MIDTOWN GREENWAY

Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail Expansion Planning Study

FINAL REPORT

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Kimley»Horn

APRIL 2026

Acknowledgements

The Metropolitan Council would like to thank the many partner agencies and individuals who contributed their time, expertise, and insight to the Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion Planning Study. This study benefited from the collaboration, technical guidance, and thoughtful review provided throughout the planning process.

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Introduction

An expansion of the Midtown Greenway over the Mississippi River via the existing Short Line Rail Bridge in Minneapolis has long been contemplated as a promising opportunity to connect the Twin Cities for people biking, walking, and rolling.

This report documents the Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion Planning Study, undertaken to evaluate and advance feasible alternatives for extending the Midtown Greenway across the Mississippi River into Saint Paul and Allianz Field. The work was initiated in response to legislative requirements and regional transportation goals, with the aim of creating a safe, continuous, and dedicated bicycle and pedestrian connection between Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Specifically, the 2023 State Legislature directed the Metropolitan Council in 2023 Laws of Minn., Chap. 68, Art. 4, Sec. 120 to:

- Plan a continuous and dedicated bicycle/pedestrian trail from the current eastern terminus of the Midtown Greenway, across the Mississippi River on the Short Line Rail Bridge and terminating at Allianz Field
- Include a trail connection to the edge of the University of Minnesota main campus terminating at 27th Avenue SE

The purpose of the Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion Planning Study is to develop a conceptual implementation plan for extending the Greenway that provides for a new and efficient transportation connection between Saint Paul and Minneapolis while creating a premium recreational facility, and to outline steps needed to advance the concept into project development.

STUDY PLANNING CORRIDOR

The Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion Study planning corridor extends from the eastern terminus of the existing Midtown Greenway in Minneapolis, across the Mississippi River and into Saint Paul, terminating at Allianz Field near the intersection of Snelling Avenue and University Avenue. The study corridor generally follows along or parallels the Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) rail line, Saint Anthony Avenue, Gilbert Avenue, and I-94 through Saint Paul. The study corridor also includes the Prospect Park Connector which extends northwest from the main trail route described above to 27th Avenue SE in Minneapolis, within a few blocks of the University of Minnesota Main Campus. **Figure 1** depicts the study corridor.

Source: Metropolitan Council

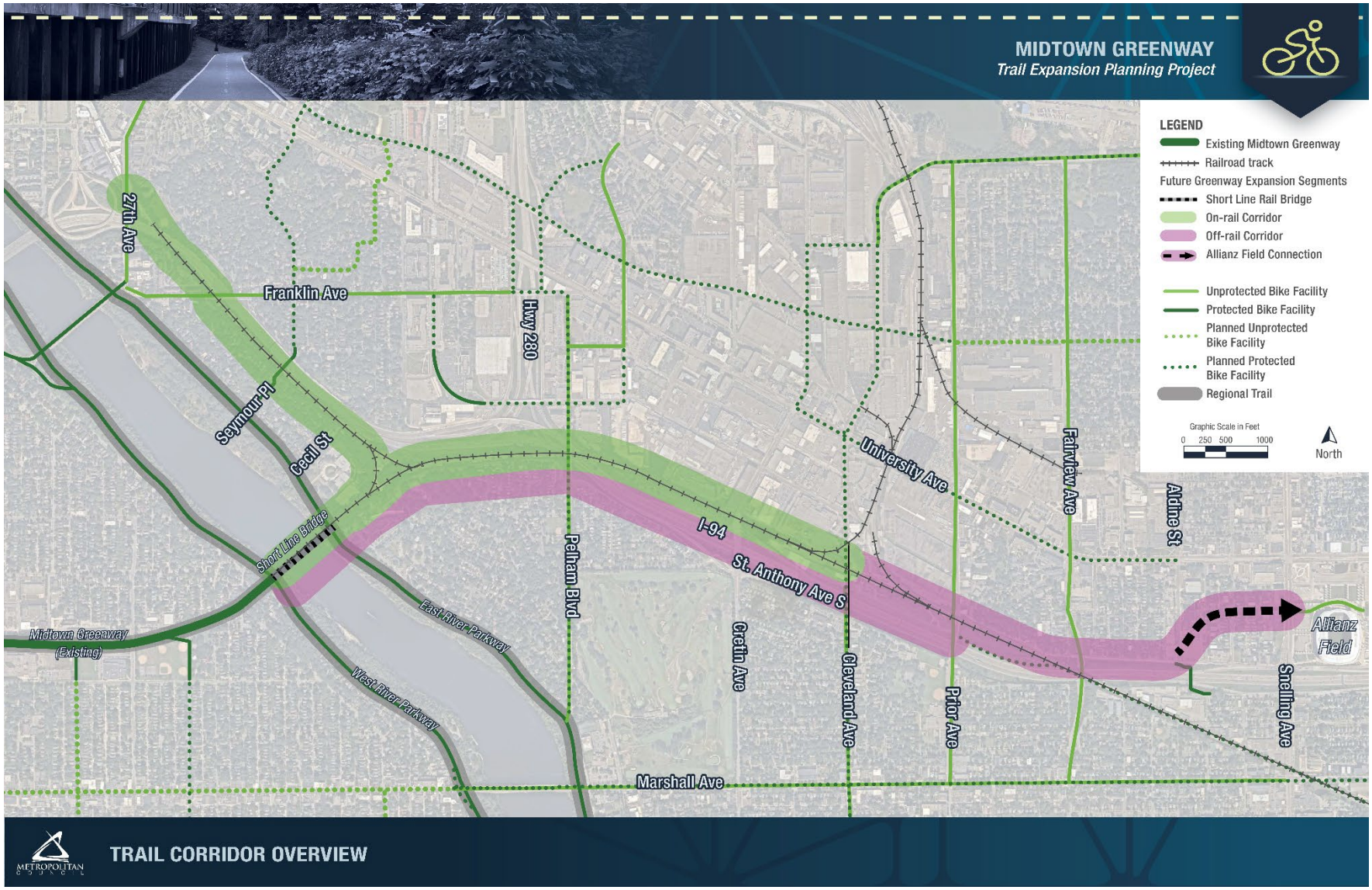


Figure 1: Study Planning Corridor

STUDY GOALS

The following goals guided the Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion Planning Project and established the framework for evaluating alternatives and advancing the trail expansion.

- Explore feasible and practical alternatives for extending the Midtown Greenway across the Mississippi River and into Saint Paul and ending at Allianz Field.
- Connect to existing and planned trails and bikeways.
- Ensure coordination among key government agencies, major public and private stakeholders, and community organizations.
- Investigate environmental, permitting, and right-of-way (ROW) considerations to deliver a conceptual trail implementation plan that is functional and achievable within a predictable timeframe and project budget.
- Develop a phasing plan and general timeline for implementation of trail segments.
- Engage the CPKC railroad in discussions regarding potential use of the rail corridor for the trail expansion.

STUDY STRUCTURE

The study began with pre-planning tasks, which involved reviewing relevant plans and existing corridor conditions to establish local background context and to identify key constraints and opportunities. The study then moved into planning and conceptual design, where corridor alternative trail alignments and bridge concepts were developed and analyzed in coordination with a Technical Working Group comprised of stakeholder government representatives. Finally, the implementation plan phase outlined the steps, agency roles, and requirements needed to advance corridor alternatives toward project development, environmental review, and eventual construction.

Phase I: Pre-Planning

Phase I began with a review of local and regional plans. The project team also conducted a review of existing conditions and developed a base map of the study corridor. This established a strong knowledge base for the project team as the study moved into the next stage and provided an understanding of potential constraints and opportunities going forward.

Phase II: Planning and Conceptual Design

Phase II involved identifying planning-level trail alternatives for the rail corridor as well as adjacent or parallel alignments. The team performed a phasing analysis of trail segments and sub-segments to determine the appropriate sequencing and interim alignments. They also analyzed design concepts for the Short Line rail bridge and considered options for an independent trail crossing of the Mississippi River. Coordination with the Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railroad was an ongoing and essential element throughout this phase of the study.

Phase III: Project Implementation Plan

This phase outlined detailed steps needed to complete the design, secure project approvals and permits, and address land purchase or easement requirements. The plan identified potential roles for government agencies in leading environmental review, permitting, construction, and ongoing ownership, operation, or maintenance of the trail. It included a phasing plan and timeline for implementing segments both on and off the rail corridor. Conceptual, order-of-magnitude cost estimates were developed for each corridor alternative, covering capital expenses as well as long-term operations and maintenance. This phase culminated in the preparation of a comprehensive final report that documents and summarizes the overall conceptual planning process, including outreach, agency coordination, and engagement activities.

AGENCY, GOVERNMENTAL, NON-PROFIT, LANDOWNER, AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION

Throughout the study, a range of stakeholders participated in various roles. These included coordinating agencies working with municipal, county, and state representatives; government entities responsible for transportation systems or Mississippi River management; non-profit organizations with vested interests; private landowners and rail operators; as well as community-based organizations providing local context and perspectives on study outcomes. The following sections present an overview of the engaged parties and, where applicable, their specific modes of involvement.

Agency Stakeholder Coordination

The agency stakeholder coordination was organized using a Technical Working Group (TWG). The TWG was assembled to advise project staff from the perspectives of project partner agencies and met seven times throughout the study. This interdisciplinary team reviewed Technical Memo 1, which documented local and regional plans and assessed existing conditions in the pre-planning phase. In the planning and conceptual design phase, they considered trail alternatives and reviewed and provided input on early design options for the Short Line rail bridge and an independent trail-only Mississippi River crossing. In the implementation phase, they outlined steps for design completion, determined permitting requirements, and discussed potential agency roles for environmental review and trail maintenance. The TWG's involvement ensured that all partner agencies were able to provide input throughout the study.

The Technical Working Group included staff representing the following agencies:

- City of Minneapolis, Transportation Planning and Programming
- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
- City of Saint Paul, Public Works
- City of Saint Paul, Parks and Recreation
- City of Saint Paul, Planning and Economic Development
- Hennepin County, Transportation Planning
- Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority
- Ramsey County, Public Works
- MnDOT Metro District, Planning and Programming
- MnDOT, Re-Thinking I-94 Corridor Project
- Metropolitan Council, Metropolitan Transportation Services

- Metropolitan Council, Regional Parks

Governmental Stakeholder Coordination

The following governmental stakeholders were consulted during the study.

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Coast Guard
- National Park Service
- American Indian Advisory Council
- Minneapolis Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Saint Paul Transportation Committee
- Hennepin County Active Transportation Committee
- Metro Transit Gold Line Extension Project Team

Non-Profit Organization Coordination

Several non-profit organizations with significant interest in the Mississippi River scenic corridor and adjacent river bluffs plus general extension of the Midtown Greenway were consulted or kept abreast of the study's progress and periodic outcomes, including the final study recommendations. Those organizations were:

- Friends of the Mississippi River
- Sierra Club
- Midtown Greenway Coalition

Railroads

The Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railway (CPKC) and Regional Rail, the operating railroad along the study corridor, were consulted during the study process. A letter proposal with preliminary trail alignments was sent to the CPKC for review and comment. The outcomes of that submittal are discussed later in this document.

Community Stakeholder Coordination

Community-based organizations were engaged through their respective neighborhood/district councils and included:

- Longfellow Neighborhood Council Board
- Seward Neighborhood Community Development Committee
- Prospect Park Neighborhood Council Transportation Committee
- Union Park Neighborhood District Council
- Desnoyer Park Improvement Association

Presentations were made to organizations during various phases of the study process. These presentations served as opportunities to walk participants or attendees through the study purpose, activities, and intended outcomes. These meetings were well attended and received by the respective organizations.

The broader community surrounding the potential trail extension alignments was also engaged throughout the study process. Engagement strategies were chosen to match the intent of each phase described above and the intent of information sharing during that phase as shown below.

Early engagement focused on introducing the study to the broader public, technical working group, other stakeholders, and project management team. A study website was developed and launched in early spring 2025. The website provided an overview of the study, a map of the study area, study guidelines, phasing and study schedule overview, engagement principles, comment form submittal with optional email sign-up, and related resources used in the planning process.

Screenshot of Study Website

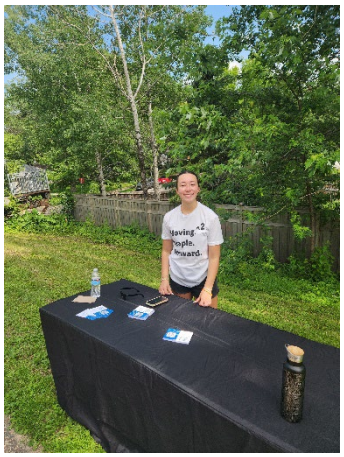
Continued engagement included introducing and informing the public about the study with more detail via passive signage and direct in-person outreach to share information in the early stages of concept development. Informational signage and sidewalk stickers were deployed through the study area, and a factsheet was developed and distributed during in-person engagement at pop-up events to spread the word about the study occurring. During the later stages of concept alignment development the study team presented preliminary concepts to the respective neighborhood organizations and districts.

Postcard Handout / Yard Sign / Sticker Decal

Source: Metropolitan Council

The pop-up events were held during late spring and through the summer of 2025:

- Lake Monster Brewery Pop-up - May 8, 2025
- Midtown Greenway Trail Pop-up - June 19, 2025
- Mobility Mingle at the Capitol - July 22, 2025



Source: Metropolitan Council

Phase I: Pre-Planning

REVIEW OF RELEVANT PLANS AND STUDIES

The project team summarized plans, studies, and projects relevant to the Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion Planning project. Plans and studies from the cities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, the Metropolitan Council (Met Council), Ramsey and Hennepin Counties, the Midtown Greenway Coalition, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), and the National Park Service (NPS) were reviewed as a part of this effort. Over 30 documents were considered, with a detailed review completed for 24 of these documents. The project team reviewed the documents to identify key factors; understand issues; and whom to contact, coordinate with, and engage. One-page summaries of the documents are included in **Appendix A: Pre-Planning, Phase I Technical Memorandum**. In further implementation stages, some planning documents may need to be revised to incorporate the future Midtown Greenway. For further discussion on that and other implementation steps, see the **Phase III Project Implementation Plan** section of this report.

Key studies reviewed included:

- *Minneapolis Grand Rounds Missing Link Master Plan* (2025), Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
- *Midtown Greenway Regional Trail Plan* (2025), Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
- *Midtown Greenway Final Impact Study* (2021), Midtown Greenway Coalition
- *Midtown Greenway Expansion Across Mississippi River Bridge L5733, Pedestrian/Bicycle Trail Use Study—Feasibility Report* (2019), Midtown Greenway Coalition
- *29th Street Midtown Greenway/Mississippi River Crossing Concept Development Study* (2006), Hennepin County
- *Saint Paul Bicycle Plan* (2024), City of Saint Paul
- *Minneapolis Transportation Action Plan* (2020), City of Minneapolis
- *Countywide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan* (2015), Ramsey County
- *Imagine 2050, Transportation Policy Plan, Bicycle Investment Plan* (2025), Metropolitan Council
- *Imagine 2050, Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan* (2025), Metropolitan Council

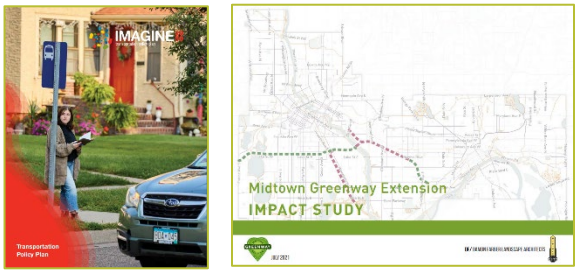


Figure 2: Plan covers of select studies

Key Observations

The following themes were consistent throughout the reviewed documents and represent support for the Midtown Greenway Expansion:

- Safety and comfort for all modes of transportation.
- Greenways are economic drivers.
- The Mississippi River is a critical connection point and gap in the current bicycle/pedestrian network.
- Successful greenways have amenities that serve diverse users and consider the safety and well-being of all.
- Engagement across the cities, counties, and communities at-large supports the Midtown Greenway and its expansion across the Mississippi River.
- The Short Line Bridge is a structural and logistical challenge but may present an opportunity to connect Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

There are several key partners and coordination opportunities that the Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion Planning project should pursue to ensure that engagement, planning, and design are well-integrated with other efforts. These include:

- City of Saint Paul:
    - 2026 Pelham Boulevard Reconstruction
    - 2024 Bicycle Plan
- National Park Service/Mississippi National River and Recreation Area:
    - Land Use Policy 11
    - MNRRA Water Trail
- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board:
    - Grand Rounds Missing Link
    - Midtown Greenway Regional Trail Plan
    - Mississippi Gorge Regional Park Plan
- Ramsey County: Countywide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan
- Hennepin County: 2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan: Making bicycling safe and comfortable, and previous relevant studies
- MnDOT: Rethinking the I-94 Corridor Project

EXISTING CONDITIONS REVIEW

The project team conducted a high-level review and summary of the key constraints and opportunities identified during the review of the Midtown Greenway Expansion corridor. The existing conditions review was intended to document the physical characteristics of the corridor, identify property ownership to ensure that proper coordination occurs, and note future design challenges early on. The review centered around the following subject areas:

Parcel Ownership: The project area includes both public and railroad rights-of-way—such as those owned by CPKC, MnDOT, and the Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul—as well as private parcel boundaries.

