PARKS, OPEN SPACE, & TRAILS

6. Parks, Open Space, and Trails Plan

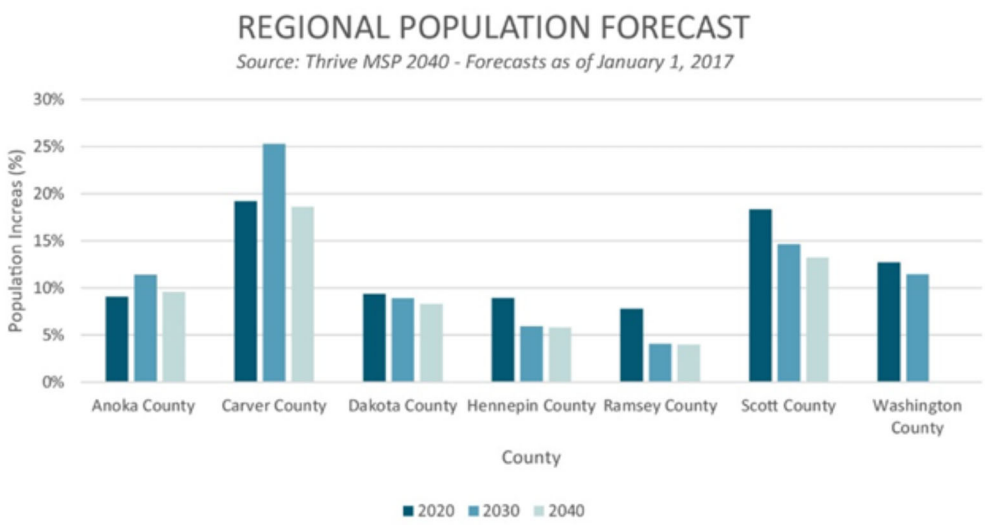
Introduction

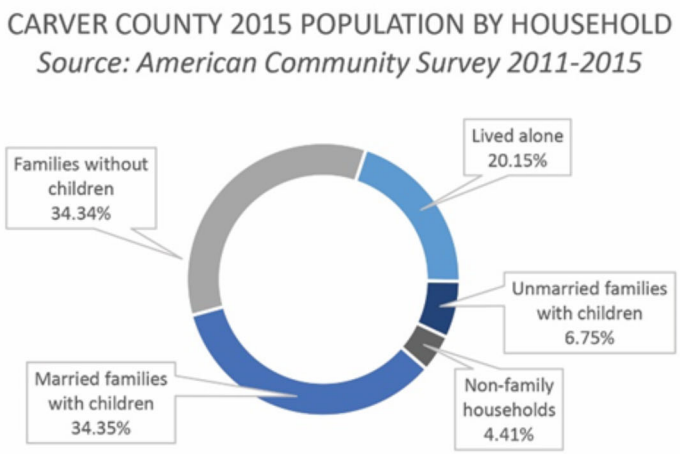
The population in Carver County is expected to increase from the current 100,600 to more than 161,000 people by 2040, which translates into an additional 62,590 more households and 53,840 more jobs. To accommodate this projected growth, land in Carver County will continue to be subdivided for residential housing, commercial, and industrial uses as cities spread out into the surrounding townships. Inherently, this growth impacts the demand for parks, open spaces, and trails.

Whereas traditional family households will continue to expand in Carver County, the general aging of the population will also bring a higher propensity for "empty nesters" or households without school age children. The senior population will also likely continue to grow, albeit at a slower pace than more gentrified communities.

Recreational trends – which are greatly influenced by demographics and other societal factors – will continue to evolve in response to new demands by new populations. For example, today's younger age groups have much more diverse interests than in past generations, at times making it more difficult to engage them in traditional recreational activities. In Carver County, observations suggest growing regional park use by Latino, Asian, and Russian immigrant populations – each bringing with them new expectations.

The changing demographic character of the county coupled with the changing recreational trends underscore the need for a well-balanced and flexible system that can respond to evolving, broad-based needs. The plan places considerable emphasis on addressing this issue by ensuring that a full cross-section of interests and needs of current and future residents can be reasonably accommodated.





General Finding from the Public Process

Public input into the planning process occurred at several levels: Public pop-ups in several communities, comments from questionnaires, meetings with local cities & townships, and work sessions with the Park Commission and County Board were all used to gain direct public input on key planning issues. Formal presentations to the County Board were undertaken to ensure consistency with overall perspectives, goals, and priorities.

All the findings from the process were instrumental in shaping planning decisions related to parks, open spaces, and trails throughout the county. The relationship between the County and local cities and townships remains important to efficiently and effectively providing parks and trails, preserving open spaces, and providing recreational opportunities; the public understands a high level of coordination and inter-reliance between public agencies will be important to meeting future needs and preserving open space in spite of inevitable growth.

Pop-ups were held in Norwood-Young America during Stiftungsfest (20-30 attendees), in Waconia during Nickel-Dickel Day (approximately 68 attendees), and at the Mayer Dakota Rail Regional Trail trailhead (approximately 35 attendees). Attendees were largely in favor of the continued planning and development of Lake Waconia Regional Park and Coney Island. They would also like to see more trail connections to Waconia, trails along the shores of Lake Waconia, and more trail loops at the local and regional levels.

Questionnaire respondents indicated that Carver County is a good place for recreation/pleasure activities, as well as, having a good variety of recreational choices, bicycling facilities, and quality of the natural environment. Overall the respondents are satisfied with current County park program and service and with current park and trial maintenance practices, and are in support of acquiring additional land for parks and trails and development of an indoor facility of recreation programs and social gatherings.

Outdoor Recreation Participation Trends

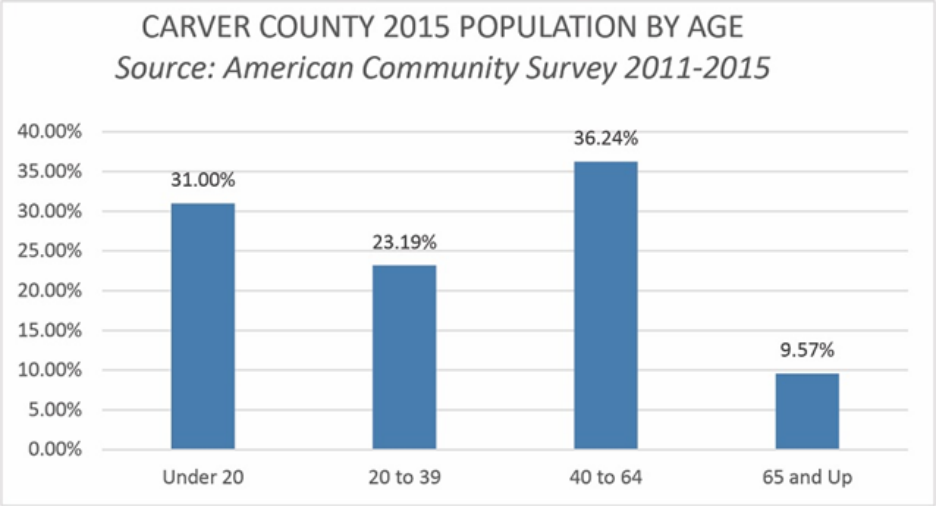
The 2014-2018 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), published by the Minnesota DNR, gives outdoor recreation decision-makers and managers a focused set of priorities and suggested actions to guide them as they make decisions about outdoor recreation. The SCORP outlines outdoor recreation trends, challenges, and issues, including protecting existing natural resources, sustaining existing facilities, promoting healthy lifestyles, connecting people with nature, and an increasing demand for a diverse range of recreation opportunities based upon population changes.

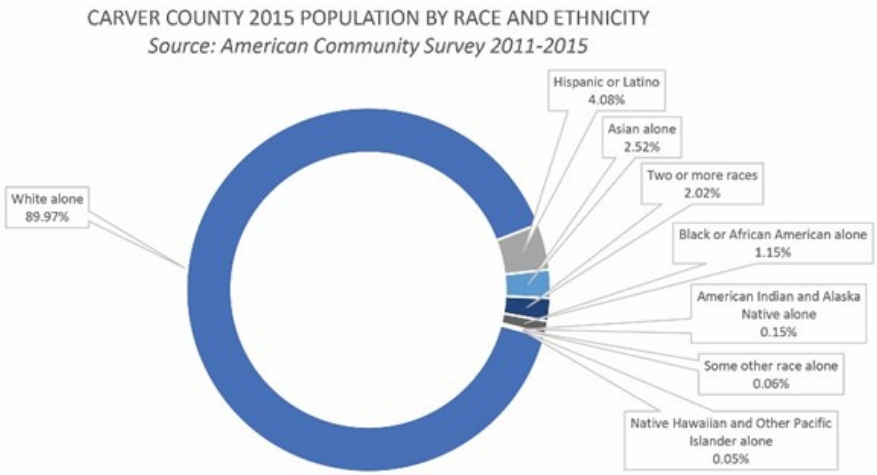
The Metropolitan Council's 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan notes that, according to SCORP, several studies show that involvement in nature-based outdoor recreation among young adults and their children had decreased since the 1990s. SCORP also notes that location plays a significant role because many users of the regional trail system live within three miles of the park or trail that they utilize. Regional trails play an important role because they provide healthful forms of exercise for people of all age groups that can be carried out by families, groups, or individuals.

According to SCORP, Minnesota's growth rate has increased since 2000, but at a slower rate than in the 1990s. Although population growth in the state has slowed, the geographic pattern of growth remained largely the same with the high growth areas centered on the Twin Cities metropolitan area. This new growth will fuel demands for near-home recreation opportunities in these areas. The Metropolitan Council's Thrive 2040 MSP forecasted growth rate for Carver County is anticipated to increase by approximately to 61,000 people. Outside factors such as gas prices, trail infrastructure improvements, and increased local sidewalk and trail network connectivity, may also promote increased use as users look for more recreation opportunities closer to home and use of the regional trail system as part of their transportation network. Within fully developed areas where population levels are expected to remain relatively stable, park and trail visitation levels and type of use will also reflect shifting demographics of those areas.

While the trend of young adults and their children shows a reduction in their involvement in nature-based recreation, SCORP notes that older adults have maintained a more stable involvement in outdoor recreation. Older adult recreation habits are well established and demand for their preferred activities will continue to be strong. However, as this group ages, physical limitations will require some park and trail visitors to change their recreational activities from higher intensity activities such as running, in-line skating, and biking to lower-impact recreational activities such as walking, nature observation, and educational opportunities. Many of these activities are accommodated by the regional park and trail system.

Metropolitan Council demographers anticipate that by 2040, 40 percent of the region's population will be people of color, compared with 24 percent in 2010. Within the county, 10.1 percent of the population are non-white (Figure 4). The minority population within the county is significantly lower than the regional average.





Trends in Park Visits

Despite concerns about per capita participation rates, with increasing population comes an increase in the number of actual park visits. When looking further into park visit trends, the numbers become even more telling as to the demands that will be placed on regional park resources. According to the Metropolitan Council, annual use estimate of the Regional Park System is summarized as follows:

- An estimated 47.8 million visits were made to the Metropolitan Regional Parks System in 2016
- Estimated annual visits have increased by over 11 million visits since 2006; 40 percent of the increase is attributed to the opening or inclusion of 13 parks and trails to the Regional Park System during this period; a total of 65 parks and 52 trails were sampled in 2016 compared to 77 park and trail units sampled in 2005, and 64 in 1995

As of 2016, Carver County's overall share of regional visitation is lower than expected relative to the county's percentage of the metro population, suggesting that some residents are visiting regional parks outside of Carver County. The most likely reasons for this is either the lack of developed parks and facilities within Carver County that meet resident needs or the desire by residents to visit a particular regional park for its intrinsic values, such as the Chain of Lakes Regional Park in Minneapolis. Also, visits to Carver Park Reserve and Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail are not included in Carver County visitor counts since the park and trail are managed by Three Rivers Park District. These two regional facilities do not charge entrance fees, which may impact park visits in Carver County parks. The chart below compares regional visits and population for Metro Regional Park agencies.

Vision, Values, and Goals Statement

Vision Statement

The vision is an outgrowth of the County's comprehensive planning process. The vision statement is as follows:
"Where the future embraces the past in keeping Carver County a great place to live, work, and play for a lifetime."

To provide focus and direction for the vision statement as it relates to parks, open spaces, and trails, the Carver County Board of Commissioners will:

- Continue the practice of focusing growth in and near the existing growth centers and transportation corridors
- Continue to have Carver County be a community where a person can successfully live their entire life; supporting planning and design of communities that allow for persons of all ages to successfully live, work and play
- Use methods consistent with existing laws to preserve natural areas, parklands, lakes and streams; in recognition that citizens of Carver County have a history of placing a high value on the natural resources found throughout the county.

Value Statements

The vision statement is supported by several value statements, including:

- Fostering the health and wellbeing of Carver County, its residents and businesses by providing a balanced network of parks, recreational lands, and conserved open space sufficient to meet present and future needs
- Preserving the geographical characteristics and environmental/high value natural resource areas for historic, cultural, and educational purposes
- Providing areas of diverse natural resources as settings for outdoor recreational activities consistent with regional standards
- Preserving cultural resources for their intrinsic and historical values
- Providing residents with facilities to support a variety of enjoyable recreational activities located in a physically attractive setting
- Ensuring that recreational opportunities are affordable and accessible (by various modes of transportation) to all citizens.
- Fostering a fully integrated and seamless system of regional, local, state, and federal parks, trails, and conservation lands

Benefits in Support of Vision and Values

The provision of parks, recreational facilities, open spaces, and trails offer many benefits to those living in and visiting Carver County, as Figure 5 illustrates. Many of these benefits align with the County's public health initiatives.

Given the many benefits, it is reasonable to surmise that parks, recreational facilities, open spaces, and trails positively affect residents' quality of life. As growth continues in the County and the sense of open space changes, the value of setting aside land for parks and open spaces will be that much more important to retaining the values that residents have come to expect and enjoy.

◊ **Figure 6.5: Benefits of Parks, Recreational Facilities, Open Spaces, and Trails**

Parks, Open Space, and Trails Goals

The following goals are broad statements that chart the course for achieving the stated vision:

COUNTY GOAL POST– 1

To prepare and implement a cohesive, effective, and efficient parks, open space, and trail plan for the purpose of fostering the health and wellbeing of Carver County, its residents, and businesses by providing recreational and conservation land sufficient to meet the present and future needs.

Objectives in Support of the Goal Statement:

- Routinely evaluate and update the plan to ensure it accurately reflects the needs of County residents.
- Use the plan for the purpose of guiding implementation in a logical, efficient manner.

COUNTY GOAL POST– 2

To provide residents with parks and natural areas for recreational uses, protection of the natural environment and geographical characteristics of the County, as visual/physical buffering of land development, and as a means to maintain the sense of place, ambiance, appearance, and cultural and natural history of the County.

Objectives in Support of the Goal Statement:

- To enhance the quality of life within the County by providing adequate parkland and natural areas to fulfill the present and future needs of residents.
- To use the parks, natural areas, and interconnecting trail corridors as a major factor in shaping growth and development.
- To maintain and enhance the natural character and aesthetic qualities of the County by providing parks and natural areas.
- To encourage sequential growth within the County in harmony with the natural environment.
- To provide recreational facilities consistent with approved park master plans.
- To provide facilities that complement those provided by other park agencies within Carver County.

COUNTY GOAL POST– 3

To provide residents with a high quality and interconnected trail and bikeway system for recreation, fitness, and transportation and as a means to tie parks and open spaces together with local communities.

Objectives in Support of the Goal Statement:

- To proved a trail system that emphasizes harmony with the natural environment.
- To develop a system of high value trails and bikeways, with a focus on providing a high-quality experience to encourage high levels of use.
- To allow for relatively uninterrupted walking, hiking, biking, and other uses to and through the County's park and open space system and developed areas.
- To provide connections with the greater regional trail system.
- To effectively tie the various parks together into an interconnected, high quality system; and to effectively tie the County trail system with those of local communities.
- To safely protect users from development encroachment and associated vehicular traffic.

Parks, Open Space, and Trails Goals—Continued

COUNTY GOAL POST– 4

To provide County residents with opportunities to engage in a variety of recreational activities that are enjoyable, in a physically attractive environment, and are affordable to all citizens. In coordination with other local recreational services providers, the County will strive to provide residents with well-designed, effective, and interesting programs and services that complement other public and private providers.

