



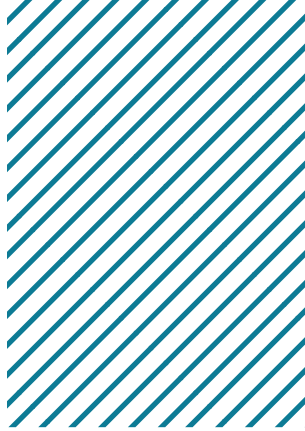
COUNTY-WIDE GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS PLAN

# **FORWARD**

KOSCIUSKO COUNTY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





## MOBILE DISPLAY INSTRUCTIONS.

Welcome to our mobile display! We encourage you to review the information provided regarding our project purpose and process. A critical part of our process is to hear from local residents- LIKE YOURSELF!

Please take a few minutes to review the questions located on either side of this display. Using the materials provided nearby please give us your ideas, input and suggestions.

Thank you for being a part of our process.

### HOW TO STAY CONNECTED AND ENGAGED AFTER TODAY.



Learn more about our project, or visit [www.FORWARDkosciusko.com](http://www.FORWARDkosciusko.com)



Follow our progress. [www.facebook.com/ForwardKosciusko](https://www.facebook.com/ForwardKosciusko)



Send us a message. [info@FORWARDkosciusko.com](mailto:info@FORWARDkosciusko.com)

## ABOUT THE PROJECT.

Following the completion of the FORWARD Kosciusko County Comprehensive Plan, Kosciusko County formed an official Parks Board and completed a long-range parks master plan in early 2023.

As the next step in the planning process, the Parks Board is in the process of identifying details and specifics for the various components of the master plan, including gateway connections between the communities of Kosciusko County.

The new County-wide Greenways and Blueways Plan will refine these recommendations to identify defined routes that allow multiple hiking, biking, community connections, railroads and recreational amenities. Furthermore, the Blueways component of the plan will identify public access locations and possible associations with the trail system.

### PLANNING PROCESS AND TIMELINE

**PHASE ONE: INFORMATION GATHERING**  
Community survey, public input, and research. The plan, vision, mission, and goals are being developed and refined. The plan is being refined and the plan is being refined.

**PHASE TWO: IDEA AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**  
Community survey, public input, and research. The plan, vision, mission, and goals are being developed and refined. The plan is being refined and the plan is being refined.

**PHASE THREE: COMMUNITY DRIVEN IMPLEMENTATION**  
Community survey, public input, and research. The plan, vision, mission, and goals are being developed and refined. The plan is being refined and the plan is being refined.



Review the list facility types shown below. Using the provided materials, indicate whether or not you would be comfortable using this type of facility for transportation or recreation.



## ARE YOU COMFORTABLE?

Review the proposed priority areas below. Using the criteria provided, mark the topics you feel are the MOST IMPORTANT based on planning process should address.



## WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES?

## TELL US: WHAT FEATURES SHOULD BE ADDED?

Using the Post-it notes provided, indicate what amenities, features and activities you would like to see along the trail system.

NEED TO EMAIL YOUR RESPONSE? [info@FORWARDkosciusko.com](mailto:info@FORWARDkosciusko.com)



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## **KOSCIUSKO COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD**

Rob Bishop, President  
Aggie Sweeney, Vice President  
Alyssa Schmucker, Secretary  
Matt Metzger, Member  
Mike Cusick, Member  
Troy Turley , Member

## **KOSCIUSKO COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Robert Conley, President  
Cary Groninger, Vice President  
Brad Jackson, Member

## **GREENWAYS & BLUEWAYS PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Aggie Sweeney, Parks and Recreation Board  
Amanda Plank, Syracuse Wawasee Trails  
Amy Roe, Community Coordinator  
Craig Allebach, Town of Winona Lake  
Fred, Helfrich, Ride + Walk Committee  
Larry Plummer, Warsaw Parks and Recreation  
Matt Sandy, Area Plan Commission  
Mike Cusick, Parks and Recreation Board  
Rob Parker, Chamber of Commerce  
Ryan Martin, Tippy River Adventures  
Steve Moriarty, County Highway Department  
Tim Metzger, Bicycle Advocate









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.



## PROPOSED SYSTEM OVERVIEW

312 

MILES OF PROPOSED TRAIL  
FOR PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS

20 

MILES OF NAVIGABLE RIVER  
IN ADDITION TO PUBLIC LAKE ACCESS

7 

PRIMARY TRAILHEADS  
WITH PUBLIC FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

5 

IMPROVED ACCESS POINTS  
ALONG THE TIPPECANOE RIVER

2 

REGIONAL SYSTEM  
TRAIL CONNECTIONS

acres 

OF PRESERVED SPACE  
FOR RECREATION AND WATER ACTIVITIES









# SYSTEM IMPACTS

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.

