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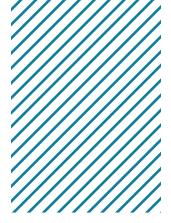
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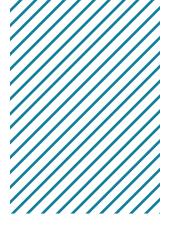




#### **APPROVAL AND ADOPTION**

The FORWARD Kosciusko County-wide Greenways and Blueways Plan was approved by the Kosciusko County Board of Commissioners during their March 25, 2025 meeting.

The FORWARD Kosciusko County-wide Greenways and Blueways Plan was approved and adopted as a amendment to the County-wide Comprehensive Plan by the Kosciusko County Area Plan Commission during their May 7, 2025 meeting.





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In 2019, Kosciusko County leadership and key community stakeholders initiated a multi-year phased process to craft a one-of-a-kind strategic plan for the County and the incorporated Cities and Towns. The FORWARD Kosciusko County planning process allowed residents, business owners, and community organizations to actively participate in the development of the Plan by voicing their concerns, ideas, and support for various initiatives county-wide.

Throughout the two-year process, preserving and enhancing the County's lakes, waterways, and natural features was a consistent point of concern and interest amongst nearly all participating individuals and organizations.

With a clear focus on leveraging the existing assets, two key priorities took shape.

- 1. Encourage the development of community facilities, parks, and open spaces.
- 2. Creates linkages between communities and destinations.

To advance these two key priorities, County leadership created a new Parks Board in the summer of 2022 and executed a county-wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan in the spring of 2023 with funding from the Office of Community and Rural Affairs, Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program. As a part of the five-year master planning process, the Board adopted a series of action strategies that could advance the development of parks, open spaces, and community connectivity at a county scale. Rather than undertake a series of seemingly individual efforts, the Board chose to advance several initiatives at once by facilitating a county-wide greenways and blueways master planning process.

In early 2024, the Parks Board started a ten-month county-wide greenways and blueways master planning effort. The *Kosciusko County Greenways and Blueways Master Plan* and supporting implementation tools are designed to not just be a static vision for the future.

# The county-wide parks master plan outlined the "why," and the subsequent greenways and blueways plan shows us "how."

The focus on creating a 'cooperative playbook' meant that the final Plan needed to be direct in its recommendations, but flexible in how future decisions were made so that the Board and their implementation partners could adapt to the changing conditions of the market, budget resources, and grant opportunities. To facilitate these needs, the Plan's intention and purpose were further defined by five key goals:

- 1. **Equitable** The system will be inviting and accessible to all users.
- **2. Connective** The system will connect our people, places, and destinations using consistent design standards.
- **3. Respectful** The system will improve, complement, and respect the needs of adjacent uses and environments.
- **4. Responsible** Implementing the system will leverage partnerships and resources to maximize County resources.
- **5. Beneficial** Implementing the system will provide value-added improvements to properties, communities, and county residents.

Through the development of specific route recommendations, standard design guidelines, budget planning tools, and communication material, the final Plan is intended to not only identify how various connections can and should be made but the supporting tool included in the final deliverables is intended to serve as an educational resource for Board members and community partners throughout the Plan's implementation.

The proposed system stands to be a game changer when it comes to local, county and regional connectivity by improving routes, facilities and access to regional amenities.

### SYSTEM OVERVIEW











### **HISTORY**

In 2019, Kosciusko County leadership and key community stakeholders initiated a multi-year phased process to craft a one-of-a-kind strategic plan for the County and the incorporated Cities and Towns. The FORWARD Kosciusko County planning process allowed residents, business owners, and community organizations to actively participate in the development of the plan by voicing their concerns, ideas, and support for a variety of initiatives county-wide.

Throughout the two-year process, the preservation and enhancement of the county's lakes, waterways, and natural features was a consistent point of concern and interest amongst nearly all participating individuals and organizations. With a clear focus on leveraging the existing assets, two key priorities took shape and gained substantial momentum as the plan was completed.

- Encourage the development of community facilities, parks, and open spaces.
- Creates linkages between communities and destinations.

To advance these two key priorities, County leadership undertook the creation of a new Parks Board in the summer of 2022 and the execution of a county-wide parks and recreation master plan in the spring of 2023.

While the County Park Board was established to create and manage a county-wide park system and expand recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, currently the Board does not have any parks, facilities, or monetary resources. With limited physical assets under their management, the Board's primary role is to oversee the long-term development of county-wide connectivity initiatives that provide new and enhanced recreational opportunities to all

residents. The playbook to support the Board's visionary tasks is the county-wide parks master plan.

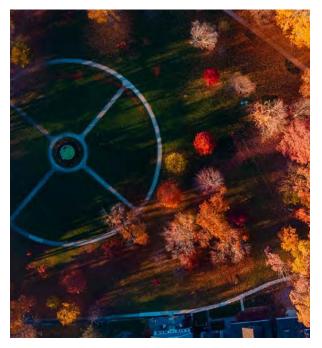
The Kosciusko County Parks Master Plan was built on the foundation laid from the extensive community engagement efforts conducted from prior planning efforts with a continued momentum to garner residents' needs and aspirations for a county park system. Throughout public engagement, and a comprehensive needs and gaps analysis, the themes and supporting goals shown on the facing page were identified as county-wide areas of interest.

A series of strategic themes and goals were adopted by the Board after the park master planning process. These initiatives, shown on the facing page, provided specific ways in which the board could advance the development of parks, open spaces, and community connectivity. While the specific initiatives were sound, and backed by public input, the Board saw that many of the recommendations were interrelated and required further research and study.

Rather than undertake a series of seemingly individual efforts, the Board chose to advance several initiatives at once with the facilitation of a countywide greenways and blueways master planning process.







#### **COUNTY PARKS PLAN STRATEGIC THEMES AND GOALS**



#### PARK AND RECREATION AMENITIES

- Establish linear park systems along our waterways including the Tippecanoe River.
- Establish neighborhood/pocket parks or advocate for pocket parks in underserved areas.



#### TRAIL AND BLUEWAY CONNECTIONS

- Add trail connections between communities, parks, recreational facilities, natural resources, schools, and other community facilities in Kosciusko County.
- Add trail connections with regional (outside of Kosciusko County) communities, parks, and trails.



#### PROMOTION AND MARKETING

- Develop a unified branding and marketing initiative in partnership with other organizations for regular promotion and awareness to increase exposure to county residents and visitors.
- Create a centralized hub that makes access to programming and resources in each community easy and a one-stop shop.

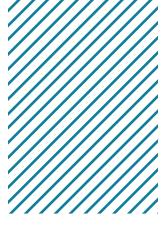


#### STAFFING AND MAINTENANCE

- Establish an annual operating park board budget to adequately maintain the parks and recreation facilities
- Create a non-profit volunteer group, like Friends of the Park, that
  is authorized and encouraged to support the park system through
  coordinating and hosting targeted volunteer days, fundraisers, and
  programming.









### INTENTIONS

The Kosciusko County Greenways and Blueways Master Plan, and supporting implementation tools, are designed to not be just a static vision for the future.

Instead, this effort serves as the Park Board's cooperative playbook for guiding and directing both short-term and generational investment into our county's trails, greenways, blueways, regional amenities, and land preservation initiatives.

In short, the county-wide parks master plan outlined our "why" and the subsequent greenways and blueways plan shows us "how".

Existing county lakes, pathways and road corridors. Images provided by Orange Door Creative.









The focus on creating a 'cooperative playbook' meant that the final Plan needed to be direct in its recommendations but flexible in how future decisions were made so that the Board and their implementation partners could adapt to the changing conditions of the market, budget resources, and grant opportunities. To facilitate those needs, the Plan's intention and purpose were further defined by five key goals:

Through the development of specific route recommendations, standard design guidelines, budget planning tools, and communication material, the final Plan is intended to not only identify how various connections can and should be made but the supporting tool included in the final deliverables is intended to serve as an educational resource for Board members and community partners throughout the Plan's implementation.

- 1. **Equitable** The system will be inviting and accessible to all users.
- **2. Connective** The system will use consistent design standards to connect our people, places, and destinations.
- **3. Respectful** The system will improve, complement, and respect the needs of adjacent uses and environments.
- **4. Responsible** The implementation of the system will leverage partnerships and resources to maximize County resources.
- **5. Beneficial** The implementation of the system will provide value-added improvements to properties, communities, and county residents.

The goals were developed at the onset of the process and then used as foundational markers to ensure that recommendations and priorities were soundly developed to reflect the identified gaps, needs, and aspirations of the county.

Since the goals represent the expectations and commitments of the Board and other County leadership groups, following the Plan's completion, the goals should serve as a set of decision-making criteria to evaluate future initiatives and projects related to connectivity and recreational offerings.









### **PROCESS**

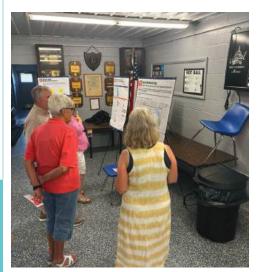
In early 2024, the Parks Board started a ten-month county-wide greenways and blueways master planning effort. Like the county-wide parks master plan, the greenways and blueways plan is built upon the work that began in 2019. With multiple county-wide and regional efforts undertaken in the last five years, much of the planning process relied on input and recommendations collected and developed during previous strategic planning efforts such as:

- 2019 Kosciusko County Community Foundation Town Hall Chats
- 2020-2021 FORWARD Kosciusko County Comprehensive Plan
- 2021-2022 Kosciusko County HELP Strategic Investment Plan
- 2023 Kosciusko County Five Year Parks Master Plan
- 2023 Move Safe: Regional Safety Plan

While previous efforts were used as resources throughout the process, a twelve-person steering committee met regularly to guide the development of the Plan's recommendations and oversee a series of focused community and stakeholder input opportunities. With the help of the steering committee and the Parks Board who received monthly updates on the process, the following informational events were offered to the planning team and the county community.

Outreach and meeting activities were used to review existing conditions, refined recommendations, and future priorities. The final connectivity master plan and supporting priorities are reflective of both resident and partner consensus and overall support.

