2020

PARK ACCESS PLAN

HURON-CLINTON METROPARKS

JULY 2020

Created for:

Huron-Clinton Metroparks

Created by:

OHM Advisors

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT

The Huron Clinton Metroparks Authority (HCMA) is a regional parks system created by the citizens of Southeast Michigan in 1940 to provide recreational and educational opportunities to all residents. The Metroparks are located in a greenbelt surrounding the Metro Detroit area and allow for access to open space, natural environments, and various outdoor activities throughout the entire year. The Metroparks are located in five counties throughout Southeast Michigan – Macomb, Wayne, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Livingston – and are intended to provide a natural retreat from urban and suburban life.

As the Southeast Michigan region has grown over the past 80 years, so has the parks' popularity. However, the parks are almost exclusively used by residents with access to private automobiles and those lacking access to transportation are unable to access the Metroparks. As the popularity of the parks has risen, more and more vehicles are utilizing the park contributing to the degradation of these pristine natural environments. Additionally, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increased demand for quality parks as residents look for ways to recreate while social distancing. The Metroparks are a great resource for Southeast Michigan, but not all residents have equal access to the parks because they may not have access to a vehicle and the Metroparks are not connected to public transit.
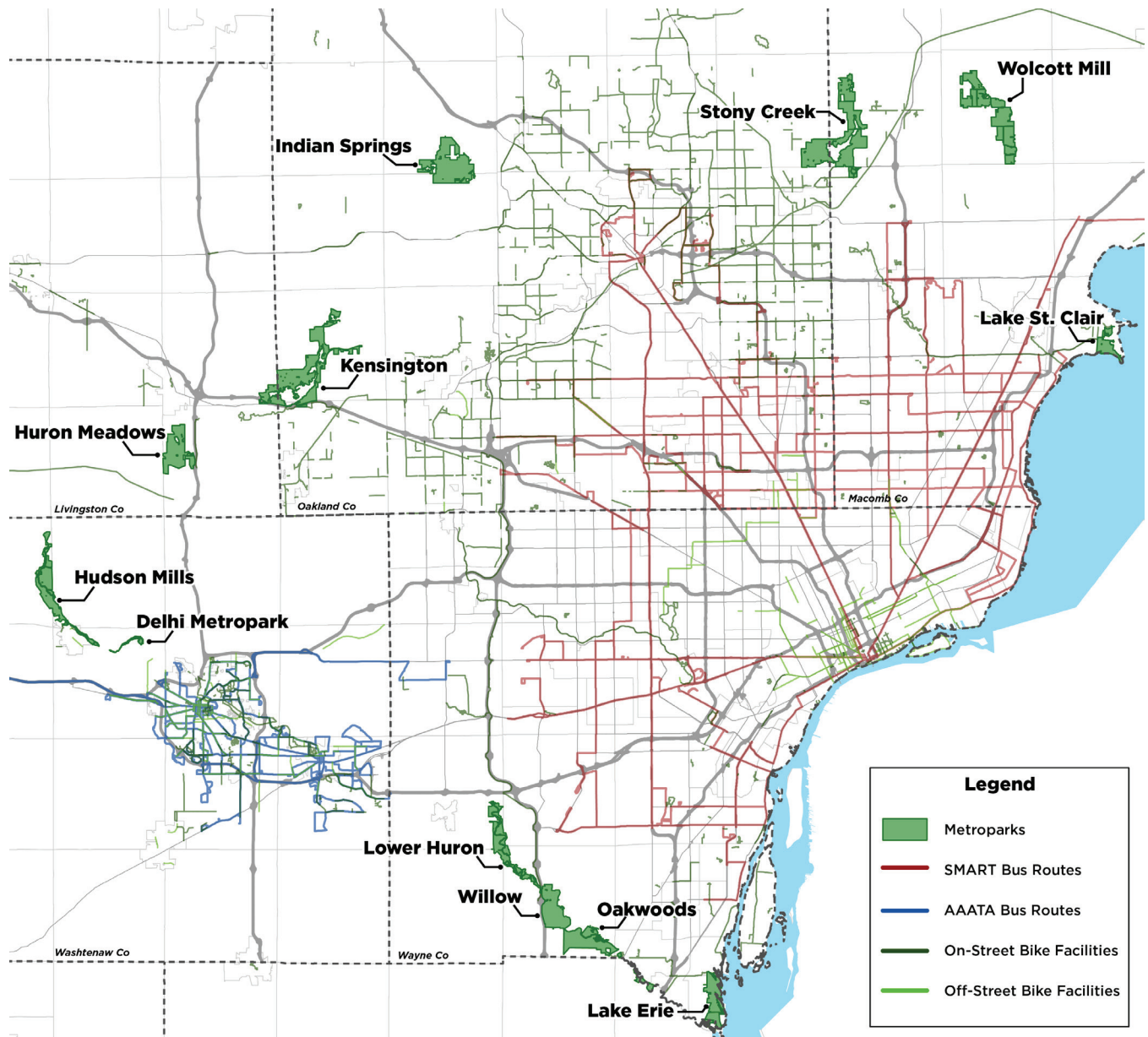
The HCMA Park Access Plan will explore ways the

Huron Clinton Metroparks Authority can better connect their parks to public transportation and non-motorized transportation systems to increase access for all residents of the region. Connecting the parks to these networks will also allow for more park users to access their preferred park without a private vehicle, reducing greenhouse gasses in the parks, slowing the degradation of vehicle infrastructure in the park, and contributing to improved safety.

PROJECT GOALS

At the onset of the project, a kick-off meeting was held with HCMA staff to better understand the previous work around improving access to the Metroparks. The following goals of HCMA will be furthered through this project:

- Connect urban areas across the Metro Region to the Metroparks
- Further HCMA equity goals through the fair distribution of resources and improvements across the Metro Region
- Decrease potential barriers of entry through increased opportunities for transit use and non-motorized connections

FIGURE 1-1: *HCMA Parks and Existing Mobility Infrastructure*

Legend

- Metroparks
- SMART Bus Routes
- AAATA Bus Routes
- On-Street Bike Facilities
- Off-Street Bike Facilities

02

EXISTING CONDITIONS

ABOUT

In order to best understand which parks have the most opportunity to improve access, an analysis of the existing demographic and transportation conditions was undertaken. HCMA's 2019 Scanning Report was used as the basis to determine where park visitors are coming from and to which parks they go.

