TH 25 Area Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

Existing Conditions Review

April 30, 2024

This report is prepared in accordance with Title 23 U.S. Code (USC) Sec. 168

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HWY 25 AREA PEL STUDY

Sherburne & Wright Counties

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1. Executive Summary

The Mississippi River defines the Central Minnesota region both as a valuable resource in addition to being a substantial barrier to travel between the communities in the region. Highway 25, a vital transportation corridor link, is one of three river crossings between Sherburne County and Wright County, connecting I-94 in Monticello to US Highway 10 in Big Lake. This area has been the focal point of multiple studies in the past aimed at improving local and regional mobility, with Highway 25 and cross river mobility as a key concern for local and county planning efforts.

This document provides a planning level review of the Highway 25 Area Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study area that encompasses Highway 25 and the surrounding area between Interstate 94 (I-94) and US Highway 10 in Wright and Sherburne Counties, Minnesota. It includes the following information, by section:

Section 2: Introduction and Highway 25 Area PEL Study Review Area

This section provides an overview of the PEL planning process, the contents of the existing conditions report (ECR), and a description of the Highway 25 Area PEL study area. The ECR provides a summary of current conditions, including previous planning documents, an overview of the transportation system, operations, and safety, and area social, economic, and environmental context.

Section 3: Plans, Policies, and Previous Studies Review

This section provides a review of plans, policies, and previous studies primarily focused on examining past efforts in identifying corridor transportation needs, and existing issues related to safety, operations, access, and mobility between the communities of Becker, Big Lake, and Monticello.

Section 4: Corridor Conditions Review

This section provides a review of the primary findings from the existing conditions data collection. Several key features related to social and economic conditions, multi-modal transportation conditions, and environmental conditions were assessed to gain a clear understanding of the natural and built environments that make up the TH 25 Area PEL study area.

Section 5: Next Step/Conclusion

This section provides a brief conclusion for the report.

Section 6: List of Data and References

This section provides links to the data referenced in this report.

2. Introduction

Wright County and Sherburne County, in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, are facilitating a comprehensive study of Highway 25 and the surrounding area between I-94 and US Highway 10. This PEL study will consider the benefits and impacts of proposed transportation system improvements to the environment, communities, and economy knowing that the outcome of the analysis and evaluation will affect many elements within the project area including safety and access, freight, and congestion, while encouraging economic development. The Existing Conditions Review provides a summary of current conditions, including previous planning documents, an overview of the transportation system, operations, and safety, and area social, economic, and environmental context.

2.1. Highway 25 Area PEL Study Boundaries

Highway 25 is a principal arterial located between Wright County and Sherburne County in Central Minnesota (**Figure 1**). The Highway 25 Area PEL covers portions of northeast Wright County and southern Sherburne County and includes the 11 miles of Highway 25 that connects the City of Monticello in Wright County to the City of Becker in Sherburne County. Highway 25 is a vital link for interregional traffic needs through Central Minnesota in addition to serving as a vital local connection across the Mississippi River for Wright County and Sherburne County. The Highway 25 bridge is one of the few Mississippi River crossings in central Minnesota, with the next nearest river crossing being Highway 101 between Rogers/Otsego and Elk River, approximately 12 miles south of Highway 25 (**Figure 2**). The Highway 24 river crossing between Clearwater and Clear Lake is approximately 14 miles north of the Highway 25 crossing.

The Highway 25 Area PEL Study will focus on the area surrounding the segment of Highway 25 that connects Monticello and Becker, in Wright County and Sherburne County, respectively, as well as the surrounding area (**Figure 3**). This segment of Highway 25 has been the focus of multiple studies and planning efforts to address mobility, safety, and other transportation needs, with a special focus on increasing mobility across the Mississippi River. However, there has been no determination made as to how these mobility improvements will be realized, hence the need for this PEL study. These previous studies are summarized in **Section 3**.

The approximate geographic limits of the TH 25 Area PEL Study review area are:

- Intersection of US Highway 10 and Highway 25 north of Becker, MN (north and west limit)
- Wright County Road (CR) 106 (85th Street NE) (south limit)
- Harding Avenue outside Monticello/Wright County Road 43 (east limit)

In the study area, Highway 25 is a four-lane divided and undivided principal arterial between I-94 and the Sherburne County Road 11/14 intersection and a two-lane section between County Road 11/14 and US Highway 10. The primary function of this segment of Highway 25 is providing vehicle mobility, while also providing access to adjacent land uses.

Figure 1. Study Regional Location

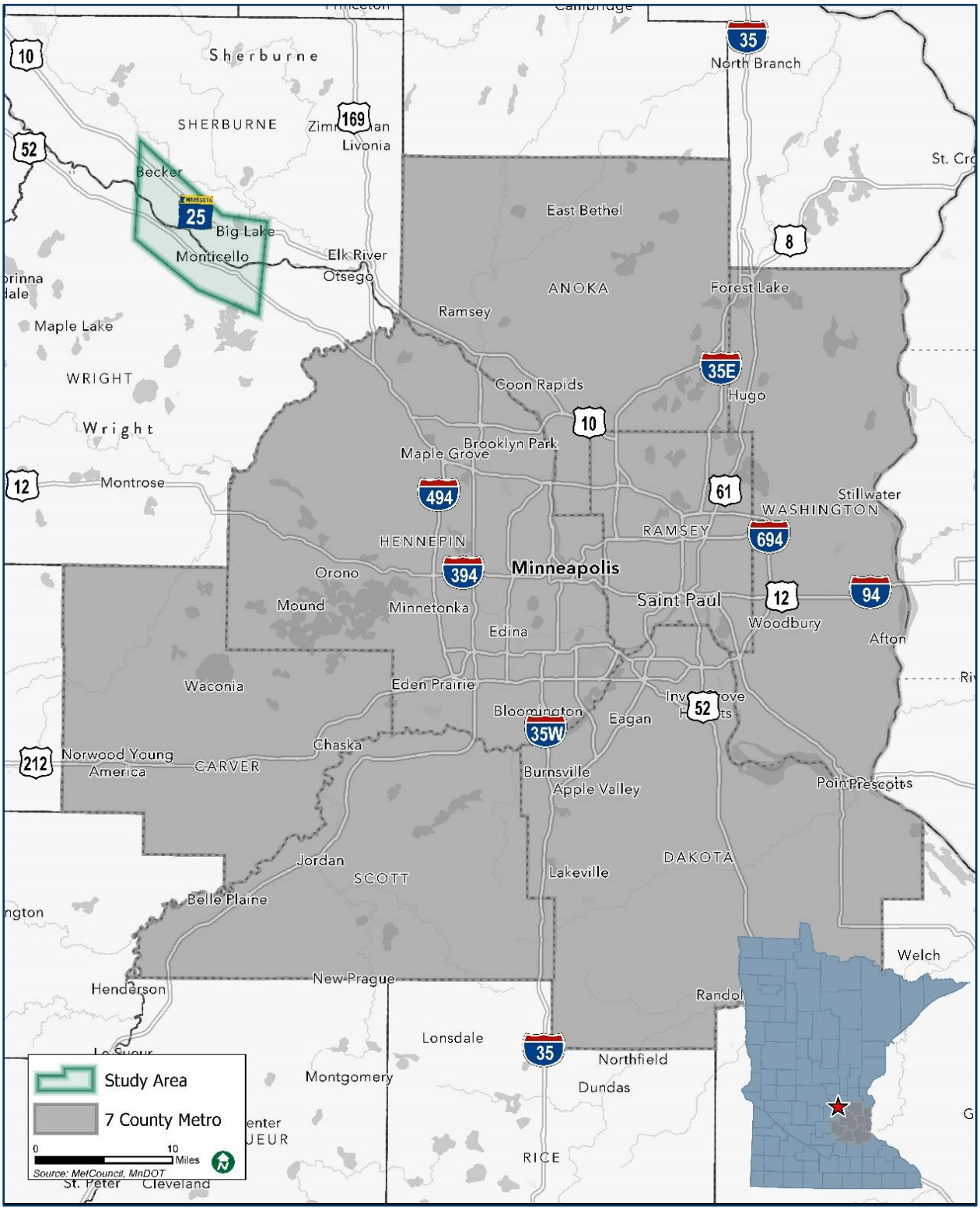
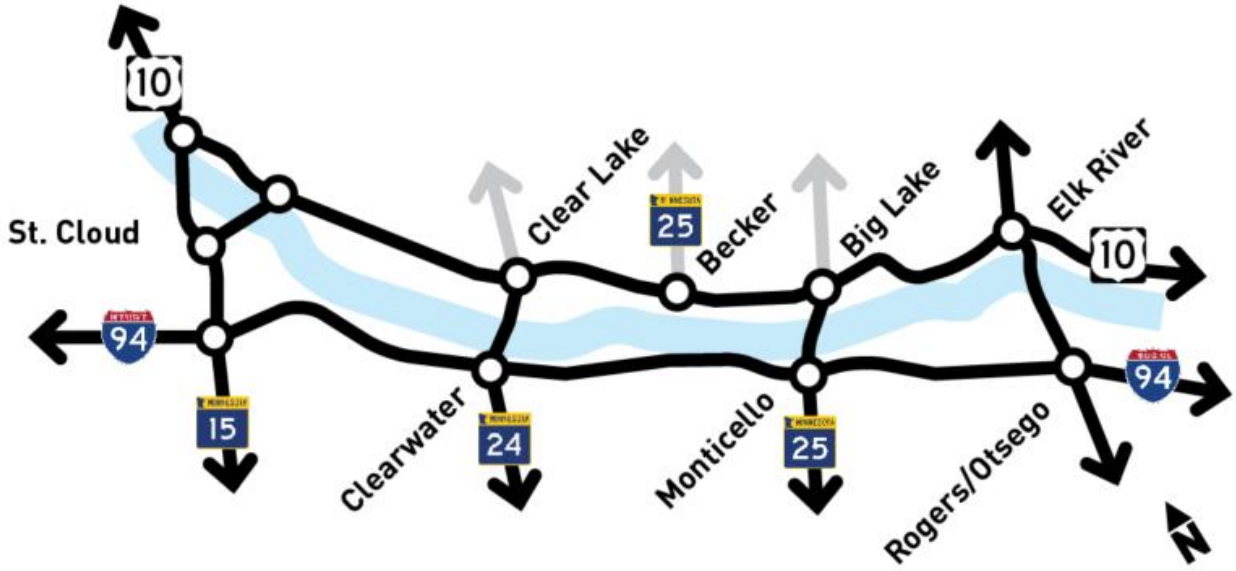


Figure 2. Central Minnesota Mississippi River Crossings



*Not to Scale

Highway 25 is a vital link across the Mississippi River, being the only river crossing between Clearwater and Rogers, linking Sherburne and Wright Counties in addition to serving several communities and unincorporated areas in both counties. The alignment of Highway 25 varies within the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area and is detailed in **Section 4.2 – Transportation Conditions Review**.

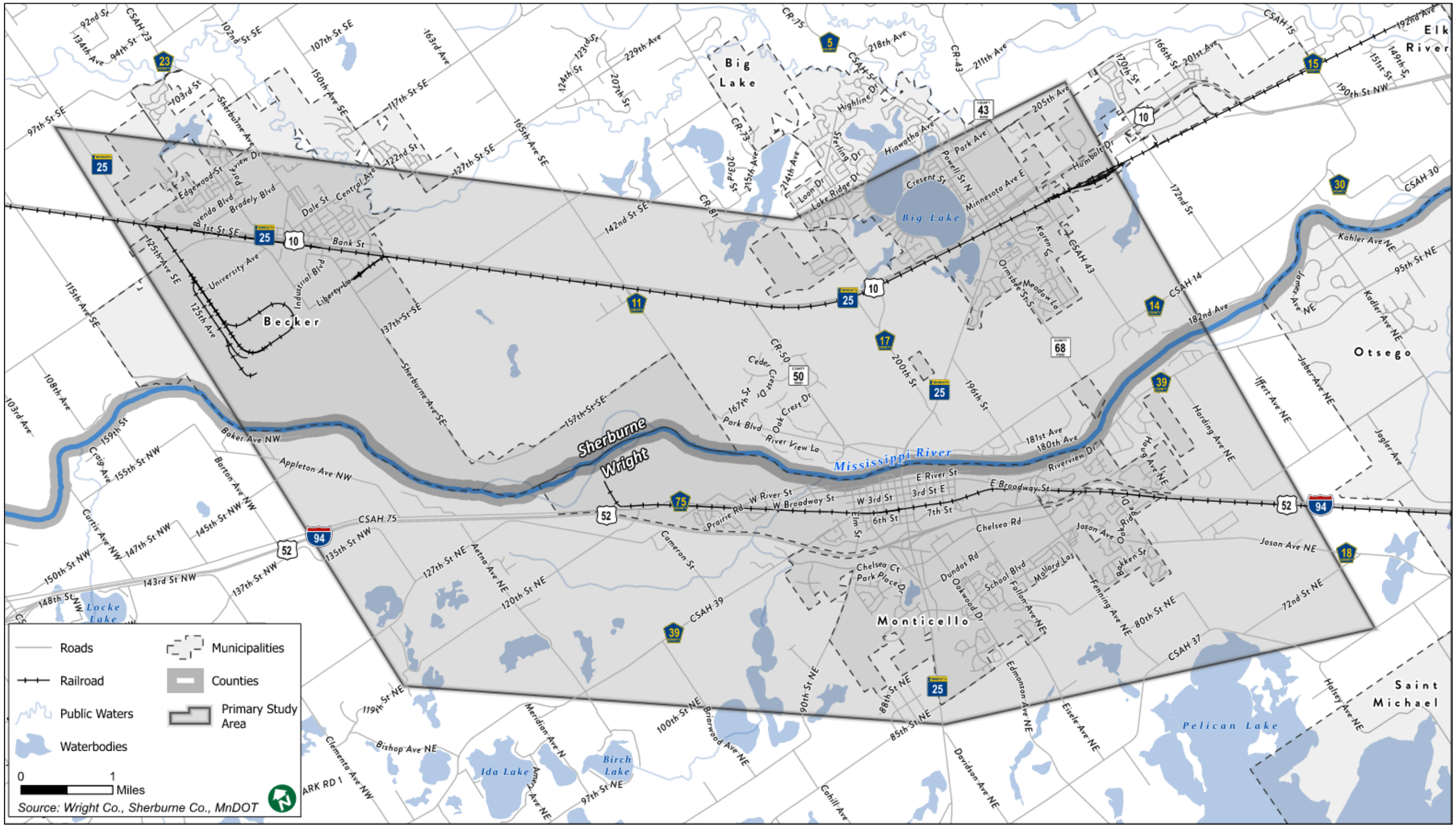
Between I-94 in Monticello and US Highway 10 through Big Lake, the majority of Highway 25 is a four-lane Urban Principal Arterial - Other, providing access to major regional activity centers in addition to serving continuity needs between interregional facilities such as US Highway 10 and I-94. A two-lane segment of Highway 25 exists between the Sherburne County Road 11/14 intersection and Highway 10.

Between Big Lake and Becker, Highway 25 is concurrent with US Highway 10, a rural principal arterial with a primary function of providing vehicular mobility while also providing access to adjacent land uses.

At the western edge of Becker, Highway 25 splits off from US Highway 10 to head north towards the Sherburne County border with Benton County.

Access to and from Highway 25 is varied throughout the PEL review area, with numerous uncontrolled private accesses for residential, commercial, and agricultural properties. Average daily traffic ranging from approximately 10,000 vehicles per day (VPD) to over 40,000 VPD.

Figure 3. Highway 25 Area PEL Study Review Area



3. Plans, Policies and Prior Studies

This section provides a summary review of state, regional, county, township, and municipal plans and policies relevant to the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. Below is a summary of relevant plans collected and reviewed as part of the existing conditions analysis. Links to plans mentioned in this section can be found in **Section 6**:

3.1. Wright County Planning and Policy Review

3.1.1. Wright County Long Range Transportation Plan (2019)

The Wright County Long Range Transportation Plan examines the county's existing transportation infrastructure and transportation needs.

- Highway 25 in Monticello near CSAH 75 is identified as a roadway that is approaching its planned traffic capacity for daily traffic volumes. Highway 25 in Monticello near the city border is a roadway that is identified to be over capacity.

3.1.2. Wright County Northeast Quadrant Land Use Plan (2007)

Wright County's Northeast Quadrant (NEQ) Land Use Plan was adopted in 2007 and serves as a vision of how the NEQ will develop. The NEQ Land Use Plan is a long-term vision for shaping future growth and change balanced against the needs and wants of the people of Wright County, through land use, policies, and transportation. The NEQ is anticipating significant growth, especially in the Monticello area, and Wright County policy is to focus development on existing cities. The future land use classification assigned the area to the south, east, and west of Monticello is Transition Areas (TA), which roughly corresponds to the City of Monticello orderly annexation area (OAA).

3.2. Sherburne County Planning and Policy Review

3.2.1. Sherburne County 2040 Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2023)

This plan primarily outlines the existing and future planned land use for Sherburne County and established 28 Policy Areas that represent community supported initiatives that help balance the Land Use Plan with natural resources, transportation systems, parks, County services, and economic development initiatives.

- Part of the Implementation strategy of the Plan was to support the PEL study for Highway 25 being completed by Sherburne and Wright County by continuing to be engaged in the Technical Advisory Committee and Central Mississippi River Regional Planning Partnership.
- Business and Industry is supported along the State Highways, but development proposals along major roads should be coordinated and reviewed with the County Public Works Department and its partners including local roadway authorities and MnDOT.

3.2.2. Sherburne County Transportation Plan (2019)

The Sherburne County Transportation Plan evaluates all transportation infrastructure within Sherburne County and forecasts future county transportation needs. Highway 25 is one of five state highways that run through Sherburne County.

Four intersections along Highway 25 were identified as issue areas by Sherburne County. They are:

- US Highway 10 / Highway 25 /CSAH 8 Intersection – this intersection will be studied further to identify future needs.
- CSAH 11 / US Highway 10 Intersection – site of a potential future interchange, area of congestion
- US Highway 10 / Highway 25 Diversion in Big Lake – potential site for bicycle and pedestrian crossings, in need of further study
- US Highway 10 / Highway 25 through downtown Big Lake – major safety concerns turning on to the highway

A need for safe bicycle and pedestrian crossings across Highway 25 is mentioned.

A new river crossing somewhere south of Big Lake to Becker is mentioned; however, no specific plan or location is defined within the plan.

Congestion along Highway 25 is discussed, as residents have begun to use alternative routes to avoid traffic and backups along the roadway.

- Highway 25 from the river crossing to CSAH 17 near Big Lake is identified as a congested area with a volume to capacity ratio greater than 1.

3.3. Local Planning and Policy Review

3.3.1. Central Mississippi River Regional Partnership Plan Framework 2030 (2022)

The Central Mississippi River Regional Partnership is made up of a variety of stakeholders from Becker Township, Big Lake Township, the City of Becker, the City of Big Lake, the City of Monticello, Monticello Township, Sherburne County, Wright County, and Silver Creek Township. The purpose of this plan is to highlight the challenges of the region and anticipate any changes to the region through strategic planning.

- The Highway 25 bridge spanning the Mississippi River in Monticello sees traffic of 39,000 vehicles per day. This is a major point of congestion in the region and alternatives are being evaluated to alleviate this congestion as the population and the regional economy grow.

- MnDOT is mentioned as a key partner in addressing congestion issues with the Highway 25 bridge through Monticello.

- Outlined land use actions mention defining key corridors so all regional partners can develop plans that work together. This would ideally result in a composite map of all plans assembled by stakeholders and using that as a basis for a larger regional plan.

- The development of a cohesive regional parks system with walking and biking infrastructure is identified as a top priority. Actions associated with developing this system include the development of a website, a greenways plan and map, and the promotion of non-motorized transportation modes.

3.3.2. Region 7W Long Range Plan (2022)

Region 7W is part of the Central Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (also known as ATP 3), and includes the counties of Benton, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright. Region 7W was formed to address regionally significant transportation issues, conduct regional transportation studies and plans, and solicit and select projects seeking federal transportation funding that support the activities of MnDOT and the Central Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership.

The Region 7W Long Range Plan was developed from stakeholder feedback and a review of the existing transportation system and demographic characteristics for the region. It produced implementation priorities, which were sub-divided into Regional Corridors of Emphasis and specific County Action Plans.

- US Highway 10 from Big Lake to Clear Lake was identified as one of the Regional Corridors of Emphasis on account of the corridor's high growth potential, historic growth rates, and its function of absorbing travel demand from the southwest via Highway 25.
- The plan calls for further evaluation of a future river crossing along this segment of US Highway 10.
- The Sherburne County Action Plan identified project needs along County Highway 11 and County Highway 14 due to primary issues of safety, connectivity, access, mobility (specifically during weekend peaks), and multimodal opportunities. There are two programmed improvements that would align with the County Highway 11 and County Highway 14 roadways in Sherburne County, identified in the Sherburne County Long-Range Transportation Plan as priority projects, but not tied to a specific implementation timeframe. They are:
- County Highway 11 from US Highway 10 to Highway 25 – A 3.8-mile-long capacity and trail project with an estimated cost of $11m (2019-dollars)
- County Highway 14 from County Highway 30 to US Highway 10 – A 1.1-mile-long pavement and trail, with the potential for traffic control modifications. The estimated cost is $700k (2019-dollars)

3.3.3. Becker Comprehensive Plan (2021)

The Comprehensive Plan for the City of Becker, updated in 2021, details the existing infrastructure, parks, and economic status of the city and details plans for expected future growth. Highway 25 runs along the western municipal boundary of the City of Becker and is concurrent with US Highway 10, a major roadway within the city.

The future land use map shows land to the east and west of Highway 25 going from agricultural land to being rezoned as low and medium-density residential.

- 95 percent of surveyed residents reported that they drove alone for most trips, making roadways like Highway 25 important for connectivity and mobility.
- Highway 25 is classified as a minor arterial within the City of Becker, meaning its main purpose is to serve as a connecting route to other roadways.
- The intersection of Highway 25 and US Highway 10 on the western edge of the City of Becker was identified as an intersection with higher crash frequency from 2009 to 2018.

3.3.4. Becker Zoning Map (2023)

This map shows all current zoning districts within the City of Becker. The map was last updated in 2023. Uses along Highway 25 include Power Generation and Quasi Public.

3.3.5. Becker Township Comprehensive Plan (2014)

The Comprehensive Plan for the Township of Becker is an update to the previous 2007 comprehensive plan. This document serves as a living guide for land use, transportation, parks and trails, and natural resources within the township. Highway 25 runs along the west side of Becker Township and connects to US Highway 10 as well as CR 54 and CR 127.

- At the time the update was published, 93 percent of Becker Township's population relies on a vehicle to get to and from their place of employment, making local roads like Highway 25 important in travel patterns for residents. Traffic analysis conducted by MnDOT found no capacity or access concerns along Highway 25 in Becker Township. There are two proposed major collector roadways that adjoin Highway 25 in the Becker Township transportation plan. Xcel Energy has publicly stated that they intend to turn their former coal burning generator sites into solar energy fields, though this is not listed in any planning documents.

3.3.6. Sherco Development Master Plan (2022)

This master plan provides a vision, framework, principles, and guidelines for the development of approximately 1,800 acres of the Sherburne County Power Plant. The designs presented in this document are conceptual in nature, presenting the possible improvements that will fulfill the desired future vision for the property. This plan will provide a foundation for future development initiatives. The majority of the developable property is owned by Xcel Energy. Due to the phased decommissioning, a portion of the Power Plant site will not be available for development until 2032.

3.3.7. City of Becker AUAR 2022

The City of Becker and Xcel Energy partnered on an Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) for an area of land adjacent to the Sherco Power Plant in Becker. Several parcels within the boundary of the proposed AUAR are owned by Xcel Energy to serve as a buffer around the power plant. Xcel Energy and the City of Becker are collaborating to develop this land with uses that can benefit from the existing

infrastructure, support community development, and replace some of the tax base that will be lost when the plant closes. The City's currently adopted 2040 Comprehensive Plan guides most of this land as heavily industrial because the land is uniquely suited to accommodate such uses.

3.3.8. Big Lake Comprehensive Plan (2018)

The 2018 update of the City of Big Lake Comprehensive Plan covers planning topics concerning housing, land use, transportation, natural resources, parks and trails, public utilities, and economic development. Demographic information as well as growth projections are used to create a growth plan for the coming years. Highway 25 is one of the major roadways for the City of Big Lake, connecting with US Highway 10 in a main commercial area of the city.

- 94 percent of Big Lake residents rely on a vehicle to get to and from work. Land uses along Highway 25 in Big Lake include commercial, low-density residential, railroad/utility, two-family/townhome residential, and multiple-family residential. Besides the Highway 25 bridge, additional river crossings in Big Lake are being evaluated due to increases in population, employment, and traffic volume.
- Highway 25 serves as a connector to I-94 through Monticello. It is classified as a principal arterial within the City of Big Lake, meaning it provides access to major activity centers and deals with the highest traffic volumes of any functional classification. There are some existing sidewalks serviced by the city along Highway 25 in the City of Big Lake. Additional bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure as well as safe highway crossings are two priorities within the transportation section of the comprehensive plan.

3.3.9. Big Lake Zoning Map (2021)

The Big Lake Zoning Map shows all current zoning districts within the City of Big Lake. This map was last updated in 2021.

- Land uses along Highway 25 in Big Lake is primarily low-density residential, but there are some commercial uses at the intersection of US Highway 10 and Highway 25.

3.3.10. Big Lake Township Zoning (2022)

The Big Lake Township Zoning Map shows all current zoning districts within Big Lake Township. This map was last updated in 2022.

- Land uses along Highway 25 in Big Lake Township include a mixture of agricultural use, low-density residential, industrial, and a special use district.

3.3.11. Monticello Comprehensive Plan (2020)

The Monticello Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2020. It covers the existing state of land use, utilities, transportation, parks and trails, housing, and economic development. Considering this information, the plan guides the future land use and development of the City of Monticello.

- The Highway 25 river crossing is important for the City of Monticello and the overall region. Congestion at this crossing has been identified as a major issue and alternatives to ease congestion are being evaluated.
- A potential new bridge within Monticello is mentioned and a preliminary study was conducted in 2018. No further official study has taken place.
- Traffic and accompanying congestion were identified as a major concern among Monticello residents when outreach was conducted for this comprehensive plan update in 2019 and 2020.
- There is broad community support for alleviating congestion and increased connectivity through downtown Monticello and at the Mississippi River crossing.
- Residents were very concerned with safely crossing and turning on to Highway 25 both in vehicles and using non-motorized modes of transportation.
- The strategic vision includes new retail land uses along Interstate 94 and Highway 25. The plan's vision includes a vibrant downtown and strategies for revitalizing the area. TH25 runs north-south through Monticello's downtown from the Mississippi River Bridge to I-94.
- Alleviating congestion while maintaining economic vitality and mobility along Highway 25 and adding safe crossings for people using non-motorized modes of transportation are key items in realizing the vision for Monticello’s revitalized mixed-use downtown area.
- Highway 25 through Monticello is classified as a principal arterial roadway and connects to Interstate 94. This is an important connection for the entire region.
- The Monticello Comprehensive Plan identifies a potential future interchange at Orchard Road and Interstate 94. While this is projected to alleviate some traffic from Highway 25, an additional river crossing is still being evaluated to account for all projected traffic increases.

3.3.12. Monticello Downtown Small Area Plan (2017)

The Monticello Downtown Small Area Plan, adopted by the City Council in 2017, was adopted into the Monticello Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of the study is to attract and direct investments on the core blocks of Downtown over the next decade. The study also makes recommendations to improve the pedestrian experience and a more walkable Downtown. The Small Area Plan recognizes the large role Highway 25 plays in Downtown, being one of the most traveled corridors in the region, and how the current usage of roadway does not align with the City’s goals for the future. The plan specifically mentions Highway 25 and its future vision in the following two action items:

- Create pedestrian refuges or enhanced building entry ways on the corners of blocks along Highway 25.
- Work with MnDOT to improve Highway 25 for users of Downtown Monticello, including additional signals (including at 4th Street), maintaining the River Street signal and supporting an additional river crossing.

3.3.13. Monticello Zoning Map (2021)

The City of Monticello Zoning Map shows all current zoning districts within the City of Monticello. This map was last updated in 2023.

- Land uses directly along Highway 25 from I-94 to the Mississippi river bridge in the City of Monticello is "Central Community District" which functions as a downtown mixed-use district. TH 25 provides critical access via collector roads to regional commercial and industrial businesses, including those located on the north side of the I-94 corridor. Beyond the immediate Highway 25 corridor, the land use is a mixture of single family and multifamily housing to the east and west, and commercial uses to the south along I-94.

3.3.14. Monticello Township Zoning Plan (2007)

Monticello Township surrounds the City of Monticello in Wright County and is bisected by Highway 25 as it runs from the Mississippi River south towards Buffalo, Minnesota.

- The most significant land uses in Monticello Township are agricultural uses, rural residential, public lands, resource lands, and the City of Monticello Transitional Area, which roughly corresponds with the City of Monticello's Orderly Annexation Area.

3.3.15. Monticello Industrial Area Feasibility Study (2022)

This study looks at two large areas on the edges of the City of Monticello, and their potential to support the city's goals of being a regional center, growing a balanced tax base and promoting job growth. In this study the City explores three development scenarios for each growth area - two scenarios in each area that consider a future interchange, and one without. Each scenario, and associated cost estimates, provide a preliminary framework in which the City can evaluate growth feasibility, strategies, and necessary allocation of resources.

This study recommends that the City pursue growth via three approaches:

- Concentrate expanding infrastructure to catalyze future development and an interchange/bridge, within the Northwest growth area
- Incrementally develop contiguous residential lands within the East growth area, as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Continue pursuing infill growth for available land within the city's existing border

This approach will allow the City to promote higher quality development where it can be efficiently served with existing and future infrastructure, and protect its identity as a regional center through land management on its eastern edge.

3.3.16. Silver Creek Township Land Use Plan (2009)

Silver Creek Township is located to the northwest of Monticello Township in Wright County. The Silver Creek Township is connected to the Highway 25 PEL Area Study review area via I-94, which travels

through the northern quarter of the township. The Silver Creek Townships Land Use Plan is a map that shows all current zoning districts within Silver Creek Township. This map was last updated in 2009.

- Land use along I-94 in Silver Creek Township is primarily rural residential and agricultural along I-94, with some commercial use at the I-94 and CR 8 interchange, and Residential Large Lot and Residential land uses around Locke Lake.

