

## Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: February 6, 2020

For the Community Development Committee meeting of February 18, 2020

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of February 26, 2020

**Subject:** Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Review File No. 50218-1

**MPOSC District, Member:** District D, Vacant

**Council District, Member:** District 7, Robert Lilligren

**Policy/Legal Reference:** Minnesota Statutes § 473.313; *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, Chapter 5, Planning Strategy 1

**Staff Prepared/Presented:** Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst (651-602-1361)

**Division/Department:** Community Development / Regional Planning

### Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan.
2. Require that Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, prior to initiating any new development of the regional trail corridor, send preliminary plans to the Environmental Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division.

### Background

Shingle Creek Regional Trail runs approximately 2.5 miles through the northernmost neighborhoods of the City of Minneapolis. The regional trail connects to the Three Rivers Park District portion of the trail at the northern city limit and travels southeasterly along Shingle Creek to North Mississippi Regional Park and Victory Memorial Regional Trail at Webber Park. The trail corridor includes lands on both sides of Shingle Creek, which cuts at an angle across the city grid, and a paved multi-use trail that crosses and re-crosses the creek.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) first designated for acquisition about 70 acres of land in a 300-foot-wide strip along two miles of the creek in 1946. Tentative plans for the park were not introduced until 1951, when it was noted that the principal objective of the project was to drain stormwater and make what was once a low, swampy area dry enough for housing construction. It took seven more years before work on the creek began and MPRB initiated a process to lower the creek and grade the land around it. MPRB focused on the area between 50<sup>th</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North where it had developed plans for a playground in a joint project with the school board.

The creek bed was relocated, lowered, and widened, and ball fields, a wading pool and tennis courts were built at what was later named Creekview Park. In 1977, MPRB completed a new recreation center at Creekview Park attached to Olson Junior High, which allowed both park and school use of facilities in both buildings. Extensive improvements were made to the playground at Creekview from 2005 to 2007. A skate park was built, a baseball field was upgraded with a grant from the Minnesota Twins, and new playground equipment was installed.

In addition to Creekview Park, the regional trail facility has two other main use areas; the creek corridor itself and the Shingle Creek park area. Creekview and Shingle Creek parks feature more neighborhood-oriented facilities like playgrounds and baseball fields, but these areas are within the regional trail corridor boundary and are therefore included in the master plan. That said, the master plan acknowledges that the neighborhood recreation center within Creekview Park is “not a contributing nor allowable feature in the regional park.”

### **Rationale**

The Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, particularly Planning Strategy 1, and other Council policies.

### **Thrive Lens Analysis**

The Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan advances the Thrive outcome of Livability by increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation, which enhances quality of life in the region. The master plan also advances the Thrive outcome of Equity by tying preferred development concepts to community engagement outcomes that are tailored to underrepresented groups.

### **Funding**

The total cost to implement the regional trail is estimated at \$19,479,205 for development and \$57,500 annually for operations.

### **Known Support / Opposition**

The Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board approved the Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan as part of the North Service Area Master Plan at its February 6, 2019 meeting. There is no known opposition to the Master Plan.

Figure 1: Regional Trails Open to the Public (2018) and Shingle Creek Regional Trail (MPRB) location

