

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: October 1, 2013

For the Community Development Committee meeting of October 7, 2013

Subject: Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail Master Plan, Dakota County

District(s), Member(s): MPOSC District H, Barbara Schmidt

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 Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail Master Plan.
2. Require that prior to initiating development of the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail, preliminary plans should be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager (651-602-4503) at Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the regional interceptor system.
3. Notify Dakota County that approval of the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail Master Plan applies to the preferred trail route designated in the master plan and does not constitute approval of the long-term alternative identified along the MN&S line owned by Canadian Pacific Railway.

Background

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* identifies a regional trail search corridor on the western edge of Dakota County. Dakota County has completed an extensive planning process to determine the alignment of the regional trail and has submitted a master plan for the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail, which will travel from the planned Minnesota River Greenway Regional Trail in Burnsville, through Savage and Lakeville, to the planned North Creek Greenway Regional Trail in Farmington. The trail will provide connections to Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve, Lake Marion, downtown Lakeville as well as to several local parks along its 20 mile route. The master plan also identifies a long-term alternative route for a portion of the regional trail along the Canadian Pacific Railway corridor, if it becomes available in the future.

Rationale

The Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies.

Funding

The estimated costs to implement the master plan are \$15,660,360, which includes \$1,793,250 for land acquisition and \$13,867,110 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. Future funding based on this master plan may be awarded through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund. Council action is required to approve the CIP and to approve specific grants to Dakota County.

Known Support / Opposition

The Dakota County Board passed a resolution approving and adopting the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail Master Plan. The master plan also includes resolutions of support from the Cities of Burnsville, Lakeville and Farmington as well as the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board. The Three Rivers Park District/Scott County Partnership provided a letter of support. There is no known opposition to the master plan.

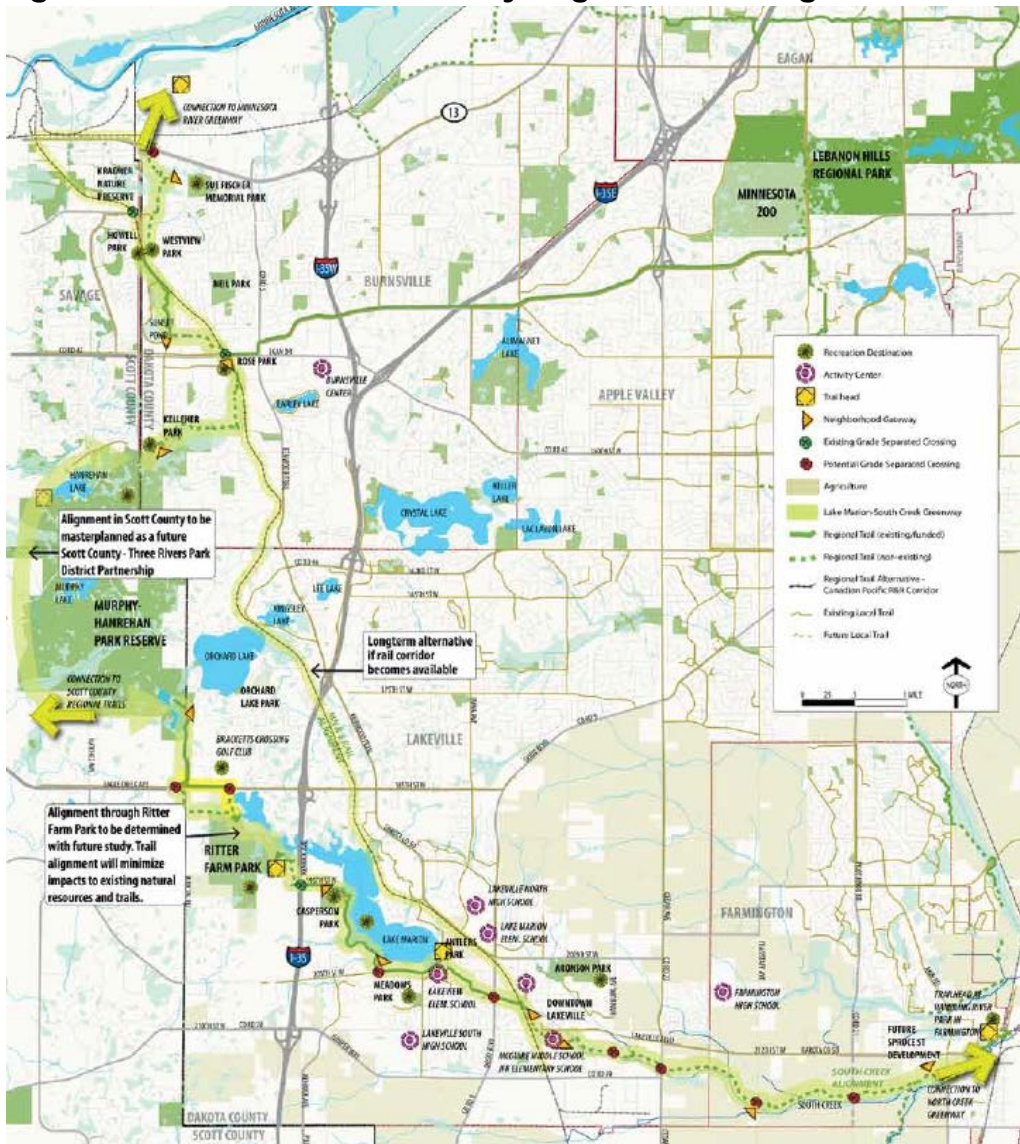
MASTER PLAN REVIEW ANALYSIS

The 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan requires that master plans for regional destination trails address the eleven items listed below.

1. Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

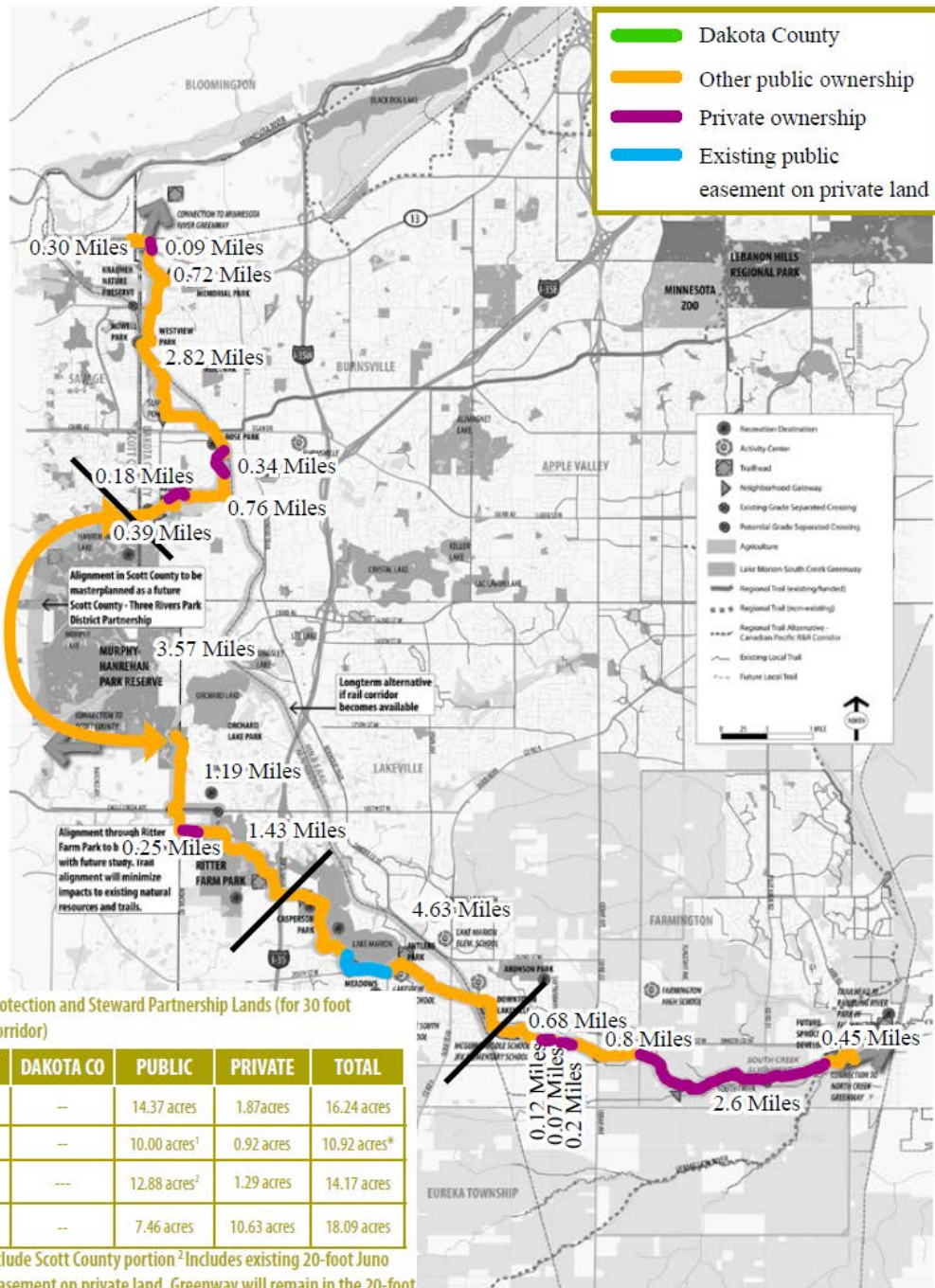
The Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail will be developed on the western edge of Dakota County and will travel through Burnsville, Lakeville and Farmington. The trail is envisioned to connect to a proposed segment of the trail on the west side of Murphy Hanrehan Park Reserve in Scott County, which will be planned in the future by Scott County and Three Rivers Park District. The general route of the regional trail is shown in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1: Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail Alignment



The route for the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail consists of existing trails as well as planned trail segments. The master plan envisions a 100 to 300 foot wide greenway, although the regional trail corridor will be 30 foot wide in most places. Along its length, the regional trail corridor consists of approximately 59.42 acres. Seventy-five percent of the acreage is publicly owned, including a public easement for Juno Trail on private property along the south side of Lake Marion. The public easement for Juno Trail is 20 feet wide; the regional trail will remain within the 20 foot easement. Twenty-five percent of the acreage for the regional trail corridor is privately owned. *Figure 2* depicts the trail route and the property ownership.

Figure 2: Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail Property Ownership



Strategies for protection of land for the regional trail include:

- Park dedication
- Direct purchase with the resale of land not required for the trail corridor
- Permanent easements
- Use agreements
- Land donation
- Bargain sale
- Life estate
- Negotiations with cities and developers

Dakota County estimates that the acquisition costs for the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail are \$1,793,250.

2. Demand Forecast

Dakota County estimates that if open today, the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail could expect approximately 429,000 annual visits. This estimate assumes that the portion of the regional trail making the connection through Scott County was also open for use.

The master plan cites Metropolitan Council studies, which indicate that 50 percent of regional trail users live within three-quarters of a mile from the trail (the core service area) and 75% percent of users live within 3 miles of the trail (the primary service area). The core service area of the trail includes the communities through which the trail travels: Burnsville, Savage, Credit River Township, Lakeville and Farmington. The primary service area includes the core service area and also extends into Apple Valley. The majority of trail users are anticipated to come from these service areas.

3. Development Concept

The primary recreation feature of the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail will be a continuous destination trail for nature-based recreation and nonmotorized transportation. 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 20-30 foot wide regional trail corridor to be constructed and operated by Dakota County.

The regional trail will be a bituminous trail designed in accordance with applicable American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guidelines, Minnesota Department of Transportation bicycle design guidelines and Dakota County trail standards. The trail will be 10 to 12 feet wide with a 3 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.

