

Transportation Policy – Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues

Scope, geography and authority of the discussion

Walking and bicycling are essential modes of transportation, especially for local trips. These modes allow people to travel without contributing to congestion and air pollution, to access other means of travel (such as transit), and to live healthy and active lifestyles.

The Metropolitan Council and its Transportation Advisory Board serve as the region's federally-required Metropolitan Planning Organization responsible for preparing a long-range Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) and programming federal transportation funds for the region.

Bicycle and pedestrian significance is reflected in state level activities:

- The Minnesota Department of Transportation's bicycle planning initiative includes a wide variety of activities intended to create bicycle accommodations for riders ages 8 to 80.
- Complete Streets legislation has raised the formal role of non-motorized transportation in the planning and implementation process.

Most detailed bicycle planning, design and construction occurs at the city or park agency level. The Metropolitan Council and its Transportation Advisory Board administer competitive processes for federal transportation funds to support bicycle and pedestrian projects. Regional recreational trails funded through the Regional Park System can also meet the transportation needs of bicyclists and pedestrians.

Today's issues are strongly connected to current and future *Thrive* discussions on:

- Transit investment;
- Regional parks and trails;
- Climate change; and
- Economic competitiveness.

Existing policy direction

Policy 2 of the [Regional Development Framework](#) states, "Plan and invest in multimodal transportation choices, based on the full range of costs and benefits, to slow the growth of congestion and serve the region's economic needs." Specific *Framework* language is to:

- "Encourage local governments to implement a system of fully interconnected arterial and local streets, *pathways and bikeways*."
- "In the longer term, the region also can slow the growth of congestion by encouraging development and reinvestment in urban and rural centers that combine transit, housing, offices, retail, services, open space and connected streets that *support walking and bicycle use*."

Policy 18 of the [2010 Transportation Policy Plan](#) outlines the current Council policy for pedestrians and bicyclists:

- The Council, state and local units of government will support efforts to increase the share of trips made by bicycling and walking and develop and maintain efficient, safe and appealing pedestrian and bicycle systems.
- Specific strategies address:
 - Investment priorities
 - Comprehensive plan requirements
 - Pedestrian and bikeway connectivity
 - Complete Streets
 - Planning to accommodate pedestrians
 - Accessibility for people of differing ability
 - Education and promotion

The Council is currently undertaking a [Regional Bicycle System Master Study](#) to identify Regional Bicycle Corridors that serve a strong transportation function—the biking equivalent of principal arterials for automobiles. The next *Transportation Policy Plan* is expected to prioritize these corridors for future funding opportunities.

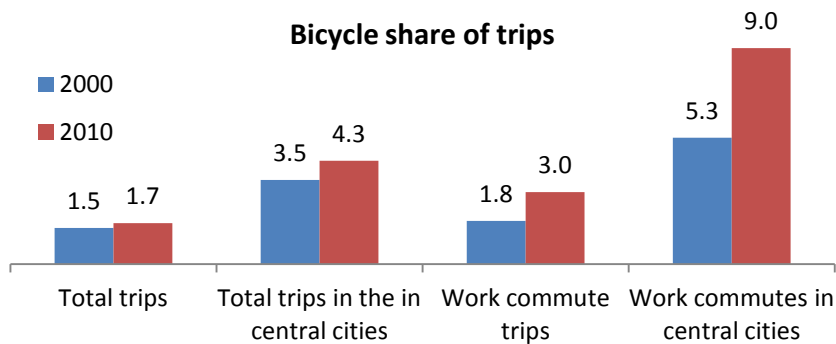
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Emerging tensions

Over the last ten years, bicycling as a mode of transportation has increased as a result of:

- Growing interest in physically-active lifestyles;
- Concern about climate change and greenhouse gases;
- Connectivity to transit; and
- Preferences of the Millennial generation.

The Travel Behavior Inventory shows bicycling growth in the last decade:



This growth in bicycling has created an increased interest in the Council playing a regional role to support this transportation mode.

Facilities for walking—which makes up 6 percent of all trips—are also important for transit ridership, healthy active lifestyles, and safety.

Questions for discussion

A. Bicycle facilities

As local communities have traditionally implemented bicycle networks, what role(s) should the Council play to support bike transportation?

Possible roles:

- Collecting and sharing information (such as the Travel Behavior Inventory, aggregating bike plans into a shared format).
- Identifying gaps, barriers and links across jurisdictional borders.
- Providing technical assistance to communities (such as mapping).
- Identifying regionally significant bicycle corridors across the region.
- Directing funding to bicycle facilities with regional significance.

B. Pedestrian facilities

Cities, counties or park agencies construct nearly all pedestrian infrastructure; what is the regional role? Possible roles:

- Identifying important pedestrian connections to regional systems (such as transit stations, highways or regional parks).
- Working with partners to construct and maintain connections.

C. Connections to regional systems

Successful transit requires the “last leg” connections – the walk, bike or ride to and from the transit stop. Where does the responsibility of Metro Transit (the region) in providing for such facilities end and the local government’s (the city) responsibility begin?

- Identify what connections should be made to regional investments.
- Work with communities to construct and maintain connections.
- Include appropriate pedestrian infrastructure along major transit corridors as a system standard reviewed for conformance with Comprehensive Plans.