# Vision and Values
## SECTION 2

July 2016

## Overview

This section of the plan describes the core vision and accompanying values associated with the alternative transportation system. These provisions establish the underlying rationale for making significant improvements to the public infrastructure over time to improve the quality of life in the City of Bloomington and better serve the transportation needs of individuals and families living, working, and recreating in Bloomington.

## Citywide Vision and Values Statement

The ATP is consistent with and builds upon the broader community vision articulated in the city's 2008 Comprehensive Plan. The community vision is supported by a values statement, as the following reiterates. (The provisions most pertinent to the ATP are in **bold**).

### Values Statement:

Bloomington is a community that people seek out as a place to live, conduct business and recreate. We have achieved this status by creating vibrant, safe, welcoming neighborhoods and by working together with our neighbors to promote the fun and vitality of community life.

» We choose to shape the future rather than reacting to a changing environment.

» We provide our children with the educational opportunities to succeed and lead Bloomington into the future.

» We support the efforts of our business community, ensuring the availability of quality jobs, goods and services.

» We are stewards of our environment, promoting sustainability of our many resources and the creation of inviting public spaces.

» We strive to preserve and enhance neighborhood vitality while promoting a strong balanced local economy.

### Community Vision:

To build and renew the community by providing services, promoting renewal and guiding growth in an even more sustainable, fiscally sound manner.

#### *Our people are:*

» Active: We participate in community life.

» Cooperative: We help and support each other for the benefit of all.

» Respectful: We hold our people and our institutions in high regard.

» **Healthy: We support actions that promote our physical and emotional well-being.**

#### *Our neighborhoods are:*

» **Safe: Our personal safety is our highest priority.**

» Welcoming: We are friendly and open to all that live and work here.

» **Enjoyable: We have high quality recreation and open spaces available to all**

» Diverse: A variety of living options are available to all.

#### *Our businesses:*

» Provide an important foundation for building community.

» Supply good jobs: We have many high quality employment opportunities available.

» Provide a variety of goods and services: Convenient and plentiful goods and services are available.

» Are active partners in community: Our businesses are engaged in civic life.

#### *Our Government:*

» **Is a reflection of our community aspirations.**

» **Spends tax revenues wisely: We invest our resources prudently for the benefit of all.**

» **Encourages public participation: We ask our citizens for their opinions and their help.**

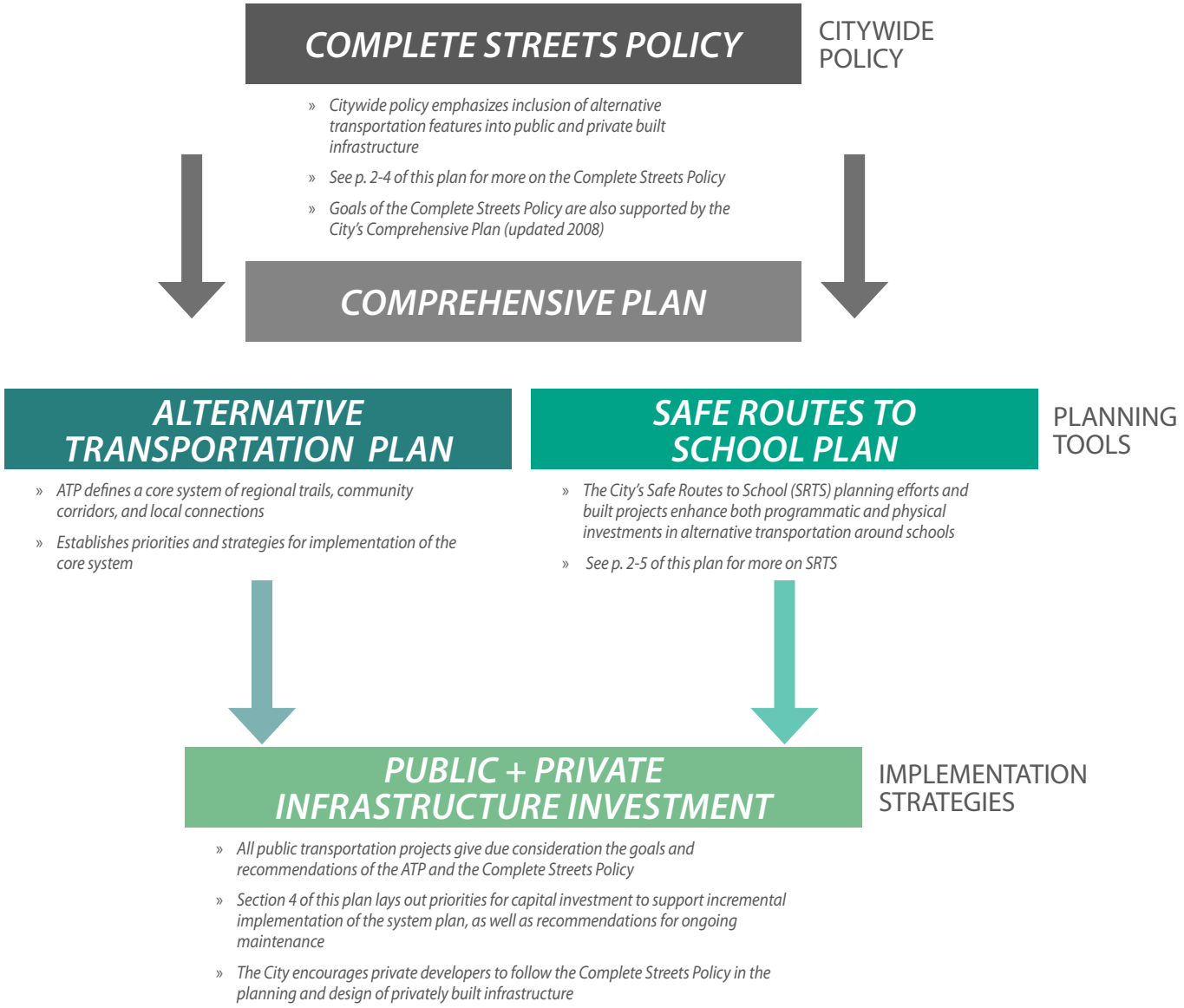
» **Anticipates and adapts to challenges and opportunities: We plan for the future and take action.**

