

great metro bike trails

So you like the Greenway? That's just a tiny piece of a metro-wide network of cycling trails. Some of them are paved, some are crushed limestone. Some may be useful for getting somewhere, but all are worth the trip. Here are some of our favorites:

Text by SIMON PETER GROEBNER • Graphic by RAY GRUMNEY

1 MIDTOWN GREENWAY

5.5 miles • paved

An urban gem. This surprising trench of green space in the middle of Minneapolis is a stealthy way to cross from Uptown to Midtown to Seward. Freewheel's Midtown Bike Center at 10th Avenue S. is the oasis that brings it all together.

2 GRAND ROUNDS

Up to 50 miles • paved

While not yet a full loop, this urban adventure tours seven different parts of Minneapolis, from the pretty people at Lake Calhoun to the industrial Northeast. If you need to cheat, there are shortcuts like the Greenway (No. 1) or the just-completed Cedar Lake Trail extension to the river (No. 3).

3 CEDAR LAKE LOOP

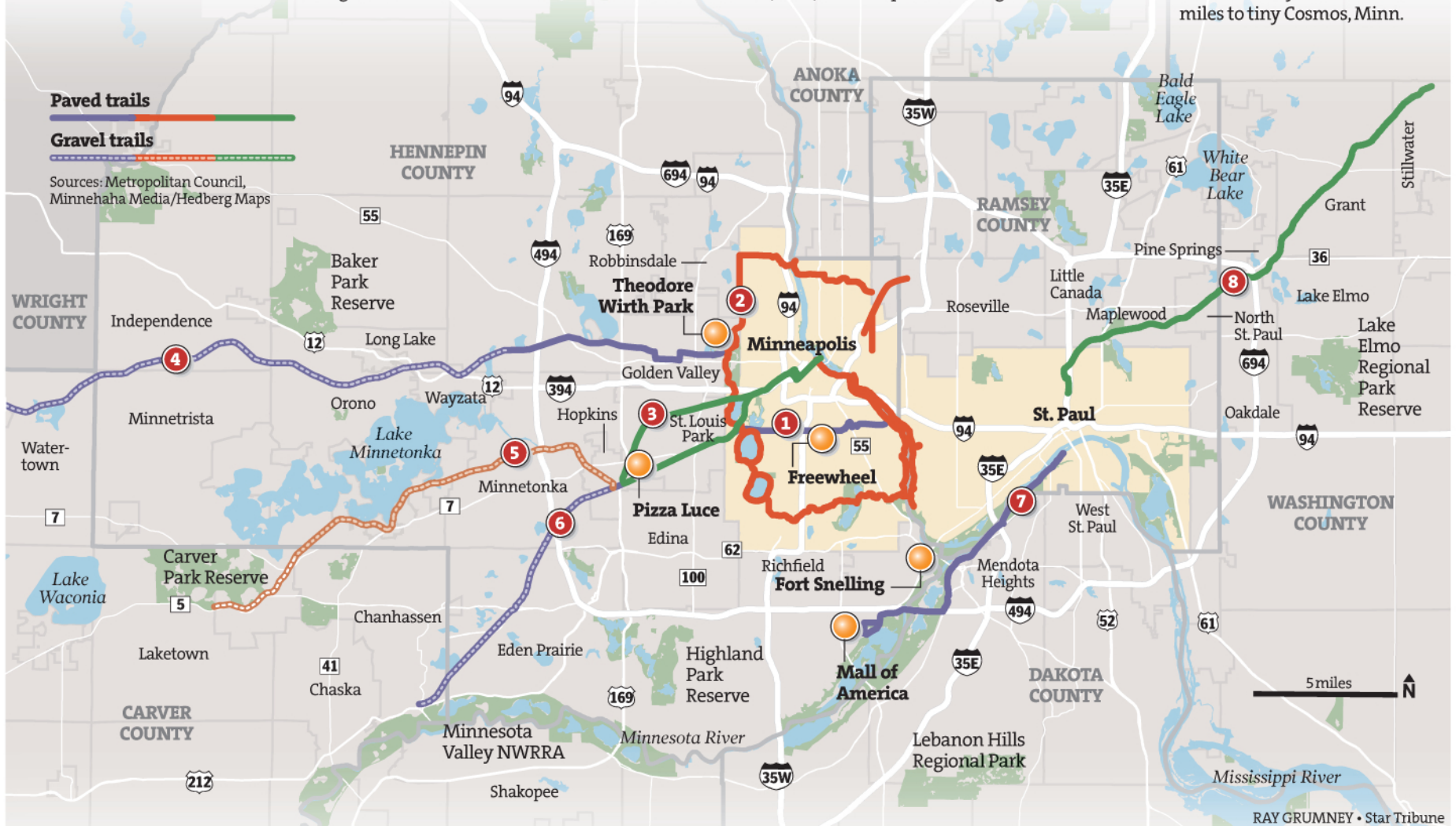
12-15 miles • paved

From Uptown or downtown Minneapolis, you can head west past the Chain of Lakes and through the varied landscapes of St. Louis Park, stopping at the bike-friendly new Pizza Luce in Hopkins — and end up back where you started. Not bad for a quick weeknight ride.

4 LUCE LINE

28 miles (Minneapolis to Watertown) • paved/unpaved

The recently completed Golden Valley segment isn't much, but stick with it for wetlands in Plymouth before the trail turns to limestone for a gorgeous haul through Wayzata and Orono to Watertown. Rougher "natural" terrain takes you another 40 miles to tiny Cosmos, Minn.



5 LAKE MINNETONKA LRT TRAIL

16 miles • mostly unpaved

Heading to your Lake Minnetonka yacht party? This is your trail. It cuts through Hopkins and leafy Minnetonka before giving way to the gold coast of Excelsior. It ends at the Carver Park Reserve near Victoria.

6 MINNESOTA RIVER BLUFFS LRT TRAIL

13 miles • unpaved

Starting at the Hopkins trail nexus, here's a straight shot through the lake districts of Eden Prairie and Chanhassen, ending in river-valley views and highly bikable Chaska. We hope future light rail won't compromise this treasure.

7 BIG RIVERS TRAIL

11 miles • paved

As the name suggests, this one straddles the convergence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers, from Mendota Heights all the way to downtown St. Paul. The southern end also connects to the Mall of America light-rail station, if you're into that sort of thing.

8 GATEWAY STATE TRAIL

18 miles • paved

This classic northeast corridor has been around for years, connecting St. Paul, Maplewood, North St. Paul, Oakdale and northern Washington County. Turn right at 75th Street to head to downtown Stillwater.

RAY GRUMNEY • Star Tribune