



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting
Wednesday, August 18, 2021

Agenda Item

Item 6. A. - I-35W Frontage Trail Cost Share - Burnsville

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

The City of Burnsville has received federal funding to construct a trail to connect the north and south bank of the Minnesota River across the new I-35W Bridge. The federal funding will only cover a portion of the cost and the City has asked the LMRWD to consider a contribution to the project.

LMRWD staff has evaluated the projects conformance with its goals. A summary of the evaluation is attached. The City of Burnsville has provided a letter with some details of the project. Jen Desrude, Burnsville's City Engineer, will attend the Board meeting to answer any questions the Board may have.

Attachments

City of Burnsville request for I-35W Frontage Trail Cost Share

Technical memorandum dated August 13, 2021 Burnsville I-25W Trail Project

Recommended Action

Provide Direction to staff

Date: July 8, 2021

To: Linda Loomis, Administrator, Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

From: Jen Desrude, City Engineer

CC: Dave Hutton, SEH

RE: I-35W Frontage Trail Cost Share

When MnDOT completed the new I-35W Minnesota River Bridge, a multi-use trail crossing was included on the new bridge. During the spring, summer, and fall of 2019, the Minnesota River was flooded much of the time and the existing trail (I-35W Frontage Trail) that leads to the bridge was under water during most of 2019. The bicycle community requested that MnDOT raise the I-35W Frontage Trail out of the floodplain to allow for safe access to the bridge. However, MnDOT was too far along in the project to add this to the scope of work. The City of Burnsville applied for a federal grant in the 2020 regional solicitation and on February 17, 2021, the City of Burnsville was awarded a federal grant for the I-35W Frontage Trail project. A complete project description is attached.

The estimated construction cost for the project is approximately \$485,000, of which the federal funding will pay 80%. The remaining 20% and all design, environmental review, and project administration costs are covered with local funding. Due to the environmental sensitivity of this project, it is anticipated that these associated project costs are approximately \$250,000. The table below shows the project cost and funding breakdown:

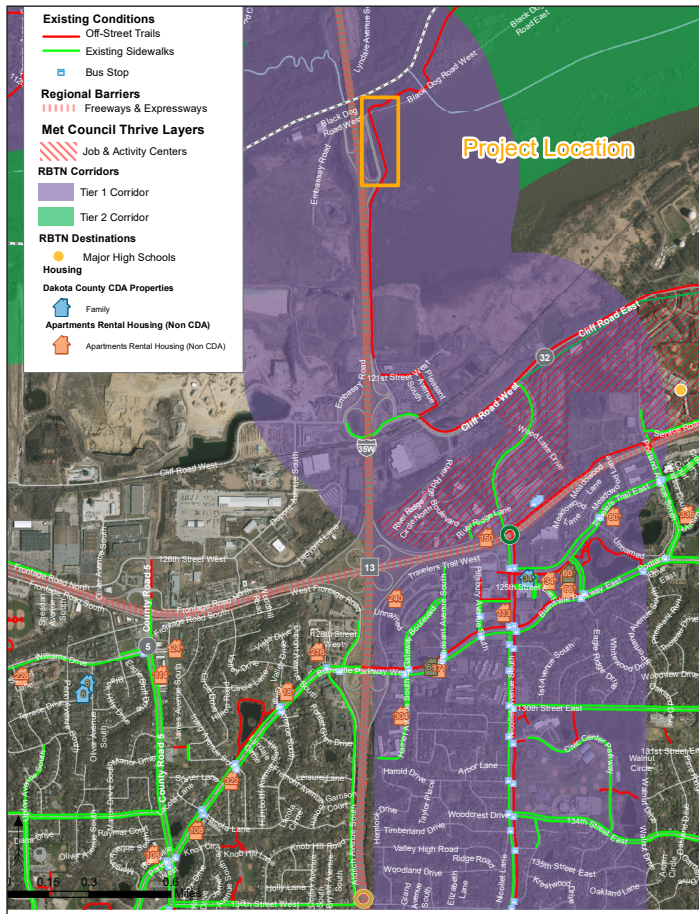
	<i>Federal Grant</i>	<i>Local Funding</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Construction</i>	\$388,000	\$97,000	\$485,000
<i>Associated Project Costs</i>		\$250,000	\$250,000
Totals	\$388,000	\$347,000	\$735,000

Initially, the regional solicitation was for projects to be constructed in 2024, however, the City requested the funding be moved up for this project, since it is a high priority for the City. The current schedule is to complete pre-design, plans and specifications, environmental work, and the project memorandum before the end 2021 and to have the plans and specifications ready for bid in early 2022 for a spring 2022 construction start.

