ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Visitation research about the Twin Cities region's parks and trails

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KEY FINDINGS

- An estimated 69.1 million visits were made to the Regional Parks System in 2025—a 5.1% increase from 2024, marking the second-highest annual visitation on record.
- Minneapolis Chain of Lakes was the most visited regional park with over 6.7 million visits, followed by Mississippi Gorge Regional Park with 3.7 million visits and Central Mississippi Riverfront with 3.5 million.
- The regional system includes more than 523 miles of trails, with trail use totaling over 23 million visits. Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail led with 3.1 million visits, followed by the Midtown Greenway Regional Trail (new to the system) and Lake Links Regional Trail, each exceeding 1 million visits.

The Regional Parks and Trails System is nationally renowned for its beauty, size, and wide range of features. With 45 regional parks, 12 park reserves, eight special recreation features, and more than 500 miles of regional trails, the system offers visitors ample opportunities for gathering, contemplation, recreation, and fun. It also preserves significant green space and wildlife habitat.

The Metropolitan Council produces estimates for visits to the Regional Parks and Trails System. We collaborate with 10 partner agencies—including cities, counties, and special park districts—to estimate the number of visits to the system annually. Park agencies collect visitation data from each regional park and trail during the summer (Memorial Day to Labor Day), then we use those results and data collected from the latest Parks and Trails Visitors Study to calculate annual estimates. Annual use estimates allow us to monitor trends over time and inform grant funding formulas for each partner agency. This report highlights key learnings from the 2025 use estimates.

Visits to the Regional Park System in 2025

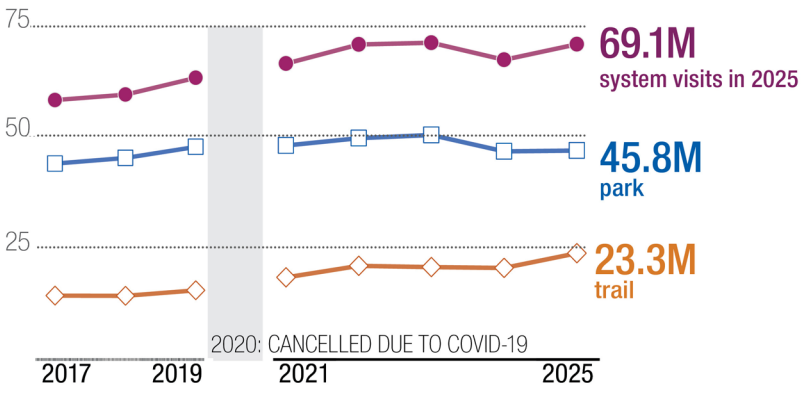
An estimated 69.1 million visits were made to the Regional Parks and Trails System in 2025 (Figure 1). This represents a 5.1% increase in visitation over 2024, when visits were estimated at 65.7 million.

Much of this increase is attributable to the addition of five new trails to the system, which added 1.7 million visits to the system in 2025 (an increase of 16% compared with 2024).

Weather conditions, interagency trail connectivity, continued trail investments, and natural variation in count sampling across years also contributed to the overall increase in 2025.

FIGURE 1 – TRAILS DRIVE VISITATION REBOUND IN 2025

Estimated visits to the Regional Parks and Trails System (in millions)



Source: Metropolitan Council's annual park and trail use estimates, 2017-2025.

Note: 2017-19 estimates are informed by the 2016 Visitors Study (dashed axis), and 2021-25 estimates by the 2021 Visitors Study (solid axis). Direct comparisons between these sets of estimates should be interpreted with caution.

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board had the highest visitation among the ten agencies in 2025, with approximately 26.4 million visitors, followed by Three Rivers Parks District (14.7 million) and the City of Saint Paul (7.6 million) (Figure 2).

As shown in Figure 3, the most visited regional park in 2025 was Minneapolis Chain of Lakes with an estimated 6.7 million visits, followed by Mississippi Gorge Regional Park (3.7 million) and Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park (3.5 million visits).

The most visited regional trail in 2025 was the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail with about 3.1 million visits, followed by the Midtown Greenway Regional Trail, a new trail in the system, and the Lake Links Regional Trail, both with over one million visits (Figure 4).

