

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Date: July 7, 2022

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: 390 Robert Steet

Members Present:

Chair, Tony Yarusso, At-large

Monica Dillenburg, District A

Robert Moeller, District B

Cana Yang, District C

Assata Brown, District D

Jeremy Peichel, District E

Cecily Harris, District F

Anthony Taylor, District G

Todd Kemery, District H

Susan Vento, Council Liaison

= present,

Call to Order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order.

Agenda Approved

Committee members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda and approved it by consensus.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Dillenburg, seconded by Moeller to approve the minutes of the June 2, 2022 regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

Public Invitation

None.

Business

1. **2022-189:** Lake Independence, Lake Minnetonka LRT, Minnesota River Bluffs LRT, North Cedar Lake, and Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail Master Plans, Three Rivers Park District, Part 2 of 2 (Chee Yang, and Kevin Phan)

Yang and Phan presented Part 2 of 2 of the Nine Regional Trails Master Plan on behalf of Three Rivers Park District (3RPD), outlined in the materials provided.

Harris asked is there a breakdown of hikers/bikers verses rollers along the trails? Kelly Grissman stated 3RPD does a robust visitor study every 5 years, so they do have that data for each trail as well as system-wide data. She could get that information if desired. Harris asked if she knew 'in general' what the breakdown was. Grissman stated it's about 80% bikers, less than 1% rollers, and the rest are walkers.

Harris asked who has the right of way on the trails? Grissman stated everyone is asked to share the trail, however there is a general expectation for trail use that requires slower traffic to keep to the right. Also, people are expected to announce their presence when passing on the left, i.e., stating "on your left".

Peichel stated he appreciates the level of participation and asked, if there is a survey methodology for collecting additional comments? Grissman noted again the 5-year visitor survey and stated that it is a great opportunity for trail users to give feedback. They also do a general population survey to gather input. Also, 3RPD has a feedback email address that is available for people to reach out with issues of concern or advice.

Moeller asked whether delay in light rail construction will change alignment issues of the trails. Grissman stated that delay of construction does not affect the final alignment or product but does delay how quickly 3RPD will be able to reopen the trail.

Kemery asked about the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail that runs next to Lake Minnetonka. Does any part of this trail have waterfront access to the lake itself? Grissman stated that the trail is adjacent to the lake at certain points and there is an overlook of the lake, but not access.

Chair Yarusso asked how 3RPD decides what portions of the trails are paved and what portions are aggregate? How does this decision relate to underserved communities? Grissman stated portions proposed to be paved are in more 'urban' areas with a greater percent of the trail use. These decisions were also made in consultation with local communities, so to meet their community expectations.

Kemery asked if there are any of the aggregate trails that have paved areas in some sections? Grissman stated there are some aggregate portions that use asphalt in spots where management needs require it, such as trails going through an underpass.

Kemery asked if there is an alternative hardened trail surface for someone with mobility issues, so they don't have to deal with aggregate surfaces? Grissman responded that right now aggregate and asphalt are the only things being planned, and noted that they are both accessible, hardened surfaces.

Kemery asked if planners are aware that aggregate surfaces need to be closely monitored to remain ADA accessible. He stated that there are 'lacquer' treatments that help bind aggregate surfaces for ADA purposes. Grissman stated they have not addressed this level of detail in the Master Plan, and she is not sure if this type of treatment has been used in these corridors before. She noted that there are a couple spots along the trail that are softer than they'd like, and they are working with Hennepin County to address these concerns.

Kemery offered to consult at no charge. Grissman stated this could be arranged and very beneficial to 3RPD.

Moeller asked 3RPD about the kinds of strategies 3RPD is considering to better serve the 'underserved' populations. Grissman stated that the master plan provides guidance for 25–40-year-olds. More detailed conversations are happening at the operations level.

It was moved by Moeller, seconded by Dillenburg, that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Three Rivers Park District's Lake Independence Regional Trail Master Plan.
2. Approve Three Rivers Park District's Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail Master Plan.
3. Approve Three Rivers Park District's Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail Master Plan.
4. Approve Three Rivers Park District's Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail Master Plan.
5. Approve Three Rivers Park District's North Cedar Lake Regional Trail Master Plan.
6. Advise Three Rivers Park District to implement advisory comments for Lake Independence Regional Trail and Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail master plans.
7. Require Three Rivers Park District, prior to initiating any construction of new or updating of existing paths, trails, bridges, or any other construction project, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.



Chair Yarusso cautioned 3RPD and Commissioners that due to forecasted use increase, there may need to be future facility adjustments, i.e., a dual, separated tracks for bikers and walkers.

