

Visits to the Regional Parks and Trails System in 2024

KEY FINDINGS

- An estimated 65.7 million visits were made to the Regional Parks System in 2024—a 5.4% decrease from 2023, marking the third-highest annual visitation on record.
- Minneapolis Chain of Lakes was the most visited regional park with nearly 6.9 million visits, followed by Central Mississippi Riverfront and Mississippi Gorge Regional Parks, each with more than 3.6 million visits.
- The regional system includes 523 miles of trails, with trail use totaling over 20 million visits. Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail led with 2.6 million visits, followed by Nine Mile Creek and Cedar Lake Regional Trails, each with a million visits.

The Regional Parks and Trails System is nationally renowned for its beauty, size, and wide range of features. With 46 regional parks (one more than 2023), 12 park reserves, eight special recreation features, and more than 500 miles of regional trails, the system offers visitors ample opportunities for gathering, contemplation, recreation, and fun. It also preserves significant green space and wildlife habitat.

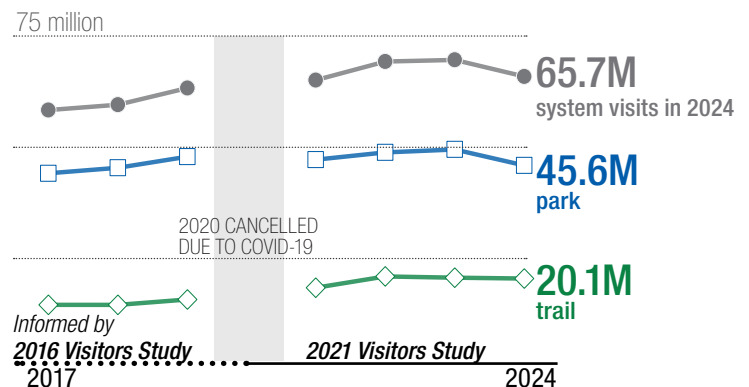
The Metropolitan Council estimates visits to the Regional Parks and Trails System. We collaborate with 10 partner agencies—including cities, counties, and special park districts—to estimate the number of visits to the system annually. Park agencies collect visitation data from each regional park and trail during the summer (Memorial Day to Labor Day), then we use those results and data collected from the latest Parks and Trails Visitors Study to calculate annual estimates. Annual use estimates allow us to monitor trends over time and inform grant funding formulas for each partner agency. This report highlights key learnings from the 2024 use estimates.

An estimated 65.7 million visits were made to the Regional Parks and Trails System in 2024 (Figure 1). This represents a 5.4% slowdown in visitation over 2023, when visits were estimated at 69.5 million.

This dip in overall use was partially driven by unusually rainy weather during the summer months. June, July, and August 2024 were particularly wet, with some record-breaking rainfall. Without the impact of above-normal precipitation, we estimate that park and trail visitation would have likely remained steady at around 69 million visits. Despite the weather, trail use held steady across the system, showing only a slight decrease of 0.8% (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 – VISITS SLOW IN 2024

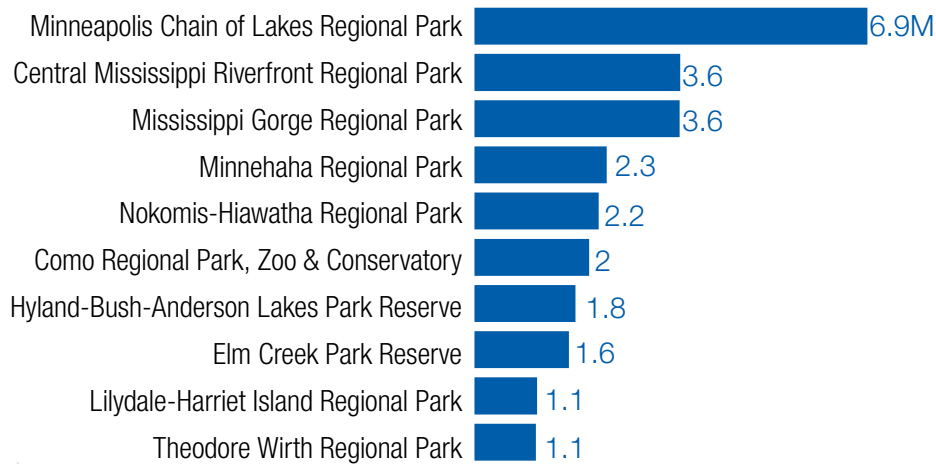
Estimated visits to the Regional Parks and Trails System