Objectives in Support of the Goal Statement:

- To provide programs and services in concert with other local providers to meet defined needs of the County and regional residents, including those of children, teens, adults, elderly, and the disabled.
- To support and encourage a wide diversity of recreation interests within the County.
- To work with program providers to provide adequate facilities for programmed use on a fair and equitable basis to ensure that all individuals and groups receive reasonable access to facilities.

COUNTY GOAL POST– 5

To maintain an effective and ongoing means of communicating and interacting with residents about issues related to parks, open spaces, trails, recreation facilities, programs, and future development. To provide residents with the opportunity to participate in recreational activities and programs through the County and various public and private partners.

Objectives in Support of the Goal Statement:

- To promote active and ongoing interaction between the County and its residents to ensure effective recreational programming and facility development.
- To promote ongoing communication between the Park Commission and residents.
- To promote ongoing volunteer programs and encourage civic and community organizations to assist in implementation of the plan and provide recreational programs.

COUNTY GOAL POST– 6

To maximize the park, open space, trail, and recreational opportunities available to residents through the development of fair and equitable working partnerships between the County and other public agencies, local recreational program providers, local school districts, local cities and townships, and civic organizations.

Objectives in Support of the Goal Statement:

- To fairly and equitably integrate County parks, open spaces, trails, and facilities with those of other public and private partners.
- To fairly and equitably integrate County programs and services with those of other public and private partners.

Parks, Open Space, and Trails Goals—Continued

COUNTY GOAL POST– 7

To secure the funding necessary to carry out the vision of the Carver County Parks, Open Space, and Trail Plan.

Objectives in Support of the Goal Statement:

- To define the funding options available for implementation of the plan, and to maximize the use of each source.
- To maximize the use of public-private partnerships where appropriate to help fund or otherwise defer costs to implement the plan.
- To prepare an implementation plan that defines the relative timing and extent of acquisition and development of system components.

Parks, Open Space, and Trails Policies

COUNTY POLICY POST– 1 PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAIL PLAN

- All implementation should be consistent with this plan, unless recommended by the Park Commission and approved by the County Board.
- Review and updating of the plan should be undertaken as warranted; revisions should be made based on documented changes in needs, unique conditions, or unforeseen circumstances/opportunities.
- Updates to individual park, open space, and trail master plans should be undertaken every 10 years.
- Residents shall be given the opportunity to participate in the planning process (i.e. through needs assessment studies, public meetings, etc.) to ensure that their needs are understood and acted upon.

COUNTY POLICY POST– 2 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ACQUISTION AND DEVELOPMENT

- Parks, natural resource areas, and related recreation facilities should be acquired and developed by the County in accordance with this plan. Acquisition of specific parcels of land should be based on land and natural resource qualities, suitability for desired uses, location, and willing landowners; undesirable land parcels with limited park and natural resource value should not be accepted.
- Special recreation features should be incorporated into the County parks system as land acquisition opportunities become available to provide services that are unique and complimentary to the services already offered by the park system. Specific requirement for special recreation features may dictate what features are feasible but they should be tied to natural resources and demonstrate the existence or potential for drawing a sizable number of people. Examples of special recreation features include: Regional shooting facility and range; large amphitheater and outdoor event facility; deep water fishing and outdoor event facility; sites of historic or archeological significance, bridging facilities (specialized or single purpose facilities that are intended to attract and introduce new outdoor recreation users to the County/regional parks system).
- A reasonable effort should be made to eliminate physical barriers that deter individuals from using parks and recreation facilities; barrier-free design principles should be applied in accordance with accepted guidelines and laws.
- Design and maintenance procedures should be consistent with industry standards; design and maintenance of all parks and recreation facilities shall emphasize high quality and user safety.

Parks, Open Space, and Trails Policies—Continued

COUNTY POLICY POST– 3 REGIONAL TRAIL ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

- Regional trails must serve the greater County and regional audience to provide connections between regional parks, park reserves, regional trails, and communities. New trails should be classified as a destination regional trail, linking regional trail, or contribute to the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (RBTN).
- Destination Regional Trails should be located to reasonably maximize the amount of high-quality natural resources within the trail corridor boundaries. The decision to locate the trail should be based on the availability of existing high-quality natural resources or the opportunity to restore, enhance, protect, or re-create natural resources.
- Linking Regional Trails should be located to reasonably maximize connections to regional trails and parks in the Carver County system as well as connecting to the transit network.
- The Regional Bicycle Transportation Network is divided into two tiers of alignments and corridors that serve to define the planning and development of critical bicycle transportation links.
    - ◊ Tier 1—Priority RBTN Corridors and Alignments: These corridors and alignments have been determined to provide the best transportation connectivity to regional facilities and developed area.
    - ◊ Tier 2—RBTN Corridors and Alignments: These corridors and alignments provide connections to regional facilities in neighboring cities, and serve to connect Tier 1 RBTN corridors and alignments.

COUNTY POLICY POST– 4 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

- The County will use communication technology to enhance participant/resident knowledge of the existing programs and facilities (e.g. website, Facebook, Twitter, etc.).
- Community participation and interaction should be promoted to determine the needs and desires of the residents; periodically scheduled public meetings, needs assessment surveys, local meetings, focus groups, interviews, etc.
- The formation of civic groups and associations should be promoted to assist in the continued development of recreation programs and services.
- Residents and the Park Commission should work together to define park facilities and programs that are needed, can be provided, and what residents can do to assist.
- Volunteerism should be promoted through the development of various volunteer programs (e.g. Adopt-a-Park, etc.).
- The County will work to obtain a diverse representation in age, sex, ethnicity, income and martial status for programs and committees/commissions by reaching out to a diverse population through a variety of media or social media outlets.

Parks, Open Space, and Trails Policies—Continued

COUNTY POLICY POST– 5 PARTNERSHIPS

- A cooperative effort should be undertaken between all partners to encourage the optimal use of limited resources and minimize duplication of park sites, facilities, and services.
- Clearly defined joint-use agreements and policies should be formally adopted between all partners.
- Where feasible, new facilities should be located adjacent to partner owned property to facilitate shared use and programming.

COUNTY POLICY POST– 6 FUNDING

- All forms of funding for implementing this plan should be pursued on an ongoing basis and in a time frame consistent with need and development opportunities.
- Public-private partnerships should be used where appropriate to help fund or defer costs to implement this plan.
- A complete analysis of financing mechanisms available to the County for implementation of this plan should be undertaken and updated on a periodic basis.
- A priority ranking system and an implementation plan should be prepared prioritizing future improvements where future costs can be reasonable projected.
- Shared-costs and joint-use agreements between the County and partners should be reviewed on a periodic basis to determine if they are equitable and cost effective.
- Special recreation features should use their own funding sources and not negatively impact other facilities in the park system.
- Trail projects should be funded in accordance to the cost participation policy applicable to cooperative highway projects between Carver County and municipalities, or the policies for cost participation between Carver County and other agencies for standalone cooperative trail improvement projects as applicable and as adopted.

Parks, Open Space, and Trails Policies

COUNTY POLICY POST– 7 PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- In cooperation with other program providers, standards should be established that apply uniformly to all programs, sites, and facilities and should include: a) Identification of the recreational program objectives and related facility needs for specific activities, b) Ensuring that adequate support of local recreation providers is in place for program viability and success, c) Undertaking a seasonal review of the effectiveness of County supported recreational programs and services.
- In concert with other program providers, leadership and Code of Conduct guidelines for each activity and program should be developed defining acceptable and appropriate actions and behavior of individuals responsible for overseeing specific programs and activities that use County parks and facilities.
- An ongoing communication strategy should be established between the County and other program providers to encourage across-the-board collaboration among providers, broaden recreation interests, and track demand/recreation trends affecting the County.
- The County shall provide an equal opportunity to participate in creational services.
- Parks and trails use policies, rules and regulations should be prepared and periodically updated by the Park Commission and approved by the County Board; this includes policies, rules, and regulations associated with activities initiated by other providers using County facilities.

Parks Plan

Overview

Carver County is one of ten implementing agencies for the regional park system overseen by the Metropolitan Council. The Council's 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan established a vision and funding priorities for regional parks and trails out to 2040. The role regional park implementing agencies have in "revising the vision" of the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan is limited to the following:

- Defining the boundaries of proposed parks and alignments of proposed trails identified in the 2040 Parks Policy Plan via the preparation of master plans for these new units. The master plans are subject to review and approval by the Metropolitan Council.
- Amending the boundaries of existing parks via master plan amendments and amending alignments/boundaries of existing trails via master plan amendments. These master plan amendments are subject to review and approval by the Metropolitan Council.

Carver County's Park and Trail System is based on current and anticipated needs and expectations of residents as well as the vision, values and goals defined earlier in this plan. It will consist of a seamless network of parks, and trails throughout the County connecting the following:

- Existing regional parks and park reserves
- Proposed regional park search areas
- State Wildlife Management Areas (MN DNR) and State Recreation Areas (MN DNR) - existing and proposed expansion
- National Wildlife Refuges (USFWS) - existing and proposed expansion
- Local parks and open spaces

Parks and Open Space Classifications

The plan consists of a variety of parks and open spaces defined under various classifications. Each of the following classifications each serve a purpose in meeting regional, County, and local park and recreation needs. The classifications as applied here are based on the guidelines consistent with the Metropolitan Council's regional-level classifications and the Nation Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways Guidelines and Planning and Urban Design Standards (American Planning Association, 2006) for local-level classifications.

Regional Parks (Regional Park System Classification)

Regional parks contain a diversity of nature-based resources, either naturally occurring or human-created. The recreational quality of a regional park is measured by the presence of outstanding resources and the ability to provide adequately for a wide range of natural resource-related recreational opportunities. Access to water bodies suitable for recreation– such as swimming, boating and fishing– is particularly important and many regional parks focus on lakes, rivers or streams. A regional park should be large enough to accommodate a variety of activities, preserve a pleasant natural aspect, and buffer activity areas from each other and from surrounding land uses. In terms of size, this is interpreted as 200 to 500 acres of land. Occasionally, because of the quality of the resource, an exception may be made and a regional park may be as small as 100 acres. Experience has shown this to be the minimum size acceptable for the range and type of activities expected to be accommodated.

County Parks (County Park System Classification)

These are land areas exhibiting natural or ornamental quality for outdoor recreation such as walking, viewing, picnicking, canoe/boat access, and, occasionally, could have some field and court games. County Parks are used to complement the regional park system by providing recreational services that are not regionally significant, but still have local value. Local cultural, historical, recreational, and environmental needs are often addressed with a County Park, with the County having the flexibility to determine what is of local significance and appropriate to address local interests.

Local-Level Classifications

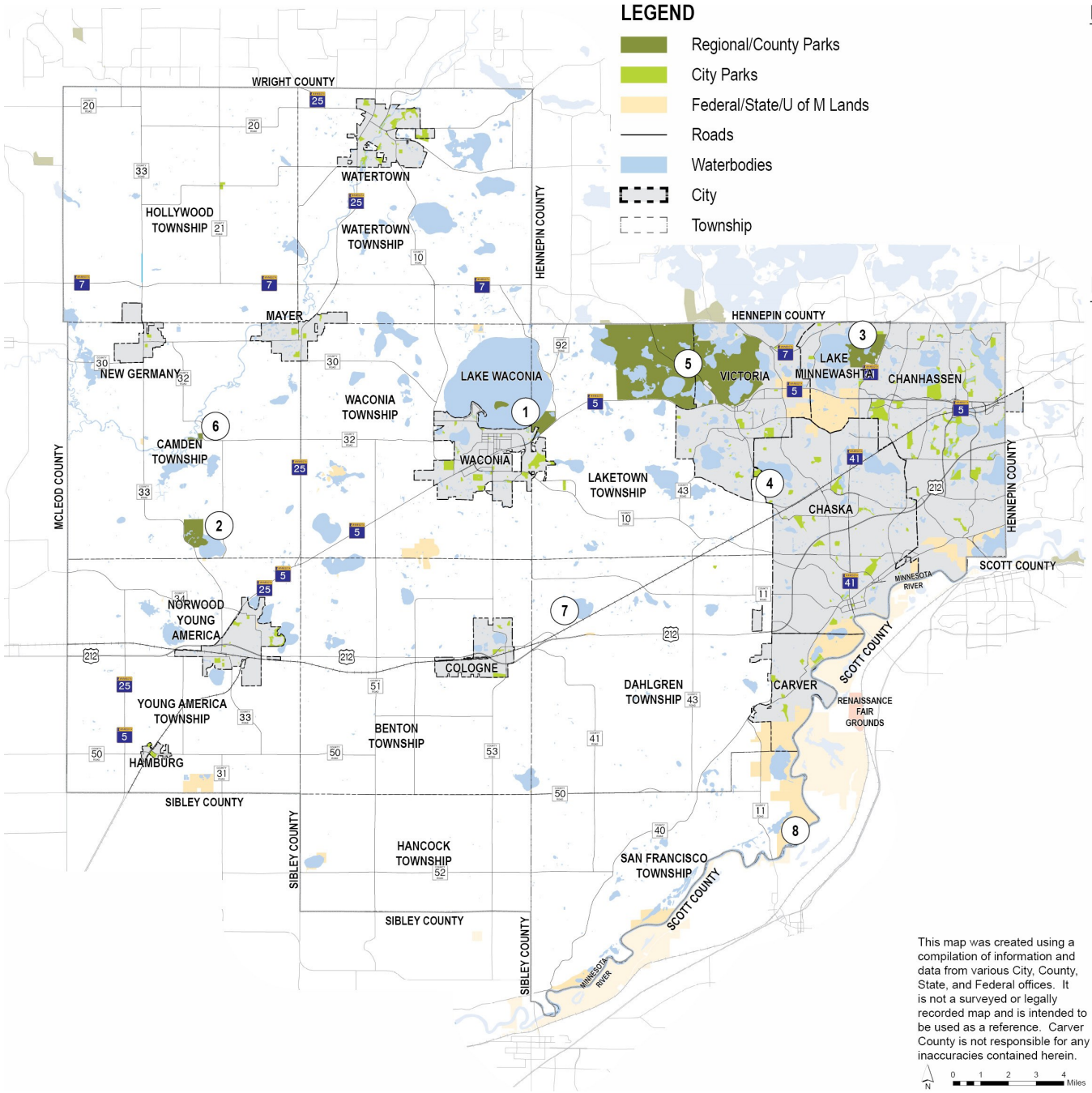
Local units of government provide facilities relatively close to where people live and are able to respond to the differing needs of small, localized groups like neighborhoods or communities. Local-level facilities tend to be population and activity-based, while the regional system is primarily resource based.

Schools and Private Operations

Schools and private operations also make substantial contributions to the development of facilities and the provision of recreational services. The most prominent facilities provided by the private sector are golf courses, horseback riding facilities, marinas, day camps and downhill ski areas. There are also multiple recreational open space areas owned and operated by corporations, employee associations, benevolent associations, and nonprofit social agencies. These private facilities reduce the burden on the public sector, provide additional opportunities and help to preserve thousands of acres of land in open space.

Figure 6 shows the existing regional and county elements of the parks system, as well as state and federal lands, such as the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.

◊ Figure 6.6: Parks Plan



EXISTING COUNTY/REGIONAL PARKS

1. Lake Waconia Regional Park
2. Baylor Regional Park
3. Minnewashta Regional Park
4. Lake Bavaria Boat Launch
5. Carver Park Reserve
6. Western Carver County Park

REGIONAL PARK SEARCH AREAS*

7. Miller Lake Regional Park Search Area
8. Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Park Search Area

** Note: Boundaries currently undefined and will be based on opportunities with willing landowners.*

Park Amenities

The three primary developed parks in the Carver County Park System—Lake Waconia Regional Park, Baylor Regional Park, and Minnewashta Regional Park–have a wide array of amenities and activities that serve a variety of users. The following table identifies the existing amenities listed by park.

◊ **Table 6.1: Regional Park Amenities**

Activities	Lake Waconia Regional Park	Baylor Regional Park	Minnewashta Regional Park
Beach	X	X	X
Biking Trails		X	X
Boat Launch		X	X
Campground		X	
Canoe Rentals		X	X
Canoe Storage			X
Cross Country Ski Rentals		X	X
Disc Golf Course & Rentals		X	
Fishing Pier		X	X
General Picnic Area	X	X	X
Geocaches Hidden	X	X	X
GPS Unit Rentals		X	
Hiking/Walking	X	X	X
Indoor Space Available	X	X	
Little Free Library		X	X
Maple Syrup Shack		X	
Multi-Use Fields		X	X
Nordic Walking Poles		X	X
Observatory		X	
Off-Leash Dog Area			X
Paddleboard Rentals			X
Paddleboat Rentals		X	
Playgrounds	X	X	X
Sand Volleyball	X	X	X
Shelter Rentals	X	X	X
Snowshoe Rentals		X	X

BAYLOR REGIONAL PARK

Location

Baylor Regional Park is located in western Carver County on Eagle Lake, which is just north of Norwood Young America on County Road 33, approximately three miles north of Highways 5 and 212.

