

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Sherburne County Public Works Department is dedicated to providing a safe transportation network for its residents, businesses and visitors. Historically, the Department has managed the county highway/roadway and bridge systems and has overseen construction, inspection, maintenance, and repair of these facilities. As the county has grown and the needs of its residents and businesses have evolved, Sherburne County and the Department have come to recognize that their efforts and attention need to encompass more than a roadway network. The Department regularly works cooperatively with communities within the county, adjacent counties, the Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to provide a transportation network that addresses a multitude of needs – be they for motorized vehicles, freight traffic, pedestrians and bicyclists, and transit dependent/choice populations. As part of its long-term planning process, the Department wants to formalize its recognition of the multimodal transportation network and its role in meeting the needs of its residents and businesses.

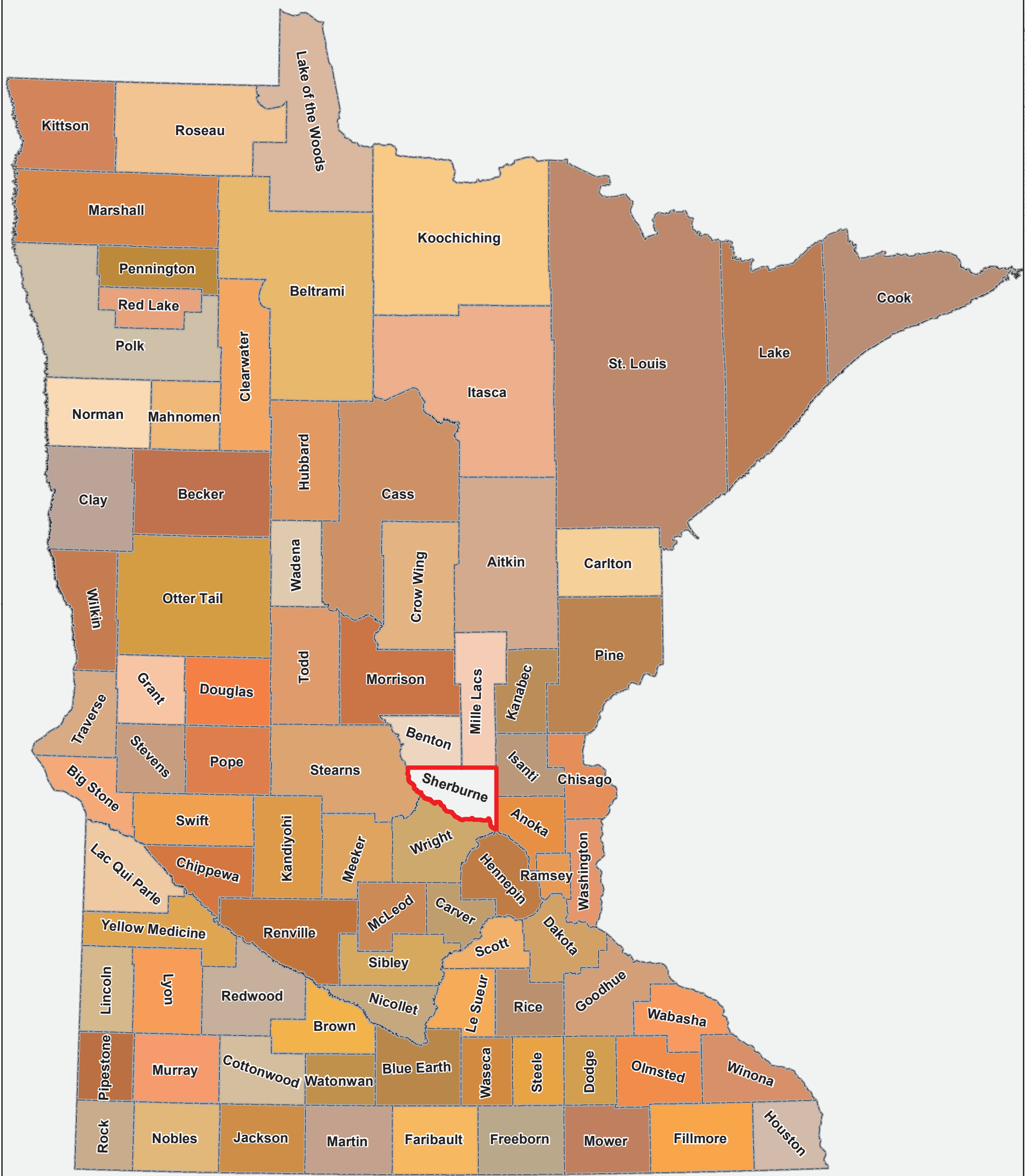
## 1.1 County Location/General Characteristics



