



Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: February 20, 2025

Location: Flynn Pavilion, 4435 Muse Rd., Detroit, MI 48207

Meeting began at 9:01 a.m.

Quorum established at 9:03 a.m.

Present for BIPAC

Dr. Meagan Elliott

Michael Curis

Virtual:

Dr. Lonnie Peek; Sherwood Forest

Angela Lugo-Thomas; Highland Park

Absent

Sommer Woods

Dr. Brian Banks

DNR Staff Present

Ron Olson, Chief

Tom Bissett

Gail Fitch

Scott Pratt

Cynthia Boggerty-Craft

Lt. Todd Szyska

Darlisa Terrell

Griselda Trevino

Barbara Graves

Others Present

Lt. Lance Couturier, MSP

Amy Emmert, Belle Isle Conservancy

Chair Elliott began the meeting at 9:01 a.m. With no quorum present, the meeting started with updates.

Tom Bissett, Urban District Supervisor, began by giving Chief Ron Olson accolades for his 20-year career with the Michigan DNR, as Chief Olson has announced he will retire this spring. He then continued with an update on the boathouse, of which they are reviewing a potential lease and the terms with Mr. Carleton, the developer. They are also actively working on filling vacant positions on the island.

A quorum was established at 9:03 a.m. with the addition of member Lugo-Thomas.

Chair Elliott called for a motion to approve the January 16, 2025 meeting minutes. Member Curis made a motion to approve, supported by member Peek. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Chief Olson gave an update on the budget hearings that are beginning and said they need to continue working with the Conservancy to try and maintain funding and stability. He gave appreciation to everyone he has worked with over the last 20 years. He will retire on April 30 but will stay on a little longer to help with the transition.

Rev. Lonnie Peek wished Ron well and thanked him for his years of service.

The meeting then continued with the law update from Lt. Todd Szyska, DNR Law. He reported that due to the weather, traffic at the park was low and there were a few accidents reported. The question of community policing and engagement was brought up by Dr. Elliott. Lt. Szyska addressed the question stating that his officers are encouraged to engage with the public when helping with safety concerns and traffic violations. Lt. Courterier, MSP, said he advises his officers to engage with the community and encourages them to make the public feel comfortable about coming to Belle Isle.

Tom Bissett then gave the infrastructure report that highlighted the multimodal mobility plan (report attached), and an update on the blue emergency phones on the island and traffic safety.

Rev. Peek said he has heard comments from others who have visited the island who are surprised how beautiful it is. He gave his continuous support and congratulated staff and Amanda Treadwell on an excellent job.

Amanda Murray, Senior Advisor, Belle Isle Aquarium, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the history and importance of sturgeons.

Public Comment

Bill Cheek (written statement) - Just wanted to squawk about the 10 year wait for wayfinding signage. Completely unacceptable. I realize this is addressed in the mobility study but really? This could have been handled with vinyl printed maps stuck on the old signs 10 years ago.

Lisa DiChiera – There will be a presentation in March at the Congregation on Rosa Parks Blvd. that will discuss the history of the Belle Isle boathouse.

There were no member comments.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 10:12 a.m.

Next regular meeting: March 20, 2025.