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

Last year, the regional park and trail system added one park to the regional system for a total of 46 parks. The most visited regional park in 2024 was Minneapolis Chain of Lakes with about 6.9 million visits, followed by Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park and Mississippi Gorge Regional Park, hosting about 3.6 million visits each. (Figure 2).

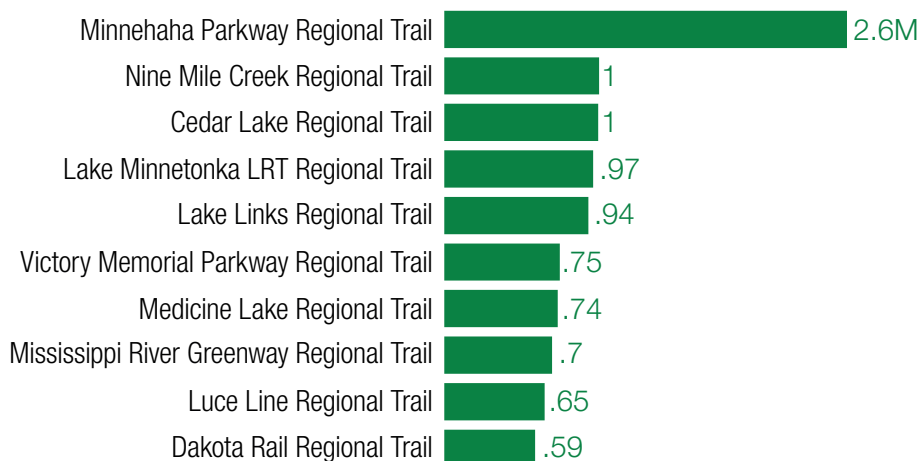
FIGURE 2 – MOST VISITED REGIONAL PARKS IN 2024




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

The most visited regional trail was the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail with about 2.6 million visits, followed by Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail and Cedar Lake Regional Trail, both with a million visits. (Figure 3).

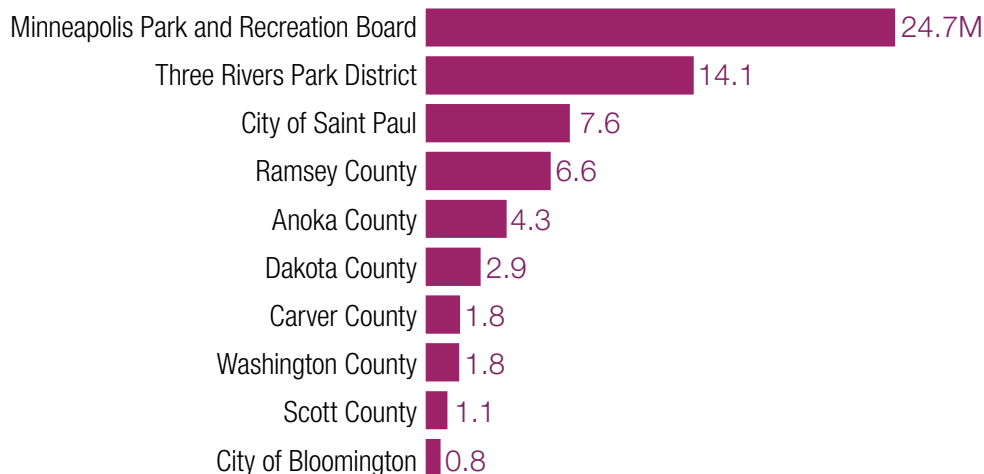
FIGURE 3 – MOST VISITED REGIONAL TRAILS IN 2024




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

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board had the highest visitation among the ten agencies in 2024, with approximately 24.7 million visitors, followed by Three Rivers Parks District and the City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation (Figure 4).

