

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
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DATE: April 27, 2011

TO: Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

FROM: Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks (651-602-1360)

SUBJECT: (2011-xx) Phalen-Keller Regional Park Master Plan Amendment, City of St. Paul and Ramsey County (Referral No. 50007-1)

INTRODUCTION

The City of St. Paul and Ramsey County, who jointly manage Phalen-Keller Regional Park have submitted a master plan amendment for the park (Referral No. 50007-1). This plan amendment updates a joint master plan approved by the Metropolitan Council in February 1978. This memorandum analyzes the master plan against the criteria for reviewing regional park master plans. It recommends approving the master plan because it is consistent with applicable portions of the *Updated 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. Requests to submit additional cost information on proposed safety improvement projects on East Shore Drive that require additional traffic study, review of projects near wastewater treatment facilities and advisory comments on the proposed conversion of Highway 61 and Arcade Street to a parkway are also included in the recommendations.

AUTHORITY TO REVIEW

Minnesota Statute 473.313, Subdivision 1 requires Regional Park Implementing Agencies to, "...prepare, after consultation with all affected municipalities, and submit to the Metropolitan Council, and from time to time revise and resubmit to the council, a master plan and annual budget for the acquisition and development of regional recreation open space located within the district or county, consistent with the council's policy plan." (i.e., the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*)

Minnesota Statute 473.313, Subdivision 2 authorizes the Metropolitan Council to review, with the advice of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, master plans for the regional park system. Plans are reviewed for their consistency with the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. If a master plan is not consistent with Council policy, the Council should return the plan to the implementing agency with its comments for revision and resubmittal.

MASTER PLAN ANALYSIS

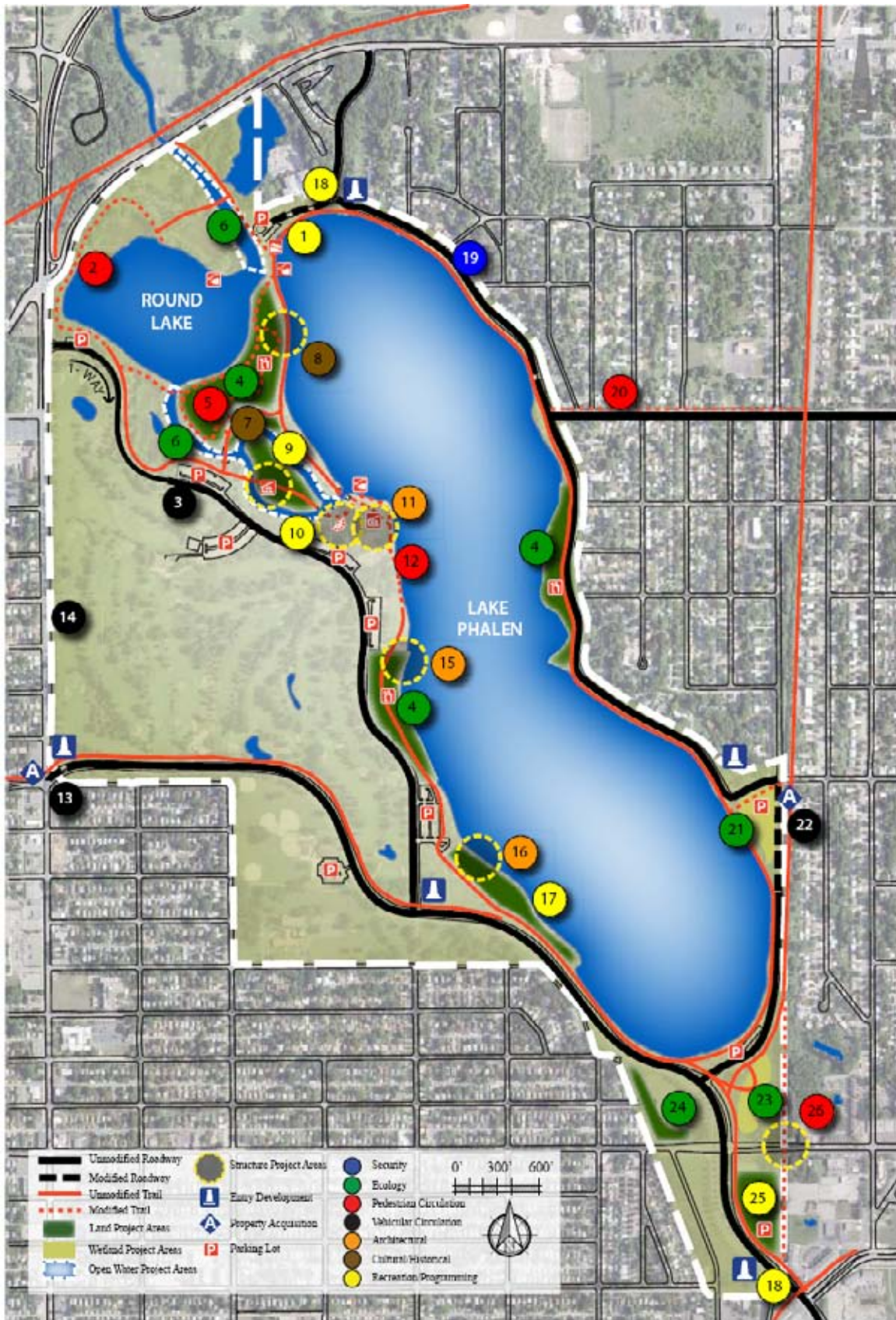
1. Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

