PUBLIC HEALTH LAW CENTER
at Mitchell Hamline School of Law

MEMORANDUM

To: Twin Cities Metro Area Healthy Community Planning Project Team

From: Anna Crouch, Research Assistant and Ross Daniels, Community Planner
Public Health Law Center

Re: Indicator Analysis: Multimodal Transportation for Metropolitan Communities
Healthy Community Planning Project

Date: August 11, 2021

m DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH **ship** statewide health improvement partnership

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Indicator: Multimodal Transportation

The following discussion includes key findings and analysis of the reviewed comprehensive plans regarding the multimodal transportation health indicator. The Project Team defined multimodal transportation as "systems [and] policies that accommodate various modes of travel (walking, bicycling, transit, automobile) and connections among modes."[1]

Overall Takeaways

All 49 plans discuss multimodal transportation in one way or another. There is a distinct regional focus to this indicator. Many plans talk about the need to coordinate with neighboring communities, allude to the Metropolitan Council (Met Council)'s policies and recommendations for transit infrastructure, and discuss how their communities fit into the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network. Additionally, communities use a wide range of additional plans, documents, and studies to support their multimodal planning efforts. Equity considerations focus primarily on accessibility for those with disabilities, although urban communities also consider people who cannot afford personal vehicles. Plans that acknowledge the municipality's position in the seven-county region and make commitments to working on their own transportation systems within municipal boundaries tend to score higher.

Equity

Equity considerations around multimodal transportation focus primarily on accessibility for those with disabilities across all categories, although urban communities also consider people who cannot afford personal vehicles.

Accessibility for People with Disabilities

One equity consideration that was addressed across different community designations is a focus on accessibility for people with disabilities. This is sometimes couched in the language of complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) although not always. **Eden Prairie** indicates its goal to ensure that "ADA-focused design facilitates access to stations, system equity, and ease of movement for all users, especially people using wheelchairs or mobility devices, the elderly, people with children and strollers, and people carrying groceries or packages" (Eden Prairie, 110). **Osseo** is another example of a community that discusses accessibility in terms of the ADA indicating that "[t]o address accessibility issues, it is recommended that the City develop and implement an ADA transition plan to bring sidewalks, trails, and intersections into compliance with ADA" (Osseo, 107). Other communities do not name the ADA specifically, but do discuss accommodating disability in their transportation plans. **New Hope** wants to "[e]mphasize disability accessibility design in City transportation improvements" (New Hope, 187).

Additional Plans and Policies

Many communities refer to additional transportation specific plans that have been created or discuss the framework for such plans, as well as various studies to happen in the future. These plans or policies take various forms, from alternative transportation and active transportation plans to Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School policies. For example, **Roseville** mentions that it is updating its "Pathway Master

Plan [which] identifies, evaluates, and prioritizes locations for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Recommendations from the pathway plan update have been incorporated into this Plan where applicable" (Roseville, 7-32). **Bloomington** meanwhile has "adopted the Bloomington Alternative Transportation Plan (ATP) to create pedestrian and bicycle facility goals, identify and prioritize facility improvements (System Plan), and outline an implementation and maintenance plan for the system" (Bloomington, 4-3). Many communities combine policies and plans, like **Brooklyn Center**, where:

> "the City took initiative to develop and adopt a policy for Complete Streets in 2013 to return focus on pedestrian-oriented streets and bicycle accommodation. Another step in these efforts was completed in 2014 with the adoption of the City of Brooklyn Center Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan that addresses maintenance and development of an integrated city-wide bicycle and pedestrian system" (Brooklyn Center, 7-24)

Interesting and Innovative Approaches

Some of the most interesting approaches taken by communities in addressing multimodal transportation include acknowledging the disconnection that highways can cause, interesting transit uses, and focusing on rural pedestrian and bicycle crossings.