Access to the Lake Marion 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

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

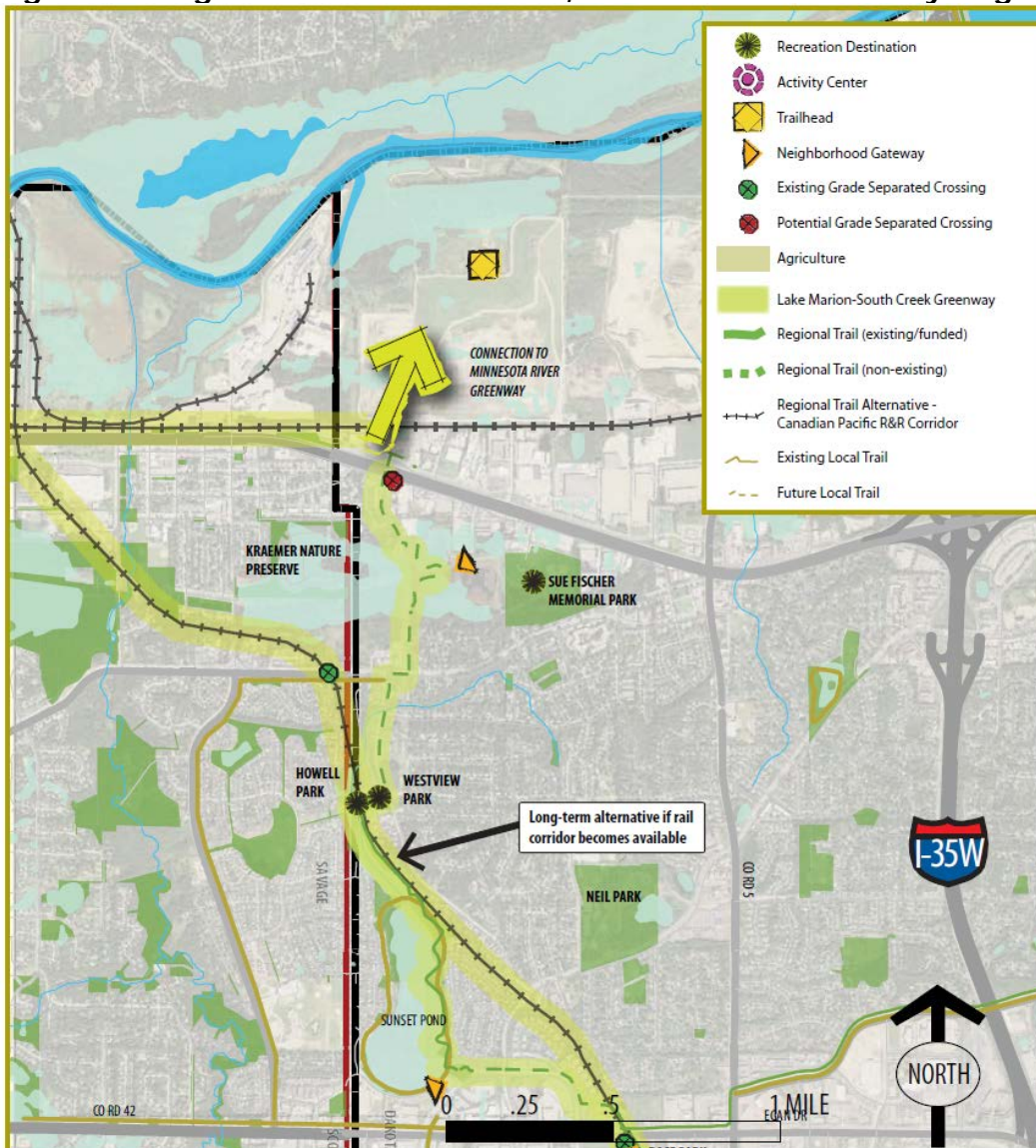
- Benches
- Secure bicycle parking
- Wayfinding and traffic control
- Local or regional trail connections
- Water
- Interpretation

For planning purposes, the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail corridor has been divided into four segments.

Segment 1 is 7.5 miles in length and travels between the planned Minnesota River Greenway Regional Trail and the northern edge of Murphy Hanrehan Park Reserve. The north portion of Segment 1 is shown in *Figure 3* and starts in Burnsville's Minnesota River Quadrant, which is a gravel mine and landfill that the City plans to redevelop with a mix of commercial, industrial, housing and recreational uses.

