



Skyline Parkway Corridor Management Plan

Prepared by URS Corporation
with LHB Engineers & Architects
Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
Mary Means & Associates
Patrick Nunnally



August 2003

SKYLINE PARKWAY CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN



City of Duluth
Department of Planning & Development

in conjunction with

URS
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This corridor management plan has been prepared with funding from the State Scenic Byways Program, Minnesota Department of Transportation, and the City of Duluth, Department of Planning & Development



**"Where in all this wide world could I
find such a view as this?"
Samuel F. Snively**

It has been 100 years since Samuel Snively donated the road he built, with its ten wooden bridges crossing Amity Creek, to the Duluth Park Board in order to establish the eastern end of what was to become Duluth's famed boulevard parkway system.

During the ensuing century, this remarkable thoroughfare has had many names – Duluth's Highland Boulevard, Terrace Parkway, Rogers Boulevard, Skyline Drive, Snively Boulevard and, officially, Skyline Parkway – yet its essential nature has remained unchanged: "A drive that is the pride of our city, and one that for its picturesque and varied scenery, is second to none in the world ..." (1st Annual Report of the Board of Park Commissioners, 1891). From its inception, the Parkway has formed the common thread which has bound this community together, creating the 'backbone' of the city's expansive park system. Its 46 miles of road range from semi-wilderness to urban in context, and its alignment, following the geography which defines Duluth, provides a unique perspective on what one early twentieth century observer referred to as this "God-graded town".

Because Skyline Parkway grew with Duluth, its history – and the physical characteristics which reflect this history – must be preserved. In his historic landscape evaluation study of Skyline Parkway entitled *Jewel of the North: Duluth's Parkway System*, Patrick Nunnally laid the challenge before us: "it is vitally important that future construction, reconstruction, and development projects on and affecting the parkway system be conducted from a basis that is firmly grounded in historical knowledge about the resource and landscape". This report represents the first step in that process, constituting the corridor management plan which will serve as the foundation for the eventual designation of this unique resource as one of this country's pre-eminent national scenic byways.

Michael Conlan, Director
Department of Planning & Development
August, 2003

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INTRODUCTION

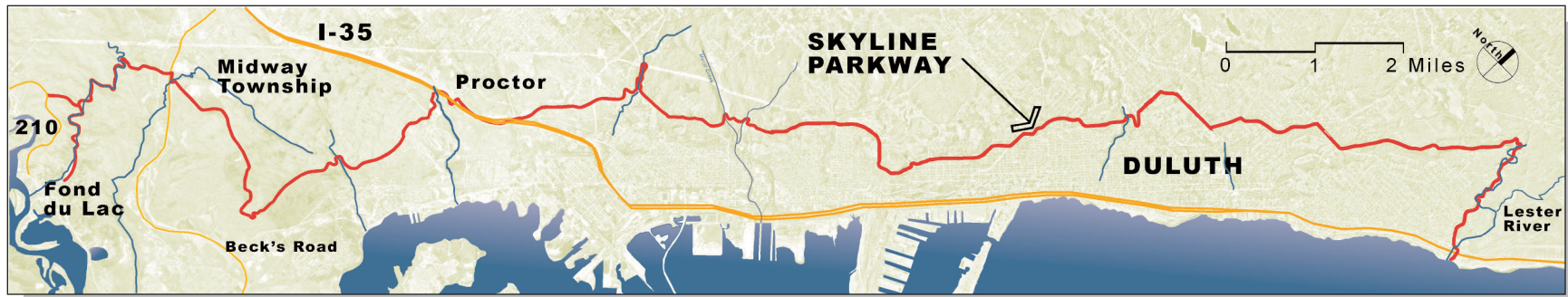
Few roads in North America combine the concepts of “urban” and “wilderness” as dramatically as Duluth’s Skyline Parkway, or offer such radical contrasts of experience. Running the full length of the city, the Parkway shifts from gravel road to urban street to winding park drive; its views meanwhile shifting from steep wooded valleys to a busy industrial port and then to historic residential districts that follow Lake Superior’s shoreline north. The Parkway itself appears to grow organically out of its rocky surroundings, with its guardstones, arched bridges, and massive retaining walls built of the same rock. It falls squarely within the picturesque tradition of landscape design, characterized by use of native materials and creation of a sequence of views along curvilinear paths, all for the purpose of enhancing a landscape’s natural and wilderness qualities.

The Skyline Parkway scenic byway corridor encompasses those portions of the system that can still be traveled by car, approximately 25 miles, largely within the City of Duluth but with portions in the City of Proctor and Midway Township. The byway extends from Beck’s Road on the west to the Lake Superior

shoreline at London Road on the east, near the Lester River. The westernmost “Mission Creek” segment, from Beck’s Road to Fond du Lac and Highway 210, is no longer maintained as a road, but has also been studied as part of the plan. Note that, in keeping with Duluth’s orientation to the Lake Superior shoreline, “east” in this report means “up the shore” in a north-easterly direction, while “west” is really southwest. Thus, the Parkway can largely be described as running east-west, although both the Mission Creek segment at the western end and Seven Bridges Road at the eastern end actually run north-south!

CHALLENGES

The sheer length and diversity of the Parkway make it difficult to manage as a single resource. It is composed of many streets, with different names, configurations and landscape character. The Parkway was never constructed through the University of Minnesota – Duluth campus area, creating a gap where the route follows a series of city streets with few directing signs. Intersections with major highways are confusing, and it is easy to lose the Parkway route.





This rock wall at an overlook near 28th Ave. W. is deteriorating.



Native rocks are used as guard stones along the parkway.

Inconsistent route signs on different segments add to the confusion. No comprehensive maps or interpretive resources exist to guide the visitor.

The Parkway system's many structural elements are also difficult to manage and maintain. Structural elements include numerous stone-faced concrete arch bridges, retaining walls and culverts of native stone, overlooks and guard stones at vista points. Many of these structures are now deteriorating, and choices must be made about which ones should receive priority for restoration. Vegetation and landforms vary greatly, from heavily wooded ravines to grassed lawns and sparsely vegetated overlooks. Management of vegetation is a major issue for corridor residents and visitors: many views from overlooks have been lost as trees and brush have grown taller, while "up-slope" and "down-slope" residents have differing priorities regarding views and vegetative screening.

PRIOR STUDIES AND PLANS

Although the Parkway has not been the focus of prior planning studies, the road and associated open space resources have essentially functioned as a greenbelt in the City's planning framework, protecting it to some degree against sprawling development. Land use and management are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

There have been a number of historical studies and two recent films devoted to the Parkway. "Snively's Road," a 1994 article in *Minnesota History* by Minneapolis researcher Mark Ryan, focused on the role of Duluth Mayor Samuel F. Snively in realizing the vision for more than three-quarters of the Parkway and many of the City's other parks and boulevards. Ryan also produced the documentary film of the same

name. Another film, "Along the Boulevard," was produced by public television station WDSE in March 2001; it focuses on the history of the Parkway and on the traveler's experience, past and present. Both films are frequently shown at public meetings and have helped to raise public awareness of the Parkway as a resource.

In 1997 the City undertook a cultural landscape study of the Parkway, in preparation for local historic designation as a City Heritage Preservation District. This report, *The Jewel of the North: Duluth's Parkway System. A Historic Landscape Evaluation Study*, provides a detailed record of the Parkway's structures, vistas, and periods of development, including connecting routes and primary and secondary segments. Report author Patrick Nunnally was part of the Corridor Management Plan study team and has provided direction on preservation strategies. Many of the historical photographs and images used in that study and this report are from the archive of the Northeast Minnesota Historical Center at the University of Minnesota – Duluth.

These and other references are listed in Appendix B, References.

OTHER SCENIC BYWAYS IN THE ARROWHEAD REGION

Skyline Parkway connects at its northern terminus at London Road/Congdon Boulevard with the North Shore Scenic Drive, a 154-mile route that follows US Highway 61 up the Lake Superior shoreline from Duluth to the Canadian border. The route was recently designated an All-American Road, the highest category of the National Scenic Byways system, and was extended into the City so that it now terminates at

Canal Park on Duluth's central waterfront.

The Parkway's western terminus at Beck's Road is a few miles north of two other scenic byways. State Highway 210, the Rushing Rapids Parkway, runs for 28 miles through the forested hills of Jay Cooke State Park along the St. Louis River, from the city of Carlton to State Highway 23, also a scenic byway, in Fond du Lac.

State Highway 23 is known as the Veteran's Evergreen Memorial Scenic Drive. It runs for 50 miles, from Banning State Park near Askov north to Duluth, paralleling I-35. The byway terminates at the Veterans' Memorial at Stowe School in New Duluth, although Highway 23 continues northeast as Commonwealth Avenue, then as Grand Avenue. Features include the Kettle River valley, hardwood forests and evergreens, a series of small villages, and the Nemadji State Forest.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Parkway was designated a State Scenic Byway in 1998. Byway designation has made the road corridor eligible for funding for various studies and improvements, the first of which is this Corridor Management Plan, initiated in June 2001 with funding from the Federal Highway Administration and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Oversight and citizen input throughout the planning process were provided through two groups:

- A Citizens' Task Force comprising over 20 people representing the broad spectrum of city commissions, adjacent jurisdictions (City of Proctor and Midway Township), environmental and preserva-

tion organizations, neighborhood associations, recreational users, and interested residents.

- A Technical Management Committee of city and agency staff, including representatives from St. Louis County, Mn/DOT, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the State Historic Preservation Office and other agencies.

A preliminary set of management strategies and recommendations was presented at a public open house in May 2002, and these were then refined for this report.

One of the strengths of this process has been the active role of the Citizens' Task Force members: many participated in a Viewer-Employed Photography exercise to identify features (sites, vistas, structures) that contributed to or detracted from the natural, scenic or historic character of the Parkway. These photos, accompanied by detailed annotations, became the foundation for many of the recommendations in this



Several parkways and scenic byways connect near Duluth.

report. (See sidebar for a summary of these features.) Task Force members also attended monthly or bimonthly meetings for more than a year, and assisted in hosting the Open House.

A note on names: Skyline Parkway was originally part of a larger parkway system, and was known, like many other roads, simply as a “boulevard,” then became known as “Skyline Boulevard.” This term has endured, as in the recent WDSE film “Along the

Boulevard.” In 1929 seven separate parkway segments were consolidated under the name “Skyline Parkway,” the winning entry in a contest to name the route. This, along with the accompanying logo (see page 52), became the official name and symbol of the scenic byway route. However, many Duluthians have always called the road “Skyline Drive,” and will likely continue to do so. A number of road signs reflect this confusion.

Viewer-Employed Photography Exercise: Summary of Main Themes

CONTRIBUTING ELEMENTS

Overlooks:

- Bardon's Peak
- Rice's Point (30th Ave. W.)
- Enger Park
- Observation Road
- Hawk Ridge
- Lester River

Resources and structures:

- Guard stones and other stonework
- Remains of "green stripe" that once marked the road
- Hawk Ridge seasonal activities
- Mission Creek path and bridges
- Amity Creek path and bridges
- Creeks and waterfalls
- Adjacent or nearby parks:
Chester Park, Chester Bowl, Enger Park,
Jay Cooke State Park, Chamber's Grove

NONCONTRIBUTING AND DETRACTING ELEMENTS

- Closed and blocked overlooks
- Erosion problems - trails
- Dumping of trash, trash at overlooks
- Deteriorating bridges and structures
- Poor road surface; bad shoulders
- Dangerous intersections (such as
Glenwood Street)
- Confusing intersections
- Concrete trail & road closure barriers
- Uncoordinated signage
- Heavy traffic
- Tour bus parking
- Lester Park hockey rink
- Oversized houses
- New residential construction - grading
for driveways on steep slopes

NOT DEPICTED IN PHOTOS

- Commercial development
- UMD campus
- Residential street segments (largely absent)
- Mesaba Avenue or Highway 2 segments

RESOURCES AND CONDITIONS

This chapter provides an overview of resources and conditions along the Parkway corridor, under the following categories:

- General overview
- Historic resources
- Scenic resources
- Natural and recreational resources
- Road conditions

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Skyline Parkway as presently understood consists of seven segments of the original Skyline Parkway System that was constructed between 1890 and 1940. At its peak, the parkway system consisted of some 13 segments, totaling over 45 miles in length, and stretching between Fond du Lac and Jay Cooke State Park on the west all the way up the North Shore to the Lake County line on the east. The present segments of the parkway system include:

Mission Creek (1920s): An extension for the purpose of constructing a regional parkway network from Fond du Lac and Jay Cooke State Park to the North Shore.