At the November 18, 2020 Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting, Agenda Item 5.B. provided the feasibility study for the project and requested potential partnering on this project with the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District. At this time, the City of Burnsville is seeking additional information on how the District might want to partner on this project. We are requesting an initial meeting with you to discuss the merits of this project for the LMRWD and determine the next steps towards any cost sharing participation.

I-35W Frontage Trail/I-35W Minnesota River Crossing

CITY OF BURNSVILLE



Project Location:	Burnsville
Requested Award Amount:	\$388,000
Total Project Cost:	\$485,000

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project will realign a segment of the I-35W Frontage Trail (a Tier 1 RBTN alignment), which connects to the Minnesota River Greenway. The improvements include the raising of the trail from the current profile to an elevation, which would lower the frequency and magnitude of trail closures due to flooding. Alternatives for raising the trail were evaluated and documented in a Feasibility Study (March 2020). The City has determined the preferred alternative is to construct a conventional earth embankment with a trail width of 10 feet and 2 foot shoulders on either side. This alternative provides the City with the lowest cost/highest benefit solution when compared to other alternatives.

PROJECT BENEFITS

- » MnDOT is currently reconstructing the I-35W Bridge over the Minnesota River. As part of these improvements, the bridge will now provide a pedestrian/bicycle facility that will link to regional trails on both sides of the river. This connection is critical in helping overcome a major pedestrian/bicycle barrier (Minnesota River) that has limited north-south travel between Burnsville and Bloomington. A pedestrian and bicycle facility along I-35W over the Minnesota River has never existed before.
- » Flooding occurs during the spring months (March – May) and can take several weeks to subside. During those times, this segment acts as a pedestrian and bicycle barrier rather than a regional amenity. Pedestrian and bicycle investments to the I-35W Bridge may not be fully realized if the flooding issues are not addressed along this trail segment. This project will limit closure due to river flooding from many weeks down to 3-6 days per year
- » The I-35W Frontage Trail is heavily relied on by bicycle commuters and will become a more prominent commuting route between Bloomington and Burnsville once the I-35W Bridge is open.



Proposed Realignment

Technical Memorandum

To: Linda Loomis, Administrator
Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

From: Katy Thompson, PE, CFM
Della Schall Young, CPESC, PMP

Date: August 13, 2021

Re: Burnsville I-35W Trail Project—Funding Request Review

The City of Burnsville (City) contacted the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) to request funding to elevate an existing pedestrian trail out of the Minnesota River floodplain at the I-35W Minnesota River Bridge (Figure 1). The City has received \$485,000 in federal funding for construction and anticipates contributing \$250,000 for the design, permitting, and management of the project. The City is specifically requesting support in any amount to offset their \$250,000 commitment to the project.

In response to the City's request, Young Environmental Consulting Group (Young Environmental) has completed an initial funding evaluation documented herein with the corresponding recommendation.

Funding Request Evaluation

LMRWD continues to receive inquiries from municipalities and other partners for project funding support. Historically, because the requests were infrequent and appeared to compete with other requests or priorities, the decision to provide financial assistance was not supported by documented criteria nor scoring. Recently, with the request from the City of Carver for the levee project, Young Environmental developed the following scoring system which was applied to this request.

The goal of the scoring system is to establish impartial and fair evaluations for all District funding requests based on the project's alignment with the goals, policies, and strategies of the LMRWD Watershed Management Plan. Projects are scored on nine different metrics, detailed below, for a possible 82 points.

- 1. Project Type (Maximum 24 points):** The Project Type Score considers whether a proposed project is tributary to an impaired waterway, if it solves an issue previously identified by the community or LMRWD plans, and whether the project is explicitly included in the community or LMRWD plans. Points are awarded

based on how well the project aligns with the community or LMRWD plans.

