

Chapter 1: Master Plan Vision & Approach



NEED FOR A REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTION

Above the Ridgeline Connector Trail

The communities of Proctor and Hermantown are located very near the Munger State Trail, a 70-mile multi-use recreational trail between Duluth and Hinckley, but do not have a trail connection to this unique regional recreational amenity. Located directly west of Duluth, the two communities are also located above the Lake Superior ridgeline (elevation approximately 1,400 feet) while the Munger State Trail terminates down at Duluth's waterfront (elevation approximately 600 feet). Traversing down the ridge presents challenges including steep slopes and crossings of creeks, roadways, and rail lines. While the network of paved trails in Duluth, below the ridge, continues to expand, there are currently no paved trails above the ridgeline.

A regional trail connection between Proctor and Hermantown and down to the Munger State Trail is called for in the 2007 Proctor Master Trail Plan and the 2010 Hermantown Trails Master Plan. In addition, this regional trail provides an opportunity to connect to Duluth's Lakewalk, Cross City Trail, and Duluth Traverse (mountain biking trail), as well as the Superior Hiking Trail (a 300-mile trail along the Lake Superior ridgeline).

With Proctor's population of 3,100 and Hermantown's population of approximately 9,600, this regional trail connection will directly serve the needs of approximately 13,000 residents. In addition to Proctor and Hermantown residents, this trail will serve the needs of businesses and employees, as well as the greater Duluth-Superior metropolitan region.

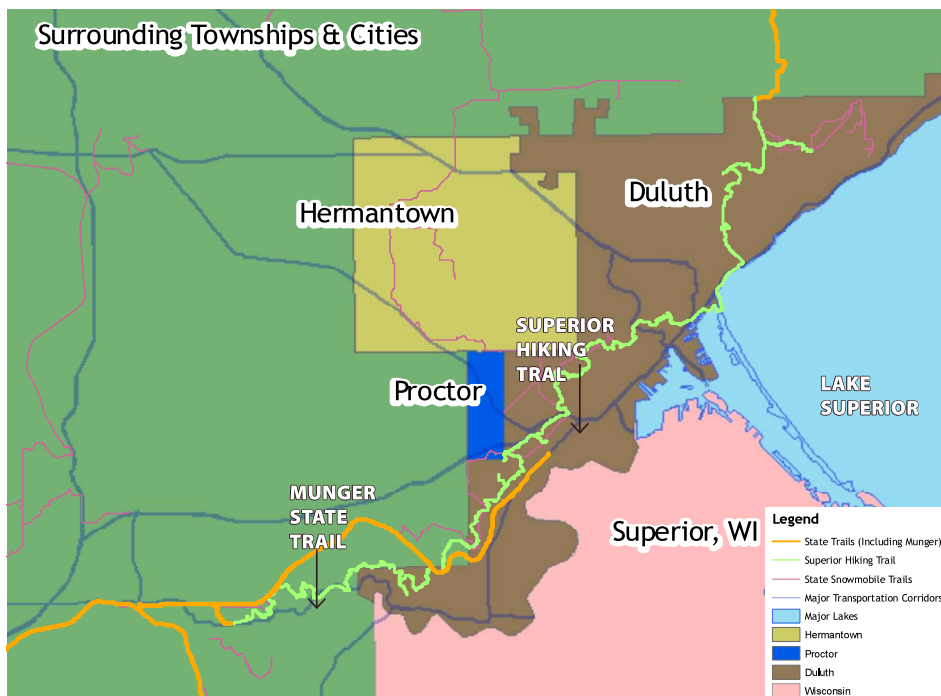


FIGURE 1-1: REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP

The Willard Munger State Trail is a 70-mile multi-use recreational paved trail that connects Duluth and Hinckley. The Superior Hiking Trail is a 300-mile natural surface hiking trail that travels near Proctor and Hermantown. Snowmobile trails travel through both communities.

