



Phase II Architecture/History Survey Report

Reevaluation of Trunk Highway 38

**Grand Rapids to Effie, Itasca County,
Minnesota**

Prepared for

**Minnesota Department of
Transportation**

SPR CR 16(001)/SP 3108-70

SHPO inventory number IC-ROD-001

Prepared by

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Level K

Consultant's Report

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Executive Summary

Mead & Hunt, Inc. (Mead & Hunt) was retained by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Cultural Resources Unit (CRU) to conduct an Intensive (Phase II) survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the proposed improvement of Trunk Highway (TH) 38. The proposed work includes removing the existing 12-foot-wide bituminous and aggregate base roadway and replacing it with 13-foot-wide bituminous surfacing. If possible, in-place right turn lanes will be extended to meet current MnDOT standard lengths.

Project historians reviewed Minnesota Historic Preservation Office and MnDOT records for segments of TH 38 that were previously determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). This review revealed that Woodward-Clyde Associates recommended the entire length of TH 38, extending from Grand Rapids to Effie, eligible for listing in the National Register in 1995. Since the evaluation was undertaken over 20 years ago, substantial improvements to the highway route have been made and historic contexts for Minnesota's Trunk Highway System have been developed. As a result, MnDOT requested that the Trunk Highway corridor be reevaluated.

This report contains a project description, delineation of the APE, and results of the Phase II evaluation of TH 38. The study was defined, through consultation with MnDOT CRU, to encompass the entire length of the road corridor and roadside properties within the APE constructed from 1945 to 1970.

The Phase II intensive-level survey recommended TH 38 not eligible for listing in the National Register. Historians identified one roadside development, consisting of a parking area at Pug Hole Lake, constructed by the Minnesota Department of Highways in 1960. This roadside development was included in the *Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways* historic context and inventory prepared by Gemini Research (1998) for MnDOT CRU. Since the parking area does not contain any standing structures it was excluded from the inventory.¹ No other roadside structures, objects, sites, or buildings, constructed by the State of Minnesota, Itasca County, or private entities from 1945-1970, were identified within the APE.

¹ Gemini Research, *Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways*, prepared for Minnesota Department of Transportation (December 1998), 2.2, 7.35.

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1. Introduction and Study Area

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is planning to resurface approximately 14 miles of Trunk Highway (TH) 38 in Itasca County between TH 19 near Pug Hole Lake and the community of Marcell. Proposed work includes culvert replacement, removal of the existing bituminous pavement, regrading, and resurfacing with bituminous asphalt pavement. The road will be resurfaced to 26 feet with 12-foot travel lanes and 1-foot bituminous shoulders. An additional aggregate shoulder will be provided if possible. Right turn lanes will be extended to meet current MnDOT design standards at locations that are outside of wetlands.

The proposed project is utilizing federal funding; therefore, the project must comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Section 106), as amended. TH 38 in its entirety was previously recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) in 1995 by Woodward-Clyde Associates. Since the completion of the evaluation TH 38 has been subject to improvements and historic contexts have been developed that provide a better understanding of Trunk Highway development in Minnesota from 1921 through 1970. The historic contexts and their associated evaluation criteria are based on National Register Bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. As such, MnDOT CRU has requested that TH 38 be reevaluated using the Trunk Highway historic contexts.

The project Area of Potential Effects (APE) was defined to encompass the proposed 14-mile project area and included the Trunk Highway and adjacent properties that had the potential to be impacted by the project. As the proposed project APE encompasses only a portion of the existing TH 38 corridor, MnDOT requested that historians evaluate the entire length of the highway from Grand Rapids approximately 46 miles north to Effie. Additionally, MnDOT CRU requested project historians document all roadside resources constructed between 1945 and 1970 within the study APE. One roadside resource, a parking area at Pug Hole Lake constructed by the Minnesota Department of Highways (MHD) in 1960, was identified in the APE; this resource was previously identified and evaluated within the *Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways* historic context as it did not meet survey criteria.² Likewise, bridges along TH 38 were included in previous statewide bridge evaluations; therefore, no bridges were individually reevaluated as part of this project. Appendix A includes a map of the APE and extent of TH 38.

A Phase II evaluation for TH 38, including a *Minnesota Architecture/History Inventory Form*, was prepared by Mead & Hunt in 2016. The work was completed by professional historians who exceed the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for history and/or architectural history, as outlined in 36 CFR Part 61. Fieldwork and documentation of properties was completed according to MnDOT CRU Project Requirements (September 2011).

² The MHD was the precursor to MnDOT. All road-related resources constructed prior to 1961 were previously identified through the *Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways* historic context (Gemini Resources, 1998). Since the parking area at Pug Hole Lake contained no standing structures, the parking area was excluded from further study and evaluation.

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2. Methodology

To inform the Phase II evaluation, historians collected research on the development of TH 38 from the Minnesota Historical Society, MnDOT, Itasca County Historical Society, U.S. Forest Service, and Itasca County Engineer. Research included control-section-logs, plans, State of Minnesota legislative records, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographical maps, historic aerials, Google/Bing streetviews, Minnesota Department of Highways records, annual reports, community and county histories, the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) *Writer's Guide for Minnesota*, and other road-specific secondary sources related to transportation, tourism, agriculture, and industry. Historic aerials and topographic maps were consulted to identify realignments and alterations. In addition, historians reviewed previously developed thematic and historic contexts, dissertations, and National Register Multiple Property Documentation Forms (MPDFs), including:

- *Evaluation Report and Historic Context, Minnesota Bridges, 1955-1970 (including Trunk Highway Evaluations)* by Mead & Hunt, Inc. (2013)
- *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921-1954): Historic Context and National Register Evaluation and Integrity Considerations* by Mead & Hunt, Inc. (2015, draft)³
- *Historic Context for Tourism and Recreational Development in the Minnesota Northern Border Lakes from the 1880s Through the 1950s* by the National Park Service Midwest Regional Office and Voyageurs National Park (1999)
- *The Last Resort: Northern Minnesota Tourism and the Integration of Rural and Urban Worlds, 1900-1950* by Eileen Walsh (1994, dissertation)
- *Historic Roadside Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways* by Gemini Research (2000)
- *Commercial Logging in Minnesota (1837-1940s)* National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form by IMA Consultants (1998)

Project historians reviewed the entire length of the current TH 38 alignment for National Register significance and eligibility. In addition, both current and historic alignments, including realignments that were identified through research or field survey efforts, were also considered for significance under the evaluation criteria. Realignments were evaluated for individual significance as part of this Phase II as they may reflect specific engineering trends or historical events related to the MHD's Trunk Highway building efforts.

The following TH 38 Phase II evaluation includes a historic overview of the road and National Register eligibility recommendation.

³ The *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921-1954) Historic Context and National Register Evaluation and Integrity Considerations* received a preliminary review by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in 2015. SHPO comments on the historic context and evaluation and integrity considerations are being addressed.

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3. Historic Context

A. Description

TH 38 extends approximately 46 miles from Grand Rapids north to Effie, through a largely rural portion of Itasca County (SHPO inventory number IC-ROD-001). A portion of the highway passes through the eastern boundary of the Chippewa National Forest. The entire road corridor has been identified as a State and National Scenic Byway called “The Edge of the Wilderness.” A map showing the location of the road can be found in Appendix A.

Generally, the highway is comprised of two-lanes with a narrow shoulder. In some locations the highway features wider travel lanes, turn lanes, bypass lanes, and a paved shoulder. Private drives intersect with TH 38 at various locations along the highway and in some cases businesses, residences, and industrial buildings dating from the 1920s to the present front the highway. Residential lake homes and resorts, with few exceptions, are set back from the road and are largely unseen. Commercial and industrial properties are scattered along the highway but are largely concentrated the in communities Effie, Marcell, Bigfork, and Grand Rapids along the route. Modern waysides, wayside stations, and navigational and educational signs have also been installed along the highway (Figures 1-3).



Figure 1. Laurentian Divide Wayside located near Kramer Lake in the Chippewa National Forest boundary. Mead & Hunt, 2015.



Figure 2. Typical TH 38 wayside station, located at the highway's northern terminus in Effie. Mead & Hunt, 2015.



Figure 3. Typical wayside sign in the Chippewa National Forest. Mead & Hunt, 2015.

TH 38 passes through varying terrain, including flat agricultural areas, undulating hills covered with thick forest, and wetlands. Within the Chippewa National Forest, located in the center third of the highway, the road is constrained by natural topography and features sharp curves, rolling hills, and narrow right-of-

way. Here the highway is composed of a 24-foot-wide bituminous (asphalt) road with two 12-foot travel lanes and 1- to 2-foot gravel or paved shoulders. Tall stands of coniferous and deciduous trees line the majority of the corridor (Figures 4 and 5). These characteristics generally continue when the road leaves the National Forest, though the road shoulders and right-of-way widen.



Figure 4. TH 38 within the Chippewa National Forest boundaries. Note the narrow gravel shoulder.
Mead & Hunt, 2015.



Figure 5. Newly paved section of TH 38 within the Chippewa National Forest boundaries.
Mead & Hunt, 2015.

Topography within the northern and southern thirds of the highway corridor are less constrained by topography and vegetation, and the road widths vary from 24 feet to 54 feet to accommodate right and center turn lanes, bypass lanes, and wide shoulders (Figures 6-8). Within communities, including Grand Rapids, Marcell, and Bigfork, the highway has been widened and includes curb and gutter (Figures 9 and 10).



Figure 6. TH 38 near Effie. Note the continued use of graveled shoulders here and flatter topography. Mead & Hunt, 2015.



Figure 7. TH 38 near County Road (CR) 19 (south of the Chippewa National Forest and north of Grand Rapids). Mead & Hunt, 2015.



Figure 8. TH 38 north of Grand Rapids. Note the widening of the road and wide paved shoulders. Mead & Hunt, 2015.



