The following are emails received during preparation of the Minnesota River Valley Strategic Plan. The vast majority relate to the State Trail project. This list includes emails received prior to publication of the public hearing notice for the MRVSP on December 4, 2015. Emails received since then are compiled in a separate document – "MRVSP emails received after public hearing notice published on 12/4/15".

Dear Council Member Oleson,

Hello, my name is Chris Hagen. I am a resident of your district at [redacted]. I am writing this in hopes of your consideration to address a parking concern I have near the river bottoms and Auto Club Road.

The area I am speaking of is a short section of Normandale Boulevard that takes you off towards the Minnesota River and the decommissioned train bridge (the closest address to this road is 11602 Normandale Boulevard). Along that street, within the last three years No Parking signs were installed. The only parking allowed along the street is a small section at the top of the hill.

My reason for taking issue with these signs is because this is the only access to the river trails within 2 miles West and 3 miles East. By not allowing parking anywhere but the top, it discourages people from visiting that part of the river, essentially turning a public road into a private drive. Without a safety concern I am aware of I believe we should be allowed access, to lawfully park along a dead end road.

My proposal is to simply allow enough space at the bottom of the hill to park two, maybe three vehicles. I understand the nearby property owners may have concerns with people misusing the road. With that, restricting the amount of vehicle area to park should reduce these issues, successively allowing legitimate users access.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,
Chris Hagen
Bloomington, MN

Dear Bloomington City Council Members,

Below is a letter that I sent previous City Council Members a few years ago. As I send you this email the MN River is currently over flood stage and will be for many more days. After the flood is gone there will be large amounts of debris like trees and logs all over the natural trail that exists currently. Also, there will be very large deposits of silt or sugar type sand that can be feet deep and hundreds of yards long as well as wide. The natural trail that has existed for many years will be brought back in only a few months thanks to volunteers. As you may be aware of some funding has been approved for construction of the Minnesota State paved trail. Many of the current trail users still feel that this is not the place for an improved surface trail. There are many opportunities for those that prefer paved trails currently in Bloomington, the Metro Area, and all over Minnesota. We feel strongly that a well managed and maintained natural surface trail can be an asset to Bloomington and to Minnesota at a much cheaper cost and maintain its natural feel and integrity. I ask that you look critically at the planned paved trail project and even think out of the box at the idea of a natural trail that already has a large draw of users from all over Minnesota and around the country.

The Minnesota River Trail in Bloomington

My name is Dennis Porter. I have lived in Bloomington Minnesota all of my life of 47 years. I am and have been a frequent user on the Minnesota River Valley. I have donated many hours of volunteer maintenance in the MN River Valley and on the current trail. I have attended meetings from The City of Bloomington, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Service and other groups about this area. I have been involved with the planning for this area for many years. I also have served on the Bloomington Parks, Arts, and Recreation Commission, The Alternative Transportion Task Force, and on the Old Cedar Bridge Group Meetings. My experience with this area and trail is extensive. During all my years I have advocated, and I am even more convinced, that the plans for an improved surface (paved or crushed limestone) are faulty. I believe a natural surface trail is the best option for the MN River Valley State Trail. I have listed below my reasons of why I feel so strongly against an improved or paved surface.

As a trail user:

1. This is a wonderfully natural and relatively undisturbed area. A person can have the feeling of being miles away from civilization when in the MN River Valley in Bloomington. A wide improved surface trail will change this experience for trail users.

2. As a user I have many recreational opportunties such as off road cycling, hiking, trail running, fishing, bird watching, cross country skiing, etc. A wide improved surface trail will change the nature these opportunities.

3. I have seen and spoken with hundreds of the current trail users. There is no oppostion for a State trail. Users overwhelmingly prefer a natural surface, not another overly managed and intrusive man made structure. I believe the current user's voices are not being heard, are being overlooked, or even considered.

4. I strongly believe there is an opportunity for a destination State trail. In many ways it already is, but could be more so when it is an officail recognized Trail. The City of Bloomington can be a big part of this natural surface gem of a trail.

5. When the MN River reaches flood stage, it deposits large swaths of sugar like silt sand three feet deep, one hundred feet wide, and hundreds of yards long. A paved / improved trail will need expensive maintenance work to repair and re-open.

6. Improved surface trails in heavily wooded area, along river systems, in sensitive areas, and poor soils do not stay in useable condition. Trail users such as Inline skaters, novice Bicycists, physically challenged users, etc. find trails with tree debris and cracked pavement very difficult to use.

7. The current soil is also prone to ice heaving during the winter months due to water pockets in the soil. This was a big reason for Burnsville to abandon the Black Dog Road.

As someone who cares about the environment:

1. Petroleum based products such as asphalt adds more pollutants to our already struggling river systems.

2. If this area does someday have a paved or improved surface, parts of this the material or asphalt will wash into the MN River.

3. A bituminous surface cannot be good for sensitive animals such as amphibians to cross during summer months. The hot black surface will cook these animals.

4. The construction of a paved or gravel trail will have a negative environmental impact due to the need to remove large amounts of mature trees and wildlife habitat.

5. The Minnesota River is already threatened.

As a Bloomington and Minnesota taxpayer:

1. The costs of building this trail will be very high. The current surface is made up of sugar like silt sand. Materials will need to be brought in, not only for the pavement but the base as well.

2. A paved trail on a flood plain will need extensive and expensive maintenance. The cost to maintain a trail on the flood plain will quickly eclipse the cost of installation in only a few years. Note: I have had discussion with the person that has been instrumental in getting paved trails in Minnesota. He mentioned that maintenance costs of paved or improved surface trails are rarely ever figured into the funding proposals. Many paved trails are currently are in need of repairs.

3. The old Bloomington Ferry Road needed many repairs and still does on a yearly basis. This is only a very small section and the base material was made for automotive traffic.

4. There are many malting/grain businesses along the Minnesota River. They have used railroads for almost as long as they have been in business. Why didn't they put rail lines along this corridor? Answer, it is a flood plain.

5. As a Bloomington taxpayer I feel that Bloomington will need to repair areas of the trail throughout the year due to the location alone. Are Bloomington taxpayers aware of this burden. Are the majority of Bloomington residents even in favor of this project?

To summarize, I believe this trail can be a true desintation trail as a natural surface. In many ways it already is a destination trail. The numbers of users are there to support my claims, a study or survey at the current trail heads could prove it. Millions of dollars can be saved by not constructing an improved surface trail on this major flood plain. Money saved could be put into better planning for a natural surface trail. Other saved funding could go to maintaining of existing improved surface trails around Minnesota. My hope is to have a natural surface trail that follow the existing proposed corridor from St Paul to Henderson. This type of trail could a model for other areas around our country.

Thank You.

Dennis Porter.

Hello Council Members,

I just had one more point to add. The Three Rivers Park District figures that a paved trail on a suitably stable soil costs roughly $375,000 per mile. This cost was verified by Rand Quale as being correct. The MN River Valley soil will need additional base material because of its silt content so you can figure a higher cost. That being said, my long and intimate knowledge of the current area I figure that roughly 5-6 miles of the trail will be damaged from the current flooding. That would put the repair of the proposed paved trail at $1,875,000 for just 5 miles of the trail. Again, I suggest you as council members take a hard look at the sustainability of a developed trail in this area. Also, just to note the natural trail that has existed for many years now has cost nothing. Nothing. A managed natural trail can be a win win for all. Please consider my points.

Thank you for your time.

Dennis Porter

I apologize but something has come up that I will not be able to attend today's meeting. Here's a quick summary of Scott County's connection to the MNRV.

The primary bike/ped connection is the existing Bloomington Ferry Bridge pedestrian bridge. We are currently constructing an extension of the MN Valley State Trail that will connect the ped bridge to the rest of the state trail between Memorial Park in Shakopee to the TH 41 bridge in Chaska. This will create a continuous paved state trail between Bloomington, Shakopee, and Chaska (approx. 11 miles). We support any continued efforts to continue the planned connection of the MN Valley State Trail to Fort Snelling.

Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Andy Hingeveld

Scott County

Mr. Farnham:

Did notice of this survey cover the following groups representative of the current usage of the MN River Valley other than the bicyclists elitist groups?:

1. Family hikers
2. Boy/Girl Scout leaders
3. Local Pedestrian hikers/runners
4. Residents in the immediate area affected
5. Bird Watching groups

I would like to be a part of a focus group and/or as a resident liaison currently residing within two blocks of a moderately used access point to the MN River Bottoms?

How can you tell where the people who took the survey live? This survey is tainted. Please see attached screenshot from MORC MN River Bottom blog dialogue where one person comments "I stuffed the ballot box". There have been many people who were rallied and encouraged to answer the survey via the Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists website and blogging (not ONE of the MN River Bottom bloggers was from Bloomington), but my 70 year old neighbor hadn't heard or seen anything, isn't "online" and doesn't get the daily paper nor the family down the street who has two working parents and three kids who take their kids down the trail or the two neighborhood boys who go exploring and skipping rocks on the lake. Nor the people who were shooting a film in combat fatigues. The Facebook notice of the Thursday open house meeting went out with only two weeks notice, and NOWHERE has this been promoted in the direct vicinity of the affected area. Was this survey information available at Creekside Center, a very active facility? Was any of the river valley information found in the City Briefing that recently went out (I know the answer to this because I just received it). At the transportation open house, there was a large poster boasting the number of people who had filled out the survey along with results to date. This is extremely deceptive and you are providing this information to the public which can sway survey results before the survey is completed. The results from the transportation online survey should not be given much regard. Also, lumping the trail in with a questions such as whether I want additional bike lanes is also deceptive. I don't want more bike lanes in the river bottom, but there is a need in the public transportation roads in the City.

I feel the City is in partnership with the bicycling groups and sponsors of MORC (Erik's Bike Shop and Penn Cycle) and is taking a very biased approach to this whole project.

Hello Julie,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. I urge you and the planner on the Overlook Drive Connection Plan to talk. I believe that your project is going to be great. I do believe that some of the things that are in the Survey are probably goals of this project – i.e. Wildlife, Access and Safety for the user of the MNRV – and these goals would be directly harmed by a connection. Connecting Overlook will increase traffic and put wildlife and the safety of those using the MNRV in harm's way. I do not have a study to prove this, but I do have a point of reference. I am asking Traffic Management to help provide me with these things, but to no prevail.

I urge you to take a look at the history of the road structure on 106th and 110th and how traffic volumes increased. These two projects are counterintuitive, one is GOING to increase traffic and the other is looking to preserve and safely use the wildlife, which would be affected by the increase traffic. So, it's hard for me to see how it's going to improve the well-being of the residents in the City of Bloomington.

Thank you,

TJ

Dear Ms. (I apologize my earlier salutation was to a Mr.) Farnham:

I forgot to include a link to a public My Space video showing the usage of a single path dual-usage trail at the MN River Bottom.

https://myspace.com/wkwizard/video/white-knuckle-riders/32629383

Please note the following:

Speed at 1:47
Jumps and tricks at 2:35 and 2:56
Manmade bank at 3:30 (I'm also including a picture on the Mound Spring Spur Trail of one man-made bank)
Manmade log jump at 4:10 (I'm also including a picture on the Mound Spring Spur Trail of one man-made jump)
First wipeout at 5:20 and
Second wipeout at 7:55

Pat

I would like to express my opinion on keeping the Minnesota Valley River Trail in Bloomington a natural surface trail. I have been using the trail as a hiker, runner, dog walker, snowshoer, and biker for the past 13 years. Over this time, I have met scout groups, cross country teams, bird watchers, fishermen, photographers, fellow hikers and bikers who all enjoy coming down to the trail to experience nature at it's best. These are people of all shapes and abilities who want to enjoy the sights and sounds nature can provide. Having such an extensive natural surface trail so close to the metro is something truly amazing and should be kept this way. I fully support the trail being improved with proper drainage, bridge

construction, etc., but to lose the natural state would surely be a shame. After all, the trail goes through a wildlife refuge. Construction of a paved trail would be detrimental to this environment and take away habitat for the animals that this land should be protecting. Another concern I have with a paved trail system is the maintenance the trail would require. The current trail goes through dense forest. Trees commonly fall during storms or over the winter months. The current natural surface is dynamic and can be rerouted easily and quickly when a large tree blocks the way. Every year the trail changes shape to reflect the effects of mother nature. The same cannot be said for a paved surface. Also, annual flooding closes the trail for several weeks every spring and when the water recedes, the trail always requires work. The cost of these annual repairs to a paved system seems to be an unnecessary burden for tax payers.

Please include my thoughts when deciding what types of improvements should be added to the Minnesota Valley River Trail. It is an exceptional trail that is already being used by many different people for different reasons. Paving the trail would take away the joy of being able to escape from the city and value the land in it's natural state.

Thank you,

Michelle Leonard

Bloomington Resident, MN Valley River Trail User

Please don't pave this trail.

I can walk out my front door and I am on a paved trail in 3 min. I have numerous paved trail options. This is nice, but I would rather commute 30 min to get to a natural trail. More paved trails are nice, but not at the cost of a natural trail. Also, the paved trail will eventually be closed in the spring when the floods wash out the substrate and the blacktop collapses. I live in Shakopee, we have a great paved trail system, that has been partially closed all year because of flooding….

Regards,

Nathan Olson

Dear Bloomington City Council;

I am writing in regards to the Metropolitan Council's Regional Bike Transportation Network Plan, specifically the proposal to pave the Minnesota River Valley Trail. I am opposed to the plan to pave the trail.

