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## Transportation Committee Staff Report for Projects

*Committee date: 2/24/2020*

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**Project Name:** Grand Round North Regional Trail Master Plan

**Geographic Scope:** Northern part of Saint Paul, wards 4, 5, 6 and 7: Pelham Blvd, Raymond Ave, Como Ave, Wheelock and Johnson Pkwy

**Project Contact:** Liz Hixson and Dave Ronzani

**Project Webpage:** <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/parks-recreation/design-construction/current-projects/saint-paul-grand-round>

**Project Description:** The Grand Round North Regional Trail Master Plan (“Master Plan”) builds on the work of the Grand Round Design and Implementation Plan. The Master Plan will, once approved, officially designate the northern half of the Saint Paul Grand Round as a Regional Trail. The remaining portions of the Grand Round are already designated as regional trails or trails within regional parks (Mississippi Gorge Regional Park, Hidden Falls-Crosby Farm Regional Park, and the Samuel Morgan Regional Trail). Regional designation enables the City to receive funding from the Metropolitan Council to develop, operate, and maintain the trail, as well as user counts. The completion of the Grand Round will enhance the park system by completing a recreational greenway that connects existing heavily used regional parks, and aims to expand the user group to be equitable and accessible to City and Regional trail users.

**Project Stage & General Timeline:** Master Plan seeking Met Council approval in April or May 2020.

**Public Hearing Date & Location:** Parks Commission 2/13, City Council 2/26

**Cost & Primary Funding Source(s):** Master Plan report development funded by Legacy, construction work from various sources including 8-80 funds.

**Transportation Committee Role:**

- ☐ Inform project scope & approach      ☐ Inform design      ☒ Inform implementation
- ☐ Make recommendation

**Explanation** This master plan has been approved by Parks Commission and is headed to City Council. I am bringing this to the Transportation Committee for coordination and as an update.

**Attachments include:**

Grand Round North Regional Trail (GRNRT) Master Plan

# MASTER PLAN FOR THE GRAND ROUND NORTH REGIONAL TRAIL

SUBMITTED BY THE CITY OF SAINT PAUL  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION  
JANUARY 2020



**DRAFT**

**DRAFT** January 2020

St. Paul Parks and Recreation Mission:

*To build a city that works for all of us, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation will facilitate the creation of active lifestyles, vibrant places and a vital environment.*

St. Paul Parks and Recreation Vision:

*Saint Paul Parks and Recreation will make Saint Paul a city that works for all of us by:*

*Responding creatively to change.*

*Innovating with every decision.*

*Connecting the entire city.*



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Mayor Melvin Carter

Past Mayor Christopher Coleman

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*Adopted by:*

\_\_\_ Council, Date

\_\_\_ Council, Date

**Past and present council members**

**Policy Advisory Committee, 2016**

**Technical Advisory Committee, 2016**

**Community Advisory Committee, 2016**

## **Project Team**

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Project funding provided by the  
Parks and Trails Legacy Fund Grant Program

# 1. PLANNING FRAMEWORK



Wheelock Parkway and Gateway Trail - wayfinding node completed in 2017

## Introduction

The Grand Round was first envisioned by renowned landscape architect Horace William Shaler Cleveland in 1872. Cleveland envisioned a system of parks and parkways linking the Mississippi River to Lake Como and Phalen Park, and described a boulevard as:

*"simply a grand avenue, of sufficient width to admit of two or three roads for different purposes; as, one for the heavy traffic of teams and business wagons, one for pleasure and driving, and one for equestrians, and also paths of sufficient width to accommodate throngs of pedestrians. The roadways are separated from each other by rows of trees with intervening grass plots, and sometimes by a broad central mall adorned with fountains, and the paths for pedestrians at the sides or between the roads, are like garden paths, the sides being ornamented with trees, grass, shrubbery and flowers."*

- H.W.S. Cleveland, Public Parks, Radial Avenues, and Boulevards: Outline Plan of a Park System for the City of St. Paul (Globe Job Office: 1885), p 11. Available online: <https://books.google.com/books?id=F-ECAAAAYAAJ&pg=PP3#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Minus the wagons, horses, and fountains, the Grand Round North Regional Trail (GRNRT) will realize Cleveland's concept when fully developed by adding a consistent path for pedestrians and recreational use.

In the early 20th century Saint Paul's Park Board president Joseph Wheelock made completion of the parkway system a priority. Acquisition of land for many of the rights of way occurred during his tenure. Implementation was overseen from 1891-1922 by Park Superintendent Frederick Nussbaumer.

*The Depression and World War II economies generally placed further parkway improvement on hold, but Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds would assist in some construction and maintenance, especially along the River Boulevard during the 1930s and early 1940s.*

- Zellie, Carol, and Lucas, Amy. "The Grand Round Parks & Parkway History, 1872-1965." Landscape Research, LLC. (2016), p 24. Available online: [https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Parks%20%26%20Recreation/ST\\_PAUL\\_GR\\_ROUND\\_Historic.pdf](https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Parks%20%26%20Recreation/ST_PAUL_GR_ROUND_Historic.pdf)

Political will, funding, and momentum lagged to complete the parkway system in the latter 20th century. The dream of a connected Grand Round was re-ignited in 2000 when a local non-profit initiated a master plan. The 2000 master plan made a modern case for completing Cleveland, Wheelock, and Nussbaumer's vision of an encircling parkway and recreational greenway connecting Como and Phalen Regional Parks to the Mississippi River. While the 2000 master plan suggested the trail location and alternates, the 2015 Saint Paul Bicycle Plan refined the route, and served as the basis for the 2017 Grand Round Design and Implementation Plan.

Following this decade and a half of planning, and the construction of the Sam Morgan Regional Trail (comprising part of the southern half of the route), the first phase of construction of the north half of the Grand Round was completed at the end of 2016. Now, with the realization of a century-old vision, the City of Saint Paul seeks to formally designate this trail as the Grand Round North Regional Trail (GRNRT) in the Metropolitan Regional Parks and Trails System.



*Pelham Blvd as it meets Mississippi River Boulevard and the Samuel Morgan Regional Trail*



*Samuel Morgan Regional Trail*

As Saint Paul's population increases, and the GRNRT is built, the trail will be an important way to connect old neighbors to new neighbors and provide residents access to nature. Population growth and the extension of transit service also underscores the need for safe, accessible, non-motorized trail connections that will serve residents of all ages and those without cars.

### **Previous and Related Plans**

No previous master plan on the northern half of the Saint Paul Grand Round has been adopted by the Metropolitan Council. The 2017 Grand Round Design and Implementation Plan (the basis for this master plan) was approved by Saint Paul City Council and includes specific design guidelines for the entire trail. This master plan seeks to receive official adoption of the remaining Grand Round segments as a Regional Trail, thereby officially completing the work set out over a century ago.