CATCHMENT AREA ANALYSIS

The park Catchment Areas are the general areas where most park visitors are coming from. The 2019 HCMA Scanning Report summarized and analyzed the park visitor passes that were scanned upon entering the park. This analysis allowed HCMA to determine where park users are coming from. As expected, visitors who live in the zip codes surrounding a given Metropark tend to visit that park most. This data was used to determine the Catchment Area for each park in order to perform a demographic analysis. The demographic analysis will identify those zip codes that contain population groups that may be more reliant on public or non-motorized transportation and will help the project team identify recommendations to improve access to the nearby parks.

This report was compiled using data downloaded from the Metroparks server recorded through barcode scanning of vehicle passes upon entry into the Metroparks. In some instances, revenue data,

vehicle count data and U.S. Census data have been incorporated as well.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

A demographic analysis of each of the zip codes identified as part of a Catchment Area was performed to determine which parks have the greatest number of potentially transit dependent visitors. In many cases, areas that have higher levels of public transit ridership also have high population densities for the following demographic conditions:

- Overall population density
- Zero car household density
- Senior population density
- Low income individual population density
- Child population density

These data were compiled from the US Census website and analyzed at the block group level (for the entire region) and the zip code level (for the Metropark catchment areas). The demographic data was used to find the 'Transit Score' for each of the geographic levels identified.
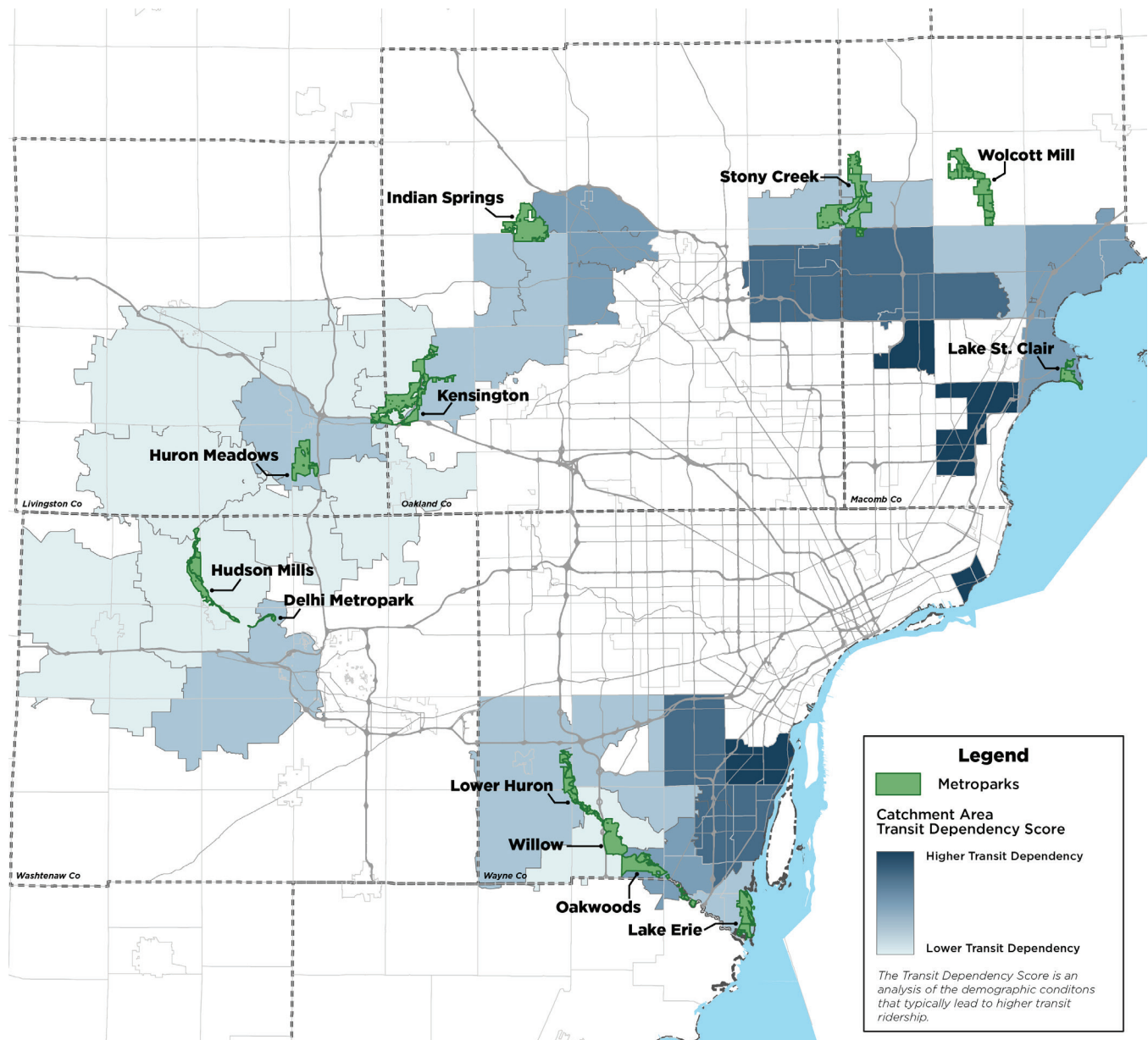
'Transit Score' is a measure of transit dependency or propensity that can be used to estimate how likely

the people in a given area are to use public transit. To calculate an area's 'Transit Score', each set of demographic density data is sorted largest to smallest and divided into 5 equal groups based on the value. The geographic areas in the highest cohort are awarded a score of 5, the next cohort is awarded a score of 4, and so on. This process is repeated with each demographic dataset. An overall 'Transit Score' is calculated by summing the score of each dataset. For the purposes of

this plan a 'Transit Score' analysis was completed for the five counties in the HCMA region, as well as for each of the zip codes in the Catchment Areas (Figure 1-2). An overall Metropark Transit Score was also developed by analyzing the demographic conditions in each catchment area as well.

