

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: February 6, 2018

For the Community Development Committee meeting of February 20, 2018

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of February 28, 2018

Subject: Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail Master Plan, Dakota County

District(s), Member(s): District H, Todd Kemery

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statute 473.313; Planning Strategy 1 *2040 Regional Park Policy Plan*

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

Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail Master Plan.
2. Require Dakota County to submit a cost sharing approach with the City of Inver Grove Heights for the development of the trailhead in Rich Valley Park prior to seeking regional parks funding for the project.
3. Inform Dakota County that if alternative trail alignments are chosen, the county must submit estimated acquisition and development costs to the Council prior to seeking regional parks funding. The Council will not provide regional parks funding for duplicate trail alignments.

Background

The *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* identifies an east-west regional trail search corridor in Dakota County that links Lebanon Hills Regional Park to the Mississippi River Regional Trail. Dakota County has named the future regional trail the Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail. When complete, the regional trail will have an estimated length of 5.29 miles. Dakota County has submitted a master plan for the entire regional trail which will travel through the cities of Eagan and Inver Grove Heights and will serve as a destination trail for the surrounding area. The regional trail will be newly constructed with the exception of existing segments of trail in Lakeside Park in Eagan and the Southern Lakes Neighborhood in Inver Grove Heights. In order to create a high-quality trail user experience, Dakota County proposes to optimize the trail alignment through an off-street greenway by utilizing parks, utility corridors, and a segment of Cliff Avenue that will be abandoned in the future. This approach will reduce the amount of trail that parallels roads.

Rationale

The Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* including Planning Strategy 1, which outlines the requirements for regional trail master plans. Also, the master plan is consistent with other Council policies.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail Master Plan 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 estimated cost to implement the master plan is \$8,827,816, which includes \$2,532,816 for land acquisition and \$6,295,000 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. The Council may award future funding based on this master plan through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP), the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund, and the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund. Council action is required to approve the CIP, the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund project list, and specific grants to Dakota County.

Known Support / Opposition

The Dakota County Board of Commissioners has approved and adopted the master plan. The Cities of Inver Grove Heights and Eagan have adopted resolutions of support for the regional trail master plan. There is no known opposition to the master plan.