The following documents highlight various planning efforts starting as far back as 2000 that are relevant to trail development. These plans, studies, policies, and guidelines should serve as references throughout the implementation process of the Grand Round.

### **Related Plans**

Saint Paul Grand Round Master Plan, 2000  
Friendly Streets Initiative: DPIZ-FSI Collaboration Report, 2013  
Friendly Streets Initiative: Pelham Boulevard Parking Study, 2014  
Friendly Streets Initiative: Raymond Station Area, 2015  
Saint Paul Street and Park Tree Master Plan, 2010  
Saint Paul Parks & Recreation Plan, 2010  
Saint Paul Complete Street Design Manual, 2016  
Saint Paul Historic Preservation, 2010  
Saint Paul Historic Context Study, 2011  
Saint Paul Historic Context Study, 2011  
Saint Paul Neighborhood Bike Rack Program, 2014  
Saint Paul Bicycle Plan, 2015  
Saint Paul Public Art Ordinance Program Guidelines, 2012  
Saint Paul Public Art Ordinance Technical Manual, 2014  
Raymond Station Area Plan, 2008  
Saint Paul Parks and Recreation System Plan, 2010  
Saint Paul Landmark Trees, 2012  
Great River Passage Master Plan, 2013  
Saint Paul Urban Tree Atlas, 2011



*Pelham Boulevard has a wide right-of-way along the west side*



*Pelham Boulevard*



*Pelham Boulevard*

## Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

All segments of the GRNRT are contained within existing public right-of-way and parkland. No significant acquisitions will be necessary to develop the trail; however, Public Works may acquire some parcels for vehicular circulation purposes (e.g. to improve sight lines or turning radii). As of 2020, Johnson Parkway and Como Ave were being engineered and will be the next segments under construction. See page 10 for a table of segments, their lengths, and construction status.

Segment 1 – Johnson Parkway

Segment 2 – Phalen Regional Park

Segment 3 – Wheelock Parkway - Arcade to Rice

Segment 4 – Wheelock Parkway - Rice to Victoria/Como

Segment 5 – Como Regional Park

Segment 6 – Como Ave

Segment 7 – Raymond Ave

Segment 8 – Pelham Blvd

## Demand Forecast

The Metropolitan Council's 2018 Annual Use Estimate provides the most recent regional park and trail usage estimates (based on data from 2017). Table 1 shows the estimated annual visitation to the regional parks and trails that are connected by the GRNRT. The estimates also show usage of approximately 40,000 to 50,000 annual users per mile on the

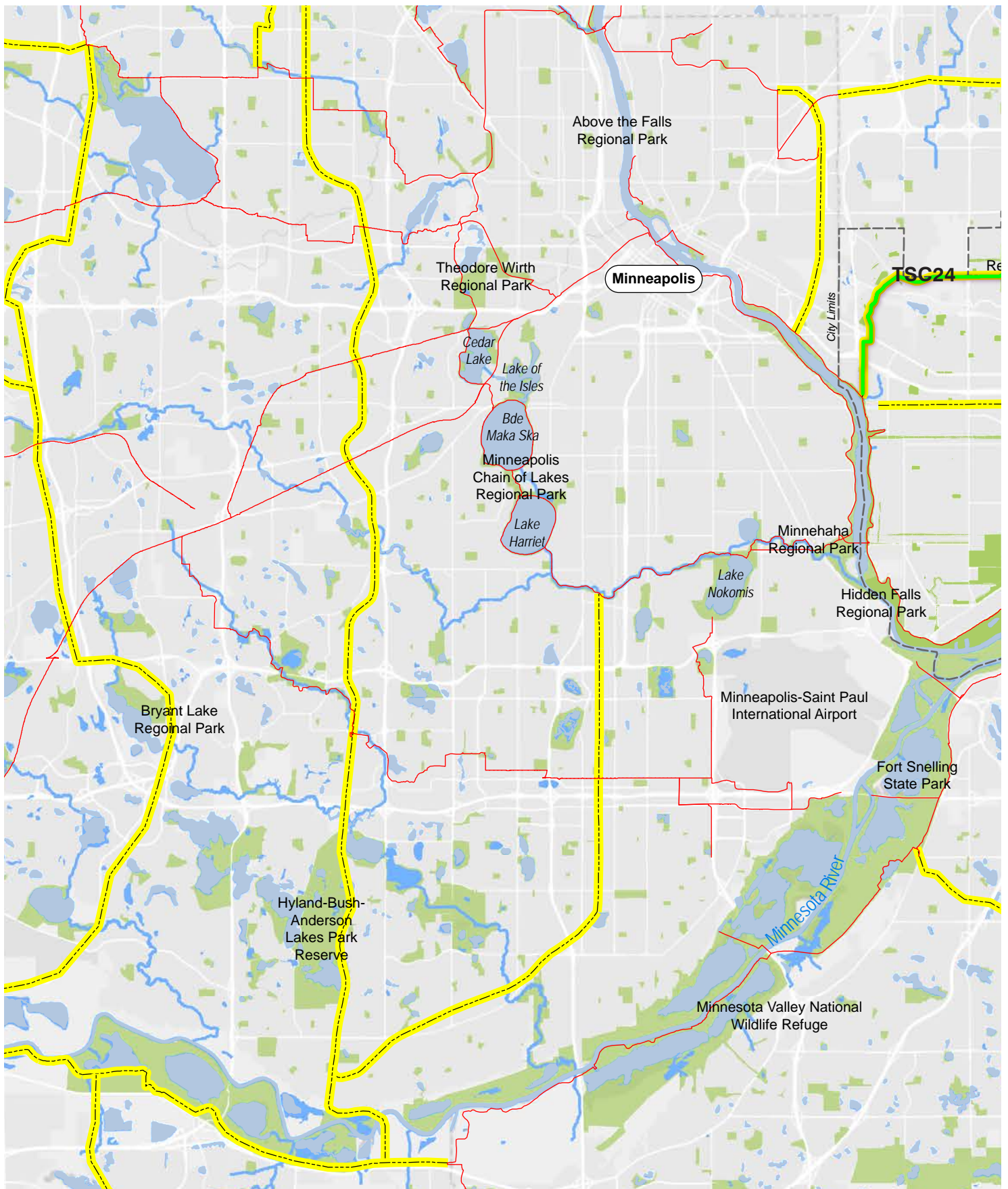
Sam Morgan and Bruce Vento Regional Trails in Saint Paul. Assuming a similar level of usage on the GRNRT, approximately 590,000 users could be expected annually if the trail were completely built today.

