



Glacial Lakes State Trail Master Plan Amendment

June 2006



***Minnesota Department of
Natural Resources
Trails and Waterways Division***

Legislative Authorization

The Glacial Lakes State Trail is a legislatively authorized state trail (Minnesota Statutes 85.015, Subd. 5).

- (a) The trail shall originate at Kandiyohi County Park on the north shore of Green Lake in Kandiyohi County and thence extend northwesterly to Sibley State Park, thence northwesterly to Glacial Lakes State Park in Pope County, thence northeasterly to Lake Carlos State Park in Douglas County, and there terminate.
- (b) A segment shall be established beginning in the city of Willmar, Kandiyohi County and extending northeasterly into Stearns County.
- (c) The trail shall be developed primarily for riding and hiking.

The map on the next page illustrates the location of the state trail system.

Overview of the Glacial Lakes State Trail

Currently, there are 40 miles of trail in DNR ownership from Willmar to 178th Avenue, just east of Richmond.

Willmar to two miles northeast of New London

The Glacial Lakes State Trail is located on a former Burlington Northern Railroad grade. The trail is paved with asphalt for 12 miles between Willmar, Spicer and New London. A parallel grass treadway for horseback riding has also been developed in this segment.

Two miles northeast of New London to Hawick

The trail is surfaced with crushed granite between New London and Hawick and is used for hiking biking, and horseback riding.

