



Active Transportation Network

Connecting Greater Minneapolis Communities through Sustainability, Equity, and Mobility

PROJECT DESCRIPTION



2023 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Program

Project Name : Three Rivers Park District Active Transportation Network:
Connecting Greater Minneapolis Communities through Sustainability, Equity, and Mobility

Total Project Cost : \$30.05M

2022 RAISE Funds Requested : \$24.04M

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Supporting Information can be found at: <https://www.srfconsulting.com/trpd-raise/>

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Three Rivers Park District Active Transportation Network: Connecting Greater Minneapolis Communities through Sustainability, Equity, and Mobility (herein referred to as “the Project”) will enhance the greater Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota (Twin Cities) regional trail network through a series of strategic improvements identified through technical analysis and extensive community outreach (Figure 1). The Project is in an urban area and is a Bike/Pedestrian trail project that will:

- Construct 5.5 miles of new regional trails,
- Reconstruct 9.4 miles of existing trails and sidewalks,
- Improve wayfinding, striping and amenities along new trails and 2.4 miles of existing trails,
- Improve 89 trail/road crossings including installing Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS) to ten intersections and upgrading over 100 ramps to meet Americans with Disability (ADA) standards,
- Add five automatic trail counters, add electric bicycle charging stations in three locations, and
- Construct ADA accessible landings for nine Metro Transit bus stops.

The Project will address existing regional trails in need of reconstruction, establish new north-south connections between existing east-west routes, fill gaps in the existing regional trail network and improve safety of the network’s most challenging locations – road and railroad crossings. Collectively, these improvements will spur active transportation, enable new connections, and travel patterns, and ensure modal equity with a regional trail network that is accessible to all community members. Three Rivers Park District is requesting \$25 million (80 percent) in urban capital 2023 RAISE funds to complete the final design and construction of the Project. The total eligible cost of the Project is \$31.2 million.

Hennepin County, where the Project is located is the state’s most populated county. Three Rivers’ 180 miles of regional trails network functions as the arterial Active Transportation Network (ATN) and the backbone of the [regional bicycle transportation network](#). Like the vehicular highway system, it carries users across jurisdictions and connects them to local routes that lead to their destinations. Additionally, the ATN is designed for greater capacity of the trail system, supports all non-motorized uses and is off-road and separated from motor vehicle traffic, safely and comfortably accommodating users of all ages and abilities.

Rather than focusing on a single route, the Project considers the ATN as a whole and applies improvements where they will be most impactful. The Project will improve safety for all modes of travel, increase access to opportunities for equity populations, significantly reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), and support sustainable and active transportation throughout Hennepin County. Figure 1 provides the location of the Project.

Three Rivers Park District is a natural resources-based park system in suburban Hennepin County. The Park District was founded in 1957 by the Minnesota Legislature to acquire, develop and maintain regional parks, park reserves, and trails. A passionate staff of more than 2,000 employees manages nearly 27,000 acres of parkland and 180 miles of regional trails.

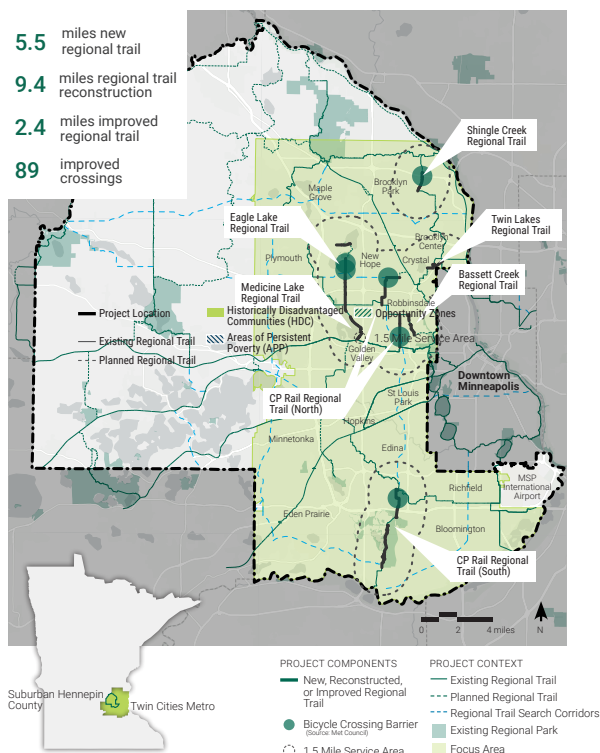


Figure 1 [Project Location](#)

PROJECT PURPOSE

The Project addresses several transportation challenges tied to the merit criteria (Table 1). Details on these benefits are provided in the Merit Criteria document.