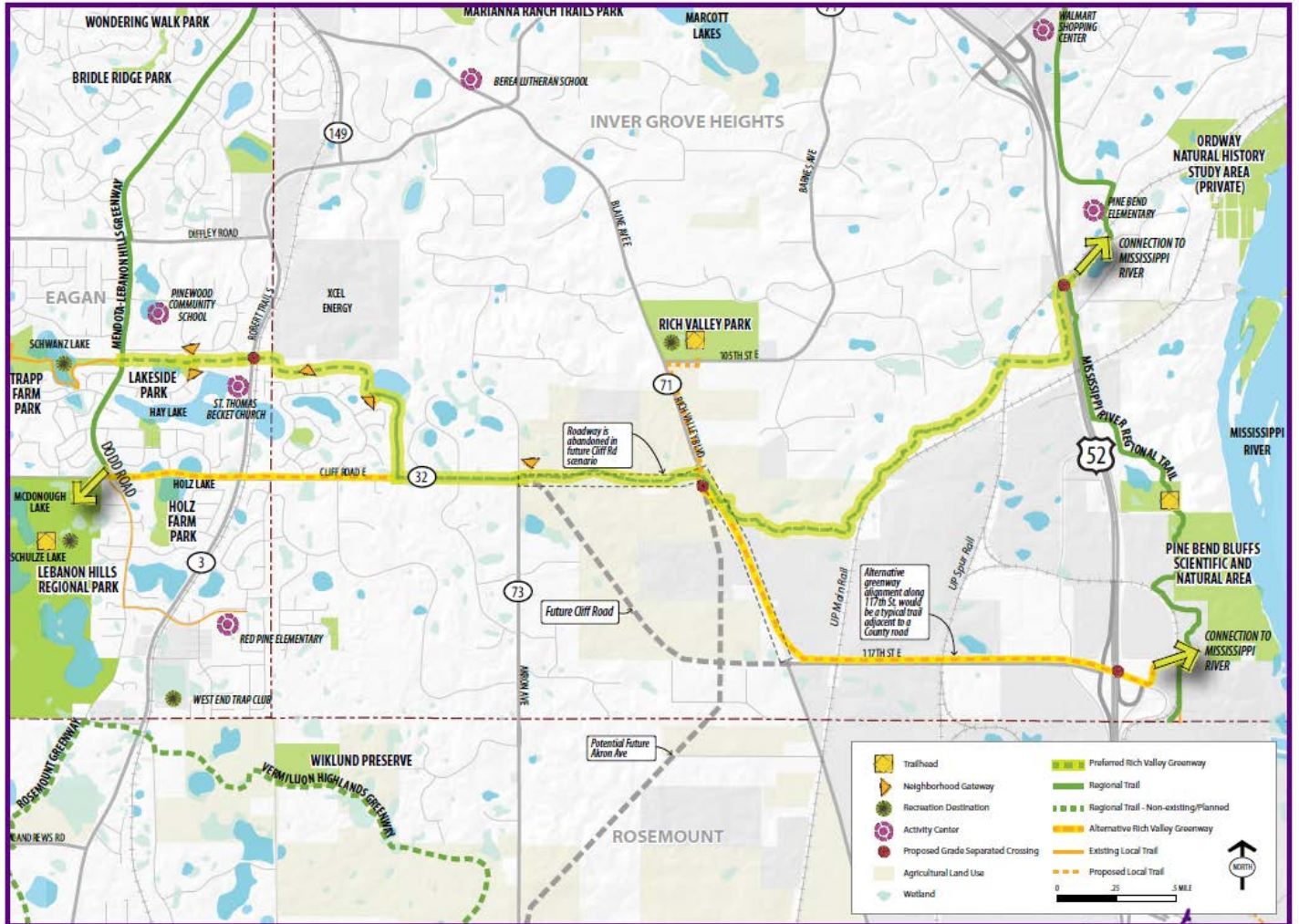
Analysis

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

Boundaries and Acquisition

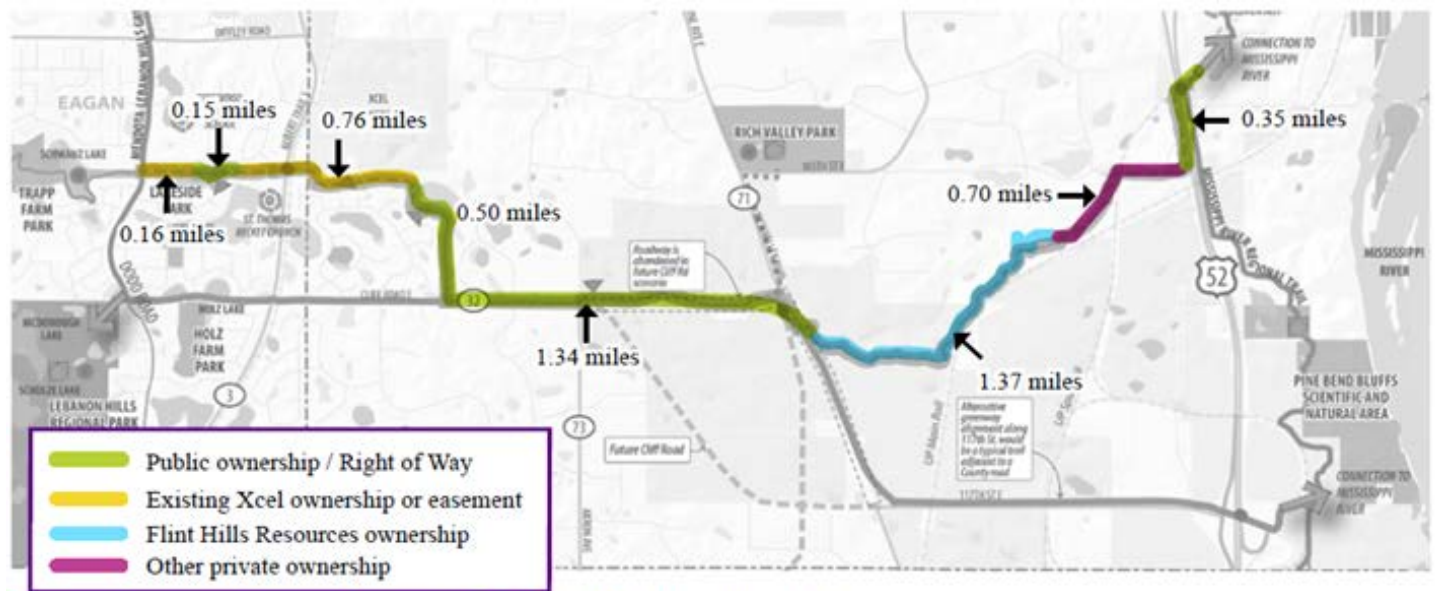
When fully developed, the Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail will travel through Dakota County from Lebanon Hills Regional Park in Eagan to the Mississippi River Regional Trail in Inver Grove Heights. An overview of the regional trail can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail Overview



Dakota County intends to secure land for a minimum 30-foot-wide greenway corridor. It is estimated that approximately 19.4 acres of land will need to be acquired for the development of the regional trail. The land to be acquired falls into four categories: publicly owned land (City of Eagan, City of Inver Grove Heights, and road right of way); land within Xcel Energy ownership and easements; Flint Hills Resources land; and other privately held land. Land protection strategies used by Dakota County include park dedication, direct purchase with resale of land not required for the trail, permanent easements, land donation, bargain sale, life estate, and negotiations with cities and developers. Figure 2 provides an overview of property ownership throughout the corridor along with estimated acquisition costs. Appendix A contains a detailed parcel map and table of impacted parcels.

Figure 2: Corridor Property Ownership and Estimated Acquisition Amounts



Protection & Steward Partnership Lands (for 30 ft wide trail corridor)

SEGMENT	PUBLIC & XCEL ENERGY EASEMENT	PRIVATE & FLINT HILLS RESOURCES	TOTAL	EST. COST
1	10.6 acres (2.91 miles)	--	10.6 acres	\$1,382,832
2	1.3 acres (.35 miles)	7.5 acres (2.07 miles)	8.8 acres	\$1,149,984

An average amount of \$90 per linear foot for a 30 foot wide corridor was used.

Dakota County estimates the total land acquisition costs for the 30-foot-wide Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail corridor to be approximately \$2.5 million. This amount is based on an estimated cost of \$90 per linear foot.

Demand Forecast

Current trends indicate that visits to Dakota County regional trails are likely to increase. These trends include active living, popularity of trail-based activities, interest in nature, history and culture, transportation and connectivity, and population growth.

By 2030, the population of communities along the regional trail corridor is expected to increase by 10% from the 2014 population estimates. Population estimates for communities along the corridor can be seen in Figure 3. The combination of recreation trends and increases in population indicates an increase in demand for recreation facilities in Dakota County, and builds a strong case for the development of the Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail.