Overview

Baylor Regional Park offers splendid views of Eagle Lake and is situated among cattail marshes, maple basswood forests, and prairie areas. Currently, the park is 201 acres in size. Existing park activities include camping, picnicking, swimming, softball, sand volleyball, horseshoes, and a disc golf course.

Planning Context

Baylor Regional Park is modest in size yet offers a broad variety of recreational opportunities that are well suited to the rural western part of the County. As growth in the County continues, so will the importance of this park.

Existing Facilities

- 35 camp sites with electrical and water hookups
- 15 primitive camp sites
- Group camping area
- Picnic areas
- Shower house
- Swimming beach
- Reservable picnic shelters
- Ball field
- San volleyball court
- Horseshoe pits
- 18-hole disc golf course
- Boardwalk Trail
- Hiking Trails
- Beach House
- Cross-County Ski Trails (skis can be rented on the weekends)
- Community Room (up to 100 people)
- Boat Ramp for Access to Eagle Lake (outside the park boundary)
- Eagle Lake Observatory—the MN Astronomical Society owns and operates the facility for the benefit of students, teachers, the public, and members of the society.

Expansion Plans and Surrounding Land Use Issues

Although not formally defined, some expansion of the park (100 acres) is proposed to accommodate new demands as the regional population grows. Of particular interest in expanding the park is acquiring the shoreline, wetland, and select adjoining upland areas on the northeast and southwest sides of Eagle Lake, as land becomes available from willing sellers.

BAYLOR REGIONAL PARK—Continued

Trail Connections

As illustrated on the Trail and Bikeways Plan, connecting Baylor Regional Park to Norwood Young America via a destination trail is proposed. This would allow nearby residents to have a direct trail connection from the local trail system to a major regional park. Group gatherings are popular at the park in the summer, especially holidays.

Master Plan Overview

The Baylor Regional Park master Plan has not been updated for many years. Prior to initiating major improvements, a new master plan will be developed to provide direction for identifying future development initiatives which will likely include upgraded to existing facilities and introducing new features based on specific demands at that time. As an example, the need for improvements to the campground will be assessed, especially considering changes to camping preferences that have shifted from tent sites to fully supported hook-up sites.

Future Development Initiatives

- Camper Cabins
- Parking Improvements/Additions
- Campground Service Improvements (Wi-Fi, additional RV sites with plug-ins)
- New water feature (splash pad)
- Re-purpose the beach area with improved non-motorized boat access and fishing access
- Visitor Center improvements that will include accessibility upgrades to meet current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards
- Improvements to the existing deck or the creation of a new outdoor gathering space for patrons and groups.

LAKE MINNEWASHTA REGIONAL PARK

Location

Lake Minnewashta Regional Park is located off TH-41 west of Chanhassen between TH-5 and TH-7 on the shore of Lake Minnewashta.

Overview

Lake Minnewashta Regional Park is a modest size destination Park situated on the shores of Lake Minnewashta that provides an extensive cross section of ecological systems in its 341 acres. Natural systems found across the site range from Big Woods remnant forest to prairie areas to wetland edges along the lake.

Existing Facilities

- Canoe storage
- Canoe and stand-up paddleboard rentals
- Soft-surface walking trails
- Paved, multi-use trail
- Groomed skiing and walking trails in winter
- Cross-country ski and snowshoe rental
- Fishing pier
- General picnicking areas
- San swimming beach with picnic facilities
- Upgraded boat launch facilities with parking and an invasive species monitoring station
- Beach bathhouse
- Concessions and rentals at the beach
- Reservable picnic shelters
- Volleyball courts
- Multi-use fields
- Large creative playground
- Off-leash dog area
- Grade-separated pedestrian access under Trunk Highway-41

Expansion Plans and Surrounding Land Use Issues

The adopted master plan does not include expansion of the park boundary. As an established park, the relationship with adjoining land uses is well-defined, primarily because much of the land adjacent to the park boundary is developed with single family housing. Broader concerns include making sure external land uses do not encroach into the park and limiting pedestrian access points to those defined under the master plan, or otherwise agreed upon by Carver County and the City of Chanhassen

LAKE MINNEWASHTA REGIONAL PARK—Continued

Master Plan Overview

A master plan adopted in 2001 continues to guide future development of the park (figure 7). The adopted master plan for Lake Minnewashta Regional Park includes a combination of upgrading existing facilities, consolidation of boat access locations, and adding new facilities, several of which have been completed in recent years. Key components of the master plan include:

- Preparing a comprehensive natural resources stewardship and water resources management plan.
- Expanding recreational opportunities based on trend research and public input; this includes developing a new group camp area with an adventure course at the closed lake access point, expanded group picnic facilities, updating or replacing the playground and expanding the trail system to include additional paved trail connections to proposed yet undeveloped facilities.

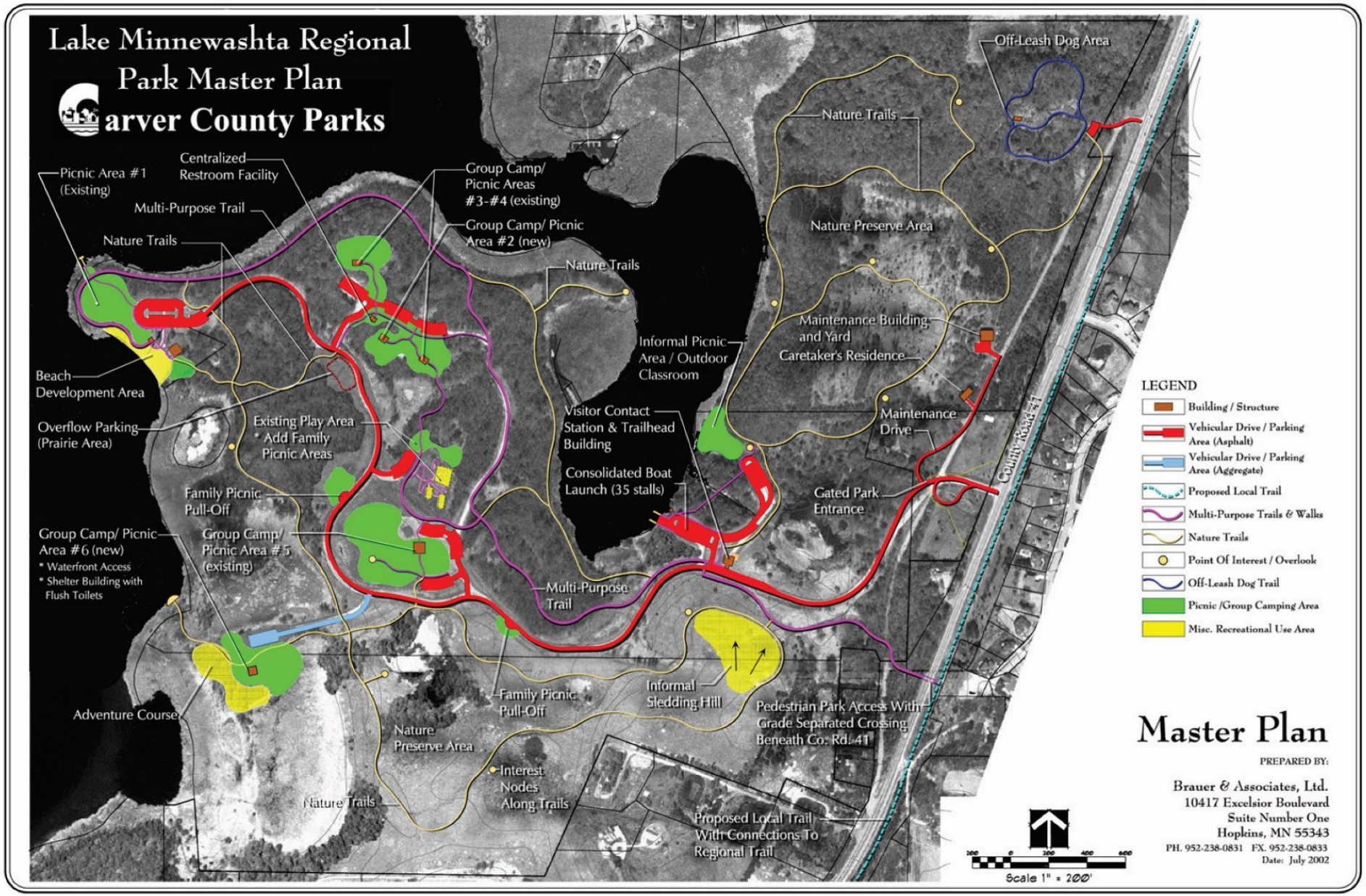
Future Development Features Under the Master Plan

- Additional Group Camp Areas
- Additional formal picnic areas
- Improved and new shelter buildings with restrooms
- Additional informal picnic areas
- Expanded sledding hill area
- An outdoor classroom
- Additional nature trails
- Interest nodes along the trails
- Installation of trail lighting

Additional Future Initiatives

- Playground upgrade
- Group activity area at the former boat access #2
- Visitor Center.

◊ **Figure 6.7: Lake Minnewashta Master Plan**



LAKE WACONIA REGIONAL PARK

Location

Lake Waconia Regional Park is located at the east end of the City of Waconia on the southern shore of Lake Waconia. Site access for vehicles is from TH-5, with trail connections provided from various directions.

Overview

Lake Waconia Regional Park provides expanded recreation opportunities in an area of the County that is experiencing significant growth, which is expected to continue, as noted in the 2040 growth forecasts. As such, the park will become an increasingly vital component of both local and regional park systems. The 133-acre park has recently been expanded to include the 33.77 acre Coney Island of the West. The beach area and accompanying picnic areas will continue to be the center of activity in the park, with proposed facilities greatly expanding recreation opportunities along the lakefront.

Existing Facilities

- Reservable group picnic shelter
- Play equipment
- Picnic Tables
- Grills
- Sledding hill
- Restrooms
- Swimming beach
- Volleyball court
- Boat access (provided outside the park at the MN DNR boat access located on the northeast side of the lake, along with private marinas located in Waconia.

Expansion Plans and Surrounding Land Use Issues

Expansion of the parks as proposed in the master plan has been completed. Given its location and topography, clearly defining the boundary of the park by adjoining roads and landforms is important to limiting the extent to which external land uses encroach into the park—actual and perceived. As illustrated on the Trail and Bikeways Plan, Lake Waconia Regional Park is a major destination, which underscores the importance of local and regional trail connections to the park.

Master Plan Overview

The development of a comprehensive master plan for Lake Waconia Regional Park (which was completed in 2016) was initiated in response to planning for the acquisition of Coney Island of the West (Figure 8). The vision for the park includes creating year-round adventure based recreation in a natural resource based park setting. The main parcel of the park focuses on use flexibility and accessibility to accommodate a wide range of user groups with varying recreational interests. The plan for Coney Island focuses on providing year-round recreation that is balanced with the natural setting and that highlights its historical past. Providing a variety of new recreational features in the park is also proposed, as listed below.

Master Plan Overview

Preparation of a master plan for the Waconia Event Center Building should be considered in the forthcoming years. Future development features under the master plan include:

- Water and utility service improvements
- Pedestrian and vehicle access improvements
- Natural resource management plan
- Waterfront development including expanding beach, lakefront walk, fishing piers
- Proposed park buildings in central plaza area

Additional Future Initiatives:

- Snowmaking for the sledding hill
- Nordic skiing
- Lighting of park trails and sledding hill to extend hours of use. Any future lighting should be coordinated with the City to allow for a more consistent, usable and looped system for park and trail users.

◊ **Figure 6.8: Lake Waconia Regional Park Master Plan**

CARVER PARK RESERVE *(Note: Carver Park Reserve is managed and operated by Three Rivers Park District)*

Location

Carver Park Reserve is located in the northeast portion of Carver County, in the City of Victoria and Laketown Township. Access to the park is from County Road 11 (Victoria Drive), which lies south of State Highway 7 and north of State Highway 5.

Overview

Carver Park Reserve is over 3,700 acres of rolling, wooded terrain and interconnected lakes and marshes that support a large wildlife population– including trumpeter swans and barred owls. The reserve is also home to Lowry Nature Center, which was the first public environmental education center of its kind in the state. The park also features miles of trails, the historic Grimm Farm, the King Waterbird Sanctuary, four lakes, an off-leash dog area, Lake Auburn Campground, and groomed cross-country ski trails in the winter. Carver Park Reserve is the only large park reserve unit within Carver County. Visitors are attracted to the reserve for the expansive open space and the Nature Center. The park reserve is popular for lake access and water-based recreational opportunities, picnicking, hiking, and bicycling trails set in a natural setting, and children's play area. Group camping is also a popular activity, as is the off-leash dog park. Effectively connecting the park reserve to Carver County's proposed destination trail system is a primary plan objective, consistent with site master plans prepared by Three Rivers Park District.

Existing Facilities

- Lowry Nature Center
- Group campsites
- Fishing piers and boat launches
- Turf hiking trails
- Dog trails (1-mile turf pet trail)
- Cross-country ski trails
- Sledding
- Access to Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail
- Public campground with swimming beach and small play area
- Historic Grimm Farm site—historical/interpretive feature
- Paved bike/hike trail
- Horse trails
- Dog off-leash area
- Snowmobile trail
- Snowshowing

Expansion Plans and Surrounding Land Use Issues

The currently adopted master plan identifies inholding parcels within the park reserve boundary have not been acquired to date. As an established park reserve, the relationship with adjoining land uses is well defined. Three Rivers Park District will determine any changes to the park reserve boundary or site master plan.

CARVER PARK RESERVE– Continued *(Note: Carver Park Reserve is managed and operated by Three Rivers Park District)*

Trail Interconnections

With respect to Carver County's plan, the proposed regional-level trail connection between Lake Waconia and Victoria via a route through the park reserve is the most important consideration. However, Three Rivers Park District has final authority on trails within the park reserve.

WESTERN CARVER COUNTY PARK

Location

Western Carver County Park is located north of Baylor Regional Park on the eastern bank of the Crow River. Vehicular site access is from County Road 32.

Overview

Western Carver County Park is an undeveloped 30-acre parcel along the Crow River that is suitable for developing a canoe and kayak access point on the Crow River, picnicking facilities, and nature trails. The park is situated on the South Fork of the Crow River, which is identified as a DNR State Water Trail. The park is well-placed to serve as a canoe and kayak launch between the existing access points in Watertown and Hutchinson. A master plan is needed to guide future development of this undeveloped park.

Future Development Initiatives:

- Canoe/kayak landing
- Parking
- Picnicking
- Nature trails

LAKE BAVARIA BOAT LAUNCH (COUNTY PARK)

Location

The Lake Bavaria Boat Launch is located on the southwest shore of Lake Bavaria with access from Shady Oak Drive. Lake Bavaria Park, a City of Chaska facility is across the street from the boat launch.

Overview

The boat launch, which is managed by Carver County, sites on 0.57 acres. The site includes a gravel parking lot, a small dock and a boat ramp with corduroy concrete planking into the lake. There are no other services at this site.

Proposed Regional Parks

MINNESOTA RIVER BLUFFS REGIONAL PARK SEARCH AREA

Search Area Location

The Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Park search area is located south of the City of Carver and extends along the bluff and ravine system of the Minnesota River in San Francisco Township. Natural landmarks in the area include Bevens Creek and the Minnesota River valley and bluffs. The search area is broad and no specific property has been identified for a regional park. Park development opportunities will be subject to identifying willing landowners as they surface over time, and to input from other government agencies or units including San Francisco Township. This search area provides unique opportunities for a regional park facility, including the potential to operate a regional facility adjacent to or within the Minnesota River Valley and in close proximity to land that is owned and managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. A regional park in this search area could include "developed" recreational facilities including but not limited to trails for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, and inline skating, interpretation, picnic areas, campgrounds, a sledding hill, fishing pier, and boat launch (if water access to a river or lake is available), off leash dog park, and equestrian trails. Adjacent DNR and USFWS land are managed for undeveloped or wildlife-dependent recreation such as boating, hiking, hunting and fishing. Complementary uses include various forms of limited development, including nature/wildlife observation and photography, education/interpretation, and nature trails for hiking.