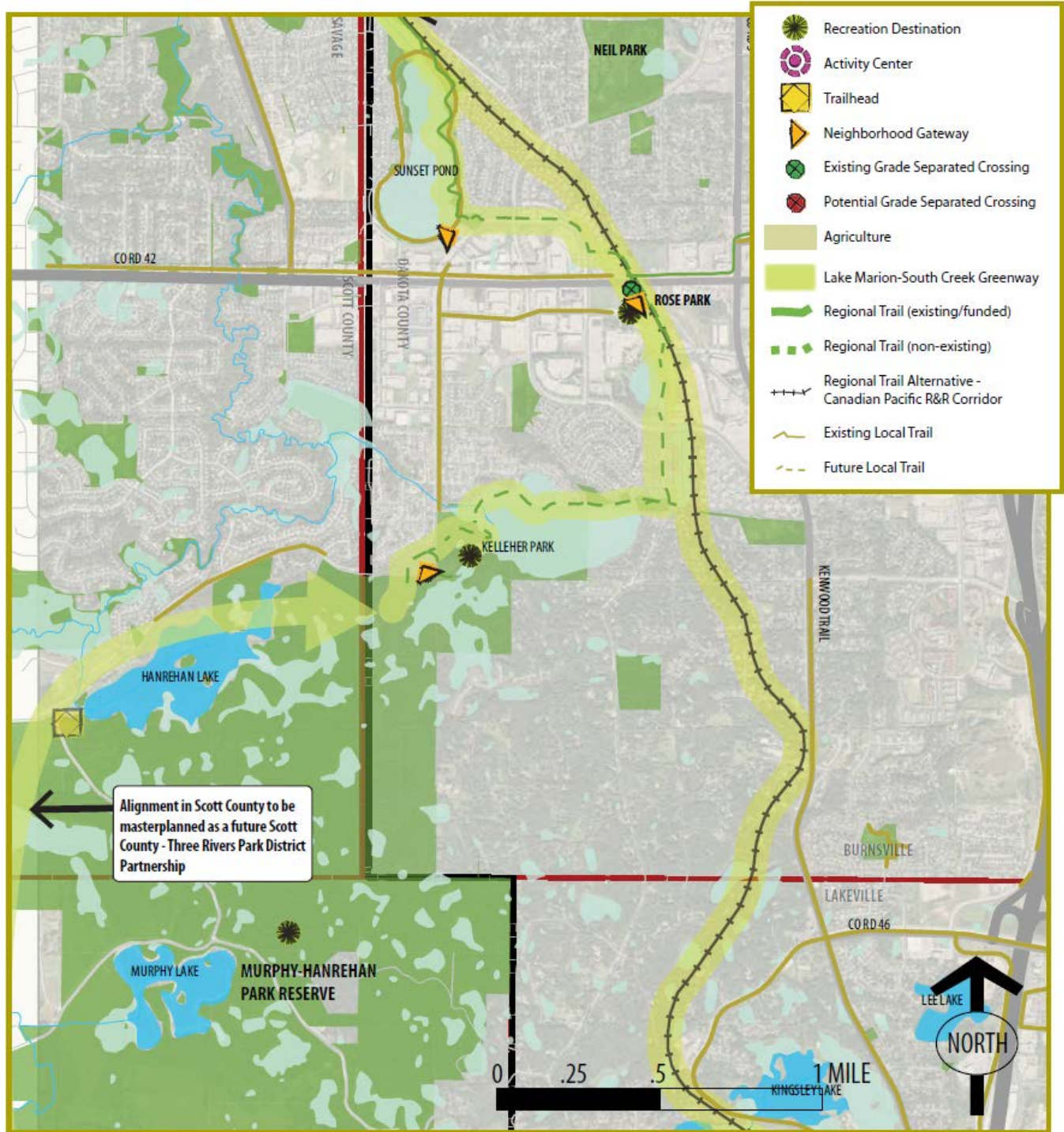
Segment 1 will include trailheads at the Minnesota River Quadrant and at the northern side of Murphy Hanrehan Park Reserve. The regional trail will also have four neighborhood gateways. In addition to the connections the Minnesota River Greenway Regional Trail and Murphy Hanrehan Park Reserve, Segment 1 will provide connections to six local parks. Two grade separated crossings will be needed for this trail segment.

Figure 3: Segment 1—North Portion, Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail



The southern portion of Segment 1 is depicted in *Figure 4*.

Figure 4: Segment 1—South Portion, Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail

