

DAKOTA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Dakota County Western Service Center – Room L139
14955 Galaxie Avenue
Apple Valley, MN 55124
Thursday, September 25, 2025
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Agenda

- I. Call to Order
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Public Comments:
Anyone wishing to address the Planning Commission on an item not on the agenda may address the Planning Commission at this time (comments are limited to 5 minutes).
- IV. Approval of the Agenda
- V. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes of Meeting Held on July 24, 2025
- VI. County’s Greenway Plan Kickoff - Information
(Tony Wotzka and Michael Honer – Parks, and Kurt Chatfield - Planning)
- VII. Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions
 - County Board authorized grant application for PFAS settlement program
 - Metropolitan Council is reviewing proposed city/county changes to the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (RBTN)
 - System Statements are scheduled for release this month, kicking off the round of local comprehensive plan updates due in 2028
- VIII. Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

Public Art Plan Pop-up open houses	1) Sept. 20-21 st , Lakeville Arts Festival 2) Sept. 24, 5pm-7:30pm, Art Extravaganza at Wescott Library 3) Sept 27, 1pm-3:30pm, Pet Portraits at Wescot Library Dakota County Public Art Questionnaire
Lebanon Hills Greenway Design (formerly the Lebanon to Mendota Greenway) Pop-up open house	October 3 rd , 3:30pm-6:30pm. Lebanon Hills Visitor Center Lebanon Hills Greenway, Inver Grove Heights and Eagan Segment Dakota County
- IX. Topics for Next Meeting (Thursday, October 23, 2025 – 7 p.m., Western Service Center, L139)
 - None at this time
- X. Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates
- XI. Adjourn



Meeting Minutes: Dakota County Planning Commission Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes-DRAFT

Date: 7/24/2025

Minutes prepared by Kurt Chatfield

Location: Mississippi River Greenway Tour (Kaposia Landing, Swing Bridge Park, Pine Bend Bluffs)

Attendance

Members Present

- Amy Hunting
- James Guttman
- Tony Nelson
- Paul Nasvik
- Barry Graham
- Ibrahim Abdinasir
- Kelly Kausel
- Steve Shurts
- Jerry Rich
- Lori Hansen

Dakota County staff members attending:

- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- John Mertens, Principal Planner

Member(s) Absent:

- Dennis Peine
- Jill Smith

Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 6:30 p.m.
- By Chair, Jim Guttman

Pledge of Allegiance

- The Planning Commission opened the meeting by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comments

- Comments/Notes: No audience member wished to address an item not on the agenda.

Approval of Agenda

Chair Guttman asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

The Planning Commission advised no changes, additions, or deletions.

MOTION: Commissioner Hansen moved, seconded by Commissioner Hunting, approving the agenda. Voice vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (from June 26, 2025)

Chair Guttman asked if there were any changes to the previous meeting's minutes.

The Planning Commission advised no changes, additions, or deletions.

MOTION: Commissioner Graham moved, seconded by Commissioner Shurts, approving the previous meeting's minutes. Voice vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 - Unanimously Approved

Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions

Comments/Notes: Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, provided the Planning Commission with an update on the following County Board Actions:

- The County Board authorized a design contract for the boat launch at Spring Lake Park Reserve (formerly Bud's Landing)

Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

CSAH 86 Roundabouts on Hwy 3, and on Hwy 56 - Design Open house	Monday, August 11, from 4:30-6:30 pm Saint Mark's Lutheran Church 28595 Randolph Blvd
Hwy 42 and US 52 Interchange Open House	Monday, August 25, 4pm-6pm Rosemount Public Works Building, 14041 Biscayne Avenue

Mississippi River Greenway Tour (John Mertens – Planning Office)

The Planning Commission received an update on the process to update the Mississippi River Greenway Long-Range Plan. John Mertens provided a history of the previous plan, adopted in 1999, and the role of the cities and county in delivering the existing trail and trailheads. John described the purpose of the plan and its importance for seeking and securing federal and state funding along the corridor.

