



METROPOLITAN
C O U N C I L

Parks Research Update: 2023 Annual Use Estimates & 2025 Visitor Study

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Use Estimates Background



- Produced annually since 1995.
- Used in formulas to calculate each implementing agency's share of Regional Parks & Trails System grant program dollars
- Allows for monitoring trends over time
- One of two ongoing research responsibilities: Other is Visitor Study, approximately every 5 years

2023 Annual Use Estimates



- The estimates include data from 128 regional parks, trails, park reserves and special recreation features.
- Third year of multipliers from the 2021 Visitor Study
- Annual estimated visitation is one way to demonstrate the value of the Regional Park System. Others include climate mitigation and public health benefits

Calculating Annual Use Estimates

Raw Counts

- Parks staff count all people entering all parks and trails at designated locations
- Schedule has randomized times, days, and entrances, Memorial Day to Labor Day

Expansion

- Averaged with previous three years to account for weather, flooding
- Counts are “expanded” to apply to all days and entrances

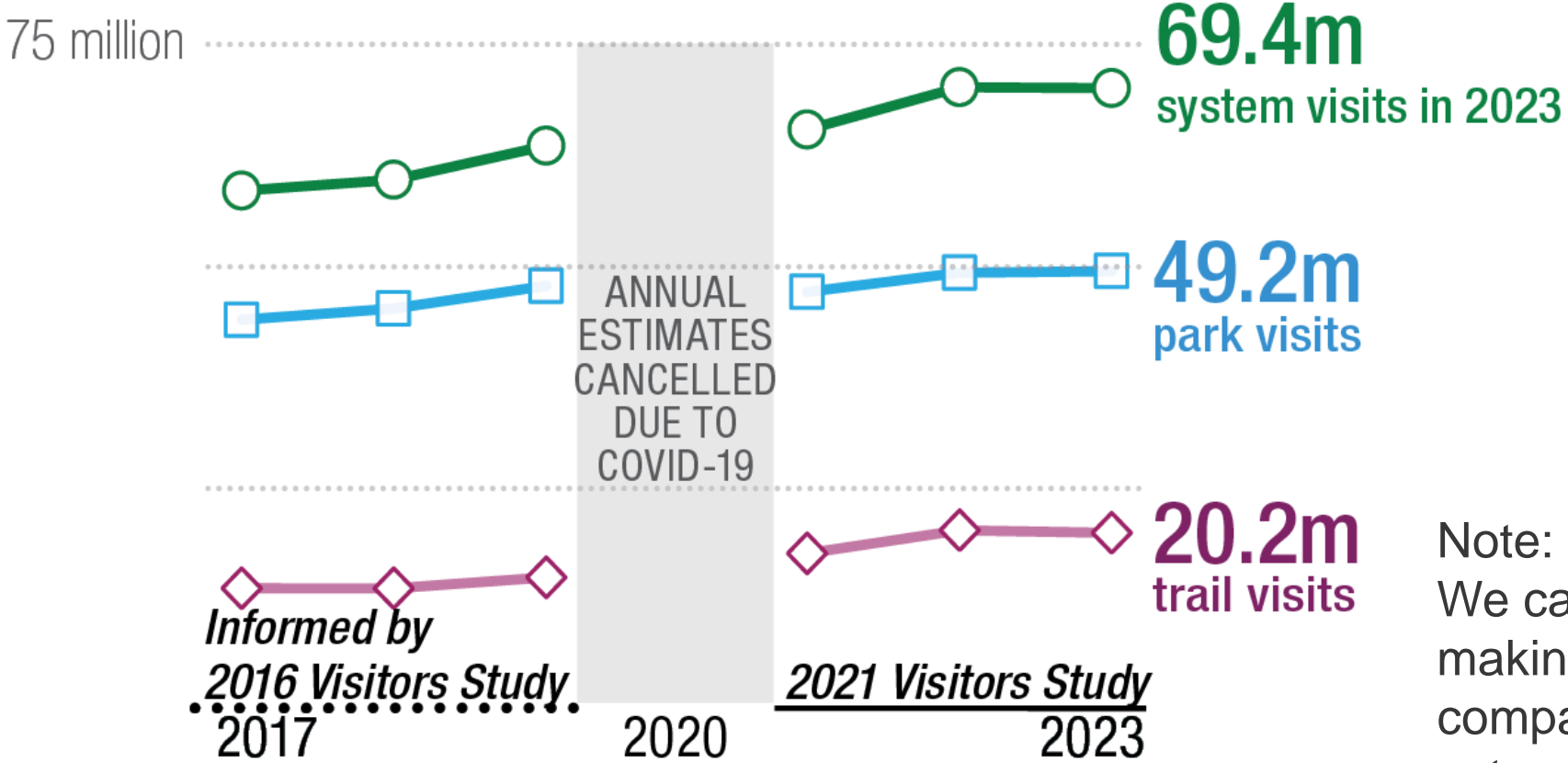
Special Events / Camping

- Agency-submitted special event, camping use is added in
- Estimated non-summer use based on 2021 Visitor Study multipliers

Annual Visits to the Regional System



Number of estimated visits



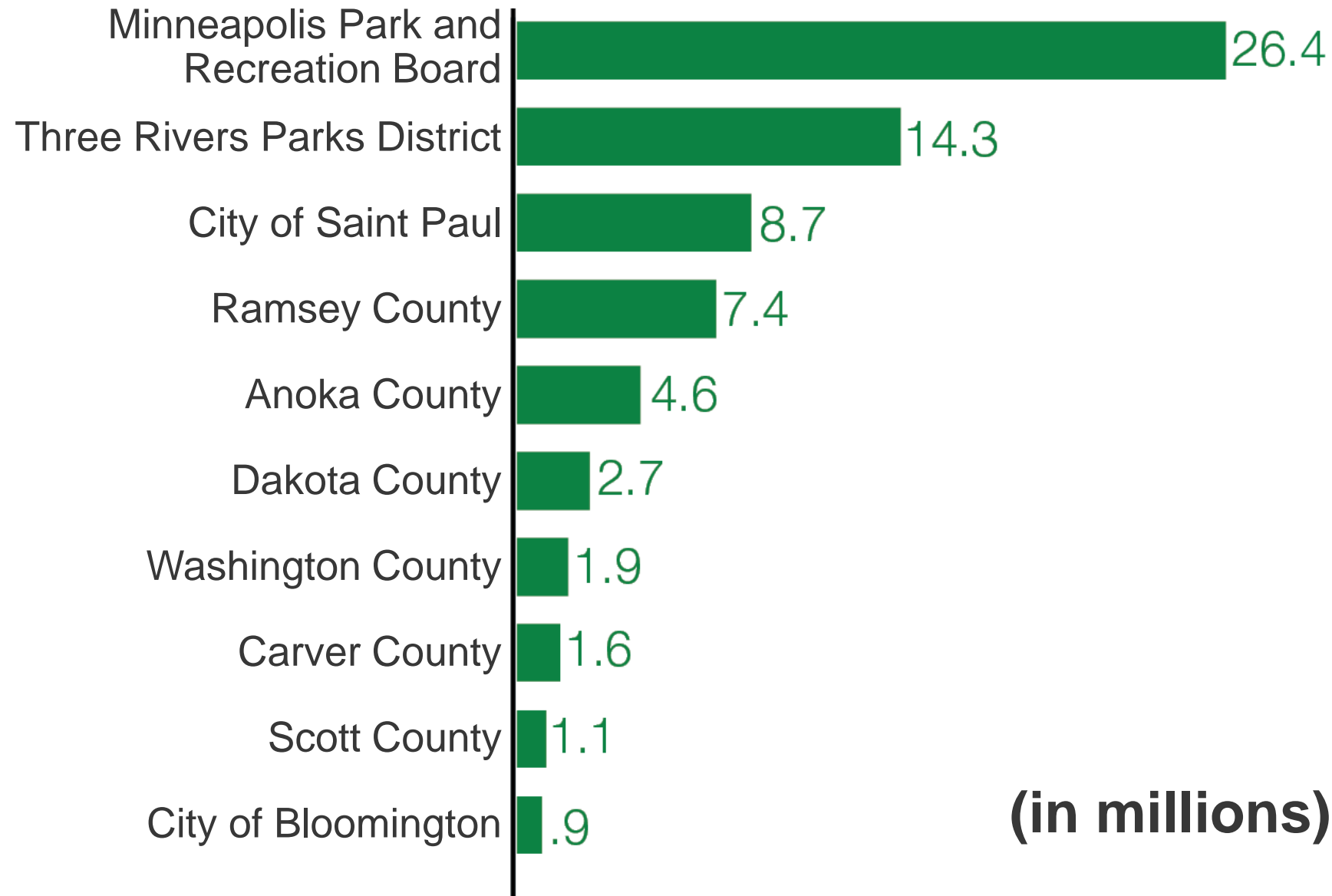
Note:
We caution against making direct comparisons across sets of estimates.