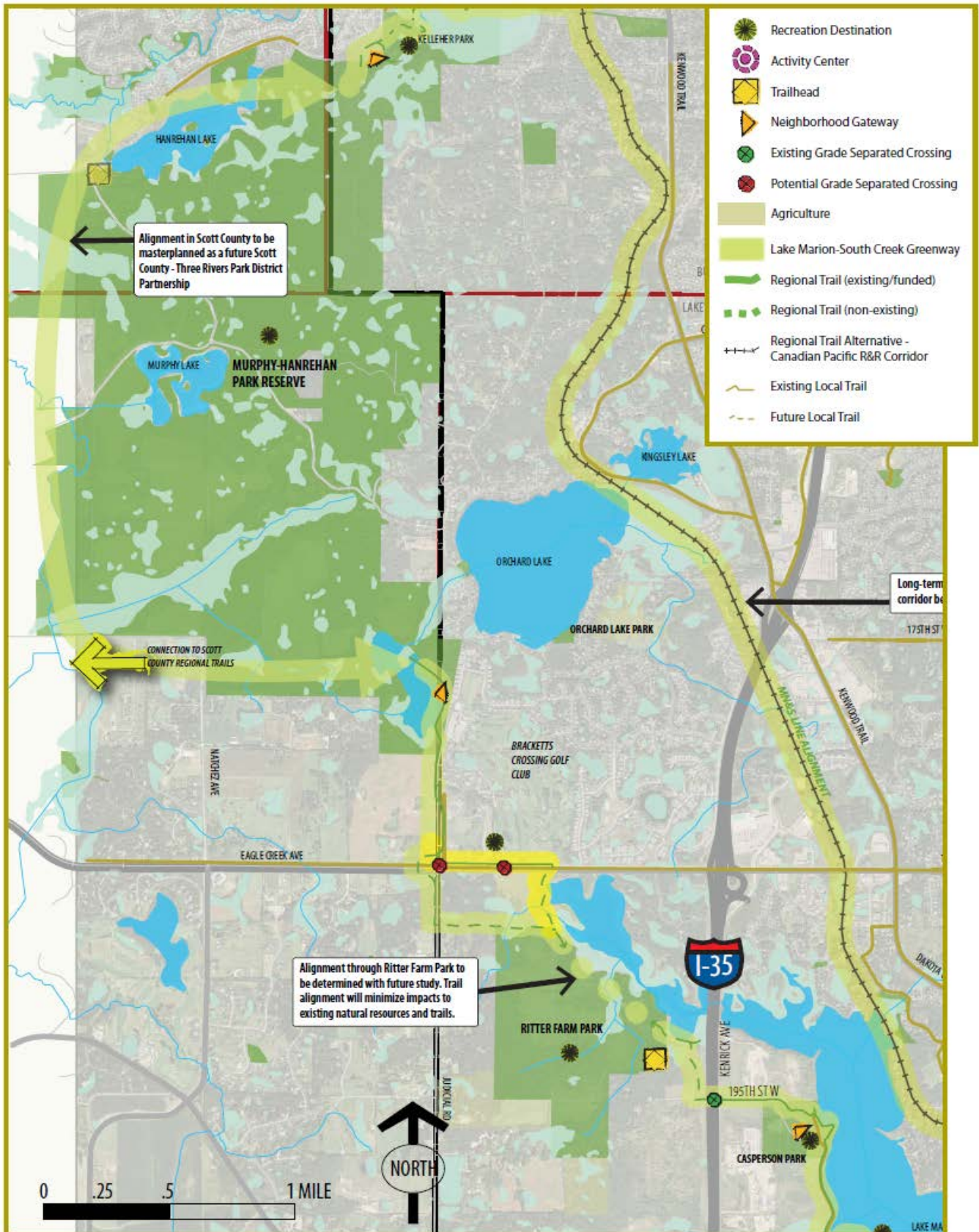


Segment 2 is 6.5 miles in length and travels between the northern portion of Murphy Hanrehan Park Reserve and Lake Marion. The master plan shows a link for the regional trail through Scott County and notes that this segment will be planned in the future by Scott County and Three Rivers Park District.

Segment 2 is shown in *Figure 5* and will include trailheads at the northern side of Murphy Hanrehan Park Reserve and at Ritter Farm Park. The regional trail will also have a

neighborhood gateway at the south edge of Murphy Hanrehan Park Reserve. Two grade separated crossings will be needed for this trail segment.

Figure 5: Segment 2, Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail



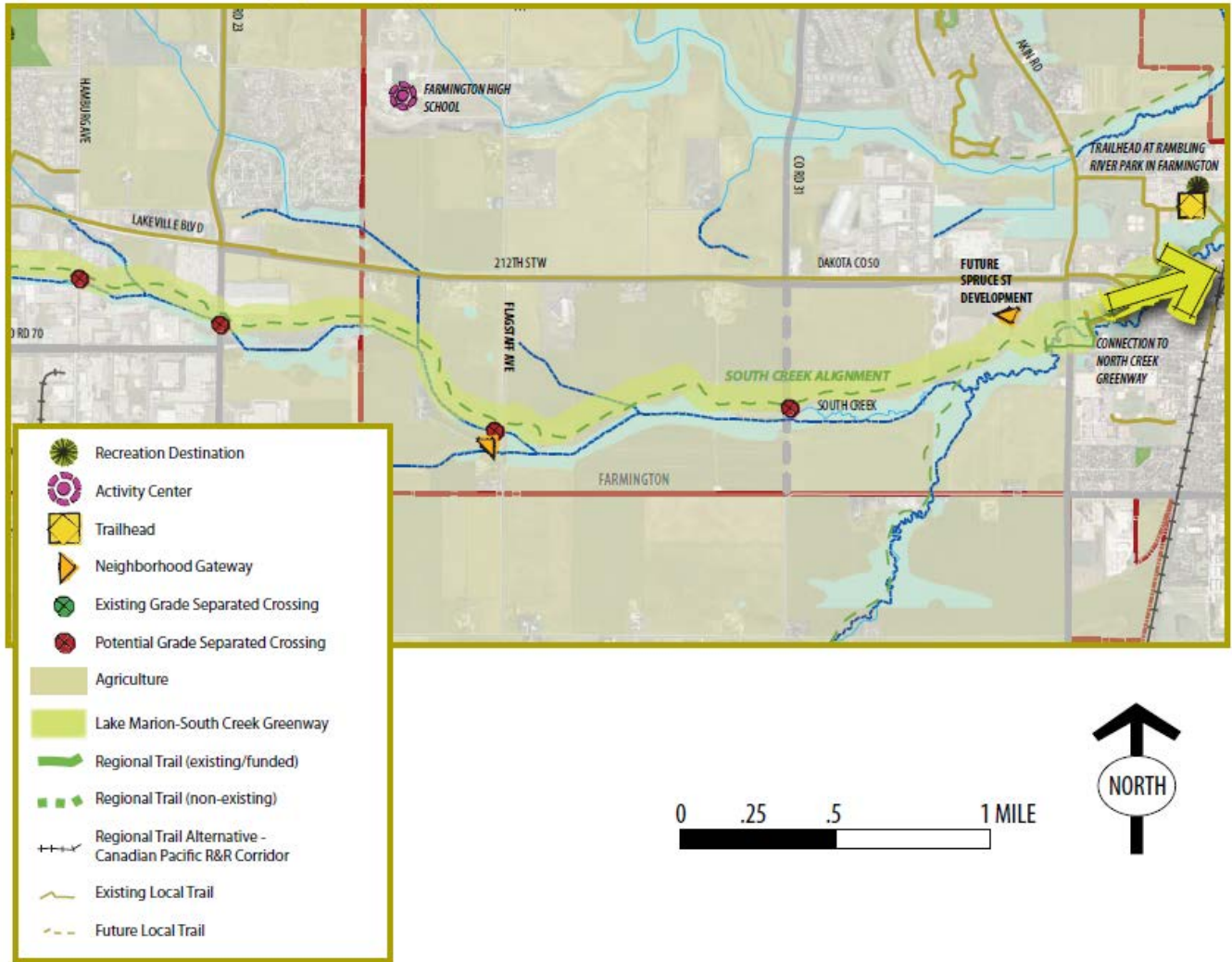
Segment 3 is 4 miles in length and travels between Lake Marion and downtown Lakeville, as shown in *Figure 6*. Segment 3 will include a trailhead at Antlers Park. The regional trail will also have four neighborhood gateways. Segment 3 will provide connections to four local parks, to Lake Marion, two elementary schools, and a middle school. Two grade separated crossings will be needed for this trail segment.

Figure 6: Segment 3, Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail



Segment 4 is 5 miles in length and extends east from downtown Lakeville to downtown Farmington as shown in *Figure 7*. This segment of the regional trail will have a trailhead at Rambling River Park in Farmington and one neighborhood gateway. Segment 4 will connect to the planned North Creek Greenway Regional Trail and will provide fishing access to South Creek. There are opportunities to provide soft surface walking trails to create recreation loops along South Creek. Six grade separated crossings will be needed for this trail segment.