Clockwise from upper left: Silver Lake Public Workshop event, Syracuse Public Workshop event, Informational booth at Fat and Skinny Tire Fest.









# PROJECT EVENTS

Informational booth Fat and Skinny Tire Festival-May 16- 19, 2024

Mobile display

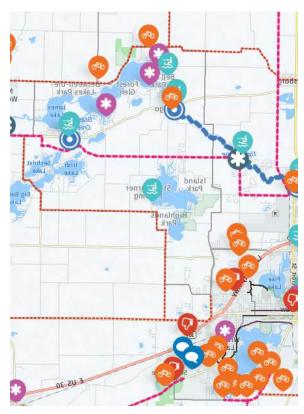
Available for local events and festivals

Tippecanoe River Tour Team and Stakeholder Field Study- June 7, 2024

KCV Cycling Input Session Warsaw, June 25, 2024

Public Workshops (Warsaw, Syracuse and Silver Lake locations) – July 9-11, 2024

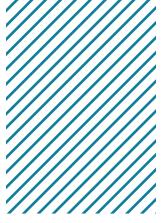
Stakeholder conversations:
The Watershed Foundation,
Tippy River Adventures,
Kosciusko County Surveyors
office, Kosciusko County
Highway Department,
Kosciusko County Area
Planning Department, and
the Michiana Area Council of
Governments (MACOG)

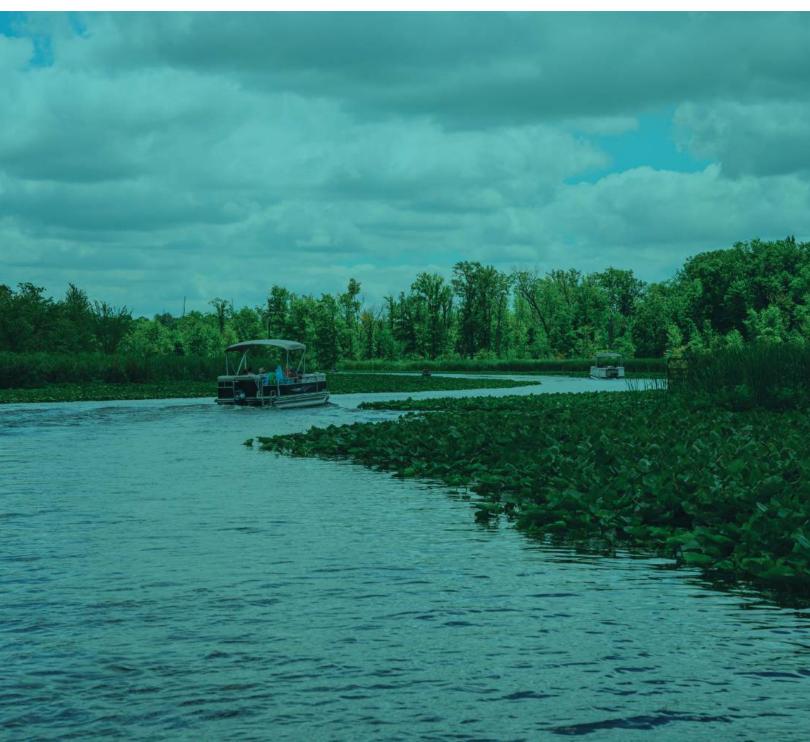












## BUILDING BLOCKS

To be successful, the county-wide greenways and blueways system should be built in a way that leverages the vast infrastructure systems and significant natural features of the area. It is through these existing natural and man-made corridors that land can be protected and enhanced, while new connections can be made to the county's communities and regional destinations.

The proposed system master plan has been developed using the county's roads, and nature systems as a backbone for corridor development. While each system or feature has tremendous advantages, there are also future limitations that will need to be overcome or mitigated as implementation moves forward.

### **ROADS**

Kosciusko County manages over 1,200 miles of roadway ranking it the 3rd largest county in terms of roadway volume. This excludes corridors, such as SR 19, SR 15, and SR 13 in the north-south direction and US 30, SR 14, and SR 25 in the east-west direction which are managed and maintained by INDOT. The county roadway network provides direct connections in nearly all directions and to all local cities and towns, making it the most efficient framework for trail and greenway development due to the reach and connectivity that the roadways provide.

While vast in length, the majority of the County's roadways are nearly all rural in character meaning they are narrow with an approximate 50'-60' of right of way along each corridor. Often, these county roads present conflicts to multi-modal users due to the presence of agricultural equipment, Amish horse and buggies and fast-moving traffic on INDOT corridors.

To fully utilize this existing transportation system, in key areas future trails can be constructed parallel to the existing roadways with the acquisition of additional right of way. Additionally, as trail routes cross or move through intersections of varying size and complexity, special design criteria will need to be applied to provide safety to all parties.





#### **ADVANTAGES**

Public ownership

Comprehensive connections

Existing public use and awareness

County Highway Department as a willing partner

#### **LIMITATIONS**

Mixed ownership on either side

Right of way acquisition needed

Increased safety and local and regional intersections

Ongoing maintenance costs will be needed



### RIVER & STREAMS

The Tippecanoe River is the headwater of the Mississippi River watershed in Indiana according to The Watershed Foundation (TWF). The river's overall length is approximately 188 miles, to the confluence with the Wabash River. Within the county, the river flows 24 miles southwest beginning at Oswego Lake and hosts many endangered species along its path. The Nature Conservancy considers the Tippecanoe River one the Top 10 Rivers to Protect in the USA due to the number of rare and endangered species it supports.

Some of the endangered species include the Blue Breast Darter, Gilt Darter, Spotted Darter, and Tippecanoe Darter. The river supports 14 families and 54 species of fish. Nearly 80% of collected fish were game fish species including largemouth bass, yellow perch, walleye, white and black crappier, etc. The river contains 49 of 57 mussels found in the area and is host to a wide variety of wildlife, waterfowl, shorebirds, and birds.

Currently, the river is navigable during portions of the year due in large part to the dedicated volunteers who assist in keeping the waterway clear of debris. While individuals can paddle portions of the corridor on their own, businesses, such as Tippy River Adventures, have worked with the County to establish documented waterway routes as well as supporting transportation services to and from ingress and egress points.







The Tippecanoe River continues to flow through Fulton County, providing connectivity to Potawatomi Wildlife Park and the Minominee Tippecanoe River Park. A portion of the Eel River also flows through Kosciusko County, although its primary route is through the adjacent counties of Whitley and Wabash Counties.

In addition to the Tippecanoe and Eel River, there are approximately 600 miles of streams located throughout the county. These streams flow in and out of several lakes and wetlands. These creeks vary in depth ranging from two to three feet to ten feet and may be as wide as fifty in some sections. In summer, some creeks will be shallow and intermittent with stream flow depending on rain fall.

Wetland and marshes are abundant within the watershed and can be very thick and difficult to paddle depending on the time of year and water levels.



#### **ADVANTAGES**

Public or quasi-public ownership

Opportunities for education

Existing amenities and access points

Existing tourism efforts underway

Existing public use and awareness

Current champions assist with maintenance of waterway

#### **LIMITATIONS**

Floodway and floodplain regulations

Shoreline stability and reclamation

Environmental and ecological sensitivities

Habitat restoration and/or mitigation

Mixed ownership on either side

Topography makes new access points difficult

Ongoing maintenance costs will be needed





# **LAKES**

Kosciusko County is home to more than 100 lakes including the largest naturally formed lake in Indiana, Lake Wawasee. These naturally formed lakes were formed by the Wisconsin glacier and are abundant throughout the county. They are freshwater and spring fed. The Continental Divide runs through the northeast portion of the county to the east of SR 13 from North Webster north to Syracuse. This divide delineates the Mississippi River Basin from the Great Lakes drainage system.

The lakes make up a large part of the region's tourism base although the county has a multitude of destinations which attract visitors from across the Midwest. A study performed in 2019 by the Kosciusko County Convention and Visitors Bureau concluded that \$200 million was contributed by visitors to the county's economy in 2019, with visitors coming from 12 separate states. To increase the awareness of and access to these resources, the existing waterways of the county have been fully integrated into the multi-modal master plan through the identification of blueways.

The county has both public and private lakes. Private lakes are managed by property owner lake associations while public lakes are owned and managed by either a city, town or state entity. Many of the County's most notable lakes have public access facilities and boat launches which are maintained by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Division of Fish and Wildlife. Several communities such as Warsaw and Winona







Lake, have park departments that manage and provide public access points through park facilities. Local marinas and private vendors also provide access to the water for nominal ramp fees for their private boat ramps. Additionally, there are a wide variety of opportunities for water recreation and boating.

IDNR manages multiple areas within the County including Tri-County Fish and Wildlife which includes ten small lakes and conservation areas such as Big Barbee, Center Lake and Wawasee Wetland Conservation Areas. A part of this management has included the development of Ecozones in key areas including Lake Wawasee, Syracuse Lake and Tippecanoe Lake. Ecozones are designated per Indiana code IC 14-15-7-3 and govern the operation and speeds of watercraft on public lakes. This protection of the lake shoreline and shallow water assists in maintaining a healthy ecosystem and habitat for the diverse plants, aquatic life and wildlife of the lake. Typically, only non-motorized boats are allowed in these zones depending on the individual lake. On Tippecanoe Lake, this zone is along the Edmund and Virginia Ball Wetland Nature Preserve. This provides an opportunity to create a paddling trail along the shoreline and minimizes potential conflicts with motorized watercraft.



