

**METROPOLITAN COUNCIL**

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**DATE:** October 2, 2012  
**TO:** Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission  
**FROM:** Jan Youngquist, AICP; Planning Analyst-Parks (651) 602-1029  
**SUBJECT:** (2012-xxx) Intercity Regional Trail Master Plan, Three Rivers Park District Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission District C (Emily Johnson Piper)

**INTRODUCTION**

Three Rivers Park District has submitted the Intercity Regional Trail Master Plan for Metropolitan Council review and approval. Development of the master plan was a joint effort between Three Rivers Park District, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and the City of Bloomington.

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* (Chapter 2 – Planning Strategy 1), describes the role of the master plan in the regional park system. The policy requires that any project proposed for funding in the Metropolitan Regional Parks Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) be consistent with a Metropolitan Council approved regional park master plan.

This staff report contains a review of the Intercity Regional Trail Master Plan based on its consistency with the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and recommends approval of the master plan.

**AUTHORITY TO REVIEW**

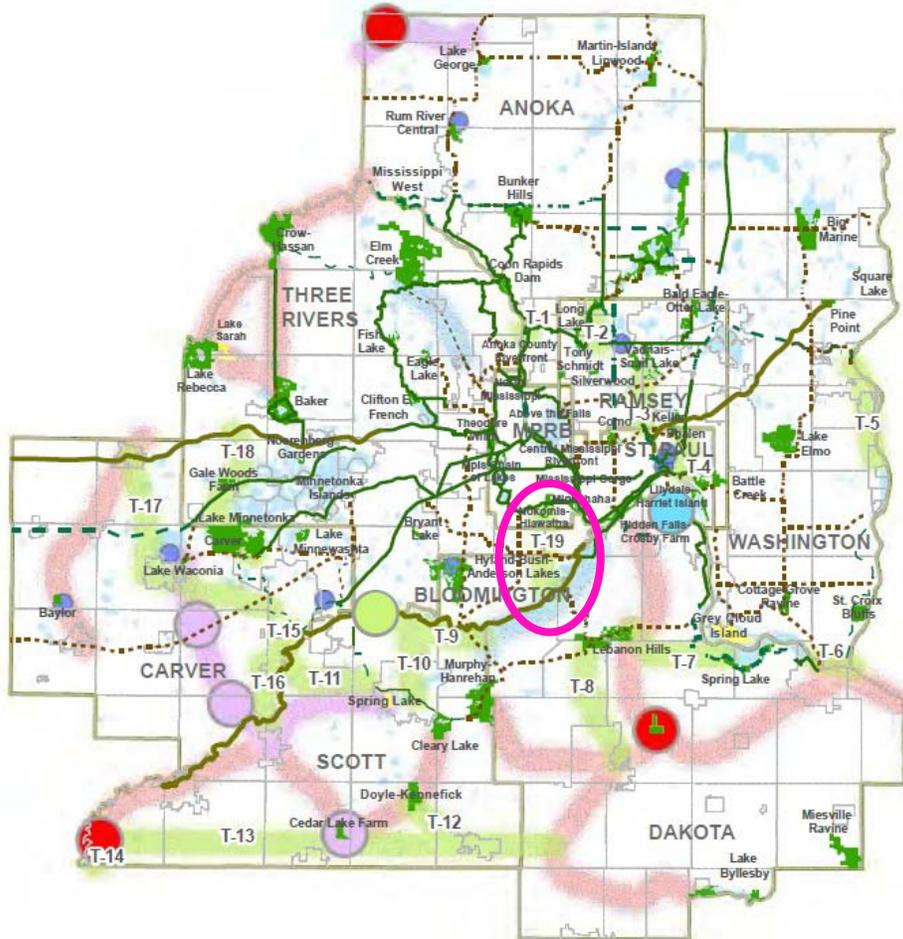
Minnesota Statute 473.313, Subdivision 1 requires Regional Park Implementing Agencies to “prepare, after consultation with all affected municipalities, and submit to the Metropolitan Council, and from time to time revise and resubmit to the council, a master plan and annual budget for the acquisition 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 parks system. Plans are reviewed for their consistency with the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policy plans. 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.

## BACKGROUND

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* was amended in July 2012 to identify a regional trail search corridor to connect Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park in Minneapolis to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the planned Minnesota Valley State Trail in Bloomington. The regional trail search corridor is circled in pink on *Figure 1*.