No longer in use as a road, and not part of the designated byway, this segment is evaluated separately in this plan.

Bardon’s Peak (1920s): Progressing south from the present Boundary Avenue intersection with I-35 around the knob of rock overlooking Gary/New Duluth and thence west to Beck’s Road.

Western Extension (1905-1915): Extending the original Boulevard past Oneota Cemetery to a point near the present Thompson Hill Rest Area.

Terrace Parkway, also known as **Rogers Parkway** (1889-1895, with subsequent work up through 1940): This is the heart of the system, extending from Chester Park to Lincoln Park; it originally included some of the parkways through those parks as well (see below under “secondary segments”).

“UMD Gap”: So called because there appears never to have been a parkway segment actually constructed through the area now home to the campus of the University of Minnesota-Duluth.

Hawk Ridge (1930s): Passing along the front of the bluff between Seven Bridges Road and Glenwood Street.

Seven Bridges Road (originally aligned c. 1903, redone 1910-1911): Climbing the bluff along the Lester River and Amity Creek.

Secondary segments that are no longer in use as roads, or that are no longer considered part of the Parkway, include the following:

Knowlton Creek Boulevard: Originally connected Fairmont Park with Bardon’s Peak Boulevard; now a

trail that extends from behind the Lake Superior Zoo to the Spirit Mountain Recreation Area.

Lincoln Park Drive: West of Miller Creek, extending from 3rd Street to the Highway 53 intersection with the Parkway.

Chester Park Drive: From the Parkway to 6th Street on the east side of Chester Creek.

Congdon Park Drive: Connecting Vermillion and London Roads adjacent to Tischer Creek; paved but recently closed to traffic.

Snively Boulevard / Amity Creek: The original segment replaced by the Hawk Ridge segment, from Maxwell Road (north end of Seven Bridges Road) to near Jean Duluth Road, and still in use as a trail.

Congdon North Shore Boulevard: A segment of what is now Congdon Boulevard (the North Shore Scenic Drive), from Lester River to Knife River.

Figure 1, “Issues and Conditions,” (following page 10) shows the Parkway’s primary and secondary segments and locations of some of the key issues discussed below.

THE TRAVELER’S EXPERIENCE

In terms of the Parkway’s chronology, it was built outwards from the middle in both directions. The traveler’s experience, however, can best be described from an endpoint. The following description begins at the western terminus of Beck’s Road in Midway Township.



One of the stone-faced concrete arch bridges on the Amity Creek trail segment.



Amity Creek trail segment.



Skyline Parkway passes under this railroad bridge at Beck’s Road.



A typical view of the Bardon's Peak segment.



Bardon's Peak overlook.



Stewart Creek bridge in late Fall.

Bardon's Peak Segment

The Parkway, an unpaved road at this point, crosses under an old railroad bridge, part of the abandoned Duluth Winnipeg & Pacific rail line, and runs uphill through a small cluster of houses, set far apart on wooded lots. Narrowing to about 18 feet in width, it continues generally uphill through Magney-Snively Park: dense mixed hardwood forest crossed by occasional cross-country ski and snowmobile trails. It slowly winds upwards for the next 3 miles, gradually emerging on the west side of the Bardon's Peak ridge. The view opens up here, first to a series of rock outcrops and then the outstanding but not widely known Bardon's Peak overlook, constructed in the 1920s. Shored up by a mortared stone wall of over 600 feet in length, the road traverses a 270-degree view off the south extent of Spirit Mountain. The view encompasses the St. Louis River valley as well as the historic planned community of Morgan Park and the neighborhoods of Gary-New Duluth. Rocky ledges above the road offer additional places to climb or picnic.

Leaving the overlook the Parkway winds downward again through dense woodland, curving steeply as it approaches the Stewart Creek bridge. This stone arch bridge, known for the distinctive "dragon's teeth" stonework on its rail, is the only Parkway resource currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Just east of the bridge, on the north side of the road, are the ruins of a monument to Mayor and Parkway builder Samuel Snively, consisting of the remains of a low wall now overgrown with vegetation. The road winds uphill through a sparsely developed residential area, with a few unpaved roads leading to isolated homes on wooded lots, then enters the Spirit Mountain Recreation Area. The original unpaved road

alignment continues east across what is now a ski slope, then turns uphill to end in one of the ski area parking lots. The new alignment, constructed in the 1970s at a higher elevation on the ridge, is wider, and lacks the characteristic stonework of the historic segments. Parking lots and roads create frequent breaks in the tree canopy. The Bardon's Peak segment is closed seasonally between the Stewart Creek bridge and the residential area at Beck's Road.

Western Extension Segment

The level of development increases sharply as the Parkway approaches I-35 and Boundary Avenue (the boundary between the cities of Proctor and Duluth), with a cluster of motels, franchise restaurants, and other highway-related commercial use. The Boundary Avenue bridge over I-35 is narrow, with no sidewalk or other pedestrian accommodation. On the north side of I-35 the Parkway turns sharply east again and continues as a frontage road following the contour across Thompson Hill, below the highway rest area and tourist information center. On the downslope side a small overlook with a crumbling wall provides views over the highway.

This section of the Parkway, like the Spirit Mountain section, was probably reconstructed in conjunction with I-35 and lacks the historical integrity of the original segments. The remains of rock walls between the Parkway and the interstate highway indicate possible locations of the original alignment, and the 1929 brochure for "Duluth's Highland Boulevard" indicates that the Parkway followed the route of Highway 1, later Highway 61, through this area.

The Parkway crosses US Highway 2, a busy four-lane highway at this point, with traffic moving rapidly downhill approaching the I-35 interchange. The

Parkway in this area is relatively lacking in character: none of the characteristic guard stones are in evidence, and the road has a fairly wide cross-section and standard metal guard rail. The surrounding landscape is largely second-growth forest, and there are few views downslope.

The character of the road changes markedly as one crosses the wide intersection of several County roads: Highland Street and Getchell Road (both designated CSAH 89) and Vinland Street. This intersection seems overly wide, with poor sight distance at stop signs, and little differentiation between the Parkway and the other roads. Just east of the intersection the Parkway narrows sharply and the characteristic guard stones reappear, as the road makes a sharp hairpin turn across Keene Creek. A new concrete bridge with molded stone veneer and a decorative iron railing was constructed here in summer of 2001. The Oneota Cemetery, which includes a World War I memorial, lies just downslope and east of the bridge. (The village of Oneota, founded in 1856, was an early settlement annexed into the city of Duluth in 1889.)

The next three miles of the Parkway have a rugged character, with large rock outcrops, stony hillsides and dense forest that frequently obscures views, making it feel distant from the West Duluth neighborhood below. It also feels neglected: a number of turnouts and overlooks have been blocked by the City due to dumping and vandalism, and low trees and shrubs now block views. The intersection with Haines Road/40th Avenue W. is located on a sharp curve and, like the Highland Street intersection, is excessively wide; the Parkway route jogs north here. A massive stone retaining wall covers much of the hillside below the road some distance east of Haines Road, and a

small stone culvert carries Merritt Creek under the Parkway. The stone wall was recently rebuilt using a form liner panel method of molding concrete.

A formal overlook with a marker, describing the Oneota settlement, is located west of 28th Avenue W. At this point, the Parkway enters a residential district typical of Duluth's hillside neighborhoods, with single-family houses spaced fairly closely on both sides of the road, narrow sidewalks on one or both sides and a parking lane on the uphill side. This pattern continues as far as Piedmont Avenue. This intersection, where Skyline crosses Piedmont, Trinity Road (Highway 53), Lincoln Park Drive and several local streets, is scheduled to be rebuilt beginning in 2003, with the Parkway relocated to a new bridge above the intersection. Lincoln Park Drive descends through the park along the valley of Miller Creek. This road segment was part of the original Rogers Boulevard parkway system and shares many of the Parkway's design features, including a massive mortared stone over concrete arch bridge that carries 10th Street across the road and creek valley. Lincoln Park includes a variety of other stone features, including small bridges and retaining walls for the creek.

Rogers Boulevard Segment

For the next several miles the Parkway runs through Enger Park, first through the municipal golf course and then along the park's southern edge. Central Park, a small undeveloped wooded area, is located on the downslope side of the Parkway. This section offers some of the most scenic views, looking out across the steep hillside known as Point of Rocks to the ore docks and grain terminals of the Duluth Harbor and the Blatnik Bridge. Hank Jensen Road curves north to the turnoff to Enger Tower and the



The new Keene Creek Bridge



Haines Road intersection



Twin Ponds



The Mesaba/Central Entrance intersection is difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to navigate.



Narrow sidewalk along the Parkway at Chester Bowl, an area heavily used by pedestrians.



College Street and Junction Avenue, a confusing intersection for Parkway travelers.

surrounding gardens, then joins the Parkway again at Twin Ponds. These small water bodies have been a visitor attraction since the Parkway's earliest days and include a small swimming area and fishing dock. Two formal overlooks are located in this area, one west of Twin Ponds and one at Observation Road.

The next road segment is largely residential, although the downslope side is open in some areas. Local streets climb the hill to meet the Parkway at sharp angles, creating a number of hazardous intersections. The Mesaba Avenue/Central Entrance intersection creates a substantial break in this segment. The Parkway has been realigned from 10th Street (now blocked at the intersection) to 9th Street in order to provide better sight distance and stacking area, but it is easy to lose the route in this area, and it is daunting for pedestrians and bicyclists. Commercial and office buildings, the "Coppertop" (First Methodist) Church and a public housing complex are clustered in this high-traffic area.

The residential area continues east of the intersection. In some areas a narrow sidewalk is present, sometimes following the slope at an angle to the road, while in others only a narrow gravel shoulder is available to pedestrians, in a segment that sees heavy pedestrian and bike use. Kenwood Avenue, a busy local street, crosses the Parkway at a confusing intersection. Several residential lots have recently been cleared and graded just west of Chester Park.

The winding Parkway section across Chester Creek at the Chester Bowl Recreation Area includes a complex of resources: a recently rebuilt bridge and massive stone retaining walls, both above and below the road. Chester Park Drive is another segment of the original parkway system, following the creek valley from Chester Bowl to 6th Street.

UMD Gap Segment

This segment is undoubtedly the most disorienting to the first-time visitor, since sporadic signs are the only indications that the Parkway route continues through a diverse series of streets. Kent Road, a narrow, winding residential street, leads to 19th Avenue East, a busier collector street that leads straight uphill, across College Street to Junction Avenue, another collector street that runs close to the UMD campus boundary. Land uses include university offices and dormitories, and a residential district to the west. Junction Avenue leads into St. Marie Street, skirting the base of Rock Hill (part of the University's Bagley Nature Area), a wooded hillside with foot trails leading up to an overlook. St. Marie runs along the northern boundary of the campus to an intersection with yet another major street, Woodland Avenue, in the small Mount Royal commercial district. Woodland, a four-lane arterial street, has some of the highest traffic volumes in the Parkway system.

Woodland Avenue connects to Snively Road, a two-lane arterial with a wide paved shoulder, suitable for bicycling, and continues east through a largely residential district. Morley Heights, a small historic planned community developed c. 1919 around a small park and tree-lined boulevard, is located just to the north. The route continues from Snively Road to Glenwood Street, a four-lane collector with a wide cross-section that encourages high traffic speeds. The intersection of Glenwood with the Parkway "proper" has been identified as a hazardous intersection, due to the sharp contrast between the scale, speeds and traffic volumes of the two roads, as well as their vertical and horizontal alignments.