Highways as a Cause of Disconnection

Bloomington and Falcon Heights both acknowledge that despite using highways, freeways, and other roads to connect communities to each other, these types of transportation facilities actually reduce connectivity within their communities. **Bloomington** notes that "[m]ajor roadways (e.g., freeways) and rivers that bisect and border Bloomington reduce connectivity" (Bloomington, 4-2). **Falcon Heights** acknowledges the deleterious effects of this reduced connectivity on health outcomes saying, "the two busy highways constitute major obstacles to pedestrian and bicycle travel and offer a considerable challenge to the city in implementing some changes that could make the community a healthier place to live" (Falcon Heights, 6).

Non-Traditional Alternative Transportation

A couple of communities reference alternative transportation aside from well-known modes like walking, biking, and buses. The inclusion of these alternative modes demonstrates a recognition that colder months and winter weather in Minnesota provide an extra challenge to active transportation and supports planning for non-traditional multimodal forms of transportation. To that end, **Nowthen** wants to "[i]nclude provisions for other transportation modes, i.e., bicycles, snowmobiles, park and ride, etc., as part of street improvement plans where feasible" (Nowthen, 32). **Maplewood** will likewise "[c]onsider options for hiking, walking, skating, and cross-country skiing" (Maplewood, 12-239).

Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossings

A few rural communities focus on pedestrian and bicycle crossings. **Marine on St. Croix** wants to "provide ADA-compliant facilities, widen pedestrian facilities where necessary, add marked crosswalks, and add curb and gutter throughout" the city (Marine on St. Croix, 59). **Corcoran** focuses on

"prevent[ing] unregulated pedestrian and bicycle crossings […] to protect pedestrian and bicycle movement paralleling vehicular traffic" (Corcoran, 83).

Other Interesting Approaches

Other interesting approaches from communities include:

- Historical Practices: **Minneapolis** acknowledges its past failures to provide multimodal transportation by "recognizing historical practices that led to inequitable pedestrian networks" (Minneapolis, 140).
- Design Standards: **Richfield** emphasizes the ability of people to use multimodal infrastructure through "[d]esign for people [that] will address universal accessibility as well as comfort, safety, and convenience for all users" (Richfield, 77).
- Partnering with the University of MN: **Falcon Heights** intends to leverage the University's campus in its community by "partner[ing] with the University of Minnesota to fund the installation of 'Fix-It Stations' to encourage bicycling in the city" (Falcon Heights, 92).
- Health Impact Assessment: In addition, **Falcon Heights** is "[requiring] a health impact assessment for new development/redevelopment" to encourage alternate transportation" (Falcon Heights, 45).
- Pedestrian Overlay District: **Golden Valley** has been "[researching] the potential for a pedestrian-oriented zoning overlay district for application near high-frequency transit service and areas where redevelopment is predicted" (Golden Valley, 2-43).

Ranking Analysis

Communities received a score of 1 to 4 on the multimodal transportation indicator, which ranks them on how much they incorporated healthy multimodal transportation in their comprehensive plan. If a community scored a 1, that means there was no mention of multimodal transportation. A score of 2 would demonstrate that the community includes mention of multimodal transportation in the body of the plan but does not include goals and policies to this end. Plans scoring a 3 include goals and/or policies for multimodal transportation. Communities with the highest score of 4 must include goals and policies for multimodal transportation in their plans and dedicate resources toward implementation. The number of communities to receive each score was:

Level 1	0 communities
Level 2	3 communities
Level 3	26 communities
Level 4	20 communities

Differences in themes and focus across the ranking levels show the respective commitment of each city to developing multimodal infrastructure and supporting the movement of residents through modes of transportation other than just a personal automobile. No community scored a 1, and only a handful of smaller communities scored a 2, showing that every community at least discusses multimodal

transportation, speaking to the Metropolitan Council's emphasis on a connected region to support public transit, walking, bicycling, and public health.[2]

Level 1

A score of 1 would indicate that the plan contains no mention of multimodal transportation. As discussed above, no community scored a 1 on this indicator.

Level 2

Communities that received a level 2 on this indicator include a discussion of multimodal transportation in the body of the plan, but do not include goals and policies to this end. Cities that scored a 2 acknowledge the importance of multimodal infrastructure but discuss their geographic and population size as constraints on developing this infrastructure within their city limits.