I moved to Bloomington seven years ago this fall and I live about a quarter mile from the trail. I run and hike on the trail with my dog several times a week and in the winter I snowshoe on the trail. Being able to escape from my work in the city to come home and spend time in a wooded area that is in its natural state is something that I love most about living in my neighborhood and in Bloomington. I love that it is simple – the trail is not filled with litter or even signs declaring that I should walk this way or that. It is nature at its absolute finest.

I believe that paving the trail would take away from the river valley's natural beauty. It would also take away a soft surface on which to run, as I frequently avoid the sidewalks and concrete on purpose because the trail is softer on my

shins, knees and hips than concrete. Finally, I believe paving the trail would also be expensive and difficult to maintain. Each year since I have moved to Bloomington the river valley has flooded – sometimes more than once a year. As I eagerly wait for the water to recede every spring I am amazed to see how the trail twists, turns and morphs to accommodate the fallen trees, sand deposits, and other debris that washes ashore. I simply cannot fathom the time, effort and expense it would take to rebuild a paved trail each year.

I urge you to consider advocating for leaving the Minnesota River Valley Trail in its natural state. It provides a beautiful oasis in the midst of a busy metropolitan area, a comfortable surface on which to run, and a low-maintenance recreation area. Please do not allow the Metropolitan Council and Department of Natural Resources to pave the Minnesota River Valley Trail.

Kind Regards,

Jamie J. Peterson, PhD
Bloomington, MN

Dear Mr. Mayor and City Council Members

For the sake of full disclosure I am an active Minnesota Off Road Cyclists (MORC) member and recently got involved in the effort to keep the Minnesota River Bottoms area natural.

I am a regular user of the Minnesota River Bottoms Trail. I drive there from Golden Valley where I live to participate in regular group mountain bike rides in the summer/fall and fat bike rides in the fall/winter. I have also taken my wife there to snow shoe in the winter and hike in the fall because she doesn't mountain bike and I wanted her to experience what I experience every time I am down there....nature at it's best right in the middle of a large metro area. This is a wonderful destination trail and area.

I am also a cyclist and bicycle commuter. I commute from Golden Valley to way west Edina on a daily basis. The Twin Cities has wonderful paved infrastructure in place to allow me to do this safely which I appreciate very much.

In other words, I'm not opposed to paved trails....where appropriate. The Minnesota River Bottoms area is not an appropriate place for a paved path. Spending many millions of tax payer dollars to build a paved trail in an area that has a consistent and significant history of flooding just does not make sense. This area has been used and enjoyed in its current natural state for decades by thousands of people at little to no tax payer expense. Please consider taking a step back. Money has been allocated but not spent. Put a plan in place to upgrade the area with the appropriate bridges and culverts. This will cost a fraction of the cost of a paved trail that would have required years and years of repeated expensive maintenance and rebuilding due to flooding.

Thank you for your consideration of my views.

Steve

Stephen Boyd
Golden Valley, MN

Dear Mr. Quale:

Please advise as to the status of the Minnesota River Valley master plan. It appears some work has already been started by either the DNR, MN Wildlife Refuge or the City as well as deliveries of pallets and boxes dropped off at the Indian Mounds entry point. Have RFPs been issued for the Master Plan work, responses submitted and/or awarded? It's been portrayed to the public that there would be community input on the Master Plan, but some work has already been started. Are there two separate trails (a state trail to the south of Long Meadow Lake and a city-owned single path trail to the north of Long Meadow Lake? Even the DNR represented to the public at one of the open houses the wrong trail to those in attendance. People were talking about the city-owned land, and she was showing the potential paving of the State Trail.

There used to be a "no bike" sign where the Refuge boundary began, which has been recently removed (pictures attached). Do you know who removed this?

Are bikes now allowed along this path to the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge?

I've been in contact with Ann Lenczewski regarding pedestrian advocacy after the Star Tribune article a week or so ago. She helped secure the funding for the renovation of the Old Cedar Avenue bridge and the bond award for this project. She will be holding a community meeting, but unfortunately it appears this will take place after the elections which is during critical Master Plan planning. As a resident directly affected by what happens to this trail, I will be trying to provide my input and am preparing this information on a broader scale to inform anyone who will listen. I feel pedestrians (families, dog walkers, scout troops, bird watchers, runners, neighborhood kids, film makers, etc.) are losing the battle against a large powerful 900 member off-road bicycling group (Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists "MORC" mostly non-Bloomington residents) and cannot compete against this MORC with its financial sponsors including Penn Cycle, Eric's Bike Shop, the law firm Thomsen Nybeck, REI (Bloomington), etc. Of the MORC sponsors, please advise which are stakeholders who also have taken part of your Master Plan planning and focus meetings? I still feel that the many different pedestrian sectors are not being represented during this initial planning. A senior walking group does not hike the all terrain river bottoms. The Star Tribune article unfortunately gave a lot of attention to the off-road bicyclist's cause and portrayed a sympathetic light to their plight, but the hikers/pedestrian's point of view and history were ignored. It sounded like they alone created these trails and are losing their exclusive rights. Ann's comments at least make a statement that these trails are not just for the bicyclist's use. They didn't create all of these trails nor have they groomed them for multi-use (single path picture) and they have been groomed to be their personal obstacle course (see manmade bank and jump pictures). Pedestrians do not need man-made jumps and banks (pictures attached). I've been using the river bottoms since I was in high school (Parker's Picnic area trails) over 30 years ago.

I continue to maintain that these single path trails are not safe for multi-use, regardless of whether they are paved or not, and need to be widened, regularly groomed (not just for biker's needs) and the sight lines improved. The MORC group and pedestrians alike favor a natural surface or aggregate versus paved. As a runner, shinsplints, muscle fatigue and joint stress are a concern with paving, and of course, the maintenance costs. It has been suggested that it is cheaper to maintain flooded asphalt than natural or aggregate or washouts. Also, it appears in the last ten years there have been at least two death I have found as a result of bicyclists either colliding with each other or falling on Bloomington's trails (river bottoms without a helmet and Hyland Park Trail). Pedestrians don't collide into each other or have the speed and recklessness (please see bicycle video on MySpace https://myspace.com/wkwizard/video/white-knuckle-riders/32629383 - 1st fall at 5:20 and 2nd fall at 7:55, speed, jumps tricks, manmade bank, mandmade log jump). Mountain Bike Website "www.mtbproject.com" regarding Minnesota River Bottom . . ."great for . . . looking for mileage and speed."

I have taken polls of every person I have encountered on my trail runs (by far more pedestrians than bicyclers), and only one person was aware of any planning to this area (started asking in early August) and a group of men I came across on a run who were "mapping" the area three nights ago. It is my belief they were from the Minnesota Off-Road Cyclist group. My earlier email to you broke down the failure to get notice about the Master Plan planning open houses and survey, to the public, and I sent you a copy of a forum entry from a MORG member "I stuffed the ballot box" regarding the Master Plan survey input and to keep that in contest with special interest groups with personal agendas.

Thank you in advance for your courtesy, answers and cooperation.

Pat Treseler

To Whom It May Concern:

I understand from neighbors that the city is contemplating a paving project down by the north side of the Minnesota River. Concurrent with that, I've been told that the city is considering changes to the parking along Normandale Blvd south of Auto Club Road.

While I recognize that change is an inevitability in our world, I want to express my concerns about adding parking along or at the end of Normandale.

First, there is already parking accessible from Bloomington Ferry Road just west of Normandale and I have trouble understanding why that parking lot, not close to houses, wouldn't be adequate... even if it needed some expansion. There is obviously a lot of parking further east too, including at 35-W as well as at the park system along Nine Mile Creek.

Second, if the idea is on-street parking on Normandale, we've already been told that it creates a dangerous situation for fire truck access should such be necessary. That's why parking is currently restricted along the street. If the idea is a parking lot, I have to believe it would be cheaper to expand the Ferry Road parking than to add new parking and infrastructure at Normandale.

Third, for 26 years since 1988 when we became the first property owners along the street, this has been a peaceful residential dead-end street serving 18 residences, many of which have kids and many others with grandkids. To suddenly change this would have a negative effect on property values and more important, a negative effect on neighborhood safety and security.

Fourth, we already have an issue with junk being dumped along our street, on both sides. We see everything from Christmas trees and refrigerators to tires and paint cans, from beer cans to McDonalds bags. As good neighbors, we all clean this up, whether it be the home owners on one side or the Masonic Home on the other. Additional parking would only increase the volume of junk and garbage we would need to pick up.

Fifth, with the almost 90 degree turn at the top of the street (to access Auto Club Road), there is the potential for car-pedestrian accidents and car-bicycle accidents if you add to the traffic on the street. Simply, it was built as an access street for the 18 homes along the street, not as a source of volume traffic. As people who use the street every day, we recognize the visibility issues... new users will not.

So, while I understand change when it leads to progress, I see nothing progressive about making this an automotive access point for the river. Instead, I see trash issues, safety and security issues, and extra and unnecessary costs. Please let it continue to be a safe access point for bicycle and pedestrian traffic, but not a source of dangerous automotive traffic.

Paul Clements

Bloomington, MN

HI Randy,

Hope you're doing well.

At the PARC meeting a month or so ago, I mentioned that I would like to give input to/participate in the development of the planning for the Bloomington section of Minnesota River Valley and also for the Alt Transportation Master Plan that is being developed. I would like to represent the Bush Lake Chapter of the Izaak Walton League while Stan, Ed, Pat may represent the Mpls-Minnesota Valley Chapter of the Izaak Walton League.

Three things I would like to see as part of these planning efforts:

1. Develop a biking-hiking trail from Pond Dakota Mission Park down the hill to the Minnesota Valley Trail which will be running along the river. I think that this could be an important access point to the trail and also enable significantly greater use of Pond-Dakota Mission Park with its unique historical and natural assets.

2. In cooperation with the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and groups of Dakota descendants, develop an area near Russell Sorenson Landing (foot of Lyndale Ave) to commemorate/intepret the large and historically significant Dakota Village that was located at the historic mouth of Nine Mile Creek. I've attached a historical summary of the village indicating its importance (see attached). Also attached is an article that Gideon Pond wrote about the large lacrosse game that the Dakotas played there in July 1852 before they removed to the reservation along the upper Minnesota River.

A good model for this living commemoration and (for the Pond-Bike Trail Link) is the excellent work that South St. Paul has done at Kaposia Village site. Lois Glewwe, author, historian, leader in South St, Paul and member of the Pond-Dakota Heritage Society was one of the leaders in that effort in South St. Paul, and I suggest that the city enlist Lois and the Pond Dakota Heritage Society in this effort. The commemoration/interpretation should also involve the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and also any descendents of the Dakotas who lived at the village or at the nearby Cloudman Village.

3. I think the idea of a marina on the Minnesota River is problematic because it has already been tried twice and both times it silted in---- Any new attempt will face the prospect of a river which is carrying even more sediment than it did 50 years ago.

The Minnesota Valley Trail is a tremendous asset which can help link some very unique sites in Bloomington and the Refuge and the overall area of the Lower Minnesota Valley.... from the Bass Ponds to Louisville Swamp. The idea that we can get to all these sites by bike, by hiking or by paddling is very exciting and will be a tremendous boon to the city and to the MN Valley Wildlife Refuge.

John Crampton

I am in favor of hiking /biking trails 100%!!

I love the fact that we have Hyland Park, Moir Park, Normandale Lake, etc… Bloomington in a great city with lots of outdoor opportunities.

However, building paved trails in the river bottoms seems like a losing proposition. I'd love to have a winter route down there to run, but I already have a great hiking and snowshoeing trail. Paving that wouldn't really help.

What paving that area would do is create a huge unmanageable expanse of blacktop that would be useless in a couple of years. With the silty base we have in the bottoms, I'd have to agree with the assessment I recently read about in the Sun Current. It just seems like something that would look and work great for a few years, then turn into something unusable.

I'd rather see Bloomington spend money on something like a protected bike / walking path from the Masonic home all the way to Normandale lake. There simply isn't a route that feels like a welcoming and safe path on that expanse, and I know that thoroughfare is used a lot more than the river bottoms is.

I know I don't really get a vote in this, but I just wanted to pass on an opinion.

Thanks for all you do.

Regards,

Scot Dauner (Bloomington resident since 2002)

Hi everyone, just wanted to give my quick input since I know you are all busy.

I live in New Ulm and on most weekends I come up to Bloomington. The reason why is I really, really enjoy riding the river bottom trails with my fat bike. There are no other trails with the length and ruggedness of this area in MN. These visits also includes winter, sometimes more than the summer. When I come to Bloomington I of course need to eat, get gas, occasionally a hotel, etc, so I spend money. If you choose to pave this trail it will be a huge loss to myself and the 2,000+ others who have signed the petition at change.org<https://www.change.org/p/bloomington-mn-city-council-stop-the-plan-to-put-a-paved-trail-in-the-minnesota-river-valley-between-the-bloomington-ferry-bridge-and-the-old-cedar-avenue-bridge?recruiter=168826904&utm_campaign=mailto_link&utm_medium=email&utm_source=share_petition>. I will no longer come up to spend my money and my opinion on this project will continue to spread like all the others - not favorably about the city or it's council members. I would like to think you would all come to the rational conclusion that paving this area is a huge recreation loss, as well as your taxpayers dollars.

I am on the board for our local Mankato mountain bike club and we have natural trails in the Kiwanis recreation area. It very frequently floods and there is also paved trails through that area. It took the city almost 2 months to fully clear the paved trail after June's flood and we are only talking 2 miles. The paved trail is also full of cracks, breaks, and crumbling away. No one rides their road bikes on it because it isn't enjoyable. The same thing will happen in Bloomington if you pave them. But I'm sure you have heard this many times so I'll stop there :)

Thanks for you time and attention to this matter.