» **Maintains and preserves public assets: We protect our environmental resources and maintain quality public facilities.**

## Alternative Transportation Policy and Planning Framework

The following section describes the key policy and planning tools guiding the development of the alternative transportation system in the City of Bloomington. As the diagram below illustrates, a Complete Streets Policy provides overarching direction and goals for the development of alternative transportation features in the City's public and private infrastructure. The Alternative Transportation System Plan described in this report, as well as planning efforts under the Safe Routes to School Plan, provide physical plans and recommendations that support the aims of the Complete Streets Policy. Ultimately, implementation of the aforementioned plans is carried out through a combination of public and private investments.

***Figure 2.1:*** *Alternative Transportation Policy and Planning Framework*



## Complete Streets Policy

The Bloomington City Council approved a Complete Streets Policy in 2012 which completed one of the recommendations of the 2008 ATP. The policy is designed to "enhance safety, mobility, accessibility and convenience for transportation network users of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, transit users, bicyclists, commercial and emergency vehicles, freight drivers and motorists, by planning, designing, operating and maintaining a network of multi-modal streets." Bloomington's Complete Streets Policy aligns with both the State of Minnesota and Hennepin County's Complete Streets policies (adopted in 2010 and 2009, respectively). Full text of the Bloomington Complete Streets policy can be found at:

https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/sites/default/files/complete_streets.pdf

Key elements of the Complete Streets Policy are as follows:

» Complete Streets is a flexible transportation planning and design process that considers the safety and accessibility needs of all users in order to create a connected network of facilities accommodating each mode of travel.

» Complete Streets is not a prescriptive roadway design. Individual "complete" street designs vary based on context, including topography, road function, the speed of traffic, pedestrian and bicycle demand, local land use, and other factors. The City will implement Complete Streets in such a way that the character of the project area, the values of the community, and the needs of all users are fully considered. Therefore, Complete Streets will not look the same in all environments, neighborhoods, or development contexts, and will not necessarily include exclusive elements for all modes.

» Project managers of the City's transportation and development projects will give due consideration to bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities from the beginning of planning and design work.

» Bicycle, pedestrian and transit facilities as shown in the City's ATP will be considered in street construction, re-construction, rehabilitation projects, and all other street improvement projects except under specified conditions (see full policy for exception rules).

» Complete Streets may be achieved through single projects or incrementally through a series of smaller improvements or maintenance activities over time.

» The City is committed to applying the complete streets policy to all projects implemented by the City. This includes projects that may not be included in the core network identified as part of the System Plan.

» The City will generally follow accepted or the best available technology when implementing improvements intended to fulfill this Complete Streets Policy, but will also consider innovative or non-traditional design options where a comparable level of safety for users is present.

» The design of new or reconstructed facilities should anticipate likely future demand for bicycling, walking and transit facilities and should not preclude the provision of future improvements.

» The City will work with neighboring communities, as well as other authorities who have jurisdiction within Bloomington, such as the State of Minnesota, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Hennepin County, Three Rivers Park District and the Metropolitan Council, to enhance the regional continuity of the City's multi-modal transportation network.

» The City will encourage private developers to follow the Complete Streets Policy in the planning and design of privately built infrastructure.

## City-Wide Land Use and Transportation Planning

Whereas this plan addresses alternative transportation issues at a city-wide scale, decisions made about future land uses and the larger transportation system in Bloomington will greatly affect the City's success toward realizing the vision and values of this plan. To this end, the City's 2008 Comprehensive Plan incorporates and aligns with the vision and intent of ATP. City review of transportation and redevelopment projects should continue to integrate alternative transportation and consider "active living" and "design for health" principles.

## Alternative Transportation Plan

The ATP is a key planning tool that supports the City's Complete Streets Policy. The plan defines the core network of regional trails, community corridors, and local connections, and provides guidance and resources for the design of alternative transportation facilities. See Section 3 for more details on the alternative transportation system. The Complete Streets Policy applies to all City street planning and subsequent improvements, regardless of whether a particular improvement is included in the ATP.

## Safe Routes to School

The goal of the City's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) planning is to engineer a safer transportation network through improvements that minimize conflicts between motorists and pedestrians, reduce vehicle speeds and maximize accessibility to safe crossings, sidewalks and trails. Infrastructure improvements are conducted as part of a comprehensive program, which is implemented incrementally on a priority basis in partnership with the School District.

### *SRTS Projects in the Planning Phase*

**Safe Routes to School District-Wide Plan:** The City and School District are currently working together to complete a Safe Routes to School District-Wide Plan. The objective of the Plan is to identify ways to facilitate and encourage walking and biking to school. The Plan will provide recommendations for education, encouragement, enforcement, engineering and evaluation. Key outcomes of the plan will include:

» School walking maps that show existing pedestrian and bike facilities around each elementary and middle school in Bloomington; these maps will be published by the City and School District as a tool for families to identify their preferred walking route

» Prioritization of safety improvement recommendations

» Recommended site-based encouragement activities

Even though the working draft Plan is being used and work has already begun to address the safety concerns identified during the Plan development. It is anticipated that the updated Plan will be ready for presentation to the School Board and adoption by the City Council in early 2017.

