

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: July 12, 2018

For the Community Development Committee meeting of July 16, 2018

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of July 25, 2018

Subject: Central Anoka Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment, Review File No. 50209-1

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

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statutes 473.313; Planning Strategy 1 and Planning Strategy 3, *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*

Staff Prepared/Presented: Jake Reilly, Senior Planner (651-602-1674), Local Planning Assistance; Tracey Kinney, Planner (651-602-1029), Regional Parks and Natural Resources

Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Central Anoka Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.
2. Require that Anoka County, prior to initiating development of the regional trail, provide a Joint Powers Agreement with the City of Ramsey that outlines and confirms use of the city owned right-of-way and easements for regional trail use.

Background

Anoka County has submitted a master plan amendment for the Central Anoka Regional Trail for Council review and approval. When complete, the regional trail will connect Mississippi West Regional Park in Ramsey to Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve in Lino Lakes and Centerville. The Metropolitan Council approved the current master plan for the regional trail in May 1999. The most recent amendment (2016) identified the trail alignment between Hanson Boulevard and Highway 65 in the Cities of Andover and Ham Lake. A portion of this trail alignment was constructed as part of the Anoka County Highway CSAH 116 reconstruction project. To date, approximately 18.5 miles of the 26-mile trail have been constructed.

The primary purpose of this amendment is to change the trail alignment in the City of Ramsey so it may align with Center Street in Ramsey's transit-oriented downtown development known as The COR (Center of Ramsey). The new alignment will allow the regional trail to take advantage of a proposed pedestrian bridge over U.S. Highway 10, identified as a barrier to bicycling in the region in the 2018 Draft Regional Bicycle Barriers Study. Once across the highway, the trail will connect to Mississippi West Regional Park, the Mississippi River, the Mississippi National River Recreation Area, and the Mississippi River Trail, a federally designated bike route (U.S. Bike Route 45), which is classified as a Tier 1 priority for the Metropolitan Council's Regional Bicycle Transportation Network.

Rationale

The Central Anoka Regional Trail master Plan Amendment is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, including Planning Strategy 1 and 3, and other Council policies.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The Central Anoka Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment advances the Thrive outcome of Livability through increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation and which enhances quality of life in the region.

Funding

The estimated development costs for this trail segment is approximately \$8,900,000 including \$5,600,000 for the pedestrian bridge and \$3,300,000 for design/engineering and construction.

Approval of the master plan does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. The acquisition and development costs 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. Further Council action is required to approve the CIP, the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund project list, and specific grants to Anoka County.

Known Support / Opposition

The City of Ramsey passed a resolution of support for the Central Anoka Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment. There is no known opposition to the master plan.

