Duluth-Superior Metropolitan

Pedestrian Plan

August 2021

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To view this plan online and for information about its development, please visit
www.dsmic.org/pedplan2021

Prepared by the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

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Duluth and Superior urban area communities cooperating in planning and development through a joint venture of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission

The work activities described within are supported by funding from the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation, the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission. The contents of this document reflect the views of the authors who are responsible for the facts or accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Department of Transportation or the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.

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Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Pedestrian Plan

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MAP DISCLAIMER

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Walking is the most basic and universal form of transportation, yet it can be easy to overlook how much we walk as part of our travel from place to place. We view ourselves as drivers, passengers, or even cyclists, but we often take for granted the walking part of the journey.

The MIC has spent the past year focusing on how to make the pedestrian part of our area's transportation system work better - and to encourage walking to destinations as part of people's daily routines. Although 25 percent of all trips are less than 1 mile, 75 percent of these short trips are made by automobile.

By making it easier, safer and more pleasant to walk to nearby destinations, a number of benefits could be realized, including improved community health, decreased vehicle emissions, reduced spending on automobile travel and increased social interaction.

This plan is based on and supports the following concepts:

- That walking plays an essential role in the urban transportation system;
- That walking is a viable and desirable transportation mode for the Duluth-Superior area as distances between key destinations and within many neighborhoods are within a walkable distance;
- That investing in walking is an effective approach for achieving multiple community goals including creating a vibrant economy, enhancing quality of life and improving health outcomes;
- That designing a transportation system that works well for people walking requires slowing motor vehicles and providing comfortable walking environments through separation from traffic, thoughtful intersection design, pedestrian amenities, and seamless integration with destinations.

The Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Pedestrian Plan incorporates extensive local stakeholder input to provide guidance to decision-makers on how best to focus transportation investments in the MPO area to improve the environment for people who walk and use wheelchairs.

About 'Walking'

This plan uses the words 'walk,' 'walking' and 'pedestrian' to refer to activity not only by able-bodied people, but also to those who use mobility devices such as walkers, strollers, and wheelchairs.

"The most essential component of "walking" is the act of being physically present in a space. Whether the movement occurs via two feet or four wheels, walking encompasses all of the ways in which an individual is present and visible in a space, influencing the world and making a mark on a place in an impactful way."

-Clara Cecil, It Starts with a Step: Better Walking for a Better World

How I Walk is a visual campaign that aims to promote 'walking' as an inclusive physical activity term that is individualized.

Vision

The vision for the pedestrian transportation system throughout the Duluth-Superior area is:

- Walking is a safe, convenient and desirable transportation option for all ages and abilities
- Routing is direct and convenient
- Access is seamless, intuitive, consistent and predictably available, across jurisdictional boundaries and roadway authorities..

Plan Purpose

The Duluth-Superior Pedestrian Plan provides a 20-year vision with short– and long– term recommendations and strategies to improve the walking environment throughout the Twin Ports area.

It is intended as a guide to be utilized by all jurisdictions responsible for roadways; township, city, and county officials carrying out and creating land use policies and development codes; public entities such as schools and colleges; and property owners that are building and maintaining connections in their part of the network.

Priority Improvements

Since financial and personnel resources are limited, the Plan prioritizes where to focus improvements along and across roadways throughout the Twin Ports.

A key component of this plan is an interactive map that shows where highest-priority walkways are needed, where key gaps should be filled, and where it is critical that the pedestrian walkways are available and reliably clear of obstructions.

While sidewalks and trails provide spaces for people to walk *along* streets, they do not help people walking *across* streets. Busy streets and streets with fast moving traffic often serve as significant barriers for people on foot.

Therefore, this plan includes a general methodology for improving pedestrian crossings, while also recommending improvements at specific intersections.

Why the MIC is Producing this Plan

The Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) is the officially designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Twin Ports and receives federal funding to

Federal Rules & Planning Guidance for MPOs

23 U.S. Code 134 – Metropolitan Transportation Planning

(a)Policy.—It is in the national interest—

(1)to encourage and promote the safe and efficient management, operation, and development of surface transportation systems that will serve the **mobility needs of people** and freight, foster economic growth and development within and between States and urbanized areas, and take into consideration resiliency needs while minimizing transportation-related fuel consumption and air pollution through metropolitan and statewide transportation planning processes identified in this chapter;

General Requirements:

(2)Contents.— The plans and TIPs for each metropolitan area shall provide for the development and integrated management and operation of transportation systems and facilities (**including accessible pedestrian walkways**, bicycle transportation facilities, and intermodal facilities that support intercity transportation, including intercity buses and intercity bus facilities and commuter vanpool providers) that will function as an intermodal transportation system for the metropolitan planning area and as an integral part of an intermodal transportation system for the State and the United States.

23 CFR 450.324

(b) The transportation plan shall include both **long-range and short-range strategies/actions** that provide for the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system (**including accessible pedestrian walkways** and bicycle transportation facilities) to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand.

undertake transportation planning efforts on behalf of the Duluth-Superior Urban Area.

One of the responsibilities that MPOs must undertake is to plan for an integrated multimodal transportation system, including accessible pedestrian walkways, to facilitate safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand.

How this Plan was Developed

Beginning in the Spring of 2020, community engagement was a core aspect in developing this plan by (a) identifying issues and barriers that exist for walking as transportation and (b) developing a range of policy recommendations and investment strategies to improve the pedestrian environment.

Community members and targeted stakeholder groups included:

Advisory Committee

The project team worked with an Advisory Committee as the primary source of input and feedback throughout the plan's development. It was composed of local and state staff, elected officials, representatives from community organizations and citizens.

It met 8 times beginning in April 2020 to discuss pedestrian needs and priorities, provide local and institutional knowledge for the project, and review project materials.

One-on-One Meetings

Project staff met with individuals representing and from priority population communities to listen and learn about pedestrian-related issues facing them. Meetings took place with the following organizations:

- CHUM – Outreach Coordinator
- Community Action Duluth – Transportation Advocate
- AICHO – American Indian Community Housing Org.

Community & Stakeholder Hosted Meetings

Throughout the project, MIC staff attend meetings hosted by stakeholder groups to give presentations and take comments:

- Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) Policy Board and Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)
  (6 presentations w/discussion)

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) (4 presentations w/discussion)
- Duluth Transit Authority Board (1 presentation w/ discussion)

Pop-Up Displays

MIC staff attended 3 outdoor community events during the summer of 2020, located in neighborhoods with higher numbers of priority populations, to distribute paper copies of the online survey:

- Damiano Meal Center
- Hillside Farmers Market
- Harrison Farmers Market

Public Open Houses

October 2020 – two virtual public open houses were held during Fall Bus, Bike Walk Month event to discuss the Plan. One session focused as Pedestrian Safety and the other session focused on Pedestrian Accessibility.

February 2021 – two virtual public open houses were held during Winter Active Transportation Week event to discuss the draft Plan.

May 2021 — two virtual public open houses were held during as scheduled events during Active Transportation Month to discuss the Plan.

Chapter 2: Priority Areas for Walking

A big role of this Pedestrian Plan is to serve as a guide to decision-makers when scoping transportation projects in the Duluth-Superior area. With resources being limited for the entire transportation network, including the pedestrian network, an analysis was conducted to determine priorities, meaning which pedestrian ways are more important to be constructed, maintained, and/or improved.

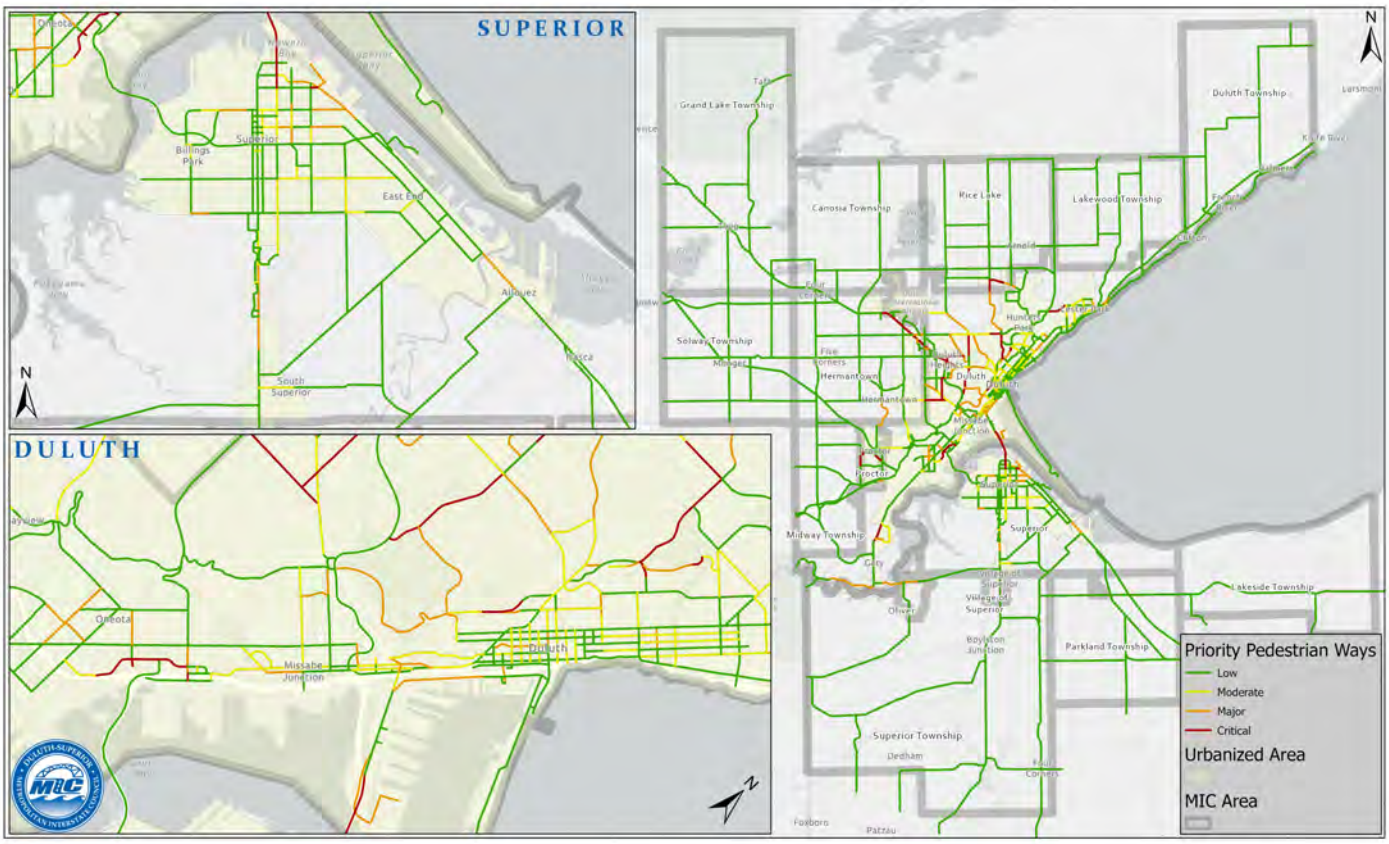
The priority analysis

The analysis and priority rankings took into account four factors including the following:

