

PROJECT REPORT

Community Facilitation and Engagement for the Metropolitan Council Regional Bicycle System Master Study

*A Report on
Community Engagement and
Community Conversations
for Development of the
Metropolitan Council Regional
Bicycle System Master Study*



DRAFT
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Section 1

Introduction

This section provides an introduction to the Regional Bicycle System Master Study, and provides an overview of the role of the community engagement effort within it.

In this section

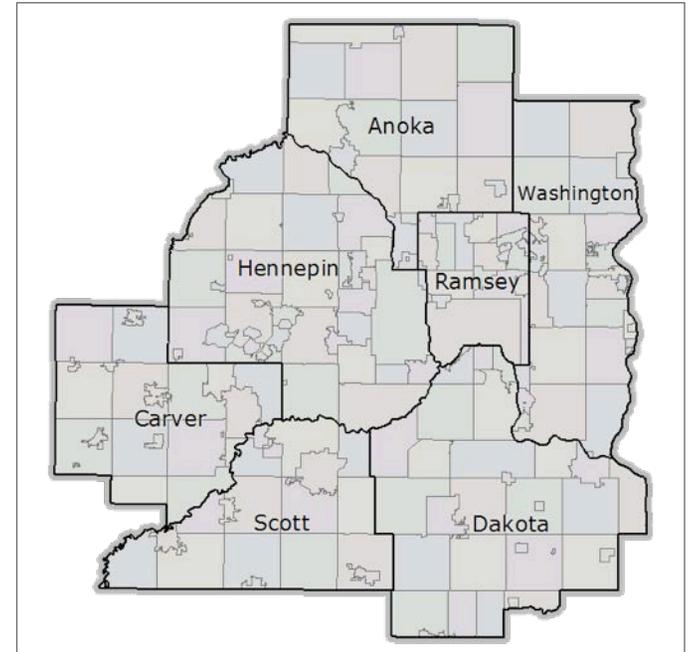
- 1.1 - Background: Regional Bicycle System Master Study
- 1.2 - Overview of the Community Engagement Effort

1.1 - Background: Regional Bicycle System Master Study

The Twin Cities Regional Bicycle Master Study (the “Study”) is designed to deepen understanding of the bicycle component of the metropolitan transportation system, and to use this improved understanding to more proactively guide its continued development in the next update to the region’s long-range Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) to be completed in 2014. The current Transportation Policy Plan is primarily focused on increasing connectivity and removing barriers for bicycle travel.

Specifically, this study provides a more complete understanding of how the regional bicycle transportation network functions, particularly with respect to on-road routes and facilities. The focus of this study is examining the transportation function of the bicycle network, with an understanding that significant segments of recreational trail facilities often serve a dual purpose of providing access to recreation while also connecting key destinations. This study uses local data and stakeholder input to guide a process that will:

- Evaluate the connectivity of the existing bicycle transportation network
- Define the role of regional bicycle corridors and regional critical links
- Identify a set of proposed regional bikeway corridors
- Propose a framework for monitoring the performance of the regional bicycle transportation system on an ongoing basis.



The Metropolitan Council Regional Planning area.



The Metropolitan Council seeks to coordinate development of a system of bikeways for transportation across the metro region. Image: The Cedar Lake Trail.

1.2 - Overview of the Community Engagement Effort

The preparation of a community engagement strategy was one of the first tasks for the Regional Bicycle System Master Study. Its goal was to map out a strategy that would allow the project team to receive guidance from bicyclists and the general public residing throughout the Metropolitan Council’s seven county planning area. A variety of opportunities to contribute opinions, insights, and experiences to the Master Study work were offered as part of this project.

This report summarizes and documents the conversations and learnings that resulted from implementation of the community engagement activities for the study. Its purpose is to serve as a tool for the Metropolitan Council in guiding and determining important regional bikeway corridors, in identifying and addressing gaps in existing regional routes, and in inform and providing background for the recommendations made as part of the overall Master Study.

The principal goals for the community engagement portion of the Master Study included:

- Engaging bicyclists and bicycling advocates living in urban, suburban, and rural communities across the Metropolitan Council’s seven county planning area;
- Collecting citizens’ opinions on perceived important characteristics of regional bikeway corridors;
- Collecting data on participants’ bicycle trip origins, destinations, existing routes, desired routes, as well as opinions on assets and obstacles surrounding bicycle infrastructure; and,
- Receiving comments and ideas about desired regional bikeway corridors in the seven county planning area, and
- Providing multiple opportunities for community engagement by offering a process that includes a variety of activities, including listening sessions, a website and online survey, and open houses.



Participants during a public workshop activity.



Participants working on the mapping exercise at the White Bear Lake listening session.

Section 2

Engagement Process and Results

This section describes the specific process and materials used in the community engagement activities. In addition, it details the results obtained, including overall guidance and results from individual listening sessions and open houses.

In this section

- 2.1 - Overview of Engagement Activities
- 2.2 - Summary of Overall Results
- 2.3 - Public Workshops
- 2.4 - Online Engagement
- 2.5 - Community Listening Sessions

2.1 - Overview of Engagement Activities

A range of community activities were completed as part of the engagement process for the Twin Cities Regional Bicycle Master Study:

Public Workshops

Four large format public workshops were held to inform members of the general public of the details of the study and to gather their comments and guidance at different stages of the project. Specific activities at each workshop reflected project questions and issues at the time of the workshop, providing a helpful opportunity to receive public guidance on project direction and progress. A summary of these workshops and the guidance received is included in Section 2.3.

Online Engagement

A public website (<http://www.metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Planning/Transportation-Resources/Regional-Bicycle-Master-Study-Introduction.aspx>) included updates on project process and information. An online map was made available for the public to provide comments and guidance for the regional bicycle network. A description of online engagement and feedback received is included in Section 2.4.

Community Listening Sessions

Four community listening sessions were held - one in each of four identified quadrants of the Metropolitan Council's seven county regional planning area. A summary of these sessions and the input received is included in Section 2.5.

Section 2.2 presents overall results and major themes from all engagement activities conducted for the project.



Participants at a listening session plot routes, barriers, and destinations on maps using markers and color-coded dots.

2.2 - Overall Themes

Several overall themes emerged over the course of the study and were repeated across engagement opportunities:

Regional assets for bicycle transportation

Participants identified the existing regional trail system as an outstanding asset that extends their ability to connect between and within cities and communities throughout the region. Participants also identified the regional network's general separation from automobile traffic as a contributor to their sense of comfort and safety. Several on-road facilities in the southern metropolitan region were also identified as providing high-quality bicycle connections.

General issues to address

Participants identified the existence of discontinuities and gaps in the current bikeway network system as a prominent issue, especially around physical barriers (freeways and major roadways, and rivers and other natural features). Participants noted the interruption of routes at these points as an impediment to greater regional travel.

Opportunities for improving conditions for bicycling

Accessibility for all types of bicyclists

A primary theme expressed was the desire for the regional bicycle network to be accessible, convenient, and comfortable to current and potential bicyclists of all ages and abilities. This theme is also reflected in the more specific ideas received in the community engagement effort, including:

Improve crossings of major barriers: Participants identified regional highway systems, railroads and waterways as main barriers to the connectivity of the regional trail system. Discontinuity of bicycle facilities at these junctions and confusion about crossings were frequently noted. Crossing the Mississippi River was identified as a major barrier, especially at the Cedar Bridge crossing. Additionally, comfort and safety at at-grade intersections of regional trails with roadways carrying higher traffic speeds and volumes were a prominent concern.

Improve connection to local destinations and recreational trails and assets: Many participants identified a need for bicycle facilities that connect to nearby trails and other destinations safely and comfortably. Employment and commercial centers, schools, parks, adjacent cities and recreational facilities were all identified as important destinations requiring connection.

Maintain facilities year-round: Year-round, including winter, maintenance for regional bikeways was identified as an important contributor to system performance and usefulness.

Address system gaps: Engagement activities provided identification of specific network gaps, with participant recommendations to address these discontinuities to improve overall connectivity.

Network organization and hierarchy: Participant recommendations included developing a network hierarchy of primary arteries providing continuous connectivity at a broader scale with frequent connection to finer-grained, local scale bicycle networks providing access to local destinations.

2.3 - Public Workshops

Process

Two sets of public workshops were held during the project:

The first set of workshops (“Round 1”) offered an opportunity for the general public to learn about the study and focused on gathering input on the guiding principles and significant regional destinations for the regional bikeway system. This first set of workshops included two open house meetings, which were held at:

- June 27, 2013 - Neighborhood House in St. Paul
- July 11, 2013 - St. Louis Park Recreation Center

The second set of workshops (“Round 2”) provided an opportunity for members of the public to review preliminary findings and provide feedback on the draft Regional Bicycle Transportation Network and Priority Regional Bicycle Transportation Corridors. This second set of workshops included two open house meetings, which were held at:

- October 27, 2013 - Hallie Q. Brown Center in St. Paul
- October 28, 2013 - University of Minnesota’s Urban Outreach and Engagement Center in Minneapolis

Each set of workshops included two identical public meetings, held in different sections of the Metropolitan region, to increase workshop reach and access. These workshops were held in addition to the four community listening sessions that focused on reaching outlying areas of the region’s four quadrants.

Public workshops were broadly advertised, encouraging members of the general public (as well as current and potential cyclists) to attend. The goal was to expand participation and increase opportunities to receive comments and guidance from members of the general public so this information could help guide project direction and progress.



Sharing project information with workshop participants.



Reviewing maps of existing and proposed bicycle networks during one of the Open House Workshops.

Public Workshops Overall Results

Round 1 Public Workshops

Round 1 Public Workshops focused on prioritization of the guiding principles for the regional bikeway system, and gathering input on significant regional destinations.

The two workshops conducted during Round 1 were attended by a total of **Pending information from project team** participants. Each workshop included an introduction to the study team and overview of the study purpose, schedule and intended outcome. Participants were also guided through two interactive exercises directed to get at specific feedback to inform the study process.

For the first exercise, participants were presented with the draft guiding principles that had been developed from existing plans and conversations with the Project Advisory Group (PAG) and the Project Management Team (PMT). Participants were broken into groups of four to six and asked to respond to three questions:

- Which of these principles are most important to you?
- Which of these principles are most important to your community?
- What is missing from these principles?

The participants used Post-It Notes to record multiple responses to each question, and then were asked to post their responses along with their neighbors along a wall in the room. The participants were asked to not only post their own responses, but read the responses from other attendees before returning to their group.

The participants were then given poster boards and materials to work with. The participants were asked to cut and paste from a list of the existing guiding principles (including some blanks) and reach consensus about the five most important principles and include comments about why each was determined to be a priority. The results of the combined workshops are summarized in Figure 1 at right.