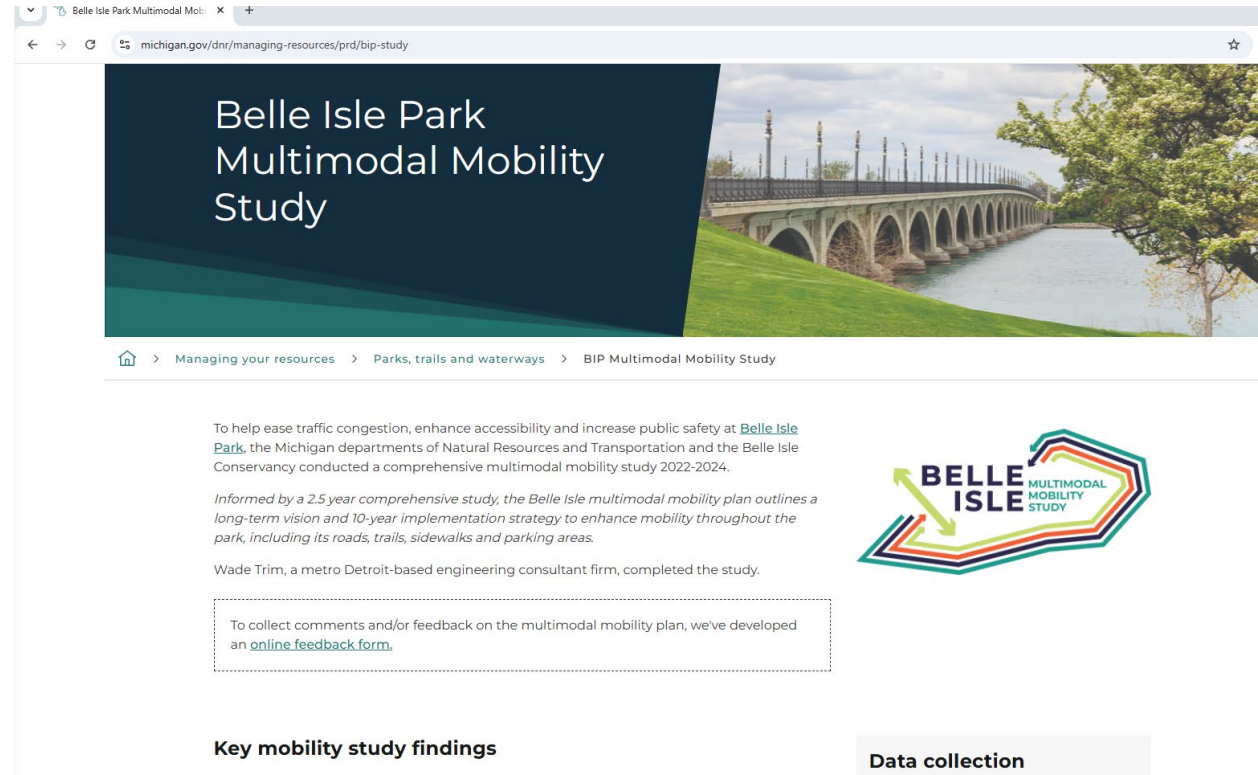
Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Updates

February 20, 2025



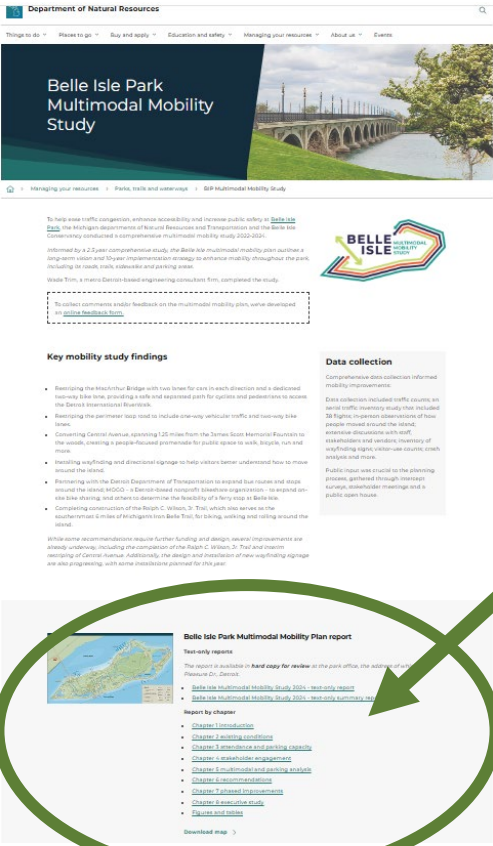
Multimodal Mobility Recommendations

- Executive Summary (chapter 8) and full report have been posted on the Belle Isle Park Multimodal Mobility study webpage.
- <https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/managing-resources/prd/bip-study>
- Accessible-readable text version available.
- A Hard copy is available at the Park HQ to view if preferred.
@ 99 Pleasure Drive, Detroit MI.

