

# LA PORTE COUNTY BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN

JULY 2025





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# Acknowledgments

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan development.

A special thanks to:

Bike Stop Cycling

Health Foundation of La Porte County

Indiana Department of Health

Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)

Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)

La Porte County Planning Commission

La Porte Parks and Recreation Department

Maple City Bike Club

Michigan City Parks & Recreation Department

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)

Shirley Heinze Land Trust

**Prepared for:**



La Porte County Parks Department

**Prepared by:**





# Executive Summary

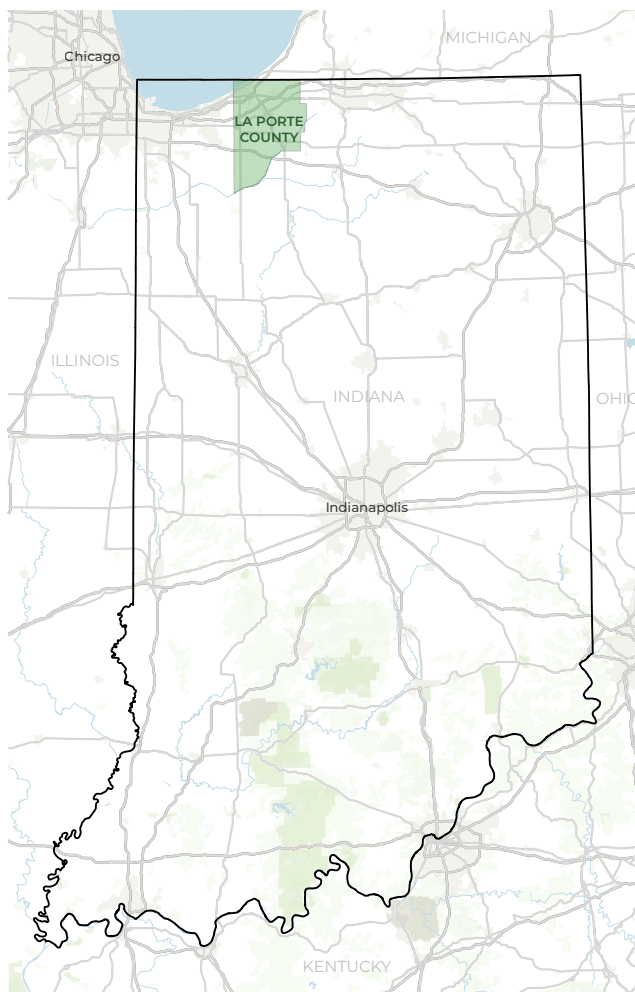
**La Porte County, Indiana (“County”)** is working to shape a more connected, accessible, and safe transportation system that supports walking, biking, and rolling for people of all ages and abilities. **La Porte County Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan (“Plan”)** is a proactive step toward designing an active transportation network that meets the evolving needs of residents and visitors across the County’s urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Located in northwest Indiana along the southern shore of Lake Michigan, about an hour from Chicago and near the Illinois and Michigan borders, La Porte County provides convenient access to major cities and neighboring states (see **Figure**). It also serves as a vital connection point within regional trail networks, bordered by systems such as the Indiana Dunes trails, the Marquette Greenway, the Great American Rail-Trail, the American Discovery Trail, and U.S. Bicycle Route 35. Locally, destinations such as Michigan City, the City of La Porte, and several County parks are already supported by a mix of trails and shared roadways. However, despite the County’s natural assets and growing trail use, its existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure has not yet expanded to meet the public’s needs for safe and connected mobility options.

Over the past several years, La Porte County has experienced a significant shift in how residents and visitors engage with the outdoors. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated an already growing trend: more people are walking, biking, running, and exploring the region’s open spaces. Data from Strava, local parks, and trail counters confirm this surge in outdoor activity, suggesting that this change is not a temporary spike but a lasting transformation in lifestyle and mobility.

However, this increase in usage has exposed gaps in the County’s trail and roadway infrastructure. While more than 37 miles of formal trails and nearly 400 miles of shared roadways provide a foundation, they are not evenly distributed or well connected. Many communities—primarily rural areas and some urban neighborhoods—lack safe and convenient options for walking or bicycling to parks, schools,

**Figure.** La Porte County Location



and commercial districts. As more people walk and bike for both recreation and transportation, many bicyclists and pedestrians continue to face barriers and unsafe conditions that limit their mobility and comfort.



Safety also remains a central concern. Since 2008, eight people have died in bicycle crashes on La Porte County roads, with most fatalities occurring in urban areas such as Michigan City and the City of La Porte. Roads like US Highway 421, with fast-moving traffic and inadequate bicycle infrastructure, present high-risk environments for bicyclists. Crossings at major intersections and state highways are often intimidating and unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists alike.

The La Porte County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan serves as a roadmap for building a safer, more connected trail and bicycle network. It outlines a vision to add over 300 miles of improvements, linking parks, schools, downtowns, neighborhoods, and regional routes while enhancing safety and access for users. Recommendations range from paved shoulders along rural corridors to multi-use shared paths through towns and natural areas.

Public feedback played a vital role in shaping the Plan. Residents shared their experiences and desires through surveys, public meetings, and workshops. Many voiced concerns over dangerous road crossings and emphasized the importance of building off-road, multi-use paths that connect neighborhoods to parks, schools, and downtown areas. The need for a safer, more accessible, and more integrated trail system was clear and consistent.

Among the Plan's most impactful recommendations are several transformative trail expansions that would significantly improve safety, connectivity, and access across La Porte County. These include a proposed trail connection to Luhr County Park by paved shoulders along S 150 W, enhancing access for City of La Porte residents and nearby schools; an 18-mile Holmesville Road Trail linking Red Mill County Park with surrounding communities and institutions; and a 27-mile corridor connecting La Porte County to South Bend through coordinated shoulder expansions. Additional recommendations include a route between Stillwell and Luhr Park to close a critical east-west gap—particularly at the hazardous US-35 crossing—and new trails near Hudson Lake along N Emery Road to support growth and connect residents to schools, parks, and regional destinations. Advancing these projects will require collaboration across local, county, and regional jurisdictions.

To address safety concerns, especially at major intersections and along high-speed corridors, the Plan recommends adopting modern safety features.

Recognizing that not every opportunity can be acted on at once, the Plan includes a phased approach. It identifies 16 corridors—totaling approximately 164 miles—that are especially well-suited for near-term development. These priorities were determined based on feasibility, cost, and the potential to close key gaps, connect neighborhoods, and support ongoing community and economic goals.

While these recommendations are aspirational, they are rooted in input from the community and aligned with broader planning goals. Implementation will require continued collaboration among County officials, municipal governments, state agencies, and local partners. Together, these efforts can shape a more connected, safe, and active future for La Porte County and the broader region.







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# Acronyms

<b>AADT</b>	Annual Average Daily Traffic
<b>ADA</b>	American with Disabilities Act
<b>ADT</b>	American Discovery Trail
<b>BEA</b>	Bureau of Economic Analysis
<b>BFE</b>	Base Flood Elevation
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>FEMA</b>	Federal Emergency Management Agency
<b>FHWA</b>	Federal Highway Administration
<b>GPS</b>	Global Positioning System
<b>IDNR</b>	Indiana Department of Natural Resources
<b>INDOT</b>	Indiana Department of Transportation
<b>MACOG</b>	Michigan Area Council of Governments
<b>MPO</b>	Metropolitan Planning Organization
<b>NIPSCO</b>	Northern Indiana Public Service Company
<b>NIRPC</b>	Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission
<b>PHB</b>	Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon
<b>RFB</b>	Rectangular Flashing Beacon
<b>ROM</b>	Rough Order of Magnitude
<b>ROW</b>	Right of Way
<b>SSPF</b>	Safer Streets Priority Finder
<b>SCORP</b>	Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
<b>USBR</b>	United States Bicycle Routes
<b>USDOT</b>	United States Department of Transportation

# Definitions

<b><u>Advisory Shoulders</u></b>	Dashed edge lanes on low-traffic roads where cars may enter if no bikes are present.
<b><u>Bike Lanes</u></b>	Marked, on-street lanes for exclusive bike use.
<b><u>Bike Signal</u></b>	Rectangular Flashing Beacon.
<b><u>Nature Trail</u></b>	Unpaved path primarily for recreational use.
<b><u>Paved Shoulders</u></b>	Minimum 4 ft wide increase in width of an existing roadway.
<b><u>Pedestrian Flashing Beacon</u></b>	Warning light system at crosswalks that flashes to alert drivers when pedestrians are crossing, improving visibility and safety.
<b><u>Shared Roadway</u></b>	Roads where bikes and vehicles share the same lane, often marked with sharrows.
<b><u>Shared Use Path</u></b>	Paved path for bikes, walkers, and other non-motorized users, about 5-10 ft buffer from existing roadway.
<b><u>Unmarked Routes</u></b>	Roads with no bike markings or signs; bicyclists share space with vehicles.
<b><u>Wayfinding and Signage</u></b>	Refers to the systems and visual cues, designed to help people navigate and orient themselves within a physical environment, such as maps, signs, symbols, and directions.



# 1

# Introduction

This chapter introduces the purpose and context of the La Porte County Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan. The chapter highlights the County's strategic location and the need for improved infrastructure to meet increasing needs.







**La Porte County, Indiana ("County")** is home to a growing number of people who use the County's hiking trails, shared roadways, and mountain biking trails. This system offers a network of trails, on and off road, to suit a wide range of outdoor activities and users. The County's distinctive blend of urban, rural, and suburban landscapes, along with its prime location along Lake Michigan, attracts a diverse range of visitors and residents. This appeal is reflected in data from trail and park visitor counts, which show consistent annual growth in the number of users utilizing La Porte County's trails and shared roadways for walking, running, and bicycling. Recognizing that continued opportunities to improve the system exist, La Porte County has drafted this **La Porte County Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan ("Plan")** to identify opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists to engage with the trail system across the County.

The County is conveniently located near several regional and well-developed trail systems, including the Indiana Dunes National Park trails, the Marquette Greenway, the Calumet Trail, and the Great American Rail-Trail. Additionally, it is connected to national trails and routes such as the American Discovery Trail and U.S. Bicycle Route 35, serving as a connection that links these extensive networks. Urban areas within the County, such as Michigan City and the City of La Porte, feature well-maintained trails that weave through neighborhoods, parks, and community hubs, offering accessible options for bicyclists and pedestrians alike. Meanwhile, hikers can enjoy an array of County parks where they can connect with nature in both active and passive ways. Bicyclists seeking longer rides can explore shared roadways that wind through the County's scenic landscapes, connecting small towns, parks, and key destinations. However, despite the variety of trails, pathways, and shared roads, the existing infrastructure falls short of meeting the needs of the County's growing and diverse user base.

This plan will serve as a roadmap for future planning efforts, helping to establish clear priorities, guide decision-making, and allocate resources effectively. It provides a framework for identifying areas of improvement, setting measurable goals, and fostering collaboration among local governments, organizations, and residents.

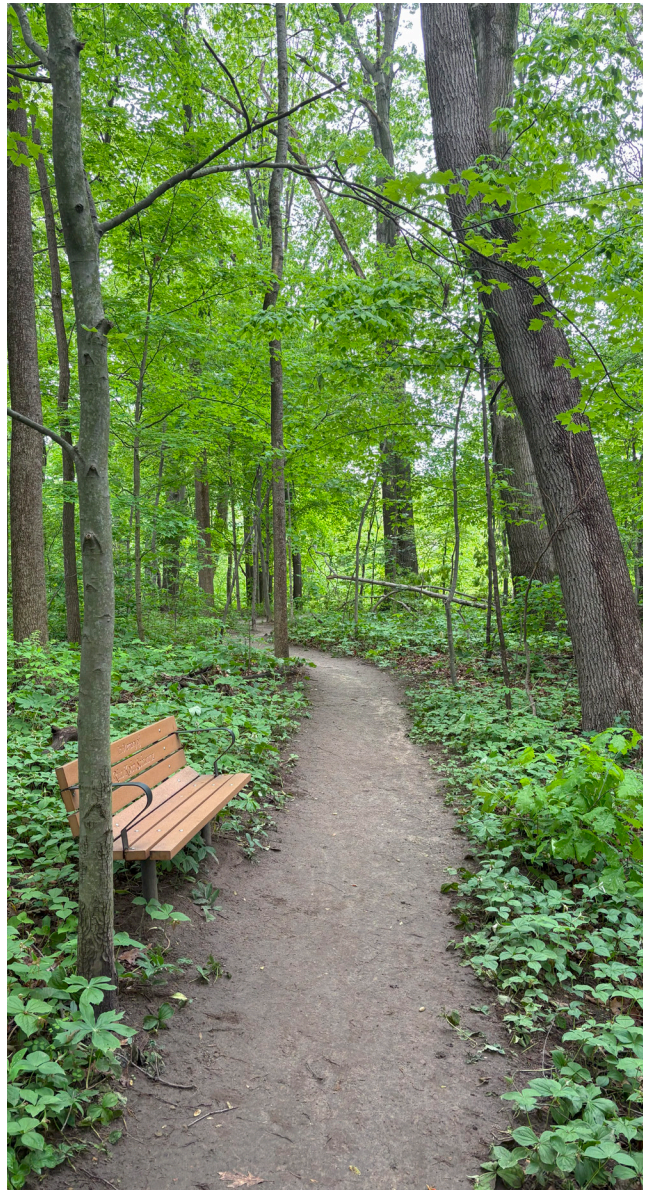
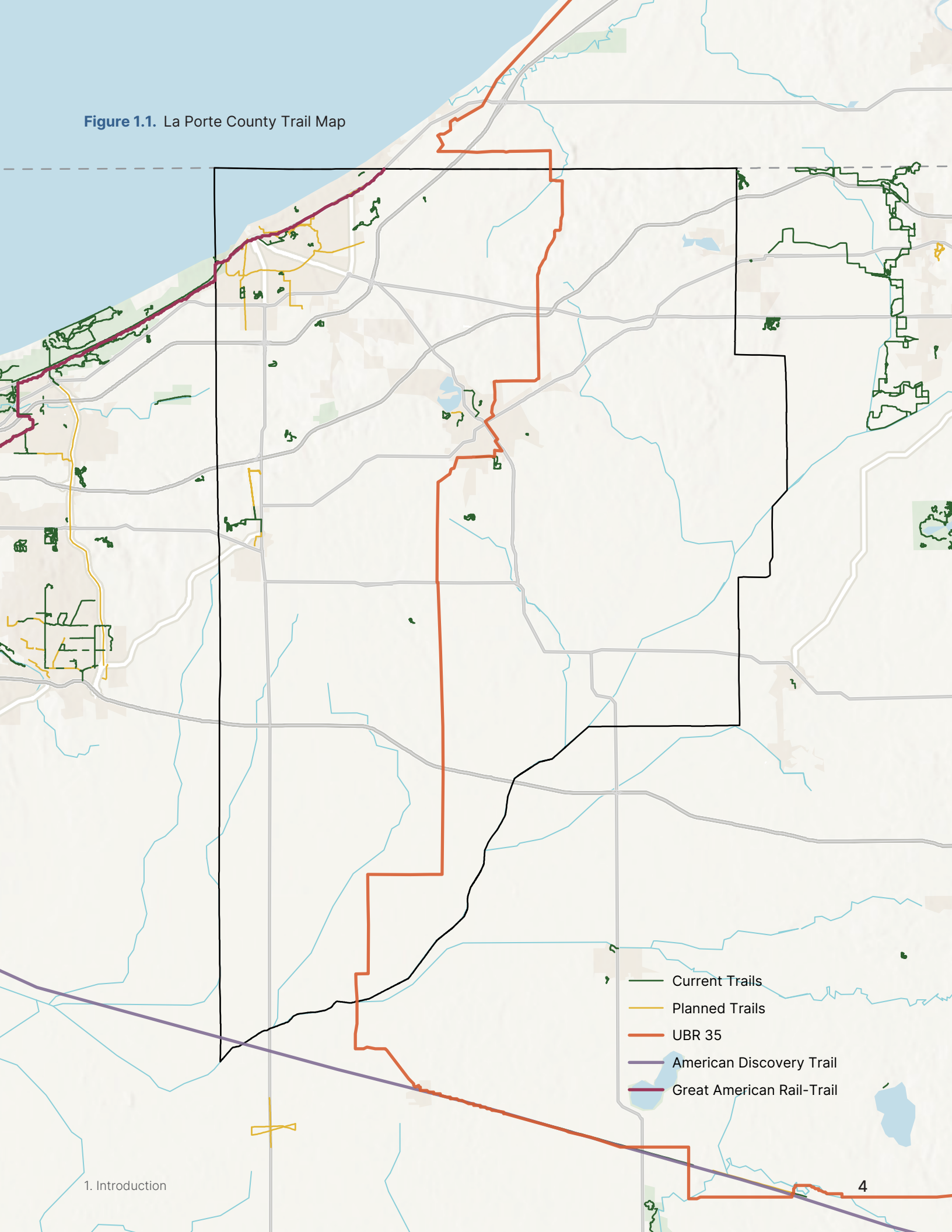


Figure 1.1. La Porte County Trail Map





# 2

## La Porte County Today

### - Bicycling and Walking in Our Communities

This chapter provides an overview of La Porte County's existing bicycle and pedestrian trails, shared roadways, and regional trail systems. It highlights the unique characteristics and context of each route while uncovering key insights to inform future trail and route recommendations. The chapter begins with a broad look at outdoor recreation trends at the national and state levels before focusing on a detailed examination of La Porte County's current infrastructure.







# Getting Outside

La Porte County is experiencing a growing interest in outdoor recreation and active transportation, with more residents using trails and shared roadways for walking, bicycling, and other non-motorized activities. This trend, accelerated by a significant rise in outdoor activity since the COVID-19 pandemic, reflects broader national shifts toward healthier, more sustainable lifestyles and underscores the benefits of these modes of travel —improved physical and mental health, reduced emissions, less traffic congestion, and economic gains through tourism and local business support. Community feedback reinforces the need for a more connected and accessible network.

## National and State Trends

### National Trends

Outdoor recreation is a significant economic driver at both the national and state levels, generating billions of dollars in revenue and supporting millions of jobs across the country. The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) reported that in 2023, outdoor recreation contributed \$639.5 billion to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP), making up 2.3% of the total U.S. economy.<sup>1</sup> Not only is this sector substantial, but it is also growing at a faster rate than the overall economy. In 2023, outdoor recreation expanded by 3.6% compared to the previous year, surpassing the nation's overall economic growth rate of 2.9%. The industry's widespread appeal is evident in participation numbers as well. According to the Outdoor Industry Association and Outdoor Foundation Report, 175.8 million Americans (57.3% of the U.S. population) engaged in outdoor activities in 2023, with hiking alone attracting approximately 59.6 million participants.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, U.S. Chamber of Commerce data showed that this sector plays a crucial role in employment, supporting around

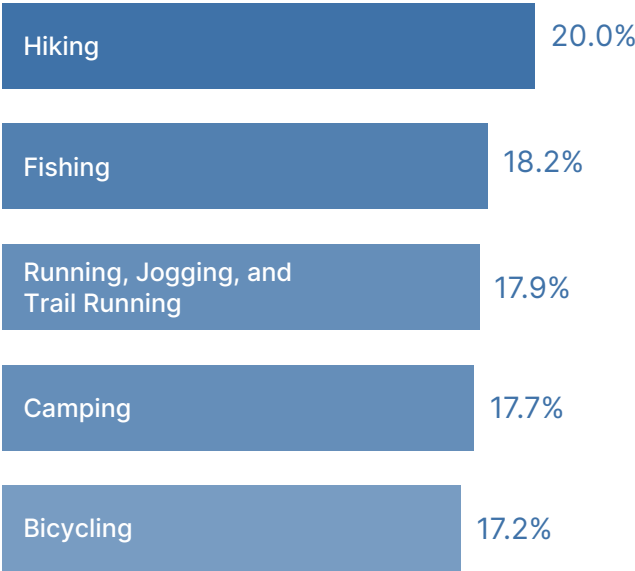
5 million jobs, which accounts for 3.1% of the nation's workforce.<sup>3</sup> Hiking was the most popular outdoor activity among the total population, with 20% participating. This was followed by fishing at 18.2%, running, jogging, and trail running at 17.9%, camping at 17.7%, and bicycling at 17.2% (see **Figure 2.1**).<sup>4</sup>

In 2023, bicycling was the fastest-growing outdoor activity, with participation increased by 26.6% from the previous year.<sup>5</sup> According to the Statista, 54.7 million people engaged in bicycling in 2023.<sup>6</sup> This growth may be driven by increased awareness of health and fitness benefits, improved bicycle infrastructure, efforts to avoid traffic congestion, and the rising popularity of e-bikes. The Statista Research Department reports that approximately 42.3 million people nationwide participate in road and paved surface bicycling. Meanwhile, mountain biking continues to gain traction, with 9.2 million participants in 2023, an increase of 4.1% from the previous year.<sup>7</sup>

# State Trends

Indiana’s outdoor recreation industry contributed \$15.7 billion to the state’s economy in 2023, placing it 12th nationwide for total value added from outdoor activities, according to Axios.<sup>8</sup> This sector made up 3.2% of Indiana’s GDP and supported 105,078 jobs, also representing 3.2% of the state’s total employment. Indiana has over 3,268 miles of trails and bikeways open for public use across the state. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) reports that trail usage surged in 2020, rising 31% compared to 2019.<sup>9</sup> Hard-surface trails, including pavement and asphalt, saw a 97% increase, while natural-surfaced trails experienced a 64% boost. According to the League of American Bicyclists, Indiana ranks 20th among bike-friendly states, climbing two spots since 2022. The state has made significant investments in bicycling infrastructure, with over \$100 million allocated to expanding and connecting trails in Indianapolis alone.

**Figure 2.1.** Top Five Outdoor Recreation Activities by Total Population Participation Rate (ages six and up)

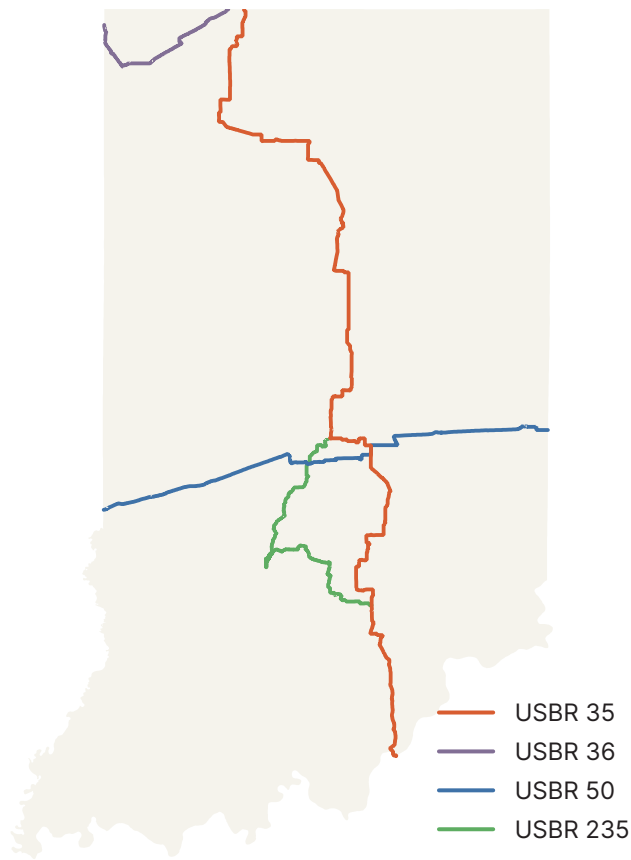


Source: Outdoor Foundation, Outdoor Industry Association

The IDNR identifies four major bicycling routes spanning a total of 730 miles across the state, one of which, United States Bicycle Route 35 (USBR 35) passes through the County<sup>10</sup>:

- **USBR 35:** A 381-mile north-south route from Lake Michigan to the Ohio River
- **USBR 36:** A 58.7-mile east-west route along Lake Michigan
- **USBR 50:** A 160-mile east-west route through central Indiana
- **USBR 235:** A 120-mile route connecting Seymour and Indianapolis

**Figure 2.2.** Indiana USBRs

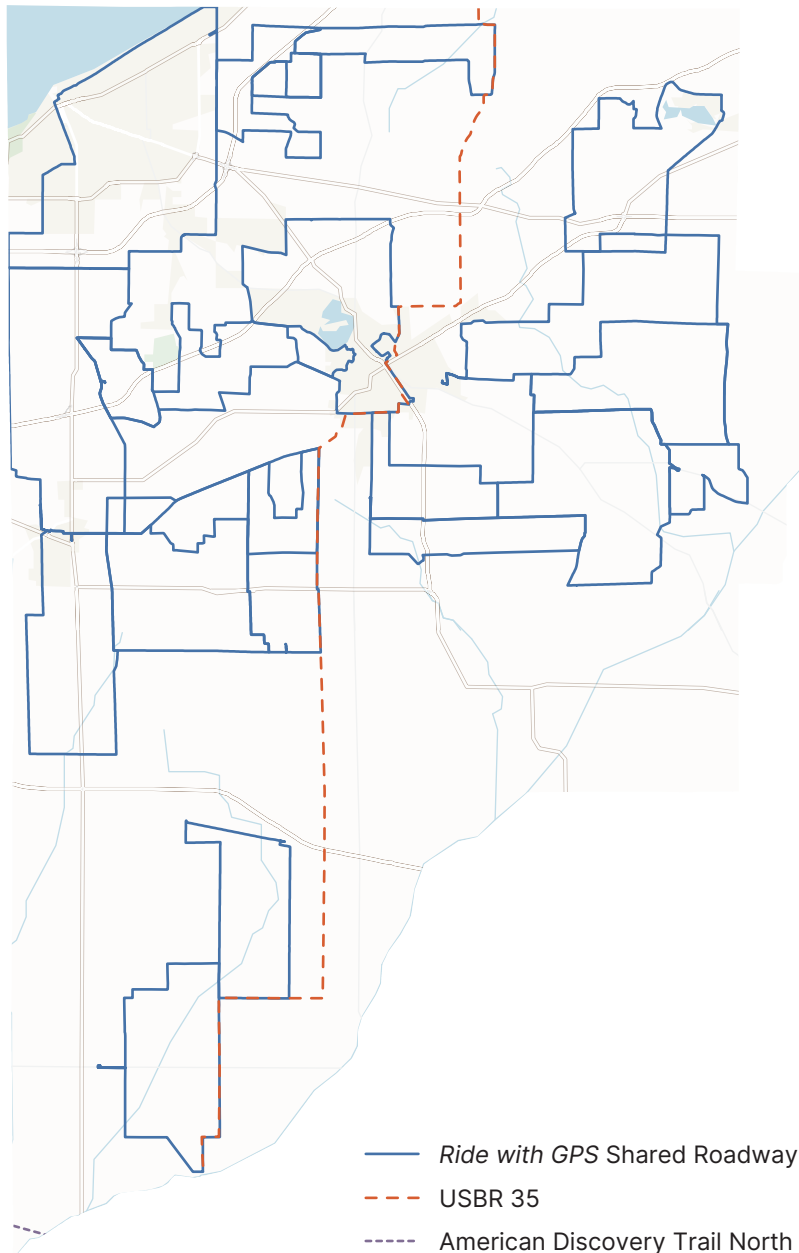


Source: IDNR



# La Porte County's Network: Trails, Roadways, and Accessibility

**Figure 2.3.** Current Ride with GPS Shared Roadway Route



Source: La Porte County Parks, Ride with GPS, Discovery Trail, IDNR

## What Exists Today

La Porte County offers a variety of trail types, ranging from park and urban trails to lakeside paths. These trails feature various surfaces, including natural terrain, pavement, boardwalks, gravel, and crushed stone. Trail lengths vary from 0.2 to 6.8 miles, collectively spanning approximately 37 miles. They accommodate multiple activities, such as hiking, road biking, rollerblading, skiing, mountain biking, educational walks, and horseback riding, with many being ADA-accessible.

