SAINT PAUL
MINNESOTA

SAINT PAUL PARKS AND RECREATION
City Hall Annex
25 West 4th Street, Suite 400
Saint Paul, MN 55102
Tel: 651-266-6400

Summit Avenue Regional Trail Plan
Staff Report
May 11, 2023

Land Acknowledgement: *Saint Paul stands on ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Dakota homelands. As we consider that the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement has brought us to the current day, we commit to understanding, respecting, supporting, and advocating for Indigenous People and for this land. Let this land acknowledgement be more than a reminder. Let it be a marker in time of dedicating ourselves to be better and do better. Through this land acknowledgement, let us lead to make changes which respect history.*

Plan Name: *Please note that the name of the regional trail plan has changed. As the City of Saint Paul takes initial steps to acknowledge its role in systemic racism, we recognize the power of language. The term "master," which is often defined as commanding control or being eminently skilled, has been identified as a word to remove in certain contexts due to its connection with the history of masters and slavery in the United States.*[1]

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
A regional trail on Summit Avenue represents a unique opportunity to create a vision for future bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in this corridor that can be accessible to all. This separated facility would meet both recreation and transportation needs while providing a higher level of comfort and safety for trail users than the current on-street bike lanes.

Many portions of the Summit Avenue roadway have not been reconstructed in more than 100 years. This presents a unique and critical opportunity prior to street reconstruction to develop a plan that not only can meet Citywide policy actions but meets goals identified through extensive community engagement of tree preservation, safety and historic character of this very important parkway in Saint Paul.

Summit Avenue is a regional trail search corridor that is centrally located in the Regional Parks System west of downtown Saint Paul. The search corridor runs along Summit Avenue from Mississippi Gorge Regional Park to Kellogg Boulevard then onto Eagle Parkway where the trail connects to the Samuel Morgan Regional Trail at Shepard Road. The 4.7-mile Summit Avenue parkway segment dates back to the 1880s and consists of generous green areas with mature trees interwoven through a roadway with an existing on-street bicycle lane. The .75-mile Kellogg

[1] Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles – City of Minneapolis Parks and Recreation

SAINT PAUL
MINNESOTA

SAINT PAUL PARKS AND RECREATION
City Hall Annex
25 West 4th Street, Suite 400
Saint Paul, MN 55102
Tel: 651-266-6400

Boulevard/Eagle Parkway segment consists of urban streetscape and an existing multi-use trail along Eagle Parkway to Shepard.

The project has faced numerous complexities from technical issues like roadway geometry and transition areas, process and framework for historical context, and responding to engagement with many voices and experiences shared identifying issues and opportunities surrounding the trail itself. The current recommendations from Federal and State traffic safety guidance is that the trail be separated due to traffic volumes that currently exist on Summit Ave. A bike lane is not recommended based on the amount of traffic and reconstructing the road back to its current configuration with an on-street bike lane would not meet recommended safety guidelines for Summit Ave. It is also important to recognize that the project team heard from many people during engagement that a trail separated from traffic would be more comfortable for people of all ages and abilities compared to an on-street bike lane.

The Summit Avenue Regional Trail plan proposes a one-way grade separated trail on both sides of the road from Mississippi River Blvd. to Kellogg Blvd. to balance community interests, provide for continuity in the user experience, and to limit impacts to greenspace. The segments along Kellogg Blvd. and Eagle Pkwy would follow plans developed for the Capital City Bikeway planning process and utilize the existing multi-use trail along Eagle Parkway.

The Plan outlines a vision that recognizes the significance of this designed public landscape for social engagement and recreation, a parkway space developed in the late 1800s, characterized by broad medians and greenspaces by which people move as they connect to places locally and regionally. This regional trail plan looks to the future of this space in the context of its current use and identifies a trail that would allow for more people to experience the linear parklike qualities of Summit Avenue through recreation for years to come.

STAFF COMMENTS:
Staff has reviewed the plan and it sets forth a framework for future development of the Summit Avenue Regional Trail over the coming years guided by current design standards, community and stakeholder engagement processes.

REQUEST OF THE COMMISSION:
Adopt resolution #23-01 recommending the Summit Avenue Regional Trail Plan for approval and that their recommendation be conveyed to the City Council for their consideration.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS:
Community engagement on the Summit Avenue Regional Trail Plan was developed over the course of a 16-month period. Engagement efforts included a multi-faceted approach using both in-person events and online engagement methods to connect with local and regional stakeholders. During this process, more than 2,800 engaged participants have helped shape the regional trail plan. Project staff have worked hard to provide an open and responsive process working to ensure community

SAINT PAUL PARKS AND RECREATION
City Hall Annex
25 West 4th Street, Suite 400
Saint Paul, MN 55102
Tel: 651-266-6400

members have access to information. The Regional Trail Plan develops an approach that sets a framework for future decision-making while balancing community interests.