Park Size Requirements

Regional parks are typically 200 to 500 acres in size, with 100 acres generally considered the minimum acceptable size to accommodate a basic set of facilities. If located directly adjacent to the other public lands along the river, the overall size of this park could be on the lower end of the typical size spectrum, since the other public land units would complement recreational offerings in the new park. This assumes that the master plans for adjacent jurisdictional land units would be complementary, thus allowing visitor access to different types of recreational experiences appropriate for each land designation. For example, direct access to nature trails within the Wildlife Refuge from the regional park would greatly expand that recreational opportunity beyond what might otherwise be available to visitors within the confines of the regional park.

Desirable Land Characteristics for Regional Park in this Search Area

Specific goals for selecting land for this regional park include preserving natural open space, fostering ecological diversity, enhancing wildlife habitat, retaining scenic qualities, and retaining rural landscape character. In this case, the desire to acquire lands that either complement or, where feasible, directly adjoin USFWS and DNR lands along the river corridor is also an important consideration for land selection.

MINNESOTA RIVER BLUFFS REGIONAL PARK SEARCH AREA—Continued

Trail Connections

Trail connections between the future regional park, adjoining public lands, and the larger county-wide trail system are important. This includes providing paved destination trails linking the park to the USFWS Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center and the local and regional trails within the City of Carver (and points beyond). In the longer-term, paced destination trails within the park would likely be part of the Minnesota River Bluffs Trail described in the trails section.

Partnership Opportunities/Private Land Ownership Issues and Concerns Associated with Site Selection

Setting aside land for this regional park will require a working partnership with landowners, the DNR and the USFWS. Carver County will pursue land opportunities with willing landowners. However, all proposed park facilities will require a detailed evaluation as to appropriateness and need. For example, the need for a visitor center is greatly reduced if a paved trail connection could be made between the regional park and the Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. Also, special consideration may be given to allowing hunting as a permitted use in select areas, depending on the circumstances associated with land acquisition and partnership opportunities with the MN DNR and USFWS.

MILLER LAKE REGIONAL PARK SEARCH AREA

Search Area Location

The Miller Lake Regional Park search area lies south of Waconia and Victoria and northeast of Cologne, near Miller Lake. Natural landmarks in the area include Miller Lake and Carver Creek. The search area limits are subject to opportunities with willing landowners as they surface over time. Siting a regional park near the growth area of the City of Cologne will ensure the benefits of providing geographically balanced park and recreation services, conveniently located within reasonable bicycling, hiking and jogging distance. In terms of general uses, the regional park will focus on “developed” recreational facilities as listed below. Exploring collaborative opportunities with the DNR and USFWS to set aside lands in this area for public open space will also be pursued. However, a collaborative outcome would require that “undeveloped” or “wildlife-dependent” recreation such as hunting, and fishing may have to be accommodated. There may also be certain use and access restrictions related to property managed by other agencies. Complementary uses may include various forms of “limited development”, including nature/wildlife observation and photography, education/interpretation, and nature trails for hiking. In spite of potential limitations, a collaborative approach may have some merit and is worth of due consideration. The City of Waconia is planning for a future segment of trail along Carver Creek. The County should be aware of this opportunity as Carver Creek drains to the Miller Lake area and additional County trail along the segment outside the City Limits might be a nice addition to the Carver County/City tail system. Snowmobile trails, operated and managed by other organizations may also be considered for a future regional park.

Park Size Requirement

Regional parks are typically 200 to 500 acres in size, with 100 acres generally considered the minimum acceptable to accommodate a basic set of facilities. Since this search area does not abut any other public lands, the overall size of this future park should be on the middle to higher end of the typical size

spectrum. The extent to which the park land interconnects with destination trails is also an important consideration in determining the minimum size needed to meet the space needs for common facilities. This is especially the case with paved trails, which could play a significant role in meeting the need for looped trails.

Desirable Land Characteristics for Regional Park in this Search Area

Miller Lake and the area directly adjacent to it are especially important natural amenities to include in the search area for this park. Specific goals for selecting land for this regional park include preserving the lake amenity, preserving natural open space, fostering ecological diversity, enhancing wildlife habitat, retaining scenic qualities, and retaining rural landscape character.

Trail Connections

Trail connections between the regional park and the larger county-wide trail system are important. This includes providing paved destination trails linking the park to nearby cities, including Waconia and Carver, as defined in the trails section.

Partnership Opportunities/Private Land Ownership Issues and Concerns Associated with Site Selection

Setting aside land for this regional park will require a working partnership with cities, landowners, the DNR, and the USFWS. The County will pursue land opportunities with willing landowners.

Potential Facilities and Amenities Overview

- Paved trails for hiking, biking, and inline skating
- Picnic areas with picnic shelters
- Group camp areas
- Sledding hill
- Visitor/interpretive center
- Boat launch (if water access to river is provided)
- Volleyball courts
- Creative playground
- Canoe/kayak launch
- Access drives and parking lots
- Disc golf course
- Nature trails for hiking, interpretation and, potentially, mountain biking
- Campgrounds serving a cross-section of campers
- Restrooms
- Outdoor classroom
- Boat launch facilities and parking
- Groomed cross-country ski trails and winter hiking trails
- Fishing pier (if water access to river or lakes is provided)
- Off-leash dog park
- Equestrian trails
- Archery range
- Outdoor performance area

Note that the above listing identifies typical facilities, with each requiring a detailed evaluation as to appropriateness and need.

NORTHWEST QUADRANT

Location

The Northwest Quadrant is described as the area north of Highway 7 and in proximity to New Germany, Mayer and Watertown. This area of the County is geographically underrepresented in services and other benefits derived from larger public open spaces or regional parks. The County's Parks and Open Space System Plan acknowledges services and benefits provided by the Luce Line State Trail and the Dakota Rail Regional Trail for this area of the County.

Desirable Land Characteristics for Regional Park in this Area

Carver County should review MLS listings for land within the northwest quadrant area that meets the qualifications of the Regional Parks Policy Plan. Specific goals for selecting land for this region include preserving natural open space, fostering ecological diversity, enhancing wildlife habitat, retaining scenic qualities, and retaining rural landscape character.

Special Recreation Features

The County may have opportunities to include Special Recreation Features as land acquisition opportunities become available throughout the County. Specific requirements for Special Recreation Features, such as parcel size, need for water source and slope may dictate what features area feasible. Examples of Special Recreation Features that may be appropriate for Carver County include the following:

- Regional shooting facility and range
- Large amphitheater and outdoor event facility
- Deep water fishing and clear water recreation facility
- Site of historic or archaeological significance
- Bridging facilities (Specialized or single-purpose facilities that are intended to attract and introduce new outdoor recreation users to the County and/or regional parks system)

State Lands, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Federal U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Lands

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) own, manage, and operate several land holding within Carver County as public open space. The following provides an overview of the type and extent of existing land holdings by the MN DNR and USFWS within the context of Carver County's Parks and Open Space Plan. Existing and future opportunities for collaborative opportunities are also discussed relative to each agency.

University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum

The University of Minnesota owns and operates the Landscape Arboretum in Chanhassen. The Arboretum provides educational and recreational opportunities to all-age spectrums and is open to members and the general public, for a fee.

DNR Wildlife Management Areas

Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) are part of Minnesota's outdoor recreation system established to protect lands and waters having a high potential for wildlife production, public hunting, trapping, fishing, and other compatible recreational uses. Funding for WMAs is provided by the Minnesota's Legislature. Hunting license fees and surcharges, bonding funds, re-investment in Minnesota funds including Critical Habitat License Plate dollars, and Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ETF) funds have been used to buy WMAs. Conservation groups also donate land and money to support the acquisition of WMA lands.

The location of existing WMAs in Carver County includes:

- Patterson Lake WMA—61 acres; consists of islands on Lake Patterson, which are surrounded by emergent vegetation and some areas of open water; islands protect and are managed for forest species and various species of aquatic orientated birds, such as egrets or herons. Patterson Lake is a state designated wildlife lake, an important migratory waterfowl habitat that can be managed to improve wildlife habitat.
- Assumption WMA—67 acres; managed mainly for wetland wildlife species; contains one large wetland basin and is predominately open water with some cattails, wet meadow and grassland; surrounding area is heavily farmed; purpose of this WMA is to preserve habitat for waterfowl and other wetland wildlife species.
- Schneewind WMA—249 acres; predominantly a wetland with surrounding uplands that have been planed to prairie; managed for grassland as well as wetland species.
- Carver Highlands WMA—302 acres; managed mainly for grassland wildlife; predominately upland grasses within 3 distinct parcels, two of which are along County Road 45 and the third is next to County Road 50, 0.3 miles east of County Road 45. Parcels are located adjacent to USFWS land along the Minnesota River. The objective for this WMA property is to preserve and enhance upland grass habitat.
- Raguet WMA—315 acres; unit is entirely within the floodplain of the Minnesota River. It contains floodplain forest, wetland and grassland.
- Tiger Lake – The DNR owns WMA lands west of Tiger Lake with plans to expand over time as opportunities (willing sellers) arise.

State Recreation Areas (SRAs)

State Recreation Areas are also part of Minnesota's outdoor recreation system. Within Carver County, a relatively small portion of the Lawrence and Belle Plaine units of the Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area are located on the west side of the Minnesota River. The Lawrence Unit occupies a portion of the present Minnesota River flood plain as well as part of a large Glacial River Warren terrace. To the southwest, the Belle Plaine Unit exists completely within the active flood plain if the Minnesota River. Given that the Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area is an extremely complex unit, the SRA is more like a landscape region than a park when considering management planning. Major recommendations for the SRAs include providing interpretive service, natural resource management, and trail development with a focus on development of a multi-use trail system. Within the Lawrence Unit, key areas of focus include resource management, especially to the south and east of Kelly Lake to protect an outstanding remnant of flood plain forest.

Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs)

Scientific and Natural Areas are used to preserve and perpetuate the ecological diversity of Minnesota's natural heritage, including landforms, fossil remains, plant and animal communities, rare and endangered species, or other biotic features and geological formations, for scientific study and public edification. SNAs are open to the public for nature observation and education but are not meant for intensive recreational activities. The 73-acre Seminary Fen SNA is located in Carver County. This site contains one of the rarest types of wetland in the United States—a calcareous fen, which has special protection under Minnesota State Law and may not be drained, filled or otherwise altered or degraded.

Minnesota DNR Collaborative Partnership Opportunities

There are several significant future collaborative partnership opportunities between Carver County and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources which includes the following:

Metro Greenways Program

The Minnesota DNR's Metro Greenways program was launched in 1998 in response to Metro Greenprint, a citizen report that called for stronger efforts to protect nature in the face of urban growth. The Metro Greenways program helps local units of government and citizens more effectively incorporate nature into their communities. By coordinating funding sources, providing technical assistance and grants, and identifying significant natural features, the program empowers communities to preserve the resources that are important to them in a way that earns local support. To date, the program has committed millions of dollars to protect some of the region's best remaining natural areas and open spaces by means of Metro Greenways Protection and Restoration Cost-Sharing Funds. This money has also been used to leverage millions of dollars from other funding sources. Carver County will continue to work with the MN DNR on taking advantage of program offerings as opportunities arise.

Expansion of WMAs, SRAs, and SNAs as Part of Larger Open Space Strategy

There are numerous potential opportunities to collaborate with the MN DNR to preserve open space for mutual benefit. Expansion of WMAs and SRAs (as previously described) are distinct possibilities in select areas within the County, as is the case with SNAs. This will require a working partnership with landowners and the MN DNR, and should only be pursues with willing landowners.

Other Collaborative Opportunities with the MN DNR

The Minnesota DNR has extensive array of financial assistance and grant programs that may be accessible to Carver County and/or local property owners, depending on circumstances. The Financial Assistance Directory on MN DNR's website provides up-to-date information on these programs, including the following categories:

- Remediation Fund Grant Program
- Landowner Incentive Program
- Native Prairie Tax Exemption Program
- Aquatic Invasive Species
- Wildlife Conservation
- Education, Planning and Research
- Fire Protection Programs
- Habitat Improvement
- Recreation (general, trails, and water)
- Metro Greenways Protection and Restoration
- Native Prairie Bank Program
- Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program
- Re-invest in Minnesota (RIM) Critical Habitat Match Program
- Community Conservation Assistance
- Enforcement (snowmobile and OHV safety)
- Forest Management
- Land Conservation
- State-supported grant-in-aid snowmobile trails

USFWS Existing Lands

Similar to the Minnesota DNR, the USFWS manages lands in Carver County, virtually all of which are located along the Minnesota River as part of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge is a corridor of land and water that stretches 34 miles along the Minnesota River from Fort Snelling State Park to the City of Jordan. It comprises 14,000 acres in eight units, five of which have trails. Two units are located at least partially in Carver County, each of which offers a variety of attractions and seasonal activities.

The Chaska Unit is nestled in the floodplain between the river towns of Chaska and Carver. This 600-acre unit consists of a marsh-edged lake surrounded by farmland and floodplain forest. Currently, this area contains a lot of "edge" habitat, areas where fields meet forests. USFWS is actively restoring the native floodplain forest to benefit migrant songbirds, including many types of warblers, as well as hawks, owls, wood ducks, herons and eagles.

The Rapids Lake Unit is located south of Carver and consists of 1,500 acres of prairie restoration in old upland farm fields, oak savanna, goat prairies clinging to steep bluffs, bottomland forests, and Minnesota's largest private wetland restoration (completed in 2001). Preserving the oak savanna systems is a high priority on this unit to enhance the habitat for turkeys, squirrels, deer, and many other species. Former agricultural land is also being restored to native prairie through prescribed burns and seeding. The Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center located in this unit has been completed and is located about 3 miles south of Carver. The Center focuses extensively on partnering with local schools on educational programming, with the facility serving as an extension of a science classroom.

Collaborative Opportunities with USFWS

As with the MN DNR, there are a number of significant future collaborative partnership opportunities between Carver County and USFWS within the context of Carver County's Parks and Open Space Plan, including the following:

Wildlife Refuge Lands

In addition to Wildlife Refuge Lands, USFWS also acquires select lands for restoration and preservation under its Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) program. WPAs are lands that are purchased and managed to provide high quality wetlands and nesting cover for waterfowl and many other species of wildlife. The average size of WPAs across the county is 90 acres, although five hundred acres or more is considered more optimal. WPA staff also manage wetland easements, which are perpetual contracts with willing private landowners that protect their wetlands from draining or filling with soil.

Expansion of Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge

The most significant opportunity for collaboration between Carver County and USFWS relates to the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Park Search Area. Coordinating efforts to expand the refuge along with a new regional park could create a seamless concentration of public lands along the river valley, there is an opportunity for each agency to achieve its individual goals of preserving natural open space while collectively service a broad cross-section of public recreational needs in an efficient and effective manner.

Other Collaborative Opportunities with USFWS

In addition to the Wildlife Refuges and Waterfowl Production Areas, the USFWS also works extensively with private landowners through voluntary partnerships that enhance private lands for waterfowl and other wildlife. Existing Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Private Land Programs of particular note include:

- Partners for Wildlife Wetland Restoration—used to improve water and soil quality, restore wildlife habitat, and flood control on private properties; provides 100% cost share to private landowners making improvements to their land following the eligibility requirements of the program; landowner retains ownership of the property.
- Partners for Wildlife Grassland Restoration—similar goals to the above mentioned program, only focused on grassland restoration; provides up to 100% cost share to private landowners making improvements to their land following the eligibility requirements of the program; landowner retain ownership of the property.
- USFWS Wetland Easement—similar goals as the previous programs, but includes payment to the landowner for purchase of perpetual easement that is recorded on the property deed; focus is on naturally occurring or restorable wetlands.
- USFWS Habitat Easement—similar goals as the previous programs, but include payment to the landowner for the purchase of perpetual easement that is recorded on the property deed; focus is on tracts of land exhibiting existing or restorable wetlands and grasslands.

Trail and Bikeway Plan

Overview

The trail system is underpinned by the common vision defined in Sections 1 and 2. The over-arching goals of the trail system are to:

- Develop an interlinking system of high value trails throughout the County that connect with local cities and townships
- Provide reasonable trail access to parks, open spaces, and natural resource amenities within the County without unduly compromising their integrity and natural qualities.
- Provide an appropriate level of universal accessibility to trails throughout the system

The Trail and Bikeway Plan is consistent with several trail planning and design guidelines, including the Minnesota DNR's Trail Planning Design, and Development Guidelines (2007), MnDOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual (2007), Public Right-of-Way Access Guidelines (PROWAG) and the Guide for Development of Bicycle Facilities, prepared by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (2012). All trail development should be consistent with these guidelines as applicable to the classification used in Carver County.

