4 Master Plan
Recommendations:
Access and Circulation
4.0 Access and Circulation

Introduction
Lake Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska and Lake Harriet are heavily used by pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. In extremely limited space, the park features a fully connected but interweaving system of trails and roadways and parking areas. Trails are the most used amenity in the entire park, and the parkways serve a variety of purposes, from transit connections to commuting to pleasure driving.

The recommendations to the right, supported by the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), guide investment in and management of the park’s access and circulation.
Access and Circulation Recommendations:

1. Improve access to and around Lake Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska and Lake Harriet, focusing on non-motorized solutions.

2. Modify trail systems and recreational features to make them universally accessible.

3. Pursue opportunities to develop, in collaboration with Metro Transit or other provider, a circulator bus route or shuttle around the lakes.

4. Continue to work with other agencies to improve the safety of crossings of heavily traveled roads such as Excelsior Boulevard, Lake Street, and Richfield Road. Support Hennepin County’s efforts to reconfigure Lake Street to better accommodate park users and benefit surrounding parklands.

5. Improve way-finding and directional signage around the lakes. Consider the use of cell phone apps and other technologies to provide information to the public.

6. Final determination of a one-way vs. two bicycle trail system will be based on further study that will take into consideration safety, additional impervious surface, tree impacts, and stormwater management.
Access and Circulation Recommendations

Bird Sanctuary access from Lake Harriet Blvd is difficult to locate.

Lake Calhoun

North Beach Tin Fish Restaurant

Boat launch in congested area with high pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle access.

Connection from Greenway not clear.

Crosswalks, landings, and ramps need improvement to improve access from adjacent neighborhood.

Connection from protected bikeway to off street bicycle trails is challenging because of multiple street crossings.

Access from the lake to the Rose Garden needs improvement to make it more inviting.

Area of high conflict between those moving through the site and those enjoying the amenities of the area.

Access from the Lake Harriet Blvd is difficult to locate.

Bicycle trail crossing of Thomas Beach parking lot driveway is a high vehicle-bicycle conflict zone.

High volume intersection with high pedestrian and bike conflicts.

Difficult intersection with conflicts between vehicles and bicyclists.

Provide better connection to Beard's Plaisance.

Lake Calhoun

Lake Harriet

Minikahda Club

LEGEND

Areas of Concern / Points of Multimodal Conflict
Opportunities for Connection
Pedestrian Conflict
Bicycle Conflict
Vehicle Conflict
Parks
Bike Lanes
Project boundary

LAKE CALHOUN-HARRIET MASTER PLAN
MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

PERKINS+WILL TEAM
08-20-2015
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Circulation & Connection
Conflicts
Bicycle and pedestrian trails are typically separated, with the pedestrian trails located closest to the water.

Looking south at the intersection of West Calhoun Parkway and W Lake Street. W Lake Street crossings are formidable and turning vehicles have injured bicyclists and pedestrians.
4.1 Roads and Parkways

**Existing conditions.**
The parkways and the trails around the Chain of Lakes are part of the historic Grand Rounds, a continuous corridor of parkland that encircles the City. This system of winding tree-lined parkways and trails is a beloved and iconic feature of the City. However, HWS Cleveland, the landscape architect who envisioned the design in the 1880s, could not have predicted the traffic volumes of today. The parkways and trails are historic recreational features, but they are also major components in a traffic network for those commuting both by bicycle and by car into and through the city.

Because the Chain of Lakes interrupts the grid of city streets which surround it, vehicular traffic often uses the parkways around the lakes as commuting routes and counts are high during rush hours. Any changes to the parkways, such as converting from a two-way to a one-way, would have major impacts on surrounding neighborhoods. In addition, large land uses adjacent to the lakes, such as Lakewood Cemetery and Minikahta Club, limit options for drivers.

