

Minnesota River Bluffs Extension Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment No. 1



The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Department is to provide a variety of quality recreational experiences, services, and lands that meet the needs of the residents of Carver County and Carver County Regional Park users.

April 2013

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Background

Introduction

The extension of the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail corridor (Map 1) master planning process provides a vision for the corridor as a multi-use trail that provides a major connection to the Carver County regional trail systems. This trail would extend from the previously planned extension of the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail and Scott County Connection (plan adopted in February 2011). Starting in historic downtown Carver, the trail would be extended to the southwest where it would also connect with the Carver County North-South Route Search Corridor as well as to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Rapids Lake unit. This master plan amendment outlines the development requirements and operations costs associated with constructing and managing an additional approximately 1.8 miles long regional trail facility. Two alternate corridors are also provided and discussed. The master planning process is designed to identify issues and opportunities, outline the costs and identify public need and interest in the proposed trail project.

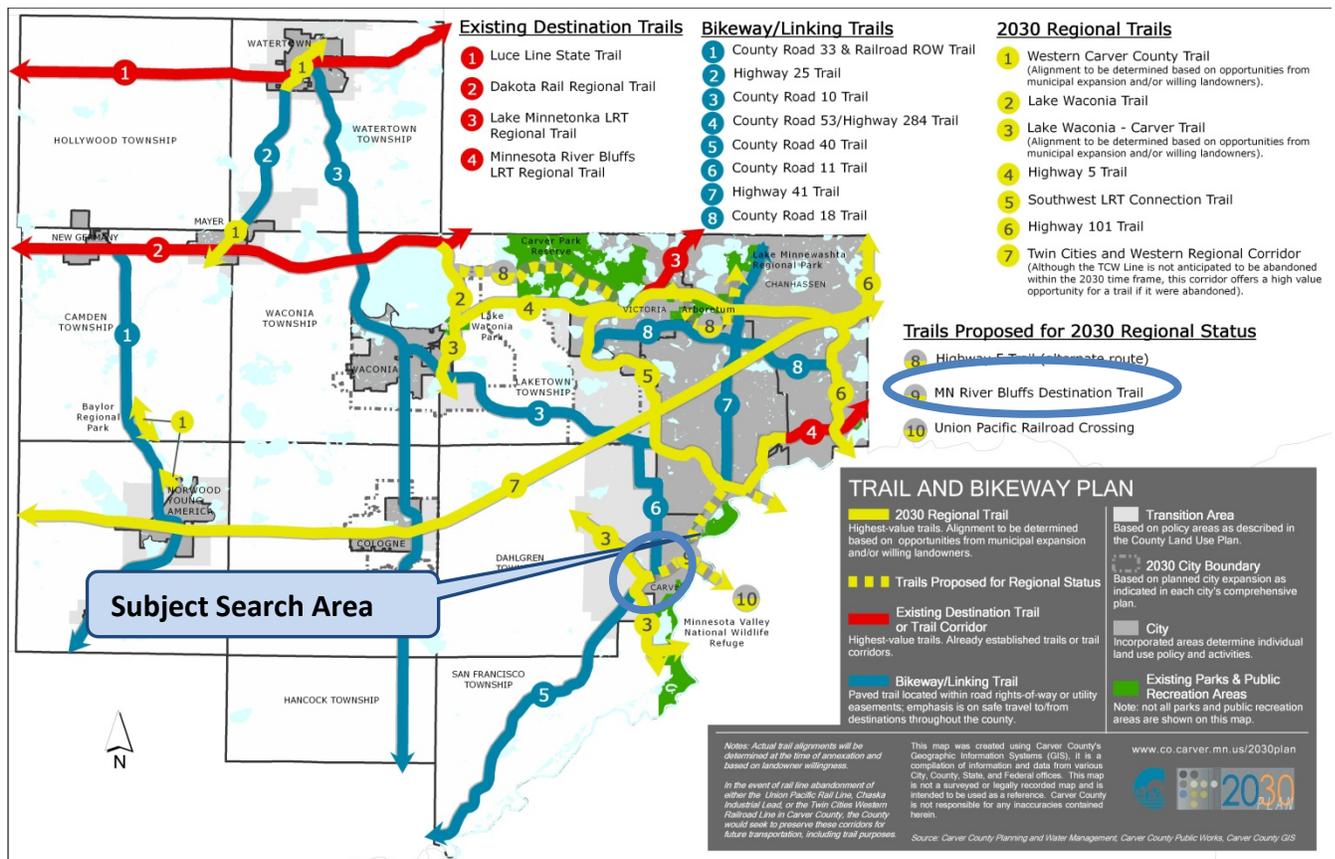
In February 2011, the master plan for the Minnesota River Bluffs and Scott County Connection Regional Trails was adopted, which planned for the development of the rail corridor being abandoned by Union Pacific. Transportation Enhancements funding is programmed for 2015 that will permit the construction of the portion of the Minnesota River Bluffs extension that was included as a part of that previous master planning effort.

Planning Framework



The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Department is to provide a variety of quality recreational experiences, services, and lands that meet the needs of the residents of Carver County and Carver County Regional Park users.

Carver County prepared this regional trail master plan in accordance with all applicable local and regional goals and policies. Carver County identified the need for a regional trail connection in its 2030 Comprehensive Plan. In 2010, this connection was included as a regional trail search corridor in the Metropolitan Council 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan Update. This planned trail extension of the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail fulfills the objectives of local and regional planning documents. The trail is proposed to extend from the Kenneth Frey trail (levee) in Carver to the intersection of CSAH 11 and Carver Bluffs Parkway.



The extension of the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail identified in this master plan will make the following connections to existing and planned regional parks and trails in Scott, Carver, and Hennepin counties via the earlier phase of the Minnesota River Bluffs Extension Regional Trail:

Existing Regional/State Trail Connections

- Southwest Regional Trail Connection – Chaska to Victoria
- Minnesota Valley State Trail
- Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail (via Southwest Regional Trail connection)
- Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail (via Southwest Regional Trail connection)
- Scott County West Regional Trail (via Minnesota Valley State Trail Connection)

Future Regional Trails/Search Area Connections

- Minnesota River Bluffs Trail Extension Search Area
- County Road 10 Regional Trail Search Area
- Carver County North-South Route Search Corridor

Existing Regional/State/Federal Park Connections

- Carver Park Reserve (via Southwest Regional Trail connection)
- Bryant Lake Regional Park (via Minnesota River Bluffs LRT connection)
- MN Valley State Recreation Area
- Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Rapids Lake Education & Visitor Center

Future Regional Parks/Search Areas Connections

- Minnesota Bluffs and Ravines (via Minnesota River Bluffs Search Area)

As the search area in the County's Comprehensive Plans illustrates, the selected corridor serves as a key extension of the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail. This extension connects the southern portion of the City of Carver and Dahlgren Township to the existing regional park and trail system, and connects the regional system to the Rapids Lake Unit of the US Fish and Wildlife Refuge. Ultimately, this extension allows a future connection to the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Park search area, and a continuation of the envisioned trail to Belle Plaine along the Carver County side of the Minnesota River.

