

# Appendix C

## Public Involvement Activities for *Sustainable Choices 2050*

## 2023

	Date	Meeting or Group Name	# of Participants	Description
1.	6/20/23	TAC <sup>1</sup>	25	<b>MTP Kickoff Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> MIC staff introduced the 2050 MTP, including its purpose, scope of work, contents and due dates, and requested ongoing participation and input from this group, as key stakeholders.
2.	6/21/23	MIC <sup>2</sup>	25	<b>MTP Kickoff Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> MIC staff introduced the 2050 MTP, including its purpose, scope of work, contents and due dates, and requested ongoing participation and input from this group, as key stakeholders.
3.	8/23/23	Public Survey Release	422	<b>2050 MTP Transportation Survey released:</b> From August – December 2023, the MIC issued and publicized an online survey for the general public, asking respondents to describe their vision for the region’s transportation system, key areas of concern, and ideas for the future. <i>Consultation Summary, p.4 below</i>
4.	9/19/23	MN Jurisdictional Representatives	10	<b>MN Jurisdictional Consultation #1:</b> AECOM staff held the first of two planned consultations with representatives from the jurisdictions on the Minnesota side of the MIC planning area. <i>Consultation Summary, p.4 below</i>
5.	9/19/23	WI Jurisdictional Representatives	4	<b>WI Jurisdictional Consultation #1:</b> AECOM staff held the first of two planned consultations with representatives from the jurisdictions on the Wisconsin side of the MIC planning area. <i>Consultation Summary, p.5 below</i>
6.	10/17/23	TAC	28	<b>Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> MIC staff presented the vision and goals of the 2050 MTP, discussed how these directly related to the Duluth and Superior Area TIPs and the annual MIC work programs, and invited comments from the group.
7.	10/18/23	MIC	24	<b>Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> MIC staff presented the vision and goals of the 2050 MTP, and discussed how these directly related to the Duluth and Superior Area TIPs and the annual MIC work programs.
8.	12/5/23	Pedestrian Focus Group	10	<b>Targeted Stakeholder Focus Group:</b> AECOM staff facilitated a discussion centered on issues and opportunities for pedestrians and walkability throughout the MIC area. <i>Consultation Summary, p.7 below</i>
9.	12/6/23	Port/Harbor/Freight Focus Group	42	<b>Targeted Stakeholder Focus Group:</b> AECOM staff facilitated a discussion at the regularly-scheduled Harbor Technical Advisory Committee meeting about transportation issues and opportunities related to the Duluth-Superior port/harbor and multimodal freight in the MIC area. <i>Consultation Summary, p. 9 below</i>
10.	12/6/23	Sustainability Focus Group	8	<b>Targeted Stakeholder Focus Group:</b> AECOM staff facilitated a discussion centered on sustainability issues and opportunities in the MIC area motorized and non-motorized transportation network. <i>Consultation Summary, p.10 below</i>
11.	12/6/23	Equity Focus Group	12	<b>Targeted Stakeholder Focus Group:</b> AECOM staff facilitated a discussion centered on equity issues related to transportation in the MIC area, with a focus on historically-underserved areas and populations. <i>Consultation Summary, p.11 below.</i>

<sup>1</sup>Transportation Advisory Committee

<sup>2</sup>Policy Board

<sup>3</sup>Harbor Technical Advisory Committee

#	Date	Meeting Group or Name	# of Participants	Description
<b>2024</b>				
12.	1/4/24	MN Jurisdictional Representatives	13	<b>Jurisdictional Consultation:</b> MIC staff held the second of two consultations with jurisdictional representatives from the Minnesota side of the MIC planning area.
13.	1/8/24	WI Jurisdictional Representatives	7	<b>Jurisdictional Consultation:</b> MIC staff held the second of two consultations with jurisdictional representatives from the Wisconsin side of the MIC planning area.
14.	1/11/24	MnDOT Passenger Rail Program	5	<b>Modal Consultation – Passenger Rail:</b> MIC staff met MnDOT Passenger Rail Program staff to get a status summary of the proposed NLX passenger rail service.
15.	1/17/24	MnDOT Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations	6	<b>Modal Consultation – Freight Rail:</b> MIC staff met with MnDOT Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations staff to get a status summary of state freight rail operations.
16.	2/1/24	BPAC <sup>4</sup>	24	<b>Modal Consultation – Bike-Pedestrian Advisory Committee:</b> MIC staff provided a status update about the MTP and invited comments from the group about pedestrian and bicycle transportation in the MIC area. <i>Consultation Summary, p.13 below</i>
17.	2/20/24	TAC	24	<b>Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> Building upon the December 2023 presentation, AECOM and MIC staff presented the proposed process for scoring the projects to be included in the 2050 MTP, highlighting the proposed data-driven metrics along with the planning emphasis areas that will be used to help refine the project scoring, and invited comments for refining the proposed metrics. <i>Consultation Summary, p.14 below</i>
18.	3/14/24	Lincoln Park Business Group	23	<b>Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> MIC staff provided a status update about the MTP and invited comments from the group about business-related transportation issues and opportunities in the growing Lincoln Park area of Duluth. <i>Consultation Summary, p.14 below.</i>
19.	3/19/24	TAC	31	<b>Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> AECOM and MIC staff reviewed the proposed Step 1 -MTP Project Scoring Metrics and Step 3 - Final Review Questions to be used to score the MTP projects, and asked for input. <i>Consultation Summary, p.14 below</i>
20.	3/27/24	DTA <sup>5</sup> Board	9	<b>Modal Consultation – Transit:</b> MIC staff presented an overview of the ongoing development of the MTP and invited comments from the group regarding transit issues, needs and opportunities in the MIC area. <i>Consultation Summary, p.15 below</i>