Hawk Ridge Segment

The paved section of the Parkway continues for about one-half mile to a formal overlook with marker. Views from this segment encompass the northern neighborhoods of Lakeside and Lester Park and extend up the North Shore and across Lake Superior. The downtown and harbor are less visible to the west; residential neighborhoods under a dense canopy of trees dominate the view. Just past the overlook, the pavement ends and the Parkway becomes an unpaved road about 18 feet wide, seasonally closed between this point and the upper end of Seven Bridges Road. This is the core area of Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, City-owned open space managed by the Hawk Ridge Management Committee of the Duluth Audubon Society.

Established in 1972, Hawk Ridge has become known as one of the major sites for the observation of migrating raptors and other birds. During the fall migration, from August into November, Hawk Ridge provides a naturalist and displays for the visitors who gather at the primary observation overlook, located at a high point about midway along the ridge. Seasonal signs are posted and trails are open to the public. During the off-season, signs are removed, since vandalism has been a continuing problem.

The unpaved road continues gradually downwards from the Hawk Ridge overlook, emerging at the junction with Maxwell Avenue and Seven Bridges Road. A wide unpaved area provides trailhead parking for the Amity Creek segment, the original Snively Road segment of the Parkway. Battered concrete sections of highway barriers are used to keep this and other trails closed to vehicles. The Amity Creek trail runs along the landward side of Hawk Ridge, across sever-

al stone-faced bridges, emerging on a local street near Jean Duluth Road. The seasonally-closed segment ends at this point.

Seven Bridges Segment

Seven Bridges Road is one of the primary visitor destinations along the Parkway, and many visitors focus on it and Hawk Ridge rather than attempting to follow the entire route. Only about two miles long, this segment has a character all its own, not duplicated elsewhere on the route with the exception of some stretches of the Mission Creek trail segment, described below. Whether descending the steep hill from Hawk Ridge or climbing it from Superior Street, the experience is one of constantly shifting views of wooded hillsides, waterfalls and rapids, and the bridges themselves. The stone-faced concrete arch bridges (actually eight in number) cross the creek on a series of sharp turns, which combine with narrow road cross-section (about 18 feet) to slow traffic down. Numerous small unpaved turnouts provide limited parking. Several trailheads provide access to the Lester-Amity cross-country ski trail and to snowmobile trails. The pavement on much of Seven Bridges Road is quite deteriorated, helping to slow automobile traffic but making the road less pleasant for bicycles.

The Lakeview Sports Arena, located about halfway down the hill, consists of an ice hockey rink, warming house and surrounding cleared area, all of which appear dilapidated and out of context with the historic landscape character of this segment. This area once included a sledding and snow-tubing hill and ski jump, now closed. Continuing downhill, a small recreational area, part of Lester Park, includes trails bordered with distinctive stone walls, a footbridge and a gazebo overlooking the creek.



The view from Hawk Ridge.



Overlook at east end of Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve.



Bridge over Amity Creek on the Seven Bridges segment.



Historic bridge #4 on the Seven Bridges segment.

Seven Bridges Road becomes Occidental Boulevard, which borders a wooded residential area to the west. The road emerges at Superior Street, where Amity Creek joins the Lester River. The easternmost terminus of the Parkway is difficult to find, and many people think that it ends here. However, the Parkway route continues east and crosses the Lester River. The route then turns immediately south on 61st Avenue East, crosses a rail line, and follows the river south for about a block to London Road. Several recently constructed overlooks provide views over the river's deep gorge, and informal trails provide access to fishing spots below.



The railroad bridge carries the Mission Creek segment over the Munger Trail.

The intersection with London Road has been identified as hazardous for motorists and pedestrians, given high traffic speeds and seasonally heavy traffic. The historic Lester River Fish Hatchery, constructed in 1885, is located on the west bank of the river. The Parkway route ends just east of the intersection at the Brighton Beach Overlook, a small wayside on Lake Superior. Here a marker describes the Parkway itself, and provides the traveler with some basic instructions on how to reach Seven Bridges Road.



The Munger Trail passes under the Mission Creek trail segment.

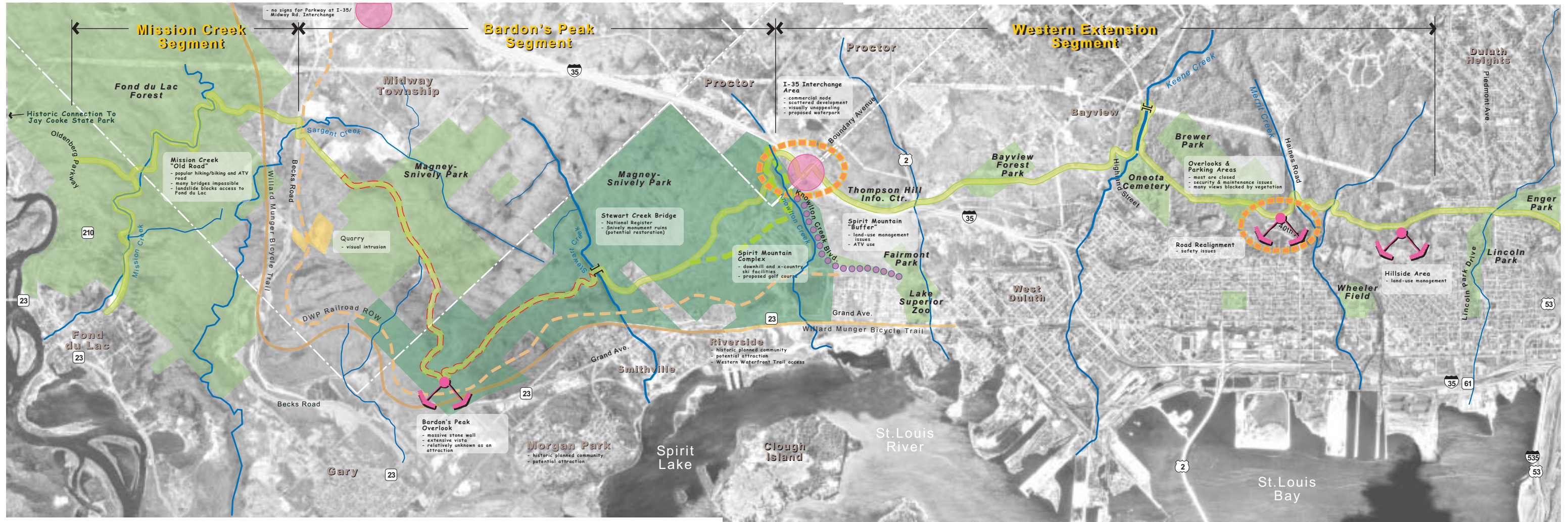
Just past this point, London Road merges with US 61, a limited-access highway to Two Harbors. However, the old Congdon North Shore Boulevard route continues along the lakeshore, initially as Brighton Beach Road, then as Congdon Boulevard. This road is historically considered to be the easternmost segment of the parkway system, but it is not part of the Skyline Parkway scenic byway; instead it is part of the North Shore Scenic Drive. Brighton Beach (a former tourist camp, now Kitchi Gammi Park) was clearly designed as part of the parkway system, with guard stones, picnic areas and a fieldstone fire shelter.

Mission Creek Trail Segment

This westernmost segment is treated separately, since it is not part of the state scenic byway and has been closed to automobile traffic for almost 40 years. It lies largely within the Fond du Lac Forest, owned by the City of Duluth but located in Midway Township. This segment was designed in the 1920s to connect the Parkway to Fond du Lac and to Jay Cooke Park, by way of Oldenberg Parkway (Highway 210). Fond du Lac residents state that the road was washed out by floods in the early 1960s. However, it continues to exist as a path used by hikers, mountain bikes, horses, snowmobiles and (illegally) by all-terrain vehicles.

Access to the trail segment from Beck's Road is a few hundred feet north of the main Parkway intersection. The trail then crosses the Willard Munger Trail, a former rail line, on a high concrete deck girder bridge, built in the late 1920s. Access from Fond du Lac is via a trailhead at the end of 131st Avenue W., close to Mission Creek. A hiking trail called the Mission Creek Trail also begins at this trailhead but takes a different route over the hills, rather than up the creek valley. The connection from Highway 210 is unmarked and largely obscured by vegetation, but is still accessible on foot.

The design and scenic character of this segment are quite similar to that of Seven Bridges Road, in a far more remote wilderness setting. It winds back and forth across Mission Creek on a series of stone-faced concrete arch bridges, about five of which remain in varying stages of deterioration. Others have been completely washed out. The creek can be forded at some of these locations. However, a mudslide in the



1 CONDITIONS & ISSUES



- Legend**
- Skyline Parkway
 - Skyline Parkway (closed seasonally)
 - Original Parkway Alignment

- Connecting Links to Parkway
- Major Overlook
- Problem Intersection

- Lack of Wayfinding
- Park/Open Space

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2 CONDITIONS & ISSUES



Legend

- Skyline Parkway
- Skyline Parkway (closed seasonally)
- Original Parkway Alignment
- Connecting Links to Parkway
- Major Overlook
- Problem Intersection
- Lack of Wayfinding
- Park/Open Space

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winter of 2000-01 diverted the creek, creating a deep pool that blocks access near the turn-off to Highway 210.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Historic Road and Scenic Byway

It is important to recognize that the Parkway is significant within two overlapping categories – as a state scenic byway and as a historic road (although it is not currently listed as a city, state or national historic resource or district). Not all scenic byways are historic roads, nor are all historic roads designated as scenic byways. Historic roads may be listed in the National Register of Historic Places while others are designated in local or state registries.

This distinction becomes important when discussing goals and strategies for protecting and enhancing a road’s intrinsic qualities. For example, the scenic byway goal of “improving the byway for all modes of travel” may need to be reconciled with the equally important scenic byway goal of “maintaining the historic integrity of the landscape.”

History

The Skyline Parkway system was developed over an extended period of time, beginning in the 1880s and reaching probably its fullest and most complete development in 1940. There were three primary periods in the parkway system’s development:

Early years: the vision of W. K. Rogers

In the 1880s Duluth was booming. The port was expanding, with iron ore, lumber and grain outbound, and building supplies such as hardware for the new towns on the plains inbound. In keeping with its vision of itself as a great city, (the “Zenith City of the

Unsalted Sea”) Duluth civic leaders developed a vision of a parkway system that would encircle the town. Led by W.K. Rogers, the Duluth Park Commission was established in the mid-1880s, with the authority to raise money for land acquisition by levying taxes on neighboring property holders.

The original conception of the parkway system was simple: a boulevard across the beach ridge of glacial Lake Duluth (the present route of the Skyline Parkway above the downtown area) would provide commanding views of the city and harbor and would connect boulevards along Chester and Miller Creeks. The fourth leg of the system, a planned lakeshore boulevard for the downtown, was never built. Land acquisition, surveying, and construction (by the City’s Public Works Department) got under way in the 1890s, and the vision soon began to grow to encompass additional areas. The Seven Bridges Road segment was added in 1903 (the bridges were constructed in 1910-11, replacing wooden structures), and a long extension of the system to the west, past Oneota Cemetery to the present Thompson Hill Rest Area, was finished in 1914.

The era of Snively and Paine

The 1920s and 1930s were key decades for the Duluth parkway system. Under the inspired leadership of Mayor Samuel Snively and Parks Department Superintendent F. Rodney Paine, the system grew to an extent rivaling the greatest parkway systems in the country. Moreover, an extensive improvement project that ended in the 1940s widened the roadway and straightened the most dangerous curves on the oldest parts of the system, upgrading the parkway system to a standard acceptable to modern auto traffic. By World War II, motorists, tourists and residents alike



Early photo of the Parkway, place and date unknown; note rail fencing. Source of photos this page: NEMHC.



Bardon's Peak segment under construction in the 1920s. Photo: F. Rodney Paine.



Horseback riding along the Parkway, date unknown. Note sparse vegetation.



Stewart Creek Bridge in snow, date unknown. Source of photos this page: Northeast Minnesota History Center, UMD.



