


Greenway Plan Update

Dakota County Planning Commission
September 25, 2025

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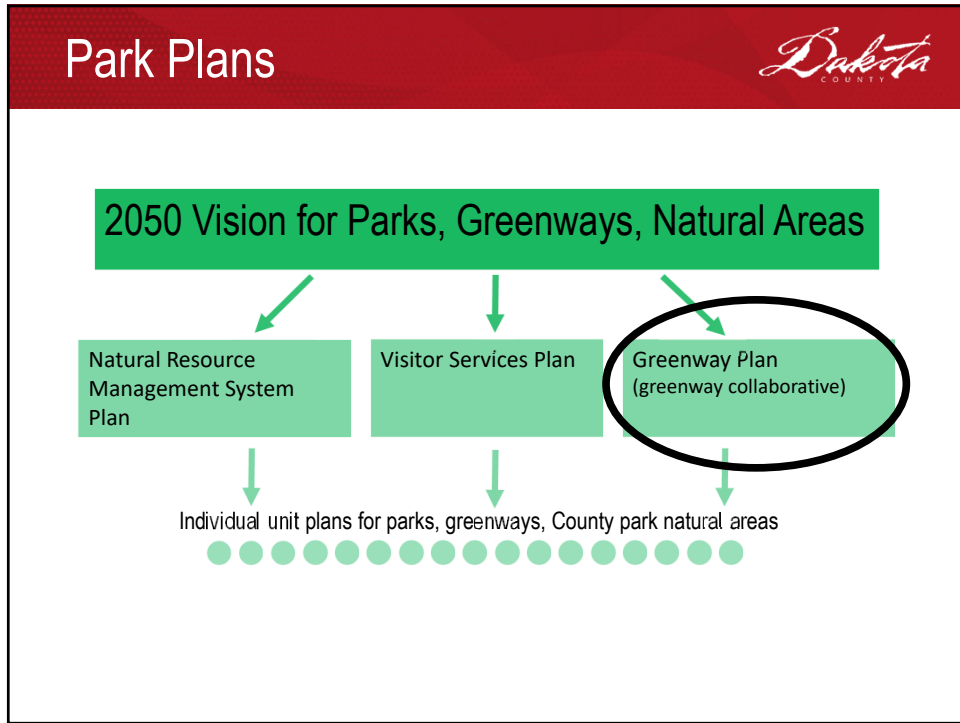
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Agenda



- Park plans (alignment with newly adopted vision)
- Current Greenway Guidebook guidelines
- Overview of greenways
- Greenway visitation and status
- Successes/challenges
- Topics for discussion
- What's next

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Greenway Vision *Dakota* COUNTY

In 2008 Dakota County adopted a greenway vision of a trail system that integrates multiple public values:

- Trail Based Recreation
- Non-Motorized Transportation
- Habitat
- Improved Water Quality

Greenways Connect Places Where People Want to Go

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2040 Greenway Vision - Map



Dakota County Parks, Lakes, Trails and Greenways Vision, 2040

What's New?

GREAT PLACES: Destination Parks

- New Whitetail Woods Regional Park in Empire Township
 - Winter activity area
 - Gathering and celebration areas
 - Swimming and water play areas
- More popular "park basics"
 - Enhanced picnicking
 - Biking and accessible trail loops

CONNECTED PLACES: Greenway Trails

- "Bring parks to people" -- Linear parks connect parks, schools, lake trails, playgrounds, libraries, and the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers
- Walking, biking, and in-line skating
- Public agencies work together to create 200 miles of greenways using mostly publicly-owned land

PROTECTED PLACES: Green Infrastructure

- Enhance and protect park resources
- Protect stream corridors in public/private partnerships
- Protect natural areas and open space in public/private partnerships

DAKOTA COUNTY PARK SYSTEM and COLLABORATIVE OPEN SPACE PROTECTION

- Dakota County Parks
- Park Private Inholdings
- Dakota County Park Conservation Areas (CPCA)
- Federal, State, and Other Regional Open Space
- Existing and Planned Regional Greenways
- Greenway Search Corridors
- Interim Connection Routes
- Stream Conservation Corridors and Greenways