Demand Forecast

Population

As of the most recent census (2010), Carver County has a population of 91,042 residents. This is a nearly 30 percent increase from the 2000 US Census. Population forecasts produced by the Metropolitan Council anticipate over 100,000 more individuals living within the county by 2030. While these forecasts were developed before the recent economic recession occurred, the overall trend of population expansion is expected to continue in Carver County over several decades.

Studies performed by the Metropolitan Council indicate that 50 percent of regional trail users live within 0.75 miles of the trail, and 75 percent live within 3 miles of the trail. The 0.75-mile area around the trail is considered the core service area, and the 3-mile area around the trail is the primary service area (see Map 2). Two communities (Carver and Dahlgren Township) with a combined population of 5,055 are within the core service area. Five additional communities are part of the primary service area. Long-term forecasts assume the trail will serve 63,000 residents within the primary service area communities, although this number does include residents beyond three miles from the trail. Completing the gap with a new trail bridge across the Minnesota River will be key to connecting residents on the Scott County side, accessing US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Refuge lands and connecting trail systems with Scott County.

Trail Service Area - Population Estimates & Forecasts, 2000 to 2030				
City/Township	Census 2000	Census 2010	Forecast 2020	Forecast 2030
<i>Core Service Area - communities within 0.75 miles of trail</i>				
Carver	1,266	3,724	16,130	19,560
Dahlgren Twp	1,453	1,331	1,550	1,600
Core Service Area Sum	2,719	5,055	17,680	21,160
<i>Primary Service Area - communities within 3 miles of trail (excluding core service area)</i>				
Chaska	17,603	23,770	33,000	35,700
San Francisco Twp	888	832	1,100	1,200
Louisville Twp	1,359	1,266	1,500	1,700
Jackson Twp	1,361	1,420	1,500	1,670
Sand Creek Twp	1,551	1,521	1,850	2,100
Primary Service Area Sum	22,762	28,809	38,950	42,370
Total Core and Primary Service Areas	25,481	33,864	56,630	63,530
<i>County-wide</i>				
All Carver County	70,205	91,042	163,830	198,500

Source: 2000 and 2010 US Census, Met Council Population Forecasts (Regional Development Framework Revised as of January 1, 2012).

Survey Findings

Regional Survey Findings

Metropolitan Council coordinates annual surveys and user counts at all regional facilities with each Regional Park Implementing Agency. The following statistics on regional park and trail use were compiled as part of the *Annual Use Estimate of the Metropolitan Regional Parks System for 2011*:

- An estimated 44,111,200 visits were made to the Metropolitan Regional Parks System in 2011.
- Twenty-five percent of all visits in 2011 were to regional trails and 75 percent were visits to regional parks, park reserves and special recreation features.
- Although Anoka County Riverfront, Minneapolis Chain of Lakes, and Mississippi Gorge are regional parks, the majority of visits to these parks are for trail use. If the trail visits to Anoka County Riverfront, Minneapolis Chain of Lakes and Mississippi Gorge area were included in the trail totals, over 40 percent of all 2011 visits were to trails.
- Fifty-five percent of all visits to regional parks and trails are considered “local” visits. A local visit is defined as a visit to a park or trail by a person who lives within the jurisdiction of the park agency that owns or operates that park or trail. Conversely, 45 percent of all visits to regional parks and trails are “non-local” visits, which clearly demonstrates that the system serves a regional audience.
- Approximately 48 percent of visitors at regional facilities within Carver County are local.
- Walking and biking are the top activities in the regional parks system, followed by swimming, jogging, picnicking and relaxing.

The following are the primary activities that attract users to the regional system. Similar to statewide statistics, the primary uses are trails activities (hiking/biking), water uses, and picnicking. Their popularity is also related to their availability, as these are generally the most common activities provided at regional and state parks.

Top Activities in the Regional Park System, 2011			
Activity	Percent of Park Activity Occasion	Percent of Trail Activity Occasion	Percent of Total Visits
Walking/hiking	21%	30%	23%
Biking	10%	45%	18%
Swimming	16%	2%	13%
Picnicking	10%	0%	8%
Relaxing	9%	2%	7%
Jogging/running	5%	10%	6%
Playground use	7%	1%	6%
Dog-walking	5%	7%	5%
Sunbathing	6%	1%	5%
Fishing	6%	1%	5%
Boating	4%	0%	3%
Zoo visits (Como)	4%	0%	3%
In-line skating	2%	4%	2%
Camping	2%	0%	2%

Source: Annual Use Estimate of the Metropolitan Regional Parks System for 2011, Metropolitan Council

Overall, previous surveys in Carver County show that residents value parks and trails for recreational opportunities. There also appears to be a strong connection to the use of parks and trails for open space preservation and environmental, wildlife and habitat protection. Residents are also generally satisfied with existing services, although the need for more services is also represented.

State Survey Findings

At the state level, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) continues to survey state park users and get an understanding for current and future needs. The top ten recreational activities for Minnesota adults are listed in the following table.

Top 10 Outdoor Recreation Activities of Minnesota Adults (population 20 years and older, participating annually)	
Activity	Percent of population
Walking	54%
Boating of all types	43%
Swimming or wading all places	41%
Driving for pleasure on scenic roads	37%
Picnicking	36%
Fishing of all types	30%
Biking outdoors of all types	29%
Visiting outdoor zoos	27%
Camping of all types	26%
Visiting nature center	25%

Source: 2008-2012 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Minnesota DNR

According to the 2008-2012 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), “a majority of residents—57 percent—believe outdoor recreation is a ‘very important’ part of their life and another 25 percent believe it is ‘moderately important.’ Outdoor recreation is at least moderately important to the vast majority of Minnesotans, but they often don’t feel they have enough time to participate as often as they’d like. Expense, effort, outdoor pests and lack of companions all keep people from taking part in outdoor activities.” The planned regional trail system may help address this concern of limited time availability for Carver County residents. Providing recreational opportunities close to home will increase the availability of outdoor recreation and reduce the amount of travel time required to access these facilities.

