

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: May 3, 2016

For the Community Development Committee meeting of May 16, 2016

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of May 25, 2016

Subject: Central Anoka County Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment and Reimbursement Consideration for Pedestrian Tunnel Project, Anoka County

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

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statutes 473.313 and 473.315; Planning Strategy 1 and Finance Strategy 6, *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*

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 Central Anoka County Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.
2. Consider reimbursing Anoka County up to \$170,000 from its share of a future Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program for costs associated with a pedestrian tunnel under CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard that connects the Central Anoka County Regional Trail to Bunker Hills Regional Park.
3. Inform Anoka County that the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that reimbursement will be granted, and expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.

Background

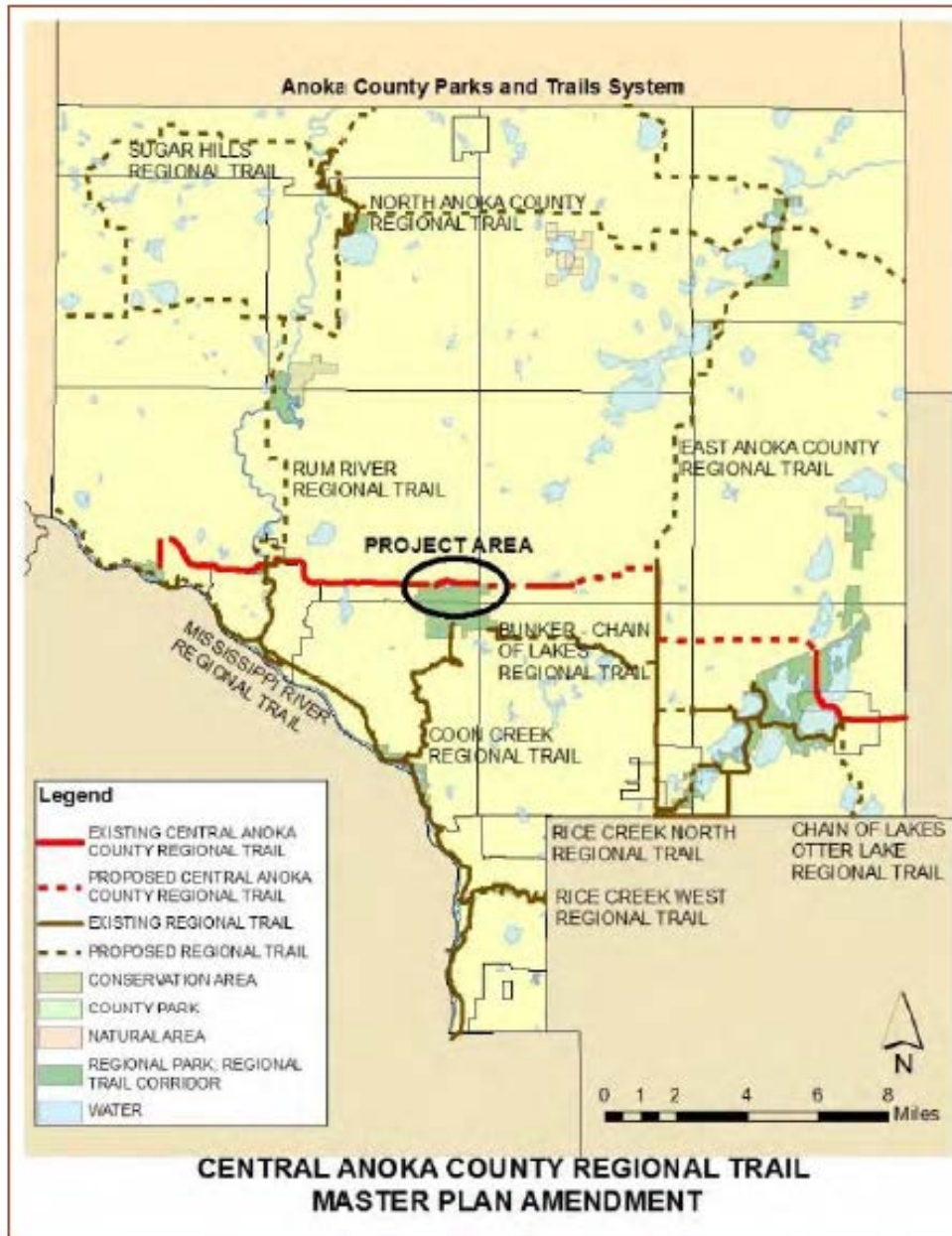
Anoka County has submitted an amendment to the master plan for the Central Anoka County Regional Trail and a request for the Council to consider reimbursing the County up to \$170,000 from its share of a future Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for the costs of a pedestrian tunnel that will connect the regional trail to Bunker Hills Regional Park.

