10. Action Steps to Implement

This chapter identifies primary action steps to be taken by the MIC over the next five years–prior to the 2055 MTP update–to work toward achieving the vision, goals, and objectives of *Sustainable Choices 2050* across the Duluth-Superior area transportation system.

Duluth-Superior Long-Range Transportation Plan

Sustainable Choices 2050

Primary Action Steps to Implement

The following are primary action steps recommended and anticipated to help realize and implement the vision of *Sustainable Choices 2050*, by ensuring its goals and objectives (*identified in Chapter 2*) are met. These action steps integrate updated local socioeconomic and travel demand data, public and stakeholder comments, input from the local jurisdictional consultations, and other planning factors received and used throughout the development of this plan.

This list is a more conceptual level, as development of each Action Step will result from continued partnership and discussion with appropriate key stakeholders moving forward.

1. Incorporate Performance-Based Planning

Now that a performance-based planning approach for prioritizing all proposed projects in this plan has been established *(see Chapters 4 and 6)* elements of this approach should integrate across relevant MIC planning processes. Most notably here are the anticipated updates to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process.

2. Improve Safety

Summary Context

Safety is a significant concern for all users of our transportation system, especially for bicyclists, pedestrians, older adults, children, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable users. Prioritizing cars along with the lack of safe, direct, and four-season pedestrian and/or cycling routes associated with the design of many roadways makes them uninviting and unsafe for non-motorized users. General lack of network connectivity and maintenance in numerous areas adds to safety concerns, especially for children and those with ambulatory difficulty. Snow and ice-covered pedestrian and bicycle lanes and paths exacerbates these concerns.

Safety Action Plans are a foundational component in improving traffic safety, as they articulate well-defined and measurable strategies to prevent road injuries and fatalities within a community. They require high levels of engagement, processes for data collection, and goal-setting.

Action Steps

- Develop a comprehensive Safety Action Plan for the entire MIC planning area (anticipated to be led by the MIC in CY 2025-2026).
- Completion of the Safety Action Plan will allow MIC area jurisdictions to apply for federal Implementation Grants to put the identified projects and strategies into effect.
- Ensure the roadway corridors and crossings within the priority project list of this plan identified for safety concerns (including 6th Avenue East/Central Entrance and West Superior Street, among others) include necessary safety improvements.
- As was recommended during a Focus Group discussion form an active group of appropriate stakeholders that explore safety concerns within our transportation network in a holistic, systemwide, all-user manner that considers the vision and safety-related goals of this plan.

3. Prioritize an Integrated Multimodal System

Summary Context

Certainly, many steps have already been taken to include more multimodal options within the MIC area. This action step is intended to continue this effort by exploring this topic in a more holistic, systemwide, all-user manner that considers the vision and numerous multimodal-related and livable community goals of this plan.

One way to prioritize a multimodal system is to keep in mind that while there is no doubt the majority of people regularly drive and ride in automobiles as a primary mode of travel in the MIC area, this does not mean all people do. Other transportation modes are also used, desired, and in some cases necessary for people to travel within, through, to, and from the MIC area, with people often using more than one mode in their door-to-door travel. Active transportation infrastructure enables other modes such as transit. It will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to establish livable, connected, and equitable communities that meet the vision and multiple goals of this plan without prioritizing true multi-modal options as legitimate transportation routes.

Multimodal Freight Network

It should be noted that there is another version of a multimodal system that does not get considered as often with typical transportation planning discussions, and that is multimodal freight movement. The Duluth-Superior area has many multimodal options for freight movement that are essential for and support the local economy. However, sometimes the overall transportation network limits or is not able to integrate some of these multimodal freight options.

Action Steps

- Actively promote and support an integrated multimodal intermodal transportation system that functions well for all users.
- Prioritize vulnerable users of the transportation network.
- Complete updates to the MIC-area Bike Plan and Pedestrian Plan.
- Ensure implementation of the MIC area Bike Plan, Pedestrian Plan, Port Land Use Plan, and various local plans that help s prioritize an integrated multimodal transportation system.