Trends in Outdoor Recreation

A number of recent studies have shown a decline in nature-based recreation at the state and national level. In Minnesota, declines have been recorded in fishing, hunting, state park visitation, and state bicycle trail use. The 2007 Minnesota State Parks Research Summary Report found participation declines are most prevalent in age groups 45 and younger. The trend in declining outdoor recreation use can have lasting impacts, as this study found the strongest association with adult park use is the direct experience with parks as a child. Thus, the decline in childhood visitation today may lead to reduced adult visitation decades later.

Studies at the national level stress this same concern for declining use in outdoor recreation. The 2009 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report (Outdoor Foundation) found declines in youth participants, women aged 21-25 (who prefer to recreate indoors), and minority groups. Increased technology, less free time, costs, and accessibility all factored in to the reduction of participation. However, the survey also found more Americans participating in outdoor activities in 2008, likely due to the changing economy where many people are choosing to take shorter vacations closer to home and a return to a simpler lifestyle. Activities like camping, hiking and mountain-biking experienced increases in participation. The study found gateway activities such as fishing, bicycling, running/jogging, camping, and hiking tend to lead to participation in other outdoor activities.

Other non-recreational trends may also impact the regional trail system. Nationwide, concerns for climate change, energy independence, active living, and sustainability have led many to explore ways of driving less and using other forms of transportation. This has led to a desire for more trails and bikeways to serve both short distance and commuter trips. The aging society is also having a significant impact on changing needs for recreation. The Baby Boomer generation is currently using the regional park system at rates that are higher than their actual proportion of the metropolitan area population; visitation by people over the age of 60 is expected to increase as this generation ages. Facilities will need to be kept up to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, and more opportunities for low-impact and educational learning opportunities will need to be provided to meet the needs of this growing user base.

Parks and Trails Legacy Plan

This proposed regional trail master plan is consistent with the strategic directions identified in the recent statewide *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*. This regional trail will “connect people to the outdoors” (strategic direction 1), taking advantage of the wonderful views and surrounding public park lands to allow trail users a unique connection to nature in a developing area. This master plan also addresses priorities to “acquire land, develop opportunities” as defined in strategic direction 2. These priorities include “making high-priority trail connections and filling critical gaps,” and “focus on near-home, convenient opportunities near regional centers and areas of shortage.”

Development Concept

Trail Design

The proposed 1.8-mile trail will be designed in accordance with applicable American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 2012, and Minnesota Department of Transportation's, Minnesota Bikeway Facility Design Manual, 2007. The trail will be ten feet wide with a minimum two-foot clear-zone on each side. The trail will have a bituminous or crushed rock agricultural lime surface. A bituminous trail surface is the preferred long-term surface treatment because it is durable, dependable and is cost effective through its life cycle as compared to other surface treatments. Bituminous trails offer a wide variety of trail uses including bicycling, walking, running, and in-line skating, which are all popular regional trail activities. However, a crushed rock or agricultural lime surface may be used as an interim trail improvement. Sections that may be prone to flooding should be designed to limit deterioration of the surface.

There are two at-grade road crossings along the proposed trail segment. Both are on local streets with low traffic volumes. Road crossings will primarily be designed using trail crossing striping and signage consistent with Mn/DOT standards. In addition to safety signing, roadway crossings will have surface paint marking the trail location.

- **Carver Bluffs Parkway, Carver:** This road serves as one of two entrances to a fully developed residential neighborhood in Carver. No additional land is available for development off this road. This road also serves as the access to Carver Bluffs Park and a trailhead facility co-managed by the City of Carver and the USFWS.
- **Carver Bluffs Parkway, Carver:** This is the second entrance to the same neighborhood as described above. Carver Bluffs Parkway loops through the neighborhood.

Other Elements

Access, signage, vegetative screening, overlooks, and rest areas are important elements of regional trails. Their proper design, stewardship and placement add aesthetic and functional value to the trail. Trailheads are important elements because they provide the amenities visitors need to prepare for trail use and a location for visitors to access the trail. A potential trailhead was previously identified in the *Minnesota River Bluffs Extension and Scott County Connection Regional Trail Master Plan* (February 2011) in the City of Carver and it has since been determined that Depot Park would be this trailhead location. A trailhead is already in existence at Bluff Park in Carver to provide access to the trails in the Rapids Lake Unit of the USFWS refuge. The City of Carver has a planned park which can serve as an additional trailhead on the west side of CSAH 11 at its intersection with CR 40 which is adjacent to both this trail extension as well as the planned Carver County North-South Regional Trail Search Corridor. Additional trailheads will be provided via other regional trail connections as well as the Rapids Lake Unit of the USFWS.

Waste receptacles, portable latrine facilities, and other site amenities may also be provided. Upon permit approval, each community will be responsible for installing and maintaining any signature features on the extension of the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail. Signature features may include landscape features, benches or tables, bicycle racks, restroom facilities, trash receptacles, and space for people to prepare before getting on the trail. Carver County will coordinate with communities who wish to construct trail elements in the rail corridor.

The extension of the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail corridor passes through scenic river valley and bluffs settings. There are a number of locations where scenic overlooks could be constructed along the trail to allow trail users to admire the views from a location other than on the trail itself.

Proper signage along the trail is important for safety and wayfinding. Traffic control signs, such as stop signs and street name signs at bridges and intersections will be installed along the trail. Informational and directional signage will be consistent with other park signage.

Development Timeline and Funding Sources

Local connections are already planned or existing in the City of Carver that will connect this trail with other regional trails. Funding for trail development has not been programmed at this time. Carver County will actively pursue recreation and transportation funding opportunities for development of the regional trail. Primary funding sources include federal transportation programs (transportation enhancement and surface transportation program), state parks and trails funds from the legacy amendment, and Metropolitan Council programs and implementing agency allocations. Local sources include general fund appropriations as part of the Park Improvement Program.

Segment 1

This segment is proposed adjacent to CR 40 in the area between the Kenneth Frey trail and the Bluff Park trailhead. Constructing a trail in this location is constrained by both the available right-of-way on CR 40 as well as by the proximity to Carver Creek which parallels the County Road in this section. Separation between the road and the trail would vary as necessary to maintain appropriate distance from Carver Creek. To make the connection to the Bluff Park trailhead, a spur trail would be constructed that would require either improvement to or an additional bridge over Carver Creek in the vicinity of the existing Carver Bluff Parkway bridge crossing (pictured on next page). Regardless of whether Segment 1 or its Alternate 1 is selected, the needed right-of-way is currently owned by the USFWS.