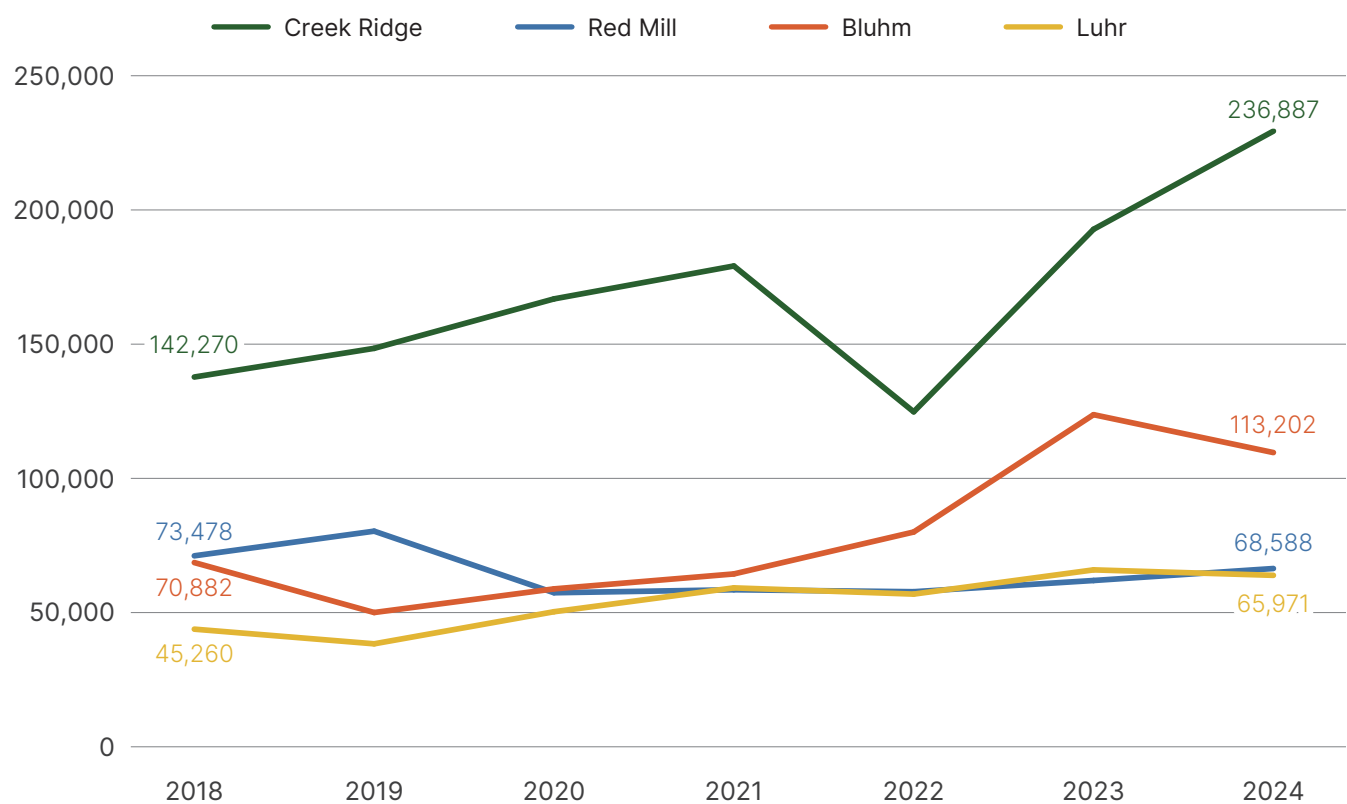
The following sections will outline the existing trails, shared roadways, and national and regional trail systems within La Porte County. **Figure 2.3** provides an overview of the County's designated shared roadways and regional trail systems.

All shared roadway routes in the County are fully paved, offering smooth connections for bicyclists across the region. A shared roadway is a street or road where bicyclists and motor vehicles share the same travel lanes, often marked with signage or pavement markings but without a dedicated bike lane. Among these, the USBR 35 follows a shared roadway, while the American Discovery Trail North features a mix of paved, natural, and gravel segments.

# Who Uses These Spaces

Several parks with trail systems are popular among both residents and visitors. While individual trail usage counts are unavailable, visitor counts for several County parks provide insight into overall trail use and trends over time. The parks with available visitor data include Bluhm, Luhr, Red Mill, and Creek Ridge. **Figure 2.4** illustrates visitor counts for these parks from 2018 to 2024. Over the past seven years, visitation has generally increased across all parks, except for Red Mill. Creek Ridge in Michigan City has seen the most significant growth, with nearly 100,000 more visitors since 2018. This suggests that trail usage has likely increased overall, surpassing pre-pandemic levels.

**Figure 2.4.** Visitor Counts to County Parks from 2018-2024



Source: La Porte County Parks

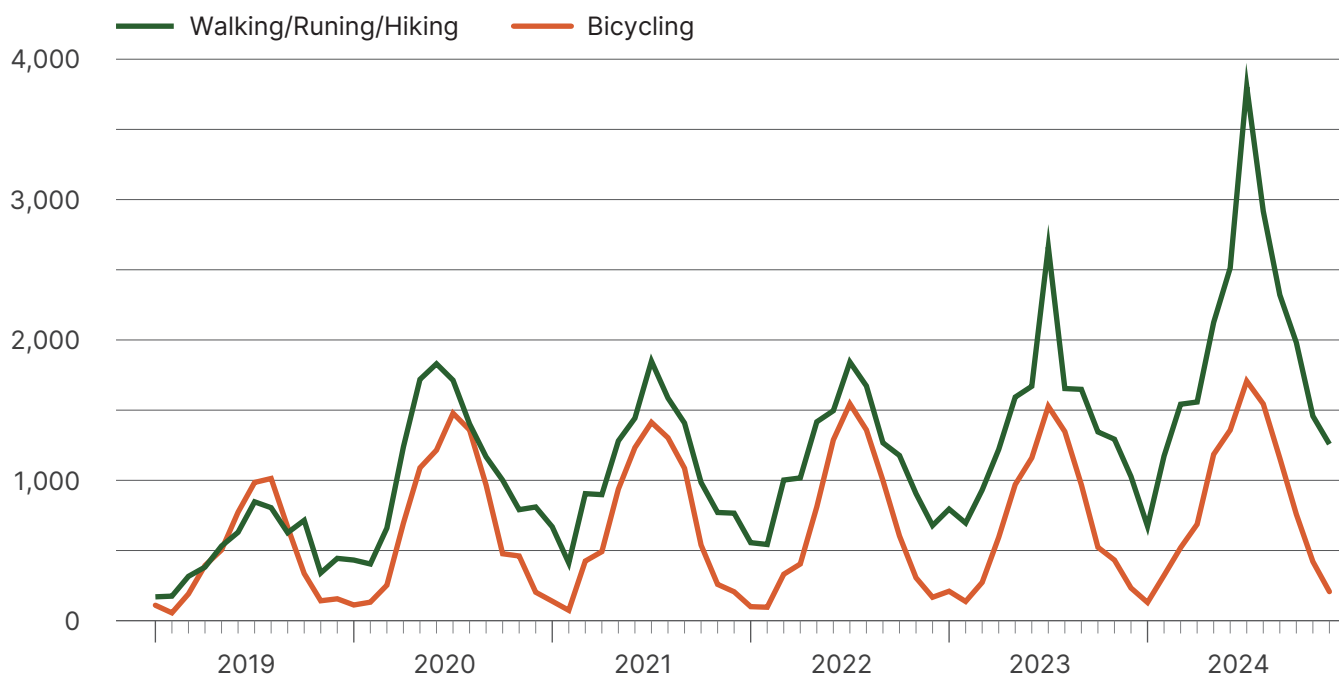


Shared roadways—marked routes where bicyclists and vehicles share space—extend throughout La Porte County, primarily along rural roads with 45 mph speed limits. Nearly 400 miles of these routes have been mapped on *Ride with GPS*, where the County has curated 19 recommended bicycling routes. National and regional trails such as the American Discovery Trail and USBR 35 also pass through the County, with the Great American Rail-Trail planned to follow. Additionally, data from Strava, a popular app for tracking outdoor activities, indicates a steady rise in walking, running, hiking, and cycling trips since 2019, though it reflects only about 10% of total users engaging in these activities. **Figure 2.5** illustrates the frequency with which app users participated in outdoor activities such as walking, running, hiking, and bicycling in La Porte County. The figure presents a comparison of activity

levels before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing a noticeable increase in participation in these forms of outdoor recreation following the onset of the pandemic. Not only did activity levels rise after the pandemic began, but this upward trend has continued steadily in the years since, suggesting a lasting shift in behavior toward more frequent outdoor physical activity.

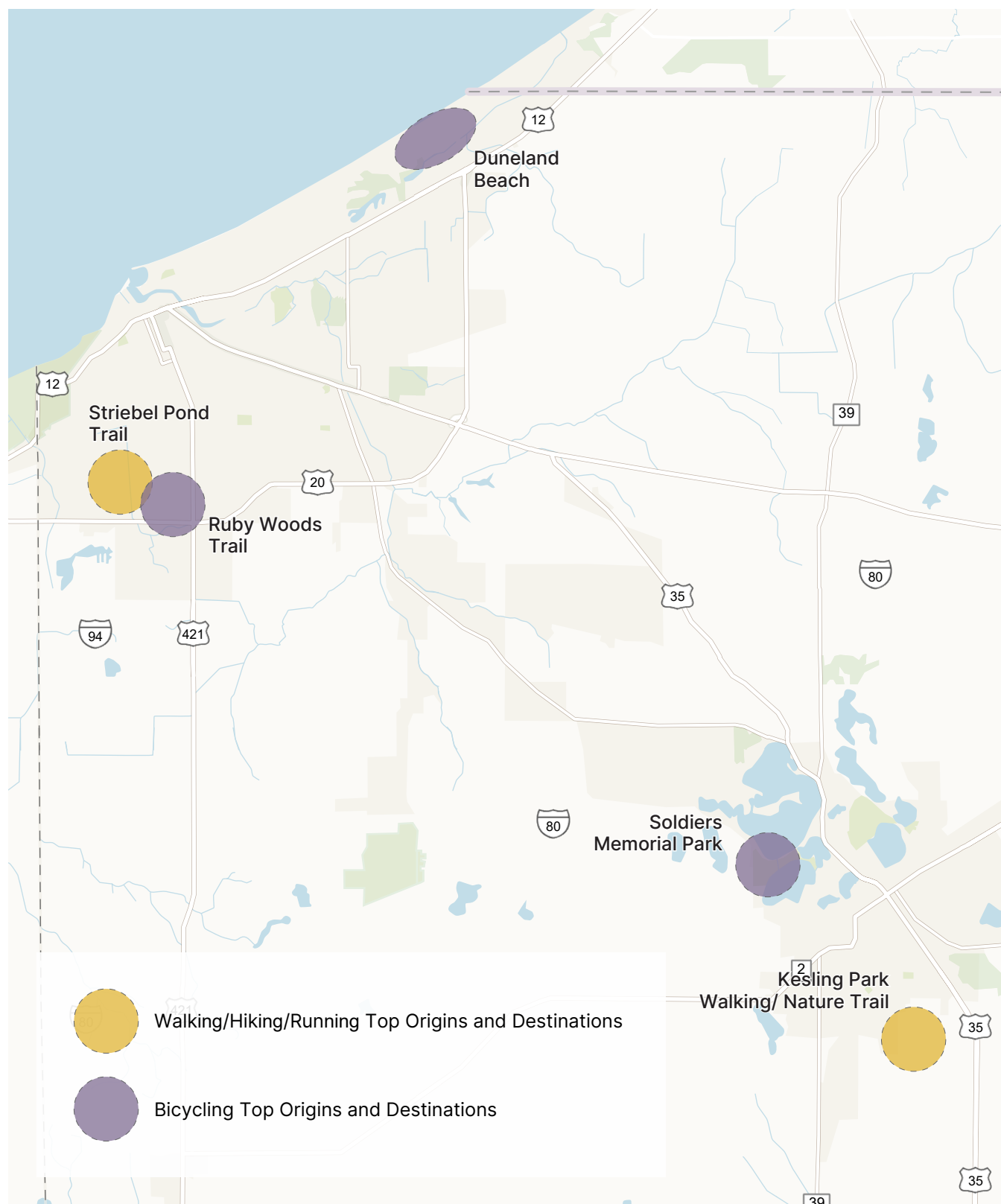
Strava data highlights the most popular origins and destinations for walking, running, and hiking within the County, with Kesling Park Nature Trail in the City of La Porte and Striebel Pond Trail in Michigan City being the top locations. For bicycling, the Soldiers Memorial Park Mountain Biking Trail in La Porte was the most popular, while Ruby Woods Trail and the Duneland Beach area in Michigan City ranked as the most frequented bicycling locations, see **Figure 2.6**.

**Figure 2.5.** Walking/Running/Hiking and Bicycling Trips in La Porte County



Source: Strava

**Figure 2.6.** Top Origin and Destination Spots for Walking/Hiking/Running and Bicycling



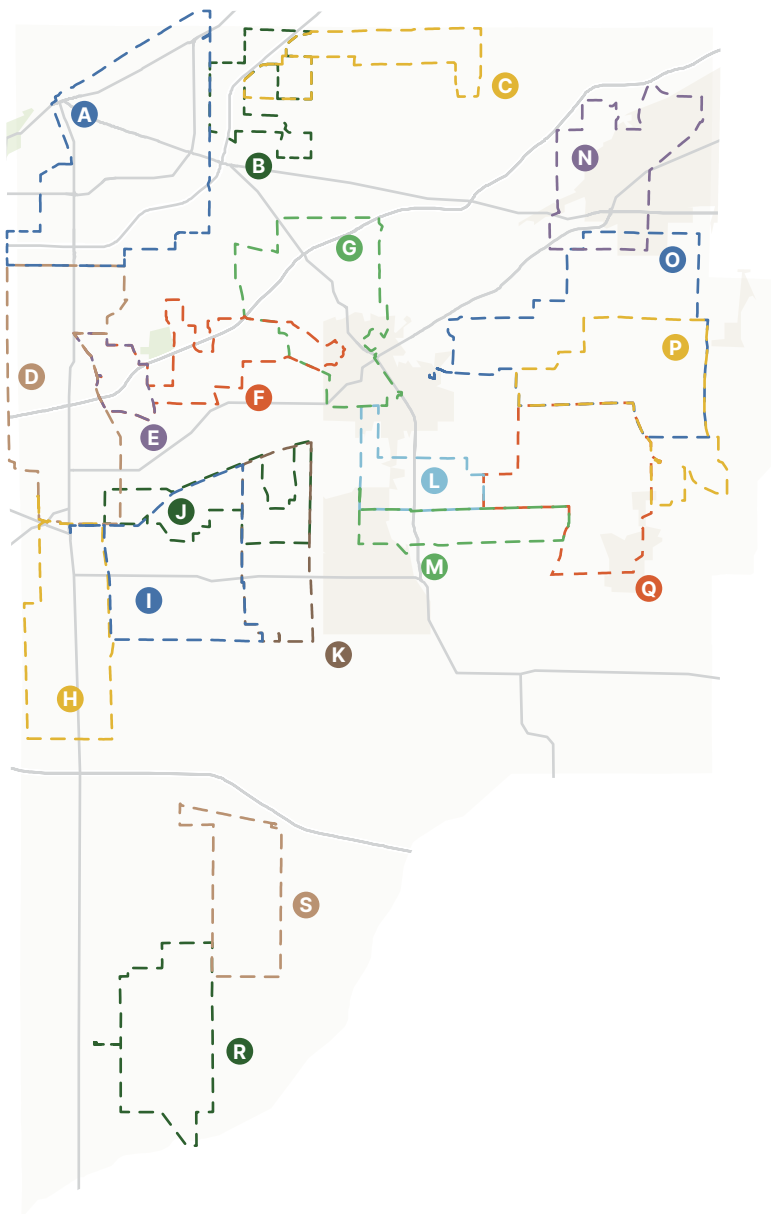
Source: Strava



## Shared Roadways

La Porte County features 19 designated shared roadway routes, spanning nearly 400 miles across the region. Some routes are marked with bicycling signage. The majority of these routes follow two-lane or four-lane roadways that are shared with vehicular traffic. Most County roadways have a speed limit of 45mph unless otherwise posted. Bicyclists can easily access detailed route information through the La Porte County Parks website or the *Ride with GPS* app, which offers maps, navigation tools, and route descriptions to help riders plan their journeys. **Figure 2.7** shows the *Ride with GPS* routes that span across the entire County.

**Figure 2.7.** *Ride with GPS* Routes



### **A Michigan City Loop**

*Length:* 26.2mi

This is an unsigned route that goes near downtown, several Michigan City Parks and along Lakeshore Drive.

### **B Ambler Flatwoods**

*Length:* 20.6mi

Looping through Amber Flatwoods Nature Preserve, this route travels through northern La Porte County, showcasing wetlands, forests, and flowing water. Nearby attractions include the Northern Boreal Forest remnant at Wintergreen Woods Nature Preserve.

### **C Northern Woodlands Loop**

*Length:* 21mi

Unsigned scenic loop that highlights some of the wetlands and woodlands in the County.

### **D Bluhm County Park Loop**

*Length:* 23.7mi

This route starts and ends at Bluhm County Park but travels through Red Mill County Park as well. This route is unsigned.

### **E Ribbon Cutting Route**

*Length:* 8.8mi

This unsigned short ride was created for a ribbon cutting event.

Source: La Porte County Parks

### **F Red Mill Loop**

*Length: 28.1mi*

Red Mill Loop starts and ends at Red Mill County Park. It travels through Soldier's Memorial Park, two of La Porte's natural lakes, Little Calumet River, and Garwood Orchards.

---

### **G La Porte Loop**

*Length: 22mi*

This route travels around the City of La Porte and is near several parks, lakes, downtown shops, and restaurants. This is an unsigned route.

---

### **H Westville Loop**

*Length: 19.6mi*

This unmarked route begins at Bluhm County Park and winds through the town of Westville, offering a mostly rural bicycling experience with minimal elevation change.

---

### **I Prairie Meadows Loop**

*Length: 0.9mi*

This is an unsigned loop that starts in the town of Westville. It travels through rural West Central La Porte County.

---

### **J Door Village Loop**

*Length: 22.6mi*

This route runs through rural La Porte County on flat terrain with minimal elevation change. The route starts and ends at Door Village Park and takes you through agriculture fields near Westville. This is a great route for those wanting a less challenging ride. There is some gravel along 500 South.

---

### **K Union Mills Loop**

*Length: 15.8mi*

This unmarked route begins at Mill Pond Park in Union Mills, winding through the rural landscapes of La Porte County with an elevation change of less than 100 feet from its lowest to highest point.

---

### **L Luhr County Park Loop**

*Length: 13.6mi*

This flat route starts and finishes at Luhr County Park and that travels through rural County roads.

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### **M Kingsbury Loop**

*Length: 16mi*

This route starts at Luhr County Park and travels through parts of Kingsbury Fish and Wildlife areas.

---

### **N Rolling Prairie Loop**

*Length: 19.4mi*

This is an unsigned loop that starts at the Rolling Prairie Public Library and travels through the small town and by Saugany and Hudson Lake.

---

### **O La Porte East**

*Length: 30.2mi*

This rural route travels through agriculture weeks, row crop fields, wetlands, and more while looping around Allesee Park.

---

### **P Fish Lake Loop**

*Length: 24.8mi*

This is an unmarked route that starts at the library in Fish Lake and travels through rural La Porte County.

---

### **Q Wildlife Loop**

*Length: 20.7mi*

This unsigned route begins at the Kingsbury Fish and Wildlife Area office, passing near the town of Fish Lake and through the rural landscapes of La Porte County. It is a good choice for bicyclists looking to spot wildlife along the way.

---

### **R La Crosse Loop**

*Length: 18.9mi*

This unsigned route starts in La Crosse and goes through farms near the Kankakee and Yellow Rivers.

---

### **S Hanna Loop**

*Length: 16mi*

This unsigned route begins at the Hanna Public Library and winds through the rural landscape of southern La Porte County. With only about 50 feet of elevation change, the terrain remains consistently flat throughout.

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## Trail-by-Trail Snapshot

As part of the current conditions assessment, a trail inventory was compiled to provide a clear overview of all active trails in La Porte County. The trails are categorized based on their relationship to developed areas, including:

- Michigan City Area
- City of La Porte Area
- Holmesville Area
- Westville Area
- Union Mills Area

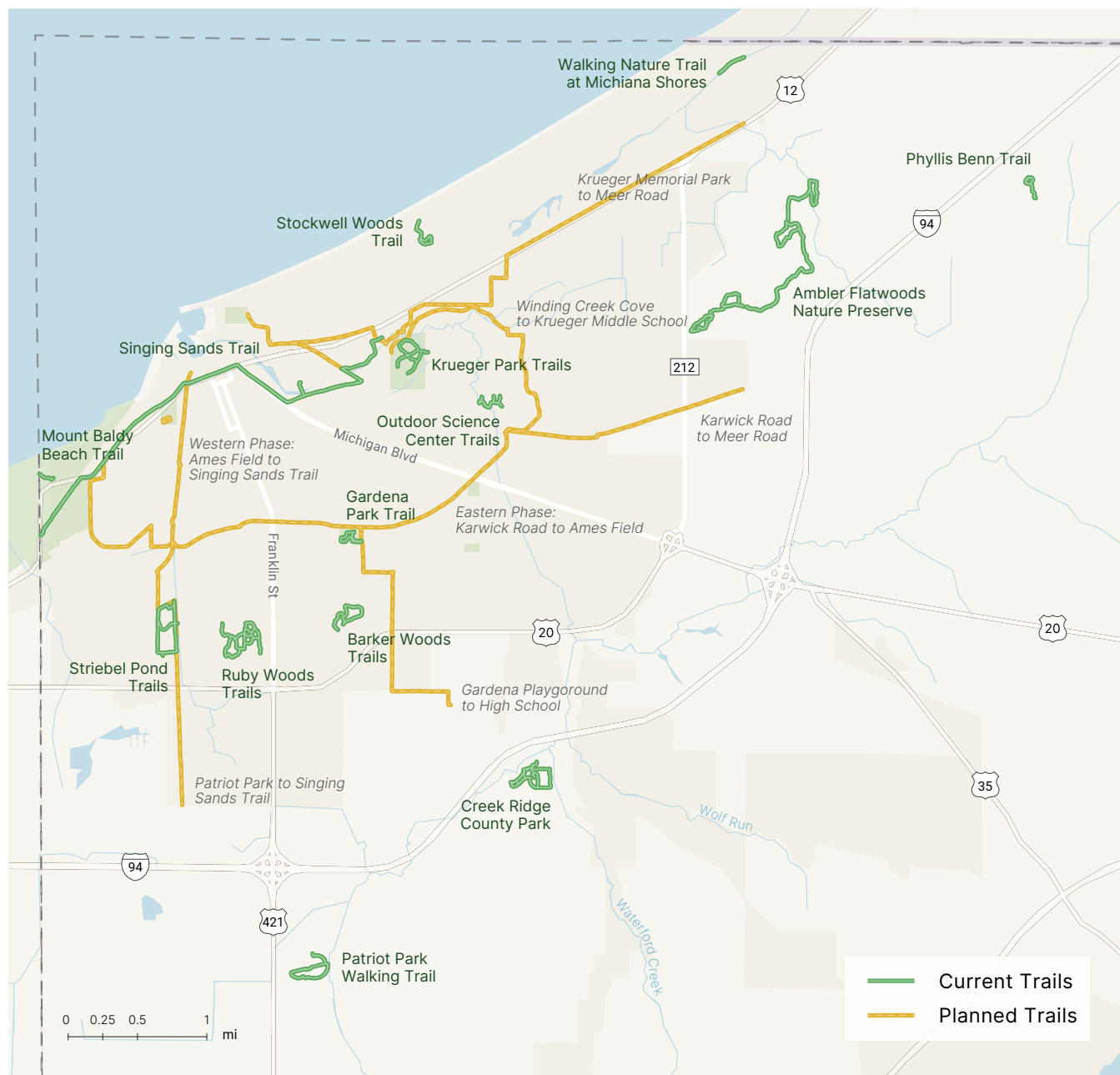




## Michigan City Area

According to the IDNR - Open Trails data, the Michigan City area has the most trails in the County, with a total of 13 trail systems. Additionally, seven planned trail developments will enhance connectivity between several existing trails. Uniquely situated near the Michigan Lakeshore, these trails traverse a variety of landscapes, including urban, suburban, and rural areas. **Figure 2.8** illustrates the current and planned trails in the Michigan City area.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 2.8.** Michigan City Area Current and Planned Trails



Source: IDNR, Michigan City



### **Singing Sands Trail**

#### **- Liberty Trail to Calumet Trail and Winding Creek Cove to Hansen Park**

The 10 ft wide Singing Sands Trail links Northwest Indiana to the Chicago area and is part of the larger Marquette Greenway, which will eventually connect Chicagoland to southwest Michigan. Currently, the trail spans just over six miles, but once completed, it will extend beyond nine miles and connect into Michigan. The trail is located in Michigan City and according to the Michigan City Parks and Recreation Department, the Singing Sands Trail will offer access to more than 175 businesses and a workforce of nearly 6,000 employees within a half-mile radius.<sup>12</sup>

**LENGTH** 6.1 miles

**SURFACE** Asphalt

**USE**

Hiking, Road Bike, Roller Skating/Blading

**MANAGING ENTITY**

Michigan City Parks and Recreation Department

**ACCESS POINT**

Calumet Trail Parking Lot, US-12,  
Town of Pines, IN 46350

**ADA Accessible** ✓

### **Outdoor Science Center Trails**

The 100+ acres surrounding Krueger Middle School have been converted into a nature-focused science center. The Krueger Outdoor Environmental Science Center contains four distinct areas: the Bird Habitat Trail, the Forest Management Area, the Savanna Prairie, and the Wetlands Area, located behind Krueger Middle School. Community members are welcome to explore the trails or enjoy a peaceful walk through the natural surroundings.

**LENGTH** 0.5 miles

**SURFACE** Natural

**USE** Hiking, Education

**MANAGING ENTITY**

Krueger Middle School

**ACCESS POINT**

2001 Springland Ave, Michigan City, IN 46360

### **Mount Baldy Beach Trail**

The Mount Baldy Beach Trail is a short, but challenging hike due to its steep, loose sand. Located within Indiana Dunes National Park, this trail provides access to the beach and offers stunning views of Lake Michigan. While the summit remains closed to the public, it is accessible during ranger-led programs. The trail is located within Michigan City and the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. It is surrounded by the park's forested landscapes and scenic lakeshore dunes.<sup>13</sup>

**LENGTH** 0.75 miles

**SURFACE** Natural

**USE** Hiking

**MANAGING ENTITY**

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

**ACCESS POINT**

Trailhead parking lot - 101 Rice St (US-12),  
Michigan City, IN 46360

### **Ambler Flatwoods Nature Preserve**

With miles of trails, Ambler Flatwoods is an ecosystem with over 20 species of reptiles and amphibians and 39 plant species to explore. The trail is easy to navigate but can be muddy during seasonally wet times of the year. The preserve site is roughly 521 acres, allowing for off-trail opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

**LENGTH** 4 miles

**SURFACE** Natural/Boardwalk

**USE** Hiking

**MANAGING ENTITY**

Shirley Heinze Land Trust

**ACCESS POINT**

The primary parking lot can be found north of Tryon Road on the west side of Meer Road. For those accessing the northern trailhead, parking is available on Freyer Road, just east of Meer Road.