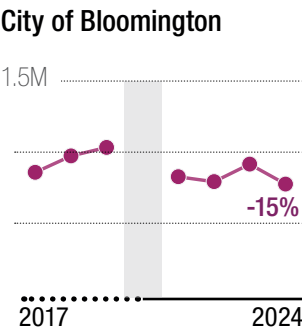
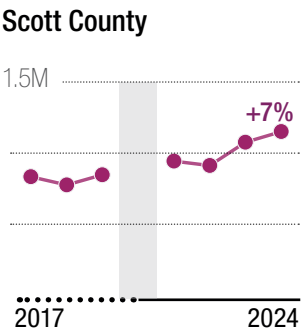
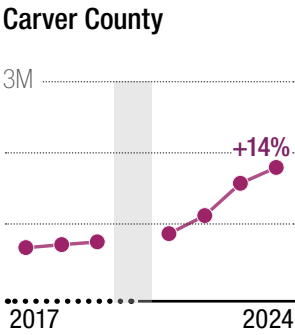
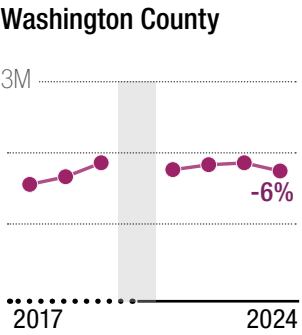
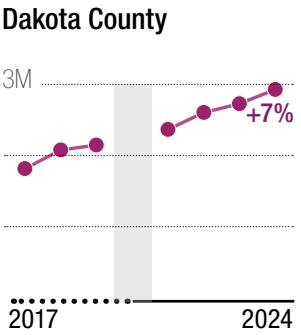
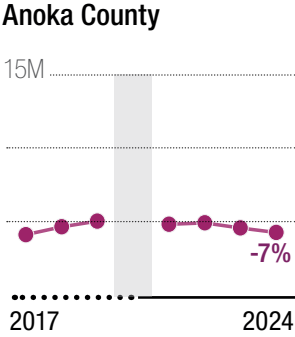
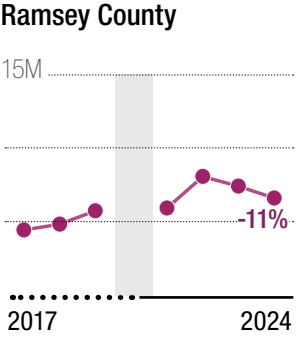
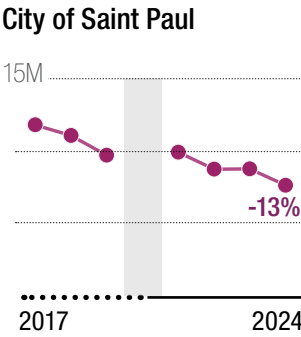
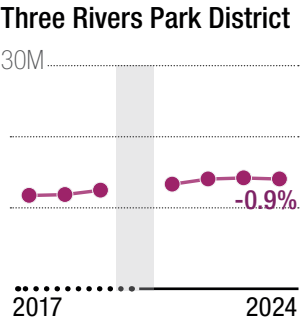
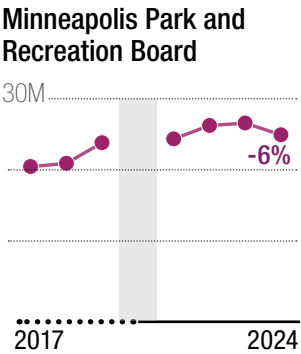
FIGURE 4 – 2024 VISITS BY PARK AGENCY



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

Carver, Dakota, and Scott County saw an increase in visitation, with 487,000 more visits combined in 2024 compared with 2023 (Figure 5). All other agencies had a reduction in visitation of between -1% and -15% compared with 2023. These changes can be understood as due to changes in weather patterns, a steady increase in trail investments, and sample variations across count years.

FIGURE 5 – VISITS INCREASED IN THREE OF TEN AGENCIES COMPARED WITH 2023
Recent visit trends by parks agency (in millions)



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