The estimated cost to construct Segment 1 is as follows:

- Trail Construction -- \$770,000
- Bridge -- \$300,000
- Creek Restoration and Erosion Correction -- \$250,000
- Landscaping and Vegetation -- \$100,000
- Miscellaneous Amenities (signage, benches, etc.) -- \$25,000

Segment 2

Segment 2 extends from the intersection of CR 40 and Carver Bluffs Parkway to the other intersection of CSAH 11/CR 40 and Carver Bluffs Parkway. The location remains on the south side of CR 40, and would be near but not cross the intersection of CSAH 11 and CR 40. Constructing a trail in this location is constrained by both the available right-of-way on CR 40 as well as by the proximity to Carver Creek which parallels the County Road in this section. Separation between the road and the trail would vary as necessary to maintain appropriate distance from Carver Creek. CSAH 11 crosses Carver Creek at an existing culvert. Preliminary engineering information suggests that the culvert is of sufficient width to accommodate the addition of the trail. However, enhancement or changes to the existing structure may be determined to be necessary when full engineering design is completed.

Segment 2 is anticipated to be constructed in stages. The first stage consists of the portion from the intersection of CSAH 11/CR 40 and extends to the intersection of CSAH 11 and Carver Bluffs Parkway. The anticipated cost of this section is anticipated to consist of the following costs:

- Trail Construction -- \$132,000
- Landscaping and Miscellaneous Amenities (signage, benches, etc.) -- \$20,000

The second stage consisting of the remainder of Segment 2 is anticipated to consist of the following costs:

- Trail Construction -- \$414,000
- Creek Restoration and Erosion Correction -- \$150,000
- Landscaping and Vegetation -- \$100,000
- Miscellaneous Amenities (signage, benches, etc.) -- \$10,000

Alternate 1

Alternate 1 extends from the existing Minnesota River Bluffs Extension in historic downtown Carver and through property owned or managed by the USFWS to Carver Bluffs Park. An existing unpaved trail is in place through this section, including a bridge (pictured below) that crosses Carver Creek that was constructed in 2008. The bridge may require some modifications to be determined in the future. The existing trail was completed by cooperative agreement between the City of Carver and USFWS. Prior to improvement of the regional trail, a determination on specific location and level of improvement will need to be made in conjunction with USFWS. This alternate would be the preferred alignment for this segment of

trail, but is constrained by potential differences in resource management between Carver County and USFWS. Further investigation and discussion will need to occur between all involved stakeholders to determine if this is a viable option for the trail. If Alternate 1 is selected, it would replace Segment 1 as the preferred alignment.

Anticipated costs associated with this Alternate may vary depending on agreements reached with the USFWS. However, under the most expensive scenario involving a land trade and pavement of the existing trail, the estimated project costs would be as follows:

- Trail construction -- \$740,000
- Bridge upgrades (if necessary) -- \$200,000
- Land Acquisition Elsewhere for Trade with USFWS -- \$100,000
- Creek Restoration and Erosion Correction -- \$250,000
- Landscaping and Vegetation -- \$100,000
- Miscellaneous Amenities (signage, benches, etc.) -- \$10,000

If the existing trail were utilized it is anticipated that some costs may still be incurred to provide some limited upgrades to the trail as follows:

- Trail and Bridge Upgrades -- \$250,000
- Creek Restoration and Erosion Correction -- \$250,000
- Landscaping and Vegetation -- \$25,000
- Miscellaneous Amenities (signage, benches, etc.) -- \$10,000



Alternate 2

Alternate 2 extends from the trailhead in Bluff Park and then through land that is characterized as floodplain and situated between Carver Creek and a bluff. The property is currently owned by the Carver Bluffs Homeowners Association and the City of Carver. The property owned by the City of Carver is currently a wastewater treatment plant that is being decommissioned by the Metropolitan Council and the City of Carver in 2013. If Alternate 2 is selected, it would replace a portion of Segment 2.

Estimated costs associated with improvement of Alternate 2 are as follows:

Property Acquisition -- \$24,000

Trail Construction -- \$475,000

Landscaping and Vegetation -- \$100,000

Miscellaneous Amenities (signage, benches, etc.) -- \$25,000

Conflicts & Mitigation

Surrounding Land Uses

Much of the corridor designated for trail use is surrounded or bounded by public lands owned by the US Fish & Wildlife (USFW) Refuge and City of Carver. The only privately owned parcels have no development potential.

Adjacent property owners (and in particular USFWS) have expressed support for the development of this regional trail.

Property Values

Several studies assessing the effect of trails on property values have been conducted for trails throughout the United States. The studies showed trails have no negative impact on either the marketability of property or its value. There was a belief among some, typically between 20 and 40 percent of a study sample, that there was a positive impact on marketability and value. Some homeowners adjacent to trail corridors have begun marketing the sale of their homes specifically to trail users, as shown above.



Aesthetic Design

The trail design may incorporate a paved asphalt or unpaved aggregate surface with two-foot shoulders on both sides of the trail. The shoulders are required for safety purposes. Specific plantings, fencing, bridge design and other amenities will be identified during the design phase of the project.

Parking

Parking lot and trailhead access points have been identified at Depot Park and Carver Bluffs Parks (pictured on next page) in the City of Carver. Additional trailheads will be offered via the Southwest Regional Trail and existing Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail connections.



Trail Surface

The master plan recommends that the regional trail ultimately be paved the entire length. However, in the best interest of completing the trail, an aggregate surface may be considered as solution if adequate funding is not available to pave the entire trail or if resource management constraints exist (particularly on Alternate 1). Several factors led the decision making process for determining trail surface. They were: 1) resource management plans of cooperating agencies; 2) past public input efforts and county guidelines; 3) the obligation of the County to provide a diversity of opportunities on its trail network; 4) consistency with existing and planned paved segments of local and regional trails in Carver County; 5) costs associated with construction and maintenance of the trail surface; and 6) eligibility for federal funding for paved surface.

Bituminous trails, despite the higher construction cost, provide a durable maintenance resistant surface that reduces erosion issues, is reliable during freeze thaw cycles, and is not susceptible to tire rutting caused by maintenance vehicles or heavy trail use. A bituminous surface expands the use of the trail to other wheeled uses such as in-line skating, skateboards and scooters. The surface is also dependable and smooth for activities of walking and hiking, which is a benefit to those who are less mobile.