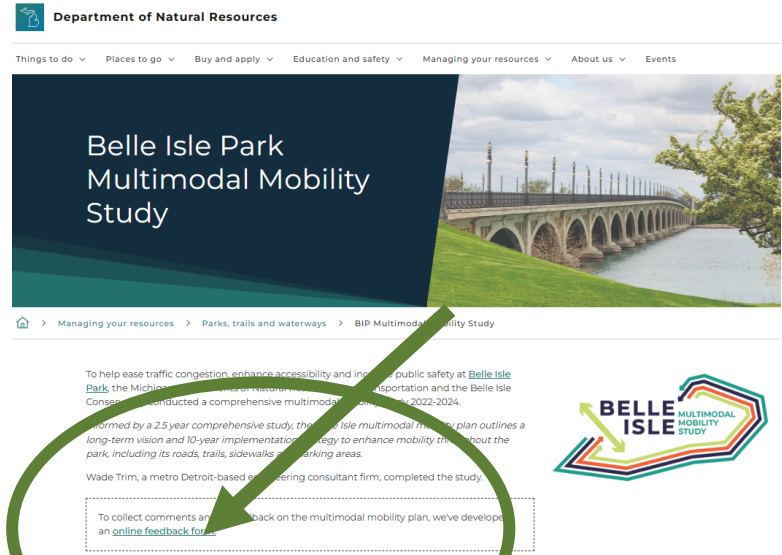


Multimodal Mobility Study Webpage image.

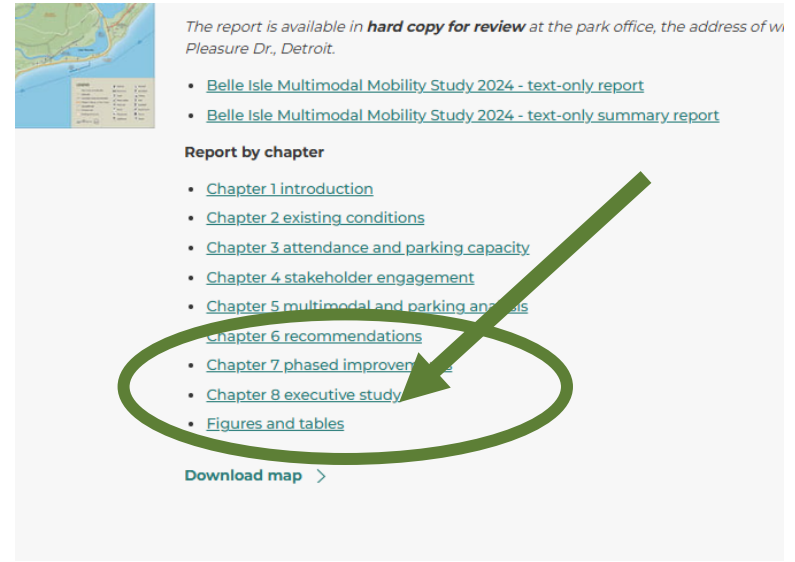
Multimodal Mobility Study Executive Summary, Chapter 8



Multimodal Mobility Study Webpage image.



- Link to survey for comments on study.



- Links to individual final report chapters.

Multimodal Mobility Study

Executive Summary, Chapter 8

8 || SUMMARY REPORT



Working to Improve Mobility and Safety on Belle Isle

Changes are coming to Belle Isle to ensure safety and access to the island for **ALL** park users



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Slide from Multimodal Mobility Study Executive Summary.



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The Past 2+ Years

We've been working on **collecting** data, **learning** from park users, and **coordinating** with MDNR staff, the City of Detroit, as well as project partners MDOT and the Belle Isle Conservancy, about what can be done to our **roads, trails, sidewalks, and parking** to make them safe and improve everyone's experience on beautiful Belle Isle.

We're excited to share the long-term plan and get started on funding, designing, and building!

Slide from Multimodal Mobility Study Executive Summary.

Why We Developed a Multimodal Mobility Plan

Ensure individual projects, investments and partnerships are coordinated and focused on community priorities



More than 5 MILLION visits per year!

- ✓ Improve safety for visitors using **all modes of transportation**
- ✓ Improve the **visitor experience**
- ✓ Provide **convenient** access to Belle Isle
- ✓ Improve **accessibility** and optimize visitor **capacity**
- ✓ **Reduce** the need for **traffic management** by park staff and law enforcement
- ✓ Implement improvements in a **sustainable** manner

Highlights of What We Heard & Learned

We learned **A LOT** by collecting data and surveying and talking to park staff and visitors



People **LOVE** Belle Isle!