The Transit Score analysis for the full metro area shows that the areas closest to the City center, Detroit and

FIGURE 1-2: Catchment Area Map

the surrounding suburbs, have the highest potential dependency on transit. This also matches up with where the majority of the transit service is located. This is important because these residents desire access to open spaces but may not have a chance to access many of the Metroparks. This analysis is helpful in determining if there are potential transit connections to the parks that touch large areas of transit dependency. The long-haul routes such as Gratiot, Michigan, and Woodward Avenue SMART Bus routes provide potential connections for the Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne County Metroparks. The Washtenaw County Metroparks are near to The Ride's system and could be connected as well.
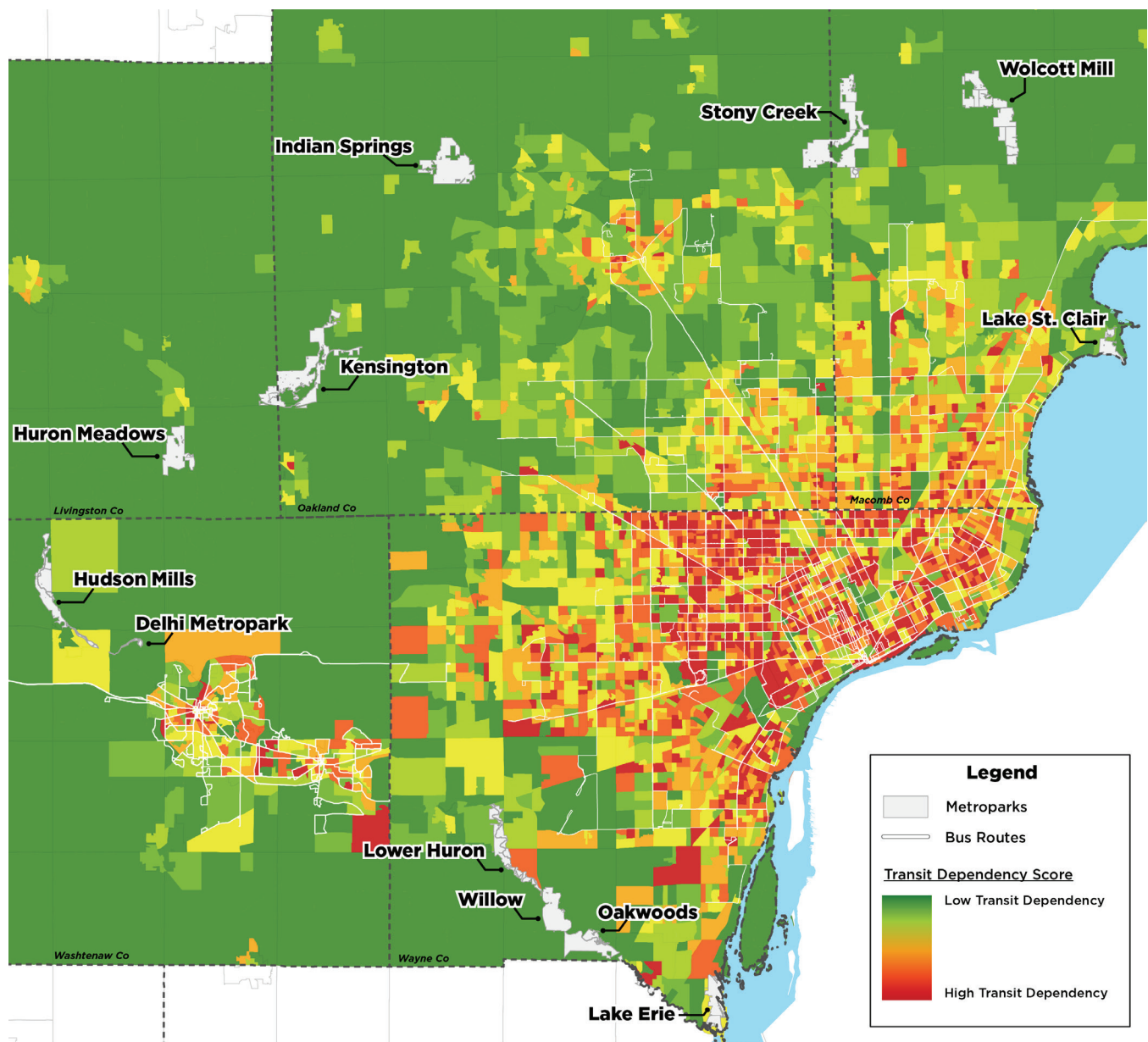
FIGURE 1-3: Transit Score Map

TABLE 1-1: *Demographic Analysis and Transit Scores of Catchment Areas*

Metropark	Population			Zero Car Households		Senior Population		Individuals in Poverty		Child Population		Total Transit Score
	Total	Density	Transit Score	Density	Transit Score	Density	Transit Score	Density	Transit Score	Density	Transit Score	
Lake St. Clair	107,228	2,516	5	92.4	5	377.9	5	367.9	5	420.09	5	25
Stony Creek	366,427	3,356	5	53.9	5	537.9	5	188.2	4	616.81	5	24
Lake Erie	208,601	2,195	5	56.1	5	370.7	5	264.2	5	384.59	4	24
Wolcott Mills	147,173	1,968	4	21.4	4	249.8	4	99.9	3	398.04	4	19
Indian Springs	101,750	1,717	4	21.9	4	264.8	4	132.3	4	289.97	3	19
Oakwoods	91,917	1,282	4	28.1	4	188.3	3	188.0	4	251.23	3	18
Dexter-Huron	65,562	1,040	3	14.8	2	170.0	3	68.9	2	190.23	3	13
Willow	93,815	724	2	17.4	3	94.7	2	96.7	3	142.76	2	12
Delhi	43,770	981	3	14.3	2	174.3	3	47.9	2	165.45	2	12
Kensington	172,781	602	2	7.5	1	96.3	2	28.0	1	111.44	2	8
Lower Huron	80,574	572	2	14.7	2	75.7	1	75.6	2	108.92	1	8
Huron Meadows	76,169	514	1	5.8	1	86.4	2	27.5	1	85.26	1	6
Hudson Mills	132,623	409	1	7.7	1	70.3	1	24.0	1	69.66	1	5