### ***Creek Ridge County Park Trails***

At 112 acres, Creek Ridge County Park located just south of Michigan City offers a variety of amenities including hiking trails, fishing, playgrounds, wildlife viewing and more. This park features a series of boardwalks to hike that are situated along the creek.<sup>15</sup>

**LENGTH** 1.6 miles

**SURFACE** Asphalt, Gravel, and Natural

#### **USE**

Hiking, Road Bike, Mountain Bike, Skiing, Roller Skating/Blading allowed at some trails (see table below)

#### **MANAGING ENTITY**

La Porte County Parks Department

#### **ACCESS POINT**

7943 W 400N, Michigan City, IN 46360

	Trail 1	Trail 2	Trail 3	Trail 4
<b>Surface</b>	Asphalt	Natural	Natural/ Gravel	Asphalt/ Boardwalk/ Natural
<b>Hiking</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Road Bike</b>	✓			
<b>Skiing</b>	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Roller Skating/ Blading</b>	✓			
<b>Fishing</b>				✓
<b>ADA Accessibility</b>	✓			✓

### ***Barker Woods Trail***

As a part of the Barker Woods Forest preserve, Barker Woods is a relatively flat trail known for its outstanding display of fall colors and different bird species. There are many tree varieties to be found here.<sup>16</sup>

**LENGTH** 0.8 miles

**SURFACE** Natural

**USE** Hiking

#### **MANAGING ENTITY**

Shirley Heinze Land Trust, Save the Dunes

#### **ACCESS POINT**

444 Barker Rd, Michigan City, IN 46360

### ***Gardena Park Trail***

Gardena Park in Michigan City, Indiana, is a 12-acre multi-purpose park offering a variety of recreational amenities. The park features a half-mile asphalt walking trail suitable for leisurely strolls and exercises. Additional facilities include a recently renovated ADA-accessible playground, two ball diamonds, a full basketball court, three picnic shelters, and seasonal indoor restrooms.

**LENGTH** 0.5 miles

**SURFACE** Asphalt

**USE** Hiking, Road Bike, Roller Skating/Blading

#### **MANAGING ENTITY**

Michigan City Parks and Recreation Department

#### **ACCESS POINT**

Wrobel Avenue and Gardena Street

### ***Ruby Woods Trails***

Ruby Woods is a 35-acre forested park centrally located in Michigan City, Indiana. The park features walking trails that wind through its natural landscapes, offering visitors a serene environment for hiking and nature observation. Seasonal, accessible restrooms are available to enhance visitor convenience.

**LENGTH** 1.8 miles

**SURFACE** Natural

**USE** Hiking

#### **MANAGING ENTITY**

Michigan City Parks and Recreation Department

#### **ACCESS POINT**

3535 Franklin St, Michigan City, IN 46360



### ***Walking Nature Trail at Michiana Shores***

The Walking Nature Trail at Michiana Shores is a pedestrian pathway through wooded areas along White Creek. The trail provides access to natural habitats, seasonal wildflowers, and birdwatching opportunities.

**LENGTH** 0.3 miles

**SURFACE** Crushed stone

**USE** Hiking

**MANAGING ENTITY**

Michiana Shores Park Board

**ACCESS POINT**

Brook Park and Brookside Drive

### ***Krueger Park Trails***

Located in Krueger Memorial Park, these walking paths wind through the park's greenery offering the perfect place for a leisurely stroll. These trails are suitable for walking, running, and other outdoor sports. The park offers a serene ambiance that makes it a perfect destination for those seeking a connection with nature.<sup>17</sup>

**LENGTH** 1 miles

**SURFACE** Natural

**USE** Hiking

**MANAGING ENTITY**

Michigan City Parks and Recreation Department

**ACCESS POINT**

801 Liberty Trail, Michigan City, IN 46360

### ***Striebel Pond Trails***

The park features family and dog-friendly outdoor recreational space, picnic shelters, seasonal restrooms, and a 1.4-mile walking trail for public use.

**LENGTH** 1.4 miles

**SURFACE** Asphalt

**USE**

Hiking, Road Bike, Roller Skating/Blading

**MANAGING ENTITY**

Sanitation District of Michigan City

**ACCESS POINT**

South: 5560 N 1100W, Michigan City, IN 46360

North: 1607 Earl Rd, Michigan City, IN 46360

### ***Patriot Park Walking Trail***

This non-motorized asphalt walking trail is situated within the Patriot Park Sports Complex. The complex features four professionally lit baseball/softball diamonds, an additional baseball field, electronic scoreboards, two press boxes, soccer fields, a public address system, an on-site concession stand, ADA-accessible restrooms and playground, picnic shelters, and picnic tables.

**LENGTH** 0.92 miles

**SURFACE** Asphalt

**USE** Hiking, Roller Skating/Blading

**MANAGING ENTITY**

Michigan City Parks and Recreation Department

**ACCESS POINT**

2224 N 950 W, Michigan City, IN 46360

### ***Stockwell Woods Trail***

This half-mile dirt trail travels through the Stockwell Woods Nature Preserve, offering visitors a tranquil environment. The trail is well-maintained, thanks to the efforts of volunteers and staff who have worked diligently to create a spacious pathway. This maintenance not only enhances the hiking experience but also promotes safety by reducing tick exposure, making it more comfortable for visitors to explore the dunes and wooded areas.<sup>18</sup>

**LENGTH** 0.5 miles

**SURFACE** Natural

**USE** Hiking

**MANAGING ENTITY**

Save the Dunes

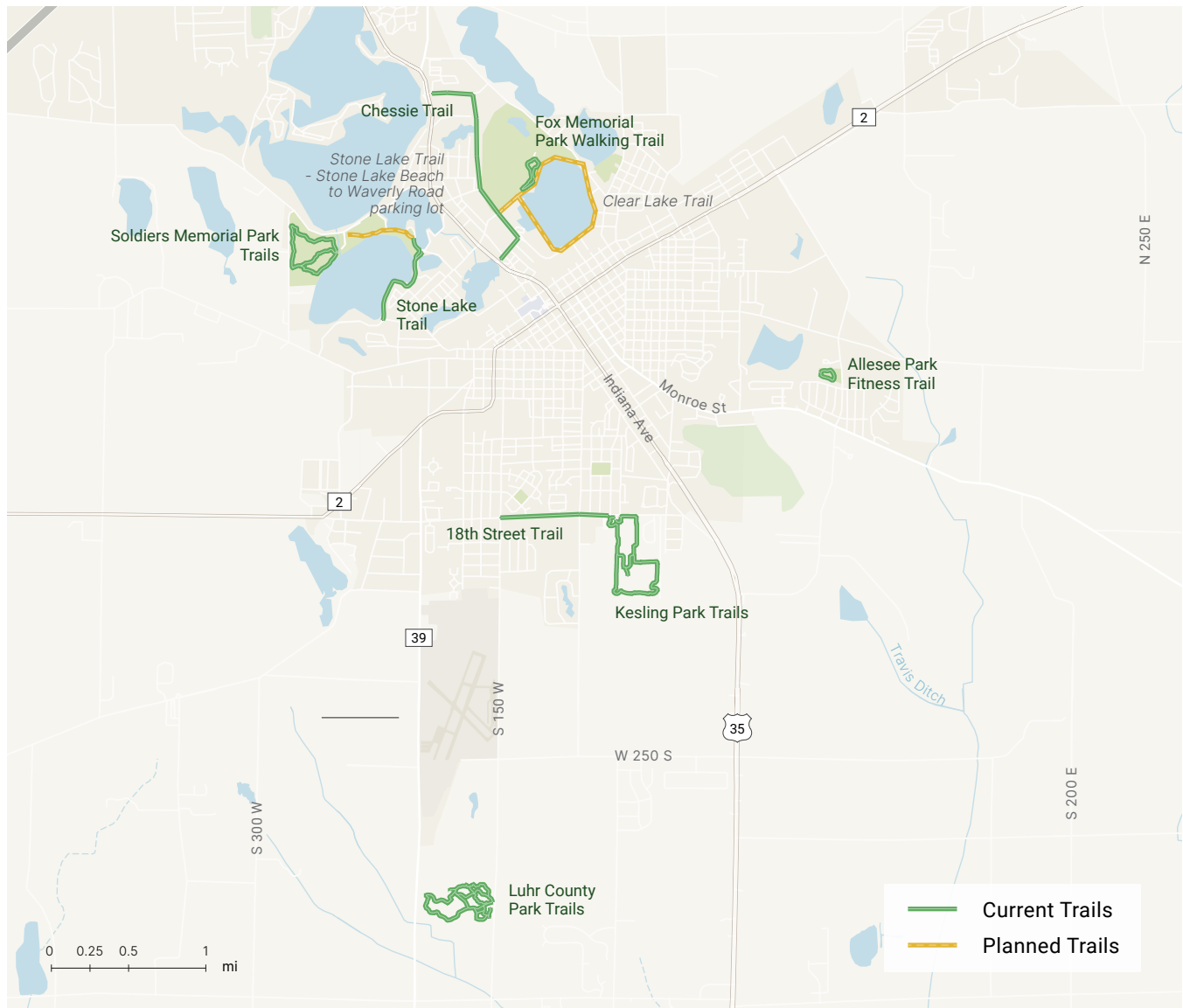
**ACCESS POINT**

1601 Nichols Ct, Long Beach, IN 46360

## City of La Porte Area

The City of La Porte trail area features multiple trail networks spanning various City and County parks. Currently, there are five established trails and trail systems, with one additional trail planned. These trails range from neighborhood walking paths to extensive networks that serve as key community recreation hubs. Located in both urban and suburban settings, they offer diverse recreational opportunities. **Figure 2.9** illustrates the existing and planned trails in the City of La Porte area.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 2.9.** City of La Porte Area Current and Planned Trails



Source: IDNR, City of La Porte



### ***18th Street Trail (Underway)***

The project involves constructing a multi-use path on the south side of 18th Street between Kingsbury Avenue and I Street, along with new sidewalks on Kingsbury Avenue to improve accessibility in the area.

**LENGTH**      About 1 miles

**SURFACE**      Paved

**MANAGING ENTITY**

City of La Porte Parks and Recreation Department

**ACCESS POINT**

Kingsbury Avenue or I Street

### ***Chessie Trail***

This multi-use path connects Pine Lake to Newport Landing on the city's north side, beginning at Kiwanis-Teledyne Park along Pine Lake Avenue. Funded primarily through federal CMAQ grants to reduce traffic and improve air quality, the project received a local match from the Healthcare Foundation of La Porte.

**LENGTH**      1.5 miles

**SURFACE**      Paved

**USE**

Hiking, Road Bike, Roller Skating/Blading

**MANAGING ENTITY**

City of La Porte Parks and Recreation Department

**ACCESS POINT**

East Shore Parkway or near Truesdell Avenue

### ***Soldiers Memorial Park Trails***

Soldiers Memorial Park features a diverse network of trails that includes 556 acres of woodlands and lakeshore, offering opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country skiing. Designed for both recreation and environmental education, the trails connect key areas of the park, making it a destination for outdoor enthusiasts year-round.

**LENGTH**      6.97 miles

**SURFACE**      Natural

**USE**              Hiking

**MANAGING ENTITY**

City of La Porte Parks and Recreation Department

**ACCESS POINT**

350 Grangemouth Drive, La Porte, IN 46350

### ***Stone Lake Trail***

***- Craven Dr to Stone Lake Beach***

The Stone Lake Trail is a scenic 0.8-mile, 8.5-foot-wide multi-use path along Stone Lake in La Porte, Indiana, connecting Craven Drive to the Stone Lake Beach House via Lake Shore Drive and Grangemouth Road. Designed for walkers, runners, and bicyclists, it features bump-out nodes every 500 feet for scenic lake access. The project also includes shoreline restoration with native plantings and erosion control to enhance ecological health.

**LENGTH**      0.8 miles

**SURFACE**      N/A

**USE**

Hiking, Road Bike, Roller Skating/Blading

**MANAGING ENTITY**

City of La Porte Parks and Recreation Department

**ACCESS POINT**

250 Pine Lake Ave, La Porte, IN 46350

**ADA Accessible** ✓

### ***Fox Memorial Park Walking Trail***

Fox Memorial Park is approximately 170 acres and offers a variety of recreational amenities. The park features a half-mile paved walking trail that travels through a wooded nature area, providing a serene environment for visitors to enjoy walks. In addition to the walking trail, the park includes Clear Lake, a 100-acre body of water suitable for fishing and boating activities. Other facilities include ball diamonds, playgrounds, picnic shelters with grills, and the Thrills 'n' Spills Skate Park. The Dennis F. Smith Amphitheater within the park hosts various events, such as the Arts in the Park summer concert series.<sup>20</sup>

**LENGTH**      0.5 miles

**SURFACE**      Asphalt

**USE**              Hiking

**MANAGING ENTITY**

City of La Porte Parks and Recreation Department

**ACCESS POINT**

Along Taylor Drive near Truesdell Avenue

### **Allesee Park Fitness Trail**

The Allesee Park Fitness Trail is a short, looped walking path located within Allesee Park that offers a dedicated space for walking, jogging, and exercise, with the trail winding through the park's grounds and featuring fitness stations along the route; it's a popular spot for residents to exercise outdoors.<sup>21</sup>

**LENGTH** 0.2 miles

**SURFACE** Asphalt

**USE** Hiking, Roller Skating/Blading

**MANAGING ENTITY**

City of La Porte Parks and Recreation Department

**ACCESS POINT**

Parkview Avenue and Silverbrook Avenue

### **Kesling Park Trails**

Kesling Park trail is a loop trail that is approximately two miles long. Open year-round, the trail's flat terrain makes it ideal for running and walking. Dogs are welcome but must be on a leash.<sup>22</sup>

**LENGTH** 2 miles

**SURFACE** Asphalt and Mulch

**USE**

Hiking, Roller Skating/Blading on the walking trail

**MANAGING ENTITY**

City of La Porte Parks and Recreation Department

**ACCESS POINT**

Near 2150 A Street, La Porte, IN 46350

**ADA Accessible on the walking trail** ✓

### **Luhr County Park**

With four ecosystems to explore—upland forest, wetland, prairie, and pond—Luhr County Park is a place where all visitors can find an activity they enjoy. At 94 acres, there are multiple park activities including paved trails, playgrounds, dog exercise areas, and geocaching. This park also features a nature center where all ages are able to explore hands-on environmental displays and exhibits.<sup>23</sup>

**LENGTH** 2.2 miles

**SURFACE** Asphalt and Natural

**USE**

Hiking, Road Bike and Roller Skating/Blading available at Trail 1, Fishing

**MANAGING ENTITY**

La Porte County Parks Department

**ACCESS POINT**

3178 S 150 W, La Porte, IN 46350

**ADA Accessible on the walking trail** ✓





# Holmesville Area

The Holmesville area features two trail systems located near Red Mill Park and the Little Calumet Headwaters Nature Preserve. Currently, no new trails are planned for this area. The existing trails are situated in predominantly rural settings. **Figure 2.10** illustrates the trail systems in the Holmesville area.

**Figure 2.10.** Holmesville Area Current Trails



Source: MTB Project<sup>26</sup>, IDNR

## Red Mill Park Trails

Red Mill Park is set on 160 acres just south of Michigan City near US-421, the area includes nearly 20 acres multi-use trails. The site offers opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, and fishing, along with picnic spots, restrooms, and a playground. Red Mill features several trail loops and the 108-acre, Little Calumet Headwaters Nature Preserve.<sup>24</sup>

**LENGTH** 1.05 miles  
2.5 miles Mountain Biking Trail

**SURFACE** Asphalt and Natural

**USE** Hiking, Mountain Biking, Fishing

**MANAGING ENTITY**  
La Porte County Parks Department

**ACCESS POINT**  
0185 S Holmesville Rd, La Porte, IN 46350

**ADA Accessible on the paved trail** ✓

## Little Calumet Headwaters Nature Preserve

The Little Calumet Headwaters Nature Preserve, located within Red Mill County Park, protects portions of the headwaters of the Little Calumet River. A pond, maintained by a historic dam originally built to power a former mill, serves as a central feature of the landscape. The area includes diverse ecosystems such as wetlands, seeps, spring runs, and upland forests, supporting a variety of plant life.<sup>25</sup>

**LENGTH** 1.5 miles

**SURFACE** Natural

**USE** Hiking

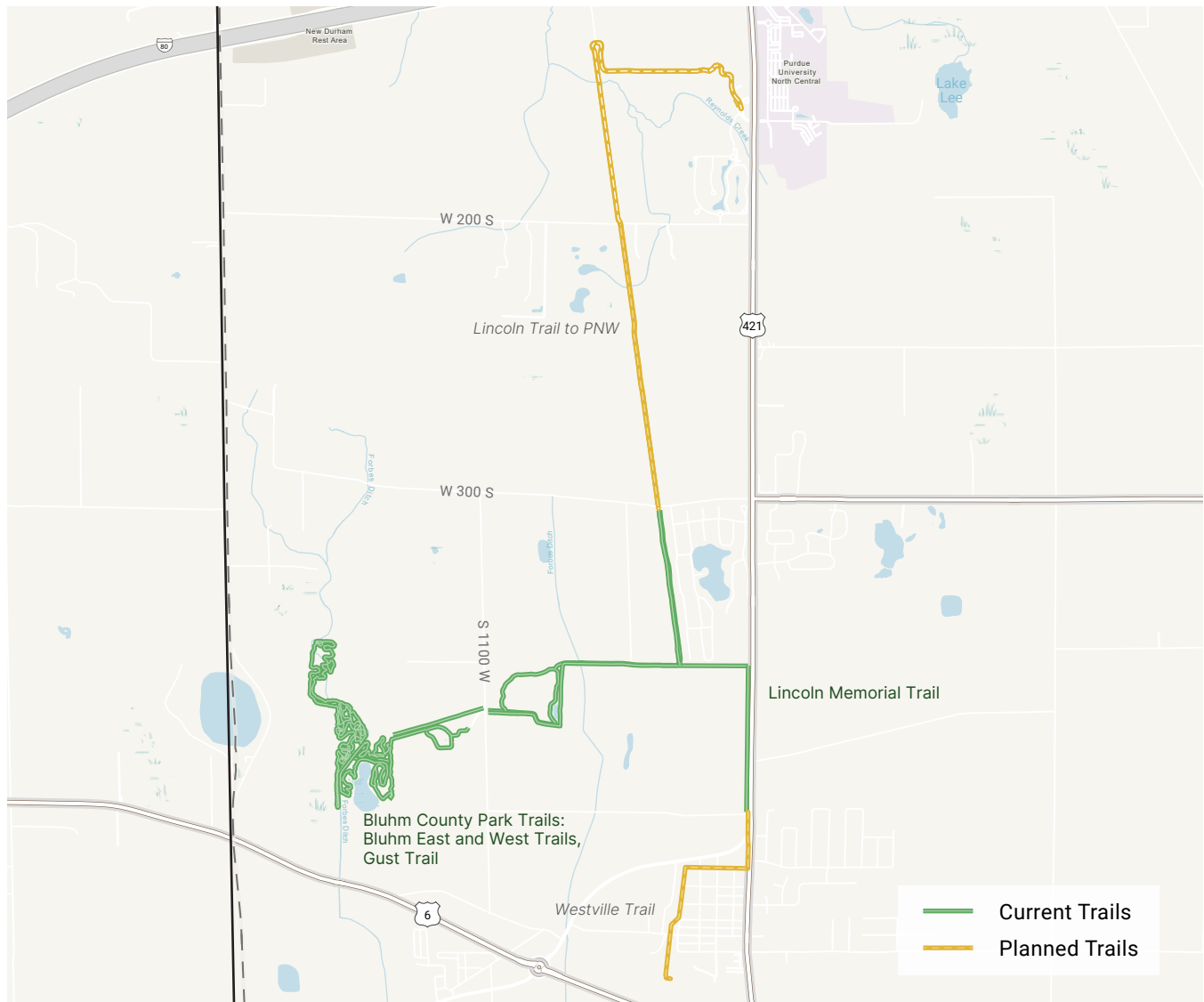
**MANAGING ENTITY**  
La Porte County Parks Department

**ACCESS POINT**  
3178 S 150 W, La Porte, IN 46350

## Westville Area

The Westville Trail area encompasses both the Lincoln Memorial Trail network and the Bluhm County Parks Trail network. A planned extension of the Lincoln Memorial Trail, known as the Westville Trail, will enhance connectivity to more urbanized areas of Westville and Purdue University North West. **Figure 2.11** shows the existing and proposed trails in the Westville area.<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 2.11.** Westville Area Current and Planned Trails



Source: IDNR



## **Bluhm County Park Trails**

### **- Bluhm East and West Trails, Gust Trail**

This 96-acre park features spring wildflowers, upland forests, wetlands, prairies, and a scenic pond. Visitors can explore nature and paved trails, rent a picnic shelter, enjoy picnic areas, a playground, restrooms, and a no-leash dog area. The park's east side has a wildflower viewing, while the west side offers multi-use trails for mountain biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and hiking. It also includes a vibrant wetland habitat, home to abundant waterfowl, including wood ducks and geese.<sup>28</sup>

**LENGTH** 6.8 miles

**SURFACE** Asphalt and Natural at East and West Woods Trails

#### **USE**

Hiking, Road Bike, Mountain Bike, Horse Riding, Roller Skating/Blading varies (see table)

#### **MANAGING ENTITY**

La Porte County Parks Department

#### **ACCESS POINT**

3855 S 1100 W, Westville, IN 46391

	<b>East Woods</b>	<b>Gust Trail</b>	<b>Designated Horse Trail</b>	<b>West Woods</b>
<b>Surface</b>	Asphalt	Asphalt	Natural	Natural
<b>Hiking</b>	✓	✓		✓
<b>Road Bike</b>	✓	✓		
<b>Mountain Bike</b>				✓
<b>Horseback Riding</b>			✓	✓
<b>Ski</b>	✓			✓
<b>Roller Skating/Blading</b>	✓	✓		
<b>ADA Accessibility</b>	✓	✓		

## **Lincoln Memorial Trail**

The Lincoln Memorial Trail is a 1.8-mile multi-use path, located just 15 minutes from Lake Michigan in La Porte County. Bluhm County Park, which offers a playground, bark park, picnic area, restrooms, and parking, with the paved Gust Trail connecting to the Lincoln Memorial Trail. Bluhm County Park spans 96 acres and includes paved and hiking trails, mountain biking, horseback riding, geocaching, and cross-country skiing opportunities.

**LENGTH** 1.75 miles

**SURFACE** Asphalt

#### **USE**

Hiking, Road Bike, Roller Skating/Blading

#### **MANAGING ENTITY**

La Porte County Parks Department

#### **ACCESS POINT**

10406 W 300 S Westville (no parking at this location)

10295 W 350 S Westville

**ADA Accessible** ✓

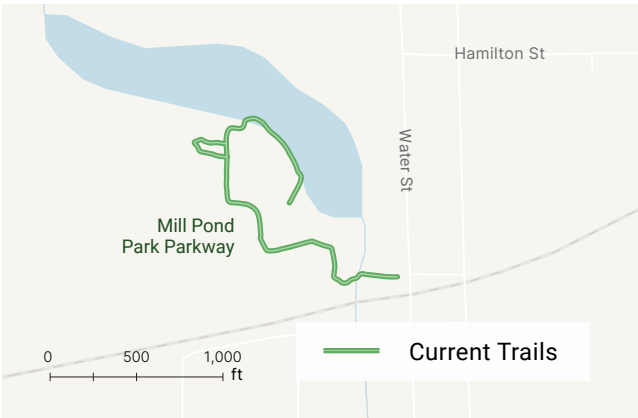




# Union Mills Area

The Mill Pond Park Pathway serves the rural community of Union Mills within Union Mills Park. Located approximately seven miles from Kingsbury along Mill Creek, Union Mills is surrounded by open agricultural land and minimal development. **Figure 2.12** highlights the overall location of the Mill Pond Park Pathway.

**Figure 2.12.** Current Union Mills Area Trail



Source: IDNR

## Mill Pond Park Pathway

This park offers multi-use trails for hiking and mountain biking, along with fishing spots and picnic areas. The well-maintained paths wind through lush greenery.

**LENGTH** 0.6 miles

**SURFACE** Asphalt

**USE** Hiking

**MANAGING ENTITY**

Union Mills Conversation Club

**ACCESS POINT**

100 Mill Pond Rd, Union Mills, IN 46382

**ADA Accessible** ✓



Source: Union Mills Conversation Club

## Trail Connections Across the County and Beyond

La Porte County sits at a crossroads of major regional and national trail systems, including the American Discovery Trail, U.S. Bike Route 35, the Great American Rail-Trail, and the Marquette Greenway. Completing these connections would boost tourism, support local businesses, and enhance access to outdoor recreation across the Midwest.

### **American Discovery Trail**

The American Discovery Trail (ADT) is a coast-to-coast route spanning more than 6,800 miles, linking California to Delaware. Designed for hikers, bicyclists, and outdoor enthusiasts, it connects urban centers, small towns, and remote wilderness areas, showcasing the country's diverse landscapes and cultural heritage. In Colorado, the ADT splits into two distinct routes, the northern route, covering approximately 4,834 miles, and the southern route, extending about 5,057 miles, before merging again in Ohio. These parallel paths provide travelers with different scenic and historical experiences as they traverse the heart of the country. While the northern route crosses La Porte County's southernmost boundary for less than a mile, its presence is still significant to the hiking and bicycling communities.<sup>29</sup>

### **United States Bicycle Route 35 (USBR 35)**

USBR 35 is a bicycling route that begins just northeast of Michigan City and travels south through the City of La Porte before continuing into Jasper County. The route extends through Indianapolis and ultimately reaches Louisville, Kentucky, covering a total distance of 345.5 miles, with approximately 40 miles passing through La Porte County. Bicyclists will experience a range of landscapes along the way, including wetlands, forests, open fields, and farmland. Along the portion of the route in La Porte County, riders can find various amenities, including parks, gas stations, visitor centers, downtown attractions, trails, public restrooms, medical facilities, and camping or lodging options.

### **Great American Rail-Trail**

The Great American Rail-Trail will stretch 3,700 miles from Washington State to Washington, D.C., repurposing former railway lines into scenic trails. Currently, approximately 50% of the trail is complete nationwide. A segment is planned to pass through southern La Porte County, linking the Erie Trail in North Judson to Hebron. Two potential routes are under consideration: one following the banks of the Kankakee River, and another utilizing an abandoned rail corridor that would connect North Judson to La Crosse before extending west to Hebron. The latter option has been referenced in multiple regional plans, including the 2008 Countywide Land Development Plan.<sup>30</sup>

### **Marquette Greenway**

The Marquette Greenway is a multi-use trail project designed to connect Chicago, Illinois, to New Buffalo, Michigan, spanning nearly 60 miles along Lake Michigan. Originating at Calumet Park on Chicago's Southeast Side, the trail provides a continuous route for bicyclists, walkers, and outdoor enthusiasts. As of 2024, approximately 25 miles of the trail have been completed in various sections. In La Porte County, the trail enhances regional connectivity and promotes outdoor recreation.

