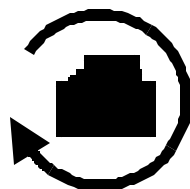


Bloomington-Normal Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan



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**BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL
BICYCLE-PEDESTRIAN PLAN**

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INTRODUCTION

Chapter

1

WHY BICYCLE-PEDESTRIAN PLANNING ?

The twin cities of Bloomington-Normal offer a quality of life that stimulates significant economic and population growth. Among the region's amenities are some of the world's most fertile soils and an unemployment rate that annually ranks as one of the lowest in the State of Illinois. In addition, a wide variety of cultural, entertainment, and recreational opportunities contribute to the region's attractiveness. Located approximately midway between Chicago and St. Louis (See Figure 1.), the Twin Cities' strategic location

has been a catalyst for the development and prosperity of the metropolitan area.

A significant and steady increase in population has been noted since 1950 and population forecasts predict this trend to continue. In the Bloomington-Normal metropolitan area, the urban fringe is expected to face significant residential and nonresidential development. This growth will continue to enhance regional amenities and contribute to a prosperous local economy. However, continued growth also presents long term responsibilities and challenges to maintain and enhance the current high standard of living.

One of the obvious challenges that growth presents is maintaining a safe, efficient, and cost effective transportation system. An increase in population correlates to more people demanding transportation services. Growth along the urban fringe results in a demand for services that will encompass more geographic



Exhibit 1-A. Downtown Bloomington.

territory which will strain existing facilities and resources. These demands have typically been served by constructing new or widening existing rights of way to accommodate increased motorized transportation volumes. This is a common response to increased traffic volumes due to an increasing dependence on the automobile. This practice has been likened to treating obesity by loosening the belt, which is a reaction to a symptom rather than a treatment of the cause. The high percentage of automobile use is not surprising because automobiles have historically been the most accessible and efficient means of direct transportation since their inception. In addition, sprawling development and inefficient land use made possible by the automobile also increases the need for the automobile.

Planning for alternative means of transportation is becoming an increasingly important means of addressing the economic, social, and environmental concerns associated with automobile usage. Multi-faceted problems that result from heavy automobile use are not easily resolved. Automobile dependence tends to perpetuate the isolation of the poor, disabled, and elderly by limiting their choice of residences to locations that are serviced by public transportation or that are within walking distance to desired destinations. Communities such as Bloomington and Normal that are expanding and growing face the challenge of providing adequate maintenance to existing infrastructure while trying to fund new road connections to the metropolitan fringe and beyond.

Increased automobile use will also contribute to the degradation of the environmental quality. Poor ambient air quality, greater amounts of polluted runoff from parking lots and streets, and habitat displacement are all effects of increasing automobile usage. In addition, highways that are constructed in order to improve regional connectivity must invariably consume valuable farmland. In order to mitigate the effects of high volumes of motorized traffic, McLean County must rise to the challenge of producing attractive alternatives to the automobile.

Planning for bicycles and pedestrians is one attempt to help alleviate the effects of automobile dependence. Significant improvements in the regional transportation system will require a holistic approach to planning that recognizes the importance of intermodal options. A well defined system of safe and accessible bicycle and pedestrian routes can provide a viable alternative that compliments other transportation facilities. It will also help meet the growing demand for bicycling for both recreation and transportation between homes and places of work and business. As a result, planning for bikeways and linear open spaces has gained substantial support in recent years from federal, state, and local governments.

THE BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BICYCLE-PEDESTRIAN PLAN

This document presents a plan to guide the development of future land use and transportation facilities through the year 2020 in an

attempt to better accommodate the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians in the Twin Cities metro area. It identifies a system of bicycle-pedestrian routes that connect many of the region's activity centers. The document also outlines a series of goals, objectives, strategies, and policies that guided the preparation of the plan and will also serve as a guide for its implementation. By providing a framework to increase opportunities for non-motorized travel, the plan provides a means to help offset the negative impacts of traffic congestion, air and water pollution, socio-economic polarization, and decline in the sense of community associated with automobile dependency and increasing travel demands. The plan is intended to serve as a guide for the development of future bicycle and pedestrian facilities as resources become available.

The plan represents an update and refinement of the bicycle-pedestrian component of the Long Range Transportation Plan prepared for the Bloomington-Normal Urbanized Area in 1994. It provides for an expanded system of bicycle-pedestrian routes and supporting policies in order to reflect further research and analysis and the recommendations of subsequent studies. Considered in the development of this plan were the Town of Normal and City of Bloomington Comprehensive Plans and the McLean County Regional Greenways Plan—all prepared since the Long Range Transportation Plan was adopted.