Kaposia Landing

The Planning Commission tour began at Kaposia Landing. The Planning Commission discussed the following topics (with staff responses in italics):

Since Kaposia Landing was originally a landfill, are there any concerns about methane gas management? *The landfill mitigation at Kaposia Landing was led by the City of South St. Paul, and it is our understanding that much of the old landfill consisted of construction and demolition debris from the former stockyards.*

The Planning Commission discussed the availability of the bathroom building at the north end of the park for general public use, as opposed to primarily for users of the athletic complex. It is believed that the bathroom, while open to the public, is currently open only for athletic events. *Staff responded that the update of the Long-Range Plan can address the benefits of shared facilities and shared costs between the City and the County. Kaposia Landing would appear to make for an excellent trailhead for the Mississippi River Greenway.*

The topic of high-speed electric bikes was discussed. Several Commissioners voiced their concerns about safety for pedestrians. Several comments were made that electric bikes open the door for a wider range of users. *Staff responded that electric bikes are rapidly growing in popularity and that recreation providers around the country are concerned about potential safety concerns. At some point, it may make sense for the County to update its recently adopted Park Ordinance to address the changing technology and use trends. Dakota County will need to work with other agencies to develop consistent electric bike standards and rules.*

Planning Commissioners talked about trail conflicts in general, and it was noted that off-leash dogs or poorly managed dogs can also cause problems for other trail users.

The Planning Commission talked about the connectivity of the Mississippi River Greenway to other greenways and to local trail loops. The South St. Paul loop along the river was discussed and was recognized as being as popular as the regional trail. The need to have a pedestrian connection along Bryant Avenue to the Mississippi River Greenway was raised as an issue.

Planning Commissioners discussed the need to coordinate with other agencies as the Mississippi River Greenway extends south and potentially to Redwing. *Staff responded that a master plan was prepared for the trail alignment between Dakota and Goodhue counties. Recently, Dakota County staff have met with Goodhue County staff and Prairie Island Indian Community members about the potential for constructing the trail in coordination with the reconstruction of CSAH 54 that runs along the river.*

Swing Bridge Park and Trailhead

The Planning Commission drove along the Mississippi River Greenway trail alignment to Swing Bridge Park. Planning Commissioners walked out onto the river pier and toured the facility at the trailhead. Planning Commissioners discussed the importance of having ADA facilities, noting that most ramps and facilities were in

place, but that a few additional ADA facilities were missing. *Staff noted their comments and shared the information with County Facilities staff.*

There were numerous positive comments about the views from the Swing Bridge pier and the LED lights that have recently been installed on the bridge. Planning Commissioners looked at the interpretive signs and historic artifacts that were preserved from the original swing section of the bridge.

Planning Commissioners discussed the partnership with Inver Grove Heights and the shared facilities for bathrooms, picnicking, parking, and maintenance.

Pine Bend Bluffs Scientific Natural Area and Trailhead

The Planning Commission drove parallel to the Mississippi River Greenway trail to Pine Bend Bluffs Trailhead. Planning Commissioners discussed the County's partnership with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on the surrounding land and for the trail and trailhead.

Planning Commissioners walked along the Mississippi River Greenway trail to an overlook of the bend in the Mississippi River and Spring Lake. Several Planning Commissioners also walked out to remnant bluff prairie and views of the Mississippi River Valley.

Wrap up

In conclusion, Planning Commissioners stated that the tour was beneficial and will be helpful moving forward as a plan draft is prepared.

Adjournment

MOTION: Commissioner Nelson moved, seconded by Commissioner Kausel, to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. Voice Vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.

Next Meeting: Thursday, August 28, 2025, at 7 p.m., Western Service Center, Conference Room L139

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Chatfield

DAKOTA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE: 9/25/2025

AGENDA ITEM: Greenway Plan Update (*information*)

PREPARED BY: KURT CHATFIELD

PURPOSE

Now that the County's 2050 Vision for Parks, Greenways, and Natural Areas has been adopted, the County's Greenway Plan needs to be updated. The purpose of this item is to "kick off" the process to update the Greenway Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Greenway Plan (formerly guidebook) was adopted in 2010 and amended in 2013. It provides a framework to establish the County greenway system, which is part of the region's park system. A central theme of the plan is that greenways provide multiple public purposes, including:

- Trail-based recreation
- Non-motorized transportation
- Habitat connectivity
- Water quality improvements

The guidelines within the plan were written to achieve these public purposes. There may be additional public benefits of establishing and operating a greenway system, and the Planning Commission will be asked to discuss these opportunities.

Dakota County has over 15 years of experience building greenways using the existing plan. Some greenway segments have been built solely by Dakota County, and others through collaboration with cities and agencies. The plan recommends roles and responsibilities for collaborative projects, along with cost-share guidelines between agencies.

The Planning Commission will review the existing plan and recommend changes to be contemporary with the County's 2050 Vision for Parks, Greenways, and Natural Areas. Discussion topics will include: growing use and use conflicts, need for access, regional and local system connectivity, facilities and amenities, and how to make the most of collaborative opportunities with cities and other agencies.

ATTACHMENTS

Greenway Plan Update PowerPoint presentation

QUESTIONS

The following questions are intended to help assist in review of the packet materials.

