

APPENDIX C - Regional Prioritization for Trail Projects

This is the first time a regional prioritization method for trails has been developed for implementation in southwest Minnesota. The Steering Committee wished to employ a flexible method/process that would allow projects (both known and undetermined at the time of this plan update) to improve their regional prioritization rank as they mature. The desired process would be useable for a longer period of time than a static plan with a set list of specific projects. Examples of how a project may improve its rank:

- A project is beyond the 10 year horizon, then suddenly there is an opportunity to acquire land. Securing land is often what delays a project. This would fit in the Tier II Category
- Encourage project planners to address the attributes below. The regional priority will likely improve as they increase their planning for a project. The increased planning often addresses issues that delay or stop projects. Delays often impact funding sources as well.

SW Regional Trail Prioritization. Trails provide various benefits, among them are:

- Opportunity to use an alternative means of transportation to work, shop, and play;
- Opportunity for more active living has a direct, positive impact on health; and
- Increased attractiveness for visitors to the region.

While a local trail project is recognized as important to local communities, the Regional Trail Corridor Plan places a higher priority on funding trails that have or propose to have connectivity to other trails and transportation systems. This Update identifies the following Impact/ Attributes to prioritize potential trail / trail corridor projects.

They are separated into two main sections: General Characteristics and Tiered Ranking with a Checklist, each with impact/categories. The higher total score, the greater priority a project has in the Region.

Tiered Ranking and Checklist. This tiered system provides for a regional prioritization for funding requests for planning, land acquisition/design, and trail development / construction.

- Is the project defined in a plan?
- Public Participation / involvement
- Alternative routes and existing trails identified / considered
- Partners and financial commitment
- Operation and Maintenance
- Engineering and Design
- Safety
- Land secured

Southwest Trail / Facility Prioritization for funding.

Trail Significance categories. This category is to provide a general nature of the project, from local impact to state impact.

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Trail / Corridor Significance	Description
Local	serves local community only
Sub-Regional	connects to a Regional or State Trail
Regional trail	Legacy Definition
State Trail	Legacy definition

Tiered Prioritization. This Tiered Prioritization provides Regional Prioritization for funding based on planning and development of a project. Ultimately, a well developed plan will address in advance many issues that complicate projects and delay development.

Tier I is meant for the development of a trail plan. The range of scores is a 1 (low) to 2 (high). The Region views this as a very important foundation element before acquisition, design, and development occurs. There is one category of criteria for regional support: Local Commitment and Partnering.

Tier II is directed toward Land Acquisition and Design elements. There are seven categories to prioritize a project; scores should range from a low of 2 to a high of 5.

Tier III is meant for the development / construction of a trail. There are 11 categories under Tier III to be considered for Regional Prioritization, with a range of 3 to 7.

Table C-1

Tier I – Planning dollars – to develop a trail plan. (1 category)

Tier II – Land Acquisition & design dollars. (÷7 categories)

Tier III – Trail development / construction. (÷11 categories)

Depending on which tier funding is being requested, add the highest qualifying point in the shaded tier impact / attribute category and divide by the number of Tier categories identified in Table C-1. Table C-2 provides the low to high region priority point range per Tier level.

Table C-2

0 - low	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 high
	Tier I						
		Tier II					
			Tier III				

To use: add points in each category in the Tier level for funding consideration and divide by categories in the Tier indicated.

Tiered Ranking and Checklist

points	Impact / Attribute	Description	Tier I	Tier II	Tier III
1. Local Commitment and Partnering, x 2 if there is financial participation by partners. Multiple partners show there is coordination occurring to accomplish a project. There are various sources for funding trails and planning: local tax dollars, Bonding, State and Federal grants, Federal Transportation funds, as well as fundraising. Appendix D lists several trail funding options. Funding may include cash and donation. Funding is necessary for not only planning, design, development but also for on-going trail maintenance.					
1	Local Advocacy Groups or Local Unit of Government	(trail committee, Friends of trails, SHIP, Safe routes to school planning initiative) If funding is contributed multiply point x 2	If \$=x2		
2	Local Unit of Government support and Local Advocacy Groups	If funding is contributed multiply point x 2		If \$=x2	If \$=x2
4	Multiple Units of Government and trail advocacy group	(i.e. county, city, school) and trail advocacy support If funding is contributed multiply point x 2		If \$=x2	If \$=x2
#2 Trail Plan – Safe Route to School Plan – Scenic By-way Plan					
0	No Plan				
1	A Plan	Clarify, identify and research the need and desire for a trail / route/facility, includes local support, identification of alternatives, public support, and cost estimates.			
2	A Plan +	Historical, cultural, ecological components			
3	A Plan +	Identify nature based activities			
4	An Adopted / Approved Comprehensive Plan	A comprehensive trail plan that includes: analysis section that addresses ecological conditions, topography, property ownership, integration with transportation system, alignment of alternatives, historical and cultural resources, educational components, nature based activities, trail / facility amenities, trail / facility management and maintenance, and process identified to move to the next steps (infrastructure design, land acquisition, cost estimates, construction).			