A key concept of trail design guidelines is maximizing the value of trails and bikeways to local and regional residents. The values ascribed to trails are important because they are at the core of why a person uses a particular trail on a repeat basis. Studies clearly indicate that trail users make a distinction between trails based on their perception of value, as Figure 9 illustrates.

As the graphic illustrates, safety and convienence are base-line determinants for whether a person will even use a trail irrespective of its quality. Once these two values are perceived as being acceptable, then the personal values will be given more consideration by a trail user. The following Considers each of these values in greater detail:

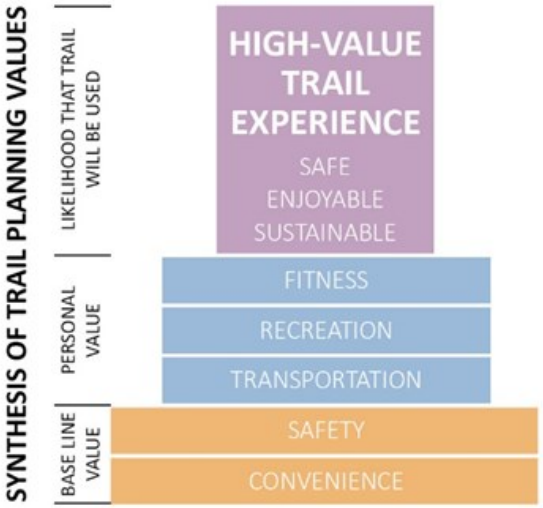
Safety—A sense of physical and personal safety is the most important trail value in that without it people are disinclined to use a trail irrespective of how many other values it might provide.

Convenience—Convenience is important to day-to-day use of a trail. Studies have shown that the vast majority of trails are used by those living within a few miles of the trail they use most frequently.

Recreation—Of all the values ascribed to a trail, its recreational value is the most important in terms of predicting its level of use, assuming that safety and convenience are not issues. In general, trails offering a high-quality recreational experience are those that:

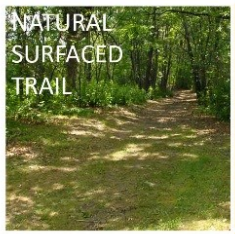
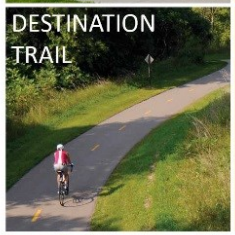
- Are scenic and located in a pleasant park-like setting, natural open space, or linear corridor away from traffic and the built environment
- Provide a continuous and varying experience that takes visitors to a variety of destinations and is a destination unto itself.
- Offers continuity with limited interruptions and impediments to travel

◊ **Figure 6.9: Personal Values Attributed to Trails**



◊ **Figure 6.10: Trail Classifications**

CARVER COUNTY TRAIL CLASSIFICATIONS

		QUICK COMPARISON GUIDE
 NATURAL SURFACED TRAIL	Commonly used where the natural environment is emphasized, and where a more natural experience is desired; developed for hiking, mountain biking, skiing, and equestrian uses	
SIDEWALKS	Emphasize safe travel for walking and jogging within residential areas, business districts, and to/ from local parks and around the community	6- 8 feet wide concrete surfacing, located in street right-of-way setting. Serves pedestrians more than bicyclists due to narrower width and surfacing
 DESTINATION TRAIL	The highest value paved trail for walking, joggong, bicycling, and located in a rural setting	10- 12 feet wide asphalt surfacing, located in conservation corridor or park-type setting, and serves pedestrians and bicyclists equally well
LINKING TRAIL	Paved trail most often located within road rights-of-way or utility easements; emphasis is on safe travel for walking, jogging, bicycling, and in-line skating to/ from destinations throughout the county	10 feet wide asphalt surfacing, located in road or street right-of-way setting, and serves pedestrians and bicyclists equally well
ON-ROAD BIKE ROUTE ON-ROAD BIKE LANE	On-road facilities that primarily serve fitness and commuter bicyclists, as well as recreationalists with a higher skill and comfort level around vehicles; bikeways augment, but do not take the place of trail and sidewalk system	6 feet minimum width preferred, and serves bicyclists- not pedestrians

This underscores that trail planning must be based on criteria that go beyond simply providing miles of trail—with considerable emphasis on the quality of the trail experience as much or more than quantity. Communities that have successfully integrated these types of trails often highlight them as key aspects of the local quality of life.

Fitness—Fitness is a growing value that is generally achieved if safety, convenience, recreational, and transportation values are met. Most critical to accommodating this value is developing an interlinking trail system that provides numerous route options with trail lengths necessary for the types of uses envisioned.

Transportation (Commuting) - The transportation (commuting aspect of trails is valuable to a growing subset of the user population. Transportation purposes including using the system to get to work, school, local stores, or around the neighborhood, along with other utilitarian trips that would otherwise be done using a motor vehicle. To that end, realizing the use of the system for transportation will only be successful if it is perceived as safe, convenient relative to a users skill level, and of a high quality. Without such a system, residents will simply use their vehicles.

Trail and Bikeway Classifications

The plan consists of various types of trails and bikeways, each of which serving a particular purpose in meeting local needs. The distinction between classifications is important due to the variability in their recreational and other values to the user, which greatly affects the value of the system to residents and the degree to which a trail or system of trails will actually be used. The classifications applied to Carver County's trail and bikeway system are consistent with Minnesota DNR and MnDOT trail design and development guidelines. Figure 7.10 provides an overview and basic comparison of the trail and bikeway classifications being applied to Carver County.

Inventory

With cooperation from local cities, Carver County has identified trails managed by local cities across the County as noted in Figure 7.11, the Trails and Trail Corridors Map. Understanding the local trail connections is important to understand the extent to which local trails and connections are provided, identify gaps in the system, and avoid duplication.

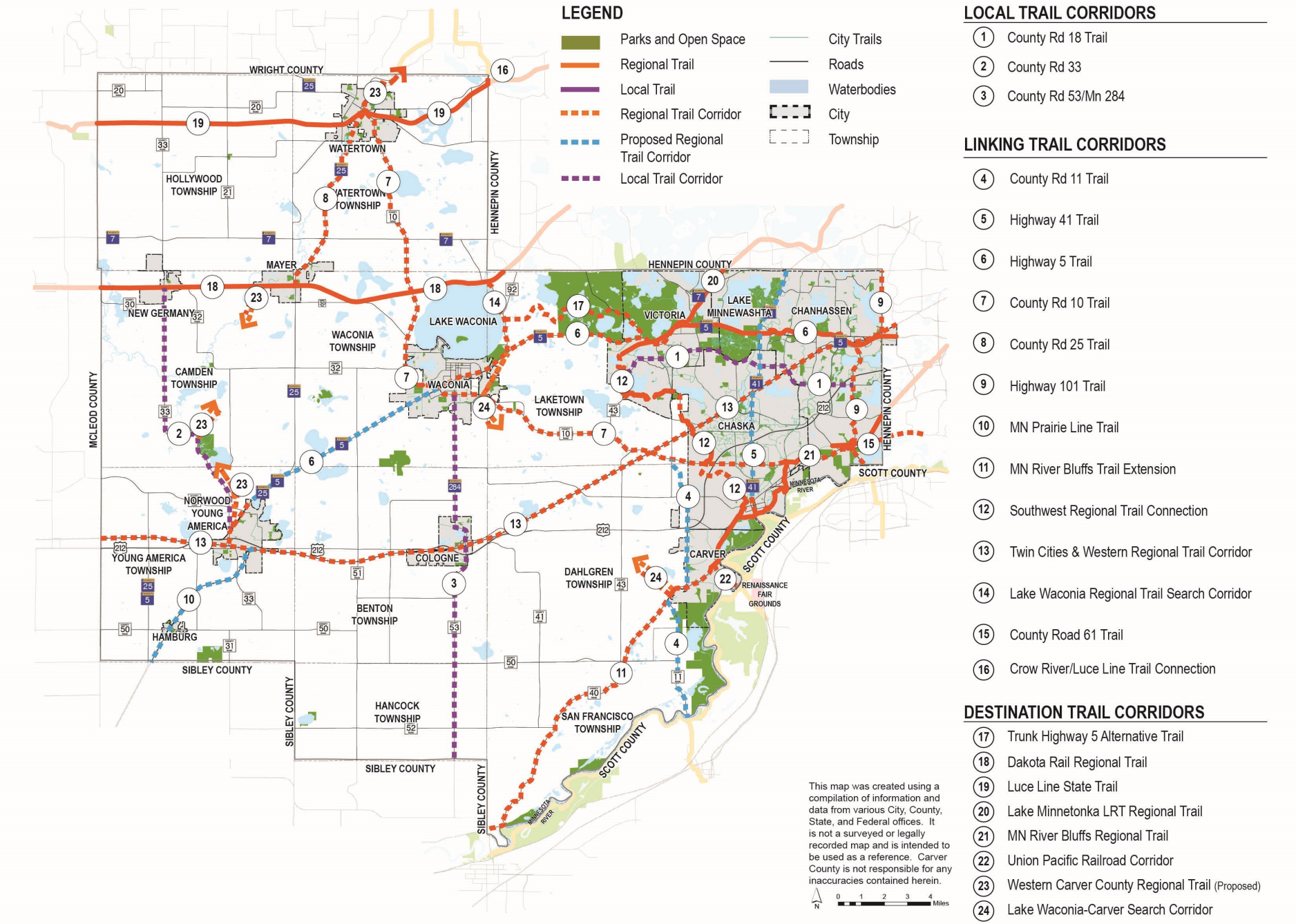
Map of Core Elements of County/Regional Level Trail and Bikeway System

The plan consists of the following core elements:

- **Destination Regional Trail Corridors** – Often located within a regional park, open space corridor, or rail to trail corridor. These trails have high aesthetic value for walking, jogging, bicycling, or inline skating; emphasize a natural, scenic setting, and create a sequence of events that appeal to the users' desire to recreate away from a built environment. To serve pedestrians and bicyclist equally well, trail width is generally ten feet or greater, bituminous surface is preferred but a suitable natural surface may also be used, and generally has fewer intersections with roadways and accommodate longer trips. Destination trails are designated as regional or state trails.
- **Linking Regional Trail Corridors** – A paved trail most often located within road right-of-way or utility easements; emphasis is on safe travel for walking, jogging, bicycling, and inline skating to/from destinations throughout the County. Linking trails often provide nearby trail connections to a local park and trail system and can connect to destination areas in and outside of city limits. Often developed in partnership between the County and municipality, they are generally ten-foot wide bituminous surface and serve pedestrians and bicyclists equally well. Linking trails may be designated as a regional trail through the Metropolitan Council's Park and Open Space System Plan, but may be non-regional as well.
- **Local Trails** – Trails developed within a municipality's local road right-of-way or parks and open space areas, or permitted by the County in county right-of-way. Regional and state trails that are constructed and managed by the County, a city, or a township are not included.

Figure 6.11 (on the following page) illustrates existing and planned trail and bikeway route classification on the County map.

◊ Figure 6.11: Trails & Trail Corridors Plan



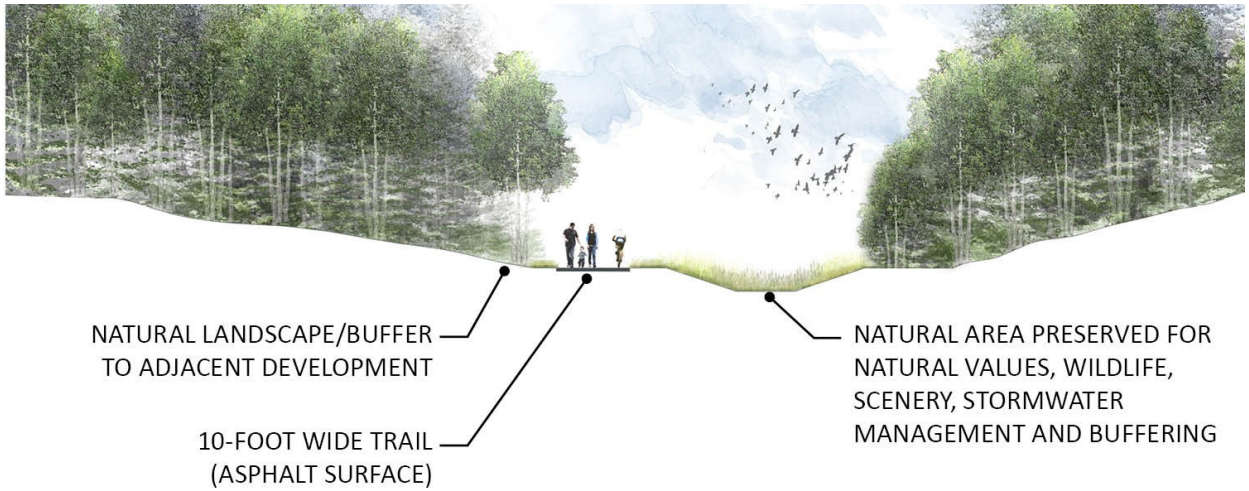
Regional Bicycle Transportation Network

The Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (RBTN) has been established to encourage planning and implementation of future bikeways by cities, counties, park agencies and the state to develop a seamless network of on-street bikeways and off-road trails to improve conditions for bicycle transportation across the region. Existing regional trails are included in the proposed RBTN system. A map of the RBTN system in Carver County is included in Appendix C, Parks and Trails Analysis.

Regional Destination Trail System

Destination trails are the highest value trails typically located in a rural setting for walking, jogging, bicycling. Destination trails are 10 to 12 feet wide, ideally with an asphalt surface, but can be of a suitable natural surface located in conservation corridor or park-type setting, and serve pedestrians and bicyclists equally well. Under this plan, developing destination trails focuses on areas subject to growth within the 2040 timeframe. These are the areas where demand for this type of trail will be highest and the opportunity to establish these corridors more time sensitive. Working collaboratively with local cities, landowners, and developers will be critical to successfully implementing the 2040 destination trail system. For added context, the following provides a general overview of each of the existing and proposed destination trail corridors as illustrated on the Trail and Bikeway Plan.

◊ **Figure 6.12: Destination Trail Example**



Existing Destination Trails

LUCE LINE STATE TRAIL

The Luce Line Trail is an aggregate surface State Trail located in a former rail bed that is managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The trail extends across Carver County and will take users west to Hutchinson or east to Plymouth. There is a separate equestrian trail adjacent to the aggregate surface trail.

DAKOTA RAIL REGIONAL TRAIL

The Dakota Regional Trail is in a former rail bed that extends across from the Carver County/Hennepin County line near St. Bonifacius to the Carver County/ McLeod County line west of New Germany. The trail continues east through Hennepin County to the City of Wayzata and to the west into the City of Lester Prairie on an aggregate surface. In 2018, McLeod County will pave the trail into Lester Prairie and there are plans to extend the paved trail west to the City of Hutchinson over the next several years. In Carver County, the trail is ten feet wide and asphalt paved its entire length. There are two trailheads with parking and user amenities, located in Mayer and New Germany.

LAKE MINNETONKA LRT REGIONAL TRAIL

Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail has pavement through the downtown area of the City of Victoria. The remainder of the trail is primarily in an aggregate trail surface to the east County line. There are direct connections from the trail into Carver Park Reserve. Beyond Carver County, the trail continues west to the City of Hopkins.

MINNESOTA RIVER BLUFFS LRT REGIONAL TRAIL

The Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail consists of both asphalt and aggregate surface segments. In 2016 a section of the trail was paved between Chaska and the City of Carver and a new pedestrian trail bridge was constructed over Spring Creek in Carver. In 2017 the section of the trail between Bluff Creek Drive and Chaska was paved, connecting to a previously paved segment that extends to Engler Boulevard. Beyond Carver County, the trail continues east to the City of Hopkins. However, a segment of trail east of Bluff Creek Drive remains closed because of damage caused by a landslide.

Planned 2040 Destination Trails

MINNESOTA RIVER BLUFFS LRT REGIONAL TRAIL EXTENSION

As illustrated on the Trail and Bikeway Plan, this destination trail is essentially an extension of the Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail. A trail master plan was completed and adopted by Carver County and the Metropolitan Council in 2011 and amended in 2013. In the future, the corridor will extend southwest to the new visitor center at the National Wildlife Refuge. Continuation of the trail to the undetermined location of the future Minnesota River Bluff regional park and on to Belle Plaine is also envisioned, although most likely in a post-2040 timeframe. This portion of the trail is classified as a linking regional trail in Figure 11, because the trail is envisioned to be within the County Road 40 right-of-way. Due to current road conditions, collaboration with San Francisco Township and landowners will be key in establishing a corridor for all stages of planning, including the master planning process, as will seeking regional status in the Met Council Regional Parks Policy Plan.

