

**WISCONSIN'S GREAT RIVER ROAD
CORRIDOR BIKEWAY PLAN
*DRAFT***

**Prepared on behalf of the
Mississippi River Parkway Commission**

by



Wisconsin Department of Tourism

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wisconsin section of the Great River Road, extending from the state's border with Illinois approximately 250 miles to Prescott, provides residents and visitors with countless recreational opportunities set in a visually spectacular natural corridor. The roadway follows the Mississippi River as it flows southward toward the Gulf of Mexico, forming the state's western border. Over the years, bicycling has become established as one of the most popular activities in the corridor, including long-distance touring along the Mississippi and short-distance recreational and day trips.

Recognizing the stock of bike accommodations already in place in the corridor, the popularity of bicycling there, and the potential impacts on the area's tourism and economy, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) requested an inter-agency effort to study the potential for the promotion of a continuous bikeway along the entire length of the Great River Road in Wisconsin. This Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Plan represents a product of that effort and includes:

- ◆ an analysis of existing and the feasibility of potential bikeway facilities;
- ◆ identification of challenges to and additional needs for continuous looped-route bikeway accommodations in the corridor;
- ◆ an examination of the potential benefits from tourism that could result from the provision of bikeway accommodations along the Wisconsin Great River Road; and
- ◆ specific recommendations and implementation strategies.

Those involved in the development and implementation of this plan will include the Wisconsin Departments of Transportation, Natural Resources, and Tourism, in partnership with the MRPC and the counties, cities, villages, towns and Chambers of Commerce along the Wisconsin Great River Road.

From a facilities standpoint, the primary purpose of the Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Plan is to identify (1) current weak links for bicycling along the corridor; (2) priorities for improvements; (3) possible alternative bike route segments parallel to the identified weak links; (4) the possibility of affecting project scheduling for highway improvements; and (5) current and potential connections to Department of Natural Resources state recreational trails.

Primary recommendations of this plan include:

- ◆ improvements to seven state trunk highway segments of the Great River Road identified as unfavorable for bicycling, including State Trunk Highway (STH) 35 on either side of the communities of Fountain City and Stoddard, and between Prairie du Chien and Bridgeport; STH 133 between Cassville and Burton; and U.S. Highway 61/STH 35 between Tennyson and Dickeyville;

- ◆ alternate bikeway routes through the communities of Buffalo, Cochrane, and Prairie du Chien;
- ◆ providing bicyclists with a variety of loop routes off of the Great River Road bikeway;
- ◆ providing signage to direct bicyclists along alternate bikeway routes and loop routes;
- ◆ working with neighboring states to enhance bicyclists' opportunities to cross the Mississippi River safely; and
- ◆ incorporating the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources trail network, especially the Great River State Trail, into the bikeway and improving access between trails and the bikeway.

The plan also includes recommendations from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism to the Mississippi River Parkway Commission and to the communities and counties along the river corridor for the promotion of bicycling in the area. Implementation strategies, including actions and responsible parties, complete this document. Some of the highlights include:

- ◆ promoting the bikeway to tourists through existing advertising and publicity programs;
- ◆ developing promotional pieces such as a strip map to distribute to the public;
- ◆ communities and counties along the corridor working together to identify local sponsors of the bikeway; and
- ◆ creating an ad-hoc Bikeway Committee that will advise the MRPC and related agencies on issues concerning the bikeway and implementation of this plan.

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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Wisconsin section of the Great River Road, extending from the state's border with Illinois approximately 250 miles to Prescott, provides residents and visitors with countless recreational opportunities set in a visually spectacular natural corridor. The roadway follows the Mississippi River as it flows southward toward the Gulf of Mexico, forming the state's western border. Over the years, bicycling has become established as one of the most popular activities in the corridor, including long-distance touring along the Mississippi and short-distance recreational and day trips. Bicyclists enjoy the views of the river and its bluffs, tributaries, native wildlife, and waterborne activities, as well as the physical challenge of bicycling along the river corridor. Many visitors combine bicycling with other activities that are prevalent along the Great River Road, such as camping, hiking, bird watching, canoeing, historic sight-seeing, fishing, and mountain biking.

Recognizing the stock of bike accommodations already in place in the corridor, the popularity of bicycling there, and the potential impacts on the area's tourism and economy, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) requested an inter-agency effort to study the potential for the promotion of a continuous bikeway along the entire length of the Great River Road in Wisconsin. This Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Plan represents a product of that effort and includes:

- an analysis of existing and the feasibility of potential bikeway facilities;
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THE VISION

The vision of the Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Plan is a comprehensive set of accommodations along the corridor catering to a wide range of bicyclists. This would mean accommodations geared generally toward long-distance bicyclists, loop routes and connections to recreational trails for average adult bicyclists (e.g., Great River and La Crosse State Trails and La Crosse city trails), and off-street bike trail opportunities for vacationing families.

GOALS OF THE PLAN

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission's primary goal in requesting this plan is to enhance the bicycling experience along the Great River Road corridor while also improving the safety of bicyclists. More specifically, the objectives of the plan are as follows:

- To improve bicycling along the entire 250 mile corridor;
- To increase the number of people that bicycle in the corridor;
- To provide a variety of bicycling experiences through connections to state recreational trails; route segments that are parallel to the Great River Road, closer to the river, and/or help avoid undesirable bicycling sections; and a set of looped bicycle routes; and
- To create partnerships between state, local, and private interests to promote the implementation of this plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO NATIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL BICYCLE PLANNING

Many policies and recommendations of applicable state and local bicycle transportation plans have been integrated into the Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Plan. The state trunk highway segments (STH 35 and STH 133) of the Great River Road are identified as priority bicycle corridors in the *Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan*, prepared by Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) in September 1998. Priority corridors tend to be key through-routes for bicyclists. With its designation of the Great River Road as a priority corridor intercity bike route, WisDOT has implemented a policy of including wider paved shoulders in all improvements when allowed by the scope of the project.

In the *Draft State Trails Action Plan* of 1996 the Wisconsin DNR identified a number of segments of State Highways that it proposed to create a network of state trails linking communities, existing trails, and natural features. The recommended improvements to the Great River Road for bicycling in the *Draft State Trails Action Plan* have been incorporated into this plan.

At the regional and national level, considerable potential exists to combine the Great River Road bikeway with a Mississippi River bikeway in other states. In June of 1999, the *Mississippi River Trail* was one of 12 selected as a national Millennium Trail, a designation made by the U.S.

Department of Transportation in concert with several national trails groups. At this time the *Mississippi River Trail* is just a written designation on paper, but efforts are in place for planning this national route. The three co-sponsors of this plan will work with the Mississippi River Trails Alliance and the Mississippi River Trails Working Group in developing this 10 state bikeway. As stated in the U.S. Department of Transportation announcement of this trail: "The *Mississippi River Trail* will follow the nation's mightiest river from Minneapolis to New Orleans. Envisioned as a bicycling route that will touch upon the cultural, historic and natural and habitat richness of the Mississippi River Valley, this trail will allow Americans to experience first-hand what Mark Twain has described as the 'body of the nation'."

In addition, the plan integrates the bicycle planning efforts of communities within the corridor such as La Crosse, in the Facilities and Strategies and Recommendations sections to follow. For example, La Crosse Area Planning Committee staff and the *Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Element of the La Crosse Area Long-Range Transportation Plan* of 1994 were consulted to identify Great River Road Bikeway connections through the La Crosse metro area.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GREAT RIVER ROAD BIKEWAY CORRIDOR

The Wisconsin section of the Great River Road consists primarily of State Trunk Highway 35 from Prescott in the north to the state's border with Illinois in the south. The official route departs from STH 35 in Grant County, where it follows STH 133 and a series of county trunk highways that are closer to the Mississippi. The southern segments of the Great River Road provide a challenging yet bikeable connection through an area that would otherwise be very difficult to travel due to topographic limitations. The official Great River Road route, some of the features along it, and its bicycling suitability (as defined in the next section) are indicated in a series of maps (Maps A1 through A9) included in the appendix to this document.

The Wisconsin Great River Road possesses an enormous variety of physical, ecological, archeological, historical, and cultural phenomena. Bluffs carved by the Mississippi now stand high above it, providing a home for a multitude of flora and fauna and adding to the wildlife that flourishes in the river's backwaters. The corridor has a lengthy history of human culture including nineteenth century wars and flourishing river towns where fur trading, mining, and lumbering took place. There are a number of historical markers, overlooks, waysides, and picnic areas along the Great River Road for bicyclists to enjoy. Today's river towns offer appealing destinations to bicyclists such as lodging, cafés, and shops. It is this variety that makes the corridor such an appealing place to bicycle.