3.3.17. Industrial Rail and Transportation Study (2017)

With the announcement of the retirement of two of the three coal burning generators at the Sherco Power Station, Unit 2 has been shut down as of 2023 and the other is scheduled for 2026, the City of Becker felt they could be in a position of reduced tax revenues. To evaluate alternatives, they performed an Industrial Rail and Transportation Study to examine potential realignments of TH 25 and TH 10 with the closure of two coal burning generators.

- One potential realignment involves TH 25 intersecting TH 10 at right angles with the intent to reduce traffic during construction and make traffic flow more smoothly. Another realignment shows the modification of TH 25 and CSAH 8 to create a common right angle crossing of TH 10 occurring within a folded diamond interchange which includes a loop exit ramp from westbound TH 10 to TH 25. This configuration allows connection of a local street on the opposite side of the ramp terminal intersection.

- The roadway system and land uses north of TH 10 are projected to benefit from a new major intersection of TH 25 and CSAH 8 with TH 10. Closure of the exiting Edgewood Street access to TH 10 is anticipated in the future. When closed, Edgewood Street should be extended westerly and northerly along the east side of TH 25, until intersecting with the County Public Works facility access road. Other configuration options are laid out in the plan.

- The plan specifies that any at-grade or grade-separated intersection realignments will need to be revisited in future plans to be consistent with development as land use changes.

3.3.18. Minnesota Statewide and District 3 Freight plans

The Minnesota Statewide Freight Plan and District 3 freight plans discuss the importance of freight in Minnesota. Both plans identify I-94 and US 10 as important regional freight corridors. For a more comprehensive freight discussion please see **Section 4.2.3**

- I-94: A major truck corridor that runs through the southern section of MnDOT District 3, carrying heavy truck traffic between the Twin Cities, St. Cloud and the markets beyond in the Upper Midwest which include Fargo and Chicago, among others.
- Both I-94 and US 10 are particularly important freight corridors for many manufacturers in the region as they connect to major markets throughout the Upper Midwest.
- Highways 24 and 25 within the study area provide essential river crossings and connections between these two highways.

3.4. Previous TH 25 Studies

In addition to reviewing the plans and policies that impact the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area, this section reviews and summarizes the prior studies related specifically to the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area.

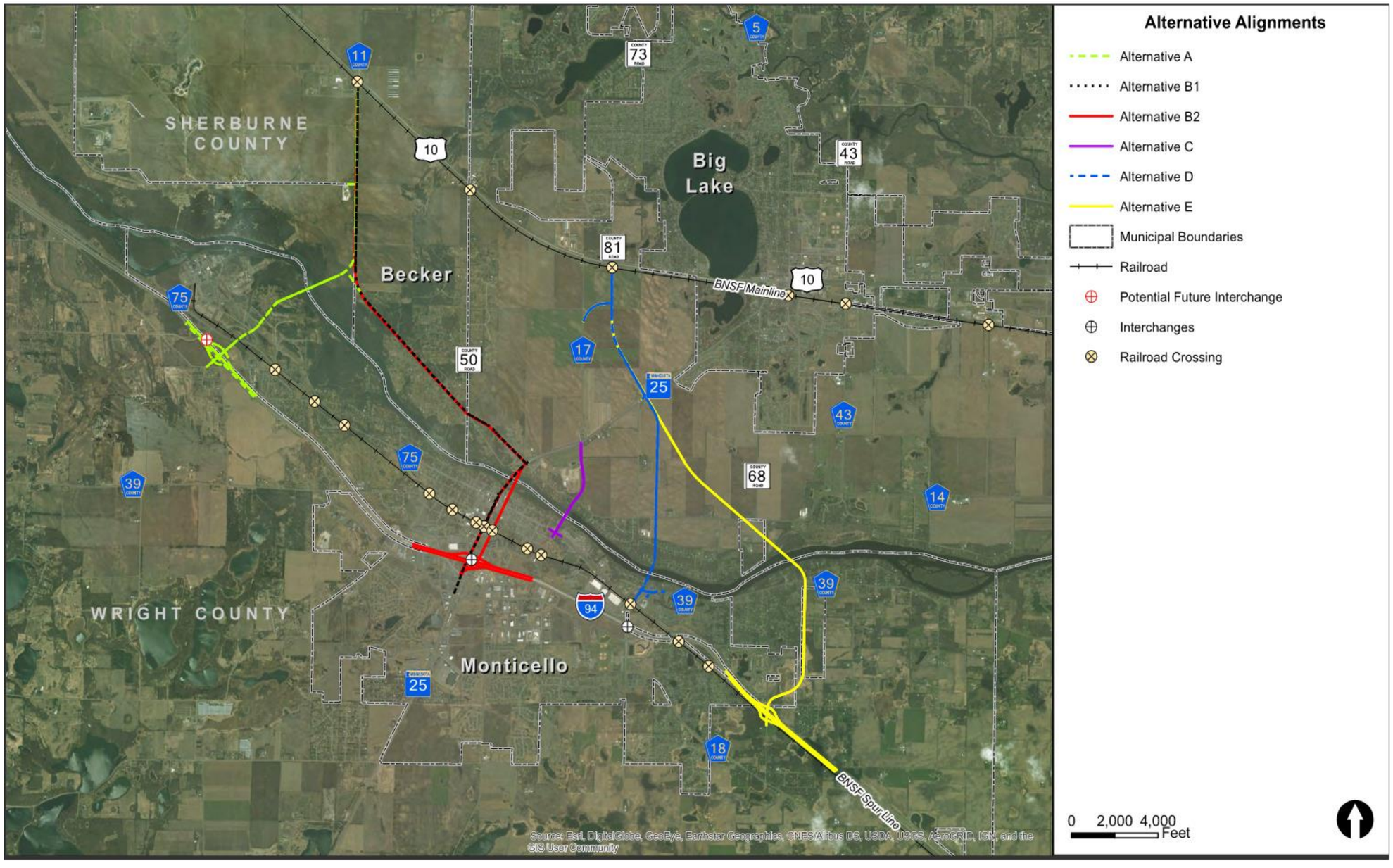
3.4.1. TH 25 Area Study (2019)

The TH 25 Area Study was commissioned by the TH 25 Coalition, a precursor to the Central Mississippi River Regional Planning Partnership, and was completed in 2019. The goal of this study was to identify improvements to address issues along Highway 25 between I-94 and US Highway 10, specifically around projected growth and traffic increases. Project partners included Sherburne County, Wright County, the City of Becker, the City of Big Lake, the City of Monticello, Big Lake Township, and Becker Township.

Three intersections within the study area along Highway 25 were found to have high crash rates. While some improvements were made to improve safety and efficiency at these intersections, it is still a major concern, especially as traffic along Highway 25 through 2040 is expected to increase in all municipalities by at least 37 percent. The City of Monticello is expected to have the biggest increase in traffic, as projections indicated a 67 percent increase by 2040.

To accommodate these expected traffic volume increases, six Mississippi River Crossing concepts were developed (**Figure 4**) within the study. Of the six options, four would be entirely new alignments, while one has two sub options (Option B) and is aligned with existing infrastructure. Public engagement was conducted for each alternative, the scope of the study was later altered and ultimately no recommendation was made.

Figure 4. TH 25 Study River Crossing Concepts[1]



[1] This map was completed by SRF in a previous study.

4. Corridor Conditions Review

The Highway 25 project review area is defined as the geographic area surrounding the segment of Highway 25 that connects Monticello and Becker, in Wright County and Sherburne County, respectively, as well as the surrounding area. The northern and southern borders of this project review area are defined as a half-mile buffer extending from the centerlines of the following roadways:

To the north, US Highway 10 between Sherburne Avenue and CR 43
To the south, I-94 between Aetna Avenue Northeast and Harding Avenue Northeast
To the east, a half-mile buffer extending east from CR 43/Harding Avenue
To the west, a half-mile buffer extending west from Sherburne Avenue/Aetna Avenue Northeast.
Several key features of the existing project review area were reviewed and documented in the following sections of this technical memorandum:

4.1 Land Use and Economic Conditions Review

- Land Use
- Property Ownership, Public Lands, and Facilities
- Economic Overview

4.2 Transportation Conditions Review

- Infrastructure Condition
- Traffic Operations (existing and future operations)
- Safety
- Freight
- Transit
- Pedestrian and Bicycle
- Parking
- Airports
- Railroads

4.3 Environmental Conditions Review

- Cultural Resources
- Visual Quality and Aesthetics
- Geologic Resources and Soil
- Water Resources
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Parks, Trails, Open Spaces, Wildlife and Waterfowl Refuges, and Section 4(f)
- Section 6(f)
- Noise
- Air Quality
- Hazardous/Contaminated Materials
- Vegetation
- Utilities
- Environmental Justice
- Other Populations of Interest

4.1. Land Use and Economic Conditions Review

To develop a holistic vision for the future of the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area, it is vital to establish a comprehensive understanding of the surrounding community. This section provides background on the land use and economic conditions within the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. When appropriate, this analysis will extend beyond what currently exists in the study area and forecast changes based on the analysis from Section2 – Plans, Policies, and Priority Studies. The study review area's Land Use and Economic Overview is organized as follows:

Figure 5 – Existing Land Use

Figure 6 – Future Land Use

Figure 7 – Economic Overview

The information in this section will be used to support public engagement efforts, identify areas that may require further analysis, and assist in the development of evaluation criteria that will be used to compare and screen alternatives.

4.1.1. Existing Land Use

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate the general existing land use and general future land use along Highway 25 in the PEL study review area. These land uses are a mixture of public space, downtown mixed use, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and residential uses.

Land use context changes substantially throughout the review area. Land use along Highway 25 in both Monticello and Big Lake is a downtown commercial corridor with high potential for pedestrian crossing traffic. Beyond the Highway 25 and US Highway 10/Highway 25 corridor in the PEL study review area, land use is a mixture of residential, agricultural, industrial, commercial, and park uses. Even further from the Highway 25 alignment, the PEL study review area is primarily made up of agricultural, rural residential, and parks and recreation uses. Specific existing land use summaries by jurisdiction are included below.

Figure 5. Generalized Existing Land Use

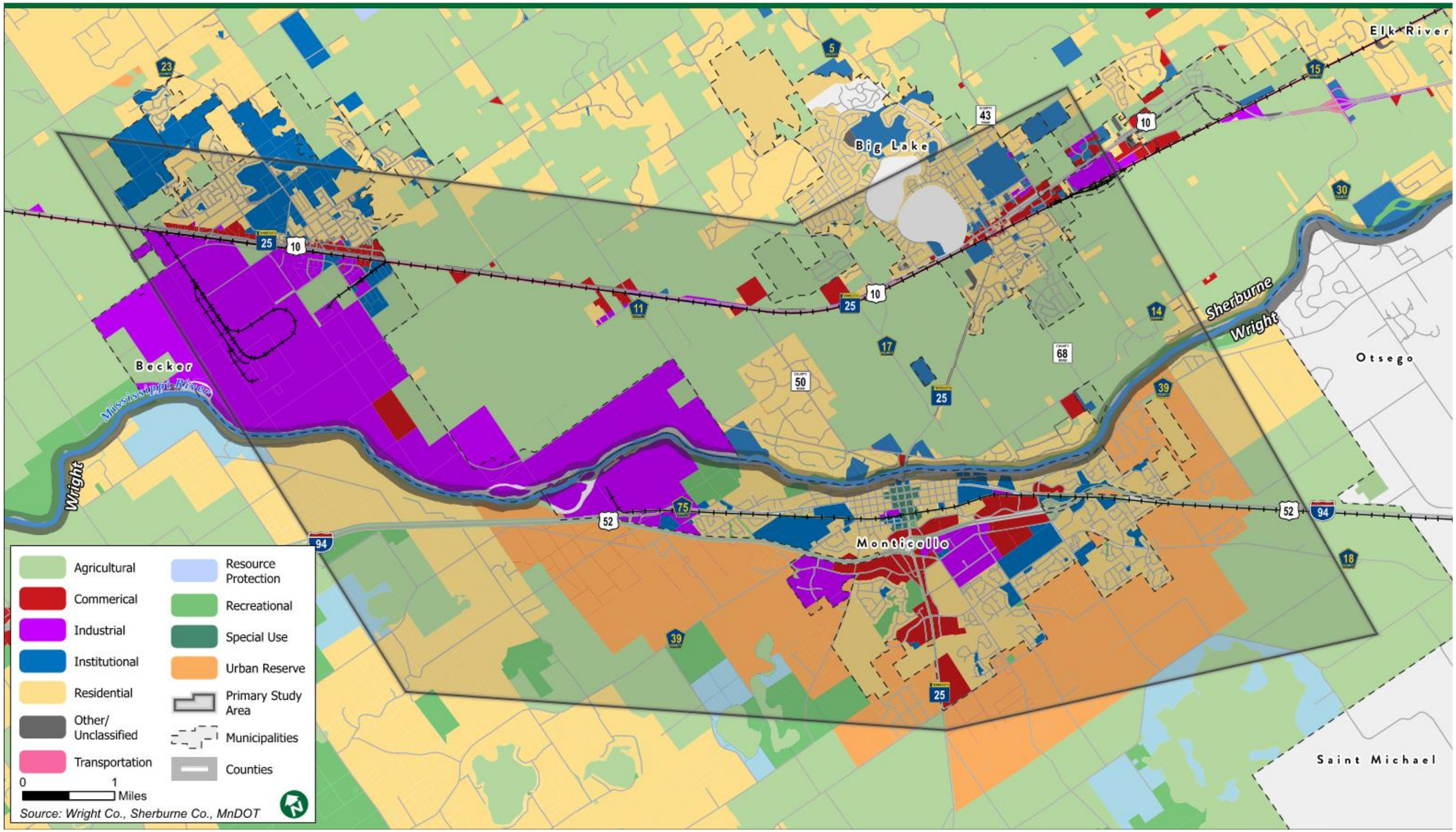
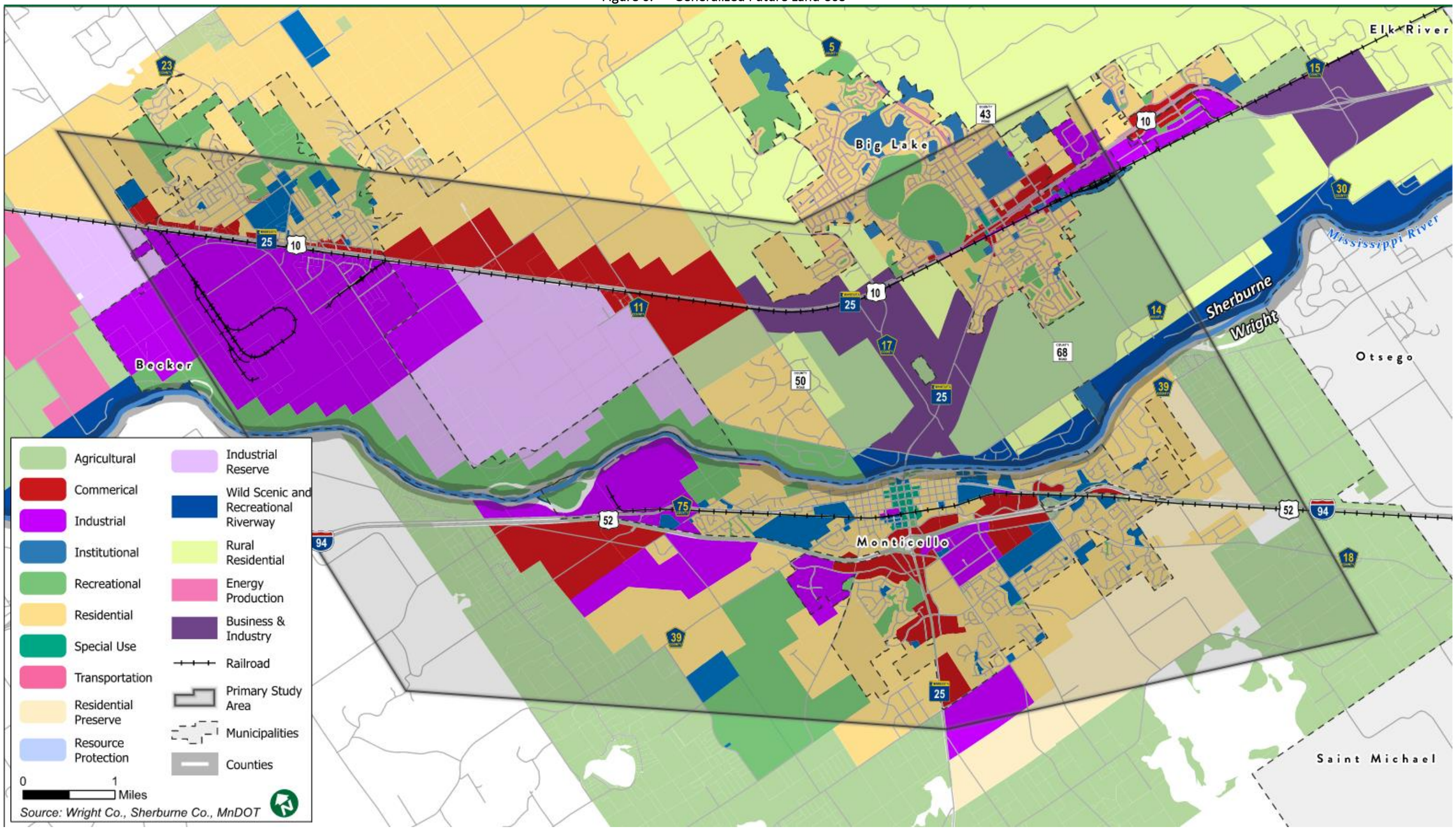


Figure 6. Generalized Future Land Use



4.1.2. Future Land Use

As a growing region, there are planned land use changes in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. **Figure 6** and the summaries below outline future planned land uses as approved in county and city comprehensive plans. Links to the full studies and comprehensive plans can be found in **Section 6**.

4.1.2.1. City of Monticello

As envisioned in Monticello's 2040 Vision and Plan, the City is seeing active redevelopment in its downtown and along the Mississippi River through the addition of high-density residential development and commercial reinvestment. Additional growth areas in Monticello include the commercial and industrial growth in the Northwest growth area of the City south of I-94, and infill commercial/light industrial and conservation residential development in the East growth area and on available land within current city limits.

Study partners are aware of the long-term operation of the Monticello nuclear power plant could be changing, providing an opportunity for redevelopment. Operations licensure of the plant has been extended to 2040. Future redevelopment of the site is yet to be determined.

4.1.2.2. City of Big Lake

The future land use plan for the City of Big Lake shows the city will continue to develop low density housing along the northern side of US Highway 10/Highway 25. The plan did not prescribe any future land use to the area south of US Highway 10/Highway 25, but instead noted it as being a potential site for a rail-served industrial park, and that the eventual decision would come from a future analysis that would determine the benefits and challenges that a rail served industrial park might present to the community and the region.

4.1.2.3. City of Becker

Continued growth is expected for Becker, in part due to its strong school system, proximity to surrounding larger job centers, affordable housing prices, and diverse amenities. The rate of growth will be dependent on maintaining these factors in addition to future industrial development south of US Highway 10 as guided by the Sherco Development Master Plan (2022) and the Xcel Energy/City of Becker AUAR (2022). As the City continues to explore expanding its industrial presence, it is also focused on expanding supportive residential and commercial centers. Xcel Energy recently broke ground on an extensive solar array project to produce electricity for 100,000 homes in the region. The solar project will help replace some of the electricity generated by the Sherco coal-fired power plant, which Xcel plans to retire by 2030.

4.1.2.4. Wright County

The County's future land use plan was last updated in 2011. To preserve agricultural lands and natural resources, Wright County encourages future development focus within existing municipalities or within orderly annexation areas. Future development in Wright County within the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area consists of residential development or transition area, a designation used for areas adjacent

to cities where a combination of uses in an urban or near-urban environment is likely to develop over the long term. Land use decisions within these transition areas are at the discretion of the local governments that they are associated with, and the county encourages uses that would serve as a buffer between urban and rural areas.

4.1.2.5. Sherburne County

The County has used their future land use planning efforts to focus on increasing the amount of commercial, industrial, and energy generation land uses in the area between US Highway 10/Highway 25 and the Mississippi River, as well as along US Highway 10 in general. This focus on development along US Highway 10/Highway 25, much like Wright County's emphasis on development near existing municipalities, is done to maximize the utility of previous investments in the area for the Sherburne County Coal Generating Station and make use of railroads that already serve the area.

In addition to the development along US Highway 10/Highway 25, Sherburne County's future land use plan also see the areas directly along Highway 25 and County Highway 17 from the Mississippi River to the Big Lake municipal boundary as future business and industry corridors, again concentrating future investment near existing resources like the railroad, the river, I-94 and US Highway 10/Highway 25.

4.1.2.6. Townships of Becker, Big Lake, Silver Creek, and Monticello

The future land use plans for each township are similar in directing some future commercial and industrial land uses along US Highway 10, Highway 25, and I-94 in areas adjacent to the communities of Big Lake, Monticello, and Becker. The remainder of township land is planned to stay agricultural, recreational, and residential preserve.

4.1.3. Property Ownership, Public Land, and Facilities

In addition to serving as a major gateway to recreation opportunities "Up North", the TH 25 Area PEL Study review area includes a wealth of their own natural assets. These include the Mississippi River, multiple lakes, the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, and numerous community parks and trails. All parks, public lands, and publicly owned facilities were mapped as part of development of this existing conditions review and included as part of the Environmental Conditions Review process for potential 4(f) and 6(f) impacts. Parks and other recreational properties can pose a potential risk of Section 4(f) or 6(f) impacts if any of the alternatives would require temporary or permanent right-of-way impacts. The findings of these Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) analyses are discussed further in Section 4.3.6 and Section 4.3.7, respectively.

4.1.4. Economic Overview

The TH 25 Area PEL Study review area covers portions of Wright and Sherburne Counties, the cities of Monticello, Big Lake, and Becker, and townships of Monticello, Big Lake, Silver Creek, and Becker. Local economic drivers include agricultural, power generation, manufacturing, health care, and other commercial uses along the Highway 25 and US Highway 10 corridors. Both corridors are important to Monticello, Big Lake, and Becker's goals in achieving their downtown goals for continued economic success by supporting business access and community connectivity.

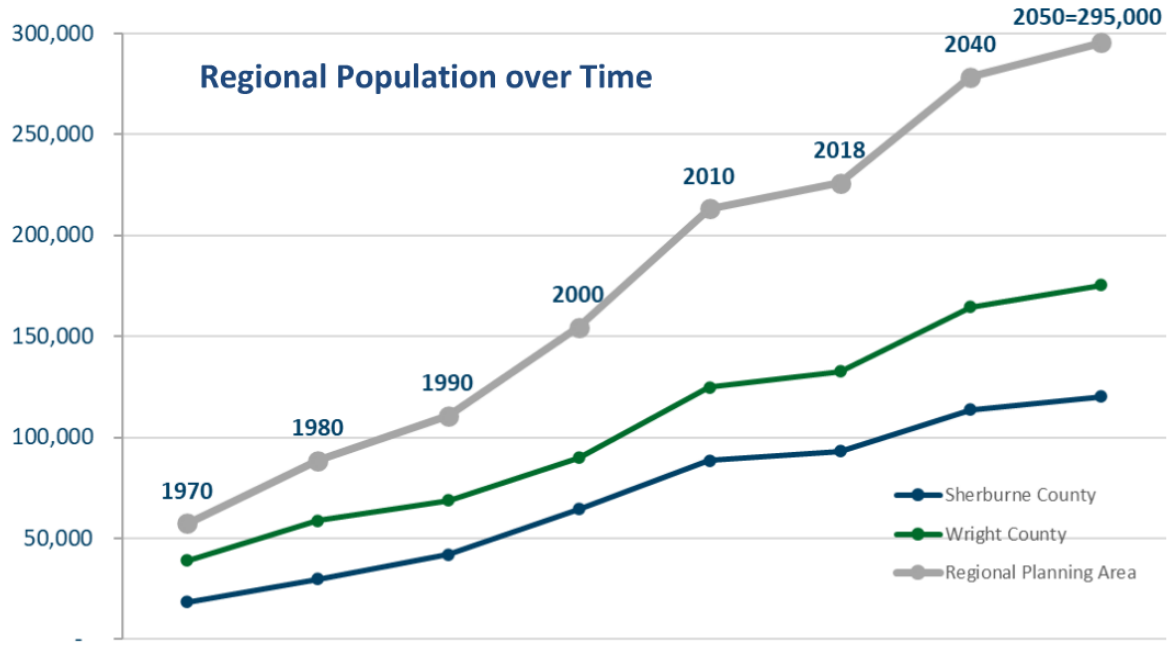
This following demographic and trends analysis utilized data from both the study area, and when appropriate, trends for the Counties as a whole.

4.1.4.1. Demographics

According to population forecasts from the Minnesota State Demographic's Center, the fastest growing counties by population in Minnesota between 2021 and 2022 were Pine (4.0%), **Wright (3.9%),** Aitkin (3.8%), Pennington (3.7%), and Clay (3.5%). The counties that added the most residents between 2021 and 2022 on net were **Wright (5,779)**, Hennepin (4,006), Olmsted (3,859), Washington (3,784), and **Sherburne (3,351).**

The Central Mississippi River Regional Planning Partnership (CMRP) Framework 2030 reported the region, which included the same planning area as the TH 25 Area PEL Study, is growing four times the state average, with the region set to exceed 290,000 residents by 2050 as shown in **Figure 7**.

Figure 7. CMRP Framework 2030 Population Growth



Additional population projection information was also gathered from US Census, Minnesota State Demographer, and local comprehensive plans and is reported in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Existing and Projected Population

Location	2020 Census Population	2040 Projected Population
Wright County	141,337	180,762
Sherburne County	97,813	120,293
Monticello	14,455	19,738
Big Lake	11,686	13,100
Becker	4,901	6, 800
Monticello Township	3,294	Data not available
Big Lake Township	7,924	Data not available
Silver Creek Township	2632	Data not available
Becker Township	5,496	6,563 (2030)

Source: Data compiled from US Census Bureau, MN State Demographers Office, local comprehensive plans, and Minnesota Compass

4.1.4.2. Employment and Economy[2]

The region's economy is continuing to expand along with its population. According to the CMRP Framework 2030, GDP in the region increased by $2.1 billion, jobs by 10,000, and business starts by several thousand from the 2015-2019 period. Planned residential growth could add between 12,000 and 18,000 new residents depending upon density.

The December 2023 unemployment rate for Sherburne County was 2.8 percent and the unemployment rate for Wright County was 3.0 in the same timeframe. This rate is comparatively the same as the statewide average of 2.9 percent. However, the unemployment rate has decreased compared to both the pandemic-related 7.2 percent in 2020 and pre-pandemic rate of 4.6 percent in 2019. While the growth in the labor force has slowed in recent years, 2021-2022 saw the greatest increase in the number of workers since the early 1990s, with 1,643 new workers added.

The 2022 median household income of Wright County was $102,980 and Sherburne County was $99,431, which was higher than the statewide average of $84,313. While the cost of living has increased over the past two years, Sherburne and Wright Counties have a lower cost of living compared to the state average.

The major occupations of the counties include Office and Admin support, Sales, Food Preparation, and Transportation and Material Moving. Food preparation and service-related jobs had the lowest median hourly wage, while management occupations had the highest.

[2] Data compiled from US Census Bureau, MN State Demographers Office, local comprehensive plans, CMRP Framework 2030, and Minnesota Compass

Specific to the Highway 25 Area PEL study area, the cities of Becker, Big, Lake, and Monticello serve as employment centers and economic hubs for not only local residents, but they draw workers from the surrounding region. Through these communities, Highway 25 provides access to jobs, retail shopping, entertainment, recreational, local destinations and activities that comprise the local economy. Furthermore, Highway 25 is a vital commerce corridor for the movement of people and goods between the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and destinations in central and northern Minnesota, including the summer tourism industries in these regions. Downtown and Comprehensive Plans for the cities of Monticello, Becker, and Big Lake state the importance of maintaining business access along Highway 25 and US Highway 10 to support the continued economic stability and growth within their respective communities.

4.2. Transportation Conditions Review

Transportation conditions were reviewed as part of the existing conditions review. These analyses include safety analysis, existing traffic operations analysis and an access review. In addition to this, a desktop survey was conducted to gather data and provide analysis on infrastructure conditions, freight operations, multimodal operations, parking, railroads, airports, and other transportation considerations.

4.2.1. Infrastructure Condition

Data identified below regarding the existing infrastructure conditions (pavement, bridge & culvert conditions, and other facilities) along Highway 25 in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area was reviewed.

4.2.1.1. Pavement

MnDOT collects pavement condition data on their roadways on an annual basis. MnDOT's pavement condition data for reporting the statewide pavement performance measures includes Ride Quality Index (RQI), Surface Rating (SR), Pavement Quality Index (PQI), and Remaining Service Life (RSL)[3]. Pavement conditions data was mapped and is included in **Figure 8**.