#### **ADVANTAGES**

Public or quasi-public ownership

Ample opportunities for education

Protection of shoreline through public policy

Existing tourism efforts underway

Existing public use and awareness

Current champions manage and maintain public sites

### LIMITATIONS

Private residential ownership in some areas

Limited access for disabled individuals

*Inconsistent amenities* 

Floodway and floodplain regulations

Shoreline stability and reclamation

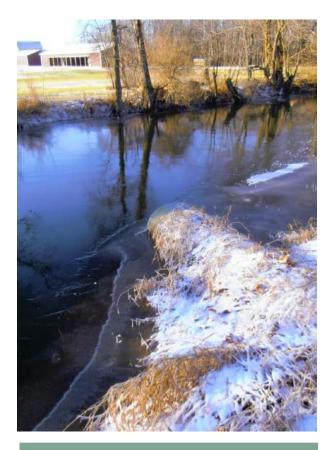
Environmental and ecological sensitivities

Ongoing maintenance costs will be needed



# REGULATED DRAINS

Regulated drains are easements which are regulated by the County Drainage Board and County Surveyor's office in the state of Indiana. They are responsible for the maintenance and operating functions of all regulated open drains and tiles within the county. A legal drain has a 75' easement from the top of the bank on both sides of the open drain for maintenance. The land is still owned by the property owner, but the County has authority over the easement and controls what can be built and developed within the easement to maintain drainage. Some open drains are streams or creeks, and some are dry and only wet after a rain event. Tiled legal drains are underground. The County Surveyor has the right to access the legal drain and maintain it. Any improvements by the property owner do not have to be restored if damaged while the county is maintaining the drain within the easement. Not all regulated drains have access for maintenance.



#### **ADVANTAGES**

Public or quasi-public ownership

Opportunities for education and interpretation

Connects to major bodies of water

### **LIMITATIONS**

Floodway and floodplain regulations

Regulated drain approvals

Shoreline stability and reclamation

Environmental and ecological sensitivities

Habitat restoration and/or mitigation

# BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Kosciusko County is Indiana's 5th largest county based on land area calculation. The county is home to fourteen individual, incorporated communities: Atwood, Burket, Claypool, Etna Green, Leesburg, Mentone, Milford, North Webster, Pierceton, Sidney, Silver Lake, Syracuse, Warsaw and Winona Lake. Each community has a rich local history that allows them to stand out from one another and from any other area across the state. While the County itself has a diverse past that has been influenced by its agriculture, industries, and numerous natural resources, each town within the County has unique backgrounds that have shaped the communities of today. Local history such as Mentone's egg market and Etna Green's grain elevator or the downtown districts in Leesburg and Syracuse should be celebrated and used to attract new visitors to each community. These historic areas are not just significant within their respective town but are pieces of pride for the entire County.

These communities, and the County itself, have leveraged this history to create niche tourism and destination opportunities. You-pick berry farms, wineries and breweries are located throughout the county and offer year-round events and attractions for visitors. In addition to the primary tourism drivers that are often located on, or surrounding, one of the county's lakes,







local entrepreneurs have worked hard to develop one-of-a-kind destinations that go beyond traditional park developments and event spaces.

Using both business, industry and the built environment, the county has been able to curate a series of independent destinations that cater to a broad range of ages and demographics. Within local areas, such as Warsaw, Winona Lake and Syracuse, these local destinations have been stitched together through the implementation of trails, greenways and on street facilities. Using those efforts and a precedent, the county can weave a more integral set of connections and destinations to one another.





#### **ADVANTAGES**

Opportunities for education and interpretation

Connects to primary destinations

Builds upon tourism efforts

Encourages tourism objectives

#### **LIMITATIONS**

Mixed ownership

Right of way acquisition needed

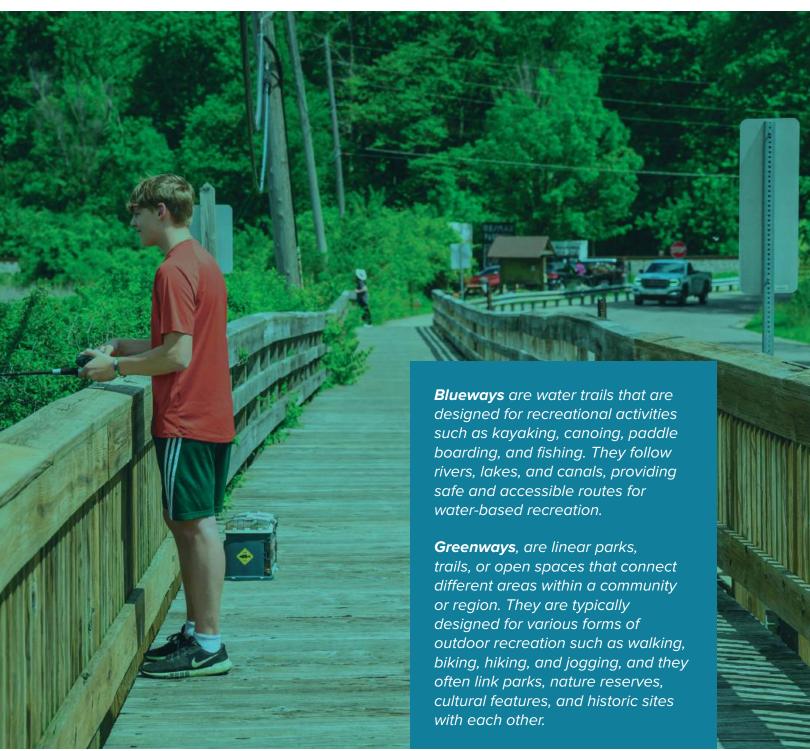
Increased safety at local and regional intersections

Ongoing maintenance costs will be needed









# SYSTEM

Across the county, connectivity and recreational opportunities have continued to increase year over year. Today, there are over 225 miles of signed, on-street, shared routes paralleling county roads with an additional 55 miles of protected facilities for bicycles and pedestrians focused on the communities of Syracuse, Warsaw, and Winona Lake.

These existing facilities complement a range of active and passive recreational opportunities and currently cater to different user groups based on age, mobility needs, and overall comfort. While the existing facilities are well-used, the proposed county-wide greenways and blueways system has the potential to exponentially improve connectivity, increase safety, and enhance access to recreational amenities across the county.

The proposed system can be categorized into either' greenway' or 'blueway' facilities.

Proposed facilities are further refined based on the intended connection type, and overall user experience. While trail users spend the majority of their recreational or commuting time on a specific facility, trailheads, or other stopping points, are often the user's first and last impression of the system itself. To support the proposed routes, a hierarchy of trailheads, access points, and nodes was developed to provide multiple entry points into the county-wide system, the existing communities, and the area's natural attractions.

# SYSTEM COMPONENTS

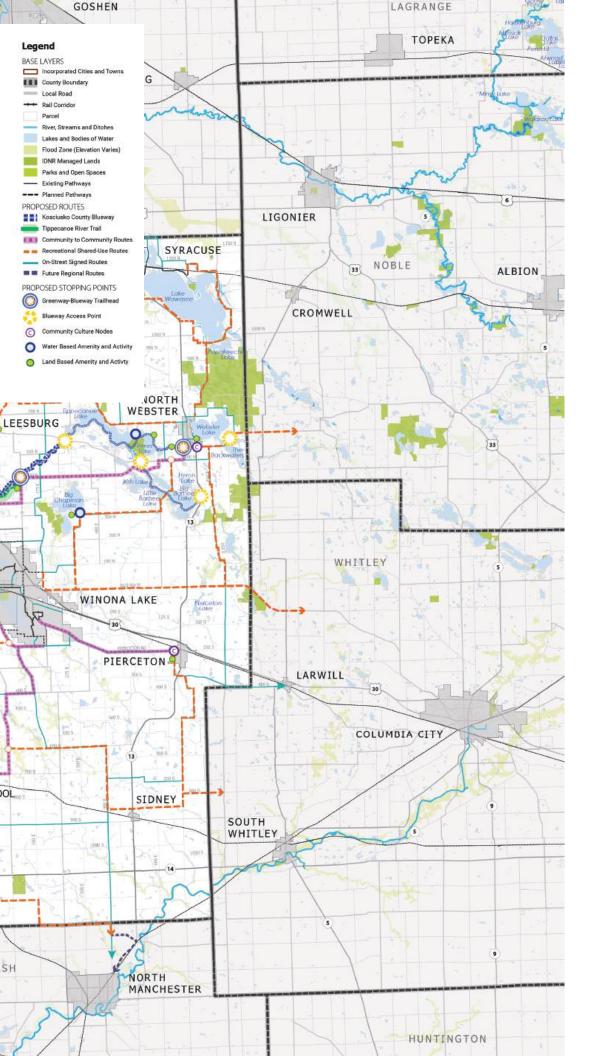
## **PROPOSED ROUTES AND FACILITIES**

KOSCIUSKO COUNTY BLUEWAY	A series of water-based routes designed to encourage interaction with one of Kosciusko County's most valuable resources. These navigable routes provide opportunities for fast and moving watercraft, fishing, and waterway observation.
TIPPECANOE RIVER TRAIL	Allows users to experience the Tippecanoe River in a way that allows for exploration, education, and active and passive recreation.
COMMUNITY TO COMMUNITY ROUTES	Provide for the most direct connection between communities. The routes are modeled after the Interurban Rail routes that provided passenger travel throughout the region.
RECREATIONAL SHARED-USE ROUTES	Establishes "loops" throughout the county to provide multiple route options at varying lengths. These routes follow existing county roadways and connect users to local destinations, open spaces, and recreational opportunities.
ON-STREET SIGNED ROUTES	Support a larger regional network of bicyclist routes connecting urban and rural communities. These routes use signage to alert drivers that bicyclists are more likely to be on the road and provide opportunities for people to travel longer distances for transportation and recreation.



# **PROPOSED STOPPING POINTS**

<b>ک</b>	GREENWAY- BLUEWAY TRAILHEADS	Designated public areas where county-wide greenways, blueways, and recreational routes intersect.  These areas provide users with multiple opportunities for both land and water-based activities and will have the highest level of user amenities.
	BLUEWAY ACCESS POINTS	Designated points along the riparian corridor where users can enter or exit the waterway route safely and protectively. These areas provide users with access to the County's river, lakes, and streams and offer conservation and user education opportunities.
J:L	RECREATIONAL ROUTE NODES	Small-scale connections where shared use paths intersect and offer opportunities for a user to change directions.
(C)	COMMUNITY CULTURE NODES	Serve as the terminus of the county's trail system within any specific community. These nodes are often located at public properties such as schools, parks, or government buildings and provide an opportunity for unique treatments and amenities.
<b>=</b>	ACTIVITY ZONES	Small to large-scale properties that can function as usable recreational places (either land or water based) now or in the future.