Once completed, the Central Anoka County Regional Trail will traverse the central portion of Anoka County as it connects Mississippi West Regional Park, Rum River Regional Trail, Bunker Hills Regional Park, East Anoka County Regional Trail, Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve, and Chain of Lakes-Otter Lake Regional Trail. The regional trail travels through the communities of Ramsey, Andover, Ham Lake, Blaine, Lino Lakes and Centerville along its 26-mile route. Approximately 16 miles of the trail have been constructed. The Council previously approved master plans for segments of the regional trail in 1999 and 2010. This amendment covers approximately 3.5 miles of the regional trail adjacent to CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard in Andover and Ham Lake between Hanson Boulevard and Highway 65, as shown circled in black on *Figure 1*.

The master plan amendment and reimbursement consideration request are associated with the reconstruction of CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard. This project also includes the construction of

portions of the regional trail, reconstruction of existing portions of the regional trail, and a pedestrian tunnel under the roadway that will provide a safe connection to Bunker Hills Regional Park.

Figure 1: Central Anoka County Regional Trail with Amendment Area Circled in Black



Rationale

The Central Anoka County Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies as described in the *Analysis* section of this staff report.

The request for reimbursement consideration is within the Council’s granting authority outlined in Minnesota Statute 473.315 and is consistent with Finance Strategy 6 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, which states:

Finance Strategy 6: The Council may reimburse regional park implementing agencies for the costs of acquiring some lands before they have been made part of the Regional Parks System or for

development projects undertaken before they can be financed through the Metropolitan Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program.

Reimbursement will be considered for development provided that:

- *the project in question is consistent in timing, scale, type, and cost with an approved master plan*
- *all information required for the development grant is submitted to the Council prior to the regional park implementing agency undertaking the project; and*
- *the Council approves the project.*

This request is consistent with the terms of Finance Strategy 6 for the following reasons:

The timing, scale and cost for the construction of the pedestrian tunnel is consistent with this master plan amendment that is concurrently being considered by the Council for approval. Sufficient information has been submitted in this request regarding what would be financed with a Council grant as described in the Funding section below and in the Development Concept portion of the Analysis section. Additionally, Anoka County is requesting Metropolitan Council approval for County expenditures prior to undertaking construction of the pedestrian tunnel.

Funding

The estimated cost to implement the master plan amendment is \$2,060,400 for development, which includes \$1,000,000 to construct the pedestrian tunnel. Anoka County has received a Federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) grant for the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard reconstruction project. STP funds will pay for two-thirds of the costs for the pedestrian tunnel. Anoka County Parks and the City of Andover will each pay \$170,000 of the remaining costs.

The County is seeking reimbursement consideration for its costs of \$170,000 associated with the pedestrian tunnel. Approval of the reimbursement consideration request does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. The requested reimbursement consideration may be financed from Anoka County's share of a future Metropolitan Regional Parks CIP. However, the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that reimbursement will be granted, and expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.

Known Support / Opposition

The Anoka County Board of Commissioners approved and adopted the master plan amendment on March 8, 2016. Additionally, the Cities of Ham Lake and Andover passed resolutions of support for the regional trail master plan amendment. There is no known opposition to the master plan amendment or the reimbursement consideration request.