Figure 7: Segment 4, Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail



Alternative Alignment: The master plan also identifies a long term alternative alignment for the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail along the Minneapolis, Northfield and Southern (MN&S) line, as shown in *Figure 8*. The MN&S line is owned by Canadian Pacific Railway. The northern portion of the line between downtown Lakeville and the Minnesota River is currently inactive. Canadian Pacific is not interested in divesting the corridor and indicates that the corridor is part of its long term strategy for moving rail freight through and around the Twin Cities. Canadian Pacific envisions the corridor will return to active status in the future. The master plan states that if the MN&S line becomes available, it should be acquired and converted to a greenway trail. However, Segments 1-4 described above are designated as the preferred alignment in the master plan. All acquisition and development costs described in the master plan apply to the preferred alignment.

Figure 8: Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail Alternative Alignment



The estimated development costs for the regional trail are \$13,867,110, as shown in *Figure 9*. These costs include trail construction, wayfinding signage, landscaping, lighting, site furnishings, trailhead and neighborhood gateway amenities, and grade separated crossings. This estimate also includes a contingency of 10 percent as well as estimated design and engineering fees of 18 percent. Grade separated crossings, which are a critical component of the County's greenway system, total approximately \$5.7 million. It may be feasible to coordinate these crossings with local and Minnesota Department of Transportation roadway projects.

Figure 9: Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail Proposed Development Costs

Segment	Proposed Development Cost
1	\$3,391,760
2	\$2,799,824
3	\$2,909,928
4	\$6,558,848
TOTAL	\$13,867,110

4. Conflicts

The surrounding land uses are generally compatible with the regional trail corridor. Minor conflicts may arise from private encroachment or residents' sensitivity to trail recreation or maintenance uses. Dakota County will work with individual landowners to resolve these issues on a case-by-case basis.

5. Public Services

No significant new public services will be needed to accommodate the regional trail. Proposed trailheads and neighborhood gateways are served by the existing road network. If utilities are not available, options such as solar-powered lighting, self-composting toilets or wells will be considered.

6. Operations

Dakota County will be responsible for the operations of the 30 foot regional trail corridor and will enter into a joint powers agreement with partner agencies where there are opportunities for operational partnerships. Once the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail is complete, an additional 0.5-1.0 FTE year-round park keeper position and a .5 seasonal FTE will be needed to operate and maintain the trail.

Regular maintenance for the Lake Marion 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.

Dakota County estimates that annual operations and maintenance costs for the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail will be \$191,850.

7. Citizen Participation

Dakota County led a yearlong planning process with advice from a technical advisory group (TAG). The TAG included representatives from:

- Cities of Burnsville, Lakeville, Farmington
- Scott County
- Three Rivers Park District
- Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization
- Dakota County Historical Society
- Dakota County Parks and Open Space Department and the Office of Planning

The responsibilities of the TAG included providing guidance and technical assistance, identifying partnerships opportunities and discussing concurrent projects. Four TAG meetings were held between September 2012 and April 2013. Several meetings with key stakeholders were held to discuss specific issues.

Two open houses were held in January 2013 to gather input on the trail alignment and two additional open houses were held in May 2013 to review the master plan. The draft master plan was posted on a project website as well as on the County's website, which allowed opportunities for public feedback. All project stakeholders also were provided a copy of the master plan for review.

The Dakota County Board adopted the master plan on August 20, 2013. The master plan also includes resolutions of support from the Cities of Burnsville, Lakeville and Farmington as well as the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board. The Three Rivers Park District/Scott County Partnership provided a letter of support.

8. Public Awareness

Dakota County promotes awareness of its regional parks and trails through the County website, direct mail, press releases, brochures, on-site promotion, signage and paid advertising. Dakota County also collaborates with cities, businesses, the Metropolitan Council and others to promote its facilities, programs and services.