Figure 1. Five most important guiding principles to consider when planning the bicycle network

Principle	% Top 5
Overcome physical barriers and system gaps	85%
Facilitate safe and continuous trips to regional destinations	69%
Work for a broad range of cyclist types	62%
Function as arteries to connect regional destinations year-round	62%
Use existing and planned infrastructure	54%
Improve opportunities to increase the share of bicycle trips	46%
Connect to local, state and national bike networks	31%
Enhance economic development	23%
Be equitably distributed	15%
Space corridors to reflect land use and transportation patterns	0%
Consider regional priorities adopted in local bicycle plans	0%

Source: Round 1 Public Workshops

For the second exercise participants were introduced to the concept of regional destinations and given an overview of the locations that had already been identified based upon Metropolitan Council definitions and input from the Project Advisory Group (PAG) and the Project Management Team (PMT). The group was then instructed to visit four stations with a map of each quadrant of the region and place dot stickers to identify locations they felt were important regional destinations for bicycling.

After some time to review the maps and provide input the participants were asked to choose one of the four tables and work within a group to complete a worksheet that would identify the 5 most important regional destinations for each quadrant based on group consensus. The results of this exercise were recorded and mapped by the project team and these data were used to supplement the scoring evaluation for the proposed Regional Bicycle Transportation Network corridors.

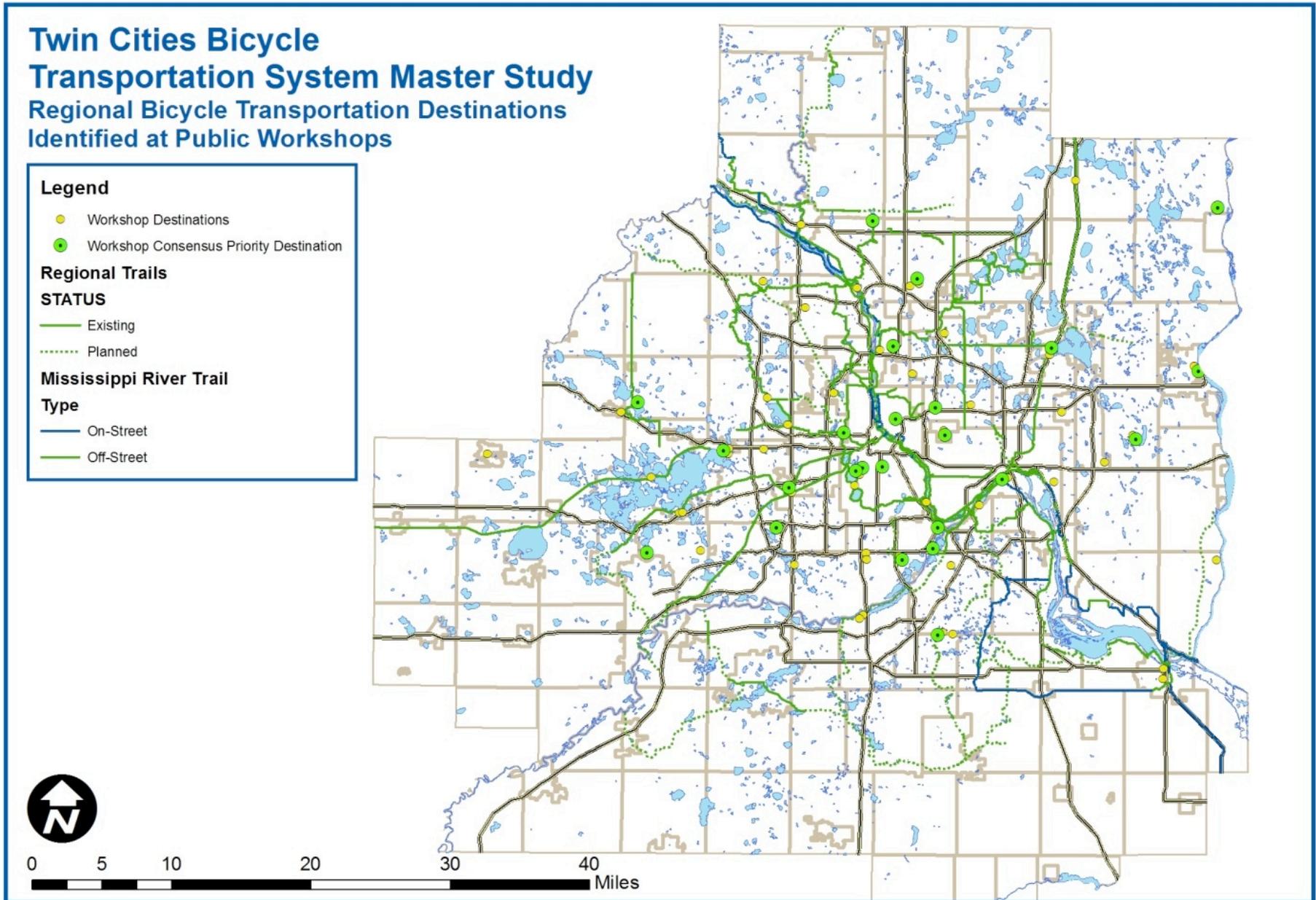
A map (Figure 2a) showing the locations identified and a full listing of the locations by geographical region (Figure 2b) is included below.

Round 2 Public Workshops

Round 2 workshops provided an opportunity for stakeholders to review preliminary findings and provide feedback on the draft regional network.

Pending information from project team

Figure 2a. Identified Regional Destinations



Source: Round 1 Public Workshops

Figure 2b. Five Most Important Regional Destinations for Each Map Quadrant

	NE	SE	SW	NW
Open House Workshop 1	Marine on St Croix*	Zoo (MN)*	Minnesota Arboretum*	Target Brooklyn Park
	Stillwater*	Hasting/Prescott	City Lakes*	Blaine
	White Bear Lake - downtown*	West Side (Harriet Island Lilydale)*	Fort Snelling State Park*	Maple Plain
	State Fairgrounds/UMN St Paul Campus*	Minnehaha Park/Highland	Minnesota River Valley*	Medicine Lake
	Lake Elmo Park*	Chain of Lakes	Minnesota Zoo*	Hopkins
	North St. Paul - downtown	Old Cedar Bridge		Wayzata
	Forest Lake	Northfield*		Excelsior
	National Sports Center - Blaine	Mall of America		Minnetonka Beach
	TCAPP	Battle Creek Park		Watertown
	Central Park - Roseville	3M		Big Lake
Open House Workshop 2	Bunker Hills Park*	Zoo + Lebanon Hills Park	Golden Triangle [Park Nicollet/Opus/United Health]*	Downtown Hopkins*
	National Sports Center	Chain of Lakes	Downtown Wayzata [Regional trailhead]	Elm Creek Park Reserve
	Coon Rapids Dam	MOA	Excelsior, city of [regional trailhead]	National Sports Center*
	Fridley MS/HS & Community Center*	Hastings	Mall of America [transit hub/employment ctr]*	Downtown Wayzata*
	Silverwood Park	Afton State Park	Greenway/Lake Street Area [commercial]*	St Paul Campus/Fairgrounds/Lake Como
	Rosedale*	Business Corridor on Hwy 13	Uptown*	Baker Park Reserve*
	Northstar Rail Station	494 Corridor	Ridgedale [transit/shopping]	French Regional Park/Medicine Lake
	Lake Elmo Park	Cedar Ave Bridge	Normandale Lakes/Highland Park Reserve	Central Ave NE*
	Stillwater	E. St Paul? Across from DT Saint Paul	Theodore Wirth*	Robbinsdale - Downtown
	Downtown Whitebear Lake*	Lilydale / Samuel Morfan	Chanhassen	Anoka

Source: Round 1 Public Workshops

*Consensus-identified Top 5 priority destination

No Top 5 priority destinations identified from the SE Group in workshop 2 and NW workshop 1

Only 5 locations identified (all as priority) in SW Group Workshop 1

2.4 - Online Engagement

Process

Public comments were also collected online through a project page on the Metropolitan Council website (<http://www.metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Planning/Transportation-Resources/Regional-Bicycle-Master-Study-Introduction.aspx>).

The page included an interactive Wikimap that allowed residents throughout the seven counties to document important regional bicycle destinations and routes they currently use, or identify barriers to bicycling, and/or routes that would be useful if conditions were improved.

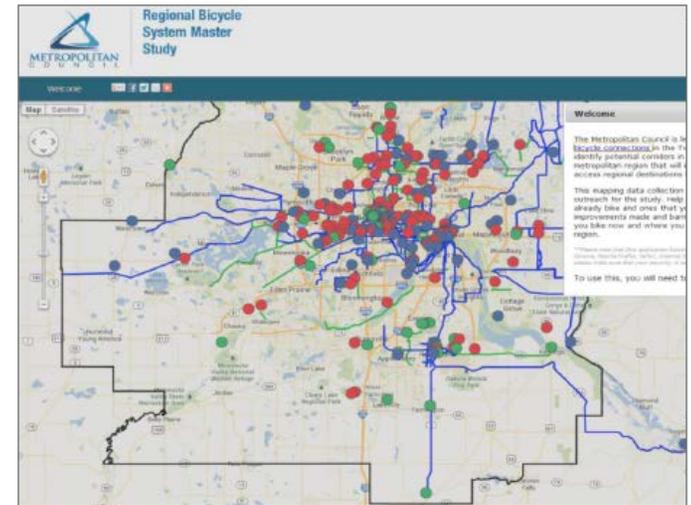
Respondents were asked to identify the following information:

- Route I ride;
- Route I'd ride if improved;
- Barrier to biking;
- Place I bike to; and
- Place I would like to bike to.

Results

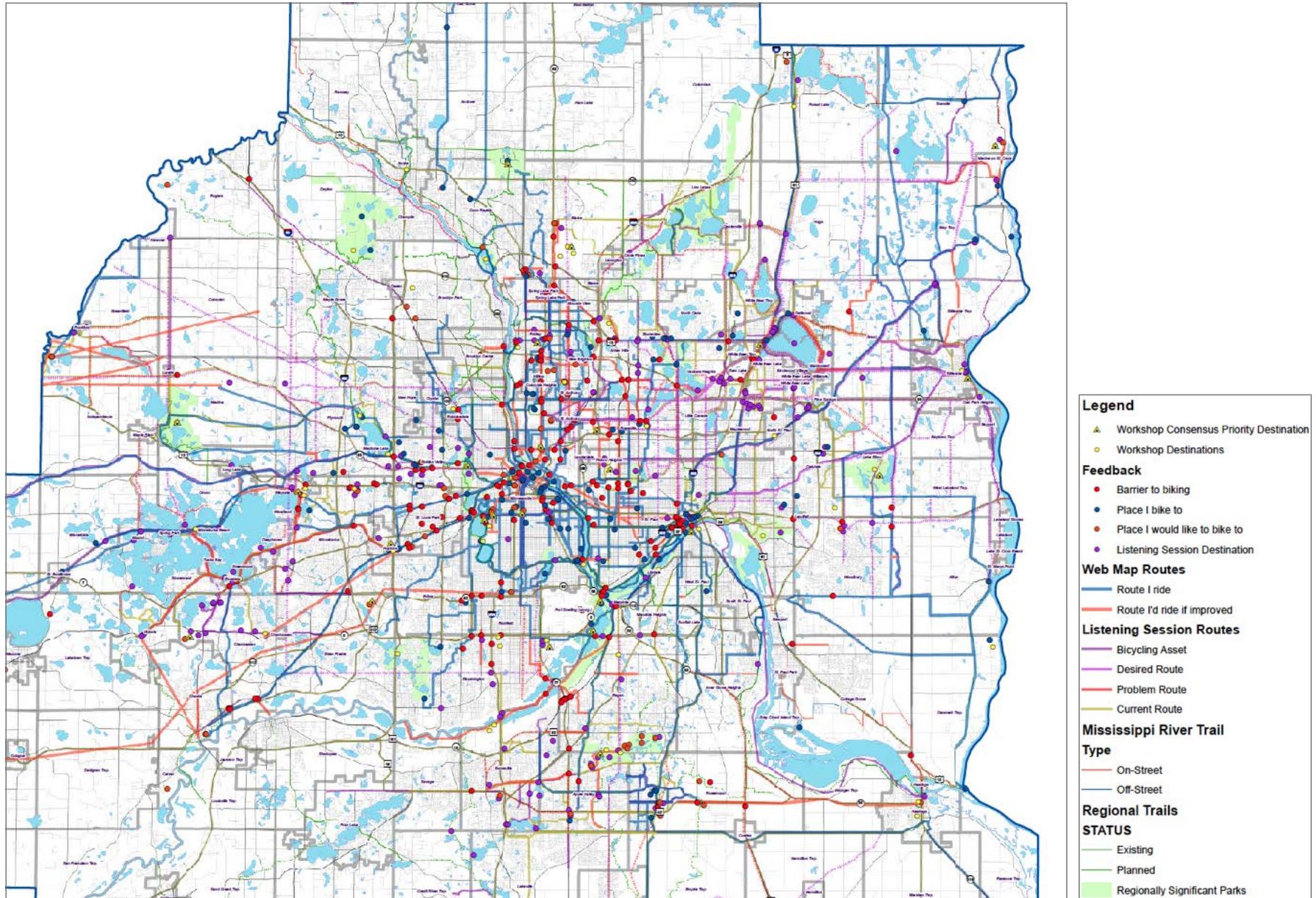
Figure 3 below is a compilation of comments received from the online map feedback, the listening sessions, and the public workshops.