<sup>4</sup>Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee

#	Date	Meeting Group or Name	# of Participants	Description
21.	3/29/24	Bicycle Shop Meetup	8	<b>Modal Consultation – Bicyclists:</b> MIC staff attended an impromptu meeting of employees from local bicycle shops to give a brief overview of the MTP and to invite comments about bicycling-related issues and opportunities in the MIC area. <i>Consultation Summary, p.16 below</i>
22.	4/16/24	TAC	7	<b>Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> As a follow-up to the MTP project scoring approach discussions during the previous TAC meetings, AECOM staff facilitated a work session focused on the project list scores, giving TAC members the opportunity to offer feedback and ask questions in a work session that directly preceded the TAC meeting..
23.	4/17/24	MIC	27	<b>Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> MIC staff presented a summary of MTP requirements, work accomplished to date, and a general timeline for finalizing the 2050 update of the MIC’s long range plan.
24.	4/22/24	Older Adults Focus Group	4	<b>Targeted Stakeholder Focus Group:</b> MIC staff facilitated a discussion centered on transportation issues experienced by older adults in the MIC area. <i>Consultation Summary, p.17 below</i>
25.	4/23/24	People with Disabilities Focus Group	3	<b>Targeted Stakeholder Focus Group:</b> MIC staff facilitated a discussion centered on transportation issues experienced by people with disabilities in the MIC area. <i>Consultation Summary, p.18 below</i>
26.	5/14/24	Superior-Douglas County Area Chamber of Commerce & Travel Superior	1	<b>Presentation and Discussion:</b> MIC staff met with staff from the Superior-Douglas County Area Chamber of Commerce & Travel Superior to discuss their perspective on future transportation issues, needs and opportunities. <i>Consultation Summary, p.19 below</i>
27.	6/18/24	TAC	34	<b>Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> MIC staff presented several chapters of the Draft Long Range MTP 2050 for review and discussion.
28.	6/21/24	Natural Resources and Environmental Consultation	4	<b>Agency Consultation:</b> MIC notified relevant agencies, including the Fond du Lac Tribe, requesting their input (i.e., concerns and/or recommendations) in regard to potential impacts from the proposed MTP transportation projects on natural resources and environmental factors.
29.	6/21/24	Historic Resources and Historic Preservation Consultation	1	<b>Agency Consultation:</b> MIC notified relevant agencies, including the Fond du Lac Tribe, requesting their input (i.e., concerns and/or recommendations) in regard to potential impacts from the proposed MTP transportation projects on historic resources and/or cultural sites.
30.	6/26/24	MIC	16	<b>Presentation &amp; Discussion:</b> MIC staff presented several chapters of the Draft Long Range MTP 2050 for review and discussion.
			<b>857</b>	<b>30 Stakeholder Interactions</b> (1 survey, 6 focus groups, 11 consultations, 12 presentation & discussions)

<sup>5</sup>Duluth Transit Authority

## 8/23/23 Public Survey

**Description:** From August – December 2023, the MIC issued and publicized an online survey for the general public, asking respondents to describe their vision for the region’s transportation system, key areas of concern, and ideas for the future.

### What We Heard – Summary of Themes:

#### Transportation System Perceptions

- Most people think traffic congestion is light at middays and weekends and moderate during the morning and evening commutes.
- People perceive transit service in the Duluth-Superior area as average, but few survey respondents are bus riders. Among riders, perceptions are mixed.
- Sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian traffic signals and other amenities for walkers are considered poor to average.
- Bike riders in the region do not feel as though biking is safe or convenient; and even non-cyclists feel that bike infrastructure is poor.

#### Transportation System Values & Priorities

- People feel that the most critical issues to be addressed in the transportation system are maintaining infrastructure in good working condition, keeping transportation safe, and improving conditions for walking, biking, and transit while connecting all modes of travel for efficiency.
- Transportation safety remains the region’s number one priority.

#### Transportation Issues and Opportunities

- Nearly everyone feels that snow clearance is a critical issue for the Duluth-Superior transportation system, particularly as it affects walking.
- Spot traffic congestion is an issue on a small number of road segments and intersections.
- In many areas, excess road capacity means there is pavement or right of way that can be reallocated to walking, biking, or transit, or reduced in the future to save costs and minimize environmental impacts, like stormwater runoff.
- Limited funding means that maintenance of an efficient transportation system can be difficult and requires prioritization of initiatives.
- We have to be able to accommodate more oversized trucks on our roads as port activities grow, and a truck bypass would benefit all transportation in the region.
- Creating a reliable, base system for walking should be a key feature of the plan – this includes fixing gaps in the sidewalk system, expanding sidewalks and trails with an eye on basic access, determining how to maintain our sidewalks, and figuring out how to keep sidewalks clear of snow in the winter. This is especially critical as the region’s population ages.
- A continuous, safe east-west greenway or bike lane could dramatically improve cycling.
- The bus system has been improved, but still is considered a “second class” mode.

## 9/19/23 Minnesota Jurisdictions—Consultation #1

**Description:** AECOM staff held the first of two planned consultations with representatives from the jurisdictions on the Minnesota side of the MIC planning area, to gain input into observed

and emerging transportation issues. The project process overview and engagement opportunities were discussed and highlighted by AECOM.

### **What We Heard – Key Themes:**

#### **1. Spot Locations and Safety Analysis:**

- The plan recognizes spot locations with peak hour congestion.
- Safety analysis will explore opportunities for improvements.
- Local knowledge is vital, as data analysis may not always capture specific problem intersections.

#### **2. Optimizing Existing Facilities:**

- Given infrastructure funding primarily relies on sales tax, maintaining and enhancing transportation assets is critical.
- Identifying short vehicle trips (under 3 miles or 1 mile) and upgrading pedestrian and bike experiences will be a priority.

#### **3. Optimizing Existing Capacity for Bike/Ped Safety:**

- Utilize excess capacity for bike/pedestrian safety.
- Consider spot locations with peak hour congestion.
- Focus on upgrading pedestrian and bike experiences.

#### **4. Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles (EVs):**

- Explore EV infrastructure needs.
- Charging stations during reconstruction projects.
- Potential future requirements through zoning and development codes.

#### **5. Preservation vs. Expansion/Reconstruction:**

- Prioritize preservation over expansion/reconstruction.
- Maintain consistent pavement markings for emerging technologies.