Figure 9. TH 38 in Bigfork. Note the wide roadway and curb and gutter. Mead & Hunt, 2015.



Figure 10. TH 38 in Grand Rapids. Note the wide roadway, center turn lane, and curb and gutter. Historically the center turn lane was a paved median. Mead & Hunt, 2015.

Since its construction, TH 38 has undergone regrading, realignment, and other modifications, including wider travel lanes, turn lanes, and bypass lanes where feasible. Much of the work to widen the road occurred following the initial determination of eligibility in 1995. Based on field survey and review of historic maps and aerials, two former alignments of the highway exist. These alignments are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Realignments of TH 38

Location	Current Name	Approx. length of former highway alignment	Improvement	Description
At Prairie Lake, north of Shoal Lake Road (Co. Rd. 263)	Pine Ridge Road	1 mile	TH 38 straightened at an unknown time, though possibly c.1933	The original alignment is extant but has been repaved. The route has residential homes on either side.
At McKinney Lake	Audrey Lane	0.5 miles	TH 38 straightened, likely in c.1933	The original alignment is extant but has been repaved. The route has residential homes on either side.

B. History

This historic context details the development of TH 38 and its predecessor from its construction as a State Road in 1924 through the present day. In addition to transportation, research revealed several

historic themes that influenced the region's development and the use of the road as a transportation corridor through eastern Itasca County. These themes include the lumber industry, which developed prior to the construction of the road, and tourism, which became the region's principal industry following the lumber boom.

(1) Lumber roads and railroads

Prior to the arrival of the automobile, people relied on waterways, railroads, and wagon trails for transportation. Some of the earliest trails and railroads established in Itasca County were constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to facilitate the transportation of harvested timber, the county's chief industry. In the early days of logging, timber was transported by logging roads (often called tote roads) to sawmills and after processing to markets in Fargo, Duluth, International Falls, and the Twin Cities. Tote roads often served as the basis for later automobile routes. By 1895 three major tote roads and many lumbering camps were established in the county.⁴

In time loggers found transporting logs by tote road was arduous as the trip from Bigfork to Grand Rapids required at least three days of travel.⁵ To provide more efficient transportation, lumber companies began constructing railroads at the turn of the twentieth century. In total, three logging railroads were established by lumber companies in Itasca County: the Minneapolis & Rainy River (M&RR), established by the Itasca Lumber Company in 1901; the Duluth, Missabe & Western (DM&W), established by the Power & Simpson Logging Company in 1904; and the Wilton and Northern Railway (W&N), established by the Crookston Lumber Company in 1905.⁶

Logging railroads not only transported timber, but also served as a vital link to transport passengers between communities, tourists to regional attractions, and goods to market. The M&RR, for example, served as the primary transportation method between Deer River and Craigville, Effie, Marcell, and Bigfork. From Deer River, passengers boarded the Eastern Railway's line, which extended through the southern half of Itasca County. Constructed between 1882 and 1892, the Eastern Railway Company, a subsidiary of the Great Northern, passed through Grand Rapids and on to Duluth to the east or Grand Forks to the west.⁷

Logging in northern Minnesota continued to be a successful venture through the early 1900s, peaking in 1910 but declining sharply by 1920. By the early 1930s, with the closure of major sawmills and the Great

⁴ Patricia E Navratil, *Trails Through the Northwoods: A History of Bigfork Trail*, 2nd ed. (Bigfork, Minn.: Northwoods Press, Inc., 1976), 12.

⁵ Patricia E Navratil, *Trails Through the Northwoods: A History of Bigfork Trail*, 12.

⁶ Richard S. Prosser, *Rails to the North Star: A Minnesota Railroad Atlas*, 1st University of Minnesota Press ed, The Fesler-Lampert Minnesota Heritage Book Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 210, 227–229.

⁷ Prosser, *Rails to the North Star*, 199, 204, 224.

Depression, the lumber industry in Itasca County slowed.⁸ While harvesting and processing timber for use at paper mills continued in the region, such as at the Blandin Paper Company in Grand Rapids, the industry's heyday was over.⁹ Itasca County's lumber railroads were largely discontinued during the 1920s and 1930s. The W&N's railroad ties were taken up in 1928 and the M&RR's in 1932. The DM&W route was discontinued at an unknown time, though it was likely in the late 1920s in keeping with the other logging companies' fates.¹⁰ With the closure of the railroads residents, industries, and businesses near Grand Rapids looked to roads as the preferred transportation method.

(2) Itasca County develops a State Road

Prior to its designation as a Trunk Highway in 1933, TH 38 was originally developed as a State Road in the 1920s. State Roads were one of four classes of roads found in Minnesota, as established by the Public Highway Act of 1921. The distinct road classes included:¹¹

- *Trunk Highways* – primary routes that connected county seats and populations over 1,000
- *State Roads* – secondary roads that were funded through state-aid but maintained by counties
- *County Roads* – routes funded and constructed solely by counties
- *Town Roads* – routes funded and maintained by township boards with some financial assistance from counties

Beginning in early 1924 Itasca County engineers began planning for the construction of a new State Road extending from Grand Rapids north to Effie. In total the road would be made up of three individual routes developed by Itasca County, including State Road (SR) 1, SR 7, and SR 9.¹² Ultimately the three routes would be combined into one State Road known as SR 1.¹³

⁸ Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, *Historic Context: Northern Minnesota Lumbering (1870-1930s)* (St. Paul, Minn.: by the author, 1990), n.p.

⁹ John A. Weeks III, "Blandin Dam," *John Weeks*, 2016, http://www.johnweeks.com/river_mississippi/pages02/gr_dam.html.

¹⁰ Bigfork Commercial Club, *On the Banks of the Bigfork: The Story of the Bigfork River Valley - Commemorative of the Bigfork, Minnesota Golden Jubilee* (Bigfork, Minn.: Bigfork Commercial Club, 1956), 18, 39.

¹¹ Mead & Hunt, Inc., *Minnesota Trunk Highways Historic Context (1921-1954) (draft)* (Prepared for Minnesota Department of Transportation, February 2016), 16.

¹² Woodward-Clyde, *Phase I and II Cultural Resources Survey of T.H. 38 Between Grand Rapids and Effie S.P. 3108, Northwoods Scenic Byway, Itasca County, MN* (Prepared for Minnesota Department of Transportation, August 1995), 1.

¹³ There is a discrepancy between the original evaluation and available plans regarding when the entire route was labeled SR 1. Plans indicate that it may have been as early as 1926 with the last portion of road work from Bigfork to Craigville listed as SR 1. However, by 1929 it is certain that the road was referred to as State Aid Road 1.

The precise reason why Itasca County decided to construct a new road between Grand Rapids and Effie is uncertain as research did not reveal correspondence between county commissioners or the MHD justifying the new route. It is possible that Itasca County could now afford to add new roads because the burden to maintain the most heavily traveled roads in the county were now under the State's purview as Trunk Highways. Regardless of the reason, road construction during the 1920s was not uncommon as public agencies constructed roads to meet growing interest and use of the automobile for travel, recreation, commerce, and industry. Such is the case with SR 1, as the new road provided an additional transportation route for lumbering companies, tourists, and residents in this area.

Plans for each segment of the road were prepared by Itasca County Highway Engineer H.A. LeSueur and reviewed by MHD Engineer Roy Bliler. LeSueur designed each segment of the route to MHD standards, which included a 24-foot-wide road base without shoulders. He included minor modifications to account for wetlands and topography as needed.¹⁴ Itasca County constructed SR 1 over the course of three years:

- The first segment of the overall route constructed, signed as SR 9, extended from Grand Rapids to Marcell. Plans were approved by the Deputy Commissioner of Highways, John Muller, in April 1924. Itasca County constructed the approximately 28-mile route in the same year for an estimated \$125,800, using state-aid funds.¹⁵
- Efforts to extend the State Road from Marcell to Bigfork continued in the following year, with MHD plan approval granted in July 1925. The 11-mile route largely followed the M&RR line. Due to the swampy terrain in this portion of the highway, LeSueur prepared additional road designs that included a minimum 8-foot drainage area on either side of the road. Construction costs for this stretch of the route were roughly half of the former segment and estimated at over \$58,000. The county signed the Marcell to Bigfork stretch of road SR 7 following its completion in 1926.¹⁶
- The county completed the final 10 miles of the road by 1927. Plans prepared in 1926 show the route extending from Bigfork through Effie to Craigville and largely following the M&RR line. Due to drainage issues, LeSueur included drainage sloping. The total cost of construction for this final

¹⁴ State Highway Department of Minnesota, "Plan and Profile of State Road No. 1 (between Marcell and Bigfork)," 1925, available online in MnDOT eDOCs; State Highway Department of Minnesota, "Plan and Profile of State Road No. 1 (between Bigfork and Craigville)," 1926, available online in MnDOT eDOCs; State Highway Department of Minnesota, "Plan and Profile of State Road No. 9 (between Grand Rapids and Marcell)," 1924, available online in MnDOT eDOCs.

¹⁵ State Highway Department of Minnesota, "Plan and Profile of State Road No. 9 (between Grand Rapids and Marcell)."

¹⁶ State Highway Department of Minnesota, "Plan and Profile of State Road No. 1 (between Marcell and Bigfork)."

stretch, signed as SR 1, totaled just over \$55,000, bringing the total cost of construction for the State Road at around \$240,000.¹⁷

SR 1 joined a number of other roads in eastern Itasca County that accommodated the growing interest in driving in the late 1920s. At the time of the State Road's completion, three Trunk Highways were located within the eastern half of Itasca County. These Trunk Highways carried the lion's share of vehicular traffic through the county and included TH 61 (now TH 6), which extended north-south from Deer River to the northern county line; and TH 8 (now US/Trunk Highway [US/TH] 2) and TH 35 (now US/TH 169), both of which extended east-west through Grand Rapids.¹⁸ In addition, SR 6, constructed by 1919 by Itasca County, provided north-south access from Grand Rapids to Taconite and Bigfork through Scenic State Park.¹⁹ Figure 11 provides an overview of other vehicular roads in the vicinity of the subject route.