A key concern with this trail corridor is coordinating its alignment with Chaska, Carver, USFWS, and MN DNR. The trail will be located within an approved corridor or adjacent to the refuge or WMA lands. Note that current USFWS and MN DNR land use and management policies do not allow paved trails to be developed on refuge and WMA lands. It is also not common practice for these agencies to provide an easement for a paved trail since that can inhibit land management and hunter access.

Another important aspect of this trail is making a connection to regional trails in Scott County, most likely via an existing road corridors or new Minnesota River crossing. Another option for making the connection is to establish a trail crossing in the existing rail corridor in the City of Carver. Should it not be practical to cross the Minnesota River at that location, the trail is envisioned to be within the County Road 40/County Road 11 right of way to Jordan.

LAKE WACONIA—CARVER REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDOR

From south to north, this destination trail corridor will ultimately connect the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail in Carver, to the ultimate location of the Miller Lake Regional Park, and to the Lake Waconia Regional Park in Waconia. In the 2040 timeframe, the focus will be on establishing the south and north ends of this trail corridor in the growth areas of Carver and Waconia. Once beyond the 2040 growth boundaries of these cities, the possible alignment options for the trail become less certain given land acquisition concerns and issues previously expressed by some of the landowners in this area. Multiple planning considerations will need to be considered, including development patterns, desire to follow natural corridors, timing and location of a regional park in the Miller Lake search area, land acquisition concerns and issues previously expressed by some of the landowners in this area. Collaboration between the County, the cities of Carver and Waconia, the townships of Dahlgren and Laketown, and any affected landowners will be key in establishing a corridor.

Destination Trails– Continued

WESTERN CARVER COUNTY REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDOR

From south to north, this regional trail corridor will ultimately make a connection between the City of Norwood Young America, Baylor Regional park, the Dakota Rail Regional Trail in the City of Mayer and north to the Luce Line State Trail in Watertown. In the 2040 timeframe, the focus will be on establishing the trail corridor in the growth areas of the three cities.

Once beyond the 2040 growth boundaries of these cities, the possible alignment options for the trail become less certain given land acquisition concerns and issues previously expressed by some of the landowners in this area. Multiple planning considerations will need to be considered, including following the Highway 25 right-of-way in select locations. Note: Watertown Township acknowledges that the Metropolitan Council's Regional Park Policy Plan identifies the Crow River Regional Trail (referred to as the Western Carver County Regional Trail in the 2040 County Plan) with a potential future alignment through the township as a linking trail. The establishment of any future trail alignment will result from a master plan process done in cooperation with Watertown Township, Carver County, and others. Within Watertown Township, the Western Carver County Regional Trail will run along State Highway 25 within the right-of-way of the State Highway. At the time the trail is to be built, the Watertown Township Board will determine the final location of the trail through public process with Watertown Township residents. Within the Watertown City Limits, the City is planning the trail alignment from north to south along the Crow River. The City of Norwood Young America should capture ROW through future land use planning within the city limits to connect to the Western Carver County Regional Trail. The development of a trail to Baylor Park would provide for the future opportunity to extend a trail to New Germany and connect into the Dakota Rail Trail. Caver County supports the state plan to widen the shoulder of both Highway 25 and Highway 284 to create on-street bicycle facilities.

Linking Trail System

Linking trails are paved trails most often located within road right-of-way or utility easements. Emphasis is on safe travel for walking, jogging, bicycling, and in-line skating to/from destinations throughout the county. Linking trials are 10 feet wide; asphalt surfaced, located in road or street right-of-way setting, and serves pedestrian and bicyclists equally well. As the Trail and Bikeway Plan illustrates, a number of east-west and north-south county roads are identified as Bikeway/ Linking Trail Corridors. Linking trails along these routes complement the destination trail system and are also used to make key connections to destinations within growth areas. Linking trails also serve an important alternative transportation function in growth areas.

Bikeways (which in most cases will take the form of a 6-foot or wider shoulder) along identified routes are used to meet the needs of subgroup of bicyclists preferring to ride on streets and roadways for recreation, fitness, and transportation.

As with destination trails, development of the linking trail system will focus initially on growth areas. Since these trails typically fall within road rights-of-way, their development will likely occur as roads are upgraded or new roads are built to accommodate growth.

Development of the linking trails along county roads will also be coordinated with development of local level trails to ensure continuity and avoid duplication. At the county-level, developing linking trails along identified routes will take into consideration the location of nearby destination trail corridors to both avoid duplication and to take advantage of the best alignment for the user experience. Most often, the destination trail alignment will be the preferred option along any given corridor since this type of trail offers higher recreational value.

On occasion, linking trails will be used to fill in gaps in a destination trail corridor. A common example is of this is where a road corridor is the only option available to link two segments of a destination trail corridor together due to land acquisition issues, wetlands, or some other physical impediment.

Linking Trails

SOUTHWEST LRT CONNECTION REGIONAL TRAIL (Connects Lake Minnetonka LRT and Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trails)

This linking trail corridor connects the Lake Minnetonka LRT and Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trails as shown on the plan map. The latter of these currently ends in the City of Chaska, with the northern trail ending in the City of Victoria.

A master plan for this trail connection was completed in 2006 and consists of a combination of existing local trails and newly proposed regional trail alignments, with an overall length of 13 miles. The Master Plan was approved by the Metropolitan Council, which makes the trail eligible for regional funding. Although not identified as part of the master plan for this connection, a river crossing near the downtown area of Chaska over to the Minnesota River Valley State Trail, which connects to Shakopee, is provided via the CSAH 41 bridge structure.

Linking Trails– Continued

LAKE WACONIA REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDOR

From south to north, this destination trail corridor makes a connection between Lake Waconia Regional Park on the south side of the lake, and the Dakota Rail Regional Trail, which is located on the north side of the lake. As illustrated on the Trail and Bikeway Plan map, the alignment of this trail is optimally located along the shoreline along the east side of the lake until CSAH 30/92, where it would then extend along the roadway, heading north, until CSAH 155. The trail would connect to the existing boat launch near the junction of CSAH 30/92 and CSAH 155 and then extend along CSHA 155 to the Dakota Rail Regional Trail. Once to CSAH 30/92, establishing the trail along the west side of the roadway would provide the most appealing experience to the trail user, albeit in close proximity to the road. The challenges with developing the trail following this alignment include limited space, steep grades, and established vegetation along the lakeshore, each of which posing significant constraints to trail development.

Future options should be explored to replace the road along the eastern edge of Lake Waconia from Lake Waconia Regional Park to the Dakota Rail Regional Trail. Presumably, the existing roadway would be relocated further to the east as part of future roadway and development planning. (Importantly, the existing private properties would require assured access under any roadway realignment scenario. The advantage, presumably, to these landowners would be that their properties would front a greenway versus a county road, with direct access to an extensive trail system and open space.)

HIGHWAY 101 REGIONAL TRAIL

The Metropolitan Council Regional Parks Policy Plan identifies a proposed Highway 101 Regional Trail, which will connect the Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail to the Lake Minnetonka Regional Trail. The extension of this future regional trail will make an important north-south connection where no trail currently exists.

HIGHWAY 5 REGIONAL TRAIL

In 2017, Carver County completed a master plan for the Highway 5 Regional Trail to identify a regional trail corridor that extends along Highway 5 from the Carver County/Hennepin County line west through the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum and connecting to the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail and Carver Park Reserve to the west. This trail, which is listed in the Regional Parks Policy Plan, will also connect to the proposed Highway 101 Regional Trail. An alternate alignment which would route this regional trail corridor through the Carver Park Reserve and via the Lake Waconia Regional Trail is presented on the trail map. The County would seek re-alignment of this corridor in the Regional Parks Policy Plan. The alignment for this trail is identified in the TH 5 Regional Trail Master Plan and should be referenced in the comprehensive plan as well.

TRUNK HIGHWAY 5 ALTERNATE

From east to west, this trail corridor makes a connection between the proposed Lake Waconia Trail on the east side of Lake Waconia and Carver Park Reserve. As with other trails, Carver County will have to work collaboratively with the City of Waconia, Laketown Township , the City of Victoria, and Three Rivers Park District, along with landowners and developers to establish trail alignments in planning and development phases.

Once the corridor is determined to the boundary of Carver Park Reserve, Three Rivers Park District will determine the final alignment of the trail within the context of the larger master plan for the reserve. Both Carver County and Three Rivers Park District will have to collaborate with the City of Victoria to make the trail connection between Carver Park Reserve and the existing Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail that now ends in Victoria.

Linking Trails– Continued

TWIN CITIES & WESTERN REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDOR

Existing rail corridors provide opportunities for long term trail corridors as evidenced by the Luce Line State Trail and the Dakota Rail Regional Trail corridors. Of particular note is the Twin Cities & Western Railroad (TCW) through Carver County, which would extend from the Highway 5 Regional Trail, diagonally southwest to the City of Cologne and then west to the McLeod County line through the community of Norwood Young America. Although the TCW line is not anticipated to be abandoned within the 2040 timeframe, this corridor offers a high value opportunity for a trail if it is ever abandoned. Developing a trail along this corridor if it is ever converted to a rail transit corridor should also be considered at such time as part of a multi-modal approach to transportation. Alternatively, as development along the rail line occurs, preserving land for trail development adjacent to the rail corridor may provide another way to develop this trail.

MINNESOTA PRAIRIE LINE REGIONAL TRAIL

Existing rail lines provide opportunities for long term trail corridors as evidenced by the Luce Line State Trail and the Dakota Rail Regional Trail corridors. Of particular note is the Minnesota Prairie Line heading south out of Norwood Young America and through Hamburg. Although the Minnesota Prairie Line is not anticipated to be abandoned within the 2040 timeframe, this corridor offers a high value opportunity for a trail if it is ever abandoned. Developing a trail along this corridor if it is ever converted to a rail transit corridor should also be considered at such time as part of a multi-modal approach to transportation. Alternatively, as development along the rail line occurs, preserving land for trail development adjacent to the rail corridor may provide another way to develop this trail. This potential trail corridor is not currently listed as part of the regional trail system. This potential trail corridor is not currently listed as part of the regional trail system.

COUNTY ROAD 10 REGIONAL TRAIL

The County Road 10 Regional Trail is intended to follow the road right-of-way between Watertown and Chaska. Small segments of the trail have been developed in coordination with roadway redevelopment. The establishment of any future trail alignment will result from a master plan process done in cooperation with affected Cities, Township, Carver County, and others. At the time the trail is to be built, the appropriate Cities and Townships will determine the final location of the trail through public process with residents.

WESTERN CARVER COUNTY REGIONAL TRAIL SEARCH CORRIDOR

The Western Carver County Regional Trail Search Corridor is intended to follow the road right-of-way between Watertown and Mayer. The establishment of any future trail alignment will result from a master plan process done in cooperation with adjacent cities, townships, Carver County, and others. At the time the trail is developed, the appropriate cities and townships will determine the final location of the trail through a public process with residents.

Linking Trails– Continued

ARBORETUM– LAKE MINNEWASHTA REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTION

As the Trail and Bikeway Plan illustrates, a trail connection is proposed between Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail in Victoria and Lake Minnewashta Regional Park in Chanhassen via a trail corridor through, or on the periphery of, the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. The intent with this alignment is to create a high value destination trail experience via a greenway-type corridor through various parks, and the arboretum site, versus directly following the TH 5 corridor, which is a far less appealing experience for the trail user. Local Connections under discussion about local trail connections in Chanhassen, defining an acceptable alignment through the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum property is the most challenging aspect of this corridor that will take a collaborative effort to address. Nonetheless, given the much higher value user experience, due diligence by Carver County, the City of Chanhassen and the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum is justified and recommended in finding an agreeable alternative route to the TH 5 corridor. Within Chanhassen, the challenge will be maintaining a greenway context through existing and future developments prior to entering the regional park. The alignment for this trail is identified in the TH 5 Regional Trail Master Plan and should be referenced in the comprehensive plan as well.

COUNTY ROAD 11 REGIONAL TRAIL CORRIDOR

The County Road 11 Regional Trail Corridor is intended to follow the road right-of-way between County Road 10 and the Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Extension Trail southwest of Carver. A short segment of the trail is already developed between County Road 44/Big Woods Boulevard and County Road 10. The establishment of any future trail alignment will result from a master plan process done in cooperation with affected Cities, Township, Carver County, and others. At the time the trail is to be built, the appropriate Cities and Townships will determine the final location of the trail through public process with residents. This potential trail corridor is not currently listed as part of the regional trail system.

TRUNK HIGHWAY 41 TRAIL CORRIDOR

The Trunk Highway 41 Trail Corridor includes segments of existing local trails and a portion of undeveloped trail between the Hennepin County line on the north and downtown Chaska. This corridor aligns with the Metropolitan Council Regional Trail Search Corridors and provides a key north/south link in eastern Carver County connecting with key regional features such as Lake Minnewashta Regional Park and the Highway 5 Regional Trail. Developing a trail plan for the undeveloped trail gap will result from a master plan process done in cooperation with other managing agencies.

COUNTY ROAD 61 TRAIL CORRIDOR

The County Road 61 Trail Corridor is intended to follow the County Road 61 right-of-way between Bluff Creek Drive on the west and the City of Eden Prairie in Hennepin County. This corridor will connect the Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail, Seminary Fen Scientific and Natural Area, and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The establishment of any future trail alignment will result from a master plan process done in cooperation with affected Cities, Township, Carver County, and others. At the time the trail is to be built, the appropriate Cities and Townships will determine the final location of the trail through public process with residents.

Linking Trails– Continued

Crow River Regional Trail Alignment

In 2017, Three Rivers Park District, in collaboration with Carver County and Wright Counties, adopted the Crow River Regional Trail Master Plan. The master plan identifies the Carver County 0.37 mile segment from the Luce Line State Trail (where it crosses County Road 26) to County Road 20, and east to County Road 17 (Wright County).

Local Trail System

Local trails are developed within a municipality's local road right-of-way or parks and open space areas, or permitted by Carver County in County Road right-of-way. Regional and state trails that are constructed and managed by the County, a City, or a Township are not included

Local Trails

All identified County local trails are intended to follow the road right of way.

- County Road 33
- County Road 53/ MN 284
- County Road 18

Although the Trail and Bikeway Plan highlights a number of routes for linking trails, the County is encouraged to secure enough space when acquiring future County Road right-of-way for the eventual development of linking trails separated from the roadway. This would ensure that the linking trail system could be expanded as demand warrants as growth occurs across the County.

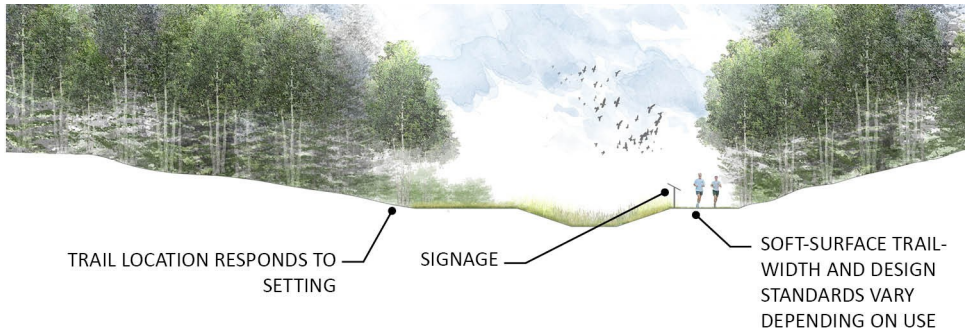
With the bikeway system, classified as local trails in Figure 11, the primary goal with routes shown on the plan is to create a series of loops across the County that link small towns with the larger growing cities. Providing a wide should and bike route signage along these roads will allow a bicyclist to safety use County Roads when out for longer recreation and fitness rides, or using their bike for transportation.

Other Trail Considerations

Hiking Trails

Natural-surfaced trails for hiking will be provided in all of the regional parks at some level, with the larger parks having more extensive looped systems to complement the paced destination trails. Natural surfaced trails may also be provided along select corridors, depending on individual site opportunities.

◊ **Figure 6.13: Independent Trail Alignment**



Mountain Biking Trails

Natural-surface, single-track trails for mountain biking may also be provided in select regional parks as warranted by documented demand. Identifying the most appropriate location for these trails will be determined as part of the master planning process for individual regional parks.

