

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

A continued funding strategy is needed to design, build and maintain the pedestrian and bicycle system. This includes the initial capital costs and on-going maintenance costs. The quality of a city's walk-bike system is a reflection how these amenities are prioritized while recognizing existing resources. In addition to city funds, other funding sources such as partnerships, grants and donations should be explored.

Many factors contribute to a community's success in securing non-city funding for trail systems. Selecting an appropriate project is probably one of the most important. In preparing the trail system funding strategy, projects that have the best potential for non-city funding should be identified. Projects with the potential for success include those that have a high number of users, address a significant safety issue, protect natural areas, connect to a regional or state trail, have an interesting story and/or have demonstrated community support. For example, a proposed trail which connects a new neighborhood along a busy road to a school and downtown has more potential for success than the completion of a gap in the sidewalk system on a street that already has a sidewalk on the other side. These types of necessary but limited interest projects are better candidates for inclusion in the city's capital improvement program (CIP) or for the use of park dedication funds.

General Funds

General funds can be used to develop the walk-bike system. These funds are best used for smaller projects within the already developed portion of the City. Projects like completing short sidewalk gaps on local streets that may not be eligible for grants. General funds are the primary funding source for on-going maintenance cost such as crosswalk painting, snow plowing and street sweeping.

State Aid Funds

State aid funds are available for pedestrian and bicycle improvements on state aid streets. This funding source is particularly useful at the time of street construction or re-construction.

Trails and Sidewalks Built Along with Development

Developers can be required to provide trails and sidewalks at the time of development. This requirement can be negotiated during the site review process or formalized through the City's subdivision and zoning code.



Park and Trail Dedication

Minnesota Statutes allow local governments to require dedication of land or cash in-lieu of land for parks and trails from new subdivisions. The dedication must be reasonable and rationally related to the recreation demand created by the development. Cities can also require dedication of right-of-way or easements for sidewalks or trails. Park and trail dedication is a frequently used tool to help pay for recreation facilities. Some cities, such as Chanhassen, MN, have adopted a separate trail fee or dedication requirement.

Partnerships

Partnerships with both public and private organizations are an essential component to achieve individual projects outlined in the plan. Organizations with partner funding can also provide assistance with design, outreach and maintenance. Local trail clubs can be used to help maintain trails. Partnerships and relationships with private businesses can also result in easements and use agreements for trails across private land.

Potential partnership organizations include:

- Dakota County.
- Dakota County Active Living Partnership.
- Rosemount Bicycle Club.
- Rosemount Area Athletic Association (RAAA).
- Rosemount Area Hockey Association.
- School District.
- Rosemount Downtown Business Council.
- Northern Dakota County Regional Chamber of Commerce.
- Friends of Dakota County Parks.
- Area Businesses including SKB Environmental and Flint Hills.
- Rotary Club.
- Lions Club.
- Railroads.

Donations

Private donations are another potential funding source. These may be financial donations from individuals or area corporations or donations of labor from recreation clubs or use agreements or trail easements from landowners. Programs such as “adopt-a-trail” by an organization, business, or individuals have successfully been used in many communities to help with maintenance tasks and raise awareness.

Grants

Grants are a way to make the City's dollars go further. Below is a sample of some grant opportunities that may be available along with websites to visit for more information.

Dakota County State Health Improvement Project (SHIP)

Website: <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Departments/PublicHealth/Projects/SHIP>

The State Health Improvement Program (SHIP) provides funds to reduce the burden of chronic diseases through increasing physical activity, improving nutrition, and reducing tobacco use. These funds are administered by the Dakota County Public Health Department and the City has access to them through participation in the Dakota County Active Living group. Grant requests associated with increasing physical activity are most closely related to this funding source and must focus on policy (laws or regulations), system (organizations or institutions operation) or environmental (land use, zoning or community design) changes. Examples of related projects funded through SHIP include pedestrian/bike master plans, wayfinding signs, bike racks, and trail master plans, as well as Safe Routes to School (SRTS) comprehensive plans for local schools and funds for events to promote walking and biking to school. While SHIP funds cannot be used for construction projects, Dakota County has contracted with a local firm to seek and write grants for projects that meet the goals of Active Living and SHIP.

Bikes Belong

Website: www.bikesbelong.org

The Bikes Belong Grant Program strives to put more people on bicycles more often by funding important and influential projects that leverage federal funding and build momentum for bicycling in communities across the U.S. These projects include bike paths and rail trails, as well as mountain bike trails, bike parks, BMX facilities and large-scale bicycle advocacy initiatives.

Minnesota DNR

Website: www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/index.html

The Minnesota DNR is one of the most comprehensive resources when it comes to state funding for trail programs. They offer a variety of grant programs and technical assistance. Current programs provide assistance for cross country skiing trails, all-terrain vehicle trails, snowmobile trails and recreational trails. Each program may vary in funding and differ in timing. The DNR should be consulted before pursuing a grant to clarify funding availability and qualifications.



NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program

Website: www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/

The National Parks Service's (NPS) "Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program" (RTCA) is designed to provide communities technical assistance to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. The RTCA program also implements the natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation mission of the National Park Service in communities across America. The NPS highly encourages communities to contact them before submitting an application for assistance.

Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Website: www.recovery.gov

The Recovery and Reinvestment Act was signed on February 17, 2009 and infused our government with a number of new grants and technical assistance programs. These programs and others are a great opportunity for local governments to fulfill the funding gaps they've seen with the economic downturn. These funding sources have a small window of opportunity and require quick action. These opportunities are focused heavily on energy efficiencies and job growth, but trail projects may also be eligible.

Surface Transportation Authorization Act of 2009

Website: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/index.htm>

Since June 9, 1998 we have seen three federal bills (TEA-21, ISTEA & SAFETEA-LU) enacted to fund the bulk of our transportation improvements. The current program in place today, SAFETEA-LU expired on September 30, 2009. The reauthorization of this bill will likely occur in some form and fashion and will fund transportation improvements across the United States for the next six years.

The essence of these bills has primarily supported roadway and safety improvements. However, roadway projects that have integrated trails have fared better than others during the solicitation process. The City should begin collaborating with roadway jurisdictions to prioritize projects for the next round of federal transportation dollars. Building early support across multiple jurisdictions will better position the City in obtaining federal dollars.

Minnesota DOT

Website: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/grants/>

The reauthorization act described above will likely open the door for new dollars. In turn, these dollars will help fund various programs at the state level. For instance, SAFETEA-LU helped fund past programs such as, "Safe Routes to Schools." A program designed to help build safe routes for kids to walk and bike to school.

Programs of this nature are likely to reoccur with the reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU. The City will need to continue to collaborate with roadway jurisdictions in order to stay up to date on potential State funding sources.

Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund

Website: www.lottery.state.mn.us/etf.html

The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund is a program funded through the Minnesota State Lottery proceeds. Between 2003 and 2008 the Trust Fund has shown a strong support for trail projects.

CURA – University of Minnesota

Website: www.cura.mn.edu

The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) is an all-University applied research and technical assistance center. The program is designed to connect the University with nonprofit organizations, businesses, neighborhoods, local governments, and state agencies in Minnesota by providing grants and technical assistance programs.

One program in particular, Center for Community and Regional Research is located on the University of Minnesota Duluth Campus. The program is designed to provide research and technical assistance to local agencies on community projects that serve a local importance. The community is linked with faculty and staff and typically requires a cost sharing agreement. This program and others offered through CURA offer a unique opportunity to partner with the academics for further planning initiatives.

Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment

On Nov. 4 2008, Minnesota voters approved the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to the Minnesota State Constitution which increased the general sales and use tax rate by three-eighths of one percentage point (0.375%) to 6.875% and dedicated the additional proceeds as follows:

- 14.25% to a newly created Parks and Trails Fund to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance.
- 33% to a newly created Outdoor Heritage Fund to be spent only to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests and habitat for game, fish and wildlife.
- 33% to a newly-created Clean Water Fund to be spent only to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater, with at least 5% of the fund spent to protect drinking water sources.
- 19.75% to a newly created Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund to be spent only for arts, arts education, and arts access, and to preserve Minnesota's history and cultural heritage.



Funding from the Legacy Amendment is administered by a variety of agencies such as the Department of Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency, Department of Health, Historical Society, and regional art councils. A number of new grant programs were created, including the Parks and Trail Legacy Grant Programs, Solar Energy Legacy Grant Program, Lessard-Sams Conservation Partners Legacy Program and Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grants. Information about grant opportunities can be found on individual state department and organization websites.

Foundations & Non-Profits

There are foundations and non-profits throughout the State and Country that are interested in fulfilling their missions by supporting local projects. Identifying these sources can be an overwhelming task. There are a number of on-line tools that can assist with this process. The Minnesota Council of Foundations is a great starting point for identifying local foundations. Another good starting point is to consider the businesses within your community and using their websites to see if they have a foundation or charitable giving department. In addition to retailers and manufacturers, be sure to consider businesses such as the railroad, energy providers and communications companies.

Before pursuing a foundation, it is important to recognize that each one operates differently. An applicant should be cognizant of the foundation's mission and be sure the proposed project aligns with the foundation's priorities. It is important to contact a foundation early-on in the solicitation process to clarify whether a project would be considered. It is also important to recognize that most funders do not want to be the sole source of funding for a project. Rather they want to see that community members, businesses and organization are actively supporting the project and have committed some of their own funds, however small. A funding strategy for an individual trail project would be to engage the community and foster some small amounts of financial support and then start writing funding requests to foundations and non-profits.

One challenge for local governments in pursuing foundation and non-profit funding is that many require the applicant to be non-profit with federal 501(c) designation. Opportunities to partner with local non-profits should be considered and relationships built so these partnerships are ready when there is a funding opportunity to pursue. Starting a new nonprofit, such as a "Friends of Rosemount Parks and Trail" may be an option. However, starting a nonprofit is neither easy nor quick. The Minnesota Council on Foundations provides a 15 step process on their website, www.mncn.org, that includes steps such as determining the organization's mission, recruiting board members, adopting articles of incorporation and bylaws and state and federal filings and registrations.