Utility Constraints: Overhead utilities are present throughout the corridor, including electric transmission lines and communications lines that may affect planning and design.

Stormwater Management: Stormwater considerations will be important throughout the project area. Water quality requirements and agency input/preferences will inform sizes, locations and types of treatment infrastructure to be incorporated as a part of future planning and design efforts.

Soil Contamination: Some parcels within the project limits have been identified as potentially containing contaminated soils, which would require special attention during further planning and construction.

Environmental Sensitivity: The corridor also features wetlands, floodplains, and other sensitive environmental areas that must be considered to minimize ecological impacts.

Regulatory Jurisdiction: The area falls under the jurisdiction of many agencies, including the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Program (MRCCA) and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), which will influence land use and design decisions.

Network Connectivity: The existing bicycle and pedestrian network, along with potential connections to the Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion Planning project, present opportunities for enhanced mobility and access.

Community Access: There are several potential destinations and origins for trail users located nearby, such as parks, schools, and other community amenities.

Project Coordination: Adjacent capital projects will require cross-project coordination to ensure alignment and maximize benefits for all stakeholders.

Initial Observations

The following summary is not an exhaustive list but highlights initial observations of existing conditions that will influence the concept planning phase of the project with respect to constraints or opportunities.

Rail Corridor

The rail corridor west of Cleveland Avenue appears to have sufficient space to accommodate a trail (except for the pinch point under the Vandalia Street bridge) with an industry standard minimum track-to-trail offset of 25 feet. Northwest of Franklin Avenue the track has been removed, presenting an opportunity for a more spacious trail corridor in this area. Southeast of Franklin Avenue, the railroad right-of-way is currently utilized for car storage which would require the same offsets as other track in the corridor. The car storage area is constrained in width north of Cecil Street which would require easements from private residential properties to achieve the minimum 25 foot track/trail separation.

Roadway Corridors

The roadway corridors included in the study that are considered for inclusion of trail facilities consist of Saint Anthony Avenue, Gilbert Avenue, Pierce Street, and Shields Avenue with short segments of Cleveland Avenue and Prior Avenue utilized to cross I-94. All of these corridors currently have sufficient right-of-way to support a pedestrian/bicycle trail; however, certain segments are limited by factors such as noise walls, transmission

poles, or narrow boulevards. In these constrained areas, it may be necessary to reduce roadway width, narrow the trail to 10 feet, and/or assume pedestrians are adequately served by nearby existing parallel sidewalks.

Structures

Short Line Bridge over Mississippi River

The study includes a detailed Mississippi River Bridge Options Report (**Appendix B**) on the range of structural considerations associated with use of the Short Line Bridge for trail purposes. The existing Short Line bridge is considered "fracture critical", meaning the bridge structure does not have redundancy to resist collapse if a fracture critical element (e.g. steel eyebar in tension or steel pin) fails. This type of structure includes an additional element of risk that would need to be considered by agencies that would either assume ownership of the bridge or responsibilities associated with constructing a trail on the bridge. Mitigation of this risk is typically managed through regular detailed ultrasonic inspections and targeted replacement of fracture critical members over a period of time.

Source: Metropolitan Council

Rail Bridges over I-94

The existing rail bridge over I-94 between Franklin Avenue and 27th Avenue is not currently in use, but it poses several challenges due to its limiting features, such as a clear width of only 12.5 feet and girders that are approximately 7 feet high, which obstruct sightlines and visibility impacting sense of safety for trail users. The existing rail bridge over I-94 near 27th Avenue is considered fracture critical based on its design which includes two parallel through girders. The existing rail bridge over I-94 under Pelham Boulevard includes a third span which is currently used for rail maintenance access and trucking associated with the railcar storage tracks south of Franklin Avenue. This bridge poses the same physical challenges as noted above with the additional constraint of rail and commercial truck operational use. The existing rail bridge over I-94 at Pelham Boulevard is not considered fracture critical based on its design which includes four parallel through girders.

Public Roadway Bridges

Existing roadway bridges at Cleveland Avenue, Prior Avenue, and Saint Anthony Avenue are included in the study that would require the addition of raised concrete curbing on the deck to provide the desired protected bikeway facilities associated with this trail extension. Changes to existing bridge widths or sidewalks are not necessary to accommodate the trail improvements.

Rail Operations

The rail corridor west of Cleveland Avenue maintains operations and

actively serves four commercial businesses in Minneapolis including two grain elevators, a plastics manufacturer and steel recycler. In addition, the storage tracks adjacent to Prospect Park are used for staging grain cars and for storage of rail tanker cars that serve as a rolling warehouse function for a local commercial business. This trackage has also been used for delivery of Metro Transit light rail vehicles from point of manufacture to the Hiawatha maintenance facility. Separation between trail and rail operations by continuous fencing would be required by the railroad to provide safety for trail users.

Roadway Intersections

When considering crossing safety design at intersections with high traffic volume or speed, measures such as rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB), appropriate signage, and curb bump outs could be implemented to address safety concerns, including crossings at East River Parkway, 27th Avenue, Franklin Avenue, Pelham Boulevard, Cleveland Avenue, Prior Avenue, Saint Anthony Avenue, and Pierce Street. Any geometric and safety treatments of street crossings will be considered and developed at a future stage of design.

Connectivity

There are also significant opportunities for connectivity, as the proposed Midtown Greenway trail corridor could link to several intersecting existing bike facilities, including Franklin Avenue, the Seymour Place pedestrian bridge, Cecil Street, East River Parkway, Pelham Boulevard, Cleveland Avenue, Prior Avenue, Fairview Avenue, and the Aldine Street pedestrian bridge.

Agency Coordination Findings

The Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion project should coordinate (either as required by law/policy or to coordinate projects) with multiple agencies, including the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, City of Minneapolis, City of Saint Paul, Hennepin County, MnDOT, Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area, National Park Service, Mississippi River and Recreation Area. Government roles are yet to be determined regarding ownership, operation, and maintenance; however, these conversations should begin early.

- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB)
    - The involvement of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is significant for the western end of the Prospect Park Connector corridor, as any proposed improvements must consider the Luxton Park long range plan.
    - Collaboration and coordination with the MPRB will be essential for the design of the eastern bridge landing and trail connection to the Grand Rounds trail system along East River Parkway. MPRB owned property adjacent to East River Parkway will likely be needed to facilitate this trail connection.
- MPRB & Hennepin County:
    - Collaboration between MPRB and Hennepin County is also essential, particularly regarding the trail corridor connection to the planned Grand Rounds Missing Link Regional Trail along 27th Avenue SE.
- Hennepin County, MPRB, & Minneapolis Public Works:
    - The proposed river crossing will be located within the municipal boundaries of Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis, and there is MPRB parkland on both sides of the proposed crossing. These three agencies will need to be significant collaborators, but government roles are yet to

be determined. Modifications to existing street cross sections, lighting, boulevards, etc. will need to be reviewed and coordinated with city departments.

- Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Program (MRCCA)
    - The segment of the trail that falls within the MRCCA planning boundary is subject to specific environmental and land use policies designed to protect the Mississippi River's ecological and recreational value.
- National Park Service/Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA)
    - The MNRRA Comprehensive Plan includes *Site Development Policy 11***,** which outlines a process for alternative selection regarding new river crossings. The goal of Policy 11 is to avoid unnecessary impacts to the natural area by limiting additional river crossings, where possible. The NPS requires that any proposal involving a new or modified Mississippi River crossing be evaluated through the MNRRA, CMP Site Development Policy 11 decision-making process (see **Appendix C: Role of National Park Service in Project Review)**.
- Saint Paul Public Works
    - Saint Paul Public Works involvement is significant for the portion of the corridor within the City of Saint Paul, with proposed improvements within city ROW on Gilbert Avenue, Saint Anthony Avenue, Pierce Street and Shields Avenue. Modifications to existing street cross sections, lighting, boulevards, etc. will need to be reviewed and coordinated with city departments.
- MnDOT
    - Any roadway bridge modification over I-94 or new bicycle/pedestrian trail bridges will need to be reviewed and coordinated with MnDOT functional areas. Any trail constructed within MnDOT ROW will need to be reviewed and permitted through appropriate MnDOT channels.

Environmental Considerations, Major Utilities, Sensitive Areas

Existing soils within the rail corridor may be impacted by diesel range organics and other contaminants. Excavation and grading of excess materials may require disposal at a landfill. An overhead powerline is located south of Franklin Avenue along the edge of the rail right-of-way. Another overhead powerline runs along Saint Anthony Avenue between Prior Avenue and Pierce Street. Corridor alternatives that include a new bridge crossing of the Mississippi River will need to consider best management practices in design and construction to avoid or minimize disturbance of the natural river valley ecosystems including aquatic and land-based plants, animals, soils, and geology.

Stormwater Management

The existing rail corridor does not appear to include any stormwater collection or treatment infrastructure. Trail construction within the rail corridor would likely require the installation of collection and treatment facilities which would likely need to be placed under the trail or outside of railroad ROW in adjacent public ROW due to spatial constraints in the rail corridor. The existing roadway corridors include curb and gutter along with stormwater collection systems which could be modified to accommodate the trail construction. As with the rail corridor, stormwater treatment infrastructure does not currently exist in the roadway corridors and would need to be incorporated into the proposed improvements via underground structures or surface infiltration methods where green space is adequate in accordance with agency requirements and preferences of the governing municipality.

Phase II: Planning and Conceptual Design

Phase II of the study involved developing and analyzing corridor-wide alternative trail alignments and bridge concepts and coordinating with stakeholders to advance feasible options for future implementation. The project must comply with the legislative requirements, which laid the general alignment outline for this plan as a continuous, dedicated bicycle and pedestrian trail from the Midtown Greenway's eastern terminus in Minneapolis, across the Mississippi River along the rail corridor, and along roadways to Allianz Field in Saint Paul, with a branch to 27th Avenue SE.

CONCEPT DESIGN PARAMETERS

Following the direction of the legislative requirements and discussions with the Technical Work Group, the following key parameters and requirements for conceptual planning and design were established:

- **Railway requirements:** Because one of the study's corridor alternatives follows the rail corridor and crosses the Short Line rail bridge, the project must address railroad operational needs and safety standards. This includes early communications with rail partners, ensuring adequate track offsets, and minimizing impacts to active rail operations.
    - **Bridge requirements:** The project involves crossing the Mississippi River and significant transportation corridors (e.g., I-94) via existing or new bridges. Bridge requirements include evaluating the feasibility of retrofitting the Short Line rail bridge and the existing rail girder bridges over I-94 north of Franklin Avenue for shared or trail-only use or designing new trail bridges, with consideration of structural constraints, sightlines, and separation from rail traffic.
- **Permitting/Environmental requirements:** Trail development must comply with all applicable environmental regulations and permitting processes. In future phases, this project will need to address impacts to sensitive resources and prepare appropriate environmental documentation.
- **Design standards and guidance:** All conceptual layouts and engineering plans must adhere to established design standards and guidance for multi-use trails, bridges, underpasses, and facilities within or adjacent to railroad rights-of-way. For trails, this includes guidance included in the *MnDOT Bicycle Facility Design Manual* and the *AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*. For bicycle/pedestrian bridges, the project must also ensure that all designs meet applicable structural, safety, and accessibility requirements.
- **Key constraints identified in Phase I:** The initial phase identified several constraints that shaped the corridor alternative alignment and design, including limited rail ROW in certain segments, active rail operations, contaminated soils, overhead utilities, stormwater management needs, and sensitive environmental areas.

Incorporating this comprehensive set of parameters in the design process ensures that the conceptual Corridor Alignment Alternatives (described in the following section) are technically feasible and responsive to stakeholder input and the practical realities of trail development in a complex urban corridor.

CORRIDOR ALIGNMENT ALTERNATIVES

Three conceptual corridor alignment alternatives were developed to follow the design parameters described above and in consultation with the Technical Working Group. A map of the three alternative alignments is shown in **Figure 3**. The corridor alternatives are defined below and presented in the more detailed corridor segment layout maps that follow. Details about the overall design philosophy and trail segment cross-sections can be found in **Appendix D: Planning and Conceptual Design – Phase II Technical Memorandum**.

Descriptions of the three corridor alignment alternatives and corresponding design considerations are included in this section. It is important to note that Corridor Alternatives 2 and 3 were developed as contingencies to Alternative 1 in the event that coordination discussions with the Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) railroad identified restrictions on the potential use of the Short Line rail bridge over the Mississippi River and/or the rail corridor east of the river as a shared rail-with-trail operating scenario. (See also the results of communications with the CPKC in the later section on "Railroad Coordination.")

Although conversion of the Short Line rail bridge to trail-only use is a scenario that was included in previous studies, that option was not considered in this study due to ongoing freight rail operations that serve multiple industries located in the Hiawatha corridor (MN Highway 55) south of downtown Minneapolis. These freight rail-dependent industries include active grain operations at ADM Atkinson Mill and General Mills Elevator 'T'. There are no known plans for business dissolution or discontinuation of regular freight rail service along this industrial spur and thus, it is assumed that rail activity will continue at the current frequency of two trains per day, on average.

For the following sections, please refer to **Figure 3**, and for more detail within specific corridor segments, please see **Figures 6 through 12** under "Corridor Alternative Layouts by Segment" and as noted in text.

Source: Metropolitan Council

Figure 3: Corridor Alignment Alternatives

Corridor Alternative 1, Short Line Rail Bridge/On-Rail Corridor, would use the existing Short Line rail bridge crossing the Mississippi River (Segment 1A in **Figures 3 and 6**) and would follow along and within rail ROW east of the river to Cleveland Avenue in Saint Paul (Segments 1A, 1B, and 1C in **Figures 3, 7, 9, and 10**). Short Line Bridge design considerations are described in the "Mississippi River Bridge Crossings" section. East of Cleveland Avenue, all alternative alignments converge and are detailed under "Segments and Elements Common to All Alternatives" and would run within city street ROW along Gilbert Avenue (Segment 3A in **Figures 3 and 10**), and along Prior Avenue, Saint Anthony Avenue, Pierce Street, and Shields Avenue (Segments 4 and 5 in **Figures 3 and 10**) to the trail terminus at Allianz Field.

Design Considerations

The potential shared rail-with-trail use of the Short Line Bridge and the connecting rail corridor west of Cleveland Avenue assumes a minimum industry standard track-to-trail separation of 25 feet. For trail segments other than the river bridge and a pinch point beneath the Vandalia Street bridge, there is adequate space to accommodate at least a 10-foot-wide bicycle trail or 12-foot wide mixed use trail. Use of the eastern bay of the rail bridge over I-94 would need to be shared with Minnesota Commercial rail maintenance vehicles and commercial trucks accessing the railcar storage yard in Prospect Park. The trail alignment would need to provide clearance to existing overhead billboard located east of Vandalia Street.

Corridor Alternative 2, New River Bridge with Partial Use of Rail Corridor, would require building a new trail-only bridge crossing of the Mississippi River (Segment 1A in **Figures 3 and 6**) and would follow along and within rail ROW between the river and Cleveland Avenue, wherever a minimum track-to-trail separation of 50 feet could be achieved (Segments 1B and 1C in **Figures 3, 7, 9, and 10**). East of Cleveland Avenue all alternative alignments converge and are detailed in the "Segments and Elements Common to All Alternatives" section below. This alternative was studied as a contingency to Corridor Alternative 1 and would provide the full 50-foot trail separation required by the CPKC (and as noted under "Railroad Coordination").