As per the 2020 MnDOT pavement management data, the following pavement condition data pertaining to the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area were identified:

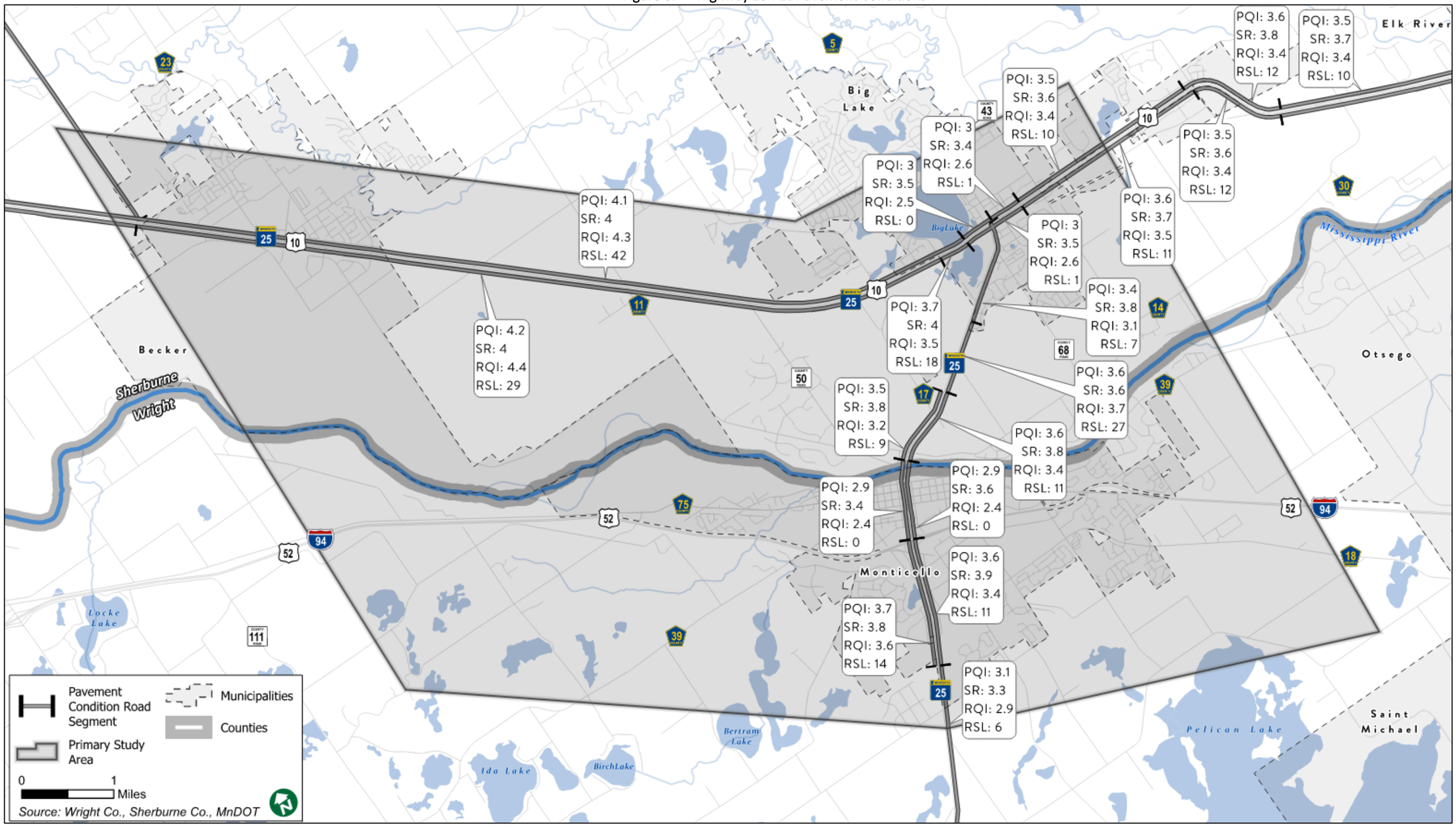
- The PQI is mixed. Generally, most segments report a PQI above 3.0. However, the segments through downtown Monticello rate below 3.0.
- The SR is good, with values reported ranging from 3.4 and 4.0.
- The RQI is mixed. Values range from 2.4 to 4.5, with the lowest values associated with segments of Highway 25 through Monticello and US Highway 10 through Big Lake. The highest values are associated with US Highway 10 west of Big Lake.
- The RSL is mixed. Values range from 0 to 42, with multiple segments through Monticello and Big Lake having a reported RSL of 0, and still more segments yet with an RSL below 10.

[3] Additional data about MnDOT's Pavement Management practices and methodologies can be found here at MnDOT Materials and Road Research Pavement Management webpage: https://www.dot.state.mn.us/materials/pvmtmgmt.html

The following agencies have scheduled the following pavement preservation projects along Highway 25 in the PEL study area:

- MnDOT D3 CHIP plans to resurface MN 25 from the I-94 interchange in Monticello to US Highway 10 in Big Lake, including ADA work, in 2030.
- Resurface Highway 25 from its the junction with US Highway 10 to MN 95 (2031)

Figure 8. Highway 25 PEL Pavement Conditions



4.2.1.2. Bridges and Culverts

Bridges and culverts along Highway 25 in the PEL Study Area were reviewed with respect to their Bridge Replacement and Improvement Management (BORIS) ratings, using MnDOT bridge data. There are two bridges along Highway 25 in the PEL Study Area. MnDOT inventories bridge condition and maintenance needs through the Bridge Replacement and Improvement Management (BRIM) Tool. BRIM aids in managing bridge inventories by providing local agencies with a tool to make risk-based data driven decisions. Every bridge that is inspected is given a sufficiency rating and local planning index rating, amongst other assessments. Bridges in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area are detailed in **Table 2.**

To prepare for and identify when bridge investments will be needed, MnDOT uses the BORIS tool to forecast future work types, costs and schedules for a 20-year planning horizon. BORIS provides several measures that are used to help prioritize investments and improvements for MnDOT for the planning horizon. These include the Bridge Planning Index (BPI), BORIS BPI Rank and Project Selection Policy (PSP) Score. National Bridge Inventory (NBI) condition ratings are also considered in the project selection process.

The bridge condition ratings and BORIS prioritization scores for this bridge are listed in **Table 2**. Additional information (location, project limits, etc.) is found in **Section 6: List of Data & References**.

The local planning index is a risk score which factors both the consequence of a service interruption and the probability of service interruption, with a lower score indicating a higher priority for bridge replacement. More details are available on the MnDOT Bridge State Aid Website on how local planning index is calculated.

Table 2. Highway 25 Area PEL Study Review Area Bridges Summary

Bridge Number	Facility Carried / Facility Spanned	Year Constructed	NBI Deck	NBI Superstructure	NBI Substructure	Project Type	Proposed Timeframe	Programmed Year
86803	Highway 25 / I-94	1972	5	5	7	Redeck		2026
71012	Highway 25 / Mississippi River	1987	6	6	6	Overlay	2028-2033	2024

4.2.1.3. Existing Traffic Conditions

Existing and Future Traffic Operations were reviewed as part of the initial analysis of the area including intersection congestion and overall travel time.

4.2.1.4. Access Locations

The MnDOT Access Management Manual[4] provides categorical access spacing guidelines based on corridor facility type and functional class. The access category assignment is distinct from functional classification, though functional classification does influence the MnDOT access category assignment. MnDOT sub-divides these category assignments based on intended network connectivity, splitting recommendations between interregional corridors (IRCs) and surrounding development patterns, such as urban or ruralness of the land use context. These categories as they are pertinent to the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area are summarized in **Table 3** below:

Table 3. Summary of MnDOT Recommended Street Spacing for IRCs and Non-IRCs

Category	Area or Facility Type	Typical Functional Classification	Recommended Primary Full-Movement Intersection Spacing	Recommended Secondary Intersection Spacing
2A	Rural Medium-Priority IRC	Principal Arterial	1 mile	1/2 mile
5A	Rural Minor Arterial	Minor Arterial	1/2 mile	1/4 mile
5B	Urban/Urbanizing Minor Arterial	Minor Arterial	1/4 mile	1/8 mile
5C	Urban Core Minor Arterial	Minor Arterial	300-660 feet, dependent on block length	300-660 feet, dependent on block length

This report used the MnDOT access management assignments[5] to determine the access management categories for Highway 25 and Highway 25/US Highway 10 in the PEL study area. Access categories within the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area are shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Highway 25 MnDOT Access Category Summary

From	To	Access Category
I-94 (Southern Project Boundary)	Wright/Sherburne County Border	5B - Urban/Urbanizing Minor Arterial
Wright/Sherburne County Border	Harrison Drive (City of Big Lake Municipal Boundary)	5A – Rural Minor Arterial
Harrison Drive (City of Big Lake Municipal Boundary)	US Highway 10	5C – Urban Core Minor Arterial
US Highway 10	Sherburne Ave, City of Becker (Northern Project Boundary)	2A – Rural Medium Priority IRC

Table 5 summarizes the type and number of access points along segments of Highway 25. Segments were selected between major signalized intersections along the corridor.

[4] https://www.dot.state.mn.us/accessmanagement/resources.html

[5] https://www.dot.state.mn.us/accessmanagement/pdf/categoryassignments/d3assignments.pdf

Table 5. Highway 25 Access Inventory Summary (by Segment)

Segment Boundaries	Length (mi)	Primary Intersections	Secondary Intersections	Private Access		
				Residential	Commercial	Field
I-94 to Wright/Sherburne County Border	0.8 mi	4	3	0	6	0
Wright/Sherburne County Border to Harrison Drive	1.7 mi	2	2	12	1	1
Harrison Drive to US Highway 10	1.2 mi	0	7	31	5	0
US Highway 10 to Sherburne Ave	7.9 mi	4	8	14	17	4
Total	**11.6**	**10**	**20**	**57**	**23**	**5**

4.2.1.4.1. Primary Intersections

In addition to the interchange, there are 10 primary (signalized) intersections on the Highway 25 corridor in the PEL Study Area. On average, primary intersections are spaced 0.9 miles apart, which is longer than the recommended spacing for primary intersections recommended by the MnDOT Access Management Manual for access categories 5A, 5B, and 5C, but shorter than the recommended spacing for Category 2A. However, these corridor-wide averages are skewed by tight access spacing in Monticello and Big Lake. Through Monticello, there is an average of 5 primary intersections per mile. From the Wright/Sherburne County Line to the City of Big Lake, there is an average of 1.2 primary intersections per mile. There is one primary intersection in the City of Big Lake. Along US Highway 10/Highway 25 from Big Lake to Sherburne Avenue in Becker, there is an average of less than one primary intersection per mile.

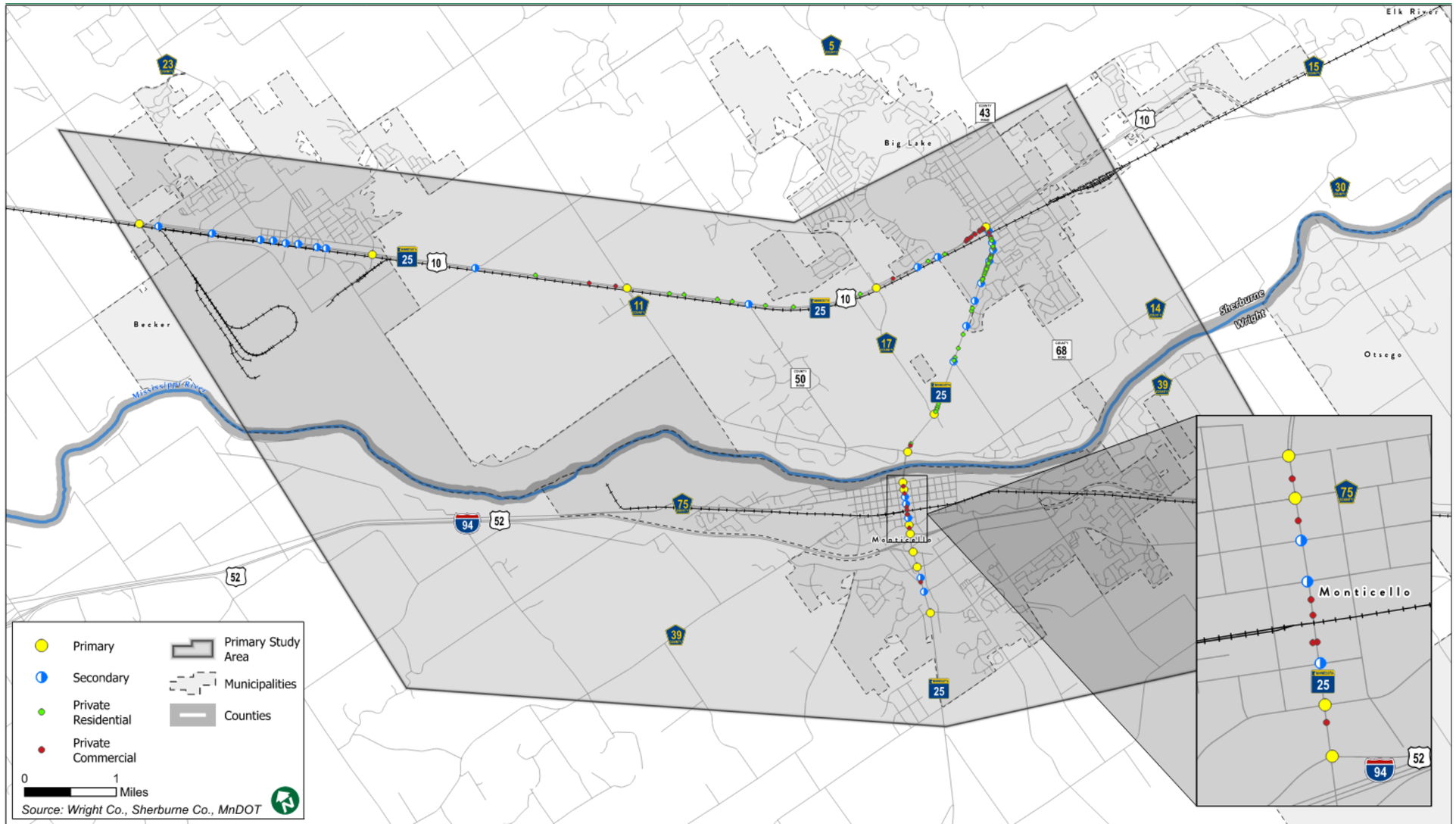
The following are the primary intersecting roadways in the study area that are spaced less than MnDOT access spacing guidance for primary accesses intersections. See **Figure 9**.

4.2.1.4.1.1. Monticello – I-94 to Wright/Sherburne County Line Primary Access Spacing

The segment of Highway 25 through Monticello was assigned, by MnDOT, as Category 5B - Urban/Urbanizing Minor Arterial. Spacing guidelines indicated primary intersections should be at least 1/4 mile apart. The following intersections are not in compliance with MnDOT access spacing:

- I-94 Northbound Ramp to 7th Street – 0.1 mile
- Broadway Street to River Street – 0.1 mile

Figure 9. Access Inventory



4.2.1.4.1.2. Wright/Sherburne County –County Line to Harrison Drive Primary Access Spacing

This segment of Highway 25 from the Wright/Sherburne County line to Harrison Drive was assigned Category 5A – Rural Minor Arterial. MnDOT recommends that primary intersections be at least 1/2 mile apart. All primary intersections in the segment are within MnDOT spacing guidelines.

4.2.1.4.1.3. City of Big Lake –Harrison Drive to US Highway 10 Primary Access Spacing

This segment of Highway 25 from Harrison Drive to US Highway 10 was assigned Category 5C – Urban Core Minor Arterial. MnDOT recommends that primary intersections be at least 300-660 feet apart, depending on block length. All primary intersections in the segment are within MnDOT spacing guidelines.

4.2.1.4.1.4. US Highway 10 – US Highway 10/Highway 25 Junction to City of Becker Primary Access Spacing

This segment of US Highway 10/Highway 25 from the junction in Big Lake to the PEL study area terminus in Becker was assigned Category 2A – Rural Medium-Priority IRC. MnDOT recommends that primary intersections be at least 1 mile apart. All primary intersections in the segment are within MnDOT spacing guidelines.

4.2.1.4.2. Secondary Intersections

There are a total of 20 secondary intersections in the 25 PEL Study Area. Secondary intersections throughout the study area are generally full access intersections, allowing motorists to make turns to and from southbound and northbound directions. For that reason, this analysis did not sub-divide the secondary accesses analysis by traffic direction.

Secondary intersection spacing is the distance between the next nearest primary or secondary intersection. On average for the entire Highway 25 corridor in the PEL study area, there are 1.7 secondary intersections per mile. Through Monticello, there is an average of 3.75 secondary access points per mile. From the Wright/Sherburne County Line up into Big Lake, there is an average of 1.2 secondary accesses per mile. From the southern City of Big Lake municipal boundary to US Highway 10, there are 5.8 secondary intersections per mile. Along US Highway 10/Highway 25 from Big Lake to Sherburne Avenue in Becker, there is an average of 1 secondary intersection per mile.

The following are the secondary intersection roadways that do not meet MnDOT access spacing guidance:

4.2.1.4.2.1. Monticello – I-94 to Wright/Sherburne County Line Secondary Access Spacing

The segment of Highway 25 through Monticello was assigned Category 5B - Urban/Urbanizing Minor Arterial. MnDOT recommends secondary intersections be at least 1/8 mile (660 feet) apart. The following intersections (not an exhaustive list) are not within MnDOT access spacing guidelines:

- 7th Street to 6th Street – less than 0.1 miles (approximately 420 feet)
- 4th Street to 3rd Street – less than 0.1 miles (approximately 420 feet)

- 3rd Street to Broadway Street - less than 0.1 miles (approximately 430 feet)

4.2.1.4.2.2. Wright/Sherburne County –County Line to Harrison Drive Secondary Access Spacing

This segment of Highway 25 from the Wright/Sherburne County line to Harrison Drive was assigned Category 5A – Rural Minor Arterial. MnDOT recommends that secondary intersection be at least 1/4 mile apart. All secondary intersections are within MnDOT spacing guidelines.

4.2.1.4.2.3. City of Big Lake –Harrison Drive to US Highway 10 Secondary Access Spacing

This segment of Highway 25 from Harrison Drive to US Highway 10 was assigned Category 5C – Urban Core Minor Arterial. MnDOT recommends that secondary intersections be at least 300-660 feet apart, depending on block length. The following intersections are not within MnDOT access spacing guidelines:

- Putnam Avenue to US Highway 10/Highway 25 – less than 0.1 miles (approximately 290 feet)

4.2.1.4.2.4. US Highway 10 – US Highway 10/Highway 25 Junction to City of Becker Secondary Access Spacing

This segment of US Highway 10/Highway 25 from the junction in Big Lake to the PEL study area terminus in Becker was assigned Category 2A – Rural Medium-Priority IRC. MnDOT recommends that secondary intersections be at least 1/2 mile apart. The following intersections are not within MnDOT access spacing guidelines:

- Lakeshore Drive to Euclid Avenue - 0.25 miles
- Sherburne Avenue to Pine Street – 0.1 miles
- Pine Street to Rye Street – 0.2 miles
- Rye Street to Hancock Street – 0.1 miles
- Hancock Street to Donnelly Street - 0.1 miles
- Donnelly Street to Garden Street - 0.1 miles

4.2.1.4.3. Driveways

MnDOT has separate guidelines for driveway access points along highways, which in turn are subdivided based on the access category. In order to maintain a safe and efficient roadway system, MnDOT limits driveway access along MnDOT managed roadways, and provides guidance for driveway spacing along these roadways. The driveway allowances per access category are detailed in **Table 6**. Driveway spacing guidelines are detailed in **Table 7**.

Table 6. MnDOT Access Manual Summary of Driveway Allowances

Category	Area/Facility Type	Driveway Allowance
2A	Rural Medium-Priority IRC	• On facilities transitioning to full access control, driveways should not be permitted if reasonably convenient and suitable alternative access is available. • Where reasonably convenient and suitable alternative access is not available, an interim driveway may be permitted, and if possible, it should be designed so that traffic can be redirected to another road when the facility becomes fully access-controlled
5A	Rural Minor Arterial	• If a property retains access rights but no reasonably convenient and suitable alternative access is available, a driveway is permitted. • The driveway should be located and designed to minimize the impact on the safety and operations of the highway. • All driveways should be spaced in accordance with Table 4-5
5B	Urban/Urbanizing Minor Arterial	• If a property retains access rights but no reasonably convenient and suitable alternative access is available, a driveway is permitted. • It is MnDOT's preference to permit public street connections rather than driveways in Urban/Urbanizing areas. Where possible, MnDOT should work with local agencies to encourage the development of a supporting road system to serve the property. • High-volume driveways should be spaced in accordance with Table 4-5 • Driveways should be permitted as interim where a future supporting street system is anticipated.
5C	Urban Core Minor Arterial	• If a property retains access rights but no reasonably convenient and suitable alternative access is available, a driveway is permitted. • The spacing of driveways will vary based on reasonableness of use and driver expectancy.

Table 7. MnDOT Access Manual Guidelines for Spacing between Adjacent Driveways

Posted Speed Limit	Rural Spacing between Adjacent Driveways for Residential and Low-Volume Commercial Uses (feet)	Rural & Urban/Urbanizing Spacing between Adjacent Driveways for High-Volume Commercial Uses (feet)
40	--	305
45	50	360
50	75	425
55	100	495
60	100	570
65	--	645

There are numerous commercial driveways (including parking lot access), field entrances, and residential driveways along Highway 25 and US Highway 10/Highway 25 in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. Residential and commercial driveway accesses along Highway 25 in Monticello and where Highway 25 is concurrent with US Highway 10 generally limits driveway access to public road network, with many access points being limited to right-in-right-out (RIRO) movements. However, along the rural residential

segment of Highway 25 between the Wright/Sherburne County Line and the City of Big Lake, as well as US Highway 10/Highway 25 through the City of Big Lake, driveway access tends to be unrestricted.

4.2.1.5. Traffic Operations

4.2.1.5.1. Traffic Study Area

An intersection-based traffic study was conducted to identify existing levels of delay at key intersections along the main travel path through the area. This study included the following intersections, which are also shown in **Figure 10.**

- Highway 25 at I-94 eastbound ramps/Oakwood Drive
- Highway 25 at I-94 westbound ramps
- Highway 25 at 7th Street
- Highway 25 at River Street
- Highway 25 at Broadway Street
- Highway 25 at CR 11/CR 14
- US Highway 10 at Highway 25
- US Highway 10 at CR 11

Note that analyses also considered the I-94 eastbound on-ramps. However, both of these ramps are free-flowing ramps off of Highway 25, so no delay or queueing exists at these locations.

4.2.1.5.2. Existing Operations Analysis

Twelve-hour intersection turning movement counts were taken at all study intersections on Friday, July 21, 2023, from 8am to 8pm. Observed peak hour volumes are shown in **Figure 11.** While Fridays are not typically used in traffic analysis, this area experiences substantial traffic peaks on Friday afternoons during the summer which are the focus of this analysis. MnDOT provided additional weekday turning movement counts from October 2022. These volumes were used to create a more typical weekday scenario. Streetlight data for the TH 25 bridge was used to calculate a series of factors, including a day of week factor, a directionality factor, and a seasonality factor. These factors were in turn used to calculate estimated turning movement counts for a Sunday peak hour and for intersections along US Highway 10 that were not counted by MnDOT. Volumes for the weekday and Sunday scenarios are shown in **Figures 12 and 13**. An operations analysis was completed for each of these scenarios using TrafficWare's Synchro 11 software in which delay and level of service for all approaches of all intersections were calculated.

The operational analysis results are described as a Level of Service (LOS) ranging from A to F. These letters serve to describe a range of operating conditions for different types of facilities. Levels of Service are calculated based on the thresholds established in the 6th edition of the Highway Capacity Manual, which bases the level of service on control delay. Control delay is the delay experienced by vehicles slowing down as they are approaching the intersection, the wait time at the intersection, and the time for the vehicle to speed up through the intersection and enter into the traffic stream. The average intersection control delay is a volume-weighted average of delay experienced by all motorists entering the intersection on all intersection approaches. Levels of service A through D for an intersection is