The map illustrates the common opinion the region's bicyclists have about difficult crossings and critical missing links in the region's bicycle network.



Participants were invited to enter information about bicycle routes, destinations, and barriers into an online mapping tool on the project website.

Figure 3. All Map Comments Received (Online and In-Person Meetings)



2.5 - Community Listening Sessions

Process

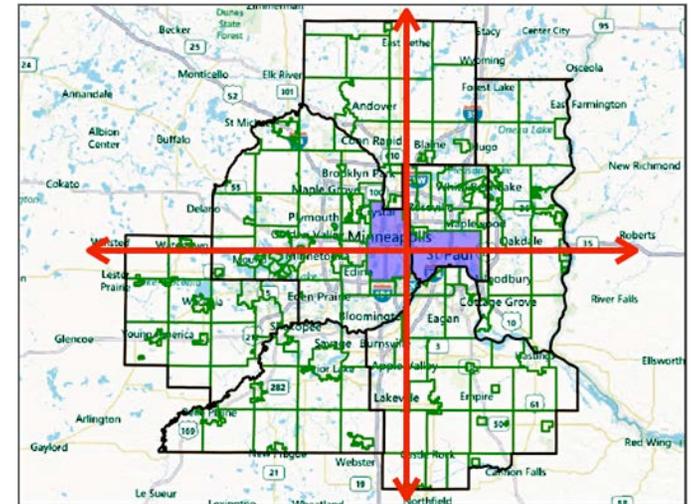
Four listening sessions were organized and conducted with the goal of directly engaging with cycling advocates and others with significant knowledge of cycling assets and barriers in their part of the region.

Outreach efforts involved a focused effort to reach members of cycling clubs and residents with significant local knowledge of cycling conditions, assets and barriers throughout the seven county planning area. The project team contacted dozens of bike shops, advocacy groups, cycling clubs, and municipal planning and recreation officials via email, phone, and social media in order to inform the cycling community in the targeted areas of the listening sessions. The Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota and Streets.MN posted information announcements about the sessions on their Facebook pages and through their e-newsletters.

Given the size of Metropolitan Council's seven county planning area geography and population, it would not be possible to convene meetings in all communities. A primary task was to divide the planning area into four quadrants, and select a location to hold a Listening Session in each quadrant during the month of April 2013.

The goal of the listening sessions was to meet with local bicycle experts and citizens bicycling in their local communities and collect information from these individuals on the origins and destinations of bicycle trips made, routes taken, bicycle assets and challenges, and desired regional bikeway corridor routes in different parts of the planning area. Determining individuals' opinions on important characteristics of regional bikeway corridors was an essential goal of the listening sessions.

The listening sessions were meant to provide a set of data and information about bicycling in the outlying Metropolitan Council planning area. Advertising the listening sessions included reaching out to bicycle groups, shops, and related businesses and organizations in these areas, making extensive use of social media, and promoting the



The Metropolitan Council's seven county regional planning area was divided into four approximate quadrants in order to facilitate meeting organization.



Participants engaging in activities at a listening session in Plymouth.

meetings specifically as a way local bicyclists can contribute their opinions and experiences bicycling in their local communities to the work of the Master Study.

Sessions and Activities

Listening sessions were held in April 2013 in the following locations:

- Apple Valley Community Center - April 15
- White Bear Lake Library - April 17
- Plymouth Library - April 24
- Chanhassen Recreation Center - April 25

Listening sessions included the following activities:

- 1) A brief introductory presentation to explain project process and goals, and explaining the role of the listening sessions,
- 2) An individual brainstorming exercise, asking participants to provide their input on what regional bikeway corridors characteristics regional bikeway corridors should possess,
- 3) A group discussion on regional bikeway corridor characteristics, including reflection on other participants' ideas of a regional bikeway corridor (i.e. what new ideas did participants see or hear from other participants?)
- 4) A small-group exercise, using maps, markers and stickers, to identify key assets, destinations, and barriers for bicycling, as well as current and desired bike routes at a local and regional scale,
- 5) Small group workshop activities where participants located ideal or desirable regional bikeway corridors on maps,
- 6) A group discussion following the small-group activity to discuss findings with the larger group, and

- 7) The provision of comment cards for participants to write out additional thoughts about regional bikeway corridors or about the engagement process.

Presentation

A brief presentation shared at the beginning of each workshop introduced participants to the Regional Bicycle System Master Study goals and process, and how the listening sessions fit within the project scope. The presentation also introduced participants to and guided them through the activities carried out at the listening session.

Individual Regional Bikeway Corridor Brainstorm Exercise

Workshop participants were then invited to participate in a brief written exercise immediately following the presentation. Each participant was asked to write down on Post-It Notes qualities that a regional bikeway corridor should possess.

Participants then ranked the attributes they had written down and placed them in vertical order on the wall next to others' notes, and were instructed to review the comments of others in the process.

Small-Group Mapping Exercise

Several large format paper maps displaying the area where the listening session took place were provided to groups of participants. The participants were first asked to individually identify three types of locations on the maps:

- 1) Common destinations to which they bike or would like to bike,
- 2) Existing routes that they use for cycling at a regional scale,

- 3) Routes of specific locations that pose challenges to them as cyclists, and
- 4) Routes which were agreed upon as being ideal or desired regional bikeway corridors.

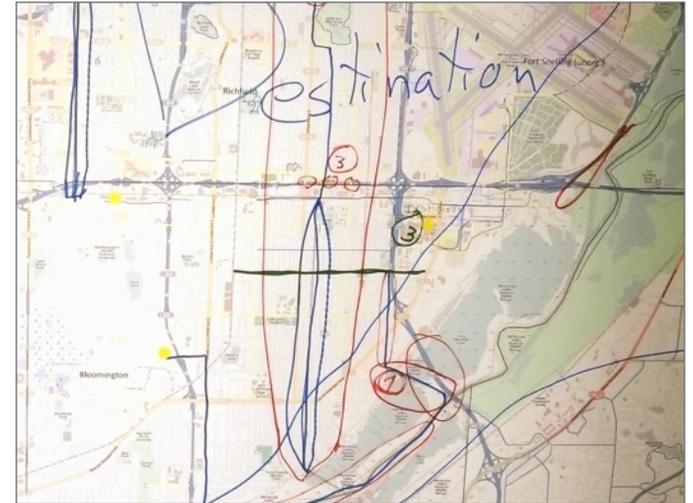
Participants identified locations by placing color-coded stickers and drawing color-coded routes (yellow for origins and destinations, green for strengths or assets, and red for weaknesses or problems/challenges, blue for existing routes, and purple for desired or ideal regional corridors) on specific intersections, streets, trails, and destinations. Participants were encouraged to provide notes on the maps near the markings that they placed on the maps describing issues in more detail.

Participants then worked as a group to further explore the maps and begin to prioritize assets, challenges and destinations. Each group of participants was asked to identify and describe their top ten bicycling destinations, the top ten challenging or unsafe locations for bicycling, and their top ten locations with favorable bicycling conditions.

All locations and description information provided by participants was coded into a geographic information systems and used to develop maps of locations and routes that participants identified as having positive or negative attributes. All notes and comments on data provided were included in the GIS.

Workshop Conclusion and Next Steps

If time permitted, participants were engaged in a larger group discussion about the key findings and aspects of the small group discussions that took place on bicycle origins, destinations, assets, and challenges.



An example of a marked up map from a listening session.



Participants marking up a map at the White Bear Lake listening session.

Overall Listening Session Results

The following are overall themes that resulted from the listening sessions conducted throughout the project.

Desired Characteristics for Regional Bikeway Corridors

One of the benefits of holding several listening sessions across the metropolitan region is that common themes emerge across locations and meetings, which may reflect widely-desired characteristics for regional bikeway corridors. Some of these characteristics that were prominently mentioned throughout include guidance that Regional Bikeway Corridors should be:

- **safe,**
- **continuous,**
- **separated from vehicular traffic,** and
- provide **fast, convenient, and comfortable connections** to key destinations.

In addition, effective **signing and wayfinding**, and **services along the route** (water, restrooms) were also prominently mentioned.