Additionally, Saint Paul's population is expected to grow to 344,100 by 2040, a 20.7% increase from its 2010 population. ([https://metro council.org/Data-and-Maps/Publications-And-Resources/Files-and-reports/Thrive-MSP-2040-Local-Forecasts-\(January-2019\).aspx](https://metro council.org/Data-and-Maps/Publications-And-Resources/Files-and-reports/Thrive-MSP-2040-Local-Forecasts-(January-2019).aspx)) A 2016 visitor study conducted by the Metropolitan Council found 80% of users of regional trails throughout the metropolitan region came from homes within five miles of the trail. Consequently, population growth in Saint Paul is expected to increase usage of the GRNRT further.

TABLE 1 - Park and Trail Annual Visits

Regional Trail / Park Name	Total Estimated Annual Visits
Bruce Vento Regional Trail	263,900
Samuel Morgan Regional Trail	570,500
Indian Mounds Regional Park	451,900
Como Regional Park, Zoo & Conservatory Special Recreation Feature	5,367,400
Phalen Regional Park	1,259,800
Mississippi Gorge Regional Park	1,545,300

Source: [https://metro council.org/Parks/Publications-And-Resources/PARK-USE-REPORTS/2017-Park-Use-Estimate-Appendix-Tables-\(July-2018\).aspx](https://metro council.org/Parks/Publications-And-Resources/PARK-USE-REPORTS/2017-Park-Use-Estimate-Appendix-Tables-(July-2018).aspx)



**FIGURE 1 - REGIONAL TRAILS, REGIONAL PARKS, AND SEARCH CORRIDORS**

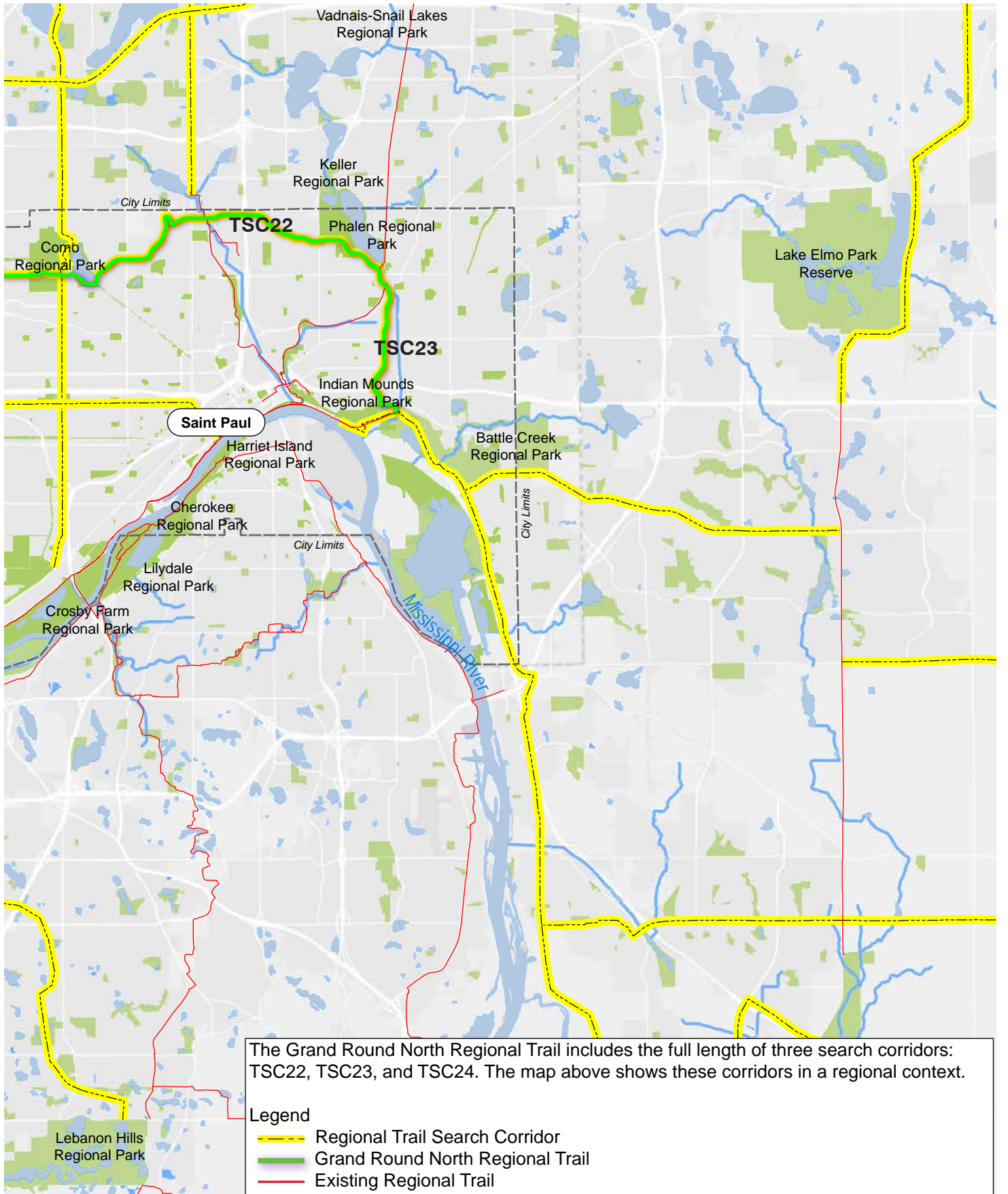


TABLE 2 - Grand Round Segments, Lengths, and Construction Status

Segment Number	Name	Description	Length	Year Complete	Notes
1	Johnson Parkway	Burns to Phalen Boulevard	10,200 ft	2021	Trail construction will start in 2020, and will be complete by 2021 at the latest.
2	Phalen Regional Park	Phalen Boulevard to Arcade	7,850 ft	Future	Pending reconstruction of Wheelock Parkway between Arcade and East Lakeshore Drive at a future date
3	Wheelock Parkway	Arcade to Rice	11,000 ft	2022	Will be mostly complete by 2021. Section between Edgerton and Arcade will be 2022
4	Wheelock Parkway	Rice to Victoria/Como	11,200 ft	2022	Will be mostly complete by 2021. Section between Western and Rice will be 2020
5	Como Regional Park	Como to Hamline Ave	7,500 ft	Future	Pending transportation study and regional park master plan update
6	Como Ave	Hamline Ave to Raymond Ave	8,500 ft	2021	Bike lane striping done, trail construction to begin in 2020 hopefully to be complete the same year. 2021 at the latest.
7	Raymond Ave	Como to University	6,200 ft	Future	Street was reconstructed in 2015-2016, trail construction will be completed in the future as funding allows.
8	Pelham Boulevard	University to Mississippi River Boulevard via Raymond and Myrtle (or Wabash)	5,500 ft	2017	Cycle track complete, full implementation at some point in future



Pelham Boulevard at Myrtle Avenue



Figure 2 - City-wide map indicating area of Wabash Avenue alternate route

## Development Concept

The Grand Round North Regional Trail forms the northern half of Cleveland's vision of parkways encircling the city. The proposed trail is approximately thirteen miles long and follows Saint Paul roadways including: Pelham Blvd, Myrtle Ave, Raymond Ave, Como Ave, Wheelock Pkwy, and Johnson Pkwy, except where the trail passes through regional parks. Figure 4 shows the segments.