Source: Metropolitan Council's annual parks and trails use estimates (July 2024).

Why was visitation flat in 2023?

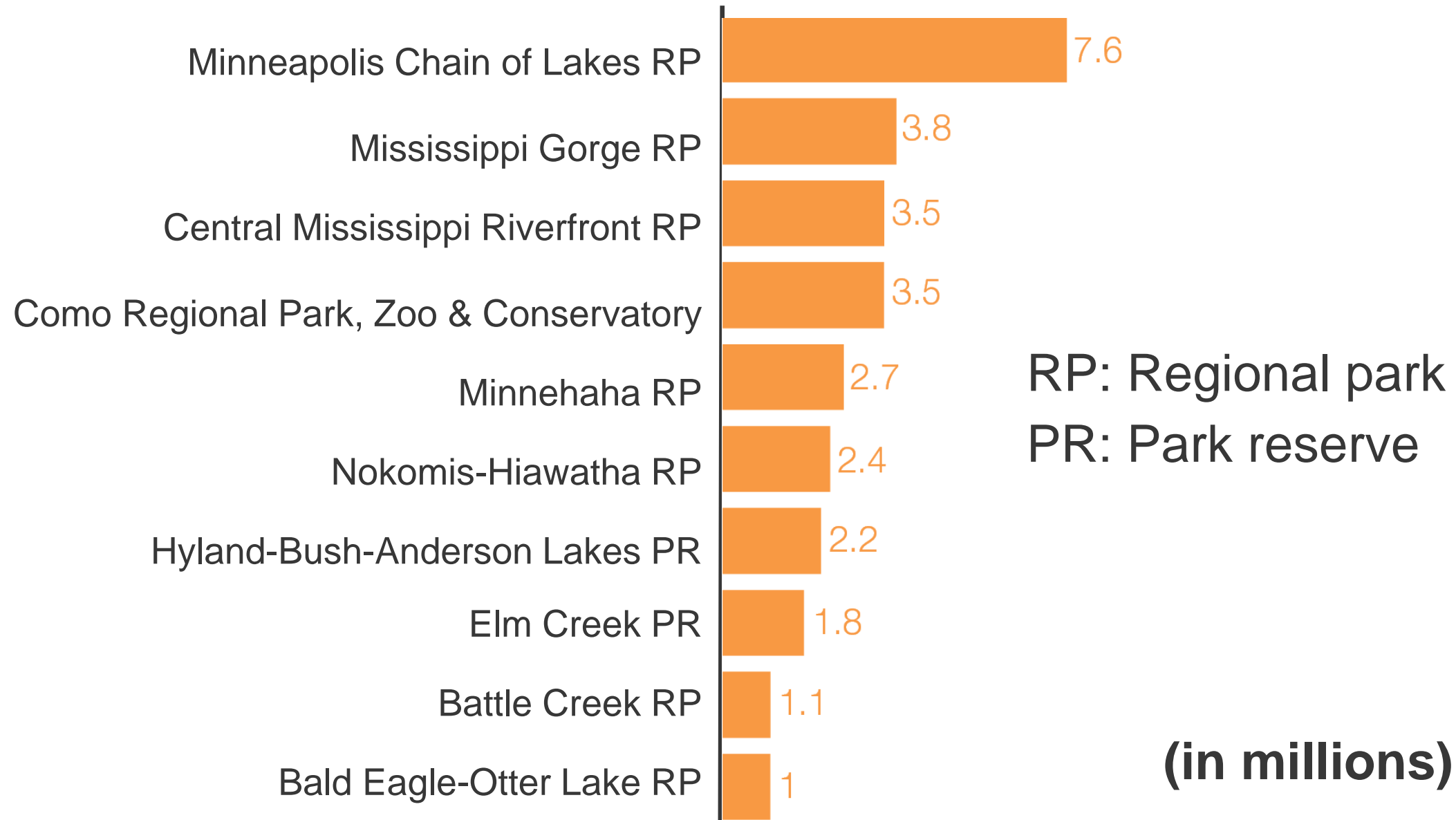
- Typical variation in sample counts from year to year
- Poor air and weather conditions in 2023
- Variations across agencies – some up, some down. This is typical.
- Effects of more years with lower vehicle multipliers from 2021 Visitor Study