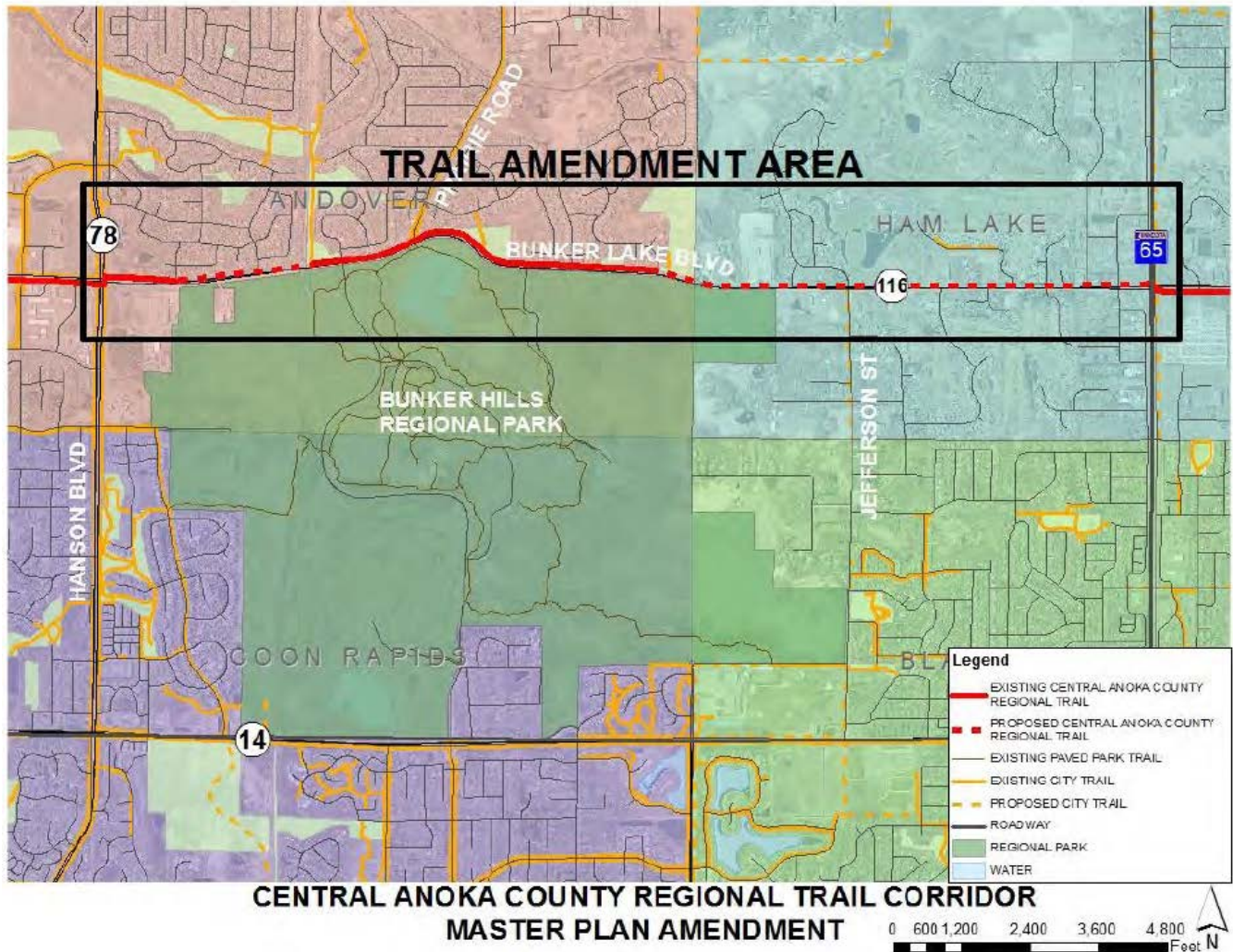
Analysis

Planning Strategy 1 of the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan requires that master plans for linking regional trails address the nine items listed below.

Boundaries and Acquisition

The Central Anoka County Regional Trail travels 26 miles through the cities of Ramsey, Andover, Ham Lake, Blaine, Lino Lakes and Centerville. Approximately 16 miles of the regional trail have been constructed. The master plan amendment area encompasses two miles of the regional trail adjacent to CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard in Andover and Ham Lake, between Hanson Boulevard and Highway 65, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Central Anoka County Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment Area



The regional trail within the amendment area will be located within the public right-of-way. The County is in the process of acquiring right-of-way for the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard reconstruction project, therefore there are no acquisition costs associated with this master plan amendment.