points	Impact / Attribute	Description	Tier I	Tier II	Tier III
3. Public Participation Process in the Plan/Planning Process					
0	None	No public participation documentation			
1	Limited	Project discussed at a Public meeting			
2	Some	Documented and fulfils a requirement in a funding application.			
3	Large	Start of the project and continues to current time, but nothing identified to continue the involvement of the public for input through the life of the project			
4	High	Documented (public outreach meetings, citizens trail planning committee participation, a TAM (Transportation Action Model) utilized); continued public participation is part of the process throughout the life of the project. Local citizen leaders are sparkplugs for the project throughout its lifetime			
4. Existing Trails and Alternative routes were considered. (i.e. bike, pedestrian, snowmobile, horse). This is to address an error sometimes made by a trail planning group by assuming it is alright to use another trail user's corridor, potentially making it unusable for the original trail use. There is an extensive snowmobile trail system in Southwest Minnesota and a few horse trails. Trails may co-exist by having parallel routes and as needed shared paths. Other trail users groups need to be part of a proposed trail plan process. Alternate routes should also be considered to take advantage of opportunities, such as scenic views or existing road underpasses, and to avoid constraints, such as wetlands or dangerous road crossings.					
0	No alternative Route				
4	Alternative Routes considered	Alternative routes were considered and are identified in the Trail Plan, other Trails and user groups involved. No other user groups are impacted – or – other user groups agree to parallel / shared use trail.			
5. Linkages and Interconnection to Transportation					
0	None	Isolated project, no connection to trail network identified in the Regional Trail Plan			
1					
2	Low connectivity	Link trail to the trail network identified in Regional Trail Plan			
3	Moderate connectivity	Deviate from highly developed road grid when possible, linkages/connectivity to trails and transportation system.			
4	High connectivity with trails and / or transportation systems	Integration/coordination with other transportation and trail systems (transit, passenger rail, scenic, horse, snowmobile, ski, water, scenic by-way, ecological trails, trail hubs)			

points	Impact / Attribute	Description	Tier I	Tier II	Tier III
6. Amenities. Trail alignment will pass within close proximity to existing amenities or amenities are part of project					
1	Basic	Water and resting areas, cell phone coverage			
2	Basic +	Food, ice cream, other recreation options, Bicycle rentals / repair			
3	Above services +	lodging			
4	Above services +	Shuttles for linear trails			
7. Signage					
1	Basic	Trailhead sign			
2	Basic +	Navigation, such as “you are here”, mile markers, maps			
3	Basic +	Navigation, such as services information kiosk(s)			
4	Above +	Actively working with other communities on signage			
8. Operation and Maintenance (O & M) If Trail Proposer has an existing trail, past performance of trail maintenance will be used. Examples from a DNR Master Plan and ATP 8 TE Application are located in Appendix D, and provide examples of items that should be considered for on-going trail maintenance.					
1	I will to do O&M	Acknowledges that there will be O&M, promises it will be done, but has no plan or funds set aside to do it.			
2	O & M will be done by a user group	This alone is not always reliable			
3	O & M in an Operation Budget	O & M is included in the Trail managing agency’s budget with a yearly schedule for trail maintenance needs.			
4	O&M planned to be funded / implemented by multiple avenues	#3 plus details on how it will be implemented, i.e. entirely through the Unit of Government or in part through volunteer trail groups who actively assist in monitoring the trail and assist with fund raising for trail maintenance & extensions.			X2
9. Safety. Will the project create or alleviate safety issues between pedestrian/ bicycle and motor vehicle traffic.					
-4	Create a new safety problem with no solution	Project will create a safety concern for users of the proposed trail			X2
0		The project does not create or alleviate a safety concern			
4	Alleviates safety issues	The project alleviates current safety issues. (i.e. an off road trail takes pedestrians off shoulder of high volume road to a safer route, a safe road crossing at a high volume road, safe RR X-ing, traffic signal timing to allow enough time to cross roadway)			X 2

points	Impact / Attribute	Description	Tier I	Tier II	Tier III
10. Engineering, Estimated Costs, Development, Trail Construction. When a route is delineated, <i>estimated costs for design, development, and trail construction</i> should be done. The plan should address who will be doing the engineering and how it will be paid for.					
0	No plan for how this is to be accomplished				
1	Preliminary survey or design has been completed				
2	Design plans are 50% or more completed				
3	Design plans has been completed				X2
4	Design plans are completed and all permits and approvals have been received				X4
11. Land. Once an alignment has been identified, it can take many years before land is acquired for a trail project to move forward. No trail can be developed without land being acquired or secured. This element alone will make or break the development of a trail					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land acquisition along a corridor may take years and must often take advantage of windows of opportunity when parcels becomes available. Funding to acquire parcels should be considered as trail corridors are developed. 					
If a trail is planned along a road right of way the road jurisdiction should be agreement with the trail location; and land owners along the road right-of-way need to be part of the trail planning process.					
0	None	No work toward land acquisition			
1	Identified in Plan	A Trail Plan or Master Plan identifies potential trail routes or trail corridors with parameters to follow for land acquisition. Or, a defined trail route is identified, but not all land owners agree there should be a trail – land not secure.			
4	Land is secure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a willing seller for a trail segment. All land owners agree to the trail / easement. All land is in public ownership, and have agreed to the trail development. any combination of the above 		X4	X4