- 2. Plan Goals (Maximum 9 points):** The Plan Goals Score gives credit depending on how well-aligned a proposed project is with the goals of the LMRWD Watershed Plan. Projects are assigned a score of 0 through 9 based on how many of the District's goals are addressed.
- 3. Water Capture (Maximum 7 points):** The Water Capture Score gives credit to projects that meet or exceed the standards for stormwater runoff volume management. Projects are assigned a score of 0 to 7 based on the amount of volume reduction that the proposed project provides.
- 4. Pollutant Management (Maximum 7 points):** The Pollutant Management Score gives credit to projects that meet or exceed the amount of water quality treatment provided beyond what is required for regulatory purposes. Projects without a pollutant reduction component will receive a score of 0, whereas those that reduce pollutant loading to downstream resources can receive a score of up to 7.
- 5. Habitat Restoration (Maximum 7 points):** The Habitat Restoration Score gives credit to projects that provide habitat benefits. Projects with no habitat benefit receive a score of 0. Projects likely to achieve habitat benefits as a secondary project benefit receive a score of 3. Projects that include a replacement of the existing habitat with an improved habitat receive a score of 5. Projects that include habitat creation or enhancement as the primary purpose of the project receive a score of 7.
- 6. Bank Stabilization (Maximum 7 points):** The Bank Stabilization Score gives credit to projects that restore or stabilize degraded stream banks or shorelines. A project is assigned a bank stabilization score based on the length of the stream bank or shoreline restored or stabilized and the level of existing degradation. This metric is only applied to projects with a designed restoration component (versus indirect benefits). Projects without a designed stream bank or shoreline restoration component are assigned a score of 0.
- 7. Watershed Benefits (Maximum 7 points):** The Watershed Benefits Score gives credit to projects that provide benefits beyond the immediate site location. Scores are based on where the proposed project is located within the watershed, giving greater weight to those near headwaters.
- 8. Partnership Opportunities (Maximum 7 points):** The Partnership Opportunity Score gives credit to projects that allow the District to partner with other organizations. The District is interested in being a project partner with its member communities. A project receives the maximum score of 7 if one or more of the partners is a financial contributor to the project.
- 9. Public Education (Maximum 7 points):** The Public Education Score gives

credit to projects that spread awareness of the District’s projects and their benefits to the public. The score is based on the accessibility of the final project, giving the greatest weight to those on public lands with public access.

Using the total points scored, projects fit in one of four priority categories (e.g., low, low-to-moderate, moderate-to-high, high), as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. LMRWD Funding Request Scoring Priority

Project Score	Priority	Recommended Action
0–19	Low	Do not recommend funding requests at this time; additional information may be needed to evaluate the potential project more fully.
20–40	Low-to-Moderate	Work with project sponsors to incorporate more District goals, policies, or strategies.
41–61	Moderate-to-High	Consider partial funding requests, with funding amount and design components that align with District priorities.
62–82	High	Recommend full funding request as presented.

The detailed scoring of the Burnsville I-35W Trail Project is provided below in **Table 2**.

Table 2. City of Burnsville I-35W Trail Project Funding Request Scoring

Scoring Metric	Project Comments	Project Score	Max Points
1. Project Type	While the Burnsville I-35W Trail Project is included in the City’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan to address connectivity concerns in the regional bike trail system, the project is not part of their 2017 Water Resources Management Plan. As such, it has been awarded 15 points in this category.	15	24
2. Plan Goals Addressed	The project does not appear to address any of the District’s goals; however, the opportunity exists for collaboration with the LMRWD to meet Goal 9—Public Education and Outreach by providing signage or other features along the trail. A provisional point for Goal 9 has been awarded for meeting the LMRWD plan goals.	1	9
3. Water Capture	The project does not provide any stormwater runoff volume management, and no points were awarded in this category.	0	7

Scoring Metric	Project Comments	Project Score	Max Points
4. Pollutant Management	The project does not provide any pollutant management, and no points were awarded in this category.	0	7
5. Habitat Restoration	The project does not provide any habitat restoration, and no points were awarded in this category.	0	7
6. Bank Stabilization	The project does not provide any bank stabilization, and no points were awarded in this category.	0	7
7. Watershed Benefits	The project does not appear to provide any watershed benefits, and no points were awarded in this category.	0	7
8. Partnership Opportunities	The City of Burnsville is invested in this project and has applied for and received federal funding for the construction of the project. The full 7 points have been awarded in this category.	7	7
9. Public Education	The I-35W Trail Project is located on public land that is highly visible and accessible to the public; opportunities may exist to incorporate public education and signage to increase awareness of the Minnesota River and its unique natural resources. The project was awarded 7 points in this category.	7	7
Total Score		30	82

Project Scoring

Based on the presented information, the Burnsville I-35W Trail Project received a score of 30 points out of a maximum 82 points, placing it in the moderate-to-low priority category for the LMRWD.

Funding Recommendation

Given the moderate-to-low priority score, before providing a funding recommendation, we propose coordinating with the City of Burnsville to review Young Environmental's funding evaluation to determine whether the project provides additional benefits that better align with LMRWD's goals, policies, and strategies.