In addition to use, maintenance, and costs, historical and forecasted flood levels will be considered in determining trail surface. Historically, sections of the corridor have experienced

flooding, and certain segments of the trail could be underwater at major flooding events. The trail surface should be designed to reduce the impact (deterioration, reconstruction, maintenance) of anticipated flooding.

Appropriate Uses of the Trail

Carver County allows walking, running/jogging, bicycle riding, in-line skating, skateboarding, kick scooters, bird watching, and dog walking on regional trails. Some of these uses may potentially not be compatible with Alternate 1, depending on the resource management plans of the USFWS.

Motorized vehicles not allowed include, but are not limited to, motorized scooters, all-terrain vehicles, golf carts, motorcycles, automobiles, trucks, sport utility vehicles, and snowmobiles. The trail planned for non-motorized pedestrian and cycling activities is too narrow to accommodate other parallel activities on the same trail corridor. Parallel activities requiring separation from pedestrian and cycling activities would include equestrian, ATV and mountain biking type activities.

Snowmobiles

There are a number of snowmobile trails that are maintained through the DNR's state trail system along the Minnesota River (on the Scott County side) that already accommodate snowmobile demand. An existing snowmobile park-and-ride is located off of Trunk Highway 41 near the Minnesota River bridge. A snowmobile connection into Carver County is provided via the TH 41 corridor. Carver County supports snowmobiling on existing snowmobile trails within the county. Excepting designated snowmobile trails, snowmobile use is not permitted within the City of Carver. This master plan does not support snowmobiling on the extension of the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail.

Equestrian Use of the Trail

Carver County supports equestrian use on existing equestrian trails. Carver County is not proposing equestrian use on the proposed regional trail segments due to existing nearby equestrian trails, the existence of urban development in Carver, and limited space on the trail corridor to accommodate two trail surfaces. The Minnesota Valley State Trail in Scott County has nearly 30 miles of horseback riding trails along the non-paved segments of the trail east of Carver. Equestrian use is also allowed in Carver Park Reserve and on the Luce Line trail in Carver County.

Dog Walking

Dogs are allowed on all Carver County trails. Dog-walkers are required to keep their dogs on leashes no longer than six feet and must clean up after the pets. These policies will also be in effect for the subject trail segments. The potential exception to this would be Alternate 1, which may require a different policy depending on any agreement negotiated with the USFWS.

Encroachments

Except by permit or lease, encroachments within the trail corridor are not permitted by Carver County. Unauthorized encroachments are unlawful and are not allowed.

Natural Resource Inventory & Management

Existing Conditions

The trail will be owned and managed by Carver County, with the exception that Alternate 1 would be owned by the USFWS and co-managed with Carver County. Operations and maintenance of the trail have been assigned to the Carver County Division of Public Works – Parks Department.

Alternate 1 contains segments of trail currently owned and managed by the USFWS. If the alternate is selected, agreement with the USFWS regarding the ownership, design, management and maintenance of these segments would be required.

Natural Resources Management Plan

Carver County will be responsible for maintaining a 14-foot wide trail corridor, generally located adjacent to CR 40 and CSAH 11. The middle ten feet of the trail corridor will consist of a paved or crushed rock trail. On each edge of the trail, two-foot (minimum) shoulders will be maintained. Overhead vegetation within the 14-foot trail corridor will be trimmed to sufficient height to allow users, maintenance and emergency vehicles unobstructed use. In instances where vegetation overhangs from outside the trail corridor, staff will trim the vegetation to keep it clear of the trail users. Areas outside of the 14-foot trail corridor are considered low maintenance areas. Native and non-invasive plant species are encouraged for visual screening, wildlife and shade purposes.

Land cover is shown in Map 3. Sensitive features are located within existing DNR and USFW refuge lands adjacent to the corridor. However, some features may encroach within the corridor and impacts should be avoided through best management practices. Carver County will explore collaboration and cost-sharing opportunities with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and US Fish & Wildlife Refuge to provide consistent management of vegetation and enhance native plant communities and habitats within the corridor and adjacent public lands.

Stewardship Plan

The corridor is in a largely natural setting, providing views of the bluffs, floodplain, and Carver Creek. The trail begins near the Minnesota River in the floodplain and climbs the bluff over the course of its 1.8 mile path. The trail would provide the user with exposure to floodplain, wetland, and various old growth forest environments over a relatively short distance, in addition to the services and amenities of the Carver National Historic District.

Portions of the corridor through Alternates 1 are currently managed for trail use and will continue to be managed by the USFWS according to their standards and practices. If this alternate is selected, then agreements between Carver County and the USFWS will be executed that address stewardship of the corridor.

Trail development will occur in a manner that is protective of the natural resources through which the trail is located.

Public Services

The Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail Extension is located adjacent to existing developed public and private lands which can provide access to the trail and have services of parking, information and water. The trail will not need additional services to become operational. Should neighboring communities' desire to construct signature features, additional utilities and roads may need to be developed to accommodate the improvement.

To ensure maximum safety possible for trail visitors and its neighboring residents, Carver County will work closely with local public safety organizations to monitor trail use and take preventative measures to deter unauthorized activity. Police, fire and emergency services are provided by the Carver County Sheriff's Department and the City of Carver's Fire Department.

Boundaries & Acquisition Costs

The majority of the corridor outside of existing right-of-way is owned by public entities. It is anticipated that cooperative agreements with the USFWS and the City of Carver would be needed for use of their existing facilities. One private parcel may be needed for partial acquisition of additional right of way as follows:

Parcels to be Partially Acquired			
Parcel Identification Number	Estimated Acquisition	Note	Segment
200830710	\$24,000	Carver Bluffs Homeowners Association	Portion needed for either Segment 2 or Alternate 2

A portion of Alternate 1 crosses through property owned by the USFWS. An agreement would need to be reached with them to utilize or acquire this property if the Alternate 1 is selected as the corridor. A land swap agreement may be possible with the USFWS whereby the County purchases a parcel that they are interested in acquiring and swaps it with the UWFWS for the area containing the trail location. No specific parcels for a land swap have been identified at this time, but it is estimated that approximately \$100,000 would be necessary to acquire and trade property.

Operations & Maintenance

Carver County has adopted a set of ordinances that define the rules and regulations of its regional parks and trails in order to provide for the safe and peaceful use of the parks, trails, and corresponding facilities. Carver County’s Park Ordinance, Chapter 91 as amended from time to time, will be enforced for all users and activities within the proposed regional trail.