**Other SRTS Projects:** Several location-specific SRTS projects are currently planned, including:

» Pedestrian crossing safety improvements on Portland Avenue at Bishoff Lane (Valley View Middle and Elementary Schools) (2016 construction)

» Pedestrian and bicycle improvements around Thomas Jefferson High School and Hubert Olson Middle and Elementary Schools (2016 construction)

» Pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements along W 106th Street and East Bloomington Freeway (Oak Grove Middle and Elementary Schools) (2018 proposed year)

### *Completed SRTS Projects*

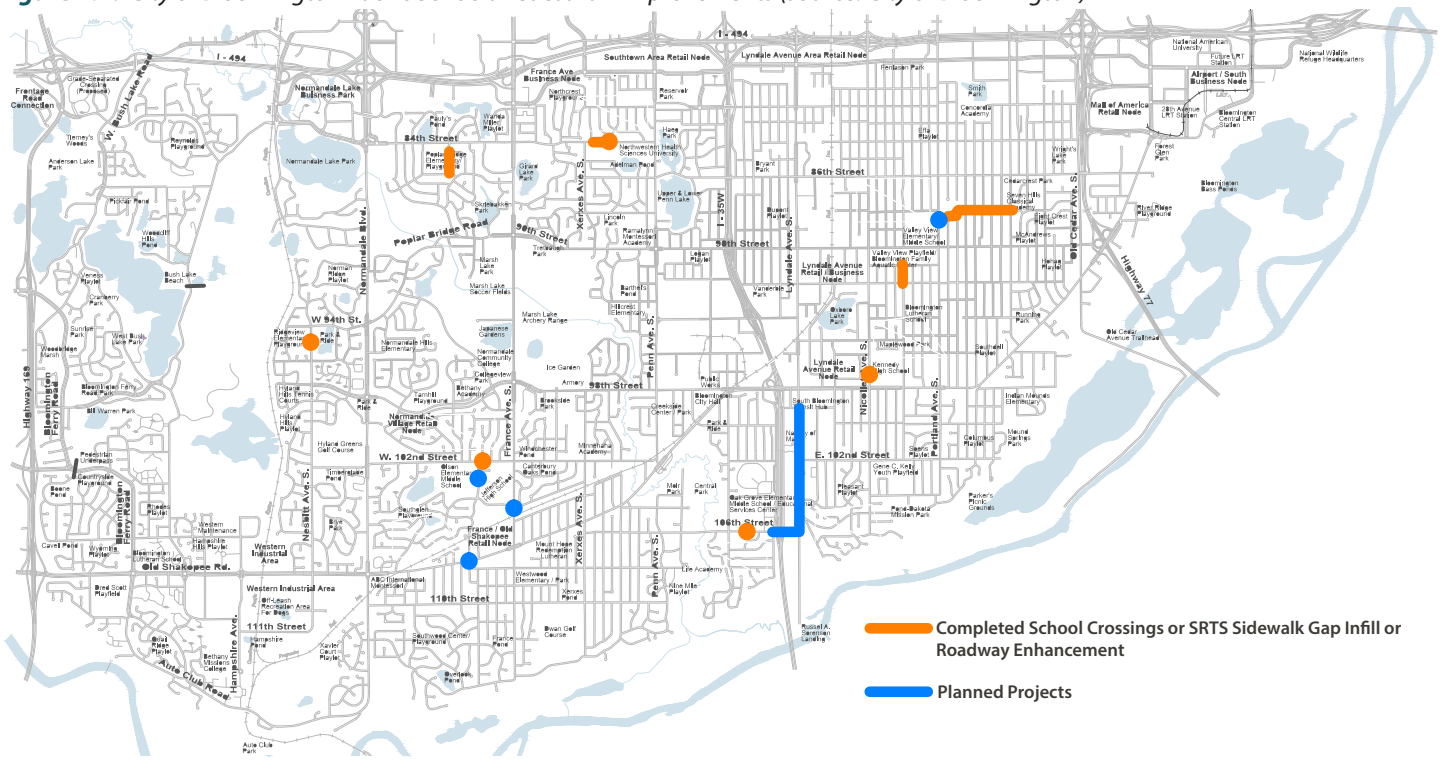
Several school pedestrian improvement projects have already been completed including:

» **SRTS MnDOT/Federal Funded Projects:** In 2010, the City filled gaps in the sidewalk network around four schools:

  ¡ **Poplar Bridge Elementary:** Sidewalk infill along west side of Morris Avenue between 86th and 85th Streets

  ¡ **Valley View Elementary and Middle Schools:** Sidewalk infill along west side of 3rd Avenue between E 91st and E 92nd Streets

***Figure 2.2:*** *City of Bloomington Public Schools Pedestrian Improvements (source: City of Bloomington)*



- **Valley View Elementary and Middle Schools:** Sidewalk infill along north side of 88th Street between Park Avenue and 15th Avenue

» **Oak Grove Middle and Elementary Schools:** Enhanced crosswalk across West 106th Street; right turn bay on West 106th Street into the school driveway; and a mixed-use trail along West 106th Street between Humboldt Avenue East and the I-35W ramp

» **Jefferson High School:** Enhanced crosswalk added to the existing West 102nd Street crosswalk at Harrison Avenue

» **Ridgeview Elementary:** Mid-block crossing on Nesbitt Avenue relocated to a safer location by the City and supplemented with ADA accessible pedestrian ramps; on-site trail reconstructed by the District

» **Washburn Elementary:** Enhanced crosswalk constructed on West 84th Street; West 84th Street and Xerxes Avenue signal replaced with many pedestrian improvements; striping on West 84th Street modified from a 4-lane to a 3-lane; right turn bay constructed for right turning vehicles that stack onto West 84th Street from the school driveway; and school driveway opening widened and median separation added between the entering and exiting vehicles.

» Other minor modifications have been completed to improve pedestrian safety around schools including the addition of street lighting at crosswalks and the restriction of parking within 100 feet in advance and 50 feet past school crosswalks

» Bike racks have been added at many of the schools throughout the City/District with the use of Statewide Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) funding for SRTS

» **Kennedy High School:** Enhanced crosswalk added across Nicollet Avenue at Kennedy High School driveway.

