

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: Facility Exchange for CSAH 116 Project at Bunker Hills Regional Park, Anoka County

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

Policy/Legal Reference: System Protection Strategy 2, *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 approve the conversion of 4.45 acres of land within Bunker Hills Regional Park needed for the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard reconstruction project in exchange for the development of one mile of trail within the park, construction of one mile of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail north of the park, and realignment of a park entrance road, as shown in Attachments 1-5.

Background

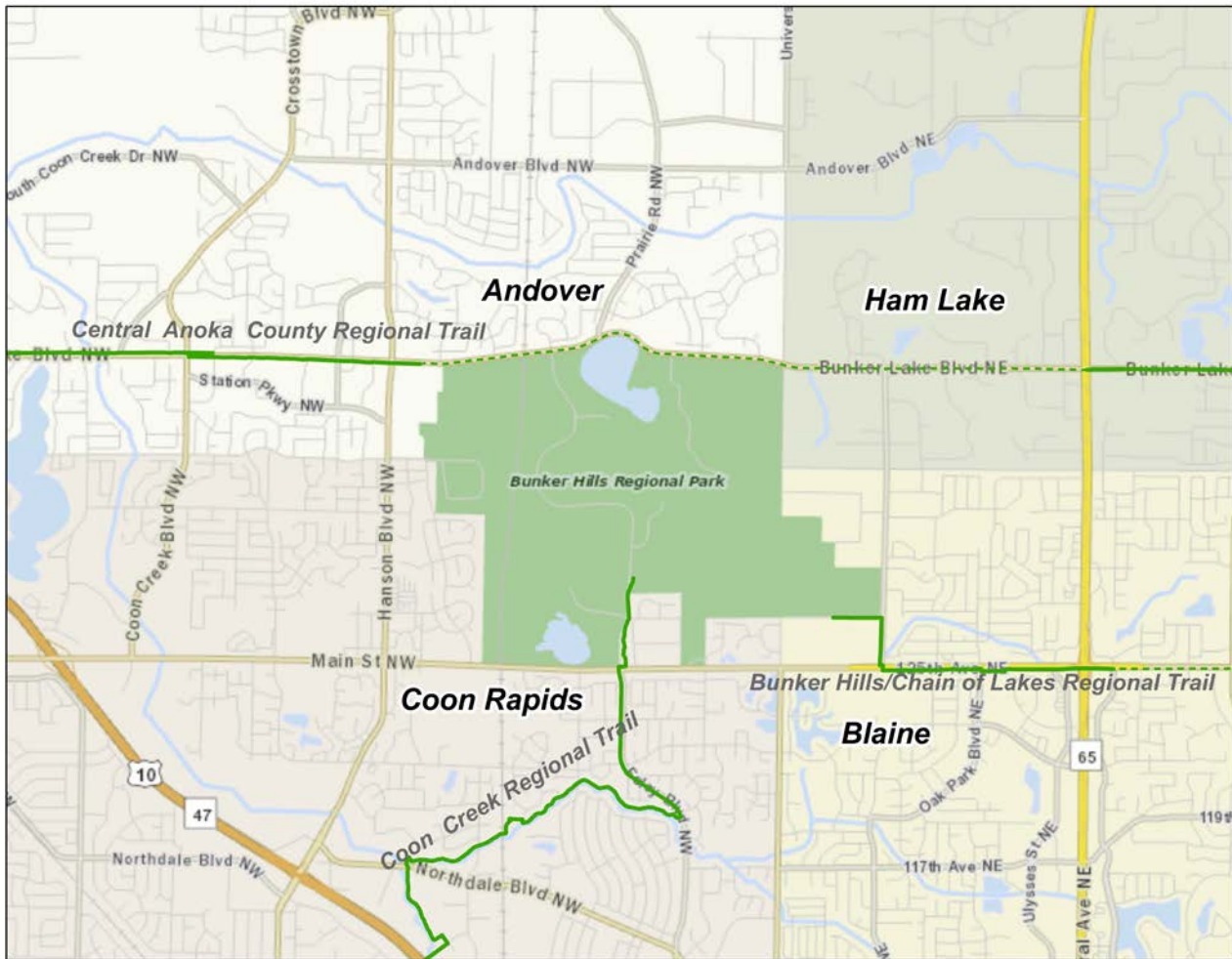
Bunker Hills Regional Park is owned and operated by Anoka County and is located in the communities of Andover, Blaine, and Coon Rapids. The 1,600-acre regional park provides a variety of recreation opportunities and includes a campground, archery range, disc golf course, horse trails and Bunker Beach Water Park. Bunker Hills is Anoka County's most popular regional park, with approximately 622,000 visits in 2014.