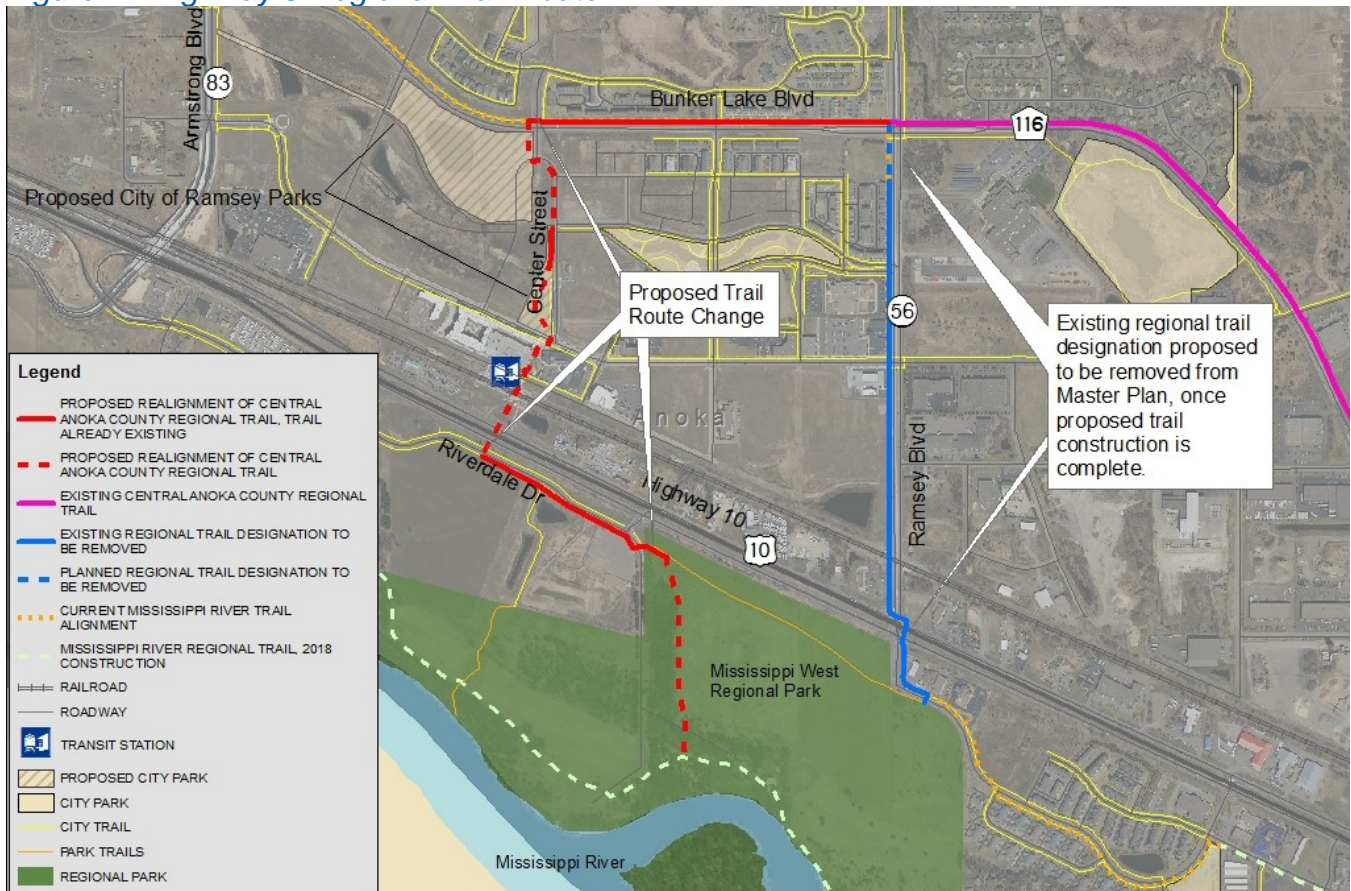
Analysis

Planning Strategy 1 of the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan requires that master plans for linking regional trails address the 11 items listed below. Planning Strategy 3 indicates that Joint Powers Agreements are encouraged between regional park implementing agencies and local governments regarding the acquisition and operations and maintenance of regional trails.

Boundaries and Acquisition

The current alignment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail follows Ramsey Boulevard south into Mississippi West Regional Park. This amendment proposes to shift the trail about one-half mile west to Center Street in the City of Ramsey. A section of the proposed trail realignment already exists within the road right of way and where the trail does not currently exist, the City of Ramsey owns the right of way or has an easement for regional trail purposes. The value of this easement is approximately \$100,000. Prior to construction of the trail, a Joint Powers Agreement will outline and confirm use of the city owned right-of-way and easements for regional trail use. Therefore, no acquisition costs related to this trail change will be required. *Figure 1* shows the alignment of the proposed and existing regional trail alignments.