City Size

Many level 2 communities cite their community's size when discussing why they do not need more multimodal infrastructure. **Landfall**'s Transportation chapter discusses existing conditions for transit users as sufficient (Landfall, 17). With respect to bicycling and walking, the city states that "[w]ith the small size of the community, along with its relatively dense housing and self-contained street system, the layout of Landfall Village is not conducive to bike lanes or trails" (Landfall, 18). **Woodland**'s Transportation Plan describes the limited options for improving the entire transportation system because of its full development and limited population growth, choosing instead to emphasize good maintenance. In regard to non-motorized transportation, the city says that, "the small size of the City, the physical limitations of its roadways and the absence of publicly owned property render a municipal network of pedestrian and bicycle trails impractical" (Woodland, 29).

Level 3

A ranking of 3 on this indicator means that the plan includes goals and/or policies to address multimodal transportation. One theme that was identified throughout these plans is the call for local collaboration with all different levels of government to implement the goals and policies identified. There is also a focus on different programming efforts, such as Safe Routes to School and Complete Streets. With respect to Complete Streets, much of the work the discussed by these communities is done in the context not just of transportation networks, but in land use as well.

Intergovernmental Collaboration

Calls for local and regional collaboration on multimodal infrastructure are an important part of plans that scored a 3**. White Bear Township**'s transportation plan includes a goal of "efficient, convenient, and interconnected transportation systems for use by pedestrians, bicycles, transit, and automobiles" (White Bear Township, 4-46). White Bear Township specifically includes an action in pursuit of this goal to "[w]ork with other communities, Ramsey County, MnDOT, and others to develop transit options, such as a transit corridor on I-35E and associated 'feeder lines' within White Bear Township" (White Bear Township, 4-46). The Metropolitan Council designated **Nowthen** as a Transit Market Area V, which is defined as an area that "has very low population and employment densities" and thus does not have any

fixed-route transit service (Nowthen, 110). To fill in the gap, the city discusses the potential of expanding the paratransit service that exists there. One policy it includes in support of this goal is to "[c]ooperate with Federal, State, Regional and other local governmental jurisdictions in efforts to create markets and expand para-transit service" (Nowthen, 32). **Lilydale**'s plan contains a discussion regarding improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, which includes partnering with its neighbors to develop such infrastructure, stating its intention to "[w]ork with the cities of Mendota and Mendota Heights to examine the possibility of conducting a corridor study and enhancement plan for the shared Highway 13 corridor through these three cities for autos, bikes and pedestrians" (Lilydale, 39).

Safe Routes to School

Many communities rely on the federal Safe Routes to School program to help support efforts for multimodal transportation. **Inver Grove Heights** discusses its Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, which "will assist in providing infrastructure and non-infrastructure grants to build trails, paths, and safe connections to local schools" (Inver Grove Heights, 5-143). One of the transportation goals for **Columbia Heights** is to "increase and promote safe and efficient alternative modes of transportation." In support of this goal, it plans to "[i]dentify and establish safe transportation routes to public schools" (Columbia Heights, 6-112). Its plan goes on to discuss the approvals of multiple Safe Routes to School plans, and pledges to "pursue grants and other funding resources available to achieve the recommended planning and engineering recommendations" for these plans (Columbia Heights, 6-112).

Even without specific funding from the SRTS program, some communities still focus multimodal transportation efforts on getting students to school. **St. Francis** encourages "creative site design," and while the city does not articulate a specific SRTS plan or policy, it does include a policy related to the goal of encouraging creative site design indicating its desire to "[p]rovide pedestrian and bike connectivity to parks, employment areas, businesses/services, and neighborhood institutional uses such as schools and churches" (St. Francis, 3-24).