The regional trail follows CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard along the north side of the road. Portions of the trail currently exist, including the segment between Hanson Boulevard and Crane Street, as shown in *Figure 3*. This segment includes a 10-foot wide paved trail and is approximately 0.25 miles long. Also shown in *Figure 3* is a planned segment between Crane Street and Lions Park, a local park in Andover. This segment is approximately 0.5 miles long and will cross the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad corridor. This will be an at-grade crossing with an automatic gate that will engage to prevent trail users from crossing the tracks when a train is present.

This trail segment will be built in conjunction with the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard reconstruction project. The rural two-lane roadway will be reconstructed into an urban four-lane divided roadway with center median, curb and gutter, and outside shoulders. The County has received STP funding and plans to begin construction in the summer of 2016.

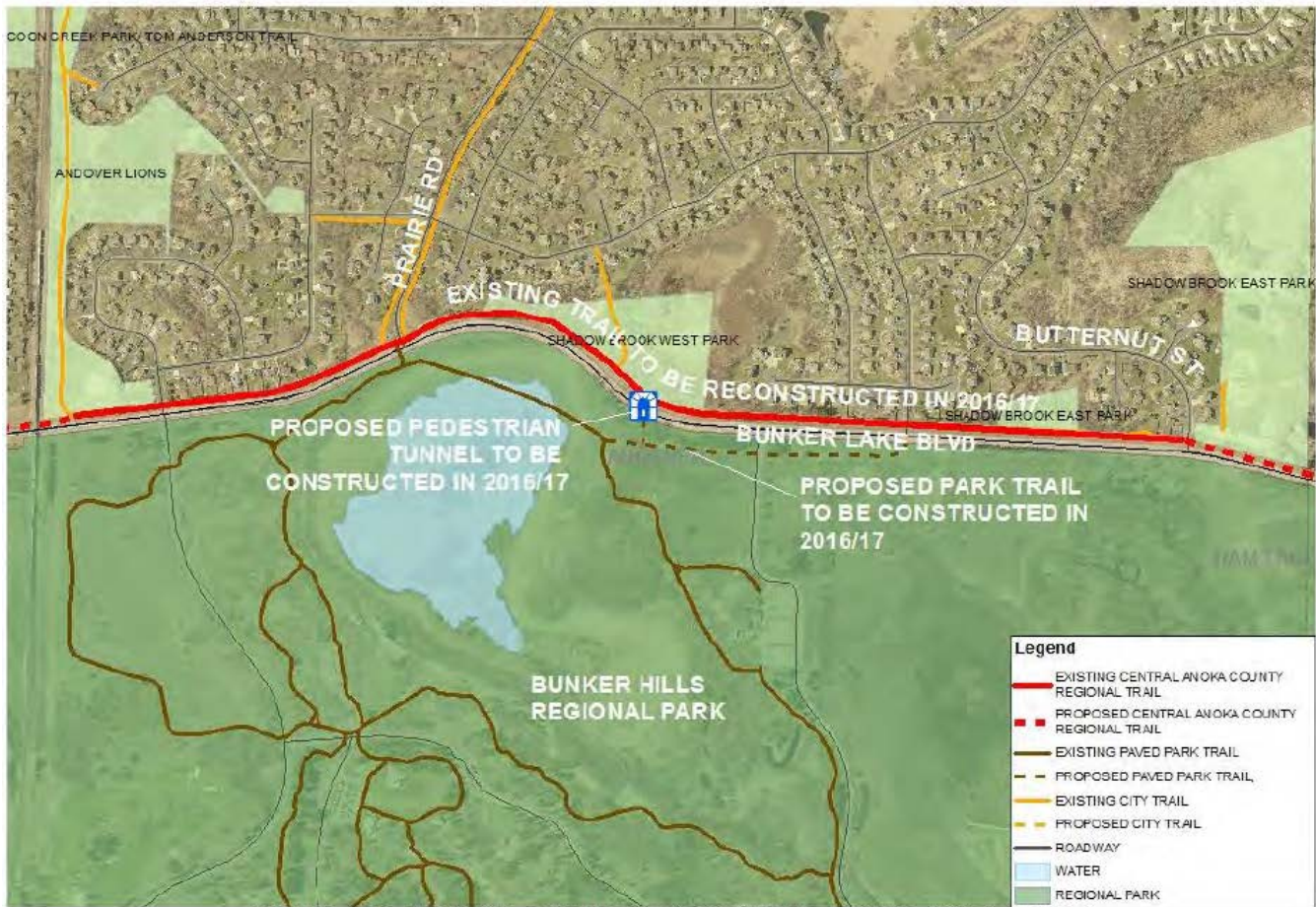
Figure 3: Central Anoka County Regional Trail from Hanson Boulevard to BNSF Railroad Corridor