Phalen-Keller Regional Park is about 750 acres in size. Of this amount 453 acres is land area and 297 acres are water in four lakes. The majority of the Keller portion of the park is located in the City of Maplewood and roughly defined by Frost Avenue on the South to Spoon Lake at Arcade Street on the North. It is owned and managed by Ramsey County. Figure 1 illustrates Keller Park Site Plan. The majority of the Phalen portion of the park is located in the City of St. Paul and roughly defined by Frost Avenue on the North, East Shore Drive on the East, Wheelock Parkway on the South, and Arcade Street on the West. It is owned and managed by the City of St. Paul. Figure 2 illustrates Phalen Park Site Plan

Figure 1: Keller Park Site Plan (Numbers correspond to development projects listed on page)



Figure 2: Phalen Park Site Plan (Numbers correspond to development projects listed on page)



With regard to acquisition, there are two parcels adjacent to the parks which are identified as potential acquisitions as they would be used to improve vehicular circulation at two locations in Phalen Park—number 13 and 22 on Figure 2. These are potential acquisitions because a traffic and circulation study is needed to fully review traffic impacts in these areas in order to determine if the land should be acquired. The estimated value of these parcels is \$378,700. Figures 3 and 4 provide more detail on each parcel.

Figure 3: Parcel at 1445 Arcade Street, number 13 on Figure 2

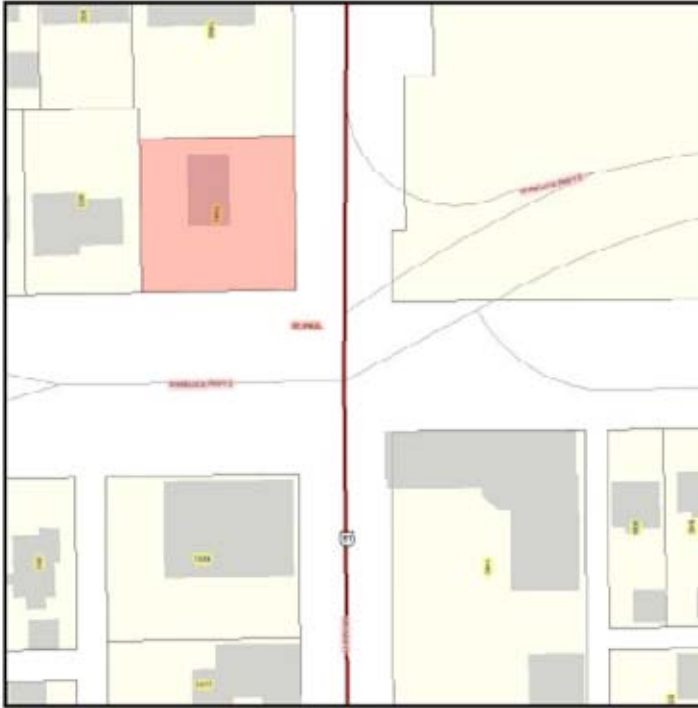


Figure 4: Parcel at 1298 Arlington Avenue, number 22 on Figure 2



2. Stewardship Plan

Phalen –Keller Park maintenance and operations include plowing, sweeping and patching/seal coating of paved trails and parking lots, removal of trash and litter and prescribed burns of native planting areas. St. Paul police and fire departments maintain public safety within Phalen Park and the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department and Maplewood Police Department maintain public safety within Keller Park.