Figure 3: Forecasted Population of Communities along and near the Regional Trail

MUNICIPALITY	2014 ESTIMATE	2030 FORECAST	% CHANGE
<i>Core Service Area (areas within 3/4 mile of greenway)</i>			
Eagan	66,810	69,800	4%
Inver Grove Heights	34,831	42,000	21%
Total Core	101,641	111,800	10%
<i>Primary Service Area (areas within 3 miles of greenway)</i>			
Rosemount	22,490	31,700	41%
Apple Valley	50,330	59,200	18%
Total (Core + Primary)	174,461	202,700	16%
Dakota County	411,507	474,670	15%

Development Concept

The greenway corridor will vary in width from 100 feet to more than 300 feet; however, the development concept described in the master plan focuses on the 30-foot-wide regional trail corridor to be constructed and operated by Dakota County. Development outside of the 30-foot-wide corridor will be done in partnership with local agencies.

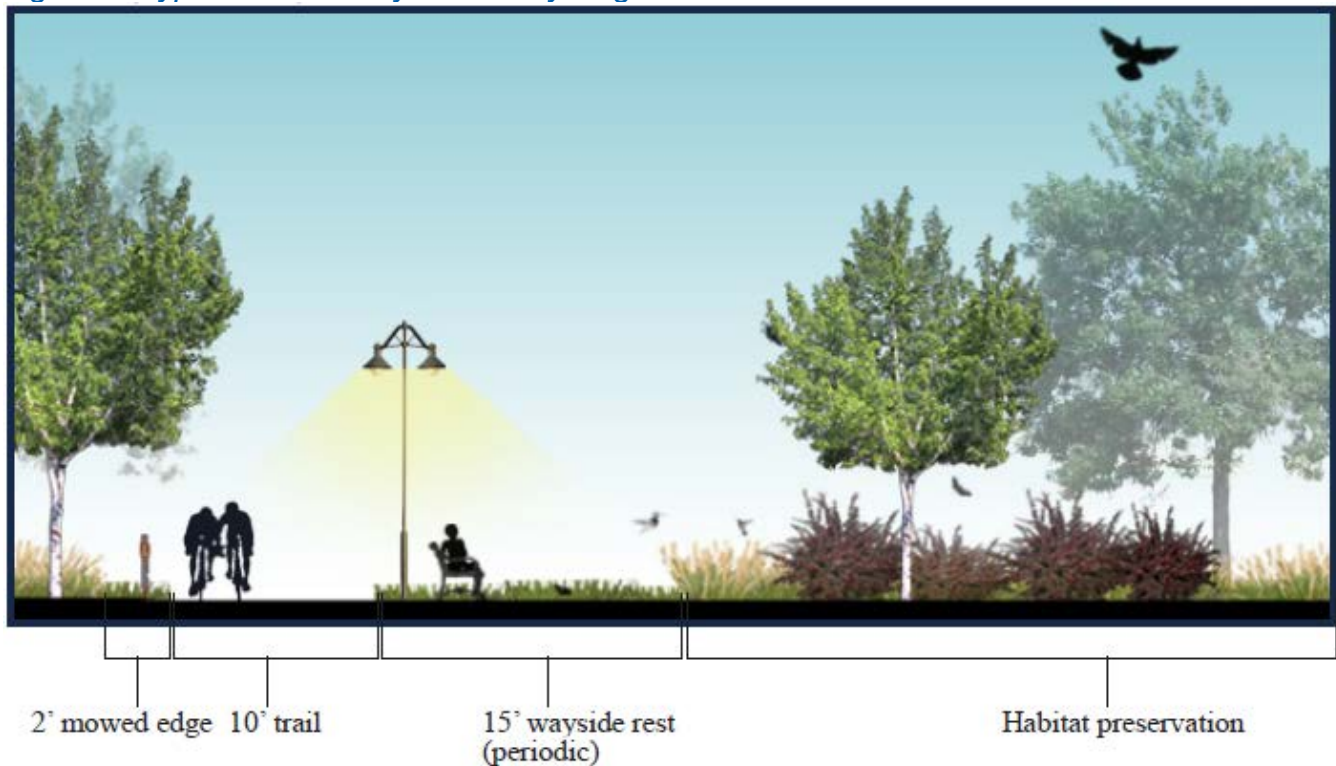
The regional trail will be a bituminous trail designed in accordance with applicable American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials guidelines, Minnesota Department of Transportation bicycle design guidelines, and Dakota County trail standards. The trail will be a minimum of 10 feet wide with a two-foot grass clear zone on each side. Anticipated uses include walking, jogging, inline-skating, and bicycling. The trail will be maintained for winter use and lighted where appropriate. A typical cross-section of the trail corridor can be seen in *Figure 4*.

Access to the Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail will be provided at trailheads for local and regional access, as well as at neighborhood gateways. Access points will typically be located at recreation destinations, activity centers, and trail intersections.

Trailheads will occur every 3 to 5 miles and will include the following amenities:

- Water
- Motor vehicle parking
- Secure bicycle parking
- Picnic areas or facilities
- Wayfinding and traffic control
- Local or regional trail connections
- Restrooms
- Interpretation
- Benches
- Food, where there are opportunities
- Shelter and shade

Figure 4: Typical Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail Cross-Section



Neighborhood gateways will be located at convenient intervals between trailheads. Where possible, facilities will be shared with other uses and will be located near a recreation destination or activity center. Neighborhood gateways will include:

- Benches
- Secure bicycle parking
- Wayfinding and traffic control
- Local or regional trail connections
- Water
- Interpretation

For the Dakota County greenway system, a consistent wayfinding system is essential for orientation, navigation, and safety. Signage is planned throughout the corridor. Wayfinding examples can be seen in Figure 5, and signage locations can be seen in Appendix B.