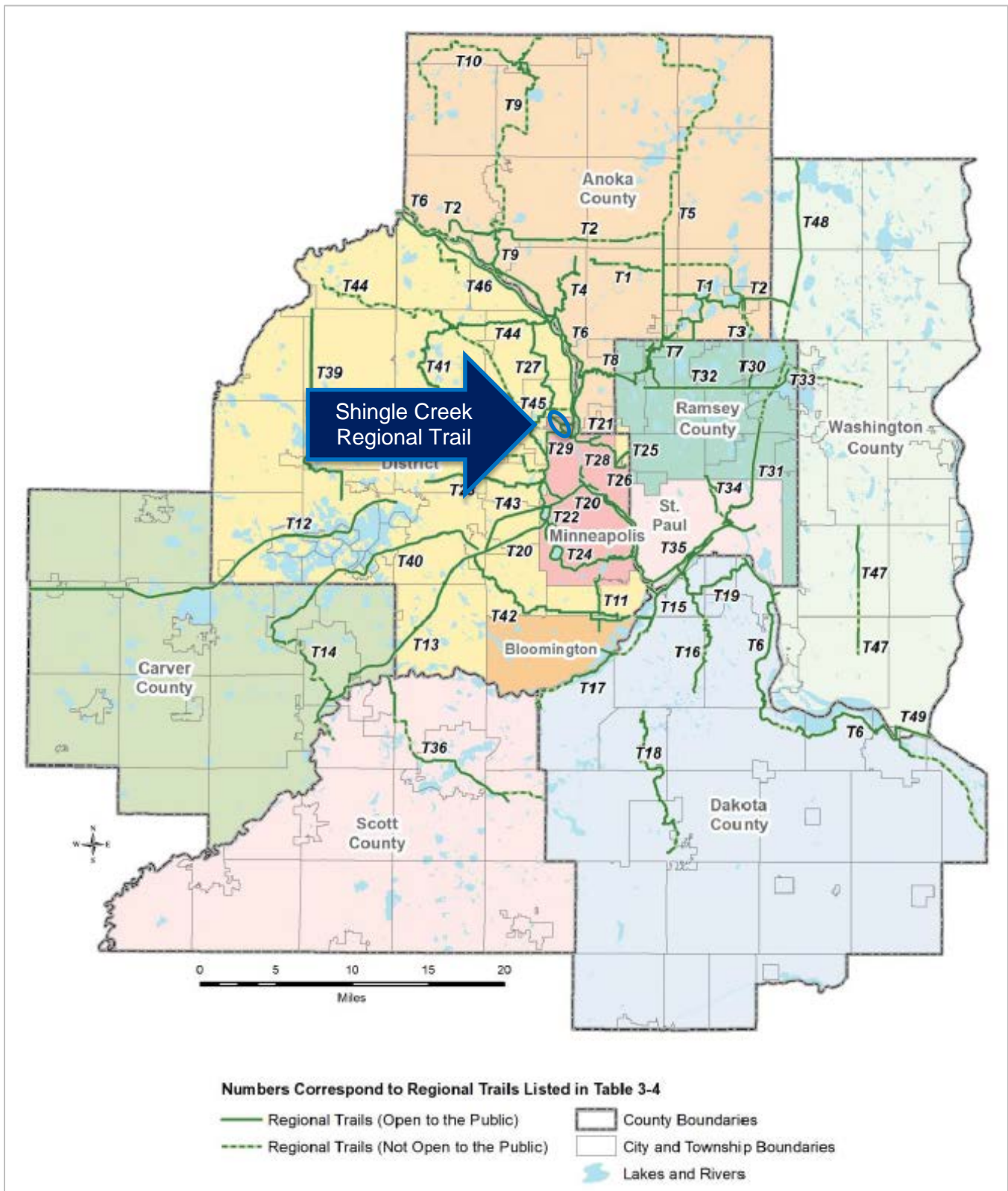
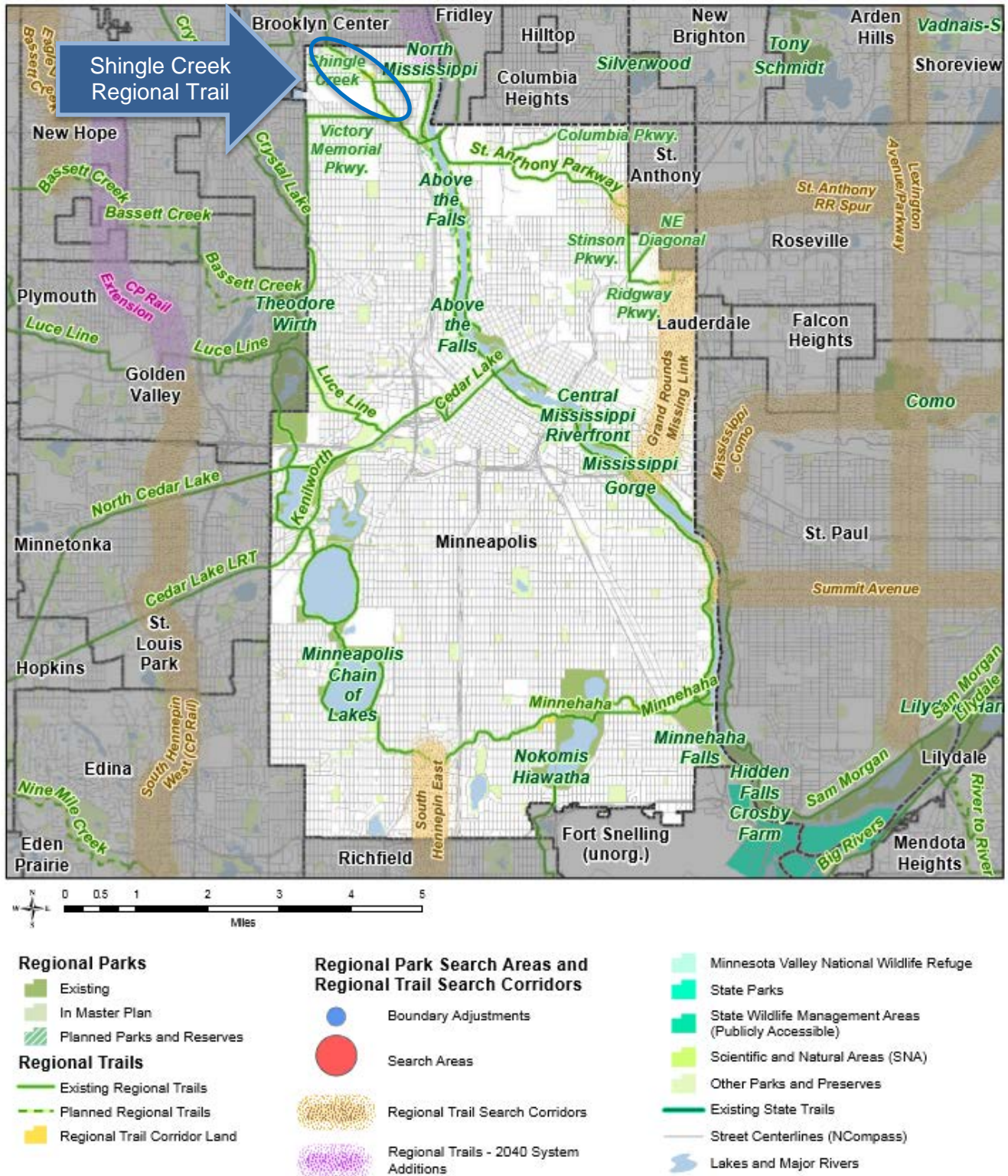