Figure 1: Highway 5 Regional Trail Route



Demand Forecast

According to the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan, the metropolitan region is expected to gain more than 850,000 residents by 2040, for an estimated total population of more than 3.7 million people. Both Anoka County's and the City of Ramsey's population is expected to grow and there are still many undeveloped tracts of land within the City to accommodate that growth. The increase in population throughout the metropolitan area, Anoka County and the City will only increase demand for recreational

opportunities. Use estimates for Anoka County show that regional trail use has almost doubled since 2009, further illustrating the increasing demand for trails. The Central Anoka County Regional Trail had approximately 95,000 visits in 2016.

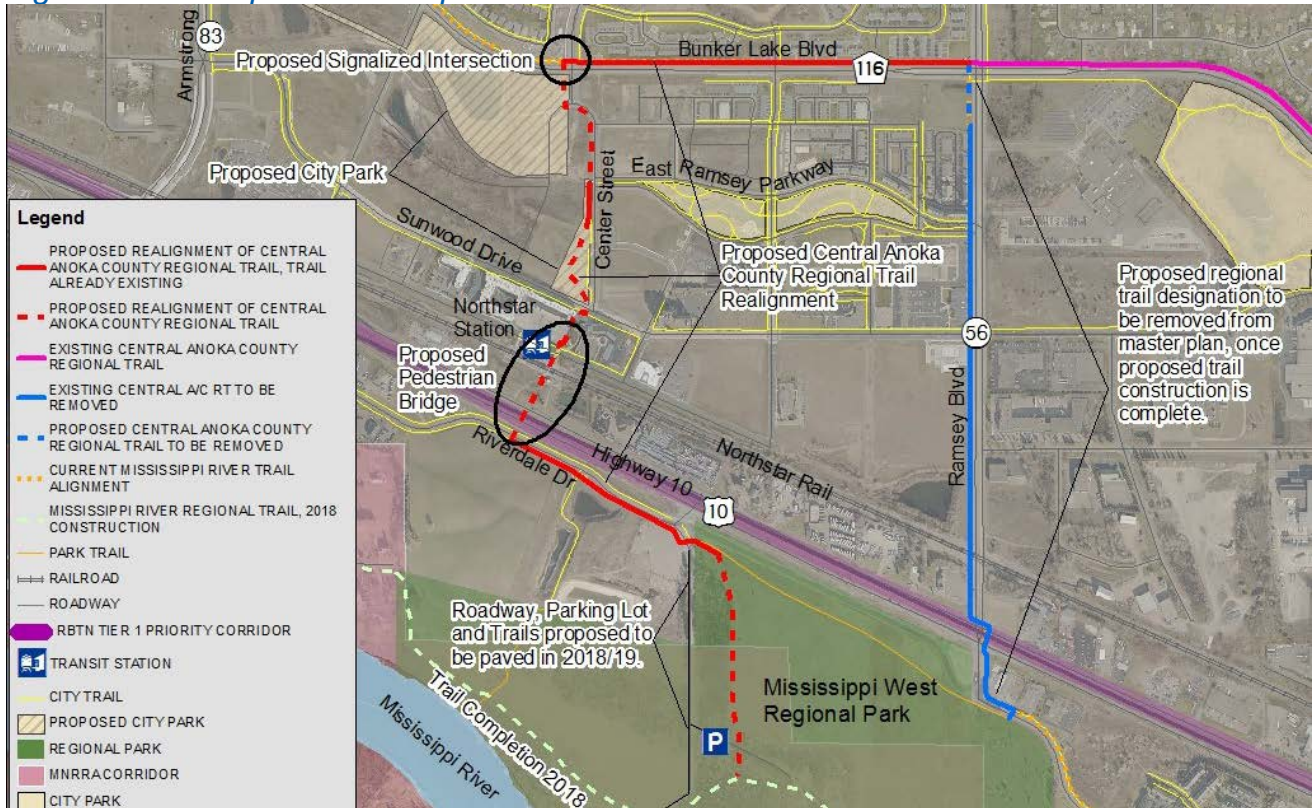
It is anticipated that the number of visitors to this particular trail segment will grow substantially due to the proximity of the trail to the large number of planned residential homes in the area, the proximity to commuters and the Northstar Commuter Rail Station, as well as the existing residential, business, and entertainment land uses nearby.