Doug Janni

The destruction of this beautifully wonderful natural place simply to fulfill a 20+ year old outdated plan is not acceptable.

Thanks, John

Hello Council Members,

On the agenda for the study meeting tonight is the draft Master Plan for the MN River Valley. I want to share some comments with you about the plan. I've also included links below for more information.

1. As a member of the first Alternative Transportation Task Force I would like to mention that the MN River Valley Trail is and will be and is mainly recreational trail. This should not be part of the Alternative Transportation Plan. Our efforts should be focused on Transportation in the City for bicycle commuting, walking, and transit not on a recreational trail that has so much public opposition. I have copied an email below from Gary Sjoquist about this subject stating that this should not be included in the ATP.

2. The MN Off Road Cyclist support improvements to infrastructure at trailheads and bridges but not a paved trail that is very questionably sustainable. Black Dog road in Burnsville is an example that you can clearly see how much maintenance is needed. FYI, the Bloomington / North side gets much more debris. The natural trail has grown extremely popular over the years without any money from governments. Shouldn't this be considered a good thing?

3. The access arguments should not drown out the majority. There are many opportunities within short distances for users that have challenges. What about the opportunities for people that want natural trails? How many opportunities are there like this area?

4. The funding is not complete and additional funding may be more difficult to obtain. The City should not approve any plan without a full plan from the DNR and full funding for the plan.

5. The majority of Bloomington residents and trail users do not support developing this area for paved trails. The public is looking for natural trails like this. Please read comments on the petition to save the Minnesota River Bottoms many are not mountain bikers.

6. Has there ever been a user count or study? The answer is no. Decisions are being made by people that do not use or recreate in the area. Bloomington has always been a City willing to get all the details before making decisions. In this case perhaps a full study is appropriate?

7. Bloomington should think out of the box and realize that they have a treasure along the MN River that has not cost any taxpayer money.

Reference links below and Gary Sjoquist's from QBP's email about the first ATP.

Petition against the paved trail. Please read the comments.

https://www.change.org/p/bloomington-mn-city-council-stop-the-plan-to-put-a-paved-trail-in-the-minnesota-river-valley-between-the-bloomington-ferry-bridge-and-the-old-cedar-avenue-bridge

Facebook Page

https://m.facebook.com/SaveTheRiverBottoms

StarTribune Article

http://www.startribune.com/local/west/277017761.html

Sun Current Bloomington Edition.

http://current.mnsun.com/2014/11/letter-paving-in-the-river-bottoms-is-not-fiscally-responsible/

Black Dog Road

http://www.startribune.com/local/south/97993504.html?elr=KArks:DCiUocOaL_nDaycUiacyKUnciaec8O7EyUr

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Dear Council Members:

Gene Winstead
Cynthia Bemis Abrams
Jack Baloga
Tim Busse
Andrew Carlson
Dwayne Lowman
Jon Oleson

Please consider postponing your vote on the Bloomington state trail system until all sides have been fairly heard. A short/no notice vote on such an important issue will not allow you to hear from all your tax paying, voting constituents. Taking time off work and arranging child care is very difficult with such short notice. I would suspect many other individuals are in a similar situation and would also like to attend this meeting.

Thank you
Scott Valleen

Dear Council Members:
Gene Winstead
Cynthia Bemis Abrams
Jack Baloga
Tim Busse
Andrew Carlson
Dwayne Lowman
Jon Oleson

Please consider postponing this agenda item until all tax paying people whom are interested in outdoor recreation have been given advance notice of the meeting and been provided a chance of attending. I for one have just found out about this agenda today. This does not leave me with any advance time to make child care arrangements. I would suspect many other individuals are in a similar situation and would like to attend this meeting, but this surprise meeting makes it difficult to participate.

Thank you,

Andy Lambert

HI Randy,

Hope you're doing well.

At the PARC meeting a month or so ago, I mentioned that I would like to give input to/participate in the development of the planning for the Bloomington section of Minnesota River Valley and also for the Alt Transportation Master Plan that is being developed. I would like to represent the Bush Lake Chapter of the Izaak Walton League while Stan, Ed, Pat may represent the Mpls-Minnesota Valley Chapter of the Izaak Walton League.

Three things I would like to see as part of these planning efforts:

1. Develop a biking-hiking trail from Pond Dakota Mission Park down the hill to the Minnesota Valley Trail which will be running along the river. I think that this could be an important access point to the trail and also enable significantly greater use of Pond-Dakota Mission Park with its unique historical and natural assets.

2. In cooperation with the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and groups of Dakota descendants, develop an area near Russell Sorenson Landing (foot of Lyndale Ave) to commemorate/intepret the large and historically significant Dakota Village that was located at the historic mouth of Nine Mile Creek. I've attached a historical summary of the village indicating its importance (see attached). Also attached is an article that Gideon Pond wrote about the large lacrosse game that the Dakotas played there in July 1852 before they removed to the reservation along the upper Minnesota River.

A good model for this living commemoration and (for the Pond-Bike Trail Link) is the excellent work that South St. Paul has done at Kaposia Village site. Lois Glewwe, author, historian, leader in South St, Paul and member of the Pond-Dakota Heritage Society was one of the leaders in that effort in South St. Paul, and I suggest that the city enlist Lois and the Pond Dakota Heritage Society in this effort. The commemoration/interpretation should also involve the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and also any descendents of the Dakotas who lived at the village or at the nearby Cloudman Village.

3. I think the idea of a marina on the Minnesota River is problematic because it has already been tried twice and both times it silted in---- Any new attempt will face the prospect of a river which is carrying even more sediment than it did 50 years ago.

The Minnesota Valley Trail is a tremendous asset which can help link some very unique sites in Bloomington and the Refuge and the overall area of the Lower Minnesota Valley.... from the Bass Ponds to Louisville Swamp. The idea that we can get to all these sites by bike, by hiking or by paddling is very exciting and will be a tremendous boon to the city and to the MN Valley Wildlife Refuge.

-- John Crampton

City Council Members,

I am a Bloomington resident and sent the following letter to Representative Lenczewski regarding my opposition to the planned Minnesota River Valley Trail. I want to be sure the Bloomington City Council knows my position on this matter.

Thank you,

Todd Lynch

Bloomington MN

Representative Lenczewski,

I received your letter regarding the State of MN and City of Bloomington plans for the Minnesota Valley State Trail along the Minnesota river valley. Thank you for your communication on this matter.

My position differs from what's described in the letter, as I don't advocate for preservation of the existing trail on the river bottom as a "biker only" trail. With that said, I'm advocating for the river bottom to remain an undeveloped wilderness area.
As it now stands the river bottom is one of the few remaining places of its kind and should be preserved as such, I find it remarkable this area still exists in a city the size of Bloomington.

There are multiple options in the area for users looking for scenic parks with paved/managed trails. These include Hyland park reserve, the Moir park area, Lake Normandale, the City of Minneapolis lakes and Crosby Farm regional park in St Paul, just to name a few. The river bottom area in Bloomington is special because it doesn't have a developed trail system, yet there's plenty of access for anybody who wants to enjoy the beauty this area has to offer.

The river bottom has remained mostly unchanged in my lifetime, although the bikers have added a new twist over the past 20 years. Development of the proposed trail will be the start of additional projects including parking lots, visitor centers and additional trails, this is human nature. The far more difficult approach is to leave this area undeveloped for future generations to enjoy as we won't get a second chance once development begins.

Greetings,

I won't be able to attend the meeting but wish to thank you for the invitation and commend you on your efforts. This is a tremendous product! The only comment that I can add to that sentiment is that I would like to see the inclusion of a pedestrian bridge crossing the MN River at the Lyndale trailhead addressed in the document under the goal oriented opportunities section. The addition of a crossing at that location would tie the trail system into the heart of the Burnsville trail system and the Black Dog Rd recreational opportunities for many residents in central Bloomington.

Your efforts on growing this wonderful assets are truly appreciated.

Thanks,

Chris

Hello City of Bloomington,

Thanks for the information that was distributed at the June 6, 2015 Bloomington Farmer’s Market. As a result of the outreach I have read the proposed Minnesota River Valley Master Plan for the City. Due to other commitments I can not attend the June 17 open house but here are my comments and views for the record.

The most exciting element of the plan is the further development of the walking trails, both paved and natural. As a current year round active walker in the nearby Hyland Park Reserve I am covering 25 to 50 miles per week around the park. It has been great to see the increasing number of people on the Hyland trails, winter and summer. Walking is one of the best activities for a healthy life!!

The additional trail improvements suggested in the plan for the River Valley trail and the connecting City trails sounds WONDERFUL!! It will be a great improvement to quality of life here in Bloomington. Please add me to the list of City residents who support the walking trail improvements and encourage the respective agencies to quickly move forward!

Your Bloomington Racewalker

Will Loew-Blosser
Bloomington, MN

Do you support this typical political move???

26.10 (b) The trail shall be developed primarily for riding and hiking. Motorized vehicles 26.11 are prohibited from that portion of the trail on the north side of the Minnesota River, 26.12 lying between Fort Snelling State Park and Rice Lake Wayside. That portion of the 26.13 trail on the north side of the Minnesota River, lying between the Bloomington Ferry 26.14 Bridge pedestrian crossing and the Cedar Avenue Bridge, must be a paved trail developed 26.15 primarily for hiking and bicycling.

Im sure the city lawyer forced the council to support a paved trail as to avoid a lawsuit with the DNR. I find it absolutely ironic/intriguing that no single bloomington official is against the paved trail. Here we have a 15 wide corridor for 6 miles, destroying countless trees and ecology, and NOT ONE bloomington official is against this????????????
#conspiracy

Matt Muyres

It is really nice and fair that a bunch of Mountain Bikers can be loud but how inconsiderate that trail should be built with every one in mind what about seniors people on walkers crutches wheel chairs are we paying real close attention to the ADA or not remember that their is state money spent on this wheel chair users need a hard surfaced bike it is an absolute must

Sincerely

Mark Hughes

Saturday, I stopped by the first Farmer's Market of the year (an event I attend regularly). Where I stopped by the information booth about the Master Plan. When I started talking to the staff at the booth I found one thing oddly wrong. They kept mentioning, "10 foot wide paved path" and "nature". Does a paved, leveled and bulldozed wide path really equal nature? In mind it is as far from nature one could get.

Please do the right thing and do not wreck nature! Keep the pavement out of the flood plan!

Thank you,

Ryan Heidcamp
Bloomington resident

P. S. I know Saint Peter has given up on campground space and trails because of river flooding. How do you plan to outsmart other cities that have failed in the past?

The Minnesota River Valley in the metro area is a unique resource that needs more access and development so the public can enjoy and utilize the resource. In addition to the river and its flood plain lakes the river valley has several trout streams including a naturally reproducing brown trout stream, boiling springs, calcareous fens with extremely rare flowers and plants, a diverse wildlife population including many nesting pairs of bald eagles and more than 20,000 acres of park and open space. Once completed the trail system along either side of the river in the metro area will be more than 100 miles long. I applaud Bloomington administration and staff for acquiring the property along the river to maintain the continuity of the open space system.

One of the serious threats to this resource is the change to the river as a result of agricultural land use in the watershed upstream of the metro area. Agricultural drainage, increased row cropping and changes in precipitation have more than doubled runoff from the watershed which causes stream bank scour, widening of the river channel to carry increased river flows and increased sediment loads. After a recent flood the Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge found that up to four feet of sediment had been deposited on their trail system requiring extensive maintenance. So I recommend that one of the highest priorities for the Minnesota River Valley Plan should be the development of a Resource Protection Plan that will preserve this unique resource for generations to come!

Len Kremer, President, Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

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Is there a plan to pave the river trails in Bloomington? I strongly urge against this. The trails are great as they are - a natural treasure. Terrific for hiking or walking dogs.

Thanks,

Scot Wolf

Bloomington MN

Hi,

Please keep the MN river bottoms a natural trail. We have lots of paved trails and not enough natural dirt trails.

Thanks ..... Bill Gartmann

Where will the proposed paved trail be in relation to the current dirt trail?

Is there an overlay map available?

Dale Vaillancourt

Greetings,

Thank you for providing an opportunity to provide feedback about the Minnesota Valley Master Plan. I am unable to attend the open house on June 17th.

I am opposed to the 100 foot corridor of cleared land and creating a paved trail. A paved trail will ruin the natural quality of this trail. I am in favor of improving the natural trails. This trail is hidden gem in Bloomington. Let's advertise that it's there and encourage people to visit. But please keep it the GEM that it is today.

About me: I am a 52 year old married woman who lives in New Hope. Every other weekend year round for the past 12 years, I've spent three (wonderful) hours of my life to do the following: drive 30 minutes to the Minnesota Valley Trails, hike or snowshoe for two hours, then drive home again. I could walk in my neighborhood for two hours, but I spend an extra hour to drive to and from the MN Valley Trails. It's worth it to me because it's like being deep in the woods. I LOVE THE TRAILS!

I park at Bloomington Ferry Bridge, Lyndale, Mound Springs, and Old Cedar Ave Bridge and have walked the enter length of the trail from Bloomington Ferry Bridge to Bass Ponds. Did I already mention that I LOVE THE TRAILS!

I have also visited Elm Creek, Hyland, and French Parks. I'm a fan of MN State Parks. I visit Ft. Snelling and William O'Brien frequently. Our family has visited about 50 of the 77 MN State Parks and our goal is to visit all of them.

