



January 25, 2023

David Swearingen, PE,  
Public Works Director/City Engineer  
Arden Hills City Hall  
1245 W Highway 96  
Arden Hills, MN 55112

## Re: Old Snelling Trail Potential Funding Opportunities

Dear David,

Thank you for allowing HR Green to research potential funding sources for the Arden Hills Old Snelling Trail project. We discussed three separate funding options for review and research. One additional funding option was identified along the way. We have included some information on the RAISE grant funding opportunity as well.

The funding sources include:

1. Met Council Regional Solicitation
2. MnDNR Regional Trail Grant Program
3. Federal Earmarks
4. An additional item identified is the Federal RAISE grant

A brief synopsis is included for each funding opportunity below, along with links, additional program information and helpful links are included as an attachment.

### **METROPOLITAN COUNCIL REGIONAL SOLICITATION**

The Met Council is responsible for disbursing federal funds for a variety of transportation, multi-modal, safety and air quality programs to help fund projects that have some regional benefits within the seven-county metropolitan region. The regional solicitation occurs once every two years. The 2022 cycle resulted in \$200 Million in awarded funds on 56 projects in total.

The solicitation process has essentially three mode categories:

- Roadways, including multi-modal elements
- Transit and travel demand (TDM)
- Bicycle and pedestrian facilities

The TAB determines funding amounts for categories for each solicitation round. Typically, local matching funds in the 10%-20% range. Projects must align with the 2040 Transportation Policy Goals of the Met Council, which defines a policy framework of transportation system stewardship, safety and security, access to destinations, competitive economy, healthy and equitable communities, and transportation investments that guide land use.

Project evaluation criteria are specific to the application categories. Among the criteria, proposals must address the project's role in the regional transportation system and regional economy, age and condition of the infrastructure, safety, connections, equity, and affordable housing.

Depending on the planned project timing, the Old Snelling Trail Project would best align with the Multiuse Trails and Bicycle facilities, however depending on the ultimate limits and points of connectivity, it could potentially be a candidate in the Safe Routes to School category. Latest rounds of project funding were finalized last December. With the two-year cycle program, the next round criteria and categories are being reviewed by the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB). So, the next round of applications would typically be in the spring of 2024. These would typically be funding for projects slated for the following several years.

However, the Board is going to be discussing moving up the application process several months, to begin in the winter of 2023, as we begin to talk about a possible overhaul of the process. There have also been discussions of increasing the scoring weights of safety, pedestrian/bicycle and mobility elements along all categories and reducing dependence on increasing capacity for vehicles for more of a complete streets look at the systems. The TAB has been working with staff on streamlining the application process to help make it a little easier and less cumbersome for applicants. These changes might be applicable in the next round of applications, prior to an overhaul.

The met Council has several informative meetings and videos, program criteria, applications and past projects and scoring available to help to best determine the best program to fit a project help self-sample score a project to get an idea of where it might fall in previous scoring ranges.

The general timing for the process is:

- Early spring – application process announced
  - o Select a project and program that the City would like to apply for
  - o Gather data and complete on-line application
- Late spring – applications due
  - o TAC reviews applications for qualifying for scoring
- Early Summer – Scoring committees in each category scope applications
- Early fall – Committees prepare funding scenarios and projects for TAB consideration
- Fall – TAB selects and awards projects to receive funding
- Late fall – Met Council approves projects to receive funding

Again, there will be discussions to move the cycle up several months to potentially start in Fall/winter of 2023

See attachment for links to additional program information

## **MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES –TRAIL GRANT PROGRAM**

The MnDNR has several federal grants programs that they administer, which range from invasive species to rural fire departments to trails and recreation. The recreation grants that seem most appropriate for the Old Snelling Trail project seem to be the Local trail connection program. This program provides grants to local units of government to promote relatively short trail connections between where people live and desirable locations, not to develop significant new trails. Grant funding reimbursement is based on 75% of the total eligible project costs

(which can include ROW as well), with the application matching at least 25%, with local funds. Nine projects were funded in 2022, ranging from \$165,375 to \$250,000, with an average grant amount of \$226,000.

Grant parameters include:

- Grant awards up to \$250,000
- Priority funding for trails providing significant connectivity
- Trail length, types of use and quality of natural and attractiveness resources
- Projects cannot begin until all agreements have been signed
- All work funded in FY 2024 must be completed by June 30, 2025
- Applications are currently open
- Applications due by March 31, 2023
  - o Applications can be submitted by March 10, 2023 to receive feedback

See the attachment for links to additional program information.

