



Minnesota Zoo's FY26-27 Legacy Request (SF 1411)

John Frawley, Zoo Director



MINNESOTA ZOO

Agenda



- Zoo 101
- Current Legacy Fund Programs
- FY26-27 Legacy Request

Minnesota Zoo: 101



- **State Agency Partnership** – Operates as a public-private partnership
- **Current Operating Model** – 37% state-funds, 63% earned revenue and private funds
- **5th Largest Zoo in the U.S.** - Spans 485 acres
- **24/7 Campus** – 125 structures, 6.5 miles of roads, and 4.75 miles of pathways
- **Major Attraction** – Minnesota’s top year-round gated attraction with 1.5M annual visitors
- **Access** – Serves 120,000+ Free to Explore guests yearly from all 87 counties, and provides significantly discounted admission to students (18,500+ free)
- **Education Leader** – Reaches 83,000 students annually across 1,000+ schools
- **Nation’s Largest Zoo Camp** – Leading immersive educational experiences
- **Aging Campus** – Nearly 50 years old, not the “New Zoo” anymore



Current Legacy Fund Programs

- **MNZOO4ALL App:** Enhancing accessibility for guests with autism
- **Wells Fargo Family Farm Access:** Providing inclusive experiences for all visitors
- **Ambassador Animal Programs:** Bringing wildlife education to life
- **Outreach, Access, and Education:** Including the Zoomobile program, bringing the Zoo experience to communities
- **New Exhibits, Events, and Arts:** Featuring experiences like the Jack-O-Lantern Spectacular
- **Multilingual Zoo Map:** Available in 10 languages—Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hmong, Japanese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese



Minnesota Zoo's FY26-27 Legacy Request (SF 1411):



\$4,000,000 in fiscal year 2026

\$4,000,000 in fiscal year 2027

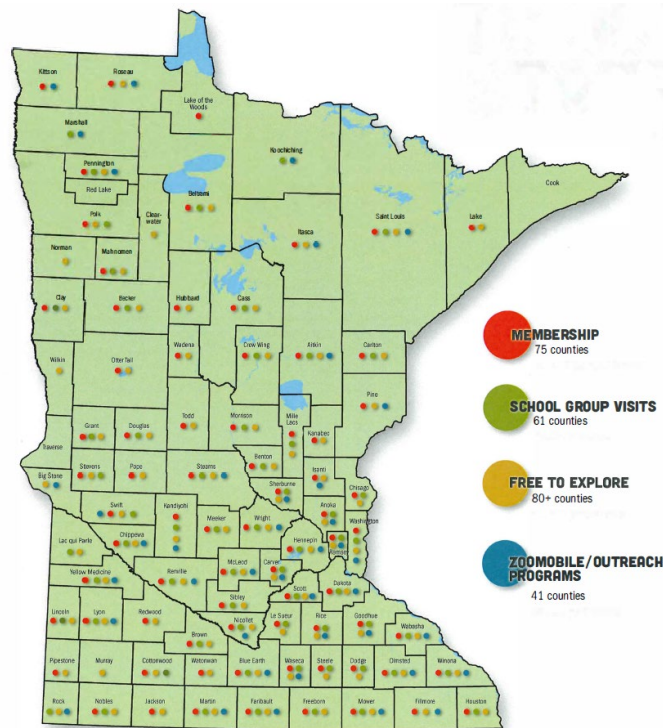


This request supports the Zoo's strategic plan to enhance:

1. **Free & Discounted Access** - Expanding Reach Across Greater MN
2. **School Bus Funding** – Increasing Delivery & Access
3. **Zooper** - Improving Mobility on Zoo Grounds
4. **ADA Upgrades** - Advancing Campus-Wide Accessibility

1. Free & Discounted Access - Expanding Reach Across Greater MN

- Our goal is to reach **2 million visitors** statewide
- To do this, we must address **gaps in Greater Minnesota engagement** (based on zip code data)



1. Free & Discounted Access - Expanding Reach Across Greater MN



Programs we offer to Greater Minnesota:

- Free to Explore Program
- Membership
- Education Programs
- School Bus Scholarships
- Zoo Camp
- Special Events
- Zoomobile
- Virtual Classes

1. Free & Discounted Access - Expanding Reach Across Greater MN

Examples of how we will reach Greater Minnesota:

- Targeted Awareness Campaigns
- Local Media Engagement
- Regional Engagement Events
- Prototyping Free Days
- School & Youth Engagement
- Collaboration with CVBs (Convention & Visitors Bureaus)
- Agricultural & 4-H Partnerships
- Outdoor & Sports Enthusiast Groups
- Engagement with Organizations Serving Underserved Communities



2. School Bus Funding – Increasing Delivery & Access

- **School Bus Funding Pilot Program**
Success: In March 2024, we launched a bus funding pilot program for schools with 40%+ Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) students to address transportation barriers (state average: 37%). **The \$30,000 fund was fully committed on day one, highlighting overwhelming demand.**
- **Survey Insights:** 92% of schools—both recipients and non-recipients—cited **transportation costs as the biggest barrier** to visiting the Zoo.



2. School Bus Funding – Increasing Delivery & Access

- **Impact & Opportunity:** Every \$100,000 investment enables 15,000 students to experience the Zoo.
- **Educator Testimonial:** *“We are a Title I school with a large population of low-income students. Providing field trip experiences is so important to us. Our biggest barrier is the cost of buses, so we greatly appreciate this support. Thank you!”*



3. Zoober - Improving Mobility on Zoo Grounds

- As the 5th largest zoo in the country, **mobility remains a top concern for guests** due to the Zoo's expansive footprint.
- The number of Minnesotans turning 65 between 2010 and 2030 will exceed the total from the past four decades combined.
- By 2030, **more than 1 in 5 Minnesotans will be older adults**, further increasing the demand for mobility solutions.



3. Zoober - Improving Mobility on Zoo Grounds

Zooper is an electric vehicle (EV) people-mover system designed to enhance accessibility by operating along existing walkways to key destinations like the Wells Fargo Family Farm.

Examples of Zooper needs:

- Acquisition of an EV fleet and charging infrastructure
- Operational support, including designated pick-up locations
- A reservation app and signage plan to ensure a seamless guest experience



4. Advancing Campus-Wide Accessibility



The Zoo's 50-year-old campus needs upgrades to ensure **Minnesota's top attraction** is accessible to all visitors.

Project examples:

- **Restroom & Access Point Upgrades:** Design and remodel to meet ADA standards
- **Inclusive Educational Spaces:** Ensure accessibility for diverse learning styles and needs (i.e. braille and low vision materials, AV systems for exhibit interpretations)
- **Sensory-Sensitive Spaces:** Designated areas for guests with sensory sensitivities
- **Appropriate Classroom Sizes:** Allow space for mobility devices





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This funding will provide **tangible, impactful, and measurable benefits** to all Minnesotans.

Questions?