The lack of signing and wayfinding adds to confusion and frustration



The most popular parking areas are at the beach, at Sunset Point, and at the Aquarium/Conservatory



People are parking in bike lanes, on lawns, and in driveways causing safety and operational issues



People can not safely walk or bike to and between popular places in the park (lack of facilities or condition)



Current design, width, and layout of the roads encourages speeding

Highlights of What We Heard & Learned (cont'd)

We learned **A LOT** by collecting data and surveying and talking to park staff and visitors



There is confusion about the pay booths and pass purchases



Closures (or even potential of closures) and long lines are impacting visitors and vendors



There is interest in being able to get to the island without a car such as via ferry, bike rentals, an off-island shuttle, and expanded bus service



The top activities people do on the island are: sit and look at the water, walk, run, bike, visit the museum/conservatory/aquarium/gardens, and cruise

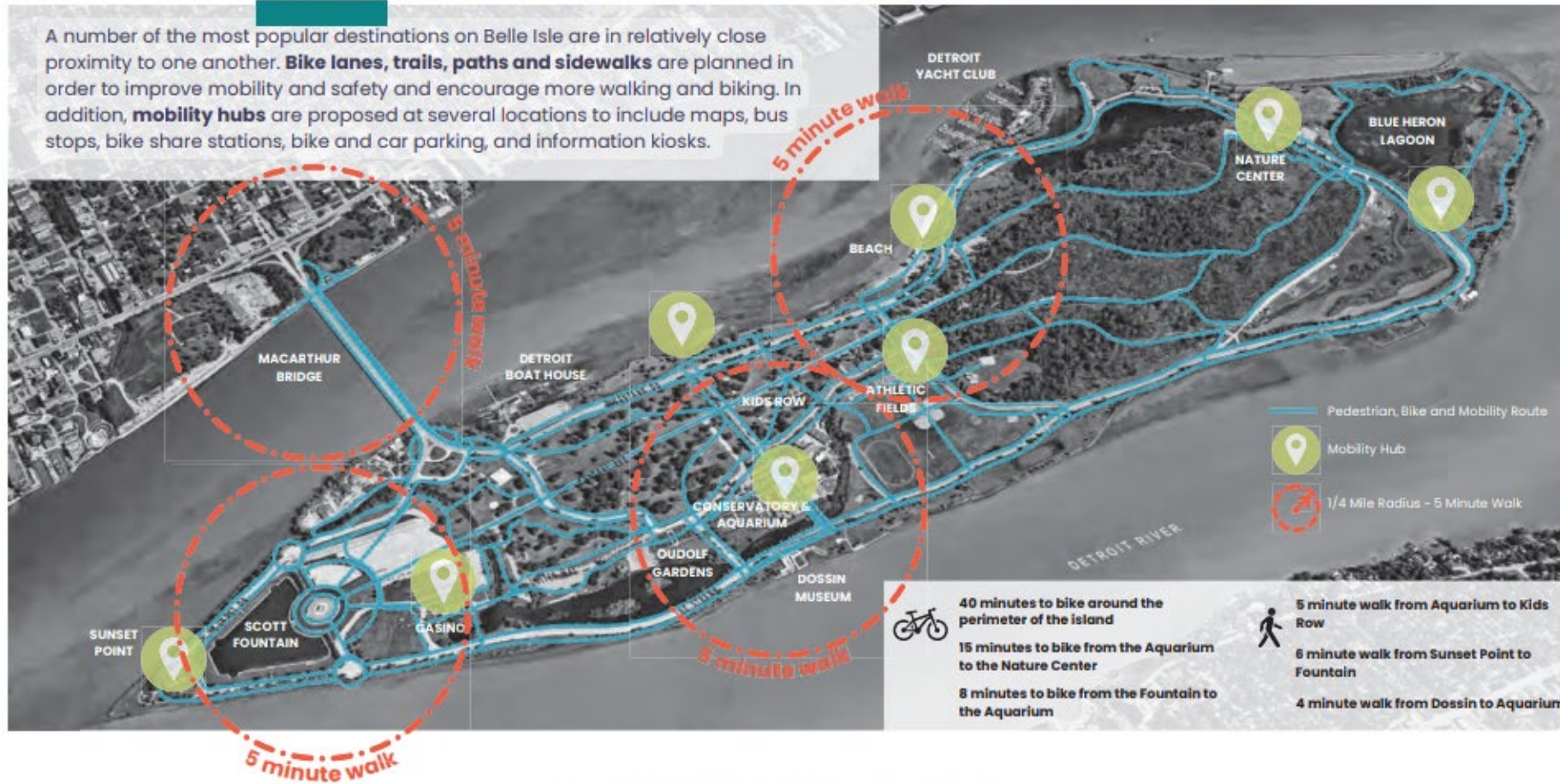
We Used The Findings and Input to Develop A Plan for Improvement