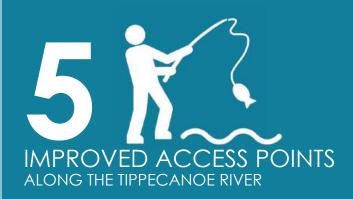


# SYSTEM BY THE NUMBERS

312 ±
MILES OF PROPOSED TRAIL
FOR PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS

MILES OF NAVIGABLE RIVER IN ADDITION TO PUBLIC LAKE ACCESS

PRIMARY TRAILHEADS
WITH PUBLIC FACILITIES AND AMENITIES



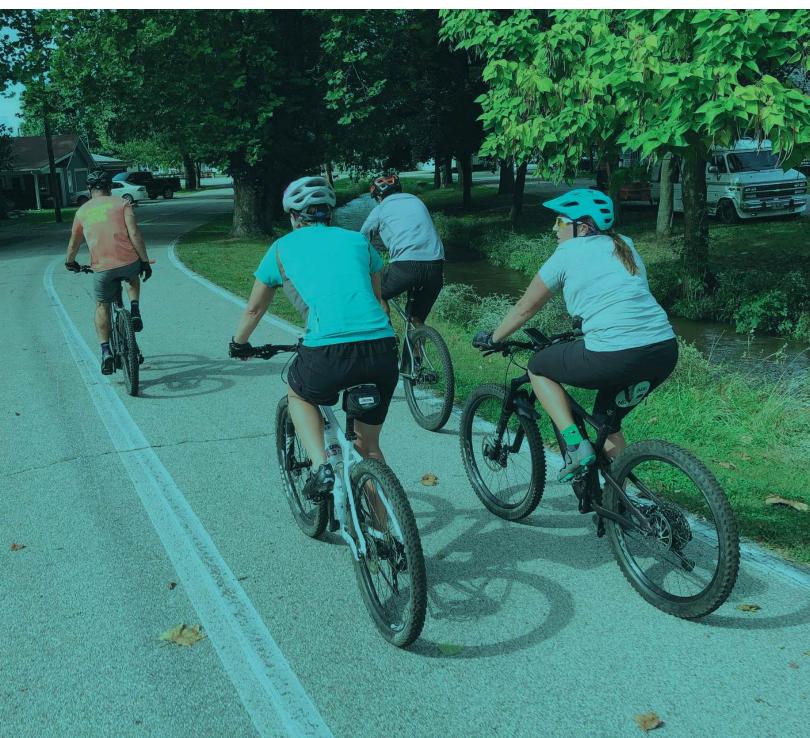












# **IMPACTS**

While the implementation of the proposed system can be measured and quantified, the projected impact goes beyond the number of completed trail miles. Rather than focusing on miles proposed and built, the proposed greenways and blueways recommendations and priorities are centered on the level of connectivity and access provided to users system-wide.

# **Connect to the Visionary Trail System**

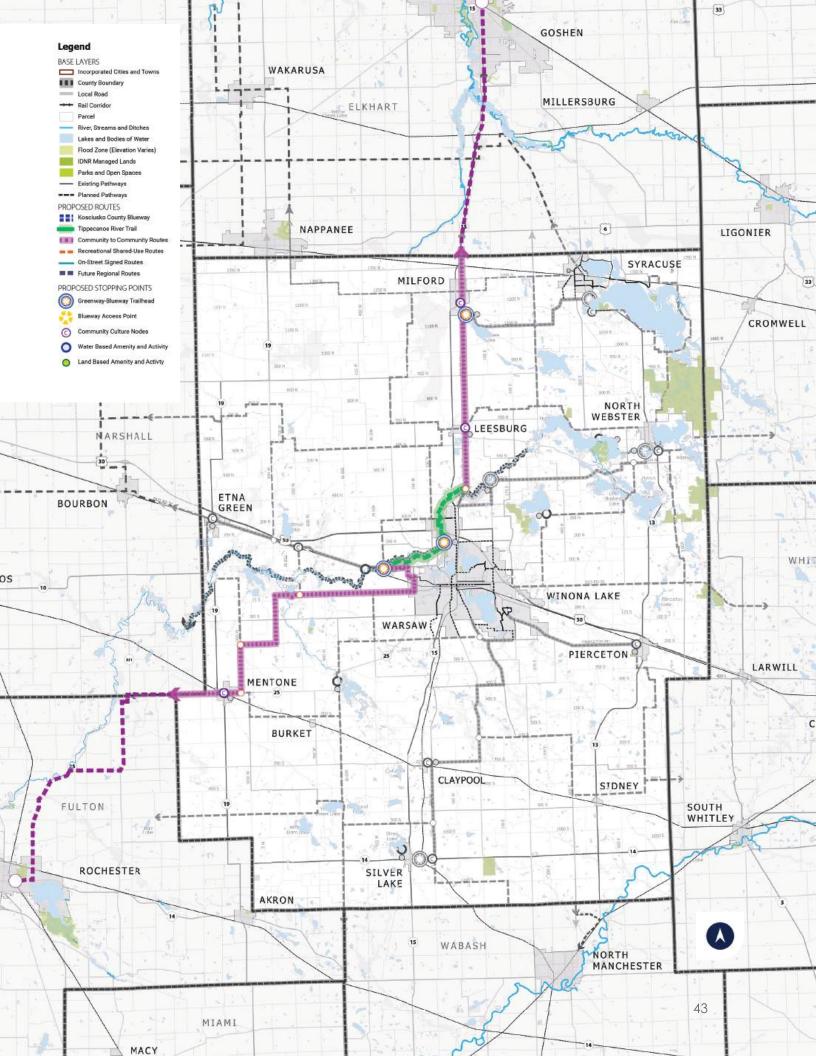
The 2021 State-wide Trails Plan included mapped existing and planned trails across the state to better reflect the advancement in trail development and funding. Included in the update was a refined proposal for a state-wide Visionary Trail System. The Visionary Trail System is a collection of existing and proposed trail corridors that provide a backbone for connected trails throughout Indiana. The current proposal provides routes that bypass Kosciusko County, likely due to the limited planning that had been done before this master planning effort. With county-wide trail implementation, connections to two proposed Vision Trails can be provided.

**Great American Rail-Trail:** The proposed trail spans more than 3,700 miles from Washington DC to Washington State. It connects 12 states and will include Indiana. A portion of the proposed route will utilize the existing 40 + mile Nickel Plate Trail that runs from the city of Kokomo in Howard County to the city of Rochester in Fulton County.

The North Central IN Greenway: The proposed North Central IN Greenway utilizes the existing Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, the Maple City Greenway, and the Maple Heart Trail to connect South Bend, Mishawaka, Elkhart, Goshen, Middlebury, and Shipshewana.







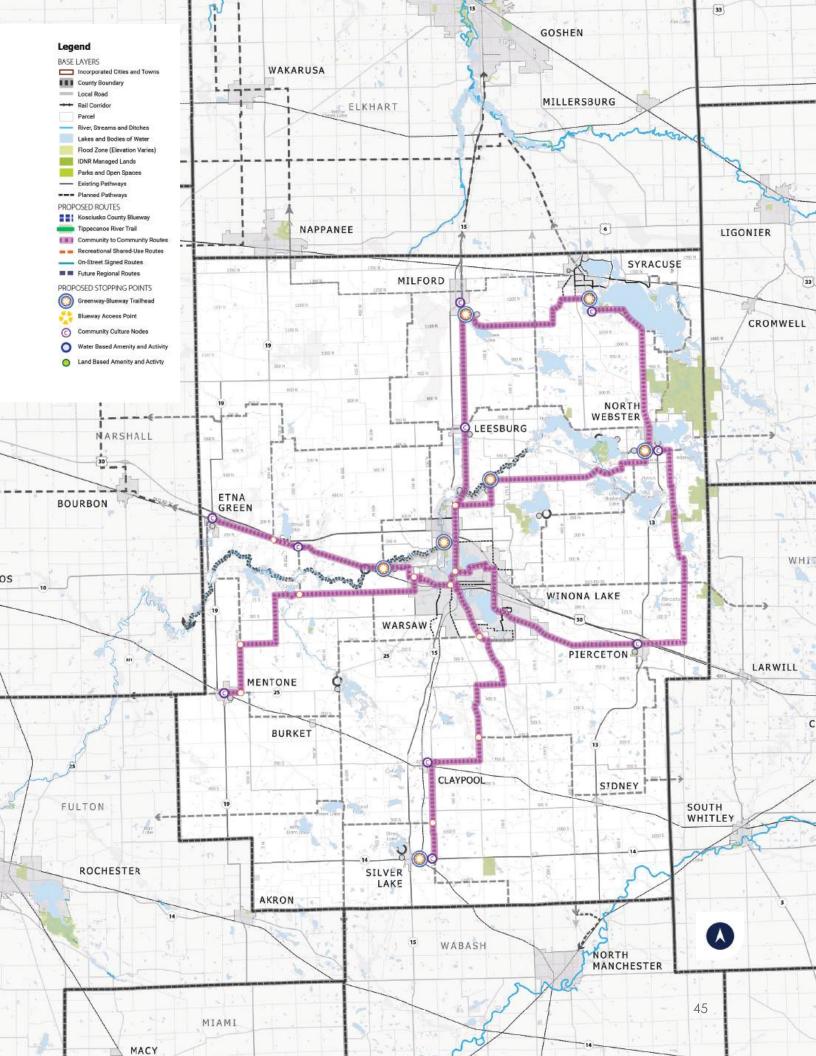
## **Connect the Communities**

In the previous planning process that supported both *FORWARD Kosciusko County* and the *Kosciusko County Parks Master Plan*, residents and process participants consistently advocated for improved connectivity to and from communities, to improve access to existing natural resources, tourism destinations, and recreational areas.

By building upon the existing connectivity hubs found in Syracuse, Warsaw, and Winona Lake, county-wide routes can extend outward to directly connect outlying towns to amenities and destinations in safe and comfortable ways.