GAP ANALYSIS

In order to determine which of the Metroparks present the best opportunity to connect to existing transportation infrastructure, a high-level gap analysis was performed. The gap analysis consisted of drawing a 6-mile buffer from the main meeting place[1] in each park and identifying the public transportation and non-motorized transportation facilities that exist in the buffer zone. The 6-mile buffer was chosen because this adequately captured the potential public transit routes near to the parks while representing the farthest someone would likely bike to access the park.

The gap analysis considered four data points to determining the overall connection opportunity:

- Total number of transit routes within buffer
- Driving distance to nearest transit stop
- Total non-motorized facility length outside of park, within buffer
- Total non-motorized facility length inside of park

Transportation options nearby the Metroparks vary depending on where the park is located. Some parks are surrounded by non-motorized transportation facilities but very few public transit routes, some have many potential connections to transit and fewer bike and pedestrian connections, and some are more isolated and only accessible with a vehicle.
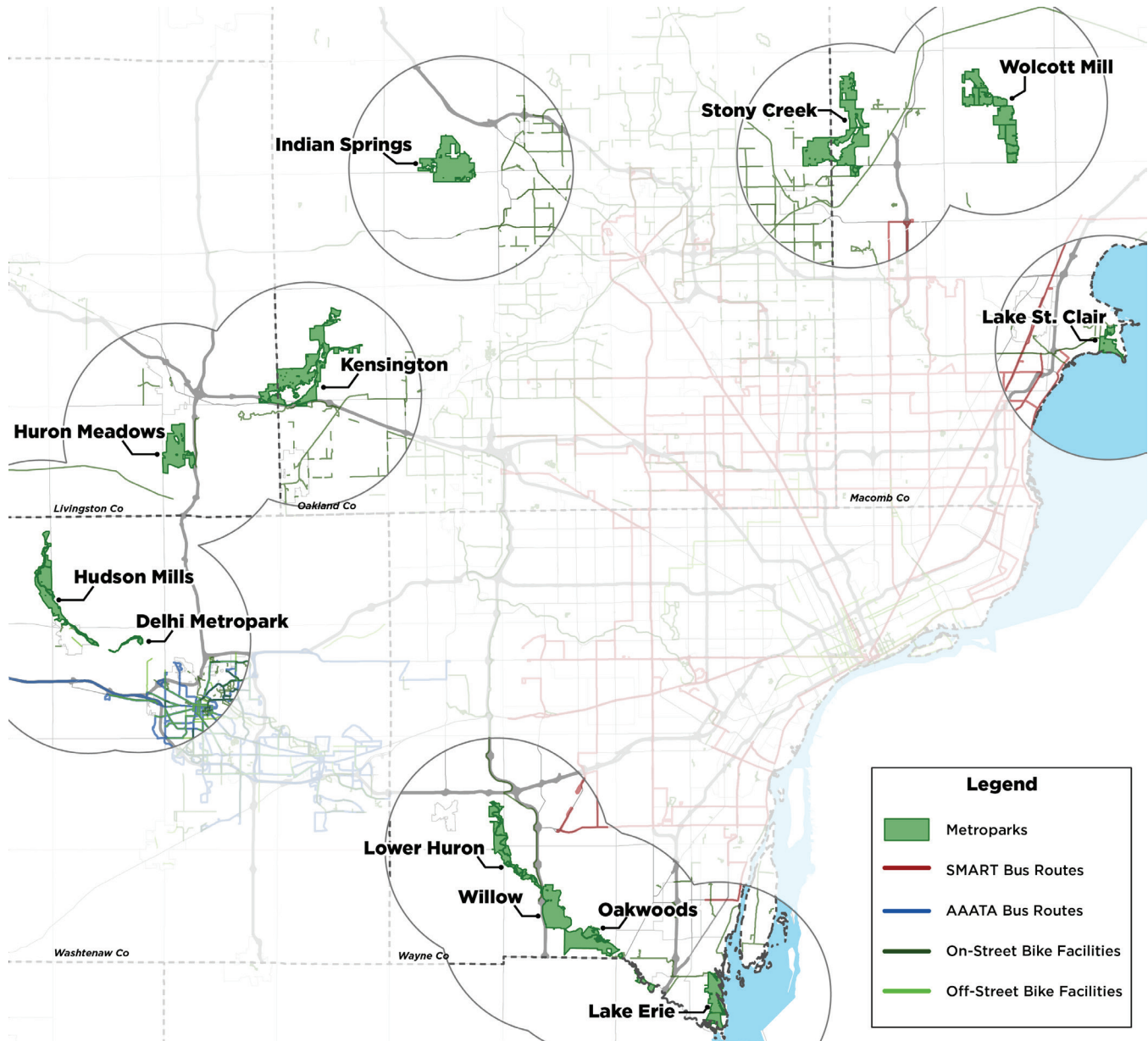
TABLE 1-2: Gap Analysis

Metropark	Non-Motorized		Public Transit	
	Total Length Outside of Park	Total Length Inside Park	Distance to Nearest Stop	Total Routes in Buffer
Lake St. Clair	13.46	2.81	3.4 miles	7
Stony Creek	95.45	8.08	7.1 miles	1
Lake Erie	20.73	4.11	6.5 miles	1
Wolcott Mills	28.65	0	n/a	0
Indian Springs	40.61	5.07	n/a	0
Oakwoods	19.48	4.28	n/a	0
Dexter-Huron	17.84	1.76	5.2 miles	7
Willow	15.97	6.33	8.4 miles	1
Delhi	41.56	0.09	3.1 miles	26
Kensington	29.63	20.3	n/a	0
Lower Huron	16.19	6.82	8.2 miles	3
Huron Meadows	15.37	0	n/a	0
Hudson Mills	5.8	8.3	n/a	0

[1]This could be the park office, large parking area, or main activity area of the park.