¹⁷ State Highway Department of Minnesota, "Plan and Profile of State Road No. 1 (between Bigfork and Craigville)."

¹⁸ US Highways and Trunk Highways shared dual designation and were constructed and maintained by the state. Designation as a U.S. Highway simply indicated the route was transcontinental.

¹⁹ Minnesota Highway Department, "1919 Map of Minnesota Showing the Status of Improved of State Roads" (Minnesota Highway Department, 1919), Digital Reflections, <http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/singleitem/collection>; Minnesota Highway Department, "1928 Map of Trunk Highway System" (Minnesota Highway Department, 1928), Digital Reflections, <http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/singleitem/collection>.

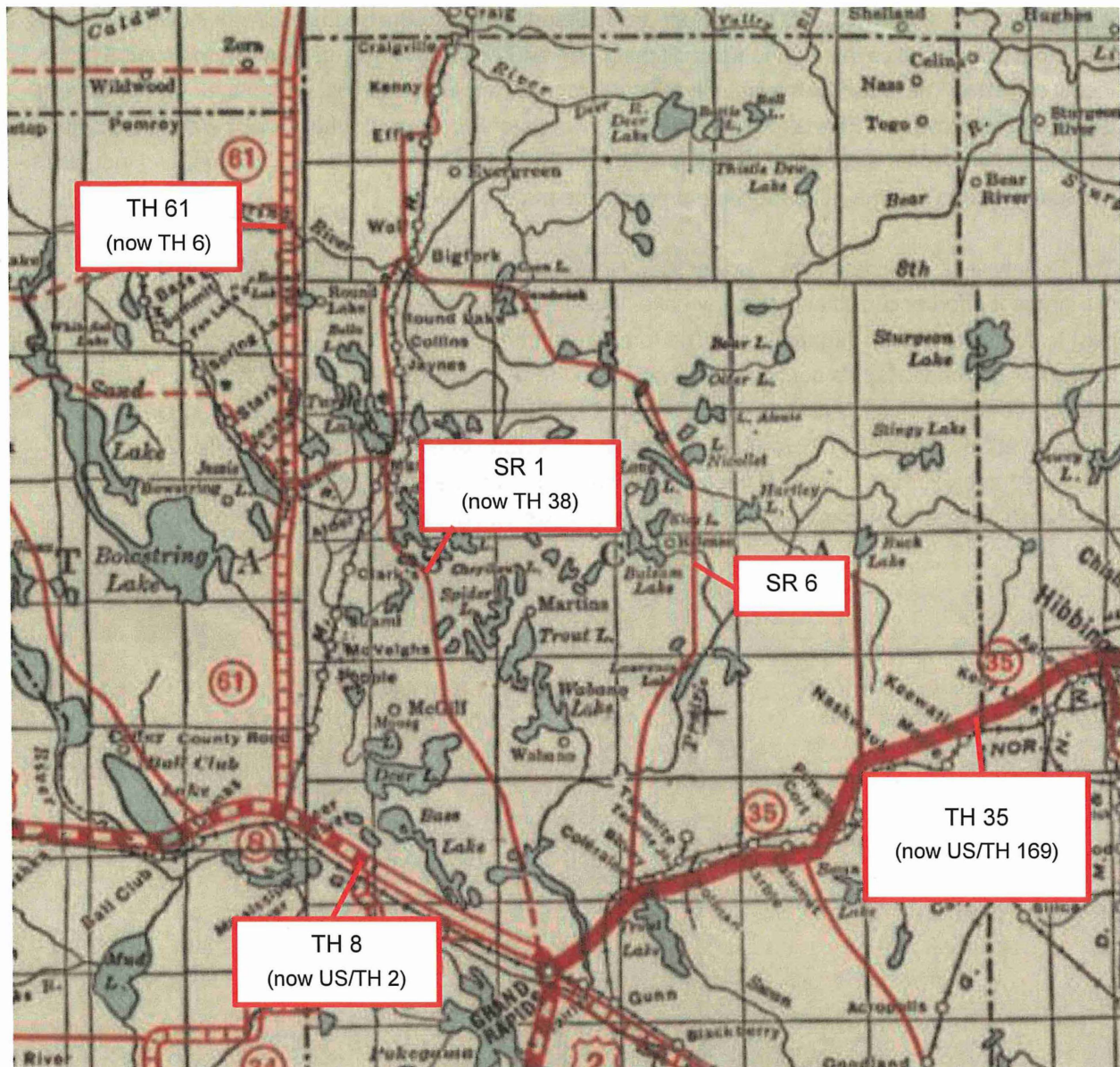


Figure 11. 1931 map showing Trunk Highways and State Roads in the vicinity of Grand Rapids with the route number notations added.²⁰

The County made further improvements to the route in the coming years, including graveling selected portions in 1929 using state-aid funding.²¹ Greater efforts to improve the alignment, straighten and widen curves, and install drainage features occurred closer to Grand Rapids, the largest of the communities along the route. For example, in 1933, just before the MHD assumed responsibility for SR 1, the County

²⁰ Minnesota Highway Department, "1931 Map of Trunk Highway System, State of Minnesota," 1:60 (St. Paul, Minn.: Minnesota Highway Department, 1931).

²¹ State Highway Department of Minnesota, "Graveling Part of State Road No. 1," 1929, available online in MnDOT eDOCs.

improved approximately 5 miles of the route from Grand Rapids to Prairie Lake. Work included clearing, grubbing, grading, excavating, and hand ditching new alignments to straighten and widen curves and install culverts. The County also graveled this portion of the route, making it one of the only sections of SR 1 to be improved.²² Efforts to gravel the entire length of SR 1 may not have been warranted initially as the road served as a secondary transportation method for area residents, businesses, and industries, who continued to use the railroad as the principal means of travel.²³

The County likely completed the two identified road realignments as part of the 1933 project. One realignment effort occurred at McKinney Lake, where approximately half a mile of road was shifted to the east to eliminate two 90-degree turns. The former alignment was eventually redeveloped as Audrey Lane as the city of Grand Rapids boundaries expanded north (Figure 12). Audrey Lane is currently lined by one- to two-story homes constructed from the late 1930s through the 1970s. The second realignment occurred at Shoal Road/CR 263, approximately 6 miles north of Grand Rapids. Here the County eliminated approximately 1 mile of the road, which included three 90-degree turns (Figure 13). Residential homes are located in tall stands of pine trees and are largely invisible from the road.

²² State of Minnesota Department of Highways, "Plan and Profile of State Road No. 1," 1933, available online in MnDOT eDOCs; State of Minnesota Department of Highways, "Plan for Graveling State Road No. 1 - Job #3310G," 1933, available online in MnDOT eDOCs.

²³ Curtis, Newstrom, *Memories of a Small Town - Marcell, Minnesota* (Marcell, Minn.: by the author, 2003), 40.



Figure 12. c.1933 realignment of SR 1 at McKinney Lake. Image courtesy of Google Earth.



Figure 13. c. 1933 realignment of SR 1 near CR 263 and Prairie Lake. Image courtesy of Google Earth.

(a) SR 1 becomes TH 38

At the close of 1932 the MHD looked to add additional mileage to the existing Trunk Highway System. Regulations established under the Public Highways Act of 1921 limited the system's expansion until at least 75 percent of Trunk Highway mileage was improved. In 1933 the Commissioner of Highways determined this threshold had been met and, in the same year, lawmakers added 140 new routes to the Trunk Highway System under the 1933 Session Law. The 140 routes equaled 4,500 additional miles, an increase of roughly 65 percent over the original Trunk Highway mileage. These new routes were now under MHD control, improvement, and maintenance.²⁴

²⁴ Mead & Hunt, Inc., *Minnesota Trunk Highways Historic Context (1921-1954) (draft)*, 31.

SR 1 was one of the newly designated Trunk Highways under the 1933 Session Law. Designated as Legislative Route 196, and later formally named TH 38, only the portion of the State Road from Grand Rapids to Bigfork was included in the highway designation. It is uncertain why SR 1 was chosen to be included as part of the Trunk Highway expansion, and why the MHD limited designation to the segment between Grand Rapids and Bigfork. The 1933 Session Law sheds some light stating the new Trunk Highway would afford "Grand Rapids and Bigfork a reasonable means of communication with each other and other places in the state." However, the 1933 Session Law utilized this same statement for a number of other highways designated at the same time.²⁵ Though research did not reveal correspondence on the matter, the discontinuation of the M&RR line in 1932, which previously connected the communities, may also have played an important role in the decision.

In 1934, following its designation as a Trunk Highway, the MHD right-of-way division engineer recommended that the MHD secure the former M&RR route to extend TH 38 from Bigfork to Effie. In a May 4, 1934, letter from O.L. Kipp, MHD Construction Engineer, to G. Gladman, MHD Engineer of Surveys & Design, Kipp indicates interest in extending the highway and the limited time for action, stating:

In connection with Trunk Highway No. 38 between Marcell and Effie a proposition has been made to the Right of Way Division under which we would secure the railroad right of way for this trunk highway between these two points. The railway company has other deals pending so we should determine at an early date whether or not we can use this right of way to advantage. Please check over this situation on the ground and confer with Mr. Blasé with reference to this matter.²⁶

Within the month MHD engineers conferred and recommended acquisition of the former railroad line to the Lands & Right of Way Office.²⁷ It took the MHD two years to formally acquire the M&RR right-of-way and conduct a survey of the area.²⁸

The MHD made limited improvements to TH 38 following its designation as a Trunk Highway. In the 1930s the MHD completed only two larger projects on TH 38, including widening, installing a central median, and paving between Fourth and Seventh Streets within Grand Rapids in 1935 and regrading and installing a bituminous surface on 7 miles of the highway between Bigfork and

²⁵ *Session Laws of the State of Minnesota Passed During the Forty-Eighth Session of the State Legislature at the Session Commencing January 3, 1933*, 1933, 894.