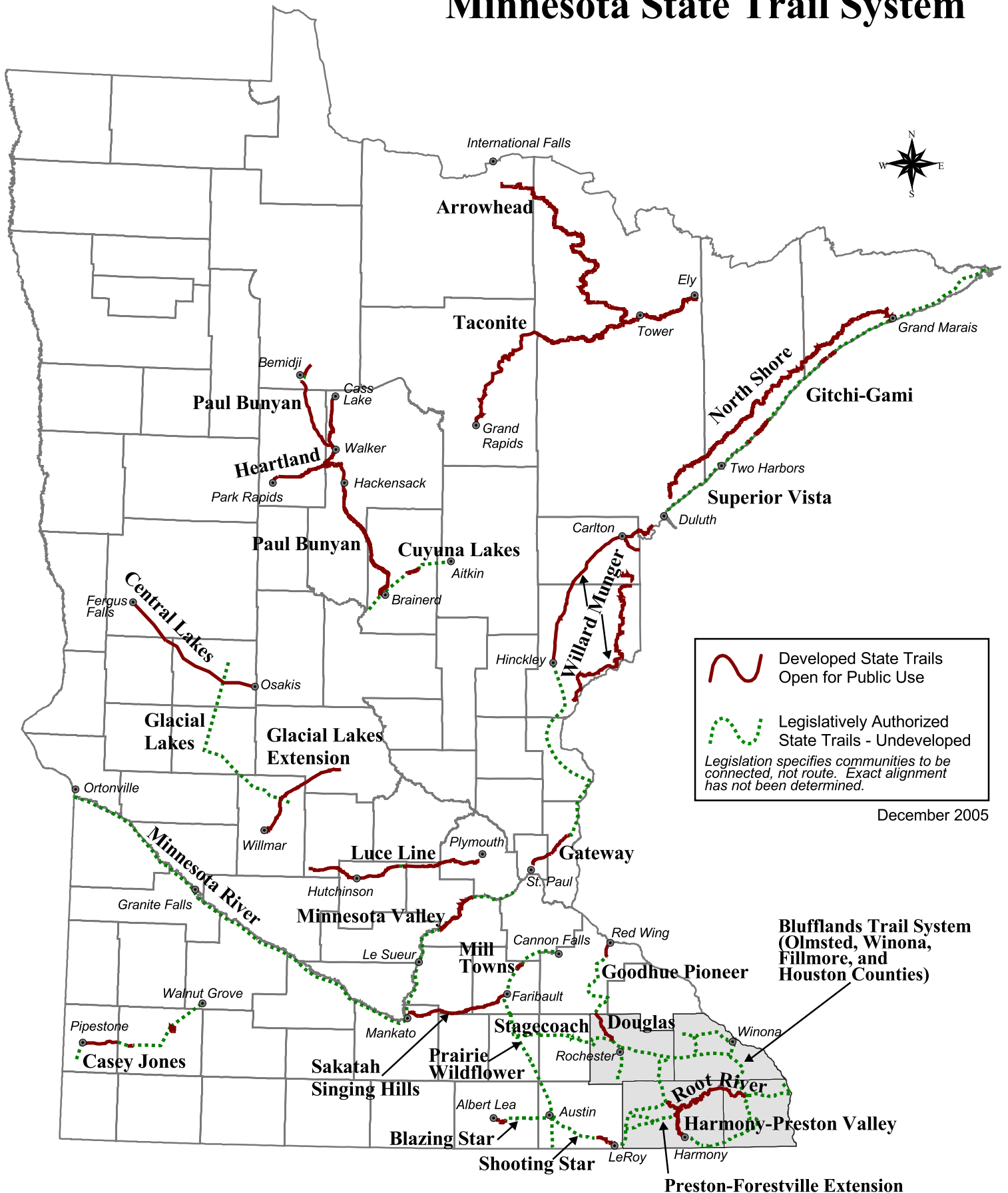
Hawick to 178th Avenue

This segment of trail is undeveloped. It is used for snowmobiling in the winter.

178th Avenue to Rockville (Rocori Trail)

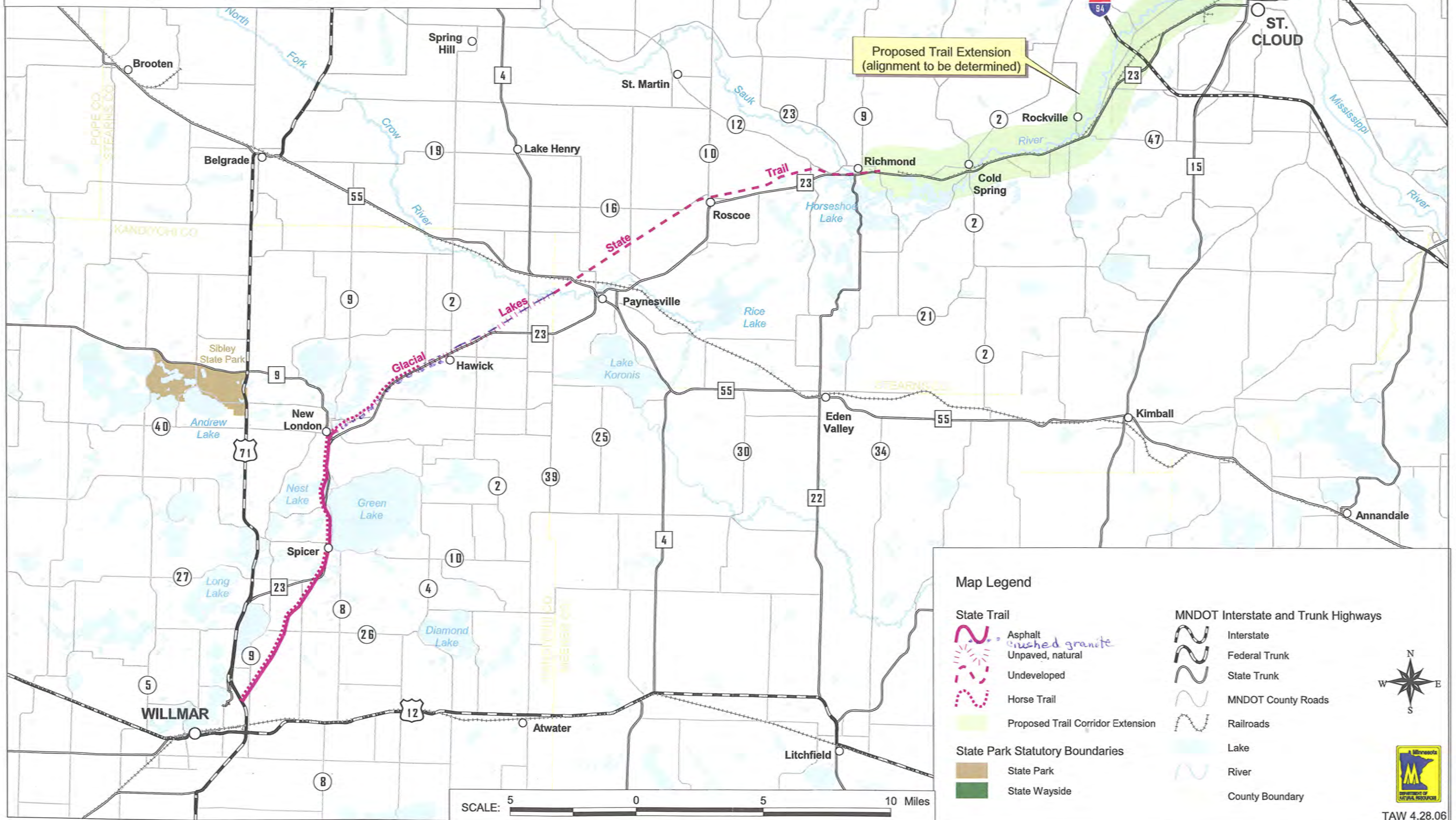
A specific alignment for this segment has not been identified at this time. A local group with representatives from Richmond, Cold Spring, and Rockville has formed to identify and acquire a trail alignment. They have named the trail the Rocori Trail. Their intent is to acquire and develop a trail and perhaps turn it over to the DNR to be managed as part of the Glacial Lakes State Trail.