## **Provide Safe Access to Water**

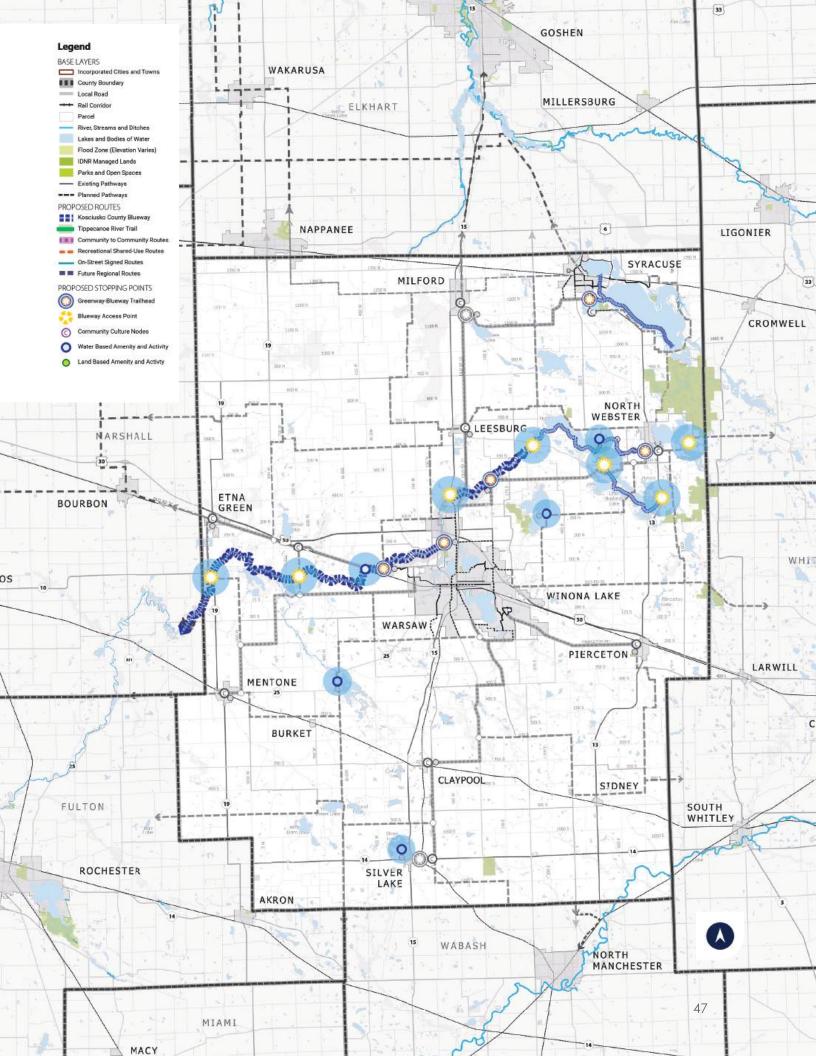
One of the largest draws for Kosciusko County is the wide range of natural resources including multiple lakes, rivers, and park spaces open to residents and visitors alike. They not only hold vast recreational potential in the form of boating, fishing, or hiking but are major destinations within the county that make up a significant piece of the county's economic base.

While many year-round and seasonal visitors have direct access to one of the county's lakes or other natural assets, in several cases, public access is limited. The blueways system proposed as part of the county-wide master plan prioritizes the creation of safe, comfortable access points so that more residents and visitors can experience what the county has to offer.

Using current access points as a foundation, the master plan proposes maintenance and enhancement efforts that provide improvements to parking, overlooks, boat docks, canoe/ kayak launch systems, and user amenities such as restrooms, parking, and gathering areas.







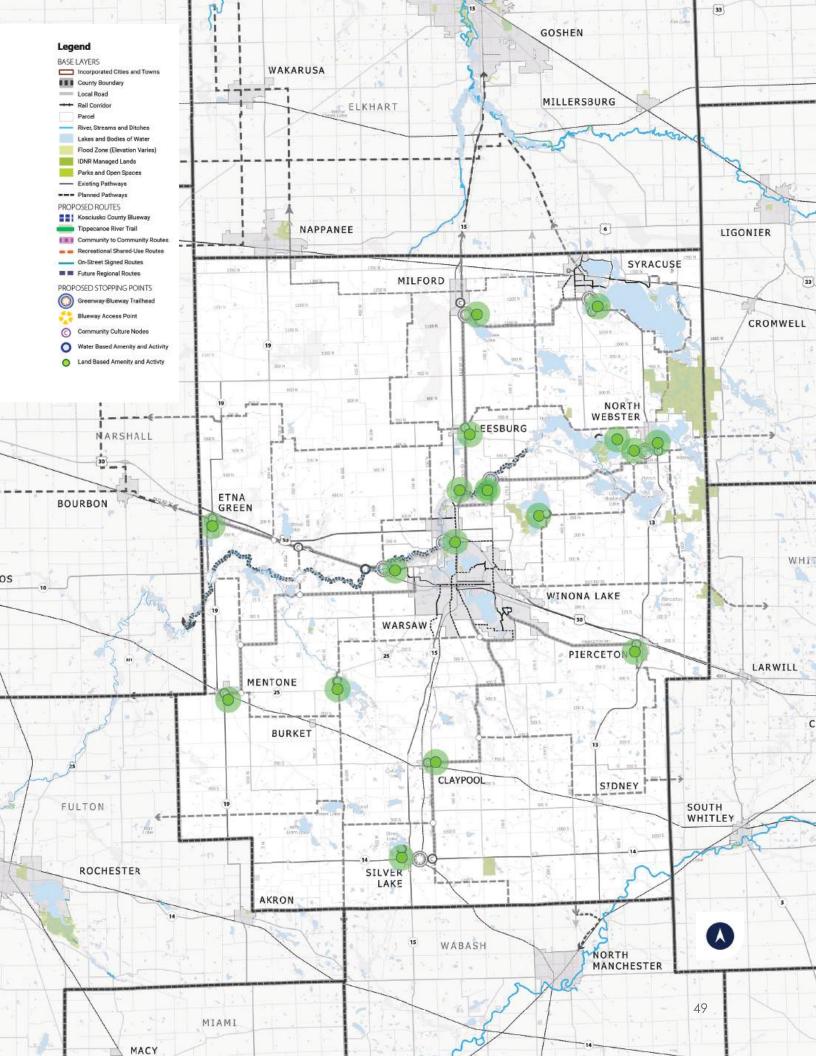
# **Increase Recreational Opportunities**

In many cases, the proposed trail system also serves as a spine for a linear park system. While the trail facilities proposed to improve connectivity, the surrounding land and supporting trailheads, create opportunities for enhanced activities including play, fishing, camping, natural exploration, and wildlife observation.

Recreation activity areas, either on land or on water, are add-on areas that complement the proposed greenways and blueway system. These proposed recreational areas are located at key points within the system where user rates are anticipated to be high and are in areas that may benefit from additional recreation opportunities. They are often found in areas where trail system facilities are either on or near public and quasi-public developments where trail users can be accommodated in shared open spaces.







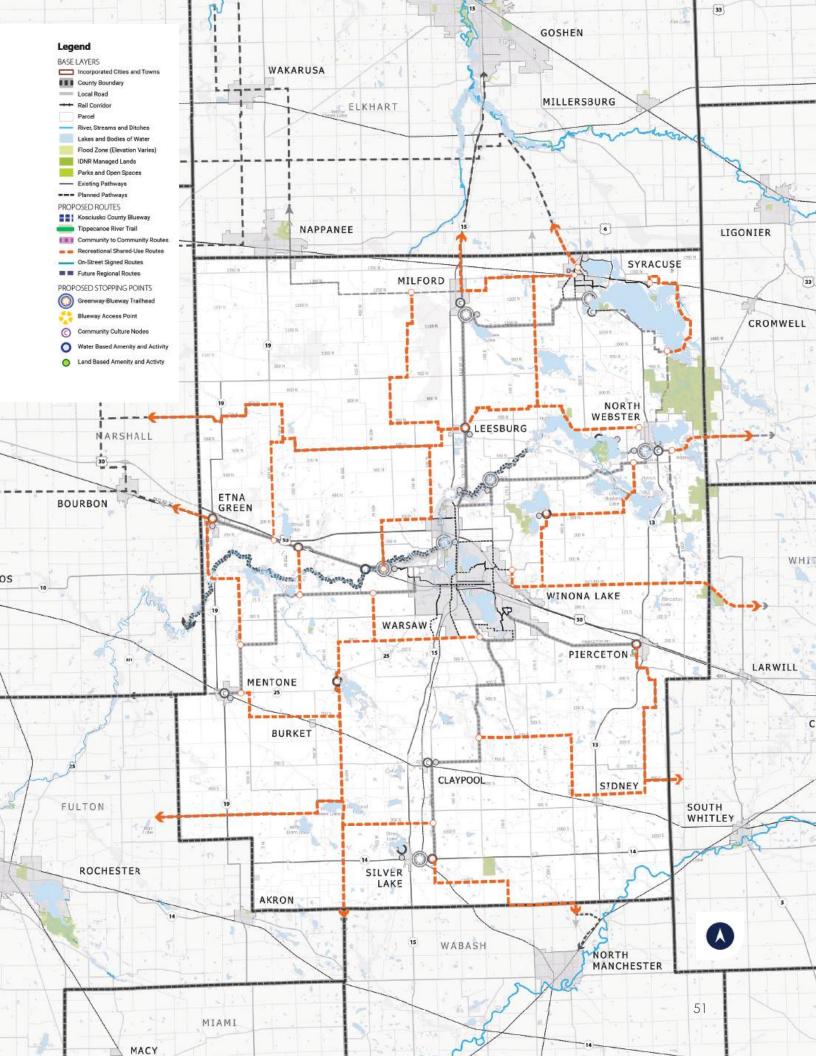
# **Complete the System**

Outside of connecting residents and visitors to the area's primary communities, there are numerous destinations located throughout the county that are worthy of visiting, either by car, bike, or foot. As trail development advances, both across the county and within the incorporated cities and towns, additional investment will be needed to complete the overall system by providing loops and routes in all areas.

These longer-term projects should be remembered during development decisions, roadway realignments or expansions, or bridge replacements, to ensure that connectivity efforts are not prohibited in the future.