The regional park is generally bounded by CSAH116/Bunker Lake Boulevard to the north, Jefferson Street to the east, CSAH 14/Main Street to the south and Hanson Boulevard to the west. Once fully constructed, the Central Anoka County, Coon Creek, and Bunker-Chain of Lakes Regional Trails will provide bicycle and pedestrian connections to the park. The location of Bunker Hills Regional Park is shown in *Figure 1*.

Anoka County is planning to widen and reconstruct a 2.3 mile segment of CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard along the north portion of the park to improve safety, movement, and multi-modal transportation. The County has received Surface Transportation Program (STP) funding and plans to begin construction in the summer of 2016. 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 project was designed to minimize impacts to the regional park, but will require four narrow parcels to be taken from the park for the siting of stormwater ponds. The parcels total approximately 4.45 acres, or 0.28 percent of the land within the regional park. The impacted land is shown in yellow on Attachments 1-5.

In exchange for converting 4.45 acres of land to a non-park use, Anoka County is proposing to build approximately one mile of trail within Bunker Hills Regional Park that will connect to existing park trails, construct a one mile planned segment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail just north of the park, and realign a park entrance road. Additionally, approximately one mile of the existing Central Anoka County Regional Trail will be rebuilt as part of the roadway project.

Figure 1: Bunker Hills Regional Park Location Map



Rationale

The facility exchange is consistent with System Protection Strategy 2 as outlined in the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* which requires an equally valuable land or facility exchange to be approved in order to convert Regional Parks System lands to another use.

Funding

No Regional Parks System funding is involved in this request.

Known Support / Opposition

None.

Analysis

System Protection Strategy 2 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* relates to the conversion of Regional Parks System lands to other uses and states:

Lands in the Regional Parks System will only be converted to other uses if approved by the Metropolitan Council through an equally valuable land or facility exchange as defined below:

“Equally valuable land” is defined as land that:

- *is contiguous to the Regional Parks System unit containing the land proposed to be exchanged (within the same park/trail unit)*
- *has comparable or better natural resource characteristics, and*
- *could provide comparable or better recreation opportunities than the land being released*

“Equally valuable facility” is defined as an exchange of land for facilities when recreational benefits and/or natural resource benefits are increased as a result of the exchange. For example, some land within a regional trail corridor may be exchanged to widen a highway if a highway department constructs a trail overpass or underpass of the widened road at no cost to the regional park implementing agency.

In this case, an equally valuable facility exchange has been proposed. In exchange for the 4.45 acres of regional parkland adjacent to CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard that are needed for stormwater ponds associated with the road reconstruction project, Anoka County is proposing to build approximately one mile of trail within Bunker Hills Regional Park that will connect to existing park trails, construct a one mile planned segment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail just north of the park, and realign a park entrance road.

System Protection Strategy 2 also requires that the following criteria be evaluated to determine whether Regional Parks System lands may be exchanged for other lands or a facility. Staff evaluation is shown in italic font.

Issues with respect to the existing park system unit:

1. Whether the park system unit can continue to meet Council site and site attribute standards established for the particular type of park system unit (regional park, park reserve, trail greenway or special recreation feature).