1. **Key pedestrian corridors ranking**
2. **Priority of existing pedestrian network gaps**
3. **Level of barriers to pedestrian network**
4. **Existing sidewalk condition ranking—**note that sidewalk condition was fully consider in the analysis but not mapped or further explained in this plan as the sidewalk conditions have an inventory document explaining the analysis and are annually updated)

This analysis is not intended to be for one-time use, but will continue to be refined, modified and improved upon to continue to re-visit and update the priority pedestrian areas. Roadways with a functional classification of collector or arterial were considered in this analysis, with a few exceptions, some key local streets, particularly near schools were included, while the and the two Interstate routes (I-35 and I-535) were excluded from this analysis as pedestrians are prohibited from utilizing those routes.

Priority Pedestrian Improvement Corridors—Duluth-Superior Area



The Priority Pedestrian Improvement Corridors were determined based on a review and composite ranking based on these four key factors:

1. Key pedestrian corridors ranking
2. Priority of existing pedestrian network gaps
3. Level of barriers to pedestrian network
4. Existing sidewalk condition ranking

Priority Pedestrian Improvement Corridors

Priority—areas where there is a relatively higher level of pedestrian use, higher level of use by priority populations, where it is generally not safe nor comfortable for a pedestrian to share the street with motor vehicles, and in turn where quality pedestrian-focused infrastructure investments and maintenance is needed to walk along and across these corridors.

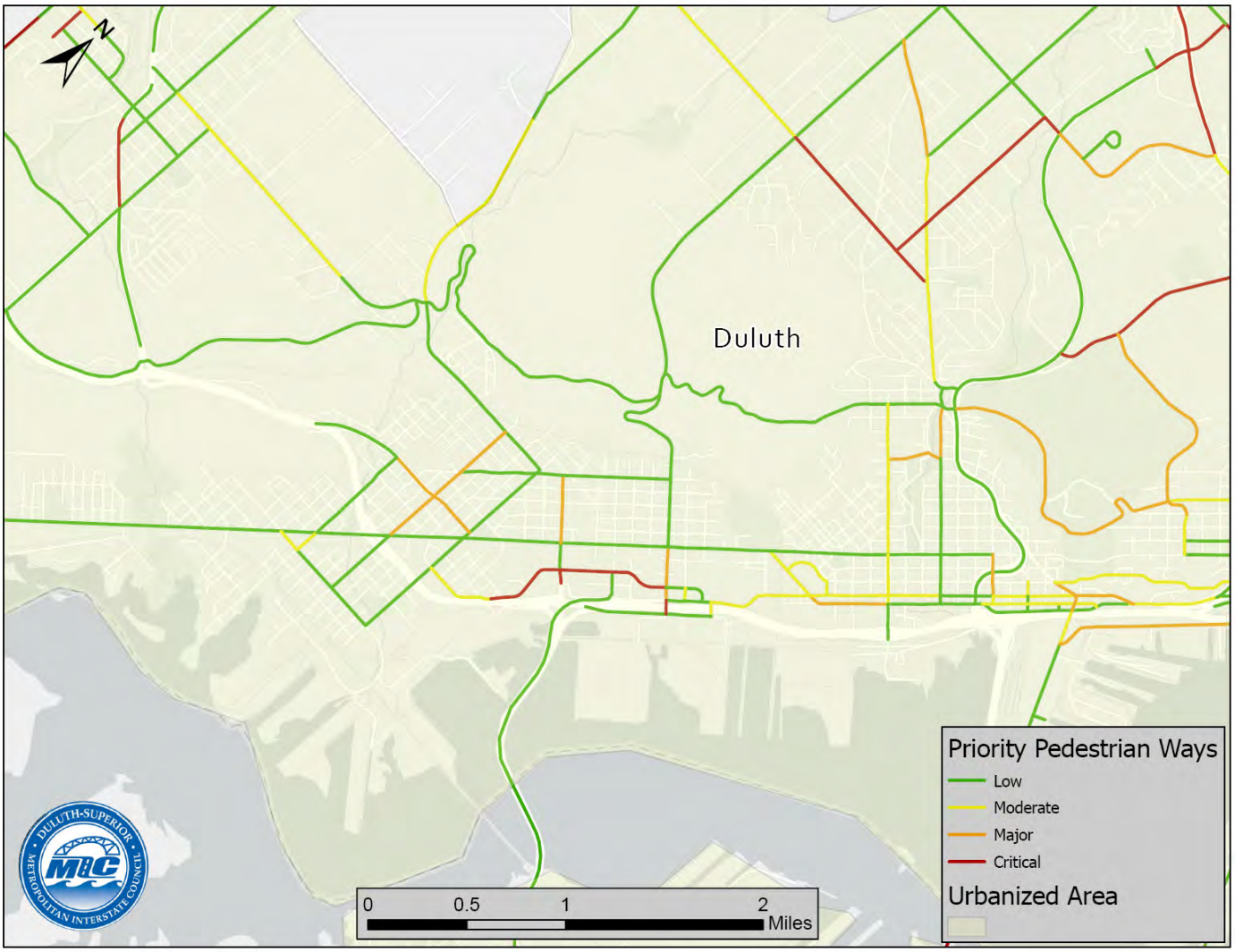
Critical— top priority for investing pedestrian facilities. These corridors need to be pro-actively improved.

Major—These corridors need to be improved for pedestrians, but are less urgent than the critical. But should be improved as part of re-surfacing/utility work projects.

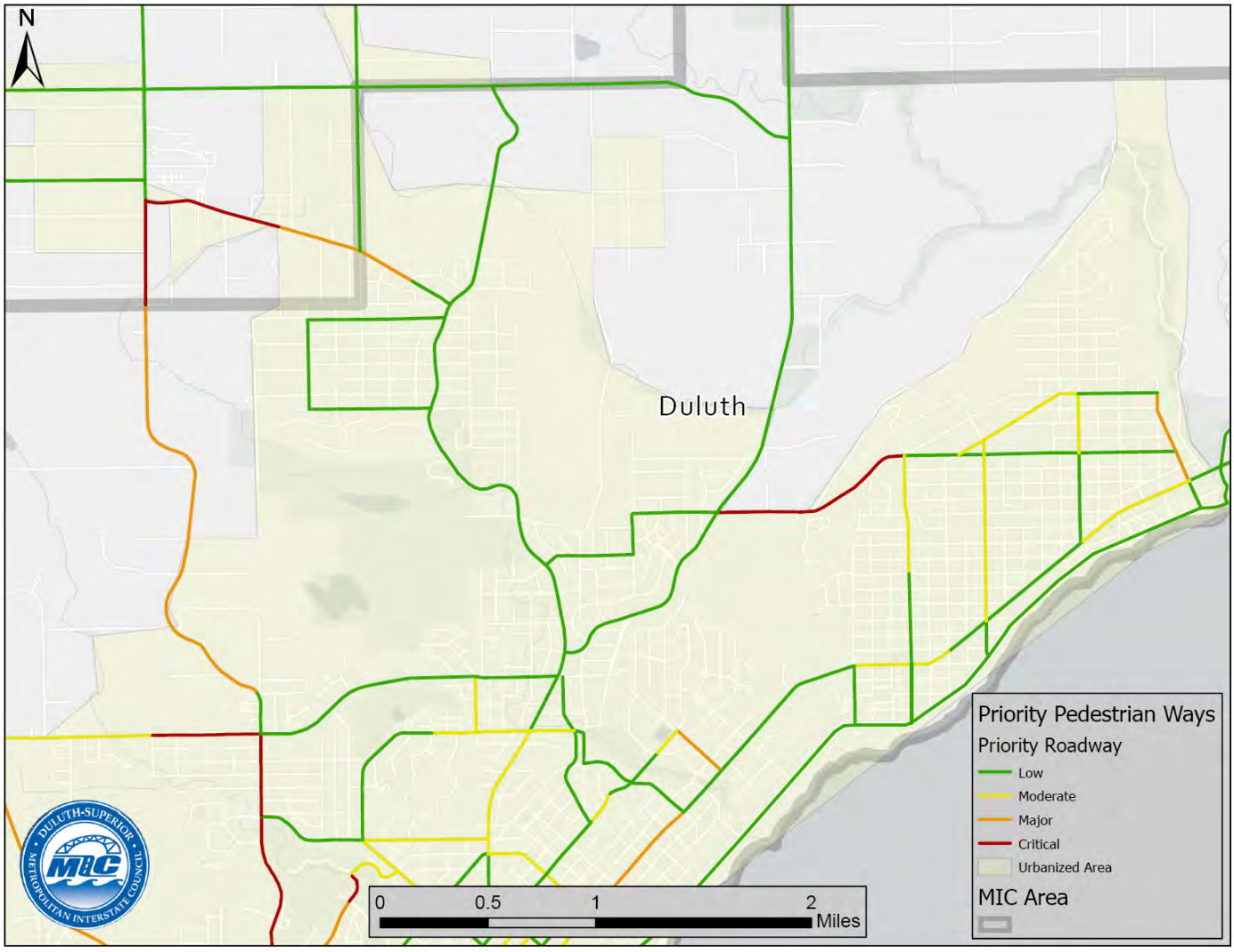
Moderate—These corridors need pedestrian improvements but can wait until the roadway or pedestrian facility is reconstructed.

