

Minnesota River Valley Master Plan

Agency Stakeholder Meeting

Thursday, June 11th, 2:30 – 4:30PM

Attendees: Bridget Olson (USFWS), State Senator Melissa Wiklund, State Representative Ann Lenczewski, Cynthia Wheeler (DNR), Sandi Kinzer (USFWS), Matt Bourne (Eden Prairie), Kurt Chatfield (Dakota County), Brandon Jutz (USFWS), Kelly Grissman (Three Rivers), John Gibbs (Commissioner – Three Rivers), Linda Loomis (Minnesota River Watershed)

City of Bloomington Staff: Randy Quale, Julie Farnham, Liz Heyman, Jen Desrude,

- Randy Quale and Julie Farnham presented an overview of the draft plan recommendations.
- Attendees asked how the City marketed the 2014 survey and if it represented the general public.
 - Quale/Farnham: No, it does not represent the general public because, one, many of the respondents said they did not live in Bloomington, and two, it wasn't a statistically significant survey.
 - Quale/Farnham: The survey was marketed via the City's website, the City newsletter and at the City's Farmers Market.
 - An attendant asked the attendees from the US Fish and Wildlife Service if they have current any user preference data.
 - They answered that no, they do not, because strict federal regulations make it cumbersome to create surveys.
 - An attendant asked if the City could separate out the results by where citizens lived and isolates responses from Bloomington residents.
 - Quale/Farnham: Responses showed that it was really a regional asset – not just a City of Bloomington asset, so that type of analysis was not completed. A summary of survey results is on the project website.
- An attendant asked how much the survey was used to make recommendations.
- Quale/Farnham: It was one piece of information. It was not the main tool or impetus for recommendations. It was intended to take the pulse of respondents at that time rather than create statistically significant data .An attendant asked how the project goals were prioritized.
 - Quale/Farnham: The goals are not prioritized. The text of the documents explains that the goals are interdependent.
- Quale told the group that some stakeholders had expressed interest in the City conducting a user study in the Valley.
 - Kelly Grissman from Three Rivers Park District said they would be happy to share their intercept survey. They said they couldn't staff such a study, but they could help with logistics.
- An attendant asked what was the impetus for the master plan?.
 - Quale/Farnham: The Bloomington City Council expressed interest in creating a plan for the Valley, because no comprehensive planning had previously been done for the area.
- John Gibbs complimented staff on where the project is at so far. He said he has received many inquires about the project from his constituents.
- Cindy Wheeler gave an update on the State Trail project.
 - Construction will start in fall 2016 at the very earliest. Bridges and culverts would be the first things completed. Work on the trail would follow starting in 2017.

- Environmental review will occur prior to any construction. Wheeler did not know the level of environmental review that will be required. She indicated that due to Federal requirements, this review may take a year to complete.
- The DNR is in contact with Xcel Energy, Twin Cities Rail Road and the two private property owners regarding easements in the Valley.
- There currently is \$2.165 million available for the project.
- The current construction estimate for the project is \$2.5 million.
 - An attendant commented that she thought this estimate seemed very low.
 - Wheeler answered that the estimate was based on 2013 data.
- Grissman discussed the Intercity Regional Trail project. It was stated that the project is fully funded within the City of Bloomington and will connect to the City's trail segment leading to the Old Cedar Bridge trailhead.
- Attendants discussed the I-35W replacement project.
 - The new bridge will include a bike/ped connection.
 - The project is currently in the design phase.
 - City of Burnsville is working on creating a trailhead at the southern end of the bridge.
 - The new I-35W ped/bike crossing could facilitate a high quality trail loop route in Bloomington and Dakota County utilizing the Hwy 77 bridge.
- Attendants discussed the feasibility of applying for a regional park reserve categorization for the City lands in the Valley.
 - Grissman mentioned that for the application to be successful the park would need to look very different than the Hyland Park Reserve.
 - Kinzer mentioned that the USFWS would need more details on how such a designation would affect their lands in the Valley as well as how it would affect the MOU with the City of Bloomington.
 - Grissman and Gibbs mentioned Three Rivers conducted a study that shows the need for certain types of regional parkland in east Bloomington. They will share the findings with the City.
- Kurt Chatfield mentioned that Dakota County is using a CDBG grant to study how their park system can better serve underserved populations (i.e. low income, minority populations). Dakota County is willing to share the results of the study with other partners.
- Grissman from Three Rivers commented that the natural resource master plan in the Valley should be completed first before the other recommended master plans.
- The attendants discuss how transit could be used to serve the Valley, specifically how better information and coordination with Metro Transit could make riders more aware of how to use transit to access the Valley.
- Olsen noted that the draft plan as is does not address safety in the Valley.
 - Kinzer said USFWS would like to strengthen their partnership with the City's police force.
 - Suggestion was made to develop a public safety plan which could include officer patrols as well as volunteer trail safety patrols.
 - A good signage plan with maps provides peace of mind as trail users find comfort in knowing where they are and where they want to go.
 - Smart phone applications with map features should be explored.
- Linda Loomis asked that the watershed district be included in future group discussions.
- An attendant stressed the need to develop a marketing plan for the Valley and for joint programming between the City and USFWS.

- The need to provide access to the Valley via public transit was discussed. Suggestion was made to rename the 34th Ave. LRT station as the “Refuge Station.”
- Suggestion was made to work with local watershed districts to delineate wetlands; some of this work is already underway.