Sherburne County is in central Minnesota (**Figures 1 and 2**) and is bordered by Benton County to the northwest, Mille Lacs County to the north, Isanti County to the northeast, Anoka County and a small sliver of Hennepin County to the southeast, Wright County to the southwest and Stearns County to the west. The county is within easy commuting distance to both the Twin Cities and St. Cloud metropolitan areas. Portions of the county – sections of the City of Elk River – have recently been added to the Twin Cities metropolitan area for census reporting purposes.

Sherburne County has experienced a significant amount of growth over the past 20 years, even with the economic downturn that occurred in the late 2000s. While much of the land within the county is rural in nature, there are larger, more urban cities. These cities include Elk River, Big Lake, and a portion of the City of St. Cloud. In addition to these larger cities, other communities include Becker, Clear Lake, Zimmerman and a portion of the City of Princeton. Population within the cities makes up approximately 56 percent of the county's population, which in 2015 was approximately 91,700.

Along with the cities, a few of Sherburne County's townships have populations that exceed some of the smaller cities within the county. Townships that had a population of at least 5,000 in 2015 included: Baldwin, Becker, Big Lake, and Livonia.

In the more rural portions of the county, forests and wetland areas, along with farming, agricultural, and mining activities dominate much of the land use in the western half of the county. This is also true for the far eastern portions of the county outside of the City of Elk River. The central portion of the county has approximately 41,600 acres dedicated to natural resource preservation – the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, Uncas Dunes Scientific and Natural Area, and Sand Dunes State Forest.



 Sherburne County Boundary  
 County Boundary



**Figure 1 - Sherburne County Location**  
Sherburne County Transportation Plan  
Sherburne County, MN

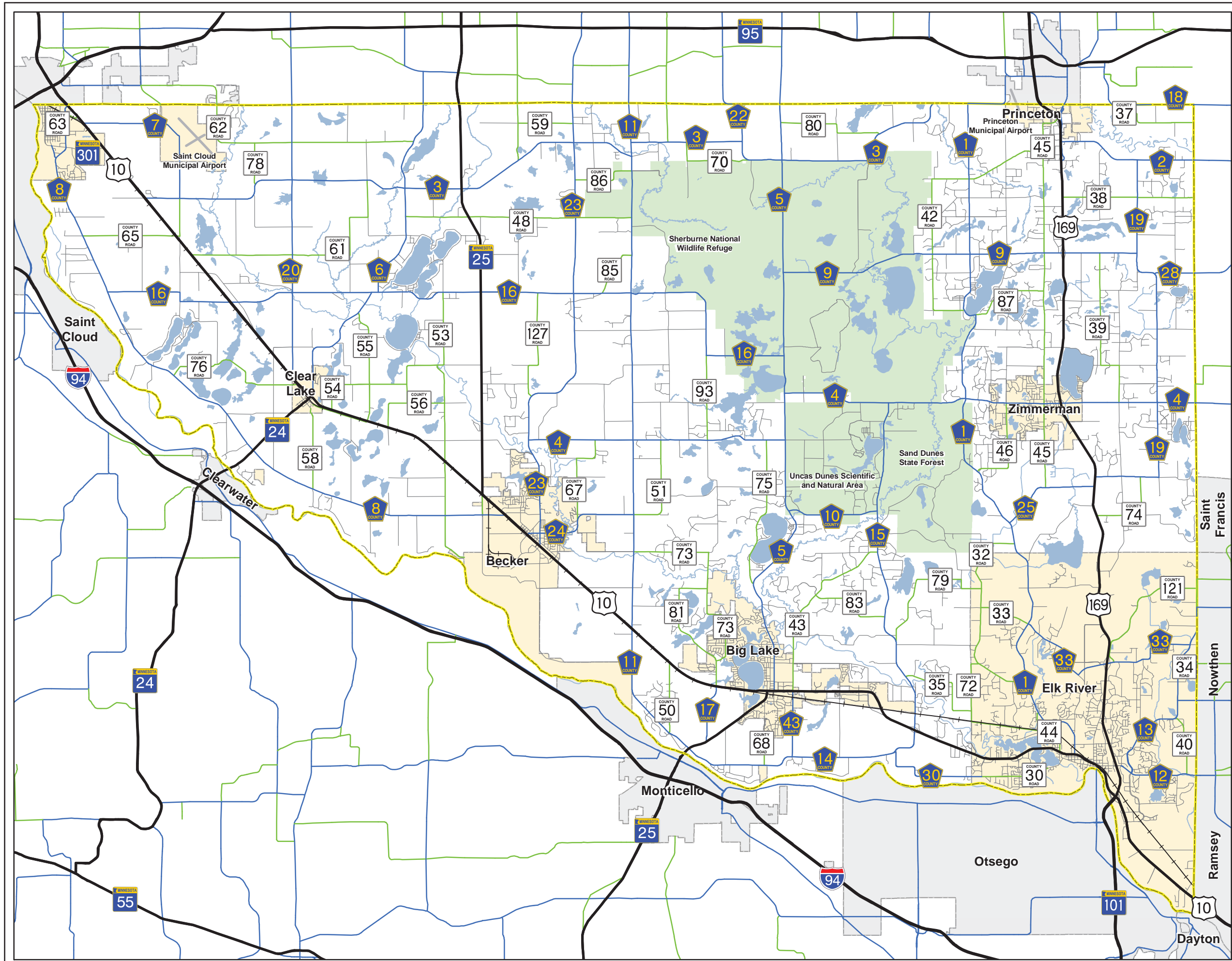


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1 inch = 35 miles

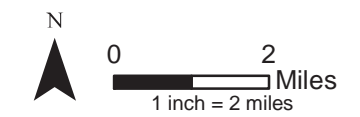




Figure 2: Sherburne County Overview  
Sherburne County Transportation Plan  
Sherburne County, MN



- US Highways and Trunk Highways
- County State Aid Highways
- County Roads
- City and Township Roads
- BNSF Railroad
- County Boundary



The southern border of the county is bounded by the Mississippi River, a key resource for Sherburne County. The river provides an attraction for residents and visitors alike. In fact, there are national efforts to have a trail or bicycle facilities follow the river from its headwaters in northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico, portions of which will be in Sherburne County.

The county is served by five state highways owned by MnDOT. State-owned highways are often referred to as Trunk Highways (TH). These routes include TH 10, TH 169, TH 24, TH 25, and TH 301. Highways 10 and 169 have the most traffic on a daily basis and carry a substantial amount of the freight traffic within the county.

There is one major railway, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway, which runs parallel to TH 10. Approximately 60 trains per day travel through the county, though this number has been as high as 100 trains per day in recent years. These include freight trains as well as Northstar Commuter trains and the Amtrak Empire Builder (passenger train).

There are three airports, one in the City of St. Cloud, one in the City of Princeton, and one near the City of Clear Lake. The St. Cloud airport provides limited passenger service and serves private planes. The Princeton and Leaders' Clear Lake airports serve private planes.

There are no river ports within the county.

All of the factors above, along with future demographics, play a role in what type of transportation network is needed to serve Sherburne County now and in the future.

## 1.2 Plan Purpose

Sherburne County last updated its long-range transportation plan in 2007. Since then, many things have changed. The latter part of 2007 saw an extreme slowdown in growth and development and the beginning of a national recession that had not occurred since the Great Depression in the late 1920s and 1930s. The recession lasted until about 2012 when sectors of the economy started to rebound. Additionally, Minnesota has experienced inconsistent investment in transportation and other public infrastructure that have impacted growth and have left many needs unmet. Funding for transportation at the federal and state levels has been erratic for years, and there is little indication that this will change in the near- or mid-term.

Changes in demographics and lifestyles with the coming of age of the millennial generation has resulted in new and different types of transportation demands than previous generations. Additionally, the overall population has aged – the baby boomers are getting older, and for some the ability to drive is becoming more difficult or no longer an option. This will continue to be an influence and change demand for roadway network as well as transit services.