Equestrian Trails

Currently, trails for horseback riding are provided in Carver Park Reserve, which is managed by Three Rivers Park District, and along the Luce Line State Trail. At this time, there are no designated or anticipated locations for equestrian trails within any of the existing or planned regional parks within Carver County, primarily because these land units are not large enough to develop long enough trail loops. The trail plan does, however, leave open the option to consider developing an equestrian trail within a select and limited number of corridors. It is desirable but not a requirement that future equestrian trails connect with Carver Park Reserve and/or state and federal lands where equestrian trails are provided. Final determination on developing equestrian trails in these corridors would be based on several key factors, including (at a minimum): 1) clearly documented demand; 2) adequate corridor width/condition to limit impact of trail development on natural systems; and 3) approval by administering agencies of lands that the equestrian trails would connect to (i.e., USFWS, MN DNR, and Three Rivers Park District, as appropriate).

Water Trails

Water trails offer unique canoeing and kayaking opportunities to explore Carver County. The Minnesota DNR manages two water trails that extend through Carver County or along its border on the South Fork of the Crow River and on the Minnesota River. These routes are established and provide periodic access and camping locations. Carver County could enhance these water trails by developing additional river access locations along the water trail routes that would enhance the existing system. Locating new access points or camping sites would require additional consideration under separate master planning processes as does defining and addressing adjoining landowner access, trespassing, and encroachment concerns. Detailed route mapping, clearly defined access points, and routine monitoring and periodic clearing of downfalls and debris along water trails, which are conducted by the DNR, are some of the most important development considerations. Otherwise, development can be as simple as creating a small parking lot, some walk-in put-in points, or providing a small dock for launching a canoe at strategic locations. Access points should be reasonably spaced to accommodate day outings or, possibly, overnight trips.

Local System Connections

Adopting Common Classification System for Parks, Open Spaces, and Trails

To ensure consistency between local and county systems, adopting a common classification system for parks, open spaces, and trails is recommended. With respect to trails, Carver County's classifications are consistent with Minnesota DNR and MNDOT planning and design guidelines. The objective with adopting these guidelines is to ensure state-wide consistency of trail classifications and associated development standards.

In terms of hierarchy between classifications, the general recommendation is to maximize the use of destination trails at the county and local level given their high value to users. Linking trails should be used to fill in missing links and connect important destinations. Sidewalks should be used to link neighborhoods and business districts together and to the trail system. On-road bikeways are used to complete the system. Figure 14 illustrates this recommended hierarchal relationship between trails, sidewalks, and bikeways.

◊ **Figure 6.14: Trail and Sidewalk Hierarchy**

Adopting Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS)

As defined by The National Center for Safe Routes to School, Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs encourage and enable more children to safely walk and bike to school. According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), about half of all students walked or bicycled to school in 1969 compared to fewer than 15 percent today. As research and anecdotal evidence shows, the decline in walking and bicycling has had an adverse effect on traffic congestion, air quality around schools, pedestrian and bicycle safety, greater potential for childhood health problems.

Safety issues remain a big concern for parents, who consistently cite traffic danger as a reason why their children are unable to bicycle or walk to school. The purpose of the Federal Safe Routes to School Program is to provide funding for programs and projects that encourage children and their parents to walk and bicycle safely to school. By adopting a SRTS program, local communities can position themselves to submit grant applications for federal funding to develop safe routes to schools.

Planning, Maintenance, and Operations Initiatives

Carver County is charged with the operation of the County's parks, open space, and trail system. The Carver County Board of Commissioners establishes policies and goals for the system and, through an annual budgeting process, provides capital and operating funds for implementing the plan. A Parks Commission, appointed by the County Board of Commissioners, serves as an advisory committee advocate for enhancing park facilities, expanding programs and services, and developing new trails.

The specific responsibilities of the Parks Commission, which are outlined in County Ordinance Title III Section 30, are as follows:

- A survey of existing, proposed, and potential parks to serve as a guide to the preservation of unique areas, the protection of water and land areas and to locate leisure time areas for outdoor recreation;
- The preparation and periodic updating of a County's Comprehensive Park Plan;
- Recommendations to the Board of Commissioners for park land acquisition and methods of financing and maintenance;
- Preparation and revision of master plans for County and Regional Parks;
- Additional items as the Board of Commissioners may, from time to time, assign to the Commission for its study and report;
- Review and recommendations on the annual park budget and capital improvements program before presentation to the Bounty Board;
- Review and make recommendations on general park operating policies;
- Initiate park policy recommendations to be presented to the County Board; and
- Review and comment on Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Plans.

County Ordinances Related to Parks and Trails

Public use and enjoyment of the County Park System is controlled by Ordinance Title III Section 30, Parks Ordinance. The Ordinance was last codified November 2007 and applies only within County Parks and trail areas. The Ordinance incorporates pertinent Minnesota Statues, and address the following:

- Regulation of Public Use
- Regulation of General Conduct
- Regulations Pertaining to General Parkland Operation
- Protection of Property, Structures, and Natural Resources
- Regulation of Recreation Activity
- Regulation of Motorized Vehicles, Traffic and Parking

Park, trail and open space properties and facilities function best with timely maintenance and operations actions that are both responsive when emergencies arise, but also planned to keep ahead of issues that stem from daily war-and-tear. The following section identifies planning, maintenance programs and service enhancements for the Carver County park and trail system.

Planning Initiatives

Carver County has recently completed master plans for several parks and trails, including for Waconia Regional Park and Trunk Highway 5 Regional Trail. Master planning is an important component of the park and trail development process because it provides a roadmap for future improvements and expansion but they are also necessary to be eligible for certain funding sources. Once a plan is several years old, it becomes outdated and may be irrelevant. Updating or developing new master plans is also an important part of the process. For example, Baylor Park needs a new master plan. The last plan for Baylor Park was developed in the 1970s and does not fully reflect current interests or uses in the regional park.

Other elements in the Carver County park system need master planning to provide direction for improvements, including:

- Waconia Event Center Building
- Baylor Park Visitor Center
- Lake Minnewashta Group Camp Area

In addition to master plans for parks, trails and specific facilities, planning efforts for natural resource management and recreation services are very beneficial to maintaining and improving the resources across the system. Carver County will initiate a Recreation Services Program Master Plan to streamline and coordinate the activities provided by the County Park and Trail System. In addition, a Natural Resource Management Plan for all parks and open space will provide the County with a beneficial planning tool to mange the land resources in the park system.

Asset Management Programs

The need to plan for park, trail and recreation maintenance is becoming a more pressing concern for recreation managers. The high cost of developing park amenities and trails can be alarming, and maintaining the assets long-term can be costly. Carver County can utilize asset management software to track current and future maintenance activities. Carver County Parks can utilize the same system that will be used by other County departments, ensuring consistent use with the same application across all County-managed resources.

P.O.S.T. Implementation Plan

The strategy for implementing the plan establishing priorities is underpinned by two objectives:

1. Developing a balanced system offering multiple values to residents
2. Taking advantage of opportunities as they arise

At times, these objectives will be in conflict in that opportunities to develop various aspects of the system will present themselves in an unbalanced , "out-of-order" manner. As such, the implementation of the plan inherently requires a degree of flexibility to respond to opportunities as they arise. The Parks Commission and County will have to consider these issues as they occur and determine the best course of action, which may include a rethinking or departure from the stated priorities.

Regional Parks

Land for regional parks remains the top priority because it is intrinsically linked to marketplace economics and risk of opportunity lost. Setting aside these lands must occur in a timely fashion if it is to occur at all. Following through on the plan will require close collaboration between Carver County, local governments, willing landowners, and other public agencies such as MN DNR and USFWS. Acquisition priorities are as follows:

1. Acquisition of land for expansion of Baylor Regional Park. The opportunity to acquire additional land adjacent the park boundary is inherently time sensitive and should be addressed accordingly.
2. Refinement and ultimate acquisition of land for regional parks in the regional park search areas—given the time involved in this process, establishing a protocol for working with local townships, cities, and landowners to refine the search areas and develop an acquisition strategy for each parcel is a top priority. The County will ensure that land acquisition in these areas be based on opportunities arising from available land and willing landowner participation.

Fostering Local System Connections

Determining system connections with local cities coinciding with land use changes and development in growth areas is critical to the success of the destination trail system. Important steps in this process to ensure alignment on common outcomes include:

1. Formalizing local adoption of key provisions of the plan and recommendations for local system connections to ensure alignment on key planning issues and desired outcomes
2. Establish a protocol for joint implementation to achieve desired public values defined under the plan for mutual benefit
3. Coordinate funding requests for acquisition and development of regional parks and regional/local trails for mutual benefit
4. Coordinate approached to working collaboratively with landowners and developers to achieve desired public values coinciding with land uses changing or development occurring.

Development of Existing Regional Parks

With respect to development of existing regional parks, the pace of improvements will be timed with funding availability. Priorities between and within each park will be updated on a periodic basis in line with facility demands. These priorities will be reflected in the County's Five-Year CIP Program and within requests for regional park funding through the Metropolitan Council. Development priorities will possibly be influenced by a variety of circumstances, including: partnership opportunities with local units of government or other agencies to gain efficiencies, control costs, leverage funding; taking advantage of a private/public partnership; contributions (direct funding or in-kind services) from user groups, and foundations that might be focusing on a particular element of the system.

Initiative timing (short-term, mid-term and long-term) is not a precise time commitment but a general guideline or indication of potential readiness for a planning or development activity. The comprehensive plan will need to be flexible to address opportunities or unforeseen circumstances. In general, initiative time periods of short-term, which is less than five years; mid-term, which is more than five years and less than ten years; and, long term, which is more than ten years in the future are provided with the planning or development activity for each park and trail area.

Planning Initiatives define a need to complete a master plan, site plan and or feasibility study before proceeding to development of a facility.

For a project to progress to development, the project is identified in a master plan or site plan and is generally supported through the Capital Improvement Plan or Long-term Financial Plan of the County.

BAYLOR REGIONAL PARK

Planning Initiatives

- Acquisition and Master Plan Update (short-term)
- Camper Cabins and/or RV Site Plan (short-term)
- Repurpose Beach, Improve Waterfront Access for Fishing and Non-Motorized Boats Site Plan (short-term)
- Visitor Center Improvements, ADA and Functionality (short-term)
- Future Adjacent Property Acquisitions (short-term)
- Natural Resource Management Plan (mid-term)
- Splash Pad Water Feature Feasibility and Site Plan (long-term)

Development and Stewardship Initiatives

- Camper Cabin(s) and RV Sites Improvements (short-term)*
- Campground Wi-Fi Access Improvement (short-term)*
- Repurpose Beach, Improve Waterfront Access for Fishing and Non-Motorized Boats (mid-term)*
- Visitor Center Improvements, ADA and Functionality (mid-term)*
- Replace Floating Boardwalk (mid-term)*
- Natural Resource Management Restoration (mid-term)
- Parking Capacity Improvements (long-term)*

**pending master plan approval*

LAKE MINNEWASHTA REGIONAL PARK

Planning Initiatives

- Amendment to Master Plan for New Planning Initiatives
  - ◊ Single Track Mountain Bike Feasibility Study (short-term)
  - ◊ Visitor Center Site Plan (mid-term)
- Group Activity Area Site Plan (short-term)
- Architectural Work to Repurpose Concession Building to Rental Services Station (short-term)
- Natural Resource Management Plan (mid-term)

Development and Stewardship Initiatives

- Replace Destination Playground (short-term)
- New Group Activity Area (short-term)
- Repurpose Concession Building to Rental Services Station (short-term)
- Natural Resource Management Restoration (mid-term)

LAKE WACONIA REGIONAL PARK

Planning Initiatives

- Site Grading and Utility Plan, Main Park Area (short-term)
- Phase I Grading and Development Plan, Coney Island (short-term)
- Waconia Event Center Building and Repurpose Study (short-term)
- Single Track Mountain Bike Feasibility Study (short-term)
- Natural Resource Management Plan (mid-term)
- Sledding hill and Nordic Ski Loop Snow Making Enhancements (long-term)

Development and Stewardship Initiatives

- Phase I Master Plan Development of Coney Island (short-term)
- Phase I Master Plan Development of Main Land Park Area (short-term)
- Waconia Event Center Public Access and Use Improvements (short-term)
- Natural Resource Restoration (mind-term)

CROW RIVER COUNTY PARK

Planning Initiatives

- Master Plan Development (short-term)

LAKE BAVARIA BOAT ACCESS

Planning Initiatives

- Master Plan Development (short-term)

Development of Trails and Bikeways

Given its routine rating as the highest value recreational activity by people across age groups, developing the trail system is justifiably a very high priority within the county. The implementation strategy for destination trails will likely occur as demand warrants and funding is made available.

In terms of priority areas, nearer-term efforts to develop destination trails will be focused in growth areas, especially in the Waconia-Victoria and Carver areas, as illustrated on the Trail and Bikeway Plan. Completion of the TH 5 Regional Trail segment through the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum is a top priority that will be implemented. In all of the cases, the County will work collaboratively with the local cities and townships to develop these trails in a timely manner. The County will also ensure that collaboration with willing landowners is a necessary piece of any trail development. Developing connections to the Dakota Rail Regional Trail from the City of Waconia is another high priority.

With respect to linking trails along county roads, the top priority will be working with local cities to complete regional trail links within and between local systems in growth areas. Development of on-road bikeways along proposed county road routes will be coordinated with roadway upgrades, with the main focus being to include a minimum 6-foot wide shoulder along select county roads for use as a bike route. Note that development of trail/bikeway corridors could include either a linking trail or bikeway, or both, depending on the specific route circumstances and user groups being accommodated.

The following table identifies trail planning and development initiatives using the same Initiative timing (short-term, mid-term and long-term) as with parks.

◊ **Table 6.2: Trail Planning and Development Initiatives**

Regional Trail	Proposed Segment	Initiative	Implementation
MN River Bluffs	Carver Levee to County Road 11	Feasibility Study	Short-term
MN River Bluffs	Bluff Creek Drive to East County Line Segment	Master Plan	Short-term
Highway 5	Rolling Acres Road to Dell Road	Master Plan	Short-term
Highway 5	Minnewashta Parkway to Century Boulevard	Development	Short-term
County Road 20	County Line to Luce Line State Trail	Development	Short-term
Trunk Highway 41	Highway 7 to Minnesota River	Master Plan	Short-term
County Road 61	East County Line to Bluff Creek Rad	Master Plan	Short-term
County Road 11	County Road 10 south to County Road 40	System Plan Amendment	Short-term
County Road 11	County Road 40 south to County Line	Master Plan Amendment	Short-term
MN River Bluffs RT Extension	County Road 11 to Highway 25	System Plan Amendment	Short-term
Highway 284	Cologne to County Road 10 Regional Trail	System Plan Amendment	Short-term

◊ Table 6.2: Trail Planning and Development Initiatives—Continued

Regional Trail	Proposed Segment	Initiative	Implementation
County Road 18	101 to County Road 43	Local Planning	Short-term
Highway 101	North County Line to South County Line	Master Plan	Mid-term
County Road 10	Audubon Road to County Road 11	Master Plan	Mid-term
Lake Waconia	Dakota Rail Regional Trail to Highway 5	Master Plan	Mid-term
Western Carver County Trail	Highway 212 to Baylor Regional Park	Master Plan	Mid-term
Waconia/ Carver Trail	Lake Waconia Regional Park to County Road 10	Master Plan	Mid-term
Waconia/Carver Trail	Carver Creek to MN River Bluffs Regional Trail	Master Plan	Mid-term
Highway 5	County Road 10 to Rolling Acres Road	Master Plan Amendment	Long-term
Highway 5	Highway 212 to County Road 10	Planning– Master Plan Amendment	Long-term
County Road 10	County Road 11 to Highway 5	Master Plan Amendment	Long-term
County Road 10	Highway 5 to Highway 25	Master Plan Amendment	Long-term
Twin Cities Western	Highway 5 to West County Line	Master Plan	Long-term
Western Carver County Tail	Baylor Regional Park to Dakota Rail Regional Trail	Master Plan Amendment	Long-term
Western Carver County Trail	Dakota Regional Trail to North County Line	Master Plan Amendment	Long-term
MN Prairie Line	TC&W Railroad to Hamburg	System Plan Amendment	Long-term

Note: the proposed segment descriptions in the table above are intended to be a general description of the area. In practice, the area of a proposed trail segment initiative may be adjusted to meet identified needs at that time. Construction of trails will be strongly influenced by opportunities related to road improvements, new or adjacent developments and available funding provided through grant opportunities.