9. Accessibility

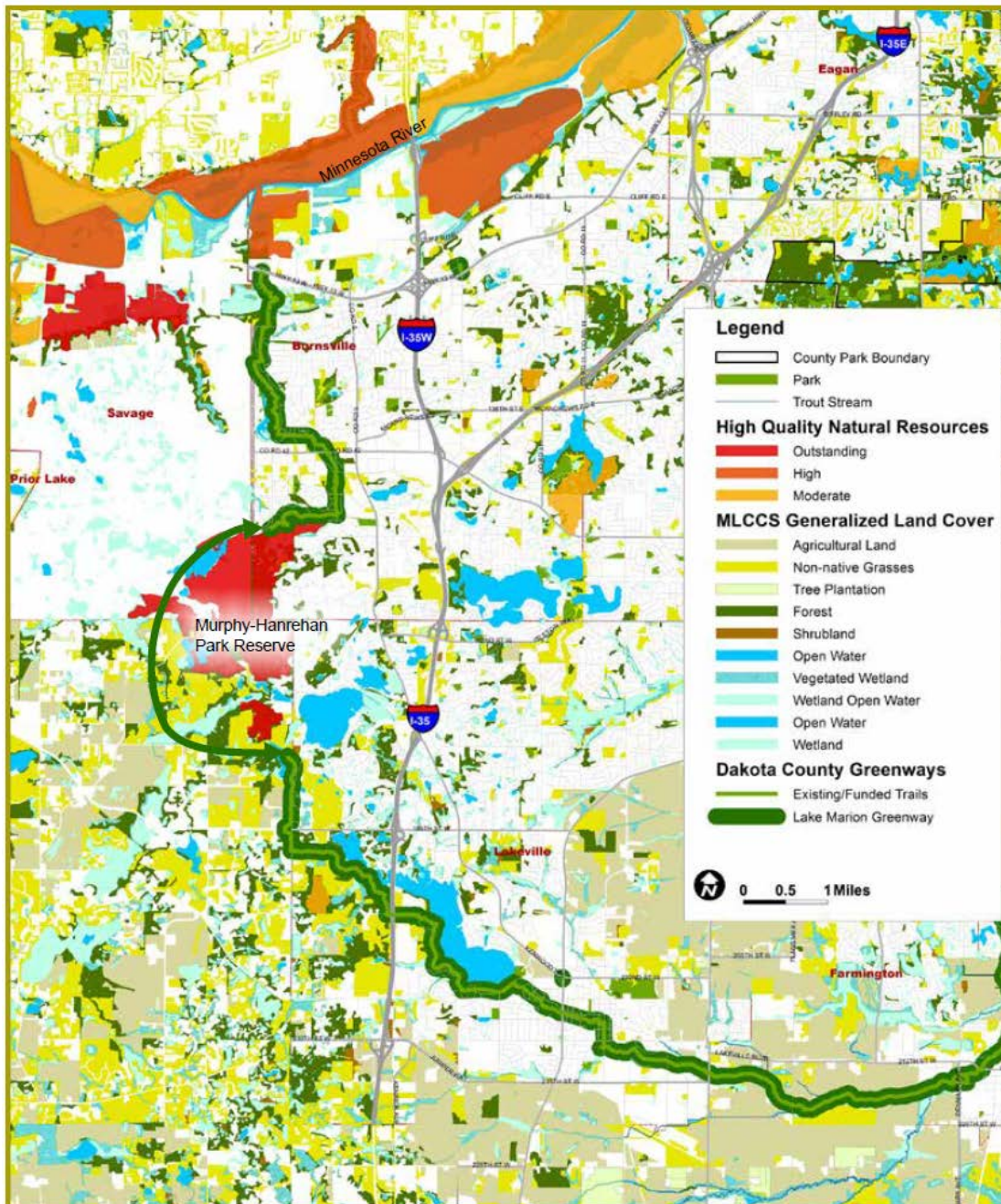
The master plan states that Dakota County is committed to offering universal accessibility at all trail facilities. The primary paved trail and all access points described in the master plan are located and planned for accessibility for all visitors.

10. Natural Resources

The existing natural resources along the planned greenway and regional trail corridor consist of large complexes of high quality woodlands, prairies and wetlands which are mostly within regional and local parks. There are several large natural areas within or adjacent to the greenway corridor including: Murphy Hanrehan Park Reserve, Ritter Farm Park and Lake Marion. The greenway links to the Minnesota River and to South Creek, a tributary of the Vermillion River.

According to the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS), a majority of the land cover along the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail route is developed lands, non-native grasses or forest cover. Murphy Hanrehan Park Reserve consists of lands that have been classified by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Metropolitan Council as High Quality Natural Resources of Outstanding Quality. *Figure 10* shows the existing land cover along the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail corridor.

Figure 10: Existing Land Cover (MLCCS), Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail



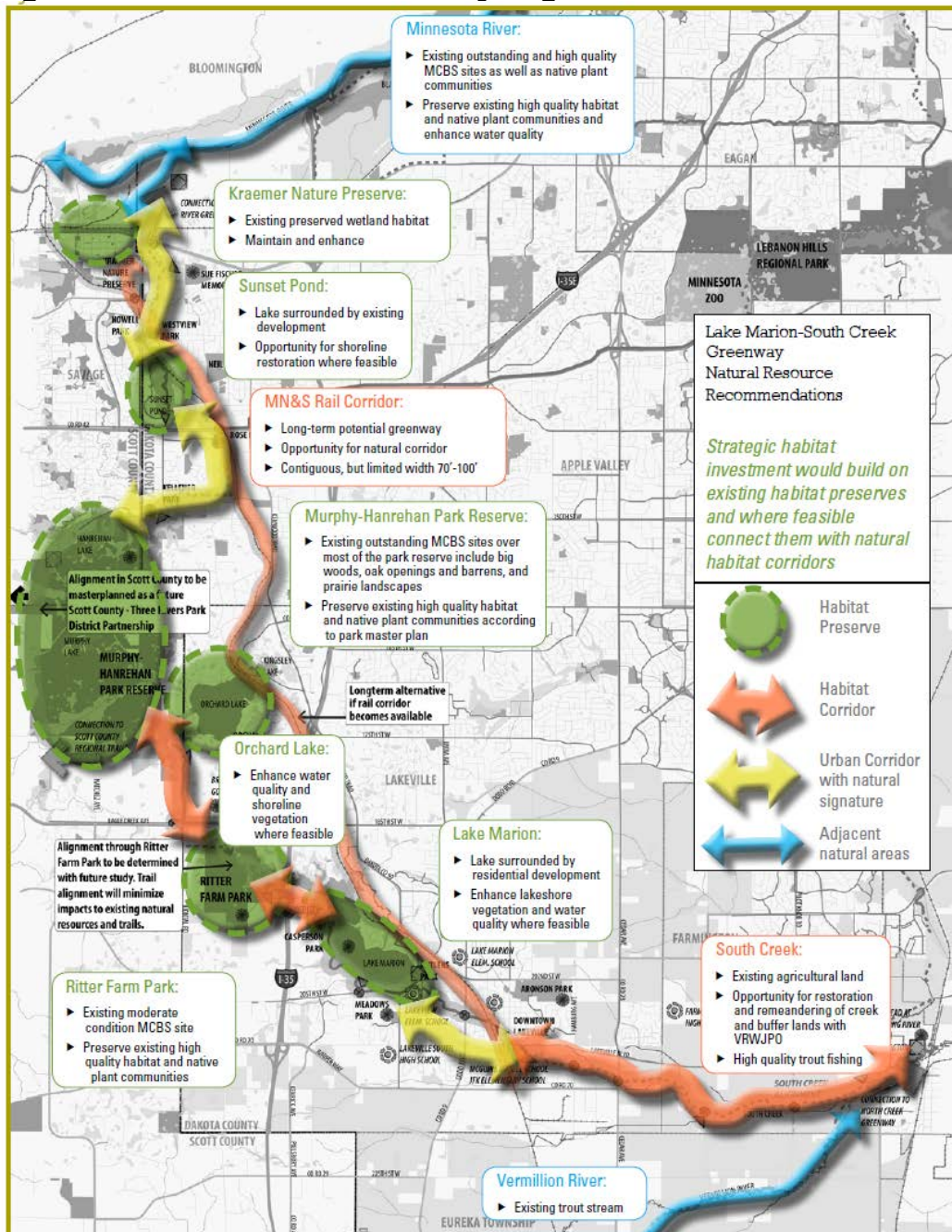
Water resources along the greenway corridor include several lakes, scattered wetlands, rivers and streams. South Creek is a significant habitat and water resource for the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail and is a designated trout stream. Although naturally producing trout populations are present, South Creek is on the Environmental Protection Agency's impaired waters list. There is a need for stream restoration on South Creek to improve conditions and remove it from the impaired waters list.

