

CHAPTER 7: BICYCLE NETWORK PRIORITIZATION

Overview

The 2025 MIC bike plan update included creating a “level of importance” map to assist with bicycle project prioritization as local jurisdictions work toward building out the bicycle network. This level of importance map does not address individual projects but is rather overlaid over the whole bicycle network. As explained below, the level of importance mapping approach assigns roads and trails a score based on criteria including proximity to schools and other key destinations, likelihood of serving households who do not own a vehicle, and level of stress sharing the road with vehicles based on traffic speed and volume.

In addition, a key insight from this plan preparation was the recognition that too many of our primary “bike highways”, such as Duluth’s Cross City Trail, remain incomplete. These gaps result in safety concerns and constrain the overall network efficiency. Placing a regional priority on identifying, completing, and maintaining major bike route continuity is also key to completing the network.

Although MIC jurisdictions have completed several “stand alone” projects that create new bicycle infrastructure, usually as shared use paths, many bicycle transportation projects are implemented as part of road reconstruction or re-paving projects. The “level of importance” map and goal of completing the bikeway arterial system will be useful for comparing and prioritizing stand-alone bicycle facility construction projects.

Although bicycle projects built as part of road projects might not follow these priorities, these projects are locally important and should still be undertaken to help complete the bike network. Non-arterial bike routes are still crucial to the bicycle network and should be appropriately designed and prioritized.

This prioritization approach will not determine every single upcoming project, humans will review and finalize the upcoming projects using their common-sense human filter, attuned to specific local needs, grant opportunities and available funding, new developments, and road projects.

Mapping Approach

Level of Importance

A “level of importance” was calculated and mapped on all roads classified as arterials and collectors. Additionally, hostility criteria and locations likely to serve as trip generators for bicyclists were used. Hostility criteria encompass metrics indicating unsafe bicycle conditions, demonstrating the need for safe, designated bikeways. These include metrics related to traffic volumes and traffic speeds. As shown in Figure 7-1 the trip generator criteria include those related to activity nodes, civic centers, schools, transit, and priority populations.

The highest possible number of points based on the prioritization approach is 91. The range of scores for each prioritization level is:

Low	1-29
Medium	30-42
High	43-55
Critical	>55

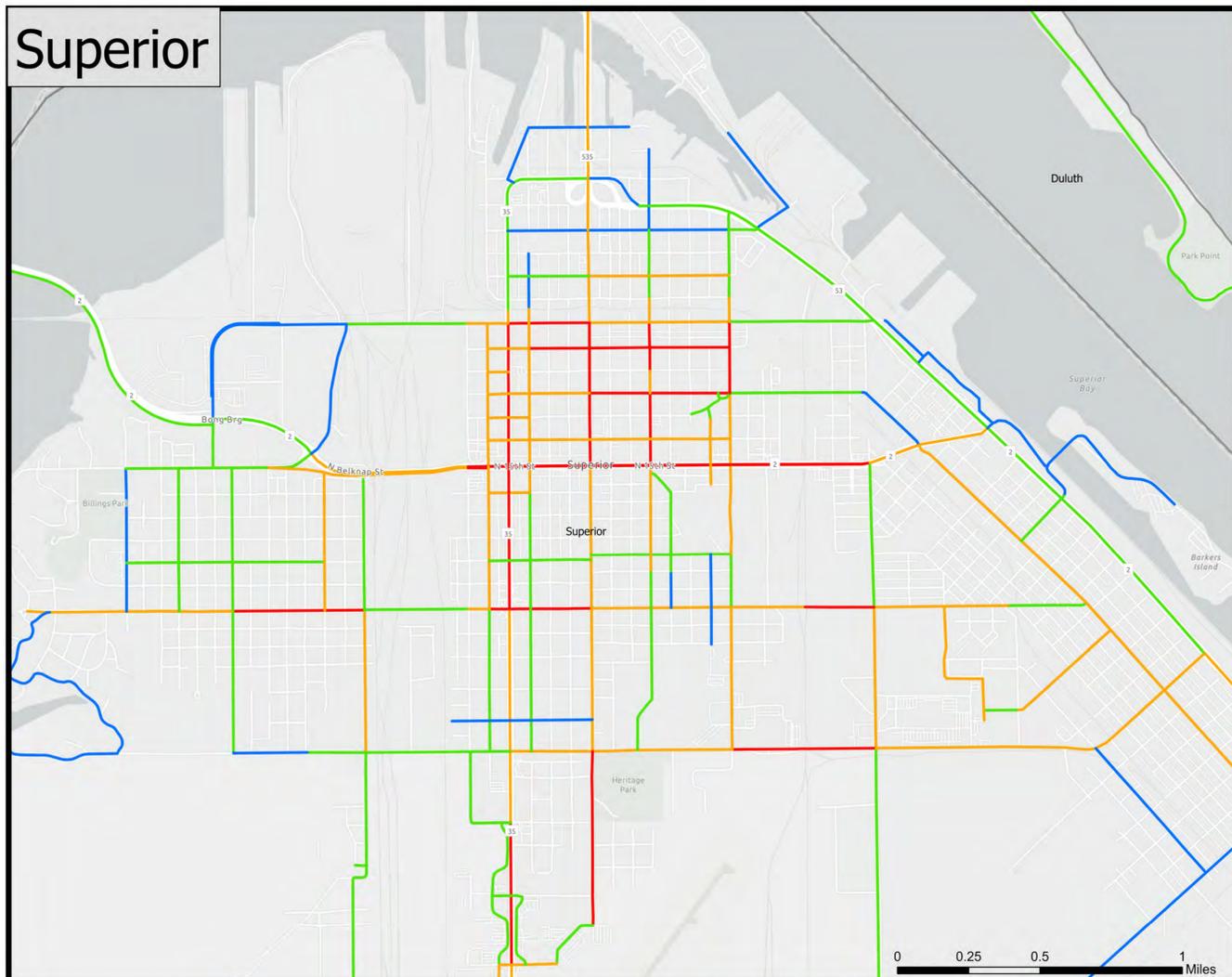
The primary “level of importance” metric categories are listed below and detailed in the table that follows:

- Traffic Volumes (daily count)
- Traffic Speeds
- Safe Route to School
- Transit Route (frequency)
- Activity Node (Civic Center)
- Priority Populations
- Short Trip Generators

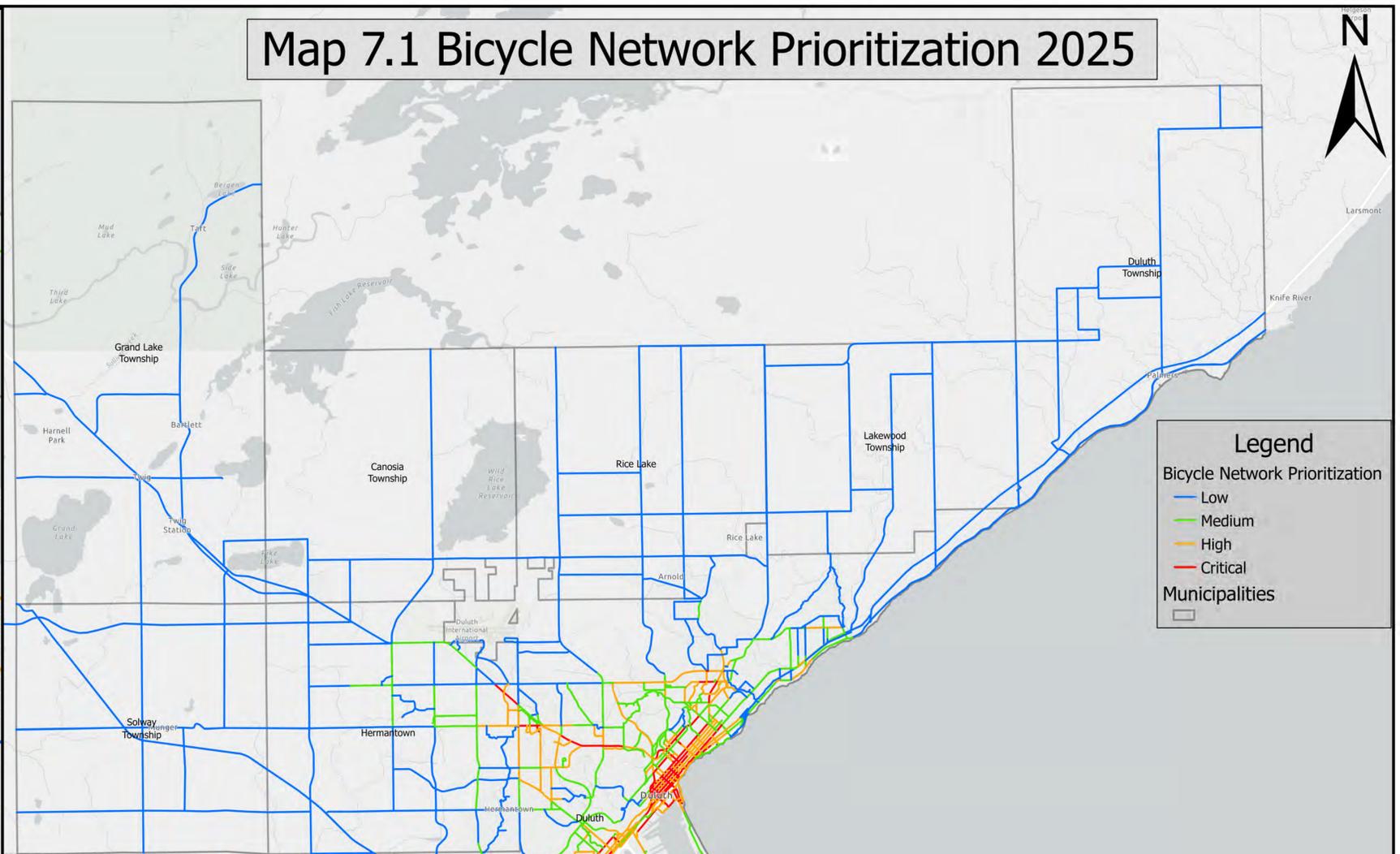
Note that the level of importance map does not account for existing bicycle infrastructure. For example, portions of Tower Avenue in Superior and West Superior Street in Duluth are red, indicating they are in the highest scoring 25% of roads evaluated, even though these roads do have existing bicycle facilities.

Also, the map often indicates most existing trails, such as Duluth’s Lakewalk and Hermantown’s Boulder Trial, as low importance, because they score zero for traffic stress (hostility). They are also often not directly adjacent to trip generators and/or may not be near residential areas with low rates of vehicle ownership. As noted above, such trails are still high priority, creating key parts of the bike “arterial” system.

Superior



Map 7.1 Bicycle Network Prioritization 2025



Duluth