*Enhanced crosswalk at Oak Grove Middle School*

# In Support of Active and Healthy Living

A flurry of recent public health initiatives and studies tout the benefits of active and healthy living and reinforce the public health goals of Bloomington's ATP and policy directions. The following describes key research findings and resources relevant to the formation of this plan.

## Active Living By Design – A Complementary Philosophy

The "Active Living by Design" movement spreading across the country is a complementary philosophy to that of Bloomington's own vision and values. As defined by one of the initiators of the movement, active living by design "is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines." Key principles of this movement that apply to Bloomington include:

» Physical activity is a behavior that can favorably improve health and quality of life

» Everyone, regardless of age, gender, language, ethnicity, economic status or ability, should have safe, convenient and affordable choices for physical activity

» Buildings should be designed and oriented to promote opportunities for active living, especially active transportation

» Transportation systems, including transit, should provide safe, convenient and affordable access to housing, worksites, schools and community services

» Parks and green space, including trails, should be safe, accessible and part of a transportation network that connects destinations of interest, such as housing, worksites, schools, community services and other places with high population density

» Municipalities and other governing bodies should plan for ongoing interdisciplinary collaboration, promotion of facilities, behavioral supports, policies that institutionalize the vision of active living, and routine maintenance that ensures continued safety, quality and attractiveness of the physical infrastructure

***Active Living by Design*** *is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and is part of the UNC School of Public Health in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Additional information and support is available online at http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/.*

***Figure 2.3:*** *Key Research Findings from the Design for Health Initiative*

**Costs of Physical Inactivity**

Physical inactivity causes numerous physical and emotional well-being concerns, is responsible for an estimated 200,000 deaths per year in the United States, and contributes to the obesity epidemic. The design of communities and the presence or absence of parks, trails, and other quality public recreational facilities affects people's ability to reach the recommended 30 minutes each day of moderately intense physical activity. A growing number of studies show that people in activity-friendly environments are more likely to be physically active in their leisure time. For example, findings clearly suggest that better access to facilities, pleasant surroundings, safe places, walkable neighborhoods, and activity-friendly environments all encourage higher levels of active recreation. Proximity, connectivity, and design quality of alternative transportation infrastructure can be added to this list to encourage higher levels of alternative transportation.

Giving children better access to healthy choices is vital to reducing the rate of obesity. Since the 1970s the percentage of obese children 6 to 11 years old has tripled. Obesity has doubled among preschool children and adolescents. Turning these statistics around means increasing children's physical activity and improving what they eat. Much research has focused on educating children and changing their behavior, but these approaches have had limited success. Changing the environments in which children eat and play is now seen as an essential strategy in fighting the obesity epidemic.

**Accessibility**

Being able to reach or access a variety of destinations (e.g., jobs, financial institutions, social contacts, health services, grocery stores) is critical to many dimensions of a healthy community. Particularly for the elderly, the young or the financially disadvantaged, transit is the mode of transportation that provides such access (where walking or cycling is too burdensome). Opportunities to access transit service, in terms of service location and service time, often rely on certain levels of density.

**Emotional Well-Being**

A number of studies have demonstrated how direct contact with vegetation or nature leads to increased mental health and psychological development. Recent data show that depression and other mental-health disorders will account for some of the world's largest health problems in upcoming decades. People do not have to actively use nature to benefit from it; rather, visual exposure is enough. It is important to consider that different groups of people have differing views of what constitutes nature in the built environment, with variation by education level, age, ethnicity, profession, residential location, etc.

***Design for Health*** *provides a series of informational fact sheets on a host of planning issues in support of local comprehensive planning. The informational sheet related to promoting accessibility and physical activity through comprehensive planning and ordinances may be of particular value, as is the case with other fact sheets in this series. Additional information and support is available online at http://www.designforhealth.net/ .*

## Metropolitan Council Twin Cities Regional Bicycle System Study

In an effort to improve the region's on-street and off-street biking facilities, the Metropolitan Council initiated this study to provide the basis for updating the bicycling section for the transportation policy plan. This study used local data and stakeholder input to identify key regional destinations, identify a regional bicycle transportation network with priority corridors and provide a framework for monitoring the performance of the regional bicycle transportation system on an on-going basis. Tier 1 and Tier 2 corridors identified in this plan occur within the City of Bloomington.

## Design for Health Initiative

Through their Design for Health initiative, the University of Minnesota and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota have developed a set of complementary research findings that further enhance the active living philosophy and provide tools that support integration into the fabric of community plans. The information in Figure 2.3 provides an overview of pertinent findings from this research.

Design for Health bridges the gap between the emerging research base on urban design and healthy living and the questions and priorities of local governments. The first phase of the initiative (2006-2008) created innovative, practice-oriented tools to help integrate human health into urban planning and environmental design in nineteen partner communities. The second phase focused on tool development and public education. Partner communities in the program received various forms of technical assistance and training through the University of Minnesota.

## BPH Healthy Lifestyle Initiative

Bloomington Public Health (BPH) promotes practices and behaviors to help people stay healthy. BPH's range of services is far-reaching, providing health care for all ages. One of the core principles of this service is the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles to prevent disease, such as heart attacks, obesity, and Type-2 Diabetes. To this end, BPH fully embraces the vision, values, and philosophies defined in this section as an essential part of enhancing the health and wellness of the community and improving the quality of life in Bloomington.

# Alignment with Regional Plans and Policies

Across the region and country, there is growing recognition and real action being taken to more effectively incorporate pedestrian and bicycle traffic into multi-modal transportation systems. The following describes the major policies and design standards emerging in the region and the implications for local nonmotorized transportation planning.