## STATE DIRECT APPROPRIATIONS-BONDING BILL/FEDERAL EARMARKS

**State Bonding Bills** - The State Legislature is set to approve and award Bonding Bill(s) this session. HR Green has worked with numerous state legislators on behalf of many cities, towns, and agencies to help identify potential projects to include in the final Bonding Bill. We work with our clients to set up meetings with legislators and get specific Bonding Bills written to fund up to a 100% of your project costs. We have a long track record of successfully funding our clients' projects using State direct appropriations through Minnesota's Bonding Bill, with a 100% success rate to date; although sometimes it can take several years to get the Bill passed. But if you have patience, your project will get funded using this method.

**Federal Appropriation/earmarks** – similar to State appropriations, we work with our clients to set up meetings with Congress and assist in writing Federal Earmarks to fund our client's projects. In 2022 we wrote successful earmarks for our clients who are currently receiving grant dollars to fund their municipal projects.

## ADDITIONAL GRANT OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFIED:

### REBUILDING AMERICAN INFRASTRUCTURE WITH SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY (RAISE) GRANT

The RAISE grant is a federal discretionary funding program, with the 2023 cycle having \$1.5 Billion available for project grant nationwide. The funding is planned to be split equally between rural and urbanized areas, with \$15 Million guaranteed for disadvantaged areas. Projects are thoroughly reviewed and evaluated on statutory criteria of:

- Safety
- Environmental sustainability
- Quality of life
- Mobility, and community connectivity
- Economic competitiveness and opportunity (including tourism)
- Partnership and collaboration



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The current cycle refined ratings criteria and continued to prioritize:

- Safety
- Environmental sustainability
- Mobility and community connectivity
- Quality of life.

The RAISE grant application and selection process is more intense than the localized application processes above and Minnesota projects selected in 2022 were significantly larger and more expensive than the Old Snelling trail project, with awards ranging from \$9.5 Million to \$25 Million.

While a RAISE grant may not be total applicable to the trail project, it is worth noting the existence and importance of this federal program for other, larger projects Arden Hills may have in the future.

If you have any questions, or need any additional information, please contact John Morast at [jmorast@hrgreen.com](mailto:jmorast@hrgreen.com) or 763.710.1514.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'John W. Morast'.

**HR GREEN, INC**  
**John W. Morast, PE**  
Regional Director

## Attachment Grant Information for Arden Hills

### Metropolitan Council Regional Solicitation

Most questions can be answered by looking at this website:

- [Applying for Regional Solicitation Funds: Instructions and Resources for Applicants](#)

**Due Date:** TBD - Typically Spring of 2024, however TAB is looking to move up four months .

Before applying:

- Review the following, but be aware that more current info may be posted closer to the next application cycle.
  - [Workshop Video](#)
  - [Regional Solicitation Introduction](#)
  - [Qualifying Criteria](#)
  - [Sample Application Forms](#)

Steps to getting started:

1. Review the [WebGrants and Mapping Application User Guide](#)
2. [Register to use the online application system](#)
3. Generate maps
4. Log in to the online application system

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### MN DNR – Recreation Grants

#### [Federal Recreational Trail Program](#)

- **Completed application due February 24, 2023**
- **Eligible projects:** Motorized and non-motorized trail projects; maintenance/restoration of existing recreational trails; development/ rehabilitation of recreational trail linkages, including trail side and trail head facilities; environmental awareness and safety education programs relating to the use of recreational trails; and redesign/relocation of trails to benefit/minimize the impact to the natural environment.
- **Ineligible projects:** Condemnation, trail construction in federally designated wilderness areas, and facilitating motorized trail use on trails predominantly used by non-motorized users prior to May 1, 1991.
- **Who can apply:** All projects must be sponsored by a unit of government, preferably in cooperation with a local trail organization.

- **Priorities:** The Minnesota Recreational Trail Users Association annually prioritizes funding categories prior to the solicitation process. Projects that involve urban youth corps workers such as the [Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa](#) (link is external) (CCMI) will be given special consideration.
- **Level of assistance:** A 25% cash or in-kind match for eligible elements of the project proposal is required. Costs must be incurred and paid for before reimbursement. Neither this funding source nor the cash match may be used to meet existing payroll; only contract services, materials and supplies are reimbursable. Federal funds can in some cases be used as match for this program.

The minimum grant request is \$2,500, and the maximum trail grant award is \$200,000. Maximum request per equipment grant is \$75,000. Equipment grant requests also require a 25% secured match.