FACILITIES ELEMENT

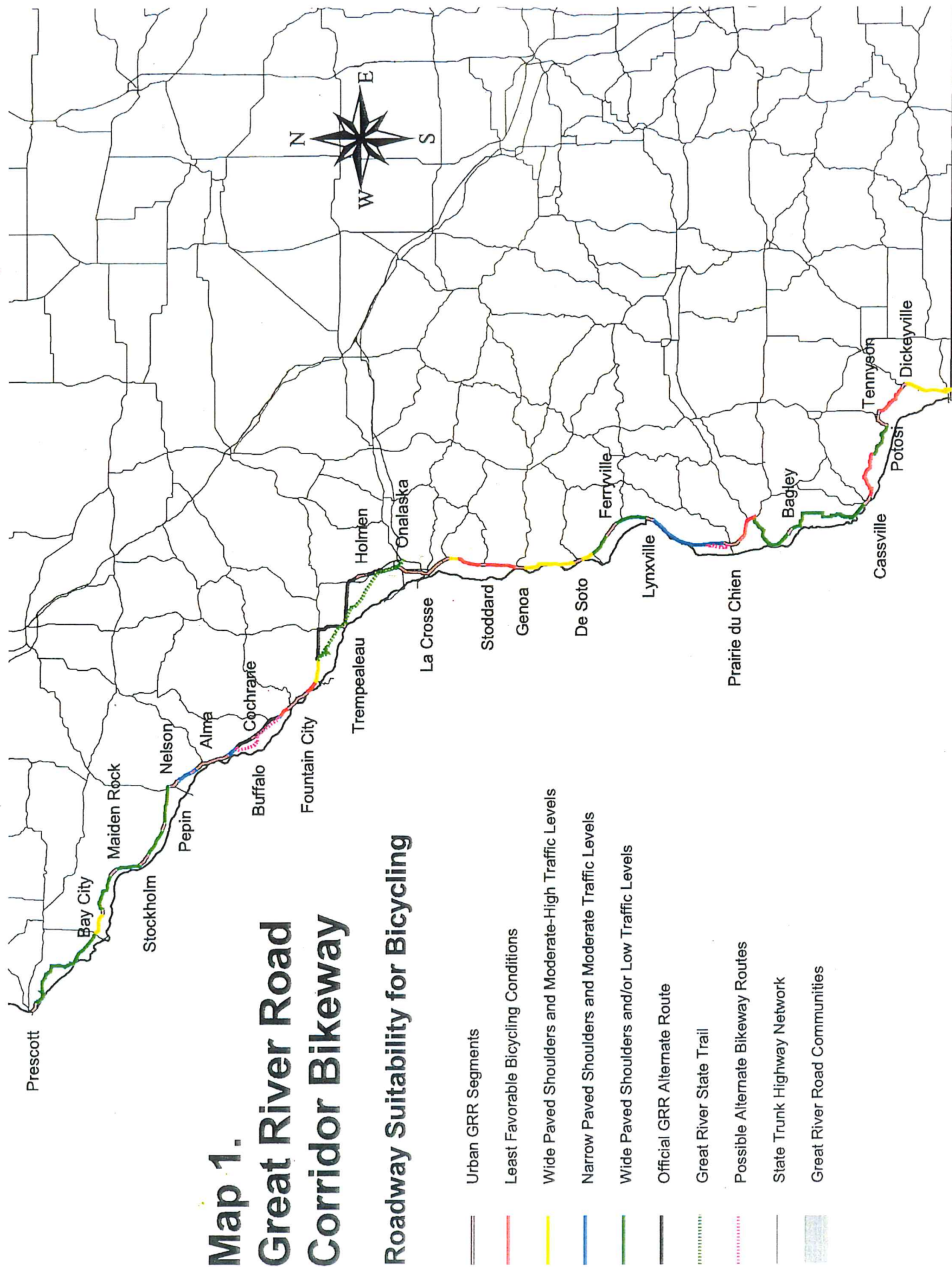
ANALYSIS OF EXISTING FACILITIES

Methodology for Evaluation of Roadway Suitability for Bicycling

The methodology used in the Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Plan to evaluate rural segments of the roadway for bicycle use is borrowed from the method that was developed for the *Wisconsin Bicycle Map* and used in the *Wisconsin State Bicycle Plan*. This process determines the relative suitability of the roadway to share bicycle and vehicular traffic, based on pavement and shoulder widths, traffic volumes, truck traffic, and vehicular passing opportunities. At the base of this methodology is the concept that roadways with lower traffic volumes are good for bicycling, and roadways with wider paved shoulders or outside lanes can better accommodate bicyclists and motor vehicles in passing situations. In urban areas, factors such as the existence of on-street parking, reduced speed limits, and higher vehicle traffic levels make this methodology problematic. Therefore, the suitability of the Great River Road for bicycling within the villages and towns will be addressed in qualitative terms, rather than the quantitative methodology explained here for rural roadway segments.

The relative suitability for bicycling along the rural segments of the Great River Road is illustrated in Map 1 on the following page (and in more detail in Map 2 and Map 3 in the appendix) according to the following legend:

- *Best conditions for bicycling (green)*
Roadway segments with relatively light traffic volumes and possibly other favorable factors such as good sight distance and minimal truck traffic. Also may include segments with traffic approaching a moderate level but with rideable paved shoulders. Suitable for shared use by motor vehicles and bicyclists with experience in on-road riding.
- *Moderate conditions for bicycling (blue)*
Roadway segments with moderate traffic volumes given the paved shoulder and roadway widths. Bicyclists with limited experience should use care when riding on these segments.
- *Wide paved shoulders and higher traffic volumes (gold)*
Roadway segments with moderate to high auto and truck traffic but also with 5-foot or greater paved shoulders. Due to traffic volumes, less experienced cyclists should use caution when riding on these segments.
- *Undesirable conditions for bicycling (red)*
Roadway segments with high traffic volumes, moderate to high truck traffic, and/or limited paved shoulder width to accommodate bicycling. Cyclists should avoid these segments if possible and, if not, should use extreme caution to ride within their individual ability for riding in traffic.



Current Bicycle Conditions and Accommodations

Rural Segments of the Great River Road Bikeway

The Great River Road Bikeway stretches a total of about 252 miles and consists primarily of on-roadway accommodation for bicycles in the form of wide paved shoulders. This section of the plan focuses on those roadway segments that do not provide adequate facilities for bikes, and details the scheduled improvements, recommended projects, or alternate bike routes that will improve the experience of bikeway riders.

Of the nearly 217 miles of roadway that make up the on-road portion of the bikeway, seven segments totaling approximately 34.8 miles, or about 16 percent of the total, currently fall under the red category as undesirable for bicycling. These segments will be the primary targets of the plan's recommendations for improvements to on-road bicycling accommodations, as discussed later in this report.

Experienced recreational bicyclists are more likely to travel longer distances and steeper grades, therefore many find the river corridor very appealing. These skilled bicyclists require only a limited amount of special facilities or design, but they do respond positively to wider pavements with delineated and paved shoulders.

Urban Segments of the Great River Road Bikeway

As bicyclists enter villages and cities along the bikeway, the conditions they encounter will vary greatly depending on where they are. Smaller villages and towns with lower traffic volumes, wider paved shoulders or outside lanes, and slower vehicle movements, such as Bay City, Pepin, Nelson, Trempealeau, Cassville, and Potosi will be much easier to ride through comfortably than cities with heavier traffic, higher vehicle speeds, and/or narrower streets, including Maiden Rock, Alma, La Crosse, Ferryville, Prairie du Chien, and Dickeyville.

The City of La Crosse is the largest community that bicyclists will encounter as they ride on the Great River Road bikeway. The primary north-south routes through the city for vehicles, US 53 and STH 35, are not very suitable for bicycling due to high traffic volumes and speeds. Due to these concerns, the city has identified alternate routes to allow cyclists to pass safely through La Crosse. Map A5 in the appendix highlights the La Crosse area bikeway connections. These routes utilize state recreational trails, city trails, and streets designated as bike routes to avoid the most difficult areas. The long-term bikeway connection will be completed after the construction of a federally-funded local trail project that will provide a link between the state recreational trails and the downtown La Crosse area. The city is also interested in identifying a more direct Great River Road bikeway connection from Onalaska through downtown La Crosse and to Riverside Park that will bring cyclists downtown for recreational and commercial activities and food and lodging.

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS TO BICYCLING FACILITIES

This plan focuses on recommending improvements in the seven segments of the Great River Road which are defined as unfavorable for bicyclists using the methodology described above. Three of the recommended improvements, totaling approximately 19 miles, are already included in the six-year State Highway Projects Schedule (see Table 1, next page). Where improvements are scheduled, this plan suggests they be modified by the appropriate WisDOT district office, if necessary, in order to provide the desired bicycling accommodation. In the appendix, Table 2 outlines other recommended roadway improvements and policies and Table 3 lists other DOT scheduled projects on the Great River Road and their possible effect on the bikeway.

Generally speaking, recommended improvements to segments of the Great River Road Bikeway with higher vehicle traffic volumes will be geared toward accommodating average-skilled adult bicyclists. Meanwhile, accommodations such as shorter loop segments and parallel alternate routes will provide opportunities for less experienced bicyclists.

All riders should use caution when bicycling in communities where conditions are less favorable. Communities that recognize a problem for bicyclists on the Great River Road should consider working with WisDOT to identify possible improvements and, in some limited situations, alternate routes on parallel roadways, as the City of La Crosse has done. As possible examples, CTH K in Crawford County may be a better route for bicyclists to enter and exit the north side of the City of Prairie du Chien, as may CTH K and CTH VV into and out of Hager City. These routes not only have better suitability ratings for bicycling than the official Great River Road but are also located closer to the Mississippi River. Local input is essential for identifying and analyzing possible alternate routes.

ALTERNATE ROUTE THROUGH COMMUNITIES OF BUFFALO AND COCHRANE

An excellent possibility for an alternate route exists between Alma and Fountain City and is shown on Map A3 in the appendix. This section of the Great River Road is classified as moderate conditions for bicycling due to moderate vehicle traffic and paved shoulders only three feet wide. The alternate route would allow bicyclists to avoid this section by following low-traffic county and town roads for approximately 11 miles through the quiet communities of Buffalo and Cochrane. This route also hugs the banks of the Mississippi River for about three miles, giving cyclists excellent views of the waterway.

While this route seems to be a good prospect as a part of the bikeway, members of the communities and counties would need to be consulted to provide feedback on the possibility. It would also need to be determined whether such a route would be deemed the official bikeway route, leaving the Great River Road as the alternate to it, or vice-versa. This is the only major alternate route identified in this plan, but the communities and counties may know of others and should be consulted for their ideas.

Table 1. Recommended Improvements to Segments of the GRR Bikeway with Undesirable Conditions for Bicyclists

Segment Location and Approximate Distance	County and Responsible Agency	Deficiency/Problem Description	Addressed in DOT 6-yr contract schedule? If yes, how & when?	Bikeway Plan Recommended Improvement
STH 35 N. out of Fountain City (2.5 miles)	Buffalo Co. DOT Dist. 5	3 ft. paved shoulder; moderately high ADT; connects Great River Road bicyclists to Merrick State Park and to alternate bike route off STH 35	No	Project to retrofit roadway to accommodate bicyclists (5 ft. paved shoulder). Improvement of this segment was a recommendation of the 1996 DNR <i>State Trails Action Plan</i> .
STH 35 S. out of Fountain City (4.5 miles)	Buffalo Co. DOT Dist. 5	3 ft. paved shoulder; high ADT; connects bicyclists between Winona, MN and Fountain City	No	Project to retrofit roadway to accommodate bicyclists (5 ft. paved shoulder). Improvement of this segment was a recommendation of the 1996 DNR <i>State Trails Action Plan</i> .
STH 35 Vernon/La Crosse co. line to Stoddard limits (4.5 miles)	Vernon Co. DOT Dist. 5		Yes, Resurfacing, 2004	If permitted within the scope of the project, widen shoulder to 5 ft. Improvement to this segment was a recommendation of the 1996 DNR <i>State Trails Action Plan</i> .
STH 35 Stoddard limits to Genoa limits (5.7 miles)	Vernon Co. DOT Dist. 5	3 ft. paved shoulder; high ADT	Yes, Resurfacing, 2001	If permitted within the scope of the project, modify project to widen shoulder to 5 ft.
STH 35 Prairie du Chien limits to Bridgeport (3.1 miles)	Crawford Co. DOT Dist. 5	3 ft. paved shoulder; high ADT	No	Project to retrofit roadway to accommodate bicyclists (5 ft. paved shoulder)
STH 133 Cassville to Burton (8.5 miles)	Grant Co. DOT Dist. 1	No paved shoulder; narrow lanes; moderate ADT	Yes, Grade, Base & Surface, 2004	If necessary, use state enhancement funds to add bike accommodation (at least 3 ft. shoulder or 4 ft. shoulder with 1 ft. lanes)
STH 35/US 61 between limits of Tennyson and limits of Dickeyville (6.0 miles)	Grant Co. DOT Dist. 1	3 ft. paved shoulder; high ADT; fairly new pavement in good condition; shoulder widens to 5 ft. + where guardrails are present; occasional additional lane for slow-moving vehicles on inclines	No	Project to retrofit entire roadway segment to accommodate bicyclists (5 ft. paved shoulder)

RECOMMENDED LOOP ROUTES

Recognizing that there is greater potential to market the Great River Road Bikeway to tourists who are more likely to take shorter bicycling trips, the plan recommends that the MRPC work with the communities and counties along the corridor, as well as the DNR, to identify bicycle loop routes. These loops would connect directly to the Great River Road Bikeway. The routes would not take emphasis away from the Great River Road as a corridor bikeway, but rather would provide a set of additional options for short-distance bicycling in the area. The loop routes ideally would be located in close proximity to popular tourist and bicycling destinations, such as near state parks, locks and dams, larger river towns, and river crossings, and would be signed for easy identification by cyclists.