Lake St. Clair, Delhi, and Dexter-Huron are the parks that present the most opportunity to connect to nearby transit facilities since they are relatively close to existing SMART and AAATA service. Stony Creek, Indian Springs, and Kensington would be best suited to more bicycle and pedestrian connections as there are many existing connections to the surrounding communities into these parks.

FIGURE 1-4: Gap Analysis Map

03

PARK ACCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

PRIORITIZATION

To determine which of the Metroparks present the best opportunity for potential new transit and non-motorized connections, the existing conditions and gap analysis data was compiled and summarized for each park. Since transportation resources are limited, the prioritization process helps determine which of the Metroparks would benefit most from these connections and which would be the most efficient to connect from a resource standpoint. An objective decision was made by utilizing the data analysis.

Table 1-3 shows the results of a high-level prioritization exercise that evaluates each Metropark on the ease of connecting to non-motorized and public transit infrastructure. The parks that had the highest total distance of non-motorized infrastructure both inside and outside of the park, the most transit routes, were the closest to existing transit stops, and had the highest overall transit score were scored the highest. These parks all are located closer to the urbanized areas and see a higher number of visitors each year.

Delhi, Stony Creek, Lake St. Clair, and Lake Erie Metroparks were the top scoring parks and received the highest priority. These parks have a higher amount of non-motorized facilities nearby the park, as well as within the park. They are also within reasonable connecting distance to existing transit routes and have a relatively higher amount of transit dependent residents. Additionally, because these parks are relatively close to

existing transit, the potential is greater to connect other residents who may not have access to a vehicle but would like to visit the Metroparks.

One of HCMA's goals for improving park access is to explore solutions that are equitable. To meet this goal, Stony Creek will not be carried forward to the recommendations phase. Stony Creek was chosen because it is the furthest from the existing transit routes and is already connected to the existing non-motorized network. Delhi, Lake St. Clair, and Lake Erie Metroparks have a higher need for access improvements and represent the three regions of the Metroparks Authority, meaning any future investments will touch a larger portion of the region.

TABLE 1-3: Prioritization Matrix

Metropark	Transit Score	Distance to Nearest Stop	Transit Routes	Non-motorized Length Outside	Non-motorized Length Inside	Total Score
Delhi	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	14
Stony Creek	●●●	●●	●●	●●●	●●●	13
Lake St. Clair	●●●	●●●	●●●	●	●●	12
Lake Erie	●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●	11
Dexter-Huron	●●	●●	●●●	●●	●●	11
Indian Springs	●●	●	●	●●●	●●●	10
Lower Huron	●	●●	●●●	●●	●●	10
Willow	●●	●●	●●	●	●●	9
Wolcott Mills	●●	●	●	●●	●●	8
Oakwoods	●●	●	●	●●	●●	8
Kensington	●	●	●	●●	●●	7
Huron Meadows	●	●	●	●	●	4
Hudson Mills	●	●	●	●	●	4

Lake St. Clair Metropark

RECOMMENDATIONS

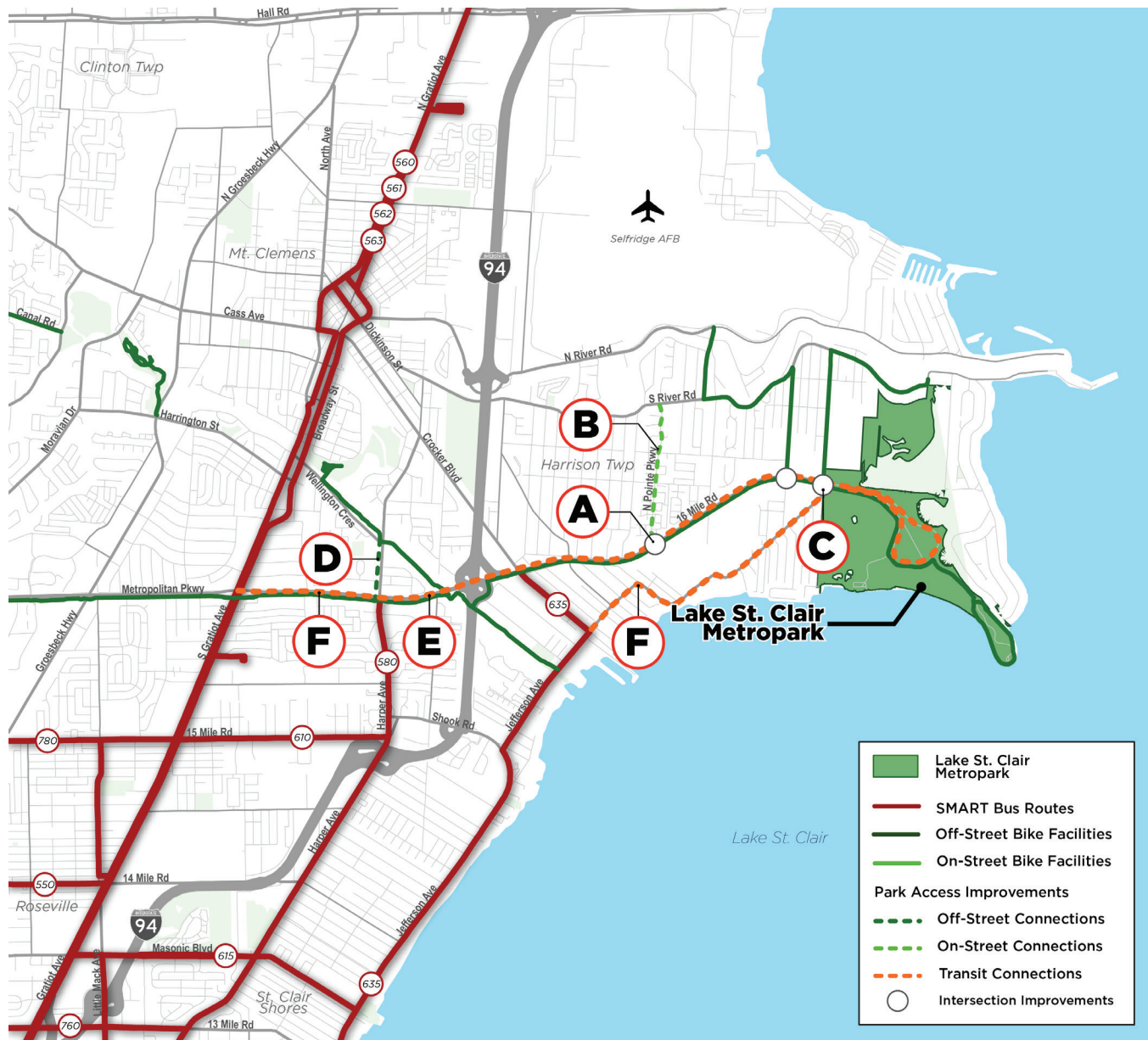|	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS					
		HARRISON TOWNSHIP	CLINTON TOWNSHIP	MT. CLEMENS	MACOMB COUNTY	SMART	SEMCOG
Action A: Add a HAWK signal and other crossing improvements at N. Pointe Pkwy and 16 Mile	SHORT	●					●
Action B: Add a bike lane along N. Pointe Pkwy connecting to S. River Road	LONG	●					●
Action C: Improve visibility of existing crossing at 16 Mile Road and Jefferson Avenue	SHORT	●					●
Action D: Harper shared use path from 16 Mile to Wellington Crescent	LONG		●				●
Action E: Provide a shuttle that runs between the park and Gratiot that picks users up from bus stops (peak season only)	SHORT	●	●	●	●	●	
Action F: Transit route on Gratiot or Jefferson connecting to neighborhoods	LONG					●	