VISION

The Proctor-Hermantown Munger Trail Spur will be a regional destination trail linking the communities of Proctor and Hermantown above the ridge line to the Munger State Trail and Duluth's growing trail network below the ridge line. This 16-mile, 10-foot wide paved trail will be a unique regional recreational resource as there are no paved trails above the ridge line in this area today. The trail will connect numerous regional and local recreation destinations and activity centers within the communities of Proctor, Hermantown, and Duluth, including schools, parks, natural resource areas, city halls/community centers, and downtown business areas. In addition to the Munger State Trail, it will connect to the Spirit Mountain Recreation Area, 300-mile Superior Hiking Trail, Duluth's Lakewalk, Cross City, and Duluth Traverse trails, creating a variety of recreational loop opportunities. The trail route will highlight the communities' natural features, including four creeks, northern hardwood forests, wetland areas, and a variety of natural and active parks.

Guiding Principles

The Proctor-Hermantown Munger Trail Spur will be a regional destination recreational trail that accommodates multiple non-motorized uses including walking, jogging, hiking, bicycling, inline skating, and cross-country skiing. There are many public trail opportunities in Duluth, but there is a gap above the ridgeline in Hermantown, Proctor, and connecting communities.

The trail will be designed as a 10-foot wide paved regional trail that meets the **Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines** of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR). The trail will provide a high-quality experience as a primarily

off-road recreational corridor through diverse landscapes, including natural, rural, and urban. As a continuous trail that will be approximately 16 miles in length, it is intended to function as both a regional destination trail and a local connector trail.

The trail will be designed as a fully accessible ADA-compliant regional trail for people of all ages and with physical limitations.

The trail will enhance connectivity and safety for trail users to get from Hermantown and Proctor to parks, schools, commercial areas, and natural areas. Currently, non-motorized trail access between Hermantown

Master Plan Process Goals

- Engage the communities of Proctor and Hermantown, as well as Duluth and other agencies, in a collaborative effort to identify the needs and preferences for developing a regional trail corridor above the ridgeline
- Create a trail that is a true community amenity providing connections to key destinations in Proctor and Hermantown from neighborhoods and residential hubs
- Explore and evaluate alternative route options between Proctor and Hermantown and down to the Munger State Trail, including the planned Proctor Connector Trail identified in the 2007 Proctor Master Trail Plan

- Conduct a physical and cost feasibility analysis of potential challenges for connecting from above the ridgeline in Hermantown and Proctor down to the Duluth waterfront, including steep slopes, wetlands, creeks, road/rail crossings, property access,
- Select a preferred route for a regional 10-foot wide paved multi-use trail that will provide a high quality non-motorized recreational experience
- Identify preliminary engineering design concepts and cost estimates for complex segments of the preferred trail route
- Identify trailheads and local access points that allow the trail to be accessed by a regional population



and Proctor and Duluth is limited to unprotected sidewalks and shared bike routes along steep, high traffic roads.

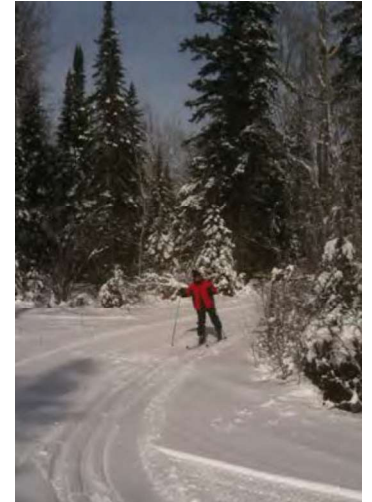
The trail will connect Hermantown and Proctor residents and visitors to regional trail and tourist destinations, including the Munger State Trail, Spirit Mountain Recreation Area, Superior Hiking Trail, Cross City Trail, Lakewalk, Traverse, and Duluth parks and open spaces.

Keep the location of the trail primarily in natural corridors in order to enhance the recreation experience with natural landscape views, quiet surroundings, and access to adjacent recreational opportunities.

Wherever feasible, the trail will be located in off-road trail corridors that are separated from vehicular traffic. The trail will be continuous with minimal road crossings and grade separations where necessary.

Trailheads will be provided for parking and wayfinding for the convenience of both local users and visitors. The trail will be accessible where it crosses through parks, school grounds, and urban areas.