The Parkway viewed from Bardon's Peak, date unknown.

could travel a system of parkways that stretched from Fond du Lac and Jay Cooke State Park on the west, all the way to the Lake County line and the beginning of the “North Shore” on the east.

Many of the parkway system’s most visible segments were added during this period. The road at Hawk Ridge was completed in 1935, bringing the sweeping views of the lake into the system and replacing the old section that ran behind the bluff along Amity Creek. On the western end, the Bardon’s Peak segment, stretching across the slopes of Spirit Mountain and featuring a spectacular overlook of the St. Louis River and Gary-New Duluth, was added in the mid-1920s. The Mission Creek segment, with its own series of rock-faced arch bridges, was added to the system in 1927. On the east, the present “North Shore Scenic Drive,” County Road 61, was connected in the mid-1920s.

Post-World War II

After World War II, Parks and Recreation Department funding and priorities changed. Responding to population increases and changes in lifestyle represented by the “baby boom,” department leaders channeled more resources into playgrounds and active sports such as hockey and Little League baseball than into maintaining or upgrading the extensive parkway system. The system remained heavily used, by recreational users of many types (cross country skiing, off-road bicycling in some areas, as well as people driving up for the views) as well as by commuters across town seeking a shortcut. In the 1960s, the Mission Creek segment was closed to automobile use, as were some of the smaller ravine and creekside segments.

Although the parkway system remains an important part of the city’s landscape, changes in priorities mean

that it is no longer the focus of the Parks Department’s attention. Today, the Parkway is informally recognized as a special place by the City’s departments of Parks, Public Works, and Planning, but there is no formal collaborative arrangement, no “Parkway Commission” or similar group to ensure that city departments work together to protect this “crown jewel” of the city.

Historical Significance

The Skyline Parkway is a designed historic landscape in the Picturesque tradition, featuring sweeping views of the lake, the city, the harbor/bay, and (from Bardon’s Peak) the estuary and valley of the St. Louis River. Other key elements of this landscape design include the Parkway’s combination of urban and “wild” ambiance, the curvilinear road alignment, which allows users a constantly varying series of views and perspectives, and, in the Parkway’s more natural segments, the relationship of the roadway to adjacent natural vegetation. More tangible components of the landscape include the use of natural materials in construction and a large number of particular structures such as bridges, walls, and culverts.

The Skyline Parkway was apparently always thought of and designed as a system, the whole of which is greater than the sum of its parts. That remains true today: the experience of the whole, or at least extended stretches of the Parkway, is more powerful and more important than a shorter stretch experienced by itself. Consequently, erosion of the landscape’s character through unsympathetic renovation, poor planning, or neglect does greater damage than just harming the immediate environment.

One of the most outstanding features of the system, which is also the most difficult to describe, is the variety of visual and recreational experiences that it provides. Nearly wild segments such as the upper Seven Bridges Road or Bardon's Peak stretches contrast vividly with the sweeping views of city and harbor that are available in the more centrally-located areas. These contrasts between sweeping views and dense forest enclosure, combined with the sheer diversity of the landscape below, expose users to the full range of urban and rural land uses that make up the city. The road's alignment emphasizes these diverse environments, while highlighting the outstanding scenic views (see below) that were such an important part of its original conception.

Today the Skyline Parkway is a distinctive and important landscape element for the entire city of Duluth. Five components of that landscape, in particular, define it:

- The roadway alignment;
- The use of native stone in both ornamental and structural construction;
- Views and overlooks, as they have been identified through constructed overlook points, turnouts, or other built expressions in the physical landscape;
- Natural vegetation in those segments of the parkway that retain a "rural" or "wild" ambiance;
- Key locations.

Alignment

The Parkway's alignment retains its overall integrity in most places, despite having been widened and

resurfaced at particular points, even during the period of significance (1890-1940). The only area of substantial realignment extends from Spirit Mountain and along the I-35 corridor to U.S. Highway 2.

Views

From the beginning, the parkway system has been focused on providing outstanding view points for users. In the 1880s and 1890s, large parties in hired horse-drawn carriages known as "tally hos" took people up onto the Parkway to admire the views. A favorite spot was the pair of small ponds known as Twin Lakes, near Enger Park. In the 1930s, the entire Hawk Ridge segment was created in order to provide better views than the original alignment did. Presently, paved turnouts at a number of points across the entire system provide viewpoints for people, much as they did 100 years ago. Some of these turnouts date to the Parkway's original period of construction (1890-1940), while others appear to be later adaptations. While the turnouts are perhaps the focal points for the important views along the Parkway, they are not the only locations where the view from the roadway is an essential component of the parkway experience. Conversely, some areas, such as the western end of the Bardon's Peak segment, appear never to have been designed with scenic views in mind.

Use of Stone

Stone has been an important design element of the Parkway throughout its development and across most of its geographical expanse. Walls and bridges of stone are among the most significant individual structures on the entire Parkway. Rows of large "guard stones" marking the bluff line at turnouts are among the Parkway's most distinguishing visual features.



Public sightseeing tours have always been popular.



Native stone is used along the entire parkway in bridge and wall construction.



The Twin Ponds bridge.



Stone footbridge along Seven Bridges Road.

The stone is both ornamental and structural, and reinforces the appearance of the stone on the bluffs through which much of the Parkway passes.

Natural Vegetation

Natural vegetation is an important element of the Parkway's design and character primarily at its eastern and western ends – the Mission Creek, Bardon's Peak and Seven Bridges Road segments. Here the dense forest enclosure provides dramatic contrasts with occasional open views, as the roadway's curving alignment crosses creeks or climbs to the Bardon's Peak overlook. The Western Extension segment also retains much of this heavily vegetated wilderness character, although many of the designed overlooks here are obscured by new growth.

Key Locations

In a landscape system as large as the Skyline Parkway, it is perhaps inevitable that some particular places, or "nodes," are better known, or are more visible. The most visible or prominent nodes, as revealed through the historical record, include:

Twin Ponds. The two water bodies known as Twin Ponds or Twin Lakes appear always to have attracted a great deal of visitor interest and use. Postcards show dozens of "tally hos" pulled up at this spot in the late 19th century, and later photographs document sightseers at this spot through at least the 1940s. Recent construction of a swimming beach, parking lot, and other amenities are a continuation of historic uses of this particular location.

Seven Bridges Road. For some people Seven Bridges Road "is" the Skyline Parkway. The steep climb to the ridge level from Superior Street, the pine parkland at the foot of the hill giving way to mixed deciduous

woodland, and the ever-changing views and perspectives of rock, water, and forest, all combine to create a definitive experience of the North Woods landscape in this region. The seven bridges that give this segment its name were designed by the famed Minneapolis firm of Morell and Nichols (also important in the design of Glensheen, Morgan Park and other Duluth area landscapes). Constructed in 1910-11, they replaced a series of wooden bridges carrying the early roadway over Amity Creek and the Lester River.

This segment was added to the system in the first decade of the 20th century, as a gift from Samuel Snively, acting as a private citizen well before his tenure as mayor. Snively personally approached many of the landowners and persuaded them to donate land for the roadway, and he had the bridges built as well.

Bardon's Peak. The Bardon's Peak segment, stretching generally west from the juncture of I-35 and Boundary Avenue to Beck's Road, was added to the system as part of the great expansion of the 1920s. It is noteworthy for several elements: the quarter-mile long overlook described above, the Stewart Creek Bridge, and the quality and extent of the City-owned forest land that borders much of this segment. The segment is also the location of two separate monuments to Mayor Samuel Snively: a small turnout with a fountain, now in ruins, at the east end of the Stewart Creek Bridge, and a shelter, no longer extant, on the rock outcrops above the Parkway at Bardon's Peak.

SCENIC RESOURCES

It is difficult to separate scenic resources from historic ones, since the intentional creation of viewpoints was such an important part of the Parkway's design. It is important, however, to document the road's scenic fea-

tures in more detail in order to identify major views (the viewshed) and determine which aspects of the natural and built environment within the corridor contribute to the visual experience of driving the road.

The viewshed can be considered as the larger scenic envelope of the Parkway – anything occurring within the viewshed has the potential to affect the scenic quality of the road. Of course, with a viewshed that extends in many locations across Lake Superior to the horizon, management strategies must necessarily focus on features within a narrower corridor, generally no more than one-quarter mile on either side of the road.

The study team drove the full length of the designated Parkway (not the Mission Creek or other trail segments) and identified various types of views – fully open, partially screened, and fully screened. This was done in late summer, when vegetative cover was most complete, with the understanding that many additional views open up from late fall through late spring. Major view corridors and overlooks were also identified and classified:

- “Formal” overlooks with a paved turnout, usually a stone guard rail and, in most cases, an interpretive plaque (these were installed by the Lions Club in the 1970s to interpret geologic features, area history and key views).
- “Informal” overlooks or turnouts distinguished by a paved pull-off or parking lane.
- Closed overlooks, mainly along the Western Extension, where the City Public Works Department has closed a number of overlooks in recent years to prevent vandalism and dumping. Guard stones were moved to the edge of the road, blocking the parking area, and vegetation has been allowed to obscure the views.
- View corridors not associated with an overlook, ranging in size from narrow power line rights-of-way to extensive road segments, for example, much of the Parkway through Enger Park.

Figure 2 and Table 1 present this information. The figures also indicate those residential neighborhoods where the road runs between houses, front yards, and



Interpretive plaques installed by the Lions Club in the 1970s are placed at various turnouts.



View from Bardon's Peak Overlook.



Power line rights-of-way can provide view corridors along the Parkway.

parked cars, and the commercial nodes found at a few intersections with arterial streets.

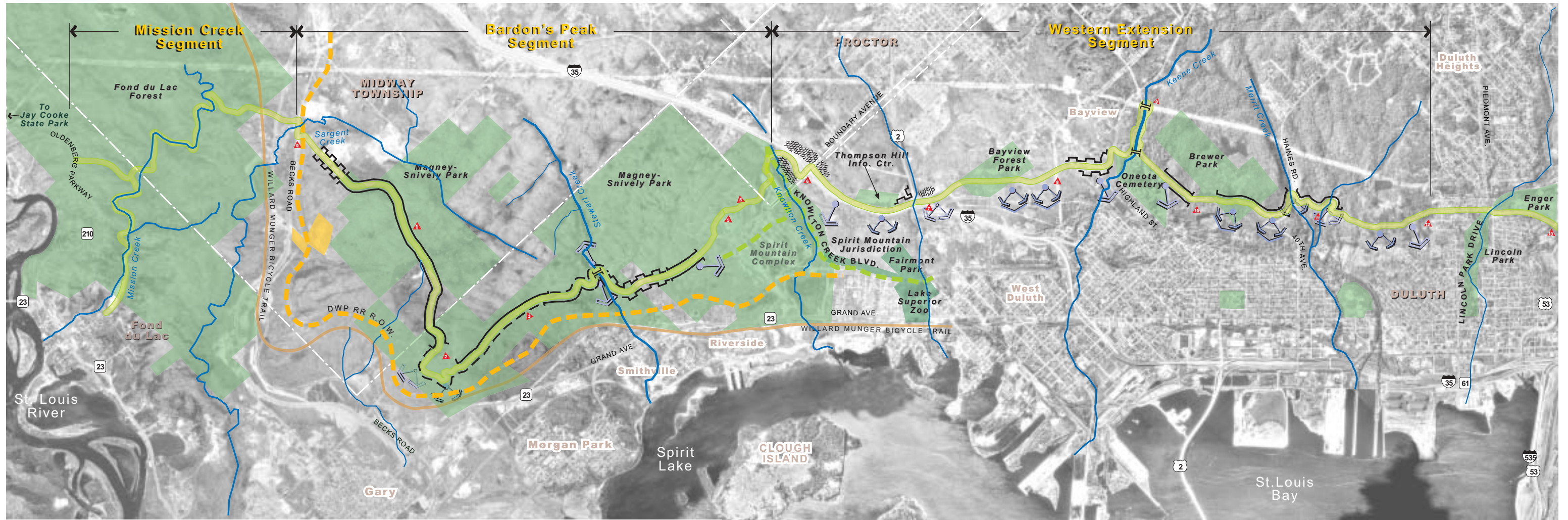
Another part of this analysis was to define six different “parkway types,” characterized primarily by surrounding land uses, vegetation, and roadway design. As shown on Figure 3, these include:

- **Recreational Parkway:** Where the Parkway passes through designated or developed recreational areas as the primary land use; examples include Enger Park and Chester Park.
- **Residential Parkway:** The Parkway functions as a neighborhood street, with housing on one or both sides, occasional views or open areas down-slope. Intersections with other local streets and driveways create hazards; pedestrian facilities are limited. Examples: much of the Rogers Boulevard segment.
- **City Streets:** As distinct from the previous category, these are streets that continue the route but were not designed as part of the system, primarily in the UMD Gap area. Features may include greater street width, alignment that diverges from the primary hillside location, no stonework or other features, higher traffic volumes and speeds.
- **Forest Parkway:** Areas where forest cover is dense and with few designated land uses, often within the City’s forest parks or conservation lands. The road section is often at its narrowest in these areas, and may be unpaved. Examples: Bardon’s Peak, Hawk Ridge.
- **Commercial Nodes:** Pockets of intense commercial or other nonresidential development, such as

the Boundary Avenue and Mesaba/Central Entrance areas.