**Figure 1: 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan Map**



The Intercity Regional Trail as described in the master plan will travel approximately 5 miles through Minneapolis, Richfield and Bloomington, and will complete a portion of the regional trail search corridor. The trail will travel through three regional park implementing agencies' service areas; therefore, the trail will be jointly operated and managed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Three Rivers Park District (Richfield section), and the City of Bloomington. The planned trail will connect Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park to the 86<sup>th</sup> Street Bikeway in Bloomington. The remainder of the regional trail search corridor between the 86<sup>th</sup> Street Bikeway and the Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge and the planned Minnesota Valley State Trail will remain to be planned in the future.

The Intercity Regional Trail will also connect to the proposed Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail, which will travel from the Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail in Hopkins to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The Metropolitan Council has not

reviewed and approved a master plan for the Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail; therefore, the routes of the trail shown on maps within this master plan are proposed and are intended to be illustrative of potential future connections to the Intercity Regional Trail.

Along its route, the Intercity Regional Trail will provide connections to local and regional parks, residential areas, shopping districts, schools and churches. The 86<sup>th</sup> Street Bikeway is an east-west route that leads from the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Reserve to Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve. *Figure 2* depicts the location of the Intercity Regional Trail, which is shown in red.

**Figure 2: Intercity Regional Trail Location**



## MASTER PLAN REVIEW ANALYSIS

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that master plans for regional linking trails address the following nine items:

## **1. Boundaries and Acquisition Costs**

The Intercity Regional Trail will extend south from Lake Nokomis Parkway in Minneapolis, along Cedar Avenue adjacent to Solomon Park until it reaches East 60<sup>th</sup> Street in Richfield, where it will head east to Bloomington Avenue South. At Bloomington Avenue South, the trail will cross Trunk Highway 62 and lead into Taft Park in Richfield. South of Taft Park, the trail will continue along Richfield Parkway/17<sup>th</sup> Avenue South; after that it will go east on 66<sup>th</sup> Street and then south along Cedar Avenue.

At 76<sup>th</sup> Street, the trail will extend west to 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, where it will then continue south over I-494 in Bloomington. Through Bloomington, the trail will extend east along American Boulevard to Old Cedar Avenue. At Old Cedar Avenue, the trail continues south on the west side of the street past Wright's Lake Park to the 86<sup>th</sup> Street Bikeway.

The regional trail will be primarily located within existing local street right-of-way. Some portions of the right-of-way do not meet the regional park implementing agencies' regional trail design standards; therefore, the implementing agencies may need to acquire easements or property to bring the trail into compliance.

The regional trail land acquisition process is typically based on a willing-seller approach. Strategies to acquire land for the regional trail include:

- Route the regional trail to utilize portions of the property with marginal development potential
- Acquire easements for the regional trail through owner or developer negotiations that may include redevelopment incentives
- Secure park dedication lands for the trail in advance of actual development
- Coordinate with City initiatives that may result in the acquisition of entire parcels, with the intent of reselling the property subject to a regional trail easement
- Acquire development rights to the property and negotiate development areas with the developer
- Accept a donation of property for the regional trail
- Acquire a portion of the property through purchase

No land or easement acquisition is proposed for the Minneapolis segment of the trail. Easements are proposed along the Richfield and Bloomington segments of the trail. The estimated acquisition costs are \$326,000 for the Richfield segment and \$324,000 for the Bloomington segment. Fees associated with acquisition are estimated at \$100,000, which brings the total estimated acquisition costs to \$770,000.