Short term time frame is 0 to 3 years, long term timeframe is over 3 years.

Global Recommendations:
- *Build strategic connections from apartment buildings/complexes along 16 Mile Road to Freedom Trail (especially near Harper Avenue and 16 Mile Road)*
- *Develop opportunities for strategic crossing of 16 Mile Road to connect neighborhoods*

FIGURE 1-5: Lake St. Clair Metropark Recommendations

The recommended access connections for Lake St. Clair Metropark attempt to foster connections between the existing non-motorized network, the adjacent neighborhoods, and nearby transit routes. Adding safer and more visible crossing infrastructure for non-motorized users to cross 16 Mile Road/Metro Parkway at N. Pointe Parkway, Jefferson Road, and S. River Road will help foster connections to the Freedom Trail, which has direct access to the park.

Transit access to Lake St. Clair Metropark could be achieved in a number of ways. A shuttle running along Metro Parkway and serving the park could help transport passengers from SMART's Gratiot, Harper, 15 Mile, and Jefferson Routes. Alternatively, a dedicated route deviating from Gratiot serving the park could connect many transit dependent neighborhoods in the region. An extension of SMART Route 635 could also offer limited stop service into the park from many transit dependent neighborhoods. All potential transit options would operate during the peak season on the busiest days to maximize ridership and make the most of limited funds.
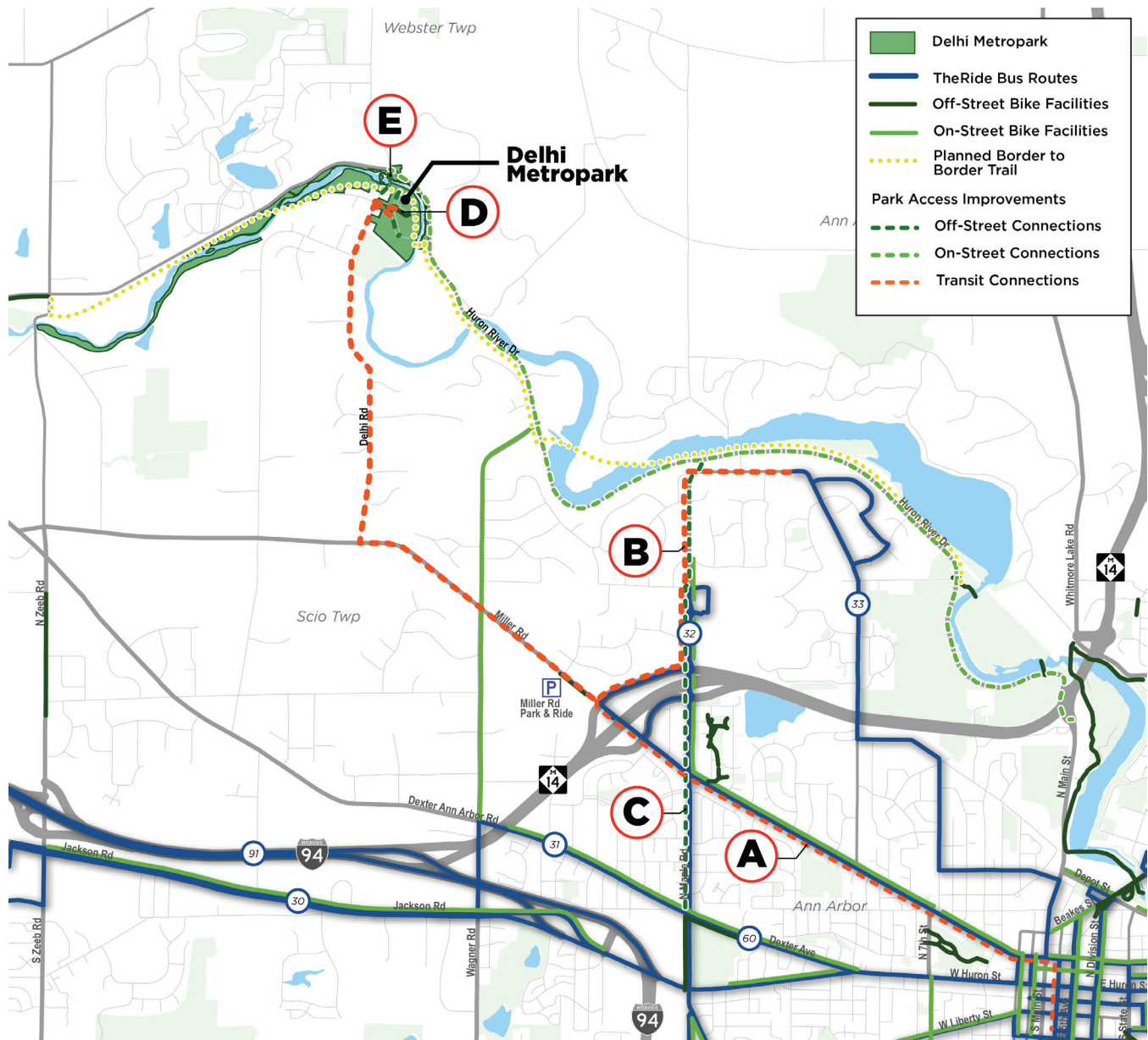
Delhi Metropark

