

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
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DATE: January 26, 2010

TO: Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

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

SUBJECT: (2010-34) Amendment to Trout Brook Regional Trail master plan, City of St. Paul (Referral Number 20658-1)

INTRODUCTION

The City of St. Paul has submitted an amendment to the master plan for Trout Brook Regional trail. The existing trail, managed by Ramsey County begins at McCarron's Lake and ends at the City of St. Paul's northern boundary at the intersection with the Gateway State Trail on L'Orient Avenue. The plan amendment extends the trail south through the Trillium Nature Sanctuary, utilizes the proposed Gateway State Trail expansion along the western edge of I-35E to Phalen Boulevard, follows Phalen Boulevard and curves beneath the Westminster Junction bridge, then proceeds along the western side of railroad right of way and along the proposed Trout Brook Boulevard to Warner Road where it links to the Sam Morgan Regional Trail. Total length of the trail is 4.1 miles.

This memorandum analyzes the master plan amendment against the criteria for reviewing regional park master plans. It recommends approving the master plan amendment because it is consistent with applicable portions of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

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.

ANALYSIS

1. Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

The Trout Brook Regional Trail's alignment was chosen to link to other local, regional and State trails. **Figure A: Proposed Trout Brook Regional Trail Corridor** illustrates existing and proposed trail alignments, and identifies four areas proposed to be acquired for trail right of way or to provide space for trailhead support facilities to the trail.