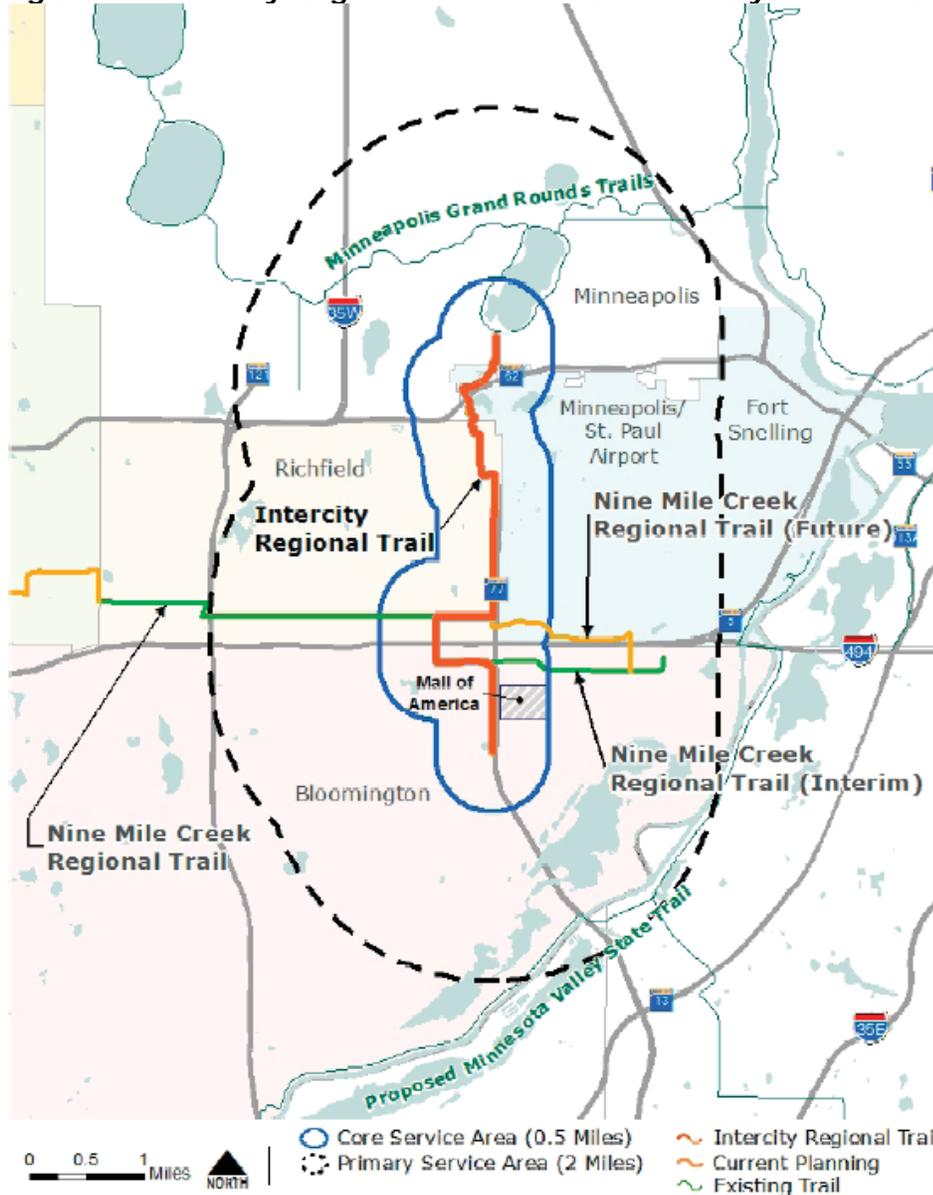
## **2. Demand Forecast**

The master plan indicates that once fully developed, the Intercity Regional Trail will generate approximately 185,300 annual visits. Due to the trail's location, adjacent land uses, and connectivity to other regional trails, the Intercity Regional Trail is predicted to serve as a commuting route in addition to being a recreational trail. Significant use of the trail will occur in spring, summer and fall. Winter use of the trail will be dependent on weather conditions as well as the assistance of local communities in maintaining the trail during the winter. At the time the master plan was prepared, the cities of

Bloomington and Richfield, as well as the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), indicated their intent to maintain the trail during the winter season.

Figure 3 depicts the core and primary service areas for the regional trail. The majority of trail users are anticipated to come from these service areas.