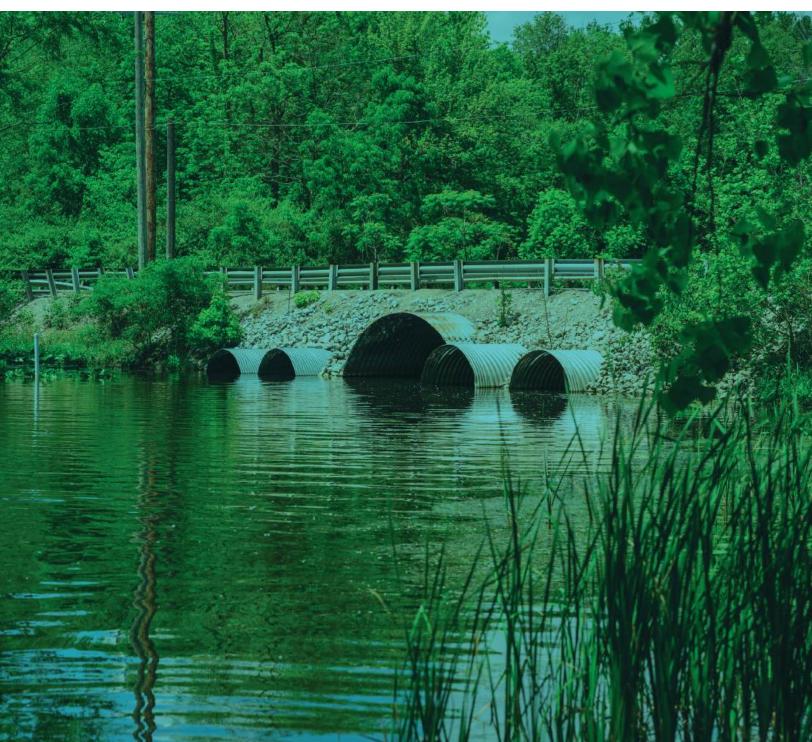












# IMPLEMENTATION

As outlined early, the intention of this final master plan is to showcase how the Parks Board, and their implementation partners can proactively plan for trail development in short and long term ways.

The recommended strategies included within this section are intended to build upon the work outlined in the county-wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan while also outlining new priorities that will directly advance the development of a county-wide trail and blueway system.

During the master planning process it became clear that while design, engineering and ultimately construction was a primary goal for the Parks Board, there were a number of administrative and organizational steps that would be beneficial to the long-term success of any physical improvement. To meet those needs, the recommended strategies include actions around data collection, communication and planning in addition to the design and engineering of specific priority segments.

The recommended strategies and the accompanying information should be used as a guide. The process to finalize a recommendation, and even the final alignment of a priority phase will need to be vetted and refined based on available resources, timelines and physical conditions.

The action plan should be re-evaluated at the end of each fiscal year, considering progress made, information discovered, available funding, and new or changing needs or priorities. Additionally, larger improvement projects may need to be phased to reflect available funding.

# DATA COLLECTION/ PLANNING

## 1. Market the value and benefits of trails.

#### **SPECIFIC STRATEGIES:**

Prepare a one-page summary outlining the quantitative and qualitative values of trails. Use real-time metrics from previous community implementation efforts in Syracuse, Warsaw and Winona Lake to track data including:

- Overall change in property value
- · Reduction in vehicle emissions
- Reduction of vehicle trips
- · Tourism dollars gained (through festivals and events)

The document should be used when discussing trail implementation and the overall benefits of trail systems to the surrounding communities and property owners.

Specific information can also be created to discuss detailed concerns related to agricultural land, drainage considerations, native habitats, ecological features, trail maintenance and trail design best practices.

### Add on strategies:

- Educate local community leadership on trail value and the trail planning process so that local leaders can participate in the creation of community specific systems and

  amonities.
- Partner with allied departments and organizations to speak on the system master plan and the intended impacts at local and regional events.
- Work with Clearly Kosciusko to further understand and measure the value trails, parks and waterways have on the local and regional economy. Use this information to create follow up marketing documents to showcase county-wide opportunities.

- Kosciusko County Commissioners
- Town of Syracuse
- Syracuse-Wawasee Trails
- City of Warsaw
- Town of Winona Lake
- Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG)
- The Watershed Foundation
- Wawasee Area Conservation Foundation
- Local lake associations





## 2. Collect data and costs on implementation tasks.

#### **SPECIFIC STRATEGIES:**

Partner with Syracuse-Wawasee Trails, the Kosciusko County Highway Department, the City of Warsaw and Town of Winona Lake to identify specific processes and procedures used to move trail implementation and community-wide trail use forward. Through the partnerships, work to understand the true costs of implementation including:

- Grant writing
- Grant administration
- · Property owner outreach
- Trail segment development (feasibility, planning, design and engineering)
- Construction administration
- Trail maintenance and repair
- · Community outreach and marketing

As information is shared, work with appropriate implementation partners to integrate pre and post construction costs into county capital budgets to accommodate ongoing trail planning and maintenance efforts.

### Add on strategies:

- Request an annual budget that supports fundraising, research and grant application to further trail planning and feasibility studies.
- Assist the County Highway Department in the development of its annual budget to support their involvement in trail maintenance and repair.
- Support grant writing efforts of partners such as the Paddlers 4 Conservation, or Lilly Center for Lakes and Streams to further study and support the development and preservation of blueways in the county.

- Kosciusko County Commissioners
- Syracuse-Wawasee Trails
- · City of Warsaw
- Town of Winona Lake
- Paddlers 4 Conservation
- The Watershed Foundation
- Lilly Center for Lakes and Streams
- Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG)

# DATA COLLECTION/ PLANNING

# 3. Establish a "Friends of the Trails" program.

#### **SPECIFIC STRATEGIES:**

Create a grassroots funding and maintenance program to supplement efforts by the County Highway Department and Paddlers 4 Conservation so that future county trails, blueway areas and open spaces are well maintained.

As a starting point, local bicycle and pedestrian advocacy committees can be engaged to discuss the opportunities, necessary actions and frequency needed. Within this ad-hoc committee, a formal structure can be established and with the help of the County attorney a formal 501(c)3 non-profit status can be achieved which would allow for future fundraising efforts to continue.

### Add on strategies:

- Further develop the organization's leadership structure and hierarchy to support multiple efforts related to trail development, maintenance and community programming.
- Utilize the committee to market the value of trails and trail development to county residents.
- Utilize the committee to assist in the research and development of funding applications.
- Facilitate county-wide clean up days or other seasonal maintenance events.
- Plan for and facilitate trail and blueway programming such as nature walks and paddling trips.

- Kosciusko County Commissioners
- KCV
- Syracuse-Wawasee Trails
- City of Warsaw
- Town of Winona Lake
- Paddlers 4 Conservation
- The Watershed Foundation
- Lilly Center for Lakes and Streams





## 4. Advocate for multi-modal solutions in INDOT initiatives.

### **SPECIFIC STRATEGIES:**

Leverage the existing work of the US 30 Coalition to provide a unified voice to the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) on the preferred bicycle and pedestrian aspirations of the County. While INDOT may not construct the bicycle and pedestrian facilities as a part of any on-going or future roadway improvement, the ability to safely navigate around or across their right of way is crucial to the success of the proposed system.

The recommendations presented within the final plan, paired with the design guidelines in the companion document, can be used to have well informed discussions with INDOT representatives as they progress any effort along their corridors. Local and County leaders should be encouraged to use and share the information within these documents as needed to ensure that trail development is planned for and feasible in and around state-owned right of way.

### Add on strategies:

 Utilize the Design Guideline document prepared alongside this master plan as a guide to assisting INDOT staff in seeing mobility opportunities in all US 30 design solutions.

- Kosciusko County Commissioners
- KCV
- Syracuse-Wawasee Trails
- City of Warsaw
- Town of Winona Lake
- Town of Milford,
- Town of Leesburg
- Town of Silver Lake
- Town of North Webster
- Town of Pierceton
- Town of Etna Green
- Town of Mentone
- US 30 Coalition
- INDOT

# PRIORITY SEGMENT

# North Webster to Syracuse

### **LENGTH:**

7.0 miles

### CONNECTIONS

Town of Syracuse

Lake Wawasee

Conkiln Bay

Tri Area Fish and Wildlife

Wawasee Middle School

Town of North Webster

### **ADD-ON PROJECTS**

North Webster Greenway/ Blueway Trailhead

Syracuse Greenway/ Blueway Trailhead

Community Culture Nodes in North Webster and Syracuse

### **IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS**

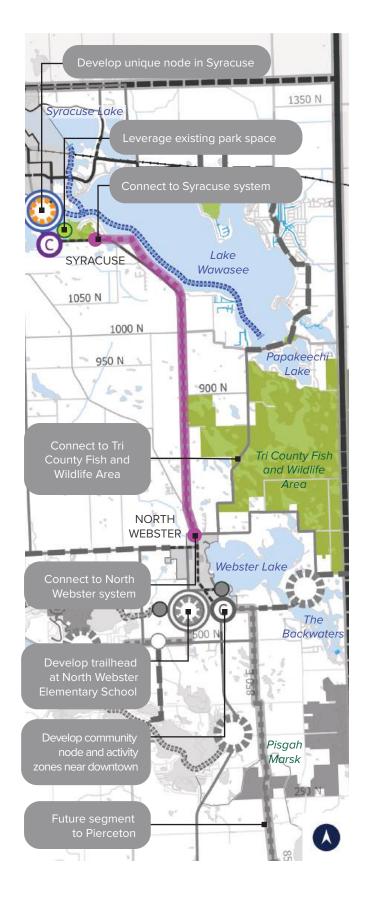
Syracuse-Wawasee Trails

Towns of Syracuse and North Webster

INDOT

Wawasee Middle School

Tri County Fish and Wildlife Area (IDNR)





# Chinworth Trail Ph. 2 Phase 1 end to Atwood

#### **LENGTH:**

3.0 miles

#### CONNECTIONS

Chinworth Trail Phase 1 (in progress)

River overlook

Atwood community

Hoffman Lake campground

#### **ADD-ON PROJECTS**

Community culture node in Atwood

Community culture node in Etna Green

Trail spur to Hoffman Lake

Trail spur to Tippecanoe River

#### IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Kosciusko County Parks Board Kosciusko County Highway Department