#### **6. Rural-Urban Divide and Transportation as a Service:**

- Rural areas may adopt new tech differently.
- Transportation as a Service could impact trip patterns.

### **9/19/23 Wisconsin Jurisdictions—Consultation #1**

**Description:** AECOM staff held the first of two planned consultations with representatives from the jurisdictions on the Minnesota side of the MIC planning area, to gain input into observed and emerging transportation issues. The project process overview and engagement opportunities were discussed and highlighted by AECOM.

#### **Key takeaways from the 2045 Plan were discussed and some key topics were identified:**

- Aging baby boomers migrating to the region may drive demand for walkability, ADA compliance, and compact community living.
- Job-based growth may not significantly impact the transportation system.
- The housing crisis affects growth prospects.
- Addressing barriers to walking, biking, and transit for shorter trips is crucial.
- Transportation project costs have increased by 20% in the last two years.

Discussions also clarified:

**1. Focus on Walking and Sidewalks:**

- Prioritize walking infrastructure.
- Gaps in sidewalk systems need attention.
- Multi-use paths and active transportation plans can enhance connectivity.
- Rail lines create isolated neighborhoods, impacting pedestrian access.

**2. New Developments:**

- Recent development includes hotels and larger apartment buildings.
- Limited developable parcels in Superior.
- Housing construction outside the city primarily focuses on single-family homes.

**3. EV Charging and Electrifying Corridors:**

- Wisconsin and Superior need to embrace EV charging infrastructure and electrify corridors.
- Private investment in charging infrastructure is preferred.
- The city aims to phase out gas vehicles for the municipal fleet.
- The state is developing an EV corridor plan, but implementation challenges remain.
- Sustainability efforts include stormwater management and reducing impervious pavement.

**4. Roadway Redundancy and Detours:**

- Lack of redundancy in the roadway system is problematic.
- Shuttling traffic through neighborhoods during closures can be disruptive.
- Detours can be lengthy, especially in rural areas.

**5. Impact of Heavy Commercial Trucking:**

- Heavy trucks cause significant damage to roadways.
- Long detours for trucks disrupt transportation throughout the region.

**6. Traffic Signals and Bridge Project:**

- Most traffic signals on state highways in Superior have been updated.
- Completion of the Blatnik bridge project will significantly alter traffic patterns and behavior.

Local Transportation Issues discussed included:

**1. Superior Active Transportation Plan:**

- Approximately half of the city's sidewalk program is funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)- importance of safety and risk assessment for multi-modal projects.

**2. Safety Hotspots and Uncharacterized Locations:**

- Safety concerns exist east of the roundabout on US 2.
- The intersection of County C and WIS 35 also needs attention, although the specific problem hasn't been characterized yet.

**3. Pavement Maintenance and Practical-Based Approach:**

- Pavement condition is a major maintenance issue.

- WisDOT’s practical-based maintenance model focuses on resurfacing and maintaining existing infrastructure.
- The City of Superior owns its own paver for overlaying local roads, ensuring operational efficiency.

**4. Enhancing Corridors for Bikes and Pedestrians:**

- E 2nd Street and Tower Avenue, both state highways, run through neighborhoods.
- The goal is to create safer, people-focused corridors that better accommodate bikes and pedestrians.

**5. Freight Bypass:**

- There’s interest in developing a bypass south of Superior specifically for freight transportation.

**12/5/23 Pedestrian Focus Group (Targeted Stakeholder Consultation)**

**Description:** AECOM staff facilitated a discussion centered on issues and opportunities for pedestrians and walkability throughout the MIC area.

**Key Takeaways:**

After discussing this topic with members of the community, it became apparent that the main issues facing pedestrians in the area are safety and year-round access. Most of the region’s roadways have been built primarily for automobiles and leave little space for pedestrians and bicyclists, and even less during winter months when snow and ice cover most of the right of way. Large barriers like Miller Trunk Highway and I-35 separate parts of the city from shopping and recreation but are unsafe for pedestrians to cross. Proposed solutions from participants for these issues included a codified complete streets policy, a snow removal utility, improved collaboration between the city and county on snow removal, and improved pedestrian and bike connections across dangerous roadways.

**What We Heard – Comments:**

Transportation Issues

- There is a lack of pedestrian lighting throughout the city, it is particularly noticeable on the lakewalk.
- Individual neighborhoods are given power to deny bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- The city has been unwilling to consider rethinking the allocation of right of way width towards prioritizing non-motorized travel.
- Concerned about speeding on 6th Ave East; the wide right of way is difficult to cross to get to school.
- Walkable communities are thriving communities.
- If we had to choose only one pedestrian issue, snow is it. Duluth is terrible at snow management.
- Pedestrian safety in the 6th Ave East area is the most important issue for the Hillside neighborhood because of speeding and reckless driving.
- Left turns on red create a significant safety hazard.
- Crosswalk awareness and yielding protocol is an issue for all users, including cars and bikes.
- I-35 is a barrier between Downtown and Canal Park.
- Transit stops on Arrowhead Rd are far from nearby commercial destinations and lack sidewalk.
- The Miller Hill Mall area is a “deathtrap” for pedestrians.
- 6th Ave East is very unsafe for pedestrians.
- Woodland Ave, Central Entrance, the Lake St and Superior St intersection, and Rice Lake Rd near Marshall School are significant barriers for pedestrians.
- Sidewalk on 11 Ave East needs to be completed to the north of E 11th St.



- Several stops on the BRT route do not have sidewalks; there are also gaps in the sidewalk along Mall Drive.
- Sidewalk repair is not good in some places; people with mobility devices can't get through.
- There is sidewalk on one side only on Kenwood between Arrowhead and UMD and needs to be on both sides.
- The intersection at 21st Ave East and Woodland Ave is unsafe for pedestrians.
- The streetscape is not designed with garbage cans in mind. They often block bike lanes, forcing bicyclists into the car travel lane.
- 26th Ave East is missing sidewalk between Superior and E 1<sup>st</sup> St.
- There is no sidewalk on the west side of Hill Ave, north of N 28th St, in Superior, which forces apartment residents to walk in the street or over grass to get to the nearest transit stop.
- The City of Duluth has passed a resolution regarding complete streets but has not solidified this into policy. The lack of policy has made neighborhood solutions inconsistent.
- Hermantown prioritizes cars and does not provide bike, pedestrian, or public transit options.
- Central Entrance is under design now by MnDOT. There is concern over whether pedestrians will be represented.