Low—corridors that do not need to be improved until a regularly scheduled resurfacing or reconstruction project is taking place. No additional pedestrian improvements are needed than exist

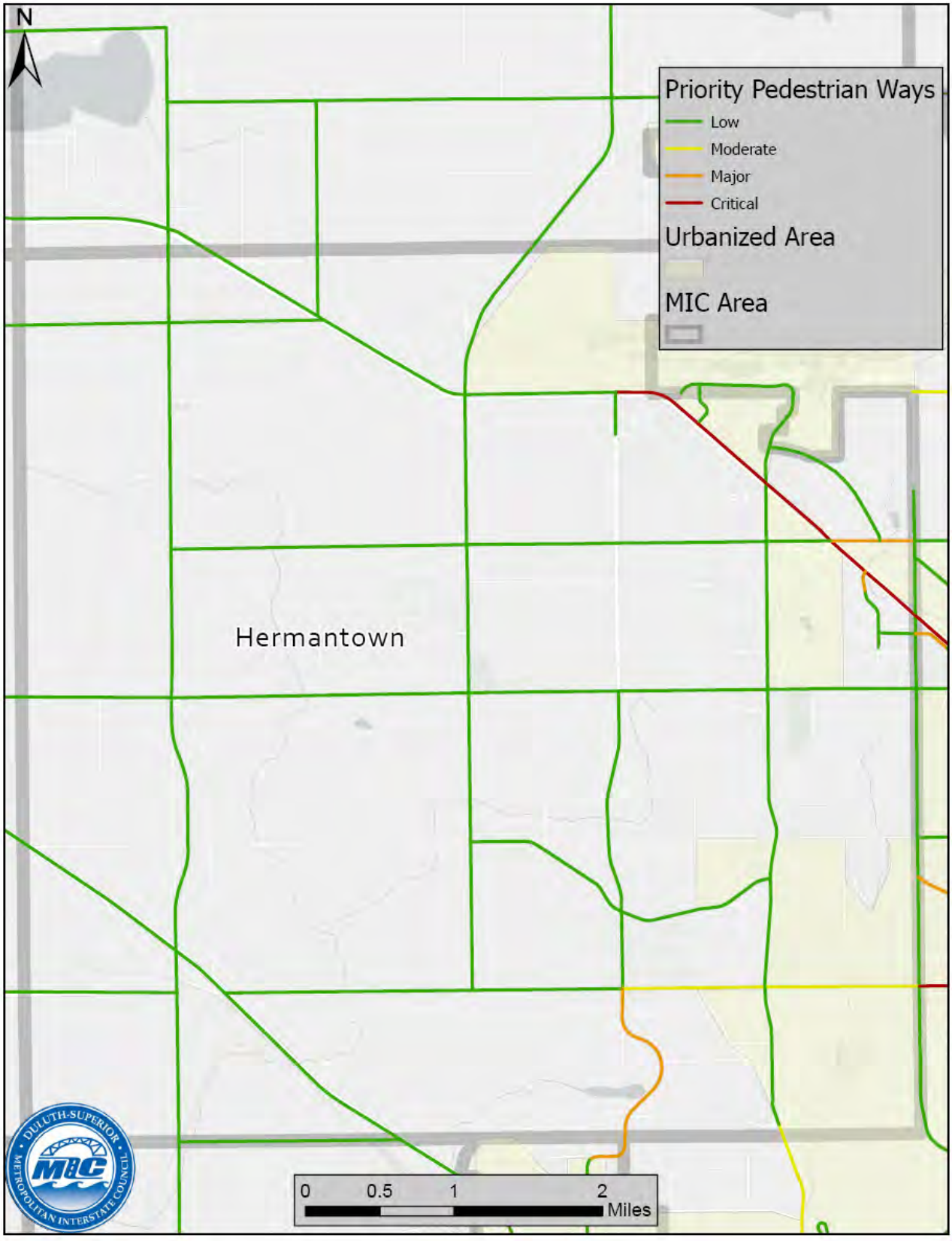
Priority Pedestrian Improvement Corridors—Western Duluth Area



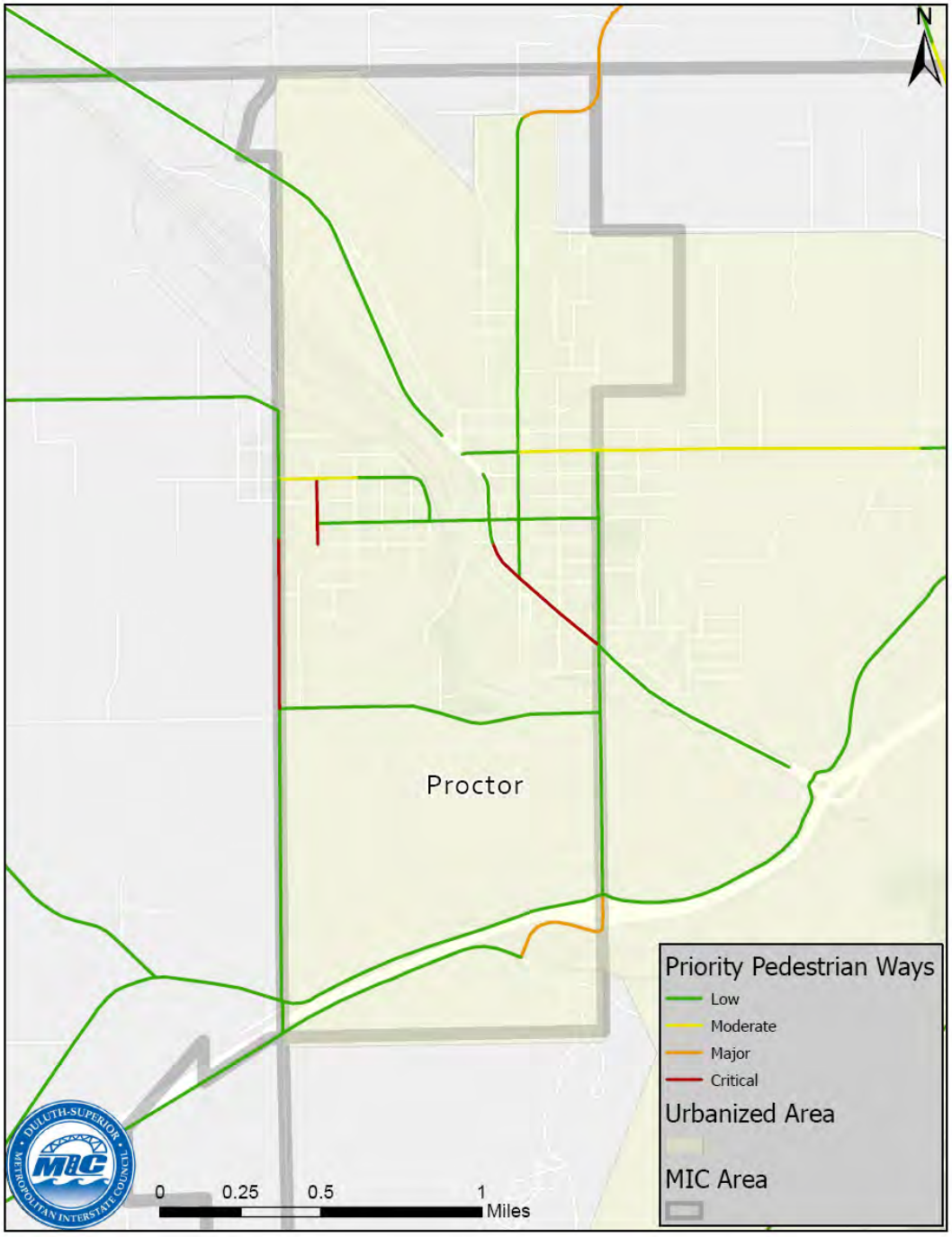
Priority Pedestrian Improvement Corridors—Eastern Duluth area



