

Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting December 8, 2022

*MINUTES PROVIDE A RECORD OF MINNESOTA'S PARKS AND TRAILS LEGACY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS. THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN APPROVED AND
REVIEWED ON FEBRUARY 23, 2023.*



APPROVED 12/08/2022
Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, December 8, 2022

10:00 AM-2:00 PM

In person Meeting in Bunker Hills Activity Center, Andover,
And virtual via WebEx

Updates and Announcements:

Next Meeting: Thursday, December 8, 2022

Meeting Host: Metropolitan Council

Meeting Location: Bunker Hills Activity Center, and via WebEx

Action Items:

- DNR staff will post the approved meeting minutes on the LCC Website.

Meeting Minutes:

Members: Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, Alysa Delgado Misfeldt, Steve Dubbs, Janice Erickson, Cecily Harris, Gina Hugo, Cathy Jordan (Absent), Matthew Lindaman, Sumbal Mahmud (Absent), Allison Mark (Absent), Dolf Moon, Jon Oyanagi, Jim Shoberg, Heather Stirratt (Absent), Dan Trudeau

Liaisons: Emmett Mullin (Met Council), Rick Anderson (Greater MN), Renee Mattson (GMRPTC), Ann Pierce (DNR), Laura Preus (DNR)

Staff: Lars Erdahl (DNR), Kaci Warneke (DNR)

Jon Oyanagi opened the meeting and led ice breaker. Thank you to the staff at Bunker Hills Activity Center for hosting today's meeting.

PTLAC approved meeting agenda and reviewed conflict of interest statement and member expectations/roles.

Corrections and errors in the October 2022 Meeting Minutes

Comments on last meeting:

- Art in Parks and Trails Phase II proposal:
 - Elaborate on what the themes of the art pieces are going to be.
 - The targeted audience is too vague. Describe in more detail on the people this project is trying to reach.
 - Advance DEI and accessibility section is too vague, more details to show direction.
 - Prioritize replacing culturally insensitive art pieces within our parks.
 - Use natural materials for the art pieces, sourced locally.
- Forest Bathing is at the heart of traditional ecological knowledge.

The October 27th PTLAC Meeting Minutes approval moved to February 23rd, 2023 PTLAC meeting.

PTLAC Annual Business Meeting/Discussion

Jon Oyanagi, PTLAC Chair

Presents draft meeting schedule

- Draft includes dates and who is hosting
- Meeting topics to be decided later

PTLAC Charter Updates and Edits

Lars presents suggested edits to the PTLAC Charter.

Suggested edits and comments:

- Resignations and members deciding to not come back for another term, the committee is not at a balanced number of cohorts. One solution to this is extending the terms of some members to even it out.
- Charter was written to initiate the committee, at this point in the 25-year plan we should evaluate the *TERMS* section with current context, and think more broadly and not be bound to the charter.
- Make it a regular process to review and update to keep it current and coherent.

“Is it necessary to have group approval of how to revise or update the charter?”

- It is important for this body and chair to weigh in on what those updates should be. There should be a clear limit on how long someone is a chair and also a clear limit on how long someone can serve on the committee.
- ‘4. Vacancies, Resignations and Removal’ in the charter; moving the filling of vacancies to every other year, will produce long periods of time in which someone is not representing the constituency of the state of Minnesota.

“Has member substitution ever happened?”

- It has happened in the past but not yet in recent years.
- The language in the charter is flexible.

“Include more voting on our advisement.”

- “We mainly use consensus, nothing major that we need to vote on.”

Decisions about the charter, and any changes to it will be brought to the attention of the committee for consideration.

Election of Committee Chair and Alternate Chair

- Jon Oyanagi expressed interest in serving another year as chair.
- Election of a committee chair is moved to the next meeting, February 2023.
- Consider Chair nominations, contact the liaisons or Lars if interested in serving as Chair or Alternate Chair.

Virtual Guided Site Tour

Jeff Perry, Anoka County Director, Karen Blaska, Planning Supervisor Bunker Hills Staff

Jeff Perry introduces Anoka County Parks, and shows highlights of the impacts of Legacy funds in Anoka County.

- 11,500 acres of county park system, positioned along lakes, rivers and streams.
- Two major rivers in the system: Rum River, and Mississippi River.
- Most biologically diverse county in the 7 county area.