Development Concept

The development concept for the proposed trail realignment in the City of Ramsey supports the Metropolitan Council's Thrive MSP 2040 Plan's Livability Outcome and follows the plan's additional directive of, "promote expanded multimodal access to regional parks, regional trails and the transit network." The County is proposing to change the alignment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail within the City of Ramsey to better connect with the river and Mississippi West Regional Park, as well as transit, local parks, trails, restaurants and businesses. The master plan amendment proposes shifting the regional trail approximately one-half mile to the west along Center Street. The existing designated regional trail along Ramsey Boulevard will remain and the regional trail designation will be removed once the proposed changes have been constructed and a direct connection to Mississippi West Regional Park has been made. No Metropolitan Council funds were used to construct that section.

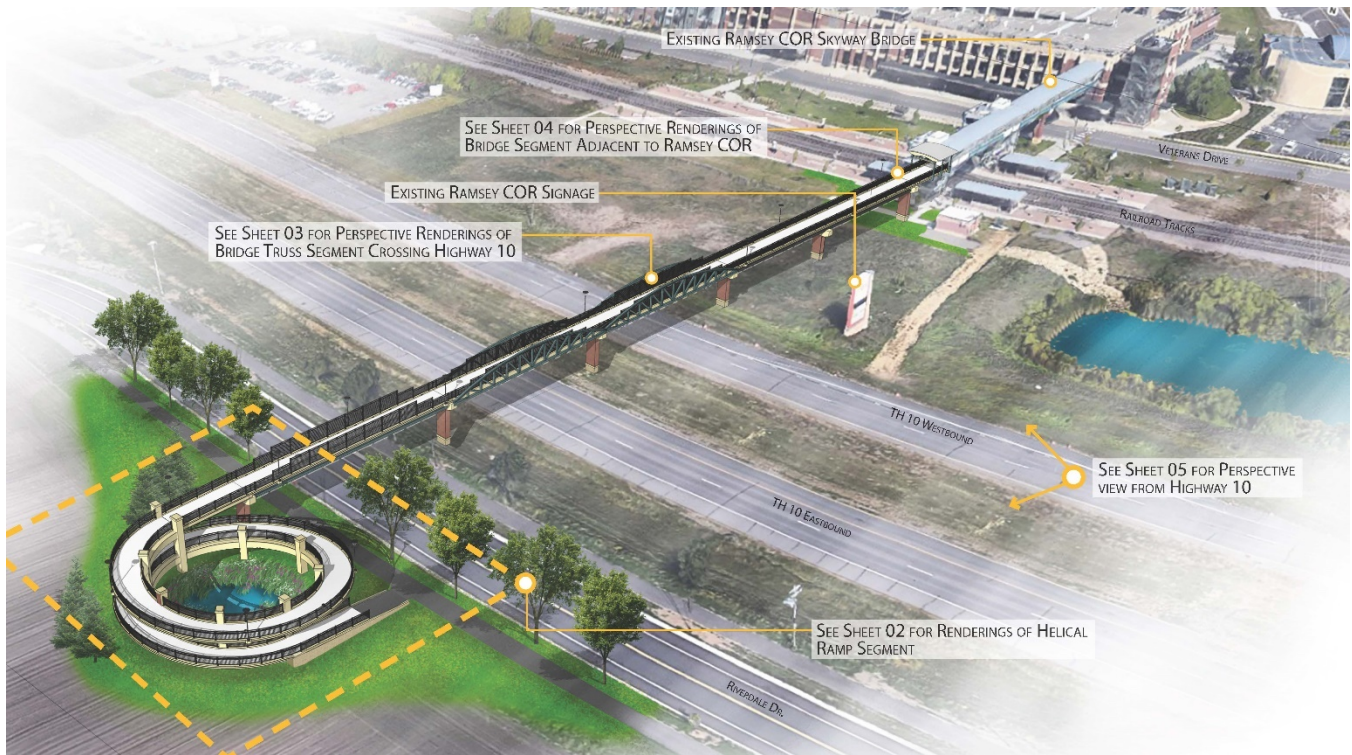
The proposed trail is a mostly ten-foot wide, bituminous path that is separate from the sidewalk and protected from the road by a rise in grade to curb height and grass strip, in a few instances the trail is protected from the road by only the rise in grade. The proposed trail connects from Bunker Lake Boulevard to Mississippi West Regional Park and the Mississippi River Regional Trail with trails, protected crossings, and a pedestrian bridge. Figure 2 shows the development concept.