Figure 10. Study Intersections

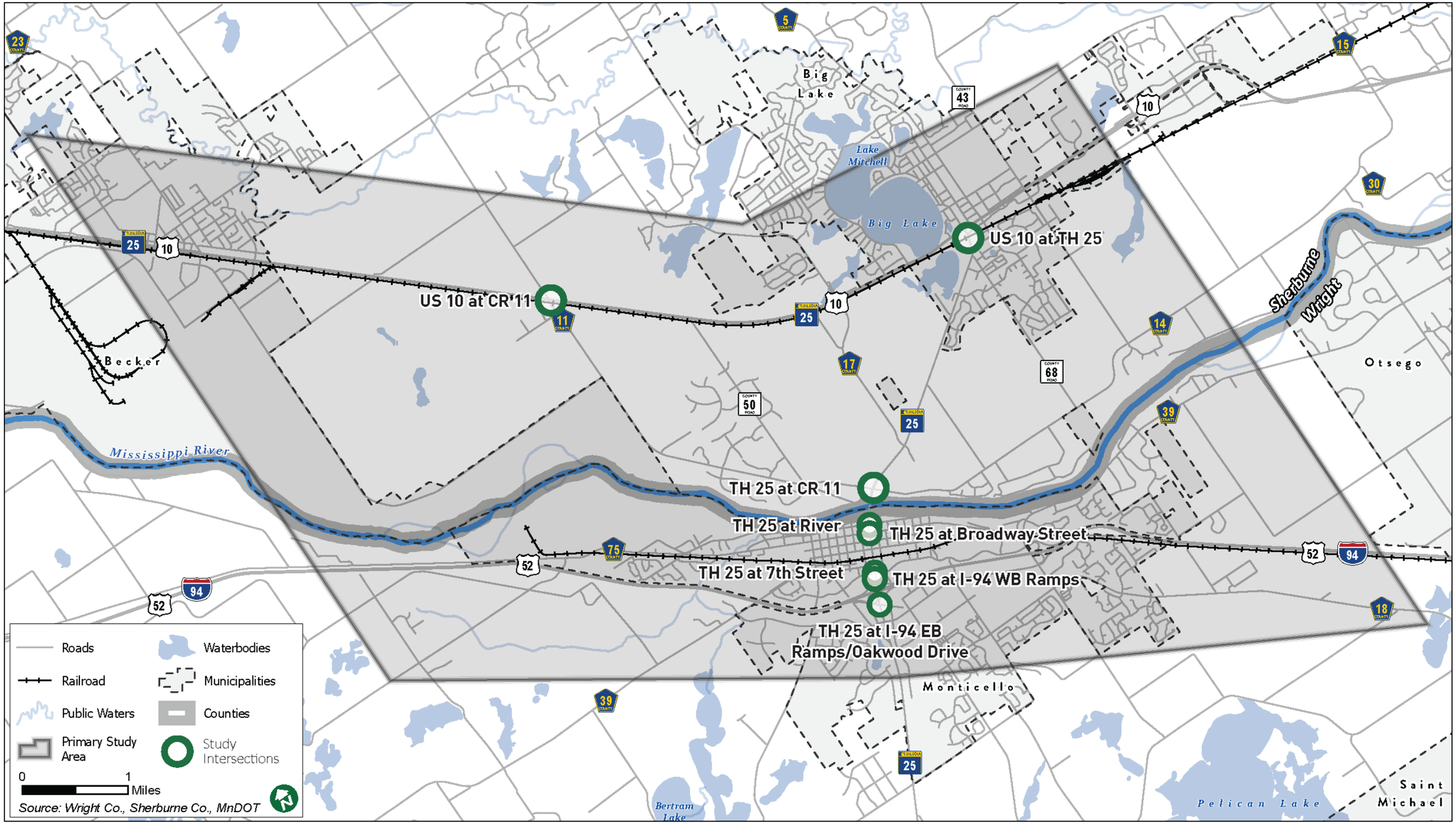


Figure 11. 2023 Summer Friday Afternoon Turning Movement Counts

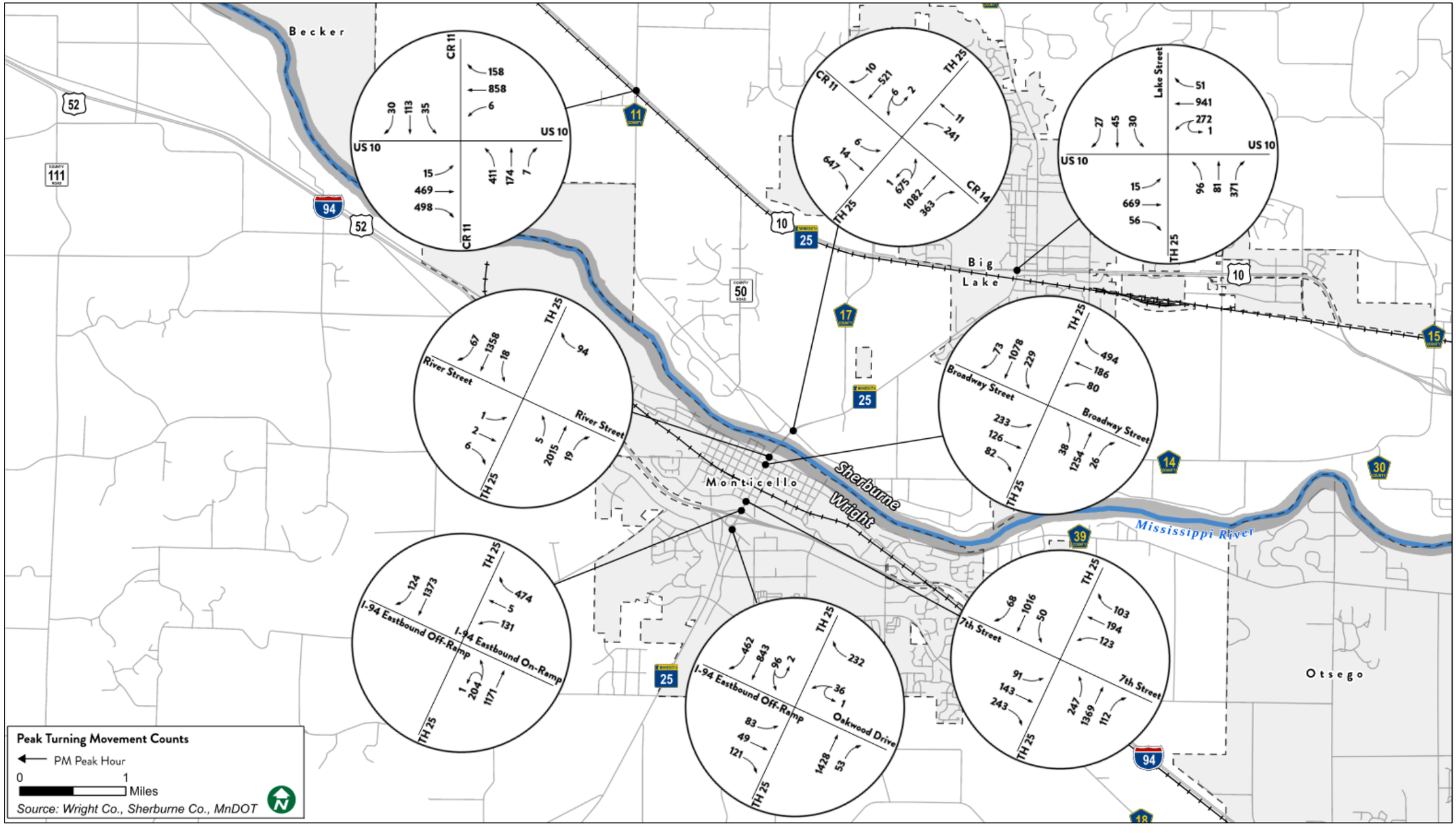


Figure 12. 2023 Weekday Afternoon Turning Movement Counts

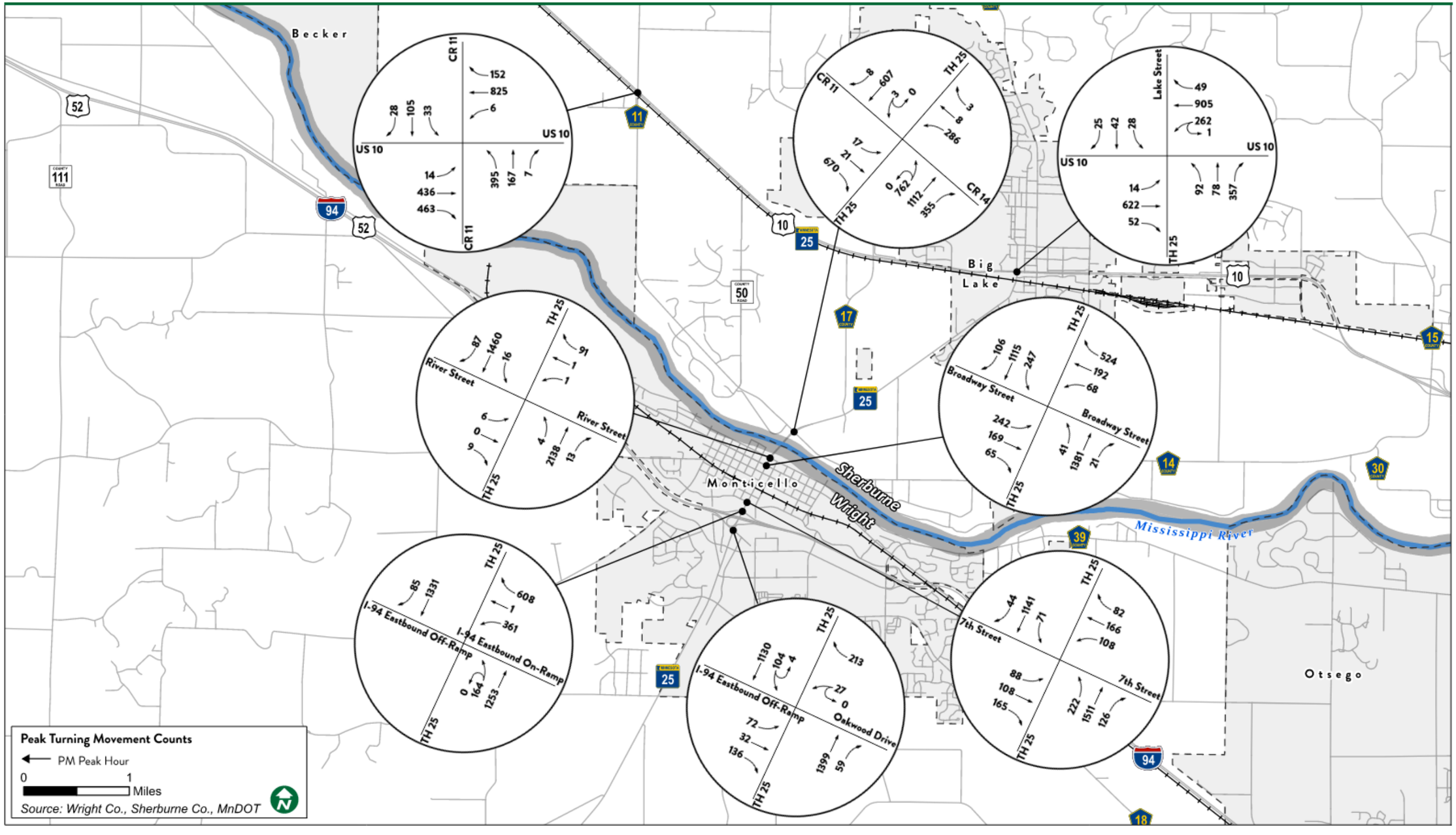
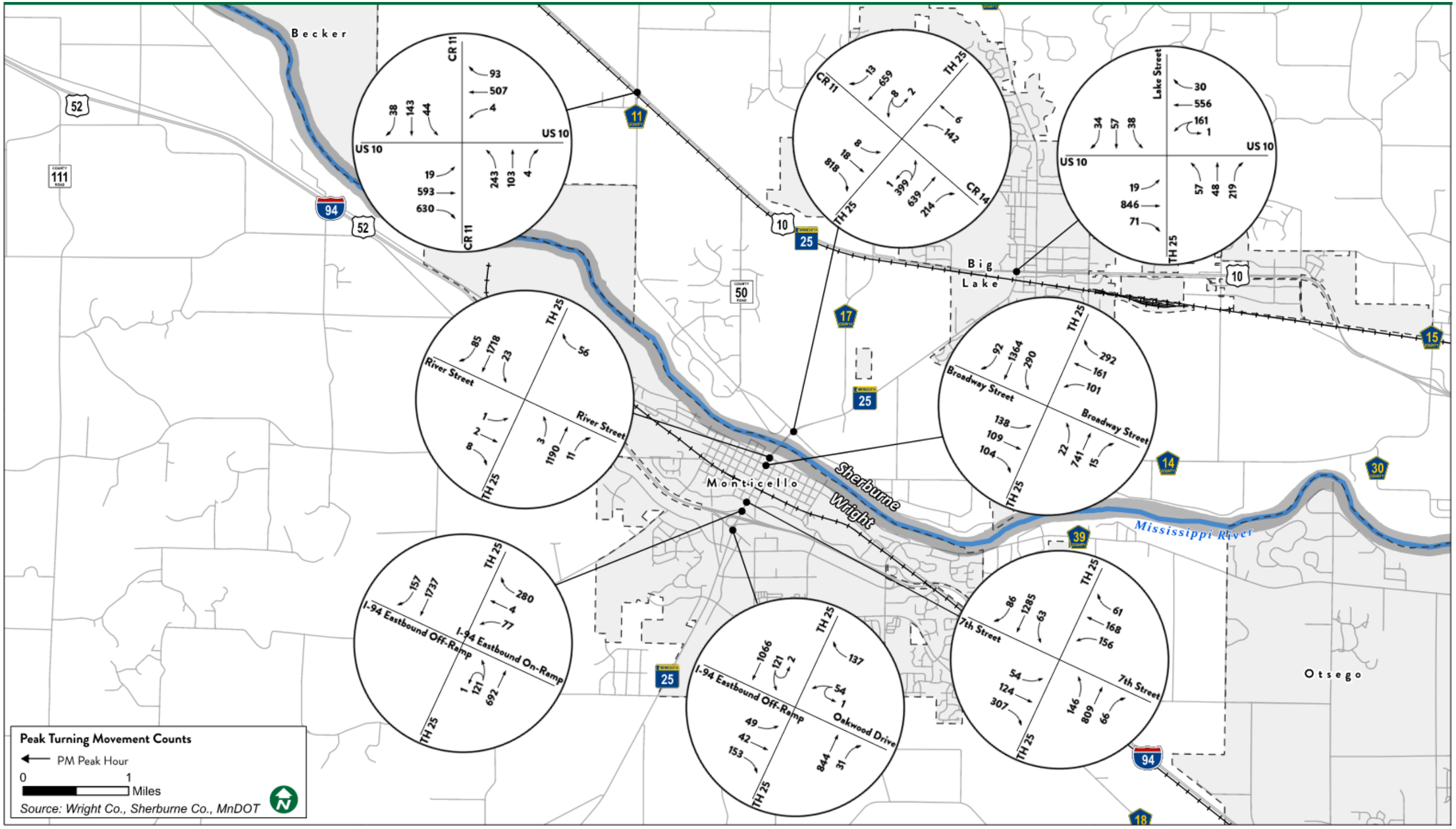


Figure 13. 2023 Sunday Peak Turning Movement Volumes



commonly taken as an acceptable design year LOS. LOS E or F may be considered acceptable for lower volume or minor movements.

The level of service and its associated intersection delay for signalized and unsignalized intersections is presented below in **Table 8**. The delay threshold for unsignalized intersections is lower compared to signalized intersections because people are generally willing to wait longer at a signalized intersection. The results of the analysis are shown in **Table 9** and **Figure 14.**

Table 8. Level of Service Thresholds

LOS	Signalized Intersection	Unsignalized Intersection
A	≤10 sec	≤10 sec
B	10–20 sec	10–15 sec
C	20–35 sec	15–25 sec
D	35–55 sec	25–35 sec
E	55–80 sec	35–50 sec
F	>80 sec	>50 sec

In general, most intersections along Highway 25 were found to have an LOS between A and D in most scenarios. Notable exceptions include the intersections of CR 11 at US 10, which experiences LOS F in all scenarios and the intersection of CR 11/CR 14 at TH 25, which experiences LOS F in the summer Friday and Sunday scenarios. Additional approaches also experience poor levels of service, notably many of the side streets (EB and WB) within Monticello. The northbound approach of TH 25 experiences remarkably high delays at CR 11/14 in the summer Friday and Sunday scenarios as well. These results show substantial mobility challenges present at specific, critical intersections along the corridor.

4.2.1.5.2.1. Existing Travel Time Analysis

To complement this intersection-based analysis, a corridor-wide analysis was conducted using the SimTraffic software included in the Trafficware suite. This tool creates a microsimulation of a study area and was used to estimate travel times. A free-flow state, set at posted speed limits, free of volume-related congestion was estimated using 25% of observed volumes. Results showed that:

- In a free-flow state, it's estimated that it would take vehicles an average of 11 minutes to travel along Highway 25 and CR 11 from I-94 eastbound to US Highway 10.
- With observed volumes, the average vehicle is expected to take 18 minutes to travel the same path, more than 1.6 times as long as during uncongested times. This is similar to the estimated 19 minutes taken on a typical weekday afternoon.

Streetlight data was also referenced for this same travel path. A distribution of travel times for the same travel path during different periods of the year is shown in **Figure 15.** This data shows that on a typical weekday (including the whole year), most vehicles make the trip in less than ten minutes, and trips are even quicker on a Friday in February. However, on a summer Friday, trip lengths skew longer, and twice as many trips take at least 12 minutes longer than they do on a typical weekday.

Table 9. Level of Service and Delay, Existing Conditions

Intersection	Approach	Level of Services (Delay, seconds/vehicle)					
		2023 Friday PM Peak		2023 Weekday PM Peak		2023 Sunday Peak	
		Approach	Overall	Approach	Overall	Approach	Overall
US Highway 10 at CR 11	EB WB NB SB	C (34) **F (201)** **F (705)** **F (153)**	**F (246)**	C (33) **F (183)** **F (647)** **F (133)**	**F (228)**	D (37) **E (61)** **F (278)** **F (213)**	**F (94)**
Highway 25 at US Highway 10	EB WB NB SB	C (27) B (15) B (16) C (32)	B (19)	C (24) B (13) B (14) C (27)	B (17)	C (21) B (12) B (15) C (30)	B (17)
Highway 25 at CR 11/CR 14	EB WB NB SB	B (15) **F (82)** **F (1071)** **E (72)**	**F (654)**	B (17) F (82) C (29) D (43)	C (33)	B (17) **E (59)** **F (400)** D (46)	**F (190)**
Highway 25 at River Street	EB WB NB SB	D (45) C (22) A (9) B (10)	A (10)	A (2) C (25) B (12) A (8)	B (10)	C (33) A (2) B (18) B (14)	A (8)
Highway 25 at Broadway Street	EB WB NB SB	**E (64)** **E (56)** D (38) D (40)	D (45)	**E (71)** **E (60)** D (41) D (43)	D (49)	D (42) C (35) **E (59)** **E (68)**	D (40)
Highway 25 at E 7th Street	EB WB NB SB	D (54) **E (64)** D (35) D (53)	D (46)	D (51) E (61) C (32) **E (58)**	D (45)	C (31) D (49) D (38) D (35)	D (44)
Highway 25 at I-94 westbound ramps	WB NB SB	**E (63)** B (14) B (19)	C (25)	**E (72)** B (14) B (17)	C (30)	C (24) A (8) **E (56)**	B (20)
Highway 25 at I-94 eastbound off-ramp/ Oakwood Drive	EB WB NB SB	D (39) D (38) C (25) B (14)	C (24)	D (36) C (27) C (22) B (13)	B (20)	C (30) D (54) C (23) B (17)	B (19)

Figure 14. 2023 Intersection Congestion Analysis Results

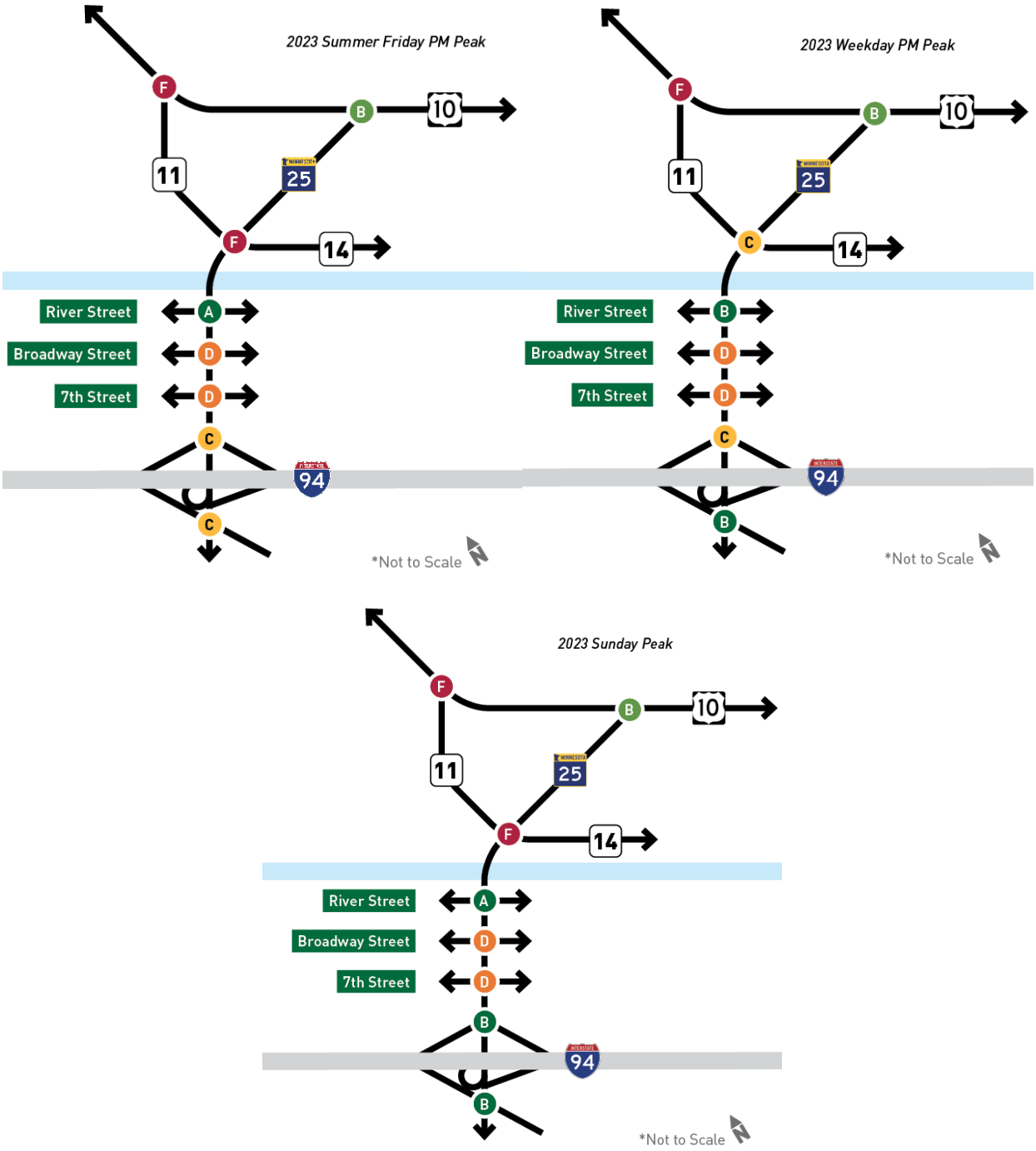
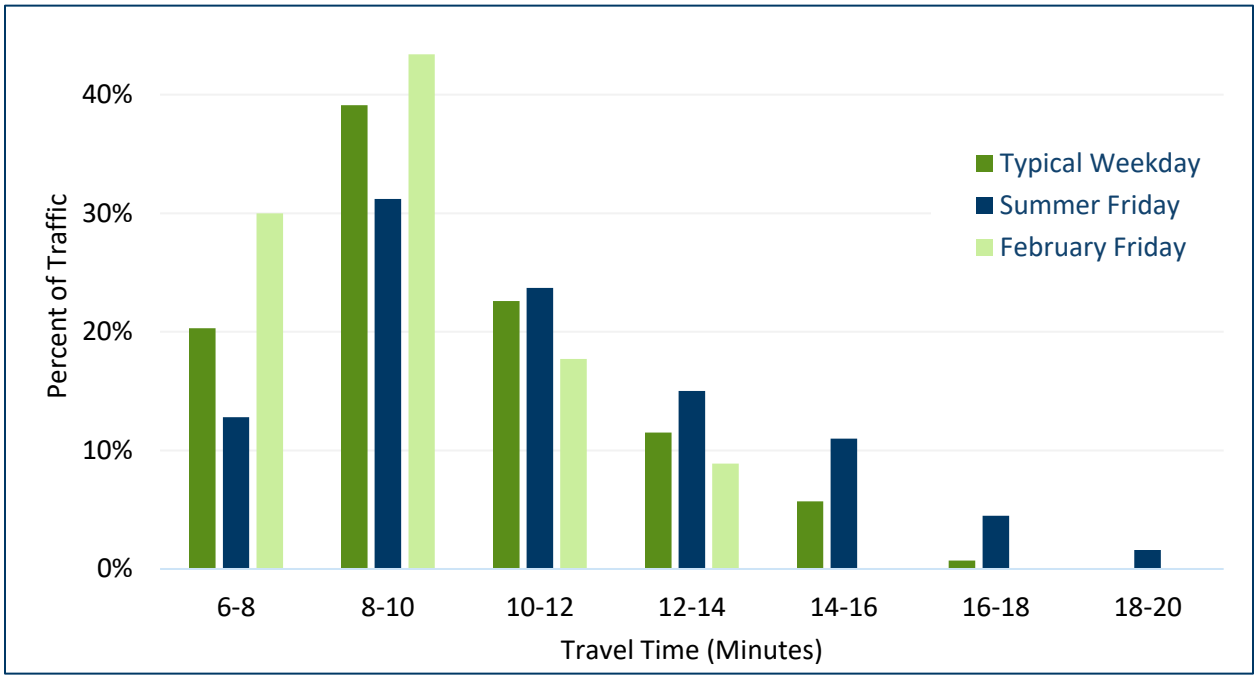


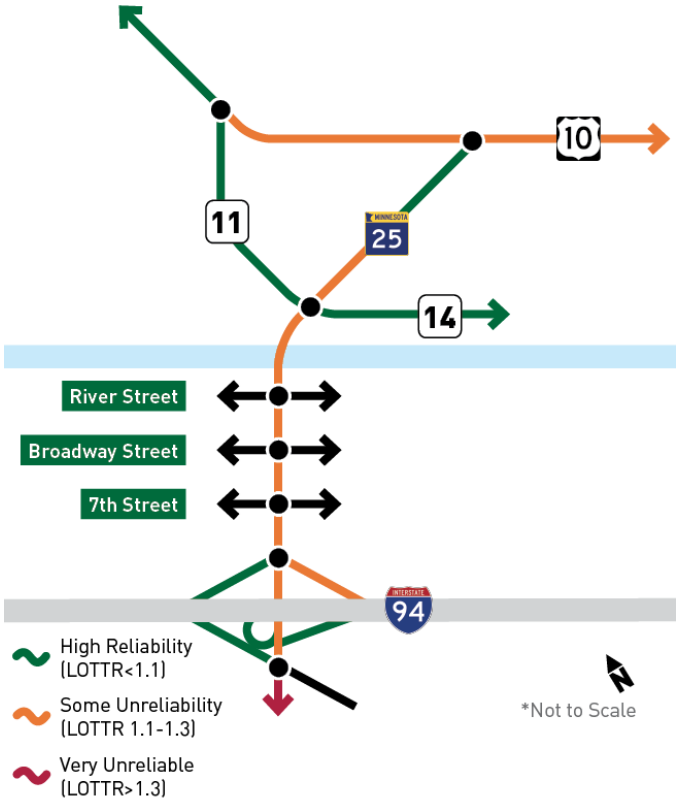
Figure 15. Afternoon Peak Travel Times along Highway 25 and CR 11 from I-94 to US Highway 10, Streetlight Data



4.2.2. Travel Time Reliability

A critical component of mobility is the reliability of roadways and other means of transportation to get travelers to their destinations within a predictable amount of time. Even congested roadways, when consistent, can sometimes be preferable to roadways with wildly irregular travel times. To understand travel time reliability within the study area, Streetlight data was used on major corridor segments within the regional study area. To identify locations where roadways provide unreliable travel times, a travel time reliability factor was calculated by dividing each segment's 80th percentile travel time by its median travel time. An analysis was conducted for both a summer Friday and for a non-summer weekday, with similar results. General results are shown in **Figure 16**. During both summer Fridays and typical weekdays, Highway 25 was found to have some unreliability from the I-94 eastbound ramps through the intersection with 200th Street (TTR factors: 1.24-1.25 summer Fridays, 1.17-1.19 typical weekdays). US 10 from County Road 11 through Highway 25 to County Road 43 similarly experienced some unreliability (TTR factors: 1.14-1.17 summer Fridays, 1.13-1.17 typical weekdays). It should be noted that *no other analyzed major segment outside of St. Cloud experienced notable reliability challenges (TTR factors >1.1)*. This includes I-94 and US 10 from TH 101 through TH 15, as well as TH 101 and TH 24 between I-94 and US 10. Both TH 15 and TH 23 in St. Cloud also experienced similar unreliability levels to TH 25 and US 10, which likely has more to do with urban traffic within St. Cloud. TH 25 experiences some of the highest levels of unreliable travel times in the region.

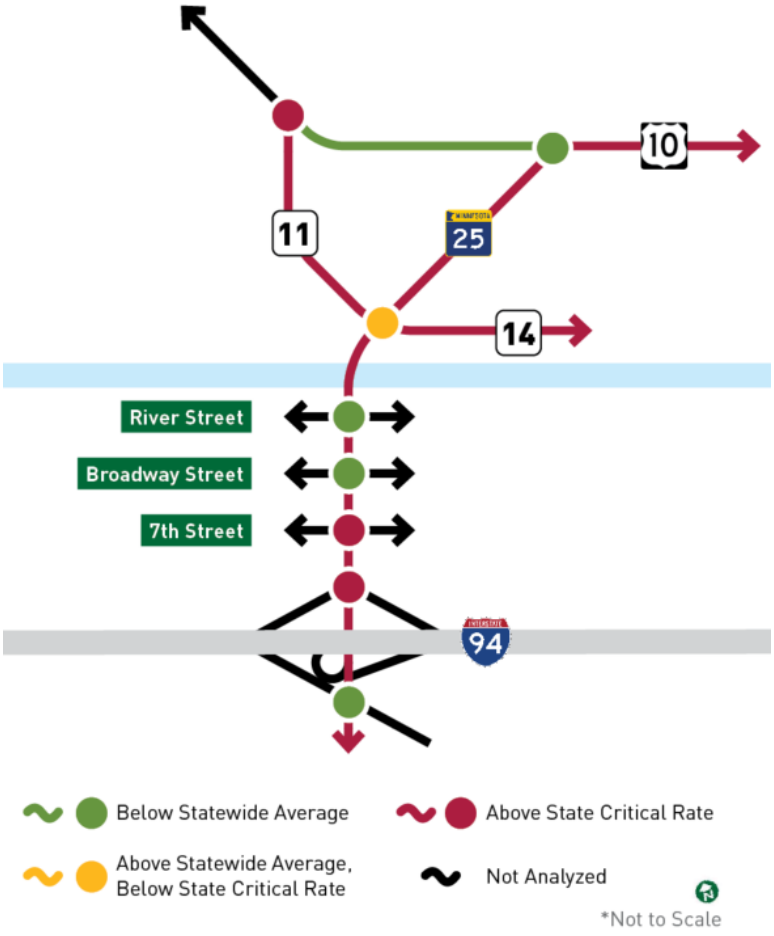
Figure 16. Travel Time Reliability Analysis Results



4.2.2.1. Safety

Crash history in the area was reviewed to identify areas with high crash rates and to identify crash patterns. Regional crash history was reviewed on major segments of I-94, US Highway 10, Highway 101, Highway 25, Highway 24, and Highway 15 around the Mississippi River, to understand regional concerns related to Mississippi River crossings. Crashes were also reviewed on a more detailed level within a crash focus area similar to the traffic analysis area that includes Highway 25, US Highway 10, CR 11, and CR 14 within the study area. Ten years of crash history were sourced from MnDOT's Minnesota Crash Mapping Analysis Tool (MnCMAT2) to review segment and intersection crash rates. An overview of five-year crash rates is shown in **Figure 17,** and details on intersection and segment crash rates are shown in the sections below.

Figure 17. Crash Rates (2018-2022)



4.2.2.1.1. Intersection Crash Rates

Within the crash focus area, intersection crash rates were calculated based on 2018-2022 crash history and are shown in **Table 10**. Four intersections have crash rates above the statewide average for similar intersections: Highway 25 at I-94 westbound ramps, Highway 25 at 7th Street, Highway 25 at CR 11/CR 14, and US Highway 10 at CR 11. Of these, all but Highway 25 at CR 11/CR 14 had crash rates higher than the state's critical rate, indicating that safety at these locations is of paramount concern. The intersection of US Highway 10 and CR 11 had an average crash rate that was more than double the statewide average, highlighting concerns at this congested intersection. The intersection of Highway 25 and the I-94 westbound ramps also had a fatal and serious injury rate higher than the state average.

Table 10. Five-Year (2018-2022) Intersection Crash Rates in Crash Focus Area

Intersection	Average Daily Entering Volume	Total Crashes	Overall Crash Rate (CR) (crashes per million entering vehicles)			Fatal and Serious Injury Crash Rate (FAR) (fatal & serious crashes per million entering vehicles)		
			Intersection	State Average	State Critical	Intersection	State Average	State Critical
Highway 25 at I-94 eastbound ramps/Oakwood Drive	63,000	34	0.59	0.59	0.86	0.00	0.82	3.23
Highway 25 at I-94 westbound ramps	76,200	67	**0.96**	0.59	0.84	**1.44**	0.82	2.94
Highway 25 at 7th St	72,500	61	**0.92**	0.59	0.84	0.00	0.82	3.01
Highway 25 at Broadway St	88,200	36	0.45	0.59	0.82	0.00	0.82	2.74
Highway 25 at River St	80,100	15	0.21	0.59	0.83	0.00	0.82	2.87
Highway 25 at CR 11/CR 14	72,750	40	0.60	0.59	0.84	0.00	0.82	3.00
Highway 25 at US Highway 10	52,900	34	0.59	0.59	0.86	0.00	0.69	3.26
US Highway 10 at CR 11	49,800	67	**0.96**	0.59	0.84	0.00	0.69	3.37

4.2.2.1.2. Segment Crash Rates

Analysis of segments in the crash focus area was also conducted using the same data sources and five-year timeframe. Segment crash rates are shown in **Table 11**. Most analyzed segments have crash rates higher than the state's critical crash rate, indicating much higher crash rates than seen on most facilities statewide.

Highway 25 from I-94 to CR 11/CR 14 passes through downtown Monticello and was observed to have a crash rate approximately two and a half times the statewide rate for similar facilities, and more than double the state critical crash rate. This area has many access points, including crossing streets and driveways, and features some of the highest pedestrian activity and highest vehicular volumes on the corridor. The confluence of regional traffic, local access points, and vulnerable roadway users may be contributing to this exceptional crash rate. Notably, this segment's fatal and serious injury crash rate is lower than the state average, suggesting that many of these crashes, due to the fact that 81 percent of crashes in this area did not involve any injury at all.

US Highway 10 between CR 11 and Bradley Boulevard and CR 14 between Highway 25 and US Highway 10 also have fatal and serious injury crash rates well above state critical rates. The segment of US

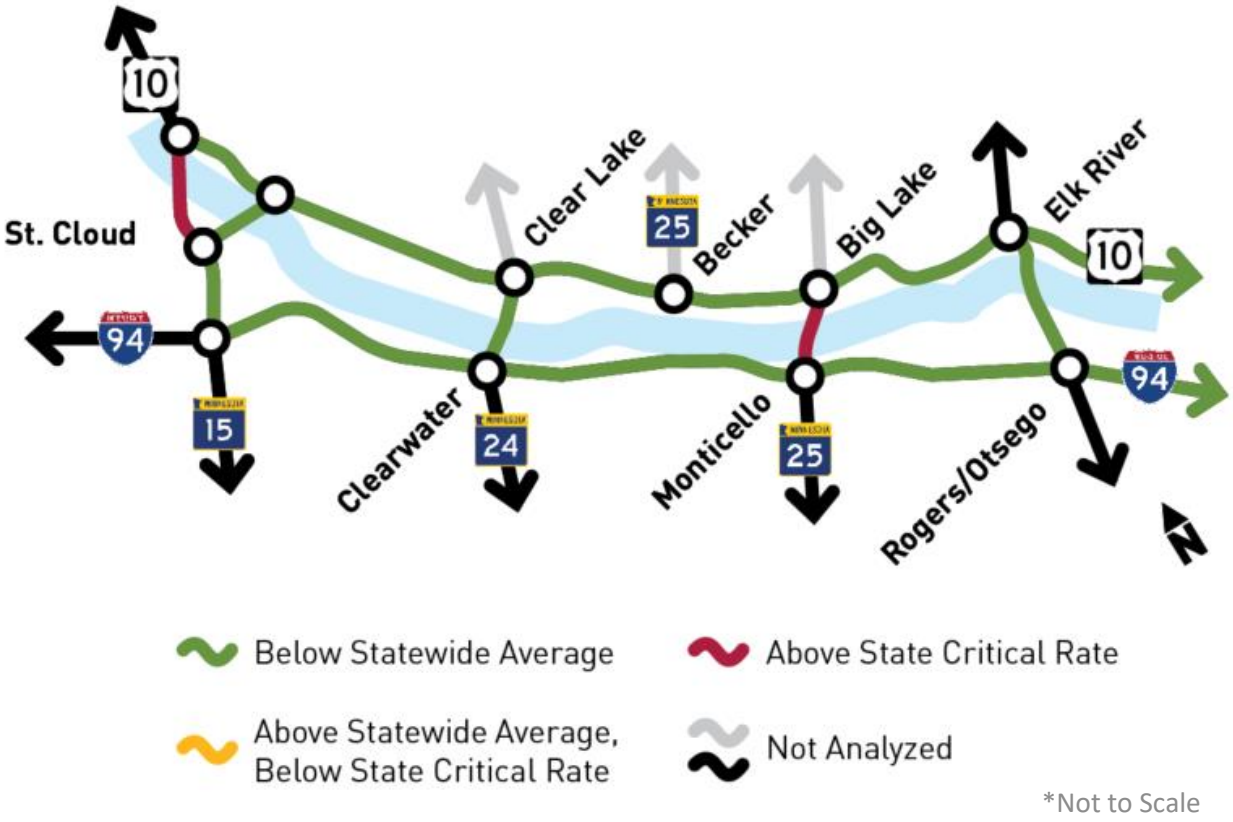
Highway 10 has seen one fatality and three serious injuries in the five years, and the segment of CR 14 has seen one fatality and four serious injuries, even with an AADT less than one sixth of US Highway 10.