Trail maintenance will be performed via the following schedule for Segment 2. Segment 1 of the trail may have a modified maintenance schedule if it traverses property owned by the USFWS rather than being adjacent to County right-of-way. Maintenance costs are anticipated to be \$5,000 (2013 dollars) once the regional trail is developed. Operations and maintenance expenditures will be budgeted for personnel and equipment. The County will explore collaboration and cost-sharing opportunities with the City of Carver and the US Fish & Wildlife Refuge to find cost efficient methods to provide operations, maintenance, and public safety services within the proposed regional trail corridor.

Trail Maintenance Schedule	
On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation – mow shoulders (maintain 2-3 feet clearance) and blow or sweep trail surface • Litter and debris cleanup • Trash removal • Use/Safety inspections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROW encroachment inspections • Verify safety for trail users (no fallen/hanging branches, slippery spots, etc.) • Graffiti/Vandalism • Inventory surface failures (cracks, dips, crumbling edges) • Drainage/Culvert clearings
Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noxious weed control as needed • Trim trees/shrubs to maintain clearance • Other annual resource management activities • Trail surface sweeping (Spring/Fall)
Two+ Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asphalt crack repair – every five years where needed • Sealcoating – every ten years • Overpass/Underpass structure inspections – every two years • Signs and lane/crossings striping – replace as needed

Public safety will be monitored by the Carver County Sheriff's office who will be responsible for patrolling the trail. A Sheriff's Deputy or a Community Service Officer will respond to calls for service needs on the trail. Community Service Officers are uniformed, non-sworn officers. In addition to responding to calls for service, the 911 First Responder system will answer any emergency call made from the trail. Cooperation with the other emergency service agencies will also be encouraged to ensure safety for all trail users.

It is not anticipated that the regional trail will generate any revenue once the trail is developed. Funding sources to cover on-going operations and maintenance costs for the extension of the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail Extension include general operating funds. A portion of operating and maintenance costs will be funded by the Metropolitan Council and distributed to Carver County consistent with MN Statute 473.351.

Accessibility

In joint planning for the extension of the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail, Carver County is committed to providing activities, access and resources for all trail visitors, including persons with disabilities and members of special population groups and will do so throughout planning, development, and operation and maintenance activities of the trail. Carver County supports equal access for all users to its park and trail facilities. Through Segments 1 and 2, the trail facilities will be designed to meet or exceed guidelines established by the Americans with Disabilities Act. If selected, Alternates 1 and 2 will be designed with the intent of meeting the guidelines. This regional trail segment is envisioned to accommodate a wide-range of user groups with varying abilities and offers access to many populations.

Ensuring that recreational opportunities are affordable and accessible (by various modes of transportation) to all citizens is an existing policy within Carver County's 2030 Comprehensive Plan. Under current policy, Carver County Parks will not charge a fee for use of the trail, making it affordable to all populations.

The Carver County Division of Community Social Services provides a wide variety of services that reach out to assist the population of Carver County. Services include transportation assistance, child, adult and senior services. Carver County provides reduced park entrance fees for qualified park users through the Park Pass Assistance program.

Citizen Participation

Initial support for the proposed trail was brought forward through the development of the County Comprehensive Plan which was reviewed by agencies and members of the public before adoption. In addition, this trail master plan has been reviewed by the City of Carver's Park Commission and City Council, the Dahlgren Township Board of Supervisors, the Carver County Park Commission, and approved by the Carver County Board on April 2, 2013.

Public comment opportunity was provided at the following meetings:

Dahlgren Town Board: March 11, 2013

Carver County Park Commission: March 12, 2013

City of Carver Park Board: March 25, 2013

City of Carver City Council: April 1, 2013

Carver County Board of Commissioners: April 2, 2013

A resolution of support for this regional trail has been adopted by the City of Carver. In addition, a letter of support has been provided by the USFWS. Both of these documents are included in Appendix A.