## Hennepin County Pedestrian Plan (2013)

This Hennepin County Pedestrian Plan addresses the county's role in making walking a safe and easy choice for residents. The plan is intended to guide implementation of pedestrian improvements within Hennepin County. This plan identifies three overarching goals:

- *GOAL 1: Improve the safety of walking*
- *GOAL 2: Increase walking for transportation*
- *GOAL 3: Improve the health of county residents through walking*

The plan lays out broad strategies for improving pedestrian safety and access, but largely does not specify locations. Recommendations in the plan are intended to serve as guidance for future roadway construction and maintenance projects, and to highlight implementation strategies and key enhancements for existing county pedestrian facilities.

## Hennepin County 2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan

The 2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan updates the county's 1997 bicycle plan to reflect current and growing uses of cycling in the region.

The planned bikeway system, shown in Figure 2.5, adds new on- and off-street facilities to the existing county system, and includes a number of planned facilities in the city of Bloomington. These recommendations align with the proposed routes and system plan described in Section 3.

In addition to physical route planning, the county bicycle plan describes the policy framework within which the plan was developed as well as strategies for coordination with other regional and local planning efforts. Key goals and policy directions are summarized in Figure 2.4.

## Three Rivers Park District

Hennepin County is collaborating with Three Rivers Park District (TRPD) in the creation of the 2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan to ensure appropriate coordination and connections between county and TRPD facilities. See Figure 2.6 for an excerpt of the proposed regional trail system and TRPD facilities in Bloomington.

***Figure 2.4:*** *Key Policy Statements from the Hennepin County 2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan*

**2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan Vision and Goals (pp.10-13)**

VISION: Riding a bicycle for transportation, recreation, and health is a comfortable, fun, routine part of daily life throughout the county for people of all ages and abilities.

RIDERSHIP GOAL: Promote the bicycle as a mode of transportation that is practical, convenient, and pleasant for commuting, health and exercise, and outdoor recreation.

BIKEWAY SYSTEM GOAL: Collaboratively build an integrated county bicycle system that allows bicyclists of varying skills to safely, efficiently and comfortably connect to and between all destinations within the county.

SAFETY AND COMFORT GOAL: Create a safe and comfortable county bikeway system.

SUSTAINABILITY GOAL: Implement bikeways and support facilities as an essential tool in realizing environmental, social and economic sustainability.

MAINTENANCE GOAL: Protect the county's and the park district's investments in the bikeway system and reduce seasonal hazards through partnerships.

**Related County Programs and Policies (pp. 75-76)**

The 2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan is consistent with other county plans and policies, including:

- Hennepin County Active Living Policies and Partnerships
- Hennepin County Complete Streets Policy
- Hennepin County Transportation Systems Plan
- Hennepin County Public Works Strategic Plan
- Hennepin County Pedestrian Plan

Three Rivers Park District Vision Plan (2010) articulates the following vision for the park system:

> *Through leadership, advocacy, innovation and action, Three Rivers is a model of a sustainable regional system of parks and trails that meets the needs of the present while ensuring that the needs of future generations are well-met.*

The Vision Plan also recognizes the growing use of TRPD regional trails as transportation routes, as well as recreational destinations and underlines the importance of these connections to the multi-modal transportation network.

## Metropolitan Council 2040 Transportation Policy Plan

As with Hennepin County, the Metropolitan Council supports provisions for pedestrians and bicycles as part of alternative transportation investments in cities within its jurisdiction. This is reflected in the Council's 2040 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). The TPP, among other objectives, provides communities with guidance to help structure local land use and transportation systems in ways that maximize future transportation investments and align with regional transportation goals and objectives. Figure 2.7 highlights key guidance from the TPP.

## Adjacent Agency Plans

It is most important that linkages to adjacent communities are provided and/or improved. Consistency with the bicycle plans for neighboring communities strengthens the systems in each city:

- Edina (2007)
- Richfield (2012)
- Eden Prairie (2014)
- Burnsville (1999)
- Minnesota Valley NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan
- Minnesota DNR - Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area Management Plan (2006)
- Dakota County
- Scott County