Figure 2: Development Concept



The proposed change anticipates construction of a signaled intersection at Bunker Lake Boulevard and Center Street in Ramsey in the next five to seven years. In the interim, a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon or high intensity activated crosswalk (HAWK) will be used to allow a safe at-grade crossing. Once south of Bunker Lake Boulevard, the trail will run along Center Street to Sunwood Drive and access the existing and proposed pedestrian bridge via the Ramsey Transit Station main entry or parking ramp. The proposed pedestrian bridge, a 550-foot-long by 12-foot-wide open-air structure with a spiral ramp, will connect bicyclists and pedestrians to an existing ten-foot wide paved trail along Riverdale Drive and then into Mississippi West Regional Park. The City of Ramsey has secured \$450,000 in funds from the National Park Service to develop engineered plans for a pedestrian bridge to make this project “shovel-ready.” Once in the park, the proposed ten-foot wide bituminous trail is to travel south through the park toward the river connecting to the Mississippi River Regional Trail, which is anticipated to be completed in 2018. Figure 3 shows the pedestrian bridge design concept.

Figure 3: Pedestrian Bridge Design Concept



Wayfinding signage for the trail will include two different types of signs. One type of sign will be a trailhead sign, located where parking is available to access a regional trail. Trailhead signs typically include a map of the area that highlights trail connections, park amenities, and surrounding businesses and amenities. The second type of sign is a simple directional sign located at decision points and to provide confirmation.

Conflicts

The master plan identifies potential conflicts at intersections and highway crossings and addresses these conflicts with pedestrian bridges at the Northstar Commuter Rail Station and U.S. Highway 10 crossing, and proposed signal enhancements at the intersections of CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard and Center Street in the long term. A HAWK system is identified as a short-term solution.

The County anticipates that any other conflicts related to this segment of trail will be kept to a minimum through proper planning and community involvement.

Public Services

No new non-recreational public services will be required under this master plan amendment. The terminus of the trail is located at Mississippi West Regional Park and while that park is not yet fully developed, a parking lot and portable toilet will be available until facilities are developed, in five to 10 years.

Operations

Anoka County manages and operates the park and trail system within the county and partners with local cities through either a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) to provide for the maintenance of regional trails. Typically, the MOU or JPA is executed prior to trail

construction and outlines what agency is responsible for general routine maintenance of the trail and what agency is responsible for capital improvements to the trail in their jurisdiction.

The County is typically responsible for the routine maintenance of trails within regional or county park lands. This includes mowing, sweeping, plowing, clearing, debris removal, and patching for example. Outside of regional and county park facilities, the local cities are generally responsible for routine trail maintenance. Solid waste is typically collected from trash receptacles located along the trail at regular intervals. Anoka County inspects trails annually and provides the capital improvements that are needed and provides the long-term maintenance required, such as bituminous overlays, and trail reconstruction. Trail signage is provided and maintained by either the City or the County as determined in the MOU or JPA.

Annual maintenance costs for the existing and proposed trail once completed are estimated to be about \$20,000. This includes funding for sign replacements, minor bituminous repair and crack-sealing. Revenue for the operation and maintenance of the trail comes from the Anoka County Parks and Recreation Department's annual operations and maintenance budget, which includes revenues from picnic shelter rentals, room rentals, programs, parks entrance fees and the County general fund. Supplementary funding is provided through the Regional Park Operations and Maintenance Grant Program.