1. How to address growing use of the system and user conflicts?
2. How to broaden the appeal of the greenway system to people that are not visiting?
3. How to best protect and manage natural resources along greenway corridors?
4. What is the role of interpretation, memorials, or public art along greenways?
5. How best to promote local trail connections and loops along greenways?
6. How to foster collaboration with cities and agencies to work with Dakota County to build greenways?



Greenway Plan Update

Dakota County Planning Commission
September 25, 2025

Tony Wotzka - Parks
Michael Honer – Parks
Kurt Chatfield - Planning

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Agenda



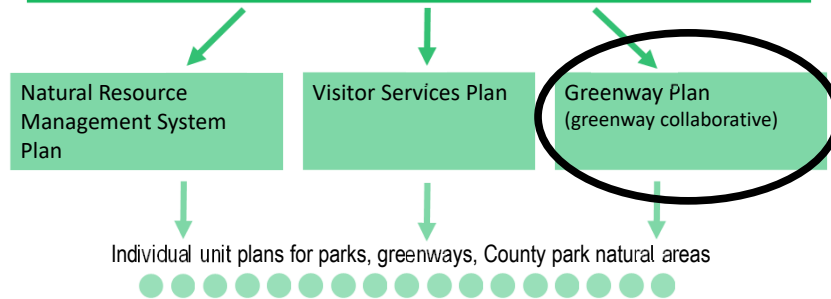
- Park plans (alignment with newly adopted vision)
- Current Greenway Guidebook guidelines
- Overview of greenways
- Greenway visitation and status
- Successes/challenges
- Topics for discussion
- What's next

2

Park Plans



2050 Vision for Parks, Greenways, Natural Areas



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Greenway Vision



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 Whittell Woods Regional Park in Empire Township
- * More things to do in parks
 - 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

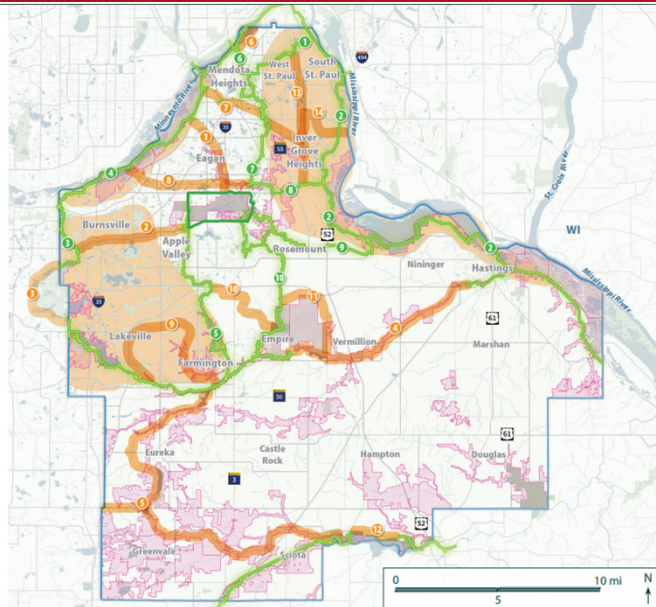
- Dakota County Parks
- Park Private Inholdings
- Dakota County Park Conservation Areas (CPCA)
- Federal, State, and Other Regional Open Space
- Existing and Planned Regional Greenways
- Greenway Search Corridors
- Interline Connection Routes
- Stream Conservation Corridors and Greenways



Notes:
Regional greenways are intended to stimulate future development and provide a network of greenways that 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

Dakota
COUNTY



9

Vermillion – Hastings Gorge

Dakota
COUNTY



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Lake Marion – Sunset Park

Dakota
COUNTY



11

Lake Marion – Juno Tr.

Dakota
COUNTY



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Minnesota River – Black Dog Lake

Dakota
COUNTY



13

Minnesota River – Long Meadow

Dakota
COUNTY



14

Minnesota River – Quarry Ponds

Dakota
COUNTY



15

Minnesota River – Oheyawahe

Dakota
COUNTY



16

Minnesota River – Sibley House

Dakota
COUNTY



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Mill Towns – Lake Byllesby Bridge

Dakota
COUNTY



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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

Dakota
COUNTY



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Vermillion Highlands – Whitetail Woods

Dakota
COUNTY



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Mississippi River – Kaposia Landing

Dakota
COUNTY



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Mississippi River – Swing Bridge

Dakota
COUNTY



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Mississippi River – Pine Bend Bluffs

Dakota
COUNTY



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Mississippi River – Pine Bend

Dakota
COUNTY



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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%)



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



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

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 DP003.

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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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