Design Considerations

Implementation of Corridor Alternative 2 would require negotiated permanent trail easements from the railroad for trail segments that run within railroad property, as well as an easement through one commercial property west of Cleveland Avenue. Corridor Alternative 2 would also require construction of a new bridge or tunnel under Vandalia Street which is not included in the costs associated with this project but anticipated to be incorporated into future reconstruction of the Vandalia Street bridge. This alternative would require construction of a new trail only bridge spanning I-94 in the vicinity of Pelham Boulevard. The majority of the trail alignment east of the Mississippi River would be located within the public ROW along Saint Anthony Avenue and Interstate I-94 which would require coordination with Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and MnDOT to facilitate

Corridor Alternative 3, New River Bridge/Off-Rail Corridor, would also require building a new trail-only bridge crossing of the Mississippi River similar to Corridor Alternative 2. From there, Corridor Alternative 3 would follow within city street or MnDOT ROW along Saint Anthony Avenue south of I-94 to Cleveland Avenue (Segments 1D and 1E in **Figures 3, 7, 9, and 10**). The alternative would use the existing Cleveland Avenue bridge over I-94 to connect to Gilbert Avenue on the north side of the freeway. East of Cleveland Avenue all alternative alignments converge and are detailed under the "Segments and Elements Common to All Alternatives" section. An optional alignment for Corridor Alternative 3 (Segment 3B in **Figures 3 and 10**) would continue easterly along

S. Saint Anthony Avenue through Merriam Park to Prior Avenue. This optional alignment would utilize the Prior Avenue bridge over I-94 to connect to N. Saint Anthony Avenue.

Design Considerations

Corridor Alternative 3 is entirely within existing public ROW which is anticipated to provide enough space for a 16-foot mixed use trail or a 10-foot, two-way bicycle trail with parallel pedestrian sidewalk on opposite side of Saint Anthony Avenue. No permanent private easements or property acquisitions are anticipated to construct this alternative based on the preliminary alignment concept developed through this Study. Corridor Alternative 3 includes at-grade street crossings of Pelham Boulevard, Cleveland Avenue, and potentially a mid-block crossing of Prior Avenue (if optional alignment is planned). Geometric and traffic related safety improvements will need to be considered and evaluated at all of these crossings. Some segments of Saint Anthony Avenue will require narrowing to accommodate the protected bikeway. Changes to roadway cross section and/or traffic operations will need to be coordinated with Minneapolis and Saint Paul public works.

Prospect Park Connector

The Prospect Park Connector (shown as Segment 2 in **Figures 3, 7, and 8**) was evaluated in this study as an element of Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2. Although not included as part of Corridor Alternative 3, New River Bridge/Off-Rail Corridor, for this study, it should be noted that this trail connector could be added later as a "hybrid option" that would merge this element of Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2 with Corridor Alternative 3. This Prospect Park trail segment would connect from the extended Midtown Greenway main route in either Corridor Alternative 1 or 2 via a track underpass of the single track between the river bridge and the triangular intersection of three tracks, also known as "the wye." (This single-track underpass would be required by the railroad as noted in the "Railroad Coordination" section).

The Prospect Park trail would run to the northwest along the southwest edge of railroad ROW and would terminate at 27th Avenue SE, which is the planned route for the Grand Rounds Missing Link Regional Trail. This trail segment would improve connections to the University of Minnesota Main Campus from Saint Paul and Minneapolis neighborhoods via the main route of the future Midtown Greenway trail extension. The trail would also include convenient connections to Cecil Street, Seymour Place, the existing Seymour Place pedestrian bridge, and Franklin Avenue.

Design Considerations

This trail connector would make use of the existing through girder rail bridge over I-94 near Franklin Avenue. The track has already been removed from this segment north of Franklin Avenue which includes the rail bridge. A trail pavement cross section of 12 feet would fit within the bridge section, which meets minimum trail standards but is less than the 16 feet desired for many existing mixed-use trails, including the Midtown Greenway. The corridor ROW north of the bridge could accommodate a 16-foot wide corridor with separated facilities for bicycles and pedestrians. This trail would make use of an existing abandoned rail bridge over I-94 north of Franklin Ave. Details of the bridge alignment are discussed in the "Non-River Bridges" section below.

The Prospect Park Connector would require a trail underpass of the track between the river crossing and the track wye in order to connect to the Midtown Greenway main trail.

The Prospect Park Connector would require permanent trail easements from four residential properties to maintain a standard minimum track-to-trail separation of 25 feet assumed for Corridor Alternative 1; for Corridor Alternative 2, it would require easements through eight private parcels to achieve the 50-foot separation that would be required by the CPKC railroad (and as noted in the "Railroad Coordination" section). All are residential parcels located northwest of Cecil Street. The easements would entail strips of land ranging from one to 40 feet in width and adjacent to railroad ROW along the rear side of the parcels.

The Prospect Park Connector would connect to the Seymour Place pedestrian bridge via a new ADA compliant ramp for Corridor Alternative 1 and the existing stairway structure for Corridor Alternative 2 or 3.

Mississippi River Bridge Crossings

1. Shortline Rail Bridge for Corridor Alternative 1

Bridge Option 1 as outlined in the Mississippi River Bridge Options Report (**Appendix B**), includes a trail retrofitted onto the existing bridge structure adjacent to the active track. Bridge Option 3 includes a fully reconstructed bridge superstructure (utilizing existing piers) with a similar deck configuration including rail and trail facilities. **Figure 4** below depicts the rail and trail cross section which applies to both Bridge Option 1 and Bridge Option 3.

The trail cross section available with the Short Line Bridge would be 12 feet, which meets minimum trail standards but is less than the 16-foot width desired for many existing mixed-use trails, including the Midtown Greenway.

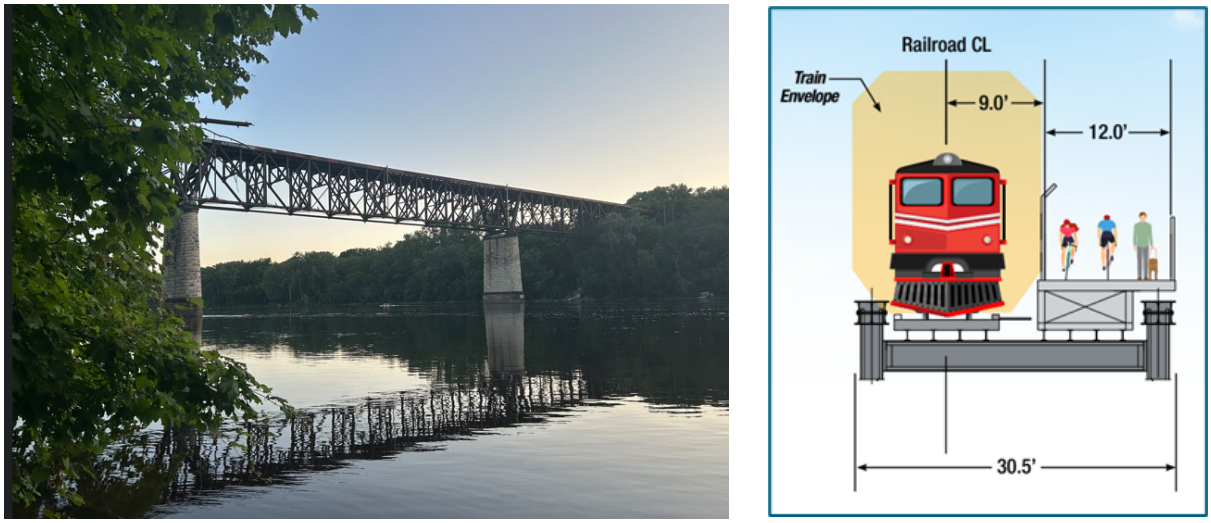


Figure 4: Existing Short Line Bridge image (left) and conceptual section of trail with rail concept (right)

2. New bicycle/pedestrian bridge for Corridor Alternatives 2 and 3

Corridor Alternatives 2 and 3 would include a new trail-only bridge crossing of the Mississippi River, downstream of the existing Short Line rail bridge. This new bridge would have a minimum separation distance of approximately 75 feet from the Short Line Bridge to accommodate inspection and maintenance needs for both structures. The new bridge would be for the exclusive use by people who walk, bike, and roll

but would be designed wide enough (assumed to be approximately 20 feet) for snow removal, maintenance, and emergency vehicles to operate without impeding bicycle and pedestrian movements. There are multiple feasible structure types for spanning the Mississippi River at this location, which are described in the Mississippi River Bridge Options Report (**Appendix B**).

Non-River Bridges

1. Three-track rail bridge over I-94 (near Pelham Boulevard) for Corridor Alternative 1

For this rail bridge below Pelham Boulevard, Corridor Alternative 1 would utilize the eastern span in the existing through girder rail bridge which does not include track, as shown below in **Figure 5.**

Design Considerations

The bridge span also needs to accommodate vehicular traffic (rail and industrial trucks) which would likely require special signage or a signaling system to ensure safety.

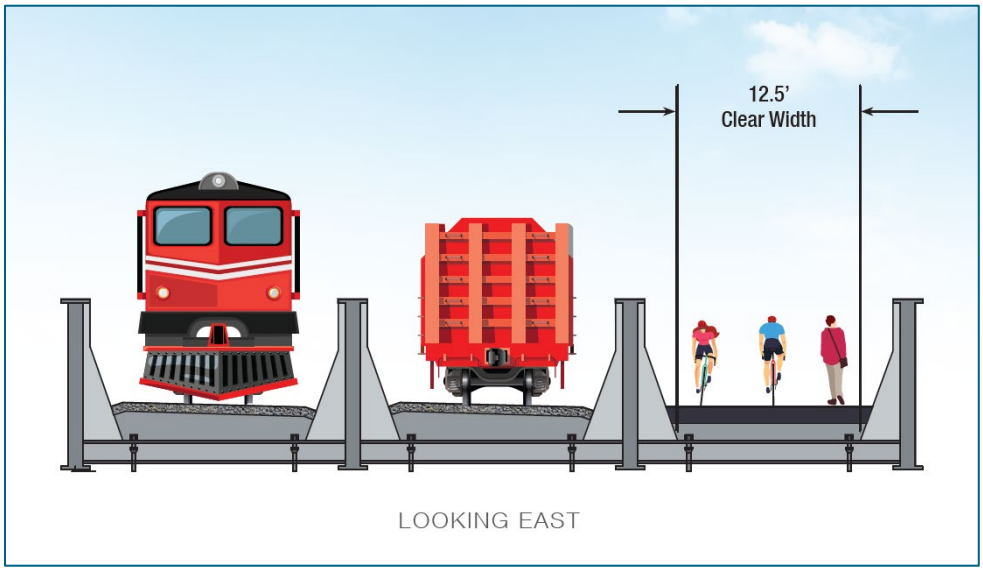


Figure 5: Conceptual section of girder bridge over I-94 of rail with trail concept

2. New bridge over I-94 (near Pelham Boulevard) for Corridor Alternative 2

Corridor Alternative 2 would require constructing a new trail bridge over I-94 east of Pelham Boulevard and southeast of the existing rail bridge. Use of the existing through girder rail bridge does not provide the 50-foot separation of rail-to-trail for Corridor Alternative 2, necessitating the construction of a new bridge in this location. The new bridge east of Pelham Boulevard is anticipated to be a 14-foot wide, pre-engineered type structure with a 220-foot clear span which would avoid the need for a median pier in the I-94 corridor.

Design Considerations

The new bridge design would need to be coordinated with MnDOT and the Rethinking I-94 planning process to ensure span length, abutments and piers do not conflict with those plans.

Segments and Elements Common to All Alternatives

1. Trail segments east of Cleveland Avenue/Gilbert Avenue intersection

East of Cleveland Avenue all three alternatives would follow within city street ROW along Gilbert Avenue (Segment 3A in **Figures 3 and 10**), and along Prior Avenue, Saint Anthony Avenue, Pierce Street, and Shields Avenue (Segments 4 and 5 in **Figures 3, 11, and 12**) to the trail terminus at Allianz Field. All three alternatives would also connect to the existing bicycle/pedestrian bridge and the bicycle boulevard at Aldine Street.

Design Considerations

Based upon review of existing public ROW and street widths there is sufficient width to accommodate a minimum of 10-foot bike trail in conjunction with use of pedestrian sidewalks on the opposite side of the street. Where space allows, the bike trail would be constructed to 12 feet width. Saint Anthony Avenue between Prior Avenue and Fairview Avenue is constrained by overhead electrical transmission poles. Trail construction between Cleveland Avenue and Allianz field will require narrowing of existing street widths in some segments. Determination of street, trail, boulevard and sidewalk widths will be finalized as a part of future design phases.

2. Optional underpass of CPKC mainline east of Prior Avenue

All three corridor alternatives include a potential option to construct trail underpasses at Prior Avenue (within I-94 corridor ROW) and/or running beneath the CPKC mainline track east of Prior Avenue (Segment 4 in **Figures 3 and 11**). This optional element would provide a more direct and potentially safer trail alignment (by not having to cross Prior Avenue at grade) and a future direct connection to the Ayd Mill Road corridor trail running parallel to and southwest of the mainline track.

Design Considerations

Trail underpass of Prior Avenue would require construction of retaining walls between the bridge pier and abutment. The trail underpass of the mainline track would require construction of a temporary shoo-fly track in order to maintain rail operations. This underpass would also require retaining walls adjacent to Saint Anthony Avenue and the rail track to accommodate the grade change.

Environmental Considerations

Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2 impact several sensitive resources, including the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA), the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), a bridge and rail corridor, contaminated soils, two brownfield sites, and one VIC (Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup) site. Environmental mitigation would likely involve soil remediation and coordination with multiple regulatory agencies, but Corridor Alternative 1 would involve less mitigation work overall than Corridor Alternative 2. For Corridor Alternative 1, mitigation complexity is rated as medium, primarily due to construction within the rail corridor and the need to address contaminated soils. Corridor Alternative 2 mitigation complexity is considered medium because the new river crossing impacts the MRCCA, MNRRA, and aquatic species as well as rail corridor contaminated soils.

Key mitigation measures would include aquatic habitat protection in the Mississippi River related to the new river bridge and soil remediation that is anticipated in rail corridor areas. Compliance with environmental permitting would also be required for new bridge construction. If federally funded these corridor alternatives would be a 4(f) impact that would require a determination that there is no prudent and feasible alternative to the use of park land.

Corridor Alternative 3 impacts the MRCCA, MNRRA, and aquatic species, but avoids the potentially historic rail corridor and contaminated sites present in the rail corridor alternatives. Mitigation complexity is also rated medium, as the alternative is primarily within public ROW and avoids most contaminated or historic areas. Environmental mitigation would focus on protecting aquatic habitats and complying with permitting requirements for new infrastructure in sensitive river corridor areas. If federally funded this alternative would be a Section 4(f) impact that would require a determination that there is no prudent and feasible alternative to the use of park land.

The existing Short Line Bridge is not currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places but was constructed in 1901. Based on its age the bridge could be considered eligible and historically significant by meeting certain criteria. A Section 106 study of the bridge would be required to determine eligibility due to the federal interest in the Mississippi River and adjacent parkland, regardless of whether federal funding is used. If eligible, further study would be needed to make a "Determination of Effect" under Section 106 and a "Determination of Use" under Section 4(f), in addition to a "no prudent and feasible alternative" finding by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Corridor Alternative Layouts by Segment

The following series of layout maps (**Figures 6 through 12**) provides a more detailed illustration of the corridor alternatives described above, the relationships with railroad right of way, streets, and other topographical elements. Segment identification (1A, 2 etc.) is included to help correlate to the corridor alternatives depicted earlier in this report in **Figure 3**. The maps are organized in seven views beginning at the river crossing and moving east toward the trail terminus at Allianz Field.