The parks are fully developed for outdoor recreation and consequently no interim non-park uses such as crop rental occur there.

3. Needs Analysis

The combined parks had 1,090,000 visits in 2009 and 1,170,500 visits in 2010. It is the ninth most visited park in the Regional Park System. The master plan forecasts that visits would grow 30% to 1.4 million per year based on the projected site and parking capacities of facilities in the parks.

Based on the 2008 Metropolitan Council Parks and Trails Survey the top recreational activities at the park were walking/hiking, jogging/running, boating, fishing, picnicking and relaxing. The master plan amendment emphasizes improvements to trails, opportunities for fishing, and picnic facilities. Based on these proposed improvements, the master plan forecasts a 30% increase in visitation to 1.4 million visits per year.

4. Development

At Keller Park, the plan proposes development described in Table 1. The number for each project corresponds to the number on the Site Plan in Figure 1.

Project	Cost (000s)
1. Shoreline restoration and fishing access to Keller and Spoon Lakes	\$ 400
2. Trail from Lower Keller picnic area to Spoon Lake Area including tunnel under Hwy. 36	\$ 2,200
3. Overflow parking at Keller Golf Course with improved pedestrian crossing on Hwy. 61	\$ 450
4. Restore lowland forest southwest of Keller Lake	\$ 100
5. Develop portion of Hwy. 61 south of Hwy. 36 interchange as a parkway when Hwy. 61 is turned back to Ramsey County	\$ 5,000
6. Remove pedestrian tunnel under Hwy. 61 as it does not meet current design standards and other crossings of Hwy. 61 are provided. Coordinate with road reconstruction	\$ 500
7. Improve access to archery range for persons with disabilities	\$ 200
8. Restore and expand oak savanna in southwest corner of Keller Park	\$ 200
9. Construct portage trail around weir dam on creek linking Keller and Phalen Lakes.	\$ 100
10. Provide more direct, user-friendly trail connections between Round Lake, the Gateway State Trail, and Golfview picnic facility.	\$ 350
Total	\$ 9,500
Total less Hwy. 61 parkway	\$ 4,500

At Phalen Park, the plan proposes development described in Table 2. The number for each project corresponds to the number on the Site Plan in Figure 2.

Table 2: Phalen RP development costs	
Project	Cost (000s)
1. Relocate Phalen Lake boat ramp to north parking lot to provide improved pedestrian access to Round Lake	\$ 750
2. Improve trail conditions, accessibility and minimize erosion on trail circling Round Lake	\$ 200
3. Reconfigure one-way and two-way segments of Phalen Drive to minimize confusion and improve traffic flow	\$ 500
4. Expand oak savanna between Round and Phalen Lakes	\$ 150
5. Develop informal nature trails through oak savanna	\$ 100
6. Restore Phalen channel to improve canoe/kayaking on channel	\$ 750
7. Create Chinese garden as part of sister city relationship with Changsha, China	\$ 1,000
8. Restore waterfall to Lake Phalen by recycling lake water--also helps oxygenate lake and improve water quality	\$ 600
9. Replace lost trees and restore turf, shoreline planting and redevelop picnic facilities on Picnic Island	\$ 750
10. Replace stage/performance space at amphitheatre	\$ 750
11. Update kitchen facilities and general renovation of picnic pavilion	\$ 1,500
12. Re-align trails and add way finding signs through picnic pavilion area	\$ 150
13. Redesign intersection of Wheelock Parkway and Arcade Street to improve traffic/bicycle/pedestrian safety	\$ 1,000
14. Encouraged to improve Arcade Street between Frost Avenue and Wheelock Parkway as a parkway including turn lanes at park entrances, landscaped medians, improved signage and other site amenities	\$ 3,000
15. Renovate/expand boat house/lakeside center to improve visibility and increase use of the building for classes/workshops and concessions.	\$ 2,500
16. Renovate beach house to increase use	\$ 1,000
17. Develop splash pad at beach to provide water play space that accommodates people of all ages.	\$ 750
18. Develop park entryway at north end of park similar to other entry ways.	\$ 75
19a. Increase trail and road user safety along East Shore Drive	TBD
19b. Traffic safety study and traffic calming measures along East Shore Drive	TBD
20. Four block trail connection from Phalen Park to Bruce Vento Trail along Larpenteur Ave.	\$ 250
21. Ecology exhibits, restrooms and drinking water at corner of East Shore Drive and Arlington Ave.	\$ 1,500