***Figure 2.5:*** *Planned Bikeway System, Hennepin County 2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan*

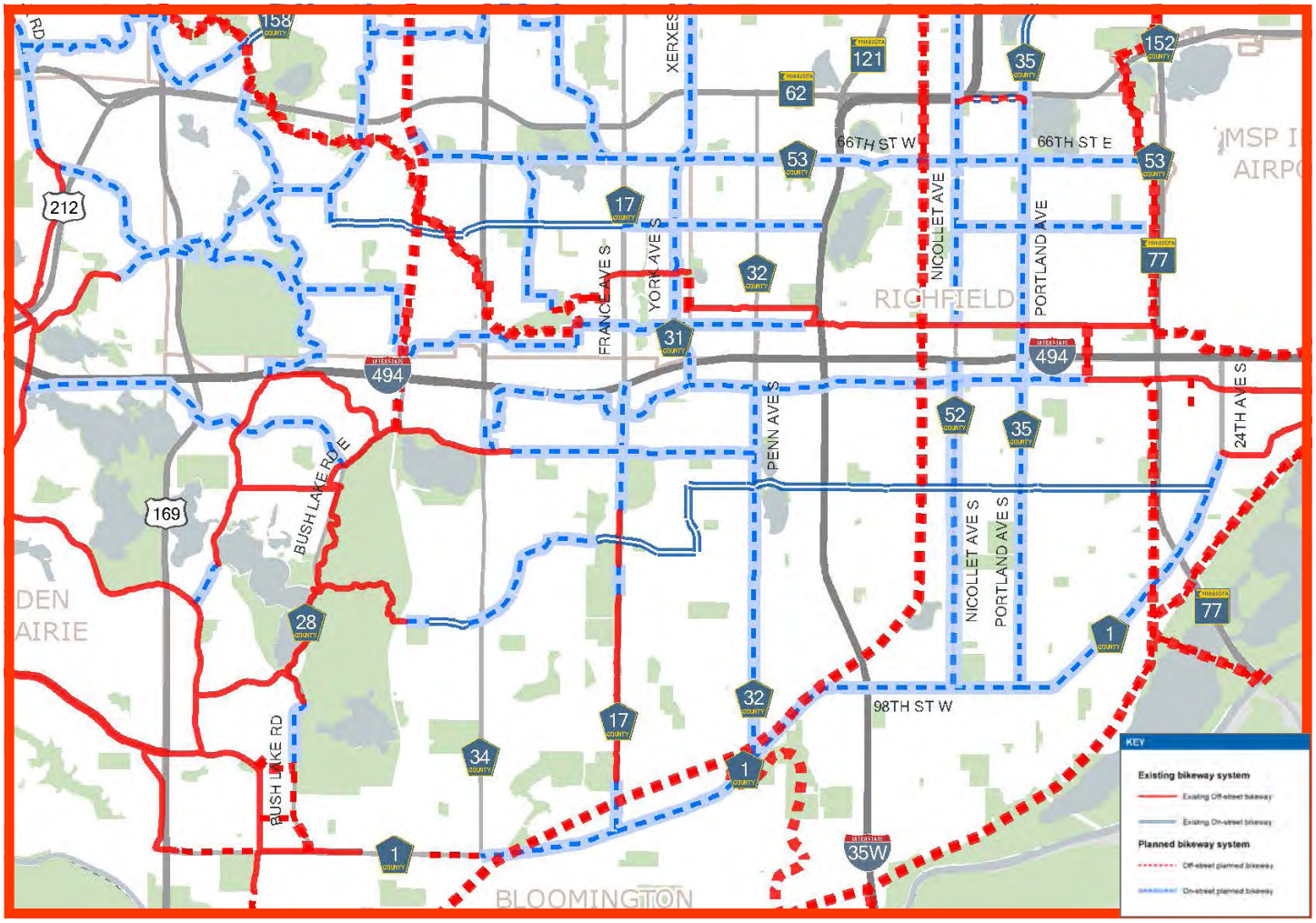
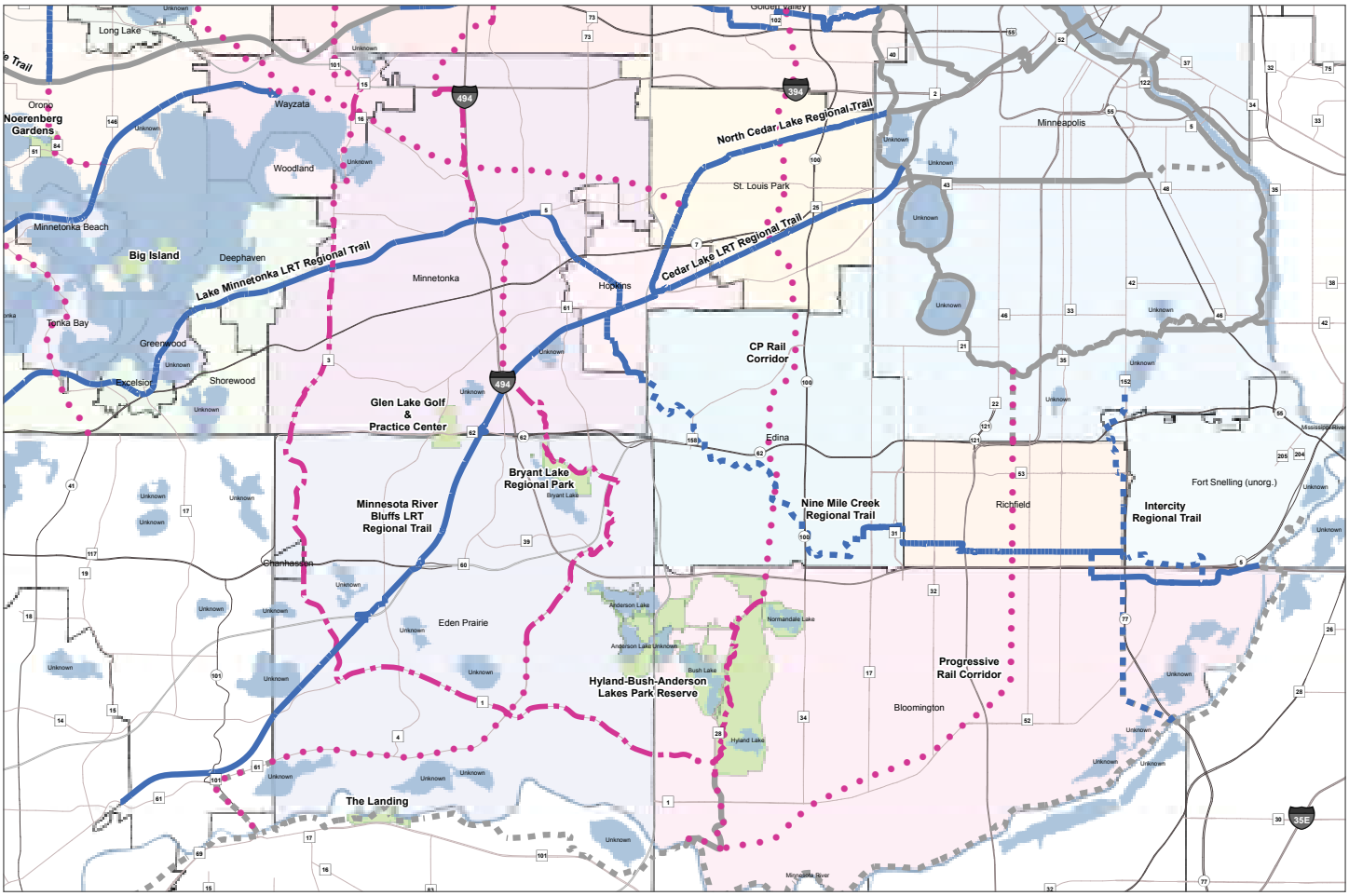