Minnesota State Trail System



Glacial Lakes State Trail Amendment to the Master Plan, May 2006

Existing, Future, and Proposed Segments



Rockville to the intersection with the Lake Wobegon State Trail

A specific alignment has not been identified for this segment of trail. Stearns County has hired a consulting firm to identify the best alignment between Rockville and Waite Park using the existing railroad corridor and public rights-of-ways.

Table 1: Trail Use and Development Summary

Segment	Alignment	Surface	Uses	Ownership	Miles
Willmar to New London	Abandoned Burlington Northern railroad grade (see map)	Asphalt	bicycling, hiking, snowmobiling, horseback riding	DNR	12
New London to Hawick	Abandoned Burlington Northern railroad grade (see map)	Crushed granite	bicycling, hiking, snowmobiling, horseback riding	DNR	6
Hawick to 178 th Avenue (just east of Richmond)	Abandoned Burlington Northern railroad grade (see map)	Undeveloped	Snowmobiling to Kandiyohi County line	DNR	22
178 th Avenue east to Rockville	A specific alignment has not been determined	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	12
Rockville to intersection with Lake Wobegon Trail	A specific alignment has not been determined	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

Amendment Language and Scope

The purpose of this amendment is to clarify the number of treadways and type of trail surfaces that will be developed on the Glacial Lakes State Trail between a point two miles north of New London (where the existing asphalt trail ends) to Cold Spring.

The master plan for the trail stated that the use on the segment between New London and Richmond should be monitored and a decision made as to whether or not two treadways should be provided - a paved trail for bicyclists and a treadway for horseback riding.

After ten years of trail surface and user monitoring, it has been determined that development of an asphalt surface is warranted, accommodating local horseback riding on the grade between New London and Richmond.

The proposed amendment language is:

Develop an asphalt surface 10 feet wide on the main grade. Accommodate local horseback riding on the grade in the design between New London and Richmond.

Existing DNR ownership ends 3/4 mile east of Richmond. The trail will be extended into Cold Spring in the future. The Minnesota Department of Transportation is working on providing an alignment from the end of current DNR ownership east towards Cold Spring as a part of an agreement mitigating for TH 23 project. This agreement is found in the appendices.

Background

The master plan for the trail stated that the use on the segment between New London and Richmond should be monitored and a decision made as to whether or not two treadways should be provided - a paved trail for bicyclists and a treadway for horseback riding. Exact references from the master plan follow.

