

3.5 Parklands and Recreation Areas

This section discusses the existing parklands, open space, and recreation areas that are located in proximity to the Central Corridor. This section does not make a determination as to whether the identified “parks, open space and recreation areas” meet the federal definition of a park under Section 4(f). Rather, this section only evaluates the potential direct and indirect impacts to public properties that are generally used as parks, open areas, and recreation areas by the public. The Section 4(f) discussion is included in Chapter 7 of this Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Table 3.5-1 provides a summary of the impacts identified for parklands, open space, and recreation areas.

Table 3.5-1 Summary of Parklands and Recreational Area Impacts

| Planning Segment | Central Corridor LRT Elements and Potential Impacts | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| | Guideway and Catenary System | Stations | Traction Power Substations | Operation and Maintenance Facility |
| Downtown St. Paul | Short-term impacts to downtown children’s play area. | No parklands or recreation area effects. | No parklands or recreation area effects. | No parklands or recreation area effects. |
| Capitol Area | Short-term and long-term impact to Leif Erikson Lawn. Important park features would be preserved. | Short-term and long-term impact to Leif Erikson Lawn. | No parklands or recreation area effects. | N/A |
| Midway East | No parklands or recreation area effects. | No parklands or recreation area effects. | No parklands or recreation area effects. | N/A |
| Midway West | Short-term impacts to Dickerman and Iris Parks due to construction activities. | No parklands or recreation area effects. | No parklands or recreation area effects. | N/A |
| University/Prospect Park | Short-term impact to Tower Hill Park, Northrop Mall due to construction activities. Long-term changes to East River Parkway due to installation of turn lanes and traffic signals; important parkway features would be preserved. | No parklands or recreation area effects. | No parklands or recreation area effects. | N/A |
| Downtown Minneapolis | No parklands or recreation area effects. | No parklands or recreation area effects. | No parklands or recreation area effects. | N/A |

N/A - Not Applicable. Indicates that the element is not relevant to the particular planning segment.

3.5.1 Legal and Regulatory Requirements

Parklands are regulated under United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Act of 1966, Section 4(f) as amended (49 USC 303) and Land and Water Conservation Fund Act: Section 6(f) (16 USC 460). The detailed Section 4(f) and 6(f) discussion is provided in Chapter 7.0 Section 4(f).