Most of the roads within the master plan study area are parkways owned by the MPRB. The pavement, storm sewers, and lighting of the parkways are maintained by the City of Minneapolis. The parkways are typically 24 feet wide with parking bays on the outer perimeter of the roadbed. The relative narrow cross section tends to slow traffic speeds, but makes on-street bike lanes infeasible. Unique curbs, lighting, and a red chip seal-coat over bituminous are distinctive design features of the parkways. A two-way system moves traffic around Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska and through William Berry. Because of constraining topography, Lake Harriet’s parkways are one-way counterclockwise.

Other agencies have jurisdiction over the roads within the project area. West Lake Street, carrying 40,000 cars a day, is a Hennepin County highway that bisects the Chain of Lakes, forming an intimidating barrier between north Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska and south Lake of the Isles. The City of Minneapolis owns Richfield Road which intersects with the parkway system at the south end of Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska.

**Related Master Plan Recommendations.**
The master planning process produced no overall recommendations related to roads or parkways within the project area. It does recommend converting the Lower Road along east Lake Harriet to a two way bicycle trail (see Lake Harriet Focus Area - Lower Road). Traffic would move onto an existing parallel parkway uphill of the Lower Road.

The CAC and many from the local community want less vehicular traffic on the parkways. They object to the use of the parkways as commuting corridors. Although there was discussion of converting parkways around Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska to a one-way system (as they are around Harriet), the CAC realized vehicular traffic flow would be disrupted and north-south commuters would move onto neighborhood streets. The bicycle community expressed frustration that two-way motor vehicle travel is given preference over bicycles on the parkways and that two-way bicycle travel on the bicycle trails is prohibited. This significantly limits bicycle access and mobility and leads to wrong way riding on the bicycle trails or people riding bicycles on the pedestrian trails. These issues were not resolved by the master plan. A multimodal traffic study in cooperation with the City and County would be required.

4.2 Transit

**Existing conditions.**
Metro Transit provides bus service along West Lake Street and along Richfield Road. Other mass transit impacting the lakes, Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska in particular, is the proposed Southwest Light Rail Transit (SWLRT). Metropolitan Council, the implementing agency for the SWLRT, is planning a station at West Lake, a few blocks from the northwest corner of Lake Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska. The West Lake Multi-modal Transportation Study, sponsored by the City of Minneapolis in anticipation of the pedestrian and bicycle traffic generated by the West Lake Station, occurred simultaneously with the Calhoun/ Bde Maka Ska Harriet master planning process and included recommendations which impact Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska.

**Related Master Plan Recommendations.**
The community recognizes that additional visitors will come to the lakes from the West Lake Station of the SWLRT. To improve connections from the West Lake Station to Lake Calhoun/ Bde Maka Ska, the master plan incorporates applicable recommendations from the West Lake Multi-modal Study and goes a step further by adding a wide promenade through the green space at northwest Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska, allowing pedestrians and bicycles a direct route to Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska from the West Lake commercial area and Midtown Greenway (NW Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska - recommendation #6).

In lieu of adding more parking lots, the CAC supported a circulator bus around the lakes (including Lake of the Isles) that would connect Chain of Lakes transit stops and other arrival points to key destinations within the park (Access and Circulation recommendation #3). Some of the amenities requested included fully accessible stops, shelters with related seating, and an understandable and reliable schedule (i.e. service during evenings and weekends during peak season and for events). A circulating bus route would improve access for seniors, persons with disabilities, and those depending on transit for transportation. Currently many park destinations are a long distance from existing transit stops. The extent of the transit circulator within Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park and how it connects to other regional parks will be addressed during the process of implementation.
4.3 Trails

Existing Conditions.
Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska, Harriet, and William Berry have separated pedestrian and bicycle trails constructed in 1997-98. The trails conform with MPRB’s guidelines of separated bicycle and pedestrian trails wherever possible, locating the pedestrian trail closest to the water resource. Both trails are constructed of bituminous (although some segments of the pedestrian trails are concrete), eight feet wide with a nine inch concrete band on both sides of each trail. As part of the master plan, a trail condition assessment report was prepared for the 12.7 miles of trails around the two lakes. The study did not include the more than three miles of connecting trail segments or those in William Berry Park.