Table 11. Five-Year (2018-2022) Segment Crash Rates in Crash Focus Area

Intersection	Average Daily Volume	Total Crashes	Overall Crash Rate (CR) (crashes per one hundred million vehicle miles travelled (100MVMT))			Fatal and Serious Injury Crash Rate (FAR) (fatal & serious crashes per 100MVMT)		
			Segment	State Average	State Critical	Segment	State Average	State Critical
Highway 25: I-94 to CR 11/CR 14	33,000	380	**5.73**	1.99	2.45	1.51	2.73	6.09
Highway 25: CR 11 to US Highway 10	13,700	63	**0.93**	0.55	0.79	0.00	2.19	5.24
US Highway 10: Highway 25 to CR 11	15,000	87	0.77	0.79	1.01	0.00	1.21	2.99
CR 11: Highway 25 to US Highway 10	13,600	120	**1.51**	0.55	0.77	0.00	2.19	4.95
US Highway 10: CR 11 to Bradley Blvd	19,300	136	**0.84**	0.79	0.97	**2.47**	1.21	2.63
US Highway 10: Highway 25 to CR 14	18,800	155	**1.03**	0.79	0.98	**1.32**	1.21	2.69
CR 14: Highway 25 to US Highway 10	3,150	56	**1.45**	0.44	0.73	**12.97**	2.61	7.24
Highway 25: School Blvd to I-94	30,000	66	1.72	1.99	2.59	0.00	2.73	7.46

An additional regional analysis was performed on major segments in the areas surrounding the Highway 25 bridge over the Mississippi River to understand other safety concerns related to river crossings roughly from the northwest part of the Twin Cities metro area to St. Cloud that serve regional traffic between the Metro region and recreational areas to the northwest. **Figure 18** shows these segments with five years of crash history. Most analyzed segments have crash rates below the statewide average rates for similar facilities. Only Highway 25 between I-94 and US Highway 10 has an observed crash rate above the state critical rates. This analysis highlights the critical safety concerns present on Highway 25 near the Mississippi River that exist above and beyond its peer crossings.

Figure 18. Five-Year (2018-2022) Regional Segment Crash Rates



4.2.2.1.3. Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes

A review of crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists was conducted in the crash focus area shown previously, using all crashes from MnCMAT2 from 2013 to the latest data available in 2023. Within these areas, there were four bicycle-involved and ten pedestrian-involved crashes, which are shown in **Figure 19**.

A notable cluster of bicycle and pedestrian crashes can be seen on Highway 25 between I-94 and 7th Street. This area has seen one fatality at the I-94 westbound ramps in which a truck driver struck and killed a bicyclist while making a right turn on red onto Highway 25. Another cyclist was struck by a bus driver who was making the right turn from Oakwood Drive onto Highway 25, and two pedestrians were struck – one at the I-94 westbound ramps and another at 7th Street.

Two pedestrian crashes were observed in the area near Saron Lutheran Church, along Highway 25 between Monroe Avenue and Pleasant Avenue in Big Lake. Both were nighttime crashes that involved pedestrians walking along the shoulder of the roadway.

Another cluster of bicycle and pedestrian crashes was seen on US Highway 10 in Big Lake. Five bicycle or pedestrian crashes took place between Lakeshore Drive and CR 43, including at least one minor injury.

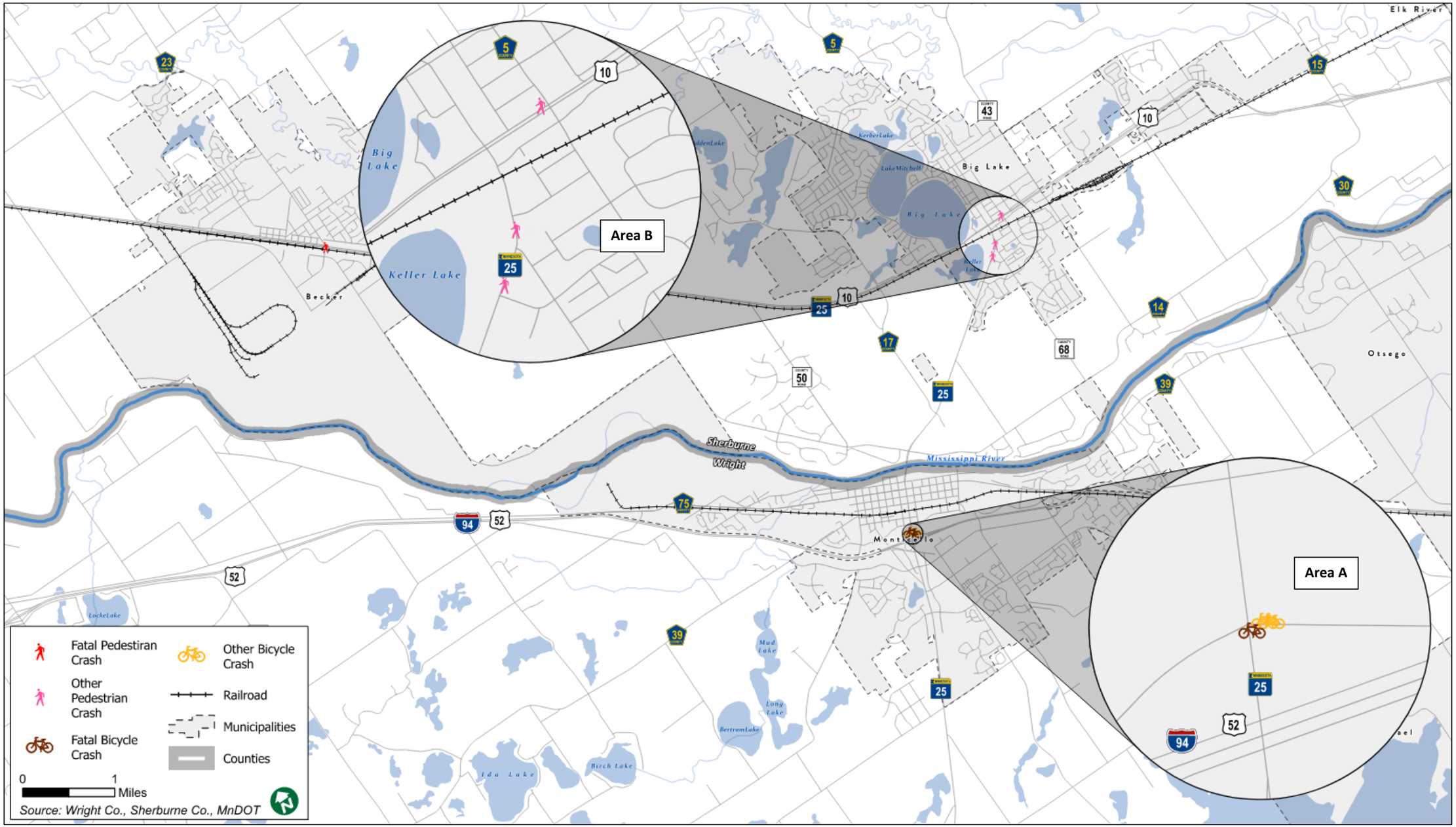
A pedestrian crossing US Highway 10 at Sherburne Avenue in Becker was struck and killed overnight by a driver traveling eastbound.

4.2.2.1.4. Sustained High Crash Locations (SHCL)

A location is considered a Sustained High Crash Location (SHCL) if it has a Fatal and Serious Crash Rate (FAR) above the state critical rate. An intersection may also be identified as a SHCL if it has an overall crash rate above the state critical rate and one or more severe crashes occurred in a five-year period. A segment may be considered a SHCL if its overall crash rate is above the state critical rate, and it has had a rate of at least one severe crash per five miles over a five-year period. The following locations meet these criteria and have been identified as SHCLs:

- Area A: The intersection of Highway 25 at I-94 westbound ramps
- The segment of CR 14 from Highway 25 to US Highway 10
- Area B: The segment of Highway 25 from I-94 to CR 11/CR 14
- The segment of US Highway 10 from Highway 25 to CR 14

Figure 19. 5-Year Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes



4.2.3. Freight

This section details freight use patterns, as well intermodal facilities, rail tracks, and other freight uses in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. The PEL study area contains a variety of land uses and freight generators that rely on Highway 25, US Highway 10, and I-94 to deliver supplies and transport finished goods to market. Stakeholder input has identified Northern Metals Recycling and the Vonco Waste Management campus as notable freight generators in the study area as well as downtown Becker and Monticello. Trucking and Heavy Commercial Vehicles

Many of the industries and employers in the area surrounding the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area rely on Highway 25 for receiving supplies and shipping goods to market. As the only Mississippi River crossing for at least ten miles to the north or south, Highway 25 itself is situated between two major freight shipping routes and interregional corridors (IRCs), I-94 and US Highway 10, which collects a large amount of truck traffic through Central Minnesota. The Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area is also home to multiple businesses that are heavily reliant on trucking for their daily operations, with large freight generators in all three communities. Heavy commercial annual average daily counts (HCAADT) from 2022 are summarized in **Table 12** below.

Table 12. 2022 MnDOT Official HCAADT Counts

Monticello to Big Lake Highway 25 Segment	HCAADT	% of Total AADT
I-94 to W Broadway St/CSAH 75	1,067	3%
W Broadway St/CSAH 75 to CSAH 11 & 14	1,378	3%
CSAH 11 & 14 to CSAH 17 (200th St)	787	4%
CSAH 17 (200th St) to Pleasant Ave	317	3%
Pleasant Ave to US Highway 10	343	3%
Big Lake to Becker Highway 25 Segment (Concurrent with US Highway 10)	**HCAADT**	**% of Total AADT**
Highway 25 (Lake Street) to CSAH 17 (200th St)	1,785	13%
CSAH 17 (200th St) to CSAH 11 (Park Blvd)	955	7%
CSAH 11 (Park Blvd) to CSAH 23 (Sherburne Ave)	1,547	8%

Within the PEL Study area, there were 134 commercial vehicle crashes between 2018-2022[6]. The majority of crashes (around 83 percent) resulted in property damage only, with one fatal crash reported in the five-year period. Half of all the reported crashes occurred at signalized intersections. Analysis of crash type provides another means to make inferences about corridor safety condition. While the circumstances that contribute to crashes vary, if one type of crash is especially prevalent, that can indicate that a design or engineering issue may be contributing to the safety conditions. The most common heavy commercial vehicle crash type in the project area were rear end crashes (44 out of 134), followed by same direction sideswipe crashes (32 out of 134) and angle crashes (27 out of 134). The prevalence of rear end and sideswipe crashes could be indicative of the vehicle speed differential for heavy commercial vehicles and passenger vehicles. Likewise, the prevalence of angle crashes might be

[6] Historical commercial vehicle crash data were gathered from Minnesota's Crash Mapping Analysis Tool 2, with crash types filtered to all crashes where one or more vehicles were reported to be a cargo van, other light truck, or medium/heavy truck.

indicative of the differences in vehicle operating speeds, especially as trucks are slow to stop, start, and turn.

As shown in **Figure 20**, Highway 25 from I-94 and US Highway 10 west of Highway 25 is designated a superload corridor. Typically, any truck that is more than 8.5 feet in width, 13.5 feet in height, 53 feet in length, and 46,000 pounds in weight is categorized as an "oversized load". On the other hand, vehicles that are over 16 feet in width, 160 feet in length, 16 feet in height, and 200,000 pounds in weight are considered "superloads". I-94 is not a superload corridor due to height restrictions and super load vehicles tend to operate at slower speeds creating unwanted congestion on the interstate.

Intermodal Facilities

Intermodal terminals are essential to the operation of the regional freight system, serving the vital function of transferring freight from one mode of transportation to another. Intermodal terminals include truck/rail, container (containers on flat cars, trailers on flat cars, bi-modal), pipeline terminals, air cargo terminals, grain shuttle terminals, and lake terminal/ports. There are no intermodal container terminals, air cargo terminals, grain shuttle terminals, or waterway terminals within the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. There is a single truck/rail intermodal terminal in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area, TJ Potter, Reload and the Becker Warehouse, located in Becker just south of US Highway 10. The storage-in-transit warehouse is connected to the BNSF line via a rail spur. This facility mostly serves steel, lumber, and bulk plastic products.

4.2.3.1. Rail Freight

Most rail traffic in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area carries freight intended for destinations beyond the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. This section focuses on terminal freight rail facilities in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. For a summary of railroad conditions and operations in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area, please refer to **Section 4.2.8 - Railroads**. Railroads can require additional consideration and coordination for future projects that may increase project development time and/or costs, and thus impact feasibility. This section provides a summary of active freight rail generators in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area, though a summary of facilities with direct access to the BNSF rail subdivisions in the study area. These are detailed in **Table 13** below.

Table 13. Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area Freight Rail Spurs

Destination Serviced	Type	Location	Subdivision
Becker Warehouse and Reload (UMI, Inc)	Truck/Rail Terminal	Becker	Staples
TJ Potter Trucking Inc.	Private Business/Trucking	Becker	Becker
EMR Northern Metal Recycling	Private Business	Becker	Becker
Liberty Paper/Liberty Diversified International	Private Business	Becker	Becker
Sherburne County Generating Station	Power plant	Becker	Staples
Howmet Aerospace	Private Business	Big Lake	Staples
Midwest Lumber Minnesota	Private Business	Big Lake	Staples
Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant	Power plant	Monticello	Monticello

Howmet Aerospace and Midwest Lumber Minnesota are short spurs directly off the BNSF Staples subdivision. They serve an unknown number of trains per day. Likewise, the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant has direct rail service, but does not see regular use. Rather, the rail line is maintained as a contingency for the Nuclear Generating Plant. The remaining freight rail facilities are active freight rail generators. The Becker Warehouse and Reload has a spur off the BNSF Staples Subdivision. The Sherburne County Generating Station (Sherco) is located directly north of the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area along US Highway 10 outside of Becker.

Sherco is a large coal-fired power plant, and a significant railroad freight generator. In the past, the plant used as much as 20,000 to 30,000 tons of coal per day, with BNSF running up to three 115-car trains per day. Total trains per day in 2019, however, was reported as being one train per day (per the MnDOT rail database). Xcel Energy, who manages Sherco, have long-term plans to replace Sherco with renewables as part of a larger effort to reduce reliance on coal. This might have long term impacts of freight rail needs in the project area. Rail freight lines and crossings are included in the freight generators map shown in **Figure 20.**

4.2.3.2. Other Freight Facilities

In addition to these dedicated intermodal and rail freight facilities, there are scattered site freight generators throughout the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area associated with industrial and commercial land uses. Trips to and from these sites likely rely on Highway 25 to access nearby interregional corridors such as I-94 and US Highway 10. Areas zoned for industrial use were mapped and shown in **Figure 20.**

4.2.4. Transit

Two major transit providers – Tri-Cap and Trailblazer Transit – provide transit coverage in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. Tri-Cap provides fixed route service in the study area in addition to a dial-a-ride service for Sherburne County. Trailblazer does not offer any fixed route service in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area, instead only providing dial-a-ride service for Wright County and the community of Big Lake in neighboring Sherburne County. Transit connections to destinations outside of the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area are supported by the Northstar Commuter Rail, which provides weekday service between Big Lake and downtown Minneapolis, as well as the St. Cloud Northstar Link (also known as Metro Bus Route 887), which provides weekday service between St. Cloud, Becker, and the Northstar station in Big Lake.

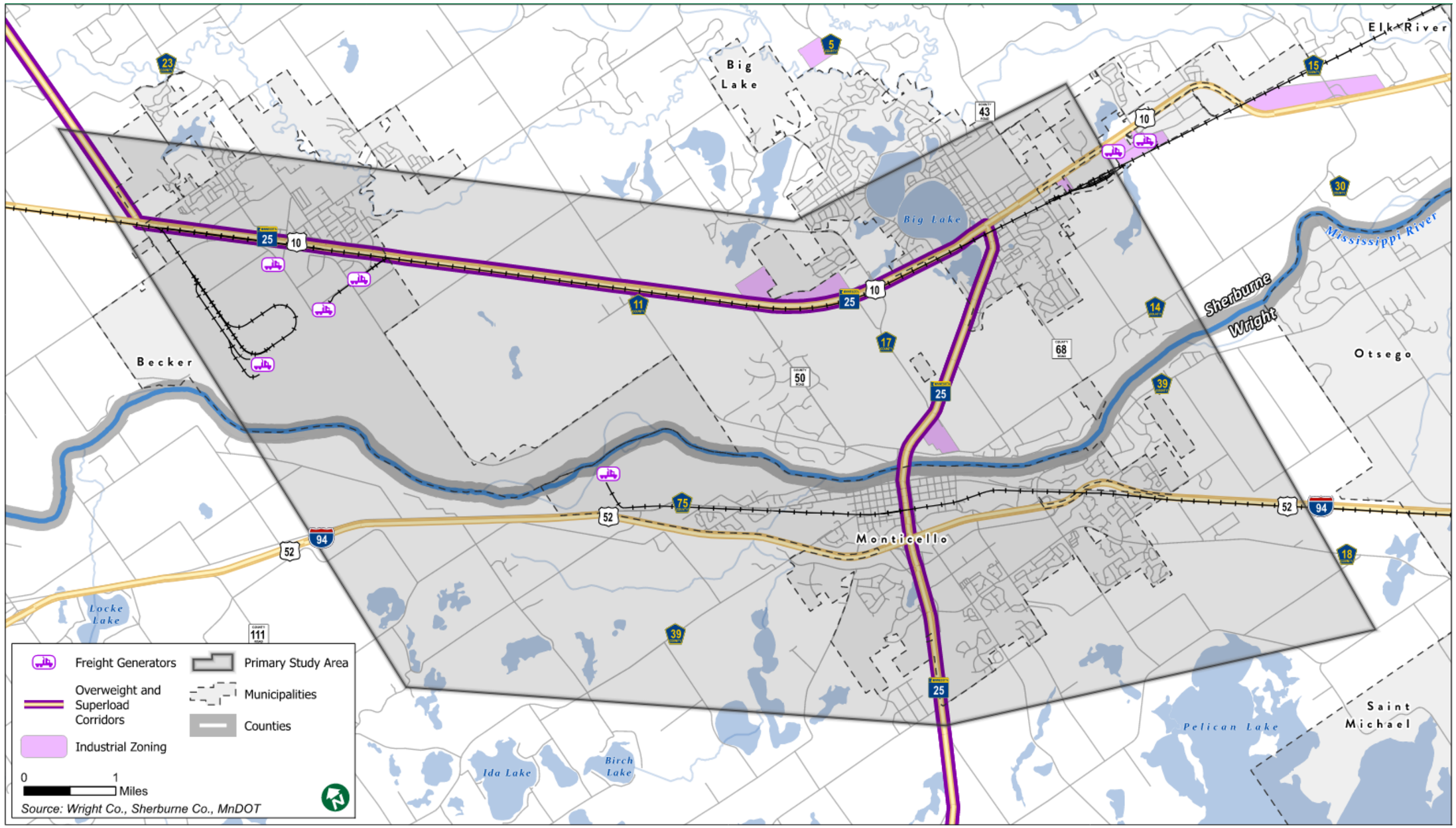
4.2.4.1. Existing Facilities

The Northstar Rail Big Lake Station is located just east of CR 43 in Big Lake. This station has a heated enclosure, surface lot with 518 free parking spaces, and services two southbound and two northbound trips between Big Lake and the Twin Cities metropolitan area, Monday through Friday. The station is the southern terminus of the aforementioned St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission's Route 887 and sees two southbound and two northbound bus trips daily, coinciding with the Northstar service schedule.

There is an additional park and ride facility located in the City of Becker between Willow Street and Rye Street, located directly west of the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area's western boundary.

Directly east of the Northstar Rail Big Lake Station is a rail depot used for the maintenance and storage of Northstar rolling stock. This facility is not open to the public.

Figure 20. Highway 25 Area PEL Freight Generators



4.2.4.2. Proposed Facilities

The demand for local transit service in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area will likely remain low and serviceable by existing facilities. As such, there is little by way of proposed transit facilities. A study assessing the feasibility of extending Northstar commuter rail service into St. Cloud was published in July 2020. This study did not provide a recommendation on extending service, instead opting to explore the cost and potential barriers to implementation. Changes to commuting patterns resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a substantial drawdown in Northstar ridership, and it remains uncertain what direction future investment will take.

4.2.5. Pedestrian and Bicycle

The Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area's geographic scale, rural densities, the Mississippi River, and distance between communities make nonmotorized travel challenging and leads to a transportation system that depends heavily on private automobiles for trips. In addition to this, Highway 25 between Monticello and Big Lake is a mix of rural principal arterial, rural minor arterial, and urban minor arterial. Given the functional classification, volume of traffic, and land development patterns around Highway 25 in the PEL study area, it is within reason to say that historically the corridor was not intended to serve as a bicycle and pedestrian route, and in fact, may function as a barrier to bicycle and pedestrian trips that necessitate crossing the corridor. In several areas along Highway 25 the current width of sidewalks is substandard, including on the bridge and through portions of downtown Monticello. Additionally, there is a lack of separation/buffers that create an uncomfortable environment for pedestrians. The Highway 25 bridge is the only ped/bike crossing of river within the Highway 25 Area PEL study area. Future analysis and recommendations from this report will focus on adequate bicycle and pedestrian crossing and linear facilities separated from motorized traffic lanes along Highway 25 in the study area.

The following sections detail the existing multimodal environment, performance, and safety within the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. An assessment of outdoor recreation facilities, which summarizes the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area's bicycle and pedestrian facilities are shown in **Figure 21.**

Section 4.2.2.1.3 outlines the bicycle and pedestrian safety information above.

4.2.5.1. Environment and Accessibility

The Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area contains three municipalities, Monticello, Big Lake, and Becker, as well as a several unincorporated communities located in Becker Township. These communities contain retail and daily service destinations, job and activity centers, single- and multi-family housing (including manufactured housing parks), schools, and parks, as well as other destinations that generate demand for biking and walking trips. These communities all have independent walking and biking networking, but there is a lack of facilities to support non-motorized trips between these community networks. These communities are not only separated by geographic distance but are divided by the Mississippi River as well as high-speed roadways such as Highway 25, US Highway 10, and I-94.

4.2.5.1.1. Pedestrian Facilities

There are sidewalks along both sides of the Highway 25 right-of-way from the I-94/Highway 25 interchange in Monticello to the intersection of Park Boulevard Southeast and Highway 25 in Sherburne County. There are no pedestrian facilities for the segment of Highway 25 between the intersection Park Boulevard Southeast and Tarrytown Road. Between Tarrytown Road and Putnam Avenue, there is a single sidewalk located along the northbound side of Highway 25. From the intersection of Highway 25 and Putnam Avenue, there are sidewalks along the northbound and southbound sides of Highway 25, which continue west of the junction of US Highway 10, where Highway 25 runs concurrent. The southbound sidewalk ends abruptly along the western end of 180 Jefferson Boulevard property, were land use transitions from commercial to residential. The sidewalk located along northbound US Highway 10/Highway 25 continues until Lakeshore Drive, where is turns north away from the US Highway 10/Highway 25 right-of-way. Pedestrian facilities are shown in **Figure 21.**

4.2.5.1.2. Bicycling Facilities

The only dedicated bicycling facilities are located in Monticello, where the Minnesota River Trail runs through the community. Bicycling facilities are shown in **Figure 21.**

4.2.5.2. Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

A review of bicycle and pedestrian crashes was completed as part of the safety analysis. Please refer to 4.2.2.1.3. Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes for a detailed analysis.

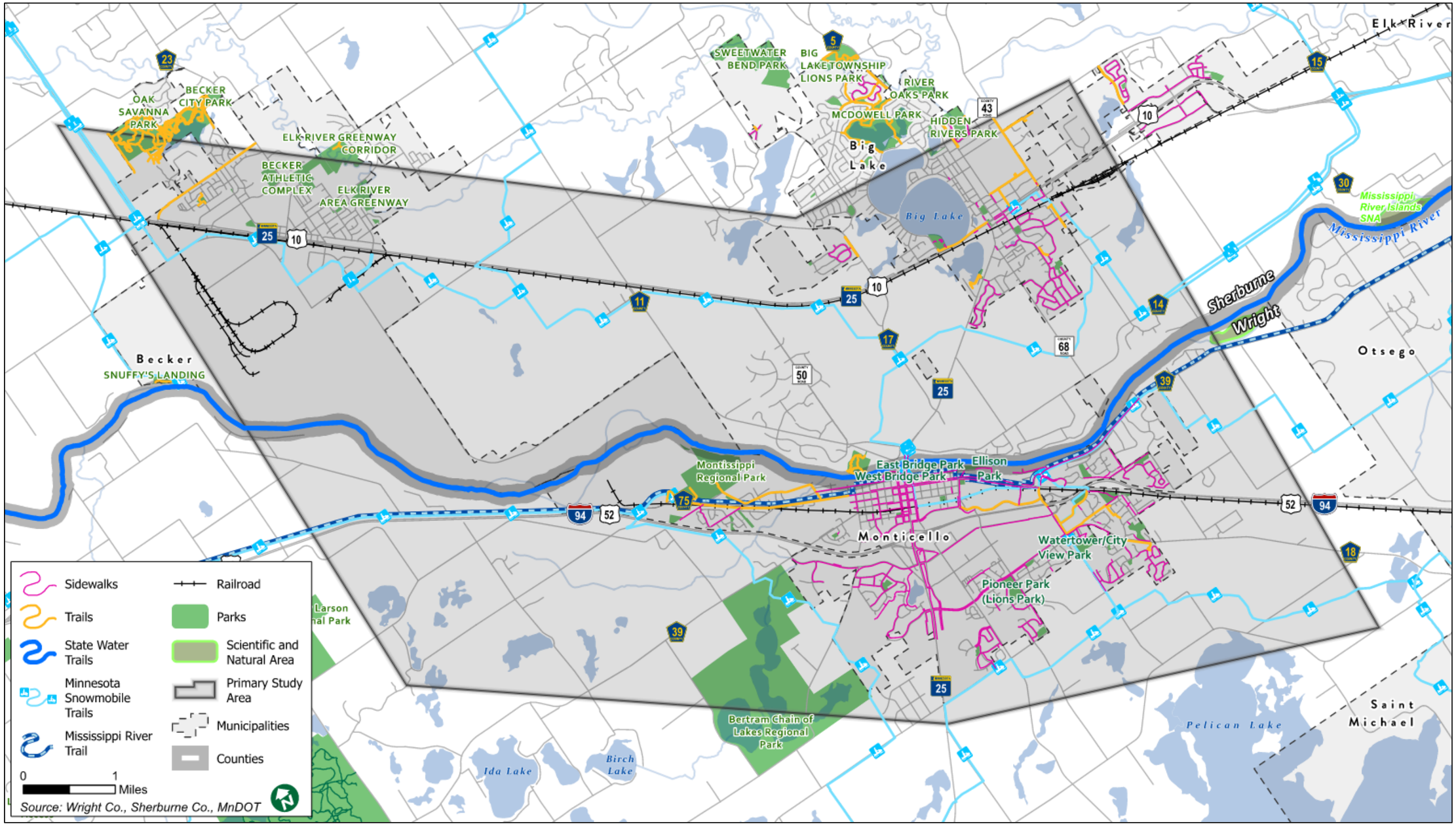
4.2.6. Parking

Rural principal arterials, like Highway 25 in the project review area, are generally not intended to have permanent permitted street parking, owing to the operational and safety issues that such parking introduces to the circulatory system, especially along higher speed roadways. The Highway 25 corridor only in the PEL project review area only permits parking in two places. These are:

- The northbound shoulder of Highway 25 between 200th St and 196th Street (directly north of the Mississippi Bridge) in Sherburne County. The roadway is signed for 55 miles per hours, and the shoulder has curb and gutter. This segment sees little long-term on-street parking. Instead, it serves as a utility lane for mail and parcel delivery to the residences located along northbound Highway 25.
- The southbound shoulder of Highway 25/Lake Street between the railroad crossing and the intersection with US Highway 10 in Big Lake has parking for businesses located along Highway 25/Lake Street. Highway 25 is signed for 30 miles per hour in this area. The businesses have an off-street parking located behind their respective buildings.

There is no other permitted on-street parking in the project review area.

Figure 21. Outdoor Recreation



4.2.7. Airports

There are no active airports or airport influence areas in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. There are two historic but defunct airport sites in the study area, both of which are now used as agricultural fields but still recorded on maps and GIS resources. These are:

- Hook Spray Airport, which was located south of US Highway 10 on 172nd Street east of Big Lake
- Pilots Cove, also known as Monticello Field, which was located between 200th Street and Highway 25 north of the Mississippi River.

4.2.8. Railroads

There are two rail lines in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area, both of which are operated by BNSF Railway (formerly known as Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway). The lines are Monticello Subdivision (south of the Mississippi through Monticello, terminating at the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant), and the Staples Subdivision (north of the Mississippi River through Big Lake and Becker). The subdivisions and crossings are shown in **Figure 22.**

The Monticello Subdivision is a BNSF managed low-volume line that runs between Monticello and the Wayzata Subdivision in the Twin Cities. The line between Albertville and Monticello is maintained by BNSF solely for cases in which there might be need to run special train service to the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant[7]. There is an at-grade crossing over Highway 25 in downtown Monticello, between 5th Street and 4th Street with cross-bucks, but no warning signals or protective gates. Based on field inventory the rail line appears to be inactive and would require significant upgrades for the railroad to be in usable condition.

