



Park Notes

A newsletter of the Friends of St. Paul and Ramsey County Parks
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Agreement reached on Port Authority land transfer

After years of delays and disagreements, it appears that the Saint Paul Port Authority and the City of Saint Paul have agreed to a land transfer that will close a chapter in river-front development that began in 2008.

As reported in the August 2011 Park Notes, the Saint Paul Port Authority was granted a permit in 2008 to develop a new commercial docking facility at Southport. The plan was to move Upper River Services from the west bank of the Mississippi River directly across from downtown Saint Paul to a new location further south. The goal was to clean up the riverbank and comply with the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan to build a park in the area. One of the conditions imposed on the Authority was to donate several parcels of land to the City.

The Port Authority did not transfer the land but, at the cost of \$3 million in public dollars, they did build the new Southport facility. With a shiny new facility downstream, the Authority decided to leave Upper River Services right where they were rather than move them.

Agreeing that mistakes had been made, the City Council and the Authority agreed in August to a compromise. The Port Authority is to transfer the land required in the 2008 agreement plus some additional land that the Parks Department says will help meet the long term objective laid out in the Comprehensive Plan. The transfer is to be completed by 12-1-2011.

The Friends sought to have the Port Authority abide by the 2008 transferring all of the land originally committed to park purposes plus additional parkland.

Mississippi River Trail

The Mississippi River Trail (MRT) is a bicycling route that travels from the headwaters of the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana. It is a 3,000-mile system of bicycle-friendly roads and multi-use pathways connecting Minnesota with 9 other states linking Saint Paul with St. Louis, Memphis, New Orleans and hundreds of other smaller towns and river communities.

Today MRT is much more than a vision but it is also a work in progress. The MRT began in the 1990's as a community and economic development project for the lower Mississippi River delta region between New Orleans and St. Louis, and later it was adopted by states between St. Louis and the Headwaters of the Mississippi in Itasca State Park.

The route relies on road shoulders or low-use roads. Within Minnesota: 60% of the trail is local, township and county roads; 25% state and US highways; and 15% is state, regional and local trails. Additional trails will likely be incorporated into the MRT's alignment but most of the trail will continue to share the road right-of-way with motorized vehicles.

A new MRT website, <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html>, was launched in 2010 with interactive Google Earth based maps and a complete series of printable maps.

In the works for the MRT are:

- Complete a signing plan for road and off-road segments not located on state highways;
- Provide professional marketing assistance to encourage partnerships within the public and private sectors;
- Post new GIS-interactive and printable maps on Mn/DOT's and other's websites for the 2012 bicycling season.

For more information visit the MRT website or contact Dan Collins, Principal Planner at Daniel.Collins@state.mn.us

This article is excerpted from materials provided by Dan Collins

Lilydale Park redevelopment

The long awaited redevelopment of Lilydale Park was launched with groundbreaking for the Gateway and the beginning of environmental cleanup work. To the public the most visible change will be the 22 foot high stone and brick structure that will mark the entrance to the park. Located just west of where the High Bridge passes overhead, the sign will be completed next spring. The Gateway is funded by the Saint Paul Parks Conservancy which has committed a total of over a half million dollars to the Lilydale project. This is the Conservancy's first major project.

Funding for phase I is not fully in place for the redevelopment and Saint Paul Parks staff are applying for grants totally \$8 million from numerous sources. Phase I construction will begin in 2012. If all funding is secured it will pay for the new roadway from the High Bridge past Pickerel Lake. It will include the bike lanes, a new bridge, storm water improvement, signage and some park trails.

Trail safety analyzed

The Minnesota Department of Transportation will convene working groups comprised of municipal, county, Metropolitan Council staff, and citizen groups concerned about ensuring safe facilities for pedestrians and bicycles to analyze non-motorized crossing of I-694 between I35W and I35E. Meetings will begin this fall. For more information please contact Mark Lindeberg, North Area Engineer, at mark.lindeberg@state.mn.us

Big changes for Keller Golf Course

Redevelopment of Keller Golf Course is underway with plans for replacement of the club house and the pro shop and renovation of the course itself coming after the close of the 2012 season.

Design work is beginning this fall for the club house and pro shop. A key decision will be whether to continue these operations within one building or built two separate facilities. The total design and construction cost will be \$12 million with funding from the Ramsey County Capital Improvement Program, which will sell CIP bonds.

Ramsey County parks looks ahead

Ramsey County is currently planning for redevelopment of seven park beginning in 2012 and extending through 2017. On the drawing board:

Tamarack Nature Center: nature play area will be added, an entrance arbor constructed and a boulder climb built;

Battle Creek Regional Park: design and construction of a trail-head facility and trail development on the north side of Pigs Eye Lake;

Keller Regional Park: in addition to the improvements listed above there will be design and construction of site improvements throughout the park including a trail, playground, archery range, canoe portage improvements and landscape enhancements.

Long Lake Regional Park: design and construction of a central picnic area, pedestrian trail connections, playground development, shoreline restoration and landscape enhancements;

Tony Schmidt Regional Park: design and construction of new trails and landscape restoration;

Vadnais-Snail Lakes Regional Park: replace Sucker Lake Road with bituminous trail and parallel turf trail; site and restoration improvements along the existing road corridor;

Rice Creek Trail: construct a trail extension from Long Lake Regional Park to County Road H consisting of about one mile off-road bituminous and boardwalk trail, and pedestrian bridges to provide safe crossings over the railway and Rice Creek.

Saint Paul considers tree trimmer ordinance

Saint Paul is considering new requirements for licensed tree trimmers in the city. While surrounding communities have increased their tree trimmer license requirements in recent years, Saint Paul's ordinance has not been updated. With emergence of emerald ash borer and other diseases it is

increasingly important that those working on the Saint Paul tree canopy be knowledgeable as well as safe in their work approaches. If approved, the new ordinance, recommended by the Saint Paul Tree Advisory Panel, will require higher levels of insurance coverage and each company must have a certified arborist on their staff. That individual will need to take periodic classes to make sure their training is up to date.

If someone drops a promotional flier or goes door-to-door seeking to do tree work, ask to see their license. If they are not licensed, contact the Department of Safety and Inspections at 651-266-8989. After wind storms or other natural disasters unlicensed tree trimmers often flood into the area. These people may not have insurance putting the homeowner at risk.

Holiday Trees

Trees may be donated for planting in Ramsey County Parks, and in Arden Hills, Blaine, Brooklyn Park, Eagan, Little Canada, Falcon Heights, Maplewood, Shoreview, St. Louis Park, Vadnais Heights, White Bear Lake, White Bear Township and Woodbury.

The holidays are just around the corner. Think gift giving. Think Tribute Tree. A Tribute Tree is one that you give in honor of someone and it is planted in a park by city staff. Voila! No gift wrapping! No shipping! No spending hours at the mall! AND it is perfect for that person who already has one or two of everything you can think of and can afford.

A tree is a gift that will be enjoyed by birds and critters as much as it is appreciated by the person you are recognizing. Everyone benefits: you; your friend; the Friends; the park system; and our shared environment.

Tribute Trees cost \$100 each or three for \$250. A hand stamped holiday card announcing your gift will be sent to the person you wish to honor. Park staff will plant the tree next summer and by late summer we will send a map showing its location. To purchase your gift tree, please use the form included with Park Notes, or download an order form from the Friends' website at www.friendsoftheparks.org

**The Friends of Parks & Trails
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