**Figure 3: Intercity Regional Trail Core and Primary Service Areas**



### 3. Development Concept

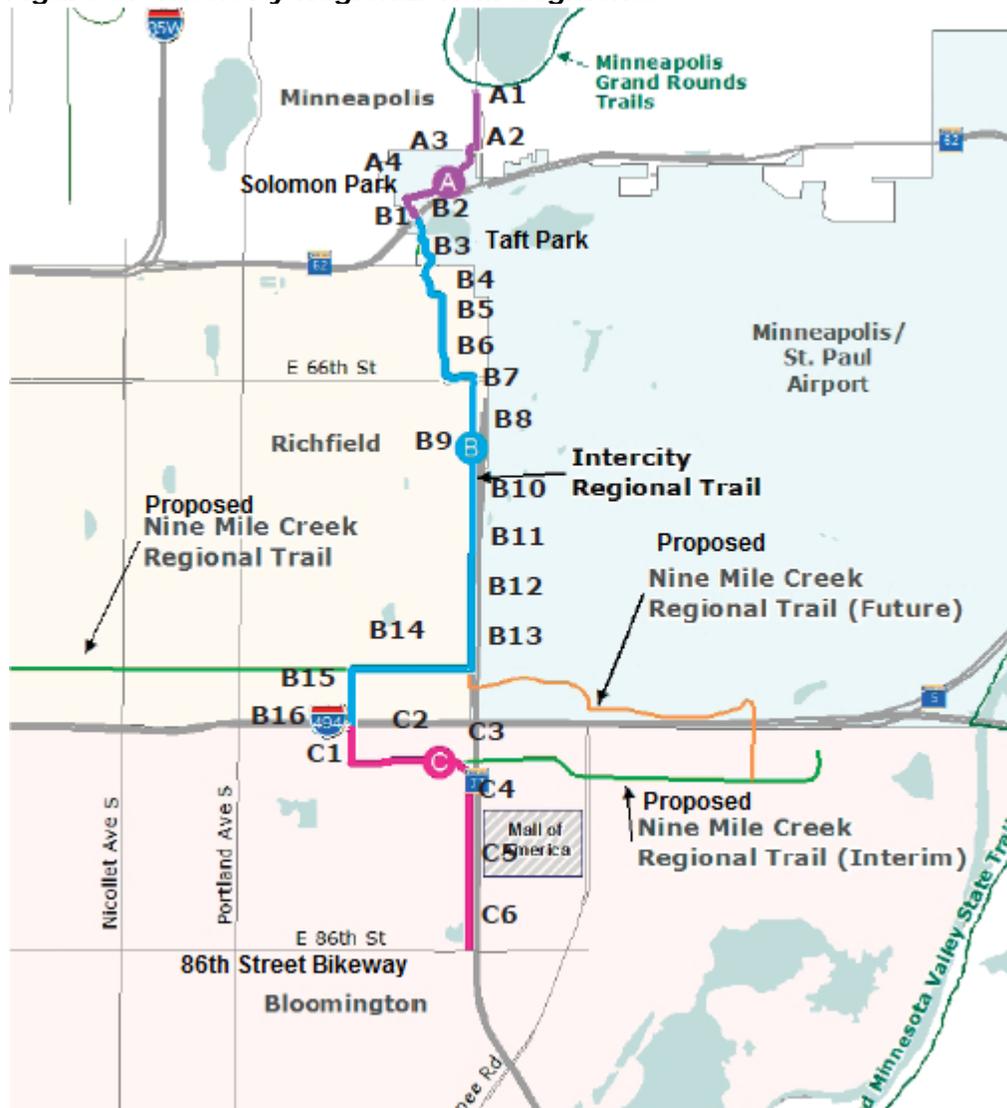
The regional trail will be primarily located within existing street right-of-way and parkland owned by local municipalities and government agencies. The trail design consists of a 10 foot wide paved surface separated from vehicular traffic. However, in some cases the trail will need to be temporarily on-street or reduced in width for short segments until additional right-of-way can be acquired or until funding is available to improve sections that do not meet typical regional trail design guidelines.

The regional trail has been divided into three major segments:

**Figure 4: Intercity Regional Trail Segments and Lengths**

Segment	Length
Segment A—Minneapolis (MPRB)	.74 mile
Segment B—Richfield (Three Rivers Park District)	2.95 miles
Segment C—Bloomington	1.45 miles
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.14 miles</b>

**Figure 5: Intercity Regional Trail Segments**



The regional trail will be developed in stages, based on the availability of funding as well as local factors such as the availability of land and the timing of adjacent roadway improvements. Until the corridor is fully developed, gaps in the regional trail will exist and may be overcome by using local sidewalks or the interim use of city streets. Ultimately, the trail will consist of a minimum 10 foot wide paved surface, separated from any adjacent roadway. Along 76<sup>th</sup> Street in Richfield, the trail will be 8'-6" wide,

but it will be adjacent to a striped bike lane on the street. This segment of the trail will be shared with the proposed Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail.

The Intercity Regional Trail will cross two major arterial highways along the route—Trunk Highway 62 (TH 62) and Interstate 494 (I-494). The planning task force reviewed several options for each highway crossing, including using the existing bridges, retrofitting the bridge structures, and constructing new pedestrian/bicycle bridges.