The summary of recommendations in the Executive Summary state the following:

"New London to Hawick (6 miles)

1. Develop and manage this segment for snowmobiling, hiking, mountain bicycling, and horseback riding. Monitor the use on this segment over the next several years before making any further decisions whether or not to pave one treadway and establish a second treadway." (Page 6)

"Hawick to Richmond (18 miles)

2. Monitor the use on this segment over the next several years before making any further decisions whether or not to pave one treadway and establish a second treadway." (Page 7)

Another reference is found in the **Trail Treadway** section on page 56.

"The Plan recommends that more research be done before deciding on a type of surface for the treadway between New London and Richmond." (Page 56)

Another reference is found in the **Recreation Management** section in the discussion under **Conflicting and Competing Uses**.

"Horseback riding is incompatible with bicycling and with hiking uses on the same treadway. Horseback riders prefer a soft surface, horses could shy at unexpected bicyclists, and horse manure could be offensive to hikers and bicyclists. Therefore, the proposed addition to the Glacial Lakes State Trail will provide for local horseback riding needs along a second, mowed treadway between Willmar and New London, a trail approximately 12 miles long one way. The right-of-way between New London and Richmond will be upgraded to accommodate horseback riders, mountain bicyclists, hikers, and snowmobilers. Use will be monitored over several years before making any further decisions relative to surface treatment of the treadway and the feasibility of constructing a second treadway." (Page 71)

Justification for the Amendment

Justifications for this amendment include the increase in demand for paved trails; emergence of a regional trail system and the role of the Glacial Lakes State Trail in that system; the preference of an asphalt surface by bicyclists; trail use and user satisfaction of the New London to Richmond segment; and support for a paved trail by adjacent local communities.

Demand for trails has increased

Two recent DNR studies document the use and demand for trails statewide. The Outdoor Recreation Participation in Minnesota Study conducted in 2004 indicated that walking and hiking were the activities that the greatest number of Minnesotans participated in (54% of the population 20 years and older). Biking ranked 7th with 20 % of the population participating. A second study, the 2004 Outdoor Recreation Facility Survey of Minnesota Cities, Counties, and School Districts identified paved trails for walking, hiking, skating and biking as the number 1 most needed facility. This demand and support for trails has fueled trail planning and development.

The emergence of a regional system

A significant amount of trail planning and trail development has occurred in the region since the master plan was written. The Central Lakes State Trail has been acquired and developed. Stearns County has developed the Lake Wobegon Trails. St. Cloud has developed a system of trails. All these trails have the potential to be connected and form a system. The Glacial Lakes State Trail will be a vital component in the emerging trail system. See the map on the next page.

Asphalt surface preferred by bicyclists

Surveys done on the nine state paved bicycle trails indicate that in general, bicyclists prefer asphalt as a trail surface. Development of an asphalt surface for bicycling was recommended in the master plans for all new state trails completed since the master plan for the Glacial Lakes State Trail was completed. These recommendations for asphalt surfaces are the reflection of community and user group input.

Use and satisfaction of the segment

Use of the New London segment of trail is low, due in part to the surface. Past experience has shown that paving an aggregate surfaced trail has increased the use substantially. When the Douglas State Trail was converted from limestone to asphalt, the use quadrupled.

Table 2 below displays the summer user hours between Memorial Day and Labor Day on nine State Trails. A user hour is one user on the trail for one hour. The Glacial Lakes State Trail has mixed use between local and tourist use. This means that approximately half the trail users are from the local area, and half the trail users are from beyond the local area. Table 3 illustrates the use on the Glacial Lakes State Trail by segment. The New London to Hawick segment receives significantly less use than the other two segments. Table 4 displays the type of trail use by trail segment. Figure 1 illustrates this use in a bar chart. The greatest percentage of trail use is by bicyclists. Horseback riding accounts for approximately 1% of the use.