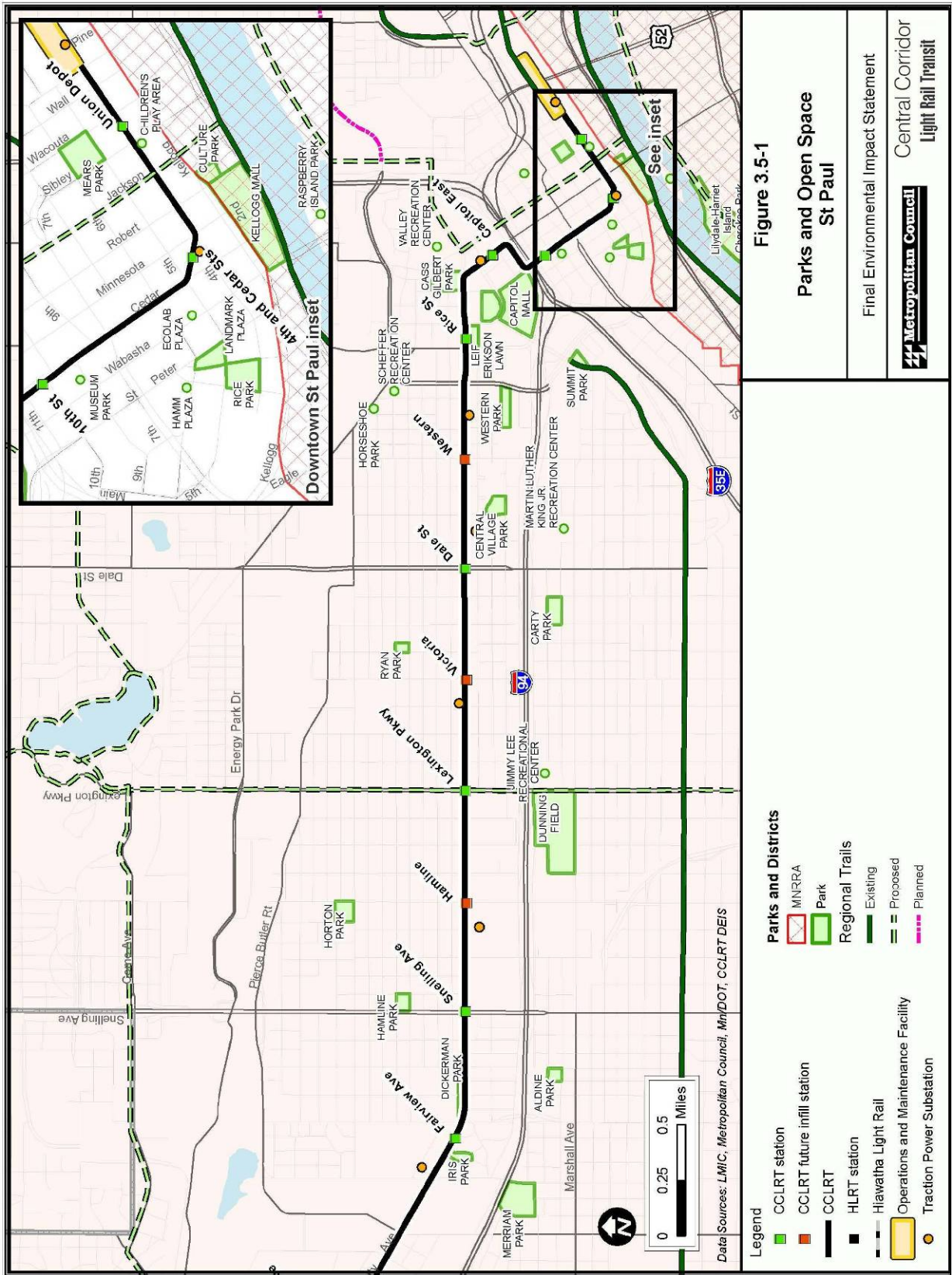
3.5.2 Methodology

For this analysis, the Study Area was identified as a 0.5-mile-wide area centered on the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (LRT) alignment. Identification of the parks and recreation areas was based on the Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS) and a review of electronic data from the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as documented in the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS). This evaluation included consideration of both direct and indirect impacts based on field observations and the current conceptual plans for those parks. Direct impacts are those that involve acquisition of land for permanent use or for temporary construction easements. Indirect impacts are those caused by the proximity of the Central Corridor LRT Project to the parkland, which substantially impair or diminish the features, attributes, or activities that qualify the park for protection under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966.

3.5.3 Existing Conditions

Parks, parkways, and recreation facilities in the City of Minneapolis are owned and maintained by the independent Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board. The U of M Minneapolis campus has landscaped open space features that may also be subject to federal regulations. In the City of St. Paul, the department of Parks and Recreation maintains a variety of facilities including major city parks and neighborhood recreation centers. Land near the Minnesota State Capitol is under the jurisdiction of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB). These lands include open space surrounding the Capitol buildings, which place the Capitol in a setting of landscaped malls important to preserving views of the Capitol Building and as gathering places for political rallies and civic events. The National Park Service oversees the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) overlay district, which borders the Mississippi River through Minneapolis and St. Paul.

An inventory of facilities within 0.5 miles of the project alignment in each jurisdiction is summarized in Figure 3.5-1, Figure 3.5-2, and Table 3.5-2.