Curb cuts, ramps, and stairways provide access points onto the trail system. Currently there are eight pedestrian ramps around Harriet, only one of which is compliant with standards established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). None of the 11 ramps around Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska are compliant. Most of stairways leading down into the parks from parkways above need redesign and replacement.

Almost 80% of the estimated 5 million visits to the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park are to use the trails. At peak times around Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska, an automated counter logs almost 10,000 users per day. For safety reasons and because of the volume of use, the eight-foot wide bicycle trails are one-way clockwise around each lake; although William Berry Parkway has a two way trail. The one-way system can create greater travel distances for recreational bicyclists and for commuting bicyclists, especially for those traveling from the southwest corner of Harriet to the on-street system on 36th Street West, a route that adds five extra miles.

Related Master Plan Recommendations.
Although there are no recommendations specifically related to the replacement of trail paving, it was listed as a high priority for implementation and is inferred in the Guiding Principle of Stewardship (“taking care of what we have, before building new things”). Trails are the most popular recreational feature around the two lakes; keeping them in good condition is critical to park users.

Many cyclists wanted a two way system, but with current widths and traffic counts, this conversion was deemed unsafe and even dangerous during peak periods of use. Widening the bicycle trails to the 14 foot width recommended for safe use would add several acres of pavement around both lakes and result in the loss or damage to several hundred trees. Most members of the CAC found this price unacceptable. The CAC declined to make a recommendation regarding bicycle trails and felt additional study was needed.
Some two way bicycle trail segments are added in the master plan (see focus area recommendations). These proposed additions would ease some of the longer routes and would enhance connectivity to the City’s on-street system.

Relieving congestion at NE Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska received universal support. This popular gathering space intersects with heavily used trails. The congestion is due in part to the movement of bicycles through the Refectory area to and from the underpass of the bridge over the channel. The trails along the channel cannot be widened and there are many near misses reported between bicycles and pedestrians on the southeast side of the bridge. The master plan retains the bike trail underneath the Lake Street bridge, augmenting connection between the two lakes with a multi-use at-grade trail crossing of W Lake Street and Lagoon on the west side of East Calhoun Parkway (NE Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska recommendation #6). The at-grade crossing was one recommended by the West Lake Multi-modal Transportation Study and is included in the upcoming 2017 Trail Improvement project. It requires revamping pedestrian ramps and synchronizing traffic signals.

Another area of concern at NE Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska is the width of the trails on the south side of the bridge where huge volumes of trail traffic are pinched together onto a narrow walkway. Since the bridge is historically significant it cannot be modified or widened. The master plan supports cooperating with Hennepin County to reduce lane widths in this area and add space on the bridge for wider and separated trails (North Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska - Recommendation #1). This recommendation was also part of the West Lake Multi-modal Transportation Study and construction is included in the 2017 Trail Improvement project.

At Lake Harriet one of the primary goals for the Bandshell area was to clarify circulation and reduce potential conflicts between bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers. Many pedestrians randomly cross the existing bicycle trail to reach amenities on either side of the trail. Recommendations include rerouting the bicycle trail out of the center of activities to the perimeter, along the parkway.

As trails are reconstructed, improved access will be a critical component. All new construction will be compliant with ADA standards. Additional curb cuts are needed around the lakes for those entering the lake trails from adjacent neighborhoods and parkway parking spaces.

Various solutions for trail crossings of roads with high traffic volumes are recommended in the master plan:

- **Roundabout at 36th Street West. (East Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska Focus Area – Recommendation #5)**

- **“Barnes Dance”, or “pedestrian scramble” at the signalized intersection of Richfield Road and William Berry Parkway. (S Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska and Wm Berry Focus Area – Recommendation #2).**

- **A raised crossing to give primacy to pedestrians along East Harriet Parkway between Rose Way Road and East Lake Harriet Boulevard, southwest of the Rose Gardens. (Lyndale Park – Recommendation #3).**

- **The “Lid” or land bridge that crosses over West Lake Street. (North Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska - Recommendation #2)**

Crossing West Lake Street is a formidable proposition for many. The corridor is currently designed to move vehicular traffic quickly into and out of Minneapolis. As a Hennepin County roadway, it is one of the most heavily used non-freeway corridors in the state. It acts as a major barrier for north-south bicycle and pedestrian movement between the between Lake of the Isles and Lake Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska.