I read a lot of material about this plan so that I could be fully informed, including the following:

- Minnesota River Valley Master Plan including all of the documents provided there
- "Save the River Bottoms" Facebook page
- HR 1168 Current Version – 1st Engrossment, 3/23/15

I didn't complete the survey because it wasn't addressing the issues I want to address.

Additional comments:

1) I read that the key goals of the plan are:
- Enhance access
- Increase awareness
- Improve utilization
- Ensure protection and preservation

2) One concern I have not seen anywhere else is: What about the hunters? The Wilkie Unit is across the river from Bloomington Ferry Bridge. If we increase the number of people who use these trails, will their presence conflict with the needs of the hunters? What about the safety of the trail users? (I get a bit nervous when I hear rifle shots across the river.)

3) The paved path will be expensive -- $500,000 per mile times 20 miles = $10 million dollars, plus maintenance in years to come. It would cost much less to improve and maintain the existing natural trails (bridges, boardwalks, etc).

4) I support the goals of increasing awareness of this great resource we have in the metro area. I support new facilities such as better parking, restrooms, bicycle pump stations, water fountains, etc. I don't NEED these things – I will continue to use the trail without them -- but these things may encourage new people to use the trails and I'm for that.

5) I agree with many of the comments made in the **Minnesota River Valley Master Plan Focus Group Meeting on July 22, 2014 from 4-6 p.m.** **These people said it well so I will borrow their comments. They echo my feelings on this subject.**

- Dennis: Bituminous is not a good surface for cross country skiing and the people with snow shoes would not use a paved trail either. I think a natural surface trial would be the best for everyone. I've talked with bikers and hikers and families and they go to the valley **for the natural experience, because they feel like they are a million miles away. They are not looking for another paved trail.**

- Matt: **ADA does not require that all facilities be designed and accessible for all people**. It is only done where it is practical. I support access for people with disabilities but the idea of a paved trail through the whole length of the river does not seem necessary. I see a great opportunity from Cedar to Fort Snelling. I don't think this should be an all or nothing proposition.

- Dennis: There are not current numbers available for usage of the trail as it is now. There are loads of people that already use the trails. The FWS don't have a great deal of money to maintain and patrol it as it. Without MORC volunteering to do some of the work, it might not be available. **Paved trails will be in very rough shape in 5 years. Not every trail needs to be like Lanesboro**, we don't need to approach it as a cookie cutter plan.

- Tim: **We also need to keep climate change into account as we think decades out. What about extreme weather events and flooding.**

- Matt: (Regarding flooding.) As a 25 year user, we see many spring floods with lots of sediment**. Other state trails do not have this same challenge and the topography is different so it should be treated differently.**

- Tim: Are you going to manage it is a **wildlife reserve with a little bit of development** or a **park and hope for the best in terms of keeping the preserve.**

- Questions for City Staff or topics that didn't get touched on:
    - Larry: If you want to create more public interest, spend more money, offer bus tours to the 3 current trailheads so you can **expose people to the river valley and the existing trail.**

    - Dennis: The MN River Valley trail **is already a destination trail**. We would like to improve user conflicts **but in the long run its draw is its natural environmental feel.** There are access points we could have for ADA and other ones for biking. You wouldn't want a paved trail next to the swampy area. A lot of kids want the adventure, go run around in the woods, not a paved trail, that is boring for kids.

    - **Julie: Take away message of be careful about the amount of development and preserve the natural. This is a special place; don't move too fast to change because you can't get it back.**

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments.

Karen Brehmer

New Hope MN

Hi There,

I have lived on the bluff of the MN River for the last 25 years and consider your intentions to pave a road parallel to the river along the bank to be a stunningly foolish idea not to mention waste of my tax payer money.

Let me review just a few of the reasons for this political joke...

* the paved road will be under water if not every year then at least maybe every other year.

* the paved road will be under snow for about a third of every year.

*the paved road will be just one more disfigurement of the remaining natural area

*the paved road will require large ongoing taxpayer monies for upkeep until another group of politicians down the road finally realize it was a boondoggle and shut it down. (come on now, you can publicize the projected costs)

*the paved trail with require motorized security, sanitation services,...$$

My guess is that those who you advocate to use this new paved road will only have maybe 3 or 4 months a year to take advantage of it.

It will also be of little enjoyment to wheel chair users during the summer because of the swarms of flies and mosquitos. Rep Lenczewski will surely back me up on this one. While I have not personally seen her down there, I'll bet that she will say that she has to keep up a fairly frantic pace as she does her weekly jogging and mountain biking(or so she says) to keep the cloud of bugs behind her head from catching her.

Once again. Stupid decision. The trails down there are fantastic. You ought to go down and try them out.

John Van Eendenburg

Bloomington MN

To whom it may concern,

I am concerned about the proposal on paving the Minnesota River trail. There should be a user study to see who all uses the trail and their opinion about it. Many people use the trail to get in touch with nature. Many animals make nests and dens along the river that would be disrupted if a paved trail went though. Current user groups include hikers, birders, fishers, hunters, cyclists, skiers, snowshoe users. They all enjoy the trail as is and would be disappointed to loose such a wonderful area. Paving a trail will not protect the environment due to all the equipment needed to pave a trail, how many trees will need to be removed so that the equipment can get through, and all the chemicals that will be introduced to the area from tar or other paved surface materials. The power line project hit a small area but that area was practically stripped for the project leaving a vast barren area for years.

There will be a great cost to maintaining the trail, currently it is kept up by volunteers require no money from tax payers in the area. Installing a paved trail down there would cost a lot of money specially with some of the bridges that would be needed. Keeping it safe for trail users will also cost a lot. There are many trees that may fall on the trail after a storm or roots that would disrupt a smooth surface. After the river floods there would be a lot of sediment to remove and possible damage from the trail bed being washed away. Look at Black Dog Rd, and the Shakopee trail to see what happens after a flood. It would be a waste of tax payers money to try and fight the river year after year.

I enjoy the river trail in its current condition taking my family on walks and bike rides through the area. We are able to see wildlife up close from the trail that probably be scared away if paving was done in the area. There are many old growth trees as well that would be a shame to lose because there was no other way for the trail to go.

Please rethink paving the river bottoms.

Saundra Riha

Hello,

I played the golf course last week with my father as Dwan GC was full. First time I've played there in years and the improvements in foot golf and the new driving range were great.

I read the study information carefully and one compromise option not mentioned was keeping the golf course and only redevelop the unused space along Normandale Blvd, which was the old driving range. As the study information stated high density senior housing is doing well. This could be a unique, one of a kind, housing development for senior golfers.

Revenue from the development may not close the golf course's operating deficit, but it could close the gap to a manageable level for the citizens of Bloomington, and preserve one of Bloomington's many great assets.

Thank you,

Tim Vitters

Bloomington, MN

P.S. Don't pave the River Bottoms!!!

Hi,

As a long time user of this trail system I am against the paving of a trail system in this area.

It will change the natural character of area and add higher costs for construction and on going maintenance.

This area has back flooded a number of times and would destroy a paved trail. There are trees that regularly fall and block trail.

Duane K.

Dear Bloomington Parks,

Please don't pave trails in the River Bottoms. If is such a beautiful natural area. Not every trail needs to be paved.

Thanks,

Kurt Franke

Hello and happy Wednesday,

I won't be able to attend tonight MNRV Master Plan meeting, however I wanted to take a moment to voice my thoughts just the same. Your time is much appreciated.

Overall I think the plan/idea to pave the MN River Valley trail is a very poor idea. Paving the trail would be a waste of money. It isn't supported (to date there are over 3,000 signatures supporting the trail stay natural verses 600 supporting paving it). This is my biggest point of contention. This idea doesn't have the public support yet it seems that some want to push this through anywhere. Certainly there are times when politicians must make a stand and do what is right even if the public doesn't support it for the great good of humanity. This is not one of those times.

The area frequently floods. A paved trail would mean more repairs and more money to keep it in decent condition. As someone who has assisted with off-road trail building and repair for the last 15 years I feel like I pretty good understanding of how relatively easy it is to rebuild and repair a natural trail. Often it just takes a small group of people and certainly fewer tools than it would take to repave an area. It would be less expensive too.

On a personal note the Minnesota River Bottoms is a very Minnesotan place. It is uniquely Minnesotan. One of the best parts of the Twin Cities area is how natural it is. Flying into MSP I am always reminded of this. It is a metro area but everything is so green and beautiful. Covering a part of this with pavement would be shame.

Thank you for reading through my thoughts regarding the MNRV Master Plan.
Your time is appreciated.

Jamie

Hi Julie and Randy,

I thought it would be a good thing for the City to have full discloser about the MN River Valley Master Plan before the open house so attached is a link to the comments on the petition. The petition has now grown to over 3,400 signatures in opposition to a paved trail. As I have said before please read the comments because it still is very clear that the message is not just from the mountain biking community but form many voice around the whole state of Minnesota. Please share these comments at the open house.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B82xeo6gvMWvQThjYWd0Q00yMHM/edit?usp=docslist_api

Petition link: https://www.change.org/p/bloomington-mn-city-council-stop-the-plan-to-put-a-paved-trail-in-the-minnesota-river-valley-between-the-bloomington-ferry-bridge-and-the-old-cedar-avenue-bridge

Thank You,

Dennis.

Why pave the riverbottoms when we have so little left of our natural resources to explore and enjoy??

Are you prepared to deal with the consequences of altering the natural shorelines of our River? We already have polluted so much of our water, removing the natural barrier is only going to make matters worse.

I sincerely hope you do the right thing - and leave well enough alone!

Re: Minnesota River Valley Master Plan

Dear Bloomington City Council Members,

The Minnesota State Council on Disability (MSCOD) was established in 1973 to advise the governor, state agencies, state legislature, and the public on disability policy. MSCOD advocates for policies and programs that advance the rights of Minnesotans with disabilities.

Approximately 20% of Minnesota's population is made up of people with disabilities, a number that is increasing as the populace ages and lives more productive lives.

MSCOD is in strong support of Resolution number 2015-3 that received unanimous support by you on January 5, 2015. It has been brought to our attention that there has been discussion to not create the dual track corridor that includes create a fully accessible trail. People with disabilities make up a valuable part of Minnesota society and to exclude anyone from the Minnesota Valley State Trail is unacceptable.

Sincerely,

Joan Willshire

Minnesota State Council on Disability

I would like to share that I am a trail runner on the MN River Valley Trails, doing so about once a week in the summer. I enjoy the natural surface trail, and the feeling of seclusion while on the trail.

Current Use of This Area:

Something disturbs me about why this area is so sparsely used. Shouldn't there be more people enjoying this gem? Am I one of the lucky few that get to cross Nine Mile Creek over a makeshift bridge or raft? The proximity to the refuge was actually one of the main draws for me to make my home here.

I worry about Nature Deficit Disorder. Once they hit a certain age, youth might trade in their trips to the Park for a Snapchat session or video games. The continued support of Minnesota's conservation values depends on our children experiencing areas like these. Sure, they might find out about the natural surface trails from a friend's invitation to ride bikes with them, but we're missing a huge opportunity. If paved, many more grandparents and parents would be able to access this trail, along with their children, opening up a whole new, undiscovered area for them, that many will want to continually explore.

Trail Surface: Paved vs. Unpaved:
Several portions of the river bottoms have conditions that are obstructive to a paved trail. A paved trail may not make perfect sense in some portions of the river bottoms, due to the higher maintenance that would result. However, despite a higher maintenance cost, paved trails will be important to getting more user groups to access the trail. Paved trails will be most important at areas closest to Refuge access points. I only go into the refuge when I am alone, as the trail conditions do not allow for me to bring along my two small children in their stroller or wagon.

Trail Easement Area: As i understand it, the easements that will be acquired will be dual (paved & natural) trail easements. Though a natural trail may have a designated course within this area, the City should not prohibit other makeshift trails from being used. I am a large proponent of natural areas & species diversity, and would be willing to assist with a solution to allow for additional trails to be developed while protecting native species.

Trail Location: Development of a trail along the slope of the bluff or the saturated area at the immediate bottom of the bluff is not advisable, unless it is the best option for a trail. This is especially true for a paved trail. I tried to traverse an area this spring that may have been near maintenance road M1. The soils were very saturated and installation of a path there may have detrimental effects, especially when factoring in tree/brush removal and increased traffic.

I**nclusion of recreational trails in ATP:** Recreational trails, even if they all do not result in a more expedient mode of getting from point A to point B, have a rightful place in the ATP. The ATP is developed to "better serve the transportation needs of individuals and families living, working, and recreating in Bloomington." The ATP is also "In Support of Active Health and Healthy Living." (Draft ATP, Section 2: Vision & Values).
Sure, we could rename the ATP to fit in all of the objectives this plan accomplishes, but the Alternative Transportation, Asset Maintenance, Healthy Communities, & Placemaking Plan (ATAMHCPP) doesn't have quite the same ring to it.

City-Funded Vegetation Maintenance: This area has long been neglected by the City, and the need to provide dedicated funds for removal of stinging nettles and invasive species is needed. There are several unique plant communities in this area, and a small amount of maintenance can go a long way to ensure diversity levels are maintained or improved back to historic conditions. The 2005 Natural Resource Inventory by Hennepin County is a valuable resource.

Additional Access to The Refuge: The City should look into an exception, allowing bike traffic from the Queen Ave. access point directly to the Refuge. Additional access points between T1 and A1 should be considered.