11. Stewardship Plan

Restoration and protection efforts will be focused near trailheads, which will provide the greatest opportunity for users to see the results of stewardship and provide a high-quality user experience. Stewardship activities are proposed to be pursued in cooperation with adjacent landowners, both public and private. Since the regional trail corridor will be 20 to 30 feet wide within a greenway corridor of 100-300 feet, the stewardship plan relies heavily on partnerships.

The master plan identifies and prioritizes key habitat investment areas for natural resource management, which are targeted to areas associated with high quality ecological resources and greenway use patterns. The top priority habitat restoration and management areas are the existing high quality landscapes at Murphy Hanrehan Park Reserve and Ritter Farm Park; the wetlands at Kraemer Nature Preserve, the shoreline of Lake Marion and the South Creek corridor. The habitat investment areas are depicted in *Figure 11*.

Figure 11: Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail Habitat Investment Areas



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.

Surface water management practices at trailheads will include:

- Developing rain gardens alongside trailhead parking lots
- Creating planted depressed parking lot islands to capture stormwater
- Allowing stormwater to run onto surrounding grass for small parking lots surrounded by green space
- Planting trees to capture and evaporate rainwater on their leaves and to create pores in the soil with their roots to allow water to soak in
- Planting prairie plants around parking lots where their deep roots facilitate stormwater infiltration

Review by Other Council Divisions

Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – This project extends 20 miles through the communities of Burnsville, Savage, Lakeville, and Farmington. The construction of any new or updating of existing trails may have an impact on multiple Metropolitan Council interceptors in many locations. To assess the potential impacts to the 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.

Community Development – Environment and Surface Water Management (Jim Larsen 651-602-1159) – A significant portion of segment 4 of the trail is proposed to be constructed in close proximity to South Creek. As stated in the submission, South Creek is already on the 303d impaired water list for fecal coliform bacteria, and fish and aquatic macroinvertebrate bioassessments. Asphalt products in general and sealcoat pavement maintenance products specifically, whether coal-tar based or asphalt-based, can contribute significant amounts of PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) to storm water runoff from impervious surfaces following their application. (see the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency consumer fact sheet at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/water/water-types-and-programs/stormwater/industrial-stormwater/industrial-stormwater-steps-to-compliance/industrial-stormwater-steps-to-compliance-step-14-how-to-stay-in-compliance/how-municipalities-can-verify-compliance-of-facilities.html>)

In light of South Creek's current listing on the MPCA's Section 303(d) Impaired Waters list, in part due to biotic impairments, Council staff recommends that the County either consider alternative trail surfaces within this segment, or elimination of the planned periodic seal coating of the trail surface (in an effort to prolong its expected life) to avoid potentially exacerbating an existing water quality problem in the creek.

Dakota County response: *Dakota County will address pavement maintenance by using best practices to minimize impacts on water quality. Currently Dakota County does not sealcoat our regional trails. As an organization, Dakota County is evaluating other products that minimize PAHs, and will be incorporating those products within our parks, transportation and capital buildings.*

Transportation Planning (Russ Owen 651-602-1724) – As the Metropolitan Council is responsible for planning all modes of passenger and freight transportation in the metropolitan region, we were encouraged to see that the Marion Lake Greenway Master Plan acknowledges the important freight rail component of the Minneapolis, Northfield &

Southern rail line through the south metro and offers reasonable, shorter term alternative alignments that would not displace the rail line. There are segments of this line that are currently inactive, but given the critical importance of freight transportation in general, and freight rail capacity in particular, to the long term economic sustainability of the Twin Cities, it is imperative that the rail line is preserved for future freight rail operations until the railroad deems it to have no future utility and agrees to disinvest the line. It should also be noted that with respect to future passenger rail transportation, the MN&S line has been considered by the Minnesota Freight and Passenger Rail Plan as a possible future intercity passenger rail corridor. Its importance is underscored by the fact that alignment provides the only remaining direct rail access from Scott and Dakota counties into downtown Minneapolis.

Metro Transit (Stephan Baisden 612-349-7361) – No comments.

Conclusions

1. The Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies.
2. The estimated costs to implement the master plan are \$15,660,360, which includes \$1,793,250 for land acquisition and \$13,867,110 for development.
3. 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.
4. The master plan identifies the Minneapolis, Northfield and Southern (MN&S) line, owned by Canadian Pacific Railway, as a long-term alternative for the Lake Marion Greenway Regional Trail. Canadian Pacific is not interested in divesting the corridor and envisions it returning to active status in the future. This corridor is important for future freight rail operations and has been considered for possible future passenger rail transportation. Therefore, the Metropolitan Council should only approve the preferred alignment as described in the master plan for the regional trail. If the railroad agrees to divest the corridor in the future, Dakota County may submit a master plan amendment for Metropolitan Council consideration.
5. Approval of this master plan does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. Future development funding based on this master plan would be done through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Land Acquisition Opportunity Fund. Council action is required to approve the CIP and to approve specific grants to Dakota County.