Atwood community



# **Chinworth Greenway/ Blueway Trailhead**

#### **LENGTH:**

N/A

#### **PRIMARY AMENITIES**

Vehicle Parking

Waterway Access

Restroom Facilities

**User Amenities** 

Signage

Walkways & Landing Areas

Open Space

#### **ADD-ON PROJECTS**

City County Athletic Complex improvements

#### **IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS**

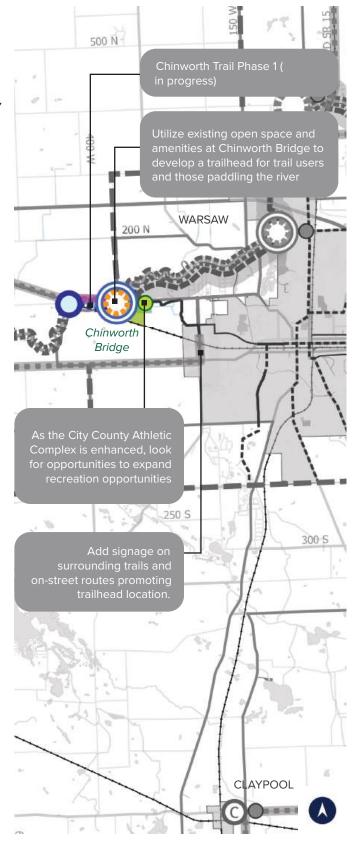
Kosciusko County Parks Board

Kosciusko County Highway Department

Kosciusko County Historical Society

Kiwanis Club

City County Athletic Complex







### James Lake Amenities

#### **LENGTH:**

N/A

#### **PRIMARY AMENITIES**

Waterway Access

**User Amenities** 

Signage

Walkways & Landing Areas

#### **ADD-ON PROJECTS**

Grassy Creek Blueway Trailhead Improvements

Campsites and complementary activity zones

#### **IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS**

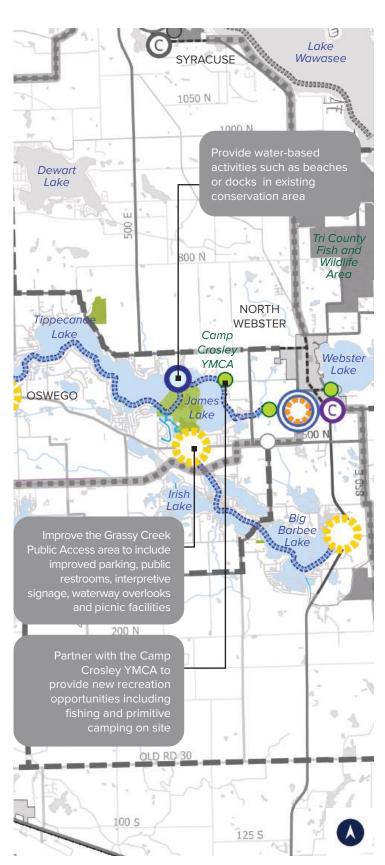
Kosciusko County Parks Board

Kosciusko County Highway Department

Edmund & Virginia Ball Wetland Nature Preserve

Camp Crosley YMCA

Lake Tippecanoe Association



# Winona Lake to Pierceton

#### **LENGTH:**

7 miles

#### **ADD-ON PROJECTS**

Community culture node in Town of Pierceton

#### **CONNECTIONS**

Town of Winona Lake
Town of Pierceton
Local businesses

## IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

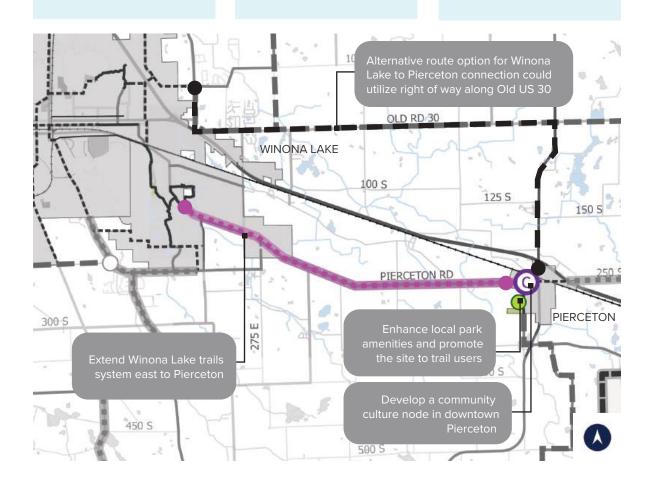
Kosciusko County Parks Board

Kosciusko County Highway Department

Town of Winona Lake

Town of Pierceton

Pierceton Elementary School





### Warsaw to North Webster

#### **LENGTH:**

13 miles

#### **ADD-ON PROJECTS**

Spur to Grassy Creek Public Access Site

North Wester Greenway/ Blueway Trailhead

### **CONNECTIONS**

City of Warsaw

Town of North Webster

Local businesses

North Webster Elementary School

## IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

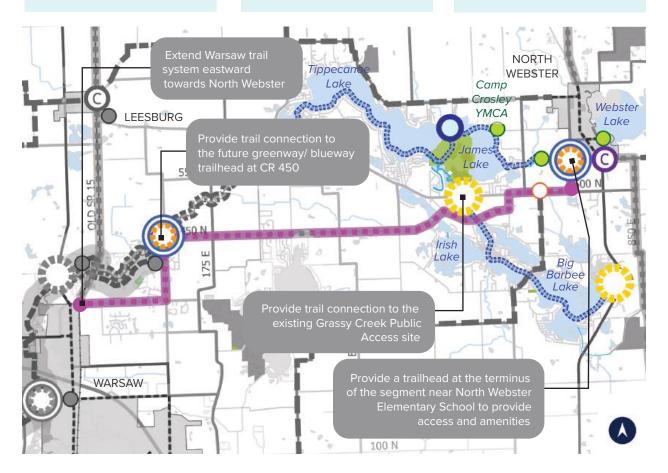
Kosciusko County Parks Board

Kosciusko County Highway Department

City of Warsaw

Town of North Webster

North Webster Elementary School



## **Tippecanoe River Trail**

#### **LENGTH:**

7 miles

#### **ADD-ON PROJECTS**

Clearwater Drive access point

Tippecanoe River Greenway/ Blueway Trailhead

#### **CONNECTIONS**

Chinworth Greenway/ Blueway Trailhead

Chinworth Trail Phase 1 (in progress)

Tippecanoe River

City of Warsaw trails

## IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

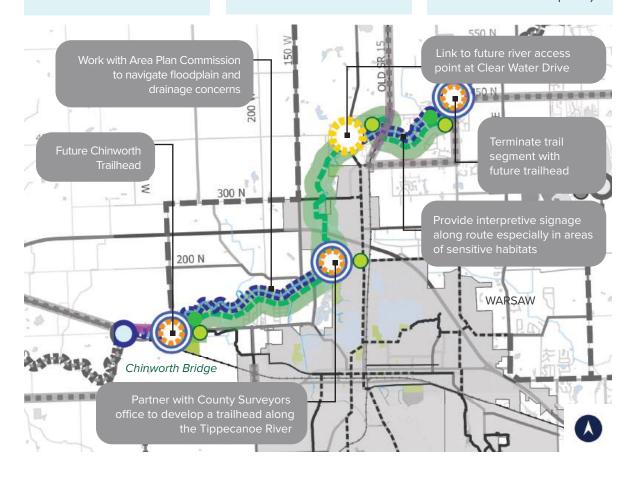
Kosciusko County Parks Board

City of Warsaw

Kosciusko County Drainage Board

Kosciusko County Surveyor

Center Lake Wetland Conservation Area (IDNR)



## Warsaw to Milford

#### **LENGTH:**

11 miles

#### **ADD-ON PROJECTS**

Leesburg Community Culture Node

Milford Community Culture Node

Complementary recreation activity areas within the communities

#### **IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS**

Kosciusko County Parks Board Kosciusko County Highway Department

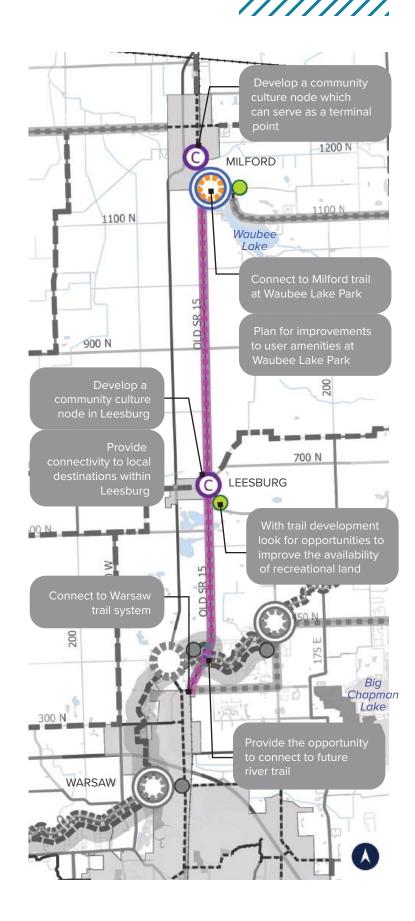
City of Warsaw

Town of Leesburg

Leesburg Elementary School

Plain Township Fire Department

Town of Milford



# Waubee Lake Park to Syracuse

#### **LENGTH:**

9 miles

#### **ADD-ON PROJECTS**

Waubee Lake Park Trailhead

Syracuse Trailhead

Tippecanoe River Greenway/ Blueway Trailhead

Community culture node in Milford

Community culture node in Syracuse

#### **CONNECTIONS**

Town of Milford
Town of Syracuse
Waubee Lake Park
Local businesses

## IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Kosciusko County Parks Board

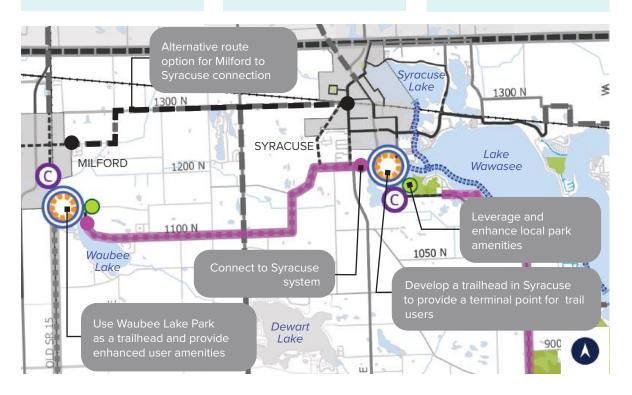
Kosciusko County Highway Department

Town of Milford

Syracuse-Wawasee Trails

Waubee Lake Park (IDNR)