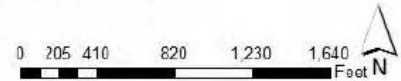
The next segment of the regional trail is located between Lions Park and Butternut Street, and is shown in *Figure 4*. This is an existing 10-foot wide paved trail that is 1.2 miles long and will be reconstructed as part of the roadway project. This segment also includes a pedestrian tunnel under CSAH

116/Bunker Lake Boulevard to provide a safe connection between the regional trail and Bunker Hills Regional Park.

Figure 4: Central Anoka County Regional Trail from Lions Park to Butternut Street



**CENTRAL ANOKA COUNTY REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDOR
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT
BOUNDARY AREA MAP B**



The 1.6 mile eastern segment of the regional trail is also planned to be 10-feet wide and is located between Butternut Street and Highway 65, as shown in Figure 5. The 0.8 mile portion of this segment between Butternut Street and 900 feet east of Jefferson Street will be built as part of the roadway reconstruction project. The remaining 0.8 mile segment to Highway 65 is not anticipated to be constructed for at least 5-10 years, and is dependent upon funding availability.

Figure 5: Central Anoka County Regional Trail from Butternut Street to Highway 65



Demand Forecast

Outdoor recreation patterns in the region have been growing steadily. These patterns have also been seen in Anoka County. Recreational visits to Anoka County regional trails have increased from 583,000 in 2009 to 1,070,000 in 2014. The Central Anoka County Regional Trail had approximately 79,000 visits in 2014. The development of key missing segments of the trail will likely increase usage.

Regional parks and trails have been increasing in popularity along with increases in population. As the population in the region continues to grow, recreation resources and amenities should also increase. Anoka County’s population is expected to grow approximately 32 percent between 2010 and 2040, when the estimated County population will be 438,820.

The historical increase in recreational visits to regional parks and trails, coupled with the projected population growth of Anoka County and its communities indicate an increase in future demand for recreational facilities.

Development Concept

As described in the Boundaries and Acquisition section, the regional trail consists of a grade separated, paved trail that has a width of 10 feet. Planned segments of the regional trail between Crane Street and Jefferson Street will be developed as part of the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard project, which is