Priority Pedestrian Improvement Corridors—Hermantown

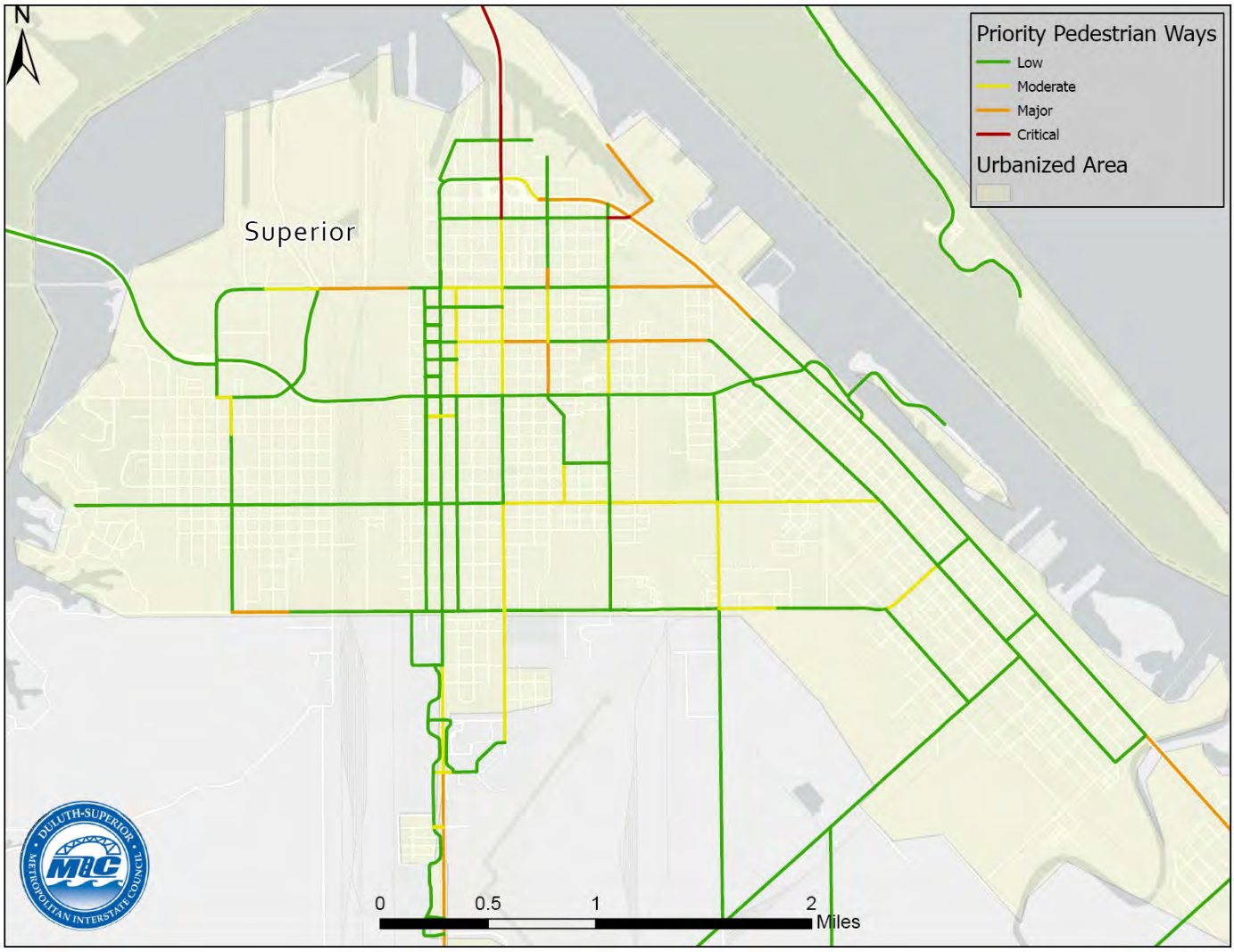


Priority Pedestrian Improvement Corridors—Proctor



Based on

Priority Pedestrian Improvement Corridors—Superior



Factor #1—Key Pedestrian Corridors

An analysis was conducted to determine the most important areas within the pedestrian network. While the pedestrian network is extensive, some corridors are more critically important. In order to objectively identify the key pedestrian corridors, a scoring matrix was developed based on factors that have impact to the pedestrian network. The following factors were analyzed, based on a point system, and final score was devised. The corridors ending up with the highest scores were identified as the key pedestrian corridors.

The following factors were considered for this analysis:

Traffic Volumes (daily count) - Motor Vehicles, Heavy Trucks, Pedestrian, and Micro-Mobility (bike, scooter, etc).

Traffic Speeds (mph) - not posted speed limits.

Safe Route to School—corridors with schools along them and/or a Safe Route to School Plan.

Transit Route—level of frequency of the routes is considered.

Civic Center— Town Hall, City Hall, Court House, Polling Place, Library, Polling Place, Library, Cultural/Museum/ Entertainment Facility, and Park.

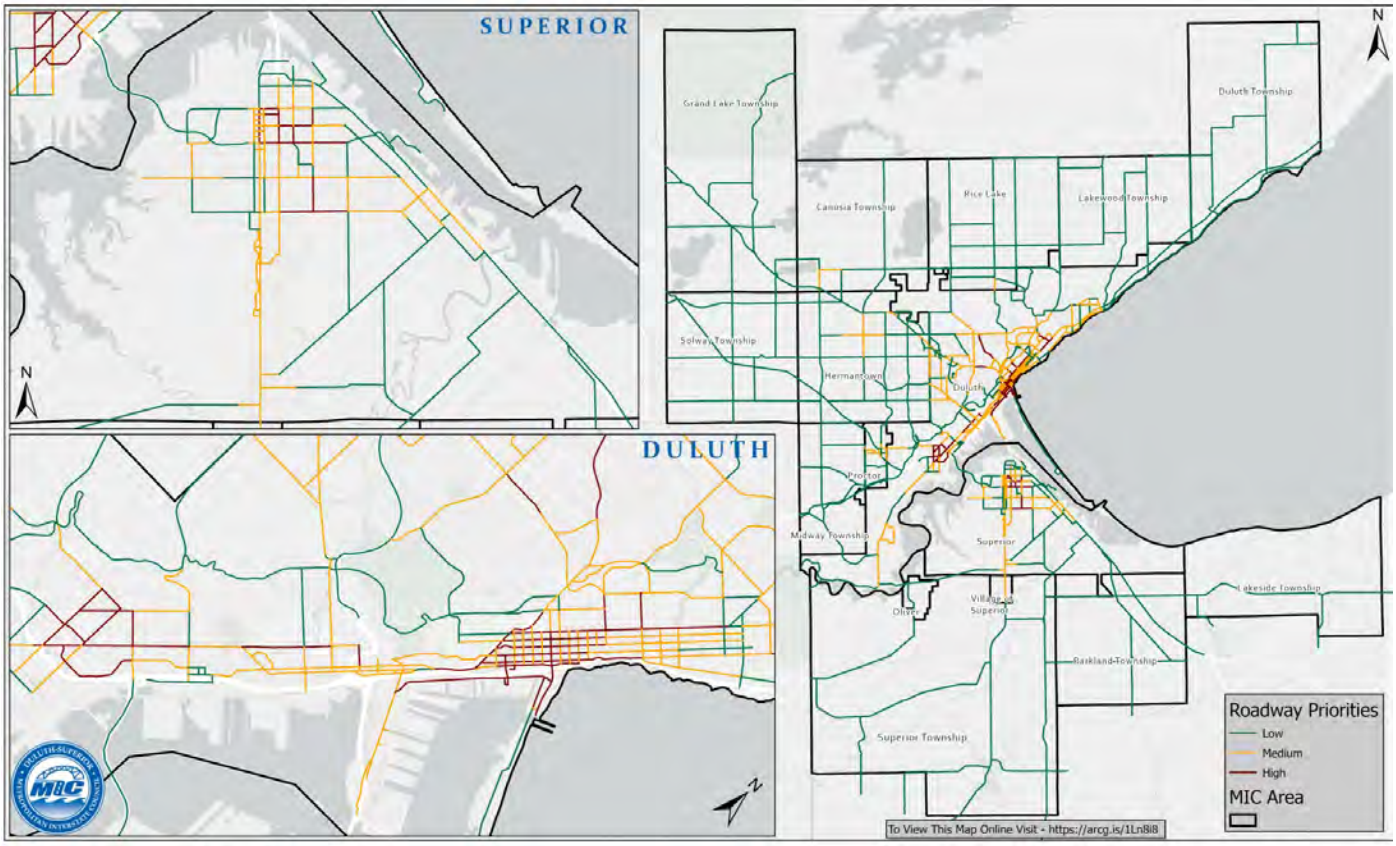
Activity Node—Grocery Store, Pharmacy, Health Care facility, Retail Shop, Service provider.

Priority Populations—Disability - Ambulatory Difficulties, Poverty, BIPOC, <18 age, and > 65 age.

Households without a vehicle—percentage of households in a Census tract that do not have access to a vehicle.

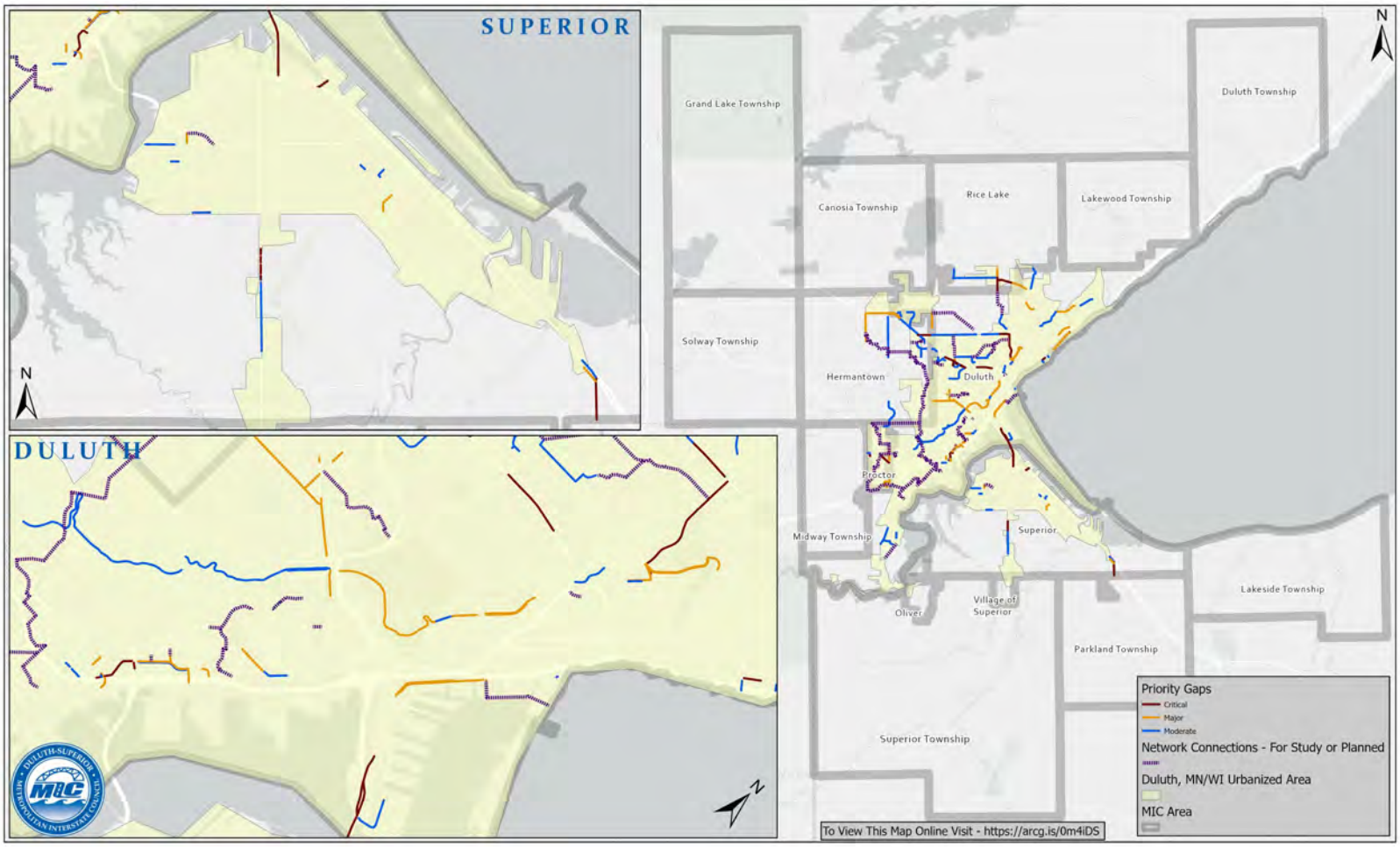
Each category was further defined by key thresholds, relative to the Duluth-Superior Area in scale. A point scoring system was devised based on each category and points were given based on how each corridor landed on the thresholds. The corridor segments with the highest point total then became the top priority walking areas.