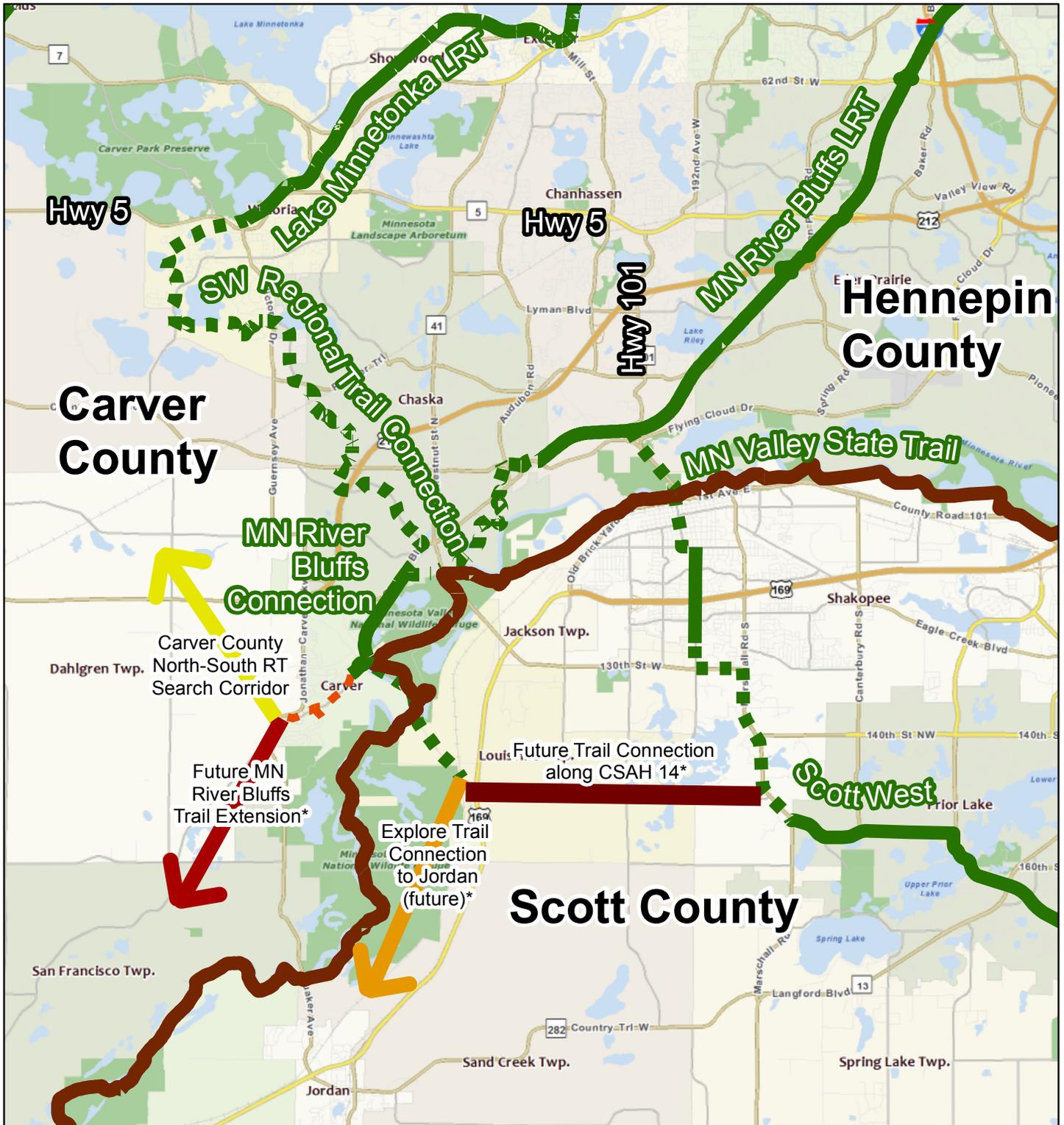
Public Awareness

Once the regional trail segment is completed, promotion and marketing the use of the regional trail is important to Carver County. The County will notify local and regional residents of the trail development through press releases to the media, publications such as the Carver County Parks Trailhead, City of Carver publications, and park related mailings, brochures and newsletters. Other methods to promote the use of the trail will include the County's website and the addition of the regional trail within all park and trail system maps and active living and biking on-line mapping resources, including GoCarverGo and Cyclopath.

As development and construction plans are proposed, public information meetings will be held as a means to inform the public, to collect input and to have dialogue on ideas and potential conflicts.

Appendix A

Letters and Resolutions of Support follow this page.



Legend

- █ Existing Regional Trails
- - - Planned Regional Trails
- - - Planned Extension
- █ Existing State Trail

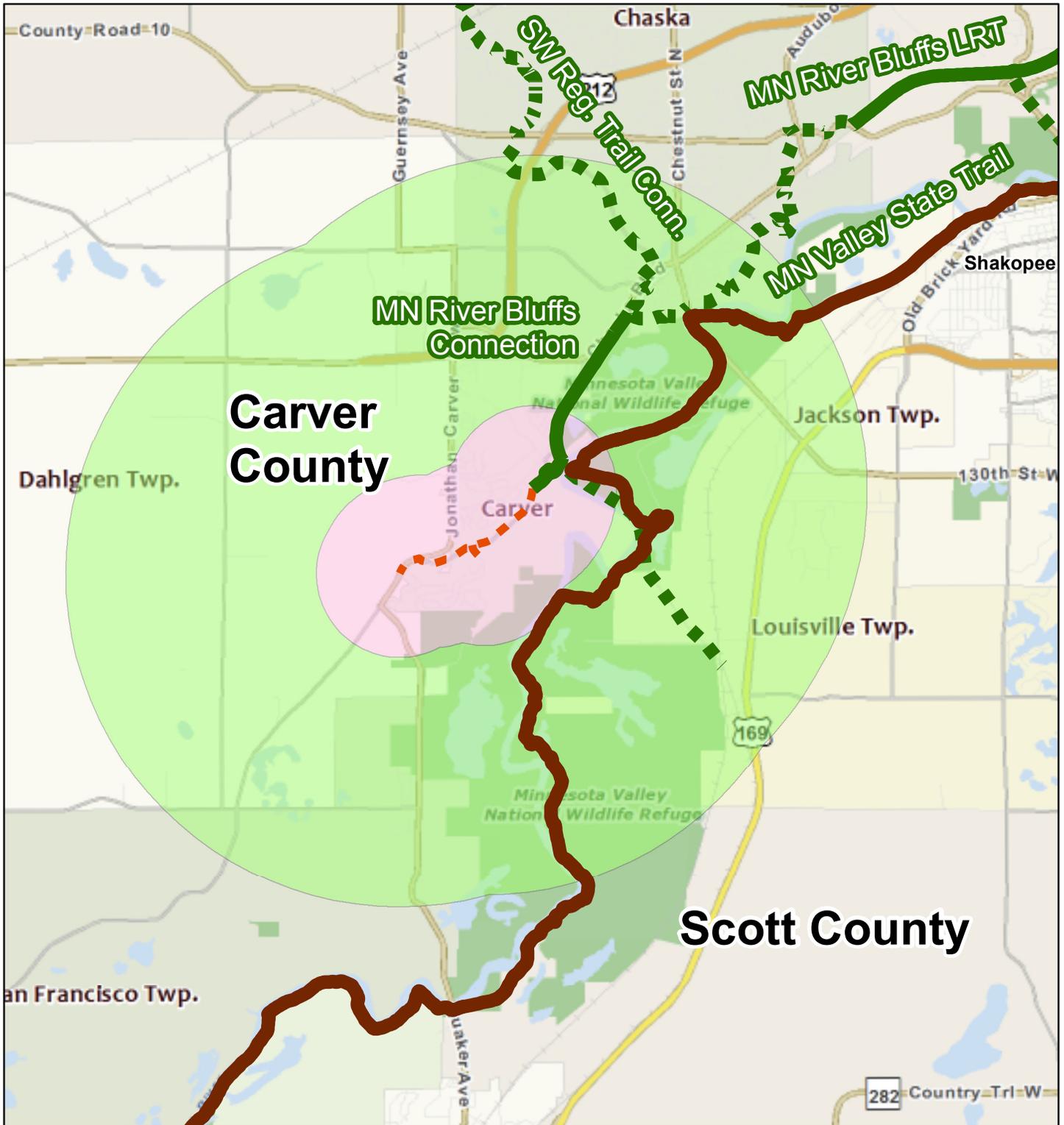
*Future trail connections are not part of this study.



