

(\$ in thousands)

Project Requests for State Funds

Project Title	Priority Ranking	Funding Source	2020	2022	2024
Treetop Trail	1	GO	\$ 11,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
Revitalize the Zoo	2	GO	\$ 14,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
Asset Preservation	3	GO	\$ 14,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
Total Project Requests			\$ 39,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
General Obligation Bonds (GO) Total			\$ 39,000	\$ 0	\$ 0

Treetop Trail

AT A GLANCE**2020 Request Amount:** \$11,000**Priority Ranking:** 1**Project Summary:** Repurpose the defunct monorail track into a 1.25-mile elevated walking loop through oak forest, wetlands, and animal habitats. Through a public-private partnership, the Minnesota Zoo Foundation is raising private contributions toward the total cost of more than \$22 million.**Project Description**

The Minnesota Treetop Trail repurposes the existing monorail track into an accessible pathway to nature, providing Zoo guests of all ages with new perspectives of the animals and serve as a gateway to undeveloped natural areas on the Zoo campus.

The elevated walking loop will start at the Zoo's central plaza, arc over animal exhibits, and circle previously unseen natural areas in the northern section of campus. With its wide walkway, artistic touchdown structures, and strategically placed trail bump outs, the Trail will offer:

- A place to observe and immerse oneself in the natural world
- A place to be active and engage with the outdoors
- A place to inspire and cultivate creativity
- A place to play and connect with family and friends

Transforming the monorail track into the Minnesota Treetop Trail involves:

- Placing a new walking surface, guardrails, and stabilizing materials on the existing monorail track;
- Renovating the existing monorail loading area into the main entrance to the Trail;
- Building viewing bump outs and ADA-accessible touchdown points at key areas around the loop; and
- Installing guest amenities such as shade, seating, wayfinding signage, water fountains, and security equipment.

Through a public-private partnership, the Minnesota Zoo Foundation is raising private contributions toward the total cost of more than \$22 million.

Project Rationale

For over three decades a monorail train circled the Zoo's beautiful 485-acre grounds, offering unique perspective on animal exhibits and views into the pristine nature of the northern section of campus. The Zoo decommissioned the monorail in 2013, due to declining ridership and obsolete trains that would cost more than \$40 million to replace. Rather than spend millions to remove the monorail track, this project would creatively repurpose the structure to transform the Zoo guest experience and provide a gateway to nature.

This one-of-a-kind journey through the trees would allow Zoo guests to connect with nature on a grand scale. Engaging people with nature is vital to the Zoo's vision of a future in which wildlife thrives in Minnesota and beyond. The Zoo's 2018 *Pathway to Nature* report makes the case that playing in nature leads to protecting nature. It concludes that the Minnesota Zoo is uniquely positioned to serve as a gateway to nature for people who are hesitant or unaccustomed to immersion in nature. The Treetop Trail can be the bridge between the more familiar, structured zoo experience and greater immersion in nature—leading to more engagement with and ultimately conservation of natural resources. Becoming a gateway to nature is also vital to a sustainable business model for the Zoo, bringing new audiences to the Zoo and opening up new programming and revenue streams related to nature.

Project Timeline

Once full funding is available, we anticipate design and construction will take approximately 2 years, with a goal of opening in summer of 2022.

Other Considerations

None.

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

As a world-class Zoo and the state's largest environmental educator, the Minnesota Zoo's mission and financial model are driven by creating new ways for people to connect with animals and the natural world. Periodically opening new exhibits and experiences is critical to sustaining attendance and generating earned income that comprises two-thirds of the Zoo's operating budget. The Zoo anticipates that additional costs for maintenance and programming for the Treetop Trail will be supported through earned income from attendance and new fee-based programming.

Description of Previous Appropriations

None.

Project Contact Person

Missy Remick
Director of Board and Legislative Affairs
952-431-9299
missy.remick@state.mn.us

Revitalize the Zoo**AT A GLANCE****2020 Request Amount:** \$14,000**Priority Ranking:** 2**Project Summary:** Revitalize the 40-year old, 485-acre Minnesota Zoo campus by repurposing the newly-vacated movie theater into a jumping off point for nature adventure, reopening a long-closed portion of the Tropics Trail, and renovating the 1970s-era animal hospital to improve animal welfare.**Project Description**

This request is part of the Minnesota Zoo's new 10-year plan to revitalize, naturalize, and mobilize the 40-year old campus through renovation of existing exhibits and facilities. Top priority projects within the plan are:

Repurpose movie theater building to nature adventure

With its location just outside the Zoo main entrance and adjacent to a scenic forested hill, the large-format screen theater building is a perfect site for the jumping off point for nature adventure. Anticipating the building would revert to Zoo ownership in 2019, the Zoo's new master plan envisions indoor and outdoor challenge courses, and registration/program space for new nature-focused programming.