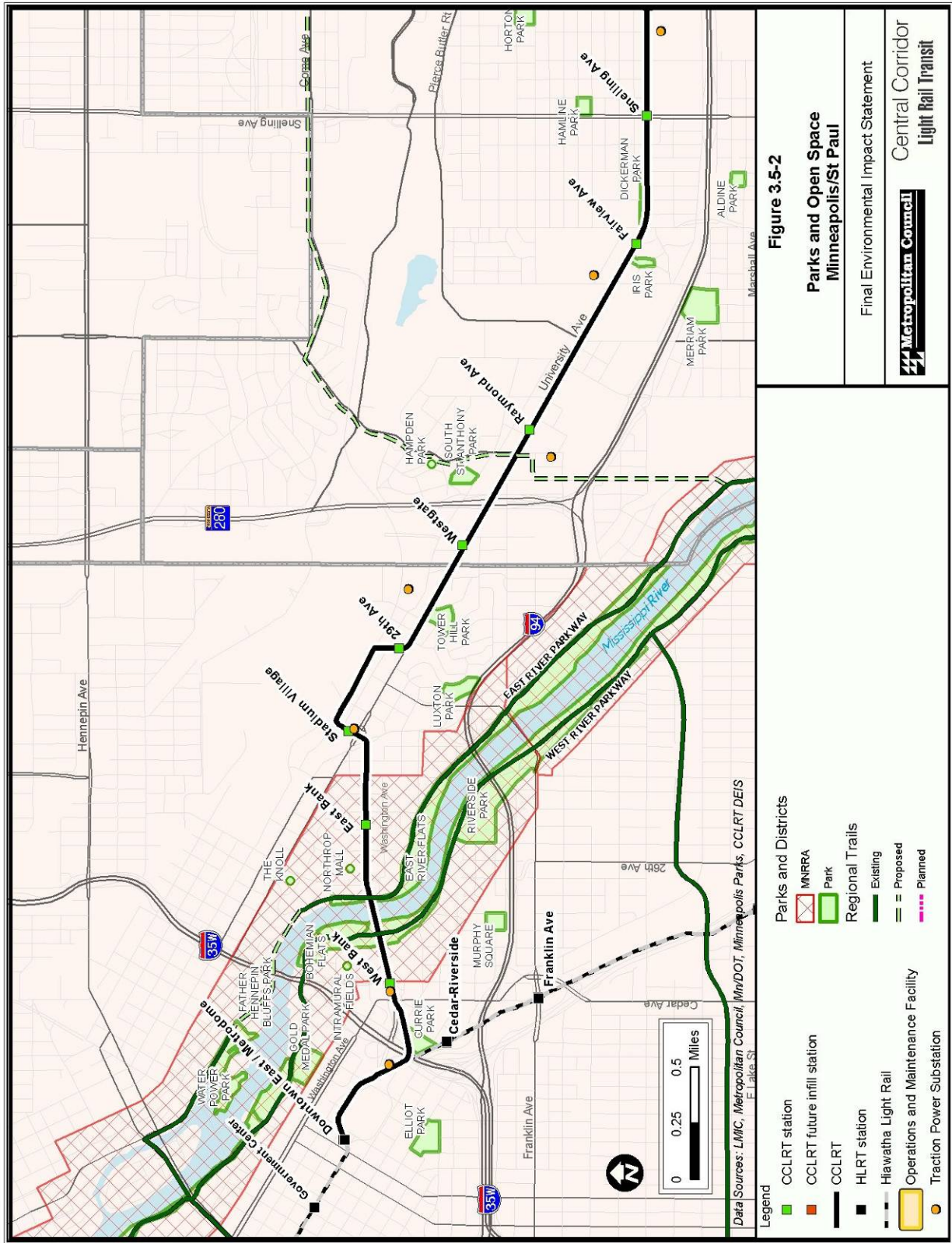


Table 3.5-2 Park and Recreation Resources Present within the Study Area

| Resource Name | Jurisdiction | Characteristics |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Downtown St. Paul | | |
| Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Overlay District | National Park Service | MNRRRA is a designated corridor that has National Park Service (NPS) administrative oversight. |
| Raspberry Island | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 2 acres of public open space on Raspberry Island, which is located in the Mississippi River. Accessed via stairs leading off the Wabasha Bridge. |
| Downtown Children's Play Area | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Downtown play area of less than 0.2 acres in size. Provides play equipment, landscaped areas, benches, and a mural. |
| Kellogg Mall Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 4.2-acre scenic overlook of the Mississippi River. Provides scenic overlooks complimented by interpretive sculptures. |
| Mears Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 2-acre park in the Lowertown neighborhood. Features bandstand, gardens, and a naturalized stream fountain. Mears Park hosts many events throughout the year. |
| Landmark Plaza | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Urban plaza located west of St. Peter Street. |
| Rice Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 1.6-acre historic park. Park fronts the St. Paul Library and the Ordway Theater and includes a large fountain. Located between 4th and 5th Streets, Market Street, and Washington Street. The park hosts numerous events year round, including the annual ice sculpture event during the Winter Carnival. |
| Ecolab Plaza | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Urban plaza of approximately 0.5 acres in size. Located at Wabasha Street and 5th Street. Features a large sculpture. |
| Hamm Plaza | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Urban plaza of less than 0.2 acres in size. Located on St. Peter Street. |
| Wacouta Commons | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Neighborhood park bounded by 9th/8th/Wacouta/Sibley. Features green space, a children's play area, a fountain, a pergola, and a dog run. |
| Museum Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Landscaped urban open space south of the former museum building. Located along Exchange Street between Cedar and Wabasha Streets. No amenities are present at this park. |