Figure 2: Regional Parks System: City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County and Grand Rounds Missing Link Regional Trail (MPRB) location



## **Analysis**

Planning Strategy 1 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that master plans for destination regional trails address 13 items: boundaries and acquisition costs, demand forecast, development concept, conflicts, public services, operations, partner engagement, public engagement and participation, public awareness, accessibility, stewardship plan, natural resources, and Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area. The following analyzes the master plan against those requirements.

### ***Boundaries and Acquisition Costs***

No additional land acquisition is proposed in the Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan; therefore no additional costs are expected related to this item.

### ***Demand Forecast***

Shingle Creek Regional Trail sees approximately 146,000 visits per year, according to the 2017 Regional Parks System Use Estimate. This places Shingle Creek at the lower end of the spectrum among Minneapolis regional trails and the lowest use among destination trails.

Shingle Creek was originally envisioned as a northern version of Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail (1,386,200 visits in 2017), but it currently lacks some of the same natural resource amenities and interconnections. If these were improved according to the development concept in the master plan, MPRB expects use to increase, potentially three- or four-fold.

One of the likely reasons Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail sees almost ten times the visits as Shingle Creek is the former's connectivity to the Grand Rounds Scenic Byway on both ends. Shingle Creek has the potential for increased visitation as it connects to Victory (Wirth) Memorial Parkway and North Mississippi Regional Park at its southeastern terminus. As MPRB's trail and park network is extended southward through the gradual implementation of Above the Falls Regional Park, Shingle Creek Regional Trail should also achieve greater connectivity and therefore greater use. Planned natural resource enhancements should also draw additional interest and visits.