Main Community Concerns:

- Greenspace:
    - Impacts to trees
        - *Trees are central to the parkway experience of Summit Avenue and as such maintaining them is a goal embedded in the project. The regional trail plan is a visionary document and recognizes that specific tree impacts will need to be identified at the time of design and engineering based on existing conditions at that time. The plan outlines an analysis for potential tree vulnerability relative to the trail within the roadway footprint to gauge potential impacts. The plan sets forth typical sections that are primarily within the roadway footprint to utilize paved spaces to the extent possible to limit impacts. It also sets forth a process for a tree preservation framework to be utilized before, during, and after construction.*
- Safety:
    - Proximity of vehicles to on-street bike lanes as a barrier to use and desire for separation.
        - *The design of the trail would be an off-street facility, providing physical separation between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.*
    - Crossings where bicyclists & pedestrians pass through intersections and driveways
        - *Trail plan introduces a toolkit of best practices that prioritize safety for pedestrians and bicyclists at crossings. Bicyclists and Pedestrians have the right-of-way at driveway crossings.*
- Facility Conditions:
    - Pavement surface of existing conditions
        - *Public Works will implement surfacing treatments to the corridor such that the roadway from Mississippi River Blvd. to Victoria Street will have improved surface conditions as a short-term solution prior to longer-term street reconstruction.*
    - Winter maintenance
        - *Saint Paul Parks and Recreation maintains regional trail facilities in the winter.*

- No Change
    - Unnecessary and that the existing conditions are adequate. Proposal from some community members to utilize high-visibility paint to improve existing bicycle lanes.
        - *Existing conditions do not meet current design standards for bicycle facilities given roadway volumes.*
    - Parking: Availability of on-street parking has been an area of concern for residents and businesses.
        - *Plan recognizes that there are areas with under-utilized parking and areas with high utilization. Plan recommends a context-based approach to removal of on-street parking in specific areas along the corridor to better align demand with utilization.*

SAINT PAUL
MINNESOTA

SAINT PAUL PARKS AND RECREATION
City Hall Annex
25 West 4th Street, Suite 400
Saint Paul, MN 55102
Tel: 651-266-6400

- *Plan reflects Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan policies prioritizing land use for pedestrians and bicyclists before other vehicles and that support strategies to improve off-street parking efficiency and that stand-alone parking uses are limited.*

- Accessibility: Concerns regarding availability of and impact to on-street accessible parking.
  - *Plan recognizes the need to meet public right of way accessibility guidelines for the regional trail facility and prioritizing select areas of on-street parking for accessible parking and trail access. The City works with individuals and property owners on a variety of parking-related concerns including permits for disability parking zones and special needs parking permits for long-term parking.*
- Funding and Priorities: Community members expressing concern for the cost of construction, equity, and decision-making for priorities Citywide.
  - *There is currently no funding for design or construction of a regional trail facility or for full street reconstruction. The most cost-effective time to include pedestrian and bicycle improvements comes when a roadway is being designed for reconstruction. The preferred strategy is to build the trail with street reconstruction, where the incremental cost of the trail is less. Regional trails are typically funded through state and federal funding and not from city funding. Assessments are not associated with trail reconstruction.*
- Concerns about historical context and impacts
  - *Staff from HPC and SHPO have been involved through technical advisory roles to provide initial feedback on the plan. The plan recognizes that if and when there is federal funding, a formal Section 106 historical review processes will be necessary during design and engineering.*
- Interest that this should occur another roadway in the City
  - *This is a regional trail search corridor in both the City's comprehensive plan and Metropolitan Council's Regional Parks Policy Plans. The grades and parkway characteristics make Summit Avenue highly suitable for a regional trail amenity. Existing conditions do not meet current design standards for bicycle facilities given roadway volumes.*

On April 13, 2023 a public hearing was held at the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. A summary of key topics from community members is attached.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Parks and Recreation Commission public hearing – key topics
2. Staff report to the Transportation Committee with vote
3. Memo from Transportation Committee to Planning Commission
4. Planning Commission resolution
5. Trail Plan - Executive Summary
6. Summit Avenue Regional Trail Plan (posted online due to file size)
   https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GUAuCGEi9QM5EyaHG5_g6Sz_SQ5Du3NN