Dave Rickert

Bloomington, MN

Hello,

I found out about the River Bottoms last year, and I wish I could have made it there sooner. It is one of my favorite places in the Twin Cities and truly a unique treasure like nowhere else.

Please keep this unique place natural and allow me and my family to use it for years to come. I work for Best Buy Corporate and often times go down after work and then stop in at 98lbs Buffet to eat. I run and bike and have never found the lack of pavement an issue.

Bryan Jacobson
Minnetonka, MN

Hello Council Members, Julie, and Randy,

I just wanted to give you a follow up after the MN River Valley Master Plan Open House last Wednesday. I have been talking with many people that attended the Minnesota River Valley Master Plan Open House. It seems that many now have more questions after the meeting than before. This highlights the fact that this issue needs much more information disclosed to make any final decision. Also, without the plan from the DNR this should not move forward with approval. I ask that the City remain consistent and require a full plan with maintenance included before moving forward with approval of this master plan.

The DNR should have been at the Open House. It is very troubling that the DNR does not even given rough estimates even at this point. You can easily get estimates from Three River Parks on paved trails ($528,000 per mile, yearly maintenance $5,702) and even our own City can come up with rough estimates. Please view this youtube clip https://youtu.be/Ca7LDEHihbU of Senate testimony of a DNR official stating that they estimate $100,000 per mile for rehabilitation of existing paved trails. The DNR has an estimate for the asset rehabilitation of current trails but does not have a estimate for Bloomington? The 2.18 million is nowhere near enough to do a paved trail or two trails as people have been told. This also does not give any estimates for the second natural trail which is being proposed? The full cost and full maintenance price for this project should be disclosed before Bloomington moves forward with any approval of a master plan.

On another note the Resolution of Support is being used as a tool to say that Bloomington is fully behind this project. We were told at the council meeting by Council Member Baloga that the resolution was only to allow the DNR to start the process of studying the area. If this was truly the case then the study is not complete.

Examples of questions from people that attended the meeting. FYI, you had quite a few attendees that were angry at the end of this open house.

The City estimates for the paved trail do not match up with other agencies cost estimates and other experts on paved surfaces. Full discloser from the DNR must be required.

Maintenance will be a very large part of this plan. The is a flood plain! Do not overlook this fact. This trail will be very expensive to tax payers. It cannot be “just swept off” and there is quite a few examples of this in other areas where a paved trail is in constant need of maintenance.

The US Fish and Wildlife representatives told people at the meeting that they will only allow one trail on their property. This again is inconsistent with the master plan.

Our Bloomington Representative said that there is language for a two trail system in the legislation but we citizens don’t see it because it’s in supportive documentation?! We know that the legislation provision that was recently passed only says paved trail, not two trails. Note: we have requested the legal supporting documentation that shows legislation with two trails or legal language showing this.

If the paved trail goes in and we have a flood the trail based on current repair time frames from the DNR could be closed for a long periods of time. This is not access, this is closing access. The current trail gets open up by the mountain bike volunteers within a week or two.

The ADA part of this plan could have compromises that can be workable for people with those needs such as loops or sections that are not so damaged by flooding. The whole area does not need a paved trail it seems foolish to spend all that money when it could be used for so many other areas that are in current need.

My favorite and I know at least ten families that moved into Bloomington because of the trail that exists now. Quote: “We moved to Bloomington because of the current trail. It was the reason why we chose Bloomington, very disappointing”.

In Conclusion. Bloomington has to be consistent to the citizens by requiring a full plan by the DNR that is public for all to see and review with open houses and etc. At this point this master plan should not move forward without full details. Our city does a great job of requiring developments, park remodels, street projects, and so many other projects with full details before passing any plans. This project is no different and should have the same requirements with full discloser to the residents of Bloomington and citizens of Minnesota.

Dennis Porter

The MN River Bottoms are a destination as they are for what they are - a slice of nature in the middle of the city. Visitors whether on foot or on bike appreciate them because of the natural feel that a paved trail would destroy. Paved trails are great within the city where there is existing infrastructure such as near streets or in rail corridors but the River Bottoms should be kept natural. On top of that, the annual flooding would be extremely hard on the trail and lead to a poor quality surface and high maintenance costs.

Please listen to the current users of the area and do not place a paved trail in the Bottoms.

Thanks,

Daniel Iverson

St Paul, MN

Hello, just a short note to state my thoughts on what I understand is the current plan regarding the further development of the multiuse trail on the USFWS & Bloomington land along the MN River.

The assumption I am operating on is that language is inserted in the Bill which authorized some or all of the funding that states the trail must be paved.

I lived in Bloomington from 1989 to 2005 at [redacted] (near where France Ave ends at the River). Due to proximity I began to use the basically undeveloped river bottoms for hiking, trail running, off road motor cycling (yes I know that is illegal), snow shoeing, and cross country skiing at times, but the most dominant activity for me was off road cycling - sometimes even year round depending on snow conditions. This is because if you've ever spent time down there you'd quickly realize that it is an activity that makes a lot of sense as you must keep moving during most of the year to stay ahead of the bugs!

Due to my growing interest in offroad cycling, I eventually joined various off road cycling groups and ended up being a steward of the trail for many years working closely with mostly Randy Quale at the city of Bloomington and others at the USFWS in completing basic maintenance of the trail, signage, etc. This was very rewarding work. I also want to make sure I mention that off road cycling in the relatively remote and isolated (for a metro area) river valley is a very rejuvenating experience which I value highly. I am currently introducing my young family to this area.

It is my personal and professional opinion (I'm a professional engineer) based on those years of observing the river valley through the seasons and over the years that while it may be technically feasible to construct a paved trail in some of the areas that this trail is proposed to traverse, most of the terrain and soil conditions are not suitable for the lasting construction of something so rigid and in-flexible as a bituminous paved trail (which is what is being proposed). I would like to see the opinion (if there is one) of technical people in the USFWS or other entity that states this plan makes structural and economic sense. On the contrary, a natural surface trail with improved water crossings at Ninemile creek and other streams could make sense as it would "weather" the seasons and seasonal flooding better and be more economically repaired. Conversely, if the trail was constructed on higher ground or constructed in an elevated manner maybe paving would work but this is not what is being proposed (and may cost more money).

I also want to relate my interactions with USFWS in the 90's where the then refuge manager stated to me that the development of ANY trail in the river valley was "inconsistent" with the mission of the USFWS which today is stated as: "The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people." My recollection at that time was that the refuge manager said activities consistent with the refuge were protecting wildlife and promoting the enjoyment of same. He felt off-road cycling (and trail development at all) was inconsistent with either one (his opinion, not mine) so I wonder how the plan being proposed could even pass this test today? My opinion is that trail development can be consistent when you apply "benefit of the American people" part and I believe I enjoy wildlife while cycling in the refuge, I believe the current basic trail does not impact the fish, wildlife plants or habitats. I wider more substantial trail would.

So, my request is that the plan which is developed considers the needs of both current users and potential new users without favoring one over the other, and that it makes economic or fiscal sense. My opinion is that a paved trail does not make fiscal sense and it has not considered the opinions of the existing users adequately.

Thank you for listening.

Steven C Eberly, PE

Hello,

I am a current user of the Minnesota River Bottoms Trail. I primarily ride mountain bikes down there almost all year round even in the winter. I have also done snowshoeing down there in the winter. I absolutely love how peaceful it is

down there. I have been able to watch deer from a rather close distance while out snowshoeing in the winter. In the fall and spring, I especially enjoy the sandy trail and watching eagles and hoping for a chance to spot a beaver. I especially love that this trail as a single track mountain bike trail has helped me to meat some great friends and introduced many women especially to mountain biking. This area has me considering other hobbies of photography and birding and if you pave through this area, that won't happen.

I have many concerns regarding the plan to pave a trail through this flood plain.
1. There has not been a trail user study. The agencies involved and Rep Lenczewski are opposed to any user study. They don’t want information like how many users, what type of users, and why they are using the area! Why? Because they don’t want any legitimate information that would show how popular the area currently is to derail the plans to develop the area and pave the trail.
2. Full disclosure of the true price tag of a paved trail and cost concerns. The DNR has yet to publish full trail plans with costs to develop and maintain. No plan should be approved until these costs are fully disclosed to the public.
3. Negative environmental impacts of a large scale paved trail project on the natural environment and the user experience. I love the very large trees and the natural beauty of this area. Clear cutting through this area would ruin the habit for the birds that I often see people out there watching. I also wonder about run off and erosion risk as trees and vegetation are removed for pavement. I would like to see more information regarding environmental impact studies that have been done.

Thank you,
Sarah Andersen
Current resident of Eden Prairie, frequent user of the Minnesota River Bottoms Trail

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The Minnesota River Valley is perhaps the most significant and loved wilderness and near wilderness experience in Bloomington and the southwest metro. It will be important to protect that feel so that our young people have ready access to such magic and our broader community can access that experience. As we consider development of trails and other uses, I think our primary concern should be to not displace that sense of wilderness.

A big issue is the Minnesota River Trail, and further development of it. This can be great, but only if we are careful regarding alignment and surface etc.

I have been involved in a lot of park and trail planning over the past few years in my role representing Bloomington, Eden Prairie and Richfield on the Three Rivers Park District Board. When it comes to trails, whether at the river bottoms or elsewhere, I have come to think that the sound policy is:

“put the right type of trail in the right location"". I think this can serve as a useful lens through which to view trail development.

Paved Trails. In Bloomington, we have scores of miles of paved bike trails, paved multi-use trails and paved designated bike lanes. These are located throughout the city - in parks, neighborhoods, throughways and transportation corridors. They are the result of a combination of Three Rivers Park District, City of Bloomington, Hennepin County and state and federal resources and efforts, and they are something to be proud of.

For its part, Three Rivers has independently and in collaboration with various agencies developed paved trails through Hyland Park, helped establish paved bike paths and lanes in the West Bloomington area connecting Hyland Park trails to

the Minnesota River trails to the south and, soon, the Nine Mile trails to the north, and is currently developing the Inter City Regional Trail from Minneapolis, through Richfield and East Bloomington and, ultimately, the Minnesota River trails.

Natural Trails. Three Rivers has also established natural trails throughout its West Suburban focus area including natural hiking trails at Hyland Park in Bloomington and natural bike trails in several locations outside of the Bloomington area. Among others, the natural bike trails include the single track mountain biking trails at Elm Creek Park Reserve in Maple Grove and Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve in Scott County. With the advancement of technology and the onset of high school mountain biking, the demand for natural mountain bike and fat tire bike trails is growing fast.

Three Rivers does not provide any natural bike trails in Bloomington. In fact, there really is only one natural bike trail in Bloomington – the multiuse Minnesota River Valley Trail. It is in the perfect location: a river bottoms area that floods at least one time nearly every year and self-renews. It is unique. The "raw" nature of it (rather than asphalt or asphalt-adjacent) makes it special. The natural surface of it attracts users and respects the river environment and habitat. The trail is a great one and loved by many. It is truly unique in this metro area. It works for people who bicycle, it works for people hiking, it works for bird-watching - and it has many entry points, making it accessible throughout our city: East, Central and West. With improved bridges, culvert work, and some carefully considered paved loops to further enhance accessibility, it will be even more outstanding.

Without care, paving trails in the Minnesota Valley can be a subtraction for Bloomington and the region. If not done judiciously it could actually displace much of the current and future use. If the unique wilderness character is lost, that unique natural character of the river bottoms is lost forever. The reward, more paved trails, will not bring a material increase in the overall amount of paved trails available in Bloomington. But the cost, in dollars and the experience, could be high.

As plans get made, we should avoid adding excessive pavement to the wildlife areas and natural trails if the effect of such addition is to actually eliminate some other experience or offering. Paving has a place if it enhances accessibility through on-ramps, for example, and perhaps manageable, appropriate length loops. But paving would not be appropriate everywhere, and likely not for the entire length.

In our planning and stewardship of the Minnesota River Valley in Bloomington, and MN River State Trail in particular, let's not lock in to any one surface or idea. Rather, let's take care to involve users, agency experts, environmental scientists, community members and policymakers and let's build consensus around alignment, surface and purposes and work to assure the right trails in the right places.

I look forward to helping.

John Gibbs

Commissioner, Three Rivers Park District

District 5

DATE: October 7, 2015

TO: Tim Bodeen
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
[redacted]

RE: Minnesota River Valley, Bloomington Trails

I find it disturbing when a few ill-informed people make decisions on the advice of a few ill-informed people on matters which they are mostly ignorant at best. Specifically, I am referring to trails in the Minnesota River Valley – trails that are closed by Federal, State or City "naturalists" who rarely, if ever, use these trails and do not understand trail dynamics. They make their decisions on recommendations by a few people with only their selfish interests as logic.

Going back about 15 years, the Federal government acquired the Kelly tract in Bloomington, below the National Wildlife Refuge. I wrote letters to help make this happen – to connect existing Federal land. 3 generations of my family hunted ducks in the Kelly tract, in what was the Long Meadow Gun Club. A couple of years after acquiring this land, the Refuge realized that the Kelly trail went near an active eagles' nest. Most people, except naturalists, know that nesting eagles readily tolerate humans, but the Refuge closed the trail from February 1st to July 1st (a bit excessive) to limit the eagles' association with people. The Refuge did this for about 5 years, until another equally ignorant person guessed that soaring eagles might be a hazard to airplanes at MSP. This resulted in the hazing of at least this nest and 2 other eagles' nests, using shotguns, so that the eagles would not nest too close to the airport. But, thankfully, the eagles have again re-nested in the area, in different trees, and are easily tolerating humans. No eagle has brought down an airplane to date.