The Bloomington Avenue Bridge over TH 62 is not suitable for a trail in its current configuration. A feasibility and cost analysis will be conducted during the design development phase to determine whether the bridge should be retrofitted to accommodate the trail or if an independent bridge should be constructed.

The existing 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue bridge over I-494 is inadequate for a trail crossing. Widening the bridge is not a cost-effective option, so the planning task force recommends constructing a new pedestrian/bicycle bridge adjacent to the 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bridge. This will allow for a pedestrian and bicycle crossing in an area where there is no safe alternative for crossing the interstate freeway. Three Rivers Park District will coordinate with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and adjacent cities to implement this bridge construction.

The trail corridor will include rest stops generally located every mile that will include trash receptacles, benches and bike racks. Wayfinding signage including kiosks and directional signs that will provide trail users with location information will also be included along the route.

The estimated costs for development of the Intercity Regional Trail range are approximately \$7.8 million. Development costs include trail construction, street modifications, site work, signage and rest stops. The costs by segment are shown in *Figure 6*.

**Figure 6: Intercity Regional Trail Estimated Development Costs**

<b>Trail Component</b>	<b>Estimated Development Costs</b>
Segment A—Minneapolis	\$397,000
Segment B—Richfield	\$1,462,000
Segment C—Bloomington	\$885,000
Bridges	\$2,906,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$5,650,000</i>
Construction Contingency	\$848,000
<i>Subtotal</i> <i>Construction Costs and Contingency</i>	<i>\$6,498,000</i>
Design Fees	\$1,300,000
<b>Total Estimated Development Costs</b>	<b>\$7,798,000</b>

Three Rivers Park District secured a 2014 Federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) grant of \$5.5 million to construct approximately 3.8 miles of the trail, which will be applicable toward the \$6.498 million of construction costs and contingency shown in *Figure 6*. The trail segment along 76<sup>th</sup> Street in Richfield (Segment B14 on *Figure 5*) is currently being constructed, which is being funded by the Three Rivers Park District General Obligation Bond Fund. The development costs of this trail segment are not included in the total estimated development costs outlined in *Figure 6*. The City of Richfield and Three Rivers Park District are working to secure funds to construct the remaining trail segments that are not currently under construction or covered by the STP grant, which are located within Taft Park (Segments B1 to B3 shown on *Figure 5*).

#### **4. Conflicts**

Developing a regional trail through an urbanized area presents unique challenges. The master plan includes a section that outlines the opportunities and challenges of implementing the regional trail plan. Various alignments were analyzed in determining the trail route; decisions regarding the chosen route were based on maximizing opportunities such as preserving street trees, allowing adequate space for snow storage, and providing access to parks, neighborhoods and retail destinations while minimizing challenges associated with several driveway crossings and limited right-of-way. The regional trail will cross high volume roadways. Trail crossing treatments that are appropriate for each crossing location will be designed based on industry best standards to minimize conflicts between trail users and roadway traffic.

#### **5. Public Services**

The development and operation of Intercity Regional Trail is not anticipated to require any non-recreational public services or facilities such as roads or sewers. Additionally, regional trail corridors do not typically require utility services such as electricity, sanitary sewer and water service.

#### **6. Operations**

The Intercity Regional Trail will be jointly operated by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), Three Rivers Park District and the City of Bloomington.

#### **Rules, regulations and ordinances**

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Three Rivers Park District and the City of Bloomington have adopted ordinances that define the rules and regulations that provide for the safe use of parks, for the protection of park property and for the safety and welfare of the public.

#### **Operations –Public Safety**

Public safety services along the regional trail will be provided by the MPRB Park Police Department, Three Rivers Park District's Public Safety Section, and Bloomington's Police Department.

#### **Operations –Maintenance**

*Minneapolis segment:* The MPRB will conduct seasonal condition assessments and periodic inspections, which will be followed by necessary maintenance actions. Inspections will address possible safety issues, vandalism and non-routine maintenance concerns. Routine maintenance will include: sign inventory and replacement, spring cleanup, trash pickup, erosion repair, bituminous patching, and restriping as needed. Mowing adjacent to the trails will be done by the MPRB for segments adjacent to MPRB owned land. Snow removal will also be provided.

