



June 20, 2023

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Commissioners,

The Extend the Midtown Greenway Partners urge you to finish the Midtown Greenway Master Plan, a critical bureaucratic step to allow the Midtown Greenway to gain regional trail status and access regional funds.

We support a fiscally responsible capital only master planning scenario where MPRB does not play a role in operations but starting in 2029 contributes capital improvements from new Met Council regional trail funding.

The Midtown Greenway connects two regional trails and traverses the South Side Green Zone, an area of high poverty and high pollution that has traditionally had underinvestment. To deny regional trail status to the Greenway is to perpetuate systemic inequities such that wealthier neighborhoods get regional trails - and the money that comes with that status - and poorer neighborhoods miss out. Especially at a time when the state has increased funding for regional parks and trails, stopping the master planning process means shutting the door on places like Whittier, Corcoran, and Phillips neighborhoods from accessing park funding.

**Master planning the Midtown Greenway does not lock MPRB into any new commitments to maintain or improve the Greenway.** With a clearly written Joint Powers Agreement, Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis have, and will continue these responsibilities.

Completing the Midtown Greenway Master Plan is merely performing a critical bureaucratic step to allow funding from the Metropolitan Council to flow to this incredible asset.

Master planning does not mean that MPRB has to pre commit to taking on the Greenway alone. Indeed, it will be crucial for HCRRA, the landowner, and City of Minneapolis to continue to play valuable roles in operations and maintenance and commit financially to its long term success as a regional trail. Master planning and the joint powers agreement that will be a result of this effort, will clarify roles. We envision the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County will include dedicated line items for the Midtown Greenway in their annual budgets that assure residents and trail users of adequate maintenance of any new capital investments unlocked by MPRB.

**It is important to note that master planning and regional trail status will not change ownership of this trail.**

**A Master Plan is required for Regional Trail status, and only your support can make that happen.**

As you may know, the State Legislature just passed the [MIDTOWN GREENWAY BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRAIL EXPANSION PLANNING BILL](#) (pdf, line 197.24), authored by Senator Zaynab Mohamed.

The new law is the next step to extend the Midtown Greenway east over the Mississippi River into the Prospect Park neighborhood of Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota, to existing bike facilities and Allianz Field in Saint Paul.



By extending the Greenway, we will build on and extend a nationally recognized success story which is described by the Federal Highway Administration as “[A Crown Jewel of Bikeways](#).” It is one of the few urban trails in the [national Rail-Trails Hall of Fame](#). The Greenway is the most well used bike/ped trail in Minnesota and the Minneapolis Public Works department calculated that it serves more people on an average day than 90% of Minneapolis streets.

## **Momentum**

To the west, the Greenway already connects to suburbs as far away as Eden Prairie and beyond. The new bill, which was incorporated by Senator Scott Dibble and Representative Frank Hornstein into the Omnibus Transportation Bill, is now law. The new law is designed to facilitate extensions to both 27th Avenue SE in Minneapolis and to Allianz Field in Saint Paul. Without doubt, it is a trail worthy of regional status.

This exciting development from the State Capitol, as well as infrastructure funding flowing from the Federal Government and new ownership of the railroad, constitute a historic opportunity which must be seized. Through the railroad merger process, we have also demonstrated strong support from our congressional delegation, including letters from our U.S. Senators, Congresswoman McCollum and testimony from the office of Congresswoman Omar in support of the Greenway. For the Park Board to publicly consider, and then fail, to recognize the value of the Greenway would be extraordinarily bad timing.

## **Park Board Role**

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board must maintain its current, award-winning park and trail system. When drafted responsibly, the new Midtown Greenway Master Plan will be fiscally responsible by not committing additional responsibilities to a new asset. In fact, it will be doing the opposite: allowing new money from an outside funding source (Met Council) to flow to a popular amenity that needs more investment.

Finishing the Master Plan is the equitable thing to do. It will ultimately serve South Minneapolis with regional status just like the Cedar Lake and Kenilworth Trail corridors serve more affluent Minneapolis neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota  
Brackett Neighbors  
Cultural Wellness Center  
Friends of the Mississippi River  
Friends of Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County  
Lake Street Council  
Midtown Greenway Coalition  
Min Hi Line Coalition  
Move Minnesota  
Our Streets Minneapolis  
Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota  
Quality Bicycle Products  
Redesign, Inc.  
Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition  
Sierra Club North Star Chapter  
Sustain Saint Paul  
St. Anthony Park Community Council