***Figure 2.6:*** *Proposed Regional Trail System - Three Rivers Park District, Hennepin County 2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan*




**Conceptual TRPD Regional Trail System**

- Existing Regional Trail (Part of Existing TRPD Regional Trail System)
- Existing Local Trail - Proposed for Inclusion in TRPD Regional Trail System
- Proposed/Planned Regional Trail Corridor (Part of Existing TRPD Regional Trail System)
- Proposed/Planned Trail Corridor - Proposed for Inclusion in TRPD Regional Trail System

**State and Other Non-TRPD Regional Trails**

- Existing
- Planned

***Figure 2.7:*** *Relevant Guidance from the Metropolitan Council 2040 Transportation Policy Plan*

**Goals of the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan**

GOAL: Safety and Security The regional transportation system is safe and secure for all users.

GOAL: Access to Destinations People and businesses prosper by using a reliable, affordable, and efficient multimodal transportation system that connects them to destinations throughout the region and beyond.

GOAL: Competitive Economy The regional transportation system supports the economic competitiveness, vitality, and prosperity of the region and state. Objectives include:

GOAL: Healthy Environment The regional transportation system advances equity and contributes to communities' livability and sustainability while protecting the natural, cultural, and developed environments. Objectives include:

GOAL: Leveraging Transportation Investment to Guide Land Use The region leverages transportation investments to guide land use and development patterns that advance the regional vision of stewardship, prosperity, livability, equity, and sustainability. Objectives include:

**Guiding Principles for the Development of Regional Bicycle Corridors**

The following guiding principles should inform local planning around regional bicycle corridors identified in the Metropolitan Council's Regional Bicycle Transportation Network:

Overcome physical barriers and eliminate critical system gaps. More attention and planning will be needed at the local level to identify existing gaps in the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network and opportunities to eliminate or divert from physical barriers. The Metropolitan Council will assist locals in planning for this critical element in developing the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network.

Facilitate safe and continuous trips to regional destinations. Planning for the development of bicycle facilities along the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network, as well as for connections between the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network and local bikeway systems, should be coordinated with Metropolitan Council staff.

Accommodate a broad range of cyclist abilities and preferences to attract a wide variety of users. Local roadway conditions and geometry, along with the available off-road trails network will largely determine what alignments and facility treatments may be feasible within an established regional bicycle corridor. Local agencies should try to accommodate cyclists from ages 8 to 80 with the full range in abilities from novice to avid cyclist by providing a range of off-street and on-street bicycle facilities. In some urban, high demand corridors, it may even be desirable to provide both an on-street bike facility (like a bike lane) and a parallel off-road trail. In most corridors with space for only an on-road facility, a conventional or buffered bike lane may be the optimal solution to attract the widest range of cyclists.

Integrate and/or supplement existing and planned infrastructure. Wherever possible, it is desirable to construct bicycle facilities along existing roadways or implement trails on corridors with minimal requirements for new land acquisition. This is important to assuring that scarce dollars for bicycle infrastructure can be efficiently invested to provide a complete regional network in a shorter timeframe.

Consider opportunities to enhance economic development. When planning specific alignments for the regional bicycle corridors, local bicycle planners should work closely with their economic development and land use planners to identify opportunities to enhance and/or serve as a catalyst to community development programs and projects. Connecting residential neighborhoods with shopping, entertainment, and work centers should be a major consideration when developing bicycle facility improvement projects.

# Building a High Value Alternative Transportation System

A key concept of the ATP update is building a system that will be highly valued by local residents, under the presumption that a quality system will entice higher levels of use. The values ascribed to various forms of trails, pedestrian-ways, sidewalks, and bikeways are important, because they are at the core of why a person uses a particular feature on a repeat basis. Studies clearly indicate that users make a distinction between alternative transportation features based on their perception of value, as Figure 2.8 illustrates.

As the graphic illustrates, safety and convenience are baseline determinants for whether a person will even use an alternative transportation feature irrespective of its quality. Once these two values are perceived as being acceptable, then the personal values will be given more consideration by the user. The following considers each of these values in greater detail.

## Safety

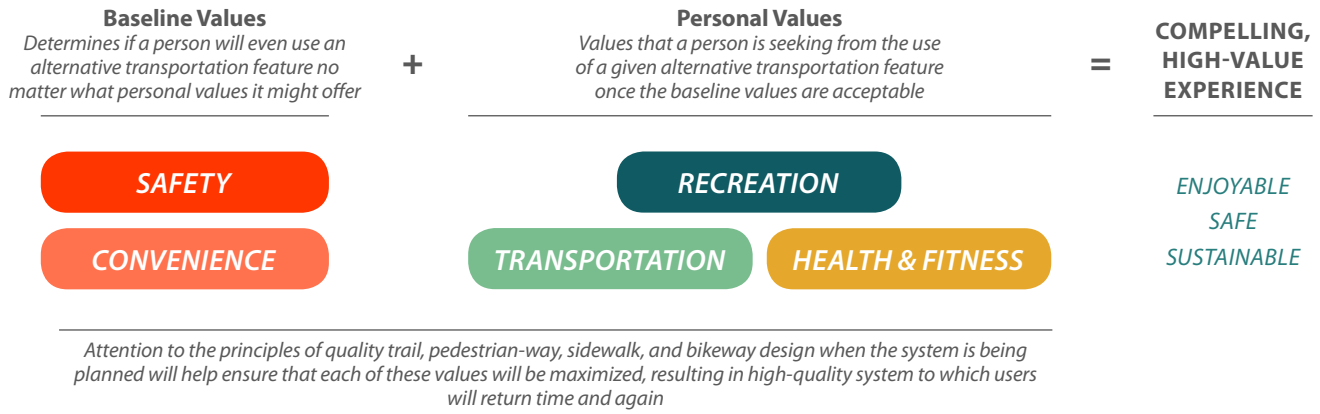
A sense of physical and personal safety is the most important value in that without it people are disinclined to use alternative transportation modes irrespective of how many other values might be provided. Physical safety can be relatively assured through good planning and design. Personal safety, which relates to a sense of well-being while using the system, is a less tangible yet still very important factor that cannot be taken lightly. This is especially important with safe routes to school, whereby parents will only allow their children to walk or bike to school if there is a high perception of safety.