Examining Overall Patterns in Desired Corridors

If the desired regional bikeway corridors from all four listening sessions are combined on one single map, a “heat” map of desired corridors can be created. While it is important to remember that comments received at the listening sessions are not a statistically-valid sample of Metropolitan Region bicyclists nor of the general population, the conceptual map that emerges can be useful as an initial approximation of general patterns desired for the regional corridor network, and for potential regional routes for a specific location - for example, pointing out the desire for radial corridors

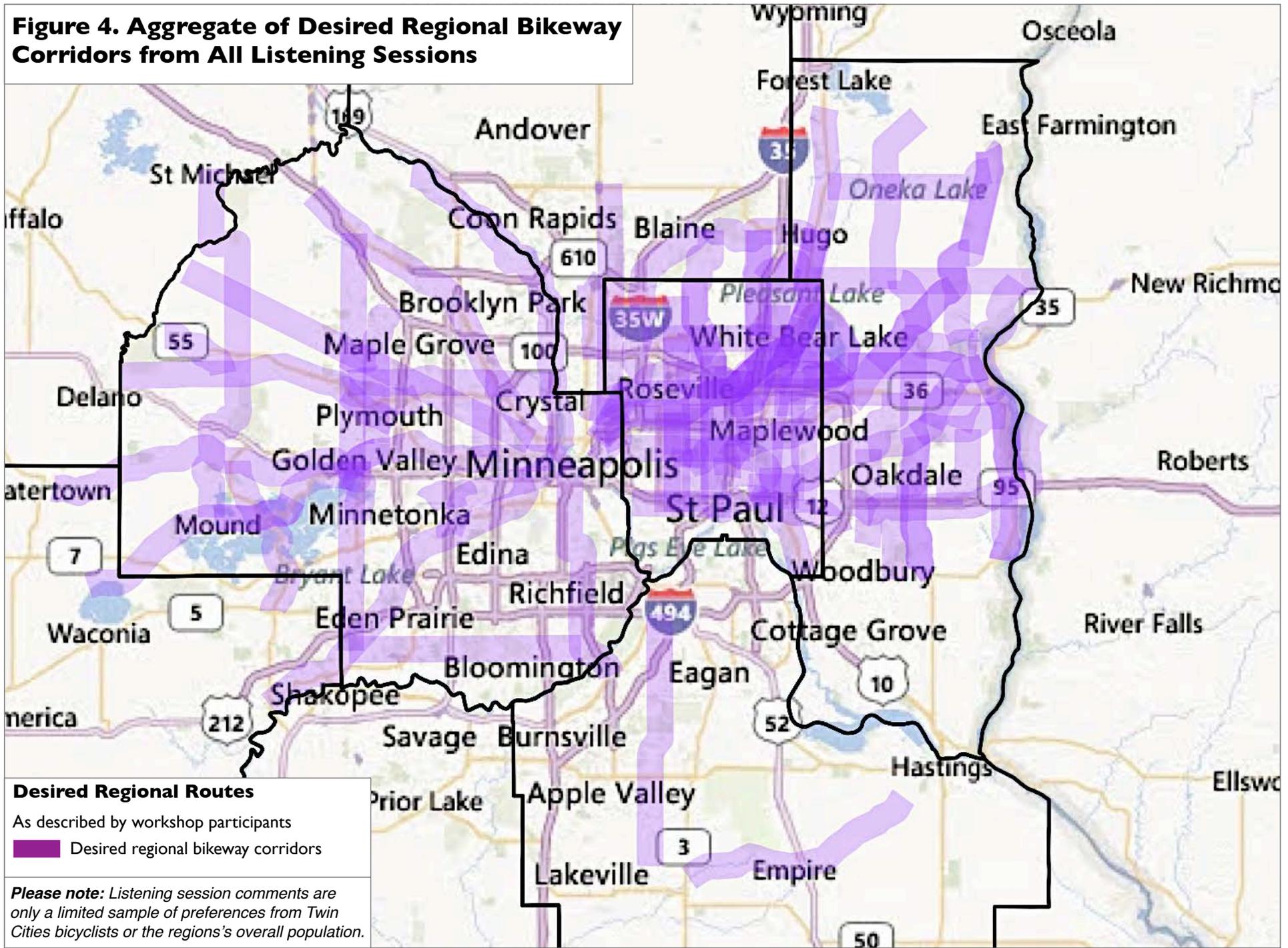
from outer jurisdictions into the central cities and for the desire to have regional corridors provide direct links between suburban locations in direct north-south or east-west patterns unrelated to bicycle travel into the region’s core.

The conceptual map depicted in Figure 4 below depicts desired regional bikeway corridor routes with wide transparent bands of color. Where bands overlap (i.e., where there are multiple instances of a corridor being identified as a desired regional corridor), darker areas are shown. Viewing this conceptual map at a broad scale can facilitate thinking about an overall regional bikeway corridor system.

The pattern that emerges shows desired regional corridors converging in the central cities in a spoke-like fashion, with shorter segments providing interconnections between these primary routes.

Descriptions of all listening sessions conducted and the information gathered are included in the sections that follow.

Figure 4. Aggregate of Desired Regional Bikeway Corridors from All Listening Sessions



Results From Individual Listening Sessions

Listening Session 1: Apple Valley

Background

Listening Session 1 took place on Monday, April 15 from 6:00 - 8:00 pm at the Apple Valley Community Center, located at 14603 Hayes Road in Apple Valley. This workshop was the first in the series of four listening sessions held across the seven county Metropolitan Council planning area in the month of April 2013.

This session was open to the public, and was attended by a mix of eleven citizens and public officials from the southeastern metropolitan area in and around Eagan, Burnsville, and Apple Valley. Representatives from the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Transportation were also in attendance.

Summary of Guidance Received: Regional Bikeway Corridors

Individual Priorities/Post-It Exercise

Key elements of regional bikeway corridors that emerged included the following items identified as top priorities by individual participants (comments are presented here as provided by participants, with emphasis added to highlight main ideas):

- **Connect destinations** or centers of activity
- Mimic motor vehicle arterial system
- Be **like a freeway system** for bicycles
- Provide **safe, comfortable facilities** for riders of **all ages and abilities**
- **Be easily identified** and **clearly labeled**
- **Safe** - so do not feel like you are risking your life getting somewhere by bicycle
- **Connect sections** of cities **with on-road bicycle lanes**
- Should not be more than **8-10 miles apart** in any direction

Participants wished for planners to examine the possible application of greenway corridors and bicycle boulevards, such as those in Minneapolis, in communities throughout the southeast metropolitan region.



Participants listen to the opening presentation before engaging in activities.



Marking existing conditions at the Apple Valley Listening Session.

Priorities and Ideas from Small Group Exercise

Primary origins and destinations identified included the Minnesota Zoo; Lebanon Hills Regional Park; destinations in Eagan, Rosemount, and Apple Valley; Crystal Lake; Alimagnet Park; Downtown Minneapolis; Downtown St. Paul; and Bloomington, Richfield, and the Mall of America.

According to participants, various existing corridors provide good bicycle connections across large stretches of the southeast metropolitan region including McAndrews Road and County Road 11/River Hills Drive West, as well as an off-road bicycle trail along Ipava Avenue. Additionally, the Highland Lilly Trail running from Interstate 35 East to Dodd Road was identified as an attractive bikeway corridor.

The railroad and several interstates and state highways were identified as barriers or obstacles to bicycle travel in the area, where, in many cases, crossings cannot be made. These included Interstate 495; Interstates 35 West and 35 East; U.S. Highway 52; Cedar Avenue/Minnesota Route 77; and Minnesota Routes 55 and 110. Participants also identified the lack of bicycle accommodations on bridges crossing the Mississippi River at Interstate 35 West and Minnesota Route 77/Cedar Avenue. General consensus was that these impediments to travel at crossing points needed to be addressed.

In addition to crossings over the Mississippi River, additional desired routes for connection included between Farmington and Hastings through Vermillion, and a north - south connection along Pilot Knob Road from Interstate 494 south to Farmington.

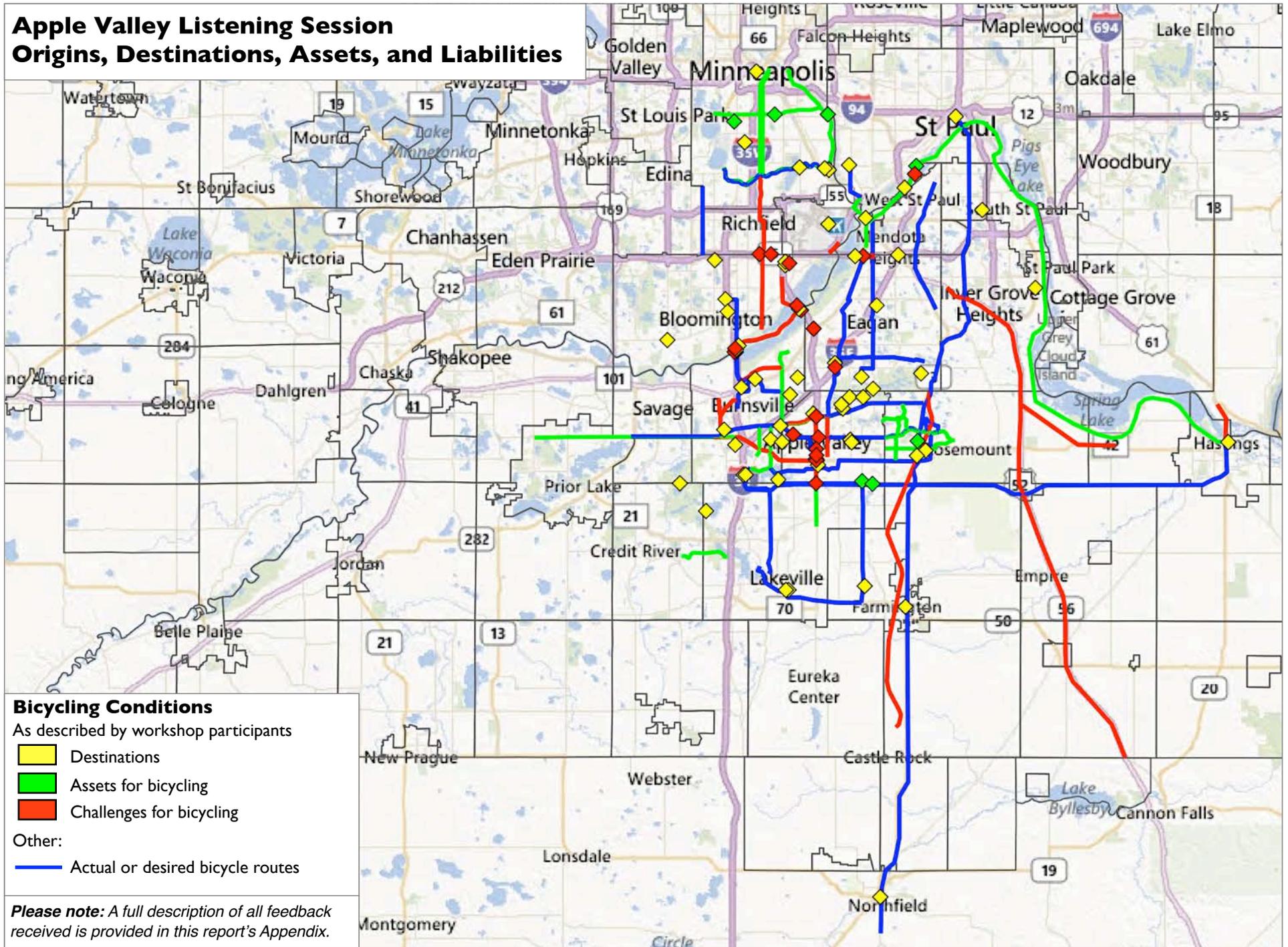
Session Summary

Findings from the individual activity indicated that participants desire regular, fast, continuous, well-marked, and comfortable regional bikeway facilities that provide important connections for riders of all ages and



Participants adding suggested regional bikeway corridors at the Apple Valley listening session.