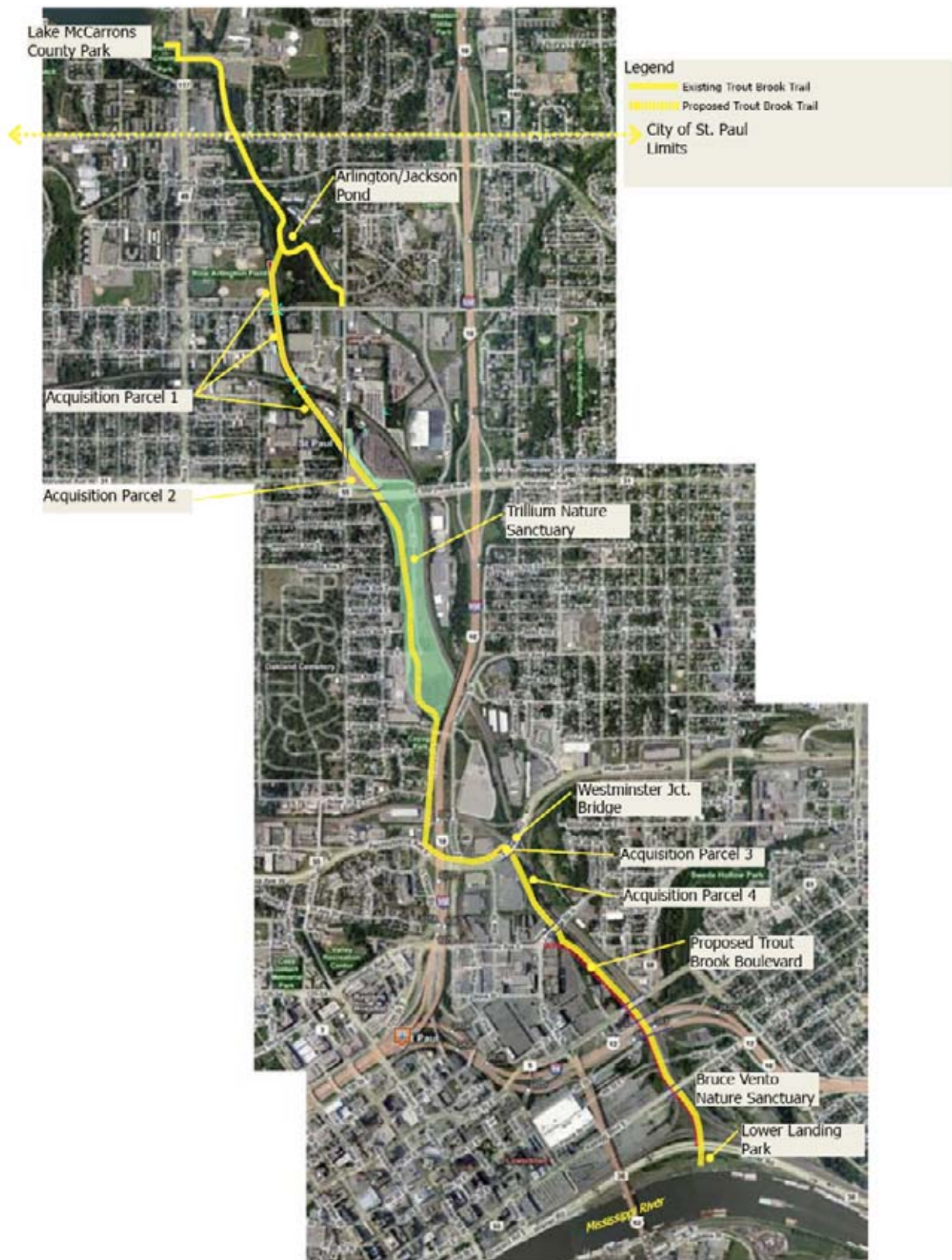
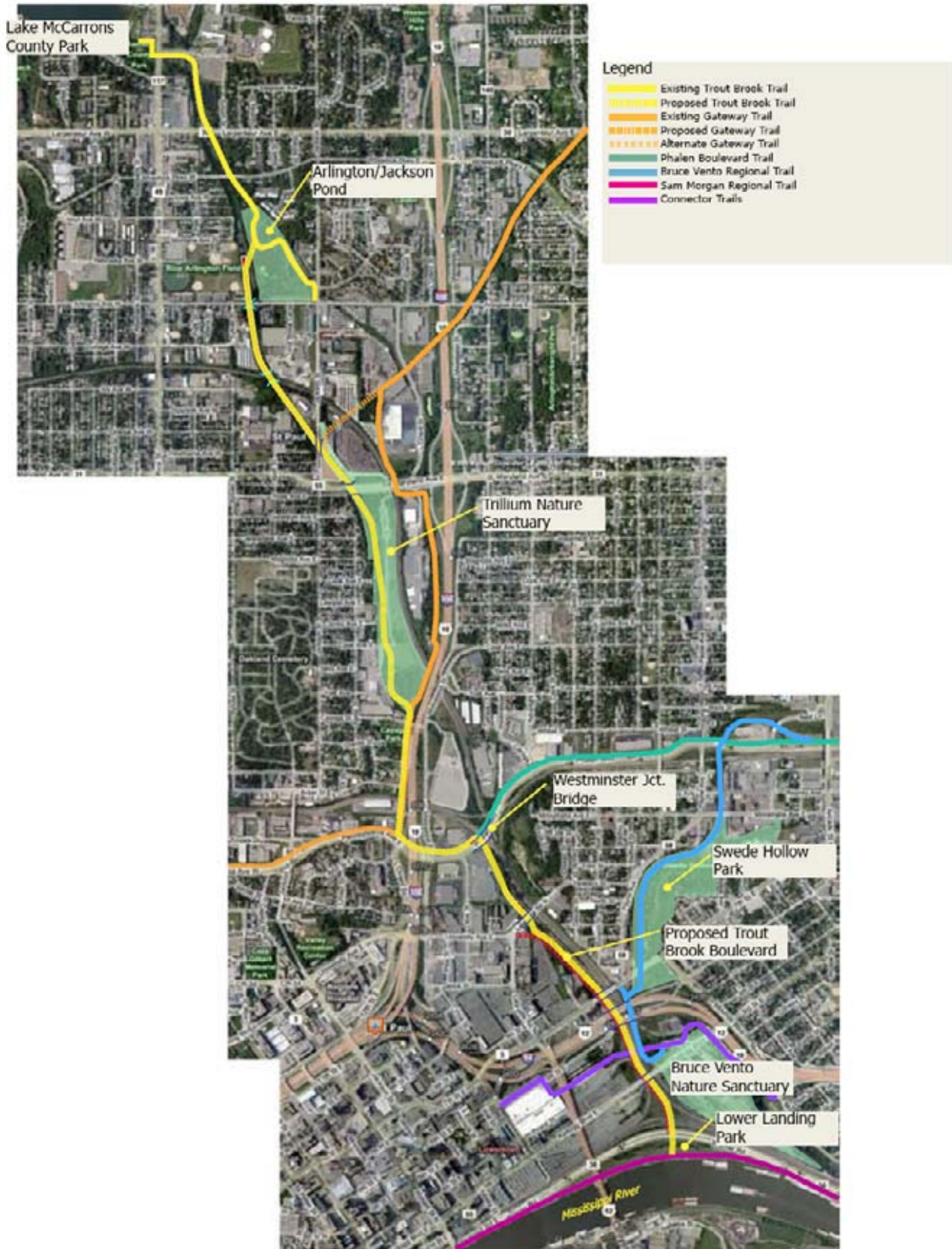


Figure A: Proposed Trout Brook Regional Trail Corridor

**Trout Brook
Regional Trail**

The trail's alignment was chosen to maximize linkages with local, regional and State trails as shown in **Figure B: Trail Connections**



In order to construct the trail, four acquisitions are proposed to fill in gaps. The total acquisition cost is \$5,375,000, which is broken down as follows.