Table 1 Transportation Challenges

Purpose	Benefits and Outcomes
Safety	Improve safety and efficiency for the transportation system's most vulnerable users - non-motorized travelers through protected facilities, connected routes, and barrier crossings.
Quality of Life	Extend and improve connectivity to equity communities.
Mobility	Increase mobility by supporting changing trail use patterns and new users
Environmental Sustainability	Improve air quality, develop resilient infrastructure, and support efficient land use and transportation systems
Economic Opportunity	Contribute to a robust regional and equitable economy
State of Good Repair	Replace infrastructure that has exceeded its useful life

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Drawing from over sixty-five years of experience planning, constructing, and maintaining parks and trails, Three Rivers has developed a toolkit of interventions to improve its regional trail network. These strategies are refined through regular field inspections and ongoing public outreach, with an emphasis on listening to communities underrepresented in the system.

- New construction of 5.5 miles of regional trails: strategically linking state, regional, and local trails with new trail segments. The resulting connectivity will expand trail access to bicycle and pedestrian friendly destinations like jobs, schools, recreation, places of worship, and shopping destinations, and public transit.
- Reconstruction of 9.4 miles of existing trails and sidewalks: updating end of useful life and substandard trail segments, to maintain a good state of repair on existing routes as well as consistent and reliable facility design. Three Rivers is a nationwide leader in infrastructure maintenance, which extends the life of trail pavement from twenty to thirty years and improves user safety and satisfaction.
- Upgrade 2.4 miles of trails: adding centerline striping, wayfinding, eco-counters, and trail amenities such as

benches, bicycle parking, bicycle fix-it stations, and bicycle e-charging stations which welcome and support trail users of all ages, abilities, and experience levels, improving quality of life throughout the service area. Wayfinding is critical to helping new users navigate the trail system and encourage multimodal transportation.

- Improve 89 trail/road crossings: adding signalization, APS to ten intersections, striping, wayfinding, and upgrading over 100 ramps to meet ADA guidelines to ensure the trail network interfaces safely with other modes of transportation as well as local and state trail and sidewalk systems. Surveys of regional trail users consistently rank 'improving or eliminating road crossings' as a top intervention to increase trail use, safety, and satisfaction.
- Add: five automatic trail counters, add electric bicycle charging stations in three locations
- Construct: ADA accessible landings for nine Metro Transit bus stops.

The Project will complete improvements and connectivity to the Three Rivers trail systems as shown in Table 2:

Table 2 Trail Network Improvements

	Construct New Trail	Reconstruct Existing Trail	Improve Existing Trail	Total Trail Length	Improved Crossing	APS Signal Upgrade	Accessible Bus Stop Landing	Trail Counter	eBike Charger
Bassett Creek Regional Trail		1.1		1.1	6			1	
CP Rail Regional Trail - North	3.7		1.1	4.8	48	3	2		
CP Rail Regional Trail - South	1.3	3.4		4.7	11	4	3	1	2
Eagle Lake Regional Trail	0.5	1.4	1.3	3.2	11	1	3	1	2
Medicine Lake Regional Trail		2.3		2.3	5		1	1	2
Shingle Creek Regional Trail		0.8		0.8	7	2		1	
Twin Lakes Regional Trail		0.4		0.4	1				
Project Total	5.5	9.4	2.4	17.3	89	10	9	5	6

DETAILED STATEMENT OF WORK/DESIGN STATUS

Three Rivers' staff has produced a detailed list of improvements for each trail segment. This work will be the basis for continuing the preliminary design tasks (non-RAISE funds) required to initiate final design and construction of the Project (RAISE funds). These tasks include hiring consultants to complete regional railway agreements, environmental review and up to 60 percent design. Environmental review includes agency reviews and determinations, completion of studies and submittal of documentation for federal review and comments. Three Rivers has committed \$2.62 million (8 percent of estimated construction costs) towards the preliminary design tasks (up to 60 percent design). The final design tasks will include 95 percent design, utility coordination, traffic management plan (TMP), permitting,

approvals, right of way easements and construction. See Project Readiness for details.

Three Rivers will hire contractors to construct the Project in accordance with its workforce and labor development plans and will be responsible for facilitating the coordination of all activities necessary for implementation of the Project. Three Rivers will cover the maintenance costs upon completion of the Project.