Apple Valley Listening Session Origins, Destinations, Assets, and Liabilities



Bicycling Conditions
As described by workshop participants

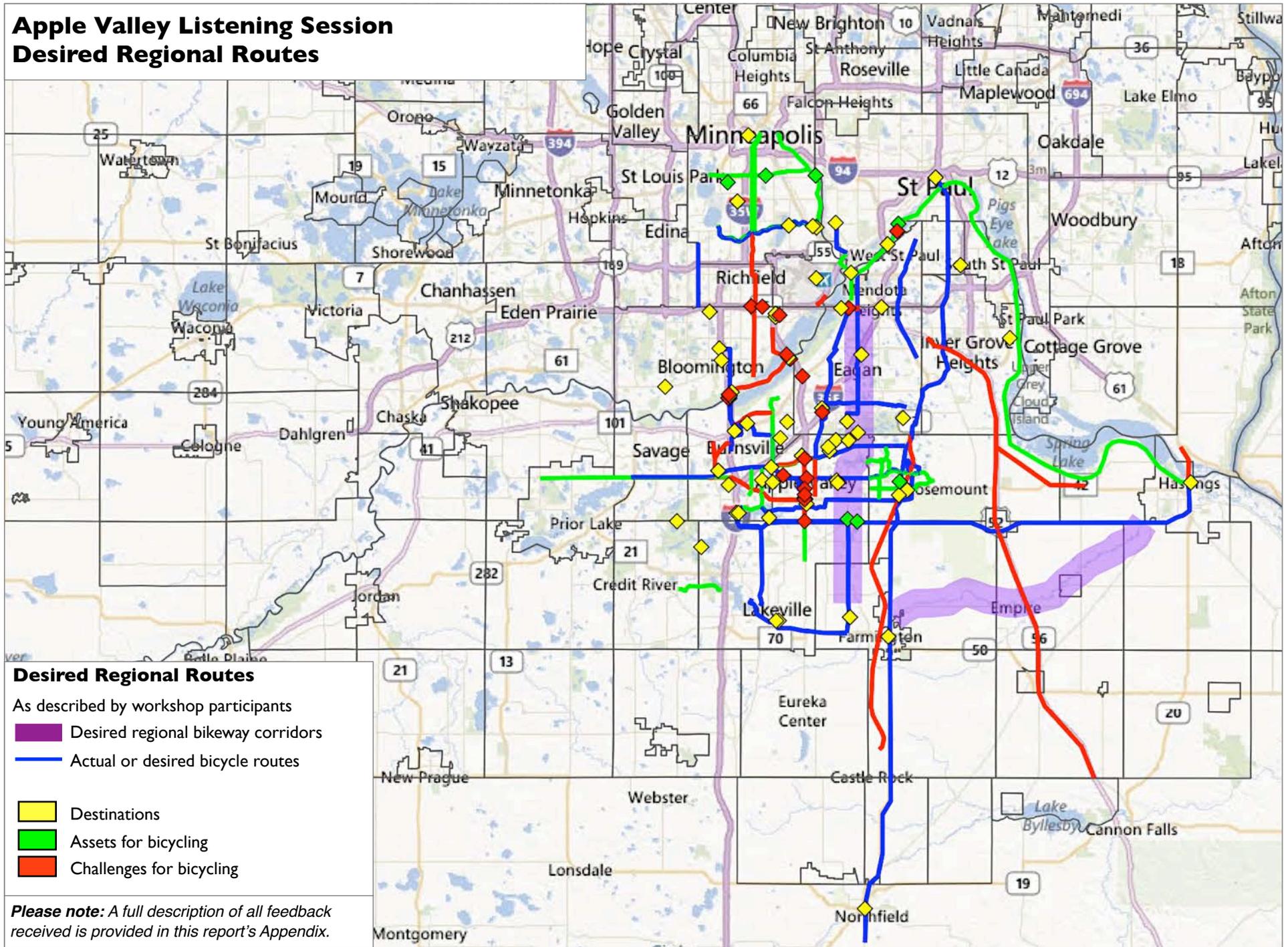
- Destinations
- Assets for bicycling
- Challenges for bicycling

Other:

- Actual or desired bicycle routes

Please note: A full description of all feedback received is provided in this report's Appendix.

Apple Valley Listening Session Desired Regional Routes



abilities. Participants also mentioned their desire for bicycle corridors to connect to transit stations and neighboring cities, be well-publicized and marked, and remove barriers for people of all ages and abilities to ride their bicycles.

The group activity led to the identification of a desire for improved connections from the area to Minneapolis and St. Paul. Existing railroads and highways provide barriers to bicycle travel in many parts of the area, notably Cedar Avenue/Minnesota Route 77.



Bridges, highways, and interstates were identified as barriers to bicycle travel.

Listening Session 2: White Bear Lake

Background

Listening Session 2 took place on Wednesday, April 17 from 6:00 - 8:00 pm at the White Bear Lake Library, located at 4698 Clark Avenue in White Bear Lake. This workshop was the second in the series of four listening sessions held across the seven county Metropolitan Council planning area in the month of April 2013.

This session was open to the public, and was attended by about forty-five citizens eager to share their experiences and ideas regarding bicycling in the northeastern metropolitan area. Attendees offered a range of personal experiences related to bicycling in the area, with many of them noting their affiliation with bicycle interest and advocacy groups including the Minnesota Bicycle Alliance, Active Living Ramsey Communities, and others. Representatives from the Metropolitan Council were also in attendance.

Summary of Guidance Received: Regional Bikeway Corridors

Individual Priorities/Post-It Exercise

Key elements of regional bikeway corridors that emerged included the following items identified as top priorities by individual participants (comments are presented here as provided by participants, with emphasis added to highlight main ideas):

- Have **safe and practical crossings** at all intersections
- Be **separate from vehicular traffic** either by a dedicated lane or physical separate off-road trail
- **Connect** to parks and schools and major employers
- **Connect** current bike paths
- Wide enough to **separate bicyclists** from pedestrians and other traffic
- **Connect** over/under critical gaps in the network

Participants mentioned the importance of regional bikeway corridors consisting of a regular pattern of grid routes, having consistent and clear way finding and signage, very



Participants introduce themselves at the start of the meeting.



Participants marking existing conditions and suggested regional bikeway corridors at the White Bear Lake listening session.

few stops, and appropriately timed intersection controls so as to not slow bicyclists down.

Priorities and Ideas from Small Group Exercise

Primary origins and destinations identified included various commercial and employment centers, local and regional parks, and residential areas including Downtown St. Paul and Downtown Minneapolis; the University of Minnesota; Como Park and State Fairgrounds; the area of St. John's Hospital and Maplewood Mall; destinations in White Bear Lake; and recreation areas along the Mississippi River.

Participants also identified major existing routes and corridors in the northeast metropolitan area. Some of the more prominent existing routes included paths and roadways circumnavigating White Bear Lake; the Gateway Trail; 75th Street North between Mahtomedi and Stillwater; Minnesota Route 96; Forest Boulevard North; and the Bruce Vento Trail.

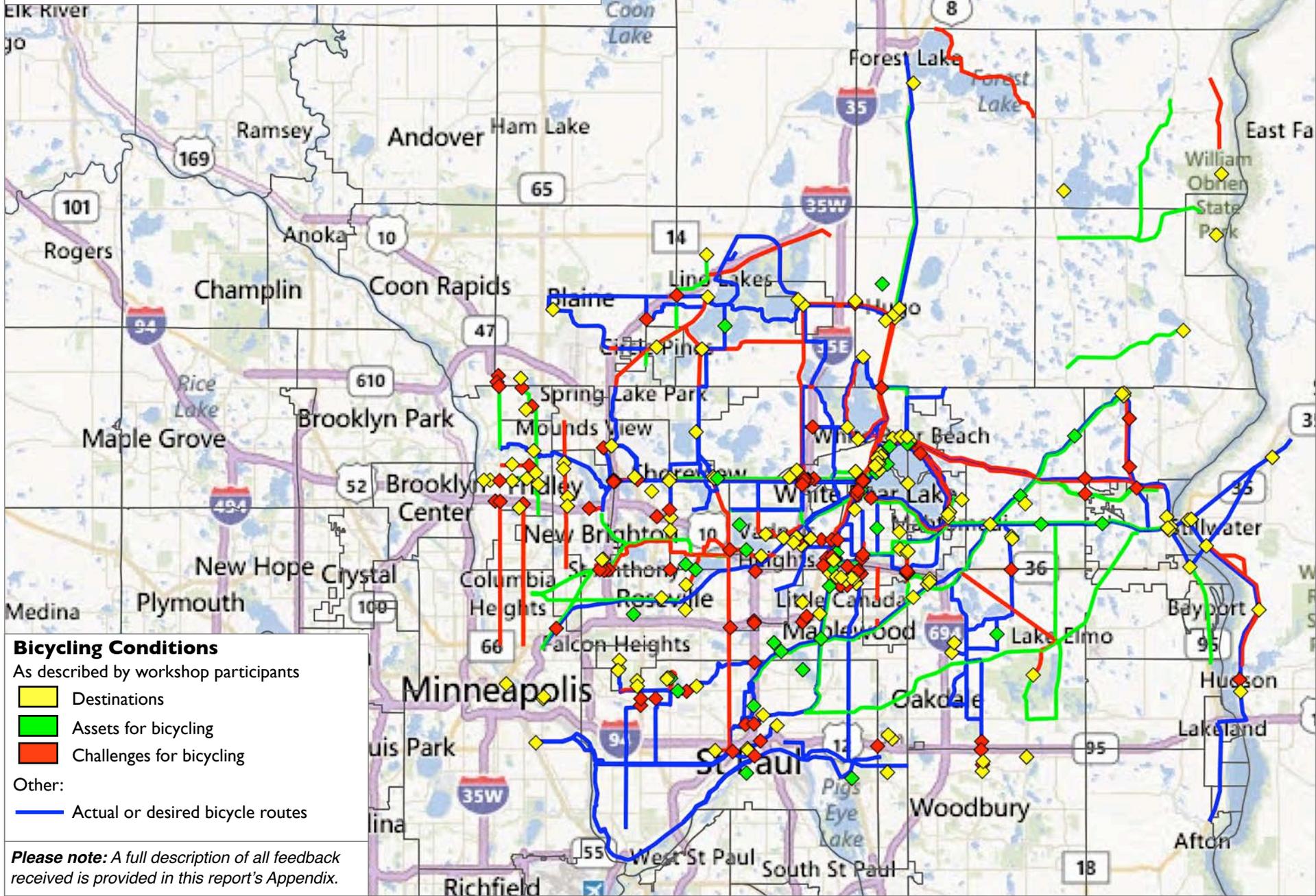
Major gaps were identified at a number of locations along these corridors. These included the east side of White Bear Lake (the lake); the westernmost point of the City of White Bear Lake; the intersection of Minnesota Route 96 and Interstate 35 East; the intersection of Minnesota Route 96 and Interstate 35 West; Minnesota Route 96 east of White Bear Lake; U.S. Highway 61 through the City of White Bear Lake; U.S. Highway 61 and Buerkle Road; the intersection U.S. Highway 61 and Minnesota Route 36; Interstate 694 and Century Avenue; County Road 55/Norell Avenue between Pine Point Park and Stillwater; and the intersection of County Road 19 and Interstate 35 West. These locations were identified by groups as being significant impediments to regional bicycle travel.

