

## Summary of Legislation and Planning Efforts Related to the Minnesota Valley State Trail

### Legislative History - Summary:

- 1934 - Governor Floyd B. Olson proposed the idea for a trail system along the Minnesota River.
- 1969 - State Legislature acted favorably on the proposal and passed M.S. 1969, Section 85.198 authorizing the establishment of the Minnesota Valley Trail.
- 1971 - MS 1969, Section 85.198 was revised and renumbered 85.015 in 1971: STATE TRAILS Minnesota State Legislature.
- 1975 - State Legislature passes 85.021 (Acquisition of Land, Minnesota Valley Trail), enabling the Department of Natural Resources to acquire any tract of land for the purposes of the Minnesota Valley Trail if deemed to be in the best interests of the State.
- 1976 - United States Congress enacts the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Act of 1976 after a successful grassroots effort led by citizens who later organized into the non-profit called The Friends of the Minnesota Valley. This act declared that the policy of the Congress would be to preserve the Minnesota River Valley and established the 9,500 acre Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and an 8,000 acre State-managed wildlife recreation area adjacent to it. The wildlife recreation area was to be established in cooperation with the State of Minnesota. The Minnesota Valley State Trail was to be provided for as an integral part of the refuge and the wildlife recreation area along the lower 36 miles of the Minnesota River.
- 2014 – The State Legislature approved \$2.165 million in bonding dollars for the construction of the Minnesota Valley State Trail in Bloomington from the Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge to the Bloomington Ferry Bridge.
- 2015 – The State Legislature approved a text amendment to State Statutes Section 85.015 State Trails, Subd. 6. Minnesota Valley Trail, Hennepin, Dakota, Scott, Carver, Sibley and Le Sueur Counties. Subpoint (b) was amended to add the following text: *“That portion of the trail on the north side of the Minnesota River, lying between the Bloomington Ferry Bridge pedestrian crossing and the Cedar Avenue Bridge, must be a paved trail developed primarily for hiking and bicycling.”*

### Planning Efforts:

A number of planning efforts conducted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the City of Bloomington acknowledge the State Trail project. These are summarized below:

- 1968 – The DNR conducted a study for a trail system from Fort Snelling to LeSueur. The report, entitled *A Plan for Recreational Trails in the Minnesota River Valley*, concluded “A recreational trail system in the Minnesota River Valley from Fort Snelling to LeSueur is both desirable and feasible.”

- **2004** – The United States Fish and Wildlife Service completed a ***Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (CCP) for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District***. The plan can be viewed at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/MinnesotaValley/index.html>. City staff and a representative of the mountain biking community served on an advisory committee to provide input throughout the planning process. The plan addresses the planned Minnesota Valley State Trail on page 17 stating in part that “*We hope that preparation of this CCP will prompt a renewed effort by citizens, public agencies, private conservation organizations, and recreational users of the valley to place a high priority on the completion of the Minnesota Valley State Trail.*” The CCP also mentions that opposition to paving the trail has been expressed, mainly by mountain biking enthusiasts.
- **2006** – The DNR completes its ***Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area Management Plan***. City staff and numerous stakeholders, including representatives of the Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists (MORC), participated in the public input process. The plan addresses the Bloomington portion of the State Trail and states in part that, “*Once easements with the public and private landowners have been acquired, an alignment will need to be designated through this area. Cooperation between adjacent private landowners, public landowners and trail users will be necessary. The specifics for alignment and consequent design (width, surface, safety standards) will be established once the segment has been assessed in a more formal design process. It should be noted that throughout the planning process, little-to-no support was expressed from the public for a traditional paved multiuse trail through this area.*”
- **2008** – City Council approves the ***Bloomington Alternative Transportation Plan (ATP)***. The Minnesota River Trail Corridor is listed as a Destination Trail in the ATP, and it states that, “*With respect to trail surfacing, an asphalt surface offers certain advantages in accommodating the broadest range of user groups – which is a major goal of the active living philosophy. That said, final decisions on trail surfacing will be determined by the DNR as part of the public process associated with detail master planning of this corridor.*”
- **2010** – City Council approves the ***Bloomington Parks and Recreation Master Plan***. The plan includes recommendations for connecting the community with trails, walks and bikeways. Strategy 14 in the Trails and Bikeways section calls for improved access to and promote use of the Minnesota River Valley/Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (MVNWR), which includes:

  - Provide connections to the City trail system.
  - Improve signage for access points.
  - Coordinate connections to the planned DNR Minnesota Valley River Trail.
  - Partner with U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Friends of Minnesota Valley River to market MVNWR facilities and programming.
  - Enhance interpretive and educational opportunities in MVNWR.
  - Provide natural surface trails for bikers and hikers separate from a paved Minnesota River Valley Trail.
  - Provide docks and piers for fishing, bird watching and water access.