Some segments of the trail have been constructed since adoption of the 2017 Grand Round Design and Implementation Plan. However, the trail will not be considered fully realized until all trails within the Grand Round are off-street. Where on-street trails currently exist, they are considered an interim condition. Separated trails will be constructed when street improvements are made.

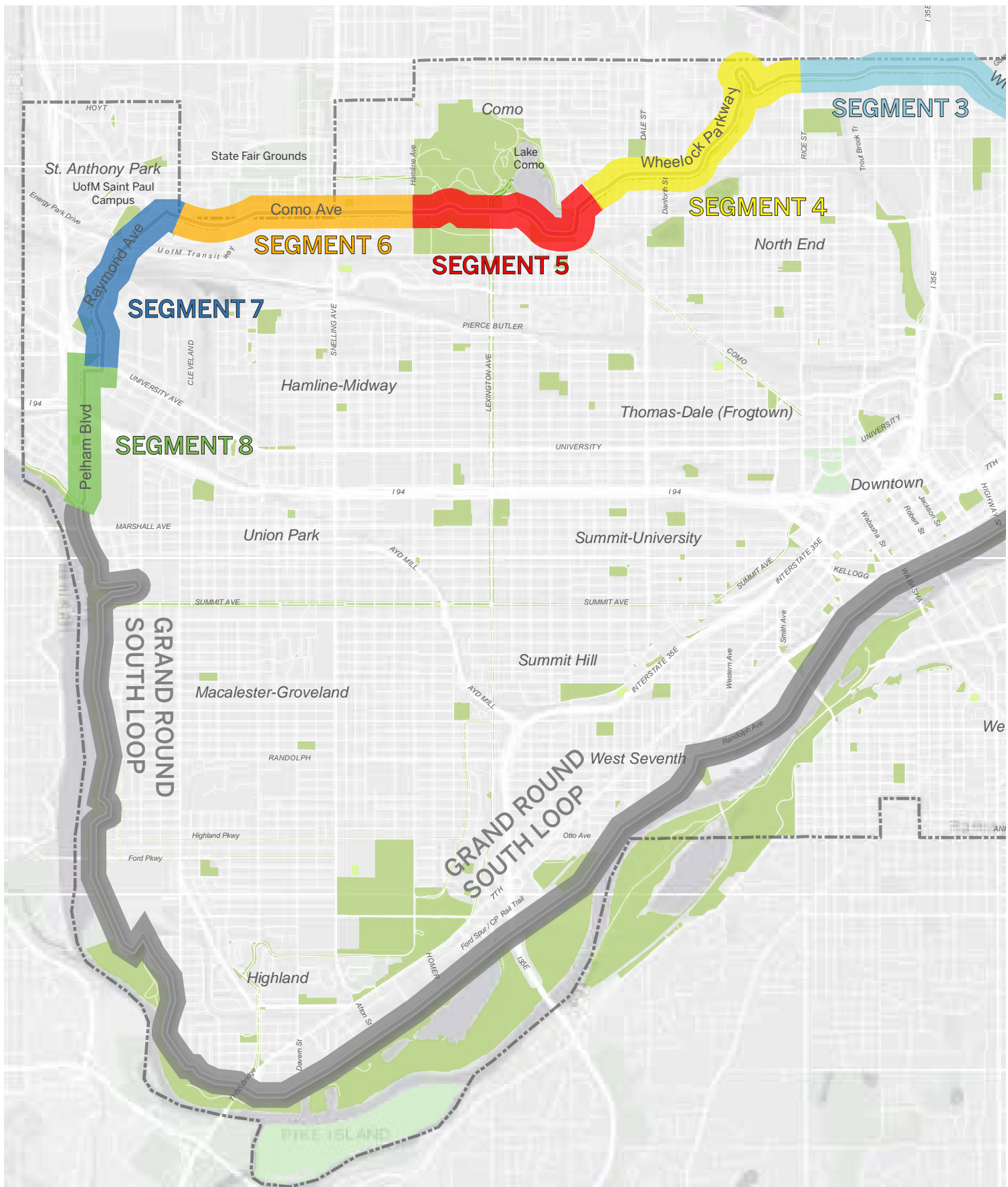
For more details on the planned development, see the Grand Round Design and Implementation Plan, available on the City website (<https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/parks-recreation/design-construction/current-projects/saint-paul-grand-round>). The Design and Implementation report will also be made available as an appendix to this document.

The GRNRT aligns with three regional Trail Search Corridors (TSC) as defined by the Metropolitan Council. To the west, TSC24 – Mississippi to Como matches Pelham, Raymond, and Como Avenues. In the middle, TSC22 Como – Phalen (Wheelock Parkway) includes all of Wheelock Parkway, between Como Regional Park and Phalen Regional Park. On the East Side, TSC23 is the Johnson Parkway.