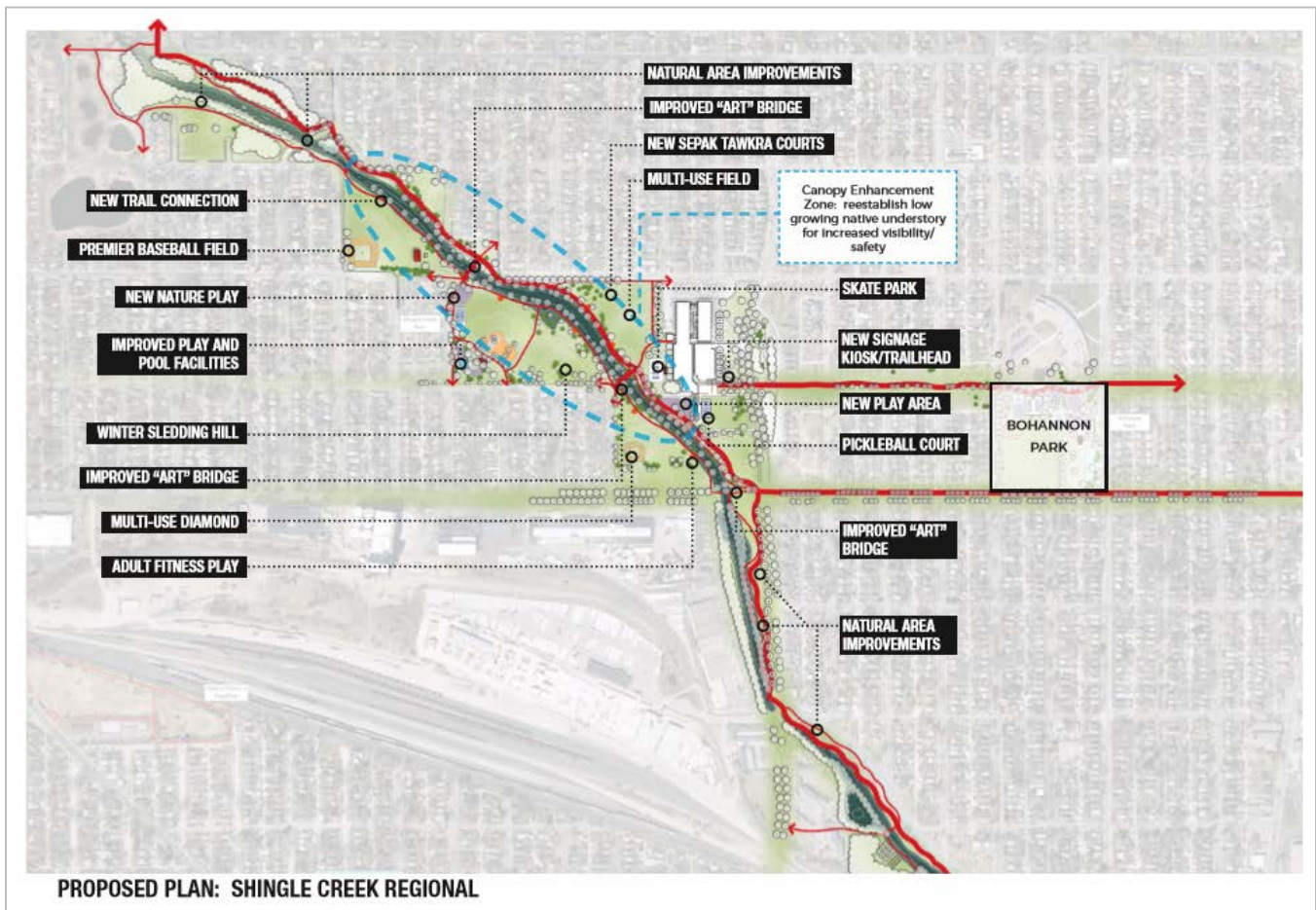
### ***Development Concept***

The overall concept for the Shingle Creek Regional Trail makes some targeted changes in the three primary use areas without fundamentally changing the character of the trail corridor or adjacent park spaces (see Figure 3). However, the master plan acknowledges that "some of the proposed elements may not be typical within regional facilities," but given the trail corridor is "a bit of a hybrid between a regional and a neighborhood facility," the recommendations are context appropriate. Further, the development plan was vetted in a series of Community Advisory Committee meetings in June and July of 2018, which resulted in a recommendation by the CAC to support the development concept.

It should also be noted the development concept articulated in the master plan includes "all development proposed by MPRB, "whether or not certain items would be allowable under regional or state funding." The development concepts for the regional trail's three main use areas are described separately below.



Figure 3: Overall Regional Trail Development Concept



### Creek Corridor

The design for the creek corridor focuses on improvements to three primary areas: trails, bridges, and creek/vegetation (see Figure 4).

Trail recommendations include:

- A new continuous pedestrian trail along the western side of the creek, from the city storm ponds to 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- A new continuous pedestrian trail along the western side of the creek from 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Webber Park.
- Improvement of bicycle trail pinch points at the northern city limits, 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.
- Improvement of trail crossings at 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenue near the northern city limit, 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue near Webber Park.
- Improved wayfinding signage throughout the trail corridor, especially at trail intersection nodes at the northern city limit, at Creekview Park/49<sup>th</sup>, and at Webber Park.
- Addition of trail mileage markers along the bicycle trail.
- Addition of a fitness circuit in the regional trail corridor near Creekview and Shingle Creek.

