four segments for planning purposes.

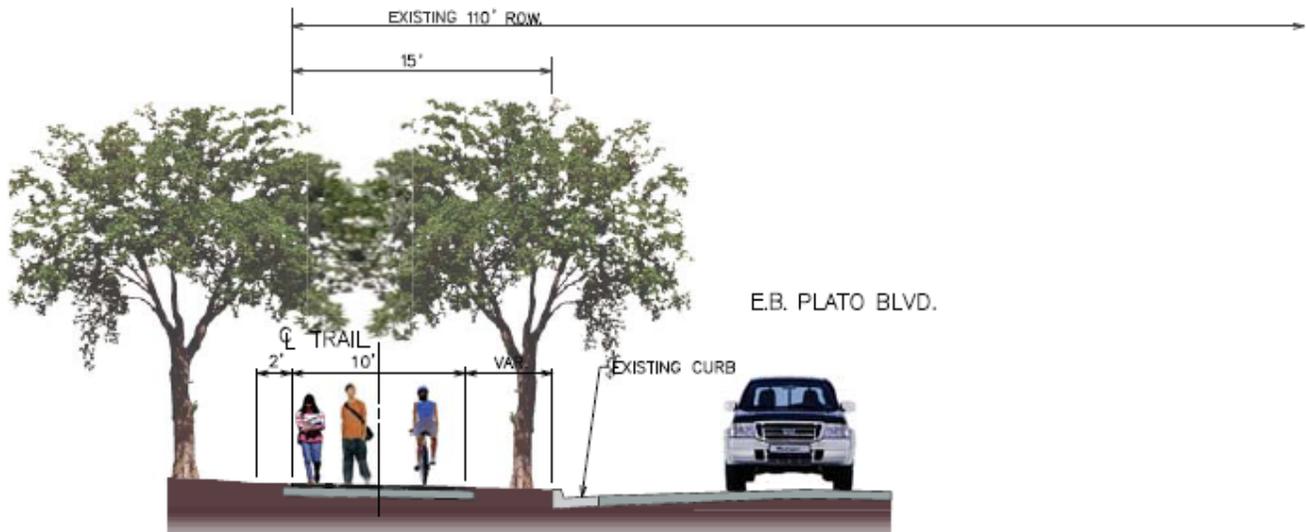
Segment 1: Segment 1 uses existing right-of-way along Plato Boulevard, which will require modifications to the existing road lanes at some portions of the segment. Where there is sufficient space, it may be necessary to narrow the median and shift the north curb. Figure 3 shows a cross section of the trail with separated bicycle and pedestrian trails located along the westbound right of way along Plato Boulevard.

Figure 3: Segment 1--Plato Boulevard Cross Section Number 1



Other portions of the trail along Plato Boulevard will require different configurations strategies, with the intent to preserve existing boulevard trees as much as feasible. Options for the trail alignment will depend on specific conditions along each block of Plato Boulevard. Figure 4 shows a second cross section type along Plato Boulevard and includes a shared use trail.

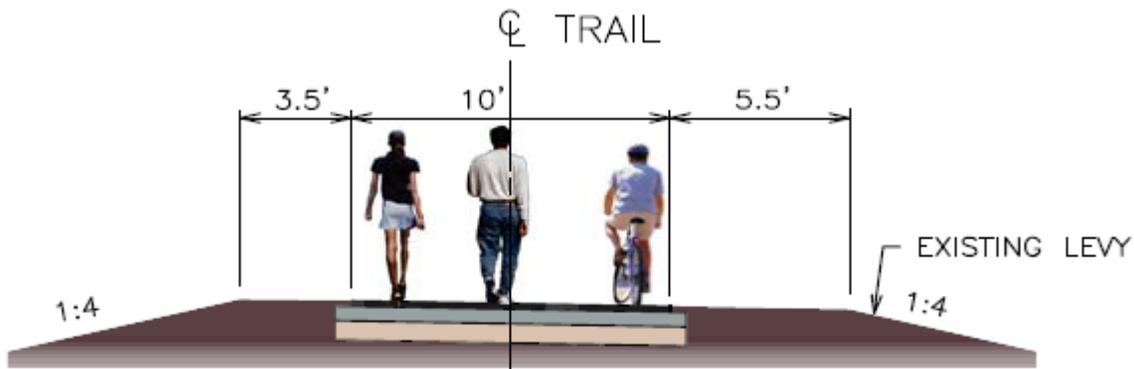
Figure 4: Segment 1--Plato Boulevard Cross Section Number 2



Estimated development costs for Segment 1 are approximately \$1.3 million and include road modification, trail construction, traffic signage, and landscaping.