²⁶ O.L. Kipp, Construction Engineer, "Memo Re: General," May 4, 1934, Gale Family Library, Minnesota Historical Society Archives.

²⁷ O.L. Kipp, Construction Engineer to S. Rex Green, Engineer of Lands & Right of Way, "Re: Minneapolis & Rainy River Right of Way," May 21, 1934, Gale Family Library, Minnesota Historical Society Archives.

²⁸ Rex Green, Engineer, "Memo," June 6, 1936, Gale Family Library, Minnesota Historical Society Archives.

Effie in 1938.²⁹ By 1940, aside from the 7-mile stretch between Bigfork and Effie, TH 38 largely remained an oil-treated, gravel-surfaced highway (Figures 14 and 15).³⁰ The limited work undertaken on TH 38 in the 1930s followed a statewide trend, as construction and improvement became less of a priority for the public and financial pressures caused by the Depression limited funding. Total revenues from the Trunk Highway fund, appropriated through licensing fees, decreased sharply when the State reduced vehicle license fees by almost one half. Even with the emergency federal funding made available by the federal government during the Depression, the MHD had limited funds to utilize on the now expanded Trunk Highway System.³¹



Figure 14. c.1940 photograph showing TH 38 road conditions between CR 61 and Indian Drive.³²

²⁹ State of Minnesota Department of Highways, "Construction Plan for Trunk Highway No. 38 - 196 in Grand Rapids," 1935, available online in MnDOT eDOCs; Minnesota Department of Highways, *Road Life Studies - Construction Project Log Record for Section 3108 in Itasca County*, 2012 1920, Minnesota Department of Transportation Roadway Data Products, <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadway/data/data-products.html>.

³⁰ Lynn Carlson, Program Engineer, "Memo - Bigfork (TH 38)," August 8, 1962, Gale Family Library, Minnesota Historical Society Archives; Minnesota Department of Highways, *Road Life Studies - Construction Project Log Record for Section 3108 in Itasca County*.

³¹ Mead & Hunt, Inc., *Minnesota Trunk Highways Historic Context (1921-1954) (draft)*, 31-32.

³² History of Arbo Township, "Beach's Store on Highway 38 Burning," c 1940, RRC - Communities, Itasca County Historical Society Archive, Grand Rapids, Minn.



Figure 15. 1941 photograph from the Grand Rapids Herald Review showing TH 38 on the right. This location is undefined in the newspaper article, but is likely located between Bigfork and Effie due to the bituminous surfacing.³³

The MHD did not make substantial upgrades until the late 1940s, when the federal government lifted wartime funding and supply restrictions following the end of World War II (WWII) and projects planned during the war became top priority. Generally, MHD improvements during this postwar period focused on expanding the most heavily traveled highways into “expressways” or divided, four-lane facilities. While TH 38’s low annual daily traffic did not qualify the road to be upgraded to expressway standards, the highway’s gravel surfacing did not meet MHD Trunk Highway standards and warranted improvement.³⁴ Between 1945 and 1950 the MHD reconstructed 38 miles of the 46-mile route with a sand-gravel base and bituminous surfacing. By 1958 the entire highway was either bituminous surfaced or had a light bituminous seal coat.³⁵

Further improvements, including widening and installing gravel shoulders, occurred through the 1960s. Beginning in the early 1960s program engineers recommended the highway be

³³ Grand Rapids Herald Review, “Beaver Dam on Highway 38,” July 15, 1941, GRHR Collection, Itasca County Historical Society Archive, Grand Rapids, Minn.

³⁴ By the 1940s MHD typical design standards for Trunk Highways called for asphalt or concrete pavement. See Table 5 in Mead & Hunt, Inc., *Minnesota Trunk Highways Historic Context (1921-1954)* (draft), 55–56.

³⁵ J.C. Roberts, Assistant Maintenance Engineer, “Re: CS 3108, TH 38,” July 17, 1946, Gale Family Library, Minnesota Historical Society Archives; Lynn Carlson, Program Engineer, “Memo - Bigfork (TH 38).”

reconstructed with a 1- to 2-foot-wide shoulder and improved sight distances, as many portions of the highway were without a shoulder or adequate visibility.³⁶ Though it took a few years to execute the recommendation, the MHD installed gravel shoulders on the entire route between 1969 and 1973.³⁷

Additionally, substantial work to a small portion of TH 38 occurred in 1966. The MHD realigned and reconstructed 1 mile of the road from CR 256 to just north of CR 49 to eliminate existing 90-degree turns. Work included culvert replacement, excavation, embankment work, installation of shoulders, and bituminous surfacing of the highway (Figures 16 and 17).³⁸ Lane widths were retained at 12 feet with an 18-foot-wide gravel base, which was narrower than established MHD road standards for this period.³⁹



Figure 16. 1966 photograph from the *Grand Rapids Herald Review* showing the realignment of TH 38.⁴⁰

³⁶ Lynn Carlson, Program Engineer, "Memo - Bigfork (TH 38)."

³⁷ State of Minnesota Department of Highways, "Construction Plan for Plant-Mixed Bit. Surf. & Gravel Shoulders Trunk Highway No. 38 - 196 (13th Street in Grand Rapids to CSAH 19)," 1969, available online in MnDOT eDOCs; State of Minnesota Department of Highways, "Construction Plan for Plant-Mixed Bituminous Surfacing & Gravel Shoulders Trunk Highway No. 1 - 160 and 38 - 196" Junction of TH 6 (TH 1) and CSAH 19," 1972, available online in MnDOT eDOCs.

³⁸ State of Minnesota Department of Highways, "Construction Plan for Grading, Gravel Base & Rd - Mixed Bit. Base Trunk Highway No. 38 - 196" North of Grand Rapids (7 Mi) for 1 Mile," 1966, available online in MnDOT eDOCs.

³⁹ State of Minnesota Department of Highways, "Construction Plan for Grading, Gravel Base & Rd - Mixed Bit. Base Trunk Highway No. 38 - 196" North of Grand Rapids (7 Mi) for 1 Mile"; Mead & Hunt, Inc., *Minnesota Trunk Highways Historic Context (1921-1954) (draft)*, 56–57.

⁴⁰ Grand Rapids Herald Review, "Highway 38 Improved," September 19, 1966, GRHR Collection, Itasca County Historical Society Archive, Grand Rapids, Minn.



Figure 17. 1966 photograph from the *Grand Rapids Herald Review* showing the realignment of TH 38.⁴¹

(b) Development of TH 38 to the present day

From the 1970s through the 1990s MnDOT replaced a small number of bridges and completed limited maintenance along the route.⁴² The highway at this time was used largely by commuters and local industries, with tourists traveling to the area's resorts or vacation properties in the summer months.⁴³ The highway was comprised of two 12-foot lanes with bituminous surfacing and gravel shoulders, which varied in width along the route. By the late 1990s the highway was in need of significant improvement. According to newspaper articles from this time, the highway was deemed dangerous with an uneven surface, narrow shoulders, sharp curves, and limited sight visibility due to hills.⁴⁴ While MnDOT recognized the need to improve the highway, its Scenic Byway designation required cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on these efforts.

⁴¹ Grand Rapids Herald Review, "Highway 38 Improved."

⁴² State of Minnesota Department of Highways, "Construction Plan for Grading, Surfacing, & Drainage Trunk Highway 38-196" 1 Mile Around Bridge 4265 in Bigfork," 1968, available online in MnDOT eDOCs; State of Minnesota Department of Highways, "Construction Plan for Remove Bridge 3639 & Const. Conc. Box Culvert," 1989, available online in MnDOT eDOCs.

⁴³ Susan Streed, "Highway 38 Plans Continue its Development as Scenic Corridor" [untitled newspaper], c.1999 in Curtis, Newstrom, *Memories of a Small Town - Marcell, Minnesota*, 227.

⁴⁴ Susan Streed, "Highway 38 Plans Continue its Development as Scenic Corridor" [untitled newspaper], c.1999 in Curtis, Newstrom, *Memories of a Small Town - Marcell, Minnesota*, 227.

Through consultation efforts the agencies reached a compromise to improve safety and upgrade the highway while maintaining the route's scenic qualities. In the compromise, only the most heavily traveled portions of the road would be upgraded with wider travel lanes, turn lanes, and bypass lanes. MnDOT made these improvements to the highway from Grand Rapids to CR 19, which had an average daily traffic (ADT) count of 4,000 cars. North of CR 19 the ADT dropped to 800; therefore, MnDOT planned only minor improvements to the road's surface and gravel shoulders.⁴⁵

MnDOT completed road improvements along 6 miles between Grand Rapids and CR 19 in 2002. Work included regrading the highway from 24 to 37 feet wide with an 8-foot bituminous shoulder. In addition, 12-foot bypass lanes and turn lanes were added along the road and new culverts installed to facilitate better drainage.⁴⁶ This road work occurred following its previous evaluation. No improvements have been made to the remainder of the route, aside from standard resurfacing efforts in 2008.⁴⁷

(3) Tourism and recreation

Tourism and recreation played an important role in the development of Itasca County in the early twentieth century and roads such as TH 38 were part of a large transportation network that brought visitors to the area. With the mass production and availability of the automobile, Minnesotans took to the open road in great numbers as a means to relax and escape urban areas in the late 1910s and early 1920s. This reflected a larger national trend in the years following World War I as workers enjoyed additional vacation time and had greater disposable incomes. In addition, travel via automobile, rather than by rail, offered motorists freedom to explore at their leisure.⁴⁸ These factors resulted in a record number of tourists traveling by road to popular destinations in Minnesota. Between 1918 and 1921 the number of tourists recorded in the state grew exponentially from 40,000 to over 300,000.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Streed, "Highway 38 Plans Continue its Development as Scenic Corridor" in Curtis, Newstrom, *Memories of a Small Town - Marcell, Minnesota*, 227.