The Staples Subdivision is BNSF managed high-volume line and a strategic rail corridor network that runs between Minneapolis and Dilworth, with the busiest segments having between 30-40 trains per day. Much of this traffic is due to the Staples Subdivision relationship with domestic oil production as it plays a key role for both transporting the raw materials necessary for oil extraction in addition to transporting crude oil from oil fields to other facilities. The future demand for crude-by-rail is uncertain, as pipeline infrastructure may reduce the need for rail transportation[8]. Alternatively, if oil prices and production remain high, there could be a sustained or increased number of trains per day along the subdivision.

The Staples Subdivision also hosts Amtrak's Empire Builder, as well as the Northstar Line commuter train, whose northern terminus is in Big Lake.

[7] Central Minnesota Freight Plan Chapter 6.0 – Rail Profile, Minnesota Department of Transportation http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/freightplan/central/PDF/Rail.pdf, Accessed July 26, 2023

[8] Freight Rail in Minnesota, Minnesota Go, https://www.minnesotago.org/application/files/3415/1552/3791/MNFreightRail_Final_V3.pdf, Accessed July 26, 2023

In the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area, there are 32 railway crossings. There are six private crossings in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area, with five of the six along US Highway 10/Highway 25, and used for agricultural field and residential access.

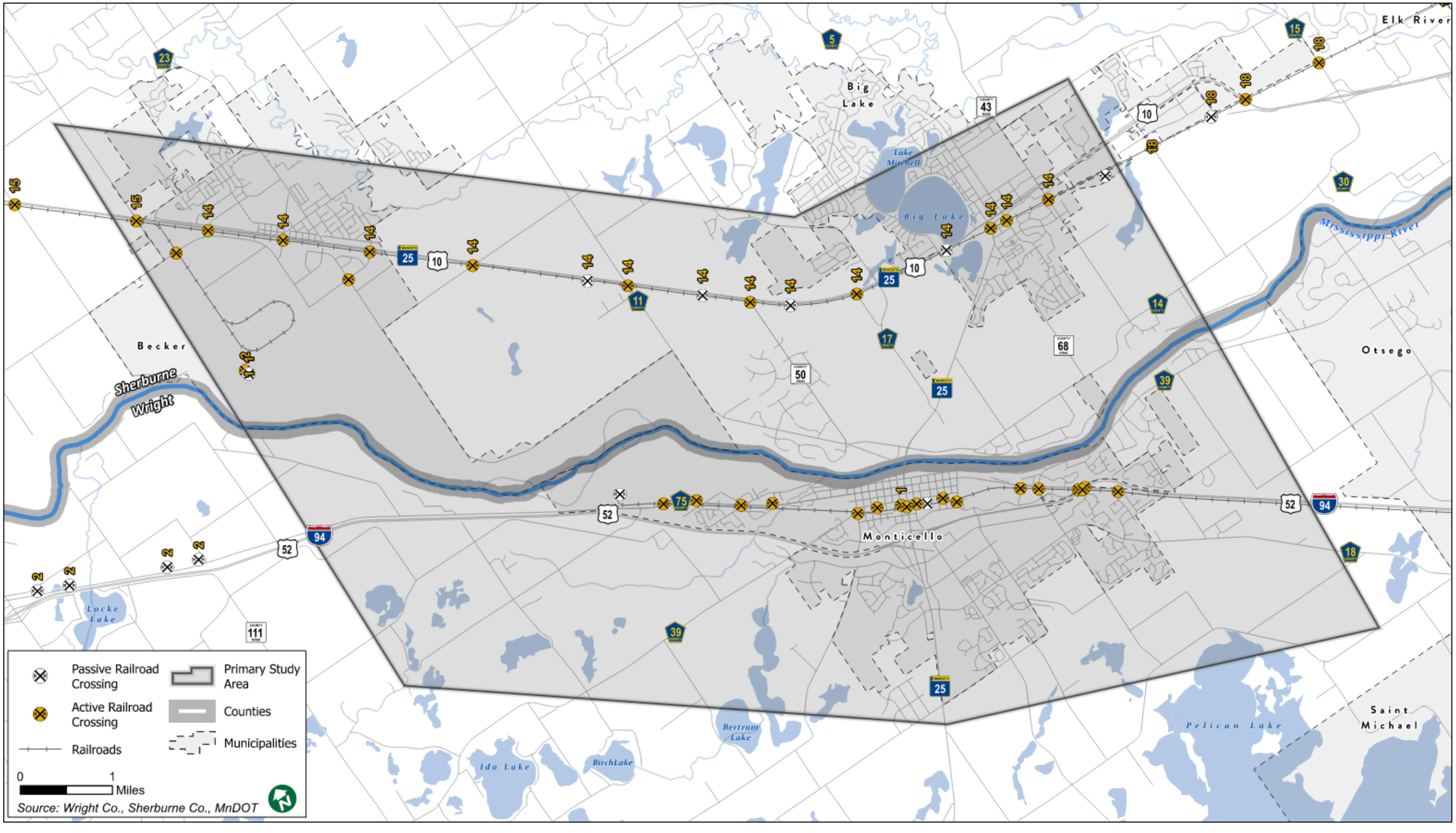
There have been six Highway-Rail Crashes in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area since 2011, all of them along the Staples Subdivision. These crashes are detailed in **Table 14**.

Table 14. Summary of Staples Subdivision Highway-Rail Crashes (2011 - 2023)

USDOT Crossing No.	Crossing Location	Date	Severity	Description of Crash
082543R	Highway 25 (Lake St S)	9/27/2016	Fatal	Pedestrian walked around gate
082543R	Highway 25 (Lake St S)	3/1/2013	PDO	Vehicle stuck/stalled on tracks
924664S	200th St	9/15/2015	PDO	Vehicle stuck/stalled on tracks
082517B	165th Ave SE	3/13/2012	PDO	Driver went through gate
097835G	117th St SE	4/11/2013	PDO	Driver stopped on crossing
097836N	125th Ave SE	10/10/2011	Fatal	Driver went around gate

Table Note: PDO = Property Damage Only

Figure 22. Railroad Daily Traffic and At-Grade Crossings



4.3. Environmental Conditions Review

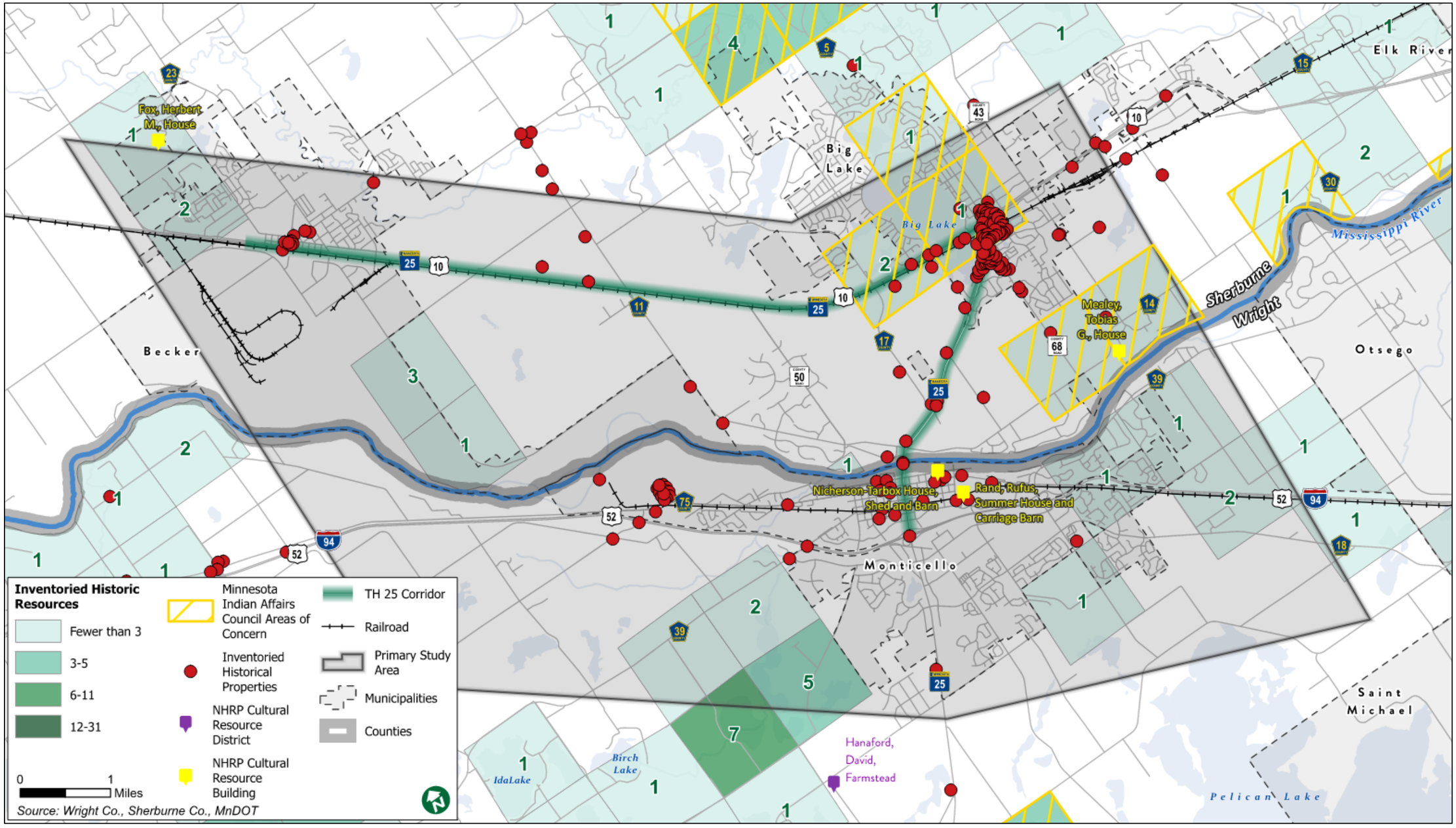
4.3.1. Cultural Resources

Several state and Federal laws and regulations, such as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, requires agencies to take into consideration the impacts their programs and actions may have on archaeological sites, historic sites, sacred sites, and Traditional Cultural Properties. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and its implementing regulations (36 CFR 800) requires any impacts to historic properties, defined as those eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), be considered before implementation of federal undertaking.

4.3.1.1. Archaeology and Architectural History/Cultural Resources

Due to the nature of this PEL study, and the broad area that it entails, a comprehensive review of area cultural resources would not be useful in terms of determining future project barriers or needs. The identification of known cultural resources was completed through the use of available online resources, including data sources from the Office of the State Archaeologist and the State Historic Preservation Office. The general location of known resources are illustrated in **Figure 23**.

Figure 23. Known Historic Resources



4.3.2. Visual Quality and Aesthetics

Visual Quality and Aesthetic for the corridor work within two considerations. First, there is the existing Highway 25 Corridor throughout the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area, and there is the corridor search area within the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area.

Highway 25 is an existing highway that links Wright County and Sherburne County over the Mississippi River, running through urbanizing Monticello to Big Lake, and then runs concurrent with US Highway 10 up into Becker. In both Monticello, Highway 25 is concurrent with Pine Street, which functions as a downtown main street for the community. Viewsheds in Monticello, Big Lake, and Becker are mainly of commercial land uses and urban streetscape. Outside of these communities, existing viewsheds are mainly of agricultural land, low-density residential development, or nature areas.

Any future projects that would require construction of new assets are in turn likely to generate visual impacts on the landscape, usually tied to specific improvements such as interchanges/grade separation, bridges, and new roadway alignments.

4.3.3. Geologic Resources and Soil

Bedrock and surficial geology vary throughout the study area. Bedrock geology for the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area is roughly split by the Mississippi River. South of the Mississippi River in Wright County, bedrock geology is primarily characterized by the sandstone, siltstone, and minor shale of the Keweenawan Supergroup. North of the Mississippi River in Sherburne County follows a similar mix of sandstone, siltstone, and minor shale of the Keweenawan Supergroup and Midcontinent Rift Intrusive Supersuite and Mt. Simon Sandstone. There is no known exposed bedrock in the project study area, and depth to bedrock ranges from below 100 feet to excesses of 300 feet. Depth to bedrock is generally lowest in the region between the Mississippi River and US Highway 10/Highway 25.

4.3.3.1. Prime Farmland

There is little prime farmland soil in the project area. Prime Farmland is a federal designation of quality soil type defined in the Farmland Protection Policy Act as “having the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses”. Lands with the prime farmland designation are subject to special protection designed to maintain their agricultural function. Prime farmland soils are shown in **Figure 24**.

4.3.4. Water Resources

A desktop review of publicly available data to identify wetlands, stream crossings, floodplains, and wells with the PEL Study Area was completed.

4.3.4.1. Surface Water/Wetlands

The project area falls within two watersheds, the Mississippi River – St. Cloud Watershed and the North (USGS Hydraulic Unit HUC08) Fork Crow River Watershed. The MnDNR National Wetland Inventory (NWI) Wetland Finder shows wetlands scattered throughout the study area, but not constituting a large

amount of acreage in the area between Highway 25/US Highway 10 and I-94 (**Figure 25**). The largest wetland areas are found to the north and south of the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area's focus, slightly further from the Mississippi River.

4.3.4.2. Streams/Floodplains

According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) Impaired Waters Viewer, there are multiple impaired bodies of water in the study area. These are listed in **Table 15** below:

Table 15. Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area Impaired Waterways

AUID	Name	Approved TMDL	Impaired Uses	Additional Impairments
07010203-729	Mississippi River	Hg-F[1]	AQC[3], AQR[4]	FC[2], PCB-F[7]
07010203-579	Elk River	FC[2], Hg-F[1]	AQC[3], AQL[5], AQR[4]	FishesBio[6]
71-0082-00	Big Lake	Hg-F[1]	AQC[3], AQL[5]	FishesBio[6]
71-0081-00	Mitchell Lake	Hg-F[1]	AQC[3], AQL[5]	FishesBio[6]

1. Hg-F: Mercury in fish tissue
2. FC: Fecal coliform
3. AQC: Aquatic Consumption
4. AQR: Aquatic recreation
5. AQL: Aquatic life
6. FishesBio: Fish bioassessments
7. PCB-F: Polychlorinated biphenyls

Floodplains are the lands on either side of a watercourse that are inundated when a channel exceeds its capacity. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) encourages state and local governments to adopt sound floodplain management programs. This corridor conditions review uses the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100-year and 500-year floodplain as a baseline, as any changes to these areas from new construction is assumed to have the potential to raise in the floodplain.

A floodway refers to a channel of a river or other watercourse and adjacent land area that is reserved to discharge the base flood without increasing the surface water elevation beyond a predetermined height. Floodways are developed by communities in order to ensure that there are no increases in upstream flood elevations. Like floodplains, changes to floodways can be assumed to have potential to raise the floodplain. FEMA-mapped floodplains and floodways in Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area are shown in **Figure 26**.

4.3.4.3. Wells

The Minnesota Department of Health's Wells Index was used to identify 1,211 wells within the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. Well type varies substantially, and there are a significant number of unlocated wells in the study area. The type and number of wells listed within the study area are detailed in **Table 16**.

Table 16. Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area Wells Summary

Type of Well	Number of Wells
Domestic	1,066
Irrigation	113
Public Supply/Non-community-transient	25
Public Supply/Non-Community	7
Total	1,211

Wells in the study area pull water from the surficial sand, buried sand and gravel, water-table, and bedrock aquifers. Many of these wells provide access to safe drinking water for the surrounding communities and numerous rural residences and businesses (**Figure 27**).

Within the Highway 25 Area PEL study area there are three areas that are designated as both Wellhead Protection Areas (WPAs) and Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs), as per the Source Water Protection Map maintained by the Minnesota Department of Health. These designations have been established to protect and preserve the quality, quantity, and integrity of clean water through surface and subsurface measures. The WPAs and DWSMAs generally coincide with the boundaries for the communities of Monticello, Big Lake, and Becker. The WPA and DWSMA areas are detailed in **Table 17**.

Table 17. Highway 25 PEL Drinking Water Supply Management Areas

DWMSA Area	Wellhead Protection Area	Vulnerability
Becker	Becker	Low to High
Big Lake East	Big Lake 1, 2, 4, 6, & 7	Moderate to High
Big Lake 5	Big Lake 5	Moderate to High
Monticello	Monticello North, Monticello 3, & Monticello 4	Low to Moderate

Figure 24. Prime Farmland

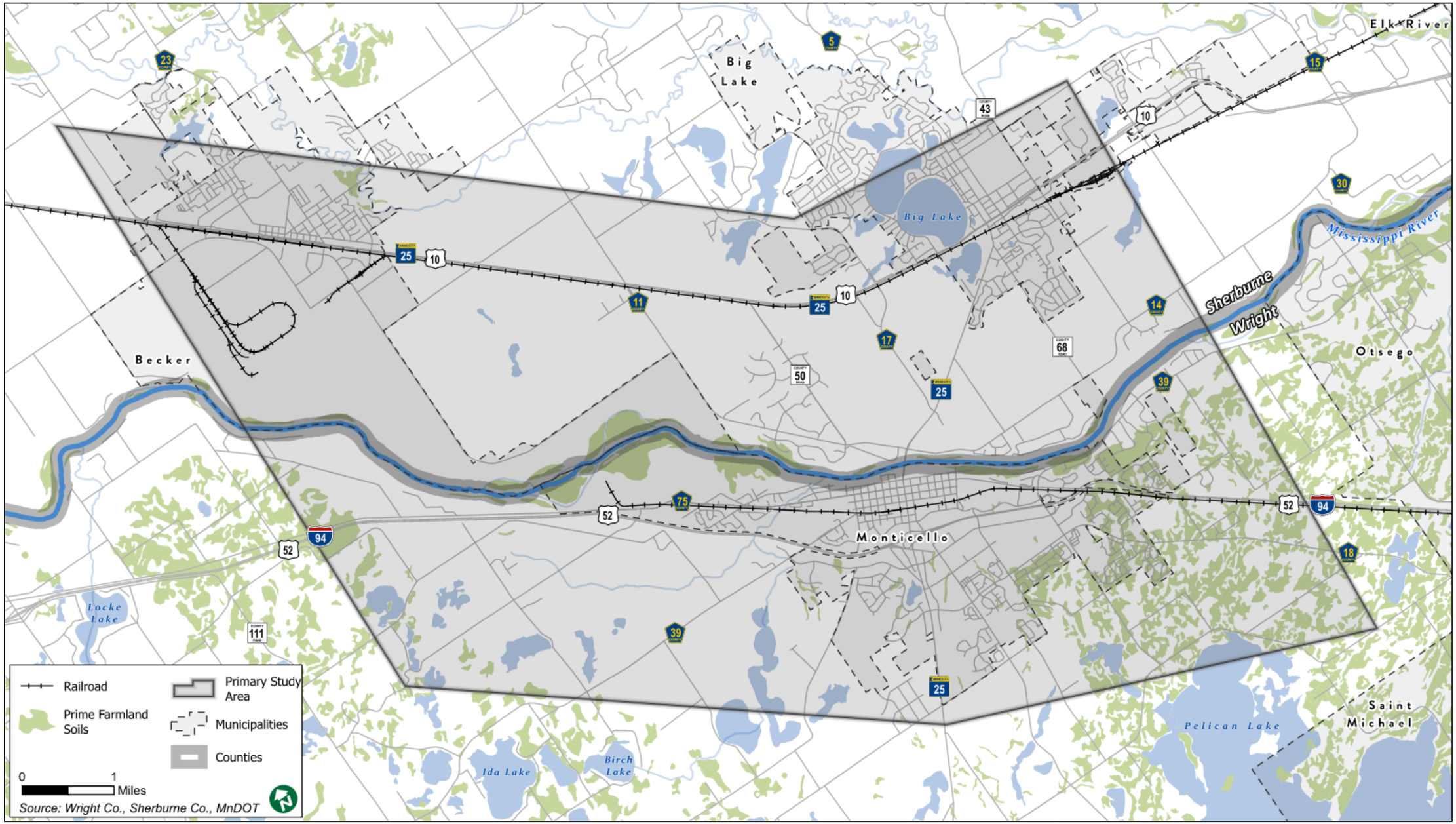


Figure 25. Wetlands

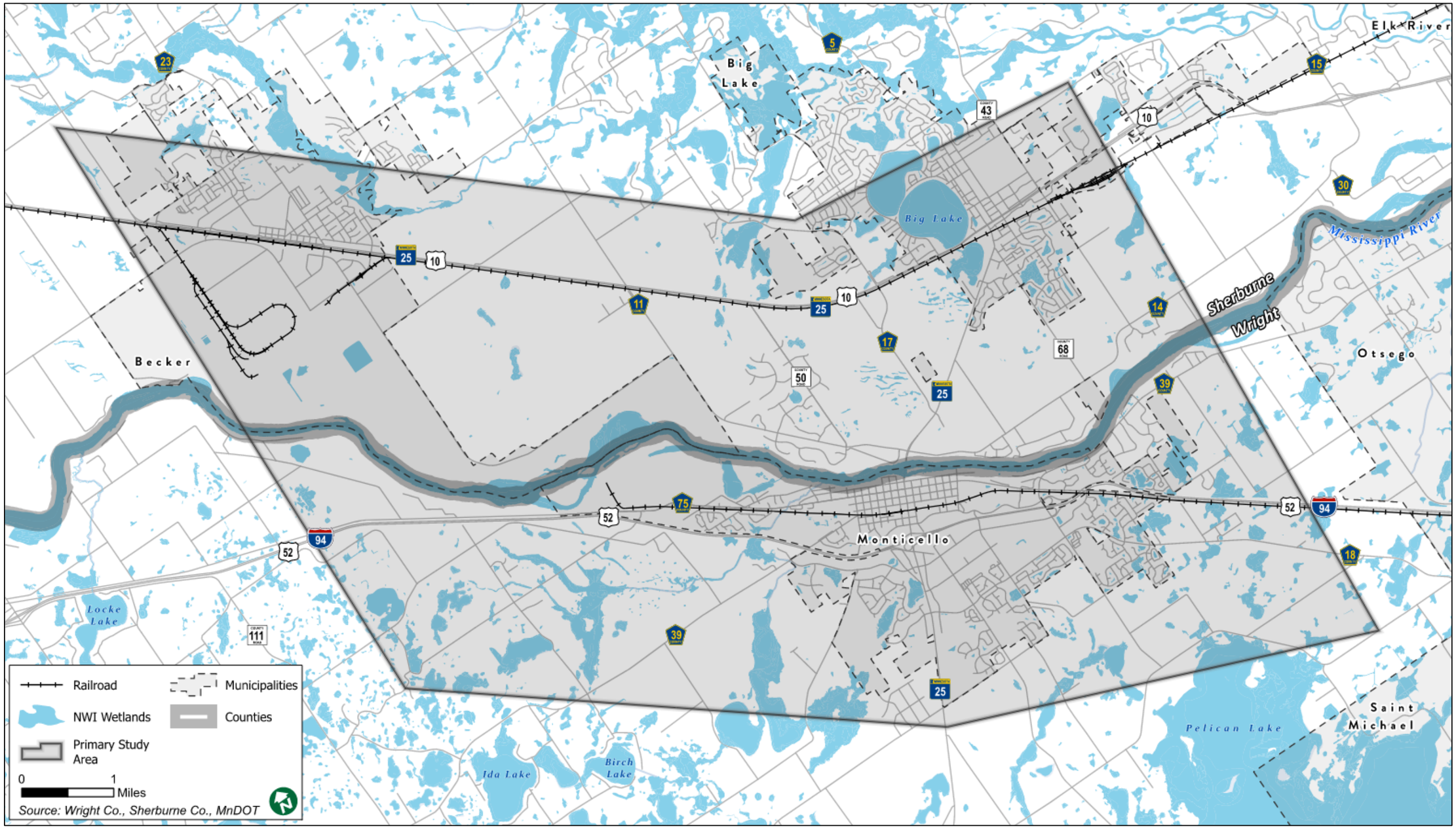


Figure 26. Surface Waters

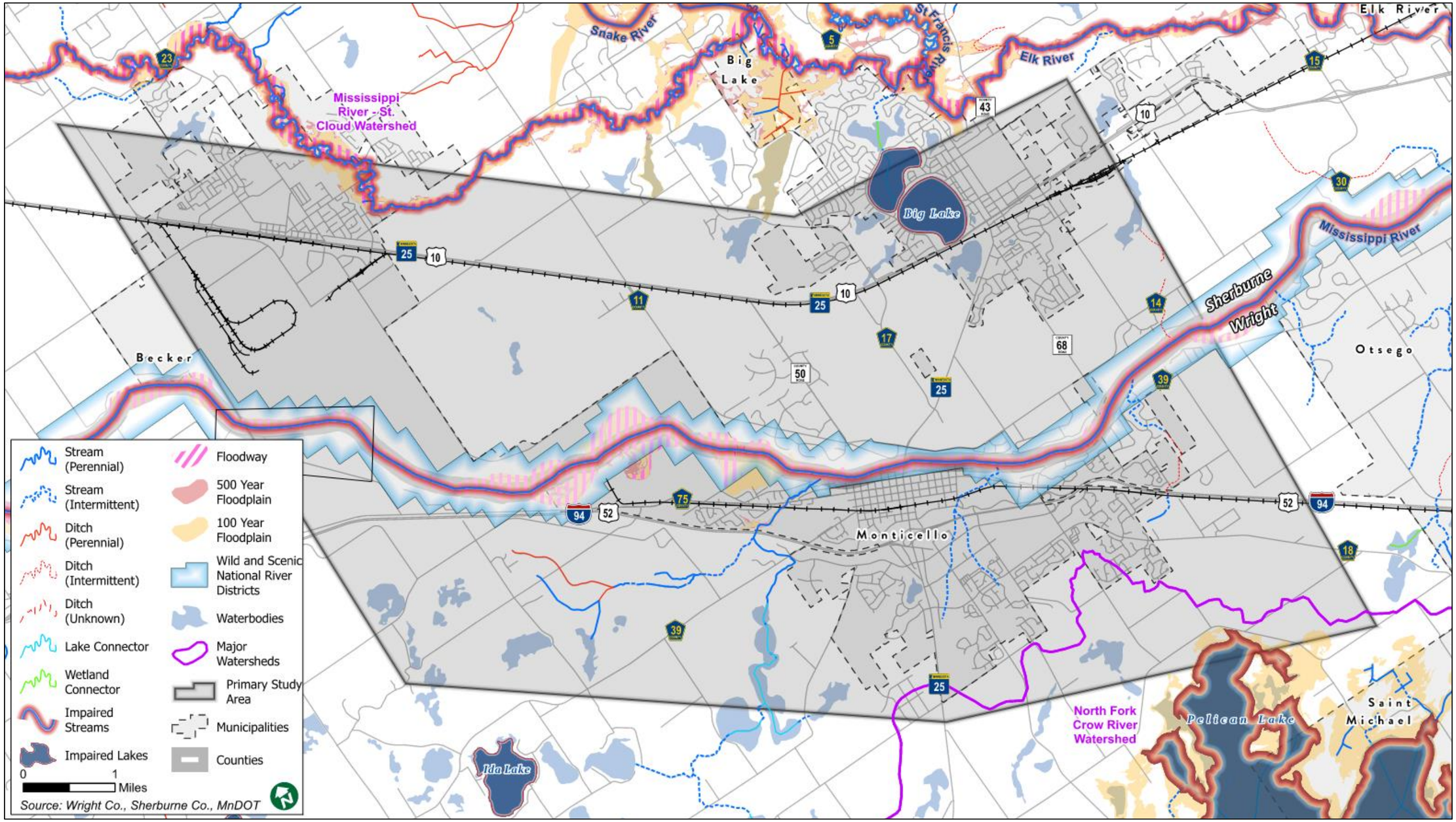
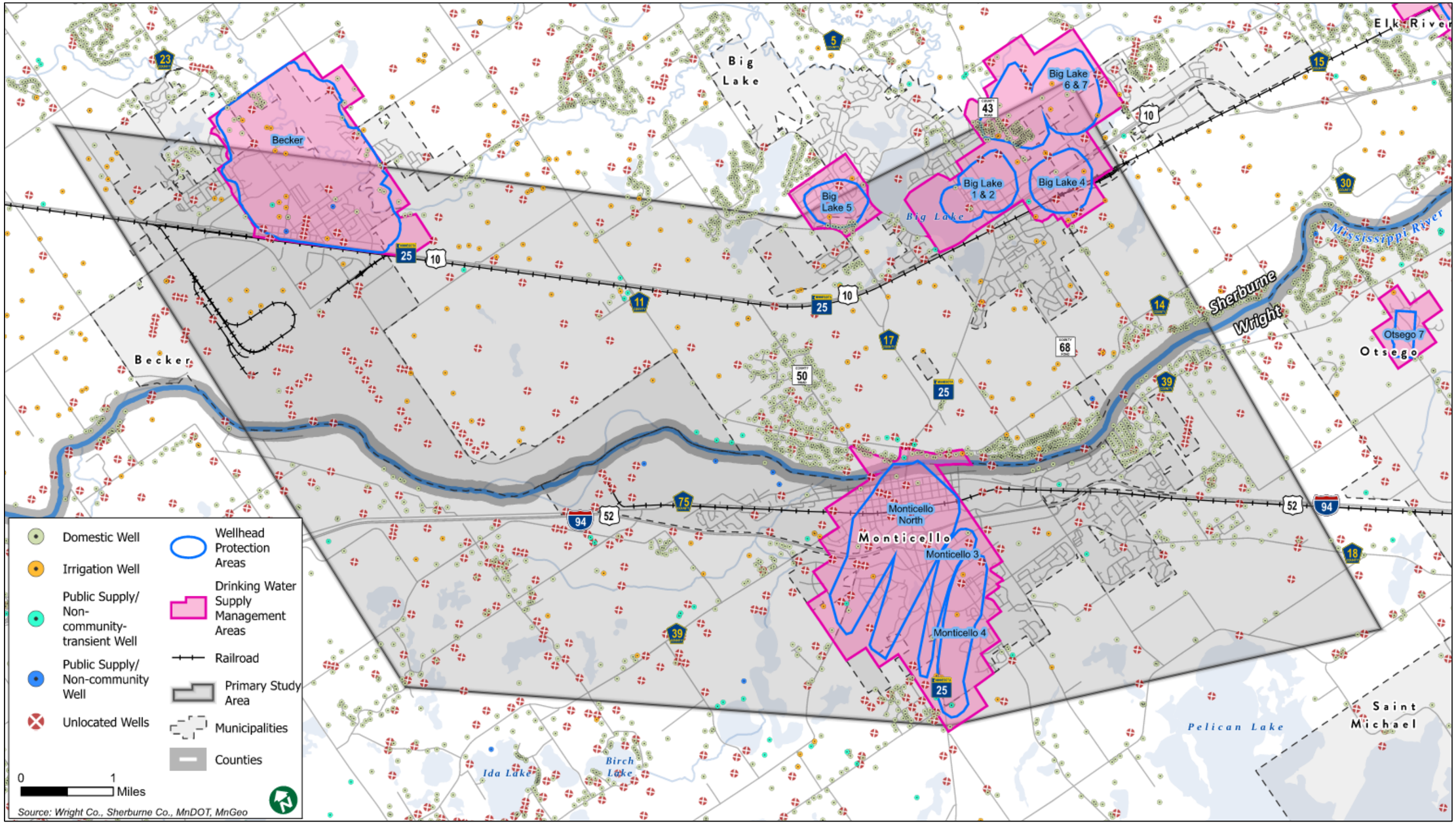


Figure 27. Geologic Resources and Groundwater



4.3.5. Biotic Resources

The study area has multiple Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) Sites of Biodiversity Significance, mostly associated with the lands along the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River Islands Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) is located downstream of the project's eastern border. This site contains a mixture of moderate and high MBS sites of biodiversity significance. There are several moderate sites throughout the study area related to the Mississippi River, East Silver Creek, Elk River, and Big Lake.