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) has secured \$17 million in federal RAISE grants to help complete more than 55 miles of trail through Lake, Porter, and La Porte Counties. This investment will benefit approximately 130,000 residents living within a half mile of the route, promoting economic development and enhancing quality of life across the region. La Porte County's involvement ensures that its communities are seamlessly connected to this larger system, providing residents and visitors with expanded access to recreation and the scenic southern shoreline of Lake Michigan.





**Figure 2.13.** Regional Trails around La Porte County

- USBR 35
- USBR 36
- Marquette Greenway
- American Discovery Trail
- Great American Rail-Trail

Source: IDNR, Ride with GPS, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

# Comfort and Safety on Roads and Trails

## Speed Limits

Vehicle speed directly impacts safety, comfort, and accessibility for non-motorized users. Speed limits vary by location and road type to balance safety and traffic flow—lower in residential, school, and urban areas, and higher on highways or rural roads with fewer pedestrians.

### General County Roads

- The default speed limit on all La Porte County roads, unless otherwise posted or specifically designated by the Board of Commissioners, is **45 mph**.

### Specific County Roads

- Some county roads have individually set speed limits. For example:
  - CR 800 E from State Rd. 4 to Wabash Railroad: **40 mph**
  - CR 800 E in the residential area along the east side of the lake: **30 mph**
  - CR 800 N between CR. 425 E and other points may have different limits.
- The County periodically updates and posts new speed limits for specific zones, such as reducing some areas to **35 mph**.

### City of La Porte

- Within the City of La Porte, the speed limit for all motorized vehicles on access roads and streets within the city park system is **20 mph**.
- Some city streets, such as State St. from 1st St. to Tyler St., have recommendations or proposals to lower the speed limit to **20 mph**.

### US and State Highways

- On US 20 in the area of Rolling Prairie, the speed limit was reduced from **55 mph to 45 mph** in certain zones.

### Low-Speed and Off-Road Vehicles

- Low-speed vehicles (such as golf carts) are only permitted on roads with a posted speed limit of **35 mph or below**. They are prohibited on roads with higher speed limits except for crossing at a right angle.





**Figure 2.14.** Speed Limits Roads Category

Category	Location/Example	Speed Limit	Notes
<b>General County Roads</b>	All La Porte County roads (unless otherwise posted or designated)	45 mph	Default speed limit
<b>Specific County Roads</b>	CR 800 E (State Rd. 4 to Wabash Railroad)	40 mph	Individually set limit
	CR 800 E (residential area along east side of the lake)	30 mph	Residential zone
	CR 800 N (between CR 425 E and other points)	Varies	Limits may differ along the stretch
<b>City of La Porte</b>	City park system roads and access streets	20 mph	Applies to all motorized vehicles
	State St. (From 1st St. to Tyler St.)	Proposed: 20 mph	Recommendation or proposal to lower the limit
<b>US and State Highways</b>	US 20 in Rolling Prairie area	Reduced from 55 mph to 45 mph	Specific zones only
<b>Low-Speed/ Off-Road Vehicles</b>	Roads with speed limits $\leq$ 35 mph	Allowed	Prohibited on faster roads except at right-angle crossings

Source: La Porte County<sup>31</sup>

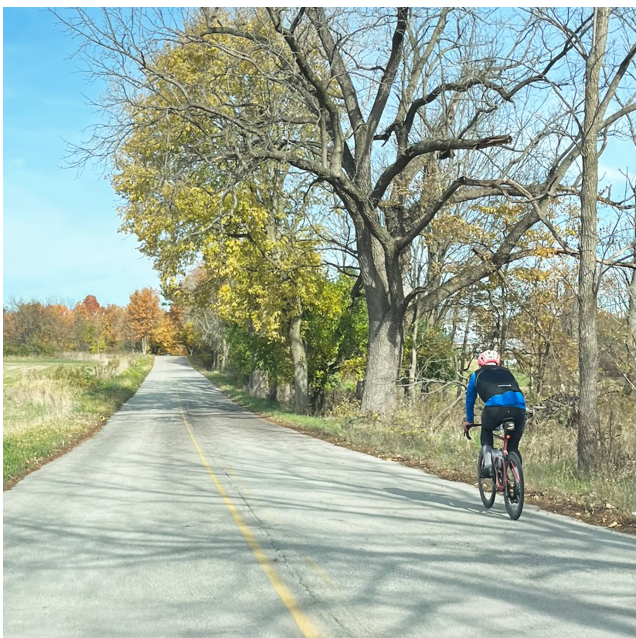




## Bicycle Suitability Routes

To better understand the conditions bicyclists face, the INDOT's Bicycling Suitability Analysis rated state roadways based on their appropriateness for bicycle travel. Suitability is an important metric because it helps planners and bicyclists identify which routes offer safer, more comfortable riding conditions, especially in areas without dedicated infrastructure. The Bicycle Suitability Analysis specifically evaluates roadways from the perspective of experienced adult bicyclists and does not account for the needs of children, novice riders, or those who are uncomfortable sharing lanes with motor vehicles. Bicyclists are categorized into two experience-based groups:

1. **Advanced Adult Bicyclists** – These riders prioritize direct routes with minimal detours or delays. They are comfortable traveling on roadways without dedicated bicycle infrastructure and often bicycle for efficiency and speed.
2. **Basic Riders** – These riders prefer designated bike lanes, multi-use paths, and lower-traffic neighborhood streets. They tend to avoid high-speed, high-traffic roads unless additional space is available for safe travel.



The roadways are broken up into three types: highly, moderately, and not suitable for bicycling.

### Highly Suitable:

Roadways classified as highly suitable provide a moderate level of comfort for basic riders and a high level of comfort for advanced riders. Key characteristics include:

- Two-lane roadways
- Lane widths of 12 feet or more
- Paved shoulders greater than 3 feet wide
- Low traffic volume, with commercial vehicles making up 0-5% of total traffic
- Speed limits of 55 mph or less
- Adequate sight distance

### Moderately Suitable:

These roadways may pose some discomfort for basic riders, while advanced riders experience moderate comfort. This classification includes roadways that meet the above criteria with the following exceptions:

- Multi-lane, non-divided roadways
- Lane widths between 11-12 feet
- Shoulders between 1-3 feet (or no shoulders/curbs in urban settings)
- Moderate sight distance
- Moderate traffic volumes, with commercial vehicles comprising 5-10% of total traffic

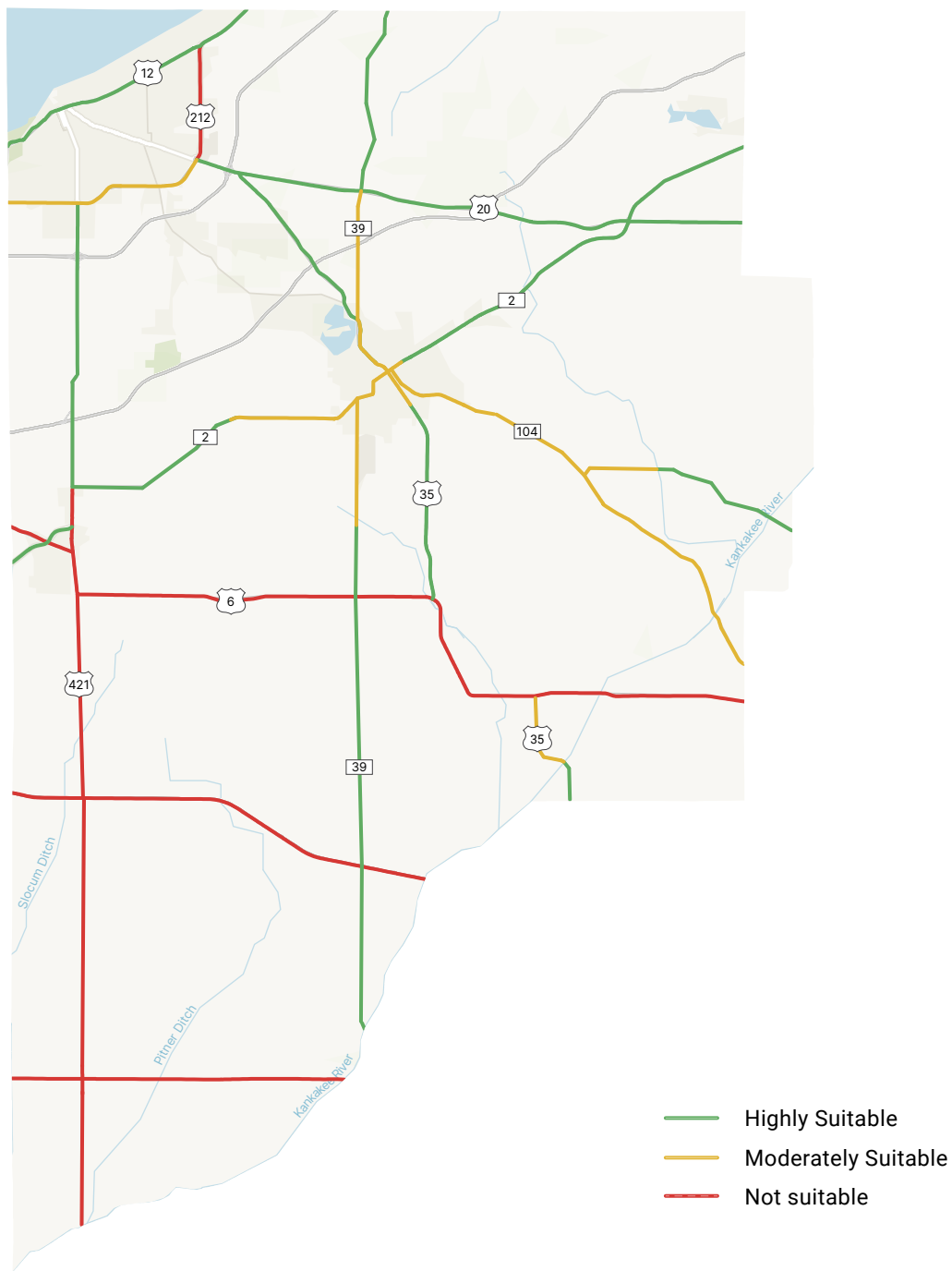
### Not Suitable:

These roadways are not recommended for basic riders, and advanced bicyclists should proceed with caution. They include:

- Multi-lane divided roadways
- High traffic volumes, with more than 10% commercial vehicle presence
- Lanes less than 11 feet wide
- Shoulders narrower than 1 foot or those with rumble strips
- Speed limits exceeding 55 mph
- Limited sight distance<sup>32</sup>

**Figure 2.15** shows which state roads and US highways in La Porte County can be suitable, moderately suitable, and not suitable for bicyclists.

**Figure 2.15.** Suitability for Bicyclists on State Routes



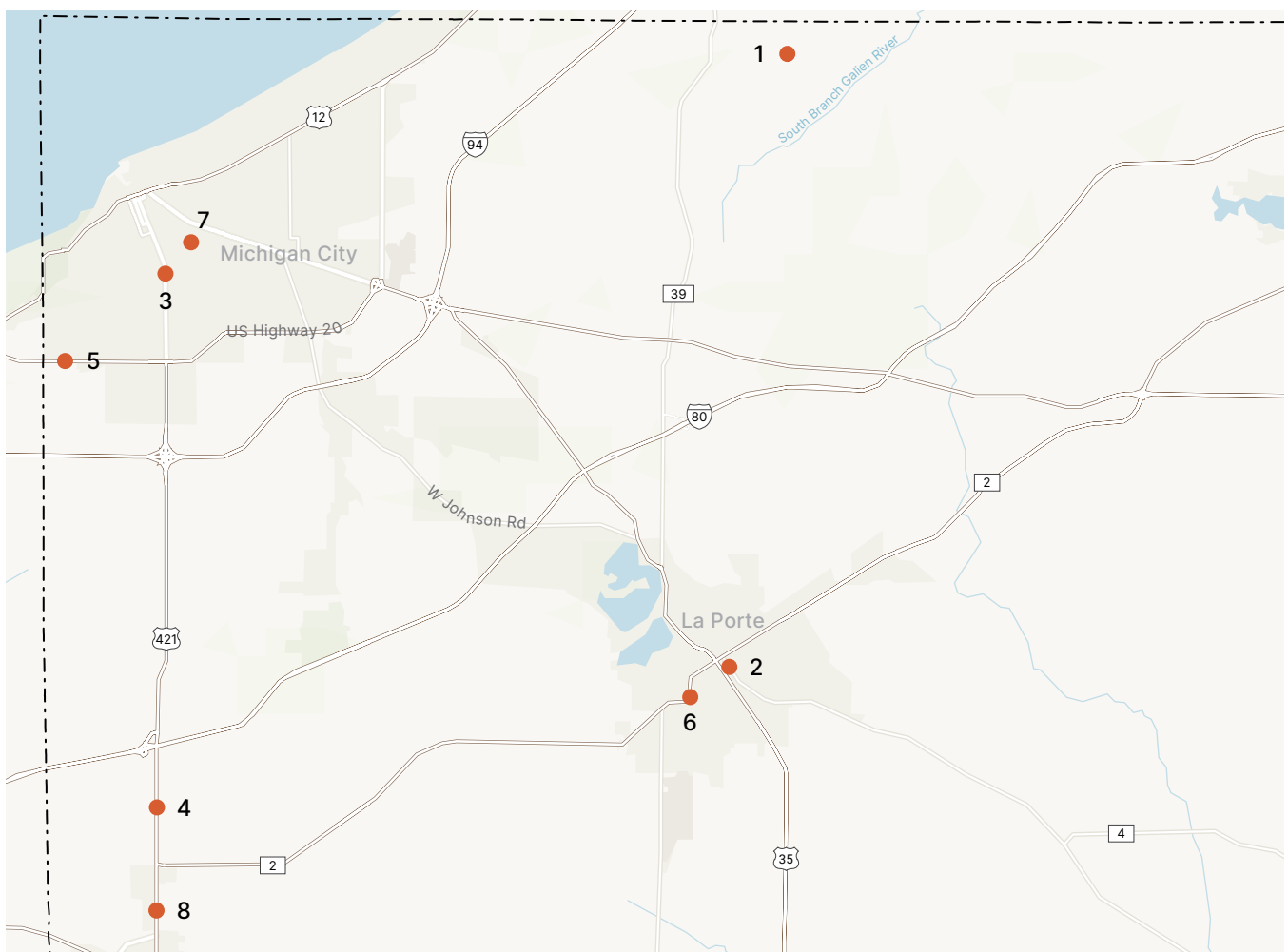
Source: INDOT 2014

## Crash Data

Analyzing fatal crash data helps identify high-risk areas for bicyclists, allowing the County to prioritize safety improvements. This data reveals where bicyclists may face the greatest danger. Since 2008, there have been a total of eight fatal bicycle crashes in La Porte County. While most occurred in urban areas, a few were recorded in rural locations. Two crashes took place on US Hwy 421, including one on a route deemed not suitable for bicycling by IDNR. Five crashes occurred in urbanized areas around Michigan City and the City of La Porte. **Figure 2.16** illustrates the locations of each fatal bicyclist crash between 2008 and 2023.

Most fatal crashes occurred during clear weather but low-light conditions, often in the evening. In some cases, contributing factors included a drowsy driver, a large truck, an inexperienced, or older adult driver. **Figure 2.17** provides details on each crash, including location, date, time, crash type, day of the week, weather, lighting conditions, and other contributing factors. These correspond to the crash map shown in **Figure 2.16**.

**Figure 2.16.** Fatal Bicyclist Crash Map



Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Motor Vehicle Crash Data Querying and Reporting 2008-2023



**Figure 2.17.** Crash Data

	Location	Date	Time	Crash Type	Day of Week	Weather	Light Condition	Notes
<b>1</b>	W County Road 1000N and N Range Road	6/18/2011	8:00-8:59am	Single Vehicle	Saturday	Clear	Daylight	Involved a drowsy driver
<b>2</b>	Monroe Street between Harrison and Noble Street	1/6/2012	6:00-6:59pm	Single Vehicle	Friday	Clear	Dark	Driver over 65 years old
<b>3</b>	Franklin and Arthur Street	9/18/2015	9:00-9:59pm	Single Vehicle	Friday	Cloudy	Dark, but lighted	
<b>4</b>	US Hwy 421 and County Road 200 S	7/26/2016	9:00-9:59pm	Single Vehicle	Tuesday	Clear	Dark, but lighted	Driver under 24 years old
<b>5</b>	US Hwy 20 between N County Line Road and Hitchcock Street	10/8/2016	11:00-11:59pm	Single Vehicle	Saturday	Clear	Dark	
<b>6</b>	J and 6th Street	8/7/2017	6:00-6:59pm	Single Vehicle	Monday	Clear	Daylight	Involved a large truck
<b>7</b>	Madison and Poplar Street	1/6/2018	9:00-9:59pm	Single Vehicle	Saturday	Clear	Dark	
<b>8</b>	US Hwy 421 between County Roads 350 S and 375 S	10/27/2022	6:00-6:59pm	Single Vehicle	Thursday	Cloudy	Dark	

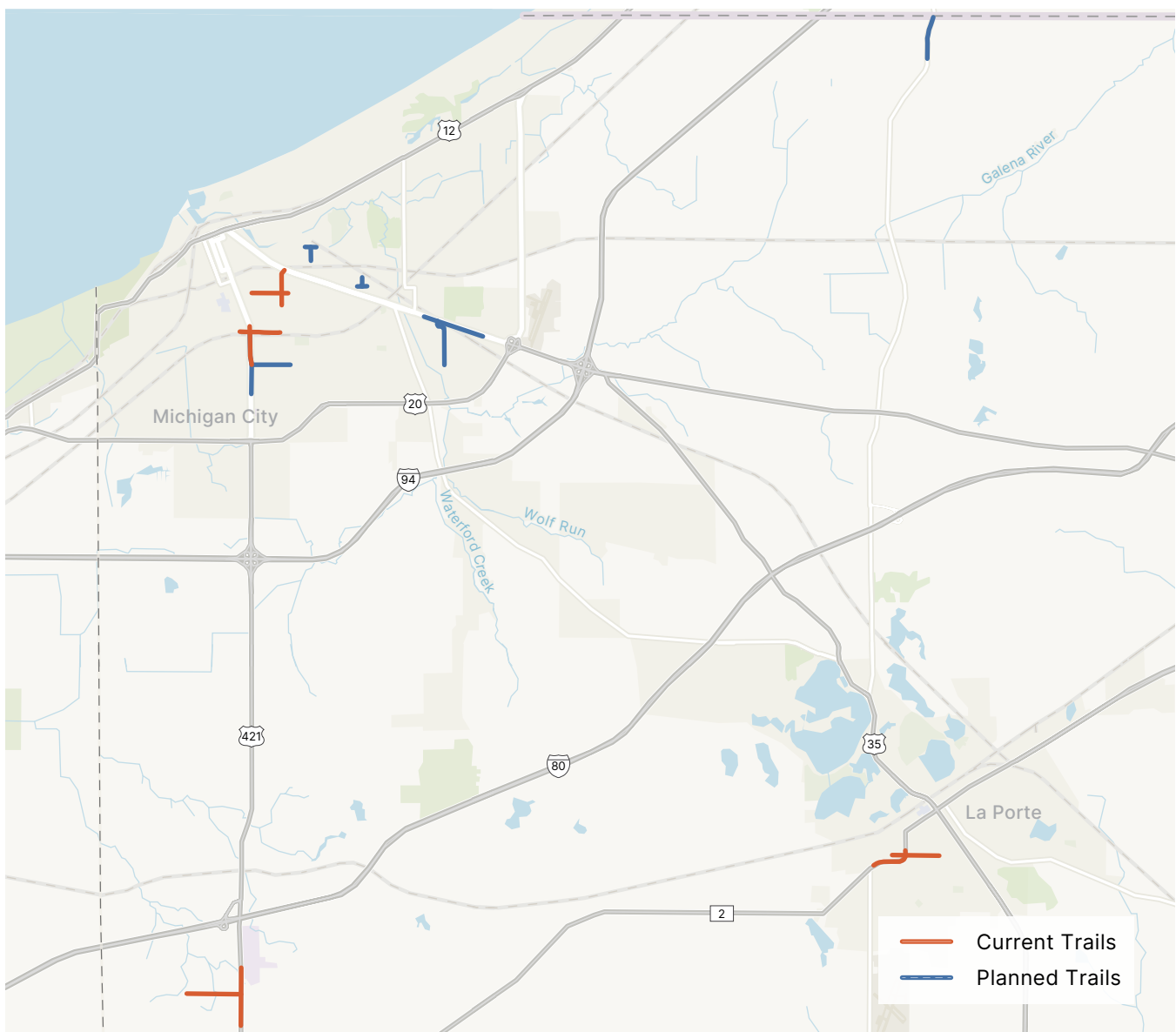
Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Motor Vehicle Crash Data Querying and Reporting 2008-2023

The Safer Streets Priority Finder (SSPF), created by Toole Design with support from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), is a data-informed tool designed to help communities identify and prioritize locations where pedestrian and bicyclist safety improvements are most needed. In La Porte County, this tool offers insights by highlighting high-risk areas allowing for strategic investments in infrastructure such as crosswalks, bike lanes, and

traffic calming features. **Figure 2.18** illustrate the top priority corridors in the County for both pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements.

Michigan City, Rolling Prairie, and the area near Hesston have been identified as having the highest-priority pedestrian crash corridors. For bicycle crash corridors, key areas include Michigan City, the City of La Porte, and the region north of Westville.

**Figure 2.18.** Top Pedestrian and Bicycle Crash Corridors



Source: Safer Streets Priority Finder (SSPF), Toole Design

# Environmental and Land Use Considerations

Several environmental factors could influence trail development across the County. Floodplains, which are prone to flooding and erosion, may limit trail usability. Additionally, numerous brownfields could pose obstacles to development. Lastly, the County has extensive wetlands that may require mitigation or alternative routing to accommodate trail construction.

## Floodplains

Floodplain Zones A, AE, and AH are designations used by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to classify areas with different flood risks. These classifications are important when planning and implementing trail projects. Within La Porte County there are three prominent floodplains present:

- **Zone A:** This is a high-risk flood zone where a 100-year flood (a flood with a 1% chance of occurring annually) is expected, but detailed flood elevations have not been determined.
- **Zone AE:** A high-risk flood zone, but with more detailed flood elevation data available, meaning FEMA has conducted a study to determine the Base Flood Elevation (BFE), which indicates the expected water level during a 100-year flood.
- **Zone AH:** Characterized by shallow ponding (1–3 feet deep) with a defined BFE, requiring drainage improvements, permeable materials, or raised boardwalks to maintain usability.

Several floodplain impacts may also affect implementation:

1. **Regulatory Requirements:** Since A, AE, and AH zones are floodplain areas, any trail planning should consider how these zones would need to comply with local, state, and federal floodplain regulations. Permits from IDNR and FEMA may be required.
2. **Elevation and Design Considerations:**
  - In Zone A, since BFE data is not available, additional flood studies may be needed to ensure proper design.

- In AE zones, trails may need to be built above the BFE or designed to withstand periodic flooding.
- In Zone AH there is the potential for ponding that may require elevated design, drainage solutions, and regulatory compliance for construction.

### 3. Material and Construction Techniques:

- Permeable surfaces (like crushed limestone or elevated boardwalks) can help reduce environmental impact.
- Bridges and culverts may need to be required to maintain natural water flow and prevent washouts.

### 4. Safety and Maintenance:

Trails in flood zones require ongoing maintenance to address erosion, debris accumulation, and possible structural damage after flood events.

The southern portion of the County, particularly along the Kankakee River, contains a significant amount of Zone A flood areas, which have a 1% annual chance of flooding and may impact trail feasibility and implementation. Michigan City and the City of La Porte have some Zone AE areas, requiring design considerations to withstand potential flooding. Zone AH floodplains are limited to a small area in southern Michigan City, including the location of Gardena Park Trail, where occasional flooding may occur, see **Figure 2.19**.<sup>33</sup>



## Brownfields

A brownfield is a previously developed site that is now abandoned, underutilized, or contaminated due to past industrial or commercial activities. These sites may contain environmental pollutants, such as hazardous substances or petroleum, requiring remediation before redevelopment. In trail development, brownfields can pose challenges due to potential contamination, regulatory requirements, and necessary environmental cleanup. However, they also present opportunities for revitalization and transformation into green spaces, including trails and parks.

Throughout the County, numerous brownfield sites exist primarily concentrated in urbanized areas of Michigan City and the City of La Porte. Additionally, a few are located near Westville and in rural areas closer to Kingsford Heights and Mill Creek, see **Figure 2.19**. If trails are developed near these sites, additional mitigation or precautionary measures may be necessary.<sup>34</sup>

## Wetlands

Wetlands can also present significant challenges to trail development, potentially limiting where trails can be constructed and requiring careful planning to minimize environmental impacts. These areas are important ecological resources, supporting biodiversity, improving water quality, and helping with flood control. However, their presence may necessitate mitigation efforts, such as boardwalk construction, rerouting trails, or obtaining special permits to ensure compliance with environmental regulations.