The 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan requires that regional parks be strongly tied to natural resources, have land acreage to serve a regional scale audience, and have the ability to provide for a wide range of natural resource related recreational opportunities. Water bodies are also a key component of regional parks. Lands within Bunker Hills Regional Park have been mapped by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as within a Metro Conservation Corridor and Regionally Significant Ecological Areas. The park is 1,600 acres, serves a regional audience, and provides a range of passive recreation opportunities including hiking, camping, and picnicking. Bunker Lake is located in the park and has walking trails, a picnic shelter, and a playground. Conversion of the 4.45 acres of parkland to non-park uses will not affect these park attributes and amenities.

2. Whether the parks system unit will continue to function as originally planned.

The facility exchange will not negatively impact the function of Bunker Hills Regional Park. The lands being converted to non-park use are open spaces that are adjacent to the roadway and do not contain recreational uses. The addition of trails within the park and the extension of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail adjacent to the park will improve recreational opportunities and multi-modal access to the

park. Realignment of the entrance road further away from a curve in the road will improve vehicular safety.

3. Whether environmental features (wildlife habitat, water quality) will be adversely affected and can be protected with the new uses.

The conversion of 4.45 acres of parkland for the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard project will not adversely impact wildlife habitat or water quality in the regional park. The land being converted is on the edge of the park adjacent to the roadway and will be used for stormwater ponds. The stormwater ponds will likely improve water quality within the park by controlling runoff from the road.

4. Whether the park system unit benefits from a facility in exchange for the parkland.

The exchange will result in the following benefits to Bunker Hills Regional Park:

- *A trail that is called for in the park's master plan will be constructed, which will improve recreational opportunities and connectivity within the park.*
- *A planned segment of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail will be constructed, which will improve multi-modal access to the regional park.*
- *An entrance road to the park will be realigned and moved further west from a curve in the road, which will improve vehicular safety and sight distances.*

5. Whether the need for the conversion, as in the instance of transportation improvements, is generated by the recreational park system unit.

The need for the conversion is not generated by Bunker Hills Regional Park, but comes from the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard reconstruction project, which is driven by current traffic volumes, projected growth for the area, and safety considerations.

Issues with respect to the alternate use:

1. The land area needs of the proposed project.

The proposed CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard roadway project requires taking 4.45 acres from the 1,600 acre regional park, or 0.28 percent of the land within the park. The acreage removed from the park will be used primarily for stormwater ponding associated with the project.

2. Whether the specific site requirements for the proposed project are unique to the area proposed for conversion.

The site requirements for the conversion land associated with the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard project are unique to the area. The design of the project shifted the roadway to the north as much as possible to minimize impacts to the regional park, without affecting the viability of the residential and local park properties on the north side of the corridor.