4.3.5.1. Threatened and Endangered Species

A preliminary review of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) Natural Heritage Database System (NHIS) publicly available data was completed within the Highway 25 Area PEL review area. In addition, a review was completed of the county distribution of State listed threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species identified eight species within Sherburne County and Wright County. A summary of threatened and endangered species found in the Highway 25 Area PEL study area is included in **Table 18**.

The study area does not fall within an area listed on Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' list of Townships Containing Documented Northern Long-Eared Bat Maternity Roost Trees and/or Hibernacula Entrances in Minnesota. This does not mean, however, that these areas do not have the potential to contain habitats conducive to Northern Long-Eared Bat roosting.

Table 18. State Threatened and Endangered Species potentially within the US 25 PEL Study Area

Scientific Name	Common Name	Species Type	Listing
Lanius ludovicianus	Loggerhead Shrike	Vertebrate Animal	END[1]
Emydoidea blandingii	Blanding's Turtle	Vertebrate Animal	THR[2]
Buteo lineatus	Red-shouldered Hawk	Vertebrate Animal	SPC[3]
Minuartia dawsonensis	Rock Sandwort	Vascular Plant	THR[2]
Ligumia recta	Black Sandshell	Invertebrate Animal	SPC[3]
Falco peregrinus	Peregrine Falcon	Vertebrate Animal	SPC[3]
Juglans cinerea	Butternut	Vascular Plant	END[1]
Pituophis catenifer	Gophersnake	Vertebrate Animal	SPC[3]

1 – Endangered Species are animals and plants that are in danger of becoming extinct
2 – Threatened species are plants and animals likely to become endangered
3 – Species of Concern are not endangered or threatened, however, the species may have a unique or highly specific habitat requirement that deserve careful monitoring of its status.
4- Source MnDNR NHIS database and USFWS dataset

4.3.6. Parks, Trails, Open Spaces, and Wildlife and Waterfowl Refuges, and Section 4(f)

A desktop analysis of public parks, trails, open spaces, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and other outdoor recreational uses within the PEL Study review area identified 22 properties Federal Section 4(f) laws are intended to protect the following types of recreational resources: publicly owned park and recreation areas that are open to the general public, publicly owned wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and public or privately owned historic sites. The term historic sites include prehistoric and historic districts, sites,

buildings, structures, or objects listed in, or eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places. This may also include places of traditional religious and cultural importance to an Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and that meet the National Register criteria. (**Table 19** & **Figure 28**).

Other possible Section 4(f) properties may be added during the environmental review process. There is one Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) near the PEL Study review area, the Kelly Myer WMA located to the west of Aetna Avenue in Sherburne County. There is a chain of Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) associated with the Mississippi River Islands Scientific and Natural Area, which is less than a mile downstream from the eastern boundary of the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. Resources within the PEL Study review area are considered to have a higher risk of being impacted by permanent or right-of-way construction needs.

Table 19. Section 4(f) Resources within Study Area

Name	Owner	Description	Address
Lakeside Municipal Park	City of Big Lake	12.4 acres, boat launch benches, playground, and skate park	101 Lakeshore Drive Big Lake, MN 55309
Browns Square Park	City of Big Lake	3 acres near City Hall, with benches, flower garden and a gazebo	106 Lake Street North, Big Lake, MN 55309
Veterans Memorial Park	City of Big Lake	36 Acres with benches, veteran's memorial, a flower garden, and reader board	10 Lake Street South Big Lake, MN 55309
Wrights Crossing Park	City of Big Lake	3.1 acres with picnic tables playground and volleyball court	514 Forest Road Big Lake, MN 55309
Kellerwood Park	City of Big Lake	1.77 acres with benches	Lake Street S & Norwood Lane Big Lake, MN 55309
Sanford Select Acres Park	City of Big Lake	1.8 acres with picnic tables, an RC track and zipline	Sanford Select Acres Development Big Lake, MN 55309
Lake Ridge Park	City of Big Lake	4.3 acres with baseball and softball fields and playground	4430 Pintail Street Big Lake, MN 55309
Our Lady of the Lake Public Ice Rinks	City of Big Lake	Public Skating rinks near City Hall.	160 Lake Street N Big Lake, MN 55309
Rivers Edge Park	City of Becker	1.3 acres with a picnic and playground area and open greenspace	14818 River Street Becker, MN 55308
Carl E. Johnson Park	City of Becker	3 acres with a playground and small green area	12360 Riley Avenue Becker, MN 55308
Becker Athletic Complex	City of Becker	Large community center with many amenities	14295 Morning Dove Drive Becker MN, 55308
Becker Community Center & Community Park	City of Becker	Large community center with many amenities	11500 Sherburne Ave Becker, MN 55308

Name	Owner	Description	Address
Kolbinger Park	City of Becker	Basketball court and skate park. Winter skating	13498 3rd Street Becker, MN 55308
Tot Lot	City of Becker	½ acre park for tots	11450 3rd Street Becker, MN 55308
Pleasant Valley Park	City of Becker	4-acre park with two large playgrounds, basketball courts and picnic tables	12980 Carole Drive Becker, MN 55308
Becker City Park	City of Becker	113.76-acre park with a large shelter, hiking trails and disc golf.	10362 Country Road 23 Becker, MN 55308
Oak Savanna Park	Sherburne County	140 acres most held in conservation with trails, cross country skiing and wildlife viewing	10775 27th Avenue Southeast Becker, MN 55309
Bridgeview Park Reserve	Sherburne County	Park with trails near the Mississippi River	20711 187th Ave. Big Lake, MN 55309
Montissippi Regional Park	City of Monticello	170 acres including a boat launch, disc golf and trails	2801 Broadway W, Monticello, MN 55362
East and west Bridge Parks	City of Monticello	Large City parks including shelters and playgrounds	107 River St, Monticello, MN 55362
Ellison Park	City of Monticello	Large City park including a shelter and playgrounds	913 E River St, Monticello, MN 55362
4th Street Park	City of Monticello	Medium sized City park with winter skating	506 4th St E, Monticello, MN 55362

4.3.7. Section 6(f)

A review of the study area identified four potential Section 6(f) (Land and Water Conservation Fund LAWCON) properties (**Table 20** & **Figure 28**). Additional protection is afforded to outdoor recreational land under the Section 6(f) legislation (16 USC 4602-8(f) (3)) where Land and Water Conservation (LAWCON) funds were used for the planning, acquisition, or development of the property. These properties may be converted for non-outdoor recreational use only if replacement land is of at least equal fair market value and reasonable equivalent usefulness is provided. Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area Section 6(f) resource are detailed in **Table 20.**

Table 20. Section 6(f) Resources within Study Area

Name	Owner	Description	Address
Montissippi Regional Park	Wright County	Montissippi Regional Park includes a picnic area on the river features 170 acres of hardwoods and pine plantings. Facilities include a boat launch with a dock on the Mississippi River, 18-hole disc golf course, a playground, two miles of paved hiking/walking/biking trails for all-season use, a DNR fishing pier, a seasonal toilet, a canoe camping site, and a small winter sledding hill. Funding was given in 2001 through the State and Local Assistance Program within LAWCON.	2801 Broadway W, Monticello, MN 55362
Monticello Athletic Complex	City of Monticello	The Athletic Park, located at 10224 Briarwood Ave NE, is the active recreational component of the larger park. The 118-acre property includes athletic fields, playgrounds, shelters, and picnic facilities. Funding was given for planning in 2012 and the property is still in development.	10224 Briarwood Ave NE, Monticello, MN 55362
Bertram Chain of Lakes Regional Park	Wright County	Wright County and the City of Monticello partnered to create these 1,200 acres of open space in Wright County, known as the Bertram Chain of Lakes Regional Park. The County and City partnership was formed with the goal of improving the community's quality of life by preserving this irreplaceable natural area and creating a regional park for public enjoyment and recreation. The 1,200 acres of the Bertram Chain of Lakes property represents four lakes, acres of undisturbed shoreline, natural habitat, and oak forest. Multiple types of campsites and cabins are available to rent. Other amenities include walking and biking trails, an amphitheater, a lakeside shelter, accesses to 4 lakes, and fishing piers. This park was awarded funding in 2011 through the State and Local Assistance Program within LAWCON.	9910 Briarwood Ave NE, Monticello, MN 55362
Warner Lake County Park	Stearns County	Warner Lake County Park is 264 acres surrounding the 30 surface acres of Warner Lake. In 1973 Campfire Girls Inc. donated the 33 acres known as Camp Suima. Other amenities include walking and biking trails, cross country ski trails, and a swimming beach. This park was given funding in 1986 through the State and Local Assistance program within LAWCON.	143 County Road, Clearwater, MN 55320

Source: US DOT

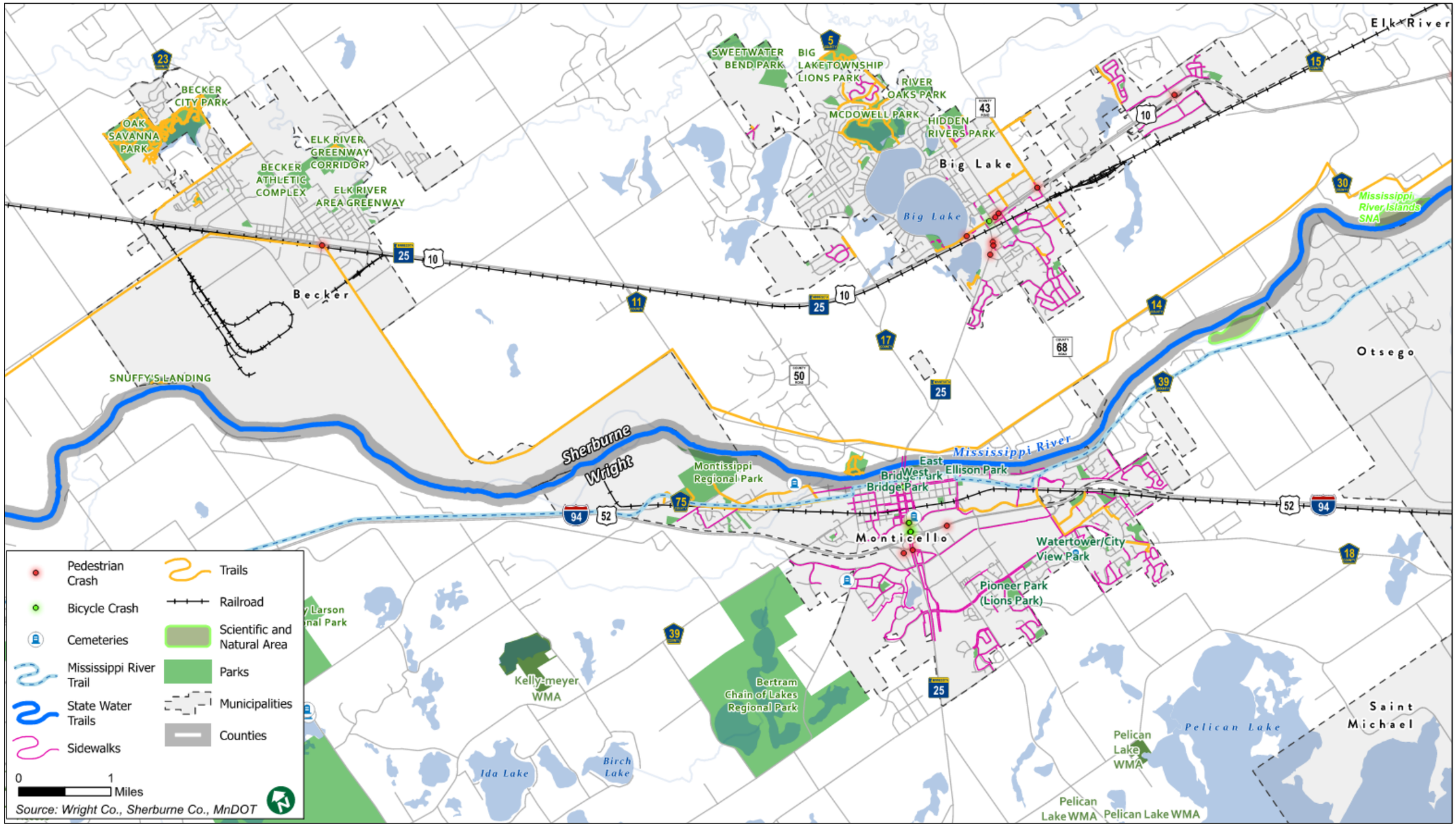
4.3.1. Noise

The potential for noise from vehicles to affect receptors (i.e., residential, commercial, and outdoor recreational properties) near transportation facilities is a consideration in transportation planning. State and federal transportation agencies (such as MnDOT or FHWA) have established guidance for assessing potential noise impacts. When impacts are anticipated to result from a transportation project, mitigation actions for the impacted receptors are typically considered as part of project design. Mitigation will be an important consideration for the proposed alternatives because traffic noise could have an impact on many properties along roadways in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area.

4.3.1. Air Quality

The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) require that State Implementation Plans (SIP) must demonstrate how states with nonattainment and maintenance areas will meet federal air quality standards. The US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has designated portions of Wright counties as a maintenance area for carbon monoxide (CO). This includes portions of the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area located in Wright County.

Figure 28. Section 4(f) & Section 6(f) Properties



The USEPA issued final rules on transportation conformity (40 CFR 93, subpart A), which describes the methods required to demonstrate SIP compliance for transportation projects. At this time, no specific projects have been identified for Highway 25 Area PEL Study. Therefore, no corridor projects are listed in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) or the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). However, the outcome of the Highway 25 PEL study will be to potentially identify improvements to move forward through the project development process, which would result in those projects being added to future updates of the TIP and TPP. As such projects are added to the TPP and the TIP, Wright County, and other partners of the Highway 25 PEL Area Study would coordinate with MnDOT regarding any necessary conformity emissions analyses.

4.3.2. Hazardous and Contaminated Materials

The presence of contaminated properties (e.g., soil and/or groundwater contamination) within the project review area can pose issues relating to worker exposure, special handling and disposal requirements, and potential liability for cleanup. Encountering unknown contamination during construction can also lead to significant delays if not adequately addressed during the planning phase. A search for federal, state, and local environmental listings was conducted for the corridor.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) EnviroMapper, a tool for accessing USEPA environmental data, did not indicate any National Priorities List (NPL) or Superfund Sites (sites which are nationally prioritized for cleanup) within 1.5 miles of the TH 25 alignment. A further search of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) “What’s In My Neighborhood” (WIMN) database was conducted to identify listed hazardous waste sites and contaminated properties located within PEL Study review area.

The WIMN database identifies listings associated with air quality, environmental review, feedlots, hazardous waste, investigation and cleanup, water quality, and above- and below ground storage tanks. **Figure 29** illustrates the locations and concentration of these types of listings. A total of 515 unique sites were found in the review area; these sites have the potential to impact the project, due to the presence or likely presence of contamination associated with the properties.

A review of the database search results found the types and number of listings that have the most potential to impact the corridor and are summarized in Error! Reference source not found. **21**. A m ajority of the listings are related to stormwater, hazardous waste use associated with commercial and industrial properties located along the corridor. There are 107 sites identified as having multiple records in the MPCA database, most of which are associated with hazardous waste sites, stormwater, tanks, and investigation and cleanup activities. There are a number of hazardous waste sites, stormwater generators, gas stations, automotive repair facilities, and other industrial uses along Highway 25 in the study review area, particularly in the portions of the corridor that run through Monticello, Big Lake, and Becker.

Table 21. Hazardous Waste and Contaminated Materials Listings

Listing Type/Program	Number of Listings
Stormwater	176
Hazardous Waste	167
Multiple Programs	107
Tanks	29
Investigation and Cleanup	20
SSTS	4
Feedlots	4
Solid Waste	4
Air Quality	2
Water Quality	2
Total	515

Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments may be required in further stages of planning and project development to adequately characterize the corridor for contamination issues that could directly impact future improvements.

4.3.1. Vegetation

A preliminary review of land cover using publicly available National Land Cover Database (NLCD) data was completed within the review area. **Figure 30** shows the land cover in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area. The same GIS data was used to determine the land cover mix of the study area as a factor of overall acreage. The results of this analysis are included in **Table 22**. Approximately one-third of the PEL Study review area is developed, and half of the study area's ground cover is for agricultural uses. There are sporadic green spaces throughout the study area which consist of grasses, trees, wetlands, agriculture, and open water. Impacts to vegetation are unknown at this time. As alternatives are developed, additional analysis will be completed to determine potential vegetation impacts.

In addition, invasive species could be present in the study area and future project construction could either encourage or inadvertently introduce the spread of these species. Construction practices designed to mitigate the spread of invasive species will be considered in the impact analysis as a minimization factor on the potential spread of these species.

Table 22. Summary of Land Cover in Project Review Area

Type	Acreage (Approximate)	Percent Share of Study Area Land Cover
Open Water	1,382	4.5%
Developed	9,083	29.7%
Barren Land	46	0.2%
Forest	2,945	9.6%
Grasses/Shrubland	268	0.9%
Agricultural	15,424	50.5%
Wetlands	1,412	4.6%
Grand Total	30,560	100%

Figure 29. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Potentially Contaminated Sites

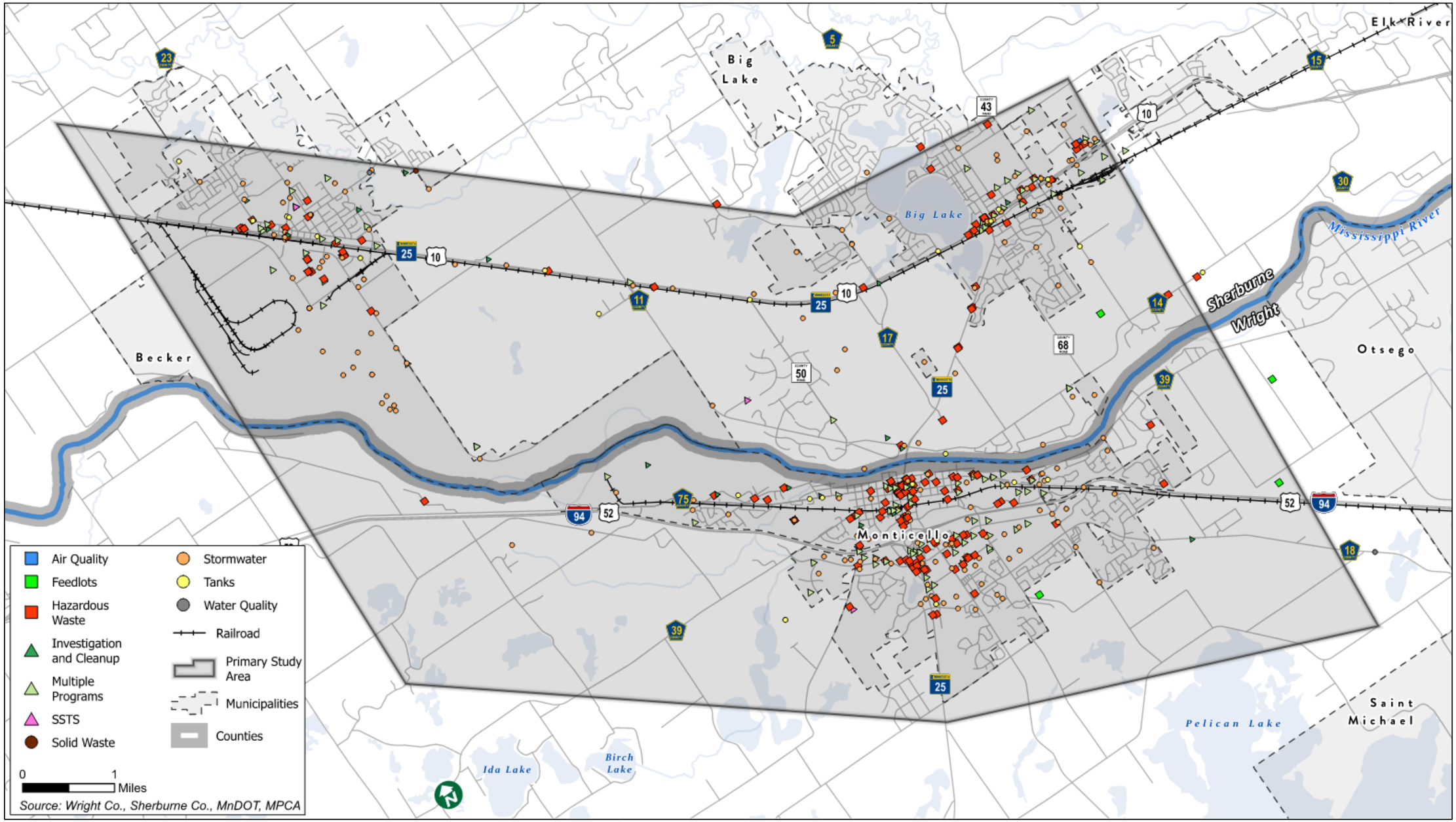
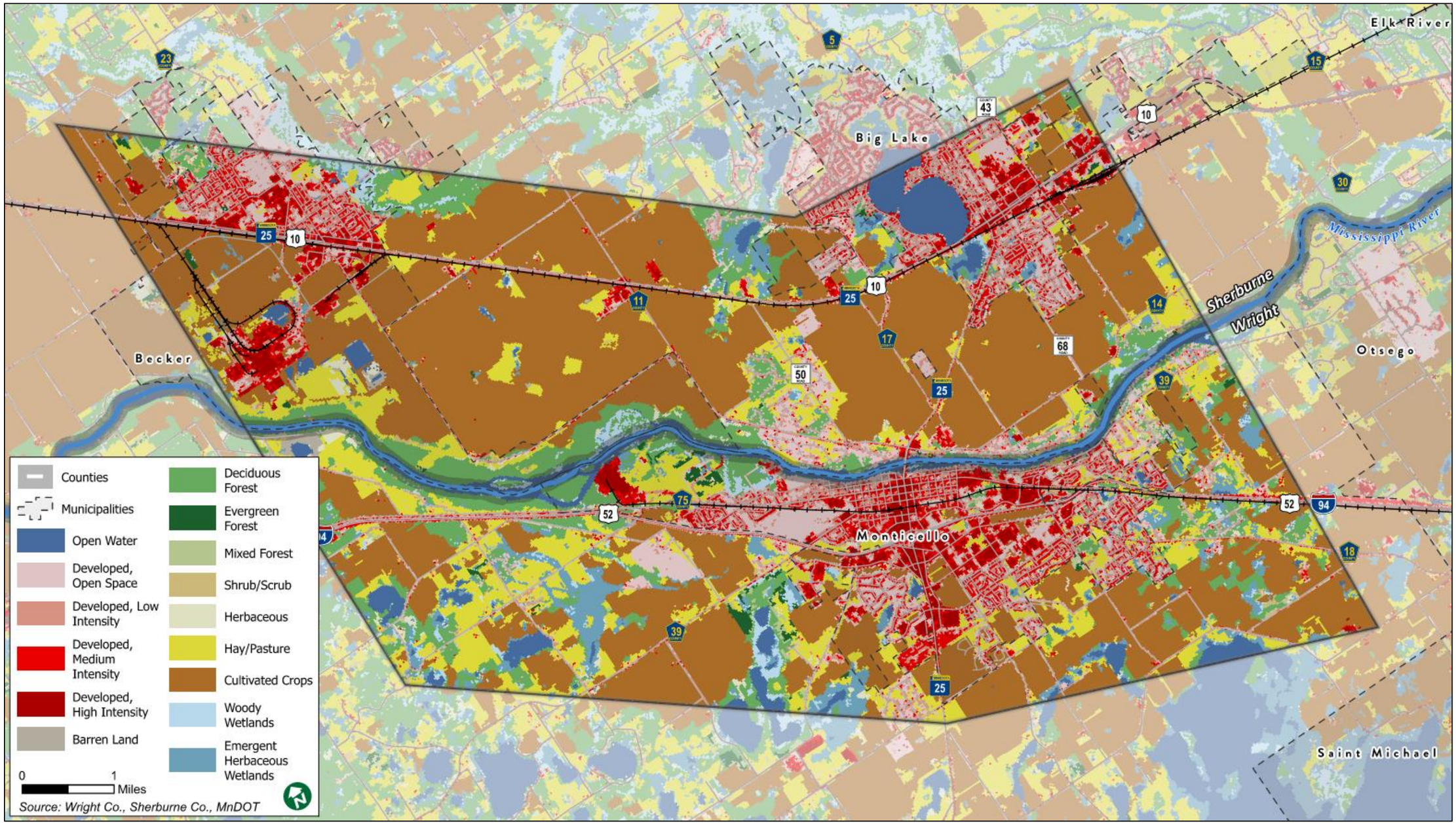


Figure 30. Vegetation and Ground Cover



4.3.2. Utilities

The Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area contains two large power generation plants, the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant as well as the Sherburne County Generating Station. Both of these facilities are owned by Xcel Energy and operated by Northern States Power Company, a subsidiary of Xcel Energy. These plants are accompanied by substantial utility infrastructure that has the potential to greatly constrain any future projects in the Highway 25 Area PEL study area. Further coordination with Xcel Energy and Northern States Power Company will be a necessary step in the development of any future projects in the PEL study area.

In addition to the utility infrastructure associated with the power generation plants in the PEL study area, there are multiple underground pipelines running through or near the review area. The general boundary of pipelines in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area were identified using the National Pipeline Mapping System's Public Viewer.

There is a hazardous liquids pipeline that runs roughly parallel to I-94 south of the PEL study review area, and a gas transmission pipeline that runs through eastern Monticello, through the Mississippi River at Harrington Avenue in Monticello, and into Sherburne County where it intersects with County Highway 14, and spans between CR 43 and CR 68 (Ormsbee Street).

Impacts to transmission lines, pipelines, and other utility facilities will be considered as a part of alternatives development and analysis.

4.3.3. Environmental Justice

The purpose of Executive Order 12898 is to identify, address, and avoid disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations. Minorities are defined as anyone who identifies as black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, or multiracial. Low-income populations are those with incomes at or below the federal poverty level. During the environmental review the steps to define potential environmental justice impacts will include: the identification of minority and low-income populations within the study area; identification of project impacts upon the identified minority and low-income populations; and the determination of whether the impacts are disproportionately high or adverse. Disproportionate is defined in two ways: the impact is "predominantly borne" by the minority or low-income population, or the impact is "more severe" than those experienced by non-minority or non-low-income populations. Census data was gathered during the existing conditions review process for the TH 25 Area PEL Study. A detailed environmental justice analysis, using the Environmental Protection Agency's EJSCREEN tool, will be completed for the study area following concept development and corridor concept evaluation.

The Environmental Justice populations according to Executive Order 12898 identified in the demographics analysis includes Minority Populations and People with Low Incomes.

4.3.3.1. Minority Populations

Minority is defined in the DOT Order on Environmental Justice (Order 5610.2(a)) as including "Black or African American, Hispanic, Asian American, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander." Minority Population means any readily identifiable groups of minority persons who live in geographic proximity, and if circumstances warrant, geographically dispersed/transient persons (such as migrant workers or Native Americans) who will be similarly affected by a proposed DOT program, policy or activity. **Table 23** summarizes the racial and ethnic composition of the principal communities of the Highway 25 PEL Area Study review area, as well as the State of Minnesota, Wright County, and Sherburne County.

According to the census data, the project review area's minority population ranges between 8.3 percent of the total population to as much as 16.8 percent of the population, which is, on the average, about comparable to Sherburne and Wright Counties. The share of non-Hispanic minority groups in the block groups in the project review area were mapped using GIS to determine if there were any potential areas that contained concentrated populations of people who identified as Black, Indigenous, or other persons of color. This analysis shows that the population of southeastern Big Lake may be as much as one-fifth minority populations, in addition to possible enclaves in Monticello. The results of this mapping exercise are shown in **Figure 31**.

Table 23. Number and Percent of Minority Populations by Governmental Unit

Label	Sherburne County	Wright County	Becker	Big Lake	Monticello
Total Population	97,183	141,337	4,877	11,686	14,455
White alone	84,761 (87.2%)	126,031 (89.2%)	4,472 (91.7%)	9,741 (83.4%)	12,030 (83.2%)
Black or African American alone	3,648 (3.8%)	2,605 (1.8%)	37 (0.8%)	405 (3.5%)	295 (2.0%)
Asian alone	1,277 (1.3%)	1,877 (1.3%)	35 (0.7%)	228 (2.0%)	235 (1.6%)
Other Race alone[1]	725 (0.7%)	874 (0.6%)	16 (0.3%)	113 (1.0%)	108 (0.7%)
Two or more races	3,952 (4.1%)	5,253 (3.7%)	186 (3.8%)	603 (5.2%)	609 (4.2%)
Hispanic or Latino	2,820 (2.9%)	4,697 (3.3%)	131 (2.7%)	596 (5.1%)	1,178 (8.1%)

4.3.3.2. Low-Income Populations

Low-income population is commonly defined as "any readily identifiable group of low-income persons who live in geographic proximity, and, if circumstances warrant, geographically dispersed/transient persons (such as migrant workers or Native Americans) who will be similarly affected by a proposed DOT program, policy or activity". Poverty levels are determined at the national level as a factor of income sorted by the number of persons and age of persons within a family unit. The 2021 poverty guideline was $26,500 for a four-person family.