Figure C: Acquisition Parcel 1 is an active Canadian Pacific Railroad right of way. The plan proposes its acquisition when the railroad abandons this right of way. The estimated cost is \$2 million. There is no projected timing for this acquisition.

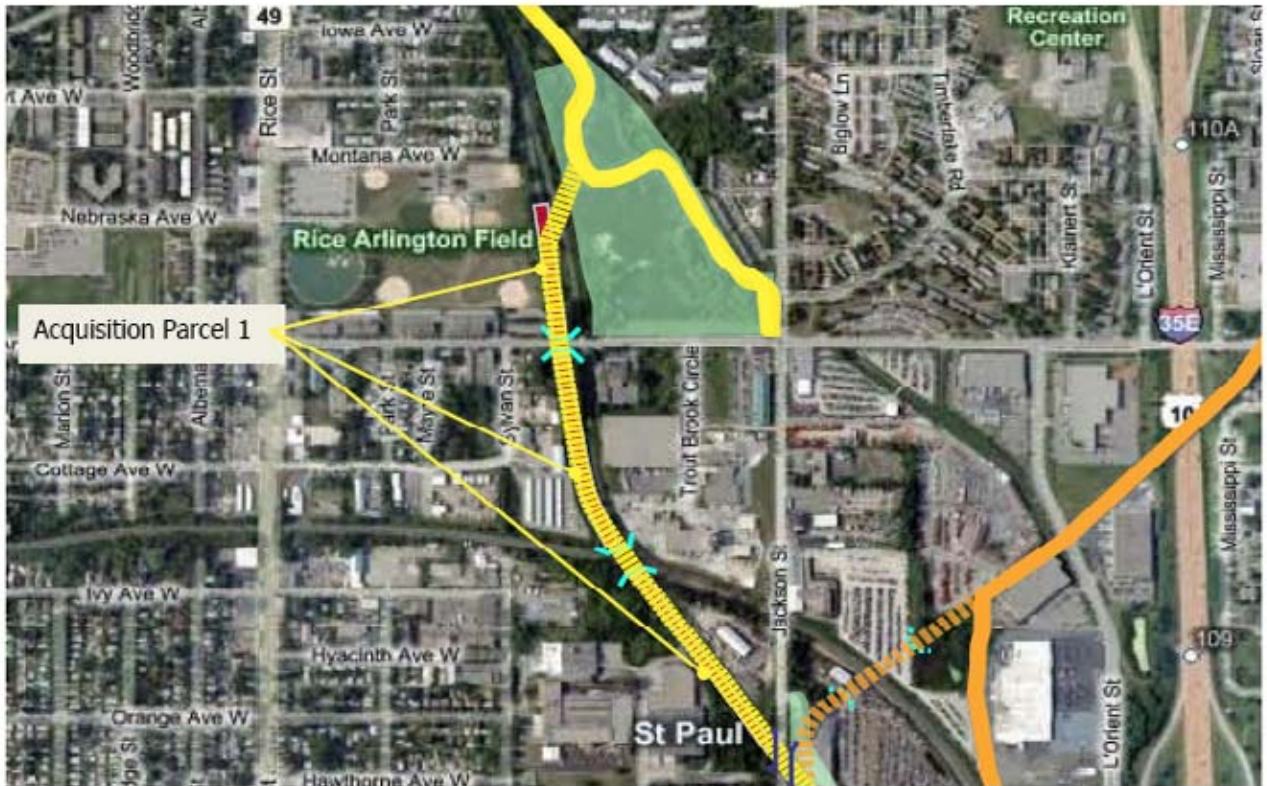


Figure C: Acquisition Parcel 1

Figure D: Acquisition Parcel 2, Trillium Nature Sanctuary Site is currently a used car business. The plan proposes that it be acquired at an estimated cost of \$2.35 million to provide space for an entrance to the trail and nature sanctuary that would include a parking lot, restrooms, trail signage and picnic area. The acquisition is proposed for 2012.