Public Engagement and Participation

The Central Anoka County Regional Trail has been previously identified in the 1996 20/20 Vision Plan and the 2006 Comprehensive System Plan for the Anoka County Parks and Recreation Department. Both of these plans included public engagement as part of the plan development process. Since the development of those plans, the trail has slowly continued to be developed.

For this master plan amendment, the public engagement process engaged local cities, population groups (citizens, commuters, and government staff) and organizations in an inclusive and accessible manner for feedback. The community engagement process occurred over a three-month period from December 2017 through February 2018. The County shared the proposed trail realignment with community members through social media, an online survey, an open house event, and a pop-up event that allowed the public to review the proposed change and provide comments. It is estimated that more than 6,000 people were engaged in-person and on-line during this process, with more than 350 people providing input.

Most of the engagement occurred online through a project website that reached 5,867 people and 259 people clicked through. Outdoor Latino, a Latino-led organization working to create a national community of leaders in conservation and outdoor education, shared some of the information with their followers.

Community input was provided through completing a survey and comment cards. A six-question online survey was developed and posted on the County's "Plan Your Parks" webpage and social media. More than 100 people completed the survey. One pop-up event targeted peak ridership at the Northstar Station where two sets of boards with pictures and project information were located at each platform of the Northstar Station for a few weeks. Twenty-five people provided input at the Northstar Station. One open house was conducted on February 12, 2018 at Ramsey City Offices, prior to a City Council meeting. Ten people attended and one written comment and several positive verbal comments were received.

Most public input was positive about the proposed change. Out of the 102 survey participants more than 60 percent did not know there was a regional park and trail system along the Mississippi River. More than 65 percent of respondents stated they would feel unsafe or very unsafe crossing U.S. Highway 10 at the existing intersection, and 74 percent of respondents said they would use a pedestrian bridge over U.S. Highway 10 to access the regional park, trail, and/or river.

Public Awareness

Anoka County builds awareness of its facilities, programs, and services through the website, press releases, event planning, and promotional materials.

Anoka County Parks engages the public through several online and social media tools. The tools will be updated as new technologies become available.

Accessibility

Anoka County strives to provide equal access to all residents of the County and the region. Park and trail use is open to all users. Use of the proposed trail is free of cost eliminating any economic barriers for trail users.

Once built, the trail will provide a valuable connection to the local parks and trail system, the regional transportation network, the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network, the Regional Parks System, and the Mississippi National River Recreation Area. The proposed segment is directly connected to the Metro Transit 887 Bus Route and the Northstar Rail Line. In addition, the Anoka County Traveler Transit Link and Metro Mobility dial-a-ride services, equipped with bike racks, are available for a minimal fee. Transit Link will pick up and drop off passengers anywhere along the regional trail or anywhere there is an address or cross street.

The master plan indicates that the trail and any facilities and amenities along the trail will conform to the standards mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Review by Other Council Divisions

Transportation – Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (Steve Elmer 651-602-1756) –

The current crossing of U.S. Highway 10 is at grade at the intersection of Ramsey Blvd. The proposed trail will move the U.S. Highway 10 crossing to the Ramsey Transportation Station with a pedestrian bridge over the highway. Vertical and horizontal clearances crossing U.S. Highway 10 with a bridge will be addressed in the design with the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

If the proposed pedestrian bridge has funding challenges and the U.S. Highway 10 crossing alignment changes, a master plan amendment will be needed.

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

Environmental – Sewers (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – No additional comments.

Metro Transit (Steve Mahowald 612-349-7775) – No additional comments.

Transportation Planning (Russ Owen 651-602-1724) – No additional comments.

Local Planning Assistance – Land Use (Eric Wojchik 651-602-1330) – No additional comments.