| Resource Name | Jurisdiction | Characteristics |
|--|---|---|
| Capitol Area | | |
| Capitol Mall | Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board | Approximately 28-acre open space area south of the Capitol Building. Includes large lawns, monuments with walking paths. |
| Leif Erikson Lawn | Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board | Approximately 4-acre triangular open space. Includes sidewalks, turf, mature trees, parking, and a statue of Leif Erikson. Located in the northwest corner of the Capitol Mall complex |
| Cass Gilbert Park | Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board | Approximately 4.5-acre open space. Provides an overlook vista of the Capitol area and downtown St. Paul. Located on a rise above University Avenue at Cedar Street. |
| Valley Recreation Center | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 11.4-acre open space with recreational facilities. Located to the northeast of University Avenue and Jackson Street. |
| Midway East | | |
| Central Village | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 4-acre neighborhood park with walking paths, tennis courts, and play equipment. Located south of University Avenue between Dale Street and Western Avenue. |
| Western Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 4.5-acre neighborhood park. Includes commons for surrounding residential development and the Western Park Sculpture Garden. Located west of Marion Street between University Avenue and Interstate 94 (I-94). |
| Horseshoe Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 0.7-acre park. Includes horseshoe pits. |
| Scheffer Recreation Center | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 2.6-acre recreation center. Includes baseball diamonds, ice skating rink, basketball courts, and play equipment. Located south of Como Avenue at Marion Street. |
| Ryan Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 1.2-acre neighborhood park. Includes play equipment, picnic tables, and benches. Located east of Victoria Street and 5 blocks north of University Avenue |
| Carty Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 3.6-acre park. Includes tennis courts, basketball court, horseshoe pits, and play equipment. Located between Victoria Street and Dale Street one block south of I-94. |
| Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 2.3-acre recreation center. Includes the Penumbra Theater, tennis courts, ice skating rink, and play equipment. Adjacent to Rondo Education Center. |