22. Traffic study and possible re-alignment of East Shore Drive south of Arlington Ave. to provide more space for project 21.	\$ 1,000
23. Line wetland with clay and plant wetland plants to restore this feature	\$ 250
24. Plant tree buffer north of Maryland Avenue	\$ 75
25. Replace 8 tennis courts, handball court and parking area (not eligible for Metro Regional Parks CIP funding but replaces facilities that were grandfathered into park before it was designated a regional park)	\$ 350
26. Pedestrian bridge over Maryland Avenue for Bruce Vento Regional Trail	\$ 1,000
Total less tennis court replacement	\$ 19,600
Total less tennis court replacement and Arcade Street parkway	\$ 16,600

5. Conflicts

The master plan identified four items that may be a conflict in the implementation of the master plan and proposed resolutions.

1. Highway 61 separates sections of Keller Park and creates a conflict at the existing trail connection on County Rd. B. However, measures would be provided for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross safely.
2. Highway 36 separates sections of Keller Park and creates a conflict to park users accessing these sections. The master plan proposes a tunnel to link the park sections together. Coordination with the MN Department of Transportation is proposed regarding any improvements to Highway 36 and appropriate measures that would accommodate the tunnel.
3. There is one known burial mound in Keller Park. Construction work in the area will require cautionary measures during any excavation.
4. The master plan proposes utilizing existing embankments from a former trolley bridge over Maryland Avenue just east of Wheelock Parkway as the landfall points for a Bruce Vento Regional Trail bridge. This corridor is also a potential route for light rail transit. In the event plans for light rail transit occur, an alternative location for a bridge over Maryland Avenue should be considered that would provide a safe trail crossing of Maryland Avenue.

6. Public Services

The plan notes that no additional public utilities are necessary for the proposed developments. However rehabilitation of existing public utilities may be required.

7. Operations and Maintenance

Table 3 illustrates existing and future costs to operate each section of the park based on the development concepts proposed in the master plan.

Table 3: Existing and Future Operations & Maintenance Costs for Keller and Phalen Parks

Keller Park	
Existing (per current operation/ Maintenance conditions)	\$360,000.00
Future (when fully developed per development identified above)	\$497,500.00
Phalen Park	
Existing (per current operation/ Maintenance conditions)	\$600,000.00
Future (when fully developed per development concepts identified above)	\$810,000.00

8. Citizen Participation

There was extensive citizen participation in drafting and reviewing the master plan, which included:

- Creating a design advisory task force to provide input and direction to City and County Parks and Recreation Departments. This task force held public meetings and utilized internet and local print media to communicate its work on the plan.
- A community open house attended by over 100 persons on May 20, 2010 to review and comment on the draft plan. Based on those comments revisions to the plan were considered. A summary of public comments is an appendix to the plan.
- A diversity outreach meeting attended by over 100 persons on June 23, 2010 to review and comment on the draft plan. Hmong and Spanish speaking individuals assisted with interviews. Based on those comments revisions to the plan were considered. A summary of public comments is an appendix to the plan.
- Review and approval of the master plan by the City of St. Paul Park and Recreation Commission, City of St. Paul Council, City of Maplewood Council, Ramsey County Parks Commission and Ramsey County Board of Commissioners.

9. Public Awareness

Phalen Park hosts several large public events throughout the year which promote and attract new visitors. A “Friends of Phalen Park” organization works closely with various government agencies and residents to increase public awareness, develop a closer lake community, foster environmental stewardship of the lake, and raise funds for a variety of projects.