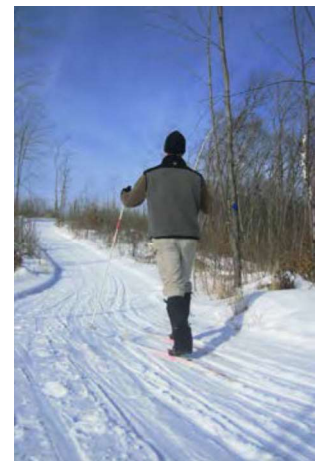
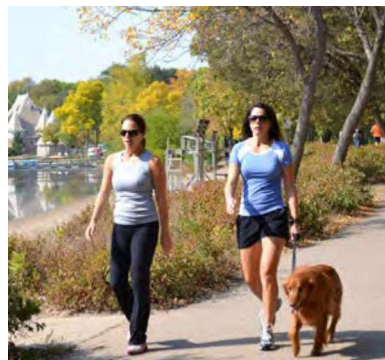
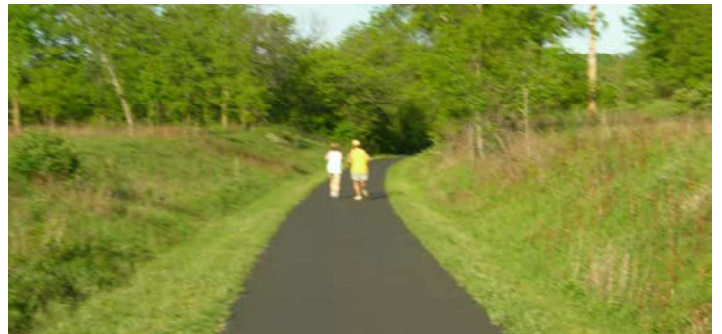
Examples of regional recreational trails and intended non-motorized uses



TRENDS

Demographic Trends

The Duluth-Superior metropolitan area's long-range transportation plan, which is called Connections 2040, was updated in 2014 by the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC). This long-range plan looks out to the year 2040 to guide public investments in multi-modal transportation infrastructure in the metropolitan area, including the cities of Hermantown and Proctor. This plan includes updated 2010 demographics, historic trends, and projections to 2040 for the metro area overall, as well as for the individual cities and townships. The plan's demographic analysis identifies that the metro area's growth has been occurring in the cities and townships outside of Duluth and Superior, particularly along the Highway 53 corridor through Hermantown. In fact, Hermantown experienced the greatest population growth from 2000 to 2010 by far with a 26% increase, while Proctor had a 7% increase. Between 2010 and 2040, Hermantown is projected to increase in population in the range of 35-44% and Proctor is projected to increase by 7-11%. The overall Duluth-Superior metro area is projected to grow by 7-17% by 2040, which means the metro area's 2010 population of 148,000 could grow to 173,000 by 2040.



Non-Motorized Transportation and Recreation Trends

The Duluth-Superior metro area is experiencing increased demand for non-motorized transportation options. From 2004 to 2013, use of public transit grew by 20% according to the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA). Since each DTA bus has a bike rack attached to its front, the DTA has also been able to monitor how many bikes use these bike racks. From 2006 to 2012, DTA saw the annual number of bikes brought on buses increase by 14,000, which equates to a 14% increase annually over the six-year period.

The Millennial generation's travel behaviors have shown an increasing demand for public transit, ridesharing, and non-motorized travel modes such as biking and walking. As the Baby Boomer generation moves into its senior years, they are expected to demand environments that are more supportive of walking, biking, and transit options. In the Duluth-Superior metro area, the percentage of seniors is projected to increase from 7% of the population in 2010 to 19% in 2040.

The cities of Hermantown, Proctor, and Duluth each have adopted city-wide trail master plans that guide future development of an extensive trail network in the metro area.

In 2010, the Advance Hermantown initiative was established to gain community consensus around Hermantown's desired future destiny. One of the goals of this initiative is to "refine, communicate and begin implementing a community-wide recreation system plan for parks, recreation fields and trails development around current activity centers in Hermantown."

In 2010, the City of Duluth adopted a Complete Streets policy that incorporates both motorized and non-motorized transportation in the planning of new and reconstructed city streets.

In 2011, Duluth set a vision to be the premier trail city in North America with its Trail & Bikeway Plan. This trail plan envisions an extensive trail network within Duluth as well as trail corridors that connect up into Hermantown and Proctor.

Over the past four years, the Duluth-Superior MIC has partnered with the Healthy Duluth Area Coalition to conduct bike and pedestrian counts each spring and fall in order to monitor the level of bike and pedestrian traffic and identify potential infrastructure improvement needs.

