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Our Mission: Providing quality services through responsible leadership, innovation and the cooperation of dedicated people

**Date:** March 13, 2018  
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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the March 13, 2018, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

#### **Newport Transit Station will be park-and-ride lot for 2018 Minnesota State Fair**

Metro Transit will continue to use the Newport Transit Station as a park-and-ride lot for the 2018 Minnesota State Fair, after the Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an agreement with the Metropolitan Council March 13.

Metro Transit, a service of the Metropolitan Council, operates expanded park-and-ride services throughout the Twin Cities to provide easier and more frequent public access to and from the fair. Metro Transit requested the use of the Newport Transit Station as a 2018 fair park-and-ride lot. The license allows the use of the paved parking area and surrounding vacant lots for 400 parking spaces. The premises will be returned in the same condition as before the use. There is no cost to Washington County for granting the license.

Newport Transit Station has served as a State Fair park-and-ride for the past two years. In 2017 more than 15,000 transit riders used the lot for express service to the fair.

**Contact: Jan Lucke, Public Works Planning Director, 651-430-4316**

#### **County Board receives report on Metropolitan Mosquito Control District work**

Steve Manweiler, executive director of the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District, reported on 2017 activities of the organization to the Washington County Board of Commissioners March 13.

*A great place to live, work and play...today and tomorrow*

Washington County is one of seven member counties of the agency, which is governed by a board of 18 elected county commissioners, and oversees a 2,900 square-mile service area. The focus of the agency is on larval control of mosquitos.

The report included information on the agency's 2018 budget, set at \$19.166 million. Of that, \$17.9 million will come from a tax levy. Washington County will contribute \$1.52 million.

Manweiler described the common mosquitos that populate the area, and that can carry viruses that cause illnesses. Distributing pellets in mosquito breeding grounds is used to combat mosquito larva, whereas spraying is used to combat adult mosquitos.

Manweiler noted the mosquito-borne diseases that the district combats:

- La Crosse virus, which is found primarily in children. There was one case in the state last year, none in the Mosquito Control District.
- Jamestown Canyon virus, an illness that is transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. The virus is closely related to La Crosse encephalitis virus. There were 17 cases in the state, with four in the Mosquito Control District.
- West Nile virus, which caused 27 illnesses in Minnesota last year, down from 83 in 2016, eight of which were in the district.

The agency also monitors the distribution of deer ticks in the metropolitan area. Manweiler said public education is the main focus to reduce the risk of tick-transmitted diseases.

Black flies, or gnats, are another focus of the agency, which does larval surveillance and control in area streams, focusing on the Rum, Crow, Mississippi, and Minnesota rivers.

Manweiler discussed the Mosquito Control District's plans for 2018, which include:

- managing the budget and expenditures with a goal of maintaining service levels while minimizing impact on metro taxpayers;
- emphasizing disease risk reduction services, including responding to new vector-borne diseases;
- evaluating how the district's control programs can respond more flexibly to increased weather variability; and
- evaluating how the district's sustainability program can be integrated with other district functions; and implement long-term succession planning and key employee retention.

## **County Board agrees to participate in One Watershed One Plan planning**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to begin a partnership with other local governments in the Lower St. Croix Watershed March 13, to implement a Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) One Watershed One Plan planning grant.

One Watershed One Plan is a planning framework, authorized by state law, to align local water planning on major watershed boundaries with state strategies towards prioritized, targeted, and measurable implementation plans.

Several local governments, including Washington County, supported a 2017 application to BWSR for a planning grant for the Lower St. Croix Watershed. The Lower St. Croix was selected for a planning grant last July. Since September 2017, local government staff from counties, soil and water conservation districts, and watershed organizations within the Lower St Croix Watershed have been meeting with BWSR staff to develop a workplan for what will be known as the Lower St. Croix Watershed Implementation Partnership. The structure for the partnership includes a policy committee, which will be the decision-making authority throughout the planning process. Policy committee members shall be selected from the elected or appointed boards of each local government.

Once the memorandum of agreement between all the local governments is finalized, the process will kick off in April 2018. The planning process will include stakeholder engagement, compiling water resources data, analysis of issues, and establishment of priorities and goals. It is hoped that the plan for the Lower St. Croix Watershed will be written by June 2019, and approved next summer. The grant expires at the end of 2019.

**Contact: Stephanie Souter, Public Health and Environment Planner, 651-430-6701**

## **County will request variance to link bike paths along Highway 12**

Washington County will request a variance from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to use a shared lane on the rebuilt County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 12 through Mahtomedi to connect a less than half-mile gap in the planned trail system of the roadway.

The County Board approved the request March 13.

Washington County is working with the cities of Willernie, Mahtomedi, and Grant to develop an improved corridor plan for CSAH 12 (Stillwater Road/75th Street).

The corridor has many challenges, including poor pavement condition, high parking demands, lack of or poor pedestrian facilities, traffic congestion, and underground utilities all along a truck/bus/commuter route. The corridor transitions from a downtown commercial core on the west end of the project to mixed residential with some commercial in the middle, and rural residential with large school properties on the east.

From a regional trail perspective, CSAH 12 serves as a link between the Gateway Trail to the east and the streetcar trail along Highway 244 to the west. More locally, an existing trail, which is part of the corridor, connects the Gateway Trail to the Glenmar Avenue intersection. A gap of less than a half mile remains along CSAH 12 between the two trails for both travel directions.

While the proposed roadway design meets state aid rules, the designation of a shared lane would not in such a heavily-traveled corridor. Although on-road riding is legal in this area, there is not sufficient space in the corridor to accommodate bicycles in a dedicated on-road bike lane, wide shoulder, or paved trail according to state aid rules for roadways with bicycle facilities. Cyclists who are comfortable with on-road riding will continue to do so after this project is constructed, hence the variance request to improve their visibility to drivers and to reinforce existing state law.

The variance would allow this gap segment to function as a shared lane. If the variance is approved, signing and striping will be used to alert drivers of the lawful presence of bicycles in the roadway. Specifically, the project team proposes to include “sharrows” or shared-use arrows, pavement markings and, if needed, corresponding regulatory signs. Sharrow markings do not establish a bicycle lane, but rather remind both cyclists and drivers of the appropriate positioning of cyclists within the traffic lane.

The project is expected to cost \$6 million; construction will start in 2019.

**Contact: Kevin Peterson, Engineer, 651-430-4330**

**County will celebrate renovation of Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park with free entry until July 1**

Visitors to the newly-renovated Cottage Grove Regional Park will be able to enjoy the park for free until July 1 after the park reopens later this spring.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the park fee waiver March 13.

Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park was closed March 1 of last year for improvements that include:

- a new park entrance;
- a new park circulation road, parking lots, associated pedestrian improvements and trails;
- updated and improved Ravine Lake outlet;
- ravine stabilization project done by the South Washington Watershed District;
- new trails within the park in accordance with the park's master plan;
- vegetation management and invasive species control; and
- a new playground.

The park is tentatively scheduled to reopen in late May. To welcome back residents, the park entrance fee will be waived until July 1. A reopening celebration is planned for June 1-3, which will include a variety of recreational events.

**Contact: Sandy Breuer, Parks Director, 651-430-4371**