Technology changes in the transportation industry in recent years have been significant with the advent of on-demand transportation services such as Uber and Lyft, connected vehicles, electric

vehicles (which do not contribute as much to vehicle fuel taxes), and advancements in autonomous vehicles.

All of the above have, over the past decade, made it challenging for local officials to properly plan for long-term transportation investments and to prioritize more immediate needs. To address the changing conditions and the varying interests of different generations of transportation users, and to be flexible with its investments to better adapt to changing conditions that are expected to occur over the next 20 years, Sherburne County is reexamining its transportation plan. This 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan is intended to help the county and the communities located within the county to better understand the county transportation network and its associated needs/deficiencies and the roles that partner agencies play in helping to maintain and improve its network. Additionally, the planning efforts in this plan are intended to better engage residents, property owners and businesses so that their needs and desires are taken into consideration as the county makes investments in the near- and long-term. The county is committed to making sound financial investments in maintaining and preserving its system, targeting expansion where most needed, addressing safety problems, and incorporating multimodal elements where appropriate.

### 1.3 Plan Vision, Goals and Objectives

As part of the planning process, the goals and objectives from the previous transportation plan were reviewed and modified to address current conditions. In addition, a vision statement was produced to set the overall theme of the plan. The goals and objectives that follow are intended to guide the development of the plan to ensure that the long-term needs and desires are addressed.

#### Vision

Sherburne County will work cooperatively with local, regional, and state partner agencies and the private sector to develop and support a multimodal transportation network that addresses the mobility and safety needs of its residents, businesses, and property owners. The Sherburne County transportation network will operate in coordination with state and local facilities to support the economic vitality of the area and quality of life for its residents. County investments will be made to maintain a network in good repair and address pressing safety problems and mobility constraints.

#### Goals and Objectives

To support the vision, the following goals and objectives have been established:

##### *Goal 1: Safety*

Develop and maintain a transportation network that promotes safety for its users by:

- Targeting crash locations and conditions where fatal and Type A crashes occur
- Proactively incorporating safety measures into reconstruction and rehabilitation projects
- Monitoring crash cluster locations at intersections and roadway segments to identify “hot spot” locations that can be retroactively addressed

- Addressing deficient roadway geometrics
- Incorporating modal elements that separate system users (pedestrian and bicycle facilities; railway grade separations, etc.)

*Goal 2: Efficient Movement*

Strive to provide a transportation network that promotes efficient movement of people and goods by:

- Targeting network expansion where problems currently exist and where growth is occurring and expected to occur
- Working cooperatively with partner agencies to invest in facilities and projects that serve the greatest travel demand
- Linking county investments with investments made by other agencies and the private sector
- Maintaining infrastructure in good repair – this also includes maintenance and operations activities such as snowplowing, crack sealing, pothole filling, etc.
- Properly classifying the roadway network and supporting investments appropriate to the classification

*Goal 3: Multimodal*

Promote transportation mode choice to support all users and enhance quality of life for residents by:

- Supporting the county’s Park, Trail, and Active Living Plan (multimodal trails)
- Incorporating multimodal trail considerations as part of the county highway transportation project planning process in urbanized areas
- Working cooperatively with other jurisdictions to support transit opportunities and services for transit-dependent populations and transit choice users
- Working cooperatively with the BNSF Railway on safety and grade separation problem areas
- Providing good access to regional airports for passengers and freight users

*Goal 4: Economic Development*

Recognize economic development opportunities when managing and investing resources into the transportation network by:

- Working cooperatively with local jurisdictions on land use decisions that support economic development and investment
- Working with the private sector on partnerships that foster development and growth while improving the transportation network
- Ensuring the transportation network provides access to and serves major economic development generators and facilities
- Maintaining a ten-ton roadway network that serves industrial and agricultural areas

*Goal 5: Land Use and Transportation Decisions*

Recognize the linkage between land use decisions and transportation decisions by:

- Working with local jurisdictions to provide formal review and comment on proposed developments that impact the county transportation network during the development review process
- Identifying and preserving space for future corridors, intersection improvements, trails, etc., through tools such as official mapping and/or right of way dedication as part of development review
- Managing access along county arterial and collector roadways
- Identifying residential, commercial, and industrial growth areas within the county and evaluating the impacts of that growth on the transportation network