Bridge recommendations include:

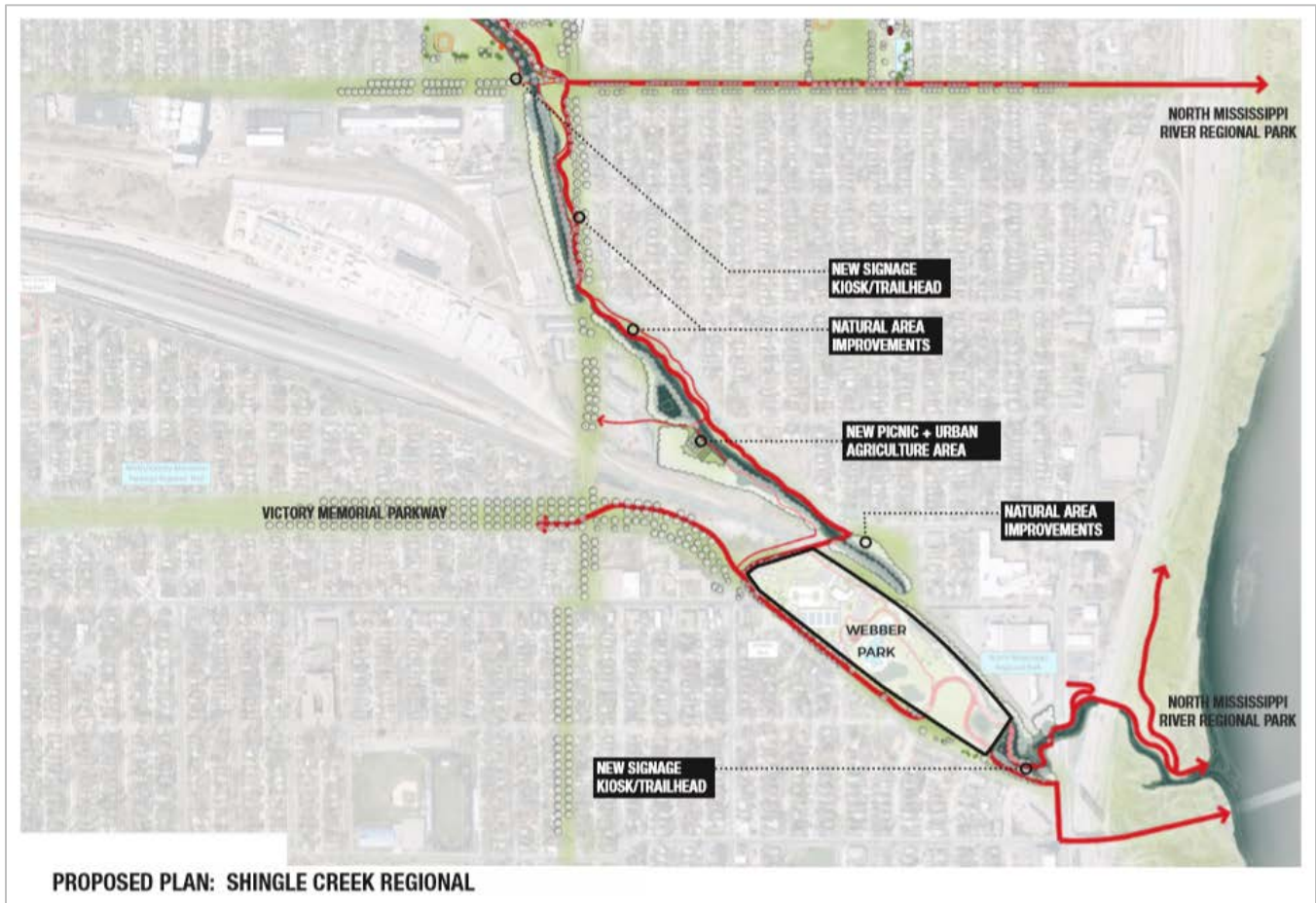
- Reconstruction of existing bridges, especially those near the Creekview and Shingle Creek Park areas, as artistically inspired and designed bridges.

- A new creek crossing at the northern end of Penn Avenue.

Creek and vegetation recommendations include:

- Continued collaboration with partners on water quality improvements throughout the watershed.
- Addition of in-creek water quality and aesthetic improvements, such as riffles and pools, especially in the vicinity of Creekview and Shingle Creek parks.
- A canopy enhancement zone stretching from 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue, where the MPRB will remove invasive species and would be replant the area with low growing native understory in order to increase visibility to and across the creek for both aesthetic and safety reasons.
- New opportunities to access the water's edge which may consist of stepping stones, accessible ramps, or other interventions to allow more direct access to the water.