Legacy Projects Highlights:

Bunker Beach

- Started as MN's largest outdoor wave pool in 1988.
- Have gone through three phases since then that included adding two slides, adventure pools, and a lazy river.
- Rebuild and redesigned the original wave pool that include a lagoon area for younger children. They also added a family restaurant building, with four family restrooms, lactation room, and locker storage. And an operations support building that legacy helped support.
- Ten acre complex with 150,000 visits a year with people visiting from all over the world.
- Wave pool is five feet deep, generates nine different types of three foot waves.

"What is the total investment?"

- Total investment was 6.4 million, majority was county funding.

"Is there a fee to enter?"

- Yes, there is a fee to get into the county park and another fee for the water park.

"Total complex value?"

- About 15 million.

"Elaborate more on the lactation room."

- It is in the new building, it has four family restrooms, and an independent lactation room. It has comfortable seating, and is well equipped for whatever the mother needs. It is also located near the lagoon area where mothers of younger kids and families would be.

"What is the bottom of the pools made of?"

- Concrete lined with aquatic plaster.

"What about a surfing component?"

- They considered it, then looked through the budget and it ended up costing too much. No surfing, but have inner tubes are allowed in the pool.

Wargo Nature Center

- Located in Lino Lakes, built in 1994.
- Used Legacy money to help rebuilt and update all the displays inside the building.
 - Replica of a maple tree on the inside with a spiral staircase going up the trunk. Models of the critters, insects, birds, and other wildlife that live in a maple/bass wood forest, are in and around the tree as well.

- Added ADA accessible computers that interact with displays. When the computer is engaged, the butterflies or insects will start to move.
- Other improvements include prairie and maple forest displays with animal and nature replicas, and an interactive topography sand box. The goal is to introduce children to the local soil profile model, energy recycling, and wildlife tracks.
- Added ADA accessible entrance to the nature center.
- 3 foot tall, 6-8 feet long statues added to the entrance; a salamander, turtle, and spider.

Natural resource restorations

- Prescribed burns
 - Hire CCMI, and contractors to help facilitate burn management.

“Consider contacting Itasca community college. They have a fantastic wild land firefighter program there. And the interns are always looking for jobs. Including college students in that, I think would be an amazing opportunity for them.”

- They are always looking for help, and Anoka County love working with college students and trainees, and they have plenty of hands-on experience.
- Tree plantings
 - Work with many volunteer groups and nonprofits with plantings, especially along the Mississippi.
 - This also includes seed collection programs, plenty of volunteer opportunities.

Karen Blaska presents on the equity projects in Anoka County

Meet the Parks event

- 2 years ago Anoka County partnered with Outdoor Latino and the city of Fridley to put on a specific Latinx event, with the goal to make the parks more welcome to the Latino/a community.
- The event included food trucks, entertainment and activities.
 - Tables were set up that related to a park activity/service that they could use.
 - Volunteer interpreters were present so visitors could speak in their own language.
 - Visitors could also participate in a Zumba class.
 - Opportunity to meet the county staff.
- Hosted this event two years in a row.

Chill Zone

- Located at the beach at Rice Lake, Chain of Lakes.
- Design developed through a partnership with Centennial Students for Change, a diverse group of students who formed together after the George Floyd event. This group wants to see change in the community. They connected with the county and were able to talk about their needs within the parks.
- Teenagers are often the forgotten group in parks and recreation, the County wanted to design a space for them.
- This partnership created a ‘Chill Zone’:
 - A separate area to ‘hang’ as teenagers.
 - Green landscaping to create a feeling of welcome.

- Includes hammock stands.

Learn to Ride program

- Working with Washington County and REI to provide programs for youth to learn to ride bike.
- REI provided the equipment and instructors, the county provided the space.
- Hosted six lessons last year, and six lessons this year.

Augmented Reality Trail

- Downloadable app used to follow on a walk down certain paths.
- The app will ping at specific locations along trail prompting the app to be opened and display 3D models on the screen with educational information.
- The goal is to engage the youth and keep them excited.
- At end of trail there are action items to do with friends and family.
- Should be operational in the spring, 2023.

“How would you get the word out to the teenagers about the chill zone?”

- We’ll connect back with that high school group and help market it.

“Can I hear more about the augmented reality, is there educational elements to it?”

- Each node pops up with the image of what the model is and talks about it. And links to additional information. It is an interactive educational app.

“Is it regionally located information that they are learning about? “

- Yes, it includes prairie burn talk, information about local birds, flying squirrels, information on what someone could potentially see in Anoka county parks system.