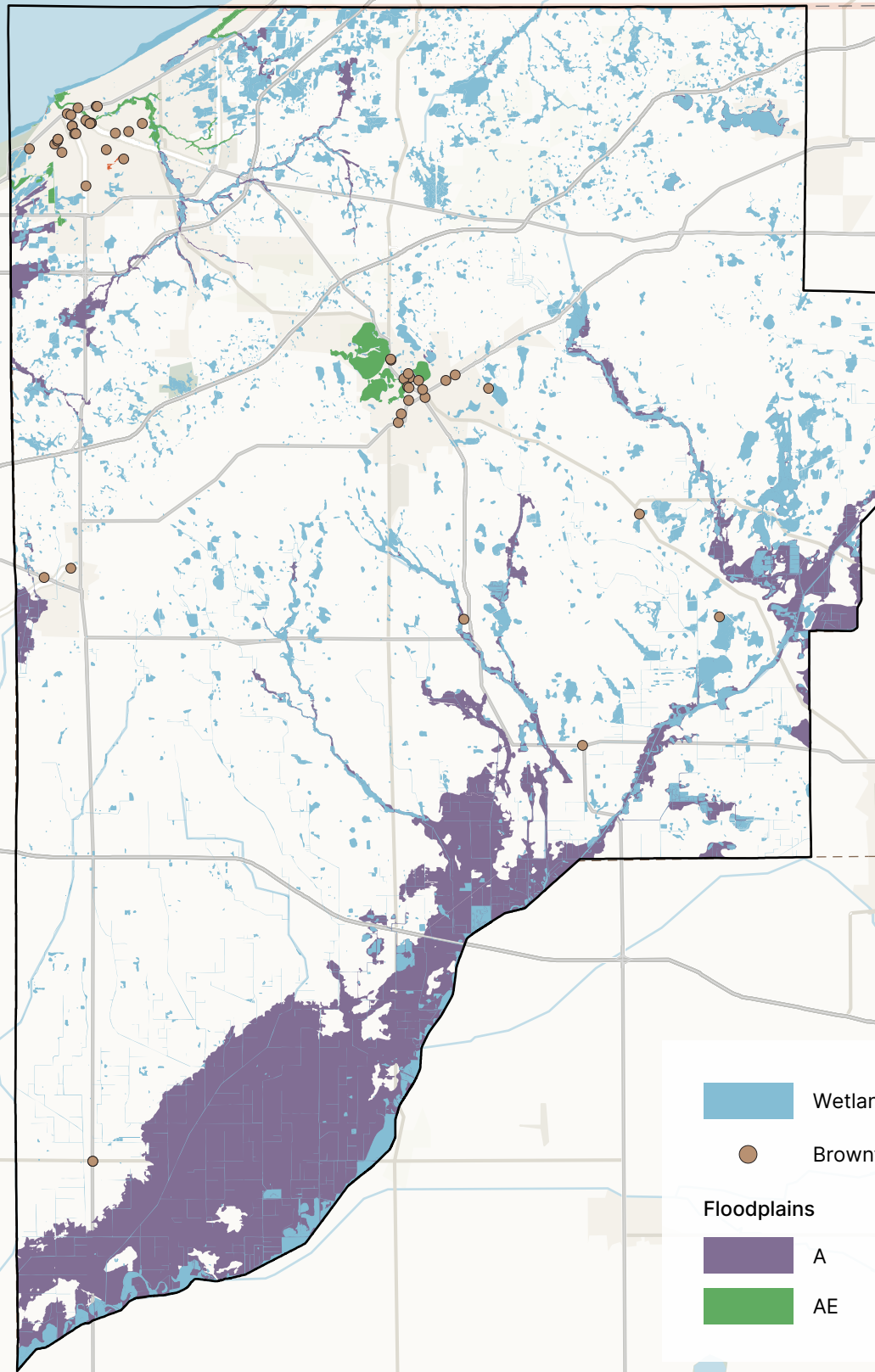
In La Porte County, wetlands are found throughout the landscape, with concentrations in areas such as the City of La Porte, along the Kankakee River, near Mill Creek, and around Kingsford Heights, see **Figure 2.19**. While wetlands are widespread, their scattered distribution requires careful evaluation to identify the best approach for navigating or integrating these sensitive areas into the trail network.<sup>35</sup>

**Figure 2.19** shows the floodplains, brownfield sites, and wetlands present throughout the County.



Photo: Shirley Heinze Land Trust

**Figure 2.19.** Floodplains, Brownfield Sites, and Wetlands



Source: FEMA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Wetlands Mapper, and Indiana Geographic Information Office



# Key Findings

- **Outdoor recreation is growing both nationally and statewide, with outdoor-related professions playing a vital role in the local economy.**
- **Trails and shared roadways in the County are seeing increased use.**
- **While many state roadways are unsuitable for bicycling, several designated routes have been identified as bike-friendly.**
- **The County's trail network spans both urban and natural areas, offering diverse opportunities for recreation and transportation.**
- **Many trails accommodate a range of users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and individuals with disabilities.**
- **Connectivity between trails remains a challenge, with some areas needing further development to create seamless regional links.**
- **High-traffic areas, such as Michigan City and the City of La Porte, feature some of the longest and most developed trails. Michigan City has the most extensive trail systems and planned expansions that integrate local parks and trails into a broader regional network.**





- The City of La Porte, Michigan City, and La Porte County Parks are actively expanding their trail networks.
- Natural trails provide ecological and educational benefits but may require maintenance to improve accessibility and sustainability.
- Shared roadways cover much of the County, but gaps remain in connectivity between the northern and southern regions.
- The County does not have officially published *Ride with GPS* routes that extend across County lines.
- Floodplains in the southern part of the County may impact future trail development.
- Wetlands near urban areas and along the Kankakee River could also affect trail planning and construction.
- Brownfield sites, primarily located in urban areas, may pose challenges for trail development but also present opportunities for redevelopment and revitalization.



# 3

## What We Heard

A range of public engagement strategies were used to gather input, including a County-wide online survey and three public meetings held at different locations across the County. During these meetings, attendees participated in interactive activities designed to collect feedback on areas perceived as unsafe for biking, desired trail and roadway connections, preferred types of trails and infrastructure, and ideas for future shared roadway and trail concepts. In addition to these public events, targeted meetings were conducted with key partners, including municipal representatives from the City of La Porte and Michigan City.







An online survey gathered insights on trail usage patterns, popular destinations for hiking, running, and biking, desired connectivity improvements, spending habits related to outdoor recreation, barriers to walking and biking, and resident preferences for future infrastructure development.

The sections that follow summarize the activities feedback gathered during these meetings and engagement activities.

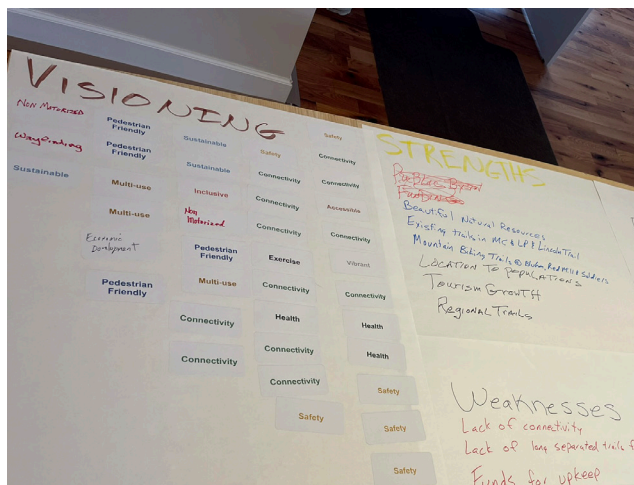
During the public meetings, several common themes consistently emerged around the development of trails and shared roadways. Participants expressed strong support for enhancing connectivity between communities, schools, parks, and key destinations to promote more accessible travel routes for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized users. Accessibility was a major priority, with calls for designing infrastructure that accommodates users of all ages and abilities, including seniors and people with disabilities.

While there was overall enthusiasm for expanding trail and shared roadway networks, concerns were raised regarding funding sources, ongoing maintenance responsibilities, and balance in project distribution to ensure all parts of the County benefit from future investments.



## Key Participants

- La Porte County Planning Commission
- City of La Porte
- Michigan City Parks & Recreation Department
- South County Coalition
- Maple City Bike Club
- Shirley Heinze Land Trust
- IDNR
- INDOT
- Health Foundation of La Porte County
- NIRPC
- City of La Porte Parks
- Bike Stop Cycling Recreation



# Meeting #1

The first public meeting was held on December 17th, 2024, at Red Mill County Park. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the development of this Plan and gather community feedback on their concerns and goals for the Plan's direction.

## Vision Statement Activity

A vision statement activity was conducted to help shape the Plan's priorities. Participants selected 2-3 words from a provided word bank, all related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, including trails and shared roadways. The most frequently selected words will be integrated into the vision statement. The word bank included:

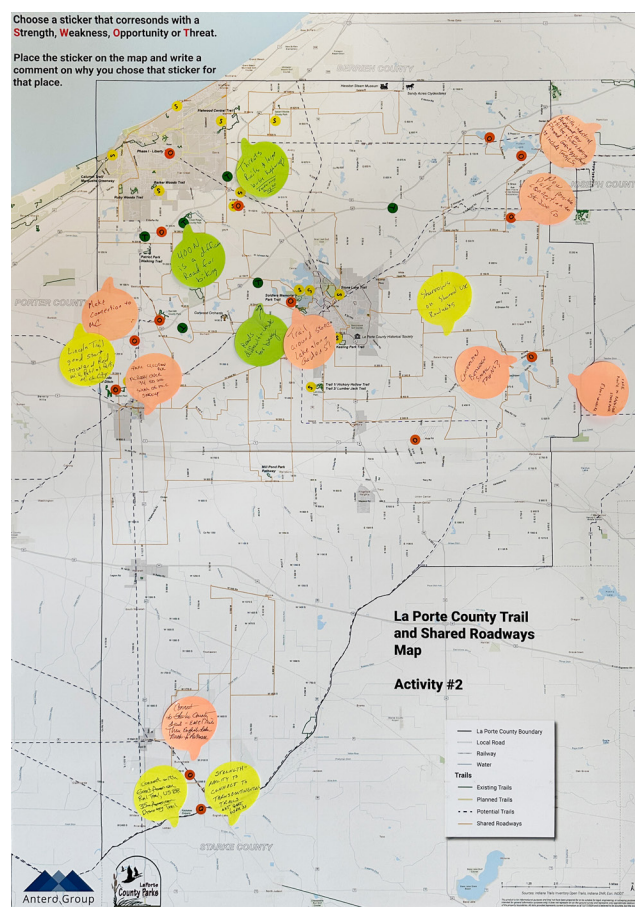
- Multi-use
- Safety
- Vibrant
- Pedestrian Friendly
- Non-motorized
- Wayfinding
- Sustainable
- Connectivity
- Exercise
- Accessible
- Infrastructure
- Health

Attendees were also encouraged to suggest additional words for the word bank. As a result, "inclusive" and "active" were added. The top five words selected through this activity were connectivity, safety, pedestrian-friendly, multi-use, and sustainable.

## SWOT Mapping Exercise

Alongside the Vision Statement activity, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) mapping exercise was conducted to assess the current strengths and areas for improvements of the current trail and shared roadway network. Using a large County map, attendees placed stickers to mark locations they identified as having these characteristics. In total, 20 strengths, three weaknesses, 20 opportunities, and seven threats were recorded (see **Figure 3.1**).

**Figure 3.1.** SWOT Map Activity





Key strengths identified included the favorable placement of existing trail systems, their well-maintained condition, and the availability of mountain biking trails. Weaknesses highlighted a lack of connectivity, and limited funding for development. Opportunities mentioned included expanding connections to smaller towns and parks, improving north-south connectivity within the County, and leveraging new developments to create additional

trails. Threats included concerns about safety on shared roadways, barriers such as railroads and busy highways, and environmental challenges like floodplains, wetlands, and brownfields (see **Figure 3.2**).

During the mapping portion of the activity, several areas in the County were identified, with comments highlighting various opportunities (see **Figure 3.3**).

**Figure 3.2.** Key SWOT Comments

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Existing County trails are well maintained	Lack of connectivity	More connection to smaller towns in the County	Roads may be difficult and unsafe for bicycling
Trails are in populated areas	Not enough trails that are separated from the roadway	More connections to parks	Railroads and large busy highways
Mountain biking trails	Funds available for development	New developments may lead to new trails	Wetlands, floodplains, and brownfields may inhibit development

**Figure 3.3.** Opportunity Areas

Location	Comment
Phase 1- Liberty Trail	Connectivity
I-94 & W 375 N	Shared roadway
N 525 W & W 450 N	Shared roadway, connectivity
S Holmesville Rd & Red Mill County Park	Make a connection to Michigan City
W 200 S & I-80	Shared roadway
Bluhm Park	New trail opportunity
Soldier Memorial Trail Park	Trail around Stone Lake
N 600 E & I-80	Shared roadway
Hudson Lake	With industrial development, new utilities, and future housing are good planning opportunities to include trails
N 700 E & E 400 N	New park connection to St. Joseph County
N 800 E	Proposed trail
N Long Shore Dr & E 200 S	Connection to smaller towns
Hupp Rd & 4th Rd	Proposed trail
W 2200 S & S Bigler Rd	Connect to Starke County, through English Lake north to La Crosse
Kankakee Property	Proposed trail

# Meeting #2

The second public meeting took place on March 25th, 2025, at Wanatah Town Hall. The purpose of this meeting was to gather feedback on the accuracy of the collected Existing Conditions data, identify priority areas for trail and shared roadway development, finalize the vision statement, and map potential routes or connections based on community input.

## ***Vision Statement Activity***

Attendees were presented with three different vision statements and asked to rank them from one to three, with one being the most preferred and three the least preferred. They were also encouraged to provide feedback, including comments or suggestions on words to modify, remove, or add. (The vision statement activity worksheets and comments can be found in **Appendix A**). Based on the feedback received, the following vision statement was developed.



**“La Porte County envisions  
a safe, sustainable bicycle and pedestrian network  
that fosters economic activity and recreational  
opportunities that connects to  
parks, towns, cities, and key destinations.**

**This network will feature multi-use trails,  
creative wayfinding, and pedestrian-friendly access  
while prioritizing safety, health,  
and non-motorized transportation.”**

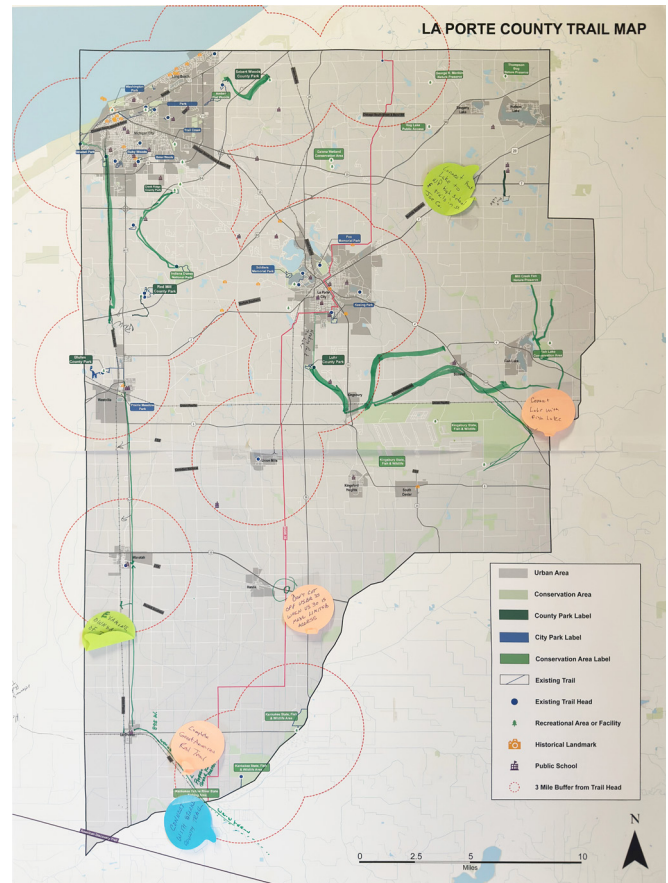
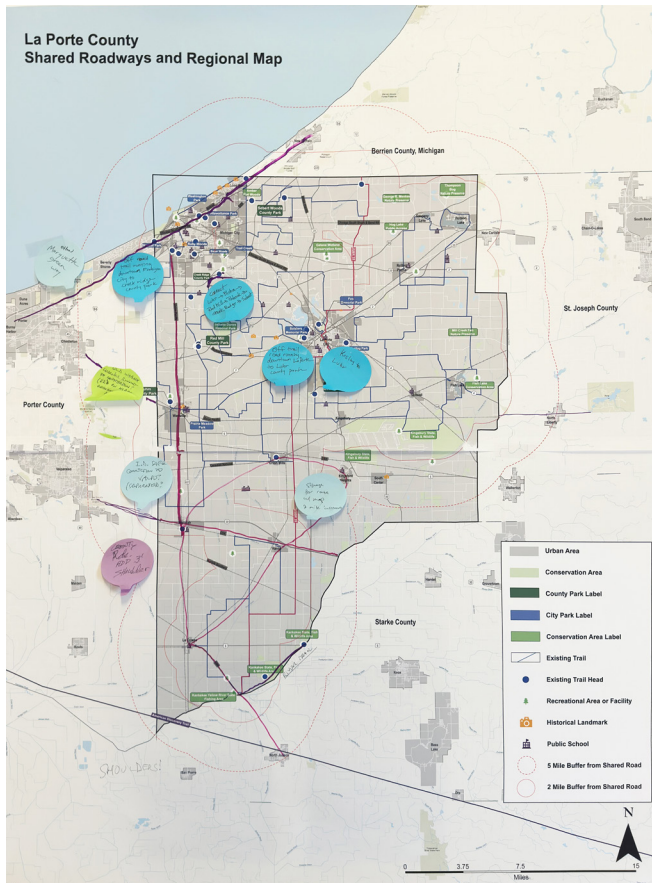


## Mapping Activity

In addition to the vision statement activity, a mapping exercise was conducted using two separate maps; one for shared route development and another for trail route development. Participants marked the maps to indicate where they would like to see new routes throughout the County, as well as connections to attractions, towns, cities, natural features, and regional destinations. **Figure 3.4** displays the maps along with participants' comments and preferred routes.



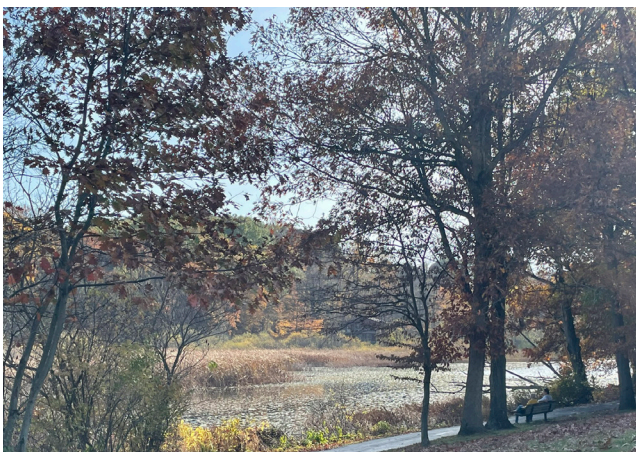
**Figure 3.4.** Maps of Preferred Shared Roadway and Trail Development



Based on the mapping exercise, the following areas were identified as areas where they would like to see trail and shared roadway development:

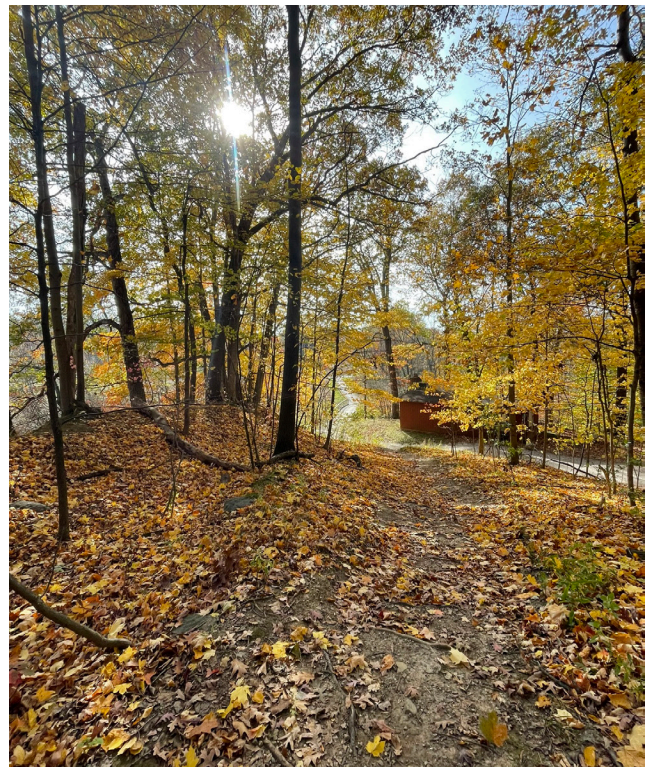
### **Potential Trails**

- Connect Kankakee Yellow River State Fishing Area to Starke County Trail
- Connect La Crosse to Kankakee Yellow River State Fishing Area
- Create easements for trails
- La Crosse to Wanatah to Westville to Michigan City
- Trail near Hanna
- Luhr County Park to Kingsbury to Stillwell to Fish Lake
- Build out trails in Red Mill County Park
- Connect Indiana Dunes National Park to Creek Ridge County Park
- Build out trails around Kingsbury State Fish & Wildlife
- Connect Mill Creek Natural Preserve to Fish Lake Conservation Area
- Ambler Flat Woods to Sebert Woods County Park
- Connect Hunt Lake to New Prairie High School
- Connect Hunt Lake to trails in St. Joseph County
- Off road trail running downtown City of La Porte to Luhr County Park
- Off road trail running downtown Michigan City to Creek Ridge County Park



### **Potential Shared Roadways**

- Michigan City to Westville to Wanatah to La Crosse to North Judson
- Wanatah to Valparaiso
- Kingsford Heights to Union Mills to Wanatah to La Crosse to Hanna
- Signage for route with map in two-mile increments
- Kankakee Yellow River State Fishing Area to Kankakee State Fish & Wildlife Area with river trail
- Add three-foot shoulders to County roads
- Kesling to Luhr
- Safe connection to Valparaiso
- Westville to Chesterton
- Connect Luhr to Bluhm to Red Mill to Pinhook
- Creek Ridge to Sebert
- Extend Marquette Greenway

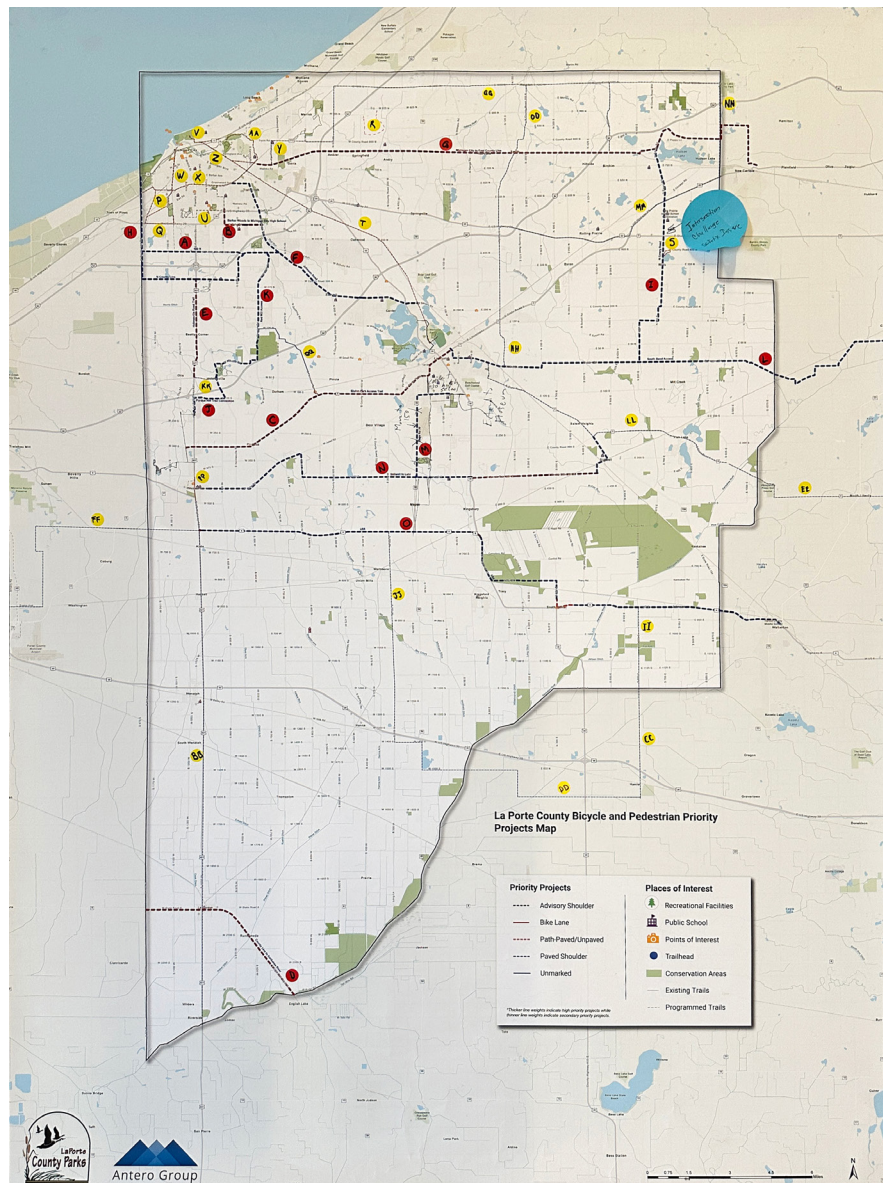




# Meeting #3

The final public meeting was held on Tuesday, May 13th, 2025, at the City of La Porte Park Department. Drawing from the Existing Conditions analysis, input from previous meetings, feedback from key stakeholders, and responses to the public survey, guidance for the recommendations were developed. Priority and secondary routes were identified and presented for public comment. These proposed routes include a variety of facilities such as paved shoulders, shared use paths, advisory shoulders, bike lanes, and unmarked routes. **Chapter 4** will provide additional detail on these recommendations. The priority routes are designed to connect parks, schools, places of interest, and populated areas across La Porte County in both east-west and north-south directions. Secondary routes aim to enhance connectivity by linking existing and future corridors. **Figure 3.5** illustrates the proposed priority and secondary routes along with comments received during the meeting.

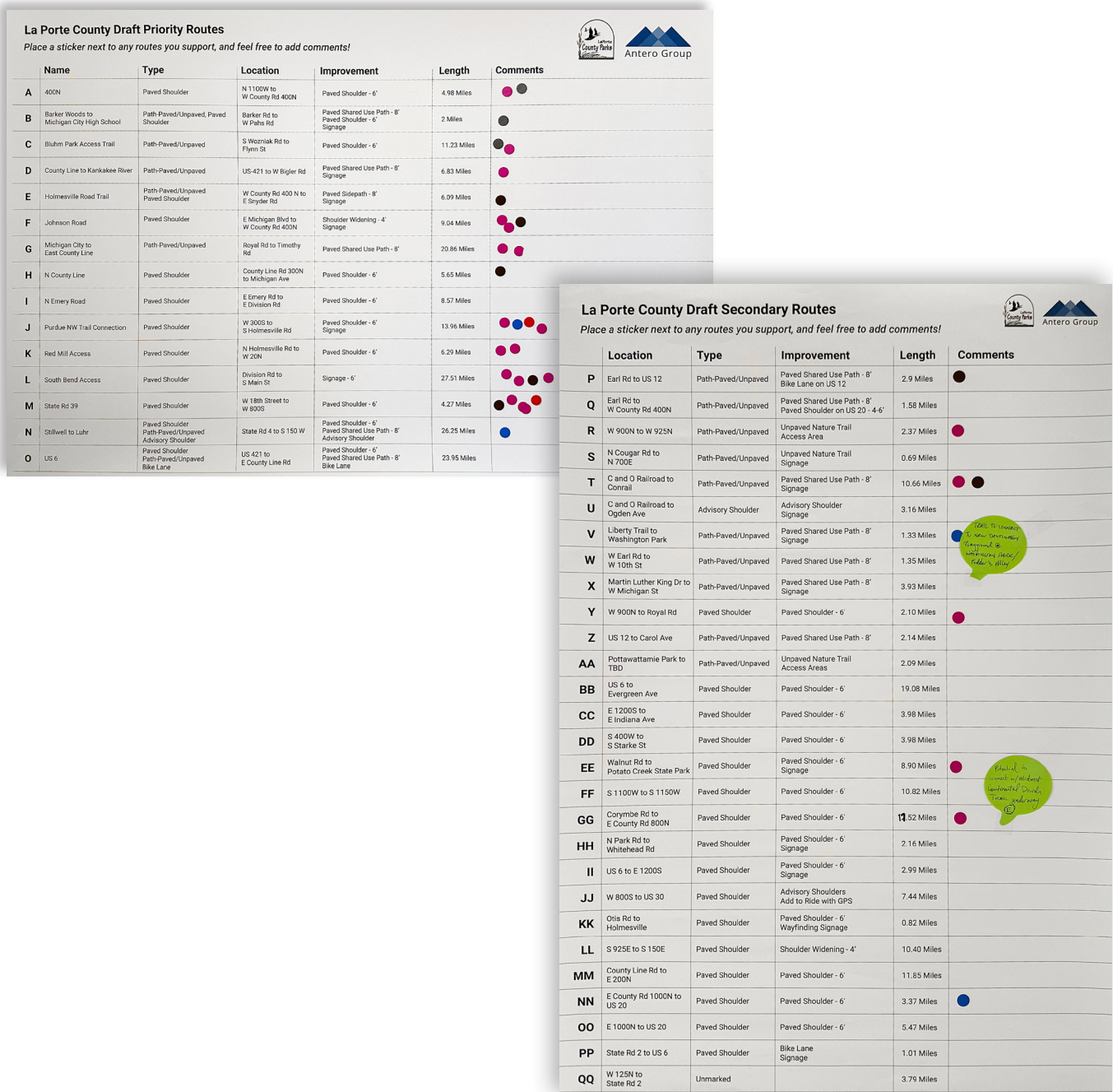
**Figure 3.5.** Map with Proposed Priority and Secondary Routes



The proposed routes were also presented in a chart format, allowing participants to rank their priorities.