Figure 5: Wayfinding Examples



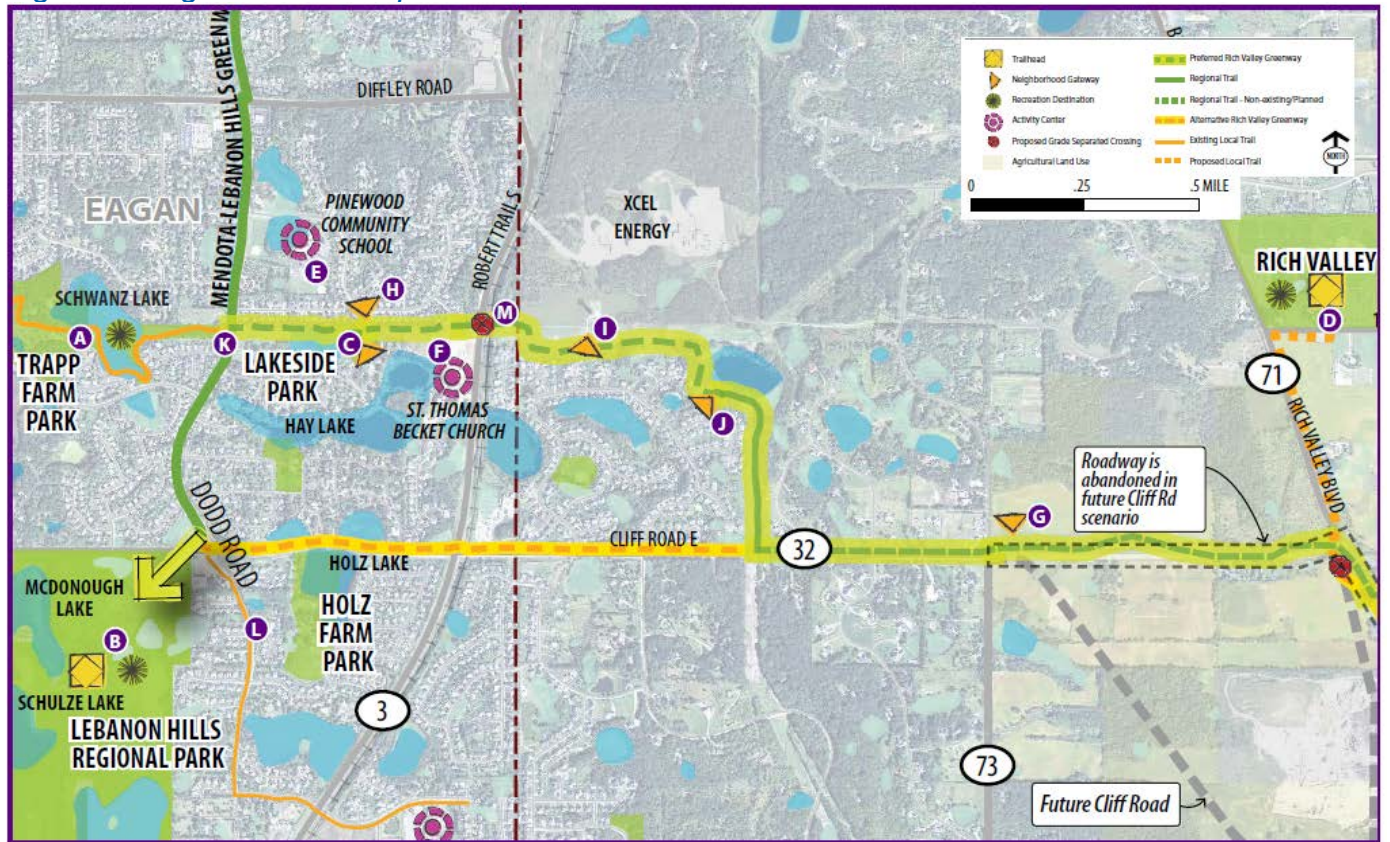
For planning purposes, the Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail has been divided into two segments.

Segment 1, the western segment, is 2.79 miles in length. It travels from an intersection with the Mendota-Lebanon Hills Greenway Regional Trail just north of Lebanon Hills Regional Park in Eagan to Rich Valley Boulevard in Inver Grove Heights. Segment 1, as depicted in *Figure 6*, includes an existing trailhead in Lebanon Hills Regional Park and five neighborhood gateways.

The regional trail will travel west from the Mendota-Lebanon Hills Greenway Regional Trail, which parallels Dodd Road. The trail will enter Lakeside Park, a City of Eagan neighborhood park, and connect to an existing paved trail in the park. Continuing east, a grade separated crossing of TH3/South Robert Street is proposed. After crossing TH3/South Robert Street, the trail will enter the Southern Lakes Neighborhood and utilize an existing trail through the neighborhood. The trail will then parallel Cliff Road as it continues to the east. Upon reaching Akron Avenue, the trail will continue east in the Cliff Road right-of-way. The stretch of Cliff Road between Akron Avenue and 117th Street is being studied by Dakota County for a proposed realignment. If the realignment occurs, the regional trail will have the opportunity to follow the abandoned Cliff Road corridor between Akron Avenue and Rich Valley Boulevard.

An alternative alignment has been proposed for a portion of Segment 1, and is highlighted by the orange dashed line in *Figure 6*. If the grade separated crossing of TH3/South Robert Street is not possible, the alignment of the trail may be shifted to parallel Cliff Road between Dodd Road and existing outlet of the Southern Lakes Neighborhood Trail. The master plan did not include estimated costs for the alternative alignment. If the alternative alignment is used, the County must submit estimated development costs to the Metropolitan Council for review prior to seeking regional parks funding for its development. The Council will not provide funding for duplicate trail alignments in this section.