Source: Metropolitan Council

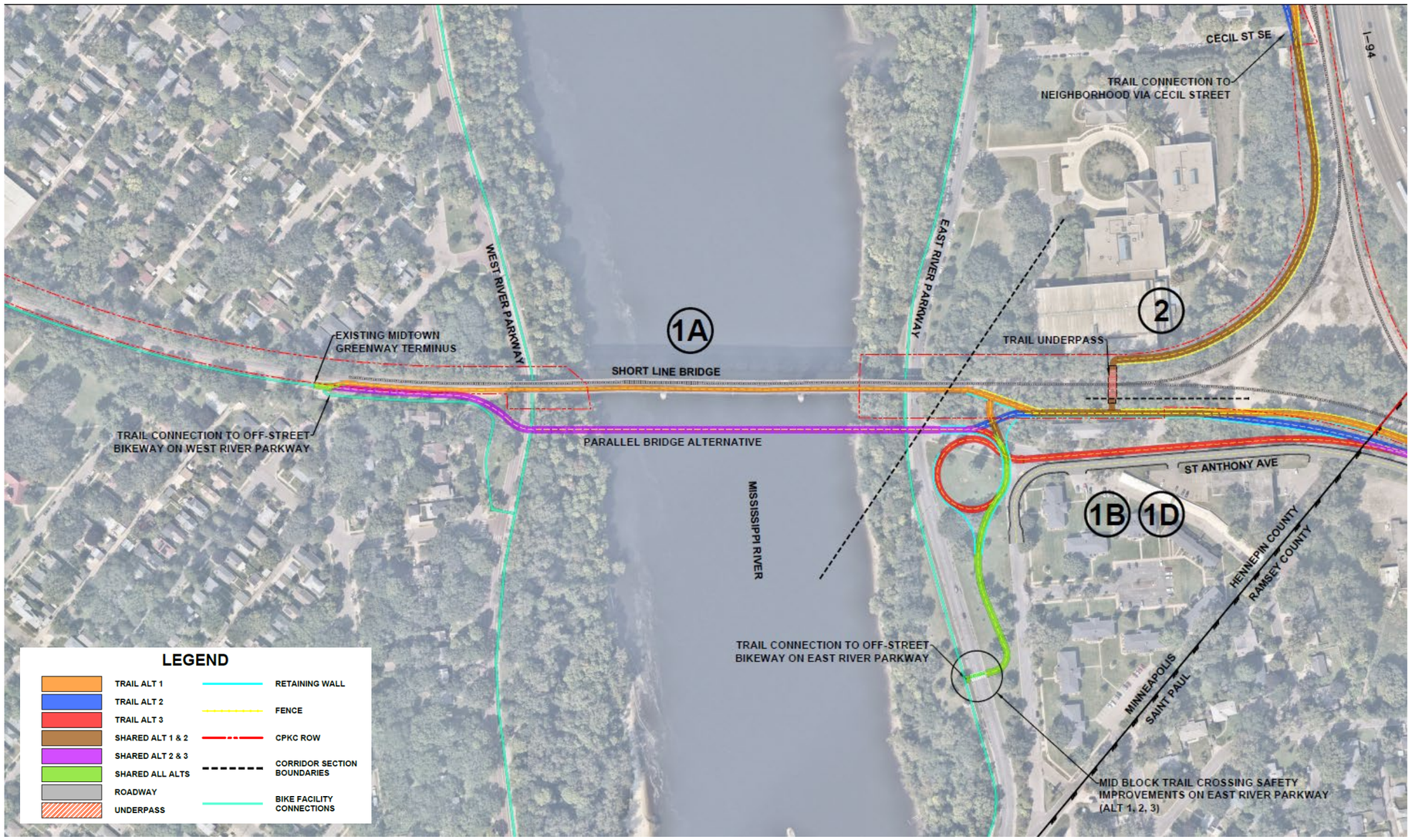


Figure 6: Mississippi River Crossing

Corridor Alternative 1 is depicted above in gold and includes segment 1A (Short Line Bridge), 1B (east bank approach and 2 (Prospect Park Connector). Corridor Alternatives 2 and 3 utilize a new parallel river bridge depicted in purple. All trails would connect to the East River Parkway Grand Rounds Trail via the segment of trail depicted in green. Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2 merge east of the bridge and intersect with the Prospect Park Connector (segment 2) via the track underpass. East of the river crossing Corridor Alternative 3, depicted in red, utilizes a helix ramp to descend from bridge level to street level (approximately 40 foot elevation drop). Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2 follow the edge of railroad right of way easterly at elevation approximately 10-15 feet below river bridge level.

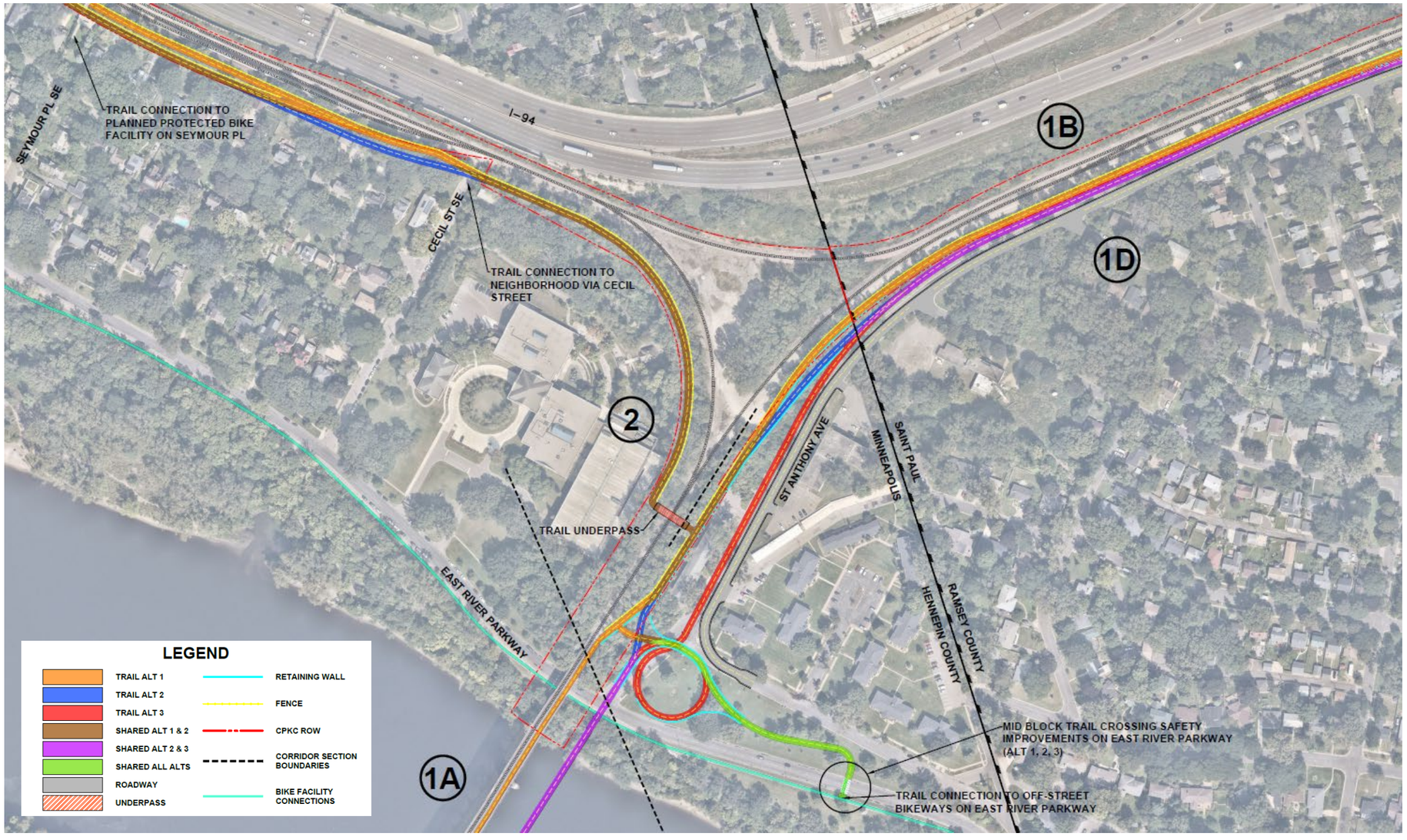


Figure 7: Prospect Park Connector Trail Connection

Figure 7 depicts the Prospect Park Connector (Segment 2) included in Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2 in brown color. The right of way is sufficient to provide 50-foot offset around the track wye to Cecil Street. Northwest of Cecil Street the rail right of way narrows – this is the location of the residential parcels that would be impacted by permanent trail easements to accommodate the 25 foot or 50 foot offsets required by the CPKC. The trail would provide convenient connection to Cecil Street, Seymour Place and the existing Seymour Place pedestrian bridge depicted in the upper left portion of **Figure 8**.

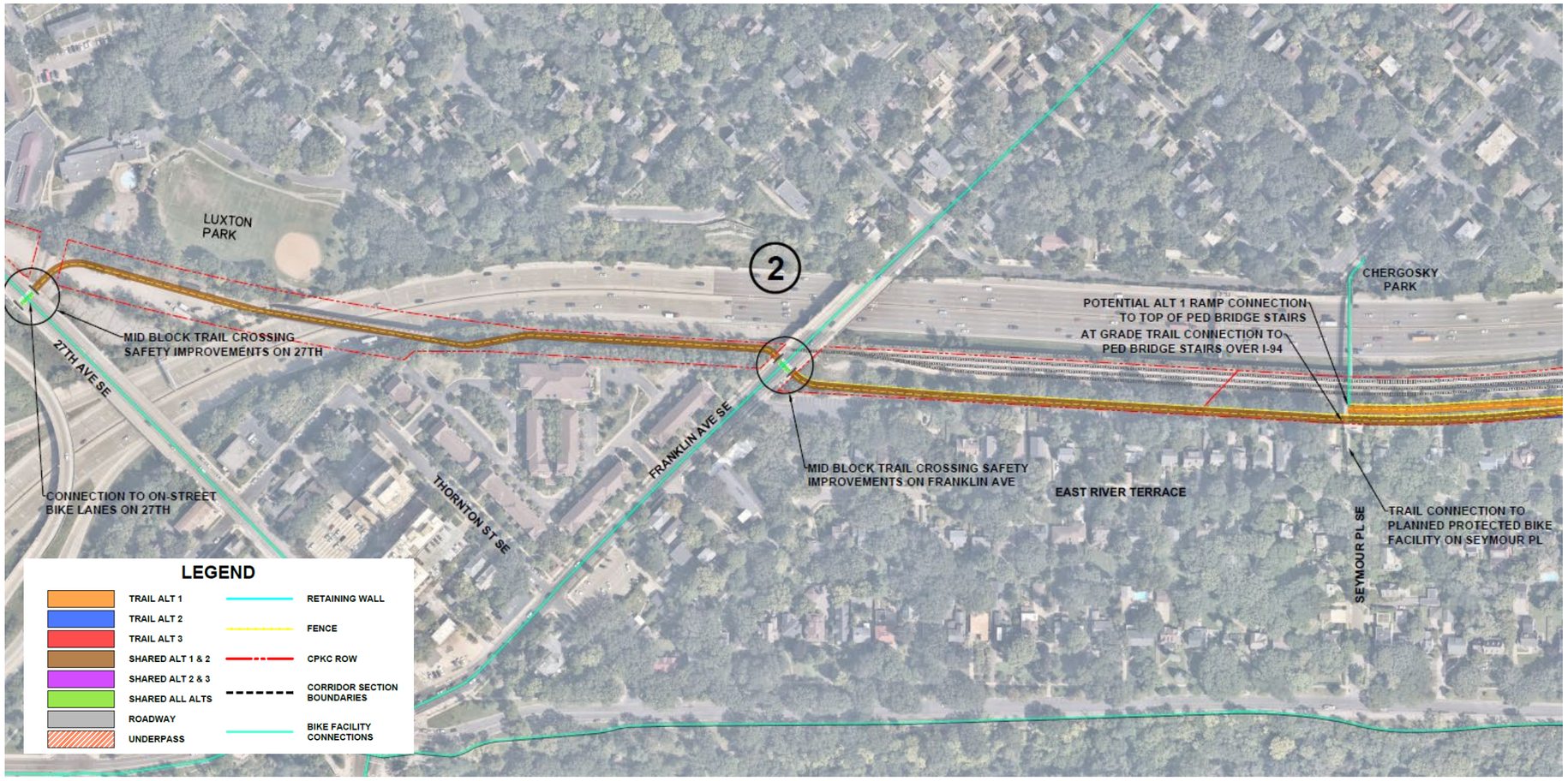


Figure 8: Prospect Park Connector

Figure 8 depicts the northern terminus of the Prospect Park Connector (segment 2) at 27th Avenue SE. This portion of the trail runs within rail right of way adjacent to private property parcels but is not anticipated to require permanent easements. Trail proximity to existing privacy fences and overhead power will need to be reviewed in detail design to identify whether any adjustments to those elements are required. The trail connects to existing on-street bike lanes on Franklin Avenue and continues north within the vacant section of rail ROW between Franklin Avenue and 27th Avenue SE. North of I-94, the trail alignment will need to be coordinated with MPRB's planned expansion of Luxton Park. Crossing design at Franklin Avenue and 27th Avenue will consider safety enhancements appropriate for mid-block crossings including bump outs and RRFB systems.

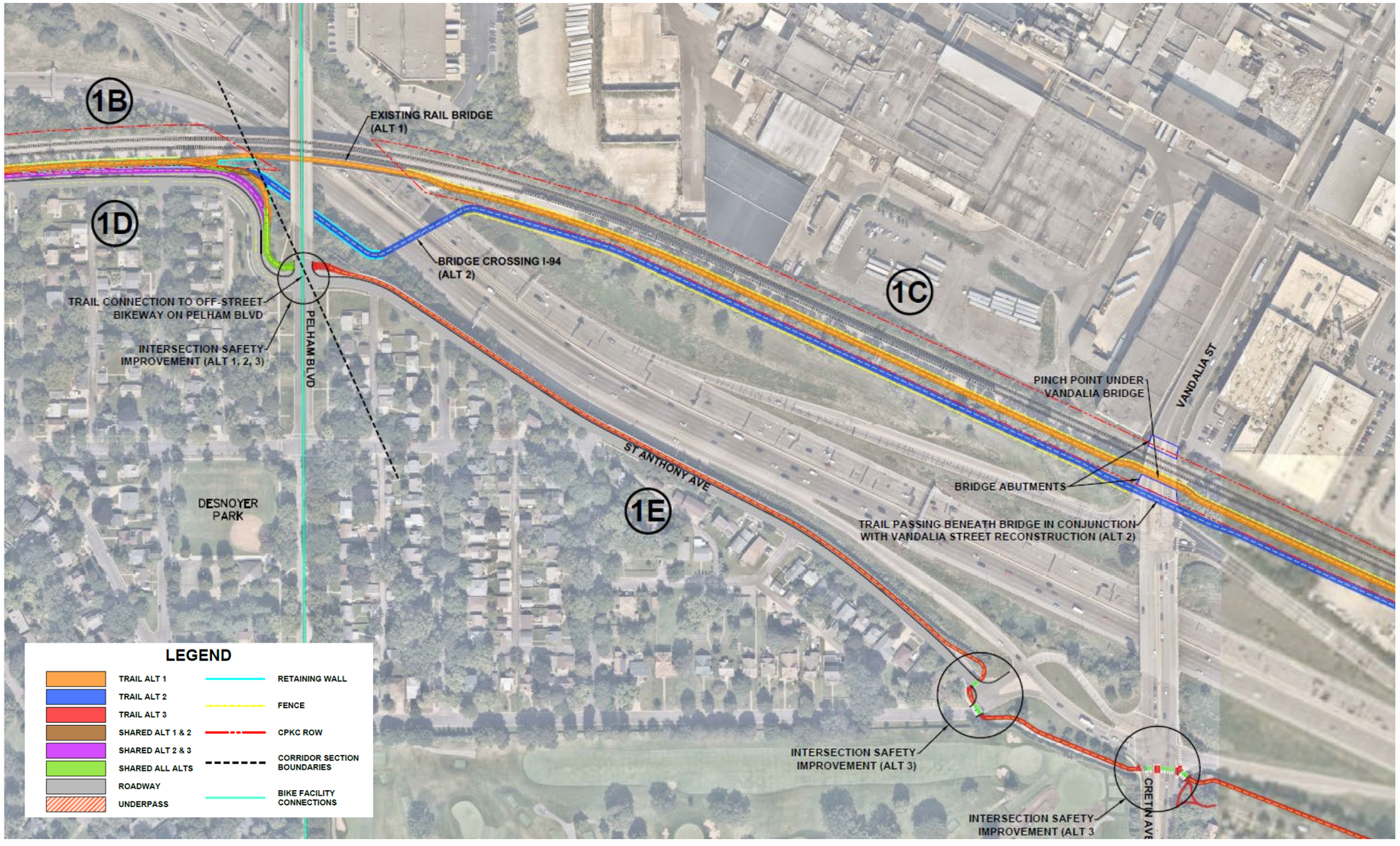


Figure 9: Corridor Alternatives from Pelham Blvd to Cretin Ave-Vandalia Street

Figure 9 depicts Segments 1C and 1E between Pelham Boulevard and Cretin Avenue/Vandalia Street. All corridor alternatives include a connection to the Saint Paul Grand Round trail along Pelham Boulevard. Corridor Alternative 1 (depicted in gold) utilizes the rail bridge over I-94 and runs east and under Vandalia Street utilizing the existing bridge although only an 18-foot offset is achievable under the bridge. Corridor Alternative 2 (depicted in blue) runs under the Pelham Boulevard Bridge, across I-94 on a new structure and crosses under Vandalia Street in conjunction with the reconstruction of Vandalia Street bridge. Corridor Alternative 3 (depicted in red) utilizes the north side of Saint Anthony Avenue ROW and includes narrowing of Saint Anthony Avenue to accommodate a 10-foot bike trail between the freeway noise wall and new roadway curb. Pedestrians would utilize the existing sidewalk on the south side of Saint Anthony Avenue in this segment. Saint Anthony Avenue would be 16 feet wide and could be configured as a one-way street with parking bays depending on community preference.