Reopen closed portion of Tropics Trail as new exhibit

In the middle of the popular Tropics Trail is a boarded up hallway that was once the beloved nocturnal section of the trail, which closed over 10 years ago. The new master plan envisions reopening this area as a new exhibit with much-needed guest amenities such as restrooms and program space.

Renovate animal hospital to improve animal welfare

Built in 1975, the Zoo's animal hospital predates the opening of the Zoo and requires significant renovation to meet industry standards for animal care. The project will replace HVAC systems and electrical services, repair the exterior structure, renovate facilities to support modern veterinary technology and practices, and co-locate compatible animal programs.

The project will include design and construction of these concepts outlined in the 10-year facilities master plan completed in 2019.

Project Rationale

Two high profile facilities – a long stretch of the popular Tropics Trail and the recently vacated movie theater at the Zoo's entrance—are sitting vacant and not contributing to the guest experience or the Zoo's bottom line. Converting the movie theater to a hub for nature adventure is central to the Zoo's goal of becoming a gateway to nature for all Minnesotans. The project is also central to the Zoo's sustainable business model by bringing in new audiences and opening up new revenue streams. Reopening the closed portion of the Tropics Trail as a new exhibit is vital for keeping the Zoo fresh and relevant for the next 40 years. Empty spaces and signs of neglect threaten the Zoo's vitality and

can have a negative impact on attendance.

As a nationally-accredited zoo, we uphold the highest standards of care for our collection of nearly 5,000 animals. Our team of veterinarians and technicians work tirelessly to care for the animals, but they are hampered by an extremely outdated facility. Animal welfare standards, veterinary practices, and medical technology have advanced tremendously in the decades since the Zoo's animal hospital was built. While our veterinary staff work wonders with what they have, the outdated facility greatly limits their efficiency and effectiveness.

Project Timeline

This request is part of a ten-year plan to revitalize the Zoo. Projects that are included in this request will be completed within the four-year timeframe that the funding is available.

Other Considerations

None

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

This project supports a sustainable business model by addressing the needs of an aging site and improving the guest experience. New and improved guest experiences are critical to sustaining attendance and generating earned income that comprises two-thirds of the Zoo's operating budget. The revitalization plan is designed to invest in the Zoo's existing facilities and minimize increased operating costs where possible, or grow revenue to support higher costs where appropriate.

Description of Previous Appropriations

None

Project Contact Person

Missy Remick
Director of Board and Legislative Affairs
952-431-9299
missy.remick@state.mn.us

Asset Preservation**AT A GLANCE****2020 Request Amount:** \$14,000**Priority Ranking:** 3**Project Summary:** Asset preservation to maintain the Minnesota Zoo's 40 year-old, 485-acre campus. Routine asset preservation appropriations are vital to maintaining this beloved state asset for future generations of Zoo guests.**Project Description**

Minnesota's "new zoo" is over 40 years old, and the campus is aging rapidly. Priorities for asset preservation during the next biennium include: assessment and design to replace the heat plant, repair and replacement of service roads and pathways, mechanical system improvements to meet MN B3 requirements, roof replacements, preservation of movie theater building, replacement of remaining Tropics Trail skylights, and modifications and retrofitting of restrooms to meet ADA and egress codes.

Project Rationale

Asset preservation allows the Minnesota Zoo to remain a safe, secure, and fun destination for Minnesotans of all ages. The Minnesota Zoo operates on the scale of a small city, with 485 acres of land, 121 buildings, its own heat plant and back up generators, 6.5 miles of roads, 48 acres of parking lots, and 25 miles of fencing. Animal exhibits and holding facilities require complex air handling and life support systems to ensure animal welfare. Significant investment is needed each year for the Zoo to remain fresh and relevant.

Project Timeline

Asset preservation funding will be spent during the four year time-frame of the appropriation.

Other Considerations

None

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

Asset preservation projects support a sustainable business model for the Minnesota Zoo. More efficient building systems reduce utility and repair bills. Timely infrastructure improvements prevent costly failures and downtime. Renovating and retrofitting existing spaces makes staff more efficient and improves the guest experience – both of which are vital to generating revenue and controlling costs. Over 50% of the Zoo's operating budget is earned through admissions, membership, education, and other programming. Supporting a positive guest experience through maintaining the Zoo's campus is essential to the Zoo's continued operation.

Description of Previous Appropriations

2018 - \$6 million

2017 - \$4 million

2014 - \$7 million

2012 - \$4 million
2011 - \$4 million
2010 - \$6 million
2009 - \$3 million

Project Contact Person

Missy Remick
Director of Board and Legislative Affairs
952-431-9469
missy.remick@state.mn.us