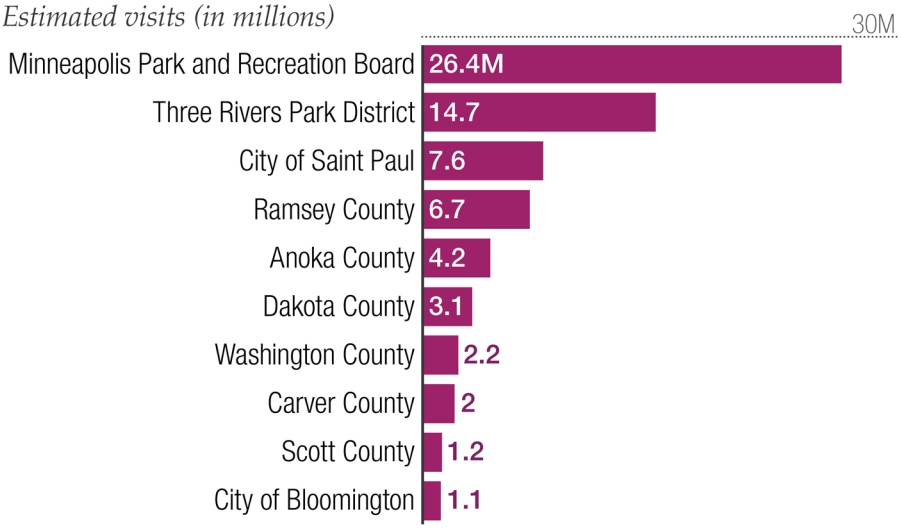
Recent visitation trends by Park Agency

Compared with 2024, visitation increased for most agencies in 2025. Taking a closer look at Figure 5 (page 3), the City of Bloomington experienced the largest percentage gain (39.7%), while a small number of agencies saw negligible decreases (1.1% or less).

Following the City of Bloomington, the largest percentage increase in vistation was seen in Washington County (24.1%) with six other agencies seeing between 1.9% and 8.3% year-over-year growth.

FIGURE 2 – 2025 VISITS BY PARK AGENCY

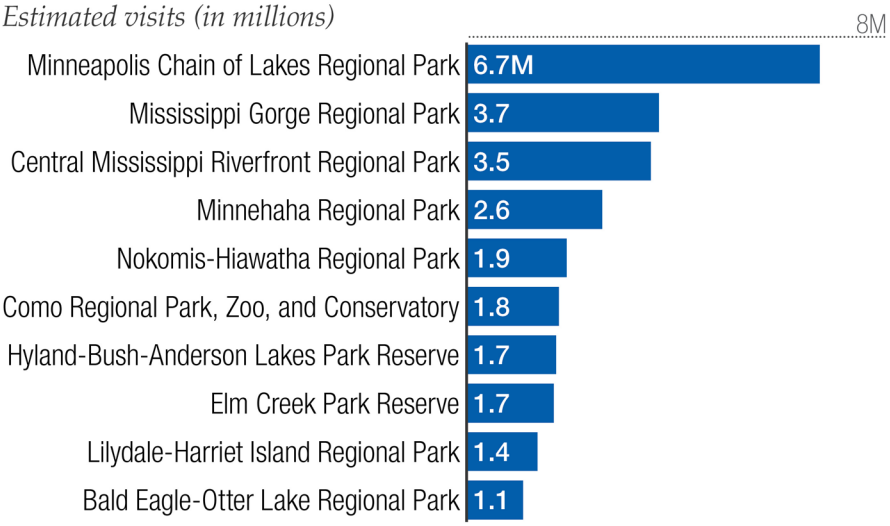
Estimated visits (in millions)



Source: Metropolitan Council's annual park and trail use estimates, 2025.

FIGURE 3 – MOST VISITED REGIONAL PARKS IN 2025

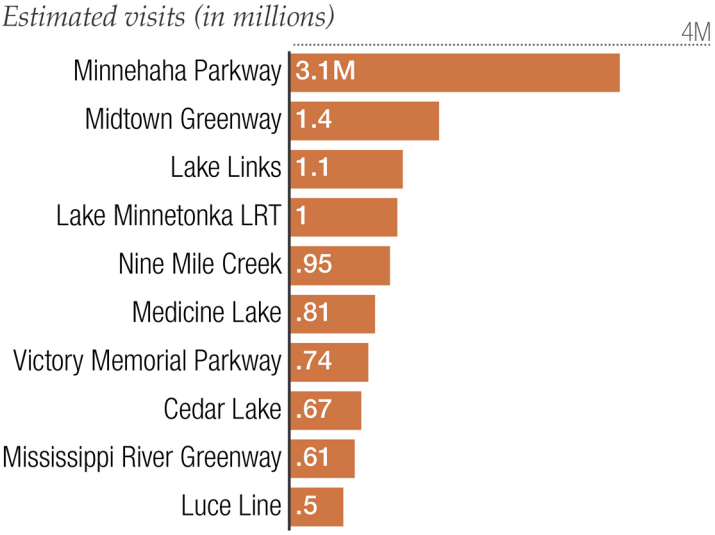
Estimated visits (in millions)



Source: Metropolitan Council's annual park and trail use estimates, 2025.

FIGURE 4 – MOST VISITED REGIONAL TRAILS IN 2025

Estimated visits (in millions)

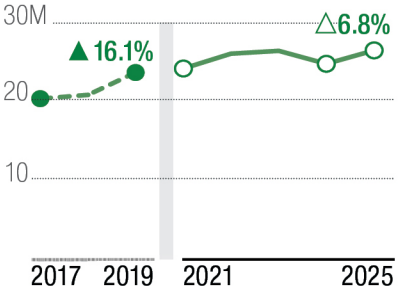


Source: Metropolitan Council's annual park and trail use estimates, 2025.