Glacial Lakes State Trail - Regional Map Amendment to the Master Plan, May 2006

Existing, Future, and Proposed Segments

Map Legend

State Trail

- Asphalt
- Unpaved, natural
- Undeveloped
- Horse Trail

Proposed Trail Corridor Extension

Regional Trail

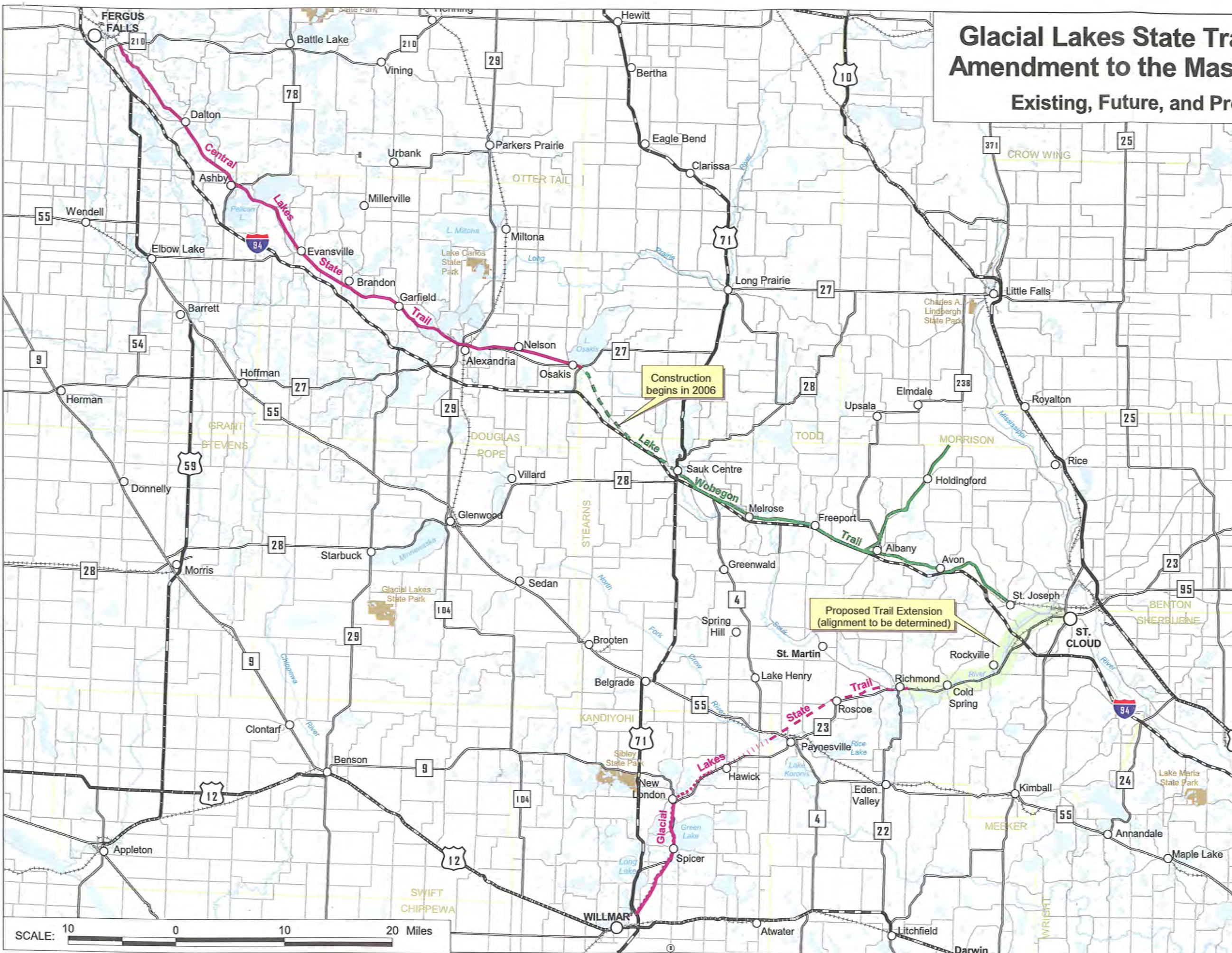
- Asphalt
- Undeveloped

State Park Statutory Boundaries

- State Park
- State Wayside

MNDOT Interstate and Trunk Highways

- Interstate
- Federal Trunk
- State Trunk
- MNDOT County Roads
- Railroads (Active)
- Lake
- River
- County Boundary



Proposed Trail Extension
(alignment to be determined)