Figure 6: Segment 1 Concept Plan



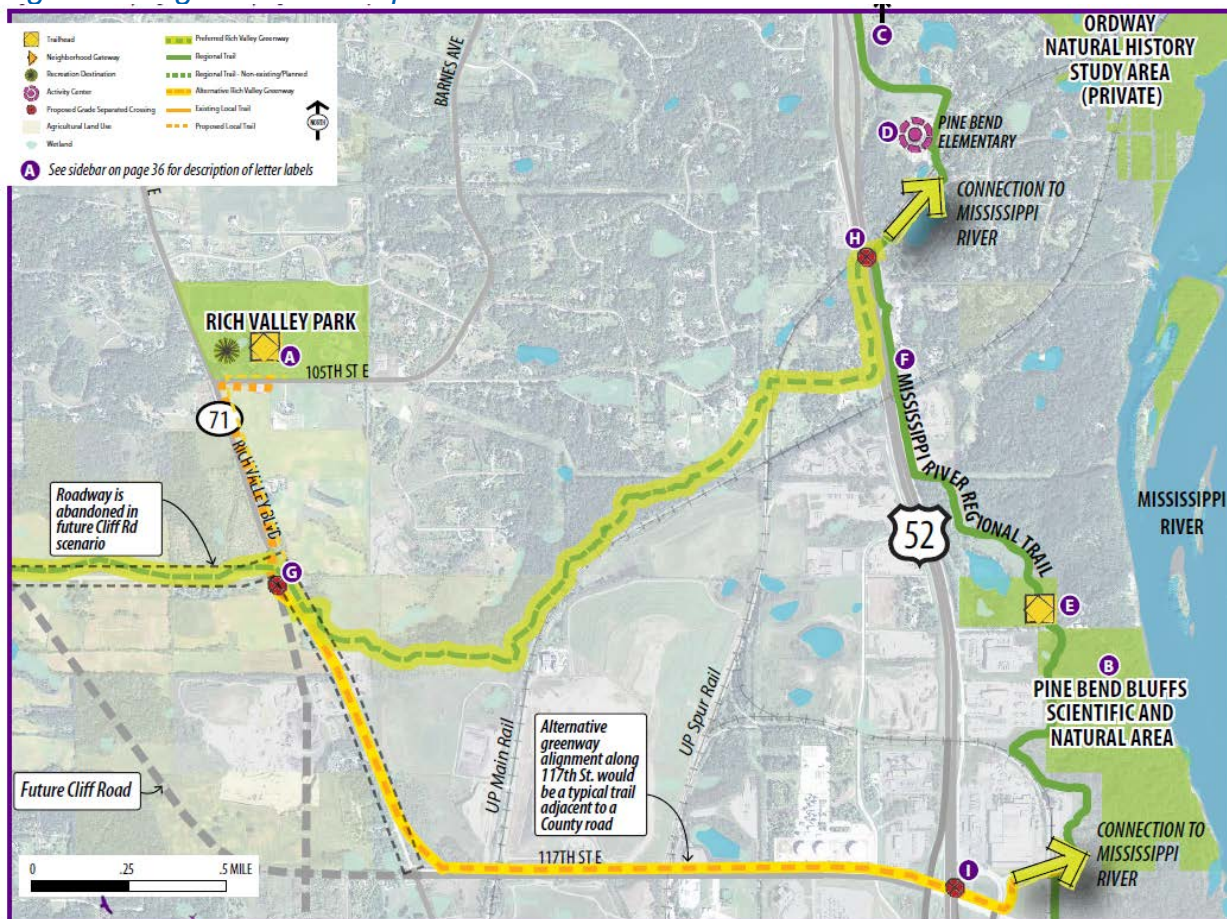
Segment 2 is 2.5 miles in length and entirely within Inver Grove Heights. The trail will travel from Rich Valley Boulevard to a connection with the Mississippi River Regional Trail. Segment 2, as depicted in *Figure 7*, includes a new trailhead at Rich Valley Park and an existing trailhead at Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) along the Mississippi River Regional Trail.

The regional trail will continue east from a grade separated crossing of Rich Valley Road. At Rich Valley Road, a local trail will connect the regional trail to Rich Valley Park, a local park in Inver Grove Heights, where a trailhead will be developed. The trailhead will serve both the regional trail and the local park. In order for the development of the trailhead to be eligible for regional parks funding, a cost sharing approach must be developed by Dakota County and the City of Inver Grove Heights.

The regional trail will continue east through Flint Hills Resources property that serves as buffer land between active industrial uses and surrounding residential areas. The trail will then follow a railroad corridor and utilize an existing underpass of Highway 52 to connect to the trail's intersection with the Mississippi River Regional Trail.

An alternative alignment has been proposed for a portion of Segment 2, and is highlighted by the orange dashed line in *Figure 7*. If the land cannot be secured for the northern alignment, Dakota County will construct a paved trail paralleling Rich Valley Boulevard and 11th Street East during future road reconstruction and expansion. The master plan did not include estimated costs for the alternative alignment. If the alternative alignment is used, the County must submit estimated development costs to the Metropolitan Council for review prior to seeking regional parks funding for its development. The Council will not provide funding for duplicate trail alignments in this section.

Figure 7: Segment 2 Concept Plan



The estimated development costs for the regional trail are \$6,295,000. A table detailing development costs can be found in *Appendix C*.

Conflicts

Dakota County anticipates that conflicts related to the Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail will be minimal. If minor conflicts arise, Dakota County will work with individual landowners to resolve the issues on a case-by-case basis.

Public Services

The master plan does not indicate that any new public services are needed to accommodate the regional trail.

Operations

Dakota County will be responsible for the operations of the 30-foot-wide regional trail corridor and will enter into a joint powers agreement where there are opportunities for operational partnerships. Once the Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail is complete, an additional 0.15 full-time employee park keeper and a 0.15 seasonal full-time employee will be needed to operate and maintain the trail.