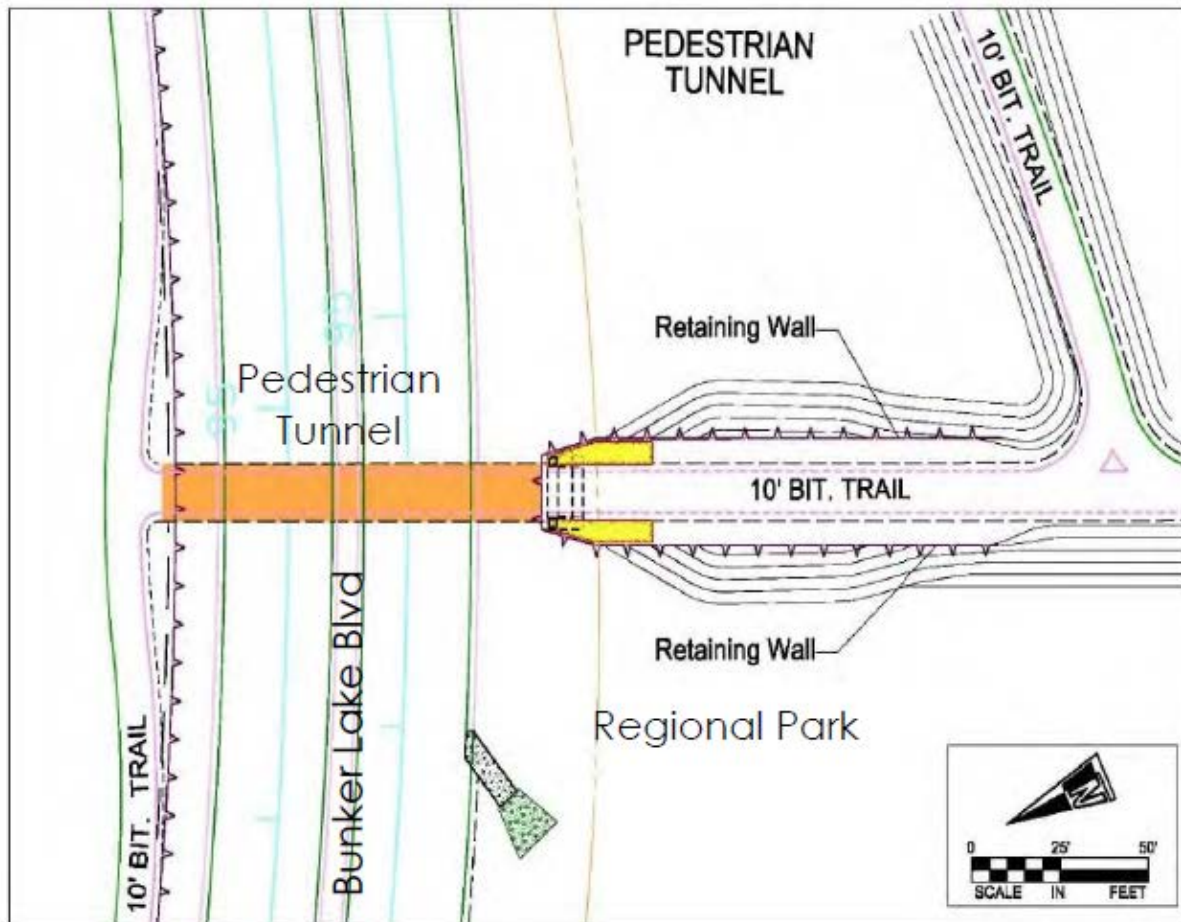
expected to begin in Summer 2016. The remaining segment between Jefferson Street and Highway 65 is not anticipated to be constructed for at least 5-10 years, and is dependent upon funding availability.

The pedestrian tunnel is proposed to be a 14 feet wide by 10 feet high box culvert with a retaining wall to reduce grading impacts to Bunker Hills Regional Park. Figure 6 illustrates the proposed elevation and Figure 7 shows the proposed layout for the pedestrian tunnel.

