

Limited re-entry may be allowed when conditions are safe and approved by the Incident Commander and County Sheriff.

Recovery Phase: Evacuation Order is lifted. Residents may return once the wildfire no longer poses a threat and hazards within the affected area have been addressed, including damaged power lines, hazardous trees, and other safety concerns. Re-entry will occur only when conditions are safe for residents, emergency responders, and utility crews. Essential utilities and services including electricity, water, sewer, and sanitation systems, must be restored before residents can safely return. Recovery and restoration efforts may take time. The safety of residents, emergency personnel, and utility workers remains the highest priority, and patience is appreciated during the re-entry process.

Areas of Refuge/Evacuation Centers (for the Public)

According to the City of Whitefish Emergency Operations Plan, evacuation centers will be declared as needed and communicated to the public through as many notification channels as possible (see below). City liaisons will be dispatched to evacuation centers to provide status updates and coordinate efforts. Shopping centers are listed as the first choice for temporary evacuation centers as they have bathrooms, shelter, large parking lots, and food. If needed, the Red Cross can be utilized to establish long-term evacuation centers (City of Whitefish 2019). Smith Fields has also been identified as an optional refuge area in a wildfire situation, and Flathead County fairgrounds has been identified as a suitable evacuation shelter. The use of specific locations like evacuation centers or areas of refuge varies depending on factors such as available resources and wildfire location, making it critical to rely on communication from the City during disaster events to determine safe locations.

Importantly, evacuation centers are not the same as staging areas or incident command posts. Staging areas and incident command posts are for official first responder use only and civilian evacuation to these areas can place first responders and evacuees alike in danger as well as hinder fire response operations.

Road System Modeling and Analysis

Open and operational roads are vital components of efficient and successful evacuation not only during wildfire incidents but any disaster necessitating the egress of many people from a location.

The results shown in these analyses contribute to understanding the overall risk to evacuation routes but do not provide recommendations for specific evacuation routes and should not be considered as evacuation plans or maps. Instead, these analyses highlight areas that may require roadside vegetation management and other mitigation efforts to improve safety during an evacuation scenario.

Additional situational updates, including road closures and Public Works' activities, may be communicated through City-managed platforms such as the Public Works Department's social media channels, here: <https://www.facebook.com/WhitefishPublicWorks/>. These platforms can provide supplemental, real-time information during emergencies and support public awareness of changing road and travel conditions.

Evacuation access and roadway constraints are further considered in the wildfire risk assessment and mitigation recommendations presented in Chapter 4, including areas where limited ingress and egress may affect evacuation and emergency response during a wildfire event.

Route Risk Analysis (Figure 2.18) – This analysis uses a custom weighted model to denote how navigable roads are and the relative risk to traffic movement. This analysis can be used to prioritize roads for surface improvement and/or roadside vegetation management and help guide evacuation planning decisions. This analysis does not consider evacuation scenarios or modeling of traffic flows and should not be used to inform an active evacuation. The analysis is designed to inform and prioritize vegetation treatments alongside key roadways or identify roadways that could benefit from maintenance to facilitate safer evacuation.

1 **Road Entrapment (Figure 2.19)** – This analysis denotes roads that fall within areas that have high modeled
2 flame lengths (8+ feet). These roads can be more susceptible to experiencing entrapment conditions due to direct
3 flame impingement during extreme wildfire conditions as modeled in the wildfire risk assessment. This analysis
4 can be used to identify roads that may be most impacted by wildfire and help prioritize roadside vegetation
5 treatments.

6 **Emergency Routes (Figure 2.20)** – The City of Whitefish Office of Emergency Management, in coordination with
7 the Whitefish Police Department, has identified emergency routes within Whitefish city limits that are best possible
8 options for evacuation during an incident. The routes may be altered or closed according to guidance from the
9 Whitefish Police Department as driven by incident-specific considerations. The Whitefish Police Department will
10 coordinate directly with BNSF Railroad to ensure key evacuation routes are not blocked by trains. Additionally,
11 BNSF can dispatch railroad crossing engineers to utilize heavy equipment to open up crossings as needed during
12 an emergency situation.