Figure 4: Creek Corridor Development Concept



### Creekview Park Area

The Creekview area of Shingle Creek Regional Trail will remain organized mainly as it is today with the addition of a few specialized facilities meant to draw new users of underserved demographics to the park (see Figure 5).

- The play area remains in its existing location.
- The skate park is relocated behind the recreation center and middle school and is expanded and improved. The facility would exist partly on regional trail property and partly on school property.



- The multi-use diamond is removed in favor of four pickle-ball courts. This sport is growing significantly in popularity among seniors and this would be the first dedicated pickleball courts in the Minneapolis system. Their location at a regional trail hub will also encourage use from outside the city by people visiting by bicycle.
- A small open-air shelter provides relaxation space for those using or watching both the play area and the courts.
- Near 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue, within the regional trail corridor, four new sepak tawkra (a sport native to southeast Asia) courts will invite a new user group into the regional facility. Minneapolis has no dedicated courts yet and the neighborhood in which this park area sits has expressed a strong desire to have them.
- A possible expansion of the recreation center to create more community space and potentially offer food and beverages. According to the master plan, a café or food venture could be successful here due to the absence of any commercial uses in the northern tier of the city and because the Creekview Park area sits at a hub of trails on which bicyclists make large interconnected loops. As noted previously in this staff report and acknowledged in the regional trail master plan, this recreation center is “not a contributing nor allowable feature in the regional park.” Further, MPRB acknowledges that an expansion potentially reaches beyond the funding ability of the agency and that “assistance with funding from community and/or private sources” may be needed.