⁴⁶ Minnesota Department of Transportation, "Construction Plan for Grading, Bituminous Surfacing, Lighting and Temp. Signal System from Junction TH 2 & TH 38 in Grand Rapids to 0.2 Miles N. Junction CSAH 19," 2002, available online in MnDOT eDOCs.

⁴⁷ Minnesota Department of Transportation, "Construction Plan for Bituminous Reclamation and Bituminous Surfacing on TH 38 (from Bigfork to Effie)," 2008, available online in MnDOT eDOCs.

⁴⁸ John Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 103; Agg, Thomas, *American Rural Highways* (New York: Mc-Graw Hill, 1920), 5, 8, 11–12; National Park service Midwest Regional Office and Voyageurs National Park, *Historic Context for Tourism and Recreational Development in the Minnesota Northern Border Lakes From the 1880s through the 1950s*, prepared for Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (1999), n.p.

⁴⁹ National Park service Midwest Regional Office and Voyageurs National Park, *Historic Context for Tourism and Recreational Development in the Minnesota Northern Border Lakes from the 1880s through the 1950s*, 10.

Prior to the advent of the automobile, tourism in the northern part of the state was typically limited to men interested in hunting, fishing, and trapping.⁵⁰ While the region continued to attract sportsmen, the post-World War I rise of the automobile helped facilitate family vacations and increased the demand for more and varied amenities.⁵¹ Many of the state's early resorts were established in the 1920s in the central lakes district between Brainerd and Bemidji, and recreational business development was densest in the areas around the Twin Cities and Duluth. These locations have long been connected by railway services and were among the first to benefit from improved roads.⁵² Minnesota's resorts soon grew from a few hundred to nearly 1,400 as roads opened previously inaccessible areas to automobiles.

While tourist destinations were also located in the south and central portions of the state, by the 1920s those in northern Minnesota were the most popular to visit. The region boasted a number of newly opened state and federal forests to discover, lake resorts for families to relax, and a vast wilderness for outdoorsmen to explore.⁵³ Itasca County was one of several counties in northern Minnesota to benefit from the growth of the tourism industry in the early twentieth century due to the number of lakes and wilderness areas available for tourists to explore. As was the case throughout the region, local businessmen and residents established resorts along numerous lakes and within the county's forests to accommodate the growing number of tourists in the early twentieth century. Many of the resorts along TH 38 date to this period, including the Fox Lake Resort/Camp Grace, which opened in the late 1920s. In some instances, turn-of-the-century hunting and fishing lodges developed into resorts, such as the McKenzie Island Resort.⁵⁴

Two of Itasca County's most popular tourist destinations during the early twentieth century were the Minnesota National Forest (renamed the Chippewa National Forest in 1928) and Scenic State Park. The federal government reserved a large section of land in Itasca, Cass, and Beltrami Counties in 1902 for conservation. This land became the Minnesota National Forest in 1908 and by 1910 was a popular destination for summer vacationers.⁵⁵ The forest boasted numerous lakes within its boundaries, including Lake Winnibigoshish and Cass Lake, which attracted recreationists. Prior to the arrival of the automobile, vacationers came to the park via railroad, but by the 1920s motorists could take the Theodore Roosevelt

⁵⁰ Bigfork Commercial Club, *On the Banks of the Bigfork: The Story of the Bigfork River Valley - Commemorative of the Bigfork, Minnesota Golden Jubilee*, 36.

⁵¹ Eileen Patricia Walsh, "The Last Resort: Northern Minnesota Tourism and the Integration of Rural and Urban Worlds, 1900-1950" (Ph.D., University of Minnesota, 1994), 16-17.

⁵² National Park Service Midwest Regional Office and Voyageurs National Park, *Historic Context for Tourism and Recreational Development in the Minnesota Northern Border Lakes From the 1880s through the 1950s*, n.p.

⁵³ National Park Service Midwest Regional Office and Voyageurs National Park, 10, 12.

⁵⁴ Curtis, Newstrom, *Memories of a Small Town - Marcell, Minnesota*, 125, 128.

⁵⁵ United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, *Chippewa National Forest Minnesota* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 4, 12; Walsh, "The Last Resort: Northern Minnesota Tourism and the Integration of Rural and Urban Worlds, 1900-1950," 34-35.

International Highway (TH 8; now U.S. Highway/TH 2) to, and through, the forest.⁵⁶ TH 61 (later TH 6) also provided access to the park's eastern boundary.

Scenic State Park, established in 1921, also proved to be another popular park for recreationists. As its name suggests, Scenic State Park boasted regional scenic treasures including untouched virgin forests and lakes.⁵⁷ While little research is available on the park's early history and use, its importance to tourism is best represented in the 1927 Rand McNally Junior Auto Road Map of Minnesota. The park is the only recreational destination included in Itasca County and one of the few highlighted within the region (Figure 18). As recommended by Rand McNally, the park was best accessed via SR 6 (now Scenic State Highway/CR 7) and located just east of Bigfork.⁵⁸ While there are no early figures for the park's use, by 1936 over 12,000 visitors came to the park.⁵⁹

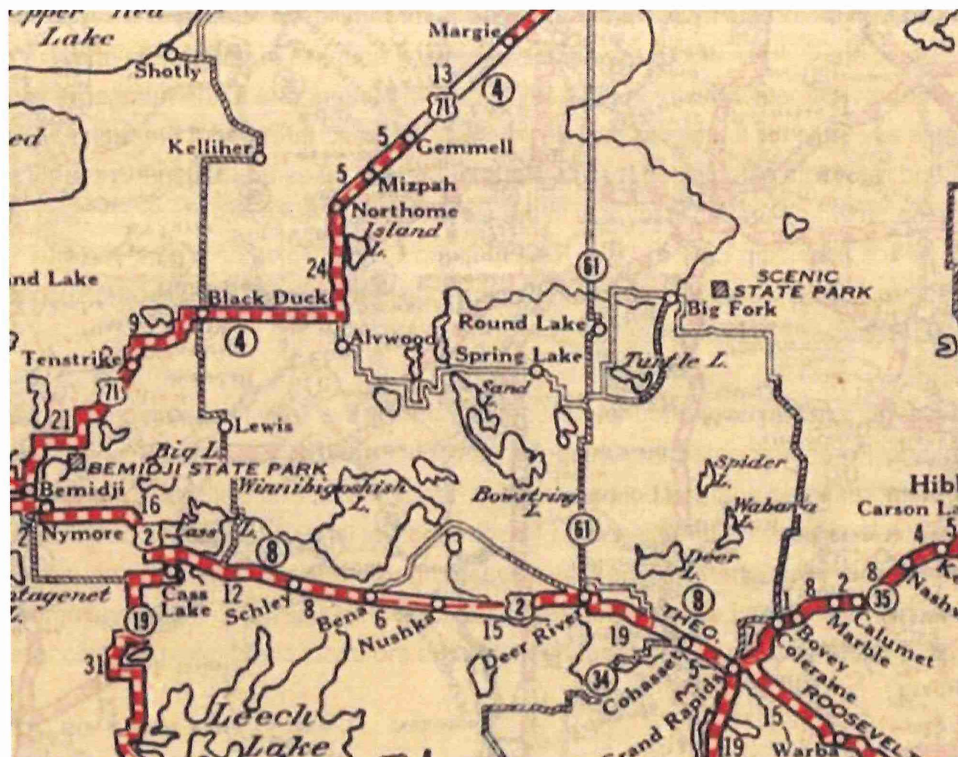


Figure 18. Detail of the 1927 Rand McNally Junior Auto Road Map of Minnesota, showing Scenic State Park in the upper right. Note that only Bemidji State Park, located in Beltrami County, is also included in the region.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ United States Forest Service, "Minnesota National Forest, Minnesota: Fifth Principal Meridian" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 1924).

⁵⁷ Bigfork Commercial Club, *On the Banks of the Bigfork: The Story of the Bigfork River Valley - Commemorative of the Bigfork, Minnesota Golden Jubilee*, 37; Itasca Resort Association, "Itasca - the County of a Thousand Lakes" (Grand Rapids, Minn.: Herald-Review, c 1930).

⁵⁸ "Rand McNally Junior Auto Road Map, Minnesota," 1:1,700,000 (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1927).

⁵⁹ Bigfork Commercial Club, *On the Banks of the Bigfork: The Story of the Bigfork River Valley - Commemorative of the Bigfork, Minnesota Golden Jubilee*, 38.

⁶⁰ "Rand McNally Junior Auto Road Map, Minnesota."