### Solutions and Opportunities

- The city needs a complete streets commission, and to look to community expertise.
- A covered walkway up and down the hill based on the example in Thunder Bay would provide protection from the elements for pedestrians.
- Reallocate right of way width; autonomous vehicles need less width.
- Budgeting more for non-car infrastructure.
- Increased and enhanced bike parking.
- Follow Minneapolis's example of a Vision Zero approach to build roadway infrastructure focused on eliminating deaths from car accidents.
- All projects should be evaluated on their impact towards city and state climate goals.
- Flip the transportation project process, planning should come first and engineering second.
- Creating a better and more equitable transportation system; not just auto focused.
- Access to transit and access in general is critical.
- We walk as a part of every trip, improving pedestrian infrastructure benefits everyone.
- Pedestrian network needs to be seen as a legitimate transportation network and needs to be reliable all year round, not an afterthought.
- Pedestrian infrastructure can improve community health by giving people the opportunity to make more trips via active transportation.
- The streetscape should be designed for snow storage to keep snow piles out of pedestrian areas. Downtown setbacks are too close to the street, as a result snow must be hauled out. Snow plowing creates an equity issue when streets are plowed and sidewalks are not, sidewalks should be plowed first.
- Transit should be free for people with disabilities, seniors, people with low income, and youth. All could benefit from the health impacts of active transit.
- Pedestrian infrastructure should be programmed into planning and construction through a formal process.
- Slowing traffic on W Central Entrance would improve safety for pedestrians crossing to Cub Foods from the bus stops on Mall Drive.
- Superior is prioritizing sidewalk repair and snow removal.
- Tower Ave in Superior is a good example for providing pedestrian and bike infrastructure in the area.
- The City could establish a transportation commission.
- Look to the St Joseph, Missouri parkway as an example.
- Shift policy to put most vulnerable travelers at top of the pyramid of needs.
- West Superior Street design gives us hope.

- Improve the pedestrian plan – what is the full map of pedestrian movements? A full map of the pedestrian network would be helpful. Create a base level walking network that is reliable year around.
- A lit pedestrian bridge across I-35. There is a lack of pedestrian level lighting elsewhere.
- 6th Ave East crossing at 4th, 9th. 6th Ave East will be undergoing a road diet from 4 to 3 lanes.
- Remove I-35.
- Free transit for seniors.
- Create a connection between downtown and the mall for bikes and pedestrians.
- The City of Duluth should be responsible for snow removal on the sidewalk, like Toronto, Ontario, and St Paul, Minnesota.
- The City of Duluth and County could collaborate to minimize uncleared roadways and sidewalks. A Snow Removal Utility would eliminate the need for property owners to be responsible for clearing snow from in front of their property.

## 12/6/23 HTAC (Targeted Stakeholder Consultation)

**Description:** AECOM staff facilitated a discussion at the regularly-scheduled HTAC meeting about transportation issues and opportunities related to the port, harbor issues and multimodal freight in and through the MIC area.

### What We Heard – Comments:

#### Transportation Issues

- It is important for the economic vitality goals to be met, viable regional partnerships and networks must be created, across states and including Canada, far beyond the Duluth-Superior area. Regarding the port, this means all the way through the Seaway to the Atlantic Ocean. Doing this would vastly increase economic vitality and better use the water-based transportation system.
- Related to that point, the system has choke points throughout that affect freight movement and thus need to be considered in the Minnesota State Freight Plan.
- Concerns were expressed over how much crude oil is being moved via rail and the risk associated with this given numerous rail accidents across the country.
- Important to ensure tribal rights are maintained.
- Consider how traffic patterns in both Duluth and Superior will be significantly disrupted for several years during Blatnik Bridge construction.
- The condition of the docks in the port is a key issue; many of the docks are very old and not up to current standards and need rehabilitation.

#### Solutions and Opportunities

- Strategies we can consider to better develop these partnerships? Suggestions included:
  - Develop a “short seas shipping” network within the Great Lakes that could alleviate tonnage (and thus wear and tear) on the highway network. Nearly all the freight leaving this port is bulk items, such as taconite; we could utilize the waters to move far more types of items, but this needs coordination.
  - A related objective in the plan could be to develop an integrated freight movement system.
  - Another strategy would be to make the gross tonnage hauled by truck consistent across states. The new Blatnik Bridge should be able to support weight limits that enable transport of heavy loads into and out of the port terminal.
  - A related idea would be to include overweight and high-load corridors to transport the heavy components of the freight system, along economic development corridors, and connected to intermodal terminals.
- It was noted that a good plan needs to have measurable steps to demonstrate whether or not we are making progress towards meeting the goals. We want and need to have measurables

that show we are making progress, identify future needs more clearly, and give us things to celebrate and promote.

**Key Takeaways:**

- Establishing regional partnerships must be created, across states and internationally (including Canada), is considered key to economic growth of the Duluth-Superior port.

**12/6/23 Sustainability Focus Group (Targeted Stakeholder Consultation)**

**Description:** AECOM staff facilitated a discussion centered on sustainability issues and opportunities in the MIC area motorized and non-motorized transportation network.

**Key Takeaways:**

This discussion focused on environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Interests represented ranged from personal to professional. Members of the group were concerned with the amount of greenhouse gas emissions emitted by gas powered automobiles, as well as a lack of greenspace within the right of way, and additional pollution from cars, like motor oil and solid debris, entering the regions lakes and waterways via stormwater runoff. Participants felt that the current system is not economically sustainable compared to a system that uses narrower roadways and prioritizes lighter vehicles like bicycles or no vehicles at all. It was also noted that single occupancy vehicles isolate us socially. Some solutions as proposed by participants were temporary road diets, the construction of a greenway system or bicycle and pedestrian thoroughfare, and a shift in planning to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure above single occupancy automobiles.