Figure D: Acquisition Parcel 2, Trillium Nature Sanctuary Site

Figure E: Acquisition Parcels 3 and 4 are parcels that allow the trail to pass under Phalen Boulevard (parcel 3) and to connect to city owned land to the proposed Trout Brook Boulevard (parcel 4). The estimated cost of both parcels is \$1,025,000. Acquisition is scheduled for 2011.



Figure E: Acquisition Parcels 3 and 4

2. Stewardship Plan

Ramsey County owns and maintains the existing trail from McCarron's Lake to L'Orient Avenue. The City of St. Paul will own and maintain the rest of the trail to its linkage with the Sam Morgan Regional Trail except that portion that is located in conjunction with the Gateway State Trail. That portion will be owned and managed by the MN Dept. of Natural Resources. The City, Ramsey County and MN Dept. of Natural Resources will cooperate on management issues including public safety throughout the corridor.

3. Needs Analysis

The 2008 visit estimate for the existing 1 mile trail managed by Ramsey County is 32,800 visits. Once the trail corridor is complete its visitation will increase since it links to the Gateway State Trail, the Bruce Vento Regional Trail (88,400 visits in 2008) and the Sam Morgan Regional Trail (175,400 visits in 2008).

4. Development

The proposed development of the trail is dependent on acquisition timing, coordination with construction of the I-35E and Cayuga interchange and coordination with construction of Trout Brook Boulevard. The total estimated development cost not born by other entities is \$4,195,600.

For ease of describing the development costs, the corridor was divided into five segments which are described below.

Figure F depicts the existing 1 mile segment of trail from McCarron's Lake to Arlington Avenue. This section was completed in 2001.