On-road loop routes should only be considered on roadways that are suitable for bicycling. For this reason, the State Bike Map should be consulted. Initial bicycling suitability analysis of state and county roads connecting to the Great River Road performed by the Wisconsin DOT identified 11 possible on-road loop routes. These routes are described in Table 4 in the appendix. This is a preliminary list of possible loops focused on county trunk highways (CTHs) for which the State Bike Map provides ratings. Local town roads may provide other loop route opportunities. The loop routes that officially become part of the Great River Road Bikeway should be chosen in a cooperative effort between the MRPC, the communities and counties, the DOT districts, and the DNR. It is most important to gather input from local residents and officials on possible loop routes, since they have the most knowledge of the conditions of the roadways.

OFF-ROADWAY OPPORTUNITIES

THE GREAT RIVER STATE TRAIL

The section of the Great River Road corridor that currently witnesses the greatest popularity for bicycling is the Great River State Trail. This Department of Natural Resources recreational trail provides a safe yet challenging option for a variety of bicyclists, from beginners to experienced bicyclists and from families on vacation to bicyclists on long-distanced tours.

The Great River Trail offers 24 miles of alternative, off-road biking experience between the heart of the La Crosse metro area and the community of Marshland, located northwest of La Crosse. The trail's surface is composed of hard crushed limestone, over which all but the narrowest of bicycle tires are able to travel. See Map A10 in the appendix for the layout of the trail.

The route provides bicyclists with direct access to the proposed La Crosse area bikeways and would link with a proposed connection to Winona, Minnesota. This "Winona Connection", a four mile trail extension from Marshland to Bluff Siding and on to Minnesota, is dependent on Minnesota Department of Transportation efforts to renovate the Wagon Bridge.

This plan designates the trail as the preferred bikeway route for this segment of the corridor and the Great River Road as the alternate route. Reasons for designating the trail as the preferred route include:

- the trail would provide direct linkage to an existing bike path and allow bicyclists to avoid the less desirable biking conditions that exist on the Great River Road in this area;
- the trail passes through the backwaters of the Mississippi River, many creeks, and the Black River, which are unique ecological areas with abundant wildlife and plant species;
- the trail passes through and borders on two National Wildlife Refuges, Trempealeau and Upper Mississippi;
- excellent birdwatching opportunities;
- easy view of Lake Onalaska and the spillway;
- direct link to Perrot State Park with other recreational opportunities available including camping, hiking, mountain biking, access to a nature center, and summer weekend interpretive programs; and
- interpretive stops along the trail discussing topics that enhance visitors' knowledge and understanding of the Upper Mississippi River Valley, such as the railroad history and use, natural history, and native cultures.

Utilization of the trail also opens access for bicyclists to Wisconsin State Parks and Recreation bicycle trail system with a connection to the La Crosse River Trail at Medary. For these reasons, the potential for increased bicyclist usage of the Great River State Trail is significant.

The Great River Trail will be designated and signed as the preferred bikeway route, yet it is recognized that some bicyclists will prefer or need to remain on the Great River Road, which will serve as the alternate route. This recommendation addresses the concern that some cyclists will travel the Great River Road during the trail's closed season, that some will choose not to use the trail due to the user's fee, and that some will prefer to remain on a paved surface.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources recommends the following bicycling loop segments that connect to the Great River Trail (see Maps in the appendix):

- Perrot State Park, Lock and Dam #6, and downtown Trempealeau
- Holmen to Downtown Onalaska (Main Street)

PROMOTION ELEMENT

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF PROMOTING BICYCLING

With improved accommodations for bicyclists, the Wisconsin Great River Road will enhance its attractiveness to a wide range of tourists. The corridor is already designated as a long-distance route by the Adventure Cycling Association (formerly BikeCentennial) and therefore draws bicyclists from around the country. The Great River Road also connects to a second popular long-distance bicycle touring route along the Wisconsin River, host of the Great Annual Bicycle Adventure Along the Wisconsin River (GRABAAR) cross-state tour. In addition to long-distance bicyclists a large number of individuals and families from the Upper Midwest fit short-distance bicycling into other popular activities in the Great River Road corridor. In fact, the current trend in the sport of bicycling is a much stronger increase in the number of short trips than in long-distance riding. This significant market of both long- and short-distance bicyclists presents a unique opportunity for businesses in the area, since visitors will need food, lodging, and other related goods and services. Many of the towns along the Great River Road have witnessed growth in small, local family-owned businesses catering largely to bicyclists, such as bed and breakfasts, bicycle repair or gear shops, cafés, general stores, and campgrounds.

According to a survey report by the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA), 27 million Americans took biking vacations in the past five years, making biking the third most popular vacation activity in the country, behind only camping and hiking.¹ People taking bicycling vacations tend to be young and affluent. On a national level, about half are between the ages of 18 and 34 and one-quarter are from households with annual incomes exceeding \$75,000. Many survey respondents bring companions on their bicycling vacations, including spouses (57%), children or grandchildren (40%), and friends (34%). These numbers indicate that there exists a significant national market of vacationers who bicycle and have expendable income.

Recent studies conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Tourism reveal similar potential for economic benefit from promoting bicycling along the Great River Road. In two surveys of visitors at Wisconsin Travel Information Centers in spring and summer 1998, the average vacation budget of the respondents who claimed biking as the most important activity was just under \$500.² Most reported the length of their vacation to be between two days and a week, the size of their travel party averaged between two and three people, and they typically traveled with family members more often than with friends or alone. The average age of the bicyclists was just over 40 years, and their gender was fairly evenly split between males and females. While the sample size of the two surveys (63 total respondents in the two surveys claimed biking as the top vacation activity) limits any hard conclusions, the results can be used as a gauge showing generalized characteristics of bicycling vacationers in Wisconsin.

¹ Travel Industry Association of America, *Adventure Travel Special Report* (1999)

² Wisconsin Department of Tourism, *Wisconsin Travel Information Center 1998 Spring Traveler Survey Report* and *Wisconsin Travel Information Center 1998 Summer Traveler Survey Report* (1999)

In addition to the potential economic benefits from marketing the Great River Road to bicycling vacationers, it will provide environmental benefits by getting people out of motorized vehicles. Bicycling consumes no fossil fuels and produces no pollution. This benefit is extremely important in the Great River Road corridor, where the quality of natural resources is such an essential component of the vacationer's experience.

PROMOTIONAL PRACTICES AND PIECES FOR THE GREAT RIVER ROAD BICYCLE CORRIDOR

The most effective approach to marketing the Great River Road Bikeway is likely to be the promotion of bicycling within a larger set of leisure activities and attractions that visitors are able to experience along the riverway. Large numbers of bicyclists reported in the TIA survey that they took camping (82%), hiking (72%), or canoeing (39%) trips within the past five years, and each of these activities is prevalent along the Great River Road. As stated throughout this plan, the Mississippi River corridor offers an abundance of activities for tourists, and the market of "silent"/"soft" sport and "eco-tourism" visitors will most likely respond to cross-promotion efforts aimed at their varied interests. Examples of such promotion might include but are not limited to any of the following:

- "Come biking on the historic and scenic Great River Road"
- "Biking the Great River Road is a great means to sight-see in the 'Land that Time Forgot' (the driftless area where glaciers never passed over)"
- An interest-inducing description of the wide range of bicycling facilities that exist in the corridor and that can accommodate a wide range of bicyclists, from families with inexperienced children to avid adventure or mountain bicyclists.

RECOMMENDED PROMOTIONAL ACTIONS, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to the promotional approaches suggested previously, the Great River Road Bikeway will need to be granted a brand image for marketing purposes. The image could build upon the image of the paddleboat inside the navigation wheel, which is the traditional symbol for the Great River Road. Yet the symbol for the bikeway needs to distinguish itself so that bicyclists and tourists easily recognize it as a symbol designated specifically for the bikeway.

It is essential that a strip map of the bikeway be developed with detailed road, trail, and loop segments. Special insets should be included on the map for the Great River State Trail and for the connections through the city of La Crosse. Ideally, this map would highlight not only the bikeway route but also accommodations along the route for bicyclists, such as wayside rests, bike shops, food and lodging, and points of interests. The map should be designed so that it is easy to fold and carry while riding a bicycle.

A special campaign should be developed using a set of promotional pieces made accessible both to bicyclists and to visitors as a whole. This set would include Department of Tourism guides

currently available and useful to bicyclists of the Great River Road, such as the *Wisconsin's Great River Road* guide and map, the *Wisconsin 1998/99 Biking Guide*, and the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin's *Wisconsin State Bike Map*. Added to these guides will be the detailed strip map mentioned earlier. The campaign should also include cross-promotional marketing pieces related to other activities in the corridor, such as birdwatching guides, mountain biking pieces, heritage travel guides, and guides to state and local parks.

Great River Road communities could look into promotional efforts through additional types of media, including the Internet. Other potential marketing strategies include seasonal promotions for bicycling in the spring, summer, or autumn, and special events.

A number of promotional partnerships will be needed in order to effectively market the Wisconsin Great River Road Bikeway Corridor. These partnerships may include such efforts as a public/non-profit Joint Effort Marketing grant proposal to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism for the development of a Destination Marketing Campaign to fund the strip map or other promotional pieces; partnerships between communities and/or counties along the corridor to push for greater welcoming of bicyclists among residents and businesses; and joint efforts between communities/counties and the Mississippi River Parkway Commission.

The state agencies involved in the cooperative development of this plan will assist the promotion of the bikeway by the following means:

DOT

- provide funding opportunities (e.g., Transportation Enhancement and Surface Transportation Program Discretionary) for bicycle facilities projects
- investigate the possibility of providing signage to direct cyclists to alternative routes, especially the use of national bike route signage once links are made to Illinois and Minnesota
- continue to include adequate bicycle accommodations where needed and possible in roadway improvement projects

DNR

- improve the visibility of Great River Road Bikeway connections to state recreational trails and state parks
- investigate the possibility of providing additional or extended state recreational trails that connect to the Great River Road Bikeway
- promote the bikeway to state park visitors
- help identify and promote additional mountain biking opportunities along the Great River Road

Tourism

- provide technical marketing assistance to local promotional efforts upon request
- distribute to the public the promotional pieces that result from this cooperative marketing venture
- promote through existing advertising and publicity programs

- provide matching funding for promotional efforts through existing grant programs

This list is not exhaustive; each department will assist the promotion of the Great River Road Bikeway Corridor to the degree that it is capable. It is also suggested that the communities and counties along the Great River Road work together to identify local sponsors of the bikeway, and that Mississippi River Parkway Commission promotional pieces cross-reference those that are developed for the bikeway corridor. Future recommendations would include market research of potential users of the Great River Road bikeway corridor.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN--STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many of the specific recommendations offered in this plan have been outlined in previous sections; most notably the proposed strategies and actions concerning bicycle facilities and promotional elements. The purpose of this final section of the Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Plan is to recommend strategies and actions concerning the implementation of the plan. The successful implementation of this plan will require commitment and action from many different entities and cooperation and coordination among them. It will likely take a number of years of continued investment to create a corridor-long bikeway that is safe and offers the variety of challenges that its users desire. This section describes the roles and responsibilities of the appropriate actors, including state, county, and local governments as well as the private sector. It also addresses the actions and projects not addressed in previous sections that will be needed in order to achieve the plan's vision, goals, and objectives.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS—PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The initial implementation step required is to decide how to incorporate the findings of the draft plan and the input from the river communities and counties into a final plan approved by the Mississippi River Parkway Commission. The MRPC could revise the draft plan based on the outcome of public input, approve it as the final plan, and then take the final plan to the public for comment and review. Alternatively, the MRPC could take a revised draft plan to the public and incorporate their comments and ideas into an approved final document.