RECOMMENDATIONS

	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS					
		CITY OF ANN ARBOR	THE RIDE	SCIO TOWNSHIP	WASHTENAW COUNTY	SEMCOG	ANN ARBOR TOWNSHIP
Action A: *Run an express shuttle to Delhi Metropark from the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority - Blake Transit Center (4-5 stops total and only during the summer during peak times)*	LONG		●				
Action B: *Run a circulator shuttle hitting The Ride Routes 32 and 33*	SHORT		●				
Action C: *Connect Maple Road path to the Border-to-Border Trail*	LONG	●		●	●	●	
Action D: *Build sidewalk/path connection along park entrance road*	SHORT	*HCMA Lead*					
Action E: *Add a bike lane along Huron River Drive to Delhi Road/Delhi Metropark*	SHORT			●		●	

Short term time frame is 0 to 3 years, long term timeframe is over 3 years.

FIGURE 1-6: Delhi Metropark Recommendations

The recommended access connections for Delhi Metropark are intended to connect to the non-motorized and transit network facilities in nearby Ann Arbor. Ann Arbor has a number of transit dependent neighborhoods that could connect to the park. A trail/shared use path connection from central Ann Arbor along Maple Road to Huron River Drive, and eventually the Border to Border Trail, would help foster non-motorized connections to the Park. Additional pathways from Huron River Drive to Delhi Metropark, and along the entrance road into the park, will help users access the park from major routes.

Delhi Metropark is near most of the transit routes operated by TheRide (Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority) and could be connected in a few ways. One option is to operate a limited stop route starting at the Blake Transit Center and traveling along Miller Road and Delhi Road and linking with Route 32. Another option is to operate a circulator shuttle connecting Routes 32 and 33 to the park. Both options would link with the Park and Ride lot on Miller Road. Any potential transit service connecting to Delhi Metropark could be operated during the peak season on the most popular days in order to maximize ridership and reduce overall operating expenses.
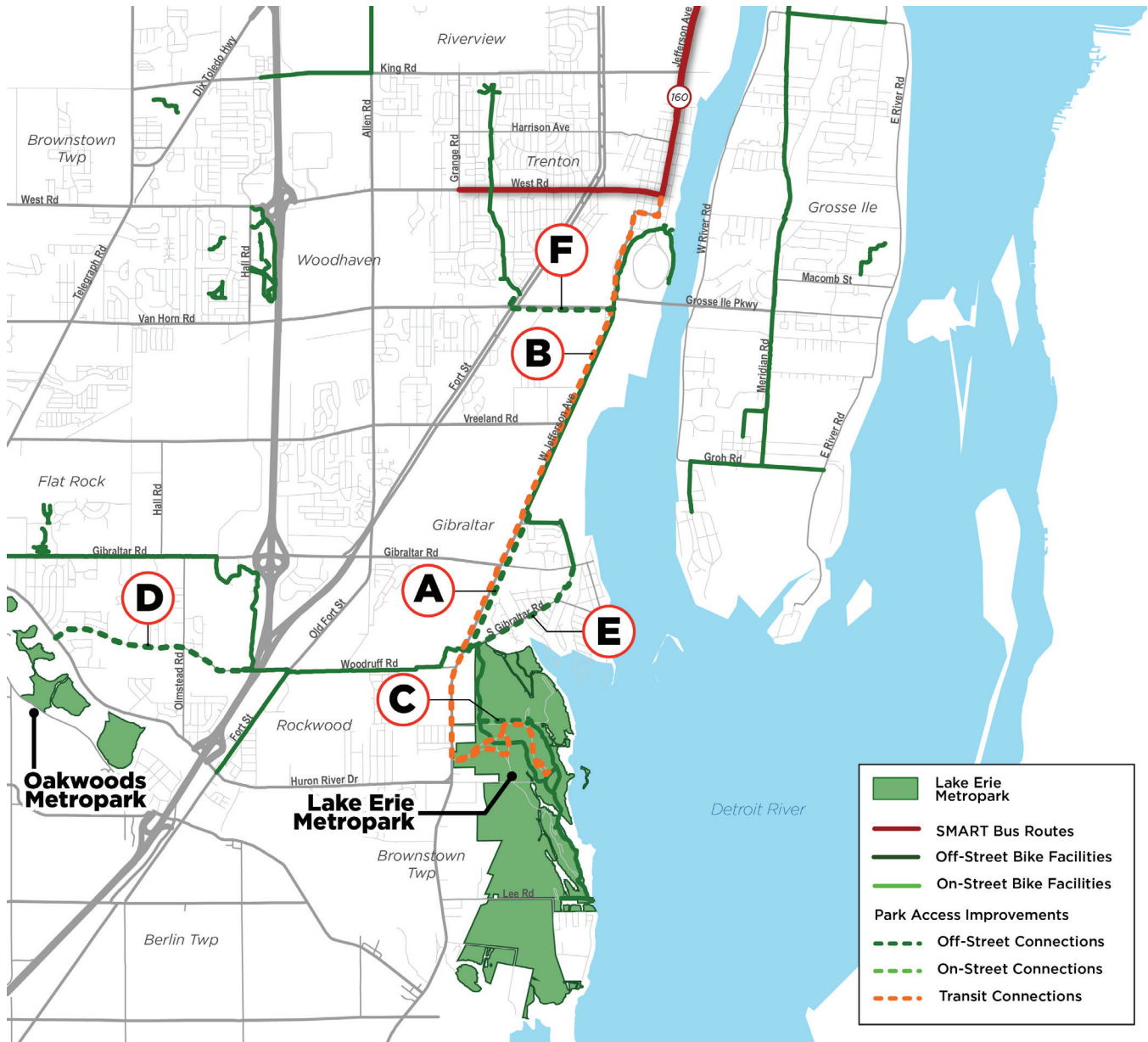
Lake Erie Metropark