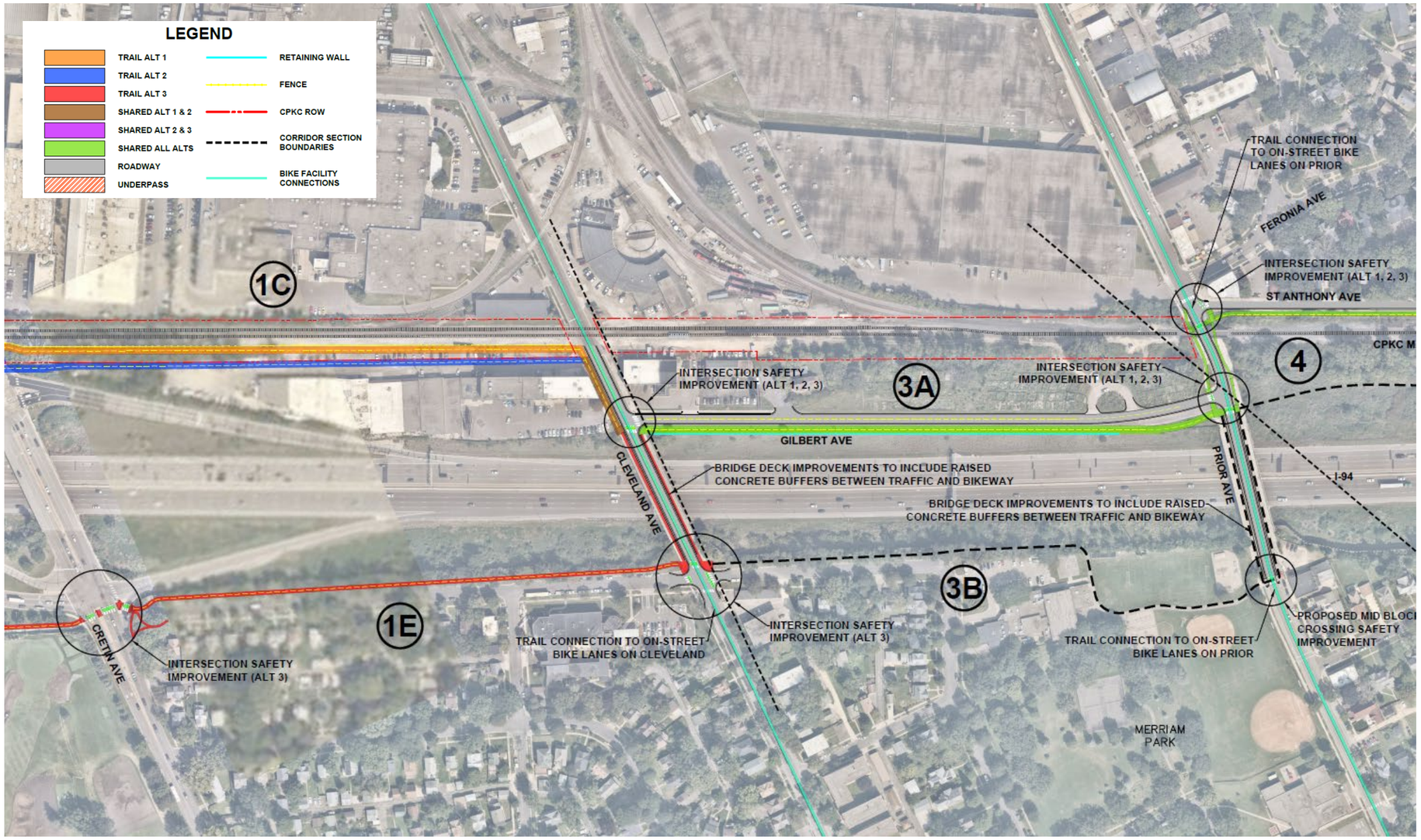


Figure 10: Corridor Alternatives from Cretin Ave to Prior Ave

Figure 10 depicts trail Segments 1C and 1E between Cretin Avenue/Vandalia Street and Cleveland Avenue as well as Segments 3A and 3B extending to Prior Avenue. Corridor Alternative 1 (gold) and Corridor Alternative 2 (blue) merge together at Cleveland Avenue and run easterly along the south side of Gilbert Avenue (depicted in brown). Corridor Alternative 3 (depicted in red) utilizes the north side of Saint Anthony Avenue ROW between Cretin Avenue and Cleveland Avenue and includes a 10-foot bike trail between the freeway noise wall and existing roadway curb without any roadway narrowing. Pedestrians would utilize the existing sidewalk on the south side of Saint Anthony Avenue in this segment. Corridor Alternative 3 may cross I-94 and connect to Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2 at Gilbert Avenue using the Cleveland Avenue Bridge or continue easterly (Segment 3B) along Saint Anthony Avenue and through Merriam Park utilizing Prior Avenue to cross I-94. All corridor alternatives utilize Prior Avenue under the CPKC mainline bridge then continue easterly on the south side of Saint Anthony Avenue. This optional element would provide a more direct and potentially safer trail alignment (by not having to cross Prior Avenue at grade) and a future direct connection to the Ayd Mill Road corridor trail running parallel to and southwest of the mainline track. Intersection safety enhancements including curb bump outs, lighting, signage, and striping and RRFBs should be evaluated at the major street crossings noted on **Figure 10**.

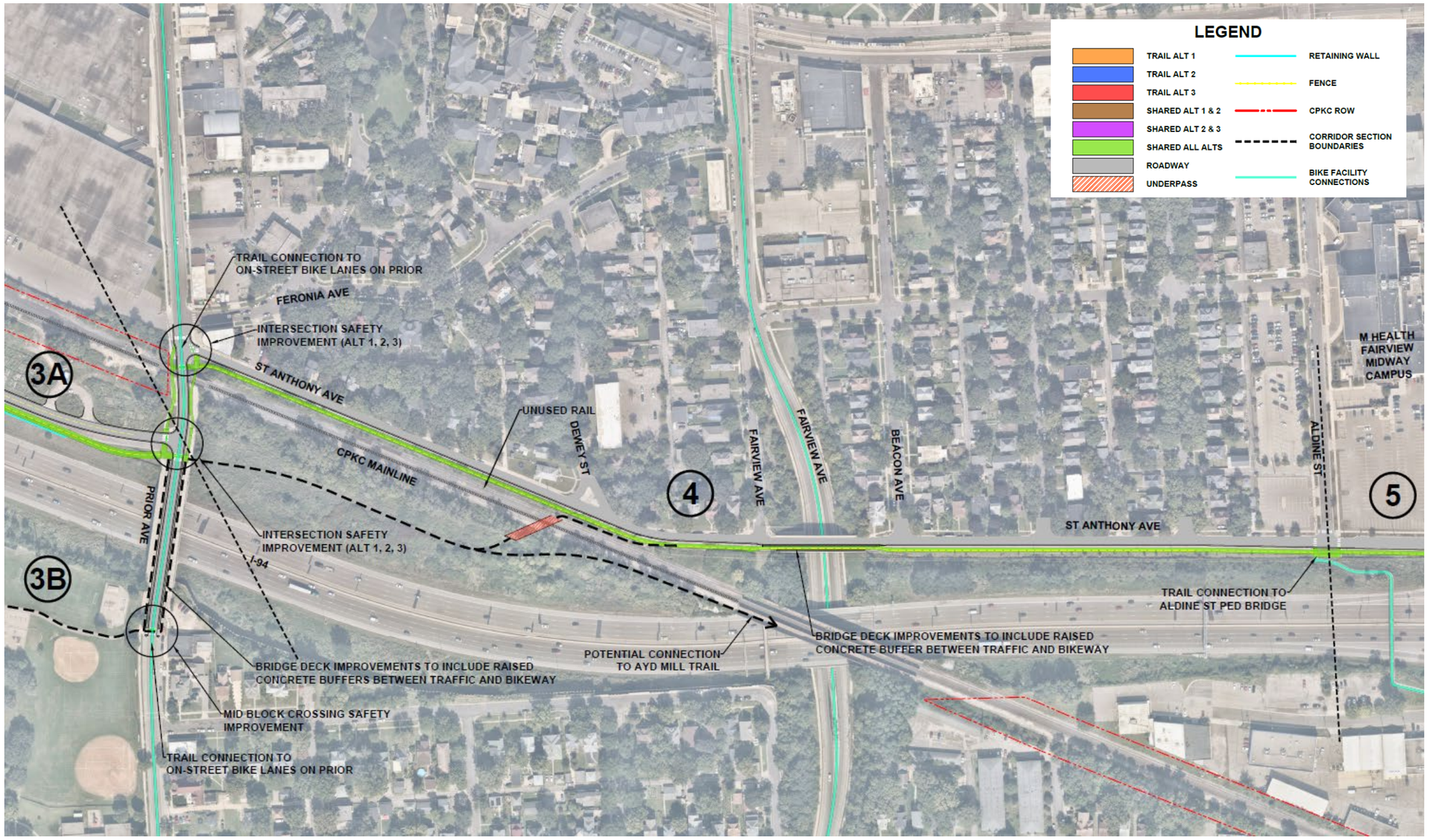


Figure 11: Corridor Alternatives from Prior Ave to Aldine St

Figure 11 depicts trail Segment 4 between Prior Avenue and Aldine Street pedestrian bridge. All three corridor alternatives follow the same alignment along the south boulevard of Saint Anthony Avenue. West of Dewey Street the 10-foot bike trail would be constrained by transmission poles and the proximity of the railroad grade. East of Dewey Street the bike trail is not constrained by transmission poles. The south curbline of Saint Anthony would shift north to correlate to the existing buffer striping. Pedestrians would utilize the existing sidewalks along the north side of Saint Anthony Avenue in Segment 4. The existing bridge over Fairview Avenue would include raised concrete median to provide additional protection of cyclists from vehicular traffic. **Figure 11** also depicts a potential connection between the Midtown Greenway trail and a potential future Ayd Mill trail via a trail extension from Prior Avenue within the MnDOT I-94 ROW (black dashed line).

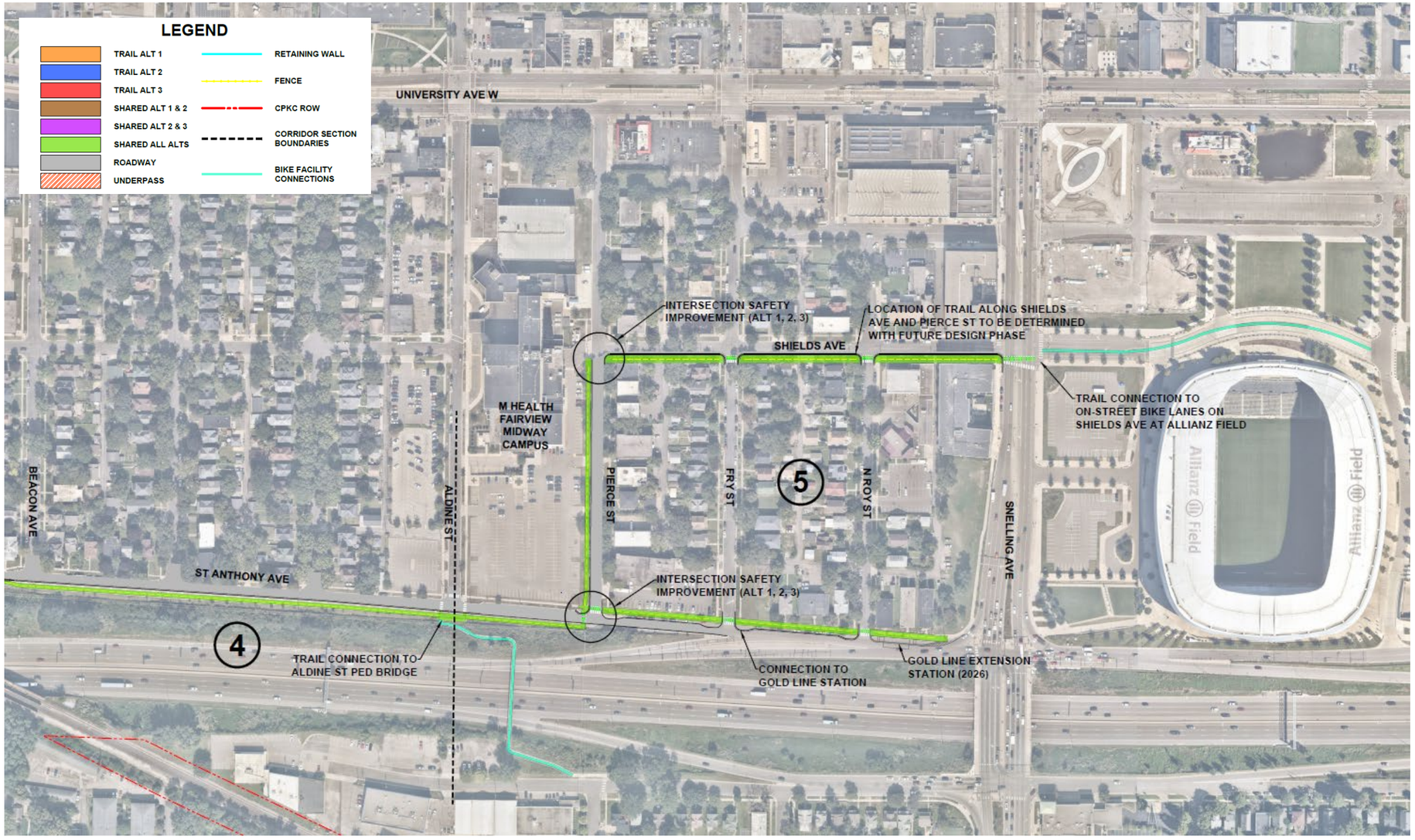


Figure 12: Trail Connection to Allianz Field

Figure 12 depicts Segment 5 between the Aldine Street pedestrian bridge and eastern terminus at the northwest corner of Allianz Field. All three corridor alternatives follow the same alignment in this segment and include a 10 foot bike trail along the west boulevard of Pierce Street and a 16 foot mixed use trail along the south boulevard of Shields Avenue. Pedestrians would utilize the existing sidewalk along the east side of Pierce Street. Curblines on Pierce Street and Shields Avenue would be shifted to optimize space for trail, vehicles, and boulevard widths. Intersection safety enhancements including curb bump outs, lighting, signage, and striping and RRFBs should be evaluated at the trail crossing of Saint Anthony Avenue at Pierce Street and the crossing of Pierce Street at Shields Avenue.

RAILROAD COORDINATION

Coordination with the Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railway (CPKC) was an ongoing and essential process for this planning and conceptual design study phase. Multiple meetings and phone conversations were held to exchange basic information about the study's purpose, initial planning concepts, and trail design and alignment considerations for the railroad. CPKC staff representing their government relations, legal, real estate, and engineering departments were involved during the coordination process.

In October 2025, at the railroad's request and on behalf of the study team, the Metropolitan Council submitted a letter proposal to CPKC for their review and response. The proposal included a preliminary trail layout that would cross and share the existing Short Line rail bridge with continuing freight rail operations and would run along and within railroad-owned right-of-way wherever standard offsets for track-to-trail separation (a minimum of 25 feet) could be attained (see letter in **Appendix E: Correspondence with Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railway**).

In December 2025, CPKC provided a written response to the proposal (**Appendix E**) highlighting the following key points:

1. Construction of a trail on the existing Short Line Bridge will not be permitted due to significant safety and liability concerns and the need to preserve the railroad's ability to expand rail capacity to serve future business development opportunities; and

2. Potential trail alignments running within and along railroad ROW would require a minimum of 50 feet of separation between the nearest track and the edge of the trail corridor. The letter acknowledged that there are locations on the railroad's network where trails had been historically permitted for construction in closer proximity to rail lines, but that those arrangements have only reinforced the railroad's concerns regarding safety and liability.