Whichever method is undertaken, after adopting the final plan, the MRPC should then distribute it to the communities and counties along the corridor and promote it for adoption by the policy boards of those entities. Upon their adoption of bikeway plan, the communities and counties will commit to support efforts aimed at encouraging residents and businesses to welcome the users of the bikeway. For this reason it is extremely important that the communities and counties provide input on proposed loop routes, roadway projects, and possible alternate routes, as they will be more likely to actively support the plan and promote the bikeway.

Local residents also have keen insight into phenomena that might adversely affect bikeway investments. For example, a loop route might appear on a map to be ideal for a given town road or county trunk highway, but community members might know that a sand and gravel trucking company operates off of the proposed route. This would obviously not be ideal for bicyclists.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission, as the developer of the plan, will act in an advisory/coordination role by working with communities, counties, Chambers of Commerce, and state agencies as bikeway implementation issues arise. The commission will facilitate the resolution of such issues and will guide the future direction of the bikeway.

The towns, villages, cities, and counties along the Wisconsin Great River Road will provide input for integration into the final corridor bikeway plan. Once the final plan has been adopted, these entities will consider, when appropriate, the bikeway plan in the decisions that they make regarding transportation, land use, and facilities design in the corridor. All future local bicycle planning efforts in the corridor should also integrate the Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Plan. The locals would also be counted on to promote hosting bicyclists and their needs within their communities, including advertising, maps, and other services.

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation will work with the Federal Highway Administration and the Mississippi River Trail Alliance to incorporate the Corridor Bikeway Plan into the development of the Great River Road's designation as a National Scenic Byway and a National Millennium Trail.

The final recommendation of this plan is that an ad-hoc bikeway committee be formed that will advise the MRPC and related agencies on bikeway issues (signage, loop routes, etc.), and guide and monitor the implementation and update of this plan. Committee membership could consist of representatives of bike groups, local officials, businesses, tourism agencies, and other interested parties.

As stated under the promotion element of this plan, the state agencies consulted for the development of this plan will provide technical assistance or clarification of their commitment to the plan when called upon by the MRPC. However, the MRPC will retain the role of primary plan coordination. Each agency will offer assistance in the implementation of this plan as it relates to its field of jurisdiction—the state highway system for DOT; the promotion of the bikeway for Tourism; and trail connections, amenities, and loops for DNR.

Appendix

Map A1. Prescott to Bay City

Map A2. Maiden Rock to Alma

Map A3. Great River Road Alternate Bicycling Option Communities of Buffalo and Cochrane

Map A4. Fountain City to Onalaska

Map A5. La Crosse Area Great River Road Bikeway Connections

Map A6. South La Crosse to DeSoto

Map A7. Ferryville to Prairie du Chien

Map A8. Wisconsin River to Cassville

Map A9. Potosi to Illinois Border

Map 2. Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Prescott to La Crosse

Map 3. Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Stoddard to Illinois Border

Table 2. Other Roadway Recommendations

Table 3. Other DOT Projects Scheduled on Wisconsin Great River Road

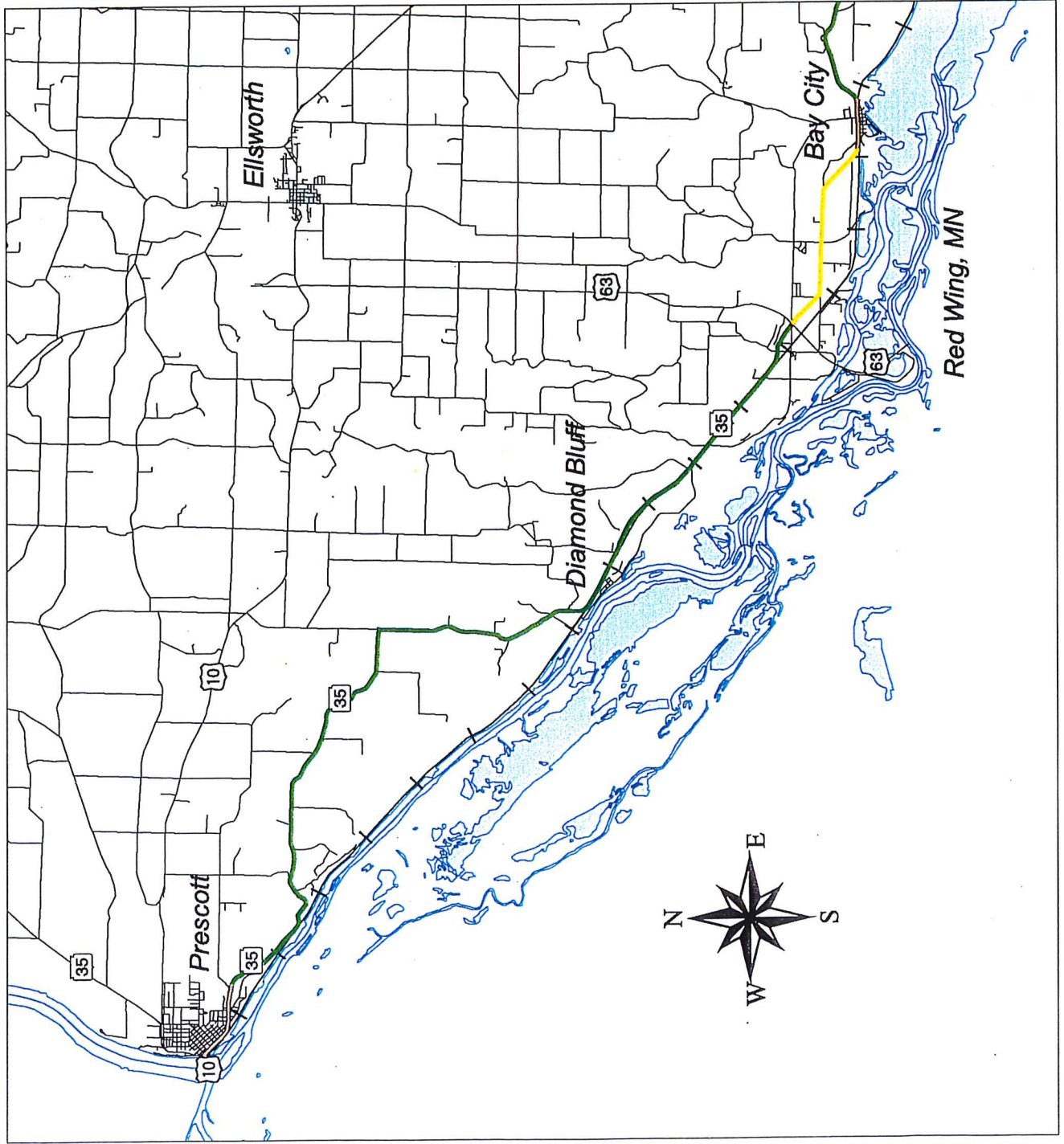
Table 4. Possible Great River Road Loop Routes