Complete Streets

Falcon Heights includes Complete Streets in its discussion of land use. Its first general land use policy is to "[a]dopt and encourage 'complete streets best practices' to promote public health and encourage an active lifestyle for residents" (Falcon Heights, 45). Furthermore, it includes a commitment to "[developing a] complete streets policy or sidewalk master plan to guide future non-motorized improvements" (Falcon Heights, 116). **Bloomington** discusses its 2012 Complete Streets policy, which "promotes benefits to health, quality of life, the environment, and safety" (Bloomington, 4.6). It goes on to include land use planners as key decisionmakers in applying this policy, with "Land Use Coordination" listed as an area of opportunity for realizing the city's mobility goals (Bloomington, 4.26). **Columbia Heights**' transportation plan includes robust policies and goals related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. It acknowledges that it does not have a formal Complete Streets plan or policy, but that its goals and policies "embrace several elements of complete streets," and refers to MnDOT's Complete Streets Policy as a document that "can serve as a resource to the City for incorporating complete street design standards into City projects" (Columbia Heights, 6-149).

Level 4

A ranking of 4 on this indicator means that the plan includes goals and/or policies to address multimodal transportation and dedicates resources toward achieving these goals. One theme identified for communities that scored a 4 is a robust incorporation of multimodal transportation goals and policies into goals related to new development. Like communities that scored a 3, level 4 communities often include a discussion of Complete Streets policies. Unlike level 3 communities, the policies of level 4 communities are generally already well-developed, and serve as a guidepost for multimodal improvements. Finally, level 4 communities generally contain strong multimodal transportation networks that already exist, and because of this much of their multimodal work is focused on closing existing gaps.

Multimodal Infrastructure in New Developments

One of the goals for **Golden Valley** is to "Create a Complete Community." This goal is spelled out in the city's implementation plan. One of the implementation activities to achieve this goal is to "[r]equire multimodal accommodations in all new developments so pedestrians, bicycles, and transit users are included in the site and building design process" (Golden Valley, 2-41). **Plymouth**'s Land Use Plan includes a goal to "[s]upport efforts that strengthen community identity, contribute to a high quality of life and enhance Plymouth as a desirable place to live, work and play" (Plymouth, 3-3) In support of this goal, the city plans to "[e]ncourage new development to integrate pedestrian and bicycle facilities - both within and connecting to adjacent development - and transit facilities" (Plymouth, 3-3).

Complete Streets

Brooklyn Center takes pride in its existing bicycle and pedestrian system. Its plan emphasizes bicycle and pedestrian linkages to key destinations and identifies specific routes that warrant reconstruction and redevelopment. To provide context for these improvements, the city discusses its "initiative to develop and adopt a policy for Complete Streets in 2013 to return focus on pedestrian-oriented streets and bicycle accommodation" (Brooklyn Center, 7-24). **Golden Valley**'s transportation section includes discussion of Complete Streets, which it has a "long history" of supporting. Its plan indicates that it "will continue demonstrating its support for Complete Streets by incorporating its principles and design options into all transportation plans and policies" (Golden Valley, 4-24).

Filling Gaps in Multimodal Network

New Brighton's transportation section lists among its objectives and policies to "[i]dentify and eliminate gaps in the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network and Connected Ramsey Communities Network and build connections to those networks" (New Brighton, 6-82). **North St. Paul** begins its "Planned Local Non-Motorized Transportation Network" section by stating that "[b]ecause the city's existing non-motorized transportation network is relatively well-established, the planned network focuses on filling gaps that exist and improving safety conditions and the comfort or convenience of non-motorized facilities through intersection design, streetscape improvements, and other design considerations" (North St. Paul, 8-34).

Community Designation Analysis

All 49 plans, representing 51 communities, reviewed in the Project were sorted into one of three main designations: urban, suburban, or rural. The project researchers analyzed these types of communities separately to see if they approached the task of accommodating various mobility modes as well as connecting those modes in different ways that were more specific to their community type. As discussed, below, these larger categories are combinations of the more narrowly defined categories the Metropolitan Council uses to distinguish communities. The urban category is made up of urban center and urban communities, while the suburban category is made up of towns that the Metropolitan Council defines as suburban, suburban edge, and emerging suburban edge communities. The rural category is a combination of rural center, diversified rural, rural residential, and agricultural communities.

Urban

The comprehensive plans of the 18 urban communities included a variety of themes around multimodal transportation, reflecting the diversity of challenges and opportunities facing these communities. Among these themes are the use of Complete Streets policies, Safe Routes to School policies, and filling in the gaps in sidewalk networks. When considering equity, urban communities emphasize serving people who cannot afford personal vehicles.