**Figure 3.6** illustrates how attendees prioritized both the primary and secondary routes. Among the primary routes, the Purdue Northwest Trail Connection, South Bend Access, and State Road 39 emerged as the top priorities. For the secondary routes, some of the most frequently selected options included the C&O Railroad to Conrail connection, links to the Midwest Continental Divide, and access to Washington Park.

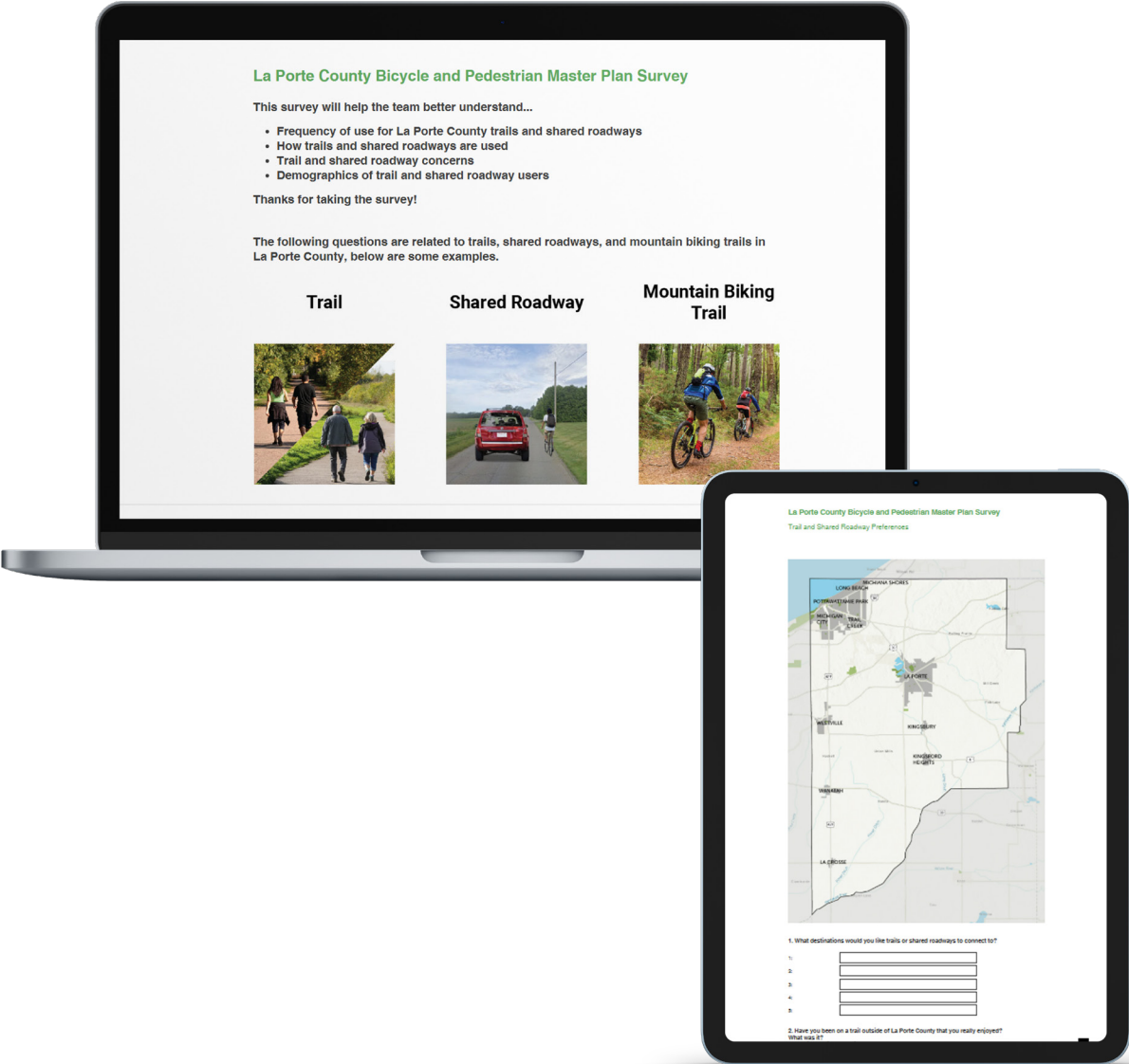
**Figure 3.6.** Charts with Proposed Primary and Secondary Routes





# Survey Results

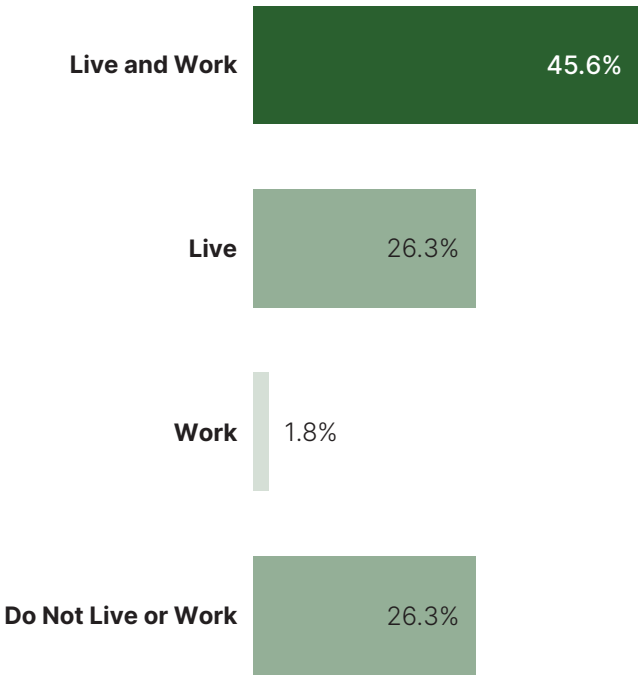
A survey was conducted on SurveyMonkey from October 2024 to March 2025, gathering a total of 114 responses. The survey was structured into sections based on participants' answers, covering topics such as demographics, the economy, walking/running/hiking, bicycling, mountain biking, and opportunity areas. This section highlights key findings, while a comprehensive analysis can be found in **Appendix B**.



# Demographics

The following responses categorize respondents based on their connection to the County—whether they reside there, both live and work there, only work there, or neither live nor work in the County. The majority of respondents, 45.6%, both live and work in the County, see **Figure 3.7**.

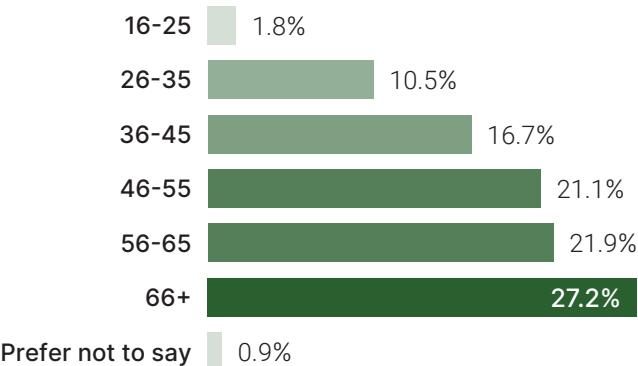
**Figure 3.7.** Connection to La Porte County



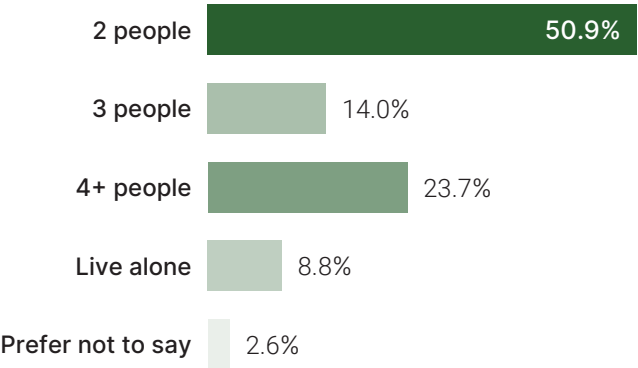
The largest portion of respondents were aged 66 and older, making up the majority of participants. This was followed by individuals in the 56-65 age range, then 46-55, see **Figure 3.8**.

Most households surveyed consist of two occupants, making this the most common household size among respondents. However, nearly a quarter of participants reported living in households with four or more members, see **Figure 3.9**.

**Figure 3.8.** Age



**Figure 3.9.** Household Size



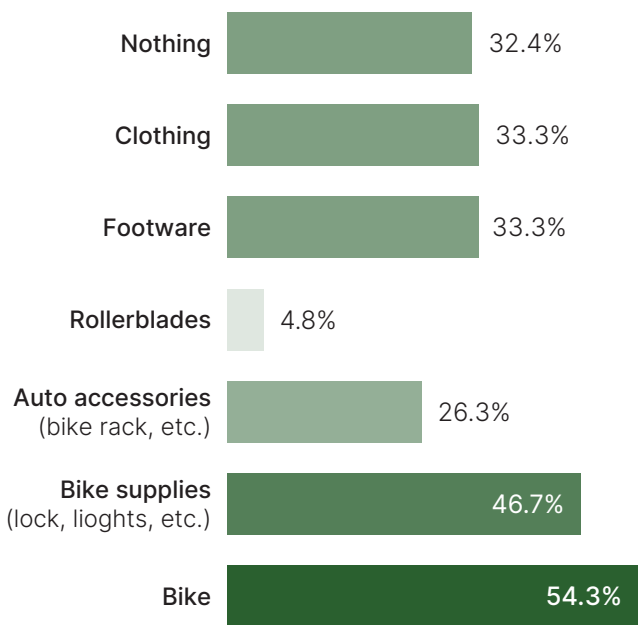


# Economy

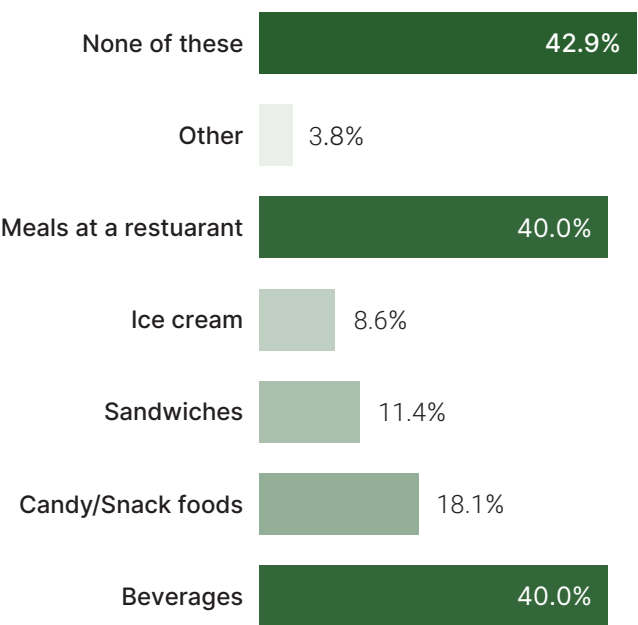
When asked about the impact of trail use on their outdoor recreation purchases, most respondents indicated that their use of trails in La Porte County influenced their decisions to buy bikes, bike accessories, footwear, and outdoor clothing. When surveyed about their spending on these items over the past year, responses varied widely, ranging from \$15 to \$4,000, see **Figure 3.10**.

As part of the survey, respondents were asked whether they purchased any food or beverages during their most recent trip to a trail. While many reported making no such purchases, 40% indicated that they bought beverages and/or meals at a restaurant. Spending on these items varied, with amounts ranging from \$10 to \$200, see **Figure 3.11**.

**Figure 3.10.** Outdoor Recreation Purchases



**Figure 3.11.** Food and Beverage Purchases



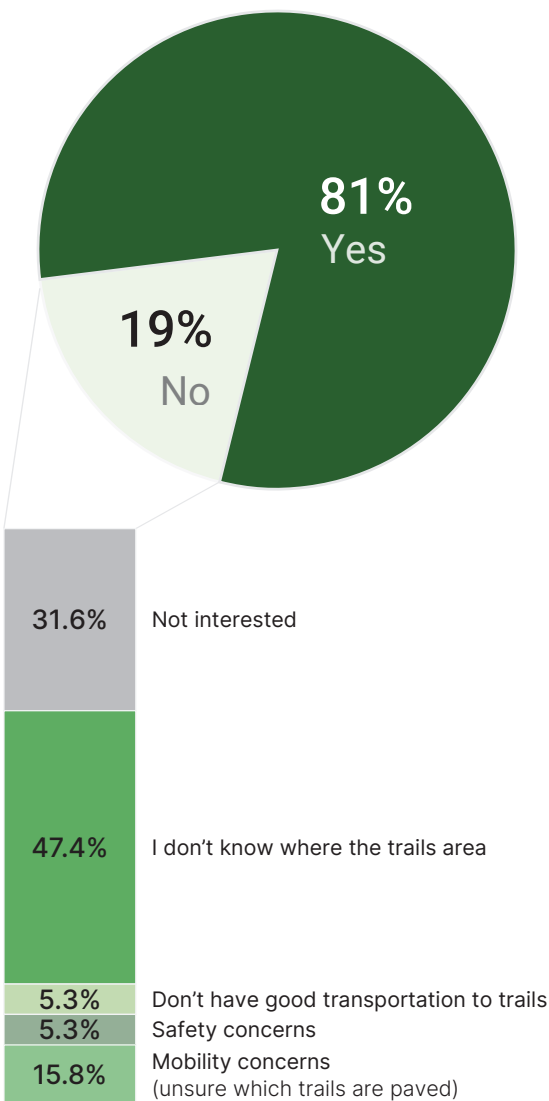
# Trails - Walk/Run/Hike

The majority of respondents reported using the trails for hiking, walking, or running. However, nearly 20% indicated they do not use the trails. Reasons included a lack of interest, not knowing where the trails are located, uncertainty about which trails are paved (raising mobility concerns), safety concerns, and limited transportation access, see **Figure 3.12**.

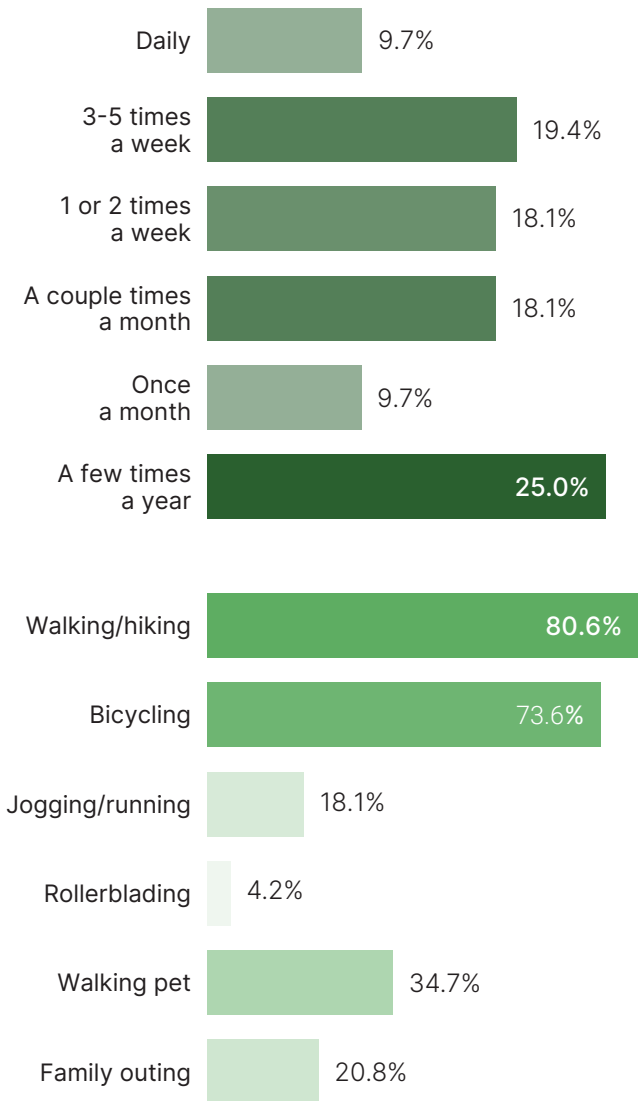
When asked about trail usage frequency, some respondents reported visiting only a few times per

year, while many use the trails 1–2 times per week, 3–5 times per week, or even daily (see **Figure 3.13**). The trails are primarily used for walking/hiking and biking. Most users reported visiting on both weekdays and weekends, typically during the daytime. While many spend at least 30 minutes to an hour on the trails, over 45% of respondents indicated they stay for 1–2 hours. Respondents also indicated that they primarily use the trails for recreation, health, and exercise.

**Figure 3.12.** Trail Use



**Figure 3.13.** Trail Visitation and Users



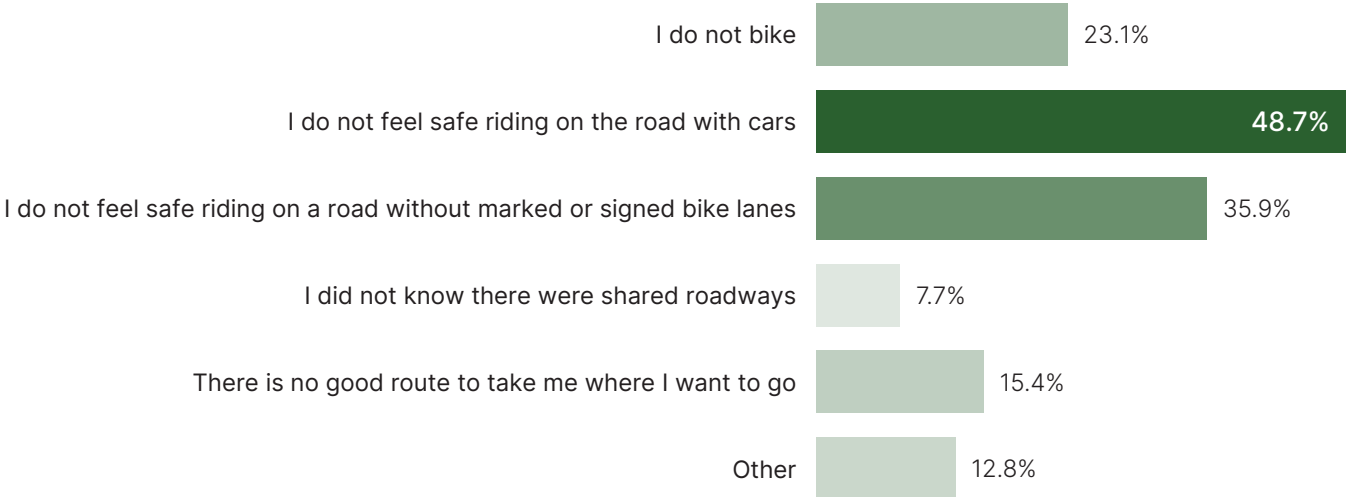


# Shared Roadways

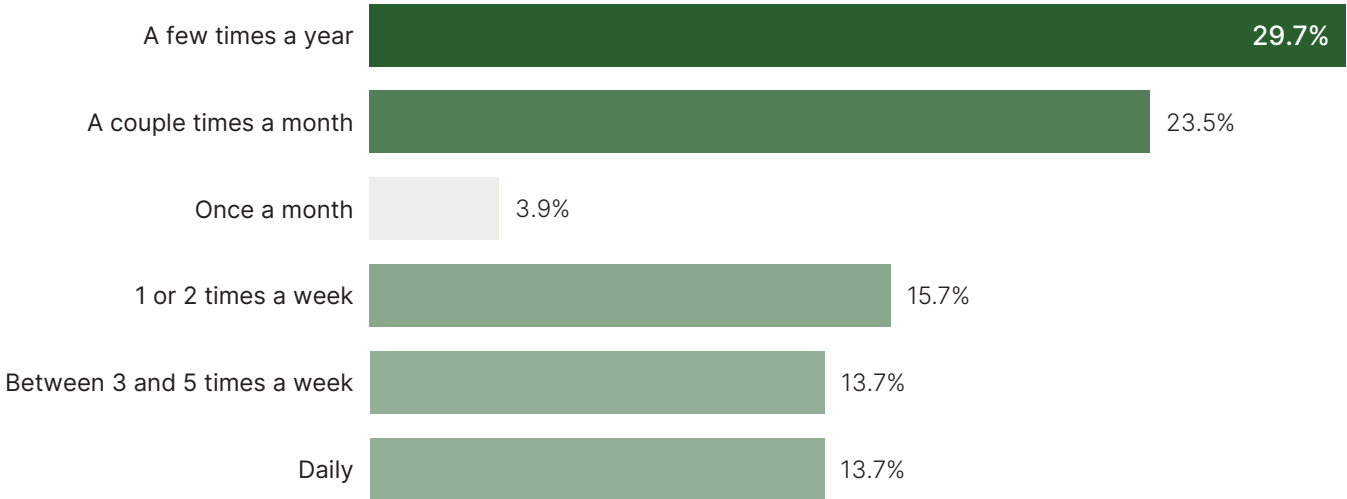
Approximately 57% of respondents reported using the shared roadway routes. Those who avoid them typically cite safety concerns—either discomfort with riding alongside vehicles or the lack of marked or signed bike lanes (see **Figure 3.14**).

About 29% of respondents reported using shared roadways a few times per year, and 23% use them a couple of times per month. However, a significant number of bicyclists ride on shared roadways more frequently, 1–2 times per week, 3–5 times per week, or even daily (see **Figure 3.15**). Most bicyclists use these routes on both weekdays and weekends, primarily during the day, with over half reporting ride durations of 1–2 hours.

**Figure 3.14.** Shared Roadway Users



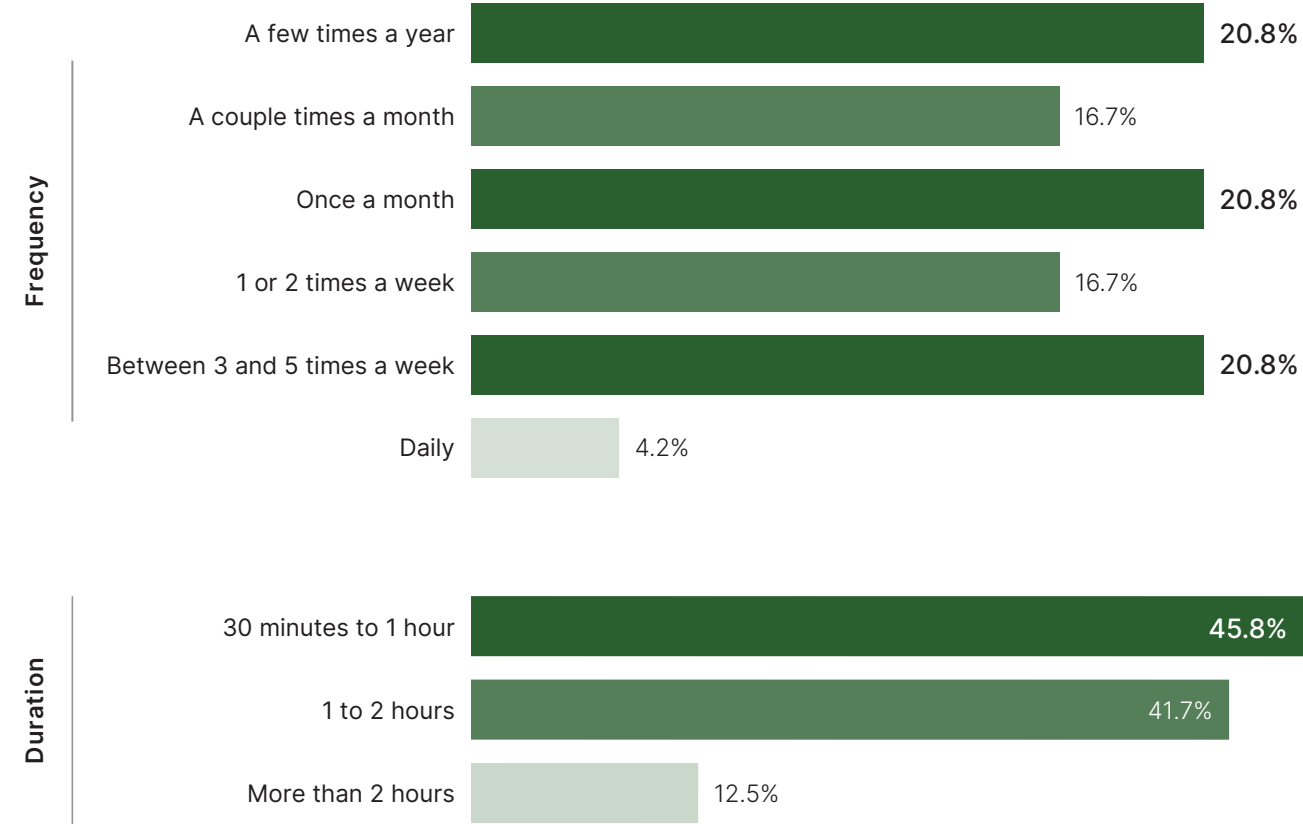
**Figure 3.15.** Shared Roadway Use Frequency



# Mountain Biking Trails

While the majority of respondents do not use the mountain biking trails, those who do (27% of respondents) tend to use them fairly regularly. As shown in **Figure 3.16**, most users visit the trails a few times per year, once a month, or 3–5 times weekly. Trail use occurs on both weekdays and weekends, with most visits lasting over 30 minutes. Although most users travel to the trails by car, approximately 46% choose to bike there.

**Figure 3.16.** Mountain Biking Trails use



# 4

## A Path Forward for Walking and Bicycling

This chapter presents proposed bicycle and pedestrian routes designed to improve safety, enhance connectivity, and increase access to common destinations. The recommendations are informed by previous findings and a range of best practices. The proposed network aims to create a safe, accessible, and pedestrian-friendly system that strengthens connections for bicyclists and pedestrians throughout La Porte County and the surrounding region.







# Recommendation Development Process

Developing projects for this Plan was a collaborative effort that considered many factors. The design approach was both strategic and adaptable. It was based on data, shaped by community input, and tailored to meet La Porte County's varied transportation needs. Each project recommendation followed a clear, step-by-step process to create safe, practical, and appropriate bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Step

1

## **Review of Data and Community Feedback**

The process began with a detailed review of crash records, travel patterns, land use, and feedback collected from residents, stakeholders, and municipal partners across the County. Public input was essential in identifying priority corridors, common barriers, and key destinations where safe and convenient walking and bicycling connections are most needed.

Step

2

## **Facility Selection Based on Context**

Using this information, the next step was to choose the right type of facility for each corridor. These decisions were guided by factors such as traffic speed, vehicle volumes, roadway width, surrounding land use, and available space. For example, rural roads with higher speeds may be better suited for paved shoulders, while areas near schools or parks could benefit from shared use paths or advisory shoulders for less experienced users.

Step

3

## **Integration of Safety Enhancements and Amenities**

After selecting the facility type, additional safety and comfort features were considered to improve the overall experience. These features could include high-visibility crosswalks, signage, lighting, pedestrian beacons, or bicycle signals, depending on the location and traffic conditions. Where it made sense, amenities like benches, trailheads, or wayfinding signs were added to make facilities more user-friendly and encourage active transportation.

Step

4

## **Feasibility and Phased Design**

Finally, each project was assessed for feasibility. This included reviewing construction requirements, costs, long-term maintenance needs, and any challenges related to utilities or property ownership. In some cases, projects were planned in phases—beginning with lower-cost improvements, such as striping and signage, and progressing to full construction as funding became available and priorities changed.