Three Rivers has created an order of construction phasing to implement the Project in a timely and controlled manner, along with aligning construction to other projects along the trail system. Figure 2 provides the timeline of the phasing.



Figure 2 Project Phasing

PROJECT HISTORY

Three Rivers' regional trail network was originally planned as a spoke system, with all facilities stemming

from Minneapolis and many taking advantage of former rail corridors. This proved a successful model for over

four decades, but it left many communities without direct regional trail access or without satisfactory connections to destinations outside Minneapolis, such as employment centers, schools, parks, retail, places of worship, and transit stations. These destinations are highly desired and are often not easily accessible by foot or bike due to post World War II development patterns which focused primarily on personal vehicles for transportation.

In recognition of these shortcomings, Three Rivers worked with the first-tier communities of Minneapolis to develop the First Tier Trails, Greenways and Parks Master Plan in 2000

and partnered with Hennepin County to develop the 2040 Hennepin County Bicycle Transportation Plan in 2015. These plans envisioned a connected 400-mile network aimed to provide equitable and convenient trail access across the Three Rivers jurisdiction and to facilitate travel between suburban communities by overlaying a grid of predominately north-south regional trails based on service area coverage and population density (Figure 3). Eagle Lake, CP Rail, and Shingle Creek Regional Trails, included in the Project, are examples of three critical north-south corridors which were added to the existing regional trail network.

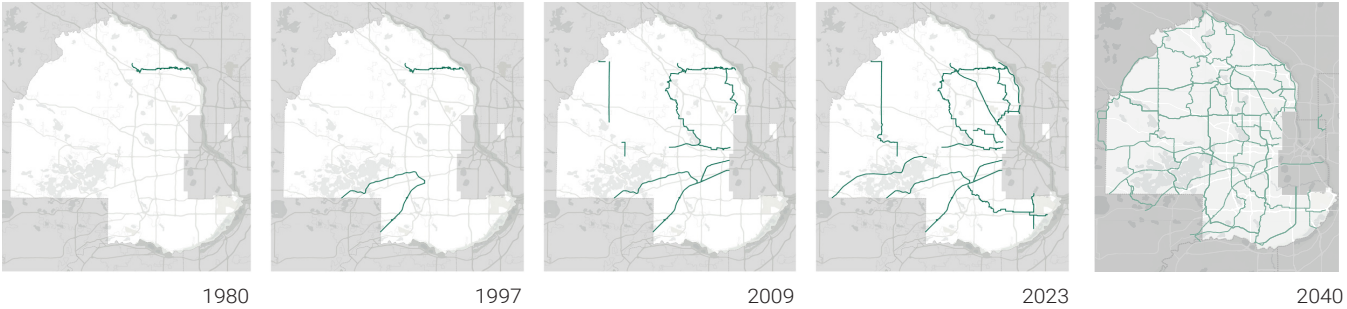


Figure 3 [Regional Trail Network Growth](#)

As a follow up to the 2000 and 2040 plans, Three Rivers developed a Three Rivers 2040 System Plan for each regional trail included within the Project, each representing years of agency coordination and public engagement. Potential trail routes were first identified via ongoing coordination with local city partners and other agency stakeholders and then thoroughly vetted through robust

engagement efforts with residents, business owners, and trail users. Public Engagement was performed via in-person and online events, targeted listening sessions, surveys, and interactive mapping options and provided interested parties a critical role in determining a preferred route through their community. Figure 4 provides a summary of planning documents that identify the Project’s components.

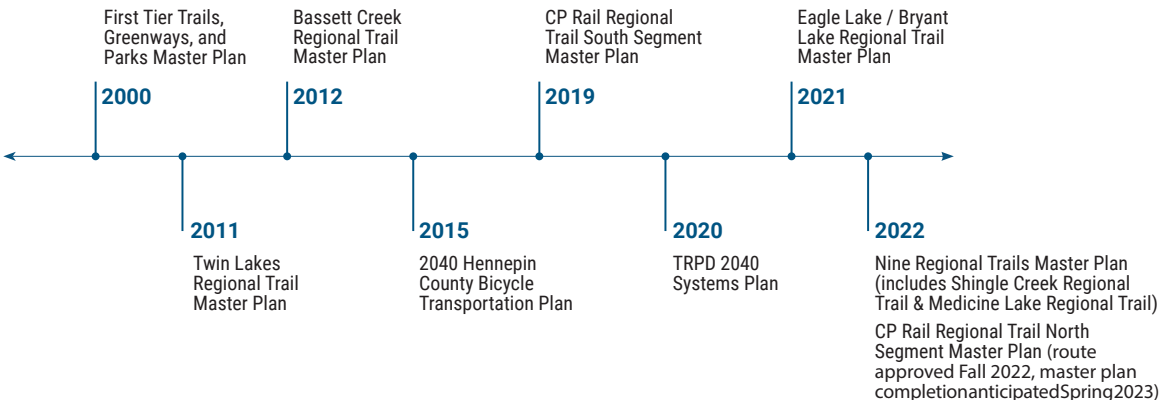


Figure 4 [Planning Timeline](#)