Map: DNR Recommended Trempealeau Loop

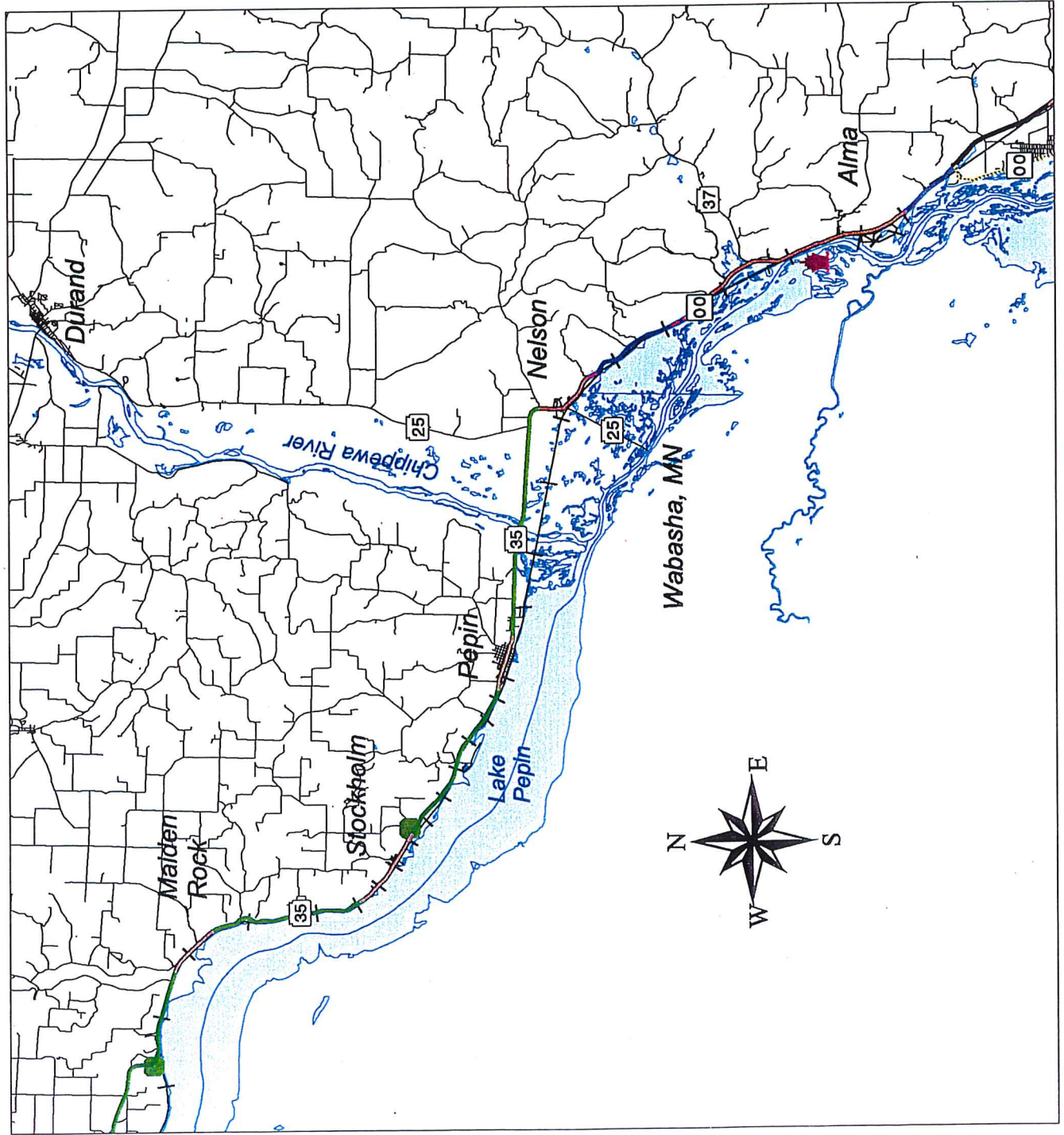
Map: DNR Recommended Holmen Loop

Map: DNR Recommended Onalaska Loop

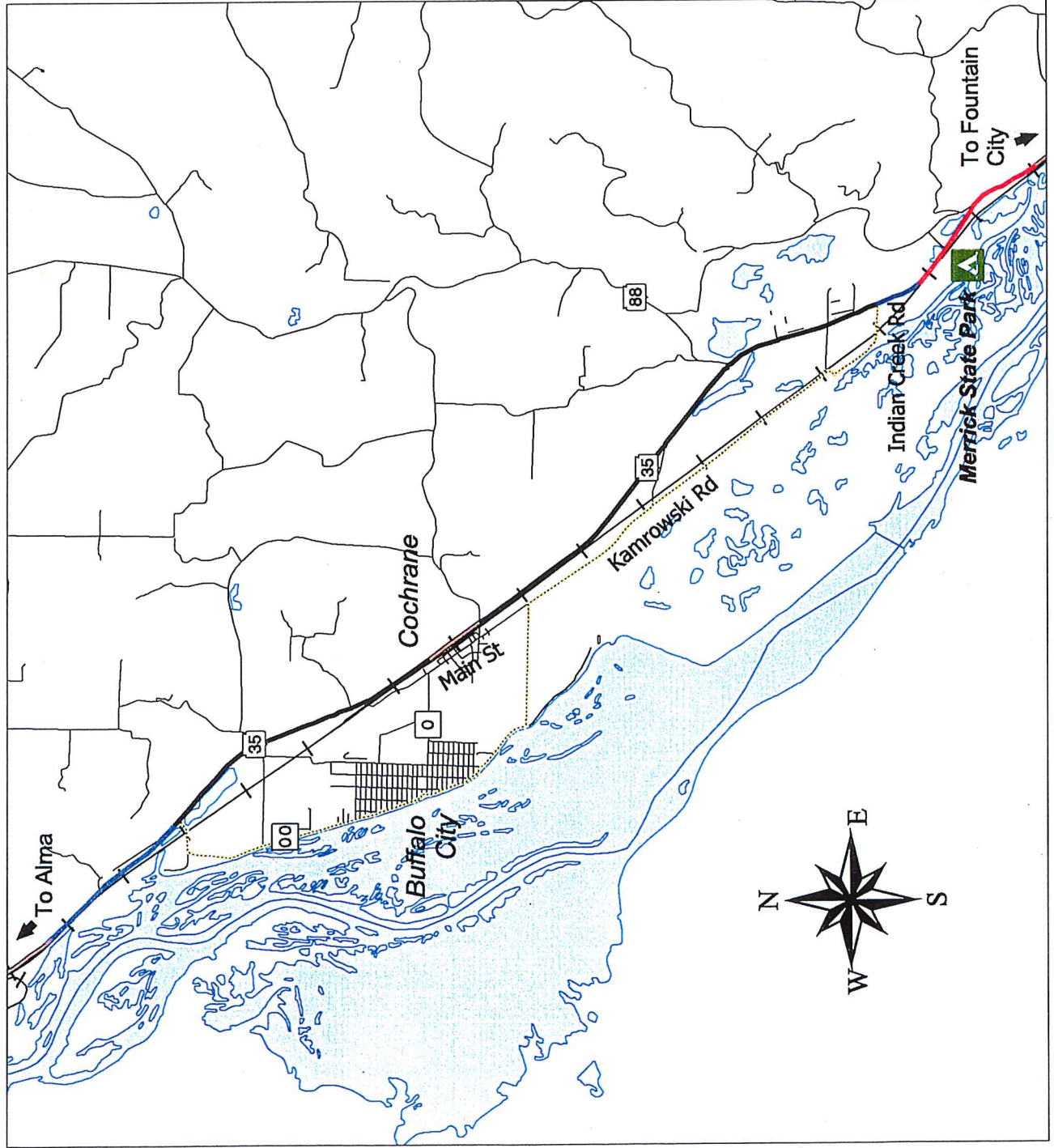
Map A1. Prescott to Bay City



Map A2. Maiden Rock to Alma

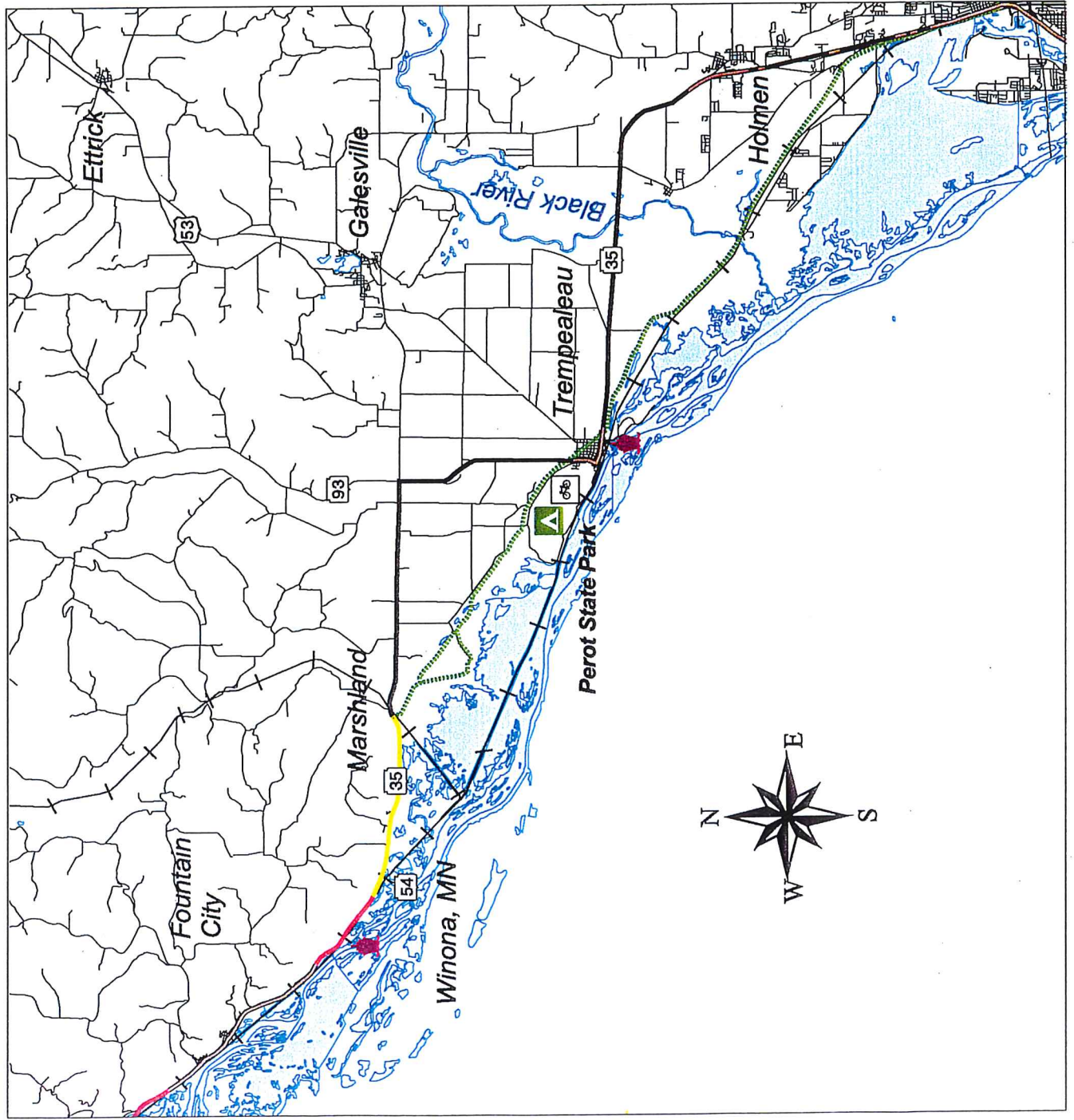


Map A3. Great River Road Alternate Bicycling Option Communities of Buffalo and Cochrane

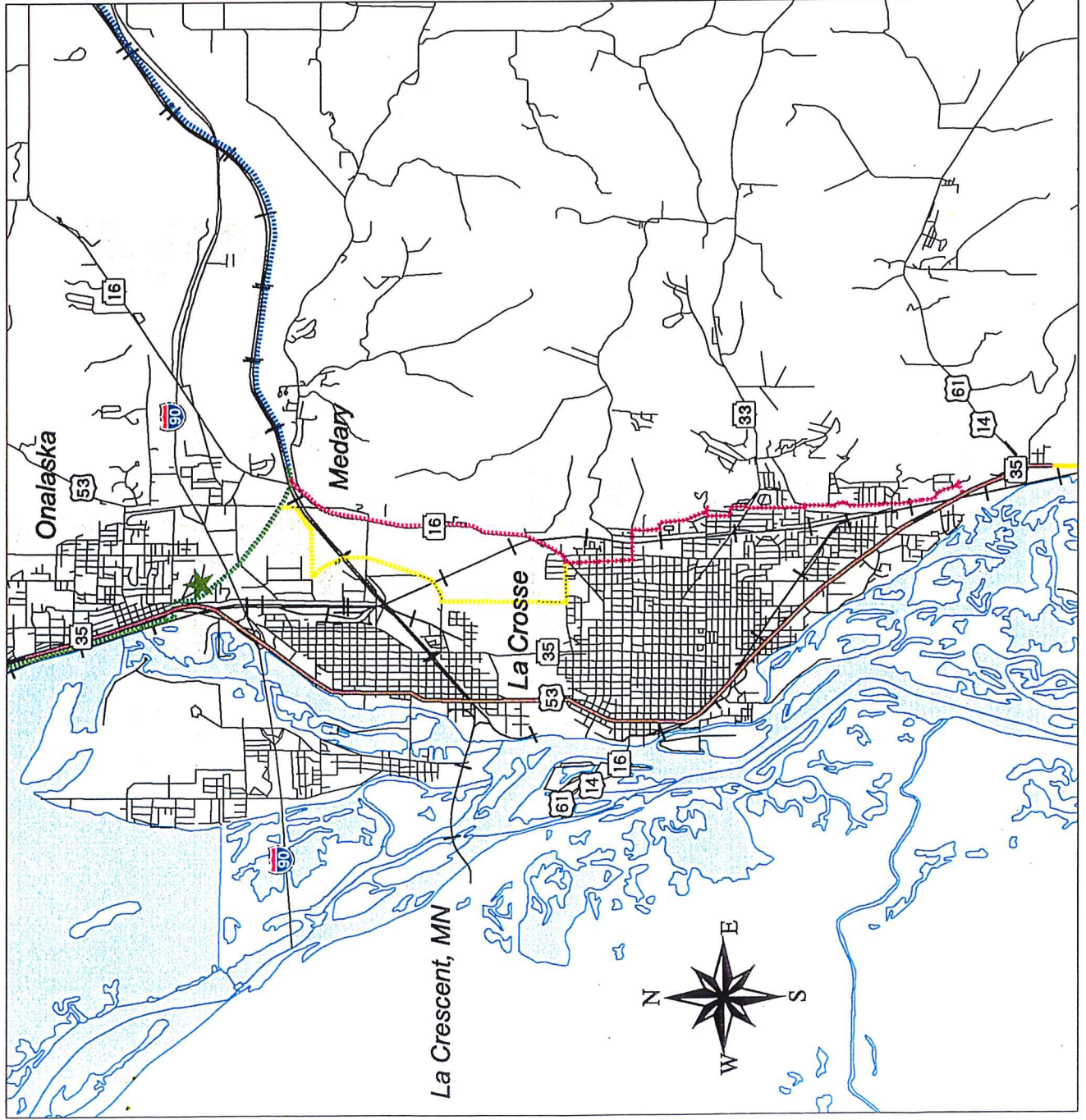


- Wide Paved Shoulders and/or Low Traffic Levels
- Wide Paved Shoulders and Moderate-High Traffic Levels
- Narrow Paved Shoulders and Moderate Traffic Levels
- Unfavorable Bicycling Conditions
- Alternate Bicycle Route
- Official GRR Alternate Route
- Urban GRR Segments
- Road Network
- Railroad
- State Park