Lunch

Statewide Trails Update

Lars Erdahl, DNR

Reviewed the purpose and accomplishments of the PTLAC Statewide Trail Work Group, and potential future partnerships.

- **Mission:** North to south, east to west across MN trail, utilizing existing trails, current trail master plans, and establishing trail corridors to connect MN communities.
- **Goals:** Promote outdoor recreation, public health, appreciation for Minnesota’s natural resources, connect state parks and regional parks, multi-agency collaboration, and public-private partnerships.
- **Trail users:** Multi-use trail including pedal bikes, pedal-assist bicycles, skaters/skiers, hikers/runners/walkers, bikepackers, backpackers, and campers.
- Majority of trails are paved, non-paved segments to be noted for trail users.

Workgroup created draft maps of potential trail routes, with a finalized map on 11/2021. Additionally, this workgroup created a project summary called Legacy Connector (Dec. 2, 2021).

- 50% of trails in the proposed Legacy Connector are already completed.
- Connects Minnesota to local culture, history, and natural resources.

MnDOT Bikeways Map

- Created a web-based MN Bikeways map that went live this past year. Shows nearly all known bikeways in MN. Users can click on individual segments, and use tools to filter routes by surface type and other attributes.
- This could be an opportunity for inter-agency collaboration.

Discussion

- “Are these trails open for other uses? Or specifically for bikes?”
 - Some sections are not for motorized vehicles, but otherwise they are open for inline skating, walking, etc.
 - Trails vary widely depending what system operates it, each have their own rules. The State map provides information for visitors to choose and plan routes.
- Potential to use MnDOT’s map to explore places to expand our trail systems to provide a better experience, considering a lot of people don’t want to bike, walk, or roller blade along a road.
- Are the trails supposed to be nonmotorized?
 - Some segments are snowmobile trails, but for the most part the trails are non-motorized. There have been many conversations recently on how to classify electric bikes and vehicles.
- Have to consider how trail use effects the landscape. Would separating snowmobile trails and hikers lower that impact? Visitor expectations should also be considered, do they know that certain areas have snowmobile trails?”
 - Usually online maps, like MnDOT, will provide information on the surface type, facility type, and usage.
- Trails should be built while considering who in the future will use them, and with what equipment. This could prevent future conflicts and harm.
- There should be user guidelines for what to do on a trail for safe multiuse interactions.
- We are behind on providing infrastructure for electric equipment, e-scooters, and bike mobility. There have been terrible accidents with these types of transportation. Are we looking far enough ahead in the future to safely include these?
 - Electric equipment is a fairly new consideration, many trails in the GMRPTC were designated before electric mobility was considered. Following what the GMRPTC master plan had written at that time, trails are for bikes, cross country skiing or walking.
 - DNR tries to best optimize the system, there are now three classes of ebikes, and currently adapted legislation to put restrictions on class 3 bikes. They also have guidelines on trail etiquette on DNR website, and trail signage.
 - Metro Council recently increased the standard width of trails from eight to ten feet, and have been talking about moving it to twelve. High use, high congestion, and increase speeds brings conflict. Important to have signage about respect, but these signs need regular change for users to notice them.
- What was the feedback from the three agencies originally, on this state wide trail idea? What bike trails is in the future and long range planning? What are the plans for long range funding for bike trails and is there any discussion for a grant and aid funding mechanism for bikes, or other solutions?

- Shared at the DNR leadership's team meeting. On a department level they are thinking about how to set the stage for future, what the future vision is and how to sustain that vision. There is a continual struggle with trail maintenance, and there is efforts to bring emphasize the importance of that work bring forth this vision.
- All the trails in GMRPTC are maintained by volunteers for the most part, can't fund those small maintenance projects. In the application cycle this coming year there is language around what GMRPTC can do for grants to repair trails that were built prior to being a sustainable mountain bike trail. Trying to work with these communities to build better trails. Received feedback with in the past two years with the mountain bike study on how these trails are perceived and how they are maintained.
- Metro Council is working on improving their trails. Trails are complex since they cross jurisdiction. Management of trails are getting better, for example Pavement Plans have been created. When the quality of the trail declines people do not us it.
- Legacy funds can help local communities invest resources in building and setting values towards shared trail spaces. Enforcement is also important in educating folks on considerate trail use. Communities with enforcement can impact that area for multiple years.
- Does the GMRPTC trail guidelines address maintenance and complete reconstruction?
 - It address Mountain Bike building and maintenance.
- Trail maintenance is becoming more commonly considered in cost decisions.
- Encourage Liaisons to suggest trail ambassador programs within their agency. It is not enforcement, but having the presence of someone representing the agency is good thing in the public eye.