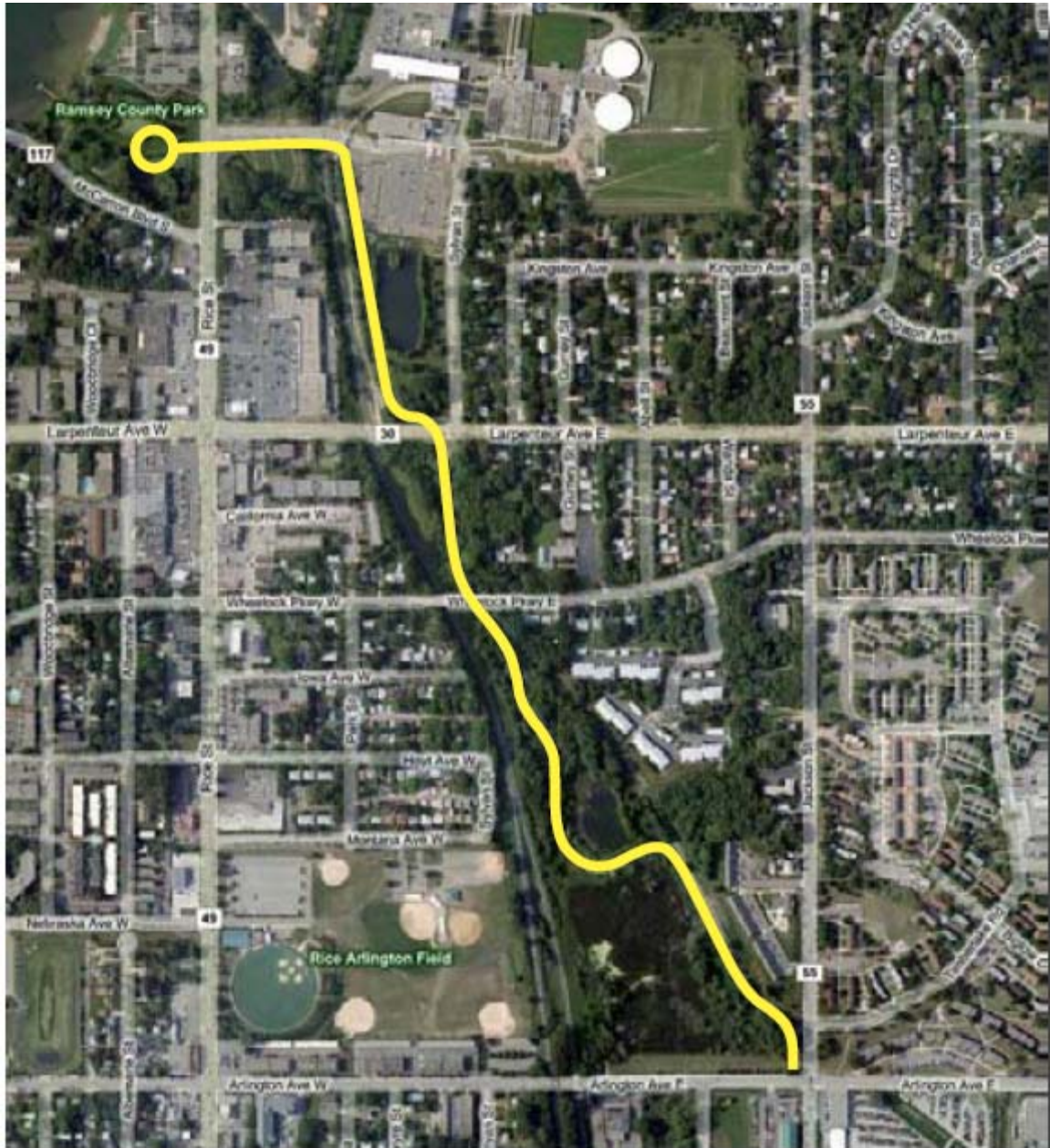


Figure F

Figure G depicts the Arlington Avenue to Jackson Street segment. It is the proposed reuse of a currently active Canadian Pacific Railroad right of way for the trail. Two existing railroad bridges over Arlington and Burlington Northern Sante Fe (BNSF) tracks would be converted to pedestrian/bicycle use. The total estimated cost of trail development is \$960,000. A portion of the existing trail to the intersection of Arlington and Jackson would remain to provide access to bus routes and for local neighborhood access to the trail.



Figure G

Figure H illustrates the proposed development from Jackson Street to Cayuga Street (.83 mile) including the Trillium Nature Sanctuary. The trail would skirt the western edge of the site on former railroad right of way. Trout Brook would be “day lighted” (taken out of its underground pipe) and a 2/3rd mile looped crushed limestone trail would be constructed alongside the stream bed with three bridge crossings. Native vegetation for eight plant communities would be installed. An entrance to the Trillium Nature Center and Trout Brook Regional Trail containing parking for 12-16 cars, bus drop-off, restrooms, picnic area and information and interpretive signage is proposed. Total development cost is \$2.8 million.



Figure H: Trillium Nature Sanctuary Master Plan

Trout Brook
Regional Trail

Figure I depicts the section from Cayuga Street to Pennsylvania Avenue/Phalen Boulevard (0.37 mile). This portion would be constructed by the State of Minnesota as part of the Gateway State Trail extension and MN Dept. of Transportation's I-35E/Cayuga interchange project. The State of Minnesota would own and manage this section. Development is proposed in 2014.



Figure I

Figure J depicts the trail adjacent to L'Orient Street in this section of the trail.

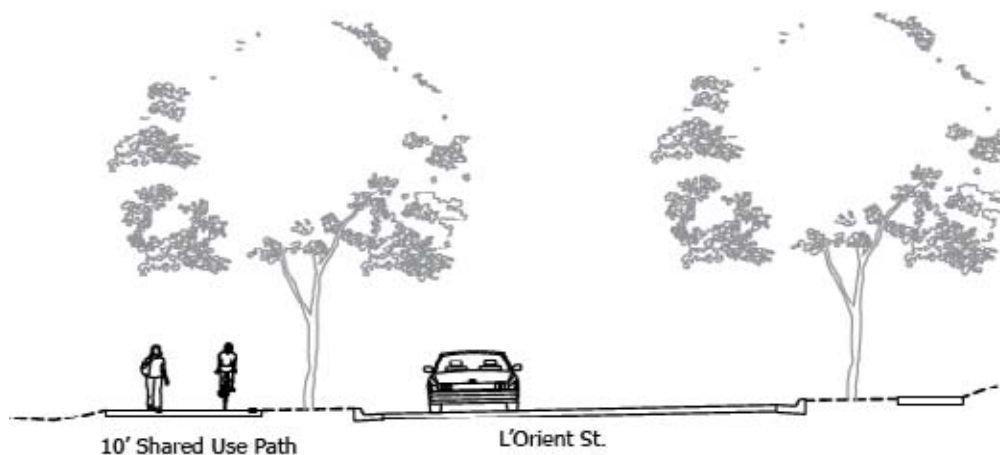


Figure J: Section of trail adjacent to roadway

Figure K depicts the last section of trail from Phalen Boulevard to Lower Landing Park and its link to the Sam Morgan Regional Trail (1.25 miles). From L'Orient Street the trail would follow the existing Phalen Boulevard Trail and then ramp down under Phalen Boulevard at the Westminster Junction bridge. It then uses existing city owned right of way behind the Lafayette office park. South of Lafayette Road the trail would be constructed in conjunction with the proposed Trout Brook Boulevard from University Avenue to Warner Road, where it would link with the Sam Morgan Regional Trail in Lower Landing Park. Development cost in this section is \$435,600.