The group further discussed the growing use and possibility of ‘passing lanes’ on trails. Mullin noted this is something we could explore further when updating the Regional Parks Policy Plan.

With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **Motion carried.**

2. **2022-190:** Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund (PAOF), Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail (Adelmann), Dakota County (Jessica Lee)

Lee made a presentation on a request for a PAOF grant request for Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail from Dakota County as outlined in the materials provided.

It was moved by Peichel, seconded by Harris, that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$81,328 to Dakota County to acquire the 5.06-acre Adelmann property located at 4755 220th Street West, Farmington, for Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail.
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

The group discussed the master plan process and benefit of working with developers.

With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **Motion carried.**

3. **2022-191:** Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund, Lake Byllesby Regional Park (Ferguson), Dakota County (Jessica Lee)

Lee gave a presentation on a request for a PAOF for Lake Byllesby Regional Park from Dakota County as outlined in the materials provided.

It was moved by Peichel, seconded by Kemery, that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$120,229 to Dakota County to acquire the 10.2-acre Ferguson property located in Randolph Township for Lake Byllesby Regional Park.
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

Council Member Vento commented that she was at an event in Washington, DC and met a couple from the east coast that has been to Spring Lake Park Reserve and were awestruck by their experience. They asked how the Twin Cities is blessed with such a cohesive collaborative park system. Vento wanted to thank the whole region but especially Dakota County for all their hard work and such a wonderful park system.

With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **Motion carried.**

Information

1. 2021 Regional Park System Annual Use Estimate (Darcie Vandegrift)

Vandegrift gave a presentation on the 2021 Regional Park System Annual Use Estimate as outlined in the materials provided.

Peichel asked if there are there any density concerns or adjustments as we were just discussing congestion along the trails? Vandegrift responded that no we didn’t measure density but that would be interesting.

Harris stated that it would be interesting to know what trail use is like during the winter. She also discussed sales trends for high quality outdoor gear because of Covid, and how much of the equipment is for sale now. It will be interesting to see if the Regional System will see continued sustained use or if people have changed their lifestyles.

Dillenburg asked about continuous monitoring of usage throughout the calendar year. Vandegrift stated it will be interesting to see what continued use will be and if trail use continues to increase. We have capacity to explore these questions with the Streetlight measurement tool.

Chair Yarusso discussed his interest in gathering better information as the Regional Parks Policy Plan projects increase use. He would be interested in knowing if the numbers are aligning between different methodology. He also agreed with Harris that he would like to see a full count in the winter.

Taylor added to this information could be helpful to guide how we are making investments and it would be instructive to know what the return on investments are, based on usage.

Dillenburg suggested some type of marketing campaign to let people know what they can do in our parks.

2. Annual Metropolitan Regional Parks Operation and Maintenance Allocation - Final (Heather Giesel)

Giesel gave a final report on the Annual Metropolitan Regional Parks Operation and Maintenance Allocation as outlined in the materials provided.

No discussion.

Reports

3. Chair

Chair Yarusso discussed the desire for hybrid meetings and stated that it is not likely unless the legislation changes the laws referring to Open Meetings. He noted that it may be possible to raise in a future legislative session.

4. Committee Members

Peichel shared that a LCCMR Bill passed, and the motion included a renewal of the Environmental Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) constitutional amendment. If passed, the initiative would wait until it could go on the ballot and be voted on by Minnesotans. It will be of primary importance for any people who support natural resources to let their newly elected or re-elected representatives and senators know how important this effort is for Minnesota. We need ENRTF to be reauthorized so that we can continue to have these funding sources we've come to rely on for conservation purposes. He also mentioned some concerns about language that prevented future acquisition funding. He was not sure if that concern will remain. For the short term, acquisition funding is kind of on hold, at least for a little while.

Harris reported that Washington County has started their Middle Saint Croix Valley Regional Trail master planning effort. She added that this trail will start in Afton and go to Stillwater. Ultimately, there is a desire to get up to Saint Croix Boom Site. She also reported on a community foundation that serves Washington, Chisago, Polk, Burnett, and Pierce Counties. She noted that they are setting up an environmental fund to give grants to organizations including public agencies who are interested in conservation. Washington County will be an eligible applicant.

5. Council Liaison

None.

6. Staff

Mullin shared that the Bdote tour is scheduled and on track for Friday, July 29. Details will be sent out soon. He also discussed late summer/fall tours for the Commission (as held in the past) and encouraged commission members to send suggestions to him.



Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting of July 7, 2022.

Approved this 4th day of August 2022.

Council Contact:

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