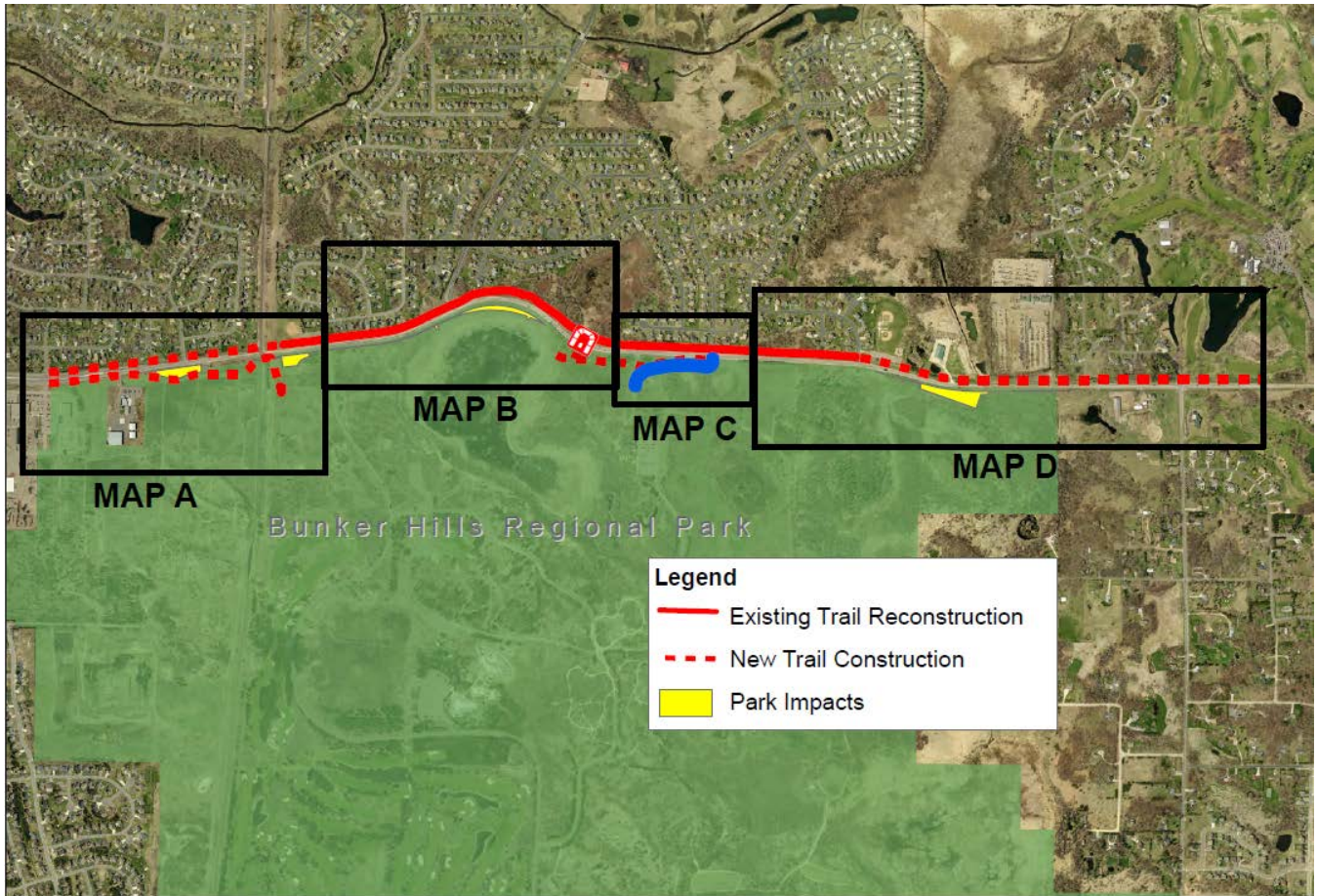
3. Whether the proposed project is consistent with Council policies.

The proposed project does not conflict with Council policies.

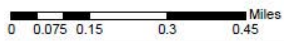
4. Whether the proposed project is of greater benefit to the region than having the Regional Parks System unit remain in place.

The proposed project benefits the region by improving transportation flow and safety as well as providing safe access to the regional park. Bunker Hills Regional Park will remain in place and will benefit from the construction of trails and realignment of an entrance road.

Attachment 1: CSAH 116 Project Impacts to Bunker Hills Regional Park—Reference Map