Additionally, desired routes for regional corridors were identified. Numerous desired routes were drawn out on the maps provided for participants, and several emerged as being desired among almost all

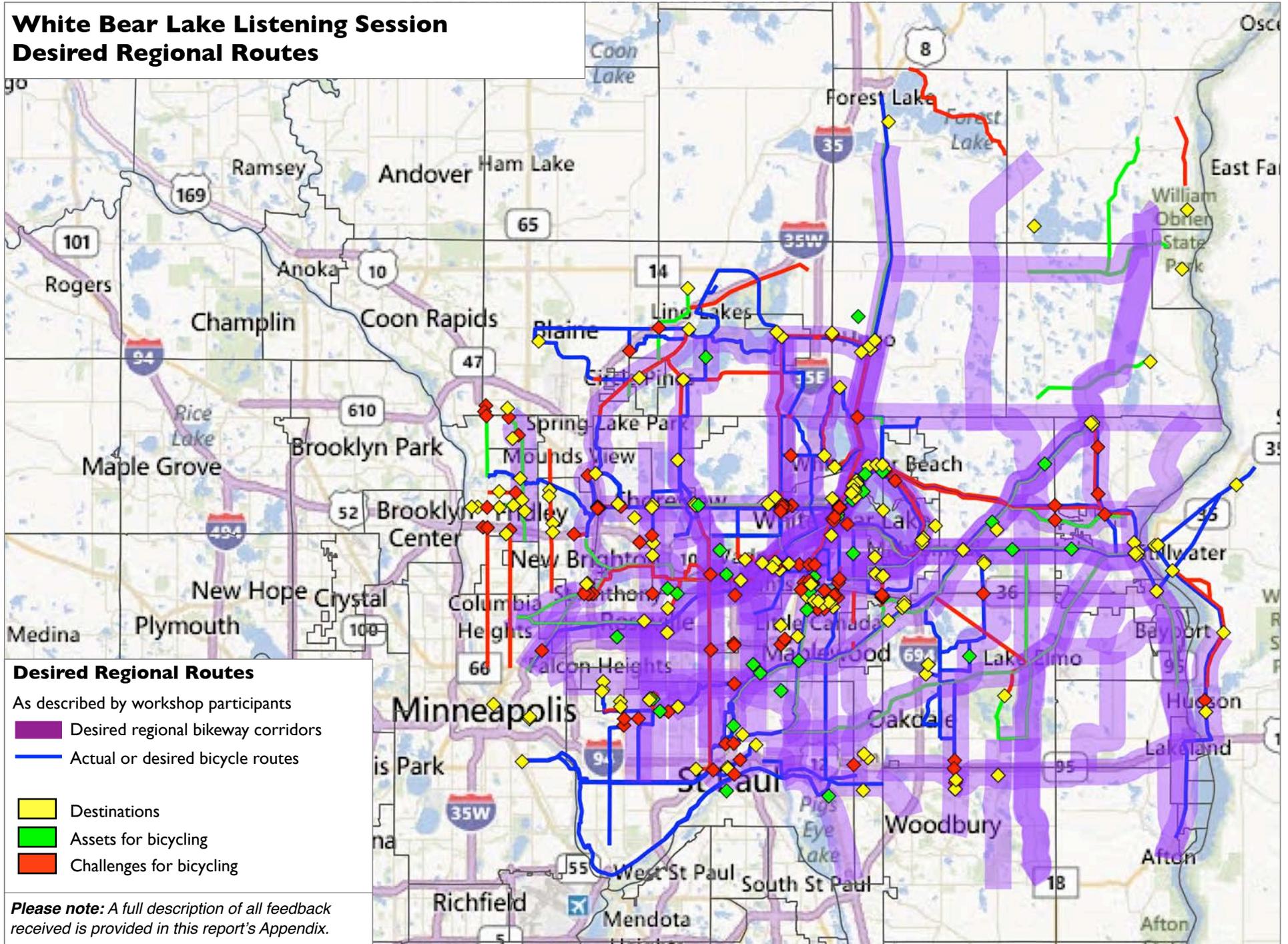


Participants mark up area maps during the small group exercise at the White Bear Lake listening session.

White Bear Lake Listening Session Origins, Destinations, Assets, and Liabilities



White Bear Lake Listening Session Desired Regional Routes

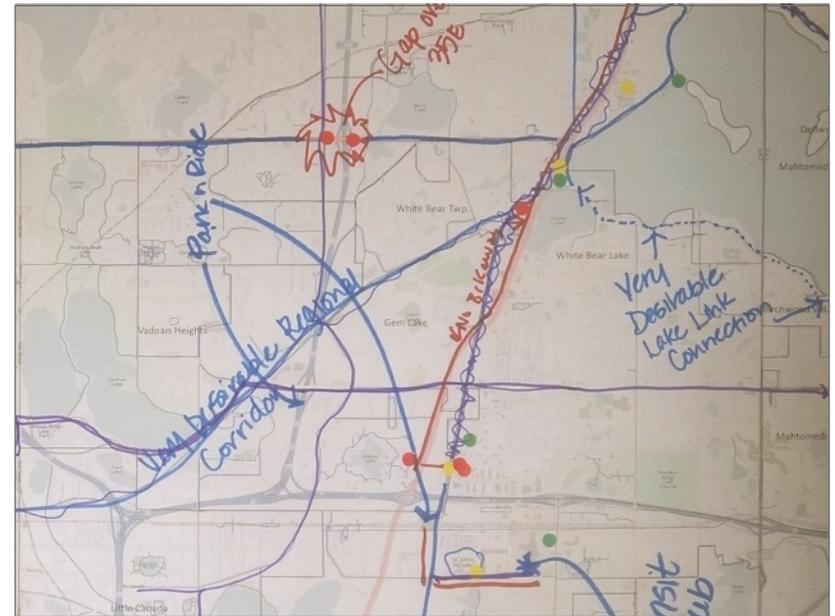


participants. These included U.S. Highway 61; the rail corridor which heads southwest from White Bear Lake towards Minneapolis; Hodgson Road to Rice Street; Lake Elmo Avenue to Settlers Ridge Parkway; gaps around White Bear Lake; and Lexington Parkway/Avenue.

Session Summary

Individual and group activities pointed to a desire for regional bicycle corridors as facilities separated from vehicle traffic with safe crossings and short wait times for bicyclists at intersections. Connections to major destinations, schools, business, and employers in the area was also a commonly desired characteristic.

Several participants indicated gaps in the bicycle network around White Bear Lake, and a desire for bicycle connections to the south along the railroad corridor or U.S. Highway 61 or the railroad towards St. Paul and Minneapolis.



An example of a marked up map from the White Bear Lake listening session displaying origins, destinations, existing and desired routes, good infrastructure, and problem areas.

Listening Session 3: Plymouth

Background

Listening Session 3 took place on Wednesday, April 24 from 6:00 - 8:00 pm at the Plymouth Library, located at 15700 36th Avenue North in Plymouth. This workshop was the third in the series of four listening sessions held across the seven county Metropolitan Council planning area in the month of April 2013.

This session was open to the public, and was attended by about ten participants. Representatives from the Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Hennepin County, and the City of Plymouth were also in attendance.

Summary of Guidance Received: Regional Bikeway Corridors

Individual Priorities/Post-It Exercise

Key elements of regional bikeway corridors that emerged included the following individual comments by individual participants (comments are presented here as provided by participants, with emphasis added to highlight main ideas):

- **Connect** to other corridors
- Safe
- Be **off road, separated**
- **Easy to find** - to enter and exit
- Be **paved**
- **Continuous** over long distances
- Equitable - serve metro area including **urban, suburban, and rural**
- **Quick travel** for bicycles
- **Convenient** - connect directly to key destinations

Participants also spoke of the importance of regional bikeway corridors possessing sight lines suitable for road bike speeds; being cleared of snow in the winter months; and being clearly marked on intersecting roads. Additional important characteristics of regional bikeway corridors included providing connections to transit options and to



Participants engage in the individual Post-It exercise.



Participants discuss comments on regional bikeway corridors.

school, commercial, and residential areas; having proper signage and wayfinding; providing access to restrooms; and being for commuters as much as for recreational bicycle riders.

Priorities and Ideas from Small Group Exercise

Primary origins and destinations identified included the Ridgedale Shopping Center, destinations in Fridley and Wayzata, and along the Minnesota Route 55 corridor in Plymouth and Golden Valley.

Several major roads provide connections for bicyclists in the northwest metro area, including Rebecca Park Trail traveling east out of Rockford; County Road 11 traveling east-west into Loretto; County Road 24 traveling east from Lake Independence; and Barker Park Road and Halgren Road traveling north-south through Morris T. Baker County Park and the City of Maple Plain. Several of these routes were identified as problem areas due to a lack of adequate shoulders for bicyclists.

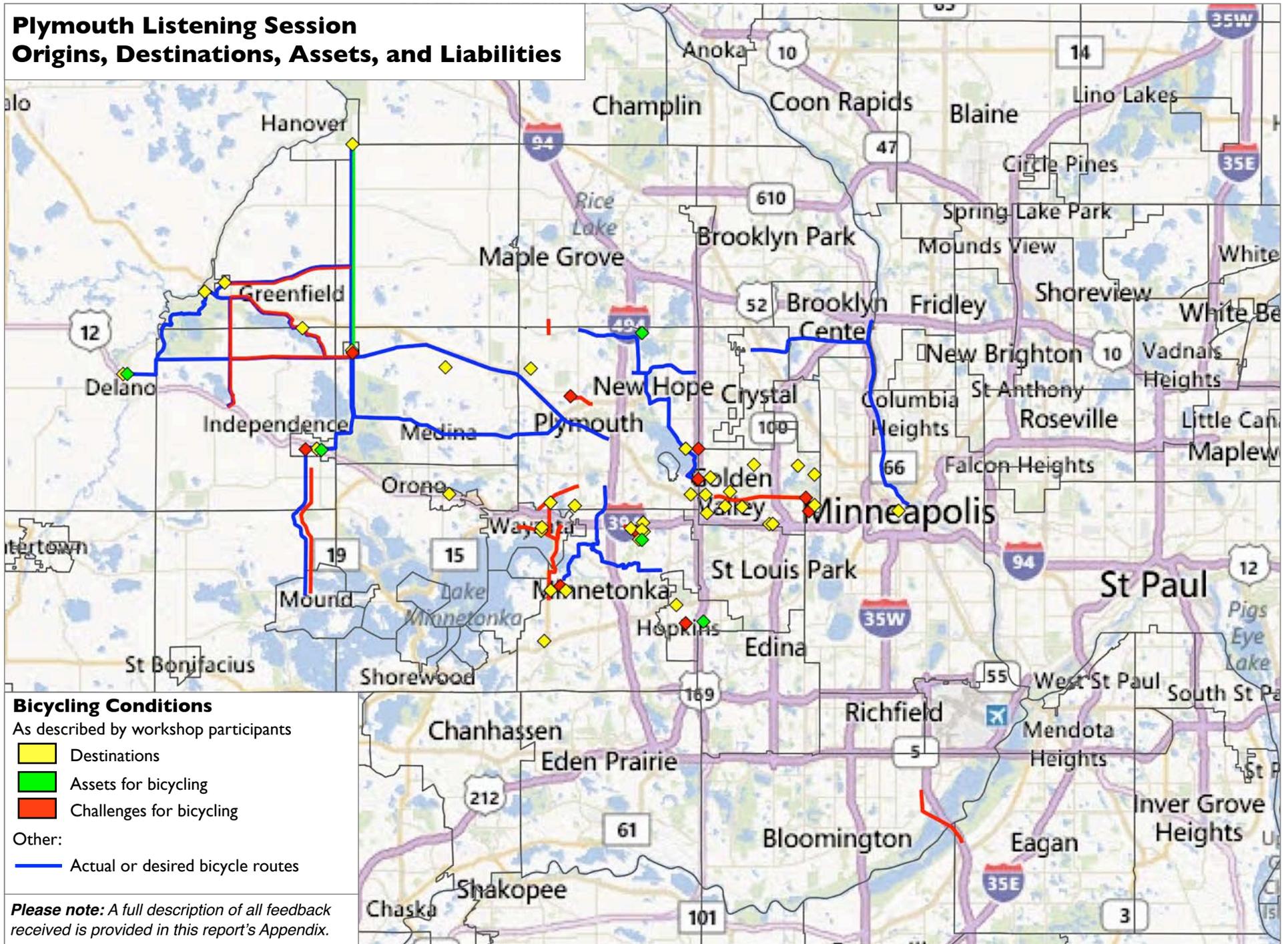
Major gaps and problem areas were identified at a number of locations in the area. These include the lack of paving on the Luce Line Trail in the Gleason Lake area; the lack of a connection between the Luce Line Trail and the Dakota Rail Trail; and the absence of bicycle lanes in areas of Wayzata, Hopkins, and Minnetonka, including downtown Wayzata, Minnetonka Boulevard, and 8th Avenue in Hopkins. Crossing Minnesota Route 55 between U.S. Highway 169 and U.S. Highway 100 in Golden Valley was also identified as an obstacle to safe bicycling.