Figure 6: Central Anoka County Regional Trail Pedestrian Tunnel Elevation

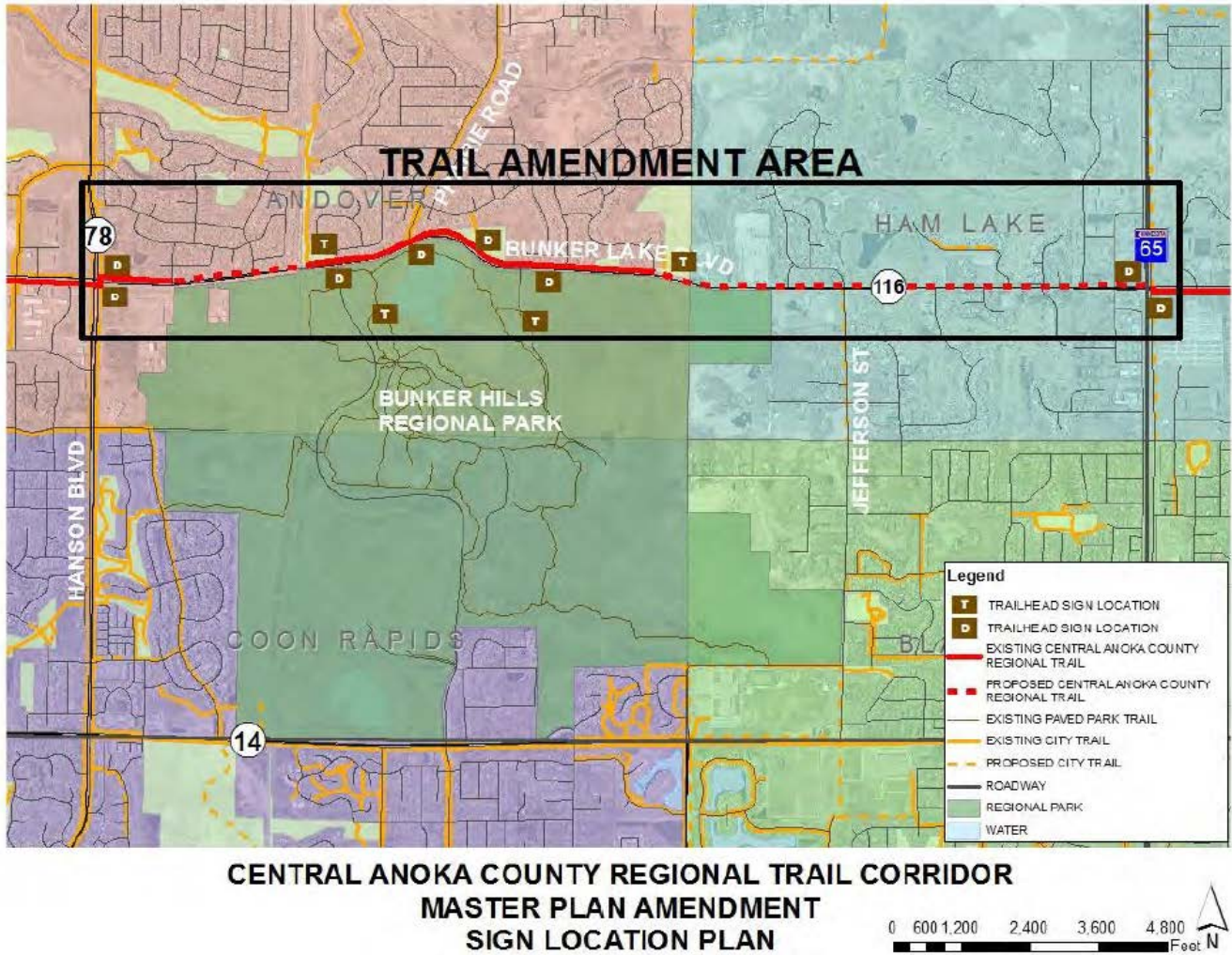


Figure 7: Central Anoka County Regional Trail Pedestrian Tunnel Site Layout



The wayfinding signage plan includes directional signs to be installed at decision points along the trail, and trailhead signs to be installed at local parks and at Bunker Hills Regional Park, as shown in *Figure 8*.

Figure 8: Central Anoka County Regional Trail Wayfinding Signage Plan



Figures 9 and 10 show examples of directional and trailhead signs, respectively.

Figure 9: Directional Sign



Figure 10: Trailhead Sign



Stormwater management along the trail will follow the requirements of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, Coon Creek Watershed District, Cities of Andover and Ham Lake, and any other permitting or regulatory agency. Anoka County will provide linear infiltration along the trail route. The ownership and maintenance of the stormwater management facilities will be the responsibility of Anoka County within County jurisdictions and the Cities within their respective jurisdictions.

The estimated development cost for the amendment portion of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail is approximately \$2,060,400. The portion of the regional trail to be constructed between Crane Street and 900 feet east of Jefferson Street is estimated to be \$1,310,400, which includes trail construction, trail reconstruction, and development of the pedestrian tunnel. This portion will be built as part of the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard reconstruction project. The remaining \$750,000 is for design, engineering, and construction of the trail segment from 900 feet east of Jefferson Street and Highway 96.

Conflicts

Conflicts between the regional trail segment and the existing and proposed land uses along the corridor were addressed as part of the planning and design for the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard roadway project. Minor conflicts include the current limited access to the regional trail from the neighborhoods to the north, which are being addressed by the proposed construction of sidewalks along Crane, Wintergreen, Goldenrod, and Butternut Streets.

Along the remaining planned segment of the regional trail, from just east of Crane Street to Highway 65, conflicts will be kept to a minimum through future planning. Land uses along this segment include mixed-use commercial, commercial, and residential. Anoka County will work closely with the City of Ham Lake when development occurs along the corridor and during the design phase of the planned regional trail to address and minimize any conflicts.