Belle Isle

Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes

Work has already begun on some projects while other projects will take time to fund, design, and build

A number of the most popular destinations on Belle Isle are in relatively close proximity to one another. **Bike lanes, trails, paths and sidewalks** are planned in order to improve mobility and safety and encourage more walking and biking. In addition, **mobility hubs** are proposed at several locations to include maps, bus stops, bike share stations, bike and car parking, and information kiosks.



BELLE ISLE MULTIMODAL MOBILITY STUDY 2024 MDNR | MDOT | BIC

Slide from Multimodal Mobility Study Executive Summary.



Slide from Multimodal Mobility Study Executive Summary.

Long-Term Vision

A people focused Central Avenue and more green space

Artist Rendering



BELLE ISLE MULTIMODAL MOBILITY STUDY 2024 MDNR | MDOT | BIC

Slide from Multimodal Mobility Study Executive Summary.



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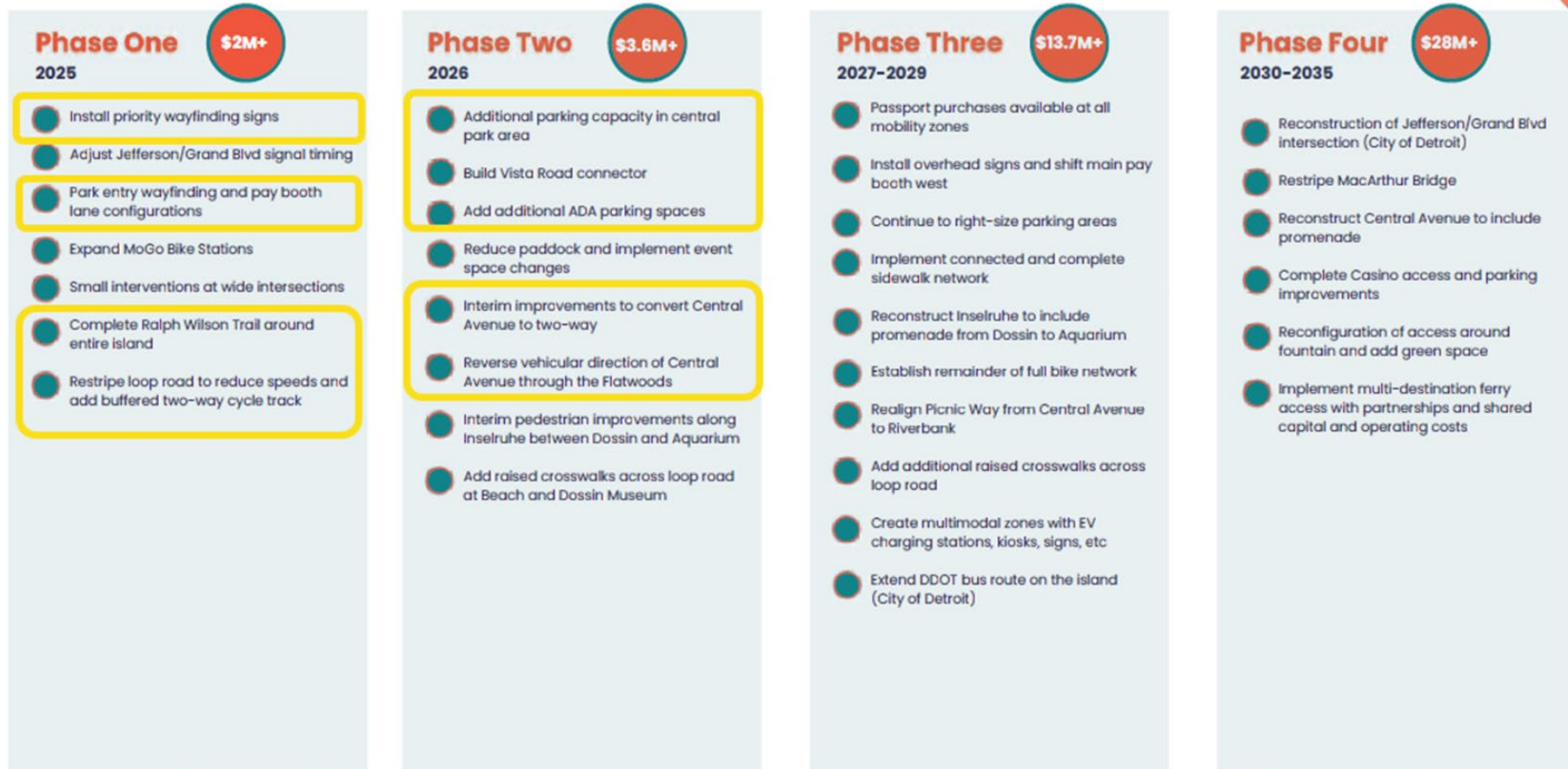