*Goal 6: Coordinate with Other Jurisdictions and the Private Sector*

Cooperate and coordinate with local and state agencies as well as the private sector by:

- Seeking opportunities to coordinate county investments with investments made by others
- Strategizing with partners on prioritizing/scheduling/planning for major transportation investments that require joint expenditures
- Reviewing and proposing logical jurisdictional changes for discussion with partner agencies
- Promoting cooperative intergovernmental roadway characteristics/geometrics

*Goal 7: Investments*

Develop a framework for understanding current revenue streams and financial resources and anticipated costs (noting any funding gaps) so that sound investments can be made to maintain and enhance the county's transportation network by:

- Preserving, maintaining, and managing the existing highway network
- Identifying targeted projects to serve safety and mobility needs over the short-, medium-, and long-term
- Examining current system designations and seeking changes in state assistance
- Developing cost sharing responsibilities for transportation investments
- Applying for funding from state, federal, and private sources to help offset county costs on transportation projects
- Implementing local taxing opportunities to address high-priority needs

## 1.4 Agency and Public Involvement

Coordination with communities within Sherburne County, as well as adjacent jurisdictions (counties), MnDOT, the Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, and airport operators was an important element in identifying transportation needs and garnering support for the planning process and resulting plan. The following activities were completed as part of the plan development.

**Project Management Team (PMT) Meetings:** A project management team comprising county and consulting staff was used to actively guide the development of the plan. The PMT met throughout the development of the Plan to review technical analyses and provide input on plan content. There were eight PMT meetings held during the course of plan development. These meetings were supplemented with check-in conference calls to discuss particular subject matters.

**Community Charrette:** A day-long community charrette was held with the townships and cities located within Sherburne County. The day consisted of presenting information about the existing transportation network and getting feedback from the communities about problems, issues, desires, previously suggested turnbacks, and vision for the county transportation network. Input from the charrette was incorporated into the issues identification section and used to develop potential improvements. Input was also used to document interest in previously recommended turnback/turn-up roadways.

**Focus Group Meetings:** Different industry and stakeholder groups were invited to discuss their interests and concerns regarding the transportation network in Sherburne County. Input from freight haulers, adjacent agencies, partner agencies, chamber groups, school districts, emergency responders, etc. were invited to attend a one-hour focus group meeting to provide their input on any transportation issues within the county.

The focus groups met twice during the study. The first time was at the beginning of the study to better understand their concerns, needs, desires, and what they think works well. The second set of meetings was used to get their feedback on draft recommendations.

**Open House Meetings:** Two sets of open house meetings were held during the study. Because of the county's diverse geography, the same information was presented in both the western and eastern ends of the county to minimize travel distance to the extent practicable. The first set of meetings presented information on existing conditions, issue identification, previously recommended jurisdictional transfers, and draft vision, goals, and objectives. The second meeting was used to present information on anticipated future conditions, the draft system plans, and the implementation plan. Feedback was collected and incorporated into the plan as appropriate.

**Agency Meetings:** Meetings were held with partner agencies to further discuss items of interest such as potential turnbacks/turn-ups, improvements to the transportation networks by other agencies, maintenance activities, etc. These meetings were held between the staff



members of Sherburne County and other partner agencies such as MnDOT, adjacent counties, airports, Metropolitan Council, etc. These meetings were used to discuss policy direction associated with plan implementation.

**County Board Presentations:** Presentations were made to the Sherburne County Board of Commissioners at multiple times during the study. The meetings were used to update commissioners about the plan progress and to provide a sense of plan direction. A final meeting was held with the Board to present the draft plan and recommendations. Input from the Board was used to make modifications and to finalize the plan.

**Training Meeting:** A training meeting was held with Sherburne County and the communities located within the county. The meeting was used to provide an overview of the draft plan and to discuss its implementation and coordination with communities in the county. The intent was for staff from the various communities to become familiar with the plan and its associated policies and recommendations so that they can help implement it over the next 20 years. It is expected that communities within the county will utilize the plan as part of development review, coordinating (when practicable) projects, making joint investments, etc.

**Project Website:** A project page was maintained on the Sherburne County website to provide information about the study and to provide opportunities for people to provide input and comments on materials drafted as part of the study. Information prior to and following open house meetings was posted as was information about existing conditions, future conditions, draft and final systems plans, implementation recommendations, etc.

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