Additionally, desired routes for regional corridors were identified north-south traveling along West Fish Lake Road and Vicksburg Lane North from Fish Lake south to Gleason Lake and U.S. Highway 12. An east-west connection is desired along Schmidt Lake Road from Peony Lane North to Crystal. Furthermore, several individuals identified the Minnesota Route 55

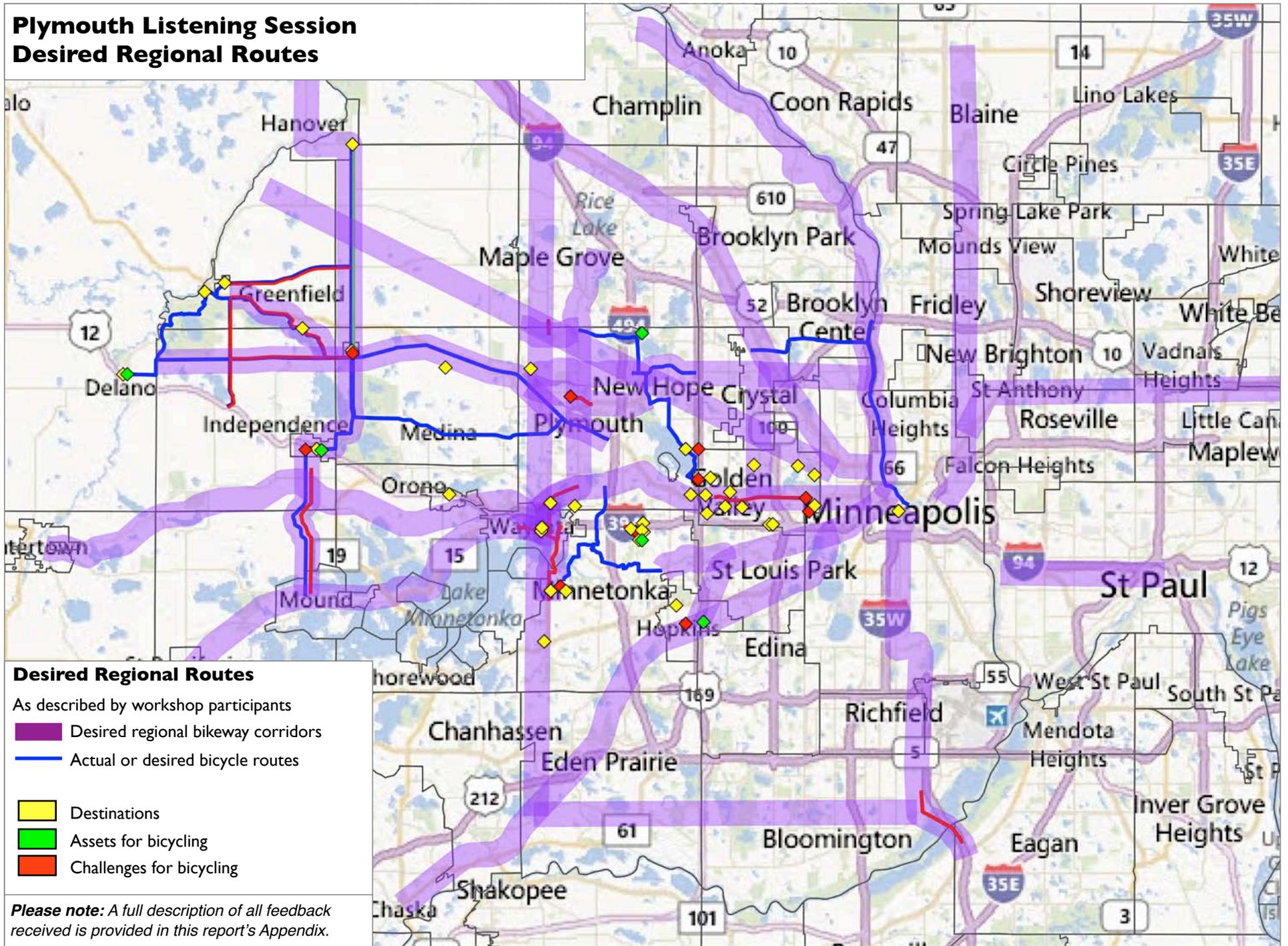


The Minnesota Route 55 corridor toward Minneapolis to the southeast was identified as a desired regional bikeway corridor, as identified on this map.

Plymouth Listening Session Origins, Destinations, Assets, and Liabilities



Plymouth Listening Session Desired Regional Routes

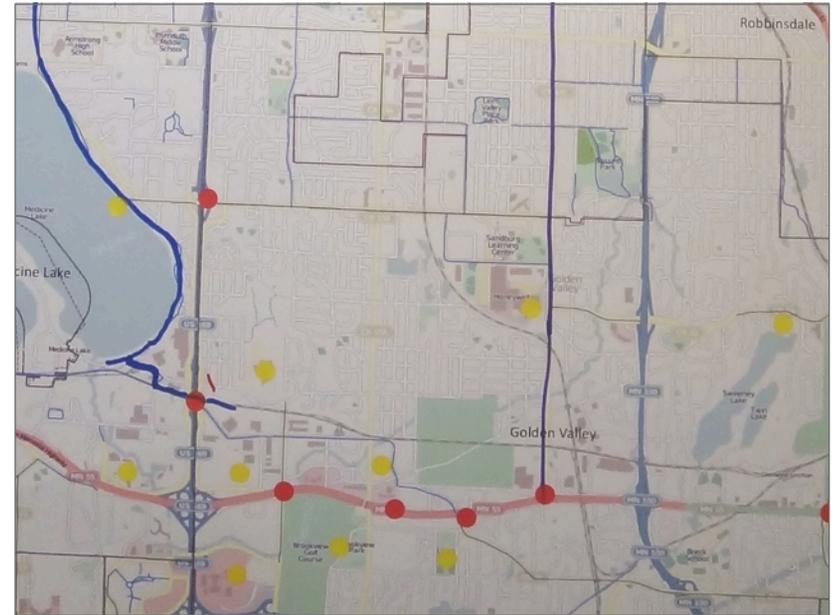


corridor as a desired regional bikeway corridor route from the area into Minneapolis to the southeast.

Session Summary

Individual and group activities pointed to a desire for regional bicycle corridors as safe facilities separated from vehicle traffic with easy wayfinding and convenient connections to other corridors and key destinations. In addition, the importance of providing access to restroom facilities and offering equitable access to bicyclists in all parts of the metro area (i.e., urban, suburban, and rural areas) were two ideas prominently mentioned at this listening session.

Several participants identified area roads with high bicycle traffic that are lacking adequate accommodations for bicyclists such as Minnetonka Boulevard and Minnesota Route 55. The Minnesota Route 55 corridor was identified as a logical connection to Minneapolis and was identified as a desired regional bikeway corridor route.



Several origins were identified along the Interstate 394 corridor in Golden Valley, but I-394 and U.S. Highway 169 were noted as barriers to bicycle travel.

Listening Session 4: Chanhassen

Background

Listening Session 4 took place on Thursday, April 25 from 6:00 - 8:00 pm at the Chanhassen Recreation Center, located at 2310 Coulter Boulevard in Chanhassen. This workshop was the last in the series of four listening sessions held across the seven county Metropolitan Council planning area in the month of April 2013.

This session was open to the public, and was attended by a mix of four citizens and public officials from the southwestern metropolitan area, mostly from the Lake Minnetonka area. Representatives from the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Transportation were also in attendance.

Summary of Guidance Received: Regional Bikeway Corridors

Individual Priorities/Post-It Exercises

Key elements of regional bikeway corridors that emerged included the following items identified as top priorities by individuals participants (comments are presented here as provided by participants, with emphasis added to highlight main ideas):

- Safety
- **Connections** between different communities
- **Connections** between existing corridors, particularly north-south connections
- **Facilities** should be wide enough for comfortable use by bicyclists and pedestrians
- Provide **more transportation options** for people to move around their communities
- **Off-road facilities** and **on-road facilities** where appropriate

Participants placed a strong emphasis on community linkages, noting that even though distances may be relatively short, it is currently extremely difficult to get from one community to another without a car in the southwestern region of the Metropolitan Council planning area.



Attendees participating in the individual regional bikeway corridor priority exercise.



Participants marking origins of bicycle trips, as well as challenges and assets of existing bicycle infrastructure.

Priorities and Ideas from Small Group Exercise

Primary origins and destinations identified included the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Lake Minnetonka, Lake Minnewashta, and destinations in Excelsior, Deephaven, Tonka Bay, and Chanhassen.

Good existing corridors were identified as being primarily east-west in direction, and include the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail, the Luce Line Trail, and the Dakota Rail Trail. Additionally, Minnesota 41 and Powers Boulevard were identified as beneficial north-south corridors in Chanhassen, but these routes were noted as not being connected to Excelsior and Shorewood to the north.

Major gaps were identified along County Road 19, Mill Road in Excelsior, and County 41 in Shorewood. County Road 19 in particular was identified as being a crucial north-south connector which is currently heavily travelled by motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians, but with no facilities for the latter two present. According to participants, many pedestrians and bicyclists do not feel it is safe to travel on County Road 19 currently. Additionally, County Road 19 continues to be a barrier where it intersects the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail, despite crossing improvements in recent years.