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.

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.



# PRIORITY #1

## 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.

A photograph of a paved trail stretching into the distance, flanked by dense green trees and bushes under a blue sky with light clouds. A utility pole is visible on the right side of the trail.

Nickel Plate Trail

A photograph of a dirt trail winding through a forest with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and red. Three people are riding bicycles along the path.

Pumpkinvine Trail



## Legend

### BASE LAYERS

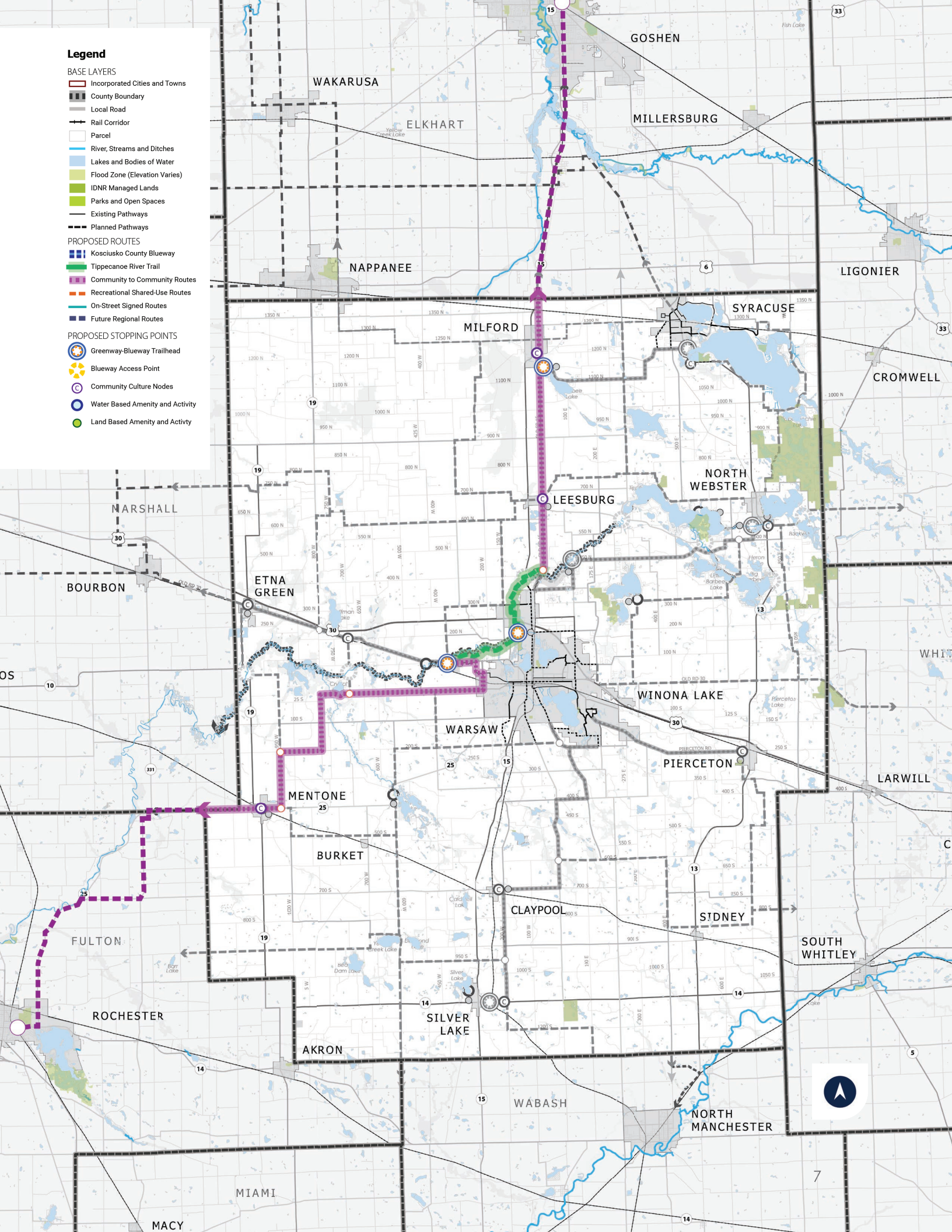
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- Rail Corridor
- Parcel
- River, Streams and Ditches
- Lakes and Bodies of Water
- Flood Zone (Elevation Varies)
- IDNR Managed Lands
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Existing Pathways
- Planned Pathways