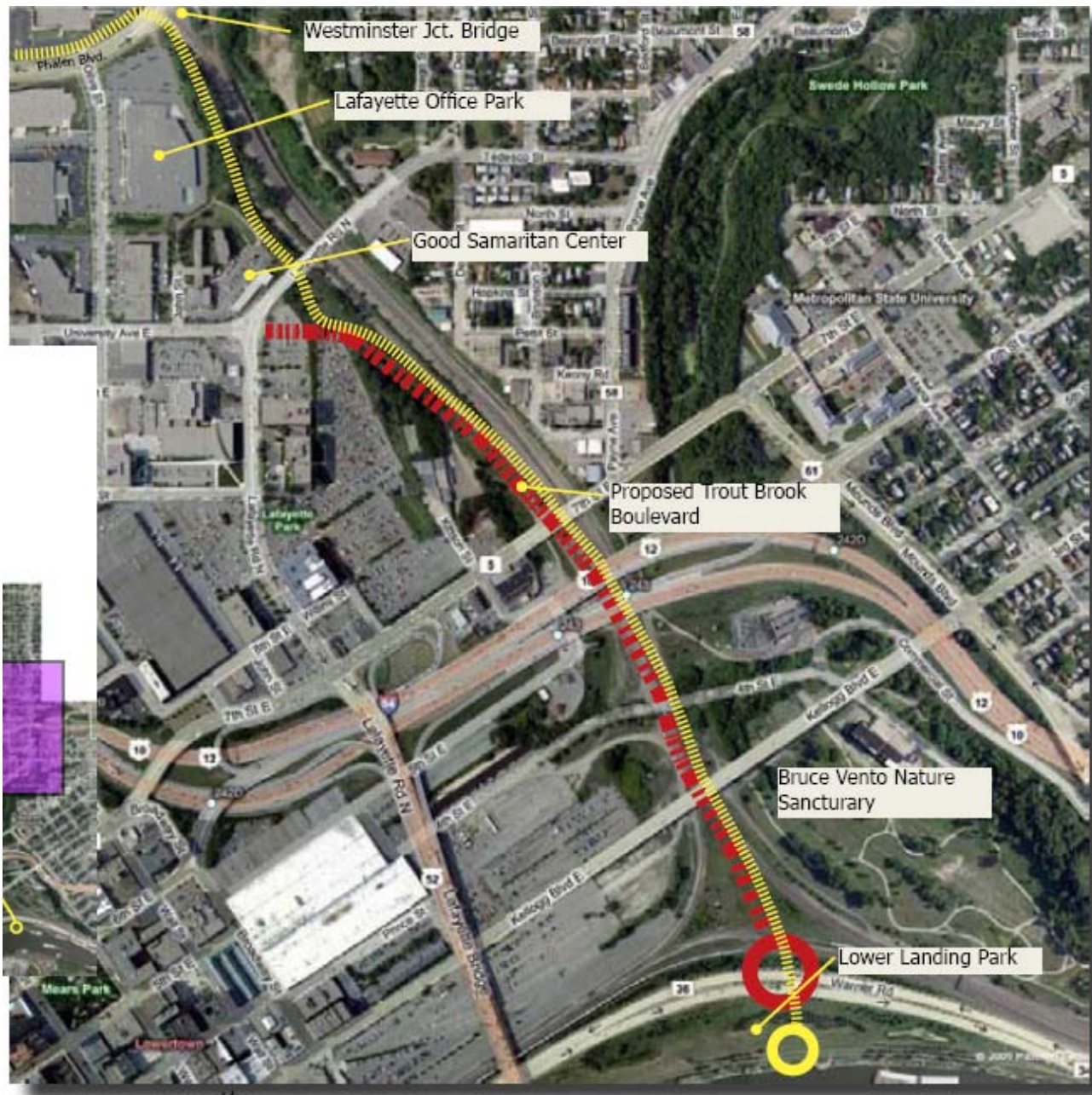


Figure K 

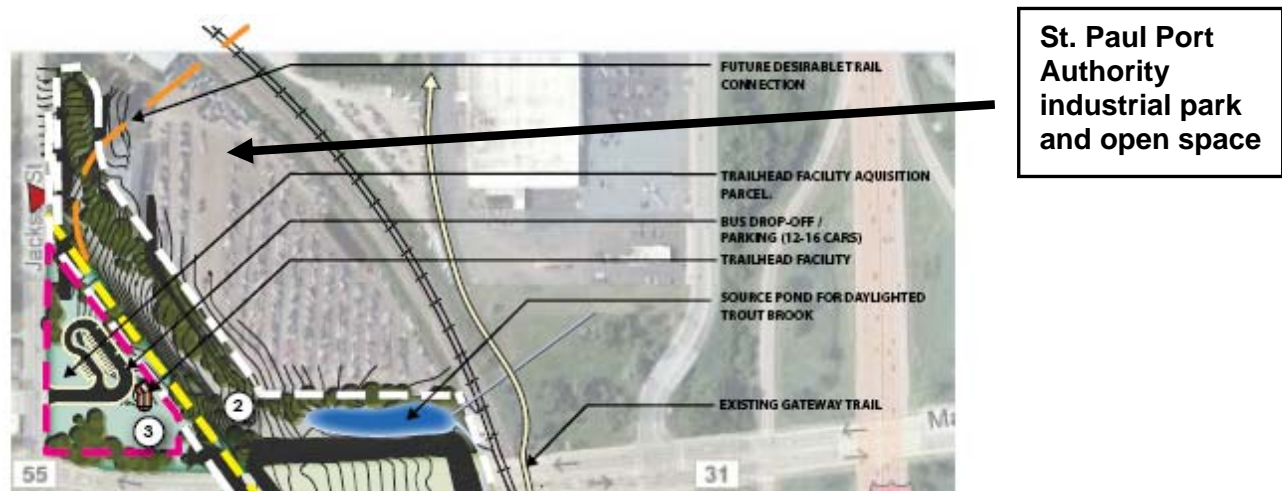
5. Conflicts

The plan describes the following issues to be resolved through coordination with other entities in each section of the trail as follows.

Segment 1: McCarron's Lake to Arlington Street. No issue as trail is completed.

Segment 2: Arlington Street to Jackson Street. Acquisition of the Canadian Pacific Railroad right of way is dependent on abandonment of this right of way. Currently it serves the Elmar St. Paul Properties. A letter of interest to acquire the right of way once operations cease has been sent to Canadian Pacific. Development of the trail will also require an at-grade or bridge crossing of an active Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad track.

The St. Paul Port Authority is redeveloping an auto salvage yard north of the Trillium Nature Sanctuary into an industrial park with open space. There is an opportunity to create a connection to the Gateway State Trail and use the Trillium Nature Sanctuary as a new route for a combined Gateway/Trout Brook Trail if another bridge over the BNSF railroad can be installed there. This is depicted as a "Future Desirable Trail Connection" in the graphic below:



Segments 3 and 4: Trillium Nature Sanctuary to I-35E/Cayuga Interchange

The MN Dept. of Transportation (MN DOT) is scheduled to reconfigure the I-35E interchange at Cayuga Street in 2014. This will cause the existing Gateway State Trail bridge over the BNSF tracks at the southern end of the Trillium Nature Sanctuary to be relocated. If the City of St. Paul can acquire easements for a new bridge over the BNSF tracks at the auto salvage yard north of the Trillium Sanctuary described above, then