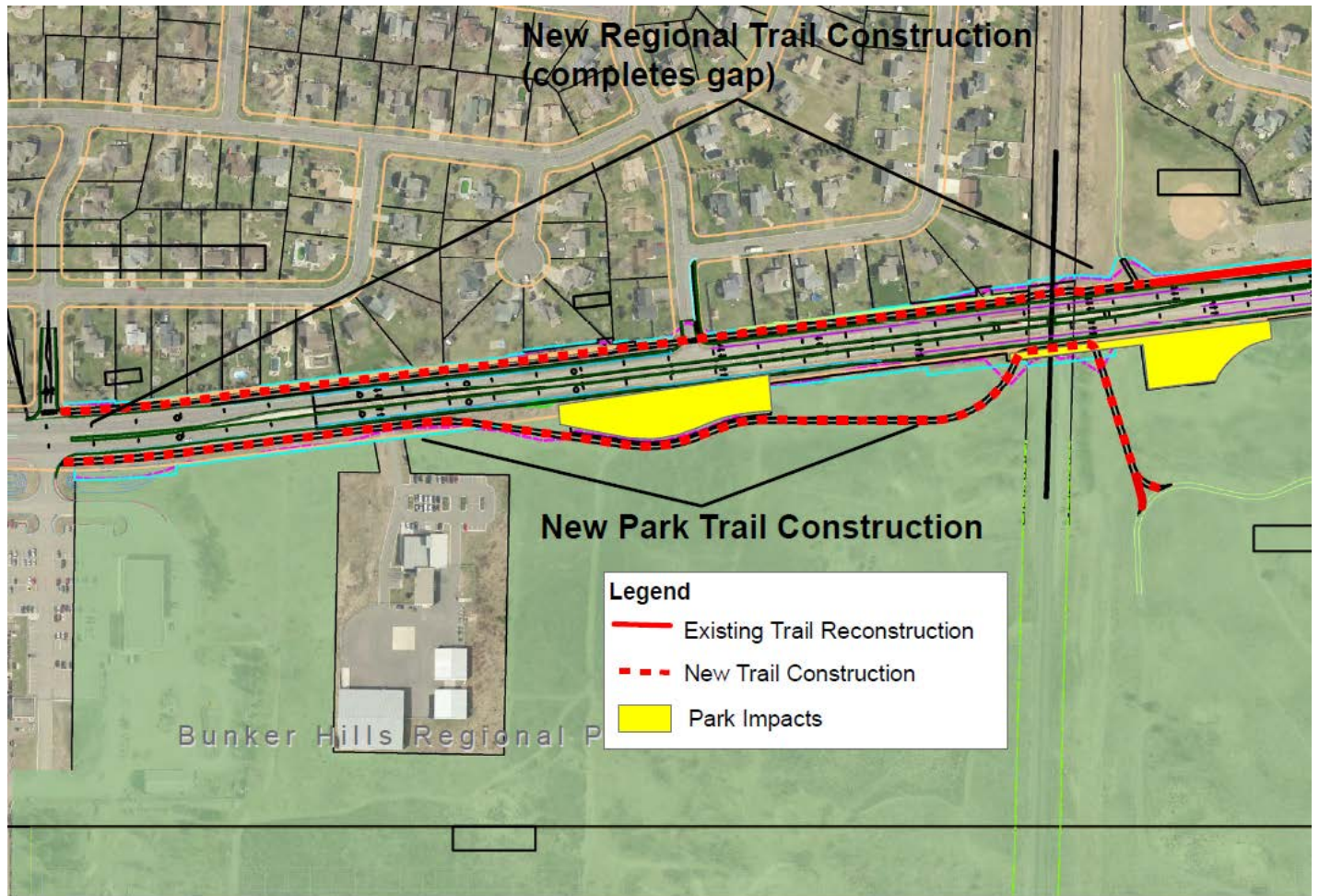


Bunker Hills Regional Park
Facility Exchange for 4.45 acres of Parkland Impacts
Reference Map

