

**CITY OF SAINT PAUL**

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To: West Side Citizens Organization (WSCO)
Lilydale Regional Park Design Advisory Task Force
Friends of Lilydale (FOL)

Fr: Saint Paul Parks and Recreation

RE: Lilydale Regional Park – Update

The City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation appreciates our community partners' willingness to continue to organize community input related to moving the Lilydale Master Plan elements forward. The City will continue to keep WSCO and others informed of progress being made as the City implements phases of the Master Plan. Parks and Recreation offers the following update.

Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW)

In response to citizen request, an EAW is being completed for Lilydale Regional Park to address all design elements as described in the approved Master Plan.

An EAW provides basic information about a project that may have the potential for significant environmental effects. The EAW is prepared by the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) to determine whether an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary. The RGU in this case is the City of Saint Paul, Department of Parks and Recreation. The EAW process involves four major steps:

Step 1. The project proposer supplies all necessary data to the Responsible Governmental Unit, who is assigned responsibility to conduct the review according to the EQB rules.

Step 2. The RGU prepares the EAW by completing the standard form supplied by the Environmental Quality Board.

Step 3. The EAW is distributed with public notice of its availability for review. The comment period is 30 calendar days. Certain state, federal and local agencies always receive EAWs for review.

Step 4. The RGU responds to the comments received and makes a decision on the need for an EIS based on the EAW, comments received and responses to the comments. The RGU and other units of government may require modifications to the project to mitigate environmental impacts as disclosed through the EAW process.

The RGU requested consultant proposals for completion of an EAW which will respond to all elements in Lilydale Regional Park as outlined in the approved Master Plan. Emmons & Olivier Resources (EOR) was awarded the project as the lowest responsible bidder. A copy of the City's Request for Proposal (Scope of Services) to perform a discretionary EAW at Lilydale Regional Park and EOR's response to it

is provided in Attachment A. EOR is currently working to submit the EAW to the Environmental Quality Board on June 12, 2012. This will also be the start date for a 30 day public comment period.

Review copies for the public will be made available at Saint Paul Central Library, Saint Paul Riverview Library, City of Saint Paul project website, and WSCO. If a community meeting to review the EAW is needed or desired, Parks and Recreation can be available the week of June 18th to address any questions the public may have in response to the EAW prior to closing of public comment period.

Roadway Design

The roadway will be constructed in two phases with the existing railroad bridge being the natural breaking point between construction phases. Phase I will begin at the DNR boat launch. Phase II is intended to begin at the railroad bridge and end by the High Bridge.

Phase I work includes:

- the realignment of Lilydale Road away from Pickerel Lake
- regional trail gap connections resulting from the new roadway alignment (from the DNR boat launch to the railroad bridge)
- construction of a portion of lakeshore trail that follows the old roadway alignment and connects to the existing trail
- soil mitigation and grading to cap the clearing mound
- storm water solutions
- timber guard rail where necessary
- utility installation

A map illustrating Phase I roadway and trail improvements will be available Monday, May 7, 2012 on the project website.

The consultant is anticipating roadway plans to be completed for permit review May 2012. After permit review and finding of fact is determined from the EAW process, the consultant will make final construction plan modifications prior to bidding. Although construction documents are nearly completed for the bidding of Phase I, community input can still be received on roadway pavement treatment at trail crossings and trail signage options.

Utilities will be placed under the new roadway section during Phase I. These utilities will not be operational until they are extended in future phases.

Project Phasing

The area selected for phase I construction was made for a variety of important reasons. Realigning the roadway away from the lake is a major infrastructure component of the approved master plan: it sets the stage for many of the other important park elements planned for subsequent phases and allows for the creation of the Pickerel Clearing space including the shelter, restrooms, trails, and new parking area. The Pickerel Clearing is to become the main park gathering point in Lilydale Regional Park and a key component of this newly developed regional park. The Clearing will offer vistas of Pickerel Lake and the river bluffs and enhance access to Pickerel Lake for non-motorized boat users. In addition, the new curved roadway alignment will provide the much desired traffic calming along Lilydale Road, which is necessary to be in place prior to the dog park being constructed. Finally, Phase I work will utilize the existing large stockpile from the marina demolition site in the creation of Pickerel Clearing. Park elements that will be funded in future phases (such as the dog park, restrooms, picnic shelter, rustic trails, camping and wildlife viewing areas, boardwalk and fishing pier) are all dependent on Phase I construction being completed first. In short, the elements composing Phase I work have been identified because they are critical to the future implementation of approved master plan elements and future funding requests.

Railroad Coordination

Initial communication with Union Pacific Railroad Company (UPRC) was initiated by Parks and Recreation in May 2009. Conceptual trail alignments under the existing railroad were mailed to UPRC and the following general comments were received on May 29, 2009:

1. Need for protective cover over the trail when it passes under an existing railroad structure.
2. An easement from the Rail Road Real Estate Department would be required to construct a trail under railroad owned property.
3. Trail construction would have to be preformed in such a manner that existing railroad facilities are not disturbed

Based on these general comments, the Consultant/City planned to continue communication with the Railroad when roadway plans are completed to “permit level” review. Engineered solutions will be required for review by UPRC to continue discussion as the UPRC has already provided general comments for the conceptual ideas and now needs to respond to more engineered solutions.

Communication/negotiations with the railroad will take considerable time so the interim plan will be to construct Phase I of the roadway and regional trail without impacting the existing railroad bridge. The City is currently researching roadway and railroad easement data to determine if an easement exists or is needed however installation of utilities in the roadway will not be an issue as they will be placed within the road right-of-way and should not affect the current RR bridge.