Regular maintenance for the Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail will include:

- Sign maintenance
- Trash collection
- Sweeping and blowing
- Trail and bridge repair
- Winter trail clearing
- Trailhead facility repair and maintenance
- Mowing
- Tree trimming

The master plan also includes a pavement management schedule for long term maintenance of the regional trail.

Public use of the Dakota County parks system is controlled by County Ordinance 107. Visitors are informed of the park and trail rules via kiosks and signs that include information regarding hours of operation, permitted and prohibited activities, fees and directions. The County's Parks, Lakes, and Trails Officers patrol the parks and trails, educate visitors, and enforce ordinances. Local law enforcement and public safety agencies will be responsible for emergency and criminal complaints along the greenway corridor.

The annual operations and maintenance costs for the Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail are estimated to be \$45,306.

Public Engagement and Participation

Dakota County conducted a seven-month-long engagement process led by a technical advisory group (TAG). The TAG met regularly during the process and consisted of representatives from the Cities of Eagan and Inver Grove Heights and staff from the Dakota County Office of Planning.

The engagement process included a project website, public review period, and two open houses that were used to gather input on the draft recommendations for trail alignment alternatives, greenway enhancements, interpretive themes, approaches to natural resource management, and water quality improvements.

Concurrent to the Rich Valley Greenway Master Plan process, Dakota County also conducted detailed multicultural outreach to inform their Parks Visitor Services Plan. Information gained from dialogues and interviews with underrepresented groups was used to inform the master plan. The underrepresented groups included individuals from the following groups: Hispanic/Latino, Somali, Vietnamese, Indian/South Asian, African American, youth, seniors, and persons living with disabilities. The groups represented all ages and a range of income levels.

Several themes came out during the engagement process. They included requests for marketing information about regional trails and recreation facilities; safe and accessible facilities; clear signage; and other amenities along trails and in parks. The engagement process also resulted in several adjustments to the trail alignment in order to protect natural resources in the corridor.

Public Awareness

Dakota County's Parks Department will continue working with Dakota County's Communications Department to promote awareness and use of the County's park and greenway system. This will involve the use of many tools including, but not limited to, websites, direct mail, press releases, brochures, on-site promotion, monument signage along roads, wayfinding within greenways and parks, and paid advertising. Dakota County also collaborates with cities, businesses, the Metropolitan Council, and others to promote its facilities, programs, and services and to educate the public about its resources.

Accessibility

Dakota County is committed to offering universal accessibility at all trail facilities. The primary paved trail and all access points allow for universal accessibility in order to provide all visitors with a meaningful experience. Additionally, there are no entrance fees to access the trail and associated amenities.

Natural Resources

The Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail corridor connects Lebanon Hills Regional Park, local parks, the Mississippi River, Pine Bend Bluffs SNA, and undeveloped land. The overall quality of plant communities within the corridor range from moderate to outstanding and can be seen in the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) map in *Appendix D*. Most of Pine Bend Bluffs SNA and the area to its north are identified as outstanding quality plant communities.

Vegetation management activities will include the removal of invasive species, wetland buffer protection, and the establishment or reestablishment of disturbed areas. The master plan includes specific actions for individual sites along the regional trail route.

The primary water resource along the greenway corridor is the Mississippi River, which is located at the eastern end of the trail. Additionally, there are several lakes, wetlands, and streams. Some of the water management practices in the corridor include:

- Developing rain gardens alongside trailhead parking lots.
- Allowing stormwater to run onto surrounding grass for small parking lots surrounded by greenspace.
- Planting trees to help improve water management and reduce run-off concerns.
- Planting native prairie species around parking lots where their deep roots facilitate stormwater infiltration.

Stewardship Plan

Focused restoration and protection efforts near trailheads will provide the greatest opportunity for users to see the results of stewardship and provide high-quality experiences. Due to the linear nature of the greenway, stewardship activities will coordinate with adjoining landowners, both public and private.

The master plan identifies and prioritizes key habitat investment areas for natural resource management. Since most of the area along the greenway corridor is undeveloped, it is possible to conserve large areas of open space and establish a continuous, ecologically functioning habitat corridor. The stewardship plan recommends overall corridor preservation with targeted natural resource and water quality improvements at key locations, such as trailheads and parks.