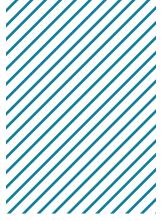
Camp Alexander Mack

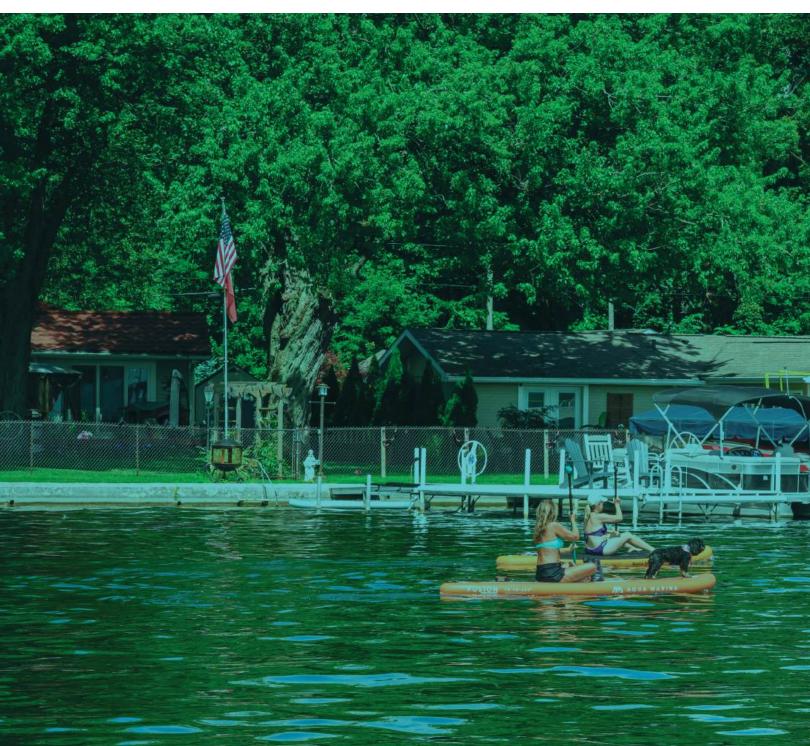












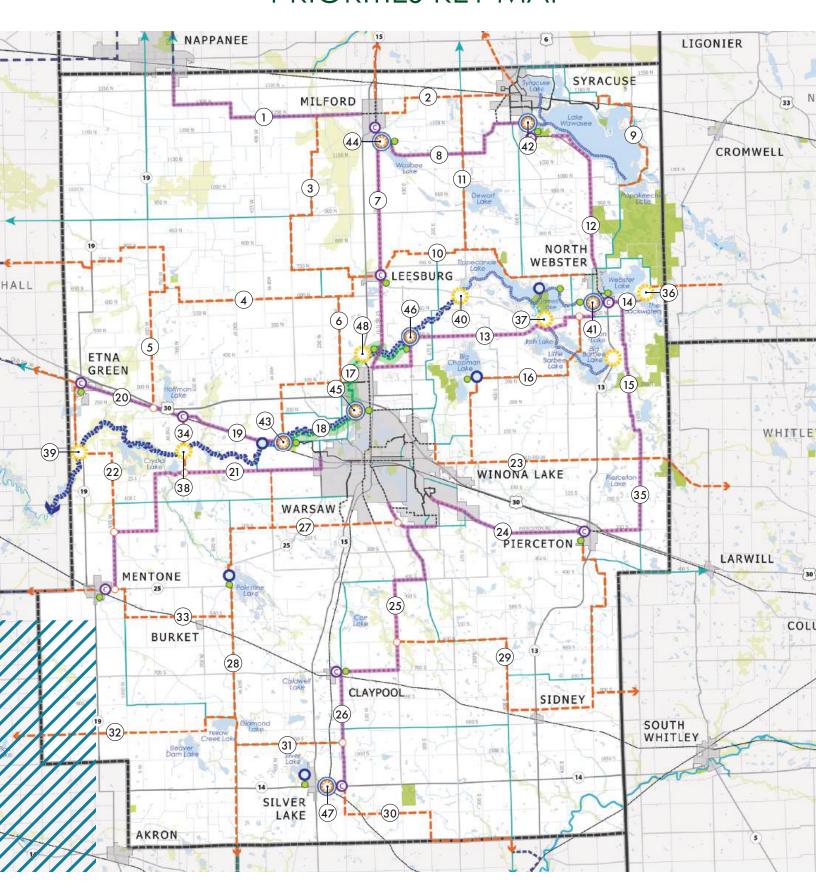
## **PRIORITIES**

### **COMPLETE PRIORITY RANKING**

While the implementation section prioritizes specific actions and trail segments for short term study and completion, the proposed master plan includes 48 individual recommendations, each with a different level of priority based on anticipated feasibility, potential funding and level of difficulty,

The listed projects on the following pages showcase the entire set of recommendations for the county. Securing financial resources for these projects will take considerable time. It is recommended that discussion on these projects occur annually to determine how priorities need to be adjusted.

## PRIORITIES KEY MAP







PRIORITY TIMELINE:

Immediate = 0-2 Years; High= 2-5 Years; Medium = 5-8 Years; Low = 8+ Years

##	ROUTE NAME	ROUTE TYPE	LENGTH	PRIORITY
1	Milford to Nappanee	Recreational Shared Use Route	12 mi	Low
2	Milford to Syracuse	Recreational Shared Use Route	7 mi	Low
3	Milford to Leesburg	Recreational Shared Use Route	13 mi	Low
4	Leesburg to West County Line	Recreational Shared Use Route	17 mi	Low
5	Hoffman Lake Connection	Recreational Shared Use Route	6 mi	Low
6	Warsaw West Loop	Recreational Shared Use Route	9 mi	Low
7	Warsaw to Milford	Community to Community Connection	11 mi	High
8	Waubee Lake Park to Lake Wawasee	Community to Community Connection	9 mi	High
9	Lake Wawasee Outer Loop	Recreational Shared Use Route	6 mi	High
10	Leesburg to North Webster	Recreational Shared Use Route	11 mi	Medium
11	Tippecanoe Lake North Connector	Recreational Shared Use Route	7 mi	Low
12	Syracuse to North Webster	Community to Community Connection	8 mi	Immediate
13	Warsaw to North Webster	Community to Community Connection	13 mi	High
14	The Backwaters Connector	Recreational Shared Use Route	4 mi	Low

##	ROUTE NAME	ROUTE TYPE	LENGTH	PRIORITY
15	North Webster to Old 30 Connector	Community to Community Connection	8 mi	Medium
16	North Webster to Winona Lake	Recreational Shared Use Route	12 mi	Medium
17	Tippecanoe River Greenway North	River Greenway	3 mi	High
18	Tippecanoe River Greenway Central	River Greenway	4 mi	High
19	Chinworth Bridge to Atwood	Community to Community Connection	5 mi	High
20	Atwood to Etna Green	Community to Community Connection	5 mi	Medium
21	Warsaw to Mentone	Community to Community Connection	16 mi	Medium
22	Mentone to Etna Green	Recreational Shared Use Route	9 mi	Low
23	Winona Lake to County Line	Recreational Shared Use Route	12 mi	Low
24	Winona Lake to Pierceton	Community to Community Connection	7 mi	High
25	Warsaw to Claypool	Community to Community Connection	13 mi	Medium
26	Claypool to Silver Lake	Community to Community Connection	6 mi	Low
27	Warsaw to Palestine Lake	Recreational Shared Use Route	10 mi	Low
28	Palestine Lake to County Like	Recreational Shared Use Route	13 mi	Low





##	ROUTE NAME	ROUTE TYPE	LENGTH	PRIORITY
29	Claypool to Piercton Connector	Recreational Shared Use Route	22 mi	Low
30	Silver Lake to County Line	Recreational Shared Use Route	7 mi	Low
31	Silver Lake to Diamond Lake Connector	Recreational Shared Use Route	<b>5</b> mi	Low
32	Diamond Lake to County Line	Recreational Shared Use Route	<b>10</b> mi	Low
33	Mentone to Burket	Recreational Shared Use Route	7 mi	Low
34	Crystal Lake to Atwood	Recreational Shared Use Route	3 mi	Low
35	Old 30 to Pierceton	Community to Community Connection	4 mi	Medium
36	The Backwaters Public Access Site Improvements	Blueway Access Point		Low
37	Grassy Creek Public Access Site Improvements	Blueway Access Point		Medium
38	Crystal Lake Improvements	Blueway Access Point		Medium
39	Mollenhour Public Access Site Improvements	Blueway Access Point		Low
40	Oswego Dam Access Site Improvements	Blueway Access Point		Medium
41	North Webster Greenway- Blueway Trailhead	Greenway-Blueway Trailhead		Immediate
42	Syracuse Greenway- Blueway Trailhead	Greenway-Blueway Trailhead		Immediate

##	ROUTE NAME	ROUTE TYPE	LENGTH	PRIORITY
43	Chinworth Greenway- Blueway Trailhead	Greenway-Blueway Trailhead		Immediate
44	Waubee Lake Park Greenway-Blueway Trailhead	Greenway-Blueway Trailhead		Low
45	Tippecanoe River Greenway-Blueway Trailhead	Greenway-Blueway Trailhead		High
46	CR 450 Greenway- Blueway Trailhead	Greenway-Blueway Trailhead		High
47	Silver Lake Greenway- Blueway Trailhead	Greenway-Blueway Trailhead		Low
48	Clearwater Drive Access Point	Blueway Access Point		Medium