- **Transitional Areas:** There are some sections of the route that have been extensively altered and are now difficult to categorize, such as the Spirit Mountain area or the section between Thompson Hill and Highland Avenue, or that provide short linkages between other segments, such as 61st Avenue East and Superior Street.

Each type tends to have similar issues and similar management recommendations, as discussed in the following chapter.



1

Figure 1
SCENIC ATTRIBUTES



Legend

- Formal Overlooks
- Informal Overlooks
- Significant Views
- Blocked Overlooks
- Open Views
- Enclosed Views
- Lightly screened/ Intermittent Views
- Residential Edges
- Commercial Nodes
- Skyline Parkway
- Mile Marker

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2 SCENIC ATTRIBUTES



Legend

- Formal Overlooks
- Informal Overlooks
- Significant Views
- Blocked Overlooks

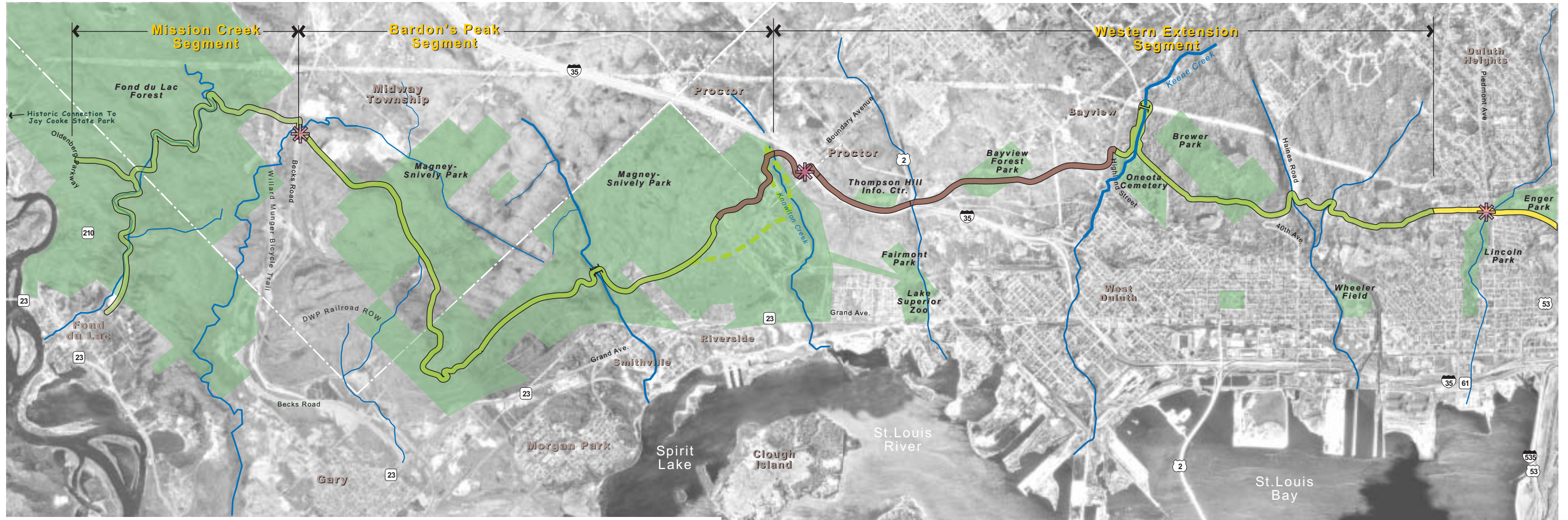
- Open Views
- Enclosed Views
- Lightly screened/ Intermittent Views
- Residential Edges

- Commercial Nodes
- Skyline Parkway
- Mile Marker

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1 PARKWAY TYPES



Legend

- Forest Parkway
- Residential Parkway
- Transitional Parkway
- Recreational Parkway
- City Street
- Commercial Node

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2 PARKWAY TYPES



Legend

- Forest Parkway
- Residential Parkway
- Transitional Parkway
- Recreational Parkway
- City Street
- Commercial Node

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Table 1: Inventory of Overlooks, Turnouts & Views - page 1

Mile	Description
2	Informal turnout, overlook toward Gary/New Duluth, Fond du Lac, rock outcrops Bardon's Peak overlook – massive stone retaining wall, no marker or formal parking area
3.7	Stewart Creek bridge – views up and down slope, no pull-out (needed here to allow views of bridge, Snively Monument)
4.0	View down former alignment, now dead-end road across ski slope
6.0	Informal gravel turnout
6.7	Formal overlook, low wall (not original stonework - deteriorating)
7	Gravel lot, lightly screened view of railroad bridge and beyond
7.5	Small paved lot, view blocked by trees
7.8	Blocked view, paved area
8.5	Residential area, view down power line right-of-way
9	New – small gravel parking lot, southwest side of new Keene Creek bridge; views of creek, surrounding woods
9.7	Past Oneota Cemetery – view downslope, minimal pull-off space
10.2	Parking area blocked by rocks; views blocked by trees
10.4	Parking area blocked by rocks; views blocked by trees
10.8	Small turnout just east of hairpin curve – excellent view of curved wall, rock outcrops
11.5	Formal overlook, wall and marker – “Oneota”
11.9	Views downslope, edge of residential district
13	View uphill across Enger Golf Course

Table 1: Inventory of Overlooks, Turnouts & Views - page 2

Mile	Description
13.7	Potential overlook – paved shoulder wide enough to pull off; panoramic view of harbor
13.9	Formal overlook, edge of Enger Park; marker – “Rice’s Point”
14.2	Twin Ponds – can turn off into parking lot
14.4	Formal overlook, Observation Road; marker – “Duluth-Superior Harbor”
14.8	Long stretch of open views; residential street with curb – a popular place to stop, but no formal parking area
15.2	Long stretch of open views; residential street with curb – popular stopping place, no formal parking area
15.7	Coppertop Church parking lot – one of the most panoramic views over downtown, bayfront and Park Point
15.8	Curbed residential street, no parking; similar views
16.2	Views toward lakefront; residential district west of Chester Park
16.6	Views over residential district, new lots, below Chester Park
17	Views down Chester Creek valley, curving stone walls (can park in Chester Bowl lot; parkway very constricted here)
17.9	Trail leads uphill to overlook platform at Rock Hill (Bagley Nature Center); parking often difficult around UMD campus
21.1	Formal overlook near western edge of Hawk Ridge and seasonally closed segment; marker – “Lake Superior”
21.9	Seasonal overlook – primary location for Hawk Ridge birdwatching and interpretation; seasonal signs, informal roadside parking
23 - 24.9	Seven Bridges Road – no formal overlooks; numerous small pull-offs at ends of bridges, trailheads, Lakeview Sports Arena; views of creek valley, rapids and rock formations
25.1	Overlook platforms over Lester River, parking spaces at 61st Ave. E. near London Road
25.2	Terminus and “wayside” at Lake Superior shoreline; marker: “Skyline Parkway” gives directions to Seven Bridges Rd.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Parkway runs through a variety of ecosystems and contains an array of natural resources, primarily consisting of:

- streams that cross the route, many of which are high-quality trout streams;
- forests of various types bordering or surrounding the road;
- geologic resources – rock outcrops and other geologic features that can reveal the process by which this distinctive landscape was created;
- wildlife habitat, most notably the unique migratory bird habitat at Hawk Ridge.

General Landscape Classification

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Trail and Waterways Unit has developed descriptions of Minnesota's recreational landscape regions in order to assist scenic byway applicants and managers focus on the regional, natural and cultural resources along their routes. These descriptions focus on features that travelers currently see on the landscape, rather than what was there previously. The Arrowhead region includes six recreational landscapes:

- Northern Pines and Lakes
- Central Peatlands
- North Shore Highlands
- Iron Range
- Agassiz Lowlands
- Border Lakes

The Parkway marks the southern and western limit of the North Shore Highlands landscape, which extends northeast up the Lake Superior shoreline. As described by the DNR, "This rugged shoreline is known for its exposed cliffs and steep stream valleys featuring cascades and waterfalls; the original conifer forests have been replaced by secondary growth of aspen and birch, and clear shallow lakes dot the hilly uplands." This is of course a generalized description; landscapes along the Parkway have their own unique mix of urban and wilderness characteristics.

Ecological Classification

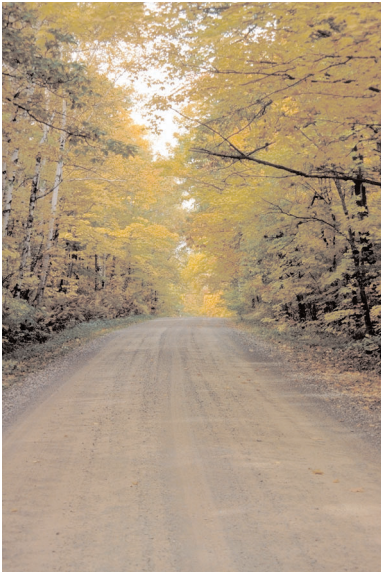
The DNR has developed an Ecological Classification System (ECS) for Minnesota that integrates climatic, geologic, hydrologic and topographic, soil and vegetation data with the goal of improved resource management. Three of North America's ecological regions representing the major climate zones converge in Minnesota: prairie parkland, deciduous forest and coniferous forest. The coniferous forest, now mixed with hardwoods, is known as the Laurentian mixed forest province. According to a DNR website description:

Glaciers sculpted this landscape, leaving relatively thin deposits of till blanketing the bedrock in the northeast and deeper deposits in the southern and western portions. Boulders, outcrops, hills, numerous lakes, bogs, and vast tracts of forest land comprise Minnesota's scenic and much beloved "up north."

Duluth falls within the North Shore subsection of the Laurentian mixed forest province, an area that roughly parallels the North Shore Highlands described above. In ecological terms, it includes:



Rock outcrops are found in many locations; this one near Chester Park.



Forest types found along the Parkway include old growth northern hardwoods within the Bardon's Peak forest.



Aspen-birch forest types are dominant along the Parkway.

- gently rolling to steep topography, with many bedrock outcrops and shallow soils;
- a climate moderated by the influence of Lake Superior;
- bedrock geology consisting mainly of Upper Precambrian basalt, rhyolite, gabbro, diabase, anorthosite, granite, sandstone and shale;
- numerous short streams, 10-15 miles long, leading directly from the highland to the shores of Lake Superior; many have waterfalls near the shoreline;
- heavy forest cover – following logging, the extensive white pine-red pine forests have been largely replaced by forests of aspen and birch.

