Section 2 Vision and Values Statement

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 and better serve the transportation needs of individuals and families living, working, and recreating in Bloomington.

Vision and Values Statement

The alternative transportation plan is consistent with and builds upon the broader vision being created as part of Bloomington's community planning process. **"The Complete City"** vision is supported by a values statement, as the following reiterates. (The provisions most pertinent to the alternative transportation plan are in bold.)

"The Complete City" Values and Vision of Success

Values Statement

Bloomington is a community that people seek out as a place to live, conduct business and recreate. We have achieved this by creating vibrant, safe, welcoming neighborhoods and by working together with our neighbors to promote the fun and vitality of community life. We have provided our children with the educational opportunities to succeed and lead Bloomington into the future; we have supported the efforts of our business community, ensuring the availability of quality jobs, goods and services. We have been stewards of our environment, promoting the sustainability of our natural resources and the creation of inviting public spaces. We have approached the future deliberately, choosing to shape rather than react to a changing environment.

Vision of Success is Centered on Four Key Concepts

People: Our people are our community. 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**

Neighborhoods: Our neighborhoods provide the base of community life. 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

Businesses: Businesses provide an important foundation for building community. Our businesses:
- 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

Government: Our government is a reflection of our community's aspirations. Our government:
- **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**

A "Complete Streets" Vision

Relative to the alternative transportation plan, the broader community vision can be applied to the street level, whereby the local transportation system will be designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. This includes pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities seeking a reasonable opportunity to safely and enjoyably move around the city. Adopting this "Complete Streets" philosophy will ensure that rights-of-way, public spaces, and private developments are more uniformly and routinely designed and operated to enable safe access for all users and promote active and healthy lifestyles. Key elements of this philosophy include:

- Specifying that "all users" includes pedestrians, bicyclists, transit vehicles and users, and motorists – of all ages and abilities
- Aiming to create, over time, a comprehensive, integrated, connected network of transportation features
- Recognizing the need for flexibility, with the understanding that all streets are different and user needs will have to be balanced
- Adoptability by all agencies involved in transportation planning and design within Bloomington
- Application to both new and retrofit projects, including planning, design, maintenance, and operations
- Making any exceptions site specific and setting a clear procedure for approval of exceptions
- Directing that "complete streets" design solutions fit in with the broader context of the built environment
- Establishing performance standards with measurable outcomes to ensure goals are being achieved

"Complete Streets" Vision Complemented By City-Wide Land Use and Transportation Planning Decisions

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 that end, it is recommended that pertinent elements of this plan be applied to the land use and transportation elements of the City's Comprehensive Plan. This will ensure that each element of the Comprehensive Plan is complementary and that "active living" and "design for health" principles are intrinsic to all City planning endeavors. In particular, adopting land use policies and practices that promote alternative modes of transportation and serve to integrate active living by design principles into the built form (public and private) will further work toward the realization of the vision and values of this plan.

Design for Health *(which is defined on the next page, left column) 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 online information and support is available at http://www.designforhealth.net/index.html*

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

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 online information and support is available at http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/

- 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

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 following provides an overview of pertinent findings from this research.

Physical Activity/Preventing Obesity

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. Through the University of Minnesota, communities have access to various forms of technical assistance.*

Additional online information and support is available at http://www.designforhealth.net/index.html

Physical inactivity causes numerous physical and mental health problems, 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 active 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.

Mental Health

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.

Alignment with BPH Healthy Lifestyles Initiatives

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.

Safe Routes to School

As defined by The National Center for Safe Routes to School, community leaders, parents, and schools across the region are increasingly using Safe Routes to School programs to encourage and enable more children to safely walk and bike to school. According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), about half of all students walked or bicycled to school in 1969. Conversely, today fewer than 15 percent of all school trips are made by walking or bicycling, with one-quarter being made on a school bus and over half of all children arrive at school via private automobiles.

As research and anecdotal evidence shows, the decline in walking and bicycling has had an adverse effect on traffic congestion and air quality around schools, as well as pedestrian and bicycle safety. As previously stated, a growing body of evidence suggests that children who lead sedentary lifestyles are at risk for a variety of health problems.

In spite of the evidence, safety issues remain a big concern for parents, who consistently cite traffic danger as a reason why their children are unable to bicycle or walk to school. The purpose of the Federal Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program is to address these issues head on. At its heart, the SRTS Program empowers communities to make walking and bicycling to school a safe and routine activity once again. The Program makes funding available for a wide variety of programs and projects, from building safer street crossings to establishing programs that encourage children and their parents to walk and bicycle safely to school.

The goal of this plan is to support the concept of safe routes to school by establishing it as one of the key component of the alternative transportation system, as defined in Section 3.

Regional Alignment on Providing an Effective Pedestrian Infrastructure

Across the region and country, there is growing recognition and real action being taken on more effectively incorporating pedestrian traffic in its many forms into local multi-modal transportation systems. With greater insights into the value of pedestrian-ways in terms of personal health, safety, economic vitality, convenient lifestyles, and accessibility, the rationale for doing so is increasingly strong. To this end, the following define some complementary policies and design standards being fostered within the region.

Hennepin County

Hennepin County's recommended policies and design standards for effective pedestrian infrastructure complements and expands upon the public values previously defined, as the following reiterates.

Select Recommended Policies and Design Standards for Effective Pedestrian Infrastructure – Hennepin County
Source: Hennepin County – items described are considered applicable to Bloomington

Federal Mandate

The federal government officially endorsed the concept of planning for pedestrians by passing Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991, with the Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21) in 1999 and most recently with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) in 2005. Pedestrians will be present in varying numbers on all highways and transportation facilities where they are permitted and it is the clear intention of the Federal Government that transportation facilities be planned, designed and constructed with this fact in mind. The TEA-21 states that *"the non-motorized modes are an integral part of the mission of FHWA and a critical element of the ... transportation system" and later that "…bicycling and walking facilities will be incorporated into transportation projects unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist."*

SAFETEA-LU places increased emphasis on a multi-modal transportation solution by mandating that *"metropolitan and statewide transportation planning processes are continued, but changes are made in the planning process for surface transportation; requirements are added for plans to address environmental mitigation, improved performance, multi-modal capacity, and enhancement activities; tribal, bicycle, pedestrian, and disabled interests are to be represented."*

Environment

Hennepin County has the potential to make a great difference in improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions through regional jurisdiction over policy areas such as air quality and transportation. Hennepin County Board resolution 07-8-334R2 passed in August 2007 aims to *"create an inventory of greenhouse gas ("GHG") emissions from Hennepin County government operations and implement policies, programs and operations to achieve significant, measurable and sustainable reduction of those GHG emissions to help contribute to the regional reduction targets"*

This inventory will reinforce that motorized transportation is one of the most significant sources of CO2 emissions in Hennepin County. A practical way to reduce these emissions is to support policies and modes of transportation, such as biking and walking, that either emit less CO2 or none at all.

Transportation Planning

Every type of transportation, especially transit, is dependent on pedestrian access. A recent statement released by Metro Transit in June, 2007, stated that *"Safe bicycle and pedestrian connections to transit are vital to ensure that passengers on the transit system can make the first and final portion of their trip safely and without using an automobile."* Planning for this pedestrian system helps ensure a safe and connected trip.

As part of the 2000 Hennepin County Transportation Systems Plan (TSP), the County board of Commissioners added a bicycle plan dedicated to closing gaps and completing a system of bike paths and trails. Including pedestrians in the 2008 TSP is a logical and exciting next step in the County's commitment to a multi-modal transportation system.

Universal Accessibility

Accommodating pedestrian traffic is especially important for those whose age, income, or physical abilities prevent them from driving. In Hennepin County, failure to provide an accessible pedestrian network for people with limited transportation options requires the provision of costly paratransit service.

Hennepin County's population is aging. According to the Minnesota State Demographic Center in a report published in February 2007, the estimated Hennepin County population ages 65 and above will be 241,570 by the year 2035.

Public Health

As stated earlier, a recent publication by Active Living Research noted that "Physical inactivity causes numerous physical and mental health problems, is responsible for an estimated 200,000 deaths per year, and contributes to the obesity epidemic" (Active Living Research, 2005). A 2001 study revealed that middle-aged men that commute by an active mode of transportation were associated with lower weight and less weight gain regardless of whether they did more rigorous forms of exercise (Wagner et al. 2001). Access to a safe system of connected sidewalks allows those who wish to substitute active transportation and exercise for time that would normally be spent sitting in a car.

Metropolitan Council

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 *2030 Transportation Policy Plan* in the form of policies and strategies. The following highlights key policy statements with greatest relevance to this plan.

Metropolitan Council Transportation Policy Statements in Support of Alternative Transportation Plan

Policy 5: Tailoring Transit Services to Diverse Market Conditions

The Council will make the transit system more compatible with different land use patterns and socioeconomic conditions, following the design standards and service delivery strategies defined in the Transit System Plan. The Council will also promote development of more transit-compatible land uses, in line with Regional Development Framework objectives. The integration of land use and transit strategies is an important element of the Council's Regional Development Framework. Various employment, housing and population densities and varying concentrations of transit-dependent people define different transit markets. Those diverse markets must be served with different transit service strategies, service hours, operating frequencies and capital improvements. Those markets and the appropriate service standards have been incorporated in the Transit System Plan.

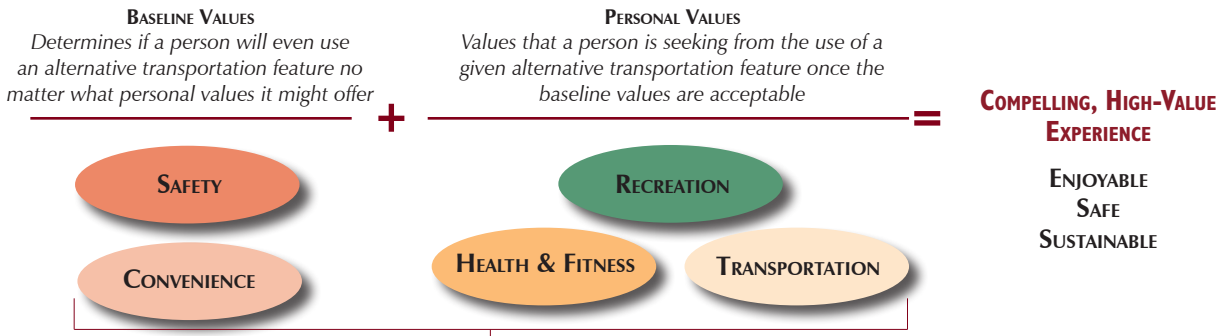
Policy 15: Develop and Maintain Efficient Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel Systems

Safe, high-quality, continuous, barrier-free pedestrian and bicycle facilities must be developed, maintained and improved to function as an integral part of the region's transportation system. Compact, mixed-use development with facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists helps reduce short automobile trips. Over the last 10 to 15 years, the region has made an effort to direct a higher level of transportation investments to special facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists, either as freestanding projects or as part of larger transportation projects. As the region promotes the development of mixed-use centers, providing facilities for these non-motorized modes becomes an increasingly important component of planning at the city, county and regional level. As recognized in the federal surface transportation law, well-developed pedestrian and bicycle systems help promote energy conservation, reduce the pressure on the highway system, and preserve the environment. In addition, recent research indicates that residents of places designed with accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians are more active and therefore healthier than residents of other areas.

Building a Highly Valued Alternative Transportation System

A key concept of the alternative transportation plan 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 2.1 illustrates.

Figure 2.1 – Personal Values Ascribed to Alternative Transportation Features
Source: MN DNR's Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines (2007)



Attention to the principles of quality trail, pedestrian-way, sidewalk,and bikeway design when the system is being planned will help ensure that each of these values will be maximized, resulting in high-quality system to which users will return time and again

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.

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 includes 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.

User Values Relative to Core Alternative Transportation Components (Classifications)

The alternative transportation plan consists of a variety of trails, bikeways, and sidewalks defined under various classifications. Each classification serves a particular purpose in meeting local needs. The distinction between classifications is important due to the variability in their value, which greatly affects the importance of the system to residents and the degree to which the various trails, sidewalks, and bikeways will be used. The classifications applied to Bloomington are consistent with the MN DNR's *Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines* (2007). The following table provides an overview of the classifications that have application to Bloomington.

Classifications for Core Alternative Transportation Components

Classification	Common Guidelines	Application to Bloomington
Destination Trails	Destination trails are paved trails for walking, jogging, bicycling, and in-line skating located within a greenway, open space, park, parkway, or designated trail corridor.	Destination trails will form the backbone of the trail system that loops the city and connects to adjoining communities and the Minnesota River.
Linking Trails	Linking trails emphasize safe travel for walking, jogging, bicycling, and in-line skating to/from parks and destinations around the community. Linking trails are most often located within road rights-of-way. Width (10') and surfacing (asphalt) are important distinctions between linking trails and pedestrian-ways. (Bicyclists prefer wider, uniform surface free of the crack control joints found in concrete.)	Linking trails will be primarily used as a means to connect neighborhoods and developed areas to the destination trail system, and provide safe routes to various destinations and schools.
Pedestrian-ways and Sidewalks	Pedestrian-ways and sidewalks emphasize safe travel for walking and jogging within residential areas and business districts and to/from parks and destinations around the community. Pedestrian-ways are essentially enhanced sidewalks designed as part of a larger streetscape scheme. Although biking and in-line skating are allowed on sidewalks in Bloomington, the narrower width and concrete surface limit their use for this purpose. Sidewalks are most often located within road rights-of-way of a local street.	Pedestrian-ways* and sidewalks* work in concert with linking trails* and are primarily used as a means to connect neighborhoods and developed areas to the destination trail system, and provide safe routes to and between various destinations and schools.
On-Road Bikeways	Bike routes and lanes are on-road facilities that primarily serve fitness and transportation bicyclists, as well as recreationalists with a higher skill and comfort level being around automobiles. (The difference between bike routes and lanes is considered on page 3.24.)	Bikeways augment, but do not take the place of, the trail and sidewalk system.
Natural Trails	Natural trails are commonly used in areas where natural tread is desired and harmony with the natural environment is emphasized. Use includes hikers, joggers, and mountain bikers in select locations in Bloomington. Natural trails in this context typically have a compacted native soil surface.	Natural trails will be primarily used as a speciality recreational feature located in natural areas, especially along the river.

** Note that there is an important distinction between pedestrian-ways, sidewalks, and linking trails in terms of which user groups are served by each facility. Refer to Section 3 for more detailed information on design differences.)*

Value Comparison Between Classifications

Each of the classifications defined on the previous page:

- Accommodate specific types of users
- Provide a certain type of experience and value to pedestrians, bicyclists, in-line skaters, and specialized users
- Are located in a specific type of setting appropriate for the activity
- Follow design guidelines that allow for a safe and enjoyable use of the facility

The following table considers the expectations of the most common types of users in Bloomington, and the values and preferences that are likely to be of most importance.

Values and Preferences of Common User Groups

User Group	Values and Preferences	Symbols
Family Group – Various Modes	Safety and convenience are top priorities, followed by a pleasant recreational experience. Controlled, traffic-free access to sidewalks and trails is preferred. Length of trail is less important than quality of experience. Will typically only use low-volume residential streets when biking or skating, and rarely busy streets even with bike lanes or routes.	 Family
Recreational Walker, Bicyclists, and In-Line Skater	Same as family user group, with trail continuity and length also being important for repeated use. 20 miles of connected trails are needed for bicyclists, at a minimum. This user group is also more comfortable with street crossings. Bicyclists and in-line skaters will use roads that are not too busy. Loops are preferred over out-and-back routes for variety.	 Recreational
Fitness Walker/ Jogger, Bicyclists, and In-Line Skater	Length of trail and continuity are most important, although an appealing setting is also desired. Bikers are reasonably comfortable on busier roads, but prefer bike lanes/routes with adequate separation from vehicles. Bikers will often use a combination of roads and trails to create a desirable loop, which is much preferred over out-and-back routes.	 Fitness
Transportation Walker, Bicyclists, and In-Line Skater	Directness of route is important. Will use a combination of sidewalks, trails, residential streets, and roads that are relatively safe, convenient, and direct. Bike lanes/routes are preferred on busy roads to improve safety. Bicyclists are not overly dependent on trails, but will use them if convenient and not too heavily used by families and recreational users, who tend to slow them down. Walkers need a trail or sidewalk.	 Transportation

Figure 2.2 provides a comparative analysis of each of the classifications highlighted in the table above relative to the values and preferences of the various user groups.

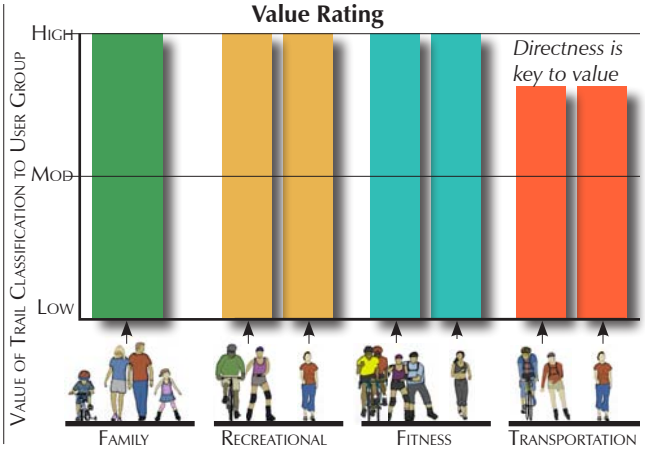
Figure 2.2 – Comparative Analysis of Classifications Relative to User Group Values and Preferences
Source: Brauer & Associates, Ltd. –Trail Values and Preferences Handbook

Destination Trail – Greenway or Parkway Setting

Value Statement

Desirable and safe environment for family and recreational outings in appealing setting away from traffic and distractions. If continuity is provided and design standards adhered to, also serves fitness users very well. Sometimes lack of directness reduces value to transportation user.

Value Rating



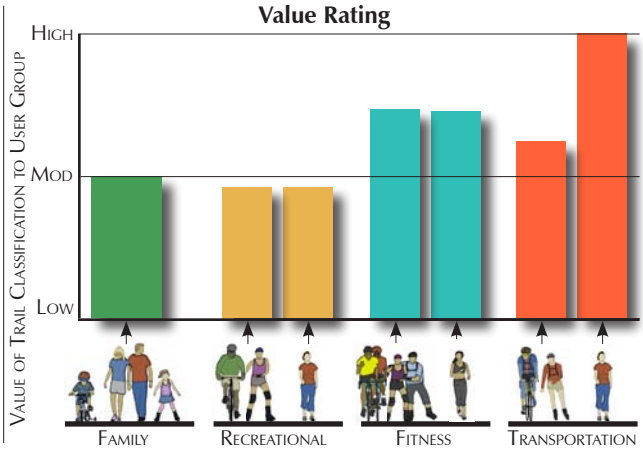
Complementary Value Characteristics for Natural-Surfaced Trails: *Note that natural-surfaced trails are also destination trails, albeit with a different surface and serving different user groups. As such, for these particular user groups, natural-surface trails offer very high value, with the exception of their use for transportation purposes, which is relatively low.*

Figure 2.2 – Comparative Analysis of Classifications Relative to User Group Values and Preferences (continued)
Source: Brauer & Associates, Ltd. –Trail Values and Preferences Handbook

Linking Trail – Road Right-of-Way Setting

Value Statement

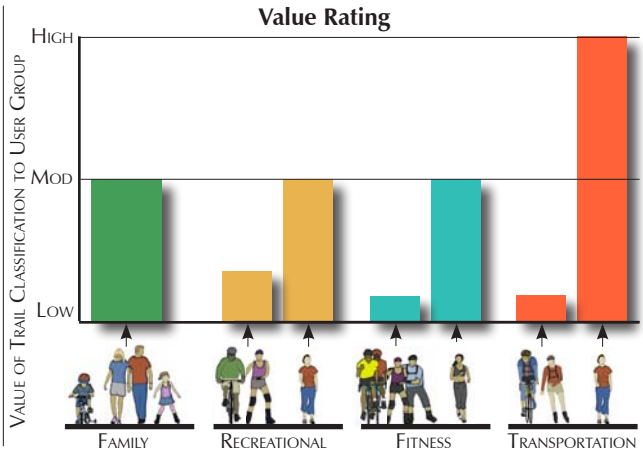
Provides safe and often convenient travel for families, but recreational value diminishes as separation from traffic decreases and traffic volumes increase. If continuity is provided, still has value to fitness and transportation users getting from one place to the next.



Pedestrian-Way and Sidewalk

Value Statement

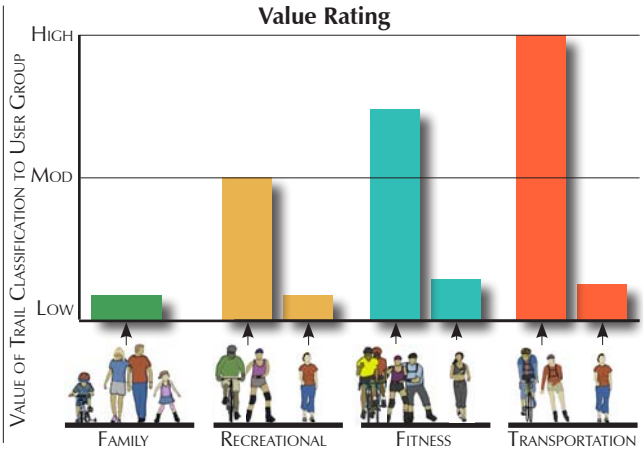
Families will use to get to a park, trail, or around the neighborhood and shopping area, as is the case with recreational walkers. Less friendly to family bikers. Recreational bicyclists and in-line skaters will use streets to avoid sidewalks. Fitness and transportation users will use which ever is most convenient.



On-Road Bikeway – Bike Lane and Bike Routes

Value Statement

Families will rarely use if traffic volumes are high and for other perceived safety reasons. Recreational users will occasionally use as a means to connect to another trail or less-busy street. Fitness and transportation users will use if convenient and direct. Meeting desirable design standards is important.



As the comparisons illustrate, the type of alternative transportation facility (and resultant quality of the experience relative to expectations) provided within the system greatly affects whether or not a given targeted user group will routinely use a particular component. The important point is that quality of experience indeed matters and that any deviation from an optimal classification, alignment, and design detail will directly affect whether or not the system is fully successful (i.e., routinely used). The system plan presented in this section is based on this fundamental premise.

Guiding Principles and Balancing Tradeoffs

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.

A Balanced Approach to Transportation System Planning

At the heart of a vision for a more balanced transportation system is the reality that the motor vehicle-centric infrastructure fostered in the past did not fully address transportation needs at the pedestrian-level. While vehicle-oriented facilities remain important and vital to a community's function, greater weight being given to alternative forms of transportation is also clearly justified.

To that end, this plan is shaped around the ideal that a "complete streets" vision is achievable over time through thoughtful planning and design and implementation strategies. Inherently, this requires the acceptance that balanced outcomes require measured trade-offs. It also must be recognized that redefining and reshaping the transportation infrastructure in its many forms across Bloomington will take time and require incremental changes with full knowledge of tradeoffs and resource implications and limitations.

Three Guiding Principles

With the above in mind, three 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-level 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 as part of "The Complete City" vision

Quality Over Quantity

In support of these principles, the plan strongly advocates the overarching principle 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 alternative transportation plan 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 focuses on taking the first steps in that direction 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 plan described in Section 3 – Alternative Transportation System Plan 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 alternative transportation plan.

Although not widely used today, alternative 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 there use 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.