*Richfield segment:* Three Rivers Park District will conduct seasonal condition assessments and periodic inspections, which will be followed by necessary maintenance actions. Routine maintenance will include scheduled striping, seal coating, and redevelopment under the Park District's pavement management program. The Park District will maintain the trail between April 1 and November 14. The City of Richfield intends to operate and maintain this regional trail segment during the winter months.

*Bloomington segment:* The City of Bloomington will conduct seasonal condition assessments and periodic inspections, which will be followed by necessary maintenance actions. The trail will receive scheduled striping, seal coating and reconstruction under the City's Sidewalk and Trail Pavement Management Program. Snow removal will be provided.

### **Maintenance Costs**

*Minneapolis segment:* Due to the close proximity of the Intercity Regional Trail to existing park and trail amenities, much of the equipment and tools for maintaining the new trail are in place. When the trail is fully developed, the annual maintenance costs for the MPRB's segment are estimated to increase by \$817 in 2012 dollars and include costs associated with sweeping, signage, striping and plowing.

*Richfield segment:* Much of the equipment and tools for maintenance of the trail are already in place through the cost savings associated with Three Rivers Park District's work cluster program. When the trail is fully developed, the annual routine maintenance costs are estimated to be \$3,000 in 2012 dollars. Additional costs for trail preservation and rehabilitation are anticipated and will depend on trail conditions identified during seasonal inspections. These costs will be included in the Park District's annual Asset Management Program.

*Bloomington segment:* The trail will be replacing existing sidewalks along much of the route through Bloomington, which are already maintained by the City. Therefore, there will be a minimal increase in the annual maintenance costs. Costs for trail preservation and rehabilitation are anticipated and will depend on trail conditions identified during seasonal inspections. The costs will be included in the City's annual maintenance programs as funding allows.

### **Funding Sources**

*Minneapolis segment:* Annual operating costs are funded through the MPRB general fund budget, which receives its funding from Minneapolis property tax and from the State of Minnesota as part of the Operations and Maintenance Fund allocation administered by the Metropolitan Council. Some rehabilitation costs may also be funded from the MPRB's Capital Improvement Program.

*Richfield segment:* Annual operating costs are funded through Three Rivers Park District's general fund budget, with property taxes as the primary source of funds. Revenue is also received from the State of Minnesota as part of the Operations and Maintenance Fund allocation administered by the Metropolitan Council. Some of the annual rehabilitation costs also may be funded from the Three Rivers Park District Park Maintenance and Rehabilitation Fund, which includes revenues from the State of Minnesota as well as the Park District's general obligation bonds.

*Bloomington segment:* Annual operating and maintenance costs are funded through the City of Bloomington Public Works Budget.

## **7. Citizen Participation**

A task force was established to inform the planning process for this regional trail. The task force included representatives from:

- Cities of Bloomington, Richfield and Minneapolis
- Hennepin County
- Metropolitan Airports Commission
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
- Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board
- Three Rivers Park District

The responsibilities of the task force included coordinating with local governing bodies, assisting in public participation opportunities, providing information and support to identify feasible trail routes and assisting Three Rivers Park District with local approval processes. The full task force met three times in 2011-2012.

Three Rivers Park District and select task force members held three open houses for the general public to review the work of the task force planning efforts and provide comments. Twenty-two public presentations regarding the planning efforts were made between January 2011 and July 2012. These presentations were made at various public meetings held by the cities of Minneapolis, Richfield and Bloomington as well as the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and Three Rivers Park District.

After receiving input from the task force and the public open house attendees, Three Rivers Park District released the draft Intercity Regional Trail Master Plan for public review. The public review period was open for 30 days. Letters of support for the regional trail master plan were received from Hennepin County and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Additionally, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as well as the Cities of Richfield and Bloomington passed resolutions of support for the regional trail.

## **8. Public Awareness**

The regional park implementing agencies use a number of tools to promote their regional parks and trails, including maps, websites, direct mail, and press releases. The implementing agencies also collaborate with community, business and government organizations to promote their facilities, programs and services.

## **9. Accessibility**

The regional trail facilities associated with this master plan will be developed in accordance with ADA standards and guidelines. All unconstructed and reconstructed segments of the regional trail and trail amenities such as rest stops, parking, restrooms and water access will be designed to accommodate individuals with disabilities.

Since the regional trail travels through urban areas, it will cross major roadways. The regional park implementing agencies will investigate opportunities to modify or add signal timing, crossings and signage to ensure that the trail is safe and accessible for all users.