Factor #1—Key Pedestrian Corridors in the Duluth-Superior Area



Based on the analysis and scoring, the map depicts the key pedestrian corridors in the network. The score was consolidated into Low, Medium, and High scores, depicting level of importance in the system. Notes that the corridors that were primarily examined in this analysis were collector or arterials roadways. A few local roadways were included due to their role around major destinations, such as schools, etc. The higher the scoring and subsequent ranking, the more key the corridor is in the pedestrian network.

Factor #2—Pedestrian Network Connection Gaps



Pedestrian Network Connection Gaps

The network connection gaps include both areas with missing sidewalks and planned or proposed to be studied network connections. An analysis of level of impact by gap. Some gaps force people into busy roadways while others go relatively un-noticed as people utilize the street and not the sidewalks.

A priority ranking was given to each pedestrian network gap, in order to better understand the level of impact.

Factor #2—Gaps in the Pedestrian Network and Planned or to be Studied Connections

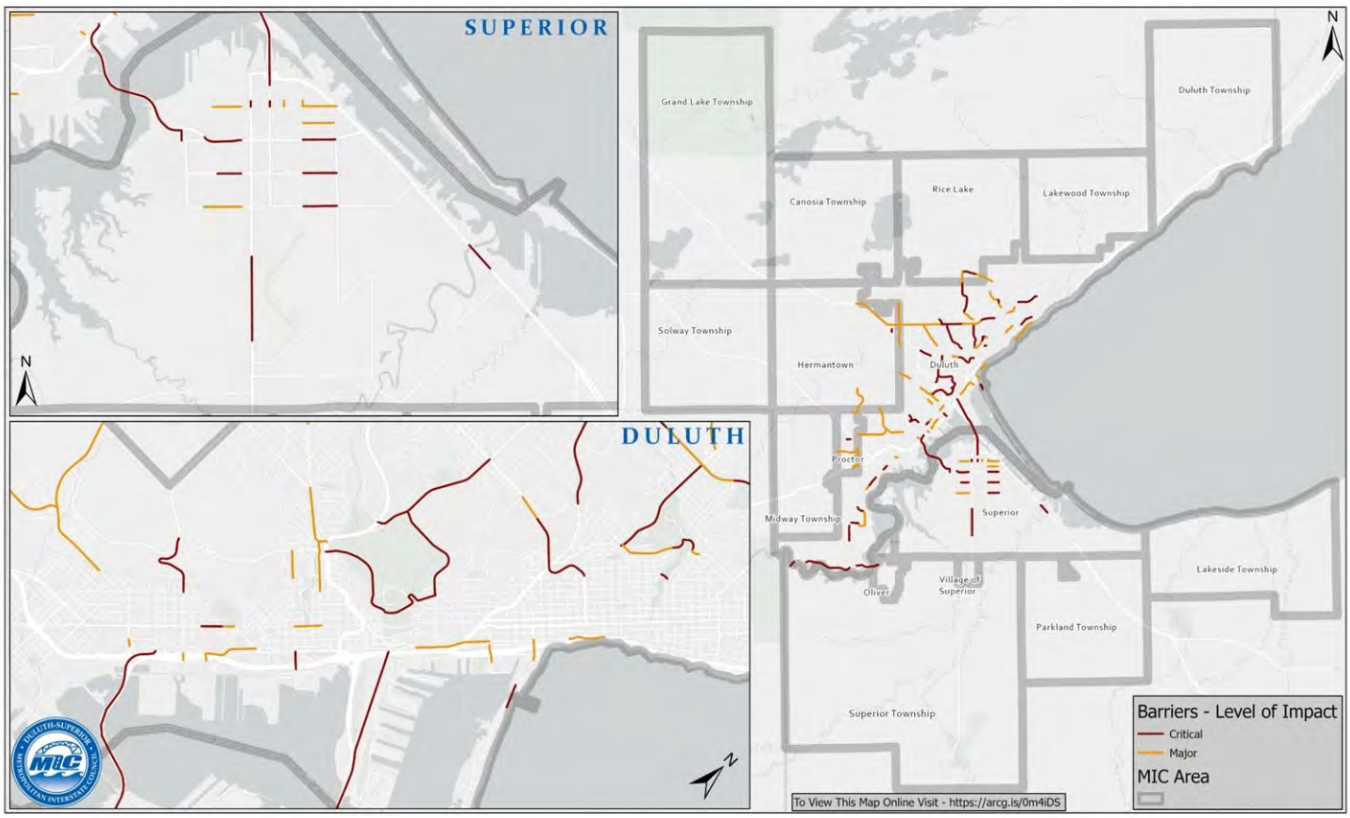
Gaps are areas where the pedestrian way, whether it be a sidewalk or multi-use path, do not exist. Planned or Studied Pedestrian Network Connections were included in this to more fully understand the level of gap in the existing and planned pedestrian network.

Critical Gaps – not safe to walk along road due traffic speeds and/or volumes and no reasonable separated walkway available.

Major Gaps—where a gap exists, but a parallel pedestrian way exists but is difficult, or where a person can but is uncomfortable to share the street with motor vehicles.

Moderate Gaps—no separated pedestrian facility exists, but a reconfiguration of the street may work to serve the pedestrian needs, or a separated facility could be installed, but where pedestrians can utilize the existing infrastructure at this time and with the existing traffic conditions.

Factor #3—Barriers to the Pedestrian System



Barriers—are areas where pedestrians have few reasonable alternatives, or only a limited number of ways to go. Railroad crossings, waterways, roadways without nearby parallel routes all fall under this barrier category. Bridges & Viaducts – are significant barriers walking and once built, can serve as a barrier for 50-75+ years if they do not have adequate pedestrian facilities. All bridges on collectors and arterials are critical to the network and must have high quality pedestrian infrastructure.

Chapter 3: Implementation

This Pedestrian Plan, which has been put together by the Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC), is the Duluth-Superior region's Pedestrian Plan and is intended to guide planning, decision-making and collaboration for residents, agencies, organizations, policy-makers, and public and private entities across the Twin Ports.

This Plan looks out 25 years and sets a realistic implementable action plan that can be accomplished in that 25-year timeframe, based on existing revenues and the expected life-cycle repair and replacement of the existing infrastructure. While pedestrian infrastructure does not get as much wear and tear as roadways do, and therefore, can stay in reasonably good condition for decades, all roadways, particularly the collector and arterial roads have resurfacing and/or reconstruction work over a 25 year timeframe. With roadways and the motor vehicle traffic conditions having the biggest impact to a pedestrian's ease, safety, and comfort with walking along and across streets. The key improvement opportunity to make an improved pedestrian network arises with each resurfacing and reconstruction project.

The current pedestrian network is extensive, but not cohesive, seamless or reliably accessible. In order to overcome these issues, all sectors of society are needed. The sectors directly involved in street and community design of course are the transportation, land use and community design sectors are the focus of this Pedestrian Plan. However, the other sectors have just as an important role as well to creating a truly walkable community. The school, colleges and universities, the worksites and businesses, the volunteer and non-profit organizations, the media, and the health care and public health sectors all have a role to play. However, this Plan is primary focused on the transportation related pedestrian improvement recommendations, as well as key land use and community design recommendations.

Overview

- Will take many sectors of society to make communities more walkable.
- This Pedestrian Plan is one piece in this effort to improve walkability.
- Current pedestrian network is extensive but not fully connected, lots of gaps.
- Plan has a long range view and is intended to be implemented over the next 25 years, as all major roadways will either have some level of resurfacing, recondition or reconstruction work in that timeframe, which is an opportune time to make pedestrian improvements.

Recommendation #1—Conduct studies to improve the pedestrian network.

While the current pedestrian network is extensive, gaps do exist. However, the vast majority of gaps in the network do not need to be further studied. However, there are a number of gaps that are more complex in nature and/or are not clear what the best solution is. The timing on when each of the following recommended studies will be conducted will be determined in coordination with key stakeholders. Note, these studies are not listed in order of importance.

Bay Walk—Portion of this multi-use path exist, however there is a need to create a continuous path from the Lakewalk through Canal Park, DECC and Bayfront to connect directly to the Cross City Trail. A study would identify final alignments and design of this multi-use path.

Blatnik Crossing—there is a missing pedestrian network connection between Rice's Point in Duluth and Connor's Point in Superior. This study is needed to determine the type of pedestrian facility and the connections that would need to be made on both sides, including the pedestrian way to connect to Garfield Avenue in Duluth.

Bong Bridge Pedestrian Connections—on both ends of the Bong Bridge there are missing pedestrian network connections. With this bridge providing the only pedestrian connection between Duluth and Superior, improving the connections to this bridge is needed. The study would determine the improvements, including alignment and design alternatives, including the feasibility of a direct pedestrian connection to the Cross City Trail, the pedestrian way improvements necessary to provide a direct connection between Grand Avenue and 43rd Avenue West on the Duluth side as well as the route alignment from the end of the Bong Bridge multi-use path at Susquehanna Avenue to Belknap Street in Superior. This study should analyze the options and feasibility of improving the separated pedestrian path along the Bong Bridge to meet minimum multi-use path standards.

Recommendation #1:
These are the 14 pedestrian network connection studies recommended to be undertaken in this Plan:

- Bay Walk Connections
- Blatnik Crossing
- Bong Bridge Connections
- Campus Connector to Mall
- Central Hillside—Up the Hill
- Hermantown-Marketplace
- Joshua Ave Connections
- Lake Superior College
- Matterhorn Connections
- Miller Trunk Ped Network
- Morgan Park to Gary/New Duluth
- Skyline Parkway
- Superior Railroad Crossings
- Wade, Wheeler & LP Middle

Campus Connector Trail to Miller Hill Mall Area Connection — this multi-use path is planned to be connected from the Lakewalk to Rice Lake Road. A study to determine the need, alignment alternatives and design for a pedestrian connection from Rice Lake Road to the Miller Hill Mall area.

Central Hillside—Up the Hill Pedestrian Connection—The steep slopes in the Central Hillside make it challenging for walking up and down the hill for people of all ages and abilities. The study would be to identify the best path forward to improving the pedestrian accessibility up and down the hill. This study should analyze the feasibility a variety of possible solutions, including a pedestrian-only up and down the hill corridor and motorized systems, including but not limited to outdoor escalators, funiculars, and gondolas.