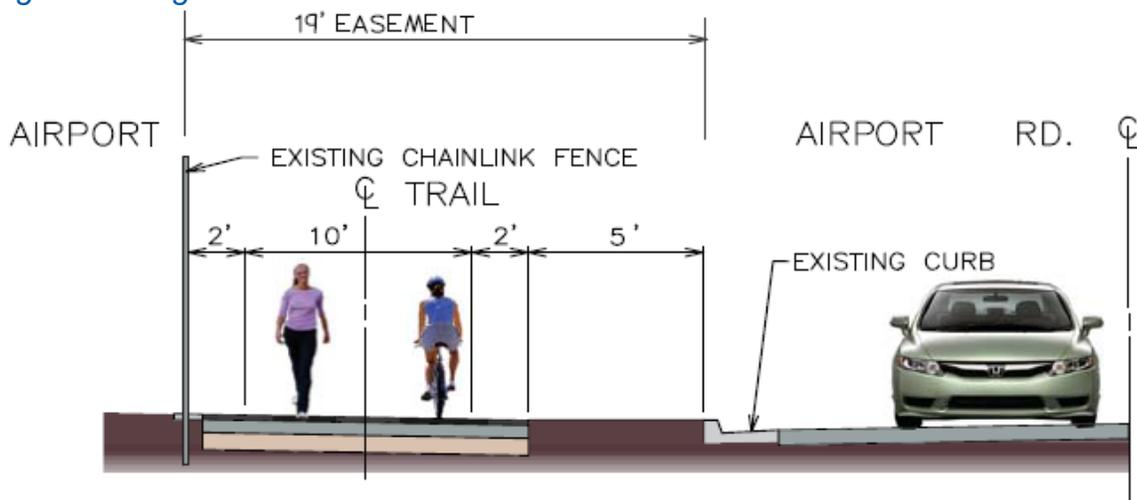
Segment 2: Segment 2 travels along the top of the flood control levee, east of the Saint Paul Holman Field Airport. The trail surface and any landscape treatments will be subject to design discussions with the Army Corps of Engineers and the Metropolitan Airports Commission. There are limitations to planting options in this area, especially trees. Grass plantings have no restrictions, however, so the levee could possibly be landscaped with extensive prairie style plantings. Careful consideration will be given to the planting plan from both a maintenance and bird habitat perspective, given its proximity to the airport. Estimated development costs for this segment are \$1.1 million and include lighting, trail construction, signage, and landscaping. Figure 5 depicts a trail cross section along the levee.

Figure 5: Segment 2--Levee Cross Section



Segment 3: The eastern portion of Segment 3 will be located within an easement on Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) property along Airport Road and will allow for a 10 foot wide trail, as shown in Figure 6.

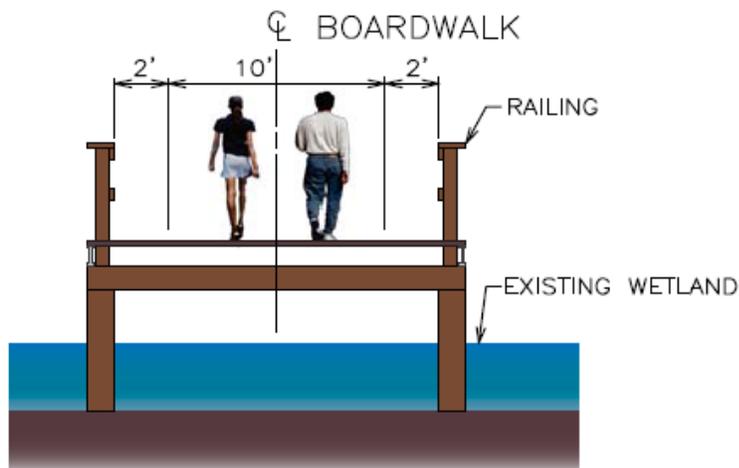
Figure 6: Segment 3—MAC Easement Cross Section



Once the trail leaves MAC property, it will then be located on Saint Paul Port Authority land. The specific trail alignment is under study while the Port Authority works with its business clients to modify circulation and property access in this area. Additionally, the Port Authority is evaluating operational effects and safety considerations of the trail. Please refer to *Figure 1*, which depicts the alignment study area along Segment 3.