13 **One Way In and Out (Figure 2.21)** – This analysis used the ArcGIS Pro network analysis geoprocessing toolset
14 to approximate road locations that have one entrance/exit point. Manual quality assurance/quality control was
15 completed to identify tiered road systems that ultimately conclude in one entrance/exit point such as the Reservoir
16 Road and Northwoods Drive road system or the Anter Ridge Road system. The analysis focused on roads
17 outside of the urban core of the City of Whitefish.

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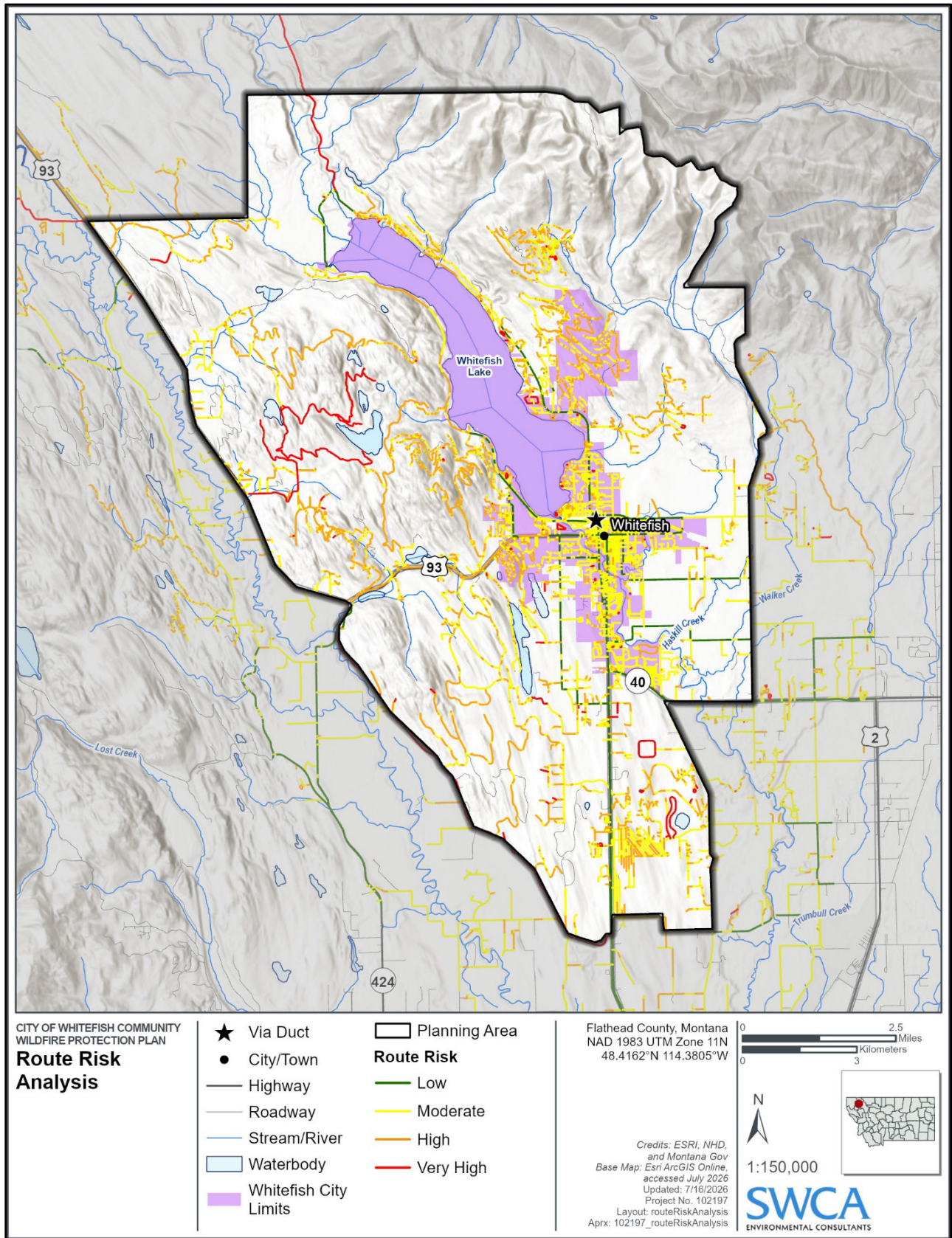


Figure 2.18. Route risk analysis depicting the navigability of roads and relative risk to traffic movement.