2021 Metro Regional Parks Visitor Study

Darcie Vandergrift, Met Council

Darcie Vandergrift begins presenting the results of the 2021 Metro Regional Parks Visitor Study.

- Visitor survey every 5 years

Purpose:

- Inform planning, policy, and management of regional park and trail system
- Evaluate and strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails
- Update data in funding formulas to help determine where funding goes for parks and trails
- 5,400 surveys, over 50% response rate, 12 years and up
- At least 393 surveys per each Metro implementing agency.
- Report to be published late 2022
- Visitor dissatisfaction: Bathroom availability and quality, water access, and trail maintenance were the highest dissatisfaction amongst visitors.
- Visitor satisfaction: 88% reported facilities very good or excellent, lower satisfaction in older facilities (MPRB, St. Paul). Visitor suggestions: better trail maintenance, bathrooms, water, signage, shade are important.

- Most popular activity: hiking/walking. The 2nd and 3rd most popular activities, the data shows differences by social characteristics (ethnicity, age, gender, disabilities etc.)
- Visitor demographics: 90.7%, 84.3% white park and trail visitors. Goal is to create a more welcoming atmosphere within the parks for visitors that reflect the regional demographics.
- This study identified men, women, transgender, and gender nonbinary people in the demographic data.
- Men visit trails more than women, and women visit parks more.
- There is an age gap between 12-24 and 25-44 year olds in trail visitation and park visitation.
- Greater amount of BIPOC community members visit parks and trails between ages 12-24.
- Big gaps between Minnesota population and the trail visitation demographics.

Discussion

- “What does the ‘relax and do nothing’ activity category mean? Maybe they are breathing in the fresh air, or working on their mental health.”
 - Honor what people say they are doing. Because of this, have to consider how our facilities affect that.
- We have a dominant culture that defines our relationship and how we perceive nature, and that contributes to how people define what they do in parks.
- Open year-round bathrooms contribute to equity and equality. Visitors may interpret closed/lack of bathrooms with feelings of unwelcome.
- “Do you have data on Indigenous communities and their visitation to parks? It is important to include this so that they are not invisible. “
 - The margin of error for Indigenous people was too large to be reliable, and is not reported in this graph, but Indigenous visitation exceeded the population of the region. More detail of this data is in the actual report.
- “How does Indigenous visitation compare to the previous study?”
 - The methodology and data of the 2016 is not such that we can compare it to this. But we are making plans so that we can compare this study, with the next.
- Important to understand what people are doing to create return visitors, and how to create a welcoming system for these returners. New Visitors are 3x greater a presence at parks than trails.
- Creating free park pass programs could help the financial situations of potential visitors.
 - There is a whole part of in the actual report on barriers, and who finds cost to be a barrier and income as an important access to equipment.
- Create coherent surveys so our three partnering agencies can compare results.

Updates

GMRPTC

- The new 2022 policy and planning report will be done in the next couple of days, will share it out when it arrives.

- Mountain bike design guidelines to be released in January.
- Special track wheelchair grant applications due tomorrow. (December 9, 2022)

Met Council

- Liaisons and Lars are working with benchmarks recommendations to prepare out 2023 legislative presentation
- Heading into the biannual budget session at the state legislature. Hoping for success in bringing funding to parks and trails and also Legacy.

DNR

- In the process of finishing the State Wide Visitor Survey. This information will be shared in an upcoming meeting sometime this year.
- Evaluating higher than normal visitor trends. Asking questions like “what does this mean for the services we provide? How do we think about the ability to extend our seasons if people are coming longer? What services are important to have? How would we staff that? What should we be offering when?”

Action Items:

- Amend October meeting minutes, approval moved to February, 2023 meeting.
- Revise the Charter, review at February, 2023 meeting
- Elect a Chair and Co-Chair, consider nominations.
- Finalize meeting plan, bring any changes or issues to discuss in next meeting.
- **Next Meeting:** February 23, 2023, at the Blazing Star Room, Centennial Office Building St. Paul. Hosted by DNR.

Meeting is adjourned

Site Tour:

Members available to stay for site tour had a guided tour through park wooded and grassland areas via a wintery wagon ride drawn by draft horses.