As a result of this response, it is likely that the alignment assumed for Corridor Alternative 1, described as 'Short Line Bridge/On Rail Corridor', would not be possible under current rail corridor ownership. It may remain possible, however, for a public government entity (or a combination of entities) to pursue acquisition of property rights for this corridor alternative through negotiated outcomes, up to and including purchase of the rail corridor. Corridor Alternative 2, described as 'New River Bridge with Partial Use of Rail Corridor', has accounted for the railroad's required 50-feet minimum track-to trail separation which limits potential use of rail right-of-way to a few segments in Minneapolis, including the Prospect Park Connector as shown in **Figure 13**. The implication of this railroad position is that implementation of the Prospect Park Connector may be possible through successfully negotiated trail easements from several private property owners adjacent to rail right-of-way.

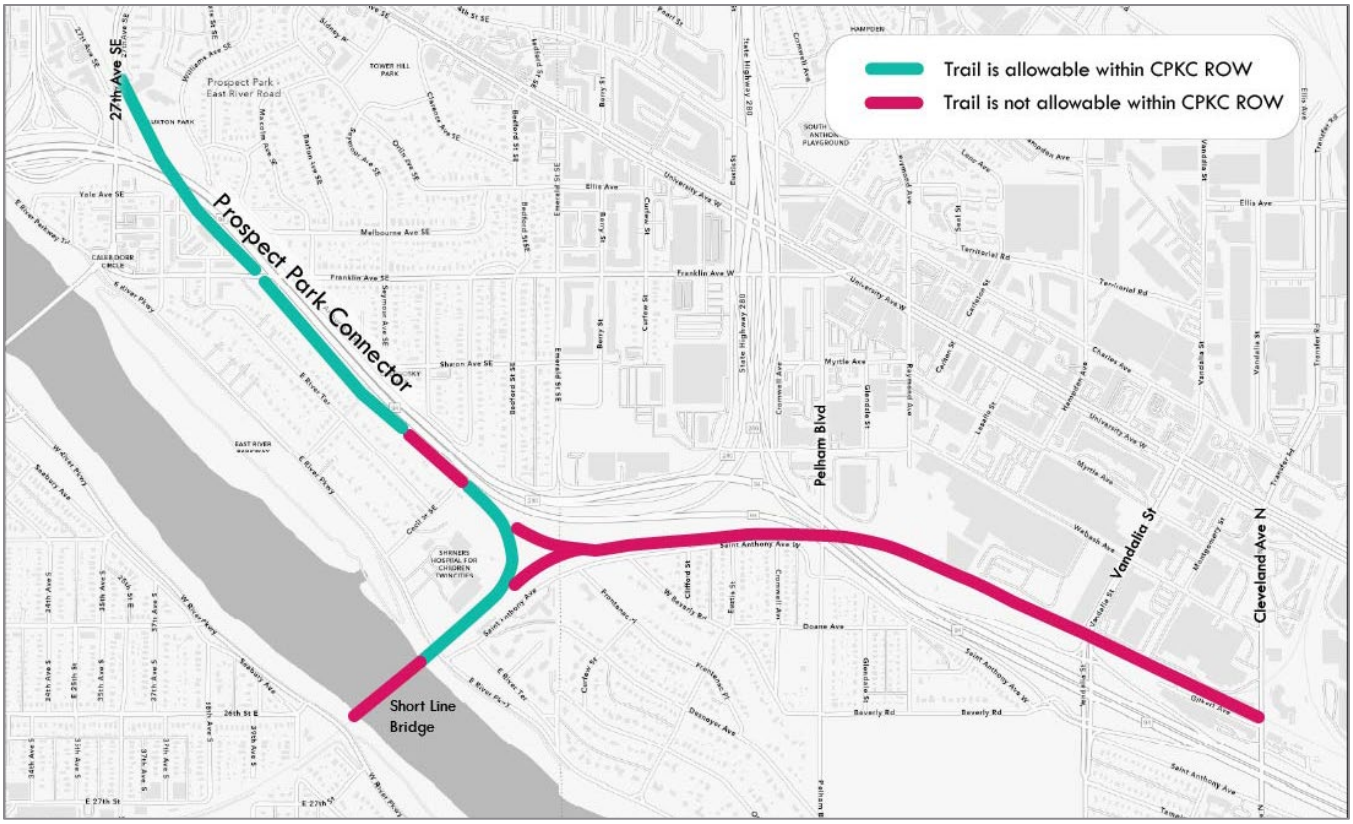


Figure 13: Midtown Greenway extension trail segments allowable within rail ROW

CONSTRUCTION COST ESTIMATES

Construction conceptual cost estimates were developed for all corridor alternatives and are presented in the table below. Corridor Alternative 1 is highly dependent on CPKC railroad factors which carry a very high risk that costs may be greater than the base cost estimate displayed, as potential railroad acquisition costs are not included in the estimate. Corridor Alternatives 2 and 3 have less or no reliance on the use of rail infrastructure and ROW and therefore carry 'medium' and 'low' cost risk, respectively.

Corridor Alternatives 2 and 3 would include constructing a new trail-only bridge crossing the Mississippi River. A number of bridge types were evaluated in the Mississippi River Bridge Options Report (**Appendix B**) with varying levels of complexity and associated construction costs. Though the range in estimated costs is high, the median estimate was about $35 million and seven of the eight options studied were estimated at or below $42 million.

Cost estimates were based on an approximate 10% level of design and are intended to provide order-of-magnitude costs for planning and programming purposes. Construction costs are based on 2026 dollars. Estimates do not account for any cost escalation related to inflation associated with construction costs in future years.

Table 1: Construction Conceptual Cost Estimates (2026 $)

Implementation Cost	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 1	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 2	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 3
Mississippi River bridge rehab or new construction	$30M - $34M	$30M - $61M	$30M - $61M
Non-river bridge rehab or new construction	$2M	$9M	N/A
Trail, structures & amenities	$18M	$20M	$16M
Design/engineering and misc. admin. cost	$13M - $15M	$15M - $23M	$12M - $19M
Total construction cost	$63M – $69M	$74M - $113M	$58M - $96M
Potential Additional Costs			
ROW acquisition or easements [1]	Very High Cost[2]	$1M - $2M	N/A
Mainline track underpass east of Prior Ave (Optional)	$9M	$9M	$9M
OVERALL COST RISK[3]	Very High Railroad bridge & corridor unknowns	Medium Railroad corridor unknowns	Low No railroad-related unknowns

[1] Due to the current railroad's position that prohibits use of the rail corridor and bridge facilities for trail construction, assumes potential public acquisition of property rights through negotiated outcomes, up to and including purchase of the rail corridor.

[2] Rail corridor acquisition cost anticipated to be significant based on comparable factors from rail corridor acquisitions in the Twin Cities and around the nation. Purchase price is typically based on appraised real estate value multiplied by a corridor factor greater than 1 to reflect the inherent value of the existing, pre-assembled corridor.

[3] Lower risk means less susceptible to changes in construction cost.

A sample of rail corridor acquisition costs for recent Class I Railroad Corridors is shown in **Table 2.** Costs for this type of acquisition vary widely as demonstrated below. For comparison purposes, the current rail corridor that begins at Cleveland Avenue in Saint Paul, runs west along the main route, includes the Prospect Park Connector spur corridor, and follows the main corridor across the Mississippi River and through to E 46th Street in Minneapolis, is seven miles in length.

Table 2: Rail Corridor Acquisition Costs for Class I Railroad Corridors since 2011

Public Agency	Railroad	Project	Corridor Miles	Track Status	Purchase Price ($M)[1]	Purchase Year	Cost in $M per Corridor Mile[1]	Cost in $M per Corridor Mile (2026$)[2]
City of Charlotte, NC	Norfolk Southern	Commuter Rail Expansion	22	Freight Continues	$74.00	2024	$3.364	$3.568
State of New Jersey	Norfolk Southern	Essex–Hudson Greenway	9	Abandoned	$65.00	2021	$7.222	$8.373
Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities	Canadian Pacific Kansas City	Bass Lake Spur (Regional Trail Reconstruction)	7	Freight Continues	$27.45	2018	$3.927	$4.968
Michigan DOT	Norfolk Southern	Detroit–Chicago Amtrak Improvements	135	Freight Continues	$140.00	2012	$1.037	$1.569
Florida DOT	CSX	Commuter Rail Expansion	61	Freight Continues	$150.00	2011	$2.459	$3.831
AVERAGE			46.8				$3.602	$4.462

[1]Millions of dollars in year of purchase
[2]Assumes 3.00% average annual growth from year of purchase

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE COST ESTIMATES

In addition to capital construction costs, the cost to operate and maintain each of the corridor alternatives was also estimated. Differences in operations & maintenance (O&M) costs are largely due to whether the corridor alternative uses the Short Line Bridge. As the bridge is approximately 120 years old and fracture critical, maintaining the bridge is estimated to cost significantly more than constructing a new dedicated bicycle/pedestrian trail bridge. O&M cost estimates for each corridor alternative are listed below in **Table 3**.

Cost estimates were based on an approximate 10% level of design and are intended to provide order-of-magnitude costs for planning and programming purposes. O&M costs are based on 2026 dollars. Estimates are annualized for comparison. Significant repair and maintenance activities are anticipated to be grouped into improvements projects that would occur in 5-10-year windows. The costs below are focused on the river crossing only. Operations and maintenance costs for trail on grade throughout the remainder of the corridor would typically include snow removal, bituminous pavement rehabilitation (20-year cycle) and miscellaneous activities such as graffiti removal and trash pick-up and would not vary between each corridor alternative. Estimates do not account for any cost escalation related to inflation associated with maintenance involving construction activities in future years.

Table 3: Conceptual Operations & Maintenance Cost Estimates (2026 $)

Operations and Maintenance Cost	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 1	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 2	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 3
Estimated Routine Inspection Cost	$75K	$25K	$25K
Estimated Annual Maintenance Cost (40-year)	$500K	$100K	$100K
Total Estimated O&M Cost	$575K	$125K	$125K

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Purpose of Evaluation

Comparing the corridor alternatives will help guide future decision making regarding the further refinement and identification of desirable design attributes for the Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion, which will consequently inform the project implementation plan. The evaluation documented in this report assesses corridor alternatives based on criteria that align with the study goals, construction feasibility, funding feasibility, and agreement of project partners. Criteria themes assess connectivity and accessibility, environmental considerations, ROW impacts, implementation costs, operations and maintenance costs, permitting, and implementation timeline. These criteria are defined in the following section, including the specific criteria measures that were used to complete the evaluation.

Evaluation Criteria and Comparative Corridor Alternatives Analysis

The corridor alternatives were evaluated against 18 measures across six criteria themes. Each criteria theme is defined below, along with the criteria measures that evaluate each theme. For each criterion described below, see the corresponding section in **Table 4** for evaluative measures applied and assessment comparisons between the corridor alternatives.

A. **Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity & Access**
   Trail use is directly correlated to ease of access for potential users from neighborhoods and how well the corridor alternative connects to existing and proposed trail systems and key destinations (parks, schools, employment, shopping, and commercial centers).
B. **Environmental Considerations**
   Concepts with significant environmental impacts, mitigation complexity, or concerns may reduce public support, limit funding sources, delay implementation, and/or require mitigation.
C. **Right-of-Way and Bridge Impacts**
   Concepts with significant ROW acquisition may reduce public support and costs and/or design stipulations related to easement granting.
D. **Permitting Complexity**
   Permitting requirements may add cost, review time, and design constraints, which could impact the project delivery timeline.
E. **Implementation Timeline**
   Projects with a reasonable timeline for full implementation typically have stronger support from responsible agencies and other stakeholders.

Source: Metropolitan Council

Table 4 presents the results of the comparative evaluation.

Criteria that emerged as major separators in the evaluation include those that assessed ROW impacts, cost, permitting, constructability, and implementation timeline. These criteria tended to be most impacted by whether the corridor alternatives required coordination with the railroad. Some criteria were not major differentiators between the corridor alternatives, such as measures related to environmental documentation timelines and phasing potential, but were included in the summary table to document any relevant considerations.

Table 4: Comparative Analysis Results

A. Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity & Access	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 1	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 2	PROSPECT PARK CONNECTOR (ALT 1 & 2)	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 3
A.1: Number of access connections to existing and planned bikeways identified in a local or regional plan	6 Connects to East River Pkwy, Pelham Blvd, Cleveland Ave, Prior Ave, Aldine St, and Shields Ave	6 Connects to East River Pkwy, Pelham Blvd, Cleveland Ave, Prior Ave, Aldine St, and Shields Ave	3 Connects to Cecil St, Seymour Place Pedestrian bridge, Franklin Ave, and 27th Ave	6 Connects to East River Pkwy, Pelham Blvd, Cleveland Ave, Prior Ave, Aldine St, and Shields Ave Shorter access distance to neighborhoods along Saint Anthony Ave S and several local streets
A.2: Estimated existing population within a 1/4 mile radius from access points	Pop. 9,569 Based on census block groups	Pop. 9,569 Based on census block groups	Pop. 6,031 Based on census block groups	Pop. 10,847 Based on census block groups
A.3: Estimated existing employment within a 1/4 mile radius from access points	Employment: 15,885 Based on census blocks	Employment: 15,885 Based on census blocks	Employment: 927 Based on census blocks	Employment: 14,802 Based on census blocks

B. Environmental Considerations	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 1	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 2	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 3
B.1: What are the potential impacts on sensitive resources (historic, environmental, and Section 4(f)?	Potentially historic bridge Potentially historic rail corridor Contaminated soils 3 brownfield sites Mississippi Gorge Regional Park, West/East River Pkwy	Aquatic species Potentially historic rail corridor Contaminated soils 3 brownfield sites Mississippi Gorge Regional Park, West/East River Pkwy	Aquatic species Mississippi Gorge Regional Park, West/East River Pkwy Merriam Park
B.2: Are there impacts on planning/policy areas, including MRCCA and the MNRRA governing sensitive resources?	MRCCA	MRCCA MNRRA Policy 11 governs new river crossings and introduces a range of design considerations	MRCCA MNRRA Policy 11 governs new river crossings and introduces a range of design considerations
C. Right-of-Way	**CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 1**	**CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 2**	**CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 3**
C.1: To what extent will trail bridges accommodate preferred design widths for the separation of bikes and pedestrians (16-ft minimum width)?	None - Retrofitting Short Line Bridge and I-94 rail bridges N/of Franklin Ave and east of Pelham for trail use would provide 12-ft trail width maximum.	Partially – new trail bridge over river would provide full separation with 20-ft width; retrofitted rail bridge over I-94 N/of Franklin Ave & new bridge near Pelham Blvd would only provide for a 12-ft shared use trail	Fully – new trail bridge over river would provide full separation with 20-ft width. Alternative 3 does not include any other trail bridges.

C. Right-of-Way	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 1	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 2	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 3
C.2: To what level does the alternative require the use of railroad property?	High – May require acquisition of rail corridor and Short Line Bridge	Moderate - Would require easements along railroad ROW to construct approx. 5,000 ft of trail	None – Does not require use of railroad property
C.3: Number of non-railroad private properties impacted by acquisition and/or easement requirements	4 residential properties, 1 industrial property	8 residential properties, 1 industrial property	No private acquisitions or easements required
D. Permitting Complexity	**CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 1**	**CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 2**	**CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 3**
D.1: Permits required by category (e.g., USACE, state wetlands, railway, municipal)	National Park Service Mn Pollution Control Agency Cities Watersheds	National Park Service US Army Corps of Engineers US Coast Guard US Fish & Wildlife Service Mn Dept of Natural Resources MN Pollution Control Agency MN Dept of Transportation Cities Watersheds	National Park Service US Army Corps of Engineers US Coast Guard US Fish & Wildlife Service MN Dept of Natural Resources MN Pollution Control Agency MN Dept of Transportation Cities Watersheds
D.2: What environmental documentation level (CE/EA/EIS) is anticipated?	Categorical Exclusion / EAW	Environmental Assessment, EAW	Environmental Assessment, EAW

E. Route Elevation Profile	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 1	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 2	CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 3
E.1: Ease or challenge of riding elevation profile	Easy gentle rail grade corridor profile	Moderately long, steep elevation climb on Saint Anthony Ave	Challenging long and steep elevation climb on Saint Anthony Ave
F. Implementation Timeline	**CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 1**	**CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 2**	**CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVE 3**
F.1: Coordination on government roles	1-2 years	1-2 years	1-2 years
F.2: Negotiate rail corridor ROW purchase agreement or easement	2-4 years ROW transfer from CPKC and negotiate agreement with operating railroad	1-2 years	Not applicable
F.3: Environmental Review	1-2 years (if reviewed independently of other alternatives)	2-3 years	2-3 years
F.4: Plan development, updates, or amendments	1-2 years	1-2 years	1-2 years
F.5: Design	1 year	1-2 years	1-2 years
F.6: Negotiate private property easements	1 year	1 year	Not applicable
F.7: Construct trail (non-river bridge) segments	2-3 years (assumes phasing of projects)	2-3 years	2-3 years
F.8: River bridge rehab and/or new construction	1-2 years	2-3 years	2-3 years
F.9: Total estimated timeline *(Note that totals do not add up as some phases overlap)*	10-17 years	11–18 years	9–15 years

Evaluation Summary

Based on the above evaluation, this section provides a high-level summary of benefits and challenges between the corridor alternatives.