- **General information:** Funding comes from revenue received by the Federal Highway Trust Fund. All projects funded in 2023 must be completed by June 30, 2025.
- **Grant Awards:** The Department of Natural Resources and the state's trail advisory council will review and rank applications during the spring of 2023. Grant awards will be announced in summer of 2023; however, **funds will first become available in October, 2023.**
- **Grant application materials:**
  - [2023 trail and equipment program manual](#)
  - [2023 trail grant application](#)
  - [2023 equipment grant application](#)

- **Contact information:**

Dan Golner, Grants Specialist Coordinator, 651-259-5599  
[Daniel.Golner@state.mn.us](mailto:Daniel.Golner@state.mn.us) (link sends email)

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Parks and Trails  
500 Lafayette Road, Box 39  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Applications are reviewed by DNR and the state's trail advisory council, the Minnesota Recreational Trail Users Association (MRTUA).

### Local Trail Connection Program

- **Completed application due March 31, 2023, but if you would like feedback on the application, please submit by March 10, 2023.**
- **Eligible projects:** Eligible projects include acquisition and development of trail facilities. Projects must result in a trail linkage that is immediately available for use by the general public. Trail linkages include connecting where people live (e.g. residential areas within cities, entire communities) and significant

public resources (e.g. historical areas, open space, parks and/or other trails). Acquisition of trail right-of-way is eligible only when proposed in conjunction with trail development. Acquisition projects require a perpetual easement for recreational purposes. Development projects require a 20 year maintenance commitment by the project sponsor. Projects inside state park boundaries, state recreation areas, on state trail corridors and elements of the Regional Open Space System in the Twin Cities Metro System are not eligible.

- **Eligible Applicants:** Eligible applicants include counties, cities, and townships.
- **Level of assistance:** Grants are reimbursement based up to 75 percent of the total eligible project costs, and recipients must provide a non-state cash match of at least 25 percent. Other state funds or grants, such as Parks and Trails Legacy Grants, or Metropolitan Council Grants cannot match these grants. Project costs must be incurred and paid before reimbursement can be made. Project costs become eligible for reimbursement once a contract agreement is established between the DNR and the grantee.

The minimum grant request is \$5,000, and the maximum grant award is \$250,000.

- **Grant funding available:** Funding available for FY 2024 is a portion of \$1.1 million from “In Lieu Of” lottery proceeds available for three Park and Trail grant programs. Additional state Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund dollars may be recommended by the [Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources \(LCCMR\)](#) (link is external). Other state funding may be available but is subject to Legislative approval. Final amounts available will not be known until after the legislative session ends.
- **Funding priorities:** Priority for trail project funding will be given to projects that provide significant connectivity. Considerations also include trail length, expected amount and type of use, and quality and attractiveness of natural and cultural resources.
- **Grant awards:** The Department of Natural Resources will review and rank applications during the spring of 2023. Grant awards will be announced in the summer of 2023.
- **Project period:** Projects cannot begin until all requested final documentation has been submitted and an agreement between the applicant and the state has been signed. Funded projects must begin promptly after an agreement has been signed. All work funded with FY 2024 appropriations must be completed no later than June 30, 2025.
- **How to apply:**
  - [2023 Grant Application](#) DOC
  - [2023 Program Manual](#) PDF
- **Contact information:**

Dan Golner, Grants Specialist Coordinator, 651-259-5599  
[Daniel.Golner@state.mn.us](mailto:Daniel.Golner@state.mn.us) (link sends email)

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Parks and Trails  
500 Lafayette Road, Box 39  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

### Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program

- Provides funding for parks and trails of regional significance outside of the seven county metropolitan area. Applications for this program are submitted directly to the [Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission](#) (link is external) (GMRPTC). The GMRPTC submits funding recommendations to the legislature. The legislature then appropriates funding to the Department of Natural Resources to award and administer the grants.
- Funding Application **Opening Date has not been set yet. Typically opens beginning of April.**
- **Application Deadline has not been set yet. Typically closes at the end of July.**
- [Application Toolbox](#) – Information for 2023 applications isn't posted yet, but this is where you will find guidelines & criteria; application tutorial; application instructions; etc.
- **Check back on the site later in March for updates on the dates and application materials.**

## **USDOT FEDERAL REBUILDING AMERICAN INFRASTRUCTURE WITH SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY (RAISE) GRANT**

USDOT Raise grant website:

<https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants>