

# Opportunities to Increase **Walking and Bicycling**

## Bloomington, Minnesota

**Local policy initiatives** play a pivotal role in promoting the health of a community, including supporting active transportation options such as walking, rolling, and biking. A variety of policy options are available to help residents of all ages and abilities make active transportation a part of their daily lives. This document provides an overview of Bloomington's municipal ordinances, policies, and plans impacting the active transportation system, and provides recommendations for improving access to active transportation through Bloomington's comprehensive plan update, as well as future plans and code amendments.

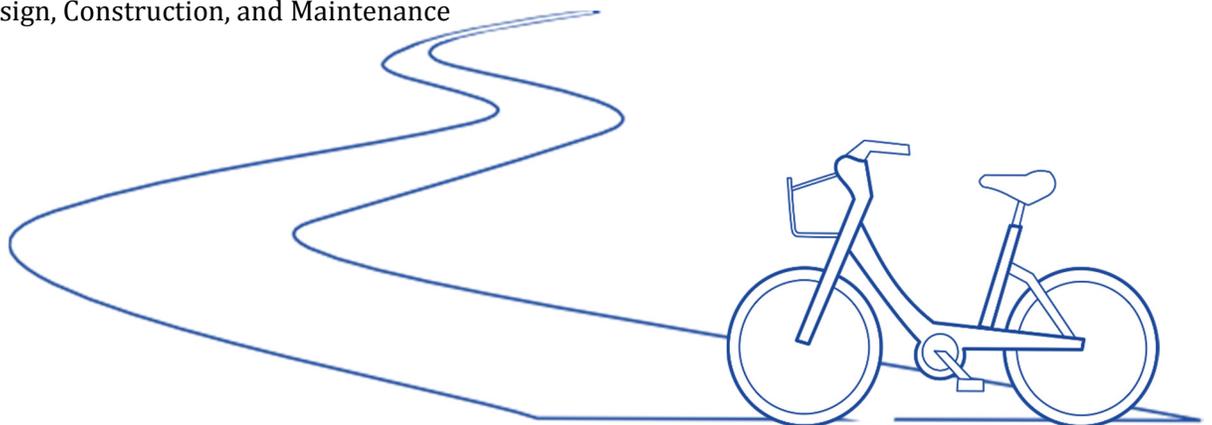
Bloomington local policies primarily impact the active transportation system in the following areas:

- Active Transportation Policies and Plans
- Land Use and Local Zoning Designations
- Bicycle Parking
- Traffic Calming
- Municipal Recognition Programs

## STATE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

A number of Minnesota state laws impact active transportation and how bicyclists and pedestrians move throughout the state and the authority municipal governments have to regulate certain areas. Areas impacted by state law include, but are not limited to:

- Signage
- Funding Transportation Facilities
- Speed Limits
- Pedestrian and Bicyclist Rights and Responsibilities
- Accessibility Standards for Individuals with Disabilities
- Design, Construction, and Maintenance



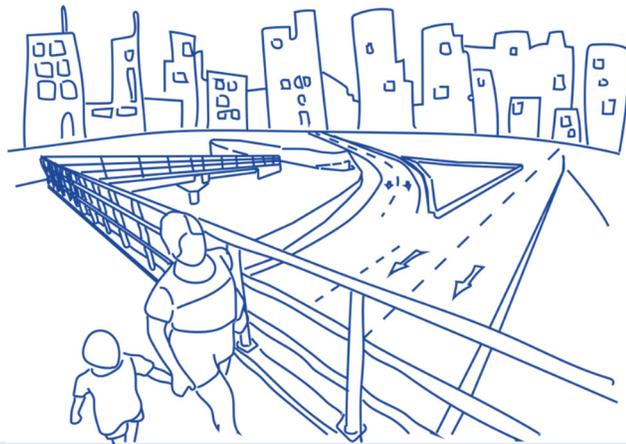
## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

### Active Transportation Policies and Plans

Bloomington promotes active transportation by maintaining a citywide network of sidewalks, trails, and bike lanes. The city's Complete Streets Policy establishes an internal procedure for enhancing safety, accessibility, and convenience for all transportation users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists of all ages and abilities.<sup>1</sup> The Alternative Transportation Plan further guides the implementation of this policy and proposes specific improvements to the active transportation network.<sup>2</sup> Finally, Bloomington's municipal code sets requirements and standards for sidewalk construction.<sup>3</sup>

Opportunities to improve Bloomington's active transportation policies and plans include:

- Measure and evaluate performance of Bloomington's Complete Streets Policy and ATP. Performance measures, such as length of new sidewalks/trails built or number of collisions involving bikes/pedestrians, are essential to quantify the positive impacts of these policies and improve them over time.
- Develop performance measures and benchmarks to evaluate ATP implementation.
- Expand the Pavement Management Program to include new sidewalk construction in addition to sidewalk repair.
- Maintain a complete GIS inventory of citywide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Explore additional funding sources for active transportation improvements, such as a Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety Fund or grant funding opportunities.
- Incentivize or require end of trip facilities or bike/pedestrian-friendly design standards for developments near planned or existing active transportation infrastructure improvements.



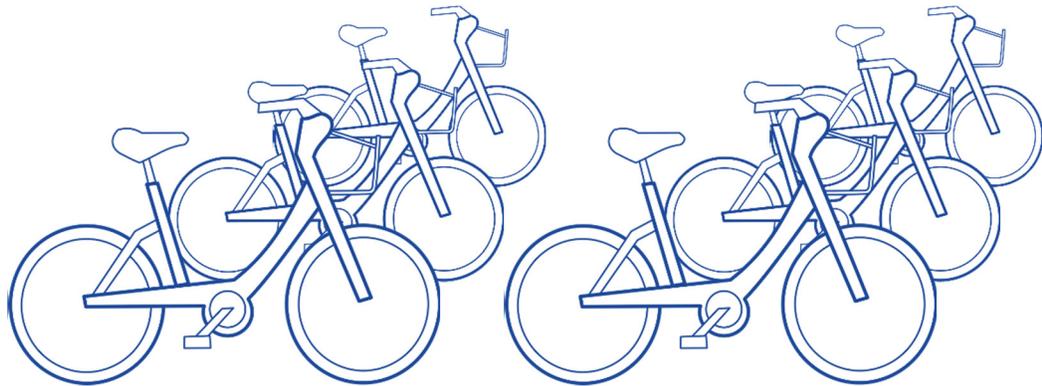
### Land Use and Local Zoning Designations

In addition to transportation infrastructure, land use patterns impact the pedestrian environment by determining what destinations are available within walking or biking distance, the number and variety of available destinations, and the distance between destinations. For example, if the only buildings within a quarter-mile of a resident's home are other homes, they can't easily walk or bike to the store, work, school, or any other daily destinations. Zoning ordinances can make residents more likely to choose active transportation options by:

- Allowing a mix of residential and commercial uses in the same area providing more variety of destinations closer to residents' homes.
- Allowing higher density of land use reducing the distance required to reach destinations.

Opportunities for Bloomington to encourage active transportation through zoning and land use planning include:

- Rezone additional areas for medium or high density mixed use.
- Reduce restrictions on duplexes and accessory dwelling units in low-density residential districts.
- Implement a Pedestrian Oriented Overlay District, with design standards to improve bike and pedestrian accessibility.<sup>4</sup>
- Reduce minimum parking requirements and implement parking maximums where appropriate. Reducing the size of parking lots reduces the distance between buildings, making them more easily accessible by foot or bike.
- Offer incentives for office developments to provide changing space and showers for bicycle commuters.
- Include language in the Comprehensive Plan or small area plans indicating a preference to discourage drive-through restaurants in certain areas, due to their impact on pedestrians/cyclists, healthy food access, and the environment.