MN DOT and the MN Dept. of Natural Resources (MN DNR) have agreed to relocate the bridge to this new location and provide the benefits described above for both the Gateway and Trout Brook Trails. If the City does not have the necessary easements to relocate the bridge in time (prior to 2014), then MN DOT will move the bridge slightly to the north and west of its current location. MN DOT will also construct an extension of the Gateway State Trail to Pennsylvania Avenue which provides a connection to the Phalen Boulevard Trail.

Segment 5: Phalen Boulevard to Lower Landing Park

MN DOT is scheduled to replace the Lafayette Bridge over the Mississippi River in 2010. New access to this bridge allows the City to create a new street (Trout Brook Boulevard) that will link University Avenue to Warner Road. The regional trail would be built adjacent to Trout Brook Boulevard. A portion of Trout Brook Boulevard will be built as part of the Lafayette Bridge project.

6. Public Services

There are no public utilities proposed for the trail other than at the trailhead site at Trillium Nature Sanctuary. That trailhead will require connection to nearby electrical, phone, water and sanitary sewer utilities. Those costs are included in the development cost for that section of the trail.

7. Operations and Maintenance

The trail is jointly managed by Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul since it transects both jurisdictions. Past experience with joint management of the Bruce Vento Regional Trail indicates no significant differences in the way the County and City operate and maintain their respective segments of that trail. Consequently trail users will not be subject to conflicting or contradictory regulations.