2023 Visits by Parks Agency



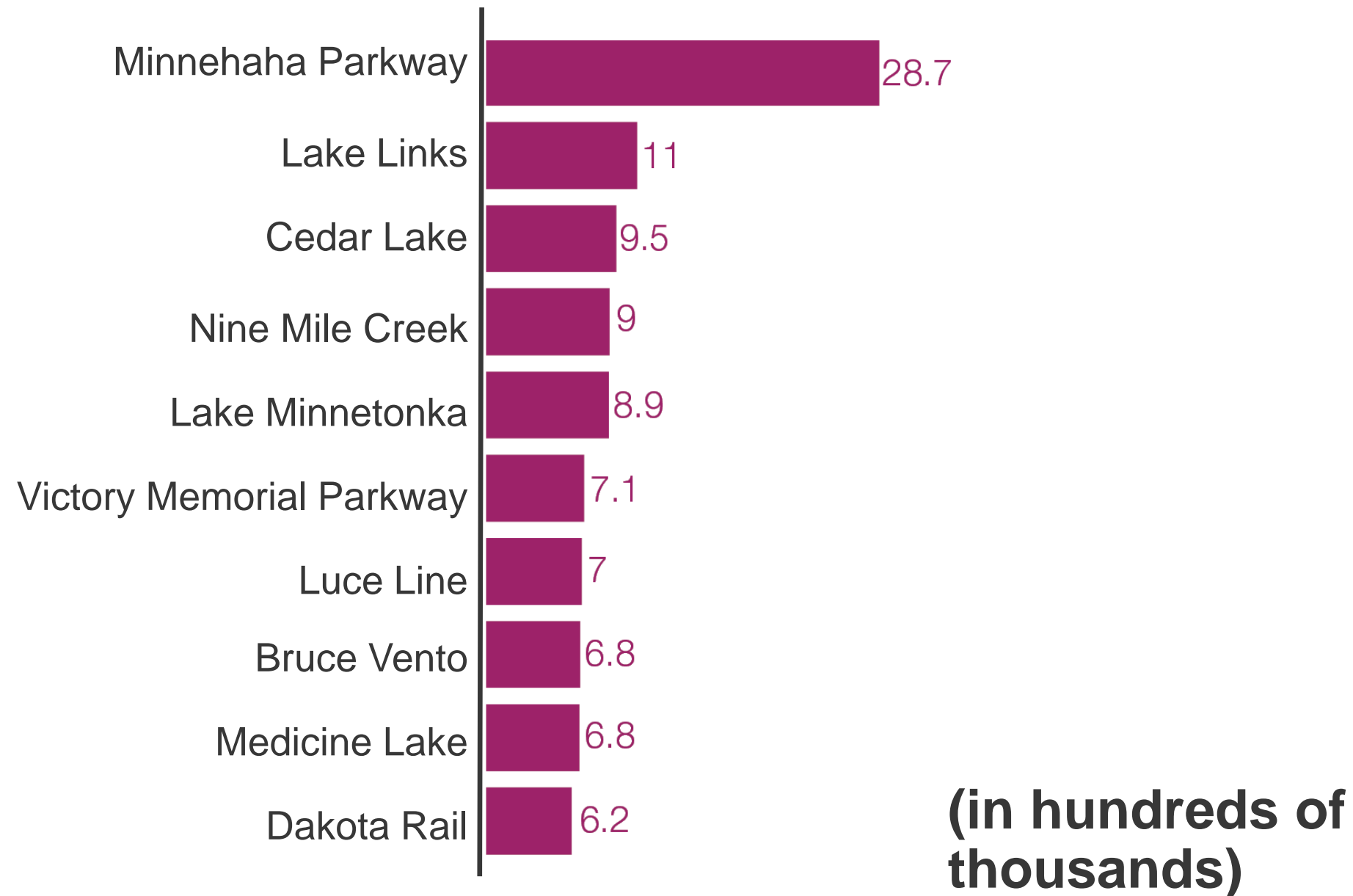
Source: Metropolitan Council's annual parks use estimates (July 2024).

2023 Most Visited Parks in the System



Source: Metropolitan Council's annual parks and trails use estimates (July 2024).