**What We Heard – Comments:**

Transportation Issues

- Transit systems overseas are much more comprehensive.
- It is time to bring in the future.
- In terms of economic sustainability, we can't afford to maintain existing infrastructure. Heavy vehicles damage roads more than bicycles and pedestrians.
- Our culture of isolation in single occupancy vehicles is not socially sustainable.
- Roads are very wide, but there are no barriers or space for snow storage.
- There is flooding due to wetland fills for transportation infrastructure.
- Too few trees on London Road, and generally in all rights of way.
- Life expectancy is significantly lower in some areas due to air pollution.
- Narrative around speed enforcement; drivers not yielding to pedestrians.
- Bike parking is lacking everywhere.
- The hill is an issue for biking and walking. Transit can fill this gap.
- Aging population will have 10 years before a larger portion are unable to drive.
- Sprawl is not sustainable, there is no need to expand infrastructure beyond existing limits.
- Needing neighborhood buy in for implementation of bike ways can be challenging. A small minority of property owners can kill a good idea in the design phase.

Solutions and Opportunities

- Systems redundancy. People need choices for how to get around no matter the mode.
- To meet MnDOT's climate goals, the number of vehicle miles traveled will need to be reduced.
- The Duluth Citizens Climate Action Plan focuses on reducing emissions and the health impacts of a more integrated transportation system.
- Roadways need snow storage and green space for bike safety.

- The public should be informed about cars' impact on Lake Superior.
- Policy could be established to always incorporate snow storage within the right of way.
- Responsibility for the maintenance of plantings in traffic circles should be decided. The city doesn't want to maintain them.
- There is no Transportation Management Organization in Duluth. Could use one around the arena area. The TMO at the St Paul, Minnesota soccer stadium could be used as an example to help organize traffic around Amsoil Arena and Bentleyville.
- Think long term about budget consideration, beyond the two year budget cycle. Narrow roads are cheaper to build and maintain.
- Cambridge MA is a good example: if it's in the plan, it gets built.
- Consider locating geothermal infrastructure within the right of way with each roadway project.
- The incoming mayor will possibly create a complete streets committee.
- U.S. Department of Energy RACER grants for solar power can reduce the cost of sustainable energy sources.

## 12/6/23 Equity Focus Group (Targeted Stakeholder Consultation)

**Description:** AECOM staff facilitated a discussion centered on equity issues related to transportation in the MIC area, with a focus on historically-underserved areas and populations.

### Key Takeaways:

During the discussion with focus group participants, it became apparent that the region's transportation system has large gaps that contribute to the disenfranchisement of vulnerable populations. For example, participants pointed out that most of the funding and engineering focus goes towards automobile infrastructure even though a large proportion of the population does not own a car. Similarly, during winter months snow is cleared from the roadways by the city and county but sidewalk snow clearance is much less coordinated. As such, participants felt that a more equitable transportation system would be one that treats pedestrians and bicyclists as equal to automobile users by providing an accessible network year-round at a minimum.

### What We Heard – Comments:

#### Transportation Issues

- Downtown transportation infrastructure prioritizes vehicles in an area where a large portion of the population does not have one.
- There needs to be a strong focus on improving transportation in low-income neighborhoods experiencing high health and economic disparities.
- Meyers Wilkins students need safe routes to walk to school.
- Safety and efficiency of transit are major issues facing the community.
- There is a lack of vision and full system planning. For example, there is no non-motorized route through town that is reliably accessible.
- The transportation system is car centric and mostly focused on suburban travelers.
- Snow clearance is not handled well.
- Car centric roadway design and real estate development puts low to moderate income communities in a spiral of disenfranchisement and creates environmental racism.
- Lack of transit in indigenous communities leads to vulnerable people taking unsafe rides.
- Beyond physical needs, there is a need to destigmatize transit users and those without cars.
- Older community members, who are not traditionally considered in transportation planning, need to be considered in future plans without furthering a decline-narrative about aging.

- 95% of the older population live in the community, aging in place. Generally, this group has difficulty accessing transportation.
- In the more rural areas outside of Duluth and Superior, providing transit to the disabled and aging populations is impossible.
- The transportation system needs to be more inclusive. Currently the system has a class bias, prioritizing those who can afford a car.
- There is limited transit access to Hermantown.
- Barkers Island is a major destination, it has a bike trail, but there's a gap across US 2. No transit options will bring you there despite many public events being held there.
- Morgan Park and Spirit Valley are disconnected from transit.
- Lincoln Middle School students do not have any bus options to get to school.
- A tiered transit fare system, specifically lower fares for older people.
- 6th Ave East needs to be reconfigured.
- Electrification is an issue for equity. Electric battery material sourcing exploits native communities.
- Barkers Island is not easily accessible for pedestrians
- Far west neighborhoods feel disconnected and have little access to amenities via transit or other modes of transportation besides cars.

#### Solutions and Opportunities

- Recognize that everyone is a pedestrian on every trip. (i.e., even when driving, you need to walk to your car, and from your car to your ultimate destination.)
- Car-free areas.
- A Sunday parkway program
- Fix the Duluth-Hermantown connection by extending transit to Hermantown.
- Sidewalk system repair and maintenance.
- A continuous east-west greenway or bike lane.
- Light Rail Transit.
- The city should maintain sidewalks like they maintain roads, and prioritize programs like Safe Routes to School, and transit.
- Prioritize pedestrian infrastructure as an equal member of the transportation system year around.
- Transportation funding allocation should be equity based.
- 6th Ave East needs to be reconfigured.
- The Justice 40 framework should be applied to transportation in the Duluth region.
- Reimagining US 61 is an equity project, to re-connect the downtown and hillside neighborhoods with Canal Park and the lake.
- A bikeshare to provide transportation options for future.
- Northern Lights Express commuters.
- Reliable safe bike parking.
- Attend programs led by community organizations, including:
  - Family freedom center Coffee and Conversations
  - Neighborhood Youth Services
  - YMCA in Superior, Duluth, Proctor
  - Historic St Mark Church – resources for people
  - Interfaith Council – migrant welcome center – Trinity Lutheran

- Higher education institutions
- Loaves and Fishes community. Damiano Center. Unhoused.
- • American Indian Housing Coalition
- • Youth leadership programs at schools

### **1/4/24 Minnesota Jurisdictions—Consultation #2**

**Description:** MIC staff held the second of two consultations with jurisdictional representatives from the Minnesota side of the MIC planning area, to discuss inter-jurisdictional coordination and potential improvement projects for inclusion in the 2050 MTP’s short-, mid-, and long-term project lists. Staff also requested data regarding transportation revenue and O&M costs.

