

FAQ for \$10 M Bonding Request for the Mississippi River Learning Center

March 2026

Proposed Bill Language: Section 1. MISSISSIPPI RIVER LEARNING CENTER; ST. PAUL.

\$10,000,000 is appropriated from the bond proceeds fund to the Metropolitan Council for a grant to the city of Saint Paul to construct the first phase of site improvements and structures at the Crosby Farm Regional Park in Saint Paul to advance the Mississippi River Learning Center project, subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 16A.695. The project includes site preparation, soil remediation, grading, trails, buildings, and amenities. This appropriation is in addition to the appropriation in Laws 2023, chapter 72, article 1, section 17, subdivision 5.

1) What are the deliverables from the \$8M bonding?

The State bonding funds of \$8 million are for the design of the Mississippi River Learning Center to develop detailed plans and specifications for the project to be shovel-ready. A multi-disciplinary consultant team is working through a 22-month design phase including site testing, permit review, engineer review, architectural studies, stormwater design, and detailed landscape planning for the construction and restoration of this significant site along the Mississippi River and within Bdote, a sacred area to the Dakota. This phase of work also includes engagement with community members in addition to focused engagement with indigenous and tribal leaders of the region. The engagement and design work is in final phase and will be complete by the end of 2026.

2) Why is this an important project in the region?

The 25-acre site near Bdote, where the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers join together, is within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), a national park area, and a part of the globally significant migratory path of the Mississippi Flyway. The project will reclaim and restore a place of significance along the Mississippi River by providing recreational and river-oriented experiences that attract and educate regional and national visitors of all ages. The project will remove massive amounts of debris in the soil from previous industrial work, river dredging, and construction, to bring people and nature together to engage the Mighty Mississippi and experience the land, water, and culture of this region. Tribal and indigenous engagement has revealed strong desire to heal the land and water for the plants and animals located in this area of great cultural significance to the indigenous people of Minnesota.

3) What is the current project budget?

Mississippi River Learning Center will be implemented in phases. The first phase is focused on restoring a contaminated landscape by regrading, environmental clean-up and revegetation of the landscape.

Approximate costs for phased implementation are:

- Soil remediation and restoration: \$10M
- Site programming and Boat House construction: \$5M
- Mississippi River Learning Center building construction and infrastructure: \$23M
- Marina site remediation and infrastructure: \$2M
- Marina building construction: \$8M
- ADA trail connection down bluff: \$10M
- Site and trail improvements: \$2M

4) What will the \$10M bonding request achieve for this project?

The \$10M request will include work on the first phase of site preparation including soil remediation, regrading of the topography for access to the river, site restoration, structures for park visitors and programs, and utility connections. This exciting initial phase will reintroduce park users to the site for restoration, gathering and ceremony as a destination location within the national park.

5) How will this project be constructed?

The project will be constructed in phases given the complexity of the site conditions and the need for preliminary site clean-up. The first phase will address soil contamination and begin the restoration process of the site as a first step to remediate and heal the landscape.

6) How does this project benefit river recreators?

This is one of two marina locations within this stretch of the river that offer access for both motorized and non-motorized boats. It is a unique asset to the region to have the marina and paddling facility. The addition of programming and educational opportunities for river exploration, paddling, and outdoor experiences in an urban environment will expand visitorship and create a regional destination.

7) What are current funding requests?

The City currently has committed \$2,500,000 in funds from City of Saint Paul Common Cent Sales Tax in addition to the State bonding funds of \$8,000,000 currently allocated for design, engineering, permitting, and environmental review.

The City is actively pursuing additional grants from other sources and developing a private fundraising strategy with Saint Paul Parks Conservancy. Current grant asks include:

- i. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Local Road funding- \$500,000
- ii. Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) funds from Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) - \$2,900,000
- iii. Ramsey County Environmental Response Funds - \$500,000
- iv. Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) - Alternative Transportation System Implementation National Park Service (NPS) – Trail connections- \$253,000
- v. Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) via DNR and US Army Corps of Engineers - \$5,000,000

8) What are future funding asks?

The City will prepare an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant for brownfields clean up funds in late 2026. The Saint Paul Parks Conservancy is developing a private fundraising strategy for the project. The Parks department will continue to explore regional park funding via the Metropolitan Council.

9) What environmental documentation has been completed for the project?

Phase I, Phase II, Response Action Plan (RAP), and Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) have been completed and are under final review by the Minnesota Pollution Control. Environmental testing indicates there is soil contamination and potential groundwater pollution in addition to significant amounts of debris in the soil from previous industrial work, river dredging, and construction. Hundreds of steel piles protrude from the site of this park space from a previous high rise private development project that was started and then halted prior to the City taking possession of the property through condemnation.