In 2002, Bloomington decided to close the Old Cedar Bridge as a trail – a decision by a small group of ill-informed City officials who didn't want to take responsibility for something they did not use and were unwilling to maintain. To close the Bridge they desecrated or vandalized both ends of an historically significant landmark by removing about 30 to 40 feet of decking, for which I feel the City should be assessed a fine, payable to the Federal government and appropriated for the Bridge's restoration.

One or more civil engineers "theorized" that the bridge could possibly fall under its own weight, thus justifying the bridge's closing for 14 years. I have lived nearly 3 quarters of a century, so for 20% of my life I have been deprived of walking across that bridge due to one or more ignorant decision makers.

Finally, some wiser heads decided to restore the Bridge, which should have remained open for these past 13 years. And, money for the expansion of the Mall of America **was contingent** upon money for restoring the Bridge, and therefore, the bridge should have been restored **before** any Mall of America expansion – and it was not! **Shame on Bloomington!** The Bridge needs to be owned and managed by the Federal government and Bloomington should have no say whatsoever in its management, unless it is to maintain access to Old Cedar Avenue or to maintain the parking lot at the end of Old Cedar Avenue.

This summer, Centerpoint Energy(?) put in a new pipeline below Nicollet(?) Avenue in Bloomington out to the Minnesota River. So, for 4 months Bloomington needlessly closed the Bluff Trail from Parker's Picnic Park at the "end" of Portland Avenue to the pipeline below Nicollet(?) Avenue, depriving runners, hikers and bikers a mile of perhaps the best, most scenic trail in the metro area, unspoiled by over-development and asphalt.

And now, and for seemingly no **good** reason, the Federal government has closed the Bluff Trail in Bloomington from 11th Avenue to Old Cedar Avenue; again one mile of perhaps the best, most scenic trail in the metro area, unspoiled by over-development and asphalt. Will it remain closed until the bridge renovation is finished sometime next fall, and after the best trail use seasons?

Sadly, the Minnesota River Valley has a history of ill-spent taxpayer money, from the 50 years of barge traffic that is becoming less and less important, to the block-long wooden foot path in Eagan, across the river from the Kelly tract in Bloomington, that was never finished or used, to the million-dollar drain to the Minnesota River that was recently built in Bloomington between Lyndale Avenue and Hopkins Circle, which has done nothing and has now reverted back to the same drain dynamics that existed 10 years ago.

Additionally, a paved path that is currently being proposed in the Bloomington *Minnesota River Valley* would get little intended use, destroy the un-improved charm of the current trail, be covered by sand from flooding within 2 years and be under-maintained, as the current trails are.

Until last year, when I cleared perhaps just 60% of the Bloomington Bluff Trail deadfall from Old Cedar Avenue to Hopkins Circle, due to the enormity of the task. I typically clear perhaps 90% of the Bluff Trail deadfall from Old Cedar Avenue to Hopkins Circle – using a manual hand saw. I often do this after waiting a week or 2 for the trail maintenance crew(s) that never comes. By mid-summer the trails are closed in by growth and nettle, which never gets cleared back, except sometimes by MORC ("Minnesota Off-Road Club" for bikes) to the west of Portland Avenue.

In conclusion, do not close good trails needlessly due the ill-advised whim of an ignorant person(s) who has no actual appreciation of this remarkable trail system that is older than all of us. Just this summer I found an 1889 penny, possibly lost over 100 years ago on the Bluff Trail.

Also, the proposed paved Bloomington *Minnesota River Trail* would destroy the scenic, unimproved charm of the existing trail, would be avoided by runners, hikers and mountain bikers alike, and would be a totally immoral waste of money.

Sincerely,

George Kittell

George Kittell
[redacted]
Richfield, MN [redacted]

Enclosures:

* The Old Cedar Bridge
* It's Not My Job

Copies:

Senior Ranger, Ft. Snelling State Park
101 Snelling Lake Rd.
St. Paul, MN 55111

Randy Quale, Manager, Bloomington Parks and Recreation
City of Bloomington
1800 W. Old Shakopee Rd.
Bloomington, MN 55431-3027

Tim Lies, President
Friends of the Minnesota Valley
P.O. Box 20697
Bloomington, MN 55420

Rep. Ann Lenczewski, District 40B
10306 Humboldt Circle
Bloomington, MN 55431

IT'S NOT MY JOB

The trail which we hike is 3 miles and ½ –
Below a big bluff where we trek using staffs;
At times there are windstorms and ill-fated trees,
And who clears this path? – I don't know – but not me.

'Cept early last summer this hill trail was dammed,
And 1 week, and 2 weeks … we crawled 'round these jams –
So where were the sawyers and loggers, I thought –
The services, City and Fed, taxes bought?

Hence, one Sunday PM we cut short our hike –
Outfitted with pruners and saws and the like,
And we worked on the trail – an hour and ½ –
Below a big bluff where we trek using staffs.

And now this hill path, all its 3-point-5 miles,
Was totally clear, though it took us awhile;
But then came July and a whale of a storm –
The eastern most mile of this trail was transformed.

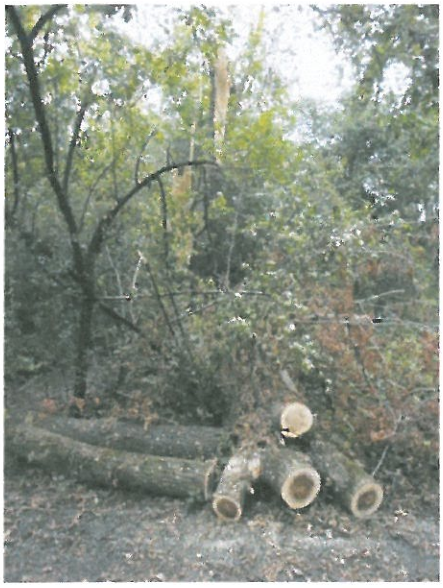
And 1 week, and 2 weeks … we crawled 'round these jams –
And where were the sawyers and loggers for dams?
The services, City and Fed, taxes bought
Should maintain this popular path, should they not?

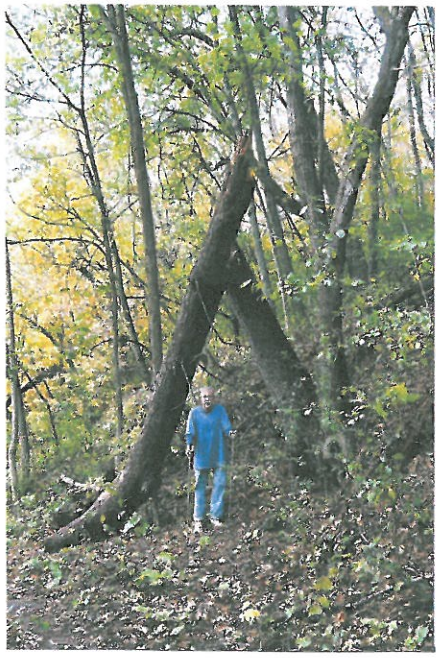
By now it was August – a month did we crawl –
Some over and under, aside of these falls,
But per my strange nature, so far can I bend –
Till I had enough and these dams I'd attend.

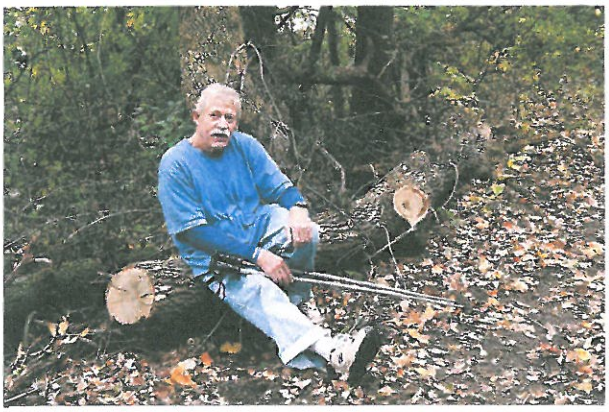
I worked 4 days straight – 2-plus hours a day,
And 20 some jams did my wit and saw weigh;
I worked in the nettle, mosquitoes and heat –
And often perplexed were the hikers I'd meet.

Some saw in me merit, to others one cracked,
A task for a chain saw one straps to one's back;
But now when I hike these 3 miles and ½
I look at my cuts and I silently laugh.

G. Kittell
Feb 2014







THE OLD CEDAR BRIDGE

There is a place I like to go,
To hike the Minnesota flow,
And see biota live and grow,
And give my life some time that's slow.

There is a bridge that takes me where
The lakes and sky and trees are fair,
And free as birds which fill the air,
And still the earth, and not a care.

A bridge that's built of thick steel beams
To deal with trucks with loads extreme,
Which men bestrode so they could dream,
And stood and watched as eagles scream.

I've hiked along our western coast
And churned the paths of which they boast,
And paid with blisters fine as most,
And lined some runnels post to post.

I've risked my bones on countless vales –
Excessive, 'side this bridge so hale,
And though this path makes others pale,
Others chose to rend this trail.

And lives are sad when just a few
Entrust some wisdom ill-thought through,
Which brought to end an avenue
Of birds and sky and peace hereto.

G. Kittell
2003

IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA
MINNESOTA VALLEY CHAPTER
[redacted]

Mayor Gene Winstead and City Council

City Hall

1800 West Old Shakopee Road

Bloomington, MN 55431-3027

Dear Mayor Winstead & City Council Members

The Minnesota Valley Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America is the major private landowner in Bloomington's Minnesota River Valley. As such, the river bottomland owned by the Chapter is an essential portion of the route of the proposed Minnesota Valley State Trail between Bloomington Ferry and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center in east Bloomington, a trail that has recently been funded by the Minnesota State Legislature.

Since the trail must traverse Chapter-owned land, the Chapter is an indispensable partner in the development of this valley trail through the City of Bloomington. Therefore, the Chapter has approved the attached position statement regarding the Minnesota Valley State Trail.

The attached statement indicates that the Chapter intends to support the development of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources planned multiuse surfaced trail through the City of Bloomington. The Chapter believes this type of trail is what is needed to provide appropriate recreational access to the river valley and to provide connectivity for the south metro trail system. With the increased use of the river valley provided by this trail, there will be greater appreciation and awareness of the river and support for improved conservation management of the Minnesota River. The Chapter will prohibit on its land, the development of a single-track natural surfaced State Trail being recommended by the mountain bike community.

Sincerely,

Stan Danielson

Chapter President

CC: City Manager - Mark Bernhardson, Randy Quale - Park and Recreation Manager

Cynthia Wheeler - Project Manager, DNR, Division of Parks and Trails

Tim Bodeen - Refuge Manager, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Manager

IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA
MINNESOTA VALLEY CHAPTER

[redacted]

POSITION OF THE MINNESOTA VALLEY CHAPTER OF THE IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA REGARDING THE MINNESOTA VALLEY STATE TRAIL

APPROVED - NOVEMBER 5, 2014

As the largest private land owner in Bloomington's Minnesota River Valley, the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Valley Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America have adopted the following position regarding the proposed DNR Minnesota Valley State Trail that is proposed to cross Chapter property.

In granting a Minnesota Valley State Trail right-of-way across the property owned by the Minnesota Valley Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America, it is the official position of the Chapter that it will allow only the currently DNR planned dual-track trail corridor across its property that includes a multi-use surfaced trail, that can be used by a wide-variety of trail users, including the handicapped, and an associated single-track natural surface trail within that same corridor.

Furthermore, it is the preference of the Chapter that throughout Bloomington's River Valley and particularly through the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, that for increased access and connectivity, the Minnesota Valley State Trail be a dual track trail corridor that includes a multi-use surfaced trail that can be used by a wide-variety of trail users, including the handicapped, and a separate natural surface single-track trail suitable for mountain bike use. The Chapter opposes a Minnesota Valley State Trail that would only be a single track, natural surface trail that is similar to the existing mountain bike trail that crosses Chapter property without having a legal right-of-way to do so.

RECEIVED

11/20/14

NOV 21 2014

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
Office of the City Council

Dear Bloomington City Council Members,

This letter is regarding the proposed paving of the Minnesota River bottoms, a lovely strip of unaltered land enjoyed by people of all ages, in Bloomington, MN.

Paving the river bottoms is problematic. In springtime when the river floods, an enormous amount of energy is created that would easily buckle and lift the asphalt off the trail necessitating costly yearly repairing/rebuilding at taxpayer expense. One only needs to walk the river bottoms to observe the results of spring flooding. Asphalt is washed out every spring in two sections of the trail along the backwaters from Bloomington Ferry parking up to highway 101. Sections of the trail through Moir Park were devastated this spring by the flooding of a mere creek. They are still not repaired.

The flooding along the river changes the terrain yearly due to large quantities of silt and sand being deposited and large trees carried on the river being left along the way. So, with the yearly changing terrain, the path of the trail is changed too. A new trail is made around the large hills of silt and around the large trees that were deposited in the flooding. Once asphalt is laid, the trail can no longer be moved. It would have to be repaired/rebuilt yearly at great expense. Presently the cost is $0 thanks to we trail users maintaining the trail ourselves. We cut and move limbs and small trees, pick up trash and have even fabricated a bridge from a fallen tree. We don't mind.

I've not talked to one person on the trail or off who is in favor of paving. Presently, young and old enjoy the river bottoms as they are. I've observed people biking, hiking, dog walking, birding and families enjoying an outing with small children in tow. What a great place within the city for children to experience unaltered nature and to "rough it" which they seem to delight in doing. As my 6 year old grandson said when he first saw the river bottoms, "This is so nice. This is so fun."