### PROPOSED ROUTES

- Kosciusko County Blueway
- Tippecanoe River Trail
- Community to Community Routes
- Recreational Shared-Use Routes
- On-Street Signed Routes
- Future Regional Routes

### PROPOSED STOPPING POINTS

- Greenway-Blueway Trailhead
- Blueway Access Point
- Community Culture Nodes
- Water Based Amenity and Activity
- Land Based Amenity and Activity





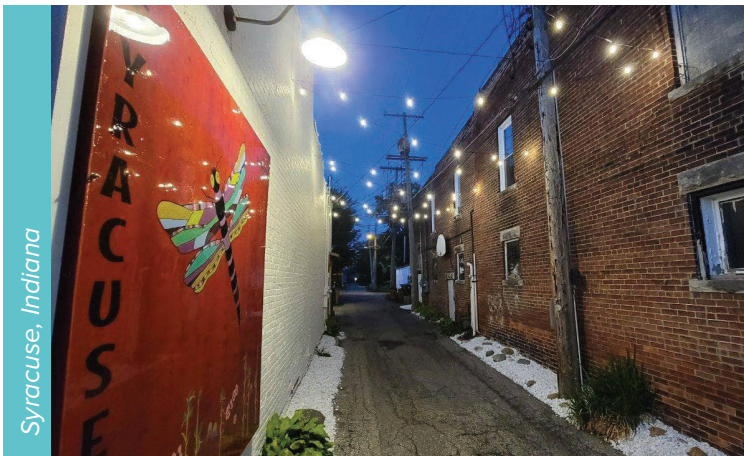
## PRIORITY #2

### 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.

Syracuse, Indiana



Silver Lake, Indiana



## Legend

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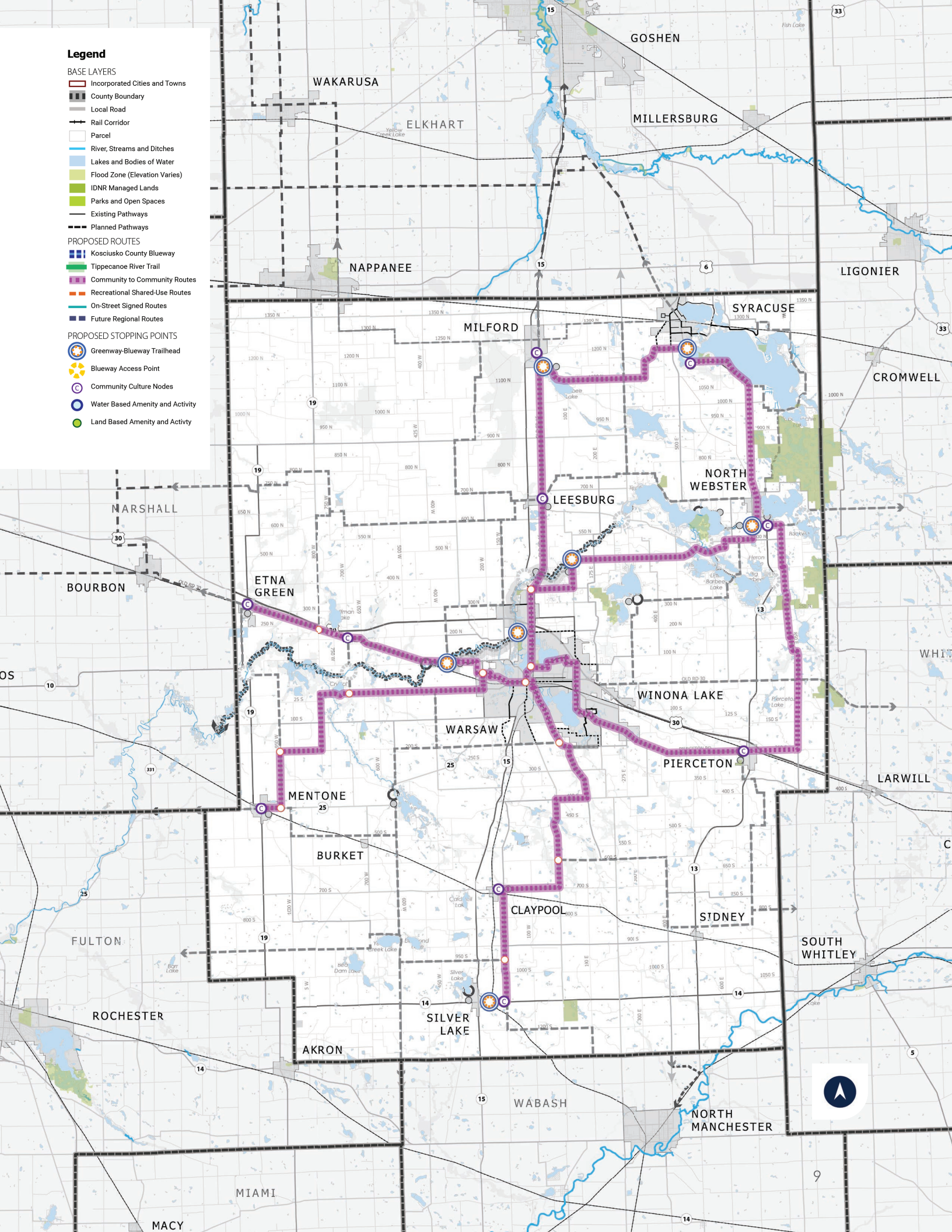
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## PRIORITY #3