Note: Data inputs and weights are road surface (20%), road grade (20%), sinuosity (20%), road length (10%), and connectivity (10%).

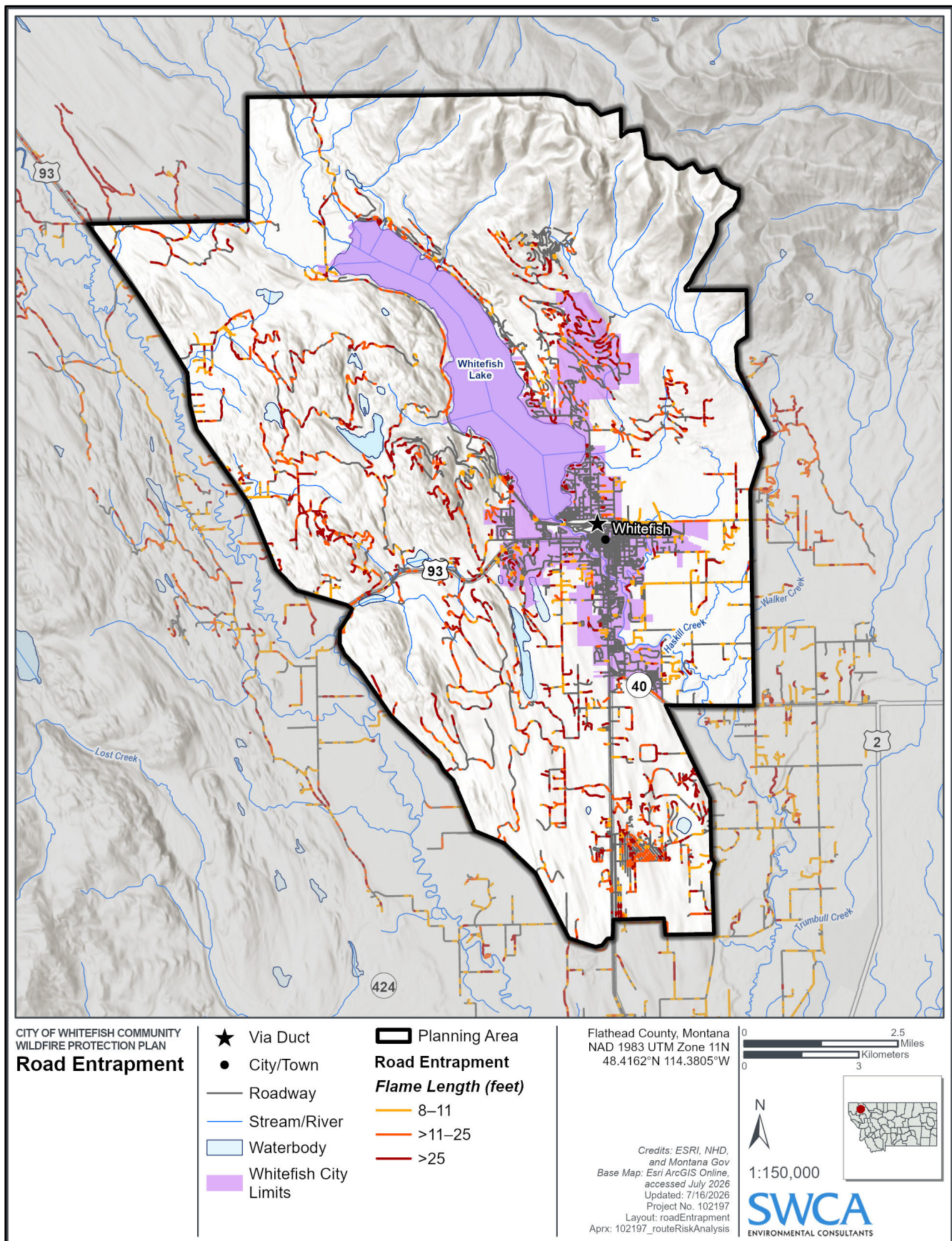


Figure 2.19. Road entrapment.

Note: Colored areas are sections of road that overlap high modeled flame lengths and could be potentially impacted by extreme wildfire.

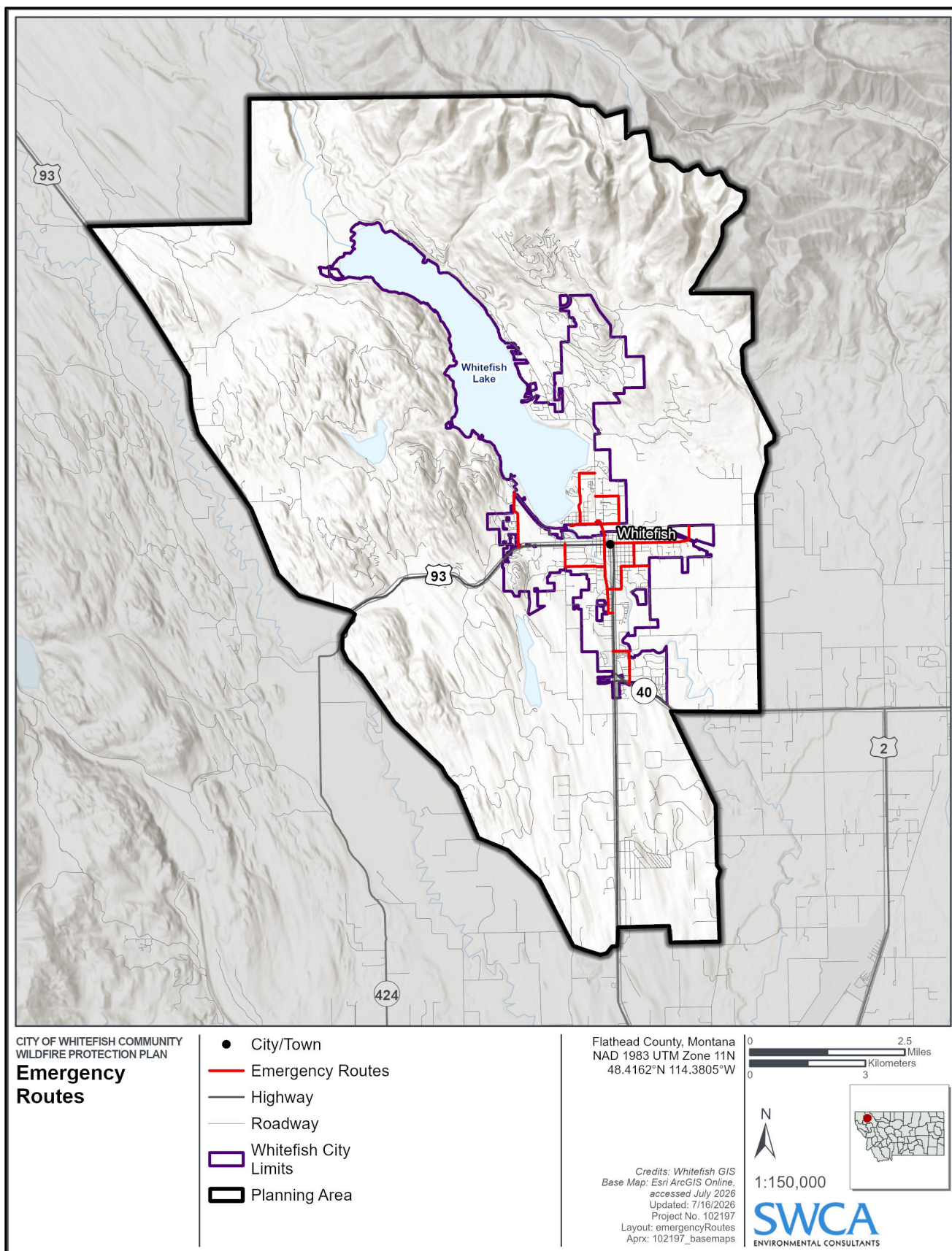


Figure 2.20. Emergency routes.

Note: Emergency routes are shown in red and were identified by the City of Whitefish Office of Emergency Management in coordination with the Whitefish Police Department.

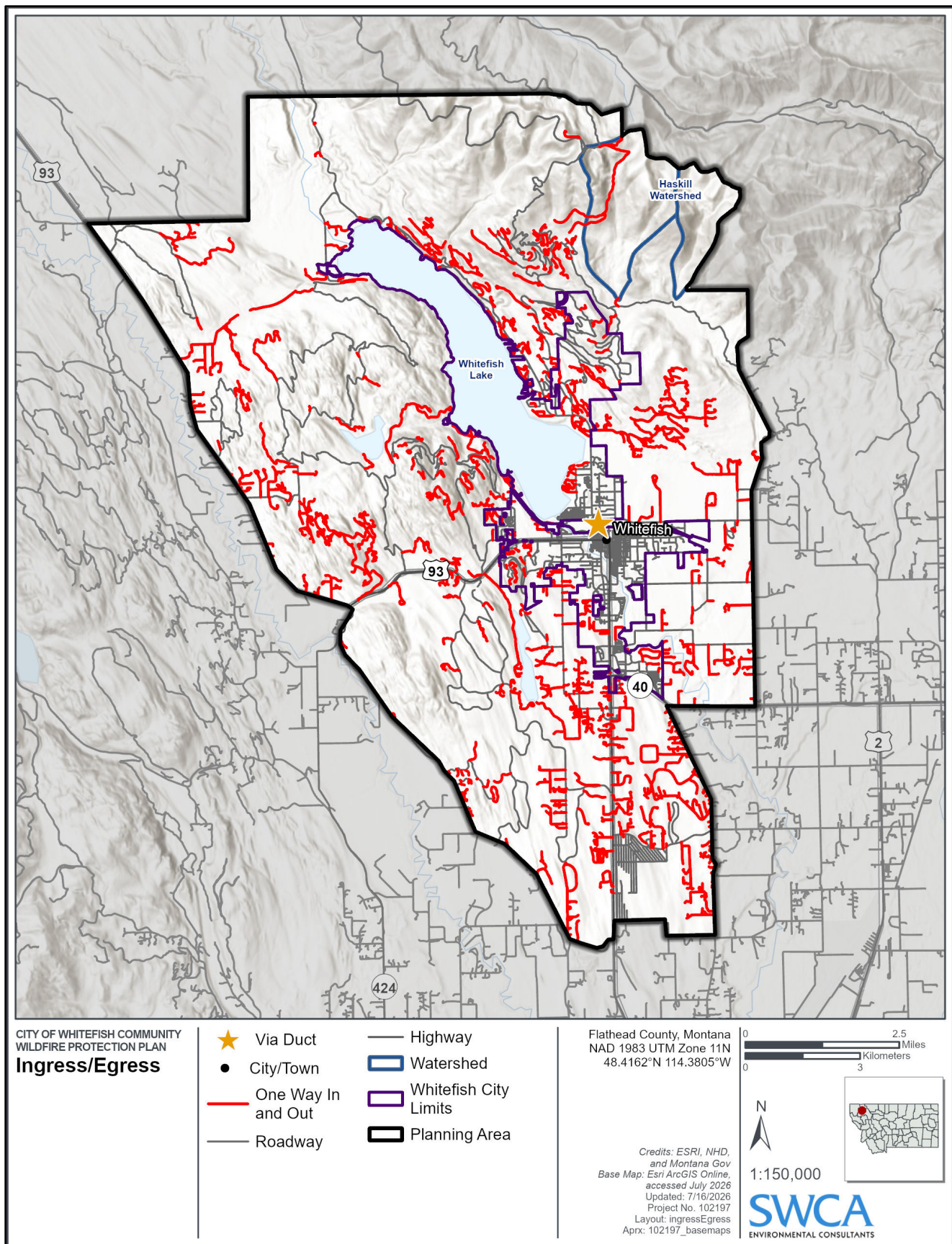


Figure 2.21. One-way-in-and-out roads.

Note: Roads or road systems analyzed to identify one-way-in-and-out situations, which can complicate or impede evacuation and fire response operations.