Slide from Multimodal Mobility Study Executive Summary.

Belle Isle

10-Year Phased Plan to Improve Safety + Mobility

Dependent on funding availability



Slide from Multimodal Mobility Study Executive Summary.



There is a lot of work yet to be done on Belle Isle and even more things we've heard people want to see and do.

We want to expand on what we learned during the Mobility Study. We are getting started on developing a **Strategic Improvement Plan for Belle Isle** that will help us look at all of the work that needs to be done in a holistic manner. The primary purpose of the Strategic Plan is to work with the community to prioritize which projects we should focus on first.

Stay tuned...we'll be reaching out to you again for your help soon!

for more info 



Multimodal Mobility Recommendations 2025 Projects

- Engineering and Construction of Central Ave. Conversion for west bound traffic in the flatwoods.
- Engineering and Construction of 2-way traffic on the central and east end of Central Ave.

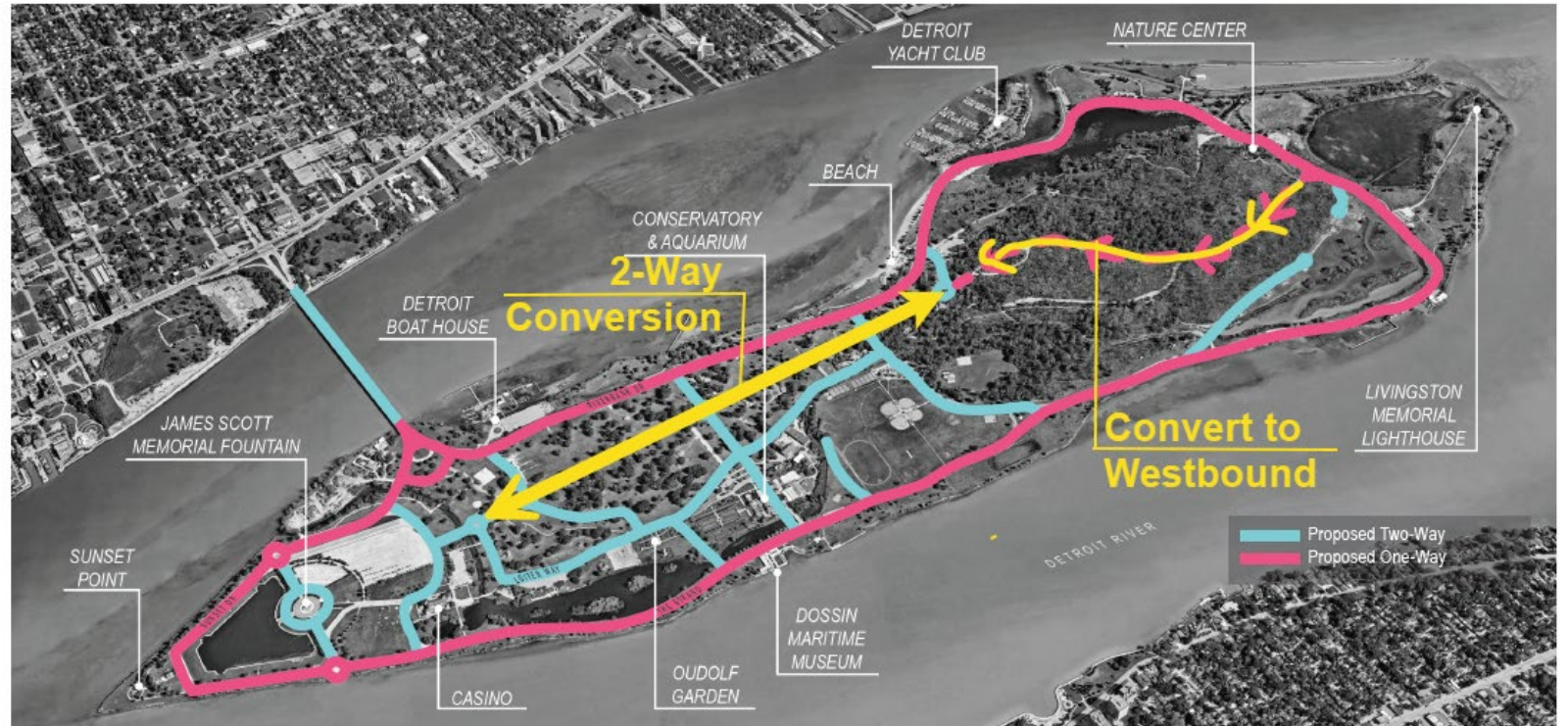


Figure 6.59 Proposed Traffic Flow on Roadways

Proposed intermediate traffic recommendations for Central Ave.

Multimodal Mobility Recommendations

2025 Projects

- Improving lane signage at park entry.
- Construction of wayfinding signs and facility signs in the park.