Ideally, Union Pacific would fund and reconstruct their existing railroad bridge in conjunction with the trail and roadway work of Phase I. However, past experience with the UPRC has led Parks to believe they will not voluntarily offer this as a solution and negotiations will not reach conclusion before the project is underway. We are continuing to work with City Real Estate and Public Works and will engage UPRC mid May 2012. Railroad discussions will also include the proposed boardwalk connection across Pickerel Lake.

If the UPRC agrees and funding is available, Phase II roadway construction will continue the on-road trails through a new expanded railroad underpass and provide a second underpass for the off-road regional trail closer to the Mississippi River, near the swing bridge.

Wetlands

All wetlands were delineated within the project scope in 2009. Existing wetland areas were avoided by the new roadway design, with the exception of an existing wetland by the fossil ground parking lot. Impacts are being minimized to the greatest extent possible through the use of piers to construct a small bridge over the existing stream. A wetland mitigation permit was submitted and the City is awaiting final determination by the Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP).

The Technical Evaluation Panel is compromised of representatives from Local Governing Unit (City of Saint Paul in this case), Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), Ramsey County, and Army Corp of Engineers. Wetlands are delineated by wetland specialists based on Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) rules. A wetland report is submitted to the TEP for review and a field visit reviewing delineated wetlands is performed by the TEP to verify boundaries. Based on the wetland report and field visit, final wetland delineation is determined and approved by the TEP.

Future Road Usage

The City of Saint Paul Public Works Department has completed numerous traffic counts along Lilydale Road/Water Street (October 2006, July 2008, July 2009 and November 2010). This information was provided to the Consultant for their review with roadway design. It was requested that an additional traffic study with traffic speeds, weekend, and weekday activity be completed to serve as baseline data for existing roadway conditions. In response to citizen’s request for current traffic data, Public Works completed an existing traffic count in Lilydale Regional Park. This report and explanation of sampling methodology will be made available on the project website.

Trails

The Consultant has included minimal trail design as part of the roadway work in order to provide a continuous regional trail in conjunction with roadway construction. This regional trail is designed to match the existing 12' wide shared-use regional trail and minimize the footprint within Lilydale Regional Park. Trail crossings have been coordinated to occur in logical locations along the roadway and appropriate signage and paving materials will be explored to alert motorists of trail crossings. The Consultant and City Public Works Traffic Engineers have advised that providing stop signs for cars at the trail crossings is not an effective solution in areas of low or intermittent bicycle use. While we can investigate this suggestion further, we believe stop signs must be placed with logic for drivers (at intersections, for example, where no other method of safely controlling traffic exists). Stop signs placed where a traffic need cannot be demonstrated often results in drivers ignoring them, which can be a significant safety concern. We appreciate the multi-modal nature of the park and would like to achieve a good balance among modes—that is, our design intent is not auto-centric, rather focused on maximizing the quality of experience for all park users. We will continue to explore methods of achieving the safest possible configuration for trail crossings.

With the existing roadway being shifted away from Pickerel Lake, there is an opportunity to convert that section of road for trail use. Conversion of the existing roadway to trail will begin to provide opportunities for trail loops within the park. This portion of trail is planned as a 10' wide paved trail but an alternate will be included for conversion to gravel as well.

In the future, as funding is secured, more rustic internal walking trails will be designed in conjunction with additional program elements outlined in the master plan. These include group camp sites, boardwalk across Pickerel Lake, off-leash dog park, interpretive signage and wildlife viewing opportunities. Parks and Recreation Plans will re-engage with a Design Advisory Task Force to continue discussions on trail options and program elements as additional funding is secured.

Parking

The parking lot adjacent to Pickerel Clearing will provide parking not only for those using the restroom and picnic structure but also is intended to provide safe and aggregated parking to serve all park users visiting Lilydale Regional Park. Parking adjacent to the Pickerel Clearing area will allow access to Pickerel Lake, picnicking, and biking/hiking trail connections. Some parallel parking is proposed along the roadway, but the majority of parking will be located off road.

Parking is to be implemented in phases. Phase I will include a 25 spot parking lot. An additional parking lot may be constructed if ad hoc parking begins to occur within the park causing issues where parking was not intended. Advancing plans beyond the 25 spot parking lot will not proceed without communication and discussion with the community.

The Sustainable Building Policy for New Municipal and HRA owned buildings in the City of Saint Paul pertains to projects for which schematic design was initiated after July 1, 2010. The Master Plan for Lilydale Regional Park was approved in January 2010 therefore technically exempting the master plan elements from meeting the storm water management requirements. However, the Consultant has been directed to strive to meet all storm water requirements as outlined in the Sustainable Building Policy for Saint Paul as well the Lower Mississippi Watershed Management Organization. Permeable pavement may be explored, but handicap accessibility and placement of permeable pavers in the floodway will limit permeable pavement options.

Picnic Shelter

Numerous shelter concepts were presented to the Design Advisory Task Force. The final concept design selected met the aesthetic and functional criteria outlined by the Task Force and staff. The development of construction documents for the picnic shelter and restrooms will occur in a future phase. (Management of fireplace use will be critical to the success of the shelter, and will be determined as part of a future phase.)

Future Projects

Parks and Recreation will re-engage with the community to further develop the design of any future phases beyond those already approved. Parks and Recreation will be following the approved Master Plan and will not add program elements indiscriminately. Parks and Recreation will discuss and work with the community prior to establishing and submitting future legislative and funding requests.