Figure 5: Creekview Park Area Development Concept



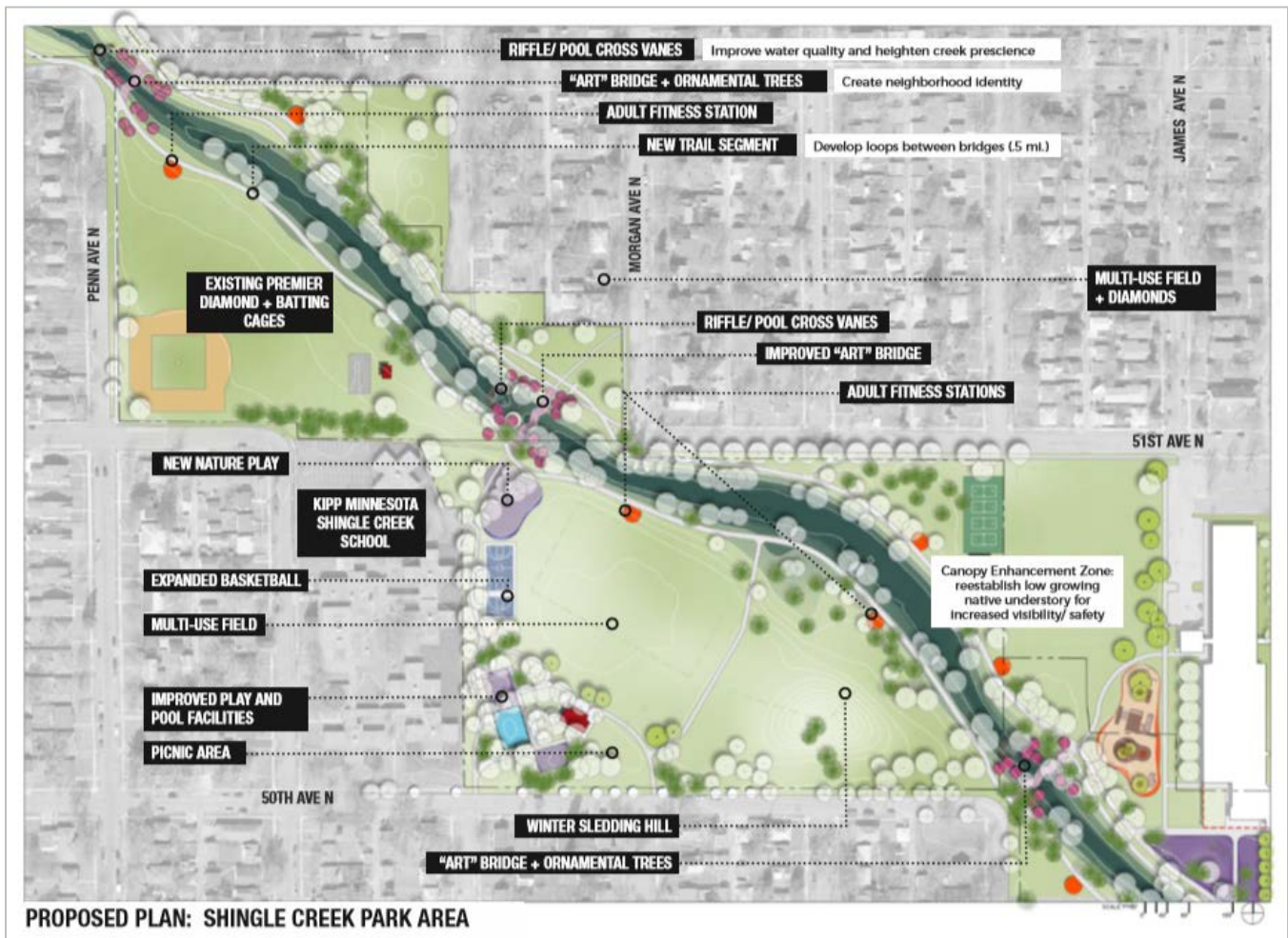


## Shingle Creek Park Area

The Shingle Creek area will see minimal change under the proposed design, largely investing in the existing facilities to ensure they provide a high-quality recreation experience (see Figure 6).

- Both the northern and southern ball diamonds remain.
- The wading pool, play area and restroom building are refurbished in their current locations.
- The basketball court is expanded to include a half-court facility to allow multiple games and use by varying ages.
- A nature play area is added near the creek north of the basketball court.
- The winter sledding hill is unchanged.
- The two multi-use diamonds near the play areas are decommissioned in favor of simple open multi-use field space.

Figure 6: Shingle Creek Park Area Development Concept



### Conflicts

There are no known conflicts with other projects in the Shingle Creek Regional Trail area.

### Public Services

Shingle Creek is located in a developed urban area with extensive public services. No additional public services are necessary for the implementation of the development concept.

### *Operations*

As an existing part of the well-established Minneapolis park system, Shingle Creek Regional Trail is already being maintained as part of MPRB's overall budget. This will continue under the new development concept.

Due to some changes in the mix of amenities in the regional trail area – most notably the reduction of multi-use diamonds – it is expected that the overall maintenance cost will decrease as the development concept is implemented. However, the community has expressed significant desire for enhanced general maintenance and natural resource maintenance along the corridor, which is supported by the natural resource elements of the development concept. Should that enhanced maintenance occur, it will be funded through MPRB's annual budgeting process and departmental budgets, with appropriate reimbursement through MPRB's share of state Operations and Maintenance funding.

All of MPRB's ordinances will apply within the regional trail corridor as they do today.

### *Partner Engagement*

Partner agencies were consulted throughout the planning process and comments were incorporated into the development concept as it evolved over 18 months. Specifically, MPRB consulted with the City of Minneapolis (multiple departments including transportation, planning and economic development), Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission, and Three Rivers Park District.

### *Public Engagement and Participation*

Extensive community engagement took place as part of the North Service Area Master Plan (NSAMP), the MPRB planning effort of which Shingle Creek Regional Trail was a part. The engagement process unfolded over more than 18 months and involved a wide variety of initiatives, more than 100 direct engagement events, and personal contacts with thousands of park users and area residents.

The NSAMP as a whole has equity – specifically racial equity – at its core. The overall plan includes guiding principles meant to ensure disparities are eliminated rather than reinforced, and extensive efforts were made to include under-represented communities in the planning process.

Shingle Creek Regional Trail is the primary “park” amenity in the northernmost section of Minneapolis. This area is unique in skewing demographically older than other north side neighborhoods and having a higher than average population of people of Asian descent. The specific equity considerations in the development concept address these two underserved groups, mainly through the introduction of new court facilities.

Another overarching equity consideration is to provide like facilities in different parts of the MPRB system, regardless of income levels near these facilities. Parallels are easily made between Minnehaha Parkway and Shingle Creek regional trails. However, the connectivity of trails, number of bridges, quality of natural environment, and other park amenities are not as pronounced within the Shingle Creek corridor as they are within the Minnehaha Parkway corridor. By augmenting the amenities at Shingle Creek as called for in the development concept, MPRB can move toward more equitable levels of service across its system.

Within the overall NSAMP process, Shingle Creek constituted one of the targeted work groups. The Shingle Creek Work Group convened multiple times to help envision and design the entire trail corridor area. The community had direct involvement with the project throughout the design process.

The development plan was vetted in a series of public Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings in June and July of 2018, which resulted in a recommendation by the CAC to support the development concept.

### *Public Awareness*

MPRB will make the public aware of improvements to Shingle Creek Regional Trail over time through e-notifications, press releases, direct communication with community engagement partners, and on-site signage. MPRB has a robust standard notification process and will apply this notification infrastructure to Shingle Creek.