A short segment of the trail will require a boardwalk crossing of wetlands that are also owned by the Port Authority. The boardwalk will be constructed to meet safety standards and minimize, eliminate, or mitigate wetland impacts. Design and construction of the boardwalk will comply with applicable wetland laws and regulations and will be coordinated with the Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization, which is the responsible permitting agency. *Figure 7* shows a cross section of the boardwalk. Estimated development costs for this segment are \$830,000 and include security fencing, wayfinding signage, and the boardwalk.

Figure 7: Segment 3—Boardwalk Cross Section

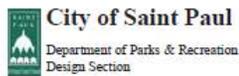
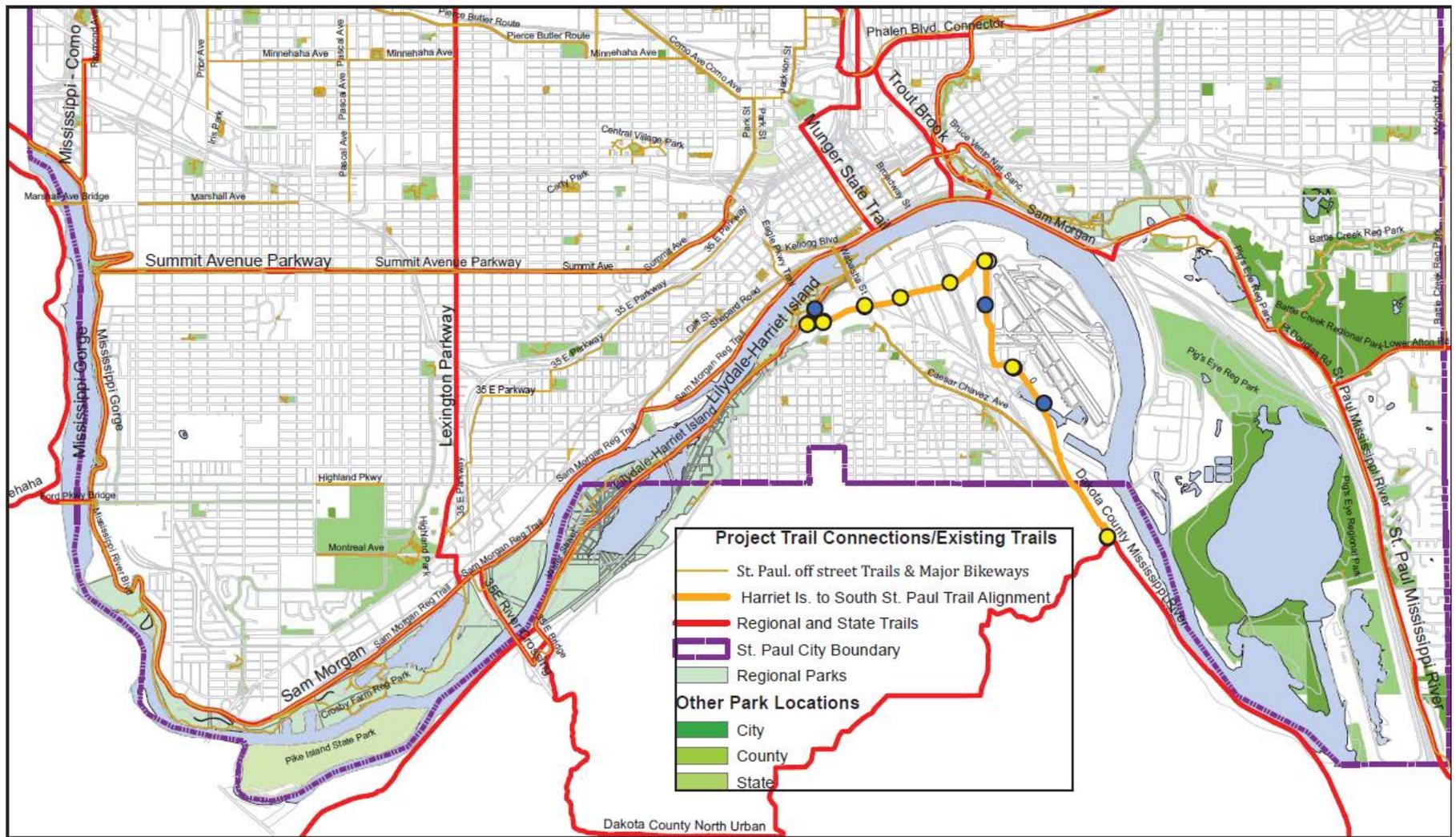