Both the St. Paul and Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Departments utilize internet technology to promote their respective parks, encourage rental opportunities of facilities, and events planned at those facilities.

10. Special Needs

All facilities proposed in the master plan will be developed in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Other local guidelines such as the Minnesota Dept. of Transportation's Bicycle Transportation Planning and Design Guidelines publication, will be utilized when developing pedestrian and bicycle trails.

11. Natural Resources

The master plan includes an extensive inventory of the natural resource features in the park. Restoration of natural vegetation is in progress and includes non-native plant removal and replacement with native species that is consistent with MN Dept. of Natural Resources and U.S. Forest Service's Ecological Classification System. Eurasian watermilfoil treatment is occurring as funding allows. Until an effective eradication method is approved, milfoil control may include a partnership with homeowners and municipalities to finance the cost of mechanical removal.

Water resource management is coordinated with the Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District.

REVIEW BY OTHER COUNCIL DIVISIONS:

Environmental Services (Anna Bessel)

We recently received the Phalen-Keller Regional Park Master Plan Amendment, which details trail, roadway, and other various improvements to Keller Park and Phalen Park. After reviewing the Plan, it was determined that park improvements in the areas surrounding Spoon Lake, the northeast corner of Keller Lake, and the northern portion of Phalen Lake are all in the vicinity of MCES facilities and related easements.

Due to the fact that the improvements outlined in the Plan are adjacent to or coincide with MCES facilities, plans must be submitted for further review to assess any potential impacts to the regional system. Therefore, after preliminary plans for the project are completed, it is requested that one set be forwarded to Scott Dentz of MCES for review and comment. Coordination with MCES should occur to ensure that MCES facilities will not be negatively affected by any construction practices. The plans should be mailed to the following address:

Scott Dentz
3565 Kennebec Drive
Eagan, MN 55122-1058

Pending the submittal of plans to Mr. Dentz, we have no objections or concerns regarding the proposed project.

Environmental Services (Jim Larsen) – No impacts

A conflict appears to exist, involving the presence of the Bald Eagle nest in the narrow stand of tall trees immediately south of Highway 36 (location discussed in text on page 21), near the interconnection between Spoon and Keller Lakes. Keller Park development concept #2 proposes to construct a trail tunnel under Highway 36 in very close proximity to the tree bearing this nest. This proposal appears to

be in direct conflict with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines which call for the avoidance of activities that may disturb nesting bald eagles. (http://www.fws.gov/midwest/eagle/guidelines/visible/visactivity_step3.html) It may seem inconsistent to identify the proposed trail as a ‘potential disturbance’ to the nest when Highway 36 is well within the recommended 660-foot activity buffer, but eagles constructed the existing nest with the highway in place, and vehicles do not stray outside the existing highway corridor. The trail alignment as currently proposed, would allow trail users to pass within approximately 100 feet of the nest-bearing tree with little possibility of acceptably buffering it with landscape to screen the nest from trail users. Council staff recommends shifting the proposed tunnel to accommodate the trail 400 to 500 feet further to the east along Highway 36.

Metropolitan Council Transportation (Ann Braden)

Metropolitan Council staff conferred with the MN Dept. of Transportation on the proposed conversion of Highway 61 to a parkway and a tunnel connecting a trail to either side of TH 36. Following are MN-DOT’s comments.

Jennifer Reed, MN Dept. of Transportation (MN DOT):

MN/DOT North Area staff is aware of the proposed parkway conversion of 61 south of TH 36 in the Master Plan, most likely south of Co. Rd. B. We don’t oppose the idea, although it is understood that in order for a parkway conversion to occur, the section of roadway will be turned back. The most likely candidate to receive the road is Ramsey County. I know that Ramsey County Parks and Recreation likes the idea, but Ramsey County Public Works didn’t seem all that interested in getting the turn back when I mentioned it last year, and Public Works would be the responsible party for the roadway once it is turned back. The County will need to work through internally on how they want to address this, so I don’t see it happening anytime soon. It’s currently not on MN/DOT’s radar for turnbacks – Ramsey County has not yet brought this forward to our State Aid group as a location for a turn back.