While master planning places a strong focus on determining the preferred regional trail through and connecting the communities it serves, associated outreach to underrepresented community groups, engineering studies,

and routine user surveys help ensure the desired outcomes are met. This ongoing work continues to illustrate that a growing number of Hennepin County residents are interested in cycling and walking for everyday trips, but are discouraged

by existing trail and sidewalk gaps, unsafe crossings, and lack of wayfinding – this is especially relevant to new trail users and underrepresented community members. These elements are purposefully included within Project (i.e. wayfinding and consistent trail design, improving road crossings and adding APS, and removing gaps caused by seasonal flooding) and will help transform the existing regional trail system into a functional arterial off-road trail network that serves all potential uses.

It is also noted that in addition to this funding request, Three Rivers is exploring many avenues and partnership opportunities to fully build out the envisioned 400-mile ATN spanning Suburban Hennepin County by 2040. In fact, Three Rivers and its partners have secured funding to construct 6.6 miles of regional trails, reconstruct 1.1 miles of end of useful life regional trails, and construct two grade-separated crossing by 2028.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Project is in Hennepin County, Minnesota - the most westerly county within the Twin Cities metropolitan area and the most populated county in the state. It is located within the Minneapolis-Saint Paul, MN-WI Urbanized Area, which is designated as an Urban Area. Three Rivers Park District covers an area with a population of 840,415. The Project includes regional trail work in nine cities: Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Edina, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, New Hope, and Plymouth, serving a total population of 232,391.

The Project service area (Project area) is defined as the area within 1.5 miles of the regional trail improvements included in the Project. This definition aligns with the trail service area (or catchment area) Three Rivers uses for planning purposes, derived from a statistically valid survey of trail users in 2019. The Project will serve five Areas of

Persistent Poverty (APP) and two Historically Disadvantaged Communities (HDC). Additionally, as shown in Figure 5, the Project provides connectivity to areas of high concentrations of APP, HDC, and Opportunity Zones.

Equity and environmental justice were key criteria when selecting and prioritizing the Project components. Minneapolis' first-ring suburbs are generally more socio-economically and racially diverse and have higher rates of poverty than the rest of suburban Hennepin County. The Project's proposed improvements on CP Rail – North Segment, Bassett Creek, Eagle Lake, Twin Lakes, and Shingle Creek Regional Trails continue Three Rivers' long-term commitment to better serving these areas and disadvantaged community members.

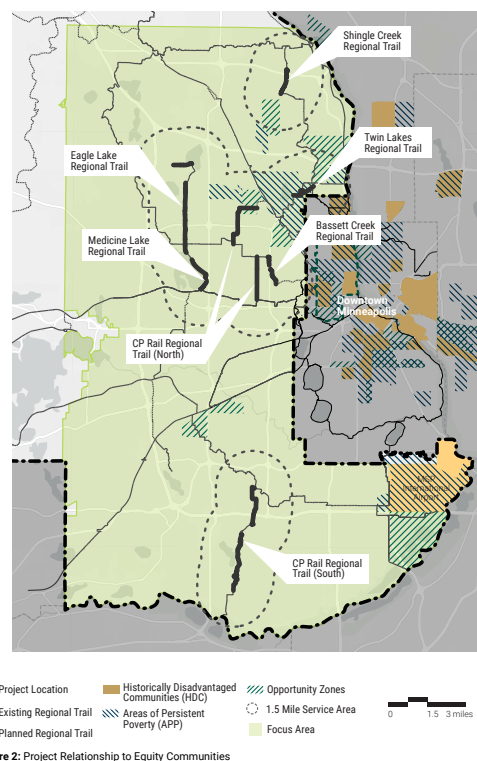


Figure 5 Project Relationship to Equity Communities

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Links to supporting documents are included throughout this narrative. All supporting documents and the RAISE grant application narrative are available to view at the following webpage: <https://www.srfconsulting.com/>