

Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Pedestrian Plan

August 2021



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Walking is the most basic and universal form of transportation, yet it can be easy to overlook how much we walk as part of our travel from place to place. We view ourselves as drivers, passengers, or even cyclists, but we often take for granted the walking part of the journey.

The MIC has spent the past year focusing on how to make the pedestrian part of our area's transportation system work better - and to encourage walking to destinations as part of people's daily routines. Although 25 percent of all trips are less than 1 mile, 75 percent of these short trips are made by automobile.

By making it easier, safer and more pleasant to walk to nearby destinations, a number of benefits could be realized, including improved community health, decreased vehicle emissions, reduced spending on automobile travel and increased social interaction.

This plan is based on and supports the following concepts:

- That walking plays an essential role in the urban transportation system;
- That walking is a viable and desirable transportation mode for the Duluth-Superior area as distances between key destinations and within many neighborhoods are within a walkable distance;
- That investing in walking is an effective approach for achieving multiple community goals including creating a vibrant economy, enhancing quality of life and improving health outcomes;
- That designing a transportation system that works well for people walking requires slowing motor vehicles and providing comfortable walking environments through separation from traffic, thoughtful intersection design, pedestrian amenities, and seamless integration with destinations.

The Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Pedestrian Plan incorporates extensive local stakeholder input to provide guidance to decision-makers on how best to focus transportation investments in the MPO area to improve the environment for people who walk and use wheelchairs.

About 'Walking'

This plan uses the words 'walk,' 'walking' and 'pedestrian' to refer to activity not only by able-bodied people, but also to those who use mobility devices such as walkers, strollers, and wheelchairs.

"The most essential component of "walking" is the act of being physically present in a space. Whether the movement occurs via two feet or four wheels, walking encompasses all of the ways in which an individual is present and visible in a space, influencing the world and making a mark on a place in an impactful way."

-Clara Cecil, [It Starts with a Step: Better Walking for a Better World](#)



How I Walk is a visual campaign that aims to promote 'walking' as an inclusive physical activity term that is individualized.

Vision

The vision for the pedestrian transportation system throughout the Duluth-Superior area is:

- Walking is a safe, convenient and desirable transportation option for all ages and abilities
- Routing is direct and convenient
- Access is seamless, intuitive, consistent and predictably available, across jurisdictional boundaries and roadway authorities..

Plan Purpose

The Duluth-Superior Pedestrian Plan provides a 20-year vision with short- and long- term recommendations and strategies to improve the walking environment throughout the Twin Ports area.

It is intended as a guide to be utilized by all jurisdictions responsible for roadways; township, city, and county officials carrying out and creating land use policies and development codes; public entities such as schools and colleges; and property owners that are building and maintaining connections in their part of the network.

Priority Improvements

Since financial and personnel resources are limited, the Plan prioritizes where to focus improvements along and across roadways throughout the Twin Ports.

A key component of this plan is an interactive map that shows where highest-priority walkways are needed, where key gaps should be filled, and where it is critical that the pedestrian walkways are available and reliably clear of obstructions.

While sidewalks and trails provide spaces for people to walk *along* streets, they do not help people walking *across* streets. Busy streets and streets with fast moving traffic often serve as significant barriers for people on foot.

Therefore, this plan includes a general methodology for improving pedestrian crossings, while also recommending improvements at specific intersections.

Why the MIC is Producing this Plan

The Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) is the officially designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Twin Ports and receives federal funding to

Federal Rules & Planning Guidance for MPOs

23 U.S. Code 134 – Metropolitan Transportation Planning

(a) Policy.—It is in the national interest—
(1) to encourage and promote the safe and efficient management, operation, and development of surface transportation systems that will serve the **mobility needs of people** and freight, foster economic growth and development within and between States and urbanized areas, and take into consideration resiliency needs while minimizing transportation-related fuel consumption and air pollution through metropolitan and statewide transportation planning processes identified in this chapter;

General Requirements:

(2) Contents.— The plans and TIPs for each metropolitan area shall provide for the development and integrated management and operation of transportation systems and facilities **(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)** that will function as an intermodal transportation system for the metropolitan planning area and as an integral part of an intermodal transportation system for the State and the United States.

23 CFR 450.324

(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 addressing current and future transportation demand.

undertake transportation planning efforts on behalf of the Duluth-Superior Urban Area.

One of the responsibilities that MPOs must undertake is to plan for an integrated multimodal transportation system, including accessible pedestrian walkways, to facilitate safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand.

How this Plan was Developed

Beginning in the Spring of 2020, community engagement was a core aspect in developing this plan by (a) identifying issues and barriers that exist for walking as transportation and (b) developing a range of policy recommendations and investment strategies to improve the pedestrian environment.

Community members and targeted stakeholder groups included:

Advisory Committee

The project team worked with an Advisory Committee as the primary source of input and feedback throughout the plan's development. It was composed of local and state staff, elected officials, representatives from community organizations and citizens.

It met 8 times beginning in April 2020 to discuss pedestrian needs and priorities, provide local and institutional knowledge for the project, and review project materials.

One-on-One Meetings

Project staff met with individuals representing and from priority population communities to listen and learn about pedestrian-related issues facing them. Meetings took place with the following organizations:

- CHUM – Outreach Coordinator
- Community Action Duluth – Transportation Advocate
- AICHO – American Indian Community Housing Org.

Community & Stakeholder Hosted Meetings

Throughout the project, MIC staff attend meetings hosted by stakeholder groups to give presentations and take comments:

- Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) Policy Board and Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)
(6 presentations w/discussion)

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) (4 presentations w/discussion)
- Duluth Transit Authority Board (1 presentation w/discussion)

Pop-Up Displays

MIC staff attended 3 outdoor community events during the summer of 2020, located in neighborhoods with higher numbers of priority populations, to distribute paper copies of the online survey:

- Damiano Meal Center
- Hillside Farmers Market
- Harrison Farmers Market

Public Open Houses

October 2020 – two virtual public open houses were held during Fall Bus, Bike Walk Month event to discuss the Plan. One session focused as Pedestrian Safety and the other session focused on Pedestrian Accessibility.

February 2021 – two virtual public open houses were held during Winter Active Transportation Week event to discuss the draft Plan.

May 2021 — two virtual public open houses were held during as scheduled events during Active Transportation Month to discuss the Plan.

