

**Twin Cities Area Transportation Study**  
**Structure for Non-Motorized Transportation Subcommittee**

**PURPOSE:**

- To review studies, plans, and projects already completed for non-motorized transportation in the Twin Cities area;
- To identify specific objectives / priorities for non-motorized transportation in the Twin Cities area;
- To create specific strategies for implementing those priorities.
- Communicate with surrounding areas in the region to ensure regional connectivity.

**STUDIES, PLANS, AND PROJECTS COMPLETED IN THE TWINCATS AREA:**

- 1999 – Great Lakes Trail conceptual plan completed by Purdue University students
- 2001 – MDOT Southwest Michigan Non-Motorized Improvement Plan
- 2003 – MDOT Non-Motorized Mapping Project
- 2004 – Southwest Michigan Alliance for Recreational Trails (SMART) formed
- 2006 –
  - *Southwestern Michigan Bicycle Travel Information* map published by MDOT
  - Benton Harbor walkability audit completed and “complete streets” ideas incorporated into MDOT’s plan for the reconstruction of Main Street
- 2007 – *Michigan Trails at the Crossroads: a Vision for Connecting Michigan* published by MDOT and DNR; *Connecting Michigan: A Statewide trailways vision and action plan* published by the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance
- 2008 -
  - *Harbor Country Hike & Bike Plan* published
  - Non-motorized facilities in TwinCATS area described in 2035 LRP by collecting survey from cities and townships

- 2009 -
  - Berrien County Health Department interested in rails-to-trails project along CSX line in Benton Harbor
  - Berrien County Health Department wrote Building Healthy Communities grant for design charrette to reconstruct Pipestone with “complete street” ideas
  - (NATS area) – Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail project
  - South Haven to Saugatuck connection
- 2007 to current – SWMPC / SMART updating Southwestern Michigan 9-county trails map to include “non-motorized paths,” bike lanes, and roads with wide shoulders; holding public input meetings and creating a SMART plan incorporating community vision for prioritizing connections of existing non-motorized paths.
- 2010 – Berrien County Road Commission and St. Joseph Township – Hilltop sidewalk CMAQ project
- 2011 – Berrien County Road Commission – John Beers Rd. sidewalk CMAQ project.
- 2012 or later –
  - Berrien County Road Commission – Fairplain / Mall Dr. sidewalks CMAQ project
  - Berrien County Road Commission – Napier sidewalk CMAQ project
  - City of Benton Harbor – Harbor Shores trails CMAQ project

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES RELATED TO NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION IN TWINCATS 2035 LRP:**

- Goal I: Support the Economic Vitality of Southwest Michigan
  - Improve competitiveness of the regional economy through efficient and improved multi-modal facilities, modes, and linkages.
  - **Strategy:** Provide letters of support for Transportation Economic Development Fund and other economic development grants.
  
- Goal II: Promote Safety Conscious Planning and System Security in Southwest Michigan
  - Educate the public to become safer road users, passengers, and pedestrians.
  - Consider individual safety and security as an integral part in the establishment and promotion of any form of transportation.
  - Promote a coordinated interface between various modes of transportation.
  - **Strategies:**
    - In cooperation with local units of government, county road commissions, and MDOT, study corridors of interest and identify solutions.
    - Coordinate with law enforcement and other relevant agencies to ensure system safety and security.
  
- Goal III: Ensure the Equitability and Accessibility of the Transportation System
  - Provide connections among individual entities, the TwinCATS urban area, and the surrounding areas.
  - Provide adequate access and connections to employment, healthcare, education, shopping, and other consumer services.
  - Increase efficiency along transportation corridors.
  - Actively encourage public participation throughout the transportation planning and decision-making process.
  - The transportation system should minimize transportation barriers which disadvantage mobility-limited persons, seniors, and those who cannot or who choose not to drive a personal automobile.

- **Strategies:**
  - Identify and communicate with transportation-disadvantaged populations to bring their ideas and needs into the planning process.
  - Conduct a public involvement program and surveys to gather information from users.
  - Conduct continuous evaluation of public involvement efforts in the transportation planning process.
  - Actively partner with other agencies and organizations to obtain greater participation in and information about the diverse needs of the population.
  - Investments from all available sources (including the private sector) in the transportation system should be maximized.
- Goal IV: Preserve the Regional Transportation System
  - Maintain, improve, and connect non-motorized facilities.
  - **Strategies:**
    - Collect and maintain a reliable database of system characteristics.
    - Encourage the development of a five-year investment strategy from corridor studies.
    - Develop four-year Transportation Improvement Program list of projects.
    - Explore and evaluate new revenue sources.
    - Draft corridor studies to insure corridors are examined from a system-wide viewpoint and examine alternative solutions to system deficiencies.
- Goal V: Promote Livable Communities and Environmental Responsibility in Southwest Michigan
  - Coordinate and incorporate local land use plans and priorities into the Long Range Transportation Plan.
  - Encourage the use of smart growth principles in transportation planning activities.

- Encourage alternative modes of transportation for trips in the urban area.
- Reflect the individual characteristics and shared priorities of the TwinCATS member communities.
- Give appropriate consideration to non-traditional modes of transportation as well as environmental concerns, economic issues, education, and societal concerns.
- Provide a transportation system for linking and traversing each of the municipalities, as well as tying into the statewide system.
- Encourage walking and other forms of non-motorized movement for community health and environmental improvements.
- **Strategies:**
  - Incorporate local land use plans and other initiatives into the transportation planning process and Long Range Transportation Plan.
  - Encourage local governments to incorporate transportation planning in local planning
  - Establish an ongoing coordination procedure with the Berrien County Planning Department to provide regular inputs to the land use plan process.
  - Develop plan for area-wide pedestrian/bicycle routes particularly to retail, medical, and recreational complexes and schools.
  - Consider pedestrian and bicycle features (e.g., dedicated lanes along roadways and bridges, bulb outs, cross walks) as a part of transportation projects during the initial planning and design phases.
  - Participate and/or co-sponsor public education programs aimed at increasing walking and other forms of non-motorized commuting.
  - Provide letters of support for enhancement and other non-motorized grants.

## **POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR NON-MOTORIZED SUBCOMMITTEE:**

- Participate in the US Bicycle Route 35 planning process.
- Partner with the We Can Healthy Berrien Coalition.
- Work with the contractor developing Benton Harbor Master plan to incorporate complete streets ideas.
- Solicit public participation (by posting signs, holding meetings, giving presentations where the people are, and/or administering surveys) to narrow down non-motorized goals and priorities for Twin Cities area – to identify the most important connections that need to be made.
- Create an interactive blog for members of the public to contribute their ideas about where non-motorized facilities are most needed.
- Identify best ways of reaching populations without internet access.
- Update / add detail to existing maps to show high-traffic pedestrian corridors, existing non-motorized paths, and/or current conditions of sidewalks in Berrien County.
- Identify deficiencies in the non-motorized system, as well as important nodes/destinations to connect.
- Conduct a field survey to identify areas that currently have no non-motorized pathways but have the highest need for them, such as by photographing “goat trails” and interviewing pedestrians.
- Utilize local university students and/or high school service groups to conduct the above studies, assist with public involvement.
- Proactively seek funding for the high-priority non-motorized projects that will facilitate the most important connections between existing non-motorized facilities and/or that will connect the important destinations for pedestrian/bicyclist populations.