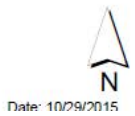


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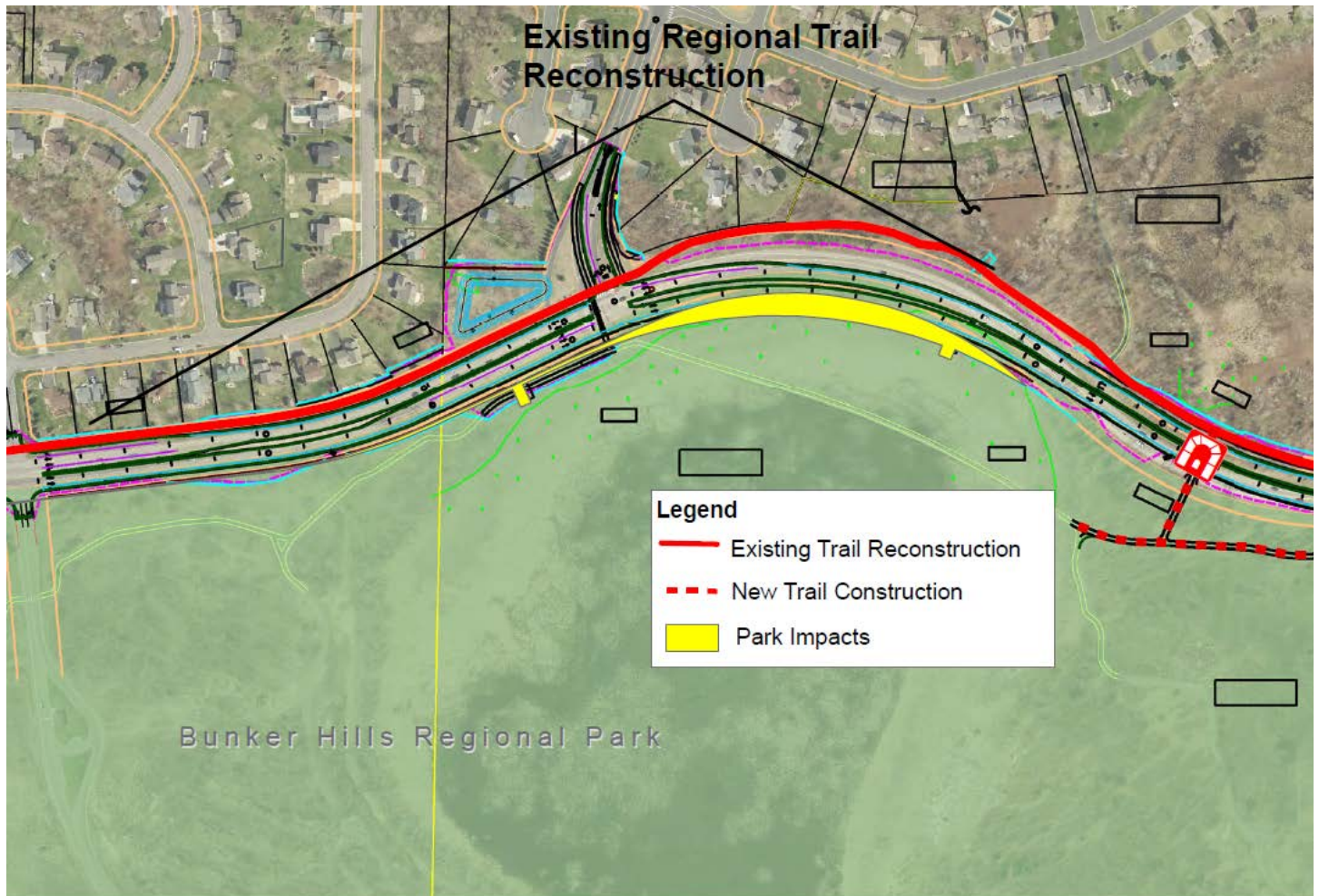
Attachment 2: CSAH 116 Project Impacts to Bunker Hills Regional Park—Map A



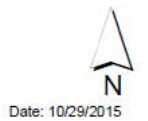
Bunker Hills Regional Park
Facility Exchange for 4.45 acres of Parkland Impacts
Map A