Reviewed by Other Council Divisions

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

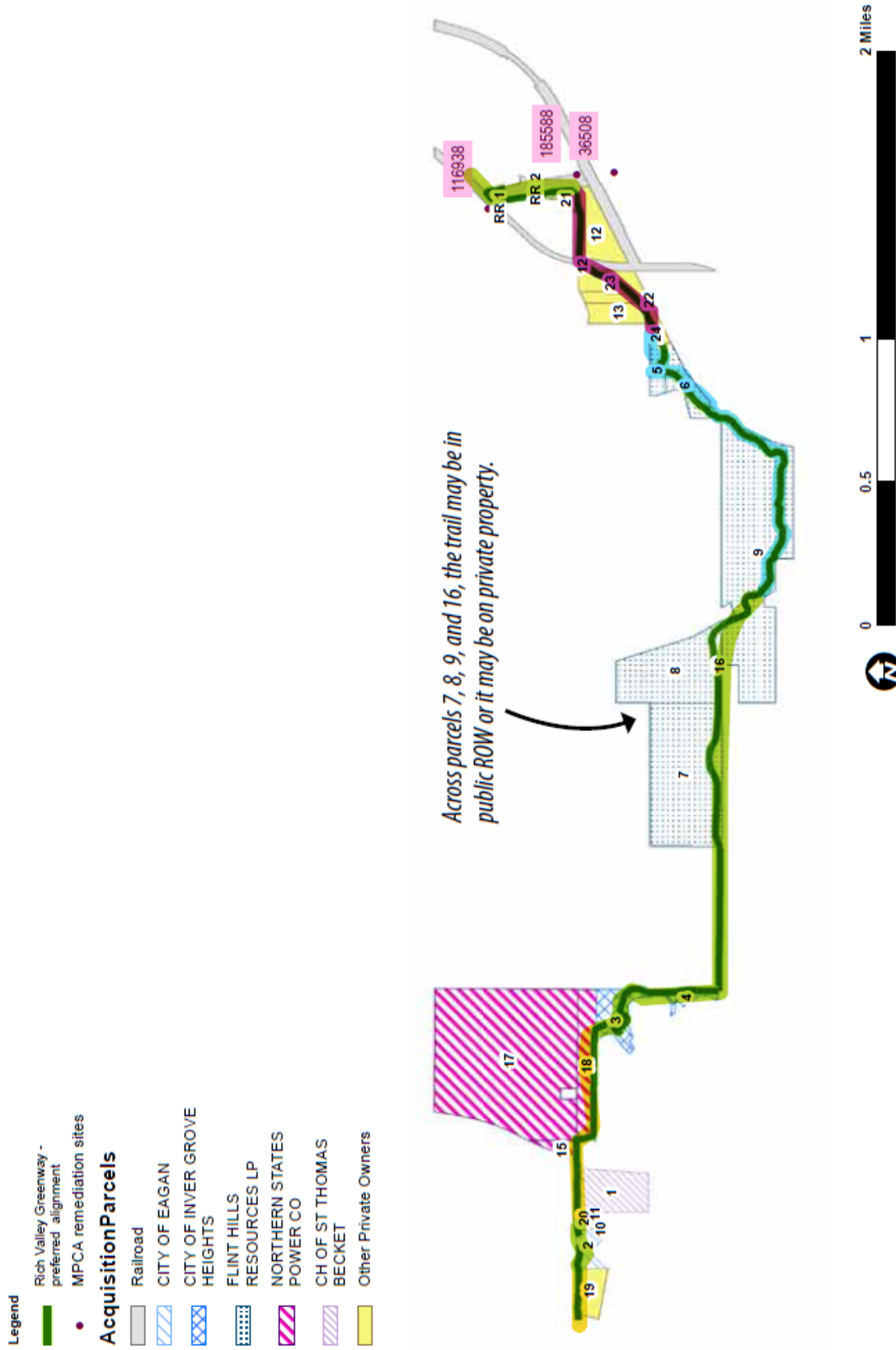
Metro Transit (Steve Mahowald 612-349-7775) – No Comments