Segment 4: Segment 4 is located in the City of South St. Paul and will require a bicycle/pedestrian bridge in order to provide a safe crossing over railroad tracks into Kaposia Landing Park. The estimated cost for Segment 4 is approximately \$2.1 million and includes trail construction, the bridge and its approach, and landscaping.

Wayfinding and interpretive signage will be provided along the regional trail route. Near the trail junction at Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park, there is an existing informational kiosk that will be updated to include maps and other information about the Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail and its connections to other local and regional facilities. Other wayfinding signage locations will be determined during the detail design process, but will generally be located at key intersections along the route. *Figure 8* includes a map of the regional trail (shown in yellow), the key local and regional trail connections (shown in red) and the general location of wayfinding signage (shown by the blue and yellow dots).

Total estimated development costs for all four segments of the Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail are \$5.4 million. Preliminary and final design for the regional trail is expected to be underway in 2016 and the trail is scheduled for bidding and construction in 2017, because Saint Paul, South St. Paul, and Dakota County were successful in jointly receiving Federal grant funds for the regional trail.

Figure 8: Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail—Trail Connections and Wayfinding Signage Locations



Harriet Island, to South, St. Paul Trail & Existing Trail Systems.
Project Trail Connections to Existing Bike-Ped Facilities
Wayfinding Signage Locations ●
Interpretive Signage Locations ●



Conflicts

The master plan describes the collaborations and agreements that are needed with public agencies in order to develop the regional trail and avoid potential conflicts. These agencies include:

- *Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC):* Construction and operation of the trail will require that MAC's requirements regarding security, lighting and vertical obstacles are addressed in order to use its right-of-way for the trail.
- *Army Corps of Engineers:* The Army Corps of Engineers provided funding and design guidelines for the construction of the flood protection levee in Saint Paul. The segment of the regional trail on the levee must meet these guidelines and the trail plans must be reviewed by the Army Corps of Engineers.
- *Saint Paul Public Works:* Preliminary discussions regarding the use of the Plato Boulevard right-of-way have concluded that there is sufficient room for off road trail development through careful reconfiguration of road lanes. Since Public Works is responsible for operation and maintenance of the levee, final approval of the levee design will be done in collaboration with both Public Works and the Army Corps of Engineers.
- *Saint Paul Port Authority:* The Saint Paul Parks Department and Port Authority have had several conversations regarding key land and easement agreements needed along the Mississippi River, including those that support this regional trail plan. The City and Port Authority will work to ensure that the trail alignment will be safe and compatible with the Port Authority's business development goals.

As part of the master planning process, bridges versus at-grade crossings of railroad tracks were evaluated, taking into consideration clear sight lines for the trail user as well as for the train operators, the speed and volume of train traffic at the crossing, and the presence of crossing arms or other signals of approaching trains. All railroad crossings necessary for this regional trail will meet the applicable standards of the railroad ownership and the Minnesota Department of Transportation's design standards. One bicycle/pedestrian bridge was deemed necessary, due to heavy railroad traffic and the need to cross several rail lines in South St. Paul.

Public Services

The regional trail will not require any new non-recreational public services or facilities to serve it. Drinking water is available at Harriet Island and Kaposia Landing Park, serving both ends of the trail corridor. Additional drinking water fountains could be provided at the intersection of Airport Road and Eaton Street, where there is an existing water service main in close proximity.