Although the onset of the Great Depression affected Minnesota's economy, it did not curb tourism. Summer vacations "at the lake" became traditions for families from a wide range of income levels, and automobile touring became increasingly common and affordable.⁶¹ Northern Minnesota recognized the value of recreational opportunities in the 1920s and 1930s, and many residents came to rely on the tourist industry during these difficult economic conditions. The state government continued to promote tourism, and in 1931 established a State Tourism Bureau within the Department of Conservation to direct this effort. Federal-relief programs also improved recreational facilities during the Depression years, including work by the Civilian Conservation Corps in Scenic State Park.⁶² In 1933 the Forest Service substantially expanded the Chippewa National Forest's boundaries to the east in order to conserve additional lands for public use. The expanded forest boundary included land in Itasca County between Bigfork and Deer Lake, accessible via what soon became TH 38.⁶³ In order to accommodate increased tourist traffic, the MHD also addressed infrastructure and scenic roads during this period, although TH 38 was not added to the Trunk Highway System until 1934 and not improved as part of these efforts. Rather, the MHD improved TH 61 (now TH 6), the main north-south route through area, between US/TH 2 and TH 1 with gravel and oil-tar surfacing during this time.⁶⁴

In addition to government efforts, regional and county-based associations promoted recreational opportunities. The Itasca Resort Association advertised a variety of recreational opportunities in the 1930s, ranging from "commodious resorts" to more primitive hunting and fishing camps. Vacationers had numerous transportation options to reach the area; rail connections were available from Chicago and Duluth, and a number of small airfields in the Grand Rapids vicinity also served the region. For visitors who preferred to drive, a brochure noted that the county could be reached on "important, well-built highways from all parts of Minnesota."⁶⁵ By this time Itasca County was home to dozens of resorts, lodges, cabins, and cottages. Most were located on lakes and accessed via a network of highways as well as county and local roads. US/TH 2 and US/TH 169 intersected at Grand Rapids and served as the principal arterials bringing travelers to the area from the Twin Cities and Duluth. From Grand Rapids drivers could reach various destinations along TH 46, TH 6, TH 38, and SR 7, as well as smaller branching roads (see Figure 19).

⁶¹ Walsh, "The Last Resort: Northern Minnesota Tourism and the Integration of Rural and Urban Worlds, 1900-1950," 105.

⁶² Bigfork Commercial Club, *On the Banks of the Bigfork: The Story of the Bigfork River Valley - Commemorative of the Bigfork, Minnesota Golden Jubilee*, 38.

⁶³ "The Chippewa National Forest," c 1960, 3, Chippewa National Forest files, Itasca County Historical Society Archive, Grand Rapids, Minn.

⁶⁴ Minnesota Department of Highways, *Road Life Studies - Construction Project Log Record for Section 3107 in Itasca County*, 2012 1920, Minnesota Department of Transportation Roadway Data Products, <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadway/data/data-products.html>; Aaron Shapiro, *The Lure of the North Woods: Cultivating Tourism in the Upper Midwest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 25; Minnesota Tourist Bureau, "Minnesota Invites You to Live, Work, Play, in the Playground of 10,000 Lakes," no scale given (St. Paul, Minn.: Minnesota Conservation Department, 1931).

⁶⁵ Itasca Resort Association, "Itasca: The County of a Thousand Lakes" (Grand Rapids, Minn.: Herald-Review), Minnesota Historical Society.

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Following the Depression, resorts became the area's principal industry aside from logging, and tourism boomed in the postwar years as more Americans had the means to take vacations.⁶⁷ By the 1950s more than 40 resorts were located in northeast portion of Itasca County alone, served by SR 7, TH 38, TH 1, and TH 6.⁶⁸ Scenic State Park's popularity continued to increase, and counts for 1955 totaled over 31,000 visitors.⁶⁹ Recreational use continued in Chippewa National Forest as well, and by the mid-1950s the forest as a whole contained several hundred resorts and thousands of summer homes. Visitors made use of the dozens of free camping, picnicking, and swimming areas developed by the Forest Service, and undeveloped areas attracted approximately 175,000 hunters and fishermen in 1955.⁷⁰ Despite the free facilities provided by the Forest Service, resorts emerged as the primary attraction for vacationers in Itasca County during the postwar period. A 1958 study found that based on the amount of money spent by tourists, Cass, Crow Wing, St. Louis, Itasca, and Hubbard Counties drew the greatest number of resort vacationers versus other vacation forms.⁷¹

By the early 1960s the tourist industry was firmly entrenched as a vital part of the regional economy in Minnesota's resort and recreation areas, and Itasca County was one of the nine northeastern counties that collectively employed over 60 percent of Minnesota's resort workers in 1961.⁷² Although the Lake Superior shoreline, accessed via US/TH 61 (formerly TH 1), was an important recreational corridor, the majority of inland recreational areas were concentrated in the Central Lakes Region, particularly Otter Tail, Becker, Hubbard, Cass, Crow Wing, and Itasca Counties (see Figure 20).⁷³ Although construction of the Interstate Highway System began in the early 1960s, none of Minnesota's three Interstate routes provided direct access to these major resort areas. Instead, US/TH 2, US/TH 71, and US/TH 169 linked the region to the Interstate system, continuing to serve as vital links between urban centers and the network of Trunk Highways that served local and regional traffic.

⁶⁷ Curtis, Newstrom, *Memories of a Small Town - Marcell, Minnesota*, 37.

⁶⁸ Commercial Club (Bigfork, Minn.) Bigfork, *The "Last Frontier": Bigfork, Minnesota "Sportsman's Paradise of the North": We Welcome You to the Land of Virgin Lakes, Streams and Forests, to the Region of Cool Nights* (Bigfork, Minn.: Bigfork Commercial Club, 1956).

⁶⁹ Bigfork Commercial Club, *On the Banks of the Bigfork: The Story of the Bigfork River Valley - Commemorative of the Bigfork, Minnesota Golden Jubilee*, 38.

⁷⁰ George Rossman and Allen Rossman, *The Chippewa National Forest* (Grand Rapids, Minn.: Herald-Review, 1956), 20.

⁷¹ National Park service Midwest Regional Office and Voyageurs National Park, *Historic Context for Tourism and Recreational Development in the Minnesota Northern Border Lakes From the 1880s through the 1950s*, n.p.

⁷² These included Cook, Lake, St. Louis, Koochiching, Itasca, Cass, Crow Wing, Aitkin, and Carleton Counties; Walsh, 275.

⁷³ Walsh, "The Last Resort: Northern Minnesota Tourism and the Integration of Rural and Urban Worlds, 1900-1950," vii.

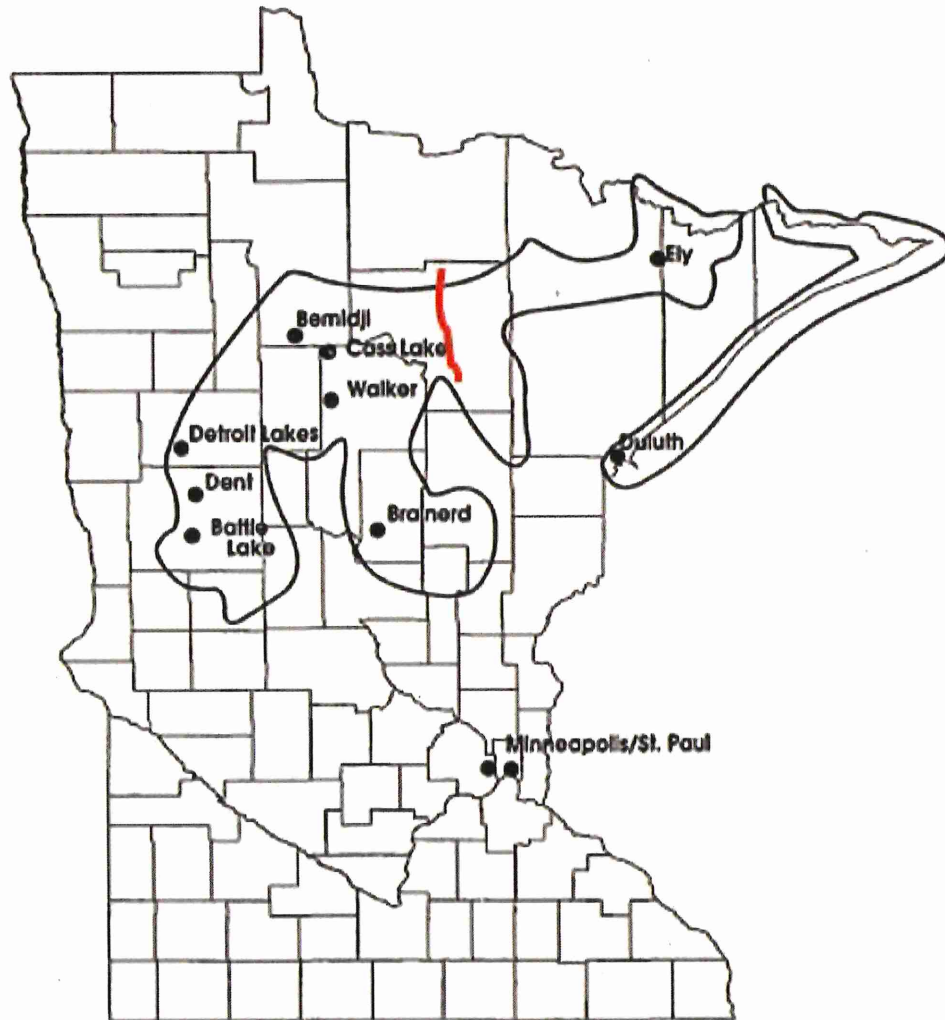


Figure 20. Minnesota's primary recreation and resort areas in 1961, TH 38 shown in red.⁷⁴

Itasca County continues to attract tourists and TH 38 has continued to serve seasonal visitors in the area. According to a 1995 study, the majority of visitors along the corridor arrived from elsewhere in Minnesota, and roughly one-third traveled the highway as part of a vacation. Resorts remain more popular than campgrounds; two campgrounds are located in the Chippewa National Forest along TH 38, but occupancy rates in 1995 were 50 percent or less during the summer season, while area resorts saw occupancy rates as high as 86 percent during the same period.⁷⁵

In addition to providing access to forests and resorts, TH 38 has also been recognized as a scenic resource in its own right and has received several Scenic Byway designations in recent decades.⁷⁶ Minnesota currently recognizes 21 transportation corridors that pass through important "cultural, historic,

⁷⁴ Walsh, "The Last Resort: Northern Minnesota Tourism and the Integration of Rural and Urban Worlds, 1900-1950," vii.

⁷⁵ "Edge of the Wilderness Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (Update 2014)," 2014, 2-5.

⁷⁶ National Park service Midwest Regional Office and Voyageurs National Park, *Historic Context for Tourism and Recreational Development in the Minnesota Northern Border Lakes From the 1880s through the 1950s*, n.p.