### **1/8/24 Wisconsin Jurisdictions—Consultation #2**

**Description:** MIC staff held the second of two consultations with jurisdictional representatives from the Wisconsin side of the MIC planning area, to discuss inter-jurisdictional coordination and potential improvement projects for inclusion in the 2050 MTP’s short-, mid-, and long-term project lists. Staff also requested data regarding transportation revenue and O&M costs.

### **2/1/24 Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee (Targeted Stakeholder Discussion)**

**Description:** MIC staff attended the regularly-scheduled meeting of the MIC’s BPAC and provided a status update about the MTP and invited comments from the group about pedestrian and bicycle transportation in the MIC area.

#### **What We Heard – Comments**

##### **Top Priorities:**

- Year round reliability and access (all season maintenance -- snow and ice clearing)
- Better connectivity/eliminate gaps
- Safer bike options (protected lanes)
- Safer crossings
- Sidewalk repairs needed in Duluth
- Policy options that more formally and directly integrate bike/ped infrastructure.
- Establish a transportation commission in Duluth
- Implement a safe systems approach – undertake a community-wide multimodal Safety Action Plan in accordance with SS4A grant requirements
- Training options
- **Specific locations of concern:**
  - 6th Ave E (Duluth)
  - Miller Hill Mall area
- **Discussion Question: What are your ideas for metrics to evaluate progress toward top priorities and desired outcomes for bicyclists and pedestrians?**
  - Bike/Ped Mode share increase
  - Reduced number of conflict points
  - VMT (Vehicle Miles Traveled) decrease: e.g., MN legislature trying to reduce VMT by 20%
  - Metric –not sure what-- to evaluate how direct proposed bike routes are

- Metric to evaluate how roadway projects enhance (or create barriers) to accessibility

## 2/20/23 **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Consultation – Proposed Process for Project Scoring**

**Description:** Building upon the December 2023 presentation, AECOM and MIC staff presented the proposed process for scoring the projects to be included in the 2050 MTP, highlighting the proposed data-driven metrics along with the planning emphasis areas that will be used to help refine the project scoring, and invited comments for refining the proposed metrics.

### **What We Heard – Comments:**

**Q:** How much effort will this process require of jurisdictions?

**A:** Most of the scoring process is completed by the MPO and the consultant, AECOM. The jurisdictions are first asked for their lists of projects and then the scoring process begins. The MIC will likely be asking some follow up questions of the jurisdictions regarding the projects that make it to Step 3, but other than that, the work should be minimal.

**Q:** How many projects will be included in Step 3?

**A:** It has yet to be determined, but 25 has been mentioned. It may easily be determined by a clear line being drawn after the outcome of Step 1 scoring. We want to have narrowed down to a reasonable number.

**Q:** How often does this process occur?

**A:** Every five years.

**Q:** What is the benefit of keeping the project list limited?

**A:** To determine priority projects to receive federal funding in the Duluth and Superior TIPS, i.e., those that will best contribute toward meeting the long term goals of the MTP.

## 3/14/24 **Lincoln Park Business Group**

**Description:** MIC staff attended the regularly-scheduled meeting of Duluth’s Lincoln Park Business Group, which represents the interests of this fast-growing hospitality, residential and business district.

### **What We Heard – Comments:**

- Concerns about upcoming West Superior Street Reconstruction project:
  - The new street design will put us out of business – no plans to accommodate delivery vehicles.
  - Concerns about sidewalk snow clearing.
  - Planners are forgetting that Lincoln Park is still very industrial, one of the few manufacturing areas in Duluth. Not just entertainment and hospitality businesses, many of them are making things.
- Parking is always a problem. Concerned the project favors bikes over the many more people who drive here.
- The problem for us is not about transportation, it’s about the needles all over the place. Every business owner here will tell you how they have to pick up needles every day. WLSSD is offering to place another sharps disposal unit in the area – looking for a property owner that will allow them to install it.

- The abandoned construction project is another big issue – looks bad and is accommodating the drug users and vagrants.
- Interest in snow clearing

### **3/19/24      Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting - Project Scoring Process Final Review and Consultation**

**Description:** AECOM and MIC staff reviewed the proposed Step 1 -MTP Project Scoring Metrics and Step 3 - Final Review Questions to be used to score the MTP projects. Most of the time was allocated to providing the TAC members an opportunity to share any thoughts, concerns, or recommendations, or to ask any questions.

**Key Takeaways:**

- This process holds harmless projects that are already programmed in the TIP.
- Step 1 is for high level, measurable data for scoring purposes.
- Step 3 (Final Review Questions) delves deeper into the projects that rose to the top of the 300+ projects that were submitted. It helps to ensure that projects were scored appropriately in Step 1.
- The aim of the scoring metrics is to elevate a list of projects that best represent the goals of the MTP. This process does not eliminate any project from the MTP.

### **3/27/24      Modal Consultation – Transit**

**Description:** MIC staff attended the regularly-scheduled meeting of the Duluth Transit Authority Board of Directors MIC staff presented an overview of the ongoing development of the MTP and invited comments from the group regarding transit issues, needs and opportunities in the MIC area.