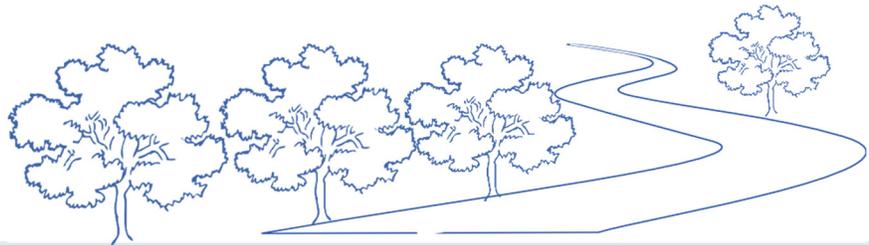


## Bicycle Parking

Secure and easily accessible bicycle parking facilities are a much-needed amenity for residents considering biking as an alternative to driving. As of December 2017, Bloomington's bike parking ordinance was in draft form, pending approval from the City Council. In addition, Bloomington's HX-R zoning district requires bike parking facilities to be included with all new developments.<sup>5</sup>

Opportunities to improve the availability of bike parking in Bloomington include:

- Adopt draft bike parking ordinance requiring bike parking in all districts.
- Designate a responsible party and timeframe to develop appropriate standards for calculating anticipated bicycle parking demand in the HX-R zoning district.
- Include a provision in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan directing the planning department (or other city office) to develop appropriate standards and minimum requirements for bicycle parking in additional zoning districts.
- Include a provision in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan to assess the current supply of bicycle parking and anticipated demand at existing/planned developments.
- Assess need for short-term and long-term (overnight) bicycle parking requirements.
- Refer to sample bicycle parking requirements in the Hennepin County 2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan to inform Bloomington's new or amended bicycle parking policies.



## Traffic Calming

In areas where traffic speeds are too high for the surrounding context, traffic calming measures may be necessary to ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists as well as motorists. Traffic calming devices such as speed tables, bulb-outs, or traffic circles help to reduce traffic speeds, making the area safer and more welcoming to pedestrians and cyclists.

Opportunities to improve Bloomington's traffic calming policies include:

- Reduce or mitigate property assessment costs in cases of resident financial hardship (similarly to the existing hardship exemption for senior citizens).
- Explore additional opportunities for reducing traffic speed, such as narrower lane widths, roadside trees, and reducing the speed limit to 25 mph for eligible streets.<sup>6</sup>
- Evaluate performance of the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Policy. This evaluation should also take into account the varying attitudes, resources, and cultural norms among resident communities that may impact participation in the program.

## Municipal Recognition Programs

Various nonprofit and governmental organizations offer recognition programs to municipalities to incentivize progress and recognize achievement in areas such as bicycle/pedestrian-friendly design, aging in place, or environmental sustainability. Recognition programs provide external incentives for improvement, metrics for evaluating progress, and guidance from subject matter experts, which can ultimately help cities improve policies and resident outcomes.

Opportunities for Bloomington to promote active transportation through recognition programs include:

- Participate in the Walk Friendly Communities program, administered by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center.<sup>7</sup>
- Join the Network of Age Friendly Cities, administered by AARP.<sup>8</sup>
- Revise Bloomington's Complete Streets Policy according to the recommendations in Smart Growth America's report, the Best Complete Streets Policies of 2016.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> City of Bloomington Complete Streets Policy (2012).

<sup>2</sup> Bloomington Alternative Transportation Plan, sec. 2 p. 13

<sup>3</sup> Bloomington, Minnesota, Code of Ordinances §21.301.04

<sup>4</sup> An example of the Pedestrian Oriented Overlay District can be found in the Minneapolis City Code. See Minneapolis Code of Ordinances Ch. 551, Art. II: Pedestrian Oriented Overlay District.

<sup>5</sup> Bloomington Municipal Code §19.29

<sup>6</sup> MINN. STAT. §§169.14, Subd. 2. Speed Limits; §169.011, Subd. 64. Residential roadway; §160.263, Subd. 4. Speed on street with bicycle lane.

<sup>7</sup> Walk Friendly Communities. <http://walkfriendly.org/about/>.

<sup>8</sup> AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/an-introduction.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Smart Growth America. (2017). *The Best Complete Streets Policies of 2016*.