The trail provides access to the metropolitan regional trail system for an area that is currently underserved by regional trails. The Intercity Regional Trail will provide access to local parks, to Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park, and to existing and planned trails. Neighborhood trail connections are anticipated along the regional trail corridor, which will further increase access.

Three Rivers Park District does not charge entrance fees to its regional parks, park reserves or regional trails. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board does not charge an entry or trail fee for its regional trails, and the City of Bloomington does not anticipate any direct revenue generation from the development of the Intercity Regional Trail.

## **REVIEW BY OTHER COUNCIL DIVISIONS:**

**Community Development – Environment and Surface Water Management** (Jim Larsen 651-602-1159) – No concerns.

**Transportation** (Ann Braden 651-602-1705) – No concerns

**Aviation** (Russell Owen 651-602-1724) – The master plan states that there might be bridges constructed crossing TH 62 and I-494. The placement of these bridges needs to be designed so they do not encroach on approach and departure surfaces (airspace) of the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. It appears that they are far enough away that they will not encroach on the airspace, but airspace concerns should be factored into the design and height of these bridges. The height of these bridges should be coordinated with the Metropolitan Airport Commission (MAC). Any correspondence between the regional park implementing agencies and MAC should also be forwarded to Russell Owen, Senior Aviation Planner (651-602-1724) at the Metropolitan Council.

**Metro Transit** (John Dillery 612-349-7773) – The trail segments appear to minimize impacts or potential disruption to bus operations and bus stop locations.

**Environmental Services** (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – This project extends through the cities of Minneapolis, Richfield, & Bloomington. The regional trail master plan shows a proposed future trail having a potential impact on multiple Metropolitan Council interceptors in multiple locations. To assess the potential impacts to our interceptor system, prior to initiating this project, preliminary plans should be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager (651-602-4503) at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) for review and comment.

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

1. The Intercity Regional Trail Master Plan, Three Rivers Park District (Referral No. 50027-1) is consistent with the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.
2. The estimated costs to implement the master plan are \$8.57 million. The estimate is comprised of \$770,000 in estimated easement and/or right-of-way acquisition costs and \$7.8 million in estimated construction costs. Three Rivers

Park District has secured a \$5.5 million Federal Surface Transportation Program grant for a portion of the regional trail construction costs. Approval of this master plan makes future land acquisition and remaining development costs eligible for regional funding.

3. The regional trail search corridor identified in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* proposes to connect Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park in Minneapolis to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the planned Minnesota Valley State Trail in Bloomington. This master plan for the Intercity Regional Trail travels from Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park to the 86<sup>th</sup> Street Bikeway in Bloomington, which designates the route for a large portion of the regional trail search corridor. The remainder of the regional trail search corridor from the 86<sup>th</sup> Street Bikeway to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the planned Minnesota Valley State Trail in Bloomington will remain a regional trail search corridor, whose route remains to be planned in the future.
4. The regional trail route may have a potential impact on MCES facilities. In order to maintain the integrity of the regional sewer system, preliminary development plans for the regional trail should be submitted to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager (651-602-4503) at Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment.
5. The proposed bridges crossing Trunk Highway 62 and Interstate 494 need to be designed to avoid encroachments on the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport airspace. The height of the bridges should be coordinated with the Metropolitan Airport Commission (MAC) and any correspondence between the regional park implementing agencies and MAC should be forwarded to Russell Owen, Senior Aviation Planner (651-602-1724) at the Metropolitan Council.
6. Approval of this master plan does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. Future development funding based on this master plan would be issued through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Land Acquisition Opportunity Fund. Council action is required to approve the CIP and to approve specific grants to Three Rivers Park District, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the City of Bloomington.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Intercity Regional Trail Master Plan (Referral No. 50027-1).
2. Require that prior to development of new trail segments, development plans be sent to Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment in order to ensure the integrity of the interceptor system.
3. Advise Three Rivers Park District, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the City of Bloomington that the design of any bridges crossing Trunk Highway 62 or Interstate 494 must avoid encroachment into the airspace of the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and require that any correspondence between the regional park implementing agencies and the Metropolitan Airport Commission be forwarded to the Metropolitan Council's Senior Aviation Planner.

4. *Retain the regional trail search corridor from the terminus of the Intercity Regional Trail at the 86<sup>th</sup> Street Bikeway south to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the planned Minnesota Valley State Trail in Bloomington within the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan.*