4. Maintain System Infrastructure

Maintenance and preservation of the existing MIC area transportation system is a part of local jurisdictional work plans and budgets. Maintenance of our existing transportation system is strongly desired, including maintenance of all aspects of our transportation infrastructure (not simply road surfaces), as well as addressing inefficiencies within the system (such as right-sizing or road diets). This is important to all users, including the movement of both people and materials and goods, supporting both personal lives and the economy. A specific point heard repeatedly in survey responses and during focus groups is to prioritize and greatly improve the maintenance of sidewalks and bike lanes/paths. This has two forms. One is the physical condition of the surface (especially for sidewalks) including uneven surface, significant cracks, and crumbling pavement. The other is consistent removal of snow and ice from these surfaces, on par with vehicle surfaces, to enable year-round multimodal options for travel. It will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to establish livable,

connected, and equitable communities that meet the vision and multiple goals of this plan without continually considering how to prioritize the whole-system maintenance needs of the MIC area transportation system for all its users.

5. Strive For An Equitable & Accessible System

Summary Context

At the core of *Sustainable Choices 2050* is ensuring equity and door-to-door accessibility for all users, whether public or private, for personal or business/commerce use. Equity and accessibility are intertwined within nearly all goals and objectives of this plan. Comments from stakeholder focus groups and survey responses suggest a community desire for a more equitable transportation network that ensures affordable and accessible transportation options for all people. People desire a network that enables them to move from one place to another efficiently and safely no matter their economic status, age, health, or physical condition.

Action Steps

- Ensure a fully equitable and accessible MIC area transportation network is considered in a holistic, systemwide, all-user manner that simultaneously considers the vision and all goals of this plan.
- Prioritize equity and accessibility within the MIC area transportation network when updating plans.
- Ensure the MIC's performance-based planning approach continually includes equity and accessibility metrics or review questions.
- Prioritize projects that include equity and accessibility improvements.

6. Policy Development

Summary Context

While improvements to the regional transportation system can be made directly through completing physical infrastructure projects, such as those listed in Chapter 6 of this plan, other improvements will be made through, or at least funded under, new or modified policies. Several policy development ideas to improve the MIC area transportation system have been identified during the development of this plan. It is recommended the MIC along with appropriate partners

consider these ideas, prioritize those that are viable, and determine the best pathways for assisting in developing these ideas into future policy. The importance of good policy in meeting goals is exemplified in two existing local examples. Both the St Louis County Transportation Fund and the City of Duluth specific tax for pothole and street repairs have led directly to improved roadway condition, improving the MIC area transportation system.

Action Steps

Some of the policy recommendations expressed during the development of this plan that can be considered include:

- Prioritize long-term budget for transportation planning beyond the current two-year cycle.
- Establish a transportation commission focus group in the region.
- Prioritize vulnerable users of the transportation system.
- Prioritize improving pedestrian and bike experiences, especially in areas identified as short trip generators.
- Prioritize transit as a primary means for meeting objectives, and reducing vehicle trips, miles travelled, and emissions.

7. Coordinated Regional Asset Management

Striving for fiscal sustainability is a key component of *Sustainable Choices 2050*. Given the significant rise in the cost of transportation infrastructure and the other regional challenges noted in this plan, conducting a coordinated regional asset management of the MIC area's transportation infrastructure seems prudent and an important step towards being able to plan for and prioritize a MIC area transportation system that is fiscally sustainable and helps implement the vision. This effort will require coordinated partnerships with and among all local jurisdictions. Perhaps focusing on primary corridors and/or infrastructure would be a useful way to begin implementing this action step.

8. Prepare for Blatnik Bridge Reconstruction

It is known that well-established local and regional traffic patterns will be disrupted during the estimated 4-5 years of closure of the Blatnik Bridge during reconstruction.

It is recommended that as the MPO for the Duluth-Superior

area, the MIC and appropriate partners and stakeholders invest time and resources to consider how best to prepare for and mitigate the impacts of the full closure of the Blatnik Bridge on the MIC area transportation system, including modeling anticipated adjusted traffic patterns, considering options, and implementing mitigative actions.

Further, it is recommended to work with, listen to, and inform both the public and business communities to prepare all users of the greater impacted system as early as possible in advance of the start of construction.