## Convenience

Convenience is important to day-to-day use of the alternative transportation system. As is clear from various studies, the vast majority of shared-use paved trails, for example, are used by those living within a few miles of the trail they use most frequently.

Although convenience is important, its influence is still tempered by recreational value. No matter how convenient, a poorly designed alternative transportation feature in an uninteresting setting will have limited recreational value. Alternatively, a well-designed feature in an interesting setting might draw users from some distance. The point is that all trails, sidewalks, and bikeways should be located where they are both convenient and offer the amenities that users are seeking.

***Figure 2.8:*** *Personal Values Ascribed to Alternative Transportation Features (Adapted from MN DNR's Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines, 2007)*




## Recreation

Of all the values ascribed to an alternative transportation system, its recreational value is one of the most important in terms of predicting its level of use by the majority of residents, assuming that safety and convenience are not issues. In general, system features offering a high-quality recreational experience are those that:

» Are scenic and located in a pleasant setting, natural open space, or linear corridor buffered from traffic and the built environment

» Provide a continuous and varying experience that takes visitors to a variety of destinations and is a destination unto itself

» Offer continuity with limited interruptions and impediments to travel

This underscores that system planning must be based on criteria that go beyond simply providing miles of trails, sidewalks, and bikeways – with considerable emphasis on the quality of the experience as much or more than quantity. While high-value, well located trails, for example, often pose more challenges to implement, the value of these features to the community will likely prove to be very high and worth the investment. Cities that have successfully integrated these types of trails often highlight them as key aspects of the community's quality of life.

## Health and Fitness

Health and fitness is a growing and increasingly important user value that cannot be overlooked nor understated. Fortunately, this value is generally achieved if safety, convenience, recreational, and transportation values are met. Most critical to accommodating this value is developing an interlinking system that provides numerous route options of varying lengths as necessary to accommodate the types of uses envisioned.

## Transportation (Commuting)

The transportation (commuting) aspect of an alternative transportation system is valuable to a subset of the overall user population. Although this is traditionally a value that appeals to a smaller group of users, an underlying goal of the plan is to entice recreational, fitness, and utilitarian users to use the system more and more for transportation. Transportation purposes include using the system to get to work, school, local store, or around the neighborhood, along with other utilitarian trips that would otherwise be done using a motor vehicle. To that end, realizing the use of the system for transportation will only be successful if it is perceived as safe, convenient relative to a user's skill level, and of a high quality. Without such a system, residents will simply use their vehicle.

## Guiding Principles

The visions and values defined in this section underscore the importance to the community of evolving the transportation system over time to better serve the broad array of contemporary transportation needs of individuals and families living, working, and recreating in Bloomington. The following defines the guiding principles used for development of the plan described in Section 3.

### Four Guiding Principles

With the above in mind, four guiding principles provide the foundation for developing the alternative transportation system Plan, including:

» **Principle #1**: Develop an initial or core system of interconnected, high value trails, pedestrian-ways, and bikeways to form the backbone of an alternative transportation system that will evolve over time and complement the existing vehicular-oriented system.

» **Principle #2:** Incrementally fill in gaps and otherwise improve the pedestrian and bicycle public infrastructure to enhance safety and encourage the use of alternative forms of transportation within neighborhoods and along routes to school.

» **Principle #3:** Include alternative transportation features into public and private built infrastructure as new development or redevelopment occurs over time.

» **Principle #4:** Consider ongoing maintenance costs and funding opportunities in planning for future alternative transportation improvements to ensure that the system is sustainable and can be maintained over the long-term.

### Quality Over Quantity

In support of these principles, the plan strongly advocates the overarching idea that quality should take precedence over quantity. The key understanding here is that higher levels of use of alternative forms of transportation will only occur if the facilities meet or exceed expectations and desirable design standards and aesthetic qualities. Developing facilities that do not reach this standard tend to perform poorly and serve to disenfranchise those they were intended to serve.

Under this pretense of quality first, the ATP purposefully strives to avoid overreaching and instead focuses on what is reasonably achievable in a quality fashion. Overreaching in this context refers to making hard choices about priorities and avoiding recommending a new trail or sidewalk along every street when the achievability of doing goes beyond practical realities. Whereas doing so may indeed be a desired long term vision, this plan identifies core networks in a reasoned manner. Should the provisions of the plan be accomplished, future plans can build upon these past successes.

### Core User Groups Being Served

The Alternative Transportation System Plan described in Section 3 focuses on non-motorized forms of transportation, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrians include walkers, hikers, and in-line skaters of varying ability and mobility. In general, the intent of the plan is to develop facilities for ambulatory people as well as those in wheelchairs or using other forms of assistance. Accommodating seniors and the elderly is especially important given the aging of the population. Expanding pedestrian-level access to bus and LRT service is also an important goal of the ATP.

Although not widely used today, other forms of personal transportation should also be kept in mind as the plan is implemented. For example, small scooter-type one-person vehicles are becoming more available. Policy decisions regarding the use of other forms of personal transportation on trails, sidewalks, and pedestrian-ways should keep pace with implementation of the plan, meaning that these forms of transportation should be fully considered as each major plan element is planned and implemented.

The City has established guidelines for the safe usage of parks and trails within the city. These guidelines can be found in the "Bloomington Park Trails, Regional Trails and Sidewalk Usage Policy".

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