Let's keep this natural gem and treasure it as it is at no taxpayer expense.

Sincerely,
Linda Eichstadt.
a Bloomington resident
[redacted]

55431

The Friends of the
MINNESOTA VALLEY
State Trail Advocacy Group
[redacted] Bloomington, MN 55431-4013

DEC 11 2014
CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
Office of the City Council

9 December 2014

Mayor Gene Winstead
City Council
City of Bloomington
1800 West Old Shakopee Road
Bloomington, MN 55431-3027

Dear Mayor Winstead:

This is to urge you and the City Council to pass a resolution of support for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources dual-track Minnesota Valley State Trail and to follow that with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that allows the DNR to proceed with the design/planning of the State Trail through city-owned land in the Minnesota Valley.

With the renovation of the historic Old Cedar Ave. Bridge and upgrade of the adjacent trailhead at a potential cost of $17 million this area will be extremely popular to visitors. If this high-quality redevelopment is connected to only a dirt mountain bike trail at the river edge many of these visitors will be greatly disappointed that they will be unable to explore more of the river valley. And the Bloomington "Missing Link" segment will remain.

Not to be forgotten and an important benefit of the dual track MN Valley State Trail will be the very much-increased public awareness of the Minnesota River itself and its conservation needs. So the benefits in the long run are statewide and even beyond to Lake Pepin and the Mississippi River.

Or, you can avoid the political hassle, save the city some money and have one consistent management plan and one set of rules for public use for all the river floodplain within the city by placing <u>all</u> the city-owned river floodplain within the national wildlife refuge by expanding the existing lease the city has with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The wildlife refuge is part of a respected and recognized national system and the refuge staff has training and experience in wild land management and wild land law enforcement something the city will need to provide to more actively manage the river floodplain. As a result of this transfer, the city would retain all the benefits of having a magnificent wild area along its southern border without the cost and responsibility of managing a wild area that is unique to the city park system and thus a challenge to park management. The DNR Minnesota Valley State Trail would then traverse the wildlife refuge.

Sincerely,

Ed Crozier

Ed Crozier
Friends of the Minnesota Valley State Trail Advocacy Group

November 28, 2014
Hi Julie and others,

Here are my comments on the Bloomington River Trail Master Plan.
I'll try to take these in the order you spoke about them at the study session.
1.Signage – Ed Crozier has found an app for cell phones that is just getting started that may work well for the trail. It could cut down on the number of signs needed.
2. City Dump site and necessity for barge to remove. We have to do better than this. This is an eyesore to the present trail and will look worse when the new trail is in. Let's find another way for disposal. It is just plain embarrassing. We want to be proud of our city trail.
3. Parkers's Picnic Grounds. This is bluff area, and we should not be allowing biking on the bluffs. I have hiked here several times, and twice I heard negative comments by neighbors who were hiking about the bikers causing erosion on those trails. Nice natural growth plots on the grounds
4. Hopkins Road path was originally made by the 3rd white people to come to Bloomington, Victor and Rosa Chatell. It is known to us historians as Chatell's Landing, as the early steamboats stopped at river's edge. Chatell came here on authority of Fort Snelling to be the blacksmith for the Dakota villages near here. We know the exact location of the Chatell house and where the blacksmith shop stood, on the high bluff just to the east of Hopkins Road.
5. A bike trail to and stop site at Sorenson Landing at Lyndale Avenue is a good idea.
6. Harrison-Moir. Bad idea to introduce another bike trail, especially in this beautiful valley.
7. The Long Meadow trail from the end of American Blvd is already a crushed rock trail and is a good entry and exit for bikers and hikers.
8. Ceredian Trail would be an entry into the bluff area. Not good idea for biking. This trail now goes to and across the Kelly property and would need some bridging to cross over the marshy area just to the south along the lakeshore. It was once the entry to a house and buildings that stood below Long Meadow Circle. Those foundations are still there. The road itself crosses over a wooden bridge and then up to the house remains. It is covered with a layer of soil, but the road itself is bituminous and much of that remains under the soil. Costly undertaking.
9. Kelly Farm access. There is already a trail from the existing house down to the old bluff road that went from the Bass Ponds to the Long Meadow Gun Club. Again, costly.
10. Keep bikes away from the bluffs. Too much damage resulting in erosion problems.

Councilmember Busse commented about the future cost of maintenance, and Randy Quale made a comment about how the Fish and Wildlife Service probably does a much better job of managing the floodplain. We [Bloomington] already have a management agreement with them for some 400 acres. I'm suggesting that we put our dollars in the parks and playgrounds that we already have and explore putting the rest of our floodplain property in their hands. One manager will be much better for the trail and its users.
The Minnesota Valley Ikes have recently received an appraisal of our floodplain land from the Minnesota Valley Trust, and we will now be considering a sale or an easement for our property.
Sincerely,

Stan

Stan Danielson

[Received via email 11-20-14]

Dear Mr. Batterson, Ms. Bennett, Mr. Fischer, Mr. Goodrum, Mr. Nordstrom, Ms. Spiess and Mr. Willette (planning@bloomingtonmn.gov):

I am writing this in preparation of your review of the suggested draft Minnesota Valley Master Plan ("MVMP"). My biggest concern about the Master Plan is about the safety of a single-track trail being currently used by multiple users (pedestrians and off-road mountain bicyclists) and what the paving of the State Trail will mean to users of the remaining trails as well as the grooming and maintenance of the trails. There have been two bicyclist deaths since 2003, one on a natural River Bottom trail and one on a Hyland Park paved trail, and it's my goal to at least call your attention to this fact along with the current safety concerns of the trails. I plead to all of you for the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists on these trails when making decisions about the MVMP and the City's involvement with the State Trail, City of Bloomington budget allocation, and setting standards for usage of the trails.

1. Trails.

Keep in mind that there are bicycling advocacy groups that have heavily rallied against the paving of the State Trail when reviewing MVMP the "Summary of On-Line Survey Results" ("MVMP Survey") and see references that a majority of Respondents indicated some connection to bicycling organizations. The Summary of On-Line Survey Results resulting in mostly pedestrian use of these trails.

There is currently one multi-use single-track trail (with various offshoots) along the North of Long Meadow Lake ("Bloomington Trail") allowing both bicycles and pedestrians, with the exception of one section of this trail that is part of the Minnesota Wildlife Refuge ("Refuge Trail") and closest to the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge renovation project ("OCAB") and is pedestrian only. Where the Bloomington Trail and Refuge Trail connect is unclear without trail signage, and isn't specifically addressed in the MVMP. This is a big deal right now because mountain bicyclists approach the "no bike" zone and continue on to the OCAB. It is my understanding that the US Fish and Wildlife Service wants to keep Refuge Trail a sanctuary and not allow bicycles along this trail. There is a second proposed undeveloped State Trail along the South of Long Meadow Lake ("State Trail") that is being proposed with two trails, one a hard-surface trail and one a natural-surface trail. Collectively all of these trails may be referred to as "River Bottoms" and please see the attached "Trail Map". These trails have many usages, and the usage definition, boundaries and care and maintenance are very complicated to the general public even with trail head and access point signage, open houses, surveys, and websites. Since the "no-bike" signage at the Refuge Trail and Bloomington Trail connection was recently removed, it is now a free-for-all. Regulations are often ignored on a regular basis even when the signage is in place. I've been passed by mountain bicyclists while on the Refuge Trail when signage was in place. Also, many people are confused about what

paving is being proposed where. The Bloomington Trail is not being paved, and I'm not sure everyone understands this.

I am not an advocate for paving the State Trail nor am I opposed to it. I can see pros and cons to both, however, if paving is going to occur, what will inevitably happen is off-road mountain bicyclists will end up going onto the Refuge Trail and Bloomington Trail in order to get the natural surface they strive for. This will increase the safety risk for both pedestrians and mountain bicyclists. I am an advocate for maintaining the Bloomington Trail as a natural surface.

I have lived in Bloomington for 46 years. I jog/walk these trails 3-5 days a week weather permitting, and I recall the trails as a teenager. I have attended two open houses; participated in the two online surveys regarding transportation and the MVMP; sent several emails to City representatives; spoken to many users of the trails, including some from members of bicycling groups and those attending the open houses/users of the trails; and have had communications with a legislator requesting pedestrian support of these trails.

Most Bloomington resident trail users I have conversed with did not know about the Master Plan. Some did know about the OCAB. See the attached Exhibit A, which is a personal survey I conducted over two months at various times of day while using the trails. You can see that the majority of people I came across are pedestrians as opposed to bicyclists. Again, keep in mind that almost one-half of the Respondents filling out the on-line MVMP Survey were those who don't live in or work in Bloomington.

Although the US Fish and Wildlife Service "Minnesota Valley Comprehensive Conservation Plan" dated 2004 relates specifically to the Refuge Trail, it shows a history of pedestrian/bicyclist issues in the River Bottoms.

2. Old Cedar Avenue Bridge Renovation Residual Effect.

With the City of Bloomington and State Legislature approval of the OCAB, bicycles will be using the new bridge as a gateway to the City, which will, in turn, lead to an increased steady stream of bicyclists commuting to Bloomington, which is an awesome opportunity. This will also include an increase in recreational off-road mountain biking within the River Bottoms. The only direction bicycles will have once they cross the bridge from the South into Bloomington are East to the Hog Back Ridge Trail or up the Old Cedar Avenue hill, but some will inevitably enter the Refuge Trail, which is currently pedestrian only. It is my hope that the Refuge Trail continues to remain bike-free as this is truly the only portion of the trail I feel reasonably safe. Sight lines are good and the single-track trails are wide enough. Signage that used to mark "No bikes" along this trail were recently removed after the controversy over paving started heating up. See "No-Bike Sign Intact" and "No-Bike Sign Removed" photos attached

taken about two months apart in July and September 2014 respectively. City representatives told me at one of the open houses that they were surprised any of these signs were still up because they are usually taken down by someone (not authorized). The impact of this bridge renovation will be great on the surrounding areas which is in direct opposition to statements made in the studies that were done to support this renovation that rehabilitation is not expected to severely impact or disrupt communities or the environment. When the OCAB renovation is completed and brings, say for example a conservative twenty-five new bicycle commuters to the City during any given week, even if you only increase the River Bottom bicycle traffic by five additional off-road bicyclists to the Bloomington Trail you are increasing the safety risks to everyone. I can't stress to you enough that the current multi-use with both off-road mountain bicyclists and pedestrians using the same single-track path on the Bloomington Trail is not safe now and hasn't been safe for years. At this point in time, I haven't seen any studies that indicate how we can tell how much increased pedestrian and bicycle traffic the OCAB renovation will bring into the City from the South.

3. Injuries, Safety and Mountain Bicycle Practices:

The River Bottoms are already dangerous at times, and because I use the trails up to 5 times a week, I have often been approached by a fast-moving bicyclist rounding a blind corner or blind hill or just approaching me from behind, making an announcement and expecting me to step off the trail regardless of the safety to do so. I had one gentleman, after he yelled "on your left" pass me and when I stepped off the trail to let him pass and told him I had the right-of-way, he stopped aggressively and told me that that's why he announced himself. Just because you announce yourself doesn't mean you have the right-of-way. Bluffs have cliffs, and without the proper width and adequate sight lines it is not always safe or convenient for two-way traffic especially in the height of itch-weed season. See "Single Path" photo attached (my hand is in it to gain perspective) of just one spot which is fairly open of which there are many and other more cleared areas but sight line difficulties, such as the "Blind Corner" and "Blind Hill" photos. Others have remarked on near-miss collisions on the trails as well.

The attached photos "Man-made bank" and "Man-made jump" taken at the River Bottoms shows samples of grooming for personal usage by off-road bicyclists along the Bloomington Trail. You can imagine what would happen if my 5 year old had been exploring along one of the single-track paths and a bicyclist is building up speed on a bank or launches off a jump with earbuds in, helmet on, wearing sunglasses.

I've taken videos of many sections of blind hills and curves, and it will be very difficult to clear all sight line problem areas without changing the landscape. But I feel that leaving the Bloomington Trail and sight lines "as is" which is basically what the City is recommending with minimal maintenance is asking for trouble especially with an increase in off-road mountain biking using the trails.

4. Surveys and Open Houses.

The City of Bloomington and MN DNR failed to adequately notify the public regarding participating in the open houses and online MVMP Survey. The social media (Facebook) notice of the transportation open house to the public was only six days' notice (the MVMP Survey Summary indicates that Facebook is the second highest place people received information about the River Valley) and the MVMP open house and Survey was seven and eight days' notice respectively. Hardly enough time for people to plan to attend/participate especially with less than six days' notice. The website schedule was inaccurate and off as well. There was a Star Tribune article on a weekday, Tuesday, July 8 pre-open houses that only referenced the Bloomington Alternative Transportation Plan and did not refer to the Minnesota Valley Master Plan, its survey or the $2 million funding.

Limited emphasis should fall on the MVMP Survey and Open Houses because of Respondents being heavily solicited by bicycle advocacy groups and for the failure to provide proper public notice. Also, even though the Respondent's usage is broken down between several activities, i.e. cross-country skiing, jogging, bicycling, etc. the majority of activities are by pedestrians.

The MVMP indicates that the City will "continue to partner with Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists to improve and maintain the bluff trails". Again see man-made photos attached. There is no doubt in my mind that the trails have had some degree of grooming and maintenance over the years but I am requesting instead that funding from the annual Capital Improvement Budget (CIP) or some other means of ab annual budgeting tool be used to hire outside sources other than those with an agenda. Professionals with knowledge and environmental/wetland impact experience should be maintaining these trails and someone with DNR or FWS experience be hired.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide my comments to the Planning Commission during this master planning stage.