Percentages of populations living at or below the poverty level is detailed in **Table 24**. Households with incomes below the poverty threshold were mapped using GIS and are shown in **Figure 32**. This analysis shows that there may be concentrations of households with incomes below the poverty threshold along US Highway 10 between Becker and Big Lake, as well as in southwestern and eastern Monticello.

Table 24. Number and Percent of Low-Income People by Governmental Unit

Location	Population Below Federal Poverty Level
Statewide	512,312 (9.2%)
Sherburne County	5,470 (5.8%)
Wright County	7,660 (5.5%)
City of Becker	253 (5.2%)
City of Big Lake	248 (2.1%)
City of Monticello	1,318 (9.4%)

Source: 2017-2021 United States Census American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

Figure 31. Highway 25 Area PEL Study Review Area Non-Hispanic Minority Population

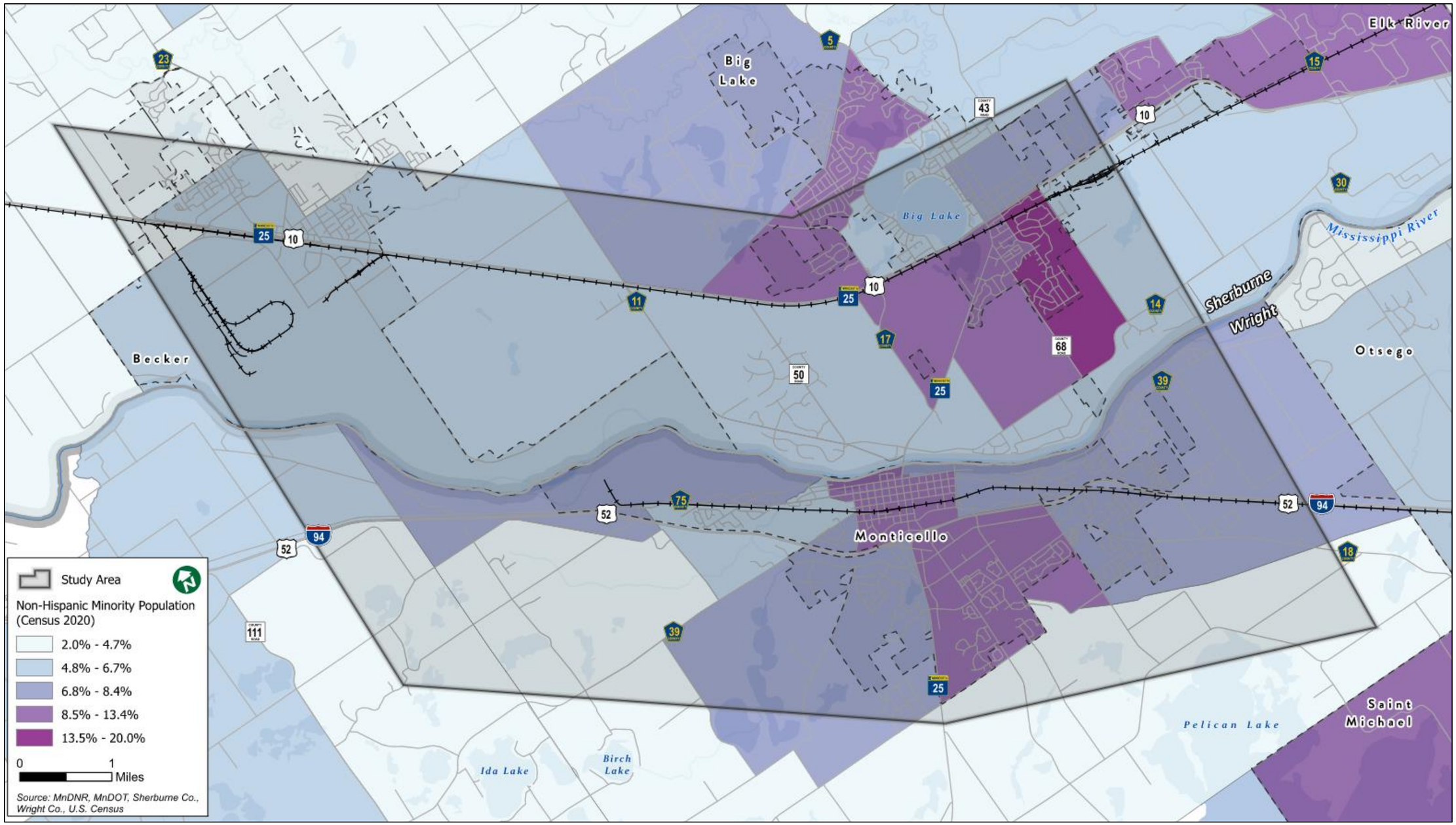
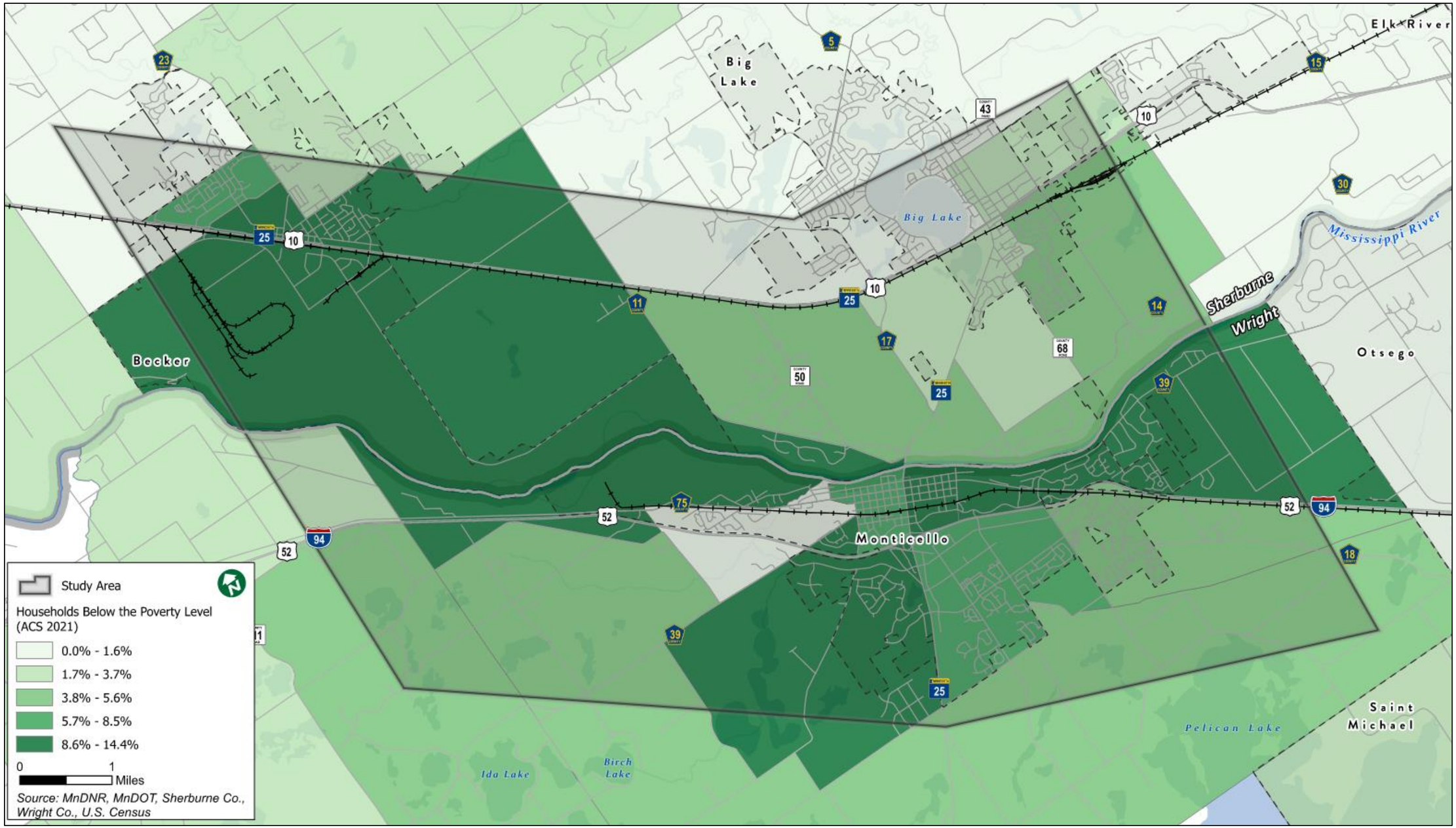


Figure 32. Highway 25 Area PEL Study Review Area Households Below Poverty Level



4.3.4. Other Populations of Interest/Community Characteristics

Community demographic characteristics provide valuable insight into local transportation needs, such as demand for transit and active transportation such as walking, rolling, or biking, in addition to providing insights into the presence of sensitive communities for future project engagement needs.

Both Wright County and Sherburne County are expected to experience positive population growth between 2025 and 2035. Population forecasts from the Minnesota State Demographic's Center estimate that Wright County will grow by 13.1 percent, and Sherburne by 10.8 percent between 2025 and 2035. Both growth estimates are substantially higher than the forecasted statewide average growth rate of 4.5 percent for the same time period.

As shown previously in **Table 24**, both Sherburne County and Wright County trend below statewide averages for share of the population with incomes below the poverty threshold, share of population with limited English proficiency, and share or population with one or more disabilities. However, this does not mean there not areas within the PEL study area that might require special consideration on account of these factors. The following sections and figures present United States Census Bureau American Community Survey demographic data for the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area at the census block group level. This allows for a more granular analysis of demographic conditions within the PEL study area.

Other populations, including people with disabilities, limited English proficiency (LEP), people over the age of 65, and people in rental housing. This analysis used the same resources and methodologies as the previously discussed Environmental Justic analysis. **Table 25** summarizes this for the major governmental units in the study area.

Table 25. Number and Percent of Populations of Interest by Governmental Unit

Location	Disabled Population	Limited English Proficiency	Population under Age 5 and over Age 65
Statewide	616,470 (11.0%)	239,624 (4.5%)	1,249,985 (21.9%)
Sherburne County	9,250 (9.8%)	1,082 (1.2%)	17,299 (18.0%)
Wright County	12,795 (9.2%)	1,728 (1.3%)	27,162 (19.4%)
City of Becker	470 (9.7%)	Suppressed*	1,033 (21.3%)
City of Big Lake	1,072 (9.2%)	Suppressed*	1,444 (12.4%)
City of Monticello	1,873 (13.2%)	4,55 (3.5%)	2,611 (18.4%)

Source: 2017-2021 United States Census American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

*Data suppressed due to high degree of uncertainty in 5-year ACS estimate date. Demographic data was considered unreliable if the reported margin of error was greater than or equal to 70% of the reported value.

4.3.4.1. Disabled Populations

The analysis of the review area's population with one or more disabilities found that communities in the PEL Study review area have comparable rates of disability with one another as well as statewide rates. Monticello has the largest share of the population with one or more disabilities.

Figure 33 maps the percentage of population with one or more disabilities in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area by census block group.

4.3.4.2. Limited English-Speaking Populations (LEP)

Populations with limited English proficiency includes all respondents who reported speaking English "not well" or "not at all". The analysis reveals that the study review area has a below statewide average LEP populations.

Figure 34 maps the percentage of population with limited English proficiency in the Highway 25 Area PEL Study review area by census block group.

4.3.4.3. Populations Under Age 5 and Over Age 65

The analysis of the review area's dependent population (persons under the 5 years of age as well as those 65 years of age and older) found that the communities in the project review area all had a smaller share of dependent population when compared to the statewide average, with Big Lake having the smallest share.

Figure 35 maps the concentrations of dependent populations across the project review area by census block group.

4.3.4.4. Populations In Rental Housing

The analysis of the study review area's households that are renter-occupied shows that the PEL Study review area is generally below statewide rates of renter households, except for the City of Monticello. The estimates for rate of renter- and owner-occupied housing is shown in **Table 26**.

Table 26. Number and Percent of Households by Tenure Status by Governmental Unit

Location	Total Household	Owner-Occupied Households	Renter-Occupied Households
Statewide	2,229,100	1,610,801 (72.3%)	618,299 (27.7%)
Sherburne County	33,825	28,500 (84.3%)	5,325 (15.7%)
Wright County	50,290	41,761 (83.0%)	8,529 (17.0%)
City of Becker	1,782	1,553 (87.1%)	229 (12.9%)
City of Big Lake	3,846	3,259 (84.7%)	587 (15.3%)
City of Monticello	5,379	3,772 (70.1%)	1,607 (29.9%)

Source: 2017-2021 United States Census American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

4.3.4.5. Households without a Vehicle

The analysis of the study review area's households that do not have access to a vehicle shows that the review area generally has lower rates of households without access to vehicle. The estimates for rate of renter- and owner-occupied housing is shown in **Table 27**.

Figure 36 maps the concentrations of no vehicle households across the project review area by census block group.

Table 27. Number and Percent of Households by Tenure Status by Governmental Unit

Location	Total Household	No-Vehicle Households
Statewide	2,229,100	144,942 (6.5%)
Sherburne County	33,825	1,317 (3.9%)
Wright County	50,290	1,306 (2.6%)
City of Becker	1,782	Suppressed*
City of Big Lake	3,846	Suppressed*
City of Monticello	5,379	207 (3.8%)

Source: 2017-2021 United States Census American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates
*Data suppressed due to high degree of uncertainty in 5-year ACS estimate date. Demographic data was considered unreliable if the reported margin of error was greater than or equal to 70% of the reported value.

Figure 33. Highway 25 Area PEL Study Review Area Households with One or More Persons with a Disability

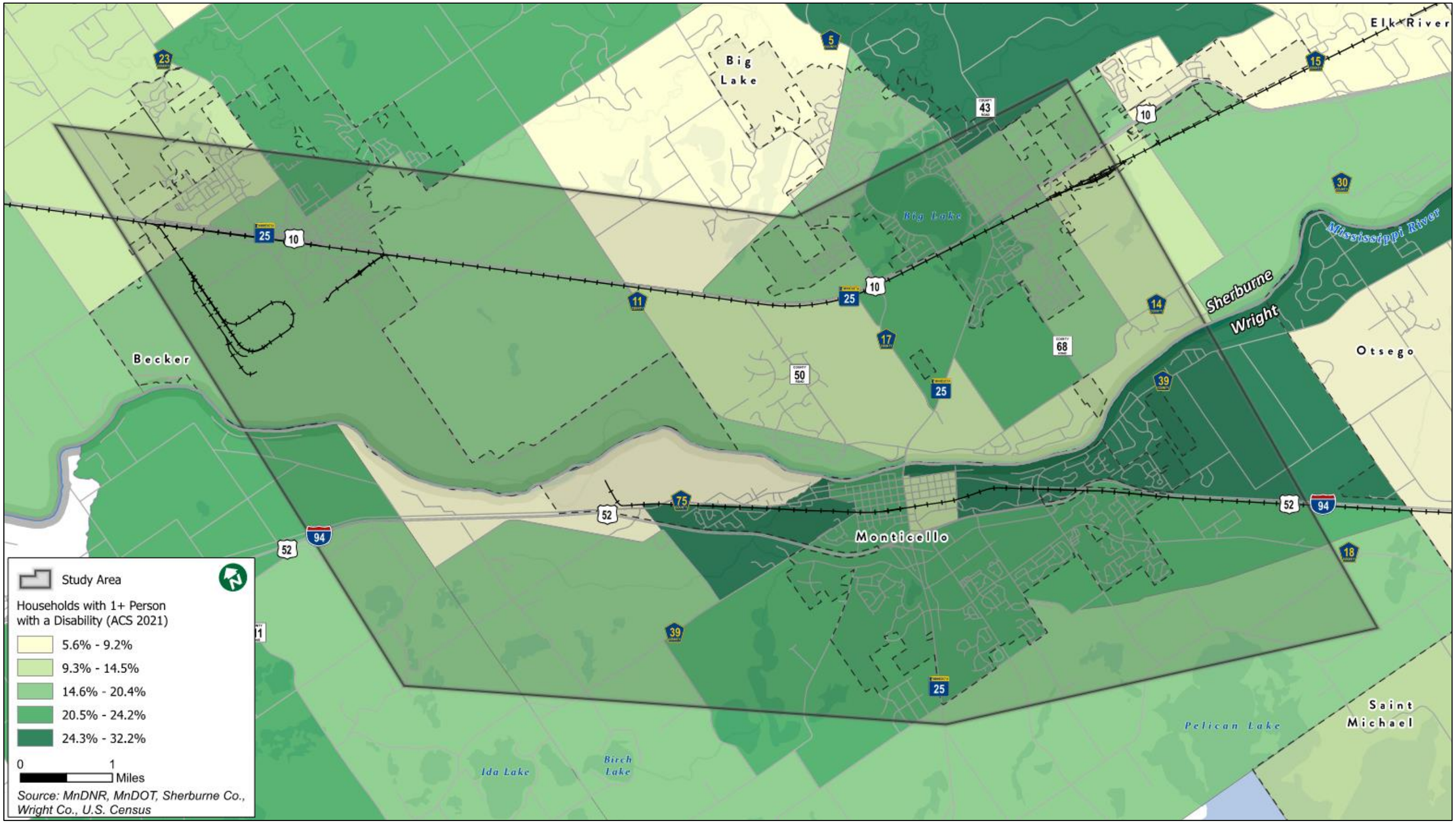


Figure 34. Highway 25 Area PEL Study Review Area Limited English Proficiency

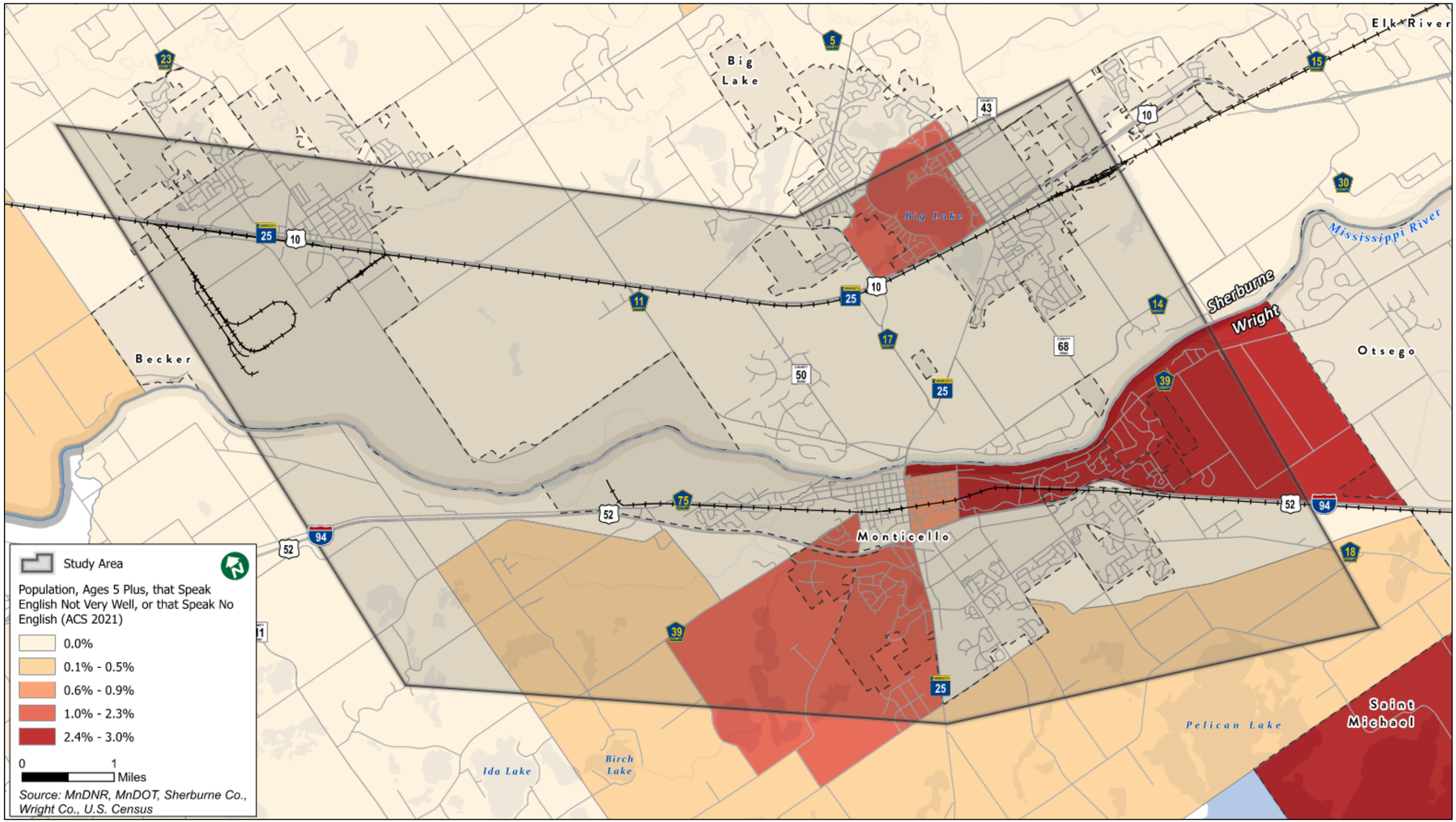


Figure 35. Highway 25 Area PEL Study Review Area Populations Under 5 and Over 65

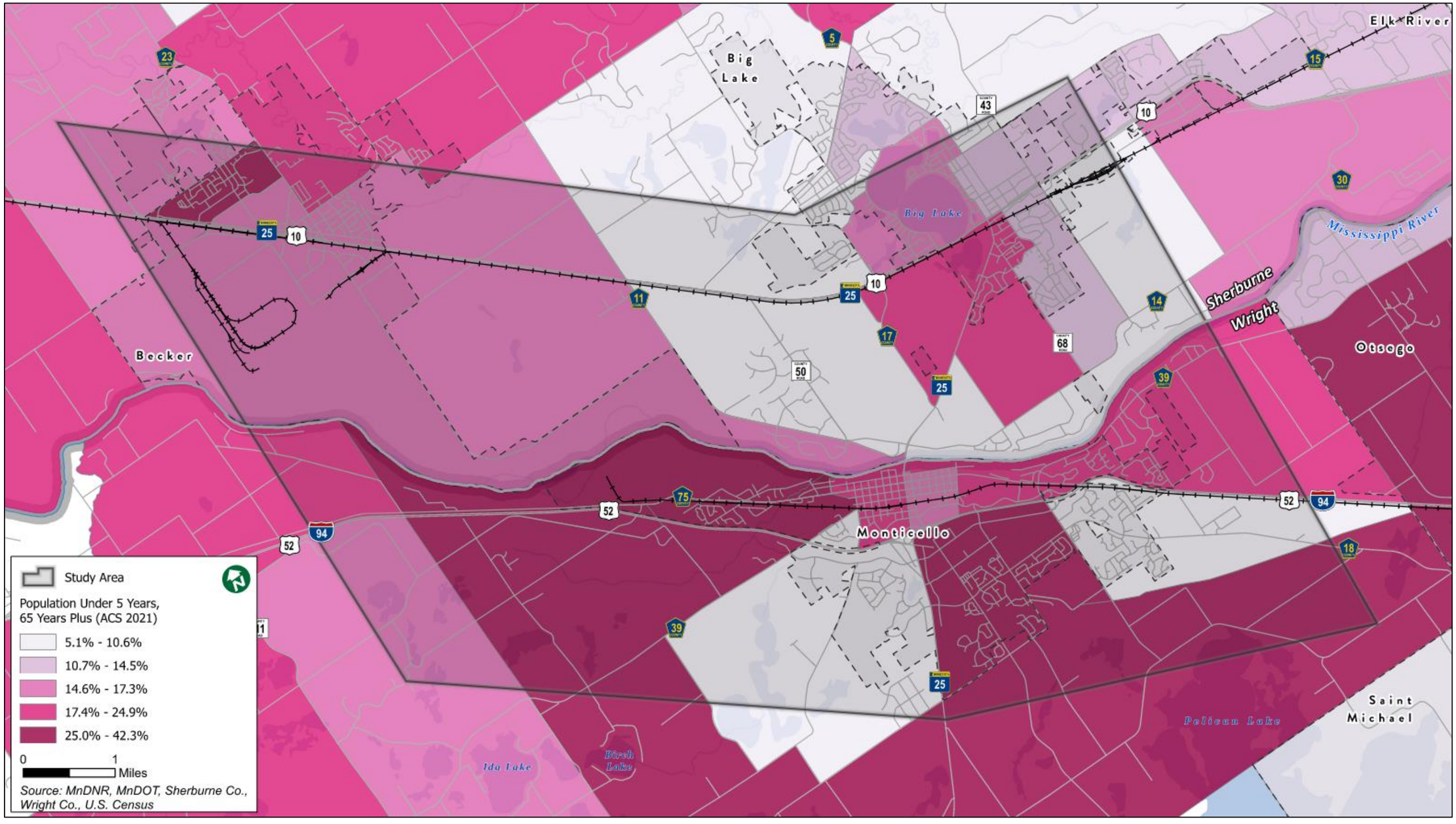
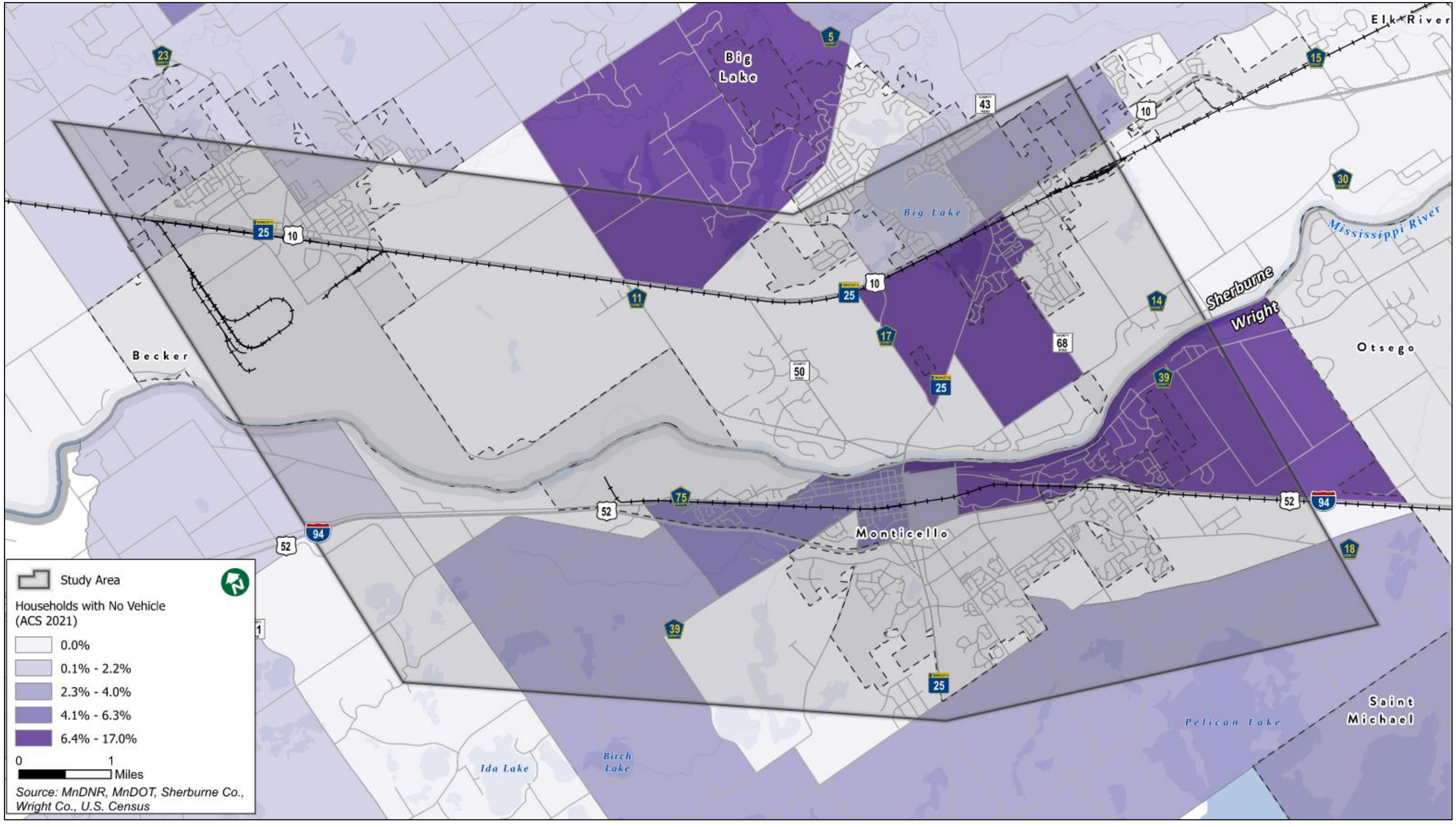


Figure 36. Highway 25 Area PEL Study Review Area Households without a Vehicle



5. Next Steps/Conclusion

The existing conditions documentation provides reference framework for future implementation of projects as identified in the larger PEL document. When a project is chosen for implementation, project proposers will need to complete environmental review in accordance with NEPA, which requires additional design advancement, social, economic, and environmental impact analysis, and public involvement.

6. List of Data & References

Wright County Long Range Transportation Plan (2020)

Wright County Northeast Quadrant Land Use Plan (2007)

Sherburne County 2040 Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2023)

Central Mississippi River Regional Partnership Plan Framework 2030 (2022)

Region 7W Long Range Plan (2022)

Becker Comprehensive Plan (2021)

Becker Zoning Map (2023)

Becker Township Comprehensive Plan (2014)

Big Lake Comprehensive Plan (2018)

Big Lake Zoning Map (2021)

Big Lake Township Zoning (2022)

Monticello Comprehensive Plan (2020)

Monticello Downtown Small Area Plan (2017)

Monticello Zoning Map (2021)

Monticello Industrial Area Feasibility Study (2022)

Silver Creek Township Land Use Plan (2009)

Industrial Rail and Transportation Study (2017)

MnDOT Pavement Condition Maps

State Aid BRIM Calculations

MnDOT Statewide Freight System and Investment Plan

MnDOT District 3 Freight Plan