Equity Theme — People Who Can't Afford Personal Vehicles

Many urban communities acknowledge that multimodal transportation systems are more equitable because they are able to service people who might not be able to afford a personal vehicle. **Columbia Heights** acknowledges that multimodal systems "[provide] vulnerable populations access to services in the area, including those who cannot afford a personal vehicle, people who cannot drive, and senior citizens" (Columbia Heights, 6-136). In its overarching strategies that guide the plan **Crystal** heavily cites the Blue Line Light Rail Transit (LRT) extension in its community (Crystal, 4 to 10). This "LRT can provide access to education and employment opportunities and reduce the need for car ownership, which is a significant financial burden for lower income residents" (Crystal, Appendix A, 10). Meanwhile, **Falcon Heights** discusses the challenges that can occur for people without viable multimodal transportation systems, saying "[p]eople who cannot afford a car, are unable to drive, or choose not to drive face transportation hurdles that can result in costly, time-consuming, inconvenient, stressful, and sometimes unsafe trips" (Falcon Heights, 120).

Complete Streets

Many urban cities are already committed to a Complete Streets Policy, and some of those who are not yet committed rely on MnDOT's Complete Streets policy to guide their own transportation planning. Complete Streets Policies are based around the idea that streets should be designed for use by every modality of transportation, including walking, biking, cars, and public transport. **Bloomington** is an example of a city that has already "adopted a complete streets policy in 2012" focusing on the aspects of complete streets "that [promote] benefits to health, quality of life, the environment, and safety" (Bloomington, 4.6). **Brooklyn Center** has also "[taken] initiative to develop and adopt a policy for Complete Streets in 2013 to return focus on pedestrian-oriented streets and bicycle accommodation" in

response to "[t]he desire for bicycle-friendly and walkable neighborhoods [...] expressed by Brooklyn Center's residents" (Brooklyn Center, 7-24).

Not every city has written its own complete streets policy. For example, while **Columbia Heights** "has not established design guidelines related to complete streets" it also acknowledges the importance of the guiding principles of Complete Streets indicating that the "Transportation Plan's goals and policies do embrace several elements of completes streets (e.g., safety for pedestrians and bicyclists)" (Columbia Heights, 6-149). Like other communities, Columbia Heights used the complete streets guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to help it come up with the complete streets elements that its community needs or wants the most.

Safe Routes to School

Many communities rely on the federal Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program to guide how they think about and fund getting residents to one of the most important destinations in the city - schools. **Brooklyn Center** already benefits from having a SRTS program and indicates that "the City should continue to access the Safe Routes to School program and work with MnDOT to utilize available benefits" (Brooklyn Center, 7-30). **Richfield** intends to "implement projects to improve connections as identified in the pedestrian and bicycle master plans, along with the Safe Routes to School Plan" (Richfield, 39).

Columbia Heights discusses the details of its SRTS plans, saying:

> "Safe Routes to School Plans have been approved for various schools in the City, in addition to North Park Elementary in Fridley, which is in the Columbia Heights School District. The Columbia Heights School District has previously participated in Safe Routes to School for Valley View Elementary). The plan provides an overview of safe routes to school with specific recommendations and is included as an appendix to this plan [...] The City will pursue grants and other funding resources available to achieve the recommended planning and engineering recommendations" (Columbia Heights, 6-150).

Filling in Sidewalk Network Gaps

Many communities want to identify areas where the sidewalk network is disrupted and fill in these gaps, both inside their own community and between other communities. **Lauderdale**, as a smaller community, has a goal to "work with adjacent municipalities to identify gaps in the system and work together to find ways to complete the network" (Lauderdale, 2-9). **Maplewood**, a larger community by contrast, wants to "[e]xtend bicycle, pedestrian, and public transit facility to eliminate gaps in both local and regional transportation networks" (Maplewood, 12-248).

Suburban

Suburban communities emphasize multimodal infrastructure by requiring or recommending sidewalks near important locations, prioritizing pedestrian safety, and increasing multimodal connections to other cities in the region.