Public Services

The master plan does not identify any non-recreational public services or facilities that are needed to accommodate the proposed trail.

Operations

The Anoka County Ordinance, dated January 24th, 2012, regulates parks and trails under the jurisdiction of Anoka County. Education, monitoring, and enforcement are provided by Anoka County Park Rangers, local police departments, and the Anoka County Sheriff's Department.

Anoka County partners with local communities to maintain its regional trails. The County typically enters into a Joint Powers Agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding with the affected Cities. These partnership agreements describe the roles and responsibilities of each agency with regard to maintenance and capital improvements along the trail corridor. Anoka County will provide routine maintenance for portions of the regional trail that travel within county or regional parks. Maintenance activities will include mowing, sweeping, plowing, clearing, debris removal, and patching. Local cities will provide general routine maintenance for the portions of the regional trail that are not within these parks. Anoka County will inspect the trail annually and provide any necessary capital improvements or long term maintenance.

Annual maintenance costs for the Central Anoka County Regional Trail are estimated to be approximately \$10,000, which also includes money for sign replacement, minor bituminous repair, and crack-sealing. Annual operating costs are funded through the Anoka County Parks and Recreation Department's annual operations and maintenance budget, which receives its funding from picnic shelter rentals, room rentals, programs, park entrance fees, and the County's general fund. Supplemental funding is received through the Regional Park Operations and Maintenance Grant Program.

Public Engagement and Participation

Much of the public engagement occurred as part of the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard road planning and design process, which includes development of the regional trail and pedestrian tunnel in the project scope. Two open houses and a public hearing were conducted. Additionally, Anoka County and the Cities of Andover and Ham Lake posted the master plan amendment to their websites and social media accounts.

The master plan amendment includes a summary of the public comments received regarding the regional trail and access to Bunker Hills Regional Park. Comments included a request for a pedestrian bridge or tunnel near the BNSF railroad tracks, the need for an overpass or tunnel from the regional trail across CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard from the regional trail to Bunker Hills Regional Park, and general comments in favor of the trail connections. Poor soil conditions near the railroad tracks makes a tunnel or bridge unfeasible, but a pedestrian tunnel across CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard has been incorporated into the project. Additionally, a signalized crossing at Sycamore Street, just east of the railroad tracks has been added to the roadway project.

The Anoka County Board of Commissioners adopted the regional trail master plan amendment and the Cities of Ham Lake and Andover passed resolutions of support.

Public Awareness

Anoka County uses a number of outreach tools to make the public aware of its regional parks and trails. These include public information maps, websites, social media, publications, and brochures. Anoka County has also installed wayfinding maps throughout its parks and trails. A portion of the wayfinding trailhead signage project was done in cooperation with Blue Cross/Blue Shield's "do.Campaign", so the signs include a "do" message promoting physical activity.

Accessibility

The regional trail will meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. There will not be a fee for use of the regional trail, which helps to eliminate economic barriers for trail users. Although transit access is limited in the master plan amendment area, the Anoka County Traveler Transit Link and Metro Transit's dial-a-ride provide transportation services for a minimal fee.

Review by Other Council Divisions

Community Development – Environment and Surface Water Management (Jim Larsen 651-602-1159) – The management of surface water runoff described in the master plan amendment appears to be consistent with the guidance contained in the Council's *2040 Water Resources Policy Plan*.

Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – No Comment.

Local Planning Assistance (Eric Wojchik 651-602-1330) -- The master plan amendment is in conformance with metropolitan system plans, is consistent with adopted policy plans, and is compatible with plans of affected and adjacent jurisdictions.

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

Transportation/Aviation Planning (Russ Owen 651-602-1705) – No Comment.

Conclusions

1. The Central Anoka County Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies.
2. The estimated cost to implement the master plan amendment is \$2,060,400 which includes \$1,310,400 for the portion of the trail and the pedestrian tunnel that are being developed with the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard roadway project, and \$750,000 for future development of the remaining trail segment between Jefferson Street and Highway 65.
3. Approval of this master plan amendment makes the development costs associated with the pedestrian tunnel and the trail segment between Jefferson Street and Highway 65 eligible for regional parks funding, but does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. Future funding based on this master plan may be awarded through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. Council action is required to approve specific grants to Anoka County.