The annual operations/maintenance cost for Trout Brook Regional Trail is \$12,600. The annual operations and maintenance costs for Trillium Nature Sanctuary including the trailhead facility is \$25,900.

8. Citizen Participation

In September 2000, the St. Paul Planning Commission established a task force to assist in plan preparation in consultation with eleven groups including:

Capitol Region Watershed District, Tri Area Block Club, District 6 Planning Council, Friends of Swede Hollow, Dayton's Bluff District 4 Community Council, Payne Phalen District 5 Planning Council, Diamond Products, Lowertown Depot, Ramsey County Parks, St. Paul Parks and Recreation Commission, and the MN DNR Metro Greenways Division.

A technical advisory committee also participated in this planning process. A public hearing was held on the Trout Brook Trail plan in September 2001.

A Community Task Force participated in the preparation of the Trillium Nature Sanctuary plan in 2005-2006.

The St. Paul City Council approved this plan amendment after a public hearing on November 18, 2009. The Ramsey County Board approved this plan amendment on January 19, 2010.

9. Public Awareness

Since a portion of the trail is in place, there is significant public awareness of its existence. Additional publicity of the extended trail will be implemented via city and county park and trail maps, brochures, and city and county WebPages, plus any updates to the Metropolitan Council's regional park system maps and website.

10. Special Needs

Access to the trail and the trail itself will be designed in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. There are no charges to use the trail and facilities proposed in the plan.

11. Natural Resources

The trail follows the historic path of Trout Brook. Significant alterations to native vegetation and the creek bed have occurred with the brook gradually buried in storm sewer pipes. Today, only a few fragments of open creek bed and degraded natural communities remain.

The master plan focuses on the Trillium Nature Sanctuary for natural resource management since that area (44 acres) is proposed for restoration of native plant communities, day lighting a portion of Trout Brook, and creating wetlands and ponds to treat storm water from the surrounding watershed before it flows further south to the Mississippi River. Figure H on page 9 illustrates these plant communities and storm water management projects.

REVIEW BY OTHER COUNCIL DIVISIONS:

Environmental Services – (Anna Bessel)

The Master Plan states that the project objectives include the development of a regional trail and sanctuary area. The trail will link Lake McCarron's County Park to the City of Saint Paul's Lower Landing Park, which lies along the Mississippi River. The Trillium Nature Sanctuary, which includes parking and a trailhead facility, is located southwest of the intersection of Interstate 35E and Maryland Avenue.

Several portions of the proposed project appear to be adjacent to or coincide with the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) Trout Brook interceptor (Interceptor Number 8660.) Specific locations of interest include the trail area just north of the Mississippi River, the area surrounding the Trillium Nature Sanctuary, and the trail area northwest of the intersection of Jackson Street and Maryland Avenue.

Due to the close proximity of the project corridors to MCES facilities, additional information will be needed to ensure that the proposed construction will not result in any negative impact to the regional sanitary sewer system. Therefore, once a detailed set of plans are completed, it is requested that a set be forwarded to Scott Dentz of MCES for review. It will then be determined whether an encroachment agreement will need to be obtained from the Metropolitan Council prior to the start of construction. The plans should be mailed to the following address:

Scott Dentz
3565 Kennebec Drive
Eagan, MN 55122-1058

Environmental Services –(Jim Larsen) – No impacts

Metropolitan Council Transportation (Ann Braden) – No impacts.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The amendment to Trout Brook Regional Trail Master Plan, City of St. Paul (Referral Number 20658-1) is consistent with requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.
2. The estimated acquisition costs are \$5,375,000 and development costs are \$4,195,600 to implement the master plan. Metropolitan Council approval of the master plan does not obligate future funding from the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to finance those costs. Plan approval only allows the City to seek funding for projects in the plan through the Regional Parks CIP.

3. Several portions of the proposed project appear to be adjacent to or coincide with the MCES Trout Brook interceptor (Interceptor Number 8660.) Therefore, once a detailed set of plans are completed, a set should be forwarded to MCES for review to determine whether an encroachment agreement will need to be obtained from the Metropolitan Council prior to construction.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Metropolitan Council approve the amendment to Trout Brook Regional Trail Master Plan, City of St. Paul (Referral Number 20658-1) and request that the City of St. Paul submit a detailed set of construction plans for the trail and nature sanctuary to Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review to determine whether an encroachment agreement will need to be obtained from the Metropolitan Council prior to construction.