Sidewalks Near Important Locations

Focusing particularly on pedestrian access, suburban communities often require or recommend that sidewalks be near essential services and particular zoning areas. **Chanhassen** states "[s]idewalks and/or trails should be required in commercial, industrial and residential areas; adjacent to schools and other public buildings and along at least one side of collectors and other high volume roads" (Chanhassen, 14). **Plymouth** expands its expectations to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, aiming to "[p]rovide pedestrian and bicycle connections among neighborhoods, major activity centers, municipal and regional parks and regional trail systems, and work toward eliminating barriers for pedestrian and bicycle movements at crossings of major trail facilities" (Plymouth, 6-2).

Pedestrian Safety

Suburban communities include a particular focus on making crossings and streets safer for pedestrians. **Coon Rapids** chose to focus on crossings, opting to "[u]tilize crosswalks, illumination, signals, and medians to provide safe pedestrian crossings" (Coon Rapids, 3-23). Meanwhile, **Minnetonka Beach** focuses on stretches of roads "[encouraging] the County to make County Roads 15 and 19 safer for bikers and pedestrians" (Minnetonka Beach, 67). **Oakdale** chooses to look at both, as it plans to "[s]tudy intersections and corridors to address issues such as traffic calming and congestion mitigation" (Oakdale, 22).

Connections to Other Cities

Suburban communities are often reliant on their connections to central cities and other suburbs for daily commutes. Increasing multimodal connections to other communities is an important part of their plans. For example, **Arden Hills** wants to "[p]rovide a transportation system that has convenient and effective multi-modal connections within Arden Hills and to adjacent municipalities, the remainder of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and greater Minnesota" (Arden Hills, 11-1). **Chanhassen** wants these connections to be clear, focusing on "[maintaining] a comprehensive and easily navigable trail and sidewalk system that connects neighborhoods to park and recreation facilities, schools, community destinations and other communities" (Chanhassen, 11).

Rural

Rural communities acknowledge that there was less demand for non-motorized transportation in their communities. However, when they did focus on multimodal transportation of all kinds, they view these modes as a way to foster environmental stewardship.

Low Demand for Non-Motorized Transport

Because rural communities are more sparsely populated, these communities often have less traffic congestion problems and need to travel longer distances, lowering the demand for non-motorized transportation. **Cologne** acknowledges how this difference might play into demands for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, saying "[i]n rural centers such as Cologne, there may be less need for dedicated pedestrian and bicycle facilities on local roadways, compared to other community types" (Cologne, 77). **Marine on St. Croix** points out that "[i]n general, non-motorized travel in most of Marine is not

problematic due to low traffic volumes and slow speeds, as well as sidewalk and trail segments that do exist" (Marine on St Croix, 58). **Nowthen** "has no concerns about barriers to bicycle or pedestrian access given the rural nature of development within the City of Nowthen" (Nowthen, 110).

Multimodal Transportation as Environmental Stewardship

When rural communities do consider alternative modes of transportation, they often turn to it as a way of connecting people with nature and fostering environmentally conscious transportation systems. **Belle Plaine** focuses on the environmental benefits of a multimodal transportation system, looking at "a 'Living Street' policy that provides for multiple modes of transportation and street design that reduces environmental impacts by reducing impervious surface, managing stormwater, and providing shade" (Belle Plaine, 3-25). Both **Inver Grove Heights** and **Marine on St. Croix** want bicycle and pedestrian trails so that people can enjoy their scenic settings. **Inver Grove Heights** intends to "[d]evelop trails and bikeways to natural resources and open space" (Inver Grove Heights, 5-139). **Marine on St. Croix** will "[p]ursue streetscape design standards intended to complement the existing architecture, take advantage of the City's attractive natural setting, and improve the pedestrian access within the Village Center" (Marine on St. Croix, 5).

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[1] "Key Definitions," Twin Cities Metro Area Healthy Communities Planning Project Team - MN DEPT OF HEALTH (2020), internal project document available upon request.
[2] "Transportation." Transportation - Metropolitan Council, 2018. https://metrocouncil.org/Handbook/Plan-Elements/Transportation.aspx.