| Resource Name | Jurisdiction | Characteristics |
|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Hamline Playground | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 1.75-acre playground. Includes open space and playfields. Located on Snelling Avenue 5 blocks north of University Avenue. |
| Dunning Field | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 41.8-acre recreation area. Includes lighted baseball diamond with bleachers, tennis and basketball courts, and community building. Located between I-94 and Marshall Avenue. |
| Jimmy Lee Recreation Center and Oxford Pool | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 8.9-acre recreation center. Includes lighted baseball diamond, play equipment, gymnasium, and swimming pool. Located east of Lexington Parkway and south of I-94. |
| Lexington Parkway | City of St. Paul | Approximately 5.75-mile urban parkway within the north-south arterial road, Lexington Avenue. Segment between Summit Avenue on the south and Montana Avenue on the north has design features of a parkway. |
| Midway West | | |
| Dickerman Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 1.75-acre linear open space. Park includes substantial parking, open space, and playground equipment that is maintained and used by the YMCA and Community Learning Center charter school. Located between Fairview Avenue and Aldine Street along the north side of University Avenue. |
| Merriam Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 17.6-acre park that includes community center, recreational facilities, football and soccer fields, lighted baseball diamond, tennis courts, and a winter skating rink. Located immediately south of I-94. |
| Iris Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 0.5-acre walking park with paths, benches, and a restored water fountain. Located adjacent to University Avenue. |
| Hampden Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 2.9-acre neighborhood park with walking paths, picnic tables, and benches. Located east of Highway 280 at Raymond Avenue and Hampden Avenue. |
| South St. Anthony Park and Recreation Center | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 12-acre neighborhood park with baseball fields, basketball court, tennis courts, play equipment, and a community building. Located east of Highway 280 and north of University Avenue. |

| Resource Name | Jurisdiction | Characteristics |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Aldine Park | St. Paul Parks and Recreation | Approximately 2.4-acre neighborhood park, with play equipment, basketball court, and baseball field. Located on Inglehart Avenue between Herschel Street and Aldine Street. |
| University/Prospect Park | | |
| Tower Hill Park | Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board | Approximately 4.5-acre historic neighborhood park with listed water tower, tennis court, turf, sidewalks and mature trees. Located along the south side of University Avenue in the Prospect Park neighborhood. |
| Luxton Park | Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board | Approximately 4.5-acre neighborhood park with softball diamonds, basketball courts, soccer field, wading pool, and gymnasium. Located between Williams Avenue and I-94 in the Prospect Park neighborhood. |
| The Knoll | University of Minnesota | Approximately 4 acres of historic landscaped campus open space with turf, mature trees, and a wrought iron fence along University Avenue between 14th and 15th Avenues. |
| Northrop Mall | University of Minnesota | Approximately 2.75 acres of turf, mature trees, and sidewalks on Main Campus. |
| Intramural Fields | University of Minnesota | Approximately 5 acres of turf used for informal and intramural recreation activities. |
| East River Parkway | Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board | <p>East River Parkway follows the east bank of the Mississippi River, much of it atop the river bluff, from the Minneapolis city limit to Arlington Avenue SE on the U of M campus.</p> <p>Includes East River Flats: 26-acre park, situated below 25-foot limestone bluffs on a large bend in the river and just below the U of M. It is the site of the recently completed boathouse for the U of M's women's rowing team. User facilities are limited to a pay parking lot, walking and biking paths, and picnic tables.</p> |
| West River Parkway | Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board | <p>West River Parkway winds along the Mississippi River from Plymouth Avenue in downtown Minneapolis to Minnehaha Park. It is a scenic drive that blends a natural habitat in an urban setting. Facilities include biking path, walking path, tennis courts, picnic areas, parking, restroom facilities, playground, and a well.</p> <p>Includes Bohemian Flats.</p> |

| Resource Name | Jurisdiction | Characteristics |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Downtown Minneapolis | | |
| Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Overlay District | National Park Service | MNRRA is a designated corridor that has NPS administrative oversight. |
| Currie Park | Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board | Currie Park includes a recreation center, ball fields, tennis courts, and practice courts. A portion of this park is on land owned by MnDOT under a limited use permit granted in 1974. Currie Park is an important destination as the only park in the immediate area off of Cedar Avenue. Currie Park (4.8 acres) and the Coyle Community Center provide recreational opportunities and programs. |