Hermantown Trail to Marketplace—study multi-use path connections between the planned Hermantown Trail to the Marketplace, including studying alignment connections, including to Walmart between Stebner Road and Loberg Drive.

Joshua Avenue Multi-use Trail Corridor—the long planned Joshua Avenue providing a direct connection between the Miller Hill Mall area and Arrowhead Road has been differed indefinitely. However, a study has been discussed to look at a multi-use trail connection along this corridor. Study multi-use path connections between Arrowhead Road and Miler Trunk Highway (US Hwy 53).

Lake Superior College (LSC) Connector—while Piedmont Neighborhood is adjacent to the LSC, Miller Creek and its' steep ravine physically separate the two. There are a few hiking/walking trail connections, but this study would be undertaken to find a corridor for a paved, ADA compliant multi-use path, between the heart of the Piedmont Neighborhood at Piedmont Avenue and Chambersburg Road to the center of the LSC campus and Arlington Avenue.

Matterhorn Connection—as new higher density residential housing cluster has developed between near Matterhorn Drive. With limited direct east-west street or pedestrian connection in this area, a study is recommended to determine an alignment for a pedestrian connection between Haines Road, Decker Road and to the Miller Hill Mall.

Miller Trunk Highway (US Hwy 53) Pedestrian Corridor - identify an interconnected pedestrian network routing on both side of the trunk highway. Looking at routing alternatives and design.

Morgan Park to Gary Connection—studying the need and alignment alternatives of provide a direct pedestrian connection between the Morgan Park and the Gary/New Duluth.

Skyline Parkway—study the multimodal transportation needs for this corridor and the options for improving the pedestrian-friendliness of the corridor. Focus on the areas of high pedestrian use and in areas where gaps in pedestrian infrastructure exist.

Superior Railroad Crossings—The City of Superior is divided by railroad crossings, creating islands of neighborhoods with only a few places to cross the rail tracks, particularly for those with mobility challenges and are in use of a wheelchairs. This study would examine these railroad crossing and identify solutions to improve them for people of all ages and abilities.

Wade, Wheeler and Lincoln Park Middle School Connection— study a multi-use path connection from the Cross City Trail, to Wade Stadium, the Wheeler Athletic Complex, and creating a direct connection between the Denfeld Neighborhood to the Lincoln Park Middle School.

General Pedestrian Planning Efforts

Consider undertaking planning efforts to identify:

a. Shared Streets—identify the local/residential streets as the best ones to serve a shared street role in the pedestrian network. These streets are shared by all users of the roadway with no separated facilities for any particular mode. The key and defining features are that these streets have an access to property role, but not a through motor vehicle traffic one in the overall network. These streets have a low volume of motor vehicle traffic and most importantly a low motor vehicle traffic operating speed. Shared streets have traffic calming features on these streets to ensure that travel speeds are less than 15 miles per hour.

b. Open Streets—identify which streets would be best for either permanently or temporarily be closed to motor vehicle traffic and enhanced for pedestrians.

c. Alleys—identify the alleys and the improvements needed to activate these pedestrian-scaled corridors as a pedestrian-friendly and welcoming space. Alleys that are ideal for this are located in business districts, where high volumes of pedestrian activity already exists. A few examples of alleys that should be further considered include but not limited to the alley between Superior Street and First Street in Downtown Duluth, the alley between Canal Park Drive and Lake Avenue in Canal Park, and the alley between Tower Avenue and Ogden Avenue in Superior.

Specific streets to consider being "shared" or "open"

Shared Streets

- 19th St—Hammond Ave to UWS
- Chester Parkway—4th St to Skyline Pkwy
- Fisher Ave—Faxon Ave to UWS
- Skyline Pkwy (various segments)
- Snelling Ave—9th St to UMD

Open Streets

- Lincoln Park Drive
- Seven Bridges Rd
- Skyline Pkwy (Enger Tower segment)

Recommendation #2—Improve the collection, evaluation, and sharing of pedestrian data and findings.

Decision-makers need data on walking and walkability to help them plan, implement, and evaluate pedestrian improvements. The following data is recommended to be gathered and disseminated:

a. Make data user friendly and easily available, include providing web access to the data findings.
b. Conduct level of use counts for pedestrian volumes utilizing automated technologies and supplement with manual counts where necessary and to verify data, including before and after counts where projects with pedestrian improvements are taking place, where gaps in data exist, and along corridors with high volumes of pedestrians.
c. Collect and analyze data on pedestrian exposure and pedestrian injuries, including analyzing the serious and fatal crashes where a pedestrian is involved to better understand and prevent these crashes in the future.
d. Evaluate motorist yield rates to pedestrians at locations with high levels of pedestrian crossings and areas identified as difficult to cross for pedestrians. Evaluate yield rates before and after pedestrian crossing improvements have been installed as well.
e. Count sidewalk riding by micro-mobility devices in areas where level of use by the various modes creates conflicts, noting the percentage of bicycles, scooters and other faster moving electronic devises utilizing pedestrian ways, including sidewalks.
f. Maintain the sidewalk condition database, including updating the sidewalk network annually where new sidewalks have been constructed and corrections made to the database as discovered.
g. Provide an annual progress report on the pedestrian related improvements made each year. This annual report will be compiled into the "Measuring Progress" section of the Long Range.

Measuring Progress:

The annual report on pedestrian network improvements include, should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Miles of new sidewalk and pedestrian pathways repaired and/or replaced.
- Sidewalk condition rating percentages
- # of ADA curb ramps brought forward to compliance, out of the total number that do not meet ADA guidelines.
- Number and type of pedestrian crossing improvements.
- Level of use counts
- Discuss any innovative or new to the MIC area pedestrian infrastructure installed on the network.

Recommendation #3—Focus on improving the Priority Pedestrian Improvement Corridors.

The pedestrian corridors have been prioritized by their level of need for improvement. The corridors prioritized as "Critical" and "Major" are primarily located within the urbanized area of Duluth-Superior region and are to be the focus for improving over the life of this Plan. The best-practice pedestrian improvement solutions are recommended. However, the Plan realizes that each situation is unique to find the most effective solutions. Therefore, the Plan recommends an iterative approach, to try, evaluate, and try again and pedestrian design guides that are available.

a. "Critical" corridors—pro-actively undertake projects to improve the pedestrian environment along these priority corridors through the use of local sidewalk funds, transportation alternative grants, and other funding sources.
b. "Major" corridors—at the time of work, even if relatively minor, improve the pedestrian environment.
c. Enhance both the "Critical and Major" pedestrian pathways along as well as crossing the streets.
d. Utilize interim design strategies on these "critical and major" corridors—techniques to deliver pedestrian improvements more quickly. They include low-cost, interim materials, new public amenities, and creative partnerships with local stakeholders, which together enable faster project delivery, and more flexible and responsive design. An interim design can serve as a bridge to the community, helping to build support for a project and test its functionality before going into construction.

Pedestrian Infrastructure Design Guidance:

Urban Street Design Guide

NACTO—National Association of City Transportation Officials

Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach

ITE—Institute for Transportation Engineers

"Critical" Pedestrian Improvement Corridors - List:

These are corridors that received a composite ranking of "critical" based on a number of factors, including the importance of the connections, especially if the corridor is near a school, the existing level of motor vehicle traffic, sidewalks gap, a barrier exists, and whether or not an alternative/ parallel routes is available. Here is the list:

City of Duluth

- Arrowhead Rd—Kenwood Ave to Triggs Ave
- Chambersburg Rd—Morris Thomas Rd to Leonard St
- Glenwood St—Snively Rd to 43rd Ave E
- Joshua Ave—Miller Trunk Hwy to Maple Grove Rd
- Kenwood Ave—11th Ave E to Arrowhead Rd
- Mike Colallilo Dr/1st St/Superior St—Wadena St to 40th Ave W.
- Skyline Pkwy—7th Ave W to 8th St
- Skyline Pkwy—Chester Pkwy to Chester Park Dr
- 11th Ave E—10th St to Kenwood Ave
-

City of Proctor

- 9th St—1st to 4th St

City of Superior

- 5th St—Catlin to Main St
- Susquehanna Ave—Belknap to US Hwy 2

"Critical" Pedestrian Improvement Corridors - List:
(Continued)

St. Louis County

- Arlington Rd—Trinity Rd/US 53 to Central Ent
- Arlington Rd—Willow St to Arrowhead Rd
- Calvary Rd to Howard Gnesen Rd to 1st Ave S
- Howard Gnesen Rd—Ridgeview Rd to Calvary Rd
- Morris Thomas Rd—Haines Rd to Piedmont Ave

MnDOT

- MN Hwy 23—Morgan Park gap
- MN 194—Anderson Rd to Trinity Rd
- US Hwy 2—1st St to Boundary Ave
- US Hwy 53—Trinity Rd to Lavaque Rd
- US Hwy 53—Mall Dr to Miller Trunk Hwy

MnDOT/WISDOT

- Blatnik Bridge—Hammond Ave to Garfield Ave

Recommendation #4—Design the pedestrian network so that walking is easy, safe, and comfortable.

Streets, sidewalks, and crosswalks should be designed to encourage walking by people of all ages and abilities. Applying effective pedestrian design measures to make it easier, safer and more comfortable through can be found through national and state guidance as well as locally by what others in the region has tried. Trying, evaluating, and improving based on lessons learned is recommended approach.

a. Improve the walking environment along streets, providing separated space on collector and arterials streets, and utilizing shared street strategies on local streets.
b. Coordinate providing direct pedestrian connections to adjacent properties and buildings. Pay attention to where major building entrances are located, and where worn paths have formed based on pedestrian desire lines.
c. Add curb ramps where they currently do not exist to major pedestrian facilities at cross streets.
d. Improve pedestrian street crossings—Reduce pedestrian crossing distances as much as possible, which creates less delay for motorists and makes it safer for pedestrians and add crosswalk improvements where pedestrians are crossing frequently, longer crossing times, more responsive pedestrian button feedback loop, midblock crossings in business districts and where the urban form and street role is appropriate.
e. On blocks with steep hills, add handrails, flat resting areas and benches.
f. Preserve pedestrian access when rights-of-way, abandoned rail corridors, and easements are vacated.
g. Install barriers between motor vehicles and pedestrians along collector and arterial roadway bridges when they are reconstructed or undergo significant rehabilitation.
h. Provide lighting along pedestrian ways, particularly in areas where there is limited surrounding ambient lighting, especially in tunnels.