Construction
begins in 2006

SCALE: 10 0 10 20 Miles



TAW 5.30.06

Table 2: Trail User Hours on Nine State Trails

	<u>Total Seasonal User Hours</u>	<u>Miles of Trail in Survey</u>	<u>User Hours per Trail Mile</u>
Summer Surveys			
<u>High Local Use</u>			
Douglas - Summer 1997	42,910	12.5	3,433
Gateway - Summer 1997	181,952	18.5	9,835
Luce Line - Summer 1998	65,120	29.0	2,246
<u>High Tourist Use</u>			
Heartland - Summer 1998	125,381	27.0	4,644
Paul Bunyan - Summer 1996	155,268	46.4	3,346
Root River - Summer 1997	178,761	40.8	4,381
<u>Mix Local/Tourist Use</u>			
Glacial Lakes - Summer 1998	33,858	18.0	1,881
Paul Bunyan segment, near Lake Bemidji State Park - Summer 1998	17,488	5.3	3,300
Sakatah Singing Hills - Summer 1998	95,634	38.0	2,517
<i>All Trails</i>	896,373	236	3,806

Table 3: Trail Use on the Glacial Lakes State Trail By Segment

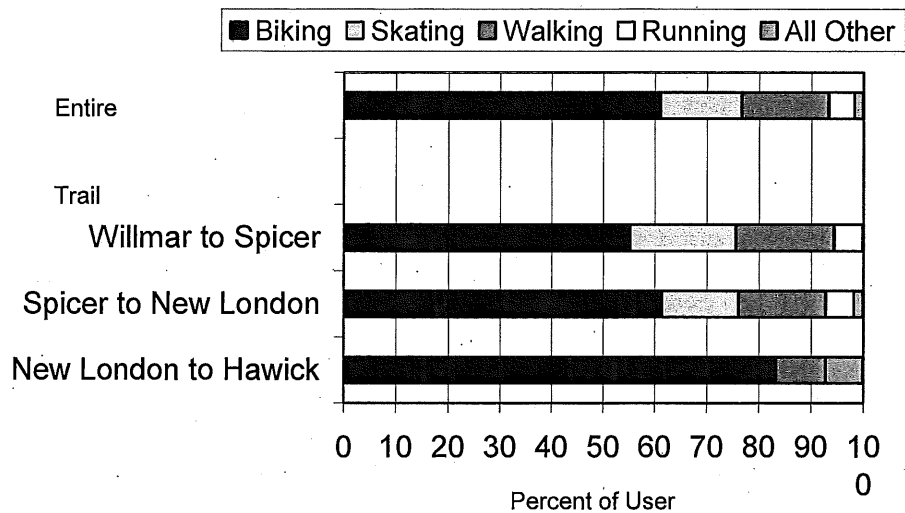
	<u>Total Seasonal User Hours</u>	<u>Percent of User Hours</u>	<u>Miles of Trail in Survey</u>	<u>User Hours per Trail Mile</u>
Entire Trail	33,858	100.0	18.0	1,881
Trail Segment				
Willmar to Spicer	12,251	36.2	6.5	1,885
Spicer to New London	18,576	54.9	5.5	3,377
New London to Hawick	3,032	9.0	6.0	505

Table 4: Type of Trail Uses By Segment

	Biking	Skating	Walking	Running	Horse	Other	TOTAL
Total hrs							
Willmar to Spicer	20,713	5,217	5,691	1,646	423	168	33,858
Spicer to New London	11,407	2,731	3,103	983	206	146	18,576
New London to Hawick	2,528	0	287	0	217	0	3,032

	Biking	Skating	Walking	Running	Horse	Other	TOTAL
% of Total Use							
Willmar to Spicer	55%	20%	19%	5%	1%	<1	100%
Spicer to New London	61%	15%	17%	5%	1%	<1	100%
New London to Hawick	83%	0%	10%	0%	7%	0	100%

Activities on Glacial Lakes Trail



DNR has received complaints over the years from a variety of user groups including bicyclists, horseback riders, and snowmobilers regarding their dissatisfaction with the granite surface. DNR has also received numerous requests to pave the trail.

Support for a paved trail by adjacent local communities

Local trail users and economic and tourism organizations have supported the concept of paving this segment of trail.