**What We Heard – Comments:**

- “We have many needs, limited resources – in keeping with the theme of your plan!”
- Expenses are on the rise and funding can be hard to acquire, at federal, state and local levels – in prior year, the DTA’s requested tax levy was the only one on the docket that was reduced.
- Raising fares is not the way to increase needed revenues; the DTA has an ongoing commitment to not raising fares to keep it affordable for users. Increasing fares could actually reduce ridership which would be very detrimental and hard to counteract (“transit death spiral.”
- Would like to see free bus fares offered to senior citizens
- Would like to explore the option of becoming a regional transit authority
- Would like to see better snow removal at bus stops; issues with coordinating with the city
- Supply chain issues with acquiring new STRIDE vehicles – and finding parts to maintain them
- Would like to see positive messaging to counter the generally negative image of public transit; bus seen as a second-class transportation option; “those people” who take the bus;
- Safety for bus rider and drivers is first and foremost concern; interest in the safe systems approach to traffic safety and how it might have positive impacts on transit.
- Interested in the continued buildout of the Go Lines, and introducing bus rapid transit
- Interest in future transit-oriented development – but location and partners TBD.



- Real problems with hiring and retaining enough drivers to maintain the routes and complete schedules of the Better Bus Blueprint. Housing has been an issue for people who are interested in relocating to work for the DTA but unable or uncertain about where they'd be able to live.
- Interest in maintaining and expanding DTA relationship with local schools
- Ridership at local colleges is growing but not to pre-pandemic levels. Might want to market more heavily, e.g., with an emphasis on environmental benefits and affordability.

### 3/29/24 **Bike Shop Meetup**

**Description:** MIC staff attended an informal meeting of employees from local bicycle shops to give a brief overview of the MTP and to invite comments about bicycling-related issues and opportunities in the MIC area.

#### **What We Heard – Comments:**

- It's always about riding defensively for bicyclists.
- We need a culture shift – in this area, it's 'bikes don't belong on the roads.'
- There's a much stronger culture in Twin Cities – one of the best bicycling networks in the country. What can we learn from them?
- Connections between the commuting cyclist and mountain biking communities here.
- The city prioritizes cars in its roadway projects and transportation expenditures.
- Must make a connected, safe, preferably separated network of bicycling facilities a priority for planning, implementation and funding.
- Roadway shoulders aren't bike lanes.
- Need to be able to safely ride bikes year-round – it's a key part of Duluth's 'Winter City' identity.
- Need public education about 'Idaho Stop'.
- Essentia Health has a Multimodal Transportation Reward program for its employees – a model for other employers?
- Essentia needs better bike lockers, however.
- Is the public bicycle safe storage area at the Duluth Transportation Center (main DTA passenger facility) still a thing?

#### **Ideas and Opportunities:**

- Create opportunities to learn from and interact with bicycling advocates, elected officials and city planners about creating a bike-friendly culture and implementing dedicated infrastructure.
- Advocate for city and state-level policies permitting the 'Idaho Stop' for bicyclists (with related education for cyclists)
- Prioritize function of Skyline Drive as a bicycling route, with separated bike lanes, improved traffic calming measures for vehicles.
- Implement 'slow days' for traffic speeds on Skyline and other identified routes.

#### **Key Takeaway:**

- It's not the weather, it's not the hills, it's safety and the anti-bike culture that are the primary issues for bicyclists in this community.

### 4/16/24 **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting**

**Description:** Workshop, Presentation & Discussion: As a follow-up to the MTP project scoring approach discussions during the previous TAC meetings, AECOM staff facilitated a work session focused on the project list scores, giving TAC members the opportunity to offer

feedback and ask questions in a work session that directly preceded the TAC meeting. At the TAC meeting that followed, Jim Meyer and Mike Wenzel wrapped up that discussion by giving an overview of the MTP Project Final Review Questions in Step 3.

#### **4/22/24 Older Adults Focus Group**

**Description:** A small group discussion was held with people who were older adults or who worked on behalf of older adults living or working in the Duluth-Superior area.

#### **What We Heard – Comments:**

- People are living longer, with a variety of circumstances and needs: some retired and some still working; some living by themselves, some in a family unit and some in a care facility; some are comfortable with technology and some are not; some are socially active and some are not, etc.
- “Age 65+” does not accurately define older adults – 65 is considered middle-aged by many these days!”
- “We are active people, and we want to stay active and independent.”
- “More than previous generation, many of us want to work as we age, and maintain our independence.”
- “We have such a car-centric society that it’s easy to overlook people who don’t (or can’t) drive. It seems like they forget about sidewalks when they fix roads or in the winter with plowing.”
- “Crosswalks mean nothing. Cars rule the road, we just get in their way.”
- “Driverless vehicles? Not so much!”
- Income can be a serious limiting factor to an independent lifestyle, in terms of transportation. Hard to afford a vehicle.
- “The NLX passenger train sounds like a great idea as a way to get down to the cities, but I wonder if I’ll be able to afford it.”
- “Losing your drivers license due to physical limitations is a huge change, often hard to accept, which leads to some people being behind the wheel when they probably shouldn’t be.”
- “The so-called Better Bus Blueprint do not seem like an improvement –my closest bus stop was removed (longer walk to and from the bus stop), the new routes are hard to understand, and it doesn’t go where I need to go (Walmart)”
- “Older folks use cabs, not Uber and Lyft – but they are expensive and often unreliable.”
- “I have an unsafe feeling at the Duluth Transit Center at night.”
- “I’ve almost gotten run over, by bikers and skateboarders on the sidewalks. If we can’t have the sidewalks and we can’t have the roads, where are we supposed to be able to walk in this town?”

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- Pedestrian safety was cited as a top priority for older adults (also for disabled people and kids).
- Active transportation options – walking and biking facilities -- are desired to maintain physical health and independence as driving may not be an option.
- Year-round accessibility and sidewalk snow removal need to be addressed as a bigger priority in the community, with an increased awareness of how it pertains to older adults and individuals with limited mobility.
- Sidewalk conditions, ease of access to public spaces and transportation, and street design, can significantly impact the daily lives of older adults, individuals with mobility challenges, and the community at large. Age- and disability-friendly transportation facilities should be standard: safe, crossable streets are vital for enhancing safety, ensuring accessible mobility options, and promoting active and healthy lifestyles.