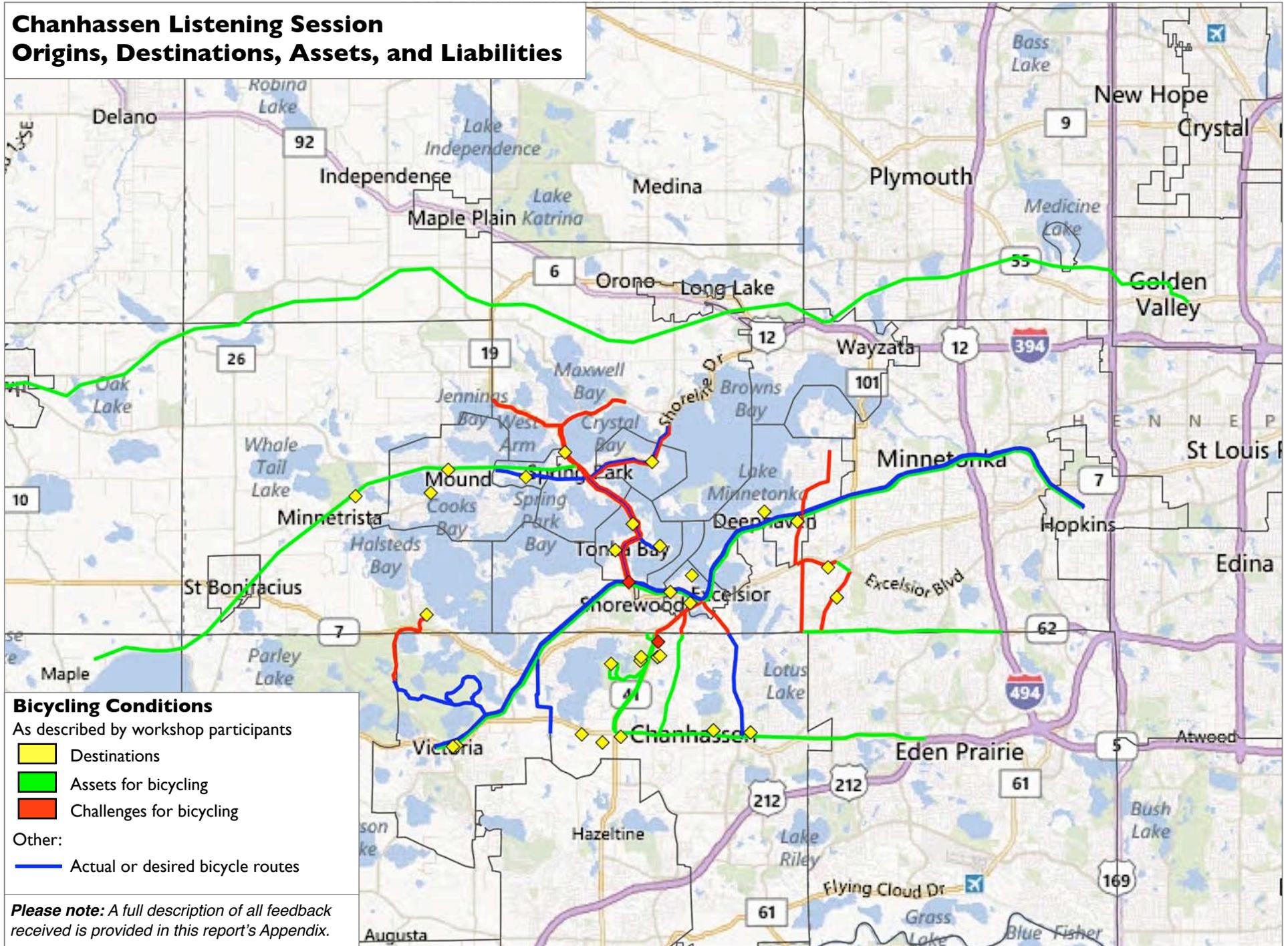
In addition to north-south routes around the Excelsior, Tonka Bay, and Chanhassen areas, routes in Minnetonka were identified as gaps, especially for access to shopping and schools. Minnesota 101 and Minnetonka Boulevard in particular were identified as challenges to bicycling.

Much of the discussion at the meeting revolved around bicycle connections in and around the Orono - Navarre - Tonka Bay area of Lake Minnetonka. Participants mentioned challenging bicycle connections on the County Road 19 corridor running north - south connecting the Dakota Rail Trail along

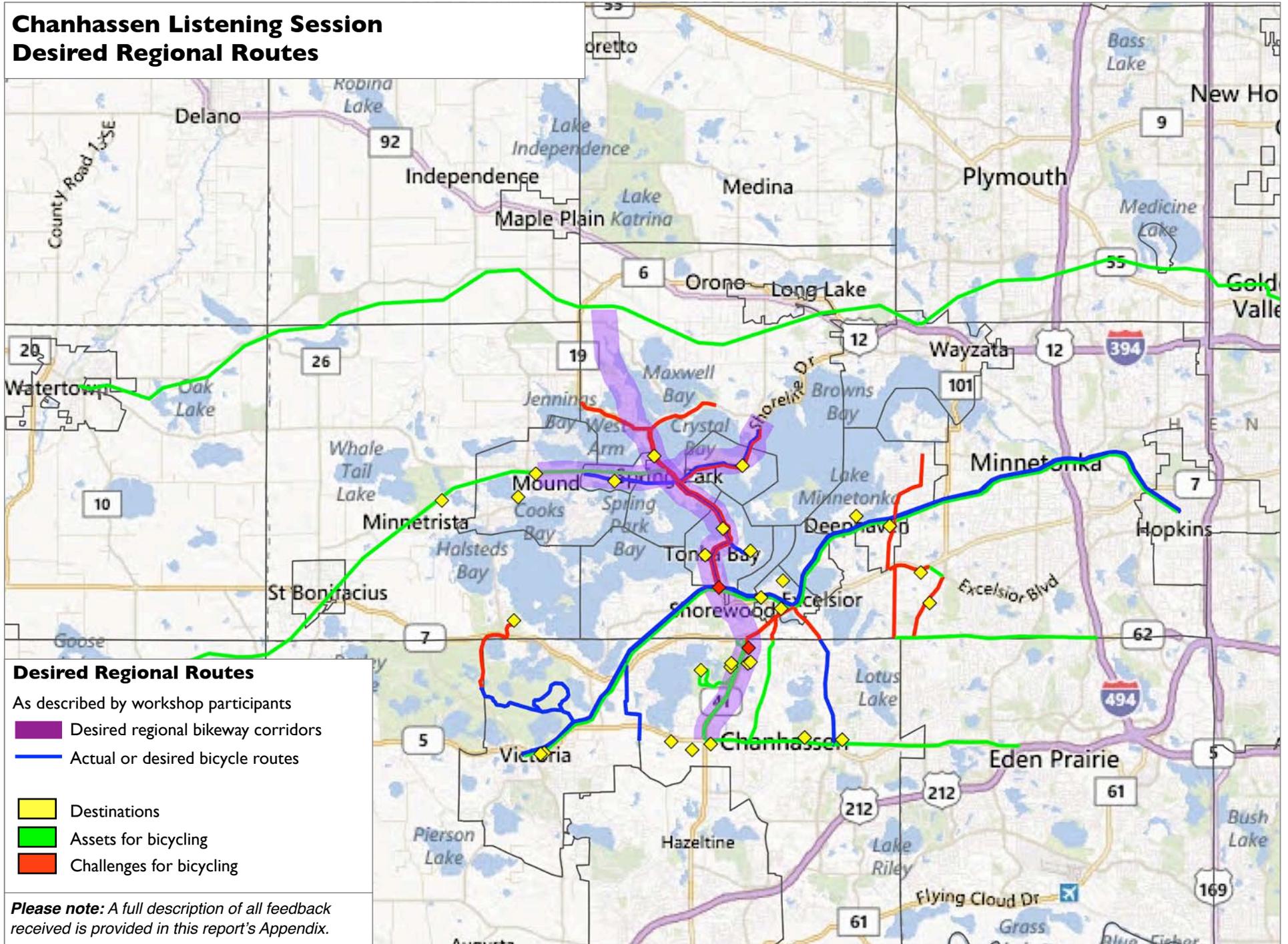


Participants marking existing conditions and desired regional bikeways at the Chanhassen listening session.

Chanhassen Listening Session Origins, Destinations, Assets, and Liabilities



Chanhasen Listening Session Desired Regional Routes



Shoreline Drive to the north with the Lake Minnetonka Regional Trail along the Minnesota Route 7 corridor to the south.

Mentioned by participants at the meeting, a study was completed in 2009 examining different conceptual alternatives for providing this trail linkage along County Road 19.

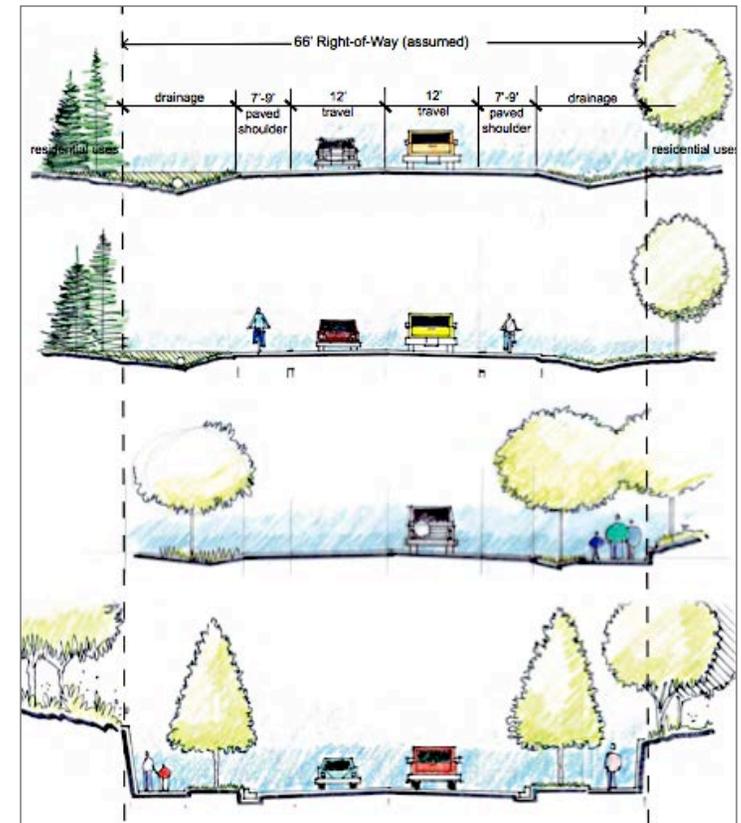
Session Summary

Findings from the individual activity demonstrated a strong desire for greater connectivity between communities in the western and southwestern metropolitan area to generate more options for transportation choices and to foster new and strong relationships between communities.

An emphasis was placed on gaps in north-south routes, especially along County Road 19, while existing east-west routes were generally considered to be assets in connecting to adjacent communities as well as to Minneapolis and St. Paul.



Connections through the Lake Minnetonka area were identified as a high priority by participants.



Conceptual trail alternatives explored in a 2009 study of bicycle infrastructure options along County Road 19.

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