### **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.

Kosciusko County, Indiana



## Legend

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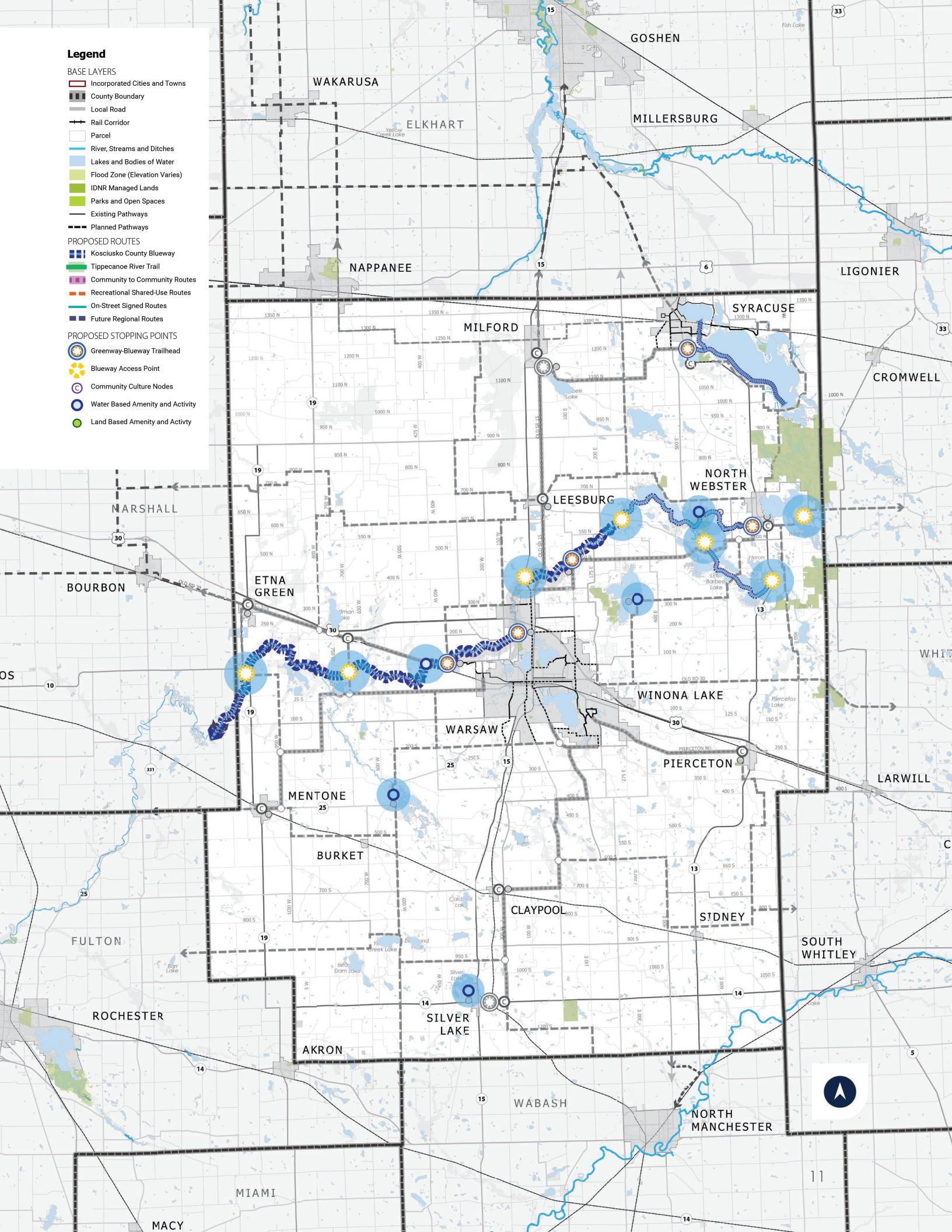
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## PRIORITY #4