3.5.4 Long-Term Effects

A discussion of the potential impacts to parklands is presented in the following section and summarized in Table 3.5-3. Particular attention is paid to those parkland resources that are within 350 feet of the Project because that is the unobstructed screening distance for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) noise impact assessments (Table 4-1, Page 4-3, FTA Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment, May 2006). The only long-term effects anticipated are due to noise because other issues, such as traffic and pedestrian flows, will not experience long-term change due to the proposed action.

3.5.4.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would result in no adverse or beneficial changes to parks and recreation areas.

3.5.4.2 Preferred Alternative

The following parks and recreation resources are found within 350 feet of the Central Corridor LRT Preferred Alternative: MNRRA overlay district, Currie Park, West River Parkway, East River Parkway, Northrop Mall, Tower Hill Park, Iris Park, Dickerman Park, Capitol Mall, Leif Erikson Lawn, Cass Gilbert Park, and Museum Park. Proximity impacts to these park resources would be limited to potential increases in noise and possible visual intrusion. Because the existing parks are in urban settings that are both fairly noisy and visually busy, these impacts would be minor in nature. These impacts would not result in the substantial impairment of the use of any of the recreational resources within the corridor.

Two public places, Leif Erikson Lawn and East River Parkway, would be directly affected by the Preferred Alternative. Construction of Rice Street Station, guideway, and access changes would impact the north edge of Leif Erikson Lawn. This impact would not restrict the use of the property, and would provide improved access for transit users.

Mitigation for additional volumes of vehicular traffic anticipated with the closure of Washington Avenue to vehicular traffic (see discussion of traffic impacts in Chapter 6) would require installation of two signals and associated turn lanes on East River Parkway. This impact is consistent with the existing transportation use and would not substantially alter the parkway. Table 3.5-3 summarizes the potential impacts to parks and recreation resources within 350 feet of the Central Corridor LRT.

3.5.5 Short-Term Construction Effects

Construction impacts may result in temporary air, noise, vibration, water quality, visual, and access impacts to parks and recreation resources that are within 350 feet of the Central Corridor LRT. Other temporary impacts could include temporary detours or short-term closure of some park access points during construction. Detailed analysis of short-term impacts related to these issues is identified in other sections of this FEIS. For park users, construction activities may interfere with normal park use for a short period of time.

Table 3.5-3 Parks, Recreation Areas, and Open Space Located Within 350 Feet of the Central Corridor LRT Project

| Park Name | Short-Term Effect | Long-Term Effect |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| MNRRRA Overlay District | No | No |
| Downtown Children's Play Area | Yes | No |
| Mears Park | No | No |
| Kellogg Mall Park | No | No |
| Cass Gilbert Park | No | No |
| Leif Erikson Lawn | Yes | Yes, a small portion of Leif Erikson Lawn would be used to construct the Rice Street passenger station; important park features would be preserved |
| Capitol Mall | No | No |
| Dickerman Park | Yes | No |
| Iris Park | Yes | No |
| Tower Hill Park | Yes | No |
| Northrop Mall | Yes | No |
| West River Parkway Bohemian Flats | No | No |
| East River Parkway East River Flats | Yes | Yes, two stop lights would be installed with associated turn lanes; important parkway features would be preserved |
| MNRRRA Overlay District | No | No |
| Currie Park | No | No |

3.5.6 Mitigation

Long-term impacts have been evaluated in accordance with Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966. Details on Section 4(f) impacts are provided in Chapter 7. Short-term impacts will be minimized by using standard construction BMPs such as dust control, erosion control, and proper mufflers.

Impacts related to temporary changes to parking and access will be mitigated by working through appropriate permitting processes and coordinated with the Minneapolis Park Board and St. Paul Parks and Recreation Department.