Corridor Alternative 1, Short Line Bridge/On-Rail Corridor

Benefits

- Improves pedestrian/bicycle connectivity and access with Prospect Park Connector
- Relatively flat corridor elevation profile for easier riding
- Fewer environmental-related permits required with use of Short Line Bridge

Challenges

- Highest level of railroad-related complexities; may only be possible with change in rail corridor ownership
- Highest cost risk due to age/unknown condition of Short Line Bridge and rail corridor unknowns
- Highest maintenance costs due to structure type and age of Short Line Bridge
- Permanent easements required for 5 private parcels

Corridor Alternative 2, New River Bridge with Partial Use of Rail Corridor

Benefits

- Improves pedestrian/bicycle connectivity and access with Prospect Park Connector
- Lower maintenance costs due to new structure type versus age of Short Line rail bridge
- Lower level of railroad coordination for easements east of the river compared to Alternative 1

Challenges

- Permanent easements required for 9 private parcels
- Long and moderately steep hill climb along Saint Anthony Ave east of river but shorter than Alternative 3 by approximately ¼ mile
- Potentially highest construction cost alternative
- Higher environmental complexity/more permits required due to new river crossing
- Higher level of complexity from potential conflict with “Re-thinking I-94” unknowns between Cleveland Ave and Pelham Blvd

Corridor Alternative 3, New River Bridge/Off-Rail Corridor

Benefits

- Potentially shortest timeline for implementation
- Better connectivity from main route to nearby neighborhoods via numerous low-volume streets
- Does not require rail corridor acquisition or easement negotiations resulting in lower cost risk
- No permanent easements needed on private property
- Lower maintenance costs due to new bridge structure versus age of Short Line rail bridge

Challenges

- Long and moderately steep hill climb along Saint Anthony Ave east of river vs. profile of Alternative 1
- Higher environmental complexity/more permits required due to new river crossing

Phase III - Project Implementation Plan

This study has determined that the three corridor alternatives that were developed and analyzed through this planning effort are technically feasible; however, each alternative comes with its own set of significant challenges for implementation. The Project Implementation Plan described in this section identifies future project phasing considerations, the overall corridor implementation process, and a general estimated timeline for implementing each corridor alternative.

PHASING STRATEGY

The phasing strategy outlines how corridor improvements can be sequenced to maximize early benefits while enabling a full buildout over time. This planning exercise identifies which segments require certain prerequisite steps that impact the implementation timeline, such as environmental review, plan updates or amendments, coordination with other major government studies, or potential property acquisition or easement requirements. This approach evaluates the "ease of implementation" for each segment and suggests which may be suitable for near-term implementation, ensuring that each phase contributes to broader project goals, builds early momentum, and strengthens long-term corridor connectivity.

Phasing Criteria

There are several criteria that are applied to ensure that early phase investments can strategically build momentum toward successful completion of the full Midtown Corridor trail expansion, including the river crossing. These phasing criteria include the following:

Independent Utility - Segments are prioritized based on their ability to function independently and provide meaningful improvements to the existing bicycle and pedestrian network. Segments that create new links between established or premium bikeways, or substantially enhance existing connectivity, are considered high-value early actions.

Consistency with Adopted Bicycle Plans - Segments that are already supported by locally adopted Minneapolis and Saint Paul planned bicycle network plans can be advanced more quickly. For segments where plan updates are required, the time for completing the update process may reduce near-term feasibility and could shift them to later phases.

Regional Trail Long Range Plans - Segments that are already included in adopted regional trail long range plans can be advanced more quickly. Plans considered include the MPRB's *Midtown Greenway Regional Trail Plan* and the Mississippi Gorge – Samuel Morgan Regional Trail Search Corridor designation in the Met Council's *2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan*.

Environmental Requirements - Segments that can be implemented prior to completion of corridor level environmental review are suitable for advancement within early phases. Segments requiring a Record of Decision or permits associated with broader corridor alternatives must be timed to follow those approvals.

Ability to Build Support for the Mississippi River Bridge - Segments located near the Mississippi River, or those that visibly enhance access and mobility near the riverfront, can reinforce the need and public support for a

future river crossing. These segments are therefore valuable as mid-range priorities that amplify engagement and strengthen the case for the bridge.

Potential to Serve as a Final Alignment Segment - Segments that represent, or could reasonably become, part of the final alignment for one or more long-term alternatives to receive higher priority. Such segments reduce rework, promote investment efficiency, and advance the corridor toward its ultimate configuration.

Right-of-way Requirements and Negotiated Easements - Where easements from the railroad or private landowners are required, realistic negotiation timelines must be acknowledged. Segments requiring complex agreements may be phased later unless they provide exceptional strategic value.

Dependencies on Other Studies and Capital Improvement Programs - Segments reliant on partner agency studies—such as the MnDOT Rethinking I-94 Corridor initiative—or timed with local Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects must align with those schedules. These dependencies may extend implementation timelines and influence assignment to later phases.

Segment Level Phasing

The following phasing strategy represents one scenario of how improvement projects in one or across multiple corridor segments might be staged for implementation. The phasing criteria described above collectively represent the "ease of implementation" for any particular segment and were applied to determine the segment level phasing in this section. The application of these "ease of implementation" factors informs the implicit timing of the phasing strategy that follows, but recognizes that there are other factors that will arise and influence the actual timing of improvements and that developed projects may overlap two or more conceptual segments identified in **Figure 14**. These additional factors are dynamic and difficult to predict but may include unidentified funding opportunities, future outcomes of major transportation-related studies, and future local street Capital Improvement Programs.

Figure 14 shows the overall study corridor organized by segments and sub-segments that align with the segment references within the phasing strategy that follows. Note that Segments 1 through 5 in the corridor map correspond to the same segments outlined in the state legislation.

Source: Metropolitan Council

Figure 14: Map of Corridor Phasing

Phase 1: Early -action segments with high independent utility

Early phased segments are identified based on criteria that reflect expected ease of implementation. Smaller project segments are identified here that can be implemented, for example, without extensive environmental review or potentially complex easement negotiations and still provide independent benefits to the existing or planned bicycle network.

- **Segment 3A** (Cleveland Avenue to Prior Avenue via Gilbert Avenue) is highly suitable for early implementation due to its strong bicycle network connections and consistency with the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan. This segment is compatible with and provides flexibility to implement any of the corridor alternatives.
    - **Segment 3B** (Cleveland Avenue to Prior Avenue via Merriam Park) is highly suitable for early implementation due to its strong bicycle network connections. This parallel segment to Segment 3A is compatible with Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2, but provides the most benefit for Corridor Alternative 3, as it establishes a continuous trail facility south of I-94. This segment would require an update to the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan.
- **Segment 4** (Prior Avenue to Aldine Street) and **Segment 5** (Aldine Street to Allianz Field) are highly suitable for early implementation due to their strong bicycle network and regional transit connectivity benefits; Segment 4 is consistent with the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan, while Segment 5 would likely require a plan update to upgrade to a separated bikeway facility.

Phase 2: Segments requiring easements through railroad or private property

These middle-phased segments will require easements through railroad property and/or privately-owned parcels.

- **Segment 1C** (Pelham Boulevard to Cleveland Avenue) is more appropriately placed in later phases due to current railroad ownership constraints for Corridor Alternative 1 and uncertainties relating to future needs for I-94 right-of-way for Corridor Alternative 2. Outcomes from the forthcoming Rethinking I-94 Corridor Project environmental review phase will determine the availability of land in the I-94 trench for implementing Corridor Alternative 2.
- **Segment 1D** (East River Parkway to Pelham Boulevard via Saint Anthony Avenue) and **Segment 1E** (Pelham Boulevard to Cleveland Avenue via Saint Anthony Avenue) also have high independent benefits through their connections to established major bikeways, but are more appropriately placed in this middle phase to allow time for railroad negotiations for corridor acquisition or easements to occur. Segments 1D and 1E could provide shorter term benefits if constructed as "interim alignments" prior to Segments 1B and 1C, and/or serve as permanent segments of an eventual Alternative 3 scenario; should railroad negotiations lead to the fruition of Segments 1B and 1C as critical segments to Alternatives 1 or 2, then 1D and 1E would offer supplemental long term benefits to neighborhoods south of the rail corridor. Construction of these phase 2 segments would require, at a minimum, an update to the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan.
- **Segment 2** (Prospect Park Connector) together with Segment 1D would provide an interim connection benefit to Saint Paul and east of river Minneapolis residents needing more direct access to the University of Minnesota Main Campus; in addition, these combined segments would add a strategic advantage by visibly raising public awareness for the need to fund and implement the Mississippi River bridge crossing and potentially enhancing public support for advancing the long-term vision.

Phase 3: Segments tied to future Mississippi River bridge construction and/or use of railroad-owned land

This later phase includes segments for which the primary purpose or benefit depends on the future Mississippi River crossing. These improvements will deliver their intended local and regional benefits only when the bridge project is fully implemented.

- **Segment 1A** (Mississippi River crossing) involves the highest degree of complexity of all segments to construct. Corridor Alternative 1 may require public acquisition of the rail corridor to allow for rehabilitation of the Short Line rail bridge for rail and trail shared use; Corridor Alternatives 2 and 3 would require constructing a new trail-only bridge.
- **Segment 1B** (On-rail corridor from the river bridge to Pelham Ave) may require public acquisition of the rail corridor to be implemented.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The following stages apply to the one or more corridor alternatives and are defined in this section:

- Determination of government agency lead and support roles
- Negotiation of railroad corridor easements or purchase agreement
- Amendment of Regional Trail Long-Range Plans and/or local bicycle plans
- Planning and pursuance of funding opportunities
- Environmental review
- Negotiation of private property easements
- Project development leading to construction
- Creating Joint Powers Agreements for operations and maintenance, if needed

Determine Government Roles

Coordination between governmental agencies will be critical to the implementation of the Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion. Agencies will need to collaborate on decision-making regarding the corridor so that the project can be delivered, operated, and maintained in the most effective manner. **Table 5** summarizes roles and responsibilities for local and state governments based on authorities granted under current law and as they relate to post-study implementation for extending the Midtown Greenway. Note that specific government roles for project development, implementation, ownership, and operations have not yet been determined.

Source: Metropolitan Council

Table 5: Government Agency Roles as Authorized under Current Law

Government	Potential Roles
Regional Trail Implementing Agencies (Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department)	Develop, implement, operate, and maintain regional trail segments, solely or in partnership with other agencies, and potential funding partners; as regional park and trail implementing agencies, adopt and/or amend regional trail long range plans, as needed.
Municipalities (Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul)	Lead updates to city bicycle plans and potentially implement non-regional trail, off-rail corridor segments east of Prior Ave in Saint Paul; potential funding partners
Counties (Hennepin and Ramsey Counties)	Potential funding partners.
Regional Railroad Authorities (Hennepin and Ramsey Counties)	Regional railroad authorities lack explicit authority to acquire and preserve rail corridors for the sole purpose of constructing bicycle trails[1]; advise on/help plan strategies for negotiating with railroads.
Metropolitan Council	Limited to planning/trail construction partnerships with other government entities along transitway corridor projects (e.g., Hiawatha Corridor LRT and Green Line Extension); could convene an Implementation Working Group of agency partners and assist in coordinating implementation phases; potential funding through TAB Regional Solicitation programs. Also oversees regional park and trails system by adopting final trail plans for distribution of regional funds.
Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)	MnDOT's statutory role for trails is supportive but limited to along the trunk highway system, or along US and Interstate Highways. Depending on outcomes of the Rethinking I-94 Corridor environmental review, MnDOT could develop trail segments within the I-94 ROW.
Transportation Advisory Board (TAB)	Potential funding source; reviews proposals and distributes federal USDOT funds to prioritized bike/ped projects through Regional Solicitation programs.

[1] A primary function of countywide regional railroad authorities (RRAs) is to acquire rail corridors to preserve or improve local rail service for freight or passenger traffic. Traditionally, RRAs in the Twin Cities have acquired rail corridors for future planned transit development. Although a few trails have been built in the Twin Cities within such corridors as an interim transportation mode, RRAs do not have explicit authority to acquire and preserve rail corridors for the sole purpose of constructing bicycle trails. RRAs do, however, possess a wealth of expertise in working and negotiating with railroads that will be helpful in continued efforts to implement a Midtown Greenway extension.

A Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) is a legal framework under Minnesota Statutes § 471.59 that enables multiple governmental units to collaborate and share authority, responsibilities, staffing, and financial resources to carry

out functions they are independently empowered to perform. Though not required to conduct any project activities, a JPA is one mechanism available for establishing a unified interagency partnership to implement a cross-jurisdictional trail corridor such as the future Midtown Greenway extension.

A JPA or other inter-agency coordination agreement could be useful to coordinate one or more stages of the project, including potential acquisition of the Short Line Bridge and connecting rail corridor, cost sharing for the new Mississippi River bridge, negotiations with CPKC Railroad, long-range planning, environmental review, construction, and post-construction operations and maintenance. An inter-agency agreement also is often used to define responsibilities for ongoing operations, maintenance, and asset management once the trail is constructed and in operation. Potential government partners include the City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the City of Saint Paul, and/or MnDOT. It is unlikely that the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin/Ramsey Counties would have a role in trail operations and maintenance.

Governments can also develop inter-agency agreements for one project phase at a time, aligning responsibilities and cost sharing arrangements with each stage of implementation. An inter-agency agreement can also establish a framework for future, sequential agreements, allowing the full structure to be defined up front and formally executed as later phases advance.

Negotiate CPKC ROW Purchase Agreement or Easement

For the rail corridor west of Cleveland Avenue under Corridor Alternative 1, which may require public acquisition of the rail corridor owned by CPKC, a legal framework similar to past examples of rail corridor purchases would be needed. This could involve a government entity (or group of entities) negotiating a purchase agreement that also includes a shared operations agreement with a third-party railroad operator to maintain freight rail service to Minneapolis businesses.

For Corridor Alternative 2, negotiations would address the acquisition of easements through CPKC ROW for the purpose of construction and operating a multi-use trail along the allowable segments previously shown in **Figure 13** under “Railroad Coordination”, including valuation, due diligence, negotiating access rights, and ensuring compatibility with continuing freight operations. Corridor Alternative 3 lies entirely outside of rail ROW and would require no negotiations with the railroad.

Long-Range Trail Plan and Planning Amendments

Establishing a clear long-range planning framework is essential to advancing the Midtown Greenway extension from concept to implementation. Regional trail designation, where appropriate, is a prerequisite to gain eligibility for Metropolitan Council regional funds. These designations raise the visibility of trails as recognized elements of a growing regional system through an established process that facilitates interagency coordination throughout the design and construction process.

The Midtown Greenway expansion project may be a candidate for regional trail designation due to its connection to the existing Midtown Greenway Regional Trail, connection to numerous community destinations, and direct route. All three corridor alternatives west of Prior Avenue could be developed as a regional trail, an implementable response to the Mississippi Gorge – Samuel Morgan Regional Trail Search Corridor designation in the Met Council’s *2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan*.

As the trail is implemented, not all segments must function as regional trails. For example, Corridor Alternative 3 in Saint Paul and the off-rail corridor segment between Cleveland Avenue and Allianz Field could be implemented as city-led trail facilities through the Public Works Department.

