



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



**Great
Northern
Trail**
Minnesota



Great Northern Trail

Minnesota

The Great Northern Trail offers a paved north-south route through the city of Elk River and into the city of Zimmerman on northwest



The Great Northern Trail offers a paved north-south route through the city of Elk River and into the city of Zimmerman on northwest outskirts of Minneapolis.

For 8.5 miles, the rail-trail winds through the community along a former railroad bed operated by the Great Northern Railroad 1886–1976. It offers scenic views and includes a pedestrian tunnel under CR 33 (Ranch Road) that provides users with an unimpeded route through Elk River.

From the trail's southern end by the intersection of Elk Lake Road NW and Upland Street NW in Elk River, the route passes several school fields and residential areas before heading into the woods.

The Great Northern Trail meanders through lush stands of hardwood forests and several parks, including Big Tooth Ridge Park and Top of the World Park, where there are unpaved trails which are limited to hiking only.

Continuing north, the rail-trail runs past the Elk River Golf Club and along east edge of the Woodland Trails Regional Park (20135 Elk Lake Rd NW, Elk River), a beautiful natural park featuring dense woods, prairies, and wetlands, all spanning more than 400 acres. The park has picnic tables, benches, parking, a dog waste station, a biathlon range, an archery range, and a nature play area.

Heading through the pedestrian tunnel under CR 33 (Ranch Road), the trail continues through woods and fields, passes streams and small ponds, and occasionally crosses residential streets. The trail's northern end is by the Frisbee/Disc Golf Course in Zimmerman City Park (25850 Main St, Zimmerman).

Future plans include transforming the remaining 19.5 undeveloped miles. The project's next phases will extend the trail north from Zimmerman to Princeton.



Great Northern Trail

Minnesota

States: Minnesota

Counties: Sherburne

Length: 8.5miles

Trail end points: by the Frisbee/Disc Golf Course in Zimmerman City Park (25850 Main St, Zimmerman) to Elk Lake Rd NW & Upland St NW (Elk River)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Grass

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Horseback Riding, Inline Skating, Walking, Wheelchair Accessible, Cross

Parking & Trail Access

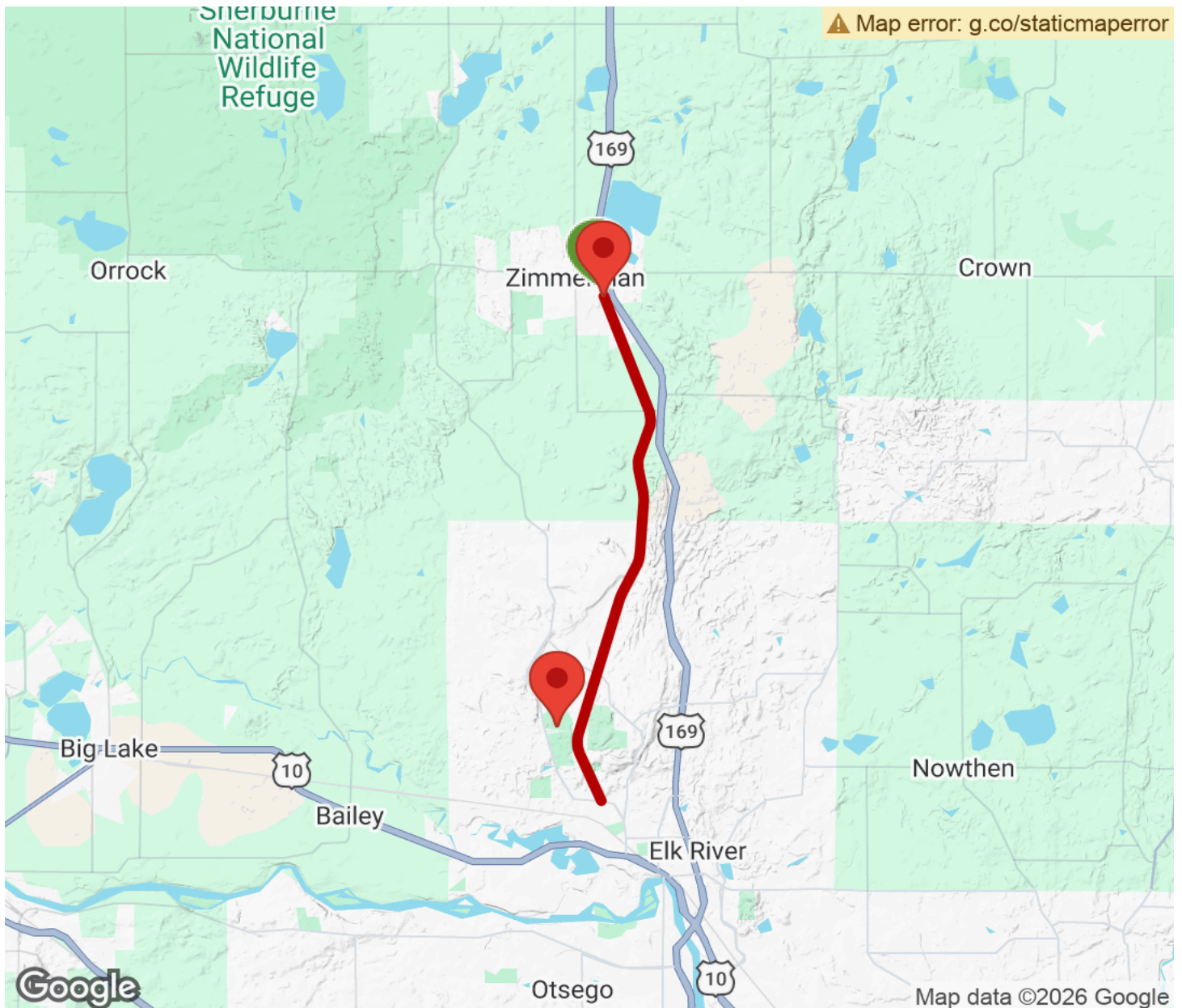
Parking is available at the northern end of the trail in a paved lot by the Frisbee/Disc Golf Course in Zimmerman City Park (25850 Main St, Zimmerman). Midway along the route, park at Woodland Trails Regional Park (20135 Elk Lake Rd NW, Elk River) and access the trail via a paved paths that wind through the park. At the southern terminus of the trail, park at Meadowvale Elementary School.

Visit the [TrailLink map](#) for all options and detailed directions.



Great Northern Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

TrailLink.com