Vegetative Cover

Vegetative cover throughout the City of Duluth has been mapped and analyzed as part of a Natural Resources Inventory currently being completed by the Planning Department and the Natural Resources Research Institute. The inventory will include maps and narrative covering the City's forests, wetlands, streams, floodplains, geology, soils, and other relevant natural and scenic features. Forest cover has been analyzed within the City's parks and forest parks (see discussion below under Land Use), including most of the open space lands bordering the Parkway. The dominant vegetation types in these areas are:

- Aspen-Birch (also including Northern Hardwood and Oak)
- Northern Hardwoods (Yellow Birch, Sugar Maple and Basswood, also including Aspen, Birch, and Oak and Red Oak)

- Upland Conifers (including Red, Jack, Scotch and White Pine, White Spruce and Balsam Fir)

The aspen/birch types are the most common in Duluth's hillside areas. These "early successional" growth species tend to dominate where older growth forests have matured or been removed by logging or development. Interestingly, early photographs of the Parkway show largely unvegetated slopes where these species now grow. There are also substantial stands of old growth forests in most of the forest parks near the Parkway. Specifically, 150-year old stands of white pine are found just inland of the Parkway at Hawk Ridge and along Amity Creek (Seven Bridges Road), and stands of old growth northern hardwoods occur in the Bardon's Peak Forest Park (including both Magney-Snively Park and Spirit Mountain).

This area, known as the Magney Hardwoods, was identified in 1964, 1979, and again in 1986 as a potential Scientific and Natural Area (a state designation). The 1986 report states that "the Magney-Snively stands have long been known to represent one of the best remaining old growth northern hardwood forests in Minnesota." A subsequent evaluation in 1999 confirms the presence of four patches of old-growth Northern Maple-Basswood Forest, totaling about 520 acres, set within about 3,000 acres of fairly undisturbed mature forest, "with a diverse mosaic of wetlands, uplands, and rock outcrop communities." The area includes several rare plant populations and several tributaries of a designated trout stream (Stewart Creek).

Geology

The North Shore Highlands have been heavily sculpted by glaciers, but the underlying bedrock is among the oldest in North America, mainly of Precambrian

age (the interval of geologic time which ended 600 million years ago). These rocks carry the record of volcanic activity, deposition of sediments, erosion, and other events over a time span of almost three billion years. The other era that shaped this landscape is far more recent – the Pleistocene, or Ice Age, when glaciers scoured the region repeatedly, their meltwaters creating a far larger Lake Superior, known as Glacial Lake Duluth. The Parkway generally follows the upper beach of this glacial lake, which was formed at the southern edge of the glacier covering what is now the Lake Superior basin.

Gabbro and basalt are the dominant Precambrian rocks in the Duluth area. The Duluth Complex is a much-studied mass of igneous rock – an intrusion of molten rock through a large rift in the earth’s crust - which underlies much of the North Shore highland. As described in *Minnesota Underfoot: A Field Guide to Minnesota’s Geology*, most of the Duluth Complex consists of weathered, dark, gray-green gabbro and troctolite, unusual rocks that lack the common mineral quartz but contain many other minerals, including traces of copper, iron, nickel and titanium. The field guide states: “Today the Duluth Complex is believed to be wedge shaped, confined to a complicated set of related fractures along a large rift, a continent-sized fault system.”

The rocks of the Duluth Complex crop out in many locations along Skyline Parkway, but are most visible and accessible at the Bardon’s Peak overlook, where the field guide recommends “miles of open rock hiking.”

Traces of glacial activity are equally visible along the Parkway. As the field guide states: “Shorelines hundreds of feet above the present lake are seen in the

immediate vicinity of Enger Tower and elsewhere. The Skyline Parkway follows the highest beach, approximately 560 feet above the present lake. Gravel ridges, gravel pits, and wave-cut bluffs mark its presence.” Enger Tower and the overlooks in and around Enger Park also offer excellent views of the Duluth-Superior Harbor, a drowned estuary of the St. Louis River. “After glacial retreat, the land rose slowly, more to the north, where the ice load had been greatest, than to the south. The Lake Superior basin thus tilted southward, and its waters flooded the lower portions of the St. Louis and other south shore rivers. The tilting and flooding continue today.” The two major sandspits that mark the harbor mouth, Minnesota and Wisconsin Points, were created by river-borne sand dispersed by wave action and shore current. The remains of earlier points also jut into the harbor further upstream.

Many of these geologic features are described in a series of interpretive markers erected in the 1970s by the Lions’ Club at a number of Parkway overlooks. Some of the text on the markers is in need of updating, however, and the many resources of Bardon’s Peak are unmarked.

Streams

Numerous streams cross the Parkway route, draining to either Lake Superior or to the St. Louis River, many on very steep gradients. A January 2000 inventory and assessment of watersheds within Duluth by Camp Dresser & McKee indicates that there are 43 separate drainage areas in the City, of which 17 drain at least one square mile. The following 14 streams, as well as a number of smaller watercourses, cross the Parkway. •

- Mission Creek*
- Sargent Creek*



Skyline Parkway generally follows the upper beach of Glacial Lake Duluth.



The streams along the parkway provide numerous recreational opportunities.

- Stewart Creek*
- Knowlton Creek
- Kingsbury Creek*
- Keene Creek*
- Merritt Creek
- Miller Creek*
- Clarkhouse Creek
- Brewery Creek
- Chester Creek*
- Tischer Creek*
- Amity Creek* (joins Lester River)
- Lester River*

* designated trout stream (see www.duluthstreams.org)

Many streams have cascades and waterfalls in their lower reaches as they approach the lake. Common watershed management issues citywide include erosion and washout of culverts and roads during intense rain. Low water flow in summer is a problem in some locations. Dumping of construction debris and other trash in stream valleys is also a problem. As with many of the Parkway's other resources, there are no signs identifying any of the streams along the route.

Migratory Bird Habitat

While the streams and forests along the Parkway provide a diversity of wildlife habitats, the most well-known and documented is the migratory bird area at Hawk Ridge. As described in a Nature Reserve brochure:

Migrating raptors, originating from summer breeding areas as far north as the Arctic and with wintering destinations as far south as points in South America, concentrate in impressive numbers at the western tip of Lake Superior. Reluctant to cross a large body of water, the raptors funnel down the

North Shore, riding the updrafts formed above the ridges parallel to the lake shore.... Beginning in mid-August with American Kestrels, Sharp-shinned and Broad-winged hawks, migration continues into December with the last of the Red-tailed and Rough-legged hawks. Peak migration occurs from the second week in September through the third week of October. The most favorable winds for viewing migration blow from a west or northwest direction. Hundreds to thousands of raptors may migrate on these winds, particularly following the passage of a cold front.

During the migration season the Nature Reserve maintains a banding research station and a naturalist program, a portable information display and trail and directional signage. It is one of the premier seasonal visitor attractions along the Parkway.

Bird congregation areas for the spring migration are found along the western reaches of the Parkway, in the Bardon's Peak – Spirit Mountain area. No interpretive facilities for the visitor currently exist in these areas.

RECREATIONAL AND OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

For a city of its size, Duluth is exceptionally rich in public open space: some 11,000 acres that includes City parkland, tax-forfeit County conservation lands, and recreational complexes such as Spirit Mountain (see discussion below under Land Use). The large City-owned Magney-Snively Park actually lies partially outside city boundaries in Midway Township. This open space has functioned as a de facto greenbelt that has defined and limited the City's growth, while providing diverse recreational opportunities within a short distance of every City neighborhood. The Skyline Parkway traverses and links the majority of these park and forest lands, providing access to many recreational



Activity at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve during fall migration includes a naturalist program.

Table 2: Skyline Parkway Parks and Public Lands, page 1

Parks/Public Lands	Acres	Address/Boundaries	Facilities	Distance from Skyline (mi)	Management	Segment/ Location
Chambers Grove	13	Hwy 23 & 137th Ave	pavillion, picnic, grills, fishing, boating, playground, restrooms, soccer field, hiking, parking, accessible	0.25	City Parks	Mission Creek
Fond du Lac Park	1	131st Ave W (N of 9th St)	playground, soccer field, basket-ball, tennis, parking, hiking, accessible	0	City Parks	Mission Creek
Fond du Lac Forest		Forest Park / Conservation Lands		0	City	Mission Creek
Magney/Snively Park	2776	Skyline, W and S of Spirit Mtn.	XC skiing, hiking, biking, parking, includes Bardons Peak overlook	0	City Parks	Bardons Peak
Fairmont Park/Lake Superior Zoo	69	72nd Ave. W & Grand	zoo, pavillion, picnic, playground, restrooms, hiking, parking, accessible	0.5	City Parks	Western Ext.
Bay View Forest	966	75th Ave. W & Skyline	hiking, biking, XC skiing	0	City Parks	Western Ext.
Oneota Forest Park	n/a		XC skiing, open space	0	City Parks	Western Ext.
Brewer Park	41	Skyline & 55th-61st Ave W	undeveloped--unofficial hiking trails; snowmobile route passes through	0	City Parks	Western Ext.
Lyman Park	2.7	Skyline & 29th Ave. W	undeveloped--functions as extension of Parkway	0	City Parks	Western Ext.
Lincoln Park	37	4th St. & 25th Ave. W	pavillion, picnic, grills, playground, restrooms, soccer, football, & softball fields, basketball court, hiking, biking, parking, accessible	0.25	City Parks	Rogers Blvd
Enger Park	130	Skyline & 16th Ave. W	Enger Tower, pavillion, picnic, grills, restrooms, trails, ornamental gardens, parking, accessible	0.25	City Parks	Rogers Blvd
Enger Golf Course	200	1801 W. Skyline	golf course, restrooms, parking, accessible	0	City Parks	Rogers Blvd
Enger - Twin Ponds	10	Skyline & 14th Ave W	picnic, swimming, fishing, parking	0	City Parks	Rogers Blvd
Central Park	32	1st-4th St & 14th-17th Ave W	undeveloped (downslope extension of Enger Park)	0.25	City Parks	Rogers Blvd
Observation Rec Center	6	3rd St. & 9th Ave W	picnic, playground, restroom, soccer & softball fields, basketball court	0.5	City Parks	Rogers Blvd
Hilltop Park		6th-7th Ave W & 8th St.	undeveloped--no access	0.25	City Parks	Rogers Blvd
Grant Rec Center / Central Field	3	11th St. & 9th Ave E	picnic, playground, restrooms, soccer, baseball, & softball fields, basketball courts, accessible	0.5	City Parks	Rogers Blvd
Lakeview Park	5	Skyline & 12th Ave E	undeveloped--no access	0	City Parks	Rogers Blvd

Table 2: Skyline Parkway Parks and Public Lands, page 2

Parks/Public Lands	Acres	Address/Boundaries	Facilities	Distance from Skyline (mi)	Management	Segment/ Location
Chester Park / Chester Bowl Rec. Area	109	14th Ave E to Chester Park Drive	picnic, playground, restrooms, softball field, tennis & basketball courts, gardens, ice rinks, hiking, biking, XC skiing, ski jump, parking, skate ramps, accessible	0	City Parks	Rogers Blvd
Bagley Nature Area	n/a	N of Junction Ave. & St. Marie St.	XC ski trails	0	University	UMD Gap
Congdon Park	34	33rd Ave E & Hawthorne	hiking trails (Tischer Creek valley)	0.25	City Parks	UMD Gap
Hartley Park	975	Hartley Road	hiking, biking, snowmobiling, XC skiing, nature center, parking	0.5	City Parks	UMD Gap
Hawk Ridge	70	Skyline & 52nd Ave E	hiking, biking, parking, Nationally recognized as a migratory raptor "hot spot," accessible	0	Hawk Ridge Mgmt Committee	Hawk Ridge
Lester/Amity Park	307	Superior St. & Lester River Rd	pavillion, picnic, grill, playground, restrooms, soccer field, hiking, biking, snowmobiling, XC skiing, ice rinks, gardens, parking, accessible	0	City Parks	Hawk Ridge
Lester Golf Course	153	1860 Lester River Rd	golf course, restrooms, parking	0.25	City Parks	Hawk Ridge
Kitchi Gammi Park	153	Congdon Blvd & 63rd Ave E	pavillion, picnic, grill, playground, restrooms, hiking, parking, accessible	0	City Parks	Hawk Ridge
University Park	3	60th Ave E & Superior St	turf area	0.25	City Parks	Hawk Ridge