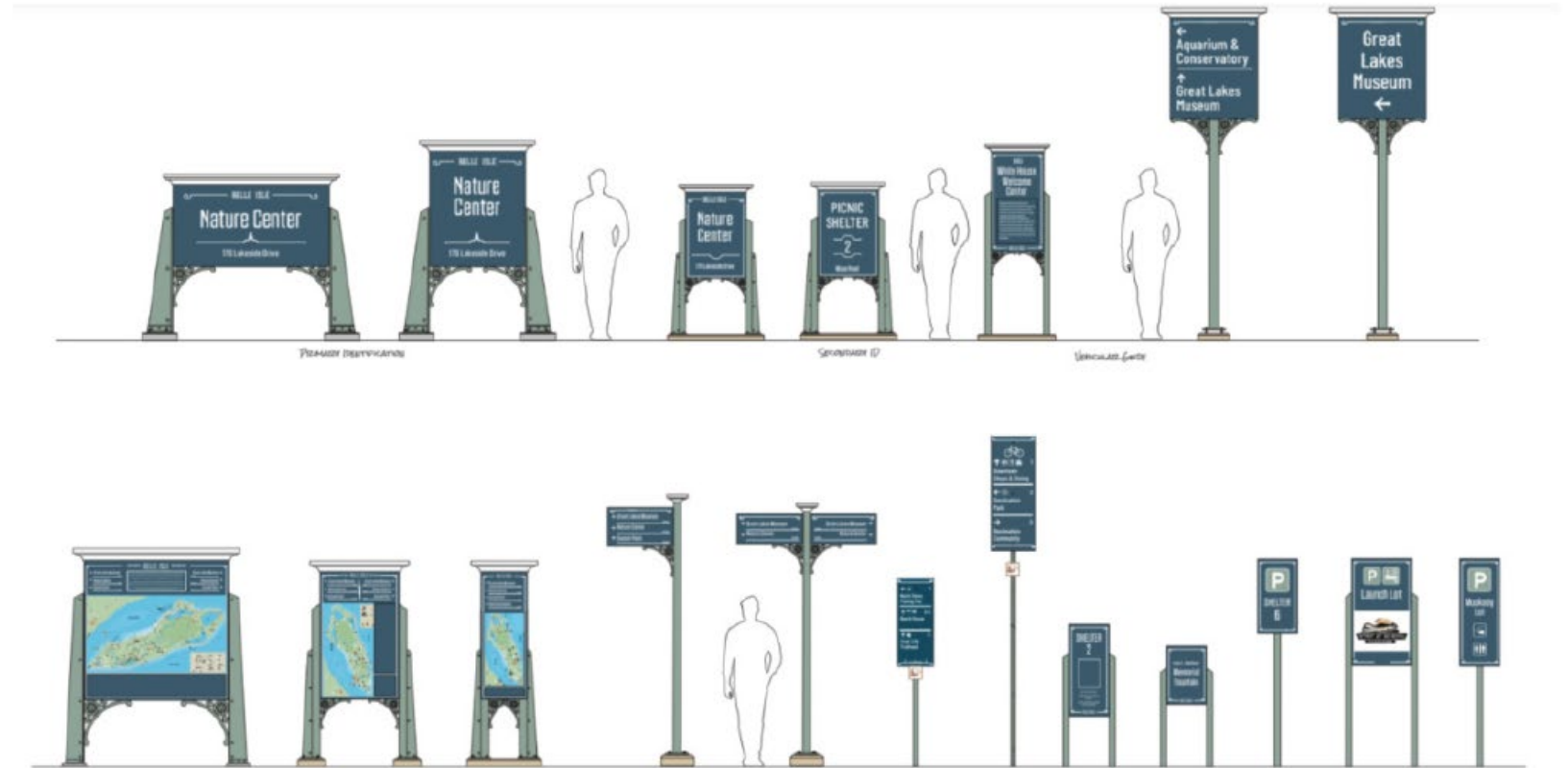


Figure 7.1 - Proposed Wayfinding Signage

**Please Note: All Estimates Including Future Phases Based on 2024 Costs

**Please Note: Design Details and Materials Chosen will Impact the Costs

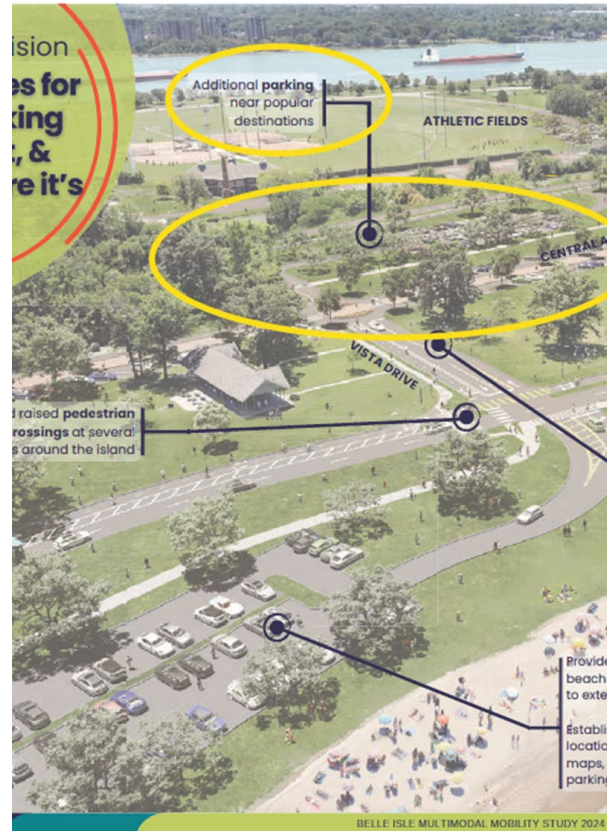
Signage array for Belle Isle park.



Multimodal Mobility Recommendations

2025 Projects

- Engineering for Vista Ave. reconnection through old zoo site. To improve circulation by improving North and South throughways.
- Engineering for a new Green Infrastructure Parking Lot in Zoo area. Fulfills recommendation to migrate parking where needed.



Location of proposed GEI parking lot.



GEI parking lot example providing stormwater management and habitat, Carpenter Lake, Southfield, MI.