For corridor alternative segments that meet regional criteria and are identified for development as regional trails, the following steps would be needed to implement the Midtown Greenway trail extension**:**

1. **Amend the *Midtown Greenway Regional Trail Long-Range Plan* (2025) for expansion in Minneapolis.** For any of the three corridor alternatives, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) would need to amend the Midtown Greenway Regional Trail to include the proposed Mississippi River crossing and extend the approved regional boundary eastward to the Saint Paul City Limit. The amendment process, among other required components, would include community engagement and a determination of ownership and operations responsibilities for the area being amended into the plan. Approval of a *Midtown Greenway Regional Trail Plan* amendment would support the vision for a continuous and multi-jurisdictional trail facility.
2. **Amend the *Mississippi Gorge Regional Park Long-Range Plan* (2019).** For any of the three alternatives, the MPRB would need to amend the Mississippi Gorge Regional Park Plan, as applicable, to account for the proposed Mississippi River crossing and proposed extension of the Midtown Greenway Regional Trail through the eastern portion of the park. The amendment process, among other required components, would include community engagement and a determination of ownership and operations responsibilities for the area being amended into the plan, as applicable. This amendment could be carried out concurrently with the process to amend the *Midtown Greenway Regional Trail Plan*.
3. **Develop a new regional trail long-range plan for appropriate segments in Saint Paul.** For portions of the corridor within Saint Paul that meet regional trail eligibility criteria, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation would lead the planning process to define the trail alignment, design intent, and implementation strategy through a proposed draft regional trail long range plan that could be developed in response to the existing Regional Trail Search Corridor that follows the rail corridor and is designated in the *2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan*. Segments of the proposed route to Allianz Field that follow city streets east of Cleveland Avenue could be developed as a city trail led by Saint Paul Public Works (see local plans discussion below) or could be developed as a spur segment of the new regional trail alignment mentioned above.
4. **Update the *2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan*.** The Metropolitan Council is required to adopt any new or amended regional trail plans proposed by the MPRB or the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department through a future Regional Parks and Trails System additions process.

For corridor alternative segments that are not identified for development as regional trails and where it makes sense to implement the trail as part of street maintenance or capital improvement projects, the following city bicycle plans will require an update and/or mapping adjustments to allow implementation to advance:

1. ***City of Saint Paul Bicycle Plan***, to update alignment classifications, mapping, and facility recommendations. Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2 broadly align with the planned bikeway designation along the rail corridor west of Cleveland Avenue would require the fewest changes to adopted plans. Corridor Alternative 3 would require adding bikeway designations along multiple segments of S. Saint

Anthony Avenue in addition to the on-street-ROW segments east of Aldine Street that would require updates for any of the three alternatives.

2. ***City of Minneapolis Transportation Action Plan's All Ages and Abilities (AAA) Network* plan**, to incorporate connections, access points, and design guidance once a preferred corridor alternative is identified. The Prospect Park Connector is already included in the AAA Network and would need only minor adjustments to accommodate the final alignment. Updating the AAA network map is a relatively simple process with minimal or no anticipated factors that could delay implementation of Segments 1B or 1D (River to Saint Paul City Limit) in Minneapolis.

Collectively and in tandem with future city street Capital Improvement Programs, these planning actions would establish the planning and policy foundation needed to secure funding, coordinate responsibilities among agencies, and guide phased implementation of the trail corridor.

Pursue Funding

Grant applications and requests for funding a Midtown Greenway extension could occur concurrently with environmental review, design advancement, and right-of-way negotiations. A mix of federal, regional, state, and local funding sources is anticipated with some sources offering larger amounts of funding, such as BUILD grants, while others are more limited in scale. Many opportunities, such as grant programs, are offered on an annual basis. Some opportunities only fund construction and not earlier phases such as planning. The anticipated range of potential funding sources for a Midtown Greenway Expansion project is shown in *Table 6*.

Table 6: Potential Funding Sources and Eligible Uses

Funding Source	Administering Agency	Eligible Uses	Typical Range	Notes / Constraints
State Bonding	Minnesota Legislature / MMB	Land acquisition, major bridge work, trail construction, preliminary and final design	N/A	Requires legislative approval; cannot be used for planning or operations
Regional Solicitation (Federal USDOT funds)	Metropolitan Council	Trail construction, grade separations, bridges	$1M - $5.5M	Projects must meet eligibility criteria Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (RBTN) Tier 1 designation for the Mississippi River Crossing provides the future crossing as a high priority

Funding Source	Administering Agency	Eligible Uses	Typical Range	Notes / Constraints
Federal BUILD (formerly RAISE)	USDOT	Design, construction, major structures, multimodal improvements	$5M - $25M	Requires strong benefit–cost analysis; federal match rules apply
Local Capital Improvement Program (CIP)	Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Counties	Match funding, local trail segments, design support	N/A	Timing must align with local CIP cycles
Regional Parks & Trails Legacy Funds	Metropolitan Council	Trail construction, amenities	N/A	Can be used for planning; maintenance ineligible; Needs to be a Regional Trail
Regional Solicitation (Active Trans. program funds)	Metropolitan Council	Trail construction, amenities	$150K - $3.5M	Construction, design, and engineering; does not include maintenance
Federal Earmarks	USDOT	Any	N/A	Requires a member of Congress to champion
Private Philanthropy / Foundations	Local or national partners	Enhancements, beautification, and access improvements	N/A	Often supplemental rather than primary funding

Environmental Review

All corridor alternatives could be included in an environmental review to assess feasibility, potential impacts, and applicable regulatory requirements, establishing a foundation for coordinated decision-making, and development of a future inter-agency agreement. Many trail segments lie entirely within existing street or other public rights-of-way, where only minimal environmental review (i.e., environmental checklist) may be required. As a result, a more detailed Categorical Exclusion, Environmental Assessment Worksheet, or Environmental Assessment process may be needed only for the Mississippi River crossings and the adjoining rail corridor-related segments included in Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2.

Private Property Easements

For all corridor alternatives, temporary property easements from adjacent landowners may be required to accommodate access, grading, drainage, or other temporary construction activities. Permanent trail easements would likely be needed for four residential parcels along the Prospect Park Connector in Corridor Alternative 1 and eight residential parcels for Corridor Alternative 2. One permanent easement from one commercial parcel west of Cleveland Avenue would also be needed under Corridor Alternative 2.

Operations and Maintenance

Key components of trail operations and maintenance include:

- Routine trail maintenance (snow clearance, pavement sweeping, vegetation, debris removal, etc.)
- Routine bridge inspection and asset management
- Security and user safety
- Periodic trail maintenance (refresh striping, signage)
- Long-term capital renewal (trail repaving, bridge deck)

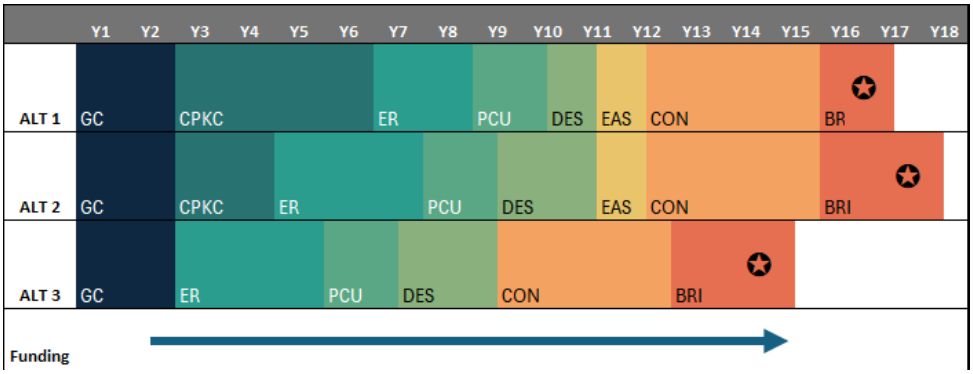
Operations and maintenance responsibilities are often incorporated into a Joint Powers Agreement. This JPA may need to be established separately from the inter-agency agreement created earlier in the process. A lead government agency (like a regional park implementing agency for regional trails, for example) should be designated to coordinate maintenance with cost sharing contributions and specific roles assigned to partner jurisdictions.

Implementation Timeline

Each corridor alternative has a different timeline for completion, as some corridor alternatives require more steps, and individual complexity would require that some steps in one corridor alternative may take longer than in others. Some phases may be able to run concurrently or overlap to reduce the overall timeline, while other phases could take longer than anticipated. The years shown for each step is a conservative estimate based on the project team's knowledge of timelines for projects of similar scale and complexity. **Figure 15** displays the estimated durations of implementation phases for each of the corridor alternatives.

Key	
Government Coordination	GC
CPKC Negotiation	CPKC
Environmental Review	ER
Plan Creation/Updates	PCU
Design	DES
Private Easement Negotiation	EAS
Segment Construction	CON
River Bridge Construction/Rehab	BRI
Project Completion	✪

Figure 15: Implementation Timeline (below) and Key (above right)



Conclusions

The Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion Planning Study aimed to identify feasible corridor alternatives for extending the Midtown Greenway into Saint Paul, connecting it with existing and planned bikeways, strengthening neighborhood connectivity, and supporting economic development. This Study also sought to ensure coordinated involvement among government agencies and stakeholders, addressed environmental and right-of-way considerations, and developed a project implementation plan that includes a segment by segment phasing strategy and potential timeline for implementing each corridor alternative.

To help the reader interpret the relevance of the three corridor alignment alternatives developed through this Study, it is important to note that each alternative has been defined with somewhat distinctive elements or characteristics to allow for a fair and clearcut evaluation that highlights key differences between the alternatives across a set of quantitative and qualitative measures. The alternatives are intended to be conceptual in nature with the expectation that further development and design beyond this study will allow the corridor alternative alignments or design features to evolve based on continued government coordination and public engagement. As one example of this inherent fluidity among the alternatives, note that some sub-elements within a specific alternative could be recombined with features or alignment segments from other alternatives to create a new *hybrid* alternative.

This Study has yielded the following conclusions through a structured process of engagement, trail design, corridor alternatives development and evaluation:

1. All three corridor alignment alternatives developed and analyzed are deemed to be technically feasible; however, each corridor alternative comes with its own set of significant challenges for implementation that will require further analysis
2. Based on ongoing coordination with the Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railway during the study and the resulting correspondence, this planning effort has concluded that “construction of a trail on the existing Short Line Bridge will not be permitted” due to the railroad’s significant safety and liability concerns (see written correspondence in **Appendix E**).
3. Given conclusion number 2, Corridor Alternative 1 (which requires shared use of the Short Line Bridge) may be possible through negotiation of extensive property easements with a future railroad owner or through negotiated outcomes up to and including purchase of the rail corridor from the current railroad owner; however, this scenario has the added complexity and higher challenge of determining a path toward public acquisition.
4. The Study acknowledges the possibility that the current rail corridor owner could change for unanticipated reasons and/or the remaining rail-dependent businesses west of the Mississippi River could unexpectedly choose to move their operations or dissolve entirely which would, in turn, remove the need to maintain rail freight service west of the river.
5. Each potential partnering government entity will need to assess the potential cost and risk of their anticipated level of participation across all corridor alternatives.
6. It will be advantageous to advance all three corridor alternatives for further project development and the Study recommends that all alternatives (in their present form or as modified during preliminary

engineering) should be carried into the environmental review process to ultimately select the most appropriate "preferred alternative."

This Study completes the technical requirements of the 2023 Omnibus Transportation and Finance Bill that directed the Metropolitan Council to "plan continuous and dedicated bicycle and pedestrian trails from the current eastern terminus of the Midtown Greenway in Hennepin County to 27th Avenue Southeast in Hennepin County and to Allianz Field in Ramsey County." Related to this planning study effort, the state legislation also directed the Met Council to provide "a recommendation for a reasonable easement or shared use agreement for the Short Line Bridge between the railroad and the entity responsible for operating the trail…." As noted throughout this Final Study Report, there has been ongoing coordination with the Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railway during the Study. Based on conclusion 2 above (see also **Appendix E)**, it is determined that developing a draft "reasonable easement or shared use agreement for shared [use of] the Short Line Bridge" would not be a prudent or practical exercise under current railroad ownership at this time.

KEY STEPS FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Key steps for implementing a Midtown Greenway Trail extension project include:

- **Determining Intergovernmental Agency Approach for Implementation**
  - **Form an Implementation Working Group:** Convene potential transportation and parks partnering agencies to begin outlining lead and secondary roles, responsibilities, funding needs and cost-sharing arrangements, and long-term management needs for one or multiple potential interagency agreements.
  - **Determine Lead Government Roles:** Identify which government or governments may be willing to take the lead on public acquisition of the rail corridor for Alternative 1, on negotiating easements from CPKC and private landowners for Alternative 2, or to lead implementation for one or more off-rail corridor trail segments for any of the three alternatives.
  - **Determine Secondary Government Roles**: Identify which government or governments may be willing to actively support implementation phases for one or more corridor alternative segments and match specific implementation activities to government department staff experience.
- **Negotiating with Railroad Owner for Public Acquisition or Permanent Easements**
  - After determining lead government roles, convene informal meetings with CPKC and the operating railroad, Regional Rail LLC, to review results of the study.
  - Confirm railroad standards and requirements for Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2.
  - Coordinate with CPKC in developing detailed layout exhibits where easements through railroad ROW are needed for Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2.
  - Work with railroads on other details required for corridor acquisition related to Alternative 1.
  - Determine timing of formal negotiations with respect to environmental review and final design phases for Alternative 1 (prior to and/or early on in environmental review) and Alternative 2 (after issuance of the environmental Record of Decision).

- **Advancing Corridor Alternatives into Environmental Review:**
    - Advance multiple corridor alternatives and Mississippi River bridge design options into the environmental review phase to assess feasibility, potential impacts, and applicable regulatory requirements.
    - Establish a foundation and structure for coordinated decision-making and potential creation of future interagency agreements among transportation and parks agencies.
    - The environmental review process should include the Prospect Park Connector and the three corridor alignment alternatives for segments west of Cleveland Avenue. A more intensive environmental review process may only be necessary for the river crossing and the adjoining in-rail-corridor trail segments included in Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2. Off-rail corridor segments east of Cleveland Avenue may require limited or no environmental review and could be developed independently and over a shorter time period. A constraint to advancing roadway-based alignment segments included with Corridor Alternative 3 or for trail segments east of Cleveland Avenue in Alternatives 1 and 2 would be the need to update or amend municipal or regional trail plans and/or municipal capital improvement plans.
- **Completing Preliminary Engineering and Design**:
    - Preliminary Engineering activities would be focused on providing a higher degree of certainty with respect to environmental impacts, resolution of design constraints, and refinement of construction costs for each of the corridor alternatives considered during environmental review. Coordination with private utilities and municipal public works officials must occur to fully account for costs associated with modifications to existing utility infrastructure. Preliminary Engineering will include further development of potential bridge structures associated with a new Mississippi River trail crossing (Alternatives 2 and 3) and a new bridge over I-94 near Pelham Boulevard (Alternative 2), as well as rehabilitated rail bridges (including the Short Line Bridge in Alternative 1 and the rail girder bridge over I-94 near 27th Avenue SE for Alternatives 1 and 2). Preliminary Engineering will include further development of trail design details such as refinement of trail typical sections, roadway and drainage modifications, intersection safety treatments, lighting, security and other trail amenities. During this process there will be multiple opportunities for public and agency input on structural details and urban design-related preferences to inform the selection of preferred bridge type.
- **Continuing Public Outreach and Engagement**:
    - Public outreach and engagement activities to support the environmental document would include engagement around design issues and details associated with the preliminary engineering effort to guide selection of a preferred alternative for the project or project elements such as the bridge type. The process will also serve to inform the public of decisions made and the environmental impacts associated with different alternatives or options. A public engagement plan would be created to outline goals of this process, and to set expectations for the level of influence that public input plays in decision-making. During the required Environmental Assessment process, a public hearing may be held which formally records public comment on the proposed project alternatives and their impacts.
- **Updating/Amending Local and Regional Plans**

- Several local and regional plans would need to be updated or amended to include a preferred corridor alternative. Plans include the MPRB's *Midtown Greenway Regional Trail* and *Mississippi Gorge Regional Park Long Range Plans*, Met Council's *2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan*, Saint Paul's 2024 *Bicycle Plan*, and Minneapolis' 2020 *Transportation Action Plan*/AAA Network map.
- All of these plan updates or amendments will include community engagement opportunities for the public to weigh in on design alternatives and to inform decisions regarding long range plan amendments or updates.

Source: Metropolitan Council

Appendices

APPENDIX A: PRE-PLANNING, PHASE I TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

APPENDIX B: MISSISSIPPI RIVER BRIDGE OPTIONS REPORT

APPENDIX C: ROLE OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IN PROJECT REVIEW

APPENDIX D: PLANNING AND CONCEPTUAL DESIGN, PHASE II TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

APPENDIX E: CORRESPONDENCE WITH CANADIAN PACIFIC KANSAS CITY RAILWAY

APPENDIX F: CONCEPTUAL COST ESTIMATE DETAIL