### *Accessibility*

All facilities within this proposed regional trail will be developed in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

MPRB updated its ADA Action Plan in 2018 and has committed to the following which will inform the development, design, and ongoing operations of the regional trail:

- Recreation is for everyone: MPRB is committed to the spirit and intent of the ADA. In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the ADA, the MPRB will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its services, programs, or activities.
- Employment: People with disabilities are encouraged to apply for seasonal employment, full-time and volunteer opportunities. The MPRB does not discriminate on the basis of disability in its hiring or employment practices and complies with all regulations promulgated by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under title I of the ADA.
- Effective Communication: The MPRB will, upon request, provide appropriate aids and services leading to effective communication for qualified persons with disabilities so they can participate equally in MPRB programs, services, and activities, including qualified sign language interpreters, documents in Braille, and other ways of making information and communications accessible to people who have speech, hearing, or vision impairments.
- Modifications to Policies and Procedures: The MPRB will make all reasonable modifications to policies and programs to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all of its programs, services, and activities. For example, individuals with service animals are welcomed in all MPRB facilities, even where pets are prohibited.

The MPRB will not place a surcharge on a particular individual with a disability or any group of individuals with disabilities to cover the cost of providing auxiliary aids/services or reasonable modifications of policy, such as retrieving items from locations that are open to the public but are not accessible to persons who use wheelchairs.

MPRB is committed to ensuring that its programs, policies, services and facilities are accessible to everyone who lives, works and plays in Minneapolis. This commitment is inherent in their mission—to provide places and recreation opportunities for all people to gather, celebrate, contemplate and engage in activities that promote health, well-being, community and the environment.

### *Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area*

No part of the Shingle Creek Regional Trail boundary lies within the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area; therefore these requirements do not apply.

### *Stewardship Plan*

The natural resources within the boundary of Shingle Creek Regional Trail are, and will continue to be, managed by MPRB's environmental management, asset management, and forestry staff. Stewardship activities may occur in collaboration with partners including the City of Minneapolis and the Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission and may also use MPRB's youth programs such as the Green Team.



The Ecological System Plan and Natural Areas Inventory and Management Plan will also provide additional guidance for stewarding natural resources at Shingle Creek and throughout the system.

The master plan's development concept specifically calls for a "canopy enhancement zone" in the Shingle Creek Regional Trail corridor, which is both a restoration and safety effort. This area would see an opening of the creekside forest for visibility and reestablishment of a lower-growing native understory.

### *Natural Resources*

Vegetation within the Shingle Creek Regional Trail corridor will be managed as described in the Stewardship Plan section with areas of invasive species removal and replanting with native vegetation. Water resources are a joint effort between MPRB, Shingle Creek Watershed District Management Commission, and the City of Minneapolis.

The master plan's development concept specifically calls for the implementation of riffles and pools in the Minneapolis portion of the creek. These stream ecosystem improvements would provide habitat for many diverse aquatic organisms and plants.

Several stormwater management ponds flank the creek and are operated by the City of Minneapolis. These "wetlands" help improve water quality in the creek. Other than these features, there are no other wetlands within the regional trail boundary. The development concept is therefore not expected to have any wetland impacts.

### **Review by Other Council Divisions**

**Transportation – Regional Bicycle Transportation Network** (Steve Elmer 651-602-1756) – No additional comments.

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

**Environmental – Sewers** (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – The construction of any new or updating of existing paths, trails, or bridges may have an impact on multiple Metropolitan Council interceptors in multiple locations. To assess the potential impacts to our interceptor system; prior to initiating this project, preliminary plans should be sent to Tim Wedin, Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager (651-602-4571) at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services.

**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** (Michael Larson 651-602-1407) – The Plan is consistent with the *Thrive MSP 2040* land use policy related to Natural Resources Protection and Water Sustainability. The Plan identifies improvements to natural elements and ecological function and assigns costs to those improvements.

The Plan is also consistent with the Thrive land use policy related to Access, Mobility and Choice. Although the trail's function is primarily recreational, it does provide uninterrupted and protected travel for bicyclists and pedestrians.

MPRB's approach to planning for new and enhanced facilities is consistent with the Council's commitment to the outcome of Equity. The Plan's public engagement process and plan recommendations reflect the unique demographics of that part of the region, which will result in facilities that respond to the recreational interests of the southeast Asian community.

Minneapolis 2040 recognizes this regional trail. The City's planned urban land uses remain compatible with the nature and character of the regional trail.