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natural, recreational, and archaeological landscapes and locations.”⁷⁷ The entire TH 38 route between Grand Rapids and Effie was designated as the Edge of the Wilderness State Scenic Byway in 1994, one of the first Scenic Byways in Minnesota. Established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, the National Scenic Byway Program was a federal program created to recognize transportation routes that possess outstanding archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. The Edge of the Wilderness Scenic Byway was added to the national designation program in 1996 along with eight other Scenic Byways in Minnesota. In addition, the 22-mile segment within the Chippewa National Forest boundary was also recognized as a National Forest Scenic Byway.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Minnesota Department of Transportation, “Minnesota Scenic Byways,” 2016, <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/scenicbyways/index.html>.

⁷⁸ Minnesota Department of Transportation, “Edge of the Wilderness Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (Update 2014),” 2014, 1.

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4. Evaluation

TH 38 was previously evaluated and recommended eligible for the National Register under *Criterion A* in the areas of Transportation, Industry, and Entertainment/Recreation. According to the evaluation the highway was eligible because it “facilitated the transport of timber to lumber mills located in Bigfork, Marcell, and Grand Rapids...improved transportation to and from Grand Rapids for the people living on the farms and villages near the route...[and] became a conduit for the tourist industry shaping the areas growth and development of new and existing resorts and industries.” The period of significance extended from 1924, when road construction began, to 1945, which corresponded to the National Register 50-year cutoff date at the time of the evaluation.⁷⁹

At MnDOT CRU's request, Mead & Hunt conducted a reevaluation of TH 38. Since the completion of the original evaluation, over 20 years ago, improvements to portions of the highway, including widening the road, have occurred and MnDOT CRU developed two historic contexts for Trunk Highways that provide a more comprehensive understanding of this statewide road network. These contexts include the *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921-1954)* (draft), which focuses on development of the Trunk Highway System to 1954, and *Minnesota Bridges, 1955-1970 (including Trunk Highway Evaluations)*, which covers improvements to the system in the postwar period from 1955 to 1970.⁸⁰ Both contexts include an evaluation methodology and criteria tailored to Trunk Highways, developed using the National Park Service guidelines for evaluating resources. Although the evaluation criteria for the 1921 through 1954 period is in draft form, it was used as a guide for this evaluation because it follows National Register criteria and has been preliminarily reviewed by SHPO.

With the development of the Trunk Highway contexts, MnDOT CRU requested TH 38 be reevaluated both for its development and use as a State Road (1924-1933) and for designation and use as a Trunk Highway. Based on a review of the road's history, areas under which the highway may obtain significance include Transportation, Industry, and Entertainment/Recreation under *Criterion A* and Engineering under *Criterion C*.

A. State Road period

Project historians first reviewed TH 38 for significance as a State Road. Itasca County constructed and maintained TH 38 as SR 1 from 1924 to 1932, until its designation as TH 38 in 1933. While there is no specific guidance established to evaluate State Roads, project historians drew evaluation guidance from the National Register Bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Bulletin) to assist in evaluating the road's significance. The highway was evaluated for its State Road period from 1924 to 1933, which corresponds with its initial development and use as a State Road.

⁷⁹ Woodward-Clyde, *Phase I and II Cultural Resources Survey of T.H. 38 Between Grand Rapids and Effie S.P. 3108, Northwoods Scenic Byway, Itasca County, MN*, 8.

⁸⁰ SHPO has reviewed the initial draft of *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921-1954)* in 2015 and provided comment. The historic context, evaluation criteria, and integrity considerations are currently under revision.

(1) Criterion A

Applying the general guidance provided in the Bulletin, for a property to be significant under *Criterion A* in a thematic area such as Transportation, Agriculture, Industry, or Entertainment/Recreation it must demonstrate an association with an important event or trend within the historic context. Further, the property must be shown to have an important association with the event or historic trend. As the bulletin states: "Mere association with historic events or trends is not enough, in and of itself, to qualify under *Criterion A*: the property's specific association must be considered important as well."⁸¹ To be significant under *Criterion A*, therefore, research should show that the road played a substantial role in the development of the regional transportation network, or the development of themes such as tourism, industry, or agriculture.

(a) Transportation

Construction activities commenced in 1924 and concluded in 1927. The development of the route was relatively late in Minnesota, as county-sponsored road development began as early as 1900.⁸² By 1921 there were over 15,000 miles of roads in the state; of these approximately 8,300 were State Roads.⁸³ Though SR 1 served as a vehicular corridor for area residents, tourists, and the lumber industry, the railroad remained the primary transportation method until its discontinuation in 1932. As such, the road does not appear to have made a significant contribution to the development of the region as an early State Road and is recommended not eligible under *Criterion A* for its State Road period.

(b) Entertainment/Recreation

Northern Minnesota's lakes and forests attracted sportsmen as early as the turn of the century, and many of the state's first resorts developed in areas served by existing rail lines from the Twin Cities and Duluth. In Itasca County, railroads conveyed visitors to the Chippewa National Forest and various hunting and fishing areas in the years before automobile travel became widespread. As the automobile made recreational travel more accessible to a wider audience in the 1920s, the Central Lakes Region emerged as one of the state's main tourist areas and resorts proliferated throughout Itasca County. Throughout the 1920s routes other than SR 1 provided direct access to popular recreational areas, including SR 7, which accessed Scenic State Park, and TH 8 (now US/TH 2), which accessed Chippewa National Forest. Research did not reveal that SR 1 played a substantial role in developing the local or regional tourist industry, but rather served as one of many feeder roads into larger and better improved highways. As such, the road is recommended not eligible under *Criterion A* in the area of Entertainment/Recreation for its State Road period.

⁸¹ National Park Service, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1997), 12.

⁸² Mead & Hunt, Inc., *Minnesota Trunk Highways Historic Context (1921-1954) (draft)*, 6–7.

⁸³ Mead & Hunt, Inc., *Minnesota Trunk Highways Historic Context (1921-1954) (draft)*, 16.

(c) Industry

Beginning in the late nineteenth century logging served as Itasca County and the region's principal industry. Logging companies hauled harvested timber on short overland routes to railroads, where they were transported to sawmills and market centers, such as the Twin Cities. In Itasca County three railroad lines established by logging companies were the principal transportation method for the logging industry from their inception in the 1890s through the early 1930s, after SR 1 was constructed. As such, the county's logging railroads best represent the association between transportation and industry. Therefore, the road is recommended not eligible under *Criterion A* in the area of Industry for its State Road period.

(2) Criterion C

Applying the guidance provided in the Bulletin, for a resource to be significant under *Criterion C* in the area of Engineering it must embody the distinctive characteristics of type, period, or method of construction, represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic value. To be significant under *Criterion C*, therefore, research should clearly illustrate that the road is distinctive among others and represents the period in which it developed, exemplify the work of a noted engineer or architect, or expresses an aesthetic ideal of the period.

Itasca County originally constructed the State Road as a 24-foot-wide dirt road largely using MHD design standards in three stages over a period of three years beginning in 1924. The road was largely unimproved (no hard surfacing) and utilized established design standards; no notable engineering features or considerations to meet design challenges were identified.⁸⁴ As such, the road no longer visually represents its State Road period. Based on research, Itasca County Highway Engineer H.A. LeSueur does not appear to be a notable engineer and, because he utilized MHD standard design principals, the road does not represent a work of a master. Finally, the route does not exhibit any exceptional design or landscaping features; therefore, it does not exhibit high artistic value. In addition, the entire route was upgraded during its Trunk Highway period with new paving materials, shoulders, and, in some areas, widening. As such, the road is recommended not eligible under *Criterion C* in the area of Engineering during its State Road period.

Similarly, the former alignments resulting from the County's 1933 improvement efforts do not represent a particular type, period, or method of construction since they are typical road examples using the MHD's accepted design standards. Both the Audrey Lane and the Pine Ridge Road realignments have been paved, and in the case of Audrey Lane the street has been widened and curb and gutter has been installed (Figures 21 and 22). As such, neither realignment reflects its earlier State Road characteristics. As a former alignment of the original SR 1 they also do not reflect a work of a master nor do they possess high artistic value. As such, these former alignments of SR 1 are recommended not eligible under *Criterion C* in the area of Engineering during its State Road period.

⁸⁴ Mead & Hunt, Inc., *Minnesota Trunk Highways Historic Context (1921-1954) (draft)*, 11.



Figure 21. Former alignment of SR 1, now Audrey Lane. Note the width, bituminous surfacing, and curb and gutter. Mead & Hunt, 2015.



Figure 22. Former alignment of SR 1, now Pine Ridge Road. Note that the road has been bituminous surfaced. Mead & Hunt, 2015.

B. Trunk Highway Period

Mead & Hunt historians also evaluated TH 38 for its role as a Trunk Highway. Project historians used the Bulletin, *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921-1954)* (draft), and *Minnesota Bridges, 1955-1970 (including Trunk Highway Evaluations)* to assist in the evaluation.

Based on a review of the eligibility criteria included in the *Minnesota Bridges, 1955-1970 (including Trunk Highway Evaluations)* historic context, in order for TH 38 to be considered significant during the postwar period it must have been upgraded to expressway standards. TH 38 retains its conventional two-lane design and has not been upgraded to a divided highway. As such, TH 38 is recommended not eligible under the *Minnesota Bridges, 1955-1970 (including Trunk Highway Evaluations)* historic context. Therefore, only the evaluation methodology and criteria considerations found within the *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921-1954)* (draft) historic context were applied to TH 38.

(1) Criterion A

(a) Transportation

A Trunk Highway may be significant in the area of Transportation under the *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921-1954)* (draft) context if it meets one of the following criteria:

- Provided a new or important connection to adjacent states;
- Served as and was improved as an important connection within the overall system, which may be demonstrated through notably higher traffic volumes compared to other Trunk Highway routes providing similar connections; or
- Is an important example of an MHD initiative during this pre-1955 period of Trunk Highway development.