Public Health Initiatives

The City of Hermantown, Hermantown School District, Essentia Health, and Duluth Area Family YMCA are partnering to improve the health and wellness of southern St. Louis County with plans to build the Essentia Health Regional Wellness Center. This new health and recreational facility will be located in Hermantown directly adjacent to the planned Hermantown-Proctor Munger Trail Spur.

Started in 2009, the Healthy Duluth Area Coalition currently consists of 17 organization members including nonprofits, foundations, community groups, and public and private entities. The Coalition's mission is to change the community's policies, systems and environments to encourage active living and improve residents' access to healthy foods. Some of the Coalition's initiatives include creating robust and equitable active recreational opportunities –and- a balanced and diverse community transportation system.

Economic Development and Tourism Opportunities

There are a number of opportunities for economic development and tourism related to the planned Hermantown-Proctor Munger Trail Spur, including the following:

- Hockey tournaments at the ice arenas in Hermantown, Proctor, and Duluth;
- Spirit Mountain's variety of recreational facilities and events, particularly skiing and mountain biking;
- Events at the South St. Louis County Fairgrounds in Proctor;
- Munger State Trail; and
- Duluth's Lakewalk Trail, including the planned Cross City Trail extension that will link it to the existing Munger State Trail and planned Munger Trail Spur.



PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process was led by Hoisington Koezler Group Inc. (HKGi) planning and landscape architecture consultants. Engineering consultants from MSA Professional Services Inc. (MSA) also attended all meetings. The project began in October 2014 with kick-off meetings with the Project Staff Team and citizen-based Advisory Committee. The planning process was completed in April 2015. The final trail plan and feasibility study report was completed in July 2015.

Identifying & Analyzing Alternatives

The planning process consisted of five primary tasks:

- Task 1: Data Collection and Preliminary Analysis
- Task 2: Route Planning in Hermantown
- Task 3: Route Verification in Proctor
- Task 4: Feasibility Analysis
- Task 5: Preliminary Project Design

As a result of early community input as well as feedback to the initial set of alternative trail routes, it became apparent that both communities placed as much value in this trail providing a desirable connection between Proctor and Hermantown - an "above the ridgeline trail" - as a connection down the ridge to the Munger State Trail. Consequently, the planning process involved exploring trail route options between and through both Hermantown and Proctor. The process involved a trail feasibility analysis to address physical, ownership, and cost challenges associated with each of the route options. In addition, preliminary engineering design concepts were identified for complex trail segments.

Collaborating with Community Stakeholders

The planning process was a collaborative effort between the cities of Proctor and Hermantown, as well as Duluth, Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources (MN DNR), Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC), and Minnesota Power. A citizen-based Project Advisory Committee was formed consisting of interested citizens from Proctor and Hermantown. The project's consultant team facilitated meetings throughout the planning process with the Project Staff Team and the Project Advisory Committee.

Gaining Public Input

Three public meetings were held during the planning process in November 2014, January 2015, and April 2015. The goals of the public meetings were as follows:

November 20, 2014 - provided an orientation to the overall project, shared information about existing and planned trails, identified general route options for the Munger Trail Spur, and gained community feedback on alternative routes as well as people's general preferences for this regional trail.

January 14, 2015 - more defined trail route options were presented, including the consultants' comparative evaluation of the options, and attendees were asked to identify their preferred route preference.

April 21, 2015 - presented the preferred trail route, trailhead/access locations, and preliminary engineering design concepts for complex segments, such as crossings of wetlands, creeks, roadways, rail lines, and steep slopes. Attendees were invited to provide feedback.