- Older adults are not a single type of person – wide range of abilities and assistance needs, from completely dependent to completely autonomous.
- Resources like matching up services with people’s needs are important, as well as innovative solutions like Community Action Duluth’s Mobile Market.

#### 4/23/24      **People with Disabilities Focus Group**

**Description:** A small group discussion was held with people who were living with a disability or who work on behalf of disabled people living or working in the Duluth-Superior area.

#### **What We Heard – Comments:**

- “It’s about dignity and respect -- sidewalk conditions affect our ability to live in the world as a healthy and whole person. We forget about the humanity of it.”
- “I’m super excited about the NLX (northern Lights Express passenger rail service between the Twin Cities and Duluth)
- “I moved to Duluth (from Cloquet) because it has better transportation options for me. But I hate to say it, but STRIDE is really hit and miss. Sometimes they don’t pick me up and also don’t let me know. And people without disabilities don’t have to schedule their trips days in advance, like you have to with STRIDE.”
- “STRIDE is kind of a joke. I stopped using it.”
- “The regular DTA drivers need better training on using wheelchair restraints – they often don’t know how to use them – it’s embarrassing because I’m slowing everything down.”
- “Mobility limitations can have a combination of physical, emotional, and/or financial causes, all of which need to be addressed in different ways.”
- “Limited financial resources and social support are big factors for many people with disabilities.”
- “I often feel like I’m trapped at home during the winter. It’s hard for me to get to the bus because people don’t shovel. And I don’t want to walk in the street, especially on the hill.”
- “Isolation is a serious problem for many people if they don’t have mobility options.”
- “Actually for me in the winter, it’s easier to wheel in the streets than on the sidewalk. But it’s kind of scary, like I’m taking my life in my hands just to go to the grocery store.”
- “It seems like sidewalks are a huge part of our transportation network that’s being ignored. Like the saying goes, build it and they will come.”
- “They also say, move it or lose it. It’s already hard enough because I can’t walk very well without a walker. I need to be able to keep doing that, but it’s hard sometimes. Hard because it doesn’t always feel safe, like just to cross the street. ”
- “Transit-oriented development would be great” – that living situation would make it much easier to use the regular (non-STRIDE) bus service
- “If I’m using my wheelchair, sometimes I can’t reach the pedestrian buttons (at signalized intersections) – they’re placed too high on the pole.”
- “We need to be more intentional and more equitable (in how we design our streets)

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- This community of people regards disability-friendly transportation facilities as ultimately being about respect -- for all persons, regardless of age, ability or income.
- Routinely approach all street design from the perspective of people of all ages, abilities and incomes – especially in urban and suburban areas.

- Year-round accessibility and sidewalk snow removal need to be addressed as a bigger priority in the community, especially as it pertains to individuals with limited mobility.
- Desired improvements to intersections and crosswalks include traffic signals that give a leading pedestrian interval, flashing beacons, and placement of pedestrian buttons that are low enough to reach for a person in a wheelchair.

## 5/14/24 City of Superior Business and Tourism (Targeted Stakeholder Consultation)

**Description:** MIC staff met with the director of the Superior-Douglas County Area Chamber of Commerce & Travel Superior to discuss future transportation issues, needs and opportunities from the perspective of the business and tourism interests in the City of Superior and Douglas County.

### What We Heard – Comments:

**Q:** What do you believe are transportation issues for business and commerce in Superior (and the Duluth-Superior area) – both now and in the future (through 2050)?

- Make it easy to transport goods and services.
- Incorporating more multimodal options into our transportation system has been good.
- Need to improve mass public transportation.
- Funding is an issue.
- We have a lot of infrastructure per capita thus it's difficult to keep all of it well-maintained.
- Need to increase public/private transportation partnerships.
- Accessibility issues. All people need access to reliable transportation. We must accommodate all needs as much as possible. Accessibility is a significant need for the workforce, and workforce is currently the number one issue/problem/concern for businesses.
- Blatnik Bridge reconstruction concerns.
  - Doubts that most trucks will use the posted truck route down Winter Street due to poor railroad crossings and many stop signs.
  - Where will 1200-1400 workers on the Blatnik live and how will they move around (i.e., adding people and vehicles to the congestion)?
  - Concerned about the response times for emergency response.
  - Concerned businesses will be hurt due to extra travel time, access issues, and Duluthians not coming to Superior.
- All this said, believes the end result should be a benefit, especially in terms of allowing normal truck payloads to cross the bridge.
- EV chargers are needed in the area, especially for tourists.
- Vehicle parking is a need in some areas. In combination with an inadequate public transportation option in Superior, people are not willing to park further than 2-3 blocks away from a destination, and thus businesses are hurt. Inadequate parking is part of the reason the commercial space associated with the Central Flats project did not fill up.

**Q:** Which of the transportation issues mentioned in “1” do you believe are priority issues?

- Blatnik Bridge reconstruction concerns
- Accessibility issues
- Public transportation being inadequate in Superior – in general, but also specifically in regard to hindering the workforce

**Q:** What do you believe are potential solutions to the transportation issues mentioned in “1”?

- Sidewalks are valuable infrastructure.
- The Chamber supports the NLX.
- Despite the concerns noted above during Blatnik Bridge removal and reconstruction, the project is funded and the end result of the new bridge will be positive and a significant improvement.
- Expand STRIDE use in Superior.
- Seek and include new, innovative private-public partnerships (such as the current funding to SK Taxi to help fill gaps in STRIDE service).
- Help local businesses by improving and expanding transportation options and access. And ask for their input.
- Keep local transportation dollars as local as possible. This includes hiring local workers to plan, design, build, and maintain local transportation projects.
- Ensure trail systems exist for all types of users (motorized and silent sport). Include options for those with disabilities.
- Include better signage for trails, including using QR codes with valuable information related to using a specific trail.
- Keep our transportation system and trails as simple (to use, understand, and maintain) as possible.