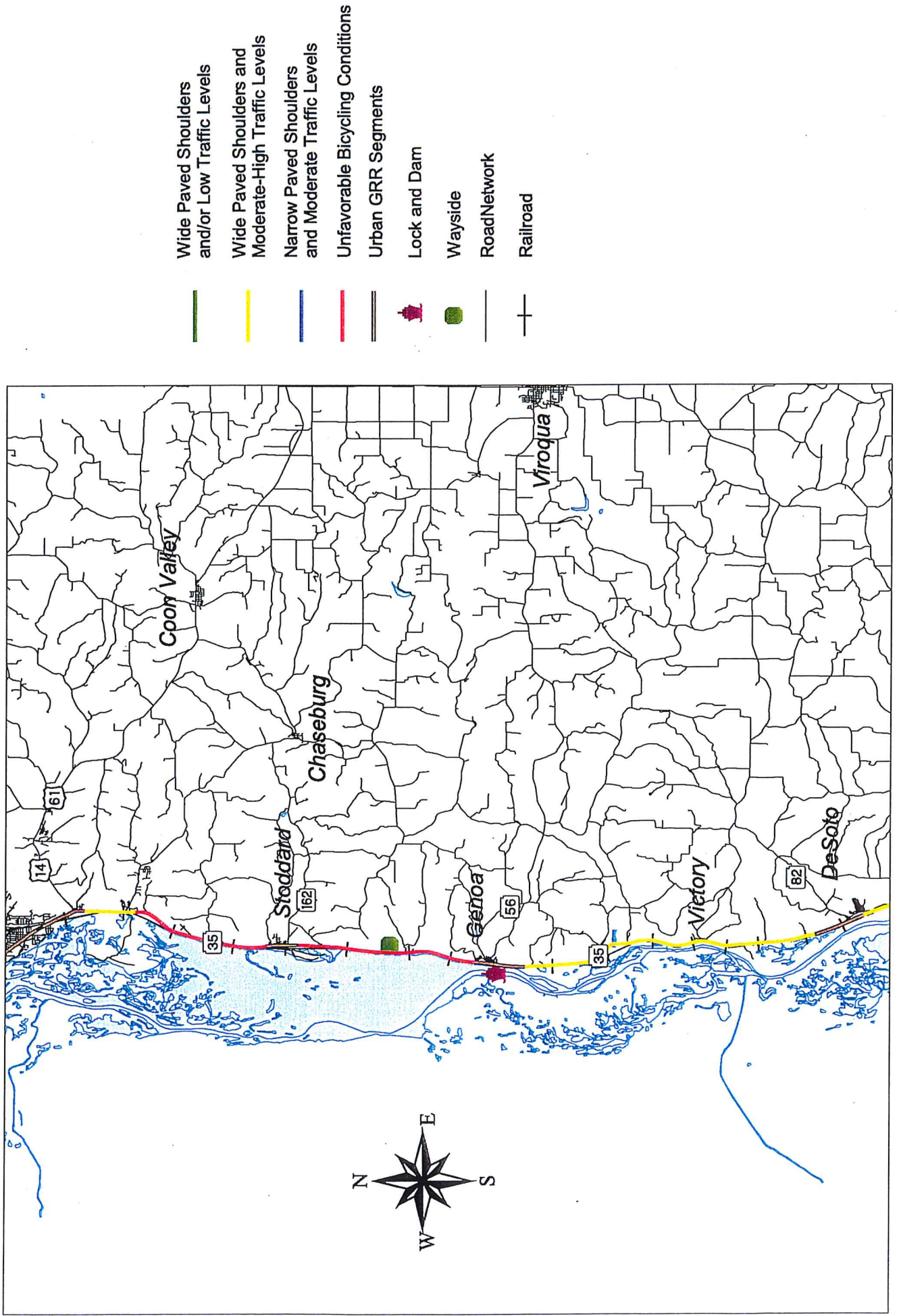
Map A4. Fountain City to Onalaska



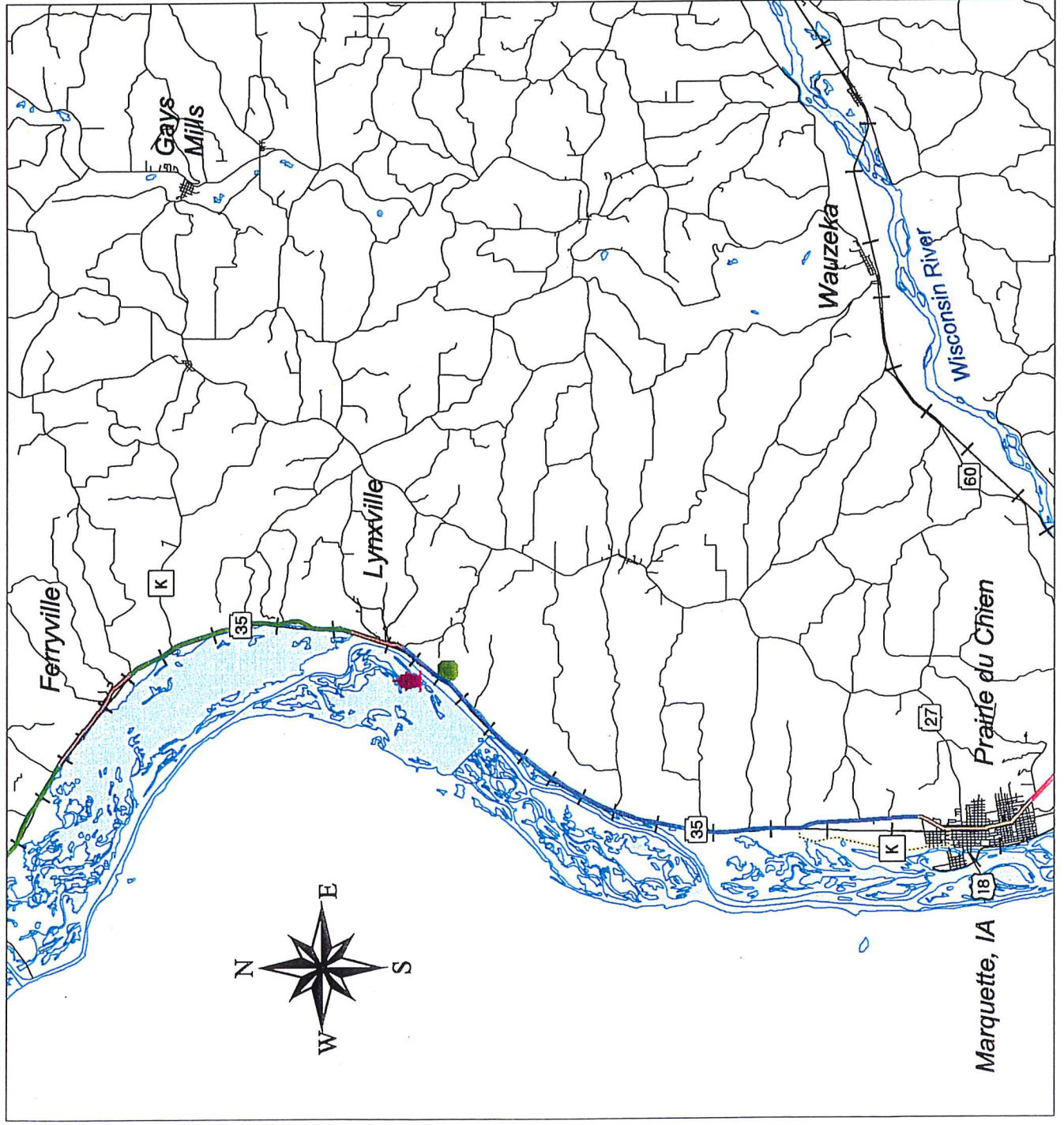
Map A5. La Crosse Area Great River Road Bikeway Connections