New Regional Park Acquisitions

MILLER LAKE REGIONAL PARK

Planning Initiatives

- Acquisition Master Plan (mid-term)

MN RIVER BLUFFS REGIONAL PARK

Planning initiatives

- Acquisition Master Plan (long-term)

Delivery of Public Programs and Services

Delivery of public programs and services is listed a bit lower in terms of priority due to the fact that being able to provide these is contingent on the availability of land and facilities. In fact, the delivery of programs and services should be considered lock-step with the development of a facility. Carver County's programming and related services function will continue to evolve, with continued emphasis on enhancing formal, well-organized programming. In addition, greater emphasis will be placed on informal, self-guided, and drop-in participation type of programming. More attention will also be given to staging event that bring larger groups to the various regional parks for group activities and social interaction in a natural setting. In addition to current offerings, cultural events such as music or arts-in-the-park and charity programs will be considered.

The number of activities and programs provided by Carver County Parks is increasing and the quality of those services ensures that they will continue to be in high demand. Carver County can utilize recreation management software to manage the variety of activities, classes and programs to streamline operations and reduce the management overhead associated with running these activities. ArcGIS and Active Net are two examples for recreation management systems.

Outreach Activities

There is a growing need for park programming for children and adults, including afternoon and evening activities and activities for adaptive learning. Carver County can expand its outreach to include more adaptive programs geared to outdoor learning to extend the reach of recreation programming to a broader audience of Carver County residents. Scholarship programs are another source of funding to provide more services to County residents who are unable to pay for recreation activities.

Public Awareness and Marketing

Carver County uses public relations, marketing, and media relations tools, such as a website, event planning, press releases, and promotional materials to promote their parks and trails. Carver County also collaborates with a wide array of community, business, and government organizations to promote their facilities, programs and services and to educate the public about the available resources.

Carver County Parks engages the public through several on-line and social media tools. The County website has a page dedicated to parks and trails that provides information on the parks and trails across the County, lists information about programs and events, explains how individuals can support the park system by donating or volunteering, and provides information and a link for reservations and permits.

Carver County actively posts information on social media to share news and information about the park system. Opportunities for expanding social media and on-line resources for public awareness will likely expand in the future as new media and new platforms become available. Younger park users frequently access public service information on-line and will continue to seek additional ways to engage with the County about the park system through social media.

Recreational and Educational Programming (and Related Services) Function

The programming function of Carver County will proactively strive to provide an ever-increasing variety of high quality visitor and participant experiences by organizing, promoting and delivering environmental education and recreation-based programs consistent with its mission.

Specific strategies to proactively advance this function include:

- Exploring collaborations/partnerships with other organizations, businesses, and groups to improve and expand both environmental and recreational program offerings.
- Developing a proactive marketing plan for promoting program offering by the County and its partners, with specific strategies targeting each program offering being developed as demand or opportunity warrants.
- Implementing services and programs that include people with disabilities and people from diverse ethnic backgrounds that reflect the population of Carver County and the local communities.
- Acquiring demographic data outlining current and projected regional population and recreation trends to view emerging trends.
- Further developing the interpretive potential of the various regional parks, with an emphasis on the unique qualities that each posses.
- Ensuring staff and volunteer levels are adequate to ensure high quantity experiences for participants.
- Exploring online program registration and the opportunities for online program delivery to take advantage of and respond to, advances in technology.

Service Enhancement

- Carver County Parks does not charge for the use of its trails. One strategy to increase use and opportunities for residents to use the park system is to eliminate entrance fees to parks. Removing entrance fees to all Carver county parks would expand the opportunities for all residents and users to access the great features and amenities of the park system.
- To offset the loss of revenue, one or a combination of the following could be initiated: a greater commitment of general funds, a reduction in park entrance attendants, sale of concession items, or an increase in revenue from rental services and program fees.

Customer/ Visitor Services Function

Enhancing customer service includes identifying customer expectations and determining the level of program, facilities, and services required to meet those expectations. Major issues relating to customer service include:

- Quality assurance– providing the services most important to park visitors; special focus needs to be placed on complaint handling, special requests, reservations, security, and customer information; the goal is to ensure that every customer request is addressed promptly and every effort is made to meet and exceed customer expectations.
- Feedback management– establishing a customer-oriented and effective input process for visitors to communicate their concerns or suggestions.
- Employee education and training– continually enhancing the capacity of all County staff to perform at a high level in meeting customer needs.
- Reservation systems– building upon the current system, providing a customer-friendly and efficient reservation system will continue to play a key role in providing quality customer service; using modern technology to reserve campsites, picnic shelters, meeting facilities, or to register for a program is important to enhancing service; expansion of web-based and online services will be a point of continued focus.

Administrative Function: Public Involvement

Carver County is committed to continuing public involvement through the implementation of the plan. The degree to which this will occur will vary depending on what aspect of the plan is being implemented. For larger scale projects, such as development or redevelopment of a larger amenity within a regional park, public involvement in the design process may be fairly extensive and involve representation from key stakeholders. In addition, forums for broader public input (e.g., open houses and presentations) will also be used as needed to communicate and exchange ideas with interested citizens. For smaller scale projects, notifications of interested parties would be a more appropriate approach.

The objectives associated with involving citizens in the implementation proves include:

- Define stakeholders and their interest in a particular development initiative
- Understand their needs and unique perspectives
- Identify and understand concerns and problems
- Development alternatives and find appropriate solutions with input from stakeholders.

In addition to formalized processes for particular projects, Carver County will use the Parks Commission to advise the County Board on implementation initiatives as they occur. The public is welcome to attend its regularly scheduled meetings. Also, Carver County uses numerous tools to provide a consistent level of communication with interested citizens.

Funding Sources

The availability of funding to implement the Plan will have direct impact on the level of acquisition and development that can be undertaken. The table below provides an overview of funding source opportunities and probability.

◊ **Table 6.3: Funding Sources**

Source	Description/Overview	Limitations
County CIP	Currently a five-year listing of parks projects is developed and updated by the Park Department to track priorities. Selected projects are then transferred to the County's CIP as funding is allocated.	Funding levels are typically too limited to address the full range of possible acquisition and development projects. Resident willingness to increase taxes for this purpose plays a key role in funding levels.
County Bonding	The mechanism is available for parks, open spaces and trails within the limits established by the County.	Bonding is not generally used as a means to fund parks and trails.
County Highway Department	Funding is available for acquiring road right-of-way and providing shoulder use on County Roads.	This is a useful option for expanding bicycle network on existing roadways.
Metropolitan Parks CIP Funding	Matched with state funds on a 60/40 basis, the Metropolitan Council allocates funds to the ten-agency regional park system. Carver County's share is typically about 2% per funding cycle.	These grants do not require a match. The most effective strategy is to support the Metropolitan Council and other agencies in lobbying for funding at the state level.
Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund	The Trust Fund is a permanent fund constitutionally established by the citizens of Minnesota to assist in the protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and natural resources. Currently, 40% of new Minnesota State Lottery proceeds are dedicated to growing the Trust Fun and ensuring future benefits for Minnesota's environment and natural resources.	These grants do not require a match. However, they are very competitive.
Metropolitan Parks Acquisition Opportunity Fund	These grants are intended to help regional park agencies acquire land within Metropolitan Council-approved regional park and trail master plan boundaries. These grants finance up to 75% of acquisition costs within a limit per park agency and require matching funds to finance 25% of the costs.	A local match of 25% is required and can be significant limitation, through the match can be redeemed through a future CIP of the Metropolitan Council.
Metropolitan Council Operations and Maintenance Funds	The Council allocates state funds to regional park implementing agencies to cover a share of the cost of parks O&M every year. In 2016, the Council distributed almost $9 million to the 10 park	The funding amount is determined annually. The established legislation requires the state to finance a portion of the regional systems O&M costs. Overall funding is declining in relation to

◊ **Table 6.3: Funding Sources—Continued**

Source	Description/Overview	Limitations
State Outdoor Recreation, LCCMR and Federal Grants	The State of Minnesota annually allocates funds for park acquisition and development projects that meet recreational needs identified by the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The grants are competitive and awarded through the DNR	Qualifying for funding for restoration and management of the County's natural resources has some potential. The grants are very competitive, but Carver County has been successful with funding from the Metro Greenways program of the DNR and the Federal
Land and Water Conservation Fund	The Federal Government allocates money each year to states for public acquisition and development projects. The State of	Funding availability through this program has been limited in recent years and the likelihood of the funding continuing at recent levels in
Transportation Enhancement Funding	The Federal Government allocates money each year for alternative forms of transportation, which includes bicycle trails	The Metropolitan Council has created new criteria for scoring and thus, funding of outer-ring suburban park providers has declined in
Fees/Enterprise Funds	Minnesota statue allows counties to prescribe and provide for the collection of fees for the use of any park or other unit of the park system or any facilities, accommodations or services provided for public use therein.	This is a common source of revenue for certain types of amenities, although Carver County may wish to expand user numbers by eliminating park entrance fees.
Partnerships	Relates to partnerships formed with other agencies, local cities, other counties and schools to develop, maintain and operate	Partnerships help to spread the cost of providing specific services and recreation initiatives.
Donations	Cash donations, gifts, volunteering and professional services donations for planning, acquisition or development purposes.	This may have limited potential for raising cash but it is important with respect to the use of volunteers to offset some program costs.
Metropolitan Council Parks and Trails Fund	The largest source of outside funding to the County Parks and Recreation Department and is appropriated annually. Provides sales tax proceeds from the Legacy Fund for new or enhanced visitor services and access, to accelerate the management, restoration and protection of natural resources, to accelerate facility maintenance and rehabilitation and to improve energy	This is a useful program for supplementing other funding sources to complete new larger projects or to provide funding for new, smaller projects and services.

◊ **Table 6.3: Funding Sources—Continued**

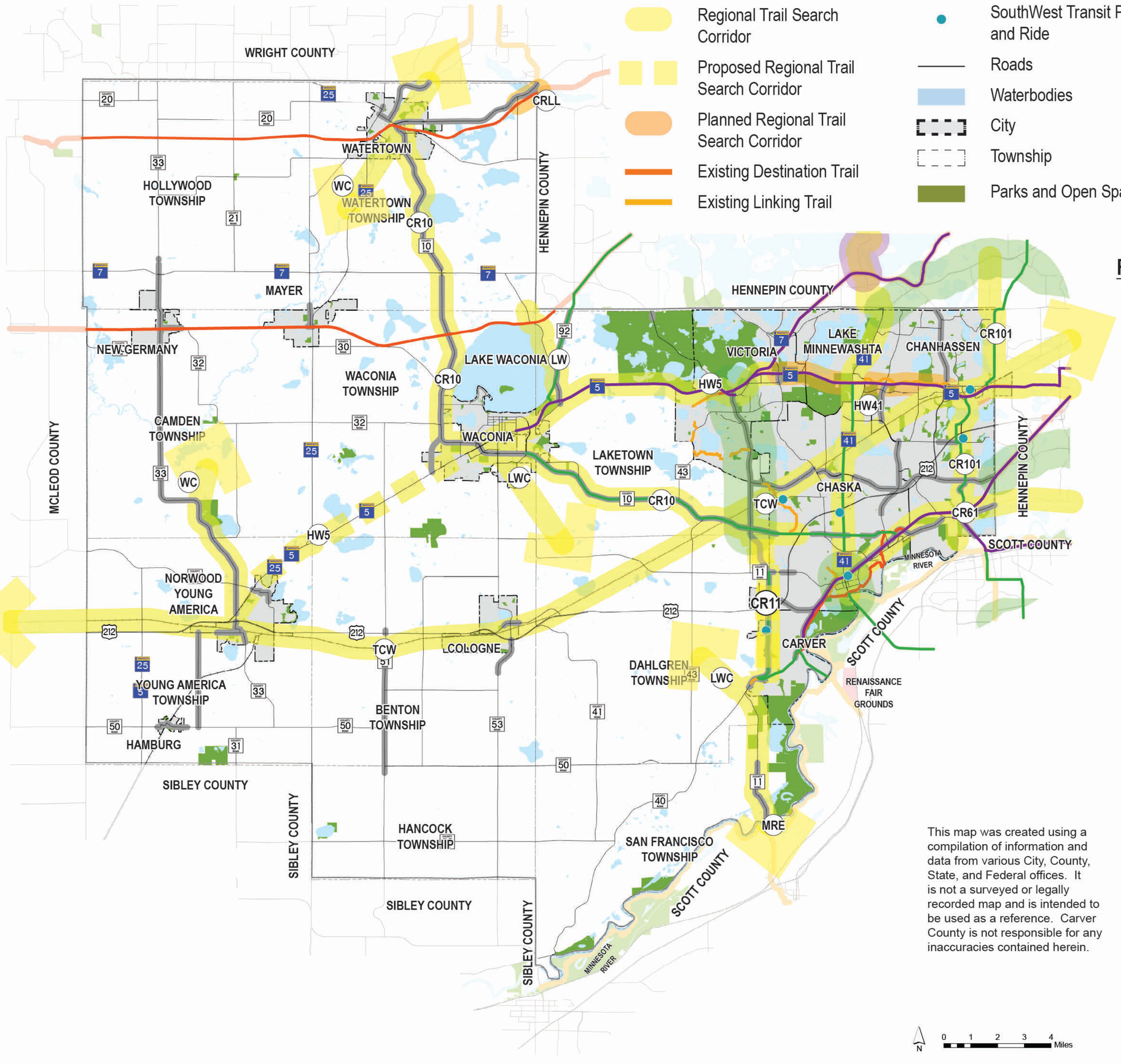
Source	Description/Overview	Limitations
Outdoor Heritage Funding Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program	The Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) Grant Program funds conservation projects that restore, enhance, or protect forests, wetlands, prairies, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife in Minnesota. Funding for the CPL grant program is from the Outdoor Heritage Fund , created by the people of Minnesota. The CPL Program has been recommended by the L-SOHC to (and approved by) the MN Legislature annually since 2009.	The MN DNR manages this reimbursable program to provide competitive matching grants from $5,000 to $400,000 to local, regional, state, and national nonprofit organizations, including government entities.

Updated Appendix Pages

Activities	Carver County		Three Rivers Parks in Scott County (Scott County Owned and Operated Parks are currently only master plans)	Three Rivers Parks District (does not include Carver Park Reserve or Scott County)
	County Parks	Carver Park Reserve		
Secondary Activities	**Carver County**		**Three Rivers Parks in Scott County** (Scott County Owned and Operated Parks are currently only master plans)	**Three Rivers Parks District** (does not include Carver Park Reserve or Scott County)
	County Parks	Carver Park Reserve		
Art Education				1
Canoe Storage	1			
Dog On-Leash	3	1	3	15
Downhill and Telemark Skiing				2
Educational Farming				1
Formal Gardens				2
Guided Hikes				
GPS Unit Rentals	1			
History Exploration		1		3
Inline Skating				
Kicksledding	2			
Little Free Library	2			
Maple Syrup Shack	1			
Nature Play				
Nature Programs		1		3
Nordic Walking Poles	2			
Orienteering				
Programs and Events				
Recreational Bonfire	2		1	
Restrooms	3			
Scuba Diving				
Story Stroll				
Snowmobiling	3 (by others)	1	3	4
Snowboarding				2
Visitor Center	1			

LEGEND

- Regional Trail Search Corridor
- Proposed Regional Trail Search Corridor
- Planned Regional Trail Search Corridor
- Existing Destination Trail
- Existing Linking Trail
- SouthWest Transit Park and Ride
- Roads
- Waterbodies
- City
- Township
- Parks and Open Space
- Roadway Shoulders Greater than 4'
- RBTN Tier 1 Alignment
- RBTN Tier 2 Alignment
- RBTN Tier 1 Priority Regional Bicycle Transportation Corridor
- RBTN Tier 2 Priority Regional Bicycle Transportation Corridor



REGIONAL TRAIL SEARCH CORRIDORS

- CR10 County Rd 10
- CR101 Highway 101
- HW5 Highway 5
- LW Lake Waconia
- LWC Lake Waconia-Carver
- MRE Minnesota River Bluffs Trail Extension
- TCW Twin Cities & Western
- WC Western Carver County
- CR61 County Rd 61
- HW41 Highway 41
- CR11 County Rd 11
- CRLL Crow River/Luce Line Trail Connection

This map was created using a compilation of information and data from various City, County, State, and Federal offices. It is not a surveyed or legally recorded map and is intended to be used as a reference. Carver County is not responsible for any inaccuracies contained herein.