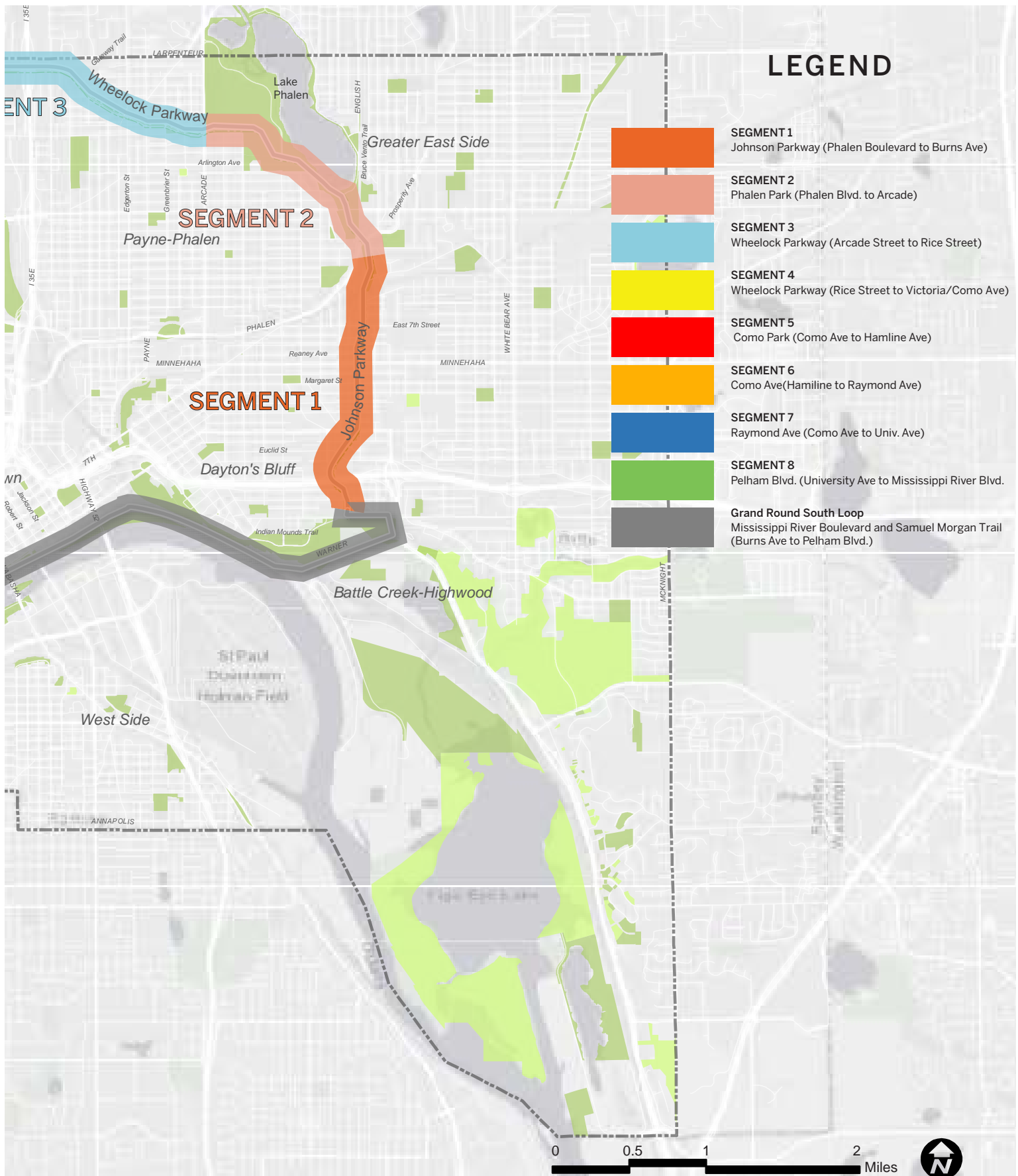


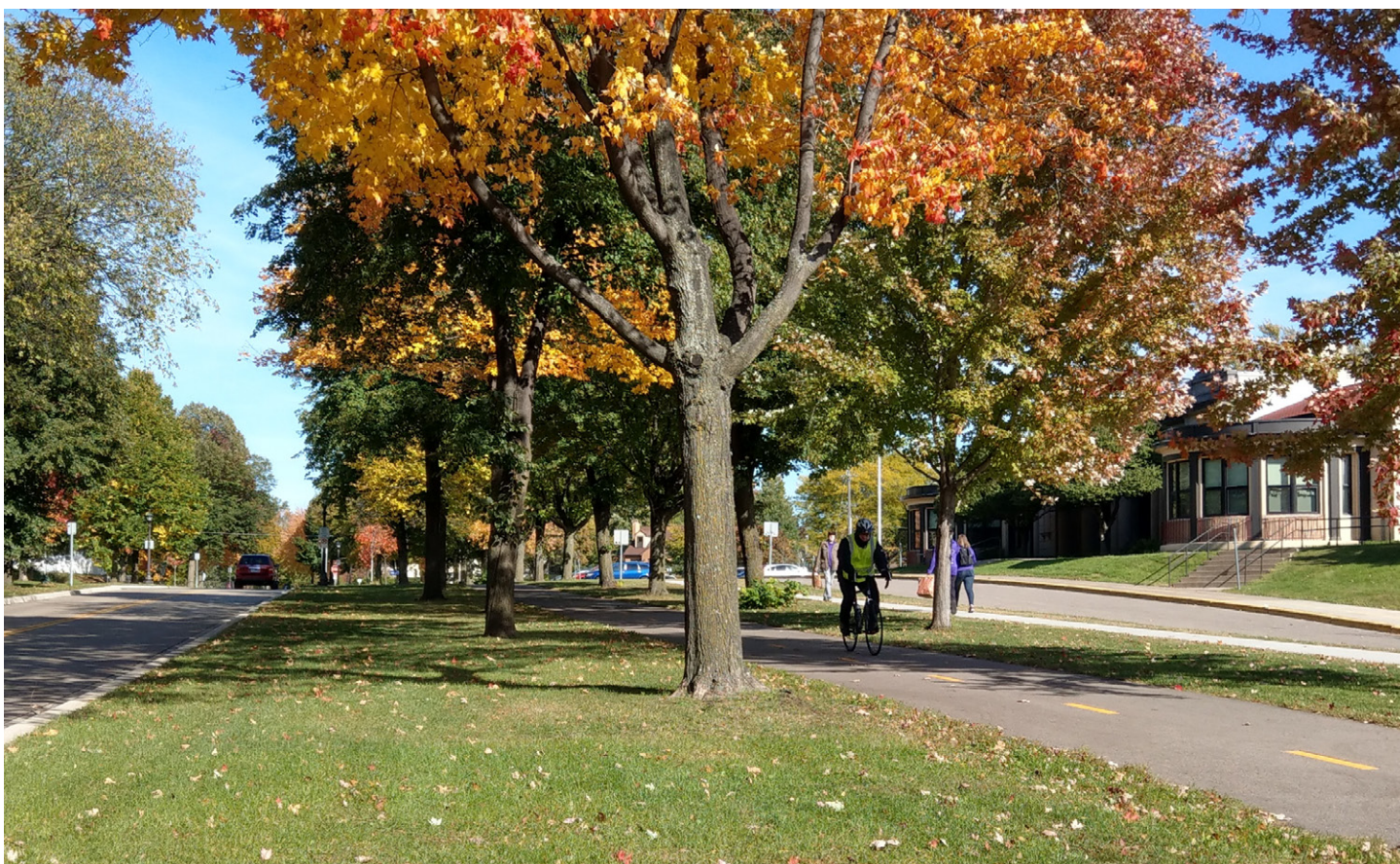
Figure 3 - Detail map of Wabash Avenue alternate route

There is one area within TSC24 that may have an alternate route to connect from Raymond to Pelham. Currently the trail is located on Myrtle Ave but an alternate is being studied for Wabash Avenue, one block to the south. See figures 2 and 3 above. Wabash Avenue may align with a future local connection westward to Minneapolis via a railroad bridge, but at the time of writing this report it is unknown when that opportunity might be realized.



**FIGURE 4 - GRAND ROUND SEGMENTS**





*Wheelock Parkway*



*Wheelock Parkway - near Como Regional Park*

## 2. INFRASTRUCTURE AND MAINTENANCE



*Harriet Island Regional Park*

### Conflicts

The Grand Round North Regional Trail will predominantly run through residential areas within Saint Paul. Because the trail is entirely within City right-of-way, the City of Saint Paul would require that any development project requires inter-departmental review including Planning and Economic Development, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation, to ensure that future development not conflict with trail use.