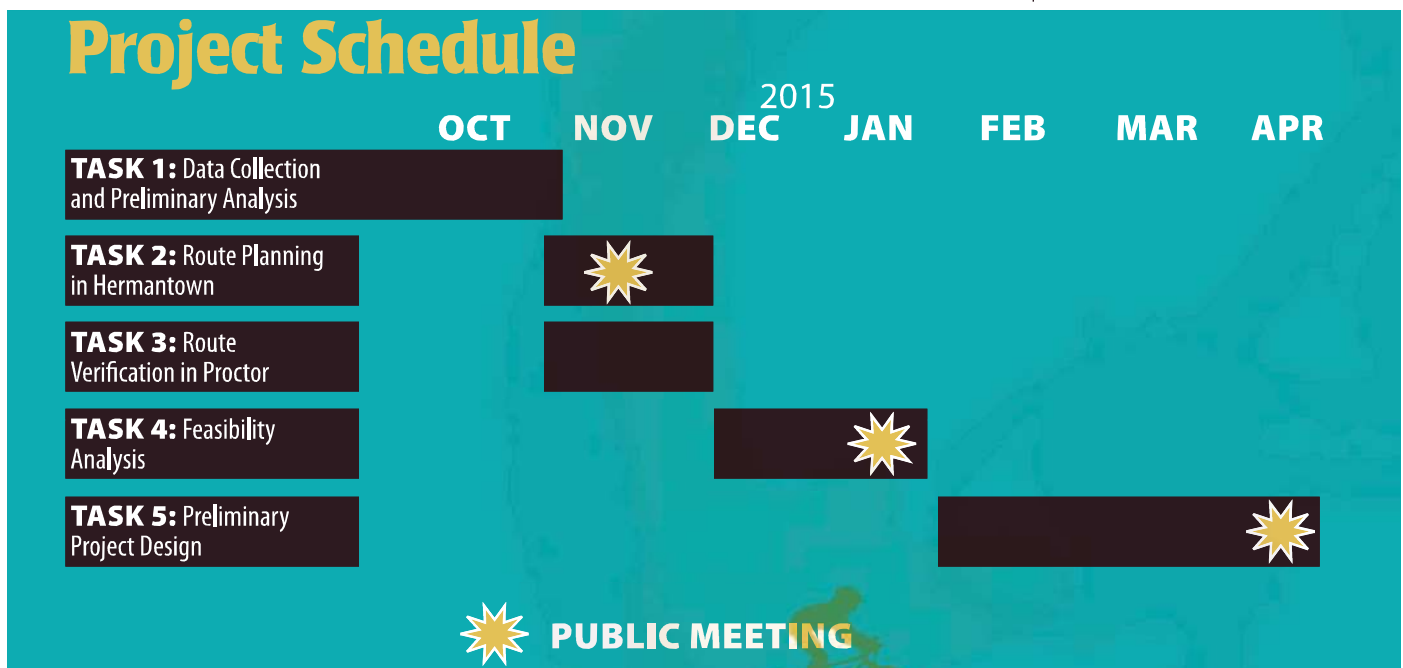
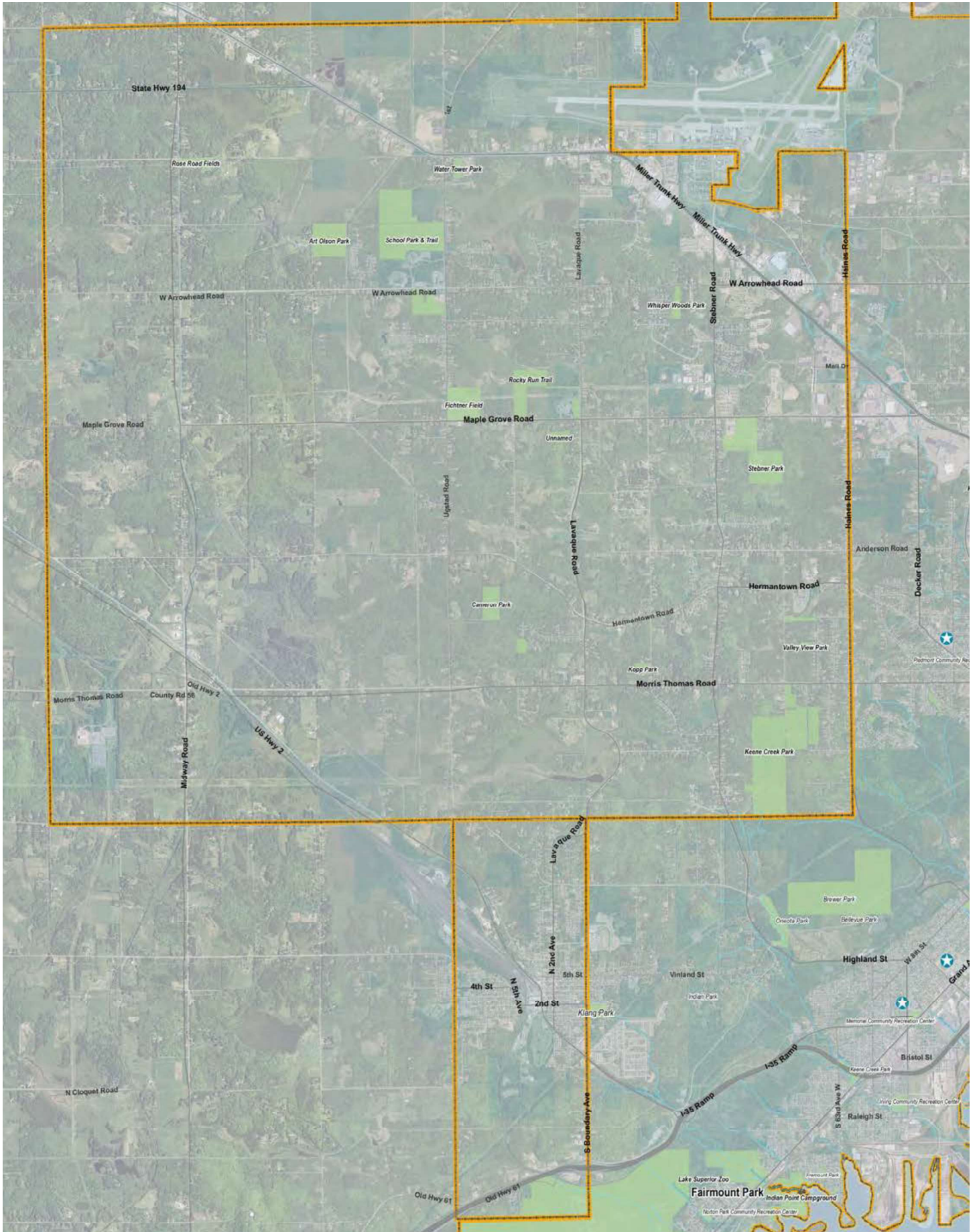