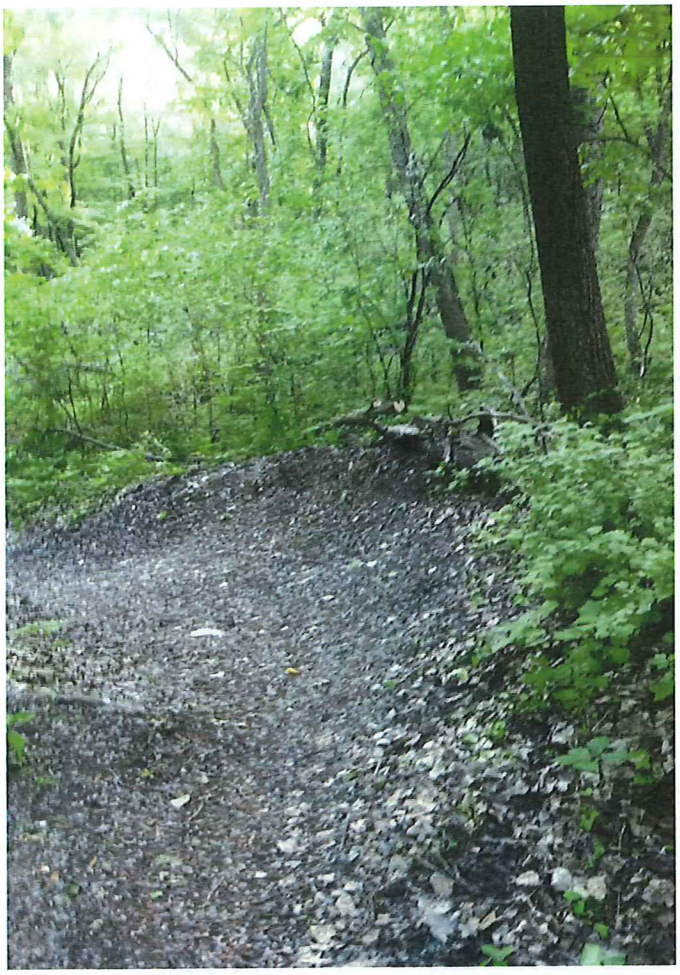
Very truly yours,

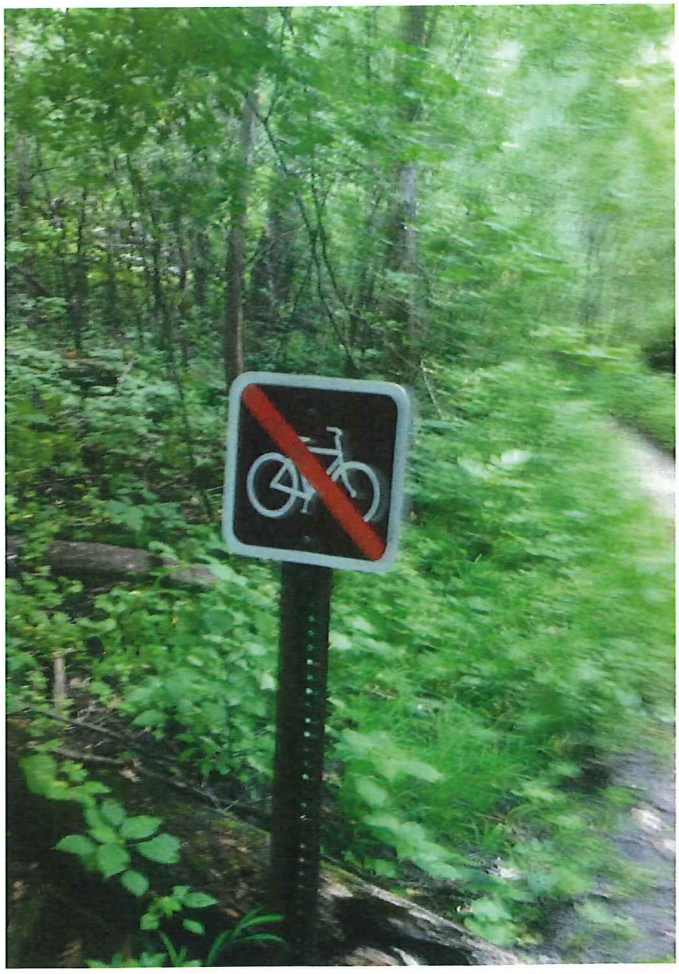
Pat Treseler

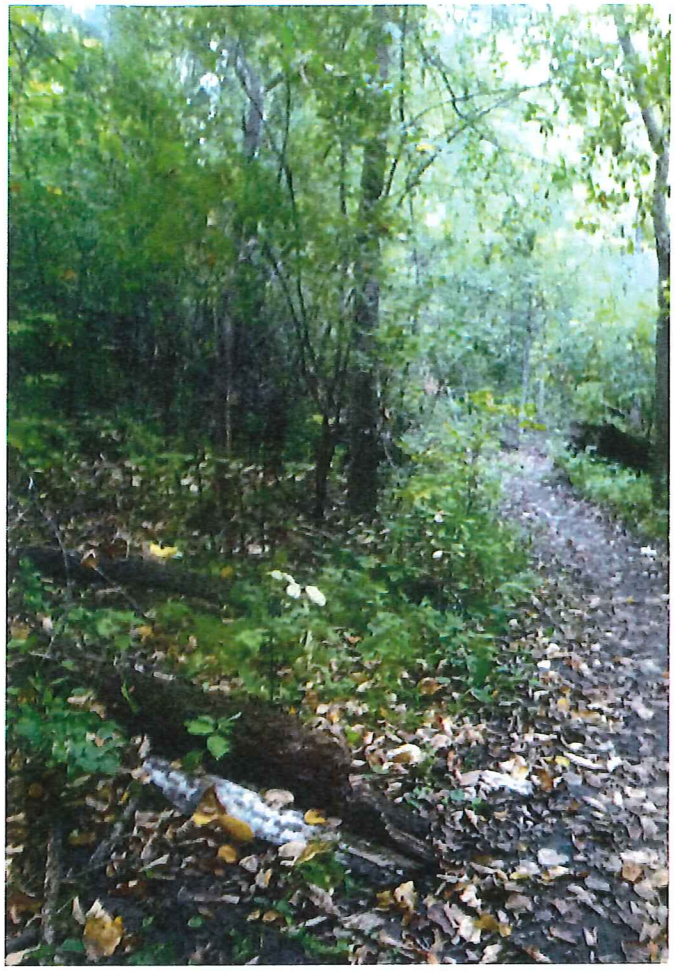
EXHIBIT A: Survey of Trail Users

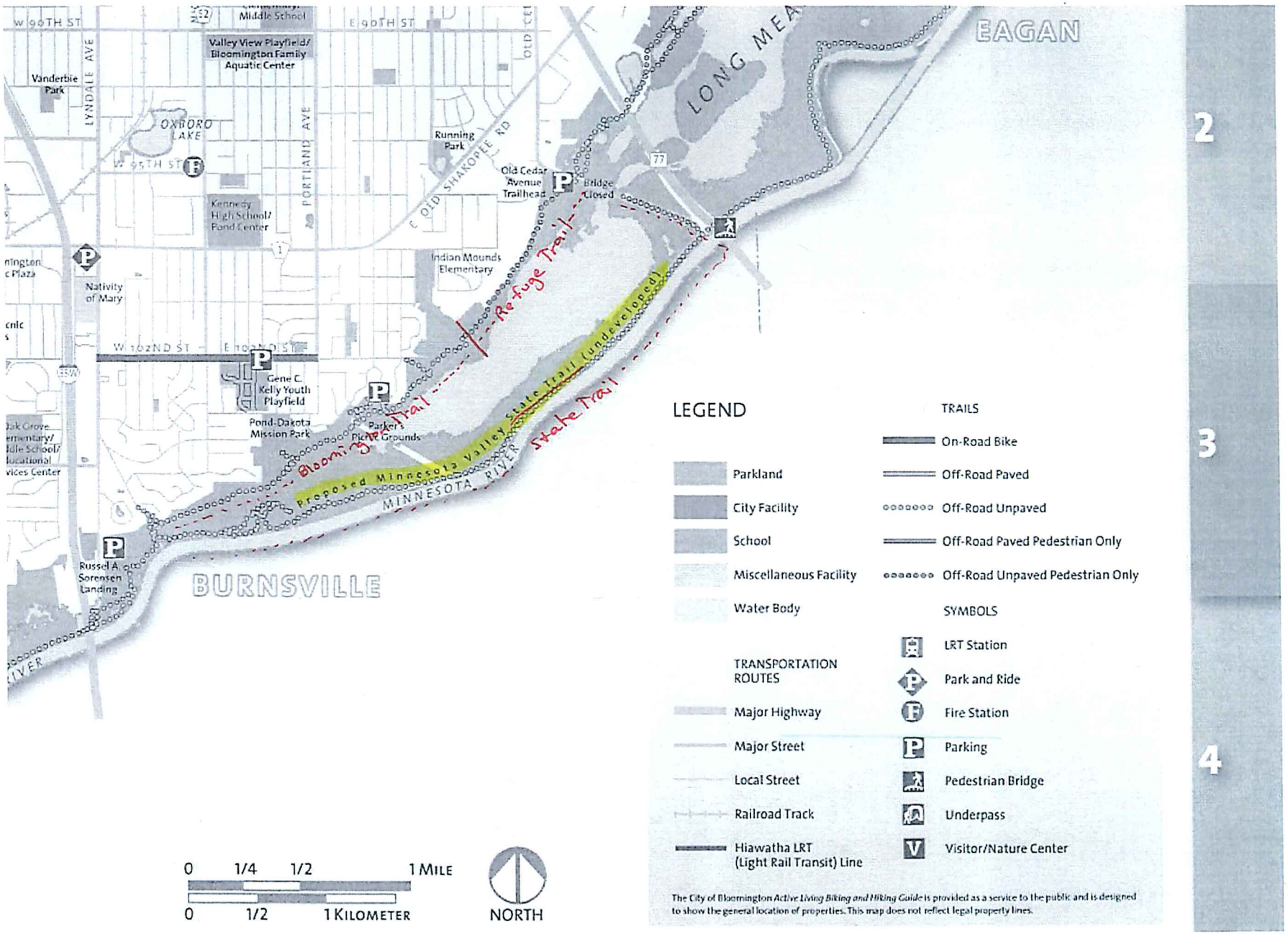
Date	Pedestrian	Bicyclist	Aware of Master Plan
8/22/14	1		Yes
8/26	1 with dog		No
8/31	4 with dog		No
8/31		3	Unknown
9/1	2		No (Bloom. residents and frequent walkers/runners)
9/7		3 (1 came to a skidding halt)	Unknown
9/7	1		No
9/17	3 with dog		No
9/17	3 (one is a child)		No
9/17		3 (w/headphones)	Unknown
9/26	2 with dog		No
9/30	0	0	
10/6	4		Unknown
10/15	1		No
10/15		1 (ignorant)	Unknown
10/18	4 (one 7-8 year old)		Unknown
10/18	2 runners		No
10/18	1		Unknown
10/18	1		No
10/18	2 with dog		No
10/18	2		No
10/18		1 (no helmet)	Unknown
10/18	3 (2 elder)		No
10/18		1 (ignorant of the 2 elders on the same path)	Unknown
10/18		1	Unknown
10/20	5 (4 tweens w/dad)		No
10/26	4 with dog		No
10/30	1		Unknown
10/30	2 with dog		No
10/30		1	Unknown
11/2	2		Unknown
11/2		3	Unknown
Totals:	52 (Majority)	17 (Minority)	

-Only one pedestrian I talked to out of 52 had heard of the Master Plan and fourteen I failed to ask or it wasn't convenient to stop.








W 90TH ST
E 90TH ST
Middle School
Valley View Playfield/ Bloomington Family Aquatic Center
Vanderbie Park
LYNDALE AVE
OXBORO LAKE
W 95TH ST
PORTIAND AVE
Kennedy High School/ Pond Center
Running Park
E OLD SHAKOPEE RD
Old Cedar Avenue Trailhead
Bridge Closed
LONG MEA
EAGAN
Indian Mounds Elementary
Nativity of Mary
W 102ND ST
E 102ND ST
Gene C. Kelly Youth Playfield
Pond-Dakota Mission Park
Parker's Picnic Grounds
Refuge Trail
Bloomington Trail
Proposed Minnesota Valley State Trail (undeveloped)
State Trail
MINNESOTA RIVER
Russel A. Sorensen Landing
BURNSVILLE
LEGEND
Parkland
City Facility
School
Miscellaneous Facility
Water Body
TRANSPORTATION ROUTES
Major Highway
Major Street
Local Street
Railroad Track
Hiawatha LRT (Light Rail Transit) Line
TRAILS
On-Road Bike
Off-Road Paved
Off-Road Unpaved
Off-Road Paved Pedestrian Only
Off-Road Unpaved Pedestrian Only
SYMBOLS
LRT Station
Park and Ride
Fire Station
Parking
Pedestrian Bridge
Underpass
Visitor/Nature Center
0 1/4 1/2 1 MILE
0 1/2 1 KILOMETER
NORTH
The City of Bloomington Active Living Biking and Hiking Guide is provided as a service to the public and is designed to show the general location of properties. This map does not reflect legal property lines.
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3
4