### **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.

Kosciusko County, Indiana





## Legend

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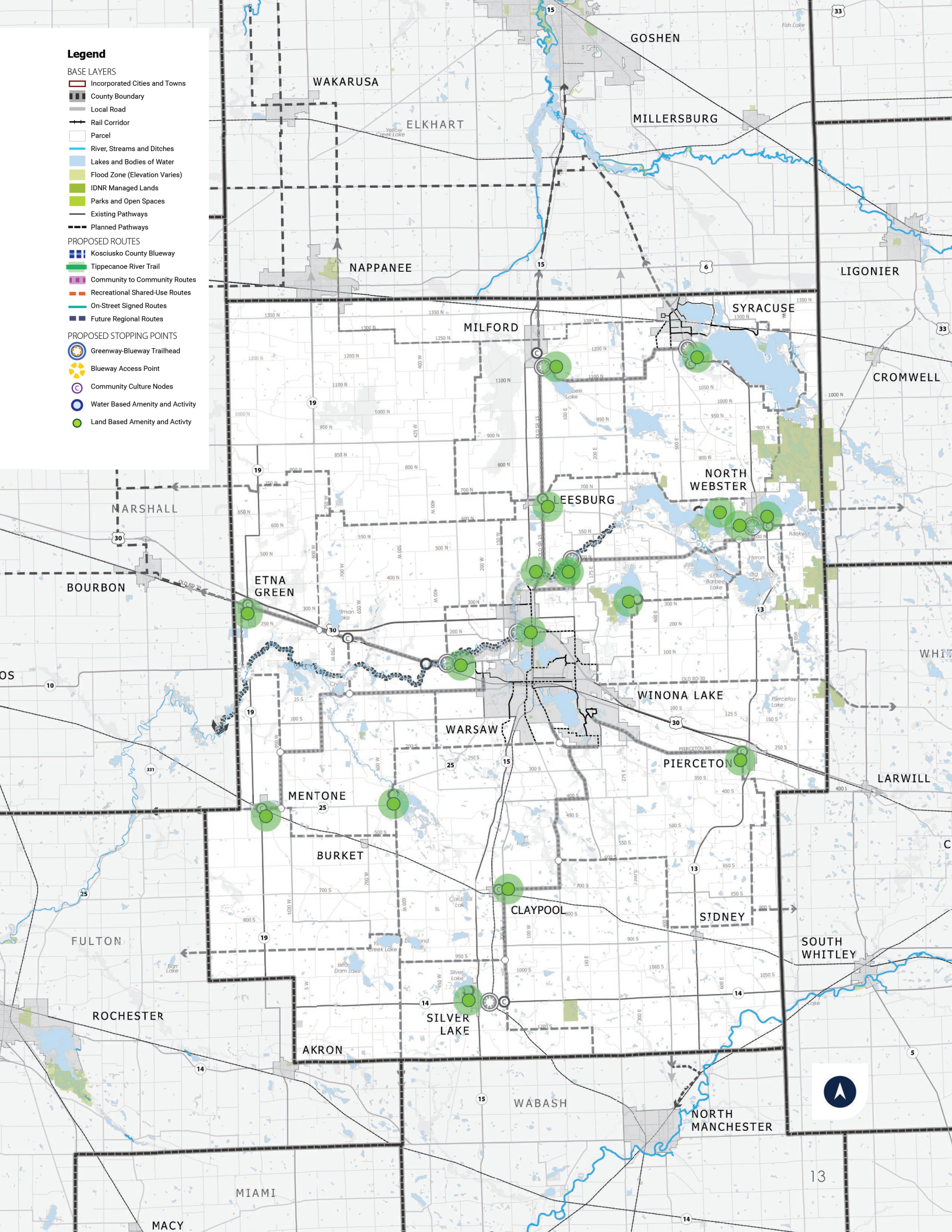
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# PRIORITY #5

## 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.



Typical Shared Use Path



Typical On Street Bicycle Lane





## Legend

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