This flexible and repeatable process helps ensure that projects are realistic, aligned with community goals, and based on proven practices. As projects progress, further engineering work, community engagement, and coordination with relevant agencies will continue to shape the final designs and guide implementation.

# Facility Selection

Each recommended project in this Plan was developed through a thoughtful, context-sensitive design process that combined technical analysis with community priorities. This approach was grounded in aligning each project with the long-term vision and goals described earlier in the plan—specifically, to improve safety, increase access to important destinations, and create an inclusive, connected network for people of all ages and abilities.

To ensure that each improvement was appropriate and effective, the design process considered a variety of interconnected factors:

- Roadway Characteristics:**  
 This included posted speed limits, average daily traffic volumes, roadway width, number of lanes, and whether existing pedestrian or bicycle facilities were present. For example, high-speed, high-traffic corridors often required separated facilities like shared use paths, while quieter neighborhood streets were better suited to advisory shoulders or traffic-calming measures.
- Land Use and Development Patterns:**  
 Recommendations were shaped by the surrounding context—such as whether a corridor served residential neighborhoods, business districts, schools, parks, or open spaces. Routes near schools or parks prioritized lower-stress options designed for less experienced users, including children and older adults.
- Expected User Types:**  
 Rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all solution, the planning process considered who would most likely use each facility. This included experienced cyclists commuting longer distances, casual riders visiting parks, students walking to school, and residents accessing shops and services on foot. Each user group has different needs for comfort, protection, and visibility.
- Feasibility Considerations:**  
 Every recommendation was evaluated for how practical it would be to build. This included factors like available space, construction feasibility, estimated costs, impacts on utilities and drainage, and the ability to maintain the facility over time. Facilities were only proposed in locations where they could realistically be installed now or in the future.

**Figure 4.1.** Facility Selection Guideline

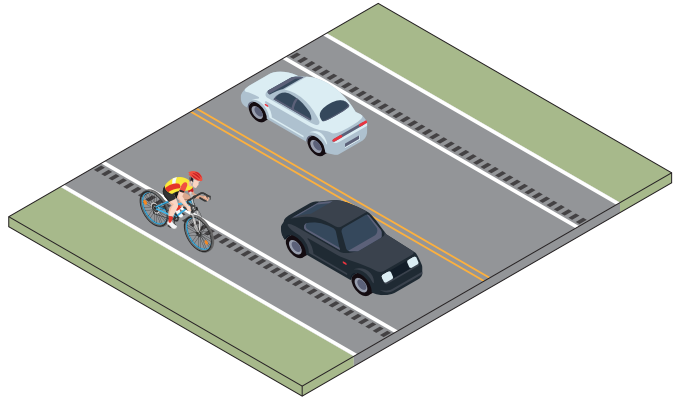
Facility Type	User Type	Context	Typical Speed Range	Traffic Volume (AADT)
Paved Shoulders	Confident and experienced bicyclists	Rural / Transition Zones	25-55 mph	> 1,500
Advisory Shoulders	Cautious or less experienced bicyclists and pedestrians	Low-volume Suburban/ Rural	< 35 mph	< 6,000
Bike Lanes	Intermediate and confident bicyclists	Urban / Suburban	25-50 mph	3,000 - 8,500
Shared Use Paths	All ages and abilities, including families and new users	Urban / Rural Edge	Up to 55 mph	4,000 - 12,000
Nature Trails	Recreational walkers, hikers, and casual users	Parks / Natural Area	N/A	N/A



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## Paved Shoulders

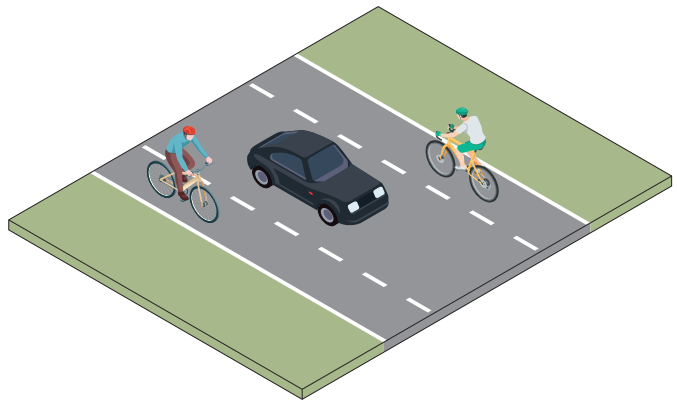
Paved Shoulders increase the width of the existing roadway by a minimum of four feet and are typical for rural areas and suitable for a variety of traffic conditions. Roadway speed, volume and ROW conditions are evaluated to recommend this facility appropriately. Paved shoulders perform well reducing pedestrian crashes by creating extra space between the travel lanes. This space also provides an increased level of comfortability for the average bicyclist, increasing access to the bicycle network for the general population. In addition, paved shoulders provide extra space for emergency response, agricultural vehicles and snow storage.



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## Advisory Shoulders

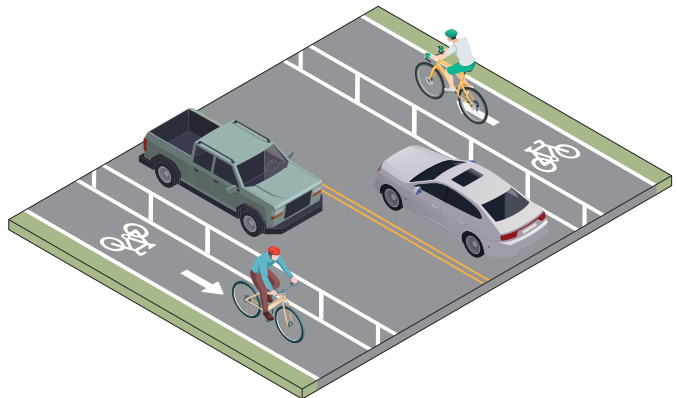
Advisory Shoulders are non-exclusive and visually distinct space on the edge of the roadway that offers priority to pedestrians and bicyclists. This improvement is typical of suburban residential streets that do not have frequent controlled intersections or stops. Advisory shoulders provide safety benefits for bicyclists without requiring additional ROW.



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## Bike Lanes

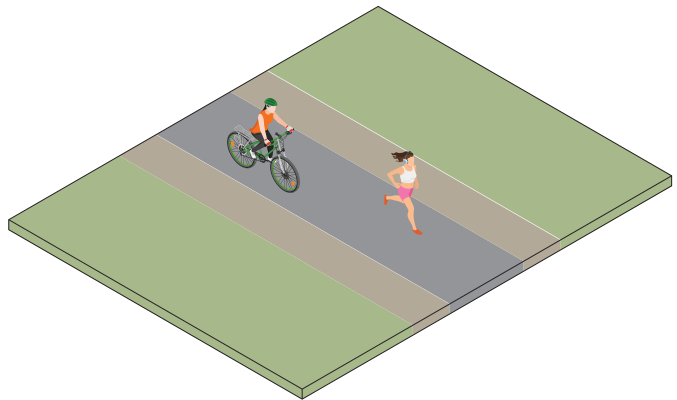
Bike Lanes provide an exclusive space on the roadway for bicyclists and are delineated by paved markings. The preferred width of a Bike Lane is 6.5 feet to allow for bicyclists to ride side by side, however four feet is the absolute minimum width for Bike Lanes. Bike Lanes promote safety for bicyclists by providing separation on the roadway and through visual cues for drivers to slow down. This facility can be used in urban and rural contexts and can support safe connections to destinations near built up areas.



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## Shared Use Path

A Shared Use Path is a physically separated travel area for non-motorized users and provides a low stress environment and can be used for transportation or recreation. Shared Use Paths are a minimum of eight feet wide and require a five-to-ten-foot buffer from the existing roadway and adjacent property line. These facilities are appropriate near recreational areas, along rivers, railroad and utility corridors.



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## Nature Trail

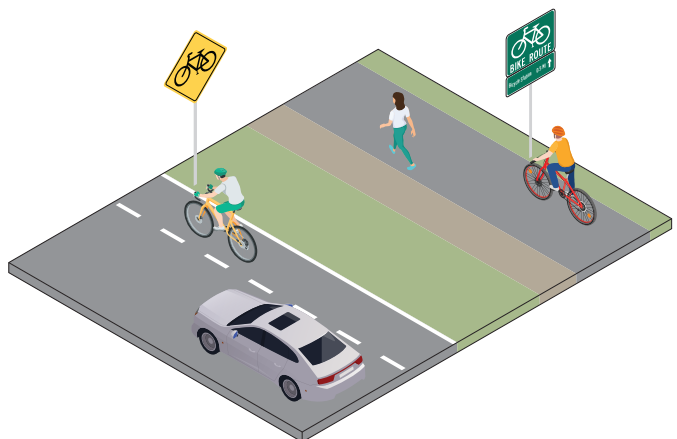
Nature Trail is an unpaved path located in a public park or natural area. Primarily for recreational use, Nature Trails provide convenient access to nature.



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## Wayfinding and Signage

Wayfinding and Signage is a method used to orient non-motorized and motorized users of their surroundings and suggested destinations nearby. This signage will also provide drivers with a visual cue that bicyclists and pedestrians are nearby. This signage is recommended for the shared-use paths as often as appropriate notifying users of nearby amenities. Other signage is recommended throughout the network where appropriate, notifying users of the presence of bicyclists on the route.



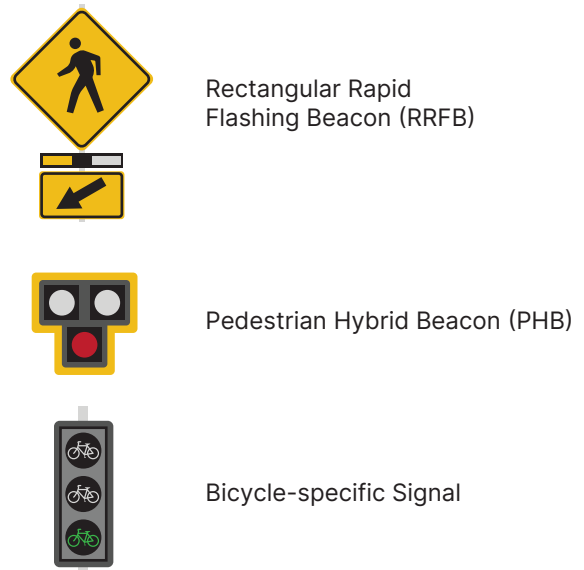
## Integrating Safety Enhancements

Designing a safe and connected bicycle and pedestrian network involves more than just selecting the right type of facility—it also requires adding the right safety measures and user-focused amenities along each corridor. As part of this Plan, important design considerations were identified for every facility type to ensure improvements address comfort, visibility, and safety across the entire network. Treatments like wayfinding signage, lighting, high-visibility crosswalks, and traffic-calming elements were included where appropriate to enhance the overall user experience and make walking and bicycling more inviting for everyone.

Intersection improvements are especially important at major crossings along the proposed network, as these locations often carry the greatest safety risks for people walking and bicycling. Treatments such as rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs), pedestrian hybrid beacons (PHBs), and bicycle-specific signal phases may be needed at crossings with heavy traffic or limited visibility. These safety upgrades were prioritized along major corridors and highways where higher speeds and vehicle volumes create barriers to non-motorized travel. Smaller intersections can rely on features like curb extensions, refuge islands, or clear signage to help create safer, easier crossings.

Paved shoulders—one of the most common facility types recommended for rural and transitional areas—require careful attention to width, markings, and surrounding context. At a minimum, paved shoulders should be four feet wide, but wider shoulders of six to eight feet are preferred on high-speed or high-volume roads. Designs should include clear striping, rumble strips where appropriate, and edge line separation to help alert drivers while providing safe space for bicyclists. In many areas, shoulders also serve other purposes such as accommodating farm equipment, providing emergency pull-off areas, and storing snow, so designs must balance these needs with safety for people bicycling.

**Figure 4.2.** Intersection Improvement Types



Each facility type has its own design guidelines to ensure comfort and compatibility with local conditions. For example, shared use paths should have smooth surfaces, a consistent buffer from the roadway (usually five to ten feet), and bollards or similar measures to prevent unauthorized vehicle access. Bike lanes need to be clearly marked with paint and signage and are ideally located on streets with lower traffic volumes and fewer driveway crossings. Advisory shoulders should use dashed edge lines to signal drivers and help create predictable sharing behavior, especially on narrower roads with limited space.

Amenities like seating areas, trailheads, bicycle repair stations, and wayfinding signs make the network easier to use and more visible to the public. These features not only improve the experience for current users but also encourage new and less confident users to choose active transportation. In areas near schools, parks, or downtown centers, such amenities are especially valuable. Their placement should be guided by anticipated use and proximity to key destinations.



## Feasibility and Phased Approach

Implementing more than 300 miles of new bicycle and pedestrian routes across La Porte County is an ambitious but achievable goal. The proposed network includes 42 projects designed to expand the existing system, improve safety, and connect people to key destinations. To make this vision a reality, the plan includes a phased approach that considers each project's readiness, community support, and funding needs.

Project prioritization was guided by public input, potential impact, and gaps in the current network. Sixteen key routes—covering over 160 miles—were identified as top priorities based on their ability to enhance safety and access across neighborhoods, schools, parks, and rural communities. These projects are expected to be the first implemented, but the full network is designed to remain flexible and responsive to future opportunities and community needs.

To help the public better understand the potential investment required, each project was grouped into one of three simple cost categories:

- **Small-Scale Projects:** Projects likely to cost under \$1 million, often shorter in length or simpler to construct.
- **Medium-Scale Projects:** Projects estimated between \$1–3 million, typically involving moderate distances or more complex designs.
- **Large-Scale Projects:** Larger investments of over \$3 million, often spanning long distances or requiring new infrastructure or extensive coordination.

Projects are organized into three implementation phases based on when they are most likely to be ready for design and construction. **Phase I (0–5 years)** includes early action projects that are lower cost and widely supported. **Phase II (6–10 years)** includes projects that may need more funding, coordination, or planning. **Phase III (10+ years)** includes longer-term projects with higher costs or design complexities.



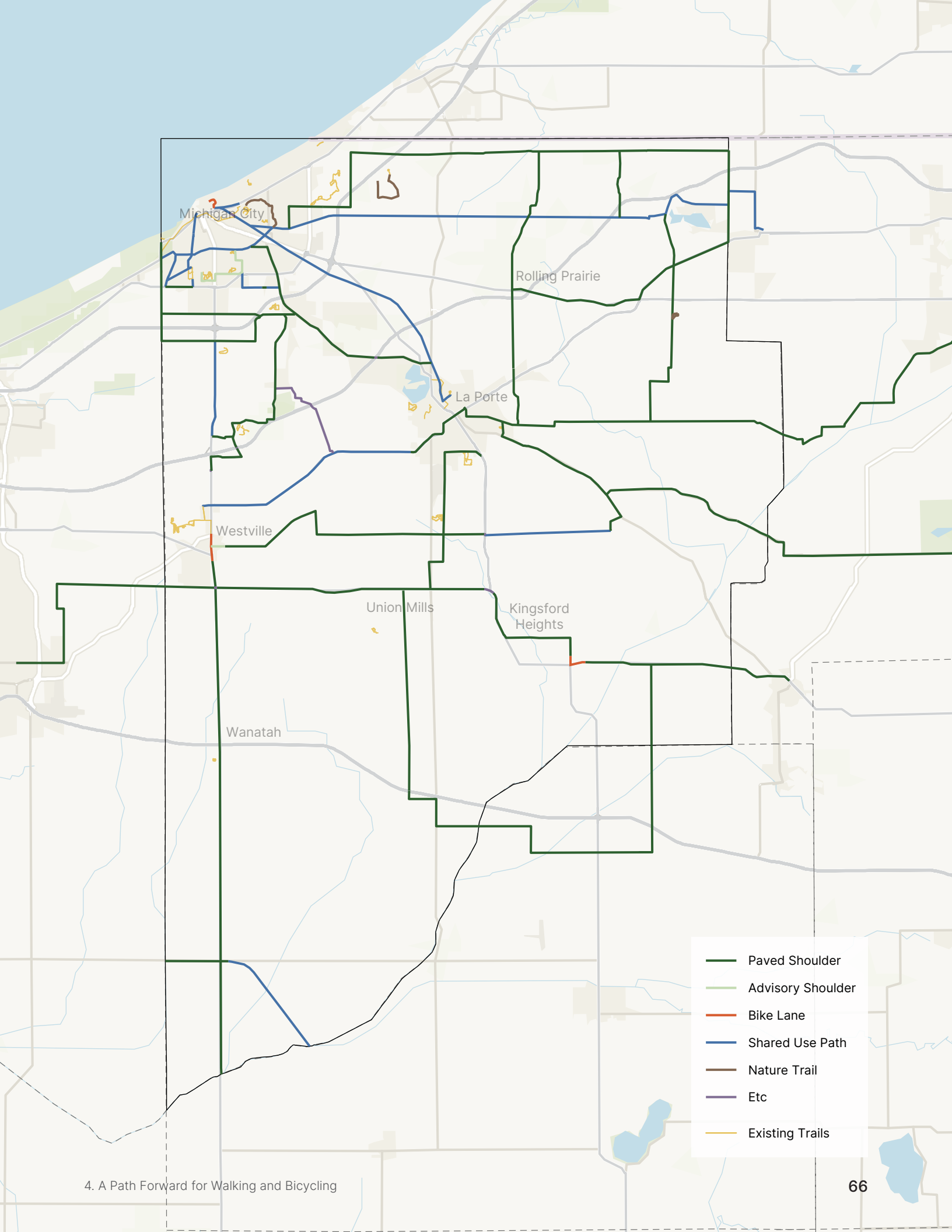
# Proposed Trail Network

The proposed trail network incorporates all aspects of the planning process and will expand from the existing network by 320 miles. The proposed network reflects the long-term vision for the La Porte County Bicycle and Pedestrian network. These recommendations are flexible and can be adapted as priorities change. **Figure 4.3** depicts a summary of the proposed improvements.

**Figure 4.3.** Proposed Trail Network

	Paved Shoulders	Advisory Shoulders	Bike Lanes	Shared Use Paths	Nature Trails	Etc	TOTAL
<b>La Porte County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan</b>	<b>234.43</b>	<b>3.69</b>	<b>2.72</b>	<b>70.91</b>	<b>5.16</b>	<b>6.92</b>	<b>320.13</b>
Phase I 0-5 years	4.60	3.69	2.72	3.00	0.69	0.71	15.42
Phase II 5-10 years	74.69	-	-	16.20	4.47	6.21	101.56
Phase III 10+ years	155.14	-	-	48.02	-	-	203.15

\* Dimension is in miles.





## Project Highlights

### ***S 150 W Route (ID 40)***

Creating a safe connection to Luhr County Park is a top priority as it is a well-loved local community amenity with nature trails and green open space. This route creates a simple connection to the park with a 6-foot paved shoulder along S 150 W extending to US-6 to the south and US-35 to the north. The project connects the park to the City of La Porte, the La Porte Historical Society Museum, Kesling Park, and the Kesling Middle School. Residents will benefit from this convenient access to the park and promote safety surrounding the park.

### ***Holmesville Road Bikeway (ID 15), Red Mill Route (ID 12) and 400 N Route (ID 22)***

Totalling 18 miles of project improvements, these routes form priority connections to Red Mill and Creek Ridge County Park. Holmesville Road Trail recommends a mix of 6-foot paved shoulder and a 8-foot shared use path along US-421. This route is key for overcoming interstate 94 as a barrier to connectivity. These projects will create safe space for bicyclists to travel from multiple directions with the purpose of arriving at the various destinations these routes connect to. The overall purpose of these projects is to create a connective network within an area that has a cluster of County destinations and schools. These routes will also take bicyclists to Purdue Northwest and Bluhm County Park to the south.

### ***South Bend Route (ID 38)***

The South Bend Access trail is the longest proposed improvement in the master plan. The 27-mile project improvement recommends 6-foot shoulders connecting the City of La Porte to South Bend. Connecting to the greater regional network is a priority for La Porte County and is aligned with the potential growth in the region.

### ***Stillwell to Luhr Bikeway (ID 14)***

This project improvement forms a 17-mile east to west connection promoting access for rural communities in southern La Porte County as well as enhancing overall access within the network. This route includes several facility types (6-foot paved shoulder, 8-foot shared use path, and advisory shoulders) in addition this route recommends a crossing improvement at US-35. This route significantly improves safety on the corridor by increasing space for bicyclists to safely travel on the roadway and 4.6 miles of separate shared use path along E County 400.

### ***N Emery Road (ID 28)***

This proposed route promotes access to new growth areas in the northwest part of the County. This north and south connection enhances connectivity to the network overall and access to Hudson Lake and nature destinations like Hunt Lake.

### ***Trail Creek Path (ID 9)***

The proposed shared use path will enhance connectivity between Carroll Avenue and US-12. This will improve north-south access to popular sites such as the Michigan City Senior Center, Pullman Park, the Carroll Avenue NICTD Southshore Line, and the Singing Sands Trail. This corridor will serve both recreational riders and commuters, enhancing connectivity between residential areas, parks, and downtown Michigan City.

### ***US-6 Bikeway (ID 11)***

The proposed bike route along US-6 from US-421 to US-35 will create an important east-west connection in southern La Porte County. This corridor will link the communities of Westville and Kingsbury while improving access to destinations such as the Kingsford Heights Community Center and the Kingsbury Industrial Park. The route will include a combination of paved shoulders, shared-use paths, bike lanes, and segments with RRFBs along US-6.

### ***Michigan City to City of La Porte Bikeway (ID 33)***

The proposed path will establish a continuous paved and unpaved trail linking Michigan City and the City of La Porte by following the former C&O and Conrail railroad corridors. It will offer a practical and scenic route for both recreation and daily travel. The project takes advantage of existing infrastructure to strengthen regional connections while maintaining a piece of the area's rail history.

### ***N 500 E Route (ID 39)***

This paved shoulder route improves east-west connectivity from Michigan City to St. Joseph County. Beginning at Corymbe Road and extending to E County Road 800 N along N 1000 E, the route links several key destinations including the Hesston Steam Museum, Heston Supper Club, and ending at scenic Saugany Lake. It also provides access to surrounding neighborhoods, parks, and rural areas, supporting both local and regional travel.

### ***US-421 Wanatah Route (ID 35)***

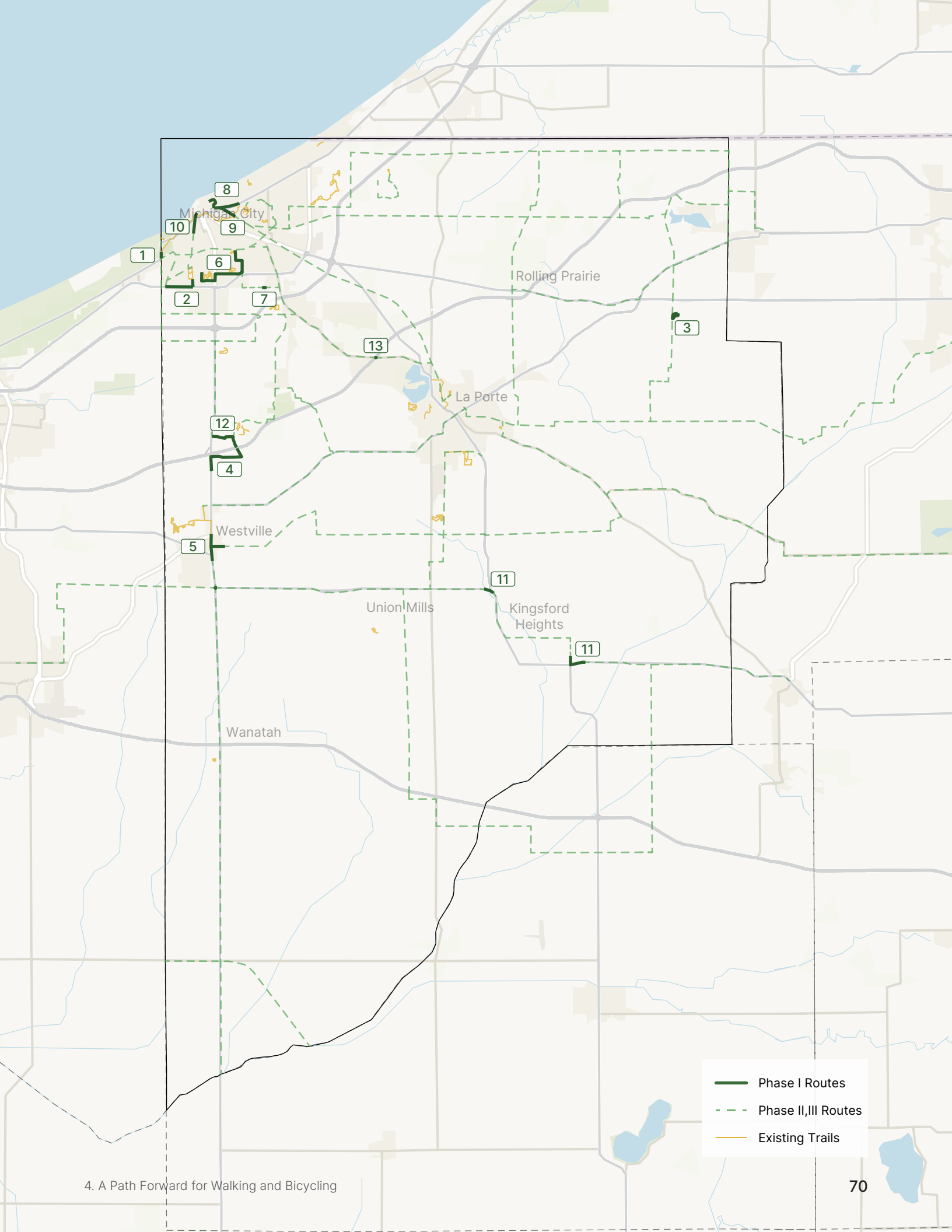
The proposed bike route along US-421 from US-6 to Evergreen Avenue will provide a vital north-south connection for cyclists traveling through the region. This route will improve access to key destinations connecting Westville to Wanatah, and La Crosse and connect to key destinations such as downtown Wanatah, Hidden Pond Park in La Crosse, and Bluhm County Park.