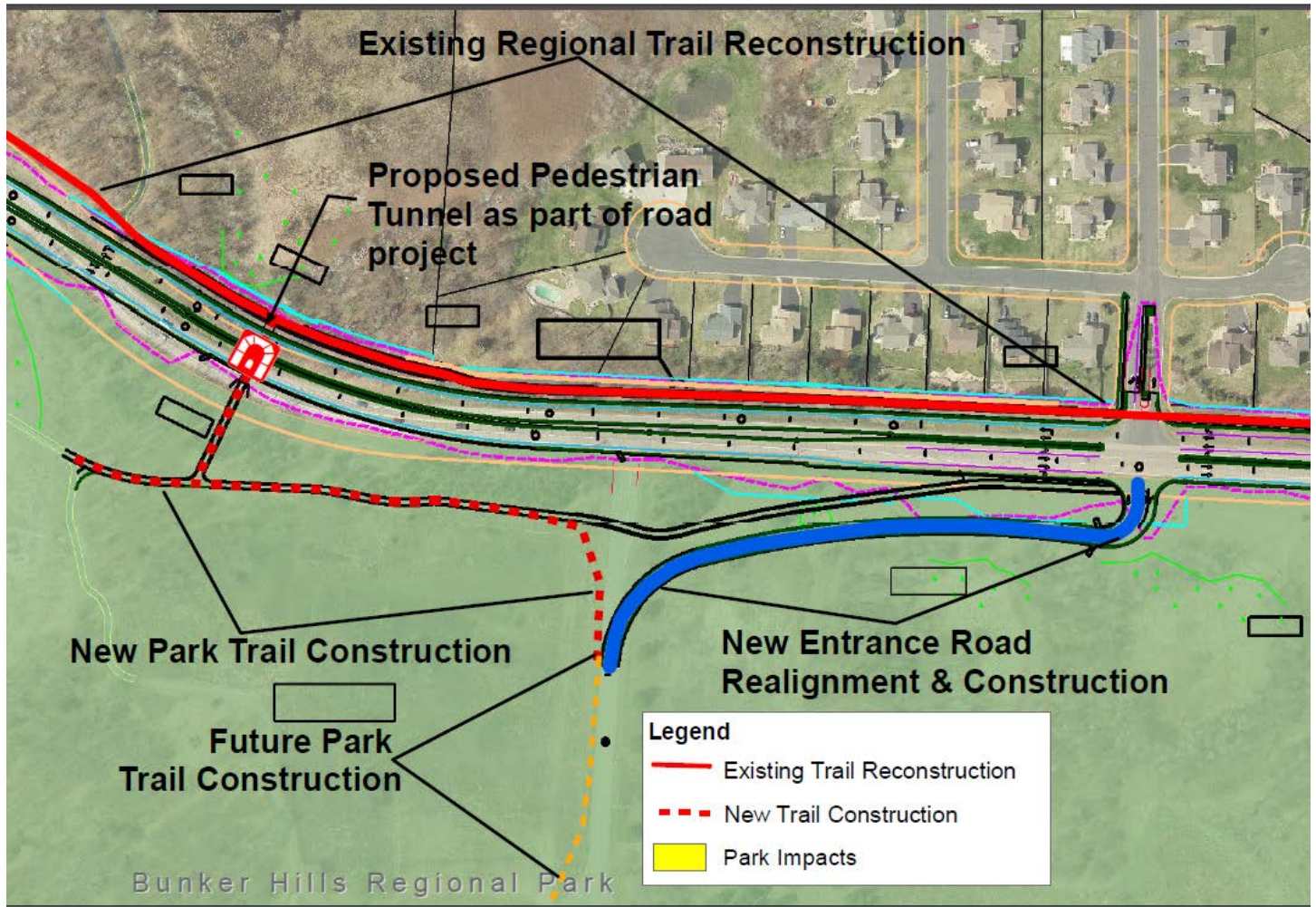
Attachment 3: CSAH 116 Project Impacts to Bunker Hills Regional Park—Map B



Bunker Hills Regional Park
Facility Exchange for 4.45 acres of Parkland Impacts
Map B