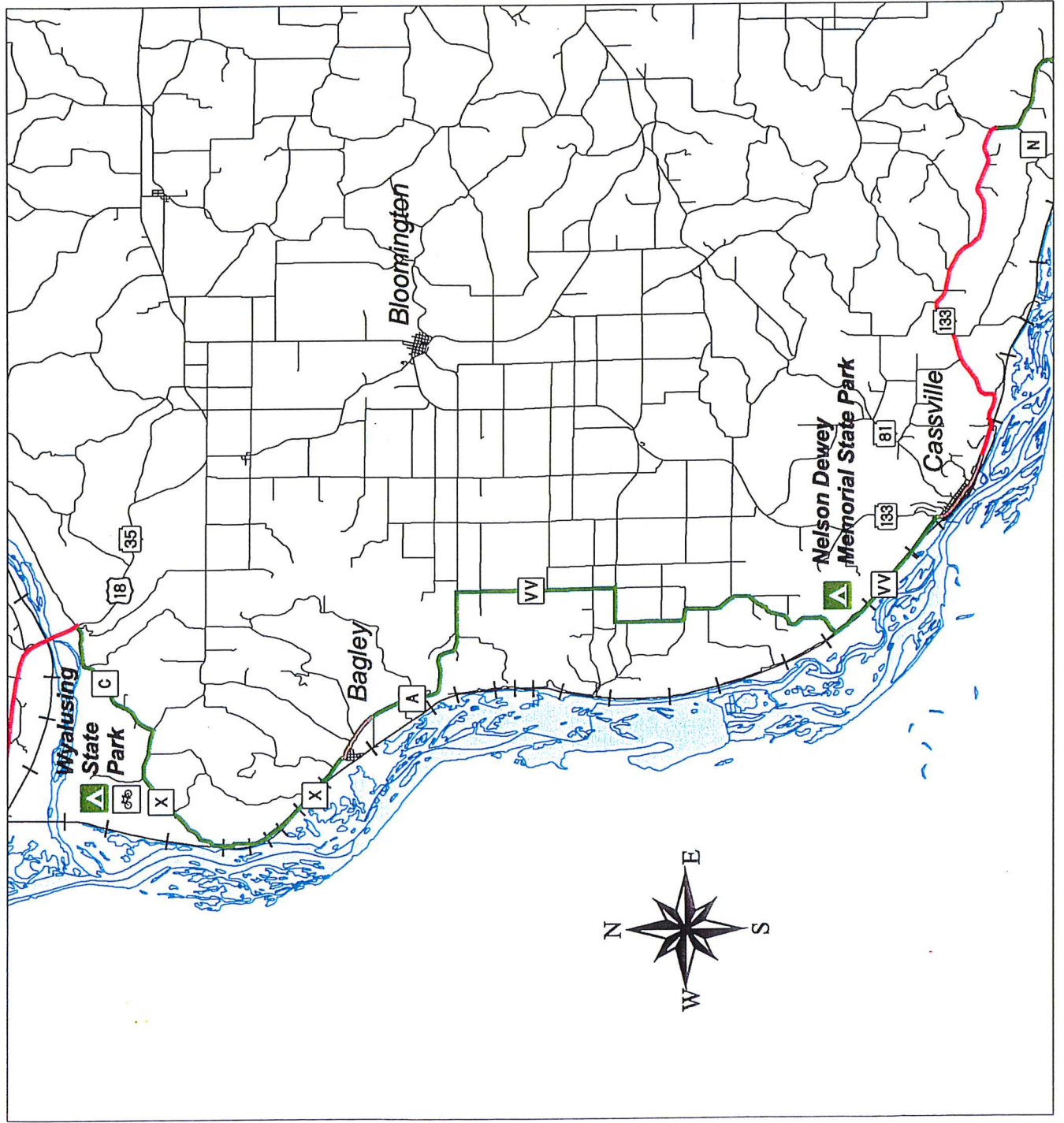
Map A6. South La Crosse to DeSoto



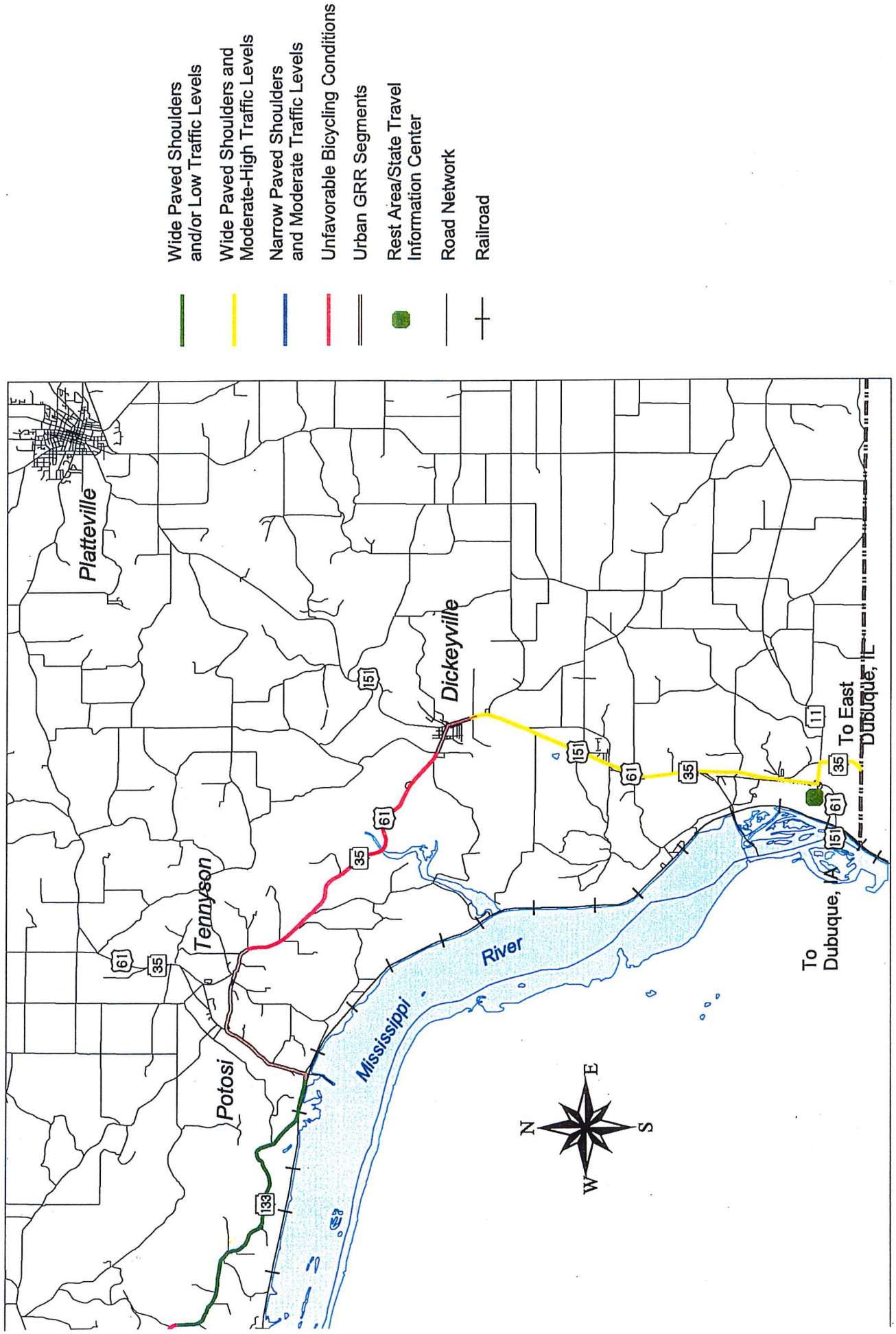
Map A7. Ferryville to Prairie du Chien



Map A8. Wisconsin River to Cassville



Map A9. Potosi to Illinois Border





Map 3. Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Stoddard to Illinois Border

Roadway Suitability for Bicycling

- Urban GRR Segments
- Least Favorable Bicycling Conditions
- Wide Paved Shoulders and Moderate-High Traffic Levels
- Narrow Paved Shoulders and Moderate Traffic Levels
- Wide Paved Shoulders and/or Low Traffic Levels
- Possible Alternate Bikeway Routes
- State Trunk Highway Network
- Great River Road Communities

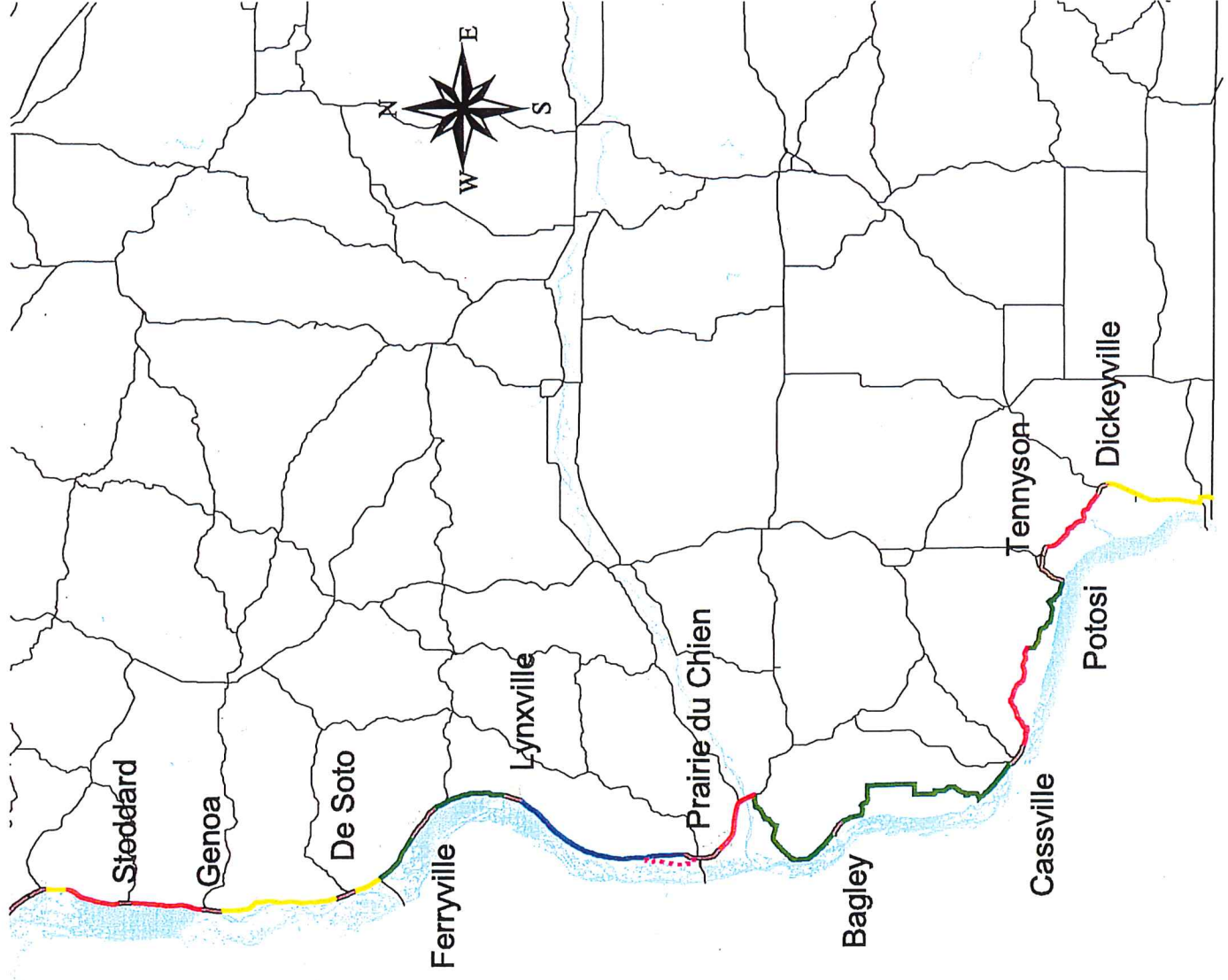


Table 2. Other Roadway Recommendations

Location	County and Responsible Agency	Deficiency/Problem Description	Addressed in DOT 6-yr contract schedule? If yes, how & when?	Bikeway Plan Recommended Improvement
STH 35 N. side of Alma	Buffalo Co. DOT Dist. 5	Very narrow, long bridge for bicyclists, shoulder on E. side only	Yes, replacement, 2001	Construct modern bridge with adequate bicycle accommodation on both sides of roadway (at least 5 ft. paved shoulder)
Great River State Trail, trailhead off STH 35 at Marshland	Buffalo Co. DNR	Trailhead not easily visible	N/A	Improve marking and signage of trailhead both to direct bicyclists and to market the trail to vehicular traffic
City of La Crosse	La Crosse Co. City and DOT	Need for Great River Road Bikeway connections through city and to DNR state trails, including signage	N/A	Work with the City of La Crosse to identify and provide on-road signage needs for bikeway connections
Many towns and cities along the corridor	All DOT districts, counties and cities	In many of the river towns the Great River Road becomes quite narrow and/or bicyclists need to deal with heavier vehicle traffic	N/A	Recommend policy of including bicycle accommodations in improvements to GRR within urban areas
All future alternate routes and loop routes	To be determined	Alternate and loop routes off of Great River Road will need to be signed to provide direction to bicyclists	N/A	Work with communities and counties to identify best alternate and loop routes and signage needs
Entire length of bikeway corridor	State DOTs and river communities	Opportunities for cyclists to cross the Mississippi River are scarce	N/A	Work with the Minnesota and Iowa DOTs and river communities to improve accommodations for bicycling across the river.
All future Great River Road bridge and road projects	All DOT districts and counties	Need to maintain and enhance the Great River Road Bikeway	N/A	Recommend policy of including and enhancing bicycle accommodations in improvements to GRR throughout the entire corridor