**Figure 4.4.** Phase I Project List

ID	Name	Type	Length (mi)	From	To	Priority
1	Calumet Trail Spur	Bike Lane	0.24	US-20 & 500ft east of Hitchcock St	US-20 & 500ft east of N County Line	
2	Striebel Loop	Paved Shoulder	1.03	Patriot Park to Singing Sands Trail	Utility Corridor on US-20	
		Shared Use Path	0.30	US-20	Striebel Park	
3	Hunt Lake Trail	Nature Trail	0.69	N Emery Rd & 1000ft south of E 400 N	E 400 N & N Emery Rd	
4	Purdue NW Route	Paved Shoulder	2.46	I-80 & S Holmesville Rd	S River Rd & US-421	✓
5	Westville Bikeway	Bike Lane	1.02	W 400 S & US-421	US-421 & W 500 S	
6	Michigan City Bikeway	Advisory Shoulder	3.17	C and O Railroad & Jackson St	Ogden Ave & Ohio St	
7	Barker Woods to Michigan City High School Route	Paved Shoulder	0.17	W Pahs Rd & 200ft east of Chickadee Dr	W Pahs Rd & 200ft east of Prairie Ln	✓
8	Washington Park to Krueger Memorial Route	Shared Use Path	0.96	Liberty Trail & US-12	Center St & Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad	
		Bike Lane	0.58	Center St & Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad	Marine Dr & Lake Shore Dr	
9*	Trail Creek Path	Shared Use Path	0.45	N Dickson St & 200ft north of E 8th St	Trail Creek	
		Existing Shared Use Path and Pedestrian Bridge	0.20	Across Trail Creek	Across Trail Creek	
10	Amtrak Station to Striebel Park Route	Shared Use Path	0.78	Wabash St & 200ft north of W 2nd St	W 10th St & Huron	
11*	US-6 Bikeway	Shared Use Path	0.51	US-6 & US-35	US-6 & US-35	✓
		Bike Lane	0.89	S 350 E & US-6	US-6 & 100ft north of E 875 S	✓
		Crossing Improvements	0.51	US-421 & US-6	US-421 & US-6	✓
12*	Red Mill Route	Paved Shoulder	0.82	E Snyder Rd & US-421	E Snyder Rd & S Holmesville Rd	✓
13	Johnson Route	Paved Shoulder	0.12	I-80 & Johnson Rd	I-80 & Johnson Rd	✓
14*	Stillwell to Luhr Bikeway	Advisory Shoulder	0.52	W Joliet Rd & Sandstone Dr	S Flynn Rd & E Valparaiso St	✓

\* Project Highlights

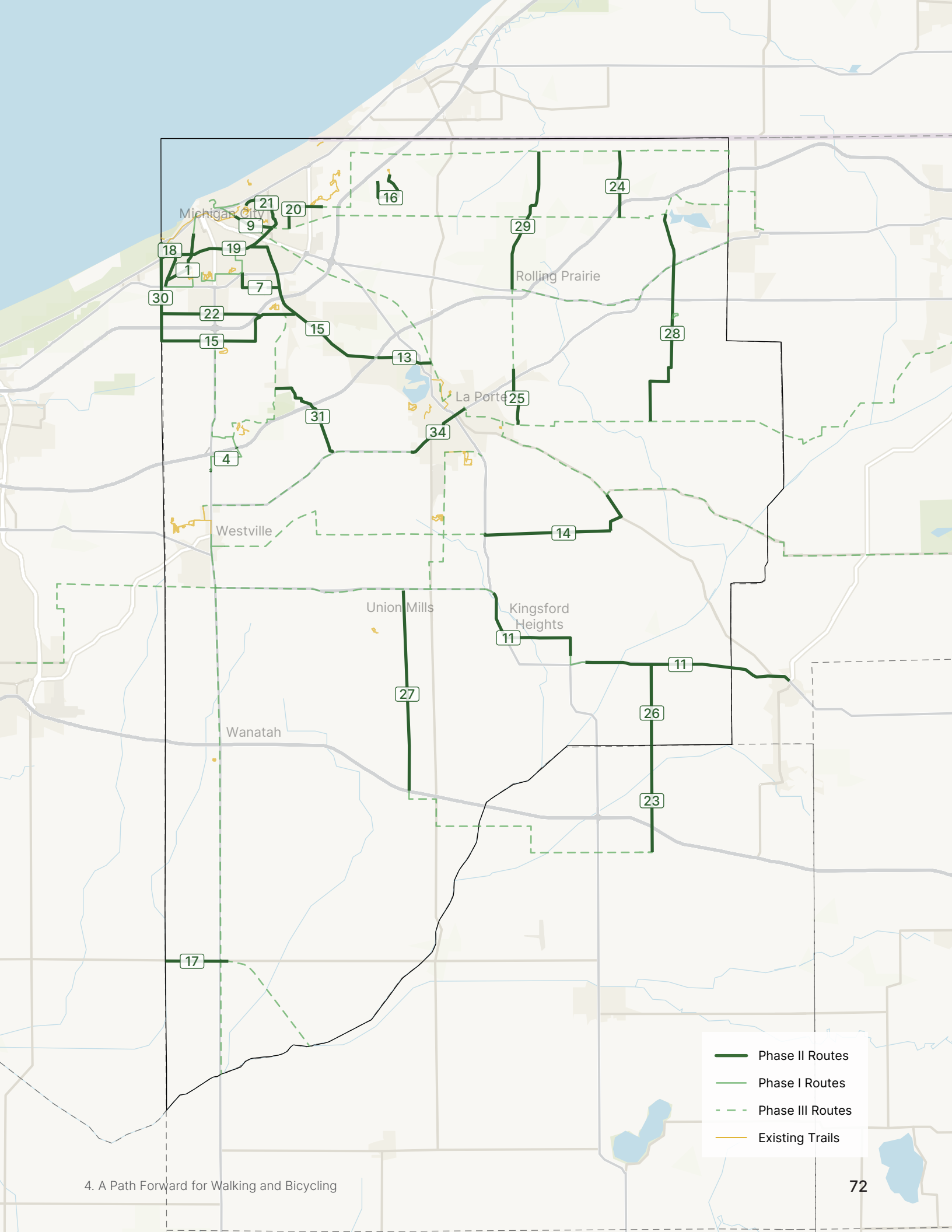




**Figure 4.5. Phase II Project List**

ID	Name	Type	Length (mi)	From	To	Priority
1	Calumet Trail Spur	Shared Use Path	2.71	Earl Rd & 500ft east of Hitchcock St	County Line Rd & Woodlawn Ave	
2	Striebel Loop	Shared Use Path	0.25	Utility Corridor from US-20	Utility Corridor to Earl Rd	
4	Purdue NW Route	Paved Shoulder	0.12	S River Rd & US-421	S River Rd & US-421	✓
7	Barker Woods to Michigan City High School Route	Shared Use Path	1.78	Barker Rd & S Woodlawn Ave	W Pahs Rd & Michigan St & 200ft east of Chickadee Dr	✓
9*	Trail Creek Path	Shared Use Path	1.49	Chicago South Shore Line & 700ft east of S Karwick Rd	N Dickson ST & 200ft north of E 8th St	
11*	US-6 Bikeway	Paved Shoulder	12.60	US-6 & US-35	Michigan St and US-6	✓
13	Johnson Route	Paved Shoulder	8.95	Greenwood Ave & Davidson Ave	W Severs Rd & SR 39	✓
14*	Stillwell to Luhr Bikeway	Paved Shoulder	1.76	SR 4 & E CR 300 S	E CR 400 S & S Hupp Rd	✓
		Shared Use Path	4.67	E CR 400 S & S Hupp Rd	E CR 400 S & US-35	✓
		Crossing Improvements	0.07	E DR 400 S & US-35	E CR 400 S & W 400 S	✓
15*	Holmesville Road Bikeway	Paved Shoulder	2.54	W CR 400 N & Gruenke Rd	W 300 N & US-421	✓
16	Sebert Woods Trail	Nature Trail	2.37	W 925 N & 2000ft west of N CR 300 W	W 900 & N CR W	
17	County Line to Kankakee Trail	Wayfinding Signage	2.34	E SR 8 & 150ft west of W 1185 W	SR 8 & N Monroe St	✓
18	Amtrak Station to Striebel Park Route 2	Shared Use Path	1.35	Earl Rd & Hitchcock St	Huron & W 10th St	
19	Barker Woods to Michigan City High School Route 2	Shared Use Path	3.94	Chicago South Shore Line & 700ft east of S Karwick Rd	800ft south of Woodlawn Ave & Sheridan Ave	
20	Ambler Flatwoods Route	Paved Shoulder	2.10	N Meer Rd & Tryon Rd	Royal Rd & Chicago South Shore Line Railroad	
21	Winding Creek Cove to Krueger Middle School Trail	Nature Trail	2.10	1000ft southeast of US-12 & Liberty Trail	Chicago South Shore Line & 700ft east of S Karwick Rd	
22*	400 N Route	Paved Shoulder	4.98	Johnson Rd & N CR 400 N	W CR 400 N & N County Line Rd	✓
23	Hamlet Route	Paved Shoulder	3.98	W Indiana Ave & S Starke St	S 600 E & E 1200 S	
24	East County Road Route	Paved Shoulder	2.52	E CR 1000 N & N 500 E	E CR 800 N & Chicago South Shore Railroad	
25	W 200 N Route	Paved Shoulder	2.16	N Falls Rd & 400ft south of E 200 N	N Falls Rd & E Division Rd	
26	S 600 E Route	Paved Shoulder	3.00	S 600 E & E 1200 S	S 600 E & US-6	
27	Long Lane Route	Paved Shoulder	7.45	US-6 & Long Lane Rd	Long Lane Rd & US-30	✓
28*	N Emery Route	Paved Shoulder	8.57	S 600 E & Division Rd	N Emery Rd & 1500ft north of E 700 N	✓
29	Falls Road Route	Paved Shoulder	5.48	E 1000 N & N CR 200 E	US-20 & N Falls Rd	
30	N County Line Route	Paved Shoulder	5.66	E Beverly Dr & N County Line RD	W 300 N & US-421	✓
31	Garwood Orchards Bikeway	Unmarked	3.80	N Wozniak Rd & W 125 N	W 100 S & SR 2	
34	Bluhm Park Bikeway	Paved Shoulder	2.81	E Lincolnway & Tipton St	W SR 2 & S 500 W	✓

\* Project Highlights

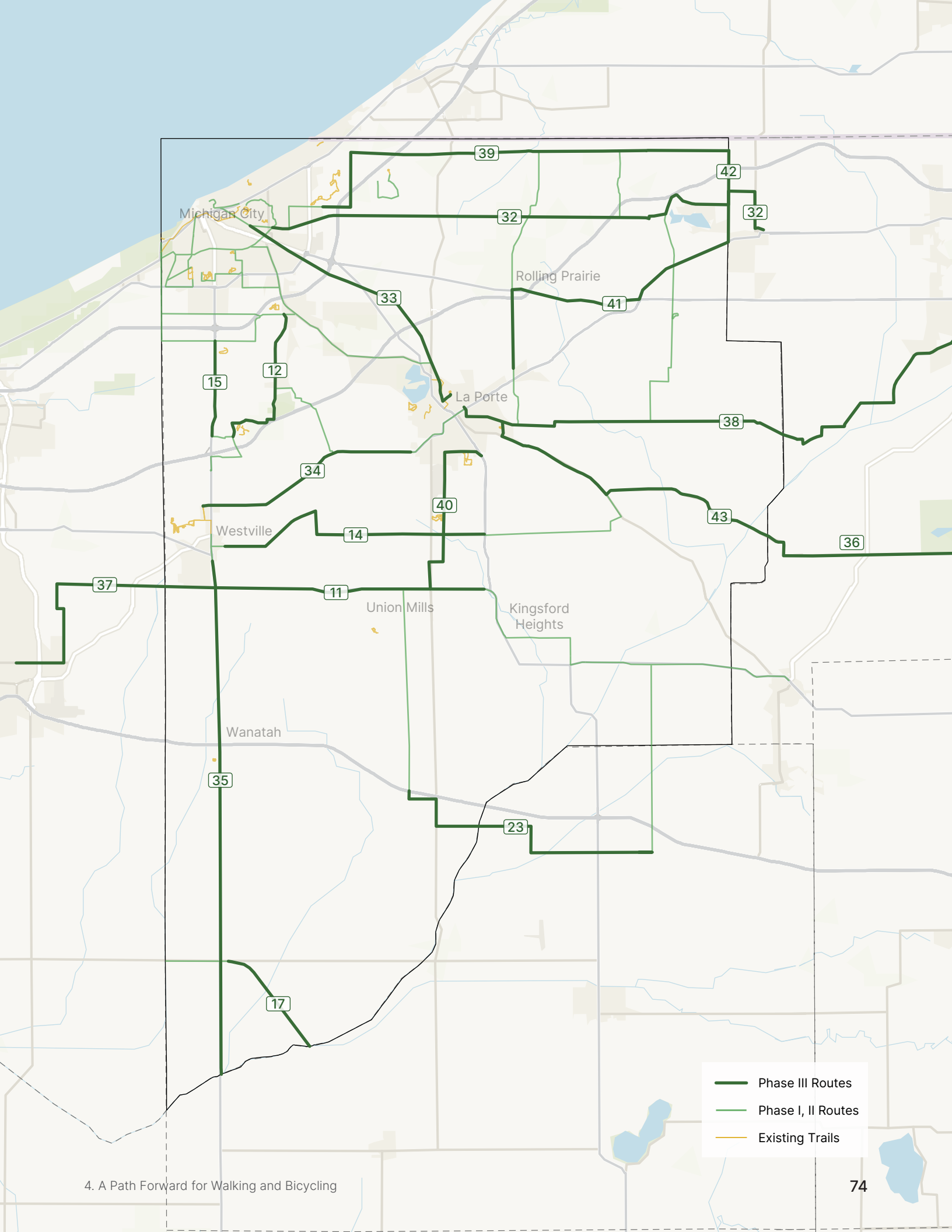




**Figure 4.6.** Phase III Project List

ID	Name	Type	Length (mi)	From	To	Priority
11*	US-6 Bikeway	Paved Shoulder	9.96	US-421 & US-6	US-6 & US-35	✓
12*	Red Mill Route	Paved Shoulder	6.29	W CR 400 N	S Holmesville Rd & E Snyder Rd	✓
14*	Stillwell to Luhr Bikeway	Paved Shoulder	10.92	E CR 400 S & W 400 S	W Joliet Rd & Sandstone Dr	✓
15*	Holmesville Road Bikeway	Shared Use Path	3.55	W 300 N & US-421	US-421 and E Snyder Rd	✓
17	County Line to Kankakee Trail	Shared Use Path	4.51	SR 8 & N Monroe St	1000ft south of W Bigler Rd	✓
23	Hamlet Route	Paved Shoulder	11.84	US-30 & Long Lane Rd	W Indiana Ave & S Starke St	
32	Michigan City to New Carlisle Bikeway	Shared Use Path	20.87	Chicago South Shore Line & 700ft east of S Karwick Rd	Timothy Rd & Marvel Ln	✓
33*	Michigan City to La Porte Bikeway	Shared Use Path	10.66	Chicago South Shore Line & 700 ft east of S Karwick Rd	Truesdell Ave & Taylor Rd	✓
34	Bluhm Park Bikeway	Shared Use Path	8.42	W SR 2 & S 500 W	W 300 S & 500ft west of Ash Parkway	✓
35*	US-421 Wanatah Route	Paved Shoulder	19.08	W 500 S & US-421	US-421 & 1000ft south of W 2400 S	
36	Potato Creek Route	Paved Shoulder	8.91	SR 4 & S 925 E	SR 4 & Potato Creek State Park	
37	Valparaiso Route	Paved Shoulder	10.83	W 600 S & US-421	Evans Ave & Study Rd	
38*	South Bend Route	Paved Shoulder	27.52	Tipton St & Grove St	W Sample St & S Main St	✓
39*	N 500 E Route	Paved Shoulder	17.13	N Meer Rd & W 800 N	E CR 100 N & County Line Rd	
40*	S 150 W Route	Paved Shoulder	7.03	Crescent Dr & US-35	SR 39 & US-6	✓
41	Rolling Prairie Route	Paved Shoulder	11.85	E 200 N & N Falls Rd	US-20 & County Line Rd	
42	Spicer Lake County Park Route	Paved Shoulder	3.38	US-20 & County Line Rd	County Line Rd & County Line Rd 1000 N	
43	Fish Lake Route	Paved Shoulder	10.40	Ohio St & Boyd Blvd	SR 4 & S 925 E	

\* Project Highlights



- Phase III Routes
- Phase I, II Routes
- Existing Trails

# Funding & Implementation

Implementing the recommended bicycle and pedestrian improvements will require a combination of local investment and external funding support. State and federal grants can play a critical role in advancing projects from planning concepts to construction. These funding sources are designed to help communities deliver infrastructure that promotes safety, improves access to everyday destinations, and encourages healthier, more sustainable transportation options. Proactively seeking these opportunities can help La Porte County and its municipal partners stretch limited resources further and deliver visible results more quickly.

Most transportation grant programs are structured as reimbursement-based funding. This means that a local agency must first commit to covering project expenses, then submit documentation to be repaid for the eligible share of costs. Funding programs often set a maximum reimbursement percentage—commonly 80% or 90%—requiring a local match to cover the remaining portion. For example, a grant that funds up to 80% of costs would require the applicant to provide the other 20% through local budgets, in-kind services, or other eligible funding sources. It is important to plan for these match requirements early to ensure that funding commitments are in place when applications are submitted.

**Figure 4.7.** State Funding Sources

Source	Agency	Typical Award	Purpose
Indiana Trail Program (ITP)	IDNR	Up to 80% reimbursement	Supports development of trails that connect residents to recreation and natural areas through non-motorized transportation
Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	INDOT	\$200,000–\$1M	Funds bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, Safe Routes to School, and streetscape improvements
Recreational Trails Program (RTP)	IDNR	Up to \$250,000	Develops and maintains recreational trails for motorized and non-motorized uses
Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)	IDNR	Typically up to 50% of costs	Assists with acquiring and developing outdoor recreation areas and facilities
Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)	USDOT	Up to \$1M (Planning), > \$10M (Implementation)	Funds strategies and infrastructure to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries



Key terms used throughout this section include eligibility, local match, and project types. Eligibility refers to which agencies or organizations are allowed to apply for a grant, such as counties, cities, non-profit organizations, or regional planning entities. Local match is the share of project costs the applicant must provide, either as cash or in-kind contributions. Project types describe the specific activities each funding source can support—for example, constructing shared use paths, installing safety improvements, or developing supporting amenities like signage and lighting. Understanding how these programs work—and how their requirements align with local priorities—is essential for successfully funding and delivering a safe, connected active transportation network.

Eligibility	Local Match	Potential Projects
Government agencies and qualifying nonprofits	20%	Non-motorized paths, trail connections, and safety improvements
Local agencies, regional planning agencies, transit agencies, tribal governments	20%	Sidewalks, bike lanes, shared use paths, crossings
Government entities and nonprofits	20%	Trailheads, shared use paths, signage, amenities
Local units of government	50%	Trails, park access improvements, supporting facilities
Counties, cities, MPOs, tribal governments	20%	Intersection improvements, protected bike lanes, corridor redesigns

**Figure 4.8.** Federal Funding Sources

Source	Agency	Typical Award	Purpose
Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)	USDOT	Varies widely; up to \$25M per project	Funds multimodal transportation infrastructure that improves safety, equity, and sustainability
Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)	FHWA/INDOT	\$500,000–\$2 million	Supports projects that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality, including non-motorized infrastructure
Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)	FHWA/INDOT	Varies	Funds infrastructure improvements that reduce fatalities and serious injuries on public roads
Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grants ( <i>formerly TIGER</i> )	USDOT	Varies; up to \$25M per project	Supports capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure, with priority for projects that improve safety, economic competitiveness, quality of life, and environmental sustainability
Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP)	USDOT	Varies	Funds planning and construction of safe, connected active transportation networks and spines
Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods	USDOT	Up to \$2M (Planning), Up to \$100M (Capital)	Helps remove or mitigate barriers caused by transportation infrastructure, improving connectivity for underserved communities
American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Community Challenge	AARP	\$5,000–\$50,000	Funds small-scale, quick-action projects that improve public spaces, promote walkability, and enhance community livability, especially for older adults

Eligibility	Local Match	Potential Projects
States, municipalities, MPOs, tribal governments	20% (rural areas may qualify for higher federal share)	Trail networks, pedestrian and bicycle corridors, complete streets
State and local agencies in eligible areas	20%	Shared use paths, bike lanes, pedestrian connections
State and local transportation agencies	10%	Safety-focused crossings, lighting, protected intersections
States, local governments, MPOs, tribal governments	20%	Large-scale trail systems, complete streets, multimodal corridors
States, MPOs, local governments, tribal governments	20%	Regional trail connections, protected bikeway corridors, network planning
Local governments, MPOs, tribal governments, nonprofit organizations	20%	Pedestrian bridges, trail connections over highways, intersection redesigns
Nonprofits, government entities, and other community organizations	None required	Pedestrian crossing improvements, benches, wayfinding signage, pop-up demonstration projects



# Proposed Policies & Programs

The successful implementation of this Plan will rely not only on physical infrastructure improvements but also on supportive policies and programs that help create a safe, connected, and inclusive network across La Porte County. The following recommended policies and initiatives are designed to address the unique challenges and opportunities of rural communities. They focus on improving safety and connectivity, supporting public health, celebrating local culture, and advancing environmental stewardship.

Together, these strategies provide a framework for consistent decision-making, clear design standards, and community engagement that will sustain progress over time. By adopting these measures, La Porte County and its partners can ensure that investments in trails and active transportation facilities deliver long-term value and remain responsive to the diverse needs of residents and visitors.

## Policies

### **Adopt a Complete Streets Policy:**

Establish a countywide Complete Streets policy requiring that all transportation projects incorporate safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

### **Develop a Vehicle Ordinance:**

Clarify the vehicles that are appropriate and not appropriate for various bicycle facilities.

### **Design for Resilient Trail Construction in Wetlands and Flood Zones:**

Establish a “Resilient Trails Toolkit” for designing rural trail sections around environmental barriers such as the Kankakee River floodplain, brownfields, and wetlands.

## Programs

### **Launch a Local Steward Program for Rural Trails:**

Engage nearby residents as volunteer “Trail Stewards” to monitor and help maintain rural trail segments, particularly in areas prone to flooding or low visibility.

### **Integrate Nature Interpretation Along Rural Trails:**

Incorporate signage, QR codes, and educational materials along rural trails that highlight ecological features, wildlife corridors, and local history.

### **Coordinate with Land Trusts and Conservation Groups:**

Work with groups like the Shirley Heinze Land Trust to co-develop rural trail routes that promote conservation while increasing public access to protected lands.





**Figure 4.9.** Policies/Programs List

Policy/Program	Description	Timeframe
<b>Adopt a Complete Streets Policy</b>	Establish a countywide Complete Streets policy requiring that all transportation projects incorporate safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.	Short-Term (1–2 years)
<b>Develop a Vehicle Ordinance</b>	Clarify the vehicles that are appropriate and not appropriate for various bicycle facilities.	Short-Term (1–2 years)
<b>Design for Resilient Trail Construction in Wetlands and Flood Zones</b>	Establish a “Resilient Trails Toolkit” for designing rural trail sections around environmental barriers such as the Kankakee River floodplain, brownfields, and wetlands.	Medium-Term (2–4 years)
<b>Launch a Local Steward Program for Rural Trails</b>	Engage nearby residents as volunteer “Trail Stewards” to monitor and help maintain rural trail segments, particularly in areas prone to flooding or low visibility.	Medium-Term (2–3 years)
<b>Integrate Nature Interpretation Along Rural Trails</b>	Incorporate signage, QR codes, and educational materials along rural trails that highlight ecological features, wildlife corridors, and local history.	Medium-Term (2–4 years)
<b>Coordinate with Land Trusts and Conservation Groups</b>	Work with groups like the Shirley Heinze Land Trust to co-develop rural trail routes that promote conservation while increasing public access to protected lands.	Ongoing

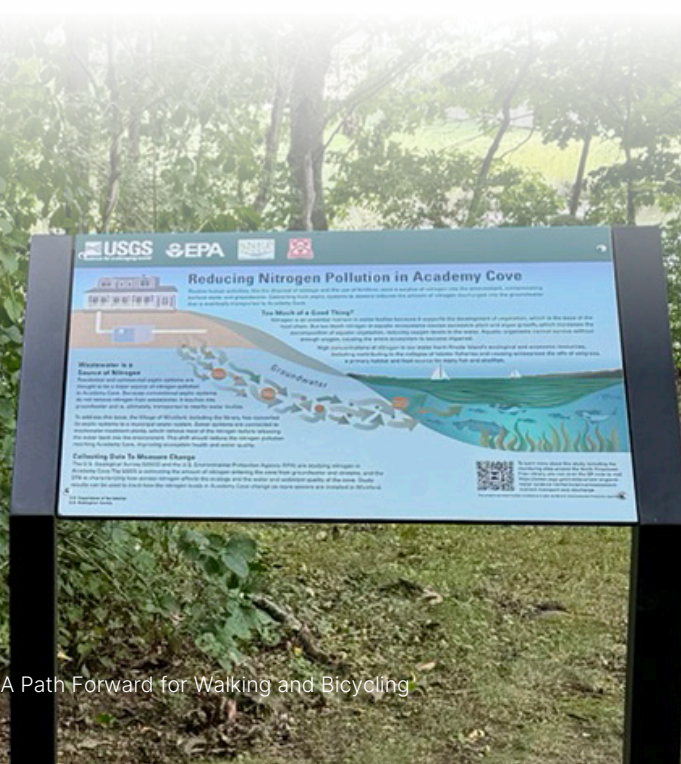


Photo: USGS

# Other Implementation Considerations

Successfully implementing bicycle and pedestrian projects often benefits from a phased approach that aligns with available funding and community readiness. Rather than waiting for full project funding, communities can begin with smaller, lower-cost actions such as pavement markings, signage, or temporary pilot projects. These early steps can demonstrate the benefits of active transportation, improve safety right away, and help build public support while larger investments are planned. Phasing also makes it easier to adjust designs based on real-world use and community feedback.

Ongoing public engagement is another important practice. Even after a plan is adopted, maintaining clear communication with residents, businesses, and stakeholders helps keep projects relevant and responsive. This can include project websites, newsletters, open houses, or online tools to share progress updates and gather additional input. Providing clear information about timelines, impacts, and benefits helps manage expectations and build trust.

Close coordination among departments and partner agencies is essential to integrate bicycle and pedestrian improvements into broader transportation and infrastructure efforts. Collaboration with public works, utilities, and parks departments can reveal opportunities to bundle projects, such as combining street resurfacing with trail construction or drainage upgrades. Aligning these efforts helps reduce costs, minimize disruption, and ensure projects advance shared goals.

Designing infrastructure with flexibility and resilience in mind will support long-term success. Facilities should be planned to adapt to growth, changing transportation patterns, and new technologies. For example, trail corridors can be designed with space for future widening or lighting improvements. Using durable materials suited to Indiana's climate and applying universal design principles ensures facilities remain accessible and low-maintenance over time.

Finally, clear policies, metrics, and maintenance plans are key to sustaining investments. This includes adopting Complete Streets policies, setting up performance measures to track usage and safety, and dedicating funding for upkeep. Regularly evaluating outcomes allows agencies to adjust priorities and refine designs to better serve the community. Taken together, these practices create a solid foundation for a safe, connected, and lasting active transportation network.





# Measuring Progress

Creating clear metrics to measure progress is essential to track the effectiveness of bicycle and pedestrian investments over time. Well-defined indicators allow agencies to demonstrate success, evaluate where improvements are needed, and communicate results to the public and decision-makers. Metrics should be practical to collect, relevant to the goals of the plan, and consistent across projects so that trends can be compared year over year. Establishing a baseline before implementation begins is a helpful way to show how conditions have changed and to highlight early wins that build support for continued investments.

Metrics can address a range of outcomes, from safety improvements and increased usage to broader community benefits like economic development and public health. For example, tracking the number of crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians helps evaluate whether safety measures are working as intended. Together, these metrics create a framework for accountability and continuous improvement.

Figure 4.10. Measuring Metric

Metric	Description	Collection Method
<i>Crash Reduction</i>	Change in crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians	Police crash reports; annual safety audits
<i>User Counts</i>	Number of people walking or biking at key locations	Automated counters; manual counts; observational surveys
<i>Facility Miles Completed</i>	Miles of new or improved facilities constructed	Project records; GIS mapping
<i>Connectivity to Destinations</i>	Percentage of residents within 1/4 or 1/2 mile of a facility	GIS analysis
<i>School Access</i>	Number of schools connected by safe walking and biking routes	GIS mapping; Safe Routes to School program data

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# Appendices

## **Appendix A**

Meeting Results

## **Appendix B**

Survey Results

## **Appendix C**

Detailed Project List & Cost Estimates