Bridging Lake Street is an idea that has been explored in many studies over the decades. A 2012 charrette or design study envisioned a “lid” over Lake Street. The idea included depressing the roadbed in the area between Thomas Avenue and the Lagoon channel and bridging the highway with a wide “intensive green roof” that could support trees, trails and other recreation uses.

The master plan develops the idea of the lid (see North Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska Focus Area – Recommendation #2) which was almost unanimously supported by the CAC. The proposed lid is wide enough and its green roof deep enough to support trees, trails, and other recreational uses. At its last meeting the CAC expressed that it did not want this “exciting idea to be relegated to the shelves”. The CAC passed a motion that additional funding be sought to move this project to fruition, even though it was listed as a long term priority for implementation. The lid would be a cooperative venture between Hennepin County and the MPRB.

Interim solutions to improve the connection between Lake of the Isles and Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska have been proposed in conjunction with the Greystar development at the northwest corner of Thomas Avenue and W Lake Street. A tunnel under the Midtown Greenway includes a ramp to the elevated trail on the north side (connections on the south side of the Midtown Greenway are discouraged by the county). A less expensive solution discussed was improvements to the crosswalk and resynchronization of the traffic lights on the east side of the Thomas-Lake intersection.
Proposed Plan for Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation and Wayfinding
4.4 Parking

Existing Conditions
Parking is limited for Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska and Harriet visitors. Lack of parking or a lack of information about available parking was one of the issues most frequently raised by non-local visitors and people of color. Large lots exist at North Beach on Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska, northwest Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska (shared with the Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska Executive Center, a privately owned office building), Thomas Beach, southwest Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska, and at the Lake Harriet Bandshell. Lyndale Park has a small lot near the Peace Gardens. Harriet has boat and trailer parking near its launch; Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska does not. In addition, there are many parking bays along the parkways, usually along the outer curb, which makes policing of illicit activities easier but also forces pedestrians to cross the parkway to reach the park. None of the parking lots employ Best Management Practices for stormwater treatment with the exception of one lot at southeast Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska, which has rain gardens and “grass-pave” overflow parking.

A huge reservoir of parking along streets in adjacent neighborhoods is heavily used by non-local visitors, especially during events, week nights, and weekends. This situation is not popular with local residents. The lack of convenient parking near desired destinations make some feel unwelcome at the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes and may discourage some visitors from returning.
**Related Master Plan Recommendations**

The CAC was open to the idea of a shared parking ramp in lieu of a shared surface lot at NW Calhoun. Moving the boat launch and sailing club and school to NW Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska would require a small lot for temporary boat and trailer parking with an area for AIS inspections (see NW Calhoun/Bde Maka Saka Focus Area). Additional parking bays in the William Berry area were approved if picnicking is added (S Calhoun and Wm Berry Focus Area – Recommendation #7). On-street parking along Rose Way Road is recommended when and if an off-street multi-use trail is constructed on its west side (Lyndale Park – Recommendation #2).

The CAC supported reconstruction of all parking areas to employ stormwater BMPs, including reinforced turf areas for overflow parking that would not need winter plowing. This support is inferred in Natural Resources Recommendation #2 and specifically recommended for all focus areas that have parking lots.

To improve access for regional visitors and communities of color, the CAC favored a circulator bus program and using technology, especially cell phone applications, to communicate information about available parking (see Access and Circulation – Recommendation #5).

Recommendations to improve access to the lakes include the use of apps to properly and timely communicate circulation and parking availability.