Future road reconstruction scheduled in the City's Capital Improvement Plan / Residential Street Reconstruction Program will require coordination between City departments including Parks and Recreation and Public Works. Where portions of the GRNRT run through regional parks, careful consideration will be given to development of the park and the trail to not adversely impact either facility.

### Public Services

Limited public services will be provided along the GRNRT. Utility connections will be provided for drinking water and lighting. Water and electrical service will be installed as construction funding allows. As of early 2020, drinking fountains are located in each regional park (Mississippi Gorge, Como, Phalen, and Indian Mounds) and along Wheelock Parkway at Edgerton Street.

### Accessibility

All segments and facilities of the GRNRT will be constructed to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. One portion of Wheelock Parkway has significant grade challenges and will require additional study to determine how best to address steepness.

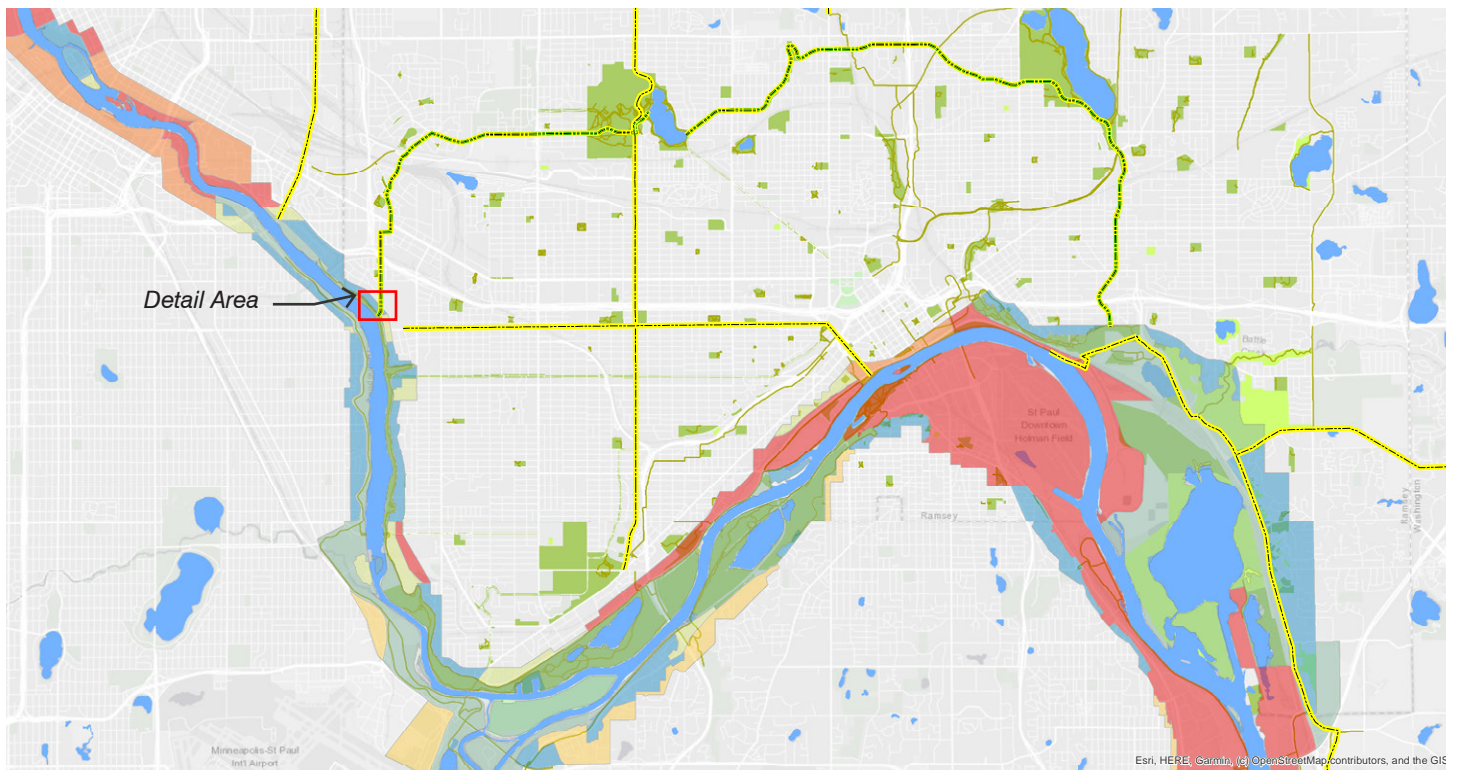


Figure 5- Mississippi River Critical Area Districts - Regional Map



Figure 6 - Mississippi River Critical Area Districts - Detail Map



## Public Awareness

The Grand Round North Regional Trail will be a signature facility in the Saint Paul park system. A strong branding effort will assist in promoting and identifying the trail. This branding will appear on signage and manhole covers along the trail. Local signage will also direct users to the trail from adjacent neighborhoods.

## Operations and Ordinances

The standard rules and regulations for all Saint Paul parks will be enforced on the Trail. Signage along the length of the trail will display rules and regulations.

The City of Saint Paul's operating budget will fund maintenance and operations for the parkway portion of the GRNRT. No use fee will be implemented. Annual parkway maintenance will include snow removal and ice treatment, trash removal, mowing and weed control, and tree maintenance and is estimated to cost approximately \$205,000 (or \$15,800 per mile). Saint Paul Public Works provides operation and maintenance of the public right of way.

## Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area

A small portion of the west side of the proposed regional trail sits within the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA). The City of Saint Paul acknowledges the regulations within MRCCA and will comply as required. Of the six Critical Area districts, only one intersects with the trail: the Critical Area – River Neighborhood (CA-RN) district, which applies at the end of Pelham Blvd where it meets Mississippi River Boulevard (in blue in Figure 6 at left). This district is defined as developed residential lands and existing parkland that are visible from the river, or that abut riparian parkland.

Trail construction within the CA-RN district would use the existing right of way and shoulders. Height and setback requirements would not apply, as the trail is a compatible use.

The eastern end of the proposed regional trail where Johnson Parkway terminates at Burns Avenue is the boundary for MRCCA, therefore no compliance is required.



Participants in community meetings from 2016

# 3. ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS

## Public Engagement and Participation

Saint Paul is home to a great diversity of people. Often, barriers such as language, culture, or employment/socio-economic status paired with historic ways of working with the community prevent the public from fully participating in planning and engagement processes. The project team made proactive efforts in 2015 to 2017 to expand opportunities for members of underrepresented communities to contribute meaningfully to the planning process.

The City of Saint Paul and the design team reached out and engaged the public using many different tools and approaches. Engagement events were held at places where people were already congregating, including workshops at community events and popular destinations, which likely enabled more people to know about the plan and easily offer their input.

There were over 40 public meetings held in 2015-2016, these included:

- Pop-Up events along the Grand Round route
- Multi day workshops
- Listening sessions with community organizations
- Engagement events held in coordination with larger community events
- Presentations at District Council meetings
- Design Workshop open houses and meetings
- Online engagement including comments and an online survey
- Open House meetings
- Hosted and convened the Community Advisory Committee made up of citizen representatives

The GRNRT will shape Saint Paul residents' connections to and enjoyment of their city for generations to come. To guide the project to respond to residents' needs and aspirations for the trail, the project team developed welcoming, user-friendly, jargon-free project materials. The materials were oriented to residents who may not be familiar with city planning processes and projects.

Comments received at Pop-Up and Listening Sessions were categorized to better identify and group similar recommendations. Most comments fell into one of four categories:

- Amenities
- Infrastructure recommendations
- Connections
- Wayfinding or safety

Comments requesting amenities were the most prevalent, with nearly one third of comments recommending additional water fountains, restrooms, and benches. More than a quarter of the responses focused on infrastructure recommendations, such as better crossing treatments and improved bicycle facilities with the most attention focused on facilities separated from motor vehicles. Participants recommended off-street trails, buffered bicycle lanes or separated bicycle lanes with a slight preference for buffered bicycle lanes. Safety was a key concern for many participants, as well as improving connections to existing trails and adding wayfinding options, such as maps, mile markers, and technology-based route-finding tools.

### Summary of Community Feedback

- Support for the plan was prevalent
- Users of the Grand Round route include both pedestrians and bicyclists. The needs of each user group must be considered
- Participants expressed a preference for facilities separated from motor vehicles.
- Safety was a key concern for many participants
- Amenities such as restrooms, water fountains, and benches are desired
- Consistent walk/bike facilities throughout the route are strongly desired. Where possible the same kind of facility should be provided for long stretches of the route
- Several intersections and/or roadways were identified as challenging for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Connections and better wayfinding to existing trails are desired



*Wheelock Parkway - recently constructed section with trail in the boulevard island*



*Wheelock Parkway - recently constructed trail crossing at Edgerton Street*



*Johnson Parkway - boulevard island before construction*

## Partner Engagement

The City will promote the trail through social media. The City will also partner with organizations such as Move Minnesota (formerly Transit for Livable Communities and Saint Paul Smart Trips), the Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition, and the Saint Paul Transportation Committee to promote trail use.

## Equity

The neighborhoods that are part of the Grand Round are comprised of diverse cultures, ethnicities, and socioeconomic makeup. The project team made proactive efforts to expand opportunities for members of underrepresented communities to contribute meaningfully to the planning process. Contributions from a broader range of the community have resulted in a project that better serves all of Saint Paul and improves community health and active living outcomes.

The GRNRT is being developed to be welcoming to trail users. Seating and water will be provided along the length of the trail. Lighting will enhance security and comfort. The trail travels through many of Saint Paul's neighborhoods, and there are numerous points of connection with transit which will greatly expand access to the trail.

The GRNRT will also be financially accessible. There will not be a fee for trail use. Additionally, the GRNRT is being constructed through areas of concentrated poverty (ACP50s) where many residents are people of color. The GRNRT will become an important recreational amenity to economically-stressed communities in addition to providing a safe, alternate transportation option.



*Wheelock Parkway - recently constructed trail section at Edgerton Street*

# 4. CONCLUSION

## Summary

The idea of the Grand Round, a park encircling the City of Saint Paul and connecting its natural attractions, is more than a century old. Twenty years ago, the Grand Round Master Plan resurrected the idea, and the southern portion of paths and sidewalks along the Mississippi River and Samuel Morgan Regional Trail were completed in the interim. Through Saint Paul's 8 - 80 Vitality Initiative the effort was renewed in 2017 to complete the northern 13 miles of the Grand Round.

Based on the work of internationally-renowned urban designer Gil Penalosa, the 8-80 Vitality Fund focuses on recent investments such as Rebuild Saint Paul and the Green Line, and aims to create city infrastructure, streets and public spaces that function for residents ages 8 to 80. This initiative began under former Mayor Chris Coleman, and continued from 2015-2017

- Source: City of Saint Paul website, <https://www.stpaul.gov/news/city-council-passes-8-80-vitality-fund> (October 2014)

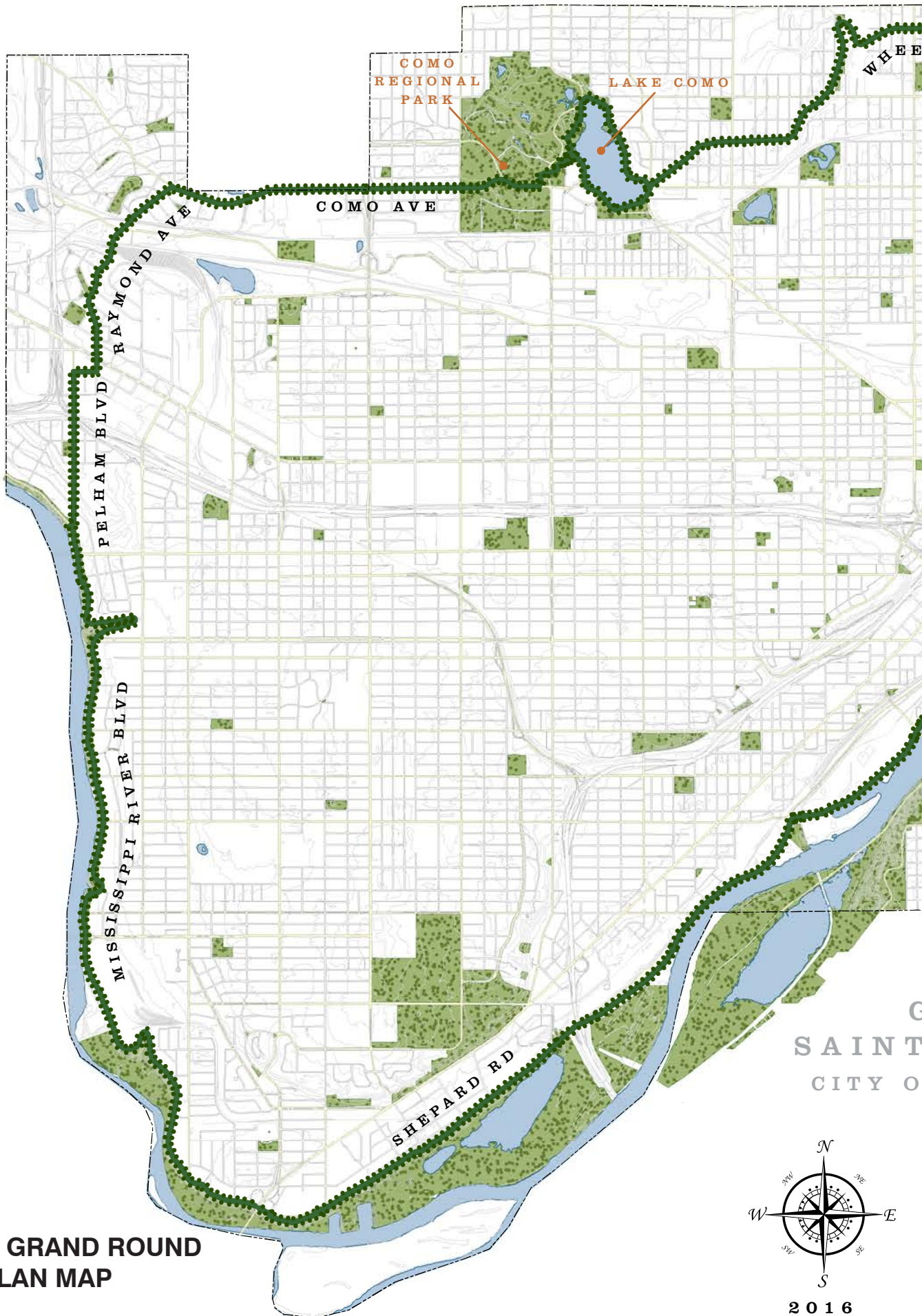
The priorities, scoping, and phasing for the Grand Round Design and Implementation plan is synthesized from many sources including public input, the Mayor's Office, Planning and Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works. This master plan aims to further that work by meeting Metropolitan Council criteria. The successful completion of the Grand Round will represent a significant