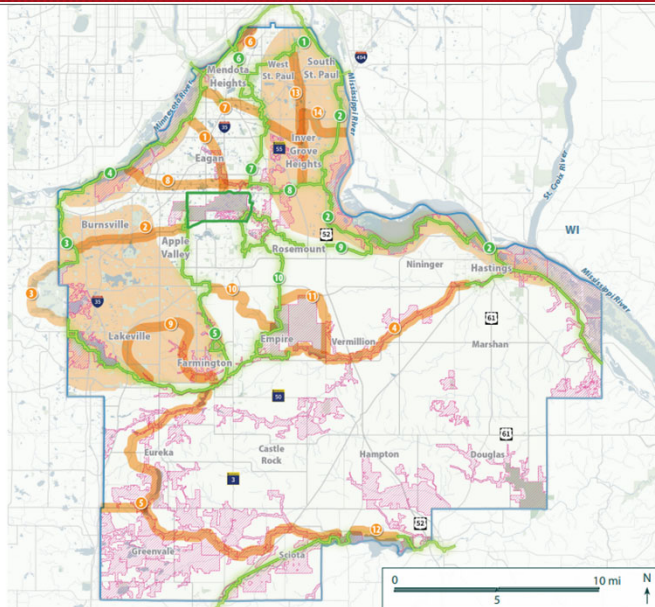


Regional greenways are intended to be built by 2025. All other parks, greenways, trails and water areas will be developed through public/private partnerships.

Dakota County Office of Planning, 2017

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2050 Greenway Vision - Map



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Greenway Vision



Greenways are different from trails along County Roads



County Road Trail



Greenway

Guideline: Greenways are at least 80% away from roads

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Greenway Vision



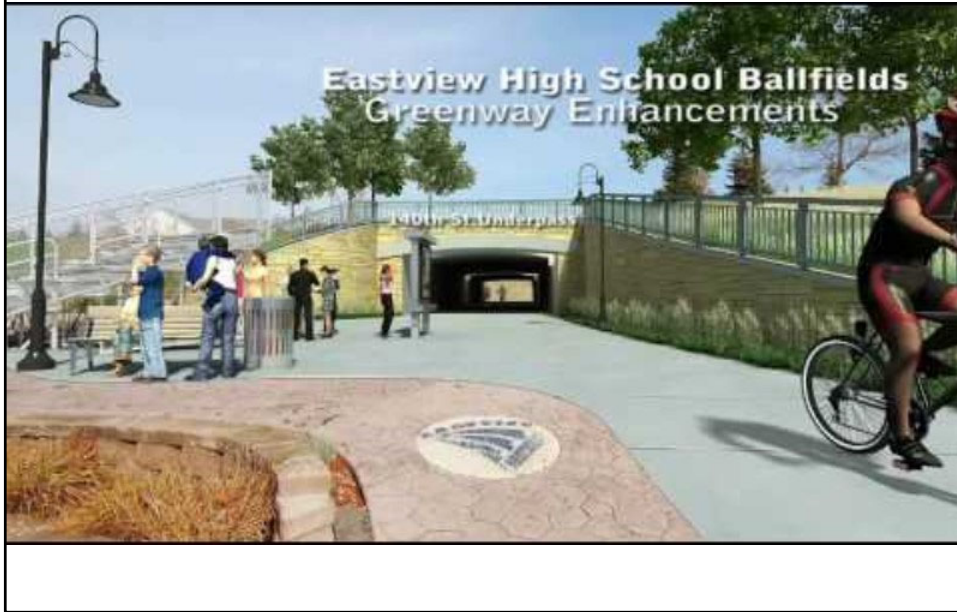
Greenways keep users separated from vehicles



Guideline: Greenways use tunnels and bridges to cross major streets

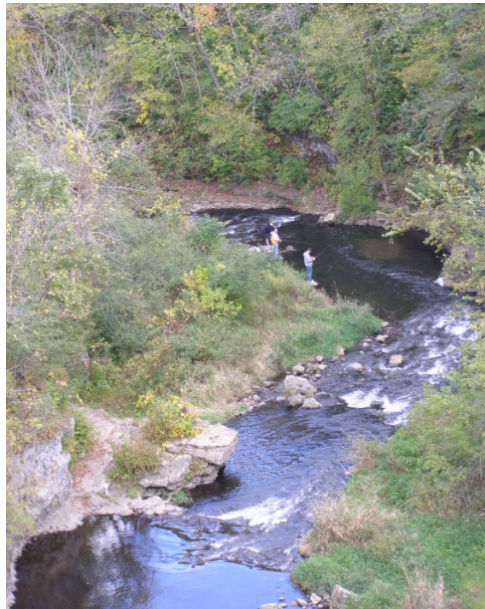
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Greenway Vision - Video



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Vermillion – Hastings Gorge



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Lake Marion – Sunset Park



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Lake Marion – Juno Tr.