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

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

Appendix A: Detailed Acquisition Information

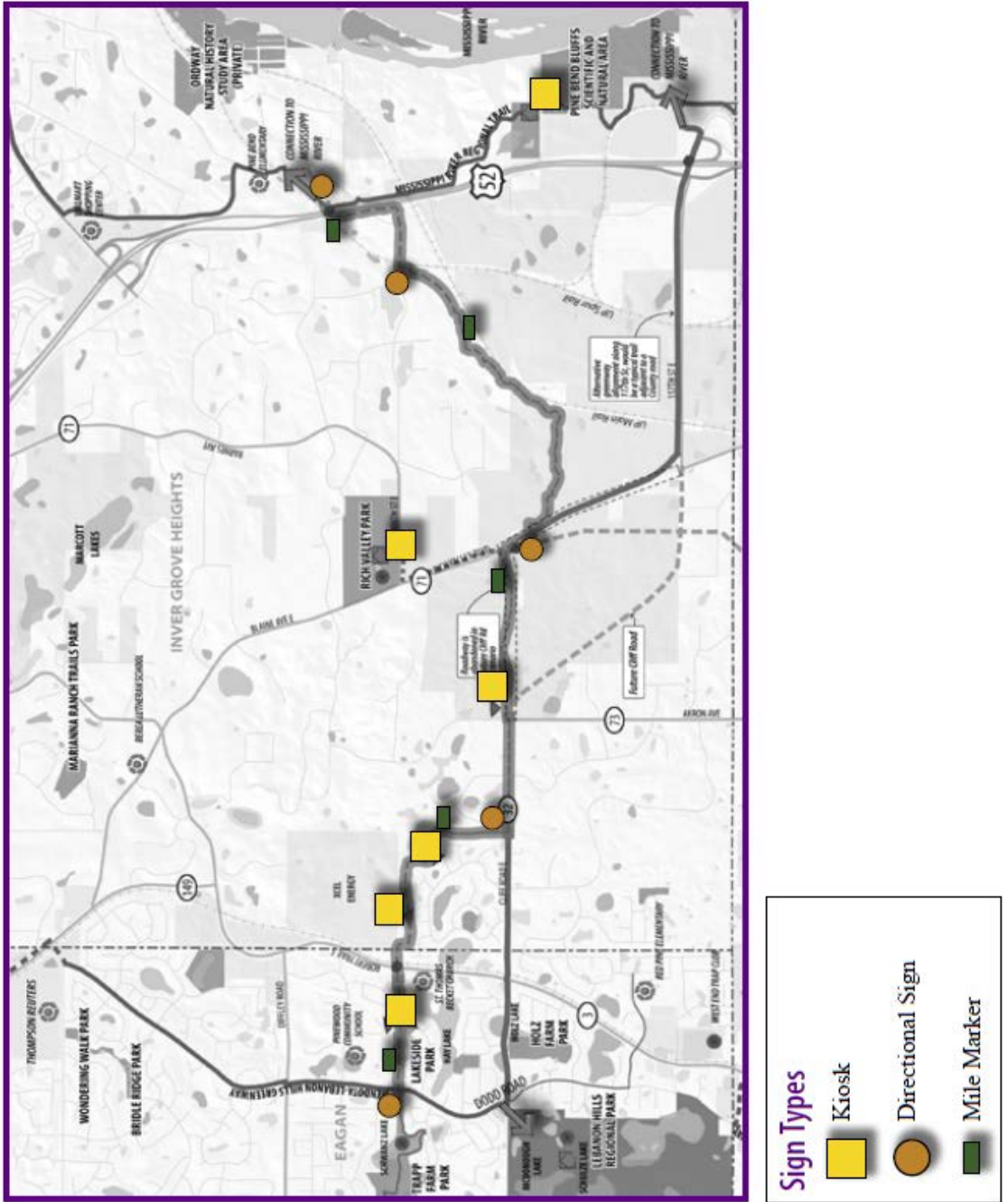
Acquisition Parcel Map



Acquisition Parcels

OWNER NAME	ESTIMATED LAND VALUE* (Source: Dakota County Property Tax Data)	ID (label on Figure 60)	NOTES
CH OF ST THOMAS BECKET	\$1,955,400	1	Work with St. Thomas Becket to gain easement for greenway trail.
CITY OF EAGAN	\$457,000	2	Work with cities to provide improved amenities and services in exchange for using existing public trails.
CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS	\$120,400	3	
CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS	\$32,000	4	
FLINT HILLS RESOURCES LP	\$66,600	5	
FLINT HILLS RESOURCES LP	\$85,600	6	
FLINT HILLS RESOURCES LP	\$950,500	7 (trail may be in public ROW)	
FLINT HILLS RESOURCES LP	\$605,000	8 (trail may be in public ROW)	Work with Flint Hills Resources to establish an easement for the trail.
FLINT HILLS RESOURCES LP	\$1,605,300	9 (trail may be in public ROW)	
HALDORSON DANIEL W	\$67,700	10	
HEUER GEORGE R & MARILYN	\$64,500	11	
JEFFRIES JOHN HENRY	\$177,000	12	
JOHNSON MARK C & CATHERINE M	\$156,400	13	
MITBO DAVID A	\$10,400	14	
NORTHERN STATES POWER CO	\$63,500	15	
NORTHERN STATES POWER CO	\$7,300	16 (trail may be in public ROW)	
NORTHERN STATES POWER CO	\$3,004,100	17	Work with Xcel Energy to meet natural resource goals with construction of the greenway and associated landscaping in exchange for trail easement.
NORTHERN STATES POWER CO	\$383,600	18	
SCHIELA HEIDE U	\$277,500	19	
SNYDER ROBERT	\$64,500	20	Purchase trail easement from private land owners or reroute greenway alignment.
SUNTRUST MORTGAGE INC	\$45,700	21	
VEGA JOSE	\$116,900	22	
VEGA JOSE	\$193,900	23	
WISCONSIN TOWN LOT CO	\$23,700	24	
	\$-	RR 1	
	\$-	RR 2	Work with railroad to build trail in ROW.

Appendix B: Wayfinding Signage Plan



Appendix C: Development Cost Estimates

Project ID	Project Description	Priority	Potential Partners/Triggers	Estimated cost (Construction, Engineering, and Administration)	
				1st Priority	2nd Priority
A	Trailhead at the Visitor Center at Lebanon Hills Regional Park This is existing. A trail connection is needed from the end of the Mendota-Lebanon Hills Regional Greenway at Dodd Rd and Cliff Rd to the Visitor Center	Existing		-	
B	Greenway Trail from Dodd Rd to TH 3/S. Robert Trail	1st		\$316,000	
C	Neighborhood Gateway from Pinewood Community School neighborhood	1st		\$45,000	
D	Neighborhood Gateway from Lakeside Park	1st	facilities combined with C above	-	
E	Trail Bridge over TH 3/S. Robert Trail	1st		\$1,700,000	
F	Greenway Trail from TH 3 to connect to existing Southern Lakes neighborhood trail	1st		\$365,000	
G	Neighborhood Gateway from Southern Lakes neighborhood - north (smaller than typical Neighborhood Gateway due to proximity to second neighborhood gateway in the neighborhood)	1st		\$25,000	
H	Neighborhood Gateway from Southern Lakes neighborhood - east	1st		\$45,000	
I	Existing Southern Lakes neighborhood trail - add greenway amenities	Existing		\$54,000	
J	Greenway Trail from end of Southern Lakes neighborhood trail to Rich Valley Blvd along Cliff Rd	2nd	Reconstruction of Cliff Rd		\$820,000
K	Gateway north of Cliff Rd on Flint Hills Resources' land	2nd			\$45,000
L	Trailhead at Rich Valley Park with trail connection from greenway (Note: Dakota County will work with Inver Grove Heights to develop a cost sharing approach as the trailhead features will also serve the local park. Additionally, the connection trail is not part of the regional trail corridor and cannot be paid for with regional parks funds.)	2nd	City of Inver Grove Heights		\$640,000
M	Grade separated crossing of Rich Valley Blvd - needs to be evaluated at time of trail construction	2nd			TBD
N	Greenway Trail from Rich Valley Blvd to Hwy 52	2nd	Land control is highest priority		\$1,440,000
O	RR underpass alterations to provide greenway grade separation from Hwy 52	2nd			\$800,000
P	Trailhead at Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area	2nd	currently under construction as part of MRRT - will be complete in 2017 or 2018		
				1st Priority Total	\$2,550,000
				2nd Priority Total	\$3,745,000
				Total cost of recommended improvements	\$6,295,000

Appendix D: Rich Valley Greenway Existing Natural Resources