achievement to multiple city departments, not limited to Parks and Recreation or Public Works.

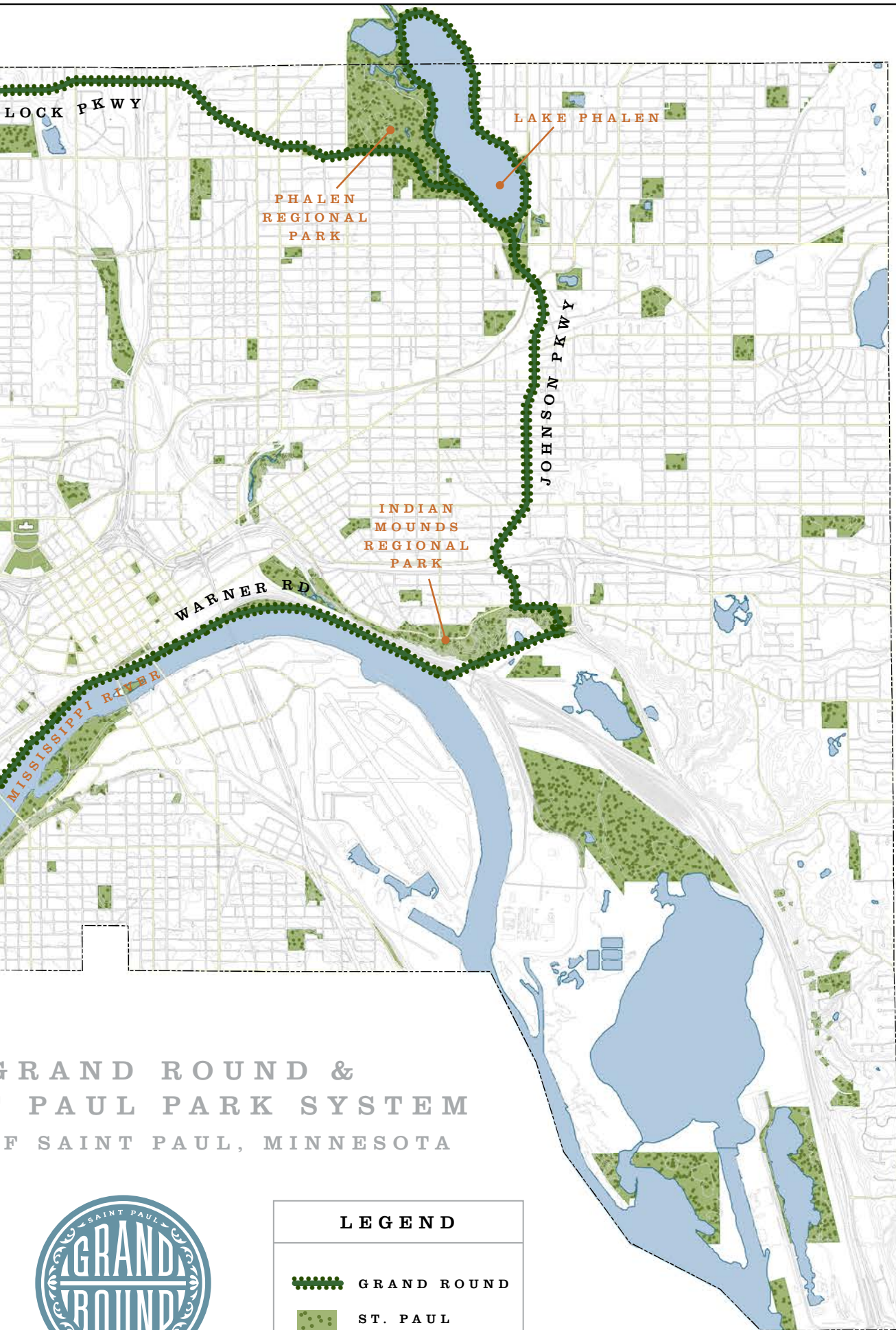
Actual sequencing and magnitude of improvements will be based on future City budgeting processes. Potential funding sources include and are not limited to: local funds, street improvement bonds, capital improvement bonds, County funds, Municipal State Aid funds, State funds, Department of Natural Resource funds, and Federal funds.

## Next Steps

When this master plan was approved, the remaining phases include converting Pelham and Raymond to off-road trails where feasible, and constructing new trail along the last segment of Wheelock (between Edgerton and Arcade). Additional study is required for trail alignments within regional parks. As master plans are updated for the Regional Parks connected to the GRNRT (which include Como, Phalen, and Indian Mounds) this plan recommends careful study of trail alignments and wayfinding within the park boundaries. When completed, the work outlined in this master plan represents a milestone achievement of realizing the century old vision of parkways encircling Saint Paul. Furthermore, achieving regional designation for the entire Grand Round will allow the City of Saint Paul to continue investment and upkeep in this significant project.



**FIGURE 7 - GRAND ROUND  
MASTER PLAN MAP**



GRAND ROUND &  
PAUL PARK SYSTEM  
OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA



LEGEND

-  GRAND ROUND
-  ST. PAUL PARKS



GRAND ROUND NORTH REGIONAL TRAIL  
MASTER PLAN DRAFT  
JANUARY 2020