TH 38 does not meet any of the criteria for significance in the area of Transportation within the *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921-1954)* (draft) historic context. A portion of TH 38 was added to the Trunk Highway System in 1933 as one of 140 newly designated highways. TH 38 was primarily used by local traffic and industries with heavier tourist traffic in the summer and fall, yet its use was generally lower than other Trunk Highways in the county, such as TH 6, US/TH 169, or US/TH 2. As such, the highway did not provide a connection to adjacent states nor did it serve as an important connection within the overall Trunk Highway System. Research did not reveal that the highway represents an important example of an MHD initiative in highway development. MnDOT limited improvements to the highway; it would not be until 2002 when the most substantial road work was completed on the route. As such, the road is recommended not eligible under *Criterion A* in the area of Transportation as a Trunk Highway.

(b) Entertainment/Recreation

Under the *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921-1954)* (draft) historic context, a Trunk Highway may be eligible in the area of Entertainment/Recreation if it opened access to new or previously inaccessible recreational and tourism areas or improved specifically to facilitate tourism

TH 38 does not meet this criteria for significance. Itasca County's resort industry and tourist attractions, such as Scenic State Park, Chippewa National Forest, and area lakes, were well-developed and served by rail and several existing roads by the mid-1930s. High-volume through-routes, such as TH/US 2 and US/TH 169, operated as the principal transportation route from urban centers to resorts and attractions, while TH 38 was one of several shorter regional highways and county roads linking resorts with these high-volume through-routes. The subsequent designation of SR 1 as TH 38 did not provide any new access to recreational areas as they were previously accessible. Pre-World War II improvements to TH 38 were minor and not intended to facilitate tourism. Although TH 38 has received a state and national Scenic Byway designation, these designations occurred within the last 25 years and the criteria used to establish Scenic Byways do not necessarily correspond to those used to evaluate properties for the National Register. While TH 38 may eventually attain significance as an early example of a state Scenic Byway, the designation does not confer historical significance at this time. As such, the road is recommended not eligible under *Criterion A* in the area of Entertainment/Recreation during its Trunk Highway period.

(c) Industry

Under the *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921-1954)* (draft) historic context, a Trunk Highway may be significant in the area of industry if it:

- Opened access to previously inaccessible areas of raw materials for industries at the time of construction; or
- Served and was improved as a principal route to an important industrial facility.

TH 38 does not meet the criteria for significance in the area of Industry within the Trunk Highway context. The railroad was the first and primary transportation method for the logging industry in this region and as such TH 38 did not open previously inaccessible areas for industry. While the Trunk Highway did serve as a route for logging trucks to haul harvested timber to sawmills, processing centers, and markets following the discontinuation of railroad service, it was one of many roads in the region that provided similar access. Additionally, TH 38 was slow to be improved and was not hard-surfaced until 1958, over 20 years after its designation as a Trunk Highway and following the boom in the area's lumber industry. As such, the road is recommended not eligible under *Criterion A* in the area of Industry during its Trunk Highway period.

(2) Criterion C

A Trunk Highway may be significant in the area of Engineering under the *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921-1954)* (draft) context if it meets one of the following criteria:

- Represents an important variation of MHD Trunk Highway design, standard; or
- Represents an important evolution in MHD design, policy, or construction method; or
- Is an early or prominent example of the MHD's effort to upgrade Trunk Highways to expressway standards (prior to 1955).

TH 38 does not meet eligibility criteria under *Criterion C* in the area of Engineering. The highway is unremarkable for its engineering and did not represent a variation or evolution of MHD design, standards, or construction practices. Following its designation as a Trunk Highway in 1933, the MHD gravel-surfaced the route and made minor improvements. Though the MHD made some modifications to the road's width at key intersections in the following decade and rerouted portions of the road, TH 38 largely retained its original width and remained unpaved until the 1950s. The MHD updates generally followed standard design principals unless topography limited these efforts, such as widening shoulders through wetland areas. Since the route remains undivided, it also does not represent an early example of the MHD's efforts to upgrade the road to expressway standards. As such, the road is recommended not eligible under *Criterion C* in the area of Engineering.

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5. Recommendation

TH 38 is recommended to not have significance under *Criterion A* in the areas of Transportation, Entertainment/ Recreation, or Industry for its history as a State Road from 1924-1933 or its later designation and history as a Trunk Highway. The road is a late example of road development in the state and research did not reveal that development of the road directly aided in the improvement of industry, tourism, or transportation in Itasca County or the state. By the mid-1920s there were multiple roads within the county that residents, tourists, and industries could utilize. While the road shortened travel distances for some, its mere use as a transportation facility cannot equate to eligibility. As such, the road, including its former alignments, does not rise to the level of National Register significance. It is a common representation of road use and development in Itasca County and in the state.

TH 38 is also recommended to not have significance under *Criterion C* in the area of Engineering. Research did not reveal that the highway represented exceptional engineering significance as a State Road or Trunk Highway. The highway was constructed using standard design practices and was modestly improved over the last century. Therefore, the road does not rise to the level of National Register significance at the local or state level. An integrity assessment of TH 38 or its former alignments is not warranted as the highway is recommended not eligible under *Criteria A* and *C*.

Historians identified one post-1945 roadside resource with the APE, a 1960 parking area at Pug Hole Lake. This roadside development was excluded from inventory in the *Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways* because it did not contain any standing structures.⁸⁵ No other roadside structures, objects, sites, or buildings, constructed by the State, County, or by private entities from 1945-1970, were identified within the APE. No further work is recommended under Section 106 for the proposed TH 38 improvement project.

⁸⁵ Gemini Research, *Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways*, 2.2. The map on page 8.1 confirms that Pug Hole Lake was not previously inventoried as part of the roadside development structures study since it did not meet survey criteria.

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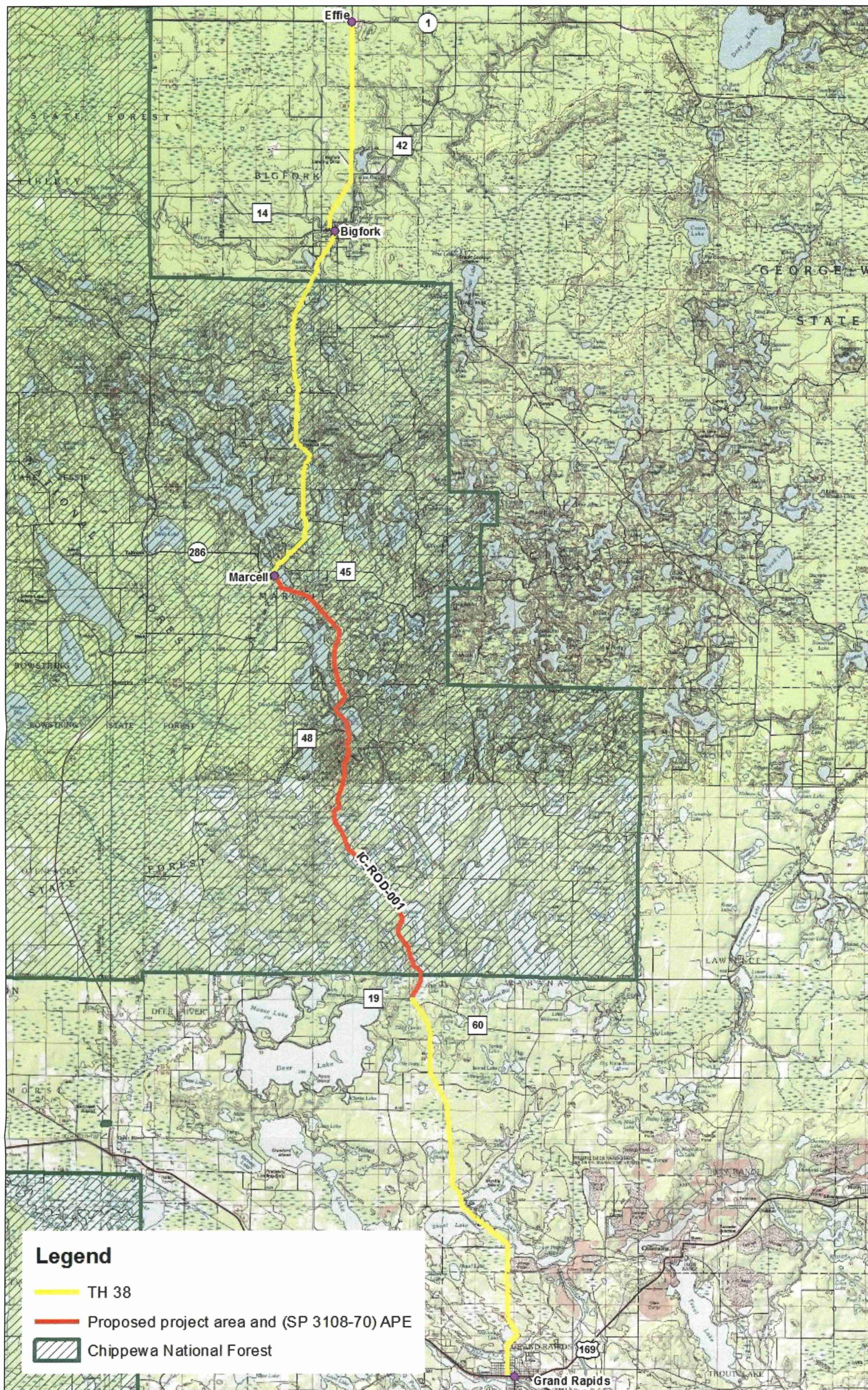
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Appendix A. Trunk Highway 38 Area of Potential Effects Map

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TH 38 (IC-ROD-001)
Area of Potential Effects