Table 4: Skyline Parkway Trail Inventory

Trails	Length/miles	Trailhead Location	Management	Type
Mission Creek (Mission Creek segment)	3.25	end of 131st Ave W., N. of Hwy 23, Fond du Lac	City Park	Hiking - steep loop trail follows a portion of former Parkway route, also climbs ridges above creek.
Magney/Snively* (Bardons Peak)	8.7	Skyline W. of Spirit Mtn. near Stewart Creek bridge	City Park	Hiking, skiing through northern hardwood forest; rugged.
Spirit Mountain* (Bardons Peak)	12	Skyline at Spirit Mountain	Spirit Mountain Authority - public	Skiing, (hiking, biking--wet in summer), ski chalet, rentals
Willard Munger (Bardon's Peak, Mission Creek segments)	63 (Hinckley-Duluth segment)	In Duluth - Becks Road, Grand Ave., etc.	DNR	Route runs below Bardon's Peak, crosses under Mission Creek segment of Parkway near Becks Road. Listed for hiking, biking, horseback riding, in-line skating, mountain biking, snowmobiling, and is handicap accessible.
Kingsbury Creek (Bardon's Peak segment)	1.3	Fremont Street - Fairmont Park (zoo parking area)	City Park	Hiking - access to Knowlton Creek segment of Parkway, now an informal trail
Piedmont Ski Trail* (Western Ext.)	2.5	Hutchinson Ave. W. of Piedmont Ave.	City Park	Skiing - loop on wooded slopes above Parkway E. of Haines Rd.
Lincoln Park (Rogers Blvd. segment)	1.5	4th St & 25th Ave W	City Park	Hiking
Chester Park* (Rogers Blvd. segment)	2.5	Parkway at 19th Ave./Kent Road St	City Park	Hiking - Steep trail descends from just below Chester Bowl to E. 4th St. along the ravine of Chester Creek.Skiing--skate style loop
Congdon Park (UMD Gap segment)	1.5	32nd Ave. E. and Superior St., or Vermillion Rd.	City Park	Hiking - Both trail and Congdon Park Drive (now closed to traffic) follow Tischer Creek through a narrow wooded ravine; park drive was part of original parkway system.
Hawk Ridge Trails (Hawk Ridge segment)	2.25 (Includes only interior trails in Mgmt. Area)	Hawk Ridge main overlook	Hawk Ridge Mgmt Committee	Five trails varying in length and difficulty for hiking and nature study. No mountain bikes or horses.
Lester/Amity Parks* (Hawk Ridge/Seven Bridges segments)	13.1-total	Superior St. & Lester River Rd or Seven Bridges Road for Lester-Amity ski trail	City Park	Hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, horseback riding. Skiing includes 1.9 miles lit dusk-11pm; 9.3 miles forested; and 1.3 miles on Lester Golf Course

opportunities. At the same time, the Parkway itself is used recreationally for walking, running, biking, and, in some locations, horseback riding and seasonal snowmobile riding. Touring the route by car with stops at parks or overlooks is, of course, a popular recreational activity. Table 2 lists the parks located adjacent to the Parkway and their facilities, while Table 3 lists recreational activities at these parks. Many other parks are located a short distance away.

Many trails cross the Parkway or originate at trail-heads along its length, including hiking trails, cross-country ski trails and snowmobile trails, as shown in Table 4.

The **Superior Hiking Trail** through Duluth is in the planning and design stages. This long-distance trail now comprises over 200 miles and is largely complete from Two Harbors to the Canadian border. The Superior Hiking Trail Association plans to extend through the city to Jay Cooke State Park and the Wisconsin border, where it will connect with the North Country National Scenic Trail. Like Skyline Parkway, the Superior Hiking Trail through Duluth will connect many city parks, other public lands and existing trails. Although the route has yet to be finalized, it appears that the trail will parallel the Parkway for much of its length and may follow short segments of the Parkway or use its bridges in some locations. The trail may therefore provide valuable opportunities for hikers to follow the Parkway route or take side trips free of conflict with vehicular traffic.

LAND USE AND MANAGEMENT

To the Parkway traveler it appears that at least half of the lands along the corridor are undeveloped, whether they consist of City parks or natural forested areas.

Developed areas along the corridor are largely in residential use, with a few widely scattered commercial nodes at major road intersections.

Open Space

The classification and ownership of “open space” along the Parkway is more complicated than it may appear to the casual observer. Open space lands fall into several categories:

- Developed city parks, such as Enger or Chester Park, with a wide variety of recreational facilities and natural landscapes.
- Undeveloped city parks, such as Lakeview or Brewer Park; some have informal hiking trails.
- Undeveloped forest parks such as Fond du Lac Forest or Bayview Forest Park. These are primarily tax forfeit lands, owned by the State but held by St. Louis County and managed by the City as “conservation” lands.
- Publicly-owned lands managed by quasi-public or nonprofit entities, such as Spirit Mountain Recreation Area and Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve.
- Privately-held but undeveloped lands.

While these areas may appear equally wild or natural, the level of protection differs for each type. In planning for the scenic byway corridor, it is important to delineate each type of open space and the degree to which each is protected or potentially developable.

In most areas along the Parkway the City of Duluth owns the right-of-way, which is generally 100 feet



Enger Park Golf Course is an example of a special-purpose facility in a developed City park.

wide. This is the case both within Duluth and within Proctor and Midway Township.

Dedicated City parks, wholly owned by the City of Duluth, adjacent to the Parkway include the following:

- Magney-Snively Park (partially within Midway Township)
- Brewer Park (undeveloped)
- Lincoln Park
- Enger Park
- Chester Park
- Congdon Park
- Lester Park

There are also a number of smaller parks that are undeveloped for recreational use, lack vehicular or pedestrian access, and essentially function as open space. These include Lyman Park (29th Ave. W.) Central Park (below Enger Park) and Lakeview Park (12th Ave. E.).

Forest Parks or Memorial Forests consist primarily of tax-forfeit lands managed by St. Louis County, but also include City-owned land and private inholdings. These areas, not all of which are fully mapped, include:

- Fond du Lac Forest
- Bardons Peak Forest
- Bayview Forest Park (covering much of the hillside between Highway 2 and Keene Creek)
- Oneota Forest Park
- Other lands adjacent to Lester Park

The St. Louis County Land Department manages about 900,000 acres of tax-forfeit land within the

county (held in trust by the state but under county management under Minnesota Statute 282). Most of this land is forested and is held “in conservation” in one of 10 memorial forests. The County sells other land parcels, primarily small parcels located within city and town boundaries, through public land sales three times a year.

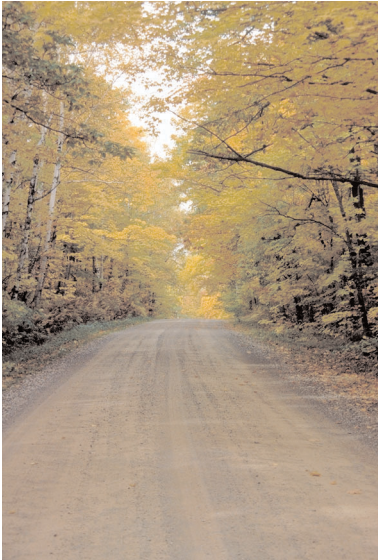
Other publicly-owned lands have specific management arrangements:

Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve: Hawk Ridge was transferred from County to City ownership in the early 1970s, with a trust agreement for management by the Duluth Audubon Society. The Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, now in its 30th year, continues to be managed by the Audubon Society’s Hawk Ridge Management Committee. The reserve includes a 115-acre core area and a 250-acre buffer.

Spirit Mountain Recreation Area: Spirit Mountain is a downhill ski and snowboard area developed by the City beginning in 1974. It is managed by the Spirit Mountain Recreation Authority, an authority created by special state statutes. Containing 1,123 acres (1,038 acres in Duluth and 85 acres in Proctor), the recreation area includes ski slopes, parking areas, lodging facilities and campground, as well as wooded areas used mainly for cross-country skiing and mountain biking.

Private Landholdings and Development Potential

Some of the undeveloped lands along the Parkway are in private ownership and are potentially developable, primarily for residential use. It is difficult to assess the full extent of these parcels, since publicly-held landholdings within the City have yet to be fully



The Parkway through Bardons Peak Forest, a largely City-owned forest park.

mapped. However, “for-sale” signs indicate potentially developable parcels within the Western Extension segment and between Kenwood Avenue and Chester Park.

Development potential is determined in part by zoning classification, as well as by the presence of municipal utilities such as water and sewer service. Most of the lands bordering the Parkway west of Piedmont Avenue are within the Suburban zoning district, the City's lowest-density residential district, with a minimum lot size of five acres. This classification likely reflects the lack of sanitary sewers in this area. (A few sewer lines cross the Parkway at 97th Ave. W., Highway 2 and Vinland Street.)

The residential areas around Piedmont Avenue and east of Enger Park are sewered and are zoned for residential use, reflecting existing lot sizes. The R-1A, R-1B and R-1C districts permit single- and two-family dwellings on lots ranging from 4,500 square feet to 15,000 square feet. The R-2 and R-3 districts, found mainly in downslope areas and throughout the UMD Gap, also permit townhouses and apartments (R-3).

Commercial nodes along the Parkway are zoned either C-1, a fairly broad commercial category, or C-2, a district that adds highway-oriented uses such as lodging and auto sales. Both districts require a 2-acre minimum lot size if unsewered, but no minimum if sewered. Commercially zoned areas along the Parkway are found west of Highway 2, at Piedmont Avenue, Mesaba Avenue, Woodland Avenue and St. Marie Street, and E. Superior Street.

The Boundary Avenue commercial node is located largely within the City of Proctor and is zoned C-2 Commercial, a highway-oriented district. This zoning

extends the length of I-35 and south to the City boundary, including some of the parking areas for Spirit Mountain (owned by the City of Duluth).

Commercial Sign Controls

The Parkway within the City of Duluth is a designated scenic area with regard to signs: no off-premises signs of more than 60 square feet in size can be posted within 450 feet of the edge of the Parkway's right-of-way. This provision (which applies to many of the City's parks, parkways and shorelines) essentially prevents billboards. Typical on-premises signs (free-standing or on buildings) are permitted within commercial districts along the Parkway. There are relatively few such commercial districts: the Mount Royal area at Woodland Avenue and St. Marie Street, the Mesaba/Central Entrance area, and the Boundary Avenue area, divided between Duluth and Proctor, where the Parkway functions as the frontage road for I-35.

Proctor's sign controls allow freestanding, wall and roof signs (including signs with changeable messages), equal in area to 2 square feet per foot of street frontage, or up to 100 square feet per sign. Outdoor advertising signs are permitted along the north side of I-35, with a maximum size of 700 square feet and a maximum height of 50 feet and with a minimum separation of 1,000 feet between signs.

Current Planning Efforts

The City of Duluth is currently engaged in a multi-year comprehensive planning effort. The City's last full-scale comprehensive plan dates from 1960, but many more recent plans for neighborhoods and specific districts have guided development since that time. As part of the current planning initiative the City was divided into ten Neighborhood Planning Districts,



The Parkway near Boundary Avenue functions as a frontage road for I-35 with highway-oriented commercial services and signage.



Typical residential street segment with sidewalk on both sides and one parking lane.

most of which include more than one established neighborhood. Each district has completed an inventory and goal-setting process, culminating in conceptual district plans. Many of the recommendations in these plans relate to the Parkway and surrounding lands, with an emphasis on protecting existing open space and improving pedestrian connections.

The City of Proctor recently adopted an updated Comprehensive Plan (December 2002). The plan focuses economic development efforts on the City's downtown district along U.S. Trunk Highway 2 and on the Boundary Avenue/I-35 interchange area. Businesses in the area have expanded, and a water park is proposed for development just north of the interchange. The potential for increased highway-oriented development is an issue to be considered in terms of both the visual image of this area and the need for improved pedestrian/bicycle access. The interchange area is often the entry point for the Parkway (identified on I-35 exit signs), but offers little in terms of visitor orientation until one reaches the Thompson Hill Visitor Center.

