

## Purpose – Role of the Metropolitan Bicycle Plan

The Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) has undertaken a complete update to the metropolitan Bikeways Plan first developed and approved in 1994. This plan is to guide the development of the bikeways system in the Duluth-Superior Urban Area for the next 25 years and sets forth a vision of where the region would like to be and guidance on how to get there.

The Plan is complementary document to the existing Duluth-Superior Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The LRTP establishes a vision for transportation in the urban area. A major component of this vision is a transportation system which is fully integrated and multimodal, where citizens of all ages and abilities have convenient and desirable options. This Bikeways Plan provides a blueprint to advance the bicycling component of this vision.

The Plan contains goals and recommendations that are regional in scope and provides a planning framework to guide decision-making. Urban transportation systems are complex where trips are routinely made across jurisdictional boundaries, regardless of the roadway authority responsible for maintenance and operations. Therefore, this Plan takes the viewpoint that the region should have a complete and integrated network of bikeways which support people making bicycle trips.

While bicycle planning and policy-making is primarily focused on the local level, the development of this Plan provides an opportunity to improve regional coordination and connectivity of bicycle facilities between jurisdictions. The Plan also provides

### IMPORTANT NOTE

This document includes maps showing large-scale, very general routing options. These maps are to be used as a reference for long-term planning purposes and do not reflect or indicate official construction plans for incomplete bikeways. All bikeways routing may change when implemented due to on-the-ground engineering and public input.

guidance to local decision-makers on the design of bicycle facilities, development of programs, and prioritization of improvement projects.

This is also a working document and is meant to be adaptable. As projects take place, including bikeway and land use changes, routes may need to be changed, whether it be a bikeway that now needs to be adjusted, expanded, removed or changed in some way to meet the new condition.

This document is not for route finding or wayfinding of the existing bike routes. This is to guide roadway jurisdictions and the general public on the future direction of the bikeway network. This document is to be used for planning purposes and the actual routes and improvements will be ultimately decided by the roadway authority.

Finally, this plan highly recommends with any bikeway improvement which will require a reconfiguration of the roadway space, whether it be traffic lane reconfiguration or parking changes, that a robust public engagement process is undertaken (which may involve multiple years of planning) involving all impacted parties and that consideration of the general public interest prevail over the particular interest.

#### KEY POINTS about the Bike Plan

A 25- year vision of the bikeway system.

Not a route finding or wayfinding document.

Guiding document – for planning purposes, not construction.

Plan is adaptable, not static.

## Federal Rules & Guidance.

The Metropolitan Interstate Council is the officially designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Twin Ports and receives federal funding to undertake transportation planning efforts on behalf of the Duluth-Superior urban area. Of the planning responsibilities that the MPO must undertake, one is to plan for the bicycle as a mode of transportation. Below are the federal rules:

### 23 CFR 450 – Metropolitan Transportation Planning & Programming

(a) Set forth the national policy that the MPO designated for each urbanized area is to carry out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive performance-based multimodal transportation planning process, including the development of a metropolitan transportation plan and a TIP, that encourages and promotes the safe and efficient development,, management,, and operation of surface transportation systems to serve the mobility needs of people and freight (including accessible pedestrian walkways, **bicycle transportation facilities**, and intermodal facilities that support intercity transportation, including intercity buses and intercity bus facilities and commuter vanpool providers) fosters economic growth and development, and takes into consideration resiliency needs, while minimizing transportation-related fuel consumption and air pollution; and

450.306

(b)(2) Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;

### US DOT - Federal Highway (FHWA)

#### Incorporating On-Road Bicycle Networks into Resurfacing Projects – March 2016

- US DOT policy is to incorporate safe and convenient walking and bicycle facilities into transportation projects.
- It is the responsibility of every transportation agency in the United States to improve conditions for bicycling and to integrate into their transportation systems.
- Additional, transportation agencies are encouraged not just to meet the minimum requirements of providing bicycle facilities, but to go beyond minimum standards to provide the safest and most convenient bicycle facilities practicable.

450.316

(vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;

450.324

Development and content of the metropolitan transportation plan

(b) The transportation plan shall include both long range and short range strategies/actions that provide for the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system (including accessible pedestrian walkways and **bicycle transportation facilities**) to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in address current and future transportation demand.

(f) The metropolitan transportation plan shall, at a minimum, include:

(12) Pedestrian walkway and **bicycle transportation facilities** in accordance with 23 USC 217 (g)

## Why Bicycling?

A key point of this plan is not that bicycles are the most important transportation mode nor is it expected that bicycles would even become the dominant mode of the future. But more so, that bicycling is a legitimate transportation mode for people of all ages and abilities and it is important for the long term health, quality of life and overall vibrancy of this area.

Modes of transportation are not the ends, but the means to an end. Finding the right balance, is akin to when working on a project, utilizing the right tool for the job. Other tools may work, but what is the most efficient and effective. Therefore, it is critical to find the best tool, or in this case, use of the various transportation modes, to most efficiently and effectively serve the Duluth-Superior Urban Area.

One of the most efficient ways within an urban area to provide physical connections is through the use of a bicycle as a mode of transportation. With a majority of trips in urban areas (which includes all trips a person makes, not only the commute to work ones) encompasses shorter distances, less than 3 miles. These shorter distances coupled with the real limits on space and public infrastructure resources, creates an environment where bringing more people into smaller spaces calls for us to devise the best ways to provide more access with less space. When bicycling is added to the options for people of all ages and abilities to get themselves around, the benefits are numerous. The benefits of a highly bikeable community is that it allows population

Reduce congestion, by shifting short trips (the majority of trips) out of cars. This will agroups without access to a car (e.g., children and low-income households) to have access to destinations within a bikeable distance that are safe and comfortable.

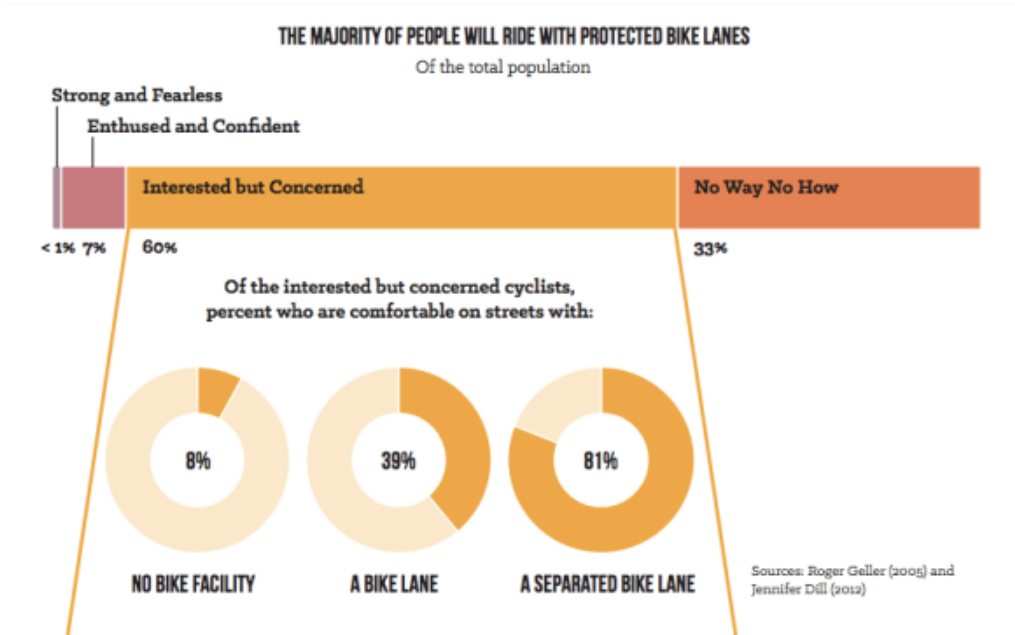
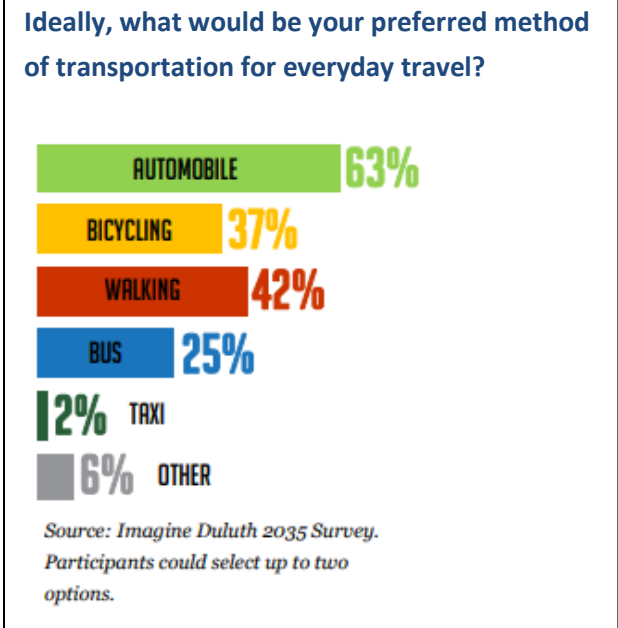
### Bicycling Benefits

- One of the most high-returning public infrastructure investments in an urban area when provide a fully connected network of all ages & abilities bikeways.
- Reduces health risks associated with physical inactivity.
- Strengthens the local economy.
- More affordable for the whole community.
- In areas of and times of congestion, it provides an increase in traffic and parking capacity, particularly in areas where space is limited, but more and more people are going.
- Equitable access to transportation.

A highly bikeable community also means residents, workers and visitors have opportunities for physical activity that can be incorporated as part of regular day-to-day activities.

The vast majority of trips in urban areas are of distances of 3 miles or less. The bicycle serves this distance quite well. Furthermore, in places, a key measurement of a vibrant, successful place is by the number of people in that particular place, not necessarily the number of motor vehicles, buses, or even bikes. The equation then is about figuring out how to accommodate more people in an given space. In urban areas where space is constrained and people generally travel shorter distances, bicycling is a really good tool (not the only tool).

Lastly, the general public is increasingly asking for better bicycle transportation facilities. Nationally, it has been found that the majority of the general public, around 70%, will bicycle for transportation with the proper infrastructure in place. Locally, results from recent surveys in the Duluth-Superior area, respondents have stated they would bicycle for transportation more often if the infrastructure was improved.



## What has changed? The reason for the Plan update.

Bicycling in the United States has taken on many iterations, a boom and bust cycle since the invention of the bicycle. From the initial push by people who bicycle for paved roads in the early 1900s to the 1970s energy crisis and environmental awareness which led to a big wave of popularity and push for bicycling to the last ten years with the exponential growth of bike infrastructure in cities across the U.S. People are buying bicycles in record numbers and there is an increasingly growing push for communities to build bicycle-friendly infrastructure including trails and bike-lanes.

In the past, and for some still today, a major view of bicycling is that it is viewed as a childhood activity and not necessarily a mainstream adult activity (except for a small percent of the population). For adults, the bicycle has also grown to be viewed primarily a vehicle for recreational purposes. While some still hold that viewpoint today, planning for bicycles as a vehicle for transportation has been underway for over 40 years. In the 1970s, both locally and nationally, plans were released to direct transportation investments to ensure bicycling was a viable component of the overall transportation system. In 1974, Federal Highway released their “Bikeways – State of the Art” Report to provide national guidance on designing bikeways. The following year, the City of Duluth released their Bikeways Plan calling for a network of bicycle friendly improvements to the city street network.

However, by the end of the 1970s, bicycle enthusiasm waned and a key theory emerged, one championed by John Forester, a prominent bicycle transportation engineer of the time. He asserted that sharing the road without separated bikeway

### The Changes:

- Travel behavior shift – general public push for better bikeway facilities.
- Growing public health concerns due to physical inactivity.
- Local government fiscal realities have created a need to gain better return on infrastructure investments.
- Declining of gas tax funding.
- Massive technological innovation, particularly the smart phone.
- Delay in driving by young people.

facilities was far more safer for cyclists. This idea was largely accepted across the United States and stalled most efforts to build separated bikeway facilities.

In 1991, federal funding was directed towards planning for the transportation system and specifically called on MPOs, to put together a bicycle and pedestrian transportation plan. The MIC decided to create separate bicycle and pedestrian plans and completed the regional bicycle plan in 1994. This plan focused on bicycle commuters and recreational bicyclists and largely comprised of sharing the road bikeway facility recommendations.

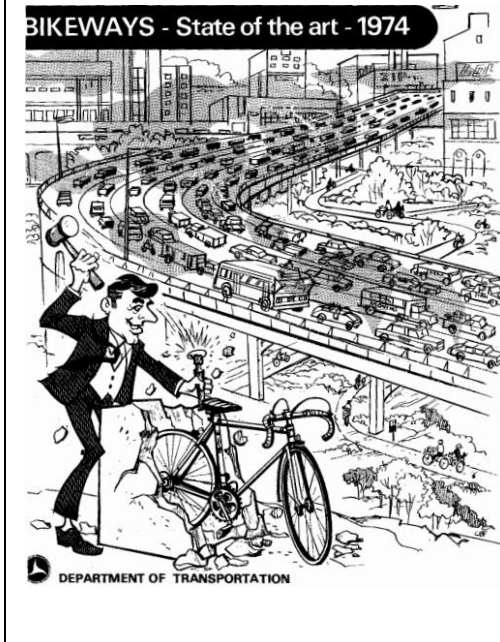
However, since the 1990s, there has been a significant change in thought on how to best accommodate bicyclists. A move away from a primarily sharing the road system to one that provides separate facilities has emerged. This idea is linked to the research which shows that a majority of people would be willing to bike, but not where they would have to share the lane with a motor vehicles.

On top of this is the trend that people are becoming less physically active and the evidence is mounting that this is creating significant health impacts. The research further shows that to change this lack of physical activity behavior, that exercise has to be incorporated as part of everyday routine. With cities and regions being more spread out, transportation has a role in promoting physical activity. People note that time and distance are the two biggest factors preventing them from being more physically active. A bicycle is one of the most efficient and effective tools to overcome the barrier of time and distance, since the majority of trips people make are within 3 miles.

Transportation vs Recreation – design for whom?

Transportation – getting from point A to point B. Direct, without unnecessary stopping or detours.

Recreation – leisurely or a work out, does not need to be direct, should include loops.





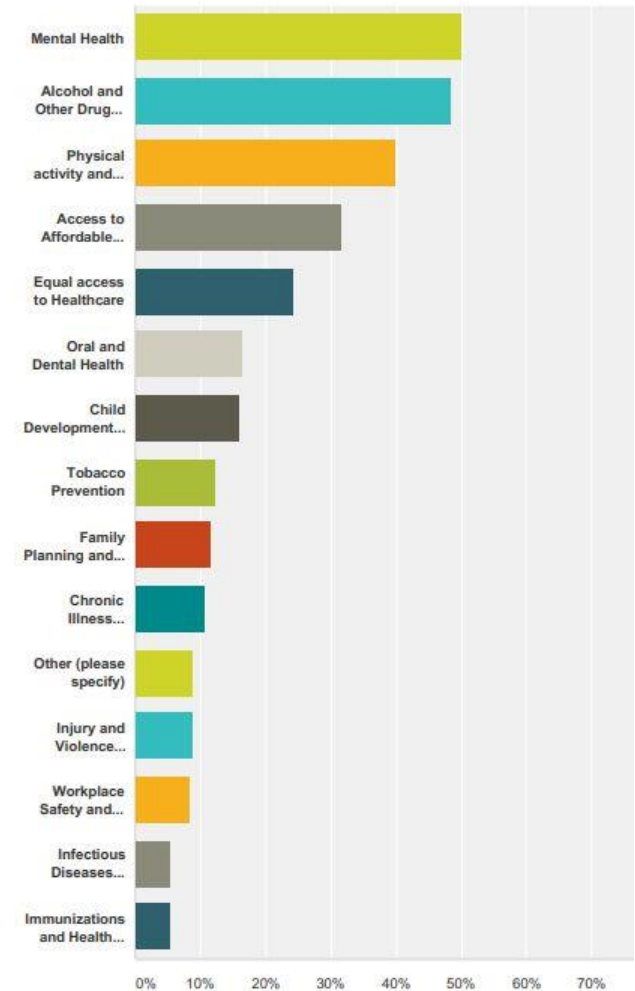
Regular physical activity reduces the risk for certain chronic diseases including high blood pressure, stroke, coronary artery disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, colon cancer and osteoporosis. Furthermore, the built environment and overall environment should promote and support people being active

Local public health organizations, including county public health departments and hospitals, routinely undertake a community health needs assessment to determine the health priorities for the area and devise strategies to address these health needs. The two counties that cover the MIC area, St. Louis County in Minnesota and Douglas County in Wisconsin are leaders in these efforts and help put together a community health improvement and implementation plan. In St. Louis County, the Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Plan identified four priority areas, one of which being “Obesity, including lack of access to healthy foods and physical activity. The plan has a goal of reducing the rate of obesity. The Douglas County plan has a goal to increase healthy eating and physical activity to reduce overweight/obesity of Douglas County residents. Both plans call for increasing opportunities for people to be physically active as one of the key measures to improve health outcomes.

Douglas County Community Health Survey - 2016

**Q5 What THREE THINGS need to be improved to make Douglas County Healthier? (check only 3 boxes)**

Answered: 537 Skipped: 17



Over the last 10 years, significant progress has been made, including in the Twin Ports to make it better for people to bicycle. Bicycle transportation facilities have been expanded, communities are redesigning streets with bicyclists in mind, bicycle support facilities are being installed including bike route wayfinding signage, bike racks and bike share system and local governments are beginning to innovate new bikeway designs. There is now national guidance for designing bikeways, through National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide, update to national and state design standards and local communities pioneering new bikeway designs.

With all of this that is happening, it was time to consider these renewed focus on the unique situation of urban streets that require innovative treatments. This bikeways plan is focused on this urban viewpoint and solutions.

## Planning Process

The Bikeways Plan builds on previous planning efforts both completed by the MIC as well as surrounding jurisdictions and partner agencies and organizations. There are numerous planning efforts that have informed the development of this plan. The level of detail into which each of these plans gives recommendations regarding the bicycle network varies greatly. In addition, there are a number of bikeway planning efforts that while not officially adopted but have none-the-less have informed this plan, including the Downtown Duluth Bikeways Audit & Survey, Michigan Street Protected Bikeway Demonstration Project and the various Safe Routes to School plans.

Nationally, innovation of urban bicycle infrastructure was transforming urban streets and rapidly expanding bikeway infrastructure in cities across the United States. As new designs were being tried, new resources for urban bikeway design were also become widely available, particularly the NACTO guides. This all led to the conclusion that a complete update of the Bikeways Plan was in order to better reflect the best practices and new urban street designs being developed.

Therefore in 2010, work began in a re-thinking of the bikeway system. The MIC worked closely with local partners on this update, in some cases served in a supporting role and in others as the lead, but all with the intention of incorporating the recommendations and ideas into the updated Bikeways Plan.

## Bikeway Planning Efforts

1975 Duluth Bikeways Plan  
1994 Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Bikeways Plan  
1998 Duluth-Superior Metro Area Bikeways Status  
Report & Implementation Plan  
2007 Proctor Master Trails Plan

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2010 – Connecting Duluth Report

2011 – Duluth Trail & Bikeway Plan

2013-14 – Plan for Duluth’s Bikeways

2015 – Downtown Duluth Bikeways Audit & Survey

2015 Hermantown-Proctor Munger Trail Spur

2016 Duluth Township Trails Plan

2017 – Cross City Trail Mini-Master Plan

2017 – Protected Bikeway Demonstration Project

2018 – Canosia Township Trails Plan

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Upcoming bikeway planning efforts:

2019 – Superior Active Transportation Plan

2019 – Campus Connector Mini-Master Trails Plan

From the very start, a number of big issues arose that really needed a series of separate planning efforts before the bikeways plan update could move forward. These issues needed to be resolved or at least moving forward with workable solution was essential. These issues were:

1. The determination of which streets within the City of Duluth are recommended to have bike facilities, particularly bike lanes.
2. Final alignment of the Cross City Trail, the backbone trail running the length of Duluth and closing the gap connecting between the Munger and Gitchi Gami State Trails.
3. Major connecting trails to Proctor, Hermantown and the surrounding townships.
4. Clarification on the Downtown Duluth bikeway network.
5. Update of the bikeway system in Superior (this will be undertaken as part of the Superior Active Transportation Plan).

**2010 Connecting Duluth Report** – citizen-driven effort lead by Fit City Duluth, conducting a complete bicycle system assessment. The local advocacy organization engaged bicyclists directly in the City of Duluth about where they ride and where they would prefer. A series of public meetings were held through out Duluth to gather this input and report back. A final report detailing preferred routes as well as recommendations.

**2011 Duluth Trail & Bikeway Plan** – Plan created a vision for trails and bikeways in Duluth for both recreation and transportation purposes. The plan identified a system of transportation routes for bicycling, both on-street and off-street and provided

Duluth Trail & Bikeway Plan - Bikeway System Evaluation:

- A largely bike unfriendly on-road environment • Good base of existing bike routes • Strong tourism market
- Tremendous resources - terrain, lake, river, views, natural areas, four season climate, etc.
- Positive Complete Streets policy • Few paved trails and no bike lanes
- Few and hidden trailheads
- Challenging terrain and climate
- Need for off-street paved trails and on-street bike lanes
- Need for a bikeway advocacy group to promote road biking
- Need for bikeway connections to downtown, schools and commercial areas • Safe, dedicated bike facilities (lanes, sharrows and bike parking) as needed downtown

recommendations on what bikeway type should be installed. The plan also called for addition follow up, including a feasibility evaluation, public outreach and site specific design process is recommend for each of these improvement projects. Some improvements involve the simple addition of signage and pavement markings, others may be part of a larger road reconstruction and some may require removal of on-street parking.

**2013-14 – Plan for Duluth’s Bikeways** Duluth undertakes a extensive evaluation of the recommended bikeways from the past planning efforts. Another round of public meetings were held gather input and devised a plan for bikeways. A final public meeting was held, then the plan brought through the formal city processes, including the Planning Commission and received approval from Duluth City Council.

**2015 – Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Bikeways Plan** – the planning efforts for this project began in 2015. The process moved slowly as a number of big issues arose and needed to be worked through before proceeding.

- Started with TAC and MIC engagement - a Perspective on Bicycling Survey and followed up with a Vision exercise and identification of gap areas.
- Superior Bikeways Public Meeting
- Downtown Duluth Bikeways Audit & Survey

2016 – Review of feedback and prior plans

- Trouble Spots Survey.

- Outreach to local groups including presentations to the Active Living Committee and Duluth Bikes.

2017 – Technical Review, Analysis and mapping

- Protected Bikelane Demonstration Project

2018 – Drafting of Plan

- Public Open House
- Roadway Jurisdiction Vetting
- Draft Review & Comment Period
- Draft Plan Public Meeting
- Final Approval