The appeal of pedestrian ways can be improved by:

- Adding buffer space between pedestrians and motor vehicle traffic.
- Planting street trees and vegetation.
- Installing benches and sitting areas.
- Orientating street lighting to pedestrian scale and appropriate brightness levels.
- Incorporating creative placemaking and art into street, transit and pedestrian projects.

Local Examples of applying new (to this region) pedestrian friendly designs:

- The new terminal at the Duluth International Airport has well design separated pedestrian ways, traffic calming features, including a raised table crosswalk at the terminal.
- The City of Superior has been applying a variety of different color paints to help make the crosswalks stand out more to motorists.
- Around the region, the dynamic pedestrian activated crossing signage, the Rectangular Rapid-Flashing Beacon (RRFB) have been installed to help people crossing by providing alert to motorists.

Recommendation #5—Design communities that support safe, easy, and comfortable place for people to walk.

Walkable environments can be created through community design principles and supportive policies. Well-connected pedestrian networks, including shorter blocks that are not too long and a range of buildings and uses in close proximity that make it easy for people to walk for transportation purposes. The following recommendations work to this goal:

a. Work with community partners to conduct a development and zoning code audit on pedestrian-friendliness of existing policies, specifically looking building direct and oriented connections to the pedestrian-way system, pathways to sidewalks, building entrances oriented.
b. Consider the special needs of the anticipated users, children near schools, people with mobility challenges, and people who are more vulnerable to harassment.
c. Add pedestrian walkways along all transit routes and improve transit hubs and stops to be more appealing, through art work, landscaping, lighting, and placing them directly in the activity nodes.
d. Incorporate green stormwater infrastructure as part of pedestrian and street projects.

•

Recommendation #6—Maintain pedestrian network to that walking is safe, easy and reliable mode of transportation.

Regular maintenance of pedestrian walkways reduces safety issues and increases use. Keeping sidewalks free from hazards is an important long-term commitment for the safety of those who use them. The Plan recommends to keep existing pedestrian walkways free from hazards.

a. Ensure that sidewalks and crosswalks are rapidly cleared of hazards to ensure ease of system use by all residents.
b. View snow management from a system viewpoint. Establish a winter prioritization network for clearing pedestrian facilities that ensures that the best access is provided to the greatest number of people possible following a heavy storm event.
c. Leverage opportunities through private development, public utilities projects, and major street projects to construct or reconstruct sidewalks and provide improved pedestrian crossings.
d. Provide education to the following on the key role the pedestrian network plays for all and that it must be reliably available to public roadway snow management, private snow management operators, and private property owners.
e. Regularly maintain lighting along pedestrian ways, especially in areas that are dark, such as tunnels and areas away from street lights and also in areas where there are safety concerns.

Recommendation #7—Evaluate and update Pedestrian Plan every 5 years.

As is the case with all planning documents, this Plan will require updates from time to time to remain useful and relevant. It is likely that over the coming years, new and/or revised priorities and strategies will emerge and new iniitiatives and programed will be desired. Therefore, it is recommended that a full review with updates take place every 5 years.

a. Continue to develop, improve, implement and evaluate the pedestrian related plans and programs, including the Safe Routes to School Plans.
b. Monitor autonomous vehicle technology and the possible impacts to pedestrians.
c. Evaluate/education best practice designs for pedestrian safety and comfort.

Chapter 4: Planning Support

What is the basis for this plan? Why focus on pedestrians and walkable communities if a common perception is that "not many people actually walk"?

While only a small percentage of people walk and bike to work in the Duluth-Superior area today, there are many people in the community who would choose to walk more often, as part of their activities of daily life, if the pedestrian network offered more safe, convenient, and comfortable choices.

In addition, according to 2016 ACS Census data, nearly 9% of households in the Duluth-Superior area do not have vehicles, which means a significant number of people depend on walking as their primary means of transportation.

The recommendations in the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Pedestrian Plan are based on and well-supported by numerous recent plans and policies at the local, state and national level, as well as the needs and desires of the community.

Local, State and National Plans

Multiple planning initiatives at the local, state and national levels support pedestrian infrastructure improvements and policy development, and this plan presents ways to implement those planning and policy recommendations.

Local Plans

Duluth Comprehensive Plan — *Imagine Duluth 2035*

The City's comprehensive plan asserts that walking is a primary mode of transportation. It articulates a vision to connect all users in a way that promotes safety, health, and quality of life.

> *Recognize that all citizens are pedestrians at some point in their daily travels, even if walking is used in conjunction with other modes, and* ***prioritize pedestrian safety and comfort in transportation improvements.***
>
> - Duluth Comprehensive Plan "Imagine Duluth 2035"

The recommendations for improved pedestrian facilities as put forward in this plan will contribute, to some extent, to meeting all of the policy goals identified in the Transportation section of Duluth's Comprehensive Plan:

Imagine Duluth 2035

The recommendations for improved pedestrian facilities as are explicitly supported by multiple policy goals and strategies as defined in the City of Duluth's most recent Comprehensive Plan:

Strategies to Implement Policy #1 – Improve Street Conditions to Function Better for Everyone

S1. Continue the City's asset management plan to extend the life of pavement and sidewalks.

S3. Prioritize implementation of the ADA Transition Plan, with a focus on Core Investment Areas. S4. Develop a funding source dedicated to installation and maintenance of sidewalk networks.

S5. Install modern pedestrian and bike facilities whenever conducting resurfacing activities on city streets, including on-road bike lanes for all locations identified in the City's adopted bikeway system plan.

S6. Ensure that sidewalks and crosswalks are rapidly cleared of snow (and continuously cleared, in Core Investment Areas), to ensure ease of system use by all residents.

S7. Continue to develop, improve, and implement Safe Routes to Schools plans to enhance safety for children around schools and throughout the community.

S9. Adopt measures to reduce vehicular travel speed and improve intersection safety, especially in busy areas, to improve safety conditions and reduce or eliminate injuries and deaths.

Policy #1 – Improve street conditions to function better for everyone

Policy #2 – Reduce infrastructure costs through innovation and wholesale design change

Policy #3 – Add to the transportation network by systematically enhancing multi-modal options

Policy #4 – Improve system condition and connections in and between downtown and Canal Park

Policy #5 – Base decisions about transportation infrastructure primarily in the context of improving city and neighborhood vitality, and not on automobile through traffic.

City of Superior's Active Transportation Plan

This 2020 plan provides a framework of programs, policies, and infrastructure improvements to encourage more residents to use active transportation (i.e., any human-powered form of transportation, including walking, running, bicycling, skating, and using a wheelchair or other mobility device).

Vision Statement

Superior is a healthy city where walking and bicycling are encouraged as attractive, safe, comfortable, and convenient options for residents and visitors at every age and life stage.

City of Superior Active Transportation Plan (2020)

MIC Long Range Transportation Plan: *Sustainable Choices 2045*

The key theme of MIC's long range transportation plan is "many needs, limited resources." The projected revenue shortfall to cover this area's infrastructure costs means that we need to set priorities for how those scarce funds are spent.

This plan identifies Priority Pedestrian Areas in which to focus improvements for people walking (see Chapter 2, Implementation).

1999 Metro Pedestrian Plan (MIC)

This plan, aimed at improving the pedestrian environment throughout the Duluth-Superior area, began with the MIC in 1999. That was where we began; this updated plan is where we're trying to go.

Superior Active Transportation Plan Recommendations

- Improve safety for people who walk and bike in Superior.
- Reduce or eliminate pedestrian and bicycle-related crashes, serious injuries and fatalities.
- Build pedestrian and bicycle friendly streets that manage vehicular speed and reduce conflicts with motorists.
- Accommodate all users, especially more vulnerable populations such as children, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- Enhance street crossings along key walking and biking routes.
- Create a complete, comfortable and attractive pedestrian network that is usable year-round.
- Fill in gaps in the sidewalk and trail network.
- Retrofit or expand the existing sidewalk network to include accessible pathways for people with mobility devices.
- Ensure that the pedestrian network is maintained for year-round access.
- Enhance pedestrian accessibility to transit services.
- Improve connections between areas of the city currently separated by barriers such as rail corridors.
- Increase bicycle and pedestrian access to key destinations.
- Enhance multimodal connections that allow people to make trips using multiple modes of travel.
- Embrace bicycling and walking as ways of transportation, recreation, and healthy living in Superior.

Subsequent Work by the MIC

Following the 1999 Pedestrian Plan, the MIC undertook a number of pedestrian-related planning and data counting initiatives.

These included Safe Routes to School plans, the formation of a Bike-Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), baseline condition analysis, sidewalk inventory and condition analysis, priority pedestrian modeling and launched a pedestrian count program.

Trail Plans

Numerous planning efforts have taken place across the Duluth -Superior area that focus on improving the walking environments and creating connections to existing pedestrian networks and key destinations.

Trail plans developed by or with MIC staff for area jurisdictions include the Canosia Township Trails Plan (2018), Duluth Township Trails Plan (2016), the Proctor-Hermantown-Munger Trail Spur Feasibility Plan (2015), the Proctor Master Trails Plan(2007) and the Munger Trail to Lakewalk Connector Plan (2007).

State-Level Plans

Minnesota Walks

This 2017 initiative was a collaborative effort between MnDOT and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and is the first statewide pedestrian planning framework in the country that includes health as a priority by recognizing the role community transportation designs play in creating health.

> *A key goal of Minnesota Walks is that pedestrians are considered as the **first priority** in design of roadway infrastructure.*

MnDOT Statewide Pedestrian Plan

MnDOT's Statewide Pedestrian Plan sets a framework to create, safe, convenient and desirable walking for all. The Plan has identified that walking is essential to achieving MnDOT's vision: a multimodal transportation system that maximizes the health of people, the environment, and our economy. MnDOT is planning to invest more in walking with a focus on safety, equity, and climate change.

Superior Active Transportation Plan Recommendations (cont'd)

- Increase the number of people who walk or bike for all trip purposes.
- Create a culture of safe walking and bicycling through education and enforcement programs.
- Ensure that City policies, ordinances, and plans support and promote active transportation.
- Increase sidewalk widths to at least 6 feet.
- Require sidewalk buffers that are at least 6 feet wide between the street and the sidewalk.
- Develop pedestrian crossing guidelines.