Proctor's Comprehensive Plan does not refer to Skyline Parkway or to the issues of wayfinding, aesthetics or pedestrian/bicycle access. The City does, however, plan to initiate a corridor study of Boundary Avenue, working in cooperation with the City of Duluth, which may provide an opportunity to address these issues.

ROADWAY CLASSIFICATIONS & CONDITIONS

Roads can be classified according to their jurisdiction (what level of local, state or federal government owns the road) and their functional classification (the role each road plays within the transportation network).

Skyline Parkway, as a route made up of numerous separate road segments, falls under many jurisdictions and functional classifications.

Road jurisdiction. Although the right-of-way of the Parkway "proper" (those segments identified and signed as Skyline Parkway) is owned by the City of Duluth, road jurisdiction over these and other segments varies. Most of the corridor is classified as Municipal State Aid (MSA) route – a local street classification that is eligible for state transportation funds – although some sections are non-MSA local streets. Other limited segments of the Parkway are County State Aid Highways, generally in locations where these County-owned roads intersect with the Parkway. Jurisdictional classifications are shown in Table 5.

Functional classification is a system that classifies roads according to their function, from freeways to local streets. "Function" is measured in terms of traffic flow (freeways maximize traffic flow) and access to adjacent property (local streets maximize access). Table 6 shows functional classifications of Parkway segments. Much of the Parkway route consists of local streets, but significant segments are also classified as collector and arterial streets: not only major thoroughfares such as Woodland Avenue, but also some of the more residential sections in the Rogers Boulevard segment.

Traffic volumes on the Parkway range from 350 average vehicles per day (termed "AADT," Average Annual Daily Trips) in the most rural areas to very heavy volumes on the major thoroughfares (15,800 AADT on Mesaba and 14,000 on Woodland). However, traffic volumes on most of the route are below 5,000. Traffic forecasts for 2025 show that only



Modernized parkway segment near Highway 2

Table 5: Road Jurisdiction

Local MSA Street	Local Non-MSA Street	County State-Aid Highway	State Trunk Highway
US Hwy 2 to Woodland Ave.	Becks Rd. to I-35 frontage road		Mesaba from 9th St. to Central Entrance (1 block)
Snively Rd. to Maxwell Rd. (Glenwood St. and Hawk Ridge segment)	Boundary Ave. to US Hwy 2	Haines Rd. (1 block)	
	7th Street to Mesaba Ave.	Mesaba Ave. (1 block)	
	Seven Bridges Road (Maxwell Rd. to Superior St.)	Woodland Ave. to Glenwood St.	

Table 6: Road Classification

Local Street	Major Collector	Minor Arterial	Principal Arterial
Beck's Road to I-35 frontage	I-35 frontage to Boundary Ave. (1 block)	Mesaba Ave. to Kenwood Ave.	Mesaba from 9th St. to Central Entrance (1 block)
Boundary Ave. to Haines Road	Haines Road to 9th Street W. of Mesaba	Woodland Ave.	London Road from E. 61st Ave. to terminus (1 block)
9th St. to Mesaba	19th Ave. E., Junction, St. Marie	Snively Rd.	
Kenwood to 19th Ave. E.	E. Superior St. (1 block)	Glenwood St.	
Glenwood to E. Superior St.			
61st Ave. E.			

a few segments of the Parkway are nearing their capacity, and these are the major thoroughfares with already high volumes: Mesaba, Woodland and Snively.

A major street improvement project planned for 2003-2004 is the reconstruction of Piedmont Avenue (US Highway 53) from 4th Street to approximately 15th Street. The Parkway will be routed over the intersection with Lincoln Park Drive, Piedmont and Trinity Road on a new bridge. The bridge, 36 feet in width, will be faced with molded stone-patterned concrete with a decorative iron railing, and will include a 6-foot sidewalk and stair connection to Piedmont.

Problems with traffic safety tend to arise where the Parkway intersects a street with significantly higher traffic volumes and speeds. These include the Haines Road, Mesaba/Central Entrance, Kenwood Avenue and Glenwood Street intersections, as well as others shown on Figure 1, Issues and Conditions. These and other intersections are overly wide, fostering higher traffic speeds, and are poorly signed.

Pedestrian and bicycle safety is a major issue throughout most segments of the Parkway, given the route's popularity for walking, running and biking. The narrow road width and curving alignment in the more rural segments does offer the advantage of keeping traffic speeds generally low, allowing pedestrians and bikes to share the road. However, hazards increase in the residential areas where there are frequent intersections with driveways and higher-volume streets, and intermittent or very narrow sidewalks. The Parkway from east of Mesaba Avenue to Chester Bowl has been identified as a particularly dangerous area.

The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission is currently completing a bike route plan for Duluth-Superior, and has designated some portions of the Parkway as signed bike routes, without a bike lane or separated path:

- Piedmont Avenue to Mesaba Ave.
- Mesaba to 11th Ave. E.
- St. Marie Street between Carver and Woodland Ave.

The Parkway is accessible via public transit at most of the major intersections: bus routes follow Highland Street, Piedmont Avenue, Mesaba Avenue, Kenwood Avenue, and most of the major streets in the UMD Gap segment. The Route 14 bus runs along the Parkway itself from Observation Road to 7th Street. The Bardon's Peak, Hawk Ridge and Seven Bridges Road segments have no direct transit access.

SEGMENT PROFILES

Appendix A consists of a series of tables summarizing the main characteristics and relevant issues found in each Parkway segment. These have been adapted from the *Jewel of the North* report and updated with additional information that has emerged in the course of this study.

ISSUES

As the study team met with the Citizens Task Force, interviewed City and agency staff and experienced the Parkway, it became clear that there were certain core issues that the plan needed to address. Issues are grouped in three broad categories: interpretation, resource stewardship, and road improvements for all modes of travel.

Interpretation

- What interpretive strategies can be developed to tell the Parkway’s story to residents as well as visitors?
- What kind of on-site facilities can withstand harsh weather conditions and the threat of vandalism? Where might displays and other facilities be sited (overlooks, etc.)?
- What kind of visitor guides (maps, brochures) will be most effective? These materials need to complement and enhance existing visitor guides produced by the Convention and Visitors Bureau, and other state scenic byway guides produced by the Minnesota Office of Tourism.
- What kind of signs and markers would be most effective in “wayfinding” – helping visitors navigate through the Parkway’s many street segments and confusing intersections – while also highlighting other City resources and attractions?
- How might existing or new overlooks be redesigned? Can the aesthetics of the overlooks be improved? How can overlooks best be managed and maintained?

Resource Stewardship

- What policies should be developed for vegetation management at overlooks so that key views of the city and lake are preserved or restored? Are there other Parkway segments where vegetation should be managed? Are there other objectives for forest management that need to be considered (e.g., biological diversity)?
- What priorities should be established for restoration of historic bridges, retaining walls and culverts?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of seeking National Register historic district designation for all or portions of the Parkway?
- Should methods be considered for limiting the size and height of new houses along the Parkway in the interest of preserving views and neighborhood character?
- How should undeveloped lands along the Parkway be managed? Are some locations appropriate for housing (as envisioned by some neighborhoods)? Should tax forfeit “conservation lands” predominantly remain as open space?
- What is the best use and management of the “trail segments” such as the Mission Creek segment and connecting routes such as Knowlton Boulevard? Should any of these segments be restored as roads or trails? Should washed-out bridges be restored or replaced?
- What solutions might be considered for the problem of dumping in remote locations?



Bicycle lanes and pedestrian paths are lacking in many high use areas.



An old sign along the Western Extension, a relic of a previous wayfinding system of the 1970s.



Can bridges along trail segments such as Amity Creek be restored?

- Are existing park facilities and recreational activities along the Parkway suitable for their locations? Should any be expanded, enhanced, reduced in size or relocated?
- What kind of recreational activities are most appropriate, and in which locations? (Examples include horseback riding, running, walking, biking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and ATV use.)

Road Improvements for All Modes

- Can facilities for pedestrians be improved without losing the Parkway’s character? Can bicycling conditions be improved?
- How could traffic management be improved at intersections with arterial streets?
- Should city street segments be redesigned to convey more of a “parkway” character?
- In what locations, if any, might road surface improvements be desirable? How might improvements be made without encouraging speeding? Should traffic calming measures be considered?
- Should additional curb cuts be permitted along the Parkway? Under what conditions?
- How best to assure continuing maintenance of the Parkway as part of the city’s road system?

GOALS

The goal statements that follow establish a foundation for the management strategies in the following chapters. These goals were developed and refined during meetings of the Citizens Task Force, reviewed by the

Management Committee, reviewed at meetings with agency staff and at a public open house in Spring 2002. The goal statements establish broad targets to guide the development of the Plan and its future implementation. They are organized by major issue or topic, as a framework for thinking about the Parkway as a cluster of diverse resources and opportunities.

General Goal:

Restore and maintain Skyline Parkway as a major scenic, historic, natural and recreational resource and attraction for visitors and residents alike.

Interpretation: Interpret the Parkway’s significant resources to visitors and residents, using maps, way-side exhibits, and other media.

Visitor Materials: Create a readable map/brochure that links Skyline Parkway to other city attractions.

Wayfinding Signs: Signs should highlight entry points in a subtle but identifiable way and should enable visitors to know their location.

Overlook Design and Use: Overlooks should be improved with better policing and security; overlooks should be constructed with natural materials, especially native stone. Lighting may be appropriate in selected locations. Overlooks should be designed to encourage visitors to get out of their cars.

Vegetation Management: Manage vegetation to frame views from overlooks and at other selected locations; also consider views from below.

Forestry Management: Manage forested segments for diversity of habitat and for scenic quality.

Bridge Restoration: Focus on bridge arches and

abutments as well as road surfaces. Emphasize the use of native stone wherever possible.

Walls and Other Structures: Seek funding and set priorities to restore and preserve major stone walls before deterioration is irreversible.

Historic Designation: Explore historic designation as a means of achieving National Scenic Byway status and ensuring adequate review of road improvement and other projects.

New Construction: New buildings should be compatible with surrounding buildings in size and scale, and should not block important views. Design guidelines would help in limiting incompatible structures.

Conservation Lands: As part of City’s comprehensive planning efforts, identify and prioritize conservation lands that should be permanently protected and those that might be suitable for limited development.

Residential Development: Limit residential development where it can damage steep slopes, important views, other natural resources or neighborhood character. New development should be a logical extension of existing neighborhoods and street patterns. Avoid lake side (downslope) development whenever possible.

“Trail Segments”: Maintain and improve the Amity Creek/Snively Boulevard and Mission Creek trail segments for non-motorized recreation.

Dumping Problems and Vandalism: Work to improve surveillance (by police and citizens) to prevent dumping. Encourage “adoption” of overlooks or road segments. Seek relatively indestructible materials for signs, overlooks, markers, etc.

Existing Park and Recreation Facilities: Signage and signage systems should be consistent throughout the corridor. Signage and interpretive materials should link these facilities to the Parkway, and vice versa. Signs should identify other resources such as the streams that the Parkway crosses.

Shared Use of Roadway: Encourage shared use of roadway between automobiles and non-motorized recreation (see specifics below).

Street Redesign: Seek opportunities to better convey “parkway character” on city street segments, through landscape plantings and other improvements.

Road Surface Improvements: Prioritize locations where road surface improvements are needed. Avoid creating “speedways” through excessive widening.

Roadway Design Standards: Develop consistent street design standards for each segment of the Parkway, to guide in planning future City, County or State road improvements.

Continuing Maintenance: Seek ongoing funding and set priorities for regular maintenance of road surfaces, bridges and structures.

Problem Intersections: Seek opportunities to redesign problem intersections for improved aesthetics, wayfinding and pedestrian safety. Consider establishing standards for regulating new curb cuts.

Recreational uses:

- **Walking, running:** Safe walking/running paths should be made available to the degree feasible.
- **Biking:** Continue to encourage bicyclists and



Graffiti under the Bardons Peak Overlook.



A wayside exhibit example, Minneapolis Park System.