2023 Most Visited Trails in the System



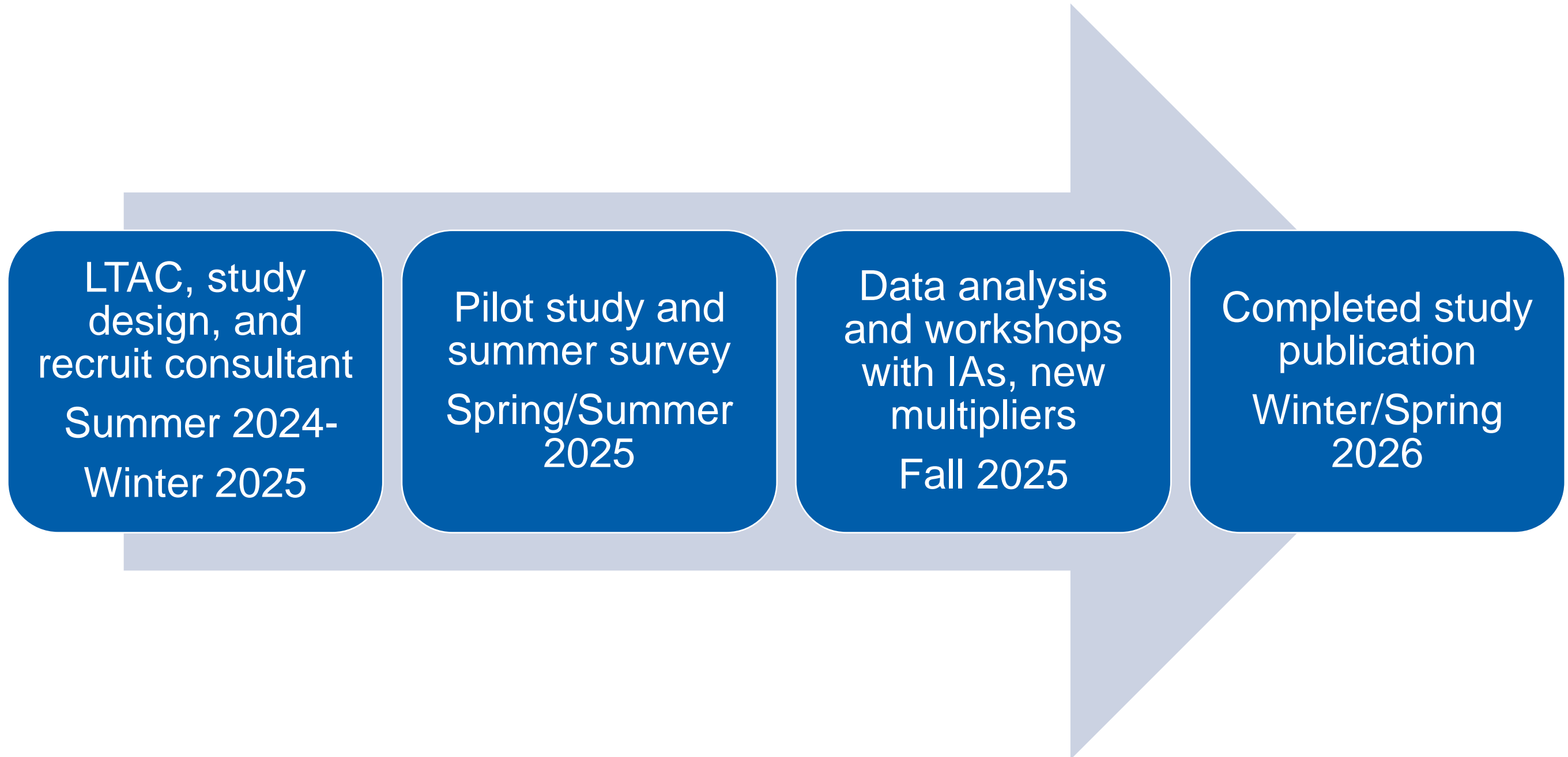
Source: Metropolitan Council's annual parks and trails use estimates (July 2024).

Visitor Study Purpose



- Help inform planning, policy, and management
- Evaluate and strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails in accordance with *Imagine 2050 Parks and Trails Policy Plan*
- Update data in funding formulas to help determine where funding goes for parks and trails

2025 Visitor Survey Process





THANK YOU

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