Operations

The City of Saint Paul and Dakota County will cooperatively operate and maintain the portions of the regional trail that fall within its jurisdiction. Maintenance of the regional trail will include: turf maintenance, sweeping, snow removal, litter pickup and waste disposal, and annual trail and asphalt maintenance. The master plan calls for mill and overlay of the trail after 15-20 years. Existing City of Saint Paul, South St. Paul and Dakota County ordinances for usage and operations of the regional trail will apply. Due to the trail's proximity to the Saint Paul Holman Field Airport, additional security measures will be incorporated as needed to meet Metropolitan Airport Commission and Homeland Security requirements. The estimated annual maintenance costs are \$17,342 for the portion of the regional trail in Saint Paul and \$2,225 for the portion within Dakota County. Operations and

maintenance costs are included in the regional park implementing agencies' annual budgets and are supplemented with regional parks operations and maintenance funding which is administered by the Metropolitan Council and comes from the State's general fund as well as lottery in lieu of sales tax.

Public Engagement

Public engagement for the Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail was conducted in conjunction with the planning process for the Great River Passage, which is Saint Paul's plan for connecting people to the Mississippi River. The planning process included a "Cultural Audit", which consisted of onsite interviews with a variety of community residents and visitors to the riverfront. Several public meetings and community design forums were held and a project website was established that provided opportunities for public comments. Other forms of outreach included sharing information through newspapers, library displays, and list-serves. Specific consideration was given to a gap analysis to identify access and connections for bicycle and pedestrian amenities, through which the Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail was identified as a critical link. The regional trail was specifically addressed as part two design forums and received positive feedback, including its plans to provide connections to Dakota County.

The master plan also describes a community engagement process to be undertaken during the detail design phase for the regional trail. The process will seek wide and diverse participation from both Saint Paul and Dakota County residents and project stakeholders and will include:

- Workshops between City and County staff,
- Coordination meetings with applicable public agencies
- Coordination with railroad entities
- Public open houses in both Dakota County and Saint Paul

Project information will be communicated through newsletters in Dakota County and through websites in both Dakota County and Saint Paul.

Public Awareness

The trail is within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), which is one of Minnesota's national parks, so the trail will be promoted as part of the MNRRA marketing efforts of the National Park Service. The trail will also likely serve as part of the national Mississippi River Trail, and will benefit from marketing efforts of the Minnesota Department of Transportation and other groups.

At the local level, a Grand Opening celebration will be held for the regional trail. The trail will be promoted through brochures, website information, and other trail related publications that will be available at park facilities.

Accessibility

The regional trail will be designed in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines resource book and the Minnesota Department of Transportation's Bicycle Facility Design Manual will be used when developing accessible bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including trail surfaces, street crossings, and the bridge connection in South St. Paul. There are no charges for the use of the facility, making the trail available for all users.

REVIEW BY OTHER COUNCIL DIVISIONS:

Environment and Surface Water Management (Jim Larsen 651-602-1159) – Initial comments were satisfactorily addressed through revisions to the master plan.

Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – This project extends 3.7 miles through the communities of Saint Paul and South St. Paul. The construction of any new trails or updating of existing trails may have an impact on several Metropolitan Council interceptors in multiple locations. To assess the potential impacts to our interceptor system, prior to initiating any proposed project, preliminary plans should be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager (651-602-4503) at Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment.

Local Planning Assistance (Patrick Boylan 651-602-1438) – No comments.

Metro Transit (Steve Mahowald 612-349-7775) –There are no concerns from a transit perspective.

Transportation Planning—Aviation (Russ Owen 651-602-1724) – The regional trail will need an airport easement. In working with the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), the easement is appropriate as long as security requirements are maintained. The master plan indicates that security requirements will be a stipulation. Therefore, it appears to be consistent with policy. No concerns from an aviation perspective.

Transportation Planning (Steve Elmer 651-602-1438) – Initial comments were satisfactorily addressed through revisions to the master plan.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The Harriet Island-South St. Paul Regional Trail is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.
2. The estimated cost to implement the master plan is \$5.41 for acquisition and development.
3. Approval of this master plan does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. Future development funding based on this master plan may be awarded through the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund, the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. Council action is required to approve the CIP, the Parks and Trails Fund project list, and specific grants to a regional park implementing agency.
4. The regional trail route may have a potential impact on MCES facilities. In order to maintain the integrity of the regional sewer system, preliminary development plans for the regional trail should be submitted to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager (651-602-4503) at Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment.