

1. Welcome!

This chapter introduces the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Duluth-Superior area.

Sustainable Choices 2045



Duluth-Superior Long-Range Transportation Plan

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Introduction: What is Sustainable Choices 2045?

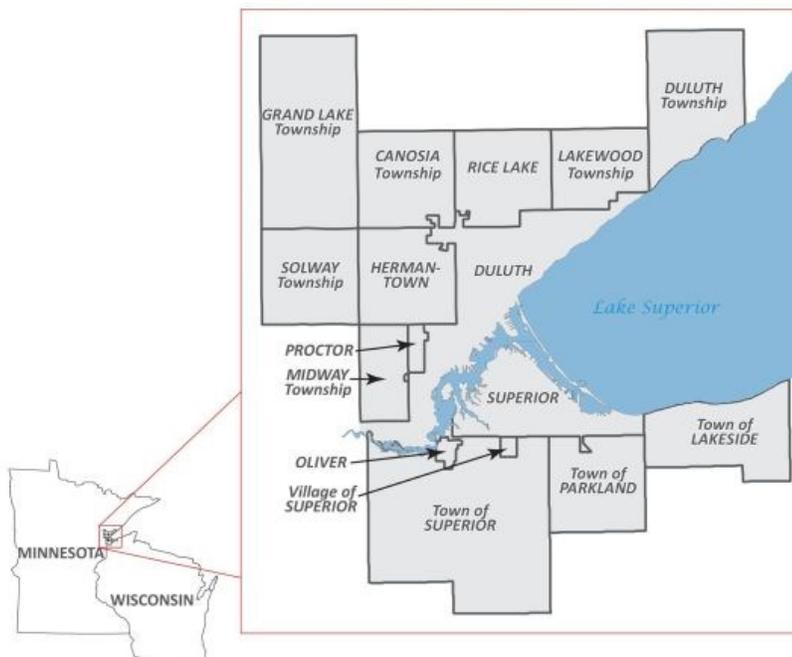
This Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) provides vision, goals and objectives, data and policy guidance for jurisdictions within the greater metropolitan area of Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin to work cooperatively to provide a well-maintained, integrated, accessible and multi-modal transportation system to safely and efficiently move people and freight for the next 25 years. *Sustainable Choices 2045* is not simply an update of our past LRTPs., it is a significant overhaul.

Since a transportation system crosses many jurisdictional boundaries with spending decisions made at state, county and city levels, *Sustainable Choices 2045* coordinates the planning and sets forth a vision for the area-wide transportation network, within the constraints of funding the region can reasonably expect to receive. It covers a twenty-five year planning horizon and is updated every five years.

What Area Does It Cover?

Sustainable Choices 2045 addresses all modes of transportation within the Duluth-Superior metropolitan planning area (Fig. 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Planning Area



Statement of Purpose

Sustainable Choices 2045 will guide the future of transportation in the Twin Ports area by planning for a comprehensive, multi-modal, and integrated transportation system that provides a high level of access and mobility for all people and goods, improves safety, preserves infrastructure, and provides economic activity consistent with available environmental and fiscal resources.

Access and mobility...

Access is the ease with which people can reach destinations

Mobility is the ease of movement that people experience in moving from place to place

for people and freight...

Transportation systems must accommodate the needs of personal and commercial trips, locally and regionally, via multiple modes

...is the sensitive balance sought in good transportation planning.*

* Source: The Institute of Transportation Engineers and Smart Growth transportation planners.

Area Transportation Assets

The Duluth-Superior metropolitan planning area features a broad range of infrastructure across all modes of transport: four Class I railroads, local roads, an Interstate highway, an international seaport, an international airport, a public transit system and miles of hiking and biking trails. These assets should be preserved and developed to maximize their economic development value and minimize their impact on the environment and other community values. (See Map 5.1 on page 5-17)

Why Does It Matter?

Sustainable Choices 2045 serves as the foundation for the MIC's planning efforts. This multimodal plan is important because it provides an overall vision, incorporates community and jurisdictional input to establish priorities for area transportation decisions; identifies issues for further study by the MIC; and filters potential projects down into the Duluth and Superior [Transportation Improvement Program](#) (TIPs) which use federal transportation funds to priority projects for the Duluth-Superior area.

If a city, county, or public agency in the Duluth-Superior metropolitan planning area intends to use federal transportation funding for projects or programs, the projects must be included in and be consistent with this LRTP.

When Is It Updated?

To keep pace with changing priorities, opportunities, and challenges, the MIC's LRTP is updated every 5 years, while the TIPs are updated annually.

What's New for the 2045 LRTP?

Sustainable Choices 2045 is not simply an update of our past LRTPs. It is a complete overhaul, attempting to consider and plan for the entire MIC-area transportation system in a holistic and applied manner. This more holistic approach is perhaps most notable in the following ways:

- The public is calling for transportation projects to consider not only safety and efficient movement of automobiles, but also to achieve a balance of other transportation-related planning factors such as supporting and maintaining health

Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council



www.dsmic.org

The MIC is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Duluth-Superior area and produced this Long Range Transportation Plan.

MIC-Area Jurisdictions include:

Minnesota

- Canosia Township
- City of Duluth
- City of Hermantown
- City of Proctor
- City of Rice Lake
- Duluth Township
- Grand Lake Township
- Lakewood Township
- Midway Township
- Solway Township
- St. Louis County
- MnDOT

Wisconsin

- City of Superior
- Lakeside Township
- Parkland Township
- Town of Oliver
- Village of Superior
- Douglas County
- WisDOT

of people and the environment, livable and equitable communities, and economic vitality. This plan weaves this holistic view throughout and these factors serve as the foundation of its five primary goals.

- As the name of the plan implies, a greater emphasis than in the past will be placed on the importance of incorporating a sustainable mindset and approach to the development and maintenance of our transportation system, and includes objectives to move us toward implementing a fully sustainable transportation system. This includes more emphasis on fiscal constraint than in previous plans.
- Unlike past LRTPs, *Sustainable Choices 2045* calls for the development of an ongoing implementation strategy to ensure the goals of the plan are carried out. We are recommending an annual evaluation and report of how goals, objectives, and key highlights of the plan are being implemented and incorporated into actual transportation-related projects. It is believed this will help the plan remain much more useful and relevant over time.
- The federally required performance measures are incorporated into the MIC’s long range transportation planning process. The MIC’s recently-adopted targets are included in this plan, and examples of projects that help achieve these targets are discussed.

In addition to the overhaul of the overall approach of the plan described above, new data that has become available since the publication of the last [LRTP \(*Connections 2040*\)](#), along with federal FAST Act transportation legislation which put forward notable policy initiatives and planning directives, have shaped the focus of *Sustainable Choices 2045*. A brief summary of these new aspects of the plan are provided below.

Updated Traffic Demand Model

The MIC-area travel demand model has been updated to include revised demographic and employment projections, as well as expansion projects that have occurred since 2014.

Adjusted Project Lists—Revenues & Expenditures

Estimated costs of all improvement projects identified in the previous (2040) version of the LRTP have been revised to better reflect updated information and inflationary increases. The updated project lists are included on pages 6-15—6-35 of

Planning for All Modes of Transportation

Transportation systems are multi-modal. This plan addresses both motorized and non-motorized (or “active”) modes of travel, including:



Pedestrian



Harbor/Port



Highways



Transit

Chapter 6. In summary this plan includes \$3,074,625,000 in total revenues and \$2,503,633,800 in total expenditures. Additionally, \$1,152,055,000 is estimated for operations and maintenance. Finally, there is an estimated additional \$199 million in unfunded transportation needs. These are clarified and detailed in Chapter 6.

Better Explanation of Fiscal Constraint

Sustainable Choices 2045 explains better how the projects in the plan demonstrate fiscal constraint. As can be noted above the fiscal analysis in this plan is showing an overall surplus of approximately \$571 million over the 25-year life of the Plan. At the same time one of the plan's main premises is that there is not enough revenue to cover the existing transportation infrastructure expenses within the MIC area. At first glance, there appears to be a significant contradiction. The summary explanation is two-fold:

- The MIC area has very large and expensive bridge and highway projects that will take place within this 25-year planning horizon but are not fully scoped at this time, thus their associated cost estimates are not yet know.
- Not all publicly funded transportation system costs are federally eligible and/or considered regionally significant, and thus not all projects in the MIC area are included in this plan's project lists and fiscal analysis.

A full explanation of how fiscal constraint is demonstrated within this plan is provided in Chapter 6.

Inclusion of State Performance Measures

Sustainable Choices 2045 includes the locally adopted State performance measures regarding:

- Safety
- Pavement and Bridge Condition
- Performance of National Highway System (NHS) and Freight
- Transit Asset Management

These performance measures are detailed, with listed targets and timelines in Chapter 5 (See p. 5-23—5-33).

Emphasis on Overall Sustainability

A purposeful emphasis on achieving fiscal, social, and environmental sustainability in both the short and long-term

Planning for All Modes of Transportation



Roadways



Air



Bicycle



Rail

across the entire Duluth-Superior area transportation system is woven throughout, and integral to the vision of *Sustainable Choices 2045*.

Implementation Strategy

Sustainable Choices 2045 calls for an ongoing implementation strategy to begin after its final adoption by the MIC Policy Board. MIC staff working with an Implementation Strategy team will develop a process and timeline to interact with the TAC and the Policy Board to (1) keep the LRTP’s goals and objectives top of mind with these stakeholders and (2) to evaluate progress toward implementing the plan’s goals and objectives. Ideas for the Implementation Strategy are outlined on page 2-11.

How Was This Plan Developed?

Sustainable Choices 2045 was developed after assessing transportation needs and setting priorities for the Duluth-Superior area, which included:

- Gathering and summarizing input from the public regarding local transportation options, use, issues, and priorities;
- Analyzing the most recent data available, including traffic volumes, level of service estimates, socio-economic and demographic trends, and existing transportation assets;
- Estimating projected revenues;
- Coordinating with current federal and state policies;
- Building upon recent local and area plans and policies;
- Consulting with local jurisdictions and other partners.

These priorities are reflected in the plan’s Goals and Objectives which are described and listed in Chapter 2.

Who Was Involved?

Public involvement is integral to good transportation planning. The MIC’s [Public Involvement Plan](#) set the framework for the outreach efforts throughout the development of *Sustainable Choices 2045*. Chapter 7 describes the public involvement process in detail, but to summarize key participants and opportunities:

Advisory Committee—The MIC’s Transportation Advisory Committee was consulted on an almost-monthly basis during all phases of the Plan’s development.

THE MIC’S PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN SET THE FRAMEWORK FOR OUTREACH EFFORTS THROUGHOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF *SUSTAINABLE CHOICES 2045*

MIC Policy Board—The MIC Policy Board was updated on an almost-monthly basis during all phases of the Plan’s development.

Public Surveys—The interactive online survey platform MetroQuest was utilized in two separate phases in the early development of Sustainable Choices 2045.

Public Events—MIC staff participated in 11 public events to reach out to the general public on the goals of the LRTP, promote the online surveys and to gather input in person.

Meetings with Partner Organizations—MIC staff held 17 meetings with targeted stakeholder groups (business, education, mobility impaired, transit users).

Consultations—MIC staff held 17 meetings with elected officials, planners and engineers from all MIC-area jurisdictions to discuss LRTP key points and gather pertinent information specific to each.