Study Area and Overview

MN River Bluffs Regional Trail Extension

Map 1

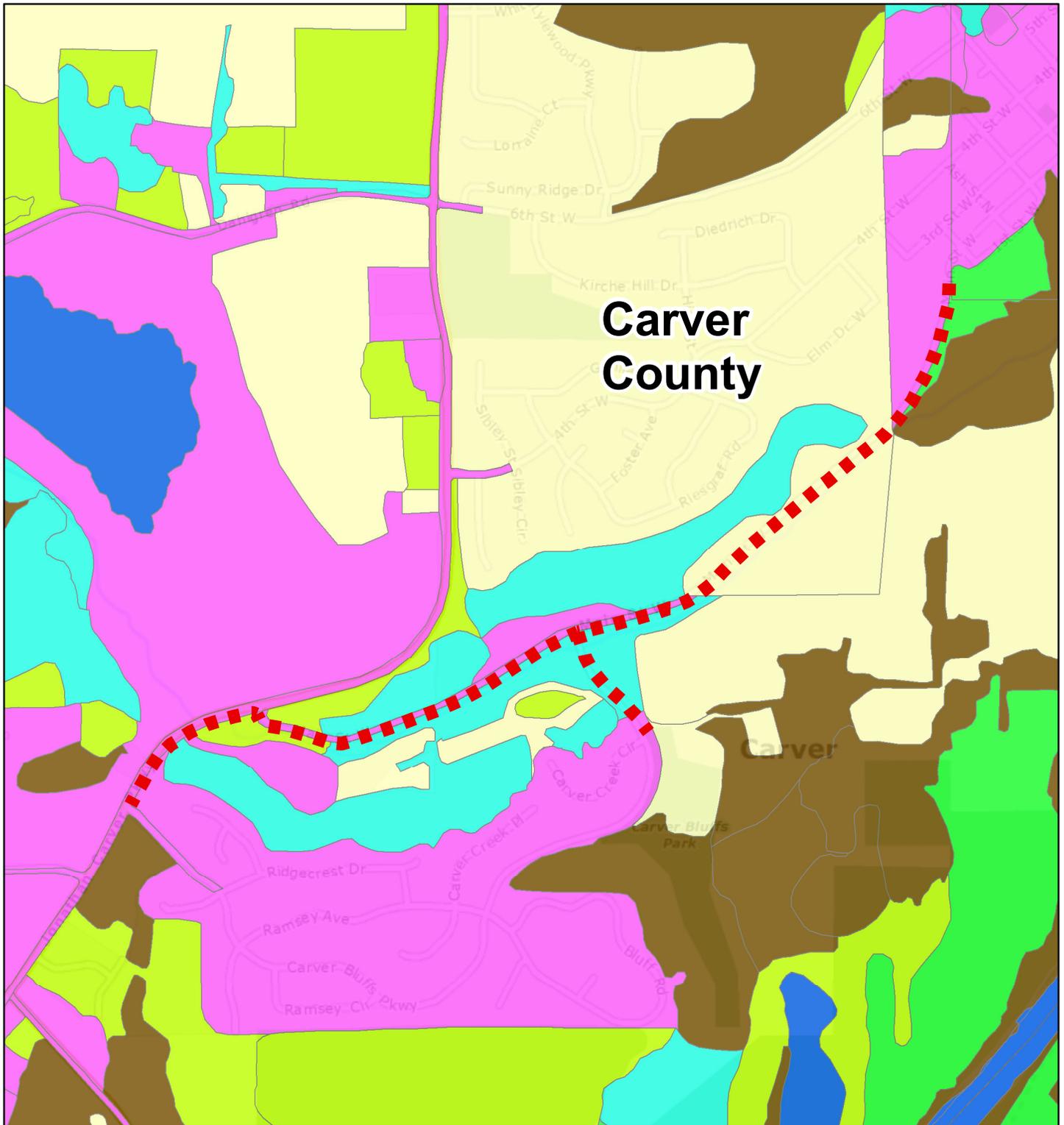


Legend

- Existing Regional Trails
- Planned Regional Trails
- Planned Extension
- Existing State Trail
- Core Service Area 0.75 Miles
- Primary Service Area 3 Miles

Primary Service Area
 MN River Bluffs Regional Trail
 Extension

Map 2



Generalized Land Cover (MLCCS)



MN River Bluffs Regional Trail Extension

Map 3

Legend

	Undefined		Shrubland
	Artificial surfaces and associated areas		Herbaceous
	Planted or Cultivated Vegetation		Nonvascular vegetation
	Forests		Sparse vegetation
	Woodland		Water



Corridor Map (1 of 2)

MN River Bluffs Regional Trail Extension



- Trailhead
- Existing Trails/Sidewalks
- Existing Regional Trails
- Planned Regional Trails
- Planned Extension
- Existing State Trail
- Alternate Route 1
- Alternate Route 2



Corridor Map (2 of 2)

MN River Bluffs Regional Trail Extension



- P** Trailhead
- Existing Trails/Sidewalks
- █ Existing Regional Trails
- █ Planned Regional Trails
- Planned Extension
- █ Existing State Trail
- Alternate Route 1
- Alternate Route 2

RESOLUTION 117-13
CITY OF CARVER

RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR THE
MINNESOTA RIVER BLUFFS EXTENSION
REGIONAL TRAIL MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 1

WHEREAS, the Carver County Comprehensive Plan contains a search corridor for an extension of the Minnesota River Bluffs Trail; and

WHEREAS, Carver County has prepared the Minnesota River Bluffs Extension, Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment No. 1 in the City of Carver;

WHEREAS, the master planning process is designed to identify issues and opportunities, outline costs and identify public need and interest in the proposed trail project; and

WHEREAS, the proposed master plan amendment plans trail connectedness within the City of Carver and to the surrounding regional trail corridors;

WHEREAS, the City of Carver has reviewed the Minnesota River Bluffs Extension, Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment No. 1;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Carver is in support of the Minnesota River Bluffs Extension, Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment No. 1.

Adopted by the Council of the City of Carver this 1st day of April, 2013, by a vote of 4 Ayes and 0 Nays.



Greg Osterdyk, Mayor

ATTEST:


Brent Mareck, City Administrator



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
and Wetland Management District
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, Minnesota 55425

In Reply Refer to:
FWS/R3/NWRS/MNV

Mr. Martin Walsh
Carver County Parks Director
Carver County Parks
11360 Hwy 212 West
Cologne, Minnesota 55322

Dear Mr. Walsh:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Master Plan Amendment for the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail. Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is in support of the amendment to include a short section of the Refuge's *Carver Creek Loop Trail* as Alternative Route 1 of the River Bluffs Regional Trail. The section identified in Alternative Route 1 is a natural surface trail on Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge property that runs from Bluff Park (102 Carver Bluffs Parkway, Carver, MN) to Ash Street in the town of Carver, MN. The Refuge supports designating this section of trail as an alternative route with the understanding it will remain a natural surface trail, will be maintained by Carver County, and only non-motorized uses will be allowed on the trail. The Refuge is open to discussions on improvements to the natural surface, but does not support any type of paved surface for this section of trail.

Should the amendment be approved, the Refuge would seek to formalize the roles and responsibilities of each party through a signed Memorandum of Understanding. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself at 952-858-0722 or my staff member Beth Ullenberg at 952-858-0712.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Holler
Deputy Refuge Manager