FIGURE 1-2: HERMANTOWN AND PROCTOR CITY BOUNDARIES



Chapter 2: Existing Conditions



EXISTING RECREATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The planning process for the Munger Trail Spur Master Plan was intended to build upon the communities' existing recreational infrastructure of public trails, sidewalks, parks, and open spaces. In addition, the project considered existing environmental features, utility corridors, and roadway infrastructure that may serve as potential connections or barriers for a regional trail corridor within the two communities, as well as Duluth. Figure 2-1 shows existing trails, sidewalks, and bike routes.

Parks & Open Spaces

Hermantown has a number of recreational parks, including Keene Creek Park, Stebner Park, Hermantown Community Park, Fichtner Field Complex, and Rose Road Field. Proctor's recreational facilities include Egerdahl Field and the Proctor Municipal Golf Course. Nearby parks and recreation areas in Duluth include Klang Park, Bay View School Forest, Spirit Mountain Recreation Area, Fairmount Park, and Brewer Park.

In addition, there are recreational facilities at both the Proctor Schools campus, just west of downtown Proctor, and the Hermantown Schools campus in the north central area of Hermantown.

Trails

Hermantown and Proctor have existing informal and unofficial trails throughout the communities. These trails primarily consist of natural surface paths for walking/hiking, and potentially mountain biking, through park areas. Keene Creek Park is the only city park with an existing trail system. Located near Hermantown City Hall are the Minter Trail and the Rocky Run Trail. There are no paved trails in Hermantown and Proctor. In Duluth, the only major paved trails are the Munger State Trail and the Lakewalk. Other non-paved trail destinations close to Proctor and Hermantown are the Superior Hiking Trail, Piedmont Mountain Bike Trails, Spirit Mountain ski and bike trails, and Western Waterfront Trail in Duluth.

Sidewalks

Both Hermantown and Proctor have sidewalks on some streets. The majority of downtown/central Proctor has sidewalks along one or both sides of streets. These sidewalks are typically 5 feet in width and vary in condition. Sidewalks are less common in Hermantown, though do exist on one side along many major roadways, including Ugstad Road, Maple Grove Road, Arrowhead Road, Lavaque Road, Stebner Road, and Haines Road.

On-Street Bike Routes

Several roadways have been identified as bicycle routes through the planning efforts of the Duluth Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC). Within the cities of Hermantown and Proctor, the MIC has identified several signed bike routes along roadways. These routes were identified as on-street signed routes, however no specific facilities dedicated for bicycle use have been provided thus far.