RECOMMENDATIONS

	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS							
		CITY OF FLAT ROCK	CITY OF ROCKWOOD	CITY OF GIBRALTAR	CITY OF WOODHAVEN	BROWNSTOWN TWP.	CITY OF TRENTON	SMART	SEMCOG
Action A: *Continue the Jefferson Avenue path connection to park**	LONG			●		●	●		●
Action B: *Extend SMART route 160, allowing for access to park*	LONG							●	
Action C: *Create a connection of the interior path connection on Culpepper Road*	SHORT					●			
Action D: *Continue Woodruff Road path connection into the City of Flat Rock/Oakwoods Metropark**	LONG	●	●						●
Action E: *Continue the Gibraltar Road trail to Jefferson Avenue**	SHORT			●					

Short term time frame is 0 to 3 years, long term timeframe is over 3 years.

Additional Coordination:
- *Work with Friends of the Detroit River and Downriver Linked Greenways to coordinate trail connections*

FIGURE 1-7: Lake Erie Metropark Recommendations

The recommended access connections for Lake Erie Metropark look to take advantage of the existing non-motorized network and connect to future Iron Belle Trail and Downriver Linked Trail facilities. Adding trail connections along Jefferson Avenue and Gibraltar Road will help connect bicyclists and pedestrians directly into the park. A path connection on Culpepper Road would facilitate non-motorized trips within the park and a pathway connection/extension along Woodruff Road

would connect Oakwoods Metropark to Lake Erie.

Transit access to Lake Erie Metropark could be achieved by extending SMART Route 160 to the park along Jefferson Avenue. This would allow riders in transit dependent neighborhoods in Southern Wayne County and Detroit to access a Metropark. This service would likely be available during the peak season on days when park visitation is the highest in order to maximize ridership and available operating dollars.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The following options should be looked into as potential funding opportunities for the recommendations listed in this plan.

Ralph C. Wilson

The Ralph C. Wilson Foundation funds the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan in key ways to improve the region. Grants in four separate categories honor the lifetime interest of Mr. Wilson and include: the Caregivers Fund, the Design and Access Fund, the Youth Sports Fund, and the Grosse Pointe Community Assets Fund. Grants from the Design and Access Fund could be used to support walking and biking trails in Southeast Michigan. Over the past few years, the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan has funded trails, greenways, and bicycle facilities for a number of different entities, including HCMA.

Washtenaw County, Connecting Communities Grant

The Connecting Communities grant program is designed to assist Washtenaw County communities in developing and enhancing the non-motorized transportation network. The program is supported by the four-year Road and Trails Millage (2016) and could help advance the walking and biking connections to Delhi and the other Metroparks in Washtenaw County. These grants would be applied for in partnership with other communities in the county.

Partnerships with Local Municipalities

Many municipalities around Southeast Michigan have dedicated funding mechanisms to add walking and biking infrastructure outside of dedicated grant funding. HCMA can work with the communities planning for these facilities and identify ways for trail connections to be made, while still serving the greater community. These connections could be made in the form of on-street interventions like bike lanes or signed bike routes.

RTA Funding

The Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA) is a regional entity who's mission is to manage and secure transportation resources to enhance mobility in Southeast Michigan. The goal for the RTA is to secure additional local funding to expand transit service around the region. Although no funding has been allocated at this time, a regional transit master plan is being developed that lays out service goals for SMART, DDOT, and AAATA. With additional funding, connections to the nearby Metroparks could be made, helping to connect residents to these vital resources. If funding is secured in the future, HCMA should consult with the RTA to identify connection opportunities.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)

CMAQ is a federally funded program administered through SEMCOG that funds transportation projects that work towards better air quality and reduction of congestion. Related projects that are eligible for CMAQ funding include non-motorized transportation facility improvements such as bike lanes, and shared ride improvements such as transit.

Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) primarily allocates resources for acquisition and development for outdoor recreation and natural resource protection. Applications are evaluated based on natural resource access, availability of matching funds, financial need, priority projects, and proximity to population clusters. Any unit of government with an approved community five-year recreation plan is eligible to receive funding through MNRTF.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The Department of Natural Resources' Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides matching grants to local governments for the development of public recreation areas and facilities. Any unit of government with an approved community five-year recreation plan is eligible to receive funding through LWCF.

Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program

The purpose of the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program is to provide grants for the development of outdoor recreation areas and facilities, primarily in urban areas. Any unit of government, or combination thereof, that is legally constituted to provide recreation is eligible to apply for funding.