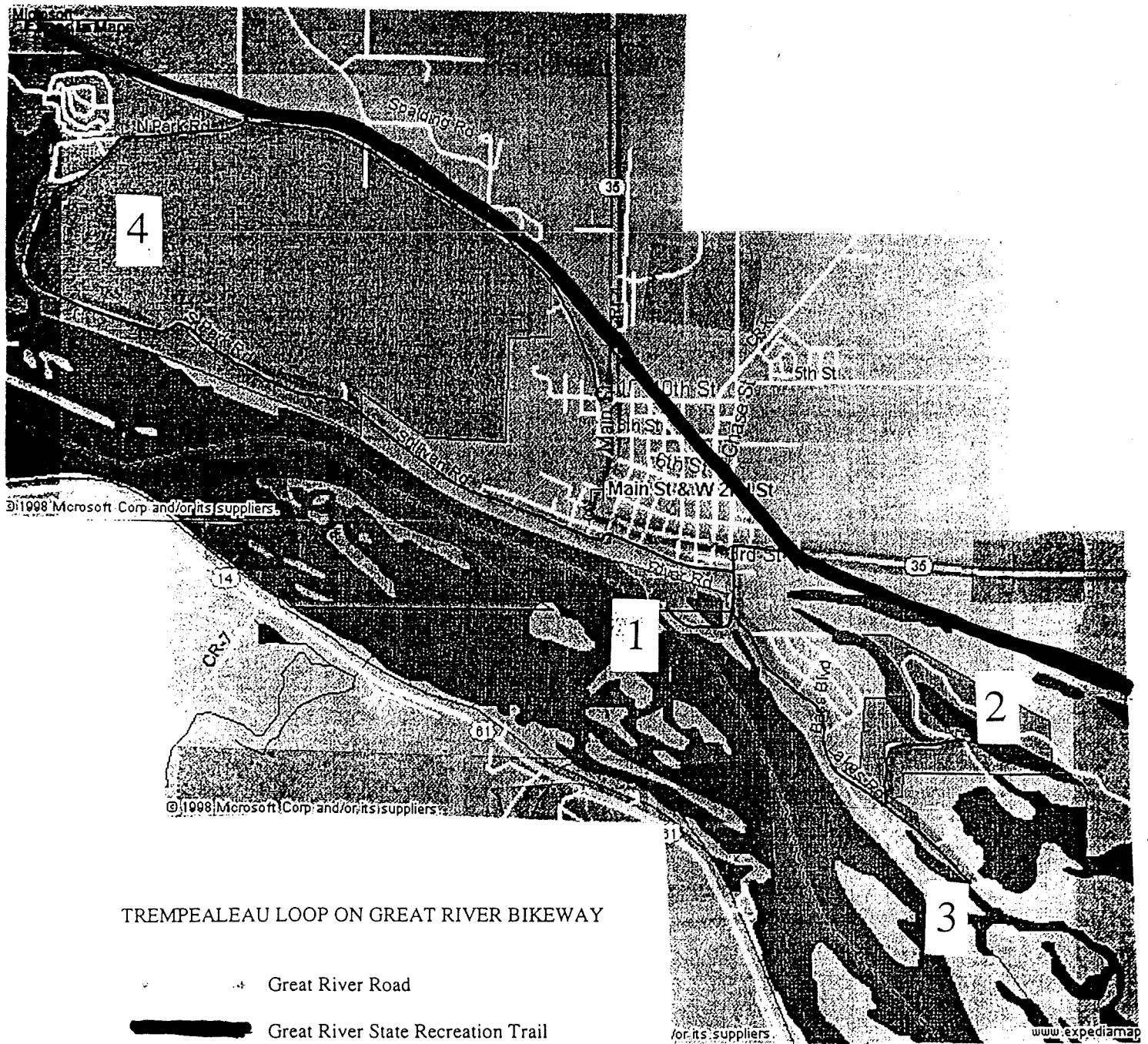
Table 3. Other DOT Projects Scheduled on Wisconsin Great River Road

Location	County and DOT Dist.	Project Description and Year	Potential Impact on Bikeway
STH 35 in City of Alma	Buffalo Co. Dist. 5	Resurfacing, 1999 (currently under construction)	Improved surface for bicycling
STH 35 from STH 37 to Merrick State Park	Buffalo Co. Dist. 5	Pavement Replacement, 1999	Improved surface for bicycling
STH 35 2 miles N. of Prairie du Chien	Crawford Co. Dist. 5	Bridge Replacement, 2000	Wider paved shoulder on bridge
STH 35 in Village of Cochrane	Buffalo Co. Dist. 5	Reconstruction, 2001	Limited since the primary route at this segment is off of STH 35 through City of Buffalo
STH 35 from La Crosse/Vernon county line to US 14	La Crosse Co. Dist. 5	Reconstruction, 2003	Improved surface for bicycling
STH 35 from Pepin/Pierce county line to limits of Stockholm	Pepin Co. Dist. 6	Resurfacing, 2004	Improved surface for bicycling
CTH C 1 mile W. Of STH 35/US 18	Grant Co. Dist. 1	Bridge Replacement, 1999	Improve narrow, dangerous bridge for bicyclists
STH 35 from STH 11 to Illinois border	Grant Co. Dist. 1	Resurfacing, 2000	Improved surface for bicycling

Table 4. Possible Great River Road Loop Routes

	Location	WisDOT District	Routes	Rideability Index (from Wisconsin State Bike Map)	Comments
1.	Grant Co. From Bagley to N	1	CTHs P and X	Both green	Better to go in counter-clockwise direction due to elevation changes, although either way is fine. Take CTH P to/from STH 35. Very good loop near Wyalusing State Park.
2.	Crawford Co. Prairie du Chien to N	5	STH 27 and CTH N, or 27 to CTH D (along creek)	Both green	Good, although CTH N to STH 35 steep downhill. STH 27 is also steep out of Prairie du Chien, although not as steep as CTH N. 27 is Priority Corridor in state bike plan.
3.	Crawford Co. Around Ferryville	5	CTH C to STH 27 to Rising Sun, then CTH B west to STH 35	CTHs C and B green; 27 blue (short distance)	CTHs B and C steep downhill near STH 35.
4.	Vernon Co. Between Genoa and Stoddard	5	CTHs K and O	Both green	Both CTH K and O moderately steep. Expand: O, K to Chaseburg to CTH KK to CTH B (S) thru Esofea to CTH Y (W) back to O.
5.	Buffalo Co. Between Marshland and Fountain City	5	CTH P	Green	Across from Winona. Steep at Fountain City (better from Marshland to Fountain City). Goes through Dodge.
6.	Buffalo Co. Fountain City - Cream - Alma	5	STH 88 and CTH E	88 blue and green, CTH E green	STH 88 is a Priority Corridor in state bike plan. 88 has little or no shoulder, winding, poor sight distance. CTH E to 35 very steep and winding. CTH E leads to Buena Vista Park overlook of Mississippi River and Lock and Dam at Alma. Would probably be for more advanced/experienced cyclists.
7.	Buffalo Co. Between Bluff Siding and Fountain City	5	CTHs M and YY	Both green	CTH YY steep at Fountain City; CTH M moderately steep at Bluff Siding. CTH M at STH 35 is near trailhead of Great River State Trail to Onalaska.

8.	Buffalo Co. Between Alma and Nelson	5	CTHs I and D	Both green	Good: Neither is very steep (CTH I is along creek).
9.	Pepin and Pierce Co. Between Pepin and Maiden Rock	5 and 6	CTHs CC, H, and S	All green	Good: Moderate climb to top of bluffs through Lund, where land is rolling hills; long loop.
10.	Pepin and Pierce Co. Between Stockholm and Maiden Rock	5 and 6	CTHs E and AA	Both green	Shorter loop than above (9). CTH E steep out of Stockholm.
11.	Pierce Co. Around Bay City	6	CTHs D, V, and C	All green	Good; but straight and flat. Red Wing nearby.



TREMPEALEAU LOOP ON GREAT RIVER BIKEWAY

- Great River Road
- Great River State Recreation Trail
- Alternate Bike Loop

Alternative loop at Trempealeau of about 10 miles length.

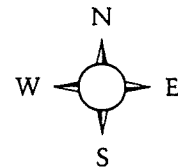
- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|
| 1 | Lock and Dam #6: | Observation deck, public restrooms |
| 2 | Lakes Recreation Area: | DNR public fisheries area, toilets, fishing pier, boat landings |
| 3 | Long Lake canoe landing: | Canoe trail head, boat landing |
| 4 | Perrot State Park: | Public restrooms, observation deck, hiking trails, off-road bike trail, campground, canoe rentals, interpretive programs, nature center, river vistas |

HOLMEN, WISCONSIN

**NEW
HOLMEN
HIGH SCHOOL**

Map provided courtesy of:

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605 Holmen Drive
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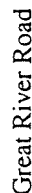
Great River Road

- Great River State Recreation Trail

Alternate Bike Route

Tourist and Lodging Information (608) 781-9570 or 1-800-873-1901

1. See “Sunny the Sunfish” and enjoy a view of Lake Onalaska and the Mississippi River Valley.
2. Take a break and enjoy Van Riper Park. Water, bathrooms, playground equipment, and picnic tables are available.
3. Stop by the Onalaska Center for Commerce and Tourism and get all the information you need about this area.
4. Visit the Onalaska Area Historical Society Museum located in the Onalaska Public Library.
5. Enjoy Rowe Park named after the founder of Onalaska. Water, bathrooms, playground equipment, and picnic tables are available.
5. Visit Historic Downtown Onalaska located on Main Street and 2nd Avenue. Enjoy old-fashioned malts and ice cream at Monsoor’s. Experience the revival of this historic city.



Great River State Recreation Trail

Alternate Bike Route

Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Implementation Plan

- Role of the Commission, the communities/counties, and the “Consultants”
- Importance of input from river communities/counties
 - Loops, project prioritization, alternate routes
- Heart of the plan: state highway part
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ of bikeway mileage
 - DOT commitment to on-road bike accommodations; minimal additional costs
 - Project schedule
 - Retrofitting possible when identified as priority by communities/counties; more costly
- Other facilities elements
 - Alternate routes
 - Routes through La Crosse
 - Loop routes
 - Signage issue

Great River Road Corridor Bikeway Implementation Plan

- Trails element
 - Possible extension toward Winona?
 - Improved trailhead visibility
 - Connections between GRR bikeway and other amenities (e.g. state parks)
- Promotion element
 - Cross-promotional opportunities
 - Short-distance bicycling v. Long-distance
 - Strip map—possible partnerships
- Implementation strategies
 - Public outreach/plan approval
 - MRPC coordination/at-need assistance from state agencies
 - WisDOT commitment
 - Will assist MRPC in implementation of plan as it relates to state highway system
 - Priority bikeway corridor—FDM guidelines
 - Possible strip map partner