As for who will pay for the conversion – we haven’t had any discussions with Ramsey County about the conversion, but the two most likely scenarios are that Ramsey County would construct a project to convert the section to a parkway, then receive Turnback dollars to pay for the project, or Mn/DOT would turn back the section of roadway to Ramsey County and provide Turnback dollars to go with it through the agreement. I don’t see it being a scenario where Mn/DOT will construct the parkway and then turn it back.

We have started discussions with Greg Mack and his staff regarding access under TH 36 to connect a trail between Keller Lake on the south side of TH 36 and Spoon Lake on the north side. MN/DOT has, in its program for FY 2013, a project to replace the TH 36 bridges over Keller Lake. We are looking at whether there is a possibility to include a trail underneath a new bridge, adjacent to the channel, or if it makes more sense to have a trail in a separate box culvert east of the bridge. Timing-wise it seems appropriate to consider such work in conjunction with a project programmed in the area. MN/DOT is still doing evaluations of possible bridge designs, and we are trying to provide Ramsey County with preliminary information regarding costs for a trail under the bridge (and any constraints that may exist for the trail) or in a separate structure.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The Phalen-Keller Regional Park Master Plan Amendment (Referral No. 50007-1) meets the requirements for master plans in the *Updated 2030 Parks Policy Plan*.

2. The proposed tennis court replacement costs (\$350,000) are not eligible for Metro Regional Parks CIP funding but are grand-fathered into the park as they were there prior to the regional park designation and do not adversely affect the natural resource based recreation facilities.
3. Park development costs excluding the aforementioned tennis courts and parkway conversion projects total \$21.1 million. This is eligible for Metropolitan Council Regional Park Capital Improvement Program (CIP) consideration. Metropolitan Council approval of the master plan does not obligate future funding from the Regional Parks CIP to finance those costs. Plan approval only allows Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul to seek funding for projects in the plan through the Regional Parks CIP.
4. The City of St. Paul should submit minor plan amendments on costs that had not been determined for:
 - a. Phalen Project 19a: Trail and adjacent East Shore Drive safety improvements
 - b. Phalen Project 19b: Traffic calming/safety measures on East Shore Drive
5. The City of St. Paul and Ramsey County should submit preliminary plans for park improvements in the areas surrounding Spoon Lake, the northeast corner of Keller Lake, and the northern portion of Phalen Lake to Scott Dentz of Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) for review and comment to ensure that MCES facilities will not be negatively affected by any construction practices.
6. The proposal to convert Highway 61 south of Highway 36 to a parkway appears to be acceptable to the Minnesota Dept. of Transportation (MN DOT), but neither MN DOT nor Ramsey County has committed to it doing it and the parkway conversion could occur only if Ramsey County Public Works accepted the road for turnback.
7. The proposed trail tunnel under Highway 36 should be moved further to the east 400 to 500 feet to eliminate disturbance to nesting bald eagles.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Phalen-Keller Regional Park Master Plan Amendment (Referral No. 50007-1).
2. Inform City of St. Paul that the proposed tennis court replacement costs are not eligible for Metro Regional Parks CIP funding but are grand-fathered into the park as they were there prior to the regional park designation and do not adversely affect the natural resource based recreation facilities.
3. Request submittal by the City of St. Paul of minor plan amendments on costs that had not been determined for:
 - a. Phalen Project 19a: Trail and adjacent East Shore Drive safety improvements
 - b. Phalen Project 19b: Traffic calming/safety measures on East Shore Drive
4. Request the City of St. Paul and Ramsey County submit a set of preliminary plans for park improvements in the areas surrounding Spoon Lake, the northeast corner of Keller Lake, and the northern portion of Phalen Lake to Scott Dentz of MCES for review and comment to ensure that MCES facilities will not be negatively affected by any construction practices.
5. Request the City of St. Paul and Ramsey County parks departments to work cooperatively with applicable street and highway departments on cost sharing for the proposed parkways on that portion

of Arcade Street/U.S. Highway 61 which borders the east side of Phalen Park and bisects Keller Park, plus the proposed tunnel under Highway 36.

6. Request Ramsey County to shift the proposed trail tunnel under Highway 36 further to the east 400 to 500 feet to eliminate disturbance to nesting bald eagles.