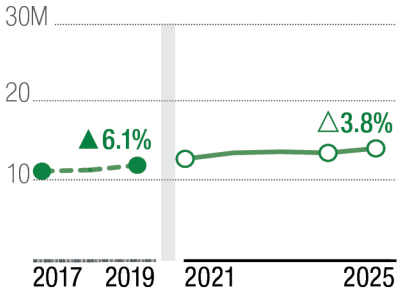
FIGURE 5 – VISITS HAVE INCREASED SINCE 2024 IN EIGHT OUT OF TEN PARK AGENCIES

Estimated visits (in millions)

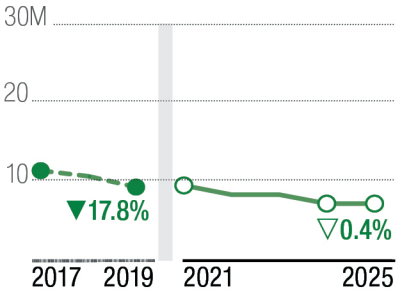
MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD



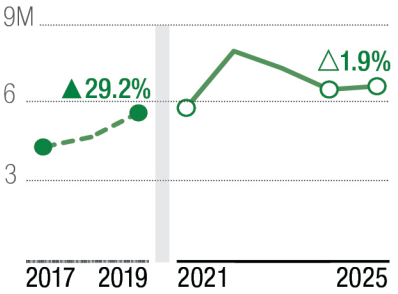
THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT



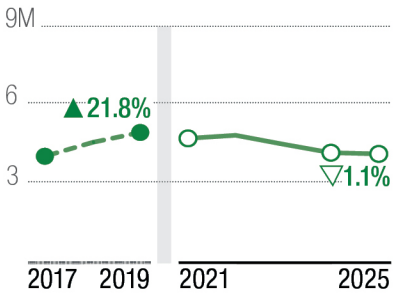
CITY OF SAINT PAUL



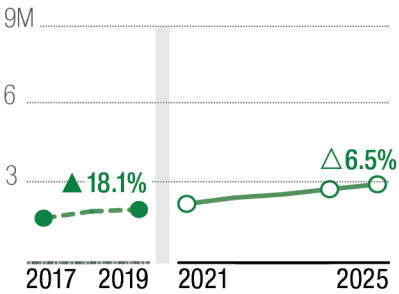
RAMSEY COUNTY



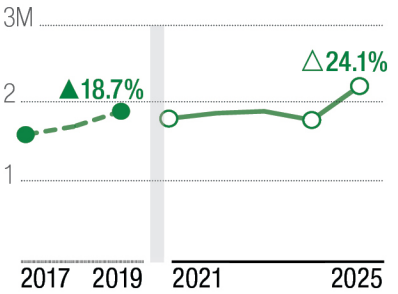
ANOKA COUNTY



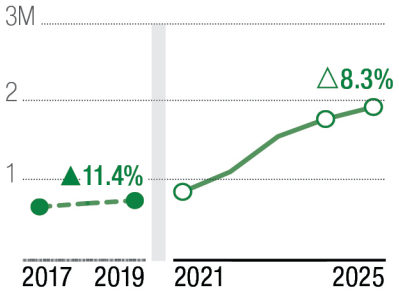
DAKOTA COUNTY



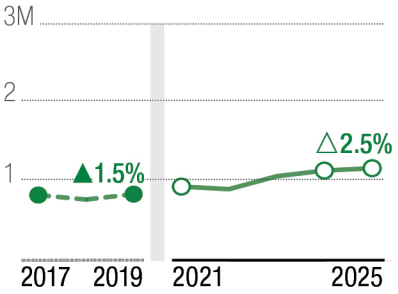
WASHINGTON COUNTY



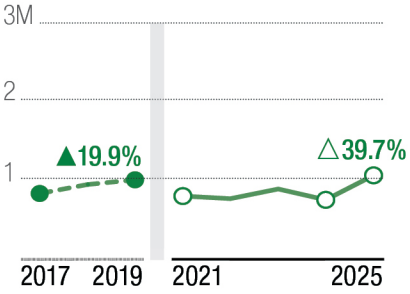
CARVER COUNTY



SCOTT COUNTY



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON



Source: Metropolitan Council's annual park and trail use estimates, 2017-2025.

Note: 2017-19 estimates are informed by the 2016 Visitors Study (dashed line; solid markers), and 2021-25 estimates by the 2021 Visitors Study (solid line; unfilled markers). Changes from 2017-2019 and from 2024-2025 are labeled; direct comparisons between sets of estimates should be interpreted with caution.