Attachment 4: CSAH 116 Project Impacts to Bunker Hills Regional Park—Map C

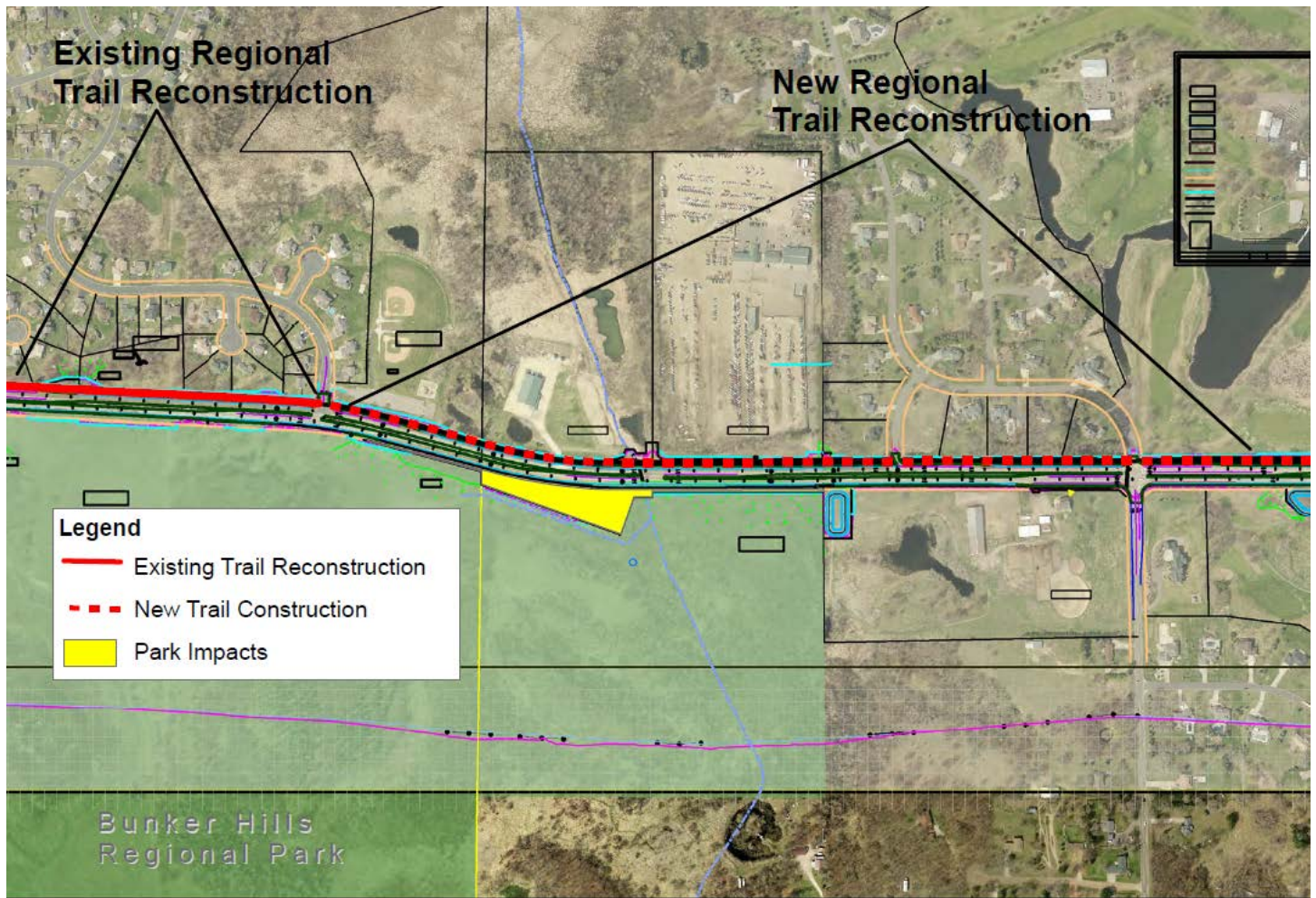


Bunker Hills Regional Park
Facility Exchange for 4.45 acres of Parkland Impacts
Map C

0 0.0125 0.025 0.05 0.075 Miles

N
Date: 03/15/2016

Attachment 5: CSAH 116 Project Impacts to Bunker Hills Regional Park—Map D



Bunker Hills Regional Park
Facility Exchange for 4.45 acres of Parkland Impacts
Map D

0 0.0375 0.075 0.15 0.225 Miles

North Arrow
N
Date: 10/29/2015