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Minnesota River – Black Dog Lake



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Minnesota River – Long Meadow



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Minnesota River – Quarry Ponds *Dakota*
COUNTY



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Minnesota River – Oheyawahe *Dakota*
COUNTY



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Minnesota River – Sibley House



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Mill Towns – Lake Byllesby Bridge




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Downtowns *Dakota*
COUNTY



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North Creek – Apple Valley (Zoo) *Dakota*
COUNTY



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Vermillion Falls - Hastings



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Vermillion Highlands – Whitetail Woods



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Mississippi River – Kaposia Landing



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Mississippi River – Swing Bridge



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Mississippi River – Pine Bend Bluffs



25

Mississippi River – Pine Bend



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Mississippi River – Pine Bend



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Mississippi River – Spring Lake



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Spring Lake Overlook



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Greenway Vision



Discussion Topic

What did you see that you liked about greenways in the previous slides?

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Greenway Visitors

Five most popular activities on regional trails are:

1. Biking (54%)
2. Hiking/walking (41%)
3. Dog walking/dog park (16%)
4. Jogging/running (16%)
5. Observing nature (15%)

2021 Visitor Snap Shot Greenways

	Under-Represented	On-Target	Over-Represented
AGE			
12 - 17	✓		
18 - 24	✓		
25 - 34		✓	
35 - 54			✓
55 - 74			✓
75 +	✓		
HOUSEHOLD INCOME			
Less than \$40,000	✓		
\$40,000 - \$79,999	✓		
\$80,000 +			✓
GENDER			
Male			✓
Female	✓		
RACE			
People of Color	✓		
White			✓
ETHNICITY			
Hispanic/Latino	✓		

Data from 2021 Met Council Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study and 2022 US Census ACS Estimates, Table DP05.

Top five changes that will help people visit trails more often:

1. None of the items are barriers (29%)
2. Better walking or better access (25%)
3. A trail closer to me (14%)
4. Better access to rental equipment (13%)
5. Park programming and features that are more interesting to me (11%)

GENDER GREENWAYS

Male
66.7%

Female
35.4%

Data Source: 2021 Met Council Regional Parks and Trails Visitor Study

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Progress Toward Plans

- 9 Greenway Long-Range Plans
- 4 Greenway Natural Resource Management Plans
- 3 Greenway Interpretative Plans

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How Greenways Have Been Delivered



- Leveraging External funding (especially in the beginning)
- In collaboration with cities and agencies
- In coordination with private land development
- Through separate County-led projects

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Successes



- Growing visitation
- Leveraged external funding
- Dedicated internal funding
- Greenways planned and built not along roads
- Many grade separated crossings installed
- Many trailheads completed
- Connected natural resource corridors

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Successes



- Wayfinding standards completed
- Greenways are primarily ADA accessible
- Cities are seeking funding for County system
- Greenway partnerships are strong with cities
- New dedicated greenway work unit at County

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Challenges/Opportunities



- Growing use leads to use conflicts (more congestion, ebikes)
- Need to appeal to a broader audience
- Greenways have natural resource challenges
- Some greenways have interpretive plans, others not
- Local trail loops/connections would improve system
- Benefits of collaboration

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Discussion Topic



Growing use leads to user conflicts

- Some trail segments have high volumes of walkers, bicyclists, dog walkers
- Speed of some E-bikes, scooters, and distance cyclists

What methods to reduce trail user conflicts have you observed? Where have you seen these in place?

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Discussion Topic



Some people are not using greenways

What opportunities exist to broaden appeal of the system?

- Safety?
- Amenities and destination connections?
- Programmed events?
- Rentals?
- Awareness and marketing?
- Wayfinding signs and branding?

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Discussion Topic



Greenways provide habitat connectivity, but they also have a lot of natural resource edge

Are greenway widths wide enough? How can Dakota County collaborate with others on natural resource stewardship?

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Discussion Topic



The greenway vision integrates multiple public values:

- Trail based recreation
- Non-motorized transportation
- Connected habitat
- Water quality

What is the role for interpretation, memorials, or public art in the greenway system?

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Discussion Topic



Local trail loops and connections enhance the County's greenway system

What should be the County's role in helping to make these local loops and connections?

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Discussion Topic



Collaboration has been key to the development of the County's greenway system

How can Dakota County maximize collaboration with greenway partners?

- *Cities?*
- *State agencies?*
- *Non-profits?*
- *Private landowners?*

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What's next



- Develop a request for proposal
- Hire consultant
- Engage city and agency stakeholders/partners
- Consider changes to plan

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Thank you



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