The Plan calls for MnDOT to leverage its resources and role as statewide leader to support agencies at the regional and local levels in their efforts to advance walking.

Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020

WisDOT developed the Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020 to provide a long-range vision addressing Wisconsin pedestrian needs. It describes existing and emerging pedestrian needs through 2020, with a set of recommendations to meet those needs.

National-Level Reports and Preference Surveys

Step It Up! - Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities

US Department of Health and Human Services — *Step It Up*! Report notes that although walking is a popular form of physical activity and can be done easily by most people, barriers to walking exist.

Health Implications of Community Design – Moving to Combat Obesity

Calls for increasing understanding of the importance of community design (and redesign) and recognizing the potential it has to increase physical activity levels and create positive health outcomes for everyone.

Discusses social trends, leading strategies to encourage higher levels of daily physical activity, key factors of what communities can and are doing and specific actions that state and local officials can undertake immediately to make communities more walkable.

National Association of Realtors – Community and Transportation Preference Surveys

For the better part of the last decade, surveys conducted by the National Association of Realtors have noted a market demand for walkability. According to the 2013 Community Preference Survey, 60 percent of respondents favor a neighborhood with a mix of houses, stores, and other businesses that are within walking distance, rather than neighborhoods requiring driving between home, work, and recreation. Respondents in the 2020 survey continued to indicate a preference for a walkable neighborhood and less commuting.

Step It Up!

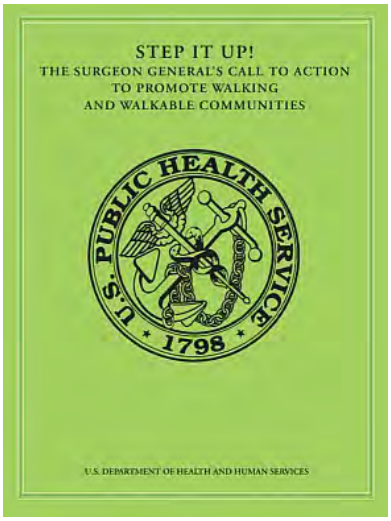
The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities

This influential 2015 publication recognizes the importance of physical activity for people of all ages and abilities.

It calls on Americans to be more physically active through walking and asks the nation to better support walking and walkability.

The Call to Action includes five strategic goals to promote walking and walkable communities in the United States:

- **Make walking a national priority;**
- Design communities to make it safe and easy for people of all ages and abilities to walk and roll;
- Promote programs and policies to support walking where people live, learn, work and play;
- Provide information to encourage walking and improve walkability;
- Fill surveillance, research, and evaluation gaps related to walking and walkability.



"Millennials and Silent Generation Drive Desire for Walkable Communities, Say Realtors"

It is no longer just millennials propelling interest in walkable communities. According to a new report from the National Association of Realtors®, members of the silent or greatest generation, those born before 1944, also prefer smaller homes in neighborhoods with easy walks to shops and restaurants.

- December 19, 2017 NAR Press Release

Multiple Societal Benefits

More and more communities are making investments in pedestrian infrastructure and amenities. Investing in pedestrian infrastructure is increasingly understood as a useful strategy with multiple social benefits: to attract residents, build the tax base, encourage economic development, ensure transportation equity, promote public health and address climate change.

Creating a pedestrian-centered transportation system has multiple benefits that include:

Health Benefits

Walking is an easy way to start and maintain a physically active lifestyle, and walkable communities make it easier for people of all ages and abilities to be active. The ways in which communities are designed and built can either present barriers to walking or encourage it as a safe and attractive way to get around.

The 2015 publication, *Step It Up! The U.S. Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities* notes that physical activity is one of the most important things Americans can do to improve their health.

The Health Implications of Community Design: Moving to Combat Obesity toolkit emphasizes community design (and redesign) and the potential it has to increase physical activity levels and create positive health outcomes for everyone.

Environmental Benefits

Providing infrastructure that supports walking (as well as other active transportation options such as bicycling and transit) can decrease motor vehicle usage and dependency on nonrenewable resources, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.

Business Benefits

A walkable environment encourages people to walk more often for day-to-day activities such as trips to the local store and to complete errands.

Walkable business districts allow people to become familiar with their surroundings, discover new businesses and engage as customers in that community.

A recent study of business performance in walkable shopping areas by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation finds that businesses appear to do better in walkable commercial areas than in areas attracting mainly drive-to patronage. It states "evidence suggests that rents in walkable shopping areas can be 27-54% higher than in non-walkable areas. Many of the most successful recent shopping developments have been located and designed to attract a substantial walk-in population."

Why Invest in Active Transportation?

An improved walking environment can boost the health, safety, quality of life, economic vitality, and accessibility of [a city} and its residents.

- City of Superior Active Transportation Plan (2020)

Equity Benefits

Although transportation infrastructure predominantly supports travel by motorized vehicles, a significant percentage of people in the Duluth-Superior area can't drive. This includes elderly people, children, those with mobility impairments, and people with low incomes.

Improving the pedestrian environment is among the most effective tools available to help level the playing field for these members of our community.

Duluth-Superior Area Population Demographics

Households without Vehicles:~8.9%

People Over Age 65: ~16.6%

People Under Age 18: ~21.5%

People with Ambulatory Difficulties: ~6.5%

Population in Poverty: ~17.5 %

- Source: 2016 ACS Block Group Data

Safety Benefits

Roadway design practices and policies that improve mobility for motor vehicles have also created unsafe conditions for walking due to high speeds, limited crossings and dense traffic.

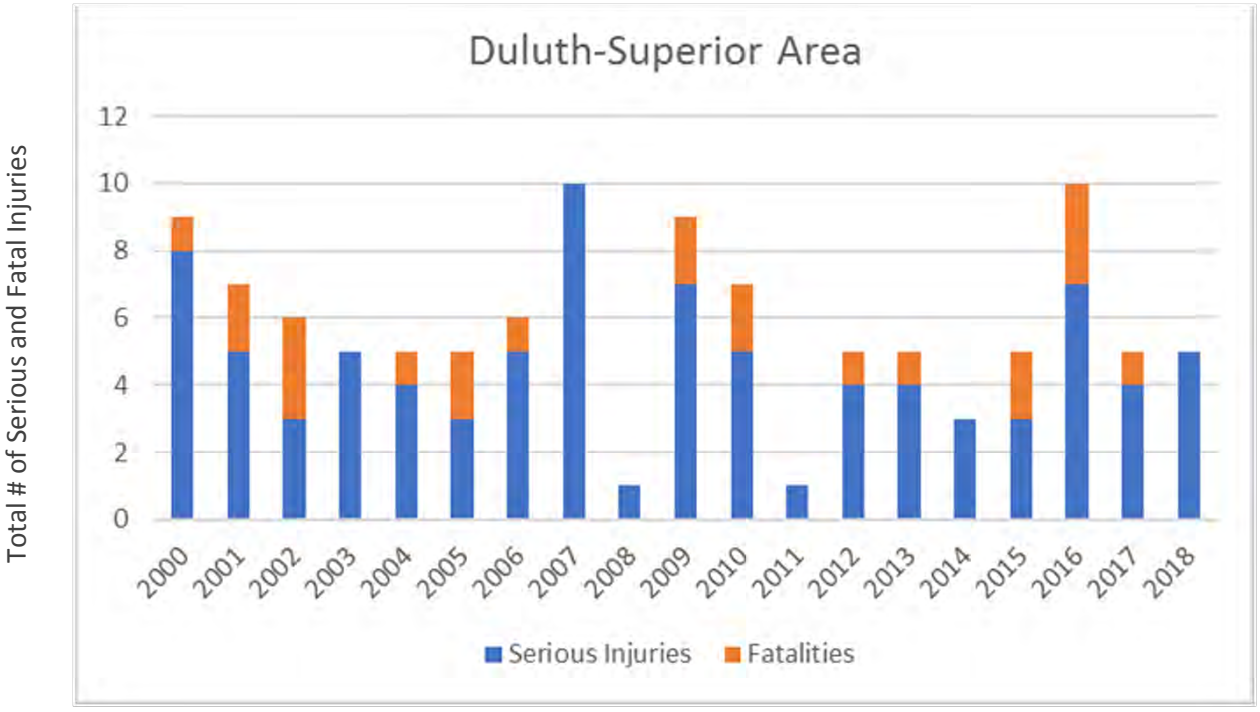
The 2018 Benchmarking Report on Bicycling and Walking reports that bicyclist and pedestrian injuries and fatalities "may be reduced through proactive infrastructure, policy, education and other community investments."

As shown below, In the 20 years since the MIC's first pedestrian plan, the number of people in the Duluth-Superior area who were injured or killed in pedestrian-related crashes has not significantly decreased.

In the majority of crashes between pedestrians and motor vehicles, the pedestrian is trying to navigate in an environment designed primarily for automobile use.

- https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped_focus/docs/

Pedestrian- Related Serious Injuries and Fatalities in the MIC Area 2000-2018



Source: MnDOT and WisDOT crash data

In the 20 years since the MIC's first pedestrian plan, the number of people in the Duluth-Superior area who were injured or killed in pedestrian-related crashes has not significantly decreased.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Public participation is a critical part of any successful planning effort in order to ensure that the plan meets the needs and concerns of the community. Public participation and feedback for this plan was solicited through a variety of forums: an Advisory Committee, two public open houses, "pop-up" engagement at local community events, and four online "open houses" focused on Pedestrian Safety, Pedestrian Accessibility and Winter Safety and Accessibility.

Public Input Survey

From July 17 thru August 10, 2020 a public input survey was open. 627 responses were received and were proportionate to all geographies across the Duluth-Superior area.

Responses identified public perceptions of (1) issues and barriers that exist for people who walk and (2)policies to improve the pedestrian environment.

1. Issues and Barriers (Priority Improvements)

A. Walking along roadways:

- Clear obstructions
- Fill gaps
- Easier access
- Sidewalks on both sides
- Streetscaping

B. Walking across roadways:

- Improve visibility
- Increase yielding
- Easier access
- Longer WALK signal
- More frequent crossings

2. Priority Policies

- Snow clearing
- Maintain sidewalks
- Prioritize pedestrian needs
- Clear obstacles
- Add vegetation along sidewalk