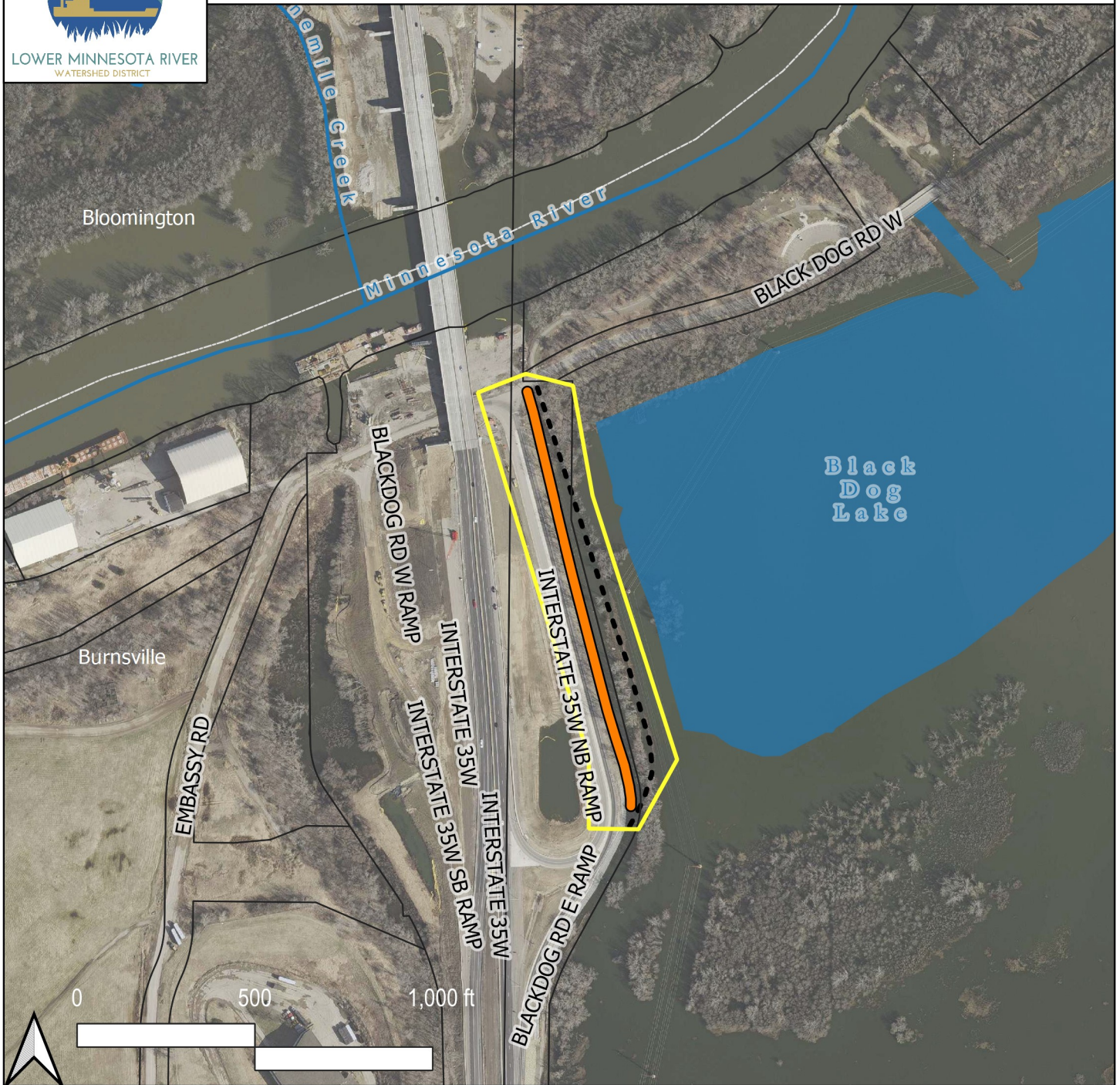
Attachments

Figure 1. Project Location Map












LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER
WATERSHED DISTRICT

Figure 1: I-35W Frontage Trail Realignment Project Location



LEGEND

-  Project Location
-  I35W Frontage Trail
-  Existing Trail
-  Proposed Trail
-  LMRWD_Boundary
-  Dakota Co. Parcels
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Public Waterbodies
-  Public Waterways

LMRWD Watershed Location Map

